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**39 IN TOP 50 SELECTIONS IN CSE 2022**

from various programs of VISIONIAS

<b>1</b> AIR <b>ISHITA KISHORE</b> ABHYAAS, ESSAY TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>2</b> AIR <b>GARIMA LOHIA</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>3</b> AIR <b>UMA HARATHIN</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>66</b> AIR <b>KRITIKA MISHRA</b> लक्ष्य, ऑल इंडिया टेस्ट सीरीज, पर्सोनिटी डेवलपमेंट
<b>7</b> AIR <b>WASEEM AHMAD BHAT</b> FOUNDATION COURSE CLASSROOM, LAKSHYA, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>8</b> AIR <b>ANIRUDDH YADAV</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ETHICS CASE STUDIES	<b>9</b> AIR <b>KANIKA GOYAL</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES	<b>11</b> AIR <b>PARSANJEET KOUR</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES
<b>12</b> AIR <b>ABHINAV SIWACH</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PT 365, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>13</b> AIR <b>VIDUSHI SINGH</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>14</b> AIR <b>KRITIKA GOYAL</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS	<b>15</b> AIR <b>SWATI SHARMA</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS
<b>16</b> AIR <b>SHISHIR KUMAR SINGH</b> ABHYAAS	<b>18</b> AIR <b>SIDDHARTH SHUKLA</b> LAKSHYA, ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>19</b> AIR <b>LAGHIMA TIWARI</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>20</b> AIR <b>ANOUSHKA SHARMA</b> LAKSHYA, ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ESSAY TEST SERIES, PT 365, MANS 365 PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT
<b>21</b> AIR <b>SHIVAM YADAV</b> PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>22</b> AIR <b>GVS PAVANDATTA</b> ABHYAAS, MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS CLASSES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>23</b> AIR <b>VAISHALI</b> PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>25</b> AIR <b>SANKHE KASHMIRA KISHOR</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ESSAY TEST SERIES
<b>26</b> AIR <b>GUNJITA AGRAWAL</b> LAKSHYA, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>27</b> AIR <b>YADAV SURYABHAN ACHCHELAL</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, ETHICS CASE STUDIES	<b>28</b> AIR <b>ANKITA PUWAR</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS	<b>29</b> AIR <b>POURUSH SOOD</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT
<b>30</b> AIR <b>PREKSHA AGRAWAL</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>31</b> AIR <b>PRIYANSHA GARG</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, PT 365, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>32</b> AIR <b>NITTIN SINGH</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>33</b> AIR <b>THARUN PATNAIK MADALA</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, ESSAY TEST SERIES
<b>34</b> AIR <b>ANUBHAV SINGH</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES	<b>37</b> AIR <b>CHAITANYA AWASTHI</b> ABHYAAS	<b>38</b> AIR <b>ANUP DAS</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>39</b> AIR <b>GARIMA NARULA</b> FOUNDATION COURSE CLASSROOM, LAKSHYA, ABHYAAS
<b>40</b> AIR <b>SRI SAI ASHRITH SHAKHAMURI</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS	<b>41</b> AIR <b>SHUBHAM</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS	<b>42</b> AIR <b>PRANITA DASH</b> ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>43</b> AIR <b>ARCHITA GOYAL</b> LAKSHYA, ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT
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<b>भोपाल</b> 21 फरवरी	<b>जयपुर</b> 23 जनवरी	<b>लखनऊ</b> 21 फरवरी	<b>जोधपुर</b> 23 जनवरी
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<p><b>Coverage for GS Prelims, GS Mains, CSAT and Essay syllabus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive syllabus coverage in classes through live interactions with highly experienced and senior faculties.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Daily Assignments, Weekly Mini-Tests and Monthly Revision Tests</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance answer writing with continuous practice, expert evaluation, and personalized &amp; concrete feedback.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Holistic Current Affairs Coverage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive coverage of Current Affairs through Monthly Current Affairs Revision Classes (MCAR), PT-365, and Mains-365 Classes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>All India Test Series for GS Prelims, GS Mains, CSAT and Essay</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mock tests with Innovative Assessment system consisting of Post-Test Analysis, Test-Discussions, and All India Ranking.</li> </ul>
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ENGLISH MEDIUM 2024: 14 JANUARY हिन्दी माध्यम 2024: 14 जनवरी	ENGLISH MEDIUM 2025: 21 JANUARY हिन्दी माध्यम 2025: 4 फरवरी



# THE WORLD

**TOP OF THE WORLD**



Jimmy Lai, File

**HONG KONG**  
First witness testifies against media tycoon Lai

THE FIRST prosecution witness to testify in a landmark national security case against Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai said on Wednesday he had been instructed by Lai to call people to join protests in 2019 and draw the attention of western democracies. The witness, Cheung Kim-hung, said Lai believed a proposed law that would allow people in Hong Kong to be sent to China to face trial in courts controlled by the Communist Party would be used to crack-down on the territory's democracy and freedoms. The bill was later withdrawn by the government. **REUTERS**

**THAILAND**  
Pro-reform lawyer gets more jail time

A THAI court sentenced a jailed activist lawyer to four years in prison on Wednesday for royal insults from a 2021 social media post, his lawyer said, in one of the country's high profile lese-majeste cases. Human Rights lawyer Arnon Nampa, 39, has been serving a four-year sentence since last September after a criminal court found him guilty over remarks about the monarchy at a speech during a 2020 rally. The sentences will run consecutively, so he will serve eight years, local media said. Wednesday's verdict is the second of 14 cases against Arnon. **REUTERS**

**SOUTH KOREA**  
Sanctions over N Korea arms programme

SOUTH KOREA has sanctioned two individuals, three entities and 11 ships linked to North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes, its foreign ministry said Wednesday. Faced with drawn-out gridlock at the UN, Seoul has turned to slapping sanctions on Pyongyang independently or together with Washington and Tokyo, seeking to squeeze its sources of funding. Wednesday's action came days after North Korea fired a new intermediate range, solid-fuel hyper-sonic missile, which Seoul and the US condemned as a serious violation of UNSC resolutions. **REUTERS**

**COLOMBO**  
Lanka arrests 18 more Indian fishermen

THE SRI Lankan Navy arrested 18 Indian fishermen and seized their trawlers for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters, a statement said Wednesday, in the third incident this month. The fishermen were arrested, and their two trawlers seized Tuesday off the coast of Mannar in the northeast, the Sri Lanka Navy said in a release. The 18 fishermen will be handed over to the Talaimannar Fisheries Inspector, it said. **PTI**

**TWO BASES OF BALOCH GROUP TARGETED BY MISSILES, DRONES**

## Pak warns of consequences as Iran strikes terror bases in Balochistan

Member of Iran's Revolutionary Guards killed in Pak: State media



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (left) with Pak caretaker PM Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in Davos, Tuesday. X/IranObserver0



**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 17

PAKISTAN ON Wednesday warned Iran of "serious consequences" after Tehran launched an unprecedented missile and drone strikes on terrorist bases of a Sunni militant group in the restive Balochistan province, which killed two children and injured three others.

Islamabad also summoned the Iranian charge d'affaires to the foreign ministry and issued a strongly-worded condemnation of Iran's "violation of its airspace", the Foreign Office said.

Tehran has repeatedly warned that the Jaish al-Adl militant group is using Pakistani soil in the border town of Panjgur in Balochistan to launch terror attacks on Iranian security forces.

"Pakistan vehemently protests the violation of its sovereignty," the Foreign Office said, adding it was "completely unacceptable" and may have "serious consequences".

**EXPLAINED**  
Iran's unprecedented move, China's dilemma

CHINA WEDNESDAY asked Pakistan and Iran to show restraint and avoid actions that could escalate tensions. It is a delicate situation for China as Pakistan is an all-weather ally, but Tehran has recently warmed up to Beijing enabling it to expand its West Asia influence. China also imports Iran's oil. Faltering ties between Kabul's Taliban and Pakistan also bothers Beijing as it has granted diplomatic recognition to Taliban.

Strongly condemning the Iranian strike, major political parties on Wednesday said after India and Afghanistan, the serious deterioration of relations with Iran is "worrisome" and speaks volumes about the country's "failed" foreign and defence policies.

Meanwhile, a member of Iran's Revolutionary Guards was shot dead in the country's south-eastern Sistan-Baluchestan province that borders Pakistan and Afghanistan, the official Iran's IRNA reported on Wednesday. **WITH REUTERS INPUTS**

## 'Blatant breach': Pak recalls Iran envoy, suspends key meets

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 17

PAKISTAN WEDNESDAY recalled its ambassador to Iran and suspended all high-level planned bilateral visits in the coming days, hours after Tehran's unprecedented strikes on what it said were terrorist bases of a Sunni militant group in the restive Balochistan province.

Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Baloch in a statement read out to the media also said that the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan who is currently visiting Iran may not return to Islamabad for the time being. Pakistan also reserves the right to retaliate to the provocation by Iran, she said.

"We have also informed them (Iran) that Pakistan has decided to recall its ambassador from Iran and that the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, now on a visit to Iran, may not return for the time being. We have also decided to suspend all high-level visits which

**UNDERSTAND ACTIONS IN SELF-DEFENCE: INDIA**

New Delhi: In response to queries by media, India's Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "This is a matter between Iran and Pakistan. Insofar as India is concerned, we have an uncompromising position of zero tolerance towards terrorism. We understand actions that countries take in their self defence." **ENS**

were ongoing or were planned between Pakistan and Iran in coming days," Baloch said.

"This illegal act is completely unacceptable and has no justification whatsoever. Pakistan reserves the right to respond to this illegal act. The responsibility for the consequences will lie squarely with Iran," Baloch said, adding that Pakistan has conveyed this message to the Iranian Government.

## Houthi missiles hit Greek-owned ship, US strikes back

Nine Palestinians killed in Israel's airstrikes in West Bank, say medics

**REUTERS**  
WASHINGTON, JAN 16

THE U.S. military carried out new strikes in Yemen on Tuesday against anti-ship ballistic missiles in a Houthi-controlled part of the country as a missile struck a Greek-owned vessel in the Red Sea.

Attacks by the Iran-allied Houthi militia on ships in the region since November have affected major companies and alarmed major powers - an escalation of Israel's war with Palestinian Hamas militants in Gaza.

A Malta-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier was struck by a missile while northbound in the Red Sea 76 nautical miles northwest of the Yemeni port of Saleef, a security firm and two Greek shipping ministry sources said.

Yemen's Houthi carried out the attack on the ship, the Zografina, using naval missiles, the group's spokesperson Yahya Sarea.

Meanwhile, Israeli air strikes killed nine Palestinians in two areas of the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, medics said, and the Israeli military described at least five of the dead as militants suspected of planning imminent attack. An air strike on a car in Balata, near the northern West Bank city of Nablus, killed five members of a local cell of militants that planned a large-scale attack on Israelis, the military said in a statement. Hours later,



Displaced Gazans wait for food in Rafah, south Gaza, on Wednesday. Reuters

an air strike in the central West Bank city of Tulkarm killed four Palestinians, medics said.

**US Senate rejects resolution on rights breaches by Israel**

The US Senate on Tuesday rejected a resolution that would have forced the State Department to produce a report within 30 days examining whether Israel committed human rights violations in its campaign against Hamas in Gaza. Of the total 100, 54 senators voted to set the resolution aside.

The vote was forced by Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent who caucuses with Democrats. While the resolution was defeated, it reflected growing concern among Biden's Democrats, especially on the left, over the supply of US weapons to Israel.

## Pak election body warns of poll delay due to dispute over party symbols

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 17

PAKISTAN'S ELECTION commission has warned that the general elections may have to be delayed if the process of changing electoral symbols does not stop, asserting that it could not keep making alterations with the February 8 polls just around the corner.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said in a statement on Tuesday that after the allotment of the election symbols, political actors are "having them changed through various forums", the Dawn newspaper reported.

Asserting that despite having issued repeated instructions to relevant authorities that election symbols should remain unchanged once the printing starts, the ECP said that if the trend of changing the election symbols did not stop, there would be no other option but to postpone the polls in such constituencies.

"If the process of changing the election symbols continues in the same way, there is a fear of election delay because the ballot papers will have to be reprinted, for which time is already limited, and on the other hand, the special paper available for the ballot papers will also be lost," the ECP statement said.

The electoral watchdog said that following the allotment of election symbols, it had already ordered the printing of ballot papers to the three printing corporations, and the printing work had commenced. According to The Express Tribune newspaper, the ECP's statement came in response to the requests made by parties.

## Russian missiles hit Ukraine apartments, injure 17 civilians

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
KYIV, JANUARY 17

RUSSIA FIRED two missiles at Kharkiv during the night, hitting apartment buildings and a medical center and injuring 17 people in the city in northeastern Ukraine, officials said Wednesday, in Moscow's latest strikes on civilian areas in the war.

The S-300 missiles landed after dark Tuesday, Kharkiv regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said on Telegram.

Normally surface-to-air missiles, the S-300s have been adapted by Russia to hit targets on the ground and are cheaper to make than ballistic or cruise missiles. However, they have a shorter range, analysts say.

Both sides are looking to replenish their weapons stockpiles



After a Russian strike in central Kharkiv on Wednesday. Reuters

as fighting along the 1,500-kilometer front line is largely bogged down during winter and the war's focus turns to long-range missile, drone and artillery strikes.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been

making a diplomatic push for Kyiv's Western allies to keep supplying weaponry. He recently visited the three Baltic countries and on Tuesday attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

**BANNERS READ 'NAZIS, NO THANK YOU,' 'IT FEELS LIKE 1933'**

## Germans protest after far-right meeting on deportation plan

**REUTERS**  
BERLIN, JANUARY 17

PROTESTS AGAINST the far-right Alternative for Germany party are gaining momentum in the wake of a report that two senior party members joined a meeting to discuss plans for the mass deportation of citizens of foreign origin.

While the party has long rallied against immigrants, the proposals for "unassimilated citizens" to be deported to "a model state in North Africa", reported by outlet Correctiv, have struck a nerve in Germany. Some have



A banner at the protest in Cologne on Tuesday. Reuters

compared them to the Nazis' initial plan to deport European Jews to Madagascar.

## Kremlin says N Korea ties growing in all areas including 'sensitive' ones

**REUTERS**  
MOSCOW, JANUARY 17

RUSSIA IS developing its relations with North Korea in all areas, including "sensitive" ones, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday.

North Korea's foreign minister Choe Son Hui lauded comradeship ties with Russia on Tuesday and then held rare talks in the Kremlin with President Vladimir Putin, who has been invited by Kim Jong Un to visit the reclusive nuclear-armed country. Asked about the talks in Moscow, Peskov said the situation on the Korean peninsula was discussed, but that the main focus was on developing relations.

"The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is our very important partner, and we are focused on the further development of our relations in all areas, including in sensitive areas," Peskov told reporters.

Putin has deepened ties with North Korea since sending troops into Ukraine in 2022, and the US and its allies have condemned what they say have been significant North Korean missile deliveries to Russia to help its war.



North Korean Foreign minister Choe Son Hui (right) with Vladimir Putin. Reuters

comparing them to the Nazis' initial plan to deport European Jews to Madagascar.

**OFFICIALS SAY TOTAL POPULATION DROPPED BY 2.08 MILLION IN 2023 TO 1.409 BILLION**

## China's population drops for second year, with record low birth rate

**REUTERS**  
HONG KONG, JANUARY 17

CHINA'S POPULATION fell for a second consecutive year in 2023, as a record low birth rate and a wave of COVID-19 deaths when strict lockdowns ended accelerated a downturn that will have profound long-term effects on the economy's growth potential.

The National Bureau of Statistics said the total number of people in China dropped by 2.08 million, or 0.15%, to 1.409 billion in 2023. That was well above the population decline of 850,000 in 2022, which had

been the first since 1961 during the Great Famine of the Mao Zedong era.

China experienced a dramatic nationwide COVID surge early last year after three years of tight screening and quarantine measures kept the virus largely contained until authorities abruptly lifted curbs in December 2022.

Total deaths last year rose 6.6% to 11.1 million, with the death rate reaching the highest level since 1974 during the Cultural Revolution. New births fell 5.7% to 9.02 million and the birth rate was a record low 6.39 births per 1,000 people, down from a rate of 6.77 births in 2022.



Births in the country have been plummeting for decades as a result of the one-child policy. Reuters

Births in the country have been plummeting for decades as a result of the one-child policy implemented from 1980 to 2015 and its rapid urbanisation during that period.

As with earlier economic booms in Japan and South Korea, large populations moved from China's rural farms into cities, where having children is more expensive.

Japan's birth rate was 6.3 per 1,000 people in 2022, while South Korea's rate was 4.9.

"As we have observed again and again from other low fertility countries, fertility decline is often very difficult to reverse,"

## 'GOTTA GET BACK TO BEATING DEMOCRATS' Trump to face tough New Hampshire test after easy Iowa win

**REUTERS**  
ATKINSON, JANUARY 17

DONALD TRUMP and his Republican opponents kicked off a week of campaigning in New Hampshire on Tuesday ahead of the state's nominating contest, with the ex-president's competitors battling to slow his march to the party's White House nomination.

More than half of Iowa voters backed Trump, 77, propelling him toward a potentially close and acrimonious rematch against Democrat President Joe Biden, 81, in the campaign for November's presidential election.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, 45, finished a distant second to Trump in Iowa, pushing former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, 51, into third.

"We really gotta get back on to Biden and beating the Democrats, and not wasting a lot of time with these two," Trump said of Haley and DeSantis to a crowd of supporters in Atkinson, New Hampshire, located about an hour's drive north of Boston.

Like in Iowa, the candidates face frigid temperatures and snow as they try to turn out supporters to campaign events



Former president Donald Trump in a rally at Atkinson on Wednesday. AP

ahead of the Jan. 23 New Hampshire primary vote.

At a hotel in Bretton Woods, a remote area in New Hampshire's White Mountains, Haley told a group of around 100 supporters who braved a snowstorm that Trump was the wrong choice. "Rightly or wrongly chaos follows him. You know I'm right," Haley, who was with New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu, said.

Desantis spoke at a CNN-moderated town hall at New England College in the town of Henniker, where he said he was encouraged that nearly half of Iowa voters cast ballots for candidates other than Trump.

"(That) tells me that there is an appetite for a different leader," DeSantis said.





## Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

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Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

**BUSINESS AS USUAL**  
By UNNY

After your rage, we need to be bigger than you for turning rage?

### Market falls sharpest in 19 months on Fed signals, HDFC Bank results

HITESH VYAS  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 17

DOMESTIC EQUITIES indices, Sensex and Nifty, plunged over 2 per cent Wednesday — sharpest since June 2022 — dragged by HDFC Bank, which witnessed heavy selling after its third-quarter results disappointed investors, and global cues.

A comment from a senior US Federal Reserve official that interest rate cuts need to be calibrated, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

**EXPLAINED**  
After a sharp rally

The correction comes after a sharp rally over the past few days. Besides the HDFC Bank-led selling pressure in banking stocks, the statement by a Fed official indicating that it could delay rate cuts spooked markets.

**'STAFF DOWN FROM 150 TO 20'**

### FCRA licence scrapped, CPR says its funding choked, staff 'skeletal'

Heartbreaking, will keep it going, says think tank head Yamini Aiyar

RITU SARIN  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

A WEEK after the Centre for Policy Research received a final order cancelling its licence under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), its president Yamini Aiyar has said its funding had been "choked", its staff strength was now "skeletal" and programming is down to a bare "minimum".

The CPR, established in 1973



### THE PREVIEW

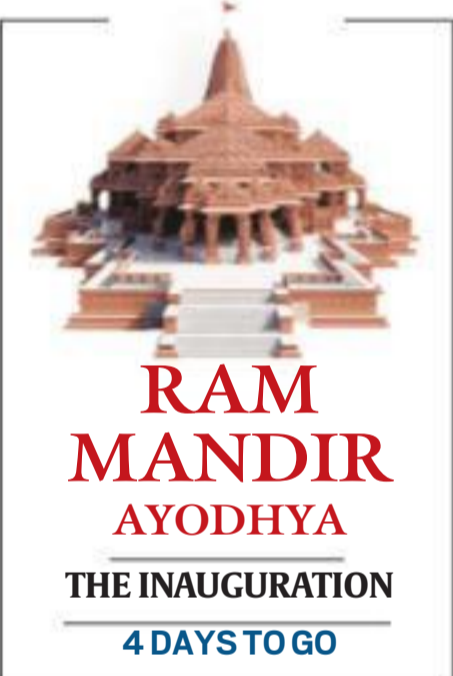
The Ram temple in Ayodhya Wednesday ahead of the consecration ceremony on January 22. The new idol of Ram Lalla was brought to the premises and will be placed in the sanctum sanctorum on Thursday. The existing idol was also taken to the premises and returned to the makeshift temple. Vishal Srivastav

### Near Ram temple, 21 youths train and compete to become its priests

MAULSHREE SETH  
AYODHYA, JANUARY 17

IN A hall 700 metres from the Ram temple under construction, away from the noise of the streets of Ayodhya, 21 youths, all under the age of 30, are training hard — and competing — to become Archaks, priests of the temple of the Lord at his janmabhoomi.

These young Archaks, who have been chosen after a rigorous selection process that involved sifting through some 2,700 applications from different parts of the country, get up before dawn breaks — between 3.30 am and 4 am — and prepare for the day's training, chanting



mantras for hours, learning the intricacies of worshipping Ram as per traditions of the

Ramanandi sect of the Vaishnavs.

In the bitter cold, the 21 young men sleep on a chatai spread on the floor of a big hall with some blankets and quilts for cover.

It's a strict schedule, one that sees them being trained in pronunciation of mantras, knowledge of shastra, character building, yoga asanas.

"We get up around 4 am to prepare food for these students as they have to be ready for their training. They begin their day with yoga and exercises, after which the training starts around 7 am and continues until noon. After a break, the classes start **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

### HC orders SIT of CBI, Bengal Police to probe attack on ED officials

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, JANUARY 17

THE CALCUTTA High Court Wednesday ordered the formation of a special investigation team (SIT) comprising officers of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and West Bengal Police to probe the attack on Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials in Sandeshkhali earlier this month.

On January 5, ED officers and central forces were attacked by a mob when they went to the house of Shahjahan Sheikh, a TMC Zila Parishad member from Ajunjipara, in connection with the agency's investigation into

alleged irregularities in West Bengal's public distribution system (PDS).

A single-judge bench of Justice Jay Sengupta said the High Court will monitor the investigation and ordered that the SIT should not submit the final investigation report without intimating the court.

Justice Sengupta said two SP-rank officers, one from the CBI and the other from police, will jointly head the SIT, and that they should induct an equal number of officers from their respective services to conduct the investigation.

The court told the SIT to file a progress report on February 12, the **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

### SURVEY OF EDUCATION 2023

# Most rural kids 14-18 can't do Class 3 math, over 25% can't read

Almost 9 in 10 are in school, but 56.7% teens could not do simple division

RRADHIKA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

MORE THAN half of 14- to 18-year-old children in rural India cannot solve a simple three-digit division problem that's usually taught in Class 3-4 and struggle with everyday skills, including determining time and doing basic calculations, shows the latest edition of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) released on Wednesday.

The findings point to a huge skill deficit among adolescents, many of them only a few years away from entering the job market.

### A REPORT CARD FROM THE CLASSROOM

% of children who can do everyday calculations

	Time	Weights	Length (easy)	Length (hard)	Unitary method
Male	50.5	65.8	87.5	45.7	55.9
Female	41.1	45.4	82.1	33.3	42.0
All youth	45.4	54.8	84.6	39.0	48.4

% of children at different arithmetic levels on the ASER test

Arithmetic level	Male	Female	All
Division	45.0	41.8	43.3
Subtraction	20.2	21.6	21.0
Number recognition*	34.8	36.6	35.8

\*(11-99 or below)

The 2023 report reveals that children in India continue to struggle with basic reading and arithmetic skills well into their teenage years, even after reaching Class 10 and higher secondary levels of education (Classes 11 and 12).

Overall, of those aged 14-18, a quarter (26.5%) could not read a Class 2-level textbook in their **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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### At debris of their demolished homes, Delhi schoolchildren pick up the pieces

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND & TASHI TOBGYAL  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

ON TUESDAY afternoon after school, class 5 student Arfan fished out a black plastic cricket bat from underneath the debris of homes that were demolished nearly two months back. Still wearing the green jacket-grey trousers uniform of Delhi Public School (DPS) Mathura Road, he swung it around, trying to hit some of the broken bricks and tiles.



Afran and Nancy read a textbook amid the remains of their demolished homes on Mathura Road. Tashi Tobgyal

The partly broken bat, said Arfan, possibly belongs to a neighbour whose demolished home is near the rubble of his own residence. Both houses were among nearly 300 structures next to DPS Mathura Road that were pulled down in an "encroachment" removal exercise ordered by the Land and Development Office of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on November 21.

The demolition followed a Delhi High Court order, which held that the slum cluster did not exist before January 1, 2006, and was, therefore, not protected under existing rules. The Central **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



# SC to hear Punjab plea against bail to Cong MLA today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

THE SUPREME Court will hear Thursday a Punjab government plea, challenging the bail to Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira in connection with a case registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and the Arms Act. The matter came up Wednesday before a bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mishra. Appearing for Khaira, Senior Advocate P S Patwalia questioned the urgency by the state in the matter and said it was mentioned on Tuesday evening and listed. Senior Advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for the Punjab government, said it was listed after being approved by the Registry.

Patwalia said he had not been supplied a copy and added that he needed time to prepare. The senior counsel claimed the state had personal malice against his client. Luthra said that the copy of the plea had been circulated and added that the order granting bail completely ignores Section 37 of NDPS Act. The Punjab and Haryana HC granted him bail on January 4. However, before he could be released from prison, the Punjab police arrested Khaira in a fresh case registered in the Subhanpur police station under IPC sections 195A (threatening any person to give false evidence) and 506 (criminal intimidation) based on a complaint filed by the wife of a key witness in the 2015 drug case. On January 15, a court in Kapurthala granted him bail in the second case.

# 'Won't do construction': Designer Tahiliani to HC over Goa property dispute

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA PANAJI, JANUARY 17

FASHION DESIGNER Tarun Tahiliani told the Goa bench of the Bombay High Court Wednesday that he shall not carry out further construction activity at a residential project in Salvador do Mundo village following a plea challenging certain permissions granted for the project. The High Court was hearing a plea from some villagers, who challenged the manner in which technical clearances were granted by the Deputy Town Planner, Town and Country Planning Department, to Tahiliani for carrying out development at a property in the village. The plea claims that the technical

clearance and the construction licence have been issued by "overlooking" statutory requirements of the physical availability of the road infrastructure, thereby making the grant of clearance and licence contrary to the Regional Plan for Goa (RPG) 2021 and the building regulations. The plea states that while no residential construction is permitted in "natural cover/ orchard zone" except for a farmhouse, however, the construction in question is "not a farmhouse, but a private residential development including swimming pool and staff quarters". Tahiliani's lawyer made a statement before the court that no further construction work will be carried out till the next hearing. The matter is now posted for February 20.

# Speaker verdict: Top court to hear Sena(UBT) plea on Jan 22

New Delhi: The Supreme Court will take up on January 22 a plea by Shiv Sena (UBT), challenging Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar's decision recognising Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led faction as the "real Shiv Sena" and rejecting petitions seeking disqualification of MLAs of the faction. Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal appeared for the Shiv Sena (UBT) before a bench presided by CJI D Y Chandrachud. The plea said the Speaker's order is unlawful and sought a provisional stay on it. The plea also sought interim suspension of Shinde faction MLAs' Assembly membership. ENS

# Kovind-led 1 nation, 1 poll panel writes to EC, seeks meet

New Delhi: The 'One Nation One Election' committee chaired by former President Ram Nath Kovind has written to the Election Commission of India asking for a meeting with the poll panel to discuss about holding simultaneous elections. The Indian Express has learnt. The committee had earlier this month written to former chief election commissioners seeking their views on the matter, and opened a window for the public to send in their suggestions from January 5 to January 15. The committee will also reach out to other groups, including the Bar Council of India. ENS

# FROM PAGE ONE Most rural kids 14-18 can't do Class 3 math, over 25% can't read

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

regional language, and a little less than half (42.7%) could not read sentences in English. Of those who can read these sentences, over a quarter (26.5%) did not understand the meaning of what they were reading. Basic mathematics remains the big challenge. More than half of the surveyed students (56.7%) could not solve a simple 3-digit by 1-digit division problem. The ability to do division is seen as a proxy for the ability to do basic arithmetic operations. ASER 2023 assessed the ability of those surveyed to apply basic arithmetic and reading skills to everyday calculations, reading, understanding written instructions and financial calculations. Worryingly, less than half of them (around 45%) could calculate the number of hours a child had slept based on the time she went to bed and woke up. In another everyday task, of measuring an object with a ruler, 85% of those surveyed could calculate the length of an object correctly if it was placed at the '0' mark on the ruler. But when the object was moved and placed elsewhere on the ruler, less than 40% could give the right answer. Two-thirds of those surveyed (65.1%) were able to read functional instructions on a packet of ORS solution. Across most tasks that test the ability to apply basic numeracy and reading skills, boys did better than girls. For instance, 45% boys in the 14-18 age group could do at least division while only 41.8% girls could do so. Also, while 50.5% boys calculated time when presented with a situation, only 41.1% girls could do so. The poor foundational skills come even though young people

are remaining in school longer than ever before. ASER 2023 found that, 86.8 per cent of children between 14 and 18 are enrolled in an educational institution, belying a major worry during the pandemic — that with livelihoods threatened, children would drop out. Emphasising the importance of foundational learning and life skills, "not just for academic advancement but also to traverse daily life", ASER Centre Director Wilima Wadhwa said, "At some level, India is in a unique position right now... For India to become the world's third largest economy, the quality of our labour force has to keep pace with our developmental needs. We can only reap the demographic dividend associated with a young population if our youth are well supported to achieve their aspirations and participate productively in the growth process of the economy." The survey shows that more than half (55.7%) of the young people in this age group were enrolled in the Arts/Humanities stream, followed by STEM (31.7%) and Commerce (9.4%). "More males report enrolling in the STEM stream (36.3%) than females (28.1%)," the report said. The report also showed that around 89% of those surveyed had a smartphone in the household and 92% said they knew how to use it — signalling a shift that has gathered force in the pandemic years and after. The survey was conducted in 28 districts in 26 states, involving 34,745 children in the age group of 14-18 years. One rural district was surveyed in each state, with the exception of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, where two rural districts were surveyed.

# Market falls sharpest in 19 months on Fed signals, HDFC Bank results

and not rushed, weighed on investors' sentiments as it dampened hopes of early rate cuts by the American central bank. The BSE's 30-share Sensex plunged 1,628.01 points, or 2.23 per cent to settle at 71,500.76. The NSE's Nifty 50 fell 460.35 points, or 2.09 per cent to close at 21,571.95. HDFC Bank contributed to around 60 per cent fall in the Sensex and 30 per cent in the Nifty 50. The private sector bank's shares tanked 8.16 per cent to close at Rs 1,542.15 apiece on the NSE, a day after it declared its Q3 FY24 results. Analysts said the market also witnessed a correction after a significant rally seen in the past few days. On January 15, the Sensex had rallied to a fresh record of 73,327.94 and the Nifty 50 closed at 22,097.45 for the first time. "A nosedive correction in banking stocks, along with concerns over delays in US Fed rate cuts, impacted market sentiments. The addition of discouraging Chinese growth data and rising US bond yields, also resulted in widespread profit-booking," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. On Tuesday, Christopher J Waller, Governor of the Federal Reserve System, in a speech delivered at The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., said that the data received in the last few months is allowing the committee to consider cutting the policy rate in 2024. "However, concerns about the sustainability of these data trends require changes in the path of policy to be carefully calibrated and not rushed," he said. This statement by Waller spooked the market which was expecting the US Federal Reserve to start cutting interest rates in March this year. In its December policy, the US central bank, keeping the key interest rate unchanged at 5.25-5.5 per cent, hinted at rate cuts in 2024. It signalled that it expects to make three quarter-point cuts to the benchmark interest rate this year. Barring IT, all sectors ended in red amid heightened volatility. "The banking sector took the biggest hit with Nifty Bank down 4 per cent as Q3 results of HDFC

Bank showed stagnant growth for the company," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head of Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd. Nifty Bank tanked 4.28 per cent, or 2,060.5 points to close at 46,064.45, with all its constituents ending in the red. Axis Bank closed 3.43 down, ICICI Bank lost 2.93 per cent and Kotak Mahindra Bank slid 3.76 per cent. In the quarter ended December 2023, HDFC Bank reported a 33.5 per cent increase in its standalone net profit at Rs 16,370 crore. According to a note by JM Financial, the growth in the bank's profit was aided by lower effective tax rate during the quarter. While its net interest margin (NIM) — difference between the interest income earned and the interest paid — stood at 3.4 per cent on total assets, there are concerns on this going forward. "A key aspect was that margins were flat QoQ at 3.4 per cent. Improvement in NIM is critical for re-rating of the stock," said Suresh Ganapathy, Managing Director, Head of Financial Services Research, Macquarie Capital Securities (India) Pvt. Ltd. Strong deposit growth remains a critical factor in enabling the bank to sustain its higher credit growth, Axis Securities said in a report. "We estimate core margins could have declined by 20 bps quarter-on-quarter for HDFC Bank which was a disappointment," JM Financial said in its note. After the announcement of results on Tuesday, the bank's Chief Financial Officer Srinivasan Vaidyanathan told reporters that the increase in risk weights on consumer loans by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will have an impact of 97 basis points (bps) on the capital adequacy ratio — the ratio of a bank's capital in relation to its risk-weighted assets and current liabilities. One basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point. Buying in IT stocks continued Wednesday, with the Nifty IT gaining 0.64 per cent to end at 36,960.40. The market capitalisation of all listed companies on the BSE declined by Rs 4.59 lakh crore to Rs 370.36 lakh crore.

# At debris of their demolished homes, Delhi schoolchildren pick up the pieces

Public Works Department and Municipal Corporation of Delhi were ordered to provide the machinery for the exercise. The demolition was part of other similar drives across Delhi, including in Trilokpuri, Khajoori Khas, Narela, Aya Nagar, Green Park and Sadar Bazar. Among the things lost in the rubble were some of his term books, said Arfan, whose father is a car mechanic. "A friend in school helps me out now." On that Tuesday afternoon, Arfan was among several children playing on the precarious pile of rubble, all of them in dusty school uniforms. In addition to DPS Mathura Road, these children attend Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya (SKV) Pandara Road, SKV Jangpura and Satyawati Sood Arya Girls Senior Secondary School. The adults, meanwhile, were trying to dig out belongings from under the debris, or simply sitting around with neighbours and family members. "On the way back from school, we come and sit here till it gets colder in the evening, and then leave. They play here for some time, and because of the demolished material they are tearing their uniform or destroying their shoes," said Mumtaz Abbasi, 30, whose daughter, Ziya, studies in class 7 at DPS Mathura Road. Land and Development Officer, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Suvashish Das, said: "A demolition/eviction drive... was done with the approval of the competent authority, in pursuance of contempt cases and orders passed by the Delhi High Court." He said the Delhi High Court had directed the L&DO on August 23, 2023, to immediately

remove the unauthorised construction and encroachment at the government land in question. He said the court, in its order on October 19, 2023, referred to the order of a Division Bench on February 2, 2019 that directed the government to remove the encroachments in accordance with the law as early as possible. The court also said if the unauthorised construction was not removed and a status report not filed, it would be constrained to initiate contempt proceedings against the land-owning department and its officials. For the affected families, the aftermath of the demolition was spent scrambling for accommodation that would be close to the school. Mumtaz said they moved to a rented place in Sarai Kale Khan. "We need to live somewhere close by since the school is here. Our schedule now revolves around dropping them off in the morning, picking them up in the afternoon, and then coming here. Jab tak himmat hai, inko school bhejenge (for as long as we can, we will send them to school)," said Mumtaz, whose husband is a tailor. While she has been living in their now demolished home for 16 years, her husband's family has been there for longer, she said. Sitting on a pile of rubble along with other women from their family and her toddler, Arfan's mother, 30-year-old Shahana, said: "We also moved to Sarai Kale Khan. The rent is high. It can be over Rs 5,500 for a single room. Then, from there, since we need to drop the children off to school and pick them up, transport expenses are involved. I see term books dab gaye (his term books were stuck under the debris). We come to sit here during the day because we don't want to leave, and don't want anybody to forget that our homes were here. We want to be able to live here." Shahana said Arfan had taken admission at the school under the EWS category. Harish, a class 6 student at DPS Mathura Road, said he lost his uniform in the demolition. His father, a gardener at the school, got him a new one. "Some of us didn't go to school for some time after the demolition. We used to play here before, but now we stop here on the way back from school. Our friends are all here," he said. There is no place to play here anymore," Arfan said, while Nancy, a class 4 student at SKV Pandara Road, chimes in that there will be space once all the debris is cleared.

# Youths train to become priests

again," said a staff member, working for these Archaks, as the students took a small nap during the break. According to the staff member, many of these trainees are from different parts of Uttar Pradesh and some from Bihar. Speaking to The Indian Express, Acharya Mitlesh Nandini Sharan, one of the teachers of the trainee Archaks, who was also part of the selection process, said they received around 2,700 applications from different parts of the country and about 300 applicants were short-listed for the final interview. Based on their "conduct", "dedication" and background, 23 were selected. Later, two were found to be from families whose members were already working for the existing Ram Lalla idol, so they were dropped, and 21 remained. "These Archaks will have to follow a hard routine. They will have to get up at 3 am and prepare for the rituals, which will require standing for over two-and-half hours at a stretch, with continuous preparations for the shringer. While they will work under senior priests, it is important that they are physically and mentally fit to perform daily rituals. It was for this reason that the age limit was kept below 30 years... Bahut parishram ka kaam hai. Youth behtar kar payega (It's very hard work, the youth will be able to perform better)," he said. All students have already undertaken training at different gurukuls but since their "ucharan" (recitation) is different, it is being corrected. Acharya Sharan said while Acharya Keshav is training the students on the Vedas, Acharya Satyanarayan Das has been instructing them on the "prakriya" (the process to be followed). Acharya Jaya Kant, he said, has been delivering lectures on the correct "ucharan" and making them aware about the different processes, and their meaning. In the evening, these students listen to prominent mahants of Ayodhya, including Mahant Kamal Nayan Das and Swami Ramanand Das, who narrate kathas from the Valmiki Ramayan and Ramcharitmanas. The students get a stipend of Rs 2,000 every month for the six-month training course which ends in May this year. All expenses and other arrangements have been made by the temple Trust. Acharya Sharan said the students will be handed certificates at the end of the training and have been told that only some of them will become priests at the Ram temple. The rest are likely to be selected for the remaining temples that will come up in the complex. For now, it's hard work.

# HC orders SIT of CBI, Bengal Police to probe attack on ED

The High Court order on Wednesday came on the ED lawyers' petition. Last week, while hearing one of the petitions, a single-judge bench of Justice Rajasekhara Mantha ordered an interim stay on proceedings in connection with the FIR against ED officials until March 31. He also asked the state government to file an affidavit. The court will hear the matter on January 22. The West Bengal Police have registered three FIRs in the incident, including one against ED officers. No one has been arrested so far. next date of hearing in the case. The ED had moved two petitions at the Calcutta High Court in connection with the Sandeshkhali incident. One sought the quashing of the FIR lodged at Nazat police station in North 24 Parganas district against its officials, claiming false allegations were made against them. The ED stated that three of its officers were injured and their belongings were snatched during the attack in Sandeshkhali. Another petition was moved by ED lawyers SV Raju and Dhiraj Trivedi seeking a probe by the CBI into the Sandeshkhali incident.

# CPR FCRA licence scrapped

The cancellation of the IT exemption has been currently stayed by the Delhi High Court and Aiyar said the organisation was "examining all options and recourses" for the loss of its FCRA licence too. Speaking to The Indian Express, Aiyar described her situation, as the current head of CPR, as "beleaguered but confident" and said that in comparison to March 2023, the think tank's staff strength was down from 150 people to just 20. "There is little funding and since the dispute... whatever funds we have are also frozen as per FCRA rules. So how do we pay salaries? It has been heart-breaking to see such challenges in an institution which has so much credibility and which has made so much contribution to policymaking for 50 years." She pointed out that with its employee strength whittled down and funding gone dry, the CPR has been forced to scale down its activities but that she was determined to "keep CPR going." She said: "We are hopeful it will go the right way and we will get administrative redressal and relief from courts." It was in August 2023 that the Delhi High Court stayed the Income Tax proceedings against the CPR. That stay order has now been challenged by IT authorities and hearings are in progress. It is the alleged "violations" traced by the IT authorities in CPR's functioning and finances following the September 2022 survey that has formed the basis of the twin cancellations. While Aiyar said the FCRA cancellation order, received on January 10, was "not a detailed order", the case against CPR is contained in the final 115-page notice sent to it by IT authorities on June 30, 2023. This notice, accessed by The Indian Express, alleges that CPR had taken part in activities which were "not as per the objectives of the Trust or were apparently not genuine." The authorities have also challenged the manner in which CPR didn't maintain separate accounts and mixed up its accounts for funding received and from what the IT sleuths have categorized as "business activities." Both FCRA and IT authorities have used documents and contracts recovered during the survey and other "evidence" such as contents of WhatsApp chats between CPR consultants and employees to bolster their case. In a statement Wednesday, Aiyar said the basis of the FCRA cancellation was "incomprehensible and disproportionate," and "some of the reasons given challenge the very basis of the functioning of a research institution." This, she said, includes the "publication on our website of policy reports emanating from our research being equated with current affairs programming." The statement added: "CPR firmly reiterates that it is in complete compliance with the law, and has been cooperating fully and exhaustively at every step of the process."

Advertisement for 'Sopan' festival by Sahitya Kala Parishad. It features a collage of images related to music, dance, and drama. The text includes: 'दिल्ली सरकार', 'Sahitya Kala Parishad presents', 'Sopan', 'Festival of Scholarship holders in the field of Music, Dance, Drama, and Visual arts (2018 - 2020)', '18-21 January, 2024, 5.30 pm', 'Chief Guest Shri Saurabh Bharadwaj Hon'ble Minister of Art, Culture & Languages', 'Triveni Auditorium, Tansen Marg, Mandi House, New Delhi', 'ENTRY FREE YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED'. There is a photo of Shri Saurabh Bharadwaj at the bottom right.



## Road rage: Man shot in hip after his car brushes against bike

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

IN A CASE of road rage, a 22-year-old man was allegedly shot in the hip by two men after his car accidentally brushed against their bike in West Delhi's Janakpuri.

Police said the man, who was with a woman friend, was allegedly followed by the accused who later fired at him. The woman escaped unhurt.

One of the accused was arrested soon after the incident while his associate was on the run. As per police, the incident took place around 11.50 am Wednesday. The injured, Jatin Jain, is a student from Sonipat and came to Delhi in his car. Police said while he was parking his vehicle near the District Centre, it hit a bike.

A senior police officer said, "An argument broke out between the man and the accused. After some time, Jatin's friend arrived. The two got onto her scooter and were crossing the road when the accused followed them and asked them to stop. Another argument broke out and one of the accused pulled out a pistol and fired at Jatin."

DCP (West) Vichitra Veer said the bullet hit Jatin on his left hip. "A police team was near the spot on patrol. Hearing the gunshot, they rushed to the spot and overpowered one of the accused... the other managed to escape."

Police said locals also rushed to help the injured person as the woman screamed for help. They provided them "cover" as the accused were acting hostile. Police said a pistol was recovered from the spot.

The DCP said the accused, Vishal Rai, is involved in over eight cases of Arms Act, theft, and robbery. Jatin was sent to DDU Hospital for treatment.

Police said a case of attempted murder was registered.

'NO INVITATION TO CEREMONY YET'

## CM: Will go to Ayodhya with family later



CM Arvind Kejriwal meets pilgrims as they leave for Dwarkadhish, in Gujarat, on Wednesday. Abhinav Saha

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Wednesday that he will go to the Ram Temple in Ayodhya with his family after the consecration ceremony on January 22 and that he has not got a formal invitation yet.

He was speaking to reporters after meeting Delhi residents headed to Dwarkadhish temple in Gujarat under the government's Mukhyamantri Teerth Yatra scheme.

"They had sent a letter, after which we called them. They said someone would come to invite (me) personally. That did not happen but it is ok. They wrote in the letter that a lot of VIPs and VVIPs will come for the ceremony and keeping in mind the security arrangements, only one person will be allowed. But I want to go to the temple with my wife and children. My parents are also very keen on Ram lalla's darshan. So I will go with my family later... after the ceremony," Kejriwal said.

He added that the government would arrange for more trains to go to Ayodhya under its free pilgrimage scheme. "After the consecration ceremony on

January 22, it will be our effort to have more trains for Ayodhya. The people are very excited," he said.

The AAP government in Delhi has been sending pilgrims to Ayodhya since 2021 as part of its Teerth Yatra scheme.

According to government data, 4,000 people from Delhi have visited Ayodhya since December 2021 as part of the scheme. The first such train was flagged off by Kejriwal. Under the scheme, MLAs recommend names of senior citizens for the pilgrimage. Arrangements for travel, board and lodging are made by the government.

CM likely to skip 4th ED summons in excise case

Kejriwal, meanwhile, is unlikely to go to the ED office for questioning on Thursday. He is scheduled to go for a three-day visit to Goa alongside Punjab CM Bhagwant Singh Mann, and MPs Raghav Chadha and Sandeep Pathak.

The investigating agency sent him the fourth summons in relation with the excise policy case last week, asking him to appear for questioning on Thursday. Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Kejriwal said, "We will do whatever needs to be done according to the law."

PARTS OF BODY RECOVERED, SENT FOR AUTOPSY: GHAZIABAD COPS

## Hit-and-run victim run over by vehicles on NH9, body mutilated

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
GHAZIABAD, JANUARY 17

IN A HORRIFIC incident, a person died after being hit by an unknown vehicle on National Highway 9 — before other vehicles kept running over the body as it lay on the road, mutilating it beyond recognition. The incident took place on the intervening night of Sunday and Monday in Wave City area.

According to Ghaziabad police, some commuters, who spotted blood on the road, informed them about the body around 10 am on Monday.

Police said they suspect the accident could have happened when the person was trying to cross the road and may have been run over by many vehicles because of poor visibility amid dense fog.

They said the body was mutilated beyond recognition after it was run over several times and it is not yet clear whether the deceased was a man or woman.

Police said they could recover only parts of the body and have sent it for a postmortem.

"An FIR under IPC section 304-A (causing death by negligence) has been registered. We



The incident took place in Wave City area, Ghaziabad, on the intervening night of Sunday and Monday. Express

are waiting for the deceased's family to identify the body. If someone has gone missing, then their family will file a missing person's complaint. So far, we have not got any lead," said Saloni Agrawal, ACP, Wave City.

The Ghaziabad police said they are also scanning CCTV footage to identify the person.

## Divya Pahuja case: Cops find pistol used to kill her

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
GURGAON, JANUARY 17

GURGAON POLICE recovered the weapon allegedly used to murder former model Divya Pahuja from Palam Vihar Mod, Wednesday.

According to police, a joint operation with employees of the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram, involved in pruning bushes near Palam Vihar Mod on Old Delhi Road, led to the discovery. A thorough search operation was conducted in garbage and scrapyards at a large scale following which a pistol and a live cartridge used to commit the murder were recovered, police added.



Divya was killed at City Point Hotel in Sector 14 on January 2. Her body was taken in a BMW by two of the accused and dumped in Punjab's Pasianna. However, it had floated and reached Haryana's Tohana, 150 km away, and was fished out last week.

Police have arrested six people so far: Hotel owner Abhijeet

Singh; hotel staff Omprakash and Hemraj, who allegedly helped Singh dispose of the weapon and Divya's belongings; lawyer Balraj Gill who helped dispose of the body; and Parvesh who supplied arms to Singh.

Police said Abhijeet was sent to judicial custody on Wednesday. A senior police officer said that they are yet to recover Divya's iPhone which was also disposed of by the accused. "...Abhijeet told us she used to be demanding at times... The phone was disposed of as Abhijeet did not want us to find certain things, but we will recover it. We have sent Divya's second phone to the forensic department," he added.

Divya was arrested in 2016 for allegedly providing information to Haryana Police on the whereabouts of gangster Sandeep Gadoli, leading to him being killed in an alleged fake encounter at a Mumbai hotel. She was granted bail last year.







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IN THE wake of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement earlier this year emphasising the need for "More airports and better connectivity... the aviation sector is bringing people closer and boosting national progress," it is unsurprising that India is rapidly emerging as one of the world's fastest-growing aviation markets. Currently positioned as the third-largest civil aviation market globally, India is poised to claim the top spot by 2047. Additionally, the nation's civil aviation industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience, bouncing back from the dire impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that cast a shadow over the global aviation sector. Notably, there has been a commendable surge in air traffic movement, rising from 188.89 million in FY2022 to an impressive 327.28 million in FY 2023.

The civil aviation industry has undergone a remarkable transformation since its inaugural commercial flight on 18 February 1911, covering a modest distance of just 6 miles. Against the backdrop of the extraordinary expansion witnessed in the country's aviation sector, which has seen a jump from 74 to 148 airports over the last nine years, with aspirations to add 220 new airports by 2025, emerges Wings India 2024. This event stands as Asia's largest gathering focused on civil aviation, showcasing the industry's dynamic growth and potential.

## SHOWCASING THE FUTURE OF AVIATION

Wings India 2024 convenes diverse facets of commercial, general, and business aviation under one roof, uniting stakeholders, participants, and visitors to celebrate the remarkable growth of the civil aviation industry. This global aviation convergence, set to unfold at Begumpet Airport in the 'City of Nawabs,' Hyderabad, from January 18 to 21, 2024, anticipates the participation of over 1,500 delegates hailing from more than 106 countries, 5,000 business visitors,

## Wings India 2024: Elevating India's aviation future

*At Wings India, experience cutting-edge developments, seize business opportunities, and celebrate the rich history of the Indian civil aviation industry. Our focus is on propelling sustainable growth and fostering innovation for a promising future*



200 exhibitors, and a staggering 100,000 visitors from across the globe. Government officials from various departments, representatives from investment firms, and members of the media and press will grace the event. Furthermore, professionals from the aviation industry, academic and research institutions, industry associations, and trade organisations, along with numerous international delegations, are expected to contribute to the vibrancy of the occasion.

Under the theme "Connecting India to the World in Amrit Kaal: Setting the Stage for Indian Civil Aviation@2047," Wings India 2024 stands out as the most comprehensive

event dedicated to the country's civil aviation sector. This gathering not only allows participants to witness the future of aviation in India but also presents cutting-edge innovations in the aviation sector alongside impressive aircraft displays. By hosting engaging sessions and promoting collaborations, the event serves as an ideal platform for exploring global partnerships and discovering untapped business opportunities within the industry. Notably, each edition of Wings India attracts a significant presence of government entities, facilitating purposeful engagement with government officials. This engagement provides exhibitors with the

opportunity to discuss policies and explore avenues for meaningful collaboration.

While 1,748 foreign airline flights and 1,440 domestic airline flights keep India connected to the world, wherein tourist arrivals from all over the world are projected to reach 30.5 million by 2028, helping the country's civil aviation sector scale to new heights globally is Wings India 2024—the flagship event on civil aviation sector. The event, organised by the Government of India's Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) along with the Airport Authority of India (AAI) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) once

every two years, beckons exhibitors and visitors with an eye-catching inaugural ceremony, a splendid exhibition, a Global Ministerial Conference and media conferences alongside a Global CEOs' Forum. Additionally, the event seamlessly puts together a one-of-a-kind opportunity to do business and networking while discovering the latest developments in aviation and has as its integral part B2B/B2G meetings, a static display, chalets, demonstration flights, a cultural evening, and a business networking dinner. Moreover, the fourth edition of the prestigious Wings India Awards ceremony will take place on the first day of the avia-

tion confluence, recognising innovation as well as excellence in demonstrating the best practices in the aviation sector under various categories.

## STEERING GROWTH, INNOVATION AND A PROMISING FUTURE

The civil aviation sector is experiencing remarkable growth, earning accolades and achieving significant milestones to establish itself as one of the world's fastest-growing aviation markets. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), India is poised to surpass both China and the US, becoming the third-largest air passenger market globally by 2030. As of June 2023, in FY2024, Indian airports have reported domestic passenger traffic reaching 76.73 million, indicating a substantial y-o-y growth of 19.1%. Concurrently, international passenger traffic reached 16.24 million, showing an impressive 35% y-o-y growth compared to the same period in the previous year. Moreover, the freight traffic in FY2023 reached 3.15 million metric tonnes (MMT), witnessing a commendable increase from 2.70 MMT to 3.15 MMT. This growth corresponds to a CAGR of 2.20% between FY2016 and FY2023, reflecting the sector's resilience and sustained upward trajectory.

As Asia's largest gathering dedicated to civil aviation, Wings India 2024 not only commemorates the sector's historical accomplishments but also sets the trajectory for a bright future where sustainability, safety, and efficiency are at the forefront. This event serves as a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the country's aviation industry, demonstrating its ability to navigate unprecedented challenges.

As the Indian civil aviation industry navigates the complexities of the 21st century, brimming with challenges and opportunities, Wings India 2024 emerges as a catalyst for promoting innovation, collaboration, and industry growth.

**WINGS** India is an important exhibition for Schiebel India. The CAMCOPTER® S-100 is the only Unmanned Air Vehicle (UAV) in its class with extensive operational experience in both the military and civil sectors. The main applications of the UAV are Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), Search and Rescue, cargo delivery and border security. In the civil aviation sector, the S-100 provides valuable capabilities for infrastructure, e.g. in the energy industry or agriculture and offshore operations for oil & gas. We're looking forward to the interesting conversations with potential customers and the networking at the conference. We are also looking forward to seeing how the civil sector in India looks at a very capable rotary UAV for its future needs.

**JAJATI MOHANTY**  
CEO at Schiebel India



## Unleashing India's talent potential



**ASHMITA SETHI**, President & Country Head, Pratt & Whitney, India (UTCPL)



**P**RATT & WHITNEY is a world leader in the design, manufacture and service of aircraft and helicopter engines, and auxiliary power units. We have a proud history of supporting India's aviation growth for more than seven decades. Today, IndiGo operates A320neo family aircraft with Pratt & Whitney GTF™ engines, which deliver industry-leading sustainability benefits, thanks to the unique geared fan architecture. Pratt & Whitney's PW100/150 turboprop engines form the backbone of India's regional aviation growth—connecting people and growing economies. In military aviation, our F117 engines power Indian Air Force's (IAF) C-17 Globemaster III, while its PC-7 trainers are powered by the iconic PT6A engine. Twin PW127Gs will power IAF's incoming 56 C295 aircraft.

Pratt & Whitney has been advancing aerospace and defence growth in India through its investments in engineering, training, supply chain, digital capabilities, and innovation. Our flagship investment was the India customer training center in Hyderabad in 2015, and we recently made a combined \$40 million investment in the

India Engineering Center (IEC) and the India Capability Center (ICC) in Bengaluru.

As we continue to grow this partnership with India, supply chain growth will be a key aspect. We have sourced nearly \$55 million in the past 10 years from India from leading aerospace suppliers and also sourced over \$500 million in engineering services into India over the past two decades. We aim to expand our sourcing from India to reach nearly \$150 million annually by 2030.

India Engineering Center (IEC) and the India Capability Center (ICC) in Bengaluru.

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As makers of some of the most advanced, and sustainable aircraft engines in the world—we are constantly innovating and advancing our aftermarket services, and using data, computer vision, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and augmented reality to deliver efficiencies to our customers. Last year, we announced the launch of Percept—an advanced AI-based aircraft engine analysis tool. Percept Computer Vision Product or (PCVP) is a Pratt & Whitney specific computer vision product designed by Awiros, an Indian start-up. Percept can identify missing components from aircraft engines by analysing images of different engine sections. This tool can help in reducing the time as well as the effort involved in the pre-and post-lease inspection of aircraft engines.

Pratt & Whitney's 350+ employees in India are dedicated to building capabilities and providing high-value services to our customers. We are committed to tapping into India's talent pool, expanding our business, and investing in the local industry as part of our broader vision for India within the RTX framework.

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AT WINGS INDIA



# WINGS INDIA

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## Unveiling the Wings India Awards 2024!

IN CONJUNCTION with Wings India 2024, slated to take place from January 18th to 21st, 2024, in Hyderabad, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) is pleased to reveal the 4th edition of the "Wings India Awards" in the civil aviation sector. The award ceremony is set to unfold on January 18th, at Taj Krishna Hotel in Hyderabad.

Wings India Awards are the benchmark for excellence for those demonstrating best practices and innovation in the aviation sector. Over the last few years, the aviation industry has shown amazing strength and resilience in the face of unparalleled challenges. Thus, we are delighted to return with the Wings India Awards to celebrate the world-class operators and individuals, who have kept the industry going during the trying times.



AS we navigate the dynamic skies of Wings India 2024, we are proud to reflect on Thales' commitment and contributions towards the growth of the Indian aerospace sector. Embracing innovation and sustainability, Thales has been an integral part of India's aerospace journey for decades now. Our technological prowess, embodied by solutions like 'Fly to Gate', not only aligns with the visionary DigiYatra initiative but also propels us towards supporting our partners to provide touchless, swift, and secure experiences to passengers. We are also strengthening our local presence and services by setting up an MRO centre in India. Thales remains steadfast in shaping the future of India's aerospace sector with cutting-edge technology and a legacy of excellence. From the intricacies of avionics to the seamless integration of advanced systems, our legacy is etched in every milestone achieved.

**ASHISH SARAF**  
VP and Country Director – India, Thales

## Shaping India's aerospace landscape

Embraer's latest E2 family is bolstering its global airline presence, adding to the widespread fleet of E-Jets flown by carriers worldwide

AS THE Wings India event unfolds, Embraer takes center stage as a crucial OEM partner. With a long-standing footprint in India, Embraer has played a vital role in shaping the country's aerospace landscape. Its commercial aircraft, business jets, defence aircraft, and advanced systems have become integral components of India's aviation sector. Notably, the ATFM system, SkyFlow, achieved full operational status in India in 2019, effectively overseeing the comprehensive flow management of the entire Indian airspace.



Innovation is intrinsic to Embraer. Over the last two decades, the company has successfully designed, built, certified, and introduced 20 different aircraft

types into service. This remarkable pace of development is unparalleled, and the substantial technological expertise amassed during this period sets Embraer

apart in the aerospace industry. Embraer's latest E2 family is growing its airline base worldwide, adding to the extensive footprint of E-Jets operated by

low-cost, regional, and mainline carriers around the globe. Leading air hubs around the world share one commonality: the prevalence of Embraer's E-Jets. A prominent name in the region, Scoot, the low cost carrier subsidiary of Singapore Airlines, will begin operations with the E190-E2 this year.

With a flying range of six hours and outstanding economics, coupled with a capacity of up to 146 passengers in a comfortable two by two configuration, the E195-E2 is a particularly compelling platform to connect Tier II and Tier III cities in India as well as international destinations farther afield.

To learn more, visit [www.embraer.com](http://www.embraer.com)

INDIA is a significant market for Rolls-Royce, and we are committed to supporting the dynamic growth of the civil aviation sector in the region. As airlines in India continue to expand both domestic and international air connectivity, we see strong potential for our Trent family of engines in addressing the requirements of the medium- and long-haul segments. Our team will be present at the Wings India show to familiarise customers with the versatility of these engines.

**CHRIS DAVIE**  
Senior Vice President, Customers – Asia Pacific, Rolls-Royce

## Uniting global innovators for a thrilling two-day experience!

THE most anticipated aviation event of the year! The Wings India 2024 conference is poised to unite the foremost minds, innovators, and leaders from the worldwide aviation industry, offering an electrifying two-day experience. With the event just around the corner, anticipate a focal point for groundbreaking discussions, visionary insights, and collaborative opportunities.

discovering its pivotal role in shaping the future of logistics and transportation.

➔ **Advanced air mobility:** The conference culminates with the Advanced air mobility India conference, presenting cutting-edge advancements and innovations that will define the future of air travel.

### EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF AVIATION: WHAT TO EXPECT

➔ **Roundtable discussions:** Dive into engaging discussions on vital topics that shape the aviation industry. From Routes and Alliances connecting India to the world to spotlighting the immense potential of Airports driving multi-modal connectivity, these roundtables will dissect key strategies and future trends.

➔ **Panels & workshops:** Gain unparalleled insights from industry experts in specialised panels and workshops. Discover the prospects for helicopter operations, the path to greener skies through sustainable aviation, and the nurturing of startups within the aviation sector.

➔ **Showcasing diversity:** Celebrate progress and empowerment in aviation with Panel Discussion, focusing on fostering gender-neutral opportunities. Explore the vast potential of the MRO sector and the critical role of aircraft leasing in empowering India as a global hub.

➔ **Innovation unveiled:** Witness the groundbreaking impact of drone technology in revolutionising the aviation landscape and delve into the surge in demand for business aviation and small aircraft, exploring economic transformation & regional advancement.

➔ **Air cargo revolution:** Unleash the full potential of air cargo transport in roundtable,

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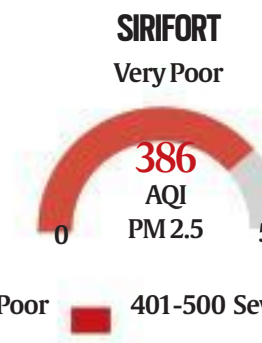
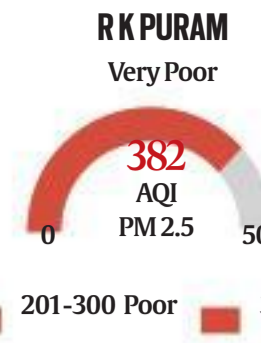
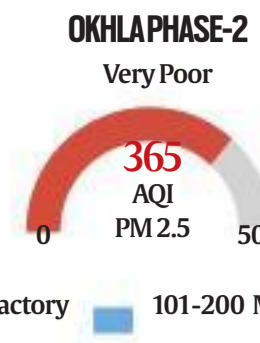
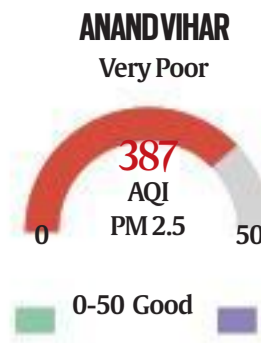
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**SKYWATCH**  
**FORECAST: January 18**  
 Mainly clear sky. Moderate to dense fog in the morning.  
**AQI: Very poor**

**MAX: 18**  
 1.6°C below normal

**MIN: 5**  
 2.6°C below normal

**BRIEFLY**

**Man held for bludgeoning woman to death: Police**

Gurgaon: A man has been arrested for allegedly killing a woman after he took her to the Aravallis on the pretext of showing her a temple in Bhondsi, police said. According to police, the accused, Jeevan, (28), and the deceased belong to Madhya Pradesh and were living in Badshahpur. They became acquainted with each other while they were working as labourers. Jeevan later set up a fruit stall. "On January 7, Jeevan said he took the victim to the hills in Bhondsi on the pretext of showing her a temple. There, he attempted to force himself on her. When she resisted and threatened to lodge a complaint against him, he killed her by bludgeoning her with a stone and attempted to disfigure her face," police said in a statement.

**Expect panel to frame rules to secure property of orphans in 3 weeks: HC**

New Delhi: After the Delhi government said a committee has been created to lay down rules for protecting properties of orphaned children or those with missing parents, the Delhi High Court said it expects that it will be framed in three weeks. A single-judge bench of Justice Subramonium Prasad, in its January 5 order, observed, "... GNCTD states that the issue regarding framing guidelines on the action to be taken by the district magistrate on the receipt of information, a committee has been formed. Members of the committee have not been disclosed to the court. It is expected that a committee which has either been formed or is proposed to be formed will frame its guidelines within... three weeks from today." The HC further said even if the guidelines are not framed, "draft guidelines or the outcome of the deliberations" shall be placed in a status report before the next date of hearing on February 20. **ENS**

**2 held for snatching**

New Delhi: Two riders working with a bike-taxi aggregator were arrested for allegedly snatching a phone from a security guard to repay their debt in Kashmere Gate, police said on Wednesday. The accused have been identified as Aman (22) and Pawan (21), police said. **PTI**

**COLLEGES WILL STAY WITH US: V-C WRITES TO ATISHI**  
**12 DU colleges to get funds only on de-affiliation, says Delhi govt**

**VIDHEESHA KUNTAMALLA**  
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

**AMID THE** ongoing row with 12 Delhi University colleges it fully funds, the Delhi government has said it will only provide funding to them once they are de-affiliated from DU and become part of one of Delhi's state universities.

The statement comes even as the DU Vice-Chancellor wrote to Education Minister Atishi saying the colleges will remain with it and the state should continue funding them, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The Delhi government said it has not received any letter from DU as of now. "Our stance is crystal clear: the Delhi government will only provide funding to these colleges once they are de-affiliated from Delhi University and become part of one of Delhi's state universities. In the upcoming financial year, funding will categorically not be granted unless these colleges are transferred, given the irregularities in these colleges. If



Education Minister Atishi; DU V-C Yogesh Singh

Delhi University decides not to de-affiliate these colleges, their funding will have to come from the central government or UGC," said sources in the government.

In the letter dated January 16, V-C Yogesh Singh said: "... all stakeholders comprising students, teaching and non-teaching staff, residents of Delhi, government, etc have the pride of being associated with the University of Delhi. Any such letter issued by the government may make an adverse impact on the future of the students and also affect the teaching-learning environment of the university." He reiterated that "the question of de-affiliation

of these colleges does not arise".

The V-C added, "In view of the above, on the behalf of the university, and personally too, I request (that) the... letter dated 01.12.2023 may please be withdrawn and continuity of funding these colleges may not be disturbed in the interest of students."

Singh was referring to Atishi's letter to Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan last month, in which she alleged "irregularities" in the 12 colleges and asked to either bring the institutions under the Delhi government or let the Centre take full control.

A DU official, on condition of anonymity, said: "These colleges

are ours. The Delhi government is the funding agency... It is the government's statutory and constitutional responsibility to continue funding them. We can't change affiliation of these colleges as these are DU's constituent colleges."

Last month, DU's Executive Council formed a committee to address the allegations pointed out in Atishi's letter; it was to submit its report in 15 days, after which it would be sent to the Delhi and central governments.

A member of this committee, on condition of anonymity, said, "... There is no question of de-affiliation of these colleges and this was passed by the previous EC (meeting)... the law does not permit de-affiliation as these are constituent in nature." The committee has not submitted its report yet, the member confirmed.

The issue between the government and these colleges has been a long-standing one, with the former insisting that funds would be released only after governing bodies are constituted according to rules. Teachers have accused the government of delaying salaries.

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
 NOIDA, JANUARY 17

A SURVEY for a new Rapid Rail from Ghaziabad to the upcoming Noida International Airport has begun, with officials stating that soil testing, the layout of stations, and determination of the track are ongoing.

A Detailed Project Report (DPR) is expected to be submitted by the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) by March, said an official.

The new Rapid Rail, which will go via Greater Noida West and Pari Chowk, will be constructed in two phases. In the first phase, a 37.15 km-long corridor will be built between Ghaziabad and Ecotech-5 (Kasna). It is proposed to be ready by the year 2031. In the second phase, a 35.11 km-long corridor will be built from Ecotech 6 to the Noida Airport.

A total of at least 12 stations will be part of the corridor — Ghaziabad RRTS, Ghaziabad South, Greater Noida West (Sector 4), Greater Noida (Sector 2), Knowledge Park 5, Surajpur, Pari Chowk, Ecotech-6, Dankaur, YEIDA North (Sector-18), YEIDA Central (Sector-21, 35) and Noida Airport.

According to the feasibility report, the entire project will cost around Rs 16,189 crore. The

**THE PROJECT**

**FIRST PHASE: 37.15 km-long corridor to be built between Ghaziabad and Ecotech-5 (Kasna). It is proposed to be ready by 2031**

**SECOND PHASE: 35.11 km-long corridor to be built from Ecotech 6 to the Noida Airport**

**CORRIDOR TO have 12 stations**  
**TOTAL COST: ₹16,189 crore**



The Noida Airport is expected to be operational by Dec 2024

first phase corridor from Ghaziabad to Kasna will cost Rs 9,798 crore while the second phase will cost Rs 6,391 crore.

Officials said that the Central government will bear 20% of the cost and the state government will bear 50%. The rest will be borne by the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) and Greater Noida authority.

Last year in December, the Uttar Pradesh government approved linking the Rapid Rail project with the Noida International Airport in Jewar, where a 72.2 kilometre-long corridor is expected to be completed by 2041.

The Airport is expected to be

operational by December 2024 and the priority section of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS, from Sahibabad to Duhai, is currently operational. Meanwhile, work is on for the next phase up to Meerut.

Recently, NCRTC officials gave a presentation to Yamuna Authority officials detailing the work done so far. Officials said a survey has been started to prepare the DPR. Apart from this, soil is being examined, so that the locations of stations, pillars etc. can be decided. The layout of the station will be decided accordingly. NCRTC officials will now give a presentation in February, wherein authority officials will share their suggestions. After this, the DPR will be submitted to the government.



**R-DAY PREP**

Rehearsals for the Republic Day parade in full swing at Kartavya Path, Wednesday. *Praveen Khanna*

**Woman dupes five-star hotel in Delhi of Rs 7L, caught trying to escape**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

**CHECKING INTO** a five-star hotel in Aerocity before New Year, a 37-year-old woman stayed in a suite for two weeks, allegedly faked UPI payments worth Rs 5-7 lakh, and tried to leave without paying bills. She has been bound down by Delhi Police after a complaint by a hotel staffer.

DCP (IG) Usha Rangnani said the incident took place at Pullman hotel. "The accused person from Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, has joined the probe and is bound down as per law," said a senior police officer.

In the FIR, hotel staff alleged that when they approached the accused about the fraudulent transactions, she "hesitated" to present the actual bank statement. Later, she was found "escaping with her bags". The hotel also alleged she attacked staff when they tried to stop her.

The *Indian Express* accessed the FIR lodged on the complaint of a Pullman Hotel staffer on January 13. Senior police officers said the woman had been questioned and was "evasive". "Earlier, she told us she was a lawyer but we think she runs a gift shop," said an officer.

A senior police officer said, "She tried to show she was paying for the services... which later turned out to be fake UPI payment receipts. She showed transactions on a bank's UPI mobile application. When hotel authorities contacted the bank, it was found that it never received any payment..." said a senior police officer.

The direction was based on a Vigilance Directorate report, in which it was alleged that a scam had taken place in awarding the tent work for Kanwar camps by the caretaking branch of the revenue department. The matter was related to allotment of tent work worth Rs 23.40 crore for Kanwar camps in the city in 2022.

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

L-G VK Saxena has directed action against three officers of the revenue department in the Delhi government for "irregularities" in awarding work to put up tents for the Kanwar Yatra in 2022.

Raj Niwas officials said "gross misconduct" was seen in connection with setting up tents and other facilities for Kanwariyas. Saxena directed Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to take "strict action" against the three officers.

The revenue department, during enquiry, informed that prior approval was not taken by the caretaking branch to include new items in the work order and they were presumably inserted in the final document allegedly by the three officials, he said.

The Delhi government said in a statement that while it was unaware of any such case, if the allegations are substantiated, it is "unequivocally committed to taking the most stringent measures against those involved".

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
 NOIDA, JANUARY 17

**HOUSE TAX** in Ghaziabad will not be increased and the existing rate will continue to apply, said Mayor Sunita Dayal Wednesday. This comes after the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation (GMC) had proposed to increase the house tax to be at par with the DM circle rate and sought suggestions.

The circle rate in the city is calculated based on a road's width in the area. The existing house tax ranges from Rs 1.61 per sq ft to 2.45 per sq ft, whereas the proposed one was a maximum of Rs 4 per sq ft. This would mean that the properties near the national highways would have to pay more tax.

Dayal said house tax was revised this financial year and it would not be appropriate to increase it further. "In the interest of the people of the city, instructions have been given not to increase house tax. It has also been said that in the past, house tax was increased by 10%, before that too, it was increased by 5%... as per rules, it cannot be increased now," the Mayor said.

"This proposal has come from the state government, but it will not be implemented yet. I will take this issue to the GMC board, where it will be discussed with all councillors... because if we implement this in the current form, then house tax will increase a lot. If required, we will take this matter to the government level," Dayal told *The*

*Indian Express.*

As the municipal corporation cannot place additional burden on the people, talks are on with officials and every possible step will be taken on priority, the Mayor added.

Dayal also appealed to those who have never paid any house tax to voluntarily come forward and do so. In such cases, only tax for the last two years will be collected. Otherwise, the GMC will collect tax from them with charges in place since the beginning. "We have appealed to the public to self-calculate and inform us how much house tax they have to pay. In such a situation, they will be given an exemption. For this, we will set up camps at various places, so people do not face any problems. But if someone deliberately does not deposit his/her house tax, then action will be taken by the corporation and they will have to pay the full tax from the start," added Dayal.

Some former councillors too opposed the move and said it would be unfair to impose additional burden on home buyers.

In his objection submitted to the GMC, ex-councillor Mukesh Garg said the municipal commissioner can revise house tax only once in two years as per the UP Municipal Corporation Act, 1959. "House tax was increased by 10% on April 1, 2023, and implemented... and the proposed rates are to be implemented from April 1, 2024 — this is not legal because it would be revised before two years," said Garg.

**Now, travel from home to office & back on one ticket**

**JATIN ANAND**  
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

**COMMUTERS** in Delhi will now be able to travel from home to their workplace and back via four modes of transportation on a single ticket.

The trial run of a single-ticket platform — allowing journeys on auto rickshaws, taxis, buses and the Delhi Metro, on a single ticket — went live Wednesday, providing the service throughout the city. It will expand over the coming days.

The service, which allows commuters to purchase a single ticket to travel on, for instance, an auto that will pick them up from their doorstep and drop them at a bus stop or Metro station for the next leg of their journey aboard a bus or train is a joint venture between Tummooc and the Delhi government.

"The app, which went live on Wednesday, enables commuters to book their journeys on four modes of transport; the same ticket will get activated and allow point A to B journeys across the city," a senior government official said.

Announcing the initiative, Delhi Transport Secretary-cum-Commissioner Ashish Kundra, in a post on X (earlier Twitter), said, "Integrating first mile (home to metro station / bus stop) and last mile from metro station and bus stop. Single ticket for a single journey. Delhi transport goes digital. Urging all users to give it a try..."

**TWO FROM 'MIRCHI GANG' AMONG 3 ARRESTED**

**How fingerprints in car helped cops crack 2020 murder of Noida man**

**ARNABJIT SUR**  
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

ON THE night of January 6, 2020, 39-year-old Gaurav Chandel, the regional manager of a private healthcare firm, was heading back to Noida's Gaur City from his office in Gurgaon. When he was five minutes away from home, he called his wife to tell her he was nearly there when he was assaulted and shot in the head inside his SUV. For the next five hours, his family tried to get a hold of him; they finally used the GPS tracker on his phone and found his body around 4.15 am on the service lane between Parthala roundabout and Hindon bridge.

Suspecting it to be a case of a robbery gone wrong or a car-jacking, a case of murder was lodged. For almost a month, Noida Police were unable to crack the case or make an arrest. Eventually, it was Chandel's Kia Seltos, found a week after his murder at Ghaziabad's Akash Nagar, that provided a vital clue.

Noida Police brought the car in for examination by the crime team and forensic experts. As per protocol, the fingerprint expert lifted prints from the steering which matched with that of Chandel. However, more fingerprints of two unidentified persons were found on the door, console, and gear, said a senior police officer. "The vehicle had



The victim, Gaurav Chandel; (right) his car was found a week after his murder



gathered dust over the week and it was a task for forensic experts to recover evidence from it," added the officer.

Police suspected the involvement of the Mirchi gang, which is involved in several cases of car-jacking, extortion, kidnapping, robbery, and attempt to murder cases in Delhi-NCR, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

On January 26, UP Police ar-

rested one of the gang's members, sharpshooter Umesh Pandit, from Hapur after rounds of crossfire. Said a Noida Police officer, "One of the fingerprints lifted from the car's door

matched those of Umesh..." Police then found that Chandel was targeted by three people from the gang — kingpin Ashu Jat, his wife Poonam, and Umesh. The trio were passing by Noida's Parthala Chowk when they spotted Chandel.

Umesh targeted Chandel and tried to grab hold of the car keys. A scuffle broke out and Ashu allegedly shot Chandel twice in the back of the head.

"On Umesh's instance, Poonam was also arrested,"

added another officer.

Meanwhile, Ashu alias Akash Rajendra Singh (32) continued to evade police. In September 2020, he was arrested by the Mumbai Police from Jogeshwari West Prem Nagar. Officers had said Ashu used to hide his identity by posing as a vegetable vendor and kept changing his location.

After his arrest, Ashu was brought on transit remand to UP and eventually taken on remand by Noida Police in connection with Chandel's murder. Said an

officer, "The second fingerprint of the unidentified person matched Ashu's. It further made it clear that both Ashu and Umesh were involved in the assault and murder while Poonam was an accomplice."

Four officers, including the SHO of Bisrakh police station, two sub-inspectors, and the Kotwali Garhi station in-charge, were suspended for negligence in the case after Chandel's family alleged lack of appropriate and speedy action.

The case is currently at the stage of prosecution evidence at the District and Sessions Court in Surajpur. All three accused are currently lodged in Noida's Luksar jail.





Ensure no hate speech: SC tells District Magistrates ahead of rallies by BJP MLA, Hindu outfit

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

THE SUPREME COURT Wednesday declined to stop upcoming public rallies by the Hindu Janajagriti Samiti and BJP MLA T Raja Singh in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh respectively, but directed authorities in each state to take appropriate steps to ensure that no hate speech is made at the events.

Taking note of apprehensions expressed regarding the events in an interlocutory application, a Bench of Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Dipankar Datta asked the district magistrates of Yavatmal in Maharashtra and Raipur in Chhattisgarh to take requisite steps and to install CCTV cameras to record the events, if needed.

The court, however, refused to stop the events and pointed out that the applicant had not made the person or group whose rally was being objected to a party to his petition.

The Bench said in its order, "It is to be noted that persons against whom allegations have been made have not been impleaded as parties. Nevertheless, in view of the assertions made, we require the authorities to be cautious of the fact that no incitement to violence or hate



BJP MLA T Raja Singh

speech can be permitted. We accordingly direct the district magistrate of Yavatmal and Raipur to take notice of allegations and take appropriate steps as may be advised and required. If necessary and deemed appropriate, the police will record CCTV cameras with installing facilities so that perpetrators can be identified if any event happens."

The plea alleged that the Samiti "has been actively involved in organising events where speeches are delivered openly demonising Muslims and calling for their boycott". It said the outfit is organising three events on January 18 in Yavatmal, while Singh "is also going to hold a series of rallies in Chhattisgarh from January 19 to January 25".

The application was filed in a pending writ petition by Shaheen Abdullah, a multimedia journalist. Appearing for the applicant, senior advocate Kapil Sibal said the lodging of FIRs was not deterring Singh from continuing to deliver objectionable speeches.

"When the event takes place,

we come to this court and an FIR is lodged. But nothing is done. Then he continues with this kind of speech. What is the point of all this then?" he said. Referring to some of the speeches by the legislator, Sibal added, "See the kind of hatred he is propagating."

Justice Khanna said he had gone through the speeches and added, "Certainly objectionable."

However, the court said it cannot preempt that a speech may be objectionable and stop it. "Is he a party? Your request, if granted, will affect someone. Your prayer is to ensure that permission is not granted or withdraw permission if already granted. How can we pass this order without this person being a party or hearing them? This goes against the fundamental principles of natural justice," said Justice Datta.

Sibal said it "will happen again and again unless Your Lordships intervene". Justice Khanna pointed out that the court had intervened and passed orders. "In one case, we had passed orders and it did stop. That is the positive part. Why only look at the negative aspect?" he asked.

2.5L investors of Sahara Group co-op societies got back Rs 241 cr: Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

UNION HOME Minister and Minister for Cooperation Amit Shah on Wednesday said 2.5 lakh investors of Sahara Group of Cooperative Societies have got back Rs 241 crore so far.

Speaking after inaugurating the office building of the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies (CRCS) in New Delhi, Shah said that though many had said people's money stuck in the Sahara Group won't be returned, "about 1.5 crore investors... have been registered, and 2.5 lakh people have got Rs 241 crore back".

On August 4, 2023, Shah had released the first tranche of refund to "genuine depositors" of Sahara Group of Cooperative Societies through CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal, and Rs 10,000 each was transferred to the bank accounts of 112 beneficiaries.

The CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal was launched on July 18, 2023. Through this portal, de-

positors of four cooperative societies of Sahara Group can submit their claims for their money.

In its order on March 29, 2023, the Supreme Court had directed that Rs 5,000 crore should be transferred out of the "Sahara-SEBI Refund Account", to the CRCS for disbursement against the legitimate dues of the genuine depositors of the Sahara Group of Cooperative Societies. The process of disbursement is being supervised and monitored by Justice R. Subhash Reddy, former judge of Supreme Court.

'Red Sea tensions won't affect fertilisers'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

TENSIONS IN the Red Sea will not lead to any shortage of fertilisers in India as the country has sufficient stocks to meet the requirement of the coming kharif season, Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers Mansukh Mandaviya said Wednesday. Speaking to reporters, Mandaviya said, "The Ministry of External Affairs is making interventions, and the Indian Navy is providing protection to Indian cargo vessels."

He said that a stock of 70 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) urea, 20 LMT diammonium phosphate, 10 LMT muriate of

potash, 10 LMT NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) and 20 LMT single super phosphate is available as on January 17, and is sufficient to meet the requirement of one season. "India's domestic plants will also produce fertilisers in the coming week, so there will be no shortage," he said. He, however, said there has been an increase in freight cost due to the tensions.

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# 8 THE INAUGURATION

AYODHYA, JANUARY 22



## Temple is flood, quake resistant, says architect

Should open to people from all faiths, says Ahmedabad-based Chandrakant

LEENA MISRA AHMEDABAD, JANUARY 17

THE RS 1,200-CRORE Ram temple, to be inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi, has been tested for resistance to flood and earthquakes of severe intensity that strike the Himalayan region, thus ensuring a life of up to 2,500 years, said Ahmedabad-based architect Chandrakant Sompura (81) and son Ashish (51), who designed the temple complex.



Chandrakant Sompura (left) with the Ram temple replica. Sompura family

Chandrakant told *The Indian Express* he would not go for the consecration because of "health reasons" but wishes that the temple, when complete, "should open to people from all faiths".

The patriarch of the family, who has designed over 200 temples in the country and abroad, is happy that this project has the stamp of his son - the first temple architect in the family backed by a professional degree.

The Sompuras told *The Indian Express* about the challenges in the project and how it has heralded the integration of technology in their family of traditionally trained architects. Ashish said "we feel we were the chosen ones" for this task after the Somnath temple in Prabhas Patan was built by Chandrakant's grandfather Prabhashankar at the "exact same place where the earlier shivling was".

Ashish added this will be the "first temple in the world" to have undergone a 3D structural analysis before it was built, for calamity resistance, including earthquakes up to 8 on the Richter scale. The Central Building Research Institute in Roorkee conducted the structural analysis to ensure "whatever calamity strikes, nothing will happen to this temple". "It is 20 ft higher than the highest flood

level (recorded till now)," said Ashish. The other unique feature of the temple will be the 'surya tilak', where lenses will be provided on the roof (shikhar) to ensure the Sun rays fall on the "forehead of the idol on the day of Ram Navami", said Ashish.

On the Congress top brass declining the invitation to attend the ceremony, Chandrakant said, "They are seeing it as Modi's... (project) but a President did inaugurate the Somnath temple..." He was referring to late President Rajendra Prasad inaugurating the rebuilt Somnath temple in 1951.

He added, "The temple should be open to people from all faiths... I can wear a cap, and if I know how to read the namaaz, go to a mosque... why should we stop anyone, this is my opinion." Even before the Babri Masjid demolition, Chandrakant had made a model of the Ram temple on a request from late PM Narasimha Rao with three domes of the mosque intact and with the temple by its side, but the VHP did not approve it.

The temple has been built in traditional technique of interlocking stones, said the Sompuras, explaining how Larsen & Toubro, which got the contract, had to be convinced about this technique.

FULL REPORT [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)



(Clockwise from top left) New Ram idol being brought in a truck, Wednesday; women take part in 'Jal Kalash Yatra'; people arrive at the Ayodhya Airport; actor and BJP MP Hema Malini performs at an event, and first visuals of the temple's sanctum sanctorum, where the idol will be kept. PTI, Express

## New idol brought inside sanctum sanctorum

MAULSHREE SETH LUCKNOW, JANUARY 17

ON THE second day of Pran Pratishtha rituals in the run-up to the ceremony on January 22, the 51-inch-tall new idol of Ram Lalla was brought to the Ram temple premises on Wednesday evening.

The new idol, sculpted by Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj, will likely be placed at the garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) of the temple on Thursday, Shri Ram Mandir Construction Committee chairperson Nripendra Mishra said. The new idol, sculpted on

'Krishna Shila' (black stone), was brought to the temple premises from a workshop near Karasewakpuram in a closed truck amid heavy security. A crane was used to shift the idol, weighing around 150-200 kg, inside the temple.

Before the arrival of the new idol, rituals were performed for the second day by the Trust members and main 'yajman' Anil Mishra.

The rituals began around 1.20 pm with Jal Yatra, in which water from the Saryu river was used for cleaning the sanctum sanctorum. It was followed by Teerth Pujan which saw havan being performed at the temple site.



Ram Lalla idol being brought to the 'Garbhagriha' of the Ram temple on Wednesday. PTI

## 'THE FIRST KAR SEVAK' ADM who blocked a CM after Ram Lalla 'appeared' in 1949

VIKAS PATHAK NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

FORMER VHP leader Ashok Singhal called his grandfather "the first kar sevak of the Ayodhya movement", recalls Raghendra Singh, former Union Culture Secretary and ex-director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

Guru Dutt Singh earned that title for his actions as the Faizabad city magistrate and additional district magistrate (ADM) in the days following the mysterious appearance of Ram Lalla idol inside the disputed Babri Masjid structure in December 1949. After PM Jawaharlal Nehru directed CM Govind Ballabh Pant to ensure that the idol was removed, Guru Dutt stood firm and did not let the CM enter Faizabad-Ayodhya, Raghendra says.

"On December 22-23, Ram Lalla appeared (in the Babri Masjid) and the news spread locally. Then Pakistan Radio showed the news and said Hindus are capturing the spaces they had vacated after Partition. The Central government in Delhi immediately came under pressure. They said if this status was

allowed to prevail, the (Muslim) community would distance itself from the Congress. CM Pant was asked to look into the matter. He got in touch with the district administration. A report was asked for, and it was submitted. It said that seeing the state of mind of the people, there would be a problem if the idol was removed," Raghendra says, adding that the guard of the garbha griha (sanctum sanctorum) testified seeing a light and fainting (when talking about the appearance of the idol).

He adds that word reached Nehru, and he sent Pant to Ayodhya. Raghendra says Guru Dutt met the CM on the boundaries of Faizabad, and advised him not to visit given the charged atmosphere.

An angry Pant told Dutt he would have to face the consequences, Raghendra says. "He (Dutt) came back... and submitted his resignation. But he passed two orders before resigning - one, that the prayers happening near the Ram Chabutra would continue, and, two, Section 144 would be imposed." Dutt was made to vacate his official accommodation in the middle of the night and his belongings removed, Raghendra says. "He

had to stay in the open. The next day, he shifted for some time to the third floor of the house of his acquaintance Bhagwati Babu. Later, he built his own house called Ram Bhawan near the Faizabad bus stand," Raghendra says.

According to the grandson, the government also created problems with Dutt's pension. But people were fond of him and he went on to become the chairperson of the municipality. Subsequently, he joined Jana Sangh and was the district chief of the Jana Sangh, Raghendra says.

He recalls receiving at their home visitors such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Murli Manohar Joshi and Gurnami Baba, about whom there was a rumour that he was Netaji Subhas Bose in disguise. Raghendra also says even before the Ram Lalla idol was placed in the Babri Masjid on the night of December 22-23, 1949, there were demands that a temple be constructed near the Ram Chabutra within its premises.

Dutt was not the only official who backed the idol installation. Then Ayodhya DM K K K Nair also refused to remove the idol from the disputed masjid, as per reports. FULL REPORT [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## Firozabad has a gift for temple opening: Bangles for devotees

MANISH SAHU LUCKNOW, JANUARY 17

AHEAD OF the Ram temple inauguration, the city of Firozabad in UP, known for its glass-art works, Wednesday sent 10,000 boxes of kangan or bangles to Ayodhya. A truck carrying the 10,000 packets of bangles is expected to reach Ayodhya Thursday morning.

Before heading to the temple town, the boxes of bangles were moved around Firozabad city. A large number of residents took part in the procession that culminated with a puja at the city's Bada Hanuman Mandir.

The bangles have been made by a local 57-year-old businessman, Anand Agarwal, who said he began work around 4 months ago after obtaining permission from the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

"I felt a deep stirring as the date for Pran Pratishtha was announced last year. As a bangle maker, I wanted to offer something special. Something that would become a cherished memory for devotees," said Agarwal, adding he was a part of the Ram



10,000 boxes of bangles sent to Ayodhya. Express

Mandir movement in 1992.

After much thought, Agarwal said, he came up with the idea of "a unique offering" of 10,000 boxes, each containing two exquisitely crafted glass bangles. "Around 250 artisans, belonging to both Hindu and Muslim communities, worked day and night to prepare bangles," Agarwal said. Agarwal said: "This is for the first time that bangles without any joint have been made. The bangles have five layers of chemical coatings which will remain intact for around six months. In each bangle, there is a gold mixture coating on its side."

While one set of bangles has images of Lord Ram, Sita, and Lord Hanuman engraved on them, the other set has 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Ram Darbar' inscribed on it.

## Will go once construction of temple is over, says Pawar



NCP chief Sharad Pawar. File

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, JANUARY 17

THE NCP has become the latest INDIA ally to declare that it won't be attending the consecration ceremony. Confirming that he had received the invite for the event, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said Wednesday it would be easier to visit the temple later, by when, "the construction of Ram Temple will also be completed".

Thanking Champat Rai, the general secretary of the Shriram Janmabhoomi Tirtha Kshetra, for the invitation, Pawar wrote in his reply: "The devotees of Lord Ram are enthusiastic and eager to witness the ceremony at Ayodhya. The joy of this ceremony will reach me through them. After the ceremony on January 22, it will be easier to take the darshan of Ram Lalla..."

AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal, who reiterated that he had not got a formal invitation yet, also indicated Wednesday he won't be there for the event, preferring to go with his family later.

"They had sent a letter, after which we called them. They said someone will come to invite (me) personally. That did not happen, but it is okay. They wrote that a lot of VIPs and VVIPs will come... only one person will be allowed. But I want to go to the temple with my wife and children. My parents are also very keen on Ram Lalla's darshan. So I will go with my family later," he said. Pawar's observation about the temple still being incomplete is significant as some religious quarters have raised objection to the idol being installed in such a structure.

### AYODHYA DIARIES

#### UP to start helicopter services to Ayodhya from 6 dists by month-end

UTTAR PRADESH government will start helicopter services to Ayodhya from six districts in the state by the end of this month, a senior official said on Wednesday. The services will be started from Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Lucknow, Prayagraj, Mathura and Agra. Helicopter services will be started from Lucknow later this month, Principal Secretary, Tourism, Mukesh Meshram said. He added the government has fixed the fare for the services. In addition to this, the state government is also introducing an aerial darshan of Ayodhya and the Ram temple there, Meshram said. For this, helicopter rides will start from a helipad near the tourism guesthouse along the banks of the Saryu river. People interested in the aerial darshan will have to make advance bookings, the official said. PTI

#### BCI writes to CJ1 requesting court holiday on consecration day

THE BAR Council of India (BCI) has written to CJI D Y Chandrachud, requesting him to declare a holiday in all courts across the country to mark the consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22. The letter written by BCI chairperson Manan Kumar Mishra highlighted the religious and cultural significance of the event. It said a holiday would allow members of the legal fraternity and court staff to participate in or observe the ceremonies in Ayodhya and the related events elsewhere. Underlining that the SC's verdict of November 9, 2019, which allocated the disputed land for the construction of the temple, affirmed the birthplace of Lord Ram and resonated with the truth and beliefs of the Hindu community, the letter said a holiday would also "demonstrate a harmonious blend of legal processes with the cultural ethos of our nation". PTI

#### Gorakhpur Zoo offers 50% off on tickets for those named 'Ram'

IN AN unusual initiative ahead of the 'Pran Pratishtha' event, Gorakhpur Zoo has decided that visitors named 'Ram' will be given a 50% discount on tickets on the eve of the ceremony. Visitors will need to show ID papers to avail the discount, the zoo's director said Wednesday. Manoj Kumar Shukla, director of the Shaheed Ashfaq Ulla Khan Prani Udyan, said that it will be available only for a day on January 21. Although the zoo has a weekly off on Mondays, Shukla has decided to play a live telecast of the ceremony at the entrance plaza of the zoo. PTI

#### Man arrested for tearing banners put up for Lord Ram in Karnataka

A 22-YEAR-old man was arrested Wednesday for allegedly tearing banners of Lord Ram that were put up in Kolar district to commemorate the Ram temple inauguration in Ayodhya on January 22. After checking CCTV footage, a street vendor, Zaheer Khan, was arrested. A police officer said, "The banners were put up for the Ram Mandir inauguration in Ayodhya and also for the Sankranti festival. Around 10.45 pm on Tuesday, Zaheer used sharp objects to cut the banners in Jahangir Mohalla and Gungunte Palya villages." The police went through CCTV footage and arrested Zaheer. ENS



# 9 GOVT & POLITICS



## POLL POSITION

IN A key meeting held on Tuesday to outline BJP's poll campaign strategy, Home Minister Amit Shah reassigned the responsibilities to the party's senior leaders. More than 300 leaders have been asked to monitor parliamentary constituencies. Sources said 146 clusters have been formed and each leader would have three to five constituencies to oversee the party's electioneering for the Lok Sabha elections. The leaders have been told that the party would have its national council and national executive meeting by mid-February and the Lok Sabha elections could be announced anytime after that.

## FOR ANIMALS

The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), which comes under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, has asked states to celebrate Vasant Panchami (February 14) as 'Jeev Jantu Kalyan Divas'. In a letter to the states and animal welfare organisations, the AWBI urged them to celebrate 'Jeev Jantu Kalyan Divas' with 'full enthusiasm' and share photos with it. Last year, the Board had appealed to people to celebrate February 14 as 'Cow Hug Day'. However, after a backlash, it withdrew the appeal.

## WRITING SPREE

Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, whose book *Fertilising the Future: Bharat's March Towards Fertiliser Self-Sufficiency*, was released by Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar Wednesday, is working on a new book, it learnt. Mandaviya, who is also Health and Family Welfare Minister, new book is said to be on how India handled the Covid-19. The book will provide a ringside view of the government's response to the pandemic.

## Ahead of polls, Bihar doles out ₹2L each to 94L homes in 5 years

SANTOSH SINGH  
PATNA, JANUARY 17

TWO MONTHS after a Bihar caste survey report showed that over a third or 94 lakh of the state's families earned less than Rs 6,000 a month, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has announced the Laghu Udyami Yojana under which one member of each family will get Rs 2 lakh over five years.

On Tuesday, the Bihar Cabinet sanctioned the first instalment under the scheme, which the party hopes will pay rich dividends in the coming elections.

Under the scheme, the Rs 2 lakh amount will be split into three instalments - the first instalment, amounting to a total outlay of Rs 250 crore for 2022-23, is of Rs 50,000 to be disbursed in February to five lakh families chosen through a computerised randomisation. The next instalment of Rs 50,000 is set to be disbursed in April to another 20 lakh families, amounting to a total outlay of Rs 1,000 crore for 2024-25.

The caste survey report released in November showed that 36.1% of Bihar's population belongs to Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) and 19.65% to SCs - with many now set to benefit from the government scheme, which will be implemented by the state's industries department.



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar with his Deputy Tejashwi Yadav.

The government said Tuesday that the programme could enable some poor families to engage in forms of self-employment, including small industrial and processing units.

"Rs 2 lakh to a poor family to boost their income is a winning scheme," a leader of the ruling JD(U) said, admitting that the party's hope is that after receiving the first instalment of Rs 50,000 before the elections, people would be inclined to go with the same government for getting the remaining Rs 1.5 lakh. "Call it competitive populism or doles, we are seeing it as a scheme that can win us elections."

With the total estimated cost of the scheme touching Rs 50,000 crore per year, including the costs of a housing scheme for 67 lakh families without homes, the government said it had approached the Centre for funding support.

FULL REPORT ON [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## Akhilesh hints won't join Rahul Yatra, Cong denies 'no invite' claim

ASAD REHMAN  
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 17

IN ANOTHER sign of the frayed ties between the two INDIA allies amidst seat negotiations in Uttar Pradesh, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav Wednesday indicated that he might not participate in Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, saying that "the Congress and BJP don't invite me for their programmes".

At a press conference in Lucknow whether he would join Rahul's yatra, which is expected to enter UP on February 14 from Chandauli in the east and remain in the state for 10 days, Akhilesh said: "The BJP doesn't invite us for their programme, and the

Congress also doesn't invite us. The Samajwadis have a separate fight. We work towards strengthening the alliance (INDIA). We are working to remove the BJP".

Contacted by *The Indian Express*, UP Congress chief Ajay Rai said invitations for the yatra had gone out to all INDIA allies. "The invitations have been sent by Rahulji and (Mallikarjun) Khargeji. I can show a copy too... Akhileshji has also been sent an invite along with other INDIA leaders," he said.

Another Congress leader said the Opposition leaders who are part of the INDIA alliance are likely to get an invite, like they did during Rahul's Bharat Jodo Yatra. However, that time too, BSP chief Mayawati, RLD president Jayant Chaudhary and Akhilesh had all

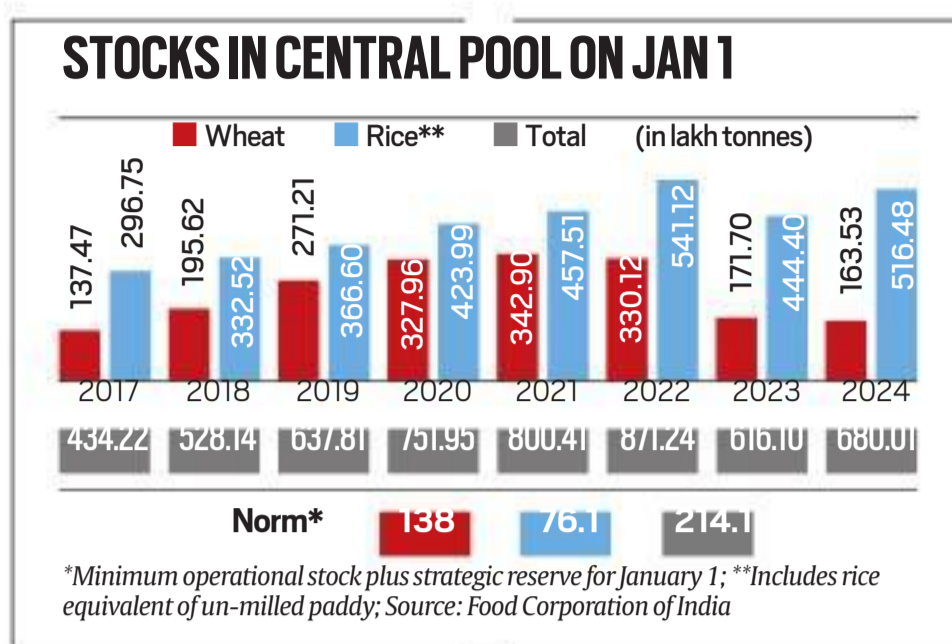
## Wheat stocks above buffer but plunge to a 7-yr low

### Inflation and impact of March temperature on crop is challenge

HARISH DAMODARAN  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

WHEAT STOCKS in government godowns have depleted to a seven-year-low. According to official data, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state agencies were holding 163.5 lakh tonnes (lt) of the cereal as on January 1, the lowest for this date since the 137.5 lt of 2017 (see table).

The current stocks are, however, higher than the minimum



buffer of 138 lt (to cover three-months' operational requirement of 108 lt plus a strategic reserve of 30 lt to meet any procurement shortfalls) for the start of the calendar year.

Moreover, rice stocks, at 516.5 lt (inclusive of grain derived from un-milled paddy), were way above the corresponding January 1 normative minimum buffer of 76.1 lt.

Together with wheat, the overall stock levels of 680 lt were comfortably higher than the necessary 214.1 lt (164.1 lt operational requirement and 50 lt strategic reserve) for this time.

The current wheat stocks depletion comes even as retail cereal prices rose 9.93 per cent year-on-year in December, following 15 consecutive months of double-digit inflation from September 2022 to November 2023.

The Narendra Modi government has resorted to a range of measures for controlling cereal inflation - including banning exports of wheat and non-basmati white rice; not allowing wholesalers and big chain retailers to hold more than 1,000 tonnes of wheat; and selling grain from

FCI's stocks in the open market.

While these measures should help keep prices under check, especially ahead of Lok Sabha elections scheduled in April-May, a great deal hinges on the size of the wheat crop to be harvested from March-end.

Farmers have sown 336.96 lakh hectares (lh) area under wheat this time, up from last year's 335.67 lh and the normal five-year-average of 307.32 lh.

"The crop that was sown early (from late-October to the first week of November) is coming close to heading (i.e. for the 'baali', or earheads bearing the flowers and eventually grain, to fully emerge from the wheat tillers). We were initially worried about the winter not setting in and temperatures ruling above normal till

about mid-December. But now, both the weather and the crop (sown early as well as late after mid-November) look very good," said Rajbir Yadav, principal scientist at the New Delhi-based Indian Agricultural Research Institute.

The wheat crop, though, is highly susceptible to temperature spikes - more so during March at the time of grain formation and filling. A sudden rise in mercury when the kernels are accumulating starch and proteins can impact yields through premature ripening, as it happened to the 2021-22 crop. A repeat of that - or even last year's unseasonal heavy rains in March - could aggravate problems from already-depleted stocks and near double-digit cereal inflation, making imports inevitable.

## If we win all booths, we can win Kerala, Modi tells BJP workers

### PM visits two temples, attends wedding of ex-MP Suresh Gopi's daughter

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JANUARY 17

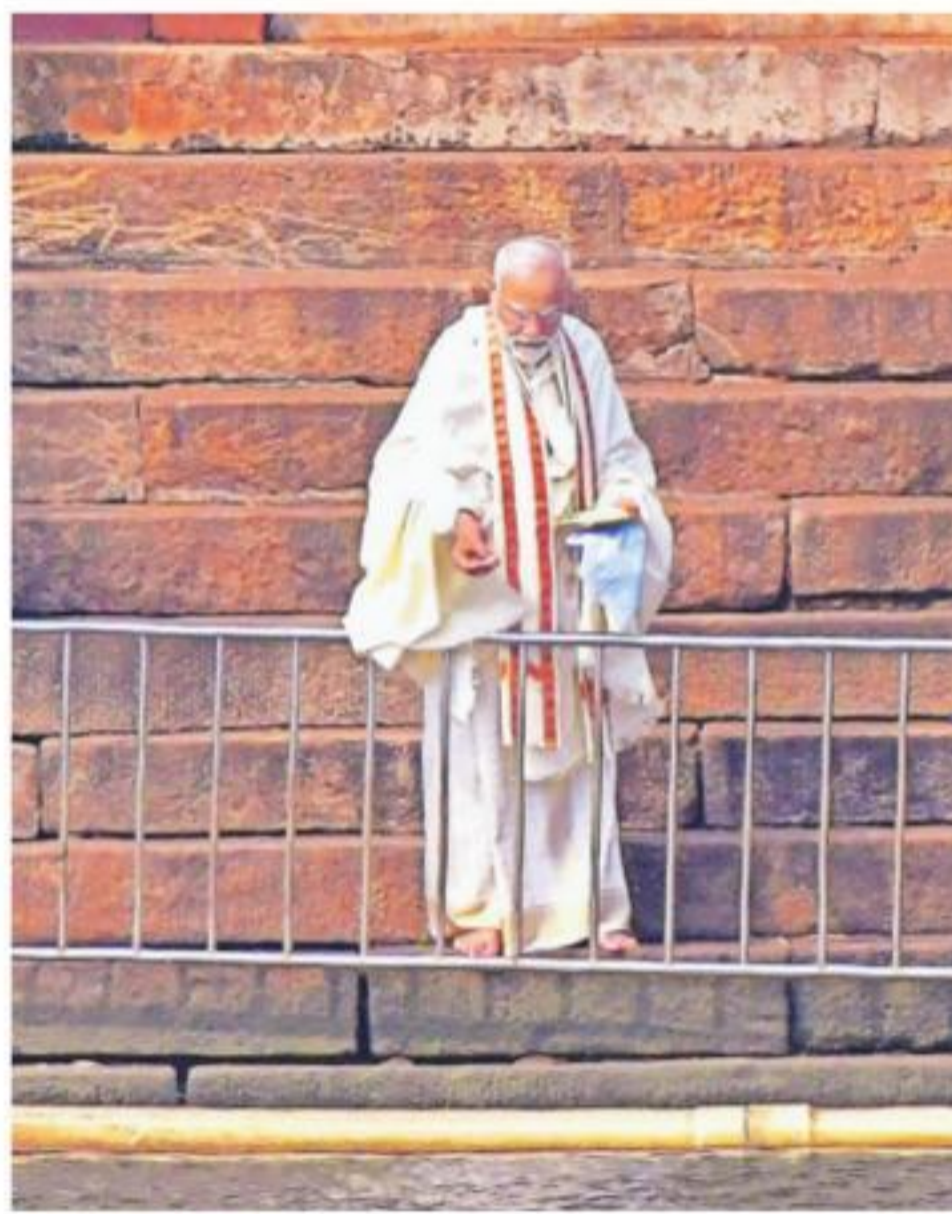
PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Wednesday offered prayers at Sree Krishna Temple and Sree Ramaswami Temple in Thrissur, and also attended the wedding ceremony of actor-turned-BJP leader Suresh Gopi's daughter, finally leaving for Kochi where he addressed 7,000 booth-level in-charges from across Kerala.

PM Modi, who is on a two-day visit to Kerala, reached Kochi Tuesday late evening, and flew by a chopper to the temple town Guruvayur.

At the temple, Modi prayed and performed a *thulabharam*, an offering, with lotus buds. He also handed over garlands to Suresh Gopi's daughter, Bhagya Suresh, who got married to businessman Sreyas Mohan. He also offered greetings to 10 other couples who wed on the same premise. Actors Mammooty, Mohanlal, Jayaram, Dileep, and several from the Malayalam film fraternity witnessed the ceremony.

After spending nearly an hour at Guruvayur, he offered prayers at one of Kerala's prominent Ram temples in Kerala, Sree Ramaswami Temple, at Thriprayar in Thrissur district.

Modi then returned to Kochi,



PM Narendra Modi at Conolly Canal during a visit to Thriprayar Sree Ramaswamy Temple in Kerala, Wednesday. PTI

where he addressed a gathering of BJP booth-level in-charges whom he termed as the "lifeline of the party". "We should win all the booths and then we can win

Kerala," he told the gathering. In his debut address to the 7,000-odd Shakti Kendra in-charges in Kerala, Modi urged the party workers to take the achieve-

ments of the Central government to all people in their locality. "I can tell that you would win over the people of Kerala," he said.

"Shakti Kendra in-charges should be frequently in touch with people of their locality. You should understand their issues. You should take the benefits of Digital India to them. At footpaths, you should talk to the street vendors about the welfare schemes meant for them... You should contact first-time voters and should ensure that nobody is excluded from the voters' list," he said.

Referring to a recent NITI Aayog report on multidimensional poverty in India, Modi said 25 crore people have been out of poverty in the last nine years.

Referring to Ayodhya Ram temple consecration on January 22, Modi asked the booth-level workers to clean all the temples in their localities and light up *Sree Rama Jyothi* on the day of the Ram temple consecration in Ayodhya. "Kerala is a state where people observe Ramayana month... On January 22, you should light *Sree Rama Jyothi* in all houses and temples," he said.

Apart from party-related events, the PM also inaugurated three infrastructure projects worth Rs 4,000 crore at the Cochin shipyard. On Tuesday night, Modi had a 1.3-km roadshow in Kochi with BJP state president K Surendran.

## PMLA probe: ED questions Hooda over land acquisitions

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

HARYANA'S FORMER chief minister and veteran Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Wednesday was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a money laundering investigation into alleged irregularities in land acquisition at Manesar during 2004-07.

At 10.30 am, the 76-year-old Hooda reached at ED's headquarters and the investigation officer recorded his statement under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

In 2021, the ED had filed a prosecution complaint against Hooda and 21 others under Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) in Panchkula's



industrial plot allotment case. The prosecution complaint pertains to allocation of 14 industrial plots in 2013, worth Rs 30.34 crore, allegedly to the acquaintances of then CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

The ED has found in its investigations that "as a result of criminal conspiracy, the then Chief Minister and ex-officio Chairman, Haryana Urban Development Authority (HUDA), four retired IAS officers and other office bearers of HUDA, illegally benefited pre-selected acquaintances of the then CM by allotting them 14 industrial plots,

denying allotment to more worthy applicants.

It said, "The price fixed for the allotment was kept 4-5 times below circle rate and 7-8 times below the market rate. The criteria for allotment was altered 18 days after last date of application and when all the applicant data was in possession of HUDA. Criteria was altered... to favour pre-selected applicants by increasing the discretion at the hands of the interview committee".

"Hence, worthy applicants were driven out of merit and applicants who were closely connected to Bhupinder Singh Hooda... were allotted these plots", the prosecution complaint reads.

The ED initiated investigation on the basis of an FIR filed on December 19, 2015 by the State Vigilance Bureau. The said FIR was transferred to the CBI.

## Odisha ex-CM Gamang, family return to Cong

*Bhubaneswar*: Nine years after he resigned from the party, former Odisha chief minister and tribal leader Giridhar Gamang returned to Congress along with his wife and son in New Delhi Wednesday.

Gamang, whose controversial vote during a no-confidence motion had led to the fall of the 13-month-old NDA government at the Centre led by A B Vajpayee on April 17, 1999, had quit the grand old party in 2015 to join the BJP.

He quit the BJP in January 2023 and joined Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) which had planned to expand its base in southern Odisha.

Gamang's wife Hema, also a former Lok Sabha member and a former MLA, son Shishir and former MP Sanjay Bhoi also returned to the Congress in presence of senior Congress leader Ajay Maken and Congress's Odisha in-charge Ajay Kumar. **ENS**



Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar at the inauguration of indigenously built CO2 based air conditioning plant at INS Shivaji in Lonavala on Wednesday. Pavan Khengre

## No place to do piracy when Indian Navy is around: Admiral Hari

SUSHANT KULKARNI  
PUNE, JANUARY 17

IN A resolute warning to pirates, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar said on Wednesday that piracy will not be tolerated when the Indian Navy is around and added that the Navy was aggressively going after the pirates.

The Naval chief was interacting with media persons on the sidelines of an event at INS Shivaji where a unique carbon dioxide-based air conditioning plant was inaugurated by him. INS Shivaji is a premier technical training institute of the Navy, located at Lonavala in Pune district.

Asked about piracy in the Indian Ocean Region, the Navy chief said, "We have got ongoing operations in the Indian Ocean Region including the anti-piracy operations since 2008. We have a constant deployment of one ship... Since 2008, we have deployed 106 ships to combat piracy. Presence of warships deters the pirates..."

When asked about the Red Sea crisis and Navy's deployment in that regard, he said, "We have deployed a ship to the east of Bab-el-Mandeb... We will go inside the Red Sea when our interests are threatened... So far Indian flag vessels have not faced threat."

When asked of the military withdrawal from Maldives, he said: "We have good relations with Maldives military... We will do whatever is agreed upon."

Towards the end of last year and beginning of this year, we saw hijacking of one vessel and attempted hijacking of a vessel with an Indian crew. We have increased our deployment... We want to tell them that this is not a place to do piracy where the Indian Navy is around."

He said, "We are boarding suspicious fishing vessels etc... at around 2,000 kilometres away closer to the coast of Somalia. We have deployed our units there."

Asked about the status of the proposed third aircraft carrier, he said, "It has been cleared by the Defence Procurement Board."

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## Andhra Cong stirs buzz with Sharmila as chief, but leaders fear not enough

SREENIVAS JANYALA  
HYDERABAD, JANUARY 17

THE NEWLY appointed Andhra Pradesh Congress chief, Y S Sharmila, faces an uphill task leading the beleaguered state unit that did not win a single MLA or MP seat in the past two elections - 2014 or 2019. A number of senior leaders appear to be unhappy with her rapid elevation - just days after she merged her party with the Congress - may not be willing to cooperate with her.

"It is good to have a new face in the party, and Sharmila is also the daughter of the late Dr Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, but whether she will receive the cooperation and support from other party leaders is a big question," a top state leader said on Wednesday.

Busy with arrangements for her son's wedding, Sharmila is yet to formally take charge of the post.

"In general, everyone is welcoming her into the party. But will there be any change in the fortunes of the Andhra Congress unit? Not many think so. The party's vote share may go up by 2-3% due to Sharmila, but any hopes of winning are far-fetched," said former Andhra Congress chief Sake Sailajanath. However, Sailajanath says, there is a buzz about the Congress now, which otherwise no one was discussing. Former Congress MP G V



YS Sharmila

Harsha Kumar openly expressed his reservations. "She has said she belongs to Telangana, but she failed as a leader there. What can she do here?"

The biggest hope of Congress leaders is that with Sharmila leading the state unit, they can lay a claim to former CM YSR's political legacy. "Whether she will be able to reach out to the people as YSR's successor... is to be seen," one Congress member said. In five years as CM, Jagan has consolidated his hold on YSR's legacy by naming all welfare schemes of his government in his father's name.

Sharmila, who is likely to visit the Congress headquarters only next week, is hoping her son's wedding festivities will be a showcase of her political muscle. The guest list includes almost all political leaders across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, including brother Jagan. Several filmstars, sportspersons and business tycoons of the area have also received the invite.





# THE EDITORIAL PAGE

**WORDLY WISE**  
 IN THE FIRST PLACE, GOD MADE IDIOTS. THAT WAS FOR PRACTICE. THEN HE MADE SCHOOL BOARDS.  
 — MARK TWAIN

## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# The genocide question

South Africa's case against Israel at ICJ could linger. Court's history in putting a stop to violence is patchy



UPENDRA BAXI

SOUTH AFRICA'S (SA) application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is simple but devastating. Israel is a state founded on saying "never again" to the modern Nazi genocide against the Jews. SA alleges violations of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Convention) because Israel continually threatens, adopts, and condones genocidal acts "against the Palestinian people, a distinct national, racial and ethnic group". SA "unequivocally condemns all violations of international law by all parties, including the direct targeting of Israeli civilians and other nationals and hostage-taking by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups", but it maintains that no "armed attack on a state's territory" even "serious... "attack involving atrocity crimes" can, provide any possible justification for breaches of the Convention whether in "law or morality". Rather, the Convention is attracted because "acts and omissions by Israel" manifest genocidal intent as these "are intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group in the Gaza Strip... including intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population... and buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science, historic monuments, hospitals".

Israel opens its statement by saying: "Seared in our collective memory is the systematic murder of six million Jews as part of a pre-meditated and heinous program for their total annihilation". It is not surprising that it was "among the first States to ratify the Convention, without reservation, and to incorporate its provisions in its domestic legislation". For Israel the promise of "Never Again" for all peoples signifies the "highest moral obligation".

Describing the civilian suffering in this war, like in all wars, as "tragic" and "heart-breaking", Israel stresses the "harsh realities of the current hostilities" aggravated for civil-

ians given Hamas's reprehensible strategy of "seeking to maximise civilian harm to both Israelis and Palestinians, even as Israel seeks to minimise it". However, the Convention was not designed to address the "brutal impact of intensive hostilities on the civilian population, even when the use of force raises "very serious issues of international law" and involves "enormous suffering" and "continuing loss of life". The Convention addresses a "malevolent crime of the most exceptional severity".

SA's attempt to "weaponise the term genocide against Israel... does more than tell the Court a grossly distorted story". It empties the word of its "unique force and special meaning". In effect, the message is that self-defensive actions are rarely available even when there is a terror attack fully disrespecting "life and ... the law". All told, some "1,200 people were butchered that day, more than 5,500 maimed, and ... 240 hostages abducted, including infants, entire families, persons with disabilities and Holocaust survivors, some of whom have since been executed".

Israel stated firmly the recall of these acts of horror does not relieve it of its "unquestionable obligations to uphold the law as it defends its citizens and territory" but rather to make it possible to "understand the armed conflict in Gaza... the nature of the threat Israel is facing, and the brutality and lawlessness of the armed force confronting it". Contesting SA, Israel, for example, exposes the weakness in data collection and analysis — while every "civilian casualty in this conflict is a human tragedy that demands our compassion... the Court is not told how many thousands of casualties are in fact militants, how many were killed by Hamas fire, how many were civilians taking direct part in hostilities".

It will take several months to decide jurisdictional issues such as whether a "dispute" under the Convention exists at all between

SA and Israel. It would then take years to decide whether there was any criminal genocidal intent. The Bosnia case took 14 years; *Gambia v Myanmar* that concerns genocide is still being heard.

ICJ's verdict in 2007 pertained to the Srebrenica July 1995 genocide — it was about the killing of more than 8,000 Bosniak Muslim men and boys in and around the town during the Bosnian War. The massacre was conducted largely by the Bosnian Serb Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) under the command of Ratko Mladic. He was later indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), thus establishing a high "synergy" between ICC and ICJ. Yet, there is no rule establishing proof of genocidal intent, except that a very high standard is required as the court considers each case. But the wait was worthwhile in this case, as the ICJ invoked the obligatory duties (in Article 1 of the Convention) of contracting parties to prevent and punish acts of genocide, now considered a part of customary international law binding all states.

Both SA and Israel are rightly seeking provisional measures until the case is decided. Unless the ICJ innovates jurisprudence on the matter, the repository of international law dictates a ceasefire and the systemic flow of humanitarian relief. However, the experience in this regard is not a good guide. Russia challenged the ICJ when ceasefire directions in the Ukraine war were ordered. As regards enforcement, a single veto by any one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council may result in non-compliance with the ICJ directives.

All one can do is hope against hope that the present litigation may offer avenues for innovation from the past histories of non-compliance at the ICJ.

*The writer is professor of law, University of Warwick, and former vice chancellor of Universities of South Gujarat and Delhi*

## CUES FOR REFORM

Latest ASER report has significant pointers on how country could use education to leverage its demographic dividend

THE LATEST ANNUAL Status of Education Report (ASER) focuses on an age group that is critical to India unlocking its demographic dividend — 14- 18-year-olds in rural areas. It confirms the heartening trend of more students transiting to secondary education. Apprehensions that the pandemic-induced economic distress would result in older children dropping out of school have been belied. Education's well-established links with people's aspirations seem to have trumped economic exigencies. ASER 2023 notes that "today more children in India have more years of schooling than ever before". But like ASER's previous editions, the latest report doesn't see enrollment as an end in itself. It lists failings and challenges, and charts opportunities. The more sobering findings relate to foundational skills — about a fourth of those surveyed find it difficult to read a Grade 2 level text in the local language and more than half struggle with arithmetic skills they should have been proficient in by Grade 5. This is a serious deficit that has a bearing on the quality of the country's labour force — no skilling programme, however ambitious and well-designed, can succeed when its targeted beneficiaries have problems with elementary reading and basic arithmetic.

The report engages with one of the most difficult education-related predicaments of recent times — the increasing pressure on young students amidst acute academic competition. The problem, as ASER 2023 reveals, is not confined to urban areas. The difficulties of a section of learners get compounded because they have to juggle academic requirements with responsibilities like working in family farms. ASER suggests reforming pedagogic processes to reduce pressures on such students. The increasing use of smartphones in rural areas — about 95 per cent surveyed households had these devices and nearly 95 per cent men and 90 per cent women could use them — is an opportunity to extend education, and design classrooms that are flexible with time and schedules. Planners will, however, have to find ways to nudge students and their parents to use digital technologies for learning. The use of smartphones for education today is way less than that for entertainment. NEP 2020 envisions embedding digital technologies in the educational landscape. It also talks of pivoting from a curriculum-centred approach to one focused on the individual learner. The snapshots of the digital — and other educational — capabilities of youngsters in ASER 2023 could provide cues to policymakers in implementing NEP's visions. At the same time, they should also remain alert against lapsing into technological fundamentalism.

China has been able to realise its demographic dividend to a large extent by prudent reforms in its technical and vocational education and training systems. The ASER report shows that India has a long way to go in this respect. Vocational skilling is not the first choice for youth. Only 6 per cent of the surveyed are currently doing vocational courses. This should be a wake-up call for policymakers to re-imagine vocational education — as NEP envisages — and make it truly aspirational.

## TRADE UPS AND DOWNS

Goods exports pick up marginally in December. But, Houthi attacks in the Red Sea may have clouded the outlook

AFTER FALLING IN November last year, India's merchandise exports picked up marginally in December. As per data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry this week, goods exports stood at \$38.45 billion in December 2023, up 1 per cent over the same period the year before. Stripping away petroleum exports, core non-oil exports grew at a higher 6 per cent. Alongside, the country's imports continue to fall, declining by 4.9 per cent in December. This combination of a mildly positive export growth and falling imports has led to the merchandise trade deficit narrowing to \$19.8 billion in December, down from \$20.6 billion in November. As a consequence, analysts at Nomura expect the current account deficit to touch around 1.6 per cent of GDP in the quarter.

In December, of the 30 key merchandise sectors, 17 showed positive export growth. Exports of electronic goods grew at a healthy 14.4 per cent, engineering goods by 10.2 per cent, and gems and jewellery by 14 per cent. For the year so far (April-December), while aggregate exports are almost 6 per cent lower than over the same period last year, 14 sectors have shown positive growth, with sectors like electronic goods and drugs and pharmaceuticals showing healthy performance. The former has grown by 22 per cent, while the latter has registered a growth of 8.2 per cent. On the other hand, even as imports on aggregate have declined by almost 8 per cent in the year so far (April-December), they remain healthy in segments such as iron and steel, non-ferrous metals, machinery and machine tools, electronic goods and gold.

Global trade is facing tremendous uncertainty due to the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. The consequent increases in transportation costs, insurance premiums and the time involved — as per reports a substantial number of vessels are now being rerouted through the Cape of Good Hope — are likely to adversely impact India's exports, especially to Europe which accounts for around 15 per cent of the country's merchandise exports. As per the commerce ministry, around 80 per cent of the outbound shipping to Europe takes place through the Red Sea region. The full impact of these attacks in the Red Sea will only be visible in weeks and months ahead. However, if India's exports are sharply impacted, the merchandise trade deficit could widen more than currently expected in the last quarter of the financial year.

## THE LOVER'S TEST

A man in Punjab tried to take an exam in his girlfriend's garb. His cross-dressing may have failed, but his commitment did not

IN 1746, AN Englishman, Charles Hamilton, married Mary Price. Hamilton was born a woman and had been living as a man since the age of 14. Upon discovery, Hamilton was sentenced to hard labour and public whippings. British novelist Henry Fielding coined the term the "female husband" in a fictionalised and sensationalised account of the incident. There are numerous accounts of lesbian lovers (and transgender men, possibly like Hamilton) in literature who would don male attire and present themselves as men to be able to live with the one they loved. Shakespearean plays such as *The Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice* have both men and women cross-dressing for a variety of purposes.

He might not yet be immortalised in literature but the latest addition to this esteemed list of cross-dressers is one Angrez Singh. Hailing from Punjab's Fazilka, Singh impersonated his girlfriend so he could take the multi-purpose health workers exam held by the Baba Farid University of Health Sciences on her behalf. He walked into the examination hall in a salwar-kameez and was quickly caught and handed to the police. For the examination, Singh had even got a fake Aadhaar card, voter card and I card made in the name of Paramjeet Kaur (his girlfriend). Since the incident came to light on January 7, the internet has offered overwhelming support and admiration to Singh. Comments like "This or nothing", "Relationship goals", "#Truelove" are all over the internet.

In a society that remains biased against cross-dressers and effeminate expressions in men, Angrez Singh is a refreshing deviant. To willingly put oneself on the wrong side of the law just to make sure that one's girlfriend passes an exam is the epitome of loyalty, albeit a slightly warped idea of it. Singh may have failed to help Kaur pass her exam, but he passed the lover's test with flying colours.

## CLASSROOM AT A CLICK

Smartphones can be enablers in education, make it more inclusive



MADHAV CHAVAN

TWO DECADES AGO, there was much hope that computers with the Internet would revolutionise education. A decade later, mobile technology led to the belief that education anytime anywhere was possible. From one laptop per child, we started thinking of mobile devices replacing books. Now we are about to reach a situation when there will be a mobile phone in every home. In its survey of 14-18-year-olds across the country, the recently released Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023 shows that about 89 per cent youth in the surveyed age group of 14-18, said they have a smartphone at home. An even higher proportion — 92 per cent — said that they can use a smartphone.

Of those who reported knowing how to use a smartphone, two-thirds said that they had used mobile phones for their studies, the week before the survey. This is a large proportion, but it's smaller than the population who reported using smartphones for entertainment. The market has many products from for-profit and not-for-profit companies for education but they are generally focused on preparing for examinations. AI-based tutoring programs are growing. As technology advances, making such programs in local languages will be easily possible. There is reason to believe that costs will keep falling. But their focus is still on preparation for exams because that is what the market demands.

Technology barriers to the availability of knowledge are falling but the transfer of this knowledge and certification is still a restricted process. These processes need to be opened up.

The idea of education anytime anywhere is now being put to test. Universal elementary school enrollment has been achieved

in India and we are on our way to achieving universal secondary and higher secondary enrollment. But, as ASER first reported in 2005, enrollment or schooling is not the same as learning. Also, the 2023 report points out, half of these adolescents start working part time after completing Class X or the age of 15-16. Although the education policy talks about greater flexibility in entering and re-entering the formal education process, the need really is for the underprivileged to be able to study while working to earn a living. Open schooling and digital technology is a powerful combination. The open school and open university processes need to be decentralised and strengthened. Rapidly developing technology is going to make it easy not only to teach and learn anywhere-anytime but testing anytime-anywhere should be possible as well.

The need for many more universities in India is much talked about. This is directly linked to the fact that the population is going to continue growing for the next 40 years or so. But there is also a need for non-formal education to supplement the formal processes of education or fulfill other needs. Widespread smartphone ownership combined with cheap data presents a huge challenge because of the risks of distortion of information. But it is also an opportunity for education of the kind that is not offered in schools and colleges. For example, agriculture, or broadly natural resource management, is a subject that is not offered in rural schools and colleges, at least on the scale it should be. The ASER 2023 survey found that while 56.4 per cent and 31.3 per cent rural students respectively were studying Humanities and Science beyond Class X, only 0.7 per cent reported they were study-

ing agriculture. Agriculture employs over 50 per cent of India's workforce and ASER 2023 shows that nearly a quarter of all adolescents in the 14-18 age group also work in agriculture while being enrolled in schools or colleges. The need to formally train our youth in advanced skills and knowledge of agriculture, fisheries and forestry, traditionally handed down in families, should be obvious. This is not a matter of skilling for jobs or livelihoods alone.

Issues of natural resource management are the issues of environment and climate. They have always been interconnected. The difference now is that there is a growing awareness about the linkages. Therefore, there is all the more reason for the entire population to learn about agriculture and the environment — not just agrarian communities. Each home has a laboratory around it for experimentation and learning. Knowledge and information can be accessed using digital technology wherever people are. So, the way to do it probably is not through rigid structures of classrooms, departments and universities run by governments or for-profit private players although these will continue to thrive for much of the foreseeable future.

Our education system has grown to train students to aim at one purpose — do well in examinations and get jobs. Times are changing. Doing well in examinations and getting jobs will continue to be a goal for a good proportion of youth but life goals that are not connected with academics are also becoming popular. Our system has to evolve to support them. Technology can assist but our mindsets have to change.

*The writer is co-founder and CEO, Pratham*

## JANUARY 18, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO



**CALCUTTA VIOLENCE**  
 THE POLICE FIRED 11 rounds and resorted to tear gassing to disperse Congress (I) demonstrators who set up road blockades and burnt buses in Calcutta, demanding the release of three leaders arrested by the Calcutta police. Congress (I) leaders said that two of their party workers were killed in the police firing. No official confirmation was available.

**KASHMIR BANDH**  
 THE RULING NATIONAL Conference and its youth wing have given a call for a Kashmir

bandh to protest against the assault on the Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, in Calcutta and Delhi recently. The National Conference has called upon the people of the Valley to make the bandh a success, appealing to traders and business establishments to close their shops and offices in protest.

**INDO-PAK TRADE**  
 PAKISTAN AND INDIA have reiterated their desire to substantially increase bilateral trade and have identified a large number of items for bulk trading. The two sides signed a joint statement on the conclusion of the three-day

joint sub-commission talks. India and Pakistan's commerce secretaries, Abid Hussain, and Izharul Haq respectively signed the statement.

**INDO-FRENCH N-DEAL**  
 FRANCE IS UNDERSTOOD to be willing to forgo the safeguards clause in the supply of French nuclear components to India and in the sharing of its fast-breeder technology. The French government seems to have given the go-ahead for French companies to participate in tenders floated by India for nuclear components, according to informed sources in Paris.



# THE IDEAS PAGE

## The monumental fate

As the buzz over the Ram temple in Ayodhya builds to a crescendo, it remains to be seen if it achieves sacred status for Hindus or remains a cultural monument — and a political project



RAMESH VENKATARAMAN

AS THE BUZZ over the Ram mandir builds to a crescendo in the lead-up to its consecration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22, the new temple is being hailed as many things: A symbol of Hindu civilisational resurrection, just retribution for past wrongs, even a Hindu Vatican. But one critical thing that is unclear, if the history of Hindu worship is any guide, is whether the Ayodhya complex will ever become a sacred pilgrimage destination for Hindus or be just a cultural monument and, in this age of Instagram and Tik Tok, a "bucket list" tourist attraction?

For context, take two major Siva temples in the ancient town of Kanchipuram. One is the Kailasanatha, among the oldest structural temples in south India built around 700 CE (prior temples were either cut out of caves or made of perishable materials such as wood, thatch, or mud). The other is the hoary Ekambareswar Temple.

The Kailasanatha is an "imperial" temple sponsored by the great Pallava ruler Rajasimha who was also responsible for the famous Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram. The elaborate inscriptions on the central structure tell the story of Rajasimha's quasi-mythical lineage and accomplishments and, in tandem with the sculptures of various gods and goddesses, propound a convergence of Rajasimha with Siva. The entire site is palpably a monument showcasing Rajasimha's power and underpinning his legitimacy via divine association.

The Ekambareswar Temple, on the other hand, is an "organic" temple. The present masonry structures are variously attributed to the Cholas (who succeeded the Pallavas in the Tamil country in the late 9th century), later Vijayanagara rulers, and a local chieftain. But the site itself is celebrated as far back as the hymns of the Tamil Saiva poet-saints of the 6th-9th century. Judging by this and the many charming Puranic myths of Parvati and Siva associated with the locale, it is very likely to have been regarded as sacred and has been a place of worship and pilgrimage for many centuries prior. The spot probably housed a shrine made of makeshift materials that was replaced by the current stone buildings in the medieval era.

Although both the Kailasanatha and Ekambareswar temples are barely a mile apart and both dedicated to Siva, they couldn't be further apart on the map of Hindu sacred geography. The Ekambareswar is a major living shrine, one of the *pancha bhoota sthalas* revered by south Indian Saivites. The devout throng its grounds, especially on festive occasions, and a posse of priests conduct multiple rituals every day.

The Kailasanatha is by far more impressive and artistically rich than the mishmash architecture of the Ekambareswar. But it is no more than a heritage attraction maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India. A solitary priest conducts worship at the main sanctum at the behest of the authorities. The buses that pull up before the site carry holidaymakers. Few come to the Kailasanatha to pray, whereas the buses at the Ekambareswar are packed with reverential pilgrims eager to wor-



CR Sasikumar

ship and fulfill vows.

In short, the organic Ekambareswar is an important holy spot for Hindus and has been for perhaps two millennia. The imperial Kailasanatha is an impressive cultural edifice and a testimonial to the power of a bygone dynasty.

There are several imperial Hindu temples similar to the Kailasanatha that dot the length and breadth of India — the Mahabalipuram complex, Ellora, the Brihadeshwara Temple in Thanjavur, the Sun Temple in Konarak, and the temples in Khajuraho, Belur and Halebidu, and Hampi to name only the most prominent. Like the Kailasanatha, they were built mainly in the 1,000 years before the Mughal epoch by various dynasties keen to flaunt their power and shore up their legitimacy. Most are not living places of worship and many are, or were at least, partly in ruins before being restored. (One has only to glance at colonial-era photographs of the Brihadeshwara Temple in Thanjavur built by the Chola emperor Raja Raja in the early 11th century to see how the magnificent monument had been reduced to an overgrown and virtually abandoned site.)

Hindus do visit imperial temples — but as tourists, not pilgrims. They go to admire their marvellous architecture and the beauty of the sculptures on their walls and pillars. In some cases, as in the Kailasanatha, there are priests on site conducting worship, which has been recently reinstated. Visitors may pay obeisance as Hindus are wont to do when passing by any godly sanctum, but there is nothing particularly notable about their reverence.

The shrines that Hindus consider truly holy are organic ones such as Tirupati, Srirangam, Sabarimala, Palani, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri, Amarnath, Vaishnodevi, Rishikesh, Varanasi, Puri, Nasik, Ujjain, and Kalahasti. No single ruler selected their location or planned their construction. Rather, these sites developed piecemeal over centuries in spots long regarded as sacred — what the Hindu scriptures refer to as *tirthas*, typically located on the banks of rivers or on mountain tops.

Arguably the most renowned Hindu pilgrimage destination today, the Tirupati Balaji Temple, sits on Venkatam hill, which finds mention as far back as the classical Tamil poetry of the Sangam age (roughly 3rd century

BC to 3rd century CE) as an especially revered natural feature. Organic holy locales like Tirupati and the Ekambareswar likely hosted wooden or brick shrines until the 3rd to 5th century CE after which they were gradually built over with more permanent stone structures sponsored by kings and other notables (many of whom also constructed imperial shrines).

Given their higgledy-piggledy construction history, organic temples typically lack much architectural and artistic distinction (think of the simple structures of the Amarnath or Sabarimala temples in contrast to any of the grand imperial complexes). There are no tourist guides or cameras allowed in organic temples. Yet, for millennia, the Hindu faithful have travelled long distances to these locations (often enduring hardship and danger) to make offerings and fulfill vows to the deities there, pray for their material well-being as well as salvation, and perform rites, especially for the departed.

This capsule history of Hindu worship provides the backdrop to the Ayodhya project. Widely accepted lists of *tirthas*, the organic sacred spots of Hinduism, are found in the Puranas and other scriptures. Though not perfectly overlapping or consistent, these lists mark the places still regarded as auspicious by Hindus. Even if one accepts that the Ram Janmabhoomi location is the birthplace of Rama and that a temple pre-existed the Babri mosque, present-day Ayodhya does not clearly figure in the conventional *tirtha* lists. There is also no known, even oral, tradition of established Hindu pilgrimage to Ayodhya from outside the area.

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The Ayodhya Ram Mandir is squarely a political project, a refrain in the BJP's manifesto since the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Like the imperial temples of yore, it is a monument to the Modi regime's power and burnishes its Hindu credentials. It also promises to be a major tourist attraction if only on account of its tumultuous recent history. But whether the new temple will resonate with the Hindu faithful and achieve the status of a sacred site is a question whose answer will unfold only in the decades after January 22.

The writer is a private equity investor and student of Hinduism

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The current president [Joe Biden] wants to restore the old norms of stable, civil politics. Mr Trump wants to destroy them. As things stand, the stakes could not be higher this November." — THE GUARDIAN

## Why I will light a diya for Sita

The consecration on January 22 will be an affirmation of our deeply ingrained faith and belief systems



ADITI NARAYANI PASWAN

WITH THE ADHIVAS of the *shyam ram* Ramlalla idol carved in Krishna Shila stone, in the sanctum sanctorum of Ram Janmabhoomi temple at Ayodhya, a struggle that has gone on for decades will culminate in faith and conviction. It would be right to say that after Independence in 1947, January 22, 2024, will be marked as another day of liberation — this time of the mind and conscience from fear, prejudice and colonialism.

Relegating Ram to a mere religious figure would diminish the contribution of Bharat's cultural history, just as it would be to relegate an ancient religion (Sanatan Dharma) to mere orthodox hegemonic practices. Ram's all-embracing cultural significance goes beyond the dwellers of the Indo-Gangetic plain or the Indian Subcontinent. Ram surpasses a monolithic understanding of religion.

The belief and faith in Ram goes beyond the geographical boundaries of Bharat and is found in various places including Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Malaysia. The religious and cultural heritage of these countries celebrates Ram. In Thailand, his mention is in Ramakien, Serat Rama in Indonesia, Yama Zatdaw in Myanmar, Maharadia Lawana in the Philippines and Hikayat Seri Rama in Malaysia. In India, various communities honour Ram in their own ways. One such community is the Ramnami community found in Chhattisgarh, known for their distinctive way of showing devotion to Lord Ram. They ink every part of their body with the word "Ram". This is more than just an act of devotion — it is also a tool of defiance against the deep-rooted caste system.

The consecration on January 22 can also be seen as revival and rebirth and an unequivocal reinstatement of our deeply ingrained faith and belief systems. This is not merely a political movement. The second struggle for independence from fears and prejudices paves the way for self-realisation. From the restrictions around women and Dalits entering temples to a Dalit laying the foundation stone for the Ram temple (Kameshwar Chaupal in 1989), Bharat had to take a transformative journey before the homecoming of Lord Ram. Kameshwar Chaupal, who is currently the trustee of the Ram mandir Trust, contends that the Ram mandir stands as a potent agent for social integration. It is important to emphasise that during a period when Dalits were steeped in the shackles of casteism, the foundation stone for this edifice was laid by an individual belonging to the Dalit community.

The Ram mandir will also come with

hope and anticipation for the arrival of Ram-Rajya. Ram has been associated with model governance, politics and statecraft built on ageless values and ethics. The current political dispensation and the Government of India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi have moved beyond rhetoric and acted to restore the site. The country will not be guided by a Darwinian "survival of the fittest" model but through internal and external cooperation rooted in the principles of harmony and non-violence.

Etymologically, "Ayodhya" is a city that cannot be defeated. This resonates with PM Modi's clarion call that "this is not an era of war". With the Ram mandir, divinity, unity and transcendence will lay the basis for fostering a united and harmonious society. The temple is emblematic of collaboration and interdependence — the very foundation of a society.

As India marches on to take up the role of vishwaguru with its young and thriving population and the scale and potential of its economy, the mandir in Ayodhya will symbolise the awakening of its spiritual and social consciousness. It will bolster the pillars of GYAN (knowledge) — garib, yuva, annadata and nari shakti — an acronym coined by PM Modi.

Since the BJP-led government took office in 2014, it has worked hard to ensure schemes and policies focus on various marginalised communities to strengthen the aforementioned pillars for attaining GYAN. This is reflected in schemes such as the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Abhiyan, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Yojana, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and Nari Arthik Sashaktikaran Yojana.

The Ram temple cannot be only understood in terms of its religiosity — it is a milestone in the spiritual journey that this nation is undertaking towards decolonisation and de-castification. Hopefully, with the great *utsav* and *utsav* (fervour and excitement) around Ram's homecoming, the *un-maad* (conflict/confusion) created by a few will be put to an end. In terms of culture, religion and even infrastructure, this is a moment of awakening for the nation. It's our liberation from domination, exploitation and oppression that colonialism imposed. As Hindus, we are seekers, not believers. So, we seek in the consecration of the Ram mandir the beginnings of a Bhartiya renaissance.

The temple is also the foundation of good governance, premised on justice and morality. As a daughter of Mithila, the land of Sita, I will light a diya on January 22. It will be a diya for an era of inclusive enlightenment and for Sita, as well — an epitome of resilience and women empowerment. I will light the diya for the dedication and devotion of Mata Sabri, for the intellect of Maharishi Valmiki and for the value of selflessness of Nishad Raaj.

The writer is assistant professor, Department of Sociology, Lakshmi Bai College, University of Delhi



A FAIZUR RAHMAN

## School over hijab

The Karnataka ban was unfair. But forcing girls to cover up is misinterpreting Islam

ON DECEMBER 22, when Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah hinted that the restrictions on wearing hijab (headscarf) in educational institutions in the state would soon be lifted, the reaction of an overjoyed Muskan Khan was, "I had given up my education over the hijab. Now... I will continue my education."

Khan, a second-year B.Com student in Mandya, hit the headlines in February 2022 for standing up to a group of Hindu boys who tried to bully her into removing her hijab inside her college. After the Karnataka government banned hijab in schools and colleges, she discontinued her education and "refused to take up" opportunities from colleges in other cities. Khan's attitude indicates that if the ban is not lifted she wouldn't mind remaining incompletely educated.

The ban was certainly unwarranted because the wearing of hijab does not affect any legitimate state interest, public order, health, or morality. But the bigger question is: What makes young Muslims such as Khan prioritise religious symbolism over something as important as education to the extent of giving it up?

Muskan Khan has been reportedly wearing the hijab since she was seven or eight years old. At such a young age, she could not have been intellectually mature enough to make an informed decision about any marker of religious identity. Her parents, in all probability, must have chosen the hijab for her, and wearing it over the years would

have conditioned her into accepting its religious importance.

If this is the case, it would mean that even when courts uphold the Muslim students' right to cover their heads, agreeing in good faith with their claim to decisional autonomy or conscientious belief as the case may be, it can still be asked if their volition is free from the constraints of another's choice. In his 1958 essay *Two Concepts of Liberty*, political theorist Isaiah Berlin called freedom from external constraints "negative liberty", and "positive liberty" the freedom to pursue one's choices with full autonomy.

In other words, if a court upholds the Muslim students' positive liberty to wear the hijab, their negative liberty can still be questioned because coercion does not always take the form of physical threats or intimidation. An individual's free will can be subverted through propaganda, indoctrination, or advertisement. This is the subject of Robert Sapolsky's book *Determined: Life Without Free Will* (2023).

For instance, there are several "Islamic" CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) schools in South India today — many of them controlled by traditionalist Muslim elite opposed to religious reforms — where the hijab and skull cap are part of the uniform from classes I-XII, without which students are not allowed to enter the classrooms. Besides, many conservative Muslim families make their female members wear the hijab from a very young age.

Then there are rebarbative illustrations that depict Muslim women as two candies, one wrapped and the other unwrapped with flies devouring it. The disgusting insinuation is that only hijab-wearing women (represented by the wrapped candy) will remain unmolested; in contrast, women who don't wear the hijab could excite sexual predators like unwrapped candies attracting flies.

These facts suggest that the conditioning of Muslim girls to adopt an "Islamic" attire does happen. Hence, the speculation about the free will of Muslim students who want to wear the hijab both inside and outside their classrooms.

The fact is that the Quran does not specify any attire for women except modest clothing (24:31, 33:59). It instructs them to "lower their gaze" (24:30-31) which would make sense only when they are not shrouded in a head-to-toe burqa.

Interestingly, the word hijab occurs eight times in the Quran (7:46, 17:45, 19:17, 33:53, 38:32, 41:5, 42:51 and 83:15) but not once in the meaning of headscarf as understood by Muslims today. It refers to an imaginary or real barrier between people or things.

In the Indian subcontinent, the most influential votary of feminine seclusion was Abul Ala Maududi, founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami. His book *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam* has been so widely quoted by Muslim theologians that it is now a byword for Muslim patriarchy.

In Maududi's understanding of Islam, a Muslim woman cannot "wear glamorous clothes that attract attention, nor should she cherish the desire to display the charms of the face and the hand, nor should she walk in a manner as may invite the attention of others."

He goes on to warn that according to Islam, "the real place for the woman is the house and she has been exempted from the outdoor duties so that she may lead a dignified and peaceful life at home and carry out her domestic responsibilities efficiently."

And if any woman dissents from this view, it is because of "modern democracy [which] looks upon man as wholly independent and unaccountable and makes him his own legislator, and so renders all legislative business dependent on majority opinion." The biggest culprit, of course, is the "concept of liberty [that] gave birth to the democratic system of government".

Maududi wrote *Purdah* in 1939, which means that for more than eight decades his shocking misinterpretations of Islam have been percolating in Muslim minds, and now, have engendered a paradox where freedom of conscience is being used by liberated Muslim women to impose on themselves a symbol of patriarchy in the name of a religion that does not mandate it.

The writer is secretary-general of the Islamic Forum for the Promotion of Moderate Thought

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### FOR SMOOTH TRAVEL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Grounded' (IE, January 17). Flights were cancelled due to poor visibility and dense fog. Airlines bear the primary responsibility for providing accurate information during delays. In such situations, either the flight should be cancelled, or passengers ought to be taken care of. Delhi experiences winter annually, often impacting flights. Shouldn't it be the responsibility of airlines, airports, and DGCA authorities to monitor the infrastructure and facilities? Authorities must take concrete actions for a smoother travel experience.

Ditika, Bengaluru

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Grounded' (IE, January 17). It is common knowledge that dense fog is an annual occurrence in North India. It is common sense that repair work on runways built to handle fog should be completed before the onset of winters. A cocktail of lack of due diligence and understaffing led to foggy responses by hapless crew members which led to violent reactions by distraught passengers. All this calls for a strong audit of systems and procedures by non-governmental agencies to lift the fog shrouding reasons for this chaos.

Raja Bandopadhyaya, Vadodara

### A POLITICAL PROJECT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A place of bonding' (IE, January 17). The writer is misrepresenting facts. Firstly, there is

no outrage about the construction of temples in India. The issue at hand is the state machinery's involvement in the building and inauguration of the Ram mandir in Ayodhya. The problem is that it has become a political event (though it was always political, faith was just the bogeyman). Secondly, the Supreme Court ruled that it did not find any evidence to prove that Babri Masjid was constructed after the demolition of a temple. The allotment of land has sent the wrong message to the masses. The allotment of an alternate land for a mosque does not serve any purpose either because the demolition was not about just a mosque. It was an assault on a religious minority.

SZA Husain, via email

### AT ECOLOGY'S COST

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A dated urban vision' (IE, January 17). India's longest sea bridge, Atal Setu, raises environmental concerns. The construction of the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link required thorough evaluations of its environmental impact and the implementation of necessary measures to minimise any potential harm. Rapid infrastructure development without adequate environmental considerations poses a threat to the delicate balance of local ecosystems. This emphasises the need for sustainable and eco-friendly engineering solutions. As we move forward, it must be ensured that the ecology of a region is not forsaken for the development agenda.

SS Paul, Nadia



ANNUAL STATUS OF EDUCATION REPORT 2023

Access, usage, privacy: Boys have edge over girls when it comes to smartphones

RADHIKA NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

THE ANNUAL Status of Education Report (ASER 2023) findings reflect that while there is a wider access as 95% males and 90% females reported knowing how to use a smartphone, however, the technical nuance of "know-how to use a smartphone" looks different for men and women.

For instance, males between the 14- and 18-year age group were more than twice as likely to own their own smartphone than females, and therefore were likely spending far more time using the device for a wider variety of tasks.

This theory is supported by the ASER data, which shows that although both sexes use smartphones, men were twice as likely as women to have done so in or-

der to utilise it for practical tasks like making a reservation or paying a bill. The report showed that 38% males used smartphones for online services while only 19% females did so. Even for entertainment, the percentage of males was higher at 69% compared to just 46% female, indicating girls and young women have far less access to it than their male counterparts.

"Owning one's own smartphone also enables the possibility of its unsupervised use for tasks unrelated to work or education," the report said.

ASER 2017 found 16% of 14-18-year-old females out of school as compared to 11.9% males - a gap of 4.1 percentage points. This year, that gap has narrowed to just 0.2 percentage points. The data showed that more females in this age group expressed desire

to continue to higher levels of education than their male counterparts. In other words, girls are staying in school longer and wanting to continue studying even longer. Around 7.4% females were enrolled in undergraduate and other courses while 6.8% males continued higher education. 44.3% aspired to study in undergraduate programmes as opposed to 41.2% males.

When reading a Class II level text in their native tongue, girls (76%) outperform males (70.9%) across all enrolment groups. On the other hand, males outperform women in maths and reading comprehension in English.

Men fared better than females across all functional tasks like calculating time, adding weights, measuring length and applying unitary method. For instance, only 41.1% females were able to

tell the time compared to 51% males. Similarly, 88% males were able to measure length compared to 82% women.

Half of the surveyed males reported to have an email as compared to 30% females. The gender gap is further prominent in activities like online shopping and even more so in using location or maps. Almost half of the males - 49% - were able to use maps to figure out how long it would take to get from their current location to the district bus stand on a two- or four-wheeler and only 25% of girls and young women - could do so.

"With most girls entirely dependent on family members (or, occasionally, on school trips) for expeditions outside their home villages, planning of travel logistics - what mode of transport to use, how long the trip will take, where to book tickets, and so on -

involves a set of tasks that are usually done by the men in the family, and may therefore be hard for girls to even conceptualise, let alone implement. In this sense, the idea that such planning can be aided by the use of apps on a smartphone is even more remote," said Director of research, Suman Bhattacharjee, in the report. The gender gap further reiterates in career choices, especially higher education. Changes in societal norms surrounding the ideal age for marriage emerged among females as a major factor influencing their capacity to pursue higher education.

The ASER 2023 'Beyond Basics' survey was conducted in 28 districts across 26 states, reaching a total of 34,745 youth in the age group 14-18 years.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

2 security personnel killed, Manipur asks Centre for helicopters

SUKRITA BARUAH GUWAHATI, JANUARY 17

THE VIOLENCE in the border town of Moreh in Manipur escalated on Wednesday with the killing of two police personnel after which Manipur Home Department Commissioner requested the Union Ministry of Home Affairs for helicopters for medical emergencies and to airlift troops and weaponry to the area.

In the second incident of killing of Meitei police personnel in Moreh in two-and-a-half months, Wangkhem Somorjit, an Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) jawan attached to Manipur police commandos deployed in the town, and Takhellambam Saileshwar, a havildar, were killed in an incident around 3.25 am.

According to the police, they had been deployed at an IRB post near the Kondong Lairembi Devi Mandir at the time and the assailants attacked it using grenades, followed by a volley of firing. Along with them, two other personnel also suffered injuries in the attack.

On Wednesday, T Ranjit Singh, the state's Home Department Commissioner, wrote to the

Home Ministry requesting "air assets" or helicopters to be placed in Imphal immediately for a minimum period of seven days citing "emergency requirements" in light of the incident.

"The law and order situation at the border town of Moreh has become a matter of serious concern as there have been continuous exchanges of fire taking place and this has resulted in the death of one IRB personnel this morning. In view of the prevalent situation, the situation may deteriorate further in Moreh, medical emergency may arise any time. Police department has also informed that there is also need for airlifting of security personnel, ammunition, etc to Moreh," wrote Singh.

After the morning's incident, combined teams of police and security forces launched operations to crack down on the assailants.

"The firing had started early in the morning after which security forces entered the areas to neutralise it. In the midst of this, a few miscreants set some buildings on fire. We do not know who these are. Police and security forces are coordinating and executing the ongoing opera-

tion," said a security source. Kuki-Zomi organisations held Manipur police commandos responsible for the arson, saying multiple houses and two schools had been gutted by the afternoon.

On October 31, 2023, Chingtham Anand Kumar, an SDPO with the Manipur Police, was shot dead in Moreh, and on Monday evening, police had arrested two men, Philip Khaikhhol Khongsai and Hemkhohal Mate, and stated that they were "among the main suspects" for the killing of Anand.

This arrest had caused unrest in the Kuki community, the majority in the mixed population town, after which a curfew was imposed in the Tengnoupal district, under which Moreh falls.

Two Kuki-Zomi organisations - the ITLF and COTU - had issued a joint statement claiming that the two men had been wrongly linked to the killing of the police officer.

The organisations declared a 48-hour deadline for their release, failing which they said they would "not allow the one-sided communal government favouring only the Meiteis to function in Kuki-Zo areas".

STATE OFFICE, KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION (Ministry of M.S.M.E. Govt. of India) GeM Bid Number GEM/2023/B/ 4390820 Dt. 24.12.2023

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER AGRA CIRCLE, P.W.D AGRA Short Term Notice inviting E-Tender Letter No. : 35/14M-AC/2023 Dated: 03-01-2024

- 1. The Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D, Agra on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the Percentage rate bids from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP, PWD, Road work. The Bidder may submit bids for any or all of the works. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

Table with 14 columns: Sl No, District, Name of Work, Estimated cost (Rs. in Lacs), Material cost (Rs. in Lacs), Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs), Cost of Document (Rs. in Rs.), Time of Completion, Address of Executive Engineer, Address of Superintending Engineer, Address of Chief Engineer, Category of Contractor.

- 3. Time allowed for completion is including Rainy Season. 4. Bid document with detailed terms and conditions will be available online on website http://etender.up.nic.in and Prabhari (http://wms.upppwd.gov.in/Prabhari) From 20.01.2024 to 27.01.2024. Bids must be submitted online only at e-tendering portal of http://etender.up.nic.in and Prabhari App with all documents as per GO No 14/2020/879(1)/ 23-7/2020/176(810)/06 Dt 25-08-2020 on or before 12:30 Hours Dt. 27.01.2024. Technical Bid received online will be opened on 27.01.2024 at 01:00 Hours.

(Nripendra Singh) Executive Engineer P.D., P.W.D., Agra UPID-200949 Date 16/01/2024 www.upgovic.in (Anand Kumar) Superintending Engineer Agra Circle, P.W.D., AGRA

SAHADEB SARKAR DENIES CHARGE

IIM-C acting director removed over sexual harassment complaint

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, JANUARY 17

THE DIRECTOR-IN-CHARGE of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta (IIM-C), Sahadeb Sarkar, was removed from the post on Tuesday evening, weeks after a complaint of sexual harassment was filed by a female administrative staff.

Professor Saibal Chattopadhyay, a senior faculty member, has been appointed in his place.

In a press statement, the institute said: "The Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) of the institute has been in receipt of a written complaint under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act) against the then Director-in-Charge Professor Sahadeb Sarkar. The ICC has ascertained that prima facie, the complaint warrants a formal inquiry and communicated the same to the Board of Governors (BoG)."

Sahadeb Sarkar is occupying the position of Director-in-Charge and recommended his removal from the said post and any other position wherein he has administrative charges, during the pendency of formal inquiry before the ICC and any proceedings arising therefrom or incidental thereto," it said.

"The IIM-C Board of Governors held a special meeting on January 6, 2024, and accepted the recommendation of the ICC that Professor Sahadeb Sarkar shall not continue in the office of Director-in-Charge and shall be removed from the said post and any other position wherein he has administrative charges in IIM Calcutta, during the pendency of formal inquiry before the ICC and any proceedings arising therefrom or incidental thereto," it said.

According to sources, the alleged incident took place last November, shortly after Sarkar was appointed director-in-charge of the institute. It has been alleged that Sarkar made lewd comments to a woman administrative staff member.

In a written statement to The Indian Express, Sarkar said, "I emphatically deny the allegations made against me. I am shocked by the baseless allegations."

PETITION AGAINST 'ILLEGAL DETENTION'

SC asks parents of 25-yr-old woman to free her, return passport within 48 hours

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

THE SUPREME COURT Wednesday directed the parents of a 25-year-old woman, who allegedly has been detained by them as she was in a relationship against their wishes, to "set her at liberty forthwith".

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Sandeep Mehta also criticised the Karnataka High Court over the manner in which it dealt with the issue and said "when the question of liberty of a person is involved, even a day's delay counts".

Hearing a plea by Dubai-based Kevin Joy Varghese who alleged that the parents of the woman, Meera Chidambaram, had taken her away from Dubai and illegally detained her in Bengaluru at her uncle's house, the bench said that the "continued detention of" the woman by her parents "is illegal" and added that they "shall set her at liberty forthwith and she is permitted to proceed further as per her own wishes".

It also asked the parents to return her passports and other documents to her within 48 hours.

Varghese had earlier moved a habeas corpus petition before the Karnataka High Court which recorded her statement on September 27, 2023.

The woman in her statement "categorically stated that she was forcibly taken away from Dubai on the pretext of her grandfather's sickness and that she is being forced to enter into an arranged marriage".

Varghese told the SC that the tentative date shown against the matter is for April 10, 2024.

Taking exception to this, the SC bench expressed its "anguish at the manner in which the" HC dealt with the matter.

"When in a habeas corpus petition the detainee-Meera Chidambaram had in unequivocal terms expressed before the High Court that she desired to go back to Dubai to pursue her career, the High Court ought to have passed the order setting her at liberty with immediate effect. Adjourning the matter on 14 occasions and now postponing it indefinitely and posting it in the year 2025 depicts a total lack of sensitivity on the part of the High Court..." the bench said in its order.

Tree census code in suicide note helps cops crack murder

MOHAMED THAYER MUMBAI, JANUARY 17

"L01-501" - NAVI Mumbai Police racked their brains over for several weeks over the code before realising that it was a tree census number, using which on Tuesday they tracked the body of a 19-year-old girl who was murdered on December 12.

According to police, the girl, Vaishnavi Babar, was allegedly murdered by 24-year-old Vaibhav Burungale, with whom she was in a relationship earlier. The code was scribbled across the suicide note of Burungale who allegedly strangled her with a zip tag and later died

by suicide in front of a moving train at Sanpada on December 12.

As per police, the girl's family was unhappy with their affair as they hailed from different castes, due to which she wanted to snap ties with him. Burungale suspected the girl was seeing another man and decided to kill her before committing suicide, they said. While the girl was studying in SIES college, Burungale had studied up to Class 12 and was working.

On December 12, the Navi Mumbai police received a missing persons complaint from the girl's family. The same day, the police found the body of Burungale at the Sanpada railway tracks.



Vaibhav Burungale allegedly killed Vaishnavi Babar before dying by suicide

Police also found a suicide note in his phone which said he had murdered the girl. However, for a month police were not able to trace the body of the girl.

Navi Mumbai Police Commissioner Milind Bharambe set up a special

task force to investigate the case under DCP Amit Kale. The police team went through the suicide note they had found. Based on call records and technical investigation, the police found that the couple had gone to the Kharghar hill area on the day

she went missing.

Soon a team led by senior inspector Atul Aher of the Anti Human Trafficking Unit of the Navi Mumbai police started spending hours in the area looking for the body. Police took the help of voluntary rescuers from Lonavala and collaborated with the Fire Brigade, Cidco, and Forest Department to search the woman's body. Drones were also used.

Aher said that in the suicide note, he had mentioned L01 - 501 as the place where the body had been dumped. "I googled for the code and we tried various combinations but we could not figure out what the code word stood for." Eventually the police had a breakthrough after they

consulted the forest department that told them it was the tree census number. The number led the police to the spot where the girl's body was spotted lying in bushes in a dumping ground in Kalamboli area, around 6 km from Kharghar, an officer said. The body was identified based on the clothing the woman was wearing when she had left for college, including the wristwatch and the ID card. An officer said in Burungale's mobile phone, Burungale writing to himself, tells the girl that he had "tested" the tag on himself before strangling her and it would not hurt much. He further told her that they would be together in their next life.



Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik during the inauguration of the Srimandir Parikrama Prakaalpa in Puri on Wednesday. PTI

Odisha CM inaugurates heritage corridor project around Jagannath temple

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 17

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday inaugurated his government's ambitious Parikrama Prakaalpa project around Puri's Jagannath Temple, five days before the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple at Ayodhya.

The Parikrama Prakaalpa is a 75-metre free passage built around the outer walls of the 12th century shrine. The Rs 800-crore heritage corridor project aims to provide improved amenities for pilgrims around the temple.

Religious heads of 90 temples from across the nation and representatives from the Pashupatinath Temple in Nepal

were among the many who attended the ceremony. The inauguration ceremony also marked the culmination of a three-day "maha yajna" that had started on Monday.

Patnaik's trusted lieutenant VK Pandian, who recently joined the BJD after quitting IAS, was present, along with Dibyasingha Deb, the scion of the erstwhile royal kingdom of Utkala, when the Parikrama Prakaalpa plaque was unveiled.

Pandian supervised the construction of the Parikrama Prakaalpa by visiting the temple town every week ever since the BJD government in 2019 unveiled the project that aimed at improving infrastructure for the visiting devotees and enhancing the "visual connect" with the temple.

Karni Sena leader shot dead, 1 held

MEERUT: A Karni Sena leader was shot dead by a man who had sneaked into his house along with his two brothers to abduct his 17-year-old daughter, Badaun police said Wednesday, adding they have arrested the main accused.

According to police, the murder took place on Monday night when 32-year-old Somendra

Singh, alias Nanhe, accompanied by his two brothers - Antu (28) and Satendra (30) - entered the house of Karni Sena leader Sudhir Kumar Singh at Sadaullah Ganj village. Singh, 40, was the Badaun district vice-president of Karni Sena. Police said that they arrested Nanhe the next day, and are looking for his absconding brothers. ENS



GOLD ₹63,050 USD RATE ₹83.13 OIL \$78.34 SILVER ₹75,800

SECTOR WATCH MARKET

Black Wednesday: What led to a mkt crash of over 2%?

HITESH VYAS MUMBAI, JANUARY 17 AFTER THE 2.44 per cent rally in the last five sessions, Indian markets fell by 2.23 per cent on Wednesday after signals from the US Federal Reserve that it may not rush to lower interest rates until lower inflation can clearly be sustained...

ABOUT ₹1,515 CRORE WAS DISBURSED IN FY24 TILL OCTOBER Govt disburses ₹4,415 cr under PLI; low job creation a concern

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



The schemes aim to attract investments in key sectors and cutting-edge technology. File

THE CENTRAL government has disbursed incentive amount of Rs 4,415 crore under its flagship Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes for as many as eight sectors, including large-scale electronics manufacturing, IT hardware, bulk drugs among others till October this fiscal year, a government official said on Wednesday.

(RBI) governor Raghuram Rajan had raised questions over lack of job creation under the scheme. "The nature of these product lines is such that it is highly technology driven and the requirement of man power is limited. It will be challenging in the future when industry 4.0 comes in. It is a cause of concern but we will see job creation going forward," Thakur said.

PMA and companies, "so it has been directed to ministries and PMAs to create an SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) and reduce the time for processing of the documents. The remarks assume significance as certain quarters have raised concerns over slow disbursement of fiscal incentives under the scheme. "It has been told to the PMAs and departments to approve the claim and not to raise unnecessary objections," he added.

which has led to production/sales of Rs 8.61 lakh crore and employment generation (direct and indirect) of over 6.78 lakh. There are about 1,000 units under the scheme. These schemes have witnessed exports surpassing Rs 3.2 lakh crore, with significant contributions from sectors such as electronics, pharma, food processing, and telecom.

Red Sea route crisis: Commerce ministry asks DFS to maintain credit flow to exporters

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



Freight rates to Europe have more than doubled due to security tension. File

THE COMMERCE Ministry has asked the Department of Financial Services (DFS) under the Ministry of Finance to maintain credit flow to exporters amid disruptions in the Red Sea route that could potentially impact over 80 per cent of the exports going to Europe, a senior government official said after an inter-ministerial meeting on Wednesday.

Freight rates to Europe have more than doubled due to security tension in the Red Sea region. Fears of disruptions in the Red Sea region have risen while oil prices have begun inching up. According to the commerce ministry, consignments have been put on hold due to high freight and surcharges and the sailing of most of the ships have been impacted and generally postponed by two-three weeks as the incoming ships, with longer routes, are getting delayed.

Govt proposes repealing Indian Stamp Act, seeks public input on draft Bill

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

THE GOVERNMENT has proposed repealing the Indian Stamp Act, 1899 and bringing in a new legislation for the stamp duty regime in the country, inviting suggestions on the draft 'Indian Stamp Bill, 2023' from the public within a period of 30 days.

Refreshments on tarmac: Aviation regulators impose hefty fines on IndiGo, Mumbai airport

SUKALP SHARMA NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



Based on the replies filed by IndiGo and MIAL, BCAS and the DGCA decided to impose the fines. File

AVIATION SECURITY regulator Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) Wednesday slapped penalties totalling Rs 1.80 crore on IndiGo and Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL) over the recent incident of passengers having food on the tarmac besides an aircraft at the Mumbai airport. IndiGo was fined a total of Rs 1.20 crore for various violations, while Mumbai airport operator MIAL was fined Rs 60 lakh by BCAS.

fog-related disruptions at the Delhi airport. Upon landing, the passengers were allegedly allowed to disembark on the tarmac and even served refreshments there, something that is in contravention of the regulations. According to the two aviation regulators, IndiGo allowed deplaning of passengers from the diverted flight—6E 2195—onto the apron and then boarded them on to another flight—6E 2091—without following the procedure of security screening, which is in vio-

Air India, SpiceJet fined for rostering lapses

New Delhi: The DGCA also imposed fines of Rs 30 lakh each on Air India and SpiceJet for failure to comply with directives on rostering of pilots for flight operations in low visibility conditions. The aviation safety regulator had issued show cause notices to the two carriers for not deploying pilots trained to operate in low visibility conditions for some flights to Delhi late December. Numerous flights had to be diverted to other airports due to dense fog at the Delhi airport in the last week of December. ENS

Economy likely to grow 7% in FY25, says RBI Governor

Davos: Indian economy should record a growth rate of 7 per cent in the next fiscal and inflation is likely to ease further, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Wednesday. He also credited the government for structural reforms undertaken in recent years, saying they have boosted the medium and long-term growth prospects of the Indian economy. He said that amidst a chal-

BRIEFLY Adani to invest ₹62,400 cr in data centres

New Delhi: Gautam Adani's aples-to-airport conglomerate will invest Rs 62,400 crore in the next 10 years in setting up data centres in Maharashtra and Telangana to provide infrastructure for the booming digital services demand in the country. PTI

GPay signs pact with NPCI to expand UPI

New Delhi: Google India Digital Services and NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL) have signed an agreement that will help expand UPI payments to countries outside India. The memorandum of understanding will enable Indian travellers to make payments in other countries via Google Pay (GPay), eliminating the need to carry cash or resort to international payment gateways. PTI

Market cap: HDFC Bank loses ₹1 lk cr, LIC overtakes SBI

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, JANUARY 17

EVEN AS the market fell by 2.23 per cent, HDFC Bank, which fell by over 8 per cent, lost over Rs one lakh crore of investor wealth as its market capitalisation declined to Rs 11.66 lakh crore on Wednesday. The overall BSE market capitalisation, or the total value of all listed shares, fell by Rs 4.53 lakh crore to Rs 370.4 lakh crore on Wednesday. Reliance India Limited (RIL) has remained the most valuable listed firm with a market capitalisation of Rs 18.42 lakh crore. Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) became the most valuable listed public sector company, surpassing the market capitalisation of the State Bank of India (SBI). LIC's market capitalisation now stands at Rs 5.60 lakh crore as against SBI's Rs 5.58 lakh crore. The surge in LIC's market value is underscored by the fact that its share price reached a high of Rs 919.45. Shares of LIC were listed on

Table with 3 columns: Company, Share price\*, Market cap\*\*. Rows include RIL, TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Bharti Airtel, Hind Unilever, ITCLTD, LIC, SBI.

the stock exchange on May 17, 2022, with a listing price of Rs 867.20 per share on the BSE, slightly below its issue price of Rs 949. However, in the subsequent months, the shares experienced a downturn, reaching an all-time low of Rs 530.20 on March 29, 2023. Despite this challenging period, LIC's fortunes took a positive turn in November 2023 when its shares witnessed a substantial spike of over 12.85 per cent. This upward momentum continued with a 22.63 per cent surge in December 2023, and a further 6.43 per cent spike in the first two weeks of January 2024. These gains contributed to LIC's market capitalisation witnessing an increase of Rs 1.50 lakh crore in the last three months. The government sold LIC shares worth Rs 21,000 crore in the IPO to raise funds.

High demand pushes India's reliance on crude imports

SUKALP SHARMA NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

INDIA'S RELIANCE on crude oil imports in the first nine months of 2023-24 (FY24) rose to 87.5 per cent from 87 per cent in the corresponding April-December period of the last fiscal as consumption of fuels and other petroleum products increased while domestic oil production largely remained flat, as per latest data from the petroleum ministry. The reliance on imported crude in April-December was marginally higher than the previous fiscal's 87.4 per cent, which was the highest-ever in a financial year. If the trend seen so far in the ongoing fiscal holds, oil import dependency could hit yet another fresh high this year. In FY22, dependence on imported crude was 85.5 per cent. Sluggish domestic oil output in the face of steady growth in domestic demand has led to reliance on imports rising over the years. FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice. Tender No: e-Tender No.227/2023-24/SE/PHC/ALP-RT1. JMC Construction of 10 dia intake well cum pump house at Mandapathinkadavu and Supplying and Laying of Raw water main from Well cum pump house to 30 MLD WTP at Mavelikkara and adjoining PDS-Construction of 30 MLD Water Treatment Plant at Mavelikkara. EMD: Rs. 2,00,000/- Tender fee: Rs. 13,10,00/- to Rs. 19,518/- Last Date for submitting Tender: 27.01.2024 02:00 pm Phone: 0477-2237953 Website: www.kwa.kerala.gov.in www.etenders.kerala.gov.in

UTTARAKHAND POWER CORPORATION LTD. (A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking). Victoria Cross Vijaya Gaba Singh Uja Bhawan, Kanwal Road, Dehradun. Corporate Identity No. U40109UR2001 SOC 025867/2368. CORRIDGEMENT FOR PURCHASE OF POWER UNDER LONG TERM PROCUREMENT AGAINST TENDER SPECIFICATION NO. 12/CE(COMM)/UPCL-12/LTPP/2023. It is to inform that an amendment/modification for extension of due date for submission of queries has been made by UPCL in tender specification No. 12/CE(COMM)/UPCL-12/LTPP/2023 and the detailed amendment/modifications can be read/studied completely in official website of UPCL i.e. www.upcl.org and website of MSTC India Limited (DEEP Portal) i.e. www.mstccommerce.com. All other terms and conditions shall remain unchanged. No.: 29/EE(CM)/UPCL/A-2 Dated: 16.01.2024 SE(COMMERCIAL)

MANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED (Government of Karnataka undertaking). Corporate Office, MESCOM Bhavana, Bejai, Mangaluru-575 004. Phone: 0824-2885795 CIN: U40109 KA 2002 SGC 030425. No. E 94527/73096/2024 Date: 12.01.2024. SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY). MESCOM invites Short Term tender for Manufacture & Supply of following materials: Tender No Name of the Material proposed for Procurement Quantity MESCOM/2023-24/IND0054 8 SWG GI Wire 100 MT. The interested eligible bidders may log on to www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in on or after 18.01.2024. Sd/- Superintending Engineer (Elec.) (Proc.) For Power Related Complaints and Assistance Call Toll Free Number 1912.

NMDC STEEL Limited (A Government of India Enterprise). P.O. Nagarnagar, Distt. - Bastar (Chhattisgarh) - 494341 (CIN: U27310CT2015GOI001618). Tender Enquiry No: NSL/Contracts/Transport/Empanel/2023/406/398 Dated 18.01.2024. NMDC Steel Limited, a public sector company under Ministry of Steel, Govt. of India, invites tenders from experienced domestic Transporters for Empanelment for Transportation of Steel Plant Finished Products (HR Coils / Sheets / Plates etc.) across various destinations from Steel Mill Loading yard / NSL stock yard and also from stock yard at Vishakapatnam Plant to various destinations in the Country for a period of one year and extendable for 1 more year on the same terms and conditions. The detailed NIT and Bid documents can be viewed and/or downloaded from 18-01-2024 to 07-02-2024 from following website links: 1. NMDC website - https://nmdcportals.nmdc.co.in/nmdctender 2. Central Public Procurement portal - https://www.eprocure.gov.in/epublish/app and search tender through tender enquiry number. The bidders are requested to submit their original bids as per the details given in Notice Inviting Tender (NIT). The Bidders on regular basis are required to visit the NMDC's website/CPP Portal for corrigendum, if any, at a future date. For further clarification, Deputy General Manager (Contracts), NMDC Steel Limited, Nagarnagar can be contacted at nslcontracts@nmdc.co.in Deputy General Manager (Contracts)

RailTel (A Govt. of India Undertaking). CIN No. L64202DL2000GO107905. e-Tender No. RailTel/E-Tender/OT/WR/R0/2022-23/HMS/03 Dated 13.01.2024. RailTel/Western Region invites open E-Tender for "Supply & Installation of Desktops, Printers, Display units, Switches and other IT related items in Divisional Railway Hospital, Sub Divisional Railway Hospital & Health units of Kalyan (Mumbai) Division, Central Railway". Tender Notice and Tender Document are available on https://www.railtelindia.com/ and can be downloaded from the e-tendering portal https://www.ireps.gov.in/. All future Addendum/Corrigendum will be uploaded on RailTel website and e-tendering portal only. Western Railway Microwave Complex, Senapati Bapat Marg, Mahalaxmi, Mumbai-400013. Phone: 91 (22) 24923907 Fax: 91 (22) 24923913

RAIL WHEEL FACTORY (A Government of India Enterprise). Yelahanka, Bengaluru - 560 064. Website: www.rfw.indianrailways.gov.in. Tender Notice No. RWF/IS/09/2023-24 Dated 16/01/2024. On behalf of the President of India, the Principal Chief Materials Manager invites Electronic Open Tender from experienced Manufacturers/ authorised dealers, for supply of the following item, on the Indian Railways e-portal www.ireps.gov.in. Brief Description of Item: Tender No: P2235644 Item Description: Energy Dispersive X-ray Fluorescence Spectrometer as per RWF, Specification, Quantity: 1 Set, Tender Closing Date and Time 20/02/2024, 14:00 hrs. Pre bid conference on 24/01/2024 @15.00 hrs. Tender details can be viewed on our website www.rfw.indianrailways.gov.in or www.ireps.gov.in. The tender documents and the corrigendum to the Tender if any, will be available on the portal only. For Principal Chief Materials Manager



**EXPLAINED CULTURE**

**PRAN PRATISHTHA AT AYODHYA'S RAM TEMPLE: WHAT IS THIS CEREMONY, HOW IS IT PERFORMED?**

**YASHEE**  
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

THE DAY of the pran pratishtha of the idol at Ayodhya's Ram temple is coming closer. The pran pratishtha ceremony will be held on January 22, and various rituals leading up to it have begun from January 16.

While the basic meaning of pran pratishtha — giving life to the idol — is simple enough, the ceremony involves various rituals taken from the Vedas and Puranas, each with its own significance.

**What is pran pratishtha?**

Pran pratishtha is the act which transforms an idol into a deity, giving it the capacity to accept prayers and grant boons. For this, the statue has to go through various stages. Here we describe some of the prominent steps. The number of steps involved depend on the scale of the ceremony.

**SHOBHA YATRA:**

One of the first stages is a shobha yatra, or a procession of the idol, taken out in the neighbourhood of the temple. During this yatra, as the idol is greeted and cheered on by onlookers, some of their devotion is transferred into it, imbuing it with divine strength. It is, thus, the devotee who begins the alchemy of turning a statue into God.

Once the idol comes back to the temple begin the rituals that make up pran pratishtha.

Dr Dipakbhai Jyotishacharya, who runs the Parashar Jyotishalaya in Gujarat's Vapi, told *The Indian Express* that pran pratishtha can be held for both chalit moorti (household idols that can be moved about) and sthir moorti (temple idols that once fixed remain so).

Dr. Sunder Narayan Jha, professor at the Department of Veda at the Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri National Sanskrit University, New Delhi, said when the mantra for pran pratishtha is chanted, the prayer is both for the idol to come to life and to be prepared to give up that life. "This is because, in case that particular statue is damaged, another will have to be installed in its place, and life should flow from the damaged idol to the new one," he said.

**ADHIVAAS:** To ready the idol for the pran pratishtha, multiple adhivaas are conducted, in which the idol is sub-

merged in various materials. For one night, the idol is kept in water, which is called jaladhivaas. Then it is submerged in grain, which is called dhanyadhivaas.

Jha explained that when an idol is being crafted, it sustains various injuries from the craftsman's tools. These adhivaas are meant to heal up all such injuries. Dipakbhai explained that the process serves another purpose: "If the idol has a defect, or if the stone is not of great quality, that will be found out when the idol is submerged in various materials," he said.

**RITUAL BATH:** After this, the idol is given a ritual bath and its abhishek is performed with various materials, depending on the scale of the ceremony. According to the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, this rite can involve "108 different types of materials, such as panchamrut, water containing the essence of various fragrant flowers and leaves, water which has been poured over the horns of a cow, and sugar cane juice."

The most important ceremony is that of netronmeelan, or the opening of the deity's eyes.

**OPENING OF EYES:** After the statue has adequately recovered from the stress of its fashioning and has been given its ritual bath comes the time for it to be awakened. Many mantras are chanted, asking for various Gods to come and animate its various parts — Soorya the eyes, Yaju the ears, Chandra the mind, etc.

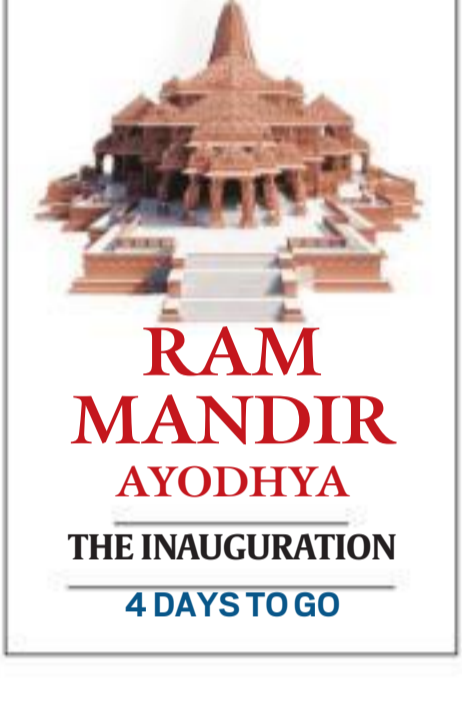
Then comes the final step, the opening of the statue's eyes. This ceremony involves putting anjan, somewhat like kohl, around the deity's eyes, with a swarn shilaka (gold needle). This process is carried out from behind, as it is believed that if one looks into God's eyes the moment they open, their brilliance can be too much to take. The substances generally used to make the anjan are ghee and honey.

Once the anjan has been applied and the deity's eyes have opened, it has 'come to life' and can now receive devotees.

**Where are these steps mentioned?**

The process of the pran pratishtha is mentioned in the Vedas and elaborated upon in various Puranas, such as Matsya Puran, Vaman Puran, Narad Puran, etc.

**LONGER VERSION ON**  
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**Inequality & social mobility**

The winners of 2019 Nobel Prize in Economics spoke to Udit Misra about the most important policy challenges facing India, in fields including education and employment. The laureates, who co-founded The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) in 2003, were speaking on J-PAL's 20th anniversary



**SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS**

**ABHIJIT BANERJEE & ESTHER DUFOLO**

**There are two views on poverty in India. One is that India has eliminated extreme poverty. The other is that poverty has gone up post-Covid. What has fuelled this debate is that we don't have official data on poverty since 2011. What is your view on extreme poverty in India?**

**Esther Duflo:** It's difficult to answer these questions in the absence of data. And it's something that will eventually make it difficult to have an appropriate policy response, because it is necessary to know what is going on to be able to address the problem.

**Abhijit Banerjee:** Even the (other) data sets that are available, diverge. This is often the reason for an authoritative survey that's credible, and politically insulated, to exist. Every country needs those things.

**Duflo:** India has a long tradition of excellent infrastructure with the national sample survey organisation — with the flagship survey, the NSS, but also with various surveys. So we kind of go from having very, very regular data with a consistent sampling frame to this state of affairs, where it's hard to say,

**Is the multidimensional poverty index, being used by the NITI Aayog and the Centre in common discourse, a good substitute for the consumption data-based method?**

**Banerjee:** Given that the consumption data is not really there, it's probably a better thing to use, because at least then you focus on infant mortality, maternal mortality, etc., which we can get reliably from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS). So in that sense, this is probably the right direction to go unless we go back to generating reliable, transparent data on consumption.

**India has tried different things to alleviate extreme poverty — from giving direct cash or food to focusing on growth and hoping that growth will bring about prosperity. Based on your J-PAL experience, what has worked?**

**Banerjee:** Evidence suggests that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) worked; there are good evaluations showing it reduced poverty. I am relatively confident, without having seen direct evidence, that PDS is also doing something for alleviating poverty.

What is harder to say is what is the impact of the more targeted-to-specific-needs schemes — the PM Awas Yojana, for example, or the energy subsidy. That's because it is not clear who exactly is getting them; if they are really about poverty, or about politically navigating a situation where there is lots of inequality and people are resentful.

**Over the years, the issue of inequality seems to have become relatively more important than poverty reduction. Is inequality a bigger concern today?**

**Banerjee:** One thing that's very clear is



Daily-wage construction labourers wait for work in Old Delhi. Abhinav Saha/Archive

that our national policy frame is really not focused on inequality; there is no real discourse about it. And partly, that's a statement about, what is your view of why inequality is important? It needs to be theorised.

It's not clear whether things have got worse or better, because maybe economic inequality was much more limited in the past but social inequality through caste and class was vast. The levels of violence and inequality have, maybe, somewhat mitigated. The political system is more responsive. If the abuse of power was the primary source of inequality, then it is not clear which way things have gone. In many ways, power has shifted from maybe rural landlords to urban businessmen.

But then you could have a very different theory. Inequality is a mechanism that reflects the lack of social mobility. Once, government schools used to be good, and if you were a talented child from a poor family, you had a chance. But that's got harder. There have been some attempts to fix that. For example, Delhi has made a valiant attempt at improving school quality, but in general, the fact is everybody's checking out of the public school system. The fact that the rich can essentially in- elastically buy whatever they want means everybody else is facing an unfair competition. So, a different aspect of inequality is just access to the channels of social mobility. The rich parents can invest so much in their children, so out of range for anybody else.

There are other forms of inequality that we don't talk about. For example, poor children have no amenities, they have no place to play, they have no green spaces... And these have long-term consequences on how people grow up, their psychology, etc.

So we need to first start by articulating: what is it that troubles us about inequality? The fact that schools are really a central piece of social mobility, and yet the best private schools get more and more expensive and fancy and create mechanisms for people to hold on to their privilege, is, in the long run, not in the national interest.

**On education, there are two main concerns: improving outcomes, and addressing unemployment. How do you see the policy landscape in India?**

**Duflo:** The progress on improving educational outcomes has been extremely slow. Especially since we have a sense that it's not rocket science for primary school; it is really

a matter of focusing on the basics, and being relentless until every child learns every bit of those basics. It has been demonstrated that it's possible at a huge scale in government schools. It worked even in some of the very poor schools in UP where there was almost nothing. So, given that we have an easy solution, the adoption of that solution has been rather sluggish.

**Banerjee:** Where we really don't know much is on secondary and post-secondary education. And in particular, there are two issues about employability.

One is that the pedagogy is often designed to suppress curiosity, your own way of thinking or your own way of solving problems — it is extraordinarily routinised. And some work we've done in Uganda suggests you can get huge effects from encouraging children to think on their own. Once you exposed children to a pedagogy that encourages them to think on their own, the pass rate went up from 50% to 75%.

So a pedagogy that's sort of top-down — 'here's the truth; you don't have to think, you have to know what it is' — is doing damage... The other thing about employability is expectations. A lot of young people expect that because in their parents' generation education had high returns and they could get a job, they too will get a job. In India, the obsession with government jobs is really counterproductive. People spend the first six, seven years of what would be the working life taking tests, trying to get a job, etc., and then failing and taking some other job.

The Indian labour force participation data looks very strange. At 30, suddenly, everybody, all the males are working. That's reflective of the fact that we have created a system where this obsession with government jobs is hurting employability. People don't want (other) jobs. We did some work with training programmes — people were trained, and then they didn't want the jobs they could get from the training. So this employability issue isn't just a matter of skills, it's a matter of attitudes, and we've created a setting where the attitudes are extraordinarily distorted.

**How to address the expectations issue?**

**Banerjee:** There are probably two sides to this. One is, the government could expand the number of people it employs if it didn't offer the kind of terms it does. For example, in China, there are three people with a

Bachelor's degree in every village working for the village government. These are people with certain skills and a certain amount of knowledge of the world.

So one thought is that the government should start introducing maybe a transitional mechanism where you take a job, and then you keep it only if you're good at it. It's like a tenure system. That will create more jobs.

We need more people on the ground. I don't think our government is big enough. A lot of people will say that we have a big government, but in fact, we have a small government that's trying to keep control. The size is small but the hands are heavy. So rethinking the shape of the government, having more young people in government, as a trial as a way to start your life, but then you can go out and do something else, could help.

**NFHS data show that a large proportion of children are stunted and wasted. What can be done to address this?**

**Duflo:** There is no one solution that we know would work. Here and there, something makes a difference. For example, in Tamil Nadu, J-PAL experimented with adding a second Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) worker in the anganwadi, with one person focused on nutrition, and that helped a bit. But it was very expensive, and wasn't scaled up.

We are at a loss in terms of solutions, unlike in other countries. In Africa, where countries are much poorer, stunting and wasting of children are improving much faster.

**Banerjee:** We already knew this was not a poverty problem because the malnutrition rates in some categories of NFHS were worse than the average African child in a very poor country.

If you look at the numbers, protein consumption is extraordinarily low in India. Relative to everywhere in the world, we eat too little protein. We think that daal contains protein, but it's actually very starchy and has very little protein. The reason why it is politically difficult is that telling people they really don't eat the right way is a tricky thing to do.

But on the other hand, here, awareness is critical. In our work, we made up a sitcom to push the use of iron-fortified salt in Bihar, and it was the only thing — we did many interventions — that worked. So the media really needs to tell people you're not feeding your children the right things. Eggs have protein, milk has protein, peanut butter has protein. Protein is not hard to get. Vegetarians can get it. But you really need to think about protein as being the thing that we are missing in our diet.

**It is often said that India doesn't allocate much money in its budget for health and education. Is that a big concern?**

**Banerjee:** On budget allocation for health, even now, India is globally on the low side. On education, we are kind of at the median level for our per capita GDP. The question is more about the allocation towards the elite institutions versus the schools. The distortions are more there than in the total amount of money allocated.

We really need to take the idea of building institutions for social mobility, because in the long run, their absence will lead to a crisis. If people feel they are completely left behind — that there are only poor quality jobs for them and good jobs for a small field of people — that will eventually not work out.

*Edited excerpts from the interview. Longer version on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)*

**Drishiti IAS**  
 General Studies Foundation Batch (Prelims + Mains)  
 (Along with Free Online Facility)  
 Offline Batch Admissions Open  
 8010-440-440 OR Visit Our Karol Bagh Centre at 21, Pusa Road, Delhi.

**EXPLAINED EDUCATION**

**Gaps in learning persist, but tech access offers avenues beyond school**

**EXPERT EXPLAINS**  
**RUKMINI BANERJI**

SINCE 2005, the NGO Pratham's Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) has recorded trends in school enrollment, attendance, and reading and arithmetic abilities among children ages 6-14 years in rural areas of the country. The 2023 edition focused on the 14-18 age group, specifically on their ability to apply reading and math skills to everyday situations, and their aspirations. It also sought to capture their access to digital technology, and whether they possess the skills to use it.

**Why did the survey focus on children in the 14-18 age group?**

From 2005 to 2014, we did annual surveys on the learning abilities of rural children. We now do such full surveys in alternate

years, which allows us to explore something in depth in the in-between years. The scale is smaller because it's 1-2 districts per state, but the angle is much wider. This year, we decided to focus on this age group.

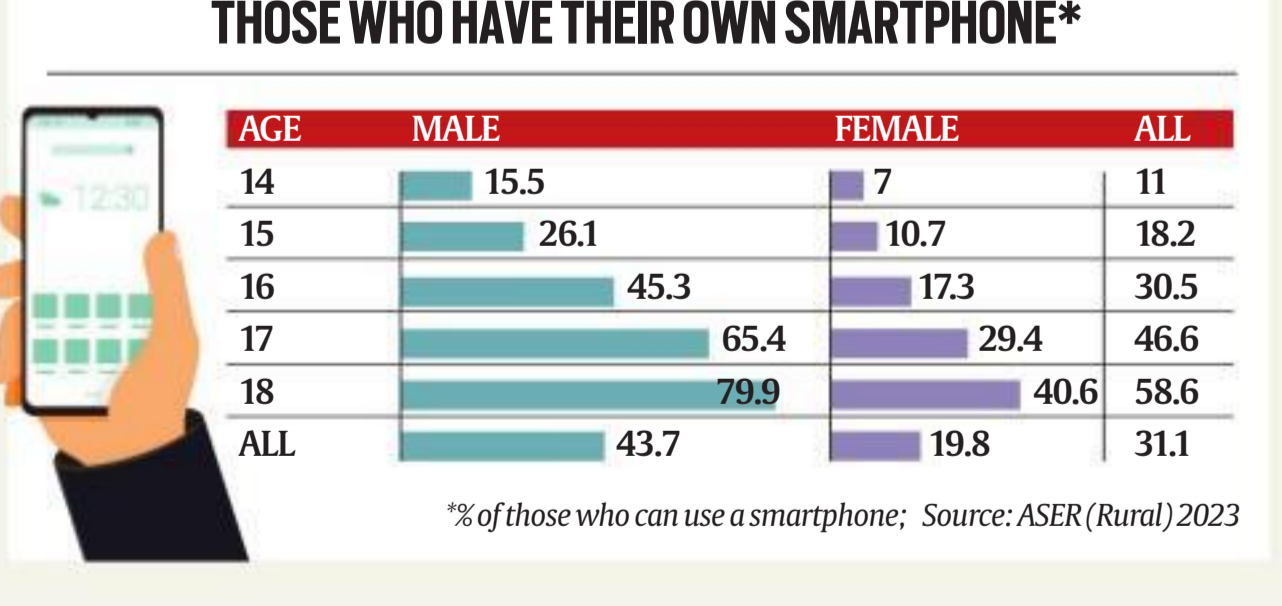
**What did the survey seek to measure?**

We had four broad buckets to measure — activity, aspiration, awareness in general, and ability. When we surveyed the same age group in 2017, on the ability front, we did the basic survey on reading and arithmetic; this time there is also a mapping of how ready the children are for everyday activities.

We also added the digital component because a lot has happened in the last 4-5 years to allow for some self-reported questions, such as, "Do you know how to use a cell phone?" The survey also included doing some tasks with a phone, such as setting an alarm or searching for information online.

**What are some key findings from the 2023 survey?**

First, the children are doing multiple things, though that is not always captured by the education sector or the job market. Around 30% are already working, often for their parents. But when asked whether that was what they wanted to do when they grew up, they said that was not for them.



Second, even for doing all kinds of everyday tasks, it seems to be very useful to have some basic skills of reading and math. Just because a child in Class 8 is still struggling with the basics, it does not mean we should not make an effort to reach out to them.

About one in four children in the 14-18 age group cannot read a Std II-level text fluently in their regional language. Overall, girls do better than boys in this respect.

More than half struggle with division (3-digit by 1-digit) problems, a skill that is usually expected in Std III or IV. About 57% can read sentences in English; more than 73% among them can tell the meanings. Boys do

better in arithmetic and English reading. The digital component is interesting: at one level, everyone knows how to use the basic things; but they're not using it in depth — they're using the surface layer, say, mainly engaging with social media. There are also a lot of opportunities there. Beyond school, there could be ways to get young people to develop a much stronger set of digital skills, which will enable them to get over many obstacles.

**The enrollment gap between boys and girls has been closing over the years. Is that true of digital access too?**

When asked if they can use a smart-

phone, more than 90% of respondents said yes, and this is not exclusive to any gender. But there is a big difference between boys and girls when answering the question, "How many of you own a smartphone?" Boys have much greater access.

About 90% of surveyed households had smartphones. Of the surveyed children, almost 95% boys and 90% girls could use a smartphone.

Across all phone-related tasks, boys outperformed girls. Performance in digital tasks improved with education level. Ability to perform digital tasks also increased with basic reading proficiency.

Among those who can use a smartphone, two-thirds reported using it for an education-related activity during the reference week, such as watching online videos related to studies, solving doubts, or exchanging notes.

**As access to phones and digital avenues for learning increase, what does the schooling system have to offer?**

School enrollment means that schools and the system can reach out to everyone on the rolls. Whether they are coming every day, sitting in school, is another story.

When you have 85% of an age group that you can reach, you can use that reach to beef up many other components. Face-to-face

in the classroom is only one mode of learning. But if you have information on whom you have to reach, you can reach them in many different ways. The school is a convening place, a place to share things. It is a very important platform.

**The majority of respondents in Class 11 or higher were studying humanities-related subjects. What does that suggest for their prospects in a job market that values STEM knowledge?**

The responses also reflect what is available in their villages. It is possible that someone wants to do science, but their local high school does not have science. But again, there may be other ways to connect to subjects that the local high school does not offer.

The system is also very streamlined, but the New Education Policy of 2020 allows for more flexibility. There should be a way for a student to register for other kinds of learning opportunities. Over some time, it should loosen up; physical restrictions should also loosen — you may not have a physical science teacher, but there are science teachers in the world from whom you should be able to learn.

*Dr Rukmini Banerji is CEO of Pratham. She spoke to [Rishika Singh](http://RishikaSingh)*



### NORTHERN RAILWAY

#### Tender Notice

##### Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement System

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001 for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
01	82241031	Infusion Human Serum Albumin 20% w/v IV in 100 ml bottle	1825 nos	12.02.2024

Note: 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No manual offer will be entertained.

Tender Notice No. 82241031 Dated: 17.01.2024

Serving Customers With A Smile

### APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified male (depicted in the photo) name unknown, residence and family is unknown was found lying unconscious at **Subway No. 1, Delhi Side at Anand Vihar Terminal, Delhi,** he was admitted in GTB Hospital, Delhi, during treatment he was declared dead by doctors on **15.01.2024.** In this regard a DD No. 32-A dated **15.01.2024** has been lodged at PS Anand Vihar Railway Station, Delhi. The Dead body has been preserved in GTB Hospital Mortuary for 72 hrs. for Identification. His physical description is as under:

Sex: Male, Age: 40-45 years, Height: 5'6" ft., Complexion: Shallow, Wearing: Grey colour Jacket and grey colour Pant.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone numbers:-

SHO  
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> PS: Anand Vihar Rly. Station, Delhi  
E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) Ph.: 011-22145601, 22145602  
Tel. No.: 011-24368638/24368641 Mob.: 8750871314  
Fax No.: 011-24368639 DP/748/Rly/2024

### RAIL WHEEL FACTORY

#### TENDER NOTICE NO. RWF/S/P/017/2023-24 dt. 16.01.24

On behalf of the President of India, Principal Chief Materials Manager invites electronic Tenders from Interested Vendors for supply of the following items on the Indian Railways E-Portal - www.ireps.gov.in. The Tender documents and the Corrigenda to the Tenders, if any, will be available on the Portal only.

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Due date	Short Description
1	P1241010	02-02-24	Magnesium Aluminium Silicate Granules to RWF Specification (Developmental Tender). Qty. 369 Kgs.
2	P1241018	10-02-24	Asbestos Gasket to RWF Specification (Developmental Tender) Qty. 2100 Nos.

**E-Reverse Auction:**  
1 | P12320874 | 14-02-24 | Steel Blooms 340mm sq R-43 as per RWF Specification, Qty. 8798 MT

**Global Tender:**  
1 | P1232298 | 28-02-24 | Graphite mould blanks 1097mm dia x 575mm Height (43.2" X 22.6") to RWF Specification. Qty. 354 Nos.

Principal Chief Materials Manager

### PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

See Section U/S 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **MD Shakil S/o Md Jalil R/o RLZ-A1/180, Vijay Enclave Dabri Palam Road, Palam Delhi** has Committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 293/19 U/S 379/411 IPC, PS Maurice Nagar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **MD Shakil** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **MD Shakil** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **MD Shakil** of case FIR No. 293/19 U/S 379/411 IPC, PS Maurice Nagar, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **19.02.2024.**

By Order  
**Ms. Shipra Dhankar**  
Metropolitan Magistrate, (Central District)  
Room No. 180, First Floor  
Tis Hazari Court, Delhi  
DP/740/N/2024(Court Matter)

### SEARCH OF MISSING

General public is hereby informed that one female (depicted in the photo), Namely : **Asha W/o Keshav, R/o 2/332-333, Trilokpur, Delhi Aged: 20 years** has been Missing from above address since **26.12.2023.** In this regard a DD No. 78-A, Dated **27.12.2023,** has been lodged at P.S. Kalyanpur, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:

Height: 4'9" Feet, Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Built: Thin, Wearing: Green Colour Suit & Salwar & Sandle in Feet.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing female, may inform to the following at E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website : <http://cbi.nic.in> Tele No. : 11-24368638 or 24368641

SHO  
P.S. Kalyanpur  
Ph: 011-22772287, 8750871830  
DP/609/ED/2024

### APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General Public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male **Namely Jaideep S/o Manoj, R/o Unknown Age: 40-45 years, Height: 6', Complexion: Fair, Face: Oval, Built: Thin, Wearing: Yellow coloured T-shirt, Cream coloured pajama,** was found on **07.01.2024** from Rain Basera Sec.12, Near Metro Station Dwarka, Delhi. In this regard a **DD No.104A, dated 07.01.2024** has been lodged at P.S. Dwarka North, New Delhi.

If any one having any clue about deceased male may kindly inform the undersigned and contact on following numbers.

SHO  
P.S. Dwarka North, New Delhi  
Ph.: 011-28031878  
DP/715/DW/2023 Mob.: 8750871022, 9560192025

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

For the convenience of Rail Passengers, Railways have decided to extend the train no. 13483/13484 and 13413/13414 Malda Town-Delhi-Malda Town Farakka Express upto Bathinda as per details given below :-

**Extension of Train No. 13483/13484 Malda Town-Delhi Jn. - Malda Town Farakka Express upto Bathinda Jn.**

Train No. 13484	ARR.	DEP.	STATIONS	Train No. 13483	ARR.	DEP.
06:50	--	--	Malda Town	--	--	19:35
No change						
21:25	21:40	04:55	Delhi Jn	04:55	05:10	
19:45	19:47	05:54	Bahadurgarh	05:54	05:56	
19:15	19:17	06:24	Rohtak Jn.	06:24	06:26	
18:33	18:35	07:05	Jind Jn.	07:05	07:10	
18:03	18:05	07:36	Narwana Jn.	07:36	07:38	
17:42	17:44	07:58	Tohana	07:58	08:00	
17:29	17:31	08:11	Jakhal Jn.	08:11	08:13	
--	16:25	10:00	Bathinda Jn.	10:00	--	

Days of Run : 13484 Ex Bathinda Jn. from 26.01.2024 on every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday and 13483 Ex Malda Town from 24.01.2024 on every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Sunday.

**Extension of Train No. 13413/13414 Malda Town-Delhi Jn. - Malda Town Farakka Express upto Bathinda Jn.**

Train No. 13414	ARR.	DEP.	STATIONS	Train No. 13413	ARR.	DEP.
06:50	--	--	Malda Town	--	--	19:35
No change						
21:25	21:40	04:55	Delhi Jn	04:55	05:10	
20:12	20:14	05:46	Narela	05:46	05:48	
19:38	19:40	06:03	Sonapat Jn.	06:03	06:05	
18:36	18:38	07:03	Gohana Jn.	07:03	07:05	
17:38	17:40	08:03	Jind Jn.	08:03	08:05	
17:12	17:14	08:28	Uchana	08:28	08:30	
16:58	17:00	08:42	Narwana Jn.	08:42	08:44	
16:37	16:39	09:04	Tohana	09:04	09:06	
16:24	16:26	09:17	Jakhal Jn.	09:17	09:19	
16:10	16:12	09:31	Bareta	09:31	09:33	
15:55	15:57	09:46	Budhlada	09:46	09:48	
15:40	15:42	10:01	Mansa	10:01	10:03	
15:24	15:26	10:17	Maur	10:17	10:19	
--	15:00	11:15	Bathinda Jn.	11:15	--	

Days of Run : 13414 Ex Bathinda Jn. from 27.01.2024 on every Monday, Wednesday, Saturday) and 13413 Ex Malda Town from 25.01.2024 on every Monday, Thursday, Saturday)

Arrival time of train no. 04979 Rewari Jn.-Rohtak Jn. Spl. at Rohtak station will be revised from 06:35 to 06:40 w.e.f. 26.01.2024

This is notify for the information of all concerned that Railways have decided to revised the timings of the following trains :-

#### Revised Timings of Train No. 04581 Delhi Jn. - Panipat Jn. Special w.e.f. 26.01.2024

STATIONS	EXISTING ARR.	EXISTING DEP.	REVISED ARR.	REVISED DEP.
Delhi Jn.	--	05:10	--	04:55
Subzi Mandi	05:23	05:24	05:08	05:09
Delhi Azadpur	--	--	--	--
Adarsh Nagar Delhi	05:32	05:33	05:17	05:18
Badli	05:38	05:39	05:23	05:24
Khera Kalan	05:43	05:44	05:28	05:29
Holambi Kalan	05:48	05:49	05:33	05:34
Narela	05:54	05:55	05:39	05:40
Rathdhana	06:01	06:02	05:46	05:47
Harsana Kalan	06:07	06:08	05:52	05:53
Sonapat Jn.	06:14	06:15	05:59	06:00
Sandal Kalan	06:52	06:53	06:07	06:08
Rajlu Garhi	06:57	06:58	06:12	06:13
Ganaur	07:03	07:04	06:18	06:19
Bhodwad Majri	07:10	07:11	06:25	06:26
Samalkha	07:26	07:27	06:31	06:32
Diwana	07:35	07:36	06:38	06:39
Panipat Jn.	08:10	--	07:53	--

#### Revised Timings of Train No. 04981 Rohtak Jn. - Jind Jn. Special w.e.f. 26.01.2024

STATIONS	EXISTING ARR.	EXISTING DEP.	REVISED ARR.	REVISED DEP.
Rohtak Jn.	--	06:45	--	07:00
Samar Gopalpur	06:53	06:54	07:08	07:09
Karainthi	07:01	07:02	07:16	07:17
Lakhan Majra Halt	07:07	07:08	07:22	07:23
Kila Zafargarh	07:14	07:15	07:29	07:30
Julana	07:21	07:22	07:36	07:37
Jai Jai Wanti	07:29	07:30	07:44	07:45
Kinana	07:37	07:38	07:52	07:53
Bishanpur Haryana	07:44	07:45	07:59	08:00
Jind Jn.	08:05	--	08:20	--

#### Revised Timings of Train No. 04995 Rohtak Jn. - Jind Jn. Special Between Pandu Pindara Jn.-Jind Jn. w.e.f. 26.01.2024

STATIONS	EXISTING ARR.	EXISTING DEP.	REVISED ARR.	REVISED DEP.
Pandu Pindara Jn.	07:45	07:46	07:45	07:46
Jind City	07:53	07:54	07:53	07:54
Jind Jn.	08:10	--	08:30	--

RailMadad Helpline No. **139** Visit RailMadad website: [www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in)

### Office of the Municipal Corporation, Satna (M.P.)

#### Section-1

##### Notice Inviting e-Tenders

NIT No. 17/01,17/02/PHE/SMC/2023-24 Satna, Dated: 11/01/2024

Tender No. 2024\_UAD\_325717\_1, Tender No. 2024\_UAD\_325719\_1,

Online PERCENTAGE RATE TENDER bid for the following AMRUT 2.0 works are invited from registered contractors and firms of reputed fulfilling eligibility criteria:

S. No.	Name of the work	Probable amount of contract (Rs.in Lacs)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in Rs	Cost of Bid Document in Rs.	Time of completion
1	REJUVENATION OF RAJAH LAKE AT SATNA UNDER AMRUT 2.0 SCHEME 1. Construction of Stone Boulder Pitching 2. Railing at Bund 3. Construction of Eco-Friendly Pathway 4. Desilting, Grassing and Plantation 5. Lake bund protection Fence wall along Lake 6. Interceptor Drain 7. Installation of Light pole and Lamp Post	222.10	1,11,050	15,000	12 Months (including Rainy Season)
2	REJUVENATION OF AMAUDHA LAKE AT SATNA UNDER AMRUT 2.0 SCHEME 1. Construction of Stone Boulder Pitching 2. Railing at Bund 3. Construction of Eco-Friendly Pathway 4. Desilting, Grassing and Plantation 5. Lake bund protection Fence wall along Lake 6. Interceptor Drain 7. Installation of Light pole and Lamp Post	67.63	50,725	10,000	9 Months (including Rainy Season)

Interested Bidder can view the NIT on website [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in).

The Bid Document can be purchased only Online 15:30 Hrs of 12.01.2024 to 17:30 Hrs. of 12.02.2024

Amendment to NIT, if any, would be published on website only, and not in Newspaper.

Sd/-  
**Executive Engineer**  
MUNICIPAL CORPORATION SATNA (M.P.)

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RAILWAY Your Convenience - Our Concern Visit us at [www.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.indianrailways.gov.in)

SEVERING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

### उत्तर पश्चिम रेलवे

#### अभिरुचि की अभिव्यक्ति

##### Beautification & Environment

मंडल रेल प्रबंधक (इंजी.), उत्तर पश्चिम रेलवे, जयपुर मंडल द्वारा कुछ रेलवे स्टेशनों के आस-पास पौधारोपण द्वारा सौंदर्यकरण किया जाना प्रस्तावित है, इसके लिये इच्छुक **Individuals, NGOs, Trusts, Horticulturists, Nursery developers, Charitable Institutions, Corporates, Govt. Bodies and Self Help Groups से अभिरुचि की अभिव्यक्ति (Expression of Interest)** आमंत्रित की जाती है। इस सम्बंध में विस्तृत जानकारी उत्तर पश्चिम रेलवे की वेबसाइट [nwr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://nwr.indianrailways.gov.in) के About us Tab में Division - JAIPUR -> Engineering पर उपलब्ध है। इस संबंध में स्पष्ट किया जाता है कि यह कोई निविदा/टेंडर नहीं है। ई.ओ.आई. (E.O.I) जमा कराने की अंतिम तिथि 02.02.2024 समय 15.00 बजे मंडल रेल प्रबंधक कार्यालय (इंजी.) जयपुर। प्रस्ताव निम्नलिखित ई-मेल पर सीधे भिजवाये जा सकते हैं। ई-मेल: [srdencojp@gmail.com](mailto:srdencojp@gmail.com) मो. नम्बर: 9001199200 (Sr.DEN/Co./JP) 73-AK/24

हमारे

### NORTHERN RAILWAY

#### E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender for the under noted work:

1. Name of Work with its location	PART-D: Design, supply, erection, testing & commissioning of 25 KV AC OHE for electrification of un-electrified sidings/ diesel sheds at GZB & JDW stations in connection with "Electrification of un-electrified sidings/diesel sheds over DLI Division in already electrified sections".
2. Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 92,17,106.35/-
3. Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 1,84,400/-
4. E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period	01.02.2024 (00.00 Hrs.) to 15.02.2024 (15.00 Hrs.)
5. E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time	15.02.2024, (15.00 hrs.)
6. Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	<a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a>

E-Tender No.: 44-TRD-NDS-2023-24 Dated 16.01.2024

SEVERING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 205/24

### Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Ltd

Shankarsheth road, swargate, Pune - 37

#### REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL - PROCUREMENT OF BUSES ON GCC BASIS

Tender No.	Department	Work Description	Tender set price	Estimate Amount	Earnest Money	Work Period
02-CE-2024	PMPML - Chief Mechanical Engineer	Selection of Operator (s) for Procurement, Operation and Maintenance of 400 nos. of 12-meter BRT compliant Non-AC CNG Buses within Pune Metropolitan Region on Gross Cost Basis	59,000/- (Inclusive of GST)	B2 Tender	55,000,000/- (Fifty five lakhs only)	7 Years

All relevant details of the procurement are available in Request for Proposal (RFP) document. The RFP document is available & can be purchased online from [www.mahatenders.gov.in](http://www.mahatenders.gov.in). All subsequent notification, announcement, changes, extension & amendments would be posted on website.

Sd/-  
**(Dr. Sanjay Kotte, IAS)**  
Chairman & Managing Director  
Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Ltd.  
Adv. No.: CE/02  
Date: 17/01/2024.

### APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of an unknown male **Age: 43 years, Complexion: Shallow, Height: 5'4", Face: Oval, Built: Normal,** was wearing Light Blue colour Shirt, Black color Jacket and Black colour Pant, was found in unconscious condition admitted in Gate No. 2, Gyne Emergency, LNJ Hospital, Delhi. During the treatment doctor declared him dead. In this regard a **DD No. 7A, dated 14.01.2024** has been lodged at P.S. I.P. Estate, Delhi. His dead body has been preserved in MAMC Hospital Mortuary for 72 Hrs.. Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHO  
P.S. I.P. Estate, Delhi  
Ph.: 011-23370928, 8750870426  
DP/710/CD/2024

### NORTHERN RAILWAY

#### Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system.

Tender Notice No. 86/2023-2024 Dated: 17/01/2024  
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi - 110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

S. Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
01 02231844A	THREE POLE POWER CONTACTOR COMPLETE WITH BASE MOUNTING	89 NOS	05.02.24
02 0924222A	AIR BRAKE HOSE COUPLING SUPPORT	19115 NOS	08.02.24
03 09233025C	ENAMEL SYNTHETIC, EXTERIOR, FINISHING, SIGNAL RED.	42404 LTR	08.02.24
04 09233032B	ENAMEL SYNTHETIC, EXTERIOR, FINISHING, WHITE.	34028 LTR	12.02.24
05 07231583	203 MM AIR BRAKE CYLINDER WITH SLACK ADJUSTER	954 NOS	12.02.24
06 19230602A	AXLE BOX BEARING FOR WAP-7/9AG-9 LOCO	462 SET	14.02.24
07 77235306	MANUFACTURING AND SUPPLY OF FITTINGS OF CURVED SWITCHES 1 IN 12, 60 KG	100 SET	15.02.24
08 77235412	MANUFACTURE & SUPPLY OF FISH PLATE 80 KG	8450 NOS	15.02.24
09 77236132	MANUFACTURE AND SUPPLY OF SPRING SETTING DEVICE	300 SET	19.02.24
10 07231968	SEALED WINDOW GLASS UNIT	5196 NOS	21.03.24
11 07233486	SAFETY WIRE ROPE ASSEMBLY	7679 NOS	16.05.24

Note- 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained.

Serving Customers With A Smile

### NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

#### E-tendering Notice

Sr. Divisional Material Manager, N.E. Railway, Varanasi for and on behalf of President of India, invites Tender through E-Procurement system "Open Tender" for the supply of the following item. Complete description of the item and other terms and conditions are available on website: E-Tender No.: 50245031. Due Date: 15.02.2024. Description: Supply, Installation and commissioning of fully computerized automated single car test rig (SCTR) for LHB and ICF/RCF designed coaches make universal or similar as per technical specification attached. (Warranty Period-30 Months after the date of delivery). Qty.: 06 Nos. Earnest Money: ₹ 60,040. Note: The firms, who desire to participate in e-tender are advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which they would require to have a Class-III Digital signature certificate authority licensed by CCA of India. Manual offers against e-tenders will not be considered.

Sr. Divisional Materials Manager CPRO/S-120 Varanasi

DO NOT TRAVEL WITH INFLAMMABLE ARTICLE IN TRAIN

### NORTHERN RAILWAY

#### CORRIGENDUM-I & II

E-Tender Notice No. 01ExamCBTbid2024Acc Dated 16.01.2024  
Hereby, this is to notify that Northern Railway has published updated tender document with minor changes and deleted the old tender document on IREPS website on dated 16.01.2024.

SEVERING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 209/24

### GMDC

#### TENDER NOTICE

Selection of Reputed Private Agency for the Management, Administration and Maintenance of the GMDC-GVT School at GMDC Kadipani Project, Kawant Block, Chhotaudepur District

Tender Advt. No. GMDC-GVT/CSR/9/23-24 Date: 18/01/2024

Sealed tenders are invited from reputed and experienced private agencies by GMDC-Grama Vikas Trust for the Management, Administration and Maintenance of the GMDC-GVT School at GMDC Kadipani Project, Kawant Block, Chhotaudepur District.

The detailed schedule of e-tender and tender document is available at the n-procure website (<https://gmdctender.nprocure.com>) and GMDC website (<https://www.gmdcltd.com>);

Queries for the tender document can be addressed at: [ceogvt@gmdcltd.co.in](mailto:ceogvt@gmdcltd.co.in)

Last date for submission of Bids (Online): 05/02/2024, 18:00 Hrs.

Last date for submission of Technical Bids (Hardcopy): 06/02/2024, 17:00 Hrs.

CEO, GMDC-GVT

### Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation Ltd.

(A Government of Gujarat Enterprise)  
Gramya Vikas Trust (GMDC-GVT)  
Khanij Bhawan, 132 Feet Ring Road,  
Near University Ground, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad-380052

Government of India  
Ministry of Textiles

\*\*\*

Appointment of Mission Director  
For  
National Technical Textiles Mission

Applications are invited for filling up of 01 (One) post of Mission Director for National Technical Textiles Mission under Ministry of Textiles. The detailed information regarding eligibility, qualification, experience, last date of receipt of application, etc. for submission of the applications for the post of Mission Director are available on the Official website of the Ministry [www.texmin.nic.in](http://www.texmin.nic.in)

Last date of application: 20th February, 2024

January 2024  
Ministry of Textiles, New Delhi CBC 41101/11/0010/2324

### "IMPORTANT"

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### NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

#### E-TENDER NOTICE

For & on behalf of President of India following E-tenders are invited by Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) North Western Railway/Ajmer at 15.00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. 15.01.2024. No. WA/E-Tender/02/2024. 1. Tender No.: 03/2024. Name of work : Extension of departmental mechanized laundry at Old S&T Workshop Ajmer (Phase-II). Approximate Cost : Rs.44,05,340.22. Earnest Money : Rs. 88,100.00. Tender Closing Date : 30.01.2024. 2. Tender No. : 05/2024. Name of work : AdENABU ROAD Sub Division- Supply of potable water through contractor's road tankers at various Level Crossings, staff quarters & stations in jurisdiction of ADEN Abu Road. (for the period of 24 months) Approximate Cost : Rs.23,03,280.00. Earnest Money : Rs. 46,100.00. Tender Closing Date : 02.02.2024. 3. Tender No. : 04/2024. Name of work : Ajmer Division-Provision of Interlocking of manned Level Crossing No. 01 in Madar-Pushkar Section, having TUV >20000. Approximate Cost : Rs.15,12,191.98. Earnest Money : Rs. 30,300.00. Tender Closing Date : 07.02.2024. The detailed information of the above tender is available on website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and Tender Notice Board of DRM Office, NWR/Ajmer

71-AK/24  
Follow us on



16 CLASSIFIEDS & TENDERS

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I,ASHOK KUMAR JAIN,S/O OM PRAKASH JAIN,R/O PNO.17,THIRD-FLOOR, MODEL TOWN,DELHI-110009.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ASHOK JAIN. 0040708763-2

I,Divinder Kumar S/O Sh. Madan Lal R/O J/74, Ground Floor, Rajouri Garden J-6, West Delhi-110027 have changed my name Davinder Kumar for all purposes. 0070883795-1

I,MANOJ KUMAR,S/O KRISHAN KUMAR AGGARWAL,R/O,F-142,PRASHANT VIHAR,SECTOR-14,ROHINI,DELHI-110085.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO MANOJ KUMAR AGGARWAL. 0040708835-3

PUBLIC NOTICE My clients Nareesh Singh S/o Late Daryao Singh, Rajni Devi W/o Nareesh Singh and Manish Chaudhary S/o Nareesh Singh all R/o 131, Ground Floor, Police Colony, Shastri Nagar, Delhi-110016 have departed their son/brother Mohi Chaudhary age about 29 years, from their movable and immovable properties and they including other members of the family have severed all relations from Mohi Chaudhary, due to his misdeeds, bad behaviour and bad intentions. My clients shall be doing so at his entire personal cost and responsibilities. My Clients shall not be liable and responsible for Mohi Chaudhary's any civil or criminal activities. Sd/- SANJEEV JAIN (Advocate) Enr.No. D/226/199



Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology of Kashmir Main Campus Shalimar Srinagar - 190025. Subject: Uploading of API Score for various faculty positions in Centre of Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning (CAIML) on web portal and providing of individual access to candidates thereof.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON (See Section 82 Cr.PC) Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Deepak Jain, S/o Sh. Satish Jain R/o H.No.8577, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005 has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No.141/2022 u/s 420/406/120B IPC, P.S. Rajinder Nagar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Deepak Jain cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Deepak Jain has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

BIHAR SCHOOL EXAMINATION BOARD NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER (Through e-procurement mode only over https://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in) Tender Notice No. - PR 22/2024 Bihar School Examination Board, Patna invites e-tenders under two bid systems from the reputed Suppliers/ experienced Firms /Companies/ Agencies/ Societies for "Providing Operational & Maintenance Support with Cloud Hosting for Online Facilitation System for Students (OFSS) of Bihar School Examination Board."

JHARKHAND BIJLI VITRAN NIGAM LIMITED (CIN: U40108JH2013SGC001702) Registered office - ENGINEERING BUILDING, HEC, DHURWA, RANCHI-4, FAX No. 0651 - 2400799, email - ecr@jseb@yahoo.co.in

OFFICE OF DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, WEST DISTRICT, NEW DELHI E-mail: dcp.west@delhipolice.gov.in Phone No. 011-25500935

Table with columns: Sl. No., DD No. & Date, Registration No., Type. Lists unclaimed vehicles seized under U/S 66 DP Act across various police stations in Delhi.

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय राष्ट्रीय उच्च पथ प्रमंडल, पथ निर्माण विभाग, देवघर, झारखण्ड सूचना इस कार्यालय द्वारा आमंत्रित अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा प्रसंग सं-NH/DEOGHAR/SBD/03/2023-24 दिनांक 04/12/2023 [PR No. 312755 (Deoghar)23-24\*] [Strengthening/IRQP work of remaining part of NH-80 from Ch. 260.000 to Ch. 283.000 (Total Length - 23.000 km) (Kelabari to Bevapur) under NH Division Deoghar for the year 2023-24] को अपरिहार्य कारणवश रद्द किया जाता है।

SURAT MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (SMC) Expression of Interest (EOI) (Online) Notice No. DC-SHAHIDSMARAK-EOI-01-2024 (Fourth Attempt) Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) invites Expression of Interest (EOI) for following work online https://www.suratmunicipal.gov.in from reputed company/ firm/ organizations from India and abroad in this regard matching the basic eligibility criteria mentioned in the documents.

JHARKHAND BIJLI VITRAN NIGAM LIMITED (CIN: U40108JH2013SGC001702) Registered office - ENGINEERING BUILDING, HEC, DHURWA, RANCHI-4, FAX No. 0651 - 2400799, email - ecr@jseb@yahoo.co.in

Very Short e-Procurement Tender Notice No. DMC/31/2023-24 Reference No. : DMC/31/2023-24 Date : 17.01.2024

Jharkhand Urja Sancharan Nigam Ltd. (CIN: U40108JH2013SGC001704) (GOVERNMENT OF JHARKHAND UNDERTAKING) OFFICE: General Manager, Contracts & Materials, Multi-Lateral Funding Projects, JUSNL Building, Kusai Colony, Doranda, Ranchi - 834002 (Jharkhand), Email: piujusnl@gmail.com Visit us on: www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in

Jharkhand Urja Sancharan Nigam Limited invites Bids (to be submitted in the e-Procurement Portal) for the following works:-

UTTARAKHAND POWER CORPORATION LIMITED (A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking) Victoria Cross Vijayta Gabar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwali Road, Dehradun-248001, Ph. No. : 0135-2763672-76, Fax : 0135-2760289 Corporate Identity No. U40109UR2001SGC025867/2358, Website : www.uktenders.gov.in

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY Tender Notice L. No. JHS-ELG-W-T-36-2023-24 Date : 13.01.2024 For and on behalf of President of India, the Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (Gen.) North Central Railway, Jhansi invites open tenders through online (E-Tendering) for the following work :-

राष्ट्रीय नाट्य विद्यालय NATIONAL SCHOOL OF DRAMA (An Autonomous Institution of the Ministry of Culture, Govt of India) SHORT TERM TENDER NOTICE National School of Drama (NSD), an autonomous Institute under Ministry of Culture is organizing International Theatre Festival of India, 23rd Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM) from 1st February to 21st February, 2024 in Delhi and other twelve cities.

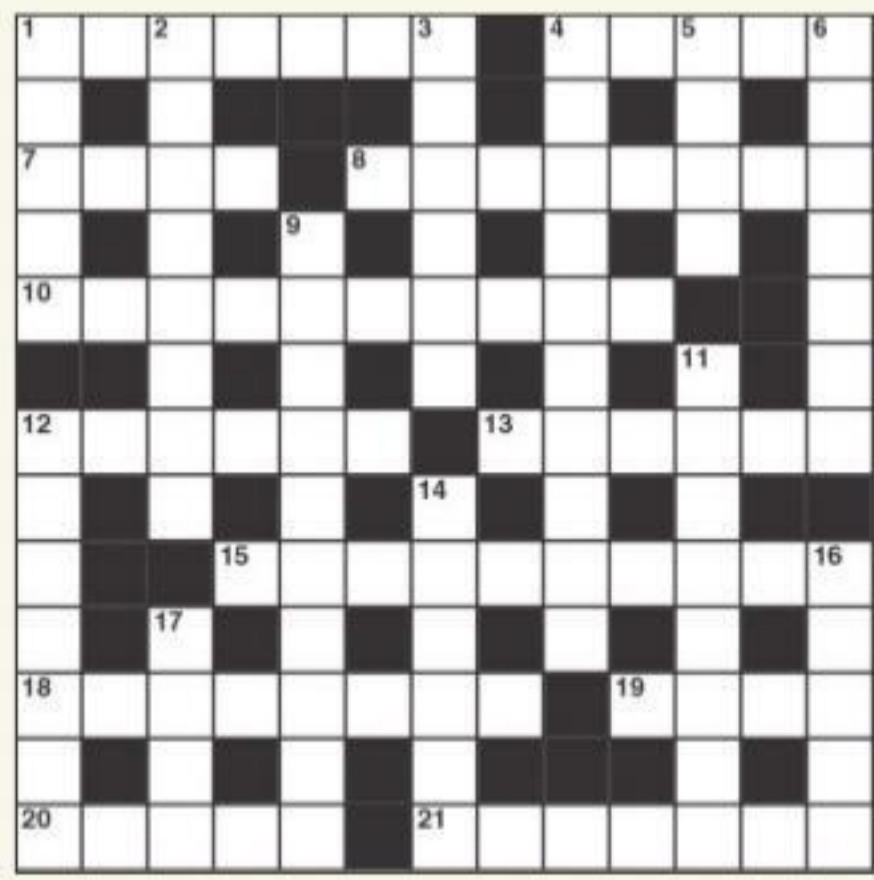
ENGINEERING WORKS UNDER KATHIAR DIVISION E-TENDER NOTICE NO. KIR/Engg/02 of 2024; dated: 10-01-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No.1. Brief Description of Work: Provision for Extension of DLS Malda Town for improvement of inspection and maintenance facility of Electrical Locomotives.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY NOTICE INVITING TENDER Tender Notice No. : RE-DNR-Engg-160 kmph-WT-1A, Dated: 16.01.2024 On behalf of the President of India, Dy Chief Engineer, Railway Project, ECR Danapur, Danapur, invites E-tender for the following works from experienced, financially and technically sound contractors, to be opened on 20/02/2024.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE Notice Inviting Open Tender, On Line (E-Tendering) Danapur Division (Gati Shakti Dept). The Divisional Railway Manager (Gati Shakti), E.C. Railway, Danapur is inviting online (E-Tendering) Open tender for and on behalf of the President of India from reputed contractors with experience, financial capability including those registered / working with Railway / Immigration / CPWD/ MES or any other public sector undertaking for the following work:-



## CROSSWORD 5264



### ACROSS

- 1 Enormous attic in disarray (7)
- 4 Father needs a hand to gather fruit (5)
- 7 Recording band (4)
- 8 Insect with a lot to learn? (8)
- 10 Play things? (10)
- 12 Make profit from a shipping company we hear (6)
- 13 Tasted differently it's said (6)
- 15 He has a burning desire (10)
- 18 It's fat and very wet (8)
- 19 Clean the decks for surgical inspection perhaps (4)
- 20 Build straight up (5)
- 21 Continue to behave strangely (5,2)

### DOWN

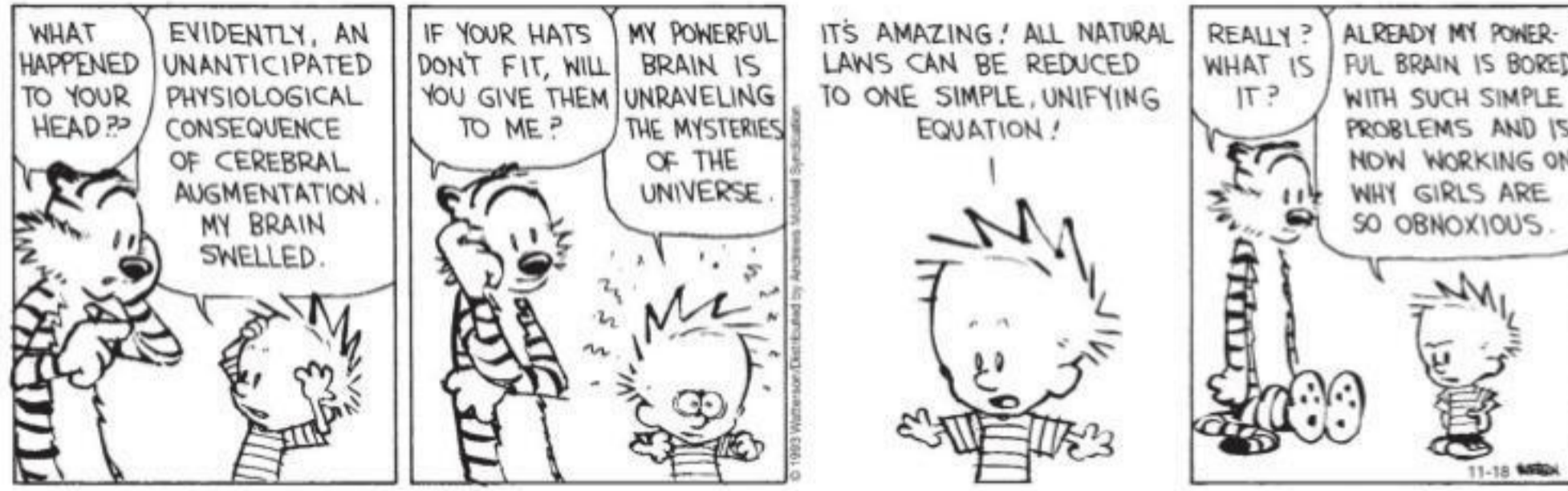
- 1 Infant raised to do simple arithmetic (3,2)
- 2 Highest score? Fine (8)
- 3 He helps the priest arrange a truce (6)
- 4 Now it's gift time (7,3)
- 5 Highly praise some pastry (4)
- 6 Held up though the road is finished (7)
- 9 Boy upset at damage to tourist attraction (6,4)
- 11 Flight path? (8)
- 12 Shorten a game of cards (7)
- 14 This drink can go a hundred years back (6)
- 16 The shed has a taxi in (5)
- 17 Five past four (4)

Solutions Crossword 5263 Across: 1 First lesson, 9 Topcoat, 10 Laura, 11 Told, 12 Anathema, 14 Orator, 16 Poetic, 18 Cocksure, 19 Abet, 22 Plaid, 23 Tribute, 24 Scared stiff Down: 2 Impel, 3 Shot, 4 Latent, 5 Solution, 6 Opulent, 7 Stethoscope, 8 Naval cutter, 13 Consider, 15 Archaic, 17 Prated, 20 Bluff, 21 Tit

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



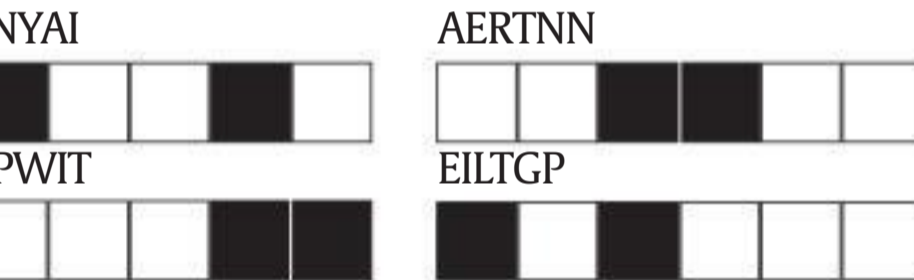
## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## JUMBLED WORDS

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

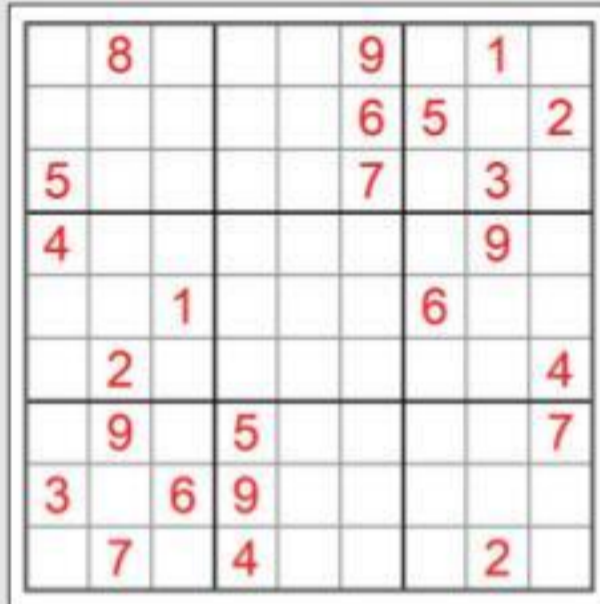
\_\_\_ is a nail to which I fasten my ideas. - Georges Braque (8)



SOLUTION: INLAY, PEWIT, TANNER, PILET. Answer: Painting is a nail to which I fasten my ideas. - Georges Braque

## SUDOKU 5445

Difficulty Level 5s  
Instructions  
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.



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

## SOLUTION SUDOKU 5444



## AWARD — SAIL

SAIL has become the first Maharatna PSU to have implemented the Anti-Bribery Management System in all its Plants & Units. ABMS is a Management System which is designed in line with the ISO 37001:2016 to help an organization to prevent, detect & respond to bribery incidents. BIS has awarded the ABMS Certificate as per IS/ISO 37001:2016 to SAIL in the august presence of APrakash, Chairman, SAIL.

## AGREEMENT — OIL

OIL signed a Joint Venture Agreement with Assam Power Generation Corporation Ltd mainly responsible for maximizing energy generation to meet the energy demand & committed to achieve maximum renewable power generation in the state, on 8th of January, 2024 at Guwahati in order to boost India's efforts towards energy transition & for achieving OIL's target for net zero by 2040. OIL already established 188.1 MW of renewable energy plants across Rajasthan, Gujarat & MP.

## DONATION — CGWWA

In a heartwarming initiative, the Coast Guard Wives Welfare Association has organized a blanket donation drive to provide warmth to the homeless during the winter season. Amidst the chilling temperatures, the CGWWA, comprising dedicated spouses of Coast Guard personnel, has taken the lead in extending compassion to those in need.

## CONFERENCE — REC

REC hosted a conference on 'Financing for Roads & Highways'. The objective of the conference was to bring all key stakeholders under one roof & to discuss the financial aspects of the sector. The conference was held in New Delhi & was attended by key stakeholders from the government & industry, including those from the Road & Highways sectors.

## INAUGURATION — NBCC

Mansukh Mandaviya, M/o HFW, inaugurated the new building of Sports Injury Centre at Vardhman Mahavir Medical College & Safdarjung Hospital, executed by NBCC recently. He also inaugurated Accident & Emergency Block at Lady Harding Medical College & Hospital, New Hostel Block at ABVIMS & Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, New Hostel & Academic Block at Rajkumari Amrit Kaur College of Nursing which were executed by HSCC, a subsidiary of NBCC.

## FOUNDATION DAY — UCO BANK

On the occasion of 82nd Foundation Day of UCO Bank, Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Director was invited as the Guest of Honor at the function organized recently at Zonal Office, New Delhi. Director DFS & S Khandelwal, Dy General Manager & Zonal Head garlanded the portrait of the founder of the bank Ghanshyam Das Birla and lit the lamp. S Kumar & S Khandelwal inaugurated the blood donation camp and free health checkup camp.

## FOUNDATION DAY — BIS

The BIS celebrates its Foundation Day on 6th January every year. Like every year, this year also the Noida branch office of BIS celebrated its Foundation Day at Radisson Hotel, Noida Sector 55. During the programme, Noida branch office head Shyam Sundar felicitated the students of standard clubs set up by BIS in different schools. Several industrialists distributed sports kits to standard clubs at the event.

## SHOBHA YATRA

There is an atmosphere of happiness in the entire country in celebration of the consecration of Lord Shri Ram in Ayodhya, religious programs are being organized in every corner of the country and state. Taking this sequence forward, Shri Ramilina Mahasangh has decided to take out a Shobha Yatra in many areas of Delhi. After the Shobha Yatra, a huge Bhandara will also be organized.

# CORPORATE BRIEFS



## MoU — HUDCO

The Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd. took a significant step towards sustainable development by signing a MoU with the National Security Guard. This MoU will pave way for setting-up an advanced material recovery facility under the broader objective of developing NSG Manesar campus as carbon neutral. The MoU was executed in the presence of Sanjay Kulshrestha, CMD, HUDCO, & M A Ganapathy, IPS, DG, NSG, & under the guidance of Deepak Kumar Kedia, IPS, IG, NSG.

This MoU will mark the beginning of a CSR project aimed at establishing a Carbon-Neutral Campus through sustainable waste management at the NSG Manesar Campus. The collaboration aims to implement a comprehensive waste management infrastructure in the NSG Manesar Campus, aligning with the Swachh Bharat Mission of the Government of India. M Nagaraj, Director (Corporate Planning), & Mrs. Manzil Saini, IPS, DIG (Admin), NSG, executed the MoU in the presence of the top leadership.

## INAUGURATION — DMRC

Marking a significant step forward, under the aegis of the Blind Relief Association, Delhi a facility for relaxation massage by visually impaired professional masseurs at Delhi Metro's Shivaji Stadium Station on the Airport Express Line was inaugurated recently. Ashok Chawla, Advisor (Japan) Ministry of External Affairs; Mohinder Yadav, JGM, DMRC; Sushil Kumar Gupta, Senior Dy. GM DMRC; Watanabe Jun, Senior Representative JICA; Fuminori Yokote, Counsellor (Administration), Embassy of Japan; Koji Yoshida, Counsellor PR & Culture, Embassy of Japan; & Mrs. Benu Nath, General Secretary of the Blind Relief Association jointly inaugurated this unique facility. Following the lighting of lamp by representatives from Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Embassy of Japan, & the Blind Relief Association, Jun Watanabe, Senior Representative - JICA & Koji Yoshida, Counsellor PR & Culture - Embassy of Japan delivered Special Addresses. KC Pande, Executive Secretary of the Blind Relief Association conveyed the vote of thanks.

## MoU — NTPC

NTPC Green Energy Ltd has executed MoUs with Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation Ltd. & Gujarat Pipavav Port Ltd. during the three-day Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit held at Gandhinagar. The summit was inaugurated by PM on 10th Jan '24. The MoU with GSPC was exchanged between Gurdeep Singh, CMD, NTPC & Milind Torawane, MD, GSPC in the presence of CM of Gujarat, Minister of Finance, Energy & Petrochemicals, GoG, Dr VK Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog & other senior officials & International delegates. The MoU aims for the blending of Green Hydrogen in the gas networks of GSPC & Green Hydrogen mobility by setting up of Green Hydrogen fuelling stations in Gujarat. Other MoU with GPPL exchanged between GM-Hydrogen, NTPC & MD of APM Terminals.

## SECURITY — CISF

On 10.01.2024, CISF took over the security of Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhya Dham, (UP). The unit will be headed by a Deputy Commandant rank officer. In a formal induction ceremony held on January 10, 2024, Vijay Prakash, Inspector General, CISF APS HQs & Vinod Kumar, Airport Director graced the event. The representatives from the airline operators and various stakeholders were also present during the occasion. The CISF is committed to provide 24/7 security coverage to Maharishi Valmiki Int'l Airport, further fortifying its security infrastructure.

## REVIEW — NCC

The Chief of Army Staff reviewed an impressive 'Guard of Honour' by smartly turned out cadets drawn from all three Wings of NCC i.e. Army, Navy, Air Force. This was followed by a brilliant band display by NCC cadets of Scindia School. Later, the COAS visited the 'Flag Area' created by the NCC cadets depicting social awareness themes & cultural activities. The cadets provided him a detailed briefing about their respective State Directorate themes. Afterwards, the COAS visited the 'Hall of Fame', a proud possession of the NCC that displays a rich archival collection of alumni photographs, models, motivational items, & other themes from the three wings of the NCC.

## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

The general tide of events is flowing in your favour, yet I would strongly advise you to consider the ethical, moral or legal dimension of all current plans and ambitions, no matter how trivial. And no matter how unimportant they seem in the short-term.

### TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

It's just not true that problems can't be solved by throwing money at them. Go on a shopping spree today or find some other innocent way to squander your money, no matter how little, and you'll probably cheer yourself up no end. The official name is 'retail therapy'.

### GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You may sense the excitement that emanates from your current planetary alignments. All your emotional, intellectual and biological cycles are reaching a turning-point, so you may be under strain. The key is to seize every opportunity to relax rather than pushing yourself to the limit.

### CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Work intrudes on your consciousness today. Think about how you're actually going to put your dreams into practice, regardless of whether your principle concern is public or professional. Once you've worked out a suitable plan you'll be ready to move forward.

### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Far from restricting your liberty, the stars have endowed you with that most precious of commodities - freedom of choice. Yet great self-knowledge is necessary if you are to make the right moves, so please don't panic and never allow other folk to push you.

### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Even chance encounters and meetings are now likely to lead to profitable associations. Happily, you will gain from all personal and social contacts, especially those involving new friends. Just to remind you of something I said earlier, your social skills are now at a peak.

### LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Past efforts and sacrifices sometimes seem to have been in vain, but you must, repeat must, not slip into disillusionment. You see, it's all a question of adopting realistic expectations and demands. If you aim for goals which are easily achievable, you'll succeed.

### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

The Moon is currently in a prosperous position, but it's also very impatient and inclined to be rash. Don't expect instant results or demand that partners fit in with all your wants. It's a question of treading softly and never stirring up feelings which are best left alone.

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)

Look ahead. Life at the moment may be a little tiresome, somewhat confusing and a mite emotional, but gradually the pieces of the jigsaw are falling into place. You're now approaching the crest of a very wonderful wave, so no complaints, please.

### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Honesty is your best policy, and if you feel that partners or close associates have overstepped the mark then you must rectify matters by setting a good example. It will do you no good to throw your weight around, or to imagine that you can get your own way if you don't meet colleagues halfway.

### AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

The Moon has now moved on and, as far as trying and testing conditions in your personal life are concerned, it must be a case of least said, soonest mended. You should exploit new friendly contacts for all they're worth and build up goodwill for the future.

### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Don't hide your light under a bushel. The Moon is drawing those of you with professional ambitions, perhaps on a partner's behalf, to the centre of the stage. Do your best to help others on their way. I think you'll find that selfless actions now will breed success later.

## ADDRESSED — CWC

On the occasion of New Year Day, Amit Kumar Singh MD, CWC alongwith Anuj Kumar Dir (F) & Ms. Sangeeta Ramkrayani Dir (P) addressed the august gathering at Corporate Office & showed the path ahead. Also pledged for more commitment towards growth & greater heights of the corporation.

## ACQUISITION — POWERGRID

POWERGRID has successfully acquired four Special Purpose Vehicles for Interstate Transmission System Projects which were bid out through Tariff Based Competitive Bidding process. The acquired SPVs— Vataman Transmission Ltd., Koppal II Gadag II Transmission Ltd., Bikaner III Neemrana Transmission Ltd. & Neemrana II Barieli Transmission Ltd. shall facilitate integration of Renewable Energy Zones, immediate power evacuation & establishment of new ISTS transmission infrastructure. Vataman Transmission Ltd. shall implement the Transmission System comprising establishment of a new 765/400kV Switching Station at Vataman, Ahmedabad; 3 nos. of 765kV D/C transmission lines (including a LILo line) traversing in the state of Gujarat as well as extension works at Navsari & Halvad Substations in the state of Gujarat.

PFC announced its plans to establish a wholly-owned subsidiary, a Finance company, in Int'l Financial Services Center in GIFT City, Gujarat. This strategic decision aligns with PFC's vision to diversify its business & maintain its long-term growth trajectory. Commenting on the occasion, CMD Ms. Parminder Chopra stated, "We are excited to embark on this new chapter. The GIFT City platform provides a conducive environment for int'l lending activities & a world-class infrastructure. We are confident that PFC will leverage these advantages to carve a niche for itself in the global market." Ms Chopra added that the "IFSC entity will present new business opportunities for PFC & contribute to the growth of the country's power sector."

## ACADEMICS

### SCDAV

The first leg of DAV National Sports Event was held at SCDAV Public School, Noida, on Jan. 4, 2024. The event was inaugurated by Principal Mrs. Chitra Kant & Manager Mrs. Nakra for Girls under 14, 17 & 9 age category. The event started with lighting of torch & oath ceremony. DAV Noida is honoured to host four games - Swimming, Basket Ball, Archery & Squash. Dr. V.Singh, Director(PS) & convener of DAV Sports, introduced Categories for Under 14 & 17 for the first time. Notably, all the players will receive certificates from the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, GOI & winners will get chance to be a part of DAV11. Recently, Dr. Alpa Sharma(RO), honoured the winners with medals and trophies.

### SSN UNIVERSITY

PSBB School - KK Nagar, Chennai & Pushpalatha Matric HSS, Tirunelveli bags the first place in the second edition of EduQuest - the Nation-Wide Quiz & Project Competition organized by Shiv Nadar University Chennai Shiv Nadar University Chennai conducted its flagship event, EduQuest 23-24, a National-level educational fest for school students in grades 9-12, at its campus in Chennai. The fest gave the students a glimpse into university life, featuring a potpourri of events, including a quiz competition titled Quiz & project competition titled ProjectX with noteworthy prizes & scholarships to the tune of Rs. 10 Lakhs.



## PRAGG STUNS WORLD CHAMPION LIREN

*Wijk Aan Zee:* Indian chess player R Praggnanandhaa defeated world champion Ding Liren of China in the fourth round of the Tata Steel Chess Tournament here, a win which also helped him surpass the legendary Viswanathan Anand as the top-rated Indian player. After the victory, the 18-year-old Praggnanandhaa has 2748.3 points as against 2748 of five-time world champion Anand. **PTI**

## Australian Open: Djokovic survives Popyrin scare to reach third round

REUTERS  
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 17

DEFENDING CHAMPION Novak Djokovic survived a scare before beating home hope Alexei Popyrin 6-3 4-6 7-6(4) 6-3 to reach the third round of the Australian Open on Wednesday.

The 36-year-old Serb, bidding for a record-extending 11th crown in Melbourne, was in deep trouble in the third set when errors began to flow and he had to save four set points.

With the packed night-time crowd on the edge of their seats, top seed Djokovic used his vast experience to win the pivotal tiebreak and then broke a dispirited Popyrin midway through the fourth set to finally seize control.

Djokovic breezed through the fourth set to rack up his 30th successive victory at the Australian Open -- his last defeat coming in 2018 -- but for the second successive round he was pushed hard and looked short of his best form. "He missed an easy forehand and I was lucky to get away with that game," Djokovic, who was riled up by a heckling fan as the match neared its conclusion, said on court.

"He was the better player for a set and a half but the momentum shifted after the tiebreak." Djokovic, bidding to claim a record 25th Grand Slam title, was kept on court for four hours during his opening round victory over Croatian qualifier Dino Prizmic on Sunday.

But when he took the opening set against Popyrin in 39 minutes having lost only three points on serve, it seemed a more routine victory was on. Djokovic had a 13-1 record against Australian players at Grand Slams but the 24-year-old Popyrin was not about to go down meekly as he fired up his serve and forehand to start denting the Serb's armour.

The crowd burst into life when Djokovic faced a break point at 1-2 in the second set and Popyrin converted it with a deft volley.

Popyrin wavered, however, serving for the set at 5-3 with some errors gifting Djokovic the break. But in the following game it was Djokovic's turn to wobble and the Serb's increasingly ragged forehand offered a couple of set points.

One was saved with an ace but Popyrin then produced a stunning lob to square the match. Serving at 4-5, the tension built as Djokovic missed a forehand, then an easy volley and then slammed a forehand into the net to offer up three set points. Djokovic held firm to save all three and then another as Popyrin eked out a fourth chance.

World number 43 Popyrin was made to rue those missed chances as Djokovic dominated the tiebreak and rolled on to victory despite some raucous fans doing their best to throw him out of his rhythm.

### KEY RESULTS

#### Round two

##### Men's Singles

1-N Djokovic def A Popyrin 6-3, 4-6, 7-6(7-4), 6-3; 10-A Minaur def M Arnaldi 6-3, 6-0, 6-3; 7-S Tsitsipas def J Thompson 4-6, 7-6, 6-2, 7-6(7-4); 16-B Shelton def C Connell 6-4, 6-1, 3-6, 6-6(7-5); T Machac def 17-F Tiafoe 6-4 6-4 7-6(5); 15-K Khachanov def A Kovacevic 6-4 6-3 4-6 6-3.

##### Women's Singles

M Andreeva def 6-O Jabeur 6-0, 6-2; 2-A Sabalenka def B Fruhvirtova 6-3, 6-2; 10-B Maia def A Kornieva 6-1, 6-2; 4-C Gauff def C Dolehide 7-6(2), 6-2; A Anisimova def N Podoroska 6-2, 6-3; A Parks def 32-L Fernandez 7-5, 6-4.

## Rohit's ton, an inspired chase by Afghanistan, and two Super Overs - India clutch up to win the 3rd T20I, sweep series

TUSHAR BHADURI  
JANUARY 17

IT WAS an inconsequential match -- both in terms of the outcome of the series as well as the composition of the Indian squad for the T20 World Cup. It was the last international game India played in the format before the global showpiece event, but with the IPL coming up in a couple of months, nothing really hinged on this game.

But the drama and length of the game -- a T20 game running almost four and a half hours with two sets of Super Overs -- was akin to a match with much more riding on it. There were batsmen taking extra runs despite a throw deflecting of their body, a batsman of Rohit Sharma's pedigree retiring himself out to get in a faster runner between wickets, and tempers being frayed between India and Afghanistan -- two teams that generally get along quite well; the game was one crazy exhibition of the format.

For the record, the two teams tied at 212 after 20 overs each and at 16 after the first set of Super Overs. The Afghans would have felt ahead of the game when they restricted India for 11 in the next Super Over, before leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi got two wickets in three balls to bring a manic evening to an end.

The first Super Over may remain in the memories of some. With Afghanistan getting 13 off the first five balls, they ran a bye on the last one, only for the throw to deflect off Nabi's body. Now, some would not take the extra runs in such an instance but at such a juncture, in the Afghans added two more to their score, much to the displeasure of Rohit and his men.

Later, the hosts also stretched the ephemeral 'Spirit of Cricket' by retiring out their skipper -- not the fleetest runner between wickets -- for the much quicker Rinku Singh, during their Super Over knock. It worked as Rinku got across to the striker's end after Jaiswal had squeezed it to the wicketkeeper -- the run that dragged the game to another Super Over. A lot to cram into an inconsequential bilateral T20I. For a team to reach 212 after being 22/4 inside four overs is a remarkable achievement, but it was only the start of a roller-coaster ride. Rohit Sharma was almost certain to go to the T20 World Cup, but after two successive ducks, needed an injection of confidence, which he got with a record-breaking fifth T20I hundred.

The return of Rohit and Virat Kohli has reduced the wriggle room for youngsters vying for batting spots in the World Cup, but one of them who definitely will be on the plane -- though one can never be too sure of such things -- is Rinku Singh. He has been described as a finisher -- someone expected to score 25 off 8 balls whether batting first or second -- but on Wednesday, he showed he has the composure and match-awareness to build an innings and engineer a big rescue act.

Rohit and Rinku started sedately, rather by compulsion than choice, before targeting the weaker links in the Afghan bowling line-up. It showed that even in the shortest international format, good things can come to those who bide their time and launch their assault at the opportune moment.

The unbroken fifth-wicket partnership of 190 off 100 balls included 103 runs in the last five overs and 36 off the 20th bowled by Karim Janat. The skipper was full of praise for his younger partner and what he brings to the table.

### SCORECARD

INDIA VS AFGHANISTAN  
M CHINNASWAMY, BENGALURU  
Toss: India won, chose to bat

**INDIA**  
Y Jaiswal c M Nabi b F Ahmad 4 (6b)  
R Sharma not out 121 (69b, 11x4, 8x6)  
V Kohli l Zadrans b F Ahmad 0 (1b)  
S Dube c R Gurbaz b A Omarzai 1 (6b)  
S Samson c M Nabi b F Ahmad 0 (1b)  
R Singh not out 69 (39b, 2x4, 6x6)  
■ Extras (lb 9, nb 2, w 6) 17  
■ Total (20 overs) RR 10.60 212/4  
■ FoW: 1-18 (Y Jaiswal, 2.3 ov), 2-18 (V Kohli, 2.4 ov), 3-21 (S Dube, 3.6 ov), 4-22 (S Samson, 4.3 ov)  
■ Bowling: F Ahmad 4-0-20-3; A Omarzai 4-0-33-1; Q Ahmad 4-0-28-0; M Saleem 3-0-43-0; S Ashraf 2-0-25-0; K Janat 3-0-54-0

**AFGHANISTAN**  
R Gurbaz c W Sundar b K Yadav 50 (32b, 3x4, 4x6)  
I Zadrans c Samson b W Sundar 50 (41b, 4x4, 1x6)  
G Naib not out 55 (23b, 4x4, 4x6)  
A Omarzai R Bishnoi b W Sundar 0 (1b)  
M Nabi c A Khan b W Sundar 34 (16b, 2x4, 3x6)  
K Janat run out Samson 2 (2b)  
N Zadrans c Kohli b A Khan 5 (3b, 1x4)  
S Ashraf not out 5 (2b, 1x4)  
■ Extras (b 1, w 10) 11  
■ Total (20 overs) RR 10.60 212/6  
■ FoW: 1-93 (R Gurbaz, 10.6 ov), 2-107 (I Zadrans, 12.3 ov), 3-107 (A Omarzai, 12.4 ov), 4-163 (M Nabi, 16.2 ov), 5-167 (K Janat, 17.1 ov), 6-182 (N Zadrans, 18.2 ov)  
■ Bowling: M Kumar 4-0-44-0; A Khan 4-0-55-1; R Bishnoi 4-0-38-0; W Sundar 3-0-18-3; Shivam Dube 2-0-25-0; Kuldeep Yadav 3-0-31-1

"We may find ourselves in such situations in big games where we'd be 30 for 4. It was a good situation to be in with the pressure, was important to bat long, but deep but not compromise on the intent we wanted to show. In the last couple of series he's played, Rinku can show what he can do. Fearless, keeps himself calm, is very clear about his game plan and knows his strengths very well," Rohit said after the game. "He's coming of age, creates an impression every time he gets an opportunity. We've wanted someone who can bat in the back end with a clear mindset."

A target of 213 would have seemed beyond Afghanistan's reach, but the flat Chinnaswamy pitch at night, the small ground and fast outfield always keeps chasing teams in the game. The opening pair of Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadrans, while not going berserk, gave a solid start putting on 51 in the Powerplay and 85 in the first half of their innings.

But with the asking rate getting well over two runs a ball, risks needed to be taken and a few wickets were inevitably lost, Washington Sundar bowling a key spell in the middle with figures of 3/18 from three overs.

Both openers went for 50 each before Gulbadin Naib, who had hit an enterprising half-century in the second T20 on Sunday, coming to the party again with a 23-ball 55. For once, the veteran Mohammad Nabi too chipped in at the crucial stage with 34 off 16 deliveries. The equation read 105 needed off seven overs when Nabi and Naib went off. The 14th over bowled by Avesh Khan went for 20 and the next one bowled by Kuldeep Yadav went for 17. Bishnoi couldn't stem the tide either.

With 46 runs needed from the last three overs and 36 from 12 balls, one would have thought that the greater cricket nous of the hosts would see them through, but the Afghans kept fighting and throwing punches. The target was 19 from the final over bowled by Mukesh Kumar and Naib took it upon himself to get his team across the line. However, despite a six and a four and a couple of wides, he could only tie the score. But it kickstarted more manic drama.



Rohit Sharma slammed his fifth T20I century, a 69-ball-121, to lead India to a total of 212. **PTI**

# Rohit erases doubts over his T20 World Cup spot with captain's knock

TUSHAR BHADURI  
JANUARY 17

INDIA WERE 22/4 inside four overs but judging by the way Rohit Sharma was going after two successive ducks, there was hardly any circumspection in his approach. The Indian captain could have easily got out for a single-digit score -- even a third zero on the trot -- but rode his luck and exploded as the innings went on. His fifth T20I hundred, the most by anyone in the format, would have brought much relief for him and the selectors. It would have put to rest any doubts, if there were any in the first place, about his spot for the ICC T20 World Cup.

When the selectors brought back Rohit and Virat Kohli for the series against Afghanistan, they coached it as a necessity due to the unavailability of the likes of Suryakumar Yadav and Hardik Pandya. But there was no doubt that the selectors were getting cold feet over picking a squad that didn't include the two veterans -- even though the youngsters who had been given opportunities since the last World Cup in the format had done hardly anything wrong.

They have displayed a fearless approach with the bat, which was often missing earlier, but it is imperative for success in the format. Kohli has definitely read the memo and perished first ball taking on the bowling on a pitch that was not a featherbed early on, with the ball sticking in the pitch and bouncing a bit more from short of a length.

India being in such strife played into Rohit's hands in a way. With the impressive Rinku Singh for company, it allowed, or rather forced him, to rein himself in for a while. The run rate was less than six an over till the halfway mark of the innings, but once the impressive left-

### SUPER OVER 1

AFGHANISTAN					
1 (W)	1	4	1	6	3

Ball hits Nabi's leg on final ball. Afg get 2 extra runs, Indians object.

INDIA					
1lb	1	6	6	1	1

Rohit retires before final ball so the better runner Rinku is on crease.

### SUPER OVER 2

INDIA					
6	4	1	W	W	-

India lose Rinku and Samson after Rohit's first ball six. Afg need 12.

AFGHANISTAN					
W	1	W	-	-	-

India's choice of wrist spinner Bishnoi works. He gets 2 wickets.

arm pacer Fareed Ahmad and Azmatullah Omarzai were through their initial spells and leg-spinner Qais Ahmad was off, the second line of the Afghan attack was a few notches lower in standard and experience.

### Changing gears

Rohit reached his fifty in 41 balls, rather pedestrian by T20 standards, but he had begun to cut loose by then. Left-arm spinner Sharafuddin was dispatched for two consecutive sixes, the second one an un-

## Was Rohit eligible for 2nd Super Over?

INDIAN CAPTAIN Rohit Sharma coming in to bat for the second Super Over with Rinku Singh became a point of contention in the aftermath of the thriller. Earlier, Rohit had accompanied Jaiswal to bat in the first Super Over. However, before the last ball -- when India required two to win -- the Indian skipper would retire himself out so that fast-runner Rinku Singh could be at the non-striker's end. In case of a tied Super Over, dismissed batsmen are ruled out.

The MCC playing conditions wouldn't have allowed Rohit's second entry. Rule 25.4.2 says: "If a batter retires because of illness, injury or any other unavoidable cause, that batter is entitled to resume his/her innings. If for any reason this does not happen, that batter is to be recorded as 'Retired - not out'. The subsequent rule, 25.4.3, puts a question mark over Rohit's second entry. "If a batter retires for any reason other than as in 25.4.2, the innings of that batter may be resumed only with the consent of the opposing captain. If for any reason his/her innings is not resumed, that batter is to be recorded as 'Retired - out'."

characteristic reverse-sweep that took the Indian skipper's strike rate beyond 100.

The M Chinnaswamy Stadium is not the biggest of grounds, and with the fast outfield, the two got into the act. India have made the conscious decision to target 200 when batting first, regardless of the situation they find themselves in initially. The onslaught also proves that one doesn't need to go berserk from the start, as India has been doing of late.

Rohit's pedigree and hitting ability when set was on full display as he found the boundary, and the stands, almost at will. The lack of experience showed as there were frequent no-balls, both for height and width, as well as wides. The skipper was literally playing with the field and unleashing shots such as the reverse-pull, which don't find a place either in the coaching manual or Rohit's usual repertoire. Debutant seamer Mohammad Saleem was targeted for special treatment and went for 43 in three overs, Rohit taking him for a four and a six off consecutive balls. It clearly rattled the bowler as he responded with a high full toss.

Omarzai has a bright future with both ball and bat and Karim Janat has quite a bit of international experience but showed that anyone can go for runs in the death overs as the two batsmen cut loose.

Rohit's second fifty took merely 23 balls and he later came to bat in the two Super Overs as well to hit a few more lusty blows. It confirmed his ticket to the United States and the Caribbean in the summer, but it remains to be seen at whose expense and to what effect, as India aims to end the major ICC trophy drought that has now lasted more than a decade.

## PAPER TEEGER

# How Israel's attack on Gaza triggered a crisis in Cricket South Africa

SHIVANI NAIK  
JANUARY 17

DAVID TEEGER is a South African batsman of Jewish origin who was removed as captain of the U-19 World Cup team after an uproar against his statements in support of the Israeli army in the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Cricket South Africa had named him captain in September, and retained him after an independent adjudicator, appointed by them, had defended Teeger's rights to freedom of speech post his offensive speech. Subsequent protests, however, made them make a U-turn, as they stripped him of captaincy though retaining him in the team.

### What did David Teeger say that triggered protests?

On October 22, in his acceptance speech at the ABSA Jewish Achiever Awards, the then 18-year-old Teeger spoke admiringly of the Israeli army.

"I am now the rising star, but the true rising stars are the young soldiers in Israel... And I'd like to dedicate the award to the state of Israel and to every single soldier fighting so that we can live and thrive in the diaspora," Teeger said.

It was said in the immediate aftermath of

over 4000 Palestinians killed by the Israeli army in retribution for Hamas terrorists who attacked on 7 October, killing 1300 Israelis and taking over 200 hostages. Since then, the number of deaths has gone up in the ongoing conflict with Israel reportedly killing 23,350 civilians in Gaza.

### What protests erupted over Teeger's speech?

During a pro-Palestine protest outside the Newlands stadium where India were playing South Africa in a Test on January 3, according to Cricbuzz's Telford Vice, the slogans included this: "Teeger, how many doctors did your friends kill today?" The Palestine Solidarity Alliance (PSA) lodged a complaint with South Africa's Olympic Committee calling Teeger's views "provocative and an inflammatory political statement".

According to Cricinfo, statements of grievance were also issued by CSA, Lions, the domestic team that Teeger represents. Others joining were four Johannesburg-based cricket clubs, a civil society group and a director of a company that sponsors Lions.

### How is the situation at Gaza viewed in



David Teeger was stripped off his U19 captaincy after speaking glowingly of the Israeli army. **X.com**

### South Africa government official circles?

It was South Africa that went to the International Court of Justice alleging Israel was engaged in genocidal acts after its defense forces bombed and invaded Palestine. There is a strong anti-Israel sentiment in South Africa with prevailing belief that Israel's treatment of the Palestinians since 1948 is apartheid, subjecting them to racial segregation and discrimination. About 50,000 Jews live in South Africa, which is committed to granting religious freedoms to everyone and has seen a bunch of Jews play

for South Africa.

### Did Teeger say anything after the outrage over his speech?

The publication Businesslive.co.za quotes Teeger as saying his comments were a personal opinion.

"Having considered the matter further, I appreciate I may have been naive in thinking that this personal reflection would be received as such. I regret not giving more consideration to whether my impromptu comments would be scrutinised, given my growing prominence in sport, or that these comments may be repeated in the media... It was therefore hurtful to read that my personal reflection on 22 October 2023 of Israel's response to the Hamas attack has been equated to supporting genocide or condoning hatred based on race, ethnicity or religion."

He further add: "My personal and honestly held view is that Israel and its soldiers have not committed genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity... On the other hand, I accept that many people and governments, including the South African government, hold an opposing view. Disagreeing in a respectful manner on a contested and emotionally charged matter is a fundamental pillar of our democracy and Constitution. I respect the right of others to disagree with my view on Israel."

### Where did he say this? Was it during an official process initiated by Cricket South Africa (CSA). And what did the process result in?

Yes, it was said in his affidavit to the advocate Wim Tregrove appointed by the CSA to conduct an independent adjudication. Tregrove would defend Teeger's freedom of speech but noted the comments could be viewed as offensive.

The report didn't say Teeger had "been cleared of all wrongdoing", as has been reported in some quarters. It did say he had not violated the code of conduct.

Writing for Cricbuzz after Tregrove findings, Telford noted, "If there was a moment for Teeger to rescue the situation by apologising and making clear he knew he represented all South Africans, not only those who agreed with him, and would endeavour to do so better in future, that was it. He hasn't." While Teeger has publicly neither expressed regret or apology, CSA went ahead and announced him as captain on December 8, a day after the Tregrove report was officially released.

The Palestine Solidarity Alliance (PSA), South African grassroots organisation, said Teeger's comments had caused a "significant rift within the cricket community" and that they continue to question whether he is "fit to represent a diverse South African team and more so, whether he has the necessary

capacity to lead any such team". PSA also called for Teeger's suspension from the U-19 World Cup squad and said there could be protests at the tournament. CSA did not drop him from the squad after the Tregrove findings.

### Were the subsequent reactions the reason he was stripped of captaincy of South Africa's U-19 team for the World Cup?

On 12th January, a day after he turned 19, in a press release, the CSA announced that Teeger was "relieved of the captaincy for the tournament" in the "best interests of all the players, the... team and David himself". It also added: "We have been advised that protests related to the war in Gaza can be anticipated at the venues for the tournament."

### Has the row impacted Teeger's cricket?

Teeger's score sequence in the tri-series ahead of the World Cup was 8 (24), 9 (19), 17 (28) and 13 (12). Later, he would score a resolute 38 in a warm up game against Afghanistan. There were concerns that the excessive scrutiny on Teeger's Israel stand with unavoidable and incessant media questions, could be another headache for the youngster, as well as open him up to further criticism and attacks with his strident views were he to be captain. It could also distract the team from the World Cup campaign.



# Lakshya's Mission Paris hangs in balance

Coach Vimal Kumar wants regular sessions with sports psychologist to boost Sen's confidence and not think about Olympic qualification

VINAYAKK MOHANARANGAN  
JANUARY 17

A YEAR can be a long time in elite sport. In 2022, Lakshya Sen was enjoying a meteoric rise. Commonwealth Games gold medallist. World Team Championships gold at the Thomas Cup. Finalist at the prestigious All England. Title at the India Open. A career-high world ranking of No 6. But in 2023, he struggled. A solitary title at the Canada Open, but not much to write about either side of it.

After he lost in the opening round at the India Open on Tuesday, he cut a dejected figure in front of the reporters. The first question was about his hopes of reaching the Olympics, and the answer was that he was still in the match zone and couldn't speak about it. But it came across as someone who is searching for clues to a puzzle.

That's the toll the recent form, or lack thereof, has taken on Lakshya who was seen as a medal hope at Paris 2024 not long ago.

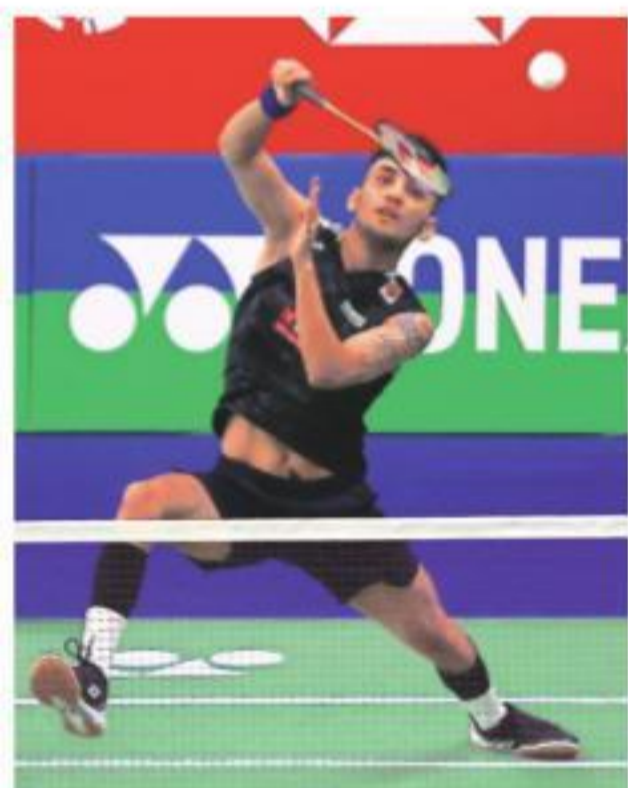
Since beating Shi Yu Qi at the Asian Games team event – a performance that made people wonder why he wasn't part of the individual event – Lakshya has not won a match on the BWF World Tour. It has been 7 straight first-round exits stretching back to the China Open.

"He is injury-free and he's training well, but at the moment, he is low on confidence and he's not playing the right game," says his coach Vimal Kumar. Referring to the match against Priyanshu, the former national coach pointed out that Lakshya was not bringing in the variations in pace at the right time, and that was trying to hit through in slow conditions. It is where he used to thrive, with his patience.

Lakshya started brightly against Priyanshu, showing his trademark hustle in the opening game. But was left ruing unforced errors at the start of the decider, as he started to check his shots and lost the sharpness in attack. "He needs to find the right game – when to push the pace, when to keep it going. There he was found wanting. He's a little anxious, that's also an issue," Vimal adds.

## No fitness issues

When looking at Lakshya's ordinary results over the past year, it's important to differentiate a couple of phases. At the start of the year, he was struggling health-wise after a nasal surgery that was followed by a dip in immunity. But in the more recent weeks and months, it's been a crisis of confidence.



Lakshya Sen's Olympic qualification quest needs a reboot and the key lies in the mind. Praveen Khanna

"All our fitness tests indicate he's in the best shape he has been in the last couple of years," says former India hockey captain Viren Rasquinha, who has worked for a long time with Lakshya as part of OGQ. "I can't fault his attitude and effort in training, he is a very disciplined guy. He has a very good team around him with a coach (Vimal Sir) and mentor (Prakash Sir) who have known him for so long, a full-time physio and nutritionist, a psychologist who has worked with him for a long time. What's missing now are just the results, and that's what is frustrating to all of us."

Both Vimal and Viren point out that every athlete goes through this tough phase and are confident he'll find a way out of it. "It's a matter of when. He has to keep believing and keep working," Viren adds.

The magic potion here is simple: Lakshya needs a few wins under his belt. It's easier said than done, of course. "After his defeat here also I just said you need to find a way, you will be OK. Just because you lost some first-round matches recently, doesn't mean you are a bad player," Vimal says.

## No new coach for now

Lakshya had worked with former national champion Anup Sridhar last year but has parted ways with him now. It is understood that Vimal will travel with him when possible while handling the daily training at his base in Bengaluru. Adding a new coach – Indian or foreign – is not on the agenda, given how close the Olympic Games are, and the best options are perhaps likely unavailable.

On the technical side of things, Vimal believes that overcoaching is not a solution. Lakshya has slid down further in the Race to Paris list after his two early exits at the start of 2024 but to qualify for the Olympics, perhaps the best solution for Lakshya right now is to not think about qualification for the Olympics.

"A lot of people saying do this and that, but as long as he stays fit, he will find a way. Tactically, yes, he needs to get better. I have told him not to think too much about Olympic Games qualification. These are the things that can drain you out. That anxiety can make you tight," Vimal says.

"Don't get desperate for it, especially when you are in a low phase. It's easy for us to talk. He is going through the worst phase of his career, but let's find a way to come out of it."

## Needs to get confidence back

Vimal also intends to make psychological sessions more regular and meaningful. Lakshya has been working with Gayathri Varthak for a few years, but the coach feels it shouldn't be an afterthought on a day when he has already trained hard. He wants Lakshya to have dedicated sessions to work on mental conditioning.

"It has to be more regular. When he comes back from Indonesia, I am only looking at that because he has to find the confidence back, the stability. His game is to play at a faster pace, retrieve then counterpunch. But now he is only trying to play fast and when it's not working out, he's not prepared to stick in there without making mistakes," Vimal says.

So now, he has to go back to his basics. Remember what worked for him not so long ago. Simplify the game. Avoid overthinking. Don't make errors in desperation. Mission Paris is getting difficult for Lakshya with every passing defeat. But as Vimal says, "He has to help himself, he's a good kid, he'll find his way back."



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy-Chirag Shetty beat Fang-Chih Lee and Fang-Jen Lee 21-15, 19-21, 21-16. Praveen Khanna

# Satwik-Chirag solitary Indian winners; Srikanth pays for unforced errors

VINAYAKK MOHANARANGAN  
JANUARY 17

THE HOST country's only winners on the second day of the India Open Super 750 were the in-form Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and even that didn't come easy. The World No 2, who only reached India late on Monday night after their runner-up finish at the Malaysia Open last week, brushed off some rustiness and lack of practice at the main court of the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall in New Delhi on Wednesday to defeat Chinese Taipei identical twins Fang-Chih Lee and Fang-Jen Lee.

Satwik-Chirag registered a 21-15, 19-21, 21-16 win to reach the second round at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium.

The significant disappointment of the day was a first-round exit for Srikanth Kidambi, who looked to be in control of proceedings at one stage, leading 17-14 in the opening game against world No 18 Lee Cheuk Yiu. Usually not the most expressive of characters on the court unless he has to dig in deep, Srikanth seemed up for the task from the word go. Buoyed on by chants like "Hamara Player Kaisa Ho, Srikanth Bhaiya Jaise ho" and "Laal Phool Neela Phool Srikanth Bhaiya Beautiful", Srikanth displayed the best of his attacking game till that point.

Lee won six straight points from there to have three game points. Srikanth didn't give up, won three straight points himself and took the opener to the distance. But eventually, the Hong Kong shuttler took it 24-22. The second game, however, saw Srikanth go completely off the boil as he trailed 2-11. As he kept going

**Srikanth kept going for the kill, but kept missing the line – something he'd reflect later on just how he plays. He lives by the sword, and he often falls by it too.**

for the kill, he kept missing the line – something he'd reflect later on just how he plays. He lives by the sword, and he often falls by it too as he lost the second game 21-13.

"I have been making quite a lot of unforced errors," Srikanth said after the defeat. "Even at the beginning of the second set, I did quite a lot today, but again, you know, I am somebody who really likes to take on the points and not to play safe. But the downside of it is what happened today. I am definitely working on cutting down on those unforced errors."

But for the crowd that stayed back to watch former champions Satwik and Chirag make a homecoming to the event they had to withdraw from in the second round, get their time's worth.

The second seeds started superbly to take the opening game but as has been the trend since last week, they conceded a big lead in Game 2. Once again they fought back, from 5-11 down to reduce the deficit to 18-19, but the Taipei pair forced the decider. In the final game, they started slow but went on a run from 1-4 down to win nine straight points and saw the remainder of the match through. They will next face Chinese Taipei's Lu Ching Yao and Yang Po Han.

"We have worked a lot on our defence over the past two years and it has brought a new facet in our armor because you can't always rely on your attack in these slow conditions," Chirag said after the win.

In women's doubles, Ashwini Ponnappa/Tanisha Crasto went down 5-21, 21-18, 11-21 against Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai of Thailand. The Indians were blown away in the opening game but fought back well to force the decider against the world No 10 pair. But a poor start to the decider meant they were unable to pull off another upset after their impressive win against former world champions Nagahara and Matsumoto in Malaysia last week.

The rest of the Indian contingent in Ashwini Bhat/Shikha Gautam, Aakarshi Kashyap, Satish Kumar Arunakaran suffered straight-game defeats.

In a highly-anticipated match between current and former world champions, An Se Young and Ratchanok Intanon produced a clash filled with delicious strokeplay. But it was the Korean World No 1 who came back from a game down to win 14-21, 21-11, 21-11. Two-time former World Champion Akane Yamaguchi, Indonesian star Jonatan Christie and Anthony Ginting, men's doubles world No 1 Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang were also safely through to the second round.

The action continues in Delhi on Thursday, with HS Prannoy and Priyanshu Rajawat facing in an all-Indian clash that ensures at least one Indian presence in the quarterfinals. Satwik and Chirag, having missed out in 2023, would be keen to get there and beyond.

## BRIEFLY

### Australia in control of 1st Test against West Indies

Adelaide: Shamar Joseph took the prized wicket of Australia's Steven Smith with his first ball in Test cricket as a rare highlight in an otherwise tough opening day for an undermanned West Indies in the series-opening test on Wednesday. Australia captain Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood took four wickets each as Australia restricted West Indies to 188 all out and made good use of the Adelaide Oval pitch after winning the toss and bowling first. Kirk McKenzie, playing his second test, made his maiden half-century to top-score for the tourists before an entertaining 55-run partnership between Shamar Joseph and Kemar Roach for the 10th wicket lifted West Indies towards 200. AP  
**BRIEF SCORES:** West Indies 188 all out in 62.1 overs (K McKenzie 50; P Cummins 4-41, J Hazlewood 4-44) vs Australia 59-2 in 20 overs (U Khawaja 30\*)

### AFC Asian Cup: India face Uzbekistan test

New Delhi: After a resolute Indian defensive display was broken down by the Aussies in their opener of the AFC Asian Cup, coach Igor Stimac will need that same tenacity shown in the first half, in addition to a few attacking inputs from his players, as India takes on Uzbekistan in their second Group B encounter. A loss would mean exiting yet another Asian Cup at the group stages, a draw would leave them at the behest of other results and only a win can keep their hopes of moving onto the Round-of-16 alive. India would have found the going tough against the Uzbeks as it is, but their opponents' opening goalless draw to Syria has put pressure on their backs to get a positive result, with their last game being against Australia. ENS

### Ankita survives scare to enter pre-quarters

Bengaluru: Top Indian tennis star Ankita Raina beat Viktorija Morvayova of Slovakia in a closely contested opening round match at the ongoing ITF Women's Open here on Wednesday. The eighth-seeded Indian, suffering from a sore throat and stomach cramps, overcame her opponent 1-6, 7-5, 6-1 to move into the pre-quarterfinals. Ankita, who recently returned following her elimination in the second round of the Australian Open qualifiers, was relatively rusty in the first set, periodically hitting a winner. PTI

### Onana back training with Cameroon

Abidjan: Goalkeeper Andre Onana is likely to be included in Cameroon's line-up for Friday's Africa Cup of Nations group game against holders Senegal after returning to training with the team on Wednesday. Onana missed Cameroon's opening match of the tournament in the Ivory Coast on Monday after he was allowed to stay at Manchester United and play in their 2-2 draw with Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday. He arrived hours before kick-off of the Group C clash against Guinea, in which Cameroon drew 1-1. REUTERS

## MUST-WIN CLASH

# Germany's flank-switch style, strength on ball key threats for India in SF

MIHIR VASAVDA  
JANUARY 17

TO REACH Paris, India will have to do something they haven't in close to a decade – conquer Germany. The ballsichern-ing (ball-protecting, translated loosely), horizontal-playing, all-controlling, rising-from-the-ashes Germany.

When they last did that in regulation time, back in February 2015, India were nobody in women's hockey. They barely played big teams, seldom won against them and the Olympics was something they'd only heard and seen but never experienced.

Yet, it was also a period of hope. A golden generation of players was expected to take the women's team to previously unforeseen heights, which they did. Step after giant step. Rising first to become an Asian force, making it to consecutive Olympics after not gracing on the grandest stage for more than three decades and once there, coming within sniffing distance of a medal.

They did all that and more. But Germany remained a team out of India's reach. The win in Valencia that February afternoon was the only time India have beaten them in regulation time in the last 20 years as per the International Hockey Federation records.

When they met most recently, a month ago on December 19, 2023, Germany won comfortably; 3-1 the scoreline read.

This puts into perspective the enormous

challenge Savita Punia – one of the two players in the current side who knows what it takes to beat Germany, Monika being the second – and her team in the semifinals of the Olympic Qualifier.

What makes Germany so good? Sjoerd Marijne, the Dutch coach who guided India to a fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics, explains to The Indian Express: "They are very good at ball possession and protect it with their body. They call it ballsichern, something that's taught from the youth level."

"When they control the ball, it's very difficult to snatch it from them," says former India captain Rani Rampal. "And when we do get the possession, we have to work even harder to keep it because they will pounce from all sides," she tells this newspaper.

Germany, they both add, are solid while defending. "But they aren't defensive," Rani says. "Their forwards also defend well. This style gives them a solid base to launch attacks."

What makes Germany different – and hence difficult – is that they prefer playing horizontally rather than going vertically like India do. They will keep the ball on one flank, control it until they find space in the front, always on the lookout to swiftly switch the flanks and take advantage of open spaces to attack.

"Because of their strong basic skills, they do that really well," Marijne, who is a performance coach with a football club in Belgium's top division, says.

"It means that as the opposition, you have to run more to cover spaces. And if you don't



India have lacked the final pass inside the 'D' and against Germany, who won't give many scoring chances, it'll come down to the efficiency of the attackers. PTI

close one side, you are at risk. When they are in rhythm, playing stick-to-stick and taking fast restarts, they will create a numerical advantage in different zones of the pitch," Marijne

adds, explaining Germany's attacking template.

India's defence – with Monika, Udita Duhan and Nikki Pradhan at the heart – has

stood out against New Zealand and Italy in the group stage. But Germany will be their toughest test yet in the tournament.

The bumpy turf in Ranchi might make it difficult for Germany to play their usual style to quickly switch flanks and overload. India will be on the lookout for that to steal possession and launch counterattacks. But Germany's horizontal structure means that if a player loses the ball, there's always someone to back her up. "Hence, they might not be very vulnerable to counterattacks," Marijne says.

As a player, Rani says she went into the matches against Germany knowing the team would have to run more than other games, endure long spells without the ball and remain patient. "You have to really work hard to get anything out of them," Rani says.

Marijne adds that the midfielders and forwards will have to be careful to not go one-on-one with German defenders because of their strong tackling abilities.

"They should instead play give-and-go hockey; play a pass to a teammate, run around the defender and receive the ball back," Marijne adds.

It requires telepathic understanding between players but that's how India played against Australia in the quarterfinals of the Tokyo Olympics, which remains one of the team's biggest wins ever.

Marijne and Rani say the team nearly ticked all the boxes during the match against Germany in Tokyo. The team, under Schopman, raised their game even in the Pro League matches post-Tokyo. Yet, they could not beat them largely because they were unable to seize the moment.

"Germany have really experienced players who thrive under pressure. They have great individuals in the team," Rani says. Marijne adds: "In our matches, the difference was the experience of the players, especially in goal-scoring situations. They will be smarter in the key moments of the match. But I also believe this team has gained experience over the years. So they should do well this time."

India's forward line has been a hit-and-miss in Ranchi. Salima Tete has been a constant threat while Lalremsiami and Neha Goyal have used their speed intelligently. But India have lacked the

final pass in the attacking third and against a team like Germany, who won't give many scoring chances, it'll come down to how efficient the attackers will be. And that, eventually, could be the difference.

India haven't beaten Germany in almost a decade. There's an Olympic-size carrot dangling in front of them to end the dubious run.