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### LATE NIGHT MEETING AT KHARGE HOME; RAHUL CALLS AGENCIES 'ELIMINATE OPP CELL'

# One more Opp leader falls: ED arrests Soren for 'money laundering', he quits as Jharkhand CM

Ruling JMM-led alliance proposes Minister Champai Soren as successor

**ABHISHEK ANGAD**  
RANCHI, JANUARY 31

JHARKHAND CHIEF Minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren was arrested in Ranchi Wednesday night after more than seven hours of questioning by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in an alleged money laundering case involving ownership of a plot of land.

The arrest was made a day after the ED seized Rs 36 lakh in

cash and a luxury SUV from his Delhi residence.

Not long before his arrest, Soren submitted his resignation to Governor C P Radhakrishnan at Raj Bhavan.

"CM Hemant Soren has decided to resign. Champai Soren has been chosen as the new leader of the legislative party..."

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



Hemant Soren tenders his resignation as Jharkhand CM to Governor C P Radhakrishnan in the presence of Champai Soren, at Raj Bhavan in Ranchi on Wednesday. ANI

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## INDIA bloc rattled again, unsure if 'BJP vendetta' has echo on poll street

**MANOJ CG**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

BARELY TWO months before the Lok Sabha elections, the embattled INDIA bloc Wednesday suffered another political blow — the late-night arrest of JMM leader Hemant Soren by the Enforcement Directorate on cor-

ruption charges minutes after his resignation as Jharkhand Chief Minister.

This comes days after Nitish Kumar's JD(U) walked out of the INDIA bloc and returned to the NDA, stunning the Opposition parties.

Stumbling from one crisis to the next, the Opposition alliance,

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

### DISPUTE OVER VARANASI SITE

## District court allows puja inside cellar at Gyanvapi complex

Mosque panel says barricading cut by admn hours after order, moving SC

**ASAD REHMAN**  
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 31

SIX DAYS after it handed litigants copies of an Archaeological Survey of India's report which stated that "there existed a Hindu temple prior to the construction" of the Gyanvapi mosque, the Varanasi district court Wednesday directed that a priest be allowed to perform puja in the southern cellar of the mosque complex.

District Judge A K Vishvesha, in his order, said, "District Magistrate, Varanasi/Receiver is being directed to get puja, raag bhog done by a priest, designated by the plaintiff and Kashi Vishwanath Trust, of idols in the cellar to the south, which is disputed, of building situated on settlement plot no. 9130, police station Chowk, District Varanasi. For this, suitable arrangements must be made with iron barricading and other things within

**EXPLAINED**

**E** The cellar, the claims

HINDU LITIGANTS call the cellar *Vyasji ka tehkhana* and say idols were worshipped there before the practice was stopped in 1993. It is in the southern part of the Gyanvapi mosque complex. The mosque committee says no idols existed in the cellar, and no prayers were ever offered there.

**EXPLAINED, PAGE 13**

seven days."

Late Wednesday, S M Yasin, Joint Secretary of the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee, which had opposed the plea for allowing puja in the southern cellar and said it would approach

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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### AN EXPRESS INVESTIGATION-PART 2

## Rs 163 cr BMC special fund follows party line: switch sides, get money

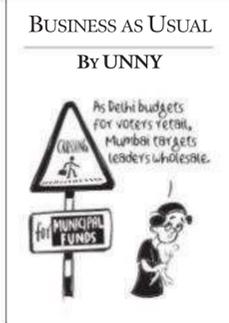
Rs 5 cr for ward after corporator switched from UBT to Shinde

**PRATIPACHARYA**  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

NOT JUST did the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) disburse Rs 500 crore from its coffers along party lines — only for projects proposed by ruling BJP-Sena (Eknath Shinde) MLAs and none for the Opposition — when it came to its contingency fund, it took this a step further.

In the 10 months between February 2023 and December 31, 2023, the BMC allotted Rs 163.29 crore from its Rs 900-crore contingency fund to 31 of the 227 "corporator wards" in Mumbai for carrying out civic works.

As many as 30 of these 31 wards are those where their corporators had switched their political allegiance from the



Opposition parties. Their breakup: Uddhav Bal Thackeray Shiv Sena — 21, Congress — 6 and NCP — 3. One is from the BJP. All the 30 crossed over to the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde after he broke away to form the state govern-

ment with the BJP in June 2022.

It was only after the 30 corporators had switched that their wards received the funds, Rs 5 crore each. Indeed, in many cases, funds were cleared in less than a fortnight of the former corporator switching sides to the ruling alliance.

None of the remaining 196 corporator wards received any money from the contingency fund, according to official records, including those obtained under the RTI, investigated by The Indian Express.

The contingency fund is a rainy-day corpus meant for use specifically during "adverse situations" such as Covid-19 pandemic, landslides, bridge collapses, etc. The civic body normally sets aside around 4 per cent of its annual net income towards the corpus of the fund.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## New IT Rules on fact check unit: Bombay HC gives split verdict

**OMKARGOKHALE**  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

A DIVISION bench of the Bombay High Court on Wednesday delivered a split verdict on a batch of petitions challenging the amended Information Technology (IT) Rules which empowered the government to identify "fake news" on social media platforms through a Fact Check Unit (FCU).

While Justice Gautam Patel agreed with the petitioners' contentions and struck down the amendment, Justice Neela Gokhale upheld the government's side.

In his verdict, Justice Patel noted that the petitioners were "correct in saying that the State cannot coercively classify speech as true or false and compel the non-publication of the latter. That is nothing but censorship."

However, Justice Gokhale

said that alleging bias on the part of FCU members because they were government appointees was "unfair", and the recourse to courts of law was always open in case of any bias. The Rules "were not directly penalising" the intermediary or the user and "did not bring any chilling effect on their rights", she said.

The petitioners included stand-up comic Kunal Kamra, Editors Guild of India, News

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## UP gets its fourth 'acting' DGP; six more states, one UT have acting police chiefs

**PAGE 1 ANCHOR**

**DEEPTIMAN TIWARY**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE UTTAR PRADESH government Wednesday appointed Director General (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar as its acting Director General of Police (DGP). He replaces Vijay Kumar, who too was an acting DGP, and is, in fact, the fourth such in a row over the past 20 months.

This action is part of an increasing trend of state governments not appointing regular chiefs of police despite eligible officers being available. At present, there are as many as seven states and one Union Territory with an acting DGP. These appointments are typically made by handing over the additional charge of the police chief's post to a DG rank officer in the state holding some other responsibility.

While Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, UP and Punjab have had such temporary DGPs for almost or more than a year, three



UP CM Yogi Adityanath with acting DGP Prashant Kumar on Wednesday. ANI

other states, Uttarakhand, Odisha and West Bengal, and the Union Territory of J&K, have recently appointed "acting DGPs".

Such action is in complete violation of the Supreme Court guidelines on DGP appointments in the Prakash Singh case and the guidelines issued by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). The apex court has clearly said no temporary or ad hoc appointments of police chiefs must be made barring exceptional circumstances. UPSC guidelines say states must

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FROM PAGE ONE

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ED arrests Soren, he quits as Jharkhand CM

All the MLAs are with us," Jharkhand Congress president Rajesh Thakur said. The JMM and Congress are allies in the state.

Champai Soren, state Transport Minister and a loyalist of Hemant Soren, told reporters, "We have staked a claim to form the new government with the support of 47 MLAs." Sources, however, said the Governor has told the ruling alliance he will revert on their proposal after considering the legalities.

The ruling coalition of JMM, Congress and RJD has 29, 17 and one MLA respectively. In the Opposition, the BJP has 26 and the AJSU three. The CPI(M-L) and NCP (AP) have one MLA each while there are two independents.

Late Wednesday night, Soren filed a writ petition in the Jharkhand High Court against his arrest. The matter will be heard at 10.30 am Thursday.

A letter Soren wrote to his MLAs earlier in the day was released after his arrest. It stated: "You are aware that yesterday, on 30.01.2024, in the meeting of the Party Legislature Party, this proposal was passed unanimously that if in any adverse circumstances, I have to leave my post of Leader of the Legislature Party,

then in that situation the new leader of the Legislature Party will be elected. The selection will be made by me, which will be universally accepted. The above proposal was also agreed to in the meeting of MLAs of all the coalition parties."

"Today I am going to appear in compliance with the summons of ED. If I am arrested... in such a situation, after due consideration, I have decided to nominate Champai Soren as the new leader of the legislature party. After formally electing him as the leader of the Legislative Party in the meeting of the Legislative Party, along with the leaders of all the allied parties, taking his letter of support, under the leadership of the new leader, all of you honorable MLAs will go before the Honourable Governor and stake claim for the formation of a new government. Showing their rock-solid unity, they will remain present in Ranchi till the formation of the new government," the letter stated.

Soren asked the MLAs that "in my absence, you all will take care of my family, my respected father Dishom Guru Shri Shibu Soren ji and mother who is not in good health and will also keep your love

for my younger brother".

In a couplet posted on social media following the arrest, Soren wrote that "life is a battle" and he "will fight every moment but not beg for compromise". He wrote that the "heartache of our people will not be in vain", and he will "not accept defeat". "Jai Jharkhand," he concluded.

Speculation over Soren's arrest was rife since 5.30 pm when two mini-buses were seen going inside the CM residence. Half an hour later, Chief Secretary L Khyangate and DGP Ajay Kumar Singh arrived at his residence.

The development caps days of drama between Soren and the investigative agency - from the ED searching his Delhi residence to his party lashing out over the move to "malign" his image.

The ED had been sending regular summons to Soren in connection with the alleged money laundering case, and he had repeatedly refused to appear before the agency. He had been questioned thrice: The first was in November 2021 in an alleged illegal mining case filed by the ED. The second and the third summons - on January 20 and 31 respectively - pertain to the alleged proceeds of crime connected to the sale and

purchase of Army land in Ranchi in which IAS officer Chhavi Ranjan is also an accused. In this case, the ED probe claimed to have uncovered illegal sale and purchase of another piece of 8-acre land in Ranchi's Bargain area. It is in connection with this plot of land that Soren was questioned.

In a letter to the ED earlier, Soren had clarified that the plot of land in Bargain was "wrongfully alleged to be owned" by him.

Hours before Soren's arrest, the Jharkhand Police had also lodged an FIR against senior ED officials under the SC/ST Act based on Soren's complaint regarding the searches at his Delhi residence. In his complaint, Soren alleged that the ED conducted the search operation to "harass and malign him and his entire community".

He also addressed ED's claims of a BMW car and cash being seized from the Delhi residence. "I am not the owner of the BMW... I do not own any illicit cash," he said, adding that the "aforesaid acts" of the ED were done to "intentionally humiliate me in public". The ED has so far arrested 14 people in the case, including Ranjan, who served as Director of the state's Social Welfare Department and Deputy Commissioner of Ranchi.

9-yr-old girl caught in tripartite custody row leaves shelter

DHEERAJ MISHRA AGRA, JANUARY 31

"EK DIDI thi, jiske saath main ludo khelti thi, woh god chali gayi (I used to play ludo with a girl, but she has been adopted)", these were the first words of the nine-year-old, who walked out of the government shelter home, where she was staying for a year-and-a-half after being caught in a tripartite custody battle in Agra.

The Allahabad High Court on Monday ordered that the custody of the child be given to Meena Devi (45), who fostered her since birth after she was found abandoned by a eunuch, Anjali, in Farrukhabad in November 2014. The girl walked out of the home at 3 pm on Tuesday.

Anjali gave the child to Meena after her community told her that she was not allowed to raise a girl child. Nearly eight years later, Anjali demanded the child back, citing their "old deal" and when Meena refused to do so, she filed a complaint with the Child Welfare Committee (CWC).

The custody battle was further complicated when Nitin Garg, an Agra-based businessman, filed an application on the advice of CWC, claiming that the child could be his daughter "who went missing in November 2015". To clear the air, the high court on November 24, 2023, ordered a DNA test on the child but the report came negative.

For the nine-year-old, the phrase "god lena", the meaning of which she doesn't quite grasp, is now etched in her memory formed at the Rajkiya Balika Grih when referring to friends who went "missing".

The girl, mumbling while she tried to fix the eyes of her old teddy bear, was dressed in a new cream-coloured sweatshirt and blue jeans. She had a boy's cut and was dressed by her foster mother Meena. She sat next to her father, Arman Khan, holding on to his hand tightly as people clicked photos and bombarded her with questions.

As the baffled child tried to understand how she ended up in a shelter home and why people were clicking her pictures, Meena caressed her hair.

"I have not only got my daughter back but I have also got a new life. I already had four children but the day she arrived at my doorstep in November 2014 wrapped in a towel and crying loudly she became our world... Today, she has got freedom after 18 months," said Meena sitting fingers crossed, as the next hurdle of the adoption process awaits her.

Gyanvapi: Dist court allows puja

a higher court against the order, said, "The administration reached the mosque complex late evening. They cut the barricading towards the southern cellar. We were not informed about this, and we still haven't received a copy of the court order. We will move the Supreme Court tomorrow."

In a post on X, Akhilesh Yadav, SP chief and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly said: "Due process has to be maintained while following any court order. The Varanasi Court fixed a 7-day period for it. What we are seeing now is a concerted effort to go beyond due process and prevent any legal recourse that can be taken."

The cellar, which Hindu plaintiffs call "Vyasi ka tehkhana" (Vyasi's cellar), is part of the mosque complex. Hindu litigants, appearing before the court, have claimed that the Gyanvapi mosque was built on the site of the earlier Kashi Vishwanath temple after its destruction in the 17th century. The existing Kashi Vishwanath temple stands adjacent to the mosque. The ASI report also stated that "the pre-existing structure appears to have been destroyed in the 17th century, during the reign of Aurangzeb and part of it was modified and reused in the existing structure".

The district court's direction came on the petition of Shailendra Kumar Pathak, head priest of Acharya Ved Vyas Peeth temple, who said that the Vyas family had been offering prayers in the cellar even during the rule of the British but the practice was stopped in December 1993. According to

Judge Vishvesha's order, the lawyer for Pathak said the court, while disposing of his application (9C) on January 17, passed an order allowing the application. "The court had deputed the Varanasi DM as receiver for southern cellar. The court had directed the Varanasi DM will keep cellar in his possession and to keep it secure."

It quoted the plaintiff's lawyer pointing out that the order had been passed only on the first part of the application but not on the second part through the plaintiff had sought directions on both. After going through his January 17 order, Judge Vishvesha said the plaintiff had said that prayers used to be done in the southern cellar.

"In December, 1993, priest Vyasji was stopped from entering the area beyond the barricade. Hence, the prayers, raagbhog and other rituals were stopped. Vyasji used to perform puja there from the time of the British and that he had possession, and he prayed there until 1993. After that, the door to the cellar was removed. Several Hindu sculptures and puja material are still in the cellar. It is necessary to do puja of the idols there in a controlled manner," the order stated, quoting the plaintiff.

Opposing the prayer to allow puja, lawyers for the mosque committee told the court that no one from the Vyas family ever did puja there. "Hence, there was no question of stopping puja in 1993. At the said spot, no idol was there. The plaintiff's claim that the Vyas family had possession of the cellar is false," the order quoted the mosque committee lawyers.

UP gets fourth 'acting' DGP

send a list of eligible officers, with at least three senior-most officers, to the Commission six months before the retirement of the incumbent DGP.

"Honourable Supreme Court had assigned this task (of preparing guidelines) to the UPSC. But unless we receive a proposal which is complete in all respects from the concerned states, we have no role to play at all in this," UPSC Chairman Manoj Soni said.

States are either not sending proposals, or the proposals have technical errors, prompting the Commission to send these proposals back.

Further, there has been no hearing in the principal Prakash Singh case for implementation of police reforms for the past three-and-a-half years. "This trend of appointing acting DGPs is contrary to SC directions and does not conform to any state-level legislation either. This matter should be taken up by the SC. My application to the court in this regard is also pending," former UP DGP and police reforms crusader Prakash Singh said.

A questionnaire on the issue sent to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, which is the cadre controlling authority of the IPS, did not elicit any response. Queries were also sent to chief secretaries of all concerned states and union territories, but no response was received.

Sources in the administration of these states, however, pointed out "flaws" in the SC judgement in the Prakash Singh case. They said the order is such that UPSC invariably chooses the three senior-most police officers from the list sent to it by the states, and the state government is forced to choose one among them. The CM should have some discretion over

who is best suited to lead the police force. The government's choice may not necessarily be among the three senior-most, they said.

The case of UP is special. It has had three "acting DGPs" in succession since May, 2022. On Wednesday, the state got its fourth. After removing then DGP, 1987-batch IPS officer Mukul Goel, for "lack of interest towards work", the state appointed 1988 batch IPS officer Devendra Singh Chauhan as acting DG. Following his retirement on March 31, 2022, 1988 batch IPS officer Raj Kumar Vishwakarma was made acting DG. Then on May 31, upon retirement, Vishwakarma was replaced by Vijay Kumar as acting DG. Vijay Kumar had superseded his senior Anand Kumar, and retired Wednesday.

In Andhra Pradesh, the YSRCP government appointed 1992 batch IPS officer Kasireddy Rajendranath Reddy as acting Andhra DGP in February 2023. There were nine eligible IPS officers of the cadre who were senior to Reddy then. He continues in the post.

In Telangana, the Election Commission promptly removed Anjali Kumar, who as acting DG, was photographed with Congress state president Revanth Reddy at his residence after vote counting trends of the Assembly elections on December 3, 2023. The state then appointed 1990-batch IPS officer Ravi Gupta as acting DGP of Telangana. The new Reddy government has continued with the practice. It appointed Gautam, the senior-most IPS officer in the state, and has not yet been made a regular DGP.

The Punjab government under AAP gave additional charge of the state DGP to 1992 batch IPS of-

ficer Gaurav Yadav in July 2022 after then incumbent DGP, the 1987 batch IPS officer VK Bhawra proceeded on two months leave. However, when Bhawra returned on September 2, the AAP government transferred him as chairman of Punjab Police Housing Corporation. While Yadav continues to remain acting DGP, Bhawra has challenged his removal in the Central Administrative Tribunal.

Apart from Bhawra, there are five IPS officers senior to Yadav and eligible for DGP's post in Punjab. In J&K, the Centre handed over the additional charge of the UT DGP to 1992 batch IPS officer RR Swain in October, 2023. Swain also heads the UT's CID. There are seven eligible officers senior to him in the AGMUT cadre.

In Uttarakhand, the Pushkar Singh Dhami government gave additional charge of state DGP to 1996 batch IPS officer Abhinav Kumar in November, 2023. Again, Kumar's name was in the list of three officers sent to UPSC for DGP's post. The other two were 1995 batch IPS officer Deepam Seth and PVK Prasad. In Odisha, the Naveen Patnaik government appointed 1990 batch IPS officer Arun Kumar Sarangi as acting DGP on December 31, 2023. There are seven IPS officers senior to Sarangi in the state.

In West Bengal, the Mamata Banerjee government on December 27, 2023 appointed 1989 batch IPS officer Rajeev Kumar as acting DGP of the state. Though he is among the three senior-most IPS officers in the state, he has not been given full charge. Kumar had hit headlines a few years ago when CBI summoned him for questioning in the Saradha chit fund case prompting Bannerji to stage a dharna in Kolkata.

RBI puts curbs on Paytm

be allowed in any customer accounts, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags, NCMC cards, etc. after February 29, 2024, other than any interest, cash-backs, or refunds which may be credited anytime," the RBI said on Wednesday.

"Withdrawal or utilisation of balances by its customers from their accounts including savings bank accounts, current accounts, prepaid instruments, FASTags, National Common Mobility Cards, etc. are to be permitted without any restrictions, upto their available balance," it added.

According to the Paytm Payments Bank website, it has over 100 million KYC-verified customers. "We are also the largest issuer of FASTag with over 8 million FASTag units issued," the website says. Paytm founder and chairman Vijay Shekhar Sharma is also the part-time chairman of the bank. Paytm has been facing RBI scrutiny since 2018.

While the RBI did not specify the reasons for the latest action, sources in the know said it could be due to concerns over KYC compliance and IT-related issues. The central bank is against allowing any institution or banking entity to expose depositors' money to such risks.

It is learnt that Paytm Payments Bank and One97 Communications had also come under RBI scrutiny for purported lack of requisite information barriers within the group, and data access to China-based entities that were indirect shareholders through their stake in the parent company. The failure to address these concerns at multiple levels over an extended period is learnt to have led to the latest action.

Although Antfin, an affiliate of Chinese conglomerate Alibaba,

INDIA bloc rattled again, unsure if 'BJP vendetta' has echo on poll street

however, hopes to project the arrest of the 48-year-old tribal leader as yet another "outrageous political" move by a "vengeful" and "dictatorial" BJP government out to finish the Opposition and silence its critics. It is to be seen how the development will play out in Parliament, the Budget session of which began Wednesday.

Late in the evening, INDIA leaders including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, CPM's Sitaram Yechury, NCP's Sharad Pawar and DMK's T R Baalu met at Kharge's house to discuss the way forward.

Soren's arrest and the political turmoil in Jharkhand is a challenge to the INDIA bloc, both in terms of larger perception and electoral preparedness in Jharkhand.

On Friday, Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is set to enter Jharkhand. Nitish's exit, Mamata's declaration that her TMC will contest all seats in West Bengal, AAP's decision to go alone in Punjab and the strain in ties between the Congress and Akhilesh Yadav's SP in Uttar Pradesh - the sense of drift in the INDIA bloc is getting more pronounced.

The Congress slammed the

BJP government for Soren's arrest. "ED, CBI, IT etc are no longer government agencies... they have become the BJP's 'eliminate opposition cell'. The BJP, which itself is steeped in corruption, is running a campaign to destroy democracy due to its obsession for power," Gandhi said.

Kharge, too, was scathing. "Those who have not gone with Modi will go to jail. To put the ED behind Hemant Soren to force him to resign as CM... is an assault on federalism. After having made the provisions of the PMLA draconian, intimidating and scaring opposition leaders have now become part of the toolkit of the BJP," he said. "Those who have gone through the BJP washing machine have come out sparkling white... we will not be scared... we will fight from Parliament to the streets," he added.

Soren is just one among the several Opposition leaders who are facing probes. And the list cuts across party lines and ideological divides: from Delhi Chief Minister and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal, Telangana's new Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, his Kerala counterpart and CPM veteran Pinarayi Vijayan, former Chhattisgarh Chief

Minister Bhupesh Baghel, the family members of RJD supreme Lalu Prasad, former Haryana Chief Minister and Congress veteran Bhopinder Singh Hooda, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah and NCP chief Sharad Pawar, the list is long.

Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, too, face ED probe in the National Herald case.

But the question is whether the opposition's political argument finds resonance on the street. Last April, the Supreme Court declined to entertain a plea by 14 Opposition parties against misuse of Central agencies saying that it can intervene in individual cases but can't lay down "separate guidelines" only for politicians.

And in July, on the day of the INDIA meeting in Bengaluru, PM Narendra Modi called it a "conclave of the corrupt."

Opposition parties, accusing the BJP government of misusing investigative agencies, have often failed to speak in one voice when it comes to many of the cases because of inter-party rivalries and local compulsions.

Soren's case, in fact, could be

an exception since the Congress, the third force in the state, is an ally. The grand old party, for instance, shed few tears when former Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia was arrested in February last year in connection with the excise policy case. Sisodia has been in jail for nearly a year now. Kejriwal too is facing the agency's heat in the case with the fifth summons going out Wednesday. The AAP believes Kejriwal could also be arrested anytime.

The Congress never really targeted the Centre or the agencies over the cases against senior TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee either. The CPM, another key member of the INDIA bloc, has often targeted the ruling TMC over charges of corruption. The Congress's Kerala unit was upbeat when Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan came under ED radar. The AAP repeatedly spoke about the corruption charges and the ED probe against Bhupesh Baghel even as late as during the campaign for the Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh in November-December. The lack of camaraderie despite the shared belief that the BJP government is misusing the agencies to target the opposition could be a marker.

Rs 163 cr BMC special fund follows party line: switch sides, get money

The typical modus operandi: records show that a former corporator would switch sides to the Shinde Sena, following which the BMC's ward officer in charge of that corporator's ward would send a written proposal seeking funds to the office of the civic body, which in turn, would clear the proposal.

On Wednesday, The Indian Express had reported that the BMC, which has not had elections for almost two years, disbursed Rs 500 crore to MLAs in Mumbai to carry out civic works in their constituencies. While all 21 MLAs of the ruling Shiv Sena-BJP alliance in Mumbai got funds under this special provision, the 15 Opposition MLAs drew a blank.

Despite several attempts, BMC Commissioner and Administrator IS Chahal was not available for comment.

Shiv Sena UBT leader Aaditya Thackeray said, "Whenever any member from the Opposition side approaches the municipal commissioner, he is told that former corporators can't claim any fund. However, if any ex-corporator having affiliation with the ruling alliance approaches the civic authority then their demand gets approved within a fortnight. This clearly shows how the administration is working on the behest of the ruling party."

Mumbai's 227 corporator wards constitute 24 municipal wards whose administrative head is a "ward officer," a BMC official of the rank of assistant municipal commissioner.

Before their terms ended on March 7, 2022, the BMC had 88 corporators from the Shiv Sena (undivided), 80 from the BJP, Congress 31, NCP 9, MNS 7, AIMIM 2, Samajwadi Party 6. With BMC going without elections since then, the civic body has no sitting corporators. It's the ward officers who have been raising demands for grants to carry out various development works.

Between June 2022 and March 2023, three former corporators - Samadhan Saravankar, Santosh Kharat and Datta Narvankar - shifted loyalties from the UBT Sena to the Shinde faction. On June 20, 2023, their ward officer sought Rs 15 crore for carrying out civic works in these three zones. A day later, the fund allotment was cleared.

Sheetal Mhatre, a former UBT Sena corporator, joined the Shinde camp in July 2022. Months later, on June 19, 2023, the corporator ward she represented in Dahisar got Rs 5 crore. When contacted for a comment on this pattern of selective disbursement, Mhatre denied any bias. "I can't comment on the pattern of how the funds are being disbursed since it's being done by the BMC. However, the authorities are giving out funds only to those who are putting in requests. At present, since there are no elected corporators in the BMC, as former corporators, we put in requests based on which they are making the funds available. Also, this whole mechanism is being done under the watch of the Guardian Ministers of Mumbai," she said.

Mumbai Congress chief Varsha Gaikwad, however, counters this. "In my area, the councillors who were with me did not get funds. But now that they have shifted to the Shiv Sena (Shinde Group), they have. The decision of allocating funds to an area should be done through proper examination and reports,

rather than being selective about where the councillor is from," she said.

Don't switch parties, don't get money

Gaikwad has reason to disagree. For, there are cases where corporators from wards next to each other sought contingency funds but money was disbursed to the one who had switched sides.

Some telling examples:

On July 28, 2023, UBT Sena's Mangesh Satamkar, corporator from the Sion municipal ward, joined the Shinde Sena. A month later, his ward officer sought Rs 5 crore which was cleared by the BMC. In contrast, in the adjoining ward, requests by its former corporator from Congress party, Ravi Raja, remain pending till date. This despite the fact that Raja has written a second letter to the BMC Commissioner and a third to the Guardian Minister.

UBT Sena MP from South Mumbai, Arvind Sawant, wrote to BMC chief on February 2, 2023, seeking Rs 6 crore under the contingency fund for carrying out civic works in a Sewri ward. Its sitting corporator is Sachin Padwal from the Sena UBT. However, the BMC is yet to allot funds to this ward. Sawant also sought funds for two other wards in south Mumbai where the former corporators are with Sena (UBT) and Congress; however, the BMC is yet to allot funds to these wards.

New IT Rules on fact check unit: HC split verdict

Broadcasters and Digital Association and Association of Indian Magazines. In accordance with the HC Rules, the bench directed its registry to place the petitions before Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya for referring it to a third judge.

Appearing for the Centre, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the HC that the FCU, to be set up under the amended IT Rules to identify fake, false and misleading facts on social media, wouldn't be notified for 10 days. After Mehta said that he did not have instructions to extend this beyond 10 days, the HC said substantive application for further continuance should be made to the third judge.

In April last year, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) promulgated the 2023 Rules, which further amended the Information Technology Rules, 2021.

Under the new Rules, if the FCU comes across or is informed about any posts that are "fake", "false" or contain "misleading" facts pertaining to the business of the government, it would flag it to the social media intermediaries. The online intermediaries would then have to take down such content if they wanted to retain their "safe harbour" (legal immunity against third-party content).

The petitioners had challenged the constitutional validity of the Rules, terming them arbitrary, unconstitutional, and in violation of fundamental rights. The Centre had said it was not against any kind of opinion, criticism, satire or humour targeting the government, and the Rules were meant to only proscribe or prohibit peddling of fake, false and misleading facts on social media related to "government business". The bench had concluded the

hearings on September 29 last year and said the judgment would be pronounced on December 1. However, the ruling was later deferred. On Wednesday, Justice Patel rejected "the attempt to curtail Article 19(1)(a) buried in the submission that the fundamental right is to ensure that every citizen receives only 'true' and 'accurate' information - as determined by the government".

"It is not the business of the government to keep citizens from falling into error. It is the other way around. For it is very much (the) business, and should be the duty, of every citizen to prevent the government from falling into error. Governments do not select citizens. Citizens elect governments," he observed.

He said the government-controlled Press Information Bureau (PIB) "already has a significant social media presence" and there was "no need" for any FCU to be created. Stating that the right to freedom of speech was not "absolute", Justice Patel said it is always to be "under-regulated" while "restrictions on it - attempts at control and abridgement - must be over-regulated," and "not the other way round".

This is not a finding that there is a fundamental right to falsehood or fake news or deepfakes, he said, adding that it was quite the contrary. He said it is "unthinkable" that any one entity can unilaterally identify the content to be fake, false or misleading, and this "cannot be sole preserve of the government". The argument that the government is "best placed to know the truth" about its affairs is equally true of every citizen and every entity, he said.

He said there was "no justification as to why the business of the central government should

stand on a special footing distinct from other information".

"The suggestion that the central government most especially is in a particularly vulnerable position and cannot defend itself is hardly tenable. It has information. It has a reach. It can disseminate widely. For the one authority that can literally shut down the internet in a region, pull the plug entirely, to suggest this is hardly credible," he said.

Justice Patel noted that there are various "fertile grounds" for criticism of the government and this takes place on print as well as online/digital platforms. "After all, the fundamental rights are to protect the minority, not the other way around. The argument that a news outlet is not a 'citizen' and cannot complain is also without merit," he said.

In her contrasting judgment, Justice Gokhale held the impugned rule as neither ultra vires to the IT Act nor contrary to the Supreme Court judgment. "The impugned Rule is not violative of Article 14 based on the FCU consisting of government officials thereby making the government the final arbiter in own cause," she said.

Justice Gokhale held that "the rights of a user or any aggrieved person to approach the grievance redressal mechanism and the appellate authority is contemplated under the Rules and the competent court is the final arbiter...". Dismissing the pleas, she held: "Right of citizens to participate in the representative and participative democracy of the county is meaningless unless they have access to authentic information and are not misled by misinformation." She concluded that the measures adopted by the government were "consistent with the object of the law".

# 3 THE CITY



**DRAWING UP THE BUDGET:** Sagar Kambli, an artist from Gurukul School of Art, paints portraits of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Mumbai, ahead of the presentation of Interim Budget 2024 on Thursday. *Sankhadeep Banerjee*

## Express investigation report: Opp seeks probe into BMC disbursing funds to ruling MLAs

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

OPPOSITION LEADERS in Maharashtra slammed the state government and civic authorities on Wednesday, after The Indian Express published an investigation report that revealed how over the past year, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) disbursed funds amounting to Rs 500 crore only to MLAs from the ruling BJP and Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena alliance.

Demanding an inquiry, the opposition parties asked whether the government considers public funds as its exclusive property. "The government has insulted the democratically elected representatives and millions of Mumbaikars who elected them... This is vindictive politics due to which Mumbaikars of the said 15 assembly constituencies are deprived of development. We strongly condemn this, and the Shinde government will have to be answerable," said Mumbai Congress president and MLA Varsha Gaikwad.

Further questioning the authorities, she said, "Where exactly did this money go? All cases should be investigated fairly and action should be taken. Congress will take legal action and take to the streets along with Mumbaikars."



The Indian Express carried the report on January 31.

Alleging that it is a betrayal of Mumbaikars, Gaikwad said, "The formation of the Shinde-Fadnavis-Pawar government is through politics of extortion. There are attempts made daily to poach former corporators and opposition MLAs. However, since the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) MLAs are not responding, the government is trying to capture them through the ED on one side and the administrators and guardian ministers of the Municipal Corporation on the other side."

Government gives funds to MLAs for development works and not as any favour, said Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Atul Londhe, adding, "People's money must be given to the people. Not giving development funds to opposition MLAs is a form of depriving the people of that constituency from development." He said that the people of Maharashtra will give a befitting reply to the ruling

side in the coming elections.

Supriya Shrinete, national spokesperson of the Congress, posted on social media platform, X, "Over the past one year, Rs 500 crore has been distributed to MLAs from the ruling alliance. This is taxpayers' money and by not distributing funds uniformly among the elected representatives, you are not just discriminating the opposition parties, but also the citizens of Mumbai."

Priyanka Chaturvedi, Rajya Sabha MP and deputy leader from Shiv Sena (UBT) alleged the civic authorities of officiating corruption. In a social media post, Chaturvedi said, "No elected corporators to check on spending, to seek accountability... between two

guardian ministers and the BMC chief, money is being splurged to help unconstitutional government's MLAs, while totally disregarding the opposition MLAs. This is not just a shame but also open loot of BMC funds. This is officiating corruption by emptying BMC coffers to fund the greed of *panas kholke* (50-crore) gang."

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLA from Sharad Pawar faction, Jitendra Awhad, accused the authorities of doing discrimination and political favouritism.

"The current ruling administration is implying that if your constituency doesn't have an MLA from the ruling party, then the existing civic infrastructure will not see any improvement,"

Awhad said on X.

The Aam Aadmi Party termed the state government's act as one of the worst scams in municipal history. "Let's be clear, the Shinde Sena and the BJP have acted as if they own the BMC funds... This has robbed Mumbaikars of their rights and denied them of local development... it must be condemned in the strongest terms," said Ruben Mascarenhas, spokesperson and working president of Aam Aadmi Party, Mumbai.

The Express investigation revealed that all the 21 MLAs from the ruling party have received money from the BMC corpus within weeks, while the proposals of 11 out of the 15 opposition MLAs were yet to be cleared.

### BMC BUDGET TOMORROW

## Policies to finance weaker sections may be introduced

Announcements for new infra projects unlikely this year

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

THE BRIHANMUMBAI Municipal Corporation's (BMC) annual budget, which will be tabled on Friday, is slated to roll out a slew of policies towards providing financial assistance to the weaker and marginalised communities, owing to the fact that this is an election year.

According to sources in the civic body, BMC is slated to make blanket allocations for ongoing mega infrastructure projects, while announcements pertaining to any new projects are unlikely to be made this year.

For the second consecutive year and only the third time since the civic body's inception in 1889, the BMC's annual budget will be presented by the municipal commissioner and state-appointed administrator

Iqbal Singh Chahal. With no sitting corporators, whose terms ended in March 2022, Chahal is currently the sole authority in the civic body.

In the run up to the elections, sources in the municipal body have said that the budget will make an optimum allocation of funds for marginalised communities, weaker sections of the society and women self help groups.

Furthermore, sources added that the civic body is likely to make a blanket fund allocation in a bid to provide a boost to key ongoing projects in the city including the second phase of the Mumbai Coastal Road Project, sewage treatment projects and the ambitious Dahisar Bhayandar Link Road (DBLR).

Another key aspect, which is likely to find place in this year's budget, is further allocation for Mumbai's ambitious concretisa-

tion project of roads. The project had been announced in August 2022, after the Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis government came to power in July 2022 and announced that Mumbai's roads would be made cement concrete and pothole-free by 2024.

Sources, however, maintained, "It is likely that there will be no new project announcements in this budget. Keeping in mind that this is an election year, the budget may roll out policies towards providing financial assistance to the marginalised and the weaker sections of the society."

Last year, in 2023-2024, presented a budget of Rs 52,619.07 crore budget, which was a spike of 14.52 per cent more than the 2022-23 amount (Rs 45,949.21 crore). It was for the first time in the history of the BMC that its budget had crossed the Rs 50,000-crore mark.

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Application Process:  
**November - February**

Selection Process:  
**March - May**

Commencement of the Programme:  
**June**

### IMPORTANT DATES

Process	Date
Application opens	Tuesday, 21 November 2023
Application deadline	Tuesday, 13 February 2024
Research Aptitude Test (online)	Saturday, 23 March 2024
Interviews (online)	Monday, 1 April - Thursday, 25 April 2024
Result announcement	1st week of May 2024
Batch inauguration & commencement	Thursday, 6 June 2024

Application Deadline:  
**February 13, 2024**

Programme Starts:  
**June 6, 2024**

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# 4 MAHARASHTRA

## State govt transfers 58 IPS officers ahead of LS elections



Amitesh Kumar has been appointed Pune Police Commissioner. File

A week after the CBI filed a closure report in an FIR registered in which he was named one of the accused, DCP Parag Manere, who was in a non-executive posting, was transferred to

Thane police as DCP. Ahead of the model code of conduct, as per Election Commission guidelines, officers who have served in the same district for a long time and those who have offences registered against them have to be transferred out. Shirish Jain, who was the joint commissioner State Intelligence Department (SID), was promoted and appointed SID Commissioner. Pravin Padwal, the former joint commissioner (traffic) was posted as IG (training and special squads) in the DGP's office. Datta Karale, who was joint commissioner (law & order) Thane, was transferred as special IG (Nashik Range). M Rajkumar was appointed

as Solapur City Police Commissioner, while former commissioner Rajendra Mane was appointed as joint director of Maharashtra Police Training Academy. Pune (rural) SP Ankit Goyal was promoted and transferred to Gadchiroli region. Shahaji Umap, the Nashik (rural) SP was transferred to Mumbai as additional commissioner (Special branch). Umap will be replaced by Vikram Deshmane as SP Nashik (rural) who was Thane (rural) SP. Deshmane was replaced by DCP DS Swamy from Mumbai city as Thane (rural) SP. From Mumbai, DCP's MSV Reddy and Ajay Kumar Bansal were transferred as SP's of Jalgaon and Jalna respectively.

## 'Found nothing significant': EOW files closure report in MSCB case

Clean chit to Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, 70 others



The ED had also summoned Ajit Pawar in connection with the same case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, JANUARY 31  
THE ECONOMIC Offences Wing (EOW) filed a closure report again this month in the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) alleged fraud case, giving a clean chit again to Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and over 70 others. In October 2020, the agency had filed a closure report when the Maha Vikas Aghadi was in power but two years and a change in government later, in October 2022, the EOW said that it wanted to continue with its probe. On January 20, through its special public prosecutor Ajay Misar, the EOW told the court that

it had considered the evidence before it and the protest petitions filed by the complainant and others. However, nothing significant was found and hence a closure report was filed. The court will now decide on whether to accept the report or direct the agency to continue with the investigation and file a chargesheet. In the first report, the EOW had said that it found no irregularities and the case

was of a civil nature. A case was filed following directions by the Bombay High Court looking into the alleged irregularities in the sale of sugar cooperatives, including Jarandeshwar Sahakar Sakhar Karkhana, allegedly linked to Pawar's kin. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had filed a separate offence alleging money-laundering based on the EOW's case. It has so far filed two chargesheets, including against Sharad Pawar-led NCP faction MLA Prajakt Tanpure. In the absence of a predicate offence, like the EOW case, the ED cannot continue with its probe. Recently, the ED had also summoned Ajit Pawar in connection with the same case.

## Man booked for flying drone at celebration of Faruqui's Big Boss win

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

A 26-year-old man was booked for allegedly flying a drone during the celebration of Bigg Boss win of comedian Munawar Faruqui on January 29.

According to personnel of Dongri police station, the drone operator — Arbaaz Yusuf Khan, a resident of South Mumbai — had not sought prior permission from them before using it to capture videos and images of the celebration in the area. An officer said, "During the celebration in Dongri area, our team noticed that a drone was being operated to capture the images and videos. Later when we inquired with the operator, Khan revealed that he did not have any permission." Police added that the drone was then taken into the custody, following which it was seized after the FIR was filed. A police officer said, "We just served him a notice and allowed him to go."

## Suspected spy pigeon released after 8 months: Mumbai police

Mumbai: A pigeon, suspected to be used by Chinese for spying and kept in the custody of a veterinary hospital here after being caught eight months back, has been released, a police official said on Wednesday.

The Bai Sakarbai Dinshaw Petit Hospital for Animals in Parel on Monday sought the police's permission to release the bird following which it was freed on Tuesday, the official from the police station said. The pigeon was caught in May last year at Pir Pau Jetty in suburban Chembur by the RCF police. The bird had two rings — one of copper and another of aluminium — tied to its leg and messages written in a Chinese-like script, the police said. The RCF police then registered a case but after the inquiry was completed, the spying charge was dropped, he said. PTI

## Fire in 12-th floor flat in Andheri, no casualties

Mumbai: A fire broke out at a 12th-floor flat in a residential building in suburban Andheri on Wednesday night, officials said. Nobody is injured in the incident, as per the preliminary information.

"The blaze erupted in a flat located on the 12th floor of Pearl Residency near Andheri Sports Club at around 8 pm," a civic official said. At least four fire engines and other vehicles of the Fire Brigade reached the spot and launched efforts to douse the fire, he added. PTI



People stop by at posters put up by Shiv Sena (UBT) in Dombivli on Wednesday, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. Deepak Joshi

## A CALL TO VOTE

People stop by at posters put up by Shiv Sena (UBT) in Dombivli on Wednesday, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. Deepak Joshi

## Rs 32.13 cr collected in stamp duty, Abhay Yojana phase 1, 2 extended

SWEETLY ADIMULAM MUMBAI, JANUARY 31  
THE STATE government has collected Rs 32.13 crore till January 25 under the Maharashtra Stamp Duty Abhay Yojana (amnesty scheme), even as the deadline of Phase 1 and 2 of the scheme has been extended to February 29 and March 31, respectively. The previous deadlines of Phase 1 and Phase 2 were January 31 and February 1, respectively. As per the data available with the Department of Registration and Stamps, Government of Maharashtra, in 3,322 cases from a total 20,147 received till January 25, managed to collect stamp duty fees of Rs 24.48 crore, Rs 7.29 crore as penalty fees and Rs 35 lakh as registration fees. On December 7, the state government issued a notification

allowing stamp duty and penalty waiver under the Maharashtra Stamp Duty Abhay Yojana Scheme 2023. This scheme aims to prompt individuals to settle outstanding stamp duty dues, offering discounts on penalty fees related to delayed stamp duty payments. According to the notification, instruments executed between January 1, 1980, and December 31, 2000, fall under Phase 1 of the scheme, running from December 1, 2023, to January 31, 2024. During this period, a full waiver (100%) on both stamp duty and penalties will be granted for amounts ranging from Rs 1 to Rs 1 lakh. For amounts exceeding Rs 1 lakh, a 50 per cent rebate on stamp duty fees and a complete waiver on penalties will be provided. The second phase from February 1 to March 31, 2024, offers reduced benefits. For amount up to Rs 1 lakh, an 80 per cent reduction in stamp duty fees and penalties will be granted. Amounts surpassing Rs 1 lakh will receive a 40 per cent reduction in stamp duty fees and a 70 per cent reduction in penalties. Deputy secretary (stamps and registration) SS Bajaj said that despite the amnesty scheme, if defaulters fail to clear the stamp duty dues, property attachment process will be initiated. "A matter is pending in the court wherein we (state) will tell the court that despite giving concessions and discounts, the pending dues have not been paid. Moreover, for years, these dues have not been paid. If objections are raised by defaulters, we will urge the court to ask the parties to make the payment to the court until the matter is concluded," Bajaj explained.

## 3 held for assaulting 4, forcing them to chant 'Jai Shree Ram'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

THREE PERSONS were arrested early Wednesday for allegedly assaulting two men and outraging the modesty of a woman and a 15-year-old girl, forcing them to chant "Jai Shree Ram" at Byculla area in Mumbai.

A senior official from Aripada police station confirmed that a case has been registered under relevant sections of robbery, assault and outraging the modesty of a woman of the Indian Penal Code and Protection of Children under Sexual Offences Act. Police said that the incident took place around 1.30 am on Wednesday. The three accused identified as Anuj Maekar, Umesh Parab and Hritik Rathod were allegedly under the influence of alcohol, when they walked up to a tempo driver. "He was sleeping inside the tempo, when the three allegedly forced him to step outside the vehicle, assaulted him and stole his mobile phone," said an investigator. They even forced him to say "Jai Shree Ram", said an officer. Subsequently, the three accused went to a man, who was walking on the road and allegedly assaulted him. "As they could not find anything on him, they assaulted him and forced him to say Jai Shree Ram," said an officer. "On seeing that a man was being assaulted, two women, including a 15-year-old, stepped during which the three assaulted them as well," said an officer. The police control room was later informed following which the three accused were taken to the police station. "We then registered a case on the complaint of the tempo driver after which the three persons were arrested," said an officer.

## GUIDELINES AFTER ASER 2023 REPORT Surprise visits, random tests to check learning of students in govt schools

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS in Maharashtra will now have to be prepared for surprise visits from their local centre-heads and random tests of students to ascertain their levels of understanding, as per the expected learning outcome of respective classes. In case of poor performance, the teachers concerned will be sent for further training before a final report is submitted to the director of school education.

Taking serious cognisance of the poor performance highlighted by the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023 report, released recently, the state school education department has issued a new set of guidelines to strengthen the mechanism of supervision of the school education system. Effective supervision, according to the government, will ensure quality teaching and thereby improve learning levels of students. The ASER 2023 report, which focused on Nanded district as a marker for all of Maharashtra, showed poor levels of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) skills among

children of 14-18 age group. This raised serious concerns as children from this age-group are generally enrolled in Class 9 and above. Educationists pointed out how these children reached higher classes without having basic academic skills, which are expected at much younger age. An official from the department said, "Even as the ASER 2023 report highlighted Nanded district, the situation is expected to be similar across the state. Serious cognisance is taken of the concern and it is decided to strengthen the supervision system, which will keep teachers and schools on toes." Even as the decision is welcomed by teachers and schools, many have pointed out how the supervision system remains inactive due to lack of manpower. "Regular supervision will definitely help in improving the standards of teaching. But the government needs to realise that there are no people to run the process. The posts of centre-heads are still the same from 30 years ago which also include vacancies and the number of schools have increased manifold," said Mahendra Ganapule, spokesperson for the Maharashtra School Principals Association.

## 109 students of Thane ashram school fall ill

Thane: As many as 109 students of a private ashram school, including 63 girls, were rushed to a government hospital in Thane district when they showed symptoms of food poisoning after consuming the mid-day meal on Wednesday, an official said. The Sant Gadge Maharaj Primary and Secondary Ashram School (residential schools for tribal children), where the incident took place, is located at Bhatsai in Shahapur taluka on the outskirts of Mumbai. Shahpur tehsildar Komal Thakur told PTI that barring four students, all were discharged from the Sub-Division Hospital in Shahapur after treatment. Students were served food (pulaos) and a sweet dish (gulab jamun) for the mid-day meal, leading to 109 of them — 63 girls and 46 boys — experiencing vomiting and other symptoms of food poisoning, she said. They were immediately rushed to the hospital, she said. Senior officials visited the hospital and enquired about the condition of the students. PTI

## Cheque-bounce case: Former cricketer held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NAGPUR, JANUARY 31

CITY POLICE on Wednesday executed a non-bailable arrest warrant against former cricketer Prashant Vaidya in a cheque bouncing case. Vaidya was produced before a court which released him on a surety bond, a police official said. He had allegedly purchased steel from a local trader and issued a cheque which bounced, following which the trader demanded a fresh payment, said inspector Vitthalasingh Rajput of Bajaj Nagar police station. Vaidya allegedly refused to pay, so the trader moved the court which issued an NBW against him, the official said.



CASUAL CATCH-UP: Former RBI Governor Raguram Rajan meets Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray at the latter's residence, in Mumbai, Tuesday. In an Instagram post, Uddhav's son Aaditya Thackeray said it was a delight to host Rajan. PTI

# Two sets of rules for one community? Kunbi certificates decision throws up new questions before state govt

## Adopt Karpoori Thakur quota model in state, says Rathod

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

WITH THE Maharashtra government issuing a draft notification granting kunbi certificates to eligible Marathas, new questions now confront the state on the complex subject of reservation. The core issue is — can the state government have two sets of rules for the Maratha community's reservation and will it withstand legal and constitutional validity? Requesting anonymity, highly placed sources in the Maratha Kranti Morcha told *The Indian Express*, "We understand the state's compulsion to take decisions to end the protest, but things have become more complicated. There are no clear an-

swers. If the draft notification serves kunbis, what about those Marathas who have no records? Will non-kunbi Marathas get separate quota under the Socially and Educationally Backward Class Act or will they be included under OBC through separate category?" The OBC leader Haribhau Rathod said the state government should apply for Karpoori Thakur formula. The Centre recently awarded Thakur with the Bharat Ratna. He did pioneering work to provide reservation to OBCs by implementing a sub-categorisation formula. "In 1978, Karpoori Thakur introduced a 26 per cent reservation model in Bihar for backward classes in government jobs and education. The break up was — OBC 12 per cent; Most Backward Class 8 per cent; women 3 per cent and Economically Backward Class (for upper caste) 3 per cent," Rathod said. "Ex-CM Vasantrao Naik had also introduced reservation for denotified and nomadic tribes. Reservation within OBC category



Maratha activist Manoj Jarange Patil has threatened to go on an indefinite protest-cum-fast from February 10. File

based on sub-categorisation is the only solution," He added. Maratha activist Manoj Jarange Patil on Wednesday threatened to go on an indefinite protest-cum-fast from February 10. He has urged CM Eknath Shinde to convene a special session and make legislation for the reservation of Marathas. State BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule on

mandated he will take up the matter with higher authorities within the BJP and ensure no injustice to OBCs. A senior BJP minister said, "First of all, we will have to address the issue of division within Marathas. There are kunbi-Marathas, Maratha-kunbis, Maratha-Levas, Patidars, etc." Without tackling these division it will be difficult to resolve the reservation. VBA president Prakash Ambedkar said, "The divide between Marathas, kunbi-Marathas, Levas, Patidars, et al is a reality. The draft notification talks of kunbi certificates to Marathas. Without explaining the details, how will the government implement the notification?" The CM had earlier promised to hold a special session in February. Insiders indicated a draft notification was the first step to diffuse tension. "The government will have to adopt Karpoori Thakur model. It can be done easily. Just raise the OBC quota from 27 to 38 per cent. Broadly, OBC should be di-

vided into three groups. The first group will include denotified tribes (4 per cent); nomadic tribes (3 per cent); dhargar 4 (per cent) and vanjari (3 per cent). In group two, there should be Special Backward Class (2 per cent); bara balutedar (3 per cent); teli, Mali, agri, bhandari (4 per cent); Kachi, kushwaha, shaky, saini others (5 per cent). In group three category there should be kunbi, kunbi-Maratha, Maratha-kunbhi, Maratha-leva, Patidar and Rajput (10 per cent). The total reservation under OBC, including all three groups, will not exceed 38 per cent," Rathod said. "The reservation model will accommodate all Marathas. Moreover, OBCs existing quota of 27 per cent will not get diluted," he added. Senior NCP minister Chhagan Bhujbal said, "Marathas cannot be acceptable in OBC quota. They will reap maximum benefits. The real deprived segment within OBCs will be left out. Let government give them separate quota."

## Will challenge Mandal report if Maratha quota challenged, says Jarange

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE PUNE, JANUARY 31

MARATHA QUOTA activist Manoj Jarange Patil on Wednesday reiterated that he will challenge the Mandal Commission report if the reservation for the Maratha community is challenged by OBC leaders. "If OBC leaders challenge our reservation, then I will also appeal against the Mandal Commission report, which granted reservation to OBCs," the activist said during an interaction with journalists in the city on Wednesday. Without naming Maharashtra minister Chhagan Bhujbal, Jarange-Patil said, "He (Bhujbal) knows the Mandal Commission report can be challenged in court. But we don't want to create hurdles for the poor among the OBC community. He should understand this, otherwise we will have no option but to challenge the report."



Manoj Jarange Patil speaks at an event in Pune, Wednesday. PTI

Jarange-Patil said Bhujbal is speaking against the Marathas for personal gains. "By railing against Maratha reservation, he has succeeded in getting three cases withdrawn against him," he said. The activist said the state government has decided to make a reservation law for the Maratha community. "But some people in the government are speaking against us which has created doubts in our mind," he said.

75  
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अमृत महोत्सव



# INDIAN COAST GUARD

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48<sup>TH</sup> COAST GUARD RAISING DAY - 2024  
(01 FEBRUARY 2024)

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Independence Day - 2023 (15<sup>th</sup> August 23)

IG Manoj Vasant Baadkar, TM - President's Tatrakshak Medal (Distinguished Service)

Comdt (JG) Anurag Shukla, Sultan Singh, P/Nvk (P) - Tatrakshak Medal (Gallantry)

DIG Manoj Bhatia, DIG KR Deepak Kumar, Deobrat Kumar Mishra, P/Adh (RP) - Tatrakshak Medal (Meritorious Service)

Republic Day - 2024 (26<sup>th</sup> January 24)

Director General Rakesh Pal, PTM, TM - Ati Vishisht Seva Medal

IG Bhisham Sharma, TM - President's Tatrakshak Medal (Distinguished Service)

Comdt Sunil Dutt, Comdt (JG) Saurabh - Tatrakshak Medal (Gallantry)

DIG Anil Kumar Parvayil, DIG Jamal Taha, Dipak Roy, P/Adh (AR) - Tatrakshak Medal (Meritorious Service)

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**GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA**  
**PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**  
 Office of the Executive Engineer  
 Multistoreyed Bldgs Construction Division,  
 Administrative Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, R.C. Marg, Chembur, Mumbai-400 071.

E-mail : msbckurla.ce@mahapwd.gov.in Ph. : 022-25220277 Fax : 022-25224060  
 No. : MBCD/TC/298/2024 Date : 23.01.2024

**E-TENDER NOTICE No. 24 of 2023-2024**

ONLINE E-Tender in "B-1" Form total 5 Works for Estimated Cost Rs. 35.92 Cr. are invited by Executive Engineer, Multistoreyed Bldgs Construction Division, Chembur, Mumbai-400 071, from the competent bidders. Details regarding E-Tender can be seen on <http://mahatenders.gov.in>

E-Tender can be downloaded from Date 30.01.2024 at 10.30 hrs. to 13.02.2024 at 17.30 hrs. from above mentioned site. The Pre-Bid meeting for below works will be held on Date 05.02.2024 at 15.00 hrs. in the office of Chief Engineer, P.W. Region Mumbai, 25, Marzban Road, Fort, Mumbai-400 001. Duly filled E-Tender will be opened on Date 15.02.2024 at 15.00 hrs. (if possible) at office of the Superintending Engineer, Mumbai Construction Circle, Chembur, Mumbai-400 071.

All detail information is available on following web sites.  
 Visit Web Site for details :  
 1. <http://mahapwd.gov.in>  
 2. <http://mahatenders.gov.in>  
 3. Notice Board of Executive Engineer, Multistoreyed Building Construction Division, Chembur, Mumbai-400 071.

Sd/-  
 (K.R. Gupta)  
 Executive Engineer  
 Multistoreyed Building Construction Division,  
 Chembur, Mumbai-400 071.

DGIPR/2023-2024/749

**GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA**  
**PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**  
 Executive Engineer, Integrated Unit (P.W.) Division, Fort, Mumbai - 400 001.  
 Email :- [integratedmumbai.ce@mahapwd.com](mailto:integratedmumbai.ce@mahapwd.com)  
 Tel. No. 022-22016974 Fax No. 022016976  
 E-TENDER NOTICE No. 112 of 2023-24

Online E-Tenders in "B-1" Form for the following work are invited by Executive Engineer, Integrated Unit (P.W.) Division, 2nd Floor, Bandhkhambhavan, 25th Marzban Road, Fort, Mumbai-400 001 Telephone No. 22016974/22016976 from contractors registered in class of the public works department of Maharashtra.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimate Cost Rs.
1.	Structural Strengthening and Renovation of Apna Boys Hostel Building at J. J. Group of Hospitals, Mumbai.	10,61,54,125/-

(Total 01 Works included in this Notice)  
 Tender Available Date : Date 01.02.2024 at 10.30 hrs. to Date 15.02.2024 at 17.00 hrs.  
 Pre-Bid date : Date 08.02.2024 at 15.00 hrs. (Noon)  
 Office of the Chief Engineer,  
 Mumbai (P.W.) Region, 4th floor,  
 Bandhkhambhavan, 25th Marzban Road,  
 Fort, Mumbai - 400 001

Opening Date (if possible) : Date 20.02.2024 at 15.05 hrs.  
 All detail information is available on following websites.  
 Visit web site for Details : 1. <http://mahapwd.com> 2. <http://mahatenders.gov.in>

No. E.E./I/TC 499  
 Office of the Executive Engineer,  
 Integrated Unit (P.W.) Division,  
 Fort, Mumbai - 400 001.  
 Date : 25.01.2024  
 DGIPR/2023-24/7495

Sd/-  
 Executive Engineer,  
 Integrated Unit (P.W.) Division,  
 Fort, Mumbai - 400 001.

**CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
**NOTICE OF E-AUCTION**

Mumbai Division, Central Railway has called for e-auction for leasing of below given assets on [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) through e-auction leasing module. The interested bidders are required to get registered in e-auction leasing module and all necessary documents to be uploaded prior to the e-auction. For further details the interested bidders are requested to visit the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) to know the details of E-Auction mentioned below:

S. N.	Category	Sub-Category	Auction Start
1.	Advertising	On station premises(Non-digital)	01/02/2024
		On station premises(Digital)	05/02/2024
2.	Parcel	SLR	05/02/2024, 08/02/2024, 13/02/2024 & 16/02/2024
		SLR & VP	15/02/2024
3.	Parking	Mixed	07/02/2024 & 14/02/2024

Further Addendum /corrigendum, withdrawal of lot/catalogue, change in date, time extension, clarification etc. if any, in connection with the subject auctions, will only be uploaded in the website. Bidders should regularly visit the website to keep themselves updated. DRM/CJCSMT

DOWNLOAD UTS APP FOR TICKETS [867]

**LIFE** **THDC INDIA LIMITED**  
 (अपवृत्ती - ए. पि. नि. रत्न, पश्चिम)  
 (Schedule-A, Mini Ratna, PSU)

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR ASSOCIATING IN COMMISSIONING & COMPREHENSIVE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT OF COAL BASED SUPERCRITICAL KHURJA THERMAL POWER PROJECT (2x660MW) AT VILLAGE & POST DASHERA KHERLI, TEHSIL KHURJA, DIST BULANDSHAHR, UTTAR PRADESH-203131, INDIA (RFP Document no.: THDCIL/NCR/CC-465R)**

GeM Bid No: GEM/2024/B/4509284 dated 19.01.2024

**Corrigendum**

It is hereby informed to all concerned that the GeM Bid No. GEM/2024/B/4485351 dated 15.01.2024 for the above work stand cancelled and fresh RFP for above mentioned work GeM Bid No. GEM/2024/B/4509284 dated 19.01.2024 has been re-invited on GeM portal. For detailed information please visit website <https://www.gem.gov.in> or [www.thdc.co.in](http://www.thdc.co.in)

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**Bank of Baroda**  
 Hamesha Aapke Liye

**e-Auction cum Sale Notice**

Bank of Baroda invites offer for E auction/cum-sale of Bank's owned vehicles on "As-is-where-is & Whatever-it-is basis"

Details are available under 'e- Auction section' on Bank's Website : [www.bankofbaroda.in](http://www.bankofbaroda.in)

Addendum, if any shall be issued on Bank's website under 'e-Auction section'. Bidders are advised to check the website before submission of EMD / Commencement of auction.

Last date of EMD payment / KYC submission : 23/02/2024 before 04.00 P.M.

Date and Time of Auction : 01/03/2024 Between 12.00 Noon to 02.00 P.M.

Place: Mumbai Asst. General Manager (COA, Baroda Corporate Centre)

Date: 01.02.2024

**KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
 (A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)  
 # 49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road Bengaluru - 560 001. Phone No. 080-22265383 website : [www.kiadb.in](http://www.kiadb.in)

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-46/47/587/2023-24 Date:31.01.2024

**SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
 (Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)

Item rate Tenders under two cover system are invited as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Agencies, Individual Firms, Company, Public Sector Undertakings having registration as mentioned below & have got adequate financial resources, suitable construction equipments, technical man power & past experience for the following works as per the schedule given below:

**Name of the work: EP-46 (1)** Formation of Industrial Layout at Sector-1 in Adinarayanahosahalli, Phase-2 Industrial Area, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District. (2) Formation of Industrial Layout at Sector-2 in Adinarayanahosahalli, Phase-2 Industrial Area, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District.

**EP-47: Implementation of 45 MLD External Water Supply Scheme to proposed Industrial Node in Dharwad Taluk & District on Total Turnkey Basis.**

For EP-46: Last date for submission of bids is: **19.02.2024 upto 04:30 pm**  
 For EP-47: Last date for submission of bids is: **15.02.2024 upto 04:30 pm**

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/-  
 Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/3340/Zen/2023-24

**कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय**  
**ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, कार्य प्रमंडल, सिमडेगा**

**अति अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना**

ई-निविदा सूचना संख्या - 12/2023-24/RWD/SIMDEGA दिनांक - 30-01-2024

1. कार्य की विस्तृत विवरणी : मुख्यांजी ग्राम सड़क सुदृढीकरण योजना अन्तर्गत (4516)

क्र. सं.	आई-टी/टी/के/एन संख्या / पकेज संख्या	कार्य का नाम	प्राकृतिक राशि (लाख में)	अपघन की राशि	परिमाण विवरण का मूल्य	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि
1.	RWD/SIMDEGA/12-STPKG-02/2023-24	1. आर0ई0ओ0 पथ से कटावक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं- 8.500 कि०मी०)	1200.678	24,02,000	(बाह्य करीब सड़क से हवाय आउं सौं रु०)	15 माह
		2. L029 खुटीटोला से मधुवन पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं- 2.240 कि०मी०)				
		3. दुदकाणर से सनरोड पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं- 2.900 कि०मी०)				
		4. दुदकाणर से रिंगरी पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं- 0.820 कि०मी०)				
		5. सिकरीयाटाड़ से बोगोटोली तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं- 2.080 कि०मी०)				
		6. वेरीटोली से नावाटोली पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं- 1.200 कि०मी०)				

2. वेबसाइट में निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि - 07.02.2024  
 3. ई-निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय - 15.02.2024 अपराह्न 5:00 बजे तक।  
 4. ई-निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय - 17.02.2024 पूर्वाह्न 11:30 बजे।  
 5. ई-निविदा आमंत्रित करने वाले पदाधिकारी का पदनाम एवं पता - कार्यपालक अभियंता, ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, कार्य प्रमंडल, सिमडेगा।  
 6. ई-निविदा प्रकोष्ठ का दूरभाष सं० - 06525.299956 एवं मोबाईल नम्बर 9973512046  
 7. निविदा सूक्त एवं अपघन की राशि विभागीय पत्रांक 3130 अनु० दि० 09.10.2023 के निर्देशानुसार केवल Online Mode द्वारा स्वीकार्य होगी।  
 8. निविदा सूक्त एवं अपघन की राशि का ई-भुगतान जिस खाता से किया जायेगा, उसी खाते में अपघन की राशि वापस होगी। अगर खाता को बंद कर दिया जाता है तो उसकी सारी जमाबंदी निविदादाता की होगी।

विस्तृत जानकारी के लिये वेबसाइट [www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in](http://www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in) एवं कार्यालय की सूचना पत्र पर देखा जा सकता है।  
 कार्यपालक अभियंता  
 ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, कार्य प्रमंडल, सिमडेगा

PR 317442 Simdega (23-24)\_D

**The Indian EXPRESS**  
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**POULTRY**

**VENCOBB** Ex-Farm Yesterday's Price In Pune Rs. 80/-, Suggested Retail Price Is Rs. 98/-/  
 0070860444-1

**FRESH** Chicken Trading Big Birds 88/- kg., Small Birds 100/- kg. Turbhe Naka, Navi Mumbai. Mobile: 9769468897.  
 0070878216-1

**NECC** Mumbai Zone suggestive farm-gate egg price for today (01/02/2024) is Rs. 585/- per 100 eggs. (for the information of Trade & industry).  
 0070883345-1

**ZORABIAN** Today's Ex-Farm Live Broiler Rate Rs. 76/- Retail Market Rate Rs. 108/- Mobile : 8879500887 / 9372663242 Office : 022-26604937/ 38/ 39.  
 00708668975-1

**AMIR** Broiler, Small: Rs. 118/-, Big: Rs. 110/- Contact: Phone: +91-8828895000 / 8080432388 / 022-25251901 / 022-23860517  
 0070884942-1

**S.K. Patel** Small: 116/-, Big: 106/-, 8082040343/ 24460095/ 24459098. To subscribe to paper rate & purchase rate. 9320460095/ 9930193010.  
 0070880994-1

**PROPERTY**  
**SOCIETY NOTICE**

**TENDER NOTICE**  
 Secretary/Chairman of L & T EMERALD ISLE TOWER 2-5 CHS Limited, Saki Vihar Road, Near L & T Gate No. 05, Powai, Mumbai, Maharashtra 400072.  
 Invite proposal for approx 400KW Solar Roof Top system for our Society. Interested Solar EPC company may contact Society manager for Further Details on Email id: emeraldit25@gmail.com Mobile No.: +91 9082599714 Tender Closing Date 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024, 18:00 Hr.  
 0070886138-1-1

**Kalifornia 30 FARMS Notice**  
 Embark on a heartfelt journey with Kalifornia30 Farms (Sindhudurg, Maharashtra) as we launch our Pet Adoption Drive! Within the embrace of our 5-acre haven, we extend an open invitation to urban pets needing a loving home. If circumstances limit your ability to care for your beloved companion, consider gifting them a fresh start with us. Our mission goes beyond reducing abandonment; it's about creating a natural sanctuary for these animals to thrive. This initiative is driven purely by altruism, with no monetary transactions involved. Together, let's extend a lifeline to these pets, granting them a second chance at the happiness they deserve. Join us in positively impacting their lives and fostering a community built on compassion. **Note:** Cats, Dogs and Rats are excluded from this adoption drive. Interested pet owners may write to us on [kalifornia30farms@gmail.com](mailto:kalifornia30farms@gmail.com). You can also meet us at the 27th Plant and Flower Exhibition held by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai. Date: 2nd Feb 2024 to 4th Feb 2024 Place: Veermata Jeejabai Bhosle Udyan, Byculla (east), Mumbai. Timing: 10 am to 8 pm Date: 30.01.2024  
 0070886159-1

**OTHERS**

**JOB VACANCY** only for ladies as Marketing Executive (Indoor) Mobile no. 8722200200/ 7083200200 Qualification : Any Graduate/ Post Graduate, language proficiency written and spoken English, Hindi, Marathi and have experience in marketing and selling product is preferable & Computer knowledge. Address: Hindustan Hightech Agro Pvt Ltd, Office No C- 5063, Bima Complex, Kalamboli, Navi Mumbai Email : hindustanhightechagroptltd@gmail.com  
 0070886159-1

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**DWARKA** Old Age Home We care Any kind of illness Patient for Monthly, 8,000/- & 1,50,000/- Life Time 7039024175/ 8452851926.  
 0070885339-1

**RECRUITMENT**  
**SITUATION VACANT**  
**ACADEMIC**

**BHARAT** Education Society's (2723015C287) Sant Gadge Maharaj College of Commerce and Economics (Aided) Applications are invited for Junior College Shikshan Sevak (Std 11th & 12th Commerce) through Pavitra Portal from Eligible candidates from OBC & EWS category for the subject of Economics & OCM. For Detailed advertisement please visit Government of Maharashtra website <https://taic2022.mahatetherrecruitment.org.in> or college website [www.sgmcollege.in](http://www.sgmcollege.in)  
 0070885493-2

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

1. Sealed offers are invited from the reputed developers having adequate expertise, resources and experience in the execution of the redevelopment of old existing building in the Island City of Mumbai owned by the Central View Co-operative Housing Society Limited ("Society").  
 a) Nature of Proposal: Offer for redevelopment of land with building belonging to the Society.  
 b) Details of Property: Land measuring 811.87 sq. mts. bearing C. S. No. 1642 of Byculla Division as per PR card plus additional Service Passage measuring 37.16 sq. mts., thus aggregating to 854.05 sq. mts., situated at 29, Meghraj Sethi Marg, (Souter Street) Near Maratha Mandir, Mumbai Central, Mumbai 400006. There are 18 members occupying their respective 18 flats and one self contained residential room on terrace on ownership basis having collective carpet area of 15,088 sq. ft. based on society records. The Land is leasehold property forming part of Estate Department of MCGM.  
 c) Cost of Offer document: Rs.25,000/- (Rupees Twenty Five Thousand only) per set by Pay Order / Demand Draft payable at Mumbai in favour of Central View Co-operative Housing Society Limited.  
 2. Offer documents will be available at the office of the Advocates of the Society Office at M/s. Apex Law Partners, 2nd Floor, Apex Chambers, 75 Janmabhoomi Marg, Mumbai 400001 between 10.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. from 1st February 2024 to 7th February 2024 (inclusive of both the days except Sunday).  
 3. Inspection of the property will be offered to tender purchasers by individual appointments only.  
 4. Sealed offers should be submitted to the office of M/s. Apex Law Partners latest by 1.00 p.m. on 13th February 2024. No offer will be accepted after 1.00 p.m. on 13th February 2024.  
 For Central View Co-operative Housing Society Limited Sd/- (Hon. Secretary) Dated : 31st January, 2024 Place : Mumbai  
 0070883096-1-1

**PERSONAL**  
**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Shubhangi Laxman Bugade, wife of Ex - Hav. Bugde Laxman Shankar, S.No. 15320208P R/o. A/703, Anandi Heritage, Pisavali, Shree Malang Road, Kalyan (E), Dist. Thane - 421306 (Maharashtra), have changed my name from Shubhangi Bugade to Shubhangi Laxman Bugade & my Son's name from Soham to Soham Laxman Bugade vide Affidavit.  
 0070886084-1

I have Changed My Name From Samidha Sameer Gore To Pranita Sameer Gore As Per Maharashtra Gazette No (M-23255226).  
 0070886179-1

I have changed my name from KESHAVA PRASAD to KESHAV PRASAD JANARDAN MISHRA as per Maharashtra Government Gazette No. M-23287079, Dated: 18/01/2024.  
 0070888051-1

I, Rajaram Dhondu Chavan, Rank - EX-Sep, S.No. 2749729, R/o 128, Ambadi Vajreshwari Road, Mahalunge, Vajreshwari, Dist. Thane - 401204, have changed my Name from Rajaram Chavan to Rajaram Dhondu Chavan vide Affidavit.  
 0070886082-1

I, Rajeshree Pramod Bhosle, wife of Ex - Nk. Bhosale Pramod Sakharam, S.No. 2774351H R/o. 304, Shri G Apt. Gangaram Tokij, Takka, Chahal Residency, Panvel, Raigarh - 410206 (Maharashtra), have changed my name from Rajeshree to Rajeshree Pramod Bhosle & Date of Birth from 29 yrs to 20/01/1969 vide Affidavit.  
 0070886085-1

I, Shirsat Samadhan Chhabulal, Ex - Nk, No. 14442822H R/o. B-2/503, Royce Paradise, Gandhare, K.M. Agarwal College, Kalyan (W), Dist. Thane - 421301 (Maharashtra), have changed my name from Snehal to Snehal Samadhan Shirsat vide Affidavit.  
 0070889083-1

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 While care is taken prior to acceptance of advertising copy, it is not possible to verify the contents. The advertiser is responsible for any loss of or damage incurred as a result of his advertisement with newspapers, associations or individuals advertising in the newspapers or Publications. We therefore recommend that readers make necessary inquiries before sending any notices or articles and any advertisement to the publishers or otherwise acting on an advertisement in any manner whatsoever.

**PERSONAL**  
**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Shubhangi Laxman Bugade, wife of Ex - Hav. Bugde Laxman Shankar, S.No. 15320208P R/o. A/703, Anandi Heritage, Pisavali, Shree Malang Road, Kalyan (E), Dist. Thane - 421306 (Maharashtra), have changed my name from Shubhangi Bugade to Shubhangi Laxman Bugade & my Son's name from Soham to Soham Laxman Bugade vide Affidavit.  
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**PERSONAL**  
**CHANGE OF NAME**

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 0070886085-1

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 0070883731-2

**GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA**  
**PUBLIC WORKS DIVISION, NASHIK**  
**E-Tender Notice No. 75 for 2023-24 (Online)**

ONLINE E-Tenders in "B-2" Form (Item Rates) for the following works invited by Executive Engineer, P.W. Division, Nashik Phone No. (0253/2583761-64, 2575324) for and on behalf of Governor of Maharashtra State From Capable of P.W.Deptt Registered/ Unregistered Contractor or International Contractor whose Sub company / branch in India and also complete terms and conditions mentioned in tender document.

Tender document download on our web site <https://mahatenders.gov.in>. Right of rejection of E-tender/ cancellation of E-tender reserved by The Executive Engineer, P.W. Division, Nashik. \*Conditional Tender will not be accepted.

**Note :- Above mentioned E-Tender Notice including Total 1 (One) (Costing below from Rs. 2500.00 Lacks) Work And details of mentioned E-Tender Notice available on below web site.**

1. [www.mahapwd.gov.in](http://www.mahapwd.gov.in)  
 2. <https://mahatenders.gov.in>

Tender Document Sale Start and End Date Time	23.01.2024 From 11.05	to	06.02.2024 Up to 17.00
* Blank E-Tender form Fees (Non refundable) and EMD amount will be accepted Online only.			
* Post Qualification criteria condition included in tender document.			
* All eligible/Interested Contractors are required to be enrolled on portal <a href="https://mahatenders.gov.in">https://mahatenders.gov.in</a> before downloading tender documents and participate in e-tendering.			
* The information of E-Payment Gateway available on E-Tendering web site <a href="https://mahatenders.gov.in">https://mahatenders.gov.in</a> .			

Please Note this to all Registered / Unregistered Contractors.

Sd/-  
 Executive Engineer  
 Public Works Division, Nashik

DGIPR/2023-24/7404

**झारखण्ड सरकार**  
**ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय,**  
 तृतीय तल्ला, नया समारहणालय भवन, परपवाटांड, गिरिडीह, झारखण्ड - 815301

**ई-अल्पकालीन पुनर्निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना**

ई-निविदा सं० - 15/R2/2023-24/RWD/EE/GIRIDIH दिनांक :- 29.01.2024 ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, कार्य प्रमंडल, गिरिडीह द्वारा निम्नविवरण के अनुसार e-procurement पद्धति से निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

1. कार्य का नाम :-

क्र. सं.	आई-टी/टी/के/एन संख्या / पकेज संख्या	कार्य का नाम	प्राकृतिक राशि (रुपया में)	अंश में	अक्षर में	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि	टेंडर कोड संख्या
1.	RWD/GIRIDIH /STPKG/13/20-23-24	(i) L070-L026 से पुनी पतरीया तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-3.150 कि०मी०)	16,36,57,300.00				
		(ii) L072-T08 से पादुडीह टोला तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-2.900 कि०मी०)					
		(iii) L061-T03 से गिरिधरचक तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-2.400 कि०मी०)					
		(iv) L056-L053 से दुमरवाड़ा तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-0.830 कि०मी०)					
		(v) दुमरी मुख्य पथ से महेशलुम्बी तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-3.000 कि०मी०)					
		(vi) टुन्डी रोड से सनरोड रोड तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-2.500 कि०मी०)					
		(vii) टडसा से सुखड़ाव माया हिलगुर्ब तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-4.400 कि०मी०)					
		(viii) मरुखा पुराना पंचायत भवन से मोहलीटाड माया बली तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-2.680 कि०मी०)					
		(ix) बुढा आहार से राजपुर मुख्य पथ माया सिरडीह तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-3.200 कि०मी०)					
		(x) मादी श्रीरामपुर मेन रोड से टोला सिरडीहा माया महुआटांड तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-2.750 कि०मी०)					
		(xi) धरारी मेन रोड से उसरी नदी तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-1.200 कि०मी०)					
(xii) महलीह उलुह से बरार नदी शिव शंकर भंडिर माया महलीह तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-2.000 कि०मी०)							
(xiii) ग्राम पंचायत मरुखा पथ से सुदुडी बगजोवर नदी पुल माया सुकेया तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-3.175 कि०मी०)							
(i) गौमी मोड खुखरा से गणेशपुर तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-9.800 कि०मी०)	15,40,21,700.00					09 माह	तृतीय
(ii) किलगा से बरदाही तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-2.750 कि०मी०)							
(iii) करदो से घटीटांड तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-3.200 कि०मी०)							
(iv) चिरकी पीपलकोशी रोड घटीटांड तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-3.000 कि०मी०)							
(v) वालगंज पपीपलकोशी से नारायणपुर मोड माया करणारडीह बजरंगली तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-2.000 कि०मी०)							
(vi) पीपलकोशी रोड से म्पुपुर मेन रोड माया मायाडीह तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-2.000 कि०मी०)							
(vii) मानिकबाद से बजोली पंचायत भवन माया महुआटांड तक पथ का सुदृढीकरण कार्य। (लं-6.100 कि०मी०)							

2. वेबसाइट में निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि:- 02.02.2024  
 3. ई-निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय:- 10.02.2024 अपराह्न 5.00 बजे तक।  
 4. निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय:- 12.02.2024 अपराह्न 3.30 बजे।  
 5. निविदा आमंत्रित करने वाले पदाधिकारी का पदनाम एवं पता:- कार्यपालक अभियंता, ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, कार्य प्रमंडल, गिरिडीह, तृतीय तल्ला, नया समारहणालय भवन, परपवाटांड, गिरिडीह, झारखण्ड - 815301  
 6. ई-निविदा प्रकोष्ठ का दूरभाष सं० - 06532-225381

विस्तृत जानकारी के लिए वेबसाइट [www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in](http://www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in) में देखा जा सकता है।

कार्यपालक अभियंता,  
 ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग,  
 कार्य प्रमंडल, गिरिडीह।

PR 317480 (REO) 23-24 (D)

**CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
**CORRIGENDUM NO. 1**

CWM's Office, Carriage Workshop Matunga, Mumbai- 400019 Tender No. EMU/WKS/POH-E/Duct100/04/07-23. Name of work: Replacement of corroded MS air ducts with Stainless Steel Air ducts of Traction Motors at HT end of Siemens EMU Motor coaches. Qty: 100 nos. Completion Period: 12 months Corrigendum No. 1, dated: 30.01.2024 has been uploaded on website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) against E-Tender Notice No. EMU/WKS/POH-E/Duct 100/04/07-23. [869]

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**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**Open Tender Notice**  
 Batch no. 04/2024

E-Tender notice for supply of materials "Participation in through" Web portal of IREPS- [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). Offers are invited for supply of the following material. The closing time for the tender is at 14.00 Hrs. (1) Tender no.: 37235403A, Short description of item: KIT FOR BRAKE CALIPER OF FTRTL PART NO. FT 005141-K75 FOR LHB COACHES as per Annexure-A. Quantity: 80 Set. Publishing date & time: 2

# Given electric shocks, forced to admit Opp links: Accused in Parliament breach case

**NIRBHAY THAKUR**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

FIVE ACCUSED in the Parliament security breach case moved an application in a Delhi court Wednesday, alleging that they were given "electric shocks", "tortured", and made to confess to association with opposition parties.

The application, moved by Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Lalit Jha, Amol Shinde and Mahesh Kumawat, also alleged that each of the accused was forced to sign about 70 blank pages by the police.

"Accused persons were tortured/given electric shocks to sign and confess the commission of crime under UAPA and their association with national political parties... two accused persons were forced to write on the paper about their association with the political party/leader of the opposition political party," their application states.

Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur listed the matter for February 17 after the Delhi

Police Special Cell sought time to reply to the application.

The Delhi Police Special Cell, during the court hearing, also sought extension of the judicial custody of the accused for a month, stating that they wanted to prevent them from committing any further offence. The police also cited evidence tampering fears.

ASJ Kaur extended the judicial custody of the accused till March 1 following the Special Cell's submissions. The five accused had first been sent to police custody in December. During an earlier hearing, another accused, Neelam Azad, had told the court that a woman officer had forcibly obtained her signature on 52 blank pages.

Lawyer Amit Shukla, who is representing the five accused, opposed the extension of judicial custody. Kumawat had allegedly contacted Jha, who police claim is the "mastermind", and the others via a Facebook group called Bhagat Singh Fan Page. Jha is accused of destroying evidence of the conspiracy in the case.

# Centre plans to introduce Bill to prevent unfair means in public examinations

Proposes 3-5 years of imprisonment; for cases of organised crimes, jail term will be 5-10 years

**HARIKISHAN SHARMA**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE CENTRE plans to introduce the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, during the ongoing session of Parliament. The Bill is aimed at curbing cases related to paper leaks and organised cheating in public examinations, including the UPSC, SSC, and the Railways; and entrance examinations such as NEET, JEE, and CUET.

According to sources, the Union Cabinet has approved the draft of the Bill, and it is likely to be tabled in Parliament on Friday or on Monday.

The Bill, piloted by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, will cover all recruitment and entrance exams such as Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railways, and banking recruitment exams, Common University Entrance Test (CUET), National Eligibility and Entrance Test

(NEET), and Joint Entrance Examination (JEE). All the computer-based examinations conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) will come under the purview of the Bill, it is learnt.

The Bill proposes minimum three to five years of imprisonment, however, for cases of organised crimes, the Bill proposes imprisonment of five-10 years. For organised crimes, the Bill also proposes a minimum fine of Rs 1 crore. For service provider firms in examinations, a fine of up to Rs 1 crore, and recovery of proportionate cost of examination have been proposed as punishment. The firm will also be barred from conduct of public examination for four years.

For organised crime committed by any person, group of persons, including persons associated with service provider or examination authority, the Bill provides imprisonment of five-10 years, and a fine not less than Rs 1 crore. For institutions involved in organised crimes, the Bill provides for fine not less than Rs 1 crore, attachment and forfeiture of property, and recovery of proportion-

ate cost of examination.

The Bill, however, provides protection to the candidates. "A candidate, as defined in the Bill, shall not be liable for action within the purview of the Bill and shall continue to be covered under the extant administrative provisions of the public examination authority concerned," said a source.

Addressing the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament, President Droupadi Murmu said, "My government is aware of the concerns of youth regarding irregularities in examinations. Therefore, it has been decided to enact a new law to deal sternly with such malpractices."

According to the sources, the Bill also provides for setting up a high-level National Technical Committee on Public Examinations, which shall look into developing protocol for insulating digital platforms, devising ways and means for developing fool-proof IT security system, ensuring comprehensive electronic surveillance of the examination centres and formulating national standards and service levels for both, IT and physical in-

frastructure, to be deployed for conduct of such examinations.

The source said that the government has introduced several reforms to enhance transparency in examinations for recruitment as well as admission to higher education institutions over the years and the proposed legislation in that direction.

The source said that the government has done away with the requirement of attestation of documents by introducing self-attestation; shortening examination cycle (from 18-22 months to 6-10 months); doing away with interviews for recruitment to Group 'C' and 'D'; introduction of computer-based tests; and issuance of appointment letters through digital means under "Rojgar Mela".

Speaking about requirement of law to prevent unfair practices in the public examinations, the source said that in the recent past, many states have had to cancel or were unable to declare results of their public examinations because of adverse impact of unfair practices and means adopted by anti-social and criminal elements.

"These unfair practices if not effectively prevented and deterred, will continue to jeopardise the future and careers of millions of aspiring youths of this country. In many instances, it has been observed that organised groups and mafia elements are involved. They deploy solver gangs, impersonation methods, and indulge in paper leaks. The Bill primarily aims to deter such kind of nefarious elements," the source said.

The source said at present there is no specific substantive law at the national level to deal with unfair means adopted or offences committed by persons, organised groups, or any other agency/organisation that adversely impacts the conduct of Public Examinations by Central Government and its agencies. This is the reason that the Centre has proposed this law.

The proposed Bill is aimed at effectively and legally deterring persons, organised groups or institutions that indulge in various unfair means and adversely impact the public examination systems for monetary or wrongful gains, the source said.

# 6 held for trying to extort money from realtor, threatening 'ED action'

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

SIX PERSONS have been arrested here for trying to extort Rs 164 crore from a real estate developer and threatening to initiate Enforcement Directorate (ED) probe against him or even kill him if he did not cough up the money, police said Wednesday.

The main accused in the case is also a builder, said a Mumbai crime branch official.

As per the complainant, he and the accused builder were jointly redeveloping an old housing society building in Bandra area. But as the accused's work was not satisfactory, the society gave development rights for the entire premises to the complainant. Earlier this month, the complainant learnt that the accused was going to file a complaint against him with the ED.

To sort out the matter, he met his former partner at a cafe, where the accused allegedly demanded Rs 164 crore and threatened to set the ED in action against the complainant and even have him killed, the FIR said.

# Second driest Jan in Northwest India since 1901: IMD

**ANJALI MARAR**  
BENGALURU, JANUARY 31

NORTHWESTERN REGIONS of India experienced the second driest January since 1901, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. In January, the rainfall deficit was 91 per cent. During December and January, the region (Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and the National Capital Territory) received only 7.8 mm rainfall.

The complete absence of snowfall, particularly over the higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and neighbouring hilly terrains, has been a matter of great concern. It was only on Wednesday that a fresh western disturbance system brought the season's first snow over some areas in the extreme northern regions like Ladakh, Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. The December rainfall recorded over northwest India was 6.6 mm against the normal of 18.9mm (-65 per cent) and



People walk with umbrellas during a snowfall in Manali, Wednesday. PTI

January reported 1.2 mm against normal of 32.5 mm rainfall (till January 30, -96 per cent).

The main source for precipitation during winter over northern India are the western disturbances. But this season, despite five such disturbance streams prevailing, their position and intensity remained unfavourable for the country, the IMD said.

"The western disturbances

crossed much to the north of India and they were largely feeble. That is why, the precipitation remained significantly below normal," said Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, director general, IMD.

Originating in the Mediterranean Sea, western disturbances are eastward-moving jet streams carrying moisture in their upper layers. As they reach the Indian sub-continent, they

encounter the Himalayas and the moisture transpires into precipitation over northwestern regions of India during winter months.

During their passage, western disturbances bring snowfall over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and rainfall over the plains of Delhi, Rajasthan and UP. After these streams move away from India,

the associated cold winds penetrate into central and north peninsular India regions, thus lowering the temperatures.

New Delhi, too, experienced a dry January and it was the driest January since 2016, the IMD said.

Since 2009, Delhi experienced dry January only in 2016 and 2024, the IMD data revealed. This winter, the Met department recorded rainfall traces (insignificant to measure) only on January 24 (Data till January 30).

The mean rainfall over Delhi in January is 19.2mm (over 1.7 mean days) and the same in December is 8 mm (over 0.6 mean days) for the period 1991-2020.

The IMD categorises January and February as winter months over India. While most of the country experiences a dry winter, northwest India, in particular, experiences intermittent snow or rainfall starting mid-December - both crucial for the year's water replenishment along the hilly terrains of the Himalayas and the dependent ecosystem.

**(ANJALI MARAR WORKS WITH THE RAMAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE, BENGALURU)**

# Karnataka gave me an award but Maharashtra jailed me: Teltumbde

**SANATH PRASAD**  
BENGALURU, JANUARY 31

CIVIL RIGHTS activist and scholar Anand Teltumbde was conferred the Basava Rashtriya Puraskara by Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in Bengaluru Wednesday for his work on delivering social justice and equality through his speeches and writings.

After receiving the award, Teltumbde thanked Siddaramaiah and the Karnataka government for the award and said, "A Kannadiga friend yesterday was telling me that our state will be the first to honour me with an award before my state does. I said my state (Maharashtra) has done the greatest honour by putting me in jail."

"This is not my personal award. It is actually an honour for all the faceless and countless activists who have been struggling for making this world better for people to live,"



Anand Teltumbde (second from left) with other awardees. ENS

said Teltumbde, an accused in the Bhima Koregaon case, who was granted permission by a NIA in Maharashtra to visit Bengaluru for two days to receive the award.

Teltumbde called Basavanna's vachanas "progressive" and said that he had

rejected all forms of social discrimination.

"I find that Basavanna carries the lineage of Lokayata, Buddha and down to Marx. He rejected all sorts of rituals and social discrimination that existed then... he valorised compassion," he said.

# Court sets aside Visva-Bharati's eviction notice to Amartya Sen: 'not according to law'

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, JANUARY 31

SETTING ASIDE an eviction notice issued by the Visva-Bharati against Nobel laureate Amartya Sen for allegedly occupying 13 decimals of the 1.38 acre of leased land on the university's Santiniketan campus, a Birbhum district court on Wednesday pulled up the varsity authorities for raking up the issue after not taking any measures in the last 80 years.

Last April, the 90-year-old noted economist had approached the Birbhum district court after the Visva-Bharati issued him an eviction notice.

"All of a sudden, in January 2023, the Visva-Bharati university woke up and issued several notices (including a statutory notice) to the appellant (Amartya Sen). It is very surprising to note that the university which slumbered over the issue without taking any effective measures according to the law for 80 years, refused to give five months' time to the appellant,



Amartya Sen

who wanted the same to meet the queries as he was abroad. The said act of the university is against the rule of natural justice and violating of the maxim audi alterem partem," the order of the Birbhum District Judge Sudeshna De (Chatterjee) stated.

"Therefore, the impugned notice dated 17.03.2023 as well as action taken by the respondents asking the appellant for showing cause and evicting him from 13 decimals of land under his occupation vide the order of respondent no.1 dated 19.04.2023 are found to be erroneous and not according to the law and thus, not legally sustainable and liable to be set aside," the judge ordered.

Since 2022, the then vice-chancellor of Visva-Bharati university, Bidyut Chakrabarty, has been claiming that Sen has been illegally occupying 1.38 acre (5550 sq ft) of land on the Santiniketan campus. Chakrabarty alleged that Sen's father, who was a professor at the university, had rented only 1.25 acre on a 99-year lease in 1943 and thus, the remaining land should be returned to the university.

The university sent three letters to Amartya Sen between January and March 2023. The final eviction notice was issued on March 17, 2023.

Visva-Bharati's then joint registrar and estate officer, A K Mahato, passed the eviction order under the Public Premises (Eviction and Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971, saying the university would take possession of 13 decimals of land on the north-west corner of the plot.

In January 2023, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee met Sen and handed over a state land and revenue department

record showing that all 1.38 acre covered by the property belonged to him through a mutation executed in 2006. The West Bengal government later transferred leasehold rights of the entire 1.38 acre to Sen to thwart any eviction attempt by the university authorities.

In May, the Calcutta High Court ordered an interim stay on the eviction order. The Bench of Justice Bibhas Ranjan De ruled that no action could be taken on it until the case is heard by the Birbhum district court.

"The court has accepted our prayer. We moved the court against the eviction order issued by the Visva-Bharati. The court has set aside the (eviction) order," Sen's lawyer Biman Chowdhury said.

No official of the Visva-Bharati university was available for comment.

Responding to the final eviction notice in April last year, Amartya Sen had asserted that the institution's claim on a part of the leased land covered by his ancestral property on the campus had "no legal standing".

# Assam Congress chief appears before police after summons related to Rahul's yatra

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 31

ASSAM CONGRESS chief Bhupen Borah appeared before Jorhat police Wednesday after receiving a summons for a case registered against the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

Last week, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Borah received a notice from the Jorhat police directing him to appear before it on

January 31, failing which he will be liable for arrest.

This is in relation to a suo moto case registered by the Jorhat police on January 18 against the yatra for allegedly deviating from its permitted route in the district.

On Wednesday, he reported to the police station at 11 am accompanied by other state Congress leaders, and his supporters. He left the police station after three hours and said he had been asked to report there again on February 12.

Speaking to reporters after leaving the police station, he said he would comply with the police's directions and that the Assam Congress would simultaneously continue with its preparations for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

"The BJP seeks that the Congress party remains busy with police stations. We will follow the law, they (the police) have called me again on the 12th (February), I will come. We all have duties. Some will contest

the elections, some will campaign... We have to fight the legal battle as well as the Lok Sabha elections, which will be conducted in 100 days. We will fulfil our duties there as well... They may lock me up, but the APCC will not stop. When Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehruji were in jail, the freedom struggle continued. I am not such a big man. There are many leaders in our party," he said.

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Subject	Date of Interview	Reporting Time
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The Government Resolution and Circular are available on the website [mu.ac.in](http://mu.ac.in) Applicants who are already employed must send their application through proper channel. Applicants are required to account for breaks, if any in their academic career. Application with full details should reach the PRINCIPAL, SHIROMANI GURUDWARA PRABANDHAK COMMITTEE'S GURU NANAK KHALSA COLLEGE OF ARTS, SCIENCE & COMMERCE, Nathalal Parekh Marg, Matunga, Mumbai - 400 019, within 15 days from the date of publication of this advertisement. This is University approved advertisement.

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## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## A TAINTED VICTORY

Inconsistencies that riddled mayoral poll process in Chandigarh threaten to reduce it to a charade, must be addressed

NEVER HAVE THE mayoral polls of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation witnessed so much drama and such rancour. What started as a low-profile election held every year to elect a new mayor, a post more titular than powerful, was transformed into a high voltage battle once the Aam Aadmi Party joined hands with Congress for the three posts of mayor, senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor. The announcement, made three days before the elections were scheduled to take place on January 18, seemed to change the complexion of the electoral process. The numbers seemed stacked in favour of the newly-minted alliance with 13 AAP and seven Congress councilors pitted against 14 of the BJP. Senior AAP leaders predicted it would be the first win for INDIA, the anti-BJP alliance at the national level. But as things turned out, they had underestimated their opponent's will to win, at any cost.

The sequence of events bears recounting. The January 18 election was called off a few minutes before it could start. Reason: The presiding officer, a nominated councilor, who was also an office-bearer of the BJP, had apparently been taken ill. The Chandigarh administration tasked with holding these polls pushed them to February 6, citing among other reasons law and order and preoccupation with preparations for the Republic Day. Many were left wondering how an election that required the counting of a mere 36 votes could depend on the health or well being of one individual when the deputy commissioner was the prescribed authority. Finally, an intervention of the Punjab and Haryana High Court led to the polls being held on January 30. On election-eve, media personnel were barred from entering the Municipal House; the polling was beamed on an outdoor screen. Inside, amid chaos, the BJP pulled off a surprise victory with 16 seats, surpassing the alliance's 12, after eight of the latter's votes were invalidated. The mayoral candidate of the alliance has sought relief from the High Court, which has asked the UT administration to respond in three weeks.

A day after the debacle, amid charges and counter-charges, there is speculation about horse-trading, and allegations of alliance councilors being cloistered away in secret locations before the polls. The humdrum corporation has turned into a political minefield. At stake, above all, is the basic question of fairness and transparency. The inconsistencies that have riddled this poll process threaten to reduce it to a charade. They also raise apprehensions about deviations from, and distortions of, due process when the stakes are higher, in larger arenas.

## MIND AND MATTER

Brain-computer interfaces, like the one tested by Neuralink, could be a paradigm shift. The pitfalls must be avoided

WITH NEURALINK, AS with so many of Elon Musk's ventures, it is important to separate science from speculation, product development from wishful thinking. Musk announced on X (formerly Twitter) on January 30 that "The first human received an implant from @Neuralink yesterday and is recovering well. Initial results show promising neuron spike detection." Given that Neuralink had received approval from the US Food & Drug Administration in September last year, the announcement was somewhat expected. Last year, there was controversy over the company's disclosures, which led to investigations into dead study animals and the transportation of hazardous materials. The surgery, however, marks an important milestone — the beginning of human-computer interfaces that can possibly address physical and cognitive limitations and disabilities. Moving forward, who controls the technology and how it is distributed will be important in determining its impact.

Neuralink is building on work done by laboratories and companies that came before it — the first Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) dates back to the 1970s. The wireless device implanted by Neuralink contains a chip and arrays of electrodes, which are meant to register thoughts related to movement. Eventually, if successful, the device should enable people with disabilities to move a cursor or type just by thinking about it. The initial users are likely to be people who have lost their limbs. But as with SpaceX and Tesla, the claims made by Musk around Neuralink's BCI make it seem like the science fiction future is now. Musk envisions a future where Neuralink's brain implants seamlessly merge with cognitive functions, offering a direct interface between the human mind and computers. Whether or not this comes to pass, it is important to approach the technological frontier with a discerning eye.

The first concern is around privacy. Who will control the data extracted from brains, and how can it be ensured that it is not exploited for nefarious purposes? As with AI, regulation must go hand-in-hand with the development of BCIs. Second, the development of significant medical technologies must not end up being a monopoly — publicly-funded research can help minimise the cost to the end user, who need not be only a customer who can afford the prohibitive cost of cutting-edge interventions. The Oxford Astra-Zeneca Covid vaccine, for example, was developed with public funds from multiple countries, and arguably reached far more people than its private-sector counterparts. Finally, if and when the technology gets closer to mass use, a dialogue involving experts, ethicists, and the public is essential to guard against its misuse, or even enthusiastic over-use. BCIs represent a potential paradigm shift in the relationship between people and technology. Its pitfalls, though, must be avoided.

## FRÄULEIN LIESER RETURNS

A Klimt artwork has been found after nearly 100 years. It reiterates the Austrian artist's radical appeal

IN June last year, Austrian artist Gustav Klimt's *Lady With a Fan* sold for a staggering \$108.4 million at Sotheby's, London, to become the most expensive artwork to be sold at an auction in Europe. It was one of the artist's two unfinished paintings, both portraits of young women, found in his studio in Vienna following his death from Spanish flu in 1918. The other, *Portrait of Fräulein Lieser*, commissioned by a wealthy Jewish industrialist, had been lost for nearly a century, its sole record a black-and-white photograph archived in the Austrian National Library from the time of its last exhibition in 1925. Now, the discovery of the latter in a private collection in Vienna has renewed anticipation of another blockbuster sale when the 31-by-55-inch portrait goes to auction in late April in the Austrian capital.

*Portrait of Fräulein Lieser* shows a clear-eyed young woman in a green dress and a richly embroidered blue coat. While the exact identity of the woman — and the fate of the painting during the period between 1925 and 1960, when it was acquired by the family of the present owner — remains unresolved, it is a classic Klimt, reminiscent of his later-era preoccupation with portraits commissioned by Austria's elite.

The excitement over the portrait is indicative of Klimt's larger legacy. He might be best known for *The Kiss*, an elaborate oil-on-canvas rendition of a couple in embrace, but as one of the leaders of the anti-establishment Vienna Secession movement that upended contemporary understanding of the purpose of art, Klimt's radical appeal lay in his melding together elements of craft and design in his art. The sumptuous and the sensual, the abstract and the everyday came together on his canvases in a rich riot of metallic hues and textured details. It had always driven up the price of his work, especially his portraits. In 2006, for instance, his 1907 portrait, *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, sold for \$135 million. It remains to be seen if Fräulein Lieser has a similar fortuitous afterlife.

# Marathon, not sprint

For sustained growth, interim budget should focus on macroeconomic fundamentals and reforms



DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI

THE FIRST ADVANCE GDP estimates from the National Statistical Office indicate that the Indian economy will grow 7.3 per cent this fiscal year, faster than the Economic Survey's prediction of 6.5 per cent made in January 2023. The survey had then noted that the Indian economy appeared more upbeat than most.

India will continue to be the fastest-growing major economy despite a sharp slowdown in agriculture and various risks and uncertainties playing out globally. The Russia-Ukraine conflict and the intensifying Middle East crisis have so far not dented the country's growth trajectory. Most other macros are also broadly in balance, with current account deficit in the safe zone, the currency being stable, and headline inflation expected to nudge down over the next few quarters.

Economic policies, specifically fiscal policy, have played a key role in shaping the post-pandemic growth recovery. The fiscal policy transitioned from a focus on welfare during the pandemic towards a public investment-driven growth strategy to accelerate a buildup in infrastructure. This was achieved while staying on the glide path of a reducing fiscal deficit/gross domestic product (GDP) ratio.

This has helped raise the productive capacity of the economy. National accounts data shows that investment has grown faster than GDP (both in nominal and real terms), with its share in GDP rising to 34.9 per cent this year, from 31.6 per cent in 2019-20. That said, the government needs to start moderating its budgetary support to capital spending. Bringing down the fiscal deficit to the committed 4.5 per cent of GDP by 2025-26 will entail a hit of 1.4 percentage points to GDP over the next two years.

This would imply fiscal rectitude in an election year. To be sure, the budget to be presented tomorrow is an interim one and the final budget will be presented after the elections. But extrapolating the current government's past fiscal conservatism, fiscal numbers in the interim budget can be considered as final, assuming the government remains in power.

Delivering on this fiscal consolidation strategy is easy if growth remains strong. Amid the vicissitudes, the review report from the Finance Ministry expects the economy to grow close to 7 per cent next fiscal and

suggests the possibility of India becoming a \$7 trillion economy by the end of this decade. Healthy medium-term growth prospects are also reflected in the forecasts of multilateral agencies. We expect GDP growth to moderate to 6.4 per cent next fiscal, before accelerating thereafter, due to slowing global growth and tighter financial conditions globally and at home.

That said, for faster and sustained growth, it is critical that the private sector picks up the investment baton from the government. This will be important to preserve the medium-term potential of the economy while moving along the fiscal normalisation path.

Improving capacity utilisation, the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, a low-corporate-tax regime, and healthy balance sheets of medium and large-sized corporates augur well for a revival in capex, which has not seen a meaningful pick-up in the last decade. We believe that lowering compliance costs and providing stability in the tax regime can complement the existing favourable scenario in unleashing a broad-based revival of the investment cycle.

Unlike advanced countries, core inflation has corrected quickly in India and is at a comforting level of 3.8 per cent. Fuel inflation is -1 per cent. India's headline inflation is yet to be brought under control, solely due to high food inflation. The underperformance of the agriculture and rural economy, coupled with high food inflation in an election year, can be worrisome. Agriculture punches far above its weight in GDP because it influences food inflation, which has a 40 per cent weight in the consumption basket, and a large portion of the population still depends on agriculture. Curbing food inflation requires supply-side measures and falls in the domain of fiscal policy.

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Although central bank policy does not directly influence food inflation, it aims to prevent the transmission to other segments by keeping overall demand in check through interest rate hikes. Therefore, the RBI would be a bit wary of declaring an early victory on inflation and initiating quick rate cuts. This also implies that government policy will go into overdrive to bring down food inflation. We expect consumer inflation to settle at 4.5 per cent next fiscal, assuming normal monsoons and

crude oil prices at around \$80 per barrel.

Globally as well, inflation and interest rate cycles have peaked. However, the expectation regarding the timing and speed of rate cuts continues to evolve as the US and Europe are still grappling with high core and headline inflation and tight labour markets. We anticipate that both the US Federal Reserve and Indian central bank would initiate rate cuts in the middle of this year. Therefore, monetary policy is unlikely to become growth-supportive, particularly until the first half of next fiscal.

Last year marked the highest annual temperature in recorded history, reminding us of the escalating climate risk. India is among the most climatically vulnerable countries. The country experienced its second hottest year since 1901 and driest August in 2023, according to the India Meteorological Department. A recent study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water highlights how monsoon patterns have changed in India over the last four decades, with increasing occurrences of excess and deficient rainfall.

This has wide implications, particularly for agriculture. India needs to step up research and development and take other complementary steps towards adapting to climate change, together with measures to limit it. And it must do so without hurting growth prospects. The review document also lists the "trade-off between energy security and economic growth versus energy transition" as a key challenge for the economy.

Over the near and medium term, domestic strengths such as healthy corporate and balance sheets, the government's policy focus on infrastructure build-up, and the noteworthy progress on digitalisation provide comfort on the growth front. External markers for the economy also remain resilient.

Historically, growth spurts in India have resembled sprints rather than marathons. To transform the current growth uptick into a marathon, it is important for policymakers to ensure sound macroeconomic fundamentals, fast-track skilling of the larger population to enable their participation in the growth process, engage in pragmatic management of energy transition, and focus on reforms. A tall order, indeed.

The writer is chief economist, CRISIL Ltd



TILAK DEVASHER

## ANATOMY OF A FLARE-UP

Pakistan response to Iran was determined by army's compulsion not to appear weak

RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAN and Pakistan have been complex. Iran was the first country to recognise Pakistan in 1947. In the 1965 Indo-Pak war, Iran provided safe bases in Pakistan Air Force. During the 1973-77 Baloch insurgency, the Shah's government provided Pakistan with 30 helicopters and pilots to strafe the Baloch.

Despite this, insurgencies of their ethnic Baloch populations have complicated relations. While there has been intermittent co-operation, both have also accused the other of sheltering insurgents. The Iran-Pakistan border has been a troubled one with skirmishes but these have been kept below the threshold of open hostilities. Over the years, mechanisms and channels of communication have been established to deal with these situations.

That was why the Iranian missile and drone attack on January 16 came as a surprise. The attacks targeted the village of Sabz Koh, about 60 km inside Pakistan, in Balochistan's Panjur district, killing two children and injuring three other civilians. According to Iran, they had targeted a Pakistan-based Iranian Sunni terrorist group Jaish al-Adl that has carried out several attacks in Iran, Jaish al-Adl or Jaish al-Dhulm as it is called in Iran, is a successor of the Iranian Baloch extremist group, Jundallah. Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, Shia Iran's severe treatment of the Baloch has fuelled Sunni radicalism in Sistan-Balochistan. Pakistan saw the Iranian attack as a se-

rious violation of its sovereignty. Its initial response was diplomatic — withdrawal of the ambassador and calling off all bilateral visits. This was followed by strikes in Sarwan in Sistan-Balochistan on January 18, in which nine persons, including women and children, were killed. According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the Pakistan military's mouthpiece, hideouts used by the Balochistan Liberation Army and Baloch Liberation Front were successfully struck in the operation code-named Marg Bar Sarmachar. Trade between the two continued as usual with all border-crossing points kept open.

For Iran, either escalating or not responding to the Pakistani attacks carried risks. The former would end up diverting its attention from the other conflicts in the Middle East that it was involved in. The latter risked inviting attacks from regional adversaries for whom the message would be that Iran could not sustain a direct conflict. Since both options were bad, it leads to the moot question of whether Iran had war-gamed the consequences of its actions against Pakistan.

Given the multiple crises in Pakistan — economic, political, security — Iran possibly assessed that it would not be in a position to retaliate and even if it were, it would avoid militarily confronting Iran. Moreover, Iran needed to signal domestically that faced with several attacks in Sistan-Balochistan, it had the capacity and will to target Jaish al-Adl ter-

rorists in Pakistan. The most consequential reason could well be the need to signal to its adversaries in the Middle East and the US that any attempt to harm it either directly or through proxies would be countered strongly.

Clearly, Iran miscalculated Pakistan's reaction. The one thing Pakistan cannot afford is an impression that despite being the Islamic world's only nuclear power, it is actually too weak to defend its sovereignty. Like Iran, the Pakistan army also has strong domestic compulsions. Its reputation had taken a beating during the past year due to the antics of Imran Khan. A military response was a given, the only question being the scale of it.

Immediately after the attacks, both countries dialled down their hostilities, expressing a desire to work together. The ambassadors have returned. However, despite the diplomatic language, it is obvious that the relations have been damaged by the events.

While Pakistan seems to have gotten over this crisis, at least for the time being, domestic events are taking centre stage. Even as elections are a week away on February 8, Khan has been sentenced to imprisonment in two cases — 10 years in the cipher case and 14 years in the Toshakhana case. While these sentences would be appealed against, for the time being, they pose serious hurdles to his political career.

Devasher is an author and member, National Security Advisory Board. Views are personal

## FEBRUARY 1, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

### CENTRE-AKALI TALKS

THE CENTRE AND the top Akali leadership are exploring the possibility of a solution to the Punjab problem. Sources say there have been two separate meetings between senior Akali leaders and a central leader. Due to the meeting between a senior Akali leader and Rajiv Gandhi, Congress (I) general secretary, the Akali leadership did not announce any serious plan for the next phase of their agitation.

### FIRING IN ALWAR

THE POLICE FIRED for the second day running

in the Alwar district of Rajasthan to disperse violent demonstrators. There has been continuing agitation against the alleged rape of a 24-year-old married woman by two policemen at Kotputli town and the death of three schoolboys in police firing on January 28. Six people, including four students, were injured in the firing at Naugawan.

### BOMBAY BANDH

THE 24-HOUR Bombay and Thane-Belapur bandh called by opposition parties and trade unions was almost total and peaceful. BEST (Bombay Electricity Supply and Transport)

buses kept off the road as planned, though traffic piled according to schedule but carrying very few passengers. Air services operated fairly well but passengers had a tough time reaching their destinations.

### PLI'S NEW POLICY

ON ITS CENTENARY, Postal Life Insurance (PLI) has introduced a new and attractive anticipated endowment assurance policy for coverage of risk as well as quicker monetary returns for its clients. The scheme provides full protection throughout its currency and also ensures a flow of cash at regular intervals.





# 9 THE IDEAS PAGE

## Caste, a Western construct

The formative literature on it dates to colonial times and is the work of writers with deep-rooted prejudices against Hinduism



THE SIDEBAR  
BY J SAI DEEPAK

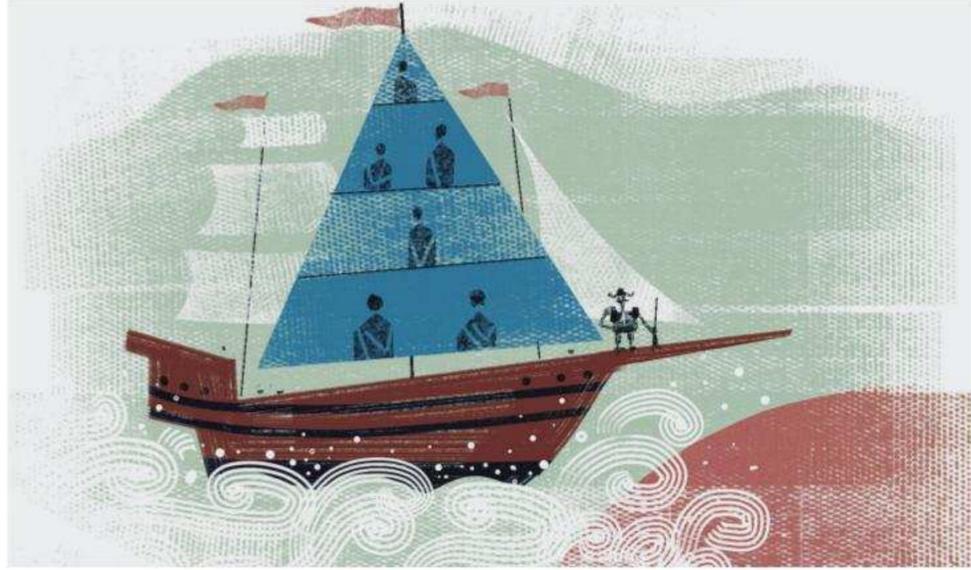
IN MY PREVIOUS article in this series on Dravidianism ('A truth forsaken', IE, January 15), I had discussed in some detail the "anthropological" mapping of Bharat's society undertaken by Christian European missionaries through the alien lens of "caste". Before I take this discussion further, a few important caveats are warranted lest my views are either misunderstood or misrepresented as a denial of the lived experience of affected groups, whoever they may be.

First, my objective is to understand the causes leading to the present, instead of falling prey to the common error of "presentism" that plagues contemporary discourse on issues such as "caste/tribe". This means the past must be understood in terms of the past, not to condone or glorify it, but to avoid the distortion caused by the lens of the present. Importantly, it would defy logic for a post-colonial society such as Bharat to not even examine the past and continuing religious, cultural and politico-legal impact of colonialism on itself.

Second, in the second part of this series ('The colonial-missionary roots of caste and tribe', IE, November 7, 2023), I had clearly qualified my position on the issue of "caste/tribe" that in attributing the introduction of these lenses to the missionary-colonial combine, the intent was *not* to deny the prior existence of the varna-jati complex, its hereditary nature and the identity silos associated with it. However, it is *certainly* my case, based on scholarly literature, that the application of the "caste/tribe" classifications by the Christian colonial establishment (especially through an official census-taking exercise) resulted in an artificial re-ordering of the Hindu society based on the European perception of it. Interestingly, the 1911 census of Bengal records the existence of at least 80 different castes even in the Muslim society. So much for monotheistic egalitarianism.

In other words, "castification" of the pre-existing varna-jati complex resulted in presenting an outside and incorrect view of how the complex operated, including its structure, rigidity and the scale of atrocities arising from "caste-consciousness". Such missionary-colonial distortion was not unique to the varna-jati structure, it was equally visible in representations of the Devadasi system, Sati and the Jagannath Rath Yatra. In fact, the European approach was no different in Africa, Australia or the Americas. No wonder, they are significantly Christian. One could go a step further and contend that the original template was crafted during the Christianisation of Europe itself against its pre-Christian societies, which was then applied during the colonial period in other continents. When understood against this larger backdrop, which reveals a commonality and continuity of thought, action and outcomes, it becomes evident that "caste", Devadasi, Sati and Jagannath Yatra, *inter alia*, were tools in the hands of the missionary-colonial compact to malign the Hindu society to create the "humanitarian" justifications needed for religious, cultural and politico-legal intervention.

On how the Devadasis were branded and reduced to "temple prostitutes", *Women of*



CR Sasikumar

*Pride: The Devadasi Heritage* by Lakshmi Vishwanathan is a good read, and on Sati, I would strongly recommend Meenakshi Jain's seminal work *Sati: Evangelicals, Baptist Missionaries, and the Changing Colonial Discourse*. As for the malicious vilification of the Jagannath Rath Yatra, the credit for it goes to Claudius Buchanan, a Scottish Missionary from the Church of England, who solicited contributions from his followers in England to save Hindus from their "bloody, violent, superstitious and backward religious system". Given these documented examples of vile misrepresentation of Hinduism and Bharat, whose underlying goal was dehumanisation followed by proselytisation, it is indeed surprising that there is stubborn resistance even from sections of the contemporary *non-Left* — and not just the Left — in Bharat to acknowledge that the varna-jati complex too has been subjected to distortion by the Christian West through application of the caste/tribe lenses.

Finally, to acknowledge this reality is *not* to present an apologia for casteism or caste-based discrimination either in the past or the present, but to understand the system as it existed prior to its distortion. This approach is more likely to throw up solutions which are original and practicable being rooted in the culture and realities of this land, instead of slavishly applying the Christian colonial template that has only worsened the caste discourse to the detriment of the Hindu society and to the advantage of vested interests. For all the so-called clarion calls for the "annihilation of caste" since before and after Independence, if anything, we are far from it and "caste" has become more deeply entrenched in politics, policies, social and electoral discourse in "independent Bharat" thanks to the perpetuation of the colonial approach. And yet, there is a mulish and anti-intellectual, perhaps even motivated, refusal to research and understand the distinctions between the varna-jati complex and caste/tribe classifications to address contemporary social challenges and the relentless anti-Dharmic pamphleteering.

I hope the above caveats serve to convey my position better, even to those who wish to disagree with *integrity*. I will now continue the discussion on the emergence of the caste/tribe categories and the mythical Dravidian identity from the "anthropological service" pro-

To acknowledge this reality is not to present an apologia for casteism or caste-based discrimination either in the past or the present, but to understand the system as it existed prior to its distortion. This approach is more likely to throw up solutions which are original and practicable being rooted in the culture and realities of this land, instead of slavishly applying the Christian colonial template that has only worsened the caste discourse to the detriment of the Hindu society and to the advantage of vested interests.

vided by Christian missionaries in Southern Bharat to colonial rulers. I had ended the last article with the reference to the publication in 1816 by the British East India Company of the "caste" scholarship compiled by French Catholic Missionary Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois, which was based on the earlier work of a Pondicherry-based French Jesuit Missionary, Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux (Père Coeurdoux). This work would go on to inform the Company's views on Hindu society and its subsequent administrative and social engineering policies, especially in Madras, for at least half a century. Interestingly, Max Müller, that patron saint of Indology, underscored the importance of Dubois' work and eulogised him as a "man singularly free from prejudice" and "a scholar with sufficient knowledge, if not of Sanskrit, yet of Tamil". But how free of prejudice was Dubois?

According to Nicholas Dirks, while Dubois attributed the achievements of the Hindu civilisation to the moral obligations imposed by the "caste system", he bemoaned that Brahmins were the primary roadblock to the Christianisation of the Hindu society. As for his views on the group previously known as the "Pariahs", propriety prevents me from repeating them and I suspect sympathisers of Dubois wouldn't want that either. Let's just say that Dubois' contempt for the aforementioned group was unvarnished and rivalled Aurangzeb's "love" of Hindus, so much so that Dubois felt that the mission to convert Hindus to Christianity would be a *failure* if it could attract only "untouchables" and not the Brahmins. If this was a "*man singularly free from prejudice*" according to the great Max Müller, I don't know who would qualify as a person with prejudice. Such were the people who put together the early formative literature on "caste" and "Indology" which academic and popular discourse parrots till date. I shall continue in the next article.

*The writer is a commercial and constitutional litigator who practises as a counsel before the Supreme Court of India, the High Court of Delhi, the NCLAT and the CCI, and author of India that is Bharat: Coloniality, Civilisation, Constitution, and India, Bharat and Pakistan: The Constitutional Journey of a Sandwiched Civilisation*

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Authorities must ensure alternatives for the long term, such as environment-friendly concrete blocks, which currently just meet five percent of construction needs. For our country to be free from pollution, the plague of illegal brick kilns must be eliminated."  
— THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH

## One versus the other

Those who celebrate the temple and those who distance themselves — the rights of both need equal protection



FAHAD ZUBERI

ON JANUARY 22, the Ram Temple in Ayodhya was consecrated by the Prime Minister of India. The moment has been discussed as being phenomenal and as a watershed moment in Indian politics. In the conversation around the politico-religious significance of the consecration of the temple, however, the question of whose temple it is and who can safely distance themselves from it, remains unaddressed.

The ruling governments of India have made it clear that the Ram temple in Ayodhya is a national project. Since the Supreme Court judgment, the government has pushed a narrative of "national heritage" around it. The explanation of design and construction of the temple involved nationalist rhetoric. This included stories about material and labour sourced from across the country, the design being representative of all Indian cultures, the involvement of institutions of national importance such as IIT Chennai and CBRI at IIT Roorkee and contribution from some of the biggest names in the construction industry.

The consecration conducted by the PM featured performances by some of the best known artists, and was attended by popular celebrities who are household names. Institutionally, weeks before the consecration, government employees were given leave on the 22nd to take part in the celebrations, and businesses were urged to stay closed. The phrase "Ram sabke hain" (Ram belongs to everyone) became part of a widely dispersed rhetoric.

The truth is, India is home to huge minority populations who do not believe in the divinity of Ram. Several traditions and sects — especially Dalit and Adivasi groups — do not believe in this nationalised homogeneous version of Ramayana, and the Ram temple might not be a site they identify with. For a large population in India, Ayodhya might be a site of fear, violence and destruction. We must recognise that the temple is a religious site for one religious group in India — a country that has a secular Constitution and is home to the second largest Muslim population in the world. We must remember that the land for the temple was recognised as a temple site in a court judgment over a title suit. That verdict did not grant it a national status and the socio-political constitution of India does not allow for it either.

Making the Ram temple a national project concretises Brahminism as the official doctrine of the Indian state. The nationalisation of the temple sends a message that those who do not identify with this partic-

ular narrative of Ram are not part of the nation. The consecration — conducted in this language of nationalisation — is the beginning of a paradigm where other faiths of India (especially Islam), belong to an inferior citizenry.

Over the last month, we saw this paradigm unfold in the built environment. Groups of volunteers went door to door distributing stickers, pamphlets and flags to mark homes and shops as assumed participants in the celebrations. Our cityscapes were painted saffron with flags and hoardings marking every structure. It was made to appear through markers in our neighbourhoods and streets that everyone in India is rejoicing in the consecration of the temple.

Here, it is important to remember social scientist Paul Brass. Brass had conceptualised the idea of "mini Ayodhyas" in cities of India. These are, according to Brass, small structures around which a narrative of conflicted claims is locally spun, and this mimics the national Ram temple-Babri masjid conflict. In Brass's mini Ayodhyas, micro-environments of confrontation, at local scales, are created through claims on mazars and mosques as being "originally" temples and social cleavages are manifested as violence. Violence is also produced through acts of provocation such as throwing bovine meat in the temple or pork meat in the mosque. Therefore, like in Ayodhya, conflict is generated through destruction and desecration of architecture.

Brass's mini Ayodhyas have come full circle. Government orders, national narratives, and saffronised cities are pushing a wedge in India's fault lines — this time through construction and consecration and not destruction and desecration. The site is the same and the object remains architectural, but while in 1992, it was acceptable to distance oneself from destruction, today, nobody can resist or deny being joyous and proud. Because if you do, you belong to the wrong group — the "other" of the nation state. Last month, our cities were marked to know who is not celebrating the consecration of the temple. Urban pockets, again, are mimicking Ayodhya, albeit this time in celebration. It was not the flag that marked houses, it was the absence of the flag that spatialised othering.

In this moment, we need to cultivate and protect a space where I can distance myself from the temple, where I can say that this is not my heritage, not the architecture I identify with, and where I feel safe in doing so. While the judgment of the Supreme Court is accepted and respected, we should resist the act of making a national icon of the temple in Ayodhya. We must protect the right to distance ourselves from the temple and still be identified as a citizen of India — no more and no less than those who partake in its celebrations. We must protect the right to say "not in my name" to the temple, and its consecration.

*The writer is an architect and a graduate scholar of South Asia at University of Oxford*

## Muslims should re-look at BJP

2024 is an opportunity for minority to move beyond a politics of negativity



TARIQ MANSOOR

THE COUNTDOWN FOR the 2024 general elections has begun. In Indian psephology, the idea of the "Muslim vote" generally evokes interest, especially in the context of the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This is due to several reasons. First, the BJP's relationship with the Muslims has been historically contentious. Second, Muslims perhaps constitute the only social group that has been beyond the BJP's political reach so far. Further, the Opposition's "Muslim" politics is predicated on instilling a fear of the BJP. However, the election of 2024 is shaping up to be different. I analyse the six factors that have the potential to effect a turning point in the relationship of Muslims with the BJP and PM Modi.

One, the BJP and PM Modi have been repeatedly invoking issues of social justice to address anomalies within the Muslim community. The Pasmandas — a social sub-group representing the most backward Muslims constituting roughly 80 per cent of the Indian Muslim population — form the core of this strategy. The party's willingness to accommodate Pasmandas promises to end the hegemony of elites in Muslim politics. By making calls for greater democratisation and inclusivity in Muslim politics, the BJP seeks to address the key Pasmanda demand — not to view the Muslims as a monolith. Not only does this mark the first official attempt of the BJP to co-opt Muslims, but it is also the first time the Pasmandas are in the political spotlight.

Two, the Modi government has also prioritised issues of gender justice in certain community personal laws. The abolishing of the archaic practice of instant triple talaq, which incidentally is not prevalent even in Islamic nations, has found resounding support amongst nine crore Muslim women.

Three, PM Modi has sought to redefine welfare as a political duty covering a wide spectrum of human needs — food, housing, sanitation, gas, water, health, etc. The Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana fed 810 million Indians during the existential crisis of the pandemic. No home has been left out because of the name on the door. The Modi government has carved out a specific category of labharthis (beneficiaries) within the economically marginalised Pasmandas. In some cases, the Muslim labharthis have benefited in a proportion higher than their population. For instance, while Uttar Pradesh has a 19 per cent Muslim population, the beneficiaries under PM Awas Yojana, Ujjawala Yojna and Mudra Yojana range from 24-30 per cent. This has lent credence to the PM's promise of "sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas, sabka prayas" and antyodaya (development without discrimination) among Muslims.

The introduction of the PM Vishwakarma scheme is a fillip to socially disadvantaged group-led enterprises and artisans such as tailors, barbers, weavers, etc. The 18 crafts listed under the scheme mirror the occupa-

tional profile of a large number of backward caste Muslims.

Four, India's relations with the Islamic world are arguably undergoing their best phase. PM Modi has used his personal imprint on foreign policy to impart substance to ties. The transformation of ties — from being simple "trade partners" to "strategic partners" — reflects a growing convergence. The centrality of India in the proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor is a manifestation of this new partnership. In recognition of PM Modi's efforts to strengthen relations, many Islamic countries — the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Palestine, Afghanistan, Maldives and Egypt — have conferred their highest civilian awards on him. These gains would not have been possible if the Muslim world felt that the Indian Muslims were being discriminated against.

Five, no major communal riot has occurred since 2014. Analysis of data from the National Crime Records Bureau of riot cases registered since the 1970s reveals that India is at its most peaceful in 50 years, as riots have been on a decline. In a recent interview to the Financial Times, Modi invoked the success of the Parsis, a religious micro-minority residing in India, while stating that the Indian society does not discriminate against any religious minority.

Finally, and most importantly, the issue of national interest and security. The Muslim

community should not be oblivious that India needs a strong and stable government given the many global conflicts — such as between Ukraine and Russia, Israel and Palestine — terrorism and China's expansionist attitude towards its neighbours including India, Vietnam, Philippines etc. PM Modi has demonstrated courage and statesmanship in navigating these challenges. In contrast, the opposition camp, as a ship without a captain, at this critical juncture offers no alternative. India's experiments with short-lived alliance governments in the 1990s incurred enormous international economic and strategic costs.

These issues show why Muslims should consider choosing Modi and the BJP in the 2024 elections. They are conscious that the BJP has won the past two general elections without any significant Muslim votes. The 2023 UP urban local body polls and by-elections in the Muslim-dominated Rampur Lok Sabha and Suar assembly in UP, and Boxanagar in Tripura show a promising trend for the BJP from these engagements. 2024 represents an opportunity for Muslims to move beyond the negativity of the opposition's politics and choose the pragmatic path of progress and national interest. For this, Modi is their best choice.

*The writer, former Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, is National Vice-President of the BJP*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A POLITICAL DECISION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Price of distortion' (IE, January 31). The government has decided to cap profit margins on certain fertilisers and regulate their maximum retail prices. While the intention to ensure taxpayer money benefits farmers is commendable, this move risks taking the fertiliser industry back to a full-control era. The nutrient-based subsidy system introduced in 2010 aimed at fostering innovation and balanced nutrition, but the recent measures may hinder progress. It is crucial to find a balance between controlling costs and encouraging innovation for the benefit of both farmers and the industry.

Zoya Ahmed, Bengaluru

### TIME FOR REFORM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'After Nihanka' (IE, January 31). The current situation reflects a troubling pattern where institutions and policymakers evade accountability in addressing challenges, echoing past occurrences of similar instances. The weight of unrealistic expectations thrust upon students is pushing them to desperate measures as a final recourse. Revamping both the educational curriculum and infrastructure is imperative at this juncture. Addressing society's entrenched stereotypes surrounding career paths and the relentless pressures accompanying them is overdue; it's high time for reform.

Archita Das, Bengaluru

### ECONOMY BATTLE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Price of distortion' (IE, January 31). The government's decision to put all the subsidised non-urea fertilisers in the price control regime is a regressive step. This will result in a further spike in fertiliser subsidies as traditional farmers tend to use nutrients based on their budget rather than the crop requirements and soil conditions. The cheaper supply of chemical fertilisers will attract fewer farmers to adopt organic farming. The Modi government's vision of reducing subsidy bills has miserably failed in an attempt to woo farmers. Rationalising the use of chemical fertilisers is an important to contain the degradation in social fertility. Keeping this in mind the government is running a Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana to promote the use of natural manures. The move is the first of many politically motivated decisions before the elections.

Kiran B Ransing, Ahmednagar

### ECONOMY BATTLE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Stay calm, build on strengths' (IE, January 31). Recent estimates put India's share in global GDP at around 10 per cent and China's at 18 per cent. To gain from Chinese slowdown, we require a massive increase in manufacturing output and service sector capabilities. These entail greater investments in manufacturing technologies, skilled labour, R&D, human capital, etc. Moreover, our own manufacturing sector, dependent on Chinese goods, will have to be insulated from the latter's slowdown. All these factors are crucial for growth, and regretfully, remain our biggest sore points. The bulk of the investment required will have to originate from the private sector. Yet, corporate investment from FY17 to FY22 grew at a meagre 4.9 per cent.

Nimish, Mumbai

## ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

## Kovind panel weighing draft paper on macroeconomic impact of syncing polls

DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE HIGH-level committee on One Nation, One Election, headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, is discussing the potential implications of holding simultaneous elections on factors such as GDP growth, fiscal deficits, crime rates, and education outcomes, *The Indian Express* has learned.

In its last meeting on January 27, committee members were apprised of macroeconomic impact of holding elections to panchayats, municipalities, state Assemblies and the Lok Sabha together. This was done by way of a draft research paper presented by former Finance Commission chairperson

and committee member NK Singh and economist Prachi Mishra. Former Rajya Sabha Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad, former LS Secretary General Subhash C Kashyap, former Chief Vigilance Commissioner Sanjay Kothari, and senior advocate Harish Salve, attended the meet, a Law Ministry statement said. Home Minister Amit Shah, a member of the committee, and Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, a special invitee, were not present.

The paper, sources said, covers impact of simultaneous elections on various aspects like education, with teachers often assigned election duties, GDP growth and investment. Those in favour of the idea argue that development work is disrupted because of the

model code of conduct and government staff being posted for poll duty. The committee also discussed potential consequences on crime outcomes, given that a significant portion of security forces is deployed for elections.

N K Singh told *The Indian Express*, "Yes, a draft paper on the macroeconomic impact of syncing elections was presented to the committee last week. We have looked at what happens to GDP growth, investment, fiscal deficits, educational outcomes, crime outcomes, freebies, and how uncertainty affects the decision-making process." Singh and Mishra's paper would undergo changes based on the comments received from committee members.

On Wednesday, Kovind met

NCP leaders Praful Patel and Sunil Dattatray Tatkar and Rashtriya Joka Janata Dal president Upendra Kushwaha, as part of the consultative process, the Law Ministry said in a statement. On Tuesday, Kovind had met former Chief Justice of Bombay High Court Pradeep Nandrajog.

The committee is scheduled to continue its discussion on the economic impact in its upcoming consultations later this week and next week. According to sources, representatives from the Confederation of Indian Industry and the Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India are expected to deliver presentations on the potential savings for corporates if polls were held once every five years.

## 'WAS AGAINST CALLING OPP BLOC INDIA'

## Nitish hits out at Rahul on caste survey, Tejashwi for job push claim

SANTOSH SINGH  
PATNA, JANUARY 31

A DAY AFTER Congress leader Rahul Gandhi broke his silence over the exit of Nitish Kumar from the INDIA bloc and attributed it to his "reluctance" to conduct a caste survey, the Bihar CM joined words with him.

In his first such remarks attacking his former partners, Nitish said it was "faltu baat" (useless talk) on Rahul's part to try and take credit for the caste survey done by the Mahagathbandhan government led by him.

He also questioned former deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav saying it was his party's ministers who had led the job push under the Mahagathbandhan government.

In another swipe at the INDIA bloc, Nitish said it "had not achieved anything". "I have nothing to do with it now. In fact, I was against calling it INDIA. But they decided to go with this name. I had taken initiative to form it, but it did not do a single thing. Hence, I have walked out of it and joined the NDA. *Ab yehi rahenge* (I will stick to the NDA now)."

The acronym, standing for 'Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance', is believed to have been arrived at by the Congress and TMC jointly at INDIA's Bengaluru meeting, with other partners taken by surprise.

On Rahul's remarks at the Purnea rally, which was part of his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, that they had made Nitish agree to do the caste survey, the CM said: "Nonsense. Everyone knows I got the resolution passed in 2019 and 2020 for conducting a caste survey in Bihar. When the Central government did not con-



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar in Patna on Wednesday. PTI

duct it for some reasons, we decided to go ahead and held it in Bihar." Nitish, in fact, was talking of a caste census since before he switched over from the NDA to join hands with the Mahagathbandhan in August 2022.

On Opposition allegations that the Central government was on a witch-hunt against its leaders, through probes by agencies, Nitish said: "These agencies are investigating old cases. It is part of the process of investigation."

He also claimed that it was only after he took over as the CM in 2006, for the first time, that the state had embarked on the path of growth and development.

On Tejashwi comparing the achievements of the last 17 months of the Mahagathbandhan government to the 17 years Nitish has been CM, he said: "When I took over the reins of Bihar, he (Tejashwi) was a child. Everyone knows all the major development initiatives have been taken after 2006. Where were government jobs before 2006? We started recruiting teachers and giving jobs in other departments later."

## STATUS CHECK

AT A time when the Trinamool Congress has made the withholding of Central funds a big political issue, party's senior leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay on Wednesday directly checked the status from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During a brief encounter in Parliament, Bandyopadhyay asked the PM why the funds were withheld and whether the state would get them in near future. According to sources in the TMC, the PM responded saying that the CAG reports on the use of funds by the state were not "right".

## NEW RITUAL

A NEW ritual was added to the customary procession of the President to address the joint session of Parliament on Wednesday. Carrying Sengol, senior marshal in Lok Sabha Rajeev Sharma escorted the President to the Lok Sabha chamber. The Sengol, which was installed near the Speaker's chair in the Lok Sabha on May 28 last year, was kept at the centre as the President took her seat, and remained there while she addressed the members. The golden spectre was kept back at its original spot after the President left the House.

## OATH CORRECTION

AAM AADMI Party's Swati Maliwal had to take oath as Rajya Sabha member twice on Wednesday as she initially read out the oath meant for 'nominated MPs', also ending it with 'Inqilab Zindabad'. Following this, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said: "This is a solemn occasion. There are instances when there were diversions on the oath and corrections had to be made. She is a young member of the House".

## Kerala: P C George merges outfit, boost to BJP's Christian outreach

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 31

KERALA JANAPAKSHAM (Secular) chief P C George merged his party with the BJP Wednesday, barely a couple of months before the Lok Sabha elections.

George, along with his son Shone and other leaders of his outfit, joined the BJP at the party headquarters in Delhi in the presence of the party's Kerala in-charge Prakash Javadekar and other senior leaders.

Javadekar said, "George is a fiery speaker, he is a great Catholic leader. He represents many things. A rally would be held in Kerala as part of the merger." After joining, George said he is ready to contest from Pathanamthitta seat in the LS polls. Union Minister V Muraliedharan said, "the merger of George's party with BJP has exposed the malicious propaganda in Kerala that BJP is anti-minority. The merger shows that even in Kerala people are convinced that Narendra Modi would retain power at the Centre again."

George had been a seven-time MLA from the Poonjar con-



George had been a 7-time MLA from Poonjar

stituency in central Kerala, where the BJP has been trying to increase its influence among the Christian community. George had earlier been with the Christian party Kerala Congress (M) and had served as then Congress-led UDF government's chief whip in the state Assembly from 2011 to 2015.

Subsequently, he parted ways with his party and fought from Poonjar as an Independent candidate in 2016 Assembly polls and defeated the CPM and Congress candidates. In 2017, George formed the Kerala Janapaksham (Secular), which backed the BJP-led NDA in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. However, his party had then not joined the NDA as an ally.

Even after floating his outfit, George tried to join either of the two leading fronts - the CPM-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF - but could not succeed as both feared backlash from Muslims due to his tirades against the

community.

George, who once enjoyed the backing of Muslims in Poonjar, lost his seat in the 2021 Assembly elections - the first election he fought on his party's ticket after "antagonising" the community. George also did not get the support of the NDA as it fielded its own candidate from the constituency.

The BJP drew a blank in Kerala in both 2019 LS polls and 2021 Assembly elections. Looking to make inroads in Kerala, the BJP has been attempting to woo the Christians, who account for 18% of the state's population. The BJP sees George as a bridge to reach out to Christians, particularly its Catholic segment, in central Kerala. George's sway has however been limited to Poonjar, which he represented in the Assembly continuously from 1996 until 2021.

George has been at the centre of rows over his alleged anti-Muslim remarks. With a section of the Christian community having concerns over the Islamic fundamentalism, observers feel George's induction into the BJP would fuel its polarising politics that may yield electoral dividends.

## Chandigarh mayoral polls: No interim HC relief, AAP to move SC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 31

THE PUNJAB and Haryana HC Wednesday refused to grant any interim relief to the AAP on its plea for setting aside the Chandigarh mayoral election, following which Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann said they will move the Supreme Court for an early hearing.

A division bench of Justices Sudhir Singh and Harsh Banger issued notices to Chandigarh administration, municipal corporation, presiding officer Anil Masih and new mayor Manoj Sonkar of BJP, among others, to file their replies in three weeks and adjourned the matter till February 26. The bench also refused to restrain Sonkar from discharging his duties.

The bench was hearing a plea filed by AAP councillor Kuldeep Kumar. Mann, meanwhile, said, "We will move SC. We will seek an early hearing... The murder of democracy which happened yesterday was captured in video. He [presiding officer Masih] is directly counting [the votes]".

## HEMANT SOREN ARRESTED BY ED, RESIGNS AS CM; GOVERNOR DOES NOT MEET RULING COALITION

## Jharkhand Police lodge FIR against senior ED officers

ABHISHEK ANGAD  
RANCHI, JANUARY 31

JHARKHAND POLICE Wednesday lodged an FIR against senior ED officers under SC/ST Act at the SC/ST police station in Ranchi based on a complaint by JMM leader Hemant Soren over searches by the agency at his Delhi residence. The FIR named ED Additional Director Kapil Raj, Assistant Director Deovrat Jha, and two other officials Anuman Kumar and Aman Patel, and unknown officials.

Soren alleged the ED searched his Delhi residence to "harass and malign him and his entire community", the FIR stated. "The local coverage in the media... is designed against me as a member of Schedule Tribes," said Soren in his January 31 complaint. An ED team searched Soren's Delhi residence on Monday.

## Soren's succession plan stalled, JMM-Cong coalition asks: 'What's Governor waiting for?'

ABHISHEK ANGAD  
RANCHI, JANUARY 31

JHARKHAND WILL wake up on February 1 without a Chief Minister, after the Governor told the ruling JMM-Congress alliance that he will revert to their proposal to appoint JMM's Champai Soren as the leader of legislature party after considering all legalities. CM Hemant Soren had submitted his resignation to Governor C P Radhakrishnan at Raj Bhavan Wednesday night, moments before his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate.

The ruling coalition of JMM, Congress and RJD has 29, 17 and one MLA respectively. In the Opposition, the BJP has 26 and the AJSU three. The CPI(M-L) and NCP (AP) have one MLA each while there are two independents.

The Governor not showing



Champai Soren named the next Jharkhand CM. PTI

immediacy has led to some concerns in the JMM-Congress camp, sources said. Congress MLA Dipika Pandey Singh said the Governor did not meet legislators of the ruling alliance: "We were given time by the Governor and then disrespectfully told to go. After seeing our majority, we have been pushed out. The Raj Bhavan is acting like the BJP's agent and all elected leaders were asked to go."

Champai Soren, in a letter to the Governor, wrote: "I have been

elected as the leader of the Legislative Party in the meeting of the Legislative Party of JMM. Subsequently, today itself, all the honorable MLAs of the alliance parties have unanimously elected me as the leader of the Joint Legislative Party. Along with this, I am attaching with this letter the letters of support from the leader of the legislative party, Indian National Congress, leader of Rashtriya Janata Dal, MLA and others. Thus, I have the support of 47 honorable members, which is more than the majority figure. Therefore, I respectfully request you to accept my claim and take action to appoint me as the CM for the formation of the new government."

Sources in the ruling alliance said the lack of a successor being appointed could lead to "a constitutional crisis". "We have the majority; what is stopping the Governor? As of now, there is not

even an acting CM. Whom does the Governor want to consult when there are no loopholes?" said a leader. Another added: "This gives time for people to meddle... If a new CM is not sworn in within the next few days, it will be a big problem."

In a post on social media, former BJP leader and Independent MLA Saryu Roy wrote: "There is no CM, no government in Jharkhand after Hemant Soren's resignation from the post of CM was accepted by Honorable Governor. A constitutional crisis has arisen in the state. Short-term President's rule is the only option in the state until an alternative government is formed."

Jharkhand speaker Rabinranath Mahato, however said, "As of now there is nothing to worry as we are in the majority. The government will function as it was functioning earlier."

## OPP LEADER-SPEAK

Governments are being toppled one by one in all the states... Harassing Jharkhand CM Shri Hemant Soren ji by imposing ED and forcing him to resign is a part of this malicious campaign.

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA  
CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

Whether it is EC or ED, IT, CBI, how all independent agencies... have become darbari in darbar of BJP... is sad for the country.

PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI  
SHIV SENA (UBT) MP

The arrest of Hemant Soren marks a brazen escalation of Modi regime's ongoing war on the opposition...

DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA  
CPI (ML) LIBERATION GEN SECY

## From Kashmir to Kerala, many CMs, ex-CMs are under ED probe

DEEPTIMAN TIWARI  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

AS JHARKHAND CM Hemant Soren was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case, the development would be watched keenly by several sitting and former CMs from Opposition parties who are also being probed by the Central agency.

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal is facing the agency's probe related to Delhi liquor policy case that the agency alleged that it favoured private players who allegedly paid bribes to the tune of Rs 100 crore. Kejriwal has till date refused to honour four summonses by the ED.

Telangana CM Revanth Reddy is under ED probe for money laundering. Reddy, then TDP floor leader in the Assembly, was booked for allegedly paying a bribe of Rs 50 lakh to a nominated

MLA for his favourable vote in the MLC elections in 2015.

The ED began a PMLA probe against Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan in April 2021, more than 13 years after the CBI chargesheeted him (then CPIM's Kerala state secretary) in the 1995 SNC Lavalin case. The case pertains to alleged corruption in a contract awarded to Canadian firm SNC Lavalin for modernisation of hydroelectric projects in Idukki. Vijayan was electricity minister then.

Andhra Pradesh CM Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has been facing multiple probes since the UPA era. The ED booked him in a fresh PMLA case in 2015. The case pertained to the financial affairs of Jagan-owned Bharathi Cerments.

Former Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel is facing ED probes in at least three cases of alleged money laundering related to irregularities in coal transportation, operation of liquor vends and

Mahadev gaming app, during his government.

Former Bihar CM Lalu Prasad, his wife Rabri Devi and son Tejashwi Yadav are key accused in the alleged IRCTC scam and the land-for-jobs case. While the 2017 IRCTC case pertains to alleged favours given by Lalu as railway minister to a company hired for the maintenance of two IRCTC hotels, the 2022 land-for-jobs case accuses Lalu family of taking plots in exchange of jobs in railways.

Former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda is being probed by the ED in the Manesar land deal case, and land allotment in Panchkula to Associated Journals Ltd (AJL). The agency has already filed a prosecution complaint against Hooda and senior Congress leader Motilal Vora in the AJL case.

Former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot and his once deputy CM Sachin Pilot, along with Congress

MP Karti Chidambaram, are named in the 'Rajasthan ambulance scam' case. The 2015 case pertains to giving a contract to run '108' ambulance service to Ziqitza Healthcare in a fraudulent manner in 2010. The company, where Pilot and Karti were once allegedly directors, is accused of submitting exaggerated invoices.

Samajwadi Party chief and former Uttar Pradesh CM Akhilesh Yadav is also under investigation by both the CBI and the ED for alleged irregularities in the Gomti riverfront project as well as mining contracts.

BSP chief and former Uttar Pradesh CM Mayawati is not named in any FIR by any Central agency, but several projects and schemes from her tenure as CM are under investigation.

Former J&K CM Farooq Abdullah is under probe in connection with alleged irregularities in grants given by the BCCI to the

J&K Cricket Association (JKCA).

Farooq Abdullah's son and former J&K CM Omar Abdullah was questioned by the ED in 2022 in connection with a money laundering probe concerning the financial affairs of J&K Bank and appointment of its directors.

Former J&K CM Mehbooba Mufti has been facing an ED probe in the J&K Bank matter as well, based on two diaries allegedly seized by the ED during a raid. The diaries allegedly mentions purported payments made to Mufti family.

In July 2019, the CBI booked former Arunachal CM Nabam Tuki for alleged corruption. Based on the CBI FIR, the ED is probing Tuki for alleged money laundering, alleging that Tuki, then a minister, had colluded with his brother to siphon off money.

In November 2019, the CBI conducted searches at the residence of former Manipur CM

Okram Ibobi Singh for alleged corruption. The case pertains to alleged misappropriation of Rs 332 cr in Manipur Development Society when Ibobi was its chairman. Based on CBI case, the ED registered a PMLA case.

Former Gujarat CM Shankersinh Vaghela is being probed by the CBI and the ED for allegedly causing a loss of Rs 709 crore to the exchequer by selling a prime land in Mumbai when he was Union textile minister. While the CBI booked him in 2015, the ED case came in August 2016, just a day after Vaghela called PM Narendra Modi and then BJP president Amit Shah "encounter specialists". The probe is still on.

NCP chief Sharad Pawar and his nephew Ajit Pawar, who is now Maharashtra deputy CM, are facing ED's money laundering probe for alleged irregularities in the running of Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in West Bengal's Malda on Wednesday. Partha Paul

## Cong claims Rahul Yatra 'attacked', backtracks; Mamata slams Cong, CPM

ATRI MITRA & RAVIK  
BHATTACHARYA  
MALDA, KOLKATA, JANUARY 31

ON A DAY that Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and her tour of northern West Bengal districts both criss-crossed Malda district, CM Mamata Banerjee indicated she was in no mood for letting up in her attacks on the INDIA bloc.

Tearing into the Congress, Mamata alleged that the party and the CPI(M) were working together to "clear the ground for the BJP" in the state, adding that only the TMC was fighting against the saffron outfit.

The Congress and TMC also had an exchange of words over the Yatra, with the Congress initially claiming that "anti-socials" had pelted stones at Rahul's vehicle, breaking its windshield.

The Yatra re-entered Bengal via Malda Tuesday. After Mamata claimed the incident had not happened in Bengal, but in Bihar's Katihar which the Yatra travelled through, Congress national spokesperson Supriya Shrinete posted on X that the windshield of Rahul's car had broken due to a crowd surge. Another senior leader said it had happened on the Labha Bridge of Malda, but that Rahul was in the Yatra bus at the time.

At the same time, the Congress criticised the TMC administration for "security lapses", claiming that most of the security had been diverted to Mamata's simultaneous tour of the district.

Mamata took out a padyatra through Malda town Wednesday, as part of which she walked for over a kilometre greeting people lining the roads, before addressing an administrative meeting.

BUDGET SESSION ADDRESS

# From Ram temple to Art 370 abrogation, President Murmu lists accomplishments

LIZ MATHEW  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

ASTRONG and stable government would ensure rapid development at the domestic level and could place the country as "vishwa-mitra" during the period of upheaval in the global scenario, President Droupadi Murmu said on Wednesday in her last address to the joint session of Parliament ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

In her nearly 90-minute speech, President Murmu, who listed the achievements of the two terms of the Narendra Modi-led government, said that January 22, the day Ram temple in Ayodhya was consecrated, was a defining moment. "There come junctures in the history of civilisations, which shape the future for the coming centuries. There have been many such defining moments in the history of India also. This year, on January 22, the country witnessed a similar epochal moment. After waiting for centuries, Ram Lalla has now been enshrined in a grand temple in Ayodhya," the President said in her address.

"This was a matter of aspirations and faith for crores of our countrymen and the resolution of this has been accomplished in a harmonious manner... For centuries, there was an aspiration to construct the Ram Mandir. Today it is a reality," she added.

The references to the Ram temple received thundering ap-

plause and chants of "Jai Shree Ram" from the members. At one reference, even Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was seen thumping the desk.

According to the President, the construction of Ram temple and abrogation of Article 370 were significant in the country's efforts to overcome the past challenges and investing maximum energy for the future.

"Over the past 10 years, India has witnessed several such tasks being accomplished in the national interest, for which the people of the country were waiting for decades. For centuries, there was an aspiration to construct the Ram Mandir. Today it is a reality. There were doubts regarding the removal of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir. Those are history now," she said.

It was the President's first address to the joint session in the Lok Sabha chamber of the new Parliament building. In the old building, joint sitting used to take place in the Central Hall.

In her address, which essentially highlights the Central government's policy priorities and plans for the upcoming year, the President also hinted that the grand edifice of developed India would be erected on four pillars - youth, women, farmers, and poor.

"Their situation and dreams are similar in every part and every section of society in the country. My government is, therefore, working tirelessly to

empower these four pillars. My government has spent a significant portion of the tax revenues to empower these pillars," the President said.

President Murmu also reiterated that only a strong and stable government could assure the country's rapid development. "The assessments of the national and international agencies are based on India's policies. Record investments in infrastructure and policy reforms are further boosting investors' confidence. The preference of Indians for a stable and strong government with full majority has also renewed the confidence of the world," Murmu said, adding that a strong government has been the "advantage" of India during the period of turmoil in the world. "There are many conflicts raging in different parts of the world. My government has established India as a 'vishwa-mitra' in these difficult times. It is because of India's role as 'vishwa-mitra' that we have become the voice of the Global South today," she said.

In her address, she also said the Indian economy used to be among the 'fragile five' but was now moving in the right direction and at the right pace due to several reforms undertaken by the government in the last 10 years. "According to the NITI Aayog, in the 10-year rule of my government, nearly 25-crore people have come out of poverty," she said.

"Propaganda and advertisement of Modi ji appeared in the speech and the entire speech was political. There was no vision in the speech. There was no mention of what the government is going to do for dalits, deprived sections and tribals," Kharge said. The President's address passed by the Union Cabinet was only a praise of the Modi government, he said.

Murmu did not say anything on the issue of rampant unemployment, unbridled inflation and the deep chasm of growing inequality, Kharge said, adding this was because the Modi gov-

## Propaganda, 'ad of Modi': Opp calls address 'political'

New Delhi: The Opposition Congress Wednesday described President Droupadi Murmu's address to the members of both Houses of Parliament as a "political speech drafted only to praise the Narendra Modi government".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said his party was happy that the President came to the new Parliament for the first time and addressed. "Though late, she received this honour. Everyone saw that the government did not consider it appropriate to invite her to the inauguration of the new Parliament building, although the President is an integral part of the Parliament," Kharge said in a statement.

"Propaganda and advertisement of Modi ji appeared in the speech and the entire speech was political. There was no vision in the speech. There was no mention of what the government is going to do for dalits, deprived sections and tribals," Kharge said. The President's address passed by the Union Cabinet was only a praise of the Modi government, he said.

Murmu did not say anything on the issue of rampant unemployment, unbridled inflation and the deep chasm of growing inequality, Kharge said, adding this was because the Modi gov-

ernment has not done anything in the past 10 years towards solving these issues.

Kharge also said that the President could have at least appealed for restoration of peace in Manipur but there was no mention of the violence in her address. "For these reasons, with full respect to His Excellency the President, we reject this eulogising address written by the Modi government," Kharge said.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said, "It was a typical speech you expect from a government before the elections. They have written an election speech for the President to deliver. They have done this, they have done that. But they have not talked about all the things they have not done... This is a one-sided narrative that leaves out a number of important omissions, which I believe people will have to think about when they go to vote in the Lok Sabha elections."

CPI general secretary D Raja said that the President's address has become an occasion to hide failures of the Modi government. "Youth, farmers, women and poor, four pillars of developed India as mentioned are suffering from unemployment, cronyism, patriarchy & inflation. BJP claims are unreal, people will show them a way out of power," he said.

# AMU to SC: Didn't surrender denominational character

ANANTHAKRISHNAN  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE ALIGARH Muslim University (AMU) on Wednesday rejected the argument that it had surrendered its denominational character upon its founding in 1920.

Senior Advocate Rajeev Dhavan appearing for the University told a 7-judge Constitution bench presided by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud that "the AMU Act 1920 read as a whole along with the statement of objects and reasons and the preamble, clearly reflect on the denominational nature of AMU". "The legislative debates... support this view", he told the bench also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Surya Kant, J B Pardiwala, Dipankar Datta, Manoj Misra and Satish Chandra Sharma. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta appearing for the Centre had earlier told the bench which is hearing a reference on AMU's minority character that the University surrendered its denominational character at the time of its establishment by an Act of the British Parliament in 1920 and hence could not claim the minority status now.

Dhavan said the then "education minister while introducing the AMU Bill narrated the entire history of how AMU came to be from the foundation of the Muslim Anglo Oriental College to negotiations with the muslim University for its conversion into a Muslim university".

He sought to underline that "the Governor General congratulated the Muslim community

on the passage of the Bill." Referring to various provisions of the Act including for imparting religious education, Dhavan said they show "continuation of the spirit of MAO". "Existing students in the MAO College were to become the responsibility of AMU. This is the most important example of continuity", he said adding this can only be an argument of continuity and not surrender.

He termed the 1920 Act as "only a mechanism" to convert MOS College into a University.

"There was no surrender at any point of time. This argument is entirely and totally a play on words and nothing more than that," he contended. He also sought to reject the argument that there was no concept of minority before the coming into force of the Constitution. In this context, Dhavan referred to the 1909 Indian Councils Act and Government of India Act 1935 recognising separate electorate for Muslims as proof of the recognition of the minority character of the Muslim community before the Constitution took effect.

"The 1909 Act recognises the minority character of Muslims. In an electoral context no doubt, but definitely the context of what constitutes a minority before the Constitution is squarely raised in the Act. Therefore, minority status my lords, is something that was known before the Constitution. It isn't a question that arises only after the 1981 amendment," he said.

The Centre had also argued that AMU was recognised by the Constitution as an institution of national importance and it "must reflect the national structure". On

Wednesday, the CJ said "there is nothing inconsistent with a minority institution being of national importance. You can have a minority institution which is made by Parliament by law".

Senior Advocate N K Kaul while opposing the AMU's claim to minority status said that the legislative history of the AMU Act could not have been altered by the 1981 amendment. The 1981 amendment was brought about to overcome the SC five-judge Constitution bench ruling in the case 'S Azeez Basha vs Union of India' in 1967 wherein it was held that AMU was not entitled to minority education status as it "was neither established nor administered by the Muslim minority".

"You cannot alter legislative history... you are today seeking to argue that by the change in definition of University and by removal of the word establishment, we will change the historical facts," he submitted.

He added, "this is my submission that by a legislative fiat or legal fiction you cannot take away a historical legislative fact, you cannot alter history".

But the CJ said: "Mr Kaul you are also appearing on the side of the government. In the eagerness to uphold the striking down of the 81 amendment (by the Allahabad High Court in 2006), let us not do something which substantially cripples the powers of the Parliament. In the effort to sustain the decision of the Allahabad HC and to get over the 1981 amendment, we shouldn't be doing something, I mean, we mean you... which really in that sense substantially mutes the powers of the Parliament in future."



UP IN ARMS: Members of the Democratic Youth Federation of India and the Students Federation of India protest against the Maharashtra government, demanding jobs and education, in Mumbai on Wednesday. ANI

## NATIONAL CREDIT FRAMEWORK

# CBSE plan: 3 languages, seven other subjects in Class 10; 6 papers in Class 12

R RADHIKA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE CENTRAL Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is reported to have proposed significant changes to the academic framework for secondary and higher secondary education, including a shift from studying two languages to three in Class 10, with the requirement that at least two must be native Indian languages. Furthermore, students in Class 10 may now need to pass in 10 subjects, as opposed to the current requirement of five.

Similarly, for Class 12, the proposed changes involve students studying two languages instead of one, with the condition that at least one must be a native Indian language. Overall, they would have to clear examinations in six subjects instead of five to graduate from high school.

According to a detailed plan reviewed by *The Indian Express*, the proposed changes form part of the CBSE's broader initiative to implement a national credit framework in school education.

Creditisation aims to establish academic equivalence between vocational and general education, facilitating mobility between the two education systems, as proposed by the National Education Policy 2020.

At present, the standard school curriculum does not have a formalised credit system. As per the CBSE plan, an academic year would be made up of 1200 notional learning hours, which would translate to earning 40 credits. Notional learning refers to a stipulated amount of time that an average student would need to spend in order to attain the specified outcomes. In other words, each subject has been allotted a certain number of hours so that, in a year, a student spends a total of 1200 learning hours to be declared pass. The hours will include both academic learning at school and non-academic or experiential learning outside the school.

The scheme of studies has accordingly been tweaked to mention teaching hours and credits earned against each subject. The credits earned by a student will

be digitally stored in the Academic Bank of Credits and accessible through a linked Digilocker account. The credits, the plan states, will be "independent" of the marks obtained by a student, an official CBSE document states.

In order to operationalise this, the Board has proposed to increase the number of subjects studied in secondary and higher secondary education by adding multidisciplinary and vocational courses to the list of existing subjects. So, for Class 10, where students currently have to pass five subjects (two languages and three main subjects of mathematics, science and social science), they would have to clear 10 subjects (three languages and seven main subjects) under the creditised system.

While two of the three languages should be native Indian languages, the seven main subjects proposed for Class 10 are: mathematics and computational thinking, social science, science, art education, physical education and well-being, vocational education and environ-

mental education.

The three languages, mathematics and computational thinking, social science, science and environmental education would be assessed externally; art education, physical education and vocational education would be a mix of internal and external examination. But students would have to pass all 10 subjects to move on to the next grade.

For Classes 11 and 12, instead of the current five subjects (one language and four subjects or electives), students would have to study six subjects (two languages and four subjects with an optional fifth subject). At least one of the two languages has to be a native Indian language.

The plan containing the changes proposed to the academic framework of Classes 9, 10, 11 and 12 was sent to all heads of CBSE-affiliated institutions late last year, to review and provide comments by December 5, 2023.

According to an official, the CBSE has received favourable responses from school heads and teachers.

# Indian-origin couple jailed for 33 years in UK for exporting over half tonne cocaine to Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON, JANUARY 31

AN INDIAN-ORIGIN couple in the UK, whose extradition was sought by India on charges of the murder of their adopted son in Gujarat, has been sentenced to 33 years in prison each after being convicted of exporting more than half a tonne of cocaine to Australia using commercial planes.

Arati Dhir, 59, and Kavaljitsinh Rajjada, 35, from Hanwell in Ealing were identified by the National Crime Agency (NCA) investigators after Australian Border Force intercepted the cocaine worth 57 million pounds upon its arrival in Sydney in May 2021, the agency said in a statement on Monday.

The couple was behind a

front company that had sent the drugs by plane under a cover load of metal toolboxes, according to the investigation.

Dhir and Rajjada denied exporting cocaine to Australia and money laundering. They were convicted of 12 counts of exportation and 18 counts of money laundering by a jury following a trial at Southwark Crown Court on Monday.

They were sentenced at the same court on Tuesday.

The drugs exported by the two had been shipped via a commercial flight from the UK and consisted of six metal toolboxes which, when opened, were found to contain 514 kilograms of cocaine.

The drugs would have been worth up to 57 million pounds when sold in Australia, where

prices are significantly higher than in the UK. In the UK, a kilo of cocaine at wholesale is priced at around 26,000 pounds but in Australia, the same amount sells for 110,000 pounds.

Officers traced the consignment back to Dhir and Rajjada,

who had set up a front company called Viefly Freight Services with the sole purpose of smuggling drugs.

Both defendants had been directors of the company at different points since its incorporation in June 2015.

**Maharashtra Agricultural Universities Examination Board**  
MCAER Building, Bhosale Nagar, Pune-411007  
Phone No.020 25528519/25528119 Email: maueb@pune@yahoo.co.in

**PG-CET-2024 Notification**

Online applications are invited by the Controller, Maharashtra Agricultural Universities Examination Board, Pune for PG-CET-2024 (Common Entrance Test for Masters, Degrees Admission during AY 2024-25) to be held on 30.03.2024 to 01.04.2024 in nine faculties at seventeen centres across four Agriculture Universities in Maharashtra. Online application process will be started from 01.02.2024 and the last date for submission of online applications is 27.02.2024. Candidates may visit the website <http://www.mcaer.org> for the further details or to apply.

Sd/- Controller  
Maharashtra Agricultural Universities  
Examination Board, Pune-7

**J.C. FLOWERS ASSET RECONSTRUCTION PRIVATE LIMITED**  
Registered Office: 203-206, 2nd Floor, Wing A, Inspire BKC, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai-400051. CIN: U74999MH2015PTC264081 Telephone No.: +91 22 62580400

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE ASSETS UNDER THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST (SARFAESI) ACT, 2002 READ WITH RULE 8(6) AND RULE 9(1) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002**

J. C. Flowers Asset Reconstruction Private Limited, acting in its capacity as Trustee of JCF YES Trust 2022-23/1 ("JCF ARC / Secured Creditor") has been assigned by Yes Bank Ltd ("YBL"), vide Assignment Agreement dated December 16, 2022, the loans granted to Ardent Infra Equipments Private Limited ("Borrower") under the financing documents together with, inter-alia, all the rights, title, interest and all other security therein. Further, notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower and Mortgagee(s) and Guarantor (s) that the below mentioned immovable property, the physical possession whereof was taken by the Authorized Officer of JCF ARC on November 23, 2023.

The undersigned hereby gives notice that the below described immovable property will be sold by way of an e-auction on an "As Is Where Is", "As is What is", "Whatever There is" and "No Recourse" basis on March 12, 2024 (between 12 pm and 2 pm) for recovery of Rs. 7,57,55,903/- (Rupees Seven Crores Fifty Seven Lakhs Fifty Five Thousand Nine Hundred and Three Only) as on June 25, 2021 together with further interest, costs, charges and expenses thereon with effect from June 26, 2021 due to the Secured Creditor from the Borrower and the 1) Ardent Machinofabrik Private Limited ("Guarantor No. 1"), 2) Mr. Ashok Narottam Tanna ("Guarantor No. 2") and 3) Mrs. Asha Ashok Tanna ("Guarantor No. 3 & Mortgagee"). The details regarding the description of the Property, Reserve Price (below which the Property will not be sold) and the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) are more particularly stated in the table below:

Name of Borrower/ Mortgagee	Description of Property	Reserve Price (IN Rupees)	Earnest Money Deposit (10% Of Reserve Price)
Ardent Infra Equipments Private Limited ("Borrower")	Flat No. 901, admeasuring 1421 sq. ft. equivalent to 1320.01 sq. mtrs. or thereabouts built-up area and 1339 sq. ft. equivalent to 124.40 sq. mtrs. or thereabouts carpet area including balcony on 9th floor along with stilt car parking space no. 2 admeasuring 23 sq. mtrs. and terrace adjoining the said flat no. 901 admeasuring 210 sq. ft. equivalent to 19.51 sq. mtrs. or thereabouts carpet area in building known as Casablanca, constructed in the year 2003-05 or thereabouts, having ground plus 10 upper floors, situated at 522A, R. P. Masani Road, Malunga, Mumbai - 400019 on plot bearing C. S. No. 4 of 110 of Matunga Division, owned by Mrs. Asha Ashok Tanna Bounded by: East: R. P. Masani Road West: Bldg. North: Narayan Villa Bldg. South: Krishna Niwas.	INR 6,20,00,000/- (Rupees Six Crore Twenty Lakh Only)	INR 62,00,000/- (Rupees Sixty Two Lakh Only)

Note: A. Last Date & Time of submitting EMD: March 11, 2024 upto 3.30 p.m.  
B. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please log on to the website <https://bankeuctions.com>. For any further information on the auction, the intended tenderers may contact Mr. Pratik Ghorpade on [pratik.ghorpade@jcfarc.com](mailto:pratik.ghorpade@jcfarc.com) and at +91 9029543661 between 10:30 AM. to 5:30 PM on all working days.  
C. In case of any discrepancy in this E-auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under SARFAESI Act Read With Rule 8(6) and Rule 9(1) of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 dated February 01, 2024 published in Indian Express (English News Paper), the English edition shall supersede the vernacular edition publication.

Sd/- Mr. Pratik Ghorpade  
Authorized Officer  
J.C. Flowers Asset Reconstruction Pvt. Ltd.  
acting in its capacity as Trustee of JCF YES Trust 2022-23/1

Place: Mumbai  
Date: February 01, 2024

**Directorate General Resettlement**  
Ministry of Defence  
brings together Employment seekers and Employers on a single platform at  
DGR Ex-Servicemen Job Fair at Pune  
providing an opportunity for Second Innings to Ex-Servicemen

**ON 07th FEBRUARY 2024 AT AIR FORCE STATION, VIMAN NAGAR GATE, PUNE - 411014**  
TIMINGS : 09:00 AM ONWARDS

- Registration for all ESM will close at 11.30 AM
- Entry on First Come First Serve Basis
- Documents to carry: ESM I card and five copies of latest CV/Bio Data with photograph

**Benefits for ESM Job Seekers**

- No cost access to Multiple Job Opportunities
- Hassle Free Recruitment Process
- Interact with Recruiters from Top PSUs/Corporates

**Benefits for Employers**

- Access to Veteran talent pool at zero cost
- To book your company's stall visit : [www.dgrindia.gov.in](http://www.dgrindia.gov.in)
- Companies are requested to register through the link provided on our official web site. Due to limited availability, stalls will be allotted on first-come-first-serve basis

**For further queries & assistance, please contact**  
**Joint Director (SE & CI)**  
**Directorate General Resettlement**  
West Block IV, RK Puram, New Delhi-110 066  
Email : [seopadr@desw.gov.in](mailto:seopadr@desw.gov.in), [drzspne@desw.gov.in](mailto:drzspne@desw.gov.in)  
Tel : 011 -20862542 , 020-26341217  
Web site : <http://www.dgrindia.gov.in>  
Nodal Contact - JWO KARAM CHAND - 9421198823  
SGT KAILASH - 9405606136

cbce- 10401/11/0017/2324

## Eight women beneficiaries, official booked for fraud in UP mass marriage scheme

**MANISH SAHU**  
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 31

AN FIR has been registered against an assistant development officer of the social welfare department and eight women beneficiaries on charges of fraud in connection with the state government's mass marriage scheme, police on Wednesday said.

It is alleged that several persons, who were already married, were married again in the mass marriage programme organised in Ballia on January 25, they said. The Mass Marriage Scheme is aimed at benefiting economically weak young men and women. Under this scheme, a payment of Rs 51,000 is made of which Rs 35,000 goes to the girl, Rs 10,000 for purchasing matrimonial materials and Rs 6,000 for the event, according to the government website.

The January 25 event was organised by the state's social welfare department. District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar said that the funds have not yet been distributed to the beneficiaries of the programme, held in the Maniyar development block.

After being informed that "ineligible" candidates may have benefited from the mass marriage function, UP Social Welfare Minister Asem Arun directed a thorough inquiry. On January 29, the District Magistrate of Ballia, Ravindra Kumar, formed a team to look into the matter.

A preliminary inquiry found that eight women who participated in the scheme were ineligible as they were already married. Assistant development

officer (social welfare) Sunil Kumar Yadav, who verified their marriages on January 25, has been suspended for "negligence." On the basis of a complaint filed by Ballia's social welfare officer, Deepak Srivastava, an FIR was registered against the eight women and Sunil Kumar Yadav at the Maniyar police station in Ballia on Tuesday. They have been booked under IPC sections 409 (criminal breach of trust), 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), and 419 (cheating by personation).

No arrest has been made yet. "We are collecting evidence," said station officer, Maniyar police station, Mantosh Singh.

The ceremony on January 25 was organised at a government inter-college building in Maniyar village under the Chief Minister's mass marriage scheme, where a total of 537 marriages were conducted.

Allegations of irregularities cropped up a video surfaced on social media, purportedly showing women seemingly garlanding themselves, with a significant number "marrying without grooms." The district administration constituted a three-member team to investigate the allegations. Chief Development Officer, Ballia, Aojasvi Raj, emphasised that immediate directives were issued not to disburse any financial assistance provided to couples under the scheme, under which each woman receives Rs 35,000.

The expanded inquiry team visited three villages — Sultanpur, Manikpur, and Kakarghat Ghas — falling under the Maniyar block. A senior administrative official said that during physical verification, it was discovered that seven women were already married — six women married last year and another married 3 years ago. **WITHPTIINPUTS**

## Back from Arctic winter voyage, scientists 'happy to see the Sun'

**ANJALI MARAR**  
BENGALURU, JANUARY 31

"THE ONE thing I have suddenly learnt to value is sunlight. India has it in plenty, and thank God for that," said Girish, a senior research scientist at Raman Research Institute in Bengaluru, who has just returned from the Arctic.

Girish was part of the four-member scientific team that became the first set of researchers from India to spend a winter carrying out scientific studies in the world's northernmost habitation. India has a permanent research station called Himadri, in Ny-Ålesund in the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard in the Arctic region since 2008, but it used to remain uninhabited during winter because of extremely hostile weather conditions. The place is barely 1,200 km from the North Pole. This year, however, India decided to make the station operational throughout the year, and the first winter team, which included Girish, went there in December.

India is only the fourth country in the world, after Germany, Italy and Norway, to have a year-round scientific presence in the Arctic region.

"In our part of the world, there is a natural tendency of waking up at dawn and seeing the sunlight. But in Svalbard, it took us a few days to accept that we will have to live in the dark," recalled Girish. During October-February, Svalbard experiences polar nights and slips into darkness.

Athulya Radhakrishnan, a final-year PhD student from the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa, who was part of the team, vividly recalls January 2. That day, she got a chance to release the radiosonde (a set of instruments packed along with a balloon



India has a permanent research station called Himadri, in Ny-Ålesund in the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard in the Arctic region since 2008.

used to measure temperature, pressure, etc.) into the air amidst pitch dark. "It was only several minutes later we could confirm that the radiosonde had been successfully released when data started flowing in," she said.

For the Indian contingent, a weekday at Ny-Ålesund would typically begin with breakfast around 7:30 am after which the researchers would begin their day's tasks. Weekends were mostly off duty and they could travel to the Svalbard settlement area.

Girish, along with Principal Investigator Saurabh Singh, had proposed to conduct the characterisation of the radio frequency environment in the Arctic, the first attempt ever from this region. It aimed at hunting for potential and pristine sites free from all kinds of Radio Frequency Interference (RFI) for carrying out sensitive radio astronomy observations in future. The duo's larger scientific goal, however, is to study the weak radio signals emerging from celestial bodies and piece together how the first stars were born when universe was quite young, a phase referred to as the Cosmic Dawn.

This characterisation over the Arctic is best done in winter, a

period when the presence of researchers in the Svalbard region is the slimmest. Besides, the absence of the Sun during polar nights is an added advantage as it is a major source of contamination when hunting for the faint radio signals from the depths of spacetime, they said.

Even though the plan to send researchers to the Arctic during winter is at least a decade old, the required boost came in March 2022, when India adopted its Arctic Policy.

It is seen as a big geo-political move and is expected to give India a 'pole' position to explore minerals, natural resources, new trade routes around the Arctic, among others.

Three experiments required the Indian researchers to drive an electric car to the Gruevbadet laboratory, located around 1.25 km from Himadri. India shares this lab with Italy and Japan.

"I would make several trips in the day. There was excellent support provided by the Kings Bay staff, who were highly skilled, professional and helped us set up in a short time," Girish said.

Final year PhD student at IIT-Mandi, Prashant Rawat shared similar views. "It is teamwork

that makes research possible while in Ny-Ålesund. But I really missed the Sun," he said.

Rawat's visit aimed at collecting aerosol samples from the Arctic and study the causal sources that released aerosols and the wind conditions responsible for transporting it to the Arctic. Girish described Ny-Ålesund as a dry and cold place, where temperature remained close to minus 15 degrees Celsius on majority of the days. Only once, due to wind chill, the temperature dropped to minus 40.7 degrees Celsius.

Surendra Singh from the Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) held the distinction of having completed three successful expeditions to Antarctica during 2016, 2018 and 2020, before visiting the Arctic. After Antarctica, Singh's latest deployment in the Arctic includes two key instruments — a Maxwell Antenna and an Electric Field Mill that will detect the atmospheric electric current and field, respectively, helping scientists piece together information about the Global Atmospheric Electrical Circuit and better understand lightning.

On differences between the Arctic and the Antarctic, Singh said: "Though there is more snowfall in the Antarctic, winter months over the Arctic are harsher."

The Service Building, about 200 metres from Himadri, is where all station members assemble for meals, official Wednesday meetings of station heads and to get weather forecast and polar bear sightings.

"More than the weather, there is a wildlife threat in the Arctic. It makes our movement restricted to a few tens of metres. We must either be escorted by a gunman or be driving a car to remain safe, a scenario not prevalent in Antarctica," added Singh.

**KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice**  
Tender No. : No.194/2023-24/SE/O  
Rebuild- WSS to Neduvathor panchayat and Kottarakkara Municipality in Kollam district- Phase I- Implementation of production components- design, construction and commissioning of 16 MLD WTP at Ugrankunnu, EMD : Rs. 500000, Tender fee : Rs. 16540+2978, Last Date for submitting Tender : 29-02-2024 02:00:pm Phone : 04742745293, Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, www.etenders.kerala.gov.in  
Superintending Engineer  
PH Circle  
Kollam  
KWA-JB-GL-6-2241-2023-24

**JAIPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
Indira Circle, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, Jaipur-302004  
No.: JDA/EE(PHE-I)/2024/D-43 Date : 31.01.2024  
**NOTICE INVITING BID**  
NIB No.: JDA/EE (PHE-I)/16/2023-24  
Online Bids are invited up-to 06:00 PM of 22.02.2024 for "Construction of Pumping Stations and Laying Down of Remaining Pipe Line of SEPD at Sangaran Industrial Area, Jaipur". The last date for Applying Bid and making online payment on JDA portal is up-to 06:00 PM of 22.02.2024. The estimated cost of NIB is Rs. 2259.70 Lacs. Details may be seen in the Bidding Document at our office or the State Public Procurement Portal website www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in, www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in and www.jda.rajasthan.gov.in.  
UBN No.: JDA2324WLO800711  
To participate in the bid, bidder must:-  
A. Participate in Tender & Deposit Payment on Online Tender Participation Portal of JDA at [www.jda.rajasthan.gov.in](http://www.jda.rajasthan.gov.in) or by Single-Sign-On at <http://service.jaipurida.org>.  
B. Submit e-Bid on e-Procurement Portal of GOR at [www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in](http://www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in)  
Raj. Samwad/2023-24/12499  
Executive Engineer (PHE-I)

**TAMILNADU MINERALS LIMITED**  
100% Government of Tamil Nadu  
No.71, Kongu Park, Chennai, Chennai-600 036, Tamil Nadu-600036, 2051973  
NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER CUM FORWARD BIDDING  
1. Description: Sale of Cement grade Limestone (as mined) from Periyannagar Limestone mine, Ariyalur District.  
2. Tender No. & Date: 10/VAP-2/2024, Dated: 31.01.2024  
Tender ID: 2024, TNMIN, 416954\_1  
3. Bid submission end date: 01.03.2024 up to 1600 hrs.  
4. Technical bid opening date: 04.03.2024 at 1600 hrs.  
5. Tender form Fee & EMD: Rs 2,000/- (Rupees Two thousand only) EMD Rs 4,72,000/- (Rupees Four Lakhs seventy two thousand only)  
Note: For further details please visit Tamilnadu e-tendering portal: <https://etenders.gov.in>  
DPMS55TENDER0202  
GENERAL MANAGER/FINANCE

**MAHAVITARAN**  
E-TENDER NOTICE  
Online bids are invited from eligible bidders for request for proposal for carrying out annual energy audit for FY 2023-24 in MSEDCL as per Bureau of Energy Efficiency Regulation dated 06-10-2021. Brief Scope of Work and Qualification Criteria are available in the Suppliers Portal - Latest Tender Notification at [www.mahadiscom.in](http://www.mahadiscom.in). The pre-bid meeting will be on 06.02.2024 at 15:00 hrs. (Google Meet link: <https://meet.google.com/obd-ubim-wgo>) while last date of bid submission is 22.02.2024 up to 17:00 hrs. Entire tender document is available on MSEDCL e-Tendering website <https://etender.mahadiscom.in>  
Chief Engineer (B&R), MSEDCL, Prakashgad, 5th Floor, Bandra (E), Mumbai 400 051 Email: [cebillingho@gmail.com](mailto:cebillingho@gmail.com), [sebillingham1@gmail.com](mailto:sebillingham1@gmail.com)  
HO PR No. 14/24 dtd. 31.01.24

**Government of Maharashtra**  
Office of the Executive Engineer,  
P. W. Division No.2, Thane.  
E-Mail ID - thane2.ee@mahapwd.gov.in Phone No. & Fax No. 022-25361393.  
E-Tender Notice No. 49 For 2023-24

The Executive Engineer, P.W. Division No.2, Thane invite in B-1 format from Unemployed Engineer Tender documents and all the details regarding e-tender may be downloaded from website <http://mahatenders.gov.in>. Acceptance of tender will rest with the Executive Engineer, P.W. Division No.2, Thane who reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason therefore. Conditional Tenders will not be accepted.

- Work Name :-
- 1) Construction of Kalambhe Manichapad road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 16,55,464/-
  - 2) Construction of Borsheti Lohipada Road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 16,55,464/-
  - 3) Construction of Borsheti Pondyachapada road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 16,55,464/-
  - 4) Construction of Jambhe Indirawadi road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 16,56,208/-
  - 5) Construction of Asnoli Nipurtepada road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 16,56,497/-
  - 6) Construction of Bhatpada approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 16,57,227/-
  - 7) Construction of Naryangaon approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 16,57,905/-
  - 8) Construction of Gokulgaon Thile approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 16,57,923/-
  - 9) Construction of Khatali Mhasarkarpad road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 16,61,9101/-
  - 10) Construction of Shelavali Bhoirpada approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 16,73,000/-
  - 11) Construction of road at Vehlode Village to Vehlode Ganapati Mandir in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 19,86,165/-
  - 12) Construction of Nevare to Saharepad road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. VR-143 (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,18,060/-
  - 13) Construction of Nevare to Waghivadi road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. VR-144 (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,25,667/-
  - 14) Construction of Chimshepada to Dattakpada road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. VR-143 (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,26,368/-
  - 15) Construction of Vandre road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. VR-169 (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,31,160/-
  - 16) Construction of Shwliwli (Kh) road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,37,537/-
  - 17) Construction of Bershing Borichapada road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,38,612/-
  - 18) Beautification of and Providing Basic Facility at Sapgao in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under Tourism Programme), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,45,976/-
  - 19) Construction of Kanve Umbhrai approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,46,527/-
  - 20) Construction of Retaining Wall on Vitthalgaon road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,51,064/-
  - 21) Construction of Kalbhonde Approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,62,475/-
  - 22) Construction of Nadgaon Samarthnagar road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 20,64,121/-
  - 23) Construction of Alyachiwadi Krishnachiwadi road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 21,15,454/-
  - 24) Construction of Slab Drain (Sakav) on Dhakne Waghvadi Approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 24,14,943/-
  - 25) Construction of Retaining Wall on Apathe Khariid Mugaon Asnoli Gegaon MDR-85 Km 8/00 to 11/00 approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 road & Bridge 04), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 24,46,757/-
  - 26) Construction of Nandgaon (So) Katarwadi road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 24,49,154/-
  - 27) Construction of Muhpada (Sawrol) road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 24,60,048/-
  - 28) Construction of Vaveghar Bhavase Taharpur to ODR 141 Approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 24,60,605/-
  - 29) Construction of Taharpur Approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 24,50,800/-
  - 30) Construction of MDR-62 Gundpada Walimbe pada Road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 23,95,704/-
  - 31) Construction of Telampada approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 24,80,702/-
  - 32) Construction of Jambhe Taichiwadi road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 24,95,241/-
  - 33) Construction of Jambhe Shendrun road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 24,93,041/-
  - 34) Construction of Umbhrai approach road in Taluka-Shahapur, District-Thane. (Under 5054 Tribal work), Estimated Cost (Rupees) :- Rs. 25,00,330/-

E-tender download period Dated :- 05.02.2024 to 12.02.2024  
E Tender opening date Dated :- 15.02.2024  
All information about the E-tenders is available on following websites.  
1) <http://mahapwd.com>  
2) <http://mahatenders.gov.in> (Changes if any, will be displayed above websites).  
3) Notice board of the Executive Engineer, P. W. Division No.2, Thane

No. PWDNo.2/Thane/E-Tender/2023-24/1292  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
P. W. Division No.2, Thane- 400601  
Date :- 29.01.2024  
DGIPR/2023-24/7475  
Executive Engineer,  
P. W. Division No.2, Thane

**GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA**  
Office of the Executive Engineer,  
Alibag (P.W.) Division, Alibag  
Pin Code-402 201  
E-mail Address : [alibag.ee@mahapwd.com](mailto:alibag.ee@mahapwd.com)  
Telephone/Fax No. : (02141)222084/225096  
E-Tender Notice No. 44 for 2023-2024

ONLINE E-Tenders in "B-1" Form for the following work are invited by the Executive Engineer, P.W. Division, Alibag from Competent Contractors/ Registered Contractors who fulfills tender conditions and post qualification criteria mentioned in the tender form.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Amount
1	Strengthening to Telavade to Katkarwadi Road with Construction of CD Works VR-41 in Km. 0/00 to 1/200, Tal. Murud, Dist. Raigad	1,27,59,468.00
2	Strengthening to Telavade to Kharbhumi Bunder Road with Construction of CD Works VR-37 in Km. 0/00 to 2/00, Tal. Murud, Dist. Raigad	1,47,22,145.00

Period of Downloading : 01.02.2024 (10.00 A.M.) to 08.02.2024 (06.00 P.M.).  
E-Tender Opening Date : 12.02.2024 (03.00 P.M.)

(Office of the Superintending Engineer, Raigad (P.W.) Circle, Konkan Bhavan, New Mumbai).

All detail information is available on following web site:  
1. <http://mahapwd.com>  
2. <http://mahatenders.gov.in>  
(If there are any charges to this notice, the information will be communicated on the above web site).

O.No./P.W./AD/Tender/ /2024  
Office of the Executive Engineer,  
P.W. Division, Alibag-402 201  
Date :  
Sd/-  
(J. I. Sukhdeve)  
Executive Engineer,  
P.W. Division, Alibag,  
Dist. Raigad  
DGIPR/2023-2024/7485

**KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice**  
Tender No. : Re Te No. 80,81,82/SE/PHCPKD (LJM) - CWSS to Karimba, Kongad and Mundur GP - Re Te No. 80) Design, Construction and maintenance of 13 LL OHSR at Parakkal in Karimba Pt providing Booster pump/house for Kongad zone including laying of pipeline in Karimba, Kongad and Mundur Pts and LSGD road restoration. Re Te No. 81) Package - 2 Laying CWP/PM from WTP to OHSR at Parakkal for Karimba Zone. Supply and erection of CW pump sets, balance laying of 200 mm DI K9 pipe and LSGD road restoration. Re Te No. 82) CWSS to Peruvembu - Design, Construction and maintenance of 7.00 LL & 3.50 LL OHSRs, supplying, laying of distribution network, renovation of intake well cum raw water pump house, WTP and Providing FHTCo. EMD : Rs. 2,00,000/-, 5,00,000/- & 5,00,000/- Tender fee : Rs. 11025, 16540 & 16540, Last Date for submitting Tender : 14-02-2024 03:00am Phone : 0491 2544927, Website : [www.kwa.kerala.gov.in](http://www.kwa.kerala.gov.in), [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in)  
Superintending Engineer  
PH Circle  
Palakkad  
KWA-JB-GL-6-2236-2023-24

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER  
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BALASORE  
No. 376 /WE, Dt:- 25.01.2024  
e-procurement Notice  
1. Name of the Work :- "Building Works."  
1. Estimated Cost :- As per Annexure.  
2. Time for completion :- As per Annexure.  
3. No of Work :- As per Annexure.  
4. Summary for key dates :-  
is provided below

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of opening of Tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Balasore	N.C.B. No.- 71 of 2023-24	Dt. 01.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.	Dt. 12.02.2024 up to 5.00 P.M.	Dt. 12.02.2024 up to 1.00 P.M.	Dt. 13.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.	Will be intimated latter

Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)  
Any other changes/ Corrigendum may be seen only in website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)  
Sd/- Er. N.V. Harihar Rao  
Chief Construction Engineer,  
Rural Works Circle, Balasore  
OIPR-25105/11/0093/2324

**GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA**  
Executive Engineer South Mumbai Electrical Division P.W.D. Mumbai  
TENDER NOTICE No. 52/2023-24  
ONLINE tender in B1 form are invited through E-tendering mode by Executive Engineer south Mumbai P.W.D. Electrical Division Mumbai from registered Contractor with P.W.D. Government of Maharashtra in appropriate class/having experience for Execution of similar type of work online blank tender form are available on site <http://mahatender.gov.in> can be downloaded from 01.02.2024 at 1300 Hrs to 09.02.2024 at 1300 Hrs. online E-tender will be opened in the office of Executive Engineer south mumbai (electrical) division P.W.D Mumbai on 12.02.2024 at 1400 Hrs. if possible. Right in reserved to accept or reject the tender without giving any reason.  
Note : To Participate in the tender it is necessary that bidder should have class D and Above digital signature and register with above site. there is 04 tender in the above tender notice details tender notice is available on the notice board of office of Ex. Engineer South Mumbai P.W.D. Electrical Division Mumbai.  
(Estimated Cost of The Work Above 10.00 Lakhs)  
OW/No/635/EE/SMED/TENDER/2023-24  
Dt. 24.01.2024  
-sd-  
Executive Engineer  
South Mumbai Electrical Division P.W.D. Mumbai  
DGIPR-2023-24/7490

**MADHYA PRADESH POWER GENERATING COMPANY LIMITED**  
Superintending Engineer (P&W), Office of the Chief Engineer (Gen.), Sanjay Gandhi Thermal Power Station  
Birsinghpur, Distt.-Umariya 484 552 (M.P.), Email ID : [sepnw.sgtps@mppgcl.mp.gov.in](mailto:sepnw.sgtps@mppgcl.mp.gov.in), Fax No. : 07655-260226  
Birsinghpur, Dtd. 30.01.2024  
E-TENDER INVITING NOTICE  
M.P. POWER GENERATING CO. LTD. Invites Electronic tenders from manufacturer/reputed supplier/contractor, for the supply/works of following items for SGTPS, MPPGCL Birsinghpur.

Sl. No.	MPPGCL Tender-ID	Particulars	Estimate (In Rs.)	Tender Cost (In Rs.)	E.M.D. (In Rs.)	Last Date of Closing of Online Submission	Due Date of E-Tender Opening
1	2024_MPPGC_323955_1	Work contract for Preventive/Breakdown maintenance of non-pressure parts of Boiler of 1X500 MW Unit, at SGTPS, MPPGCL, Birsinghpur	105.83 lakhs	5000	2,00,000/-	22.02.2024	26.02.2024
2	2024_MPPGC_325634_1	Work contract for "Annual Preventive/Breakdown maintenance of Non-Pressure parts of Boiler & its Auxiliaries for unit no. 1 to 4 of 210 MW of PH-I & PH-II" at SGTPS, MPPGCL, Birsinghpur	279.80 lakhs	5000	2,79,800/-	22.02.2024	26.02.2024

These tenders are being invited through e-tendering system. For viewing detailed E-NIT, downloading tender documents and participating in Electronic Tender, for any clarifications and/or due date extensions or corrigendum, please visit the website [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in) regularly. Any clarifications and/or due date extensions or corrigendum shall be issued on the website [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in) only.  
M.P. Madhyam/113523/2024 "SAVE ELECTRICITY- SAVE POWER- SAVE MONEY" SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (P&W)

## Assam Cong chief appears before police after summons related to Rahul's yatra

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 31

Assam Congress chief Bhupen Borah appeared before Jorhat police Wednesday after receiving a summons for a case registered against the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

Last week, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Borah received a notice from the Jorhat police directing him to appear before it on January 31, failing which he will be liable for arrest.

This is in relation to a suo moto case registered by the Jorhat police on January 18 against the yatra for allegedly deviating from its permitted route in the district.

On Wednesday, he reported to the police station at 11 am accompanied by other state Congress leaders, and his supporters. He left the police station after three hours and said he had been asked to report there again on February 12.

Speaking to reporters after leaving the police station, he said he would comply with the police's directions and that the Assam Congress would simultaneously continue with its preparations for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

"The BJP seeks that the Congress party remains busy with police stations. We will follow the law, they (the police) have called me again on the 12th (February). I will come. We all have duties. Some will contest the elections, some will campaign... We have to fight the legal battle as well as the Lok Sabha elections, which will be conducted in 100 days. We will fulfil our duties there as well... They may lock me up, but the APCC will not stop. When Gandhi ji and Jawaharlal Nehru ji were in jail, the freedom struggle continued. I am not such a big man. There are many leaders in our party," he said.

The complaint against which the relevant case had been registered alleged that "one K B Byju, along with unknown others, instigated and led the crowd to take the Gar Ali Road and (they) damaged the barricades which were put for the management of traffic and also assaulted on-duty police personnel."

## RBI action against Paytm Payments Bank: probable causes, effects

**SUKALP SHARMA & GEORGE MATHEW**  
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

IN A huge blow to Paytm Payments Bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday barred it from offering all its core services — including accounts and wallets — from March, effectively crippling the company's business.

While the action is technically not a cancellation of Paytm's licence, it constricts the company's operations to a great extent. Given the significant customer base of Paytm — once the poster boy of India's fintech revolution — the RBI action could impact a large number of customers. The central bank, though, has allowed withdrawal or utilisation of balance amounts by customers.

According to the Paytm Payments Bank

website, it has over 100 million know your customer (KYC) verified customers. "We are also the largest issuer of FASTag with over 8 million FASTag units issued," the bank's website says. Paytm founder and Chairman Vijay Shekhar Sharma is the part-time Chairman of the Bank.

Paytm Payments Bank has so far not commented on the RBI order.

### What does the RBI direction say?

The central bank has barred Paytm Payments Bank from offering practically all of its key services — accepting deposits or top-ups in any customer account, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags, National Common Mobility Card (NCMC), etc., after February 29 in the wake of "persistent non-compliances and material supervisory concerns".

"No other banking services...like fund transfers (irrespective of name and nature of

services like AEPS, IMPS, etc.), BBPOU and UPI facility should be provided by the bank after February 29, 2024," the RBI said, adding that the nodal accounts of parent company One97 Communications and Paytm Payments Services should be terminated at the earliest, and not later than February 29.

Settlement of all pipeline transactions and nodal accounts—in respect of all transactions initiated on or before February 29—should be completed by March 15. No transactions shall be permitted thereafter.

### What about customers' money?

According to the RBI, withdrawal or utilisation of balances by customers from their Paytm accounts, including savings bank accounts, current accounts, prepaid instruments, FASTags, NCMC, etc., are to be permitted without any restrictions "up to their

available balance".

The RBI statement, however, does not mention a number of other services, like loans, mutual funds, bill payments, digital gold, and credit cards.

### What likely led to the RBI move?

Paytm Payments Bank has been facing RBI scrutiny since 2018. While the central bank did not specify the exact reasons for the latest action, sources said it could be due to the RBI's concerns on KYC compliance and IT-related issues.

It is learnt that Paytm Payments Bank and its parent One97 Communications had come under RBI scrutiny for purported lack of requisite information barriers within the group, and data access to China-based entities that were indirect shareholders in the payments bank through their stake in the parent com-

pany. The failure to address these concerns at multiple levels over an extended period led to the latest action by the RBI, it is learnt.

Although Antfin, an affiliate of Chinese conglomerate Alibaba, has been reducing its stake in One97 Communications, it still is a shareholder in the company. As of December 31, Antfin held a 9.89% stake in the company, as per stock exchange data. Given the frosty relationship between India and China over the past few years, Chinese investments in firms have attracted intense scrutiny by Indian regulators.

### What were RBI's earlier actions?

In October 2023, the RBI had slapped a fine of Rs 5.39 crore on Paytm Payments Bank due to deficiencies in regulatory compliance. In March 2022, the RBI had directed Paytm Payments Bank to stop onboarding of new customers with immediate effect.

The Comprehensive System Audit report

and subsequent compliance validation report of the external auditors revealed "persistent non-compliances and continued material supervisory concerns in the bank", warranting further supervisory action, the RBI said on Wednesday.

Prior to the action taken in 2022, the central bank had made certain observations in 2018 about the processes the company followed to acquire new users, especially on KYC norms. The RBI also had concerns over the close relations between Paytm Payments Bank and its parent One97 Communications. Payments banks are required to maintain an arm's length distance from promoter group entities. Paytm parent firm One97 Communications held 49% stake in Paytm Payments Bank while 51% was held by Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma.

LONGER VERSION ON [indianexpress.com/explained](http://indianexpress.com/explained)

## EXPLAINED SCIENCE

### WHY BIRD FLU DEATHS OF ANTARCTIC PENGUINS IS A FLASHING DANGER SIGN



Penguins live in big colonies, have little existing immunity. Wikimedia Commons

A HIGHLY lethal form of bird flu has been detected in Antarctic penguins for the first time. The virus, H5N1, was confirmed in two gentoo penguins that were found dead on Sea Lion Island in the Falkland Islands, a British territory.

"But many more are dying," said Sally Heathman, the head of communications for the Falkland Islands government. As of Tuesday, more than 200 dead or dying gentoo chicks have been reported on Sea Lion Island, she said.

### Why the deaths matter

Penguins are already under pressure. The birds are facing numerous threats, including climate change, pollution, and commercial fishing. Three Antarctic penguin species — emperor penguins, southern rockhopper penguins and macaroni penguins — are listed as vulnerable or near threatened.

### Extent of the threat

Before H5N1 arrived in the Antarctic region last fall, highly pathogenic bird flu viruses had never been documented in the area. That means that the penguins are likely to have little existing immunity. And because they breed in large, crowded colonies, once one penguin is infected, the virus could spread rapidly, causing mass mortalities. As H5N1 spread through South America last year, Chile reported the deaths of thousands of Humboldt penguins.

The extent of the virus' spread in Antarctic penguin populations is unclear. The virus has not been confirmed in any other local penguin species, Heathman said, but testing of rockhopper penguins is on.

At least one suspected case has also been reported in king penguins in South Georgia, another British territory. But that report was based on a single dead king penguin, and investigators have not seen a spike in penguin deaths at that location, said Laura Willis, the chief executive of the government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

### Scientists are worried

Scientists have been worried about the spread of the virus in Antarctica. The virus, which first emerged in 2020, has taken an unprecedented toll on wild birds and mammals. After it was detected at the tip of South America last year, OFFLU, a global network of flu experts, warned that the pathogen could spread to Antarctica next.

The Antarctic region provides critical breeding territory for more than 100 million birds as well as seals, sea lions and other marine mammals. If the virus arrived in the region, its impact on those animals "could be immense", OFFLU said in a statement last August.

Just two months later, the virus was detected in brown skuas in South Georgia, the first cases in the region. Since then, infections have been confirmed in numerous other bird species, as well as in elephant and fur seals. These marine mammals also breed in large colonies, and they suffered major losses as the virus spread through South America, where tens of thousands of seals and sea lions were reported dead. Scientists worry that the same fate may befall Antarctica's seals as the virus spreads.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

**UDIT MISRA**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget for 2024-25 on Thursday. This is the interim Budget; a full Budget will be presented in July, after the Lok Sabha elections. As such, the Budget speech will likely focus on underscoring the government's achievements over the past year and decade — and the opposition will likely seek to find reasons to argue that these Budgets have failed the most vulnerable sections.

Here are four aspects of government finances to look out for in Sitharaman's Budget speech, in order to understand it better.

### How money comes, and where it goes

The Budget provides two pie charts: (i) a source-wise break-up of each rupee that the government earns; (ii) details of where each rupee is spent. These charts give proportionate shares, not absolute amounts.

The charts show the current state of the government's financial health. Comparing pies for two or more years can show how the financial health has changed.

The earning pie for the current financial year (2023-24) shows 34 paise in each rupee — 34% of total income — came from borrowings by the government, and 15% each came from income-tax and corporation (corporate) company tax.

The corresponding figures for earlier years show the government's dependence on borrowings has increased noticeably, while that on income and corporate taxes has reduced somewhat.

So, the share of borrowings, income-tax, and corporate tax for 2015-16 were 24%, 14%, and 20% respectively; these figures for 2016-17 were 21%, 14%, and 19%.

Comparing the pies for "where the rupee goes" shows the change in the government's spending priorities over the years. In FY17, Defence received 10 paise out of every rupee spent, and another 10 paise went for subsidies of various kinds. In FY24 by contrast, Defence got 8 paise, and subsidies 7 paise.

### Nominal increase vs real increase

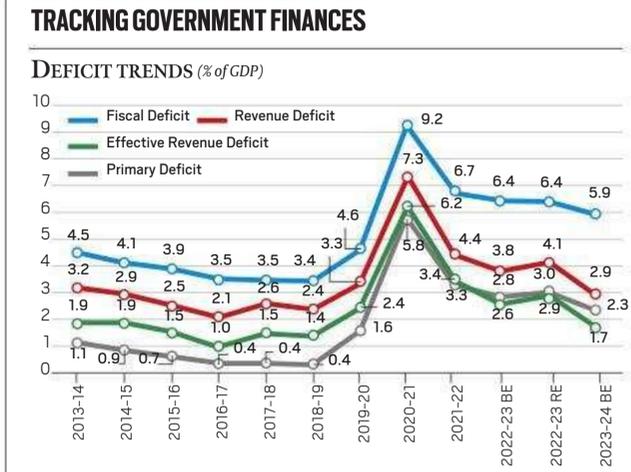
The Budget is full of numbers and percentages. It is important to know whether any number — be it absolute amounts or growth rate or increase/ decrease in allocation — is 'nominal' or 'real'.

The difference between nominal and real changes is inflation. Your salary and annual increment are stated in nominal terms. However, what (say) Rs 30,000 per month can buy today is far less than what it would

## EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

### What to watch in Budget

The Union Budget is the gov't's annual financial statement. It is full of numbers, which make sense when seen in their contexts. Here are four aspects of gov't finances key to understanding the Budget and its numbers



Scheme	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 BE	2022-23 RE	2023-24 BE
MGNREGA	98,468	73,000	89,400	60,000
National Social Assistance Programme	8,152	9,652	9,652	9,636
Umbrella Programme for Development of Minorities	1,428	1,810	530	610
Umbrella Programme for Development of Other Vulnerable Groups	1,745	1,931	1,921	2,194
Umbrella Programme for Development of STs	3,779	4,111	3,874	4,295
Umbrella Scheme for Development of SCs	4,979	8,710	7,722	9,409

BE: Budget Estimates, RE: Revised Estimates

have bought a decade ago. As inflation raises the general price level, the same amount of money can buy fewer and fewer goods with each passing year.

In terms of the Budget, a 7% increase in the allocation for a department may not mean much in real terms if inflation, too, has increased by 7% (Indeed, a nominal increase could work out to be a real decline.)

The nominal GDP growth rate, inclusive of inflation, is possibly the most important bit of data in the Budget since it forms the base for all other calculations. Since fiscal deficit (read borrowings) targets are set as a percentage of (nominal) GDP, if the nominal GDP is small, the amount of money that the government can borrow is also smaller.

The nominal GDP is the actual data that is observed in the economy; the real GDP and real GDP growth rates, etc., are derived from nominal data after removing the effect of inflation.

### Fiscal Deficit vs Revenue Deficit

Fiscal deficit is essentially the amount of borrowing that the government is forced to have when it can't meet all its expenses with its income.

Each year's fiscal deficit adds to the pile of government debt. A high fiscal deficit is seen as a warning sign over the government's solvency situation.

India has set prudential limits for its fiscal deficit. The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act of 2003 said the fiscal deficit of the Union government should not exceed 3% of GDP. It also said that the revenue deficit — the gap between the government's everyday expenses (salaries and pensions) and everyday earnings (taxes, cesses etc) — should be zero.

The dual stipulation — fiscal deficit at 3% and revenue deficit at 0% — is meant to ensure that all the money that the government

borrow is spent towards the creation of new productive assets.

However, in 2018, the law was amended, and targeting revenue deficit was dropped. This meant that India could have a scenario where even though the fiscal deficit was 3% of GDP, all of the borrowing could be going to fund the revenue deficit. This dented genuine fiscal prudence.

The chart on deficit trends, sourced from last February's Budget presentation, shows that of late, a large part of India's fiscal deficit has been in the form of a revenue deficit.

### Budget Estimates vs Revised Estimates

Budget Estimates (BE) and Revised Estimates (RE) denote very different things.

The BEs — say, for the money to be spent by a particular Ministry, or the money to be collected via GST — for any year essentially show what the Finance Minister expects the value to be at the end of the financial year when she is presenting the Budget even before the financial year has actually started.

As the year goes by, data for income and expenditure come in. By the time the Budget for the forthcoming financial year is presented, the government also has the REs for the current financial year.

Comparing REs with BEs for the same financial year provides a good idea of how far the government came through on the promise it made before the start of the financial year.

To understand how much the government plans to spend on a particular scheme in the coming year, one can either compare the BEs of the two years (say FY24 and FY25) or the BE of the coming year (e.g. FY25) with the RE of the previous year (FY24).

The most apt comparison often depends on the context.

Say, the government allocates Rs 10,000 crore (BE) for a scheme in a particular year's Budget, but ends up spending only Rs 1,000 crore (RE). However, for the next financial year, it allocates Rs 2,000 crore (the new BE) for the same scheme.

So, the government can compare the BE of the second year to the RE of the first and claim that the budget for the scheme has been doubled. And the Opposition can compare BE to BE and claim that the Budget allocation has been slashed by 80%.

The table, sourced from last year's Budget, shows that the REs (Rs 530 crore) for the "Umbrella Programme for Development of Minorities" in 2022-23 were less than 30% of the original BEs (Rs 1,810 crore).

The BE for the current financial year (2023-24) was pegged at Rs 610 crore — which is an increase of 15% relative to the RE but a decline of 67% compared to BE.

## Vyasji ka tehkhana inside Gyanvapi complex, where court allowed puja

**LALMANI VERMA**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE VARANASI District Court on Wednesday allowed prayers in the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque complex.

The order said, "District Magistrate, Varanasi/Receiver is being directed to get puja, raag bhog done by a priest, designated by the plaintiff and Kashi Vishwanath Trust, of idols in the cellar to the south, which is disputed, of building situated on settlement plot no. 9130, police station Chowk, District Varanasi. For this, suitable arrangements must be made with iron barricading and other things within seven days."

On January 24, the Varanasi district administration had taken possession of the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque

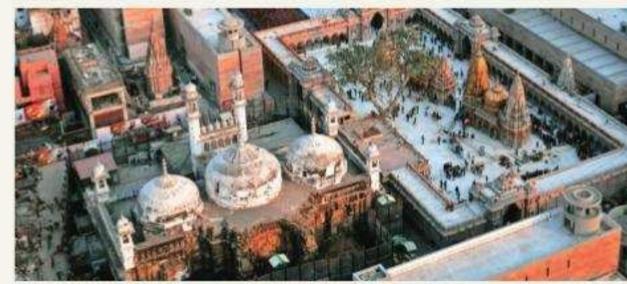
complex. This was following a Varanasi District Court order of January 17, through which it appointed the district magistrate of Varanasi as the receiver of the cellar, also called "Vyasji ka tehkhana".

This case was filed by the head priest of Acharya Ved Vyas Peeth temple, Shailendra Pathak Vyas.

### What is Vyasji ka tehkhana?

Vyasji ka tehkhana is located in the southern area of the mosque's barricaded complex, facing the Nandi statue inside the Kashi Vishwanath complex near the sanctum sanctorum.

The tehkhana has a height of around 7 feet and carpet area of around 900 square feet. Subhash Chaturvedi, the lawyer of the petitioner Shailendra Pathak Vyas, said that the Vyas family had been conducting prayers and other rituals inside the tehkhana



The tehkhana is located between the Nandi statue in the temple complex and the wuzukhana of the mosque. AP file photo

for more than 200 years, but the practice was stopped in December 1993.

He said the tehkhana is located between

the Nandi statue and the wuzukhana of the mosque, where Hindu petitioners had claimed a Shilving was found during a court

mandated videographic survey in 2022.

### Why was worship barred here?

The petitioner has argued that Vyasji's entry was prohibited in the tehkhana in December 1993, and hence the prayers being held here had to be discontinued.

On December 4, 1993, Mulayam Singh Yadav formed the government in UP, ending one year of President's Rule imposed after the Kalyan Singh government was dismissed in the wake of the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in 1992.

"The Mulayam Singh Yadav government prohibited worship inside the Vyasji ka tehkhana in the name of law and order. Before that, Pandit Somnath Vyas had carried out Hindu worship rituals here regularly," Chaturvedi said.

Chaturvedi said that idols of Lord Hanuman, Ganesh, Shiva and other gods were worshipped inside the tehkhana and

katha was preached there. He said during the recent ASI survey too, idols of various Hindu deities were found inside the tehkhana.

### Who is the petitioner?

The petitioner, Shailendra Pathak Vyas, is the maternal grandson of Pandit Somnath Vyas. Shailendra is currently the head priest of the Acharya Ved Vyas Peeth in the Shivpur area of Varanasi. His family had been provided space inside the tehkhana to worship, and hence the place was known as Vyasji ka gaddi.

Madan Mohan, a lawyer for the Hindu side in cases related to the Gyanvapi mosque, said the tehkhana was given to the Vyas family for worship and other religious rituals under the British in 1809.

"Somnathji was a priest. He had been living near the Gyanvapi area. Several generations of his family had been performing religious rituals inside the tehkhana," Madan Mohan said.

# 14 THE WORLD



## EFFORTS TO END GAZA, UKRAINE WARS IN LIST NOBEL PEACE PRIZE NOMINATIONS CLOSE

THE DOORS closed Wednesday on nominations for the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize, with peace activists connected to the wars in Gaza and Ukraine among the known entries. Attempts to end the war in Gaza have been a theme for some of the announced nominations.

### TOP OF THE WORLD



Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar. AP

### MALAYSIA

#### Ibrahim sworn in as King in unique rotation system

**Kuala Lumpur:** The billionaire sultan who rules Malaysia's Johor state was sworn in as the nation's new king Wednesday under a unique rotating monarchy system. Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar, 65, took his oath of office at the palace and signed the instrument of the proclamation of office in a ceremony witnessed by other royal families, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and Cabinet members. A coronation ceremony will be held later. Sultan Ibrahim has an extensive business empire ranging from real estate to telecoms and power plants. AP

### THAILAND

#### Court: Stop bid to change royal defamation law

**Bangkok:** Thailand's Constitutional Court ruled Wednesday that the progressive Move Forward party must cease advocating amending the law on royal defamation. The court's nine judges deemed it unconstitutional to advocate a change in Article 112 in the country's Criminal Code which protects the royal institution from criticism by imposing severe penalties on those found to violate it, including up to 15 years in jail. AP

### POLAND

#### Govt softens stand on WW II compensation

**Berlin:** Thailand's Constitutional Court ruled Wednesday that the progressive Move Forward party must cease advocating amending the law on royal defamation — a decision that leaves the party vulnerable to being dissolved. The court's nine judges deemed it unconstitutional to advocate a change in Article 112 in the country's Criminal Code — also known as lese-majeste law — which protects the royal institution from criticism by imposing severe penalties on those found to violate it, including up to 15 years in jail per offense. AP

### UNITED STATES

#### CEOs of Meta, TikTok, others testify in Senate

**Washington:** Sexual predators. Addictive features. Suicide and eating disorders. Unrealistic beauty standards. Bullying. These are just some of the issues young people are dealing with on social media — and children's advocates say companies are not doing enough to protect them. On Wednesday, the CEOs of Meta, TikTok, X and other social media companies went before the Senate Committee to testify as lawmakers and parents grow increasingly concerned about the effects of social media on young people's lives. The hearing began with recorded testimony from kids and parents who said they or their children were

### CONCERNS REMAIN THAT ADDITIONAL U.S. STRIKES COULD FURTHER INFLAME REGION

## Iran says will 'decisively respond' as Biden weighs Jordan strike payback

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
JERUSALEM, JANUARY 31

IRAN THREATENED Wednesday to "decisively respond" to any US attack on the Islamic Republic following President Joe Biden's linking of Tehran to the killing of three US soldiers at Jordan military base.

The US has signaled it is preparing for retaliatory strikes in the Mideast in the wake of the Sunday drone attack that also injured at least 40 troops at Tower 22, a secretive base in northeastern Jordan that's been crucial to the American presence in Syria.

However, concerns remain that any additional American strikes could further inflame a region already roiled by Israel's ongoing war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the ongoing attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels on shipping in the Red Sea.

A US Navy destroyer in the waterway shot down an anti-ship cruise missile launched by the Houthi late Tuesday, the latest attack targeting American forces patrolling the key maritime trade route, officials said.

The Iranian warnings first came from Amir Saeed Iravani, Iran's ambassador to the UN. He gave a briefing to Iranian journalists late Tuesday. The Iranian mission to the U.N. did not respond to requests for comment or elaboration Wednesday on Iravani's remarks.



Displaced Palestinians flee Khan Younis to Rafah as Israel hardens its strikes, Wednesday. Reuters

## EU to launch Red Sea naval mission

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BRUSSELS, JANUARY 31

THE EUROPEAN Union plans to launch a naval mission in the Red Sea within three weeks to help defend cargo ships against attacks by Houthi rebels in Yemen that are hampering trade and driving up prices, the bloc's top diplomat said Wednesday.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said he wants the mission to be up and running by February 17. Officials say that seven EU countries are ready to

provide ships or planes. Belgium has already committed to send a frigate. Germany is expected to do the same.

"This is the purpose: protection of the ships. Intercepting of the attacks against the ships. Not participating in any kinds of actions against the Houthis," Borrell told reporters.

EU defence ministers were expected to decide later Wednesday which country should lead the naval effort — France, Greece and Italy are vying for that role — and where the mission's headquarters should be based.

### US URGES 'CHANGES' IN UN AGENCY FOR FUNDS

**United Nations:** The United States said on Tuesday that the UN agency for Palestinian refugees needs to make "fundamental changes" — including review of staff management to ensure those involved in crimes are held accountable — before restarting funding halted over Israeli accusations that some agency staff took part in the October 7 attack by Hamas militants. REUTERS

## Taiwan simulates 'drills becoming strikes' as Beijing holds patrols close to border

REUTERS  
TAITUNG, JANUARY 31

TAIWAN'S MILITARY on Wednesday simulated a scenario where China suddenly turns one of its regular drills around the island into an actual attack, on the same day China staged another "combat readiness patrol" near Taiwan.

Taiwan says China's armed forces routinely operate in the skies and seas around the island in an effort to pressure Taiwan to accept Chinese sovereignty.

Taiwan's defence ministry says Chinese warplanes and warships often carry out "joint combat readiness patrols". It reported another such patrol on Wednesday, involving 22 Chinese aircraft.

### US braces for conflict

The US military is taking a hard look at its own military readiness as tensions rise, trying to play catch-up in a critical area — its logistics network. After the Talisman Sabre military exercise led by Australia and the US, they helped create new stockpiles of military equipment that were left behind in Australia.



Taiwan forces at the drill at a military base in Taitung. Reuters



## DROUGHT HITS NORTHEAST SPAIN

La Baells reservoir near Berga, north of Barcelona at 21 per cent of its capacity on Tuesday. Barcelona and its surroundings in northeastern Spain's Catalonia region are preparing for tighter water restrictions amid a historic drought that has shrunk reservoirs to record lows. AP

## Maldives govt, Opp trade barbs over assault on Prosecutor General

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MALE, JANUARY 31

HOURS AFTER the Prosecutor General of Maldives was attacked by unidentified persons on Monday, a blame game erupted between the ruling and the opposition parties that called the attack "politically motivated," according to local media.

Former Maldivian president Ibrahim Mohamed Solih described the attack as "politically motivated," asking Home Minister Ali Ithusan to ask him to share in-

formation to back his claim.

Responding to Solih's post, Home Minister Ali Ithusan said, "Former President declaring the attack was 'politically motivated' suggests that former President has credible information about motive and people behind this attack."

### Ex-president Nasheed relocates to Ghana

Former president Mohamed Nasheed temporarily relocated to Ghana in Africa after announcing his hiatus from 'active politics' without informing Parliament, it emerged Wednesday.

## 'Grumpy Old Men': Haley pokes Trump, Biden

JAZMINE ULLOA  
JANUARY 31

TWO CURMUDGEONLY old rivals, reclusive spendthrifts, are marching toward a showdown that a lot of people really wish wasn't happening. If that is the plot of a slapstick comedy, it's also the latest knock from Nikki Haley on former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden as she fights for oxygen before the Republican primary in South Carolina on Feb. 24.

In a new series titled "Grumpy Old Men," the Haley campaign on Wednesday plans to start unveiling online videos, digital ads and voter emails that will underscore the ways in which Haley has ar-



Nikki Haley. AP

gued that the two party front-runners are alike. The episodes, with titles like "Stumbling Seniors" and "Basement Buddies" take shots at, among other things, her rivals' signs of mental confusion, their light presence on the campaign

trail and their economic policies leading to high inflation.

The push is part of a shift in strategy that Haley began after the Iowa caucuses, casting Trump, 77, and Biden, 81, as belonging to the same bygone era of politicians.

But the series, with its reference to a movie from 1993, could prove a risky bet as she looks to court a Republican base

that is largely graying, white and Christian. Polls show her trailing the former president by double digits in her home state. Attacks on Biden's age did not play well during the 2020 presidential primary.

Haley, 52, has consistently pitched herself as a "new generational leader" for her party and called for mental competency tests for candidates, 75 or older.

Her sharpest attacks have been against Biden, though she often tells her audiences that she is not being disrespectful.

She has been even less inclined to go after Trump.

She directly criticized him as being in mental decline after he appeared to confuse her for Nancy Pelosi, the former House speaker. Days later, she said she believed he was "mentally fit" to be president.

## Ukraine, Russia swap POWs amid tensions

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
KYIV, JANUARY 31

RUSSIA AND Ukraine have exchanged about 200 prisoners of war each, the countries said Wednesday, despite tensions stemming from last week's crash of a military transport plane that Moscow claimed was carrying Ukrainian POWs and was shot down by Kyiv's forces.

After the Jan 24 crash of the Il-76 plane in Russia's Belgorod region near the border with Ukraine, some Russian officials had publicly questioned the possibility of future POW swaps.

Russia's Defence Ministry said 195 POWs each were exchanged. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said 207 Ukrainians were freed. There was no immediate explanation for the different figures.



A Ukrainian soldier released after the swap, Wednesday. AP

### PUTIN VOWS VICTORY TO CAMPAIGN ACTIVISTS

**Moscow:** President Vladimir Putin vowed Wednesday to push back Ukrainian forces to reduce the threat of attacks on Russian territory as he met with activists running his campaign ahead of the March presidential election that he's all but certain to win. AP

## South Africa says 5 countries confirm joining BRICS grouping

REUTERS  
JOHANNESBURG, JANUARY 31

EGYPT, ETHIOPIA, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have confirmed they are joining the BRICS bloc after being invited last week, South Africa's Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor said on Wednesday.

The five countries were extended invitations along with Argentina at a summit in August in Johannesburg to join the bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, China, India and South Africa. Members say it would help reshuffle a world order they view as outdated.

Argentina has since declined the invitation to join, "and we accept their decision," Pandor told a press meet Wednesday.



## JÉRÔME BAYLE HAD ENOUGH OF HARDSHIPS OF FRENCH FARMING, SO HE BLOCKED HIGHWAY WITH FRIENDS. MANY FOLLOWED

# French farmers' protests have become a wildfire: He was the spark

CATHERINE PORTER  
CARBONNE, JANUARY 31

JÉRÔME BAYLE had spent seven nights on a major French highway, leading a group of aggrieved farmers in protest, when the prime minister arrived, dressed in his Parisian blue suit and tie, to thank them for "making France proud" and announced he would meet their demands.

Before camera flashes and outstretched microphones, Bayle told Prime Minister Gabriel Attal that he had seen the standoff as a match between two teams — the revolting farmers, led by Bayle, and the government, led by Attal.

"I don't like losing," said Bayle, dressed decidedly more casually, with a baseball hat on his head, turned backward. The thick crowd around him chuckled. It was clear his team had won.

Bayle, 42, a former professional rugby player, is widely credited with sparking a national protest movement of farmers that this week brought their grievances to the capital, blocking highways into Paris, despite pledges on Tuesday from Attal to shield them from "unfair competition."

Unsatisfied, the farmers say they will continue the disruptions to call attention to what they call the insufferable hardships of growing food to feed the



Farmers say they will continue the disruptions to call attention to what they call the insufferable hardships of growing food to feed the French nation. NYT

French nation.

It has been a terrible few years for local farmers. First they were hit by repeated droughts, and a collapse of consumer demand for organic food after many farmers had made the difficult switch. Then, a midge-carrying disease crossed over the nearby snowcapped Pyrenees from Spain and infected many of their cattle, causing death and miscarriages. And that is just in Bayle's southwest corner of the country.

More broadly, not just in France but all around Europe, farmers are complaining about rising costs from inflation and the war in Ukraine. Those burdens have been exacerbated as the gov-

ernments look to save money by shaving farm subsidies, even as the EU heaps more regulations on farmers to meet climate and other environmental goals.

It has become too much, farmers say. Bayle was among the hundreds of farmers who rolled through the streets of Toulouse this month in their tractors.

National polls revealed enormous support for the movement they had started, and other actions began around the country. Most locals agreed and tolerated the truck traffic, according to the mayor, Denis Turrel.

"It made perfect sense what they did," said Frank Bardon, 66, a retired physiotherapist and os-

teopath, who was walking his dog through the town's main street with his family on Sunday. "Their living conditions are difficult."

The farmers were following a deep-seated revolutionary tradition in France. Back in 1953, wine-makers, seeing their profits collapse, set their wooden carts across a national highway at the start of the summer holiday to demand government aid and offer tastings to waylaid drivers.

It worked so well that a model was set, with farmers in the southwest following suit a couple months later, said Édouard Lynch, a professor of contemporary French history at Lyon 2 University. NYT

## Fiscal deficit at 55% full-year target at Dec-end 2023: CGA

PRASANTA SAHU  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE CENTRE'S fiscal deficit came in at 55 per cent of the budget estimate (BE) in the first nine months of the current financial year, compared with 59.8 per cent of the respective target in the year-ago period, the data released by the Controller General of Accounts showed on Wednesday.

This increased the possibility of the government meeting the fiscal deficit target of 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) for FY24 in the interim Budget to be presented today. Last year, the Centre had met the deficit target of 6.4 per cent.

While net tax revenues rose by 11.2 per cent on year in April-December 2023, in line with the required growth rate of 11 per cent to achieve the budget estimate of Rs 17.3 trillion, non-tax revenues expanded by 46 per cent to Rs 3.1 trillion (required rate 5 per cent) on the back of the robust RBI dividends.

However, the pace of rise in tax receipts slowed a bit in recent months— net tax receipts were up 15 per cent in April-September. Despite a lower nominal GDP size (8.9 per cent as per first advance estimate), as against 10.5 per cent the budget factored in, analysts are of the view that the fiscal deficit target of 5.9 per cent of GDP will likely be met due to revenue performance and a likely shortfall in capital expenditure.

In December 2023, capex more than doubled on-year to Rs 87,985 crore, offsetting the tepid performance in the previous two months. The Centre's capex ex-

### Core sector growth eases in December '23

New Delhi: The output growth of eight core industries eased to a 14-month low of 3.8 per cent in December from 7.9 per cent in November, on account of the statistical effect of a high base, data released by the commerce ministry showed on Wednesday. In December 2022, the core sector's output had grown 8.3 per cent. On a month-on-month basis, the core sector's output rose 5.9 per cent in December, slightly higher than the average 5.8 per cent sequential growth recorded between the two months in the last 12 years. FE

panded by 37.5 per cent in April-December FY24, marginally higher than the required growth rate to meet the FY24 target of Rs 10 trillion.

However, the capex achievement could fall short of the target due to likely lower utilisation by states from a special capex loan facility of Rs 1.3 trillion and a reduction in capital infusion into state-run oil firms.

"ICRA expects the government of India's capex to under-shoot the FY24 BE by around Rs 0.75 trillion, which still implies a robust YoY growth of around 26 per cent," ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar said. FE

## AHEAD OF UNION BUDGET Import duty on smartphone components, inputs slashed

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

AS MORE Indian companies join the fray to start local assembly of smartphones, the Centre has reduced the import duty on a number of components used in mobile phone manufacturing from 15 per cent to 10 per cent — addressing a part of a long standing demand by smartphone companies and industry bodies representing them.

While some stakeholders believe the changes could result in a minor price drop in smartphones in the entry level segment, others said that the cut in these tariff lines may not yield any significant results in terms of mobile phone prices. Assertions have also been made that the cut in duties might not result in export competitiveness.

According to a notification by the Ministry of Finance — a day ahead of this year's Budget — the basic customs duty (BCD) has been rationalised on inputs of mobile phone for the following: mechanics and die cut parts to 10 per cent, and all others inputs of mobile phones classified as 'others' under HSN code 85177990 has been adjusted to 10 per cent. Further, there will be no duty on inputs of mechanics and die cut parts.

It is worth noting that the BCD on the 'others' category was earlier raised from 5 per cent to 15 per cent in 2018 under the Phased Manufacturing Programme (PMP).



Centre has reduced the import duty on a number of components from 15 per cent to 10 per cent. File

The components on which the import duty has been slashed to 10 per cent include battery cover, front cover, middle cover, main lens, back cover, and GSM antenna/antenna of any technology among other things.

Information Technology (IT) Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "This rationalisation of custom duties brings much needed certainty and clarity for the industry and in customs processes".

Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on X, "Reduction in certain input tariffs and rationalisation will help reduce costs, advance ease of doing business, and catalyse export led manufacturing".

Amid US-China tensions, India is potentially the only country which provides a big

empowering the consumers and making the devices affordable, especially in the entry and budget segments.

However, the think tank Global Trade Research Institute (GTRI) said that the changes "will have no impact on improving export competitiveness of mobile phones made in India as all inputs, parts, and components used in the making of mobile phones for exports can already be imported at zero duty under various government schemes... Firms like Apple use these schemes. The government should watch out if the benefit of duty cuts are passed to domestic mobile phone buyers through price cuts".

In a report released earlier this month by the ICEA, the industry lobby group had called for a sharp cut in tariffs on components and sub-assemblies for boosting smartphone exports from India, adding that the country has the highest tariffs on inputs compared to seven countries, including Vietnam, China, and Mexico.

Mobile phone exports from India promise to be the next big milestone for smartphone makers. The ICEA report had said that mobile phone exports from the country are expected to hit 30 per cent of the total production of \$49-50 billion in the current fiscal, but that requires matching China and Vietnam's competitive tariff regime in addition to other factors which impact competitiveness.

## Three full-time, one part-time members of 16th FC appointed

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

AFTER THE appointment of Arvind Panagariya as Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission, the government has now announced the appointment of three full-time members and one part-time member of the Commission.

Former Finance and Expenditure Secretary Ajay Narayan Jha, who was also the member of 15th Finance Commission, has been appointed as one of the full-time members, along with Annie George Mathew, former Special Secretary in Department of Expenditure and Niranjana Rajadhaksha, Executive Director, Artha Global.

Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India has been appointed as a part-time member in the Commission. Among the members, Jha, a former 1982 batch IAS officer of the Manipur cadre, has served in several positions in the earlier Finance Commissions. Before being a member of the 15th Finance Commission, Jha also served as Member Secretary of 14th Finance Commission, which was headed by former RBI Governor YV Reddy.

The Finance Commission mainly decides the tax sharing formula between the Centre and the states. The 16th Finance Commission is expected to submit its recommendations by October 31, 2025, covering an award period of five years beginning April 1, 2026. In November, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

had approved the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the 16th Finance Commission. As per the ToR, "The Finance Commission shall make recommendations as to the following matters, namely: The distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be, or may be, divided between them under Chapter I, Part XII of the Constitution and the allocation between the States of the respective shares of such proceeds."

It shall also make recommendations on the "principles which should govern the grants-in-aid of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India and the sums to be paid to the States by way of grants-in-aid of their revenues under article 275 of the Constitution for the purposes other than those specified in the provisos to clause (1) of that article," according to a statement issued after the Union Cabinet meeting on November 29.

Following this, Finance Secretary TV Somanathan had said that the ToR for the 16th Finance Commission are short but "all-encompassing" and that the ToR had been prepared after consultation with states. He had clarified that the terms are not limited or preliminary, and though they are shorter than recent commissions, they offer greater leeway to stakeholders so that their inputs can be taken into account.

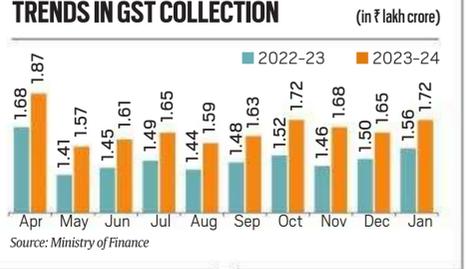
In December, the government had announced the appointment of Panagariya as Chairman, and Ritvik Ranjanan Pandey, a 1998-batch IAS officer of the Karnataka cadre, as Secretary of the 16th Finance Commission.

## January GST collections hit ₹1.72 lakh crore, up 10.4% y-o-y; second highest since rollout

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

GROSS GOODS and Services Tax (GST) collections rose to Rs 1.72 lakh crore in January (for sales in December), up 10.4 per cent from the year-ago period, data released by the Finance Ministry on Wednesday showed. This is the second highest level of GST collections after the July 2017 rollout of the indirect tax regime and marks the third instance of collections over the Rs 1.7 lakh crore mark in this financial year. The highest-ever monthly GST collection was recorded in April 2023 at Rs 1.87 lakh crore.

"The gross GST revenue collected in the month of January, 2024 (till 05:00 PM of 31.01.2024) is Rs 1,72,129 crore, which shows a 10.4% Year-to-Year (Y-o-Y) growth over the revenue of Rs 155,922 crore collected in January 2023 (till 05:00 PM on 31.01.2023)," the ministry said in



a statement. "Notably, this is the second highest monthly collection ever and marks the third month in this financial year with a collection of Rs 1.70 lakh crore or more," it said.

With the latest print, GST revenue collections have averaged at Rs 1.67 lakh crore per month during April-January 2023-24, up 11.6 per cent from the monthly average of Rs 1.50 lakh crore seen during April-January

2022-23. The government has settled Rs 43,552 crore to Central GST (CGST) and Rs 37,257 crore to State GST (SGST) from the Integrated GST (IGST) collection.

The GST collections data was released a day earlier than the usual scheduled date of 1st of every month because of the presentation of the Union Budget for financial year 2024-25 in Parliament on February 1. State-wise data of the GST collections was not released by the ministry

this time as per the norm. The GST collection figures are likely to be revised later. "The data is as of 05:00 PM today (i.e. 31.01.2024). Final collection for the month would be higher," the ministry said.

Abhishek Jain, Partner & National Head, Indirect Tax, KPMG said, "The consistent growth in GST collections with this one being the second highest collection ever is a big cheer for the economy. One significant reason for this growth could be linked to voluntary payments by businesses for FY 22-23 during finalisation of annual returns and reconciliation statements in December."

Saurabh Agarwal, Tax Partner, EY said, "This consistent upward trend, evident in surpassing key milestones, reflects the effectiveness of improved tax administration and heightened taxpayer compliance. Overall, these positive indicators pave the way for continued economic expansion."

## Burmans picks up additional stake in Religare Enterprises for ₹309 cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

DABUR INDIA promoter Burman family on Wednesday increased its grip on Religare Enterprises after acquiring an additional 4 per cent stake in the financial services group for Rs 309 crore through open market transactions. M.B. Finmart, Puran Associates, and VIC Enterprises — the three entities of Burman Family — acquired a total of 1.32 crore shares, representing a 4 per cent stake in Religare Enterprises Ltd.

"With respect to the open offer and pursuant to Sebi's SAST (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeover) regulations, the acquisition of the equity shares of the Target Company (REL) by M.B. Finmart Pvt Ltd, Puran Associates Pvt Ltd, VIC Enterprises Pvt Ltd" was done through the open market on January 31, 2024, Religare said in a regulatory filing.

M.B. Finmart, Puran Associates, VIC Enterprises picked up 44 lakh shares each of REL in the price range of Rs



As per Sebi, entities acquiring 25% or more stake in a listed company have to make an open offer to the company's shareholders. File

233.93-233.98 apiece, the filing said. This took the combined transaction value to Rs 308.83 crore.

After the latest acquisitions, M. B. Finmart's shareholding increased to 5.49 per cent, while stakes of Puran Associates rose to 9.33 per cent, and that of VIC Enterprises to 7.47 per cent.

Also, the combined shareholding of M. B. Finmart, Puran Associates, VIC Enterprises and Milky Investment & Trading Company increased from 21.18 per cent to 25.18 per cent. After the acquisition of shares, the deal will also trigger

a mandatory open offer in Religare Enterprises as well.

As per Sebi's takeover rules, entities acquiring 25 per cent or more stake in a listed company have to make an open offer to the company's shareholders. As per the bulk deal data of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), M B Finmart, Puran Associates and VIC Enterprises purchased more than 1.18 shares in Religare Enterprises.

Puran Associates is owned by Anand Burman and Minnie Burman, while VC Burman owns VIC Enterprises, and MB Finmart is owned by Mohit Burman.

### BRIEFLY Maruti Suzuki Q3 profit up 33%

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India on Wednesday reported 33 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 3,207 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2023, on account of higher sales. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 2,406 crore for the year-ago period, Maruti Suzuki India said. Total revenue from operations was up 15 per cent at Rs 33,513 crore as compared with Rs 29,251 crore in the year-ago period. PTI

**Dushadhi The Pharmaceutical Corporation (P.L.) Kerala Ltd.**  
(A Govt. of Kerala Undertaking)  
Kuttanellur, Thrissur-14, Kerala  
Ph: 0487- 2459841, 2459807.  
E-mail: purchase@dushadhi.org

**E-TENDER NOTICE**  
E-Tenders are invited for the supply of I) Raw Materials and II) Containers & Packing Materials for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Tenders can be downloaded from the website [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in). For more details, please visit our website [www.dushadhi.org](http://www.dushadhi.org) or contact our Purchase Division at Kuttanellur. Thrissur (Sd/-) Managing Director

**CHANDRAPUR CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION CHANDRAPUR (M.S.)**  
No. CCMC/WS/2024/3586 Date: 31/02/2024

**CORRIGENDUM**  
**e-Tender Notice**  
Chandrapur City Municipal Corporation invites e-Tender notice for the work of Central Government Sponsored AMRUT 2.0 Mission Chandrapur Municipal Corporation Sewerage Project in the State of Maharashtra Time limit for the tender submission for the tender Notice No. CCMC/WS/2023/3402, Dated 19/01/2024 is hereby extended upto Date 15/02/2024  
All relevant dates will be as per tender published in web portal [www.mahatenders.gov.in](http://www.mahatenders.gov.in)

Sd/-  
Commissioner  
Chandrapur City Municipal Corporation, Chandrapur

**Solapur Municipal Corporation, Solapur**  
**Public Health Engineer Department**  
**E-Tender Notice**  
Commissioner Municipal Corporation, Solapur invites E-Tender for the work Construction and Commissioning of 66 MLD Conventional WTP at Pakani, Tal-North Solapur, Dist-Solapur in the State of Maharashtra valued at 16,79,46,624/- the E-Tender details are available on [www.mahatenders.gov.in](http://www.mahatenders.gov.in) from 31/01/2024 at 10.00 a.m.  
Tender ID - 2024-SMC-992992-1

Sd/-  
Deputy Engineer  
Solapur Municipal Corporation, Solapur

**Jaysingpur Municipal Council, Jaysingpur (M.S.)**  
**E-Tender Notice 2023-24**  
Jaysingpur Municipal Council invites E-Tenders for construction of various D. P. Roads at Jaysingpur, Tal-Shirol, Dist-Kolhapur. For more details kindly visit <http://mahatenders.gov.in> from date - 02/02/2024.

Sd/-  
Chief Officer,  
Jaysingpur Municipal Council

**Malkapur Municipal Council, District Satara**  
**Department of Health**  
**E-Tender Notice B-2 Year 2023-24**  
E-tenders are being invited from qualified monopolists for the supply, installation and testing of various machinery under solid waste management in Malkapur Municipal Council. The said e-tender is on Main Portal - <https://maharashtra.etenders.in> d. 01/02/2024 from 10.00 a.m. to d. 08/02/2024 at 5.00 PM Available for viewing till. Last date for submission of e-tender received it will remain on d. 08/02/2024 till 3.00 PM. Tender received. It will be opened on d. 09/02/2024 at 11.00 AM in the presence of the incumbent. Also all the terms and conditions are available in the concerned department during office hours and on the website <https://maharashtra.etenders.in>.

Sign/-  
Chief Officer  
Malkapur Municipal Council Dist. Satara

**नगर परिषद कार्यालय, उमरगा**  
ता. उमरगा, जि. धारगिरी  
संकेतस्थळ: [www.umargamahaulb.maharashtra.gov.in](http://www.umargamahaulb.maharashtra.gov.in)  
संपर्क क्र.: ०२४५५-२५२०२३. ईमेल: [umerga@gmail.com](mailto:umerga@gmail.com)  
आ.क्र./१९०४/२०२४ दिनांक: ३१/०१/२०२४

**ई-निविदा सूचना (१९ ते २२)/२०२३-२०२४**  
सूचनाक्रमांक: नगरपरिषद उमरगा जि. धारगिरी यांनी निविदा योजनाअंतर्गत सन 2023-2024 अंतर्गत उमरगा नगरात निविदा प्रमाणित स्वयंचलू विकसक कामासाठी ई-निविदा मागवित आहे.  
संदर्भ कामाची ई-निविदा दिनांक 30/01/2024 रोजी संध्या [www.mahatenders.gov.in](http://www.mahatenders.gov.in) संकेतस्थळावर प्रसिद्ध करण्यात आली आहे.

स्वाक्षरीतः  
(रामकृष्ण जाधव)  
सूचनाधिकारी, उमरगा नगरपरिषद

**MANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED**  
(A Government of Karnataka undertaking)  
Corporate Office, "MESCOM BHAVANA", Bejai, Mangalore - 575 004  
Ph: 0824-2885795 CIN: U40109 KA 2002 SGC 030425

No. E-89205/175485/2024 Date: 31-01-2024

**SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY)**  
MESCOM invites Short term tender for Manufacture & Supply of following material:

Tender No.	Name of the Material proposed for Procurement	Quantity
MESCOM/2023-24/IND0057	Ultra Sound partial discharge detector	2 Nos
	Leaky insulator detector	2 Nos
	Non contact Voltage detector	50 Nos

The interested eligible bidders may log on to [www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in](http://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in) on or after 01.02.2024  
Sd/- Superintending Engineer (Ele) (Procurement)  
For Power Related Complaints & Assistance Call Toll Free Number 1912

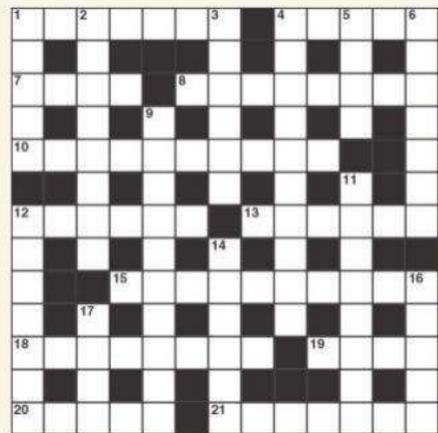
**UTTARAKHAND POWER CORPORATION LIMITED**  
(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking)  
Victoria Cross Vijaya Gagar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwali Road, Dehradun-248001  
Corporate Identity No. U40109UP2001SGC025867  
E-mail: [ugpcup@upcl.co](mailto:ugpcup@upcl.co), Website: [www.upcl.org](http://www.upcl.org), Telephone No. 913212344, Fax No. 9135219383

**CORRIGENDUM FOR PURCHASE OF POWER UNDER MEDIUM TERM PROCUREMENT AGAINST TENDER SPECIFICATION No. 10/CE(COMM)/UPCL-10/MTPP/2023**  
It is to inform that an amendment/modification has been made by UPCL in tender specification No. 10/CE (COMM)/UPCL-10/MTPP/2023 and the detailed amendment/modifications/corrigendum can be read/studied completely in official website of UPCL i.e. [www.upcl.org](http://www.upcl.org) and website of MSTC India Limited (DEEP Portal) i.e. [www.mstccommerce.com](http://www.mstccommerce.com)  
All other terms and conditions shall remain unchanged.  
No. : 58/EE(CM)/UPCL/A-2, Dt. 30.01.2024 SE(COMMERCIAL)  
"SAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE INTEREST OF THE NATION" Use LED Bulb to Save Electricity.  
(Toll Free No. : 912) "Pay Electricity Bills Online 24x7 from [www.upcl.org](http://www.upcl.org)"  
(For information on Electricity theft, Informer may report to Toll Free No. : 1800 180 4195/Fax No. 9135 219383)

**STATE BANK OF INDIA PREMISES & ESTATE DEPARTMENT LHO MUMBAI METRO**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, State Bank of India, Local Head Office, Synergy Building, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra East, Mumbai - 400 051  
TENDER ID: MUM 20240201

**NOTICE FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR DESIGN COMPETITION FOR SELECTION AND ENGAGEMENT OF ARCHITECTURAL AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY FIRM (APMCF) FOR PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF NALASOPARA (W) BRANCH BUILDING AND RESIDENTIAL TOWERS FOR AWARD STAFF ON THE BANK'S PLOT AT VRUNDAVAN, NALASOPARA (W) MUMBAI**  
State Bank of India, invite Expression of interest (EOI) from reputed and experienced Architectural Firms / Individual for participating in the Design Competition for selection and engagement of Architectural and project management consultancy firm (APMCF) to render Architectural and Project Management Consultancy Services for the Proposed Construction of Nalasopara (W) Branch building and 3 Residential towers for Award staff at Vrundavan, Nalasopara (W) Mumbai for State Bank of India.  
The prequalification / eligibility criteria, scope of the services to be rendered, terms and conditions of appointment and prescribed formats for submission of application can be downloaded from Bank's website <https://bank.sbi> under procurement news (<https://bank.sbi/web/sbi-in-the-news/procurement-news>) from 01/02/2024 to 21/02/2024 upto 15.00 hrs.  
Interested Architectural Firms having PMC experience, complying prescribed eligibility criteria may submit their applications in the prescribed format with supporting documents online on e-tender portal - <https://tenders.sbi> in addition to submission of the same in hard copy at this office latest by 15.00 hrs on 21/02/2024. Application received after due date and time will not be entertained. SBI reserves its right to accept or reject all the applications without assigning reasons therefor and no further correspondence shall be entertained in this regard.  
Assistant General Manager (P&E)

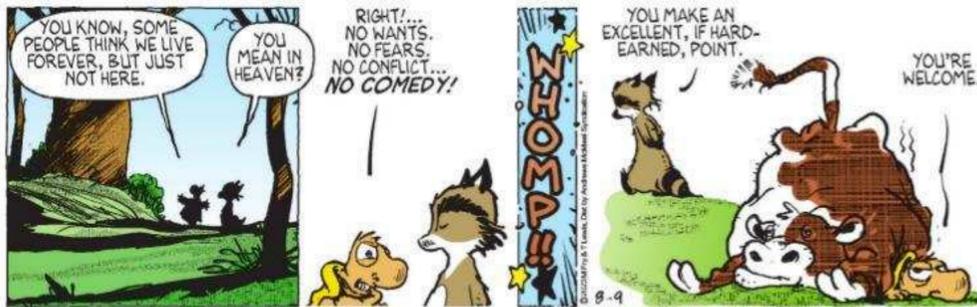
## CROSSWORD 5276



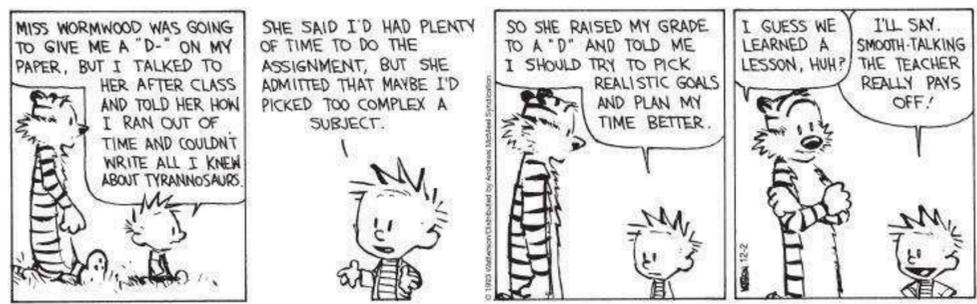
- ACROSS**
- New mascot hard to put up with (7)
  - Go round for some clothing (5)
  - It floats right astern (4)
  - Banter becomes hurtful in time (8)
  - Capital example of craft in war (10)
  - Emigre beaten up by the authorities (6)
  - It's normally measured at arm's length (6)
  - Tell a friend off the record (10)
  - It moves slowly to get up to the centre (8)
  - The right time for fashion (4)
  - When the devil drives, they must (5)
  - Complete slice and a half of Edam (7)
- DOWN**
- Brush and clean thoroughly (5)
  - Where prompt action may be needed behind the scenes (3-5)
  - Its passengers will be late (6)
  - A source of light at the seance? (6,4)
  - Scattered rain in the country (4)
  - It has wings and flies (7)
  - They fly some flag in trouble (10)
  - Mineral springs help? Hear, hear! (4,4)
  - Apply soothing balm or aggravate one's trouble (3,2,2)
  - He hopes to find you well (6)
  - Return from the capital (5)
  - Bank of Scotland (4)

**Solutions Crossword 5275 Across:** 1 Proofer, 9 Richard, 10 Put up, 11 Visa, 12 Narrator, 14 Nether, 16 Emmesh, 18 Slatter, 19 Min, 22 Askew, 23 Forbade, 24 Address book  
**Down:** 2 Races, 3 Okay, 4 Redraw, 5 Apparent, 6 Entitle, 7 Driving seat, 8 Apprehended, 13 Bestover, 15 Thanked, 17 Crafts, 20 Idaho, 21 Grub

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given clue.

All things are \_\_\_ that God would have us learn. - Iyanla Vanzant (7,5)

DVAEE      ACOLLN  
MORTS      ELUNSS

Answer: All things are lessons that God would have us learn. - Iyanla Vanzant

## SUDOKU 5459

**Difficulty Level 5s**  
**Instructions**  
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

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

## SOLUTION SUDOKU 5458

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

## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

**ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**  
Many times you have earned the admiration of those who matter most by refusing ever to buckle under the strain. Now you can relish the fruits of your success. This looks like a smooth moment for love, although if you don't take a chance now, you may not have a second opportunity.

**LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)**  
You are being urged to devote all your time and energy to fulfilling your vision of a better life, even though you may be distracted by a mixture of financial worry and emotional uncertainty. In affairs of the heart, take it easy and play it cool.

**TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)**  
If close companions are currently disagreeable, they will not remain so for long. You will win them over through the sheer power of your quite extraordinary charm. Put some distance between you and stressful situations, just enough to protect your sensitive soul.

**SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)**  
Commonsense and sound principles must soon finally convince you that you will have to fight for the truth. Yet keep it in mind that other people are not being willfully obstructive. They just don't have your breadth of vision. You will soon have to decide whether to confront a partner or leave well alone.

**GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**  
Associates may not share all your aspirations, so do be prepared for negative responses and stony silences. Perhaps there is something missing in your presentation. A lack of fact, maybe? Still, however blunt you are, partners will be even more so.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)**  
You must stagger your workload if you are not to be snowed under. You would do well to delegate any tasks at home or at work to people who have the skill and experience to complete them on your behalf - if such people exist, that is.

**CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)**  
Now that the planets have abandoned that area of your chart ruling domestic matters, concentrate on what is taking place on the home front. The point is that you are now in the driving seat. Yet you still have your doubts, so don't act until you're absolutely ready.

**CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**  
Nobody can question your devotion. However, you are likely to over-dramatise the most ordinary events and see offence where none was intended. Cultivate a relaxed, even frivolous, outlook. That way you'll be in a much better spirit to cope with partners when they become over-stressed.

**AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)**  
You may begin to feel that it is pointless going over any more old ground or churning yourself up emotionally for the sake of people who clearly do not value your remarkable gifts. Stick up for yourself for a change and don't let other people walk on your interests, even if they think they do have the right.

**LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)**  
Although there are several reassuring aspects this week, you must still face up to certain onerous duties. Thus a buoyant mood will be kept in check by the realisation that your routine must be adhered to. For all creative and romantic Leos, new volcanic passions are about to stir.

**PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)**  
In the past you may have been able to turn a blind eye, but now you cannot avoid facing up to situations which affect your domestic life. Decisive action is what is required, and you will let yourself down if you delay. Colleagues expect you to be up on the facts, so you'd better know what you're talking about.

**VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)**  
You are probably right to refuse to be rushed, or forced to sign on the dotted line. You cannot make a firm commitment unless you are completely sure that other people hold your interests as dear as their own. You will soon find out that a rival is right, by the way, so be ready to back down if you have to.

**ANDHRA PRADESH POWER GENERATION CORPORATION LIMITED**  
VIDYUTH SOUDHA :: VIJAYAWADA

**Notice Inviting Tenders (NIT) No. RFX No.610001447**

APGENCO invites tenders for "Providing Service Services round the clock for the premises of Viduth Soudha, Gunadala, Vijayawada for the period from 01-04-2024 to 31-03-2026" through APGENCO e-procurement platform (<https://tender.apgenco.gov.in/jrj/portal>). Estimated Contract Value is Rs.1,36,75,603. Schedule Available Date & Time: 05.02.2024, 6.00PM. Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: 22.02.2024, 3.00PM. PH. (0866-2526899/442). Detailed Tender Notice is placed in [www.apgenco.gov.in](http://www.apgenco.gov.in). No: 2653/PL/ADVT/1/1/2021-22 Sd/- M.S.V.V.PRASAD

**INDIAN RAILWAY CATERING AND TOURISM CORPORATION LTD.**  
(A Government of India Enterprise - Mini Ratna)  
CIN : L74999DL1999GOH191707

**IRCTC invites bids for:-**

- Open E-Tender IRCTC/IR/Ambermath/Legistics/2023/2 for selection of agencies for transportation and CPA services of Rail Neer Packaged Drinking Water produced for a period of three (3) years at Rail Neer Plant, Ambermath (Mumbai). Last Date for Submission: 15.02.2024 up to 15.00. E-mail: gpmrailneer@irctc.com
- Open Tender (two bid system) Tender No. IRCTC/COT/RS/M/2021/Tourism/VISA SERVICES for engagement of Visa Service Provider. Pre-bid Meeting - 15.00 hrs on 13.02.2024. Last Date for Submission: 23.02.2024 up to 15:00 hrs. E-mail: jaswinders320@irctc.com
- Open e-tenders for provision of onboard catering services in trains, for a period of 05 years further extendable up to 02 years for a cluster of trains. Last date for submission: 22.02.2024 up to 12:00 hrs. E-mail: mobilecatg.tend@irctc.com
- Supply of 5,00,000 Pcs of Corrugated boxes for packaging of 500 ml bottles of Rail Neer at Rail Neer Plant Nangloi (New Delhi). Last Date for Submission: 15.02.2024 up to 15:00 hrs. E-mail: railneerangloj@irctc.com

For details visit [www.irctc.com](http://www.irctc.com) for (1-4). [www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC](http://www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC) for (1-3) and [www.eprocure.gov.in/cppp](http://www.eprocure.gov.in/cppp) & [www.gem.gov.in](http://www.gem.gov.in) for (4). Tender document downloading & participation can only be done on [www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC](http://www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC) for (1-3) and [www.gem.gov.in](http://www.gem.gov.in) for (4). Corrigendum/addendum if any, shall be published only IRCTC's website [www.irctc.com](http://www.irctc.com) for (1-4). [www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC](http://www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC) for (1-3) and [www.eprocure.gov.in/cppp](http://www.eprocure.gov.in/cppp) & [www.gem.gov.in](http://www.gem.gov.in) for (4). Office Address:- IRCTC Ltd. 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Statesman House, B-148, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Palace, New Delhi-110001. Tel: 011-2311263-64 [ecatering.irctc.co.in](http://ecatering.irctc.co.in)

**ANDHRA PRADESH INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE CORPORATION LIMITED**  
(Govt. of Andhra Pradesh Undertaking)  
APIC Tower, 9, 10 & 11<sup>th</sup> Floors, CFC-1, IT Park, Autonagar, Mangalagiri, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh-522503. Website: [www.apic.in](http://www.apic.in). Phone: 0863-2381850

APIC has proposed for Setting up of Bulk Drug park, Nakkapalli, Anakapalli District, Andhra Pradesh on EPC mode. The tender documents (Request for Proposal, Concession Agreement and Price Bid) were submitted to Judicial Preview. As a part of Judicial Preview and to ensure transparency, the tender documents were placed in the public domain of Judicial Preview website: [www.judicialpreview.ap.gov.in](http://www.judicialpreview.ap.gov.in) on 31.01.2024 to invite the objections / suggestions from the general public and intending bidders. The objections / suggestions, if any, have to be submitted to the Judge, Judicial Preview on or before 08.02.2024, 05.00 PM through Judicial Preview official email [apjudicialpreview@gmail.com](mailto:apjudicialpreview@gmail.com) only.

Mangalagiri, Date: 31.01.2024 Sd/- CHIEF ENGINEER -III, APIC - Mangalagiri

**Mahatma Phule Renewable Energy and Infrastructure Technology Limited**  
MAHAPREIT (Subsidiary of MPBCCD, a Government of Maharashtra undertaking)

**NOTICE FOR INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)**

Mahatma Phule Renewable Energy & Infrastructure Technology Limited (MAHAPREIT) invites Request for Proposal for Transfer & Stamp Duty Administration Services, Custody and Fund Accounting of MAHAPREIT Alternative Investment Fund (MAIF). Interested agency/firms may submit their documents on or before 15-02-2024 up to 03:00 PM. Details of the RFP can be viewed at <https://mahapreit.in>

Executive Director (IT)

**PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited**  
(Regd Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala - 147001)  
CIN: U40109PB2010SGC033813, Website: [www.pspcl.in](http://www.pspcl.in)  
Mobile No. 96461-18721

**Tender Enquiry No. QW-320/PO-W Dated: 24.01.2024**

Chief Engineer/Stores & Workshops Organization, Sarabha Nagar, PSPCL, Ludhiana, invites E-tender of Repair of 3-phase, 50 cycles, outdoor type, oil immersed, naturally cooled, Stack core type construction, OWP Aluminium Wound Distribution Transformers (Type Conventional) of capacity 63 KVA with voltage ratio 11/0.433 KV conforming to ISS: 2026 (with latest amendments, if any) and 1180 part-1 (2014) complete with a first filling of oil conforming to ISS:335/1993 (with latest amendments, if any)

Quantity = 15000 Nos.

For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 24.01.2024 from 1.30 PM onwards. NOTE: Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. C-78/24 31897/PB

**OFFICE OF THE MEDININAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**  
e-mail :- [municipalcouncil.medininagar@gmail.com](mailto:municipalcouncil.medininagar@gmail.com)

**Short Tender Notice (4<sup>th</sup> Call)**  
Tender notice No:-UDHD/MMC/AMRUT2/63/2023-24 DATED: 31/01/2024

Sl.No.	Event Description	Date
1	Name of work	Construction & Rejuvenation of Kacharwa Dam (Water Bodies) in ward no. 05, Medininagar Municipal Corporation.
2	Estimated Cost	Rs. 9,66,85,295/-
3	Bid Security	Rs. 9,67,000/-
4	Cost of Document	Rs. 25,000/-
5	Completion of Work	18 Months
6	Date of Publication of Tender	31/01/2024 AT 10:00 A.M
7	Mode Of Submission Of Bids	E-Tendering <a href="http://jsharkhandtenders.gov.in">http://jsharkhandtenders.gov.in</a>
8	Date Start Of Submission Of Bids	02/02/2024 AT 10:00 A.M
9	Last Date Time Of Submission Of Bids	15/02/2024 AT 02:00 PM
10	Pre bid Meeting Date	10/02/2024 AT 12:00 PM
11	Date Of Bid Opening	16/02/2024 AT 03:00 PM
12	Name & Address Of Office Inviting Tender	Municipal Commissioner, Medininagar Municipal Corporation
13	Contact No. Of Procurement Officer	9430783582, 8409756635 & 9386849354
14	Helpline Number Of E-Procurement Cell	9430783582, 8409756635 & 9386849354

Note :- Only Online tender is Permissible. Sd/- Municipal Commissioner -Cum- Administrator PR 317522 (District)23-24'D Medininagar Municipal Corporation

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES,  
O/O THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER,  
RENGALI RIGHT IRRIGATION CIRCLE, DHENKANAL  
Email Id - [adicerric@gmail.com](mailto:adicerric@gmail.com)

**'e' Procurement Notice**

The Additional Chief Engineer, Rengali Right Irrigation Circle, Dhenkanal on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites on line percentage rate bids in double cover system for construction of the works as detailed below:

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Construction of RCC Retaining wall in incomplete patches from RD 40565M to 48900M of GBC of Rengali Right Irrigation Project, Dhenkanal.
1.	Name of the work	Construction of RCC Retaining wall in incomplete patches from RD 40565M to 48900M of GBC of Rengali Right Irrigation Project, Dhenkanal.
2.	Tender Cost	Rs. 621.32 lakh
3.	Bid Document Cost	Rs. 10,000.00 (on line)
4.	Bid Security/EMD	Rs. 6, 21,400.00
5.	Class of Contractor	"A" Class & "Special" Class
6.	Period of Completion	12 (twelve) calendar months including monsoon
7.	Other details are as follows:	

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding From To	Date of Opening of Technical Bid (Cover-I)
Additional Chief Engineer, RRIC, Dhenkanal	ACERRICRD-04/2023-24	05.02.2024 10.00 AM	17.02.2024 5.30 PM
			19.02.2024 11.00 AM

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum/ Corrigendum Cancellation to the above notice will be published in the Govt. website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)

OIPR-32516/11/0006/2324 Sd/- Additional Chief Engineer Rengali Right Irrigation Circle, Dhenkanal

**KMF Karnataka Co-Operative Milk Producers' Federation Limited**  
KMF Complex, Dr. M. H. Marigowda Road, Bangalore-560 029. Phone : 26096832/910/922 Fax : 080-25536105 e-mail : [purchase@kmf.coop](mailto:purchase@kmf.coop)

IFT No.: KMF/PUR/Market-Maharashtra/Tender-608/2024/Call2 Date: 30.01.2024

**SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
(Through KPP Portal only)

The Karnataka Milk Federation, Bangalore invites tenders from eligible tenderers for Transportation, warehousing and Distribution service of Flavored milk in 200ml tetra brick packs to the door step of ATP Dhule (Dhule District) & Toloda (Nandurbar District) 64 ashram school Maharashtra State on one year basis.

Date of commencement of Tender	31.01.2024
Pre-bid Meeting Date and Time	05.02.2024 @ 15.00 PM KMF Co. Premises
Last date for submission of Tender	09.02.2024 On or before Up to 15.00 PM
Date of opening of Technical Tender	12.02.2024 at 15:05 PM
Date of opening of Commercial Tender	After technical bid verification

Tender documents may be downloaded from e-Procurement website <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>. EMD and other details can be seen in the tender document.

For Karnataka Co-Op. Milk Federation Ltd., Sd/- DIRECTOR (PURCHASE)

**CIDCO WE MAKE CITIES**

**NOTICE INVITING BID**  
Appointment of Bank as a total solution provider for all payments related to Marketing department.

CIDCO of Maharashtra Limited through the process of e-tendering invites "On-line" for "Appointment of Bank as a total solution provider for all payments related to Marketing department." (hereinafter referred to as "the Prospective Bidder").

**1. Name of Work: Appointment of Bank as a total solution provider for all payments related to Marketing department. 2. C.A. No.: CIDCO/MM-C/2022-23/01 3. E.M.D.: ₹1,00,000/- 4. Contract Period: 36 Months 5. Bid Price: INR 5,900.00 (Rupees Five Thousand Nine Hundred only) (Non Refundable) (Inclusive of 18% GST) (Rs.5000/- Bid cost + Rs.900/- for 18% GST)**

Bid Document along with Bidding programme will be available on the website <https://mahatenders.gov.in> from 31.01.2024 at 11.00 Hrs

Marketing Manager (Commercial) CIDCO/PR/534/2023-24

**MUMBAI SLUM IMPROVEMENT BOARD**  
A REGIONAL UNIT OF (MAHARASHTRA HOUSING AND AREA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY)  
Tel. No. - 022-66405484, E-mail- [ecicityslum@gmail.com](mailto:ecicityslum@gmail.com)

**e-TENDER NOTICE**

**EXECUTIVE Engineer (City) Division, Mumbai Slum Improvement Board, (Unit of MHADA) Room No. 539, 4th floor, Griha Nirman Bhavan, Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051, Phone Number (022) 66405484 is inviting Open/Regular e-Tender for the 29 number of works in the form of B-1 (Percentage rate) from the Registered contractors in the corresponding appropriate class of contractor or any Govt./Semi Govt. organisation, via online e-tendering system. The Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Documents shall be available & can be downloaded from Government of Maharashtra portal <https://mahatenders.gov.in>, Bidding documents can be loaded on the website. The tender Document sale start on dated 02.02.2024, 1.00 pm. To Document sale end date 09.02.2024, 5.35 pm. Corrigendum / Amendments if any could be published only on the <https://mahatenders.gov.in> web site. The Competent Authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof. Conditional offers will not be accepted.**

Sd/- Executive Engineer (City), M. S I B Board, Mumbai

CPRO/A/122 MHADA - Leading Housing Authority in the Nation



*Bengaluru:* Bengaluru FC, on Wednesday, announced the signing of defender Nikhil Poojary on a deal that keeps the India international with the Blues till the end of the 2027-28 season. **PTI**

## BRIEFLY

## Shaw declared fit, to play Ranji Trophy for Mumbai

*Mumbai:* Opening batsman Prithvi Shaw has been cleared for fitness by the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru and will play Mumbai's next

Ranji Trophy game against Bengal in Kolkata from February 2. Shaw has been on the sidelines because of a knee injury and will be playing a competitive game after six months. Shaw had injured his knee in August while playing a one-day game for Northamptonshire. He was in fine touch after making 244 and 125 not out before injury struck. "He has been declared fit and can take part in the Ranji Trophy games. The BCCI has informed the MCA (Mumbai Cricket Association) about it," a BCCI official confirmed. Shaw has been batting in the practice nets at the NCA in Bengaluru. An MRI had revealed that Shaw had grade-II tear of posterior cruciate ligament. Shaw has played five Tests, six ODIs and one T20I.

**DEVENDRA PANDEY**

## Jay Shah appointed ACC chairman

*New Delhi:* Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) secretary **Jay Shah** was on Wednesday appointed as the president of the Asian Cricket Council for a third consecutive term. Shah's extension was proposed by the Sri Lanka Cricket president Shammil Silva for the second time and the nomination

was unanimously backed by all the members of the ACC at its annual general meeting. Shah assumed the role in January 2021, succeeding Bangladesh Cricket Board President Nazmul Hassan. "I am grateful to the ACC Board for their continued trust. We must remain committed to ensuring the all-round development of the sport with a special focus on regions where it is still in its infancy," Shah said. **PTI**

## PKL: Patna Pirates tie with Bengaluru Bulls

*Patna:* Patna Pirates shared points with the Bengaluru Bulls in a thrilling 28-28 tie during their Pro Kabaddi League meeting here on Wednesday. Sandeep Kumar (14 raid points) and Ankit (8 tackle points) were the star performers for the hosts. The Pirates had two reviews go their way and appeared to be walking away with a victory before Bharat came off the bench for the Bulls and landed a running hand touch on Krishan Dhull in the penultimate raid to tie the scores. Pirates became only the second side to remain unbeaten in their home leg this season, along with the Jaipur Pink Panthers. **PTI**

## Sheoran bags ISSF World Cup bronze

*Cairo:* Paris Olympic quota winner Akhil Sheoran won his second career individual ISSF World Cup stage medal, clinching the men's 50m rifle 3 positions bronze here on Wednesday. Akhil shot 451.8 in the eight-man 45-shot final, after qualifying in second place with a score of 589. The seasoned Jiri Privratsky of the Czech Republic won gold with 462.9, while France's Romain Aulfere bagged silver after finishing with 460.5. The effort meant that India concluded their engagements at the season opening World Cup stage with medals of every colour. **PTI**

# India bring out the sweep, reverse sweep

Rajat Patidar and Sarfaraz Khan played the traditional version but others tried the reverse sweep too

**VENKATA KRISHNAB**  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JANUARY 31

AT TEN minutes to 3 pm, Rajat Patidar finally walked out of the temporary canopies that were placed near the practice arena, which sits about 100 metres from the main playing arena at the Visakhapatnam stadium. With Rohit Sharma, Yashavi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Kuldeep Yadav batting ahead of him, Patidar had sat alone for an hour-and-a-half with his thigh pads on, paying close attention to India's top three.

Even Washington Sundar, who was only drafted into the squad after Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul were out injured, would come in and straightaway have a go at the nets. It remains to be seen if Sundar gets the nod ahead of Patidar. As the clock kept ticking, Patidar would start tapping a ball, presumably enjoying the sound. A little later, Sarfaraz Khan and Saurabh Kumar – two other players who joined for the second Test here in Visakhapatnam, would join him after inquiring whether his turn was over. With the weather a tad hot, Jasprit Bumrah, Axar Patel, Washington and Jaiswal would seek shelter for a few minutes while the captain Rohit walked up. After gently chiding Jaiswal for relaxing and asking Sarfaraz and Saurabh to join the rest, Rohit had a short discussion with Patidar before the latter headed for his first outing of the day.

Awaiting him were R Ashwin and Axar and Patidar would dish out five sweeps of the first six deliveries he faced. A few deliveries later, the paddle-sweep came out, before a couple more sweeps materialised – front and behind square. This would continue for a while before he switched to an adjacent net, where he faced Ashwin exclusively, sweeping him almost every ball he faced. Only the odd ball was played with a vertical bat.

Much later, alongside Mohammad Siraj, Sarfaraz entered the batting nets to face Kuldeep and Washington.

He has been primarily in the squad for his sweep-shot prowess and because he is strong square of the wicket. Unlike Patidar, he didn't deploy the sweep as much, instead allowing the ball to come in and working around to the leg-side. Intermittently, he would employ the sweep shots, and his version was the most powerful among all Indian batsmen who had a hit on Wednesday.

The reverse-and-conventional sweeps, two shots which were missing in India's arsenal as England spinners targeted them with a stump-to-stump line, came out in full at the practice session. Only Patidar and Sarfraz didn't dabble with the reverse; the rest did.

The disappearance or rather the reluctance of the current set of Indian batsmen to play the sweep has been a big mystery. Most of the current crop prefer to largely play from the crease. A couple like Jaiswal and Rohit like to advance. But the reluctance to use the sweep shot on low surfaces makes them live dangerously. Ollie Pope showed them the value of the reverse sweep in Hyderabad.

And with a similar pitch expected in this coastal city for the second Test, India showed refreshing signs of practising the sweep. There were signs of it coming, especially when India's batting coach Vikram Rathour spoke before the training session that while the reverse-sweep wasn't something their batsmen could master overnight, the conventional sweep remained a definite option.

"You need to be prepared for that by practising it. If you add more shots to your game, it's always beneficial. We played traditionally. We can keep doing that, and if we can add more shots and score through the square of the wicket, that's always an addition," Rathour said.



Shreyas Iyer practises at the nets in Visakhapatnam ahead of the second Test starting on Friday.

BCCI/Twitter

## Dravid keeps a close eye on Gill

For a batsman who is struggling for runs in red-ball cricket and his spot no longer safe when Virat Kohli comes back for the third Test, Gill had an extensive session. Among the first batch of batsmen to take guard at the nets, Gill started off by facing the throwdown specialists, who troubled him at times. Later, he played a few attractive shots to the spinners though there was this one moment that led Dravid to move close to him for a better look. It came when Axar deceived him in the flight and hit the top of off stump with Gill still on the move. Dravid headed across, positioned himself right behind Gill, with the proceedings being captured on a camera. With Dravid suggesting him to go forward, Gill would then take long strides to defend and after a 45-minute session, he would take his helmet and head towards some shade, but only to change his gloves and go back to facing Ashwin.

## Pitch for 2nd Test: Slow turner on cards

**HAVING RESORTED** to rank turners the last time England went 1-0 up, in the 2021 tour, all eyes are firmly on how India would respond this time. However, all things in Visakhapatnam point out to the pitch for the second Test beginning on Friday, being another slow turner, similar to what was rolled out at Hyderabad. If the pitch for the first Test had turned from Day 1, it may not be the case here. With Visakhapatnam being on the coastal stretch and temperature being warmer than what it was in Hyderabad, the pitch remained under covers for most part of the day. But not before it was watered and a heavy roller was used. There is a slight layer of grass in patches, but that is hardly going to matter on a pitch that looks brown. Like most parts of the country, this one is a black soil surface and watering it two days ahead of the Test means it will not crumble as much, thus leading to less sharp turn. "It is difficult to predict. It will turn, may not be from the first day, but eventually it will turn," said India's batting coach Vikram Rathour.

**VENKATA KRISHNAB**

# Is Kuldeep capable of taming the Bazballers in Visakhapatnam?

**SANDIPG**  
JANUARY 31

IT WAS not Kuldeep Yadav's turn to bowl. But he jumped the line; the shy and starstruck net-bowler whose turn it was did not raise an objection. The ball before, loopy and landing on good-length, his teammate and the hottest young batting talent in the country Rinku Singh had thunder-bolted Kuldeep over his head, the ball whistling into the distance like an arrow. Kuldeep wanted to serve revenge hot, even if it was only a routine net session on the eve of Uttar Pradesh's Ranji Trophy encounter with Kerala in Alappuzha a fortnight ago.

The haste did not ruffle him. With short, busy strides, he took off, watched keenly by head coach Sunil Joshi and a handful of students who had bunked the class to watch Kuldeep. Rinku hunkered down and uncoiled his body for the reverse sweep, but before he could bring his bat down fully across from leg side towards the off side, the ball crashed onto his forearm. Rinku smiled sheepishly, the crowd gasped in shock. It was not just a staple quicker one, but one that was seemingly 25kph faster than his regular pace.

There was a time when the left-arm wrist spinner was considered too slow; here is a time when he could bowl with the pace he whims. The next ball was considerably slower—more classical in rendition—drifted away from Rinku and spun back a trifle, which Rinku, shedding adventure, defended stoutly on the back-foot. Joshi would advise him to bowl a yard fuller. He would demonstrate it to him too with a deliciously flighted ball. The latter is attentive to details, and Kuldeep in receiving the wisdom of a craftsman of the spin-art. Kuldeep would correct his length. Joshi is content.

"For a spinner, it's the length that matters more than the line. You can play around with the lines, but cannot compromise with the lengths. All great spinners have had absolute mastery over their lengths. It has been the most important aspect of his bowling we have been working on, and the reason he has been successful of late," Joshi says.



Kuldeep Yadav. Reuters

From plunging the depths of despair during the lockdown, he resurfaced as one half of India's potent spin pair (with Jadeja) in the World Cup. Now, with Jadeja injured for the 2nd Test, he could return to the longer format after 14 months. His Test career has been a tale of scattered appearances—eight outings in seven years, despite an impressive tally of 34 wickets at an average of 21, striking once every 37th ball, a four or more wickets in third innings. Even in his last Test—against Bangladesh in Chattogram—he snared eight wickets. But in the era of India's most prolific spin pair—Jadeja and R Ashwin—the dilemma of selectors is understandable.

For a long time, he was their understudy. Then during his downtime came along Axar Patel, whose superior batting numbers thrust him back to the domestic grind. "But he has made good use of it, picked up the pieces and fought back to the team. He has developed more control, got fitter and is confident of getting wickets. For a spinner that is important, confidence. I see no reason why he can't be successful in Tests. He has the confidence, the hunger and the variations," points out Joshi.

Whereas he seemed restrained about unleashing his full repertoire of trickery in the World Cup, at the nets and later in the match, he was the twinkle-eyed trickster that swallowed Steve Smith and Co in Dharamsala to hand India a series-winning victory. On a surface that was not the spinner's best friend, he

spun the ball both ways to the right hander. The stock ball was the one that snakes back to the right-hander, but it is the one that breaks away that enhances his potency.

"It is a really difficult ball for the right-hander to negotiate if it's turning. It's difficult to read him off his hands, and if you depend on reading him off the pitch, the ball can really surprise you," explains Joshi, who has been involved in his comeback journey, first at the NCA and then with the Uttar Pradesh team.

By being a left-arm wrist-spinner alone Kuldeep offers a different proposition. The angles and trajectories he treads are different; as are his release points and lengths. Rare as his tribe is, most batsmen are unaccustomed to his ways. That's not all. The variations are eye-watering—there is the stock ball that comes in to the right-handed batsmen, the wrong one, the flipper, and the quicker that beat Rinku to the reverse-sweep. He could be the antidote to reverse-sweep-happy England batsmen. Now that he has conquered the art of modulating pace without any changes in variations, he could reclaim his stakes with the red ball.

But the biggest gift, Joshi emphasises, is his ability to turn the ball. "It's what spinners are supposed to do, aren't they? But not all can turn the ball on any surface. Kuldeep can, whether it is a turner or not, and that makes him really special," says Joshi.

Besides, the Bazballers have not yet been tested by a quality wrist-spinner in their march. It's worth noting though that Abrar Ahmed did grab 17 wickets at an average of 27 in Pakistan two years ago. Pakistan's second highest wicket-taker too was a leg-spinner, Zahid Mahmood, who though leaked nearly seven runs an over. Wrist-spin is an old weakness of England, one that Ben Stokes's gung-ho group has not countered much in their march.

He is no stranger to them, though chiefly with the white ball in hand. He had harassed them so much in the white-ball series in 2018 that Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow sought the help of a specially-designed bowling machine Merlyn to help them out. The next game, he nailed them both and he would quip: "The machine doesn't have hands or fingers."

## PLATE GROUP RUN FEST

# Film director's son scripts dream run, scores 5 tons in 4 Ranji Trophy games

**PRATYUSH RAJ**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

IN VIDHU Vinod Chopra's movie '12th Fail', there is a song "Restart" that plays every time the protagonists Manoj Sharma (Vikrant Massey) and Gauri bhैया (Anshuman Pushkar) fail to crack the UPSC exam. Although the song was written almost a year before Agni Dev Chopra made the switch from Mumbai to Mizoram, he feels a connection to the song from the movie directed by his father.

"There is a connection now but the song was written a year before I moved to Mizoram. I moved to Mizoram in 2023. But that line is applicable everywhere in life," he tells *The Indian Express*.

Agni, son of filmmaker Vidhu Vinod and journalist Anupama Chopra, has scored five centuries in four games in the Plate Group, including 105 and 101 in the last game

against Meghalaya

The 25-year-old has piled up 767 runs in four matches, with an astonishing average of 95.87. Agni's first love was cricket and not movies. "When I was seven or eight, I started playing cricket. I was not passionate about films. Nepotism does exist in the film industry. I am not talking about just actors but also as a producer. My father could have got me an entry pass, but my heart was never in it," Agni told *The Indian Express*.

Agni taking up cricket surprised his father, who loves the game and has produced "Ferrari Ki Sawaari," a movie on cricket.

"My dad used to say ye kiska beta hai, mera beta toh nahi ho sakta (Whose son is this, he is certainly not mine)."

But the director-producer father keenly follows his son's cricket career and even asks him about shot selection.

"He does ask 'why did you play that shot, how can you get out like this?' The thing about cricket is that everyone is a



Agni Dev Chopra has scored 767 runs in four matches. Special arrangement

coach. Everybody knows cricket more than the cricketer does," Agni said.

The bowling attack in Plate Group isn't of the same quality as the Elite Groups but Agni, 25, was an accomplished junior bats-

## Agni taking up cricket surprised his father, who loves the game and has produced "Ferrari Ki Sawaari," a movie on cricket.

man. He has led the Mumbai Under-19 team and was Mumbai's leading run-getter in 2019-20 CK Nayudu Trophy with 760 runs, including a double hundred.

In the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, he scored a 45-ball 76 against a Jammu and Kashmir attack that comprised Umran Malik, Yudvir Singh, Rasikh Salam and Abid Mushtaq. All of them with an IPL contract.

"I remember my 201. It was against Bengal in Under-23s at Dadoji Kondadev Stadium. It was a turner. I would have been dropped if I hadn't scored in that game. In the first three games, I had only scored a fifty. It was make or break for me," he recalled.

However, he couldn't break into the Ranji Trophy team.

"In July, Mizoram had trials at the National Cricket Academy. I went for the trial and I was lucky enough to be picked. It was tough to leave my city but this was the best opportunity to play in the List A and first-class cricket," Agni said.

Agni also had injury setbacks, a freak one two years ago saw him miss nearly three months of cricket.

"A week before the Under-25 tournament, I was fielding at slips in a club match and a ball landed in front of me and I tried to catch it but it was a little too far. The ball hit me on the ring finger of my right hand. My nail had broken from the middle. I was out for two-and-a-half months," Agni said.

Two of his close friends, also cricketers, Arjun Tendulkar and Test capped Shubman Gill helped him cope during the difficult period. "Arjun and I have grown up together. We have played pretty much every

age group together. Both of them have had injury setbacks too. When I couldn't move my finger at all I was wondering how I was going to hold my bat or catch or bowl. They made me understand that it is something (injuries) that you can't control and it is just part of the game," Agni said.

In 2019, Agni made the big decision to move out of his parents' home. He moved in with Khushpreet Singh Aulakh, Gill's trainer. Khushpreet felt that it would do Agni a world of good if he moved out of his comfort zone. Agni said shifting homes helped him grow as a person. "I moved out because everything was too easy, and comfortable, everything was on a platter. I was becoming too laidback.

Agni is pragmatic and does not want to get carried away because of his run-scoring spree for Mizoram. "Yes, I have scored five centuries but it doesn't matter if we won't be able to qualify for the Elite, that's the aim."

# Pairs eyeing Paris

Ashwini-Tanisha are ahead of Treesa-Gayatri in the qualification race, as they face off in Bangkok

VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

AFTER NOT having a single representative at the Tokyo Olympics, women's doubles badminton in India is entering an exciting final phase of Paris qualification. Two pairs are in the fray, battling it out against each other in a topsy-turvy race. Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto, who only started playing together a year back, recently overtook Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly in the Race to Paris list.

On Thursday in Bangkok, there will be a round-of-16 clash between the two Indian pairs at the Thailand Masters Super 300 that promises to be an intriguing chapter in this race.

Ashwini and Tanisha currently hold the edge, occupying the 11th qualification spot among 16 pairs that will qualify for Paris. Treesa and Gayatri are trying to mount a comeback after a less-than-ideal finish to 2023 where the latter was managing an injury and results simply didn't fall their way. Whoever wins this second official meeting, is bound to get a shot in the arm. But all of them insist they will be happy for whoever qualifies ultimately.

"They are also playing well at the moment, and if any of us go to Paris, it will be a proud moment for India," Treesa, 20, said during the India Open. "We didn't have any women's doubles representation from India at the Tokyo Olympics. They are also working really hard, anyone goes it is fine, we will be happy for them. From our side, we need to play good matches and pull off good results in the next few tournaments, that's the aim. Every match, whether we win or lose, we are taking the learnings from it, there is a lot of improvement and experience we need to get."

"Likewise (we'd be happy if either gets to Paris)," said the veteran Ashwini, 34. "They are a strong pair, we definitely learn a lot from their matches. At the end of the day, it'd likely be them or us and it'd be great to see an Indian pair qualify for the Olympics. We are all fighting."

On the court and off it, the two pairs are quite contrasting. Treesa and Gayatri have been playing together on the tour since 2021, and are largely conventional in the sense that there is a steadiness about them. Treesa is the aggressor, the backcourt en-



Tanisha Crasto (L), 20, partners the experienced 34-year-old former Worlds bronze medallist Ashwini Ponappa. BA/

forcer, while Gayatri is the touch specialist from the front court. They are the same age, there is a bit of ice-and-fire in their approach to the game with Treesa being the fiery element and Gayatri, 20, maintaining a largely unruffled persona.

On the other hand, Ashwini and Tanisha, 20, bring more collective energy. Their movement on the court can often be chaotic, but both of them are good enough to take up any position, and it makes them potent. They have played together just for a year and have battled it out at the lower-level tournaments on the World Tour to build up their understanding and rhythm.

Purely on technique and aesthetics, the pair of 20-year-olds should be favourites, but what Ashwini and Tanisha have going for them is momentum, fitness, and a whole lot of experience that the 34-year-old brings to the table. In fact, Ashwini and Tanisha are a rare duo on the tour in that there is a 14-year age differential between them. Most of the top pairs in the world at

the moment are barely separated in that respect.

"That's what makes us a unique pair," Tanisha said. "I really don't think there looks like there is a huge difference on the court, didi is still one of the hardest hitters in the world and she is at least bringing me to that level. In fact, I feel she is more agile than me at times, she is all over the court."

For Ashwini, a reset this late in her career has brought about a new perspective and she is feeding off the youngster's unbridled enthusiasm. It makes her feel younger. "Partnering with someone who is just 20 and starting off, is very exciting," Ashwini, who won the World Championships bronze with Jwala Gutta in 2011, said.

"I see things from a different perspective, I have been playing for a long time, and then when I see how she approaches events, she is excited. Like Malaysia Open was her first Super 1000 and her first tournament in Malaysia. I have played there for

so many years, and when I see her come for the first time, it is very exciting. For me, it's great that I get to share that experience with her as well as learn a lot from the energy she brings to the court. It keeps me going and gives me that buzz."

It is also not lost on Ashwini that for the first time in a while, India have two pairs in women's doubles pushing each other. "There has been a decade's gap where we didn't have a strong second pair. And now we have two good pairs from India, which is a big change. Ideally we need more, but it's nice to see the next rung of doubles players are already here," she said.

Mutual admiration aside, the match in Bangkok will indicate whether Treesa-Gayatri have the fight in them to return to the form they showed in early 2022 and 2023 with back-to-back All England semifinals that made the world sit up and take notice.

Because on the other side of the court, Ashwini-Tanisha will bring the heat.

# 'Experience has been great... but we are in Pakistan for a purpose'

NAMIT KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

AN INDIAN tennis team has travelled to Pakistan for the Davis Cup for the first time in 60 years, for the upcoming World Group 1 playoff tie to be played on the grass courts of Islamabad between February 3-4. But given the tight security cover that has been granted to them, they are yet to experience the atmosphere of the city or judge the reception they will receive from the people.

"The experience has been great so far but we have been under very strict security conditions," Zeeshan Ali, India coach and captain for the tie, told The Indian Express over the phone from Islamabad. "We went from the airport to the hotel, and then to the practice venues and back to the hotel. We have not been moving around the city and have not gotten a chance to interact with anyone. What we have seen so far has been fabulous, the hotel is catering to our needs and the food is great. Can't expect more, really."

Sporting ties have been frosty between the two countries due to geopolitical tensions - when India were scheduled to play a Davis Cup tie in Pakistan in 2019, the tie was moved to the neutral venue of Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan; India's request for the same was denied this year. It remains rare for an Indian sports team or group of athletes to tour the country.

However, given the circumstances, the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) have ensured a security cover usually reserved for heads of state for the Indian contingent, limiting their movement around the city. A dinner held at the Indian Consulate on Wednesday will be the team's first outing away from the hotel and practice venue.

Ali says that the group is aware of the novelty of being able to play in Pakistan, and that the sporting rivalry between the two countries has resonance back home. But the team needs no extra motivation than the simple fact that they are playing in the Davis Cup for the country.

"We were aware of the security meas-

ures beforehand, so we came prepared. This has no impact on the players mentally. I know that, in some ways, this is a historic tie since we are coming here for the Davis Cup for the first time in 60 years.

"All of us are aware of that history and what that means. A match like this does not really happen very often.

"But at the same time, we are not here to sightsee, we are here with a purpose. The focus remains on winning the tie for India this weekend and if we can experience a good (atmosphere), that's a plus."

"India and Pakistan may not be playing much, but individually, the players are in contact with each other on the tour, and some of the Pakistani players have played in India as well. So, again, this is not a new experience for

them," Ali added. Among the familiar faces in the Pakistan camp are veterans Aqeel Khan and Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi. Qureshi, the 43-year-old doubles specialist who could feature in singles too, has a bigger connection with India, once reaching the men's doubles final of the 2010 US Open alongside Rohan Bopanna.

While speaking during an Idea Exchange with *The Indian Express* back in 2021, Qureshi lamented the breakdown of sporting ties between the two countries.

"It is disappointing that for political reasons, these things are not happening and sports are getting affected.

"Sports and arts, that's the beauty about it that we don't rate people because of the culture or religion or which country they belong from. And it should be left like that," he had said. "For me, it's disappointing that Indians can't come to Pakistan to play, or Pakistanis can't go to India to play either."

With their top-ranked singles players - Sumit Nagal and Sasikumar Mukund - opting out of the tie, and Bopanna retiring from Davis Cup duty after India's win over Morocco in Lucknow last year, India will field a second-string team, led by World No. 461 Ramkumar Ramanathan and doubles specialists N Sriram Balaji, Yuki Bhambri, and Saketh Myneni. Niki Poonacha is also in the squad.

# Agarwal shares positive update after mid-flight health scare

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
JANUARY 31

CRICKETER MAYANK Agarwal has given a medical update about himself, a day after he needed to be rushed to a hospital in Agartala.

The Karnataka Ranji Trophy team captain fell sick on board a New Delhi-bound flight on Tuesday, while on his way to Surat for Karnataka's next fixture.

It was learnt that Agarwal had apparently consumed a liquid a pouch in front of him thinking it to be water.

That led to him having swelling and ulcers in his mouth.

Agarwal, who has played 21 Tests for India, had led Karnataka to a 29-run victory over Tripura Tripura at the Maharaj Bir Bikram Stadium in Agartala, which started on January 26 and ended on Jan 29.

In his absence, vice-captain Nikin Jose is likely to take over the Karnataka team's captaincy in the next match.

The team is slated to take on Railways in Surat in a Ranji Trophy game starting from February 2.

Sharing two photographs of himself lying on a hospital bed, Agarwal posted the caption: "I am feeling better now. Gearing to comeback. Thank you for prayers, love and support, everyone!"

While it is not yet ascertained what was in the pouch, Agarwal has lodged a formal complaint with the police, who are now investigating the matter.

"(Mayank) while sitting on a flight saw a pouch in front of him and thinking of it as water, drank it. He had swelling and ulcers in his mouth.

"His condition is normal, and his vitals are stable. His manager has made a complaint. We are registering the complaint and will investigate the matter," Kiran Kumar K, Superintendent of Police of West Tripura, told PTI.

IndiGo Airlines issued a press release to address the incident.

"IndiGo flight 6E 5177 operating from Agartala to Delhi returned to origin due to a medical emergency onboard.

"The passenger was off-loaded and was rushed to the hospital for further medical assistance. The aircraft took off again for its destination at 1620h," it read.

# Forest-dweller from Siddi tribe hopes to emulate Sushil

SHIVANI NAIK  
PUNE, JANUARY 31

BEFORE SHE joined a sports hostel for wrestling, Leena Antho Siddi, one amongst 11 children but her father's favourite, would be thrilled when she heard someone in the neighbourhood or extended family was getting married. She loved wedding invites because it was a legitimate reason to leave their dwelling in the forests of Haliyal taluk of Karnataka's Uttara Kannada district, and eat to their heart's content at the feasts.

"My father would take us along so we could have a proper meal, after days. His struggle in my regard ended when I joined a sports hostel where I was fed well. When he watched Sushil Kumar win the Beijing Olympics bronze, he had decided that his next-born would join wrestling, compete at the Olympics, and never go hungry. Now I win village dangals and earn enough to feed my family," says the happy 68kg freestyle wrestler, who missed out on bronze at the suspended WFI's senior Nationals in Pune, but remains undaunted in pursuing her career.

The family subsisted on tilling tiny patches of land, and struggled because their forest dwellings were not considered their own. "Whatever we grow on the farm as labour, we have to share with people whose land it is. We don't own any land. It's why marriage feasts were looked forward to because income wasn't steady," she recalls.

"Earlier people from the Siddi community didn't leave the jungles, because we felt unwelcome. But after joining sports, I travel everywhere comfortably. I don't feel like the odd one out because even I'm a wrestler," says the 22-year-old Leena, possibly the first female from the community to take up wrestling. "Watching me, other girls from Siddi houses have started getting into wrestling too."

India's efforts at engaging with the Siddi community - with lineage from north Africa and spread over Kerala, Karnataka, Konkan, Goa and Gujarat - and draw them into sport are age-old. The experiment to tap into their presumed athletic genes is not new either, but sports administrators either never persisted, or simply moved on without giving a thought to how they could make sport enjoyable for the Siddis rather than just mining their abilities for medals. Many Siddi pehelwans from Karnataka trained in Kolhapur in the 1970s and 80s, though it didn't make life easy for Leena, a rare girl smitten by the sport.

Her father loves kabaddi and kushti, but wasn't always welcomed by local clubs. "He loves these two sports. And when Sushil came back to win a medal through repechage in 2008, he was very inspired. It became a story of courage and comeback that he told us children, starting from 2008 to the 2012 silver, adding a lot of details like in a fairytale. He decided that even his daughter would compete at the Olympics like Sushil," she recalls. So Leena was



Leena Antho Siddi.

on her way to train in mud pits while only in Class 5.

At first, she hated it. And kept asking herself why she had to be there, fighting dangals in front of 100s of people staring at her, making her conscious of her thick cropped curls.

"We were very reluctant to leave our forests and come out. You have to understand we look different. Hum alag hai. People stare. They say, 'yeh baal kaise hai (look at their hair)'. It's not nice when people look at you oddly. That's why we never came out," she explains.

Fluent in Hindi, English, Konkani, Marathi and Kannada, Leena says, wrestling had her heart at first sight, but competing drove her to tears. Her neighbourhood kids joined kabaddi teams, but going out there all alone with every-one watching was a matter of dread for her.

"I'd think main kyu aayi idhar (Why did I come here)? People would taunt me saying 'tere baal dekhi', so I felt bad. My father and coach would explain that no matter what anyone says, you continue fighting and winning. Just don't listen. They would tell me stories of how Sushil pehelwan didn't bother about anyone saying anything, and I'd watch his videos on loop. I love how he stealthily attacks. His technique was amazing," Leena explains.

As she persisted, she started winning village dangals, and earning money to sustain her family. "With sport, I'll be able to get a job and make a living. All the awkwardness is in the past. Now I tell myself, people respect me and are glued to watching what I do in a fight, not because I look different." Leena's love for wrestling went beyond making money at dangals. "I wanted to improve on my weaknesses. I have strength like Sushil pehelwan, but my technique has to get better," she says. Her foot speed isn't bad either, but there's a naivete in her technique that will need smartening.

The Karnataka wrestler would lose to eventual 68kg champion Diksha Malik of Delhi, and run out of ideas in the bronze medal match against Vedantika of Maharashtra.

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