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ESE & GATE

THE WORLD

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS CALL IT THEIR 'LAST, BEST & FINAL OFFER' STRIKING U.S. ACTORS REVIEWING 'FINAL' OFFER

Negotiators representing Hollywood actors are considering a new proposal that major studios described as their 'last, best and final offer' to end a four-month-long strike, the SAG-AFTRA union said Saturday. The alliance which represents Walt Disney, Netflix, and others presented its latest offer Saturday. **REUTERS**

TOP OF THE WORLD



Armed special police forces prepare for an operation at the Hamburg airport. AP

GERMANY

Airport hostage standoff over, suspect held

Wellington: Police said they arrested a man and rescued a child at the centre of a suspected hostage standoff at Hamburg airport on Sunday, ending a crisis that had forced authorities to close the busy air hub. A man, who police said was suspected of carrying a gun, and possibly explosives, drove a vehicle through gates of the airport Saturday night, officers said. Police said the 35-year-old man was with his four-year-old daughter and likely involved in custody dispute. **REUTERS**

CHINA

On Beijing visit, Australian PM seeks dialogue

Shanghai: Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, starting the first visit to China by a leader of his country in seven years, said Sunday it was "in all our interests" to have a bilateral relationship with dialogue and cooperation. Australia will continue to work constructively with China, he said in a speech to the annual China International Import Expo in Shanghai, which was opened by Premier Li Qiang. Albanese is first Australian leader to visit China since 2016. **REUTERS**

AFGHANISTAN

Opium poppy supply down by 95% after ban

Kabul: Opium poppy production in Afghanistan, previously the world's top supplier, has plummeted since the Taliban banned the cultivation of narcotics last year, a United Nations report said Sunday. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said opium cultivation fell to just 26,700 acres in 2023 from 575,755 acres last year, slashing supply by 95% to 333 tons. This was putting pressure on farmers in the war-torn country, where most people depend on agriculture and the value of poppy exports at times outstripped the value of all formal exported goods, UNODC said. **REUTERS**

PALESTINE LEADER PRESSES U.S. STATE SECY to push Israel for Gaza ceasefire, Bibi dismisses

Blinken meets Abbas, Gazans say 47 killed in strike on refugee camp

Blinken reaffirms commitment to Gaza aid, says no one should be forcibly displaced

NIDAL AL-MUGHRABI, ALI SAWAFTA & SIMON LEWIS
GAZA, RAMALLAH
NOVEMBER 5

US TOP diplomat Antony Blinken made an unannounced visit to the occupied West Bank on Sunday, where Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas urged him to persuade Israel to agree to a ceasefire as more died in a strike on a refugee camp overnight.

A spokesman for the health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip said earlier on Sunday that Israeli military had struck the Maghazi refugee camp overnight, killing at least 47 people.

In a separate attack, 21 Palestinians from one family, including women and children, were killed in Israeli strikes targeting Gaza overnight, the health ministry said.

"We demand that you stop them from committing these crimes immediately," Abbas told Blinken, demanding an "immediate ceasefire" from Israel.

"The Secretary reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance and resumption of essential services in Gaza and made clear Palestinians must not be forcibly displaced," spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday rejected ceasefire calls until all 240 hostages captured by Hamas are returned. "There will be no ceasefire without the return of the hostages. This should be completely removed from the lexicon," Netanyahu reiterated government's long-standing position.

Gaza health officials said Israeli air strikes destroyed houses in the Maghazi refugee camp. Asked for comment, it said they were waiting and gathering details.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said there was also intense bombardment, violent artillery explosions, and air strikes in the



Palestinians look for survivors under the rubble of a destroyed house in Gaza City. AP

DEATH, DESTRUCTION	
ISRAEL	PALESTINE
TOTAL DEAD	TOTAL DEAD
1,400+	9,700+
TOTAL INJURED	TOTAL INJURED
5,400+	20,000+

Gaza evacuations through Rafah halted after Israel hits ambulance

REUTERS
CAIRO, NOVEMBER 5

EFFORTS WERE under way on Sunday to resume evacuations of injured Gazans and foreign nationals through the Rafah crossing to Egypt, suspended since Saturday after a deadly attack on an ambulance, Egyptian, US and Qatari officials said.

One of the security sources and the medical source said the evacuations were suspended after an Israeli strike on Friday on an ambulance in Gaza being used to transport injured people.

The Rafah crossing to Egypt's Sinai peninsula is the only exit point from Gaza not controlled by Israel. Aid trucks were still able to travel into the territory, two of the sources said.



Palestinians holding Spanish passports wait to leave Gaza at the Rafah crossing with Egypt. Reuters

Al Ansari, spokesperson for Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a briefing on Sunday.

"We urge all parties, but especially the occupation army to make sure that there is safe routes and that that the agreement, as it was reached, is respected," he added.

The United Nations Secretary General and aid agencies working in Gaza have condemned Israel's air strike on an ambulance on Friday, which the Israeli military said, without showing evidence, was carrying Hamas militants.

The Health Ministry, a hospital director and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in the Hamas-controlled enclave have said the Israeli strike targeted a convoy of ambulances evacuating wounded people from the besieged northern Gaza area.



Imperator Alexander III test launches the Bulava ballistic missile from the White Sea, in this screenshot from a Russian Defence Ministry handout. Reuters

Russia military says test-fired ballistic missile from new nuclear submarine

AGENCIES
MOSCOW, NOVEMBER 5

RUSSIA'S NEW nuclear-powered submarine Imperator Alexander III carried out a successful test launch of the Bulava ballistic missile, designed to carry nuclear warheads, the Russian defence ministry said on Sunday.

"Firing a ballistic missile is the final element of state tests, after which a decision will be made to accept the cruiser into the Navy," the defence ministry said on Telegram messaging app.

President Vladimir Putin has been pushing for Russia to maintain its nuclear deterrent to counter what he calls growing security threats, as ties between Moscow and the West have hit new lows over the war Russia launched in Ukraine in 2022.

The intercontinental missile, launched from an underwater position in the White Sea off Russia's northern coast, hit a target thousands of kilometres away on the Kamchatka peninsula in the Russian Far East, it said.

The ministry did not specify when test took place. Cruise class strategic-missile cruiser is equipped with 16 Bulava missiles and modern torpedo

EXPLAINED

Cornerstone of Russia's nuclear triad

THE 12-METRE long Bulava missile, which has an estimated range of around 8,000 km and can carry up to six nuclear warheads, has become the cornerstone in the naval part of Russia's nuclear triad. The Imperator Alexander III is one of the new Borei-class nuclear submarines that carry 16 Bulava missiles each and are intended to serve as the core naval component of the nation's nuclear forces in the coming decades.

weapons, it said. Putin took part in a ceremony in December setting the Imperator Alexander III afloat, TASS state news agency said.

The navy has three nuclear-powered submarines of the Borei class in service - one is completing tests and three more are under construction, the defence ministry said.

Philippine radio anchor gunned down during Facebook livestream

JIM GOMEZ
MANILA, NOVEMBER 5

A RADIO ANCHOR was fatally shot by a man inside his southern Philippine station Sunday in a brazen attack that was witnessed by people watching the program live on Facebook.

The gunman gained entry into the home-based radio station of provincial news broadcaster Juan Jumalon by pretending to be a listener. He then shot him twice during a live morning broadcast in Calamba town in Misamis Occidental province, police said.

The attacker snatched the victim's gold necklace before fleeing with a companion, who waited outside Jumalon's house, on-board a motorcycle, police said.

An investigation was underway to identify the gunman and establish if the attack was work-related.



Juan Jumalon was shot at his home-based radio station. Facebook

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr condemned the shooting and said he ordered the national police to track down, arrest and prosecute the killers. "Attacks on journalists will not be tolerated in our democracy and those who threaten the freedom of the press will face the full consequences of their actions," Marcos said.

National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, a press watchdog, said Jumalon was the 199th journalist to be killed in the country since 1986, when democracy returned after a "People Power" uprising toppled dictator Ferdinand Marcos, the father of the current president. **AP**

Israel minister says dropping nukes on Gaza an option, suspended indefinitely

DAN WILLIAMS
JERUSALEM, NOVEMBER 5

PRIME MINISTER Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday disciplined a junior member of his cabinet who appeared to voice openness to the idea of Israel carrying out a nuclear strike on Gaza, where the war with Hamas is inflicting a spiralling Palestinian civilian toll.

Netanyahu's office issued a statement saying that the minister concerned - Heritage Minister Amihay Eliyahu, from a far-right party in the coalition government - had been suspended from cabinet meetings



PM's office says Heritage Minister Amihay Eliyahu debarred from meetings. Wiki

"until further notice".

Asked in a radio interview about a hypothetical nuclear option, Eliyahu had replied:

"That's one way." His remark made headlines in Arab media,

scandalised mainstream Israeli broadcasters and was deemed "objectionable" by a US official. Neither Eliyahu or his party leader are in the streamlined ministerial forum running the Gaza war.

Neither would they have inside knowledge of Israel's nuclear capabilities - which it does not publicly acknowledge - or authority to activate them.

"Eliyahu's statements are not based in reality. Israel and the IDF (military) are operating in accordance with the highest standards of international law to avoid harming innocents. We will continue to do so until our victory," Netanyahu's office said. **REUTERS**

BRIEFLY

War with Hamas to cost Israel above \$50 billion: Report

ISRAEL'S WAR with Hamas in the Gaza Strip will cost as much as 200 billion shekels (\$51 billion), the *Calcalist* financial newspaper reported Sunday, citing preliminary Finance Ministry figures. It said the estimate, equal to 10% of GDP, was premised on the war lasting between eight to 12 months; on it being limited to Gaza, without full participation by Lebanon's Hezbollah, Iran or Yemen; and on some 350,000 Israelis drafted as military reservists returning to work soon. **REUTERS**

Over 100 Britons left Gaza, hopeful of more, says UK

MORE THAN 100 Britons have been evacuated from Gaza and the government hopes more will be able to leave, Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden said on Sunday, as he urged the re-opening of the Rafah border between Gaza and Egypt. "It is very disappointing that the crossing was closed yesterday," Dowden told the *BBC*. "We are engaging very closely and we're hopeful that the crossing will reopen again today enabling further UK nationals to leave." **REUTERS**

JAVIER MILEI WANTS TO BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT. BUT FIRST HE MUST GET AROUND LEGIONS OF ANGRY TAYLOR SWIFT AND BTS FANS

The new enemies of Argentina's far right: Swifties and the BTS army

NATALIE ALCOBA
BUENOS AIRES, NOVEMBER 5

JAVIER MILEI, a far-right libertarian economist, has stayed aloft in Argentina's presidential campaign on the wings of youth vote. To win the runoff election this month, he will need to hold on to that key demographic, pollsters say. But now, a major hurdle stands in his way: Swifties.

Squadrons of Argentine fans of the pop star Taylor Swift have gotten political. They have trained their online sights on Milei and his rising libertarian party, framing them as a danger to Argentina, while Swift herself is preparing to arrive in Argentina next week for

the launch of her Eras Tour outside North America.

"Milei=Trump," said one post from a group called Swifties Against Freedom Advances, which is the name of Milei's party.

After Milei placed second in Argentina's election last month, sending him to a runoff on November 19, a group of 10 Argentine fans of Ms. Swift created the group and issued a news release calling on fellow fans to vote against Milei.

They said they were inspired by Swift's past efforts to confront right-wing politicians in the United States.

"We cannot not fight after having heard and seen Taylor give everything so that the right does-

n't win in her country," the group said in the statement. "As Taylor says, we have to be on the right side of history."

The two-page missive was viewed 1.5 million times on X, the site formerly known as Twitter, before it was suspended the group's account without explanation, the group said.

In the statement, it called Milei's positions against legal abortion, his support for the loosening of gun laws and his proposals to overhaul public education and public health care as "a danger to democracy."

Milei, in response, has shrugged off the Swifties. "I'm not the far right," he told a radio station. "They can express what



Macarena, 29, a member of a group calling on fans of Taylor Swift to vote against the Argentine presidential candidate (left) Javier Milei.

they want." His campaign declined to comment.

The Swifties' criticism of Milei has shifted the conversation to his conservative social views and away from his drastic proposals to reverse Argentina's economic crisis, which include ditching the Argentine peso for US dollar and closing the country's central bank.

But it isn't just Swifties who are organizing against Milei. He and his running mate, Victoria Villarruel, are also contending with criticism from legions of loyal fans of another musical juggernaut, the K-pop band BTS. They are so active and organised on the internet that they have become known as the BTS Army. Last week, the fury of that

army was unleashed upon Ms. Villarruel after a series of her tweets denigrating the K-pop group resurfaced. In 2020, she likened the name BTS to a sexually transmitted disease. She also mocked the dyed pink and green hair of some members.

Those tweets prompted such a fierce response from BTS fans, accusing her of xenophobia, that a large BTS fan club in Argentina felt compelled to try to calm their fellow fans down. "The message that BTS always transmits is one of respect to oneself and everyone else," said a statement from the club, which has been viewed 1.9 million times, according to X. Villarruel's only reaction on-

line to the BTS blowback has been a post in which she called her STD post part of "funny chats" from "a thousand years ago."

Milei's political base is particularly reliant on young voters. One survey of 2,400 people in October showed that nearly 27 percent of his support came from people ages 17 to 25, versus less than 9 percent for Sergio Massa, the center-left economy minister who opposes Milei in the runoff. People under 29 account for 27 percent of all eligible voters in Argentina.

Ahead of Swift's arrival, the Buenos Aires Legislature voted Thursday to name Swift a guest of honor. The only officials to vote against the proposal were members of Milei's party. **NYT**

'I heard their cries... then, silence': Nepal quake survivors recall moment of tragedy



A woman who lost her son, daughter-in-law and grandchild, in Jajarkot district on Sunday. AP

ASAD REHMAN
NEPALGUNJ, NOVEMBER 5

FOUR COUSINS, aged between 17 and 28, were sleeping in one room in Jajarkot district's Khalanga village when the deadly earthquake struck the region on Friday night. Only one of them, 28-year-old Isha, survived. The roof of the room they were sleeping in collapsed, and while Isha was rescued from the debris, her cousins — Merina (25), Urja (17), and Upasna (23) — were found dead.

On Sunday, Isha found herself at Bheri hospital in Nepalgunj town, around 150 km from

Khalanga village. She suffered injuries to her face and back. "I don't remember all that happened, but I remember everything falling on us. It was so sudden. Initially, I heard cries for help from my cousins, but eventually, that stopped, and I lost consciousness. When I woke up, I was at the Jajarkot hospital. I don't remember being brought here (to Bheri hospital). It is all hazy. People tell me the roof fell on us," Isha told *The Indian Express*.

She is a BA student at a college in Kathmandu, around 500 km from Jajarkot. Isha and Merina were visiting sisters Urja and Upasna in Jajarkot for their

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Virat Kohli celebrates his century at Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Sunday. Chasing 327, South Africa were bowled out for 83 runs, Parthiv Patel

'Stuff of dreams': B'day boy Kohli hits 49th ton, equals Sachin record

SANDIPG
KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 5

THREE BALLS into the 48th over, the moment 65,000 pairs of eyes had waited for at the Eden Gardens for the entire day finally arrived. With a back-foot punch, Virat Kohli ran the run that equalled his tally of ODI hundreds with his idol Sachin Tendulkar.

For a man born for theatre, the celebrations were sombre.

He removed his helmet, raised his arms, soaked in the magnificence of the moment for a fleeting second, closed his eyes and gazed skywards, as though offering a silent note of prayer, waved his bat towards the dressing room and slumped onto the shoulders of his batting partner Ravindra Jadeja.

Perhaps, he was too tired for the effervescent hundred celebrations that marked his bristling youth. The heat, humidity and age — he turned 35 on

Sunday — had taken their toll on his body. Perhaps, scoring hundreds and scaling milestones have long become routine so they don't excite him as much as they once did. Perhaps, the magnitude of the feat was sinking in. For nine balls later, at the end of India's innings, drenched in sweat, he shed emotions.

"To equal the record on my birthday in front of such a huge crowd; it's the stuff of dreams," he said, choking for the right word.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

IN MP, SLAMS CONG FOR IGNORING TRIBALS

Free ration for 5 more years, can't let people sleep hungry: Modi

Scheme has benefited 80 cr people, he says on campaign trail



PM Narendra Modi in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district on Sunday. PTI

Admission of distress, hunger, now stop using revdi term: Opp

MANOJCG
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

ANAND MOHAN J
BHOPAL, NOVEMBER 5

UNDERLINING THAT 80 crore people have benefited from the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Sunday that he has decided to extend the free ration scheme for another five years so that people "don't go to sleep hungry".

Addressing a poll rally in Lakhnadon in Seoni district of Madhya Pradesh — he had made a similar announce-

ment a day earlier in Durg in Chhattisgarh on extending the scheme beyond December — Modi said: "My family members in Madhya Pradesh support Modi for various reasons such as the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana and his

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's announcement Sunday that the free ration scheme of the Central government will be extended by five more years has triggered a political slugfest with the Opposition parties claiming his decision is a tacit admission that the economy is in distress and that 80 crore Indians are still facing hunger even after nine-and-half years of BJP rule.

The Opposition parties have

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Delhi air severe, curbs back: No trucks, classes go online, odd-even on table

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

TRUCKS HEADED to Delhi will not be allowed to enter unless carrying essential commodities such as milk and vegetables; there shall be no construction activity on projects such as roads



Gajendra Yadav
Delhi's AQI was 454 on Sunday. **REPORTS, P 4**

and highways; and the government should consider bringing back the odd-even road rationing scheme. These are among the measures taken on Sunday as Delhi's air quality continued to remain in the "severe" category. Also, schools have been asked to hold online classes for students

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NITI weighs discontinuing key water report launched 5 yrs ago

Latest edition says water scarcity a 'national problem'

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

NITI AAYOG, the government's think tank, is learnt to have marked the reports on states progress on water management for 2018-19 and 2019-20 for "internal use" after having publicly released the previous editions. Called the 'Composite Water

EXPLAINED
E Problem of data inadequacy

WATER is a scarce resource, and efficient management is critical. Much of its responsibility lies with states. After launching a 'one of its kind in the world' water index five years ago, the NITI Aayog feels data may not be fully adequate. Hence, a pause in releasing the report publicly.

Management Index' report, the first edition launched five years ago in June 2018 brought India's water challenges into spotlight and ranked states in terms of efficacy based on 28 parameters. The first edition provided data for 2015-16 and 2016-17, and the second edition launched in August 2019 was for 2017-18.

The report, published by NITI Aayog, was prepared in association with three ministries — Water Resources, Drinking Water & Sanitation, and Rural Development.

In May this year, the NITI

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



IDEA EXCHANGE

'We champion circular economy... dairy co-op can turn into energy firm'
JAYEN MEHTA
MD OF GUJARAT COOPERATIVE MILK MARKETING FEDERATION
PAGE 12

Nijjar probe tainted, where is proof: Indian envoy's swipe at Trudeau



Indian High Commissioner to Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

CONTESTING CANADIAN allegations of a potential India link to the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Sanjay Kumar Verma, India's High Commissioner to Canada, has said the Canadian probe into the killing has already been "tainted" by the public statements.

In an interview to Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, Verma, without naming Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who first alleged Indian involvement in the killing, said "no specific or relevant information" has been provided "for us to assist them in the investigation". "Where is the evidence? Where is the conclusion of the investigation? I would go a step further and say now the investigation has already been tainted. A direction has come from someone at a high level to say India or Indian agents are behind

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

Jaishankar speaks to Iranian counterpart on Gaza situation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday spoke to his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and discussed the "grave" situation arising out of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

In the phone conversation, Jaishankar conveyed to Amir-Abdollahian the importance of preventing escalation of the conflict and the need for providing humanitarian support in Gaza.

"Spoke today with Iranian Foreign Minister @AmirAbdollahian. Discussed the grave situation in West Asia and the concern of the international community," the external affairs minister posted on X.

"Conveyed the importance of preventing escalation and providing humanitarian support.

Agreed to stay in touch," he said.

On Saturday, Jaishankar had a phone conversation with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen.

Israel has been carrying out a massive military offensive in Gaza following the unprecedented and multi-pronged attacks on Israeli cities by Hamas militants on October 7.

Hamas killed around 1,400 people in Israel and kidnapped more than 220 others. According to authorities in Gaza, more than 9,000 people have been killed in the Israeli attack.

Previously, Jaishankar had discussed the situation in West Asia with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, his counterpart from the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and with Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi.

UP minor's suicide: After suspect's arrest, admin demolishes family shop

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 5

A DAY after the prime suspect in a case of abetment to suicide and rape of a minor girl in Lakhimpur Kheri district was arrested, the administration on Sunday demolished a shop belonging to the 19-year-old youth's family saying it was constructed on government land.

The girl (17), who belonged to another community, was found hanging at her house on November 2. Lakhimpur Kheri SP Ganesh Prasad Saha said the SHO of the area police station was suspended for negligence. Police are conducting raids to nab the others named in the FIR — the 19-year-old's father and two brothers, the SP said.

The victim's family has alleged that the youth blackmailed the girl using the explicit video and forced her into a sexual relationship.

had on Friday issued a notice to the prime suspect's family, claiming that the land on which their shop, a wooden shack, was built belonged to the state Public Works Department. The family was asked to vacate the land by 10 am on Sunday or face action.

"The shop was demolished after the deadline given to the family expired," a senior official said. The deceased's elder sister demanded stringent punishment for all the accused.

Earlier, the victim's mother, in her police complaint, had stated that the main accused posted an explicit video of her daughter on social media.

She along with her daughter confronted the youth and his family at their residence on November 1, but were instead abused and assaulted, she said in the complaint.

On Saturday, a protest by locals against the accused turned violent as they pelted stones at the shop and set wooden furniture lying on the roadside on fire.

Geologist murdered at Bengaluru home: Police

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 5

A 43-YEAR-OLD government servant working with the Karnataka Department of Mines and Geology was found murdered at her residence in south Bengaluru on Sunday.

The victim has been identified as Prathima K S, a resident of Doddakallasandra and a senior geologist. The incident came to light on Sunday morning around 8.30am when the neighbours informed the police about the incident.

Police found Prathima dead on the floor. "Her throat was slit and prima facie, no valuables have



Prathima K S

gone missing from her house. But we need to confirm it. We do not know the motive," a police officer said.

Prathima's husband was in Shivamogga district when the incident took place, police said. According to an officer, an initial probe revealed Prathima was in office till 6 pm on Saturday and returned home by 8 pm. Her driver said he had dropped her off, said police. The murder took place between 8 pm and 8 am on Sunday. Police have filed a murder case.

FROM PAGE ONE

Free ration for 5 more years, can't let people sleep hungry: Modi

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic."

"I had a single thought in my mind during the pandemic: The whole world was facing such a big crisis, and yet, every individual in my family was doing (his or her) best to save lives. I was determined not to step back and continue fighting the pandemic. My first resolution was not to let any poor household's stove go cold. I have seen poor children go to sleep hungry, and that's why I stayed awake at night."

He said around "80 crore people have received the bene-

fits of the Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, and our family members in Madhya Pradesh have also received this free ration".

"These people's stoves never went cold, their mothers never went without food, and their children never went to sleep hungry. That's why, despite this scheme set to complete in December, I have resolved to provide free ration for the next five years," he said.

The PMGKAY scheme was to end this December. The Central government had launched the scheme in April 2020 under

which 5 kilogram of free food-grains was provided to every person on top of their National Food Security Act (NFSA) entitlement of foodgrains at subsidised rates.

Eyes set on the crucial tribal vote in Madhya Pradesh, Modi was speaking in Seoni district of the Mahakoshal region. The BJP has been focussing on tribal seats by highlighting welfare schemes, development programmes and celebrating tribal icons by renaming educational institutions and railways stations.

"Seoni is associated with the sacrifice of Rani Durgavati, Raja Shankar Shah, and the brave tribal heroes and heroines who defended our culture and defended India," Modi said.

"However, in the past few decades, the Congress has limited the idea of India's freedom to the name of only one family. In their election manifesto, even in Madhya Pradesh, it only shows that one family. Has the tribal society only arrived after the BJP government came into power? Hasn't the tribal society existed for hundreds of years,

from the time of Lord Ram? Did the tribal society not elevate Lord Ram to the status of Purushottam Ram? Our tribal society is so ancient, yet for decades, the Congress did not even utter the word 'tribal'," he said.

He said the BJP government has honoured the legacy of various tribal leaders, by celebrating Janjatiya Divas on the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, construction of a memorial for Rani Durgavati in Jabalpur and naming the Bhopal railway station after Gond tribal queen Rani

Kamlapati.

"In Madhya Pradesh, Congress is not contesting elections. It knows it cannot win. It is merely competing the elections to gather donations. The real battle is not for the Chief Minister's chair. The battle is about whose son will lead the Congress in the future... Two prominent leaders are working on setting the stage for their sons in the coming days. Those who are concerned about their own children, can you tell me, will they ever think of your children and daughters?" Modi said.

Admission of distress, hunger, now stop using revdi term: Opp

found themselves in a tricky situation. Given that the scheme touches the majority of Indians, parties, especially the Congress, cannot oppose the programme despite the burden of Rs 2 lakh crore it will have on the exchequer. The Congress too has made a raft of promises — which it calls guarantees — ranging from subsidies on gas cylinders, monthly financial support to women heads of families, free power and health insurance schemes.

They are instead framing it as a virtual admission by the Prime Minister that his government's economic policies have pushed up prices of essential commodities and left the economy reeling. So

much so that the government is now being forced to extend the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojna, they said. The Trinamool Congress, on the other hand, has approached the Election Commission claiming that the PM's announcement in the midst of election campaigns in five states was a violation of the code of conduct.

"The timing and stage of the announcement — at a BJP poll rally — clearly shows that it is an attempt by the party-in-power to influence the electorate ahead of the elections and to defeat the idea of a level-playing field," the TMC said in a complaint.

At a press meet in Bhopal, Congress communication head

Jairam Ramesh said the Prime Minister's announcement means economic distress is continuing.

"This means poverty and economic distress are continuing, especially since demonetisation and the hasty rollout of GST... they talk about inflation rate... but the prices of essential commodities has risen so much that people are not able to bear it, forcing the Prime Minister to extend the PMGKAY by five more years," he said. The Prime Minister's "latest announcement is an indication of the continuing high level of economic distress and growing inequalities. For the vast majority of Indians incomes have not grown in line with the sky-high prices of

essential commodities," he said.

Recalling that Modi, as Chief Minister of Gujarat, had "consistently opposed the National Food Security Act passed by Parliament in September 2013," Ramesh said "the PMGKY is nothing but the National Food Security Act (NFSA) that already covered 80 crore Indians. This, of course, is not the only example of a U-turn done by him. On MGNREGA too, which proved to be a life-saver during the pandemic, he was forced to shift his position."

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, RJD MP Manoj K Jha asked the PM to stop using the word "revdi" from now on. "The Prime Minister should stop calling it free ration.

There are certain commitments which emanate out of the very fact that India is a welfare state. At least, on paper... seen through our Constitution and the way things have functioned. Second, using the same logic, the PM should not deny that the hunger index places India on a lower pedestal. Because that would generate a kind of anomaly. If there is no hunger, what would you do? Denial of hunger index and going for this extension of ration don't go very well. I must also expect the Prime Minister, apart from stopping the usage of the word free, should immediately stop usage of the word revdi, which I have heard him saying many times," he said.

Delhi air quality

up to Class 5 till November 10. In fact, many schools have decided to suspend physical classes for older students as well.

The 24-hour average AQI in Delhi was recorded at 454 on Sunday, up from 415 a day before. The measures taken on Sunday, on directions from the Commission for Air Quality Management, are part of the Graded Response Action Plan for Stage-IV or "severe plus" category of air pollution.

The measures also include a ban on Light Commercial Vehicles registered outside Delhi, except for electric/CNG/BS-VI diesel vehicles for essential services. Diesel medium and heavy goods vehicles registered in Delhi can no longer run in the city, except when providing essential services.

The Commission for Air Quality Management has asked the Delhi and NCR state governments to consider allowing 50 per cent of staff strength in public, private and municipal offices to work from home. State governments may also consider other measures such as closure of colleges and permitting vehicles to run on odd-even basis, the Commission said.

The restrictions were imposed even as there appeared to be no respite from the toxic air over the next few days. While the Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi had earlier forecast some respite after November 6, a fresh forecast said that the AQI is expected to remain in the severe category for the next six days.

Nijjar probe tainted, where is proof: Indian envoy's swipe at Trudeau

it," Verma was quoted saying.

In September, Trudeau told his country's Parliament: "Canadian security agencies have been actively pursuing credible allegations of a potential link between agents of the government of India and the killing of a Canadian citizen, Hardeep Singh Nijjar."

In the interview, the Indian envoy said conversations between diplomats are secure by law and cannot be used as evidence in the court of law.

"You are talking about illegal wiretaps and talking about evidence. Conversations between two diplomats are secure by all international law. Show me how

you captured these conversations," he said.

He also mentioned that New Delhi has made 26 requests to Ottawa over the past 5-6 years to extradite people from Canada, but is still waiting for any action on that front.

Verma expressed concern over the safety of Indian diplomats, including himself, something External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had also flagged earlier.

Verma has been repeatedly threatened by Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) group and its leader Gurbatwar Singh Pannun in the wake of Nijjar's death.

"I feel that is hate speech and an incitement to violence. I am

concerned about my safety and security. I am concerned about the safety and security of my Consul Generals," Verma said.

He said that despite the strained relations between the two countries, India would like to expand business ties and return to the negotiating table on a trade deal.

In September, following a firestorm over Trudeau's remarks, India suspended its visa services in Canada and asked Ottawa to reduce its diplomatic presence in India.

On October 20, Canada announced it had pulled out 41 diplomats from India and halted its visa and consular services in

Chandigarh, Mumbai and Bengaluru, and that these services would now be available only at the Canadian High Commission in Delhi.

On October 25, Delhi moved to reduce tensions between the two countries by restoring visa services in some categories — entry visa, business visa, medical visa and conference visa. But tourist visas have still not been restored for Canadian citizens.

On Saturday, commenting on the standoff between India and Canada, Jaishankar said both sides have been in touch and hoped a way would be found to resolve the row. At the same time, he said that "sovereignty and sensitivity" can-

not be one-way streets.

Speaking at an interactive session at the Hindustan Times Leadership Summit, he said, "I feel that there is room for diplomacy here. I know that my counterpart in Canada has also expressed the same position. So, we have been in touch."

"My hope certainly would be that we find a way... sovereignty, sensitivity — these cannot be one-way streets. They may have their concerns. I have never ever with any country said that I am not willing to talk to them about their legitimate concerns," he said. "But it cannot be that the conversation is completely dismissive of my concerns and my sensitivities."

Nepal quake survivors recall moment tragedy struck

vacations when tragedy struck.

Friday night's earthquake in Nepal left 157 people dead and over 250 injured. Jajarkot and Rukum West were the two worst-hit districts. Several of the injured were brought to Bheri hospital.

Dinesh Oli (25), like Isha, is another earthquake survivor recovering at the emergency ward. And like Isha, he is also mourning the loss of a loved one. Tears trickle down his injured face as he thinks of his sister, Rashmi, who died in the earthquake. Both Dinesh and Rashmi were in the same room when it hit.

Many of those who died or were injured were asleep at the time. Anamika Shahi (15) was sleeping at her home in Jajarkot when she heard what she thought was a blast. "Then I can't remember anything else. I woke up at the hospital," she said. She will undergo a surgery Monday for injuries in her abdomen. She has also fractured her ribs. Like Anamika's home, many houses in Jajarkot's hilly terrain are built with

AID FROM INDIA ARRIVES IN NEPAL

Kathmandu: An IAF C-130 flight arrived in Nepal Sunday carrying the first consignment of emergency relief material including tents, blankets, tarpaulin sheets as well as essential medicines and medical equipment, officials said. The consignment worth Rs 10 crore arrived in Nepalgunj. More consignments from

rocks and mud. This made rescue more difficult — it took six people to pull Anamika out.

Her father Gopal Prakash Shahi (39), who runs a small eatery from their house in Riman village, is also injured. He is in the same ward as her. "I could only see her hand before we rescued her. She was under the rocks and mud," Shahi said. They were both airlifted to Nepalgunj.

With bandages on his legs and head, 64-year-old Tika Ram Rama,

a farmer, is also awaiting a surgery scheduled for Monday. "Kismat ki wajah se bach gaya. Saans nahi aa rahi thi. Mujhe laga tha main mar jaonga (It was luck that survived. I couldn't breathe and I thought I would die)," he said.

Also at the hospital was 31-year-old Hari Prakash, who rushed there from Shimla after getting to know that his mother was injured in the earthquake. Hari is from Nepal, but works in Shimla as a daily wage. "The

whole house has collapsed. I don't know what we will do now. Maybe we will rebuild it," said Gauri Kamini (61), Hari's mother. She sustained injuries to her back.

A doctor at the Bheri hospital told *The Indian Express* 40 people are being treated at the government facility. "Out of them, 12 are children. Some people died on the way. It is a challenge to bring people from the hilly terrain. It takes at least 5-6 hours. Most patients have suffered severe trauma to the head, fractures in legs, ribs and other parts," said the doctor.

The earthquake, which struck at 11:47 pm (local time) Friday, was Nepal's deadliest since 2015, when two earthquakes measuring 7.8 and 7.3 on the Richter scale struck just a few weeks apart, killing around 9,000 people. Friday's 6.4 magnitude earthquake was followed by 175 aftershocks.

A local activist involved in rescue operations said that the number of deaths and injuries in the quake was made worse by the fact that it took place at night.

'Stuff of dreams': B'day boy Kohli hits 49th ton, equals Sachin record

"As a child you wish something like that happens, so I'm very grateful to God that I've been blessed with these moments. So much love from the fans as well. I'll just continue to try to help the team in any way possible," he said, to the deafening applause of the crowd.

The narrative thread could not have been more dramatic — Kohli scoring his 49th hundred on his birthday in front of the most storied cricket ground in the country. The wait for this moment had begun long ago, almost as early as Kohli missed a hundred by 12 runs in Mumbai three days ago.

On Saturday, when Kohli and Co came for practice, a few thousands waited for a sighting of him at the entrance, chanting his name, like a mantra. On match-day, they flocked to the stadium in the morning, wearing the No.18 jersey and 'Kohli masks'. When he approached the landmark, they switched on the flashlights of their smartphones, which flickered like glow-worms in the hazy evening.

South Africa's run chase would be meagre, as they were bowled out for 83 in 27 overs. They couldn't even get past India's powerplay score of 91. The left-arm off spin of Ravindra Jadeja, who ended with figures of 5-33 in 9 overs, would blow the Proteas away.

Earlier in the day, only Kohli mattered. The world began and ended with him.

Kohli, as Kohli does, took the fans along with his journey. It's the gift of Kohli, as it was with Tendulkar. He strikes such an intimate personal connect that his innings is theirs too; his pain and joy theirs too. The bond is something Kohli has acquired over 14 years of sustained excellence, a period wherein he defined and redefined the art of batting in this format, a span when he lifted the bar of greatness higher, to an almost unscalable peak.

Whether he is a master of the shortest format can be disputed; whether he would equal Tendulkar's body of work in the longest format is doubtful. But in the 50-over game, Kohli is King. The epithet King Kohli rests fittingly on his shoulders.

Stats-trawling would bewilder. Kohli's haul of 49 hundreds have arrived in only 277 innings. That is one in six innings.

Tendulkar's 49 consumed 452 outings, one in almost nine innings. Unlike Tendulkar, who laboured to his 100th century, or Kapil Dev, who clung for several months for his record 432nd wicket, Kohli's wait was non-existent.

It was just at the start of the year that he cracked his 45th; only 20 innings later, he is on 49. Of them, 40 have ended up in winning causes.

The numbers reveal how outrageous Kohli has been, how incredible his batsmanship is in this format. As much as the numbers, it could be said that no batsman has touched the soul of this version other than Kohli. There are few who could construct a chase, few who could set up a target either. He could switch roles with consummate ease. This innings was a classic example — he started off as the aggressor, converted to an accumulator, and then reconverted to the unshakable pillar that held the building together from crumbling.

He didn't put on the destroyer role at the Eden, not because he can't, but because he didn't find the need to. He later explained: "My job was to keep the momentum going when I got in. But after 10 overs, the ball started gripping and the wicket started slowing down. My role was to bat deep and till the end after the openers fell."

There are few strokes that are beyond his level of skill, but no one has glamourised the craft of running singles and twos as Kohli has. A nudge here, a tap there, there are few better judges of the single, or quicker, hungrier runners between the wicket than him. Even when he was tiring, even when the sweltering humidity was sucking every ounce of energy out of him, he kept running. You would seldom see him stroll for singles.

En route to his hundred, Kohli unzipped several glorious strokes, including an extra cover-drive to get off the mark and a regal straight drive off Kagiso Rabada, but he aptly completed his record-equalling 49th ton with a single that fulfilled the purpose of the day. For the 65,000-odd pairs of eyes that watched the slice of history at the Eden as well as the millions who soaked the moment on smartphones and television sets.

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NITI weighs discontinuing key water report launched five years ago

Aayog wrote to the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, seeking the government's perspective on the "use and applicability" of the Index and whether the CWMI should continue. There has been no response from the Ministry, even as the third and fourth editions are awaiting release, sources said.

When contacted, a NITI Aayog spokesperson said there was an idea to club the report for 2018-19 and 2019-20 with that of the next two years (2020-21 and 2021-22). It was also felt that the coverage should be extended to districts. Finally, on the continuation of CWMI itself, there was a view that other channels also need to be explored to undertake the task of indexing rather than bank only on CWMI, the spokesperson said.

The latest report, a copy of which has been seen by *The Indian Express*, maps the performance of states for 2018-19 and 2019-20, and points out that water scarcity is a "national problem". The average annual per capita water availability is expected to reduce to 1,486 cubic meters per person per year by 2021 from 1,545 cubic meters per person per year in 2011, according to the Jal Shakti Ministry.

As per the annual water availability norms, the availability value of less than 1,700 cubic meter/person/year indicates water shortage. Water avail-

ability below 1,000 cubic metre/capita/year is considered as "scarcity".

According to the report for 2019-20, Gujarat tops the list "with continuous improvements year on year and is closely followed by Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh" in terms of performance. "It is encouraging to see that Rajasthan jumped nine positions upward from 2017-18 to FY 2019-20," the latest unreleased report states. Goa, it said, has slipped from the fourth position in 2017-18 to tenth position in 2019-20. Punjab too has seen a drop in its rank during this period.

Responding to questions from *The Indian Express*, a NITI Aayog spokesperson said work on the third and fourth rounds of the index was started in 2022, and attributed the delay to unavailability of updated data due to the Covid-19 pandemic. NITI Aayog also "ideated" whether the third and fourth rounds should be clubbed with fifth and sixth rounds meant to cover years 2021-22 and 2022-23.

"NITI Aayog also commenced the work for 3rd & 4th rounds of CWMI in 2022. However, due to Covid-19, updated 2022 data was not available. In consultation with both the Ministry of Jal Shakti and State Water Resource Departments, it was ideated that (i) a combined report of CWMI rounds 3.0, 4.0, 5.0 and 6.0 should be re-

leased; and (ii) coverage of data should be extended to districts level," the statement reads.

"One view regarding the continuation of CWMI was that other channels also need to be explored to undertake the task of indexing rather than only on CWMI. Views of the Departments have been sought in this regard," the statement said.

The consultation mentioned in the spokesperson's response took place on December 12, 2022, two months after the combined report of the third and fourth rounds of the Index were ready. The meeting was chaired by NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand and officers of the Jal Shakti Ministry where it was indeed "ideated" whether a combined report of CWMI rounds 3.0, 4.0, 5.0 and 6.0 should be released together.

However, five months later, the NITI Aayog sent letters to Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, both of which come under the Jal Shakti Ministry, saying that the Member (economist Ramesh Chand and NITI Aayog member) is of the view that "other channels need to be explored to undertake the task of indexing rather than relying only on CWMI and that the CWMI is not widely used or applied in Planning, Decision making, Policy Formulation or

Research by public or private stakeholders concerned with water sector."

"It has also been directed to obtain the views of Departments under the Ministry of Jal Shakti before deciding on the continuation of CWMI," said the NITI Aayog communication sent to the Ministry on May 12, 2023. "It is therefore kindly requested to share your views on use, applicability, and whether the CWMI is to be continued anymore," said the communication, issued with the "approval of competent authority" in NITI Aayog.

Emails soliciting comments of Jal Shakti Ministry and Rural Development Ministry did not elicit a response. In June 2018, the NITI Aayog said the CWMI report was meant to foster "a culture of evidence and data-backed policy-decisions for efficient management of water resources" and also bring about competitive and cooperative federalism among states.

In October, the United Nations University — Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), had warned that India is close to reaching its groundwater risk tipping point. Environmental tipping points are critical thresholds in the Earth's systems, beyond which abrupt and often irreversible changes occur.

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Spike in accidents on Yamuna E-way; slight decline in fatalities

DHEERAJ MISHRA
NOIDA, NOVEMBER 5

THE NUMBER of cases of road accidents on Yamuna Expressway has increased this year compared to 2022 even as there has been a dip in the number of fatalities in accident cases. According to data accessed by *The Indian Express*, a total of 341 cases of accidents have been reported till October this year. Thus, on an average, more than 34 accidents have taken place every month on Yamuna Expressway this year. In 2022, 310 accidents had taken place on Yamuna Expressway, according to YEIDA data.

Meanwhile, the number of fatal casualties in accidents has seen a decrease. Till October this year, a total of 80 people were reported dead in accidents on the expressway. Thus, on an average, eight persons died due to injuries sustained in accidents on the expressway this year. In comparison, a total of 105 people died in 2022; 91 deaths took place until October, putting the monthly average last year at 9.1.

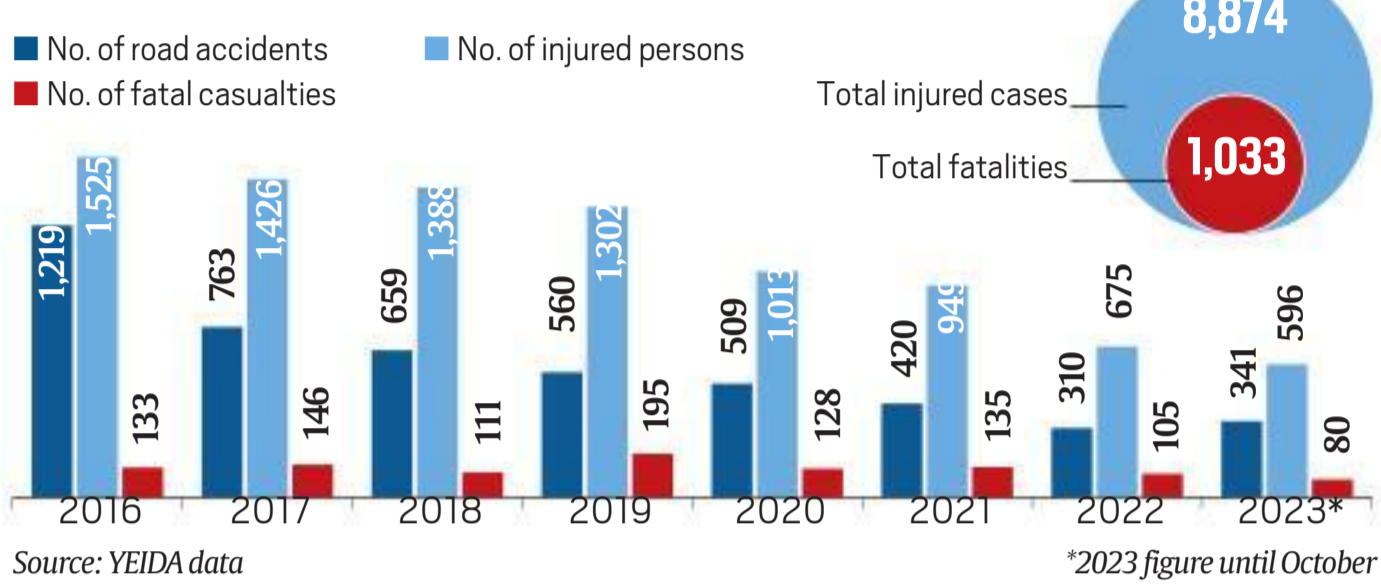
As per data, since 2016, the number of accident cases has decreased with each year. However, in 2023, for the first time in eight years, accident cases have registered an increase in comparison to the preceding year. This year, maximum number of accidents, 51, were reported in June while July was the most fatal with 14 people dying in Expressway-related accidents.

Most recently, eight people died in an accident that took place in Rabupura Police Station area of



On an average, more than 34 accidents have taken place every month on the Expressway.

INCIDENTS ACROSS 8 YEARS



Greater Noida last month, once again raising questions about the safety on the thoroughfare.

Officials said the accident took place at the 25th kilometre from the zero point. "The car was going at a speed of 119 km/hr. There is no camera and even proper lights at the spot where this accident took place. We are investigating the matter but till date have not

been able to collect any significant evidence... We are questioning different people and hope that we will find something soon," said an official involved in the probe.

Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA), which maintains the expressway, said officials have ordered an increase in the number of cameras. "Currently, a total of

64 cameras are installed at the Yamuna Expressway. We have ordered installation of 120 more cameras at different locations. The new cameras will be installed by March 31. This is in line with the recommendation of IIT Roorkee, which had submitted a report after a detailed study on the safety of the expressway," said Dr Arun Vir Singh, CEO of YEIDA.

Arsh Dalla aide held for 'making extortion calls' to businessmen

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

THE DELHI Police Special Cell has arrested a key associate of Canada-based fugitive Arshdeep Dalla in Delhi for allegedly helping the gangster in Canada by making extortion calls to different businessmen all across Northern India.

Sources told *The Indian Express* that the accused, Manpreet Singh alias Peeta, was a businessman in the Philippines who had to be deported this year due to his alleged illegal activities. Peeta was first arrested by the National Investigation Agency and has now been arrested by the Special Cell. Investigation found that Peeta and his associate Mandeeep Singh had gone to Manila, Philippines and were collecting funds for the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF), a banned terrorist organisation.

A special court had issued non-bailable arrest warrants against them for their alleged involvement in terror acts, extortion and funding terrorist organisations in India.

Sources said Peeta was mainly working as a "recruiter" for Dalla as he was luring men from around Punjab to join the KTF. "He was also part of the extortion ring led by Dalla. They would make random calls to businessmen and demand money in the name of Dalla. Peeta threatened people that he would get them killed unless they gave protection money. He would send the recruits in India to threaten their targets and fire outside their house," said an officer.



Canada-based fugitive Arshdeep Dalla

Peeta has already been booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for his alleged involvement with the KTF.

The Delhi Police will now question him about Dalla and his arms smuggling and extortion activities around Delhi. "We have found he was smuggling arms and drugs at the behest of Dalla. He was the main manager for Dalla and often initiated "Dabba Calls" to communicate with Dalla. In the Philippines, he was dealing in real estate while working with Dalla" said another officer.

Police explained that a dabba call is made via two phones to conceal the identity of the receiver (Dalla). For this, the person first calls the receiver from one phone but then immediately takes another phone and calls a random number. The second phone's speaker is then connected to the first phone via Bluetooth or other means and the receiver can talk to his associate via the second phone. Police said such conversations can't be tapped into.

Last month, police had arrested two men who allegedly worked for Dalla and killed Congress leader Baljinder Singh Balli at his home in Punjab's Moga. Balli was shot dead on September 18th. Delhi Police arrested two men on October 11th.

Student 'tied' inside girls' washroom, sexually harassed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

A 20-YEAR-OLD student at a prominent university in the Capital was allegedly tied up inside the girls' washroom, threatened with a pistol, and sexually harassed by two unknown men.

The complainant has alleged that she saw two men armed with a pistol, who threatened her and tied her limbs with her own scarf.

The Delhi Police Sunday said they have registered an FIR under sections of molestation, wrongful confinement, act endangering life, and Arms Act. No arrests have been made yet.

The woman said she left for her college around 6.30 pm on

Friday and went to the library where she studied for two hours. "I was on the second floor when I heard some noise inside the washroom... I then saw two men with a gun-like object. I got scared and asked them what they were doing inside the washroom. They... put the gun to my head... I panicked and fell unconscious..." reads the FIR. The woman said she regained consciousness around 10.20 pm and found her limbs tied. She said she called her friends who took her to a hospital.

Senior police officers said, "We are talking to the woman and her friends. We asked her about the perpetrators but she hasn't been able to provide us with any details... An FIR has been lodged on her complaint."

Faridabad: 16-yr-old found dead on Rly tracks

Faridabad: A 16-year-old girl was found dead on a railway track in Faridabad, police said Sunday.

As per officials, the girl, a class 10 student, went missing on November 3. Her body was found on the same day, they

said. Police said she died by suicide by jumping in front of a train. The family, however, contested this and sought a probe.

Police spokesperson Sube Singh said the post-mortem report stated that it was a case of suicide and that she was decap-

itated after the train hit her. SHO of GRP police station, Faridabad, Rajpal said: "Her family said she was melancholic for a few days leading up to the incident. CCTV's showed her going on rickshaw. She was later found on the tracks." ENS

NECC DAY

Late Dr. B. V. Rao (1935-1996)

On his 88th Birth Anniversary, we salute the Father of Indian Poultry Industry Padmashree Dr. B. V. Rao, Who rose above and beyond the call of duty and restructured the Indian Poultry Industry as a modern, Scientific Industry driven by technology. On this occasion, we rededicate ourselves to his dreams - making India the No. 1 country in the World of Poultry...

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SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

TRAFFIC

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06-11-2023

ADVISORY

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2 PM TO 10:30 PM

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- THOSE HAVING PARKING LABEL MAY FOLLOW BLUE ARROWS.
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* - USE METRO OR PUBLIC TRANSPORT TO REACH THE STADIUM

Nearest Metro Station:
Delhi Gate, (Gate No. 4 & 5) ITO (Gate No. 3, 4 & 5)

RIDE METRO FOR HASSLE FREE JOURNEY

Parking : Mata Sundari Parking, Shanti Van Parking, Under Velodrome Road

SECURITY INSTRUCTIONS: Spectators visiting the stadium are requested not to bring the following prohibited items:

BE A TRAFFIC SENTINEL Download App from Google Play / App Store

SALE TENDER

Sale Tenders are invited from prospective buyers on or before **22.11.2023** between **11 AM and 5 PM**, for disposal of 5359 Pcs having 68787.62 sq. ft. of Fire/Water affected carpets lying in the godown of MIS Jaipur Rugs Pvt Ltd at Surana Warehouse, Khasra No. 31, 34, 35, 38, 36/4, 37 Village Surana, Khora Road, Teh. Shapur Dist : Jaipur, PIN-311404. Interested buyers are to pay **earnest money @ 10%** of offer value by DD/PO payable in favour of MIS Jaipur Rugs Co Pvt Ltd payable at Jaipur, should be affected with the Tender and to be deposited at the office of Jaipur Rugs Co Pvt Ltd, G-250 Mansarovar Industrial Area, Jaipur - 302020. For inspection of salvaged material, please contact Sri Murlidhar Vashist, Mob no. 9928370500 between 10AM & 5 PM.

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ARUN JAITLEY STADIUM, FIROZSHAH KOTLA GROUND, NEW DELHI

DIVERSION / RESTRICTION (AS AND WHEN REQUIRED)

There will diversion of traffic for half and hour after conclusion of the match. No heavy vehicles and buses shall be allowed on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Delhi Gate to J.L.N. Marg, from Darya Ganj to Bahadurshah Zafar Marg and from Guru Nanak Chowk to Asaf Ali Road. People are requested to avoid following roads from **12:00 PM to 11:30 PM** on the match day respectively when the spectators would be coming to the stadium and congestion is expected.

- Raj Ghat to JLN Marg.
- J.L.N. Marg from R/A Kamla Market to Raj Ghat.
- Asaf Ali Road from Turkman Gate to Delhi Gate.
- Bahadurshah Zafar Marg from Ram Charan Agarwal Chowk to Delhi Gate.

ENTRY TO THE STADIUM

- Gate No. 1, 3 & 6 are located on the southern side of the Stadium & entry to these enclosures are from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg.
- Gate No. 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 & 15 are located on the Eastern side of the Stadium on the road and entry is from J.L.N. Marg next to Ambedkar Stadium Bus Terminal.
- Gate No. 16, 17 & 18 are located on the Western side of the Stadium & entry is from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg Near Petrol Pump.

PARKING

Labeled Vehicles

Limited parking is available for labeled vehicles in the proximity of the Stadium. Display of car parking label on windscreen is mandatory. Vehicle number must be written on the parking label. Those who do not display parking label with vehicle number will not be allowed in the proximity of the stadium. Car parking label holders are advised to take Ring Road, J.L.N. Marg, Asaf Ali Road or Bahadurshah Zafar Marg. 'U' turn at Delhi Gate is allowed. Entry to parking lots P1 P3 & P4 shall be from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg only from near the Petrol pump.

General Vehicles

No vehicle shall be allowed to be parked on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Jawaharalal Nehru Marg & Ring Road from Rajghat to I.P. Flyover (both the carriageways) on the match day. Vehicles parked on these roads shall be towed away and prosecuted as per law.

PARK & RIDE

For spectators, unlabeled vehicles 'park and ride' facility has been created at the following places:-
• Mata Sundari Parking • Shanti Van Parking • Under Velodrome Road

All the spectators coming in their vehicles shall reach these Park & Ride sites, and avail 'Park & Ride' facility or walk down to reach stadium.

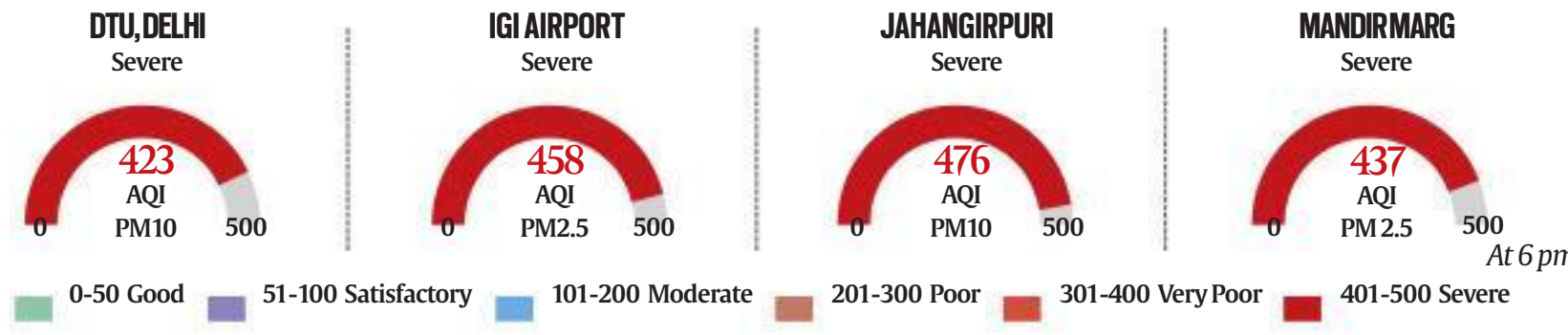
BUS

All buses will start their service 2 hours before the match and will continue till one hour after the start of match. The bus service from the stadium to their respected destinations will start as soon as the game ends and will continue for one hour after the match ends.

TAXI

Spectators using app based taxi and other taxis should use the service lane on Ring Road between I.P. Flyover & Rajghat crossing for drop & pickup.

4 THE CITY



SKYWATCH
FORECAST: November 6
 Clear sky. Shallow/moderate fog in the morning.
AQI forecast: Likely to be severe

MAX: 31 | **MIN: 15**
 0.5°C above normal | 0.3°C below normal

BRIEFLY

Man held for 'communal remarks'
Chaziabad: A 20-year-old man Sunday was arrested after a video went viral on social media in which he allegedly made "objectionable remarks". In the video, the man is seen responding to questions posed by a YouTuber. An FIR under IPC sections including 153A and 295A was registered, police said. **ENS**

Cricket World Cup: Traffic to be regulated today
New Delhi: There will be traffic restrictions in parts of Delhi on Monday from 12 noon till midnight for the Cricket World Cup match, Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka, at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, officials said. Traffic Police issued an advisory on Sunday stating that no vehicle would be allowed to be parked on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, JLN Marg and Ring Road from Raighat to the I.P. fly-over on Monday. **PTI**

Delhi: Vendor mowed down by hydraulic crane
New Delhi: A man died after he was allegedly mowed down by a hydraulic crane in northeast Delhi on Sunday, police said. The deceased has been identified as Adil (22), a vendor, and his body has been sent for post-mortem, they said. **PTI**

AQI CROSSES 450-MARK FOR SECOND TIME THIS SEASON

AQI still in the severe zone, share of farm fires in pollution spike increases

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

A SLEW of measures to curb pollution in Delhi came into force on Sunday as the city's air quality index (AQI) crossed the 450-mark for the second time this season.

Sunday's AQI was 454, as opposed to 468 on Friday. It had improved to 415 on Saturday.

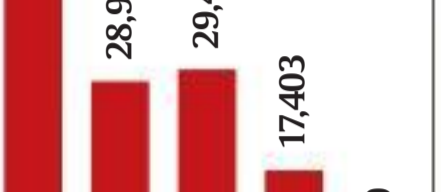
This came even as the number of farm fires in Punjab rose to 3,230 and to 109 in Haryana. Despite the increase in fires over the past few days, the figures are still lower than those recorded over the past few years between September 15 and November 5. (see box)

According to the Decision Support System of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), the contribution of biomass burning in Delhi's pollution was around 20% on Sunday. It has been above the 15% mark on all days, barring three, since October 22 and it peaked on Friday with over 35%, coinciding with the city's worst recorded air day so far this season.

According to senior Delhi government officials, the combination of adverse weather conditions and an increase in the input of pollutants in the form of farm fires means that the situation is not expected to improve anytime soon. "What Delhi needs right now is a spell of rain and strong winds. Because of Delhi's geographical position - with the Aravalli mountain range on one side, the Malwa and Deccan plateaus a few hundred kilometres to the South and the Himalayas to the North, the entire

How the neighbouring states fared

Farm fires from neighbouring states is considered one of the factors behind the rise in pollution in the capital



Sunday's AQI was 454, a deterioration from 415 recorded on Saturday. *Gajendra Yadav*

PERCENTAGE CONTRIBUTION OF PM 2.5 TO DELHI'S AIR (BIOMASS BURNING)



belt from Haryana to Bihar is ideal for trapping pollutants. If you look at other cities in this area, they are facing a similar condition. What pushes it over the edge in October and November is the dip in temperature and calm winds, and to an extent the farm fires. Even after the farm fires stop, the air will mostly remain in the very

poor category," said an official. Cities and towns such as Bhiwadi (413), Faridabad (450), Greater Noida (410), Gurgaon (402), Noida (414) and Kaithal (434) also remained in the severe category.

According to the Air Quality Early Warning System, the city will remain in the severe category for at least the next six days. The wind coming from the northwest direction will bring smoke and particulate matter with it from over Punjab and Haryana, on Monday. The speed, however, will remain between 4 and 6 kilometres per hour. The ideal wind speed for the dispersion of pollutants is around 10 kilometres per

hour. The speed may increase to around 12 kilometres per hour on Tuesday, but the direction will be northerly. This is expected on Wednesday as well, as per the forecast. The temperature, meanwhile, is not expected to see much change and there is no chance of rain.

Pet dog 'injures' woman; owner, son booked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

A WOMAN was severely injured after a Pitbull attacked her outside her house in the Swaroop Nagar area of Delhi on Friday.

Delhi Police has booked a man and his son for allegedly provoking their pet dog to bite her. According to the police, the woman, Riya Devi, a doctor at a local clinic, had objected to the dog peeing and defecating outside her house when its owner allegedly unleashed it on her. As per Devi's complaint, she was standing outside her house on Friday afternoon when she saw the Pitbull defecating. She also alleged she was chased and the dog bit her multiple times.

A video of the incident shows the woman standing outside a house and the dog near her. After a while, it is seen jumping on her and attacking her. Residents are then seen rushing to help her and removing the dog. The owner is later seen taking the Pitbull inside. They said she suffered injuries to her hands, legs, and face, and was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. The police have registered a case against the owner under IPC Section 289 (negligent conduct with respect to animals). The woman and other residents alleged that the dog had previously attacked children. The police said they are probing the allegations. (WITH PTI INPUTS)



People at the public meet at Ramliila Maidan, Sunday. *Express*

At 'Samvidhan Bachao' rally, call raised for caste-based census, OPS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

A RALLY was held to demand implementation of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and a caste census, at the Ramliila Maidan on Sunday.

Addressing the 'Samvidhan Bachao' (Save the Constitution) rally, Congress leader Udit Raj said lakhs of employees had earlier organised rallies at the Ramliila Maidan against the new pension scheme blaming the BJP-led Centre for "impoverishing" retired government employees. He also accused the Centre of having robbed the Dalit and Adivasi communities of benefits which they had accrued since Independence. "Under the OPS, pensions used to be in thousands of rupees but the new pension system has made retired employ-



Cong leader Udit Raj at the event. *Express*

ees beggars, and most of them are not getting the money to survive. Either this government or the OPS will stay, both cannot co-exist," he was quoted as saying in a statement by the organisers. Raj also said that in 10 years of the BJP's rule at the Centre, Dalits and Adivasis had lost gains they had attained since Independence. "The government departments and PSUs are created by public money and they are being privatised, downsized and sold to crony capitalists. It has killed government jobs and the most affected are Dalits and Adivasis," he said.

Three women to a bed, kin sleeping in verandah: Space crunch ails Gurgaon city's sole civil hospital

AISWARYARAJ
 GURGAON, NOVEMBER 5

AT THE antepartum ward in Gurgaon city's sole civil hospital, 33-year-old Neelam is sharing a bed with two heavily pregnant women. Earlier last week, Neelam gave birth to a premature baby at Sohna civil hospital from where she was referred to the Gurgaon hospital after her condition deteriorated. "The baby is in an incubation room... At night, I lie down with my legs hanging so the other two women can be accommodated as well," she said, gesturing at the 12-bed ward, tightly packed with pregnant women, new mothers, and their kin.

Neelam's plight echoes that of several other patients who are compelled to share their modest hospital beds with other women, thanks to overcrowding and lack of infrastructure on the premises. According to the health department, the urban part of Gurgaon has 21 urban PHCs and a polyclinic apart from the civil hospital. Earlier called the Maternal and Child Health Hospital, the premises started functioning as a civil hospital in the last few years after, owing to infrastructures issues, the Civil Lines hospital was demolished and all services shifted to the Sector 10 institution.

While Haryana has 71 civil hospitals in its 22 districts, Gurgaon has three, including one each in Sohna and Pataudi.



While Haryana has 71 civil hospitals in 22 districts, Gurgaon has three, including one each in Sohna & Pataudi. *Express*

For women like Neelam, there is really no choice. "This is my fifth child. Two died earlier, and this one is very weak... Sohna hospital had better beds and wards, but here we have better doctors and machines," said Neelam. Not far from Neelam is Chakarpur resident Shefali, sharing a bed with Anita whose daughter recently gave birth to a pair of twins. "I came with my daughter (who is admitted to the labour room). The hospital is 18 km from my home, and we can't afford to go back and forth every day," said Shefali, who works as a labourer. Said Anita, "I asked them (the hospital staff) that we have two babies, and we need a bed for my daughter, but when this is the state of the entire ward, what can be done?"

On the other side of the first-floor gynaecology department is a post-operative ward with 13 beds. The post-natal ward, on the oppo-

site side, has 20 beds. Adjacent to this is the septic ward with six beds. All three wards had at least half-a-dozen beds occupied by at least two women. On the verandah, Deeksha's mother-in-law Mamta sits with a newborn girl. "I am out with my daughter's three-day-old granddaughter. She suffers from jaundice and we had to let her soak in the sunlight. Last night, I was squatting on the floor with the child on my chest because my daughter had to share the bed with another woman. On another bed, there were three women yesterday. I fought with the nurses..." she said.

Compared to Panchkula, which is the administrative hub of the state, the health care in Gurgaon is floundering, said a former civil surgeon, on the condition of anonymity. With three hospitals, two CHCs and eight PHCs, Panchkula has a robust

healthcare infrastructure accompanied by 33 private hospitals. "The condition in Gurgaon Civil Hospital is far from the ideal setup, it does not even reach average," he said.

Gurgaon civil surgeon Virender Yadav said that 100 admissions are made every day while 2,000 OPD patients visit the hospital. The hospital has a cardiology department, three X-ray machines, a dialysis unit, CT/MRI scan arrangements, four operation theatres, and a four-bed makeshift ICU at the medical ward apart from a cardiac ICU with 12 beds. A senior officer said funds were awaited for a high-dependency unit (HDU) with six beds. In the basement of the hospital is the general ward doubling up as the dengue ward. Though Gurgaon has not seen a drastic rise in cases this season, the ward was seen tightly packed with accident victims, dengue patients and others lodged together.

A doctor at the hospital, on the condition of anonymity, admitted that there were infrastructural issues, including lack of beds, limited facilities at the ICU, overcrowding and limited accessibility for people from across the city. "There is a massive problem of overcrowding here. Around 30 deliveries take place in this hospital every day. This becomes a problem when all we have are 170 beds. Also, though there are four operation theatres and four beds with ventilators, the facilities at the ICU are subpar, and there is no

burns unit," he said. However, he is hopeful that a new facility, work for which is underway, could reduce this burden to some extent. "It is envisaged to have 32 beds in the ICU in two wings, along with 100 beds, new OTs and labour rooms," he said. Located just a few feet away from the hospital, a five-story building is under construction. However, the Civil Surgeon said that the construction at the 100-bed facility, which started in 2019, has crossed many deadlines.

At a meeting recently, attended by Gurgaon MP and Union Minister for State Rao Inderjit Singh, discussions were held on setting specific timeframes for development projects, including the relocation of the Gurgaon Civil Hospital. The government hospital to be rebuilt in Civil Lines was initially planned to have 400 beds but the plan was later changed to accommodate 700 beds. Earlier this year, the plan saw another round of revision. "This shows poor planning. If they had conducted proper studies, they would have known what was feasible," said the former civil surgeon.

The blame game is of little comfort to women like Neelam, whose mother and mother-in-law are having to sleep on the verandah of the hospital as they don't have the means to travel from Sohna everyday to keep their daughter company. "Sometimes, it gets very stuffy here as there is little ventilation and these many people," she said, pointing at the crowded ward.

An abode for fugitives to an architectural landmark: The story of Balban's Tomb

VIDHEESHA KUNTAMALLA
 NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

BUILT IN the 13th century and now renovated from ruins, the Tomb of Balban located inside Mehrauli's Archaeological park has served many purposes in its lifetime: an abode for debtors and fugitives, a slave-turned-Sultan's Tomb, and a landmark in India's architectural history.

Ghiyas-ud-din Balban, a Sultan of the Mamluk (Slave) dynasty - the first of the Delhi Sultanate dynasties - ruled from Delhi between 1266 AD to 1287 AD. Balban was sold as a slave to the then ruler Iltutmish in 1232 CE, who later released him. Historian and author Swapna

Liddle said that "individuals captured as slaves during that particular period then rose to become rulers," giving the period its name.

Liddle told *The Indian Express* that the tomb "is a very important structure as it shows us the first use of the true arch construction in India"

According to the official website of the Ministry of culture, "Ghiyas-ud-din Balban, one of the most powerful slave sultans after Iltutmish, is buried within the archaeological park, in a building once built by the Sultan himself called the Dar-ul-Amaan (Haven of Safety)".

"Unlike the corbelled arches of Qutub Complex, the true arches of Balban's tomb have the keystone placed at the centre,



Delhi L-G had recently unveiled the tomb of Balban after renovation. *Mustafa Naqvi/Delhi Karavan*

which evenly distributes the weight of the superstructure. From here on, True arches be-

came a common feature of the Indo-Islamic architecture of Delhi," said the website, explain-

ing its architectural significance. A few weeks ago, Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena unveiled six

renovations nestled inside the park, one among which was the tomb of Balban.

"It's a square building with spacious rooms on either side... it is the same place where his son Sher Khan, Khan e Shaheed was interred only two years before him. However, only one grave is extant now" wrote author Rana Safvi in her book *Where stones speak: Historical Trails in Mehrauli, the First City of Delhi*.

"...from afar it looks very unattractive... To reach it, one has to scramble down from the Jamali Kamali mosque by fol-

lowing the ASI markers. Steep steps lead down from it to the ruins... The Sultan was buried in this building, and I have visited his tomb," wrote Safvi.

Safvi cites Ibn Batuta, where he had referred to this structure, The Dar-ul-Amaan, as "One of his acts of generosity".

The structure served as a sanctuary for debtors and fugitives, offering refuge from debt collectors and angry pursuers. Even those who had committed murder could find solace within its walls, as the Sultan would compensate the families

of the victims. The Dar-ul-Amaan truly embodied its name, meaning "House of safety" providing protection for all who sought its shelter.

"Balban's tomb was one of the first domes to be constructed, but the dome was long destroyed" said author Sohail Hashmi, who also said that the structure is no longer accessible to people as it is currently locked and closed for visiting.

Safvi - who quotes Maulvi Zafar Hasan - wrote that the Sufi fakirs of Mehrauli and the dargah precincts of Qutub Sahab around them said this had occurred because Balban was extremely cruel, "his ascension to the throne was marked by bloodletting and this could be the reason his afterlife is cursed".





Pushkar Singh Dhami
Chief Minister, Uttarakhand



The construction of developed India for the 21st century rests on two primary pillars - pride in heritage and, second every possible effort for the development. Today, both these pillars are being strengthened by Uttarakhand. This decade will be the decade of Uttarakhand.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

DESTINATION UTTARAKHAND
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Natural Fibers	

KEY POLICIES

- Service Sector Policy 2023 • Solar Energy Policy 2023 • MSME Policy 2023 • Start-Up Policy 2023 • Customized Package • Logistics Policy 2023
- Film Policy 2015 (as amended in 2019) • Private Industrial Park Policy 2023 • Mega Industrial Policy 2015 • Export Policy 2021 • Tourism Policy 2023-30 • Drone Policy 2023
- IT Policy 2019 • Wellness & Ayush Policy • Biotechnology Policy 2018-23 • Food Processing Policy • Pump Storage Projects Policy 2023

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- Good quality of life for employees due to healthy environment.
- Attractive investment policy of State Govt.
- Availability of suitable industrial land to start business at a cheap rate.
- Good connectivity by Rail, Road and Air with NCR.
- So far, MoUs worth Rs. 94000 crore have been signed with various industrial groups in various road shows organized in the country and abroad for investment in Uttarakhand. Work is in progress on priority basis for their grounding.
- Along with Ease of Doing Business, Achievers category in the LEADS Ranking of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade and Leader category in the Startup Ranking.
- The size of GSDP increased to Rs 3.03 lakh crore in the year 2022-23 which was Rs. 2.65 lakh crore in the last year 2021-22.
- Per capita income of the state more than the national per capita income.
- Unprecedented progress in Road, Rail, Ropeway (RRR) as well as air connectivity in the state.

- According to NITI Aayog, Uttarakhand is at 4th place in SDG Ranking.
- UPCL ranked 1st among Himalayan States in Consumer Service Rating by Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- First position among Himalayan states, 9th position in the entire country in the ranking of NITI Aayog's Export Preparedness Index for the year 2021.
- Uttarakhand Tourism awarded as the Best Adventure Tourism Destination by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.
- Award of Best Tourism Village to Sarmoli village of Pithoragarh district by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.
- The Char Dham Road Project strengthened the road connectivity of Char Dham as well as Tanakpur-Pithoragarh.
- After the construction of Delhi-Dehradun elevated road, one can go from Delhi to Dehradun in just two and a half hours.
- Work on Rishikesh-Karnprayag rail project is progressing fastly.
- International Convention Center and Wellness City proposed in Rishikesh.



For more detail please log on investuttarakhand.uk.gov.in

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6 DECISION 2023

CHHATTISGARH • MADHYA PRADESH • MIZORAM • RAJASTHAN • TELANGANA

ELECTION IN NUMBERS

1,18,699

The largest victory margin in Telangana in 2018, when T Harish Rao of BRS defeated Telangana Jana Samithi nominee in Siddipet.

I HEREBY DECLARE

ZORAMTHANGA, 79
Mizoram CM and MNF chief, contesting from Aizawl East 1

MOVABLE ASSETS (including of spouse, dependents)
₹1.75 CRORE (Rs 82.61 lakh in 2018)

IMMOVABLE ASSETS
₹6.23 CRORE including agricultural, commercial and residential properties (Rs 3.02 crore in 2018)

LIABILITIES: None

CRIMINAL CASES: None

SOURCE OF INCOME: CM salary, rent

EDUCATION: BA (Honours) from DM College, affiliated to Manipur University

LEGACY OF LADLI BEHNA SCHEME

In battle of his life, Shivraj's ace card divides

As MP CM goes all in to convince voters and signal to his party's leadership that he will not go down without a fight, his campaign has an air of urgency

VIKAS PATHAK
JABALPUR, NOVEMBER 5

SADAR BAZAR in Jabalpur's cantonment area is barricaded on two sides and is bustling with activity on a Friday night. On one side is a stage full of women waiting to welcome Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for a roadshow in the locality.

Even before Shivraj makes his way, women can be seen on balconies of nearby houses and the optics reflect the pro-women base he has built. There are women from across communities, with three women in burqas on the front row.

Crowds grow manifold as the "rath" — an improvised saffron-coloured tempo with no roof — carrying the CM, his close aides, local candidate Ashok Rohani, and security personnel makes its way through the narrow lane towards the stage. Shivraj quickly makes his way to the stage, showing no signs of fatigue 12 hours after he left Bhopal on yet another hectic day of campaigning, gets garlanded by women, and soon speeds away.

Not the official CM face of the BJP, Shivraj, who has been in power for almost two decades, is fighting the battle of his life. Congress state president Kamal Nath has said that "there must be something wrong with Chouhan that he hasn't been projected by his party" as the CM face.

Party sources say Shivraj leaves Bhopal each day at 9 am and returns as late as 2.30 am as he crisscrosses the state in a whirlwind tour to reach out to voters and signal to his party that he will not go down without a fight.

The BJP central leadership has centred its campaign around "collective leadership", with Prime Minister Narendra Modi dominating the hoardings. Smaller, smiling faces of several



Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan at a public meeting in Jabalpur on Friday. PTI

leaders appear on both sides of a smiling PM. In this backdrop, Shivraj's campaign seems to have an air of urgency. He is not just touring his constituency Budhni but hitting all corners of the state with a vengeance.

Shivraj also has a dramatic style, grabbing eyeballs wherever he goes. Many people are still fond of him but jibes have also begun here and there as weary voters do exhibit an element of fatigue. Yet, he is the topic of casual conversations everywhere, more than any Congress leader.

"Shivraj goshnaveer hain (Shivraj is a champion of announcements)," says Anil Patel, a member of the OBC Lodhi community from the Goteagan SC-reserved constituency close to Narsinghpur. "Mark my words. The BJP will win but replace 'mama' (as Chouhan is fondly called)."

Congress supporter Rahul Yadav in Bargi near Jabalpur says Chouhan has created a women's support base with the Ladli Behna scheme. From Bhopal to the Mahakoshal region, Ladli Behna is mentioned in every conversation. While people speak positively about it, there is a hint of sarcasm in the tone of young men who see it as something women are getting for free.

"He does nothing except give money to ladlis (women). There are very few jobs. Pits have been dug for water connections but the pipes have not arrived and people are falling into the pits each day. Where pipes have come, there are no taps ... In some cases, women are not giving the money to their husbands," says Narendra Verma of Silari village near Pipariya in Hoshangabad district.

An elderly Mahendra

Vishwakarma in Tanna tehsil, which comes under the Junnardeo seat, says Chouhan will be CM again because of Ladli Behna. "For poor people, it matters that money is being credited to their accounts. The woman of the house can at least educate her children. Send it to men's accounts and it will go into alcoholism." Suraj, a young man, disagrees, wondering how long the money will keep coming.

On the outskirts of Jabalpur an animated discussion is about Chouhan.

Hemant Vishwakarma, a local resident, says the Ladli scheme is leading to a rise in state debt. Despite possibly staring at the end of his chief ministerial journey, Chouhan is still being discussed on the streets like before. And at the heart of those conversations is the scheme that is already part of his political legacy.

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KEY BATTLES

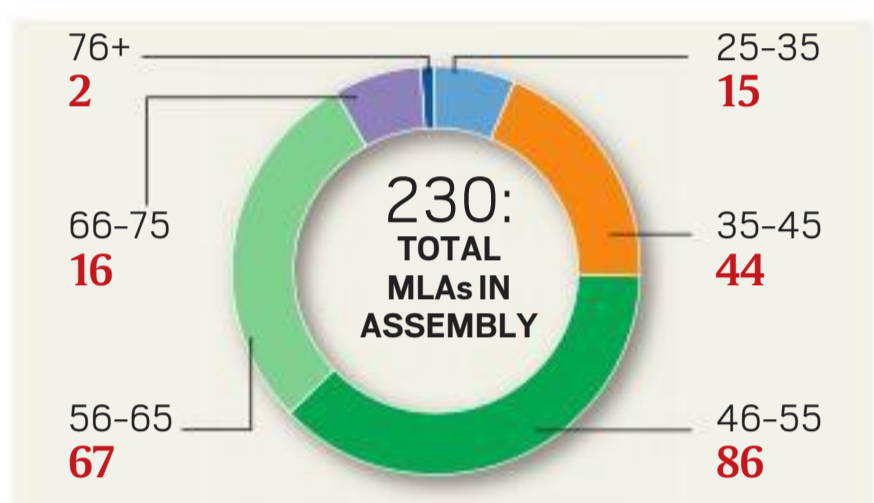
SLIM MARGINS: MP SEATS WHERE REBELS MAY SWING THE FRAY

QUESTION PAPER LEAK SCAMS, KEY BJP CAMPAIGN AMMO AGAINST GEHLOT

NUMBER SPEAK

MADHYA PRADESH'S OUTGOING ASSEMBLY: THE YOUNG AND THE OLD AMONG MLAs

Party	25-35	35-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	76+
BJP	6	19	46	48	8	2
INC	9	24	37	19	8	0
BSP	0	1	0	0	0	0
Indep	0	0	3	0	0	0



Source: ADR, Election Commission

'BJP focusing on the backward classes ... all OBC leaders told to contest elections'

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

BANDI SANJAY Kumar, 52, is a fiery critic of the ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) in Telangana. Just a few months after replacing him with Union Minister G Kishan Reddy as the state BJP president and giving him a central organisational role as its national general secretary, the BJP leadership has now brought Kumar back to the state, fielding him from Karimnagar for the Assembly polls.

In an interview, Kumar discusses the BJP's prospects and the fight against the BRS and Congress. Excerpts:



THE EXPRESS
INTERVIEW
WITH
BANDI SANJAY KUMAR
BJP CANDIDATE FROM KARIMNAGAR, TELANGANA

How do you view the BJP's prospects in Telangana?

BJP will win the state. Because BJP is the only party that fights elections with a vision against the BRS. The Congress has strife due to internal politics, their leaders are fighting against each other. People in Telangana have no trust in the Congress. The BRS is beset with corruption and appeasement of one community. The Congress had also robbed the nation. So the people have no faith in either of these parties. This makes the BJP the strongest player.

What is the biggest challenge for the BJP?

It is the coming together of all the parties against the BJP. The BRS and the Congress are together fighting against the BJP. Senior leaders from the BRS are joining the Congress because of an understanding between them.

How will you counter the allegation that the BJP, BRS and AIMIM are together and that is why BRS and AIMIM leaders have not been arrested?

It is wrong to say that Modi is using ED or CBI against the Opposition. They are independent and going after corrupt leaders. The ED is not a party institution. Rahul Gandhi keeps raising it to mislead people and to hide that the BRS, Congress and AIMIM are together. In 2019, 12 of 19 Congress MLAs joined BRS. In 2014, they fought together. In the Rashtrapati elections to elect Droupadi Murmu, Congress and BRS voted against her.

You have been the face and voice of the BJP in Telangana for some time. What led to the change of leadership?

Narendra Modi is the only face of the BJP — be it in Telangana or any other state. And Kamal (Lodhi) is our symbol too.

The BJP under your leadership took on the BRS. But since you were removed, there has been a talk that the BJP wanted an understanding with BRS for the Lok Sabha polls. So you were removed.

It is wrong to say that the BJP does not attack the BRS now. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been attacking the BRS and the family of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao fiercely in his speeches in the state. Home Minister Amit Shah has been attacking the BRS and so is BJP national president J P Naddaji.

People said the party wanted to keep you away from the state. But then it fielded you in a tough seat. Why?

That is because the BJP has decided to focus on the OBC. That is because the BJP wants to make an OBC chief minister. All the OBC leaders in the state BJP have been asked to contest the election. Our party decided to field all the OBC leaders in the state. We would have almost 50% of the total candidates from the OBC community. The Congress has fielded only 19, the BRS list has 23.

Did the BJP change strategy due to Congress's OBC push?

It is not true. In fact, the OBC leaders from the Congress are moving out.

FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

JAYPRAKASH S NAIDU
NARAYANPUR, NOVEMBER 5

JUST TWO days before the first phase of Assembly elections, the Congress tried to outdo the BJP in Chhattisgarh by promising a loan waiver, better paddy prices, and free education in its manifesto released in Raipur on Sunday.

Apart from the anti-incumbency factor going against the BJP in the 2018 elections, the promises of farm loan waivers and higher paddy procurement prices were credited for its victory. In 2018, the loan waiver cost the government Rs 9,500 crore for 18.5 lakh farmers; both the waiver and beneficiaries are expected to be higher this time.

The Congress's Chhattisgarh in-charge, Kumari Selja, said if the party is re-elected, its gov-



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel releases the Congress manifesto in Raipur on Sunday. PTI

ernment would procure 20 quintals of paddy from each farmer at Rs 3,200 per quintal, slightly more than the Rs 3,100 promised by the BJP, while sellers of tendu leaves would get Rs 6,000 per sack compared to the BJP's promise of Rs 5,500.

Selja also said the party will subsidise gas cylinder refills by

Rs 500, while the BJP has women from poor families cylinders at Rs 500.

Both the Congress and the BJP have promised Rs 10,000 to landless farmers and free medical treatment up to Rs 10 lakh for the poor. The Congress has gone a step further, promising families above the poverty line

free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh, which was earlier Rs 50,000.

Among other promises made by the Congress is free education in government institutions from kindergarten to post-graduation. At present, free education is provided up to Class 12, said Selja.

Electricity bills will be waived for those who consume up to 200 units per month, she added. Those consuming more than 200 units will not have to pay for the first 200 units.

On forest produce, an additional Rs 10 per kg has been promised. The Congress has also decided to add tdiva to the MSP list of forest produce.

However, unlike the party's 2018 manifesto, the Congress has not promised a liquor ban, an unfulfilled promise for which the BJP has attacked the ruling government.

In manifesto, Cong tries to outdo BJP: Farm loan waiver, better paddy price to free higher education

CHANGING SIDES

Left hanging, Cong MLA accused of assaulting Dalit engineer moves over to BJP

DEEPA MUKHERJEE
JAIPUR, NOVEMBER 5

FOR THE family members of 29-year-old Harshadhipati Valmiki, the news of Congress MLA Girraj Singh Malinga joining the BJP on Sunday and receiving a poll ticket came as a shock and disappointment.

On March 28 last year, Harshadhipati, an engineer with the power department who was posted in Dholpur, was allegedly assaulted by Malinga, who represents Bari in the district. A chargesheet has yet to be filed in the case and Malinga is presently out on bail.

The case of assault on Harshadhipati was one of the reasons why the Congress was taking time to announce

Malinga as its candidate from Bari. Till Sunday evening, Congress had not announced its candidate from Bari.

Malinga, a three-time MLA who has been undefeated from the seat since 2008, was inducted into the BJP on Sunday in the presence of Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

"Girraj Singh Malinga ji, who is a three-time MLA holding immense influence in eastern Rajasthan, is joining the BJP today, despite a guarantee of a ticket from the Congress. Malinga ji is an influential leader connected to the ground. With his influence over all 36 kaum (communities), not only does he have a hold in Dholpur, but also across eastern Rajasthan. With him joining the family, the strength of

the BJP in that entire area will surely increase by several times," Shekhawat said at a press conference in Jaipur while inducting Malinga into the party fold.

Relatives of Harshadhipati, who has been in Jaipur's SMS Hospital since last year, expressed shock at the news.

"Several BJP leaders, including Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Rajendra Rathore, visited the hospital to meet my son and condemned the assault on him by MLA Malinga. We are shocked and disappointed to see the BJP induct him today. The BJP, which talks of bringing people on the margins of society to the forefront, is now inducting people who assault Dalits," said the engineer's father Mukesh Valmiki.

Harshadhipati suffered multiple fractures, including a bro-



Girraj Singh Malinga (left) with Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in Jaipur Friday. Hours later, he received the party ticket from his seat Bari in Dholpur district. Express

ken femur, in the assault. He told The Indian Express earlier this year that he had said that Malinga had thrown a chair at him, hurled

casteist slurs, and stood on his face during the assault.

The FIR, in which Malinga is an accused, was registered un-

der the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. After the incident, while the Rajasthan Police arrested the other accused, the MLA was not arrested. He surrendered on May 11, 2022, after meeting Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and proclaiming his innocence before the media. A day later, Malinga, who had been ordered to be sent to judicial custody by a local court in Dholpur, tested positive for Covid-19 and was admitted to a hospital. Within a week of his arrest, he was also granted bail by the Rajasthan High Court.

While out on bail, Malinga has shared the stage with Gehlot, met former Deputy CM Sachin Pilot on his birthday, and walked beside Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

In the last few months, Dalit organisations across Rajasthan have carried out a sustained campaign against Malinga, urging the Congress not to give him a ticket. The party appeared to have heeded the call by holding off on fielding Malinga from Bari. Sources said the case and the campaign by Dalit outfits against the MLA was the reason behind the inducting.

Back in 2022, the BJP had slammed the Congress and Malinga over the case. In April last year, Rajendra Rathore, after visiting Harshadhipati at the hospital, tweeted: "Today, after reaching SMS Hospital, inquired about the well-being of Assistant Engineer (AEN) Harshadhipati Valmiki, who was the victim of vandalism and hooliganism of the Congress MLA from Bari, and

took information about his health from the doctors. These pictures automatically describe the jungle raj of Congress rule."

After joining the BJP, Malinga said he left the Congress because he was being "harassed" by the party. "I was in the Congress for some time. I was harassed way too much without any reason," he told reporters, adding that he received no support from his party or government even though the allegation against him is "fake".

"The BJP campaigned against Malinga for a long time, the leader accused of instigating an attack on a government employee. By inducting him, the BJP has proved it can include a tainted person to fulfil its selfish needs, no matter how serious the allegations..." said Congress leader Swarnim Chaturvedi.

7 GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



Rahul Gandhi at Kedarnath temple on Sunday. @INCIndia

DIVINE CONNECTION

LORD SHIVA seems to be the go-to God for politicians this election season. PM Narendra Modi, while attacking Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel over the Mahadev app scam, recently alleged that the Congress government "did not even spare the name Mahadev". The Congress too hit back by raising the Mahakal issue and attacking the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government in Madhya Pradesh over the collapse of statues built to portray Saptarishi at the Mahakaleshwar temple. Now, amid the hectic campaign schedule, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi visited Kedarnath on Sunday and his party shared photographs of him attending the evening aarti at the famous Shiva temple.

BREACH OF CODE

OF THE numerous complaints of model code of conduct violation, lodged mostly by BJP and Congress leaders against each other, the Election Commission is likely to soon consider those against Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. The EC had sent show-cause notices to both the leaders on October 26. According to sources, the EC has received their replies and will soon decide if the allegations against them merit action. The Congress had filed a complaint alleging Sarma had made communal remarks while speaking about one of the party candidates in Chhattisgarh. The BJP had complained that Vadra made a false statement about PM Modi when she said he donated only Rs 21 to a temple in Rajasthan.

SAYS DECISION TO HOLD SURVEY TAKEN DURING BJP-JDU GOVT

Yadav, Muslim numbers inflated in Bihar caste survey, says Shah

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, NOVEMBER 5

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Sunday alleged that the population of Yadavs and Muslims were inflated in the Bihar caste survey as part of the Grand Alliance government's "appeasement politics".

Addressing a public meeting at Patna in Muzaffarpur district, Shah also said the decision to conduct the caste survey was taken while the BJP was part of the state government in alliance with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U).

"They (the Grand Alliance) have been trying to pass themselves off as champions of OBCs with this report. But Nitish Kumar should remember that when the decision to conduct the caste survey was made, the BJP was part of the state government... The survey inflated the numbers of Muslims and Yadavs, while the number of EBCs (Extremely Backward Classes) was deflated. It was done under pressure from



Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Muzaffarpur, Sunday. ANI

Lalu Prasad," Shah said.

According to the survey report, which was released last month, Yadavs constitute 14.3 per cent of Bihar's population, and Muslims account for 17.7 per cent. In 1931, the last time the country's census had data on castes that were not part of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the number of Yadavs in Bihar was recorded at 12.7 per cent of the population, and Muslims constituted 14.7 per cent.

On Friday, Shah had said in Chhattisgarh that the BJP was not opposed to the idea of a caste census, but that it would not do "politics of votes" on the issue. He said such "decisions have to be taken after careful thought" and at an "appropriate time".

In his speech in Muzaffarpur on Sunday, he said it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who had made sure the backward communities got their due. "Our Cabinet has 27 ministers from

OBC. We have given constitutional validity to the OBC commission. Why did Lalu Prasad (who was a Union minister in the UPA government) not get it done? We have given quotas for OBCs in extending petrol/gas agencies allotment. We have also given financial assistance to backward students at pre-matric and post-matric levels," Shah said.

Taking a jibe at the Opposition, Shah said Nitish would get nowhere with the INDIA bloc. "Nitish Babu, you better drop the idea of becoming PM. INDIA alliance did not even make you its convener. Aap kahin ke nahi rahenge (You will not belong anywhere)," he said.

He also told the gathering that the Ram Temple in Ayodhya would be inaugurated on January 22, 2024. "On this day, diyas will be lit in all temples of the country to mark the occasion," Shah said.

He appealed to voters to bring the BJP back to power in Bihar in the 2025 Assembly election in order to get rid of the "jungleraj (misrule)" in the state.

Ram temple completion will start Ram Rajya in India: Adityanath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SUKMA (CHHATTISGARH), NOVEMBER 5

BJP LEADER and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya will begin 'Ram Rajya' in the country, where there will be no discrimination on the basis of caste and religion.

Addressing a rally in Konta in poll-bound Chhattisgarh, he also accused the ruling Congress under CM Bhupesh Baghel of encouraging religious conversions.

"The construction of Ram temple will be completed in January in Ayodhya. People of Chhattisgarh should be more happy than UP with this as Chhattisgarh is the 'nanihal' (maternal place) of Lord Ram. (Completion of) Ram temple in Ayodhya will be the beginning of proclamation of Ram Rajya in the country," he said.

"Ram Rajya means a rule where there will be no discrimination on the basis of caste and religion. Benefits of schemes will reach everyone, including the poor, deprived and tribals. Everyone gets security, facilities and rights on resources. This is Ram Rajya," Adityanath asserted.

The BJP leader accused the Congress of putting up hurdles in the construction of Ram temple. "The government here (in Chhattisgarh) is silent on activities like love jihad and religious conversion."

Love jihad is a term used by the right wing to allege a conspiracy by Muslim men to convert Hindu women by luring them into marriage.

Konta is among the 20 seats that will go to polls in the first phase in Chhattisgarh on November 7.



VHP workers carry the kalash containing akshat (rice) in Ayodhya on Sunday. @ShriRamTeerth

Consecration rituals for Ram temple begin with akshat puja

VHP workers to carry akshat to more than 5 lakh villages

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 5

MARKING THE beginning of the January 22 "Pran Pratishtha" (consecration) ceremony of Ram Lalla at the Ayodhya temple, akshat puja was performed in a grand way on Sunday.

Over 200 VHP workers from its 45 units across the country collected 101 brass kalash (um), each carrying five kilos of akshat, from the Ram Temple site for distribution in over 5 lakh villages between January 1 and January 15.

The akshat puja was performed at the temple site with over 500 kilos of whole rice mixed with turmeric and desighee, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust said.

The VHP workers, in yellow kurtas and saffron stoles, carried akshat in brass urns and left the Ram Temple premises.

"These representatives from 45 prants of VHP have left for each of their states carrying the pious kalash with akshat... These akshat invitations along with invites in their local language will be given to people in villages, cities across the country. They will request people to join the Pran Pratishtha ceremony of Ram Lalla on January 22 from their respective homes, temples, maths etc and later visit the newly constructed Ram temple in Ayodhya," said VHP leader Sharad Sharma.

About 25 of these 101 kalash will be distributed across Uttar Pradesh, the remaining will be taken to different states in the country. "These representatives will further divide the 5 kilos akshat to their subordinate units for distribution in households in villages and cities," Sharma said.

"Over 10 crore people from across the country will receive this akshat, which is an invite... The day Ram Lalla will be

brought to the new temple, our plan is to make it a maha utsav (a grand ceremony) across the country..." Sharma said.

Along with the akshat, the aim is to distribute about 2 crore pamphlets in local languages as an invite to the people, he added.

The Trust's secretary Champat Rai said that they would also appeal to every Ram devotee to light five lamps of mustard oil in the evening on the day of consecration. People will also be asked to gather at their local temples from 11 am to 1 pm on January 22, play shankha (conch), ring bells and chant "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Ram" 108 times.

On November 9, 2019, the Supreme Court paved the way for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. Its ruling mandated that a Ram temple be built on the site where the Babri Masjid once stood and that five acres be set aside for the construction of a mosque in Ayodhya district.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the people of Mizoram in a video message on Sunday. PTI

As campaign ends, PM sends message: BJP firm on creating marvellous Mizoram

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AIZAWL, NOVEMBER 5

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday released a video message for the people of poll-bound Mizoram seeking their support and blessings to make their homeland "marvellous".

Addressing the people of the Northeastern state on the last day of the campaign, Modi in the video message said the BJP-led central government has taken steps to improve its various infrastructure, including railway, health and sports.

Termining the people of Mizoram like his family members, he said it has always been a great pleasure for him to interact with the state's warm people. "We have worked in all possible ways to reduce the distance after forming the government at the Centre in 2014. We gave prime importance to fulfil your aspirations, dreams and neces-

sities," Modi said. "Friends, the BJP is committed to creating a marvellous Mizoram. I am sure that we will get your support and blessings to make it happen," he added.

Polling for the 40-seat Mizoram assembly will be held on November 7 and votes will be counted on December 3.

The BJP is contesting in 23 seats. In 2018, it contested in 39 constituencies and won one seat, opening its account for the first time in the state Assembly.

The PM was earlier scheduled to visit the state and hold a public meeting in Mamit district

on October 30. His visit was, however, cancelled without citing any reason. "In the last nine years, I got the opportunity to visit the Northeast 60 times. Large-scale development and connectivity works also reduced the physical distance. The BJP brought the country's capital Delhi to the doorstep of the Northeast," he said in the video message.



BJP denies ticket to Raje loyalist, former state unit chief

DEEP MUKHERJEE
JAIPUR, NOVEMBER 5

THE BJP Sunday released its fifth list of candidates for the November 25 Rajasthan Assembly elections, fielding among others, the president of its union for the unemployed, and denying ticket to Ashok Parmami, former state president of the party and a loyalist of former CM Vasundhara Raje.

Upen Yadav, president of the Rajasthan Berozgar Ekikrut Mahasangh (RBEM), has been fielded from the Shahpura seat.

Upen Yadav has emerged as a youth leader after being at the forefront of various agitations. The BJP dropped Parmami, a two-time MLA from Adarsh Nagar, and fielded Ravi Nayyar from the constituency.

The party has also dropped another former Rajasthan state BJP president Arun Chaturvedi from the Civil Lines seat and fielded Gopal Sharma against state minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas. From Shergarh, the party has fielded Babu Singh Rathore while former MLA and another Raje loyalist Prahlad Gunjal will contest from his usual seat of Kota North.

The party issued its final list of three candidates late in the night on Sunday.

Cong final list out, filing of nominations to end today

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, NOVEMBER 5

THE CONGRESS on Sunday released its final list of 21 candidates for the November 25 Rajasthan Assembly polls.

Monday is the last day to file nominations for the Assembly elections.

Cabinet Minister Shanti Dhariwal has been fielded from his Kota North seat. In September last year, Dhariwal was one of three Gehlot camp leaders who had led a boycott of the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) meet which was apparently called to empower the high command to pick a new CM, said to have been Sachin Pilot. The party high command was said to have been against Dhariwal's candidature.

Despite campaigns against Minister Zahida Khan alleging corruption by her, she retained the Kaman seat. In Chaksu, Sachin Pilot camp leader Ved Prakash Solanki has been retained. Of the 21, while four have been retained, eight sitting MLAs have been dropped by the Congress while the remaining nine seats are held by Opposition MLAs.

With the final list, the Congress has declared candidates for 199 seats, leaving Bharatpur for ally RLD. The seat is held by RLD MoS Subhash Garg.

In Haryana, Kejriwal takes a dig at PM: Stop working for your friend and I'll support you

SUKHBIR SIWACH
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 5

AAM AADMI Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday offered to support Prime Minister Narendra Modi if he stops doing "naukri (service)" of a dost (friend).

Addressing a party event in Haryana's Rohtak, Kejriwal said: "I would like to make an offer to-day. Pradhan Mantri ji, 'You stop doing naukri of a 'dost', I and the entire Aam Aadmi Party would support the BJP. Leave the friendship of 'dost' and stop working for him and start working for 140 crore people. Stop patronising thieves and corrupt, and send

them to jail. If a 'dost' runs this country... then every child of this country would oppose you."

Kejriwal added: "The PM says he is fighting against the corrupt and corruption. I want to tell Modi ji, 'if you were fighting against corruption in reality, I would have supported you in the first place'."

Further attacking Modi, Kejriwal said, "There are talks that the PM has a friend. It's said the PM works only for that friend and this friend is running the country and taking all decisions. This situation is extremely dangerous."

Accusing the current regime of filing false cases against the political opponents, Kejriwal said: "They see who speaks against Pradhan Mantri ji and



Delhi CM and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal in Rohtak on Sunday. PTI

make a list. Then CBI is called. What was the fault of (AAP MP) Sanjay Singh? He raised voice against the PM in Parliament."

The ED had recently summoned Kejriwal for questioning in the alleged Delhi excise policy case and to record his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Referring to the ED summons, Kejriwal said: "They are saying they would arrest Kejriwal. I would like to tell them that I may be arrested, but how will you suppress and stop my voice?"

Kejriwal on Thursday did not appear before the ED and wrote to the central agency demanding the "recall" of its summons to him, calling it "vague, motivated and unsustainable in law".

Apparently equating himself with Bhagat Singh, Kejriwal said: "He was eventually sent to the gallows. But, even after 100 years, the ideas of Bhagat Singh resonate in every corner of the country."

Happy he can be sarcastic: Siddaramaiah on Kumaraswamy offer to support DKS as CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 5

KARNATAKA CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday dismissed as "sarcasm" JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy's offer to support the Congress government if Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar was made CM.

Responding to media queries at Mysuru, the CM said, "We are happy that Kumaraswamy can also be sarcastic."

On Saturday, Kumaraswamy, while attacking the Congress over confusion regarding change of leadership in the state, had said, "Will you (Shivakumar) become the CM? If so, all 19 JD(S) MLAs would extend support to



Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy

you tomorrow itself." Subsequently, he lashed out at the Congress for trying to poach JD(S) MLAs and said the state government was "feeling insecure mere five months after coming to power".

Shivakumar hit back saying Kumaraswamy belonged to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). "We don't have any rela-



tionship with NDA. Let them come out of NDA and then talk about extending support," he said.

All these developments are being seen in the context of Karnataka's leadership debate, which has ebbed and swelled during the five months of the Congress rule. Though Siddaramaiah reiterated recently that he will remain the

membership for speaking against its ideology. The letter was signed by Onkar Singh Lakhawat, chief of the BJP's state disciplinary committee.

On Saturday, senior leader and former Punjab CM Captain Amarinder Singh called for Dayma's expulsion. His daughter Jai Inder Kaur, the state Mahila Morcha president, Sunday filed a police complaint against the leader in Chandigarh.

Punjab BJP chief Sunil Jakhar also condemned the remarks Sunday, tweeting: "State BJP Unit has recommended exploring of all options to ensure no repetition of such misconduct takes place as no apology would assuage hurt and anger caused by this insensitive remark".

On Thursday, Dayma issued an apology video, besides visiting a gurdwara and providing service. But he ended up inviting more flak for saying he had meant madrasas and not gurdwaras. —INPUTS FROM ENS CHANDIGARH

CM for the next five years, speculation on change in leadership after he completes two and half years in power have remained.

After a meeting last week with AICC leaders, a breakfast meeting was held on Saturday where Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar and other senior ministers of the state took part. Following the meeting, directions were issued to all party MLAs and ministers not to make any comments on internal matters of the party.

Siddaramaiah on Sunday also accused the BJP of manufacturing a debate on change of leadership in Karnataka. "Both BJP and JD(S) are frustrated. They had thought they could form the government together," he said.



WORDLY WISE
WE KNOW THAT NO ONE EVER SEIZES POWER
WITH THE INTENTION OF RELINQUISHING IT.
— GEORGE ORWELL

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Power vs Humanity

Self-serving leaders such as Netanyahu often hide hubristic overreach under cloak of democratic sanction



OVER THE BARREL
BY VIKRAM SINGH MEHTA

THIS HAS NOT been an easy article to write, for it has been triggered by emotion. The visuals of the humanitarian carnage over the past four weeks, ever since the Al Qassam brigades of Hamas butchered civilians in Israel, and then the severity of the retaliatory bombing of Gaza by Israel that has killed, predictably, thousands of children has been searing. I write "predictably" because 50 per cent of the 2.2 million people in Gaza are below the age of 18.

There are historical and political explanations for this latest round of violence between Israel and Palestine. Many experts have written about it and assigned blame. I do not intend to do that. I do not have comparable expertise or interest. Also, my thoughts are preoccupied by the brutality of what I have read and seen. I am wrestling to come to terms with the corruption of morality by leaders who *prima facie* have lost the support of the majority of the population that they claim to represent or act on behalf of.

Benjamin Netanyahu is an unpopular and polarising leader of Israel. His Likud party received only 23.41 per cent of the votes polled in the national elections of November 2022. He leads the most ultra-right coalition that Israel has ever had. Members of that coalition do not recognise the right of Palestinians to any land in the Levant. They aggressively encourage citizens to settle in the West Bank. This coalition has a majority of seats in the Israeli parliament, not because they polled a higher percentage of votes than the Opposition, but because of the peculiarities of the system of proportional representation. I have little doubt that the majority of Israeli citizens want revenge — almost every family has been affected and there is a "rally around the flag" effect. But I find it hard to believe they are supportive of the actions that have led to the killing of literally thousands of innocent young Palestinians. Netanyahu has been PM on and off for 17 years. He is now facing the end of his political career. His decision to carpet bomb Gaza is influenced by the conviction that "office" sanctifies his

judgement — that what he does is correct because he is PM — but also by a last ditch effort to regain lost political ground. If in the process, the devil takes the hindmost, so be it.

In a similar vein, and I want to make clear that by "similar" I am not suggesting "equivalence", the perpetrators of October 7 are also not representative of the will of the Palestinians. I recently heard a conversation between TV journalist Karan Thapar and Italian journalist, Paola Caridi. Caridi is the author of the book *Hamas: From Resistance to Government* and a recognised authority on the movement. She explained that Hamas is not an undifferentiated entity. It is a complex and spread out organisation with a political wing based in Gaza, West Bank and abroad, and a military wing predominantly in Gaza. The militant brigades Al Qassam that carried out the October 7 attack are subsumed under the military wing. In the past, the political wing set the direction of Hamas' policy and the military wing determined the instruments of action. But since 2017, this connection has frayed and the Al Qassam brigades (which incidentally have no more than around 3,000 members) have acquired greater autonomy of action. In her view, and that of other experts she has spoken to, the political wing did not sanction October 7 and, most likely, did not even know it was to happen. I do not know if she is right, but I believe that this subset of Hamas conceptualised and carried out the attack to safeguard their hold over power. Relations between Israel and Arab nations, in particular Israel and Saudi Arabia, have been on the mend. This has posed an existential threat to the brigades. October 7 was carried out to disrupt the process. Israel would inevitably retaliate and that would stay the hands of Arab governments from continuing the "normalisation" talks.

There are other examples of leaders who took decisions for self-serving purposes that led to adverse humanitarian consequences. Ukraine is currently caught in the vortex of

such a tragedy. No one knows what prompted President Vladimir Putin to invade Ukraine. Perhaps to create "Imperia Rus"; perhaps to bolster domestic support. Either way, the collateral consequence has been the death of thousands of innocent people across borders. If one tracks back, the US invasion of Iraq was also a case of hubristic overreach by President George W Bush. The invasion did not create a stable "democratic" Iraq. Instead, it compounded social, religious and internal differences. Comparably, "the march of folly" in Afghanistan by leaders focused only on playing the "Great Game" brought about the ruination of this country.

Former UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, "Democracy is the worst form of government — except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." It is a cynical comment but not without substance. Democracy has the built-in check of electoral accountability. But that happens only every 4-5 years. In the interim, leaders have considerable latitude to exercise power ostensibly for the purpose of "national security". And therein lies the rub. National security can often be the prompt for policies that are narrowly self-serving and the cloak of democratic sanction to hide the consequences of such policies.

The historian, Lord Acton, wrote in 1887, "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" and "despotic power is always accompanied by corruption of morality." One could add that the longer a leader is in power; the greater the likelihood of despotism. The past four weeks have brought into stark relief the consequences of "immoral" leadership. It has raised the question: Are power and humanity fundamentally incompatible? Clearly that would be tragic. The global community must tighten the sanctions against breach of basic human principles.

The writer is chairman and distinguished fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEF)

A MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Failure of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's Israel visit shows that ceasefire in Middle East conflict remains a fraught pursuit

THE US SECRETARY of State Antony Blinken's second trip, over the weekend, to the Middle East since the horrific Hamas terror attack on October 7 has turned out to be as unsuccessful as the first. If the last time, Blinken was trying to restrain Israel from a costly military offensive against Gaza, this time, the top American diplomat sought to persuade, without much success, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to be mindful of the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. At a meeting with Blinken in Jordan, several Arab foreign ministers pressed the US to prevail on Israel to bring the military offensive to a halt. At a joint press conference on Saturday with Blinken, the Jordanian and Egyptian foreign ministers vented their frustration with Israel. Jordan's Ayman Safadi demanded that the US must "Stop this madness." Egypt's Sameh Shoukry called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. But Netanyahu, who had met Blinken last Friday, has publicly rejected the call for a ceasefire.

This has made the US balancing act harder between its competing objectives — support for Israel's right to self-defence, the call to reduce civilian casualties in Israel's Gaza military operations, and retaining the support of moderate Arab nations for a regional rearrangement. Blinken affirmed the US position that a ceasefire at this juncture would only help Hamas regroup and renew its attacks on Israel. At the same time, Blinken has been pressing Israel for "humanitarian pauses", a position that is unacceptable to both the Arab foreign ministers and to Israel, which does not want to lose the momentum in its military offensive against Hamas in Gaza. Meanwhile, the one US diplomatic success in getting Israel and Hamas to facilitate the evacuation of foreign and dual nationals from Gaza is in danger of falling apart. The two sides are accusing the other of breaking the terms of the agreement. Moderate Arab states, who are not enamoured of the radical regional agenda propounded by Hamas and its Iranian backers, are under mounting popular pressure to take a tougher stance against Israel or risk their own domestic political legitimacy.

It is no surprise, then, that the Arab leaders are not willing to publicly engage with a major element of Blinken's mission to the Middle East — to look at the future of Gaza after the Israeli military offensive comes to an end. The US is hoping to mobilise the moderate Arab states to construct a post-Hamas arrangement in Gaza. But none of the region's leaders want to engage in such a discussion amidst Israel's military offensive that is producing massive casualties. According to the UN, the death toll has crossed 10,000 and more than 2,000 people are missing. Meanwhile, Israel is losing sympathy around the world, including in the United States and the West. Israel's regional adversaries, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, are taking full advantage of the war in Gaza to define the narrative and win new supporters. The ceasefire has become the precondition for any meaningful regional diplomacy, but the US is unable to deliver on that count, at least for now.

THE SHAPE OF THE CITY

Kozhikode's City of Literature tag affirms culture's power to humanise. It is a necessary reminder

THE UNESCO CITY of Literature tag for Kozhikode affirms what has always been an open secret: That one of culture's great powers is its ability to assimilate and humanise. With a robust publishing scene, over 500 public libraries, bookstores, and a long tradition of *kolaya* (veranda) gatherings — informal, free-flowing discussions on politics and the arts — the city of Muhammad Basheer, M T Vasudevan Nair, P Valsala and others has been at the forefront of India's cultural movements. But the tag also draws attention to the role that urban planning plays in leveraging creativity as an integral part of a city's developmental goals.

In a rapidly urbanising, deeply polarising world, access and representation are crucial to make cities inclusive. In India after Independence, in cities that were as different as Delhi and Mumbai, Allahabad and Chennai, Kolkata and Vadodara, urban planning laid emphasis on keeping the community at the centre. But this idea of cities as repositories of cultures is beleaguered in New India, where homogenisation remains a driving impulse and where shiny glass-and-chrome buildings and gated communities determinedly mark their distance from the rest. For any migrant in an alien city, much of a heaving metropolis remains prohibitively out of bounds. Yet, the only meaningful imagination of a brighter future comes from feeling at home in a space that is far from home. Brighter economic prospects, affordable housing, yes, but also embracing patches of green that allow a spot of rest or debate; book stores where one can browse even if one cannot buy; a sturdy public transport network; a city centre dotted with museums, archives, theatres, but also other less inhibiting spaces where one can experience a *tamasha* or a *lavani*, a *nagar sankirtan* or a *mushaira*. A place that forges friendships, evokes ownership, that galvanises and transforms in many different ways.

There was another such place that once grew out of the imagination of a university that opened its arms to the world. Santiniketan, which recently earned a UNESCO World Heritage tag, and home to Rabindranath Tagore's beloved Visva-Bharati, drew in poets and philosophers, scientists and artists, dancers and musicians for the fertile ground it provided for creative exchanges. The plaque announcing the UNESCO tag has left Tagore's name out of it, but perhaps, in hindsight, that is not so remiss after all. A place that distances itself from the local populace, that closes in on itself, is not one where Tagore, another migrant who had made it his home, would have felt at ease.



KAMINI WALIA

THE DELHI DECLARATION during India's G20 presidency saw a commitment to strengthen the global health architecture by building more resilient, equitable, sustainable and inclusive health systems to implement the One Health approach, enhance pandemic preparedness and strengthen existing infectious diseases surveillance systems.

Another important part of this agreement was to prioritise tackling Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) through research and development (R&D), infection prevention and control, as well as antimicrobial stewardship efforts within respective National Action Plans (NAPs). A pledge to facilitate equitable access to safe, effective and affordable vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and other medical countermeasures, especially in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States was also undertaken.

A 2021 report by *Lancet*, documenting data from 204 countries, estimated that 4.95 million deaths were associated with bacterial AMR, and 1.27 million deaths were directly attributed to bacterial AMR. The magnitude is equal to that of diseases such as HIV and malaria. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia had the highest death rates, signifying high susceptibility to AMR.

The rising levels of antimicrobial resistance, driven by excessive antimicrobial use threaten to compromise not only public-health gains in the field of infectious diseases but also jeopardises cancer treatment, transplants etc. G20 countries are home to over 60 per cent of the world's population. Now, Africa, with 17.89 per cent of the global population, is also a part of the coalition. It will have pro-

CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

Tackling antimicrobial resistance will require sustained global & local commitment

found implications for low and middle-income countries with low investments in healthcare infrastructure.

For the intent of the declaration to translate into implementable action, it will require concerted global and local effort. At the global level, some key areas can be prioritised. First would be to work with developing countries to create regional AMR action plans. Most G20 countries have well-developed NAPs. But their efficacy varies with policy, planning, performance and patient and public engagement.

Second, G20 countries should consider championing an international funding mechanism that focuses on AMR R&D.

Third, efforts should be made to promote patent reforms for fostering innovation and ensuring affordability in new antibiotics. Dialogue among developing countries to explore models like the Medicines Patent Pool will be useful.

At the local level, countries need to prioritise implementation of NAPs. India was one of the first countries to develop a comprehensive NAP on AMR (NAP-AMR) in 2017. It saw sub-optimal implementation because of the absence of leadership and resources. There has been a special focus on surveillance and research under the NAP-AMR, both for innovative affordable interventions and implementation, with emphasis on inter-sectoral connections between human, animal, plant health and the environment. We must expand the scope of existing monitoring networks, currently limited to a few tertiary care hospitals, to understand the extent of the problem. Government initiatives like Free Diagnostic Services and Kayakalp, strict protocols under Indian Public Health Standards have the po-

tential to strengthen AMR containment efforts. Another area that requires attention is promotion of responsible behaviour among citizens by educating people on the dangers of overusing antibiotics. Involving academia and civil society organisations (CSOs) in these efforts is essential. Academia can help understand the environmental dimensions of AMR better, develop new technologies and provide training and education to healthcare professionals. CSOs can raise awareness and advocate for policy changes. Unlike TB and HIV/AIDS programs, where CSO engagement led to major advancement in increasing coverage of the programs, little CSO engagement has been seen for AMR containment in India.

AMR may not be as palpable a pandemic as Covid-19, but with an annual death toll in the same order of magnitude, it represents a clear and present danger. The same impetus, investment and prioritisation as Covid-19 needs to be applied to AMR. Indonesia has developed national surveillance plans, Australia prioritised animal health and committed to reducing antibiotic use in livestock, Brazil has shown reduction in antibiotic use in humans and the UK and the US are investing in research to develop new diagnostics, drugs and vaccines. India has also taken steps in the right direction. By expanding the scope of existing surveillance and monitoring networks, promoting responsible behaviour among citizens and encouraging collaboration among nations, India can lead the way in reducing the burden of AMR.

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FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



NOVEMBER 6, 1983, FORTY YEARS AGO

PLO OFFENSIVE

SYRIAN-BACKED REBELS OF the Palestine Liberation Organisation pressed their "final offensive" to depose PLO chairman Yasser Arafat with tank assaults and artillery bombardment. But diehard supporters of the beleaguered guerrilla chief held fast to the hills and highway interjections surrounding the two Palestinian refugee camps in northern Lebanon that are Arafat's last redoubt in West Asia.

CALCUTTA ENCLAVE

THE BHARATIYA JANATA Party and the Lok Dal

are not likely to be invited to the next conclave of opposition parties in Calcutta which will consider the question of launching a mass movement to focus the government's attention on the price rise, unemployment and breakdown of law and order. A meeting of representatives of the political parties identified several issues which called for a united action.

PAKISTAN'S ALLEGATIONS

PAKISTAN FOREIGN MINISTER Sahibzada Yaqub Khan repeated Pakistan's charge of Indian interference in its internal affairs and its denial that it was assisting militant groups

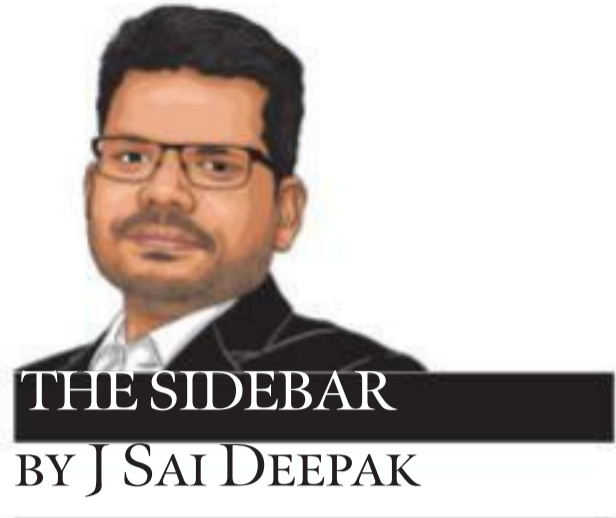
in Punjab. He alleged that Indian leaders had encouraged and instigated the MRD agitation against the Pakistan government in the guise of support for democracy.

CHINA JOINS IAEA

CHINA'S JOINING THE International Atomic Energy Agency as a member last month has generated an avoidable controversy involving the status of India and China in the nuclear club. Available information suggests that India has welcomed China's entry into the IAEA fold and is not opposed to China becoming a permanent member of the IAEA governing board.

Construction of identities

The colonial-missionary establishment's understanding of Bharat's social organisation in terms of 'caste' and 'tribe' laid the foundations for its contemporary interpretations



THE SIDEBAR
BY J SAI DEEPAK

IN MY LAST article under this column ('An anti-Dharmic movement', IE, September 27), in the backdrop of Udhayanidhi Stalin's hate-filled statement calling for eradication of Sanatan Dharma, I had promised to chart the anti-Dharmic origins and journey of the Dravidian Movement. However, no discussion on the origins of the movement is complete without a short primer on the early ethnographic work undertaken by Christian missionaries in 18th century southern Bharat. Their work laid the foundation for the British colonial establishment's understanding (especially in colonial Madras) of Bharat's social organisation through the prism of "caste" and "tribe". This contributed significantly to the creation and shaping of a "Dravidian" identity on ethnic, religious and linguistic lines, which went hand-in-hand with the colonial formulation of the Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT). Given the nature of the topic, it's important to inform the readers of the material (non-exhaustive) I will be drawing from to present facts and to substantiate my views. For those interested in understanding the colonial origins of the "caste system" and the role played by missionaries, I would recommend the sample literature, which includes books, doctoral theses, and scholarly articles, at the end of this article. It is important to clarify that although I may not agree with all the opinions of some of the authors cited, I will still draw from their factual content to the extent it is credible.

As we shall see, contemporary notions of "caste" and "tribe" in popular discourse (including political), academia and the State apparatus in Bharat is significantly traceable to the application of the "caste" and "tribe" lens to Hindu social organisation by the colonial-missionary establishment. What does this exactly mean? Does this mean there was no stratification in Bharatiya society prior to the advent of colonial rule? No. However, it does mean that there was an undeniable colonial hand in the creation of "caste" and "tribe" (as we understand them today) as dominant cataloguing categories of the Bharatiya society by the colonial administrative apparatus on the basis of philology and ethnography prepared by Christian missionaries as well as researchers appointed by the British for the said purpose. Such an approach to Bharat's societal organisation suffered (and still suffers) from at least three layers of related problems.

First, the term caste came to be conflated with *varna* and *jati* when *varna* and *jati* themselves cannot be treated as all-purpose synonyms. Simply put, *varna* and *jati* are not substitutes for each other, and caste is a poor and incorrect colonial approximation for both. This problem arose primarily due to the application of a Christian-European lens and language to concepts and terms that are strictly untranslatable from Bharatiya languages such as Sanskrit to English. One such popular incorrect colonial approximation that readers may be familiar with is that of "Dharma" with "religion".

The second layer, which is perhaps more



C R Sasikumar

symptomatic of European colonisation of the world, is the obsession with race and ethnicity that characterised the Christian European coloniser's approach to caste. This race obsession was then projected on to the *varna-jati* complex. What this means is that the European coloniser applied his own ethnocentric worldview to the faith systems and social organisation of colonised societies instead of understanding them through the prism of the latter. This becomes evident when the canvas of colonisation is expanded beyond Bharat and one looks at the global experience of European colonisation as a whole. The other way of putting this is that as long as Bharat's colonial experience is sought to be understood in isolation, it will remain an incomplete, inaccurate and truncated picture.

The third problem, which is a corollary of the second, is the formulation of "tribe" as a category to explain those groups which could not fit within the "mainstream caste system". In fact, drawing from their experience with "aborigines" from colonised societies in other continents, the "tribal identity" was formulated by the coloniser to catalogue "indigenous communities" ("adivasis"/"moolnivasis") with the presumption that they were the ethnically distinct original inhabitants who were conquered and marginalised by adherents of the mainstream caste system. This shows that race was a relevant factor in two ways — first, to distinguish between communities/groups within the caste system; and second, to distinguish castes from tribes.

Each of these problems continues to afflict the contemporary approach to the study of Europe's colonisation of Bharat and, critically, our approach to Bharat's history. Clearly, coloniality or colonial consciousness is not a thing of the past, but is a continuing state of mind and affairs. With this as the context, in the next piece, I hope to address the following broad questions: One, what were the motivations of the colonial-missionary combine in seeking to understand and document the ethnography of Bharat? Two, how did they go about this exercise? How much of a role did European Christian theology and ethnocentrism play in framing the purpose and methodology of the exercise? And finally, what was the role played by the "native" in aid of the exercise? Did the "native" understand colonial intentions and evangelical motives? If yes, why did he continue to co-operate and collaborate with the colonial exercise to the detriment of Bharat?

The recommended resources:

1. *Western Foundations of the Caste System*

Does this mean there was no stratification in Bharatiya society prior to the advent of colonial rule? No. However, it does mean that there was an undeniable colonial hand in the creation of 'caste' and 'tribe' (as we understand them today) as dominant cataloguing categories of the Bharatiya society by the colonial administrative apparatus on the basis of philology and ethnography prepared by Christian missionaries as well as researchers appointed by the British for the said purpose.

(2017), edited by Martin Ferek, Dunkin Jalki, Sufiya Pathan and Prakash Shah. This anthology draws significantly from the ideas and scholarship of S N Balagangadhara, Professor Emeritus at the Ghent University, Belgium

2. *Rethinking the Caste System*, edited by Prakash Shah, Vol. 13 No. 1 (2023) of *Onati Socio-legal Series*

3. *The Caste Connection: On the Sacred Foundations of Social Hierarchy* (2015) by Jakob De Roover and Sarah Claerhout

4. *Ethnography (Castes and Tribes)* by Sir Athelstane Baines (1912)

5. *Colonial Ethnography and Theories of Caste in Late-Nineteenth-Century India* (2023) by Chris Fuller, published in *Berose Encyclopedie internationale des histoires de l'anthropologie*, Paris

6. *Ethnographic Inquiry in Colonial India: Herbert Risley, William Crooke, and the Study of Tribes and Castes* by C J Fuller (2017), *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 23 (3), pp. 603-621

7. *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (2001) by Nicholas B. Dirks, published by Princeton University Press

8. *The Dravidian Idea in Missionary Accounts of South Indian Religion* (2017) by Will Sweetman in *Religion and Modernity in India*, published by Oxford University Press

9. *Tribes in India: The Fallacy of a Colonial Category* (1990) by Susana B C Devalle in *Studies on Asia and Africa from Latin America*, edited by David N. Lorenzen

10. *The Development of Aryan Invasion Theory in India: A Critique of Nineteenth-Century Social Constructionism* (2019) by Subrata Chattopadhyay Banerjee. This work was preceded by a Ph.D. Thesis in 2017 by the same author on the same subject

11. *Aryans and British India* (1997) by Thomas R Trautmann, published by University of California Press

12. *The Aryan Debate* (2005) by Thomas R Trautmann, published by Oxford University of Press;

13. *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (2006) by Thomas R Trautmann, published by University of California Press

14. *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929* (1969) by Oxford University Press

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The Labour Party will have to make the case that its economic policies can mitigate the worst excesses of globalisation that affect both workers and professionals, as well as seeing off the snake-oil sales pitch of the populist radical right."
— THE GUARDIAN

App for mother and child welfare

Poshan Tracker helps improve last-mile delivery of nutritional services. It could be precursor for targeted investments in women and child health



LINDSAY JAACKS,
ANANYA AWASTHI

THE ROLLOUT of the Poshan Tracker by the Government of India represents the largest mobile phone nutrition monitoring system in the history of global health. Other examples of app-based nutrition monitoring systems from around the world have been limited one-off pilots with little, if any, integration into national systems. For example, UNICEF's RapidSMS project in Malawi or a small project in nine primary health centres by university researchers in the Republic of Mauritius.

In contrast, in India, within two years of the inception of the Poshan Tracker, there has been universal uptake — nearly 1.3 million Anganwadi workers have downloaded the app across all states and Union territories and are using it every day for monitoring ICDS services. Central to the new Poshan 2.0 guidelines released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Poshan Tracker is a centralised ICT-enabled platform, developed to promote transparency and accountability of nutrition service delivery to the last mile.

Going by the scale of operations, Poshan Tracker represents an unprecedented opportunity to monitor progress in addressing malnutrition in India. As per the latest data from the Poshan Tracker Dashboard, the height and weight of 72 million children under five years of age are being collected through the Poshan Tracker. If we compare it against a total of 113 million, which is the population of children under the age of 5 as per the UN Data Projections, this translates into real-time monitoring of more than 50 per cent of children in the country. Moreover, 94 per cent of beneficiaries have been Aadhar verified.

In addition to capturing beneficiary data, the Poshan Tracker dashboard captures national, state and district-level data on three sets of indicators. First, the Anganwadi infrastructure including the number of Anganwadi centres built, with functional toilets or drinking water and whether they have been open for service delivery. Second, tracking the number of beneficiaries who received take-home rations (not raw rations) and hot cooked meals. And third, monitoring of nutritional outcomes.

The Poshan Tracker is designed to act as a real-time feedback loop for frontline functionaries to prevent malnutrition by identifying children who are faltering at an early stage, targeting beneficiaries facing acute malnutrition, and monitoring the effective delivery of ICDS services.

The various modules available on the Poshan tracker include — beneficiary registration, daily tracking job aid module and home visit scheduler for the anganwadi worker, growth monitoring (height/weight) as per WHO Standards, migration facility for beneficiaries who move to another Anganwadi centre within or outside the state, a dashboard for monitoring key performance indicators of se-

lected underperforming districts, and a portal for reporting community engagements on nutrition promotion. Further, separate modules for AWCs in tribal and border areas are also being developed.

Looking at the global experience, doubts about data quality have been identified as a major hindrance to using nutrition monitoring data for informed nutritional policies. Also, global experience shows that decision-makers do not place a high value on data that are three to five years old. Novel approaches such as the Poshan Tracker may be a solution, but the question is: Will the Poshan Tracker improve the accuracy and timeliness of nutrition monitoring in India?

With regards to accuracy, a 2015 evaluation of a mobile phone app built into the existing national growth monitoring system in Indonesia found that the mobile phone app improved the accuracy of growth monitoring for children — particularly underweight — by 80 per cent, on average. In the context of the Poshan Tracker, the app automatically calculates whether a child has low height for age ("stunted"), low weight for height ("wasted"), or is underweight based on the WHO growth charts. Thus, it has significant potential to reduce errors in manual calculation of these nutritional outcomes using field tables.

Moreover, the granularity of Poshan Tracker data is key in addressing the huge variability in malnutrition rates estimated through household-level surveys. The Poshan Tracker makes beneficiary-wise data — that is observed on the ground, not modelled by academics — available for decision-makers for local and timely action.

Also, considering timeliness, paper-based reporting typically requires more time because the registers need to be transported to a central location, entered into a database, and then aggregated for analysis and reporting. The Poshan Tracker avoids this, enabling real-time transmission of data to local, state, and national offices. In addition to faster transmission of data to the government, in terms of care at the level of the AWC, it is easier to retrieve information about a given child from the Poshan Tracker app as compared to bulky paper-based registers, saving more time for nutritional promotion activities.

Finally, in the Indian context, it is important to consider the fact that Anganwadi workers are overburdened, and extreme care must be taken to ensure that the Poshan Tracker is routinely updated based on their feedback to improve user-friendliness. Ongoing skill-building and technical assistance will also be needed to ensure the sustainability of this new monitoring system.

India's Poshan Tracker represents a groundbreaking initiative in monitoring the nutritional status of women and children on a large scale. Nevertheless, it's crucial to understand that data serves as a tool, not a goal in itself. Therefore, adequate investments must be directed towards delivering essential services when malnutrition is detected in children or mothers. To fulfil the objectives outlined in Poshan 2.0 guidelines, the Poshan Tracker's data can thus catalyse tangible and actionable outcomes at the grassroots.

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Their own truths

Attempt to rewrite Constitution is choice between reality, historical negationism



SATVIK VARMA

THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION is the world's largest written constitution. Divided into 22 parts with several sub-chapters, it consists of 12 schedules and several appendices. It has survived the test of time in upholding the rule of law and keeping intact the unity within our diversity. It is a living document in as much as it can be, and has been amended several times to adapt to the changing needs of society. The legislature, judiciary and executive all derive their powers from it. In fact, our elected representatives and judges affirm their oath to office by bearing faith and allegiance to our Constitution. Does this make it worthy of worship?

On November, 25, 2021, the eve of Constitution Day, the speaker of Lok Sabha, Om Birla, published a newspaper article where he commends the framers of our Constitution for having incorporated "the cardinal values of liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice" and lauds the timeless ideals enshrined in our Constitution which have helped us establish a social, economic and political democracy. He notes that, as a nation, we have faced numerous challenges, but our Constitution has helped us successfully surmount these, that "our Constitution is a sacred document and everyone should be fully committed to its ideals." The Speaker emphasises how the "Constitution lays down the road map for the process of nation-building" and how he has "no doubt that the Constitution of India will be our guide, friend

and philosopher in this task." Does this make the Constitution inviolable?

Our Constitution has been described as "too long, too rigid, and too prolix" and has also been critiqued for being written in legalese, given the predominance of lawyer-politicians in the Constituent Assembly. Is that enough for a relook? Ram Madhav, an RSS ideologue, recently wrote ("A Living Document", IE, September 9) that "the saga of our Constitution, including the debates, is most inspiring" and goes on to write that "the suggestion to junk it is premature" and states that "countries do not replace constitutions at the drop of the hat." He is correct, although he goes on to say that "a re-examination of various facets of the Constitution from time to time" may be required. Do our courts not do this regularly?

As India strengthens its position globally and, given the changes which have taken place domestically, we must look at and embrace new constitutional ideas. But these can be incorporated into the existing manuscript. Why the insistence to re-write it?

As noted jurist Fali Nariman states in his latest treatise, *You Must Know Your Constitution*, "We will never be able to piece together a new Constitution in the present day and age simply because innovative ideas however brilliant and howsoever encouragingly expressed in consultation papers and reports of commissions, can never give us an ideal

Constitution. In constitution-making, there are hidden forces that must not be ignored, viz., the spirit of persuasion, of accommodation, and of tolerance." It is worth highlighting that a total of 7,635 amendments were tabled before the Constituent Assembly out of which 2,473 were moved and debated during the nearly three years it took to draft our Constitution. During this time, many members did not yield to the rule of party discipline and went beyond by raising ideological issues. Do we have the resilience today to replicate all of the above?

Nariman adds: "The life of a written Constitution — like the life of law — is not logic (or draftsmanship) but experience." The US also has a written constitution, although not as detailed as ours, which has lasted over 200 years. Contrastingly, the original constitution of Sri Lanka was much shorter than ours and lasted only 14 years. The US Supreme Court lauds its unprecedented determination to preserve and protect its written constitution. It acknowledges that the "power of judicial review" has given the Court a crucial responsibility in assuring individual rights, as well as in maintaining a "living Constitution" whose broad provisions are continually applied to complicated new situations." James Madison, who played a pivotal role in drafting the American Constitution and served as the fourth President, wrote, "Constitutional interpretation must be left to the reasoned judgment of

independent judges, rather than to the tumult and conflict of the political process. If every constitutional question were to be decided by public political bargaining... the Constitution would be reduced to a battleground of competing factions, political passion and partisan spirit." Do similar challenges confront us?

B R Ambedkar, chairman of the Drafting Committee, in the final discussion before the adoption of the Constitution stated that he would not enter into the merits of the Constitution as "however good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot." Resultantly, the "working of a Constitution does not wholly depend upon the nature of the Constitution." Ambedkar felt it is "therefore futile to pass any judgment upon the Constitution without reference to the part which the people and their parties are likely to play."

After all, our Constitution is a document for "we, the people of India". For some people, the Constitution is sacred. For others, it may not be. Fair, given that individuals are free to be convinced of their own version of truth. But at some point, people have to choose between reality and historical negationism.

The writer is a Senior Advocate in New Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PRODUCTIVITY TRAP

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'It's not about the hours' (IE, November 4). The process of production requires skill, training, welfare, leadership and motivation, among other factors. So, corporate leaders need to invest their resources in research and development, and human capital. Only if they do that are the results bound to be rewarding — with respect to their businesses and nation-building.

Manish Mishra, Bhopal

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'It's not about the hours' (IE, November 4). A Stanford study showed that productivity begins to fall at about 50 hours per week and after 55 hours, it plummets with no discernible difference in output for those who worked 70 versus 55 hours. In issues of underemployment, the focus must be on other factors such as monotony, lack of autonomy at work, job-skill gap, low pay and non-supportive leadership. Also, women already put in more than 70 working hours if we include the unpaid work they do at home.

Y G Chouksey, Pune

PAK POWER TUSSELE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Nawaz like Imran' (IE, November 4). Though both Nawaz and Imran have suffered at the

hands of the Pakistan army, their reactions have been dissimilar. While Imran relies on his charisma to get the better of the men in khaki, Nawaz is a more shrewd operator and will use his contacts in the Arab world. He is more liberal when it comes to religion in politics, while, Imran has a messianic approach. Notwithstanding his views on Kashmir, Nawaz is a much better proposition in our Western neighbourhood — not only for the Pakistani army but also for the India-Pakistan equation.

Shubhada H, via email

UNFAIR BLAME GAME

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Join the dots' (IE, November 4). Pinning the entire blame on the AAP government in Delhi not only exonerates the central government but also misses the broader picture of causes of air pollution and its remedies. Many Centre and state expert committees were formed to tackle the problem but they failed to make any difference. The lack of understanding and political will is evident when contrary to research evidence, the Union Minister of State for Environment, Ashwini Kumar Choubey in August 2022 stated in Parliament that there is no conclusive data in India to establish a direct correlation between health and air pollution.

L R Murmu, New Delhi

10 EXPRESS NETWORK

BRIEFLY

MAHARASHTRA

Big blaze at two industrial units in Nashik outskirts

Nashik: A major fire raged through two companies situated in an industrial area on outskirts of Nashik city on Sunday evening, officials said. "Nothing can be said as of now if anyone is trapped inside the factories located in the Shinde MIDC area situated on Shinde-Naigaon Road alongside the Nashik-Pune highway", a fire brigade official said. Prima facie, the fire erupted in the chemical unit which manufactures paint and spread to the adjacent plant. The exact reason behind the fire is yet to be ascertained. **PTI**

Youth dies by suicide, cops cite Maratha quota

Pune: A 22-year-old man died by suicide for the cause of reservation for the Maratha community, said police. The deceased has been identified as Siddhesh Barge, a resident of Chimbali in Pimpri Chinchwad. Police officers said Barge took his life at a gas and stove repairs shop where he worked. DCP Sandip Doifode said a note has been recovered in which Barge is said to have written that he was ending his life for the "cause of Maratha reservation" and nobody should be held responsible for it. **ENS**

KARNATAKA

Constable held for 'procedural lapse' in Odisha

Bengaluru: A police head constable from Bengaluru rural district and three others have been arrested in Odisha's Kandhamal on the charges of possessing marijuana and sent to 14-day judicial custody. The Karnataka police said head constable Anand K, attached to the Jigani police station, was investigating a drugs peddling case and there was a "procedural lapse" that led to his arrest. **PTI**

GUJARAT

2 women, 2 kids end lives; 1 held, husband booked

Ahmedabad: A 35-year-old woman, her two kids, and her 55-year-old mother-in-law allegedly died by suicide by jumping into the Dantiwada reservoir in Banaskantha Saturday. Police have booked the woman's husband and her father-in-law for abetment to suicide after a complaint lodged by her brother. The father-in-law was held Sunday. The deceased have been identified as Nayana Chauhan (35), son Viram (5), daughter Sapna (8) and her mother-in-law Kanuba (55). Nayana's husband Naransinh and father-in-law Gensinh are the accused. **ENS**

Maternity leave for women soldiers on par with officers

Defence Minister approves proposal; will include personnel who are among the retained Agniveers

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh has approved a proposal for extending the rules for maternity, child care and child adoption leave for women soldiers, sailors and air warriors in the Armed Forces on a par with their officer counterparts.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the defence ministry said under the rules, the grant of such leaves to all women in the

military, whether one is an officer or any other rank, will be equally applicable.

So far, there were no women air warriors or sailors in the Indian Air Force or Navy. Both started inducting women in their ranks after the government brought in the Agnipath military recruitment scheme last year.

The Army had started inducting women in the ranks in just one arm — the Corps of Military Police (CMP) — in 2019. Now women are getting inducted in the CMP as Agniveers.

Only those women soldiers, sailors and air warriors will get the benefits of the new proposal who feature among the 25% of Agniveers inducted into the three services on a merit-based selection after completing their four-year tenure.

This is because the terms and conditions of the Agnipath scheme state that they cannot marry till they are serving the four-year term under the scheme.

Women officers in the three services currently are eligible for

180 days of maternity leave, with a provision for extension of a month of leave without pay in exceptional cases and 30 days of leave in the instance of a miscarriage or abortion.

Women officers are eligible for 180 days of leave in case they adopt a child below the age of one year.

Permanent commission women officers are also eligible for 360 days of child care leave while short service commission women officers are eligible for 180 days of leave.

As per the ministry statement, the decision is in line with the defence minister's vision of inclusive participation of all women in the Armed Forces, irrespective of their ranks.

"The extension of leave rules will go a long way in dealing with women-specific family and social issues relevant to the Armed Forces," it said, adding that the measure will improve the work conditions of women in the military and help them to balance professional and family life better.

IT ministry bans Mahadev App; why did it take so long, asks CM Baghel

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

THE MINISTRY of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has issued blocking orders against 22 illegal betting apps and websites, including the Mahadev online betting platform that has been at the centre of a major political storm in poll-bound Chhattisgarh.

The order was issued on the recommendations of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), following its investigation into illegal betting app syndicate and subsequent raids on Mahadev Book in Chhattisgarh revealing the app's unlawful operations, the ministry issued a statement on Sunday night.

The ED had earlier alleged that Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel was paid Rs 508 crore by a cash courier sent from the United Arab Emirates by the promoters of the Mahadev app. So far, the ED has arrested four persons and made seizures worth over Rs 450 crore in proceeds of crime. The agency has also filed a prosecution complaint against 14 accused persons.

Reacting to the development, Baghel said the Central government has "finally woken up from its sleep" and banned the Mahadev app. "I have been asking this for months as to why this app was not being banned. I had even said that maybe the greed of getting 28% GST has made the government not ban the app or the BJP and app operators have made a deal," he said.

"I feel amazed that for months the ED had been probing this app but still it was oper-

ational. Now that app is banned, its operators in Dubai should be arrested soon. Chhattisgarh Police was the first to issue a look out circular against them (app promoters). Even Chhattisgarh Police wants to question them because the first FIR against them was registered over here," said the CM.

Attacking the Congress government in Chhattisgarh, Minister of State for Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the state government had the powers to recommend shutting down of the app but it did not exercise that option. "The Chhattisgarh government had all the power to recommend shutting down the (Mahadev) website and app under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act. However, they did not do so and no such request was made by the state government while they have been investigating it for the last 1.5 years. In fact, the first and only request has been received from ED and it has been acted upon. Nothing prevented the Chhattisgarh government from making similar requests," Chandrasekhar said.

Blocking orders and requests made by various authorities to prohibit access to certain platforms are only known when the Centre makes such information public. As per law, the requests and orders are supposed to remain confidential.

According to the ED, Mahadev Book provides online platforms for illegal betting in different live games such as poker and other card games, chance games, cricket, badminton, tennis and football.



MUMBAI HAZE

A thick layer of smog covers Mumbai city on Sunday noon. *Amit Chakravarty*

■ A team of officials from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change will visit Mumbai soon to take stock.

■ The Maharashtra health department has started an initiative to monitor air pollution-related illnesses and ensure prompt treatment.

■ An order issued by the department Sunday instructed for the implementation of sentinel surveillance for acute air pollution-related illnesses.

Jet executives to ED: Firm sank as Goyal was averse to change

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

THE TOP management of Jet Airways has squarely blamed Naresh Goyal for the airline's demise. In their statement to the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the CEO and other top managers of the company said over-centralisation of power by Goyal, his obsession with obsolete systems such as general sales agents (GSA), ignoring advice of top aviation minds, his refusal to lose controlling stake in the company and the involvement of his family were reasons that led to the Jet ship sinking.

Goyal had been arrested by ED in September in connection



Naresh Goyal

with the central agency's money laundering probe into a Rs 6,000 crore alleged bank fraud committed by Jet Airways India Ltd (JIL). Earlier this week, the agency filed a chargesheet against Goyal, his wife Anita, JIL and various entities in the case. Statements by JIL's top executives are part of chargesheet.

In his statement to ED, Goyal has blamed Jet's failure on high fuel prices and taxes, high landing navigation charges, high global

distribution system (GDS) cost and the government's refusal on merger of Jet Lite Ltd (JLL) with JIL.

"Every decision, no matter how small, had to go to the Chairman/promoter of Company and the decision making was painfully slow. The Chairman of the company was averse to change (he was still stuck in old aviation from the 1990s) and did not listen to aviation experts. As such, what should have taken 6-12 months to implement was not done in 18 months or really until it was too late," he told ED.

Ravichandran Narayan, Senior VP, Finance, of JIL said in his statement that bulk order of wide-body aircraft with three class configurations was one of the reasons JIL was grounded.

Govt notifies next round of electoral bonds sale

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

AT A TIME when polls to five State Assemblies are underway, the Union government on November 4 notified the next round of sale of electoral bonds, from November 6 to November 20.

The Finance Ministry's notification came just two days after the Supreme Court wrapped up its hearing of petitions challenging the Electoral Bond Scheme, 2018 and reserved its judgment on November 2.

In a statement, the Finance Ministry said the EBs would be sold at the 29 authorised branches of State Bank of India in the 29th tranche under the scheme. The bonds are valid for 15 calendar days from the date of issue.

"No payment shall be made to any payee political party if the electoral bond is deposited after expiry of the validity period. The electoral bond deposited by an eligible political party in its account shall be credited on the same day," the statement said.

'CASH-FOR-QUERY'

Ethics panel to consider draft report tomorrow

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

THE LOK Sabha's Ethics Committee, which is inquiring into the cash-for-query allegations levelled against TMC MP Mahua Moitra by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, will meet on November 7 for the "consideration and adoption" of its draft report.

Moitra had in multiple letters to the panel's chairman Vinod Kumar Sonkar urged the panel to call Darshan Hiranandani, CEO of the Hiranandani Group, to depose and allow her to cross-examine him as well as lawyer Jai Anant Dehdrai.

When asked if the committee will call Hiranandani and allow Moitra to cross-examine him, Sonkar told The Indian Express, "Let the committee meet on November 7. Let's see what happens... what the mandate of the committee is." Hiranandani had in a sworn affidavit to the panel claimed Moitra provided him her Parliament login and password so that he could "post the questions" directly "on her behalf when required".

Claiming that BJP was planning criminal cases against her, Moitra in a post on X said, "Shaking in my skin to know BJP (is) planning criminal cases against me. Welcome them - only know that CBI and ED need to file FIR against the Power for Rs 13,000 crore coal scam before they question how many pairs of shoes I have."

Reiterating her charges against Sonkar that the questions put before her at the last committee meeting on November 2 were "undignified", Moitra, in another post on X, said, "Also BJP - before you push out women MPs with



TMC MP Mahua Moitra, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey

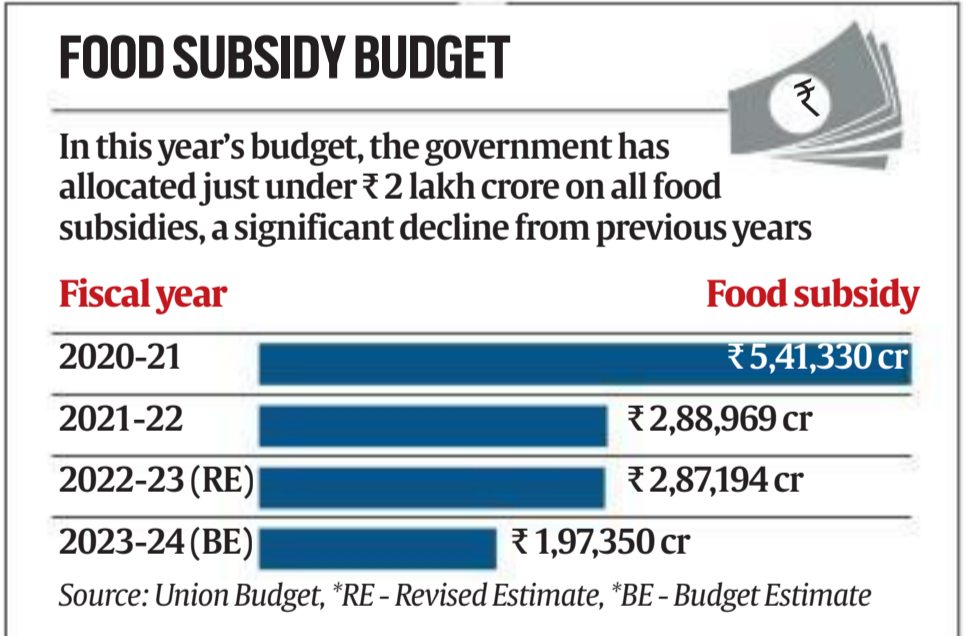
fake narrative remember I have EXACT transcript of record in Ethics Committee verbatim. Chairman's cheap sordid irrelevant questions, Opposition's protests, my protests - all there in official black and white."

Given that the meeting has been called to consider and adopt the draft report means the panel has finished its enquiry. Since the opposition members in the panel had backed Moitra and walked out with her from the panel's meeting last week, there is a possibility some of them will submit dissent notes.

In one of her letters to Chairman Sonkar, Moitra had said, "It is imperative that I am allowed to exercise my right to cross-examine Shri Hiranandani. I wish to place on record that any enquiry without the oral evidence of Shri Hiranandani will be incomplete, unfair and akin to holding a proverbial 'kangaroo court' and that he too will need to be called to depose before the Committee before it prepares its final report."

The last meeting of the committee on November 2 witnessed stormy scenes after Moitra, who had appeared before the panel to give oral evidence, walked out with Opposition members, accusing chairman Sonkar of putting "undignified questions" before her.

5-yr extension for free ration: Numbers behind food security scheme



ANJISHNU DAS
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

IN THE MIDST of the election season, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced an extension of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) free ration scheme for another five years, while addressing rallies in Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh.

"Under the PMGKAY, free ration has been provided to the poor in the country for the past three years. Even though the one-month free ration scheme is coming to an end, Modi's commitment is to extend it for the next five years. For the next five years, the stoves of 80 crore people in my country will keep burning. This is Modi's guarantee," he said.

The PMGKAY was introduced in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic to provide 5 kg free foodgrains to eligible ration card holders under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA). The NFSA, introduced by the UPA government at the time, entitled beneficiaries to receive subsidised foodgrains (at Rs 3, Rs 2 and Rs 1 per kg of rice, wheat and coarse grains) through the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

In late 2022, ahead of the Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh Assembly polls, the PMGKAY was extended until December 2022 and then for another year until December 2023, merging it with

the NFSA. With the scheme nearing its expiry, the government has again extended it, this time for another five years.

Scope of PMGKAY

The PMGKAY covers two kinds of ration card holders under the NFSA — for the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Priority Households (PHH).

The NFSA covers about 20 crore families, or a total 81.35 crore beneficiaries, who account for two-thirds of the population — 50% for urban and 75% for rural.

While the AAY households are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrains per month irrespective of the number of family members, the priority households get foodgrains depending on the number of family members (each member 5 kg per month). The PMGKAY's free ration was in addition to this.

Allocations under PMGKAY

Since the scheme was introduced in 2020, the government has allocated 1,118 lakh metric tonnes of foodgrains from its central procurement pool at a cost of Rs 3.9 lakh crore.

In January this year, the PMGKAY was merged with the NFSA, providing all ration for AAY and PHH families for free and eliminating the additional provisions introduced during the pandemic.

Odia artist's 'kalash' for Meri Maati Mera Desh

UDBHAV SETH
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

A KALASH (POT) designed by an Odia artist-lawyer has been selected by the Prime Minister's Office from around 2,000 entries to be part of the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will Tuesday offer the soil from this pot to the Amrit Kalash at Kartavya Path to mark the end of the campaign to honour the country's soldiers.

Suryasnata Mohanty got a call from Delhi's Lalit Kala Akademi a few weeks ago informing that 30 artists had been selected to participate in this leg of the Amrit Kalash Yatra.

The yatra aimed to collect soil and rice from over six lakh villages around the country in a single kalash. This would be taken to Delhi for a culminating function that required contributions from artists like her. She was required to hand paint 50 pots on the theme of 'Meri Maati, Mera Desh' over five days.

Mohanty worked long hours for the first three days — from 10 am to 12:30 am — while the fourth and fifth days were reserved for installation of the artists' pots at Kartavya Path. She found out on TV that her pot was selected to put soil over the Amrit Kalash by PM Modi. "It was a complete surprise. This may be the biggest and happiest moment of my life," she said.

Meet the Maharashtra man who proposed the idea of bravehearts' memorials to PM

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 3

LAST YEAR, Ratnagiri-based Sadanand Bhagwat sent a letter to the Prime Minister's Office, urging him to set up Shaheed Jawan Smaraks — or martyrs' memorials — in schools across the country to commemorate the sacrifices made by Army jawans for the nation.

In his letter addressed to the Prime Minister in January 2022, he had said it would be a fitting legacy of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, or 75th year of India's independence.

In August this year, the gov-



Sadanand Bhagwat had requested Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to source a tank for display purposes at the former's education institute

ernment had announced an initiative to set up such memorials in each village in the country to

memorialise Army martyrs. On each Shilaphalakam, as these memorial walls are called,

names of bravehearts are inscribed — including freedom fighters, defence personnel, armed police forces and state police who laid down their lives in the line of duty.

Shilaphalakams have been erected near Amrit Sarovars, local schools and other prominent locations.

Bhagwat had requested Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to source a tank, a canon and a fighter jet for display purposes on the premises. The request was immediately considered and recently, they received all the three exhibits, which have now been installed on the campus.

From Jogi to Baghel: A political history of Chhattisgarh

SHYAMLAL YADAV
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

IN ANSWER to a decades-old demand, the mineral-rich state of Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh in November 2000. In the two decades since, the state's politics has centered largely around its chief ministers: Ajit Jogi, Raman Singh, and Bhupesh Baghel.

Before the creation of a new state

The present-day Chhattisgarh had been a part of the old Madhya Pradesh as it was prior to November 1, 1956. Earlier called Central Province and Berar (with capital at Nagpur), the state was renamed after the Constitution of India came into effect. Later, following recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission under Fazl Ali, the new Madhya Pradesh was created by merging the present-day Chhattisgarh, Vidhya Pradesh, Bhopal, almost the entire Madhya Bharat, and a tehsil named Sironj of the Kota district of Rajasthan. The Marathi-speaking districts surrounding Nagpur and Amravati were an-

nexed to Bombay state. As the literal meaning of Chhattisgarh is thirty-six forts, some believe it consists of three dozen erstwhile princely states, mostly tribal states during the Kalchuri dynasty.

Chhattisgarh is born

From 1956 to 2000, Madhya Pradesh had 14 Chief Ministers. Only four of these were from the Chhattisgarh region — father-son duo Ravi Shankar Shukla-Shyama Charan Shukla, Motilal Vora, and Naresh Chandra Singh. Singh was the only one from a tribal community, and he sat on the CM chair for only 12 days in 1969. Demands for a new state of Chhattisgarh, and also Gondwana, were being raised for decades.

In the 1998 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP promised in its manifesto that it would "carve out Uttaranchal (now Uttarakhand), Vananchal (now Jharkhand), Vidarbha and Chhattisgarh as separate States."

After the party came to power, Chhattisgarh was created with 16 districts, 11 Lok Sabha and five Rajya Sabha seats, and 90 Assembly seats. Nearly one-third of its population consisted of tribals. When it was first created, 34 of the 90 Assembly seats were re-

served for tribals. After delimitation, 29 seats are reserved for them and 10 for Scheduled Castes. The state now has 33 districts.

Coronation of Ajit Jogi

As the new state was being created, many were active to take credit for it. Prominent among them was Vidya Charan Shukla, son of first Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Ravi Shankar Shukla. In May 1999, Vidya Charan had formed the Chhattisgarh Rajya Sangharsh Morcha.

When MP was divided, the CM of the undivided state was Digvijaya Singh. Out of the 90 seats that had gone to the new state, Congress had 48 MLAs. After the new state was born, in a meeting of the Congress legislature party in Raipur, Ajit Jogi was elected its leader.

On November 9, 2000, Jogi was sworn in as the first CM of Chhattisgarh. An IAS officer who had served as collector of districts like Raipur, Indore and Sidhi, Jogi had joined the Congress in 1986 on the advice of then MP CM Arjun Singh. After becoming the CM, he engineered a defection in the BJP and man-

aged to make 13 of its MLAs join Congress.

In the first Assembly polls held in 2003, Congress was a divided lot. Vidya Charan Shukla could not adjust with Jogi and had revolted to join the Sharad Pawar-headed NCP. In the polls, while NCP could win only one seat, the 7.02 per cent votes it secured reduced Congress to 37 seats. The BJP got the majority with 50 seats.

Jogi could not digest this defeat, and news broke that he was trying to buy MLAs to get a majority. This caused huge embarrassment to the party leadership. Though Jogi was active in politics till almost his death in May 2020 — sometimes with Congress, sometimes his own party Janta Congress Chhattisgarh — he could never regain his clout.

Raman Singh's era from 2003

While the first BJP president of the new state was prominent OBC leader Tarachand Sahu, after the Jogi-engineered defection, the party top bosses were unhappy with him.

Thus, then Minister of State at the Centre, Raman Singh, was sent to replace Sahu. The

2003 Assembly polls were won under the leadership of Raman Singh, and he was sworn in as new CM.

In the 2008 polls, his scheme of free distribution of rice helped him. Also, though Vidya Charan Shukla had returned to Congress (after briefly joining the BJP as well), in the 2008 polls, Jogi's camp within Congress allegedly managed to defeat many of his opponent Congress leaders, and BJP retained its tally of 50 seats.

Naxal attack of 2013

While statehood for Chhattisgarh had generated hope of all-round development, what also saw a rise in the state was Naxalism.

On May 25, 2013, a few months before state polls, Maoists ambushed a convoy of Congress leaders in Bastar district. Twenty-seven people were killed, including state Congress chief Nand Kumar Patel, his son Dinesh, senior Congress leader Mahendra Karma and ex-MLA Uday Mudaliyar. Vidya Charan was injured and died later.

The BJP won the subsequent polls with 49 seats, and the Congress secured 39. In the meantime, Raman Singh established his son in politics, who won the Lok Sabha polls in

2014 from Rajnandgaon.

By the 2018 Assembly polls, the tide was turning against Raman Singh. He had been discredited among BJP workers for advancing his family, had many enemies within the BJP leadership, and was also facing anti-incumbency after a 15-year run.

Return of Congress, arrival of Bhupesh Baghel

After losing three consecutive Assembly polls and the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, Congress was now preparing well. After Mahendra Karma was killed, the party first appointed Charan Das Mahant as the state chief, and then, within a few months, the OBC leader Bhupesh Baghel was appointed in his place.

For the 2018 polls, Congress devised a new strategy, putting in place new leaders. The BJP's struggles gave it more steam, and it won the polls with a historic majority of 68 seats. The BJP managed to win only 15 seats.

Baghel was sworn in as CM on December 17, 2018. His promises for farm-loan waiver and best prices for crops for farmers worked in his favour. Now the state is again heading towards polls. The results will be crucial for the careers of both Baghel and Singh.

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

DESPITE GOVT'S EFFORTS, WHY ONION PRICES ARE STILL HIGH

PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS
PUNE, NOVEMBER 5

DESPITE A virtual ban on exports and creation of a buffer stock, onion prices are still high. In most metro cities, the bulb has touched the Rs 80/kg mark, with more escalation expected. A look at why repeated interventions by the government have failed to cool prices down.

What did the govt do?

In the past few months, the Centre has taken repeated measures to control the price of onion.

In August, an export duty of 40 per cent was imposed to increase its availability in the domestic market. However, though the move throttled the export pipeline, onion continued to report escalation in prices both in the wholesale and retail market. On October 28, the government imposed a Minimum Export Price (MEP) of \$800/tonne. This translates into Rs 67/kg as the base price of exports. In effect, the small trickle of exports which was on for Bangladesh also came to a halt.

This came even as the government had effectively formed a buffer stock of 5 lakh tonnes of onion with agencies like National Cooperative Agricultural Marketing Federation (NAFED) and the National Cooperative Consumer Federation (NCCF).

Why are prices still rising?

Lasalgaon's wholesale market — the largest onion market in the country and thus the price setter — responded to these moves but not to the extent the government would have wanted to. Thus on October 28, average traded price of the bulb was Rs 4,800/quintal, which came down to Rs 3,650 on November 3. At the retail end, onion prices continue to be high with most cities reporting the price range of Rs 70-80/kg.

Late arrival of the monsoon and extensive damage to the harvested crop earlier in the year is responsible for the high prices. Farmers in Maharashtra harvest



Congress Seva Dal workers protest against the soaring price of onions in Kolkata on Friday. PTI

their rabi onion post March, after sowing in December-January. This onion, with low moisture content, is amenable for storage.

However, this year, this crop was extensively damaged due to unseasonal rains and hailstorms in March. Trade estimates say around 60 per cent of the onion meant for storage was damaged, and was flooded by the farmers in April-May at throw away prices.

The delayed monsoon delayed the transplanting of the kharif crop in June, which was supposed to hit the market by October. Also the late kharif crop, which is transplanted normally in September, was delayed. Thus, at present, the only available onion in the market is the stored rabi crop. This severe supply chain mismatch is the cause of the present price rise.

When will they stabilise?

At Lasalgaon's market, the kharif onion has started arriving but its quantity is too small to make a difference. On an average, the arrival of the new onion is between 10-50 quintals while the old stock continues to form the bulk.

"At present, most farmers are liquidating their old stock. The new crop is yet to be harvested. The situation will improve only towards the end of the month when arrivals will improve," said a trader from the market.



HARISH DAMODARAN

INDIA'S AGRICULTURAL exports have fallen 11.6% year-on-year in April-September. This comes on the back of the Narendra Modi government imposing bans/restrictions on the shipments of various commodities — from wheat and rice to sugar — and global prices easing from their peaks scaled immediately after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

According to department of commerce data, exports of farm commodities, at \$23.6 billion in April-September 2023, were below \$26.7 billion for April-September 2022. Imports fell too, from \$19.3 billion to \$16.2 billion, resulting in a marginal dip in the agricultural trade surplus (exports minus imports) from \$7.4 billion in April-September 2022 to \$7.2 billion in 2023.

The country's farm exports touched all-time-highs of \$50.2 billion in 2021-22 (April-March) and \$53.2 billion in 2022-23, reversing a declining trend from 2013-14 to 2020-21. The years 2021-22 and 2022-23 also saw record imports of \$32.4 billion and \$35.7 billion respectively (chart). The current fiscal, in a sense, marks a return to normal with both exports and imports contracting.

The impact of global prices

India's farm trade, especially exports, is strongly correlated with world prices.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Food Price Index (FPI) rose from an average of 96.5 points in 2019-20 and 102.5 points in 2020-21 to 133 points in 2021-22 and 139.5 points in 2022-23. In the current fiscal (from April till October 2023), the FPI has averaged 123.2 points.

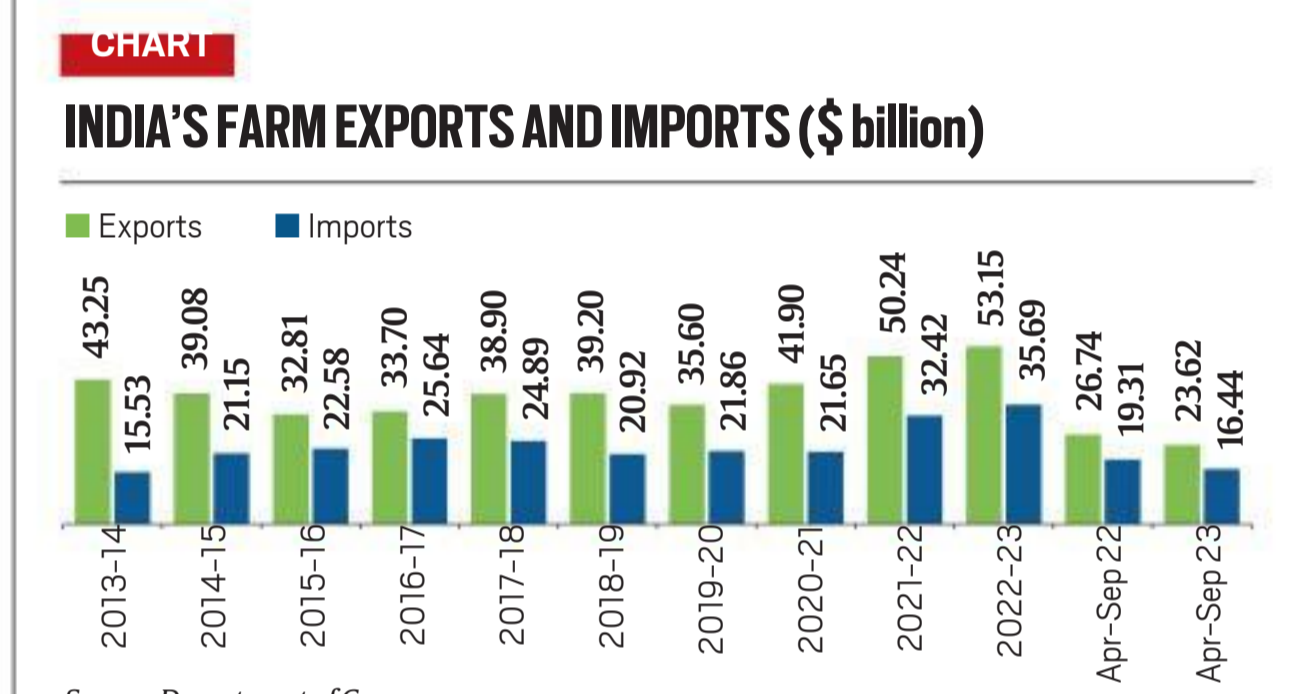
India's agricultural exports fell from \$43.3 billion in 2013-14 to \$35.6 billion in 2019-20 along with the FPI, and rose thereafter with the index soaring to unprecedented levels in 2022-23.

With world prices since coming down, the value of both exports and imports of farm commodities are set to decline in 2023-24. This comes even as supply disruptions from the Russia-Ukraine war have eased. In its latest supply and demand brief, the FAO has projected global ending cereal stocks for 2023-24 at an all-time-high of 881.1 million tonnes (mt) and the stocks-to-use ratio at

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

Falling farm exports: concerns

While the effects of bans and restrictions on rice, wheat and sugar shipments are being felt in declining agri exports from India, imports are continuing unhindered. This is hurting farmers



Source: Department of Commerce.

	2021-22	2022-23	Apr-Sep 22	Apr-Sep 23
Marine products	7772.36	8077.98	4119.63	3803.88
Non-basmati rice	6133.63	6356.71	3199.18	2706.58
Sugar	4602.65	5770.83	2636.25	1302.06
Basmati rice	3537.49	4787.65	2278.35	2589.98
Spices	3896.03	3785.36	1926.90	1949.78
Buffalo meat	3303.78	3193.69	1636.10	1734.40
Raw cotton	2816.24	781.43	435.87	393.82
TOTAL*	50240.21	53153.55	26736.48	23621.71

	2021-22	2022-23	Apr-Sep 22	Apr-Sep 23
Vegetable oils	18991.62	20837.70	11097.64	8508.76
Fresh fruits	2460.33	2483.95	1236.66	1131.58
Pulses	2228.95	1943.89	595.78	1265.23
Spices	1299.38	1336.65	755.20	774.55
Cashew	1255.46	1805.67	1412.52	968.79
Raw cotton	559.55	1438.69	1081.43	401.20
Natural rubber	1032.71	937.60	542.18	380.37
TOTAL*	32422.30	35686.20	19311.21	16444.83

*Includes other items.

Source: Department of Commerce.

30.7%, "a comfortable supply situation from a historical perspective".

The impact of export curbs

Easing global prices apart, a second reason for falling farm exports has to do with government restrictions, in response to domestic availability and inflation concerns.

In May 2022, the government banned exports of wheat. In September 2022, exports of broken rice were prohibited and a 20% duty levied on all white (non-parboiled) non-basmati grain shipments. In July 2023, exports of white non-basmati rice were banned altogether.

In August 2023, a 20% duty was clamped

on exports of parboiled non-basmati rice too, while basmati shipments were subjected to minimum export price (MEP) curbs.

In May 2022, the government moved sugar exports from the "free" to the "restricted" category, capping the quantity of the sweetener that could go out. Since May 2023, exports have stopped completely, with no fresh quotas for shipments being issued.

The effects of these measures can be seen in table 1. In 2021-22, India exported an all-time-high 7.24 mt of wheat valued at \$2.1 billion. In 2022-23, exports of rice (non-basmati plus basmati) rose to a record 22.35 mt worth a whopping \$11.1 billion. In the current fiscal (April-September), wheat exports have plunged to negligible levels, while non-basmati rice posted a 15.9% year-on-year decline. Sugar exports have more than halved, after fetching \$4.6 billion and \$5.8 billion in 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively.

Concerns for farmers

Declining international prices not only lower the cost competitiveness of the country's agricultural exports, but also make its farmers more vulnerable to imports. This is being witnessed in cotton and edible oils.

The benchmark global Cotlook 'A' Index price for cotton is currently quoting at 91.80 cents per pound, from the high of 173.45 cents attained on May 5, 2022. The price crash has led to India's cotton exports not only plummeting, from \$2.8 billion in 2021-22 to \$781.4 million in 2022-23, but also imports surging 2.5 times from \$559.6 million to \$1.4 billion (table 2). This transformation from a net exporter to net importer is reflected in the prices of kapas (raw un-ginned cotton): Rs 7,000-7,100 per quintal in Gujarat's Rajkot market now, as against Rs 9,000-9,100 a year ago and Rs 12,000-plus in May 2022.

The value of India's edible oil imports more than doubled from \$9.7 billion to \$20.8 billion between 2019-20 and 2022-23. This was primarily due to skyrocketing global prices, particularly post the war in Ukraine. Prices have since collapsed, but imports of crude palm, soyabean and sunflower oil are still coming in at a low 5.5% duty.

Soyabean is trading at Rs 4,700-4,800 per quintal in the mandis of Madhya Pradesh, compared with Rs 5,300-5,400 at this time last year. However, the Modi government's focus on controlling food inflation ahead of national elections — and privileging the interests of consumers over producers — means that imports of edible oil and pulses will continue unhindered, alongside restrictions on exports of cereals, sugar and even onion.

For farmers, that would be a double whammy.

India starts process to adopt National Security Strategy: why this is significant

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

AFTER YEARS of deliberations in the military and strategic community, India has kickstarted the process of bringing in a National Security Strategy.

The National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) is collating inputs from several Central ministries and departments to stitch together the draft of the strategy before seeking the final cabinet approval for it.

The exact timeline of when the strategy would be ready is yet to be known, even as multiple ministries have already sent their inputs to the NSCS.

This is the first time that India would come out with such a strategy.

What is a National Security Strategy?

A National Security Strategy document outlines the country's security objectives, and the ways to achieve them.

Updated periodically, it defines traditional and non-traditional threats and opportunities while introducing accountability for agencies tasked with the implementation of various responsibilities.

In a nutshell, a national security strategy would guide the military as well as critical defence and security reforms, providing a holistic view of the overall national security, the threats, and the roadmap to address them.

The exact contours of the strategy being drafted are not known, but it will likely include the entire range of newer challenges and modern threats facing India, including non-traditional ones such as financial and

economic security, food and energy security, information warfare, vulnerabilities in India's critical information infrastructure, as well as those associated with supply chains and environment.

Which countries have a National Security Strategy?

Most developed countries with an advanced military and security infrastructure have a National Security Strategy in place, updated from time to time. The US, the UK and Russia have published national security strategies.

China also has such a strategy in place, called the Comprehensive National Security, which is closely tied to its governance structure. Pakistan, too, has brought

out a National Security Policy 2022-2026, underlining its national security objectives and priority areas.

Why the efforts now?

A National Security Strategy for India has figured multiple times in military discourses and has long been discussed in the strategic community, but has failed to see the light of day despite three past attempts.

Last week, top officials in the government had told *The Indian Express* that given the complex nature of the various traditional and non-traditional threats, especially when rising geopolitical tensions have given way to uncertainties, urgency was felt to draft a national security strategy.

Former Army chief General NC Vij (ret'd) had written in a paper in 2018 that the only political direction to the Armed Forces in existence is the Raksha Mantri's operational Directive of 2009. "It is now dated and hence needs to be revised," he had written.

Some experts have also highlighted that major military reforms should ideally flow from a national security strategy.

At an event last month, former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon had said that India needs a national security strategy and, in the interim, a white paper on defence detailing its thinking on important issues.

Last year, former Army chief General MM Naravane (ret'd), while delivering a talk at the 4th General KV Krishna Rao Memorial Lecture, said it was essential to draft a national security strategy before taking the

military command theatisation process forward. Without such a well-defined strategy, he had said, military reforms would be like "putting the cart before the horse".

Why did India never have a National Security Strategy?

Former NSA Menon at the event last month said that in the past, three attempts were made to come out with a national security strategy, but there was hesitation at the political level.

There have been varying views in the strategic community in the past over why India has not brought out a national security strategy—from lack of a cohesive, whole-of-government effort, to the government deliberately not making public its national security objectives.

EXPLAINED SECURITY

12 IDEA EXCHANGE NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

Milk is a source of livelihood. These (RCEP) countries have a surplus — New Zealand exports 95 per cent of the total milk produced. We are not stupid that we will allow our farmers to stay hungry because they have surplus



WHY JAYEN MEHTA

Jayen Mehta took over as the Managing Director of Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (which owns the Amul brand) in January 2023. A product of Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA), Mehta is now in his 33rd year of service at GCMME. He takes over at a time when the cooperative's

annual turnover has crossed Rs 55,000 crore mark (in 2022-23). Amul is now expanding into commodities other than milk and even venturing outside India with the aim to raise the turnover to Rs 1 lakh crore by 2025-26. Amul is also expected to play a key role in the development of other cooperatives in the country



Nandini and Amul are registered under the respective state governments' Cooperative Societies Act. Any change in the Multi-State Act does not impact us... There is good cooperation between the two state federations

UDIT MISRA: Last year, we saw a substantial increase in the domestic prices of milk. Why was that? Will there be further rise in the near future?

If you look at long-term inflation of milk, vis-a-vis the general inflation in the country, milk has always been slightly below the average inflation. Last year was an aberration because the two years prior to that were COVID years when we couldn't take any price increase. During the COVID period, hotels and restaurants were closed and the private sector stopped collecting milk and cooperatives got all the milk. During shutdowns, we were operating at 130 per cent of our capacity because we couldn't say no to the farmers. We also continued our supplies in the market through the lockdowns. There was an inventory buildup in India. We did not reduce the price of the raw materials and farmers continued to get the remunerative price for the milk. There was an overall inflation — feed, fodder cost and general inflation — but we did not pass it on to the consumers.

So, last year, when demand rebounded, you saw milk prices being increased in India, not just by Amul, but by every single player. In the last 10-12 months, there's been no increase in the prices.

UDIT MISRA: What is your view on the amendments in the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002?

The government has formed a new Ministry of Cooperation, and realises that for the 1.4 billion people, 70 per cent in rural areas — including landless and small marginal sections of the society and women — cooperatives are the best tool for development. The new Ministry has also created three new multi-state cooperatives. One is on exports, second is on organics and third is on seeds.

The Ministry of Cooperation identified the top cooperatives of the country — Amul, IFFCO, KRIBHCO, NAFED, NDDB, NCDC and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation. Between the seven of us, each is incubating new multi-state cooperatives.

The objective is clear — the exports one will identify the international markets for export of all the products the cooperatives make.

The structure of the primary agricultural cooperative societies is being strengthened through computerisation and support. The vision is that in every village if there is an active primary agricultural cooperative society, it will harness the collective might of all the producers of different agricultural crops. If they have a requirement for seeds, they will buy certified seeds and the seeds cooperative will give them certified seeds. The same is happening in the case of milk.

UDIT MISRA: If you could tell us about recent reports of conflict between Amul and Nandini in Karnataka.

Nandini and Amul are registered under the respective state governments' Cooperative Societies Act and any change in the Multi-State Act does not impact either of us. We are owned by our respective farmers and there is good cooperation between these two state federations. Since 1998, Amul ice-creams have been packed in Karnataka in the plants owned by the Karnataka Milk Federation with Nandini, and are being sold there. During COVID, when they had surplus milk, we also had surplus milk, and we bought close to 5,000 tonnes of cheese from the Karnataka Federation because they had no other revenue. The conflict is largely in the minds of a few politicians, if I may say so. More importantly, the issue was made-up and hyped. When Nandini wants to set up a new plant, they will come to us. All our facilities, recipes, products and insights are available to them free of cost. Together we have been able to grow this country to this height and keep the multinationals out.

UDIT MISRA: Few years ago, there was opposition to India joining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). One of the things being said was that India doesn't want cheaper milk from New Zealand and Australia. Does Amul welcome the opening up of food milk trade?

Milk is a source of livelihood. These countries have a surplus — New Zealand exports 95 per cent of the total milk produced. We are not stupid that we will allow our farmers to stay hungry because they have surplus. And it is not cheap milk. Anything that you think is cheap,

'We champion circular economy... a dairy co-op can transform into an energy company'

Jayen Mehta, Managing Director of Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, on cooperation between cooperatives, why India should not support free trade for milk and Amul's expansion plans. The session was moderated by Associate Editor Udit Misra



Jayen Mehta (right), Managing Director of Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, with Udit Misra Abhinav Saha

we actually pay through the nose. Till 1995, India was self-reliant in terms of edible oil. Somebody gave this magic mantra to the then government that cheaper oil from Malaysia could help us. Look at what has happened today — we are importing 90 per cent of our edible oil, all our oil seed cooperatives have closed, our local oil mills are under pressure and we are paying the price. So, there is nothing like cheap food. Europe, USA, Australia and New Zealand, all of them are looking for a market. We are not just the largest producer of milk in the world, but also the largest consumer. No country will deprive its farmers of their livelihood and depend on imports. Gujarat farmers are getting perhaps the same price or better price for milk than the New Zealand producers today, but our consumers are getting milk at less than half the price compared to a customer in New Zealand.

RAKESH SINHA: Now that the farmers have been pointing to the rising costs of feed and animal husbandry, how are you managing your pricing?

The nutrition of the cow is the basis on which the output and productivity happens. We manufacture close to 10,000 tonnes of cattle feed every day and this is sold at no profit-no loss business to farmers. That is still one-third of the total feed cost. We give them the high-protein stuff, but the cows also need to eat grass, dry fodder, water and so on. This is the feed part.

There is also the breed part. We have several semen stations, sorted semen technology to see that the breed and productivity of the cows improve. There are veterinary services where you can get a doctor within 30 minutes of calling, in every single village of Gujarat. These are the integrative services a cooperative provides, which keeps a farmer interested in the business.

RAKESH SINHA: Is there reluctance among the children of dairy farmers to continue in the trade?

Post COVID, people realise it's a very assured business. There is reverse migration because there is no problem in selling milk. So, people are investing in it and we are seeing the younger generation getting into it. They are interested in increasing the cattle holding size. With the economies of scale, you are able to employ labour. With automation, milking machines, and the different tools available, it is not a drudgery like it used to be. So, people are coming back

into this business.

It's also our responsibility to keep the farmers interested. So, we run entrepreneurship development programmes and three-month courses where farmers can look at the successful models of how these large farms are working, and we also support them by giving bulk milk-coolers right in their farm.

PVAIDYANATHAN IYER: In the next five-seven years India will be a third of the total global market, why are you reluctant to open trade?

India is one of the most open markets for dairy in the world. You can import any brand of dairy product by paying a nominal duty of hardly 30 per cent. For skimmed milk powder there is a TRQ (Tariff Rate Quota) in which you can import 10,000 tonne for just 15 per cent duty. So, India is open to import. There are countries which don't even allow a single kilo of import. Still, they want access to our markets at zero duties. No country will be insensitive to the demands of its large number of producers who depend on it for their livelihood.

The US has a 50 per cent import duty on butter, Canada has 250 per cent, and Bangladesh has 78 per cent. So, every country has a right to protect its market, its farmers. To demand that because we are such a big market, we should open up our country with zero per cent import duty, that's not acceptable.

UNNI RAJEN SHANKER: How does the ban on cattle slaughter impact the dairy sector and the farmers?

There are certain things linked to our culture and religious beliefs, and we don't believe in cow slaughter because cows have a very elevated status in our society.

When you treat a cow as a mother, obviously there are sentiments attached. Economics is not important in this regard, but I will share our solution to this.

We are now championing a circular economy. A cow gives milk for 300 days in a year, that's the lactation cycle. It gives dung every day. If we are able to pull that dung, which we've started doing, it becomes a source of biogas. That biogas can light a *chulha* in a village kitchen or we can purify it and run cars (compressed biogas, CBG). The slurry left behind is a bio fertilizer that can go into the field and replace chemical fertilizers.

So, farmers get an income for the *go-bar*, and India's fuel and fertilizer imports also reduce. It is a win-win situation and we are trying to strike at that. We have set up multiple plants of micro-model to collect and store dung for local usage. We are also setting up CNG pumps. Additionally, methane can be broken down using solar energy or any other power into hydrogen.

So, a day will come when a dairy cooperative or a cooperative which handles milk in a large volume can also transform into an energy company.

AGGAM WALLA: Can you share Amul's experience with the PLI (Product Linked Incentive) scheme? Amul is one of the four companies to have received support for mozzarella cheese under this scheme — if you could talk about this specific segment.

The PLI scheme has been good and we have been among the largest investors in the three categories available to us. We are doubling up on our ice-cream manufacturing capacities. We are making new investments in the butter-

milk and beverage segment. Mozzarella cheese is another category. The government identifies certain categories that can help India get into a larger space globally, and because we have good quantities of buffalo milk and buffalo, mozzarella is very premium and this one category was identified. We are the largest manufacturers of cheese in the country, and now also the largest manufacturer of mozzarella cheese, and this investment has been benefiting us.

JATIN ANAND: India imports a bulk of its whey protein. Given the pace at which the market is growing, will we be able to become self-sufficient in this sector?

In 2018, I happened to be the in-charge Managing Director for Amul Dairy, which makes cheese and a lot of whey is produced. We weren't getting any price for whey in those days. Whey powder is actually a very cheap commodity. Today, we are selling a range of whey-based high protein products online.

We took some time and have now launched high-protein *lassi*, where you get 15 gram of protein, compared to normal 4 to 5 gram, in a 200 ml pack. We also have high-protein shakes and are working on a product, which is milk with 30 gram protein. The key thing in India is the need for an awakening that each one of us requires one gram of protein per kg of body weight daily.

ANIL SASI: Could you talk about the segregation of markets and how do cooperatives decide how to serve the home market they started out with? I believe there has previously been a friction between NDDB and Amul over markets, and now of course Amul's entry into Karnataka has been announced in the run-up to the polls.

We have been selling milk in Karnataka since 2015-16. So, Amul milk entering into Karnataka was a media creation for just whipping up sentiments in the period known to you.

Practically, every state has some presence of cooperatives. You also have to look at what is the share of the cooperative in the total milk production of the state. Whenever an organised player enters the market, cooperatives play the role of a catalyst. We will have an extra share. The private sector always wants to buy at the lowest price and sell the finished goods for the highest price, keeping the maximum profit for the shareholders and owners. We do exactly the opposite. We buy the raw material at the

highest possible price, because we are buying it from the owners. So, whenever a cooperative enters anywhere, it will set the cat among the pigeons. At the end of the day, any farmer would welcome a new institution coming to buy products.

Karnataka sells milk at a price which is much cheaper than any other state. So, who is the government subsidising? They're subsidising the consumer, it's not a subsidy to the producer.

SUKALP SHARMA: Amul was a pioneer but now other state cooperatives have also started diversifying into the larger FMCG space. Do you expect any friction with other dairy cooperatives in different product categories, apart from milk.

If the cooperatives work, why shouldn't we? If they expand, leverage their brand name, why just domestic, let us go international.

India liberalised its economy in 1991 and with that came relicensing, the removal of the borders. With delicensing, what could happen is that Nestle could technically set up a plant next to Amul dairy in Anand. We, as Amul, have gone through this in a very painful way.

We are aligned to the changes that are happening and are not vulnerable to all the shocks which can happen. Every single cooperative has coped with liberalisation. We should be proud that the cooperatives have made India the largest producer of milk in the world. And we have a bonding amongst ourselves.

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M: In the last five years, Amul has seen a significant visibility in the dark chocolate segment. How did this surge happen?

(A decade ago) we experimented with dark chocolate. The darkest dark in those days was Bournville, which was 45 per cent dark, which they've increased to 50 per cent. Our dark started with 55 per cent. We entered this market with a slab of 150 gram for Rs 100, with elegant packing and zero marketing, only using the power of social media. From 2015-2016 to today, people have started talking about it, and we have implemented suggestions to do 75 dark, 90, coffee flavour or orange flavour or sugar-free. We have created a portfolio of more than 30 SKUs (stock-keeping unit) of dark chocolate. We also started getting cocoa from Peru, Venezuela, Tanzania and Colombia, and launched a 'single country' age of chocolates. Today, we are the largest manufacturers of dark chocolates in the country.



If the cooperatives work, why shouldn't we diversify? If they expand, leverage their brand name, why just domestic, let us go international. We should be proud that the cooperatives have made India the largest producer of milk in the world

13 ECONOMY

MARKET WATCH M-CAP OF 9 OF TOP-10 COS SURGE

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10 most valued firms surged Rs 97,463.46 crore last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest gainer, amid an overall positive trend in equities. **PTI**

THE AI SAFETY SUMMIT AT BLETCHLEY PARK, UK

US steals a march over Europe amid UK's showpiece AI Summit

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

OVER THE last decade, Europe has taken a decisive lead over the US on tech regulation, with overarching laws safeguarding online privacy, curbing Big Tech dominance and protecting its citizens from harmful online content.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's showpiece artificial intelligence event that kicked off in Bletchley Park on Wednesday sought to build on that lead, but the United States seems to have pulled one back, with Vice President Kamala Harris articulating Washington's plan to take a decisive lead on global AI regulation. Harris then went on to elaborately flesh out the US plan for leadership in the AI regulation space before a handpicked audience, which included former British PM Theresa May, at the American Embassy in London, while she was there to attend Sunak's Summit.

The template for Harris' guidance on tech regulation was the freshly released White House Executive Order on AI, which proposed new guardrails on the most advanced forms of the emerging tech where American companies



The template for Harris' guidance on tech regulation was the freshly released White House Executive Order on AI. **File**

dominate. And in contrast to the UK-led initiative, where the Bletchley Declaration signed by 28 signatories was the only major high-point, the US executive order is at the point of being offered as a well-calibrated template that could work as a blueprint for every other country looking to regulate AI, including the UK.

Harris was emphatic in her assertion that there was "a moral, ethical, and societal duty to make sure that AI is adopted and advanced in a way that protects the public from potential harm and ensures that everyone is able to enjoy its benefits". And to address predictable threats, such as algorithmic discrimination, data privacy violations, and deep fakes,

the US had last October released a Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights – seen as a building block for Monday's executive order. After its Bill of Rights was released, Washington had extensive engagement with the leading AI companies, most of which are American (with the exception of London-based Deep Mind, which is now a Google subsidiary) in a bid to evolve a blueprint and to establish a minimum baseline of responsible AI practices. "We intend that the actions we are taking domestically will serve as a model for international action. Understanding that AI developed in one nation can impact the lives

and livelihoods of billions of people around the world. Fundamentally it is our belief that technology with global impact requires global action," Harris said just before travelling to the United Kingdom for the summit on AI safety. "Let us be clear when it comes to AI, America is a global leader. It is American companies that lead the world in AI innovation. This is America that can catalyse global action and build global consensus in a way that no other country can. And under President Joe Biden, it is America that will continue to lead on AI," Harris said before the signing of Monday's executive order, clearly outlining Washington's intent to take a lead on AI regulation just ahead of the UK-led safety summit.

This assumes significance, given that over the last quarter century, the US Congress has not managed to pass any major regulation to rein in Big Tech companies or safeguard internet consumers, with the exception of just two side legislations: one on child privacy and the other on blocking trafficking content on the net. In contrast, the EU has enforced the landmark GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) since May 2018 that is clearly focused on privacy and requires individuals to give explicit consent before their data can be

processed and is now a template being used by over 100 countries. Then there are a pair of sub-legislations – the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA) – that take off from the GDPR's overarching focus on the individual's right over her data. The DSA focused on issues such as regulating hate speech, counterfeit goods etc. while the DMA has defined a new category of "dominant gatekeeper" platforms and is focused on non-competitive practices and the abuse of dominance by these players.

On AI, though, the tables may clearly be turning. Washington's executive order is a detailed blueprint aimed at safeguarding against threats posed by artificial intelligence and seeks to exert oversight over safety benchmarks that companies use to evaluate conversation bots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard. The move is being seen as a vital first step by the Biden administration in the process of regulating rapidly-advancing AI technology, which White House deputy chief of staff Bruce Reed had described as a batch of reforms that amounted to "the strongest set of actions any government in the world has ever taken on AI safety, security, and trust".

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

'Open up the foreign exchange market freely, money will flow in'

MARK MOBIUS, veteran investor and the founder of Mobius Capital Partners LLP, believes that India needs to have a freer foreign exchange market in order to attract overseas funds. If the Indian government opens up the market freely, they would have an incredible flow coming in, he says.

Speaking to GEORGE MATHEW and HITESH VYAS on the sidelines of Morningstar Investment Conference, Mobius, who was earlier Executive Chairman of Templeton Emerging Markets Group, says his investment strategy aims at return on capital and earnings growth, and going by these two metrics, India is very cheap in terms of valuation. India is the place for long-term growth, says Mobius, whose emerging markets fund has a 20 per cent allocation to India. Edited excerpts:



THE EXPRESS

INTERVIEW

WITH MARK MOBIUS
FOUNDER OF MOBIUS CAPITAL PARTNERS LLP

that and there is a reason why he has opened this system in Gujarat (GIFT City).

What should the Indian government do to attract more foreign investments and speed up the growth? Do you have any suggestions?

First thing, free up the foreign exchange market (free float of the rupee). For example, allow people to take money in and bring money out, like in the US. This (India) is a big economy. I know the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) doesn't like to lose control of the exchange rate but it is such a big economy that it can withstand these flows. Don't be like China where they want to control everything. If you open the door, money will flow in. If you try to close the door, money will get out. This is psychology. NRIs (non-resident Indians) want to bring money in but the government tries to control it.

I guarantee you that if they (the Indian government) open the market freely, they would have an incredible flow coming in. And not only for institutional investors but for individual investors.

I am a good example personally because my funds are different. Where are my personal investments? In the US. Why can't I invest in India directly? I must go through the US. I must buy Indian funds in the US market. I can't buy Indian funds in India directly because of foreign exchange control. This is a problem and that's the reason why the US gets all this money because it's a free float.

India has 1.2 billion people. Why can't they open the market completely? I think (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi realises

structure. That's what India has to do.

What is your assessment of the global economy and markets in the wake of the tension in the Middle East?

You have three things happening now – the Middle East (conflict), Ukraine (-Russia war) and China. So, these are three big deals for the US in particular. Now, what does that mean? It means that the US has got a lot of challenges in front of it. A lot of people say this can't be good for the US. But that's not the case because if you look at the stock prices of the military or its industry in America, it has gone over the roof. All this spending flows back into the US economy. So even with high interest rates, the economy is doing fairly well. These challenges create activity on a global basis.

If you take the situation in Israel, a lot of money will be flowing into that region on both sides. If you take the situation in Ukraine, the same thing. A lot of money is going into Ukraine. If you take what's happening in China, there is a whole realignment, with lots of spending taking place including diversifying away from China. So, all of this creates economic activity.

Do you see interest rates and yields rising in the US and other markets?

I think the yields in America probably have reached the highest stage. Of course, the (inflation) target of 2 per cent has not been reached and so, it is unlikely they will lower the rates. The only proviso would have is that if this economic environment that I am talking about, with a lot of activity, pushes up inflation, then the Fed (US Federal Reserve) may want to raise (interest rates) again. But I don't see that happening because if you look at money supply growth, it has come down dramatically, and that, of course, means lower inflation.

Indian markets are one of the worst performers in Asia after maybe South Korea in the last two or three weeks. What do you think about the valuation in the Indian markets? Is it moderate or still overvalued?

I know a lot of people look at the price-earnings ratio as a valuation measure, but we don't.

FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

Wipro, Tech M, LTIMindtree exiting low-value clients to buoy margins

SAMEER RANJAN BAKSHI
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 5

FACING MARGIN headwinds, IT firms like Wipro, Tech Mahindra and LTIMindtree are reducing their exposure to low-value clients in the Asia-Pacific region. Instead, these firms are concentrating on deals in the North America region.

Though this region is witnessing a slowdown in tech spending, it offers higher margins than other geographical areas, known in IT circles as RoW (Rest of the World).

"Tech Mahindra has businesses where margins are structurally low (eg high presence in low-margin RoW segment, specifically APAC) or has contractual structures with high pass-through component. We suspect such low or negligible margin business may be as high as 10 per cent of revenue," analysts at Kotak Institutional Equities wrote.

TechM's share of revenue from RoW has fallen quarter-on-quarter and as well as year-on-year basis to 23.2 per cent in the September quarter. In contrast, its share of revenue from Americas has increased to 53.3 per cent in Q2 from 51.4 per cent in Q1.

During the post-earnings call

recently, Rohit Anand, CFO, TechM, "We have taken actions to reduce the exposure to non-core areas of business. These actions will, over time, help us improve our financial performance and enable long term sustainable growth."

Similarly, Thierry Delaporte, CEO, Wipro, also highlighted the company's strategy in the recent post-earnings call, "In our APMEA (Asia Pacific Middle East and Africa) business, revenues for the quarter declined 0.5 per cent sequentially. Our goal in this region is absolutely to capture the rapidly digitising market. For that, we are leveraging our global scale and domain expertise to actually continue to move our portfolio towards higher value transformation projects."

While Wipro's revenues from APMEA region saw a marginal decline, the same increased by a percent from Americas1 during the quarter. In a recent interaction with FE, Wipro's CFO Aparna C Iyer said that the company is pivoting from low-value clients to defend margins.

LTIMindtree has also raised its revenue exposure to North America by 2 per cent q-o-q while seeing a decline of 2.3 per cent in RoW during the September quarter. **FE**

FPI sell-off continues; ₹3,400 cr pulled out in November

Foreign Portfolio Investors' (FPIs) selling spree continues on rising interest rates and geopolitical tensions



₹14,767 cr September
₹24,548 cr October
₹3,412 cr November so far

₹1.74 lakh crore

FPIs buying Indian equities during March to August

DEBT MARKET:

₹1,984 crore: November so far
₹6,381 crore: October

TOTAL INVESTMENT:

In Equity: **₹92,560 crore**
In Debt Market: **₹37,485 crore**

"The main trigger for this reversal in bond yields is the subtle dovish commentary from Fed chief Jerome Powell that 'despite elevated inflation, inflationary expectations remain well anchored.'" **V K Vijayakumar**
Chief Investment Strategist
Source: PTI

States capex up 50% in H1FY24 on low base

PRASANTA SAHU
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE by 18 state governments whose financials were reviewed surged by 56 per cent on year in the first half of the current financial year compared with just a 2 per cent rise in the year-ago period. This was supported by capex loans from the Centre.

Excluding loans from the Centre, the capex of these 18 states rose by a robust 26 per cent in H1FY24 over the year-ago period.

These states – Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, West

Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Telangana, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand – reported Rs 2.57 trillion in H1FY24 against Rs 1.65 trillion in the year-ago period. In H1FY24, the Centre provided around Rs 0.5 trillion in loans to these states.

Keeping in mind the fund crunch faced by states, the Centre has increased the allocation for the Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investments to Rs 1.3 trillion in FY24 BE from the Rs 0.8 trillion loans disbursed to them in FY23. The enhanced allocation is aimed at spreading as-

set creation across the country to boost economic growth and the creation of jobs.

Election-bound Telangana reported a whopping 190 per cent increase in annual capex in H1FY24, followed by Andhra Pradesh with 142%, Odisha (up 87 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (85 per cent). However, Karnataka saw a 32 per cent decline in capex during the period.

These 18 states reported a 15 per cent growth in their tax revenues in April-September 2024 at Rs 12.55 trillion, upon the 32 per cent growth recorded in the corresponding period of the previous year.

The borrowings of these states

rose 49 per cent on year to Rs 3.39 trillion in April-September FY24 as against a 29 per cent decline in the year-ago period, reflecting trailing revenues vis-a-vis aggregate target.

Even as capex surged, the states' revenue spending was contained with about a 10 per cent annual increase in H1FY24 compared with 15 per cent in the year-ago period.

The Centre has raised the capital expenditure target by 37 per cent on year to a whopping Rs 10 trillion (including Rs 1.3 trillion capex loans to states) for FY24 to continue the public investment-led economic recovery post-pandemic. **FE**

FMCG Ebitda margins going strong despite slow volume growth

VIVEAT SUSAN PINTO
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 5

THERE IS an interesting trend showing up within fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies. While volume growth, especially, rural volume growth, has been sluggish, earnings before interest tax depreciation and amortisation (Ebitda) margins, which is a measure of profitability for companies, remains strong. This has been on account of a moderation in commodity prices as well as strict cost-control measures initiated by firms.

While companies claim they are investing in their brands to shore up volume growth, the numbers tell a different story.

In the last one year, rural volume growth for the domestic FMCG market has inched up from a decline of 3.6 per cent in



Ebitda margins have moved up to 28%. **File**

the September 2022 quarter to 7 per cent in the September quarter this year, according to Nielsen data sourced from the industry.

Ebitda margins, on the other hand, have moved up from 26 per cent last year to nearly 28 per

cent now, pointing to a wariness of companies to sacrifice margins for growth, sector experts say.

Ebitda margins have been derived from an aggregate of 13 FMCG companies, compiled by FE Research Bureau. **FE**

Reliance returns to oil indexation for KG gas, seeks buyers for 4 mmscmd

PRESSTRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

RELIANCE INDUSTRIES Ltd and its partner bp plc of UK have reverted to oil indexation for pricing the gas they produce from India's largest private-sector operated field in KG basin as they look to tap into the upside from the buoyant oil market. Reliance and bp in a tender have sought bids from buyers for 4 million standard cubic meters per day of gas from KG-D6 block in Bay of Bengal starting December 1, 2023.

They want users to quote a price indexed to Brent crude oil price, according to the tender document. The firm had in recent previous auctions, the last being in May this year, sold gas indexed to international gas benchmark,

JKM.

"The consortium issued a notice inviting offer dated October 27, 2023 and invited offers from interested companies to offtake gas from the gas fields on the price basis specified in Request for Proposal (RFP), commencing from December 1, 2023 at the delivery point located in Gadimoga, Andhra Pradesh," the tender document said.

It asked bidders to quote a premium 'v' they are willing to pay over and above 12.67 per cent of dated Brent crude oil price. The starting bid price for 'v' has been kept at \$1.08 per million British thermal unit.

At current Brent crude oil price, the starting price translates into a gas price of \$11.8 per mmscmd (12.67 per cent of \$85 plus \$1.08).

BRIEFLY

Tata Steel seeks aid for Netherlands unit

New Delhi: After securing a funding in the UK, Tata Steel is looking for a financial aid from the Netherlands government to execute its decarbonization plans. In October 2021, Tata Steel completed the process of separating Tata Steel UK and Tata Steel Netherlands as two independent companies from Tata Steel Europe. "In Netherlands, we will shortly be submitting the detailed decarbonization proposal to the Dutch government seeking regulatory and financial support," Tata Steel CEO & MD TV Narendran said. **PTI**



Virat ≥ Sachin

Fewer numbers of innings, better average, superior strike rate, more tons while chasing

WHILE CHASING

Sachin: 17/ Virat: 27
Chasemaster Kohli leads the way given his brilliant record in run chases. In fact, his average while chasing - 65.49 - is better than Tendulkar's 42.33.

SENA COUNTRIES

Sachin: 9/ Virat: 10
In 40 fewer innings in SA, Eng, NZ & Australia, Kohli has amassed one more century. In Australia, he has hit 5 centuries while Tendulkar has one.

150+ SCORES

Sachin: 5/ Virat: 5
Both have an equal number of big scores but it will be Tendulkar's achievement that stands out most, hitting his one and only double century, the first ever in ODIs.

BEST YEAR

SACHIN: Tendulkar hit 9 hundreds in 1998 at the age of 25.
VIRAT: Kohli hit 6 hundreds in both 2017 and 2018 at the age of 29 and 30.

30-PLUS RECORD

Sachin: 15/ Virat: 11
Tendulkar remarkably played 149 One-Day Internationals after turning 30. Between the age of 30 and 35 - Kohli's age - he hit 8 of these 15 centuries.

LONGEST PHASE WITHOUT A HUNDRED

SACHIN: 31 Jan 2007 to 2 Mar 2008 36 innings; 1 year 2 months.
VIRAT: 14 Aug 2019 to 10 Dec 2022 25 innings; 3 years 4 months.

Icon equals idol

Kohli and Indian cricket's unquestionable patriarch were much more than teammates and their connection was far more personal than between any teacher and student

SANDEEP DWIVEDI
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

AFTER HIS long emotional farewell at the Wankhede Stadium on November 16, 2013, Sachin Tendulkar was finally sitting all by himself in the dressing room. The fans hadn't left yet, the chants of "Sacheeene, Sacheene" were still echoing outside. During his final goodbye speech, Tendulkar had been continuously taking swigs from a water bottle to push down the lump that repeatedly rose in his throat.

Now he was about to face another tough test in self-restraint. What followed was proof of a special spiritual bond that Tendulkar shares with his successor and the man who equalled his record of 49 ODI hundreds in front of a frenzied Eden Gardens crowd - Virat Kohli.

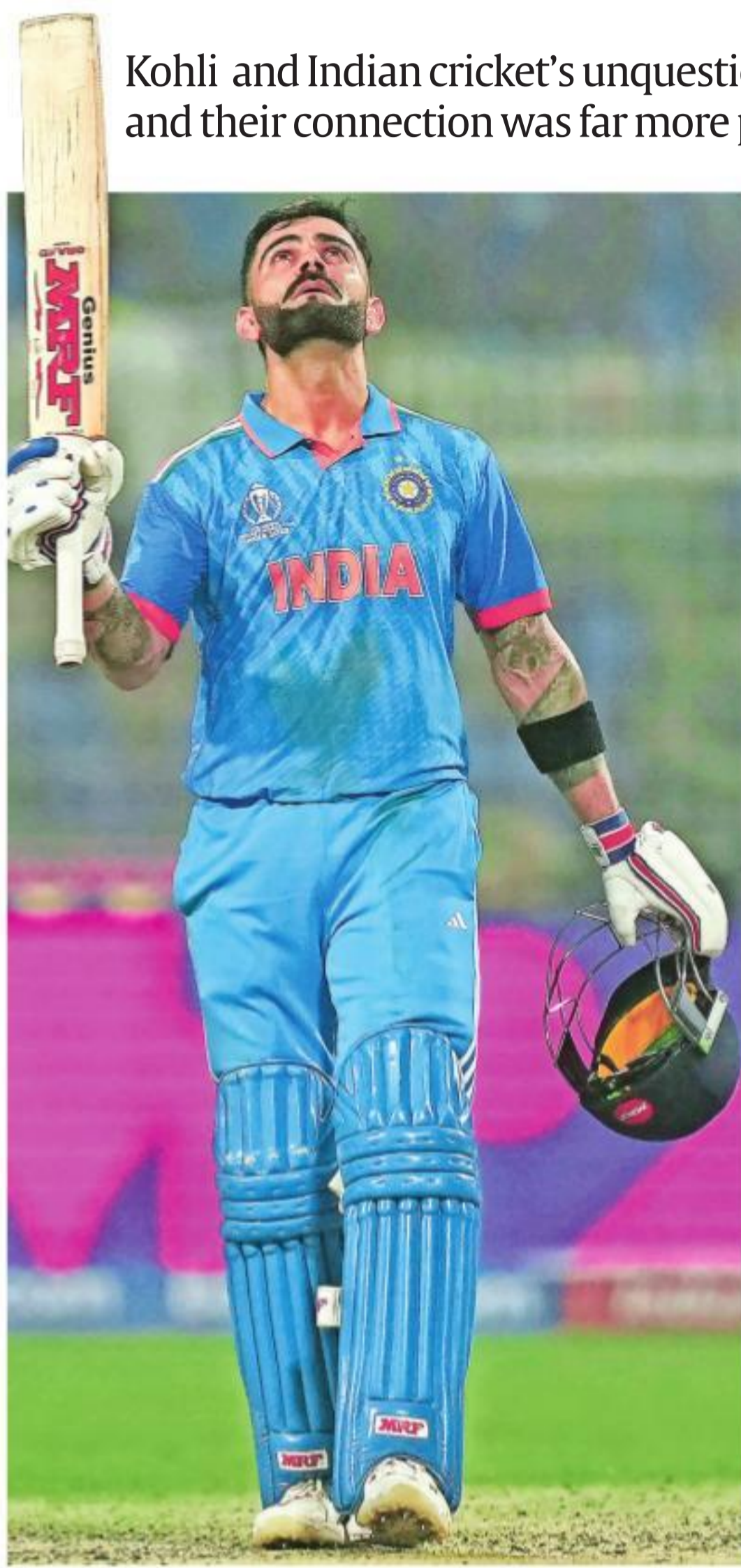
In his autobiography, *Playing it My Way*, Tendulkar had spoken about the brief but solemn moment he had with Kohli on his final day as an international cricketer. Seeing Tendulkar finally alone that day, Kohli had walked up to him with tears in his eyes. In his hands were strands of a few fading threads, the kind worn on wrists for good luck. They were given to him by his late father and he had preserved them for close to seven years.

Kohli wanted Tendulkar to keep them. He would later say that it was the most valuable thing he possessed and he wanted to gift it to his inspiration. Kohli touched his senior's feet and handed him the threads. Tendulkar recalls the moment in his book: "I was speechless. I held him tight and said, 'Arre, tu yeh kya kar raha hai?' (What are you doing touching my feet? You should be giving me a hug)." An overwhelmed Tendulkar would nod his head and ask Kohli to leave, "I would have burst into tears if I had tried to say anything else. It was a gesture I can never forget."

For years, the one Tendulkar-Kohli moment that has stayed imprinted on the nation's retina has been from the 2011 World Cup. Tendulkar on Kohli's shoulders remains the obvious cover picture of modern-day Indian cricket. The frame has gravitas. It captures the passing of the baton, India's uncanny ability to produce champion batsmen, and also celebrates the country's ancient guru-shishya tradition. But what happened away from public view, inside the dressing room, points to a much deeper attachment between two geniuses with more than 15 years of age difference. The boy who lost his father early in life and Indian cricket's unquestionable patriarch were much more than teammates and their connection was far more personal than between any teacher and student.

Guardian angel

In his interviews, Tendulkar often calls Kohli his friend. But for Kohli's generation,



November 5, 2023: Kohli looks skyward on reaching his 49th hundred on Sunday, to be on par with Tendulkar. PTI

Virat after 49th ODI ton

277
Innings
58.48
Average
93.63
Strike Rate
70
50s
49
100s

Sachin after 49th ODI ton

451
Innings
44.81
Average
86.18
Strike Rate
95
50s
49
100s
1
200s



March 16, 2012: Tendulkar after scoring his 49th ODI hundred, his 100th international ton, versus Bangladesh in Mirpur. Reuters

To equal my hero's record is something special for me. He is perfection when it comes to batting. But I am never going to be as good as him... I know the days where I have been watched him on TV, and just to get that appreciation from him means a lot to me."

VIRAT KOHLI, AFTER EQUALLING TENDULKAR'S ODI CENTURY COUNT

didn't take much time to warm up to his North Zone seniors Bhajji Pa and Yuvi Pa. He too was on Paaji terms with Tendulkar.

In a matter of a few years, they would form the core group that won the 2011 World Cup. On that magical April 2 night, once the team had reached the team hotel, the newly-crowned world champions would party till dawn. Guards were

dropped, inhibitions abandoned. It was in this atmosphere that three young men walked into Tendulkar's room to pour their hearts out. They would tell their Paaji, who had stood by them through thick and thin, what he meant to them.

Tendulkar writes in his book. "The party went on into the early hours of the morning... Anyone could come in and have

a drink and celebrate. In one memorable moment, Virat, Bhajji, Yuvraj went down on their knees and sang: *Tujhme rab dikhta hai yaara mai kya karu* (What to do, my friend, in you we see God himself)."

Tendulkar had motivated severely-ill, but Player of the Tournament Yuvraj Singh, all through the World Cup. He was by Harbhajan's side during Monkeygate. And Kohli too had his reasons. Once during the T20 World Cup in 2016, Kohli was batting when the Eden Gardens giant screen showed Tendulkar. Kohli bowed even as Tendulkar blushed.

Kohli had reached out to this friend a.k.a God when he faced his career's gravest confidence crisis. It was the time

when, according to him, he felt like the loneliest man in the world. In 2014, after a disastrous tour to England, Kohli thought he had forgotten batting. Kohli would call Tendulkar, the oracle with all batting solutions. That would be the all-important first step towards complete healing and launch of Kohli 2.0.

Till date, Tendulkar has been very reluctant to speak about the inputs he gave to the troubled champion. Kohli has been less secretive, he has shared with the world about the batting tweaks he undertook after interacting with Tendulkar. "I came back from England and spoke to Sachin paaji... I told him that I am working on my hip position. He made me realise the importance of a big stride, a forward press against fast bowlers as well. The moment I started doing that with my hip alignment, things started ironing out nicely."

There have been ups and downs in Kohli's career after that but the hip position, big stride, and forward press against fast bowlers have stayed with him. On the day he reached ODI cricket's batting summit, Kohli was ticking all the boxes that Tendulkar had listed long back. One knew it was Kohli's day when very early in the innings, he drove South Africa's most dangerous pacer Kagiso Rabada through the covers. Hip (check), stride (check), press (check). All okay, the 49th was loading.

Handy advice

Tendulkar also shared with his heir-apparent some important batting hacks. One of which was very handy in ODIs - a format where keeping the scoreboard ticking, scoring singles and rotating strike are key. Tendulkar shared with Kohli a trade secret. He asked him to not turn the bat as it was very risky. By placing that bat gently in line of the ball and allowing the pace to automatically take it to the third man region was a wiser way of taking a single.

Growing up, like the rest of India in the 1990s, Tendulkar was Kohli's die-hard hero too. He would buy nibbles and cold drinks and be glued to the television when his idol batted. In case Tendulkar got out chasing a steep target, he couldn't sleep. Kohli would lie in bed dreaming how he would one day finish those tight India games.

Since those days of staring at the roof of his West Delhi home and thinking of reaching for the stars beyond it, Kohli has come a long way. By scoring the 49th ODI hundred, he is now on par with Tendulkar. Having reached the target in 277 innings - Tendulkar needed 452 outings - Kohli is expected to take the record to a height where it might not be humanly possible to match.

But still crossing the Tendulkar milestone on his birthday didn't seem like a protégé being on par with his master or a student turning out to be better than the teacher. It felt more like a devotee reaching an important shrine on an auspicious day during his long pilgrimage.

ONE HAND ON THE CUP?

Team India juggernaut looks unstoppable after putting SA through grinder

SANDIP G
KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 5

LIKE A screaming unstoppable truck speeding along an expressway, India is smashing to smithereens every obstacle on their path to glory. South Africa was supposedly the stiffest challenge yet, the second on the points table, attack-minded batsmen and all-bases covered bowling bunch, yet they were rendered utterly wretched, hopelessly hopeless, so abysmally humiliated that it would a freakish conjunction of stars to stop India's march to lifting the World Cup.

South Africa's coach Rob Walters was at a loss of words to capture the excellence of India. "What should I say? All I can say is that this is a hell of a team. Hell of a team." He was asked whether the pitch that offered assistance for the spinners surprised them. He thought hard and replied: "The scoreboard says it all. There are no two ways about it."

The scoreboard, an old-fashioned manual one, read: India 326 for 5; South Africa 83. A 243-run victory in what was perceived as the biggest match of the tournament.

Four weeks into the tournament, no box remains to be ticked; no base required to be covered, no force seemingly strong enough to stop them, no group driven enough to stall them. Their transformation was ludicrously

swift and magical. A couple of months ago, even at the start of the tournament, no one expected India to be outright favourites. There were cracks and crevices, doubts about the form and fitness of individuals, suspicion of their combination.

Yet in the space of a month, they have emerged as the most rounded, ruthless, and driven side. An unbreakable winning machine, functioning by an alignment of supremely-skilled cricketers at the peak of their prowess, feeding off their own motivation as well as riding the rousing support of the home crowd.

No other Indian team has won eight games in a World Cup, let alone winning eight on the spin. No other Indian team, even the 2011, blazed the aura of fear and halo of intimidation than this team. Few other Indian teams had a readymade answer to every tricky question thrown at them. Few other teams in this edition have made winning look so effortless, or executed their plans as clinically as the merry band of Rohit Sharma.

The punches India flung were so powerful that South Africa were knocked out several times in the Eden ring. But mercilessly, India pulled them again to feet and shower more blows on their already battered minds.

First was Rohit, who launched an unabashed assault on their new-ball pair, Lungi



The Ravindra Jadeja box was ticked on Sunday as he scored 29 off 15 and took 5 for 33 at the Eden Gardens. Partha Paul

Ngidi and Marco Jansen. The Indian captain knew that the pitch would be difficult to bat on after the new ball loses its sheen and the spinners stride in. So Rohit threw caution to the wind, taking India to 61 runs in five overs. The onslaught was not preplanned but in-

No other Indian team has won eight games in a World Cup, let alone winning eight on the spin.

stinctive, he would say during the presentation. He departed, but Kohli and Gill sustained the momentum till the 10th over. Keshav Maharaj produced a ripper made in left-arm spinner's heaven that castled Gill. The ball had begun to rip, grip and turn. But no situation flusters them.

But so experienced is the batting, so deep their understanding of the game so prepared are they with the plans that they know the right responses. So Virat Kohli dropped the anchor, sucking the blood out of South Africa's resolve, drop by drop, leaving them lifeless. Shreyas Iyer played along, stifling his attacking impulses, but not out of fear but retreating only to leap longer and further. The early storm weathered, he became the storm himself, whipping fear and fury.

The first 34 balls yielded 11 runs. In the next 53 balls, he cracked 66 on a track where Maharaj extracted staggering side-spin, where the odd ball spat viciously. Kohli would play the selfless side-kick role. He bit his ego, eschewed the big shots and calmly dragged them along.

He would later dwell on the game-situation simulation during the nets. "We had a lot of practice sessions before the Asia Cup. In those sessions Shreyas and I invariably batted together, because we knew we were Nos 3 and 4. In the middle I told him, 'This is the partnership, this is the partnership.'" This was the partnership. They added 134 runs, 51 runs more than South Africa mustered. Ravindra Jadeja's late blitz stormed India to a total their opponent coach reckoned was "at least 70-80 runs more than we had thought."

A sense of inevitability

The chase was over before it even began. It's now an inevitability - India's seamers running the top-order ragged, making them see sixes and sevens.

This was a batting line-up that has stacked five 350-plus totals in the previous seven games. But here, they were ruthlessly dismantled. Just 10 balls into the game, Mohammed Siraj disarranged the stumps of the highest run-getter of the series, Quinton de Kock. His captain and opening partner, Temba Bavuma would not last long. Half an hour later, the match was effectively over, with South Africa losing the top six for 59 runs.

There is no respite, or breathing space. Threat comes in various forms. You endure the seamers, the spinners would chasten

you. Sharma introduced Jadeja as early as ninth over, and by the time he was into his ninth over, he had five wickets to his name. With the ball spinning - not as much as it did in daylight - Jadeja did Jadeja things. He would land the ball on length within the stumps and spin it either way, mix the pace, shuffle the trajectories and points of release. Three of his wickets were bowled; one was leg before the wicket.

His all-rounder performance could go unnoticed and unsung, but Rohit would praise him: "Jadeja has been really good. Big match-winner. He keeps doing the job, goes under the radar but today is a classic case of what he does - score late runs and take wickets."

Thus, from top to bottom, there are match-winners.

Read aloud the margin of India's wins - by six wickets, eight wickets, seven wickets, seven wickets, by four wickets, 100 runs, 302 runs, 300 runs and 243 runs. This is a team that is hitting higher notes with every game. Like Walters admitted, "a hell of a team" or a screeching unstoppable truck speeding along an expressway.

BRIEF SCORES: India: 326 for 5 (Virat Kohli 101 not out, Shreyas Iyer 77) beat South Africa: 83 all out in 27.1 overs (Ravindra Jadeja 5/33, Mohammed Shami 2/18, Kuldeep Yadav 2/7) by 243 runs

STANDINGS

	M	W	L	T	PTS	NRGK
Ind (Q)	8	8	0	0	16	2.456
SA (Q)	8	6	2	0	12	1.376
Aus	7	5	2	0	10	0.924
NZ	8	4	4	0	8	0.398
Pak	8	4	4	0	8	0.036
Afg	7	4	3	0	8	-0.330
SL	7	2	5	0	4	-1.162
Ned	7	2	5	0	4	-1.398
Ban	7	1	6	0	2	-1.446
Eng	7	1	6	0	2	-1.504

SHORT TAKES

Pulmonologist, air purifiers, sprinklers: WC match in Delhi

New Delhi: Independent consultation with a pulmonologist, implementation of water sprinklers around the premises, installation of air purifiers in the dressing rooms and match officials areas, and hoping for the conditions to improve – these are some of the mitigating actions taken by the BCCI and ICC as toxic haze and poor air quality continues to surround the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi ahead of the World Cup fixture between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka here on Monday.

Both teams cancelled one training session each this week, as air quality levels have stayed in the 'severe' category for four consecutive days. According to the Union Government's 'early warning system', it is expected to stay that way up until Tuesday. As of 9am, Delhi reported an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 461 on Sunday.

While air quality can be an external circumstance out of the organisers' control, the scheduling of a 50-over international cricket match in the first week of November in New Delhi remains contentious. This is the fifth consecutive year that the AQI has been rated as 'severe' for at least three days in the first week of November. Preparations suggest the match will go on, the final call for which will have to be taken by match officials and the umpires on Monday itself.

"It's not ideal, but we have no choice. We have to play in the condition in front of us," said Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusinghe in his pre-match press conference, adding that they have aimed to reduce players' exposure to the toxic air, also keeping asthmatic players indoors.

When skipper Kusal Mendis was asked if they have requested to get the game moved out of the city, team media manager Mahinda Halangoda protectively stepped in to answer on his part, denying they have made any requests, instead having only been in touch with the ICC to understand their measures to deal with the pollution. "We plan to go ahead as the ICC guides us," he said.

-NAMIT KUMAR

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

Iyer's skilled six, Maharaj's salvo and quick reviews

Eden Gardens' plea: 'Kohli ko bowling do'

The Indian bowling attack ripped through the formidable South African batting lineup on with the Proteas losing 7 wickets inside 19 overs in a chase of 326 runs. So dominant was the performance that the Eden Gardens crowd emulated their Wankhede counterparts, chanting "Kohli ko bowling do" (Give the ball to Kohli). The chants to give Kohli the ball have been the hot topic in this World Cup ever since he rolled his arms in the match against Bangladesh after Hardik Pandya's injury.



Virat vs Kagiso: The battle of bat and ball

The first exchanges between Virat Kohli and Kagiso Rabada was classical Test match. Rabada probing his outside the off-stump, mixing his length, tempting him to drive and Kohli waiting for the ripe ball to drive. Rabada bowled one slightly fuller and Kohli punch-drove imperiously through extra cover. Rabada roared back with a ball that straightened a wee bit to beat his outside edge. He almost had him chopped on the next ball. Rabada shook his head in despair, Kohli smiled sheepishly.



Crowds outside Eden Garden line up with Virat Kohli cutouts ahead of the World Cup match. Partha Paul

Shubman loses wicket to old-school plans

Like Mohammed Shami, Keshav Maharaj's plans are format-agnostic. He too sticks to the classical old-school plans that have worked in cricket for ages. Shami keeps the ball up, giving it enough time in the air to swing. He also makes the ball pitch on seam, helping it to cut in or go away without losing pace. Maharaj has the stock ball that bowlers of his tribe have used to outfox right-handers since the time the game was invented. He gives the ball flight, gets it to drift to the leg-side and also gives it a heavy tweak. It's the tweak that pulls the ball back, makes it break towards the off-stump and also gives it that extra bounce that makes batsmen uncomfortable. Against the batsmen inclined to flick the ball off their pads - most Indians - this is a perfect opening move. Shubham Gill tried the same with Maharaj and was foxed. As we speak Maharaj is trying the same against Virat Kohli and Shreyas Iyer. Oh, the thrill of watching a spinner in pomp.



After perfect batting start, Maharaj pegs Indians back

In the build-up to the game, Australia captain turned commentator Ricky Ponting, who spent half his afternoon observing the pitch, inferred that this is a new-ball wicket. Turned out to be exactly that. For the first 10 overs, the pitch seemed a batting beauty. No ball misbehaved or threatened to misbehave. But as soon as the spinner Keshav Maharaj came on, and the new ball lost some of its gloss, the pitch began to throw a few tantrums.



It spun and gripped, some stopped at the batsmen, some didn't bounce much. If strike rotation was hard, finding fours was turning out to be harder. But the 91 runs in the first 10 overs meant there was a cushion for a lull. Virat has just put on a cap and sent his helmet in. It means two things - spinners from both ends and Kohli isn't sweeping. Isn't sweeping left-arm spinner Maharaj a good play?

Iyer's jailbreak four



Shreyas Iyer decided it was time he shifted through the gears. Against spinners, he usually shimmies down the track and lifts them straight down the ground. Here, he chose sophistry. He bent awkwardly and decided to paddle Tabraiz Shamsi behind the wicket. But the ball spun more than he thought and he ended up scooping it past the keeper. The connection was feeble, but Iyer had the jailbreak four he was looking for.

Jansen's nightmarish start



The usually accurate Marco Jansen had a nightmarish start. His second ball of the first over was a standard wide. But the next one was so wide that it screamed past the keeper and the leg-slip. His ploy was clear. In a bid to correct his length, he ended up over-correcting. The next ball was a wide on the off-side that crashed into the boots of the first slip. He would bowl one more wide and concede one more four in what turned out to be a 17-run over.

Ngidi troubles with a yorker to Kohli



For the first time in a long while, Virat Kohli was in some trouble there. From yorkers, in particular. First it was Lungi Ngidi in the 40th over, with a surprise yorker that Kohli just about dug out. Then Kagiso Rabada speared in another yorker in the next over, and yet again Kohli quickly took his trespassing front leg out of the danger area, and jammed his bat in the path, and the ball rolled off the inner edge. As an related aside, the dearth of yorkers in modern-day cricket is quite a mystery. Wasim Akram once explained how bowling yorkers takes a lot out of the bowlers as they have to tweak their release a bit, by extending their arm as far out as possible and the effort in the release.

Iyer's highly-skillful hit on Shamsi



A most-gorgeous and highly-skillful six from Shreyas Iyer arrived in the 28th over. Tabraiz Shamsi had looped it up on a length, and

Shreyas stretched well forward, without leaving his crease, and let his hands go through the line with consummate ease. The stretch itself isn't nothing to gasp about, but the fluidity in that bat-swing isn't common. Often, in such positions, we have seen batsman end up chipping the ball as they know they aren't quite upto the pitch of the ball. Or at times, they let go of the bottom-hand and just go with the top-hand to try get that fluidity. Not Shreyas. At least this time. Everything synced up gorgeously: from the stretch to the bat swing.

Two reviews in quick succession for India



Ravindra Jadeja gets his second. Jadeja wanted this to be reviewed. Rohit Sharma was not interested at first sight, but after bowler's request, Indian skipper went upstairs! It was pitched in line, the impact was in line, and wickets were hitting. Dharmasena reversed his decision. Klaasen can't believe it. Soon, another successful review came from India and half of the South African side was back in the hut. Shami wanted a Rassie van der Dussen lbw to be reviewed immediately, and so does KL Rahul, as both the players signal for the 'T'. Rohit reviews it and it's all three red.

ASIAN CHAMPIONS TROPHY

India emerge champions after near-perfect week

Stands full, crowd outside follows action on screens

VINAYAKK MOHANARANGAN
RANCHI, NOVEMBER 5

SAVITA PUNIA did not have much to do in the early part of the Asian Champions Trophy in Ranchi. It would not be an exaggeration to say she had to work harder in the pre-tournament press conference where she was bombarded with questions than in the first two matches against Thailand and Malaysia. On Sunday, on the night of the final, the Indian captain came up with a massive performance as India defeated Japan to win the ACT title for the first time since 2016.

Sangita Kumari (17'), Neha (46'), Lalremsiami (57') and Vandana Katariya (60') were the scorers as India finished their assignment in Ranchi with seven wins in seven matches.

If you are wondering how the plaudits go to a goalkeeper in a match where the scoreline reads 4-0, the final in front of packed stands once again, was closer than that suggests. Savita came up with multiple saves on the night to keep her side in the lead, first in the second quarter when she was sharp from a series of Penalty Corners for Japan. Then came the big moment in the final quarter when Japan won a Penalty Stroke. With sufficient time left in the match, a goal there would have brought Japan in the game. But the Indian captain put out her left foot in time to prevent the ball from going in.

India then hit Japan on the counter to add gloss to the scoreline with two late goals. Jude Menezes – the Indian Olympian who has spent a considerable time between the post would say, "Savita kept them in the con-



The Indian women's team won seven out of seven games in the Asian Champions Trophy and defeated Japan in the final on Sunday. Hockey India

test early. A goal then, and it would have been a different game. And with that stroke save too, she absolutely changed the game basically," Menezes said.

Hard yards

On the first rest day of the tournament, only the Indian goalkeepers trained. But that wasn't new for Savita. As she had said then, they have always put in the hard yards especially after the arrival of head coach Janneke Schopman. The former Dutch star puts them through the paces every chance she gets, and training for quick reflexes to making back-to-back saves and getting ready to deal with Penalty Strokes is how majority of the session

was spent. And it is exactly on those fronts that Savita delivered. The 33-year-old doesn't wear her heart on the sleeve but she put her stick up and punched the air quietly, as she pointed to the dugout. As if to tell her coach that those extra hours paid off on the night that mattered.

"I know she is always ready," Schopman said after the match. "Today she stepped up when we needed her. It's good for her, she is a good goalkeeper. Not that I want too many balls on goal, but she stopped all of them and it was good to see."

India and Japan had met each other twice already in the last month. First, in the bronze medal match at the Asian Games where India bounced back after a heartbreaking defeat in

the semifinal against China. Then in the group stage in Ranchi, another close match was edged 2-1 by Japan. And for the most part, it seemed like this was destined to be a close one too.

Neha and Navneet Kaur, who have played so much together in their careers from their days in Haryana, combined to release Sangita Kumari down the right. India's leading goalscorer in the tournament (6) didn't make a mistake. The second quarter saw Japan fight back before an even, end-to-end, sometimes scrappy third quarter.

Then came a dramatic final quarter. India extended their lead early as Deepika found Deep Grace Ekka with a superb back-flick. Deep – the player of the match – got the shot away on goal, Neha got the final touch. After Savita's save of the stroke, it was Lalremsiami who scored from another PC rebound. After struggling most of the tournament with the short corners, India picked the right night to step things up a notch.

"Sometimes the girls just need a little bit of a wake-up call. I didn't even show them the PCs from the semifinal, I just told them it wasn't just good enough. We were all making mistakes. I said to them, 'don't have to score all the time, but execute'. Today one of the players decided themselves on a variation. That's where growth is in the tournament," Schopman added.

In the end, after back-to-back tournaments in the space of a month, India would have perhaps liked to win the title more in Hangzhou (with Olympic qualification on the line) given the option to pick one. But Schopman has been saying all week, "I know we are a good team," and Savita Punia's side showed just that.

VINAYAKK MOHANARANGAN
RANCHI, NOVEMBER 5

AROUND 5 PM on Sunday, when Virat Kohli was edging towards his 49th century in ODIs at Eden Gardens in Kolkata, crows had tuned in to the official streaming platform for the World Cup. One of those many crows concurrent views was from a tea stall about a kilometer away from Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh AstroTurf Hockey Stadium in Ranchi. Three young men sat at the table, watching the World Cup match.

The three of them had come just around 2 pm to the stadium where the Jharkhand Women's Asian Champions Trophy final was scheduled to take place... at 8.30 pm later that day. And yet, looking at the length of the queue that had formed six-and-a-half hours before the match, they decided to take their place at the bench, for now watching the cricket match. They still had a few hours before India took on Japan in the title clash.

A few metres one side of the tea stall there was a massive queue of people trying to get through Gate No 4, a line that extended to at the very least a kilometer. A few metres on the other side, outside Gate No 3 there was a massive crowd waiting, being told through speakers by the security that the doors were now shut. Outside the hockey stadium, there was an open ground with screens put up to which the fans were being redirected.

The stadium was already packed to the limits in the stands that were open to the public. It was free entry, sure, but the scenes one hour



Outside the stadium was a ground with screens put up to which fans were redirected. Vinayakk Mohanarangan

before the third-place match between China and Japan told its own story.

The atmosphere was a matter of happiness for the Hockey India president and former national captain Dilip Tirkey. He says, "I saw outside that there was a big crowd even where the giant screens have been set up. Excellent crowd, it's a small stadium for hockey in Ranchi. In the future, we have to think about this too, for promoting and developing the game in the state of Jharkhand."

All through the tournament, the stadium in Ranchi was full and the craze for hockey has been evident. But on Sunday, it went up a notch or two. In the end however, there were some unfortunate scenes at one of the stadium gates. With the pressure on the gates growing, the security personnel had to resort to force to disperse the crowd. An eventful tournament certainly headed to a drama-filled end outside the Astro Turf too.