

Thank You!

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Hon. Union Minister, Shri Nitin Gadkari, virtually addressing the gathering



Virtual address by Hon. Chairman of 15th Finance Commission, Shri N K Singh



TIOAwards Special publication release by (from left) the Revenue Secretary, Shri Tarun Bajaj; Hon. Member of Parliament, Shri Sushil Modi; Hon. Justice M R Shah; The Managing Partner - Tax, Deloitte, Shri Vipul Jhaveri, and the former Finance Secretary, Shri A N Jha



Shri Vipul Jhaveri, Managing Partner - Tax, Deloitte, addressing the gathering



Smt Seema Arora, Chief Commissioner, CGST, Ahmedabad, receiving Gold Trophy under CGST Zonal category



Shri Sushil Kumar Lohani, VAT Commissioner of Odisha, receiving Gold Trophy under SGST category



Shri Roopam Kapoor, Chief Commissioner of Mumbai Customs Zone III, receiving Gold Trophy under Customs Zonal category



Smt Renu Narvekar, Global Head - Taxation at TCS Ltd, receiving Gold Trophy under Corporate above Rs 5000 Cr turnover category



Shri Vineet Agrawal, Senior Executive Vice President & Group Head of Taxation, JSW Steel Ltd, receiving Silver Trophy under Corporate above Rs 5000 Cr turnover category

CONGRATULATIONS!

FISCAL HERITAGE AWARD



TIOL Fiscal Heritage Award conferred (posthumously) on **Dr. Raja j Chelliah**, the father of Tax Reforms in India

TIOAwards 2021 WINNERS

REFORMIST STATE CATEGORY

GOLD - Odisha
SILVER - Haryana

CUSTOMS ZONAL CATEGORY

GOLD - Mumbai Zone III
SILVER - Gujarat Zone

CGST ZONAL CATEGORY

GOLD - Ahmedabad
SILVER - Delhi

SGST / STATE VAT CATEGORY

GOLD - Odisha
SILVER - Punjab

CORPORATE (Above INR 5000 cr Turnover)

GOLD - Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)
SILVER - JSW Steel Ltd
JURY AWARD:
Northern Coalfields Limited
Wipro Enterprises Private Limited
Nayara Energy Limited
Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust

CORPORATE (Between INR 500 cr - 5000 cr Turnover)

GOLD - Black Box Ltd
SILVER - Mitsubishi Elevator India Pvt Ltd
JURY AWARD:
Watson Pharma
JK Lakshmi Cement Ltd
Eveready Industries India Ltd

MSMEs

GOLD - Rajlakshmi Cotton Mills Pvt Ltd
SILVER - All Vet Diagnostic Solutions Pvt Ltd
JURY AWARD:
Le Merite Exports Limited
Ipp Catalog Publications Pvt Ltd
Narmada Spinning Pvt Ltd

TAX TECHNOLOGY SERVICE PROVIDER

GOLD - Tally Solutions Pvt Ltd
SILVER - IRIS Business Services Ltd
JURY AWARD:
TMSL
Relyon Softech Limited

FACILITATOR / INTERMEDIARIES

GOLD (Joint Winners) - Dr Avinash Poddar & CA Rajendra Kumar P
SILVER - M/s Goyal Rathi & Associates
JURY AWARD:
CMA Anil Sharma
RAJKOT Chamber of Commerce & Industry Hiregange & Associates LLP

FISCAL JOURNALISTS / COLUMNISTS

GOLD - Anshuman Tiwari
SILVER - Arun Goyal
JURY AWARD:
Ajay Kumar Mishra
Shailesh Sheth
Abhishek Raja

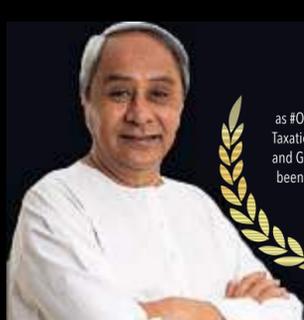


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www.tioawards.in



I am really happy with TIOAwards recognising and appreciating contribution of taxpayers in nation-building - a great initiative!
NITIN GADKARI



Congratulate @Baniyyakar as #Odisha has been selected to receive TIOAwards National Taxation Award 2021 (Gold) as the best reformist state and Gold Award in GST/State VAT Category. Odisha has been selected based on the responses received from citizens/taxpayers. #OdishaLeads
NAVIN PATNAIK



Every country which implemented GST across the world faced inflation. India is ONLY exception to it!
SUSHIL MODI



Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Priyadarshini W/O Hari Om Panwar, R/O, Block, C-494, Alpha -1, Greater Noida, G.B. Nagar, U.P have changed my full name to Priyadarshini Pawar for all future purposes.

0040604549-10

I, Rajinder Joshi S/o Chhinta Mani Joshi R/O 5775 B-Block Street No.116, Sant Nagar Burari Delhi-110084 have changed my name to Rajender Kumar Joshi.

0040604541-4

I, Radha, Spouse of No.-2806824M Rank HAV Mali Shyamsunder Fajdar, Vill- Lokmanya Nagar Pada No.4, Post- JK Gram, Tah- Dist- Thane, Maharashtra-400606, have changed my name from Radha to Radha Shyamsunder Mali wide-Affidavit dated 26.02.2022 before Notary Public, Delhi.

0070774831-1

I, Kajal, Spouse of No.-2811961P Rank LNK Gorad Tatoba Vishwas, VIII- Aikud(S), Post- Aikud(S), Tal- Kavathe Mahankal, Dist- Sangli, State- Maharashtra-416411, have changed my name from Kajal to Kajal Tatoba Gorad vide-Affidavit dated 26.02.2022 before Notary Public, Delhi.

0070774829-1

I, Binesh Kumar S/O Ram Niwas R/O E-283, S-283, Shastri Market Jhuggi, South Moti Bagh, New Delhi-110021 have changed my name to Dinesh Kumar.

0040604514-3

I, Keshav S/O Manoj Jethliya, R/O 20 Savita Vihar Delhi-110092 have changed my name to Keshav Jethliya Permanently.

0040604142-7

PERSONAL

I, Janki Joshi W/O Rajender Kumar Joshi R/O 5775 B-Block Street No.116, Sant Nagar Burari Delhi-110084 have changed my name to Janakata Joshi.

0040604514-2

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public at large is hereby informed that my client Sh. Kapil Vats, S/o Sh. M S Vats, R/O: WZ-193 Palam Village, New Delhi-110045 (Mob: 9871027549) will purchase the property bearing plot No. 102, Khassa No. 11677, situated in Village Palam, Delhi area measuring 218 Sq. Yds. i.e. 183 Sq. Mts. Approx. Abadi known as Mahavir Enclave, Part II and III, New Delhi from Shri Prakash Pandey, S/o Shri Surya Narayan Pandey, R/O, Village-Akharia, Post- Shukla Pur, Sirsa Kachhar, District- Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh 212305, (M o b: 8376931685) who is lawful owner and in peaceful physical possession of land. My above said client is going to purchase the said property. If any person is having objection on same may claim for their right with competent authority within 30 days. Anybody dealing in respect of the aforesaid land with any other person shall be doing solely at his own risk, cost and consequences. My client shall not be liable for any such dealing in any manner whatsoever.

**BD PANDEY & ASSOCIATES
ADVOCATES & LEGAL CONSULTANTS**
Chamber No.-750, Lawyer Chambers, Dwarka Court Complex, Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby informed that my client Sh. Rajjan Lal, S/o Late Sh. Suraj Bali, R/O House No. B-87, Street No. 14, Ganesh Nagar, Pandav Nagar Complex, Delhi -110092, has disowned and debarred his youngest son Ashish Kumar, S/o Sh. Rajjan Lal and his wife Smt. Sunaina, W/o Ashish Kumar from his entire movable and immovable properties. My client shall not be responsible in any way for his acts or claim as he/she has broken all links whatsoever from him forever.

S.K. JHA (Advocate)
E. No. DI1282/2004
Mobile No 9971826801



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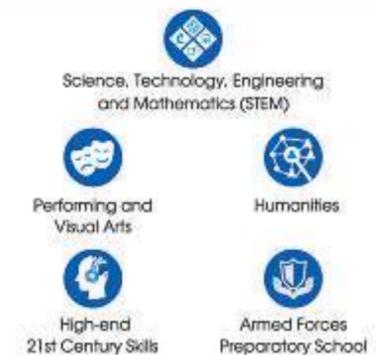
Specialization	Tentative dates for Aptitude Test
Performing and Visual Arts Class 9	12th March, 2022
High-end 21st Century Skills Class 9	13th March, 2022
Humanities Class 9	20th March, 2022
STEM Class 9	25th March, 2022
STEM Class II (PCB)	
AFPS Class 9	26th March, 2022
STEM Class II (PCM)	
AFPS Class II	27th March, 2022



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Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi

WESTERN RAILWAY

GENERAL WORK FOR POH OF ROOF MOUNTED PACKAGE UNIT

E-Tender No.: EL90/MX/2021-22/12
Dated: 24/02/2022 Name of Work :
General work for POH (24 months schedule) of 15 TR RMPU of Stdwal / Fadders Electric. Make list of most change items as per Section 'B', Annexure A and list of condition based change items as per Section 'B', Annexure B) as per scope of work and schedule of rate. Quantity - 144 units (6 Rakes). Approx Cost of Work: ₹ 4,45,00,490.40 EMD: ₹ 3,72,500 Time & Date for submission of e-Tender: upto 12.00 hrs. on 28/03/2022 (electronically) For viewing complete details of tender and submitting, please visit website- www.irps.gov.in D-6742

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WESTERN RAILWAY-RAJKOT

E-TENDER FOR YARD MODIFICATION WORK

E-Tender Notice No.: DYCECRJT-RJT-KNLS-01, Dy. Chief Engineer (Construction), Western Railway, Rajkot for and on behalf of President of Union of India invites E-Tender for the following work: Name of Work with its location: Yard modification work in six yards between Rajkot (excluding) to Jamwanthali (including) involving Earthwork for track laying, bridge extension, FOBs, Platforms & Station Building construction, Track work, Electric general, over head electric works (OHE) and Signalling & telecommunication outdoor work in connection with Rajkot-Kanals doubling work in Rajkot division. Approximate cost of the work: ₹ 1,37,59,03,888.43/- Completion Period: 24 Months EMD: ₹ 70,29,500.00/- Date & Time for submission of bid and opening of bid: Submission: 31.03.2022 upto 15.00 hrs. Opening: 31.03.2022 at 15.15 hrs. Website particulars notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen & address of the office: Website: www.irps.gov.in Office of the Dy. Chief Engineer (Construction), Western Railway, Kothli Compound, Rajkot. RJT-83

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अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी शासकीय चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय, विदिशा (म.प्र.)
खेल परिसर के सामने, सांची रोड, विदिशा म.प्र. 464001 दूरभाष 07592-297001
E-mail - deangmcvidish@gmail.com, website : www.gmcvidisha.org

क्रमांक 1142 क्रयशाखा/जी.एम.सी. विदिशा/2022 विदिशा दिनांक : 21/02/2022

ई-निविदा सूचना
उपरोक्त विषय में लेख है कि अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी शासकीय चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय विदिशा से संबद्ध चिकित्सालय के लिए स्मार्ट क्लास हेतु निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

निविदाकार निविदा से संबंधित सम्पूर्ण विवरण एवं आवेदन पत्र www.mptender.gov.in वेबसाइट पर रु. 1000 (एक हजार रुपये मात्र) का भुगतान कर अवलोकनार्थ दिनांक 26/02/2022 से प्राप्त की जा सकती है। निधि एवं शर्तों में परिवर्तन होने पर कॉन्ट्रैक्ट केवल www.mptender.gov.in एवं महाविद्यालय की वेबसाइट www.gmcvidisha.org पर ही जारी किये जावेंगे एवं समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशित नहीं किये जावेंगे।

अधिष्ठाता
अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी शासकीय
चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय विदिशा
दिनांक : 27/02/2022

आदेश क्रमांक : G23089/21
कोरोना से बचने की तीन बातें बहुत जरूरी, टीका लगवाना, मास्क पहनना और अपना नासो गज की दूरी।

Government of Maharashtra
Directorate of Archaeology and Museums

St. George Fort, St. George Hospital Campus, Near C.S.M.T., Mumbai-400 001
E-mail : mahaarchaeology@gmail.com Tel. No. : (022)-22623380
No. : Tech.2021-22/UNESCO Geophyhs-T.N./432 Date : 22 February 2022

Tender Notice

THE Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Maharashtra State invites tender from the eligible firms through the online mode for preparation of the UNESCO World Heritage Nomination Dossier of the Geophyhs of Konkan Region of India. The applicant firm should fulfill the eligibility criteria mentioned below.

1. The Consultant/ Firm should be empaneled with the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Maharashtra.
2. The Consultant/ Firm should have a record of successfully inscribing at least 1 Cultural Heritage property as the UNESCO World Heritage Site OR should have experience in working with Archaeological Survey of India/ State Government/ UNESCO with regard to nomination of the world Heritage Sites.
3. The Consultant/ Firm should have a record of successfully inscribing at least 1 Cultural Heritage property in the Tentative listing of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
4. The Consultant/ Firm should have a proven experience of 10 years in preparation of Nomination Dossier and Management Plans for Heritage sites nominated/ declared as the World Heritage Sites.
5. The appointment will be purely on a project based and no any permanent claim will be entertained in this regard.

The tender form and document will be available for download with applicable charges on the web site <http://mahatenders.gov.in> from 28th February, 2022 to 8th March, 2022. The eligible firms may visit the above mentioned web site for more details.

The Directorate reserves the right to cancel/ postpone this notice of tender at any point of time and to accept/ reject any tender without assigning any reason.

Sd/-
Director

DGIPR/2021-2022/4740

MANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED
(Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Corporate Office, MESCOM BHAVANA, Bejai, Mangaluru - 575 004.
Ph: 0824-2885795, CIN: U40109 KA 2002 SGC 030425

No. MESCOM - PROCPUR/4/2022-PROC Date: 19.02.2022

TENDER NOTIFICATION (THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY)

MESCOM invites tender for Manufacture and Supply of the following material:

Tender No.	Name of the Material proposed for Procurement	Quantity
MESCOM/2021-22/IND815	11KV 5KN Polymeric Pin Insulators	1,00,000 Nos.

The interested eligible bidders may log on to www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in on or after 28.02.2022.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer (Elc.)/Proc.) Corporate Office
For Power Related Complaints & Assistance Call Toll Free Number 1912

OKHLA INDUSTRIAL AREA CETP SOCIETY (REGD.)

Regd. Office & Plant :- C-141 Okhla Industrial Area Phase-I, New Delhi- 110020

INVITES TENDERS

Sealed tenders are invited from reputed eligible parties for the supply of process chemical as per the items mentioned below and Registered Contractor for O & M of 24 MLD Physico-Chemical/ Bio Treatment as per tender term.

Items	Qty. Required
1- Anthracite (90% C)	16 MT
2- Activated Carbon (1050 IV)	12 MT
3- Filter Media (Sand) 1/10 to 1/16	50 MT
4- Filter Media (Round Pebbles) of three sizes 3/4", 1" and 1.5".	30 MT
5- Ferric Alum Commercial Grade-I hot processed minimum 16% Alumina & less than 10 % Moisture	50 MT per annum
6- Bleaching powder Grade-I With minimum 35% of Chlorine content.	30 MT per annum
7- Polyelectrolyte (Cationic 90% Active Content)	2 MT per Annum
8- Poly Aluminum Chloride (PAC) with minimum 30% Alumina	35 MT per Annum

Terms:- Earnest Money-Rs. 30,000/- DD in favor of the Society for each of the Tender.

Tender Document are available free of cost from CETP Society's Regd. Office as given above up to Dt. 04-03-2022 till 4:30 pm. The interested Bidders may submit their tender complete in all respect so as to reach the Society's office on or before 4 pm on 08-03-2022 or deposit the same in person in the Tender Box in the office of the Society till 4 pm on 08-03-2022. Tenders received after due date and time will not be considered. The received tenders will be opened on 15-03-2022 at 3:00 pm. The Society Management reserves the right to accept, reject in part or full any bid or negotiate any bid without assigning any reason.

The above chemicals will be tested at NABL Approved Laboratory. The Price should be inclusive of freight, packing & unloading charges and GST etc.

Sd/-
Kuldip Khanna (President)

THE 'LABHARTHI VARG'



Bhairav Vishwakarma at his house in Saura, Charkhari constituency, Mahoba; (below) the house he built with the Rs 1.20 lakh that he got under the PM Awas Yojana. Harikishan Sharma

In UP, a new, silent voter class: beneficiaries of welfare schemes

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
CHITRAKOOT, FEBRUARY 27

OVER THE last five years, Govind Das and family received Rs 1,20,849 in their bank accounts under the PM housing scheme, Swachh Bharat Mission, PM-Kisan, as Covid assistance by the Central and state governments, and in lieu of his children's school mid-day meal. Besides, he has been getting 35 kg foodgrains at subsidised rates, and free food-grain during the pandemic months, among other benefits.

From Mahoba district, Geeta Devi Shrivastava and her family have



received Rs 1,52,000 in their bank accounts over a similar period under the housing scheme, Swachh Bharat Mission and PM-Kisan. Besides, the family has been getting foodgrains at subsidised rates

DECISION 2022
TURNOUT
UP PHASE 5
53.93%

and other pandemic measures. In the last five years, Ramashankar's family, from Chitrakoot district, has received Rs 1,54,000 in their bank accounts

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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Behind 10-min delivery promise: app tracking items, last-mile race

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK & PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, GHAZIABAD, GURGAON, FEBRUARY 27

EVEN BEFORE a customer taps the check-out button, the process has begun with a pre-designated delivery executive on standby. Once that button is clicked, a "picker" inside the "dark store" receives an alert on a smartphone app. The app guides the picker, who has a bucket in hand, through a maze of shelves. The items selected are scanned, billed and packed by a two-member team.

All of this takes just two minutes, leaving around eight minutes for the delivery executive to

reach the customer's doorstep. Welcome to the world of q-commerce, the 10-minute shopping experience that has taken the online grocery service segment by storm.

According to internet consultancy firm RedSeer, even in a conservative scenario, the q-commerce segment is expected to grow to \$3.1 billion in gross merchandise value by 2025, 10 times the \$300 million clocked in 2021. Over 1,000 dark stores have mushroomed across the country in the last six months alone.

Following Blinkit (earlier known as Grofers), which started the 10-minute trend in India last year, over half a dozen players, both new to the space

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

TENSIONS SHOOT UP ON DAY 4 OF INVASION

Putin orders nukes on alert after West removes Russian banks from SWIFT

Zelenskyy says he is ready for talks; EU, UK, Canada close their skies to Russian planes

YURAS KARMANAU, JIM HEINTZ, VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV & DASHA LITVINOVA
KYIV, FEBRUARY 27

IN A dramatic escalation of tensions in the war in Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin on Sunday ordered Russian nuclear forces put on high alert in response to what he called "aggressive statements" by leading NATO powers.

The directive to put Russia's nuclear weapons in an increased state of readiness for launch raised fears that the crisis could boil over into nuclear war, whether by design or mistake.

It is "potentially putting in force forces that, if there's a miscalculation, could make things much, much more dangerous," a senior US defence official said on condition of anonymity.

Putin's order came after the United States, European Union, and Britain announced they would remove some Russian banks from the SWIFT financial messaging system, a key gateway for international transactions. They also moved to slap restrictions on Russia's central bank.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



People fleeing Ukraine wait at the Shehyni checkpoint bordering Poland. Several Indian students are among those stranded here. Reuters

EXPLAINED

Harsh step by West so far

THE SANCTIONS are the harshest measures yet against Moscow; kicking banks off SWIFT is the financial world equivalent of cutting off the Internet. Only one other country — Iran — has been cut off so far, and it led to Tehran losing a third of its foreign trade.

With students stuck at Poland border, India looks at Budapest route

SOURAV ROY BARMAN, DIVYA GOYAL, ADITIRAJA & RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, LUDHIANA, VADODARA, FEBRUARY 27

WITH HUNDREDS of Indian students stranded in freezing temperatures at the Ukraine-Poland border, the government on Sunday said it has identified an alternative train route from Uzhhorod, a city in western Ukraine, to the Hungarian capi-

tal of Budapest.

Acknowledging that evacuation of Indians through the Poland border has emerged as a "problem area" — with lakhs of people, including citizens of Ukraine and other foreign nationals, having chosen that route to safety — Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said, "It's not an organised situation, it's a conflict zone. Many of our people have been there for a long time and they are in a very

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

A day after Russia veto, Ukraine seeks to move UNGA

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

A DAY after Russia vetoed a resolution at the UN Security Council (UNSC) which was critical of Moscow's actions against Ukraine, Kiev's envoy has moved a request to take up the issue at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

The request will be put to a procedural vote at the UNSC and then can be taken up for discussion at the UNGA.

The UNSC will vote in the wee hours of Monday to call for the emergency special session of the 193-member UNGA on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The vote of the 15-member UNSC is procedural in nature and none of the permanent members will be able to use their vetoes. The move needs just nine votes in favour and is likely to pass, following which the emergency session of the UNGA will be held on Tuesday.

So far only 10 such emergency sessions of UNGA have taken place.

On Saturday, India had abstained at the UNSC draft resolution vote, which was vetoed by Russia. It is most likely to vote in a similar manner this time as well.

As Delhi tried to maintain a delicate balance between the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

WORLD



IN IRAN, A RUSSIAN ALLY, CHANTS OF 'DEATH TO PUTIN'

GERMANY COMMITS 100 BN EUROS TO NEW ARMED FORCES FUND PAGE 15

Headmistress held over Faridabad student suicide

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, FEBRUARY 27

THREE DAYS after a 16-year-old student of a private school in Greater Faridabad died by suicide, with his mother alleging he was harassed over his sexuality and that the school ignored her complaint, Faridabad Police on Sunday arrested the headmistress on the charge of abetment of suicide.

Police said they had found a suicide note on Friday in which the teenager allegedly blamed his school and "higher authorities".

Faridabad Police spokesperson Sube Singh said, "The accused academic head, who was named in the police complaint and the alleged suicide note, has been arrested and sent to judicial custody."

Saying the handwriting in the note would be verified, Singh added, "We will question the school authorities and the students... The family has raised allegations of sexual harassment which will also be probed."

In her police complaint, the boy's mother alleged that a year ago, her son had told her about being harassed by some boys in his school over his sexuality.

"I filed several complaints to the school authorities but no action was taken. My son was depressed and his treatment was going on... On Wednesday, he had his science exam and since

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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7 AIR PRAVEEN KUMAR (ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ESSAY TEST, ABHYAAS, PDP)	8 AIR JIVANI KARTIK NAGJISHAI (GS FOUNDATION COURSE CLASSROOM STUDENT, ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PDP)	9 AIR APALA MISHRA (ABHYAAS TEST SERIES)	10 AIR SATYAM GANDHI (ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ESSAY TEST)	YOU CAN BE NEXT

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फाउंडेशन कोर्स सामान्य अध्ययन 2023
प्रारंभिक, मुख्य परीक्षा और निबंध के लिए महत्वपूर्ण सभी टॉपिक का विस्तृत कवरेज
DELHI: 5 अप्रैल, 9 AM | 1 फरवरी, 1 PM | LUCKNOW: 12 अप्रैल, 9 AM | JAIPUR: 15 फरवरी
DELHI • HEAD OFFICE: Apsara Arcade, Karol Bagh | CONTACT: 8468022022, 9019066066
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LIC IPO

Reservation for Policyholders

To participate, policyholders must meet the following criteria:

- Resident Individual Policyholders of the Corporation having one or more policies of the Corporation as on February 13, 2022 and Bid/Offer opening date are eligible.*
- Policyholder's PAN details should be updated with the Corporation on or before February 28, 2022.

* Please also refer draft red herring prospectus dated February 13, 2022

DEMAT Account Opening

- Go to the nearest Common Service Centre (CSC) to open a DEMAT account.
- OR
- Visit either of these websites for registered Depository Participants (DP) to open a DEMAT account:
NSDL: https://nsdl.co.in/Open_NSDL_Demat_Account.php
CDSL: <https://www.cdslindia.com/DP/dplist.aspx>

LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA is proposing, subject to applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, receipt of requisite approvals, market conditions and other considerations, to undertake an initial public offer of its Equity Shares and has filed the draft red herring prospectus dated February 13, 2022 ("DRHP") read with the corrigendum dated February 15, 2022. The DRHP is available on the websites of SEBI at www.sebi.gov.in, websites of the Stock Exchanges i.e., BSE at www.bseindia.com and NSE at www.nseindia.com, respectively and is also available on the websites of the BRLMs, i.e., Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Limited at <https://investmentbank.kotak.com>, Axis Capital Limited at www.axiscapital.co.in, BofA Securities India Limited at www.mf-india.com, Citigroup Global Markets India Private Limited at www.online.citibank.co.in/rfm/citigroupglobalscreen1.htm, Goldman Sachs (India) Securities Private Limited at www.goldmansachs.com, ICICI Securities Limited at www.icicisecurities.com, JM Financial Limited at www.jmfli.com, J.P. Morgan India Private Limited at www.jpmpil.com, Nomura Financial Advisory and Securities (India) Private Limited at www.nomuracholdings.com/company/group/asia/india/index.html and SBI Capital Markets Limited at www.sbicaps.com. Potential investors should note that investment in equity shares involves a high degree of risk and for details relating to such risk, please see the section titled "Risk Factors" of the DRHP when filed. Potential investors should not rely on the DRHP filed with SEBI for making any investment decision. Specific attention of the investors is invited to "Risk Factors" beginning on page 23 of the DRHP.

This announcement does not constitute an offer of securities for sale in any jurisdiction, including the United States, and any securities described in this announcement may not be offered or sold in the United States absent registration under the U.S. Securities Act of 1933, as amended, or an exemption from such registration. No public offering or sale of securities in the United States is contemplated.



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EXPRESS AUDIO

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ENTERTAINMENT

'UPACHARAPOORVAM GUNDA JAYAN' REVIEW

The tale of a messy wedding and the drama surrounding it

CHENNAI PHOTO BIENNALE

SHUTTERBUGS FROM SCHOOLS CAPTURE TN

Smartphone snaps by 40 schoolchildren go on display



Mubashir Azad (left) with J&K BJP chief Ravinder Raina. PTI

Ghulam Nabi Azad's nephew joins BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 27

SENIOR CONGRESS leader Ghulam Nabi Azad's nephew Mubashir Azad joined the BJP on Sunday and said he was "influenced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's developmental works at the ground level".

Mubashir Azad, son of Azad's youngest brother Liaqat Ali, also said his uncle was "disrespected" by the Congress leadership, which hurt him and led to him parting ways with the grand old party.

He, however, claimed that he did not discuss the plan to join BJP with his uncle.

Mubashir and his supporters were welcomed into the party fold by Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina and other senior leaders, including former MLA Daleep Singh

Power outage in parts of Mumbai hits local trains

YOGESH NAIK
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 27

AROUND 50 suburban trains were cancelled and 140 others were delayed after an hour-long power outage hit several parts of Mumbai as the Mulund-Trombay line tripped on Sunday morning. The areas hit by the power cut, which lasted from 9.42am to 10.45am, included Sion, Matunga, Parel, Dadar and Kurla.

State energy department head Dinesh Waghmare said the problem was triggered by a fire in the BARC mountains in Trombay area. Power Minister Nitin Raut has announced a high-level probe in the matter.

Principal Secretary (energy) Waghmare said, "The Mulund-Trombay line passes through the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) area. A conductor had snapped there. We are told that this happened due to a fire in the BARC mountains. Our people had gone there, but initially they did not allow us to enter the area and do repairs. The Sunday

Karnataka Cong resumes 'walk for water' march

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 27

THE CONGRESS party on Sunday resumed its 'walk for water' march demanding implementation of the Mekedatu project, more than a month after it was halted amid a surge in Covid cases.

Led by the party's state unit chief D K Shivakumar, former CM Siddaramaiah and All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, the 'Mekedatu march' began at Ramanagara.

The 'Mekedatu march' seeks construction of a reservoir to boost water supply to Bengaluru and its surrounding areas. Tamil Nadu, however, has challenged the project in the Supreme Court, saying it would eat into the state's share of Cauvery water.

7 booked over 'pro-Pak' slogans in Prayagraj

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 27

POLICE BOOKED seven persons and several other unidentified people for allegedly raising 'Pakistan Zindabad' slogans in Handia area of Prayagraj on Saturday. While police claimed that they suspect the accused to be affiliated to Samajwadi Party (SP), the district unit of the party rubbished the charge, saying that police were trying to prop up a false charge against party workers.

Taking cognizance of a video circulating on social media, police filed an FIR. "Seven persons have been identified in the video... we are trying to ascertain the identity of the others," said Station House Officer (Handia) Kesav Das Verma.

FROM PAGE ONE

Ukraine seeks to move UNGA

US-led Western bloc and Russia, India and China had found themselves on the same side of the vote at the UNSC on Saturday, with both choosing to abstain. The UNSC had last month taken up a procedural vote on whether to discuss Ukraine — then too, India had abstained.

But Delhi has sharpened its language in the UNSC meeting on Saturday, talking about territorial integrity and sovereignty, UN Charter and international law — all of which is being interpreted as a signal directed towards Russia.

India's envoy to the UN, T S Tirumurti, said: "The contemporary global order has been built on the UN Charter, international law, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. All member states need to honour these principles in finding a constructive way forward."

China had also used a language similar to India's to abstain. China's permanent representative to the UN, Zhang Jun, said the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states should be respected and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter should be upheld... Security of one country cannot come at the cost of undermining the security of other nations... Ukraine should become a bridge between East and West."

Students stuck

difficult situation. We fully empathise with them and we have been working round the clock to see what options we can provide. One of the options in the event we cannot make much progress into Poland, we come down to Uzhhorod and from there every two hours there is a train which leaves for Budapest, Hungary... This is an option we are recommending to our people."

The journey time to Budapest will be approximately seven to eight hours, including exit procedures, said Shringla, who also called in the envoys of Russia and Ukraine in New Delhi separately during the day and conveyed India's "deep concerns" regarding the safety and security of its citizens, particularly the students.

"I have shared with them the locations where Indian students and citizens are concentrated for ensuring their protection. Both ambassadors did take note of our concerns and assured us that they are very cognisant of the safety and security of Indian citizens," Shringla said.

In a fresh advisory late Sunday, the Embassy of India in Warsaw (Poland) said: "We have arranged 10 buses at Shehyni on Ukrainian side of the border that will take Indian citizens to other border checkpoints from transit entry into Poland... These buses will be operational from 28th February 2022 and will drive through the other border checkpoints, e.g. Krakowice and Budomierz, and will drive them to the residential accommodation arranged by the Embassy at Rzeszow, Poland."

The Indian Express spoke to several students who said they have been stuck at the Shehyni-Medyka border checkpoint, which separates Ukraine and Poland, for more than 48 hours with "no response from the Indian embassy" to their calls and messages.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a first-year MBBS student from Lviv, around 70 km from the border, said on phone, "My cousin and I, along with over a hundred other students from our university reached the border Friday night after walking for over 30 km. We have been here in the open for more than 48 hours, but there has been no help. There isn't even space to sit there and whenever a vehicle full of Ukrainians ar-

Putin orders nukes on alert

Around the same time as Putin's nuclear move, the office of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced that the two sides would meet at an unspecified location on the Belarusian border for talks. The message did not give a precise time for the meeting.

The Ukrainian leadership had earlier said it was open to talks with Russia but Belarus as a venue was not acceptable because it had served as a staging ground for the invasion. Despite Kyiv's concession, however, the Kremlin's ultimate aims in Ukraine — and what steps might be enough to satisfy Moscow — remained unclear.

Hours after Putin's order, the European Union's top official said the 27-nation bloc will close its airspace to Russian airlines, and fund the purchase of weapons for Ukraine.

"For the first time ever, the European Union will finance the purchase and delivery of weapons and other equipment to a country that is under attack," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said. The EU will also ban some pro-Kremlin media outlets, she said.

Canada too closed its airspace to Russian aircraft operators to "hold Russia accountable for its unprovoked attacks against Ukraine". There are no direct flights between Russia and

Canada, but several Russian flights pass through Canadian airspace every day to other countries, a spokesperson for the Canadian transport minister said. Britain has banned Russia's flagship carrier Aeroflot from entering British airspace.

Sunday's fast-moving developments came as Russian troops drew closer to Ukrainian capital Kyiv, street fighting broke out in the second-largest city, Kharkiv, and strategic ports in the country's south came under pressure from the invading forces.

In giving the nuclear alert directive, Putin cited both statements by NATO members and the hard-hitting financial sanctions imposed by the West, including against the Russian leader himself.

At a meeting with top officials, Putin told his defence minister and the chief of the military's General Staff to put nuclear forces in a "special regime of combat duty".

"Western countries aren't only taking unfriendly actions against our country in the economic sphere, but top officials from leading NATO members made aggressive statements regarding our country," Putin said in televised comments.

US defence officials would not disclose their current nuclear posture, except to say that the military is prepared all times to defend its homeland and allies.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Putin is resorting to a pattern he used in the weeks before launching the invasion, "which is to manufacture threats that don't exist in order to justify further aggression".

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told CNN, "This is dangerous rhetoric. This is a behaviour which is irresponsible."

The practical meaning of Putin's order was not immediately clear. Russia and the US typically have land- and submarine-based nuclear forces on alert and prepared for combat at all times, but nuclear-capable bombers and other aircraft are not.

If Putin is arming or otherwise raising the nuclear combat readiness of his bombers, or if he is ordering more ballistic missile submarines to sea, then the US might feel compelled to respond in kind, said Hans Kristensen, a nuclear analyst at the Federation of American Scientists. That would mark a worrisome escalation, he said.

Earlier on Sunday, Kyiv was eerily quiet after huge explosions lit up the morning sky and authorities reported blasts at one of the airports. Only an occasional car appeared on a deserted main boulevard as a strict 39-hour curfew kept people off the streets. Authorities warned that anyone venturing out with a pass would be considered a Russian saboteur.

Terrified residents hunkered

down in homes, underground garages and subway stations in anticipation of a full-scale Russian assault.

"The past night was tough — more shelling, more bombing of residential areas and civilian infrastructure," President Zelenskyy said.

Until Sunday, Russia's troops had remained on the outskirts of Kharkiv, a city of 1.4 million about 20 km south of the border with Russia, while other forces rolled past to press the offensive deeper into Ukraine.

Videos posted on Ukrainian media and social networks showed Russian vehicles moving across Kharkiv and Russian troops roaming the city in small groups. One showed Ukrainian troops firing at the Russians and damaged Russian vehicles abandoned nearby.

The images underscored the determined resistance from Ukrainian forces. Ukrainians have volunteered en masse to defend their country, taking guns distributed by authorities and preparing firebombs to fight Russian forces.

The fighting in the south of Ukraine appeared aimed at seizing control of the country's coastline. A Russian defence ministry spokesman, Maj Gen Igor Konashenkov, said Russian forces had blocked the cities of Kherson on the Black Sea and the port of Berdyansk on the Azov Sea.

Student suicide

he suffered from dyslexia... he sought help from headmistress but she rebuffed him and accused him of taking advantage of his condition... and that she would not promote him to the next class. Due to this, he was quite stressed and worried," she said in the police complaint.

On Friday, the boy's mother told The Indian Express that in March last year, her son was sexually harassed in the school washroom by some boys. While the principal and other authorities in school have not responded to this specific allegation, the principal had Friday told the media that children "are nurtured", "not harassed" in the school.

On Saturday, the family, locals and acquaintances had carried out a candle march to the police station demanding immediate arrest of the accused and appealing for justice.

On Sunday, his mother alleged, "Since the incident, he had been having constant panic attacks. He was scared to go to school... Some classmates and seniors had been calling him names... He did not want to attend school when it opened recently, but had to because of his exams. After the teacher scolded him on Wednesday when he sought help, I was also summoned by school authorities and told that they would not promote him."

A friend of the victim, who was earlier in the same school, said the frequent incidents of bullying and harassment at school had left him upset. "He often spoke of the bullying he suffered. He told me some students made prank calls on his phone and passed remarks on his sexuality."

The teenager's aunt said he was often mocked for his interest in nail art, fashion, and jewellery.

"He was planning to go abroad to study fine arts and fashion designing. He was undergoing treatment for depression and was responding well to therapy. Recently, we got him a cat as a pet and that cheered him up."

the platform itself either by hiring on its own or through a logistics service provider.

For 36-year-old Kundan Kumar, a manager at a Ghaziabad-located dark store operated by Softbank-backed Blinkit, a typical day at the micro-warehouse for groceries starts around 5 am. He, along with six other store operators, in their early 20s, start by stocking a day's worth of items received from Dasna city, around 12 km away. They prepare for a deluge of small-ticket grocery orders that the store will fulfil between 6 am and 11 pm.

But the 10-minute shopping solution has also raised a few question marks.

At Kundan's facility, The Indian Express saw around 70-80 delivery workers outside the store at peak hours. At another Blinkit facility in East Delhi, around 30-40 delivery workers were waiting for orders. For these delivery executives, who get paid "Rs 40-50 per delivery", it's a "race against time".

Companies say they do not provide incentives to delivery workers to fulfil the order within the promised time. But several workers told The Indian Express that they go to extreme lengths to keep the 10-minute promise.

"If we drive while following all traffic rules, it will be very difficult for us workers to deliver orders within a short span of 10 minutes. So we do everything we can to deliver orders quickly. Often, that means driving too fast or at times on the footpath too," Sonu Pal, a Delhi-based delivery executive, said.

Responding to an email with queries on safety issues in last-mile servicing, a Blinkit spokesperson said: "Our platform works with 400+ stores across India. We encourage our store partners to change the layout based on ordering patterns in their communities. Also, our network design ensures stores are located within 2 km of the customer. With this density of stores, our partners don't need to break any traffic rules to deliver orders under 10 minutes and we don't incentivise them on speed of delivery at all."

patterns affecting the delivery process, road and traffic conditions being an impediment, location intelligence, etc., are also considered," a top industry executive said.

A dark store will typically keep a focused set of 1,500-2,000 stock keeping units (SKUs), compared with over 1 lakh SKUs of a large-format online grocer. Based on order patterns, these franchisee-run stores are guided by the platform to stock up items.

Each store serves an area within a radius of 2-3 km and is customised to cater to the locality it serves with the most high-frequency items, such as bread, eggs and milk, stocked in the front. Impulse-driven categories, such as chips, chocolates and namkeen, are stored alongside, whereas staple items such as atta, rice, etc., are stored together.

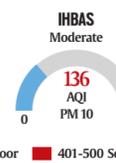
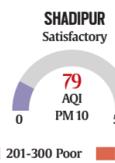
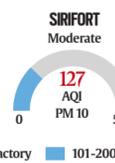
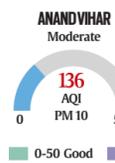
The deadline is a function of factors, such as number of items ordered, weight of items ordered, order backlog at a given facility, distance between delivery location and the dark store, and the availability of delivery executives.

"From packing to dispatching, that entire process happens in about 58 seconds today, on an average," Zepto CEO and co-founder Aadit Palicha told The Indian Express.

"Within the partner hubs (dark stores), we have automated SKU verification, how the workforce within those hubs functions. We have also built a system to pre-slot a delivery rider even before an order is placed so that we don't have any delay in assigning the order. If you have ordered on a food delivery platform, you would have noticed that there is a bit of a delay between you placing the order and a delivery rider being assigned to it," Palicha said.

Compared with large-format online grocers that deploy light commercial vehicles and service a higher number of orders at once in a locality, q-commerce platforms deploy delivery workers on a two-wheeler, thereby limiting the size of order up to a maximum of 50 kg.

While those working inside the dark store are hired and managed by the franchisee, delivery workers are usually managed by



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

SKY WATCH
FORECAST: Feb 28
Partly cloudy sky.

MAX: 24 | MIN: 11
1.6°C below normal | 1.4°C below normal



About 80,000 books of the college's library will be tagged under the system

At Lakshmbai College library, RFID system to check theft

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

TO PREVENT theft and keep track of books being borrowed by students, Delhi University's Lakshmbai College has decided to introduce a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) System in the Central Library for automation of the library system. About 80,000 books will be RFID-tagged under this.

Currently, in DU, Ramjas College, Shaheed Rajguru College of Applied Sciences for Women have automated library systems.

According to authorities at the college, every year about 1,000 books go missing from the library. "Sometimes students get the books issued and never return them. While some students just take the books without even registering them at the library reception. The RFID system will help the college to keep track of books that have been issued to students," said college Principal Pratyusha Vatsala.

"We have been planning this for so long but it got delayed due to Covid and other reasons. Beside, colleges were closed (due to the pandemic). Now that physical classes have started and students are coming, we have decided to introduce the system. We gave the project to the Delhi Public Works Department (PWD). Tenders have been floated and the library will be automated in the next month," she added.

Besides tagging books, the library's door will also be RFID tagged like the ones in shopping malls. For instance, if any student takes books

without approval and tries to exit the premises, an alarm will go off at the exit gate. The tag can also be used to check if the students have damaged the books.

"It will also help to keep a database and physically verify each book with its entry in the Koha (library) software. It will also help to identify books that have errors and make necessary corrections, and improve database accuracy. It will also reduce the workload of library staff," said a PWD official.

Other library items and shelves will also be RFID tagged and integrated with computer records. Books will be labelled with tags and paper stickers.

"The RFID chip used in the tag will be designed specifically for library usage, that is, it will have three sections — a lockable section for item identification, a rewritable section for library-specific use, and a security function (EAS) for item anti-theft (which can be activated and deactivated). The chip will also have a multi-read function, which means several tags can be read at the same time," the official added.

Further, automated RFID technology kiosks will also be set up at the library where students can issue and return the books themselves. Once the system is in place, students will also be issued RFID smart library cards, said officials.

The PWD has floated tenders for implementing the RFID technology system and the approximate budget of this project is Rs 32.84 lakh. The system will be implemented by the end of March.

Delhi traffic police prosecute over 300 buses, impound 19

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

THE DELHI Police traffic unit prosecuted more than 300 buses and impounded at least 19 under the Motor Vehicles Act between February 22 and February 25 for plying without a proper permit.

Police officers said most of these buses had contract permits or all-India tourist permits but were violating the norms by taking passengers from different routes and changing destination points.

Police said that they had received information about the violation and conducted checks at all ranges in Delhi.

A total of 323 buses were tagged as "daggamar" and prosecuted, said the police.

"Among all the buses, 152 buses were prosecuted in the eastern range, 95 in the central range, 29 in outer, 30 in the southern range and seven in the west and the New Delhi region," said Vivek Kishore, Joint Commissioner of Police

Police said most of these buses had contract or all-India tourist permits but were violating norms by taking passengers from different routes and changing destination points

(traffic).

As per the contract carriage permit, the buses are allowed to pick up passengers from one place and drop them at a particular destination.

Police said the buses are not allowed to deviate or pick up and drop passengers between originating and destination points. "Despite clear instructions, we found that many of the buses take passengers from different spots and offer them seats. They violate the contract carriage permit conditions and cause road safety issues by stopping at different spots," said an officer.

Wages of anganwadi workers highest in Delhi: AAP leaders

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

WITH ANGANWADI workers and helpers refusing to end their strike, senior AAP leaders pointed out that their wages in Delhi are the highest among all states across the country.

The Delhi government increased the honorarium for anganwadi workers from Rs 9,678 to Rs 12,720 and of helpers from Rs 4,839 to Rs 6,810, last week.

The workers, however, have been protesting for regularisation and higher remuneration near Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence at Civil Lines for nearly a month, demanding wages be increased to Rs 25,000 per month for workers and Rs 20,000 for helpers. There are currently around 22,000 workers and helpers employed in AWCs across Delhi.

"Salaries of anganwadi workers have increased up to two and a half times since AAP came to



Anganwadi workers have been protesting near CM Arvind Kejriwal's residence at Civil Lines for nearly a month. Archive

power in Delhi. In comparison to BJP-ruled states, the Kejriwal government pays 30% more to anganwadi workers... they are getting substantially lower salaries in Congress-ruled states... Anganwadi workers in BJP-ruled UP, Gujarat, and Karnataka are paid Rs 7,800 to Rs 8,000 per month... Bihar's BJP government is paying anganwadi workers only Rs 7,000 per month," a senior party leader said.

Anganwadi workers have protested periodically against re-

spective governments in different states demanding higher wages.

Governments do not consider anganwadi workers to be regular employees but their services are used for several programmes apart from those at anganwadi centres with children during early childhood care. In Delhi, for example, anganwadi workers and helpers were deployed to distribute dry ration door to door every month, for surveys and home visits, and for vaccination awareness programmes.



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VACCINATIONS IN
LAST 24 HOURS
56,538

PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL: **180**

OXYGEN SUPPORT **39**

VENTILATOR SUPPORT **12**

DELHI: TOTAL CASES		Total	Vacant
18,59,634		11,079	10,907
		2,496	2,431
		2	53,173
Feb 26	440	460	2
Feb 27	484	554	3
Total	2,086*	18,31,426	26,122
		3,63,43,359	

*Total active cases in Delhi

NOIDA		
	Feb 26	Feb 27
Cases	N/A	35
Deaths	N/A	0

GURGAON		
	Feb 26	Feb 27
Cases	156	172
Deaths	1	2

TO BE FINISHED BY APRIL-END

Broken divider removed, U-turn closed: Work begins to repair new RTR flyover



(Left) the broken divider on the stretch; (Right) PWD officials demolished the divider and closed off the U-turn. Tashi Tobgyal/Express

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

THE DELHI government's Public Works Department (PWD) has demolished a broken divider on the New Rao Tula Ram Marg (RTR) stretch and closed a narrow U-turn following months of traffic snarls at the mouth of the flyover as well as occasional accidents. It has also begun repairs on potholes on the stretch.

A spot check by *The Indian Express* on February 6 had found that while the initial commute was smooth, at least five potholes on the descent slowed down vehicular movement and caused traffic snarls. A part of the divider on the stretch was also broken, with small stones and bricks lying on the road. Moreover, the U-turn around 100 metres after the flyover to head to Shankar Vihar and nearby residential colonies like Vasant Vihar and Subroto Park had turned into a choke point.

"We received several complaints from commuters about



The Indian Express report dated February 6

potholes and the U-turn, which creates a bottleneck where the stretch ends. The traffic police had also raised this issue several times. Tenders were issued for the work, but it was delayed due to various reasons — Covid restrictions, construction ban, and laxity by the contractor. We have started it now and shifted the U-turn," said a senior PWD official.

The official added, "Currently, the broken concrete divider has been removed and the U-turn has been closed. Work is on to fill the potholes and re-lay the bituminous road. The road will be repaired in the next 30 days. By April-end, commuters will have a smooth ride without any bumps or traffic snarls."

Another official, on condition

of anonymity, said work was started days after *The Indian Express* report: "After the issue was highlighted, senior officials from the department and government directed officials concerned to expedite work."

The 2.7-km-long flyover, branching off the Munirka flyover and ending before the Army Hospital Research and Referral near Subroto Park on the Outer Ring Road, was inaugurated in 2019 to make the commute from South Delhi to Indira Gandhi International Airport easier.

As per officials, the U-turn was initially not in the plan and designed later to provide a route to people living in surrounding areas like Shankar Vihar and Vasant Enclave to reach Munirka, Subroto Park and other areas of South Delhi.

Commuters too had complained that the U-turn was unnecessary and led to accidents. According to the traffic police, one-two road accidents on the stretch are reported in a month and 12-15 in a year. Police said

around 18 accidents took place on this stretch in 2021, of which four proved to be fatal.

"We were advised by the traffic police to shift the U-turn; this has been done and other work is going on. If they ask us to create a U-turn at another location on this stretch, it can be done. Now, commuters will have to take the U-turn below the Delhi-Jaipur flyover a kilometre away," said PWD officials.

A senior traffic police officer said, "It was a long-pending issue. The new RTR stretch has eased the traffic load from the Outer Ring road, but the U-turn slowed vehicular movement. We had raised this issue in several meetings with the PWD. Now, traffic will be smooth once work is complete."

Commuters, meanwhile, welcomed the move. "The divider was a nightmare; it was hard to spot at night, due to which vehicles ended up hitting it. The department should now complete work without delays," said Javadh Singh, who commutes via the stretch every day.

EV charging guidebook for residential areas to be launched today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

THE DIALOGUE and Development Commission of Delhi (DDC), in collaboration with World Resources Institute India, is set to launch a step by step "Residential Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Guidebook" to simplify and enable the adoption of residential areas in Delhi on Monday.

After launching the guidebook, Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot will also inaugurate two EV chargers at Vasant Kunj pockets B and C that have been installed under the Delhi government's single-window facility.

The inaugural event will also be attended by DDC vice-chairperson Jasmine Shah, heads of BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL), United RWAs Joint Action (URJA), and the Federation of CGHS Dwarka Limited and other senior government officials who will discuss ways to promote EV charging in residential areas.

SDMC park to sport replicas of dinosaurs, made from scrap

ABHINAV RAJPUT
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

FOLLOWING THE success of its "Waste to Wonder" concept, the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has planned to build replicas of 15 dinosaurs — using scrap material — at its park in Sarai Kale Khan that houses replicas of the wonders of the world.

The dinosaur park will have sculptures of various types of dinosaurs such as Coelophysis, Brontosaurus, Velociraptor, Taurus, Rajasaurus, Prenocephale, Ankylosaurus, Triceratops, Amargosaurus, Spinosaurus, Tyrannosaurus, Diplodocus, Stegosaurus.

Spread across seven acres, the park currently has replicas of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Eiffel Tower, Pyramids of Giza, Taj Mahal, Statue of Liberty, Colosseum, and Christ the Redeemer — all made out of waste.

In the first year of opening the park, the SDMC collected revenue of around 900 lakh through tickets. The development of the second phase is likely to increase revenue to Rs 1,500 lakh, as per SDMC estimates.



It will come up at its park in Sarai Kale Khan that houses replicas of the wonders of the world. Archive

"Some of these sculptures would have iron as the base but would have a soft covering so that children do not get injured... swings would be designed around some of these sculptures keeping all safety precautions in mind," said an official.

Besides this, the civic body is planning to install replicas of historical figures and freedom fighters such as Bhagat Singh, Chandrasekhar Azad, Vikramaditya, Chanakya, Chandragupta Maurya at Shaheed park in ITO along the

lines of the 'waste to art' concept.

The park will also exhibit sculptures of various historical incidents including the Battle of Haldighati, Revolt of 1857, Home Rule Movement, Simon Commission. "The motive behind developing Shaheed Park is to make people aware about the glorious history of our country, the struggle and sacrifice of our freedom fighters to make India an independent nation," said the official.

The SDMC will develop the Shaheed Park at a cost of Rs 29.29 crore.

BRIEFLY Woman killed in accident

New Delhi: A 55-year-old woman died after a truck allegedly hit her scooter at Southeast Delhi's Moolchand underpass. Police said the woman, Santosh Arora, was with her cousin, Ashish, on the scooter. They were rushed to a hospital but the woman succumbed to injuries. The truck driver has been apprehended, said police.

Body found in hotel room

New Delhi: A 26-year-old woman's body was found inside a hotel room in Southwest Delhi's Mahipalpur area. Police said the woman had been staying at the hotel with a friend for two days. Housekeeping staff found her body and immediately informed police. No arrests have been made in the case and police are questioning and looking for suspects, including the woman's friend. ENS

3 years since notification, DDA's land pooling policy sees lukewarm response

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

OVER THREE years since the Delhi Development Authority's (DDA) land pooling policy was notified in 2018, to consolidate parcels of land and use it for planned residential and commercial development in urban villages, the response to repeated calls for registration has not been encouraging. Landowners who have already applied too are beginning to turn skeptical about the avowed benefits of the policy.

Till December 2020, applications were received to pool 6,445.35 hectares of land. In the latest application window, the portal for applications was opened up on November 10, 2021, for 104 villages, including nine villages for which applications are being sought for the first time. The deadline for registering, which was initially on December 24, 2021, was later extended till February 28. The pamphlet extending the date of application states that 7,262 hectares of land is registered under the scheme.

However, the response to the new application window has not been encouraging, a senior DDA official said. "Since we opened up applications this time, we have received around 200 for around 250 hectares of land. We are not in favour of opening the window for applications again. In sectors where over 70% of the land has been pooled, we need to issue notices for consortium formation so that there is some confidence among the public that something is happening on ground," the official said.

Once 70% of the vacant area has been pooled in a sector, consortiums are to be formed. As per the policy, the consortium will retain 60% of the land and hold the remaining 40% on behalf of the DDA. "For integrated planning of a sector, the land required for the development of roads, utilities, greens and other infrastructure shall be made available to the DDA and service-providing agencies for development...", going by the policy. Around 60% of the land will be used by the consortium to develop residential, commercial, and public facilities. Landowners can form these consortiums with private developers or builders.

"We have submitted the files to issue notices for consortium formation for three sectors. Once the consortium is formed, proposals can be submitted for the land," the official said.

Till December 2020, 10 sectors had received applications to pool

UNDER THE POLICY

Applications received to pool **6,445.35** hectares of land in 4 zones — till Dec 2020

ZONE N in Northwest Delhi received applications to pool **3,014.54** hectares, the highest among the 4 zones

ZONE L in Southwest Delhi received applications to pool **2,008.97** hectares

ZONE P-II in Northeast Delhi received applications

10 sectors received applications to pool over **70%** of vacant land — till Dec 2020

to pool **1,174.08** hectares **ZONE K-I**, close to Zone N, received applications to pool **247.76** hectares

Land pooling policy for 104 villages — Zones N, L, P-II, K-I, P-I, J



over 70% of vacant land, though notices have not yet been issued to form consortiums. Verification of the land applied for in these sectors has been underway.

Landowners agree that confidence in the policy has been waning since it has not seen much progress.

Mahender Singh, who owns around 6.5 acres of agricultural land in Daryapur Kalan village and had applied for land pooling, said he was still unsure about how it was going to proceed. "There is no clarity about the charges we will have to pay, or how the policy might benefit small farmers," he said. The policy mentions that external development charges (EDC) will be applicable to the entire area of pooled land to cover the cost of providing city-level infrastructure. But how much will have to be paid is not clear, Singh said.

Daryapur Kalan, in Northwest Delhi, lies in Zone N, where applications were received to pool 3,014.54 hectares of land till December 2020, the highest in any zone so far.

"How is the policy going to benefit the village when it lacks basic amenities? There is no community centre, there are no proper roads or a proper bus stand," said Krishan Dutt, who owns around 7 bighas of land in Daryapur Kalan, and did not apply.

Some landowners, who applied in the first application window in 2019, have second thoughts about allowing their land to be pooled. "If the charges that we are required to pay are high, people with small landholdings will not be able to pay. Since a part of the land will be taken away from us free of cost, why demand a development charge from the farmer? We should be able to get some commercial and residential area out of our own agricultural land so that we don't

lose out," said Devinder Singh, who owns land in Nangal Thakran and has rented it out to a farmer. He applied in the first window, but several people did at first expecting that it would be beneficial for the village, he said.

On the lack of clarity on charges to be paid by landowners, the official said that an amendment to the DDA Act is in the offing, and is awaiting approval. "The amendment includes a chapter on land pooling. We are hoping that the amendment will be sent to the Law Ministry this financial year. Major apprehensions are likely to be addressed through the amendment, like paying the EDC by handing over extra land instead of cash, and imposing stamp duty just once instead of multiple times," the official said.

According to Paras Tyagi, Centre for Youth, Culture, Law and Environment, an NGO working in these villages, work will have to be done on developing the villages themselves and ensuring that there is a development plan for them, rather than just for the pooled land. "We will need a village development plan to deal with the housing and other facilities of the village itself. We can then have a planned village as well as a planned sector. Landless farmers will also have to be factored in," he said.

Bhupender Bazard of the Delhi Dehat Vikas Munch said the response to the new application window has been poor since not much has happened since the policy was notified and there has been little progress on the ground. "The amendment to the DDA Act is yet to be passed. The EDC also looks like a big expense for the layman. Gram Sabha land is being given free of cost to the DDA. When this is the case, why must the landowner pay again," he said.

Businessman arrested for 'cheating' people on pretext of selling properties

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

A 44-YEAR-OLD businessman has been arrested by the Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing for allegedly cheating half a dozen people on the pretext of selling their properties at Vasant Kunj and nearby places. Police said the accused, Dhiraj Prasad, is an MBA graduate from Punjab and runs four companies.

Police called him a serial offender as he has six cases registered against him, including a case being investigated by the CBI.

According to police, in the present case, a man named Vishal Sharma alleged that Prasad introduced himself as the director of JMD Technifra and gave a deal of a plot at Vasant Kunj. The complainant made a payment of Rs 1.52 crore but later found that the property was with another company. He alleged that the accused forged documents and cheated him, police said.

Joint CP (EOW) Chhaya Sharma said, "We registered a case and seized all documents and bank accounts in connection with the investigation. We found

that the said property had been sold to Excel Management Services and not JMD Technifra. The documents submitted by the accused were sent to the Forensic Science Lab to confirm the details."

The investigating team also found that there were other cases registered against Prasad at Pandav Nagar, Amar Colony, CR Park, Vasant Vihar, Muzaffarnagar and one with the CBI. Prasad initially joined investigating but later evaded arrest in all these cases, said police. He was arrested on Friday and produced before a court.

TO BOOST SECURITY IN CAPITAL

Soon, dog squad to help with probes will be deployed at local police stations

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

TRAINING FOR hours every day at VIP routes, Metro stations, markets, airport and railway stations, the Canine Squad of the Delhi Police's Crime Branch follow a disciplined routine. These dogs will soon be deployed in all ranges in the capital to help local police with tracking, detection and investigative work, officials said Sunday.

The squad currently has 64 trained dogs — German Shepherds, Labradors, Belgian

Shepherds and Golden Retrievers. Out of the 64, 49 dogs are experts in explosive detection and 13 are trackers.

From recovering stolen goods, detecting explosive material, identifying narcotics to searching for missing children, the dogs are well-trained and follow a strict diet and routine. They are also part of Republic Day, Independence Day and other police parades, where they march with their handlers.

DCP (Crime) Manoj C said, "The dogs play a vital role in safety and security in the city. We have had incidents where

dogs have been used to guard courts, malls, markets, and the airport. They have been trained at the Indian Army's Remount and Veterinary Corps base in Meerut. Some of them have been trained by the Border Security Force (BSF) in Madhya Pradesh. They are now ready to work with different police teams."

After the training of explosive-detection dogs, police hired 19 handlers for personal training in Meerut. The dogs' training starts when they are six months old.

"We need specialised dogs



Out of the 64 in the squad, 49 dogs are experts in explosive detection and 13 are trackers. Archive

in the national capital. There are always VIP duties and anti-sabotage checks where we need more than human eyes to detect danger of any sort, especially after the two IED incidents in Shahdara. At the end of the training, dogs and their handlers have to qualify for a practical and written test and need to get a certificate. If they fail, their training period is extended," said an officer.

At present, the dogs are deployed at 10 police stations in Delhi — Model Town, Chanakyaपुरi, Kalyanपुरi, Darya Ganj, Sabzi Mandi, Maurya

Enclave, RK Puram, Dwarka, Janakपुरi and Saket.

At the Saket centre, assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Gautam and his team take care of Golden Retrievers and other breeds that were inducted in 2019. "We give them a very nutritious diet with eggs, milk, mutton, roti and dalia (porridge). We train them and also give them time to play with their furry friends and handlers," said ASI Gautam.

In North Delhi, DCP Sagar Singh Kalsi said the dog squad stays in the Sabzi Mandi police station and has been operational for a long time. The centre

is headed by ASI Jitendra Dogra who said he takes care of four Labradors and one German Shepherd — three are explosive detection dogs and the other two are tracker dogs.

"We have many politicians, VIPs and officials living in North Delhi and have to conduct checks for their security. There is also the Tis Hazari court where the dogs are taken for regular checks for bombs and weapons. To prevent crimes near ISBT, Chandni Chowk and other heavy football places, we deploy dogs to conduct checks," said ASI Dogra.

7 DECISION 2022



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BALLOTIN

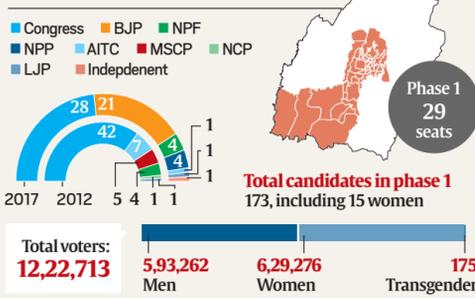
Manipur JD(U) nominee shot at

Imphal: Imphal: A JD(U) candidate in Manipur's Imphal East district was shot at by gunmen late on Saturday night, officials said Sunday. Wanglembam Rohit Singh is the candidate from the Kshetrigao constituency that goes to the polls on Monday. The police said the incident occurred around 11.30 pm when the candidate was meeting some of his supporters at Naharup Makhapat. Chief Minister N Biren Singh condemned the attack and promised action against the attackers. A team of JD(U) leaders led by its state chief Hangkhanpao Taihul met the state's Chief Electoral Officer over the incident.

Another Kuki outfit backs BJP

Imphal: A day after the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), an umbrella group of 17 Kuki insurgent groups, extended its support to BJP candidates in its operational area, the United Peoples' Front (UPF), which represents eight Kuki outfits, followed suit on Saturday. UPF convener Sanga Hmar made the appeal. Both the KNO and the UPF have cited Union Home Minister Amit Shah's recent assurance on ending the Kuki insurgency as a reason for their support. — Jimmy Leivon

MANIPUR VOTES TODAY



PROMINENT CANDIDATES

N Biren Singh (BJP) - Heingang
Th. Biswajit (BJP) - Thongju
Y Joykumar Singh (NPP) - Uripok
Th Joykishan (JD-U) - Thangmeiband
Govindas Konthoujam (BJP) - Bishenpur

KEY CONTESTS

Heingang (BJP's N Biren Singh vs INC's P Saratchandra Singh)

Uripok (NPP's Y Joykumar Singh vs BJP's Kh Raghmani Singh)

Keishamthong (NPP's Langpoklappm Jayantakumar Singh vs Maheswar Thounaojam of RPI Athawale)

Thongju (BJP's Th Biswajit vs INC's Seram Neken)

Wangkhei (NPP's Y Erabot vs BJP's Okram Henry)

CRITICS QUESTION CLAIMS ON SECURITY

As Manipur goes to the polls, BJP banks on 'change' of last 5 years

TORA AGARWALA
IMPHAL, FEBRUARY 27

A brightly lit Thangal Road in Imphal. Tora Agarwala

IT IS 8 pm on a Saturday, and 29-year-old Pithang Haolai and his two friends have stepped out to "enjoy the weekend" in Imphal. Close to the famous Ima Keithel (Women's Market) of Manipur, Haolai and friends take turns to pose under the canopy of festive, twinkly lights that envelop the street that was dark until recently. In insurgency-ridden Manipur, where life comes to standstill at sunset, places like "Thangal Lambi", or Thangal Road, where Haolai is on Saturday, have emerged as a rare bright spot in capital Imphal.

Just two months ago, the Biren Singh-led BJP government revamped the 500-metre stretch on the side of Ima Keithel, installing lights, several park benches, potted plants, and a sign that declared it as Imphal's "new mall road". Ankit Jain, a 31-year-old businessman and Imphal resident who is out with his wife and newborn, says they "barely ever stepped out before but now things are changing".

In poll-bound Manipur, which votes in the first round of a two-part election on Monday, the BJP is banking on this change. "Peace, stability and normalcy" — as opposed to "instability, insurgency and inequality" under the Congress — have been the buzzwords of the BJP campaign.

Ravaged by multiple insurgencies for decades, Manipur has long lived on the edge, with residents navigating blockades and protests year after year. As Haolai put it, that is the "life the only life they have known". In contrast to the 1980s and the rule of the Iboi Singh-led Congress government from 2002 to 2015, there have been no major incidents in the last five years: a "slight change" that people across the board concede has taken place.

While people like Jain, who runs a cloth business, entirely credit the BJP for the transition, others remain sceptical. Says Haolai, "It's not about this government, per se. Whichever party is in power would have done this, because the situation has changed over the last few years."

In recent years, the insurgency

has flagged in the state despite the Meitei groups in the valley refusing to come to the table to discuss a solution with the Centre. On the other hand, hill-based tribal groups are in peace talks.

Yet, many observers believe that insurgency is far from over, and it is just a low phase that the BJP has been able to cash in on.

Defending the rule of Iboi Singh, Manipur Congress spokesperson Devabrata Singh says the "times were bad in the early 2000s". He claims, "Insurgency was on a high, and the state government had to take action... but things began improving at the end of 2015 during the last term of Iboi Singh. Now, the BJP tries to take credit."

Critics of the BJP, especially the Congress, claim that the "law and order" has deteriorated, especially in the last two months. This election season, the state has seen at least four cases of gun-related violence. But as a political observer points out, like in other parts of the country, the BJP's messaging has been "clever", and at the end of the day that is what matters to the voter.

Devika Tongbram, a 28-year-old NGO worker in Imphal, says that she can now come back from her coaching class after 6 pm without feeling unsafe, and that is why her vote is with the BJP.

Khurajam Athouba, the general secretary of the United Committee Manipur, a civil society group that represents Meitei interests, says that while the "timing may have been right for the BJP", they "had the will too".

Soon after he became CM,

Biren Singh introduced the concept of "Imphal Evenings", a weekend night market in the heart of the city. While the initiative fizzled out in a couple of months because of "economic reasons", many in Imphal still remember those weekends.

Biren tells *The Indian Express*, "It was my mission to wake up the people... tell them that there can be nightlife. It did not work out but that is okay... but at least people know that they can step out," he says, adding that it is not just in the valley, but in the hills too that the BJP has managed to bring a sense of "normalcy".

But, observers also say that the Naga People's Front (NPF), which is a partner of the state government and is believed to have the backing of the NSCN-IM, has helped hold things together, especially in the hill districts.

In Imphal, a Manipur University professor says that economic blockades have subsided "not because of great statesmanship but because of promises given to the Naga groups backed by the insurgents".

To that, Biren says: "Even if I invite people who call bandhs, who agitate... why is that an issue? The point is I have been able to speak to them face to face, and bring about a change. The public wants a better quality of life, and that is what we are here to bring."

— WITH INPUTS FROM JIMMY LEIVON

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

Coming up in Gonda, a distillery to convert sugarcane into ethanol

HARISH DAMODARAN
GONDA, FEBRUARY 27

COME SEPTEMBER, Uttar Pradesh's Gonda district will have a new sugar mill with a difference — it will not produce any sugar. Instead, the mill will convert the entire cane juice produced to ethanol for blending with petrol.

This ethanol distillery of Balrampur Chini Mills Ltd is being built for Rs 450 crore on a 200-acre site at Maizapur in the Colongelanj tehsil that already houses a mill with a capacity to crush 3,000 tonnes of cane daily (tcd). That is now going to make way for what will be India's largest single-tandem and multiple-feedstock distillery with a capacity of 343 kilolitres per day. "It is a new 4,000-tcd plant, which can also process about 800 tonnes of grain and 1,100-1,200 tonnes of molasses per day in the off-season when cane isn't available. We will use cane for 150-160 days during the crushing season (November-April), stored molasses (mainly from the company's other mills) for the next 50-60 days, and broken rice (mostly sourced from the open market) for another 140-150 days. This way, it can operate for 350 days of the year unlike a regular sugar mill," explains Sandeep Agarwal, the unit head at Maizapur.

For sugarcane farmers in the district, and the rest of Uttar



The new Maizapur plant will not produce sugar. Harish Damodaran

Pradesh, the new mill is a potential gamechanger. If it succeeds, it will open up the possibility of sugarcane's evolution into a full-fledged energy crop.

Diverting cane juice for bio-fuel — ethanol, which is now blended up to 10 per cent in petrol — will result in mills accumulating fewer sugar stocks and making it easier for them to pay farmers. "Ethanol plant se donon ko faida hoga. Unka maal jaldi bik jayega aur hamara ganne ka payment bhi tez hoga (The ethanol plant will benefit both the company and us. They can sell their product faster and pay us quickly)," says Rang Bihari Singh, who grows cane on 20 bighas of his 30-bigha (six acres) land in Colongelanj's Ashokpur village.

A normal mill produces around 115 kg of sugar from every quintal (100 kg) of cane crushed.

The unrecoverable sugar goes into what is called "C" molasses, constituting 4.5-4.7 per cent of the cane. At 22-23 per cent recovery, the corresponding ethanol production from "C" molasses is 1-1.1 litres. Alternatively, the mill may produce only 9.5-9.6 kg of sugar and allow the extra sucrose to go into an earlier stage of "B-heavy" molasses, accounting for 6.5-6.8 per cent of cane. At 32-33 per cent recovery, the ethanol production works out to 2.1-2.2 litres.

The new plant will not produce a single kilogram of sugar from the crops. After being crushed, the entire juice will be concentrated into cane syrup containing roughly 60 per cent solids. This syrup will be then fermented to yield 8-8.2 litres of ethanol from every quintal of cane.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

From parivarvaad to women's safety: Senior BJP leaders on the stump in UP

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

CAMPAIGNING FOR the UP Assembly elections, senior BJP leaders have continued to train their guns on their rivals, firing salvos at them relentlessly over a host of issues. While the BJP's overall poll strategy seems to be based on polarisation and populism, an analysis of campaign speeches of the party's top leaders — Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP president J P Nadda and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath — reveals that their themes and rhetoric are well-orchestrated.

The *Indian Express* analysed 25 of their speeches, delivered during January 8-February 24, including 10 speeches of Modi and 5 each of Shah, Nadda and Yogi. While Modi has been targeting the opponents on various larger issues, Shah has focused on ideological issues like abrogation of Article 370. Both Nadda and Yogi have been highlighting major schemes like PM-Kisan, PM Awas Yojana-Gramin and PM Ujjawala.

The analysis shows Modi using the twin themes of 'parivarvaad' (dynasty politics) and 'mafiaavaad' (criminalisation) in his speeches during all poll phase so far while slamming the Opposition, especially the Samajwadi Party (SP). He has also flagged women safety.

Addressing a rally in Sitapur on

February 16, Modi mentioned "mafia" at least 7 times. In his speeches, the PM has even mentioned how the law against triple talaq has benefited Muslim "sisters and daughters". He has also attacked the SP leadership, calling them "fake socialists", and touched upon issues like the Covid-19 pandemic.

In his campaign speeches, Shah has raked up issues like scrapping of Article 370 that have been part of the saffron party's core agenda for years. He has also sought to corner the SP and the BSP over the law and order issue, calling out names of their jailed leaders like Azam Khan, Atique Ahmed and Mukhtar Ansari. He has highlighted riots that occurred in UP during the SP rule. He has also mentioned India's surgical strike against Pakistan.

In his rallies, Nadda has showcased the benefits provided by the Centre to people, while in his fiery speeches, CM Adityanath has gunned for the SP over law and order even as he dwelt on issues like free vaccine, free ration and stray cattle. The CM has also highlighted the details of various government schemes availed by the people, even underlining district-wise figures of their beneficiaries.

Referring to the problem of stray cattle, Adityanath has proposed to double the number of government-backed cowsheds.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

FROM PAGE ONE

In Uttar Pradesh, a new, silent voter class: labharthi varg

under the housing scheme, Swachh Bharat Mission and PM-Kisan, as assistance to women Jan-Dhan account holders, and in lieu of his children's mid-day meal.

Das, Geeta and Ramashankar live miles apart in UP's rural Bundelkhand and belong to different castes, yet are bound by a common thread: they are all beneficiaries of government welfare schemes and talk about how, from a new electric meter to a toilet, they have seen and felt change in their lives.

In an election with few certainties and where caste and religion often dominate discourse, the labharthi varg — or beneficiaries of government welfare schemes — has become, to the BJP, an emblem of the "double engine" it hopes will blunt anti-incumbency.

The *Indian Express* tracked down several beneficiaries, checked their official records, to find that most have witnessed several firsts in their lifetimes: a brick-and-mortar house; a toilet; LPG cylinders; a bank account. While this labharthi varg emerged with the launch of Direct Benefit Transfer schemes in 2013, the numbers have gone up since then as the number of schemes went up. For instance, the Indira Awas Scheme (IAY), which has been in operation since 1985-86, was restructured as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin in April 2016, after which the scheme saw a

massive spike in numbers.

Manoj Kumar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary (Rural Development), Uttar Pradesh, said, "In the last five years, 26.5 lakh houses have been built under the scheme in UP, which is equal to the number of houses built in 15 years before the launch of PMAY-G in 2016." He added that the amount of grant given under the scheme to build a house in rural areas has increased from Rs 75,000 to Rs 1,20,000.

Govind Das, 37, Jhansi

Das lives with his wife, three children and his father at Achru Khirak Phutera village near Barua Saragar in Babina constituency of Jhansi district.

A Class 10 dropout, he earns his livelihood — Rs 5,000-6,000 a month — by tilling his quarter-acre farm, besides working as a labourer at NREGA sites and as a part-time worker at a factory in Orchha, Madhya Pradesh.

Last year, Das and his family received Rs 90,000 under the PM Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAGY), the rural housing programme that started in 2016 as a restructured form of the Indira Awas Yojana of the 1980s. The amount was credited to his father Dayaram's bank account. However, Das said, he is yet to receive the remaining amount of Rs 30,000. Construction work on the one-room house is still on.

In 2019, the family received Rs 12,000 for the construction of



Welfare beneficiary Geeta Devi Shriwas in front of her house in Saura village in Mahoba district. Harikishan Sharma

a toilet under the Swachh Bharat Mission. They also got a tap-water connection under the Jal Jeevan Mission, but haven't got water yet. "Yeh pipeline purani line se connect ki hui hai, isliye pani nahin aata (The pipe has been connected to an old pipeline. Therefore, they do not receive water)," he said.

Between February 25, 2019, and May 15, 2021, the family received eight installments of PM-Kisan, totaling Rs 16,000. They are yet to receive the last two installments. In all, 10 installments have been released under PM-Kisan till date since the launch of the scheme in 2018-19. Under PM-Kisan, the government provides Rs 6,000 per year in three installments to landholding

farmer families.

Das and his wife, Pramila Devi, both have e-Shram cards, a Central scheme which entitles them to an accident insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh. They have also registered themselves with the Uttar Pradesh Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, as part of which each of them is entitled to get a one-time Covid-19 relief of Rs 1,000. While Das has received his share, Pramila is yet to get her entitlement.

Das's three children — a 17-year-old son, two daughters aged 10 and 12 — all go to school. Documents available with the family show that with schools shut during the pandemic, both his daughters got free foodgrains

(a total of 51.9 kg) and Rs 1,849 in lieu of cooked food under the mid-day meal scheme at school.

His family also has an Antyodaya card that entitles them to receive 35 kg foodgrains at subsidised rates under the National Food Security Act, 2013. Besides, each member of the family has been getting 5 kg free foodgrain (30 kg in all) every month under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, a pandemic measure. In addition to this, the family has also been getting one kg each of gram dal, edible oil and salt every month — a state government measure during the pandemic.

All the adult members of Das's family have a Jan-Dhan account. However, his wife did not receive the Rs 500 monthly Covid assistance announced by the Centre for women account holders during the first Covid wave. While Das has an insurance cover under the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, for which an amount of Rs 12 is deducted from his bank account every year, the family does not have a card under Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).

Das said the village has a health sub-center but no doctors are available there.

When asked about an issue he would like to raise during the election, Das, who belongs to the Kushwaha (OBC) caste, said, "koi plant lag jaaye ya kachhu ho jaye. Rojgar milat jaye bas (A factory should be set up so that we get some work)," he said, adding that stray cattle are also a big problem.

should be set up so that we get some work," he said, adding that stray cattle are also a big problem.

Geeta Devi Shriwas, 30

About 80 km away from the Das family, Geeta Devi lives with her husband, three children, her father-in-law and brother-in-law in Saura village in Charkhari assembly constituency of UP's Mahoba district.

Her husband, Vijay Kumar, is a truck driver and earns Rs 8,000-10,000 a month. The family sends their children to a private school. "Sarkari school me padhai theek nahin hoti (Government schools do not provide good education)," says Geeta, who belongs to the Dhobi community, a Scheduled Caste. The family is building a house with the Rs 1.20 lakh that was credited to her account under the PMAY-G scheme. The house is in her name.

The family has an Ayushman Bharat Card in her father-in-law Maiyadeen's name that entitles them to free treatment of up to Rs 5 lakh a year. When asked whether he has used it, Maiyadeen said there is no big hospital available in the locality.

All the adult members of the family have bank accounts and e-Shram cards. However, Geeta says she did not receive the Rs 500 a month Covid assistance announced by the Central government.

Geeta's family also has a NREGA job card.

In August last year, the family got an LPG gas cylinder under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana. They use it occasionally, Geeta said. The family, which grows mustard and wheat on their 1 bigha, has received all 10 installments announced so far of PM-Kisan, totalling Rs 20,000.

Maiyadeen says he is happy that the government has given "equal respect to big and small farmers" under the scheme. "Earlier, under Akhilesh Yadav's government, only rich farmers with 200-250 bigha got money; they had no regard for small farmers like us. Yogi ji ne bahut achha kam kiya hai har aadmi ko samaan roop se samman diya hai... (Yogiji has done a very good job of giving equal respect to all farmers). Now a person who owns 100 bigha will get Rs 2,000, so will someone who owns 1 bigha," he says.

Ramashankar, 52

About 220 km away lives Ramashankar in his unplastered house that's surrounded by mustard fields at Moharwan village in Chitrakoot Assembly constituency. Ramashankar, who belongs to the Nishad community, lives with his wife, two sons and a daughter. The family grows wheat, paddy and mustard on their one-acre land.

Documents available with the family show his children received Rs 1,100 each from the state government to buy school uniforms and shoes. One of them has also

received Rs 1,318 in lieu of the mid-day meal in addition to food grains. In addition to the 35 kg foodgrains that they get at subsidised rates under the Food Security Act, the family has also been getting ration under the Centre's pandemic-time allocation. The family has a NREGA job card. Last year, Ramashankar got Rs 10,000 under the job scheme. Last year, he started building a house with the Rs 1.20 lakh he got under PMAY-G, but had to stop the work when he ran out of money; the doors and windows are still to be installed. They also got Rs 12,000 for the construction of a toilet.

Ramashankar's wife, Asha Devi, says she received the Centre's monthly Covid-19 grant of Rs 500 for three months, with the amount credited in her Jan Dhan account. The family has also received all 10 installments of PM-Kisan, totalling Rs 20,000, from March 2019 to January 2022.

While the family has an electricity connection, tap water pipelines under the Jal Jeevan Mission are yet to reach their home. Ramashankar says the family has an LPG cylinder but he does not get it refilled regularly. "We have firewood. We use that," he said.

Discussing the upcoming election, Ramashankar says the stray cattle menace is the biggest issue in his village. "We will vote for the party that gets rid of this problem. I have to stay up all night to save my crops," he says.

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



Prime Minister Narendra Modi offers prayers at Kashi Vishwanath temple, in Varanasi on Sunday. ANI

ALL SET FOR LAST LAP

ALL ROADS lead to Varanasi this week for BJP leaders, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi going to be there for three days to campaign ahead of the last phase of Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh. With BJP campaigners leaving nothing to chance to ensure the party makes an impressive performance in Prime Minister's Lok Sabha constituency, many leaders have already arrived in Varanasi and could be spotted walking along the ghats. Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Culture Arjun Ram Meghwal has been camping in Varanasi and running his office from there. Meghwal uses his morning walks to interact with the general people, the boatmen and others. Last week, he surprised members of the public, including those who were performing yoga, with his Bhajan singing. While Meghwal, in his traditional, colourful Rajasthani turban, instantly attracted attention, those with him got the moment captured for posterity.

VOCAL FOR LOCAL MATH

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY professor, Manjul Bhargava, believes the propagation of colonial-era textbooks and writings have kept the "Indian roots" of mathematics largely unknown to the public. A recipient of the Fields Medal, Prof Bhargava's remarks, made during a session on India's contribution to mathematics, organised by the AICTE on Friday, is interesting, given that he is a member of the 12-member committee to revise the National Curriculum Framework set up by the Centre. Joining the event virtually, Prof Bhargava said India's fundamental contributions to mathematics are not covered even in school textbooks.

INVOKES BALAKOT, THROWS TERROR JIBE AT SP UP elections a contest between dynasts, diehard nationalists: PM

LALMANI VERMA VARANASI, FEBRUARY 27

WITH ONLY two phases of polling left, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the ongoing Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections was a contest between "ghor parivarwadis" (ardent dynasts) and "ghanghor rashtrabhakts" (diehard nationalists).

Addressing a public meeting in Deoria district, Modi also said that all the sections of society, including Dalits, oppressed, deprived, OBC and general category were united to defeat "parivarwadis" (dynasts). Talking about the free ration scheme for the poor that was launched during the pandemic, Modi said, "More than nine crore OBCs, three crore Dalits and three crore general category families in UP were being provided free ration by the double-engine government".

The PM uses the phrase - double-engine government - to emphasise on having the BJP government both at the Centre and state. He also claimed that BJP and its allies - Nishad Party and Apna Dal (Sonelal) - were getting "overwhelming support" in the fifth phase of polling. "There is an echo all around: 'ayegi to BJP hi, ayenge to Yogi hi'".

In an election rally in Basti district, the PM stressed on "aatmibrabar bharat" (self-dependent India), and claimed that previous governments preferred to import because they "liked keeping India dependent on other countries as they wanted commission". "Rashtrabhakti aur parivarbhakti me yahi farq hota hai. (This is the difference between devotion to the nation and devotion to one's family)," he added, alleging that "ghor parivarwadis" (ardent dynasts) kept the country's defence forces completely dependent on foreign countries for several decades and destroyed India's defence industry.



PM Modi at a party event in Varanasi on Sunday. Anand Singh

He also invoked the 2019 Balakot airstrikes - the air strike on terrorist launch pads in Pakistan, days after the Pulwama terror attack in which around 40 security personnel were killed. "Some 'ghor parivarwadis' (ardent dynasts) in Delhi and UP do not like the valour of the country. They still demand evidence from defence forces and don't trust their capability. The people of UP therefore need to be very careful of them."

Once again accusing the Samajwadi Party of "being on the side of the terror", he said that terrorists carried out bomb blasts in temple and ghats in Varanasi without any fear in the past government as the then Samajwadi government was with them and

initiated the process to withdraw the terror cases.

Referring to the ongoing invasion of Ukraine by Russia, Modi called the prevailing global scenario a "challenging period", and claimed that his government was leaving no stones unturned to bring back the stranded Indian students to the country.

"In such a challenging period India has always given topmost priority to the safety of life of every citizen. Wherever there was a crisis, we left no stone unturned to bring our citizens back safely. We are bringing back thousands of Indians from Ukraine by launching Operation Ganga," Modi said.

Modi said the current era was sending a big message to every Indian. "This time it is to make India stronger and self-dependent as much as possible and stand with the nation by rising above caste and other minor issues," Modi said. "People whose hearts beat for the terrorists who carried out bomb blasts in the country they will never make the nation strong," Modi said.

For govt under SP, development meant making boundary walls of kabristan: Yogi

MAULSHREE SETH LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 27

CAMPAIGNING IN Campierganj Assembly constituency of Gorakhpur, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday claimed that the BJP will form the next government in Uttar Pradesh with "full majority" and lashed out at rival Samajwadi Party, saying that the previous Akhilesh Yadav-led government "worked only for the development of Saifai family".

He alleged that for Samawadi Party, the development only meant constructing boundary walls of "kabristan" (graveyards) and giving electricity during Eid and Moharram. "Unka nara tha sabka sath, lekin kaam hota tha Saifai khandan ka vikas (Their slogan was to support everyone but when it came to work, they only did development of the Saifai family)," Adityanath said.

Claiming that his government "gave protection to all", he said that if anyone tried to breach the security during his rule, they had to face the "bulldozer" as well.

Adityanath also promised that once the BJP comes back to power in the state, the beneficiaries of Ujjwala Yojana would get free LPG cylinder every Diwali and Holi.

MANN KI BAAT

Triple talaq a 'social evil', 80% drop in cases since law enacted: PM Modi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

TERMINING TRIPLE talaq a "social evil". Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that there has been a drastic 80 percent decrease in such cases since a law was enacted against the practice in September 2019.

In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' programme, the PM, while underlining the "success" of the government's programmes for women empowerment, said, "In the recent past, decisions like increasing maternity leave for women have been taken. We are trying to give equal rights to sons and daughters by fixing a common age for marriage," he said, adding that due to this the participation of women in every field is increasing.

"Take the success of 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao', today the sex ratio in the country has improved. The number of girls going to school has also improved. In this, we also have a responsibility that our daughters do not drop out of the school. Similarly, women in the country have got freedom from open defecation under the 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan'," Modi added.

All this, he said, was possible in such a short span of time because women themselves were leading the change in the country.

The PM also appreciated the role of Indian scientists in the fight against the coronavirus, saying, "Due to their hard work, it was possible to manufacture a made-in-India vaccine which helped the whole world a lot. This is the gift of science to humanity."

Flagging the issue of smuggling of antique idols out of India,

Modi, referring to the country's history of making idols, said, "Not only were they a wonderful artistic example of Indian sculpture but our faith was also connected with them. It is our responsibility towards Mother India to bring home these idols. They idols embody a part of the soul of India."

India, he claimed, has created a deterrent fear against the tendency to steal and the countries where these idols were taken away to also started to feel that it could have immense repercussions in diplomatic relations with India. "This is an example of the changing global outlook towards India. Till 2013, just 13 idols were brought back to India. But in the last seven years, India has successfully brought back more than 200 precious idols," he said.

The PM also praised Tanzanian lip sync artists Kili Paul and his sister Neema Paul. "Recently, a video of Kili singing our National Anthem on the occasion of Republic Day went viral" and "a few days ago he also paid a soulful tribute to Lata Mangeshkar by presenting her song," he said.

Appealing to the country's youth to make videos of popular songs of Indian languages in their own way, the Prime Minister said, "You will become very popular! And the diversity of the country will be introduced to the new generation."

Prime Minister Modi also emphasised the importance of one's mother tongue, saying "as our mother moulds our life so does our mother tongue. Just like we cannot abandon our mother, we cannot leave our mother tongue either."

People have decided to send CM Yogi back: Akhilesh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 27

ADDRESSING A rally on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's home turf in Gorakhpur, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday said that after voting in the five phases of the UP assembly elections, people have decided to send him back to his 'math'.

"After voting in the first four phases, people have already voted him out. Today, the fifth phase of voting is happening. Everyone has decided to send Baba ji back to the math. When we family people go back home,



Akhilesh Yadav with party leaders in Kushinagar, Sunday. PTI

we take something with us. That is why I advise Babaji to take biscuits for his Gullu (Adityanath's

Taking a dig at the CM, Akhilesh said how can he run a state when he can't use a smartphone or a laptop.

He added: "The BJP people said that people who wear 'hawai chappal' (rubber slippers) will fly in 'hawai jahaaz' (airplanes). As soon as they came to power, did they sell airplanes or not? They also sold the airports. You can find out that trains and expensive land at railway stations are also being sold. They have also sold ships. Have you ever thought why they sold everything? That is because if these things are sold, they won't have to provide jobs."

Slamming Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Akhilesh said, "He was going to houses for campaigning and I don't know if he was distributing pamphlets or his spit. However, ever since people started showing him their empty red cylinders, he is now campaigning from a distance."

He also attacked the state government over the stray cattle issue. "Our gau mata (cow) and the animal which is out Baba CM's favourite animal is roaming around hungry. Tell me if that animal is attacking people on the road and killing them or not? What do you expect from a government which has eaten up thousands of crores in the name of gashalas (cow shelters)," he said.



People at a polling booth in Barabanki district. PTI

Phase 5 of polls: UP records 55% turnout

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 27

AROUND 55 per cent polling was recorded on Sunday in the fifth phase of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls for 61 seats spread across 12 districts.

According to the Election Commission of India's voter turnout app, the polling percentage was 54.98. Voting ended at 6 pm. The final polling figure will be available on Monday, an official said.

Police said voting was largely peaceful, barring in Pratapgarh's Kunda seat where Samajwadi Party candidate Gulshan Yadav's convoy was allegedly attacked by some people. Party workers claimed that Yadav sustained minor injuries.

SP state president Naresh Uttam and party national spokesperson Rajendra Chowdhury have sent a written complaint to the Election Commission about the incident.

The night before voting began in Gonda, an FIR was registered against former minister and SP candidate Yogesh Pratap Singh and 12 others for allegedly assaulting and gangraping a 45-year-old woman in Gonda.

Yogi has made UP poorer, says Chidambaram

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 27

FORMER UNION minister and senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Sunday alleged that Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath's governance is a mix of authoritarianism and religious fanaticism that fans hatred among people.

Addressing a press conference in Lucknow, he said, "Despite the state having the "hardest working people" and having given eight PMs in the past, its people are still poor as it stands at the bottom of many social and economic indicators. The Adityanath government added 40% of the debt burden on the state exchequer in five years alone."

Adityanath's model of governance also includes perpetuating caste enmity, police excesses and gender violence, he claimed, adding that this has made the state and the majority of its people poorer. Urging people to vote for change, Chidambaram targeted the BJP government on the parameters of unemployment, high debt burden, enrolment ratio in colleges and universities, besides neo-natal and infant mortality rates.

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EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
Himachal Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation Limited, Shimla invites EOI (Expression of Interest) for procurement of manufacturers/ authorized distributors/dealers for supply of Furniture (hospital, school and offices etc.), Furnishing items, Concrete Furniture, Prefabricated Structures, Portable Cabins etc. for the period of two years i.e. 2022-2023 & 2023-24. The detailed EOI notice, EOI documents and other instructions can be downloaded or viewed on-line from the portal <https://tenders.gov.in>. The last date of submission of on-line EOI, earnest money deposit, EOI document fee and processing fee shall be till 15.03.2022 up to 04:00 PM. The EOI shall be open till 16.03.2022 at 11:03 AM. Managing Director

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH PUNE
(An Autonomous Institution of Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)
Dr. Homi Bhabha Road, Pune-411008 Website: www.iiserpune.ac.in

Admission to Masters and Research Programmes - August 2022
IISER Pune invites online applications for admission to the MSc, Integrated PhD, PhD, International PhD and externally funded PhD programme for the August 2022 session. Details of eligibility and application procedure are available at: <https://www.iiserpune.ac.in/education/admissions>

पावरग्रिड POWERGRID
Invitation for Bids (IFB) For GIS Sub-station Package SS-90: For (I) Extn. of 765/400 kV Nizamabad GIS Sub-station including 765 kV Bus ducts, Bushings, 400 kV GIS bays etc. under Augmentation of Transformation Capacity in Southern Region, (ii) (a) Extn. of 400/230 kV Tuticorin-II GIS S/s for installation of 4" ICT & (b) Extn. of 400/230 kV Tuticorin-III GIS S/s for installation of 5" ICT under Transmission System for Tirunelveli and Tuticorin Wind Energy Zone (Tamil Nadu) (500 MW) and (iii) Extn. of 400 kV Nizamabad GIS Sub-station under Consultancy services to TSTRANSCO under Single Stage Two Envelope (SSTE) Bidding Procedure (Funding: Domestic).
Date: 28.02.2022

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E-Tender Notice 2021-22
JNP/2582/2021-22 Date: 25/02/2022

The Chief Officer, Jamkhed Municipal Council, Jamkhed invites e-tender (online) for the work Providing Underground drainage (Phase-I) with 6.00 MLD Capacity Sewerage Treatment Plant Under Maharashtra Suvarnajayanti Nagarothan Mahaabhiyan for Jamkhed Municipal Council, Jamkhed, Dist. Ahmednagar, (Estimated Cost Rs. 60,23,24,090/-) Online tender is available from Dt. 03/03/2022 to Dt. 28/03/2022.

Detail terms & conditions, schedule regarding sales of tenders, submission and opening, tender download and upload is available on <http://mahatenders.gov.in>.

*note - For any queries regarding online submission and obtaining digital signature, interested parties may contact - National Informatics Centre (NIC)-Help Desk Toll Free No 18002337315. (For more details contact no. - 7745084784) Chief Officer (class 1) Jamkhed Municipal Council, Jamkhed

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD
Office of the Chief Engineer (West), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009

No. BWSSB/EIC/CE(W)/ACE(W)-1/DCE(M)-H/ITA(M)-II/6478/2021-22 Date: 25.02.2022

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER (Only Through e-Procurement Portal) (4th Call)

BWSSB invites Item rate tender in two stage tender system from eligible tenderers for Work of providing & laying of water supply lines (missing bits) in Ward No. 160, R.R Nagar coming under AEE(W-2) Sub Division, Bangalore.

Amount put to tender: **Rs. 3,50,26,646/-**. EMD: **Rs. 5,26,000/-**.

Last date and time for receipt of tenders will be on **14.03.2022** upto **15.00 hrs.** Date of opening of bids will be on **15.03.2022** after **16.00 hrs.** The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to <http://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>. For further details contact the undersigned office during working hours.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer (West)
DIPR/DDU/MIA/3547/2021-22

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.

6 Feet
Wear Mask
Follow Physical Distancing
Maintain Hand Hygiene

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
Plant Depot, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya
E-Tender Notice No. CWMPD-04-2021-22, Date: 25.02.2022

Online (through e-tendering) for the following work is invited by Chief Workshop Manager, East Central Railway, Plant Depot, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya for and on behalf of the President of India, from reputed Firms.

E-Tender Closing Date: 21.03.2022

1. Name of the work with its Location: Balance work of Casting of PSC & RCC slabs of Standard Span along with ballast retainers as per RDSO Drawing for 25 Ton Loading Standard- 2008 at Engineering Workshop, Plant Depot, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya. 2. Approx. cost of the work: Rs. 2,49,31,748.48 3. Earnest Money: Rs. 2,74,700.00 4. Date and time for Closing of e-tender: 21.03.2022 at 12:00 hrs. 5. Website particulars of e-tendering: www.ireps.gov.in

Executive Engineer (PD)
Plant Depot, E.C. Railway, DDU
PR/01756/PDM/ENG/GT/21-22/32

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
No. DNR/S&T/Tele/2022/6 Danapur, dtd: 25.02.2022. Divisional Railway Manager (Signal & Telecom), East Central Railway, Danapur Division, for and on behalf of President of India invites tenders on web portal www.ireps.gov.in for the following work:

1. Name of work with its location: Augmentation of Railnet connectivity for implementation of e office at 25 stations under different sections including provision of CCTV, voice logger, RTU at 2 LC gates & provision of telecom facilities at PNC, DNR station, RPF Barrack at LKR & zonal S&T training school hostel at Danapur under Danapur Division. 2. Approximate cost of work: ₹1,03,71,845.36. 3. Earnest Money: ₹2,01,900/- 4. Last Date & Time of Submission: Up to 15.00 hrs. on 21.03.2022. 5. Opening of tender: 15.30 hrs. on 21.03.2022. 6. Website particulars where detail of the work and criteria can be seen: www.ireps.gov.in. 7. Address of the office from where detail information can be obtained: Sr. Divnl. Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, East Central Railway, Danapur. Note: Any corrigendum if required will be uploaded on above website before 14 days.

Sr. Divnl. Signal & Telecom Engineer/ ECR/Danapur
PR/01751/DNR/S&T/21-22/44

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अनु. क्र.	विज्ञापन संख्या	विवरण
1.	IIITP/Tender/Manpower/2022/3105 date:25 Feb/2022	जनशक्ति सेवा प्रदान करने के लिए शौलियों का आमंत्रण Invitation of Bids for providing manpower service

विस्तृत विज्ञापन संस्थान की वेबसाइट www.iiitp.ac.in पर उपलब्ध हैं। कोई भी अपडेट या संशोधन केवल संस्थान की वेबसाइट पर प्रकाशित किया जाएगा। सहयक रजिस्ट्रार आईआईआईटी पुणे

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Competitive Tenders are invited for following. For more details please visit the E-Tendering Portal, <https://tenders.kerala.gov.in> or www.kmmll.com

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NIT No.: SCC/AJK/OT(Press)/Cranes/009/ET-1821

SUB: Triennial Rate Contract for Preventive and Breakdown Maintenance of Cranes, Rail Track and other lifting equipment

Due date: 21 days from date of publication

1. Details will be available in e-tendering portal www.grse.nic.in/etender and websites <http://www.grse.in/tenderhome.php> & <http://eprocure.gov.in/cppp/>
2. Any addendum/corrigendum to this tender enquiry will be published in above website only.

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Just three trips in 10 days for Mumbai's new water taxi service

VALLABH OZARKAR
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 27

ON FEBRUARY 17, the much-awaited water taxi service to connect Navi Mumbai and Mumbai was inaugurated by Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Union Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal. Linking Belapur to the Domestic Cruise Terminal (DCT), or Bhaucha Dhakha, in South Mumbai, it was labelled as the solution to cut travel time from around 90 minutes by road to 25 minutes along the coastline.

But in the 10 days since then, operators say, the speed boat service has run just three trips between the two locations while the catamaran ferry, for mass transport, has had no trips at all due to lack of commuter interest.

"We will be holding a meeting on March 2 with all stakeholders to find a solution to the issue," said Amit Saini, CEO of Maharashtra Maritime Board (MMB), the nodal agency for the project.

According to Saini, there are "issues of connectivity" between DCT and the "main points" in South Mumbai. "There is a need to provide end-to-end service from the jetty. It was brought to our notice by some passengers and we are working on it," he said.

According to officials, three operators were given the contract for these services — two to run speedboats and the third for the catamaran.

The speed boat can accommodate around 12 people and cover the distance in 25-30 minutes, with Rs 1,210 for a one-way ticket. The catamaran can accommodate 56 passengers with a ticket priced much lower at Rs 290 for the 45-minute journey — an AC train ticket costs Rs 210, and



Issues of connectivity between DCT and the 'main points' cited as reasons by CEO of Maharashtra Maritime Board. File

AC taxi fare adds up to Rs 900.

"We have not operated a single service since February 18 as there was not a single passenger for the trip. Operating one trip on a catamaran costs us around Rs 27,000 and we need at least 50 passengers," IY Mukadam, the catamaran contractor, told *The Indian Express*.

The other two operators are My Boat Ride and Mumbai Water Taxi, which provide speedboat services on three routes: Belapur-DCT, Belapur-Elephanta and DCT-Elephanta. MMB CEO Saini said the Elephanta service is "receiving good response on the weekends".

"We managed to operate one service from DCT to Belapur, and two from Belapur to DCT. The response is low and many people who inquire on our phone numbers and online don't turn up after checking the fare," said a representative of Mumbai Water Taxi.

"There is a satisfactory response for the Elephanta trip. There is a need to have connectivity between DCT and other parts of Mumbai. Many people

don't even know where DCT is and we have to guide them on how to reach the jetty," the representative said.

"We have not managed to operate a single speedboat service from Belapur to Mumbai but we have been operating the Belapur-Elephanta service," said a representative of My Boat Ride. Several commuters between Navi Mumbai and Mumbai told *The Indian Express* that more than the fare, lack of connectivity is the key issue.

"I don't have a problem paying the fare but after reaching DCT from Belapur, how will I go to my office, which is in Fort, about 4 km away? There is no feeder service or facility at the jetty like we have at railway stations," said Ravindra Shinde, an accounting professional who commutes between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai every day by train.

Another commuter, Pankaj Pawar, points to a similar issue in Belapur. "There is no auto stand or bus stop at the jetty," Pawar, a trader, said.

Rahul meets Gehlot, Baghel; discusses party strategy after polls, pension scheme, coal

GARGI VERMA & MANOJ CG
RAIPUR/NEW DELHI, FEB 27

TEN DAYS to go for counting of votes in five states, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday held a surprise meeting with Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh Chief Ministers, respectively.

While party leaders said they discussed the post-poll strategy, sources said the Gehlot government's decision to implement the old pension scheme for state government employees was also on the discussion table.

The tussle between the two states over supply of coal by Chhattisgarh to Rajasthan was

also discussed. Gehlot has already written two letters to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, seeking her intervention to persuade Chhattisgarh to speed up clearances for mining coal for power plants.

Baghel is learnt to have apprised Rahul about protests by people from tribal communities who may face displacement and concerns regarding the environmental impact.

In his letter to Sonia earlier this month, Gehlot had argued that Rajasthan may suffer power crisis due to outage of 4,340 MW power plant over non-availability of coal from a block in Chhattisgarh, which might not only adversely reflect on the per-



Bhupesh Baghel and Ashok Gehlot (right). File

formance of his government but also create a precarious situation, as both states are governed by the Congress. He wanted Sonia to advise Baghel to expedite requisite pending approvals for the coal blocks in Hasdeo Aranya forests to enable Rajasthan to start mining activities at the earliest.

In 2015, the Centre had allocated three coal blocks in

Chhattisgarh's Sarguja district to Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Ltd (RRVUNL). Gehlot's letters to the party's central leadership and his Chhattisgarh counterpart notwithstanding, the Mine Developer and Operator for RRVUNL Adani Enterprise, left almost 55 million tonnes of coal in the first phase of mining in Chhattisgarh's PEKB coal blocks.

Sources said the announcement made by Gehlot in the state Budget last week to restart the old pension scheme for government employees appointed after January 1, 2004 also came up for discussion in Sunday's meeting. The central leadership, keen to woo back the salaried middle class, is said to be keen

that Chhattisgarh also announce the same in the state Budget but the state has fiscal constraints.

Sources said Baghel was asked to look at the financial implications of this on the state.

The Congress is betting big on Gehlot's announcement to implement the old pension scheme.

The leaders also discussed the post-poll strategy. The Congress hopes it will emerge in front in at least two states — Uttarakhand and Goa — and is also hoping against hope in Punjab. Sources said the Chief Ministers could be rushed to the states for government formation efforts if the party finishes at a striking distance from the halfway mark.

TURNOUT 77%

Violence marks civic polls in Bengal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 27

ABOUT 77 per cent of the total voters on Sunday turned up to exercise their franchise in the civic polls to 108 municipalities in West Bengal that was marred by widespread violence. Throughout the day, reports of intimidation allegedly by the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) workers and electoral malpractices emerged from various parts of the state.

The BJP asked the West Bengal State Election Commission (WBSEC) to declare the elections "null and void" and called for a 12-hour strike across



A policeman resorts to lathicharge in Bhatpara on Sunday during a clash between TMC and BJP supporters. Partha Paul

Bengal on Monday.

The CPM and the Congress described the election as the "murder of democracy" and faulted the TMC, police and SEC. The TMC instead claimed that

the elections were peaceful with sporadic incidents of violence.

An SEC official said voting was overall peaceful with disturbances in a few areas where action has been taken.

West Bengal DGP Manoj Malaviya said, "With confidence, I can say that the polling was held peacefully. There were some minor incidents of violence where action was taken immediately. However, there has been no complaints of grave injuries, bullet injuries or deaths. On specific complaints, 51 people were arrested today," said Malaviya during a press conference.

A total of 44,000 police personnel were deployed for the civic polls. Votes will be counted on March 2. Meanwhile, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar summoned State Election Commissioner Saurab Das at Raj Bhawan on Monday in view of poll violence reports.

Kambli held for drunk driving, released on bail

Mumbai: Former India cricketer Vinod Kambli was arrested by Bandra police on Sunday for allegedly driving under the influence of alcohol and ramming another vehicle. He was subsequently released on bail.

The car that Kambli hit on Sunday afternoon belonged to Tajawini Pawar, wife of another former cricketer Ramesh Pawar.

Confirming the incident, Deputy Commissioner of police Manjunath Singhe (zone IX) said, "He was driving his car in a drunken state. He has been arrested and further investigation is being done by Bandra police station." **ENS**

DISHA SALIAN CASE

'Defamatory remarks': FIR filed against Narayan Rane, son Nitesh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 27

THE MALWANI police on Saturday registered a case against Union Minister Narayan Rane and his MLA son Nitesh Rane for allegedly making defamatory remarks and spreading false information about late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's former manager Disha Saliyan's death.

The remarks in question were made by Narayan Rane during a press conference on February 19; Nitesh Rane was also present at the event.

According to police, Saliyan had died by suicide by jumping off a building on June 8, 2020 — six days before Rajput was found dead inside his Bandra home.

Since then several controversies have erupted questioning the circumstances surrounding their deaths. Following Rane's press conference, Mumbai Mayor Kishor Pednekar visited Saliyan's family and lodged a complaint with the Maharashtra State Commission for Women (MSCW) on February 21.

The MSCW recorded statements of Saliyan's family members before issuing a notice to the Mumbai police asking them to file a report in two days. They also sought Saliyan's post-mortem reports.

Late on Saturday, a case was registered under sections 211 (False charge of offence made with intent to injure), 500 (defamation), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace), 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code along with section 67 of the Information Technology Act.

In her statement to police, Saliyan's mother Vasanti said she has seen the press conference in which the attempt to "spread false information" about her daughter's death was made. "The information shared by them was demeaning and has damaged the reputation of our daughter that has tarnished our image in the society," her statement read.

When the Indian Express tried reaching Narayan and Nitesh Rane, their phones were switched off.

Bank of Maharashtra
Head Office :
"Lokmangal", 1501, Shivajinagar, Pune-05

Recruitment Notification

Bank of Maharashtra, one of the Leading Listed Public Sector Banks having Head Office in Pune with more than 2000 PAN India Branch Network invites offline applications from the eligible candidates for the following post.

Sr.	Name of the Post	Scale	No. of Posts
01	Chief Security Officer	(Contract Basis)	01

Details are available on Bank's Website <https://www.bankofmaharashtra.in>. Offline Applications shall be opened from 28/02/2022 to 18/03/2022.

Place: Pune
Date: 28/02/2022
General Manager, HRM

LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD.
8th Floor, BSFC Building, Fraser Road, Patna - 800001, Tel : +91 612 2332128 / 30

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

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

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

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

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

Name and Address of Loanee /A/c No.	Date of Demand Notice & Dues Amount / Date of Possession	Description of the Immovable Property
Ramanuj Singh S/o Late Mishri Singh & Biswajit Singh S/o Ramanuj Singh at Jaitpur At PO Ward No. - 10, Barahiya, Dist: Lakhisarai, Pin 811302 Loan Account No. - 220600000003	15.12.2021 Rs. 25,21,794.56 + Sarfaesi + Other charges thereon 24.02.2022	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Sale Deed No. - 4845 Dated - 24.07.1961 Mauja - GF - 1s Floor Mauza - Jaitpur Tauzi No. - 3636 Khata No. - 733 Plot No. - 615 J District - Lakhisarai Total Area - 1306.47 sqft. & Total Built up Area - 2220.86 sqft. sub registry office Lakhisarai in the name of Ramanuj Singh Boundary : North - Jadhoo Singh, South - Kameshwar Singh, East - Megha Singh, West - Baiju Singh & Awadhesh Singh
Ashok Kumar Singh S/o Rajendra Singh, Village - Shrichandpur P.O. - Saligrami P.S. - Saligrami Via - Sahebpur Kamal District - Begusarai, State - Bihar, Pin Code - 851217 Loan Account No. - 220600000037	22.09.2021 Rs. 12,02,837.81 + Sarfaesi + Other charges thereon 24.02.2022	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Sale Deed No. - 8718 Dated - 25.08.2000 Sub Division - Balia Anchal - Sahebpur Kamal Halka - Sabdapur Mauja - Sabdapur Khata No. - 105 Plot No. - 18, Jambandi No. - 579, Thana No. - 647 P.S. - Saligrami (Sahebpur Kamal) District - Begusarai Total Area - 3 Katha 4 Dhur Sub Registry Office Begusarai in the name of Ashok Kumar Singh S/o Rajendra Singh Boundary : North - Ashok Kumar, South - Nand Kishore Singh East - Mokir Allahe, West - Mokir Allahe.
Om Prakash Kumar S/o Mahendra Yadav and Ram Parvash Kumar S/o Mahender Yadav and Jay Prakash S/o Mahender Yadav, At - Shahbazpur, PO - Irki, B.O Sub Office - Chakand District - Gaya State Bihar Pin Code - 804404 Loan Account No. - 220300000738	25.10.2021 Rs. 15,90,059.16 + Sarfaesi + Other charges thereon 23.02.2022	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Original Token No. - 1138, Serial No. - 1101 Sale Deed No. - 1057, Dated - 02.02.2017 Sub Division - Gaya Anchal - Gaya Sadar Mauja - Jaitpur Khata No. - 57, Plot No. - 237, Thana No. - 183, Tauzi No. - 4099, Railway Colony Gaya District - Gaya Total Area - 2 Katha 8 Dhur Sub Registry Office Gaya in the name of Om Prakash Kumar, Jay Prakash and Ram Parvash Kumar S/o Mahendra Yadav Boundary : North - Birender Yadav & Kamlesh Yadav, South - Niz Lekhyakari, East - Sadak Gramin, West - Kailash Yadav alias Budhan Yadav
Mr. Pawan Prakash Yadav S/o Sadhu Saran Prasad and Sadhu Saran Prasad S/o Late Nathun Prasad At - Katari Bharki Delha Ward No. - 27, Katari Hill Road Delha Over Bridge Kalyanpur District - Gaya State Bihar Pin Code - 804404 Loan Account No. - 220300001662	25.10.2021 Rs. 23,05,009.79 + Sarfaesi + Other charges thereon 23.02.2022	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Original Sale Deed No. - 10616 Dated - 14.06.1985 Sub Division - Gaya Anchal - Chandauli Ward No. - 27, Mauja - Delha Kalyanpur Khata No. - 57, Plot No. - 237, Thana No. - 183, Tauzi No. - 4099, Railway Colony Gaya District - Gaya Total Area - 2 Katha 8 Dhur Sub Registry Office Gaya in the name of Sadhu Saran S/o Late Nathun Prasad Boundary : North - Chotu Yadav, South - 31/2 Road then Railway East - Badhan Devi, West - Deo Lal Yadav

Place - Patna
Authorised Officer (LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD)

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India
(A Govt of India Undertaking)

REGIONAL OFFICE PATNA:
Nasheman Bhavan, 1st Floor, Mazharool Haque Path, Frazer Road, Patna
(Contact: 09199949186, 09850649870, 07802003424)
Email: law.ropatna@unionbankofindia.com

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged / charged to the Secured Creditor, **Symbolic / physical possession** of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Union Bank of India (secured creditor), will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on the date mentioned below, for recovery of dues as mentioned hereunder to **Union Bank of India** from the below mentioned Borrower(s) & Guarantor(s). The Reserve Price and the Earnest Money Deposit are also mentioned hereunder:

1. Branch Name & Address	Union Bank of India, Janipur Branch (EAB), Rai Colony, Naya Tola, Janipur Road, Phulwarisarif, Patna	
Name of the Borrower & Guarantor/s	M/s Shilpi Art Gallery (Prop: Late Shamim Ahmad) Represented through his legal heirs: Ms. Anwari Khatoun, W/o: Late Shamim Ahmad Kamal Md. Akbar Shamim, S/o Late Shamim Ahmad Kamal Md. Ghulam Sarwar, S/o Late Shamim Ahmad Kamal Ms. Sanam Firdosh, D/o Late Shamim Ahmad Kamal Md. Maslullah Shamim, S/o Late Shamim Ahmad Kamal	Amount Due: Rs. 11,51,442.50 (Rupees Eleven Lakh Fifty One Thousand Four Hundred Forty two and paise Fifty Only) as on 10.10.2018 with further interest and cost.
Property:	Residential Land and Building (in area admeasuring 1 Katha) belonging to Late Shamim Ahmad situated at Thana No:38, Tauzi No:5441, Khata No:204, Survey Plot No:462, Mauza: Nohsa, P.S-Phulwarisarif, Dist: Patna; Boundary : North: Gali thereafter Lakhichand & Others, South: Md Hafiz & Others; East: Gali & Ahilaya Baushad Halwarshan Jumai Miya Marhum; West: Plot Hazza ke Juj me Dingar Kharidur Reserve Price: Rs. 33,97,000 (Rupees Thirty Three Lakh Ninety Seven Thousand Only) EMD: Rs. 3,39,700/- (Rupees Three Lakh Thirty Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Only)	
2. Branch Name & Address	Union Bank of India, Pahari Branch, B-68, Transport Nagar, By Pass Road, Bari Pahari, Patna, Bihar-800026	
Name of the Borrower & Guarantor/s	M/s 7 Eleven (Prop: Shri. Sushant Prakash) Shri. Sushant Prakash, Shri. Arvind Kumar, Shri. Arun Kumar	Amount Due: Rs. 45,17,715.75 (Rupees Forty Five Lakh Seventeen Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifteen and Paise Seventy Five Only) as on 31.03.2021 with further interest and cost.
Property:	Vacant Land admeasuring 3262.50 sq ft (7.49 decimal) in the name of Shri. Arvind Kumar and Shri. Arun Kumar situated at Khesra Plot No. : 4555, Samiti Plot No: B-25, Tauzi No: 15, Thana No: 19, Khata No: 1387, Mauza- Ranipur, South of N.H Thana-Khajkalan, Patna, Bihar Bounded by: North: Samiti Plot No: B/21 & 22, South: 20 feet wide Sahayak Rasta; East: Samiti Plot No: B/26; West: Samiti Plot (Committee Hall) Reserve Price: Rs. Rs. 45,36,000/- (Rupees Forty Five Lakh Thirty Six Thousand Only) EMD: Rs. Rs. 4,53,600/- (Rupees Four Lakh Fifty Three Thousand and Six Hundred Only)	
3. Branch Name & Address	Union Bank of India, Delha Branch, At Delha, Post: Railway Station, District: Gaya-823002, Bihar	
Name of the Borrower & Guarantor/s	M/s Shivay Enterprises (Prop: Mrs Guddi Kumari) Mr. Vijay Yadav (Guarantor)	Amount Due: Rs. 12,85,572.42 (Rs. Twelve Lakh Eighty Five Thousand Five Hundred Seventy two & Paise Forty two only) as on 31.08.2019 with further interest & cost.
Property:	All that Piece and Parcel of Land and structure thereon in the name of Mrs. Guddi Kumari admeasuring about 2239 sq. ft. vide title deed no. 12295 dated 04.08.2015 bearing Plot No. 1241; Khata No. 699; T.S. No. 186/Kujapur, Chandauti, in the District of Gaya; Bounded by: North: Rasta and Property of Bhupesh Kumar; South: Rasta and Property of Nagwanti Devi; East: Property of Kishori Prajapat and Chaliter Prajapat; West: Property of Kausalya Devi; Reserve Price: Rs. 19,50,000/- (Rupees Nineteen Lakh Fifty Thousand Only) EMD: Rs. 1,95,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Ninety Five Thousand Only)	
4. Branch Name & Address	Union Bank of India, Delha Branch, At Delha, Post: Railway Station, District: Gaya-823002, Bihar	
Name of the Borrower & Guarantor/s	Mr. Sintu Kumar alias Shri. Birender Keshri Mrs. Maya Devi W/o: Mr Sintu Kumar alias Mr Birender Keshri	Amount Due: Rs. 9,50,373.02 (Rupees Nine Lakh Fifty Thousand Three Hundred and Seventy Three and Paise Two Only) as on 31.08.2019 with further interest and cost.
Property:	All that Piece and Parcel of 2720 sq ft of Land with Shed Structure thereon at Khata No: 231, Plot No: 3083, Mouza: Belaganj, Thana: Belaganj, Thana No:433 at Rauna Belaganj Gaya in the name of Mrs Maya Devi, W/o: Mr. Sintu Kumar; Bounded by: North: Nij Bikreta then Shiv Paswan; South: Sateyendra Kumar; East: Naresh Yadav; West: 10' Wide Road Reserve Price: Rs. 8,16,000/- (Rupees Eight Lakh Sixteen Thousand Only); EMD: Rs. 81,600/- (Rupees Eighty One Thousand Six Hundred Only)	
Date & Time of E-Auction:	30.03.2022; 11:30 am to 01.30 pm	
For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendeViewAllAuction.aspx For Registration and Login and Bidding Rules visit https://www.msctcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp		
Date : 24.02.2022	Union Bank of India	
Place : Patna	Authorised Officer	



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE ABSTENTION

India's nuanced position on Ukraine, seen in its stance on UNSC resolution, reflects the challenging terrain it stands on

INDIA'S ABSTENTION ON the United Nations Security Council draft resolution "deploring in the strongest terms" Russia's invasion of Ukraine was in continuation of its balancing act on the crisis since the escalation began in January, keeping in mind its own interests, strategic imperatives and partnerships on both sides of the conflict. It was a foregone conclusion that Russia would use its veto against this resolution. Still, the vote on the draft offered India the opportunity to articulate in clear and strong terms its position on the issue — that there should be no messing with territorial integrity of states, and that the UN Charter and international law are sacrosanct — without taking sides despite pressures from both sides to do so. The tempering of the draft resolution over 24 hours from "condemnation" to "deploring", and the replacement of Chapter VII that authorises the Security Council to take measures including the use of force with Chapter VI that speaks of a peaceful resolution showed that nuance is everything in international realpolitik. India omitted reference to "legitimate security interests", a phrase that appeared in its previous formulations at the UNSC, giving them a pro-Russia tilt. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's appeal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hours after the vote in the Security Council, for political support in the UN to "stop the aggressor", helped Delhi further sharpen its position, conveying anguish at the loss of lives, reiterating the demand for a cessation of hostilities and a return to dialogue, and significantly, expressing a willingness "to contribute in any way towards peace efforts".

For sure, none of these statements and positions, whether in phone calls or at the Security Council horse-shoe, are etched in stone. The Ukraine crisis is developing by the minute, and Delhi will need to review its position accordingly. The Ukrainian president, who was hardly believed to be the right fit for high national office, is clearly a hero, one who knows how to use social media. Using these platforms to great effect, he has single-handedly marshalled the sympathy of people around the world in this David vs Goliath battle, inviting comparisons with how just a few months ago, the Afghan President upped and left the people of his country to deal with the Taliban on their own. Stories of brave Ukrainians taking on Russian soldiers has underlined how international law counts for nothing when weak countries are up against powerful nations. Casualties are bound to rise. As it fine-tunes its position, India will have to factor all this, particularly Russian President Vladimir Putin's international isolation and his loss of moral high ground as a "victim" of NATO's machinations. Even Putin's fast friend China, which has its own territory problems, spoke about "territorial integrity" and abstained from the vote, even while nodding in the direction of Russia's legitimate security interests. And Germany, India's ally and an ever-reluctant power, is coming out of its long European cold to turn the heat on.

Delhi has its hands full, including with the evacuation of the thousands of Indian students in Ukraine. Indian diplomats have worked the phones and buses and planes to get the process rolling. Many more students are waiting in line and it will need deft diplomacy and logistics to get them safely home — a debate on the merits of a Ukraine education or gaps in college infrastructure, which the PM touched upon, can surely wait. Getting students out is only the first in the countless challenges posed by Putin's invasion of Ukraine, not all can be handled by abstention.

THE OTHER OIL

The Ukraine war will force a spike in edible oil prices. India must incentivise farmers to grow more oil seeds

WHILE ECONOMIC COMMENTARY post the Russian invasion of Ukraine has largely focused on oil — Brent crude topping \$100/barrel and the likelihood of petrol, diesel and LPG cylinder price increasing once polling in Uttar Pradesh concludes on March 7 — there is also the impact on the "other oil". Sunflower is India's fourth most consumed cooking oil, after palm, soyabean and mustard. The country imports about 98 per cent of its sunflower oil requirement — almost 93 per cent of that coming from Ukraine and Russia. Moreover, it's not only sunflower. India also imports the bulk of its soyabean oil from Argentina and Brazil and palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia. The ongoing conflict and disruption in shipments from Black Sea ports is rubbing off on these oils too, compounded by dry weather in South America and Indonesia imposing a 20 per cent domestic market sale obligation on its palm oil exporters. Crude palm futures prices in Malaysia scaled record highs of 7,000-plus ringgit per tonne last week.

All these matter for India, given that only 8.5-9 million tonnes of its annual 22-23 million tonnes edible oils consumption demand is met through domestic production. The country's vegetable oil import bill totalled \$11.09 billion in 2020-21 and \$14.02 billion in April-December 2021, which may well cross \$17-18 billion for the whole fiscal. The war in Ukraine, in a sense, exposes India's vulnerability in edible oils similar to what the 1991 Gulf War did vis-à-vis petroleum. Russia is, incidentally, also the world's top wheat exporter, with Ukraine at third position both in wheat (behind Australia) and maize (after the US and Argentina). But for India, the worry is more on the edible oil and fertilisers front: Russia and its neighbouring ally Belarus are the biggest producers of potash after Canada, while the curtailment of natural gas supplies from Russia will certainly push up ammonia and urea prices.

Every crisis, however, opens up opportunities. Mustard is now trading in Rajasthan's mandis at Rs 6,600-6,900 per quintal, way above the official minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 5,050. That's good news for farmers, just days ahead of the harvesting season. The Narendra Modi government should declare higher MSPs — preferably, as a one-time bonus — for groundnut, soyabean, sesamum and sunflower to incentivise farmers to grow these oilseeds in the ensuing kharif season. There is a need for focused campaigns, especially in states such as Punjab, Haryana, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, to wean farmers away from paddy to oilseeds, pulses and cotton. The best way to do it is through guaranteed MSP procurement — which may not be required if open market prices stay high.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



What Russia stands to lose

Irrespective of how the Ukraine war ends, Putin may lose the plot



SHYAM SARAN

UKRAINE IS ENVELOPED in the inevitable fog of war and it is difficult to assess whether Russian forces are on the threshold of overwhelming the much less capable Ukrainian forces. Vladimir Putin's calculations — that the shock and awe of the Russian invasion would lead to the collapse of the Ukrainian government and surrender of the Ukrainian forces — have proved to be premature. This may still be the eventual outcome but would not have been achieved without considerable expenditure of blood and treasure. The longer it takes to bring Ukraine to heel, the greater the compulsion to use much greater levels of violence than we have witnessed so far.

The images of wanton destruction and streams of traumatised Ukrainians streaming across their borders into neighbouring countries are a public relations disaster for Putin. At the same time, there are stories and visuals of brave resistance by the Ukrainian forces, the taking up of arms by ordinary citizens and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy himself reincarnated as a heroic leader, standing by his people in their hour of peril, prepared to go down with the ship rather than accept a swift evacuation into safety. Russian attempts to vilify him as a leader of a "Nazi" gang planted in Kyiv by the American CIA have failed. The projection of Ukraine as an artificial state is belied by the displays of national pride and courageous resistance, which are being played on TV screens across the world. There is a David versus Goliath feel to what is unfolding in Ukraine. Zelenskyy was a comedian and stage performer before entering politics and he is using those theatrical skills to good effect. As his international standing soars, the damage to Putin's reputation is already palpable and will be hard to repair. Putin may still win the war but he may lose the plot.

There is a rising level of discomfort among Russia's friends who have chosen to look the other way. The geopolitical calculations that led to artful ambiguity in reactions to the Russian invasion are now shifting so as not to be stranded on the wrong side of the fence. The Chinese who, in more senses than one, enabled Putin's Ukraine adventure, are trimming their sails. During the initial phase of the military campaign, Chinese official statements

refused to describe it as an invasion, but chose instead to use the Russian description — "special military operations." There was a reluctance to affirm, as the Chinese usually do, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. Instead, here is what the earlier statement said: "China is closely following the situation in Ukraine, we call on all parties to exercise restraint and prevent the situation from getting out of control. We have stated China's position multiple times on the Ukraine issue. The issue has complex historical background and merits and the result we are seeing today is at the interplay of multiple factors." The last sentence appeared to be an implicit endorsement of the Russian narrative on Ukraine's history as umbilically tied to Russia.

This has undergone a slight shift in China's latest statement at the UN Security Council while abstaining on a western sponsored resolution "deploring" the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The observation that the Ukraine crisis is "at the interplay of multiple factors" has been repeated, but now there is a clear reaffirmation of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states as a matter of principle: "China is deeply concerned about the latest situation in Ukraine. Currently, it has come to the point which we do not want to see. We believe that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states should be respected and that purposes and principles of the UN Charter should be jointly upheld."

China continues to harp on the negative consequences of "military blocs" and the eastward expansion of NATO and the need to ensure equal security. To that extent, its support for Russia's position remains undiminished.

One Chinese scholar has now suggested that a solution could be for Ukraine to enter the European Union while refraining from joining NATO. This is not a suggestion that Russia would welcome.

It was expected that India would not support any Security Council Resolution condemning Russia. But the Indian statement explaining its vote of abstention comes fairly close to criticising Russia's resort to arms. Unlike China, India has neither criticised NATO nor made any comment about the expansion of NATO as a trigger for Russian ac-

tion. It has reiterated the principle of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and stated that "all member states need to honour these principles in finding a constructive way forward". More importantly, there is an implicit criticism of Russia in the expression of "regret that the path of diplomacy was given up".

Prime Minister Modi's phone call to Putin urging the cessation of violence was also a departure from the past and may have helped deflect western pressure to take a more explicitly critical stance on the issue. What is more interesting is PM Modi's readiness to receive a call from the beleaguered Zelenskyy on February 26. The read-out on the call states: "The PM expressed his deep anguish about the loss of life and property. He reiterated his call for a return to dialogue, and expressed India's willingness to contribute in any way towards peace efforts." Considering that Russia regards Zelenskyy as an illegitimate leader who it is trying to defeat and topple from power, PM Modi's gesture of sympathy if not support could hardly be welcome to it. India may be sensing the shift in international public opinion against Russia and adjusting its position accordingly.

A resolution condemning Russia is now likely to be introduced in the UN General Assembly, where there will be no veto available to Russia against its passage. Russia can no longer be certain that the large constituency of developing countries, including African countries, will vote against or abstain on the resolution. The strong condemnation of Russian action by Kenya is a pointer to the sentiments among African countries. It will be interesting to see how far China will be ready to deploy its considerable influence among developing countries, in particular African countries, in support of Russia. It may be hesitant to do so in the light of international opinion shifting unmistakably against Russia.

India may also need to weigh its vote in the General Assembly in the light of the rapidly changing situation but one suspects that abstention would still be the preferred option.

The writer is a former foreign secretary and senior fellow, CPR

HANDS OFF THE HIJAB

This is a case of hostile discrimination, not about what is essential to Islam



THULASI K. RAJ

THE HIJAB CONTROVERSY which began in Karnataka has caught national attention. Several schools have prohibited Muslim girl students from entering classrooms or the premises of institutions wearing the hijab. On February 25, the matter was reserved for judgment by the Karnataka High Court.

Much of the deliberation on the issue — judicial and otherwise — seems to focus on essentiality, a doctrine developed by the Supreme Court in the *Shirur Mutt* case. The court held that Article 25, which guarantees freedom of religion and conscience, "covers all rituals and practices that are integral to the religion." The current debate has led many to ask how essential the hijab is to the practice of Muslim faith.

This focus on essentiality is misconceived because of, at least, two reasons. One, this results in mischaracterising an instance of hostile discrimination to that of interpretation of religious texts and rituals. One ignores that the Muslim women are simply discriminated on account of their religious belief. Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees equality before the laws and Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the basis of several grounds, including religion and sex. When Muslim women are kept out of classrooms for wearing the hijab, it is a classic case of discrimination under the equality clauses of the Constitution.

It is pertinent to note that this is also a case of intersectional discrimination, a term credited to Kimberly Crenshaw. Intersectional discrimination recognises that people are not made of

monolithic identities, but multiple identities cutting across each other. Muslim women are subjected to the present exclusion because of the intersection of both identities — being Muslim and being women. Discrimination solely on account of these protected grounds is prohibited by the Constitution. As the Supreme Court held in *Navtej Singh Johar* (2018), the essential content of the anti-discrimination provision is the appreciation of the intersection of "varied identities and characteristics."

Moreover, the government order which bans clothes violative of "public order" amounts to indirect discrimination. The doctrine was recognised by our Supreme Court in *Col. Nitisha* (2021) as part of our constitutional jurisprudence. Indirect discrimination occurs when an action is neutral on its face, but disproportionately impacts a protected group.

Secondly, the essentiality test, to ascertain the genuineness and the nature of freedom of religion and belief, is deeply flawed. The courts are simply not theological experts in determining if a practice is "integral" to a religion or not. Faizan Mustafa, scholar on freedom of religion, has argued that the test "impinges on individual freedom and gives too much power to the courts in matters of religion. In effect, it elevates the judiciary to the status of clergy." (*Freedom of Religion in India*, 2017). Moreover, the test is of a general character, completely sidelining how important and integral a practice is to one's belief and conscience. Instead, it looks at how essential the practice is for the religion altogether, with reference to its tradi-

tions and texts. Individual autonomy and agency are ignored. This structure is antithetical to how rights must be conceived, by keeping the individual at the centre of the debate. As Charles Fried puts it: "Individuals come first. Whoever says otherwise is trading in metaphors. There are societies, nations, families, teams, but they are all made up of individual persons." (*Modern Liberty*, 2007).

In 1954, the US Supreme Court declared segregation between the Black and White students in public education to be illegal in *Brown v. Board of Education*. However, when nine African-American students reached the gates of Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas, they were faced with an angry White mob and several soldiers sent by the Governor of Arkansas to prevent their entry to the school.

Our Muslim friends are faced with a similar threat of hatred and discrimination. In both cases, children are being deprived of education — a significant social good — for unfounded reasons. We must also be conscious of the false equivalence that the right wing is trying to peddle by comparing the hijab and the saffron shawls. While the first, for many Muslim women, is an innate part of religious identity, the latter is only a symbol of Hindu extremism and a pretext to intimidate. Every attempt at exclusion and discrimination must be met by holding on to the Constitution, close to our hearts. Hands off the hijab, please.

The author is a lawyer at Supreme Court and the Kerala High Court



FEBRUARY 28, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

TAXES AND RELIEF

INLAND LETTERS, ENVELOPES, cement, tyres and sophisticated electronic equipment will cost more following a heavy dose of taxation — Rs 533 crore net — proposed by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee in the Union Budget. The reliefs announced by him are concessions to the individual taxpayer and pensioners, small tax relief for incremental exports, help for construction projects abroad, rationalisation of capital gains and reduction of excise duty on consumer items such as ballpoint pens, pencils, thermos flasks, erasers, water coolers and toothbrushes, braille typewriters, invalid carriages, and helmets. The Finance Minister gave

some minor incentives to people from lower-income groups concerning house construction. He announced a wealth tax on tea and coffee plantations.

IMF HAND SEEN

WHILE CONGRESS (I) MPs predictably praised the Budget as one geared towards boosting growth and economic productivity, Opposition MPs, by and large, saw the hand of the IMF in its drafting and said that the poor would be worse off, especially because of the rise in postal rates. However, Subramaniam Swamy of the Janata saw no hand of the IMF in the budget and welcomed

some of the incentives. But he felt that the high amount of indirect taxes was called for and regretted that the Budget had no proposal for slum development. Somnath Chatterji felt that the huge deficit would aggravate inflationary tendencies.

MORE FOR DEFENCE

THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS to spend Rs 900 crore more on defence in 1982-83 compared to its expenditure in 1981-1982. The outlay has gone up to Rs 5,100 crore from Rs 4,200 crore. This will be the highest amount the nation will be spending on defence since Independence.



C R Sasikumar

So that the war doesn't hit us

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has made it imperative to control inflation. This calls for reforming India's grain management and food subsidy system



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

WITH THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE conflict flaring into a war, global commodity prices, especially that of crude oil and gas, are likely to see a strong surge. This poses a challenge not only for India to contain inflationary pressures but also the world at large.

At 6 per cent, India's consumer price index (CPI) inflation crossed the upper limit of RBI's tolerance band in January 2022. The wholesale price index (WPI) is surging at more than double that rate (12.96 per cent). In US, inflation is at 7.5 per cent, almost a 40 year high. Most economists believe that the Federal Reserve is way behind the curve in taming inflation. High inflation inflicts a large "inflation tax" on the general public whose bank savings earn an interest of less than 1 per cent. This is robbing the general public in the name of fuelling growth. No wonder, rich entrepreneurs make hay and inequalities widen in such situations.

India is not impervious to this tendency. Most of the major banks in the country, including the State Bank of India, offer interest rates between 3 to 4 per cent to depositors. With CPI inflation at 6 per cent and WPI inflation at 13 per cent, Indian depositors are fast losing the real value of their money because of this hidden "inflation tax".

Both the finance ministry and the RBI are betting on revving up growth, at least for the time being. This is fine as long as they can tame inflation within reasonable limits. Even the upper limit of RBI's tolerance band has an in-built bias against depositors and is in favour of entrepreneurs, accelerating in-

equalities in the system. If we want to do justice to the masses on whose deposits the entire banking system hinges, one must ensure positive real rates of interest. To do this, one must ensure lower rates of inflation, preferably below 3 per cent per year.

How can one do that in a country like India? Given that food has a weight of more than 45 per cent in CPI in India, understanding the dynamics of food inflation is critical. India imports roughly 60 per cent of its consumption of edible oils, and global prices of edible oils have gone up by more than 50 per cent over the last year. Edible oil inflation in India was touching 35 per cent a few months back. This has come down to 18 per cent after the reduction on import duties.

The Union Minister of Commerce has also recently claimed that they have brought down the inflation in pulses by imposing stock limits on traders and by lowering import duties and importing more pulses. The Centre has also imposed stocking limits on domestic oil/seed traders. One wonders why it does not impose a stock limit on wheat and rice with the Food Corporation of India. After all, the FCI is the biggest hoarder of staples. As on January 1, it is saddled with stocks that are almost four times the buffer stock norms. By unloading the excess grain in the open market, FCI could help in bringing down food inflation substantially as rice and wheat have a high weightage in CPI. The problem, however, is that the economic cost of rice and wheat to the FCI is way above their market prices. The unloading of excess stocks will, therefore, have to be done at prices much lower than their economic cost — the FCI will incur huge losses that are hidden in the "food subsidy". In the name of the poor, India runs one of the largest but perhaps the most inefficient and corrupt public distribution system (PDS) in the world. The system is crying for reforms, but no political party has the will power to take it head on for fear of being branded as anti-poor.

Every political party promises freebies be-

It is important to reform the grain management cum food subsidy system to release precious resources for growth of agriculture. This should be combined with taking giant strides to raise productivity and producing more nutritious food while protecting the environment. The paradox of Indian policy making can be judged by looking at the Union budget for the 2022-23. It provides more than Rs 2 lakh crore for food subsidy while agri-research and development gets a paltry Rs 8,500 crore — even though it's well known agri-R&D gives a much higher return in terms of promoting growth with competitiveness, and reduces poverty by making food cheaper and controlling food inflation.

fore elections. In the current round of state elections too, political parties are competing to promise loan waivers and free power to farmers, unemployment allowances to the youth and income support to women. Some have even promised laptops, smart phones and electric scooters. This amounts to misusing taxpayers' money to get into power. Unless the Election Commission comes down heavily on such promises or a public interest litigation is filed in the Supreme Court to stop this competitive populism, Indian policymaking cannot be growth-oriented.

In this context, it may also be noted that India's food subsidy policy covering 67 per cent of the population and distributing rice and wheat at more than 90 per cent subsidy under the National Food Security Act of 2013 was the UPA's last-ditch attempt to win the 2014 parliamentary election. It lost the polls, but the policy has remained stuck. The Narendra Modi government has so far not summoned the will to either raise the issue price under PDS or reduce its coverage to only those below the poverty line — defined as per the Rangarajan Committee or by the NITI Aayog recently under its multi-dimensional poverty index.

It is important to reform the grain-management-cum-food-subsidy system to release precious resources for growth of agriculture. This should be combined with taking giant strides to raise productivity and producing more nutritious food while protecting the environment. The paradox of Indian policy making can be judged by looking at the Union budget for the 2022-23. It provides more than Rs 2 lakh crore for food subsidy while agri-research and development gets a paltry Rs 8,500 crore — even though it's well-known agri-R&D gives a much higher return in terms of promoting growth with competitiveness, and reduces poverty by making food cheaper and controlling food inflation.

Gulati is Infosys Chair professor for Agriculture at ICRIR

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Putin is acting like a thug. He is threatening the international system by taking what he wants, irrespective of the human cost." —THE GUARDIAN

Getting out of business

In another five years, the structure of PSUs is likely to be different with only those of national importance remaining with the government



MADAN SABNAVIS

THE ONGOING FINANCIAL year will be a rather singular one for the disinvestment story, with two big tickets having seen the light of the day. This will be a good booster for the government as it embarks on its journey to divest its stake in other companies too. One thing that is certain is that in another five years the structure of PSUs is likely to be different with only those of national importance remaining with the government.

The LIC flip-flop — will it occur or not — had riddled the markets for the last three months. But the fact that markets are down today is significant and probably not expected. The sudden focus on what the US Federal Reserve will do now is driving the markets down. Normally, good news on the US economy should be applauded by the markets. But this time, it means that interest rates will be increased, which implies that foreign investment flows will ebb to emerging markets and this, in turn, will affect the external account. Add to this the Ukraine crisis. A wobbly stock market is normally not the best time for new issuances in the market, especially of the size of LIC.

The government is determined to complete this disinvestment and the budget speech has stated this intent. With the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) being filed, it is only a matter of time before the offer for sale (OFS) will be floated. Doing it with the Sensex below 58,000 is quite different when the markets are above 60,000. But, clearly, this is not a consideration. The intrinsic value of the company is just too good and should challenge conventional thinking. The questions that are now being raised pertain to the pricing of the issue. Merchant bankers will have to ensure that there has to be enough left for the investors to look forward to in terms of gains once they buy these shares.

The other important issue that will keep coming up is whether the LIC disinvestment will be a habit or a one-time affair. This is important because as the percentage of disinvestment increases, the free-float will increase, which will add buoyancy to the scrip price. On the other hand, if it is kept low, interest may be limited with time. Also, investors will be looking to see if the government eventually goes below the 50 per cent mark because there would be heightened interest if this is indicated. Finally, with this issue, the composition of the shareholders would be interesting as some of the other large insurance players can take some interest in LIC.

The only apprehension in the market today is public appetite. As this comes right at

the end of the year when there has been a tidal wave of IPOs, which were of great investor interest, will there be enough funds left for LIC considering that for all practical purposes, it is a PSU? Besides, the upside to a LIC stock will be steady and not volatile, unlike the start-ups that have either made investors millionaires or bankrupted them with equal probability. Maybe this is a reason why a smaller than targeted number of shares may be offered.

An implication of this IPO, though not spoken of much, is that once listed, the company has to be run more on commercial lines. LIC has always been known to be the investor of last resort, intervening in the market to minimise volatility. It has also been proactive in ensuring that several disinvestment plans of the government fructify by becoming the buyer. This will not be easy in the future as investors will be looking closely at all such investments when evaluating the company.

The other victory for the government has been Air India where everyone seems happy. The government is glad to have the airline off its hands, given that it was adding losses of around Rs 20-26 crore a day. Hence, any deal was better than no deal. It can also take credit for finding a formula that worked for divesting completely a company that was hard to run or give up. Thus, these two endeavours can serve as templates to be followed for companies that fall in either of these categories — fully government-owned and heavy loss-making units.

It is often stated that the government is not in the business of doing business and hence should be out of PSUs. The genesis of the concept of PSUs was when socialistic ideals were pursued and it was felt that the government had to be everywhere. The objectives of employment and price control were met by having these undertakings. There are winds of change in the thinking today where the government would not like to carry the baggage from the past. Besides, pricing has been left open to market forces and even products like petrol and diesel are driven by the market. There is hence less reason for the government to be involved. On the other hand, it may be argued that once the government is fully out, it may mean losing control over a sector where there could be cut-throat market tactics that could militate against the consumer.

As we have embarked on this journey of privatisation, it would probably be worth considering earmarking such funds for either capex or capital infusion into enterprises that require such help. Money is fungible and one never knows how the money earned is spent as it all enters a pool. It may be time to keep disinvestment proceeds outside the budget so that there is better targeting and evaluation of such funds. A thought worth pursuing.

The writer is Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda and author of Hits & Misses: The Indian Banking Story. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WOLF AND LAMB

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The world at risk' (IE, February 26). The writer has cogently exposed the fiendish bellicosity and temerity of both the right and the left, which is responsible for a situation in which Russia is now devastating the small state of Ukraine. The daredevilry was in the offing for some time now due to the absence of a strong message from countries that were in a position to tell despotic Putin to stop it or else. Instead, what is surprising is that even powerful America with a defence shield of the NATO is goading India to arbitrate in this knotty situation. We are trying to be in the good books of US and Russia, when China is eyeing our own territory menacingly.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The world at risk' (IE, February 26). World peace was dealt with a terrible blow on the eve of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Aggressive nationalism, widespread propaganda, dreams of reviving the old Soviet glory, and the virtual lack of meaningful countermeasures has bolstered Russia to do as it pleases, even as the NATO watches helplessly. Other smaller nations, particularly the Baltic states, are rightly wary. China has already upped the ante with its covert support for Russia. It is hoped that the NATO and Russia call ceasefire at the earliest. Notwithstanding the outcome, India will have to walk a tight rope between Russia and the West.

Ila Raikar, Mumbai

ON THE TIGHTROPE

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'India abstains and assures' (IE, February 27). India did not endorse the harsh language used in the US-sponsored UNSC resolution condemning Russia's actions. It wants to maintain a balance between the Western bloc led by the US, and Russia, since it has strategic partners on both sides. India's abstention is not a surprise since on January 31, India abstained on a procedural vote on whether to discuss the issue of Ukraine. While China's abstention is a surprise since it had opposed the vote on January 31, and was seen echoing Russia's position.

SS Paul, Nadia

IN DEFENCE OF SPIDER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'Web of Outrage' (IE, February 25). People have expressed their discontent over the name 'Palpimanus narsinhmehtai', opining that the 15th century poet Narsinh Mehta's name should not be associated with an 'arachnid'. This highlights the lack of affection that people harbour towards ecologically important creatures like spiders. Had the naming been done for some charismatic felid or other large mammal, which appeals to *Homo sapiens'* definition of grace, beauty, and power, the outrage would have easily taken the shape of celebration and back-patting. But spiders serve as dominant predators and play an important role in controlling the populations of many agricultural pests. The way our society perceives these creatures needs to change.

Sayanti Basak, Dehradun



DISHA NAWANI

Pedagogy of empathy

Education should make us reach out to those with whom we differ

AVIJIT PATHAK'S ARTICLE on JNU ('Healing a campus', IE, February 18) challenged my assumptions, forced me to do some soul-searching and reflect on my own positioning as a university teacher and researcher. Three reasons compelled me to respond to it. One, the author has been a teacher and a scholar at the university that he talks about — Jawaharlal Nehru University — for 31 years. Two, Pathak should be saluted for boldly presenting his views on multiple issues across different spaces, without taking sides in a politically-volatile environment. The third reason has to do with exploring the realms of possibilities in a world full of cynicism. This is a challenging proposition because it involves taking positions on social issues that are often framed in mutually exclusive binaries.

In recent years, JNU has received much flak. The university has been accused of nurturing the "tukde tukde gang" and promoting anti-national ideas. Pathak humanises the institution and describes it as being wounded. The university requires healing, he says. The article has been written in the context of the appointment of the new vice-chancellor of the university, Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit,

who, because of her ideological leanings, has become the object of ridicule and contempt. Pathak bestows faith in her leadership and urges her to start the process of healing JNU.

This appeal might seem naïve, even preposterous, to some. But it is also true that life bereft of hope, optimism and faith is hardly worth living. This reminds me of the work of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. Once a woman regarded as illiterate in accordance with the conventional standards of literacy responded to a question posed by the educator: "If all human beings were to die but all other beings like animals, plants, mountains, rivers were to remain alive, then the world would cease to exist because there will be no one to say that this is the world". In other words, the world does not have an independent existence but defines our social reality depending on the way we look at it.

I am a sociologist of education by training and consider my primary job as that of examining educational problems in their context rather than trying to find solutions. Interestingly, however, most of my students are enthusiastic practitioners who are disillusioned with the existing education system and want to

contribute towards improving it. In contrast to the attitude of these students, many of us — perhaps smug with our intellectual prowess — take much pride in presenting multilayered and nuanced analyses. In the process, we probably dampen the spirits and thwart the hopes of our youth, and prevent them from dreaming.

By and large, our school education system with its emphasis on rote learning and year-end examinations also leads to the scuttling of hope. It perhaps trains students to be realistic, rather than become optimistic. In most schools, in the name of discipline, the culture of "pin-drop silence, finger on your lips" is cherished. An overwhelming number of such students tread the conservative path. Only a few universities like JNU allow students to appreciate diversity without fear. But the best of universities typically prioritise the skill of critiquing over appreciating. It is also true that the gap between academics and practitioners seems to be growing wider. While academics are accused of mystifying reality and being too theoretical and abstract, practitioners are accused of ignoring the principles of equity and social justice. Freire worked for most of his life with oppressed societies where

the dispossessed did not even have access to basic rights such as land, water and housing. Yet, he was hopeful and proposed a problem-posing pedagogy that he counterposed to the traditional concept of education — he described such education as a banking model. The Brazilian educationist believed that eventually, boundaries between oppressor and oppressed will be dissolved and the new pedagogy will help both of them in becoming human, realising their true nature.

While it's important to critique, take positions in life, call spade a spade, it is probably more important to not lose faith in humanity. Violence, whether verbal or physical, should be shunned and efforts made to resolve differences. Equally important is to dialogue with people who have different points of view, bring back hope in our lives, revive our dreams, reinstate faith in ourselves, make Freirian praxis (reflective action) a part of our lives and continue to have unwavering faith in humanity — like Pathak.

The writer teaches in the School of Education, TISS Mumbai and is a former student of JNU

CRISIS IN UKRAINE

Why eastern Europe is popular with Indian medical students

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

AMONG INDIANS waiting to be evacuated from Ukraine following the Russian invasion are students of medicine enrolled in colleges located across the country — from Kharkiv in the east to Lviv in the west. Ukraine and other eastern European countries like Romania and Bulgaria are popular destinations for Indian students pursuing medicine because of the easy entrance criteria in colleges there, relatively less competition, and the appeal of studying in Europe for less than what it would cost to study in private medical colleges in India.

However, practising medicine in India after studying from colleges in these countries can be challenging. All those who graduate from foreign medical education institutions are required to take a licentiate exam before they can practice medicine or pursue higher medical education in India. The test, called Foreign Medical Graduates Examination (FMGE), has a very low pass percentage.

Dr Sonali Vaid, a public health expert and an alumna of the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, wrote on Twitter: "I did my medical training in Bulgaria (cheaper than private in India + travel held an appeal) Better teacher-student ratio. Early intro to public health, student orgs, ethics, exchange programs to other countries & more. Saw a variety of health systems early on — [and had a] global outlook."

Entrance requirements, costs, credit transfer

Those who work with agencies that govern medical education in India say universities in Ukraine that offer medical education in English, and are meant for foreign students, do not have any test or criteria for entrance. Since 2018, India has made it mandatory for students going abroad for their MBBS to also give the NEET-UG exams.

"...If you see students travelling to east European countries, Russia or China, most of them score less than 20 per cent on NEET-UG. The cut-off for India, even in private colleges, is about 60 per cent," said a senior doctor who has previously worked with organisations regulating medical education in India.

Dr MC Mishra, former director of AIIMS, said, "Anybody who pays the fees, gets in. Ukraine, Russia and China have been popular destinations for years now,

and it is cheaper than private medical colleges in India."

The cost of graduating in medicine in Ukraine is around Rs 15-20 lakh for the entire duration of six years. In India, fees of private medical colleges can range between Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1.5 crore for a 4.5-year course.

Another reason students are attracted to studying in Ukraine is that universities there follow the European Credit Transfer System, which makes it easy for students to change institutions in Europe during their course.

The FMGE

All medicine graduates from foreign institutes returning to India will have to give the FMGE test, which most people do not pass. An analysis of FMGE results by the National Board of Examination — which conducts the test — showed that only 16.48 per cent of those who applied for the test in 2020 passed it. Only 16.6 per cent of students from Ukraine were able to pass the test. "There are thousands

of medical graduates who are still waiting to clear the test. They are unable to practice medicine in India. They keep going to various coaching institutes and studying. What is the point? I feel bad for the students," a senior doctor who has worked with medical education regulators said.

Competition in India

Dr B N Gangadhar, president of the Medical Assessment and Rating Board, under the National Medical Commission, said: "There are nearly 90,000 MBBS seats in the country... We will soon have 100 medical seats for 1 million population, and that is enough for us. When there are so many seats in the country, why should children go abroad?"

However, even with India increasing the number of MBBS seats, getting through to a college, let alone a government college, can be difficult.

More than 16 lakh students applied for NEET-UG for 2021. This means that for every MBBS seat in the country, there are more than 16 applicants.

In Ukraine, a country of 4.4 crore people, there are at least 25 medical colleges where Indians study. This means the country has at least one medical college for every 1.7 lakh people.

On the other hand, in India, which has a population of 138 crores, there are around 536 medical colleges. This comes to one medical college for every 25.7 lakh people. **FULL REPORT ON** www.indianexpress.com

Indian students who were evacuated from Ukraine are greeted by their family members at Delhi airport early on Sunday morning. *Gajendra Yadav*

688 return on Day 2: Journey to a Kyiv nightmare, back home through border

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

AT AROUND 3 am Sunday, a flight from Bucharest landed at Delhi's IGI Airport. Around 250 passengers who got off breathed a sigh of relief. These were the first of the students from war-torn Ukraine to land on Sunday, the second day of the evacuation.

On Sunday, 688 Indian nationals returned in three Air India evacuation flights from Bucharest, Romania, and Budapest, Hungary.

After the early-morning flight, another evacuation flight with 240 Indian nationals on board landed at IGI around 9.20 am Sunday, followed by the day's third flight, with 198 Indians on board, at 5.35 pm.

The first flight, carrying 219 people, landed in Mumbai on Saturday.

Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said approximately 13,000 Indians are stranded in Ukraine as of now.

Most students who returned in Sunday's early flight came from Chernivtsi, about 40 km from

Family members receive a student, who returned from Ukraine, in Ahmedabad on Sunday. *Nirmal Harindran*

Ukraine's border with Romania, said Shivam Soni, a student at Bukovinian State Medical University (BSMU). A majority of passengers on the flight were from BSMU, the Delhi resident added.

Ayna Mansoori, a first-year student at the same institute, said Chernivtsi was mostly safe. She said: "We went to Kyiv to take the flight on February 24. However, on the way, we got an email that the flight would be cancelled. We waited at Kyiv railway station for long, trying to get through to the Indian Embassy for help. But we

had to head back to Chernivtsi, and the journey that usually takes around eight hours took us a day. There were traffic jams... tanks, guns, and the military everywhere in Kyiv. Residents of the city were on the roads, carrying their luggage, trying to leave."

An Air India flight was scheduled to depart from Kyiv to Delhi on February 24, but was cancelled when Ukrainian airspace was closed for civilian flights. Students who tried to reach the airport either returned to their hostels, or were stuck in bunkers

in Kyiv, said Falak Ansari, a first-year student. "The university then divided us into batches, and we were sent home. Buses were arranged from the hostel to the border. At the hostel, all our luggage was put into a single room, and the other rooms are being vacated for Ukrainians who might want to stay."

"We are receiving messages from the university group saying that people are not able to cross over to Romania. There are long traffic jams all the way to the border. We had to walk 4-5 km to the border after the bus dropped us off," Falak added.

Both Ayna and Falak are from Ahmedabad. A bus has been arranged from the Delhi airport to take them home, Falak said.

Similarly, Telangana government had arranged a bus to take 17 students from the airport to Telangana Bhavan in Delhi. From there, transport will be arranged for students returning to the state, an official said. At the Arrival terminal of IGI, Haryana and UP governments had also displayed banners welcoming the students, offering them help and support. Gurkeerat Singh, a fourth-

year student of Uzhord National University in Ukraine was evacuated early Saturday morning. A resident of Muktsar's Udyakaran village, Gurkeerat said, "As we were close to Hungary border, things were normal in that part — there was no bombings, nor firing. But as war broke out, we were living in emergency conditions."

"There were 1,800 students in the university who were stuck, and 1,500 of them were from India," she said.

Anjali Vasaniya, 19, a native of Amreli, Gujarat, and a second-year student at BSMU, said, "Earlier, I had booked a return ticket on March 7 but it got cancelled after the war broke out. Then we were taken to the Romania border, from where our evacuation process started..."

Mahima Chawla, second-year BSMU student and a Haryana resident, said: "It was safer in Chernivtsi. There weren't too many problems. On the way to the border, there was a lot of traffic, since many people were trying to cross over to Romania."

WITH INPUTS FROM RAKHI JAGGA IN LUDHIANA; VAIBHAV JHA IN AHMEDABAD

Girl, 17, stays back to help host family

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 27

HOLED UP in a bunker in Kyiv and faced with the grave threat of war, a 17-year-old medical student from Haryana has steadfastly decided to remain in war-torn Ukraine to help the family of her landlord who has joined the nation's army to fight the advancing Russian forces.

When Neha first arrived in the east European nation, she was unable to find accommodation at a hostel and decided to

rent a space at the house of a construction engineer in the capital Kyiv. Her mother is a school teacher in Charkhi Dadri district while her father, who was in the Indian Army, died some years ago.

Savita Jakkhar, a family friend of Neha's, told *The Indian Express* on Sunday: "Neha is alright there... They are currently in a bunker in Kyiv. They are continuously hearing noises from outside," Savita, who hails from Jhanswa village in Jhajjar district, is currently a school teacher in Denmark. In a Facebook post, Savita said

the landlord joined the Ukrainian army three days ago while his wife and three children took shelter in a bunker. Neha is also with them. "My friend (Neha's mother) tried to evacuate her from there by contacting the embassy there after a lot of difficulties. But the girl did not want to return leaving three children and their mother alone in this time of crisis," Savita wrote.

"Despite all efforts by her mother, the girl is adamant to stay there. I wonder what gives her the courage to stand by that family in these difficult times..." the post said.

PM holds meeting on Ukraine crisis

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi held a high-level meeting on the Ukraine crisis on Sunday, official sources said.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was part of the meeting which was also attended by other top government officials.

Modi presided over the meeting immediately upon his return from Uttar Pradesh, where he addressed rallies as part of the BJP's campaign for the

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar at a meeting on Sunday. *Video grab*

ongoing state Assembly polls. A large number of Indians, mostly students, are stranded in Ukraine following Russia's attack on the country. India has begun evacuating them.

Modi has also spoken to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy, with India calling for dialogue to defuse the crisis.

Losing hope of evacuation, Indian students spend sleepless nights with little or no food

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

ELIZABETH DEVASIA, a medical student from Kerala who studies at Karazin National University in Kharkiv, has been sleeping in a metro station for four nights since the war broke out in Ukraine.

With the city being the centre of clashes between the Russian army and Ukrainians, she along with 18 other Indian students at the metro station

hasn't been able to step outside. "We ate whatever we carried with us but now we have run out of food," she told *The Indian Express* over phone on Sunday.

She couldn't recall what exactly her last meal was. She asked her friend and replied, "I had some bread yesterday." Water supply was started on Sunday to the metro station, where nearly 500 people have taken refuge. "The people here are trying to arrange some food too, but with constant fighting that may not be possible,"

Elizabeth said. Although the Indian embassy has been asking students to take trains to cities in the west of the country, Elizabeth said none of her friends were able to step out of the metro station on Sunday due to heavy shelling.

After India abstained from vote at the UNSC, Devasia said her friend was harassed by the Ukrainian guards at the metro station he took refuge in.

Anurag Punia of Haryana, a third-year medical student at Kharkiv National Medical

Indians on the fourth evacuation flight from Bucharest. *Twitter/@DrSJaishankar*

University, was stranded in Kyiv when the city airport was closed just before he was to board a

flight to India. He has been living in a school just 20 metres from the Indian embassy since. He, however, says that the Indian embassy hasn't really been able to help him or the 450 others living at the school.

With the trains being the only public transport functioning, Punia was elated when he was told that seats were booked for students to reach western border towns of Ivano and Chernivtsi on Saturday. "Over 250 people reached the train station. But there were no

embassy officials there. There were locals carrying guns and they did not let us board the train," said Punia.

He said when they reached back there were only 180 people left at the school. "We don't know where the others went. We can't contact them."

Adhivesh Dhama, a medical college student from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh who reached Kyiv less than three months ago, said he is stuck with 250 other students at a hostel in the Kyiv Medical College. He said he has

lost all hope of evacuation and is scared of the armed locals.

"There is no law here and the government has armed the locals. Four men with guns broke the doors and forcibly entered the gym in the basement of our hostel. Seeing that there were so many of us, they left. Now, we have blocked the doorway with furniture and branches of tree. We haven't slept for three days," said Dhama.

When his parents called the embassy, they were asked to communicate with the person

who arranges for admission and travel to Ukraine for the medical students and arrange a bus to the border.

"We have spoken to so many bus drivers. We told them we will pay 10 to 20 lakh if they ask for it for dropping us to the border. But no one agreed. They say they do not have any fuel left. The Indian embassy is evacuating those who are able to cross the border. Those living in cities like Lviv close to Polish border can reach there. We are over 900 km away, how do we go there?"

Amid rumours of being hired by TRS, Kishor visits Telangana

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD FEB 27

AMID speculation that the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) is contemplating seeking the services of Prashant Kishor to form a strategy for the next election, the political strategist visited Kaleshwaram project in Telangana's Jayashankar Bhupalpally district on Sunday.

Kishor was accompanied by actor Prakash Raj, a known critic of the Union government who had unsuccessfully contested



Prashant Kishor

the 2019 Lok Sabha polls from Bengaluru Central constituency as an Independent.

No one in either the TRS or the state government replied to questions on the purpose of Kishor and Prakash Raj's visit.

With Telangana Chief Minister, K Chandrababtu Naidu, seeking to play a major role at the national level, sources said Kishor may be hired as an adviser.

As part of the visit to the state, Kishor and Prakash Raj also went to other reservoirs created under the Kaleshwaram project, including the huge Mallanna Sagar Reservoir. Prakash Raj was present in Mumbai last week when KCR met his Maharashtra counterpart, Uddhav Thackeray, although what role he is going to play in Telangana politics is still unclear. Telangana is slated to go to the polls next year.

SC quashes Bihar notification to declare Lohar caste ST

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, FEBRUARY 27

THE SUPREME COURT has quashed a 2016 Bihar government notification, through which the government had given people from Lohar caste the status of Scheduled Tribes (ST) — from the earlier Extremely Backward Classes (EBC).

The court ruled that Bihar's Lohar or Lohara community is not the same as 'Lohra or Lohra', which are ST communities in several districts.

The court also asked the state government to pay Rs 5 lakh as costs the petitioner may have in-

curred because a case was lodged against him, and ruled, "We quash the impugned Notification."

The court's verdict, which came on February 21, was in response to a PIL, filed by one Sunil Kumar Rai from Bihar, challenging the changed status of Lohars.

According to the petitioner, police issued non-bailable warrants against him following a case filed by a Lohar resident, and that he faced subsequent harassment.

Lohars in Bihar, constituting nearly 2 per cent of the state's population, benefitted in government jobs since their changed caste status since August 23, 2016.

The court ruled that Bihar's Lohar or Lohara community is not the same as 'Lohra or Lohra', which are ST communities in several districts

The Supreme Court's division bench of justices KM Joseph and Hrishikesh Roy stated in their judgement: "The Lohar community in Bihar is not entitled to be treated as members of the Scheduled Tribe... It is the case of the petitioners that this is per se

unconstitutional and illegal. It occasions breach of Articles 14 and 21 of Constitution. What is more, relying upon the same, proceedings have been initiated against the petitioners under the provisions of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Preventions of Atrocities Act), 1989..."

The court SC ruled: "Lohra or 'Loharas' are thus different from 'Lohar' in Bihar, as 'Lohars', as noticed hereinbefore, are ranked with 'Koiris' and 'Kurmis', whereas 'Lohra' or 'Loharas' are merely sub-castes, a sect of Mundas in Chhotanagpur or sub-tribes of Asurs who are Scheduled Tribes."

The court order also said:

"While 'Lohara' is a member of Scheduled Tribe, 'Lohar' is not. Therefore, while we have quashed the notification, it must not be understood as meaning that 'Lohara', which is already included in the category of Scheduled Tribe, is to be affected by this judgment. We clarify that the quashing of the impugned notification will be qua 'Lohar' community and the Lohara will continue to get the benefit vouchers for them under the Presidential Order as amended by the Acts."

Ruling JD (U) and BJP leaders refrained from commenting on the matter, as it is a "judicial process".



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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

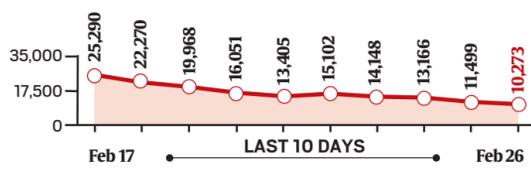
DASHBOARD, AS ON FEB 26

727 DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN

New cases 10,273 | **Active cases** 1,11,472 | **Deaths** 243

Weekly CFR: 0.41% | Overall CFR: 1.21% | Total deaths: 5,13,724

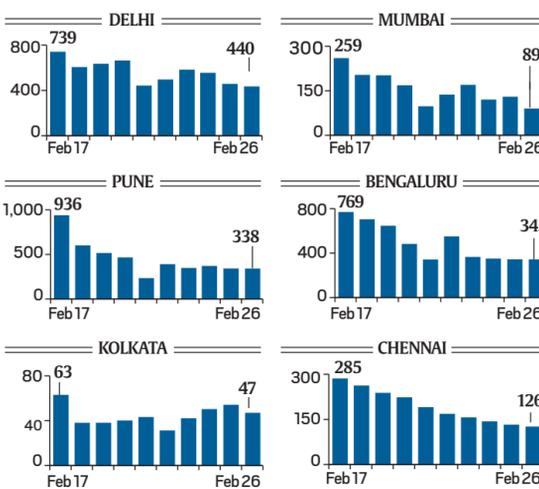
NEW CASES, DAILY



SURGE IN THE STATES

State	ON FEBRUARY 26			Weekly positivity
	New cases	Active cases	Deaths	
Kerala	3,262	33,782	181	8.94%
Mizoram	901	7,599	0	19.94%
Maharashtra	893	7,811	9	1.22%
Rajasthan	648	5,542	0	2.48%
Karnataka	514	6,978	19	1.07%

CASES IN THE CITIES, LAST 10 DAYS

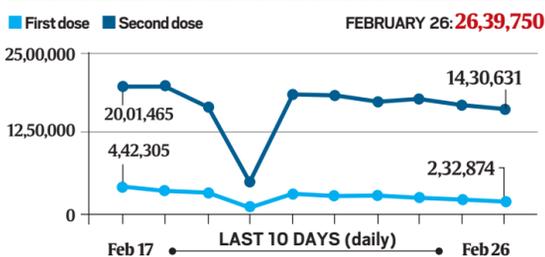


TOTAL TESTS 76,67,57,518

TESTS ON FEB 26 10,22,204 | WEEKLY POSITIVITY 1.26% | OVERALL POSITIVITY 5.60%

INDIA TOTAL DOSES 177,44,08,129

(Adults 1st dose: 90,91,62,288; 2nd: 76,31,58,359; 15-18 age group 1st dose: 5,47,63,188; 2nd: 2,73,46,818; Precautionary: 1,99,77,476)



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SIMPLY PUT

The German turnaround

Germany, primary beneficiary of Nord Stream 2, is a key player in the conflict in Ukraine. This past week, it has changed its policy in three major ways, contributing to NATO's stronger response to Putin's aggression.

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

AS THE United States and European Union mount a series of punitive measures against Russia, there is clear evidence of a very significant change in stance of a key member of NATO, and the country with enormous stakes in the war as the main beneficiary of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline: Germany.

In at least three major decisions made over the past week, Berlin has moved from earlier stated positions to squarely confront Moscow, largely to accommodate growing pressure from NATO allies as Russia moves its offensive deeper into Ukraine. This has been the central factor in strengthening the united western front against President Vladimir Putin on both sanctions and other measures.

On Sunday, Chancellor Olaf Scholz also announced a commitment of €100 billion to a special fund for Germany's armed forces, raising the country's defence spending to more than 2% of GDP. This, Scholz told the Bundestag, was necessary "to protect our freedom and our democracy". He also said that "Germany stands closely by Ukraine's side."

Turnaround on SWIFT ban

The US and EU on Saturday moved to partially cut off a number of Russian banks from the main international payment gateway, SWIFT, alongside a freeze on the assets of Russia's central bank. While the intention of the moves is to "further isolate Russia from the international financial system", Germany is learnt to have earlier been a fence-sitter on invoking the SWIFT ban. It had been reluctant because it believed such a move could trigger major collateral damage in Germany for businesses that work with Russia, or for gas deliveries that come from Russia to Germany.

Reports suggest that the "targeted sanctions" are a halfway house, primarily on account of the objections that Germany had raised against full-scale sanctions. But still, the fact that sanctions have been initiated indicates that Germany has decisively come on board.

Reversal of arms supply policy

On Saturday, Germany reversed its historical policy of not sending weapons to conflict zones. After having initially refused to send weapons to support Ukraine in the early days of the conflict, Berlin has now agreed to a major armaments delivery, including anti-tank weapons, surface-to-air missiles, and rocket-propelled grenades. The policy shift has brought Germany in line with other NATO allies on the issue of supplying weapons.

The shift is important because Germany's long-standing policy of not sending weapons to crisis zones is rooted in its own historical past, as well as a deep reluctance to take any step that might fuel conflicts further.

Germany has said it will send weapons to Ukraine, both directly across its own borders, and indirectly through countries such as the Netherlands and Estonia. From its own stockpile, it will send 1,000 anti-tank weapons and 500 Stinger anti-aircraft defence systems. It has authorised the Netherlands to send 400 rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and asked Estonia to send nine howitzer artillery guns.

While the move is largely symbolic, it does send out a clear signal. "There was no other response possible to Putin's aggression," Scholz told the special session of the Bundestag, DW reported.

Rethink on Nord Stream 2

The third major issue on which Germany



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz receives a standing ovation while addressing the Bundestag on Sunday. Reuters

has yielded is the future of Nord Stream 2. Earlier this week, Berlin put the certification of the gas pipeline project on hold. The \$11-billion pipeline had already driven a wedge between Germany and the US, but the invasion of Ukraine decisively forced Berlin's hand.

The project, owned by Russia's state-owned Gazprom, runs from western Siberia to Germany, and will double the capacity of the already-in-use Nord Stream pipeline. The new pipeline bypasses the overland route through Ukraine. German regulators had not issued the final legal clearances needed to start operations, and the move by Berlin has put the certification of the project on indefinite hold.

The US considers the pipeline a potential geopolitical tool for Russia to increase its leverage with Europe. While that is likely the case, Germany had argued the concerns of energy-starved Europe. Russia met more than half of natural gas supplies to Germany in 2020, according to IHS Markit.

Also, while Germany will be the big beneficiary, some gas will also be piped to Austria, Italy, and other Central and Eastern European nations. Besides Gazprom, the pipeline has been built with the backing of five European firms: Austria's OMV, France's Engie, Britain's Shell, Germany's Uniper, and a unit of BASF, all of which have stakes in the project.

In December, with tensions rising, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock had made it clear that she believed Nord Stream 2 "should be on the

table" if the Russians attacked Ukraine. And Scholz had promised his government would "do everything" to prevent Russia from using Nord Stream 2 to cripple Ukraine's economy.

Scholz's predecessor, Chancellor Angela Merkel had, however, fended off demands from German lawmakers to drop the project after the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny in 2020. Among the backers of the pipeline is Gerhard Schroeder of Scholz's own SPD Party, who was Germany's chancellor before Merkel. Schroeder holds key posts at the Russian state oil company Rosneft and Nord Stream.

Given the pulls and pressures within Germany, the halting of the certification process is very significant.

SWIFT: what it is, and how limiting Russia access helps

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

THE US and the EU have decided to partially exercise the nuclear option as far as economic sanctions are concerned: cutting off a number of Russian banks from the main international payment gateway, SWIFT. The assets of Russia's central bank are also expected to be frozen, constraining Russia's ability to access its overseas reserves. The intention of the moves is to "further isolate Russia from the international financial system", the Americans and Europeans said in a joint statement.

These sanctions are expected to deliver a significant hit to Russia, which is heavily reliant on the SWIFT platform for its key natural resources trade. In the financial world, kicking a country out of SWIFT is like cutting off the Internet. So far, only one country — Iran — has been cut off from SWIFT, which resulted in Tehran losing a third of its foreign trade.

For now, only some Russian banks have been covered. The US and its allies have reserved the option of expanding it to a pan-country ban. However, these decisions were announced before President Vladimir Putin threw down the gauntlet later on Sunday, dramatically raising the stakes in the war by putting his nuclear forces on high alert.

The SWIFT platform

SWIFT stands for the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication. It is a secure platform for financial institutions to exchange information about global monetary transactions such as money transfers. While SWIFT does not actually move money, it operates as a middleman to verify information of transactions by providing secure financial messaging services to more than 11,000 banks in over 200 countries.

SWIFT is based in Belgium, and is overseen by the central banks from 11 industrialised countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, besides Belgium.

Impact of the action

Excluding Russian banks from the SWIFT platform will, in the words of the White House, make the country rely on "the telephone or a fax machine" to make payments.

According to former Russian Central Bank deputy chairman Sergei Aleksashenko: "There is going to be a catastrophe on the Russian currency market on Monday."

Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, said the move to paralyse the assets of Russia's central bank would stop the Kremlin from "using its war chest" of forex reserves. Moscow has been building up a cushion of foreign currency in the wake of previous sanctions in 2014, with reserves touching a record high of \$630 billion in January 2022. She said there would be action against the so-called "golden passports" which "let wealthy Russians connected to the Russian government become citizens of our countries and gain access to our financial systems".

Targeting only some Russian banks seems to be aimed at keeping the option of further escalation open, while ensuring the sanctions have the maximum possible impact on Moscow but preventing a major impact on European companies dealing with Russian banks for payments for their gas imports.

Will it work?

While attempts have been made to work around to SWIFT system, they have not been very effective. During the last seven years, Russia too has worked on alternatives, including the SPFS (System for Transfer of Financial Messages), an equivalent of SWIFT developed by the Central Bank of Russia.

The Russians are reported to be collaborating with the Chinese on a venture that could be a potential challenger to SWIFT. It remains to be seen whether Moscow can leverage this platform to some extent to get around the partial SWIFT ban.

While these measures may take some time to have an impact, they signal a strong resolve to act against Russia from the Western nations. Ukraine's PM Denys Shmyhal said they were a "real help during this dark time".

The ISS, Russia's participation, and its threat to let it fall to Earth

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, FEBRUARY 27

A WIDELY circulated comment by the chief of Russia's space agency, Dmitry Rogozin, has ignited fears that the tension following Russia's invasion of Ukraine could have consequences for the International Space Station (ISS), the laboratory in space where the United States, Russia and some other countries work as partners.

In a series of threatening tweets, Rogozin said Russia could respond to the US sanctions by letting the ISS fall from space. He said the ISS, a 420-tonne spacecraft, the largest human-made structure in space, could drop over US or Europe, or over India and China. Its orbital flight path usually does not take it over most of Russian territory.

The ISS project

The ISS is the only operational space laboratory as of now, orbiting the Earth in a trajectory about 400 km above. It is operated by

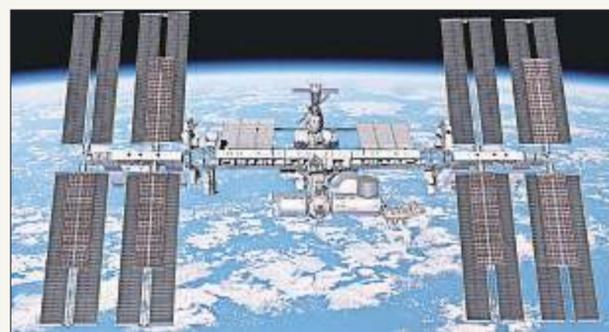
more than 15 partner countries. Apart from Russia and the US, Canada, Japan and several members of the European Space Agency are partners in the ISS.

The football-field-sized ISS travels at about 28,000 km per hour. It completes one trip around the Earth in about one-and-a-half hours, or about 16 such orbits in a day.

The ISS has been manned continuously since the start of operations in 1998. At any given time, there is a crew of six astronauts on board. Right now, seven astronauts — four from the US, two from Russia (which prefers to call them cosmonauts) and one from Germany — are at the ISS. According to NASA, 240 individuals from 19 countries have so far been to the ISS.

The ISS is used for carrying out a variety of zero-gravity experiments, space exploratory studies, and technology development.

The ISS is not the first space station to be built and operated. Several smaller space stations have been used earlier, the most famous of which have been the Russian Mir space station that operated in the 1980s, and



US, Russia, Canada, Japan and several European countries are part of ISS. NASA

the American Skylab.

The ISS has been in operation since 1998 and is expected to continue until at least 2028. Russia, however, has indicated that it

might pull out of the collaboration earlier, possibly by 2024. Replacements for the ISS are already being planned. Several countries including India and China have ambitions to

put up their own space stations. China has already tested at least two prototypes.

The Russian threat

The threat from the Russian space agency chief emanates from the fact that Russia provides the propulsion system that keeps the ISS in its defined orbit. The ISS has two broad segments, one each managed by the US and Russia. While the US manages power and the systems that make the spacecraft habitable, Russia is responsible for keeping it in orbit.

ISS is not entirely in zero-gravity space; it does encounter a little bit of gravity. Also, it loses a bit of energy as it moves around the Earth. Left to itself, the ISS would fall. The Russians periodically send thrusters that attach themselves to the ISS and impart the required momentum to keep it going.

Rogozin's threat implied that the US and other countries would not be able to keep the ISS from falling down if Russia withdrew its support. Incidentally, Elon Musk, the billionaire owner of SpaceX, the largest private space enterprise which has been carrying

both astronauts as well as cargo to the ISS, responded by saying that his company could step in and provide the propulsion to the facility should the Russians abandon it.

US-Russia cooperation

The ISS is the most visible element of a wide-ranging space collaboration between the US and Russia. It has so far remained immune to geopolitical tensions that regularly prevail between the two countries. For example, the previous crisis in Ukraine, when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, had no impact on the ISS collaboration.

This time, too, Rogozin's threat is not being seen as something Russia was seriously contemplating, and NASA played it down. But the current conflict can potentially affect space cooperation in other ways. Already, there are reports that Russia might decide to keep the US out of a planned mission to Venus, which the two countries were working to send together. The Venera-D mission to Venus is planned for 2029, and until now it was supposed to be a joint US-Russia mission.

14 IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

MOHAMMAD SHAMI, FAST BOWLER, TEAM INDIA

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

India's fast bowler Mohammad Shami talks about the vitriolic trolling he was subjected to after the T20 World Cup game against Pakistan and his life-changing journey from a backward village to worldwide fame. The session was moderated by Deputy Associate Editor Sriram Veera

Gaurav Bhatt: When you were young, your father had prepared a concrete pitch, not just for you but the village. How were those days?

There was some struggle in that phase. We were all young and no one knew the direction one would take. It depended on passion, how much you played and how much skill you had acquired. We did not have much idea about the game except whatever we saw on television. We tried to execute what we heard. My father is a friendly person and used to help others out. Ours is a political family, so people would come and go. When we laid out the concrete pitch in that area, there was no public facility in the locality except a government school. Behind it was our compound, and we made a pitch because it was in nobody's way and was easily accessible. Then local kids started coming in. We let them in and never felt like preventing them from entering the space. We formed groups and played against each other. We had great fun.

Gaurav Bhatt: Your childhood coach Badrudin says that you were in the habit of collecting cricket balls. How big was your collection?

Batsmen have a fondness for fiddling around with the ball and bowlers like to play around with the bat. But my focus or love was always the ball. What natural shots I had as a batsman then, I still have them today (smiles wryly). With the ball, I felt each had a distinct trait. I knew how much *harkat* (movement) the ball does, how much it swings, how much it reverses. So I never felt like throwing any ball away. I would keep each and use it in the nets the next day. If it didn't come good on the nets, I would give it to kids in the village.

Gaurav Bhatt: You loved *bhujia* and *biryani* in your childhood. But you had to sacrifice your indulgence as your career progressed.

Back then, our village was nondescript, with narrow roads and not too many shops. Things have changed now, there are good roads, big shops, people have started to go out and learn about different cultures. Growing up, most of the shops belonged to my friends' families. So every evening, we would go on our usual round and find familiar faces everywhere. The last shop was the *bhujia* one. We ate whatever we felt like because it was ours and we didn't have to think much about propriety. That time we didn't care much about our diet either. We ate whatever we wanted, be it *bhujia* or *biryani* (laughs out loudly).

I eat the same even now and it tastes just the same. When I go home, I still have a lot of green mangoes, the mango grove is still there. The old shops are there, too, but have been modernised. A lot of things have changed. The way people dress up has changed, the way they speak has changed. It feels good that they have understood there is a world outside this village. It is not their mistake that they were born in a village, which had a low rate of literacy and lacked education facilities some 15-20 years ago. Now it is well-developed. The internet, multimedia and Android phones have opened their eyes and sensibilities to the world. It feels nice that a lot has changed. The new generation has moved out of the village in pursuit of education and jobs. So the concept of people sitting around has changed. But the food remains the same. You get the pure stuff even now.

Shamik Chakrabarty: So, your love for *biryani* has faded in these days of fitness?

I always love it. But I have to be careful that I don't put on weight. I probably eat it once a month from 28 times before (laughs). I have never forgotten its flavour.

Sriram Veera: Can you talk about the lovely seam presentation you manage? We hear that in your growing up years you would almost sleep with a ball, always be with it. Can you talk about that love for the cherry?

God certainly gives you some skill but the rest you need to develop. No one is born a scientist. You might be intelligent but to become a scientist, you have to work hard and change yourself. Similarly, no one is born a batsman or bowler, you have to become one. There is hard work in every success story. We fast bowlers like to get the feel, the grip, and I always try to release the ball along the seam (even when I am just trying with it). If you are not watching the replay or slow motion on televi-



IDEA EXCHANGE

WHY
MOHAMMAD
SHAMI

Mohammad Shami's meteoric rise from a village is a great example of the democratisation of cricket in the country. He is best suited to advise youngsters from small towns how to leap over various obstacles in pursuit of their dream

sion, you will have no idea about how much the ball had swung, from where it swung or the seam position. Initially, I used to wonder, "Oh the ball seam has gone so straight, but I did not see the ball after it left my hand." Then I understood the movement depended on my hand. It felt great.

Whichever job you choose, be it as a cricketer or some other profession, if you don't love it, or if you are not committed to it, you won't be successful because you have to repeat and repeat. The more you repeat, the better your flow would be and you move forward. So if you don't love the bat, I don't think you could be a better batsman. You have to care, you have to love. My mindset is that if I have to use the ball the next day, or for three-four days, I have to maintain it. That's my duty. Even in the Indian team, if I like a ball, I tell the coaches that I would like to use it the following day. There are some balls that give you a feel when they leave your hand. It seems that each ball would do the things you want it to do and that it would complement your skills.

Sriram Veera: During the 2018 Test series in England, you were closely observing how James Anderson bowled. What did you learn?

Anderson is a different player when he plays at home and when he plays overseas. When he's playing at home, I observe what is his approach, at what length does he bowl, how much swing he would get and how does he control the swing. He has taken so many wickets, so obviously, there's something special about him. Therefore, it is important to watch the bowler that you consider to be good, understand his skill and see if it can benefit yourself.

Sandeep Dwivedi: India was known as the land of spinners but fast bowlers like you have changed the mindset.

Indian pacers were bowling bouncers in the U19 World Cup, too. Do you think the image of Indian cricket has changed?

There is a lot of difference between earlier teams and this one, and the difference in results especially is immense. The fast bowling unit, or even the overall bowling unit, that we formed after 2015 is on a different level. Be it in fielding, fitness or batting, we

have changed completely compared to the old Indian team. We have won everywhere, given befitting replies everywhere. If you look at the contribution of the bowling unit, understand the boys have contributed with the bat also. It is a very good sign for the Indian team and I hope it will continue like this in the future too.

Sandeep Dwivedi: Batsmen have long been superstars in cricket. Do you think time has come to give hard working bowlers their due too? Be it rules or protective equipment, things are so much in favour of batsmen.

I believe it is bowlers who bring you into the game in any format. Whenever the Indian bowlers have done well, you have got the results for years now. All rules are in favour of batsmen, why not some



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

in favour of bowlers? A no-ball brings a free hit, the batsman cannot get out. Fair enough, but you have to give some benefit to the bowlers, too.

Abhishek Purohit: I remember watching you for the first time in the Duleep Trophy final in 2012. You took eight wickets in an innings win for the East Zone, dismissing the likes of Mohammed Kaif and Naman Ojha. You would go on to play for India in a year. Did you feel then that the chance would come so soon?

Honestly, I did not know. I knew I had got a platform but it was my job to work hard. At that time, I had not even dreamt that I would play for India in a year's time. After that, I did well with both the bat and ball for India A and also went to New Zealand with India A. I played for India after that. It has been a very good journey overall and I believe the Indian team picked me at the right time.

Sriram Veera: There was a phase in your personal life that was threatening to spill over into your professional career. It seemed you had a lot of anger, as the bowling coach Bharat Arun once said. Then you went to the NCA, worked on your fitness and re-focused. What was going on in your mind at that time?

My family has always stood by me during tough times. The coaches (Ravi Shastri and Arun) met me when I had already come out of the fight. I had decided by then that I should focus on the game and on my fitness. They gave me good advice and appreciated that I had done well, fought the situation and returned to the field. They told me how it would keep me occupied, divert my attention and help me improve my skills. As far as the fight goes, you have to keep fighting one thing or the other all your life.

Devendra Pandey: What was your reaction when you saw Jasprit Bumrah bowl for the first time? And what's his one quality that you wished you had?

The first time I saw him was during the IPL. It felt a bit strange seeing him because of his bowling action. I wondered how someone could bowl so fast with that action and where he got the power from. When he got drafted in the Indian team, I knew him better. He performed and became part of the Test team. Today, you see a different Jasprit Bumrah. He has such control, he has everything.

The one thing I would love to have from him is his yorker. Such a lovely ball. It's fun to bowl together. With the kind of Test match bowling we have now, I don't think we ever had such a period in our cricketing history. If you look at our graph for the last five years, I feel it is the highest. I enjoy bowling with Jassi, Umesh, Ishant and all of them. We know each other's ability. The best quality of this bowling unit is that whenever someone is down, we lift each other up and give confidence. These are the things one remembers in life. We walk together through thick and thin.

Devendra Pandey: One batsman you don't like bowling to at the nets?

We are professionals, it's never a case of likes. The BCCI pays us so well to do what we like, so one enjoys bowling (laughs). But no one can irritate you like Cheteshwar Pujara. As everyone knows, unless he hits 100 to 200 balls, he doesn't get sleep!

Shamik Chakrabarty: What were the reasons for our failure in the T20 World Cup; there were huge expectations. What went wrong?

Yes, there were great expectations. But we are also human. Mistakes can happen. We didn't execute properly and I admit

that, but it's not like that we can always execute 100 per cent and no team can defeat us. It doesn't work like that. It's a game.

Sriram Veera: How important is a captain and what kind of support did Kohli extend to you?

The captain plays a big role, be it on the bowling or batting side. Everything depends on a captain's demand. The one thing I like about Virat is his energy. And the second is that he always supports the bowlers. He is always around the bowlers, planning strategies with them. And in case the plan isn't working, he agrees to change it. It is good if the captain is on your side, you feel comfortable.

Sriram Veera: Kohli supported you

Sandeep Dwivedi: Do you think people understand the effort and thought that go behind your bowling? Do you think they can appreciate it?

The fast bowling unit, or even the overall bowling unit, we have formed after 2015 is on a different level. Be it fielding, fitness, batting, everything has changed completely compared to the old team. We've won everywhere

The real fans would definitely appreciate it. Even those who have played a little bit of the game can understand it. But for those who look for controversy, I don't care what they think or whether they appreciate my game or not. I don't care if they are laughing or crying. True fans and my team-mates do understand. Of course, I am also hurt inside if runs go. I respect that sentiment in the true fans and team-mates. Because I am also hurt. Just as I am disappointed, I can understand true fans are also disappointed. I always respect true fans. Don't care about the abusers.

Sriram Veera: What is the role of faith in your life?

Har insaan ka mazhab alag hai, har insaan usko alag tarah se maanta hai (Everyone has a different faith and everyone follows it in their own way). But I will say one thing, everyone believes in the almighty. In English, he is called God, in Hindi he is Bhagwan and in Urdu he is Allah. At the end of the day, it is the same thing. You need to look within to see who you believe in and who you are. And that's how you will be closer to reality.

Sriram Veera: Cricket is a beautiful sport, a bubble away from all these differences in real life. What does cricket mean to you?

Cricket has given me an identity. There can't be anything bigger. It has given me, my family and those around me everything. The place where I live is seen as Mohammad Shami's region, my family is seen as Mohammad Shami's parents. Forget what role cricket has played in my life, it is my life, it is everything. If there is anything for me after my parents, it has to be cricket and my loyalty to the game. I don't think there can be anything more important than that. It has made me, after my parents. So one should respect cricket.

Parveen Dogra: In your formative years, which bowlers did you admire and collect posters of?

I never collected any posters but did like the fast bowling units. West Indies used to be very good, going by the videos and records. Pakistan also had a good time with Akram, Younis and Akhtar. Australia was good with Brett Lee and company. I like different fast bowlers, search for similarities with my bowling and try to execute better.

Tushar Bhaduri: Can you talk about the rotation system? Do you decide what games to sit out? How does it work?

Who has the courage, which bowler or batsman has the *himmat* to say that he wants to sit out? No one even wishes to sit out. Of course, there is something called workload management. I would agree with it to an extent but at times I think there are some minus points in it as well. I feel that at times when you are in good form and in great rhythm, you shouldn't stop playing. Of course, at times I feel, for the sake of recovery, I need to take a break. You have to do it smartly.

Parveen Dogra: Indian teenagers just won the U-19 World Cup. Did anyone catch your eye and what's your message for them?

They performed well. The bowlers and batsmen; both did well. Spinners did a particularly good job as the ball was turning a lot. In such games, the role of captaincy becomes important and Yash Dhull did a very good job. Congratulations to all of them from my heart and I would just like to say one thing: Keep working hard. You have to work really, really hard. It's a long road. You have got a platform now and you have to keep improving.

Cricket has given me an identity. If there is anything for me after my parents, it has to be cricket and my loyalty to the game. I don't think there can be anything more important than cricket. It is my life, it is everything



MEANWHILE

'HEARTBROKEN' POPE SLAMS WARMONGERS

Pope Francis on Sunday made an impassioned call for humanitarian corridors to help refugees leave Ukraine and said those who make war should not be deluded into thinking that God is on their side. As some in his audience in St. Peter's Square held large Ukrainian flags, Francis said his "heart is broken" and invited people to take part in an international day of prayer and fasting for peace which he has called for Ash Wednesday, March 2.

West unleashes SWIFT bans on Russia

Cuts banks in country from financial system

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 27

THE US and European nations agreed Saturday to impose the most potentially crippling financial penalties yet on Russia over its unrelenting invasion of Ukraine, going after the central bank reserves that underpin the Russian economy and severing some Russian banks from a vital global financial network.

The decision, announced as Ukrainian forces battled Saturday to hold Russian forces back from

Ukraine's capital and residents sheltered in subway tunnels, basements and underground garages, has potential to spread the pain of Western retaliation for President Vladimir Putin's invasion to ordinary Russians far more than previous rounds of penalties.

The European Union, United States, United Kingdom and other allies have steadily stepped up the intensity of their sanctions since Russia launched the invasion late last week. While US and European officials made clear they still were working out the mechanics of how to implement the latest measures, and intend to spare Russia's oil and natural gas exports, the sanctions in total potentially could amount to some of the toughest levied on a nation in modern times. If fully carried

out as planned, the measures will severely damage the Russian economy and markedly constrain its ability to import and export goods.

The central bank restrictions target access to the more than \$600 billion in reserves that the Kremlin has at its disposal, and are meant to block Russia's ability to support the ruble as it plunges in value amid tightening Western sanctions.

Saturday's move also includes cutting key Russian banks out of the SWIFT financial messaging system, which daily moves countless billions of dollars around more than 11,000 banks and other financial institutions around the world. The fine print of the sanctions was still being ironed out over the weekend, officials said.



Citizen soldiers join Ukrainian forces to help slow Russia's advance in key cities

THE NEW YORK TIMES
LVIV, FEBRUARY 27

THE UKRAINIAN army, with the assistance of growing ranks of citizen soldiers, said on Sunday that it had slowed Russia's advance by wreaking havoc on Russian supply lines while fighting to keep control over the cities of Kyiv and Kharkiv.

"Enemy troops, deprived of timely replenishment of fuel and ammunition, are stopped," the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said in a state-

ment at 6 am on Sunday. "The personnel of the occupying forces, the vast majority of whom are young conscripts, are exhausted by previous military exercises and have low morale."

It was impossible to independently verify the claims made in the statement, but the Ukrainian military's focus on what it suggested was a lack of will on the Russian side seemed part of a broader strategy to tap into the resolve of a nation fighting to hold onto its independence and to undermine the determination of the Russian forces.

For its part, Russia's Ministry of Defense said on Sunday that its military had completely blockaded the Ukrainian port cities of Kherson and Berdyansk.

The main tactic of the Russian forces, according to the Ukrainian military, is to capture small towns, villages and highways, where some of the most pitched fighting was thought to be taking place.

On Saturday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine called on people from around the world to come and help defend Ukraine.

IN BRIEF



ANTI-WAR PROTESTS IN BERLIN: People walk down the boulevard 'Strasse des 17. Juni' in Berlin on Sunday. AP

Israel offers to mediate, bring both sides closer together: Kremlin

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett offered on Sunday to mediate an end to the Ukraine hostilities during a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Kremlin said. The offer followed months of Ukrainian appeals to Israel to serve as intermediary. An Israeli official said Bennett told Putin that Israel "was prepared to assist at any time, and as requested, to assist in resolving the crisis and bringing the sides closer together".

Belarus holds referendum to renounce non-nuclear status



People in an underground parking garage turned into bomb shelter in Kyiv. AP

Belarus held a referendum on Sunday to adopt a new constitution that would ditch its non-nuclear status at a time when the country has become a launchpad for Russian troops invading Ukraine and marching on Kyiv. The vote, almost certain to pass under the tightly controlled rule of President Alexander Lukashenko, could see

nuclear weapons on Belarusian soil for the first time since the country gave them up after the fall of the Soviet Union. On Sunday, speaking at a polling station, Lukashenko said he could ask Russia to return nuclear weapons to Belarus. Reuters

Boycott call for Russian vodka

Vodka is now the target of international anger over the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In New Hampshire, where liquor and wine are sold through state-run stores, Gov. Chris Sununu, a Republican, announced on Saturday the removal of "Russian-made and Russian-branded spirits from our liquor and wine outlets until further notice." In Ohio, where the state contracts with private businesses to sell liquor, Gov. Mike DeWine, also a Republican, announced a halt to state purchases and sales of Russian Standard Vodka. NYT



Volunteers sort empty bottles to be used for Molotov cocktails in a parking lot in Dnipro on Sunday. NYT

REACTIONS ELSEWHERE

Iranians chant 'death to Putin' as they defy govt — a Moscow ally

FARNAZ FASSIHI
FEBRUARY 27

CHANTING "DEATH TO Putin," a crowd of Iranians defied their government, an ally of Russia, by protesting outside the Ukrainian Embassy in Tehran on Saturday night, according to videos posted on social media.

The protest's organisers had issued a call for people to join a public condemnation of the war in Ukraine and show solidarity with its people. The demonstrators waved Ukrainian flags, clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live Ukraine" and "The Russian Embassy is a den of spies." Security guards watched over the crowd, which included children, but did not interfere, videos showed.



Vladimir V. Putin

There had also been calls to demonstrate outside the Russian Embassy, but there was no indication that protesters had gathered there. A photograph shared on social media showed members of the Iranian special forces on motorcycles guarding the Russian Embassy and blocking

access to its gates.

The Iranian government has not outright endorsed the invasion of Ukraine, but it has expressed support for Russia's position. That appears to be deepening the growing rift between Iran's leaders and its people. Many Iranians harbour deep mistrust of Russia and have expressed outrage on social media about the government's attitude toward the war.

"Iran must show its independence by condemning Russia's invasion," Mottahari wrote. A popular Iranian newspaper, Shahrvarad ran a photo of Putin in emperor's clothes, with the headline "King Putin: Is the former K.G.B. officer taking the world into a new Cold War?" The newspaper said the Red Crescent was ready to provide medical assistance to Ukraine. NYT

'Putin the Great': Chinese Internet approves invasion

LI YUAN
FEBRUARY 27

IF PRESIDENT Vladimir V. Putin is looking for international support and approval for his invasion of Ukraine, he can turn to the Chinese Internet.

Its users have called him "Putin the Great," "the best legacy of the former Soviet Union" and "the greatest strategist of this century." They have chastised Russians who protested against the war, saying they had been brainwashed by the United States.

Putin's speech on Thursday, which essentially portrayed the conflict as one waged against the West, won loud cheers on Chinese social media. Many people said they were moved to tears. "If I were Russian, Putin would be my faith, my light," wrote @jinyu-

jiyiliangxiaokou, a user of the Twitter-like platform Weibo.

As the world overwhelmingly condemns Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Chinese internet, for the most part, is pro-Russia, pro-war and pro-Putin.

Putin's portrayal of Russia as a victim of the West's political, ideological and military aggression has resonated deeply with many on social media. It dovetails with China's narrative that the United States and its allies are afraid of China's rise and the alternative world order it could create.

A translation of Putin's speech on Thursday by a nationalistic news site went viral, to say the least. The Weibo hashtag #putin10000wordsspeechfulltext got 1.1 billion views within 24 hours. "This is an exemplary speech of war mobilization," said one Weibo user, @apjam. NYT

Germany commits 100 bn euros to armed forces fund

AGENCIES
BERLIN, FEBRUARY 27

IN AN extraordinary address to a special session of Parliament on Sunday, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a significant increase in military spending, reversing the country's longstanding policy that has favored deterrence over conflict.

Scholz announced a one-time increase of 100 billion euros (\$113 billion) for defence spending and a pledge to spend more than 2 per cent of Germany's economic output annually on defence. He also proposed enshrining that threshold in the country's Constitution, ensuring that future governments follow it.

"It's clear we need to invest significantly more in the security of our country, in order to protect our freedom and our democracy," Scholz told a special session of the Bundestag in Berlin.

Scholz said the 100 billion euro fund was currently a one-time measure for 2022. It wasn't immediately clear whether similar funding would be allocated in future years. The move is a significant one for Germany, which has come under criticism from the United States and other NATO allies for not investing adequately in its defence budget.

KYIV CALLS 'I.T. ARMY' TO DISRUPT WEBSITES

UKRAINIAN OFFICIALS asked volunteers from around the world to take down websites belonging to Russia's government, banks and businesses, an effort that appeared to be partly successful. Mykhailo Fedorov, Ukraine's minister of digital transformation, tweeted that he was assembling an "IT army" on the chat platform Telegram.

The channel, named "IT Army of Ukraine," quickly grew to more than 150,000 users, and it directed them to websites to be targeted in cyberattacks. NYT

Nepal meets deadline, ratifies \$500mn US deal

Kathmandu: Nepal's Parliament on Sunday ratified the \$500 million dollar grant from the US State Department as part of the Millennium Challenge corporation Nepal compact — a day before the deadline imposed by the US.

The deal ostensibly meant for expansion of road and construction of 400kv power substation along a 300km transmission line is being approved following a last minute understanding among the ruling coalition partners, mainly the Unified Socialist and the Maoist Centre, which had also been parallelly mobilising their cadres on the street calling the deal an affront to the national sovereignty.

The cabinet held a five minute emergency meeting to draft a "clarification note" explaining its position on some of the controversial provisions and doubts raised, knowing well that it would not have any legal or constitutional backing.

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

INDIAN STUDENTS, WORKERS ELIGIBLE FOR WAIVER

US waives in-person interview for many visa applicants

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 27

THE US has waived in-person interview requirements for many visa applicants, including students and workers, at its diplomatic missions in India through December 31 this year, a senior American diplomat has told Indian community leaders. These applicants eligible for the

waiver are students (F, M, and academic visas), workers (H-1, H-2, H-3, and individual L visas), Culture and extraordinary ability (O, P, and Q visas).

"This is much-needed support to visa applicants. This would be very helpful to our friends and immediate family members and remove a lot of their concerns and remove inconveniences," Ajay Jain Bhutoria, South Asian

Community Leader and US President Joe Biden's advisor for Asian Americans, said after his meeting with Assistant Secretary of State for South Central Asia, Donal Lu.

Bhutoria raised the issue of visas during his meeting with Lu in Silicon Valley in the US state of California on Friday. Lu informed that through December 31, of this year, the US Department of State is authorised to waive in-person interview requirements for certain applicants and their qualifying derivatives in various non-immigrant visa classifications.

To be eligible for the expanded interview waiver programme, applicants must have previously been issued any category of US visa; have never been refused a US visa and have no indication of ineligibility or potential visa ineligibility. PTI

China's new-generation rocket launches 22 satellites

KJM VARMA
BEIJING, FEBRUARY 27

CHINA'S NEW Long March-8 rocket placed 22 satellites in space on Sunday, setting a domestic record for the most spacecraft launched by a single rocket.

The rocket blasted off at 11.06 am (Beijing Time) at the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site

in the southern Hainan Province before sending the satellites into pre-set orbits, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

These satellites will be mainly used for commercial remote sensing services, marine environment monitoring, forest fire prevention and disaster mitigation. The mission marked the 409th flight of the Long March carrier rockets. The Long March-8 used for

Sunday's launch is a modified version of the medium-lift carrier rocket and is 48 metres long with a take-off weight of 198 tonnes. It uses non-toxic and pollution-free propellants with a 3-tonne capacity for sun-synchronous orbit, the Xinhua report said.

Compared with the original model, the modified model does not have side boosters but can launch multiple satellites with

different orbital requirements.

The Long March-8 is the new generation of China's carrier rocket. Designed and built by the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology, the rocket fills a gap in China's launch capability to the sun-synchronous orbit and meets the needs of more than 80 per cent of launch missions for medium and low-orbit spacecraft. PTI

PEGASUS ROW NSO sues paper after explosive articles on police

Tel Aviv: The Israeli tech company NSO Group on Sunday filed a libel lawsuit against an Israeli newspaper after it published a series of explosive articles claiming Israeli police unlawfully used its Pegasus spyware on dozens of public figures.

The articles by the Israeli business newspaper *Calcalist* published over recent weeks triggered an uproar over what the newspaper claimed was the police's unfettered use of sophisticated phone hacking software on a broad swath of figures. An investigation into the reports found no indication of abuse. The NSO suit targets a specific article published earlier this month, which said the company allowed clients to delete traces of their use of the spyware, a claim it denies. But the company questioned the overall credibility of the reports, calling the series of articles "one-sided, biased and false." AP

N Korea resumes testing, fires ballistic missile

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SEOUL, FEBRUARY 27

NORTH KOREA launched a ballistic missile into the sea on Sunday, its neighbours said, in a resumption of weapons tests that came as the US and its allies are focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The missile launch was the eighth of its kind this year. Some experts have said North Korea is trying to perfect its weapons technology and pressure the US into offering concessions like sanctions relief amid long-stalled disarmament talks. North Korea also might view the US preoccupation with the Ukraine conflict as a chance to accelerate testing activity without any serious response from Washington.

Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi said the North Korean missile flew about 300 km at a maximum altitude of about 600km before landing off North Korea's eastern coast and outside



TV footage of North Korea's missile launch. AP

Japan's exclusive economic zone. No damage to vessels or aircraft has been reported, he said.

"If North Korea deliberately carried out the missile launch while the international community is distracted by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, such an act is absolutely unforgivable," he told reporters. "Whatever the motives are, its repeated missile launches are absolutely inexcusable and we cannot overlook considerable missile and nuclear advancement."

16 ECONOMY

TO BUY INVESTMENT-GRADE DEBT SECURITIES IN STRESSED, NORMAL TIMES

For bond market liquidity, FinMin looking at institution for buying debt

SUNNY VERMA & GEORGE MATHEW
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, FEB 27

IN ORDER to help in the development of the corporate bond market, the Finance Ministry plans to set up an institution that will purchase investment-grade debt securities, in stressed as well as normal times. Sources said the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) has held consultation with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in this regard. The broader structure of the entity and the norms governing its operations will be finalised by the March-end, they said. Several discussions have been held in the Finance Ministry on this proposal in the current year.

The DEA is working closely with Sebi. Such an entity is being seen as crucial especially during times of stress in financial markets, which freezes liquidity sometimes even for investment-grade bonds.

The proposed special purpose vehicle is likely to be an alternate investment fund, which will buy

RESOURCE MOBILISATION

Year	Public issues		Private placement	
	No. of issues	Amount (₹ cr)	No. of issues	Amount (₹ cr)
2016-17	14	29,093	3,377	6,40,716
2017-18	8	5,173	2,706	5,99,147
2018-19	25	36,679	2,358	6,10,318
2019-20	34	14,984	1,787	6,74,703
2020-21	18	10,588	1,995	7,71,840
Apr-Nov 2020	10	3,871	2,299	4,88,071
Apr-Nov 2021	20	9,132	851	3,62,458

Source: Sebi

investment-grade bonds from mutual funds and other institutional investors. The fund is likely to be set up with contributions from mutual funds and other institutional investors, with a PSU fund getting majority stake.

This institution is expected to play a crucial role during stressed times, taking a leaf out of the book of a bad bank, promoted by banks, which got approval from

the RBI and kicked off operations recently. While bad bank takes over non-performing assets of banks, the proposed bond institution will take over illiquid investment-grade bonds during the period of stress.

However, there's no clarity about the capital requirement of the institution. It is likely to deepen the bond market and create liquidity. Such an entity will

be especially useful during stress — such as in case of default on payment by DHFL, which led to significant stress in the bond market in recent years.

Sebi has also proposed to create a set of market makers for further deepening and strengthening the country's corporate bond market. In a consultation paper issued in November 2021, Sebi said these market makers will help bring liquidity to secondary market for corporate bonds, where trading is limited to a small number of highly-rated notes or restricted to trades by financial institutions, banks and mutual funds.

This proposal was announced in the previous Budget, released in February 2021. "To instill confidence amongst the participants in the Corporate Bond Market during times of stress and to generally enhance secondary market liquidity, it is proposed to create a permanent institutional framework. The proposed body would purchase investment grade debt securities both in stressed and normal times and help in the

development of the Bond market," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said in her Budget speech last year.

With equity markets remaining buoyant in the current year, fundraising through corporate bonds was lower during the April-November period. Companies raised around Rs 3.7 lakh crore in April-November 2021 through issuance corporate bonds. The amount raised through public issues in debt doubled as 20 public issues raised Rs 9,132 crore during April-November 2021, as compared to 10 issues which raised Rs 3,871 crore during the corresponding period of previous year.

However, the number of issues and amount mobilised through private placement declined as Rs 3.6 lakh crore was raised through 851 issues during April-November 2021, as compared to Rs 4.9 lakh crore mobilised through 1,299 issues during April-November 2020, as per data presented in the Economic Survey 2021-22.

MARKET WATCH

FPIs PULL OUT ₹35,506 CR IN FEB

New Delhi: Continuing the selling streak for the fifth consecutive month, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pulled out as much as Rs 35,506 crore out of the domestic markets in February. FPIs have been pulling funds out of Indian markets since October. PTI

INTERVIEW WITH MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND IT

'Don't want to be just fuel for global IT cos, want IPR, platforms in India'

THE GEOPOLITICS of a post-Covid world is likely to be very different and new. Companies and countries across the world are looking to diversify their supply chains to avoid disruptions. This diversification, especially in the electronics manufacturing segment, provides India with a unique opportunity that must be capitalised on, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR said in an interview with AASHISH ARYAN. Edited excerpts:

The government has set an ambitious goal of exporting electronics good worth \$120 billion over the next few years. How will that be achieved?

Till now, we just had a goal in mind that we have to export, as an industry and the government. There were no concrete goals and most of it was just talking on paper. Now, we have a more focussed approach, wherein we have laid out year-, segment-wise goals. I had been pushing the industry to do this, so that we have an idea of what we are trying to achieve.

Simply putting up a number of achieving certain export does not work. The new targets have been set after a series of very deep and rigorous engagement with various stakeholders. So, this might be a new benchmark for goal-setting in governance.

Of the \$5-trillion dollar economy plan, \$1 trillion is the digital economy goal. Now, of this, \$300 billion is the electronics manufacturing target and, then, comes our export target. The way we have set our strategies and goals this time is so that the entire government functionary is aligned to it.

The period between 2014 and 2021 marked phase one of electronics manufacturing. That was driven predominantly by domestic consumption of domestic production. When there was a deficit, it was met by imports. That changes now. What the new goal is that there will be domestic consumption of domestic production. But apart from that, there will be \$120 billion worth of exports.

We have very little experience in electronics exports. Entering the global value and export value chain is a totally different ball game. We are at an inflection point of a materially different character from the last five years. Export intensity will be significantly higher in the second phase of electronic manufacturing than the first phase. That will be key.

Are there any specific geographies that will be



Rajeev Chandrasekhar File

targeted for the exports plans?

That will be decided by the brands. We do not decide that. Samsung and Apple have their markets in North America, Western Europe and a little bit in the African continent. These brands have set up bases in India and are investing and manufacturing from here. And, they have a significant market presence globally.

So, now, whatever is manufactured here will reach global markets and highly developed economies. We have reached the base camp of Everest and now are climbing the sharp peak of the global markets. That requires serious government rigour, approach and support to the industry. The industry too must take its task of working with the government seriously and not just flay around with demands. We cannot suddenly become Japan, China. We are India and we have all of these issues. Wherever there are infirmities and disadvantages, we minimise them. Wherever there are significant strengths and advantages, we maximise them.

Whenever someone has floated the idea that technology can be exported from India, there has been a crinkling of nose by Western countries. How do you plan to tackle that?

It puts on table one of the most important issues that we have to tackle as government and industry. 'Made in India' is working as a brand in many other sections. With time, it should also be something that is a powerful advertising brand associated with the electronics value chain.

We have the 'Designed in India' branding capability. Technology wise, we have tremendous capac-

ity. There is coming together of all these things, which is offering India an unprecedented opportunity because the world's awareness of digital and digital technology is at an all-time high. India is now increasingly seen as, if not the top, in the leadership bracket of digital. So, there are two tailwinds behind us. One is that digital adoption domestically is increasing and that the global supply and value chains are diversifying. It represents the opportunity for Make In India electronics to be received by these global markets. It requires effort. So we will do road shows and global conference on electronics. We have to ensure that Make In India electronics is as admired and accepted as designed in India technology. We need to address it and we will address it.

All the industry leaders in the tech world have said that with Web 3.0 or the next transition in technology, India will lead. But when that comes to translating into investment for masses, that has not been the case.

Over the last few years, there has been a definite focus on elements in an ecosystem that have innovation. When we talk about electronics and semiconductors, we also talk about their design. We have, in MeitY, completely reorganised the way we handle start-ups and are funneling into the design and innovation side of the electronics and semiconductor ecosystem. For example, let us take mobile phones. Why are there no Indian brands? The most proprietary thing about a device is its operating system. That is an area we should focus on. Is there a possibility of an iOS or Android India? It may be a corner of the operating systems that are there but at least here the intellectual property rights will remain with India.

If you look at Web 3.0 and distributed ledger etc, most companies that have come in are happy to outsource design to India but they do not do IPR and design work here. The entire policy is to focus on design and innovation in India. The next generation of computing performance is going to be driven by software optimisation and design innovation, whether it is on system, semiconductor or software. That is our strength.

The government of India is now not satisfied with being just the fuel for global software companies of the world. We also want to have the IPR and platforms here, which use Indian artificial intelligence and distributed ledger or the cryptocurrency ecosystem to build our own products.

BANKING WATCH
LOANS

Credit score 'misused': How to fix this key metric

SUNNY VERMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

MULTIPLE CASES have recently come to light of miscreants allegedly using other people's permanent account number and other documents to avail loans without customers' knowledge from fintech firms and NBFCs. As many of these loans were not repaid, this affected the credit score of a number of borrowers without them actually having taken and defaulted on them. Specific instances were reported for Dhani Loans and Services, formerly known as Indiabulls Consumer Finance Ltd.

A deterioration in credit score, and default on existing loans, can have adverse consequences such as denial of future credit or credit being available at rates much higher than market interest rates.

How to get credit score rectified?

A customer can check her credit score and whether any loan (which has not been taken) is outstanding through the reports furnished by respective credit information bureaus. These reports can be obtained by logging into CIBIL, Equifax or Experian or by accessing through one's bank via net banking facility.

Experts say the easiest way to rectify in the recent cases would be through an institutional process initiated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Affected persons can also directly approach the information provider and the bureaus,

A deterioration in credit score and default on existing loans can have consequences such as denial of future credit or credit being available at rates much higher than market interest rates

even as that is expected to be a tedious process.

"This rectification process has to be case specific... if CIBIL score has been distorted, the customer has to reach out to the specific institution where their security was compromised. The loan provider, who is also the information provider, will have to reach out to CIBIL to put the customers rating in order. In addition the aggrieved parties should also reach out to CIBIL & initiate dispute request online or by writing to them," said Surya Bhatia, a certified financial planner. An easier way being suggested by financial sector experts is the RBI intervening to provide relief to aggrieved customers.

Where to approach if the issue is still not resolved?

The RBI's Integrated Ombudsman Scheme provides cost-free redress of customer complaints involving deficiency in services by banks, NBFCs, and payment system operators.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

BRIEFLY

Vaishnav, data Bill

New Delhi: The government hopes to resolve certain complex issues soon and get Parliament's approval on the legislation latest by the monsoon session, according to IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav.

BBNL tender

New Delhi: Bharat Broadband Nigam Ltd, as per a PTI report, cancelled a Rs 19,000-crore tender that was floated for connecting villages across 16 states with high-speed broadband network, following lack of participation of bidders. PTI

PowerMin: New rules specify qualification of BBMB members

New Delhi: The Power Ministry on Sunday said the Central government has specified technical qualification for power and irrigation members of Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) in the new rules following the directions of the high court.

The statement came after some Opposition leaders reportedly attacked the Centre for notifying new rules and termed the action as an attack on the federal structure as earlier 2 members for power and irrigation subjects were appointed from Punjab and Haryana. PTI

'Oil import bill to top \$100 bn in current fiscal'

Crude oil import bill is set to exceed \$100 billion in the current fiscal year, almost double its spending last year, as per data from the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell (PPAC)



\$11.6 BN spent in January alone when oil prices had started to surge, compared with \$7.7 billion spending in the same month last year

IN FEBRUARY, oil prices crossed \$100 per barrel and going at this rate, India, which imports 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements, is expected to almost double its import bill to \$110-115 billion by the end of the fiscal year 2021-2022

Source: PPAC/PTI

'Grover loses arbitration against governance review at BharatPe'

New Delhi: BharatPe co-founder and MD Ashneer Grover has lost an arbitration that he had filed against the company's investigation against him, with an emergency arbitrator holding that there was no ground to stop governance review at the fintech firm, sources said.

Grover, who last month went on a two-month leave of absence following allegations of using abusive language against Kotak Mahindra Bank staff and fraudulent practices, had filed an arbitration plea with the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) claiming the company's investigation against him was illegal.



BharatPe co-founder and MD Ashneer Grover, via Twitter

While BharatPe declined to comment as the matter was sub judice, Grover could not be immediately reached for comments.

The emergency arbitrator (EA) has, however, rejected all the five

grounds of his appeal and denied a single relief, sources said.

Sources said EA rejected all the five grounds of relief.

On the claim of bias, the EA said that Grover's claim did not seem reliable or credible because until week back both Suhail and Sumeet were among the best employees and everything was great about them. Also, everything the company has done is as per law and governance norms so there is no need to change anything, the EA noted.

He can challenge the arbitrator's order before the Delhi High Court, sources said. PTI

RUSSIA INVADES UKRAINE

BP to exit 19.75% stake in Rosneft

REUTERS
LONDON, FEBRUARY 27

BP SAID on Sunday it plans to abandon its 19.75 per cent stake in oil giant Rosneft in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, marking an abrupt and costly end to 30 at times fraught years operating in the oil-rich country.

The British oil and gas giant did not say how it planned to exit its stake, which it said would result in charges of up to \$25 billion at the end of the first quarter. Rosneft accounts for around half of BP's oil and gas reserves and a third of its production.

"I have been deeply shocked and saddened by the situation

CHARGES OF UP TO \$25 BN

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Reuters file

unfolding in Ukraine and my heart goes out to everyone affected. It has caused us to fundamentally rethink bp's position with Rosneft," BP Chief Executive Bernard Looney said.

The move represents the boldest step yet by a Western oil company with exposure to Russia amid an escalating crisis

between the West and Moscow.

BP said the move and financial hit will not impact its short and long term financial targets as part of its strategy to shift away from oil and gas to low-carbon fuels and renewables energy.

Looney and his predecessor as CEO Bob Dudley will both

step down from the board of Rosneft, which BP acquired a shareholding in as part of its \$12.5 billion TNK-BP stake sale in 2013.

British Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng, who on Friday expressed "concern" over BP's stake in Rosneft in a call with Looney, said on Twitter that he welcomed the decision.

"Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine must be a wake up call for British businesses with commercial interests in (Russian President Vladimir Putin's Russia)," he said.

As a stake, BP received revenue from Rosneft in the form of dividends which totalled around \$640 million in 2021, roughly 3 per cent of BP's cash flow from operations.

Germany to cut reliance on Russia gas

REUTERS
BERLIN, FEBRUARY 27

GERMANY WILL make good on plans to build two liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and up its natural gas reserves to cut its dependence on Russian gas after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Sunday. "We will do more to ensure secure energy supply for our

Google's curbs on Russian channels

San Francisco: Google has barred Russia's state-owned RT and other channels from receiving money for ads on their websites, apps and YouTube videos, similar to a move by Facebook after invasion of Ukraine. REUTERS

country," he told lawmakers in a special Bundestag session called to address the Ukraine crisis.

"We must change course to overcome our dependence on imports from individual energy suppliers." Germany will make good on plans to build two liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and up its natural gas reserves to cut its dependence on Russian gas after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said.

"We will do more to ensure secure energy supply for our country," he told lawmakers in a special Bundestag session called to address the Ukraine crisis.

"We must change course to overcome our dependence on imports from individual energy suppliers." Russia has since invaded Ukraine, prompting the West to impose further sanctions on Moscow and making the energy supply issue even more pressing.

Consumer firms unlikely to hike prices for now

SHUBHRA TANDON & VARUN SINGH
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, FEB 27

AUTOMOBILE AND FMCG firms facing the prospect of escalating input prices in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis are likely to put on hold any price hike, at least till the first quarter of FY23, to gauge how the geopolitical situation pans out. Even air carriers, who are reeling under high aviation turbine fuel prices but have recently witnessed an uptick in traffic, are unlikely to raise fares anytime soon.

Industry executives said that FMCG companies have already hiked product rates in recent times due to elevated commodity prices to the extent possible without risking demand and are covered at least for the next three months due to long-term contracts.

Similarly, most auto firms in the passenger vehicle (PV) category raised prices in January itself, and therefore, the earliest they are likely to take stock for another round of hike would be in April. "There's no clarity at the moment as to how the Ukraine crisis will pan out, so we will have to wait

COMMODITY PRICES

■ Analysts said the geopolitical crisis due to tension between Russia and Ukraine is expected to result in further inflation in commodity prices

and watch," RC Bhargava, chairman, Maruti Suzuki India, told FE. So far during the current fiscal, Maruti Suzuki and most other PV manufacturers have already hiked prices four times. Normally, they do so twice a year.

Analysts said that the current geopolitical crisis due to tensions between Russia and Ukraine is expected to result in further inflation in commodity prices, which have remained high over the past few quarters due to global supply chain disruptions. However, with demand returning with the Covid-19 restrictions being eased, the companies want to tread cautiously.

Inflationary pressures impacted rural demand of HUL during the third quarter as 30 per cent of its business comes from price-sensitive packs. FE

Landless farmer's daughter Abha meets Asian Games qualifying mark

NIHAL KOSHIE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 27

A WRIST injury on her right hand, breathing difficulties, fatigue, body ache because of Covid-19 and severe chikungunya – shot-putter Abha Khatua recounts a difficult chapter which was 2021.

"It is a miracle that I am fit and able to throw today," the 26-year-old said after throwing 17.09 metres to win gold at the 1st Indian Open Throws Competition in Patiala. Her best throw till date is an upgrade from 16.01 metres from two years ago.

Seventeen metres is the qualifying standard for the Asian Games laid down by the Athletics Federation of India. "I feel like a champion today," Abha said.

Only a handful of women from India have thrown beyond 17 metres – her being just the fourth. The health issues of last year seem like just another hurdle she sailed over when she talks about her background.

Abha is the daughter of a landless farmer from Narayangarh in West Midnapore. The nearest bus stop from her village is 10 kilometres away. Even today she has to hitch a ride to get to public transport.

Her father Laxmikant pays a lease to the owner to farm paddy. "Twice a year there is harvest. But we sell paddy only once because we need to keep rice for ourselves to eat," Abha said.

There were days when she ate just rice porridge before and after a competition. "About Rs 25,000 is what we earn annually. It is not much, but my family saved even some of that money to fund my career when there was a good yield," Abha said.

When it was needed, she became a farm-hand. "I have worked on the field with my father and brother. As a family we had to stick together and make it work for us."

Last May during the second wave she returned home from the National Institute of Sports in Patiala. She was looking forward to a break from being cooped up at one place because of pandemic restrictions.

The wrist injury had severely restricted her training so she needed a change of setting. But instead of getting to enjoy quality time with her family, Abha tested positive for Covid.

"I had breathing difficulty, I had body pain, fever. I felt the side-effects for almost three months. I was already downbeat because of the injury," Abha said.

But the difficult times didn't end for her. In August, she travelled to Mumbai to report to work with the customs department and fell ill again.

"I don't know which was worse, the Covid or the chikungunya. After chikungunya, tests also showed I had high levels of uric acid. I



Abha Khatua became only the fourth Indian woman to cross 17 metres in shot put after her throw at the 1st Indian Open Throws Competition in Patiala. Express

experienced pain and swelling. It was a difficult year for the whole of the country. But here I am, throwing 17.09 metres.

"It proves I have recovered well from the wrist injury in my throwing hand too," Abha added. There were other challenges as well. In the fray was national record holder Manpreet Kaur, the 2017 Asian Championship gold medalist who is finding her feet again following a doping ban.

"I didn't think about who I was up against. If things had gone my way, I would have thrown 17 metres last year only. I had the confidence though I have been training for just two months after fully recovering from the wrist injury."

Being injury-free is key

At the national camp, Abha is coached by Gursimran Singh. Being injury-free is the key to her progress, the coach said. "I think she can break the national record (17.96 metres) within a year. But she needs to stay fit. Today she showed she has the potential to become the best thrower in the country," Gursimran said.

A balanced diet, good facilities and struc-

tured coaching at the national camp helped but in her early years, she was lucky to be spotted by a physical education teacher in her school Sadhan Pramanik.

He spoke about her highly to whoever was ready to listen. Her first break came when she was admitted to the Sports Authority of India hostel in Kolkata four years ago. But she still had to make a big decision. Which event to focus on.

Because she was naturally athletic and wanted to be spotted by talent scouts, she tried nearly everything in track and field – javelin, shot put, 100 metres, 200 metres, 400 metres and took to heptathlon. "Heptathlon helped me develop my overall skills as an athlete. But in 2019 I improved most in shot put and decided to stick to it," Abha said.

She is hoping it is smooth sailing this year. About seven years ago she had quit the sport because of a back injury and enrolled at a college. She made a come via the university route.

"In college I took an active part in student politics. I was with the TMC. Now I don't have any political leanings. I am focused on throwing and nothing else."

All pace and no patience

Indian men, women go down to Spain in FIH Pro League at Kalinga Stadium

MIHIR VASAVDA
FEBRUARY 27

NOTHING CAN illustrate the blinding speed at which India played better than the fact that even the high-definition cameras placed around the Kalinga Stadium could not properly capture the move.

Down 2-3, India were piling pressure on Spain, making repeated inroads into their 'D'. One such move came from the left-wing, when a cross was played in but found no Indian stick. As it sailed out of play, India asked for a review, seeking a penalty corner for a push by a Spanish defender on one of the attackers.

Raghuprasad RV, the television umpire, pored over multiple angles and numerous replays. But after five or so minutes, he turned to the on-field umpire, Javed Sheikh, in dismay – the speed of India's movements and the pace on the cross was so high that it was all but a blur, even in slow-motion replays! If ever there was any doubt about the speed at which India operates, those were put to rest.

However, it's important for India to realise that all that pace is of no use unless they combine it with patience. The 5-3 loss to Spain in the FIH Pro League on Sunday, a day after they secured an unconvincing 5-4 win, underlines this.

Like a sports car that goes from 0 to 100 in the blink of an eye, India unfailingly transitions from defence to attack within seconds. But almost every time, they seem in such a rush that they are unable to pick the right pass, resulting in either the ball going out of play, or them losing possession.

The latter has caused severe problems. Every time India have lost the ball in the two matches against Spain this weekend, they have looked like conceding a goal. One of the biggest concerns for coach Graham Reid, who has been trying new players in different positions, will be the ease with which teams have been opening up his defence.

Sunday was the third time since the Olympics that the Tokyo bronze medalists allowed five goals in a match; France and Japan are the two other teams who have inflicted such miseries on the Indian defence.

India ended its Olympic medal drought by playing with a certain level of calmness, especially in the attacking third, which helped them in making the right decisions in crunch moments. The other factor was defensively, the team looked structured and disciplined. These factors have been missing in the recent games India have played.

Against Spain on Sunday, India would feel goalkeeper Suraj Karkera could have done better in saving at least a couple of goals he



Sunday was the third time since the Olympics that the Tokyo bronze medalists allowed five goals in a match. Hockey India

One of the takeaways for India from this match will be the performances of Sukhjeet Singh, who dribbled past the Spanish defenders to score a goal on debut, and his strike-partner Abhishek, who continues to impress after debuting earlier this month

conceded, given that the shots in the first and fourth goals almost went right through him. Karkera, however, could have been shielded better by the defence in front of him, which went missing on most occasions.

One of the takeaways for India from this match will be the performances of Sukhjeet Singh, who dribbled past the Spanish defenders to score a goal on debut, and his strike-partner Abhishek, who continues to impress after debuting earlier this month.

In the two youngsters, India may have found players who can score smart field goals. But what the team needs is some cunning defenders, who can stop the team from leaking goals.

Women lose 4-3 at fag end

Fragility during turnovers is what let down the women's team as well. India came back from a goal down three

times in the match but Xantal Gine scored the winning strike for Spain with seconds left to play, making another comeback impossible. India lost 4-3, their first defeat of the Pro League.

Despite the loss, there is a lot to build on for Janneke Schopman from Sunday's match. Savita Punia was once again rock-solid in goal, even saving a penalty stroke, but India made one too many defensive errors, which overshadowed the extra shift put in by the attackers.

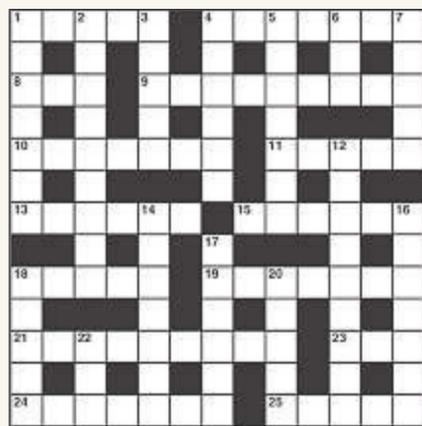
Two out of the three goals were indicative of the variety of skill-set the team possesses. Debutant Sangita Kumari opened the scoring for India by picking the ball just around the 'D' on the right, turning around her marker, dribbling past two defenders and avoiding a tackle by an onrushing third before slotting it past the goalkeeper.

The goal showed why Sangita is rated highly on the domestic circuit for her scoring abilities. And while her goal was all about skill, Salima Tete displayed another dimension of the women's team: speed. Salima got the possession in front of her dugout and marched ahead, rapidly shifting gears as she approached the 'D'.

With no player able to match her speed, Salima found herself with a lot of time and space to get a shot in. And instead of going for power, she chose placement as she squeezed the ball past the goalkeeper at the near post.

Unfortunately for them, this wasn't enough to get a result.

CROSSWORD 4675



- ACROSS**
- Strip a firearm? (5)
 - One hears it being broken (7)
 - Give vent to a song (3)
 - They supervise - prophets? (9)
 - French arrogance (7)
 - Pious - nothing short of goodly (5)
 - He's not truly American (6)
 - A number relaxed and stopped (6)
 - Some of these bounce back being overweight (5)
 - Refined male fish? (7)
 - I'd returned with an account causing amusement (9)
 - Favourite mood? Hardly (3)
 - Idle chatter has teeth on edge (7)
 - Hack to pieces wandering herds (5)
- DOWN**
- Comes to cheer as arranged (7)
 - Lucky at coming into a lot of money (9)
 - Make a run to clinch the match (5)
 - Make a mistake and throw out the drink (6)
 - Turn up the gas in a way making an Italian dish (7)
 - Born of woman (3)
 - Literary work? Yes as it turns out (5)
 - Not a good state of mind for decorating? (9)
 - Find made by a hunter (7)
 - Indeed a cancelled service causing amusement (9)
 - Possibly it goes to a selfish type (6)
 - A class given instruction (5)
 - One may be dressed up to them - by numbers? (5)
 - He may earn money with his pet treatment (3)

Solutions Crossword 4674: Across: 1 Shoehorn, 8 Forte, 9 Mae West, 10 Reissue, 11 Opera, 12 Turn on, 14 Stupor, 17 Llama, 19 Polygon, 21 Station, 22 Ankle, 23 Minute hand. Down: 2 Harrier, 3 Epees, 4 Temper, 5 Ice boat, 6 Geese, 7 St Lawrence, 8 First-class, 13 Ovation, 15 Pigskin, 16 Spinnet, 18 Alarm, 20 Leash.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



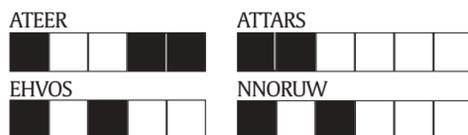
MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



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.

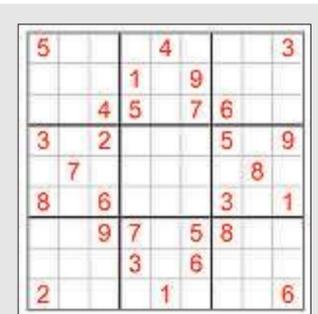
The ___ and the ___ this is what makes great art - Ward Jenkins (5, 4)



Solution: ENTER, SHOVE, STRATA, UNWORN

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



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

- ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**
You may not be sure why you should feel so confident about the future. Just appreciate the sense of growing optimism that is due to lift your spirits over the coming few days, under the Sun's intriguing relationship with Jupiter, planet of wisdom and open spaces.
- TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)**
In your own sweet, quiet way you have built up a considerable fund of wisdom and experience over the years. Now you may come to the aid of various people whose collective ventures are floundering for want of a voice like yours. Speak up, it's time you were heard.
- GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**
The week's stars begin on a high note, but as the days pass, argumentative influences will creep in. You must therefore be aware that what seems like a golden opportunity now could turn into quite the opposite by next weekend. Harsh words today could rebound on you later.
- CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**
You've been wondering what happened to all your alleged good fortune. Well, today's intriguing planetary patterns provide a pretty good guarantee that events are moving your way. All you have to do is get on the train while it's moving, and hang on tight.
- LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)**
In many respects you fare better than most at the moment because you have the wit to see a personal situation for what it really is. I doubt if anyone will be able to pull the wool over your eyes. You may even realise that cast-iron practical arrangements might not work out after all.
- VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)**
You are now going through a rather peculiar phase, perhaps because you're not really sure what you want. Try to be a bit more at ease and relaxed with the world in general, without swinging to the other extreme and becoming disorganised and chaotic.
- LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)**
It's time to say another word to all Librans who are in the throes of domestic change, that there is only another fortnight of confusion. In fact, all of you will find it easier to straighten out family complications next month, which has to be good news.
- SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)**
You may imagine that everything at home is just fine and hunky-dory. However, it's just at times like these that you must take extra precautions. Do your very best to see that family members are happy and contented, even if they're not. I have a feeling you'll soon have some making up to do.
- SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)**
You will soon share with your fellow fire signs, Leo and Aries, a superb, if challenging, planetary line-up. However, your optimism may be tempered by the knowledge that in some senses even you may now be out of your depth. It's time to rely on your past experience.
- CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)**
Partners, loved ones and close colleagues are about to start moving back to an optimistic high after a few weeks of uncertainty. You may both help them develop their good feelings, and share in their success. You should also help them face up to the truth.
- AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)**
You're an Aquarian, so nobody can really put you on the spot or undermine your confidence unless you allow them to. However, judicious concessions made now will prevent them even making the attempt. Your judgement and timing are crucial, and I suspect that you'll be walking a tightrope, temporarily.
- PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)**
As long as you keep your eye on the ball, you'll have a good start to the week, so no fears on that score. As the days pass, just keep an eye on those secret worries and frustrated hopes that tend to erupt at moments of irritation or pressure. Talk to friends and those who know best, if you need reassurance.

RABADA LEADS SOUTH AFRICA SURGE

South Africa lost two wickets after tea but pushed their lead over New Zealand to 211 runs by the close of day three to leave the second test delicately poised in Christchurch on Sunday. Earlier, South Africa pacer Kagiso Rabada finished with 5-60.

BRIEF SCORES: SA 364 (Erwee 108, Wagner 4-102) & 140 for 5 lead NZ 294 (de Grandhomme 120*, Rabada 5-60) by 211 runs at stumps Day 3

Czech Republic refuse to play Russia, EPL opponents unite in 'No War' call

Expulsions, dismissals and refusal to play – the fourth day of Russia's war against Ukraine has seen European sports outlaw the country, its top leadership and its oligarchs, in a variety of ways

While the sporting world has shown unity in condemning Russia and its leadership, there are already instances of these leaders either stepping aside or being suspended, only for close aides or long-time partners to still be a part of day-to-day functioning.

CZECHS JOIN THE CHORUS

The Czech Republic joined Poland and Sweden on Sunday in rejecting to play Russia in the 2022 World Cup qualifying next month. The Czech soccer association's executive committee said it "unanimously approved a decision that the Czech national team will not in any case play Russia." The soccer federations of Poland and Sweden made the same decision on Saturday. The Czech Republic is a potential opponent of Russia in next month's playoffs. The winner of the Poland-Russia match is due to host Sweden or the Czech Republic on March 29 for a place at the World Cup being played in Qatar from Nov. 21-Dec.18.

The executive committee asked Czech soccer federation head Petr Fousek to lead negotiations with UEFA and FIFA about



JUDO BODY SUSPENDS PUTIN Vladimir Putin temporarily lost his most senior official position in world sports on Sunday. The International Judo Federation cited "the ongoing war conflict in Ukraine" for suspending Putin's honorary president status. The Russian president is a keen judoka and attended the sport at the 2012 London Olympics. The IJF is rare among

Olympic sports bodies for using the word "war" to describe Russia's invasion of Ukraine ordered by Putin on Thursday. Others have used phrases such as "escalation of conflict." A Kremlin-supporting oligarch and long-time friend of Putin, Arkady Rotenberg, remains on the IJF executive committee as "development manager."

the Czech position. "The Czech FA executive committee, staff members and players of the national team agreed it's not possible to play against the Russian national team in the current situation, not even on the neutral venue," the federation said in a statement. "We all want the war to end as soon as possible."

ABRAMOVICH'S SYMBOLIC GESTURE

Roman Abramovich symbolically diminished his status as Chelsea owner by appearing to take himself out of the decision-making process on Saturday after facing calls to completely give up control of the Premier League club. There is no indication that Abramovich is paving the way for a sale of the club he has transformed since 2003 with his wealth but a carefully worded statement indicated a relinquishing of some control.

"I have always taken decisions with the club's best interest at heart," he said. "I remain committed to these values. That is why I am today giving trustees of Chelsea's charitable foundation the stewardship and care of Chelsea FC. I believe that currently they are in the best



Manchester City's Ukrainian full-back Oleksandr Zinchenko was moved to tears by Everton fans' support. Reuters

position to look after the interests of the club players, staff and fans."

The foundation is chaired by Bruce Buck, who is also chairman of the club after becoming a director following Abramovich's takeover. Chelsea director of finance Paul Ramos is also among the trustees, as is Emma Hayes, who manages

the women's team. There was no sense this change at Stamford Bridge was coming before the attack on Ukraine, and politicians have been among those to urge moves to end his ownership. There has been no announcement about whether Abramovich would be subject to British sanctions targeting Russians.

EPL PLAYERS SHOW SOLIDARITY

In a stadium in northwest England, two Ukrainian footballers on opposite teams embrace prior to kickoff, before being brought to tears as team-mates line up for a match wearing tops displaying the Ukraine flag and the message: "No War."

It was an emotional and at times uplifting day in the Premier League on Saturday, marked by messages of solidarity across the country from players and fans toward those in, and from, Ukraine. Nowhere more so than at Goodison Park, where the football felt somewhat insignificant as City's Oleksandr Zinchenko and Everton's Vitaliy Mykolenko, two Ukraine internationals, walked toward each other during the warm-ups and hugged. **ENS**

BRIEFLY

Nikhat, Nitu strike gold for India

Bengaluru: Indian boxers Nikhat Zareen (52kg) and Nitu (48kg) struck gold at the 73rd Strandja Memorial Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria by notching up thoroughly comprehensive victories in their respective finals on Sunday.

Nitu prevailed 5-0 over Italy's Erika Prisciandaro, a former youth world championship bronze-medallist. Zareen, on the other hand, out-punched Ukraine's Tetiana Kob, a three-time European Championships medallist 4-1. The Hyderabad-based Zareen, who is a multiple-time national medallist, had won a gold medal at the Strandja Memorial's 2019 edition as well. **PTI**



Harmanpreet guides India to win vs SA in World Cup warm-up

Rangiora (New Zealand): Harmanpreet Kaur struck a timely hundred as India eked out a two-run win over South Africa in a warm-up match of the ICC Women's World Cup here on Sunday. The India vice-captain, who had regained some form with her first fifty in 12 months during the final ODI against New Zealand, slammed a 119-ball 114 with the help of 11 boundaries. Star opener Smriti Mandhana (12) was struck on the head by a bouncer and was forced to retire hurt. **PTI**

BRIEF SCORES: India: 244 for 9 in 50 overs (Harmanpreet 114, Bhatia 58; Khaka 3/23) bt SA 242 for 7 in 50 overs (Luis 94; Gayakwad 4/46) by 2 runs

Rout map to a world record

Thrashing Sri Lanka to win series 3-0, India notch 12th successive T20I win; Iyer scores third successive half-century

ABHISHEK PUROHIT

FEBRUARY 27

INDIA EQUALLED the world record for most consecutive T20I wins with their 12th successive victory as they defeated Sri Lanka by six wickets in the third and final match in Dharamsala to make it a hat-trick of 3-0 sweeps at home. They are now tied with Afghanistan and Romania, and only the latter's streak is ongoing.

Shreyas Iyer's form remained the stand-out of the series as he took charge of Sunday's chase of 147, just like he had on Saturday. He ended the three-match contest with three half-centuries – 57 off 28, 74 off 44 and 73 off 45, all unbeaten knocks at a cumulative strike-rate of 174 as against a career T20 strike-rate of 130.

The Mumbai batter was needed to guide the pursuit again after Rohit Sharma, Sanju Samson, Deepak Hooda and Venkatesh Iyer managed a highest score of 21 between the four of them. Shreyas and Ravindra Jadeja ushered in the win in the 17th over—two balls before they had done on Saturday—with an unbroken 45-run stand.

That there was a bit of a target in the first place was down to Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka, who followed up his unbeaten 47 off 19 in the second T20I with 74 not out off 38 on Sunday night. Shanaka's calculated hitting after he chose to bat first revived the visitors from a horror start of 11 for 3, which was to worsen to 29 for 4, and then 60 for 5 at the start of the 13th over.

This was after India had rested Jasprit Bumrah, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Yuzvendra Chahal, and gone in with an almost entirely changed attack of Avesh Khan, Mohammed Siraj, Ravi Bishnoi, Kuldeep Yadav and Harshal Patel, the last one the only specialist bowler to play through the series.

Inexperienced, but potent

The first 15 overs of the Sri Lankan innings



With 204 runs in three matches, Shreyas Iyer has the second highest tally for an unbeaten batsman in a T20 series or tournament after David Warner, 217*, also against Sri Lanka (2019). **PTI**

were an exhibition of discipline and control by an attack largely inexperienced at this level. Avesh and Siraj had set the tone in an outstanding Powerplay, in which they pitched up probably only two deliveries. The first, from Avesh, was smashed straight to cover by Pathum Nissanka, while the second, from Siraj, was sliced over point for four by Charith Asalanka. That would remain the only boundary in the first half of the Sri Lankan innings until Siraj's misfield at long leg allowed the second off the last ball of the 10th over.

Avesh and Siraj bowled unchanged through the Powerplay, after which Sri Lanka were left tottering on 18 for 3. The pitch of-

fered seam and there was some swing in the mountain air. And the Indian new-ball pair made it zip as they constantly hit a good length as if on the first morning of a Test match. It was an awkward pitch map for the batters, who were neither able to ease forward or rock back. The top order soon fell apart to helpless mishits. Siraj's opening spell read 3-0-9-1, Avesh bettered it with 3-1-4-2, even managing to squeeze in a maiden amid field restrictions.

Kuldeep was playing his first T20I since July last year, but he kept up the struggle with fine accuracy. Even as the Sri Lankans tried to sweep him off his rhythm, he conceded only

22 in his four overs, some lovely wrong 'uns beating the bat without bringing him a wicket.

Bishnoi, meanwhile, struck with his third ball, luring Janith Liyanage forward and bringing it back in to bowl him in the ninth over. The 21-year old's command led Sunil Gavaskar to remark on air that for someone who bowled mostly googlies, Bishnoi's control was remarkable.

Serial hitter

So far, so good, until the death overs arrived. India had gone for 72 from the last four overs on Saturday, they would go for 68 from the last five on Sunday. Only the cast that took

Iyer ended the three-match contest with three half-centuries – 57 off 28, 74 off 44 and 73 off 45, all unbeaten knocks at a cumulative strike-rate of 174 as against a career T20 strike-rate of 130.

punishment was different. In the second T20I, it was Harshal (42), Bhuvneshwar (16) and Bumrah (14). In the third, it was Harshal (24), Avesh (19), Siraj (13) and Bishnoi (12). Only the aggressor remained the same—Shanaka. From 78 for 5 after 15, Shanaka took Sri Lanka to 146 for 5 in 20. His hitting in front of square on the off was a sight, as he repeatedly beat the sweeper in the deep with his placement. This late barrage is clearly something India have to work on during their next T20I contest, against South Africa at home in June, as they build for the T20 World Cup in October.

The chase wasn't big, but India were playing one less batsman as Ishan Kishan had been ruled out after the blow to the helmet he took in the second T20I. They had chosen to play two wrist-spinners instead of bringing in Mayank Agarwal, so Samson opened with Rohit, and Harshal was slotted at No. 7.

Shreyas stepped in once more. Two early, successive fours summed up his dominance. He backed away to Lahiru Kumara, who followed him with a bouncer. Shreyas walloped it over backward point for four. The next ball was eased through the covers in a return to convention. He'd finish the series by whipping Kumara to the midwicket rope.

BRIEF SCORES: Sri Lanka 146/5 in 20 overs (Dasun Shanaka 74 not out of 38 balls; 9x4, 2x6; Avesh Khan 2/23) lost to India 148/4 in 16.4 overs (Shreyas Iyer 73 not out off 45 balls; 9x4, 1x6; Lahiru Kumara 2/31) by six wickets. PoM: Shreyas Iyer, PoS: Shreyas Iyer

After baby girl, Baroda batter Solanki loses his father, plays Ranji game

DEVENDRA PANDEY

FEBRUARY 27

VISHNU SOLANKI stopped a four through a great fielding effort at Vikas Cricket Ground in Cuttack. Much to the cluelessness of his team-mates, the player was asked to come to the dressing-room by the Baroda team manager Dharmendra Arothe. A shattering news awaited Solanki there; his father had passed away.

"Later, we came to know that his father passed away," Baroda captain Kedar Devdhar recounted after their Ranji Trophy game on Sunday, adding: "Vishnu saw his father's last rites in one corner of the dressing room, on a video call. It was really tough for him, but the courage he showed has been remarkable."

Solanki has been going through one of the toughest phases of his life. Ten days ago, he lost his newborn, when the baby girl died only a day after she was born. Skipping the previous Ranji Trophy match and joining the team late for this game against Chandigarh had been normal. Upon reaching Cuttack, he had to undergo a five-day quarantine. Solanki went on to score a hundred.

The Baroda Cricket Association stood by the player, the state association secretary Ajit

Solanki has been going through one of the toughest phases of his life. Ten days ago, he lost his newborn, when the baby girl died only a day after she was born.

Lele informing that Solanki was given the option to return home. "When we got to know about his father's death, we informed the team manager. The manager told us that he would stay back. It showed his commitment towards the game and his team," Lele said.

Devdhar said that the team offered help to Solanki and asked him whether he wanted to travel back. However, his father's body couldn't be kept in the morgue for long. With Solanki's elder brother performing the last rites, he decided to watch it on phone.

"His father was sick for the past two months and was in hospital. Over the past two months, he had been dealing with a medical emergency. Vishnu wouldn't have been able to reach home on time even if he tried. But hats off to him that he played cricket and excelled, carrying an overload of grief," Devdhar said.

When he rejoined the squad, after the passing away of his newborn baby, the team handed him a signed note, lauding his determination and courage. "Little did we know that another tragedy would unfold so soon," said the Baroda captain. As things happened today, it offered a throwback to Virat Kohli turning up for a Ranji game on the same day of his father's demise.

Mumbai win, Delhi lose

PTI adds: Left-arm spinner Shams Mulani carried Mumbai to the top of the points table as the 44-time champions thrashed Goa by 119 runs after having conceded a 164-run first-innings lead in their group D match. Mulani had match figures of 11 for 167 (6/107 and 5/60) along with a crucial half-century.

In Guwahati, Dhruv Shorey's counter-attacking hundred set up a fitting final hour but Shahbaz Nadeem's second five-wicket haul enabled Jharkhand to oust Delhi from quarter-final contention with a 15-run win in the final over of their group H game. **BRIEF SCORES:** Mumbai 163 and 395/9 (T Kotian 98, S Mulani 50, A Rahane 56). Goa 327 and 112 (S Mulani 5/60); Jharkhand 251 and 307/7 decl (K Suraj 131 no, N Siddiqui 110, N Rana 3/47). Delhi 224 and (target 335) 319 all out (Dhruv Shorey 136, Jonty Sidhy 59, Shahbaz Nadeem 5/83). Jharkhand 6; Delhi 0

Tons-up Rohan seals victory for Kerala

NARAYANAN S

KOCHI, FEBRUARY 27

NOT OFTEN does a team chase down 214 from 41 overs on a fourth-day pitch in the Ranji Trophy. But Kerala romped home with overs to spare against Gujarat in an Elite Group A game on Sunday, thanks to Rohan Kunnummal's rapid-fire century.

The 23-year-old hit an unbeaten 106 off 87 balls (12x4, 3x6) in Rajkot, notching up his third consecutive hundred in the process. The opener had scored 129 in the first innings, on the heels of his 107 against Meghalaya in the previous game. Kerala had beaten Meghalaya by an innings and 166 runs in their opening fixture. They trumped Gujarat by eight wickets. Captain Sachin Baby's 62 off 76 balls immensely contributed to the win as well.

Rohan didn't allow the Gujarat bowlers to settle down in either innings, playing well both off the front foot and back foot, and also taking the aerial route, through inside-out cover drives and flicks over mid-wicket. Pull was another productive shot for him.

"I have been batting well but I didn't expect to score three centuries in as many innings. The most satisfying thing is that I have been able to contribute to the team's cause in our wins," Rohan told *The Indian Express*.

"We wanted to win the game but knew that the fourth innings chase could be tricky. At tea, Tinu sir (coach Tinu Yohannan) told me to carry on batting normally and if I did that



Rohan Kunnummal's 87-ball 106 was his third consecutive hundred.

runs would come easily. It was good that Sachin Baby was batting with me. He guided me through the innings and made sure that there was no pressure," he added.

Baby was full of praise for the youngster. "Rohan is not a single-format player and has been in good form across T20s, one-dayers and now four-day games. We missed a good opener after Jagadeesh retired. Now with him and Rahul P coming through, we have our opening problems sorted."

Rohan has risen through the ranks, staying prolific across all age-group competitions. He made his first-class debut against Rajasthan in January 2020. Out for 8 in the first innings, he

sustained an ankle injury and had to miss the rest of the match and the season. The Covid-induced break forced him to wait for two more years to play another Ranji game. Recuperating from the injury, Rohan made full use of the Covid break and worked on his fitness with trainer Vysakh Krishna, now the Kerala team's strength coach, at his hometown Kozhikode.

"My strength and stamina have improved a lot. Earlier, I was very lean and used to get tired quickly. The strength and conditioning sessions with Vysakh helped me become fitter and play longer innings. Also, I can play lofted shots more effectively now," said Rohan, who was the highest run-getter (264) for Kerala in the Vijay Hazare Trophy this season.

Rohan owes much of his development to his father Sushil Kunnummal, a university-level player back in the day. Sushil would bowl countless deliveries to a young Rohan, using a tennis ball from 13 yards out in the backyard, at his home in Koyilandy. The father-son duo still follows the routine.

"I have developed the ability to play pace bowling better because of the drills I have been doing with my father, using the tennis ball. We sometimes practise with a tape-ball too. My reflexes, I think, have quickened due to this and I have time to play my shots," said Rohan. **BRIEF SCORES:** Gujarat 388 (Het Patel 185, Karan Patel 120; Nidheesh MD 5/54, Basil Thampi 4/118) & 264 (Karan Patel 81; Jalaj Saxena 4/57) lost to Kerala 439 (R Kunnummal 129, Vishnu Vinod 113; Siddharth Desai 5/132) & 214/2 (R Kunnummal 106*) by 8 wickets