



# Hindustan Times

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**Directorate of Urban Local Bodies, Jammu**  
Panama Chowk, Narwal Road, Adjoining Architect Organization (Near Canal)  
Email: dlbjammu@gmail.com; Phone: 0191-2470050  
<https://uktenders.gov.in>

1. Director, Directorate of Urban Local Bodies, Jammu (DULB) invites online bids for the following works:

NIT Reference No.	Name of Project/Work(s)	Availability of Tender online for downloading From To	Last Date & Time for on-line Submission of Bids	Bid Security/ (Earnest Money) (Rs.)	Cost of Tender Fee (Rs.)
DULB/RFP/13/2023-24	Request for proposal for Rate Contract for Empanelment of Agency for Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Wet Waste Shredder of 5 TPD in 36 ULBs of Jammu Division	13.02.2024 1600 Hrs. to 07.03.2024 1500 Hrs.	07.03.2024 1500 Hrs.	NA	NA

2. For downloading the RFP and details such as important dates, detailed scope of work, qualifications and eligibility criteria, visit website <https://uktenders.gov.in>.

3. Pre-bid meeting is schedule online on 22.02.2024 at 11.00 AM through link: <https://meet.google.com/eru-uxmi-shv>

Sd/-  
Director  
Urban Local Bodies, Jammu

No.: DULBJ/2024/6524 Date: 13.02.2024  
DIP-J-15112-23

**NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY**  
**OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE (SURVEY & CONSTRUCTION)**  
Dy. Chief Engineer (Const.), North-Western Railway, Bikaner for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-Tenders under Two packet system for the following works:- 1. Tender No. : NWR-SC-BKN-17-2023-24 2. Name of the work with its location : Supply and stacking 65 MM gauge stone ballast machine crushed (Hard Stone) conforming to RDSO Specification along the cess including all station Yards between KM: 69.680 to KM: 101.800 of Manheru- Bawanikhera section & KM: 36.800 to KM: 49.00 of Rohtak- Bhiwani section (including Bhiwani City, Manheru, Bhiwani and Bawanikhera stations) of Bikaner division in connection with Manheru-Bawanikhera and Doh Bahall-Bhiwani Doubling Project 3. Approx. cost of the work : Rs 13,96,88,764.88 4. Bid Security (Earnest Money) to be deposited : Rs 8,48,500.00 5. Date for submission of e-Tender: On 11.03.2024 upto 15.00 hrs 6. Details and particulars of website where e-tender can be seen & filled up : [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) 7. Official email address: [dycec@bkn.railnet.gov.in](mailto:dycec@bkn.railnet.gov.in) Note :- 1. No manual tender will be accepted. 2. The Bid Security (Earnest Money) shall be deposited in cash through e-payment gateway or submitted as Bank Guarantee bond from a scheduled commercial bank of India or as mentioned in the tender documents. The bank guarantee bond should be issued in favour of FA & CAO/Construction, North Western Railway Jaipur otherwise tender will not be considered. 217-DG/24

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**PACE NEWS | Hindustan Times MEDIA MARKETING INITIATIVE**

**Tagore International School, East of Kailash, Bids Farewell to the Class of 2024**

Tagore International School, East of Kailash, gave a ceremonial send off to the graduating class of 2024 with a formal graduation ceremony and farewell party in the school premises. The Chief Guest for the occasion was Dr. Indu Prakash Singh, a human rights defender, socio-spiritual activist, poet, author, a feminist, and a TEDx speaker. Citations honouring each student were read out to the audience comprising of parents, families and teachers. Chief Guest motivated the students and urged them to focus singularly on their goals and work conscientiously and honestly to meet them. The Principal, Mallika Preman in her address encouraged the students and inspired them to realise their self-worth and face life confidently with the strength of good values. The valedictorians in their farewell speeches paid tribute to the school reminding about their journey in their Alma Mater. Later that evening

the students of Class XI bid adieu to their seniors in a farewell ceremony. In a happy atmosphere, the outgoing batch competed for coveted titles. Divyot Kaur Mavi and Shahzaan Anwar were given the titles, Ms. TIS and Mr. TIS 2024, respectively.

**Rainbow English School sparkles at Annual Function**

Rainbow English School, C-3 Janakpuri, Delhi celebrated its grand Annual Function, Arcadia: Unveiling the Ethos of Happiness, with great enthusiasm at Talkatora Stadium. Many eminent dignitaries were present at the annual day celebration to grace the occasion. Dr. Rajveer Singh, Deputy Director of Education, West-B, Delhi, was the chief guest of this joyous occasion. Amit Khanna, World Athlete, Wan Yong Lee, the enthusiastic Taekwondo Instructor, and Rohtash Choudhary, the push --up man of Bharat, graced the magical evening with their benign presence. Mahant Om Giri Maharaj, Pandit Suresh Sharma, and Swami Anar Dev blessed everyone with their spiritual enlightenment. Students beautifully presented the journey of our school depicting the vision of the school chairman Dr. J.R. Kashyap and the triumph and growth of our institution. The mesmerizing performance of the famous epic drama 'Ramkatha' left the audience spellbound. The Annual Report of the school comprising the achievements of the students, was presented by Principal Sourabh Raj Kashyap. The students received awards for their excellence in academics and co-curricular activities. The dignitaries lauded the efforts of the students and praised the school for its accomplishments. School Chairman Dr. J.R. Kashyap, through his speech urged the parents to spend some quality time with their wards which is an intrinsic part of parenting. Dr. Rajveer Singh shared his views on Parenting and laid emphasis on the importance of Education. The beautiful program ended with the principal proposing the vote of thanks and extending his warm regards to everyone present at the Annual Day function.

**UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR**  
**OFFICE THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) DIVISION GANDHI NAGAR**  
e-mail: [xenpwwdivgandhinagar@gmail.com](mailto:xenpwwdivgandhinagar@gmail.com)

**SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
Short e-NIT No. DGN/72 of 2023-24 Dated 15.02.2024

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Gandhi Nagar invite Expression of Interest (EOI) from the Empanelled Architects including structural consultants vide Chief Engineer, PW (R&B) Department, Jammu's order No. CEJ/17/14091-14116 dated 24.12.2019 for the below mention work.

S. No.	Particular	Cost of Consultancy ₹ in Lacs	Tender fee in ₹	Earnest Money in ₹	Time of Completion
1	Providing Structural and Architectural Consultancy for Construction of New Building NSCAV at Govt. Girls Higher Secondary School Shastri Nagar Jammu (inclusive of soil investigation and vetting of the design from any competent authority as IIT/NIT/DIOCC Jammu)	7.00	600/-	14000/-	30 Days

Position of AAA : Accorded by Project Director Samagra Shiksha, J&K vide No. 06-CHIRAG of 2024 dated 05.01.2024

The bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, bill of quantities set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be viewed/downloaded from the website [www.uctenders.gov.in](http://www.uctenders.gov.in) as per the schedule given below:

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	15.02.2024
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 15.02.2024 to 26.02.2024, 1800 Hrs
3	Date, Time and place of pre-bid meeting	21.02.2024 at 1300 Hrs in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Gandhi Nagar, Lok Nirman Bhawan Complex Rail Head Complex Jammu
4	Bid submission Start Date	15.02.2024
5	Bid Submission End Date	26.02.2024 upto 1800 Hrs
6	Date & time of opening of Technical (Online)	27.02.2024 on or after 1300 Hrs in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Gandhi Nagar, Lok Nirman Bhawan Rail Head Complex Jammu
7	Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online)	To be notified after technical bid evaluation

Sd/-  
(Er. Rahat Gupta)  
Executive Engineer  
PWD (R&B) Division  
Gandhi Nagar

DIP-J-15112-23

**NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY**  
**OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE (SURVEY & CONSTRUCTION)**  
Dy. Chief Engineer (Const.), North-Western Railway, Bikaner for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-Tenders under Two packet system for the following works:- 1. Tender No. : NWR-SC-BKN-18-2023-24 2. Name of the work with its location : Laying and linking of Broad gauge main line, loop lines including points and crossings in yards, spreading of ballast, tamping of track, transportation of P-way materials and other ancillary works from (Including) Km 69.680 to Km 101.800 of Bawanikhera to Manheru section & km: 45.200 to km: 49.00 of Rohtak - Bhiwani section (including Manheru, Bhiwani & Bawanikhera) in connection with Manheru- Bawanikhera and Doh Bahall-Bhiwani section Doubling Project 3. Approx. cost of the work : Rs 13,73,80,389.66 4. Bid Security (Earnest Money) to be deposited : Rs 8,36,900.00 5. Date for submission of e-Tender : On 14.03.2024 upto 15.00 hrs 6. Details and particulars of website where e-tender can be seen & filled up : [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) 7. Official email address: [dycec@bkn.railnet.gov.in](mailto:dycec@bkn.railnet.gov.in) Note :- 1. No manual tender will be accepted. 2. The Bid Security (Earnest Money) shall be deposited in cash through e-payment gateway or submitted as Bank Guarantee bond from a scheduled commercial bank of India or as mentioned in the tender documents. The bank guarantee bond should be issued in favour of FA & CAO/Construction, North Western Railway Jaipur otherwise tender will not be considered. 218-DG/24

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**A Winter Carnival was held at SRDAV Public School, Dayanand Vihar**

The Winter Carnival- Euphoria 1.0 held at SRDAV Public School, Dayanand Vihar transformed the Nursery Wing into a lively hub of festivities. The carnival was a fun packed experience stimulating games, music, DIY corners. The thrilling DIY corners like pottery, calming bottles, paper plate crafts and brain gym activities were a huge hit and surely added to the excitement. There were various game stalls and a reading corner that attracted tiny tots. The event was in sync with the Balvatika model as delineated in the NEP 2020 with a focus on developing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities and also early literacy and numeracy in foundational years. The gala event also marked the school's vision towards sustainable practices by spreading awareness for using cloth bags for shopping. Parent visitor Prabhat Ranjan, Science Communicator, Ministry of Science and Technology expressed his delight over the event. Vinita Kapoor, Principal extended her felicitations to organizers, volunteers, and enthusiastic participants for bringing together the winter carnival and making it a memorable event, weaving together the threads of fun, community connections, and experiential learning.

Scan the code for all the latest updates

**Bal Bharati Public School, Rohini Hosts Spectacular Winter Carnival**

Bal Bharati Public School, Rohini organized Winter Carnival on the school premises. The theme of the carnival was Kaushal Utsav, A Skill Fest Extravaganza. The Cavalcade showcased India's folk dances and culture. It fabricated its own uniqueness through the Meena Bazaar- a shopping arcade, camel ride and other adventurous rides, innovative games stalls, multi cuisine food stalls, scintillating stage show, dance floor and many other events like Baby Show, Bhoot Bangla, Kaur Banega Luckpati, Flash Mob, Razzmatazz and Vogue that attracted many guests. Students along with their families and friends thronged to bask and revel in the winter sunshine outdoors. Nikhil Channa, President, CES and Chairman, BBPS, Rohini; Harsh Kumar, Secretary, BBPS, Rohini and other dignitaries of the Child Education Society had graced the occasion. They also appreciated the efforts of the Principal, Geeta Gangwani, staff and students in making this event of fun and frolic a grand success.

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**Prayagraj Nagar Nigam**  
1, Sarojini Naidu Marg, Prayagraj-211001, Uttar Pradesh

NIT NO 1122 ENV/2024 DATE 17/02/2024

**E-TENDER NOTICE, 2nd Time**

This is to inform to all prospective bidders having the required qualification mentioned in the RFP document that Municipal Corporation Prayagraj invites E-Tender for Construction of SLF in Solid waste Processing Plant Baswar Prayagraj.

1	Tender Document Fee	₹12,000/- (non-refundable), RTGS only
2	EMD/Bid Security	₹15.66 Lakhs (Rupees Fifteen Lakh sixty six thousand) (Refundable Through FDR, CDR, BG, RTGS only)
3	Estimated value of bid	₹782.54 Lakhs
4	Account details for EMD/Bid Security & Tender Fee	<b>Tender document Fee/EMD/Bid Security Bank details:</b> Name of the Bank: INDUSIND BANK Account No. 100116210062 IFSC CODE: INDB0000124
5	Date/Time of Publication of Tender document on e-Procurement portal	19.02.2024, 14:00 hrs onwards
6	Last Date & Time for Submission of Tender online.	01-03-2024 upto 15:00 hrs
7	Date & Time of Bid Bid Opening (Technical Bid)	01-03-2024, 16:00 hrs onwards
8	Period of Completion	6 months.
9	Contact Details for the queries (if any)	Environment Engineer, Prayagraj Municipal Corporation email ID: <a href="mailto:env.prayagraj@gmail.com">env.prayagraj@gmail.com</a> Mobile No. +91-8303701016

For more details, please visit the website at <http://www.etender.up.nic.in>.

(Satish Kumar)  
Chief Engineer  
Prayagraj Nagar Nigam

पत्र संख्या : 1122/एन/2024 दिनांक 17.02.2024

**NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY**  
**(Survey & Construction) E-Tender Notice**  
For and on behalf of the president of India, Dy. Chief Engineer/Const.-II, North Western Railway, Udaipur invites e-tender under "Two packet system" from the agencies fulfilling the eligible criteria for the following work:- 1. Tender No. : NWR-SC-NDT-NDTT-NL-T11 2. Name of the work with its location: Construction of major and minor bridges, earthwork in cutting and filling, blanketing, construction of new station building, other service buildings, platforms, PF shelters, circulating area, staff quarters, Road Over Bridges, Road Under Bridges, supply of track ballast, laying and linking of new BG track including turnouts, SEJs, etc, transportation of P-way material and carrying out all other ancillary civil works and track works between Nathdwara (excluding) and Nathdwara Town (including) stations in connection with Nathdwara-Nathdwara Town New Line Project. 3. Approximate cost of work : Rs. 1,31,09,35,607.58 4. Earnest money to be deposited : Rs. 67,04,700.00 (5) Last date for submission of E-tender : 12.03.2024 upto 15.00 hrs. (6) Details and particulars of website where e-tender can be seen & filled up : [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) (7) Office e-mail address: [dycec2ud@railnet.gov.in](mailto:dycec2ud@railnet.gov.in) 214-DG/24

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**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, DEO IRRIGATION PROJECT, KARANJIA**  
AT/PO: KARANJIA, DIST: MAYURBHANJ-757037  
Tel: 06796-296144, e-mail: [ce.jip.dowr@gmail.com](mailto:ce.jip.dowr@gmail.com)

**"A" Procurement Notice**  
Bid Identification No.: 11/CEDEIP of 2023-24

Name of Work : As per Detailed Tender Call Notice  
Total No. of Packages : 01 (One) No. of Individual work  
Estimated cost of Package : 262.95 Lakhs  
Period of Completion : 11 (Eleven) months  
Class of Contractor : "B & A" Class

Procurement Officer	Bid-Identification No.	Availability of tender on-line for bidding	
		From	To
Chief Construction Engineer, Deo Irrigation Project, Karanjia	11/CEDEIP of 2023-24	19.02.2024 at 10.00 AM	04.03.2024 up to 05.00 PM

Further details can be seen from the Govt. web site [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said Website.

Chief Construction Engineer, Deo Irrigation Project, Karanjia  
OIPR - 32337/11/0018/2324

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Commerce and Transport Department  
File No.HO/P&C/T&E-E-1924/01/2022 Dt. 17.02.2024

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (P&C), IDCO, IDCO TOWER, BHUBANESWAR**

**Bid Identification No.P&C/EST-E/202 /2023-24**  
(on behalf of Commerce & Transport Department, Govt. of Odisha)

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement**

- Name of the Work** : Development, Operation and Maintenance of Green Field Sri Jagannath International Airport on PPP mode near Sipasarubali, Puri District, Odisha for Phase-I (4.6 million mppa capacity)
- Value of the Work** : 2203,00,00,000 (Rupees Two Thousand Two Hundred and Three Crore), inclusive of IDC, inflation and GST for Phase-I (4.6 million mppa capacity)
- Period of completion** : 1095 (One thousand and ninety five) days
- Availability of tender online for Bidding** :
  - Start Date : 18:00 Hours of dt. 21.02.2024
  - Pre-bid meeting (VC) at 11.30 AM on 15.03.2024
  - End date : 17:00 Hours of dt. 20.04.2024.
  - Opening date : 17:30 Hours of dt.21.04.2024

Tender details can be seen from the e-procurement portal: [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum or Addendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/-  
Chief General Manager (P&C),  
IDCO, Bhubaneswar

CAD:- OIPR-94075/110002/2324

**कार्यालय : प्रधानाचार्य, जीएएसबीएम मेडिकल कालेज, कानपुर**

संख्या : 46 / क्रम सं/ निविदा-मेडिकल गैसस-ओषि-अय/2022-23 दिनांक 08 फरवरी, 2024

:: निविदा सूचना ::

इस चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय एवं चिकित्सालयों/संस्थानों के विभिन्न विभागों की आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति हेतु वित्तीय वर्ष 2020-21 में किये गये विभिन्न दर अनुमोदन सनाच हो चुके हैं। वित्तीय वर्ष 2024-25 में इस चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय से सम्बद्ध समस्त चिकित्सालयों में आने वाले रोगियों को सुचारु रूप से उपचार सुविधा उपलब्ध करायें जाने हेतु आवश्यक मेडिकल गैसस की आपूर्ति एवं औषधियों की आपूर्ति हेतु विभागीय कार्यों के संपादन हेतु नवीन दर अनुमोदन किये जाने हेतु निविदास (टेन्कीकल/फार्मेसियल बिड्स अलग-अलग) ई-निविदा आमंत्रित करने हेतु निविदा प्रकाशित किये जाने का प्रस्ताव निम्नवत् प्रस्तुत है :-

क्रम	मद	घरोहर राशि	निविदा मूल्य
01	औषधियों की आपूर्ति	1,00,000.00	₹ 6000.00 + जीएएसटी
02	मेडिकल गैसस की आपूर्ति	1,00,000.00	₹ 1000.00 + जीएएसटी
03	कन्टीजेन्सी सामग्रियों की आपूर्ति	50,000.00	₹ 100.00 + जीएएसटी
04	स्टेशनरी सामग्रियों की आपूर्ति/प्रिन्टिंग कार्य	10,000.00	₹ 1000.00 + जीएएसटी
05	कम्प्यूटर स्टेशनरी सामग्रियों की आपूर्ति	10,000.00	₹ 1000.00 + जीएएसटी

**नोट-**

- निविदा प्रपत्र 3090 सरकार के ई-टेंडर पोर्टल [etender.up.nic.in](http://etender.up.nic.in) से दिनांक 20-02-2024 को प्रातः 10 बजे से 11-03-2024 को सायं 05:00 बजे तक डाउनलोड किये जा सकते हैं।
- उक्त के लिए (Two Bids) दू बिड्स सिस्टम के अन्तर्गत निविदास दिनांक 11-03-2024 को सायं 05:00 बजे तक निविदा प्रपत्र 3090 सरकार के ई-टेंडर पोर्टल [etender.up.nic.in](http://etender.up.nic.in) में उपलब्ध किये जा सकते हैं। दिनांक 12-03-2024 को प्रातः 10:00 बजे टेन्कीकल बिड्स खोली जायेंगी।
- निविदा प्रपत्र में अंकित विवरण निविदा सूचना का अंश माना जायेगा और बिना किसी कारण बताये निविदा निरस्त/संशोधन करने का पूर्ण अधिकार अधोस्तराधिकारी में निहित होगा।

प्रधानाचार्य  
मेडिकल कालेज, कानपुर

UP-203723, Dt. 17.02.2024  
Website : [www.upgov.nic.in](http://www.upgov.nic.in)

**उत्तराखण्ड पावर कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड**  
(उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम)  
कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत वितरण मण्डल (शुभांगी) 18 ई.सी. रोड, देहरादून  
दूरभाष: +91-135-2653601

**"ई-निविदा सूचना"**

अधोस्तराधिकारियों द्वारा अनुमोदी/प्रतिष्ठित तथा उत्तराखण्ड शासन द्वारा विद्युत अधिष्ठापन कार्य के लिए अधिकृत 'ए' क्लास लाइसेन्सधारी ठेकेदार जो ईन्कम टैक्स, उत्तराखण्ड जीएसटी, ईपीएफओ, ईपीएफओ, ईएएसआई तथा श्रम विभाग में पंजीकृत हों से निम्न निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

- ई-निविदा संख्या 84/EDCRDDUN/2023-24
- ई-निविदा संख्या 85/EDCRDDUN/2023-24
- ई-निविदा संख्या 86/EDCRDDUN/2023-24
- ई-निविदा संख्या 87/EDCRDDUN/2023-24

उपरोक्त निविदाओं की अधिक जानकारी हेतु वेबसाइट [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in) पर देखें।

"विद्युत बिलों के 24x7 ऑनलाइन भुगतान हेतु [www.upcl.org](http://www.upcl.org) पर जायें"

पत्रांक: 414/विद्युतमण्डल/उपाकालि दिनांक: 17/02/2024 अधीक्षण अभियन्ता  
"राष्ट्र हित में विजली बचायें" टोल फ्री नं० 1800-419-0405

**उत्तराखण्ड पावर कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड**  
(उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम)  
कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, कर्णप्रयाग  
E-Mail: [edc@karnprayag@gmail.com](mailto:edc@karnprayag@gmail.com)

**"ई-निविदा सूचना"**

विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, कर्णप्रयाग, उत्तराखण्ड पावर कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड, के अन्तर्गत निम्नानुसार ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्र सं०	ई-निविदा संख्या
1	42/विद्युतमण्डल/2023-24
2	43/विद्युतमण्डल/2023-24
3	44/विद्युतमण्डल/2023-24
4	45/विद्युतमण्डल/2023-24
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16	57/विद्युतमण्डल/2023-24
17	58/विद्युतमण्डल/2023-24
18	59/विद्युतमण्डल/2023-24

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— 19 FEB 2024 • LUCKNOW —

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JOB  
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Aligning with Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve to make India a \$5 trillion economy and the world's third-largest economy, Uttar Pradesh is steadfastly progressing towards becoming a \$1 trillion economy. With this objective, investment projects worth ₹4.28 lakh crore secured during Investors Summit 2018 have been successfully implemented in the state. Out of the MoUs of ₹40 lakh crore received during UP Global Investors Summit 2023, Projects worth ₹10 lakh crore are being launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister today, which will create more than 34 lakh job opportunities.

On behalf of the 25 crore citizens of the state, we **Welcome & Express our Gratitude** to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for his invaluable guidance and encouragement in Uttar Pradesh's development journey.

**- Yogi Adityanath**  
Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh





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**34** LAKH+  
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by

## Narendra Modi Prime Minister

In the august presence of

**Anandiben Patel**  
Governor  
Uttar Pradesh

**Rajnath Singh**  
Minister of Defence  
Govt. of India

**Yogi Adityanath**  
Chief Minister  
Uttar Pradesh

**Keshav Prasad Maurya**  
Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

**Brajesh Pathak**  
Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

**Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi'**  
Minister, Industrial Development, Export Promotion  
NRI & Investment Promotion, Uttar Pradesh

**Jaswant Singh Saini**  
Minister of State, Parliamentary Affairs &  
Industrial Development, Uttar Pradesh

AND OTHER DIGNITARIES

Date : 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2024 | Time : 12:00 PM

Venue : Indira Gandhi Pratishthan, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow



Electronics Manufacturing Hub



MSMEs Hub



Defence Industrial Corridor



Airport Pradesh



Metro Pradesh



Express Pradesh

LIVE TELECAST

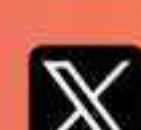
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**Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee**

**Modern farming ensuring empowerment of farmers**

'NAMO Drone Didi' connects farming with technology; 80% relief on purchase of drone

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

Scan for more information

## BJP needs bigger win for India's benefit: PM

Smriti Kak Ramachandran  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Exhorting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) cadres to redouble their outreach in the 100 days leading up to the Lok Sabha polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that retaining power was not an end goal for personal glory but for securing the country's future.

A third consecutive win for the party, the PM said, is imperative for the country's development by 2047, for keeping terrorism, corruption and inflation at bay, and for uninterrupted infrastructure development and economic growth.

"I am not someone who lives for his own happiness. I am advocating for a third term for the BJP not for political gains, but for the benefit of India," he said in his address on the concluding day of the party's national council meeting at Bharat Mandapam in Delhi.

The PM, who frequently attacks the Opposition for fostering dynastic politics and kinship over merit, sought to burnish his credentials as a leader committed to the country and its people.

"My efforts are dedicated to the people of India. The dreams of Indians are my commitment—on →11



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with defence minister Rajnath Singh, Union home minister Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda in Delhi on Sunday.

### SHAH LIKENS 2024 ELECTIONS TO THE MAHABHARATA

**NEW DELHI:** Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday likened the upcoming general elections to the battle of Mahabharata, and said people will have to choose between the "Kauravas", represented by the Congress-led INDIA bloc, and the "Pandavas", represented by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). →P9

### New 'kaalchakra' has begun: BJP resolution

**Smriti Kak Ramachandran**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is a "historic and glorious achievement" for the country that heralds the establishment of "Ram Rajya" in India for the next 1,000 years with the beginning of a new "kaal-

chakra" [cycle of time], a resolution passed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during its national convention on Sunday said.

The idea of "Ram Rajya" was also in the "heart of Mahatma Gandhi" who used to call it the "idea of democracy", the resolution moved by party chief JP Nadda said. →P9

### EAM JAISHANKAR MEETS WANG YI AMID FRICTION IN CHINA TIES

**BEIJING/MUNICH:** External affairs minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi met briefly in Germany on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, their first meeting in over six months, people familiar with the matter said on Sunday.

Video footage from the Munich Security Conference showed Jaishankar and Wang having a brief chat on the sidelines of the event attended by top diplomats from across the world. However, there has been no official word on their discussion from both capitals.

This was the first meeting between the two leaders in over six months. The India-China relations have remained frozen since May 2020. →P10

### KAMAL NATH KEEPS SPECULATION ALIVE, SON MAY JOIN BJP WITH MLAs TODAY

**NEW DELHI:** Speculation continued on Sunday over senior Congressman Kamal Nath and his son Nakul Nath's plans to leave the party, with both leaders not quelling rumours of a possible switch to the BJP. Several loyalists of the father and son reached Delhi on Sunday and party functionaries aware of the developments said Nakul alone, and not Kamal Nath, could join the BJP on Monday along with MLAs from his camp. →P9



Yashvi Jaiswal celebrates after scoring his second consecutive double century, at the Niranjan Shah Stadium in Rajkot on Sunday.

### Jaiswal, bowlers deliver a record 434-run victory

**Rasesh Mandani**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**RAJKOT:** India crushed England by 434 in four days to register their biggest Test victory by runs on Sunday, taking a 2-1 series lead. Their second win in a row followed another resounding counter to the visitors' Bazball approach of all-out aggression.

The brightest young star in India's batting transition, Yashvi Jaiswal, buried England with another sensational innings before the seasoned Ravindra Jadeja captured

**THE VICTORY WAS INDIA'S BIGGEST EVER IN TERMS OF RUNS, ECLIPSING THEIR 372-RUN WIN OVER NEW ZEALAND IN 2021**

five wickets to rout England for 122 in their second innings in just over a session, the all-rounder claiming the Player-of-the-Match award on his home ground after scoring a first-innings 112.

The 22-year-old Jaiswal, whose career graph has zoomed since his debut in the Caribbean last summer, smashed his second consecutive double century to remain 214 not out, after hitting a match-winning 209 in the second Test, in Visakhapatnam. Skipper Rohit Sharma declared at 430/4 before the bowlers ran through the England innings in 39.4 overs.

"It's a big victory and a very good feeling to win a game like that, especially with such a young team." India skipper Rohit Sharma told reporters. →P8

## Ministers assure farmers but no breakthrough yet in talks

HT Correspondent  
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**CHANDIGARH:** Talks between a delegation of Union ministers and senior farm leaders continued deep into the night on Sunday, amid efforts by interlocutors to snap a week-long agitation by cultivators from Punjab and Haryana, who have made a raft of demands, including a law on minimum support prices (MSP).

Union ministers Piyush Goyal, Arjun Munda — who have been part of all four meetings so far — and Nityanand Rai met a group of senior farmer leaders, including Punjab Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarvan Singh Pandher and Bhartiya Kisan Union (Ekta Sidhupur) chief Jagjit Singh Dallewal in Chandigarh. Sunday's negotiations also included Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann.

The previous rounds of talks,



Farmers with their tractors and trolleys at the Punjab-Haryana Shambhu Border, in Patiala district, on Sunday.

on February 8, 12 and 15, all ended in deadlocks over similar sticking points.

The farmers have also demanded debt waivers, employment for relatives of people killed during the cultivators' protest in Delhi between November 2020 and December 2021, compensation for farmers

injured in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence in 2021, and the withdrawal of cases registered against protesting cultivators.

Thousands of farmers have camped at the Punjab-Haryana border since Monday and tried to ram through dense layers of police barricading and head →11

## Pak rigging claims trigger street protests



Supporters of Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party clashed with police on Sunday as they staged protests across various cities in the country, including Peshawar (above), against alleged rigging of the results of the general elections held on February 8. →P12 REUTERS

## Chd mayor quits ahead of SC hearing

Hillary Victor  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**CHANDIGARH:** Three Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Chandigarh councillors joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Manoj Kumar Sonkar quit as the mayor on Sunday, a day before the Supreme Court is scheduled to resume its hearing on a peti-

tion alleging tampering of votes in the mayoral election last month.

The AAP councillors' switch to the BJP is set to give the latter the numerical edge in the event of a fresh election. In a House of 35 (and one MP, the BJP's Kirron Kher, as ex-officio member), a party needs 19 votes to win the poll.

"AAP councillors Neha Musavat and Poonam Sandeep Kumar joined the BJP and Gurcharan Singh Kala returned to the fold on Sunday," former Chandigarh BJP chief Arun Sood said.

The three AAP leaders switched sides in the presence of BJP secretary Vinod Tawde at his residence, Sood added. →P9

## Punjab decision was mutual, no bad blood with Cong: Kejriwal

HT Correspondent  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The AAP and the Congress mutually decided to contest all 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab on their own, Delhi chief minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday, denying that there was a rift between the two parties, both of which are constituents of the Opposition's INDIA grouping.

The two parties are also discussing seat-sharing arrangements for Delhi, which has seven Lok Sabha segments, Kejriwal said, underlining that the BJP will "have it easy" in the absence of an alliance between the Opposition parties.

"In Punjab, Congress and AAP have mutually agreed to contest the polls separately. There is no hostility over this... We are in talks with the Congress over an alliance in Delhi. We are discussing seat-sharing arrangements. The BJP will have it easy if there is no alliance (between AAP and Congress)."

The Delhi chief minister was speaking to reporters after a meeting with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, who he



Arvind Kejriwal (left) and Mallikarjun Kharge during a meeting on Sunday.

interacted with during a visit to senior Congress leader and Supreme Court lawyer Abhishek Singhvi's residence for lunch.

In a video of the meeting shared on social media, Kejriwal could be seen sitting with Kharge, with the latter saying, "We are sitting together after the decision has been taken (*Faisla hone ke baad hi mil rahe hain*)."

On February 11, while addressing a rally in Punjab, Kejriwal said the people of Delhi "will give all seven Lok Sabha seats to the AAP", setting political circles abuzz with speculation that the party would fight the elections independently in the Capital as well. →P3

## U.N. COURT SET TO HOLD HEARING ON ISRAEL'S ACTIONS

**THE HAGUE:** The UN's top court will from Monday hold hearings on the legal consequences of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967, with an unprecedented 52 countries expected to give evidence.

Nations including the United States, Russia, and China will address judges in a week-long session at the Peace Palace in The Hague, seat of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

In December 2022, the UN General Assembly asked the ICJ for a non-binding "advisory opinion" on the "legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem".

The hearing comes amid Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip against the Hamas militant group. →P2

## India, EU to begin 7th round of FTA discussions today

Rajeev Jayaswal and Rezaul H Laskar  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** India and the European Union (EU) will launch the seventh round of negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA) in New Delhi on Monday, along with talks on an investment protection agreement (IPA) and a pact on geographical indications (GIs).

This round of talks is expected to last five days, three officials aware of the development said on condition of anonymity.

The sixth round of negotiations, held in Brussels, concluded on October 27, 2023. The previous round covered policy areas related

to goods and government procurement offers, and the seventh round is expected to include services and investment, one of the officials said.

The sixth round also focused on accelerating work on the text presented by the two sides and some progress was made on technical matters, a second official said.

The two sides have already held "substantial" discussions on matters related to goods and public procurements in previous rounds, the third official said. "The two sides were engaged constructively in the last three to four months to iron out differences and prepare the ground for the seventh round," he said. →P11

### { ERRATIC WEATHER }

## Maximum temperature approaches 30°C, could dip this week



People rest in the shade at Lodhi Gardens on a warm Sunday afternoon. VIPIN KUMAR/HT

Jasveer Gandhiok  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi's temperatures remained on the uptick on Sunday, with the maximum touching 29.7°C, the highest so far this year and five degrees above normal, showed data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

However, the days are likely to get cooler between Monday and Wednesday, said the weather agency, predicting that a western disturbance will bring

the Capital rain and push temperatures down significantly.

"A western disturbance is expected to start impacting Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) from Monday evening and there are chances of a drizzle late at night. Much of the rain is expected on Tuesday, with light to moderate showers likely in Delhi. There is a possibility of some drizzle on Wednesday," said an IMD official.

Temperatures in the city have →8

### Triple-dip La-Nina altered air quality last winter: Study

**NEW DELHI:** The air quality in Delhi-NCR improved last winter due to a rare "triple-dip" La Nina, that reduced pollution levels in north India, but propelled them up in peninsular parts, a study has said. →P4



NUMBER THEORY

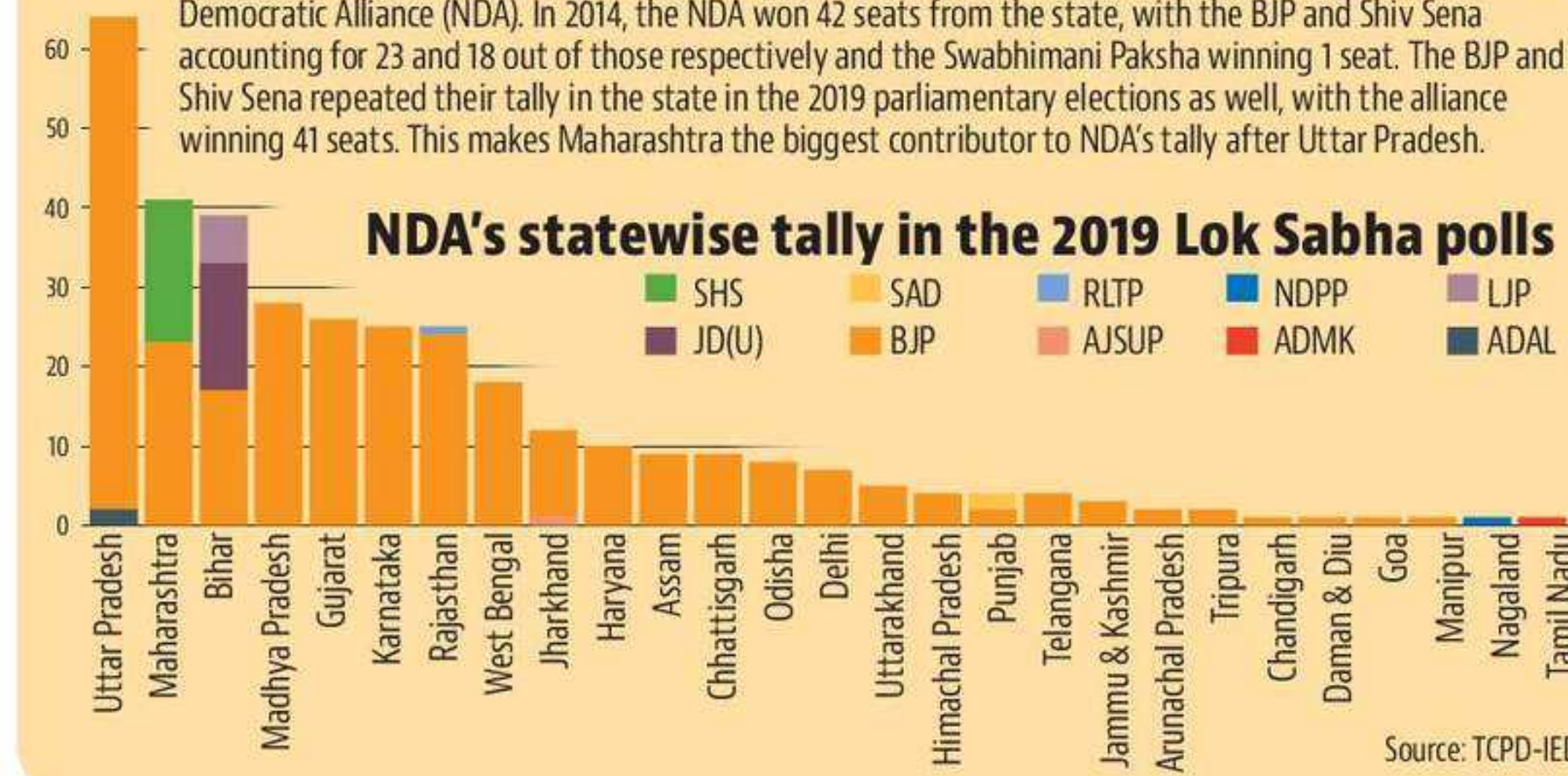
The political black box that is Maharashtra

By Sreedev Krishnakumar

With 48 Lok Sabha MPs, Maharashtra is the second largest state in terms of political representation in India. On paper, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) now has a coalition with the two largest regional parties in the state, namely the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Yet politics in the state seems far from settled and the churn continues. What explains this uncertainty? Here are four charts that try and answer this question.

1 How important is Maharashtra for the BJP's national ambition?

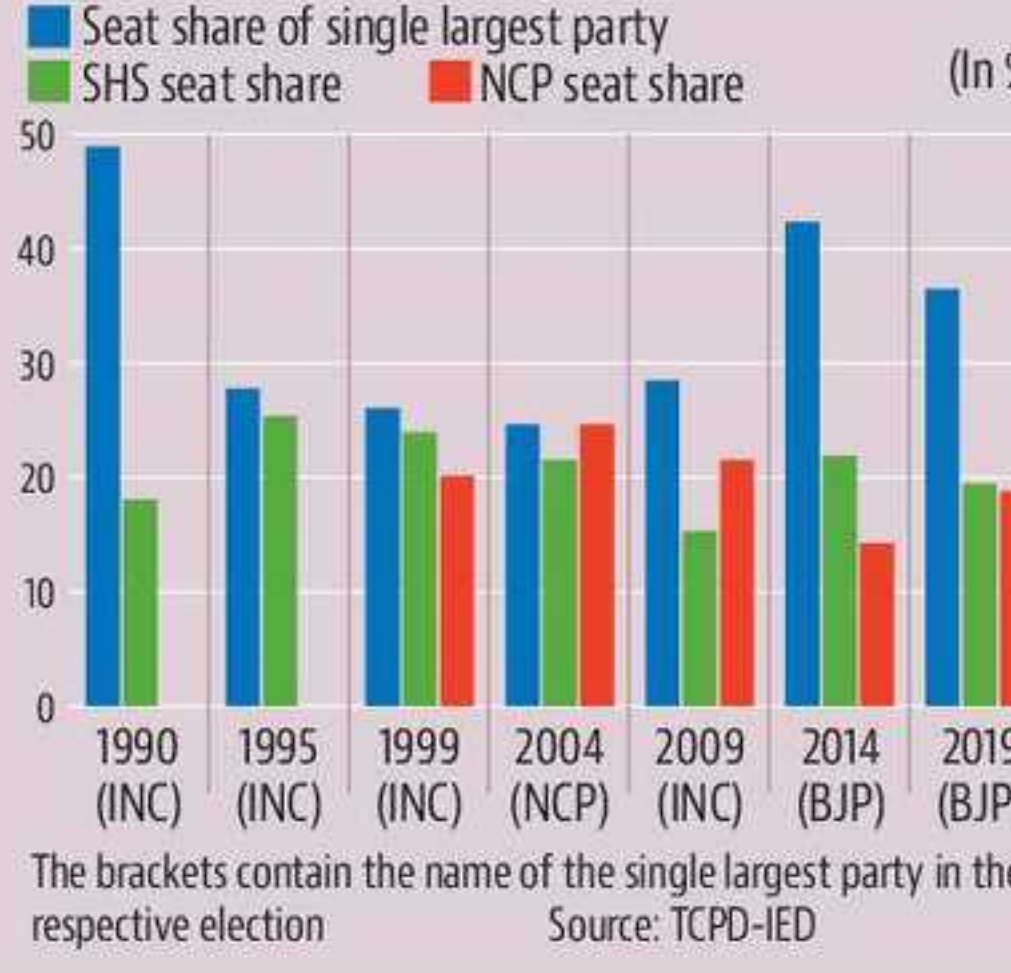
In the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, it was a big contributor to the seat tally of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). In 2014, the NDA won 42 seats from the state, with the BJP and Shiv Sena accounting for 23 and 18 out of those respectively and the Swabhimani Paksha winning 1 seat. The BJP and Shiv Sena repeated their tally in the state in the 2019 parliamentary elections as well, with the alliance winning 41 seats. This makes Maharashtra the biggest contributor to NDA's tally after Uttar Pradesh.



2 BJP has tried, but it cannot win the state alone

The biggest proof of this came in the 2014 assembly elections, which were held months after the Lok Sabha polls. Both the NCP and the Shiv Sena contested on their own in these elections rather than allying with their traditional alliance partners, the Congress and the BJP. While the BJP did finish as the single largest party with 122 MLAs, it fell short of the half-way mark of 145 in the assembly and had to get into a post-poll alliance with the Shiv Sena to form a government. For the Congress, the situation was even more difficult as it was reduced to just 42 MLAs in the assembly, just one ahead of the NCP. 2014 was not the first election in Maharashtra which destroyed any one party's ambition to rule the state. No single party has managed to win a majority of its own in the state since 1990. This is what makes the support of either NCP or Shiv Sena crucial in Maharashtra's politics.

Seat share of Shiv Sena & NCP in the Maharashtra assembly polls

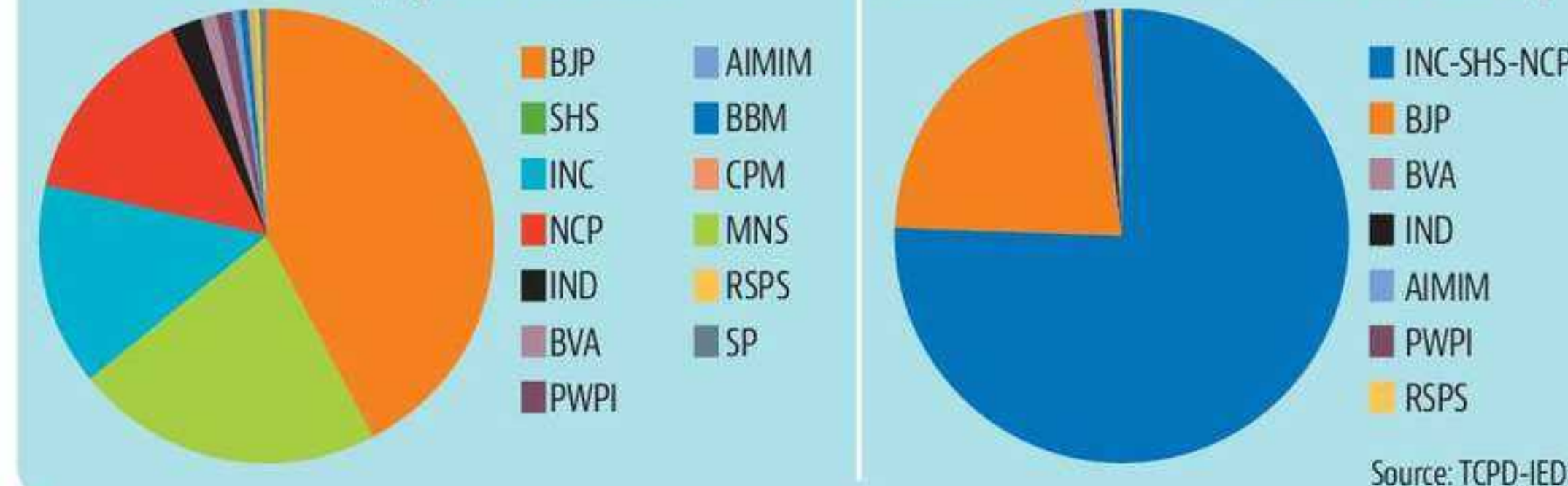


3 This is what made the MVA a big worry for the BJP

The 2019 Maharashtra assembly elections were primarily fought between the BJP-Shiv Sena and Congress-NCP alliances. However, after the results were declared, the alliance between the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena and the BJP broke down, with the Sena demanding its own chief minister. What followed was a grand coalition of Congress-NCP-Shiv Sena, known as the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) which formed the government with Thackeray as the chief minister. Data from the 2014 assembly elections shows that the Congress, together with undivided Shiv Sena and NCP, would have electorally been a formidable force. If the votes received by the three parties in 2014 were added up in each constituency, the Congress-NCP-Shiv Sena alliance would have won a total of 218 seats, way past the majority mark. Meanwhile, the BJP would have lost 60 seats it won originally from its tally.

2014 Maharashtra assembly poll results

Results if INC-NCP-SHS votes are added up in each constituency



4 But the MVA was anything but a natural alliance

To be sure, the Congress and NCP are not natural alliance partners of Shiv Sena, considering the latter's stark difference in ideology. In fact, the Shiv Sena has historically been anti-Congress, until it broke its alliance with the BJP and formed the MVA. These ideological splits can also be seen in their performance in the 2014 assembly elections, when all the four parties contested elections on their own. The largest number of wins for each of them came against their ideological rivals, i.e. both the Shiv Sena and the BJP individually won the most number of seats against the Congress and the NCP and vice versa. For example, of the 41 seats that the NCP won in 2014, 29 came against Shiv Sena (19) and the BJP (10). In the case of Shiv Sena, out of the 63 seats it won, as many as 34 came against its ideological rivals Congress (16) and NCP (18). The same trend could be seen for both Congress and the BJP as well.

Seats independently won against each party in the 2014 Maharashtra assembly elections



What next?

Having dislodged the MVA from power with majority (and now officially recognised) factions of the NCP and the Shiv Sena behind it, the BJP would be hoping to enjoy a formidable alliance for its 2024 Lok Sabha and assembly battles. What remains to be seen is whether the official groups will enjoy the popularity they had or will it still rest with the founders of these two parties, namely the Thackerays and Sharad Pawar. Had elections to local bodies been conducted in the state, answering this question would have been easier. Given the fact that a BJP controlled state government has been delaying these elections, Maharashtra will continue to be a black box until the Lok Sabha elections and perhaps even after that.

{ MY INDIA } IN CHURACHANDPUR

Skip work, ITLF tells government staffers



A prominent Kuki outfit — the Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) — has asked Manipur government employees to refrain from attending work in Churachandpur district from Monday as it again pressed for the reinstatement of a suspended police head constable from the community and the removal of two top officials. The state government on Sunday issued an order, calling the ITLF directive illegal. The order, issued by chief secretary Vineet Joshi said, that "No Work, No pay" will be enforced against those "employees who do not attend their official duty without authorised leave". HT has seen a copy of the order. →P10

{ MY INDIA } ENUMERATION EXERCISE

Jharkhand to carry out caste survey, announces CM Soren



Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren on Sunday announced a caste survey to enumerate the state's caste composition, with officials indicating that the exercise will be held after the Lok Sabha elections in April-May. With this, Jharkhand will become the fourth state to hold such a caste-based headcount after Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. "Jiski jitni sankhya bhari, uski utni hissedari (bigger the population, bigger the share). Jharkhand is ready," Soren said in a post on X as he shared a news report on the matter. Soren's principal secretary Vinay Kumar Choubey also confirmed the survey, saying the "plan has principally been approved". →P9

{ MY INDIA } 'MOLESTED RAPE VICTIM'

Magistrate accused of assault in Tripura



A 23-year-old rape survivor in Dhalai district of Tripura has alleged that she was molested and sexually assaulted by a magistrate inside his chamber, prompting the district and sessions judge to form a committee to look into the matter, according to people aware of the details. In a written complaint to the Kamalpur Bar Association, which was later forwarded to the Kamalpur additional district and sessions judge, the survivor said the alleged incident took place on February 16 when she went to the chamber of first class judicial magistrate to get her statement recorded in connection with her rape. →P9

{ DECADES-LONG CONFLICT }

ICJ to start hearing on 'Israeli occupation'

The United Nations' highest court opens historic hearings on Monday into the legality of Israel's 57-year occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state, plunging the 15 international judges into the heart of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Here's what to know.

**ADVISORY OPINION**

- An unprecedented 52 countries and three organisations, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, are expected to give evidence in six days of hearings at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the seat of the International Court of Justice.
- The court will rule "urgently" on the affair, probably by the end of the year.
- The case arrives at the court after the UN General Assembly voted by a wide margin in December 2022 in favour of a non-binding ICJ "advisory opinion" on the "legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" of the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem.

**SECURITY GROUNDS**

Israel is not scheduled to speak during the hearings, but could submit a written statement. It will likely justify the ongoing occupation on security grounds and point to the October 7 attack in which Hamas-led militants from Gaza killed 1,200 people and took 250 hostage.

An Israeli soldier patrols the street in Jerusalem. REUTERS

**'VIOLATION OF INT'L LAW'**

Palestinian representatives, who speak first on Monday, will argue that the Israeli occupation is illegal because it has violated three key tenets of international law. They say that Israel has:

- Violated the prohibition on territorial conquest by annexing large swaths of occupied land,
- Violated the Palestinians' right to self-determination,
- And imposed a system of racial discrimination and apartheid.

A Palestinian walks past an Israeli checkpoint in occupied West Bank. AFP

**PREVIOUS JUDGMENTS**

It's not the first time the court has been asked to give an advisory opinion on Israeli policies or to declare an occupation illegal. In 2004, the court said that a separation barrier Israel built through east Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank was "contrary to international law." It also called on Israel to immediately halt construction. Israel has ignored the ruling.

**IMPACT ON INT'L JURISPRUDENCE**

Experts say the decision, though not legally binding, could profoundly impact international jurisprudence, international aid to Israel and public opinion. The hearings come as Israel's offensive has killed at least 28,985 people, including children, devastated much of Gaza and forced nearly all of its inhabitants from their homes. The war began after Hamas's October 7 attack.

{ AIRLINES TOLD }

'Flyers must get baggage within 30 mins of arrival'

Neha LM Tripathi  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) in an order has directed all airlines to ensure by February 26 that all passengers get their check-in baggages back within 30 minutes of arrival, in an effort to decongest airport terminals. "Airlines need to ensure that delivery of last baggage is made within 30 minutes as per the Service Quality Requirements of Operation, Management and Delivery Agreement," the civil aviation ministry said in a statement on February 16. The security wing of the ministry also directed the airlines to implement required measures by February 26, it added.



The BCAS has been studying the time taken by airlines to clear arrivals halls of six major airports since January. HT PHOTO

The bureau has been studying the time taken by airlines to clear passengers from arrival halls of six major airports since January, an official said, asking not to be named. These were New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chennai. As per rules, the first baggage should arrive on the belt within 10 minutes of shutting off the aircraft engine and the last bag should be on the belt within 30 minutes. "The airlines have been given final warning in the form of the letter written on Friday. If an airline continues to delay the process of delivering baggage, the ministry will be forced to take action against it," the official said.

The bureau has written to seven airlines — Air India, Indigo, Akasa, SpiceJet, Vista, Air India Express Connect and Air India Express — directing them to take immediate measures that ensure faster delivery of baggage. Airport congestion is a matter of concern at all major airports in India. The government has been taking steps to ease congestion, especially after December 2022, when airports like New Delhi and Mumbai saw a sudden spike in passenger footfall. Since then, civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has been in discussions with airport operators and airlines to reduce congestion. Some measures have been taken, including increasing the number of departure gates, introducing new technologies, such as Digi Yatra, for faster security clearances, and deploying more manpower to handle crowds. Scindia also asked some lounges and commercial areas to be taken down to create more space for passenger movement. "Space allocations for commercial activities are planned on the principle of 'on the way' and 'not in the way' to ensure smooth and natural flow of passengers," he said in December. "The move to ensure baggage delivery on time will not only clear the passengers faster, making space for the others arriving into the hall, but will also help in security of the airport," a government official said, seeking anonymity. "Since the beginning of the review exercise, performance of all airlines are being monitored on a weekly basis and have improved, but are not as per the mandates."

'Consultation on data rules will be fruitless so close to elections'

Aditi Agrawal  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) rules will have a transition period of six months to a year, minister of state for electronics and information technology (MeitY) Rajeev Chandrasekhar has said, adding that while they are ready to be released for consultation, it may not be a fruitful exercise right now ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. "Today, to put the rules out before elections, it has no meaning because in two weeks time, there is going to be nobody in government who is not going to be busy with elections," Chandrasekhar told HT.

We are never going to go with an artificial timeline for any legislation that needs to be future-proof.

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR, MoS IT

The IT ministry, since at least November 2023, has also been working on amending the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, to deal with the issue of deepfakes. Given the imminent general elections, and Chandrasekhar's statement on January 17 that the deepfake-related amendments would be notified in the next seven to 10 days, are amendments to IT Rules expected before elections? "No," he said. "The advisory (issued by MeitY to social media platforms in 2023) clarifies that deepfakes are nothing but AI (artificial intelligence)-powered misinformation. You (platforms) need to deal with it," he said. HT has also learnt that the MeitY is looking to include language related to algorithmic bias in amendments to the IT Rules. "That is a conversation

we have had in the DIA (Digital India Act) context," he said. However, the government could decide to make these amendments to the IT Rules in the third term if the new legislation takes a long time to come, he said. The parliamentary standing committee on communications and information technology hauled MeitY up over the delays in enacting the Digital India Bill and delay in drafting the rules under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 — which despite being notified has not been enacted yet. But Chandrasekhar told HT, "We are never going to go with an artificial timeline for any legislation that needs to be future proof... We have got the legislation [DIA] ready... We want to take this [to the Parliament] after consultation with a lot of inputs, as we did for the pre-consultation." "The nature of platforms is becoming much more complex and diverse... Regulation in the old sense of regulating through functionality or regulating through domain will not work anymore," he said.



# MY DELHI

## Talks continuing over seat sharing in Delhi: Kejriwal

HT Correspondent

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**NEW DELHI:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Congress mutually decided to contest all 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab on their own, Delhi chief minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday, denying that there was a rift between the two parties, both of which are constituents of the Opposition's INDIA grouping.

The two parties are also discussing seat-sharing arrangements for Delhi, which has seven Lok Sabha segments, Kejriwal said, underlining that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will "have it easy" in the absence of an alliance between the Opposition parties.

The Delhi chief minister was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a meeting with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, who he interacted with during a visit to senior Congress leader and Supreme Court lawyer Abhishek Singhvi's residence for lunch.

Kejriwal was accompanied by state minister Atishi. Former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda was also present.

"In Punjab, Congress and AAP have mutually agreed to contest the polls separately. There is no



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, senior Congress leader Abhishek Singhvi and former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda. HT PHOTO

hostility over this... We are in talks with the Congress over an alliance in Delhi. We are discussing seat-sharing arrangements. The BJP will have it easy if there is no alliance (between AAP and Congress)."

When asked about Kejriwal's remarks, leaders of the Delhi units of the BJP and Congress did not offer a comment.

In a video of the meeting that was posted on social media, Kejriwal could be seen sitting along Kharge, with the latter saying, "We are sitting together after the decision has been taken (Faisla hone ke baad hi mil rahe hain)".

On February 11, while address-

ing a rally in Punjab, Kejriwal said the people of Delhi "will give all seven Lok Sabha seats to the AAP", setting political circles abuzz with speculation that the party would fight the elections independently in the Capital as well.

That statement came a day after the Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann declared that AAP would independently compete for all 13 seats in Punjab.

In response, Pratap Singh Bajwa, the leader of the opposition in Punjab assembly, expressed gratitude to Mann, stating that this aligns with the Congress's preferences.

The AAP on February 13 held a

meeting of its Political Affairs Committee (PAC), after which Kejriwal said the party wants to contest six of Delhi's seven Lok Sabha. He added that the AAP would give one seat to the Congress, based on its recent electoral performances in the Capital.

AAP national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak said that the Congress "does not deserve to contest even a single seat in Delhi", but that the AAP is ready to offer one Lok Sabha seat to the grand old party as part of alliance dharma.

After the PAC meeting, the AAP announced candidates for two Lok Sabha seats in Gujarat and one in Goa, and said it wants to contest 8 of the 26 seats in Gujarat, and one of the two seats in Goa in alliance with Congress, and blamed the Congress for the delay in the finalisation of the seat-sharing talks.

The BJP has held all seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi since 2014. Meanwhile, the AAP has 62 MLAs in the 70-member Delhi assembly, while the BJP has the rest and the Congress has none.

However, in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls which the AAP and the Congress contested separately, the Congress stood second on five seats and the AAP came at the second spot in two Lok Sabha seats.

## Concern over illegal units after fire

Hemani Bhandari

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**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Police and local residents have written to the sub-divisional magistrate of Alipur, demanding action against the illegal factories running in the area. The demand came in the backdrop of the death of 11 people in a devastating fire on Thursday in a paint factory in the Nehru Enclave

area of the north Delhi locality.

Local residents on Friday said they had complained about many of these industrial units operating out of the area, but the authorities did not initiate action against them. A local resident alleged that there were about 10-12 alleged illegal manufacturing factories in area.

A senior police officer said, "We have been apprised of the situation by the residents of the

area. We have written to the SDM to take action against the illegal factories in the area."

The SDM did not respond to requests seeking comment.

Gaurav Verma, 32, whose house was damaged as the fire spread through the area after drums containing paint and other chemicals exploded, said he had written to the police and SDM on the matter, and has sought compensation. "I have

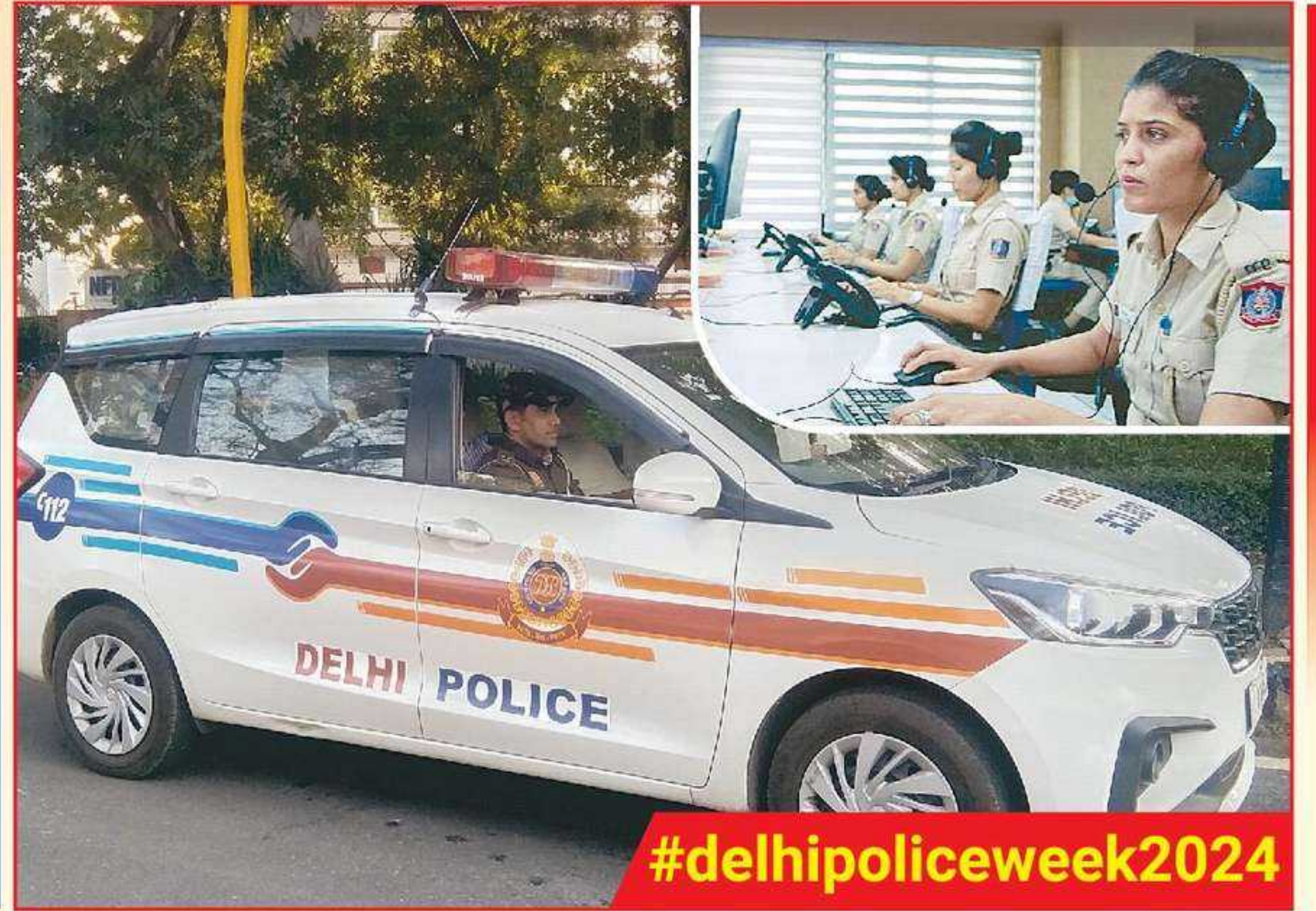
also written about the damage the fire has caused and asked for compensation," he said.

A Delhi Municipal Corporation official said, "Action against industries in the non-conforming area has been taken several times but new units keep coming up."

Delhi chief minister on Friday said that a full assessment will be done and compensation will be given to victims.



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# Dog squad to curb smuggling of illicit liquor through Asola

**HT Correspondent**  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi forest and wildlife department is planning to deploy a dog squad at the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary to check the illicit smuggling of country-made liquor from Haryana to the Capital, officials aware of the matter have said.

The department has written to the eco-task force (ETF) at the sanctuary to form a proposal to train the canine unit, officials said, adding that once the training is complete, the dogs will be handed over to forest guards to help patrol the boundaries of Asola Bhatti.

ETF comprises personnel from the 132 Infantry Battalion of the territorial army, who have been deployed in the southern Ridge since 2000 as part of a project sanctioned by the Delhi government to revive and rejuvenate the degraded Asola and Bhatti areas.

"We have asked ETF to draft a proposal on the number of dogs that will be needed to cover the sanctuary, and the expected cost. Once the dogs are trained, they will be handed over to forest guards on the

**THE FOREST DEPARTMENT HAS WRITTEN TO THE ECO-TASK FORCE AT THE SANCTUARY TO FORM A PROPOSAL TO TRAIN THE CANINE UNIT**



## A liquor run through a sanctuary

- HT had reported in 2021 that the smuggling began when liquor stores were shut in the wake of the Covid-19 lockdown
- According to the officials, large quantities of illicit liquor were smuggled to south Delhi's Sangam Vihar from liquor vendors near Haryana's Anangpur village
- The Anangpur village is located near the boundary of Asola Wildlife sanctuary

**JULY 1, 2021:** HT's report on bootlegging in the sanctuary.

ground," Delhi's chief wildlife warden Suneesh Buxy said, adding that though instances of liquor smuggling were on the decline over the past two years, a dog squad is being looked at as a long-term solution to the problem.

"They will also be trained to identify narcotics and sniff them out. Kennels will be created within the sanctuary to keep the dogs there full-time," Buxy said.

HT on July 1, 2021 reported

that smugglers have created makeshift dirt tracks cutting through Asola Bhatti to smuggle large quantities of liquor into Delhi from Haryana, and have broken a portion of the sanctuary's boundary wall, which was right next to a liquor store in Haryana.

A second forest official said liquor is smuggled into Delhi from Sarang village in Haryana — located inside the sanctuary — with bootleggers mostly travelling at night.

"The liquor is brought to Sangam Vihar, as it is located next to the sanctuary. These bootleggers mostly travel on foot. Earlier, they would use two-wheelers as the sanctuary walls had openings, which have since been plugged," the official said, on condition of anonymity.

Buxy said the dog squad will also help protect forest guards and rangers on the ground — there have been several instances in the past where bootleg-

gers attacked forest officials.

The most recent example was in September 2021, when four forest guards were attacked by a group of around 25 bootleggers, resulting in them sustaining grievous injuries and requiring hospitalisation, he added.

After the incident, the forest department had written to the Delhi Police, seeking assistance to patrol the sanctuary. However, no additional manpower was provided to them.

# Bijwasan rail terminal site is not a forest, rules NGT

**HT Correspondent**  
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**NEW DELHI:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT), has observed that the land on which the Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) is building the Bijwasan Rail Terminal station in Dwarka's sector 21, is neither a protected forest nor a deemed forest, dismissing a plea alleging trees had been felled on a 'protected forest' by the body.

Allowing the project to proceed, the tribunal in an order on February 13, however, asked the project proponent to ensure any further felling of trees is done only after seeking permission from Delhi's forest and wildlife department.

RLDA was fined ₹5.93 crores by Delhi's state forest department in 2022, after it had found around 990 trees to be felled at the site of the station, without any prior permission. A series of inspections were conducted on the site by the forest department, following allegations from local residents that RLDA was carrying out large scale felling of trees for the project.

According to officials aware of the matter, the project will see an airport-style makeover of Bijwasan station by 2024. It includes a new terminal building spread over an area of 30,400 square metres (sqm), an air concourse across 12,500sqm and a circulating road network of 123,500sqm. The new Bijwasan railway station will have eight platforms. Currently, it has just two platforms.

Permissions have to be sought under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994, for any construction work in Delhi. If the area is found to be a protected forest, or a deemed forest, then further permissions are required under the Forest Conservation Act, 2023, too.

## Station on track

**THE PROJECT** RLDA is giving an airport-style makeover to Bijwasan Rail Terminal station in Dwarka's Sector 21

### THE CASE SO FAR

- In 2022, RLDA was fined ₹5.93 crore for felling 990 trees at the site without permission.
- RLDA said it did not seek permission as the land was barren when it began the project.
- A plea asked NGT to halt the project because trees were felled on forest land.
- But NGT ruled that the land is neither a deemed forest nor a protected forest, and the project can proceed. However, RLDA must seek permission before felling any more trees.

### DEEMED FOREST

A deemed forest is not a notified or a reserve forest. In Delhi, any area over 2.5 acres with over 100 trees per acre, or 1km stretches with same density is a deemed forest

NGT was hearing a plea filed by a Delhi resident RM Asif, who called for the tribunal to halt the project and said over 1,000 trees had been felled in the forest land, which was a violation of the Forest Conservation Act. In a submission made last week, the forest department had told NGT the area was not a protected forest, but it may be a deemed forest, based on the density of trees.

A deemed forest is not a notified or a reserve forest and different states have different definitions. In Delhi, any area over 2.5 acres with over 100 trees per acre is called a deemed forest. Similarly, 1km stretches of roads and drains with the same density are also deemed forests. The concept came into existence following a Supreme Court order in the TN Godavaram case in 1996.

"Council for the respondent (RLDA) has pointed out that DDA had handed over the possession of about 110.07 hectares of land to the Railways. He has also pointed out the plea of the applicant... that there are 1,100 trees at the subject land. Hence, he submits that on calculating the number of alleged trees standing on per acre of land... this land does not fall

under the category of deemed forest," said NGT in its order, dated February 13, stating the recently amended Forest Conservation Act 2023 also did not cover deemed forests anymore.

A bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said the counsel for RLDA had also made a categorical statement before the tribunal that all rules will be followed at the time of implementation of the project.

"Hence, we are of the view that adequate precautions have already been taken to prevent illegal felling of trees. Even otherwise, we make it clear that respondents during the implementation of the project, will not cut any tree unauthorisedly or illegally and will follow all the environmental norms including compensatory plantation. That they will carry out the activity on the subject land only with due approval and compliance of the conditions imposed by the environmental authorities," said the NGT.

Last year, RLDA had said that it did not seek any permission as the land was barren when the project was awarded nine years ago. RLDA did not respond to requests for comment on Sunday.

{ ELSEVIER JOURNAL STUDY }

# 'Triple-dip La Nina led to better winter air in 2023'

**HT Correspondent**

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**NEW DELHI:** The air quality in the National Capital Region (NCR) improved significantly last winter due to a rare weather phenomenon, known as a "triple-dip" La Nina, that reduced pollution levels in north India, but propelled them up in the peninsular parts of the country, said a study released on Sunday.

The triple-dip, or three consecutive years of La Nina, deeply impacted oceans and the climate across the globe, said the study titled "Triple dip La-Nina, unorthodox circulation and unusual spin in air quality of India", published in the Elsevier Journal.

A team of scientists led by Gufran Beig, chair professor of the National Institute of Advanced Studies, worked on the project.

"The winter of 2022-23 coincided with the last phase of an unusual triple-dip La Nina event, the first in the 21st century. This phenomenon, influenced by climate change, impacted the large-scale wind pattern, playing a decisive role in preventing

stagnation conditions in north Indian cities, thus improving air quality," said RH Kripalani, a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology and co-author of the report.

La Nina is a climate phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean, where stronger winds push warm waters towards the west, leaving behind cooler waters in the eastern Pacific. In India, the weather pattern is associated with a strong monsoon and above average rains and colder winters. La Nina has a cooling influence in India and brings about unusual spring and summer dominated by extreme record-breaking heat spells.

"The dominance of higher northerly winds at the transport level forced an influx, along with relatively slower winds near the surface, trapping pollutants in peninsular India and increasing PM2.5 concentration," Kripalani said.

Conversely, feeble western disturbances, unique wind patterns, and the absence of rain, clouds, and faster ventilation led to a significant improvement in air quality in the north," Kripal-

ani added.

Among the north Indian cities, Ghaziabad's air improved most significantly, with PM2.5 (an ultrafine pollutant) levels dipping 33%, followed by Rohtak (30%) and Noida (28%). Delhi's air improved by around 10%. On the contrary, Mumbai recorded the worst deterioration with a 30% jump in PM2.5 levels, followed by other peninsular Indian cities like Coimbatore (28%), Bengaluru (20%) and Chennai (12%), among others.

The scientists used the newly developed advanced NIAS-Safar air quality forecasting model, which combines a chemical-transport model with an indigenous developed modern artificial intelligence algorithm.

"Our findings are vindicated as the air quality in the winter of 2023-24, when La Nina ended, returned to normal levels," Beig said.

"The findings of the current paper suggest that we need to wake up to the fact that extreme and unusual occurrences in air pollution phenomena are directly or indirectly manifestations of climate change," he said.

# Delhi's 1st bird census to start from Feb-end; to be held every 3 months

**Jasjeev Gandhiok**

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**NEW DELHI:** Delhi's forest and wildlife department is planning to create a "bird atlas" for the Capital, which will have details of the city's bird diversity in terms of species and their distribution across the city. The department is planning to create the atlas by the end of the year by conducting a series of bird census, beginning this month-end, officials aware of the matter said on Sunday.

A bird atlas helps the states to look at the change in bird diversity and density over the years. It also uses maps to help identify important bird habitats.

A census is planned to be carried out once every three months, which will provide the government adequate data on both resident and migratory birds across different seasons, they added. Forest officials said this will be for the first time that the department will carry out a bird census in the city, which will eventually provide the data to create Delhi's first bird atlas.

Suneesh Buxy, Delhi's chief wildlife warden, said to gather data and conduct census across

### What is bird atlas?

A bird atlas helps the states to look at the change in bird diversity and density over the years. It also uses maps to help identify important bird habitats.

**Locations selected for February census**

Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, Najafgarh Jheel, entire stretch of the Yamuna floodplains from Palla till Okhla, Delhi Zoo, Bhalswa Lake and Sanjay Lake

**Focus on both resident and migratory birds**

**Forest dept to be assisted by**

Delhi Development Authority's Biodiversity Parks Programme and Delhi University students

**Other states that have such record**

Kerala was India's first state to get a bird atlas in 2020, making use of over 25,000 checklists to map out the state's birds. Goa has recently come up with a one-year bird atlas programme, based on the Kerala model.

the city, the department will seek assistance from Delhi Development Authority's (DDA's) Biodiversity Parks Programme and Delhi University students. A date to start the first such census is still being finalised. Birders have also been approached by the department to cover different wetlands and bird-rich areas of the Capital, he added.

"The plan is to carry out a bird census every three months,

which will be able to look at the changes in bird density over different seasons. We will start the first census of this year in February-end, which will represent the winter season. The goal is to track migratory birds too and the different species that are reaching the Capital each year, which will help create a detailed bird atlas," Buxy told HT, stating this will be an annual publication released by the department.

"We looked at states like Kerala and Goa, which have their own bird atlas," he said.

So far, the department has shortlisted over 10 locations at the moment for the February census, with more to be added, depending on the number of volunteers, it said. These include Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, Najafgarh Jheel, entire stretch of the Yamuna floodplains from Palla till Okhla, Delhi Zoo, Bhalswa Lake and Sanjay Lake.

"By covering the floodplains, we will also be able to cover locations such as Baansera, Asita, Kalindi Aviral, Garhi Mandu and Yamuna Biodiversity Park, which are all on the floodplains," Buxy added.

Though bird counts are held in Delhi-NCR annually, these are normally held by birders at an informal level, with its data uploaded on the website, eBird.

On February 4, birders had taken part in the Big Bird Count 2024, held over 30 different locations spread out across Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR), finding 237 species.

Faiyaz Khudsar, scientist-in-charge of DDA's biodiversity parks programme, who will be assisting the department with

the first census this month, said this was a welcome move and will provide Delhi with its own data of Delhi's rich bird diversity.

"A bird atlas will require long-term planning. First, the number of locations being covered will have to be fixed. Then, we will have to fix permanent points at each spot, which will have to be covered every time a census is conducted," said Khudsar.

Nikhil Devasar, a birder and one of the organisers of the Big Bird Count in NCR, said a bird atlas would be extremely helpful for Delhi. However, it will require extensive data collection, beyond the census planned every three months. "We have told the forest department ideally, we will need to collect data every other week and bird data needs to be collated for at least 1.5 years, before the first bird atlas can come out. We have also suggested them to make the eBird portal as the baseline," he said.

Delhi is supposed to have a rich bird biodiversity, a comprehensive assessment of which has been presented in the book, "Birds of Delhi area", by birder Sudhir Vyas. He has listed 470 different species that have been sighted in the Capital in the past.

# 9 ROADS IN EAST DELHI'S SHAHDARA TO BE UPGRADED: PWD MIN ATISHI

**NEW DELHI:** Public works department (PWD) minister Atishi has approved the strengthening and upgradation of nine major roads across Shahdara district in East Delhi, the government said on Sunday.

The nine stretches that would be revamped under the project include GT Road to Road 64, LIC Road, Road 69 and Gurudwara Road. The government added that the initiatives aim to offer a more pleasant commuting experience for residents and enhance the overall interconnectivity of different areas.

Atishi said, "The sanctioned road strengthening projects across Delhi reiterate the government's emphasis on establishing a secure transportation network. Strengthening of these roads will positively impact thousands of individuals in the area, alleviating congestion and enhancing interconnectivity from main roads to colonies."

"PWD has conducted assessment of the roads with the assistance of experts and has been instructed to initiate the upgrading process," the minister added.

# 3-stage restoration planned for Sultanate-era reservoir

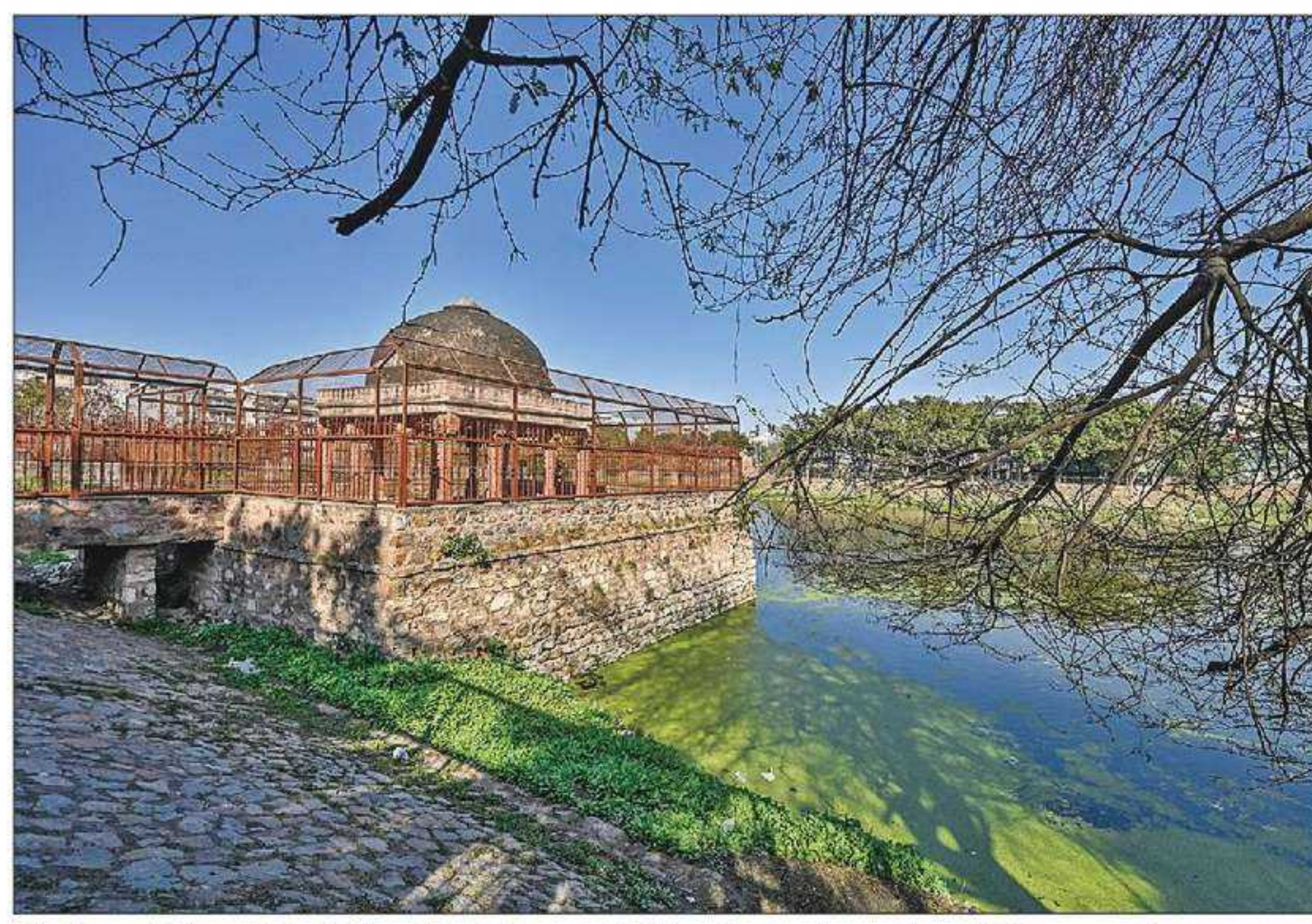
**Aheli Das**

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**NEW DELHI:** The Hauz-i-Shamsi — a reservoir in Mehrauli built by 13th century Delhi Sultanate ruler Shamsuddin Iltutmish due to a dream — has seen better days. Once, it covered over a hundred acres and was lined with red sandstone. Now, it is spread across a 7.05-acre land, according to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the red sandstone is missing, its banks are fenced, and occasionally home to heaps of garbage.

By the end of 2024, however, the reservoir, which is protected by ASI, might reclaim its lost glory. ASI, along with Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS), an NGO, has taken up the project of restoring Hauz-i-Shamsi, popularly known as Shamsi Talab.

"The revival of the 13th century reservoir will be done in three stages, the first of which was concluded in the first week of February. From September to November last year, and then again, this month, we removed around 300 tonnes of water hyacinth, duckweed and algae



The Hauz-i-Shamsi in Mehrauli on February 9. Since September, at least 300 tonnes of water hyacinth, duckweed, and algae have been removed from the reservoir.

from the reservoir," said an on-ground team member of SEEDS, Delhi.

The second stage of the restoration will involve bacteria treatment and will commence

in April. "Then we will move to the third stage, which will ensure that sewage water from neighbouring pipelines does not get leaked into the reservoir. We will also clean up the banks and

tighten the fence around it to discourage people from throwing their garbage here," said the member. According to the detailed project report, which has been approved by stake-

holders such as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, ASI, and the Delhi Jal Board, the restoration work should be complete by late 2024-early 2025.

There is also a pavilion — a domed chhatra supported on 12 stone pillars — on the bank of the Hauz-i-Shamsi. As per the "List of Muhammadan and Hindu Monuments, Volume III-Mahrauli Zila" compiled by Maulvi Zafar Hasan, assistant superintendent of the ASI in 1922, "it was erected by Iltutmish... at the same time when he built Hauz-i-Shamsi in 1229-30 AD..." but also mentions that its construction is ascribed to Alauddin Khalji in 1311-12 AD. This too is a protected structure.

The closest locality consisting of two wards, including ward eight completely and parts of ward six, starts about 100 metres away from the Shamsi lake, mostly tall buildings with apartments packed in neat lines, blocking the horizon opposite to the Jahaz Mahal. The Jahaz Mahal is on the north-east corner of the Hauz-i-Shamsi, a Lodhi-era structure, protected by ASI. While some historians believe that it was used as a mosque, others think

that it was perhaps the residence of a holy man.

"Hauz-i-Shamsi is a historical water body, and so close to our homes. We hope that once the restoration work is done, people will come here to enjoy its beauty," said Amar Kumar, 40, a teacher by profession, who lives in Mehrauli's ward 6, about 200 metres away from the reservoir.

### About a Dream

The belief is that Iltutmish, the 13th century ruler, built the tank after the Prophet appeared in his dream. As per Maulvi Hasan, "...Iltutmish intended to build a tank. He was very anxious to select a suitable site for it, when one night the Prophet appeared to him in a dream riding a horse and advised the king to build the tank, he desired, where the Prophet had appeared."

Maulvi Hasan wrote that the next morning, Iltutmish went with saint Qutb Sahib to the place pointed in the dream and found that "a mark of one of the hoofs of the Prophet's horse was imprinted on the spot where he had appeared in the dream, and that water was flowing from the mark." The ASI listing mentions

that the tank is "treated as a most holy spot."

**Attempts at restoration**

In 2015, ASI had attempted to restore the reservoir but it did not go as planned.

"People keep throwing trash which pollutes the lake again and again. We ensure that the lake is cleaned periodically but lack of community awareness makes it very difficult," said Misbah Noorie, an ASI engineer.

Finally, in 2022, ASI signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with SEEDS.

"Following the MOU, the NGO has been conducting routine clean-ups of the reservoir. It is of utmost importance that all historical structures are conserved properly," said Misbah Noorie, an engineer with ASI.

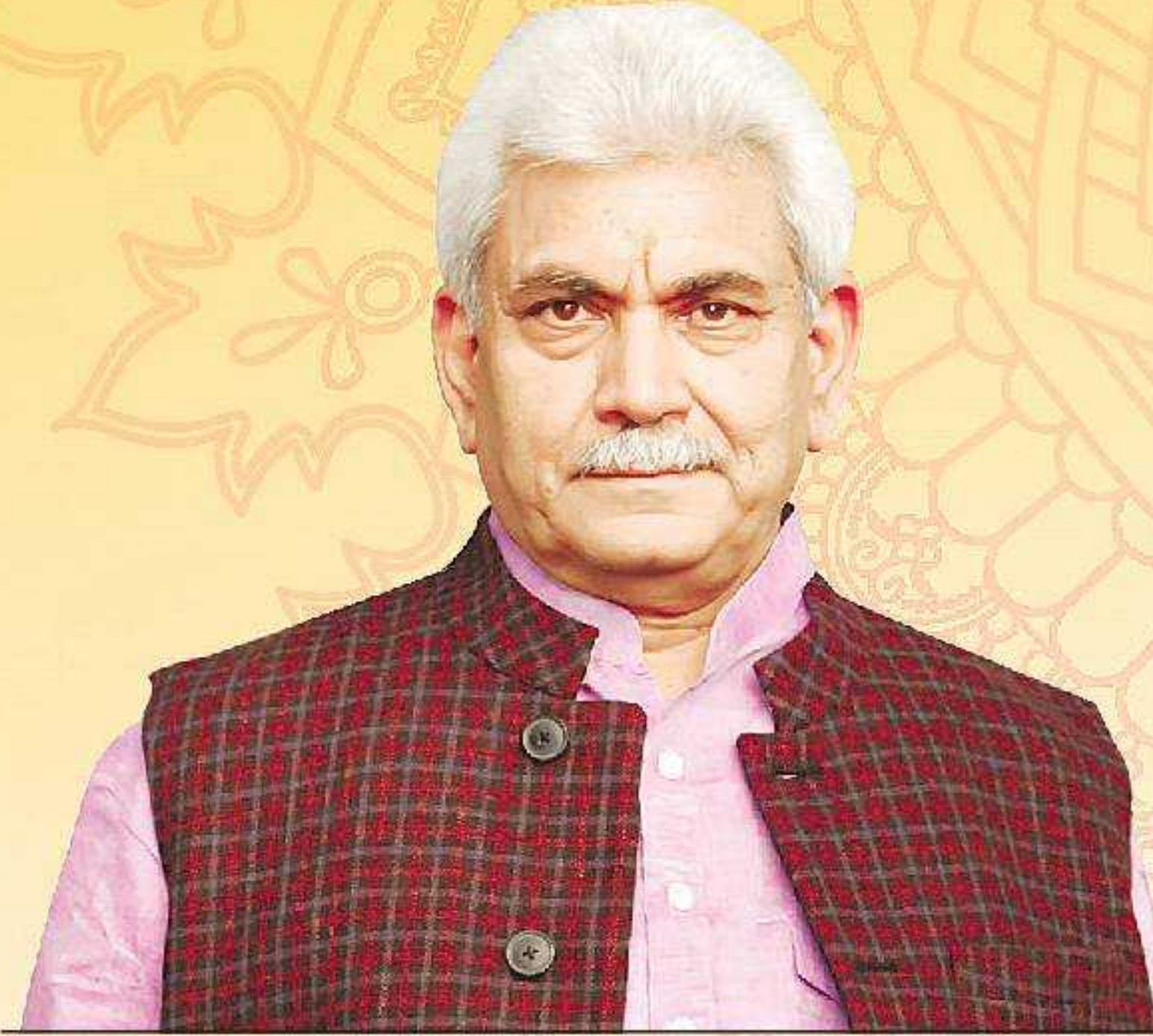
For the residents of Mehrauli, the restoration plan brings with it some hope. "Sewage water gets leaked into the reservoir and leads to a lot of pollution. People also keep throwing trash on the bank, which leads to a terrible stink. The restoration, we hope, will solve these problems for us," said Mini Gupta, 28, who lives in ward 5, about 500 metres away from the reservoir.





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# Flyover project on busy W Delhi stretch delayed

**Paras Singh**  
paras@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Commuters using the west Delhi section of the Ring Road between Punjabi Bagh and Moti Nagar are likely to continue to face heavy congestion and delays for at least another three months as the Public Works Department has pushed the deadline for the construction of an elevated corridor between Raja Garden flyover and Punjabi Bagh flyover May 31 this year.

Earlier, the project was to be finished by January 31, 2024.

According to a progress report of the project prepared by the department, 85% of the civil work has been completed but there will be delays on account of shifting utilities -- overhead high-tension power lines and Delhi Jal Board water lines. However, the department plans to open the Moti Nagar section of the corridor by early March, senior officers involved in the project said.

A senior PWD official said that the power discom is likely to complete work on shifting the overhead power lines by March. "We will also need forest department's permission for tree felling and a DJB water pipeline passing through the right of way in Club Road flyover also needs to be relocated. Due to these hurdles, the completion deadline has been shifted to May 31, 2024," the official who asked not to be named said.

But the official said the Moti Nagar flyover's basic structure is ready and it can be opened for the traffic once the black-topping of carriageway is done. "It needs 10 days of work to open the road for traffic. We were hoping to bring construction material from Faridabad but this has been temporarily delayed due to restrictions in the wake of farmers' protest. We hope to open the Moti Nagar section by early March," the official added.

The west Delhi corridor development and connectivity plan for the influence zone of the Ring Road stretch between Punjabi Bagh Flyover and Raja Garden was launched in September 2022, and the first deadline was set for December 8, 2023. Delhi PWD minister Atishi inspected



Photo: Sanchit Khanna/HT

## Key road link misses deadline

The Punjabi Bagh flyover project was supposed to be done by January 31

**₹352 crores ESTIMATED COST**

**PROJECT STARTED IN: September 2022**

### What is the project?

Elevated corridor between Raja Garden flyover and Punjabi Bagh flyover, it involves development of a six-lane elevated corridor from the ESI Hospital to the existing Club Road half flyover, one of the busiest road stretches in Delhi

### What PWD officials say?

- The corridor will be completed in two phases: Moti Nagar six-lane flyover will be opened by early March
- The Punjabi Bagh flyover will be completed by May 2024

### How it will help

Will reduce the carbon emission by 160,000 tonnes annually

**1.8 mn litres** Amount of fuel savings annually

**₹200 crores** Money to be saved on fuel costs

**Hurdle and cause of delay?** Shifting of power lines, heavy traffic, Grap construction curbs

the site in October, highlighting the delay in the construction work of Moti Nagar and Punjabi Bagh flyovers. She directed the officials to complete the construction work by January 2024, pointing out that both flyovers were crucial for making the Ring Road jam-free.

A government spokesperson said: "Moti Nagar flyover will be inaugurated by first week of March, as work is nearing completion. Punjabi Bagh flyover will be completed by end of March."

The project involves doubling of three-lane flyovers at Moti Nagar and Punjabi Bagh and connecting them to develop a six-lane corridor from the ESI Hospital to the Club Road flyover. The ₹352.3-crore-project is being carried out under corridor development and flyover construction scheme of PWD. Then PWD minister Manish Sisodia laid the foundation stone of the project in September 2022.

PWD had earlier said that the project lost momentum when construction was banned under

the Graded Response Action Plan (Grap). The construction work on flyovers bridges and other such linear projects was suspended in Delhi in November due to high pollution levels by the Commission on Air Quality Management in Delhi NCR.

A second PWD official said that besides utility relocation, another primary reason for the delay in Punjabi Bagh flyover was installation of girders in the presence of heavy traffic near the Bharat Darshan section.

Karan Harjani, who regularly takes the stretch from Pitampura to Punjabi Bagh, said that the residents of Punjabi Bagh have to endure traffic snarls every day due to delayed flyover construction, and potholes. "The plight of entire west Delhi is the same," he said.

Nidhi Chaudhary, another commuter wrote on X, "It's been so long Punjabi Bagh flyovers are under construction... and the traffic on the Ring Road which is the life line of the Delhi is observing traffic jams... people are suffering and there isn't any police personnel to manage the traffic."

The corridor between the Punjabi Bagh Flyover and Raja Garden Flyover is a part of busiest sections of Ring Road, and it experiences a heavy traffic load because apart from the regular city traffic, it also takes traffic from Haryana using the Rohtak Road (NH-10). The key route also connects north Delhi to south Delhi, Gurugram, and other parts of the NCR.

"An estimated 125,000 vehicles pass through the two flyovers every day and once the project is complete it is estimated to lead to annual saving of 1.8 million litres of fuel annually and 27,000 man-hours due to reduction in congestion. The fuel saving will lead to reduction of 160,000 tonnes of carbon emissions annually," the second PWD official added.

The infrastructure planning arm of DDA -- the Unified Traffic and Transportation Infrastructure (planning and engineering) Centre or UTTIPEC had cleared the project in December 2020. The expenditure finance committee of the Delhi government provided the financial approval for the project on May 10, 2022.

## LG INAUGURATES ALL-WOMEN POLICE POSTS IN CAPITAL

**HT Correspondent**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Lieutenant governor VK Saxena inaugurated two all-women police posts along with commissioner of police Sanjay Arora on Sunday. One of the police posts is located at Swami Shradhanand Marg, while the other is in Khan Market, officials aware of the matter said.

"The inauguration of the all-women police posts heralds a new era of inclusivity and efficiency in policing. It exemplifies a progressive step towards gender parity and underscores the dedication of law enforcement authorities to serve and protect all members of the community," the LG's office said in a statement.

"We remain committed to increasing the strength of women in the police force to 33 per cent as soon as possible," Saxena said in a statement.

Sub-inspector Puja Saini has been appointed as the in-charge of the Khan Market post and sub-inspector Kiran Sethi will be at the helm at Shradhanand Marg, the officials said.

## AAP announces protest to push water bills scheme

**HT Correspondent**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday announced that it will soon launch protests against the alleged hurdles being put before the implementation of the Delhi Jal Board's One-Time Settlement Scheme for water bill arrears "at the behest of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and lieutenant governor (LG) VK Saxena".

The BJP, meanwhile, said that the AAP government fails to fully implement the scheme-related administrative procedures and then blames and targets the officials.

HT reached out to LG office, but the officials did not respond to request for comment.

AAP functionaries, MLAs, councillors and cabinet ministers held a meeting at the Civic Centre on Sunday over the scheme being allegedly obstructed by bureaucrats. In a statement, AAP said due to LG's pressure, government officials have refused to implement it.

Delhi minister Gopal Rai said that the problem of increased water bills is being faced across Delhi. "Wherever I go, people raise this problem. It is unfortunate that despite the constitutional decision of the five-member bench of the Supreme Court, the elected government of Delhi has been usurped by the BJP-led central government. Inside Delhi, a double government is being run by LG by controlling the officials of Delhi," he added.

Rai said that the other government has been installed by BJP that works under the leadership of the LG. "Efforts are being made to stall the Delhi government through the DJB officials. By bringing the government to a standstill, wrong bills are being forcibly imposed on people. Now, we will protest again against this dictatorship of BJP," he added.

Water minister Atishi said, "Over 10 lakh families are not paying their bills as meter readers are not being noted on time and also as proper readings were not taken for one-and-a-half

year during Covid. We got the scheme passed from the DJB, but the BJP does not tolerate solutions to the problems of the people of Delhi. LG and BJP have complete control over the bureaucracy of Delhi. Therefore, through Delhi officials, BJP has stopped the scheme."

Delhi minister Saurabh Bhardwaj said that officials have refused to put up the scheme before the cabinet for approval. "Now we are going to launch a big movement regarding the settlement of bills," he added.

BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said, "The Kejriwal government is an anarchic government that announces schemes arbitrarily, then fails to fully implement the related administrative procedures, and when an official raises objections, the entire government starts targeting the official."

He added, "For the water bill waiver scheme proposed by the Delhi government, it is necessary to complete an administrative process of approvals."

## Two banquet halls fined for loud noise

**HT Correspondent**  
htreporters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has imposed an environmental damage compensation (EDC) of ₹70,000 against two banquet halls in Karol Bagh, after residents complained that decibel levels were routinely breached in the Ajmal Khan locality.

During an inspection carried out in the area on January 5, the pollution watchdog found that two out of three banquet halls were hosting events. Though the events did not have a DJ and accompanying music system, yet the noise levels were far higher than both the day-time and night-time standards set.

DPCC in a submission to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) said it had fined the banquet halls ₹60,000 and ₹10,000 for the violations, and had also

issued a show cause notice so that corrective measures could be taken.

"The units are in a commercial area and as per Noise Rules, 2000, the limits during daytime are 65 dB (A) and 55 dB(A) at night. The noise levels of one of the banquet halls pre and post 10 pm were found to be 75 dB(A) and 68.9 dB(A), which exceeded the prescribed norms," said the submission, dated February 15.

It said the second banquet hall had average decibel levels of 76.4 dB(A) till 10 pm and 74.3 dB(A) beyond that, with noise monitoring conducted one-metre away from the boundary wall of the hall. DPCC said both the halls were facing a residential area on one side, from where the complaints had emerged. Karol Bagh resident Anuj Kansal had filed a petition last December alleging noise norms were violated by three banquet halls in the area.

## Fog curbs lifted on e-ways across Noida

**Snehil Sinha**  
snehil.sinha@hindustantimes.com

**NOIDA:** The speed limit on the Yamuna Expressway and Noida-Greater Noida Expressway has been increased to 100km/hr for light vehicles from February 16. The speed limit was reduced to 75km/hr on December 15 last year following road accidents due to fog.

The speed limit on both these expressways remains 100km/hr for light vehicles and 80km/hr for heavy vehicles throughout the year. But the limit is reduced every year as a precaution during the two winter months to 75km/hr for light vehicles and 60km/hr for heavy vehicles.

"The limit has been increased but people need to use their judgment while driving. Despite the norms, Yamuna Expressway has one of the highest number of speeding challans even when

the limit is 100km/hr. This is not just a violation but also a safety concern for the vehicle's occupants and others," said Anil Yadav, deputy commissioner of police (traffic).

In the last winter, dense fog was first recorded in Delhi and the National Capital Region on December 2 when visibility dropped to 50 metres or less in many areas. Despite the reduced speed limit, at least five incidents of crashes and pileups were reported along the Yamuna expressway in the last two months.

The traffic police challaned 2,671 people for violating the speed limit between December 15 and February 15. According to data shared by officials, speeding cases were relatively fewer on the Noida-Greater Noida Expressway because of the higher traffic volume on the route.

## HT Homage



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your memory a treasure...  
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missed beyond measure.

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14/01/1940 - 19/02/1994

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That you are no longer here with us is the Reality yet you will remain in our hearts forever is the truth.

Fondly Remembered & Deeply Missed by

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All family & Friends  
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**SH S.P. GOEL**  
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**Addendum Notice/Date Extension Notice-2**

In reference to e-NIT no. 15/EE/(C&M)/MB-II/Joshiyara/2023-24 for execution of "Reconstruction of Damaged Road from Police line Gyansu to Darbar band at right bank of Joshiyara Barrage MB-II Reservoir, Uttarkashi" the Addendum notice has uploaded on portal. Date of submission and opening of bid is being extended as below:-

**Last Date & Time for Submission :-** Upto 17:00 hrs of 22/02/2024 of bids

**Last Date & Time for Submission :-** Upto 11:00 hrs of 24/02/2024 of Hard Copies

**Date & Time of Opening of Bids :-** At 15:00 hrs of 24/02/2024 the portal

Other terms, conditions of bid shall remain same. For fuller & further details, kindly visit "e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in>"

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**SRM e-Tender No. T-2406/MSETCL/CO/C&M/T/Pre-Tender (RFx No. 6000001170)**

MSETCL invites offers by SRM e-tendering in TWO bid system (Techno-Commercial Bid and Price Bid) from the eligible registered bidders for the following work as detailed below.

"Work of Construction of 220kV D/C line from CTT location around 3.93km from 400/200kV Talegaon PGCIL S/S to 220kV Chakan Phase-II S/S using O/H HTLS conductor on monopole- 3.89km along with 2X220kV end bays at 220kV Chakan Phase-II S/S under Pune zone in Maharashtra."

Interested bidders may obtain further information available on the website: <https://srmetender.mahatransco.in>

The date of downloading of Bid documents available on the website is from 14.02.2024.

Sd/-  
Chief Engineer (Projects), MSETCL

**OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER IN CHIEF PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, NAVA RAIPUR, ATAL NAGAR (CENTRAL TENDER CELL) E-Procurement Tender Notice**

Main Portal : <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>

Tenders are invited for the following works :-

S. No.	System Tender No./ Date	Name of Work	PAC Amount (Rupees in lacs)
1	152846 (4th Call 13.02.2024)	CONSTRUCTION OF HIGH-LEVEL BRIDGE I/C APPROACH ROAD ACROSS BAGNAI RIVER ON BIJAPAL-JOGIDIPA ROAD.	498.97
2	152848 (3rd Call 13.02.2024)	CONSTRUCTION OF HIGH LEVEL BRIDGE ACROSS MAHANADI RIVER ON BHANWARMARA-BHARARI ROAD.	1058.15

Last Date of Tender Downloading S.No. 01 To S.No. 02 date 26.02.2024. For more details on the tender and bidding process please visit the above mentioned portal.

Chief Engineer (Central Tender Cell)  
Office Of Engineer In Chief  
P.W.D., Nava Raipur, Atal Nagar  
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{ FROM PAGE 1 }

INDIA-ENGLAND TEST

"So, a lot of these guys are learning from the experience they're having in the middle. We got a lot to learn in Hyderabad (the first Test), and then in Vizag, when we won.

"Obviously, we knew it's not going to be an easy one for us to just come out here and win this series; we have to work really hard, especially with a lot of our frontline players missing as well. A lot of credit to these young boys who have come in and shown a lot of character. Looks like they belong here, and they actually want to stay here as well."

Only seven Tests old, the left-handed Jaiswal who resumed on 105—he had retired hurt on Saturday with back spasms—and soon launched a stunning attack on England's bowlers. It included three consecutive sixes against pace great Jimmy Anderson in an over that went for 21 runs.

Jaiswal hit 12 sixes to equal Wasim Akram's world record for most sixes in a Test innings. India's tally of 28 improved their own record for most sixes in a Test by one. It took their series tally to 48, also bettering India's world record for most sixes in a series. He also eclipsed Navjot Singh Sidhu's Indian record of most sixes in an innings—eight.

Debutant Sarfaraz Khan and Jaiswal unleashed their power-hitting in an unbroken 172-run partnership for the fifth wicket. Sarfaraz, run out for 62 in the first innings, remained 68 not out, becoming only the fourth Indian batter—after Dilawar Hussain, Sunil Gavaskar and Shreyas Iyer—to cross 50 in both innings on debut.

England's ultra-aggressive batting approach has come in for huge criticism after Joe Root threw away his wicket in the first innings trying to play a needless T20 style reverse ramp shot. Set an improbable 557 to win, England were more in survival mode on a pitch that was still playing well but could not survive even till stumps.

"I don't think we need to temper anything," Stokes said. "Was it how we executed the shots that led to our downfall? And a lot of us would say: 'Yes, I didn't execute well enough.' But our batting line-up is full of international class players. We give them the freedom to play what's in front of them."

For India to put it past

England inside four days is as dominant a win as it could have been, coming from an inexperienced playing eleven with two debutants and no Virat Kohli or KL Rahul.

New wicket-keeper Dhruv Jurel impressed as well with brilliant glove work and solid batting.

It would also rank as a special win as India subdued England in the first innings despite missing premier off-spinner R Ashwin, who had left for Chennai due to a family emergency. Ashwin, who flew back on a chartered flight on Sunday afternoon, took a wicket and could celebrate the win with the team.

India were in front going into Day 4 with a lead of 322 runs and Jaiswal's innings set up the victory. First innings centurion Ben Duckett was run out with fielder Mohammed Siraj and Jurel combining brilliantly though fellow opener Zak Crawley (11) was a bit aggrieved as DRS upheld umpire Kumar Dharmseena's leg before verdict off Jasprit Bumrah with the ball tracker showing it was only clipping leg-stump.

Jadeja then removed Hyderabad Test hero Ollie Pope (3) and the struggling Jonny Bairstow (4), whose attempt at sweep led to another downfall. With England reeling on 28/4, skipper Ben Stokes and Joe Root cut out the entertainment quotient. For once, England were playing the situation.

The change in mindset alone wasn't enough to ward off the threat posed by Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav on a wearing track. For 65 balls, the two seniors resisted until Root (7 from 40 balls) was trapped leg before by Jadeja after another failed attempt to sweep. There was no boundary in the 22-run partnership, underlining how India had systematically dented England's pride—their attacking mind-set.

JAISWAL HIT 12 SIXES TO EQUAL WASIM AKRAM'S WORLD RECORD FOR MOST SIXES IN A TEST INNINGS. INDIA'S TALLY OF 28 IMPROVED THEIR OWN RECORD FOR MOST SIXES IN A TEST BY ONE

Stokes (15 from 39 balls) still couldn't resist sweeping, only to be beaten by Kuldeep. The left-arm wrist-spinner soon got Rehan Ahmed out. From 50/4, England slipped to 50/7.

On a track where England's spinners had looked listless earlier in the day, India's tweakers began to make it look like a tiring Test match pitch, demonstrating the gulf in standard between the two spin attacks.

DELHI WEATHER

inched upwards for days as a chilly winter gives way to what promises to be a hot summer. Delhi's maximum temperature was 26.5°C on Saturday, 27.2°C on Friday (which was the previous highest this year), 26°C on Thursday and 25°C on Wednesday.

Sunday's maximum temperature, however, is not unusual for this time of the year.

On the same day last year, Delhi's temperature hit a maximum of 29.6°C and it was 29.8°C a day earlier. In fact, the maximum during this month last year peaked at 33.6°C on February 21. Last February was also the city's warmest February in 17 years, in terms of the average maximum temperature.

The highest in February 2022 maximum was 28.4°C (February 19), and the year before that, it was 33.2°C (February 26). In 2020, the peak February temperature was 27.8 (February 14).

Showers at the start of the week will likely push the maximum down to 27°C on Monday, to 24°C on Tuesday and bottom out to 23°C on Wednesday, said IMD. This is then likely to hover between 24°C and 25°C for the rest of the week.

The city clocked a minimum temperature of 8.6°C on Sunday, two degrees above normal. It was 7.4°C a day earlier.

Nights will get warmer over the next three days, though, with IMD forecasting minimum temperatures of 10°C-11°C over the next three days.

The rain is also likely to help Delhi's air quality, which has remained "poor" for the last few days. Delhi's 24-hour average AQI was 269 on Sunday at 4pm. It was 245 (poor) at the same time on Saturday.

Forecasts by the Early Warning System (EWS) for Delhi show that the air quality index (AQI) could improve to "moderate" on February 20 and remain in this range on February 21 as well.

SHUT AMID STIR BY FARMERS, RED FORT REOPENS

Press Trust of India letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The historic Red Fort complex, which was closed for visitors about a week ago due to security reasons in view of a farmers' march, has been reopened, PTI reported on Sunday.

The iconic Mughal-era monument, a Unesco World Heritage Site in old Delhi, was "suddenly sealed" late Monday night "due to security reasons".

"It was reopened a couple of days ago," an official at the Archeological Survey of India told PTI.

However, the Red Fort is regularly closed for visitors on Mondays, so they will not get entry inside the complex on February 19.

The site was temporarily closed amid a massive deployment of police and paramilitary forces in central Delhi in view of the farmers' "Delhi Chalo" march.

Sources said "no order has been officially issued for reopening" of the site, adding, it was closed in accordance with police instructions and accordingly reopened.

Thousands of farmers are staying put at the Shambhu and Khanauri points of the Punjab-Haryana border with layers of barricades and a large number of security personnel halting their march to the national capital.

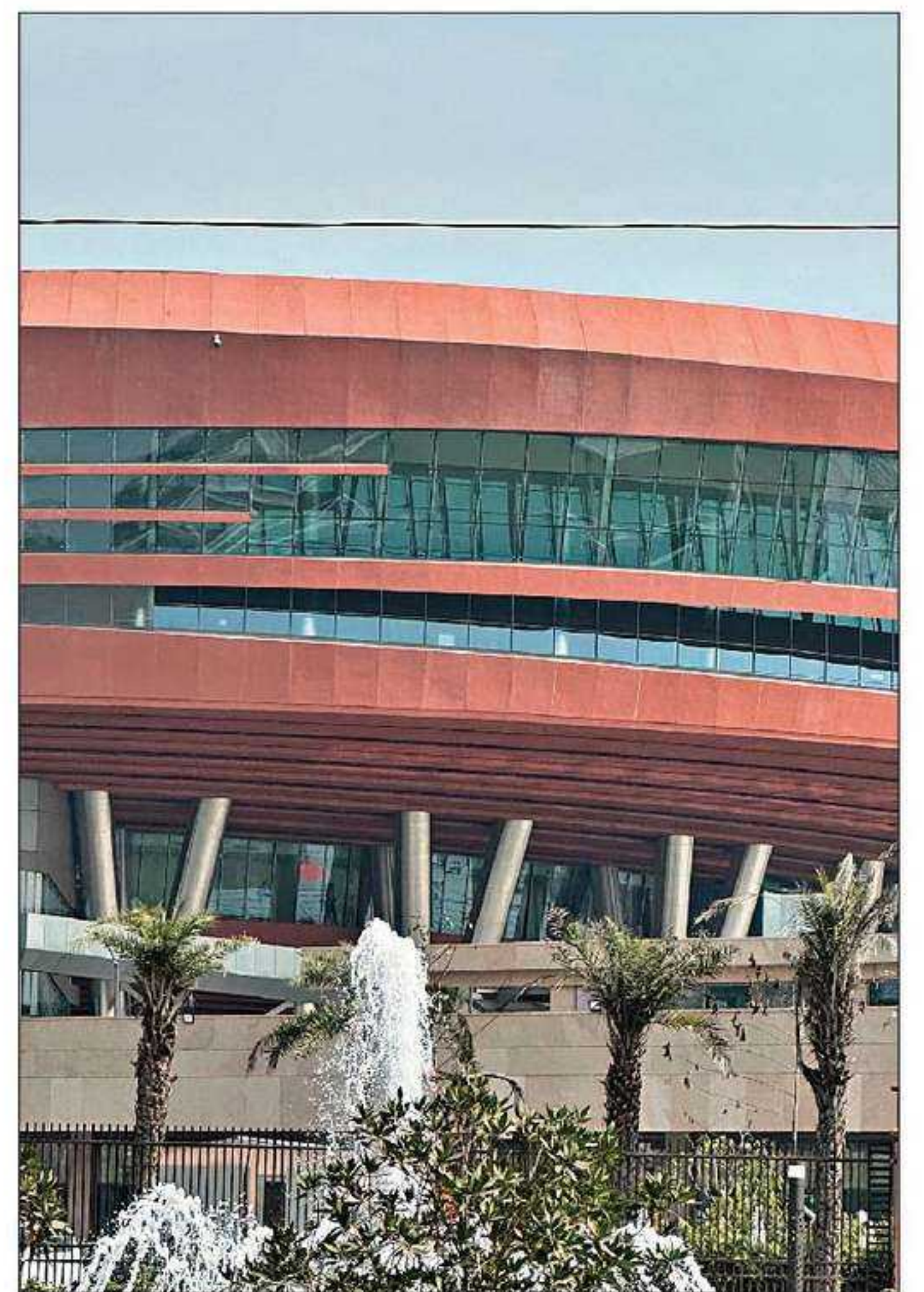
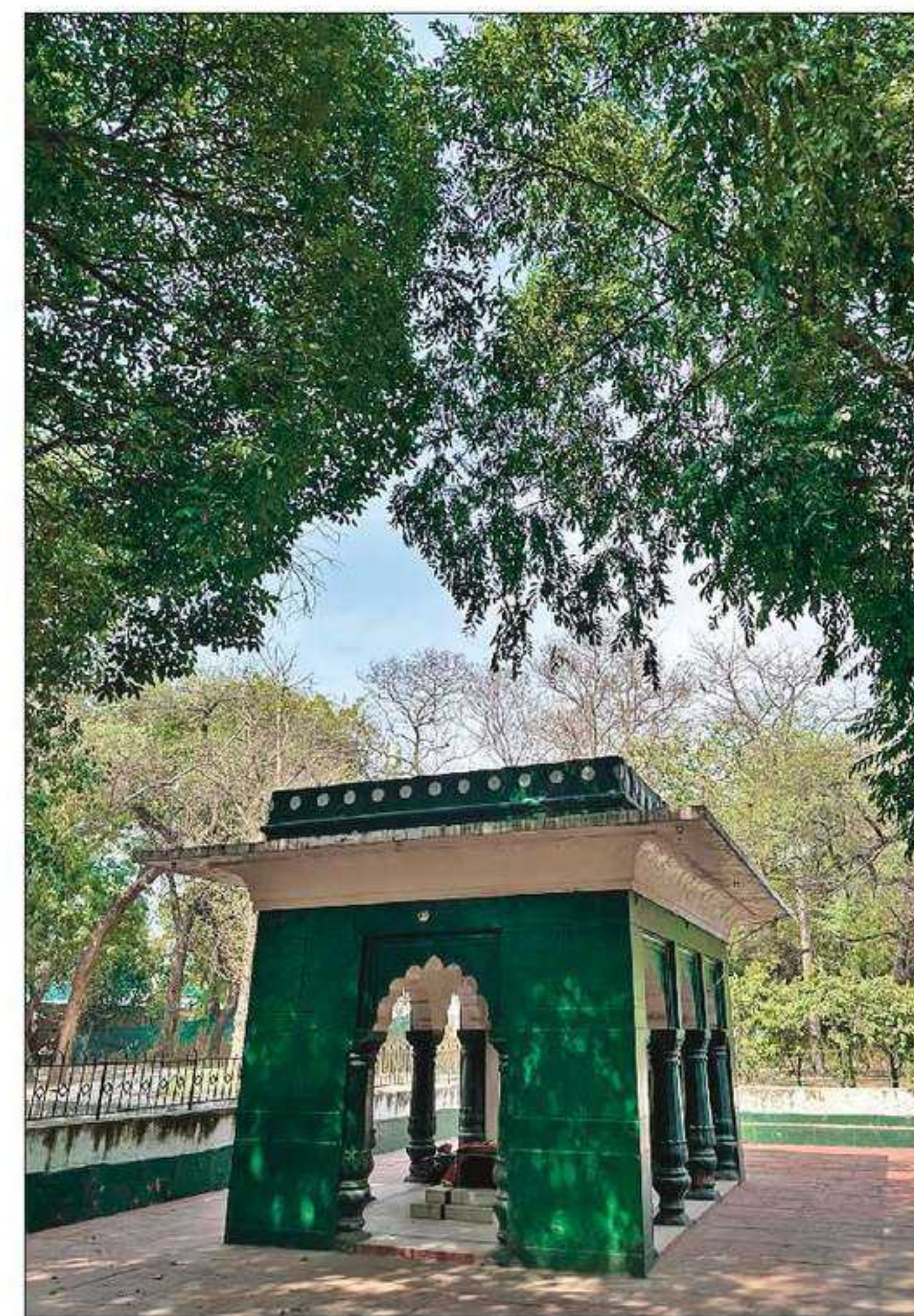
Besides loan waiver and a legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP), farmers of the "Delhi Chalo" agitation, which entered its sixth day on Sunday, are also demanding implementation of the Swaminathan Commission's recommendations, pension for farmers and farm labourers, and withdrawal of police cases.

There was no report of any confrontation between the protesters and Haryana security personnel on Saturday. The farmer leaders have asked the protesters to maintain calm at the borders.

THE MONUMENT WAS "SEALED" LATE MONDAY NIGHT "DUE TO SECURITY REASONS"

Delhiwale

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Dilli's Bedil, Dilli's Mandapam

On the capital's changing and unchanging aspects

Delhi is changing so fast. Just across the road are the sleek edifices of Pragati Maidan's Bharat Mandapam. They came up last year, replacing the decades-old Hall of Nations.

But on this side of the busy Mathura Road, nothing has changed. The dusty leaf-strewn ground is littered with derelict graves. The centrepiece is the tomb of one of the world's great poets, though forgotten in the city in whose mitti he has found his everlasting rest. Understandable perhaps, for Abdul Qadir Bedil (1642-1720) wrote in Persian, which was a language of the elite in the India of his time. Besides, his poetry is considered tough to crack.

That said, Bedil is a superstar in the countries of Central Asia, which were once a part of the Soviet Union. The Russian-language signboard beside his tomb, unveiled by a Tajikistani President, celebrates a legend who "was nourished by this blissful and fertile land of Hindustan" and whose "celestial verses have greatly benefited the

evolution of the poetry of Persia and Tajikistan in the past centuries." Even Ghalib—who wrote in Urdu and Persian, and was notorious for being dismissive of fellow poets—had utmost esteem for Bedil. Check these words by Ghalib:

Tarz-e-bedil mein rehka kehna Asadullah Khan, qayamat hai (To write Urdu in the style of Bedil, that indeed is superlative, Asadullah Khan)

Like most Delhiwale, Bedil wasn't originally from Delhi. He was from modern-day Bihar, where his forefathers had arrived from Afghanistan. In fact, one afternoon, an elderly Afghan man was seen reverently stepping inside Bedil's tomb. Kneeling down on the grave, the visitor from Kabul took out a notebook from his jacket's breast pocket. With trembling fingers, he jotted down the Persian text inscribed on the poet's gravestone. He then got up, straightened his frail figure, placed his hand on his heart, and murmured a prayer.

Poetic-minded or not, every Delhi wala ought to spend some time at Bedil's tomb, if only to marvel at how much our city has changed, just across the road, and how little as well—on this side of the road, by a poet's grave.



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1. BIMLA Devi, Mother of- No.152178585 NK (CHEF COM) Jitendra Singh, R/o- Vill- Nagla Ghurela, Post- Karauli, Teh- Kheragarh, Dist- Agra, U.P.- 283119, have changed my name from BIMLA Devi to Vimala Devi, vide affidavit dated 17/02/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

CHANGE OF NAME

1. MEENA Devi, Mother of- No.15451009X NK Dinesh Kumar Yadav, R/o- Vill- PO-PS- Rupow, Teh- Rajauli, Dist- Nawada, Bihar- 805107, have changed my name from Meena Devi to Mina Devi, vide affidavit dated 17.02.2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

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 Power Sector Skill Council (PSSC)

CHANGE OF NAME

1. ANKITA Bansal W/o Arvind Sharma R/o A-506, New Anand Society, Plot No.47, Sector-56, Gurgaon Hr, have changed my name to Anikta Sharma For all future purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME

1. BRAHM Yadav, Father of- No. 15451009X NK Dinesh Kumar Yadav, R/o- Vill- PO-PS- Rupow, Teh- Rajauli, Dist- Nawada, Bihar- 805107, have changed my name from Brahm Yadav to Brahamad Yadav, vide affidavit dated 17/02/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

CHANGE OF NAME

1. SHAYALAMA Rajan W/o Kulamulathi Choyan Rajan R/o WE-143, Rama Park Road, Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-59, have changed my name to Shyamala Rajan for all purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME

1. SAROJINI K, Mother of- No.15182733K HAV(RST) Sandeep C K, R/o- Nadaville Veetil, Chouda (PO), Pallingome, Kannur (Dist), Kerala - 670511, have changed my name from Sarojini C K to C K Sarojini, vide affidavit dated 17/02/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

CHANGE OF NAME

1. DINESH Kumar S/o Sh. Yudhister Verma R/o H.No. 66/21, Arjun Nagar, Gurgaon, Hr-122001, have changed my name to Dinesh Verma for all future purposes.

COURT NOTICES

In The Court of Sh. Ramesh Kumar-II, Additional District Judge-01, Court No. 302, Third Floor, Shaheedara District, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi  
 PC/28/2023  
 Anshika Sharma Vs. The State and Ors. Anshika Sharma ...Petitioner Versus  
 1. The State Represented Through The Chief Secretary, Players Building, Delhi Secretariat GNCT of Delhi, Indraprastha Marg, (10), New Delhi-110002  
 2. Raj Kumar Sharma S/o Late Chiranjil Lal Sharma, Presently At: H.No. 1193, DDA Janta Flats, G.I.B. Enclave, Near Tahipur Stadium, Dilshad Garden, Delhi-110093  
 3. Sameera Anwar W/o Sunny Anwar, D/o Raj Kumar Sharma, R/o H.No. 73, 3rd Floor, Vignay Vihar, Karkardooma, Delhi. —Respondent  
 Citation for Publication of Petition Under Section 278 of The Indian Succession Act, 1925, (as amended upto date) for grant of probate/letter of Administration in respect of the will dated 08.01.2019 of Late Jisha Bhardwaj, R/o H. No. 1193, DDA Janta Flats, G.I.B. Enclave, Near Tahipur Stadium, Dilshad Garden, Delhi-110093. Whereas the 2nd February, 2024 has been fixed for hearing of the case, notice is hereby given that person having any interest in the Administration of estate of the said concerned may if he/she desire appear in this court the said 21nd February, 2024 and see the proceedings before the grant of probate (or for letter of administration).  
 Given under my hand and the seal of this court on this 15.01.2024.  
 (Ramesh Kumar-II)  
 ADJ-01/SHD/KKD Courts, Delhi

CHANGE OF NAME

1. CHANDRASEKHAN Nair, Father of- No.161258491 SPR Varan Senan, R/o- Punartham, Near K.P.H.S., Kalluvathukkal (PO), Kollam (Dist), Kerala- 691578, have changed my name from Chandrasenan Nair to B Chandra Senan, vide affidavit dated 17/02/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

LOST & FOUND

1. JOSEPH George P S/O Chirakakaran Joseph George R/O flat No 414, Mavilla, 7 Mayur Vihar Phase-I Delhi-110091 have lost Original Property Documents i.e Share Certificate, Possession letter and Allotment letter of the above flat issued by the Mavilla Society. Finder contact 7899503803

LOST & FOUND

1. SONU Agrawal S/o Prakash Chand Agrawal R/o H.No. 14/9 Mahvira Nagar, Jaipur Rajasthan, have lost my Original Possession Letter dated 24.06.2023 and Allotment Letter of Property No C-1203 Shree Yashdham Mantra Sector-67, Gurgaon Hr. Finder may contact at address above.

LOST & FOUND

1. KAUSHAL Kumar S/o V.D. Alam R/o Flat No. 44 Raja Enclave, Road No.44, Pitampura, Delhi-110034, have changed my name Kaushal Kumar to Kaushal Kumar Alam for all future purposes

LOST & FOUND

1. SUBRESH Sharma S/o Smt. Late Uma Sharma W/o Late Shri K.D. Sharma R/o B-242 Yojna Vihar Delhi-92, declare that my mother Uma Sharma and Uma are names of one and same person and in future will be known as Uma Sharma.

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# One alliance is growth-focused, other rooted in corruption: Shah

**Smriti Kak Ramachandran**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday likened the upcoming general elections to the battle of Mahabharata, and said people will have to choose between the "Kauravas", represented by the Congress-led INDIA bloc, and the "Pandavas", represented by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

"India has to choose between a dynamic and development-oriented alliance, whose leader does not have any blemish of corruption and an alliance that's rooted in corruption and dynastic politics," Shah said, while speaking at the BJP's national council meet.

The senior BJP leader, who is considered as the party's chief election strategist, used the battle from the Hindu epic — fought among members of the same dynastic clan where the Kauravas represented the unvirtuous and the Pandavas stood for principles — as an allegory to define the present-day electoral contest between the NDA and the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).

Shah also moved a political resolution, "BJP-Desh Ki Asha, Vipaksh Ki Hatasha (BJP-nation's hope and opposition's frustration)", on the occasion, which was seconded by Union agriculture minister Arjun Munda.

In a sharp attack on the INDIA bloc, which he referred to as the "Ghamandia Gathbandhan (arrogant alliance)", Shah said: "INDIA bloc is an alliance of seven family-based parties. The leaders of these parties have not changed in the last four generations," he said.

Accusing the Opposition parties of only wanting to promote their own families, he added: "Congress leader Sonia Gandhi aims to make her son Rahul (Gandhi) the country's prime minister... Pawar Saheb (veteran leader Sharad Pawar) wants to make his daughter (Amravati MP Supriya Sule) CM, (West Bengal chief minister) Mamata Banerjee wants to see her nephew (TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee) in that posi-



Union home minister Amit Shah at the BJP national convention in New Delhi on Sunday. X/BJP

tion...Mulayam Singh Yadav ensured that his son (Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav) became CM."

Hailing the BJP's democratic functioning, he said it was possible only in the BJP that a tea-seller's son could become prime minister, unlike in the opposition parties that are controlled by families and where the baton is passed from one generation to the other.

"There are 2G, 3G, and 4G parties, where one family has been ruling for two, three and four generations," he said.

Shah's statement is in line with the BJP's campaign against dynastic politics. The party accuses the Congress, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the Samajwadi Party of perpetrating dynastic politics that does not allow the ordinary worker to occupy positions of power. Earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while responding to criticism that the kin of several BJP leaders also hold positions in the party and the government, said that while multiple people from the same family can join politics, what he stood up against was one family controlling a political party.

Shah also credited PM Modi for eradicating the politics of corruption, casteism and appeasement, and for giving the poor and the marginalised the respect they deserve. He slammed the Congress for using social groups that are economically and socially deprived as mere vote banks.

"Those who cannot encourage democracy in their parties, cannot protect democracy in India," Shah said.

Drawing a contrast between the Congress-led UPA's decade in power and the last 10 years of the NDA rule, Shah said the PM has reduced the gap between the haves and have-nots. "For the first time, politics of performance has been established... wherever Indians now go, they get asked if they are from Modi's India," he said.

Asserting that the Modi government has been successful in snuffing out terrorism and left-wing extremism, Shah said Modi 3.0 will ensure the country is free from these scourges.

"Modi has also shown that there need not be a conflict between empowering the farmers and boosting the economy... This used to be a debate whether the rural areas need to be uplifted or the urban areas. He showed both can be done, there can be smart cities as well as development in the rural areas," he said.

He added that similar contradictions existed between pursuing policies for securing diplomatic ties and ensuring the country's safety. "The PM showed the security of the country is our first priority and then we set out to make friends and become vishva-mitra (global friend)," he said.

## 'Glorious achievement': Resolution hails Ram Temple's construction

**Smriti Kak Ramachandran**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is a "historic and glorious achievement" for the country that heralds the establishment of "Ram Rajya" in India for the next 1,000 years with the beginning of a new "kaalchakra" [cycle of time], a resolution passed by the BJP during its national convention on Sunday said.

The idea of "Ram Rajya" was also in the "heart of Mahatma Gandhi" who used to call it the "idea of democracy", the resolution moved by party chief JP Nadda said. It also congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for successfully conducting the consecration of the temple, which was celebrated as a national festival, on January 22.

The BJP refers to its concept of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas or development for all sections irrespective of their faith or caste as the embodiment of Ram Rajya.

In its resolution, the BJP said the Constitution has been inspired by the ideals of "Ram Rajya". "Even in the original copy of the Constitution of India, on the section of fundamental rights, the picture of Lord Shri Ram, Mother Sita and Lakshman ji, after returning to Ayodhya after the victory, is a proof of the fact that Lord Shri Ram is the source of inspiration for the fundamental rights," it said.

It added that "the idea of 'Ram Rajya' was also in the heart of Babu Mahatma Gandhi". "He used to say that the idea of 'Ram Rajya' is the idea of true democracy. Following the ideals of Lord Shri Ram, the Prime Minister has implemented the spirit of 'Ram Rajya'

## The idea of 'Ram Rajya' was also in the heart of Babu Mahatma Gandhi

### BJP RESOLUTION

in the true sense by establishing good governance in the country," it said.

The resolution noted that the "temple of Lord Shri Ram will play a decisive role in fulfilling the resolutions that we have adopted in building a Viksit Bharat". "The Prime Minister has played an impeccable role in uniting the entire nation on this auspicious occasion associated with Lord Shri Ram," it said.

The temple in Ayodhya is a symbol of India's vision, philosophy and path and has become a temple of national consciousness, the resolution said.

The party said that after the Supreme Court's Ayodhya verdict on November 9, 2019, "the central government led by PM Modi, without any delay, formed the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, as a result of which the construction work of Shri Ram temple went on at a fast pace, and within just four years, the consecration of the idol of Lord Rama was completed on January 22, 2024", the resolution said.

"The grand and divine Ram Temple of Ayodhya is imprinted in the consciousness of every Indian and has become a reflection of the richness of cultural heritage. The nation, freeing itself from the mentality of slavery, creates a new history by taking inspiration from every part of the past," it said.

{ CHANDIGARH MAYORAL POLL } AHEAD OF SC HEARING

# 3 AAP councillors join BJP as mayor resigns

**Hillary Victor**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**CHANDIGARH:** Three Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Chandigarh councillors joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Manoj Kumar Sonkar quit as the mayor on Sunday, a day before the Supreme Court is scheduled to resume its hearing on a petition alleging tampering of votes in the mayoral election last month.

The AAP councillors' switch to the BJP is set to give the latter the numerical edge in the event of a fresh election. In a House of 35 (and one MP, the BJP's Kirron Kher, as ex-officio member), a party needs 19 votes to win the poll. The latest development will reduce the strength of the AAP and the Congress, which had jointly contested the poll, from 20 to 17, and increase the BJP's support from 16 (including one from the Shiromani Akali Dal) to 19.

"AAP councillors Neha Musavat and Poonam Sandeep Kumar joined the BJP and Gurcharan Singh Kala returned to the fold on Sunday," former Chandigarh BJP chief Arun Sood said.

The three AAP leaders switched sides in the presence of BJP secretary Vinod Tawde at his residence, Sood added.

On January 13, Kala, who was earlier with the BJP, had joined the AAP and even voted for it



Manoj Sonkar

during the January 30 election. He, however, returned to the BJP on Sunday. "It is very unfortunate that our councillors have moved over to the BJP. Even for the election for a mayor, BJP has to execute Operation Lotus. It's really a shame. The courts must take cognisance of this horse trading by the BJP," AAP leader Prem Garg said.

The developments came even as Sonkar, who defeated Kuldeep Dhalor, the joint mayoral candidate put up by the AAP and the Congress, stepped down from the mayor's post.

"At the national convention of the BJP in the national capital, the top leadership asked Sonkar to resign as mayor. Sonkar quit the post after the same was conveyed to him by Chandigarh BJP chief Jatinder Malhotra. He submitted his resignation to the Chandigarh municipal corporation commissioner," a senior BJP leader said on condition of anonymity. All the BJP councillors have been asked

to stay put at Kissan Bhawan in Panchkula and wait for the Supreme Court's verdict on the poll, the leader added.

On January 30, the BJP won the Chandigarh mayoral poll after the chair scrapped eight votes of the AAP-Congress in a controversial decision, sparking allegations of vote tampering. Dhalor was tipped to win after the AAP, with 13 members, and the Congress, with seven, joined hands and supported a joint nominee. But he was defeated by Sonkar after the nominated councillor officiating the election, Anil Masih, declared the eight votes invalid.

Dhalor subsequently moved the high court, which, a day later, refused to grant any relief on the petition. The high court gave three weeks to the Union Territory administration and Masih, director general of police, and Sonkar to file their replies on the plea. It also refused to restrain Sonkar from discharging his functions during the pendency of the dispute in court.

On February 1, the AAP moved the top court against the high court's decision. On February 5, the top court said it will "not allow democracy to be murdered" and pulled up Masih, especially after the bench perused through a video that the judges said made it obvious that the officer "defaced ballot papers".

## POLICE ATTACH HOUSES OF SIX PEOPLE ACCUSED IN HALDWANI CASE

**HT Correspondent**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**DEHRADUN:** Police in Nainital have attached the properties of at least six people accused for the Haldwani violence, including those belonging to the prime suspect Abdul Malik and his son Abdul Moid, a senior officer aware of the developments said on Sunday.

"We have attached residences of six accused, including key accused Abdul Malik and his son Abdul Moid, in the Haldwani violence. We have also arrested three more accused, who were absconding," the officer said on condition of anonymity.

Police had begun the confiscation of properties of the accused under section 83 (attachment of property of person absconding) of Code of Criminal Procedure.

So far, 58 people have been arrested in connection with the violence that claimed five lives and left 150 people injured.

The violence in Banbhoolpura area of Haldwani district broke out on the evening of February 8, when civic authorities razed two structures — Masjid Mariam (mosque) and Abdul Razzaq Zakaria madrasa — alleging that they were illegally built on state government ("nazool") land. As workers from the Haldwani Municipal Corporation and Nainital administration razed the 20-year-old structure, residents of the area set afire several vehicles, a police station and hurled stones at the demolition team as well as police personnel, according to police.

Police said Malik, who is absconding, had constructed the mosque and madrasa on the concerned land.

# Jharkhand is ready to conduct a caste survey, says new CM

**Raj Kumar**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**RANCHI:** Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren on Sunday announced a caste survey to enumerate the state's caste composition, with officials indicating that the exercise will be held after the Lok Sabha elections in April-May.

With this, Jharkhand will become the fourth state to hold such a caste-based headcount after Telangana, which announced a similar move on Friday, and Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

"Jiski jimi sankhya bhari, uski utni hissedari (bigger the population, bigger the share). Jharkhand is ready," the chief minister posted on X while sharing a news report on the matter.

Soren's principal secretary Vinay Kumar Choubey also confirmed the survey, saying the "plan has been principally approved". "Earlier, it was not decided who would carry out the work, i.e. the rural development department or personnel department. Now it has been decided that the work will be done by the personnel department," he said.

Asked if the government has set any deadline for the completion of the exercise, the senior IAS officer said: "It will be too early to give any deadline. The personnel department has to prepare a standard operating procedure (SoP) for the work."

He added: "Besides this, the (Lok Sabha) elections are near. Soon the Model Code of Conduct will be enforced and getting the survey work done will not be possible." Choubey said "the survey will be held on the lines of neighbouring Bihar".

According to a senior leader of the Congress, which is a part of the



'Alliance strong, no threat to coalition govt'

**NEW DELHI:** The JMM-led alliance in Jharkhand is "strong" and there is no threat to the coalition government in the state, chief minister Champai Soren said on Sunday, amid reports of resentment brewing among a section of Congress legislators over the induction of four party MLAs as ministers.

Soren, who is in the national capital, made the remarks before meeting Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

After meeting Kharge, he told reporters that it was a courtesy meeting with Kharge after taking charge as CM. "We will continue our journey of progressiveness, public welfare and social justice in Jharkhand," Kharge said in a post on X. **HTC**

ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led alliance, the decision was not taken all of a sudden. "Earlier, the Hemant Soren government was also in favour of conducting a caste survey, but it was not clear who would conduct it," the leader said, seeking anonymity.

{ LOYALISTS ARRIVE IN DELHI }

# Buzz over Nath son's shift to BJP grows

**Saptarshi Das**  
saptarshi.das@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Speculation continued on Sunday over senior Congressman Kamal Nath and his son Nakul Nath's plans to leave the party, with both leaders not quelling rumours of a possible switch to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Several loyalists of the father and son reached Delhi on Sunday and party functionaries aware of the developments said Nakul alone, and not Kamal Nath, could join the BJP on Monday along with MLAs from his camp.

A newly installed "Jai Shri Ram" flag hoisted atop Nath's residence in the Capital greeted reporters, who were told by the Congress veteran that he had not spoken to anyone in the BJP yet.

"I said yesterday [on Saturday] that if there is something like that, I will inform you all. I did not talk to anyone," Kamal Nath told the media.

Around half a dozen Madhya Pradesh lawmakers loyal to him



Kamal Nath was removed as Madhya Pradesh Congress chief after the party's crushing defeat at the hands of the BJP in the assembly elections.

reached Delhi as efforts were on by the Nath camp to get the support of 23 MLAs so that the anti-defection law does not come into play, said the party functionaries cited above.

If more than a third of state legislators switch sides, the law does not apply. The Congress has 66 seats in the 230-member state assembly.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, attending a lunch hosted by senior lawyer and party leader Abhishek Singhvi, did not directly comment on the

issue but, in a veiled jibe, said that he can't stop anyone who wants to leave, according to leaders present at the event.

"Whoever needs to leave can leave, can't stop them, they make up their minds when they meet people whom they wish to join," a person who attended the lunch gathering said quoting Kharge and asking not to be named.

Senior Congress leader Digvijay Singh said that he was in constant touch with Kamal Nath and was confident that he would not leave.

"I am constantly in touch with Kamal Nath. The Congress leadership is having discussions with him. A person like him, who started with the Congress, whom we all considered to be the third son of Indira Gandhi, has always supported the Congress and has been a pillar of the Congress party... he was the cabinet minister at the Centre, state Congress committee president and chief minister... he got all the posts. I don't think he will leave the party," Singh told reporters.

Delhi BJP leader Tajinder Bagga said that his party's door was "not open" for Kamal Nath though there was no problem in Nakul joining the party.

Former state minister and Kamal Nath loyalist Deepak Saxena hinted that the politician was upset with the party's top leadership.

"Kamal Nath has been neglected since (the 2023 assembly) elections. No one would have thought that Bhupesh Baghel would lose. We lost in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan where we didn't think we would lose. But why is only Kamal Nath being blamed for it?" Saxena said.

Kamal Nath, the sitting MLA from Chhindwara, was removed as the state Congress chief in the wake of the party's crushing defeat at the hands of the BJP in the assembly elections last year.

Another Kamal Nath loyalist, former state minister Sajjan Singh Verma, wrote "Jai Shri Ram" on his profile on social media site X.

"I will follow Kamal Nath," Verma had said on Saturday.

# Rape survivor says sexually abused by Tripura magistrate

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**AGARTALA:** A 23-year-old rape survivor in Dhalai district of Tripura has alleged that she was molested and sexually assaulted by a magistrate inside his chamber, prompting the district and sessions judge to form a committee to look into the matter, according to people aware of the details.

In a written complaint to the Kamalpur Bar Association, which was later forwarded to the Kamalpur additional district and sessions judge, the survivor said the alleged incident took place on February 16 when she went to the chamber of first class judicial magistrate to get her statement recorded in connection with her rape.

"I was asked to go into his chamber alone and the police-woman was asked to stay outside. The judge closed the door and I

## A THREE-MEMBER PANEL LED BY DISTRICT AND SESSIONS JUDGE, HAS BEEN FORMED TO PROBE THE ALLEGATIONS

was narrating the incident when he asked me to stand up, groped me and sexually assaulted me," the complaint, a copy of which HT has seen, said.

"I rushed out of his chamber and informed the lawyers and my husband about the incident," she added.

According to the people cited above, the woman's husband subsequently lodged a complaint with the Kamalpur Bar Association.

Following the allegation, a three member panel, led by Dha-

lai district and sessions judge Gautam Sarkar and comprising chief judicial magistrate Satyajit Das was formed to probe the case. Sarkar and Das also visited the magistrate's office to investigate the case.

"A complaint was filed addressed to the Kamalpur Bar Association secretary. Our bar association president received the complaint. The complaint was forwarded to the additional district judge," advocate Shibendra Dasgupta, secretary of the advocate body, said.

Meanwhile, a senior police officer said the woman was allegedly raped by a 26-year-old man at her residence on February 13. "A case was lodged at Kachhucherra police station on February 15. She went to the judicial magistrate's office the next day to record her statement," the officer said, seeking anonymity.

# 6 suspected poachers from Myanmar die of starvation, dehydration in Andamans

**Press Trust of India**  
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**PORT BLAIR:** Bodies of six suspected Myanmarese poachers were found in remote Narcondam island in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, an officer said on Sunday. It appears that the poachers died of starvation and dehydration on the small volcanic island after they ran out of ration, the official said.

The small boat they used to reach the island had developed some snag and they could not return. The bodies were found lying a few metres from the shore in a forest on the small Narcondam island on Saturday.

Located in the easternmost part of India, Narcondam in North and Middle Andaman district is only 126km from Myanmar's Coco Island. It is formed of andesite, a volcanic rock. The



On February 14, the Andaman police during a search operation apprehended two Myanmarese poachers. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

island is classified as a dormant volcano by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).

The island covering an area of approximately 7.6 square kilometres is a hunting ground for the poachers from Myanmar.

On February 14, the Andaman police during a search operation apprehended two Myanmarese poachers from Narcondam

Island. They were brought to Port Blair and handed over to the CID, the officer said.

During interrogation, they revealed that six more poachers from their country were hiding in the forest of Narcondam.

"Immediately, a search team of Andaman police swung into action and they found bodies of the six poachers," the officer

said. Preliminary investigation revealed that the motorised wooden dinghy in which they entered the Indian Territory developed some snag and they took shelter in the jungle of Narcondam. "They ran out of ration and drinking water and most probably died of starvation. There are no injury marks on their bodies. The exact cause of their death will be known only after the post-mortem examination," the officer said.

The bodies were brought to the GB Pant Hospital in Port Blair with the help of the Coast Guard and further investigation is going on. "The Union home ministry and the external affairs ministry have been informed about this to fulfil the formalities at the international level to hand over the bodies to their Myanmar counterpart," the officer said.

**HT**

**BJP council ratifies party chief Nadda's tenure extension**  
**NEW DELHI:** The BJP National Council meeting on Sunday ratified the extension given to party president JP Nadda till June this year. Nadda's term was extended till June at the national executive committee meeting last year. The council also granted him powers to take decisions without seeking prior approval of the parliamentary board.

**Press information officer of CBI RK Gaur's service ends**  
**NEW DELHI:** RK Gaur, who was the backbone of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)'s information wing, has retired after 26 years of service at the agency, officials said. He was the face of CBI in a number of media briefings, and handled many tricky situations during his service at the agency, which he had joined as an inspector on deputation from the CRPF in 1997.

**NEET aspirant from UP dies in Kota hospital**  
**KOTA:** A man from Uttar Pradesh, preparing for medical entrance tests in Kota, died during treatment, two days after he had to be rushed to the city's MBS Hospital with high sugar level and blood pressure, officials said on Sunday. The NEET aspirant, Shivam Raghav (21) from Aligarh, was preparing for the entrance test in Kota for the last three years.



# 3 TMC ministers meet residents of Sandeshkhali, CM targets BJP

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**KOLKATA:** Three West Bengal ministers on Sunday rushed to Sandeshkhali, which has been witnessing violent protests since early this month against allegations of sexual atrocities on women and land grabbing by local Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders, to speak to the residents about their grievances, even as chief minister Mamata Banerjee blamed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for trying to create disturbance in the state.



Trinamool Congress leader Shibu Hazra was sent to police custody for eight days, on Sunday.

After meeting aggrieved people who assembled at Kalinagar village, fire services minister Sujit Bose, irrigation minister Partha Bhowmick and forest minister Birbaha Hansda said the ruling TMC will raise money and compensate those who have suffered losses because of local party leaders. Sandeshkhali's TMC legislator Sukumar Mahata also accompanied them.

"We are here to listen to the grievances and also meet our local leaders," Bose said, and claimed that allegations have come from a few places in Sandeshkhali, which has 16 panchayat areas. "We are not trying to muzzle anyone's voice; the accused persons have been arrested."

The state land department also opened camps to register the complaints of villagers about alleged land grabbing by some local TMC leaders. Several farmers have alleged their land were forcefully grabbed and turned into salt water fisheries over the last decade, making the soil unfit for conventional farming.

Since police have clamped

prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrP), barring assembly of five or more people, at 19 locations in Sandeshkhali, the ministers said they met the villagers at Kalingar, where the order was not in force.

A six-member BJP panel, headed by Union minister Annapurna Devi, was stopped from visiting Sandeshkhali by the administration, citing prohibitory orders. BJP chief JP Nadra had formed the high-level panel to gather information from the area and file a report to him at the earliest.

Sandeshkhali, an assembly constituency comprising 16 village panchayats in North 24 Parganas district, has been witnessing tensions since January 5, when an Enforcement Directorate team that arrived to raid TMC leader Sheikh Shahjahan's

house in connection with a money-laundering case was attacked by a mob. Even as Shahjahan has evaded arrest, since February 7, villagers led by local women have held violent protests against alleged sexual harassment and exploitation by local TMC leaders.

So far, 18 people, including local TMC leader Shibaprasad Hazra and Uttam Sardar, both members of the zilla parishad, have been arrested in connection with complaints of sexual assault, land grabbing, attempt to murder and inciting violence in Sandeshkhali.

Hazra, who was arrested late on Saturday, was remanded in police custody till February 26 by the Barasat court on Sunday. "Hazra has been charged with gangrape, attempt to murder and molestation," public prosecutor Arun Pal told reporters.

A crowd assembled outside the court premises demanded arrest of Shahjahan, TMC's Sandeshkhali unit chief, who was defended by chief minister Banerjee a few days ago.

Local women, most of whom belong to Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities, have accused Hazra and Sardar, another panchayat member, of exploitation and torture. Both are known to be close aides of Shahjahan.

Meanwhile, chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday accused the BJP of orchestrating the incident in Sandeshkhali with the help of the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Speaking at a government event in Birbhum district, the TMC chief said that not a single woman in Sandeshkhali has lodged any first information report (FIR).

"Not a single woman (from Sandeshkhali) has lodged any FIR. It was me who directed the police to lodge a suo motu case. Our block president has been arrested," Banerjee said. "The entire incident was engineered. First, they (BJP) sent ED to Sandeshkhali and then the BJP entered the area."

She added that if "anyone complained that money was taken from them, then we will return it. But nobody has made such an allegation."

Rejecting Banerjee's allegations, state BJP's chief spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said: "The arrest of Shibaprasad Hazra proves that rape and molestation took place. If the TMC is talking of returning money, then it is evident that extortion and land grabbing took place at random."

## APEX COURT TO HEAR PETITION SEEKING TRANSFER OF PROBE TODAY

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**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a public interest litigation seeking a court-monitored CBI or SIT probe into the violence in Sandeshkhali village of North 24 Parganas district West Bengal.

A bench of justice BV Nagarathna and justice Augustine George Masih will hear the PIL, filed by advocate Alakh Alok Srivastava. Earlier, on February 16, the top court agreed to hear the plea after it was mentioned for urgent listing by Srivastava.

The plea, filed by Srivastava in his personal capacity, also seeks compensation for the victims of the Sandeshkhali violence and action against officials of the West Bengal Police for alleged dereliction of duty.

The plea also seeks transfer of the probe and subsequent trial outside West Bengal. Besides, it seeks an inquiry by a three-judge committee as done in the Manipur violence case.

Sandeshkhali has been witnessing protests over allegations of sexual abuse of women by a local Trinamool Congress leader. Several local women have accused the local TMC strongman Shahjahan Sheikh and his supporters of land-grab and sexually assaulting them under coercion.



**HAWKSBILL TURTLE**  
(also found in Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar)

## MIGRATORY SPECIES TAKE CENTERSTAGE

The 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals concluded on Saturday in Samarkand with some significant decisions on conserving species facing extinction. Species relevant to India found special mention in some of the agreements. A look at the key decisions —by Jayashree Nandi

**14 species** added to the Convention, these include:

**Pallas's Cat** (found in Ladakh and Trans Himalayan region)

**Sand Tiger Shark** (found in Indian Ocean also)

**Magellanic Plover**

**Lahille's bottlenose dolphin** and **Eurasian Lynx**

**6 species** get new priority conservation measures, these include:

**Chimpanzee**

**Straw-coloured Fruit Bat**

**Blue Shark**

### NEW MANDATE ON DEEP-SEA MINING

The agreement confirms that there is a need to better understand the impacts of deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities on migratory species, their prey and the ecosystems on which they depend on

It also urges countries interested in deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities to consider the impacts of deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities on migratory species with best available science and precautionary approach

### 3 NEW ACTION PLANS

for aquatic species facing extinction:

- Atlantic Humpback Dolphin
- Hawksbill Turtle
- Angelshark

### AMONG OTHER RESOLUTIONS

- Recognising Central Asian Flyway, which spans 30 range countries
- Establishment of a coordinating unit in India with financial support from government
- Mandate on tackling bycatch and aquatic wild meat
- Impact of climate crisis; ecological connectivity, insect decline and impact on migratory species; ecotourism; infrastructure and impact assessment; light pollution among others.

### INDIA WELCOMES AGREEMENTS

"The Initiative for the Central Asian Flyway will bring paradigm shift in conservation of migratory birds through creation of a Co-ordinating Unit in India under the umbrella of the CMS which will act as a platform for capacity building, knowledge sharing, research and coordinating with all range countries and will pave way for sustaining the population of over 600 species of migratory birds that use the flyway," the Union environment ministry has said

### EXPERTS CALL FOR FURTHER STUDY

"It is wonderful that India is taking leadership for the Central Asian Flyway. Due to global warming and other allied threats, migratory birds have been declining. There is a need to urgently pay attention to these groups. Further, we must study and understand the conservation needs of seabirds better. Other threats that emerge to large migratory birds like eagles are electric wires - a threat that must be mitigated," said Neha Sinha, conservation biologist and author



A video grab of the brief interaction between S Jaishankar and China's Wang Yi at the Munich Security Conference 2024.

## Jaishankar meets China's Wang Yi amid strain in ties

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**BEIJING/MUNICH:** External affairs minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi met briefly in Germany on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, their first meeting in over six months, people familiar with the matter said on Sunday.

Video footage from the Munich Security Conference showed Jaishankar and Wang having a brief chat on the sidelines of the event attended by top diplomats from across the world. However, there has been no official word on their discussion from both capitals.

This was the first meeting between the two leaders in over six months. The two last met in July in the Indonesian capital Jakarta at the ASEAN Regional Forum. The India-China relations have remained frozen since May 2020 when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) amassed troops in eastern Ladakh led to a deadly clash.

Since then both countries have held 20 rounds of corps commanders-level talks and agreed to pull back forces at four points. India is pressing the PLA to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas, maintaining that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal.

Wang along with Jaishankar and a host of ministers from multiple countries attended the Munich Security Conference.

Earlier on Saturday, Wang in his address to the conference on said that protectionism and concerns about security have impacted world economy, while unilateralism and bloc politics have dealt a heavy blow to international system, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The Ukraine crisis has dragged on and intensified, and conflicts in the Middle East have flared up again, Wang said, adding that new challenges have emerged one after another, such

### EAM discusses Gaza row with Palestinian counterpart

**MUNICH:** External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Sunday met his Palestinian counterpart Riyad al-Maliki during which they exchanged views on the current situation in war-torn Gaza.

Jaishankar is in Germany to attend the prestigious Munich Security Conference.

"Nice to see Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki. Exchanged views on the current situation in Gaza," the minister posted on X, sharing a photograph of the meeting. India has been pushing for a two-state solution to the Palestine issue.

During an interactive session at a security conference on Saturday, Jaishankar described the October 7 attacks on Israeli cities by Hamas as "terrorism". At the same time, he said Israel has an international obligation to observe humanitarian law. It is important that Israel should have been very mindful of civilian casualties, he said.

as artificial intelligence, climate crisis and polar regions in space. China will work with the United States to implement the common understandings reached by their heads of state and push China-US relations forward on the right path of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, he said. China will push for stable development of relations with Russia and promote strategic stability in Asia-Pacific region and the world at large, he said.

# Mamata takes on BJP by invoking Emergency

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**KOLKATA:** West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday drew a parallel between arrests made by the Indira Gandhi-led Congress government during Emergency and those being made today by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime using federal agencies, saying both were done with an eye on electoral gains.

Speaking at a government event in Birbhum district, Banerjee, whose Trinamool Congress (TMC) has already declared to go solo in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls dealing a major blow to the opposition INDIA bloc, accused the Congress of joining hands with the BJP.

"During the Emergency, 2,000 people were put in jail. Indira Gandhi thought she would win the elections (in 1977), but she lost. Today, the BJP is using ED and CBI for elections," Banerjee alleged.

Referring to a series of high-profile arrests of TMC leaders, including party's Birbhum unit president Anubrata Mondal, by federal agencies in various cases, Banerjee said: "There can be allegations but how can people be kept in jail year after year without trial? A conspiracy has been hatched in Birbhum. Kesto (as



Mamata Banerjee

Mondal is fondly called) is in jail for so long. If there is any allegation against him, then he has the right to defend himself."

Mondal was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in August 2022 in a cattle-smuggling case. His daughter was also arrested later and both are currently lodged in judicial custody in Delhi's Tihar Jail pending trial. She said: "The BJP, Congress and CPI(M) have joined hands. You saw this in the last Lok Sabha, assembly and panchayat polls."

While the TMC swept the 2021 assembly polls and panchayat elections last year, it faced a setback in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls as the BJP wrested 18 of state's 42 parliamentary seats.

Reacting to her comments, state Congress leader Koustav Bagchi said: "In an interview to BBC, Indira Gandhi said she thought arresting those people

was necessary under those circumstances but later realised that it was a mistake. Mamata Banerjee should realise that those arrested during Emergency did not face charges of smuggling cattle, coal and rice like her leaders."

Banerjee also accused the Union government of cancelling Aadhaar cards of several people in West Bengal.

"The Aadhaar cards of 50 people at Jamalpur in (West) Burdwan district have been cancelled. This has happened in Birbhum, North and South 24 Parganas districts and the north Bengal region as well. This is a conspiracy," she alleged and ordered state's bureaucrats to launch a portal for the people to register complaints if their Aadhaar cards have been cancelled.

"The elections will be declared in one month. Those who are not enrolled as voters must get it done as soon as possible. Aadhaar or no Aadhaar, none of our schemes will be stopped," she said.

The BJP rejected her allegations, terming them "lies". State BJP leader Sajal Ghosh said: "Mamata Banerjee is telling lies to secure votes. Aadhaar cards of many people are suspended if they do not link it to their PAN card and update their bank records."

### 10 COAL MINERS ABDUCTED NEAR ARUNACHAL BORDER: POLICE

**SILCHAR:** At least 10 labourers working in a coal mine near Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border were abducted by a group of suspected militants, said police on Sunday.

The incident took in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh on Saturday late-night, said police. According to the initial investigation, the kidnappers are suspected to be members of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and United Liberation Front of Assam Independent (ULFA-I).

Tinsukia superintendent of police Gaurav Abhijit Dilip confirmed the abduction but said the police "are yet to confirm the exact number of people kidnapped". "Arunachal Pradesh police are investigating the matter. As per our initial investigation, some Assam residents are among the kidnapped individuals," he said.

According to the officials of Arunachal Pradesh police, additional forces have been called for the rescue operation. As of now, no demand has been made from the militant groups.

### { CHURACHANDPUR VIOLENCE } GOVT WARNS OF ACTION

## Refrain from going to work: ITLF to govt staff

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**GUWAHATI:** A prominent Kuki outfit has asked Manipur government employees to refrain from attending work in Churachandpur district from Monday as it again pressed for the reinstatement of a suspended police head constable from the community and the removal of two top officials and

On Thursday, two people were killed when security forces opened fire on a mob that stormed a government compound in the tribal-dominated district during a protest against the suspension of a cop over a video of him with "armed village volunteers".

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) held superintendent of police (SP) Shivan and Surve and deputy commissioner Dharun Kumar responsible for the violence, setting a 24-hour deadline for them to revoke the cop's suspension and leave the district.

"More than 24 hours have passed since the ITLF gave an ultimatum to cancel the suspension order of head constable



A mob stormed a government compound and set buildings on fire in Churachandpur on Thursday.

person and health minister Sapam Ranjan Singh for a response to the ITLF statement but could not get one immediately.

The state government on Sunday issued an order, calling the ITLF directive illegal. The order, issued by chief secretary Vineet Joshi said, that "No work, no pay" will be enforced against those "employees who do not attend their official duty without authorised leave". HT has seen a copy of the order.

## Ajit reaches out to Muslim community

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**NAVI MUMBAI:** Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Ajit Pawar on Sunday reached out to Muslim community, assuring them that he would not allow any injustice to take place while he was in the government.

His party organised a state-level minority community confidence meeting in Vashi, where the assurance was given by him and other top leaders, including MP Praful Patel, state NCP president Sunil Tatkar and state woman president Rupali Chakanar.

The meeting held shortly after the Ajit Pawar-led party was recognised as the real NCP by the assembly speaker had Muslim leaders from across the state, including former Con-

gress leader Baba Siddique, who joined the NCP on February 10.

Addressing the gathering, Pawar said, "The NCP is a party with a secular ideology. We are inspired by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and follow the teachings of Shahu Maharaj, Jyotiba Phule and Ambedkar. The minorities have always trusted the NCP, and it is our duty to ensure that the confidence continues."

"Maintaining communal harmony is our responsibility," he added. "The Muslim community is an integral part of the country and it has made a huge contribution in the battle for India's Independence."

"Leaders like Baba Siddique have joined us because they know that I take everyone along and that is the key to success," the NCP leader said.



Sharad Pawar

## TOP COURT TO HEAR PAWAR'S PLEA AGAINST EC DECISION TODAY

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**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of Sharad Pawar challenging an Election Commission order recognising the Ajit Pawar-led faction as the real Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

A bench of justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta and KV Viswanathan is likely to hear Sharad Pawar's plea.

On February 16, the top court had agreed to urgently list the plea after Sharad Pawar stated that a whip may be issued by the faction led by Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar.

Sharad Pawar had sought an urgent hearing of his plea in the wake of twin blows suffered by the group led by him and the consequential fear of facing action for possible violations of whip by his MLAs. He had sought urgent hearing in view of the February 15 order of Maharashtra assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar.

Narwekar held that the NCP faction led by Ajit Pawar was the real NCP and that the anti-defection provisions in the Constitution cannot be used to stifle internal dissent. Prior to this, the poll panel announced on February 6 that the Ajit Pawar faction is the real NCP and also allotted the party's 'clock' symbol to the group. The special Maharashtra assembly session is beginning on February 20.

Pawar senior, who founded the NCP with former Lok Sabha speaker PA Sangma and Tariq Anwar in 1999 after their expulsion from the Congress, filed the petition through lawyer Abhishek Jharaj.

Prior to him, the Ajit Pawar faction had filed a caveat in the Supreme Court to ensure that no ex-parte order is passed in favour of Sharad Pawar group if the latter moves the top court.

(With inputs from New Delhi)



# India, EU to begin 7th round of discussions on FTA today

Rajeev Jayaswal and Rezaul H Laskar

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**NEW DELHI:** India and the European Union (EU) will launch the seventh round of negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA) in New Delhi on Monday, along with talks on an investment protection agreement (IPA) and a pact on geographical indications (GIs).

This round of talks is expected to last five days, three officials aware of the development said on condition of anonymity.

The sixth round of negotiations, held in Brussels, concluded on October 27, 2023. The previous round covered policy areas related to goods and government procurement offers, and the seventh round is expected to include services and investment, one of the officials said.

The sixth round had also focused on accelerating work on the text presented by the two sides and some progress was made on technical matters, a second official said. "The stage for the seventh round has been set by the chief negotiators of both sides after two separate meetings — the first in Brussels during mid-November and the second in New Delhi last month," the first official said.

The two sides have already held "substantial" discussions on matters related to goods and public procurements in previous

## THE SIXTH ROUND CONSISTED OF 71 TECHNICAL SESSIONS COVERING 18 OF THE 23 POLICY AREAS AND CHAPTERS

rounds, the third official said. "The two sides were engaged constructively in the last three to four months to iron out differences and prepare the ground for the seventh round," he said.

The sixth round consisted of 71 technical sessions covering 18 of the 23 policy areas and chapters. These talks were held in-person and virtually.

The proposed trade deal with the EU is one of the most complex FTAs being negotiated by India. While there is interest on both sides to take forward the deal, a breakthrough is unlikely before the general elections in India and European Parliament polls this year.

India will continue to oppose the EU's move to impose a carbon tax or the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) on various imports at multilateral forums such as the MC13 at Abu Dhabi later this month, but this is unlikely to affect the FTA talks, a fourth person aware of the matter said on condition of anonymity.

"India is committed to environmental protection and is doing more than it has committed at global forums. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a call for LiFE (Lifestyle for the Environment). But India is against making this part of trade commitments, which would be nothing but a non-trade barrier," the fourth person said, referring to CBAM, which is a proposed tariff on carbon-intensive products to offset carbon leakage.

CBAM could lead to tariffs of up to 35% on imports of high-carbon goods such as steel, iron ore and cement from India. EU officials have said CBAM will be implemented gradually and that their side is open to talks to address India's concerns.

Even as New Delhi opposes measures such as CBAM being made part of any trade deal, it is preparing its industry to make products with a low carbon footprint, such as green steel, green cement and green hydrogen, the fourth person said.

The EU's demands include removing barriers to trade for smaller European firms, opening up services and the Indian public procurement market, and negotiations on such matters are being done on the principles of reciprocity and equity while protecting the interests of India's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the third official said.

"There are marked differences between the MSMEs of the two

sides in all aspects — size, investments and use of technology. Hence, all such matters must be negotiated on the principle of equity," he said. MSMEs, agriculture and dairy are sensitive sectors for India, he added.

The third official noted India is the world's fifth largest economy, but is also a developing nation with significantly low per capita income compared to European states. Reciprocal trade arrangements farming and dairy are not possible as Indian farmers are very poor. For them, farming is for subsistence rather than profit, and the government is committed to protect their interests, he added. Unlike the recently signed FTAs with Australia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the proposed deal with the EU is comprehensive in terms of size (27 member countries) and scope (the range of subjects under negotiation), and hence, the pact will take more time, the third official said.

India and the EU resumed bilateral trade and investment negotiations about a month after Modi participated in a leaders' meeting in May 2021 at the invitation of European Council President Charles Michel. This was the first time the EU hosted a meeting with India in the EU+27 format.

The negotiations that were stalled for almost nine years were relaunched in 2022 along with separate talks for the IPA and the agreement on GIs.

## GREEN PIECE REDESIGNING OUR CITIES FOR WATER CONSERVATION NEED OF HOUR

Bharati Chaturvedi

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**NEW DELHI:** We know that 2024 is being touted as the year with the unseason heat and high temperatures. Even as recently as February 9 of this year, the temperature at some stations was among the hottest, as reported earlier by the HT.

This may not necessarily mean another year of intense heat, but it certainly indicates that there is a possibility.

India should prepare in multiple ways for the possible rise in temperature. Water is a top priority, as previous summers have shown us.

According to the World Bank, India constitutes 18% of the world population, but only 4% of its water resources, making it among the most water-stressed in the world. I won't compile a to-do list, but restrict myself to the urgency of the rapidly urbanizing India. Let's redesign our cities in three key ways to circulate water instead of using and throwing it like a linear commodity. First, recycle grey water in a decentralised manner, using it for gardens, road washing and more. All parks and institutions with open areas should harvest rainwater, with transparently available evidence. Second, we cannot ignore the concretisation of more and more surfaces, both as a dust control mechanism and for aesthetics. Why not modify this, so water can percolate optimally. The current 'open tiles' do not do that adequately. And third, technology like water saving devices should be made the norm, from taps to industry.

In other words, water should be captured and kept usable. The temperature gauges tell us there is almost no time left.

(The writer is the founder and director of Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group)

## Fresh snowfall in Himachal, alert issued



Fresh snowfall hit the Solang Valley of Himachal Pradesh on Sunday. The Met department has sounded a red alert for heavy to very heavy rain and snow in seven of the state's 12 districts for Monday.

## Decoding Pak elections and the implications for region

HT Correspondent

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**NEW DELHI:** Last Thursday, voters in Pakistan exercised their franchise in the country's first general elections since the July 2018 election that brought former prime minister Imran Khan to power. In 2022, Khan was ousted in an unprecedented no confidence vote and now finds himself behind bars.

In a stunning reversal of fortune, independent candidates backed by Khan's political party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), emerged as the single largest party, with allegations of vote rigging rampant. Meanwhile, Pakistan's traditional political heavyweights are engaged in a furious effort to form a coalition government.

"Everyone's reading of the events before the election is out of the window. And everyone has to start from scratch and figure out what has happened," said sociologist Zoha Waseem, an assistant professor in the department of sociology at the University of Warwick. She made these comments on last week's episode of Grand Tamasha, a weekly podcast co-produced by HT and the Carnegie Endowment for Interna-

tion Peace. In the months before the election, the PTI was repressed with party members jailed, harassed, and eventually forced to contest the 2024 elections as independents. Pakistan's powerful military was widely seen as the guiding force behind these moves. But the election results appear to have caught the military—and perhaps many Pakistanis—by surprise.

Elaborating on the unanticipated result, Waseem told host Milan Vaishnav: "It was exciting because initially, in the lead-up to the polls, there was this idea that people were not interested. The momentum, the energy, the excitement were not there, which made people seem quite disheartened and think that voters are not going to turn out, this is already set, and everything is already engineered and the stage has been managed." However, she noted, "once the results start coming in, the excitement comes because you're suddenly seeing that this is not going as predicted; this was not going as per the military's plans."

Waseem remarked that many political observers did not predict this shock outcome because "they underestimated Imran Khan's pull and the way that he inspires

young voters in a way that PMLN [Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)] has not been able to do. We also underestimated Khan's voters and supporters' creativity and improvisation," she said. In spite of months of repression, PTI supporters found ways of using mobile phone applications to inform their supporters where to go on the day of the polls. And they found ways of communicating with their voters using artificial intelligence and other tactics on social and digital media.

"What the establishment was trying to do was keep Khan out of the public eye," Waseem remarked, "but PTI's supporters and workers were really crafty and creative in keeping the conversation going and allowing Khan to keep inspiring voters the day of the polls." To add insult to injury, the military overplayed its hand. "The army thought that using so much repression, using all these cases to delegitimise Khan would work in its favour," she explained. "At some point, it started backfiring."

Listen: Scan the QR code to the next episode of Grand Tamasha's latest season

## MUNDRA DRUG HAUL ACCUSED ESCAPES FROM POLICE CUSTODY

**BHUJ:** An accused in the case related to the seizure of 2,988 kg of heroin in Mundra port in Gujarat in 2021 escaped from police custody in Punjab, where he was taken for a court appearance in another case, police said on Sunday.

Jobanjit Singh Sandhu, who was taken from the Bhuj jail in Kutch to appear before a court in Amritsar in another case, escaped on Saturday, Kutch (West) Superintendent of Police Mahendra Bagadiya said.

"He was being brought back from Amritsar when he managed to escape from the clutches of the Gujarat police. A search operation has been launched with the help of local police, and efforts are on to capture him," the official said.

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized around 2,988 kg of heroin worth around ₹21,000 crore from the containers at Mundra port in Kutch in September 2021.

## HT Shervani quits as national general secretary of SP

**LUCKNOW:** Saleem Shervani, former Union minister and five-time former Lok Sabha MP from Badaun in Uttar Pradesh, on Sunday quit as the Samajwadi Party's national general secretary, citing the party's "inappropriate" selection of candidates for upcoming Rajya Sabha polls and "neglect" of the Muslim community.

"I have repeatedly requested a Rajya Sabha seat for the Muslim community... there was not a single Muslim candidate... The way you have distributed tickets for the Rajya Sabha shows you do not give importance to PDA (pichhde, Dalit and alpsankhyak). Shervani, who had joined the SP in 2020 from the Congress, said he will continue to work for the party.

## HT Rahul seeks release of aid to kin of Kerala tusker attack victims

**WAYANAD:** Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday sought immediate release of compensation to the families of two victims of the recent wild elephant attacks in Kerala's Wayanad district, which is also his Lok Sabha constituency. "We've been facing these tragedies that are coming out of man-animal conflict for some time... We've told the administration to pay the compensation quickly and effectively and not delay it," Gandhi said.

Gandhi also met the families of Aji (42), who was trampled to death by a radio-collared elephant in the Mananthavady area of Wayanad last week, and Paul, an eco-tourism guide of the forest department who was killed by a wild tusker near Kuruva island on Friday.

## HT Wanted gangster killed, 2 cops injured in Punjab encounter

**CHANDIGARH:** A wanted gangster was killed and two Punjab Police personnel were injured in an encounter in Barnala district on Sunday, a senior police officer said. At least 60 cases were registered against the gangster, Gurmeet Singh alias Kala Dhanula, Punjab director general of police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said in a post on X. "In a major breakthrough, Anti Gangster Task Force (@AGTF) of @PunjabPoliceInd neutralized wanted A category Gangster Gurmeet Singh @ Kala Dhanula at a farmhouse in Badbar, District Barnala," he said.

The police party fired back in self-defence. An inspector and a sub-inspector were injured in the cross-firing, he said.

## FROM PAGE 1

### BJP NEEDS BIGGER WIN

Modi said in his nearly hour-long speech. "I am a person who worries about the nation. If I had worried about my own home, it would not have been possible to make homes for crores of Indians... the dreams of crores of people are Modi's resolve and it is for the realisation of those dream that we work hard with *seva bhav* (selfless service)," he said.

Instructing the party workers to go to the people with a report card of the BJP's good governance, clean administration and blemish-free image of the PM ahead of the polls due this summer, he said neither his party nor he engaged in "rajneeti" (politics) but had been toiling for the sake of "rashtraneeti" (national politics).

"A senior leader once told me you have accomplished enough, first as CM and then as PM and that I should now rest. But I am working for *rashtraneeti*, not *rajneeti*... We follow the ideals of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and are inspired by him," he said amid sloganeering by the 11,000-strong audience.

What the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government has achieved in the last 10 years is just the first step, he said, adding that several decisions are pending, for which the party cadres must ensure an emphatic win.

"We will have to take a long jump and for the accomplishment of all targets, the first condition is the *zordar* (emphatic) return of the BJP to power," he said.

While he called on party workers to reach out to first-time voters, women and each of the beneficiaries of government schemes to elicit their support and ensure the NDA meets its 400-seat target, he appeared confident of returning for a third consecutive term, claiming that several foreign governments have extended invitations to him through July and September as even they know

that "*aayega toh Modi hi*" (Modi will come to power). The PM has set a target of winning 370 seats for the BJP and 400 for the NDA. On Saturday, he told party colleagues that winning 370 seats will be their homage to party ideologue and Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee who campaigned for the abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu & Kashmir.

In his valedictory address on Sunday, the PM did not shy away from taking credit for a multitude of policy interventions that have brought economy on track, empowered the poor, marginalised and the women.

"India's pace and the determination to accomplish big targets is being acknowledged by the world. The country is not dreaming small dreams or making small resolutions. It is our *sapna* and *sankalp* (dream and resolve) to make India viksit (developed)," he said.

The PM said all nations are now eager to establish closer ties with India. In an outreach towards women, who have emerged as a crucial votebank for the BJP, the PM said he was the first Prime Minister to speak about the dignity of women and their safety from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

He said the BJP is bringing together the power of the youth, women and farmers to build a viksit Bharat. "In the coming days our mothers, sisters, and daughters will have multiple options," he said.

He said it was the BJP that gave the marginalised communities representation in the council of ministers for better political representation. "For the first time, a woman has become a member of the Rajya Sabha from Nagaland. We are proud that for the first time we have given a place to a person from Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh in the council of ministers," he said. Training his guns at the Con-

gress, the PM said it is the responsibility of every party worker to "save the country" from the grand old party.

"Their track record is before us... it is the mother of instability, corruption, appeasement, and dynastic politics," he said. Referring to the Congress as "confused", he said there is a fight going on in the party not about ideals or policies, but over attacking Modi.

"There is a section that says Modi should be hated and personal allegations made to destroy his image. The other section that is rooted in the party's ideology, says this hurts the Congress more. They are not fighting with us over ideological issues, therefore, abuses and false accusations against Modi have become their agenda," he said.

The PM said the completion of the Ram Temple is the fulfilment of a 500-year-old dream. During his address, the PM also got emotional upon receiving the news of the demise of Jain monk Acharya Vidhyasagar Maharaj. Later, condoling the death, the PM said he will be remembered by the coming generations for his invaluable contributions to society.

"I had the honour of receiving his blessings for years. I can never forget my visit to the Chandragiri Jain Mandir in Dongargarh, Chhattisgarh late last year. That time, I had spent time with Acharya Shri 108 Vidhyasagar Ji Maharaj Ji and also received his blessings," the Prime Minister said in a post on X.

### FARM TALKS

Police and security forces have sought to keep the agitators at bay, hurling tear gas shells, firing water cannons and baton-charging protesters to avoid them barreling through the blockades.

Meanwhile, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella group of 37 farmer unions, on Sunday said it will protest in

front of the residences of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders in Punjab for three days from Tuesday to press the Centre into accepting the farmers' demands.

Earlier, Dallewal, one of the farmer leaders who has helmed the current round of protests, said the government should meet the protesters' demands before the model code of conduct comes into force.

"If the government thinks it will continue to hold meetings till the model code is imposed, and then say it cannot do anything as the code is in force... the farmers are not going to return," he said.

"The government should find a solution to our demands before the model code of conduct comes into force," Dallewal said.

Meanwhile, several farm leaders held a panchayat in Kurukshetra, Haryana on Sunday with Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni) chief Gurnam Singh Charuni and other khaps to chalk out a course of action to lead their support to Punjab's protesting farmers.

"It was decided that all farmers' organisations would hold a united protest in support of the agitation," Charuni said after the panchayat.

Several other decisions have been kept in abeyance for now and will depend on the outcome of the negotiations with the Centre, Charuni said, adding that a four-member panel has been formed to connect all farmers in the National Capital Region (NCR) with those from Delhi.

Another Khap leader who attended the meeting told news agency PTI that farmers will reach Delhi and protest if the talks fail.

Meanwhile, the suspension of internet services has been extended in certain areas of some Punjab districts, including Patiala, Sangrur and Fatehgarh Sahib, till February 24 on the orders of the Union ministry of home affairs.

**Chief Engineer, Uttarakhand Rural Roads Development Agency**  
First Floor, Directorate of Panchayatraj, Opp-IT Park, Sahastradhara Road, Dehradun

Ref. No. 2317 / (11-02)(xix)-2/ITCO/URRD/23 Dated : 17-02-2024

**PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY) e-Procurement Notice- 33/2023-24**

The Chief Engineer, URRDA on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of works under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in the Districts of Tehri for 01 number of Packages with estimated cost totaling to **Rs. 1.50 Crore** including their maintenance for five years from the eligible contractors (Class-A and above) registered with PWD/CPWD or equivalent.

Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: **19-02-2024.**

**Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission:** The bid documents are available online and should be submitted online in [www.pmgstyendersuk.gov.in](http://www.pmgstyendersuk.gov.in). The bidder will be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities.

The bidders are required to submit original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4.B (ii) of ITB with **CONCERNED CIRCLE OFFICES, mentioned in SBD/IMB, only up to and before the time and date of the submission of the Bids (for World Bank funded works) and on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the bid (for Regular PMGSY Works)**, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids shall be declared non-responsive. No physical documents will be accepted after the closing date and time of submission of bids.

Last Date / Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: **26-02-2024 01:00 PM.**

For further details please log on to [www.pmgstyendersuk.gov.in](http://www.pmgstyendersuk.gov.in).

**Chief Engineer, URRDA, Dehradun**

\* Non Registered bidders may submit bids, however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

**Note :** For e-Procurement for any sort of queries 0135-2608125 number may be contacted 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM.

**कार्यालय मुख्य अभियंता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी विभाग, रायपुर परिक्षेत्र, रायपुर (छ.ग.)**

**ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट निविदा सूचना**

एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत सक्षम श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदार से प्रपत्र "ए" में प्रतिशत दर पर कार्य हेतु ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है :-

क्र.	निविदा आभरण क्र./ दिनांक	सिस्टम नं.	निविदा आभरण	जिला	योजनाओं का नाम	अनुमानित लागत (रु. लाख में)	ठेकेदारों की श्रेणी
1	23 / 15.02.2024	152958	अरम	बेमेतना	धानखुहरीवा कलीवर वाटर पॉपिंग कार्य	260.75	बी एवं उच्च
3	24 / 15.02.2024	152959	तृतीय	कोटावा	छुरीकला जल वितरण प्रणाली कार्य	905.89	बी एवं उच्च

**Important Events and Time Schedule-** Date of calling NIT-15.02.2024, Bid Start Date - 19.02.2024, Pre Bid Meeting date-26.02.2024, Bid Due Date- 08.03.2024, PHY Doc. Submission Last Date- 11.03.2024, PQ Document Download Date- 11.03.2024.

नोट :- उपरोक्त निर्माण कार्यों की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तों, धरोहर राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञप्ति, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट वेब पोर्टल <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> में उक्त निविदा दिनांक 17.02.2024 से देखी जा सकती है।

अधीक्षक अभियंता (प्रकोट प्रभारी) राज्य स्तरीय निविदा प्रकोट कार्यालय मुख्य अभियंता लोक.स्वा.यां. विभाग, परिक्षेत्र रायपुर (छ.ग.)

G-07863/5

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**

See Section 82 Cr. P.C.

Where a complaint has been made before me that accused Kamlesh W/o Lt. Sh. Satbir, R/o- Flat No. 135, MCD Colony, Sector-04, Rohini, Delhi has committed (or suspected to have committed) the offence in case registered vide FIR No. 1497/2017 U/s 125 Electricity Act P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused Kamlesh can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Kamlesh has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Kamlesh of case FIR No. 1497/2017 U/s 125 Electricity Act P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi is required to appear before this court (or before me) to answer the complaint on or before the day of **20.03.2024.**

By Order,  
**Sh. Jitendra Singh**  
Additional Session Judge(Electricity)  
North-West, Court No.205  
Rohini Court, Delhi

DP/1987/RD/2024 (Court Matter)

**BHARAT HEAVY ELECTRICALS LIMITED, BHOPAL (CMM-SUPPLIER DEVELOPMENT CELL)**

**REGISTRATION AS A SUPPLIER IN BHBL BHOPAL**

Suppliers are requested to apply through online supplier registration portal for registration in bhbl-bhopal so that they can participate in limited tenders of bhbl-bhopal.

Our regular procurement list can be found at <https://supplier.bhbl.in/> ->material search. Select plant as hep-bhopal.

Apart from regular procurement list as above, bhbl-bhopal requires vendors for some specific items that are not either supplied by indian supplier or have a low supplier base. List can be accessed through <https://bpl.bhbl.com/mm/> click on-vendors required for given item or pmd items with less than 4 vendors.

You are requested to apply online for registration in bhbl-bhopal for supplying items as mentioned in above list. Link for registration can be accessed from <https://supplier.bhbl.in/>. Read steps for filling the application form and apply for registration.

**Supplier Development Cell**  
Admin Building – Second Floor Piplani- Bhopal

**RESERVE BANK OF INDIA**  
Estate Department, Central Vista, Sector - 17 Chandigarh  
<https://www.rbi.org.in>

**NOTICE FOR E-TENDER**

Providing Integrated Facility Management Services (IFMS) in the Bank's Premises and Residential Colonies of Reserve Bank of India, Chandigarh

(E-Tender No. RBI/Chandigarh Regional Office/Estate/11/23-24/ET/541)

Reserve Bank of India (the Bank) invites tenders through e-tendering for providing Integrated Facility Management Services (IFMS) in the Bank's Premises and Residential Colonies of Reserve Bank of India, Chandigarh. The estimated cost of the work is ₹2,78,01,461/- (incl. of GST) only.

2. Interested tenders are mandatorily required to fulfil pre-qualification criteria and registered on [www.msfccommerce.com](http://www.msfccommerce.com) for participation.

3. Tender documents can be downloaded from the Bank's website [www.rbi.org.in](http://www.rbi.org.in) from February 19, 2024 from 05:00 PM onwards. The tender can be filled through e-tendering at <https://www.msfccommerce.com/eproc/> from February 19, 2024 (05:00 PM onwards) till March 21, 2024 (11:00 AM). Part I of the tender will be opened on March 21, 2024 at 03:00 PM through the MSTC website.

4. For complete details and to download the tender documents, please see the tender link on the RBI website at [https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/BS\\_ViewTenders.aspx](https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/BS_ViewTenders.aspx)

5. All corrigendum / modifications / changes, if any, will be published only on the Bank's website [www.rbi.org.in](http://www.rbi.org.in) and [www.msfccommerce.com](http://www.msfccommerce.com).

6. The Hindi version of this notice is also available at the Bank's website and in Hindi newspaper, Punjab Kesari in Chandigarh/Panchkula/Mohali region and in Hindi Newspaper, Hindustan Hindi in New Delhi region.

Regional Director  
Reserve Bank of India, Chandigarh





# OPINION

The  
**Hindustan Times**  
ESTABLISHED IN 1924

{ OUR TAKE }

## Message from Sandeshkhali

Bengal govt must uphold the rule of law, TMC needs to heed message from the grassroots

In 2011, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) led by Mamata Banerjee won a landslide victory in the West Bengal assembly elections to end 34 years of uninterrupted CPM-led Left Front rule. A key promise of the TMC then was poriborton (change). The change Banerjee promised was not just a change of government but also a change of the toxic political culture, produced by a self-serving nexus of party cadres and government machinery. Protests in Singur and Nandigram over land acquisition led to a groundswell against the CPM organisation and later, the government, in the 2010s. Land acquisition may have been the immediate trigger, but underlining the protests then was anger against the party-government that had refused to let people breathe, and voice their discontent against party cadres and policies. The ongoing protests in Sandeshkhali, a village in North 24 Parganas, suggest that the plot has not changed in West Bengal politics even though the cast has.

Sandeshkhali is a throwback to the past when the party in office thought it could ignore public anger and back tainted leaders. Chief minister Banerjee needs to uphold the rule of law and ensure that the state machinery implements the law impartially and is seen to be doing so. It has not helped that the state police are unable to apprehend Sheikh Shahjahan, a TMC leader, on the run in an alleged ration scam. The violence in Sandeshkhali started when a mob attacked Enforcement Directorate officials who were raiding Shahjahan's residence on January 5. Since then, allegations of land grab and sexual harassment, including child abuse, have been levelled against Shahjahan and his aides. State police were late to act on the charges while the TMC accused the BJP and the Left-Congress leadership as well as the state governor, CV Ananda Bose, of politicising the case. On Saturday, gang rape charges were finally and belatedly filed against TMC leaders named in the case following intense pressure from the ground and the Opposition.

Violence has been a leitmotif of politics in West Bengal since the late 1960s. The Congress and the CPM used it to suppress political opposition. In office, the TMC has followed the same template, using its presence in government to influence all aspects of civic life and the political process, to monopolise power and control public institutions. Sandeshkhali suggests that the people have had enough; it is a warning the TMC needs to heed, especially with national elections around the corner.

## Indian wrestling still down on the mat

The United World Wrestling (UWW), which is the sport's international governing body, lifted the suspension of the Wrestling Federation of India last week. The UWW, on August 23, 2023, banned the Indian wrestling body for failing to hold elections within the required period and for operating without a president for six months. The UWW's decision came with some conditions though. It urged a guarantee for non-discrimination against the protesting wrestlers (Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia and others) and also said the WFI would have to re-convene the elections of its Athletes' Commission no later than July 1, 2024. The immediate impact of the decision is that the Indian wrestlers will now be able to compete under the national flag at the UWW events.

But the protesting wrestlers aren't happy with the decision because it means the faction controlled by BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, which won the elections in December 2023, will be running the show. The wrestlers have dashed off a letter of protest to the UWW and the sports ministry. As things stand, there is little that the ministry can do. It had already suspended WFI and given that the elections were held in a fair manner, there is no reason for UWW to change its decision. In this scenario, the best option for the wrestlers would be to take the matter to court and ask for the elections themselves to be declared null and void.

This will still not solve the problem though as the body has many Singh loyalists across India. To truly change things, the body itself will need to be reformed and that is a process that will take time. Parachuting a candidate to the top post may not be the solution Indian wrestling, a sport that has fetched international acclaim for the country, needs.

{ STRAIGHTFORWARD }

Shashi Shekhar



## Restive farmers, responsive State

Agriculture in India needs redress — but its problems are not exceptional

Farmers in certain parts of the country are restive once again. They have started marching towards Delhi to exert pressure on the Union government through sit-ins. They claim the government has not kept the promises it made to them. However, one question arises: If farmers are present throughout the country, why is their agitation not nationwide? I'll try to explain this in a bit, but first, let us first talk about a similar situation in Europe.

Farmers from several European countries recently drove their tractors into major cities there. They blockaded highways and attempted to halt the operation of ports. Governments in France, Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Spain all succumbed to the protests. Farmers were angry owing to the policies of their respective governments, and they believed they were being treated unfairly. Resource-rich France and Germany swiftly agreed to some of the farmers' demands.

France reinstated cuts to fuel subsidies and scrapped the law that restricted pesticide use. Germany has also announced similar measures. The European Union has put forward numerous proposals on the use of fertilisers and pesticides that farmers believe are not in their best interests. They have also been assured that the policy would be reassessed.

Can European farmers be compared with those in Punjab and Haryana? The circumstances are certainly different, but there are similarities as well.

Agriculture in India needs a new vision and strategy, and not just ad hoc interventions. It will now have to adapt to changing circumstances. Agriculture has shaped our society and culture for centuries, but farmers have always been under stress. They continue to worry over the decreasing size of land holdings, increasing water scarcity, and land becoming progressively infertile. Has the government turned a blind eye to their problems, forcing them to obstruct road and railway traffic?

In the 2019 interim budget, the Union government resolved to grant farming households ₹6,000 each year from the treasury. Similarly, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the government

began providing free foodgrain and edible oil every month to the needy.

These schemes have since continued, and are regarded as a great aid in the villages of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Bihar, which I have visited. The central and state governments also operate numerous social programmes for children of farmers and agricultural labourers and for women involved in farming. The needy benefit from direct cash transfers to farmer accounts. Not just that, this class is also entitled to several other agricultural concessions. It does not require any great insight to discern the positive impact these have had on the rural economy.

If this is the case, why are farmer and farm worker suicide rates climbing year after year?

According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, 11,290 persons associated with agriculture died by suicide in 2022. Of these, 5,027 were farmers, while 6,083 worked on farms as labourers. This year, such deaths have grown by 3.75% over last year. These are worrying figures, to be sure, but not everyone who is experiencing bad luck is associated with agriculture. In data from 2022, 170,921 suicides were reported to the NCRB. Of these, 11.6%



Agriculture in India needs a new vision and strategy, and not just ad hoc interventions

were self-employed, 11.6% were housewives, 9.6% were unemployed, 9.2% were employed, and 7.6% were students. Another 26% were daily wage workers. Farmers ranked seventh on this list.

But a suicide is a suicide. The entire social and economic system must be held accountable for this, but the solution takes resources, time, and patience.

Another issue also needs to be discussed here. It is commonly stated that the agriculture sector contributed more than half of India's gross domestic product (GDP) when the country gained independence in 1947. In 2022-23, this became just 15%. This figure is sometimes presented as a reflection of the deteriorating situation in agriculture,

despite the fact that in rapidly developing countries, industry, trade, and service sectors are expanding significantly. Had this not occurred, agriculture's small percentage of the total GDP of the richest countries in the world — the United States and Germany — would not have continued to remain at just 1%.

Are the demands made by the protesting farmers unjustified? No. They have their own grief and suffering. We have to look at these. But it is impossible to overlook the fact that other sections of the population also require government assistance just as much, if not more, as the figures here make evident.

Shashi Shekhar is editor-in-chief, Hindustan. The views expressed are personal

## Govt must rethink the role of defence attaché

In international politics, diplomacy and the military are inextricably linked. There is no consensus, however, on the precise boundaries separating the military and foreign policy domains. For instance, should the depth and extent of foreign military cooperation be decided by diplomats or military professionals? Ideally, this is a deliberative process, but, as with matters pertaining to different bureaucracies, there is always some tension. Many American diplomats deride the outsized role of the Pentagon in the United States (US)'s foreign policy. India's story reflects its tradition of strong civilian control over the military — diplomats, for better and for worse, have been firmly in the driving seat. But with growing capabilities and interests, we need to reconsider the current terms of the partnership between the military and our diplomats. Ironically, recent policy measures — of redeployment of military attachés — may end up narrowing the scope of the military's overseas engagements.

The military's main point of contact for its overseas engagements is through the office of the defence attaché. Since independence, India has progressively increased the number of defence attachés posted worldwide. Currently, there are around 64 military officers, and supporting enlisted staff, assigned to about 55 military missions. The number of staff posted at these missions, and their service affiliations, divulge the "revealed preferences" of its military and foreign engagements. For instance, until very recently, India had 10 officers posted to its mission in Moscow, indicative of its military-technical exchange and its Cold-War-era reliance on Russian platforms. Moreover, indicative of the leading component of its bilateral engagement, the three services have divided up their responsibilities. For instance, naval officers serve as defence attachés to Sri Lanka, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, and Japan, among others, whereas Army officers are posted to countries like Turkey, Malaysia, South Korea, and Italy, and air force officers to countries like Brazil, Egypt and Israel.

Recently, the strength of military officers posted to different missions was "rationalised". Citing the need to enhance defence exports and engagement with other countries, officers and their supporting staff were reduced and "redeployed" from some missions to others. Hence, the number posted in

Russia was cut from 10 to seven, in France from three to two and, quite surprisingly, in the United Kingdom (UK), from three to one. The officers were removed altogether from countries like Chile and Sudan, among others. For the first time ever, officers were posted in countries such as Spain, Djibouti, Philippines, Tanzania and Poland. This was perhaps necessary to fill voids and explore opportunities for defence trade. However, the reduction inevitably decreases the capabilities of these missions.

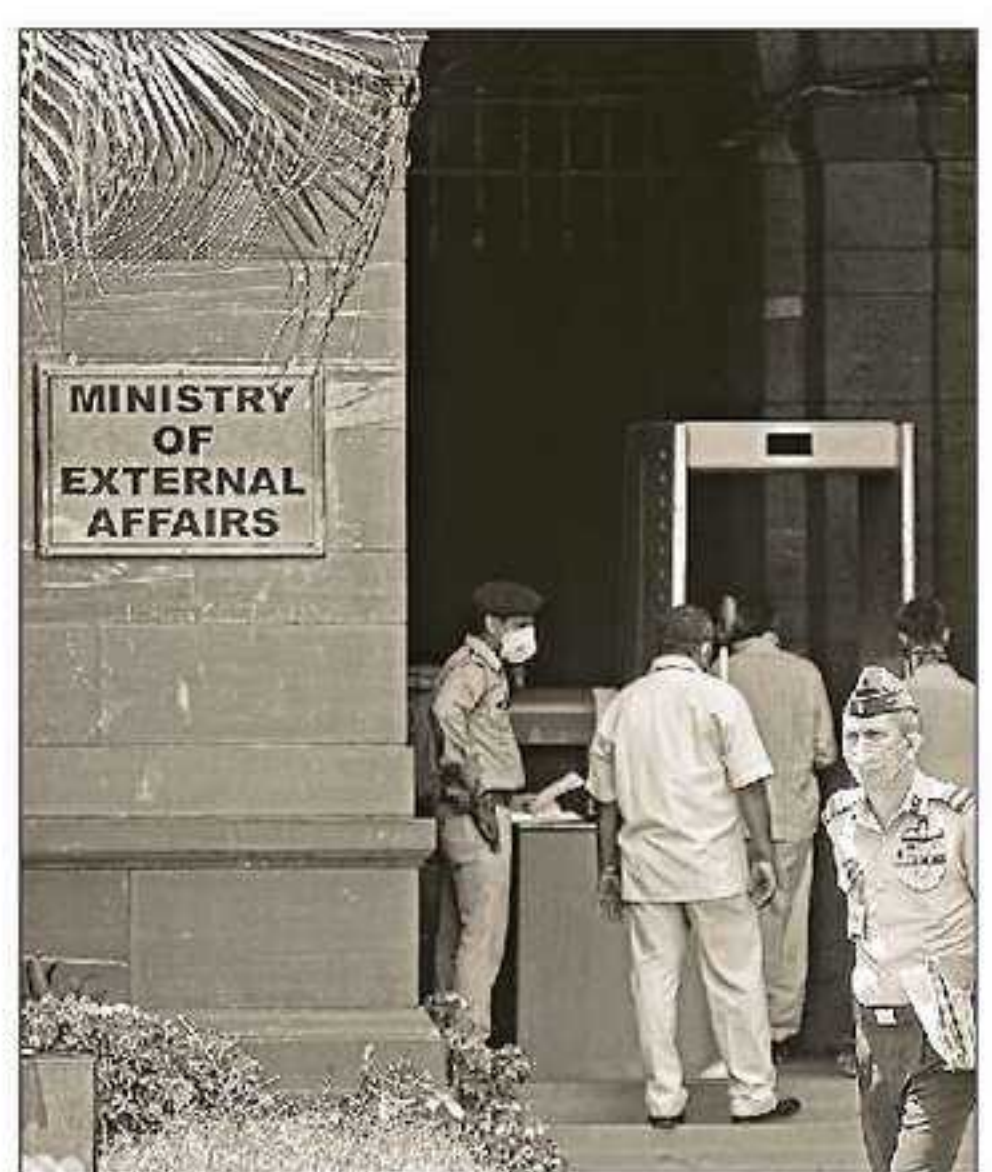
Such tinkering also reveals a piecemeal approach to this issue. Instead, the government should think more creatively about defence diplomacy. First, there is a strong case to be made to drastically increase the number of such military missions worldwide. The number of Indian military attachés abroad stands at 64 currently, with unfirmed reports that this may rise to 70. This is grossly inadequate for the expanding arc of India's interests and engagements. In contrast, China has military attachés in over 110 countries, with varying numbers of officers posted in each. The UK has around 145 attachés whereas the US has a much larger number. To be sure, all three are resource-rich countries and so these numbers should be considered aspirational rather than absolute.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the government should stop thinking of military attachés as mere procurement officers posted to further technical and defence trade. Instead, military attachés have other equally critical functions, such as influencing and interacting with the host country and with other members of the diplomatic community, gathering intelligence, and projecting perspectives. To be sure, these are intangibles — and bureaucrats abhor unquantifiable outcomes. Nonetheless, military attachés should be essential to any diplomatic strategy. They are even more important as a potential channel of engagement in the Global South, where the military is a prominent political actor.

Third, the military itself needs to rethink its policy on posting attachés. So far, it posts career officers, which is a great exposure and learning curve for such officers. However, this also prevents an in-depth knowledge and continuing regional expertise among the officers. To address this, the military may consider creating a separate stream, akin to the US foreign area officers, for individuals inclined towards such a career. It may be best, therefore, to have a mix of careerist and area specialists. Unfortunately, however, the military seems stuck in desultory debates about inter-services allocations of attachés.

Eventually, military attachés are best utilised if they are adequately empowered. In fact, current service rules, relics of a bygone era, prohibit officers from interacting with foreigners. The ministry of external affairs also needs to shed a gatekeeping attitude towards military diplomacy. There are ambassadors and high commissioners who confidently engage and utilise the services of the military. Equally, there are others who keep the military at a distance. India's interests are best served with a partnership between these two equals — confidently projecting and protecting our country's interests.

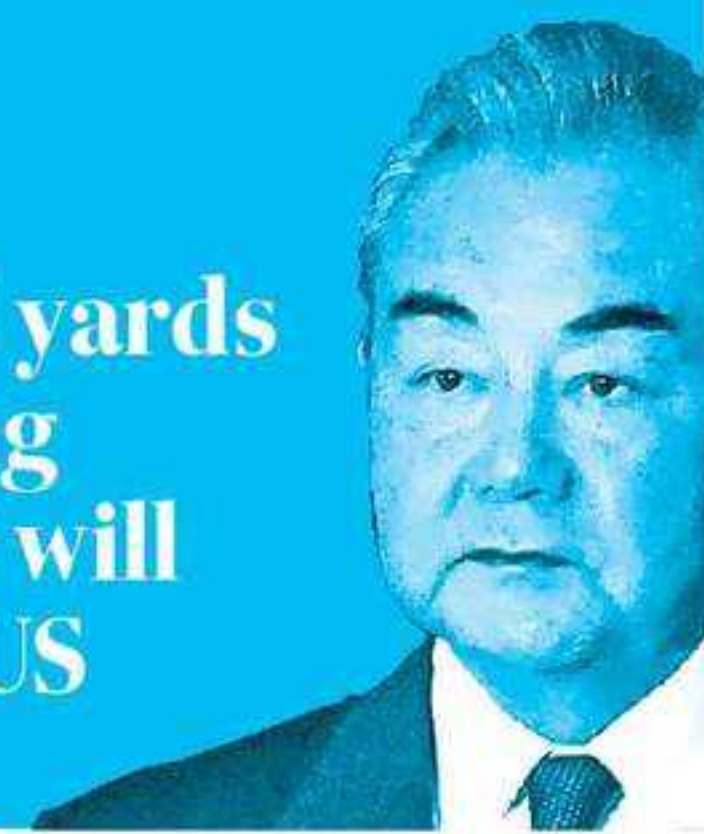
Anit Mukherjee is a senior lecturer at the India Institute at King's College London. The views expressed are personal



The ministry of external affairs needs to shed a gatekeeping attitude towards military diplomacy

{ WANG YI } CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER

Making 'de-risking' into 'de-China', building 'small yards and high walls' and seeking 'decoupling from China' will only backfire on the US



## Free speech on OTT: A Kerala model for films

When Netflix removed Nayanthara-starrer *Annapoorani* under pressure from Hindu right-wing groups, many Indian OTT subscribers wished for a platform that could shrug off such threats. C-Space, an OTT platform proposed to be launched by the government of Kerala, may not be the answer, but, hopefully, it won't bend to pressures from non-State actors. What spurred Kerala to become the first state in India to launch an OTT platform? It wasn't the *Annapoorani* episode. The plan to launch an OTT platform was first discussed two years ago, after the Covid-19 pandemic, when such services were garnering wide attention. Malayalam movies on streaming platforms had also been receiving acknowledgment globally around the time. Richard Brody, a film critic for *The New Yorker*, reviewed the Fahadh-Faasil-starrer *Joli*, which had an OTT premiere in 2021. Also, many regional language streaming services were being launched; these followed the rent-per-view and subscription models. Many have lost their sheen since. But now, it seems, the viewership for many Malayalam web series is distributed across the country.

The state government is perhaps motivated more by its penchant for developing alternatives, be it in governance or easing access to OTT content. Or it could have in mind the interests of the Malayali diaspora. The *pravasi* (expatriate) Malayali remains a prime factor for the Kerala government, as many of its decisions indicate. It also assures revenue — the question of a viable model for self-sustainability is critical to the durability of any OTT platform.

C-Space will showcase a wide array of movies, from classics to independent films and documentaries. Kerala has a vibrant film-society culture, and the vibe for world and art-house movies is reflected in the genuine enthusiasm for international film festivals in the state. Many such festivals are now held even at remote locations, with the International Film Festival of Kerala being the benchmark. There is a specific set of audience interested in independent movies screened online. There is also a theatre-going audience who may not be able to afford the monthly subscription rates of OTT streaming services. The Kerala government, therefore, wants to offer an affordable platform to viewers. The OTT will be an independent platform with a specific revenue model, but need not be swayed by the vagaries of the market.

Another reason for launching a "public sector" OTT is that it can overcome social censorship that has been determining what can be streamed and what can't. OTT players have succumbed to the pressures of communal groups, and have ended up withdrawing mov-

ies and web-series that such groups say "hurt sentiments" — an Indian euphemism for social censorship. At the same time, some OTTs are promoting propaganda content. Clearly, OTTs are a contested space now.

The Union government recently introduced a revised Cable Television Act that would bring OTTs under its ambit. Its stringent provisions could rob the charm of unregulated content on OTTs. C-Space, however, should provide avenues for independent content while resisting any temptation to showcase propaganda movies. Doing this, it can increase its viewership base and remain open to an international audience. Restoration and re-mastering of old movies has become a trend. A large repository of classic Indian and world movies could get it a large number of subscribers. Artistic merit should be the main criteria for inclusion in C-Space's library. The platform does not have to function in the mode of legacy OTTs; rather, it should be different, in terms of new content, curated content, master classes, and independent artistic productions.

The question facing a public enterprise OTT start-up is, without doubt, sustainability, even if profitability is set aside for the moment. C-Space has to compete with existing players that are still struggling to evolve a viable model, years after their launch. The Kerala government is also launching the OTT at a time when the state is suffering from many economic woes, and has overcome its earlier obsession with public enterprise. To remain sustainable, a revenue stream based on subscription and content rentals must prop up government support. Purchase of movies needs to be streamlined with an institutional and transparent

method. Kerala has a model of public investment in film-making in the Kerala Film Development Corporation. Like many other public enterprises in the state, overstaffing can also wreck its prospects. Given these issues, the state government must take a measured approach in deciding the management structure and providing for functional autonomy.

There is always the possibility that a State-owned OTT can exclude the movies that are critical of the state government. For instance, the Malayalam movie *2018*, which was about the heroism of the people involved in rescue operations during the flood, was criticised for minimising the role of the state government in the relief work. The platform needs to be envisioned as a public OTT rather than government owned. Given the tendencies in governance in these times, this may remain wishful thinking.

Damodar Prasad is a media researcher and writer. The views expressed are personal



Damodar Prasad



# Israel strikes Gaza as US says it will veto new UNSC ceasefire vote

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected US and international calls for a pathway to Palestinian statehood

Agencies  
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**RAFAH, GAZA STRIP:** Israeli strikes across Gaza killed at least 18 people overnight and into Sunday, according to medics and witnesses, as the United States said it would veto another draft UN ceasefire resolution.

Algeria, the Arab representative on the UN Security Council (UNSC), has circulated a draft resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access, as well as rejecting the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians.

Algeria has requested the UNSC vote on Tuesday, but Washington signalled it is likely to veto the measure.

The US, Israel's top ally, instead hopes to broker a ceasefire agreement and hostage release between Israel and Hamas, and envisions a wider resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back while rejecting US and international calls for a pathway to Palestinian statehood.

His Cabinet adopted a declaration on Sunday saying Israel "categorically rejects international edicts on a permanent arrangement with the Palestinians" and opposes any unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state, which it said would "grant a major prize to terror" after the October 7 attack that triggered the war.

Netanyahu has vowed to continue the offensive until "total victory" over Hamas and to expand it to Gaza's southern-most town of Rafah, where more than half the enclave's population of 2.3 million Palestinians has sought refuge from



**28,985**  
people have been killed in Gaza during the war between militants and Israel. A total of 127 people died in the last 24 hours, and 68,883 people have been injured since the war erupted on Oct 7.

Palestinian people struggle to buy bread from a bakery in Rafah, Gaza Strip, on Sunday.

## WHO says Nasser Hospital 'not functional anymore'

The head of the World Health Organization (WHO), meanwhile, said Nasser Hospital, the main medical centre serving southern Gaza, "is not functional anymore" after Israeli forces raided the facility in the southern city of Khan Younis last week. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the head of the UN health agency, said a WHO team was not allowed to enter Nasser Hospital on Friday or Saturday "to assess the conditions of the patients and critical medical needs, despite reaching the hospital compound to deliver fuel alongside partners".

In a post on X, formerly Twitter, he said there are still about 200 patients in the hospital,

including 20 who need urgent referrals to other hospitals.

Israel says it has arrested over 100 suspected militants, including 20 who it says participated in Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel. The military says it is looking for the remains of hostages inside the facility and does not target doctors or patients.

The war erupted after Hamas burst through Israel's defences and attacked communities across southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostages. Militants still hold around 130 hostages, a fourth of whom are believed to be dead, after most of the others were released during a weeklong ceasefire in November.

## Brazilian president accuses Israel of 'genocide' in Gaza

Agence France-Presse  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**ADDIS ABABA:** Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva accused Israel on Sunday of committing "genocide" against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip and compared its actions to Adolf Hitler's campaign to exterminate Jews.

In response, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the 78-year-old president's com-

ments "shameful and grave" and said his government had called in Brazil's ambassador in protest.

Lula told reporters in Addis Ababa, where he was attending an African Union summit, that what was happening in the Gaza Strip "isn't a war, it's a genocide".

"It's not a war of soldiers against soldiers. It's a war between a highly prepared army and women and children," added the veteran leftist.

{ PAKISTAN } FEBRUARY 8 ELECTIONS



Supporters of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party protest against the alleged skewing in national election results, in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Saturday.

## Supporters of Imran clash with police over poll rigging allegations

Press Trust of India  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**LAHORE/KARACHI:** Supporters of Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party have clashed with police in various cities across the country as they staged protests against alleged rigging in the general elections held on February 8.

In Lahore, supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) gathered outside the Lahore Press Club and the party's Jail Road office on Saturday to register their protest, the Dawn newspaper reported on Sunday.

The protesters chanted slogans, demanding the restoration of their "stolen mandate".

In many cities of Punjab, police arrived at the protest site even before the demonstrators had gathered and arrested several party leaders, candidates, workers and supporters.

In Karachi, hundreds of PTI workers and supporters gathered outside the Election Commission of Pakistan's Sindh office in the city's Saddar area.

In Peshawar and other areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, PTI workers, including the newly elected lawmakers, staged rallies.

### Committee to probe poll rigging allegations

Pakistan's election commission has formed a high-level committee to probe the explosive allegations levelled by a senior bureaucrat that widespread rig-

ging aided by the judiciary and the top election body happened against jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party in the garrison city of Rawalpindi in Punjab province.

### Resignations of CEC and Chief Justice demanded

Imran Khan's party has demanded the resignations of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Chief Justice of Pakistan after Rawalpindi Division Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhatta's allegations that the top election body and judiciary were involved in the poll rigging. A PTI spokesperson demanded that CEC Sikandar Sultan Raja and Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa tender their resignations following the revelations by Chhatta.

### No consensus yet on power-sharing formula

Imran Khan's party on Sunday demanded a judicial probe into growing allegations of vote rigging even as two major political parties failed to reach a power-sharing formula to form a coalition government. Though independent candidates backed by PTI party won the maximum number of seats in parliament, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) — have announced that they will form a coalition government after the February 8 elections resulted in a hung parliament.

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## OpenAI in deal valuing it at \$80bn: Report

**SAN FRANCISCO:** OpenAI has concluded a deal with investors that reportedly values the California start-up at \$80 billion or more, after a roller-coaster year for the inventor of ChatGPT. The agreement, reported by The New York Times but not yet confirmed by OpenAI, would mean the value of the company — a world leader in generative artificial intelligence — would have nearly tripled in under 10 months.



A police car burns in The Hague.

## 6 police officials hurt as Eritreans clash in The Hague

**THE HAGUE:** At least six police officers were injured and 13 suspects arrested after rival groups of Eritreans fought running battles in The Hague in the early hours of Sunday, torching police cars and hurling rocks.

## Thailand's ex-PM Thaksin Shinawatra freed on parole

**BANGKOK:** Thailand's convicted former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra was released on parole on Sunday, his lawyer said, starting a first day of freedom in his homeland, 15 years after fleeing in the wake of his overthrow by the royalist military.



People attend a rally following the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, in Berlin, Germany, on Sunday.

{ RUSSIA } KREMLIN CRITIC

## Over 400 detained for paying tribute to late Alexei Navalny

Associated Press  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**MOSCOW:** Over 400 people were detained in Russia while paying tribute to opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died at a remote Arctic penal colony, a prominent rights group reported. The sudden death of Navalny, 47, was a crushing blow to many Russians, who had pinned their hopes for the future on President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe. Navalny remained vocal in his unrelenting criticism of the Kremlin even after surviving a nerve agent poisoning and receiving multiple prison terms.

The news reverberated across the globe, and hundreds of people in dozens of Russian cities streamed to ad-hoc memorials and monuments to victims of political repressions with flowers and candles on Friday and Saturday to pay a tribute to the politician. In over a dozen cities, police detained 401 people by Saturday night, according to the OVD-Info rights group that tracks political arrests and provides legal aid. Meanwhile, Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, published a picture of the couple on Insta-

The fact of the matter is, Putin is responsible [for Alexei Navalny's death]. Whether he ordered it, he's responsible for the circumstance.

JOE BIDEN, US President

gram on Sunday in her first social media post since her husband's death. The caption read simply: "I love you."

The news of Navalny's death came a month before a presidential election in Russia that is widely expected to give Putin another six years in power.

Questions about the cause of death lingered, and it remained unclear when the authorities would release Navalny's body. More than 12,000 people have submitted requests to the Russian government asking for the politician's remains to be handed over to his relatives, OVD-Info said on Sunday.

## U.S. SHOULD LIFT SANCTIONS ON CHINESE FIRMS: WANG TO BLINKEN

Reuters  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**BEIJING:** Washington should lift sanctions on Chinese companies and individuals, and that attempts to de-couple from China would only hurt the United States, China's foreign minister Wang Yi told US secretary of state Antony Blinken.

The United States should lift the sanctions and not harm China's legitimate development rights, Wang told Blinken on Friday on the sidelines of a Munich security conference, according to a statement from China's foreign ministry.

Washington has imposed sanctions on various Chinese companies that it accuses of working with China's military despite denials from the firms. US sanctions have also been imposed on individuals and entities over alleged human rights abuses in the Chinese region of Xinjiang.

The Biden administration has imposed bans on the sale of certain technologies to Chinese companies, citing national security risks. China has accused Washington of "weaponising" economic and trade issues.

"Making 'de-risking' into 'de-China', and building 'small yards and high walls' and seeking 'decoupling from China'" will only backfire on the US itself, Wang told Blinken.

The exchanges between the two men were "frank, substantial and constructive", the ministry said in the statement released on Saturday.



Antony Blinken (left) and Wang Yi in Munich, Germany, on Friday.

{ UKRAINE WAR } EASTERN CITY OF AVDIIVKA CAPTURED BY RUSSIAN FORCES

## US prez says Ukrainian city's fall shows impact of aid delays

Agencies  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**WASHINGTON:** President Joe Biden blamed US lawmakers' failure to approve emergency aid to Ukraine for the fall of Avdiivka, which handed Russia a significant battlefield victory after months of fighting for control of the city.

Biden said he called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday "to let him know I'm confident we're going to get that money", while warning that more Ukrainian cities might fall if Congress doesn't approve the funding.

"There's so much on the line," Biden told reporters near his home in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. "The idea that now we're running out of ammunition — to walk away, I find it absurd. I find it unethical. So



Ukrainian police officers and rescue workers clear the rubble of a destroyed private house after a Russian rocket attack in Kramatorsk, Donetsk region, on Saturday.

I'm going to fight to get them the ammunition they need."

Attempts to unlock emergency foreign aid to US allies have been stuck in a partisan deadlock in Congress for months, leaving Biden and Zel-

enskyy to make increasingly urgent appeals for Congress to move forward as Ukrainian supplies run low.

The US Senate last week approved \$95 billion in assistance for Ukraine, Israel and Tai-

wan after months of delay, but the legislation still faces formidable obstacles in the Republican-led House of Representatives. Anchoring the package is \$61 billion for Ukraine, mainly in the form of military equipment from the US.

European officials, who recently approved a more than \$50 billion aid package for Ukraine, have been increasingly concerned by the delays in Washington.

Events on the battlefield in Ukraine are a matter of "life and death" for Russia that could determine its fate, President Vladimir Putin said in remarks aired on Sunday.

"I think it is still important for us ourselves, and even more so for our listeners and viewers abroad, to understand our way of thinking," Putin said in an interview with state TV.

{ UK AUCTION } DRAFT SNAPPED UP BY AN AUSTRIAN COLLECTOR

## Harrison Ford's 'Star Wars' script fetches \$13,600

Agencies  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**LONDON:** An original draft *Star Wars* script left in a London apartment by "Han Solo" actor Harrison Ford sold at a UK auction for £10,795 (\$13,600) on Saturday.

The script was used when Ford was in London for the filming of the first instalment of the epic saga, originally entitled *The Adventures Of Luke Skywalker*, at Elstree Studios north of London.

The fourth draft of the screenplay, dating from March 15, 1976, was snapped up by an Austrian collector when it went under the hammer at Excalibur Auctions in Hertfordshire, north of London.

Ford left the script at the London flat he rented at the time along with shooting schedules, which sold for £4,826, and a letter from an agent or friend,



Harrison Ford, as Han Solo, on the set of *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*, directed and produced by Georges Lucas.

which sold for £177.80.

The landlords renting the property found the items and kept them for decades. The incomplete and unbound

script contains revisions, and introduces Han Solo on page 56.

The 1977 film catapulted Ford to international fame and he starred in sequels *The Empire*

*Strikes Back* (1980) and *Return Of The Jedi* (1983), before taking on the role again in *The Force Awakens* (2015).

Excalibur Auctions' auctioneer Jonathan Torode said this sale saw a new record set for a *Star Wars* script, "which shows how a personal link to the items is so enticing to *Star Wars* fans".

The script was left at a flat on Elgin Crescent, Notting Hill, that Harrison Ford rented in 1976, the BBC reported.

The owners of the Notting Hill flat said Ford developed a relationship with them after he responded to their advert in the Sunday Times for a tenant.

Ford bought plants for their garden and attended their son's first birthday party, the family said.

They said Ford was "an excellent tenant, very tidy" — but explained they now wanted to sell the script along with several other items, the BBC reported.



# Rising summer airmiles fail to deter travellers

Flight tickets turn expensive due to rising demand and lower capacity

Anu Sharma  
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**NEW DELHI:** Airmiles are climbing. And people are planning to travel more. Two contrasting trends are merging this summer, belying the gloomy outlook of rising air fares hurting travel. Flight tickets are turning expensive because of rising demand and, more pertinently, due to not enough capacity available to handle that demand—IndiGo, India's largest airline, has grounded 20% of its fleet. Mumbai airport, India's second busiest, has been asked to cut down flights.

Travel group Thomas Cook has seen a year-on-year (y-o-y) uptick of approximately 10-15% in advance air fares for April-May on routes connecting hubs such as Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai to popular summer destinations of Srinagar, Chandigarh, Leh, Bagdogra and Goa. As per travel platform ixigo, advanced airfares have surged by around 30% for routes such as Delhi-Srinagar and Delhi-Goa.

Still, based on advance bookings and search trends, industry executives say air traffic is also likely to grow in the summer months, with demand primarily rising for leisure destinations. "The pandemic having accelerated the YOLO (you only live once) mindset, Indians are displaying strong appetite for travel this upcoming summer," Indiver Rastogi, president and group head, global business travel, Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC Travel said. "Despite



Industry execs say the demand is primarily for leisure destinations.

increased airmiles, customers have clearly not compromised on their planned holiday, and our demand trends indicate brisk uptick of over 3X compared to last year." That is good news following India's highest air traffic recorded in FY24 so far. Latest data from Airports Authority of India for April-December show that combined domestic and international traffic was recorded at an all-time high at 34 million passengers, 7% higher than the pre-covid year of 2019 in the same period, and 10% higher than in 2022.

That high airmiles are not acting as a deterrent to demand is visible in destinations such as Srinagar where 75-80% of five-star hotels and 80-90% of budget hotels are already booked for summer. P.P. Khanna, board member, Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH), said. Similarly, in the international

segment, online travel portals have witnessed an uptick of up to 20% in fares on long-haul routes, with fare levels showing a slight increase on short and medium-haul destinations. In terms of international destinations, data from Thomas Cook shows airmiles for Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore, among others, are 4-7% higher, and flights to Sri Lanka and Nepal are witnessing an uptick of more than 10%. Flights are up to 20% more expensive for cities such as Zurich, Paris, Madrid, Vienna, Budapest, Milan, and Helsinki.

Despite tailwinds of strong demand sentiment, challenges remain with respect to volatility in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices and supply chain constraints following IndiGo's grounding of more than 70 aircraft due to engine inspection requirements and shortage in availability of engines and spare parts.

And ATF prices for domestic airlines, despite being cut four times, are now at ₹1,00,772.17 per kilolitre in Delhi as of 1 February, 74% higher than in 2019. Going forward, too, airmiles are expected to go up, said Ajay Prakash, board member, FAITH and president, Travel Agents Federation of India. "The upswing in the demand can be seen with supply falling short of it. Besides, Mumbai, one of the busiest airports in the country, has been asked to reduce flights, so all the factors together will make air travel costlier in the coming summer season," he said.

In 2024, predictions for passenger demand globally also remains high, with the International Air Transport Association announcing that the number of passengers traveling by air will reach a record high of 4.7 billion in 2024, a jump from the 4.5 billion passengers who travelled in 2019.

# Key to India Inc's margins forged in Chinese steel

Naman Suri & Nehal Chaliawala  
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**NEW DELHI/MUMBAI:** India's steelmakers and user industries are keeping a close watch on the trajectory of Chinese steel exports, which could determine these companies' margins in the coming quarters.

Executives at top steel companies highlighted the outsized impact of Chinese steel on their export and domestic prices during their December quarter earnings calls with media and analysts.

How Chinese steel exports shape up in the coming quarters will be a key factor to monitor, they said.

Despite India's 7.5% import duty and logistics costs, Chinese steel was still 5-10% cheaper than locally produced steel for the better part of FY24, curtailing the ability of Indian steelmakers to raise prices and curbed their margins. At the same time, cheaper steel benefits user industries in consumer durables, automakers and infrastructure and construction



Despite India's 7.5% import duty, Chinese steel was still 5-10% cheaper than locally produced steel in FY24.

Average prices of benchmark hot-rolled coils of steel (HRC), which stood at around ₹57,900 per tonne in September, fell to just over ₹54,000 in February, as per data from SteelMint. "Our retail sector sales dropped because of higher imports from China and FTA countries in the last quarter," Jayant Acharya, joint managing director of JSW Steel said in a recent interview. "Our imports rose by 16% and our exports fell by 16%, and that impacted basic

sentiments and retail." The Ebitda margin of JSW Steel contracted nearly 57 basis points sequentially during the December quarter to 17.1% as per Mint's analysis. Ebitda stands for earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization. Tata Steel, Jindal Steel and Power and Steel Authority of India reported Ebitda margins of 11.3%, 24.3% and 9.2% during the quarter, as per Mint's analysis.

Any Chinese stimulus for its infrastructure sector may raise steel prices, said Jayanta Roy, senior vice-president, Icr. "China's government is trying to revive the country's domestic property sector. Any large Chinese stimulus measure in 2024 directed to the property and infrastructure sectors has the potential to improve Chinese domestic steel demand growth prospects, which can have a significant impact on global steel prices if Chinese exports come down as a result of that," Roy said. User industries say that, if Chinese steel prices go up, local prices may rise as well, lifting their input costs.

# FPIS TAKE OUT ₹3,776 CR IN FEB DUE TO SPIKE IN US BOND YIELDS

Press Trust of India  
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**NEW DELHI:** Foreign investors adopted a cautious approach offloading Indian equities worth close to ₹3,776 crore so far this month owing to a spike in the US bond yields and uncertainty over the interest rate environment in the domestic as well as the global front.

In contrast, they are bullish on the debt market and injected ₹16,560 crore in during the period under review, data with the depositories showed. According to the data, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) pulled out a net sum of ₹3,776 crore from the Indian equities this month (till February 16). This came following a net withdrawal of ₹25,743 crore in January. With this, the total outflow for this year has reached ₹29,519 crore.

"The spike in US bond yields triggered by the higher-than-expected consumer price inflation led to sustained selling by FPIs," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Also, the latest selling could be attributed to the uncertainty surrounding the interest rate environment, both domestically as well as globally. Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

According to Vijayakumar, the selling by FPIs in equity would have been much higher in response to the rising US bond yields.

But FPIs have been consistently losing the tug of war with DIIs and, therefore, they are a bit reluctant to press aggressive selling.

They will have to buy the same stocks later, which they have been selling, when conditions are favourable for buying. On the continued bullish stance in the debt markets, Morningstar's Srivastava attributed it primarily to the announcement of the inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index, coupled with the country's relatively stable economy.

# Casa ratio falls to two-year low

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**MUMBAI:** Keeping savings bank interest rates largely unchanged amid rising policy rates since mid-2022 has been shrinking the share of current and savings accounts (Casa) in banks' overall deposits for a while. However, it still remains far below levels of pre-demonetization years. Casa ratio of the banking system stood at 31.6% at the end of 2014, and surged to 37.8% in 2016 as cash flooded into accounts after demonetization.

It continued to rise and peaked at 42.9% in December 2021, but has fallen since then, touching 39.3% at the end of December 2023, data from rating agency Icr and Mint calculations showed.

"Casa ratio shot up after demonetization and reached its

peak during covid-19, prior to which it used to be in early to mid-thirties levels," said Anil Gupta, senior vice-president and co group head of financial sector ratings, Icr Ltd. Casa levels should remain "comfortably above mid-thirties", Gupta said. He said digital payments have increased significantly, which means people do not need to carry much cash for daily requirements; so, it will lead to higher balance in savings accounts.

Gupta said Casa ratio might go down further if banks continue to increase term deposit rates. However, he does not foresee any increase in saving deposit rates for larger banks, as their savings deposit base is driven by balances that customers maintain on a day-to-day basis and the relationship with the bank is more transactional,

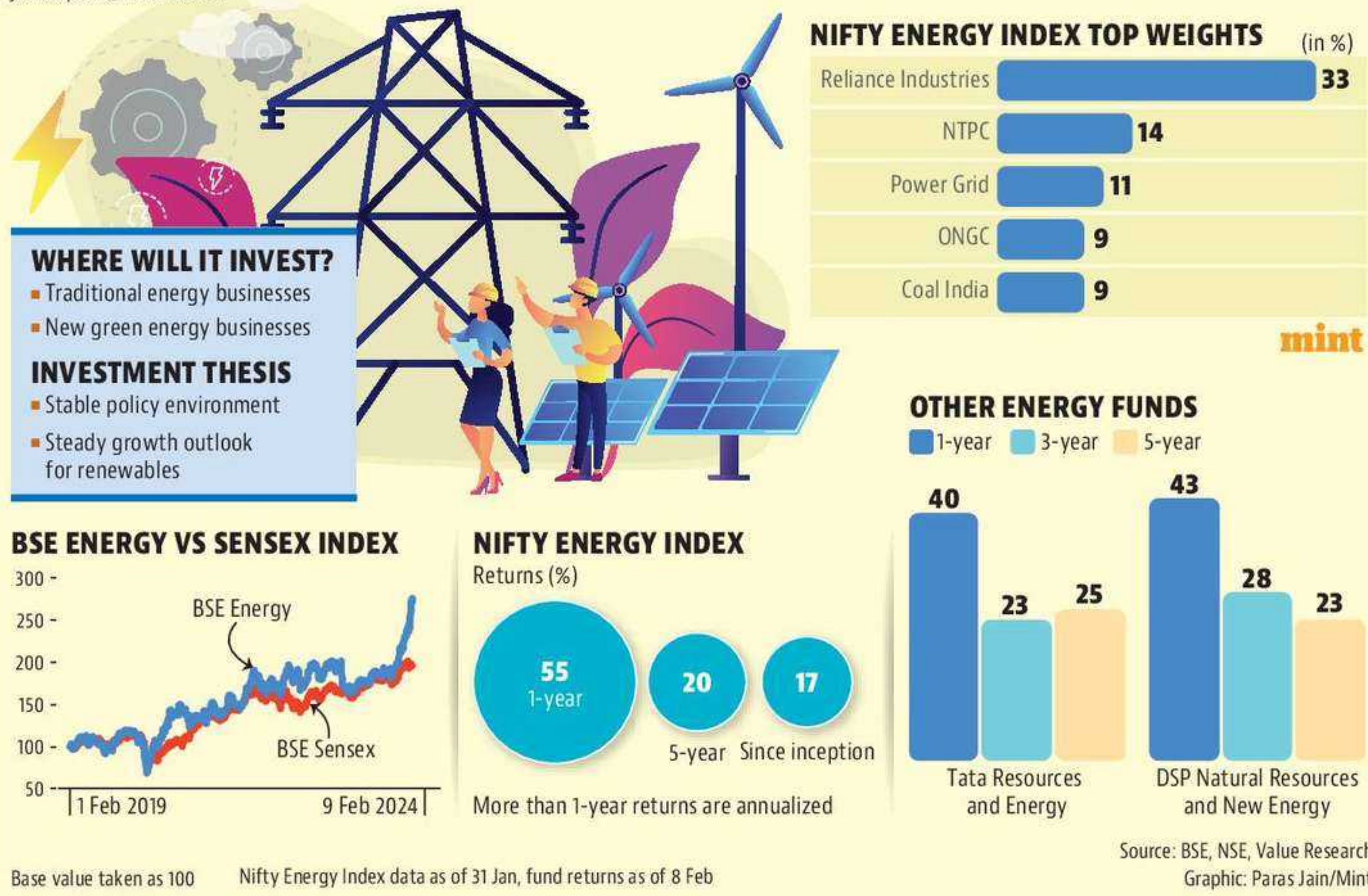
not just driven by interest rates. In FY24, savings deposits earned 2.7-3%, while term deposits of one to three years earned 6-7.1%, showed RBI data of five major banks up to 1 September. A decade ago, savings deposit rates were at 4% and one to three year fixed deposits at 8.75-9.25%, meaning the gap between savings and term deposits has narrowed over the years. In fact, the share of term deposits in total deposits increased to about 60% in September 2023 from 57% in March 2023 and 55% in March 2022.

According to Ajit Velonie, senior director, Crisil Ratings, since May 2022, RBI has hiked the repo rate by 250 basis points (bps) and term deposit rates offered by banks also rose about 230 bps for deposits till December, as the transmission of rate hikes played out.

# SBI Mutual Fund's bet on India's energy demand

India's energy landscape seems to be getting some fairly deserved attention, particularly from fund houses. India's largest fund house—SBI Mutual Fund—recently launched a thematic fund focused on the energy space. The SBI Energy Opportunities Fund will invest in stocks that belong to the energy sector to take advantage of rising energy demand.

Compiled by Jash Kriplani  
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# SUNDARAM ALTERNATES TO RAISE ₹1K CR FOR GREEN PROJECTS

Press Trust of India  
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**DUBAI:** Sundaram Alternates Assets (SAA), the private equity arm of Sundaram Finance Group, plans to raise about ₹1,000 crore from global investors to fund green real estate projects in India.

"This move reflects our commitment to build on our own track record, depth of underwriting and risk management skills in the ever-evolving landscape of Indian real estate credit market," Sundaram Alternates Assets managing director Vikaas M Sachdeva told PTI here.

In the past year, Sundaram Alternates has not only re-engineered its high-yield credit funds to generate real alpha from its performing credit business but has also adopted a robust ESG and climate impact framework as a significant investor initiative, he said.

# India's answer to EU carbon tax: green textiles

Dhirendra Kumar  
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**NEW DELHI:** The textile industry is moving to shed its polluter tag by adopting a 'circular economy' in order to avoid being snared by future climate change tax regimes such as the European Union's proposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), two persons aware of the plans said.

CBAM will tax the 'embedded carbon' in imports from select emission-intensive sectors—steel, aluminium, cement, hydrogen, electricity and fertilizers. It is expected to be implemented in 2026.

Although textiles isn't mentioned by CBAM, promoting a circular economy in the sector, one of the biggest polluters, will be a key topic of proposed consultations, one of the persons cited above said.

A circular economy approach refers to a mechanism to extend the life of products through reuse and repair and to keep



Textile manufacturing is a water-intensive sector, consuming 1.6 mn litres of water in India to produce 8,000 kg/day of fabric.

end-of-life material in the economy through recycling. In the textile industry, much of this is about limiting water use. Textile manufacturing is a water-intensive sector, consuming roughly 1.6 million litres of water in India to produce 8,000 kg/day of fabric. Globally, 4% of all freshwater is used up in making textile products. The government is also making efforts to promote sustaina-

ble textile manufacturing practices at the upcoming BharatTex show from 26 February. Global exhibitors will showcase their initiatives to minimize textile waste, from 'upcycling' scraps into new products to implementing a closed-loop manufacturing process, this person said. "Textile production has increased manifold in the last few decades, and due to cost-efficiency and durability, the pro-

duction of synthetic fibres such as polyester and nylon has increased significantly. In the present set-up, most textile products are made, used and disposed of—resulting in environmental losses," the second person said. The demand for circularity in textiles comes from both the government and corporate groups seeking to address climate change, save natural resources, and reduce carbon emissions without disrupting the supply chain, the second person said. Apparel production has doubled, but the number of times a garment is worn before being discarded has come down by 36% in the past 15 years. The production of synthetic fibres, mainly made from crude oil, has grown from less than 20% of global fibre production in 2018 to 62% now, as stated in a report prepared by the Centre for Environment Education.

Welcoming the move, Nishant Malhotra, founder of WeaverStory, a handloom promotion

firm, said, "The textile industry stands as one of the biggest contributors to water pollution, and the circular economy model presents a remarkable opportunity to transform and revolutionize the way we design, produce, and consume textiles."

India is the world's sixth-largest exporter of textiles and apparel. The domestic industry contributes 2.3% to the GDP, 13% to industrial production, and 12% to exports.

India's exports of worn clothing and rags in 2022-23 amounted to \$134.7 million, while imports were \$381.71 million. To be sure, India has also made it clear that it will not initiate discussions on non-trade issues such as labour and environmental standards at the 13th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), set to start on 26 February in Abu Dhabi.

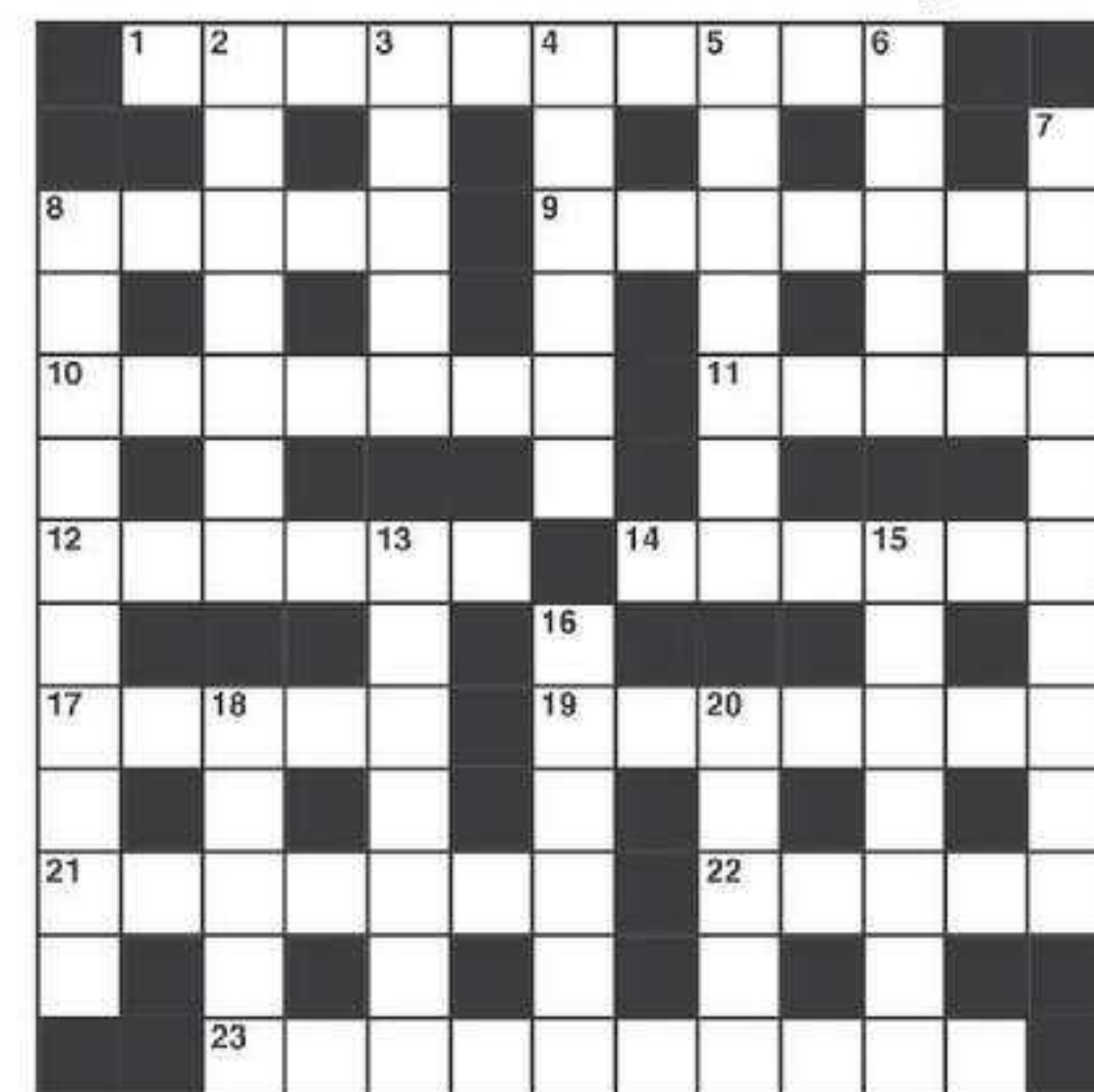
Queries mailed to the textile ministry spokesperson and the textile secretary remained unanswered.

## THE CROSSWORDS

### CRYPTIC CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Dostoyevsky's partner in crime (10)
  - A trimming of lace one gathers (5)
  - How to sing a piece written in quavers? (7)
  - Have everybody behind you (7)
  - Mouthful of water (5)
  - Underground shelter for trapped clubmen (6)
  - He takes part in a spirited war dance (6)
  - See, I go round a house up north (5)
  - Big man catapulted to fame (7)
  - Assign work to a writer (7)
  - Desire no part of this temptress (5)
  - Natural outbursts that may upset caravanners (10)
- DOWN**
- Dad's brother receives article that's dirty (7)
  - She's in dire need (5)
  - It's a success with a woman over here (6)
  - Improved and repaired under direction (7)
  - Monster controlling the middle (5)
  - Occasionally in the past and present (3,3,4)
  - He's against having royalties (10)
  - Perhaps one is turned up on wearing away of the soil (7)
  - A new way of composing letters (7)
  - Birds, for example, disturb rest (6)
  - They're used to fasten one's hair (5)
  - Catch a girl with a ring (5)

### PUZZLE 16786 © Gemini Crosswords 2018 All rights reserved



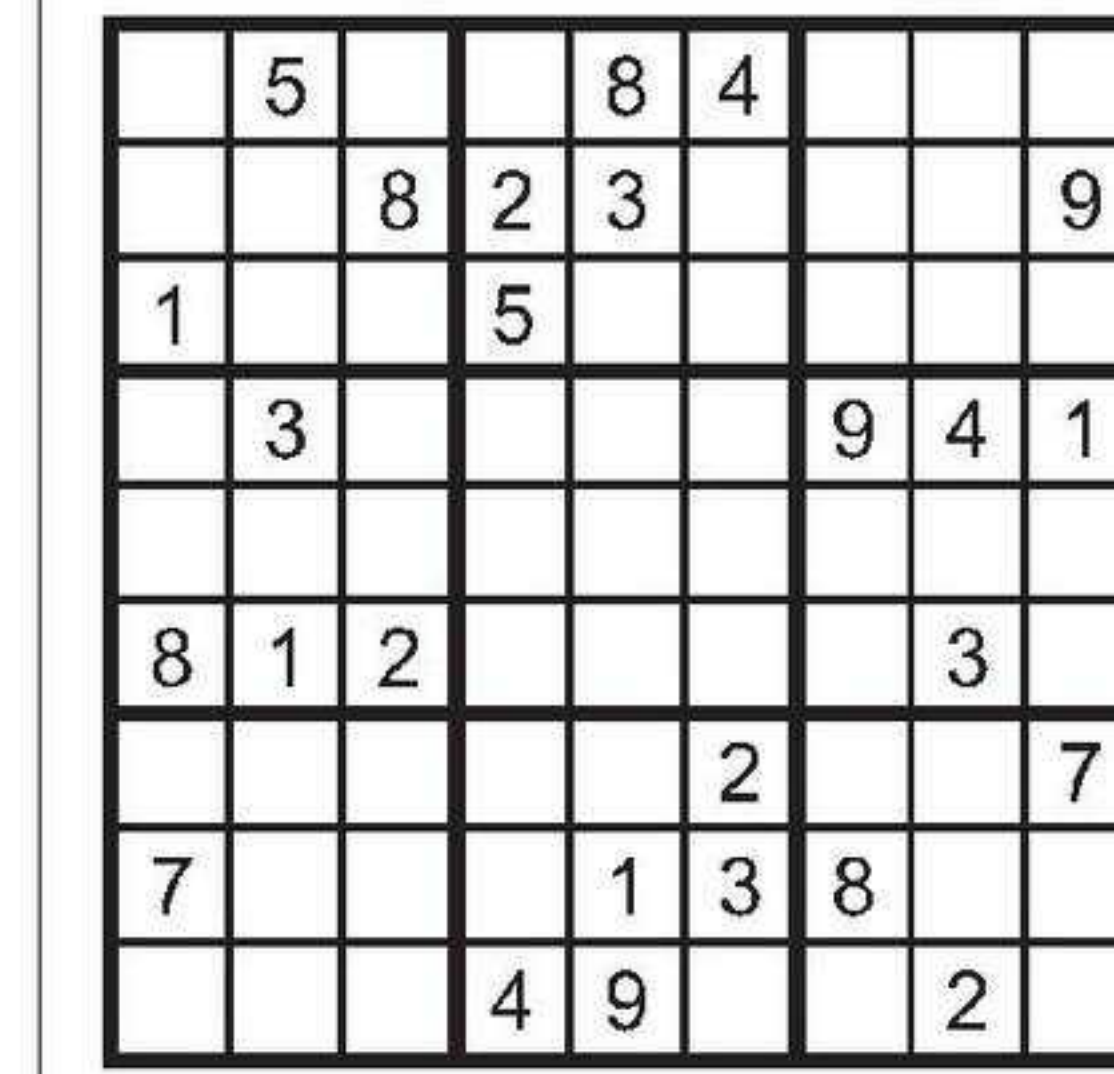
### QUICK CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Renewed energy (6,4)
  - Relinquish voluntarily (5)
  - Venetian canal boat (7)
  - Champion of a cause (7)
  - Commonplace (5)
  - Twist violently (6)
  - Highly exciting (3-3)
  - Passage of time (5)
  - Depart to avoid arrest (7)
  - Difficult to catch (7)
  - Mixture of metals (5)
  - Late (6,4)
- DOWN**
- Embodiment (7)
  - Done openly (5)
  - Stage in a process (6)
  - Dishonourable (7)
  - Suffocate by submersion (5)
  - Leave off doing something (4,2,1,3)
  - Irresolute (4-6)
  - Hold dear (7)
  - Gangster (7)
  - Inn (6)
  - Vertical (5)
  - Quick-witted (5)

### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS (16785)



### SUDOKU DIFFICULTY LEVEL ★★★



Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, column and each of the 9x9 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

### WEATHER

TEMPERATURE • HIGH • LOW

<b>MONDAY</b> Rain or thundershowers with strong gusty winds 26°C   11°C	<b>TUESDAY</b> Generally cloudy sky with moderate rain 22°C   11°C	<b>WEDNESDAY</b> Generally cloudy sky with light rain or drizzle 24°C   10°C
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### ALMANAC

Today is 19th February 2024  
• 08 Shuban, 1445  
• 25 Magha, Shukla  
Paksha 10  
• Samvat 2080  
Sunset: Monday at 06:13 p.m.  
Sunrise: Tuesday at 06:55 a.m.  
Moonrise: Monday at 01:28 p.m.  
Moonset: Tuesday at 04:36 a.m.

### TEMPERATURE IN FOUR METROS

Delhi	26°C   11°C
Mumbai	31°C   20°C
Kolkata	30°C   20°C
Chennai	34°C   22°C



SPORT

# Jaiswal, Sarfaraz sparkle in sublime win

The Mumbai batters, belonging to the same school, are showing the same appetite for runs on the big stage

**Rasesh Mandani**  
rasesh.mandani@htlive.com

**RAJKOT:** On a warm Sunday afternoon in Rajkot, Sarfaraz Khan let Yashasvi Jaiswal lead the way back to the dressing room and soak in all the applause following their unbeaten 172-run partnership off 158 balls that set up India's declaration and 434-run win. Never mind the nervy moments while running between the wickets, Sarfaraz is Jaiswal's school senior by four years.

For Jaiswal, a second consecutive double century made him only the third Indian to achieve the feat after Vinod Kambli and Virat Kohli. Jaiswal's free-flowing range against spin — he hit 12 sixes, another record — reminds one of Kambli, the hugely flamboyant Mumbai left-hander of the 1990s. Jaiswal appears to have the attributes to stay the course. Sarfaraz, on debut, put together two fifties — 62 and 68\*.

Together, for 106 minutes on Sunday, Jaiswal and Sarfaraz batted with the freedom that they would for Rizvi Springfield school, Bandra — famous for producing a rich line of prodigious batting talents including Prithvi Shaw. The pressure of Test cricket didn't seem to bother them as they toyed with England's bowling attack.

Their back stories are intertwined. Both are Uttar Pradesh natives. Jaiswal, born in Bhadoli district, had taken a train from Prayagraj to Mumbai fifteen years back. Around the same time, Sarfaraz, as a 12-year-old, made his first headline-grabbing score — 434 in a Harris Shield (U16) inter-school match. Sarfaraz's father, Naushad, had moved from UP to Mumbai to make a cricket career.

Even before Jaiswal changed his school to Rizvi, Jaiswal was already a prolific scorer in Giles Shield (U14). "There was a time when he scored 16 hundreds across tournaments in a year," his school coach Raju Pathak recalls. To have an appetite for big scores at age-group level is one thing. To do it against the big boys is quite another.

The duo joined hands after nightwatcher Kuldeep Yadav frustrated England with his 91-ball stay at the crease in the morning session. Jaiswal was already on 104 overnight and India's lead 384. England's spinners aren't polished gems, but they had still matched India's bowlers in the first two Tests. To them, Jaiswal and Sarfaraz showed scant respect.

England may not have known that hitting through cow corner is Sarfaraz's favoured zone. He frequently went down on one knee and dispatched leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed over midwicket.

**Jaiswal takes Anderson apart with three sixes**  
After tea, Stokes went to James Anderson — four wickets short of 700 — to bowl to Jaiswal. With a heavily packed off-side field, Anderson began bowling really wide to the left-hander before trying to catch him off guard with a delivery on the stumps. Jaiswal, almost half of Anderson's age, was up to the task, going low and smashing a full toss over deep

**SCORECARD**

**India 1st innings 445**  
**England 1st innings 319**  
**India 2nd innings (overnight 196/2)**

Y Jaiswal not out 214  
S Gill run out (Stokes/Hartley) 91  
K Yadav c Root b Ahmed 27  
S Khan not out 68  
Extras (lb9, w2) 11  
Total (4 wickets dec, 98 ovs) 430  
FoW: 3-246, 4-258  
Bowling: Anderson 13-1-78-0, Root 27-3-111-1, Hartley 23-2-78-1, Wood 10-0-46-0, Ahmed 25-1-108-1

**England 2nd innings**

Z Crawley lbw b Bumrah 11  
B Duckett run out (Siraj/Jurel) 4  
O Pope c Rohit b Jadeja 3  
J Root lbw b Jadeja 7  
J Bairstow lbw b Jadeja 4  
B Stokes lbw b Kuldeep 15  
B Foakes c Jurel b Jadeja 16  
R Ahmed c Siraj b Kuldeep 0  
T Hartley b Ashwin 16  
M Wood c Jaiswal b Jadeja 33  
J Anderson not out 1  
Extras (b5, lb4, nb3) 12  
Total (all out, 39.4 ovs) 122  
FoW: 1-15, 2-18, 3-20, 4-28, 5-50, 6-50, 7-50, 8-82, 9-91  
Bowling: Bumrah 8-1-18-1, Siraj 5-2-16-0, Jadeja 12-4-41-5, Kuldeep 8-2-19-2, Ashwin 6-3-19-1

backward square leg. Next ball, Jaiswal walked down the track and smashed Anderson over the cover boundary. By then Anderson appeared to have lost his will to punch back. Jaiswal stood tall and smashed the bowler over his head to bring up a hat-trick of sixes.

Anderson was given another over, but Sarfaraz also lifted his full-length delivery over square leg for a boundary, after which Jaiswal opened the face for a boundary to third man. With those 28 runs in 2 overs, Anderson was off the attack, taken down by two young men.

When Jaiswal was acknowledging the crowd after his double ton, Stokes was applauding from midwicket. "He's a great player to watch. I like good players even if they are against me," he told reporters. "It appeared to me like you are watching Rishabh Pant. Earlier, he took his time to get in and was struggling. But he sensed an opportunity to get started and he did. We need to get him out in the next four innings. Hopefully the double hundred theme does not continue."

As Jaiswal leapt in the air to celebrate his double hundred with a single, his batting partner Sarfaraz also had both his hands up in celebration. Sarfaraz has lived the same struggle as Jaiswal. The milestone seemed to matter to him as much as it did to Jaiswal.

It also helps that they have an India captain in Rohit Sharma who understands the pulse of a Mumbai cricketer.

"I have been told that Sarfaraz has scored runs in difficult situations for Mumbai. That shows the mindset with which he plays and how he approaches the game," Sharma said. "He has scored big runs... triple hundreds, double hundreds in domestic circuit. So, he is doing something right to be that consistent."

Aware that, in Jaiswal, India have found a gem, the captain wanted to be protective. "I won't say anything on Jaiswal," he said. "Everyone is talking about him. Let him play. He is playing well... it's good for us. I am not going to say much more than that."

## Another game-changing knock

**Most 6s in an inns**  
**YASHASVI JAISWAL**  
vs England, 2024  
**12**

**WASIM AKRAM**  
vs Zimbabwe, 1996  
**12**

**NATHAN ASTLE**  
vs England, 2002  
**11**

**JAISWAL'S 214\***

**INDIA'S BIGGEST WINS (BY RUNS)**

2024	vs England, Rajkot	434
2021	vs New Zealand, Mumbai	372
2015	vs South Africa, Delhi	337

**Indians with consecutive double tons**

Rank	Player	Opponent	Year	Score 1	Score 2
1	Vinod Kambli	vs England, Zimbabwe	1993	224	227
2	Virat Kohli	vs Sri Lanka	2017	213	243
3	Yashasvi Jaiswal	vs England	2024	209	214*

## Rahul likely to return; Stokes close to bowling again

**Rasesh Mandani**  
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**RAJKOT:** KL Rahul is set to return to the middle-order for the fourth Test in Ranchi starting on February 23, after missing the Visakhapatnam and Rajkot matches due to quadriceps and knee issues. "He seems to be good," India skipper Rohit Sharma said on Sunday.

Rahul has been progressing well from the quad injury suffered in the first Test at Hyderabad. He was on course to return for Rajkot. It was eventually decided that he should sit out as he was only '90 percent fit', as per a BCCI medical bulletin. If Rahul returns, Rajat Patidar, who hasn't had a big score in his first two Tests, may make way.

India's 434-run win at Rajkot is their biggest ever in terms of runs. This, after they had scored 445 and 430 runs in their two innings. That gives an idea of how poor England were with the bat. After being 207/2 at the end of Day 2 to be 319 all out, they were skittled out for 122 in the fourth innings.

It also shows when things go wrong with England's disruptive present way, they could go horribly wrong. "I thought the game will go to the fifth day," Sharma said. "We had only 40 overs to



Ravindra Jadeja celebrates Joe Root's wicket. He won the Player-of-the-Match award.

bowl today and we thought 130 overs to get them out will be quite comfortable. More than runs, it was how many overs we need to get them out. By no means did I expect that it will get over by this evening."

India was able to put it past England quickly because the home boy Ravindra Jadeja cast a spell over England. His 13th five-wicket haul came after his first innings 112.

"We've seen him over the

years. He understands the conditions really well; he knows exactly what the game is and what his game is. Then he goes and does it, backs it up. This is his hometown. More than anyone else, he knows these conditions better," Sharma said.

"If you see the past couple of years, he's come out and scored some crucial runs for us, whether in India or outside. He's batting really well, the confidence is there, which is why we

thought of sending him up the order (at No.5). With the ball, there's not much to tell him. My job is to make sure I set the right field."

Jadeja's wickets in the second innings and Kuldeep Yadav's probing spell in the first innings helped India make up for R Ashwin's absence from most of the match. "When you lose your most experienced bowler, especially in the middle of a Test, it is not easy," he said. "But family

{ ROHIT SHARMA } INDIA CAPTAIN

Everyone is talking about him (Jaiswal). Let him play. He is playing well... it's good for us. I am not going to say much more than that.

comes first. When we heard the news, there was no second thought in our mind that he should do what he feels is right. He wanted to be with the family, which is the absolutely right thing to do. Good on him to make a way and come here and be part of the team on this day. It shows the character and shows the kind of person he is."

**Stokes may bowl**  
In what would be a bonus for England, skipper Ben Stokes said he was not ruling out a return to bowl in the next two Tests. Stokes, who underwent knee surgery after the 2023 ODI World Cup, has not bowled in this

series, forcing England to play with four bowlers. Stokes has been gradually increasing his bowling workload in training.

"I'm not saying yes, I'm not saying no. I have progressed a lot faster than I thought I would," he said. "Me being me, I'm always very optimistic about most things. There will be a more detailed chat with the medical team about what workload I have done to pass me off as not being a massive risk. I managed to bowl at 100% in one of the warm-up days here, which made me feel pretty good. I felt like I could have bowled in the game but that would have been stupid. It's (still) a work in progress."

## After China miss, Manika hands India vital win against Hungary

**Rutvik Mehta**  
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**MUMBAI:** Coming off two defeats in India's battling 3-2 loss to China in the opening group fixture, Manika Batra had a lot riding on her shoulders walking into the final match of the tie against Hungary locked at 2-2. India's top-ranked paddler delivered the result her team desperately needed, defeating Hungarian No. 1 Georgina Pota 3-0 (11-5, 14-12, 13-11) in the deciding rubber to give the Indian women's team its first win at the 2024 World Team Table Tennis Championships in Busan on Sunday.

Manika came up with two gritty wins on the day, also giving India the lead in the first match by edging past their No. 2 Dora Madarasz 3-2 (8-11, 11-5, 12-10, 8-11, 11-4). With Sreeja Akula having a below-par outing — she lost to world No. 88 Pota and No. 90 Madarasz — and Ayhika Mukherjee coming up with another impressive result in beating Bernadett Balint 3-1 (7-11, 11-6, 11-7, 11-8), it would all come



Manika Batra won both her matches on Sunday.

down to Manika. After giving China a mighty scare, the victory over the higher-ranked Hungary is important for the women's team as it keeps them in fray for a top three finish in Group 1, which will put them into the knockouts and with a shot at the Paris Olympics team quota.

The men, on the other hand, suffered a 3-1 defeat to Poland after easing past Chile on Saturday. Only Harmeet Desai managed a win while the experienced Sharath

Kamal and young Manav Thakkar faltered. The men's team now finds itself with a lot of work to do to sneak into the knockouts from Group 3, starting with the third-ranked Koreans on Monday. The women take on lower-ranked Uzbekistan on Monday. Manika had a slow start but picked up the pace in the second game, racing to 9-4 extracting errors from Madarasz off her backhand blocks. She levelled things up at 5-5 from 2-5 down in

the third game, again using the block to good effect. Manika managed to save a game point with a lucky net touch off her return before an error by Madarasz handed her the game. Manika's backhand errors cost her in the fourth game but with the scoreline at 4-4 in the fifth, she reeled off seven straight points.

India's Chinese slayers had contrasting fortunes against Hungary. Ayhika, who had stunned world No. 1 Sun Yingsha on Friday, remained clinical against lower-ranked Balint in the third match and was impressive off her forehand wing. On either side of it, Sreeja couldn't back up her show against No. 2 Wang Yidi and went down 2-3 (3-11, 7-11, 11-9, 11-9, 8-11) to Pota and 1-3 (4-11, 6-11, 11-5, 7-11) to Madarasz.

It meant it was left for Manika to get the job done in the high-stakes final rubber. As she sealed the win after an error from Pota, Manika raised both her fists, flashed a smile towards her teammates and stuck her tongue out in an expression of relief.

## Dhull and Sidhu hit tons, Delhi take lead

**HTC & Agencies**  
sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Centuries by Yash Dhull and Jonty Sidhu helped Delhi take the first-innings lead on Day 3 of their inconsequential Group D Ranji Trophy clash against Odisha here on Sunday. Dhull hit 112 off 167 deliveries while Sidhu stayed unbeaten on 105 after consuming 218 balls.

Their efforts helped the hosts reach 451 in response to Odisha's first-innings total of 440. Kshitiz Sharma, whose highest score this season was 28 before Sunday, also contributed 64.

Dhull, who hasn't had great returns opening the batting, made 112 off 167 balls at No.3 to end the season on a high.

The game is heading towards a drab draw with neither side in the race for a berth in the knockouts.

Delhi's two wins came against Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, helping them avoid relegation after a poor start to their



Mukesh Kumar.

**Mukesh stars in Bengal's win against Bihar**  
Mukesh Kumar, who played for India in the second Test against England in Visakhapatnam, starred for Bengal with a match haul of 10/50 in their Group B match against Bihar at Eden Gardens in Kolkata, setting up victory by an innings and 204 runs. Resuming Day 3 on 32/1 in their second innings while still trailing by 284 runs, Bihar were only able to add 80 runs to their total as Kumar ended with figures of 9-3-32-6.

**Man City held by Chelsea in EPL**  
**MANCHESTER:** Rodri's late equaliser extended Manchester City's year-long unbeaten record at home but a 1-1 draw against Chelsea on Saturday handed Liverpool and Arsenal a huge boost in the Premier League title race. Raheem Sterling gave Chelsea a first-half lead on his return to the Etihad and City were headed to a first defeat on home soil for 34 games until Rodri's deflected effort seven minutes from time.

Man City's Rodri.

of an ad hoc panel to run the day-to-day affairs of the sports body but the world governing body of the game, IPC did not allow it.

**India women defeat USA via shootout**  
**ROURKELA:** A day after upsetting world No.3 Australia, India women beat USA 2-1 via shootout in the FIH Pro League. The regulation period ended 1-1 with young drag-flicker Deepika Kumari scoring in the 19th minute and the US equalising through Ashley Seesa in the 45th. Mumtaz Khan and Sonika were on target in the shootout, while Leah Crouse scored for the losing team.

**PCI to conduct elections on March 9**  
**NEW DELHI:** The suspended Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) announced that it will conduct its delayed polls on March 9. The Sports Ministry had on February 4 suspended the body for not holding election in time. The four-year term of PCI executive committee had ended on January 31. The ministry had even advocated forming



# India shuttlers clinch women's Asia team championships title

**Sandip Sikdar**  
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**NEW DELHI:** Social media posts of India's male shuttlers on reaching Malaysia for the Badminton Asia Team Championships were going viral a week back. As the Thomas Cup champions, all eyes of the badminton world were on them.

Led by PV Sindhu, the women too put out similar posts, but they never gained similar traction. It was understandable. Twice Olympic medallist Sindhu was returning from a four-month injury layoff, and barring Ashvini Ponnappa, most of the team was young — Tanvi Sharma, the youngest, is 15 — with barely any international experience.

Yet this unheralded women's team showed incredible maturity to stand atop the rostrum in Shah Alam on Sunday after India beat Thailand 3-2 in the final to clinch the biennial title for the first time since its inception in 2016.

India, who beat the top three seeds China, Japan and Thailand, rode on the shoulders of Sindhu, Treesa Jolly/Gayatri Gopichand and 17-year-old Anmol Kharb on Sunday to deliver the gold and put India in good stead heading for the Uber Cup in Chengdu, China.

"Anmol's fearlessness stands out. She's gritty and her attitude is perfect for team championships. She has no international experience and was picked in the team because she is our national champion. She in fact lost the finals of the junior nationals before winning the senior title," national selector U Vimal Kumar said. "In team matches there's so much pressure and she enjoys it; that helped her win the crucial matches."

It must be noted that most teams came without their top players. China, who India beat 3-2 in the group stage, didn't have Olympic champion Chen Yufei, world No.6 He Bingjiao and world No.1 doubles combine Chen Qing Chen and Jia Yi Fan.


Japan were without two-time world champion Akane Yamaguchi and two of their top pairs. Thailand were without their two top singles players, including former world champion Ratchanok Intanon, with the big names deciding to rest and prepare for

**BATC winners (women)**

2016 China | 2018 Japan | 2020 Japan | 2022 Indonesia | 2024 INDIA

**Road to title**

<b>Group stage</b> 3-2 India beat China	<b>Quarter-final</b> 3-0 India beat Hong Kong	<b>Semi-final</b> 3-2 India beat Japan	<b>FINAL</b> 3-2 India beat Thailand
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**FINAL RESULTS**

<b>PV Sindhu</b> beat Supanida Katethong 21-12, 21-12	<b>Treesa Jolly/Gayatri Gopichand</b> beat Jongkolphan Kititharakul/Rawinda Prajongjai 21-16, 18-21, 21-16	Ashmita Chaliha lost to Busanan Ongbamrungphan 11-21, 14-21	Priya Konjengbam/Shruti Mishra lost to Benyapa Aimsaard/Nuntakarn Aimsaard 11-21, 9-21	<b>Anmol Kharb</b> beat Pornpicha Choiekeewong 21-14, 21-9
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the BWF World Tour resuming next month in the crucial Olympic qualification period.

Though Sindhu lost to Japan's Aya Ohori in Saturday's semi-final tie, she brought out her vintage game against Supanida Katethong in the opening singles. The former world champion played aggressively against a player who has troubled her in the past and it paid dividends as she won 21-12, 21-12.

Treesa and Gayatri, both 20, doubled the lead, beating world No.10 Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai 21-16, 18-21, 21-16.

The world No.23 began with a

clear plan. They pinned their opponents to the back court and attacked at every opportunity to win the opening game. But the superior defence of the Thai pairing helped them claw back into the match as the Indians lapsed into errors.

To their credit, Gayatri and Treesa hung in despite things not going their way and managed to rally from 6-10 down in the decider to 14-all. From 15-all, they won five straight points before converting the second of the five match points, finishing with an all-win record in the competition.

Ashmita Chaliha couldn't find the rhythm that saw her defeat

former world champion Nozomi Okuhara on Saturday as she lost 11-21, 14-21. Doubles national champions Priya Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra lost to the Aimsaard sisters, Benyapa and Nuntakarn, pushing the final into the deciding rubber.

Like against China in the group stage and Japan in semis, it came down to national champion Anmol. And the 17-year-old, playing in only her second international senior event, again delivered. Though she took time to get used to Pornpicha Choiekeewong's power game and trailed 4-6 in the opener, once she started controlling the rallies there was

no stopping her. Anmol, ranked world No.472, hammered the world No.45 21-14, 21-9.

When Pornpicha's shuttle went long on the final point, Anmol ran to chief national coach Pullela Gopichand and the rest of the players rushed towards them, picking the Faridabad teenager on their shoulders and chanting her name in frenzied celebration at the Setia City Convention Centre.

"I'm very happy that we won because this is the first time India are winning gold at the Badminton Asia Team Championships. It is a big thing because history has been scripted here," said Anmol.

## South Africa great Procter dies at 77

**NEW DELHI:** Former South Africa cricketing great Mike Procter, whose brilliance as a fast-bowling all-rounder was restricted to seven Tests because of his country's international isolation due to apartheid, has died in Durban aged 77. "He suffered a complication during surgery and while in ICU went into cardiac arrest. He became unconscious and unfortu-

nately never woke up," his wife Maryna told website News24.

South Africa won six of the seven Tests Procter played — all against Australia — in the three years since debut in 1967. He took 41 wickets at an average of 15.02 and scored 226 runs.

His phenomenal first-class career left the game wondering what his Test achievements would

have been as in the case of his contemporaries Barry Richards and Graeme Pollock. He was named Wisden's Cricketer of the Year in 1970. The same year, he emulated Don Bradman and CB Fry by scoring six successive first-class centuries for Rhodesia in the Currie Cup. Procter was SA's first coach on their re-admission into international cricket in 1991-92. **HTC**

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