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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



TIOL 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

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



Congratulate @Baniyyakar as #Odisha has been selected to receive TIOL 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

**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 Chittrakoot district, has received Rs 1,54,000 in their bank accounts

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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 play 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

Harshest 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, ADITI RAJA & 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

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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By UNNY



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to all candidates selected in CSE 2020

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7 AIR PRAVEEN KUMAR (ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ESSAY TEST, ABHYAAS, PDP)	8 AIR JIVANI KARTIK NAGJIBHAI (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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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:
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CDSL: <https://www.cdslindia.com/DP/dplist.aspx>

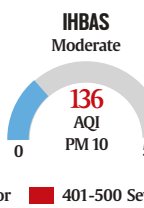
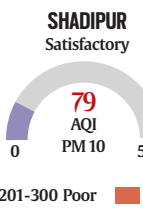
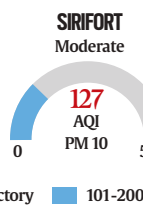
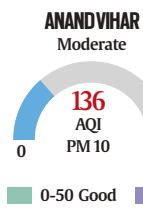
LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA is proposing, subject to applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, receipt of requisite approvals, market conditions and other considerations, to undertake an initial public offer of its Equity Shares and has filed the draft red herring prospectus dated February 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.mi-india.com, Citigroup Global Markets India Private Limited at www.online.citibank.co.in/html/citigroupglobalscreen1.htm, Goldman Sachs (India) Securities Private Limited at www.goldmansachs.com, ICICI Securities Limited at www.icicisecurities.com, JM Financial Limited at www.jmfint.com, J.P. Morgan India Private Limited at www.jpmil.com, Nomura Financial Advisory and Securities (India) Private Limited at www.nomuraholdings.com/company/group/asia/india/index.html and SBI Capital Markets Limited at www.sbicap.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 RHP 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.

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Har Pal Aapke Saath



SKYWATCH
FORECAST: Feb 28
Partly cloudy sky.

MAX: 24
1.6 °C below normal

MIN: 11
1.4 °C below normal



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

At Lakshmibai 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 Lakshmibai 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 one 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
18,59,634

	Total	Vacant
HOSPITAL BEDS	11,079	10,907
ICU BEDS	2,496	2,431

*Total active cases in Delhi

	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



BEFORE



AFTER

(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 EV charging in all types 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.

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.



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

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, Amargasaurus, 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.

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, Janakpuri 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 inside 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 footfall places, we deploy dogs to conduct checks," said ASI Dogra.



New Delhi



7 DECISION 2022



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BALLOTIN

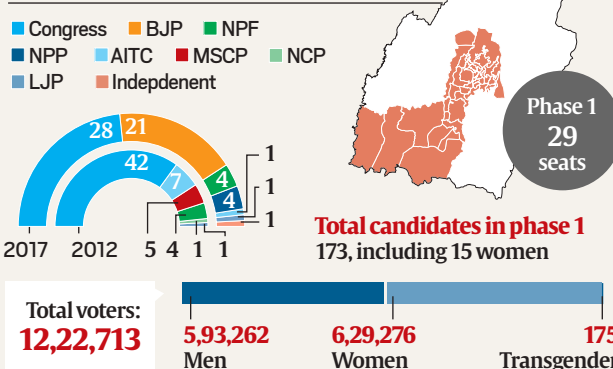
Manipur JD(U) nominee shot at

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 Langpoklapm Jayantakumar Singh vs Maheswar Thounaojam of RPI Athawale)

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

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 Colonelganj 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 Colonelganj'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 JP 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 phases 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

CRITICS QUESTION CLAIMS ON SECURITY

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

TORA AGARWALA
IMPHAL, FEBRUARY 27

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 Ibobi 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



A brightly lit Thangal Road in Imphal. Tora Agarwala

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 Ibobi 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 Ibobi 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 Athoubha, 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

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 Baruwaga Sagar 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, totalling 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 lagaya 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.

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 Ujjwala 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.

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

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: 'aayegi to BJP hi, aayenge to Yogi hi'".

In an election rally in Basti district, the PM stressed on "aatm nirbhar 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



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

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.

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 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 to 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

TERMING 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 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.

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हम आपका ध्यान लॉकर के क्रियायनामा में उल्लिखित नियम व शर्तों की ओर से आकर्षित कर रहे हैं। जिसमें यह उल्लिखित है कि सभी क्रियाओं का भुगतान अंतिम क्रिया जाना अनिवार्य है। विषयगत लॉकर में अब बकाया ओवरड्यू हो चुका है। हमें खेद है कि हमारे द्वारा पूर्व में जारी अनुसूचकों के बावजूद अपने रकम का अभी तक प्रेषण नहीं किया है। हमारे द्वारा दिनांक 14.02.2022 को आपको नोटिस जारी कर यह अवगत कराया गया था कि नोटिस प्राप्त होने की तिथि से 15 दिनों के भीतर बकाया क्रिया का भुगतान आपके द्वारा कर दिया जाना चाहिए। अन्यथा आपके बैंक के साथ हुए लॉकर के लीज को रद्द कर दिया जाएगा तथा बैंक का यह अधिकार होगा कि बकाया की वसूली क्रियायनामा में उल्लिखित प्रावधानों के उपराधरा -9 के अनुसार करे अथवा जैसी सलाह प्राप्त होगी।

क्रिया या संज्ञान में लें कि दिनांक 14.03.2022 तक या उससे पूर्व यदि आपके द्वारा लॉकर के क्रिया का भुगतान नहीं किया जाता है कि बैंक द्वारा आपके लॉकर को तोड़ दिया जाएगा। तदुपरांत क्रियायनामा में उल्लिखित प्रावधानों के उपराधरा 9 के अनुसार क्रियाय क्रिया की वसूली लॉकर में स्थित सामानों के कुछ भागों अथवा पूरे के लोक अथवा निजी विक्रय द्वारा की जाएगी। बैंक द्वारा किए की वसूली के उपरान्त शेष सामान आपके जोजिम तथा लागत पर बैंक द्वारा रखा जाएगा।

यदि लॉकर में रखे सामान की विक्रय से क्रियाय वसूली नहीं हो पाती है तब तो शेष क्रिया के भुगतान का वाचिक आपका होगा। हमें विवश है कि उपर्युक्त उल्लिखित प्रक्रिया किए जाने से पूर्व ही आपके द्वारा लॉकर के क्रिया का भुगतान कर दिया जाएगा तथा हमें लॉकर तोड़ने तथा उसमें रखे सामान को बेचने की आवश्यकता होगा।

दिनांक 28.02.2022 आपका विश्वासी अनिरुद्धक

JAMKHED MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, JAMKHEDE

Bazar Tal, Jamkhed, Dist. Ahmednagar, Maharashtra - 413201.

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/TA(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 Follow Physical Distancing Wear Mask Maintain Hand Hygiene

HP STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LTD.
(A State Government Undertaking)
Block No. 16 & 17, SDA Commercial Complex, Kasumpli, Shimla-171009
Ph. No.: 0177-2621583, E-mail Address: himapurim@gmail.com

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
Himachal Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation Limited, Shimla invites EOI (Expression of Interest) for empanment of manufacturers/ authorized distributors/dealers for supply of Furniture (hospital, school and offices etc.), Furnishing Items, Concrete Furniture, Prefabricated Structure, 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 from 16.03.2022 at 11:01 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-II GIS S/s for installation of 3" 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

POWERGRID invites online bids through e-portal <https://etender.powergrid.in> for the following Package:

Rfx No. Tel.	Package Reference	Downloading of Bidding Documents; Cost of Bidding Documents;	Deadline for Bid Submission (Soft copy & Hard copy part)
5002002107/0124-2822393	Specification No.: 5002002107/ GIS-EXCLUDING/ DOM/AC-CC CS-1	Up to 14.03.2022; till 11:00Hrs. Document Fee: Rs. 25,000/-	Soft copy: 14.03.2022; till 11:00 Hrs. Hard copy: 16.03.2022; till 11:00 Hrs.

- For further details including addendum/changes in bidding program, if any, please visit procurement portal <https://etender.powergrid.in>.
- The first Envelope (Techno-Commercial part) of the bid shall be opened 30 minutes after the deadline of Bid Submission (Hard copy part).
- The complete Bidding Documents are also available on our website <https://www.powergrid.in> on Government of India's Central Public Procurement Portal (<https://eprocure.gov.in>) for the purpose of reference only.
- The NIT /IFB has already been published on <https://etender.powergrid.in> portal on 21.01.2022.

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Corp. Office : 'Saudamini', Plot No.2, Sector-29, Gurgaon-122001, (Haryana) Tel. : 0124-2571700-719
Reg. Office : B-9, Qutab Institutional Area, Kataria Sarai, New Delhi-110 016. Tel. : 011-26560112, 26560121
www.powergrid.in, CIN : L40101DL1989G0038121

A MAHARATNA PSU

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 Dhakka, 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,” I Y 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.

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.

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[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 P O 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. - 2206000000037	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 - Sabdalpur Mauja - Sabdalpur 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 - Shahwajpur Khata No. - 102, Plot No. - 83, District - Gaya Total Area - 3.7190 Decimals 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 - Chandaoti 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)



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. Masiullah 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-Phulwarisharif, Dist: Patna; Boundary : North: Gali thereafter Lakhichand & Others, South: Md Hafiz & Others; East : Gali & Ahilaya Baushad Halwarshan Jumai Miya Marhum; West : Plot Haza ke Jui me Dingar Kharidar 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/Kujapir, Chandaoti, 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 Prapajap and Chaliter Prapajap; West: Property of Kaushalya 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. Birendra Keshri Mrs. Maya Devi W/o: Mr Sintu Kumar alias Mr Birendra 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: Satyendra 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/Tende/ViewAllAuction.aspx For Registration and Login and Bidding Rules visit https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp	
Date : 24.02.2022 Place : Patna	Union Bank of India Authorised Officer



WORDLY WISE
WAR DOES NOT DETERMINE WHO IS
RIGHT — ONLY WHO IS LEFT.
— BERTRAND RUSSELL

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 “deplo-
ring in the strongest terms” Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was in continuation of its bal-
ancing 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 is-
sue — 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 “de-
ploring”, and the replacement of Chapter VII that authorises the Security Council to take meas-
ures 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 secu-
rity 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 compar-
isons 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 coun-
tries are up against powerful nations. Casualties are bound to rise. As it fine-tunes its posi-
tion, India will have to factor all this, particularly Russian President Vladimir Putin’s inter-
national 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 “territori-
al 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 com-
ing 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 stu-
dents 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 stu-
dents 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 rub-
bing off on these oils too, compounded by dry weather in South America and Indonesia im-
posing 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 pe-
troleum. Russia is, incidentally, also the world’s top wheat exporter, with Ukraine at third po-
sition 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 pro-
curement — which may not be required if open market prices stay high.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



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 over-
whelming 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 govern-
ment 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 expen-
diture of blood and treasure. The longer it
takes to bring Ukraine to heel, the greater the
compulsion to use much greater levels of vi-
olence than we have witnessed so far.

The images of wanton destruction and
streams of traumatised Ukrainians streaming
across their borders into neighbouring coun-
tries 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 rein-
carnated 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 vil-
ify him as a leader of a “Nazi” gang planted in
Kyiv by the American CIA have failed. The pro-
jection of Ukraine as an artificial state is be-
lieved 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 ef-
fect. As his international standing soars, the
damage to Putin’s reputation is already pal-
pable and will be hard to repair. Putin may still
win the war but he may be losing 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 trim-
ming their sails. During the initial phase of the
military campaign, Chinese official statements

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

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
Zelensky on February 26.
Considering that Russia
regards Zelensky 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.



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 judg-
ment by the Karnataka High Court.

Much of the deliberation on the issue —
judicial and otherwise — seems to focus on es-
sentiality, 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 re-
sults in mischaracterising an instance of hos-
tile 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 discrimina-
tion 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 discrimi-
nation recognises that people are not made of

HANDS OFF THE HIJAB

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

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.

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 es-
sential content of the anti-discrimination provi-
sion is the appreciation of the intersection of
“varied identities and characteristics.”

Moreover, the government order which
bans clothes violative of “public order” amo-
unts to indirect discrimination. The doctrine
was recognised by our Supreme Court in *Col
Nitisha* (2021) as part of our constitutional ju-
risprudence. Indirect discrimination occurs
when an action is neutral on its face, but dis-
proportionately 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 deter-
mining 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 prac-
tice 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-

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 impor-
tantly, 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 de-
parture from the past and may have helped
deflect western pressure to take a more ex-
plicitly critical stance on the issue. What is
more interesting is PM Modi’s readiness to re-
ceive 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 avail-
able to Russia against its passage. Russia can
no longer be certain that the large con-
stituency 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 sen-
timents among African countries. It will be in-
teresting to see how far China will be ready to
deploy its considerable influence among de-
veloping countries, in particular African coun-
tries, in support of Russia. It may be hesitant to
do so in the light of international opinion shift-
ing 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 ab-
stention would still be the preferred option.

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

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 tooth-
brushes, braille typewriters, invalid carriages,
and helmets. The Finance Minister gave

some minor incentives to people from lower-
income groups concerning house construc-
tion. 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 productiv-
ity, Opposition MPs, by and large, saw the
hand of the IMF in its drafting and said that
the poor would be worse off, especially be-
cause 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 pro-
posal for slum development. Somnath
Chatterji felt that the huge deficit would ag-
gravate inflationary tendencies.

MORE FOR DEFENCE

THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS to spend Rs
900 crore more on defence in 1982-83 com-
pared 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.



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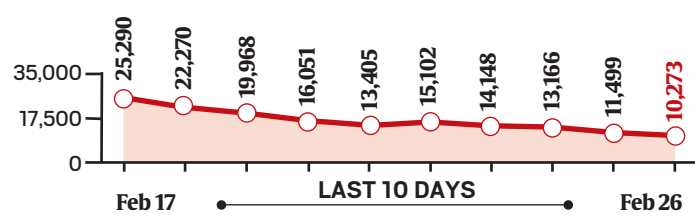
If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

DASHBOARD, AS ON FEB 26

727
DAYS SINCE
PANDEMIC
BEGANNew cases
10,273Active cases
1,11,472Deaths
243Weekly CFR: **0.41%** | Overall CFR: **1.21%** | Total deaths: **5,13,724**

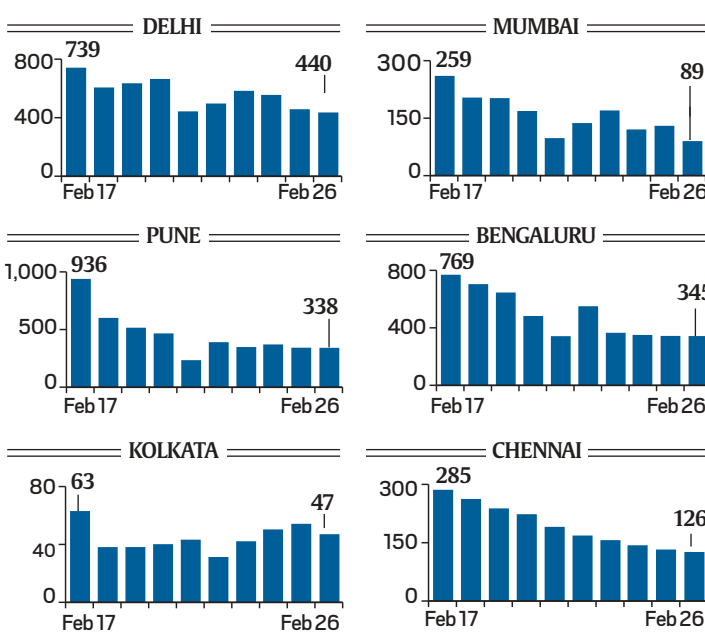
NEW CASES, DAILY



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

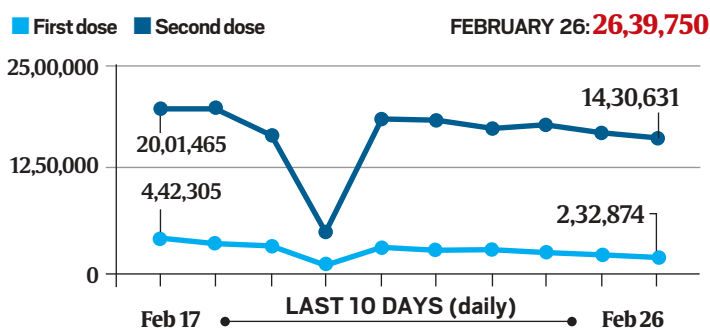
WEEKLY POSITIVITY

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

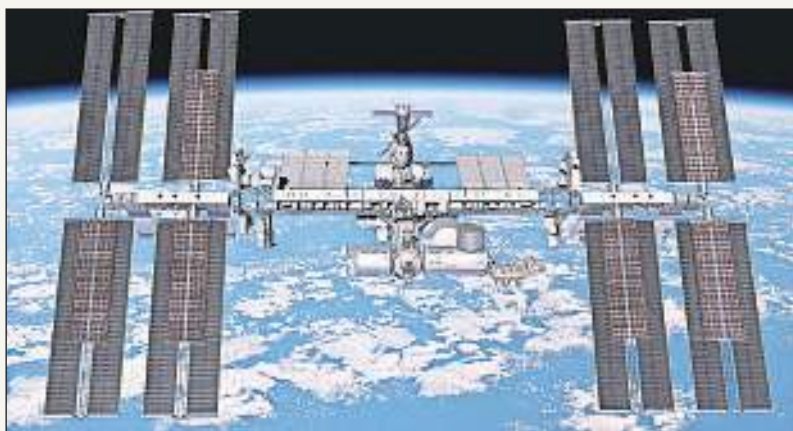
more than 15 partner countries. Apart from Russia and the US, Canada, Japan and several members of the European Space Agency are partners in the ISS.

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 prevails 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 taste 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-



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-focussed. 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.



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, Shahrvand 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 #putin10000wordsspeechfull-text 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 socialists 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

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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

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

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 machinery 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.

EXPLAINED

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

‘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)



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 Sumet 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

BP SAID it 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.



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

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-led 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**

Indian men, women go down to Spain in FIH Pro League at Kalinga Stadium

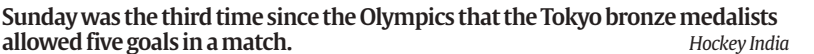
"I don't know which was worse, the Covid or the chikungunya. After chikungunya, tests also showed I had high levels of uric acid. I



A balanced diet, good facilities and struc-

"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 focussed on throwing and nothing else."

Against Spain on Sunday, India would feel goalkeeper Suraj Karkera could have done better in saving at least a couple of goals he



Fragility during turnovers is what let down the women's team as well.

Unfortunately for them, this wasn't enough to get a result.


Solutions Crossword 4674: Across: 1 Shoestring, 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 Spinet, 18 Alarm, 20 Leash.

SOLUTION: EATER, SHOVE, STRATA, UNWORN
Answer: The **sweet** and the **sour**; this is what makes great art - Ward Jenkins

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

BY PETER VIDAL

♈ 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.

 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.

六 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.

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 (Luus 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 hatrick 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 2/3) 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