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After Bengaluru cafe blast, email to CM warned of more explosions

ENS & PTI
BENGALURU, MARCH 5

KARNATAKA DEPUTY Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said Tuesday that a day after the blast at Bengaluru's Rameshwaram Cafe on March 1, an email threatening of multiple blasts in various locations if the demand for \$2.5 million (nearly Rs 20 crore) is not met was sent to Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, him and other senior ministers and officials.

Shivakumar said that the email has been sent to police officers and the cybercrime police are probing to trace the sender after registering a case. According to Shivakumar, the sender has also shared another email ID for future communication.

The NIA Monday had lodged an FIR in connection with the low-intensity IED blast which left nine people injured.

The email, sent from an account of one Shahid Khan at 2.48 pm Saturday with the address Shahidkhan10786@proton-mail.com, read, "What are your thoughts on the movie trailer? If you don't provide us with 2.5 million dollars, we will cause large explosions on buses, trains, temples, hotels and public areas throughout Karnataka."

'Where did he go?' Family of missing sailor holds on to hope as Navy continues search

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
PANAJI, MARCH 5

OVER A week after a sailor went missing from an Indian Navy ship, prompting the force to launch a massive search operation, the sailor's family has been left grappling with one question — "where did he disappear?"

Sahil Verma, a seaman from Jammu, went missing from the naval ship on February 27. In a post on X on March 2, the Western Naval Command said that a board of inquiry has been set up for a detailed investigation.

The post said, "In an unfortunate incident, Sahil Verma seaman II has been reported missing at sea from an Indian Naval Ship whilst on deployment since February 27. The Navy immediately launched a massive search operation with ships and aircraft, which is still continuing."

The missing sailor's elder brother, Shivam Verma, said, "The ship's captain told us that he (Sahil) could not be seen falling into the sea in any of the CCTV cameras aboard the ship. We have been told that they checked the ship thoroughly multiple times, but couldn't find him. The ship was in the middle of the sea. So, if he was not on board and he



Sahil Verma, a seaman from Jammu, went missing from the naval ship on Feb 27

did not fall into the sea... who kahan gaya (Where did he go)?"

"The search operation is still going on. We have been told that aircraft and ships are looking for him. We are holding on to the hope that he will be found and return home soon... He will turn 20 this month-end," Shivam told The Indian Express.

Sahil's family hails from Gho Manhasan village in Jammu. His father, Subhash Chander, runs a mechanic shop and his mother Rama Kumari is a homemaker. A year after completing his schooling in 2021, Sahil got a job in the Navy. "He was the Class 12 board exam topper in the village. He was interested in joining the Navy," said Shivam.

Sahil had spoken to his family over the phone on February 25 afternoon, two days before he

went missing.

"It was a Sunday, Sahil spoke to our mother three or four times... It was a routine talk about chores and daily routines. He mentioned that he was sailing the next morning and would only call after three days, when the ship returns," said Shivam.

He said their family was informed about Sahil's disappearance on February 29 evening, more than 50 hours after he went missing.

He said the family was not satisfied with the inquiry. "All we want is clarity. The CBI should probe the circumstances leading to his disappearance."

On Tuesday, on the sidelines of the inauguration of a new building at the Naval War College in Goa, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar, responding to a question on the sailor's disappearance, said, "Sahil Verma has been on board for more than a year. He was last seen around 6.30-7.30 am when physical fitness training normally takes place. Later, at the time of muster for work around 9 am, he was missing. The usual norm is to search for three days, but we have continued the search and also deployed other patrol aircraft. We hope he is safe and we are able to recover him."

6 Himachal Cong MLAs move SC against their disqualification

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

SIX HIMACHAL Pradesh Congress MLAs have approached the Supreme Court, challenging Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania's decision to disqualify them last week under the anti-defection law.

The six MLAs — Rajinder Singh Rana, Sudhir Sharma, Chaitanya Sharma, Ravi Thakur, Inder Dutt Lakhnampal, and Davinder Bhutto — had cross-voted in the Rajya Sabha election in favour of BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan, who won by draw of lots after a tie of 34 votes each in the 68-member Assembly.

They were not disqualified for cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha election, which does not attract provisions of the anti-defection law, but for defying the party whip as per which they were supposed to be present on the floor of the House at the time of voting on cut-off motions on demands and the Finance Bill.

The MLAs are learnt to have said in their plea that they were not given sufficient time to respond to the show-cause notice issued to them on the petition moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan, seeking their disqualification.

In blow to Sukhu govt, HC strikes down water cess on hydel projects

SAURABH PARASHAR
SHIMLA, MARCH 5

IN A major setback to the Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu-led Congress government, the Himachal Pradesh High Court Tuesday declared the water cess levied on hydropower generation unconstitutional. With this, the government will have to forego an annual revenue of around Rs 2,000 crore it was hoping to make by levying the cess on hydroelectric projects.

A division bench of Justices Tarlok Singh Chauhan and Staven Vaidya said that the provisions of the Himachal Pradesh Water Cess on Hydropower Generation Bill, 2023 exceed the state's legislative competence as per Articles 246 and 265 of the Constitution of India, rendering it ultra vires.

Sections 10 and 15 of the Himachal Pradesh Water Cess on Hydropower Electricity Generation Act, 2023, dealing with fixation and liability to pay cess made applicable to the existing projects, are declared to be unconstitutional and stand quashed,

the bench said.

The court, in the 100-page verdict, also ordered that the sum of money recovered from the petitioners under the provisions of the Act should be refunded within four weeks from March 5. Disposing of 40 petitions filed by private power-producing companies and central hydropower-generating undertakings, the bench further quashed the letter and notice issued by the state government and the water commission seeking recovery of water cess from the petitioners.

Advocate General Anup Kumar Rattan said the state government will challenge the verdict in the Supreme Court. "There are many states including J&K and Uttarakhand, where laws have been formulated to impose water cess," AG Rattan said.

Two months after it assumed charge, the Congress government on February 15, 2023 last year promulgated the Himachal Pradesh Water Cess on Hydropower Generation Ordinance, 2023. It had then said it was aiming to generate Rs 4,000 crore per annum — which it later

revised to Rs 2,000 crore.

Later, the Himachal Pradesh Water Cess on Hydropower Generation Bill was introduced in the Assembly on March 14, last year and passed on March 16, replacing the Ordinance. It proposed a cess of 10 paise/cubic metre up to 30 m; 25 paise per cubic metre for 30-60 m; 35 paise per cubic metre for 60-90 m, and 50 paise per cubic metre for above 90 m.

The state government had then set up the Himachal Pradesh Water Cess Commission, which issued notices to 173 hydropower-producing companies to collect cess amounting to Rs 871 crore for the period March to July 2023. While three private power companies complied, public sector companies challenged the order in the high court.

Earlier, the Centre, had said it was beyond the jurisdiction of the states to impose any additional charges or duties on power generation.

The Punjab and Haryana governments too had opposed the levying of water cess and passed resolutions in their respective Assemblies in this regard.

Gujarat: Day after resignation as MLA, Modhwadia joins BJP

PARIMAL DABHI & KAMAAL SAIYED
GANDHINAGAR, SURAT, MARCH 5

A DAY after he resigned from as the Congress MLA from Porbandar, Arjun Modhwadia joined the BJP in Gandhinagar on Tuesday. Soon after, he attacked the Congress, stating that he was a first generation politician without any political background and in Congress, there are "kalam ambas" (grafted mango trees), who have "not undergone the pain of germination".

Modhwadia joined the BJP along with former Congress MLA Ambarish Der, Navsari district Congress general secretary Dharmesh Patel, and several other party leaders and workers in the presence of state BJP president CR Paatil.

Addressing mediapersons, Modhwadia said, "I am a first generation politician. I joined politics so that I can bring some change in my constituency of Porbandar and to Gujarat. I tried to fulfill this dream while staying in Congress for 40 years. But today, Congress has almost lost its connect with people."

Maintaining that he has joined the BJP to contribute to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of Viksit Bharat, he said: "I have decided to make contribution like a squirrel who contributed in building the Ram Setu of Lord Ram." He assured that as a BJP worker, he would double the efforts he put in Congress. "We have not inherited politics. We are not kalam amba. We came into politics from poor family while doing a lot of hardwork to make some contribution. That contribution was not possible in the party I was in (Congress). Now, it has got a NGO-like form..." he added.

Replying to media queries about his criticism of BJP in the past, Modhwadia said, "What could be more... than BJP giving me entry despite my such criticism? It shows their generosity. The difficulty was where I was (Congress). There, you had to wait for five to seven years for a meeting. The chief minister of Assam has talked about it in detail... (Here in BJP) a tea-maker becomes the PM, it wasn't inherited."

"Not me, but the chief minister of Telangana (Revanth Reddy) has said that Modi is a big brother and we all should follow the Gujarat model. What could be bigger certificate than this..." he told mediapersons. Modhwadia rejected claims that Opposition leaders join BJP under pressure of investigating agencies or because of some enticement. Der, meanwhile, said he was associated with VHP, Bajrang Dal and youth wing of BJP between 2003 and 2009.

UP man sets self on fire near SP office, rescued

Lucknow: A 45-year-old man allegedly attempted suicide outside the office of district police chief in Shahjahanpur on Tuesday afternoon following a dispute with his business partner. Police said the victim, identified as Tahir Ali, set himself on fire by pouring petrol over his body, but the police in a prompt action extinguished the flames, and rushed him to the hospital. Ali suffered 40 per cent burn injuries and doctors said his condition to be stable.

The video circulating of Ali's son calling out to his father engulfed in flames has also gone viral.

According to the police, Ali was embroiled in a dispute with Umesh Tiwari and around a month ago had filed a police complaint against Tiwari who was illegally keeping the custody of two pick-up vehicles registered in his name and sought police help to get the matter solved. However, when the police summoned Umesh Tiwari presented documents supporting his claim that Ali's complaint was false. Shahjahanpur SP Ashok Kumar Meena said that the police had advised Tahir Ali to approach court. Meena also directed the Additional SP to conduct a detailed inquiry into the matter to identify the persons who might have instigated the man to take such a step.

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Dharmveer Prajapati Minister of State (Independent Charge), Jail & Home Guard, Uttar Pradesh	Rajkumar Chahar MP, Fatehpur Sikri	Yogendra Upadhyay Minister, Higher Education, Science and Technology, Electronics & Information Technology, Uttar Pradesh
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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

PROTECTING DEBATE

In overturning JMM verdict, SC makes a course correction. It must lead to expanding, not constricting, deliberative space

BRIBERY IS NOT protected by parliamentary privilege," the Supreme Court said on Monday, setting aside its 1998 judgment in *PV Narasimha Rao v State*. The 3-2 split ruling in that case — also known as the JMM bribery verdict — had held that lawmakers enjoy immunity from prosecution even if they take money to vote or make a speech in Parliament or a state legislative assembly. The majority in that bench had based its conclusion on Articles 105 and 194 of the Constitution, which deal with the powers and privileges of MPs and MLAs. Disagreeing with their reasoning, the SC has applied a welcome corrective, anchored in constitutional principles of equality and probity. "Corruption and bribery of the members of legislature erode the foundation of Indian parliamentary democracy. It is destructive of the aspirational and deliberative ideals of the Constitution and creates a polity which deprives citizens of a responsible, responsive and representative democracy," CJ D Y Chandrachud, who headed the seven-judge bench, said.

In 1993, JMM leader Shibu Soren and five of his party colleagues were accused of taking bribes to vote against the no-confidence motion against the PV Narasimha Rao government; Janata Dal's Ajit Singh was also accused of accepting a bribe to abstain from voting. Five years later, the SC cited Article 105(2) to argue that "MPs must be allowed to exercise their freedom of speech in Parliament and their votes must be treated as an extension of this freedom". But bribery and corruption as, Monday's verdict pointed out, take away the "free will and conscience to enrich the functions of the House". The judgment draws on a broader notion of parliamentary privileges and reiterates the argument that, unlike members of the UK's House of Commons, Indian lawmakers do not have "undoubted rights", wrested after a struggle against a monarchy. Privileges for MPs and MLAs, it ruled, must be interpreted in ways that "fit with the larger ideals of the Constitution". In other words, as the SC pointed out, privilege "must be such that without it, they [lawmakers] cannot discharge their duties". It would thus be a travesty if graft is accepted as a necessary condition — even if inadvertently — for discharging a lawmaker's responsibility. The bench's ruling is also significant because it engages with the issue of quid pro quo associated with bribery: "The mere acceptance or attempting to obtain an undue advantage with the intention to act... in a certain way is sufficient to complete the offence".

Affirming the Right to Equality, the SC said, "it would be a violation of Article 14 to create a class of public servants, which is afforded extraordinary protection". Going ahead, however, a note of caution is in order: Monday's ruling should not end up making Opposition legislators more vulnerable, especially in times when the space for debate and disagreement is embattled in the House and governments armed with decisive mandates do not hesitate to weaponise central agencies to target political opponents. In coming months and years, the litmus test for the executive and judiciary would be to heed the Court's words that best encapsulate the spirit of the verdict: "Create a fearless atmosphere in which debate, deliberations and exchange of ideas take place in Parliament and state legislatures".

DECISION IS HERS

Amid global reversals on reproductive rights, France sets a welcome precedent by making abortion a constitutional right

IN HER AUTO-FICTION *Happening*, first published in an English translation in 2021, Nobel laureate Annie Ernaux writes of the ignominy of getting an abortion in France in 1963. She was 23 at the time, a working-class student. In her narrative, Ernaux refuses to name her pregnancy, referring to it as "that thing" or "it" — a reminder of the threat that hangs over her in a state where abortion is illegal and seeking it can lead to imprisonment or death. Ernaux survived the ordeal but others were less fortunate. Ahead of France's historic 780-72 vote that led to women's right to abortion being enshrined in the French constitution, Prime Minister Gabriel Attal invoked the suffering and struggle of these women: "Today, the present must respond to history. To enshrine this right in our constitution is to close the door on the tragedy of the past and its trail of suffering and pain... We're sending a message to all women: Your body belongs to you and no one can decide for you."

The amendment, France's first since 2008, is historic not merely because the right to abortion has had a stormy history in the country — it was only legalised in 1975 — but because, across the world, there has been a dangerous backsliding on hard-won freedoms relating to a woman's autonomy over her body. The French amendment is an explicit response to the trend seen in countries like Hungary, which, in 2022, placed significant bureaucratic hurdles before women seeking an abortion, and Poland, where a near total ban was imposed in 2021. The 2022 overturning of the US Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v Wade* (1973) set alarm bells ringing.

While the global movement of abortion rights has largely been towards greater liberalisation — Ireland in 2018 and Mexico in 2023 — these developments underline the continued vulnerability of women's right to bodily autonomy in a society that remains stubbornly patriarchal. In India, where the legal framework on reproductive rights has incrementally moved in favour of women's autonomy, the test of "foetal viability" is a new factor that could potentially set back progress made over the years. In 2023, this was seen in the case of a woman seeking medical termination of her 26-week pregnancy, citing physical and mental incapacity. The SC denied her the abortion in the interest of the rights of the unborn child. Such decisions also point to the moral value ascribed to what is, in essence, a deeply personal matter. France's amendment, therefore, sets a welcome precedent, in which neither patriarchy nor morality gets to have a say in what is, essentially, a woman's decision.

IT'S SWIFT'S WORLD

Diplomatic row over her music tour is proof that everyone else is just living in it

THE LAST TIME a pop act caused a diplomatic row this big was in 1966 when The Beatles refused to meet Imelda Marcos, the first lady of the Philippines, resulting in a rough send-off from the country. Now, pop star Taylor Swift's super-hit Eras Tour has resulted in a war of words between Singapore and some of its Southeast Asian neighbours. The former's exclusive deal with Swift — which makes it her only stop in the region — has got Thailand, Philippines and others asking why they should be left out. The tour has meant a financial bonanza for every city — and nation — that has hosted it so far. So why should they not get a share of the pie?

Few artistes have captured the public imagination like Swift has. The 34-year-old is not just seen as a reliable revenue generator, but has also become a subject of study in the hallowed halls of Harvard and New York University. Her concerts are so well-attended that in at least one case, the crowd generated seismic activity equivalent to a 2.3 magnitude earthquake. Across cultures and economies, Swift seems to have left a mark.

Of course, Swift is not the first star to inspire fevered devotion. From the Beatlemania to the Beliebers and BTS Army, music history is dotted with examples of crying, screaming fans and the cold, hard cash they are willing to spend on their idol. Swift is no Kardashian — she can actually sing. But stardom, these days, is no longer just a function of talent. It requires social-media management and mythmaking in real time. From singing about her exes to an alleged genealogical connection to the poet Emily Dickinson, the musician evidently knows how to train the spotlight on herself. The recent diplomatic tension is proof that this is Swift's world. Everyone else is just living in it.



TC A RAGHAVAN

THE CONTOURS OF the post-election political and governance architecture in Pakistan have crystallised. A coalition of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), along with smaller parties, has formed the government at the Centre, with Shehbaz Sharif as the Prime Minister. In Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's daughter is the new chief minister, with the PPP forming the government in Sindh. Independents, in effect representing the Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of the jailed Imran Khan, are forming the government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This structure resembles the 18-month long coalition arrangement following the ouster of Khan as PM in April 2022. The major continuity between the two coalitions is the military's backing. But there are important differences. For one, there are changes of incumbency in high constitutional posts. As part of the agreement between the PML-N and PPP, Asif Ali Zardari will be the next President of Pakistan. He will replace a Khan acolyte who had operated in an openly partisan manner. Similarly, the earlier Supreme Court Chief Justice who had shown a clear partiality towards Khan, has since retired.

This makes it less likely that the new government of the PML-N and PPP will confront legal or constitutional challenges on account of Khan loyalists in key constitutional posts. Zardari becoming President for a second time after his 2008-13 tenure underlines both the repetitive nature of Pakistani politics as also his personal qualities that make him such a formidable player of a relatively weak hand.

Even more significant are the changes in the political landscape of Pakistan since 2022-2023. Most prominent is Khan's visible demonstration of his power as an independent political force. The question of whether he can survive without military backing has been erased and the February 2024 elections proved that reports of his charismatic appeal were not exaggerated.

On an irresolute note

Surprisingly strong showing of Imran Khan in Pakistan election has left all other players feeling vulnerable



The military's image is certainly dented but it remains the principal political player in Pakistan. There seems to be so far no rethink about its approach to Khan and he may continue to be in jail. A popular leader imprisoned, a restive public and a shaky coalition forming the government may appear to be a leaky ship for the Pakistan military to be trying to sail. But it has navigated such situations before and may well feel confident that it can do so again despite the turbulent seas on the way.

In fact, the overall results have been a vindication of Khan's position, most clearly for his defiance of the military establishment. The latter had accused Khan of orchestrating attacks in May 2023 on its installations and landmarks. That effort to drum up public outrage against him failed quite spectacularly and may even have backfired.

Khan has displaced Nawaz Sharif from his pedestal of being the leading political voice against the military in Pakistan. That Nawaz Sharif stood aside in favour of his brother to be prime minister reflects both his own declining political standing as well as the PML-N's equally disappointing electoral performance.

This reiterates a surprisingly contradictory feature of Pakistan's politics: The existence of a significant anti-military narrative space. The party that commands this space reaps the electoral harvest as Khan did this time.

The momentum he has generated also strengthens the general sentiment that the PML-N and PPP coalition lacks both mandate and credibility. That the new government is going to be both brittle and fragile is evident; no surprise then that there is already speculation about its longevity.

Perhaps more than anything else, mutual suspicions and distrust will prey on all the stakeholders. Notwithstanding the greater acceptability of Shehbaz Sharif, as compared to Nawaz Sharif, the residual suspicions of the PML-N within the military establishment should not be underestimated. The same applies to the PPP-military relationship. The PPP-PML interface is also going to be friction-ridden, with both sides feeling that the other has got more out of the coalition agreement. The PPP's delay in clarifying whether it will be part of the PML-N cabinet or just support it from outside reveals the significant fissures between the two parties. The PML-N will remain suspicious of a possible PPP-Khan deal in the future or even a Khan-military rapprochement. The point is that the surprisingly

strong showing of Khan in the election has left all other players feeling vulnerable.

The military's image is certainly dented but it remains the principal political player in Pakistan. There seems to be so far no rethink about its approach to Khan and he may continue to be in jail. A popular leader imprisoned, a restive public and a shaky coalition forming the government may appear to be a leaky ship for the Pakistan military to be trying to sail. But it has navigated such situations before and may well feel confident that it can do so again despite the turbulent seas on the way.

Politics aside, this coalition will face the full portfolio of problems that it encountered in its earlier incarnation and some of which have become even more formidable. The economy is obviously the most important of these and also the most intractable. Pakistan's neighbourhood relations are also deeply troubled. Relations with Afghanistan have deteriorated sharply. Pakistan finds to its great frustration that on issues vital to its interests, the Taliban government is no different from its predecessor. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan poses a major internal security threat and the recent spike in terrorist attacks is deeply damaging to public morale. Relations with Iran are in an uncertain phase as the recent missile and drone attacks and counter attacks show.

In India, expectations that a return of Nawaz Sharif would open up new possibilities for some normalisation with Pakistan will now have to be tempered. In the foreseeable future, Pakistan is going to be even more self-absorbed in what is already a very sombre phase of its contemporary history. Nevertheless, India-Pakistan relations rarely follow a predictable or linear path for any length of time. Even in the most unusual of situations opportunities exist and arise unexpectedly, and good neighbour hood diplomacy also means being on the lookout for these.

The writer is a former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan



SWATI BHASIN

A WOMAN TRAVELLING ALONE

Concerns for safety often mar what should be an experience of freedom

IN A COUNTRY where women's safety is a perennial concern, travelling alone is an act of rebellion. Often, the excitement of exploring the unseen and unheard is tainted by past experiences of unsought glances and comments. At worst, one has to put up a fight against unsolicited advances. But why should a woman always be prepared to put up such a fight? Why should she always have her guard up?

"Something has happened to us that we would not wish on anyone". Last week, a Spanish vlogger reported that she was gang-raped in Jharkhand's Dumka. The woman — who has almost two lakh followers on Instagram — also put out a video message. "Seven men raped me, and they have beaten us and robbed us, although not many things (were taken) because what they wanted was to rape me. We are in the hospital with the police, it happened tonight in India... They attacked us, beat us, put a knife to our necks, and said they were going to kill us," she said in Spanish. The woman was on a bike tour with her husband. When the incident occurred, they were camping because they could not find a hotel.

Along with outrage, insensitive comments flooded social media after the incident was reported. Some implied that the couple "should have known better", and avoided venturing to a deserted spot.

As a solo woman traveller in her thirties, the incident shakes my confidence yet again.

Is travelling alone for leisure, as a woman, an invitation to trouble? "Will this hotel or homestay be safe?" "Should I take a late-night cab to the airport?" "Should I take an overnight bus or train, or not?" The second-guessing can be overwhelming.

A 2018 Thomson Reuters Foundation survey, which ranked India as the world's most dangerous country for women, ahead of Afghanistan, Syria and Saudi Arabia, was severely criticised by the government. However, last year, another international survey by The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security placed India in the 128th spot in a list of 177 nations.

But experiences say more than numbers. A few years ago, during an impromptu trip to Prayagraj, an auto driver asked me, 'Why are you travelling alone? It's not safe'. It was about 11 in the morning. But the question was not surprising. Nothing untoward happened on that particular trip, but in my years of travel, oglers have often made their unpleasant presence felt at bus stands, railway stations, coffee shops, or other places. Walks on the beach have been disrupted by men seeking attention with a random 'hello', raising the volume until they are snubbed.

there was a need for a "great movement for judicial reform" initiated by the legal community itself on how to make justice expeditious and inexpensive, how to reduce arrears, and to keep in step with the changing situation. Mrs Gandhi acknowledged India was nowhere near the level of social justice it had aimed for. One of the crucial issues of social change is redistribution of land, she said.

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At one of the local police stations to inquire about cabs to Nainital. It was 7:30 pm. There were no government buses scheduled till the next morning, I was told. The woman police officer looked concerned. She asked a question I have come to expect: "Why are you travelling alone?" She took my number and told me about a local cab stand. Her concern was not unreasonable. But the question, coming from a police officer, was unsettling. Tourists only get a slice of what locals experience every day. Women reclaiming space in small towns after sunset is still unheard of.

While exploring Kerala last month, I made friends with a traveller from Tamil Nadu who shared similar experiences. She was travelling solo for the first time. She was unnerved when she was repeatedly asked why she was not accompanied by her husband as co-travellers noticed her wearing vermilion and a nuptial chain.

When I returned to Delhi after that trip to Haldwani and took a cab home, the driver made an unannounced stop near a tea vendor. It was past midnight. He returned after 10 minutes. I was angry. I argued with him over the "just a tea break" response and warned him that I would report it on the ride-hailing app. But I was relieved that the ride resumed. As a woman traveller, I realised, there's little freedom without a sense of safety.

swati.bhasin@expressindia.com

MARCH 6, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

NO PACT WITH ISRAEL

PRESIDENT AMIN GEMAYEL'S administration cancelled Lebanon's troop withdrawal pact with Israel, a government official said. The statement said the cancellation decision was taken in an extraordinary session of Prime Minister Shafik Wazzan cabinet held under Gemayel. The statement came after the announcement that Gemayel asked the PM to withdraw the resignation of the cabinet submitted early last month.

PM ON LAW REFORM

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi said that

there was a need for a "great movement for judicial reform" initiated by the legal community itself on how to make justice expeditious and inexpensive, how to reduce arrears, and to keep in step with the changing situation. Mrs Gandhi acknowledged India was nowhere near the level of social justice it had aimed for. One of the crucial issues of social change is redistribution of land, she said.

INDO-SOVIET TIES

THE SOVIET DEFENCE Minister, Marshal Dmitri F Ustinov met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in her office at Delhi. No aides were present at the meeting where both leaders

reportedly expressed their desire to strengthen relations between India and the Soviet Union. Ustinov is believed to have conveyed to Mrs Gandhi the Chernenko regime's desire to continue and develop "close economic cooperation" with India and assist it in the defence field.

FANS RUN RIOT

SUPPORTERS OF KANNADA matinee idol Raj Kumar indulged in arson and violence and stabbed a Tamil youth in Bangalore. Trouble broke out when a procession organised by Raj Kumar Fans' Association was disbursed. Frenzied mobs set fire to vehicles



11 THE IDEAS PAGE

The middle ground in Moscow

It is high time to look beyond the Manichean categories of democracy versus authoritarianism. And to search for a ground between aggression and capitulation



SUBRATA MITRA

AN INVITATION TO participate in the Eurasian Philosophy Congress in Moscow revealed an aspect of the current situation in Russia which is quite different from the images that we get in the media. It has made me partly reconsider my explanation of the frozen conflict in Ukraine in this newspaper (“A Long War”, *Indian Express*, November 17, 2022).

I had then argued that long drawn out wars are caused by strategic depth of the belligerents, diffuse targets, moving and incompatible war objectives, and the induction of third parties with a stake in keeping hostilities alive. My exposure to what is really going on in Russia, carefully shielded from us by the global media, showed me how a deeper layer of collective memory and resolve to protect what people consider sacred, can pull elites and masses together, and magnify the incentive to keep on with war efforts.

It was refreshing to see the spirited arguments in the Congress among philosophers from Europe, different parts of Russia and Asia, on how diverse folks sharing the same living space can achieve a common, collective identity. Drawing on the “Russian idea” of Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Berdyaev, the Russian contributors came up with the concept of “Eurasian identity” which, they argued, unites the diverse folks of the vast country that spreads across Europe and Asia. This raised general, comparative and cross-national questions and spilled over to discussions of India, Sri Lanka and the “Arab mind”.

Both the general tenor of the conversations and the insights that emerged were striking. How might we achieve a meaningful dialogue between adversaries, when the *Self* and the *Other* are locked in battle without shared terms of discourse? What might incentivise opponents to engage with one another? Which resources — ontological, epistemological, material and communicative — might constitute the level playing field for a dialogue?

The general drift of the conversations was an important takeaway from the Congress. A meaningful dialogue between adversaries becomes possible when they recognise, and accept the sacred beliefs of one another. Conflating ontological realism regarding cultural diversity, and its epistemological construction in terms of a unified vision of society, is a necessary condition for legitimate order in diverse societies with multiple faiths and regional identities. Whether “Eurasian philosophy” offers a cohesive set of beliefs and underpins Russian society is open to deeper empirical investigation.

While the Russian philosophers struggled to define Russian collective identity, I ventured out to look for social resonance of the Eurasian identity, and to see how Russian people were coping with the mundane problem of getting by in their everyday lives. I could get the sense of a society coping with, and living side by side with a war of attrition. The sanctions have given a boost to local industry and commerce among and across different regions of the far-flung country. Some sanctioned Western commodities are finding their way into Russia through a circuitous route. “Isn’t there a war going on?” I asked my guide. Her answer — “Sometimes one has to fight to keep what belongs to one” — concentrated my mind.

She, like millions of Russians, has been brought up on the heroic stories of the bat-



CR Sasikumar

tles of Kursk, Leningrad and Stalingrad. The Second World War cost 27 million Russian lives. It affected practically every family. These sentiments that unite the elites and masses of Russian society today are eerily similar to what had prolonged the Second World War. Reports about how ordinary people in Ukraine are coping with war show a development of national solidarity and resilience in that war-torn country, akin to what I saw in Russia. The symmetry feeds into a frozen conflict which, other things being equal, is likely to endure.

There is a valuable lesson here for Western backers of Ukraine who have reduced the complexity of protracted war and its deep psycho-historical underpinnings to absurd simplicities of “sanctions, ammunition and cash”. The grim history of conflict shows how, when ideology gets the upper hand over realism, and conflicts of interest and perceptions are boiled down to the clash of ideologies, the consequence becomes horrendous. By some calculations, between 70 to 85 million people paid with their lives “to make the world safe for democracy” in the Second World War. Its outcome, the Cold War had its own “Good-vs-Evil”, leading to mass slaughter: The Korean war (1950-53, approximately three million casualties), Vietnam (1955-75, 3.8 million war casualties), and closer to date, Afghanistan (2001-2021, 1,76,000 casualties).

Demonising adversaries can actually become a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is high time to look beyond the Manichean categories of democracy versus authoritarianism which are much in evidence in global

Western backers of Ukraine have reduced the complexity of protracted war and its deep psycho-historical underpinnings to absurd simplicities of ‘sanctions, ammunition and cash’. The grim history of conflict shows how, when ideology gets the upper hand over realism, and conflicts of interest and perceptions are boiled down to the clash of ideologies, the consequence becomes horrendous.

platforms such as the moribund United Nations Security Council, the European Union, or the annual security conference in Munich. One finds little evidence in their deliberations of the search for a middle space between aggression and capitulation, where adversaries could negotiate their legitimate interests, leading to a win-win solution. Attempts in this direction by smaller powers lead to the predictable American veto. What one hears mostly is the blatant language of war-mongering, by political and military leaders and public intellectuals, far away from the killing fields.

The search for a middle ground between capitulation and aggression — in Ukraine, Gaza and other intractable local conflict regions of the world — has never been more important than now. The real challenge in our digital age when complex issues are boiled down to soundbites, is to expose the interests of powerful states and corporations that profit from war mongering. Just underneath the lurid media images and alluring ideological slogans about the promotion of liberal democracy lurks their ruthless quest for power and profits. They take the focus off the real danger of the conflict spilling out beyond the region, and escalating into nuclear war. In these dangerous times, the nuanced approach of Indian diplomacy to seek the middle ground between polarised positions is the best way forward.

Mitra is an emeritus professor of Political Science at Heidelberg University, Germany

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“If the BJP manages to form the next government, will it continue the politics of polarisation and hatred, painting Indian Muslims as the eternal ‘other’, to either be converted to Hinduism or live as second-class citizens in the *rashtra*? The evidence, unfortunately, supports this likelihood.” — DAWN, PAKISTAN

For the Gaya Lals of today

Tenth Schedule must be replaced to ensure that anyone who changes party affiliation resigns and seeks re-election



ABHISHEK SINGHVI

NOWHERE IS THE saying “the law is an ass” more validated than in the shenanigans of defectors and amidst the legal acrobatics surrounding the 10th Schedule. Nowhere is the gap between preaching and practice more pronounced and nowhere in constitutional law is human venality more self-evident. Poor Gaya Lal, who twice changed parties on the same day in 1967, would blush if he saw the sophisticated present-day devices used to circumvent the 1984 anti-defection law. Constitutional law is no match for Indian *jugaad*.

The ill-repute of this subject does not arise from lack of legal principles or absence of clarity. After endless delays by the Speaker, the Supreme Court’s (SC’s) Manipur judgment declared that three months is the ideal time limit for Speakers to decide disqualification petitions. The Constitution was amended to eliminate the concept of a split, and despite the common misconception, even a two-third breakaway group is liable to be disqualified unless it merges with another political party. The Speaker’s order is subject to judicial review and the 10th Schedule is not an unreasonable restriction on free speech (*Kihoto*). Voluntary giving up of membership is not limited to resignation but can be inferred from myriad forms of conduct (*Ravi Naik*). An expelled member continues as an unattached member of his old political party and will not attract the anti-defection law unless he joins a new party (*Vishwanathan*). Defiance of whip by absenting oneself or being present and voting in violation of it as well as severe criticism of the government and seeking its change incurs disqualification. Reports showing dissidents joining or acting in concert with other political parties is culpable conduct. Remaining incommunicado, failure to attend legislature party meetings, threats to topple the government, all constitute voluntary giving up of membership (*Naik and Balasaheb Patil*). While the Speaker must normally follow the seven or 14-day notice period provided in the assembly rules, he is entitled to shorten it and even two or three days notice before disqualification has been upheld (*Naik and Patil*). Writing to the Governor to call upon the Leader of the Opposition to form the government and even travelling together in a bus to the Governor with the Opposition inside the penalty (*Rajendra Rana and Subodh Uniyal*).

The reality is radically different. First, most potential defectors write a prior letter expressing no confidence in the Speaker and defect the next day. A loosely drafted paragraph in *Nabam Rebia* is invoked to argue that the Speaker is himself disqualified to adjudicate the disqualification petitions of those who have lost confidence in him. This interpretation of *Rebia* is pending reconsideration before a larger bench of the SC.

Second, the Speaker, the sole authorised entity to adjudicate complaints of disqualification, is nevertheless a member of the

ruling party and almost never rises above his party affiliation. He dithers endlessly and does not decide the pending complaints if they are from the Opposition and in relation to those who have defected to the ruling party to which he himself belongs. This enables the defectors to reap the benefits of their defection by voting against their original party.

Third, the Speaker decides the complaint with lightning speed if the complainants are from his own party and disqualifies the defectors promptly, maintaining his party in power through an artificial majority created by him.

Fourth, a more recent innovation involves the potential defectors (say A), a day prior to defection, clandestinely filing an application with the Election Commission, claiming to be the real party and seeking the symbol of the party from which they have defected (say B). While the disqualification dispute is delayed by a friendly Speaker, the EC hearings are fast-tracked. The EC, especially under the influence of a domineering central government, eventually applies only the legislative majority test to hold A to be the real party. It needs no rocket science to see that a test based on counting legislators is patently fallacious since they include all the defectors. Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of the rank and file continue to support the original party. Had the organisational test been applied, as mandated by the SC in *Shiv Sena*, the original party alone can get the name and symbol. By applying only the legislative party test, the EC actually sanctifies the defection, giving the party name and symbol to the defectors.

Fifth, engineered resignations of legislators in a ruling dispensation by any desperate opposition promising them lucrative ministerships if they ensure that the Opposition comes to power, has its own charm. These “toppling agents” are entitled to at least six months as ministers in the new government, even if they fail to get re-elected in that period.

The common man is disgusted with such duplicity. I would, therefore, advocate complete abolition of the 10th Schedule and its replacement with a one paragraph law — anyone who changes party affiliation must mandatorily resign and seek re-election. Second, such a person should be prohibited from holding ministership without re-election. Third, there would be no need for a Speaker in such a simple system. If a Speaker is necessary for any adjudicatory role, let us stop the use of such oxymorons like impartial or independent umpire.

The Speaker’s umbilical cord with his party can never be wished away and judicial homilies to the contrary must stop. The only solution is to make it an unchangeable convention and if necessary, solidify it by constitutional amendment. Under this, all political parties or a majority of them will select a Speaker before the elections and declare that no party will put up a candidate from his/her constituency. This alone can impart a degree of credibility, moral and political authority to the Speaker, conspicuous by its absence today.

Let us all join together to see that the law is not called an ass except very, very rarely.

The writer is a jurist and national spokesperson, INC. This article is the second in a series marking 75 years of India’s Independence

A death on campus

JS Sidharthan case points to culture of impunity for politics of violence in Kerala



K J ALPHONS

COLLEGES STOPPED BEING centres of education and higher learning in Kerala a long time ago. They were seen by political parties as breeding grounds for party cadres. The party cadre had to be tough. Therefore, they encouraged pitched battles to produce foot soldiers. They didn’t want them to be soft and sophisticated. They wanted them to be baptised in blood. These foot soldiers beat up fellow students, teachers and principals in the most ruthless manner. Their political masters always protected them.

Kerala’s universities have long been witness to violence and killing. The latest and the most ruthless has been the death of JS Sidharthan, a 20-year-old second-year student of Veterinary College, Pookot in Wayanad, under the Kerala Veterinary University, on February 18. He was stripped naked and beaten up by his classmates and seniors in broad daylight. It didn’t happen in some closed hostel room. The kangaroo

court took place over three days in the middle courtyard of the hostel. It was alleged that Sidharthan finally committed suicide, unable to take it anymore. The post-mortem report revealed extensive injuries, including to internal organs. The assault reportedly took place in full view of several onlookers, many of them supposedly his friends. None of them, reportedly, tried to stop the attacks.

Cases have been registered against the accused for abetment to suicide. The accused claim that Sidharthan committed suicide in the toilet, a claim that seems dubious to many. There are also doubts about how well the Kerala police — generally very competent — will handle the case, given the stakes for the ruling dispensation in the state. I think it is best to entrust it to CBI.

One thing is certain — all 18 accused who have been arrested belong to the Students Federation of India (SFI), the stu-

dent wing of the CPI(M), which governs Kerala. Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has suspended the university’s vice-chancellor, MR Saseendranath, which has been applauded. He has also ordered a judicial inquiry by a retired Supreme Court or high court judge. The Governor has been engaged in a battle against the rampant criminality in the state’s universities. The dean and hostel warden too have failed in their duties. The entire campus, it seems, is run by the SFI.

Was there a communal angle to the tragedy? I hope that these are rumours. Kerala has been the most literate state in the country for a long time. I was in some way responsible for the final act of glory: When Kottayam became the first town in India with 100 per cent literacy, I was the District Collector there. The people of Kerala are well-read. The state is home to a multi-religious society where the people

have lived together peacefully since time immemorial. There was a fraying of that fabric when fundamentalism knocked at the state’s door about 25 years ago. Therefore, God forbid, the Sidharthan saga has a communal angle to it.

All 18 accused have been arrested. From even a cursory look at the list of the accused, one thing is evident: These students belong to every community and religion of Kerala. All of them are in the age group of 20-25 years.

Why did these young men, who should be full of hope for the future, attack one of their own in such a brutal manner? Most of us won’t understand this — unless we understand the politics of Kerala.

The writer is a former Union minister. He currently practices in the Supreme Court and was a 1979 batch officer of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOR A HEALTHY INDIA IN THE RIGHT HANDS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘A big fat problem’ (IE, March 5). The alarming rise in obesity among children and adults calls for immediate preventive measures. The Lancet study indicates that 12 million children and 70 million adults are overweight. This trend is on the increase because more and more people are now living a sedentary lifestyle. Nutritional food, daily exercise must be integrated across the country. The consumption of processed foods and sugary beverages should be regulated. The government should make disclosure of nutrient value mandatory.

Subhash Vaid, New Delhi

BIG FAT WEDDING

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Shaadi Number One’ (IE, March 5). On the one hand, we have the wealthiest wedding ceremony of the year and on the other, 80 per cent of Indians can’t afford two square meals a day. Soon, the middle classes will start measuring the success of their wedding functions against this new benchmark. “They” — the rich — set the example; the classes below them emulate them even if the bulging budget leaves behind a burden of debt. This is a concerning culture.

Narendra Dani, Lucknow

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘A fair deal for farmers’ (IE, March 4). Even if the government strikes a deal with the agitating farmers, it must check whether the benefit of the MSP will really go to the farmers. Of the 93.09 million agricultural households in India, 82 per cent belong to small and marginal farmers, while the agitators are mostly rich, tractor-owning farmers from Punjab and Haryana. The government buys selected produce at MSP rates from farmers through NAFED and FCI but not every village has access to them. These schemes must reach those who need them most.

YG Chouksey, Pune

TRAIN TO GROWTH

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Going places by train’ (IE, March 4). The BBIN initiative has come a long way and will certainly prove lucrative in boosting economic growth for its member nations. A sound railway transport network will assist in regional integration. The next move by Indian Railways, connecting complex terrains from Baramulla to Udhampur ensures our railways reach new heights. India must continue to expand on this front.

Diya Khatri, Baran

OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PHED DIVISION RAJGARH No.: 5360-77 Date: 26.02.2024 NOTICE INVITING BID (NIT NO. 171/2023-24) Bids for Work of Transportation of drinking water by Tankers at UWSS Rajgarh District Alwar are invited from interested bidders upto 06:00 PM on Date 10.03.2024. Other particulars of the Bid may be visited on the procurement portal (http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, http://sppp.raj.nic.in) of the state and https://phedwater.rajasthan.gov.in departmental website.

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE Sr. DEE/EMU/GZB for and on behalf of President of India. Invites open e-tender for the under noted work: 1. GEM Bid Number: GEM/2024/B/4701559 Dated: 04-03-2024 2. Name of the work: Implementation & certification of Integrated Management System (IMS) of ISO 9001:2015 or latest-Quality Management system (QMS), ISO 14001: 2015 or latest Environmental Management system (EnMS), ISO 45001: 2018 or latest Occupational Health and Safety management system (OHSAS), ISO 50001:2018 or latest-Energy Management System (EMS) and 5'S at EMU Car Shed, Ghaziabad for the period of 03 years

NORTHERN RAILWAY Tender Notice Invitation of tender through E-tendering (e-Procurement Systems) NIT No.: 232133 Name of Work and its location: Tender for "Provision for outsourcing Wheel Shop activities at RCNK as per scope of work." Approx. Cost of work: Rs. 47,08,790.00/- including GST (Rs. Forty Seven Lakh Eight Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety Only) Earnest Money: Rs. 94,200/-

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON (SECTION 82 Cr.P.C.) Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused Maroof, S/o Late Makbool, R/o Vegabond, Patri Asaf Ali Road, Delhi, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 344/2021, U/s 380/411 IPC, registered at P.S. Chandni Mahal, Delhi, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused Maroof, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Maroof, has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of said warrant).

NORTHERN RAILWAY INVITATION OF TENDERS THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM Tender Notice No. 82248874A/391 Date: 04.03.2024 Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi - 110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION General public is hereby informed that an unidentified deadbody of male Age : 50 years, Height : 5'5", Complexion: Shallow, Identification: A black mole on face, wearing pink colour shirt, red, white, grey & blue colour jersey and grey colour pant, was found dead on 27.02.2024 near Gate No. 4-5, Delhi Gate Metro Station, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 20-A dated 27.02.2024 has been lodged at P.S. IP Estate, Delhi.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON See Section 82 Cr.P.C. Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Salman @ Badshah, S/o: Ali Sher, R/o: 11A-4, Dilshad Garden, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 502/2020, U/s 392/397/34 IPC, P. S. Seema Puri, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Salman @ Badshah cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Salman @ Badshah has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Government of Jharkhand Rural Works Department JHARKHAND STATE RURAL ROADS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (JSRRDA) 3rd Floor, F.F.P. Building, Dhurwa, Ranchi 834004 NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

(National Competitive Bidding Through e-Procurement) eTender No.- 370/ 2023-24- Ranchi, Dated: 04.03.2024 The undersigned on behalf of Government of Jharkhand invites item rate bids through e-Procurement from the eligible bidders registered* in appropriate class with any State/Central Government/State /Central Government Organization for construction and maintenance for five years of the works (List of schemes shall be displayed in the website pmsgsyndersjhr.gov.in) of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna PM-JANMAN (Batch-1, 2023-24).

Table with 13 columns: Sl.No, District / Block, Package Number, Mega Package No, Road Name, Type, Length (in Kms), Const. Cost (in Lakhs), Maint. Cost (in Lakhs), Total (Const.+Maint. in Lakhs), Total cost (in Lakh), EMD (in Lakh), Time period (in Month). Rows include projects like L022-PMGSY NH-100-SAIL SEREGEDA ROAD TO SAHEDA, L021-NH99 CHATRA BAGRA RD TO ARUDANA, etc.

The bid should be submitted online in the website pmsgsyndersjhr.gov.in. The bidders should have valid Digital Signature Certificate for online submission of bid. Details of bid submission is as under:

Table with 9 columns: Procurement Officer, Place of Opening, Availability of tender (on-line) for bidding (From/To), Last date & time of seeking clarification, Last date and time of bid submission, Date & time of opening (on-line) of tender (Technical/Financial bid).

- * Non-registered bidders may also submit bid, however the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authority before signing the contract. ** Cost may change. Note:- 1. Amount of Bid Security should be taken as mentioned in the Bid Data Sheet of the Bidding Document. 2. Cost of Bid Document (Rs. 10000) and Bid Security (as mentioned in the Bid Data Sheet) shall be deposited online in form as mentioned in Bid Data Sheet...

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male namely Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown was found unconscious condition on 21.02.2024 at 6:00 AM near Mool Chand Flyover, New Delhi. He was admitted to AIIMS Hospital, New Delhi vide MLC No. 500419797/24 where doctor declared him brought dead. In this regard FIR No. 104/24, U/s 279/337 IPC, dated 21.02.2024 has been lodged at Police Station, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi.

GOVERNMENT OF JHARKHAND WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT LOCAL/NATIONAL TURNKEY COMPETITIVE BIDDING (Complete Job with Ten Years O&M) NIT NO:- WRD/Konar Canal Division Dumri/TURKEY-01/23-24 DATE:- 04.03.2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON See Section 82 Cr.P.C. Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Gulab Alam, S/o Shaikh Gulzar, R/o H. No. 271, Khumra Mohalla, Village Ghonda, Jafrabad, Delhi-53 and Village Tirumuhani, PS Ahmadabad, Katiyar, Bihar and V-11/1, Arvind Nagar, Ghonda Garhi Mandu North East Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 434/2020, U/s 336/337 IPC, P.S. Jafrabad, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Gulab Alam cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Gulab Alam has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED General public is hereby informed that this Person (depicted in the photo) namely Bhagat Singh S/o Jile Singh R/o 461, Shahbad Daulatpur, Valmiki Chopal, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped from G-3, Sector-15, Rohini, Delhi since 21.02.2024 at 03:00 PM. In this regard a vide FIR No./DD No. 95-A, Dated 01.03.2024 has been registered at PS K.N. Katju Marg, Distt. Rohini, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out this person but no clue has come to light so far.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON (See Section 82 Cr. P.C.) Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely Arun S/o Ishwar R/o House No. B-2/512, Raghuraj Nagar, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in a case vide FIR No. 308/2017 U/s 324 IPC registered at P.S. Khyala, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued stating that the said Arun could not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the accused Arun has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON (SEE SECTION 82 Cr.P.C.) Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person(s) Ravi S/o Puranmal R/o B-154, J.J. Colony Bharat Vihar, New Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in FIR No. 313/17 U/s 323/341/34 IPC, PS Dwarka North, New Delhi and it has been returned to a Warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) Ravi can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) Ravi has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग हरिद्वार जिन कोड- 249604 संख्या: 303/01/डीओआर(डिजी)/सेवा-2/2021-22 दिनांक: 04 मार्च, 2024 लघु विज्ञापित एतद्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि अडिस्ट्रेट प्रोफेसर (राजकीय महाविद्यालय) चयन-2021 के अन्तर्गत अडिस्ट्रेट प्रोफेसर वनस्पति विज्ञान (Botany) एवं अडिस्ट्रेट प्रोफेसर भूगोल (Geography) विषयान्तर्गत साक्षात्कार हेतु अर्ह अभ्यर्थियों की संख्या निर्धारित पद के सापेक्ष 2 गुने से कम होने के कारण परीक्षा परिणाम निर्माण प्रक्रिया नियमावली-2012 के चतुर्थ संशोधन-2016 के नियम-06 में उल्लिखित प्रावधान के क्रम में पदों के सापेक्ष एप्रीओरिटी की मेरिट के आधार पर श्रेणीवार/उपश्रेणीवार अतिरिक्त अभ्यर्थियों को औपबन्धिक रूप से शार्टलिस्ट किया गया है।



SINGAPORE'S EXCLUSIVE DEAL WITH TAYLOR SWIFT IT'S NOT A HOSTILE ACT TOWARDS NEIGHBOURS: PM

Sydney: Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said Tuesday an incentive provided to Taylor Swift to make Singapore the only stop in Southeast Asia on her world tour was not a hostile act towards its neighbours. "(Our) agencies negotiated an arrangement with her to come to Singapore and perform and to make Singapore her only stop in Southeast Asia," Lee told a press conference in Melbourne.

TOP OF THE WORLD



A Chinese ship near a Philippine ship. Reuters

Philippines, China vessels collide in South China Sea

Manila: Chinese and Philippine coast guard vessels collided in the disputed South China Sea, and four Filipino crew members were injured Tuesday in a series of confrontations as Southeast Asian leaders gathered for an Asian summit where alarm over Beijing's aggression at sea was expected to be raised. The Chinese coast guard ships and accompanying vessels blocked the Philippine coast guard and supply vessels off the disputed Second Thomas Shoal and executed dangerous maneuvers that caused two minor collisions between vessels, Philippine officials said. The BRP Sindangan of the Philippine coast guard had minor structural damage from the collision. AP

CHINA 'Peaceful Taiwan reunification' remark dropped

Beijing: China will boost its defence spending by 7.2% this year, fuelling a military budget that has more than doubled under President Xi Jinping's 11 years in office as Beijing hardens its stance on Taiwan, according to official reports on Tuesday. China also officially adopted tougher language against Taiwan as it released the budget figures, dropping the mention of "peaceful reunification" in a government report delivered by Premier Li Qiang at the opening of the National People's Congress. China's parliament, Tuesday. REUTERS

SOUTH KOREA North Korea issues threat over joint drills

Seoul: North Korea called the ongoing South Korean-US military drills a plot to invade the country, as it threatened Tuesday to take unspecified "responsible" military steps in response. The North's warning came a day after the South Korean and U.S. forces kicked off their annual computer-simulated command post training and a variety of field exercises for an 11-day run. This year's drills were to involve 48 field exercises, twice the number conducted last year. AP

BELGIUM EU targets new system to boost bloc's defence

Brussels: Top European Union officials on Tuesday outlined ambitious plans to boost its defense industry at an unprecedented pace as the bloc seeks to respond to the threat posed by Russia and a trans-Atlantic partner that could be wavering on its commitments to Europe. For decades, EU nations have slumbered under the protective nuclear cover of the US through the NATO alliance while their defense spending withered. A first warning under Trump's presidency highlighted a lack of coordination that would be needed. AP

Ball in US court, says Hamas as Gaza truce talks extended before Ramadan

REUTERS
CAIRO/RAFAH, MARCH 5

HAMAS NEGOTIATORS stayed in Cairo for a third day of ceasefire talks on Tuesday after two days yielded no breakthrough.

The Cairo talks have been billed as a final hurdle to reach a 40-day ceasefire in the war between Hamas and Israel in time for the Ramadan Muslim fasting month, due to begin at the start of next week. Three security sources from host and mediator Egypt told Reuters the warring sides still wanted a deal but were sticking to demands. Earlier, senior Hamas official Bassem Naim told Reuters the group had presented its proposal for a ceasefire agreement to the mediators, and was now waiting for a response from the Israelis.

"PM Netanyahu doesn't want to reach an agreement and the ball now is in the Americans' court" to press him for a deal, Naim said.

A senior Israeli official, however, said: "Israel is making every effort to reach an agreement. We are awaiting a response from Hamas." US President Joe Biden said Tuesday that a truce deal is in the hands of Hamas, and a ceasefire was necessary to get more aid into Gaza.

China: Ties with Maldives not to target anyone

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, MARCH 5

CHINA TUESDAY vowed to work with the Maldives to build a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership with the island nation and underlined that normal cooperation between the two does not "target" any third party and will not be disrupted by any 3rd party.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning referred the media to "competent Chinese authorities" for details.

"More broadly, China is committed to working with the Maldives to build a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership," she said. "Normal cooperation between China and the Maldives does not target any third party and will not be disrupted by any third party" Mao said. Her statement came a day after China signed a defence cooperation agreement with the Maldives to provide free military assistance to foster "stronger" ties weeks after President Mohamed Muizzu set a deadline for the withdrawal of the first group of Indian military personnel to leave the island nation.

Ukraine war: German officer used hotel Wi-Fi for conference call, Russia hacked & leaked it

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, MARCH 5

A GERMAN military officer used an unsecured phone line at a Singapore hotel to join a conference call that was hacked by Russians and leaked to the public, Germany's defense minister said Tuesday.

The fallout from the leaked audio tape, which features four high-ranking German air force officers discussing hypothetically how Taurus long-range cruise missiles



People protest at Israel's Nitzana border crossing with Egypt in southern Israel on Tuesday against the delivery of aid to the Gaza Strip until all hostages are released. AP

UN report finds evidence of sexual violence during Oct 7 Hamas attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, MARCH 5

A UNITED Nations report has found credible allegations that sexual assaults took place during the October 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel.

A team led by the UN special envoy for sexual violence in conflict, Pramila Patten, found "rea-

sonable grounds" to believe Hamas committed rape and "sexualised torture". Patten presented the report Monday at the United Nations.

The UN team did not meet with any victims of sexual violence "despite concerted efforts to encourage them to come forward", and Patten said much of the evidence was circumstantial. The team conducted interviews

with survivors and witnesses of the October 7 attacks, released hostages, health providers and others, Patten said.

The report comes nearly five months after the October 7 attacks, which left about 1,200 people dead and some 250 others taken hostage. Israel's war against Hamas has since laid waste to the Gaza Strip, killing more than 30,000 people.



Residents flee as the government declared state of emergency amid violence, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Tuesday. Reuters

In Haiti, violence leaves thousands homeless

REUTERS
PORT-AU-PRINCE, MARCH 5

RAGING VIOLENCE in Haiti triggered by a top gang leader's push to overthrow the prime minister has forced more than 15,000 people to flee their homes, many of which have been destroyed.

"Armed gangs forced us to

leave our homes. They destroyed our houses, and we're on the streets," said Nicolas, who is living in a camp after abandoning his home, sleeping in such cramped conditions he says he feels like an animal.

The situation escalated over the weekend with Prime Minister Ariel Henry's trip to Kenya to tie up a deal for the de-

ployment of foreign troops in Haiti. On Sunday, Haiti's government declared a state of emergency after inmates escaped in two major prison breaks and heavy gunfire spread across the capital. Henry's arrival date back in Haiti remains unclear.

Meanwhile, multiple embassies have recalled their staff and neighboring Dominican

Republic has said it will never accept setting up refugee camps.

The United Nations' immigration office said during the weekend at least 15,000 people had been displaced due to violence. Since Henry came to power after the assassination of Haiti's last president in 2021, violent gangs have expanded their territory.

Nepal PM Prachanda fails to expand Cabinet with no consensus on deal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, MARCH 5

NEPAL PRIME Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Tuesday failed to reach a consensus with allies on a power-sharing deal as their talks ended inconclusively, giving rise to speculation regarding the stability of his government following his dramatic move to terminate alliance with the Nepali Congress.

Prachanda, a former guerilla leader, forged a new alliance with

the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) - the second-biggest party - led by former premier KP Sharma Oli on Monday following which three ministers took the oath of office.

After forming the new alliance on Monday, the four political parties reached an 8-point agreement. As per the deal, the four parties have agreed to support the Maoist Centre candidate in the election of the National Assembly chair while they will back a UML candidate for the vice-chair.

As the power-sharing deal

among the members of the ruling alliance could not be materialised, Prime Minister 'Prachanda' failed to distribute ministerial portfolios to the cabinet members even 24 hours after the new alliance government was formed. The four parties have a combined strength of 142 seats. "we are trying to include other smaller parties including CPN-Unified Socialist (10), Loktantrik Samajwadi Party (14) and Janamat Party (6), in the alliance to get a comfortable majority," Bishnu Rijal, central member of CPN-UML, told PTI.

Neither Trump nor Biden will be able to formally clinch their party's nominations on Super Tuesday.

The earliest either can become his party's presumptive nominee is March 12 for Trump and March 19 for Biden.

declared a "Dongbei Renaissance." Some have suggested that young people see resonance between that time and China's current economic slump.

The Shenyang where Shuang was born in 1983 was the biggest city in China's most urbanized, prosperous region. State-backed factories churned out steel and heavy machinery, and their workers basked in the promise of life-long job security. Shuang's parents dropped him off each day at the factory preschool; the 7,000 employees enjoyed a factory hospital, movie theater and auditorium.

Then, in the 1990s, as Chinese leaders began allowing private companies to compete with the

state-run behemoths, that idyll collapsed. Shuang's mother began peddling tea eggs on the street.

Determined to earn a steady income, Shuang studied law at university, then joined a bank. But he soon grew bored. As a teenager, he had found solace in Ernest Hemingway and J.D. Salinger's lost young men. He started writing secretly at night, about his own lost young men.

Shuang's prose is vernacular, and he doesn't shy away from the unsavory choices his characters make to survive. There are murderers and drunks. Shuang is not religious, but he said he was fascinated by believers' searches for meaning

VIVIAN WANG
MARCH 5

FOR A long time during Shuang Xuetao's early teenage years, he wondered what hidden disaster had befallen his family.

His parents - proud workers at a tractor factory in the north-eastern Chinese city of Shenyang - stopped going to work, and the family moved into an empty factory storage room to save money on rent. But they rarely talked about what had happened, and Shuang worried that some special shame had struck his family alone.

It was not until later that he learned about the mass layoffs

that swept northeastern China in the 1990s, during the country's shift from a planned economy toward a market-based one. The region had been China's industrial heartland, but suddenly millions of laborers were left unemployed. Crime and poverty rose. Even today, the region, sometimes called China's Rust Belt, has not fully recovered.

The legacy of that communal suffering animates the writing of Shuang, now 40 and one of China's most celebrated young authors. For his short stories chronicling the economic decline of his hometown, and the mass disillusionment that followed, he has been hailed for bringing atten-



Shuang Xuetao is one of China's celebrated young authors. NYT

tion to a time and people that China's public imagination had long written off.

His stories also dwell on indi-

viduals' isolation within that collective experience. His characters disappear from their neighbors' lives without saying goodbye or

in one of his trademark magical realist twists, they trek through the northeast's heavy blizzards and find themselves in a cell at the bottom of a lake.

The question of how to understand the region's history has become especially relevant lately, as a wave of art about the northeast, known in Mandarin as Dongbei, has found widespread popularity. A television drama about a faded factory town was China's top-rated show last year, and songs by Dongbei musicians have gone viral. Last month, Shuang published a new story collection, and a star-studded film adaptation of one of his novellas is due this year.

Cultural commentators have

SECTOR WATCH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Govt's AI advisory: What to make of the clarification amid a backlash?

Soumyaendra Barik New Delhi, March 5. After severe backlash, the Centre has clarified that its advisory for generative artificial intelligence (AI) services was directed towards 'significant' platforms and not start-ups. The clarification helped calm some nerves, but also pointed towards some of the pitfalls in the commentary that emerged from the fallout. On Monday, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said in a post on X: '(The) advisory is aimed at the significant platforms and permission seeking from MeitY is only for large platforms and will not apply to start-ups... it is aimed at untested AI platforms from deploying on the Indian Internet.' He added that the process of seeking permission, labelling of platforms that are under testing and consent-based disclosure to users is an 'insurance policy to platforms who can otherwise be sued by consumers'.

What the advisory said With Lok Sabha elections set to be announced soon, the IT Ministry had on Friday sent an advisory to generative AI companies like Google and OpenAI and to those running such platforms - including foundational models and wrappers - that their services should not generate responses that are illegal under Indian laws or 'threaten the integrity of the electoral process'. Platforms that currently offer 'under-testing/unreliable' AI systems or large language models to Indian users must explicitly seek permission from the Centre before doing so and appropriately label the possible and inherent 'fallibility or unreliability of the output generated'. The advisory had faced backlash from some startups.

BRIEFLY NFRA engages with cos' independent directors, audit committees

New Delhi: Auditing watchdog NFRA engages with audit committees and independent directors at the time of inspection of audit firms to gather their perspectives as part of larger efforts to improve audit quality as well as corporate governance, according to a senior official. Amid instances of corporate misdoings and auditing lapses, regulators are taking various measures to strengthen the framework for financial reporting. PTI

Bitcoin hits record high

New Delhi: Bitcoin hit a record high on Tuesday, fueled by investors pouring money into US spot exchange-traded crypto products and the prospect that global interest rates may fall. The cryptocurrency hit a high of \$69,202, topping November 2021's all-time peak of \$68,999.99. Investor interest has increased since the SEC approved 11 spot bitcoin ETFs in late January. REUTERS

THE INCLUSION WILL HAPPEN FROM JANUARY 31, 2025

After JP Morgan, Bloomberg to include Indian bonds in EM index

Hitesh Vyas Mumbai, March 5

After JP Morgan Chase & Co, Bloomberg on Tuesday announced inclusion of Indian bonds in the Bloomberg Emerging Market (EM) Local Currency Government Index and related indices from January 31, 2025.

The inclusion of India Fully Accessible Route (FAR) bonds in the Bloomberg EM indices will happen in a phased manner spread over a ten-month period, it said. Last year in September, JP Morgan Chase & Co announced the inclusion of Indian government bonds to JP Morgan GBI-EM Global Index. The inclusion will be staggered over a 10-month period starting June 28, 2024, through March 31, 2025, JP Morgan had said. 'Indian FAR bonds will be included in the Bloomberg EM Local Currency Government Index with an initial weight of 10 per cent of their full market value on January 31, 2025,' Bloomberg said in a release. The weight of FAR bonds will be increased in increments of 10



India is expected to join China and South Korea as markets that reach the 10 per cent cap. File

per cent of their full market value every month over the ten-month period ending in October 2025, at which point they will be weighted at their full market value in the indices, Bloomberg said. The indices in scope for inclusion include the Bloomberg EM Local Currency Government Index, the Bloomberg EM Local Currency Government Index 10% Country Capped Index, and all related sub-indices. According to Michael R Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg, the inclusion is a reflection of India's growing impor-

largest country after China and South Korea. Using data as of January 31, 2024, the index would include 34 Indian securities and represent 7.26 per cent of a \$6.18 trillion index on a market value weighted basis, Bloomberg said. Bloomberg indices will create an ex-India version of the EM Local Currency Government Index and can also create other standard and custom versions of the index. Inclusion of domestic bonds to global indices will help bring in dollar inflows into India and ensure a stable financing of the current account gap of the country. After JP Morgan had announced inclusion of Indian bonds to its emerging markets bond index, analysts had estimated a direct inflow of around \$20-25 billion into the country over the next two years. 'Inclusion of India in the Bloomberg Bond Index is expected to attract investment exceeding \$5 billion. This comes on top of the expected investment of around \$20 billion in the JP Morgan EM Bond Fund,' said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services.

Google allows Indian apps back on Play Store temporarily

New Delhi: Google will temporarily reinstate all Indian apps that it had removed from its Play Store along with their billing systems, the company said on Tuesday, marking a momentary break in the fallout between the firm and the country's start-ups. The company will continue to raise invoices for the service fee these apps owe but will seek that at a later date which it has not clarified. Google's statement came after a meeting with IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw where impacted start-ups were also present. 'We have spoken to both Google as well as the startup community. Google has agreed to re-list the apps with the same status as on Friday, 1st March, 2024. Google and India's startup community will engage with each other to find a long-term solution to all issues in consonance with India's legal framework...' Vaishnaw said in a statement. ENS

RBI bans JM Financial Products from financing against shares, debentures

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, MARCH 5

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday barred JM Financial Products Ltd (JMFP) from financing against shares and debentures, including sanction and disbursement of loans against initial public offering (IPO) of shares as well as against subscription to debentures. The RBI said the action was necessitated due to certain serious deficiencies observed in respect of loans sanctioned by JMFP, which is a systemically important non-deposit taking non-banking financial company (NBFC) for IPO financing as well as non-convertible debentures (NCD) subscriptions. The RBI carried out a limited review of the books of the company on the basis of the information shared by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). 'During the limited review it was observed that the company (JMFP) repeatedly helped a



The RBI carried out a limited review of the books on the basis of the information shared by the SEBI. File

group of its customers to bid for various IPO and NCD offerings by using loaned funds,' the RBI said in a release. The banking regulator also found the credit underwriting was perfunctory, and financing was done against meagre margins. The application for subscription, the demat accounts and the bank accounts, all were operated by the company using a power of attorney (POA) and a master

agreement obtained from these customers without their involvement, whatsoever, in the subsequent operations. 'Consequently, the company (JMFP) was able to effectively act as both lender as well as borrower. The company also acted as the arranger of bank account opening as well as operator of the said bank accounts using the POA,' the release said. The RBI said that apart from being in violation of regulatory guidelines, there were serious concerns on governance issues in JMFP, which are detrimental to the interest of the customers. The regulator is separately examining the regulatory violations and deficiencies, if any, on the part of the bank(s) in this regard. The business restrictions imposed on JMFP will be reviewed upon the completion of a special audit to be instituted by the RBI and after rectification of the deficiencies to the satisfaction of RBI. financing and real estate financing. FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

FTA talks: India begins hard bargain on non-tariff barriers with European Union

Ravi Dutta Mishra New Delhi, March 5

IN AN effort to get non-tariff barriers eliminated in the ongoing free trade agreement negotiations with the European Union, Indian negotiators have prepared an elaborate list of such roadblocks in key sectors such as pharma, engineering, electrical and agri items and have begun taking it up with their European counterparts, two people aware of the developed told The Indian Express. This comes as India-EU concluded their seventh round of negotiations last month dealing with goods, services, market access, investment protection agreement (IPA) and a separate proposed pact on geographical indications (GIs). India and the EU had relaunched the negotiations in May 2021 after a gap of over nine years, at a time when western firms are looking at India as an alternate supply chain source to China. The talks on non-tariff barriers (NTB) come in a backdrop of multiple environment and labour regulations brought by EU such as Carbon Border

Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and Deforestation-free Regulation (EUDR) which is threatening to obstruct about 8 to 10 per cent of the Indian agri, steel and aluminum exports going into the 27-bloc union. Barring Indian petroleum exports, India's exports to EU - a key trading partner - have seen little gain over the last five years largely due to a slew of non-tariff barriers in tea, agriculture, engineering and electronic items. While India has brought up the issues in negotiations, both parties continue to disagree on the definition of non-tariff barrier causing friction in the negotiations. 'The problem is that what we call the non-tariff barriers are referred to by them as non-tariff measures. They say that as a society we have high standards. Sometimes these standards are at par with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and sometimes they are WTO plus. They say that it's an internal lookout that EU manufacturers are subjected to those high standards and are not meant to target India,' a senior government official said. FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

IIFL Finance shares plunge 20% after RBI restrictions

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, MARCH 5

A DAY after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday barred IIFL Finance Ltd from sanctioning or disbursing gold loans or assigning, securitising or selling any of its gold loans in the wake of several regulatory violations by the company, shares of the company crashed by 20 per cent to Rs 478.50 on the stock exchanges on Tuesday. In its December quarter investor presentation, the company said it's among top two NBFCs in the country in the gold loans segment, having grown at a five-year CAGR of 39 per cent over FY2019-23. 'The RBI ban is likely to impact its business as nearly one-third of its business is from the gold loan segment,' said an analyst with broking firm. According to the company, its

gold loan business amounted to Rs 24,692 crore, which is 32 per cent of the overall asset under management of Rs 77,444 crore as of December 2023. IIFL Finance has over 2,721 dedicated gold loan branches spread across 25 states and Union territories, manned by 15,000 employees. On Monday, the RBI said certain material supervisory concerns were observed in the gold loan portfolio of the company, including serious deviations in asaying and certifying purity and net weight of the gold at the time of sanction of loans and at the time of auction upon default. The RBI also noticed breaches in Loan-to-Value ratio, significant disbursement and collection of loan amount in cash far in excess of the statutory limit, non-adherence to the standard auction process and lack of transparency in charges being levied to customer accounts.

Singapore's competition watchdog approves Air India-Vistara merger, but with riders

Sukalp Sharma New Delhi, March 5

SINGAPORE'S COMPETITION watchdog Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) Tuesday granted its conditional approval to the proposed merger between Air India and Vistara, the latter being a joint venture between Tata (51 per cent stake) and Singapore Airlines (49 per cent). The Competition Commission of India (CCI) had approved the merger in September and the CCCS's nod was among the last pending competition-related approvals for the merger. The CCCS has identified some competition concerns pertaining to the merger, specifically the majority market share Singapore Airlines, Air India, and Vistara cumulatively hold on four direct flight routes between Singapore and India - from Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Tiruchirappalli. The airlines have given capacity-related commitments to the CCCS to address its concerns, and the approval is contingent upon the commitments. 'Even though a number of competing airlines provide air passenger transport services on these routes, the parties have

Unemployment rate drops to 3.1% in 2023

New Delhi: Unemployment rate for persons aged 15 years or above declined to 3.1 per cent in 2023, the lowest in the last three years, as per a report of National Sample Survey Organisation under the statistics ministry.

According to Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for calendar year 2023, the unemployment rate came down to 3.1 per cent in 2023 from 3.6 per cent in 2022 and 4.2 per cent in 2021. PTI

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice. Tender No: E-Tender No 3162023-24/SPPHC/CHN. AMRUT-2.0 - Water Supply improvements to Pachalam Zone - Providing Distribution Mains from Pachalam OHSR - Phase 2 - Providing Distribution Mains from Pachalam OHSR Pipeline Work - Phase 2. EMD: Rs. 5,00,000/- Tender fee: Rs. 19,518 Last Date for submitting Tender: 22-03-2024 03:00:pm Phone: 0484-2360645 Website: www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, www.etenders.kerala.gov.in

Meja Urja Nigam (Pvt.) Ltd. MEJA THERMAL POWER PROJECT (A Joint Venture of NTPC Ltd. & U.P. Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Ltd.) PO: Kohbar, Tehsil: Meja, Distt: Prayagraj-212301 CIN: U74900 DL2008PTC176247

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (A wholly owned Government of Karnataka Undertaking) (CIN: U04010KA2002SGC030438) BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through KPP Portal) BESCOM invites tender through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal (KPPP) for the following Enquiry Nos.:

CONCOR INVITES E-TENDER IN TWO PACKET SYSTEM OF TENDERING FOR THE FOLLOWING WORK: Tender No. CON/AREA-ENG/MMLP-Til/Warehouse & CC pavement/E-85758/2023-24. Name of Work: Construction of CC Pavement and new domestic warehouse at MMLP-Til Near Indore (Madhya Pradesh). Estimated Cost: Rs. 2556.00 Lakhs (including GST).

KOHINOOR PULP & PAPER PRIVATE LIMITED (IN LIQUIDATION) CIV: U74999WB2008PTC126964 LIQUIDATOR - CVR Krishnaswami (Reg. No. IBB/IIPA-001/IP-P01302/2018-19/12217) Notice is given to the public in general that the following Asset Lot of KOHINOOR PULP & PAPER PRIVATE LIMITED (In Liquidation) ('Corporate Debtor') (in liquidation vide order of Hon'ble NCLT dated 01.07.2019) is proposed to be sold in accordance with clause (c) of regulation 32, sub-regulation (1) of regulation 33 and Schedule I of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016 through e-auction platform. The interested applicants may refer to the detailed Sale Process Memorandum by writing to liquidation.kohinoorpulp@gmail.com with a copy to rpvcrswami@gmail.com

EXPRESS EXCLUSIVE: ASHWIN'S WIFE PRITHI ON THE OFF-SPINNER'S JOURNEY TO 100 TESTS

'His unmatched work ethic stands out... be it his YouTube channel or playing chess online'



PRITHI ASHWIN

MY HUSBAND, R Ashwin, is standing on the verge of 100 Tests and our marriage is 98 Tests old. We got married immediately after his debut. Even before leaving for Dharamsala when we were talking, I could only recall a couple of his wickets. Five years ago, I kept a tab of those but after that, the bandwidth reduced. I don't want to be that obsessed. The 99 Tests have sped past rapidly.

The lifestyle of a professional cricketer is far different from what people assume it to be from outside. Since there was no dating in our pre-marriage life, he didn't prepare me for married life. As soon as we got married, we were off to Kolkata to play a Test the next day against the West Indies. I wasn't aware there would be so much media attention. I remember this instance when he was tying the wedding Thali (like a mangalsutra), all I could see was photographers around both of us. And we couldn't spot the one we had hired for the wedding. It was the first taste of what it meant to be around a cricketer all the time.

I didn't want the attention that came with this. I was particular about having my identity and didn't want to get into the web where I'd no control over what was happening around me. I was clueless, starting from packing a kit-bag. I knew what a net session was, but didn't know training meant additional gym sessions too!

Since he was part of all three formats, and moving from one city to another, I never felt settled at any place. It's not glamorous. Sure, we are in really nice hotels, but that is pretty much it. The amount of time you get to spend with this person inside that hotel room is very limited and if you are playing at home, you cannot think about stepping out. The crazy schedules and all the commitments take a huge toll.

I don't know how much of the fact that I love the game contributed to overcoming it. I know I love him but if I didn't like what he was doing, would I have done what I'm doing today? I don't have a problem putting him first. But I was very unsettled the first

few years, not in the marriage but in how much this profession was taking away from what I could be building with him. First, it was surprise, then shock, then denial. Then it was pure misery. When we had children, I was sacrificing all our time. It took time to understand that if you want to succeed at the highest level, it always comes at a cost, either not spending time with his parents, or with his wife and children.

This sport took over his life from the time he was seven and I took time to realise that sometimes they don't know anything else. There is no fuel in the vehicle to put into another relationship or another presence in your life.



It was Covid that really got us together. In a way, it was a blessing in disguise because we all suddenly realised that he is probably never going to play cricket again. So what is our life about? That's probably eight-nine years into a marriage when we really lived together under a roof like a normal couple.

It was during Covid that Ashwin realised that family can also be a part of his life. So he expanded a little bit to give us space which gave him more happiness and stability to deal with a lot of things on the field. That is why he has had a detached attachment over the last few years.

The big turning point in his career was 2017. In March that year, he told me 'I'm working on this leg-spin. If it doesn't come off, I will be out'. I didn't actually put so much thought into what he said because he was adjudged ICC Player of the Year and ICC Bowler of the Year only a few days ago. And in that 2016/17 home season, he had a stellar performance. But in the middle of the year, he was not part of the white-ball team. Those were really hard days for him.

He is someone who seeks clarity and because that was not there, it was very hard for him. He didn't know if he was dropped or rested. If someone told Ashwin, 'come here, you are not good enough', he would get out and work on it. But when he was not told why he wasn't there, I saw him struggling. And at that point, my plate was full. I had two tiny children. So it was hard for him to actually open up to any of us.

It is probably the only time when he didn't. And he did seek help from outside, going through counselling. There was a tough pe-



R Ashwin will become the 14th Indian cricketer to play 100 Tests in Dharamsala this week. PTI

riod and it was something none of us could help him with. And he needed someone who was from the fraternity who could help him. It took him a year to accept that he was not in the scheme of things. After that he was a different person. Not once was he thinking of comebacks, it was always about being on top of his game.



While he's very meticulous on the field, off the field, thankfully he isn't! At home, we

are so used to not having him that when he comes in, it feels like someone has come into your space. And it is the same for him. I always tell him that after he retires, we have to figure out how it's going to be. As a father of two children, he is very dutiful. He enjoys school runs with the kids. He has taught them to bat. Maybe after the IPL, he will teach them how to bowl as well. The Tamil film boy he is, he has started to spoil them with movies. He has introduced them to all Tamil cult classics and Vadivelu comedy tracks. So when he is at home, the kids get extended

TV time.

Unlike the excitement around his 100th Test, as a family we were very cocooned when he was on 499 wickets. That was because Ashwin did not talk about it. During Rajkot, the kids had just got back from school when five minutes later, he got to 500. And soon, all of us were on the phone answering all the congratulatory messages.

It was then that I heard a sudden scream from aunty as she collapsed, and in no time we were at the hospital. At that point, we had decided not to tell Ashwin because there

wasn't good flight connectivity between Chennai and Rajkot.

So I dialled Cheteshwar Pujara and his family were of great help. And once we found a way out, I called up Ashwin because after the scans, the doctor suggested it was better to have her son around. Over the phone, he sounded so broken and hung up. It took an other 20-25 minutes to process what I told him and for him to call back. And thanks to Rohit (Sharma), Rahul bhai (Dravid) and the others in the team and the BCCI — who followed up all the way till he reached here — he got here late at night.

It was a very emotional moment for him to see his mom in the ICU. And after she stabilised, we asked him to rejoin the team. Given his personality, he would never leave a game like that. And he would have an extreme amount of guilt if he didn't win the game for his team. Through those couple of days, I realised his yearning for time with his parents is a lot more now and it is coming with age and maturity.



Lately, we are talking about life after retirement every now and then. I think the post-retirement topic becomes very important because whether you like it or not, it will give a certain purpose to life after cricket.

We started talking about it 4-5 years ago that he needed to build a set of hobbies that have nothing to do with the game, because you have to have something else that you love. Over the years, it's become more important that we drive that into him. However, he still hasn't found anything else (laughs).

As he stands on the cusp of a landmark, his unmatched work ethic and unwavering and insane commitment stand out. I'm hundred percent sure he got it from his parents and I watch in wonder when he extends that to everything he does — be it his YouTube channel or playing chess online. I write this as we make our way up to Dharamsala and realise what a pleasure it has been. Congratulations Ashwin. We have come through 99 Tests together. We are so proud of all those that you played and those you didn't. It has been a beautiful journey and I hope the rest of it gives you as much happiness.

(Prithi Ashwin is R Ashwin's wife, She spoke to Venkata Krishna B.)

BRIEFLY

Ranji Trophy semis: Vidarbha close in on thrilling win over MP

Nagpur: Vidarbha took command of their Ranji Trophy semifinal with the key wicket of Yash Dubey (94) late on day four as they inched closer to a thrilling victory over Madhya Pradesh here on Tuesday. Heading into the final day on Wednesday, hosts Vidarbha are a mere four wickets away from setting up a date in the summit clash with Mumbai, while Madhya Pradesh, who still need 93 runs to win, will hope their tailenders can produce an inspired fightback. **PTI**
BRIEF SCORES: Vidarbha 170 & 402 in 101.3 overs (Yash Rathod 141; Anubhav Agarwal 5/92) lead Madhya Pradesh 252 and 228/6 in 71 overs (Yash Dubey 94; Akshay Wakhare 3/38) by 93 runs.

CAS clears Halep for immediate return

Geneva: Former Wimbledon and French Open champion Simona Halep had her four-year doping ban cut to nine months by the top court for global sport on Tuesday, making the former world number one eligible to return to competition immediately. Halep was initially banned for four years for two separate anti-doping rule violations. But the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled that her suspension should be reduced to nine months, a period she has already served. **REUTERS**

Pragg beats leader Abdusattarov

Prague: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa defeated overnight sole leader Nodirbek Abdusattarov of Uzbekistan to stake his claim for the top honours at the Prague Masters chess tournament here. Winning with the black pieces, Praggnanandhaa came within striking distance of the sole leader in the ten-player round-robin event that still has three rounds remaining. Things worked out even better for Praggnanandhaa as the second-placed Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran went down to Nguyen Thai Dai Van of the Czech Republic. **PTI**

Satwik's net play may need tweaking before Olympics

SHIVANI NAIK
MARCH 5

SATWIKSAIRAJ RANKIREDDY didn't quite know until a hoot of a video interaction about their memes with the Bridge website recently, what the comic-book staple 'kryptonite' implied.

Confidence is their cape. And vulnerabilities don't exactly loom on his and fellow-superperson Chirag Shetty's legend easily, as they forge ahead with eternal 'apna time aayega' optimism. In beating Malaysians Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi 21-13, 24-22 to kick off the French Open, there was little cause for concern at the Porte de LA Chapelle arena.

Yet, like the jagged, green kryptonite, there is an awkward, pointy part of the formidable Satwik's game, that can suddenly cut short their flying. It's not a particular opponent. And nothing insurmountable for the hugely talented 23-year-old. It might only need the tiniest technical adjustments sorted out by canny coach Mathias Boe. But having lost three consecutive tournament finals at China, Malaysia and India, and with a good chance of running into Aaron-Soh or Kang-Geo in the semis at Paris, the Indians might want to cover their bases against the wretched green thing. It's Satwik's racquet-work at the net, especially playing the angled returns and the round the heads.

Like kryptonite, Satwik's shot making at the net only marginally weakens what is an otherwise exceptionally strong and fearsome all-court game. His big smash can shut down every single chirping of any team. His mid-court placement lobs to the opponent's back court, drops and drives are highly dependable as Plan B if he can't rain down pure hail-storm. Perhaps the duo's inimitable and un-counterable combination attack is the S-C 1-2: a thunder smash from Satwik that strains and drains out opponent's defensive wits so much in digging it out, that the Chirag follow-up smash, equally booming, buries all resistance. But time and again, opponents and the game of doubles demand that Satwik is summoned to the net for front court marshalling. That's where the problem begins.

That he even proactively is learning to take charge at the net, and allow Chirag to hover from the back, is a sign of the big beast

willing to step out his comfort zone. No one has an attack as grand as Satwik in the world. The net responsibility even cramps his style. But the Indian pairing is chasing complete well-roundedness and in doing that, the big lad needs to hunker down and go about skirmishing with covering-fire snipes and pokes.

Satwik rolls the racquet for a switch in backhand forehand grip fast enough. The stopper straight racquet backhand blocks, taps and pushes too flow seamlessly. But it's when he's trying to manoeuvre the shuttle around with the forehand in net exchanges, that he can flounder. Either his wrist locks awkwardly or the bird rushes on him as he sticks his racquet out or the wrist can't guide it precisely



into gaps.

A very visible difference between Satwik at the net, and someone like Seo Seung-jae or Aaron Chia or even Chirag is their receiving stance. The Koreans and Malaysians as well as Chirag tend to stand diagonal - one foot ahead of the other and the body at an angle. It not only reduces the torque pressures on the body in imparting angles on the shuttle. But the hypotenuse-like playing position also aids quicker lateral striding movement to the back of the court if need be. The diagonally flexible fleet-footedness frees up the floating around the court.

Satwik though, plonks himself at the net with an open stance - both feet firmly in a straight line, parallel to the net. It forces him to contort severely for the round-the-heads at the net which come at him at blitzing pace, and shorten his reaction time window. He scrambles, and gets the shuttle back. But not with venom of power, pace or placement that the net-killers do.

The tall big built shuttler also commits his weight balance to defend at the net. He got into that position with feet parked from 17-11 onwards in the second set, and the Malaysians sniffed a chance. To his credit, in the longest rally at 9-8, it was a Satwik net winner that put India ahead. But the desired mobile half side-on stance, standing angled at 45 to the net, might give him better court coverage and variety on his stroke options.

Satwik's default setting is attack from the back. And it might only be a matter of confidence before he matches Chirag in scything at the net with the same venom, with tweaks to footwork, and horizontal racquet skills.



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