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CHARTERED PLANE LEAVES KOCHI WITH SOME IRAN SAILORS, BODIES OF OTHERS KILLED IN U.S. ATTACK NEAR SRI LANKA

Will try our best: Iran envoy on safe passage for India-bound fuel ships

Two LPG tankers are reported to be transiting Strait of Hormuz

Shubhajt Roy
New Delhi, March 13



Mohammad Fathali (right), Iran's envoy to India, and Abdul Majid Hakeem Ilahi, Supreme Leader's representative, in New Delhi. ANI

2 INDIANS KILLED AS DOWNED DRONE FALLS IN OMAN CITY P 6

The Reuters news agency reported that Iran had allowed two Indian-flagged LPG carriers to sail through the Strait of Hormuz. Quoting sources, it identified the vessels as Shivalik and Nanda Devi.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

As BRICS chair, condemn attacks on Iran: Tehran's message to New Delhi

Along with Iran, grouping also has the UAE, Saudi Arabia as members

Shubhajt Roy
New Delhi, March 13

TEHRAN IS learnt to have reached out to Delhi to take the lead in issuing a statement on behalf of the BRICS, currently chaired by India, condemning the US and Israeli strikes against

Iran in the last two weeks. This has put Delhi in a diplomatic pickle since it has stayed away from taking sides in the ongoing conflict. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken to leaders of the countries in the region

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

DHARMA SWATANTRYA BILL, 2026 Maharashtra Bill on 'unlawful' conversion: Mother's first religion for child out of wedlock

Vallabh Ozarkar & Omkar Gokhale
Mumbai, March 13



Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis at Vidhan Bhavan in Mumbai, Friday. AKASH PATIL

IN A provision that appears to go beyond anti-conversion laws enacted in several states, the Dharma Swatantrya Bill, 2026, tabled in the Maharashtra Assembly on Friday, states that a child born from a marriage arising out of an "unlawful" religious conversion will be considered to belong to the religion followed by the mother before such a marriage/relationship.

While some states like Haryana recognise inheritance

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Seeking ouster of 'partisan' CEC, Opposition submits notices in both Houses

120 MPs in LS, 73 in RS sign notice

Asad Rehman
New Delhi, March 13

CITING CHARGES including "partisan and discriminatory conduct" and "obstruction of investigation into electoral fraud and SIR" (Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls), the Opposition on Friday submitted notices in both Houses of Parliament for an impeachment motion against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar.

A senior TMC MP told *The Indian Express* that 120 Lok Sabha members and 73 Rajya Sabha members had signed the notice. "A total of 17 Opposition parties have supported the notice. It has been submitted in both Houses," the MP said.

As per procedure, the notice has to be signed by at least 100 members if moved in the Lok

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPRESS interview



WILL WIND UP ARMED OPS IF OUR PARTY IS LEGALISED, SAYS SURRENDERED MAOIST DEVIJI REPORT, PAGE 6

Delhi SIR preparations crawl, CEO tells depts to let BLOs focus on task

Devansh Mittal
New Delhi, March 13

FLAGGING THE slow progress of preparatory work for the revision of electoral rolls in Delhi, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Delhi, has asked government departments to ensure that teachers and other officials deployed as Booth Level Officers (BLOs) are not assigned additional duties

after office hours, so they can carry out the necessary field-work relating to the revision.

The letter has noted that the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the capital is expected to begin next month, that the preparatory exercise has progressed slowly — with only about 30 per cent of the required "mapping" exercise having been completed so far.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Business as Usual By EP UNNY



BOOK LPG ONLY IF NEEDED: GOVT - PAGE 6

Oil price rise: Market sinks 5% in a week, logs worst 4-yr weekly fall

Akash Mandal
Mumbai, March 13

THE DOMESTIC stock market fell more than five per cent this week, marking its steepest weekly decline in nearly four years, driven by surging crude oil prices linked to the ongoing conflict in West Asia that has kept investors on edge. Since the crisis began late last month, companies listed on the BSE have collectively lost about Rs 34 lakh crore in investor

ECONOMY PAGE 13

WHY FPIs ARE DUMPING INDIAN STOCKS, PUSHING RUPEE DOWN

wealth even as the benchmark stock indices have dropped roughly eight per cent.

On Friday, the Sensex index ended 1.9 per cent, or 1,470.50

points, lower at 74,563.92 points as foreign investors went on a selling spree. The Nifty 50 closed 2.1 per cent lower at 23,151.10 points.

Both the indices are currently trading around their lowest levels in around a year. Despite reaching record highs on a couple of occasions, both have been in a consolidation phase over the past 18-24 months. They are now near February 2024 levels.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Happening today

PM NARENDRA Modi will address a rally at the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata and inaugurate various projects.

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Breakfast with President

President Droupadi Murmu hosts MPs from various states and nominated members of the Rajya Sabha for breakfast, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

CASH-FOR-QUERY CASE

SC raises doubts on HC order, issues notice to Mahua

Express News Service
New Delhi, March 13

THE SUPREME Court on Friday expressed prima facie doubts about the Delhi High Court order that set aside the sanction granted by the Lokpal to the CBI to file a chargesheet against TMC MP Mahua Moitra in relation to the cash-for-query row.

Issuing notice to Moitra on an appeal filed by the Lokpal, a bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joydeep Chatterjee said the anti-corruption ombudsman need not, for now, comply with the HC's December 19, 2025, direction asking it to take a fresh decision on the sanction within a month.

The bench said it will examine the interplay between sections 20(7) (a) and 20(8) of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. "We are not permitting the prosecution as of now. The (Lokpal) order has been set aside. What Mr Ranjit Kumar (appearing for Lokpal) wants is the direction upon his client to pass a composite order which as per the interpretation of the Lokpal Act (which) we prima facie agree maybe an incorrect reading of section 20(7) and section 20(8)," the bench said.

Section 20(7) (a) says that the Lokpal, after considering reports from agencies and after obtaining the comments of the competent authority and the public servant concerned, may grant sanction to its prosecution wing or investigating agency to file a chargesheet or direct closure of a report against a public servant before the special court.

Section 20(8) says that the Lokpal may, after taking a decision under sub-section (7) (a) on the filing of the chargesheet, direct its prosecution wing or any investigating agency (including the Delhi Special Police Establishment) to initiate prosecution in the special court in respect of the cases investigated by the agency.

Setting aside the November 12, 2025, Lokpal order granting sanction to file a chargesheet, the high court said the anti-corruption ombudsman had wrongly interpreted sections 20(7)(a) and 20(8) to mean two separate sanctions. The HC had asked the Lokpal "to accord its consideration for grant of sanction under Section 20 of the Lokpal Act, strictly in accordance with provisions thereof as construed hereinabove, within one month from today."

After ASI restores Netaji cap at Red Fort museum, his grandnephew alleges item not original

Divya A
New Delhi, March 13

A DAY after Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's grandnephew, Chandra Kumar Bose, alleged that the freedom fighter's cap had gone missing from the Netaji Museum at Red Fort in Delhi, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) clarified on Friday that it was in safe custody after being taken away for an exhibition at Port Blair recently.

However, in a social media post later in the day, Chandra Kumar Bose said that those who had previously seen the cap feel the restored cap was not original. He also sought probe and proper authentication in the matter.

In a post on X on Thursday, Chandra Kumar Bose, a former BJP leader, had said that he and his family members had personally handed over Netaji's cap to PM Narendra Modi. "Dear Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodiji, you may recall that I, along with members of my family, our friend Shri @SuparnoSatpathy and many others from the Open Platform for Netaji (OPN), had handed over Netaji's cap to you. You had personally dedicated it at the Netaji Museum, Red Fort, Delhi on January 23, 2019 — Netaji Jayanti (Patriots' Day of India)," the post said.

He also shared photographs of the event. "A member of OPN, Advocate Naveen Bamel, had recently visited the museum and found Netaji's cap missing. No



Chandra Kumar Bose had said that he and his family members had personally handed over Netaji's cap to PM Narendra Modi. X/@CHANDRAKBOSE

one at ASI could explain where it had gone. Netaji is our tallest leader and this is highly embarrassing. I shall be obliged if you kindly look into this matter," Chandra Kumar Bose said.

Responding to a query by *The Indian Express*, an ASI official said, "The original cap is in safe custody at the Red Fort. The same was taken to Port Blair for display in temporary exhibition during Parakram Divas celebrations. Therefore, the place/display box was empty from January 19 to 25."

However, the official added that after Parakram Divas, the cap was again put on display. However, due to a problem with the lock, it was once again removed and placed in safe custody. "The lock is repaired now, and it will be put on display again today," the official said.

On Friday, Bose said, "Grateful to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodiji for taking prompt action on the #NetajiCap issue."

Bill on 'unlawful' conversion

rights of children born from such marriages, the Maharashtra Bill specifically defines the religion of the child, a feature not explicitly mentioned in many similar laws enacted in recent years.

"Any child born out of marriage or relationship in the nature of marriage, caused due to unlawful conversion shall be deemed to belong to the religion of mother before such marriage or relationship in the nature of marriage," states the Bill.

It also mandates that those intending to change their religion must give 60 days prior notice to the district magistrate and submit post-conversion declarations. It prescribes prison term of seven years and fine up to Rs 5 lakh for violations, with stricter punishment of 10 years and Rs 7 lakh fine for repeat offences.

If the Bill is passed, Maharashtra will become at least the tenth state in recent years to enact a law regulating religious conversions. Among the states that have passed similar laws are: Jharkhand (2017), Uttarakhand (2018), Himachal Pradesh (2019), Uttar Pradesh (2020), Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (2021), Haryana and Karnataka (2022), and Rajasthan (2025).

Citing the absence of such a law and increased instances of "unlawful" religious conversion, including mass conversions, the Maharashtra government had constituted a special panel to study legal issues related to religious conversion and examine laws enacted by other states.

The panel, which included the Director General of Police (DGP), had recommended enacting the Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Act.

According to the statement of objects and reasons attached to the Bill, although the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the right is not absolute and is subject to public order, morality and health.

Besides specifying the religion of the child born from such a marriage, Section 5 of the Bill also stipulates that the child will have inheritance rights to the properties of both parents according to the applicable succession laws. The child will also be entitled to maintenance under Section 144 (order for maintenance of wives, children and parents if any person with sufficient means neglects or refuses to maintain them) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). The Bill provides that custody of the child will remain with the mother unless the court directs otherwise.

The Bill has provided that "unlawful" conversion includes converting a person through allurement, fraud, coercion, misrepresentation, undue influence, influencing through education or other

methods. It has also expanded the scope of "allurement" to include glorifying one religion over another, portraying the customs, rituals, ceremonies or any part of a religion in a harmful manner in comparison with another.

The Bill has widened the scope of "allurement" beyond material benefits of money, gift, employment, better lifestyle along with free education in institutions run by a religious institution, divine healing and promise of marriage.

As per the Bill, "coercion" includes threats of divine displeasure, social boycott, intimidation, or threats to life, property or reputation, along with any form of physical or psychological pressure.

The Bill treats conversion through fraud or misrepresentation, or impersonation as unlawful. This includes situations where a person conceals their religious identity, misrepresents the nature of religious beliefs or practices, or misleads a person about the purpose of a religious activity.

It identifies certain categories as vulnerable, including women, minors and members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Conversions carried out by exploiting such vulnerability would attract stricter penalties.

The Bill also states that if a person converts another through marriage or under the promise of marriage, the conversion would be treated as unlawful. Where a marriage is undertaken solely for the purpose of religious conversion, the Bill provides that a competent court may declare the marriage null and void.

The proposed law introduces a system of prior declaration for individuals intending to change their religion. Any person wishing to convert must submit a written notice to the district magistrate at least 60 days before the proposed conversion. The notice must include personal details including age, occupation, address, present religion, the religion they intend to adopt, and details of the proposed conversion ceremony.

After receiving the notice, the district magistrate or an authorised officer may conduct an inquiry to determine whether the proposed conversion is voluntary and not the result of coercion, fraud or inducement. The district administration may also seek a police inquiry and invite objections regarding the proposed conversion.

The Bill further requires that after the conversion ceremony, both the individual who has converted and the person or organisation conducting the ceremony must submit a declaration to the district authorities within 60 days. The dec-

[FROM PAGE 1 | FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM]

Will try our best: Iran envoy on passage for India-bound ships

Another report by *Reuters* said a chartered plane arranged by Iran departed Kochi late Friday, carrying some sailors from a naval vessel that had docked in India, as well as the bodies of crew members killed in a US submarine attack off Sri Lanka.

Speaking to reporters in New Delhi after an event to mark the Al-Quds Day, Fathali, on being asked whether Iran would allow India-bound ships safe transit through the Strait of Hormuz, said, "Yes. Because India and I are friends. You can see the future, and I think after two or three hours... Because we believe that. We believe that Iran and India are friends. We have common interests, we have common faith."

"Suffering of the people of India is our suffering and vice versa. And for this reason, the Government of India helps us, and we should help the Government of India because we have a common faith and common interest."

Sources in the government said there have been "multiple conversations at multiple levels" and "layers of conversation" between India and Iran over the past 24 hours. And, the negotiations are "delicately poised" since the lives of so many Indians are at stake.

Sources said it is "work in progress" and the intent is to get as many Indians out of the blocked waterway — there are

around 800 Indian seafarers on 28 ships stranded in the Strait of Hormuz.

While Iran maintains Tehran has not closed the Strait, sources said that insurance companies have not been guaranteeing the movement of ships in the last two weeks because of the volatile situation.

Fathali said, "We have a good relation with the Government of India, and our officials talked yesterday with the Indian government and its officials. I think we should pray to Allah to remove all the obstacles in different fields. As for your question, we will try our best to remove the problems. I think you can expect good news in the near future."

Asked about the phone conversations between leaders of India and Iran over the last few days, he said they have had "good conversations".

"And Mr (Narendra) Modi and Mr (Masoud) Pezeshkian believe that they should try their best. Because several times we have announced that we don't want war, but we are ready for war. Iran re-entered the negotiations with the United States, but unfortunately they disturbed and destroyed the negotiations. Now we are saying to all the governments that Iran doesn't want war, but Iran is ready for war," Fathali said, adding, "Iran prefers peace."

Opp notice seeks CEC's removal

Sabha and 50 members in the Rajya Sabha. This is the first time a notice is being moved for the removal of a CEC.

However, the Opposition's move is largely symbolic, given the ruling NDA's clear numerical advantage in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. But it has political significance as it comes days before the EC is expected to announce the Assembly election schedule for the states of West Bengal, Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

According to sources, the Opposition has listed several charges against the CEC, including "proven misbehavior", "partisan and discriminatory conduct", "SIR exercise and mass disenfranchisement", "compromised appointment", "obstruction of investigation into electoral fraud and SIR", "contempt of Supreme Court", and "failure to maintain independence".

Speaking to reporters inside the Parliament complex, TMC's Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra said the required number of signatures have been collected. "We have got more than enough numbers," she said.

The TMC, led by West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, has taken the initiative for the move against the CEC, with senior party MPs being at the forefront of collecting signatures of Opposition MPs. While the SIR has remained a contentious exercise in several states, it has been especially controversial in Bengal.

Market sinks 5% in a week, logs worst 4-yr weekly fall

The rupee also closed at a record low of 92.46, down 26 paise, against the dollar.

Foreign institutional investors pulled out Rs 10,716 crore (around \$ 1.16 billion) from the cash market on Friday, according to exchange data. FIIs have taken out Rs 56,800 crore (\$ 6.14 billion) in March so far.

Crude oil prices have remained above or around the \$100 per barrel mark over the last few days as supply has been disrupted due to the conflict in West Asia. Refineries across key oil markets such as Iran, Qatar and the UAE have been hit as part of the conflict, forcing the shutdown of large capacities.

Iran has unofficially maintained a chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, a key trade waterway through which 20-25 per cent of the global crude oil supply is transported. The Iranian military has also targeted multiple ships attempting to navigate through the waterway, including at least one India-bound ship.

The situation has led to a shortage of liquefied natural gas in several parts of the country, and the potential impact of the exorbitant crude prices on corporate earnings have caused jitters in the market. Crude is among the most essential raw materials across a host of industries. It is also the biggest cost in India's import bill, thus putting the rupee too under pressure against the dollar.

"While our forex reserves can help us to manage price risk, availability of energy supply is a challenge. Till there

is visibility about the reduction in severity as well as length of the conflict, downward movement in the market is likely to persist," said Nilesh Shah, MD and CEO of Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company.

The benchmark equity indices — BSE's Sensex and NSE's Nifty 50 — may fall another 2-5 per cent from current levels as the war extends for another couple of weeks and crude prices remain above the \$100 per barrel mark, according to G Chokkalingam, founder of Equinomics Research.

The India VIX index, which indicates volatility in the market, remained elevated on Friday. The index shot up almost 14 per cent during the week to levels last seen when US President Donald Trump first announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs in April 2025.

All sectoral indices of NSE ended deep in the red on Friday. Metals lost five per cent, while automobiles and public-sector banks fell nearly four per cent. Broader markets also closed the session in the red but fared better than the benchmark indices over the week. The NSE's small-cap indices have fallen around four per cent over the week, while the mid-cap indices have lost around 4.5 per cent.

The underperformance is not limited to Indian markets, with high crude prices sending shockwaves across global bourses. The US markets have lost as much as two per cent over the week. Asian markets such as South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong fell up to three per cent.

Condemn attacks on Iran: Tehran to Delhi

targeted by Iran, condemned the attacks and thanked them for looking after the Indian community "in these difficult times".

On Thursday night, Modi spoke to Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian and expressed "deep concern over the escalation of tensions and the loss of civilian lives as well as damage to civilian infrastructure".

In a post on X following the phone call, Modi said he "urged for dialogue and diplomacy" and "reiterated India's commitment to peace and stability".

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also spoke to his Iranian counterpart Seyed Abbas Araghchi Thursday night — their fourth conversation since the outbreak of hostilities on February 28. In a post on X Friday, Jaishankar said they "discussed bilateral matters as also BRICS related issues".

The BRICS grouping has Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (the original five), along with Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Indonesia. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which host US bases and personnel, have been targeted by Iranian missiles and drones. The fact that all three countries are in the BRICS has made diplomatic navigation difficult for India.

India, which holds the rotational presidency of the grouping for 2026, is expected to host the summit of BRICS leaders

later this year.

A readout by the Iranian government in Persian said Araghchi "briefed" Jaishankar on the situation arising from the "aggressions and crimes committed" by the US and Israel's "Zionist regime" against Iran and its "consequences on the stability and security of the region and the world". He emphasised the "firm will" of the Iranian government, people and armed forces to exercise the "legitimate right to self-defence against the aggressors".

Araghchi, the Iranian readout stated, emphasised the need for international and regional forums and organisations to "condemn military aggression against Iran". Underlining the "importance of the role and position of BRICS" as a forum for developing multilateral cooperation, he considered it necessary for this institution to play a "constructive role" at the "current juncture to support the stability and security of the region and the world".

According to the phone call, Jaishankar, while announcing India's readiness to develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation in regional and international forums, also emphasised the importance of "finding a way to strengthen stability and sustainable security in the region as a collective need".

Let BLOs focus on task: Delhi CEO

The Election Commission of India (ECI) carried out the SIR in Bihar between June and September last year, and notified the second phase of the exercise, covering nine states and three Union Territories, in October. The final roll for Uttar Pradesh is yet to be published.

On February 19 this year, the ECI wrote to CEOs of another 17 states and five UTs, including the NCT of Delhi, where the next (third) phase of SIR is expected to commence in April, directing them to complete preparatory work relating to the exercise at the earliest.

On March 10, the CEO's office wrote to the Delhi Directorate of Education, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), and Department of Social Welfare: "Presently, mapping of electors of electoral roll-2025 is being done vis-a-vis electors of year 2002, which is a crucial exercise before start of actual SIR and has to be completed in a time bound manner."

BLOs are required to conduct house-to-house visits in their assigned polling booth areas to collect details from voters and verify them against earlier records. Migrants from states all over the country come to live and work in Delhi, and this exercise is expected to present challenges.

The ECI has directed that BLOs should carry out this work after their regular hours at government schools or offices, and on Sundays and other holidays.

However, the CEO's office said, many BLOs in Delhi were not conducting these house-to-house visits after their regular work hours.

"On enquiry, it has been found that BLOs are assigned additional work by their parent department to be performed after office hours," the letter stated.

"In view of the above," the letter said, "you are requested to kindly direct all the officials under your jurisdiction who have been deployed as BLOs to

perform their BLO duties after office/ school hours on a daily basis."

Additional work should not be assigned to these officials after office hours during the preparatory phase of the revision, the CEO's office said.

The Election Commission had ordered the SIR on June 24 last year, breaking from the past two decades during which no intensive revisions had taken place. Instead, electoral rolls have been revised annually and before each election by adding to and deleting names from the existing rolls.

As part of the SIR, the ECI is preparing the rolls afresh, with the last intensive revision in each state as the base year.

The process has been controversial, with opposition parties accusing the ECI of playing a partisan political role by trying to eliminate certain groups of voters, and have challenged the SIR in the Supreme Court. The ECI has denied allegations of bias and partisan ship.

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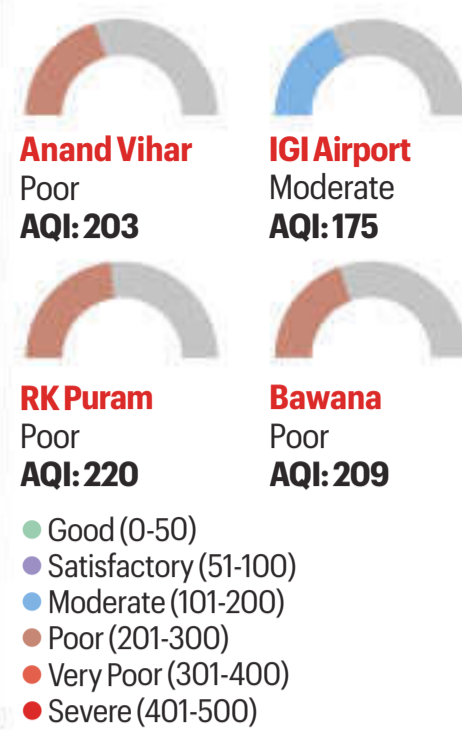
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Forecast:
March 14, 2026
 Partly cloudy sky expected during the day
MAX: 32-34
 7.1°C above normal
MIN: 18-20
 2°C above normal

•Sunrise: 6:32AM (March 15)
 •Sunset: 6:29 PM (March 14)
 •Moonrise: 4:11AM (March 15)
 •Moonset: 1:53AM (March 14)

AQI Tracker



LG Taranjit Singh Sandhu meets Police Commissioner Satish Golchha at Lok Niwas, on Friday. X/SANDHUTARANJITS

LG meets DDA vice chairman, top cop; reviews key challenges

Express News Service
 New Delhi, March 13

A DAY after taking charge as the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Delhi, Taranjit Singh Sandhu hit the ground running by holding meetings with DDA vice chairman and Delhi Police chief on Friday.

"Officers who came to call on him were in for a surprise when the LG started discussing in detail the sectors they represented and the services they were delivering," said a source who was part of the meeting.

The LG also called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhawan, where he also took a round of the Amrit Udyan. Further, he called on Vice President C P Radhakrishnan at the VP enclave, officials said.

In his meeting with the DDA vice chairman, the LG discussed sector specific issues as well as key challenges and opportunities related to the authority, along with initiatives underway to enhance access and transparency, officials added.

While meeting Delhi Police Commissioner Satish Golchha, the LG reviewed challenges related to security, law and order and cybercrime, among others. "Had a good discussion with Satish Golchha, Commissioner of Police, Delhi Police, at Lok Niwas. Reviewed challenges relating to security, law & order, cybercrime and emerging unconventional issues, and discussed responses including innovative approaches," Sandhu said in a post on X. He also met MCD Commissioner Sanjeev Khirwar and discussed issues like waste disposal, and improving transparency and efficiency in the civic body's licensing and enforcement activities, officials said.

MURDER ON HOLI IN UTTAM NAGAR Rs 37L raised with misleading clip, cops launch social media crackdown

Express News Service
 New Delhi, March 13

NEARLY A week after a 26-year-old was killed in West Delhi's Uttam Nagar allegedly over a dispute with neighbours over throwing of a water balloon on Holi, the Delhi Police has launched a crackdown against social media accounts spreading rumours regarding the incident.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Kushal Pal Singh said that police took serious note of misleading and inflammatory content on social media.

A social media account, said police, allegedly uploaded a video on March 10, appealed for financial assistance by raking up emotions in a misleading manner, shared a QR code and collected Rs 37 lakh within just two days.

The police traced the QR code-linked account and contacted bank officials, asking them to block credit and debit transactions. They have also requested that the account be frozen. The police are now investigating whose name the bank account is registered, said officers.

Another 22 social media accounts, officers added, have been identified that were constantly posting misleading and provocative videos.

Twenty-six-year-old Tarun



Security presence was heightened in the area after the incident. FILE

Kumar was beaten to death on March 4 amid a brawl on the day of Holi with neighbours in Uttam Nagar.

Along with investigating the murder case, the police have also been monitoring social media platforms to curb misinformation. Based on this, a case has been registered under the IT Act.

During the investigation, 14 accounts on X (formerly Twitter) were identified. Similarly, eight provocative posts were found on Instagram. The police have contacted the social media platforms and requested them to remove all such content, said officers.

DCP Singh said that spreading false information or rumors on social media is a punishable offense under the law. The police have warned that strict action will be taken against those involved.

BTech student found hanging at apartment on IIT-D campus

Express News Service
 New Delhi, March 13

A FIRST-year undergraduate student at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi was found hanging from a ceiling fan in an apartment located on the campus on Thursday morning, police said.

As per preliminary probe, Harshit Swami - a BTech Civil Engineering student - lived at New Vindhyaal Apartment with his mother, who had gone to her native place two days ago. No suicide note has been found, officers said.

According to police, a PCR call was received around 8.35 am at Kishangarh police station regarding the death. When a police team reached the spot, the student was found hanging from a ceiling fan with the help of a stole. He was declared dead by doctors at the IIT Delhi hospital, they added.

Amit Goel, DCP (Southwest),

said the family does not suspect any foul play. "The statement of the father has been recorded, who expressed no suspicion regarding any foul play. The body was sent to Safdarjung Hospital mortuary for postmortem examination and later handed over to the family," he added.

Based on a written complaint filed by the security officer of IIT Delhi, a case of abetment of suicide has been registered, the DCP said.

In a statement issued on Friday, the IIT expressed "deep sorrow over the tragic and untimely demise" of the student. "The Delhi Police are investigating the tragic incident... In this hour of grief, the institute stands with the bereaved family and is providing them all support," it added.

Earlier in the day, Dean of Student Affairs B K Panigrahi wrote to students and faculty informing them of the death. "His family has already arrived... A

condolence meeting will be fixed by the registrar in due course," the email said.

Urging students to seek support if needed, it added, "This challenging time reminds us of the constant need for us to be there for each other. You are also requested to reach out to the multiple counselling avenues in our system if you need help in coping with this tragedy."

The incident comes amid growing concern about students well-being across IIT campuses. In January, a PhD student at IIT Kanpur had died after he allegedly jumped from the sixth floor of a residential building on the campus. Following the incident, the Union Education Ministry, on January 22, constituted a three-member committee to review cases of student suicides at the institute and recommend measures to prevent such incidents and strengthen mental health and well-being support systems.

2020 NORTHEAST DELHI RIOTS CASE

Court rejects plea seeking FIR against Kapil Mishra

Nirbhay Thakur
 New Delhi, March 13

A DELHI court on Friday dismissed a petition seeking the registration of an FIR against Law Minister Kapil Mishra in connection with the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots.

"The submissions of the counsel for the applicant that (an) FIR be registered for the incident dated 23.02.2020 against proposed accused no. 2 and his associates is legally impermissible at this stage in view of the findings laid down in... the order passed by the Special Judge (PC Act), CBI-09 (MPs-MLAs cases), Rouse Avenue District Court, New Delhi," said Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) Ashwani Panwar of the Rouse Avenue Court.

He added, "The findings are binding on this court and have attained finality. The Special Judge has further held... that Section 531(2)(a) of the BNSS does not apply in this case. Even this finding has attained finality."

Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Panwar rejected the plea by Yamuna Vihar resident Mohammad Ilyas who sought registration of a FIR against Mishra on allegations that he took part in the riots.

ACJM Panwar's predecessor had earlier directed the Delhi Police to investigate

Mishra's alleged role in the riots.

That order was set aside by the Sessions Court whose observations ACJM Panwar relied upon.

Earlier, AJJM Panwar's predecessor, ACJM Vaibhav Chaurasiya, had found Kapil Mishra's police interrogation to be insufficient, noting contradictions in his statements regarding the delivery of a speech that was at the centre of controversy related to the riots.

His order dated April 1, however, was challenged by two separate revision petitions - one filed by the State and the other filed by Mishra himself. Last year, on November 11, both petitions were disposed of and directions for further investigation passed by the ACJM were set aside.

While setting aside the directions, the Sessions court had said: "To initiate legal action, the application should have clearly disclosed the commission of a cognizable offence, which it lacks. To assume cognizable offence, the ACJM relied analogies and inferences from Kapil Mishra's questioning in the larger conspiracy case."

In 2020, communal violence had rocked Northeast Delhi between February 24 and 26, leaving 53 people dead, over 500 injured, and property worth crores damaged.

Don't have Pink Saheli card yet? No need to panic, women can still travel free on buses, says DTC

Gayathri Mani
 New Delhi, March 13

THE DELHI Transport Corporation (DTC) Friday clarified that women residents can continue to travel free in its buses using the existing pink paper ticket system until they obtain the new Pink Saheli Smart Card. It also urged women not to panic or rush to collect the cards, assuring that the distribution process will continue gradually across the city.

"The Government of NCT of Delhi, through DTC, has launched the Pink Saheli Smart Card (National Common Mobility Card) for women residents of Delhi to enable free travel in DTC buses in a more transparent and digital manner. This initiative is part of the national vision of 'One Nation, One Card', promoting seamless and interoperable mobility across public transport systems," officials said.

Launched on March 2 by President Droupadi Murmu, these cards restrict free travel in DTC and cluster buses to women and transgender residents of the Capital. This is unlike the system launched by the previous AAP government in 2019, where all women - even those who were not residents of Delhi - could travel for free on buses run by DTC and cluster bus services.

Officials said eligible women residents of Delhi can obtain the Pink Saheli Smart Card free of cost from designated counters established by DTC across the city.

The government has set up 50 such counters at bus depots, DM and SDM offices. "Women commuters are advised not to worry or rush, as the card distribution will continue smoothly over time and all eligible beneficiaries will be able to obtain

'Will speed up desilting ops': CM unveils 4 amphibious excavators

New Delhi: CM Rekha Gupta on Friday launched four amphibious excavator machines as the government aims to remove over 10 lakh metric tonnes of silt before monsoon at Badusara Bridge, Najafgarh drain and Pankha Road drain.

The CM also underlined that the machines will help clean Yamuna.

"These machines will significantly speed up and improve desilting operations, removal of garbage, and clearing of water hyacinth from the drains. The move is expected to improve water drainage capacity and help reduce waterlogging during the monsoon season," said the CM. ENS



CM Rekha Gupta with Minister Parvash Sahib Singh at the event on Friday. X/@GUPTA_REKHA

existing Pink Paper Ticket system, even if they do not possess the Pink Saheli Smart Card," it added.

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Director (Additional Charge), NCCS

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NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY AND JUDICIAL ACADEMY, ASSAM
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2	Deputy Registrar (Academic)	01	UR
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5	System Operator	01	OBC / MOBC (Assam)
6	Library Restorer	01	OBC / MOBC (Assam)
7	Cook cum Attendant	01	UR

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Sd/- Registrar

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ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, GUWAHATI
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File No. 2-378/2023-24/AIIMS/GHY/Estt/Deputation/Pt-1/4171 Date: 28.02.2026

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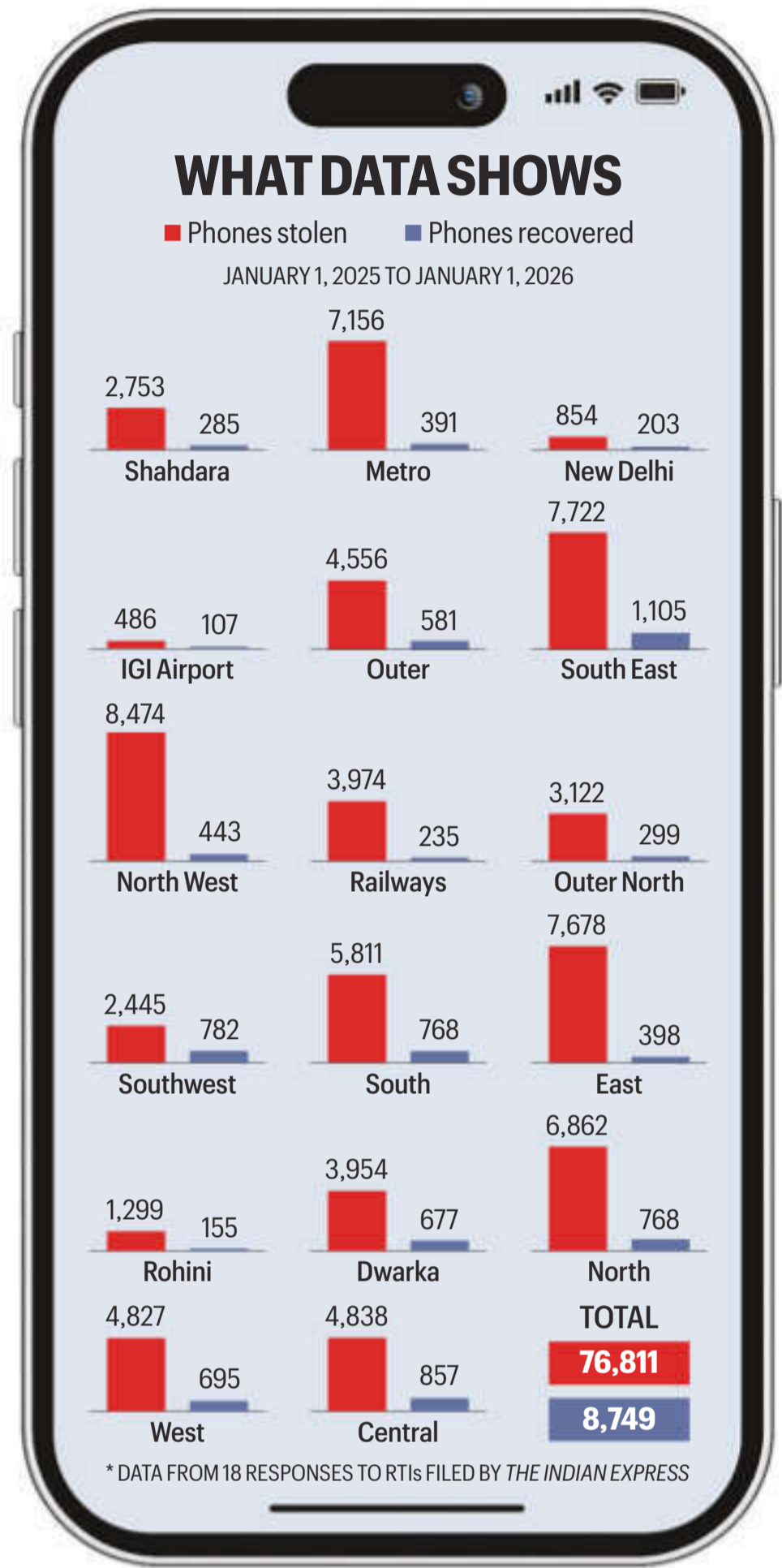
Sl. No.	Name of the post	Group	Pay Level / Scale	No. of Posts
1.	Medical Superintendent	A	Level 14 as per the 7th CPC (Rs 144200-218200) + NPA	1
2.	Superintending Engineer	A	Level 13 as per the 7th CPC (Rs 123100-215900)	1
3.	Registrar	A	Level 12 as per the 7th CPC (Rs 78800-209200)	1
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Total				20

For details of recruitment i.e. application form, eligibility criteria, desirable qualifications/experience, corrigendum/addendum and etc., will be uploaded only on the official website www.aiimsguwahati.ac.in & Candidates are advised to check website regularly for updates. Applications completed in all respect along with CRs, Vigilance clearance, Integrity Certificate etc. should be sent through proper channel to Asst. Administrative Officer, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Guwahati, Changsari, Kamrup, Assam -781101. The last date for submission of application through proper channel for posts on deputation basis and online application for Accounts Officers on Direct Recruitment basis will be 30 days from the date of publication of advertisement in Employment News.

Sd/-
Executive Director,
AIIMS, Guwahati

RTI RESPONSE

Inaccurate location tracing, immediate dismantling: Why stolen phones often remain 'untraced'



Nirbhay Thakur & Pragynesh
New Delhi, March 13

ON NOVEMBER 25 last year, advocate Anzar Ahmed (53) was on his way home when the iPhone he had just bought for his 21-year-old son was snatched by a biker near Tara Apartments, which is a kilometre-and-a-half from the Govindpuri police station. It has been over three months since then; the phone is yet to be traced.

Anzar's story is not an outlier, it is the standard Delhi experience with phone recovery numbers being dismal.

Data collated from 18 RTI (Right to Information) responses received from police districts based on queries filed by *The Indian Express* reveals a staggering gap between the number of phones stolen in 2025 and the number of phones recovered during the same period.

The main reasons behind this? Police pointed to snatchers immediately throwing away SIMs after a theft, and breaking up the phones in parts as well as the phones crossing borders. Also, even if location of phone is traced, it's seldom precise, they said.

From January 1 2025 to January 1 2026, while 76,811 phones were stolen in Delhi – this translates to about 210 phones everyday – only 8,749 (11%) were recovered. In North-west district alone, 8,474 phones were snatched – an average of 23 per day – in 2025. Just 5% found their way back to their owners.

Data on the Sanchar Saathi App portal, which allows IMEI tracking and blocking of lost or stolen phones anywhere in India, shows that Delhi had an overall recovery rate of 3.81%, with just over 22,000 mobile phones finding their way to their owners. On the other hand, 9.37 lakh mobile phones were blocked, and 5.94 lakh traced. In Delhi, only 9.03 lakh people are using the application.

"One of the major issues with tracking stolen phones is dismantling them for parts. In the black market, separate parts are sold at a higher price than the phone itself, as the parts can be re-sold to repair shops. So, snatchers immedi-

ately throw away SIMs and break up the phones in parts," a cyber police officer said.

A senior officer added, "We get different types of locations when tracing calls – A type, E type and C type. If calls have been made from the phone, we get a A type location, which is about 10-14 m from where the phone is located. But if no call has been made, and only Internet has been used from the phone, we get a C type location, which shows a 150 m to 200 m radius where the phone could be. Also, the accused keep moving, which makes it extremely difficult to trace the phones."

In case of E type location, the phone could be located anywhere within 20-40 m of the given location, police said. The cyber police officer maintained that even if phones are tracked over a long period of time, they often end up crossing borders. "The phones are smuggled to Nepal and Bangladesh in bulk from India. Once they cross, it's impossible to track them. These phones are also used to execute cyber scams, and then dumped immediately," the officer said.

"It also depends on the tower location of the SIM company. For example, Jio gives very accurate locations. Also, the phone needs to rest in an area for about 35-40 minutes for it to give a precise A type location."

A worrying trend, especially in the past year, has been 'SIM SWAP': transfer of money from online payment apps of victim after their phones have been stolen.

"Snatchers take out the SIM from the stolen phone and put it in another device. They then call service providers as the owner of the SIM, and convince them to transfer the number to a new SIM card they own. They then use that SIM card to generate OTPs, open payments apps, change passwords and transfer money," a cyber police officer said.

The officer added that enabling two-factor authentication on apps is the least users could do to insure privacy in case of a theft. "Also, people who use Apple devices should never turn off their 'find my device' feature. It's a huge help in tracing phones."

WAR IN WEST ASIA



(Left) Empty cylinders lie besides a sack of coal outside Zahra, a restaurant in Shaheen Bagh; rush at Zakir Nagar's Madina Chicken Corner, which reopened after three days due to LPG shortage. ABHINAV SAHA



Chief Secy seeks rationalised use of LPG

Express News Service
New Delhi, March 13

DELHI CHIEF Secretary Rajeev Verma on Friday directed the Food and Supplies (F&S) department to prepare a plan to ensure rationalised usage of commercial LPG (Liquefied petroleum Gas) in Delhi – based on specific needs of all sectors – as and when the Union Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (P&NG) makes available additional quota of the fuel for the city.

This was after Additional Chief Secretary-cum-Commissioner (F&S) Prashant Goyal, at a high-level meeting, highlighted a few cases in Delhi where shortage of commercial LPG has been reported following the disruption of supplies of petroleum due to the war in West Asia.

"It was decided that a plan for rationalised usage of fixed quota of commercial LPG in Delhi based on specific needs, may be prepared by F&S Department in discussion with the Divisional Commissioner and Delhi Police. This may be used as and when Ministry of P&NG makes available additional quota of commercial LPG in Delhi," reads the minutes of the meeting that was attended by Verma on Friday.

Also, the document stated that the Power department has been asked to move the Ministry of Power and Ministry of P&NG to ensure uninterrupted supply of gas to power plants in Delhi. "The quantity erstwhile fixed for the power plants

Additional Chief Secy highlights a few cases in Delhi where shortage of commercial LPG was reported

should not be curtailed under any circumstances."

The meeting was attended by representatives of F&S and Revenue departments, Delhi Police, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, Indraprastha Gas Limited, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Indian Oil Corporation Limited and State Logistics Cell, among others.

Verma went on to issue a slew of directions to the concerned departments and urged representatives of oil and gas marketing companies to provide daily report on supply and stock of fuel.

According to the minutes of the meeting, F&S department was directed to monitor the situation closely by coordinating with all concerned departments/agencies to avoid black marketing of LPG cylinders.

"The services of field officers be used extensively for keeping watch on supplies, replenishment centres, godowns etc to assist oil and gas companies in streamlining booking process and delivery mechanism of LPG cylinders," it added. The field officers will also pay surprise visits to such godowns. "Police and Revenue departments were asked to keep a close watch on hoarding, black marketing and diversion and take stringent actions," read the document.

This comes amid the Delhi Police suspending all leaves of its personnel with immediate effect and starting the process to deploy staff round-the-clock outside LPG cylinder warehouses.

"Leave requests will now be sanctioned only in cases of genuine emergencies to maintain heightened readiness," a senior officer said.

Police have also asked all district deputy commissioners (DCPs) to identify warehouses/godowns storing LPG cylinders and deploy personnel round-the-clock to prevent any untoward incident, said officers.

According to the minutes of Friday's meeting, "preventive detention" of hoarders should be done as and when required. Further, the F&S department will issue a press release everyday to counter rumours about LPG/oil/CNG/PNG availability in Delhi to prevent "panic buying". The department, along with police and others, shall keep a close watch on social media and "immediately counter any negative narratives", it added.

Verma, meanwhile, directed that PNG (Piped Natural Gas) connections be promoted where the PNG network is available.

Eateries hit during Ramzan – too few cylinders, too costly in the black market, say owners

Drishiti Jain
New Delhi, March 13

IT'S 20 minutes to 6.29 pm, the time for Iftar on the last Friday before Eid. In the narrow streets of Zakir Nagar, motorcycles roar past, their riders rushing to get home. Mohammed Sarwar stands next to a huge aluminium container, surrounded by a small crowd of customers, racing against time to pack orders for Iftar – half plates of chicken lollipop and quarters of fish fry.

Mohammed Sarwar's shop, Madina Chicken Corner, has been running for the past 11 years. Business is usually brisk during Ramzan – but on Friday, Sarwar had opened his shop after a full three days. He did not have a choice – he had run out of cooking gas. "You need LPG to cook every item on the menu... Today, I finally got a cylinder from my sister who lives in Seelampur," Sarwar said.

Amid the panic-booking and hoarding of LPG as the war in the Middle East rages on, cylinders have been available in the black market – but the prices, Sarwar said, were unaffordable, sometimes as high as Rs 3,000 per cylinder.

Sarwar's dilemma isn't



Prices of food items have spiked at Zaika. ABHINAV SAHA

unique. Several other eateries in Zakir Nagar have also been hit by the gas shortage during Ramzan, the month in which many people visit, often from faraway neighbourhoods, for the famous nahari, chapli kebabs, and Afghani samosas. The rush begins with Iftar and continues until Sehri, the pre-dawn meal that is eaten around 5 am.

Sarwar's neighbour is Javed Famous Nahari, which is indeed very famous. The restaurant has been running for the past 35 years, but this Ramzan, operations have been impacted by

the uncertainty about LPG cylinders. "This has been going on for a week, and today we have not even prepared food for Sehri, the cooking for which should have been over by now. We are getting a few cylinders from home and buying some in the black market. We don't know how things will be over the weekend, which is the busiest time. Dishes like korma and nahari need prolonged slow cooking," owner Javed Baig said.

In Shaheen Bagh, Zaika, a well-known Mughlai food outlet, is struggling to manage with half the LPG supply it needs, and is considering curtailing the menu. "Instead of the 4-5 cylinders that we need, we're getting only about two, that too at black market prices sometimes touching three or four thousand rupees. There can be no compromise with the cooking of our chicken and mutton burra, so if the shortage continues, we will be forced to stop making some items on the menu," said the owner of the restaurant.

Zaika has been forced to raise the prices of its rolls by Rs 10, and that of tea by Rs 5. Pieces of white paper with the revised prices written on them have been stuck on the red menu card.

Incorrect angles, uneven distribution: PWD to study CCTV network

Gayathri Mani
New Delhi, March 13

THE PUBLIC Works Department (PWD) is planning to conduct a comprehensive study of the existing network of CCTV cameras in the Capital to assess how they can be better utilised to help prevent criminal activities and assist in investigations, PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said on Friday.

Delhi currently has more than 2.8 lakh CCTV cameras installed by PWD, most of which were installed during the AAP government's tenure. Singh said the government plans to replace the cameras installed in Phase I of the project, during 2018-19. "Delhi at present does not

necessarily need more cameras. What it needs is better planning, maintenance and redistribution of cameras in terms of angles and locations," Singh said.

Pointing out that at several places, cameras have been installed at incorrect angles, he said, "Instead of covering a larger area, some cameras are directed only towards the door of a house. So, we have to fix this."

Singh said the government plans to appoint a consultant to study all the 2.8 lakh cameras to assess proper utilisation, actual requirements and their effectiveness in crime prevention.

"About 1.4 lakh cameras were installed in Phase I (by then AAP government), and many of them have now become obsolete.

Study of existing cameras

AIM: Better utilisation, check for incorrect angles, replace damaged and outdated cameras

2.8 lakh Cameras under PWD

12,000 Footage given by PWD to police



50k new CCTVs being installed, tenders in progress

- IP-based bullet cameras with 512 GB SD cards, improved clarity and night vision, protective cages to be mounted on poles to safeguard cameras.
- The system will be supported by 5,000 solar panels with lithium-ion batteries, providing

- 14 hours of back-up
- Over 12,100 UPS units with maintenance-free batteries will provide back-up of 30 minutes.
- Most cameras in markets, roads, residential colonies and business centres to record footage for 30 days.

QUESTIONS OVER LAND OWNERSHIP, CIVIC CONCERNS AT HEART OF PROTEST

Why residents are opposing 400-bed pvt hospital in GK 1

Ankita Upadhyay
New Delhi, March 13

FOR OVER two years now, a group of residents at Greater Kailash 1 (GK-1) in South Delhi have been protesting against the construction of a 400-bed hospital by the Medanta group near Archana Complex.

Why? They say the area already has a number of big hospitals and another one will only increase traffic and parking woes, create additional pressure on civic infrastructure and generate more biomedical waste.

Even as a petition filed last year by residents, raising objections over the ownership of the land and project approvals, is being heard in the Delhi High Court, the construction at the site has been ongoing.

The protests first began in

2023 and have been held more frequently since last July.

Rajiv Kakaria, the RWA chairperson in GK-1, says, "Within a radius of 3-4 km, Max, Apollo, Escorts, Holy Family hospitals and AIIMS are located. Building another 400-bed hospital in the middle of a residential colony will only increase traffic, pollution and commercialisation."

Instead, Kakaria says, residents want the land to be used for a community facility for elderly citizens. "This is a 60- to 70-year-old colony with many senior residents. We have been demanding public utilities for the past 30-40 years. This land could have been given for a community centre or other facilities for residents," he adds.

Kakaria – the lead petitioner on behalf of Greater Kailash Residents' Association (GKRA) which has moved HC – underlines that a special committee was formed from within the residents' body to examine the legal records related to the land. He says the disputed site comprises two



Residents at a recent protest against the project. EXPRESS

plots of roughly one acre each. "One plot is owned by MCD and the other by DLF... but both were given on perpetual lease following a settlement agreement between the two in 1989."

Residents have argued in the HC that the project violates conditions of the original lease agreement. "One of the lease conditions clearly states that whatever activity takes place on the plot should not cause nuisance to the neighbours. A 400-bed private hospital in the middle of a residential colony will inevitably create disturbance," Kakaria says.

The Medanta group did not respond to queries raised by *The Indian Express*.

Renu Roshia, a member of GK-1 RWA says they have raised the matter with public representatives too. "We have given representation to MLA Parvesh Sahib Singh, MP Bansuri Swaraj, MLA Shikha Roy and former L-G (V K Saxena)," she adds.

The residents are now planning to meet Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

The protests intensified after

residents began examining land records. Kakaria said some individuals claiming ancestral ownership of the land approached them with documents suggesting that parts of the property may not have been legally transferred decades ago. "They brought records going back 200 to 300 years, including the original village maps showing that this was an agricultural land with a drain and a water body."

The RWA subsequently filed multiple RTIs and examined revenue documents. Kakaria says, "When we checked the documents, some of the khasra numbers did not appear in the ownership records of DLF. If the ownership itself is disputed, then how were all the construction permissions granted?"

"Our next court hearing is on April 7," he adds.



MODI IN ASSAM

PM hands over land rights to tea workers

Express News Service
Guwahati, March 13

AMID FUEL pressures with the war in West Asia, speaking at a function in Guwahati Friday, PM Narendra Modi claimed that the Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA government in the country has worked to develop India's refining capacity that it can "take care not only of its own energy needs but also of the energy requirements of the world."

He was speaking at an event in Assam, where he laid the foundation stones for development projects worth around Rs 19,480 crore and released the 22nd instalment of the PM-KISAN scheme for over 9.3 crore farmers. At the event, he also flagged off the process of giving land rights to tea garden workers in the housing or labour lines within the estate premises, with 28,241 families receiving it in the first phase.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with CM Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati, Assam on Friday. PTI

Modi claimed that measures by the government for the welfare of farmers such as the PM-KISAN scheme, crop insurance and loans, have helped protect farmers from international crises. "Because of COVID-19 and the wars that followed, the prices of fertilisers had increased in the international market. It had also become dif-

icult to procure fertiliser in foreign markets. But the central government tried its best to stop this crisis. The same bag of urea which is available in the international market for Rs 3,000, our government has given same bag to its farmers for only Rs 300. The government has spent more than Rs 12 lakh crore from its treasury on this," he said.

Nehru would have made Kanshi Ram UP CM, says Rahul

Maulshree Seth
Lucknow, March 13

LEADER OF Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, said on Friday it was the shortcomings of the Congress that created a space for Kanshi Ram and that India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru would have made the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) founder chief minister of Uttar Pradesh if he were alive.

Addressing a 'Samvidhan Sammelan' (Constitution conference) at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan in Lucknow to mark Kanshi Ram's birth anniversary, the Congress MP and former party president said the late Dalit icon's struggle and vision had a deep impact on Indian politics, and that he raised the voice of marginalised communities. "Today we remember Kanshi Ramji, his struggle and his vision. Social justice requires a determined political fight rather than mere slogans," Gandhi said.

Reflecting on the rise of Kanshi Ram, Gandhi said the Congress had its own share of shortcomings which created space for the BSP founder to emerge as a powerful leader. "If the Congress had done its work properly, Kanshi Ram ji might not have been a success. And if Jawaharlal Nehru were alive, Kanshi Ram ji would have been the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh," he added. Linking Kanshi Ram's politics with the ideas of B R Ambedkar, he stressed the need for education, organisation and struggle to ensure representation of Dalits, backward classes and minorities in the country's power structure.

Claiming that the representation of marginalised communities in India's institutions and corporate sector remained abysmally low, he reiterated that the Congress would demand a nationwide caste census to ensure their fair participation in governance and decision-making.

BAC meet: Opp seeks discussion on West Asia crisis, govt says it may consider

Both Houses to take up pending legislative matters on March 28 & 29

Liz Mathew
New Delhi, March 13

WITH THE government denying debates over the functioning of External Affairs, Defence and Commerce ministries, the Opposition is now pushing for a discussion on the West Asia crisis in both the Houses. In the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting on Friday, the government did not commit to a debate, but said it can consider the Opposition demand.

Parliament will have a four-day break next week (March 19 to 22) on account of Ugadi and Eid festivals. To take up the pending legislative business, the BAC meeting, chaired by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, has decided to convene both Houses on March 28 (Saturday) and 29 (Sunday).

Sources said the government wants to pass the pending Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha in August last year. The Bill seeks to reduce delays, maximise value for all stakeholders and improve governance of all processes under the Code.

In the meeting, sources said, the government informed the Opposition that it is ready to have a discussion on the functioning of the ministries — Railways, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Home. The Opposi-

tion leaders pointed out that they had demanded a discussion on the Ministry of External Affairs, which, they said, was significant in the wake of the ongoing conflict in West Asia and its impact on the Indian economy as well as lives of people here. The Speaker suggested there could be a discussion on the West Asia conflict under Rule 193 (short duration discussion on urgent matters). Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju told them that he would get back after discussing with the top leadership.

The Rajya Sabha has already discussed the functioning of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and Rural Development. Sources said the government informed the Opposition that it could also consider debates on the functioning of the Ministries of Health & Family Affairs as well as Sports. The Lok Sabha is expected to guillotine the demands for grants of the undiscussed ministries on March 18.

The opposition has been trying to persuade the Speaker to revoke the suspension of eight of their MPs, who have been sitting on a protest outside the Makar Dwar since February 3.

On Friday, Congress leader Kodikunnil Suresh raised the demand in the BAC meeting and the Speaker said the matter could be discussed with the government. In the afternoon, Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rijiju and Piyush Goyal were in the Speaker's chamber for some discussion. Sources in the Lok Sabha secretariat said the matter of the revoking suspension will come up on Monday.

Credit Sharing

TRINAMOOLOO CONGRESS'S Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien on Friday took the Members by surprise when he began his speech by congratulating House Chairman and Vice-President C P Radhakrishnan for ensuring that more members were able to raise issues of public importance during Zero Hour. "All thanks to you," said the MP before adding that some credit for it also goes to the Opposition and Treasury Benches. The Vice-President immediately replied that as an Opposition MP he could take the entire credit for the "cooperation", drawing laughter from the Trinamool leader and other Members of the House.

Under Watch

THE CONGRESS high command is particularly irritated with a senior party leader in Bihar. The leader had "close ties" with former Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, who was recently replaced by Lt Gen (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain. The Congress leader regularly met Khan when he was the Governor against his party's wishes, said sources. Now with the new Governor taking charge, the Congress leadership in the Capital has asked multiple leaders in Bihar to keep a close watch on the senior leader in question.

Caught Off Guard

A MADHYA Pradesh government delegation, led by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, faced an awkward moment on Thursday during their visit to Krishi Bhawan for a meeting with Union Agriculture Minister and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. The Minister, who also holds the Rural Development portfolio, raised concerns over protocol issues faced by a woman official from the Rural Development Ministry who often visits the state. Chouhan is learnt to have expressed dissatisfaction over the conduct of some state officials. Madhya Pradesh's Rural Development Minister Prahlad Singh Patel and senior officials from his department, who were present at the meeting, were taken aback by Chouhan's rebuke. A Madhya Pradesh government official, however, disputed the claims regarding protocol violation and presented the state official's version of the incident, said sources.

Centre sets conditions for states to receive Jal Jeevan Mission funds

Harikishan Sharma
New Delhi, March 13

DAYS AFTER the Union Cabinet approved extending the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) until 2028, the Centre has set four conditions that must be fulfilled by the states to receive funds, putting safeguards amid concerns over irregularities in the implementation of the rural tap water scheme.

This was conveyed by the Centre to the states during a video conference with states on Friday. The video conference, chaired by Union Jal Shakti Minister C. R. Patil, attended by Ministers of Public Health Engineering Department (PHED)/Rural Water Supply (RWS) and Panchayati Raj Departments of States and Union Territories. The meeting discussed the implementation roadmap of JJM 2.0.

"The release of Central funds under JJM 2.0 will be strictly conditional upon States/UTs meeting four mandatory compliance requirements. These include: signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); creation of Sujal Gaon IDs to ensure complete digital mapping of all rural water supply schemes; timely financial reconciliation, and notification of State operation & maintenance (O&M) policies," said an official.

The official said that the Centre has shared a copy of the MoU with all the states and UTs and they have been asked to sign the same as soon as possible so that funds can be released on time. Some of the states including Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh expressed their willingness to sign the MoUs soon, said the official.

The official said that states have been told clearly that the Centre will release funds up-front only in case of single village schemes (SVS) under the

Conditions include

SIGNING the Memorandum of Understanding

CREATION of Sujal Gaon IDs to ensure complete digital mapping of all rural water supply schemes

TIMELY financial reconciliation

NOTIFICATION of State operation & maintenance

JJM. In case of multi village schemes (MVS) the Central funds will be released only after reviewing the Detailed Project Reports, the official said. However, in case of those MVS which are in quality affected or water scarcity areas, a relaxation will be made, the official added.

During the meeting, Patil released the Sujal Gaon ID, a scheme-based unique digital identifier that enables complete digital mapping of rural piped water supply assets. So far, 1.64 lakh Sujal Gaon IDs across 31 States/UTs have been created, linked to 67,000 Sujalam Bharat IDs. Each Sujalam Bharat ID integrates the scheme's infrastructure ID and service area ID, creating a comprehensive digital footprint of rural water service delivery.

Addressing the meeting, Patil urged the states to ensure timely completion of schemes and strengthen on-ground monitoring. Patil said that the conditions in the MoU are a way forward for bringing in the structural reforms and should be followed in letter and spirit.

The safeguards are significant in view of Centre's crackdown on widespread irregularities in the JJM implementation.

On Tuesday (March 10), the Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved an additional allocation of Rs 1.51 lakh crore for the JJM till 2028.

Mamata sets up development boards for five communities ahead of polls

Ravik Bhattacharya
Kolkata, March 13

AT A time when she and her party are facing blowback following President Droupadi Murmu's recent remarks, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on Friday announced that the state government intends to set up five new cultural and development boards for various Adivasi, backward class, and Dalit communities.

The boards would be established for people from the Munda (Scheduled Tribe), Kora (ST), Dom (SC), Kumbhakar (Other Backward Class), and Sadgope (OBC) communities. These join more than 20 such boards established for various communities in the state.

While the TMC hailed the announcement, Opposition parties said these boards had been announced with votes in mind before the Assembly elec-



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

tions, and like the previously established boards, these too would not serve their communities. The BJP alleged that this was Banerjee's way of doing damage control after President Murmu, during a visit to Sili-guri last weekend, asked why the CM or her ministers had not received her and questioned why the venue of a Santal community event that she was in the city to address had been shifted. This had led to a bitter exchange between the TMC and the BJP, which accused her

of violating protocol.

On Friday, Banerjee posted on X, "I am pleased to announce that our government intends to constitute five new Cultural and Development Boards for the Munda (ST), Kora (ST), Dom (SC), Kumbhakar (OBC), and Sadgope (OBC) communities. These communities are integral to the vibrant fabric of Bengal..."

"These boards will protect their unique languages and traditions while ensuring better education, healthcare, and jobs. They will safeguard customary rights and bring further socio-economic growth. Since 2013, we have established many such boards for our weaker communities, ensuring their all-round development," the CM wrote.

The latest boards illustrate a larger trend that characterises West Bengal politics since the last years of the Left Front government: the rise of identity politics.

RSS meet begins with tributes to its critics Nallakannu, Patil

Deeptiman Tiwary
New Delhi, March 13

THE RASHTRIYA Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Friday paid tributes to several public figures — including ideological opponents such as Congress leader and former Union home minister Shivraj Patil and veteran Communist leader R Nallakannu — as its top decision-making body, the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha, began a three-day meeting in Haryana's Samalkha.

The meeting, being held at the Madhav Srishti campus in Patti Kalyana from March 13 to 15, will see all the top leaders of the RSS, including RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale, along with representatives of all associate organisations discuss



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale in Samalkha on Friday. X/@RSSORG

the progress made by the Sangh, its goals for the future and contemporary issues affecting the country. Among those remembered was Patil, who served as Union home minister during the 26/11 Mumbai attacks and had to resign in its aftermath.

Nallakannu, a senior CPI leader from Tamil Nadu who

passed away this February at the age of 101, had been a strong critic of the RSS. Other figures included environmentalist Madhav Gadgil, environmental activist Saalu Marada Thimmakka, archaeologist KN Dikshit, actor Dharmendra and former Mizoram governor Swaraj Kaushal.

Cash crunch pushes Vijay's party to consider alliance option

Arun Janardhanan
Chennai, March 13

ACTOR VIJAY launched the Tamilaga Vetttri Kazhagam (TVK) promising to challenge the DMK, the AIADMK, and the BJP as an independent force. But just before the elections, an online meeting on Friday convened by party organiser Bussy Anand to appoint constituency coordinators turned into an unexpected reality check: many districts reported their inability to find candidates with the roughly Rs 5 crore considered necessary to contest polls. This led a majority of leaders at the meeting to raise the idea of an alliance, something that was once considered unthinkable in the party.

While the party has no shortage of aspirants on paper, very few potential candidates

can meet what leaders describe as the informal financial threshold required to run a competitive campaign.

"The minimum expectation internally is that a candidate should be able to mobilise around Rs 5 crore. In many constituencies, we simply don't have people who can spend that kind of money," said a district leader who attended the meeting. This triggered a candid conversation among the roughly 130 district leaders at the meeting. A senior TVK functionary said about three-fourths of the participants spoke in favour of exploring an alliance "because we cannot find candidates who can fund their own campaigns".

The financial question was not the only issue raised at the meeting. A leader from Pudukkottai district said a former AIADMK minister had made



TVK founder Vijay

an informal approach with the idea of an alliance. Once that information was shared, the discussion widened into what one participant described as "a Pandora's box of opinions".

Some leaders argued that the party might have little choice but to align with a larger coalition if it wanted to contest effectively. Others questioned the political message such a move would send. "Why will people vote for the

TVK if the CM candidate is EPS (AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami)?" a leader asked. Others wondered whether the AIADMK-NDA alliance would be willing to accommodate Vijay's original demand for power sharing. "Will Vijay at least be offered a Deputy CM post?" asked another participant.

For many in the party, the dilemma runs deeper than campaign logistics. Vijay has spent months attacking both the DMK government and the BJP in speeches that drew large crowds. An alliance with the same forces he criticised could appear to contradict that message. "Going with the AIADMK-BJP alliance goes against everything Vijay has said in his speeches," said a party leader.

"At a time when Vijay is facing a CBI inquiry in connection with the Karur stampede

case, and when discussions around his personal life, all of that formed the invisible backdrop of the meeting. It made the atmosphere more confused and vulnerable," said a district secretary who was at the Friday meeting.

The question many party workers are now asking privately is why the leadership did not anticipate this earlier. "How could a party preparing for an election suddenly realise it doesn't have candidates with resources? This is something that should have been assessed months ago," a district secretary said.

Multiple sources in the TVK, the AIADMK, and the BJP said there had been no pressure from the BJP for Vijay to join the alliance. A senior BJP leader said recent developments, including the controversy over the censor certification of Vijay's film Jana-

nayagan and the Karur stampede investigation, were not politically orchestrated.

The BJP leader said talks with the TVK had been held through informal contacts.

But AIADMK leaders said their party was cautious about the idea of an alliance with Vijay. A former AIADMK minister said EPS harbours reservations about sharing power. "I don't think EPS will agree to power sharing even if Vijay decides to join us," he said.

For the TVK, an alliance could lead to new dilemmas. Some leaders estimate that if the party eventually joins forces with the AIADMK, Vijay might settle for around 40 to 50 seats, similar to the arrangement the AIADMK had with Vijay's party DMDK for 2011 Assembly polls.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

LPG crisis fuels uproar in LS, adjourned twice

Jatin Anand
New Delhi, March 13

CHAOS CONTINUED in the Lok Sabha on Friday, which was adjourned twice amid non-stop protests and multiple heated exchanges between the Opposition and Treasury benches over the LPG situation and hike in its price due to the ongoing West Asia crisis.

Between the two adjournments, around 70 opposition members gave notices to the Presiding Officers of both the Houses to move a resolution to remove Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar from office.

Soon after Lok Sabha convened, Opposition members raise the issue of LPG situation and price hike. Speaker Om Birla warned them against disrupting the Question Hour.

When the Opposition MPs continued raising slogans questioning PM's absence, Birla said he was adjourning the proceed-

ings till 12 noon.

When the House resumed at 12 noon, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju accused the Congress of indulging in "discipline" and "drama" and warned the party to mend its ways or face "severe punishment" from the people.

"They should have reformed after the very fruitful discussion we had about (the motion to remove) the Speaker, but instead they...are indulging in indiscipline... Their leader himself is doing a natak (drama) holding a glass and plate," Rijiju said.

As the Opposition refused to relent, the Chair adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm.

The final leg of the proceedings for the day saw Finance Minister's reply to the debate on Supplementary Demand for Grants and The Appropriation Bill, 2026 to authorise the payment of over Rs 2.81 lakh crore for various capital and revenue expenditures amid the protests from the Opposition benches.

Chhattisgarh:
741 LPG cylinders
seized in raids to
check hoarding

Press Trust of India
Raipur, March 13

A TOTAL of 741 LPG cylinders were seized from 102 locations across Chhattisgarh as part of a crackdown on the hoarding and black marketing amid West Asia crisis, an official said on Friday.

Teams from the Food Department and district administration have been conducting surprise inspections at suspected locations to curb hoarding of domestic LPG cylinders, an official release said.

"So far, 741 cylinders have been seized from 102 places across the state. Raipur district recorded the highest number of seizures with 392 domestic LPG cylinders confiscated, followed by Bilaspur district where 130 cylinders were seized," it said.

It said five LPG bottling plants are operational in the state adding that adequate stock of domestic LPG was available at these plants and bottling was being carried out at full capacity.

Two Indians killed, 10 injured as downed drone falls in Oman city

Shubhrajit Roy
New Delhi, March 13

THE GOVERNMENT said Friday that two Indians were killed and 10 injured during an attack in Sohar city in Oman. This raised the death toll of Indians to five in the war raging in West Asia — three seafarers died earlier. There are about one crore Indians living and working in West Asia.

The Oman News Agency (ONA) said, "A security source has reported the downing of two drones in Sohar Governorate. One of the drones fell in the Al Awahi Industrial Area, resulting in the tragic death of two expatriates and several injuries." The second drone fell in an open area, where no injuries or material losses were recorded. "Competent authorities are currently on-site handling both incidents and have launched a formal investigation into the circumstances."

Aseem Mahajan, Additional Secretary, in charge of the Gulf division in the Ministry of External Affairs, said, "I wish to share with all of you an incident

which has happened in Sohar city in Muscat today. There was an attack, and in this incident, two Indian nationals have died. We express our deepest condolences to their families."

"Of the 11 injured, 10 are Indians. Out of them, five have been discharged after receiving treatment, and 5 others are receiving treatment in local hospitals. None of them are reported to have serious injuries. Our mission is in close touch with the company concerned and local authorities, and is rendering all assistance," he said.

Earlier, three Indian nationals were killed and at least one person was reported missing. Officials said all four Indian nationals were part of crew on board merchant ships plying in the area.

"Our embassies in Oman and Iraq and our consulate in Dubai are working with local authorities to have their mortal remains transported back to India at the earliest," officials said.

On Thursday night, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a

phone conversation with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, raised the issue of movement of maritime traffic.

"The safety and security of Indian nationals, along with the need for unhindered transit of goods and energy, remain India's top priorities," he said.

A day earlier, Delhi had "deplored" the attack by suspected Iranian fighters on an Indian-bound ship in the Strait of Hormuz. The third Indian seafarer to die was a crew member of a US-owned oil tanker.

He was killed after the vessel came under attack in the waters near Iraq's Basra.

The Indian embassy in Iraq said 15 other Indian crew members of the ship were evacuated. "On March 11, 2026, a US-owned crude oil tanker, Safesha Vishnu, sailing under the Marshall Islands flag, was attacked near Basra, Iraq, in which one Indian crew member unfortunately lost his life," the Indian embassy in Iraq said on social media.

"The remaining 15 Indian crew have since been evacuated to a safe place," it said.

Govt: Book LPG only if needed, switch to piped gas if possible

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, March 13

WITH THE war in West Asia affecting India's LPG imports and oil marketing companies (OMCs) swamped with bookings for cooking gas cylinders, the government Friday appealed to consumers not to panic and book cylinders only when required. A senior Petroleum Ministry official said the government is ensuring uninterrupted cooking gas supply to households, and urged consumers living in the vicinity of areas that have piped natural gas (PNG) connectivity to apply for household PNG connections to reduce pressure on LPG supplies.

According to data shared by Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma, average LPG bookings by households averaged at 55.7 lakh cylinders in the April-February period of the current financial year, but the number jumped over 35% to 75.7 lakh on Thursday, March 12.

Sharma attributed this to panic booking behaviour due to



Petroleum Ministry Joint Secy Sujata Sharma at the National Media Centre in Delhi, Friday. PTI

"misinformation" and "rumours". Despite the constraints in LPG imports, the government, she said, is prioritising supplies to households. OMCs are maintaining their earlier average of over 50 lakh cylinder deliveries per day and none of the 25,000-odd LPG distributorships across the country have reported a "dry-out" — running out of stock.

She said there are roughly 60 lakh LPG-consuming households that have access to PNG connectivity in their vicinity, and they could apply for PNG connections with the local city gas distributor to take some

pressure off LPG supplies.

While India has over 33.4 crore households with LPG connections, the number of households with PNG connections is around 1.5 crore. Given the requirement of connecting homes with pipelines for PNG connections, it remains unclear how quickly a switchover from LPG can be done.

While India's natural gas imports have also been hit due to the war in West Asia, the situation is relatively better than that of LPG. Moreover, the government has passed an order to ensure continuous natural gas supplies for household PNG connections and compressed natural gas (CNG) for vehicles, while cutting gas allocation to other sectors.

The effective halt in maritime traffic through the crucial chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz has significantly impacted India's LPG imports. The country depends on imports to meet around 60% of its LPG requirement, and 90% of the LPG imports come through the

Strait. This means that roughly 55% of India's LPG consumption volumes are currently unavailable.

Given the crisis, the government has prioritised LPG supplies to households over commercial and industrial consumers, ordered refiners to maximise LPG production, and directed them to divert propane, butane, and other streams from petrochemical manufacturing to LPG production. Sharma said these measures have led to an increase of 30% in domestic LPG production vis-a-vis pre-West Asia conflict levels.

On black marketing and hoarding of LPG cylinders, Sharma said the Petroleum Secretary and Consumer Affairs Secretary held discussions over video conference with Secretaries of Food and Civil Supplies departments of all states and Union Territories. She said specific action against cylinder theft and hoarding have already led to recoveries and arrests in states like Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh.

Hostels, canteens brace for LPG shortage at some of India's higher education hubs

Soham Shah, Parul
Kulshrestha, Tanusree Bose &
Aryan Matthews
Ahmedabad, Jaipur,
Kolkata, Pune, March 13

AMONG SERVICES affected by the shortage of LPG due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia are hostels and messes of higher education institutions in some parts of India.

In Ahmedabad, a canteen that caters to nearly 1,500-2,000 students on a daily basis at Nirma University has suspended larger meal options like thalis, and will serve sandwiches and small plates from now on because of the LPG shortage.

The canteen manager, Jitendra Singh, told The Indian Express, "Today is our last day (of using LPG cylinders). We will cut items that require more time to cook and use up gas, and have suspended meal options like the Punjabi and Gujarati thalis. Our kitchen will instead prioritise sandwiches and items made in the oven."

He said that the canteen,



A worker arranges LPG cylinders at a godown in Mumbai. DEEPAK JOSHI

which caters to just one section of the residential university, will continue to stay open for the "campus community" while the situation stabilises.

In Kolkata, the canteen of the century-old Hindu hostel of Presidency University has been closed since Tuesday night due to the shortage. The hostel houses 120 students.

Hostel authorities said bookings have been made for new cylinders and that it was not clear how long it would take for new supply to arrive.

At the Savitribai Phule Pune

University, Abhishek Shekhar, a student representative at the Mess Quality Control Committee, said, "I have just spoken to the mess at the university, and they said they have gas stock for one or two more days. After that, they will have to shift to either coal or wood-based stoves, as it is not possible to cook food for thousands of students on an electric stove."

A non-teaching member of staff on the committee said, "Vendors have told us that they are facing pressure in cylinder supply. They are asking if they

can reduce one sabzi and serve only one. We are taking stock of the situation."

In Rajasthan's Kota, known as the coaching capital with over 1 lakh students attending classes in the city to prepare for competitive exams, some hostels and messes have begun experiencing issues, with some even switching to using wood-based stoves.

Naveen Mittal, president of the Hotels Association of Kota, told The Indian Express that if the situation continues, it will be difficult to provide food for the students.

Jasmer Singh, owner of the Food Mess in Kota, said there are eight branches of the mess, in which 250 LPG cylinders are required monthly. Due to the shortage, they have started using firewood.

"Not everyone has such an open mess to use a wood oven. Hence, many mess owners have shut down their messes, and students are suffering because they have paid monthly. We need LPG cylinders or the economy will collapse," said Singh.

Need Covid-like exemptions, pharma industry urges ministries amid fuel curbs

Anonna Dutt
New Delhi, March 13

THE CURBS on supply of LPG and petrochemicals in view of the West Asia conflict have impacted pharmaceutical and medical device industry, affecting the manufacturing of even the most common medicines such as paracetamol and products such as gloves and syringes.

Industry bodies and think tanks have written to the Commerce Ministry, Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry and the pharmaceutical department, seeking exemptions such as the ones seen during the pandemic — allowing the manufacturing to continue considering them to be "essential commodities".

Earlier this week, the Commerce Ministry called a meeting with the industry to assess its reliance on LPG and look for alternatives, according to persons in the know of the matter.

Indian Pharmaceutical Association, Indian Drug Manufacturers Association and Federation of Pharma Entrepreneurs have submitted their represen-

tations to the ministries, urging them to prevent any disruption or rationing of LPG and PNG supply to the pharmaceutical industry. Any disruption would immediately impact the manufacturing of critical medicines for the country as well as the global market, considering the gasses are used for several critical processes in drug manufacturing, said sources.

An industry expert said: "You need LPG for several manufacturing processes such as the boilers, granulation, sterilisation among others. Most MSMEs — which constitute a large chunk of the industry — completely depend on LPG or PNG, whereas bigger companies may have provisions to use electricity for some of it."

The government order to curtail supply of certain petrochemicals in favour of increased production for household gas supply has also hit the production of several key medicines and medical equipment. The most urgent is refinery grade propylene — needed for the production of pharmacopoeia-

E. EXPLAINED

What's 'essential commodities' tag

The government Monday invoked the Essential Commodities Act to divert natural gas to "priority sectors". Essential commodities as defined by the Act include cattle fodder, coal, its derivatives, automobile components and accessories, cotton and wool textiles, drugs as defined in Section 3 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, foodstuffs, iron and steel, raw cotton, raw jute and any other product listed by the Centre via a notified order.

grade Isopropyl Alcohol (IPA), which is needed for coating in several commonly used medicines.

The Reliance Industry refinery in Jamnagar, which provides the refinery grade propylene, has already implemented

the government order, cutting off most IPA manufacturers. The possibility of import is also unlikely as the Singaporean company that could supply has invoked a force majeure on propylene supply.

Around 200 manufacturers will have to stop production in the next 7 to 10 days, latest by the end of the month, after they exhaust their stored supply, according to a representation to the pharmaceutical department by Centre for Domestic Economy Policy Research (CDEP).

The organisation also pointed out that any disruption in the supply of Benzene and other materials whose synthesis depends on it can affect the manufacturing of several active pharmaceutical ingredients, including the common fever medicine paracetamol.

Propylene and benzene are also needed for the manufacturing of several medical products, including gloves, PPE kits and syringes. "The manufacturing of these items will also be impacted if the petrochemicals do not become available," said a source.

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE			
Name of work	Cleaning of fresh air & Return air filters, AC grills and cooling/condenser coils of AC coaches during maintenance works at Washing Line/ Sick Line and On-board Electrical Escorting Units in Primary-Based Shatabdi/Tejas/ Shatabdi-Type/ Rajdhani/ Duronto/ Gatimaan/ AC Express Trains under HNZM Depot over Delhi Division for three years.		
Tender No.	30-Elect-10T-Chg-2025-26		
Approx cost of the work	₹12,18,74,697.01		
Cost of tender form	0.00		
Address of the Office	Sr. Div. Elect. Engineer/ Chg/ Northern Railway, New Delhi.		
Earnest Money	₹7,59,400/-		
Period of completion of work	36 Months	Last date & time of submission of tender	07.04.2026 up to 15.00 hrs.
And opening of tender	07.04.2026 at 15.01 hrs.	Website & notice board	www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. DEE/Chg/DLI

SERVING CUSTOMER WITH A SMILE 865/2026

म.प्र. राज्य पर्यटन विकास निगम मर्या.
पर्यटन भवन, भद्रभद्रा रोड, भोपाल-462003
फोन : +91-755-4027100, 2774340, 42, Web : www.mpstdc.com
क्रमांक 106/यात्रिकी/पविनि/26 दिनांक : 13.03.2026

निविदा सूचना 119/2026_STDC_484914_1

मध्यप्रदेश राज्य पर्यटन विकास निगम भोपाल द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु ऑनलाइन (Online) निविदा प्रपत्र APPENDIX 2, 10 पर म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में उपयुक्त श्रेणी में पंजीकृत टेकदारों से आमंत्रित की जाती है।

कार्य का नाम :- कुनो रिसोर्ट जिला खोपुर में कोटिज, वेल्नेस सेंटर, बाउंड्री वॉल, पार्किंग, ड्रेन, ओवर हेड टैंक का निर्माण, लैंडस्केपिंग, सीवेज सिस्टम, आंतरिक विद्युतीकरण एवं फर्नीचर कार्य सहित। (09 माह) कार्य की अनुमानित लागत राशि रु. 843.75 लाख

वेबसाइट पर ऑनलाइन भुगतान कर निविदा प्रपत्र (टेण्डर डॉक्यूमेंट) वेबसाइट के माध्यम से क्रय किये जा सकते हैं। निविदा प्रपत्र ऑनलाइन क्रय करने की अंतिम तिथि 30.03.2026 समय सायं 05:00 बजे तक निर्धारित है। कार्य का विस्तृत विवरण वेबसाइट <https://mptenders.gov.in> पर देखा जा सकता है।

म.प्र. माध्यम/124912/2026 कार्यपालन यंत्र

APPLICATION FOR ALLOTMENT OF CAMERO SI REGIMENTAL SHOPS

- Air Officer Commanding, Air Force Central Accounts Office, Subroto Park, New Delhi-10 invites applications from War Widows/ Widows of Defence personnel killed while on duty, Disabled soldiers/Ex Servicemen and spouses/Widows of Ex- Servicemen etc for allotment of under mentioned shops in Subroto Park Complex at New Delhi.
 - Courier Shop at Ganga Complex- For Ex-Servicemen
 - Branded Milk Parlour Outlet at Sangam Complex- For Ex-Servicemen
 - Premium refreshment shop at Sangam Complex-For Ex-Servicemen
 - Frozen Foods & Non Veg Shop at Sangam Complex.- For Ex-Servicemen
 - Stationery Shop at Peter Complex- For Ex-Servicemen and civilian.
- The applicable terms and conditions are mentioned in application form.
- The application form is available from 16 March 26 at Service Institute, AFCAO, Subroto Park, New Delhi-10 between 0800 hrs to 1400 hrs on every day except Saturday, Sunday and holidays (Tele No. 011-25690477/23307359). The application form for tendering may be collected on payment of Rs. 500/- per application. The last date of deposit / receipt of completed application is 30 March 26 by 0900 hrs along with EMD (Earnest Money Deposit) of Rs. 5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand only). The EMD should be in the form of Demand Draft drawn in favour of OIC SI Fund, Payable at New Delhi. After scrutiny of documents, eligible candidates will be intimated about the date and time of auction through candidate provided E-mail and telephone number (both).

IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED
NAV RATNA COMPANY
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)
Website: www.ircon.gov.in CIN: L45203DL1976GO008171

EOI Notice Dtd. 12.03.2026
Icon International Limited, A Navratna PSU Under Ministry of Railways, invites open Expression of Interest (EOI) from S&T experienced agencies for association as Pre-bid partner/Associate Agency/ sub-contractor for the following work: "Design, supply, installation, testing and commissioning of indoor and outdoor Signaling works consisting of electronic interfacing with route Book Instrument, Dual SSDAC, MSBAC, integrated power supply system, data loggers, RDPMS etc and associated works at stations Yogi Bhanu, Shivpur, Bysani, Dewprayag, Janasua, Malaha, Srinagar, Dhari Devi, Tiani, Ghotir, Gausar, and Kamprayag (120.30 km) section, including tunnels T1 to T16, in connection with the new single BG rail line between Yogi Bhanu Roshkesh and Kamprayag in Moradabad Division of Northern Railway on the state of Uttarakhand, India".

Last Date and Time of e-Bid Submission of EOI: 18.03.2026 up to 11:00 hrs (IST)

For further details and updates, please visit tender section on e-tender website <https://tenders.gov.in/procurement/app> & <https://www.ireps.gov.in/epsnlanonymSearch.do#> Amendment / Contingency, if any, would be hosted only on the website. Chief General Manager/S&T C-4, District Centre, Saket, New Delhi-110017

NOTICE FOR SETTING UP CAFÉ ON RENT

- AOC AF Stn Palam New Delhi- 10 invites application to run Café Shop in Rock View area on rent for a period of one year extendable to three years. Opportunity open for experienced vendors/entrepreneurs to operate a Café Shop offering Ready-to-Eat and Flameless Cooking Menu. Experience of setting up similar cafe in Defence establishments for five years or above with innovative menu ideas are welcome with documentary proof along with application form. All participants (including Ex-servicemen, civilians & govt. agencies) can apply however preference will be given to war widows/widows of defence personnel killed while on duty, disabled soldiers / ex-servicemen and spouses / widows of ex-servicemen. **Base Price for the venture is Rs. 3000/- per month.**
- Blank applications can be collected from Ashray Complex on Old Palam Road, Near IOC Chowk, New Delhi - 110010 from Monday to Sunday (1000 hr to 1700 hr) wef 15 Mar 26 to 28 Mar 26 on cash payment of Rs 200/- (non refundable), **Contact number - 9266531522. 9696328132.**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE**

Open tender through E-tendering are invited by Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRS, Electric Loco Shed, Khanalampura Yard, Northern Railway, Saharanpur (Ambala Division) for and on behalf of the President of India from the registered tenderer on website www.ireps.gov.in for the following work **upto 11:00 hrs** on the date of closing shown against the work and will be opened thereafter:-

Open Tender No.	ELS-SRE-25-26-T-14
Name of work	Comprehensive repair/renewal of CCB brake system in 3-phase electric locomotives.
Date of Closing/Opening	08.04.2026
Approx. Cost.	Rs.2,01,17,931.30
Earnest Money	Rs.2,50,600/-
Completion period	Eighteen (18) Months
Validity period	60 days
Cost of tender form	"Free of cost" for downloading from IREPS & ₹10000/- for obtaining from Sr.DEE/TRS/SRE Office.

- Tenderer(s) should have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate to participate in E-Tendering of Works Tenders.
- Tenderer are required to upload self-attested scanned copies of all related eligibility documents as per conditions.
- Taxes & Charges will be applicable as per extant rule.
- For details, please log on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in

No. ELS-SRE-25-26-T-14
dtd. 13/03/2026 866/2026

Serving Customers With A Smile

'BASAVARAJU KILLING OUR FAILURE... SONU'S A TRAITOR' Will wind up armed ops if our party legalised: Surrendered Maoist Devuji

Nikhila Henry
Hyderabad, March 13



Devuji, who was a Politburo member and head of Central Military Commission of banned CPI (Maoist), surrendered in Feb

THIPPURI THIRUPATI alias Devuji, a top Maoist who surrendered last month after 44 years of rising through Maoist ranks, has told *The Indian Express* that the killing of General Secretary of the CPI (Maoist), Nambala Keshava Rao alias Basavaraju, in May 2025 was their "collective failure", and that the Maoist leadership had considered moving him away from the jungles before security forces got to him.

Devuji, who was a Politburo and Central Committee member and head of the Central Military Commission of the banned CPI (Maoist), surrendered last month, just weeks ahead of the Home Minister Amit Shah's deadline of March 31, 2026, to eradicate Naxalism from the country.

In an interview with *The Indian Express*, when asked if he considered Basavaraju's killing a personal failure, Devuji said, "To a great extent, it was our collective failure. As CMC chief, I had thought a lot about how to protect him — should he be moved from the jungle or should he stay on was the question. We decided not to move him because, without the general secretary, we could not have functioned as a single organ. It was definitely my responsibility as CMC chief to

protect him. Yes, the highest responsibility was mine, and I did self-criticism and told the cadre that we couldn't save him."

"When he passed, there was a vacuum as he was one of the most experienced leaders. Had he lived, we — the party — would have worked as a team," he said.

Devuji was also critical of another key Maoist leader, Malloju Venugopal Rao alias Sonu, who surrendered last October. After Basavaraju's killing, Devuji and Sonu were reportedly contenders for the general secretary post. Devuji, however, said this wasn't the case: "Sonu was never a contender for the post of general secretary because he met Basavaraj when the latter was alive in 2024, and proposed that the armed struggle should stop. Basavaraj had told him off then and there and stuck to the party line of armed struggle."

"What Sonu had proposed was to demoralise the cadre — to temporarily stop the armed struggle meant surrendering arms which were obtained after many sacrifices. It was anti-party activity; it was to break the party from within. He formed an alliance with the central and state governments against the party. So he was a traitor," he said.

When reminded that he, too, had surrendered, Devuji said, "I did not surrender; I was arrested. I could have been killed or jailed for years on end. Instead of choosing these two options, I chose a third option — to stay with the party, stay with the party line of Marxism, Leninism and Maoism and work within the legal framework of the country."

With the walls closing in on the Maoist ranks, Devuji shared his view on a possible future for the CPI (Maoist): "Our demand now is to legalise the party. We will wind up armed operations if the party is legalised. What I mean is, the guerrilla armed tactics will not continue if they legalise the party. We will wind up the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), the armed wing of the party, and remain within the legal framework. We want to work for political prisoners who are still in jail. We want to stand by those who were killed by armed forces."

Devuji was also critical of another key Maoist leader, Malloju Venugopal Rao alias Sonu, who surrendered last October. After Basavaraju's killing, Devuji and Sonu were reportedly contenders for the general secretary post. Devuji, however, said this wasn't the case: "Sonu was never a contender for the post of general secretary because he met Basavaraj when the latter was alive in 2024, and proposed that the armed struggle should stop. Basavaraj had told him off then and there and stuck to the party line of armed struggle."

El Niño likely to emerge post-July, say international weather models

Anjali Marar
Bengaluru, March 13

THE DEVELOPMENT of El Niño in the second half of 2026 is becoming increasingly likely, say global climate models. The US-based agency National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) confirmed this in its latest El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) bulletin.

"In June-August 2026, El Niño is likely to emerge (about 62 per cent chance). It will persist through at least the end of 2026," NOAA said. In the past, El Niño years have seen abnormally high temperatures, prolonged heatwaves and below-average rainfall over many parts of the world, including India.

El Niño and La Niña are the two opposite phases of ENSO — an important global ocean-atmospheric phenomenon that influences global weather. ENSO has three phases: El Niño (warm), neutral and La Niña (cool). If El Niño develops post-July, it will coincide with the peak of India's southwest monsoon season, which falls between June and September.

India's Monsoon Mission Climate Forecast System has also projected the transition to ENSO-neutral conditions to take place during February-April.

6 girls in UP go missing after appearing for board exam

Bijnor: Six female students who left their college in Chandpur in Bijnor district after appearing for class 12th board exams have gone missing, police said, adding that the students did not return home after the exam held on the final day.

SHO of Chandpur Amit Kumar, said that the Sanskrit exam conducted by the UP Board of Secondary Education took place on Thursday evening. When the students did not return home, their families conducted a thorough search. PTI

Women's panel orders to arrest singer Badshah

Express News Service
Chandigarh, March 13

THE HARYANA State Commission for Women Friday issued orders to arrest rapper-musician Aditya Prateek Singh Sisodia, known as Badshah, after he failed to appear before the panel to explain his side on the indecent lyrics and visuals in his recent Haryanvi song "Tateeree". HSCW chairperson Renu Bhatia instructed the superintendents of police of Panchkula and Panipat to arrest Badshah and confiscate his passport. "His passport should be seized so he can't leave the country," Bhatia said. Police had said the video of the song depicts minor girls wearing school uniforms throwing away their school bags and appearing to run away from studies. "...Objectionable and derogatory expressions towards women and girls have also been identified in the lyrics," read the official police statement.

'DON'T KNOW AMOUNT OF DAMAGE IT WILL DO'

Mandatory menstrual leave could hurt women's careers: Apex court

Express News Service
New Delhi, March 13

THE SUPREME Court on Friday reiterated its concern that making menstrual leave for women employees mandatory could disadvantage women, as it could make employers wary of recruiting them. A bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joyimalya Bagchi said it was better left to the Government to take a call on the matter. "Affirmative action in respect of women is constitutionally recognised. But look at the practical reality in the job market. The more unattractive the human resource, the less is the possibility of consumption in the market. These are also factors to be looked into... You are right, we will see it from the

rights regime. But look at it from the business model. Will an employer be happy with the competing claims of other genders?" said Justice Bagchi. The bench initially questioned the locus standi of the petitioner, Shailendra Mani Tripathi, and wondered why no woman had approached the court. Tripathi had moved the court twice in the past. The first one was disposed of in February 2023, allowing him to give a representation to the Centre. He moved the court again in 2024, contending that the government had not responded to his representation. The court then asked the government to take a policy decision. On Friday, the CJI said, "You are not a bona fide petitioner. This is only to create a type of

Says employers would be wary of recruiting women, and it's better if the Government took a call on the matter

impression in young women that you still have some natural issues, and you are not at par with male persons, and you cannot work like them during a particular time. "Nobody will give them responsibilities" Appearing for the petitioner, senior advocate M R Shamsad Said Bihari, Karnataka, and Odisha had menstrual leaves while Kerala had

allowed it in schools. He added that some private institutions, too, had allowed it. The CJI said it was excellent if they were giving leave voluntarily. "That is a very good thing... But the moment you introduce it as a law, as a compulsory condition, you do not know the amount of damage you will do to their career. Nobody will give them responsibilities. Not even in judicial services, a normal trial will be assigned to them," he added. Creating a right to take leave for two days every month may deter the entire private sector, the CJI said. The counsel urged the court to at least ask the government to respond. Justice Bagchi said, "It's very difficult to wade into what is weighing with the government in not coming up with

a policy which is of affirmative nature. It is for the government to take a call." Disposing of the petition, the court said, "The petitioner has already brought to the notice of the authorities the issues sought to be raised in this petition. It seems to us that whatever was required to be done at the end of the petitioner, he has done, presumably for the welfare of young working women. It is not necessary for the petitioner to approach the Court time and again and seek a positive mandamus. We direct that the competent authority shall consider the observations made by this court in its orders dated February 24, 2023, and July 8, 2024... for framing a model policy in consultation with all stakeholders."

• BRIEFLY



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with UP CM Yogi Adityanath and his deputy Brajesh Pathak in Lucknow on Friday. EXPRESS

UTTAR PRADESH

Rajnath, Yogi inaugurate second phase of Green Corridor project

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh and UP CM Yogi Adityanath Friday inaugurated the second phase of the Green Corridor project in Lucknow, from Daliganj Pakka Pul to Samatmulak Chauraha, aimed at easing traffic congestion and significantly reducing travel time across the city. During an event held in Lucknow, they also laid the foundation for the third and fourth phases of the project worth nearly Rs 1,220 crore. Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak and other leaders were also present at the event. ENS

'Diversify crops': SC asks Govt to revisit yellow dal import policy

Express News Service
New Delhi, March 13

THE SUPREME Court on Friday asked the Centre to call a meeting of stakeholders to revisit the import policy for yellow peas with focus on incentivising farmers for diversifying from water-intensive crops like rice and wheat to pulses. A bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joyimalya Bagchi said this while hearing a PIL filed by Kisan Mahapanchayat against the Centre allowing import of yellow dal without any duty, which it contended was hurting local farmers by denying them a level-playing field. Appearing for the petitioner organisation, Advocate Prashant Bhusan, said this had resulted in crashing the price of locally produced pulses and farmers getting less than the MSP. Additional Solicitor General N Venkataraman said there has been a steep decline in produc-

tion because of a disease. He said that the production was 273 lakh tonnes in 2021-22, but fell to 261 lakh tonnes in 2022-23 and 242 lakh tonnes in 2023-24. The CJI sought to know if the Department of Agriculture examined the reasons for the decline. Bhusan said the the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices had given two reports on this and underlined the need for "ensuring remunerative prices to farmers" in its 2025 report. The counsel said that the Commission had also recommended a ban on import of yellow dal. The CJI said "the point is very simple. You have an MSP for wheat, you have an MSP for paddy, and you have an MSP for some pulses now also. The moment you make sure the farmer will get this price, you will see how it (production) will rise. Unfortunately, this aspect probably has not been really addressed". CJI Kant added that there is an issue of productivity gap.

While an acre of wheat can yield up to 100 quintals, pulses may yield only 10 quintal per acre. He added that there is also the issue of finding a market for the produce. The CJI told the ASG to ask the Agriculture Ministry to work on solutions. While acknowledging the decision to import would be to meet consumer demands amidst shortfalls in production, the bench said that India has a much higher production of rice and that a part of it could be diversified to grow pulses. "Do we require as much paddy for consumption as we are producing? We need some good quality for export, like Basmati rice, because that brings in FDI. But with normal paddy, the production is likely much more than our consumption. So, if you divert — and the paddy plantation area is reduced — and that area is diverted for pulses, it will balance that," he said. This will also help address concerns of falling water tables, the CJI said.

10 lakh leaflets with 'chargesheet' against Assam govt: Why 4 Cong workers face sedition-like charges

Sukrita Baruah
Guwahati, March 13

ON A visit to Assam on February 19, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra released a 20-point "People's Chargesheet" against the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led BJP government. This Monday, the Assam police found four Congress workers carrying a large number of these leaflets, intended for distribution as part of the party's Assembly poll campaign. The four were arrested and slapped with BNS Section 152, a charge similar to "sedition" under the IPC. Their bail has been denied. The four Congress workers — Rakibul Hoque Khan, Akshay Bordoloi, Joyanal Abedin and Pranjit Pator — were detained by police in Guwahati early Monday. Guwahati East DCP Tabu Ram Pegu said police were alerted about a dispute over the entry of a truck into a housing society in the city, and when they checked the vehicle, they found "around 10 lakh printed leaflets", which "had allegations against our honourable chief minister", stocked for "large-scale distribution." He cited the "sensitive election time", and "law and order ramifications and provocative nature" to arrest the men and register a case against them. The case, based on a complaint by a sub-inspector, includes charges under several BNS sections, including acts that endanger the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India; false statement in connection with a poll; promoting enmity between different groups; statements conducive to public mischief; and criminal conspiracy. The "chargesheet" released by Congress accuses Sarma and his ministers of cor-



Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Gaurav Gogoi had released the 'People's Chargesheet' on February 19. FILE

ruption and protecting activities from illegal rat-hole mining to illegal transportation of Burmese supari and drugs. It claims they and their families had amassed wealth in this manner, blames them for betraying promises made to Scheduled Tribes, accuses them of indulging in "bulldozer justice" against minorities, and ramping up police encounters. The FIR states that the contents are "not in the nature of fair comment, ordinary political criticism, or lawful democratic dissent" and that they are instead "couched in a form designed to sensationalise, inflame passions, provoke public unrest, and disturb the atmosphere immediately preceding the forthcoming Assam state poll". Pointing to the number of leaflets the four possessed, the complaint states, "The scale of the operation itself rules out any casual or isolated act and prima facie suggests a systematic campaign to spread falsehood, incitement and public mischief on a mass scale across the state of Assam." The Congress has said the four men are their workers and were transporting printed copies of the "chargesheet" for subsequent distribution. "The Chief Minister was so frightened

by a few sheets of paper that he had them confiscated by the police. The BJP has failed to fulfil promises made to the people of Assam. The chargesheet highlighting the failures of the ruling party has been seized. Is this the strength and courage of Himanta Biswa Sarma?" APCC president Gaurav Gogoi said. "Is the Assam police owned by the BJP? If they do whatever the BJP asks of them, then tomorrow, if we put out banners and posters during our campaign, they will again use the Assam police," said Assam Mahila Congress president Mira Borthakur. The bail petition by the four men was rejected by a court in Guwahati, and they were first remanded to three-day police custody and then to judicial custody. Stating that the allegations "prima facie disclose organised activity," the court ordered, "The probe at this stage requires identification of other persons who may have participated in the printing, financing and dissemination of such materials. In such circumstances, custodial interrogation of the accused appears necessary for effective and meaningful investigation." FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Bank fraud: CBI questions Anil Ambani's son

THE CBI Friday questioned former Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL) director Jai Anmol Ambani, the son of industrialist Anil Ambani, for over six hours in the Rs 228-crore bank fraud case involving RHFL, a company of Reliance ADA Group. "Jai appeared before the investigating officer at the CBI headquarters in Delhi earlier in the day and was examined for about six and a half hours. He has been directed to appear again Saturday for further questioning," a CBI spokesperson said. ENS

Over 100 fall ill after consuming food at wedding

OVER 100 people fell ill after reportedly consuming food at a wedding feast in Bohita village, Jharkhand's Palamu district, Wednesday — prompting the administration to set up a temporary medical camp and deploy health teams. Within hours of eating food at the pre-wedding event, several complained of severe stomach pain, diarrhoea, vomiting and dizziness. Palamu Civil Surgeon Dr Anil Kumar Srivastava said, "It was organised by Harishankar Chandravanshi ahead of his son's wedding." ENS

DOUBLE MURDER AT U.P. HPCL PLANT

Blacklisted supplier 'threatened' official prior to killing him, another

Bhupendra Pandey
Lucknow, March 13

THE 35-YEAR-OLD man who allegedly shot dead two officials of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) ethanol plant at Saijini village in UP's Badaun district Thursday had been threatening the plant deputy general manager (DGM) for blacklisting him as a crop stubble supplier, police said. The victims, plant DGM Sudhir Gupta (55), who was a resident of Noida, and Harshit Mishra (34), an assistant manager, hailing from Pilibhit, were declared brought dead at a hospital after sustaining two bullet injuries each. Police said Musajhag SHO Ajay Kumar and Sub-Inspector Dharmendra Kumar have been suspended for failing to act on Gupta's complaint that Singh was threatening him. Officials said Ajay Pratap Singh, who

was barred from the plant about eight months ago over complaints of misbehaviour, threats to staffers and issues related to supply of crop stubble, surrendered at the local police station after the incident but tried to escape during the weapon recovery later. According to officials, after he was blacklisted, Singh started threatening Gupta through phone calls and even followed his vehicle and intercepted it. An officer told The Indian Express Gupta had filed a complaint against Singh on February 4, alleging that the accused was threatening to kill him if the blacklist order against his firm was not withdrawn. The victims' families arrived in Badaun. The SHO and the SI will face a departmental inquiry and legal action will follow if the investigation concludes that their laxity led to the murders, a senior officer said.

Gujarat HC allows man in custody to hold last rites of pet dog of 14 yrs

Aditi Raja
Vadodra, March 13

THE GUJARAT High Court Friday directed the Surat City Police to escort a man, who is in judicial custody in Lajpore Central Jail in a cheating case filed by his estranged wife, to perform the last rites of his pet dog of 14 years. A bench of Justice UT Desai of the Gujarat HC was hearing a plea by a Surat-resident seeking temporary bail in the case lodged against him by his estranged wife alleging misappropriation of Rs 17 lakh from an investment policy. Though the man had moved the trial court

for bail before the chargesheet was filed, his application was rejected. Later, he moved the HC and on the day of the first hearing of his plea in the HC Friday, his pet dog died. The counsel representing the man implored the HC to allow him to perform the last rites of his pet dog, a German Shepherd named Tiger. Considering the oral submission made by Advocate Kruti Shah, representing the man, the HC, in an oral order, directed police to take the applicant to his house in Surat until 8 pm Friday. The HC's oral order said, "...the applicant was having a pet dog for the last 14 years which has

passed away. Because of the applicant's attachment with the pet dog, he wants to perform the last rites of his pet dog. The applicant is hereby directed to be taken to his house at Surat today (March 13, 2026) with police custody immediately upon receipt of this order till 08.00 pm." The applicant had moved the HC for bail before the chargesheet was filed in the case of forgery and cheating filed by his estranged wife, alleging that the man had "misappropriated Rs 17 lakh" from the maturity of an investment policy that was taken in the wife's name after their marriage in 2000.

17-YR-OLD SPEECH-IMPAIRED TEEN BEATEN TO DEATH IN BIHAR AFTER HIS CHEER MISUNDERSTOOD

A cricket match, a village scuffle, and the death of a boy

Himanshu Harsh
Mahnar (Vaishali), March 13

KUNDAN KUMAR'S world was a silent one. Hearing-impaired since birth, his language was that of gestures and emotions — laughing, smiling and pointing to communicate. "While watching cricket matches on TV, he couldn't hear what was being said on the screen, he would watch people's reactions. If they cheered, he would too. If they were upset, he would also become sad," Ajay Rai, a resident of Jakkopur village in Bihar's Vaishali, says. The 17-year-old's shocking death in a village scuffle last week has brought a different kind of silence to the Rai household. It sits on the empty cot where Kundan and his grandfather Arjun slept, in the silent hay-chopping machine that he used to cut grass, and in the men who do the tasks Kundan once did — gathering hay, feeding and milking cows, and delivering milk. It sits beside his griev-



Kundan Kumar's home in Jakkopur village in Vaishali. HIMANSHU HARSH

ing mother Usha in a small mud room that Kundan had hand-painted. "Kundan was our support," she says. "He helped everyone... He would gesture that we rest and that he would handle everything." Last Sunday, Kundan died after a scuffle broke out between him and another boy while watching the India-New Zealand final match of the T20 World Cup on their phone. Kundan had been out delivering milk when the alleged assault occurred barely 50 metres from

home. The suspect, who has just taken his Class 12 exams, is currently on the run. "An argument that started when a wicket fell soon turned into a scuffle," Mahnar SDPO Praveen Kumar said. "There was a speed breaker at the spot, and the victim's head hit it. He was rushed to hospital immediately but his condition deteriorated. He was referred to PMCH but died on the way." The incident has shaken not only the family but also the village. His mother says: "A boy came running and told us that he

had fallen unconscious." Father Braj Kishore adds: "My son never had trouble with anyone. There was no feud between him and the boy who attacked him".

That Sunday evening

It started, a resident says, when Kundan stopped by a group of young men watching the match. "When he went closer to see the screen, one of them got irritated because Kundan reportedly started peeping into his phone." Virendra Rai, a village resident, says: "He [the suspect] first pushed Kundan. When he fell down, he stomped on his head 3-4 times." By the time the family reached the spot, Kundan had allegedly fainted. "His face was swollen. One of his eyes had turned blue. His head was badly injured," his father says. The family first took him to a village doctor who administered first aid. "As soon as he regained consciousness he began vomiting," Braj Kishore says. "We took him to Mahnar Community Health Centre. From

there, he was referred to Hajipur Sadar Hospital. But doctors there said the injury was too serious and asked us to take him to PMCH. There, he was declared brought dead." Despite his disability, villagers say Kundan was well loved. At the family home, his relative Baidhyanath describes him as "very curious" and "sensible". "Whenever he saw people looking at their phones, he would sit nearby to see what they were watching," he says. His uncle Naresh Rai adds: "He didn't have friends in the conventional sense. But he was always ready to help anyone in the village." About the suspect, villagers describe him as short-tempered and "a little moody". Police said the probe so far suggests the violence may have occurred in the heat of the moment and that neither side has any known criminal history. Describing the incident as tragic, Vaishali SP Vikram Sihag said teams are searching for the accused.

Quoting Einstein, J&K High Court frees man detained under PSA

Arun Sharma
Jammu, March 13

THE J&K & Ladakh High Court Thursday ordered the release of a Public Safety Act (PSA) detenu, Mudasir Ahmad Bhat, from Udhampur district jail, holding that his detention "is painful and pinching to the very constitutional sensitivity with which preventive detention jurisdiction is supposed to be exercised and carried out". Quoting Albert Einstein's words — that "who is careless with truth in small matters cannot be trusted with the important matters" — at the outset of his judgment, Justice Rahul Bharti pointed to a "discord" in the dates in the police dossier, the district magistrate's detention order, and the Udhampur district jail superintendent's communication about when the petitioner was called to the police station, when he was detained and

when he was sent to jail. Bhat, a salesman at a tin shop in Pulwama, was formally detained under the Public Safety Act on May 1, 2025, and handed over to the Superintendent of Udhampur district jail in Jammu province the same day. On May 27, Bhat, acting through his wife Shagufta Akhter, challenged the detention order in the HC. "However, the truth comes sneaking out from the very correspondence of the respondent No. 3 — Superintendent District Jail, Udhampur, who in a communication dated July 25, 2025, addressed to the Additional Secretary to Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir, Home Department, is on record saying that the petitioner is lodged in District Jail, Udhampur with effect from 05.12.2024, meaning thereby even prior to date 22.04.2025 as asserted by the petitioner in his writ petition," Justice Bharti observed.

Darjeeling DM shifted to state home department

Atri Mitra
Kolkata, March 13

AMID REPORTS that the Home Ministry may seek the services of Siliguri Police Commissioner C Sudhakar and Darjeeling DM Manish Mishra on Central deputation after the row on "protocol breach" during President Droupadi Murmu's recent north Bengal visit, the state government Friday transferred Mishra and posted him as special secretary in the state home department. Senior WBCS officer Sunil Agarwal, special secretary in the North Bengal Development Department, has been given additional charge as Darjeeling district magistrate, a notification issued by the state government read. However, state administration sources have not confirmed whether Sudhakar was transferred or asked to report at Kolkata. The reshuffle came hours after reports surfaced that the MHA was considering seeking services of the two officers in the last week's controversy.

The Big Picture

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026



MALLAKHAMB ACADEMY IN CHHATTISGARH

Abujhmad's pole stars

In the Naxal hotbed of Abujhmad, where childhood is scarred by loss and violence, a mallakhamb academy run out of a ramshackle structure is helping youngsters land safely on their feet. JAYPRAKASH S NAIDU meets the coach and his wards who have now their sights on the world stage

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHITRAL KHAMBHATI

THE NINE-year-old stands facing an 8.5-foot wooden pole, his body covered in white chalk dust, his eyes narrowed in concentration. It has been a long day of studying and practice, but Yujit Manjhi is determined to land his routine. Around him, the music starts. It's a medley of *Ganesh Vandana*, KGF's *Sultan* and Dhurandhar's *Fa9la*, a cue for Yujit to clamber onto the pole, dive down and execute a backflip, wedging himself precariously into a groove. Then comes an eye-popping manoeuvre — a deft spin around the pole, foot locked in, his body now parallel to the ground. As cheers erupt all around, he acknowledges with a winning smile, and returns to finish the rest of his routine.

Located in a corner of the vast Parade Ground in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur town, the Abujhmad Mallakhamb and Sports Academy is all of two ramshackle single-storey structures. This has been Yujit's world since the summer of 2022, when his uncle brought him and his elder sister to the academy to train in mallakhamb, a traditional gymnastic sport. He now goes home to Farasgaon village, in neighbouring Kondagaon district, only during the holidays.

Last year, the academy's trainees were invited to perform at *America's Got Talent*, two years after lifting the winner's trophy in the 2023 Indian edition of the talent show. The invitation marked a milestone not only for the group but for Abujhmad, an area at the heart of the Maoist conflict.

As the central government's March 2026 deadline to end the Maoist insurgency approaches and security operations intensify in Chhattisgarh, for these youngsters, the conflict is far more personal.

"Most students here come from villages affected by insurgency," says coach Manoj Prasad, a 31-year-old commander with Chhattisgarh's anti-insurgency Special Task Force (STF) unit.

The journey

With roots dating back to the 12th century, mallakhamb was primarily a preparation workout for wrestlers. The sport, which tests agility, balance and core strength, has been included in military and law enforcement training drills in several European nations, though Germany took the most interest in nurturing it.

Recognised by the Sports Authority of India, the first competitive national mallakhamb event was organised during the national gymnastics championships at Pa-

harganj stadium in Delhi in 1958, while the first national mallakhamb championships were held in Gwalior in 1962 as part of the national gymnastics championships.

Although it has largely remained an exhibition sport at global events, it has become more structured over the years — featuring as a medal event at the 38th National Games in Uttarakhand last year.

Since it was set up in 2017, the Narayanpur academy's trainees have swept up around 400 medals at district-, state- and national-level games.

Much of this is down to academy founder Prasad, a man with a ready smile and a quick word of praise.

Originally from Ballia district in Uttar Pradesh, Prasad, an athlete, was picked by his STF unit to go to Mumbai for a 15-day training in mallakhamb. He was expected to pick up some skills and help his colleagues take up the endurance sport.

But it wasn't his colleagues he ended up training. On his return from Mumbai, Prasad was sent to a camp in Chhotte Dongar in the Maoist-affected Narayanpur. Here, an IPS officer, Santosh Singh, chanced upon his performance and invited him to an Independence Day function.

Soon, he began getting calls from schools, asking if he could train children. "I was obsessed with teaching mallakhamb and would pay for the equipment myself," he says. "I would go to various schools during my leave to teach mallakhamb free of cost."

It was around this time that he met wife Poonam, who was then working as a volunteer with UNICEF. "She would help me set up mallakhamb poles and we got talking. We are now married and have two children," Prasad says, smiling.

For Prasad, his early mallakhamb training offered respite from the trauma of his STF work. "I've faced many encounters and have seen my colleagues and friends die. Sometimes, I felt dead on the inside. But I think I'm alive to serve a greater purpose," he says.

Among his early students was Rajesh Korram, then six, the son of a Kosa silk seller from Ansar village deep inside Abujhmad.

"When our team won gold at the national mallakhamb championship in Bilaspur [in 2020], I got a cheque of Rs 50,000 and gave it to my father. My father was confused and asked me, '*Chori toh nahi kiya na* [I hope you didn't steal this],'" Korram, now 14, says, laughing.

Then there is 26-year-old Shyamal Pottai. From Gumiabeda village in Abujhmad's Kohkameta tehsil, Pottai, then



(Anti-clockwise from top) Training sessions at the academy involve complex manoeuvres; coach Manoj Prasad with his wards; training is followed by study sessions; the academy is located in a corner of Parade Ground, Narayanpur

19, had only cricket on his mind when Prasad showed up at his porta-cabin school in Narayanpur's Devgaon in 2017 and screened videos of mallakhamb.

Pottai was hooked. "I loved cricket but I thought mallakhamb would be good for my health," he says. "When I started, I used to get hurt because it's a difficult sport. But I'm proud that my efforts paid off."

But the journey wasn't smooth. A police commando teaching tribal children drew suspicion, and inquiries soon began from Maoists.

Says 16-year-old athlete Rakesh Kumar Werda, "They (Maoists) would contact my parents and siblings back in my village and ask them to call me back, but I never went. I heard they surrendered last year."

"Once the boys started winning medals, our intentions were clear and the Maoists never bothered us again," adds Prasad.

The setback

By 2020, Prasad's dreams for a training centre of his own finally took wing, and he started the academy at the Parade Ground. But then, the pandemic struck. The timing could not have been worse.

Curfews were imposed, schools shut down, and the academy suffered. The big-

gest blow came when Prasad was posted to a remote camp in Abujhmad. "My dreams were shattered. I requested a transfer back to Narayanpur," he says.

Months later, he was reposted to Narayanpur town and began searching for his wards in the remotest corners of Abujhmad, tracking them from as far as Orhha and Kutul, some 40 km away, and urging them to return.

"The children wanted to come and their parents wanted them to do better, so there was no trouble getting them back," he says. "Some of them were grazing animals, some were farming. I brought all 25 children back to Narayanpur town and kept them in my two-bedroom home for the remainder of the pandemic."

It wasn't easy. The house was too small for 25 people, and food bills mounted.

"We would take surplus food rations from those who didn't need them, have *gud-chana* for breakfast and mostly *dal*, rice and *sabzi* for lunch and dinner. His [Prasad's] salary would run out in a week," says Saurabh Pal, 30, an assistant coach at the academy.

As bills rose, so did disagreements at home. "But in the end, my wife understood," Prasad says.



The future

Back at the academy, the students are hard at work. Prasad watches as a young woman does her stretches. As the opening bars of *Fa9la* start to play, she clammers up an aerial rope and performs a graceful backflip, swinging midair with her body arched, arms reaching down and a leg stretched upward.

On the wall — between the slogans '*Main khelunga, padhunga aur duniya ka sarvashreshth khiladi banunga* (I will play, study and become the best athlete in the world)' and '*Utho, jaago aur lakshya prapti tak ruko matt* (Get up, wake up and don't stop till you've reached your goal)' — is the pride of the place: Olympic rings made of repurposed cycle tyres.

The Mallakhamb Academy currently has 100 students, including 30 girls, all between ages 4 and 22, three coaches and one cook. The academy is self-funded, meeting its running costs of approximately Rs 1 lakh a month from winnings, supplemented by a goods transport business run by Prasad.

To ensure they don't lose out on education, students are enrolled in nearby government schools. Practice starts at 6.30 am and lasts a few hours. Then it's time for school. Evenings are dedicated to practice — until 5 pm for younger kids, with the sessions for seniors stretching to midnight on some days.

Next to the training centre stands a makeshift pine-green shed, sparkling in red, green and purple fairy lights put up a few months ago. It's the academy's residential quarters.

It's 9 pm, and practice is over. Inside the quarters, with its three-tiered bunk beds, students sit poring over schoolwork under overhead bulbs, some in groups and some alone.

"These children and I built this place from scratch. From welding to painting, we did everything ourselves," Prasad says. "We had little money to spare and saved whatever we could to buy food or tiny items for decoration."

Initially, Prasad had his students perform at little-known shows. "We did multiple performances, including a Bengali talent show, just to get exposure," he says.

As the academy grew, Prasad had little time for anything else. "From 2016 until 2023, I didn't even travel to Ballia to meet my parents. I told them I was busy," he says.

Now, Prasad and his staff are considering a second academy.

"We have also had aspirants from Odisha, Gujarat, Delhi and Haryana come to us for advanced training," trainer Pal says.

In 2023, after the group's *India's Got Talent* victory catapulted it to national recognition, they received a hero's welcome in Narayanpur as hundreds lined the streets to greet them.

"As a pole artist, I want to perform in *America's Got Talent* and put Abujhmad on the world map," says 16-year-old Ramesh Kumar Werda. "But my dream is to someday perform mallakhamb at the Olympics."

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• WAR IN WEST ASIA

Amid oil supply crunch, the big winner – Russia



SUKALP SHARMA

THIS WAR has no winners, except maybe one that is not even fighting in it.

As Iran effectively chokes off the Strait of Hormuz in its escalating response to the US and Israel's attacks, Russia is making a windfall on the back of the reduced supply of crude oil as well as its spiralling prices. According to a *Financial Times* report, Moscow is estimated to have earned around \$150 million a day in extra oil revenue since the effective closure of the narrow transit passage for a fifth of the world's energy supplies.

Till a few days back, millions of barrels of Russian crude were languishing on the high seas with few willing buyers, thanks to US efforts to starve Moscow of oil revenues that could fund the Ukraine war. Now, America's own war against Iran has taken precedence. After issuing a 30-day "waiver" to Indian refiners last week for buying Russian crude that is already sitting in tankers on water, the US has now extended it to other countries too.

"To increase the global reach of existing supply, @USTreasury is providing a temporary authorization to permit countries to purchase Russian oil currently stranded at sea. This narrowly tailored, short-term measure applies only to oil already in transit and will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government, which derives the majority of its energy revenue from taxes assessed at the point of extraction," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent posted on social media platform X.

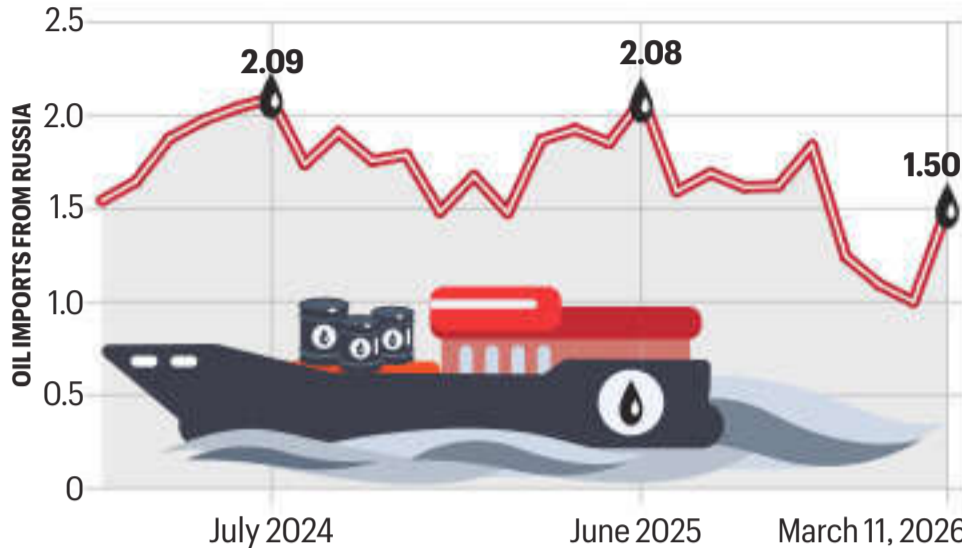
How does Russian oil waiver work?

The easing of sanctions, which will be in place for a month, means that the US will have no problem if countries import Russian crude that was loaded on or before 12:01 am eastern daylight time, or 9:31 am India time, on March 12.

While this move could help other countries secure some oil supplies, it is likely to help New Delhi as well as the India-specific waiver was for oil loaded on tankers before March 5.

• Uneven flow

In recent months, India significantly cut down oil imports from Russia, its largest supplier. Now, amid the US waiver, imports are rising again. (FIGURES IN MILLION BARRELS PER DAY)



An oil tanker hit by an Iranian strike at Khor al-Zubair port in Iraq, Wednesday. AP

According to industry watchers, the US could be forced to ease sanctions further on Russian crude if the disruption to the global oil supplies via the Strait of Hormuz persists for an extended period.

Experts see these moves from Washington as part of Donald Trump's effort to prevent a further and sustained spike in international oil prices — and the consequent rise in domestic fuel prices in the US — given the midterm elections later this year.

"So far, there is only one winner in this war — Russia. It steadily undermines Ukraine's position by flouting international law. It gains new resources to finance its war against Ukraine as energy prices rise," European Council President António Costa said earlier this week at the European Union Ambassadors Conference in Brussels.

And while Bessent said in his X post on Friday that the temporary easing of sanctions on Russian oil on water will not provide significant financial benefit to Moscow, he said earlier that the financial gains Russia would accrue would be "unfortunate".

How has Russia benefited?

The West Asia war has led to a spurt in crude oil prices, which remain extremely volatile. At noon on Friday, benchmark Brent crude was around \$100 per barrel, almost 37% higher than nearly \$73 per barrel just before the US and Israel launched military strikes on Iran on February 28. So, like any other oil producer who is able to sell crude in this market, Russia gains from

higher oil prices. But that's not all. The price of Russian crude grades — mainly its flagship Urals — have appreciated more given the availability in an otherwise tight market and buyer interest.

Russian oil used to trade at a discount to crude benchmarks. The discounts have now largely disappeared, and there are reports of Russian oil even selling at a premium in some cases. Add to that the fact that the easing of sanctions by the US has made large volumes of Russian crude kosher for international buyers.

Around 130 million barrels of Russian crude was estimated to be on ships on water as of early March. Some of those volumes would have already been gobbled up by India and China, the biggest buyers of seaborne Russian crude. Additional volumes are likely to have come on water over the past couple of weeks as well.

"From a market perspective, Russian crude currently acts as one of the best supply hedges for Asian refiners. With persistent risks around the Strait of Hormuz and Middle East supply routes, refiners in Asia are naturally looking for barrels that are more secure and priced competitively, and Russian crude fits that role," said Sumit Ritolia, Lead Research Analyst, Refining & Modeling at Kpler, a commodity market analytics firm.

All this means Russia could rake in billions of dollars more as the war continues. And the longer the West Asian oil flows remain constricted, the more it benefits Rus-

Surge price

At this stage, the US waiver on buying Russian oil does not change much for countries such as India, China and Turkey, which were already buying despite sanctions.

But now, increased competition for Russian barrels could lead to even higher prices.

Millions of barrels of Russian crude were languishing on the high seas. It is now in high demand as the war chokes energy flows & price spirals

How is India affected?

With the conflict — now into its second week — suspending traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, India's Russian oil imports have shot up. In the first 11 days of the month, India imported 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) of Russian oil, up around 50% from February levels, as per ship tracking data from Kpler. These volumes could increase if regular West Asian oil volumes through the strait are not resumed soon. Around 2.5-2.7 million bpd of India's crude imports — accounting for around half of the country's total oil imports — have crossed the strait in recent months; the longer-term average is around 40%. This oil is mainly from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait.

India had, in recent months, significantly cut down its oil imports from Russia, its largest oil supplier, amid trade negotiations with the US, as Washington made it a prerequisite for scrapping its 25% additional penal tariff (see chart).

In February, India had imported just over one million bpd of Russian crude, almost half of the 2025 peak of over 2 million bpd. Loadings of Russian crude for Indian ports, which averaged 1.7 million bpd last year, was just 0.7 million bpd in February. India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports to meet over 88% of its oil requirement.

But now the US is counting on India to buy more Russian oil. On Wednesday, Ambassador Sergio Gor said: "India has been a great partner in maintaining stable oil prices around the world. The United States recognizes ongoing purchases of Russian oil are a part of this effort. India is one of the largest consumers and refiners of oil and it is essential for the United States and India to work hand in hand for market stability for Americans and Indians."

A senior government official had said last week that India never stopped buying Russian crude, and the "waiver" appeared to be more for Washington's own legal and procedural requirements.

"What the waiver does is reduce some of the uncertainty around the trade and could potentially open the door for other Asian buyers who had stayed away (from Russian oil) since 2022," said Ritolia.

• LEGAL

OBC creamy layer: Why SC ruled against 'hostile'

Shyamal Yadav
New Delhi, March 13

THE SUPREME COURT on Wednesday ruled that income cannot be the sole criterion to decide the "creamy layer" among Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and settled the long-pending question of equivalence between public sector undertakings (PSUs) and private sector employees and those in the government sector. Those included in the creamy layer are not entitled to OBC reservation benefits.

What the top court said

The Division Bench of Justices PS Narasimha and R Mahadevan held: "The object of excluding the creamy layer is... not to create artificial distinctions between equally placed members of the same social class... unequal treatment of similarly placed OBC candidates would not only be legally erroneous but constitutionally impermissible."

The Bench was hearing petitions arising due to an October 14, 2004, letter issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) with regard to the creamy layer criterion, clarifying an Official Memorandum (OM) issued on September 8, 1993. The OM noted who is classified as OBC and who belongs to the creamy layer among them.

Creamy layer in OBC quota

The concept of creamy layer within the OBCs was introduced following the landmark 1992 SC ruling in *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India*, also known as the Mandal verdict.

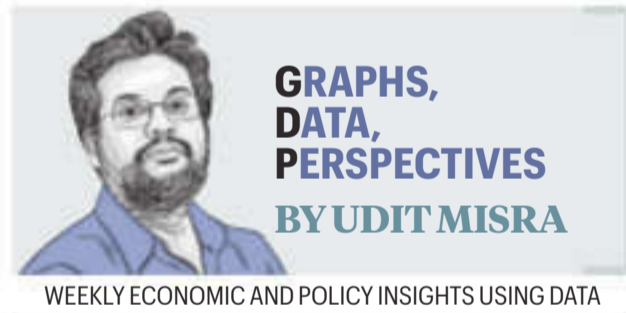
For those in government jobs, the creamy layer specifies groups such as persons occupying constitutional posts; Group-A/Class-I officers of All India Services, Central services and state services; Group-B/Class-II services of Centre and state; employees of PSUs; officers of Armed Forces; professionals and those from trade and industry; property owners; and an income/wealth test. In a nutshell, if either parent is a direct recruit of Group-A, or is promoted before the age of 40, their children cannot take advantage of the OBC quota. Similarly, if both parents are Group-B direct recruits, their children will be covered under the creamy layer. The criterion for those not in the government sector was set at Rs 1 lakh per annum in 1993. It was revised in due course and since 2017, this income limit is Rs 8 lakh.

DoPT's clarification

Para 9 of DoPT's October 2004 clarification said that "the creamy layer status of sons and daughters of persons employed in organisations where equivalence or comparability of posts vis-à-vis posts in Government has not been evaluated is determined as follows: Income of the parents from the salaries and from the other sources (other than salaries and agriculture land) is determined separately. If either the income of the parents from the salaries or the income of the parents from other sources (other than salaries and agricultural land) exceeds the limit of Rs 2.5 lakh per annum [as it was then] for a period of three consecutive years, the sons and daughters of such persons shall be treated to fall in creamy layer."

The court noted that while the OM had excluded income from salary and agricultural income from the income/wealth test for determination of creamy layer status, the October 2004 letter directed inclusion of salary income of PSU and private sector employees. This resulted in hostile discrimination between wards of government servants and those of PSU and private sector employees, "thereby attracting the rigour of the equality doctrine under Articles 14, 15 and 16." **FULL REPORT ON** WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM/EXPLAINED

To compute the true costs of Iran conflict, look at the past



WEEKLY ECONOMIC AND POLICY INSIGHTS USING DATA

SINCE THE US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, initial estimates suggest a heavy running cost for this war. Last week, Israel's Finance Ministry claimed that the country is spending \$3 billion per week as it attacked Iran and defended itself from Iranian missiles. In the US, the costs are reportedly even higher. On Wednesday, the Department of Defense (or War, as the Trump administration calls it) told the US Congress in a briefing that the government had spent \$11.3 billion in the first six days of the war: close to \$2 billion a day.

For perspective, \$1 billion is roughly equal to Rs 9,000 crore. So, the US and Israel spent over Rs 1.3 lakh crore in six days.

Another way to look at this is to compare it with India's defence budget for FY 2026-27: Rs 7.8 lakh crore. At the going rate, in just six weeks — one of the many timelines US President Donald Trump has given since the war began — the two countries

would have spent as much as India's defence spending in the coming year.

Of course, it is possible that as the days and weeks go by, the direct running cost may come down. After all, Trump has said that almost all the targets that could be hit aerielly have been hit. But it is unclear how long this war will drag on, especially since there is no clarity on the exact goal.

Lessons from history

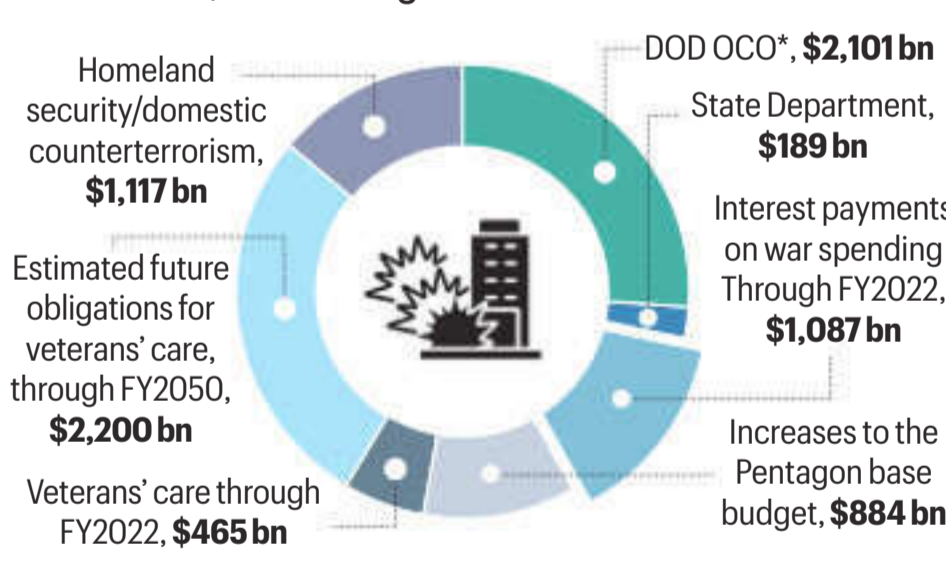
While accurately assessing the true cost of war is near impossible, one way to get a sense of the scale is to look at the cost of past wars. A 2021 study by Brown University's Costs of War project put the total budgetary costs and future obligations of the post-9/11 wars (including estimated future costs for veterans' care) at about \$8 trillion (see chart).

But even these costs are only those that will fall on the US government and American taxpayers. If this war settles down to a lower frequency of attacks and counterattacks, the focus of costs will shift from direct military costs to the US and Israel to indirect costs to the wider world, such as the cost of higher fuel prices.

Crude oil prices have shot up by almost 50% since the war began. That increase will now feed inflation globally, worsening the so-called cost of living crisis that started in

• \$8-trillion burden

A snapshot of America's war-related spending after the 9/11 terror attack, and its obligations



*DOD OCO STANDS FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS. NOTE: AMOUNTS PERTAIN TO FY2001 TO FY2022 IN CURRENT \$. SOURCE: COSTS OF WAR PROJECT

the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war.

But even such inflationary bumps fail to truly capture the real cost of war. For instance, what is the opportunity cost of any such war? Opportunity cost refers to the "money which could have gone towards societally beneficial expenditures such as infrastructure improvements, educational investments, and environmental protec-

tion" instead of military spending.

The non-economic costs

Beyond the economic costs, are the human costs — again, far more difficult to assess. The project found that around 940,000 people were killed by direct post-9/11 war violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and Pakistan between 2001 and 2023. Of these, over 432,000 were civilians.

The post-9/11 wars have also led to a severe undermining of civil liberties and human rights. "Domestically, the post-9/11 wars dramatically expanded mass surveillance, eroding constitutional protections, and intensified police militarization. Marginalized and racialized groups, from Muslims and Arabs to Black and Indigenous organizers to migrants, have borne the brunt of these consequences," the project noted.

Last, there are environmental costs because "military jets and vehicles consume petroleum-based fuels at an extremely high rate, and the vehicles used in the war zones produce tons of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons, and sulfur dioxide in addition to CO₂". One of the key findings has been that the US Department of Defense is the world's single largest institutional consumer of oil — making it one of the world's top greenhouse gas emitters.

• WAR IN WEST ASIA

Strait of Hormuz crisis spotlights a growing risk for Indian seafarers: Abandonment



SUNANDA MEHTA

THE WAR in West Asia, in which a number of tankers and merchant vessels near the Persian Gulf have come under attack, is throwing light on the risks faced by commercial sailors, especially Indians.

At least three Indian seafarers have been killed so far in Iranian attacks. As ships continue to find themselves stranded near the Strait of Hormuz, industry stakeholders are warning of the increasing risk of "abandonments" — when shipowners cease all support to their crew and vessels.

Indians, who make up about 15% of the world's seafarer workforce — the second biggest share by nationality — top the list of "abandoned seafarers".

A recent report by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF),

which represents seafarers globally, put the number of abandoned Indian seafarers in 2025 at a record 1,125, representing nearly 18% of all global abandonment cases. The total number of ships abandoned was also a record — 410 in 2025 from 20 in 2016.

Around 740,000 seafarers are registered with India's Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) and 3,23,479 of them are active seafarers. Here's a look at why abandonment happens and why Indians are the worst affected.

What is 'seafarer abandonment'?

Seafarer abandonment refers to a scenario where shipowners cut off all support to their crew, leaving them stranded without pay, food, shelter, medical care or a way home, either aboard a vessel or in a foreign port. For many seafarers, especially those from low-income backgrounds, disembarking abandoned vessels without a salary is impossible — they often would have already shelled out hefty sums of money to agents for jobs or training certifications. Additionally, port or visa restrictions may prevent them from going ashore.

Why would owners abandon their crew and vessels?

When faced with situations such as high operational costs, debt, or even war and strife, ship owners may opt to cut ties altogether rather than pay wages, cover repatriation or maintain ageing vessels.

But enabling these abandonments is the "flag of convenience" (FOC) system. Each commercial vessel needs to register with a country's flag so that it has a legal nationality. This determines the laws a vessel must follow and the protections its crew receives.

But since international rules allow flagging anywhere, ship owners pick countries (called Flag States) that allow them to bypass safety standards, avoid taxes, and skirt laws protecting labour conditions and wages. The FOC system also conceals the ownership, enabling fly-by-night operators. It is little surprise, then, that FOC vessels dominate abandonment. The ITF estimates that 30% of the 1,00,000-strong global merchant fleet flies FOCs, and 90% of the abandoned ships in 2024 were under FOCs.

Chirag Bahri, operations manager at the International Seafarers Welfare and Assis-

tance Network (ISWAN), said the turmoil in West Asia threatens more abandonments. "If this crisis persists, shipping companies in the Gulf region may encounter significant financial difficulties, which could threaten their survival, potentially resulting in more seafarers being left stranded on their vessels," says Bahri.

What are the recent incidents in which Indian seafarers have found themselves abandoned?

In March 2026, 20 Indians and two others were stranded on the *MV Manali* near Iran's Bandar Abbas Port amid bombings.

In 2025, 19 people, 17 of them Indians, were stranded off UAE on the tanker *Global Peace*. Since June last year, the crew of the *Eleen Armonia*, including four Indians, has allegedly been abandoned off the coast of Nigeria — with no pay and battling severe mental strain in isolation.

In 2024, crew members on the *MV Captain Tarek*, one of them an Indian, were left abandoned for several months off Yemen.

In July 2025, the crew members of the *MT Nathan* found themselves abandoned

in a war zone for months in a port in South Ukraine, caught between Russian bombing and the Ukrainian air defence.

The West Asian and Persian Gulf regions, conflict-ridden waters, dominated recent incidents of abandonment. Over 100 Indians were repatriated from 14 vessels in places like Sharjah (UAE), Tartus (Syria), Shinas (Oman) and Qatar in 2025-2026.

Why are Indian seafarers susceptible to abandonment?

Indian seafarers top abandonment lists owing to a mix of socioeconomic pressures, systemic flaws in recruitment, and a surge in fraudulent practices, says Bahri.

"India's vast population, particularly in tier-3 and tier-4 cities, sees seafaring as a golden escape from poverty — salaries here can dwarf local earnings by multiples. But unlike earlier generations with family shipping ties, many rural newcomers fall into traps set by rogue agents. These agents charge high fees for phantom jobs, peddle fake or bought foreign certificates, and dangle promises of instant wealth," he says. Bahri also points to policy gaps. "The

What protections do seafarers have?

Stranded seafarers need to swiftly alert ITF inspectors worldwide for aid, wage negotiation and repatriation. Indian seafarers can also dial the DGS's round-the-clock helpline. In India, the DGS is responsible for verifying the credentials of ships, owners and recruitment and placement agencies. But the shipping community alleges that lax regulatory oversight is behind issues such as abandonment.

Capt PC Meena, Deputy Director General of Shipping (Crew) at the DGS, said the regulator has tightened compliance requirements for recruitment and placement service licensees and shipping firms. He said 86 vessels were blacklisted for repeated abuses against Indians in September 2025 alone.

The writer is Resident Editor, Pune

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LPG cylinder crunch hits home, sings stories of welfare and aspiration

SINCE THEIR introduction in 1955, two implements of Indian domestic life have remained steadfastly rooted in the national imagination as symbols of well-being as well as intergenerational class mobility. One is the pressure cooker and the other is the LPG cylinder. Their non-Indian origins notwithstanding, they have iconic status as objects that both represent modernity and give rise to bonds of family. In popular culture, the idea of the modern Indian family is indispensably built around the idea of a kitchen equipped with one or more pressure cookers and (and even more desirably) multiple LPG cylinders. The plump red cylinder with faded company logo is the object of both domestic aspirations and welfare. It is not for nothing that old films wanting to show domestic poverty would do it through a scene of a woman blowing into a smoke-spewing *chulha*, tears streaming down her face.

The political importance of the LPG cylinder — or, rather, the fuel that gives it meaning — was recognised in the 2016 Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), intended to provide clean cooking fuel to rural and poor households. The BJP's publicity strategy centred around billboards that showed women in poses of happiness and gratitude as they receive cylinders from the Prime Minister. But the route to the well-being of the Indian kitchen and family is entangled in the global geopolitics of the US-

Israeli war with Iran and the subsequent blocking of the Strait of Hormuz by the latter. The majority of LPG supplies are made up of imports and around 90 per cent of these pass through the Strait of Hormuz. While global media outlets give considerable airtime to energy experts who fret over the effect of petrol price increases in the US and Europe and the growing consumer anger, there is far less coverage of the effects of the war on some of the world's most vulnerable populations.

Multiple studies indicate that while the burning of solid fuel — wood, for example — adds to the overall air pollution, its health effects are most severe on the poor. There are four intertwined aspects to this: Class, caste, gender, and the rural-urban divide. At the most general level, biomass fuels affect the poor much more than the better-off both due to the density of the population where the poor are forced to live and the constricted nature of their residential dwellings. Individual households with a high level of biomass use suffer disproportionately whereas those who live in the locality but have a lower instance of using such fuel also suffer due to exposure to the outdoor air pollution in their locality.

Government data show that access to clean fuels such as LPG is crucially dependent on caste. In both urban and rural areas, for



SANJAY SRIVASTAVA

With women's access to LPG, studies suggest that the time that is saved allows for leisure activities. Women are able to utilise it for activities that generate income. This secures a measure of personal autonomy

example, the percentage of upper-caste homes that use LPG as the main cooking fuel can be three to four times higher than those belonging to SC and ST families. A key factor relates to the places of residence of each of the above groups. In rural areas in particular the socially marginalised are forced to live in localities that suffer from forbidding topography and poor transport infrastructure. LPG cylinders are unwieldy containers requiring pedal-powered or motorised transport and, notwithstanding government subsidies, the location factor adds another layer of discrimination when it comes to energy access.

Among the poor — whether urban or rural — women and young girls shoulder the greatest burden of diseases connected to extended exposure to the pollution that results from solid and biomass fuel use. While the responsibility for food preparation is given over to women, the power to make decisions about what kind of fuel to use is usually in the hands of men. Given gender norms, women's health does not usually figure as a priority when it comes to deciding on the distribution of the household budget. Add to this the fact that daughters of the household join their mothers in sharing kitchen responsibilities from a young age and you have a lifetime of exposure to particulates and other forms of pollution in extremely confined spaces.

In addition to reducing the burden of disease, women's access to LPG is also linked to another well-being effect. Studies suggest that the time that is saved — no gathering of firewood and faster cooking periods — releases them from the enforced drudgery of household work, allowing for leisure activities. Not only are women able to devote more time to activities that improve health outcomes but also utilise it for activities that generate income. This, in turn, secures a measure of personal autonomy that is denied by unpaid household work. Control over time is a crucial measure of the capacity to control and fashion one's life chances. There is evidence that the red cylinder has been an important contributor to this aspect of women's lives.

India is heavily reliant on imports to meet domestic LPG requirements and the current shortage has had significant effects on commercial activities, such as restaurants and hotels having to curtail operating hours. However, a more significant crisis relates to the welfare effects on the poor. Popular culture portrayals of the LPG cylinder as harbinger of personal and collective well-being are not far off the mark: The transition from the wood-burning *chulha* to the bright blue flame of the LPG stove is also a transition to better life chances.

The writer is distinguished research professor, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, SOAS University of London

Tariffs to LPG, a shape-shifting crisis

THE 1997 Asian Contagion, triggered by the collapse of the Thai baht before spreading to other countries in the region and beyond, was a financial crisis. So was the American subprime mortgage crisis leading to the global Great Recession from late 2007 to mid-2009. India's twin-deficit and twin-balance-sheet problems of the last decade were also primarily "financial" crises. Financial imbalances — from currency devaluations and capital flight, the bursting of housing and asset bubbles or high fiscal and external current account deficits — spilled over into the real economy, causing growth and investment slowdowns. The "real" impact of over-leveraged private corporates not investing and bad loans-saddled banks not lending on the Indian economy was felt through much of the 2010s.

The present decade, in contrast, has seen more "real" crises. The Covid pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the on-going US-Israel-versus-Iran conflict have all originated from the physical, as opposed to the financial, world. These have profoundly disrupted physical human interaction or movement of goods. Just as the virus made people afraid of meeting one another, the wars have created anxiety among exporters and importers, and producers and consumers alike. The movement of vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, which handles about a fifth of the world's total petroleum liquid consumption and liquefied natural gas trade, has stopped due to non-availability of war risk insurance for hull and cargo. The very reports of attacks on ships and their sailors being stranded at sea are enough to freeze international trade. The ripple effects on other real economic activities don't take long in coming.

Like with Covid and the Russia-Ukraine war, which sent global oil and food prices skyrocketing, the current West Asia conflict will have a spillover from the "real" to the "financial". For India, it could entail a further weakening of the rupee and renewed pressures on both the balance of payments and government finances. This, just when the Centre as well as states have been working on fiscal consolidation and reduction of debt-GDP ratios that had spiked to all-time-highs in 2020-21, because of pandemic-time spending and economic contraction. Financial crises resulting from debt-fuelled growth, over-investment and speculative bubbles are normal — even considered part of the business cycle — in most market economies. The "real" crises of the kind seen in this decade, including those emanating from Donald Trump's tariff wars, have more to do with geopolitics. It makes economic policymaking much more complicated.

On climate change, mind the science-policy gap

IN 2023, scientists began debating the need to quantify the extent of global warming. Natural fluctuations, such as El Niño, made it difficult to ascertain if the faster rise in temperatures was due to climate change. Now, an analysis by Stefan Rahmstorf of the University of Potsdam, Germany, and US statistician Grant Foster has confirmed the links between the two. The researchers isolated the influence of phenomena such as El Niño, volcanic eruptions and solar irradiance to affirm that the pace of global warming has doubled since 2014, compared to the decade before it. Their study, published in *Geophysical Research Letters* a few days ago, reckons that the Paris Pact's target of keeping temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees Celsius below pre-industrial levels could be out of reach by 2030. The study comes in the wake of a *Nature* paper that concludes that sea-level rise — caused by global heating — could be far higher than previously understood, including in IPCC reports. The two studies confirm the fears of scientists — the climate system is already in uncharted territory. As another analysis, published on Tuesday in the journal *Environmental Research: Health*, points out, a third of the world's population now lives in areas — including large parts of India — where heat severely limits human activity.

It took careful diplomacy to include the 1.5-degree target in the Paris Pact. Since then, diplomacy has not kept pace with science. Take the net-zero target. Two different methodologies are used to calculate this goal — one deployed by IPCC scientists and a much looser method adopted by national policymakers. The latter, criticised for not reckoning with the fact that multiple entities can claim the same emission cuts, has found its way into climate negotiations. Scientists who framed the net-zero concept warn that reliance on this method will artificially inflate progress.

Every fraction of a degree of warming will make adaptation more expensive. As the *Environmental Research: Health* study warns, extreme heat will affect not only the elderly but also the young and healthy. Public health experts, agriculture scientists and energy specialists have blueprints to increase resilience. It's up to policymakers to make optimum use of their inputs.

In Radić's architecture, poetics of space

WORDS OFTEN fail critics trying to describe the work of Chilean architect Smiljan Radić, recipient of the 2026 Pritzker Architecture Prize, architecture's most coveted award. His futuristic modernism is sometimes interpreted as "conceptually evasive", and, at other times, as "Mies van der Rohe-meets-Star Trek". Spanning cultural and commercial buildings, residences, and pavilions, each project is marked by a unique dialogue between structure, material and context. Ranging from minimalist, sharply geometric forms to sculptural, almost fantastical constructions, they challenge conventional notions of space.

Radić's buildings allow the city in. In the Biobío Theatre, he and his collaborators used woven fibreglass over 8,000 sqm, throwing the building's skeleton open to the city in its translucence. The VIK Winery in Millahue is mostly underground, with the remaining structure peeping out lightly above ground. For Alexander McQueen's Spring/Summer 2022 show in London, he created a stage almost like a soap bubble, against the city's skyline. Radić's architecture celebrates the weathering of materials, the "pretty ugliness" of objects, and the fragility of time and nature.

Once considered the end of the world, post-Pinochet Chile has become a site where architects explore material versatility and technical finesse. Radić's work, often inspired by literary or artistic references, succeeds not only because it honours legacy but because it offers inventive paths to the future. Blending experimentation with a deep sensitivity to context, it offers lessons for other architects, showing how architecture can be both rooted in place and radically inventive.

Amid the gloom, an opportunity to rebuild



KP NAYYAR

WARS BRING windfalls. The ongoing conflict in West Asia is no exception. India can gain, too, but the public discourse in this country has so far dwelt entirely on doomsday scenarios — high oil prices, evacuation imperatives, job losses in overseas labour markets and the like. I have been a witness to fortunes made in the Persian Gulf from every outbreak of turmoil since the triumphant return of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to Tehran from exile in 1979. Smart countries in the lower parts of this region have thrived from every war — there have been many in its proximity — since Iran's Islamic Revolution. All this runs against India's traditional ethos and public policies. It needs to change because times have changed. If India does not change, it will lose, and the loss to altruism and compassion will be borne by this country's 1.4 billion people.

I arrived in the Gulf, 11 months before Khomeini's return, to start the first broadsheet English newspaper on the Arab side of the region. With me were six Indian journalists, a British editor and a Bangladeshi news editor, who had spent many years at Xinhua and was the only foreign journalist in Beijing during the aftershocks of the Cultural Revolution. Nineteen months after Khomeini took control of Iran, Saddam Hussein, Iraq's then president, ordered an invasion of his eastern neighbour. The war lasted eight years, caused deaths estimated at half a million and ended in a draw brokered by the UN. Dubai thrived during this period by supplying Iran with everything it needed through the port of Bandar Abbas. This port is less than two nautical miles from the emirate and it takes only between 16 and 24 hours for cargo ships to reach it. It was like a lucky lottery ticket for Dubai's merchants — many of whom are of Persian descent — that such vessels could avoid the most dangerous choke points in wartime in the Strait of Hormuz. As a reporter, I went every six months to the Dubai ports and customs department to check re-export figures, a barometer of the emirate's prosperity in those days before Dubai grew into anything remotely like what it is now. Reports went up by leaps and bounds. Such windfalls were repeated during the war to free Kuwait from Iraqi occupation in 1991 and the US invasion that overthrew Saddam Hussein in 2003.

How can India gain from the dent in the

image of Gulf countries as safe havens from constant Arab upheavals without appearing to fish in troubled waters? Abu Dhabi and Dubai are leading MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) locations. The Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC), the largest such venue in the Arab world, hosts more than 100 international events every year. Dubai's Expo City does the same. Cancellations of some of these events are inevitable now because global MICE programmes require certainty. Instead of going in for cancellations, India can use its friendly relations with the UAE to shift some of these events to Delhi, Mumbai or Bengaluru, which have venues that match ADNEC and Expo City in capacity, amenities and comfort. Yashobhoomi in the national capital, the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre and Mumbai's Jio World Centre are currently underutilised. MICE is a multi-billion-dollar business, but India has never had a strategy or credible plan to attract this business.

Persuading ADNEC and Expo City to shift some of their mammoth events this year to India — even if they have to be downsized — instead of cancelling them is a stopgap arrangement. But it can be built upon because of the opportunities such relocation will allow to expose India's recently enhanced MICE infrastructure — like Bharat Mandapam in Delhi — to the global exhibition and conference industry. Fortuitously, this chance coincides with the appointment of an economic diplomat, Jawed Ashraf, as chairman of the Indian Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO). As he works on a complete reorientation of ITPO's global outreach, Ashraf has been keen to bring in the best practices of another MICE location, Singapore, where he was high commissioner. Disruptions in the Gulf offer him an opportunity, if only India is ready to be self-serving.

Dubai's reputation was built over 40 years of hard and imaginative work. If the war in West Asia does not stop soon, it will take as many decades to rebuild confidence in the Gulf. India used a windfall from the war in Ukraine until Trump stepped in. But those were government-to-government windows and were existential for India. The opportunities popping up now are people-centric and can benefit everyone, from some entrepreneurs to corporate leaders.

The writer, a senior journalist, has worked in West Asia

The many limitations of a social-media ban



ANGELINA DASH

THE KARNATAKA and Andhra Pradesh governments have announced their intention to introduce measures to restrict social-media access for children below the ages of 16 and 13 years respectively. With law-making powers relating to internet and communications governance typically falling under the Union List, it is unclear whether states can, in fact, regulate children's access to social media through legislation.

Fragmented approaches to social-media bans can present challenges in applicability, particularly in the case of non-uniform age thresholds across different states. It is also unclear how different states may intend to assign the onus with respect to enforceability. A broader social media ban for children is also contentious due to several constraints. It is challenging to identify an age threshold, as it could be onerous to ascertain the extent of agency and evolving capacity that an individual child may demonstrate. Moreover, online age verification raises several privacy concerns, since such regulation would require every user to verify their age to access platforms, through mechanisms which have not fully been specified. Such a ban also fails to account for challenges such as shared device usage. A ban may also further limit online expression for girls and LGBTQIA+ children.

As per India's data protection law, which is yet to be enforced, even when children are past an identified age threshold, they will still need parental consent to access most platforms. Notwithstanding the prevailing law in their state, parents may choose to exercise caution in a manner that disregards their child's individual capacity and agency. Social-media bans, coupled with existing parental consent requirements under data protection frameworks, may shift the narrative entirely towards restricting children's access, whereas the real question relates to how we can safeguard children from the very real harms that present themselves online. With children continuing to be exposed to inherent platform design choices that can foster safety harms, the crux of the problem often remains unaddressed.

Rather than restricting access, policies and legal frameworks should empower children and parents to navigate these platforms safely. The Centre is reportedly looking to introduce a law that attempts to take a "nuanced and graded approach" to regulating access to social media for children. However, it is imperative that consultative processes take a multi-stakeholder approach, including consultation with civil society, academia, and children. Any law must acknowledge different harms, such as grooming, sexual content, addiction, and mental-health challenges, and explore targeted mitigation strategies as opposed to a sweeping ban. The law must also build pathways towards equipping children, parents and educators with tools for responsible social media use.

It is crucial that legislation consider factors such as India's linguistic diversity, which may not only impact how platforms detect children's accounts but can also dictate the accuracy with which safety measures used by platforms work. Additionally, a narrow focus on social-media platforms alone ignores risks that may present themselves on alternative mediums such as gaming platforms and large language models. Policies and legal frameworks must, therefore, safeguard the best interests of children in a manner that accounts for emerging technologies and India's unique considerations and challenges.

The writer is project officer at Centre for Communication Governance, National Law University Delhi

40 YEARS AGO

March 14, 1986



Chavan finalises ministers

SB CHAVAN, Maharashtra Chief Minister-elect, met the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in New Delhi. Chavan is expected to return to Bombay soon. He said the list of the members of his Cabinet was finalised after his meeting with Rajiv Gandhi, which lasted about 90 minutes. After arriving here from Bombay, Chavan drove straight to the Prime Minister's house. Prabha Rau, MPCC(I) president, who accompanied him from Bombay, waited at Chavan's residence.

India told of killings

INDIA was told of a UN panel on the escalating violence and indiscriminate killings of

the minority Tamils in Sri Lanka and expressed the hope that President Jayewardene would resist political pressures and work out a peaceful solution to the ethnic problem in his country. Speaking in the committee on the elimination of racial discrimination, Shanti Sadiq Ali said the situation in Sri Lanka had "deteriorated considerably" with the conditions of the minority (Tamils) becoming "very precarious."

PM's TV 'exposure'

A DOORDARSHAN discussion on the projection of the Prime Minister on television vs the official control of the media has run into rough weather, thanks to the government's noncooperative attitude. The discussion

was to be telecast in *Newsline*, a fortnightly programme presented by a private agency under a Calcutta editor. The original idea was to interview L K Advani, information minister in the Janata government, Mani Shankar Aiyar, the Prime Minister's publicity aide, and Amita Malik, a media critic.

Marcos papers

THE REAGAN administration has decided to turn over to the Philippines government copies of all the 1,500 financial documents brought to Hawaii by Ferdinand Marcos, amidst reports that President Corazon Aquino has frozen all assets and properties in the Philippines of the deposed president, his family and associates.



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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY
It would be morally indefensible for this country to support the US-Israeli aggression against Iran.
— Dawn, Pakistan

Growth has been less strong than it seems. The misreading has complicated policy



ABHISHEK ANAND, JOSH FELMAN AND ARVIND SUBRAMANIAN

RECENTLY, THE government released a new series of GDP numbers. It did so for two main reasons. First, the weights of the various goods and services needed updating, a step that was long overdue as India's economy has gone through tremendous changes since the weights were last established in 2011-12. Second, shortcomings in the methodology for estimating GDP needed to be addressed.

The process of changing the methodology has been commendably consultative, for which the Ministry of Statistics and Policy Implementation (MoSPI) deserves credit. But assessing whether the shortcomings have been substantively addressed will take time. And it will ultimately depend on the quality and plausibility of the new numbers.

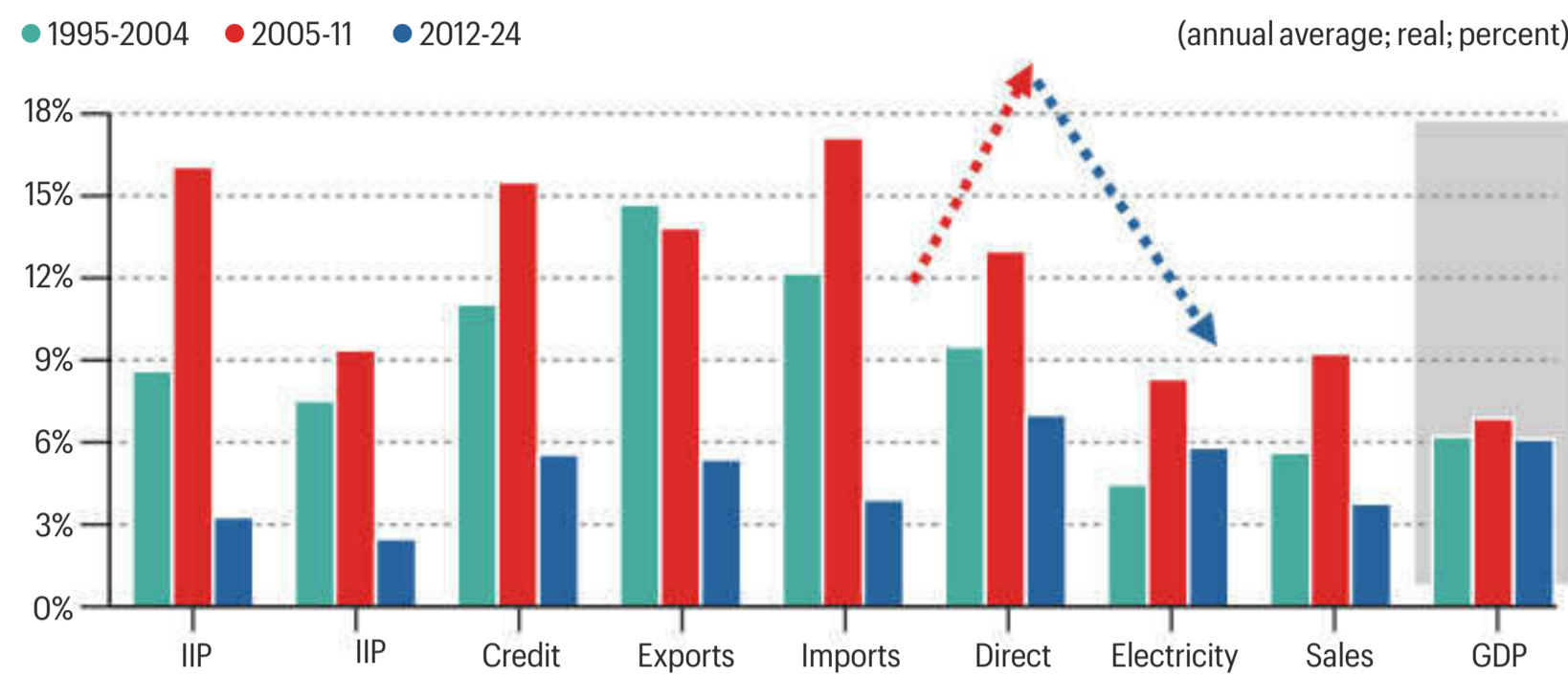
Prima facie, while there have clearly been improvements, some oddities remain. For example, goods inflation (as measured by the manufacturing GVA deflator) is strangely negative for 10 quarters, which has led to an unusual jump in the sector's real growth rate. Also, import deflators are radically different from those in the previous series, which has produced sharp changes in real import growth.

But before we can fully assess the new methodology, we need to understand: What were the problems with the old methodology? Were they serious? In a new paper, we try to answer these questions.

Start with the manifestation of the problem. Until a decade ago, there was a close relationship between the GDP numbers and the standard macro-indicators that economists monitor to gauge the health of the economy: Exports, credit, taxes, electricity consumption, sales and the index of industrial production. These relationships broke down, however, after the methodology was radically revised in January 2015.

A key problem was the use of inappropriate data sources, notably proxying the per-

• GROWTH RATES OF MACRO-INDICATORS OF GDP



ALL VARIABLES ARE IN REAL TERMS; SEE PAPER FOR DETAILS. SOURCES: RBI, CEA, MOSPI

formance of the informal sector by using data from the formal sector. This may have been a reasonable approach in normal times. But after 2015, the informal sector was hit disproportionately by three severe shocks: Demonetisation, the introduction of the GST and Covid. As a result, the methodology overstated informal sector performance — a serious problem, since informal enterprises accounted for over 45 per cent of the economy in 2011-12.

The other major problem was the use of inappropriate deflators. Much attention has been paid to the lack of "double deflation". The bigger issue was the use of inappropriate price indices, most notably the use of the wholesale price index (WPI), to deflate services production even though the WPI doesn't really capture service prices. This was a particularly acute problem over the past decade when the WPI plunged, driven largely by the collapse in the price of oil. As a result, inflation was understated and real growth was overstated. These problems mattered enormously, causing significant misestimation when the 2015 methodology was applied to GDP growth numbers, initially from 2011-12 onwards and then retrospectively to figures going back to 2004-05.

Growth was overstated by about 1½-2 percentage points on

Much attention has been paid to the lack of 'double deflation'. The bigger issue was the use of inappropriate price indices, most notably the WPI, to deflate services production even though the WPI doesn't really capture service prices

average between 2011-12 and 2023-24, with inappropriate data and deflators contributing roughly equally. As a result, we estimate the economy grew at 4-4½ per cent on average instead of 6 per cent over these 12 years. Estimates of India's potential growth need to be re-calibrated accordingly.

For the earlier period, the 2015 methodology had the opposite effect: It underestimated growth by about 1-1½ percentage points on average between 2004-05 and 2011-12. The net result is a mischaracterisation of the 20-year trajectory of growth. The boom of the aughties and the subsequent slowdown have been erased from history, replaced by a picture of steady, rapid growth.

The figures show the problem. The macro-indicators surged from the 1990s to the early aughties but then decelerated sharply, falling even below pre-2005 levels (see arrows). Yet official GDP growth figures (the shaded area) portray a picture of stable growth over the entire period.

In this picture, there was no India Shining between 2003 and 2010, when the heady, dizzy dynamism was palpable everywhere, including in all the major macro-economic aggregates. Nor was there any slowdown after the global financial crisis, any impact of the twin balance sheet problem, or

of the four major post-2015 shocks: Demonetisation, GST, the ILFS-triggered credit meltdown and Covid. The official data suggest that the last two decades were an uninterrupted idyll of 6-7 per cent growth.

This misreading complicated macro-economic policy. At various periods the data signalled strength when the economy was weak, and in others, it suggested that policy should be eased when growth was strong. It also attenuated the urgency for reforms, especially in the period between 2014-15 and 2019-20. After all, why change the policy framework when it was already producing world-beating growth?

In recent years, there have been frequent invocations of puzzles. If growth is strong, why is private investment so weak? Why is net FDI declining? Why are capacity utilisation, wage growth, employment growth so tepid? More recently, why was there pressure on the rupee if real growth was so much greater than anywhere in the world? Each puzzle elicits its own complex and different explanation. But in the spirit of Occam's Razor, there is one simple, albeit partial, explanation for all of them: Growth has been less strong than it appears!

India has taken pride in being amongst the fastest-growing economies in the world. According to IMF data, India has been the fourth-fastest-growing major economy between 2011 and 2023. But even on our revised estimates, India will remain amongst the top seven or eight fastest-growing economies. National pride may yet be warranted but it does not require a statistical crutch.

Our analysis is both complimentary and complementary to the latest effort by MoSPI. Complimentary because MoSPI has now attempted to address the challenges identified by our analysis and other scholars. Complementary because while the new methodology will apply to future estimates, our research is about the past, focusing on correcting the historical record. Our research will also provide a benchmark for assessing the new methodology when MoSPI undertakes the backcasting exercise to come up with estimates for the last one or two decades. Hopefully, out of the fog of the past there will be light ahead.

The writers are affiliated respectively to Madras Institute for Development Studies, JH Consulting and Peterson Institute for International Economics. Data and replication code for the paper are available at the PIIE web-site

In Nepal and Bangladesh, the people have spoken



RAM RAJYA
BY RAM MADHAV

INDIA IS not only the world's largest democracy but a successful one, too. It is a model for its South Asian neighbours to emulate. The last couple of months saw two important neighbours, Bangladesh and Nepal, successfully demonstrating their democratic credentials. Bangladesh held its elections on February 12, while Nepal went to the polls on March 5. Two things stood out: One, the peaceful manner in which they were conducted, and two, the commendable maturity that the electors in both countries displayed.

Bangladesh and Nepal witnessed popular revolts that led to the ouster of their respective heads of government: Sheikh Hasina in August 2024 and K P Oli in September 2025. These revolts were not peaceful. The abruptness and scale of violence in both cases prompted some observers to suspect the involvement of foreign agencies. But there were genuine reasons for popular unrest in both countries.

Bangladesh remained under an unelected government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus for an unusually long period. The Yunus government's antics endeared it neither to its people nor to neighbours like India; India-Bangladesh relations touched a nadir. The National Citizen Party, backed by the student groups that spearheaded the agitation against Hasina, was seen as an important contender for power along with the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami. In the run-up to the elections, many suspected that the two parties, with the backing of the interim government, would emerge as frontrunners.

But the voters in Bangladesh demonstrated utmost wisdom and maturity in offering a landslide majority to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), a seasoned warhorse in the country's politics. The BNP, under the leadership of Tarique Rahman, is best suited to provide a stable government with credibility and experience at this crucial juncture.

The BNP's priorities include implementation of the constitutional and political reforms approved by the citizens in a referendum conducted by the Yunus administration in February 2025. The reform proposals include, among others, limiting the prime minister to two consecutive terms and creating an independent anti-corruption body. While Yunus followed an overtly anti-India policy, Rahman is expected to bring balance and bonhomie back into the relationship.

In Nepal, the voters chose a new party that came into the electoral scene just a few years ago. The Rastriya Swatantra Party, led by 50-year-old journalist-turned-politician Rabi Lamichhane, and 35-year-old rapper and youth sensation (also former mayor of Kathmandu) Balendra Shah, registered an unprecedented victory by winning more than two-thirds of the seats. Nepal opted for younger faces and new leaders, decisively rejecting the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), led by septuagenarians like Sher Bahadur Deuba and K P Sharma Oli.

Although Nepal began its democratic journey in 1990, it never succeeded in establishing stable governments. There were more than a dozen prime ministerial tenures during the constitutional monarchy between 1990 and 2008, and 14 since the abolition of the monarchy in 2008. The 2026 election is a watershed moment because a single-party majority government is being formed. It will provide greater stability and allow for mature decision-making.

No democracy can be perfect, and no election will be complaint-free. But India has always been more comfortable dealing with fellow democracies, except for Pakistan, where a sham democracy prevails with the country's military looming large. Earlier, the Maldives (in 2023) and Sri Lanka (in 2024) conducted elections peacefully. In Myanmar, elections were held in December 2025-January 2026. All these governments enjoy excellent relations with India. Given its historically strong people-to-people ties with neighbours, India should proactively reach out to the new governments in Bangladesh and Nepal and rebuild relations, which have suffered some setbacks in the last few years. After all, as Atal Bihari Vajpayee said, "We can change our friends but not neighbours."

The writer, president, India Foundation, is with the BJP



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SC vs NCERT

TO BE angry over the textbooks issue even after NCERT's deletion and apology appears excessive for the apex court ('In blacklisting experts, SC does itself disservice', IE, March 13). In a wider framework, it risks creating a chilling effect on teachers, authors, and publishers, who may hesitate to state even alleged details that could reflect adversely on an institution. It also raises concerns of a double standard, that is, when similar institutional protection is often demanded by minorities or religious bodies. Guarding faith in institutions is one thing, but measures that instill fear run contrary to our constitutional values.

Shaswat Jena, Indrapuram

THE MORAL authority of an institution is paramount and nothing must dent it ('In blacklisting experts, SC does itself disservice', IE, March 13). In the case of NCERT, the reaction of the SC is being seen as an overreach without a matching cause. It would have been better to show intent to own, correct, and move forward. We have high hopes from our strong setup of governance, including the legislature, executive and judiciary.

Sanjeev Raina, Noida

Move to impeach

THE OPPOSITION parties in India are in dire straits. They are hard-pressed by a series of defeats and the high-handedness of state institutions, both of which are mutually reinforcing. Their own conduct has exacerbated their predicament ('Question CEC, but move to impeach is unwise', IE, March 13). There is scarcely any issue on which it has fought the government tooth and nail. Rarely is an issue pursued with diligence. This shifting of goalposts has reduced the stature of the Opposition to a caricature. This explains why state institutions continue to treat them unfairly with impunity, while they simultaneously fail to rally meaningful public support.

Anirudh Parashar, Chandigarh



RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

THE WAR between Iran and the US and Israel is in its second week. The conflict is increasingly turning into a test of will between the Iranian regime and a multifront military alliance. This is a moment of uncertainty for the Iranian nation — caught between intensifying attacks, geopolitical tensions, and internal repression. Iran's strategy is clear: Survive the war. Iran has expanded the confrontation with Israel and the US because this is the only strategy for the survival of the Islamic regime. The Iranian regime is weakened, but it is not decimated. Young Iranians are also pushing back against the religious policies and cultural repression of the current regime.

Hope is a necessary component for creating a better future for Iranians, but the war does not follow a written script. US President Donald Trump has no exit strategy; he seems to be offering the international community conflicting signals on how long the US war with Iran will last. Consequently, what started on February 28 as an attempt to end the Islamic regime and its hegemony in the region turned into the erosion of the political balance in the Persian-Arab Gulf. Both Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu know that the Iranian Regime cannot win this war, but what they

In Iran, the military mindset — in favour of the escalation of the war — is winning against the political strategy of a reduction in tensions with the West

Forces of martyrdom, military lead charge in Iran

seem to be underestimating is the potential of the Shia ideology of martyrdom. This is embedded in the institution of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its actions, and is used to justify regional expansion, hostility toward the US, and the eradication of the state of Israel. It is by favouring this view that the Iranian regime survived the eight-year war with Saddam Hussein. This worldview cannot be destroyed by bombs; it is faith-based.

For four decades, the ayatollahs and the IRGC amplified the role of the Iranian regime as a hegemonic power in West Asia and the Levant. But today, with the degradation of Hezbollah in Lebanon and the collapse of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, Iran's hegemonic potential has been fatally compromised. Iran still has the capacity to turn this war into a "religious war" by mobilising the Shia communities across Asia. We saw an example of this during the pro-Iran protest at the US consulate in Karachi. Many still remember the suicidal missions of young Iranian volunteers during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988).

Today, the scenes of jubilation that followed the death of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in cities like Tehran and Shiraz are now far away. The

election of Mojtaba Khamenei as the new Iranian Supreme Leader is a clear sign that the hardline factions in the establishment will retain power. Though Mojtaba does not have the Shia theological credentials needed, he is certainly a security-minded leader through whom the IRGC will try to expand its authority.

Therefore, more than ever, the military mindset — in favour of the escalation of the war with the US and Israel — is winning against the political strategy of a reduction in tensions with the West. The latter group is represented by the former Iranian president Hassan Rouhani (2013-2021), who consistently advocated for diplomacy over military conflict. It looks as if, with the intensification of bombings in Iranian cities and around the Persian-Arab Gulf area, the political line of thought is losing ground within the Iranian power structure. It is difficult to predict how and when the war will end, but it seems that neither Israel nor the US would like to deploy ground troops in this war. It looks like the greatest moments of this war for Donald Trump are the unplanned ones.

The writer is director, Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Nonviolence and Peace Studies, OP Jindal Global University



SASMIT PATRA AND ASHWIN UPRETI

AS THE proliferation of AI increasingly impacts us, one question looms large: Who gets to govern artificial intelligence? The pace and scale of AI deployment has far outstripped the ability of traditional regulatory models to ensure oversight. Historically, technology governance has been state-centric, with standards set by regulators. The emergence of artificially intelligent systems, however, disrupts this tendency.

AI-enabled systems increasingly impact labour markets, education, healthcare, finance, and even democratic processes. While technical know-how resides in private

firms, the risk and impact is borne by the public at large. This is compounded by the ability of machine-learning systems to evolve post-deployment, complicating regulation for static legal frameworks. The cumulative outcome is a fragmented ecosystem where knowledge, regulation and risk are unevenly distributed.

A participatory approach to governance offers one pathway to correct this imbalance. Such an approach would enable the diverse community of end-users, such as citizens, civil society organisations, independent researchers and academia, to detect emerging harms that domain experts or developers overlook. This is particularly helpful when bias relates to linguistic or cultural groups, regional practices or local traditions. Participatory approaches allow models to account for experiential knowledge, enabling audits

to bring contextual shortcomings to the surface. Community-led audits can further strengthen transparency and accountability by stress-testing systems under real-world conditions. However, a participatory approach to governance may only be effective when embedded in institutional design.

This requires us to reimagine governance structures. To have meaningful oversight, AI governance cannot remain in silos of state, private sector or civil society organisations. Also, intersectional coordination is contin-

If governance remains a technocratic exercise behind closed doors, AI will deepen inequalities and weaken democratic oversight

gent on infrastructure. Deliberative governance requires accessible reporting platforms and open datasets. Targeted literacy programmes are required to lower barriers to engagement and democratise knowledge.

If governance remains a technocratic exercise behind closed doors, AI will deepen inequalities and weaken democratic oversight. If India invests in qualitative institutionalised participatory mechanisms for AI audits and builds infrastructure to drive responsible innovation, AI-enabled systems can be aligned with public values rather than narrow institutional priorities. The challenge is not whether to govern AI or not, but to do so in a way that redistributes power equitably and secures public trust going forward.

Discourse around AI governance often treats opacity as a purely technical problem, locating the "black box" within proprietary

algorithms and complex model architectures. While technical opacity is real, this framing is incomplete. There is also an emerging social black box. Decisions regarding what problems are worth automating, which datasets are to be deployed for training models, whose errors are tolerable and which harms we embrace are not always made by algorithms. They are shaped by commercial value, strategic priorities and social considerations. So long as upstream choices remain opaque, even transparent AI models may produce unjust outcomes. Participatory governance mechanisms carry the prospect of piercing this veil and opening AI systems to democratic oversight.

Patra is Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha. Upreti is assistant director at Cyril Shroff Centre for AI, Law & Regulation

ONE FRENCH soldier was killed and six others were wounded after an Iran-made drone attack in Iraq that President Emmanuel Macron said was unacceptable.

ASEAN FOREIGN ministry called for an immediate halt to West Asia war as oil prices and trade disruptions hit region.

A TURKISH-owned ship that had been waiting near Iran was allowed to pass through the Strait of Hormuz after authorities received permission.

THE UNITED States has designated an officer outside of US Central Command to complete a probe on a strike on an Iranian school.

Iran's new Supreme Leader is wounded and likely disfigured, says Hegseth

Trump eases curbs on Russian oil, says US will hit Iran 'very hard'

Associated Press
Dubai, March 13

US DEFENCE Secretary Pete Hegseth says Iran's new supreme leader "is wounded and likely disfigured." Hegseth spoke Friday, a day after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei released a written statement vowing to continue the war.

It was Khamenei's first statement since he assumed Iran's top office after the death of his father in an Israeli strike.

President Donald Trump said the US was going to be hitting Iran "very hard over the next week", shortly after issuing a partial 30-day waiver for purchases of sanctioned Russian oil, hoping to ease prices fuelled by the US-Israeli war on Iran.

Prices have been whipsawing on Trump's comments about the likely duration of the war, which has prompted Iran to attack vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, the conduit for a fifth of the world's oil.

Trump has previously said the war is "complete", and also promised to guarantee the safety of vessels in the Strait. In a Fox News interview aired on Friday, Trump said the US would escort shipping there "if we needed to".

After nearly two weeks of war, 2,000 people have been killed, most of them in Iran, but many also in Lebanon and a growing number in the Gulf,

which has for the first time in decades of Middle East conflicts found itself on the front line.

US forces have also suffered casualties. The US military confirmed that all six crew members aboard a refuelling aircraft that crashed in western Iraq were dead. Iran fired more missiles and drones at Israel, and Iranian drones were reported flying into Kuwait, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman.

The Israeli military launched strikes across Tehran. It said its air force had struck more than 200 targets in western and central Iran over the past day, including ballistic missile launchers, air defence systems and weapons production sites.

Iranian Press TV said a woman had been killed by an airstrike close to a rally in Tehran for Quds (Jerusalem) Day, one of many across Iran in support of Palestinians living in Israeli-occupied territory.

President Masoud Pezeshkian, Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and security chief Ali Larijani all appeared in videos verified by Reuters openly attending the rally in a gesture of defiance, despite an assertion by US Defense Secretary Peter Hegseth that the leadership were "cowering" underground.

"People are not afraid of these attacks. As you can see, people have come out in this rain, under these hardships," judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei "We will not back down in any way."

With gasoline and diesel prices rising at pumps in the United States and around world, the US on Thursday issued a 30-day licence for countries to buy Russian oil and petroleum products already at sea.



The mortal remains of 45 sailors of the Iranian frigate *IRIS Dena* inside a facility in Iran on Friday. Sri Lankan authorities had handed over the bodies to the Embassy of Iran. On March 4, Sri Lanka said it had recovered 84 bodies of Iranian sailors after a US submarine attack sank the *IRIS Dena* off Galle on the island's southern coast. @IRAN_IN_INDIA

Blast rocks Tehran rally after Israel threat

NATO defences intercepted third missile from Iran, says Turkey

Associated Press
Dubai, March 13

A LARGE explosion rocked a central square in Iran's capital where thousands were gathered Friday for an annual state-organized rally to support Palestinians and call for Israel's demise. Israel warned that it would target the area in central Tehran.

There were no reports of casualties. But the decision to proceed with the mass demon-



Iranians carry flags as they take part in a protest marking the annual Quds Day on the last Friday of holy month of Ramadan, in Tehran. REUTERS

stration that was attended by some senior government officials, and Israel's threat to target the area, underscored the fierce determination on both sides nearly two weeks into a war that has rattled the global economy and shows no sign of letting up.

warplanes pummel military and other targets across Iran.

The explosion in Tehran rocked the Ferdowsi Square area midday, where thousands had gathered for an annual Quds Day rally in which they chanted "death to Israel" and "death to America."

NATO air defenses intercepted a missile fired from Iran and entering Turkey's airspace on Friday, the Turkish defense ministry said in a statement.

It was the third such interception of an Iranian missile over Turkey in 10 days. The defense ministry did not say where the missile was shot down. In a statement, Allison Hart, a spokeswoman for NATO, confirmed the interception of a missile "heading to Turkey."

US Navy could escort vessels in the Strait with international coalition, says Bessent

Reuters
London, March 13

THE US Navy, perhaps with an international coalition, will escort vessels through the Strait of Hormuz when it is militarily possible, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told Sky News in an interview on Thursday.

"My belief, that as soon as it is militarily possible, the US Navy, perhaps with an international coalition, will be escorting vessels through," Bessent said.

The plan to escort ships would go ahead as soon as the US has "complete control of the skies and... (Iran's) rebuilding capabilities for the missiles completely degraded," he said.

US and Israeli strikes on Iran and the subsequent response by Tehran have widened regional tensions and paralyzed shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, disrupting vital Middle East oil and gas flows and sending energy prices higher.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps says it will block oil shipments from Gulf unless the



My belief, that as soon as it is militarily possible, the US Navy, perhaps with an international coalition, will be escorting vessels through the Strait"

SCOTT BESSENT,
US TREASURY SECRETARY.

US and Israeli attacks cease.

"There are tankers coming through now, Iranian tankers, some Chinese flag tankers... So we know that they have not mined the straits," Bessent said.

China pledges \$200,000 for victims of Iran school bombing

Press Trust of India
Beijing, March 13

CHINA ON Friday said it will provide \$200,000 in emergency humanitarian assistance to the students killed in an airstrike on an elementary school in Iran in the ongoing joint US-Israeli attacks on the country.

China expresses deep condolences regarding the deaths of students in the recent attack on an Iranian elementary school and extends sincere sympathies to their families, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said at a media briefing.

Red Cross Society of China has decided to provide the Iranian Red Crescent Society with USD 200,000 in emergency humanitarian assistance, he said.

"China is willing to continue to offer necessary support to Iran in the spirit of humanitarianism to help the Iranian people overcome the difficulties," Guo said.

China condemns all indiscriminate attacks against civilians and non-military targets. Targeting schools and harming children constitute a severe violation of international humanitarian law, he added.

US refueller deployed for combat mission crashes in Iraq, 6 killed

Reuters
Washington, March 13

ALL SIX crew members aboard a US military refueling aircraft that crashed in western Iraq are confirmed to have been killed, the US military said on Friday.

A US military refueling aircraft crashed in western Iraq on Thursday, in an incident the military said involved another aircraft but was not the result of hostile or friendly fire.

The deaths add to the seven US service members who have already been killed as part of US operations against Iran which began on February 28.

"The circumstances of the incident are under investigation. However, the loss of the aircraft was not due to hostile fire or friendly fire," a statement from US Central Command said.

A US official told Reuters that the second aircraft involved in the crash, which landed safely, was also a military refueling aircraft known as the KC-135.

The United States has deployed a large number of aircraft into the Middle East to take part in operations against Iran and the incident highlights the risk of not just operations, but of refueling aircraft in the air.

The KC-135, built by Boeing

WHAT IS THE KC-135 STRATOTANKER



A F-16 fighter jet being refuelled by a KC-135 Stratotanker. FILE

BUILT BY Boeing in the 1950s, the KC-135 Stratotanker has long been the backbone of the US Air Force's aerial refueling fleet.

CRITICAL IN enabling other aircraft to refuel midair, allowing them to carry out long missions without landing.

ACCORDING TO the Congressional Research Service, the Air Force had 376 KC-135 aircraft in service last year. A typical KC-135 operates with a crew of three.

in the 1950s and early 1960s, has served as the backbone of the U.S. military's air refueling fleet

THE AIRCRAFT is gradually being phased out as the next-generation Boeing KC-46A Pegasus tankers enter service

BESIDES REFUELLING missions, KC-135s have also been used for medical evacuations, transporting wounded personnel, and for surveillance operations.

HAS PREVIOUSLY been involved in several accidents, with the most recent before the latest crash occurring on May 3, 2013. REUTERS

and is critical to allowing aircraft to carry out missions without having to land.



A man stands outside a house damaged in Pakistani airstrikes on the outskirts of Kabul on Friday. REUTERS

Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of killing 6 civilians in airstrikes

Associated Press
Kabul, March 13

AFGHANISTAN'S TALIBAN government accused Pakistan's military Friday of targeting homes in overnight airstrikes in Kabul and other areas of the country, saying at least six civilians were killed and more than a dozen injured, as fighting between the neighbors entered its third week.

Afghan government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said on X that Pakistani aircraft also struck fuel depots belonging to the private airline Kam Air near the airport in Kandahar in southern Afghanistan. "This company supplies fuel to civilian airlines as well as to United Nations aircraft," he said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's state-run television reported that the country's armed forces carried out "successful airstrikes inside Afghanistan" as part of the ongoing operation, targeting what it said were four alleged militant hideouts and their support infrastructure in Afghanistan.

The developments come amid a dramatic increase in

Two bomb-laden drones downed in Islamabad

Islamabad: Pakistani security authorities on Friday intercepted and destroyed two explosive-laden drones in the capital Islamabad, according to a media report.

One of the drones fell near Faizabad, and the other in the I-9 sector of Islamabad, Dawn reported, quoting sources.

The sources added that the drones were explosive-laden. It was not clear who and from where launched the drones, which came days after Afghan Defence Minister Mullah Yaqoob threatened his country could target Islamabad. PTI

tensions between the two countries which Pakistan has referred to as "open war." They are adding to concerns about the stability in the region as the US-Israeli war against Iran continues with no end in sight.

BRIEFLY

CUBA

Cuban President says talks held with US to resolve differences



President Miguel Diaz-Canel at BRICS summit in Rio de Janeiro. FILE

CUBA HELD recent talks with the US government, President Miguel Diaz-Canel said Friday, marking the first time that the Caribbean country confirmed such speculation.

Diaz-Canel said in a speech that the talks "were aimed at finding solutions through dialogue to the bilateral differences between our two nations. International factors facilitated these exchanges."

He didn't elaborate on those factors, or provide any details about the talks. The White House didn't return an immediate request for comment. Diaz-Canel said that no

petroleum shipments have arrived on the island in the past three months, which he blamed on US blockade. AP

MYANMAR

Military boosts air power as it takes over town

MYANMAR'S MILITARY has commissioned new combat aircraft to boost its air capacities, state media reported Friday, as the army steps up efforts to regain territory from resistance forces in the country's civil war. The state-run *Global New Light* of Myanmar newspaper did not specify the number or types of the newly commissioned military aircrafts. AP

SOUTH AFRICA

Soldiers shut illegal mining in Johannesburg

SOUTH AFRICAN soldiers deployed to high-crime areas have dismantled illegal gold mining operations in a community near Johannesburg, forcing some illegal miners to flee and abandon their equipment. Police and the army recovered various tools used by illegal miners. Makeshift trenches with food supplies and utensils that were also dismantled. AP

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

PAKISTAN

Seven police personnel killed in IED blast

AT LEAST seven police personnel were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast targeting a police vehicle in northwest Pakistan on Friday, local police said. The incident occurred in the Shadi Khel Bettani area in Lakki Marwat district when a police mobile on routine patrol near the Rasool Khel check post was hit by a roadside IED which detonated with a powerful blast. PTI

NEPAL

Nepal govt halts visa on-arrival for Iranians

NEPAL WILL no longer issue on-arrival visas to Iranian nationals, the Immigration Department said on Friday. The department said that Iranian nationals, except those with a government and diplomatic passport, shall enter the Himalayan nation only after acquiring a visa from a Nepalese Embassy abroad. With this, the number of countries not eligible for an on-arrival visa to has reached 13. PTI

PERCHED IN THE DANGREK MOUNTAINS, THE PREAH VIHEAR TEMPLE SITS ON THE CAMBODIA-THAILAND BORDER

An ancient temple caught in the heart of a modern conflict

Sui-Lee Wee
Preah Vihear, March 13

THE SANDSTONE walls are more than a millennium old but they are pockmarked with holes from artillery fire. An ornate column has collapsed. A carving of a mythical seven-headed serpent has been destroyed. All along the half-mile causeway are triangular red placards that warn of unexploded ordnance.

This monument, the Preah Vihear temple in Cambodia, was largely unscathed for centuries because it's so remote. Conceptualized as a "stairway to heaven," this series of stone pavilions and hallways sits on a

sheer cliff in the Dangrek Mountains along the Cambodia-Thailand border.

But since colonial times, the temple — a masterpiece of Khmer architecture that was built as a shrine to the Hindu god Shiva and evolved into a Buddhist sanctuary — has been a flashpoint for tension and conflict. A few decades ago the area was a stronghold of the Khmer Rouge and littered with land mines.

Today, it is an emblem of two warring neighbors, Cambodia and Thailand, that can't agree on where their border sits. The International Court of Justice has affirmed that the temple belongs to Cambodia.



The temple complex is a series of stone pavilions and hallways in the Dangrek Mountains along the Cambodia-Thailand border. NYT

But tensions spilled over last year into two devastating rounds of clashes that left

dozens dead and hundreds of thousands displaced on both sides of the border.

During the fighting, Cambodia says Thailand attacked the temple, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Thailand says it was targeting Cambodian military installations inside the temple. To support their claim, Thai officials provided images of bunkers, artillery and command posts that they said were within the temple complex. But a New York Times analysis was not able to verify those locations independently. Cambodia denies Thailand's claim.

The fighting left deep scars at the site, which is older than the more famous Angkor Wat in nearby Siem Reap. Years of work by the United States to re-

store an ancient staircase have been erased. Efforts by China and India to help with other repairs have stalled.

The temple's Cambodian custodians fear that the damage is irreparable.

A millennium ago, this mountainous jungle was a thriving center of the Khmer civilization, then one of the world's most advanced and artistic empires, which extended across a vast swath of Southeast Asia.

"If it's destroyed, it's lost," said Mao Chanthou, 21, a temple "preservation agent" whose job was to prevent tourists from vandalizing the site. "Even if it's rebuilt, it won't be the same as the original." NYT

FPIs HAVE NET SOLD INDIAN SHARES WORTH \$5.73 BILLION SO FAR THIS MONTH

Why FPIs are dumping Indian stocks, pulling rupee down

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, March 13

AT A time of global market volatility, investors tend to cut down on the risks they are exposed to and withdraw from emerging markets, such as India. Staying invested in a foreign asset where the currency is weakening can hurt returns for foreign investors in terms of their own currency, such as the US dollar.

This, in essence, is why Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have continued to dump Indian shares amid the war in West Asia and volatile crude oil prices, dragging down the Indian rupee, which hit a new all-time low of 92.48 per dollar on Friday.

Foreign investors have sold Indian shares on a net basis every day since Israel and the US attacked Iran on February 28.

So far this month, FPIs have net sold Indian shares worth \$5.73 billion. This is the most that foreign investors have pulled out from Indian markets in 14 months, even though less than half the month is over.

The last time FPIs sold more was in January 2025, when net outflows amounted to just over \$9 billion. Since the start of 2025, FPIs have been net sellers of Indian shares in 10 out

of 15 months.

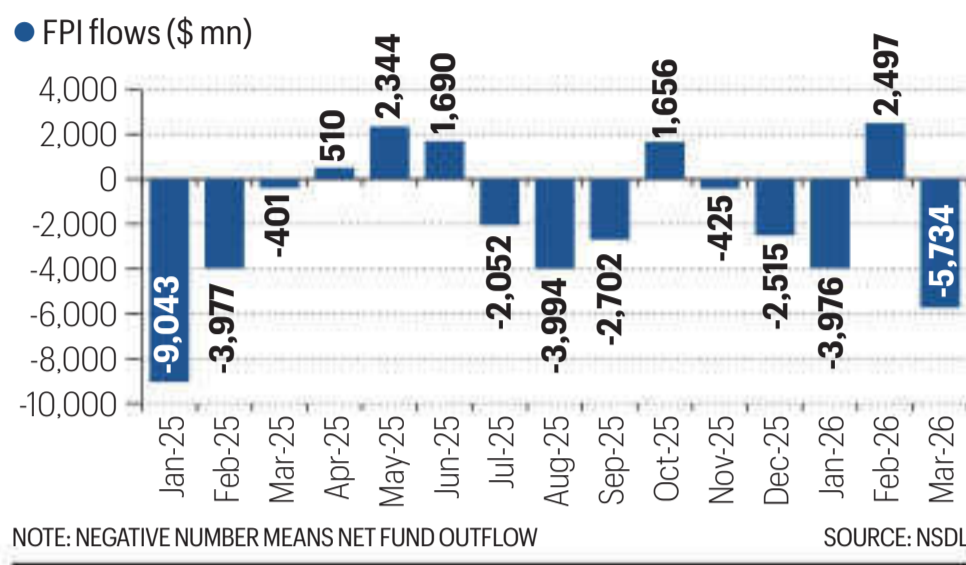
Sale of Indian assets denominated in the rupee lowers demand for the Indian currency and cuts its value.

As such, the continued sale of Indian shares and other assets such as government bonds by foreign investors leads to the rupee's fall as it constitutes an outflow of foreign money from India — similar to the impact of a widening trade deficit from more expensive oil.

"We downgrade India to neutral as the equity market enters a delicate phase," Hou Wey Fook, CIO of Singapore-based DBS Bank, said on Friday. "While growth, policy support and demographics remain supportive, rising risks warrant a more cautious view. AI disruption is weighing on the IT services sector, while export-oriented industries face intensifying competition from China and Southeast Asia, particularly in autos and auto components amid rising costs and EV pressures," he said.

The exit of foreign money from Indian shores has not been limited to the stock market. Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) — seen as a more stable form of foreign investment than in the

FPI outflows at 14-month high



NOTE: NEGATIVE NUMBER MEANS NET FUND OUTFLOW SOURCE: NSDL

stock market — into India saw net outflows in three of the last four months of 2025 as per latest available data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) — well before the conflict began in West Asia.

E.

In fact, the Economic Survey for 2025-26, which was tabled in Parliament on January 30, had warned that the

paradox of 2025 had been that India's "strongest macroeconomic performance in decades has collided with a global system that no longer rewards macroeconomic success with currency stability, capital inflows, or strategic insulation". As a result, the

rupee's valuation did not accurately reflect India's "stellar economic fundamentals", which was causing investors to pause. The rupee, which fell below 90 and 91 per dollar in December, breached 92 earlier this month. And if crude oil prices remain elevated and average \$100 per barrel in 2026-27, economists expect the rupee to weaken further.

According to a scenario analysis by QuantEco Research's economists, if oil averages \$100 per barrel in the next fiscal, the rupee could weaken to as much as 98.5 per dollar.

While the fall in Indian stock markets has been sharp — Sen-

sex and Nifty 50 dropped more than 5% this week, marking their biggest weekly fall in nearly four years — it has been lower than in some other markets, such as South Korea's Kospi, which have been riding high on the AI wave.

While the Sensex and Nifty 50 are down around 9% since February 26, the Kospi has crashed by more than 13% over the same period despite gaining ground in recent days.

"What makes the South Korean selloff stand out is its severity," Dave Chia and Stefan Angrick of Moody's Analytics said in a note. "The drop after the outbreak of the conflict is broadly comparable to the decline seen after US President Donald Trump announced his 'Liberation Day' tariffs last April. In most other APAC economies, equity losses have been far less pronounced. The main exceptions are Thailand and Indonesia." According to Japanese investment bank Nomura, Thailand is the most vulnerable Asian country to the shock from Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz, followed by South Korea and India. Analysts expect Indian markets to stay volatile in the near term as tensions in West Asia keep energy prices elevated and sentiment fragile.

US initiates 'forced labour' trade probe against India, 59 others

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, March 13

THE US on Thursday launched another trade investigation against India and 59 other trade partners to ascertain if these countries failed to prohibit imports of goods produced using 'forced' labour.

This comes a day after the US initiated a probe into more than a dozen countries, including India, citing structural excess capacity and overproduction in certain manufacturing sectors.

India, meanwhile, said it was evaluating the US announcement. "We are studying what is there in their note. We are looking at it from all perspectives. Both from the legal perspective as well as the economic angle which is being mentioned there. India is evaluating the documents," an official said.

The probe covers sectors, including steel, aluminum, automobiles, batteries, electronics, chemicals, machinery, semiconductors, and solar modules. "The Trade Representative initiated Section 301 investigations to examine whether the failure of the various economies listed in Annex A to prohibit the importation of goods produced wholly or in part with forced labour is unreasonable or discriminatory and burdens or restricts US commerce... If any determination is affirmative, the Trade Representative must determine whether action is appropriate, and if so, what action to take," United States Trade Representative (USTR) said.

Apart from India, the list of trade partners under US scrutiny included close trade partners such as the UK, EU, Japan, Israel, UAE, Argentina,



US law prohibits the import of goods manufactured or produced in whole or in part with forced labour, said USTR. EXPRESS PHOTO

as well as Russia and China. Even smaller countries such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are part of the probe.

USTR said that forced labour taints the entire supply chain in which it exists. The US and the US Department of Labour's 2024 List of Goods Produced by Child Labour or Forced Labour (TVPLA List) includes 134 products produced with forced labour in particular countries. The TVPLA List includes 34 downstream goods in particular countries that are produced with inputs that are produced with forced labour.

"These inputs made with forced labour include cotton used to produce garments, textiles, thread and yarn; critical minerals used to produce solar products or auto-parts; fish used to produce fish oil and fish meal; and palm fruit used to produce kernel or palm oil used in various cooking oils and bio-fuels," USTR said.

USTR said that US law has prohibited the import of goods mined, produced, or manufactured in whole or in part with

forced labour and that this prohibition recognises not only the humanitarian concerns associated with allowing parties to profit from the suffering of others but also foreign policy and "national security" concerns arising from the exploitation of workers.

"Such exploitation threatens domestic producers who must compete with foreign goods produced with an artificial cost advantage and may harm US workers and citizens through distorting competition and the purchase of goods produced under exploitative conditions. Ending forced labour is a key priority and an economic and national security imperative for the US," USTR said.

Arguing that forced labour is causing injury to American businesses, the US said that the firms using forced labour incur artificially lower labour costs, and, as a result, are able to sell their goods at a lower price than they would otherwise.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

GAS POWER'S SHARE LESS THAN 2% OF TOTAL GENERATION

With question mark on flexible gas plants, govt eyes alternatives

Pratyush Deep
New Delhi, March 13

AS DISRUPTIONS in Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) supplies hit India due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, the Power Ministry is preparing to meet peak summer electricity demand by relying more on coal-based generation.

While coal accounts for more than 70% of the country's electricity generation mix, its operational inflexibility is often cited as a challenge for integrating renewable energy into the grid. Gas-based power plants, though contributing only a small share to India's overall electricity supply, are more flexible and can ramp generation up or down to accommodate renewable power while keeping the grid stable during evening peak hours when solar generation is unavailable.

After the government invoked the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 on Monday, gas allocations to power plants and petrochemical units could be curtailed or even halted as supplies are diverted to priority segments such as household and transport.

However, officials in the power ministry said the government is ready to tackle any constraints in gas supply and peak demand can be met through other sources.

'Sufficient alternate resources'

A power ministry official said gas-based power stations account for only about 10 GW of

Although gas-fired plants make up only a fraction of India's overall electricity supply — accounting for about 10 GW of generation at its peak — it plays a key role in meeting demands during summer nights, when solar power is unavailable

generation at its peak.

"Out of this, approximately 2.4 GW is currently available for generation, while the rest may or may not be available due to constraints in gas supply. In the worst-case scenario, the shortfall due to gas unavailability could be around 7.6 GW," the official said.

The official maintained that the ministry is prepared for any disruption in LNG supplies and that peak demand can be met through other sources.

"Thermal plants, for instance, can compensate for any shortfall in gas-based electricity generation. We are fully aware of different scenarios and power supply will not be impacted," the official told *The Indian Express*.

In the current financial year, India has added more than 51 GW of capacity, including around 9 GW of coal based power and 4.5 GW of wind power.

Another 3 GW coal based capacity is also expected to be commissioned in the coming quarter, a senior official said.

New battery storage capacity of about 2,500 MWh is also expected to come online in the same period, while an additional 2.5 GW of wind power capacity is likely to be added by April 15.

These additions ensure that the government has sufficient alternate resources to manage any potential gas supply disruption, the official added.

Struggling gas plants

Power generated from gas-based units is typically more expensive than coal and renewable energy. However, due to their flexibility, they are generally used during high-demand periods, such as peak summer months when cooling demand surges, to meet evening peak demand.

In the past, the government has invoked emergency measures to ensure utilities operate both gas and coal plants at full capacity when soaring temperatures push electricity consumption to record levels.

Last week, Minister of State for Power Shripad Yesso Naik said peak electricity demand is projected to reach around 270 GW this summer, compared with about 243 GW last year.

Meanwhile, the utilisation of India's gas-based power plants has been steadily declining, largely due to high fuel costs.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

War risk insurance costs soar 10x as West Asia conflict escalates

George Mathew
Mumbai, March 13

WAR-RISK insurance premiums for ships operating in West Asia have surged sharply, following continuing US and Israeli strikes on Iran. The rates for a seven-day cover are now estimated to be around ten times higher than before the attacks, having more than doubled in the past week. The spike in premiums is expected to significantly raise the cost of goods transported through the shipping corridor.

High-risk voyages were being quoted at around 7.5% of the value of the ship, likely to reach 10% or more soon, according to Lloyd's List. Before the offensive launched by the US and Israel against Iran on February 28, additional premiums for voyages through the Middle East Gulf (MEG) typically ranged within 0.15% to 0.25%.

"Premium would have already touched 10% or even more. The charterer will end up paying the rise in the cover and will pass it on to customers," an insurance official said.

Meanwhile, Brent crude oil has climbed above \$100 per barrel. For a five-year-old VLCC (very large crude carrier) on charter to the US interests valued at around \$140 million, insurers could charge anything from \$10 million to \$14 million to cover a voyage through the Strait of Hormuz as against \$0.21-\$0.35 million (\$210,000 to \$350,000) before the war began. The cost will be borne by the charterers rather than owners of the vessel. "Among those being asked for

the most money are US nexus tankers, which have attracted the nickname of missile magnets," Lloyd's List said.

Further, bunker fuel prices are also rising fast. The average price of very low sulphur fuel oil across the top 20 bunkering hubs was \$1,005 per tonne on Thursday, as per data from Ship & Bunker. This is double the cost prior to the war and the highest price since July 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Bunkering is the process of supplying fuel to ships for their operations. The fuel used by ships is called bunker fuel.

The escalating war in West Asia has led to attacks on three container ships. Nearly 56 container ships from the top 10 global carriers are currently stuck in the region, with analysts estimating total number of trapped vessels across all operators to be close to 140 ships, Lloyd's List Intelligence data shows.

As per Balasundaram R, Head of Marine Insurance at Policybazaar, "The Middle East, especially the Red Sea, has been under close scrutiny for some time by the war risk underwriters. In fact, many ports in the region were already identified as high-risk areas wherein the conventional war risks were no longer included under the marine hull and cargo insurance, which could be purchased only by paying extra premiums." The sudden escalation, with strikes by Israel and the US on Iran and the retaliation by Iran, has changed the scenario.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

IndiGo to levy fuel charge for global, domestic flights from March 14

New Delhi: IndiGo will start levying fuel charges ranging from Rs 425 to Rs 2,300 on domestic and international flight tickets from March 14 amid the steep surge in jet fuel prices due to the West Asia crisis. The move will increase the airfares and comes three days after Air India Group announced the introduction of such charges.

For domestic flights and those within the Indian subcontinent, the fuel charge will be Rs 425, while it will be Rs 900 for the Middle East services, the airline said in a statement on Friday. The fuel charge will be Rs 1,800 for South East Asia, China, and Africa flights, and Rs 2,300 for Europe flights. Aviation Turbine Fuel accounts for nearly 40% of an airline's operational costs.

While announcing the introduction of the fuel charge, the airline said the measure has been taken due to the significant surge in fuel prices, following the ongoing geopolitical issues in West Asia. PTI

BRIEFLY

NMDC produces record 50 mt of iron ore in FY26

Hyderabad: India's largest iron ore producer NMDC Limited on Friday said it has produced 50 mt of iron ore during FY26, a feat which no other Indian mining company has achieved. "Being India's largest iron ore producer comes with a huge responsibility, and this milestone reflects not just the strength of our operations but also the trust placed in us to support the nation's steel ecosystem," said Amitava Mukherjee, Chair and MD, NMDC Ltd. ENS

Forex reserves drop \$11.68 bn to \$716.81 bn

Mumbai: India's forex reserves dropped by \$11.683 billion during the week ended March 6, the central bank said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had increased by \$4.885 billion to an all-time high of \$728.494 billion. PTI

MARKETS

Sensex 74,563.92 -1,470.50 -1.93%	NIFTY 23,151.10 -488.05 -2.06%	Gold ₹1,63,200	US Dollar ₹92.48
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NOTE: GOLD, SILVER RATES AS PER ALL INDIA SARAFI ASSOCIATION DATA GOLD PER 10G, SILVER PER 1KG; CRUDE OIL (INDIAN BASKET) AS OF MARCH 12, 2026

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THE EDITION WILL SHOWCASE A LINE-UP OF ACHIEVERS WHOSE JOURNEYS REFLECT GRIT, INNOVATION & COURAGE TO BREAK BARRIERS

Spotlight turns to women entrepreneurs today

ENS Economic Bureau
Mumbai, March 13

The Express Awards for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE), now in its fifth edition, has grown into one of the most credible platforms recognising women who lead with vision, resilience and impact. An initiative of *The Financial Express* in partnership with FICCI-FLO, the awards celebrate women who are not just building successful enterprises but also reshaping India's entrepreneurial landscape.

Set to take place in Mumbai on Saturday evening, this year's edition promises to showcase an inspiring line-up of achievers whose journeys reflect grit, innovation and the courage to break barriers. Over the years, the awards have attracted enormous interest from across India Inc, emerging as an aspirational forum that honours women who combine leadership with integrity and purpose.

At a time when the global business environment is marked by uncertainty and rapid technological disruption, platforms such as these assume greater significance. *The Express Awards* offer women entrepreneurs an opportunity to engage with the stories and experiences of peers who have navigated

challenges — from raising capital to breaking through the proverbial glass ceiling. In doing so, they highlight how women leaders are increasingly shaping India's economic, entrepreneurial, cultural and social landscape.

The winners have been selected by a distinguished jury comprising leaders whose own professional journeys have inspired generations of entrepreneurs. Chaired by Deepak Parekh, former chairman of HDFC, the jury comprised Zia Mody, co-founder and managing partner, AZB & Partners; Mallika Srinivasan, chairman and managing director, TAFE - Tractors and Farm Equipment Ltd; Preetha Reddy, executive vice chairperson, Apollo Hospitals; and Anjali Bansal, founding partner,

Avaana Capital.

The evening will see members of the jury sharing their insights on the larger business environment and the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. The focus, based on the feedback on what many would want to hear from the distinguished members of the jury, will be on raising capital in the world of artificial intelligence (AI) and Donald Trump. The members of the jury will then be joined by Anant Goenka, Executive Director, The Indian Express Group, to give away the awards.

This year, Zia Mody was the unanimous choice for the Lifetime Achievement Award (she recused herself from the deliberations). The other awardees represent a remarkable cross-section of women shaping

modern India: Jayshree Ullal (technology), Guneet Monga Kapoor (entertainment), Vinati Saraf Mutreja (legacy entrepreneur), Neha Bansal (lifestyle), Geetha Manjunath (health & wellness), Priya Krishnan (education and skill development), Rohini Nilekani (social impact), Mariam Mammen Mathew (media), Ruchi Kalra (finance), and Preeti Patel, who will receive the FICCI-FLO Award this year.

The awards have consistently drawn some of the biggest names from India Inc. Last year's gathering included Mukesh Ambani, Isha Ambani, Anand Piramal, Swati Piramal, Venu Srinivasan, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Meher Pudemjee, Ektaa Kapoor, Kiran Rao and Lakshmi Venu, among several other industry leaders. FE



The Faultlines of a Shared Past

Shubhra Gupta

MARATHI CHAMBER drama *Tighee* (*Three Of Us*, or *Us Three*) features veteran actor Bharati Achrekar, familiar to Hindi film audiences through her impactful supporting roles, helming a story about simmering familial tensions, traumatic pasts and the promise of a better future. She plays the terminally ill Hemlata — mother to two fractious daughters, Swati (Neha Pendse) and Sarika (Sonalee Kulkarni) — back home one last time.

An impending tragedy is usually a strong hook to gather up estranged family members, throwing them into a difficult

situation where memories, not always good ones, reside. *Tighee*'s troubled trio could well remind us of our own conflicted relationships and the much-needed promise of mending frayed ties, in the way Hemlata, nursing a dark secret, finally reveals all, and in the way the fatherless Swati and Sarika respond to that information, which has shaped their childhoods, and perhaps their adult relationships with the men in their lives.

Swati lives in Mumbai with her husband (Pushkaraj Chirputkar), who seems more off than on in the marriage, showing up when he needs a cash handout but refusing to see it as merely transactional: that's an interesting touch. Also vividly executed is her discomfort around her

TIGHEE

★★★

DIRECTOR:

Jeevivishka Kale

CAST: Bharati

Achrekar, Sonalee

Kulkarni, Neha

Pendse, Nipun

Dharmadhikari,

Pushkaraj Chirputkar,

Jaimini Pathak

predatory boss (Jaimini Pathak): here's a felt example of how women are forced into dealing with their boundaries being violated every day they go to work.

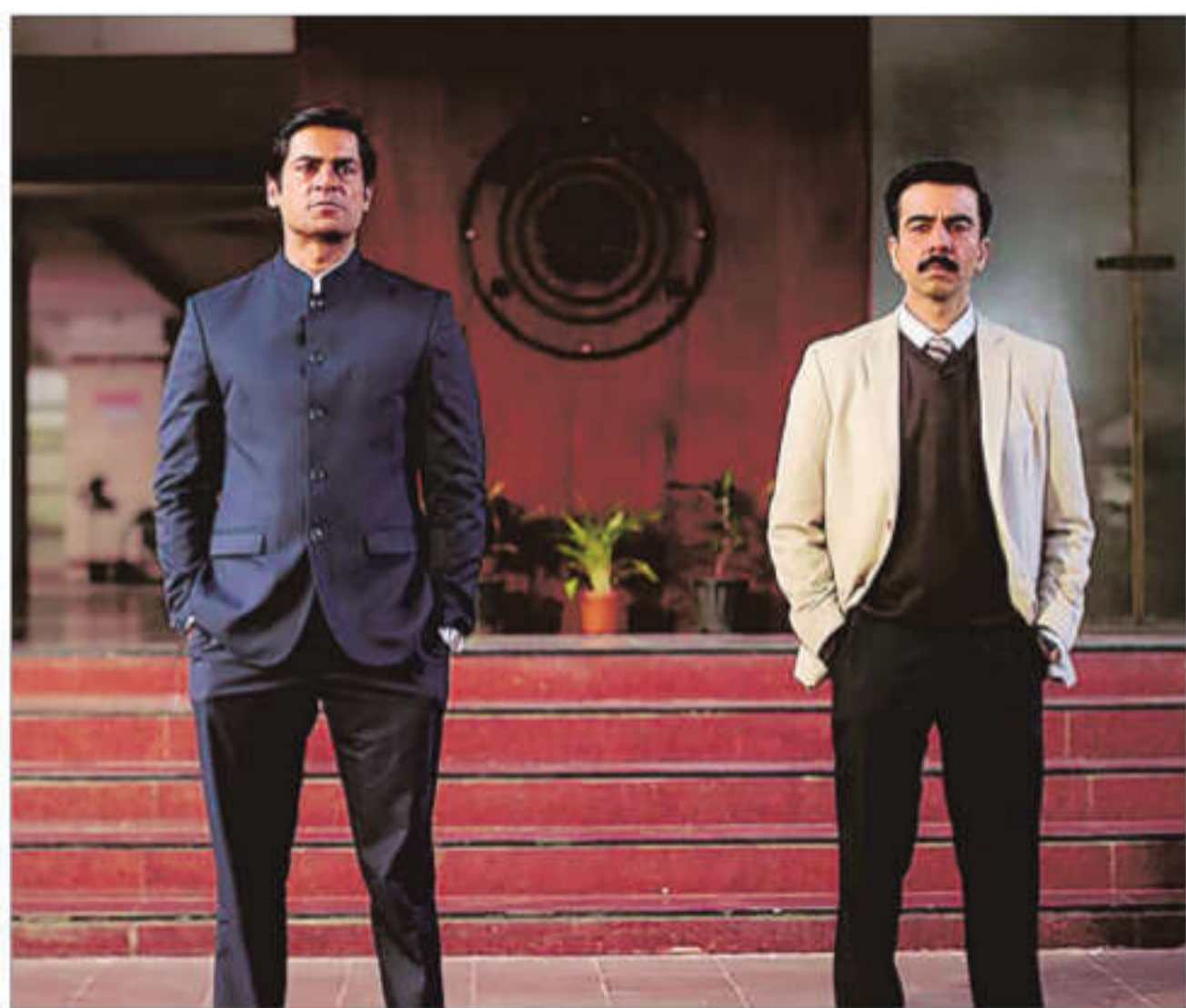
Sarika (Sonalee Kulkarni) is the one who was left behind, in Pune, having had to put her ambitions on hold, even as her friend and professional partner (Nipun Dharmadhikari, who's stayed with me with his tiny scene in *Phalke*) remains supportive: of all the characters in the film, Kulkarni's unvarnished performance is the most effective, as the sibling forced into a caregiving role.

Where I felt the film not as satisfying was the thing between the women, while powerful as a premise, not always succeeding in touching me as deeply as I wanted. There's a group hug — the only

time the three fuse physically together — which had both immediacy and intimacy, which felt right.

I also wanted to know more about the younger Hemlata, and the way in which she becomes convinced about taking a major step about her own marriage: yes, there is a shocking scene which is a tell, but the consequence seems much too abrupt. Some more detailing on how that decision affects her and the girls would have been welcome.

But overall, I would say that this is the kind of film, revolving around complex, relatable human emotions that we need more of: the end-note is perhaps most conflicting, leaving us to question our feelings; this is a scene I will be thinking long about.



When Love Falls Flat

Shalini Langer

A MAN dies. His girlfriend is charged with manslaughter and jailed in the belief that she "abandoned" him and walked away from the scene of an accident. A couple of years pass and his best friend takes up the space left by him in her life — in ways more than one.

Less reminders of him (as in the man), and more reminders, you think? But this is Colleen Hoover doing it by the numbers after all. And, so far, it has worked for the bestselling author, whose soppy romances have been landing with amazing frequency on the big screen. Not to forget that her last one, *It Ends With Us*, remains at the centre of a juicy Hollywood feud, with A-listers battling it out in court.

But little of that steam registers in this film, whose two leads are not enchanting enough to make us set aside the contrivances. Monroe is a talented new actor, as she showed in *Longlegs*, but the many, many tears she sheds in *Reminders of Him* hardly help turn up the heat between her Kenna and Withers's Ledger. The latter, all bronze muscle and 5 o'clock shadow cheeks, is a cliché — and a sad one — the perfect friend, the kind boss, the substitute dad, the surrogate son, who has no life apart from being all of the above, despite being a former NFL star.

Ledger is juggling all these roles as he wants to be there "every day" for Diem, the



REMEMBERS OF HIM

★★★

DIRECTOR: Vanessa

Caswill

CAST: Maika Monroe,

Tyriq Withers, Lauren

Graham, Bradley

Whitford, Rudy

Pankow

daughter of Kenna and Scotty (Pankow), her late boyfriend, his late best friend — so Ledger even lives across the road and turns up for soccer coaching.

Diem has grown up with Scotty's parents (woefully misused Graham and Whitford) after he died and Kenna was imprisoned and banished by them. The five-year-old doesn't know the back story, has never met Kenna and initially Ledger and the grandparents want to keep it that way. But then Kenna walks one day into Ledger's bar, plonks notebooks full of her writings on the table, and the rest is Hoover territory.

Surely there are simpler ways for Kenna to get rights to see Diem than the film makes it out, and surely we know that this story has no sad endings. And yet, for a few scenes at the end, when the film leaves all the heavy emotions behind for some genuine connection, you think we could have had a few surprises.

Stuck in a Loop

Shubhra Gupta

THE "TRIPOD" — Abhilash (Naveen Kasturia), SK (Abhilash Thapliyal) and Guri (Shivankit Singh Parihar) — is back for a third time, the three friends picking up threads from where they'd left off in the previous season.

The deep personal ties, forged through intense studying to crack the UPSC — the hierarchy graven in stone within the civil services, with the IAS on top — the squabbles and the warmth of the years spent propping each other up in Old Rajinder Nagar and Mukherjee Nagar rented holes-in-the-walls, have given way to complicated professional life, which is not as rosy as it was cracked up to be.

We have seen this process in recent films — *12th Fail*, *All India Rank* — with varying degrees of success. 'Prelims' and 'Mains', the twin towers all UPSC aspirants have to conquer, are all-consuming affairs: all you do is to keep your head down and swot through coaching sweatshops (Unacademy gets a look-in again, with SK as a teacher) and *kunjis* and sheer luck, and if you get through, there is the dreaded interview where the aspirant is faced with a group of hard-nosed characters asking tough, tricky questions.

Seasons 1 and 2 gave all the thousands, who spend several years consumed by the effort, the chance to feel seen and heard. Which is why the series has been so popular in its constituency, at once feeling familiar — there's no getting away from the incessant work — as well as thorny — you fail, try again, fail, get back and try again, rinse, repeat. Tough, spirit-quenching stuff, yo-yoing through hope and despair.

It also acknowledges the really hard bit that, try as you might, you may never be able to climb that mountain. Guri goes back to his father's business, SK becomes a coach, while only Abhilash manages to get through to the other side, as the 'DM of

ASPIRANTS 3

★★★

DIRECTOR: Deepesh Sumitra Jagdish

CAST: Naveen Kasturia, Abhilash Thapliyal, Shivankit Singh Parihar, Jatin Goswami, Sunny Hinduja, Joy Dev Chatterjee, Tengam Celine, Namita Dubey, Mallika Prasad

Rampur', with that coveted chair-and-the-towel, the peons carrying your files, the official car with the *laal-batti* and the hundred other things that denote the privilege and power of even the smallest *babu* in India.

While the earlier seasons managed to sustain interest, this time around the central conflict comes down to the Hindi vs English divide, which rapidly loses fizz as it goes along. A central character from the previous season, Sandeep *bhaiya* (Sunny Hinduja) reappears here as the antagonist: in his possession is a damning letter which can cause Abhilash harm. Jatin Goswami, playing a fellow civil servant but buried under old resentments, raises the banner of uplifting Hindi-speaking sections of his district, and of Hindi in general: in and of itself, it's a worthwhile conversation but there's only that much that it can be juiced for.

And that's the trouble with this TVF offering, which gives the characters we have rooted for in the past that it feels much too familiar, and gets into predictable loops, with lines that always feel like dialogues, even though the actors themselves are always watchable. The two chief female characters, ex-girlfriend of Abhilash, and present wife of Guri, Dhairya (Namita Dubey) and IPS officer Deepa (Tengam Celine) and Abhilash's current romantic interest, do get screen time but are never allowed to sway the narrative; it's the boys who lead from the front, as always.

The season may be new but the flow is same old.

Between Tamil Dreams and Korean Reality

Yashaswini Sri

RAKARTHIK'S *Made in Korea* opens with its best idea. A young woman from a small town in Tamil Nadu is so desperate to watch K-dramas that she climbs on top of an elephant just to catch a weak internet signal. It is funny, specific and moving. It tells you exactly who Shenba is, what she wants and how far she will go to get it. In that single image, the director demonstrates that he understands his character and her world. The rest of the film, unfortunately, does not always live up to that opening.

When Shenba unexpectedly finds herself in Seoul, reality proves far more challenging than she imagined, setting her on a path of resilience, self-discovery and new connections. On paper, this is a premise with real emotional potential. In practice, the film delivers on some of that promise and quietly squanders the rest.

Priyanka Arul Mohan is the best argument for watching *Made in Korea*. She does not play Shenba as a chirpy, K-drama-obsessed caricature. She plays her as someone genuinely in over her head and there is real texture in how she carries the film's quieter moments. A scene where she sits alone in an unfamiliar apartment and realises nobody is coming to help her lands because Priyanka does not reach for easy emotion. She just sits with it.

The film also deserves credit for giving audiences both the dreamy and the ugly at



MADE IN KOREA ★★★

DIRECTOR: Ra Karthik

CAST: Priyanka Arul Mohan, Park Hye-jin

STREAMING ON: Netflix

the same time. There is no dramatic rescue, no cinematic saviour and the film functions as something of a reality check for anyone who has romanticised a foreign country through a screen.

Park Hye-jin, best known for *Squid Game*, brings warmth and restraint to her role as an elderly Korean woman carrying secrets of her own. Her scenes with Priyanka are the film's most affecting and the relationship that develops between

them is where the cross-cultural promise of the premise comes closest.

Made in Korea never quite answers the question that sits at its centre: what exactly is it about South Korea that connects to the Tamil experience? Beyond references to a disputed legend about a Korean queen's Tamil roots, Karthik does not appear curious enough about the specific aspects of the Hallyu wave that has gripped the Tamil audience. Korea ends up feeling more like a scenic backdrop for Shenba's self-discovery than a place the film is genuinely interested in.

Shenba herself is a frustrating character to spend the entire movie with. She has no real qualities beyond wanting to go to

• STREAMING WATCHLIST



Rooster

JOHOTSTAR

THE 10-EPIISODE comedy series from Warner Bros. Television is headlined by Steve Carell. Set on a college campus, it centres on Greg

Russo's (Carell) complicated relationship with his daughter Katie (Charly Clive). Greg, who is a best-selling author known for his trashy page-turners, is yet to recover from the divorce. But he is drawn in to help his daughter whose marriage is falling apart. To be close to her, he takes up a position as 'Writer in Residence' at the prestigious (fictional) Ludlow College, where Katie teaches. New episode drops every Monday.



Zootopia 2

JOHOTSTAR

THE OSCAR-NOMINATED and BAFTA-winning animated buddy cop comedy follows Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde in their new adventure. This story unfolds soon after the events of the original *Zootopia*. Nick and Judy are partners at the police, even though a clash of personalities is inevitable. They find themselves on the twisting trail of a great mystery when Gary De'Snake arrives in Zootropolis and turns the animal metropolis upside down. To crack the case, Judy and Nick must go undercover to unexpected new parts of town, where their growing partnership is tested like never before.



Anniversary

PRIME VIDEO

A GRIPPING psychological thriller directed by Jan Komasa, *Anniversary* follows a seemingly stable family whose lives spiral into chaos when their son begins dating a mysterious young woman

connected to a controversial ideological movement: The Change. As her presence grows within the household, buried tensions, loyalties, and secrets surface, threatening to tear the family apart while reflecting a society divided by radical ideas and power struggles.

Scarpetta

PRIME VIDEO

DAVID GORDON Green's thriller features Nicole Kidman as Dr Kay Scarpetta, a brilliant forensic pathologist who uses her intelligence to solve gruesome, complex murders. Set in Virginia, the series explores the intense and high-stakes investigations.

With Emmy-nominated writer, executive producer, and showrunner Liz Sarnoff (Barry, Lost) on board, the story of *Scarpetta* unfolds across two timelines.

This dual narrative explores Kay Scarpetta's journey from her beginnings as a chief medical examiner in the late '90s to her present-day return to her hometown, where she resumes her former position while investigating a grisly murder. ALAKA SAHANI



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Letter No : 284 Date : 12.03.2026
Corrigendum
The following changes have been done due to some unavoidable circumstances in Tender Reference No. DWSD/UWSS/O&M/CH/09/2025-26(1' Call) Operation and Maintenance of Reorganization of Chatra Urban Water Supply Scheme for 03 Years (2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29) on "TURNKEY BASIS" under D.W.&S. Division, CHATRA for the Year 2025-26 on published wide P.R. No. - 372834 (DWSD) 2025-26

Office of Director General Department of Higher Education Government of Haryana
Shiksha Sadan, Sec-5, Panchkula
Corrigendum
Resolution of Pending Cases of Post Matric Scholarship for SC / BC Students of Higher Education, pertaining to Academic Years 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY
TO BECOME A PARTNER IN THE SUCCESS OF THE COUNTRY
Specific organization of "One Station One Product Plan"

कार्यालय पुलिस अधीक्षक, रोहतक (हरियाणा)
द्वितीय तल लघु सचिवालय, रोहतक
फोन नं. :- 01262-228114, 247100
ई-मेल:- sproh@hry.nic.in

Table with 3 columns: Previously Published, Amended as follow, Details of amendments.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE
SR. No. NAME OF BOARD/CORP./ AUTH NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME) AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) INRUPEES WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL

हरियाणा पुलिस अधिनियम-2007 की धारा 21 के तहत रोहतक पुलिस में 53 विशेष पुलिस अधिकारियों के चयन हेतु प्रक्रिया
पद का नाम पदों की संख्या सारणी तिथि व समय

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TELANGANA SEEDS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, HYDERABAD
No.TGSDC/Mrktg/Short e- Tender/V-26/2025-26 Date:12.03.2026
SHORT E- TENDER NOTIFICATION
Short e-tender is invited by TGSDC for supply of freshly harvested Green manure T/L seedling...

Office of the Sub Divisional Officer (Civil), Gohana
कार्यालय उपमण्डल अधिकारी (ना०), गोहाना।
Office:- Mini Secretariat, Gohana, Haryana:- 131301, Email:-sdm.gohana@hry.nic.in
निलामी नोटिस/निलामी सूचना
सर्व साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि लघु सचिवालय गोहाना में डुकानो / कैन्टीन / पार्किंग स्थल को किराये पर देने हेतु निलामी दिनांक 25.03.2026 को दोपहर 01:00 बजे उपमण्डल अधिकारी (ना०) गोहाना की अध्यक्षता में लघु सचिवालय गोहाना में वर्ष 2026-27 के लिए की जाएगी...

Classifieds

PERSONAL WE, SATENDER KUMAR CHAUHAN, S/O SHRI. CHAND AND DOURCUS MASSEY, W/O SATENDER KUMAR CHAUHAN BOTH, R/O 274-A, POKCKET-C, MAYUR VIHAR, PHASE-II, DELHI-110091, hereby declare that our son name is AARON CHAUHAN and his actual and correct date-of-birth is 22-04-2012. 0040844203-10

I, Maj Khan S/O, Huliya Khan R/o L-1st, 1660 Gali No. 12, sangam Vihar Delhi 110062 have changed my name to Moj Khan. 0040844090-1

I, SAPNA SEHGAL D/O LATE NARINDER KUMAR SEHGAL R/O J-5/104, THIRD FLOOR, RAJOURI GARDEN, TAGORE GARDEN, DELHI-110027 declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as SHYAM LAL BAREJA in my PAN Card No. FIFP5761C. The actual name of my father is NARINDER KUMAR SEHGAL for all purposes. 0071024010-1

I, Raj Kumar, S/o Sh. Dharam Singh, R/o, H.No.151, VPO- Katewara, Delhi-110039, have changed my name, from Raj Kumar to Raj Kumar Vats for all future purposes. 0040844203-9

I, RAJAN KENNEDIA NATHAN, S/O- AROKIYA IRUDIEM JOHN, R/O- PLOT NO-D-274, T.F.FRONT SIDE, STREET, NO.55, MAHAVIR ENCLAVE PART-3, UTTAM NAGAR, DELHI-110058, have changed my name to RAJANKENNEDIA NATHAN for all purposes. 0040844203-2

I, Poonam W/o-Rahul, Address-B-235, NEAR PANDEY KOTHI, SANGAM VIHAR SOUTH DELHI-110062, have changed my name to Poonam Diwakar. 0040844192-5

I, PRASHANT KANCHEDI JAIN S/o Kanchedi Lal Jain R/o-39/12, Second floor East, Patel Nagar Delhi-110008, have changed my name to PRASHANT JAIN for all purposes 0040844203-1

I, NARESH GUPTA, S/O-LATE RADHEY SHYAM GUPTA, R/O-A-1, Street No-2, Near-Hanuman Mandir, Raju-Park, Khanpur, Deoli, New Delhi-110062, have changed my name, for all future purposes to NARESH KUMAR GUPTA. 0040844192-9

I, NAMITA MEHTANI w/o Sunil Kumar Batra R/O Flat. No.18162, Tower-18, Sector 150, Noida (u.p.) 201310, have changed my name to NAMITA BATRA 0040844203-5

I, MOHD TAPSEER S/O MOHD VASHIR R/O G-733, GALI NO-12, JAIPUR EXTN, PART-2 DELHI-44, DECLARE THAT MY FA, HER PREVIOUSLY CALLED BASIR URF MOHD VASIR DONO SAME PERSON. 0040844203-7

I, Km Manju Rani W/O Virender Kumar, R/O B-163/A, Swaroop Nagar, Delhi-110042, have changed my name to Varsha Devi. 0040844192-7

I, Kamlesh D/o-Late Shri Babu Lal R/o House-No.72-A, Galaxy Apartment, Sector-43, Chakarpur (74), DLF Qe, Farrukhnagar, Gurgaon, Haryana-122002, have changed my name to Kamlesh Kishore. 0040844204-4

I, Kahkshan Tabassum, W/O Ashfaq Ahmed R/O J-210, Prem Nagar-2, Kifari-Suleman Nagar, Nithari, P/O Sultanpuri C-Block Delhi-110086, have changed my name to Tabassum Ashfaq. 0040844203-4

I, Jitender kumar s/o-Vishan Sarup Mittal, R/O-3409/249, Hansa Puri, Tri Nagar Delhi-110035, have changed my name to JITENDER KUMAR MITTAL for all purposes. 0040844192-2

I, BASANTI DEVI, W/O BAIJ NATH, R/O D-7/222 SECTOR-6 ROHINI DELHI-110085, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BASANTI DEVI. 0040844204-2

I, Hitherto known as Awtar singh, S/O-Lata singh, R/O-89, Dobra-Maral, P/O Maral, Dist:-Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand-249304, Have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Awtar Singh. 0040844204-10

I, Bimla Devi, W/o Raj Kumar Vats R/O H.No.151, VPO-Katewara, Delhi-110039, have changed my name from Bimla Devi to Bimla for all future purposes. 0040844203-8

I, BHUWAN CHANDRA PANDEY, S/O-KESHAV DUTT PANDEY R/O-A-1/127, Sector-17, Rohini Delhi-110089, do hereby inform the general public that I, BHUWAN CHANDRA PANDEY and B.C. PANDEY is the same-person. 0040844204-3

I, Amit Arora S/o Ashok Kumar Arora, R/o 16E/28, Near Lal Mandir, East Patel Nagar, Delhi-110008, have changed my name to Amit Kumar Arora. 0040844192-1

I, hitherto known as Rajnish Kumar S/o Nandkishor Prasad Singh R/O Khasra No.607, Telco Service Station, Rangpuri, Telco Service Station, Malik Pur Kohli alias Rang Puri, South West Delhi, Delhi-110037, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAINEESH. 0071024003-1

I, Mo Hanif S/o Yasin R/O-833, Gurana Road-2, Gurana, Baghpat, Baraut, UP have changed my name to Mohd Hanif. 0071023897-1

I, Yasin Saifi, S/o-Mohd Soddik, R/o H.No-586, Pooja Colony, Loni Dehat, Loni, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201102, have changed my name to Mohd Yasin, for all purposes. 0040844204-6

I, Vinay S/O Late Suresh Kumar R/O 179 Transit Camp, Ragubir Nagar, Tagore Garden Delhi-110027 have changed my name to Vinay Malhotra for all purposes. 0040842625-5

I, Venus Rawal alias Vani Munjal D/o Trilok Chand Rawal W/o Manu Kumar C-22 HARGOVIND VIHAR, VIJAY VIHAR PHASE-2 SECTOR 4, ROHINI PO: ROHINI SECTOR-7 DELHI-110085 have changed my name to Vani Munjal for all purposes. 0071023953-1

I, Surender Gandhi, S/o Dewaan Chand Gandhi, R/o H.No./332, Sunder Vihar, Paschim-Vihar, Delhi-110087, have changed my name to Surender Kumar Gandhi, Permanently 0040844102-1

I, Sunil Kumar S/o Davender Kumar Chhabra, R/O F-47B, Patel Nagar 3 Ghaziabad 201001, have changed my name to Sunil Kumar Chhabra for all purpose 0071023982-1

I, Soheb S/O Mohd Sakir R/O G-132 Street No-16 Old Mustafabad Delhi-110094, declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as MOHD SHAKIR in my all educational documents. The actual name of my father is Mohd Sakir . 0050285709-1

I, Sheena Paul alias Sheena D/o Ashka Kumar R/O RZ-63, Gali No. 2, Puran Nagar, Palam Village, Delhi-110045 have changed my name to Sheena Paul for all purposes. 0071023981-1

I, Satbir Singh, S/O Late Sh. Rattan Lal, R/O H. No. 319, Chirag Delhi Village, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-110017, have changed my name to Satveer Singh and shall hereafter be known as Satveer Singh for all purposes 0040844070-1

I, Sanjeev Gupta, R/o Khasra No.120, H.No. B-6, Dwarika Dham Colony, Amehra Power House Road, Amehra Adipur, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh-250001, have changed my name to Sanjeev Kumar Gupta. 0071023992-1

I, Rohit Mohan Bhalla S/o Sh. Rajinder Mohan Bhalla R/o House No 501, Tower-14, Lotus Panache, Sector-110, Noida-201304 have changed my name to Rohit Bhalla for all future purposes. 0071023905-1

I, Ram Singh alias Ram Singh Bajwa S/o Gains Singh R/o H-77, Upper 2nd Floor, Gali No. 6, Sant Nagar Extension, Tilak Nagar, Delhi-110018 have changed my name to Ram Singh Bajwa for all purposes. 0071023896-1

I, RAMAVTAR, S/O-RAMNIWAS R/O C-25, GROUND-FLOOR REAR-SIDE SHIVAJI-PARK, WEST PUJABJI-BAGH, DELHI-110026, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RAMAVTAR BANSAL. 0040844204-11

I, Mohd. Jalaluddin, S/o Sanaulah, R/o-39-A, Street.No.2, Sewa Sadan Block, Mandawali, East Delhi-110092, inform that Mohd. Jalaluddin and Jalaludin, both names are same person. 0040844203-3

I, Mohammad Nadeem, S/O Nasruddin, R/O-H.No-1, Gali No-39, Zakir Nagar, Okhla, New Delhi-110025, have changed my name to Mohd Nadeem, for all purposes. 0040844204-5

I, Meharban Ali S/o Abdul Gaffur, 305/3 Jaroda Muzaffarnagar, UP-251003 have changed my name to Meharban Tyagi for all future purpose. 0071024000-1

I, Kiran Lata Sharma W/o late Laxmi Narain, R/o House no 348, near South Extn-2, Masjid Mohd, New Delhi-110049, hereby declare that my name is Kiran Lata Sharma mentioned as in my Aadhar card, whereas in my late husband army pension book identity documents my name is mentioned as Kiran Lata. Both the names Kiran Lata and Kiran Lata Sharma refer to one and the same person. 0040844068-1

I, Kanhya Prasad Kashyap S/o Kuchan Prasad R/O-288, Gali-4, Main Shyampark, Sahibabad Ghaziabad have changed my name to Kanhya Prasad. 0071023917-1

I, Jubeeer Mohammad S/o Meharban Ali, 814/3 Yogenderpuri, Muzaffarnagar UP-251002 have changed my name to Zubair Tyagi for all future purpose. 0071023989-1

I, Inderjit Singh S/o Satish Kumar, AG-1-59-C, Vikaspuri, Delhi-110018 have change my Minor son Aryaveer Singh DOB from 15.09.2010 instead to 15.07.2009 permanently. 0071023996-1

I, ISHITA JADIA, W/O-Anirudh Gargasya, R/O Flat.No-707, Saraswati Apartment S-1-D-6, Vasant Kunj, South West-Delhi, Delhi-110070, Have changed my name and address to ISHITA GARGASYA. 0040844192-10

I, Vinesh Kumar S/o Sohan Lal R/O Flat No 893 Pocket D Near Greenway School Dilshad Garden Jhilmil East Delhi Delhi 110095 have changed my name to Vinesh Kumar Sharma for all future purposes 0040844095-1

I, Surender Sharma S/o Shri Brahm Pal R/o FCA 131 East Chawla Colony Ballabgarh Faridabad 121004 have change my name from Surendra Sharma to Surender Sharma (both are the same person) 0071023898-1

I, ILMA MAJID W/O MUSALIN, R/O B-386 JAHANGIR PURI DELHI-110033. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ILMA, FOR ALL PURPOSES. 0040844204-1

I, Dr. Jai Perkhask Gupta S/o Lt. Sh. Sarup Singh Gupta R/o House No. A-37, GF, South Extension Part-1, ND 49, declare that correct name of my father is Sarup Singh Gupta. Swarup Singh, Sarup Gupta, SS Gupta and Sarup Singh Gupta are one and the same person. 40844266-2

I, Diya Yogesh Gupta has changed my name to Diya Gupta D/o Yogesh Kumar Gupta, for all purpose. Add-O-310, AWHO, Vivek Vihar, Sector-82, Noida-201304, Uttar Pradesh. 0071023904-1

I, Samiksha Roy D/o-Naresh Kumar Bhayana R/O-B-3/7, Jeewan Jyoti Apartment, Pitampura, Delhi-110034 have changed my name to Samiksha Bhayana for all purposes. 0040844069-1

I, Jai Rani Alias Jyoti Rani Alias Jai Rani W/o Late Shri Pal Singh R/o H-No-F-314/C Pandav Nagar, Street No-8, Delhi Police Society, Gharonda Neem ka Bangar, Patparganj, East Delhi, Delhi-110091, have changed my name to Jai Rani 0071024008-1

I, Devyani Singh D/O Manvir Singh R/O 38/ Sadhna, Enclave, Flat No.-11/12, Panchsheel Prark Enclave, Malviya Nagar, South Delhi, Delhi - 110017, have changed my name to Nyarah Singh. 0050285708-1

I, Chander Kanta Thapar W/o Kuldeep Thapar R/O 22, P and T Colony, Sandesh Vihar, Pitampura, Delhi-110034 have changed my name to Chander Kanta for all future purposes 0071023975-1

I, Ajay Kumar S/o Kishan Kumar R/O-387, Krishana Nagar, Maniram Vns-3, Kosikalan, Mathura have changed my name to Ajay Kumar Goyal. 0071023900-1

I, hitherto known as ANAS S/O MR. RAJI ULLAH R/O H.No. 660/1, H-BLOCK, STREET.NO. 3, SUNDER NAGRI, NORTH EAST DELHI, DELHI-110093, HAS CHANGED MY NAME AND SHALL HEREAFTER BE KNOWN AS ANAS ULLAH. 0040844203-6

I, Avneet Kour w/o Amitoze Singh r/o J-27, Paryavaran Complex, Saket, Delhi-110068 have changed my name to AVNEET KAUR. 0040844148-1

I, Usha kumari, W/o-Deepak Kumar, Address-B-235, NEAR PANDEY KOTHI, SANGAM VIHAR SOUTH DELHI-110062, have changed my name to Usha 0040844192-6

I, Nidhi Jain, W/o Manoj Kumar Goyal, R/O H.No-98, Gali No-1, Subhash-Nagar, Meerut-City, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh-250002 have changed my name to Nidhi Goyal, for all, Future Purposes. 0040844192-3

I, Manoj Goyal S/o-Mangu Mal Goyal, R/O B-No-98, Gali No-1, Subhash-Nagar, Meerut City, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh-250002, have changed my name to Manoj Kumar Goyal, for all Future Purposes. 0040844192-4

I, Sandhya Kumari W/o Sanjay Kumar R/O Flat-1012, Tower-11, Panchsheel Primrose, Gandhinagar, Ghaziabad, have changed my name to Sandhya. 0040844192-8

I, information is given to general public at large that my client Veeraj Chadda who is the owner of Flat-309 Plot Property No. 58, area measuring 294 sq. mts. situated in Block-F, of Sector B, Model, Dist. Gautam Buddha Nagar, U.P. 201310. By virtue of Transfer Deed of Leasehold rights dated 13.08.2021 executed by M/s. K. Sahai Associates (Pvt. Ltd.) in Book No. 11, Vol. No. 12150, Page No. 155-184, dated 13.08.2021, S/O B. Gautam Bhatt (who was the owner of the said lease deed dated 03.09.1985 executed by NIDDA (Doc. No. 3548 & Mutation No. 3547) had Original Possession Certificate dated 03.09.1985, Lease Deed dated 17.03.1985 and Abandonment letter with terms and conditions dated 18.03.1985 issued/issued by NIDDA are missing and not traceable and F.I. has been lodged on 12.05.2025 vide LR No. 1502/2025, South District, Crime Branch, Delhi. Any person, institution(s) having any claim against or objection in respect of the said property shall communicate the same to the undersigned at our address within 07 days from the publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which all the claim of such person(s)/institution(s) shall not be binding upon the said property or purchaser. Mohd K. Hussain (Advocate) 204, Grand Tower, Sector-1, Gurgaon, New Khasra Park, N.D. 124, 8510316172

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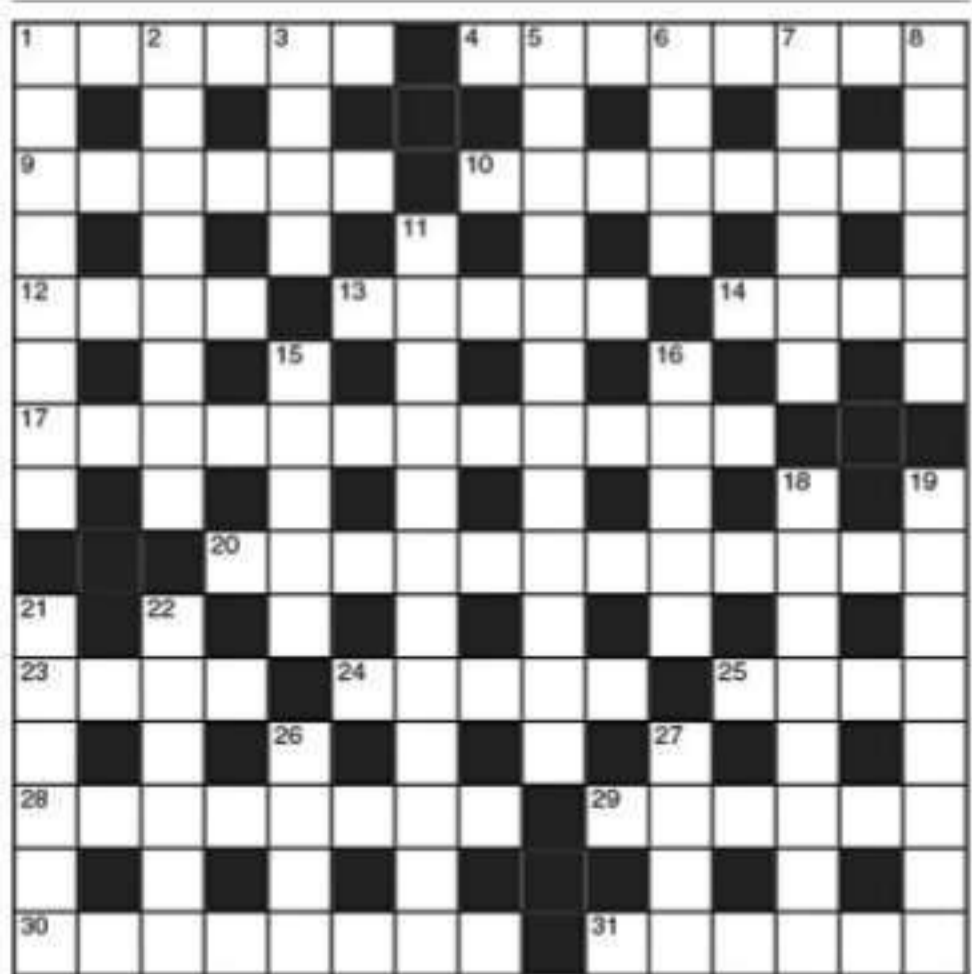
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CROSSWORD

5936



ACROSS: 1 Fires round about fifty guns (6), 4 Calm converse (8), 9 Shouting and weeping (6), 10 He usually has a second helping (8), 12 A tree Father found in America (4), 13 Small arch (5), 14 Fruit attached to the trunk (4), 17 Instantly not but here and now (5,3,4), 20 Pleasing to see in a church but not in a bar (7,5), 23 It's worth its weight in gold (4), 24 An increase not for the first time (5), 25 Famous Roman seen back in Florence (4), 28 Club regulation that must be strictly obeyed (4,4), 29 Song about a morning in Lent? (6), 30 Open clash that reveals the strength of one's hand (8), 31 Pursued by two boys (6). DOWN: 1 Gets others to do the fighting (8), 2 Domestic buzzer may be stuck here (8), 3 Letters of no real sterling worth (4), 5 Become very indignant and take flight (2,2,2,3,3), 6 Converse of turkey? (4), 7 Not being fully illuminated makes it wilt (6), 8 Dislike of French examination (6), 11 It won't strike one directly (8,4), 15 Tie the ship up for the rest of the voyage (5), 16 Some climb Eiger to get a tan (5), 18 Sees Carl is strangely unconcerned (8), 19 Various designs to a dress (8), 21 Peels off in layers (6), 22 After gold rises two firms are highly decorated (6), 26 Source of power on the American football field (4), 27 A symptom of fever like a hot head (4).

SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 5935 ACROSS: 1 Haste, 4 Usurper, 8 Lam, 9 Trappists, 10 Bandage, 11 Empty, 13 Taiwan, 15 Unison, 18 Reset, 19 Kitchen, 21 Given away, 23 She, 24 Dresser, 25 Teeny DOWN: 1 Halibut, 2 Semantics, 3 Extra, 4 Usages, 5 Umpteen, 6 Pas, 7 Rusty, 12 Posthaste, 14 Attends, 16 Nunnery, 17 Skewer, 18 Rigid, 20 Tryst, 22 Vie

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective circles below. Select the letters in the shaded circles and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

While one _____ in himself and his pursuits, he cannot feel old, no matter what his years may be. - Amos Bronson Alcott (5,7)

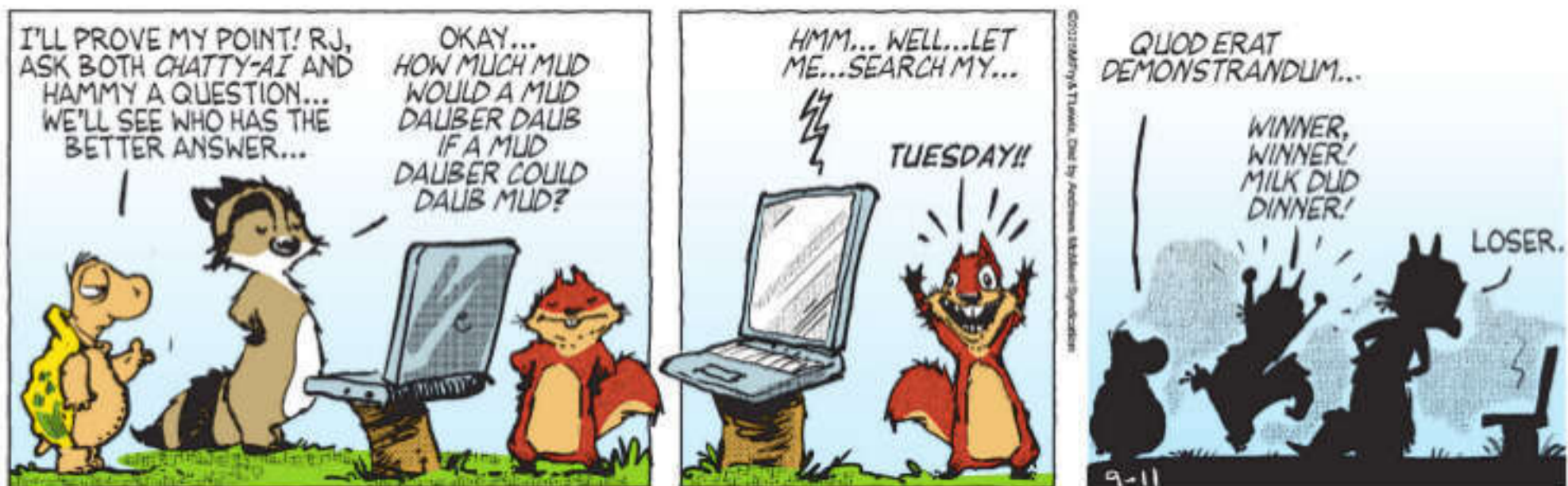
Word jumble puzzle with letters in circles and a grid. Letters: AENNS, EOYCDM, IRUPFY. Solution: ANSWE: While one finds company in himself and his pursuits, he cannot feel old, no matter what his years may be. - Amos Bronson Alcott.

OVER THE HEDGE

BY MICHAEL FRY & T LEWIS

ROYAL STARS

BY GEORGIA NICOLS



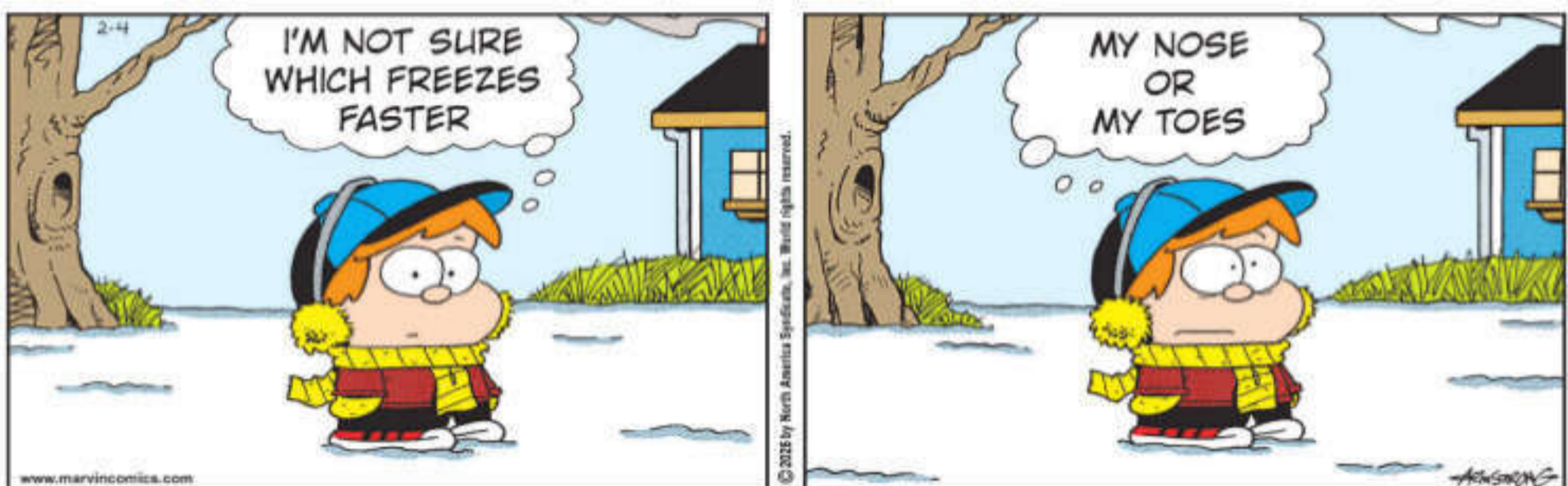
CALVIN & HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON



MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG



Sudoku puzzle with difficulty level instructions and a 9x9 grid. Solution: 8 4 3 1 9 6 5 2, 3 7 4 1 9 8 6 5 2, 1 8 6 4 5 2 3 7 9, 2 9 5 7 3 6 8 4 1, 5 6 1 2 8 3 7 9 4, 8 2 9 6 4 7 5 1 3, 7 4 3 9 1 5 2 6 8, 4 5 8 3 7 9 1 2 6, 6 1 7 8 2 4 9 3 5, 9 3 2 5 6 1 4 8 7.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY E-AUCTION PROGRAMME - April - 2026. Online auction sale through www.ireps.gov.in for disposal of scrap Ferrous, Non-Ferrous Scrap comprising of Rails online, other P-Way Scrap, M.S. Sheet, Axles, Machines and condemned wagons/coaches will be held as per schedule programme given below.

JAIPUR CITY TRANSPORT SERVICES LIMITED Corrigendum-01. This is with reference to JCTSL Bid no 08/2025-26 published on http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in UBN No. JCT2526SLOB00010 and http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in Tender ID 2026 JCTS_533159_1.

भारत का राजपत्र The Gazette of India. EXTRAORDINARY PART II-Section 3-Sub-section (ii) PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY. नई दिल्ली, शुक्रवार, फरवरी 27, 2026/फाल्गुन 8, 1947.

NOTIFICATION New Delhi, the 27th February, 2026. S.O 1054(E) - In exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highways Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government, after being satisfied that for the public purpose, the land, the brief description of which is given in the Schedule below, is required for building (widening/two lane with paved shoulder/four laning etc.), maintenance, management and operation of Greenfield Connectivity to Jewar International Airport from DND-Faridabad-Ballabhgarh Bypass KMP Link- Spur to Delhi Mumbai Expressway under Bharatmala Pariyojana in the stretch of land from Km. 0 to Km. 18.9 in the village(s) namely- Mohiapur(203), Mohna Taluk-Ballabhgarh in the district of FARIDABAD in the state of HARYANA hereby declares its intention to acquire such land.

FEDBANK FINANCIAL SERVICES LTD. AUCTION NOTICE

This is to inform the public at large that FEDBANK FINANCIAL SERVICES LTD. has decided to conduct Auction of Gold ornaments belonging to accounts (mentioned below) which are NPA (Non-performing Asset) or margin breach account/s or any account/s falling into the loan recall cause as specified in the terms & condition of the Loan. The Auction would be held as per the schedule provided below:

Table with columns: Auction Dates, Loan A/c Number, Base Branch, District Auction Date, District 1 Contact, District 2 Contact. Lists various branches like AASANDH, BADSHAHPUR, BAHADURGARH, FARIDABAD, HISAR, JAGADHRI, KATHAL, KARNAL, PALWAL, SONIPAT, AGRA, BHANGEL, BULANDSHAHR, DADRI, GHAZIABAD, MATHURA, NOIDA, VIJAY NAGAR, BARDARPUR, BHAJANPURA, BHOGAL, BUDHVIHAR, CHANDERLOK, DELHI SHAYAM NAGAR, DEOLI, DILSHAD GARDEN, DWARKA MOR, GEETA COLONY, HASTAL VILLAGE, KARAWAL NAGAR, KHANPUR, KHIRKI VILLAGE, KIRARI, MAYUR VIHAR, MAYUR VIHAR PHASE 3, NAJFARGH, NAJFARGH, NANGLOI, NARELA, PALAM COLONY, PANKHA ROAD, RANI BAGH, ROHINI, ROHINI SECTOR 16, SADAR BAZZAR, TUGHLAKABAD, UTTAM NAGAR, VISHWAS NAGAR.

HEAD QUARTERS B.E.G. & CENTRE ROORKEE (An organization under Ministry of Defence)

RE-TENDER NOTICE 1. Auction of fruit trees inside BEG & Centre Roorkee for the year 2026 was published in Daily news paper Hindustan (Hindi) Dehradun edition and Indian Express, Delhi edition on 29 Dec 2025. During evaluation, it has been observed that the quoted rates were not as per with the existing available market rate.

2. Hence, applications are again invited for bidding for the auction of fruit trees planted on defence land under the jurisdictions of BEG & Centre, Roorkee for the year 2026. 3. Interested applicants are required to submit their bid accordingly latest by 19 Mar 2026.

4. The bidder is requested to quote reasonably as per the existing market rate & the higher bidder shall be admitted accordingly. In case it is found that the quoted rates are below the existing market rate the same shall be cancelled without giving any reasons & BEG & Centre shall go for fresh call for quotation accordingly. 5. The bidder, is supposed to be aware of the geographical location, distance & other, existing parameters existing in a restricted areas & the same shall reflect in the overall quotations. The bidder shall be responsible for watering of trees, chemical spraying & watch & ward of the trees for which they shall quote. This organization shall not be responsible for any theft or any unwanted incidents that might occur during the running of the ongoing tender.

6. Details of trees with location can be obtained from Adm 'Q' Branch of BEG & Centre.

DETAILS OF TREES FOR AUCTION: BEG & CENTRE ROORKEE. Table with columns: Mango Trees, Lichi Trees, Kathal Trees, Berry, Simbhal Dode. TOTAL: 1328 (incl 24 at Bhagavanpur, Amarpur Camping Ground), 158, 27, 339, 53.

Adm Offr, BEG & Centre Roorkee

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE No: S/2026/009

SUPPLY OF STORES ITEMS "THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT TENDERS" The Principal Chief Material Manager, North Western Railway, headquarter Jaipur, for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open E-tenders on www.ireps.gov.in site as follows.

Table with columns: Sr, Tender No., Brief Description, Qty, Unit, Due date. Lists items like SET OF PREVAILING TORQUE TYPE HEXAGON, Set of Valves, BLIND SOCKET ASSEMBLY, COUPLING SOCKET ASSEMBLY, COUPLER BODY, Side frame key, Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Diesel operated Rail cum road vehicle, Secondary brake beam assembly, Price Agreement/RGC for supply of 6 Quad X 0.9 mm dia cable for a period of one year, Stiffener plate of front carrier plate, OVERHAULING KIT FOR BRAKE ACCELERATOR, POH KIT FOR COCK, Liquid Petroleum Gas, HIGH VOLTAGE HRC FUSE.

Note: (1) Interested tenders may visit the website ireps.gov.in for full details/description/Specification/EMD & tender cost etc. All tenders are requested to obtain digital signatures and get them registered on above site and quote electronically only. (2) For viewing and participating in other tenders such as open tender costing below Rs. 50 Lakh, limited tenders, special limited tenders and low value tenders, please visit www.ireps.gov.in.

Bahrain and Saudi F1 races set to be cancelled



World Champion Lando Norris of Britain gets a pit service during the sprint qualifying ahead of the Chinese GP. AP

Reuters
London, March 13

NEXT MONTH'S Bahrain and Saudi Arabian Formula One Grands Prix are set to be cancelled over the weekend due to the conflict in the Middle East. Multiple sources told Reuters an announcement, seen within the sport as just a matter of time, was expected by Monday at the latest with a March 20 deadline looming for freight that has to be transported to Bahrain for logistical reasons. Sky Sports television, which has the broadcasting rights in Britain where most of the 11 teams are based, said it understood the races would be called off by Sunday night.

U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran are continuing while Iranian drones and missiles have hit some Middle Eastern capitals including Bahrain's Manama, where most team personnel would be staying in hotels. Formula One is racing in China this weekend for the second round of the season after the opener in Australia last weekend.

Sources have indicated previously that neither Middle Eastern race is likely to be replaced or rescheduled, leaving April an empty month for the series and the championship reduced to 22 rounds.

Bahrain was scheduled for April 12 with the Saudi race in Jeddah on April 19. The Japanese Grand Prix, round three, is on March 29 with the next race then in Miami on May 3.

"I think we follow the guidance of the FIA and Formula One, as we always do. They've always led us in the right direction," Audi team principal Jonathan Wheatley told reporters after practice at the Shanghai circuit. "Nobody's going to compromise on anything that would put teams into an uncomfortable situation."

There was no immediate comment from Liberty Media-owned Formula One or the governing International Automobile Federation (FIA). The World Endurance Championship (WEC) has already postponed what would have been its season-opener in Qatar on March 26-28, with the first race now scheduled for Italy's Imola circuit on April 19. The Qatar round at the Lusail circuit outside Doha, which also hosts Formula One in November, has been rescheduled for October 24 as the penultimate round.

READY FOR THE IPL

Lighter, hungrier: Pant gunning to wear his India blues again

With his white-ball place under threat, wicketkeeper has quietly transformed himself ahead of the IPL

Venkata Krishna B
Chennai, March 13

A VISIBLY exhausted Rishabh Pant says, almost pleading, "Woh mat puchiye." He's responding to a question about how many kilograms he's shed. He doesn't need to answer it. The work he has put in over the last five months speaks for itself. Ahead of what promises to be a defining IPL season, the Lucknow Super Giants captain looks remarkably fit as the franchise begins its preparations in Chennai.

Although Pant remains an integral part of India's Test setup, his white-ball standing has slipped. When India needed a second wicketkeeper for the recent T20 World Cup — with Jitesh Sharma unavailable — it was Ishan Kishan who got the nod. In the ODI format, Pant has been part of the squad, but with KL Rahul firmly established as the first-choice keeper, he has spent much of his time on the bench. Among all Indian players heading into this IPL, few have more at stake than Pant. With Ishan Kishan and Sanju Samson both in fine form and favour, this is his moment to remind selectors that he remains very much in the reckoning.

By the looks of it, Pant seems acutely aware of that. Before arriving in Chennai — where Lucknow have set up their pre-season base at former India bowling coach Bharat Arun's academy, Coaching

Beyond — Pant spent five days in Mumbai working with Yuvraj Singh. The sessions with Yuvraj, who has played a key role in the development of Shubman Gill and Abhishek Sharma, were focused on the basics: retaining shape, bat swing, and above all, clarity in shot selection. The idea, it is understood, was to keep things simple.

For a batsman of his gifts, Pant's IPL record has been something of a mixed bag. His peak of 684 runs came in the 2018 edition; his closest approaches since were 488 in 2019 and 446 in 2024. Last season, acquired for a record Rs 27 crore, he managed only 269. His role in the middle order hasn't made run-scoring easy, but for Lucknow to mount a serious play-off challenge, they will need far more from their captain.

Going by what unfolded in Chennai, Pant looks ready to deliver. On Friday, just hours before leaving the city, he spent three and a half hours in an open net session — facing seamers and spinners alike until they were on their knees. With assistant coach Lance Klusener stationed at the side of the nets and Arun positioned behind the bowlers, Pant began at 3 PM and finished around 5:20 PM.

His intentions were clear: against full deliveries, he rocked back and hit long and straight; anything short or in his arc was dispatched through



Rishabh Pant at the Coaching Beyond academy in Chennai. (Top right) Former India cricketer Yuvraj Singh (L) with Pant during a training session ahead of the IPL. EXPRESS, X/LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS.

mid-wicket. Every so often, he sought input from Arun and Klusener while video analysts watched closely from the other side.

Then came the off-side drills. He instructed the pace bowlers to aim wide yorkers outside off-stump, and as Avesh Khan delivered one on cue, Pant swivelled and scooped it away. The audacity is still there — but there is now a more deliberate quality to it.

In the past, his attempts to impose himself have occasionally cost him his wicket and, sometimes, his team. Those criticisms would have reached him. What you see now is a more considered Pant, one who has n't surrendered his flair but has chosen to be selective about when and how he uses it.

Being smarter

Behind the scenes, significant changes are underway.



Since November, Pant has been working closely with strength and conditioning coach Soham Desai, who previously worked with the Indian team and is now attached to the Lucknow franchise. As he approaches 30, the focus has shifted: less about grinding harder, more about being smarter.

Agility, movement, self-awareness. "Pagal jaise nahi," a source says — not like a madman. "When you get older, you need to manage things differently. It comes down to understanding yourself." A stint of domestic cricket and time spent at home in Uttarakhand also appear to have helped him arrive at a big season feeling genuinely refreshed.

When Ishan Kishan returned to the Indian fold after nearly two years away, a noticeably different version of him showed up. There is a sense that something similar is happening with Pant. As he walked off after his marathon session on Friday — drained, but visibly hungry — he had the look of a man who had given everything and couldn't wait to do it all over again.

CSK taken to court by Sun TV over use of Rajini soundtracks

Venkata Krishna B
Chennai, March 13

THE NEXT edition of the IPL is still a couple of weeks away, but off the field, tensions are heating up in Chennai.

On Friday, the Sun TV Network Limited — which owns the Sunrisers Hyderabad franchise — filed a copyright infringement suit in the Madras High Court against Chennai Super Kings for using songs, dialogues and background tracks from Rajinikanth-starrer Jailer, Jailer 2, and Coolie in their promotional content on its social media platforms.

On March 1, CSK had put out a promotional video to reveal their new jersey for the upcoming season. The franchise had used audio and background tracks and dialogues from Rajinikanth's movies. However, hours after it went viral, it was taken down and released a day later with modifications in the audio. While speculation has been rife about the reasons as the franchise usually relies on Tamil movie

songs for its content on social media, the answer to it arrived on Friday when the Sun TV network approached the Madras High Court.

In its plea — accessed by this newspaper — Sun TV Network Limited stated that Jailer, Coolie and Jailer 2 (yet to be released) were its productions and music composer Anirudh Ravichander had specifically, by way of a written agreement, given all rights for exploitation of the music to the film production firm.

"The plaintiff submits that, the Defendants (CSK) officially unveiled the new jersey for the IPL 2026 on 01.03.2026, offering fans a glimpse of the fresh design through a promotional video shared on social media pages, namely Instagram, X, YouTube and Facebook. The said video to the surprise of the applicant prominently used the audio tracks and dialogues from Plaintiff's films Jailer, Jailer 2 and Coolie and further incorporated copyrighted audio elements at multiple junctures including scenes de-



The Sun TV Network limited, which owns the SRH franchise, filed a copyright infringement suit in the Madras High Court against CSK. FILE

picting the arrival of MS Dhoni at the 1st Defendants camp," it read.

Sun TV Network Limited also brought to the court's notice that each jersey was sold for Rs 2,399 and the plaintiff's copyright works were used for making commercial gains without authorisation.

"The Applicant submits

that the promotional videos mischievously exploited the Applicant's copyrighted works for aiding the sales of the Match Jersey 2026 priced at Rs 2399 and other merchandise. It is needless to state the influence effect of the music from films involving Mr Rajinikanth and Mr Anirudh would have in aiding the merchandise sales of a team based in South India and more particularly Chennai."

The Plaintiff has asked the court to injunct CSK Limited from infringing the copyright. It has also demanded submission of accounts regarding the quantum of money earned through such unauthorised exploitation. While CSK has in the past used soundtracks and dialogues on their social media platforms, since the issue flared up, it has stopped using any such audio for its content.

Appearing on behalf of the television network, senior counsel J Ravindran revealed that CSK has stopped using their copyright materials after they were sent an official email on March 1. And appearing for

CSK Limited, senior counsel PS Raman said the franchise has stopped using the soundtracks and dialogues. He further stated that in case of the franchise using such materials in the future, they would do so only after obtaining necessary permission.

While the issue is only with regard to CSK, other franchises' social media contingents are also keeping a close tab on the developments.

While all the franchises have relied on soundtracks from movies, this is the first instance where a team has been dragged to court for copyright infringement by a production house.

With a precedent set, some of the franchises have advised their content team to tread cautiously and not use any soundtracks without necessary permission. "Even when we used the audio tracks in the past, due credit used to be given to each production house," a source pointed out. However, as per copyright infringements, it amounts to a violation.

BRIEFLY



Ukrainian heavyweight world boxing champion Usyk. REUTERS

Usyk hits out at softening stance toward Russian athletes

THE WORLD of sport appears to be softening the hardline stance it took when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. Russian athletes are back competing under their own flag at the Paralympics. FIFA president Gianni Infantino said the international ban on Russian soccer teams "has not achieved anything." Oleksandr Usyk remains as resolute as ever. "My opinion has not changed - this should not be happening," the Ukrainian heavyweight world boxing champion told The Associated Press. "People who support the killing of others, the bombing of civilian cities, hospitals, schools, and everything else should not have the right to take part in the Olympic Games." REUTERS

KSCA briefs Expert Committee

THE KARNATAKA State Cricket Association officials met the state government constituted Expert Committee, giving detailed presentation of the security enhancement works being carried out at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium ahead of the IPL. The state government has recently green-lighted the conduct of IPL matches at the venue after months of uncertainty owing to the stampede on June 4, 2025. Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru will take on former champions Sunrisers Hyderabad here in the inaugural match of the IPL 2026 on March 28. "Apart from the season's inaugural match, the RCB Unbox function and the opening ceremony are also scheduled to be held at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. PTI

Goa to host next Ultimate Table Tennis event

GOA WILL host the 7th season of the Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) event in July at the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium, the organisers said. Organised by IISports Pvt. Ltd. under the aegis of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI), UTT has grown into one of the country's most prominent sporting properties since its launch in 2017, the organisers said in a statement. Speaking about the upcoming season, UTT co-promoter Vita Dani said, "Ultimate Table Tennis has steadily become a key pillar in India's table tennis ecosystem. Over the years, we've seen the standard of the sport rise across every level, from grassroots programmes to international competition. The league has created more exposure." PTI

'Abrar picked by Sunrisers Leeds not our concern'

The BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla on Friday downplayed the acquisition of Pakistan spinner Abrar Ahmed by Sunrisers Leeds during The Hundred auction, saying the development in an "overseas league" is beyond the board's ambit. The Sunrisers Leeds, owned by Chennai-based media conglomerate Sun Group, signed Pakistan mystery spinner Abrar during The Hundred player auction, making him the first Pakistan cricketer to be picked by an Indian-owned franchise in the tournament. "It doesn't concern us. It's not the IPL. What happens in The Hundred or other overseas leagues, we have nothing to do with it," Shukla said. PTI

'Strengthening grassroots is a key factor'

UNION MINISTER of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Raksha Khadse said strengthening grassroots development and promoting sports tourism are among the government's key priorities as she inaugurated the Annual Convention of the Sports Journalists Federation of India (SJFI) and unveiled the JK Bose Trophy. The trophy was unveiled in the presence of SJFI president Saraju Chakraborty and Delhi Sports Journalists Association chief Abhishek Tripathi during the golden jubilee convention of the Federation. The convention marks the golden jubilee of the SJFI, which represents sports journalists across India. PTI

WONDER FREEKICK

Manisha's viral goal, a silver lining in India's AFC campaign

Sriram Veera
Mumbai, March 13

THIRTY YARDS out, four defenders in white between her and the goal, Manisha Kalyan stood still for a moment, with her shorts hitched up, then hit it with her left foot. The ball climbed, caught the underside of the crossbar, bounced down and over the line. The stadium waited. VAR confirmed. The commentator called it the goal of the tournament.

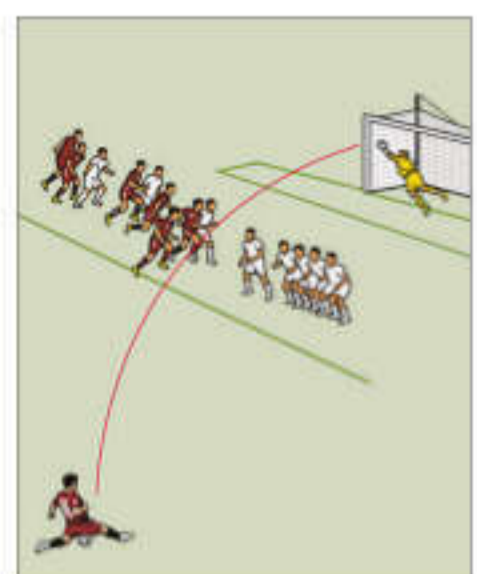
India lost the match 3-1 to Chinese Taipei. They finished the AFC Women's Asian Cup at the bottom of their group — three games, no points, a goal difference of minus fourteen. But for one moment in Sydney on Monday night, a girl from a village in Punjab's Hoshiarpur reminded everyone what Indian football could look like, if only there were more of her.

Eight years before that free

kick, a PT teacher at the Government Middle School in Muggowal saw a girl playing barefoot with a group of boys. She was scoring at will. Brahmjit Singh watched, then took her to Mahilpur Football Academy, where the coaches saw it immediately too.

But Narendrapal Singh, Manisha's father, ran a small cosmetic shop in the village. There was no money for sports shoes, no money for training. He had four daughters and he wanted them to study. Football was not the plan.

Brahmjit spent a month convincing him. "I kept telling him that this girl is so talented," Brahmjit had told this paper. "She was scoring against U-14 boys for fun. I asked him what was stopping him. He said he can't afford sports shoes. I told him money will never become a hurdle in Manisha's career." Narendrapal agreed. Then came the neighbours. "They used to tell him that his



Manisha Kalyan's freekick against Chinese Taipei was impressive for its accuracy as well as power.

daughter plays with boys, she wears shorts," Manisha's elder sister Sonam had said. "My parents were exposed to such scornful comments that anyone would get mentally scarred. But both my father and mother had a strong belief in coach sir, and they just kept ignoring it."

Her friends back home called her Dinho, after Ronaldinho, for the way she played and the way she wore her hair.

There was no girls' team in Muggowal. So Manisha walked fifteen kilometres whenever she wanted to play. Her friends back home called her Dinho, after Ronaldinho, for the way she played and the way she wore her hair.

In November 2021, India played Brazil in a four-nation tournament in Manaus. They lost 6-1. Manisha scored India's only goal — the first Indian woman to score against Brazil in senior football. At home in Muggowal, Narendrapal watched the replays. The neighbours who had

taunted his family came to congratulate him.

"Everything is in the past," Narendrapal had told this newspaper. "I just want her to keep scoring goals for India."

The goal opened doors. Apollon Ladies in Cyprus came calling. Manisha had never heard of Apollon. She did some research, saw they played in the Women's Champions League and signed. The language barrier was immediate — she couldn't speak much English, couldn't communicate with teammates on or off the field.

"If you're quiet during games, you won't get the ball," she told Al Jazeera. She learned to speak.

In August 2022 she became the first Indian to play in a UEFA Women's Champions League match. A month later she scored in one. From Cyprus she moved to PAOK in Greece — twenty-three appearances, eight goals. Then in January this year, Peruvian champions

Alianza Lima came calling. She packed her bags for South America. Of the twenty-six players in India's squad in Sydney, Manisha was the only one playing at a serious level outside India.

The Women's League in India runs for a month. Sometimes less. You train and then wait, not knowing what comes next. In Europe the league runs for seven months or more. You play every week.

"Players in Europe have clean touches," Manisha told Al Jazeera. "Their runs, positioning, tactics — all quite impressive. Whereas in India, the players aren't good at their basics."

Narendrapal couldn't afford sports shoes. The neighbours said his daughter would come to nothing. On Monday night in Sydney, she hit the goal of the tournament.

Agha left fuming after bizarre run out

Express News Service
New Delhi, March 13

PAKISTAN CAPTAIN was left fuming after being controversially run out by his Bangladesh counterpart Mehidy Hasan Miraz in the second ODI on Friday in Mirpur. The incident happened during the 4th ball of the 39th over. Mehidy delivered the ball to Mohammad Rizwan, who hit it down the ground off his backfoot, towards the right of the bowler. Mehidy got around the non-striker to try and stop the ball with his boot. Salman, despite being well out of his crease and in Miraz's way, bent down to pick the ball to try and hand it back to the bowler, evidently. But Mehidy swooped in himself and with an underarm throw, knocked the balls off with Salman clearly stranded outside the crease.

The decision was sent upstairs, and the third umpire Kumar Dharmasena ruled it as

a dismissal, much to the chagrin of Salman who threw his helmet and gloves onto the ground in frustration before walking off. "He was away from the wicket and I was just looking for the ball," Mehidy said. "If you miss, he would go for the run, so I was just thinking like that."

Salman's dismissal at 231-4 sparked Pakistan's collapse at the hands of Rishad (3-56) and Mehidy. But allrounder Maaz Sadaqat led Pakistan to a series-leveiling 128-run win against Bangladesh in a rain-affected second ODI on Friday. The 20-year-old Sadaqat, playing his second ODI, hit a 46-ball 75 and grabbed 3-23 with his left-arm spin. Pakistan lost last seven wickets for 43 runs and were bowled out for 27. Lightning and a hailstorm delayed play for well over two hours and Bangladesh's target was revised to 243 runs in 32 overs. But Bangladesh managed just 114.

WILL USA FACE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR?

Money and power shape sport's response

In recent past, the likes of India and Indonesia have faced sanctions which the US is unlikely to now

Mihir Vasavda
Mumbai, March 13

FEBRUARY 20, 2022: The Beijing Winter Olympics conclude, and the turnaround period for the Winter Paralympics begins.

FEBRUARY 24, 2022: Russia launches a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, starting a conflict now entering its fifth year.

FEBRUARY 25, 2022: The International Olympic Committee sanctions Russia, urging international sports federations to relocate or cancel events in the country and accusing Moscow of breaching the 'Olympic Truce'. Russian athletes are barred from competing under the national flag.

FEBRUARY 28, 2022: FIFA expels Russia from the 2022 World Cup and bars the country's teams — national and club — from international competition, a ban that re-

mains in force till today.

FEBRUARY 22, 2026: The Milano-Cortina Winter Olympics end, beginning the transition period before the Winter Paralympics.

FEBRUARY 28, 2026: THE United States and Israel launch coordinated air strikes on Iran.

MARCH 3, 2026: In a statement, the IOC does not mention the US or Israel. It describes the Olympic Truce — cited in banning Russia — as an 'aspirational and non-binding resolution' and says it has no means of enforcing it. FIFA has yet to issue an official statement since the war began, though secretary general Mattias Grafstrom said the organisation was 'monitoring the situation'.

Money matters

Two wars, two strikingly



Donald Trump with FIFA Peace Prize Award. FILE/REUTERS

similar timelines. In one case, world sport moved swiftly to sanction Russia. Four years later, the same organisations are taking a far more cautious approach to the US-Israel attacks on Iran.

The reasons are simple: power and money.

Simon Chadwick, Professor of Afro-Eurasian Sport at the Emlyon Business School, says the USA accounts for 'one third

of the global sport industry'. 'It is the source of investment funds; for a sport to truly go global then it ideally needs to engage American audiences; and many of the latest developments in world sport originate there. Boycotting, excluding and banning countries from global (sport) is an outcome of power, which the United States has in abundance,' Chadwick tells The Indian Express.

American networks and sponsors pour in billions of dollars into the IOC coffers, which keep the ecosystem rolling. This year's World Cup is projected to generate approximately \$10.9 billion in revenue, up 56 per cent compared with Qatar 2022.

Power rests with West

While banning Russia, the IOC invoked the Olympic truce.

The Olympic Truce is a United Nations resolution calling for global peace from seven days before the Olympic opening ceremony until seven days after the Paralympics close. The aim is to promote peace and ensure safe travel for athletes.

This year's Olympic Truce runs up to March 22. So, when the USA-Israel airstrikes on Iran began, it officially violated the truce.

The IOC, which came hard on Russia for the same violation, said last week: "The Olympic Truce Resolution is an aspirational and non-binding resolution which the UN Member States agree on for

each edition of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is tabled by the host nation of the Games and is adopted by the UN Member States themselves. The IOC, with its Permanent Observer Status at the UN, has no means of enforcing the implementation of the resolution."

Chadwick adds that sports governing bodies are increasingly faced with having to make decisions they previously didn't have to. "Such is their lack of expertise in this field that many of them are prone to making inconsistent, even ill-informed, decisions," he adds. "It doesn't help that elite sport's global hegemony is still essentially 'Western'; this is where wider power rests and the basis upon which sport governing bodies typically make decisions."

Trump statement

On Thursday, US President and recipient of the first-ever FIFA Peace Prize, Donald Trump, said it wouldn't be 'appropriate that they (Iran) be there (for the World Cup), for their own life and safety. In say-

ing so, Trump might be testing the Olympic charter.

The US will be hosting the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. The Games will be in the final few months of the Trump presidency, which has already imposed visa sanctions on more than a dozen countries.

Rule 44 of the Olympic Charter — to which all Olympic sports are signatories — states: "...ensure that no one has been excluded for racial, religious or political reasons or by reason of other forms of discrimination."

In February 2019, the IOC had sanctioned India for violating this very rule. A couple of years ago, FIFA stripped Indonesia of the hosting rights to the Under-20 World Cup after the country refused to host Israel.

The USA, though, might not face the same fate. Who has the power and the inclination to mount a challenge?" Chadwick asks.

"Unless there is a coalition of countries working in conjunction with each other, I don't foresee the US or Israel being excluded from international sports organisations or events anytime soon."

Duplantis breaks another WR with 6.31m vault

Reuters
Uppsala, March 13

SWEDEN'S MONDO Duplantis cleared 6.31 metres at the Mondo Classic indoor meeting in Uppsala to set another pole vault world record on Thursday, improving his own previous mark by one centimetre.

The Olympic and world champion, opens new tab had no failed attempts on his way to the record height, opening at 5.65m before clearing 5.90m and 6.08m and then going on to surpass his previous best. Unlike most track and field disciplines, pole vault has a single world record covering both indoor and outdoor performances.

It was the 15th time Duplantis has broken the world record since first setting it in 2020, underlining his dominance in the event. Sondre Guttormsen of Norway placed second after clearing 6.00m, marking his second successful six-metre vault this season.

Americans Zachery Bradford and Sam Kendricks and Australia's Kurtis Marschall each cleared 5.90m to finish third, fourth and fifth respectively.

India scrape past Italy to enter final

Vinayakk Mohanarangan
New Delhi, March 13

WITH WORLD Cup qualification assured irrespective of their result against Italy in the semifinal of the qualifiers on Friday, India head coach Sjoerd Marijne said he demanded that his players 'be the best version of themselves'. "We need to improve every match and that starts with every individual," he said before the match. What followed over the next 60 minutes did not quite live up to those demands, but India still did enough to edge past Italy 1-0 and seal their spot in the title clash against England.

The solitary goal was credited to Manisha Chauhan, so that is an additional box ticked off for India. In Deepika's absence for this tournament — the forward who has been India's primary drag flick threat in recent times — Manisha and debutant Annu have been tasked with flicking from short corners. But the primary options have been to go for Navneet Kaur or Udita for low slaps and angular hits. When presented with chances in the earlier matches, Manisha had not been able to convert despite drawing saves from the opponent's goalkeepers.

In the 40th minute against Italy, with pressure mounting on India to find the breakthrough, Manisha managed to keep her flick on target but it still needed a significant helping hand — or stick — from Italy as the ball looped over goalkeeper Lucia Caruso after taking a deflection off Sofia Laurito. Worryingly, though, that was the only Penalty Corner converted by India from nine opportunities in this match.

India started the second quarter better, with Sunelita Toppo combining down the left with Navneet to fashion the first of many PCs of the night. But the injection-trapping mechanism failed for the hosts. From their second PC

shortly after, Salima Tete found herself in a good scoring position after Udita found her with a variation from the first battery. But Salima's push towards goal was deflected wide from a tight angle. From their third PC, Navneet's attempt to find a deflection through another variation didn't come to fruition either.

The first big attacking threat of the second half came from Italy as Bichu was forced into a save off Emilia Munitis after a counterattack down the right flank. Then came what could have been an outrageous goal for India, as Navneet Kaur produced a sensational turn of individual skill, 3D-ing past a couple of defenders, producing a magical 360-degree spin to eliminate some more markers, but her final pass was just ahead of Ishika's stick from close range.

The breakthrough finally came from a careless mistake in defence from Italy for not giving 5m to Rutuja at the edge of the circle, which gave India their first PC of the second half, and Manisha stepped up to convert.

With just under five minutes back, Italy removed their goalkeeper to employ 11 outfield players in search of that equaliser and they were able to finally make the numerical advantage translate into something tangible. After a couple of minutes of sustained onslaught on India's defence, Italy celebrated winning their first PC of the night with 77 seconds left.

But Navneet, who has been India's best attacking player through the tournament, came up with a critical touch in defence with a goal-line clearance at the post to deny Federica Carta. It was as good as a goal scored by Navneet. India held on, but England might not be as accommodating in the quest for gold on Saturday if the performance improvement demanded by Marijne doesn't materialise in less than 24 hours.

Samrat, Suruchi and Jaismine among new TOPS inductees

Prithish Raj
New Delhi, March 13

AFTER MONTHS of waiting, reigning 10m air pistol world champion Samrat Rana, 57 kg boxing world champion Jaismine Lamboria and three-time World Cup medallist shooter Suruchi Inder Singh have been inducted into the core group of Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) after the 169th meeting of the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC).

The Indian Express understands that their consistent performances have prompted MOC to take notice and add them to the core

list, despite updating the list at the start of the year.

One of the best Indian boxers on the circuit right now, Jaismine had a strong season last year with a World title and multiple other international medals. Her absence from the core group at the start of the year had raised eyebrows, similar to the absence of India's first-ever Pistol World Champion, Samrat Rana, and one of the most consistent shooters, Suruchi.

TOPS Core athletes get a monthly allowance of Rs 50,000. They are also \$25 per day during the period of training and competition overseas.

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