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China legislature sacks 19 members, nine of them are military officers

Associated Press
Beijing, February 27

CHINA'S LEGISLATURE has dismissed 19 members, including nine who are military officers, one week ahead of the start of its annual meeting. The late Thursday announcement did not say why the deputies had been removed, but such removals are generally tied to corruption investigations.

An anti-corruption campaign launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping shows no sign of letting up after more than a decade. The military has been targeted in recent years, including the removal of its top general last month, as Xi seeks to reform and modernize the armed forces.

Analysts say the campaign is also a way for Xi, who is in his 14th year in power, to remove potential rivals and ensure loyalty among his subordinates. The dismissals aren't likely to have a major impact on the meeting of the National People's Congress, which opens next Thursday and is expected to run for a week. The largely ceremonial

The removed officers include two under the Central Military Commission, the military's highest body, as well as others from the army, the navy, the air force and the rocket force

legislature rubber stamps decisions that have been made by the ruling Communist Party.

The removed officers include two under the Central Military Commission, the military's highest body, as well as others from the army, the navy, the air force and the rocket force. Three are generals. The rocket force, which oversees China's nuclear arsenal, was an early target of the military purges. The other dismissed deputies were regional representatives from several provinces. The removals leave the National People's Congress with 2,878 members.

PAK PM SHEHBAZ SHARIF TO VISIT MOSCOW NEXT WEEK

Russia, China urge Pakistan, Afghanistan to end conflict

Press Trust of India
Moscow, Beijing, February 27

AMID AN escalation of armed clashes between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Russia on Friday urged both countries to end the conflict and resolve their differences through diplomatic means.

Pakistan launched a retaliatory operation late Thursday night in response to the alleged border attacks by the Afghan Taliban. Islamabad claimed that 133 Taliban fighters were killed in Operation Ghazab lil Haq.

The 2,611-km-long border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is known as the Durand Line, which Kabul has not formally recognised.

The Russian Foreign Ministry expressed concern over the "sharp escalation" of armed clashes between Afghanistan and Pakistan, "involving regular army units, air force, and heavy weapons".

"There are casualties on both sides, including civilians. We call on our friendly countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan, to abandon this dangerous confrontation and return to the negotiating table to resolve all differences through political and diplomatic means," foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said in a statement.



Afghan Taliban soldiers at the Torkham border on Friday. PTI

to abandon this dangerous confrontation and return to the negotiating table to resolve all differences through political and diplomatic means," foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said in a statement.

Kremlin's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, also urged Islamabad and Kabul to halt the hostilities.

China also called on Pakistan and Afghanistan to work

out a ceasefire while expressing concern over the escalation of the conflict between the two countries. China is closely following the developments of the situation in the conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said. The strikes by Pakistan were the first time it had directly targeted its former allies over allegations they are harbouring militants; it described

E. EXPLAINED

Open escalation PAKISTAN AND

Afghanistan are in open conflict after cross-border clashes escalated. Pakistan launched airstrikes on Kabul and other Afghan cities, accusing the Taliban of harbouring militants. Both sides report heavy losses, with tensions rooted in border disputes, militancy, and accusations of supporting insurgents.

the situation as "open war".

Sharif to visit Moscow

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is set to visit Moscow next week, according to a report. "The Pakistani Prime Minister will visit the Russian Federation next week," Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed was quoted by news agency TASS. However, so far the Kremlin has not officially confirmed the report.



New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani presents a mock newspaper front page to US President Donald Trump on Thursday. @NYCMAYOR

Trump, Mamdani meet again, discuss housing, ICE action

After talks, govt frees Columbia varsity student detained by ICE

Reuters
New York, February 27

NEW YORK City Mayor Zohran Mamdani said he had a productive meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House on Thursday, discussing issues including housing and student detentions by federal immigration authorities.

It was the second meeting between them since Mamdani's mayoral election win late last year. Mamdani is a Democrat and Trump a Republican.

Mamdani posted a photo with Trump on social media. "I had a productive meeting with President Trump this afternoon. I'm looking forward to building more housing in New York City," Mamdani wrote.

Mamdani said he raised concerns with Trump about a detention on Thursday of Col-

umbia University student Elmina Aghayeva from Azerbaijan by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement and that Trump later informed him she will be "released imminently."

The federal Homeland Security Department subsequently said it freed Aghayeva and launched removal proceedings against her.

While both men have been critical of each other's policy positions and hold radically different worldviews, their previous meeting in November was unexpectedly friendly.

In that meeting too, they spoke about bringing down the price of housing. Trump had brightened at Mamdani's call for more housing in New York.

Making housing more affordable has been one of Trump's pledges ahead of the midterm elections in late 2026 as prices for housing remain significantly higher than they were a few years ago.

Mamdani has criticised Trump's headline immigration crackdown, especially his use of ICE agents and deportation attempts, along with the president's policies towards Israel's war in Gaza.

I saw nothing, did nothing wrong: Clinton on Epstein



Former US President Bill Clinton

Associated Press
Washington, February 27

FORMER PRESIDENT Bill Clinton told members of Congress on Friday that he "did nothing wrong" in his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein and saw no signs of Epstein's sexual abuse as he faced hours of grilling from lawmakers over his connections to the disgraced financier from more than two decades ago.

"I saw nothing, and I did nothing wrong," the former Democratic president said in an opening statement he shared on social media at the outset of the deposition. The deposition in New York marks the first time a former President has been compelled to testify to Congress.

It came a day after Hillary Clinton sat with lawmakers for her own deposition.

CHINA URGES CITIZENS IN IRAN TO EVACUATE

US advises embassy staff in Israel to leave immediately

Agencies
Tel Aviv, Beijing, February 27

THE US Embassy in Israel on Friday told its staff that it could leave the country and urged anyone considering departure to do so immediately, as the threat of an American strike on Iran looms.

US Ambassador Mike Huckabee told embassy employees in an email that discussions with officials in Washington had led to a decision authorizing departures for those who wished to leave.

The email was recounted to The AP by someone involved with the US mission who wasn't authorized to share details. Sent before 10:30 a.m., it urged staff considering departure to do so quickly, advising them to focus initially on getting any flight out of Israel and to then make their way to Washington.

"Those wishing to take AD should do so TODAY," Huckabee wrote, using an acronym for "authorized departure."



At the Imam Khomeini Grand Mosque in Tehran on Friday. AP

While there may be outbound flights over the coming days, there may not be," he added. Huckabee said there was no need for panic, but for those desiring to leave, it was important to make plans soon.

Australia on Wednesday "directed the departure of all dependents of Australian officials posted to Israel in response to the deteriorating security situation in the Middle East." India and several European countries with missions in Iran advised citizens to avoid travel to the country as well.

Meanwhile, China also advised its citizens to avoid travelling to Iran and urged those in the country to evacuate as soon as possible.

Officials posted to Israel in response to the deteriorating security situation in the Middle East. India and several European countries with missions in Iran advised citizens to avoid travel to the country as well.

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COUNTRY WILL HOLD FIRST ELECTION SINCE GEN-Z PROTESTS ON MARCH 5

Three rivals in race to become Nepal PM

Binay Gurubacharya
Kathmandu, February 27

A FORMER rapper who ran Kathmandu as a mayor. The young leader of Nepal's oldest party. And a communist veteran politician hoping to return to power after being ousted in youth-led protests in which dozens were killed last year.

Whoever prevails will become Nepal's 16th PM in less than two decades, underscoring the recurring political instability that has marked the Himalayan nation since the monarchy was abolished in 2008.



(From left) K P Oli, Gagan Thapa and Balendra Shah

Balendra Shah, widely known as Balen, is seen as front-runner after emerging as a popular figure during the campaign. He was elected mayor of

the capital, Kathmandu, in 2022 and later left the post to become the National Independent Party's candidate for PM.

Gagan Thapa is the newly

installed leader of the Nepali Congress, the country's oldest major political party, a liberal democratic party with close ties to neighboring India.

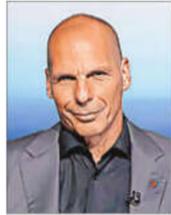
The other contender for the post is K P Oli, the controversial but strong communist leader who led the coalition government that was forced out of power last year. He is blamed by many for the deaths in the violent protests that ousted him.

Oli has consistently argued that steady policies and politics are essential for Nepal, warning that the economy needs stability to develop. AP

BRIEFLY

GREECE

Ex-minister charged over use of dance drug ecstasy decades ago



Greece's former finance minister Yanis Varoufakis. REUTERS

GREECE'S FORMER finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, a self-declared "erratic" Marxist, has been charged with promoting drug use after he publicly admitted to having popped an ecstasy pill nearly four decades ago, his party said. The economics professor, who infuriated euro zone partners with his unconventional style and lectures during bailout negotiations at the peak of Greece's debt crisis in 2015, said he had once tried ecstasy or MDMA — a drug commonly associated with dance parties and raves — in Australia in 1989. "It was a terrific experience until the days after," he said during the podcast "3026: Human Algorithm", adding that he was able to dance for hours but then suffered migraines. REUTERS

CONGO

171 bodies found in mass graves, say officials

AUTHORITIES AND a civil society group said that mass graves were found in part of eastern Congo that the M23 rebel group has recently withdrawn from, as fighting in the region escalates despite a US-mediated peace deal. The governor of South-Kivu province, Jean-Jacques Purusi, said authorities found two mass graves with at least 171 dead bodies in the Kiromoni and Kavimvira neighborhoods on the outskirts of the eastern city of Uvira. AP

UNITED KINGDOM

Greens seize Labour Party stronghold

UNITED KINGDOM PM KEIR Starmer's Labour suffered an embarrassing election defeat to the left-wing Green Party on Friday in an area of Manchester it had dominated for almost a century, a result that underscored the breakdown of Britain's two-party politics. The loss of one of Labour's safest seats piles further pressure on Starmer to prove that he should keep his job following weeks of political turmoil and calls for him to resign. REUTERS

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

NEPAL

4.7 magnitude earthquake hits eastern Nepal

AN EARTHQUAKE of magnitude 4.7 hit Sankhuwasabha district on Friday in Nepal. There were no immediate reports of loss of life or damage of any kind due to the quake. The earthquake struck at 3.18 am on Friday with its epicentre located at Topke Gola near the Sankhuwasabha-Taplejung border area, situated around 400 km East of Kathmandu, according to the National Earthquake Monitoring and Research Centre (NEMRC). PTI

BANGLADESH

Hasina named in murder case chargesheet

OUSTED PM Sheikh Hasina is among 25 people named in a chargesheet filed by police in a case of murder in the capital during the July Uprising, a media report said on Friday. The Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) of police filed the chargesheet against 25 people, including Hasina and ex-ministers Obaidul Quader and Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, in the case of murder of Abujar Sheikh in the capital's Pragati Sarani area, state-run BSS reported. PTI

Cannot accede to Pentagon's request in AI safeguards dispute: Anthropic

Reuters
February 27

ANTHROPIC SAID it would not accede to the Pentagon's request to eliminate safeguards from its AI systems, despite threats to deem the company a "supply chain risk" and remove it from the Department of Defense's systems, putting a \$200 million contract at risk.

The Pentagon's dispute with Anthropic stems from the AI startup's refusal to remove safeguards that would prevent its technology from being used to target weapons autonomously and conduct surveillance in the United States.

Earlier in the day, Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said on X that the department has no interest in using AI to conduct mass surveillance of Americans nor does it want to use AI to develop autonomous weapons that operate without human involvement.

"Here's what we're asking: Allow the Pentagon to use Anthropic's model for all lawful purposes," Parnell said, adding that the company had until 5:01 pm ET on Friday to decide. "Otherwise, we will terminate our partnership with Anthropic and deem them a supply chain risk."

In a statement on Thursday, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei underscored the company's opposition to the Pentagon using its AI models for mass domestic surveillance or to power fully



Dario Amodei, CEO Anthropic

autonomous weapons, the latter being because "frontier AI systems are simply not reliable enough." A source close to the company said Anthropic was not accusing the Pentagon of planning to engage AI for either use, but was offering a product safety judgment.

The source said AI systems were not reliable enough for "life-or-death targeting" because they behave unpredictably in novel scenarios, which could lead to "friendly fire, mission failure or unintended escalation" in a weapons context.

Using AI for mass domestic surveillance was problematic because current laws do not restrict the conclusions that AI can draw by aggregating large amounts of data, the source said. That meant AI could build population-level profiles that "no law explicitly prohibits but that clearly violate the spirit of constitutional protections," they added.

JACINDA ARDERN JOINS NEW ZEALANDERS WHO ARE DISENCHANTED WITH THE COUNTRY'S WEAK LABOUR MARKET AND SLUGGISH ECONOMY

The latest New Zealander to move to Australia is former PM

Isabella Kwai
February 27

MORE AND more New Zealanders, lured by higher salaries, economic opportunities and more sun, are moving to neighbouring Australia. Now one of New Zealand's most recognizable citizens, Jacinda Ardern, is among them.

A spokesperson for Ardern, a former prime minister of New Zealand, said Thursday that she and her family were basing themselves in Australia "for the moment." Ardern's family had worked there, the spokesperson said in a statement, without giving details.

The announcement, which

was earlier reported by The Guardian newspaper, came after speculation in the Australian news media that Ardern was mulling the move. Reported sightings of the former leader viewing properties for sale in a beachside neighbourhood of Sydney prompted news headlines. Residents of Gerringong, a relaxed coastal town south of the city, were surprised last weekend to see her at a local event.

Her family's decision has brought new attention to a migration trend: New Zealanders, disenchanted with a weak labor market and a sluggish post-pandemic economy, are leaving their country in search of opportunities abroad.



New Zealand's former Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern

More than 1% of New Zealand's population left the country in the year ending in October, and half ended up in

Australia — or "across the ditch," in affectionate local terms.

The trend has added to the

longtime dynamic of siblinglike rivalry between the two countries, which are so closely bound that they allow citizens free passage to work and live between each other. Australia has a population of nearly 28 million people, compared with around 5 million in New Zealand.

Ardern, a star of New Zealand's center-left Labour Party, led the country as prime minister between 2017 and 2023. She took office at 37, the youngest woman at the time to head a national government, and was the first world leader in decades to give birth while in office when her daughter, Neve, was born in 2018. Ardern is married to Clarke Gayford, a

television host.

During her time in office, she steered the country through the COVID-19 pandemic, a terrorist attack on a mosque in the city of Christchurch and a deadly volcanic eruption. Ardern resigned in 2023 and stepped back from domestic politics.

Since then, she has been a trustee of the Earthshot Prize, a climate leadership award initiated by Prince William, and was made a dame. In 2023, she held fellowships at the Harvard Kennedy School and temporarily moved her family to Massachusetts. In 2025, she was appointed a fellow at Oxford University. NYT



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28 फरवरी, 2026 | प्रातः 09:30 बजे | कायड़ विश्राम स्थली, अजमेर

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DELHI LIQUOR POLICY CASE

'Choreographed exercise': How CBI's case fell apart

The court pulled up the agency on several counts, from the nature of evidence and its presentation to how it steered the investigation



SOHINI GHOSH

A DELHI court Friday discharged former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his former deputy Manish Sisodia, along with 21 others, in the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) case in the alleged liquor policy scam. The ruling is a shot in the arm for the Aam Aadmi Party and its leaders, who were named as accused in a separate money laundering probe linked to the excise policy "scam".

An order discharging the accused essentially means that the court has not found enough material to proceed with a full-fledged trial. The court at this stage is essentially limiting itself to assessing whether the prosecution material, taken at face value to be true, actually discloses the essential ingredients of the alleged offence and raises grave suspicion, as distinct from a mere suspicion. It is also an indictment of the investigative agency that brought in the charges.

In the 598-page ruling, the CBI's case fell apart on a number of grounds — from the nature of evidence and how it is presented to how policy decisions are examined when under a cloud of criminality.

Procedural integrity of policy

The prosecution's case is that the excise policy was allegedly "manipulated and tweaked" with a preconceived design to extend undue benefit to certain private persons/entities described as the "South Group" and allied intermediaries.

The court stated that it found no evidence to support this claim and, on the contrary, said the record establishes that the policy was the outcome of a consultative and deliberative exercise. The court noted that even though there was no statutory or constitutional mandate to obtain the suggestions of the Lieutenant-Governor, "the file notings unmistakably reflect that such suggestions were nevertheless sought, examined, and incorporated".

"Dehors [without] any material indicating manipulation in policy formulation or corruption in implementation, such allegations fail to sustain. Even otherwise, upon independent scrutiny, this Court finds that the entire alleged chain of payments rests predominantly on so-called pauti entries of Angadia firms, documents which are inadmissible in law, and on ap-



AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, right, and party leader Manish Sisodia address a press conference in New Delhi on Friday. AMIT MEHRA

prover-like statement which remains uncorroborated on material particulars. These infirmities are not peripheral; they strike at the very root of the prosecution case and render it unsustainable even at the threshold stage," the court said.

Bribery allegations

The CBI's allegation was that a Rs 100-crore bribe was paid as "upfront money" by the so-called South Group to the "beneficiaries" of the conspiracy. The court found this allegation to be a speculative construct devoid of admissible evidence.

The allegation that parts of the alleged upfront money was received rests solely on the statement of an approver. However, the court noted that the approver did not directly name the accused in the initial statements and that there is no independent statement or documentary trail showing that the accused received any amount.

"The version that he handled cash is wholly uncorroborated. In view of the "inconsistencies in statements" and "lack of corroboration, no inference of conspiracy can be drawn," the court said. The CBI's allegations on hawala transactions, the court said, "suffer from contradictions as to dates, amounts and instances."

Evidentiary, procedural failures

The court effectively junked the "prosecution's theory (which) rests not on admissible material, but on layered assumptions." The court criticised the CBI for providing "fragmented circumstances" while relying on the court to "join the dots" by "presumption".

The court also heavily criticised the prosecution's reliance on uncorroborated and shifting statements of approvers and other "accomplice-like" witnesses. It noted that

an approver's statement cannot substitute for foundational facts. The court said that allegations of bribery by vendors/retailers only surfaced belatedly by an approver "only in statement recorded by the probe agency later, and not in the initial statement recorded before a magistrate/confessional statement." This, the court said, calls for "heightened judicial caution" even at the preliminary stage since it effectively becomes an "improved" version of evidence.

"...in the absence of independent corroboration on material particulars, reliance upon mutually reinforcing tainted statements would not satisfy the standard required even for proceeding to trial."

The "pauti" entries from Angadia firms (the alleged hawala transactions) that the CBI used to track the alleged money trail to Goa, were ruled inadmissible because they were loose pencil-written sheets and not part of account, regularly maintained books of account. The court also said there were no recoveries, documents, or financial trails produced by the CBI to link the political leadership to the cash transfers directly.

Criticism of investigation

The court described the investigation as a "pre-meditated and choreographed exercise" where roles were retrospectively assigned by the CBI to fit a preconceived narrative. "What emerges instead is a troubling picture of an investigation steered by a preconceived outcome rather than by objective evaluation of evidence," it said.

It also recommended "appropriate departmental proceedings against the erring investigating officer" for "framing A-1 as an accused in the absence of any material against him..." A-1, or the first accused in the case, was Kuldeep Singh, a former excise department official.

Strong observations
The court effectively junked the 'prosecution's theory (which) rests not on admissible material, but on layered assumptions'.

'What emerges... is a troubling picture of an investigation steered by a preconceived outcome...' it said.

The Delhi Excise Policy, the case, and the ruling

THE POLICY

Earlier, retail sales in the National Capital Territory operated through a mixed system of government-run and private outlets under controlled pricing.

The Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22, which was in force from November 2021 to July 2022, shifted to a fully privatised model.

The city was divided into licensed retail zones auctioned to private operators, and licensees were granted greater flexibility in pricing and promotions (subject to oversight).

Objectives were to increase excise revenue, standardising distribution across municipal wards, and curb illegal liquor sales.

THE CONTROVERSY

The policy was withdrawn amid disputes over licensing conditions, shop locations and regulatory approvals.

A July 2022 report by Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to LG Vinai Kumar Saxena alleged procedural irregularities, questioned if decisions led to undue benefits to licensees.

The report said "arbitrary and unilateral decisions" taken by Manish Sisodia as excise minister resulted in around Rs 580-crore loss.

THE INVESTIGATION

Two parallel investigations followed. CBI case under the Prevention of Corruption Act and IPC examined alleged abuse of official position and criminal conspiracy. ED's PMLA probe looked at whether alleged illegal gains constituted proceeds of crime.

Agencies alleged that changes introduced during policy formulation were tailored to benefit specific liquor wholesalers, retailers.

A key allegation concerned restructuring wholesale margins and eligibility criteria. The prosecution claimed that reduced turnover requirements and fixed distributor margins enabled selected entities to secure licences and recover alleged upfront payments through assured commercial returns.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW

Money-laundering proceedings depend on the existence of a predicate offence that generates the illegal proceeds — in this case, the corruption allegations investigated by the CBI.

Since PMLA proceedings are linked to an underlying scheduled offence, the discharge in the CBI case may affect the ED's case.

- BY AMAAL SHEIKH

ECONOMY

As urbanisation grows, 16th FC provides a boost



THE 16TH Finance Commission (FC) has provided a boost to urban local governments, shows its latest report tabled in Parliament on February 1.

The FC is a Constitutional body that provides recommendations about how India's Centre and state governments should divide tax revenues. It is reconstituted every five years and provides a fresh set of recommendations. Since the 10th FC, which was the first one after India adopted a third tier of government — urban local bodies and the rural panchayats — each FC has provided grants to these government structures.

The latest FC, the 16th, has sharply increased the proportion of grants for urban local governments to 45% from the previous FC's 36% allotment and the 13th FC's 26% allotment (see chart). In absolute numbers, the 16th FC recommends Rs 3.56 lakh crore in grants to urban local bodies — over two times more than 15th FC's Rs 1.55-lakh crore grant and a 15-fold rise over the 13th FC's grant.

The 13th FC is relevant because it came immediately after the last Census in 2011. These shares are important because they determine how much money is available with the lowest tier of government to solve problems at the grassroots level.

A significantly higher share for urban bodies versus the rural bodies is in recognition of the projected urbanisation level of 41% as of 2031. Simply put, with each passing decade, more and more of India is living in its cities.

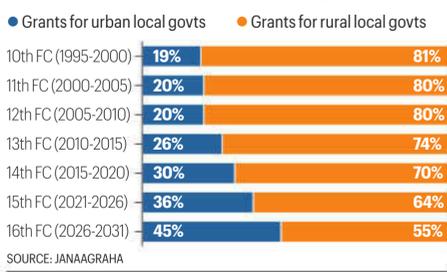
To be sure, urbanisation in India often suffers from a lack of good quality data. To begin with, there is little clarity about the rate of urbanisation in India. According to the last Census in 2011, 31% of the population was living in urban areas. This is much lower than global peers such as China (45%), Indonesia (54%) and Brazil (87%).

Urbanisation estimates in India have also varied quite substantially. A 2015 World Bank report said 54% of Indians were living in cities and another 24% were living in "urban clusters", taking the total to 78%. None of these numbers still capture the rapid changes in migration that are taking place each year.

Lack of credible numbers hold back policy initiatives. The worst affected are urban local bodies. The recommendations for an increased share by the 16th FC are likely to address some of the financial gaps in urban governance.

Srikanth Viswanathan, CEO of Janaagraha, a think-tank that focuses on urban governance, believes that an increased share for urban local bodies would essentially mean that they are likely to be hit far less when the Census 2027 data comes along.

A bigger share for urban local govts



SOURCE: JANAAGRAHA

GEOPOLITICS

Taliban, terror: Behind Pakistan's call for 'open war' on Afghanistan

Rishika Singh
New Delhi, February 27

PAKISTAN LAUNCHED airstrikes on Afghanistan overnight, in what Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif described as an "open war" after months of cross-border attacks from both sides. Reuters reported that 274 people had been killed in Afghanistan since Thursday night.

Taliban factor

Pakistan's Operation "Ghazab lil-Haq" (meaning, righteous fury) comes amid its criticism of the Taliban-led Afghan government on security-related issues. Specifically, it has accused Afghanistan of failing to rein in the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has operated in Pakistan since 2007, while the Afghan Taliban have denied supporting the group.

It has alleged that the Afghan Taliban is acting on behalf of India as New Delhi-Kabul ties have warmed. New Delhi, on its part, has condemned Pakistan's strikes and described them as another attempt by Pakistan to "externalise its internal failures".

Initially comprising separate groups,

TTP seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate by overthrowing the Pakistani government. It has launched several terror attacks over the years, including one in a Peshawar school in 2014 that killed 132 students.

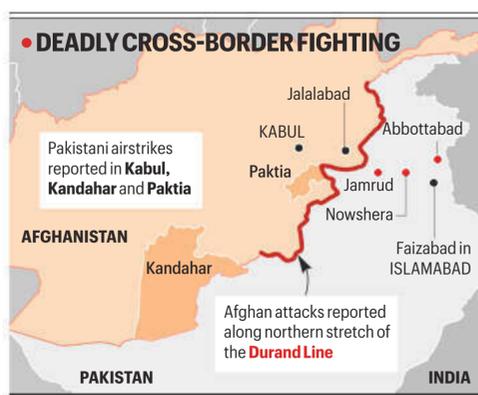
Pakistan had welcomed the Afghan Taliban's return to power in 2021 — to gain strategic depth in the region (and to counter India). But TTP-led terror attacks in Pakistan have only increased since then, especially in the northwestern Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa region that borders Afghanistan, resulting in a souring of relations.

In October 2025, too, a ceasefire mediated by Qatar and Turkey in Doha halted a round of hostilities. That did not last.

The Pakistan information ministry, citing a series of suicide bombing attacks this month, including an attack on February 6 that killed over 30 people at a mosque in Islamabad, said it had "conclusive evidence" to show that the acts were perpetrated by militants at the "behest of their Afghanistan-based leadership and handlers".

Worsening ties

The security issues have spurred other actions, adding to the friction. The think-



another layer of complexity, with attacks along this border in recent days. Established in 1893 by the British, Afghanistan later rejected it for cutting through the Pashtun and Baloch areas.

Former Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Vivek Katju, earlier wrote for *The Indian Express* that before 1947, Afghanistan urged Britain to relinquish the agreement, which it refused to do. "That would have meant that all the Pashtun lands ceded to British India would revert to Afghanistan, effectively making the Indus as the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan."

On Friday, the Turkish Foreign Minister spoke with his Pakistani, Afghan, Qatari and Saudi counterparts to discuss the conflict, AP reported.

What might happen over the next few days will also stem from the differences in military capabilities. The Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* reported: "The Taliban's strengths are rooted in unconventional and guerrilla-style warfare, whereas Pakistan's advantages lie in its conventional force structure, air power and deterrent capability... It implies that a head-on military contest would therefore never favour Kabul."

tank International Crisis Group noted that Islamabad's "pressure tactics", like forced deportation of over 1.7 million Afghan refugees from Pakistan and launching airstrikes on supposed TTP bases and even ensuring "hits" as far as in the capital Kabul, did not sit well with the Afghan Taliban.

The 2,640-km Durand Line adds

EDUCATION

Before 'judiciary corruption', the other NCERT revisions that sparked controversy

Abhinaya Harigovind
New Delhi, February 27

THE NEW NCERT class 8 social science textbook, which was to be taught in the ongoing academic session in schools, had a short shelf life: just one day.

The new book — part two of the textbook — was released on Monday after a long wait: part one came out in July 2025. *The Indian Express* reported Tuesday that the new book featured a section on "corruption in the judiciary".

NCERT swiftly pulled the book from sale on Tuesday and a day later, expressed regret for the "inappropriate textual material and error of judgement" that "have inadvertently crept" into the chapter on the judiciary's role. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said later that he had directed its immediate withdrawal.

Having registered a suo motu case, the

Supreme Court on Thursday imposed a "complete blanket ban" on the book's further publication, reprinting, or digital dissemination.

For NCERT, which has made sweeping changes to school textbooks in recent years, this expression of regret and the book's withdrawal, even before the court's order, is rare.

Need for revisions

New NCERT textbooks for all classes are being developed and released in line with the recommendations of the National Education Policy, 2020, and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE), 2023.

Based on the 2005 curriculum framework, the old books were first published from 2006 to 2008. Under the new NCFSE, new books were released for classes 1 and 2 in 2023, classes 3 and 6 in 2024, and classes 4, 5, 7, and 8 in 2025.

NCERT undertook four rounds of textbook revisions since 2014, including a round of "rationalisation" in 2022-23 in the wake of Covid-19 to reduce content load.

Notable changes

Here are a few instances of revisions and changes, as reported by *The Indian Express*, that have sparked controversy.

• The class 12 political science textbook, published after a 2017 review, described the 2002 Gujarat riots as only the "Gujarat riots". The old book called it the "anti-Muslim riots".

• In the 2022 rationalisation exercise, the section on the Gujarat riots in the class 12 political science book was trimmed. Deletions included references to the National Human Rights Commission's criticism of the Gujarat government for failing to control the violence, and a paragraph on the chronology of events.

• Yet another reference to the Gujarat

riots was removed from the class 12 sociology book in 2022. In a section on 'Communalism, Secularism, and the Nation-State', sentences that were dropped include: "In fact, the two most traumatic contemporary instances of communal violence occurred under each of the major political parties. The anti-Sikh riots of Delhi in 1984 took place under a Congress regime. The unprecedented scale and spread of anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002 took place under the BJP government."

• In a class 12 sociology textbook in 2022, references to how "untouchability" operates were dropped.

• From a class 6 social science textbook, a box describing a common stereotype about Muslims — and why this is far from the truth — was removed.

• From a class 12 sociology book, a paragraph on how minorities are politically vulnerable was removed.

Sections on the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal empire were removed from the class 7 history textbook in 2022.

• In 2023, from a class 12 political science textbook, a paragraph on the ban on the RSS after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, and Hindu extremists having disliked Gandhi was removed.

• In 2024, the class 12 political science textbook did not mention the Babri Masjid by name, calling it a "three-domed structure". The old book had described the mobilisation on both sides and communal tension, which the revised version left out.

• A revised class 11 political science book (released 2024) stated that vote bank politics in India is associated with "minority appeasement" (not mentioned in old version).

• The new class 6 social science textbook (released 2024) refers to the Harappan civilisation as "Sindhu-Sarasvati" civilisation (unlike the old one) with references to

the "Sarasvati river".

• Part one of the class 8 social science textbook (released 2025) described Babur as a "brutal and ruthless conqueror, slaughtering entire populations of cities", and Akbar's reign as a "blend of brutality and tolerance". The book's history section is preceded by a "note on history's darker periods", which explains the importance of studying these darker developments dispassionately without blaming anyone living today for them.

• In the chapter on the colonial era and resistance to the British, the book skipped mentions of Tipu Sultan, Haidar Ali, and the Anglo-Mysore Wars, unlike the old book.

• Part 2 of the class 7 social science textbook (released 2025) has a larger section on the Mahmud of Ghazni's "destruction and plunder", including the Somnath temple.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM/EXPLAINED

The Indian EXPRESS

JOURNALISM of COURAGE

NEW DELHI, LATE CITY, 28 PAGES

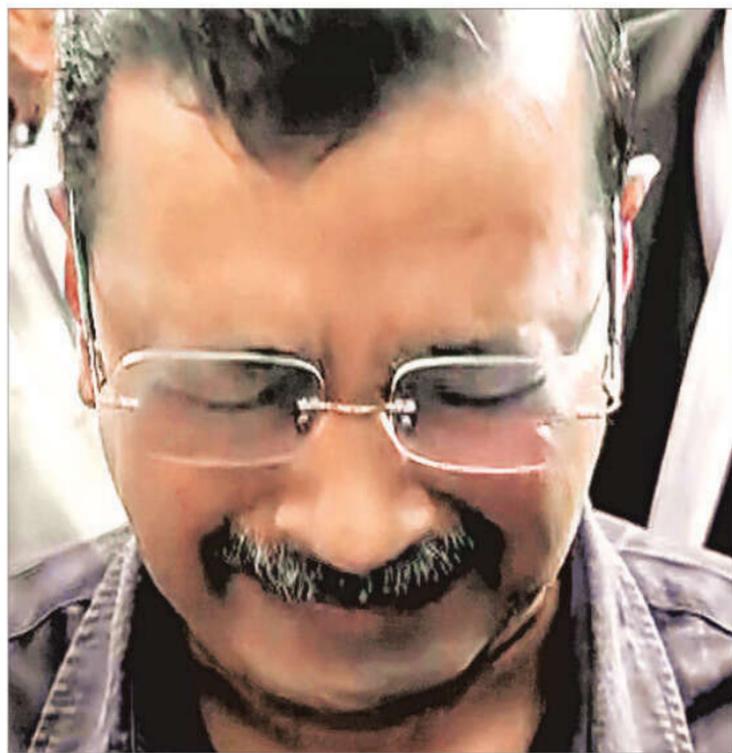
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AGENCY PROBE A CHOREOGRAPHED EXERCISE TO SUIT PRECONCEIVED NARRATIVE: TRIAL COURT JUDGE

Slamming CBI, court throws out its liquor case, discharges Kejriwal, Sisodia, 21 others

“We are honest to the core”



AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal breaks down after the trial court's verdict in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

No overarching plot or criminal intent in policy framing: Court; CBI moves HC

Nirbhay Thakur & Sohini Ghosh
New Delhi, February 27

RULING THAT there was no “overarching conspiracy” or “criminal intent” in the framing of the Delhi excise policy, a Delhi trial court, while strongly indicting the CBI over its probe into the case, Friday discharged AAP leader and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia and 21 others booked for alleged corruption in the matter.

In a 598-page order, Special (CBI) Judge Jitendra Singh of the Rouse Avenue Court said, “To compel the accused to face the rigours of a full-fledged criminal trial in the stark absence of any legally admissible material connecting them to the alleged offences would not serve the ends of justice; it would instead constitute a manifest miscarriage of justice and an abuse of the criminal process, offending the most basic tenets of fairness and the rule of law.”

While the AAP and its leaders hailed the ruling and called it a vindication of their stand, the CBI moved the Delhi High Court, challenging the trial court verdict.

The Judge, in several instances, slammed the CBI over its conduct, the nature of its investigation, and its presentation of evidence. He described the investigation as a “premeditated and choreographed exercise, wherein roles appear to have been retrospectively assigned to suit a preconceived narrative”.

The court raised questions on the course of the investigation, calling it “seemingly driven by the question of who all can be brought within its fold” and “an ever-expanding”

Stand vindicated, Kejriwal dares PM to hold immediate elections in Delhi

Gayathri Mani & Drishti Jain
New Delhi, February 27

HOURS AFTER a trial court discharged him and 22 others in the alleged liquor “scam”, AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal dared Prime Minister Narendra Modi to hold immediate elections in Delhi, and said he would leave politics if the BJP won even 10 of the 70 Assembly seats.

“I challenge you Modiji, if you have the courage, show us”



AAP workers celebrate in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

CBI in the dock: Court calls out ‘abuse,’ says hold officer to account

Amaal Sheikh
New Delhi, February 27

DESCRIBING THE CBI investigation as a “conscious abuse of official position” that struck at the core of the criminal justice system, a Delhi trial court, which Friday discharged AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal and 22 others booked for alleged corruption in the Delhi excise policy case, has recommended departmental proceedings against the Investigating Officer. It ruled that the prosecution of public servants was not supported by evidence.

Special (CBI) Judge Jitendra

Singh of the Rouse Avenue Court said the investigation had crossed the line from flawed inquiry to institutional misconduct, making it necessary to fix accountability beyond merely discharging the accused.

The court said that “the course consistent with the duty of the Court is not merely to discount the tainted investigative material but also to recommend initiation of appropriate departmental proceedings against the erring investigating officer”. This needed to be done “so that accountability is fixed”

Happening today

● EIGHT MORE CHEETAHS will be airlifted from Botswana and brought to Kuno National Park on Saturday.

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

VERDICT VINDICATES KEJRIWAL, AND DUE PROCESS P 10

EXPLAINED

HOW CBI'S CASE FELL APART

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WHAT CBI SAID ABOUT KEJRIWAL AND SISODIA, WHAT TRIAL COURT SAID

JUDICIARY HAS CUT THROUGH WEB OF LIES: KAVITHA AFTER CLEAN CHIT

ECONOMY PAGE 19

NEW GDP SERIES: ECONOMY TO GROW 7.6% IN 2025-26

● FROM COURT, AAP LEADERS RETURN TO KEJRIWAL HOME, FIND FAMILIES WAITING

As Kejriwal wept, Sisodia held him tight: Joy and relief as cloud lifts after months

Drishti Jain
New Delhi, February 27

MINUTES AFTER the special judge passed his order on Friday morning, two men — old friends, colleagues, and ideological fellow travellers — stood outside the court premises. One of them, Arvind Kejriwal, wept; the other, Manish Sisodia, held him tightly.

In the years and months since the allegations about the “liquor scam” began, the two Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders have led their lives in the shadow of prison and court visits, defending themselves against accusations of corruption. On Friday, they had reasons to celebrate the lifting of a cloud.

“A sitting Chief Minister was”



Kejriwal returns home with Manish Sisodia after the verdict. ANI

West Bengal final rolls to be out today, fate of over 60 lakh electors in limbo

Atri Mitra & Damini Nath
Kolkata, February 27



During an SIR hearing in West Bengal. EXPRESS FILE

WITH THE Election Commission set to publish the final electoral roll after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in West Bengal Saturday, lakhs of electors who had earlier been cleared by the statutory authority, the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), are now again facing the possibility of being cut from the rolls because Supreme Court-appointed judicial officers are reviewing the eligibility of 60,06,675 electors, or 8.5% of the total electorate, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Over half a dozen EROs and Assistant EROs, whose responsibility it is to maintain electoral rolls, told *The Indian Ex-*

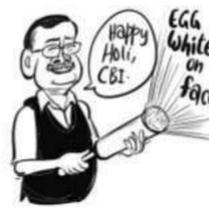
GURUSWAMY, SUPRIYO IN TMC LIST FOR RS PAGE 12

press they found many cases of names which they had cleared, with documents uploaded, »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

‘If foundation crumbles, superstructure must fall’: Collapse of CBI case a big blow to ED probe

Apurva Vishwanath
New Delhi, February 27

Business as Usual
By EP UNNY



THE DELHI trial court's order Friday discharging former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia, along with 21 others, in the CBI case related to the liquor policy is also a blow to the Enforcement Directorate's money laundering probe in the matter.

The Supreme Court's landmark 2022 ruling in *Vijay Madant Lal Choudhary v Union of India* held that once an accused is discharged or acquitted in the predicate offence, the money laundering charge cannot be sustained.

Citing the 2022 ruling, the trial court, in its 598-page order, said “if the foundation crumbles, the superstructure must necessarily fall”.

“The offence under the PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002) is not autonomous in its origin, but is

inextricably linked to the existence of a legally sustainable scheduled offence. The predicate offence constitutes the foundational edifice upon which the allegation of money laundering rests; if the foundation crumbles, the superstructure must necessarily fall,” it said.

The discharge is a shot in the arm for AAP leaders and the »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

‘Open war’: Pak bombs Kabul and Kandahar after strikes by Taliban

Mohammad Yunus Yawar & Asif Shahzad
Kabul, Islamabad, Feb 27



Taliban fighters in Afghanistan's Khost province on Friday. AP

PAKISTAN BOMBED Taliban government forces in Afghanistan's major cities overnight, the first time it has directly targeted its former allies over allegations they are harbouring militants, describing the situation as “open war”.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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PM: Cong can keep tearing clothes, we will continue our work to build India

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, February 27

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Friday came down heavily on the Congress for the shirtless protest by its youth wing members at the AI Impact Summit recently, saying the opposition party can tear as many clothes as it wants, but his government will continue to work for the country's progress.

Addressing the News18 Rising Bharat Summit, Modi also said that the Congress did not just remove its clothes in front of foreign guests but also exposed its intellectual bankruptcy, asserting that the millennials have already taught the country's oldest party a lesson, and now Gen-Z is ready to do the same.

In an apparent jibe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Modi said the opposition was unhappy seeing the statue of "Babar Shers" (lions) installed atop the new Parliament building, but their own "Babbar Shers" were running away after facing the "shoes" of general public.

Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, had said on February 24 that he was proud of the "Babbar Shers" of the Indian Youth Congress, who "fearlessly" raised their voice at the AI Summit.

"Congress ke Babbar Sher logon ki jute kha ke bhaag gaye (The 'lions' of Congress ran away after being hit by shoes by the public)," Modi said.

The prime minister was apparently referring to the protesting Youth Congress workers



PM Narendra Modi at the Bharat Summit in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

being heckled by some people at the AI Summit.

On February 20, a group of Indian Youth Congress (IYC) workers staged a dramatic protest inside Hall No. 5 of the summit venue in Delhi by removing their shirts to reveal T-shirts printed with anti-government slogans, triggering a political slugfest between the BJP and the Congress.

"Congress can tear as many clothes as it wants, but we will continue to work for India's development. Congress not just shed clothes at the AI Summit, it also exposed its incapacities in front of foreign guests," Modi said.

He said the AI Summit was a moment of pride for the entire nation, but Congress attempted to tarnish this national celebration. "When the frustration and despair of failure weigh on the mind, and arrogance makes one's head spin, such a mindset emerges to defame the country," he said.

Shah chairs high-level meet to review security in Bihar border districts



Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union MoS Nityanand Rai and Bihar Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary in Purnea on Friday. PTI

Himanshu Harsh
Patna, February 27

A HIGH-LEVEL meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday reviewed security concerns in districts along the Indo-Nepal border in Bihar, with directions issued to tighten border management, remove encroachments and strengthen financial oversight in the region.

The review focused on illegal constructions near border areas, illegal migration, circulation of Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN), encroachment on No Man's Land, and unauthorised financial flows. The Home Minister directed strict enforcement of a "zero-tolerance" policy against illegal constructions, particularly in forest and uninhabited areas, and ordered the immediate removal of encroachments identified along No Man's Land.

Administrative verification processes were also discussed. After completion of the SIR, authorities will verify all reported death cases through due process. Upon confirmation, deletions and updates will be carried out across official databases, including UID records, driving licences, PAN data and other government documents "to ensure accuracy and prevent misuse".

A door-to-door survey will be conducted to verify individuals reported as migrated but who were absent during verification. Officials said the exercise would ensure that "no genuine voter is erroneously deleted".

Financial compliance along the border districts formed a key component of the review. District Magistrates have been given enhanced responsibility to ensure that all banks, including co-operative banks, comply with RBI norms. Banks have been directed to report high-value cash transactions and ensure PAN linkage with accounts.

SC Collegium announces 'advance transfer' policy for incoming HC CJs

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 27

THE SUPREME COURT Collegium has decided that high court judges slated to take over as Chief Justices of other high courts be transferred "well in advance" so that they have sufficient time to familiarise themselves with the changed circumstances.

The Collegium, presided by CJI Surya Kant, said this in a statement issued after its meeting on Thursday, where it decided to recommend the transfer of Punjab and Haryana HC judge Justice Lisa Gill to Andhra Pradesh HC, where she will take over as Chief Justice upon the retirement of the incumbent Chief

Justice. The Collegium also recommended the appointment of Kerala HC judge Justice S A Dharmadhikari as the Chief Justice of Madras HC.

"The Collegium has taken a policy decision that in order to strengthen the efficiency and quality of administration of justice, a Judge who is proposed to take over the High Court as its Chief Justice may be transferred well in advance, preferably two months before the vacancy arises, so that such recommendation in the meantime becomes well conversant with the affairs of that High Court and assumes charge of the office of Chief Justice, on the retirement of incumbent Chief Justice," the statement said.

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

Kejriwal, Sisodia and 21 others discharged

sweep" to eventually arrest national leaders of the AAP.

And in a rare instance, it also recommended "appropriate departmental proceedings against the erring investigating officer" for "framing A-1 as an accused in the absence of any material against him, so that accountability is fixed and the institutional credibility of the investigative machinery is preserved" - A-1 or the first accused in the case was Kuldeep Singh, a former excise department official.

The court said the case against Singh was "solely on 'inadmissible hearsay attributed to an approver.' It also criticised the executive (the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi) for granting prosecution sanction.

"...the Court finds it difficult to comprehend how, in the admitted absence of incriminating material, these public servants were arrayed as accused, and how sanction for their prosecution came to be accorded despite the lack of any admissible material against A-1 and A-2," it said.

It noted that the CBI's case against the accused rested predominantly on statements of approvers and documents which were inadmissible in law.

"...this Court finds that the entire alleged chain of payments rests predominantly on so-called pauti entries of Angadia firms, documents which are inadmissible in law, and on (an) approver-like statement which remains uncorroborated on material particulars. These infirmities are not peripheral; they strike at the very root of the prosecution case and render it unsustainable even at the threshold stage," the ruling stated.

The Judge said there was an attempt to "stitch together disparate fragments so as to create an impression of a vast and com-

plex conspiracy, unsupported by legally admissible material". He called the investigation "steered by a preconceived outcome rather than by objective evaluation of evidence".

"The investigative trail begins with a campaign-related company, then moves through small vendors and intermediaries, thereafter to angadiyas who admittedly operate organised cash-transfer networks, followed by house owners, hotel operators, political volunteers, contesting candidates, state-level office-bearers, and ultimately the national leadership. This widening arc does not appear to be founded on fresh or independent incriminating material emerging at each stage, but rather on a preconceived assumption of the existence of 'proceeds of crime,' coupled with an apparent attempt to demonstrate that no segment has been left untouched in the purported effort to trace such proceeds," he said.

The corruption case arose out of a report submitted in July 2022 by Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, pointing to alleged procedural lapses in the formulation of the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. The report said "arbitrary and unilateral decisions" taken by Sisodia in his capacity as Excise Minister had resulted in "financial losses to the exchequer" estimated at more than Rs 580 crore. It alleged that "kickbacks... received by the AAP Delhi government and AAP leaders" from owners and operators of alcohol businesses for preferential treatment such as discounts and extensions in licence fee, waiver on penalties and relief due to disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, etc. were used to "in-

fluence" the Assembly elections in Punjab and Goa in early 2022. The policy came into force in November 2021, but was scrapped in July 2022.

Almost all top AAP leaders in Delhi were once behind bars in relation to the excise policy case, including Kejriwal and Sisodia.

The CBI had claimed that Rs 100 crore in "advance kickbacks" was paid by a Hyderabad-based "South Group" to AAP leaders. This money, the agency alleged, was used by the party to fund the election campaigns in Goa and Punjab.

The two main procedural lapses alleged by the CBI were the insertion of a wholesale margin of 12 per cent to allegedly benefit the "South Group" and the enhancement of the turnover eligibility criteria for grant of L-1 licence to Rs 500 crore every year for five years to eliminate competition and favour the group.

The trial court criticised the use of the expression "South Group", which the Judge said could be deemed offensive in certain circumstances.

"What emerges, therefore, is not a transition from a fixed 5% to 12%, but a transition from no cap (with a 5% minimum) to a standardised 12%. The first draft did not prescribe a 5% ceiling; it prescribed only a floor. The second draft replaced a flexible regime with a uniform rate," the Judge said on the first allegation.

He also pointed out various "lapses" such as making some persons who should have been accused in the case as prosecution witnesses and over-reliance on an approver's statement to implicate the accused.

"Individuals who openly acknowledge operating systematic cash-movement syndicates are not proceeded against as ac-

used, but are instead converted into prosecution witnesses. Their largely uncorroborated and self-serving statements are then employed to implicate persons placed progressively higher in the alleged chain," he said.

"An investigation that departs from transparency, consistency, and procedural discipline, particularly by repeatedly re-recording statements of an approver after the grant of pardon without any disclosed justification, does not merely affect evidentiary appreciation, but strikes at the heart of these constitutional and international guarantees," he said, stating that the agency resorted to "repeatedly re-recording" statements of the approver over an extended period, "ostensibly to fill gaps, improve the prosecution narrative, implicate additional accused, or artificially weave missing links in the chain of circumstances".

"The record reveals that the approver, who has been examined on multiple occasions over an extended period of more than 1 year, has come forth with this new allegation only in the course of his later statements," he said.

The trial court also observed that the CBI had strayed into the domain of the Election Commission of India by scrutinising election campaign logistics.

"...the investigation strays into the constitutionally demarcated domain of election expenditure. By scrutinising campaign logistics, accommodation arrangements, political volunteers, and alleged cash payments, the investigating agency, in substance, undertakes a self-conducted audit of election spending. This field falls within the exclusive constitutional jurisdiction of the Election Commission of India," it said.

Blow to ED probe

other accused in the case. While 23 individuals, including Kejriwal and Sisodia, were named as accused in the CBI case, the ED case has 40 accused. Several companies and, in a first-of-its kind move, even the AAP was named as accused in the ED case.

An ED case under the PMLA is often termed both a "standalone" offence and "linked to the predicate offence". Essentially, this means that the ED can begin an inquiry for alleged generation or use of "proceeds of crime" against a person even without a conviction in the predicate offence. The predicate offence can be ongoing or undecided while the ED establishes its case.

In the alleged excise policy scandal, the ED had summoned Kejriwal when he was not even named as an accused in the CBI case, arguing that money laundering is a standalone case. Given that bail conditions under the PMLA are stringent and carry a reverse burden of proof, arrest in ED cases, even when the trial in predicate offence is yet to move, is onerous on the accused.

"It is noticed that, in several cases, the Enforcement Directorate proceeds to file a prosecution complaint primarily to obviate the statutory consequence of default bail, without the investigation in the scheduled offence having attained finality. In such situations, while the proceedings under the PMLA are set in motion, the investigation in the predicate offence continues to remain inconclusive, and in many cases even the filing of a charge-sheet therein is awaited. This Court itself is a witness to a case where the proceedings re-

lating to money laundering have reached the final stage of arguments on charge, whereas, in the predicate offence, the investigation is still underway to determine whether any offence has been committed at all," the trial court said.

However, ED offences are essentially anchored to the predicate offence. It means that the ED case has to necessarily stem from a predicate offence. When a court discharges or acquits the accused, then the ED case cannot be sustained.

According to the 2022 Supreme Court ruling, the ED cannot prosecute any person on "notional basis" or on the assumption that a scheduled offence has been committed, unless it is so registered with the jurisdictional police and/or pending enquiry/trial including by way of criminal complaint before the competent forum. This means the ED case has to necessarily follow a predicate offence case. Therefore, as a corollary, once the predicate offence goes, the ED case also must go.

In the ruling, the Supreme Court stated that "if the person is finally discharged/acquitted of the scheduled offence or the criminal case against him is quashed by the Court of competent jurisdiction, there can be no offence of money-laundering against him or anyone claiming such property, being the property linked to the stated scheduled offence through him".

Following the trial court ruling Friday, the CBI also moved an appeal in the High Court against the judgment. Unless the trial court order discharging the accused is stayed, the ED case cannot continue.

CBI in the dock: Court calls out 'abuse'

and the institutional credibility of the investigative machinery is preserved".

The observation followed a sequence of adverse findings against the IO's conduct. The court described the investigation as a "pre-meditated and choreographed exercise, wherein roles appear to have been retrospectively assigned to suit a preconceived narrative," noting that public officials were prosecuted "solely on the basis of inadmissible hearsay attributed to an approver".

The judge noted that the officials concerned were carrying out routine administrative responsibilities "under extraordinary pressure, often at personal risk" during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Criticising what it termed "anticipatory manipulation", the court found that individuals

were simultaneously kept in the column of suspects while also being presented as prosecution witnesses, a "conscious and calculated stratagem" designed to protect the investigation if the case failed.

"Such a course of action reduces the investigative process to a self-serving exercise, where legal technicalities are invoked not to uncover the truth, but to shield investigative lapses and to construct a post-facto defence in the event that suppression or distortion of material facts is exposed during judicial scrutiny," the order stated.

Allowing such conduct to pass without consequence, the court said, would erode public confidence and amount to "tacit judicial approval of investigative impropriety, an outcome which the rule of law does not permit".

As Kejriwal wept, Sisodia held him tight

thrown into jail, all manner of dirt was thrown on us, participants in television debates would say 'Kejriwal is corrupt,' Kejriwal told reporters.

But "Kejriwal bhrasht nahin hai, Kejriwal kattar imaandaar hai", he said - Kejriwal is not corrupt; he is uncompromisingly honest.

From the court, the two leaders travelled to Kejriwal's residence on Firoz Shah Road, where his wife, Sunita Kejriwal was waiting along with their two children. Soon, Sisodia's wife Seema joined them.

Videos of Kejriwal's arrival showed Sunita, a former government officer, rushing forward as the car entered the gate. She cupped her husband's face and embraced him. Their two children hugged the former CM and Sisodia before all of them walked into the house.

"First of all, I would like to thank God. Arvindji has led his whole life with honesty, only with a vision for the country's progress. A few power-hungry people put false allegations on us, sent these leaders to jail, and tormented us," Sunita told reporters.

While Kejriwal was put in Tihar jail for more than five months before he was given bail by the Supreme Court in 2024, Sisodia, who was the first AAP leader to be arrested for the alleged scam, spent 17 months behind bars from February 2023 to August 2024.

As evening came closer, the

Hold poll: Kejriwal

by holding elections in Delhi today. If you win more than 10 seats, I will leave politics. The people of Delhi are fed up with you," the former Chief Minister said at a press conference at the AAP headquarters.

Flanked by his colleagues Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh, Durgesh Pathak, and Saurabh Bhardwaj, he said: "The BJP has used the words 'sharaabghotala' (liquor scam) a lot over the last four years... But our judicial system has passed a historic judgment today. I thank Judge Sahib for showing courage in an environment in which all institutions and authorities are being intimidated... The judge has shown great courage in delivering this justice."

"The CBI and ED were used to frame us in the so-called liquor scam," Kejriwal said. He directly accused the Prime Minister and Home Minister Amit Shah of hatching a conspiracy to "destroy the AAP", and asked both of them to apologise to the entire country.

"Together, they... orchestrated the most useless and false conspiracy in independent India. They saw that they could not defeat us in Delhi and that they would not be able to stand in front of our government in Delhi, so they hatched this conspiracy... The BJP started saying that Kejriwal is dishonest, Kejriwal committed the liquor scam, Kejriwal ate Rs 100 crore..." he said.

"I have only earned honesty in life, I have earned respect, I

have not [fraudulently] made a single penny... I am not like these people. They wanted to put an end to that honesty... But today, after the court order, it has been proven that Kejriwal is a staunchly honest man; Sisodia, Durgesh, Sanjay Singh, AAP are staunchly honest," he said.

"I want to tell Modi ji... you could not harm Kejriwal," he said, adding that the Prime Minister could try to emulate and surpass the achievements of the AAP government. He said the Centre would not do so.

Delhi under the BJP was facing an unprecedented crisis of road conditions, hospital infrastructure, water scarcity, and pollution, he alleged. "Tell me one thing they (BJP) have done... They made the city hell... For their lust for power, the people of Delhi are suffering..."

He predicted that the ED's case would also fall. "The ED case is over. The ED's case is based on the CBI's case... We will file an application next week, and that case will also be over," Kejriwal said.

Kejriwal said that he had not "disappeared" after AAP was defeated in the Assembly elections a year ago - he had only decided that he would "remain silent" until he was proven innocent. "Today, I feel that a heavy weight has been lifted from my heart... I feel light," he said.

Kejriwal also responded to the Congress's allegation that the BJP had helped him get relief. "Kejriwal went to jail. Did Robert

Vadra go to jail? Sanjay Singh went to jail. Did Rahul Gandhi go to jail, Sonia Gandhi...? Congressmen have no shame," he said.

Earlier, in the day, Kejriwal broke down while speaking to reporters outside Rouse Avenue Court, saying, "They threw mud on us, saying Kejriwal is corrupt. There used to be debates 24 hours on television about me and members of my party. Kejriwal bhrasht nahin hai (Kejriwal is not corrupt). I have only earned honesty through my hard work in my life and this has been proven today," he said.

"They made false cases against me, saying Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia are corrupt. But the court proved that Kejriwal, Sisodia, and AAP are kattar imaandaar (staunchly honest), they came to power by only doing good and hard work. Putting us in jail with false cases does not benefit the Prime Minister..." Kejriwal said.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva alleged that Kejriwal and Sisodia were involved in destroying evidence. "He is corrupt... The people of Delhi had already delivered their verdict by removing him from power," Sachdeva said.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta accused Kejriwal of shedding fake tears.

"The verdict delivered by the trial court is... a part of the legal process. The court... referred to a lack of evidence. Insufficient evidence and being completely innocent are two different things. The legal process is not yet complete, and the matter may go to the High Court," she said in a statement.

Bengal final rolls

being "reversed" and sent for review after the EC's micro-observers flagged certain discrepancies.

This number jumped around the last day of hearings held by EROs/AEROs, which was February 14. According to some estimates by officials, the number jumped from a few lakhs to over 60 lakh.

One ERO said the work of collecting enumeration forms and uploading had been done meticulously in the first phase of the SIR in November-December. "The micro-observers were present during the hearings. It was only February 11 onward that they started sending back the cases we had approved for inclusion in the final roll," the ERO said.

This, even as the February 14 deadline for hearings was approaching. The ERO said this left them with no time to address the shortcomings, if any,

in the documents uploaded by them. On February 14, the ERO's log-in on the EC's ECINET platform, through ERO-NET, stopped showing the option to upload documents, the ERO said. Among the electors approved by the ERO and returned by the micro-observer was a serving senior IAS officer, it is learnt.

Another ERO said the micro-observers in the constituency had not raised any concerns during the hearing phase, but had later sent back thousands of the names for review through ECINET.

Now, as 530 judicial officers from West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand have been tasked with reviewing the documents uploaded for these 60 lakh electors, the EROs and the electors concerned are in the dark.

"When I do not know how many electors of my AC (Assembly Constituency) are

pending with the judicial officer, what will the voter know," the ERO asked, adding that the EROs were now no longer involved in the process. The ERO's log-in, too, no longer showed the pending cases and decisions taken.

As per the Supreme Court order, 530 judges have started working this week to decide whether these voters can be restored to the rolls or are to be deleted.

Official data accessed by The Indian Express shows that the highest number of cases pending adjudication are in the minority-dominated Murshidabad district (11 lakh), followed by Malda (8.28 lakh), South 24 Parganas (5.22 lakh) and North 24 Parganas (5 lakh). Jhargram and Kalimpong had the fewest pending cases at 6,682 and 6,790 cases, respectively.

Until their names are cleared by the judicial officers, these 60 lakh electors will not be able to cast their votes in the soon-to-be-announced Assem-

bly elections, officials said.

The final roll will include their names but with the remark "under adjudication", which will only be removed in subsequent supplementary lists if the judicial officers reviewing the cases approve them.

The EC, which announced the SIR for the whole country on June 24 last year, has carried out the exercise in 13 states/UTs so far including West Bengal, but a series of unprecedented decisions have played out in the state.

Asked about the West Bengal situation, Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal said: "A very uncertain environment was created because of which people repeatedly went to the apex court. This has led to the precedent being created of judicial officers being appointed for the revision."

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is among the petitioners who have challenged the SIR order in the Supreme Court.

2 held for teen's murder near Majlis Park Metro

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 27

TWO MEN have been arrested in connection with the murder of a 17-year-old boy near Majlis Park Metro station earlier this month, police said.

Officers termed it a "pre-meditated act of revenge" linked to a case of murder in which the teenager was an accused. According to the police, a call was received on February 12 at Adarsh Nagar police station regarding a fire and a child's body found near the Majlis Park metro station's park-

ing lot. Officers reached the spot and found a charred body. The body was subsequently identified by his family members.

His sister told police that he had earlier been sent to a juvenile home in connection with a 2025 murder and released on bail on January 31. She alleged that he had been receiving threats from a neighbour of the victim, police said. She said the teen had left home on February 11 and did not return, they said. An FIR was registered.

On February 17, the police received a tip-off regarding one of the accused and arrested

him. "During questioning, he told police that he, along with another man, was involved in the teen's murder. The second accused was subsequently arrested," said DCP (Northwest), Bhisam Singh.

The police found that the teen and his friends had allegedly stabbed to death a neighbour of one of the accused in August last year. "The 2025 murder victim was returning from work when the teen and his friends had been allegedly drinking. He told the boys not to make a ruckus... Furious, the boy and his friends stabbed the man sev-

eral times," a senior officer said.

Months later, after the teen was released on bail, the two accused convinced him to drink with them. "On the night of February 11, while drinking, the teen allegedly confessed to his involvement in the man's murder in 2025 and further revealed his intention to eliminate one of the accused men too. Enraged, Gaurav hatched a plot to kill him," said DCP Singh.

Officers said the accused allegedly hit the boy repeatedly on the head with a stone and poured petrol on his body and set it on fire to destroy evidence.

NITISH KATARA MURDER CASE

SC orders Vikas Yadav's release on furlough for family time on Holi

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 27

THE SUPREME COURT Friday ordered the release of Nitish Katara murder case convict Vikas Yadav on furlough after he requested temporary release to spend time with family on Holi.

A bench of Justice M M Sundresh and Vipul M Pancholi permitted the grant of furlough from February 28 to March 7. The court asked him to report back to the concerned prison authorities at or before 5 pm on March 7. The order pointed out that it was a case where the petitioner has been under incarceration for 23 years without the grant of remission, pursuant to the judgment rendered by the Delhi High Court, by which he was sentenced to undergo life imprisonment, which included actual imprisonment for 25 years without remission.

The bench made it clear that it had not gone into the merits of the case.

The interim order came on an appeal filed by Yadav, challenging the February 11 HC order upholding the decision of the jail authorities to reject his application for furlough.

"The petitioner is statutorily ineligible for furlough under the Delhi Prison Rules, 2018, as amended in 2020 and, in any event, does not merit discretionary relief in the facts and circumstances of the case," the HC had said.

Appearing for Yadav, senior advocate S Gurukrishna Kumar said Yadav had already undergone more than 23 years of imprisonment and that he was

given interim bail even earlier, for his mother's treatment and for his marriage.

"In the earlier round, when interim bail was granted, I got married on September 5. Now, Holi is approaching. I am seeking two to three days of interim furlough," Kumar said on behalf of Yadav. He added that every prisoner is entitled to three furloughs and Yadav had got none so far.

Advocate Vrinda Bhandari, appearing for Nitish's mother Neelam Katara, opposed the request for furlough, saying Yadav was not entitled to any relief as per Delhi Prison Rules.

Justice Sundresh then asked, "You want to hang him?" "After 23 years, you don't want to let things go... We need to let things go. Our biggest problem in life is, we don't let things go," he added.

Recalling his tenure in the Madras High Court, the judge observed that giving such reliefs can sometimes help reform the prisoner. He said that he had then granted furlough to convicts who were sentenced to life imprisonment in a bomb blast case. "After the furlough period ended and they returned to prison, their behaviour had changed. Over time, they developed a sense of remorse," he added.

Vikas Yadav, son of former MP D P Yadav, his cousin Vishal Yadav and their aide Sukhdev Pehalwan were convicted for the 2002 abduction and murder of Nitish, a business executive. They were upset over Nitish's relation with Vikas's sister Bharti.



CM Rekha Gupta flagged off the service in New Delhi, Friday. AMIT MEHRA

Now, you can hop on a double-decker bus to see Capital's landmarks

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 27

AIMED AT boosting tourism in the Capital, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday flagged off an electric double-decker bus service that will run on a fixed route connecting key landmarks in Central Delhi.

The service 'Dekho Meri Dilli' will be operated under a public-private partnership with the Hinduja Group.

The 63-seater bus will begin daily operations from Delhi Haat at 9 am. Fitted with modern amenities and safety systems, the bus has a panoramic upper deck designed to provide an open view of the landmarks.

After the launch, Gupta and Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra travelled on the bus from Rafi Marg via India Gate, Akbar Road and Teen Murti Marg to the Prime Minister's Museum.

The proposed tourism circuit will start from Delhi Haat, and cover Vijay Chowk, Rashtrapati Bhavan, North Block, South Block, National Museum, National Gallery of Modern Art, Prime Ministers' Museum, National War Memorial and India Gate before returning to the starting point.

The fare has been fixed at Rs 500, plus 5% GST. For children

in the 5-10 age group, the fare will be Rs 300, plus 5% GST. Children below five can travel free.

Officials said tickets can be booked online via the Delhi Tourism website. Tickets will also be on sale at designated counters, including the Central Reservation Office and I-Centre at Baba Kharak Singh Marg, IGI Airport Terminal 1, Transport Office at West Kidwai Nagar, and counters near Delhi Haat.

Gupta said the initiative is aimed at strengthening Delhi's position as a tourism destination. Referring to the Prime Minister's call for 'Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi', she said the government is working to balance modern infrastructure with the preservation of heritage. "The zero-emission bus would support clean mobility and reduce carbon emissions," said the Chief Minister.

Two double-decker buses are planned to be made operational as part of the initiative, officials said. The launch marks a revival of a format once familiar to Delhiites, as double-decker buses were earlier operated by the Delhi Transport Corporation as 'Suvidha' services before being phased out in 1989 due to the withdrawal of an ageing fleet.

RELIEF LIBERTY ON PAPER, JAIL IN REALITY: JNUSU

14 JNU students arrested, released on bail hours later

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 27

HOURS AFTER Delhi Police arrested 14 Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) students after halting a march towards the Ministry of Education on Thursday evening, the Patiala House court on Friday released them on bail.

They were released against a bail bond of Rs 25,000. Teachers affiliated to the JNU Teachers' Association (JNUTA) will be depositing the surety on behalf of the arrested students. While granting bail, Patiala House court duty magistrate Animesh Kumar noted that while "allegations against the accused persons are serious in nature" where around 27 policemen sustained injuries, the offences they are accused of entail a maximum punishment of five years' imprisonment, which "cannot be ignored".

"The accused persons are students and not habitual offenders. They have their entire career lying ahead," the court reasoned, while ordering for their release.

Notably, the court also recorded that MLAs of some of the accused persons reported injuries sustained by them and following an inquiry from the court, the students submitted that they were "dragged and assaulted by police officers".

Those arrested included former JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) president Nitish Kumar, its current president Aditi Mishra, vice-president Kizhakoot Gopika Babu, and joint secretary Danish Ali.

The JNUSU, however, described the bail relief as "liberty on paper but jail in reality". In a statement, it said the bail conditions require verification of the students' permanent addresses before release — a process it argued could delay their



Police barricades erected after the protest, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

freedom because most of them are from outside Delhi. It said pleas to allow the students to appear daily before the investigating officer until verification was completed were not entertained.

"Since all of the students are originally from out of Delhi, hence, the process of verification itself becomes the process of elongating the imprisonment," the statement said. It also claimed that several students had suffered injuries during the protest and that the upcoming court holidays would further slow the process.

The union contended that the very grant of bail suggested that the grounds of arrest were "flawed" and "politically motivated," and that imposing stringent conditions had "turned justice into its own travesty."

According to the police, 51 protesters were detained on Thursday after clashes broke out near the university's North Gate when students attempted to march despite being denied permission to hold a protest outside the campus.

According to officials, the university administration had informed students that no permission had been granted for a protest outside the campus

grounds and had asked them to restrict any demonstration to university premises. Despite this, they said, about 400 to 500 students gathered around 3:20 p.m. and began moving towards the gate.

In a statement, the police said that barricades were damaged and that the protest turned "violent". Some protesters allegedly hurled banners, sticks and shoes; while a few "went to the extent of physically assaulting by biting" police personnel, the statement added. Several officers were injured, police said.

The protesters were eventually pushed back inside the campus, police said. "Protestors were detained, who had become violent & did not obey lawful orders," the statement said.

Late on Thursday night, Vasant Kunj North police registered an FIR under Sections 221 (voluntarily obstructing a public servant in the discharge of official duties), 121(1) (voluntarily causing hurt to deter a public servant from performing duty), 132 (assault or use of criminal force to prevent a public servant from carrying out official work) and 3(5) (common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Protest at India AI Impact Summit: 3 more Youth Congress members held

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 27

THREE MORE Indian Youth Congress (IYC) members were arrested in connection with a 'shirtless' protest at India AI Impact Summit, police said Friday.

The accused were identified as Divyansh Girdhar from Delhi, Kubeer Meena from Rajasthan and Bhuvdev Sharma from Madhya Pradesh, police said.

An officer said that Divyansh and Kubeer were allegedly present in the protest at Bharat Mandapam on February 20, while Bhuvdev was among the conspirators.

The latest arrests take the total number of arrests in the case to 14, the officer said.

The Delhi Police is also examining the financial trail behind the protest staged during the high-profile summit, of-ficers said.

Police suspect that funds originally collected for the 2025 Bihar elections may have been diverted for the demonstration. One of the accused, Krishna Hari, secretary of Indian Youth Congress' Bihar unit, allegedly received sums ranging from Rs 40,000 to Rs 1,00,000 on various occasions, police said.

"Questioning has indicated that the money may have been unused funds of the recent elections in Bihar. We are examining bank accounts and the possible money trail further to establish this," the officer said.

Accounts associated with the Youth Congress have also come under scrutiny as investigators track how and when the money was spent.

According to the police, nearly Rs 35,000 was allegedly used for logistics, including printing T-shirts and placards. Printed umbrellas were also allegedly prepared, but those remained unused.

Of the 14 people arrested so far, three — identified as Arbaz Ahmed Khan, Saurabh and Siddhartha — were brought to Delhi from Himachal Pradesh on Thursday on transit remand following a stand-off with the Shimla Police.

Couple who sold same flat to multiple buyers arrested

New Delhi: A man and his wife have been arrested in Greater Noida for allegedly selling the same flat to multiple buyers, officers of the Delhi police said.

Two cases of cheating were registered against them last year, police said, adding that the woman had been declared a proclaimed offender last September by a Dwarka court in connection with one of the cases. Her anticipatory bail plea had also been dismissed earlier, police said.

The accused were identified as Naresh Kumar Sikri (57), a loan agent, and his wife Sharda Sikri (55), residents of Dwarka

Sector 9, police said. They allegedly executed multiple agreements to sell the same flat, collecting money from several buyers without completing the sale process.

"During investigation, it emerged that the accused had mortgaged their flat and to arrange funds to settle bank dues, they allegedly began entering into sale agreements with different buyers and collecting money," said DCP (Dwarka) Ankit Singh.

Police also said the accused are suspected to have collected Rs 2-2.5 crore through the alleged fraud. ENS

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CHIEF SECRETARY submits report to L-G, alleging procedural lapses in implementation of Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22

MANISH SISODIA, then Deputy CM, says govt will revert to the old excise policy (2020-21)

CBI FILES its first chargesheet, names 7

CBI ARRESTS Sisodia under Prevention of Corruption Act

ED ARRESTS AAP MP Sanjay Singh

LIQUOR POLICY CASE TIMELINE

ED ARRESTS Kejriwal, then Delhi CM, on money laundering charges

KEJRIWAL SURRENDERS in Bihar after interim bail period ends

HC STAYS lower court's bail order

SC GRANTS bail to Kejriwal

L-G WRITES to MHA, recommending CBI probe

AAP COMMUNICATIONS in-charge Vijay Nair arrested

ED FILES first prosecution complaint

ED ARRESTS Sisodia in money laundering probe in excise case

SC DENIES bail to Sisodia in CBI and ED cases

SANJAY SINGH gets bail from SC

KEJRIWAL GRANTED interim bail by SC for Lok Sabha election campaigning in Delhi till June 1

KEJRIWAL GETS regular bail from Rouse Avenue Court

CBI ARRESTS Arvind Kejriwal

KEJRIWAL GRANTED interim bail by SC in ED case

SC GRANTS bail to Sisodia in ED and CBI cases

2022
JULY 8 JULY 22 JULY 30 SEPT 28 NOV 24 NOV 26

2023
FEB 26 MARCH 9 OCT 4 OCT 10

2024
MARCH 21 APRIL 2 MAY 10 JUNE 2 JUNE 20 JUNE 25 JUNE 26 JULY 12 AUG 9 SEPT 13

How CBI case collapsed, point by point



Arvind Kejriwal during a roadshow after the court's verdict, in New Delhi on Friday. AMIT MEHRA

Kejriwal role as 'apex controller' built on a single witness statement; doesn't meet the required legal standard: Court

Amaal Sheikh
New Delhi, February 27

WHILE DISCHARGING former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the Delhi excise policy case, the court on Friday held that CBI failed to produce legally sustainable evidence connecting him to the alleged conspiracy behind the policy.

In its order, the special judge said that the allegations portraying Kejriwal as the "apex controller" of the conspiracy were built almost entirely on a single witness statement that neither disclosed a criminal act nor met the legal standard required to even frame the charges.

CHARGE: The CBI alleged that as CM, Kejriwal exercised "over-arching control" over the policy's formulation and implementation and approved it with knowledge that it would confer "undue pecuniary advantage" on private liquor interests linked to the "South group". It claimed that his direct involvement stemmed from a brief meeting in March 2021, described by liquor businessman Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy, who claimed Kejriwal encouraged business participation in Delhi and suggested political funding.

COURT OBSERVED: The court found that this allegation, which also formed the foundation of the prosecution's case, did not stand. "The statement relied upon, when read in isolation, does not, on its plain terms, attribute any overtly illegal act. It does not, by itself, disclose the commission of an



Arvind Kejriwal with Manish Sisodia on Friday. ANI

offence or an agreement to commit one," the order stated.

The court noted that Kejriwal's alleged role appeared only late in the probe, in the fourth supplementary chargesheet.

A central weakness identified by the court was the nature of the prosecution's main witness itself. Reddy, a liquor businessman from South India, wanted to expand his business in Delhi. He allegedly negotiated and paid "upfront money" to AAP and its intermediaries to secure favourable positions in Delhi's liquor market.

Under criminal law, the court said, testimony from a participant in an alleged offence cannot be accepted at face value unless it is independently verified. The judge noted that Reddy's account was effectively that of an "accomplice-like" witness, someone whose own statement disclosed participation in the very transaction the prosecution described as conspiratorial.

Such witnesses are treated as unreliable because their testimony is self-incriminating. While Section 133 of the Indian Evidence Act permits reliance on accomplice evidence, Section 114 embodies a settled rule of prudence: an accomplice is presumed unworthy of credit unless corroborated in material particulars by independent evidence. The court found that the prosecution had produced no such corroboration.

The CBI attempted to rely on the statement of Reddy's son, approver Raghav Magunta, but the court rejected

this outright, noting that Magunta "does not claim to have personally witnessed the alleged meeting... his version... is hearsay and cannot constitute independent corroboration".

Reiterating law that tainted evidence cannot validate similarly tainted testimony, the judge added: "One accomplice cannot corroborate another."

Since the son's knowledge flowed entirely from what his father allegedly told him, the court held that the prosecution was attempting to reinforce one compromised account with another of the same legal character something criminal jurisprudence does not permit.

CHARGE: Kejriwal attended conspiratorial meetings or had knowledge of unlawful arrangements.

COURT OBSERVED: The court said that while Reddy had said that 10-12 persons were present during the alleged meeting with Kejriwal, none of them was examined. The judge called this a "serious gap". The court found no record placing Kejriwal in conspiratorial meetings or showing knowledge of unlawful arrangements.

CHARGE: CBI's key approver Dinesh Arora claimed knowledge of alleged fund flows.

COURT OBSERVED: The order highlighted that Arora never implicated Kejriwal. "There appears no reason why, if any involvement of [Kejriwal] existed within his knowledge, the same would not have been disclosed," it observed.

'Prosecution hasn't produced single recovery or financial trail linking Sisodia with alleged transfer of funds'

Amaal Sheikh
New Delhi, February 27

A DELHI court on Friday discharged former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in the Delhi excise policy case, holding that the material placed by the CBI does not disclose even a prima facie case that he manipulated the policy or participated in a criminal conspiracy.

CHARGE: Sisodia was "principal architect and controlling force behind the alleged conspiracy".

COURT OBSERVED: Documentary record reflected a policy that was framed through institutional consultation rather than unilateral decision-making. In its order, the special judge noted that an excise policy is not framed by a single authority but moved through multiple administrative and constitutional stages, including departmental examination, Cabinet approval and interaction with the L-G's office. "The attribution of criminal intent to a policy decision... must be tested against this collective and layered decision making process," it observed.

CHARGE: Relying on three policy drafts from March 2021, CBI alleged that recommendations of an expert committee were ignored to introduce provisions such as a 12% wholesale margin, relaxed eligibility conditions and changes in licensing.

COURT OBSERVED: Examining file notings and committee reports, the court said that the material instead showed "structured deliberation and administrative refinement". What emerges is a process of policy evolution marked by "continuity, consultation and institutional engagement".

On the central allegation of the increase in wholesale mar-



Manish Sisodia at his residence on Friday night. AMIT MEHRA

gins, the court said that the change replaced an uncapped system with a uniform rate. "A policy that replaces an uncapped negotiable margin with a fixed standard cannot, on its face, be said to enlarge the scope for windfall accumulation," it said.

CHARGE: The CBI alleged that Sisodia falsely attributed several policy suggestions to the L-G.

COURT OBSERVED: The court relied on contemporaneous records and witness statements to conclude that the file reflected consultation at multiple levels. "The official record reflects consultation, communication and institutional concurrence at the highest executive level," it said, adding that a conspiracy theory based on "misattribution of inputs" could not stand when official documents showed "shared deliberation."

CHARGE: Adverse legal opinions suppressed through removal of a Cabinet note.

COURT OBSERVED: The court said suppression could not be inferred without proof of intentional concealment. "The allega-

tion of removal cannot rest on conjecture. There must be material to indicate conscious and intentional suppression," it said, noting that the substance of legal opinions was later incorporated into subsequent documents.

CHARGE: Illegal gratification of Rs 90-100 crore was generated through intermediaries.

COURT OBSERVED: The court recorded that no financial trail linked Sisodia to any payment. "The prosecution has not produced a single recovery, document or financial trail linking him with the alleged transfer of funds. The allegation of monetary exchange remains unsubstantiated so far as he is concerned," it said. Attempts to also connect him through the co-accused, Vijay Nair, were "inferred rather than demonstrated", it added.

CHARGE: Fabricated public consultation emails were used to justify policy changes.

COURT OBSERVED: The court noted that only six emails out of more than 14,000 were questioned and none were shown to have been directed by Sisodia.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS: The bench pointed to what it described as a "structural inconsistency" in the prosecution's case - either official records showing consultations were genuine, weakening allegations of concealment, or the records themselves were fabricated, a claim neither pleaded nor supported by evidence.

It also noted that the prosecution's case relied on a selective reading of records. "The allegations... do not generate grave suspicion warranting trial," it said, adding that the "edifice of conspiracy... stands dismantled when the documents are read as a whole".

Court: Actions by firms named as beneficiaries, accused were legitimate

Nirbhay Thakur
New Delhi, February 27

INDISCHARGING former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and 22 others in the corruption case linked to the alleged excise policy scam, a Delhi trial court said on Friday that private companies lawfully earning profits or securing commercial advantages within a policy framework cannot be criminalised unless the material discloses clear elements of fraud, bribery, or statutory breach.

The court concluded that the actions by companies named as accused or "beneficiaries" in the case were either legitimate commercial transactions or permitted under the regulatory framework.

The two key allegations made by the prosecution were that the company M/S Indospirits was structured to represent the "South Group" and used as a vehicle to recoup "upfront money".

This, the CBI said, was done by inserting a wholesale margin of 12% (raised from 5%) and by enhancing the turnover eligibility criteria for grant of L-1 licence to Rs 500 crore every year for five years to eliminate competition and favour the group. This money, the agency alleged, was used by the party to fund its 2022 Assembly election campaigns in Goa and Punjab.

The CBI had also alleged that 61% of its profits were il-

legally transferred to an accused, Hyderabad-based businessman Arun Ramchandra Pillai, as proceeds of crime.

However, the court said that the policy could not have favoured the company since its own revenue could not have matched the threshold of the policy requirement.

"The very entity alleged to be beneficiaries of the conspiracy, M/S Indospirit, were themselves confronted with difficulty in meeting the turnover requirement... If the prosecution theory is that the eligibility threshold was deliberately raised to eliminate competitors and secure advantage for conspirators, the fact that the alleged conspirators themselves faced disqualification on the very same turnover condition introduces a serious inconsistency. A clause that renders the supposed beneficiaries ineligible cannot, on its face, be described as a provision crafted exclusively for their benefit," the court said.

It further said that the transition was not from a fixed 5% to 12%, but from a 5% minimum to a standardised 12%. "The first draft did not prescribe a 5% ceiling; it prescribed only a floor. The second draft replaced a flexible regime with a uniform rate. It is also of significance that the investigating agency has not alleged manipulation in the first draft," the Judge said.

AAP's next steps: A mega rally, 'national role' for Kejriwal



EXPRESS interview SAURABH BHARDWAJ AAP DELHI PRESIDENT

RIDING ON what he calls a historic verdict for party chief Arvind Kejriwal, AAP Delhi chief Saurabh Bhardwaj tells Gayathri Mani about the party's plans, beginning with a mega rally at Jantar Mantar on March 1, and how will the court order strengthen AAP.

What is the plan ahead?

On March 1, AAP is going to hold a mega rally at Jantar Mantar, in which our supporters will bless us and Arvind Kejriwal. The doctors and nurses who were removed from Mohalla Clinics and 10,000 bus marshals (who lost their jobs) will also join the rally. Kejriwal ji, along with senior leaders like Manish Sisodia, will raise issues on behalf of the conductors, bus marshals, doctors and pharmacists who will be coming wearing their uniforms.

Will Arvind Kejriwal now be more visible in Delhi?

I think you will see Arvind Kejriwal more active in national politics now. It's too early for Delhi (polls), so there's plenty of time left... The shoes

(Delhi CM) Rekha Gupta has to fill is huge.

How this verdict will strengthen the party?

The verdict matters a lot to the party cadre. It will definitely have an impact... Today, you can count on your fingers how many leaders can say that they are honest. There are some people who think that many leaders, councillors and workers, who used to ride a cycle earlier, have now started wearing coat and pant, their children are going to English medium schools and they are driving Defender and Fortuner.

But there are some people who know that he (Kejriwal) was an IRS officer, an IITian and even today, he is coming out of jail for the sake of people... BJP hatched a conspiracy on your credibility, which was your strength, and caused a dent... and did it very successfully.

Now, after this verdict, he has a larger than life image. People are spreading the word that this man has passed the test, he has returned after serving time in jail.

'Holi has come early': AAP Delhi office erupts in celebrations

Drishiti Jain
New Delhi, February 27

REDUCED TO a spectre of its former self since it was routed in the 2025 Delhi Assembly polls, the AAP found a reason to cheer on Friday after a Delhi court discharged party leaders Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia, along with 21 others, in the CBI's corruption case linked to the alleged excise policy "scam".

Right after the court order, party supporters thronged to the AAP office to celebrate,

raising slogans of 'jeet gaye bhai jeet gaye, aap aadmi jeet gaye (we won brother, we won, the common man has won)'. "Kejriwal zindabad" and "Aam Aadmi Party zindabad".

Holi has arrived early for the party, said supporters who smeared colours on Kejriwal's poster and each other while dancing to the beats of bands and dhols.

"The case was nothing from the start. It was written in the office of the BJP only because



At AAP's office in Delhi on Friday. AMIT MEHRA

they wanted to stop Arvind Kejriwal, because he was making new-age policies of giving free bus rides to women to empower them..." said AAP's chief national spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar.

Party worker and supporter Meena Salwan hailed the order as a boost to the party.

"Today is the victory of truth. The present party [BJP] had promised that it would give Rs 2,500 [to women] on March 8 [last year] when it won, but who has received it? The pres-

ent party just makes false statements like they made against Kejriwal, but the truth always comes out," she said.

AAP's OBC wing state president, Sita Sharan, said the court order has imbued a wave of happiness and trust among the party and its supporters.

"For us, Holi started today. Everyone is calling out the BJP... despite heavy allegations, it could not shake the AAP... Every member of the party now has new energy to work," he said.



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NEW PARTY, NO TRUCE WITH KCR FAMILY: FORMER BRS MLC CHARTS HER NEXT STEPS

Judiciary has cut through web of lies: Kavitha after clean chit

Nikhila Henry
Hyderabad, February 27

WITH A Delhi court exonerating her in the alleged liquor policy case, former Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLC Kavitha now finds herself at a political crossroads yet again, months ahead of the launch of her new party. “*Satyameva Jayate*,” Kavitha said shortly after the order. “The judiciary has cut through the web of lies,” she said at a press conference in Hyderabad, adding: “Who will be held accountable for the time I lost when I was in jail?”

The daughter of former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, Kavitha had been accused of being a key member of the alleged “South Group” that orchestrated the payment of Rs 100 crore to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in exchange for liquor licences under the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy. She spent a little over five months in prison before being granted bail.

Those close to her say the stint in jail marked a turning point in her life. “The case was politically motivated to target then Telangana CM KCR but it was Kavitha who went to jail. This seems to have changed her internally,” a source said.

After her release, Kavitha largely focused on grassroots meetings through her NGO, Telangana Jagruthi. In April 2025, she wrote to her father saying he “should have targeted the BJP more” during his speech at the BRS silver jubilee meeting in El-kathurthy. “I am saying this perhaps because I was the one who suffered the most (under BJP),” she wrote in a letter, which was later “leaked”.

The episode deepened rifts within the family as Kavitha publicly criticised her brother, K T Rama Rao, and cousin T Harish Rao saying, “KCR is like god but he is surrounded by demons.” She was issued a show-cause notice for anti-party remarks and subsequently resigned from the primary



K Kavitha celebrates the court verdict, in Hyderabad on Friday. PTI

membership of the BRS.

Earlier this month, she announced plans to float her own party and is expected to launch it in May. Kavitha has also said she intends to field candidates in the Greater Hyderabad municipal elections, the dates for which are yet to be announced.

On Friday, Kavitha thanked her parents, in-laws and children for standing by her. “I

sought my mother’s blessings after the court order,” she said, without naming KCR or KTR.

Sources said that she has distanced herself from the Kalvakuntla family and wants to remain that way despite the “resounding legal victory”.

KTR, however, struck a conciliatory note in a post on X saying that the AAP government was led by Arvind Kejriwal was

brought down in the name of the “so-called liquor scam” and that the “political casualty of that narrative was the BRS” in the 2023 Assembly elections and 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

“Kavitha garu got justice in court today and in the same manner, every case registered against our leaders will be conclusively exposed as false, politically motivated and fabricated...,” he wrote.

However, sources close to Kavitha dismissed the possibility of reconciliation.

Responding to KTR’s post, Kavitha accused him of attempting to blame her for the BRS’s electoral losses. “You are living in denial, my dear brother. Learn from the people what really caused the BRS’s loss,” she said, adding that the party had failed to defend her during “the vilest” social media campaigns against her. “They morphed my pictures placing liquor bottles on my head instead of Bathukamma flowers. No one from BRS social media team reacted,” she said.

VERDICT SPARKS AAP-CONGRESS SPAT

After Khera’s dig, Kejriwal hits back: ‘Did Gandhis go to jail?’

Manoj C G & Asad Rehman
New Delhi, February 27

HOURS AFTER a Delhi court gave a clean chit to AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia in the excise policy case, differences in the Opposition camp erupted in the open.

While the Congress took a dig at the AAP, Kejriwal hit back by pointing out that he went to prison, but none of the Congress leaders did. The verdict is also likely to put the BJP on the defensive, bringing into question its anti-corruption narrative directed at the Opposition.

“The BJP is not a political party. It is a shape-shifter, a wishful serpent — *Ichhadhari Naag*. It will stoop to any level for one obsessive goal: defeat Congress — Congress-mukt Bharat. For 12 years they spewed venom at the TMC. And now? (PM) Narendra Modi himself is showering it with praise — not out of respect, but to land a cheap blow at Congress,” said Congress media department head Pawan Khera.

“Elections are coming. So the script is predictable. Cases against Congress leaders will suddenly accelerate — @PChidambaram_IN has already been dragged back into the spotlight because Tamil Nadu is going for polls. Meanwhile, proceedings against their convenient ‘allies’ in the AAP and others will quietly vanish in light of the Gujarat and Punjab elections. This is the BJP playbook: vendetta as governance and agencies as campaign tools,” he said.

Hours later, asked about the comments, Kejriwal hit back at the Congress, saying, “I want to ask you — Kejriwal went to jail. Did Robert Vadra go to jail? Sanjay Singh went to jail. Did Rahul Gandhi go to jail? Manish Sisodia went to jail. Did Sonia Gandhi go to jail? With what face is the



Arvind Kejriwal’s wife Sunita and Manish Sisodia’s wife Seema after the verdict, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

Congress saying all this? Does the Congress have no shame?”

A senior AAP MP said the Congress could have kept the acrimony aside at a time like this. “We know all Opposition parties are fighting one enemy, the BJP. Then, why couldn’t they keep their differences aside for a day?”

However, Congress insiders said they suspect the “clean chit” might be the “BJP’s ploy” to create a Kejriwal versus Rahul Gandhi battle and keep the Opposition divided.

Where other Opp parties stand

In contrast, other Opposition parties, many of them the Congress’s allies in the INDIA bloc, welcomed the verdict.

“The Union BJP government must not mortgage the integrity of investigating agencies for short-term politics. Have some shame. Well done, my respected friend Thiru. @ArvindKejriwal, and Thiru. @msisodia, for standing firm through it all and letting the truth speak for itself,” Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin said in a social media post.

The Trinamool Congress too cheered — “*Satyameva Jayate!*

Stop shedding crocodile tears, still guilty before people, says Delhi CM

Pragynesh
New Delhi February 27

DELHI CHIEF Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday said that former CM Arvind Kejriwal shouldn’t shed ‘crocodile tears’ and a trial court discharging him of corruption charges is not a clean chit.

Gupta’s comments were in reference to Kejriwal sobbing on camera after being discharged in the excise policy case.

Referring to the court’s judgment citing “lack of evidence”, CM Gupta said Kejriwal was still “guilty before the people of Delhi”, and that insufficient evidence and complete innocence are “two very different things”. The matter, she said, remains part of an ongoing legal process and could be examined by higher courts.

“If the excise policy was transparent ... why was it scrapped soon after the investigation began? Why revert to the

old regime if there were no flaws? Why was the wholesale profit margin allegedly increased from 5 per cent to 12 per cent, and who benefited?” Gupta said.

Echoing her stance, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said investigating agencies repeatedly alleged destruction of proof by Kejriwal and former Dy CM Manish Sisodia. “We believe that truth will prevail and it will ultimately be proven that you [Kejriwal] are corrupt,” Sachdeva said.

BJP MP Manoj Tiwari said the issue would be pursued politically as well as legally. He claimed that Delhi voters had already delivered a political verdict by removing the AAP government from power.

“Even his tears need to get inspected... They destroyed 183 phones during the investigation. The CBI is also going to the High Court. We believe he will be punished,” Tiwari added.

‘South Group’ draws court concern

Nikhila Henry
Hyderabad, February 27

WHILE EXONERATING all the 23 accused in the liquor policy case, the Rouse Avenue court questioned the CBI’s decision to label a group of accused from southern India as the “South Group” in its chargesheet.

Special Judge Jitender Singh said, “The Court considers it necessary to place on record its concern with the repeated and deliberate use of the expression ‘South Group’ by the investigating agency to describe a set of accused persons, ostensibly on the basis of their regional origin or place of residence.”

“It is equally significant that no comparable regional descriptor has been employed for the remaining accused persons; the prosecution narrative does not speak of any ‘North Group’ or similar categorisation. The selective adoption of a geographically defined label is, therefore, plainly arbitrary and unwarranted,” the court said.

The prosecution had alleged that AAP communication in charge Vijay Nair, acting on behalf of the party leaders, “received kickbacks to the tune of Rs 100 crore from a group”. It further alleged, “For convenience, we may call it the South Group (as termed in the statements re-

corded during the probe).” According to the CBI chargesheet, the South Group referred to businessmen Abhishek Boinpally, Arun Ramchandra Pillai, and chartered accountant Butchibabu Gorantla. Boinpally and Pillai were accused of facilitating the movement of the kickback money, the chargesheet had claimed. Butchibabu was accused of being the front-man of K Kavitha, who was alleged to be the main link between the South Group and AAP leaders.

The ED, which did a parallel probe, named YSRCP MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy and P Sarath Chandra Reddy of Aurobindo Pharma in ‘South Group’.

what they feared may have been lost as a Delhi court discharged Kejriwal, former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, and 21 others in the CBI probe in the excise policy case. For a party whose political roots lie in an anti-corruption movement, the exoneration of Kejriwal and most of its senior leadership is more than a shot in the arm. It is a reinstatement of its identity.

The BJP had struck at the very core of this identity to chip away at the party’s moral foundation, even as daily run-ins with the office of Delhi’s Lieutenant Governor furthered the narrative of an administrative paralysis seemingly meant to underline that the AAP government did not have what it took to run the city.

Kejriwal broke down in front of news cameras after walking out of the court complex on Fri-

day, and looked like a changed man as he addressed the media a few hours later.

The former Delhi CM said the court verdict had lifted a heavy load from his heart and, having limited his public appearances since the Delhi loss last year, took on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah in his characteristically sharp tone as he accused them of going after him and his senior party colleagues because of political vendetta.

“People were saying, why did Kejriwal go mum after coming back from jail, that Kejriwal disappeared, where is Kejriwal. I am not a politician; politicians do not get affected... they have thick skin. But the only thing that I have earned in life is *imandaari* (honesty); when someone calls me *bei-*

maan (dishonest), it affects me,” he said.

“When I am sent to jail, taunts are showered on my family, it affects me. Kejriwal is affected. That is why I had decided that I would not speak till I am proven innocent in front of the whole nation. Today, a major load has been taken off my heart,” he said.

From Satyendra Jain to Manish Sisodia and finally to Kejriwal himself — who was accused of looking the other way when it came to the construction of a “palatial home” just like he did when it came to alleged loopholes that would generate financial kickbacks for the AAP through the excise policy — the political dominoes had fallen one after the other based on investigation into one scam or another.

Going forward, the discharge in this case will only

strengthen an AAP looking to broaden its national horizons even as it seeks to retain the only state where it remains in power, Punjab.

While the party will receive a boost in Delhi and Goa, the biggest payday could come in Gujarat, where Kejriwal is said to be personally invested in building the party’s organisation from the ground up “just like the BJP’s”, according to party insiders.

In national politics, with several of the INDIA bloc’s constituents not in agreement with the Congress — including the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC in West Bengal, where both parties are not likely to come together in an alliance for the coming Assembly polls — on many issues, the AAP’s position will now have more heft with Kejriwal back with a spring in his step.

6 key faces: What the court said

Vijay Nair, then communications in-charge of AAP



Allegation: Acted as the “central facilitator” and a conduit between the AAP leaders and so-called South Group. Between July and September 2021, a sum of Rs 20–30 crore in cash was sent through hawala channels to Nair and his associates. He exercised “overarching influence” over the Excise department to facilitate licence grants and suppress scrutiny.

What the court observed: “There is no legally admissible material” to establish that Nair acted as a “conduit”...with the relationship only being inferred rather than demonstrated. Nair’s alleged acts “rests on conjecture and assumption rather than demonstrable nexus”.

Sameer Mahendru, proprietor of M/s Indospirits



Allegation: Prosecution projected Mahendru as a “major beneficiary” where M/S Indospirits was structured to represent the interests of the so-called South Group, and a medium for transfer of “ill-gotten money”. Turnover eligibility clauses of the policy were tweaked to make it favourable for M/s Indospirits, which earned a profit of Rs 29.29 cr, forming part of the funds circulated as bribe money, paid to the excise department.

What the court observed: Noting that the firm had initially applied for an L-1 licence but withdrew it as it did not meet the criteria, the court said the bribery allegation “does not appear to align with the factual material on record” as the company itself was “confronted with difficulty in meeting the turnover requirement.” The court said bribe allegation “is founded solely on statement of the approver”, minus any “independent corroboration”.

Butchibabu Gorantla, Hyderabad-based CA

Allegation: Assisted the South Group to incorporate favourable clauses and was allegedly involved in policy-draft discussions. A confidential Excise Department tender document recovered from him was cited to suggest unauthorised access to official records. He coordinated the delivery of Rs 10 crore from K Kavitha for paving the way for the South Group to enter the Delhi liquor market.

What the court observed: The material on record, including prosecution witness statements, show that he was only enquiring about liquor market considerations in Delhi. Material “reflects that basic commercial issues, such as staffing of retail operations, setting up of shops and overall market viability, were still being explored”, where such conduct “does not align with the existence of a settled and pre-determined criminal conspiracy”. Further, the Rs 10 crore allegation was only based on the approver statement.

K Kavitha, former BRS leader

Allegation: Used M/s Indospirits as a vehicle to recoup upfront money, which was routed back to

her. She recouped Rs 14 crore through a sham land transaction with a company under the Aurobindo Group, controlled by Sarath Chandra Reddy. She also received Rs 80 lakh through CSR contributions, routed via an Aurobindo Group company in favour of her NGO Telangana Jagruthi.

What the court observed: Noting that she has been primarily implicated in the case on the basis of two prosecution witnesses, one of whom was granted pardon, which counted as “accomplice-like statement”, the court held the allegation is “speculative and legally unsustainable”, in the absence of any material that the land transaction was a facade, that the funds were utilised for any unlawful purpose, or that the tender process was manipulated to confer benefit.

Durgesh Pathak, former AAP MLA, who was in-charge of party’s campaign for 2022 Goa elections

Allegation: He utilised a role in the utilisation of the purported proceeds of crime for political purposes, specifically in connection with the 2022 Goa elections. He approached candidates and party workers and assured them that their election expenses would be borne by the party, which indicated the existence of a centrally managed funding mechanism for the campaign.

What the court observed: With respect to the assurances given to the potential candidates, the court held that such assurances fall squarely “within the domain of permissible political conduct, and cannot, without more, be elevated to criminality”. The court expresses its serious disapproval of the manner in which the investigating agency has sought to implicate (Pathak) without placing on record any material indicative of his knowledge, participation or involvement in the alleged conspiracy or the alleged proceeds of crime. Criminal liability cannot be fastened on the basis of political position, organisational role or supervisory responsibility,” the court held.

Sarath Chandra Reddy, director of Aurobindo Pharma

Allegation: He reportedly secured retail zones through multiple entities” and subsequently, an amount of about Rs 60 crore remained outstanding in relation to the five retail zones under his control, out of which around Rs 46.88 crore remained unpaid, an exemption allegedly allowed as a favour.

What the court observed: The allegations “resting on conjecture rather than cogent material”. Allegations of outstanding dues, by itself do not disclose criminal conspiracy and “at best, the matter appears to arise out of commercial transactions between wholesaler, manufacturer and retailer under a policy framework that was later withdrawn”. The court factored in that such disputes over recovery of dues “ordinarily fall within the realm of contractual remedies” and the fact that litigation has taken place between the parties “further indicates the commercial nature of the controversy”. (REPORTING: SOHINI GHOSH)

What court verdict means for AAP, broader Opp

Jatin Anand
New Delhi, February 27

ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2024, Arvind Kejriwal triggered shock waves by announcing his resignation as Delhi Chief Minister. With the elections in the national Capital a few months away, the move was billed as an “agnipariksha (trial by fire)” for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and its chief, but was in fact a political manoeuvre soon after Kejriwal’s release from prison in the excise policy case to retain his moral capital.

It did not make much of a difference as the AAP was voted out of power following a high-voltage BJP campaign that projected the party, and Kejriwal himself, as mired in corruption.

However, on Friday, the AAP and its chief appeared set to regain the high ground that had powered their rise and

Jain to Kejriwal, aggregate jail time of AAP’s five top leaders — 82 months

Jatin Anand & Nirbhay Thakur
New Delhi, February 27

FROM SIX months to almost two-and-a-half years, five leaders from the Aam Aadmi Party’s top leadership, including its convener Arvind Kejriwal, spent an aggregate of 82 months — only two months shy of seven years — behind bars.

It started in May 2022 with the arrest of one of Kejriwal’s close aides Satyendra Jain, who was the Delhi Health Minister at the time, in an alleged money laundering case by the ED. Jain spent two years and five months behind bars in a case registered by the CBI in 2017. He is the only one on the list of AAP leaders who were sent to jail on charges separate from the excise case.

Another jolt came when



AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh, Saurabh Bharadwaj and others at party office in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

AAP’s communications in-charge Vijay Nair was arrested in September 2022. He was released two years later in the same month in 2024.

The bigger jolt came when Manish Sisodia, then Delhi Deputy CM, was arrested in February 2023. He walked out of jail 17 months later in August 2024.

This was followed by the arrest of the AAP’s Raja Sabha MP

Sanjay Singh in October 2023. He got bail in April 2024 after spending six months in prison.

The party’s biggest setback in the excise policy saga was the arrest of then CM Arvind Kejriwal in March 2024. Barring a 21-day interim reprieve (May 10 and June 1) from the Supreme Court for the Lok Sabha poll campaigning, Kejriwal walked out on a regular bail in September 2024.



Healthcare

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Dr. Arora, what first drifted you towards medicine and then to gastroenterology?

Medicine, to me, is and always was a field where knowledge could directly transform lives. During my training years, I realized that gastroenterology offered a unique blend of clinical reasoning, procedural skills, and long-term patient relationships.

The liver, in particular, fascinated me. It is resilient, complex, and central to almost every body function. Understanding it felt like understanding the very core of human biology. That curiosity gradually became a lifelong commitment.

You often call the liver a "silent organ." What do you mean by that?

The liver rarely complains. Unlike the heart or stomach, it doesn't give early warning signs. A person can lose up to 70 percent of liver function and still feel relatively normal.

This silence is both its strength and its weakness. Because there is no pain or discomfort initially, people ignore the problem until it reaches an advanced stage. That is why awareness and screening for early liver disease are so important.



Dr Anil Arora
MD, DNB, DM Gastro (AIIMS),
FRCP (Edinburgh), FRCP (London),
FIAMS, FAMS, FAASLD

Healing the Silent Organ: The Legacy and Vision of Dr. Anil Arora

In the complex machinery of the human body, few organs are as hardworking-or as underappreciated-as the liver. It detoxifies, digests, stores energy, produces vital proteins, and quietly keeps the body running day after day. Yet most people rarely think about it until something goes terribly wrong.

*For over three decades, **Dr. (Prof.) Anil Kumar Arora** has made it his life's mission to change that indifference.*

A leading name in gastroenterology and hepatology, Dr. Arora is currently Chairman of the Institute of Liver, Gastroenterology and Pancreaticobiliary Sciences at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi. Over the years, he has emerged not only as a skilled clinician but also as a passionate educator, researcher, and public health advocate.

At a time when liver diseases are rising faster than ever before-driven largely by modern lifestyles-Dr. Arora's voice has become a crucial one. His approach blends scientific rigor with practical wisdom: detect early, prevent proactively, and treat responsibly.

"Most people assume liver problems only happen to heavy drinkers," he says. "That is no longer true. Today, even schoolchildren are developing fatty liver. This is a wake-up call."

In this in-depth conversation, Dr. Arora transcends, the evolving face of liver disease in India, and why protecting this "silent organ" is essential for a healthier nation.

The Silent Crisis

"The liver rarely complains. A person can lose up to 70 percent of liver function and still feel relatively normal. That silence is dangerous — because by the time symptoms appear, the damage is often advanced. Awareness and early screening are our strongest defenses."

How has the pattern of liver diseases in India changed over your career?

When I started practising, infections like hepatitis B and C were the dominant issues. Alcohol-related liver disease was also common.

Today, the landscape has changed dramatically. The biggest threat now is lifestyle-related liver disease, especially Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD). Urbanization, processed food, lack of physical activity, and rising incidence of diabetes have completely altered the liver disease profile.

Why has NAFLD become such a massive problem?

Because our lifestyles have changed faster than our biology.

Human bodies were designed for movement and natural food. But modern life promotes sitting for long hours, eating calorie-dense meals, and consuming excessive sugar. The liver converts this surplus into fat, and over time that fat begins to damage liver cells.

What worries me is that NAFLD is no longer a disease of the elderly. I now see teenagers and young professionals with advanced fatty liver. That was not so common earlier.

How can an ordinary person know if they have fatty liver?

That is the tricky question usually can't.

Most patients discover it accidentally during routine health check-ups. Ultrasound, liver function tests, and newer tools like Fibro-Scan help in early detection of liver diseases.

I encourage anyone with obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, or a family history of liver disease to get evaluated at least once a year.

The Changing Enemy

"When I began practicing, viruses were the biggest threat to liver health. Today, the enemy is different — it is our lifestyle. Processed food, inactivity, rising diabetes, and stress are silently reshaping the disease profile of our nation."

What is the biggest myth people have about liver health?

The biggest myth is: "I don't drink alcohol, so my liver must be fine."

Nothing could be further from the truth. Today, a majority of liver patients I see are non-drinkers. Calorie dense highly processed diet and inactivity can harm the liver as much as alcohol.

Another myth is that liver tonics or supplements can fix everything. Real improvement comes from disciplined lifestyle changes, not magic pills.

You have spoken extensively about prevention. Why is that so important in liver disease?

Because advanced liver damage is very difficult and expensive to treat.

Once cirrhosis sets in, options become limited. Prevention, on the other hand, is simple, inexpensive, and incredibly effective. Weight control, balanced diet, regular exercise, vaccination against hepatitis, and responsible use of medicines can prevent most liver diseases.

As doctors, we must shift focus from only treating disease to preventing it in the first place.

What role does early screening play?

A very important role. Early screening allows us to identify risk factors before irreversible damage occurs.

With modern non-invasive technologies, we can assess liver health without painful procedures. If we diagnose problems early, we can

The Myth That Must End

"One of the biggest misconceptions is that only alcohol harms the liver. In reality, many of my patients today are non-drinkers. Poor diet, excess sugar, and lack of exercise can damage the liver just as seriously."

reverse them in the majority of cases.

Think of it like servicing a car before the engine fails.

How important is mental health in managing chronic liver conditions?

Extremely important. Chronic illness affects not only the body but also the mind.

Anxiety, depression, and stress often accompany long-term liver disease. Patients need counseling, family support, and reassurance along with medical treatment. Healing is holistic-it cannot be purely biochemical.

Over the years, what changes have you seen in patient attitudes?

Patients today are far more informed. They read, research, and ask intelligent questions. That is a positive change.

However, the downside is information overload and misinformation. Many people rely on social media advice instead of scientific guid-

ance. Part of my job now is to separate fact from fiction for them.

As a teacher and mentor, what gives you the most satisfaction?

Training young doctors and seeing them grow.

Clinical success is rewarding, but watching a student become a compassionate, competent physician is even more fulfilling. Knowledge multiplies when shared.

I believe a doctor's legacy is not only the patients he treats, but also the doctors he trains.

How has technology changed gastroenterology practice?

Dramatically. Endoscopic procedures, advanced imaging, minimally invasive interventions- all these have revolutionized outcomes.

Large number of GIT conditions that once required major surgery can now be managed through small noninvasive procedures. Technology has made treatment safer, faster, and more precise.

But technology must always be guided by human judgment and ethics.

What are some early warning signs people should never ignore?

Persistent fatigue, unexplained weight loss, yellowness of eyes, swelling of the abdomen, or vomiting of blood-these are red flags.

But remember, absence of symptoms does not mean absence of disease. That is why periodic health checks are crucial.

Prevention is Power

"Advanced liver disease is complex and expensive to treat. But prevention is remarkably simple — maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly, eat balanced meals, vaccinate against hepatitis, and avoid unnecessary medicines. Small habits can prevent lifelong consequences."

If you had to give five simple rules for liver health, what would they be?

- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid excess sugar and processed food
- Limit or avoid alcohol
- Never take medicines without medical advice

Follow these five, and your liver will thank you.

How do you see the future of liver care in India?

I am optimistic. Awareness is improving, vaccines are widely available, and diagnostics are better than ever.

The challenge is to make preventive care a national priority. If we can do that, India can drastically reduce its burden of liver disease in the next decade.

Finally, what keeps you motivated after so many years in medicine?

Every time a patient recovers, every time a student learns something new, every time awareness saves a life-that keeps me going.

Medicine is not just a profession. It is a responsibility and a privilege.

A Doctor's Responsibility

"Medicine is not merely about treating illness. It is about educating, preventing, and empowering. If awareness can stop even one person from reaching the stage of irreversible liver damage, that is the real success."

Beyond the Clinic: A Charismatic Leader in Liver Health

Apart from his clinical commitments, Dr. Arora has been deeply involved in academic research, medical education, and public outreach. Through seminars, publications, and digital platforms, he has consistently worked to simplify complex liver science for ordinary people.

His initiative Fatty liver Clinic, dedicated to spreading awareness about fatty liver disease, reflects his belief that informed patients are empowered patients.

Colleagues describe him as meticulous, compassionate, and relentlessly focused on patient welfare. Students remember him as a demanding but inspiring teacher who insists on both scientific excellence and ethical practice.

Conclusion: A Life Dedicated to Prevention and Care

In an era where lifestyle diseases are silently overwhelming healthcare systems, Dr. Anil Arora stands as a voice of reason and responsibility.

His message is not alarmist-it is practical. Eat better exercise regularly. Get checked early. Respect your liver.

Through decades of service, he has treated thousands, trained hundreds, and educated countless more. Yet his goal remains unchanged: to ensure that fewer people ever need to reach the doctor in the first place.

As he often says with quiet conviction: **"The liver works for you every second of your life. The least you can do is take care of it."**

Noble Medicare
Specialist Polyclinic

High Court lifts stay on release of Kerala Story 2

Shaju Philip
Thiruvananthapuram,
February 27

ADIVISION Bench of the Kerala High Court on Friday lifted the interim stay on the release of *Kerala Story 2: Goes Beyond*.

The Bench of Justices S A Dharmadhikari and P V Balakrishnan stayed the single bench order of Thursday, after producer Vipul Amrutlal Shah moved an appeal. The single bench of Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas had stayed the release of the film for two weeks and had directed the CBFC to review the screening certificate it had issued to the movie, which is a sequel to *Kerala Story*.

The film was slated for release on Friday. On Thursday, hours after the single bench verdict, the film producers appealed to the Division Bench, which heard the matter on Thursday night. The Division Bench raised doubts on whether a decision on the matter could be made based on the movie's teaser released last week.

The single bench had said that materials available prima facie indicate a manifest absence of application of mind to the requirement of law by CBFC, and the possibility of communal disharmony or denigration of a community also being prima facie involved in the movie.

It had said the movie's release, without scrutiny by the higher authorities, would be legally improper.

IAF showcases combat prowess at Exercise Vayu Shakti in Pokhran

Event presents glimpses into Operation Sindoor missions

Press Trust of India
Jaisalmer, February 27

THE INDIAN Air Force demonstrated its combat prowess and firepower capabilities, and presented glimpses of missions undertaken during Operation Sindoor through simulated strikes at Rajasthan's Pokhran Field Firing Range under Exercise 'Vayu Shakti' in the presence of President Droupadi Murmu on Friday.

The day-dusk-night demonstration, held in the Thar desert of western Rajasthan near the India-Pakistan border, was also attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Rajasthan Governor Haribhau Bagade and Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, among others. IAF chief, Air Chief Marshal A P Singh, senior officials of the force and others were also present.

A presentation on Operation Sindoor was made at the beginning of the exercise, followed by a detailed display of day target layouts spread across a three-kilometre area.



President Droupadi Murmu stands beside 'Prachand', a Light Combat Helicopter, before undertaking a sortie as co-pilot at Air Force Station in Jaisalmer on Friday. She later attended Exercise Vayu Shakti at Pokhran; (right) an IAF aircraft during the exercise.

The simulated targets included an enemy runway, a petroleum storage facility, bunkers, radar sites, tank and armoured convoys, a communication centre, a terror camp, ammunition storage, a hangar and a command-and-control centre.

Fighter jets and attack helicopters carried out synchronised operations, displaying strategy formulation, target identification and calibrated



destruction. The IAF showcased a calibrated response for controlled escalation and precision strikes as part of the simulated mission.

The demonstration also featured decoy operations and loitering missions akin to those undertaken during Operation Sindoor. A radar cluster was neutralised in a simulated strike

to "blind" enemy surveillance systems. An AKASH surface-to-air missile was also fired as part of the demonstration.

The demonstration culminated in a spectacular drone show.

Earlier in the day, President Murmu, clad in an olive green uniform and helmet, undertook a 25-minute sortie as a co-

pilot in the indigenously developed Light Combat Helicopter 'Prachand' from the Jaisalmer Air Force Station.

The 'Vayu Shakti' demonstration was aimed at showcasing the IAF's operational preparedness, precision strike capability and ability to undertake multi-domain operations in a near-realistic combat scenario.

NCERT retrieves 31 of 38 sold copies of Class 8 social science textbook

Abhinaya Harigovind
New Delhi, February 27

IN THE three days since the NCERT stopped the sale of the Class 8 social science book and started the process to retrieve its copies, it has received 31 of the 38 sold prints, sources in the Education Ministry said.

The book - 'Exploring Society: India and Beyond' part 2 - that was released on Monday for use in the ongoing academic session, was pulled out of sale on Tuesday. In a chapter on the role of the judiciary, the book featured a section on "Corruption in the judiciary". The Supreme Court registered suo motu case in the matter on Wednesday, with Chief Justice of India Surya Kant taking serious exception to the section, and saying that he "will not allow anyone to defame the institution".

On Thursday, the Supreme Court imposed a "complete blanket ban" on further publication, reprinting, or digital dissemination of the book. In its order, the court said the NCERT Director and the principal of every school where the book has reached will be personally responsible "to effectuate immediate seizure and sealing of all copies of the book in their pre-

ises and submit a compliance report".

After the sale of the book was halted on Tuesday, staff at the NCERT's publication division and book counter on its campus in Delhi have been attempting to reach out to all the 38 buyers of the book in an effort to get the buyers to return the copies.

An advisory issued by NCERT Secretary Himanshu Gupta on Friday asked those who purchased the book to return it immediately.

It asked "any individual or organisation, who is in possession of the NCERT textbook Exploring Society: India and Beyond, Social Science Grade 8 Part 2, or any material related to it" to return it to the Head, Department of Education in Social Sciences (DESS) or Publication Division, NCERT, "at the earliest possible".

Citing the court order on the ban, and stating that the NCERT has withdrawn the book, the advisory added: "We also request that any content related to the chapter 'Role of Judiciary in Our Society' if posted on any of the social media or digital platform may be deleted at the earliest possible. Also, whoever has purchased this textbook from anywhere is requested to return it to NCERT immediately".

SC Judge: Economic regulations by State have profound effect on editorial independence

Vineet Bhalla
New Delhi, February 27

HIGHLIGHTING THE precarious nature of press freedom in an era of corporate consolidation, Supreme Court Judge Justice B V Nagarathna on Friday cautioned that while media outlets "may be legally free to criticise the government", they often remain "economically constrained in ways that make such criticism costly or unsustainable".

Delivering the address at the presentation of the International Press Institute (IPI) - India Award for Excellence in Journalism 2025, Justice Nagarathna noted that in India, the media is protected under two distinct constitutional provisions: Article 19(1)(a), which guarantees freedom of speech and expression, and Article 19(1)(g), which protects the right to practice any profession or business.

However, she warned that this dual status creates vulnerabilities. "The most serious threats to press freedom are likely to arise not from direct censorship under Article 19(2), but from regulations justified under Article 19(6)," she said. Article 19(6) allows the State to impose reasonable restrictions on the right to carry on trade in the



Justice B V Nagarathna at an event in New Delhi on Friday.

interest of the general public.

Justice Nagarathna said economic regulations by the State through ownership rules, licensing laws, taxation and anti-trust law have "profound effects on editorial independence".

"This allows the State to influence the press indirectly while maintaining formal compliance with Article 19(1)(a)," she said. "In this way, freedom may exist in law, but may be weakened in practice."

The ceremony saw the IPI India Award for Excellence in Journalism 2025 being conferred upon Vaishnavi Rathore, a reporter with *Scroll.in*. She was honoured for her ground reportage on the Great Nicobar Island Development Project.

SC grants bail to doc in Pune Porsche case

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 27

THE SUPREME Court on Friday granted bail to Ajay Aniruddha Taware, a doctor arrested for allegedly tampering with blood samples of a minor, who was accused in the 2024 Porsche hit-and-run case in Pune that killed two young software engineers.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan directed that the accused "be produced before the concerned trial court as early as possible and the trial court shall release him on bail, subject to such conditions as it may deem appropriate to impose to ensure his presence in the proceedings arising out of FIR..." against him. The court asked Taware to extend complete cooperation in the trial, not to misuse his liberty in any manner and not to make any attempt to contact the witnesses either directly or indirectly.

Taware's counsel told the bench that his co-accused had been granted bail and he should be treated on a par. The counsel said Taware has been in jail for about 21 months.

The counsel for state of Maharashtra opposed the bail plea. As per the prosecution, Taware, former head of Forensic Medicine at Sassoon Hospital, facilitated swapping of the minor driver's blood sample to show "nil alcohol" levels in blood and made false entries in the register for bribe money.

TELANGANA OFFICER HAS SECURED OVER 590 SURRENDERS IN LAST 2 YEARS

Meet B Sumathi, the intelligence officer behind Maoist leader Devuji's surrender

Nikhila Henry
Hyderabad, February 27

OVER TWO decades ago, when Maoist leaders walked out of the jungle to hold peace talks with the government of then united Andhra Pradesh, a young woman police officer of the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) stood out.

The 2001 state service officer, who was inducted into the IPS in 2010 and allotted 2006 batch, was the first woman DySP of Andhra Pradesh. Just 25 at the time, Sumathi was present as the top leadership of the Maoist movement took its first steps towards initiating peace talks in 2004.

On February 24, Sumathi, who now heads Telangana's Special Intelligence Branch (SIB), was present again when Thippiri Tirupathi alias Devuji officially surrendered before the Telangana Police, becoming the highest-ranking Maoist leader to do so. Telangana's Director General of Police B Shivadhar Reddy, who was on the dais with her, congratulated Sumathi and "her SIB" for making "this high-profile surrender possible".

Those who know Sumathi are not surprised at her presence at both events. A colleague of Sumathi's told *The Indian Express*: "In 2004, she impressed

First woman DySP of united Andhra Pradesh, she now heads Telangana SIB



Maoist commander Devuji surrenders in the presence of Telangana DGP B Shivadhar Reddy and SIB chief B Sumathi.

with her composure even under so much pressure. The whole weight of the talks at the time rested on the state government and its police department."

On Tuesday, when Telangana showcased its big achievement in getting Devuji to surrender, nobody deserved to be more on the stage than Sumathi, a highly placed source said. "Without her tactics, it would have been impossible."

The source said the officer ensured the surrender, while making it clear that it would happen on the state's terms. The source underlined the impor-

tance of this, with Devuji being a member of the CPI (Maoist) Politburo and Central Committee, as well as the head of its armed wing, Central Military Commission, for close to two decades.

If in 2004, Sumathi was the first woman DySP of Andhra Pradesh; in 2024, when she was appointed the SIB IG, she was the first woman to hold the post in a force founded for the purpose of tackling Maoist insurgency.

While Devuji's surrender has brought her to the limelight as the SIB chief, Sumathi has overseen "591 Maoist surrenders", including four members of Central

Committee and 16 of the State Committee, in the last two years.

Underlining her "grit", a source close to Sumathi said she was expecting her first child at the time of the 2004 peace talks. "She went on maternity leave only after the talks concluded."

Sumathi is remembered as "a people's officer" for the time she spent in Warangal as DySP. When she was transferred from Warangal to Hyderabad, "people protested and held dharnas", an officer who knew her said.

In Hyderabad, she joined the CID, Cyber Crimes, as SP, and also worked in counter-intelligence. "During this time, she travelled across the country, including Delhi, to question terror suspects," a source said.

This was the time that Hyderabad witnessed two bomb blasts. "She led the interrogations," a source said, adding that she dealt with alleged members of the Indian Mujahideen, SIMI and, later, the Islamic State.

This combination of skills has helped her in the battle against Maoists, said sources. "With her work in intelligence and counter-intelligence, and as head of the women's police force of Telangana - She Teams - Sumathi has seen it all. It helps her engage with the Maoists at the level of world-view," an intelligence source said.

From bombmaker to Assembly guest: 120 ex-Maoists step into 'temple of democracy' in Chhattisgarh

Jayprakash S Naidu
Raipur, February 27

ABOUT 120 surrendered Maoists - including a former Central Committee Member (CCM) - visited the newly built Vidhan Sabha in New Raipur Friday as part of the Chhattisgarh government's rehabilitation efforts to integrate them into the democratic system.

Among them was former CCM Takkalappalli Vasudeva Rao, alias Ashanna alias Rupesh, 59, known as the Maoists' bombmaker and allegedly involved in major attacks, including the 2003 assassination attempt on Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu.

This comes as security forces intensify operations ahead of the central government's March 31 deadline to end the insurgency. Welcoming them with a traditional 'Jai Johar' greeting and promising them safety, dignity,



The surrendered Maoists pose with Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai and other ministers and officials outside the Assembly on Friday.

and rehabilitation, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said: "It's a matter of pride for us as the good rehabilitation policy we had brought has shown results. Over 2,500 Maoists have surrendered. It is a special day today as 120 Maoists have come to Vidhan Sabha and saw the proceedings and took photos with our ministers and DGP. We had a conver-

sation with them, they are most welcome here and we will think about their future."

Home Minister Vijay Sharma said: "In our entire process we have not used the word surrender but rehabilitated those who chose to return to the mainstream. They now believe in the Indian Constitution and democratic processes and it's a historic

day because they have come to the temple of democracy and witnessed democratic process and now they have completely integrated into democracy."

After witnessing the proceedings, Rupesh told the media: "I thank the government for giving all of us the opportunity to visit the Vidhan Sabha and showing respect. We want to work for the people and will put this experience to use."

When asked about his new life after the surrender, Rupesh said it was "nothing special".

"We are still here as per the rehabilitation policy. We have not gone outside. I want to do a lot of things. Let's see what happens in the future," he said.

When asked whether he will enter politics, he said: "I'm in politics from the beginning. Have done politics and still I am in politics."

Apart from Rupesh, the group included 54 women, five

former members of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZC), seven former Divisional Committee members, 33 former Area Committee members, and 84 ex-party members of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist).

The chair in the Assembly described the occasion as "rare and historic", welcoming the former Maoists and congratulating them for rejoining the democratic mainstream and accepting the Constitution.

On Thursday night, Sharma also hosted a dinner for the rehabilitation group at his residence in Nava Raipur Atal Nagar.

Last October, Rupesh, along with 209 Maoists from Abujhmad, had surrendered before Bastar Police, returning 153 weapons, including automatic guns such as 19 AK-47 rifles, 23 INSAS rifles, 17 Self Loading Rifles (SLR), and 36.303 guns, in Jagdalpur city of Bastar district.

• BRIEFLY



The elephant strolls on a Ranchi road on Friday.

Wild elephant enters Ranchi, triggers panic among locals

A WILD elephant entered Jharkhand's capital Ranchi on Friday morning, triggering panic among locals, a forest official said. The jumbo was moving around the Hawai Nagar area, and a forest team has been deployed to drive out the animal from the city, he

said. "The elephant perhaps deviated from its route and entered the city. Since it is school time for children, we are following all safety measures," Ranchi Divisional Forest Officer said, adding elephants often come to Dhurwa dam from the Halhu forest area.

UP govt declares 3-day Holi holiday for staff

THE UTTAR Pradesh government has declared a three-day holiday for Holi from March 2 to March 4 across state government offices. In an order issued on the instructions of CM Yogi Adityanath, departments have been directed to ensure that salaries are disbursed before Holi. To ensure this, officials said the government has declared February 28 - a Saturday - as a working day to facilitate the completion of financial and administrative formalities. As part of the arrangement, government employees will be given a compensatory holiday on March 3 - and will get a three-day continuous holiday. ENS

Gujarat man held for killing daughter over 'inter-faith relationship'

Express News Service
Vadodra, February 27

ANGERED BY his daughter's insistence on marrying a man from a different religion, a 50-year old man in Gujarat's Narmada district allegedly killed the 22-year-old and tried to pass off her death as natural, police said on Friday.

Nearly a week after the family hurriedly conducted the last rites without informing the police, the Narmada police arrested the man, Dashtrathsinh Udesinh Gohil, on Friday and booked him on charges of murder and destruction of evidence.

The FIR states that Gohil and his daughter, Tejaswita, had an argument over a prospective matrimonial alliance that the family had arranged for her and when she insisted on "marrying Salim", the accused allegedly strangled her to death on February 21.

The FIR filed on Thursday is the third in the case and follows two cross-FIRs lodged on February 22 — one by Gohil and another by Hanif Hussain Malek, the father of Salim, for criminal intimidation, voluntarily causing hurt and other sections.

The FIR lodged by Malek accused Gohil of trespass, criminal intimidation and physical assault of his wife, Noorjahan-bibi, as well as Malek.

The FIR stated that Gohil and another person had allegedly "dragged him out of his house, pinned him to the ground and threatened to set him on fire".

Canada's Carney begins India visit, uranium to AI on table

Will meet Modi on Monday for bilateral talks

Shubhajt Roy
New Delhi, February 27

UNDERLINING THAT India is showing the fastest growth among the world's major economies, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney began his four-day visit to India as he landed in Mumbai on Friday, and said that he would meet with business leaders and establish partnerships that will offer opportunities to Canadian businesses and workers.

According to officials, Carney will likely sign a 10-year, US\$ 2 billion uranium supply deal and smaller agreements on oil and gas, environment, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, education and culture.

Carney was received by Maharashtra's Minister of Protocol and Marketing Jay Kumar Rawal at the airport.

This is a major visit to repair ties between India and Canada, almost two-and-a-half years after former Canada PM Justin Trudeau wrecked the relationship by alleging the role of Indian government agents in the killing of a pro-Khalistan separatist figure in Canada.

Carney is expected to meet business leaders in Mumbai on Saturday, and will also pay homage to 26/11 victims at the memorial at Taj Mahal Palace hotel. He will arrive in Delhi on Sunday evening and will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi



Canada Prime Minister Mark Carney and wife Diana Fox Carney arrive in Mumbai on Friday. AP

on Monday for bilateral talks in Hyderabad House.

After landing in Mumbai, Carney said, "India is showing the fastest growth among the world's major economies. We have just arrived in Mumbai to meet with business leaders there and establish partnerships that will offer opportunities to Canadian businesses and workers."

The Ministry of External Affairs' official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal posted on X, "A warm welcome to Prime Minister @MarkJCarney of Canada as he arrives in Mumbai on his first Official Visit to India. The visit marks a significant step in further strengthening India-Canada ties."

"The India-Canada partnership is anchored in shared democratic values, strong people-to-people ties, and expanding cooperation across diverse sectors," he said.

According to the MEA, Carney is on an official visit to India

from February 27 to March 2. This is his first official visit to India after assuming office in May last year. PM Modi had visited Canada for the G7 leaders' summit in June last year.

Over the next two days, Carney will participate in separate business engagements, interact with Indian and Canadian CEOs, industry and financial experts, innovators, educators as well as Canadian Pension Funds based in India, according to the MEA.

On March 2, the two Prime Ministers will hold delegation-level talks at Hyderabad House. "Both leaders will review the progress achieved till date across diverse areas of the India-Canada Strategic Partnership, building on their earlier meetings in Kananaskis (June 2025) and Johannesburg (November 2025). They will also take stock of ongoing cooperation in key pillars including trade and investment; energy;

critical minerals; agriculture; education, research, and innovation; and people-to-people ties. The two leaders will also exchange views on regional and global developments", the MEA said.

Modi and Carney will also attend the India-Canada CEOs Forum scheduled later in the day. The MEA said that the visit comes at an "important juncture in normalization of India-Canada bilateral relations".

"The two Prime Ministers have earlier agreed to pursue a constructive and balanced partnership grounded in mutual respect for each other's concerns and sensitivities, strong people-to-people ties, and growing economic complementarities," it said. "The forthcoming meeting between the leaders will provide an opportunity to reaffirm the positive momentum and shared vision of India and Canada in building a forward-looking partnership."

KILLING OF TWO POLICEMEN AT GURDASPUR OUTPOST

Suspect killed in encounter had fired at cops on Feb 22: Accused

Kamaldeep Singh Brar
Amritsar, February 27

PUNJAB POLICE Friday arrested a third accused for his alleged involvement in the murder of police personnel in Gurdaspur on February 22.

While Inderjit Singh (21) was nabbed Friday, police had earlier arrested Dilawar Singh and Ranjit Singh, both 19.

Meanwhile, as Dilawar was being taken to the Civil Hospital in Gurdaspur for medical examination Friday, he told reporters that Ranjit and Inderjit allegedly fired at the two policemen. The two men, he claimed, took him along for it.

Assistant sub-inspector Gurnam Singh and home guard Ashok Kumar were found dead on Sunday with

gunshot wounds inside a checkpoint in Adhian village, about 2 km from the border with Pakistan.

Earlier on Wednesday, Ranjit, a resident of Adhian village, was shot dead in an encounter after he fled from police custody. His family and political leaders have raised questions about the encounter, some calling for a judicial probe into the matter.

Speaking to reporters in Gurdaspur Friday, Dilawar also demanded a fresh post-mortem by PGIMER, Chandigarh. Ranjit's family has refused to accept his body for cremation. His uncle Gurinder Singh demanded a CBI probe into the death.

Ranjit's mother Sukhwinder Kaur had earlier said that her

son was picked up by police on Tuesday for questioning but later she came to know that he was shot dead. The family had also alleged that the CCTV cameras were taken away by police from Ranjit's village.

Political leaders continued to meet the family of Ranjit at his residence in Adhian village.

Congress leaders Partap Singh Bajwa and Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa met the family of Ranjit in Gurdaspur on Friday. "The 50-km belt around the International Border fence falls under the jurisdiction of the Border Security Force (BSF), which is a joint responsibility of the Centre and the Punjab government. Therefore, accountability cannot be deflected or diluted," Bajwa said.

India set to get new batch of eight cheetahs from Botswana today

Anand Mohan J
Bhopal, February 27

EIGHT CHEETAHS from Botswana will be flown into India on Saturday as part of the Centre's ambitious cheetah re-introduction programme, taking the total number of the big cats in the country to 46. The animals will be released into quarantine enclosures at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, where officials will closely monitor their health and behaviour before gradually preparing them for life in the wild.

The batch, comprising six

This will take the total number of big cats in the country to 46

specially prepared enclosures at the park.

Project Director Uttam Sharma told *The Indian Express* that the cheetahs are expected to reach Kuno between 9 am and 10 am on Saturday after an intercontinental flight that takes around 9-10 hours. He said the park has readied multiple quarantine enclosures and five helipads to ensure a smooth and stress-free transfer of the animals. "Our aim will be to boost the cheetah population to over 50. We have not taken a call on shifting the cheetahs to the Gandhi Sagar wildlife sanctuary," Sharma said.

Prof suspended over harassment complaint in Haryana

Express News Service
Chandigarh, February 27

AN ASSOCIATE professor at OP Jindal Global University in Sonapat, Haryana, has been suspended for one semester after a student's father accused him of "continuous harassment, humiliation and discriminatory conduct".

In a complaint filed with the Haryana Human Rights Commission (HHRC) in November 2025, Vishav Bajaj, father of undergraduate student Vikhyaat, alleged that his son was subjected to "harassment at the hands" of two faculty members. On October 31, 2025, Vikhyaat wrote an essay on URI: "The Surgical Strike" which was allegedly not liked by the teachers of the university", Vishav said in his complaint. As a result, Vikhyaat "was allegedly harassed" on November 3, 2025, it stated.

Vishav, according to the complaint, said on November 7, 2025, during the course titled "Politics of Representation" taught by the associate professor, his son repeatedly faced remarks "which were politically derogatory, inflammatory and deeply disturbing in nature".

According to the complaint, the professor's remarks also included "comparisons of the Prime Minister of India to Adolf Hitler, and characterisation of national security operations as mere branding exercises".

The student's father claimed that "certain professors... began deliberately targeting" Vikhyaat since he had praised the central government, the PM and the Indian Army. Vikhyaat also wrote a complaint to the Vice-Chancellor. The university's chief communications officer, Anjoo Mohun, said, "As per the law, the matter is being heard by the HHRC... We are fully cooperating..."

Karnataka Gov gives nod to SC internal quota bill

Bengaluru: Karnataka Governor Thawarchand Gehlot has granted assent to a bill that provides internal quotas for different Scheduled Caste (SC) communities within the SC quota in the state. The bill was passed in the state legislature in December 2025. Earlier, the governor had sent back the Karnataka Scheduled Castes (sub-classification)

Bill, 2025, seeking clarifications from the government.

"The...bill, which was passed by both Houses of the legislature, has been granted assent by the governor," Law Minister H K Patil said on Thursday, suggesting the bill received assent after seven Congress ministers met the governor to urge for the approval. ENS

Central University of Punjab
Dated: 27.02.2026
RECRUITMENT NOTICE
Online Applications are invited for following posts:
Contractual Faculty for B.Pharm.
Guest Faculty for Physical Education
Part-Time Faculty on Lecture Basis for Computer Science & Technology
Contractual Non-Teaching Posts (Veterinary Officer, Office Staff and Laboratory Attendant)

भारतीय विज्ञान शिक्षा एवं अनुसंधान संस्थान मोहाली
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH MOHALI
(Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)

Ph.D. Admission (August 2026 session)
Applications are invited from prospective candidates for admission to the Ph.D. Program at IISER Mohali. Applications are invited in the areas of Biological Sciences, Chemical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Earth & Environmental Sciences, and Humanities & Social Sciences for the session beginning in August 2026. Candidates interested in pursuing research in interdisciplinary areas are also encouraged to apply. The details of eligibility criteria, online application form and application procedure are available at <https://www.iisermohali.ac.in>. The online application facility will remain open from March 7, 2026, until March 31, 2026 11:59 PM.

भारतीय विज्ञान शिक्षा एवं अनुसंधान संस्थान मोहाली
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH MOHALI
(Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)

Integrated Ph.D. Admission (August 2026 session)
Applications are invited from prospective candidates for admission to the Integrated Ph.D. Program at IISER Mohali. Applications are invited in the areas of Biological Sciences, Chemical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Mathematical Sciences for the session beginning in August 2026. Eligibility Criteria, Other details and Application procedure: The details of eligibility criteria, online application form and application procedure are available at <https://www.iisermohali.ac.in>. Last date: The online application facility will remain open from March 7, 2026 until March 31, 2026 at 11:59 PM.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
JAWAHAR LAL NEHRU BHAWAN,
23-D JANPATH, NEW DELHI-110011

Ministry of External Affairs invites applications from interested candidates for engagement as Consultants in the UNES Division of the Ministry on contractual basis.

Detailed advertisement along with the process of submission of applications is available at Ministry's website www.mea.gov.in under the heading- Careers → Vacancies → 2026 (web link <https://www.mea.gov.in/vacancies.htm>) with the Title "Advertisement for engagement of a Consultant (UN Issues) for the UNES Division of the Ministry of External Affairs" and "Advertisement for engagement of a Consultant (Global Issues) for the UNES Division of the Ministry of External Affairs".

Last date for submission of applications is 17th March, 2026 (1730 Hrs).

CBC 14101/11/0030/2526

Tripura Natural Gas Company Limited
(A Joint Venture of GAIL (India) Ltd., Tripura Industrial Development Corporation Ltd., A Govt. of Tripura Undertaking and Assam Gas Company Ltd., A Govt. of Assam Undertaking)
Shilpa Nigam Bhawan, Khejur Bagan, Agartala, Tripura-799006
Phone: 03813500431 | email: hr@tngclonline.com
Web: www.tngclonline.com | CIN: U23201TR1990SGC003451

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN EXECUTIVE GRADE-M3.
DY MANAGER (FIRE & SAFETY)

Tripura Natural Gas Company Limited invites ONLINE applications from Indian nationals for recruitment of 01 Executive Grade-M3, Dy Manager (Fire & Safety).

For detailed advertisement, eligibility criteria, general conditions and instructions for filling the online application form please visit "CAREERS" section of TNGCL website: www.tngclonline.com.

Commencement of on-line Registration & Submission of Application 01st March 2026 (from 1100 hrs onward). Last date for on-line Registration & Submission of Application 20th March 2026 (Till 1800 hrs). Corrigendum/ Addendum, if any, will be hosted on TNGCL's website www.tngclonline.com.

Advt. No. TNGCL/OPEN/MISC/II/2026

Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi
Nursing Officer Recruitment
Common Eligibility Test (NORCET) 10
Notice No. A-12019/01/2026 Date: 27.02.2026

Online Application is invited for the Nursing Officer Recruitment Common Eligibility Test (NORCET)-10 for the recruitment of Nursing Officer posts at Level 07 in the Pay Matrix (Rs.44900-142400) Group-B for Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi through the Nursing Officer Recruitment Common Eligibility Test (NORCET)-10, to be conducted by AIIMS New Delhi as per available vacancies in the Institute.

Eligibility Criteria for appearing in NORCET

Essential Qualification

I a. B.Sc. (Hons.) in Nursing from a recognised University or Institute; or Regular Course in B.Sc Nursing from a recognised University or institute; or Post Basic B.Sc Nursing from recognised University or institute;
b. Registered as a nurse or nurse and mid-wife with State Nursing Council.

OR

II a. Diploma in General Nursing Mid-wifery from a recognised Board or Council;
b. Registered as a nurse or nurse and mid-wife with State Nursing Council; and
c. One year experience in a minimum fifty bedded Hospital after acquiring the educational qualification.

Age Limit:
1. Not exceeding thirty years. (Relaxable for Government servants upto five years in accordance with instructions or orders issued by the Central Government.)
2. Age shall be counted on the last date of closing of the application form.

APPLICATION FEES:
A) General/OBC Candidates - Rs.3000/- (Rupees Three Thousand only)
B) SC/ST Candidates/EWS - Rs.2400/- (Rupees Twenty-Four Hundred only)
C) Persons with Disabilities - Exempted

The candidate can pay the prescribed application fee through DEBIT CARD/CREDIT CARD/ NET BANKING. Transaction / Processing fee, if any, as applicable, will be payable to the bank by the candidate.

Application fee, once remitted, shall not be refunded under any circumstances.
Applications without the prescribed fee would not be considered and summarily rejected.

Application Fees of SC/ST candidates who appear in the Examination will be refunded after the declaration of results in due course of time after verification SC/ST certificate.

Online (CBT) for Stage I: NORCET Preliminary, Date: 11th April, 2026 (Saturday), Online (CBT) for Stage II: NORCET Mains, Date: 30th April, 2026 (Thursday).
Related details can be seen on our website www.cipranchi.nic.in and AIIMS website www.aiimsexams.ac.in

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF BIOLOGICALS
(Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Govt. of India)
A-32, Sector-62, Institutional Area, Phase-II, NOIDA-201309, U.P
E-mail: info@nib.gov.in, Website: www.nib.gov.in

A-2.0/2/2025-Admin-NIB Dated: 23.02.2026

Advertisement for various posts

The National Institute of Biologicals, an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is an apex scientific Institute to ensure quality of biologicals in the country. Applications are invited for the following posts on Direct Recruitment basis:-

S. No.	Posts	No. of Post	Scale of pay	Max. Age Limit	Category					
					SC	ST	OBC	UR	EWS	PwD (incl.)
1.	Scientist Grade-II	02 (Two)	Pay Matrix level-12 Rs.78800-209200+ NPA for medical personnel	45-Years	-	-	-	02	-	-
2.	Scientist Gr.III (Vet.)	01 (One)	Pay Matrix level-10 Rs.56100-177500+ NPA Veterinary personnel	35-Years	-	-	-	01	-	-
3.	Junior Scientist	12 (Twelve)	Pay Matrix level-7 Rs.44900-142400	30-Years	02	-	05	03	02	01
4.	Administrative Assistant	01 (One)	Pay Matrix level-6 Rs.35400-112400	30-Years	-	-	-	01	-	-
5.	Jr. Hindi Translator	01 (One)	Pay Matrix level-6 Rs.35400-112400	30-Years	-	-	-	01	-	-
6.	Laboratory Technician**	25 (Twenty-Five)	Pay Matrix level-6 Rs.35400-112400	30-Years	04	02	07	10	02	01
7.	Assistant-II	02 (Two)	Pay Matrix level-2 Rs.19900-63200	27-Years	-	-	-	01	01	-

*01 post for Junior Scientist and **01 post for Laboratory Technician is reserved for PWD (Orthopedically Handicapped/Hearing Handicapped).

Start date of submission of online Application Form: 09.03.2026
Last date of submission of online Application upto: 08.04.2026
Last date of submission of Hard Copy of Application upto: 14.04.2026 (up to 5:30 PM).
(for North-Eastern Region) 21.04.2026 (up to 5:30 PM)

Online link (under Career Tab) will be available live from 09.03.2026

The hard copy of online application form along with all self-attested testimonials, certificates/educational qualifications and all supporting documents should reach to "The Director, National Institute of Biologicals (Ministry of Health & Family Welfare) A-32, Sector-62, Institutional Area Noida U.P. 201 309" in closed envelop within a week from the last date of submission of Online Application Form, positively by 14.04.2026 (up to 5:30 PM) and for North-Eastern Region by 21.04.2026 (up to 5:30 PM) by Speed Post / Registered Post only, failing which the application will be rejected. The envelope containing the application form should be superscribed with "Application for the post of...".

For detailed advertisement refer to Employment News Issue 07-13 March 2026/ Institute Official Website <https://nib.gov.in/career1.aspx>

Director, NIB

GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE
(PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WELFARE BRANCH)
7th FLOOR, MSO BUILDING, ITO, NEW DELHI-110002

ADMISSION NOTICE

Applications are invited for admission to the Atal Drishti-Hostel for College-Going Blind Students (Girls) at Timarpur, Delhi, run by the Department of Social Welfare, GNCTD, for the students studying in Delhi but are not able to get accommodation in the college hostels.

Eligibility

- Female unmarried totally blind students, who are bonafide residents of Delhi (Partially blind are not eligible).
- Maximum age up to 25 years.
- Passed Senior Secondary (10+2) examination from CBSE or other recognized Board/Passed B.A examination from University in Delhi.
- Blind daughters of Govt./Defense employees posted outside Delhi may also be considered, subject to availability of seats.
- Students of correspondence/evening colleges, and those who have passed M.A. and pursuing M.Phil., Ph.D., B.Ed., LLB, or other PG/Professional courses are not eligible.

Admission Procedure

- Apply in prescribed form (available at <https://socialwelfare.delhi.gov.in>) with required documents.
- Applicants will be interviewed by the Admission Committee and the decision of the Committee shall be final.
- Selected candidates must deposit ₹500 refundable caution money or submit a surety bond of equivalent amount.
- Admission/re-admission is not a matter of right.
- No admission shall be made during the mid academic session/year.

Facilities: Fooding & Bedding article as per Manual of Department of Social Welfare.
Note: Hostellers are required to apply for re-admission every year at the commencement of the academic session, subject to the hosteller following the rules and regulations of the hostel
Note: Students must apply for admission within 30 days of publication of admission.

Sd/-
Dr. Director (Media)
Department of Social Welfare
Govt. of NCT of Delhi

DIP/Shabdarth/Classified/0454/25-26

झारखण्ड राज्य प्रदूषण नियंत्रण पर्सद
JHARKHAND STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD
T.A. DIVISION BUILDING (GROUND FLOOR), H.E.C., DHURWA, RANCHI - 834004
Phone: 0651-2400851/2400852/2400979/2401847, Fax-0651-2400850/138,
Web site: www.jspcb.org.in; e-mail: ranchijspcb@gmail.com

सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि बैटरी अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन नियम, 2022 (Battery Waste Management Rules 2022) के अनुसार अपशिष्ट बैटरियों के पुनर्चक्रण (Recycling) / पुनर्निर्माण (Refurbishing) से संबंधित सभी इकाइयों के लिए निम्न अनिवार्य है:

- केंद्रीय प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड (CPCB) के (EPR) पोर्टल पर पंजीकरण
- झारखण्ड राज्य प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड (JSPCB) से Consent to Establish (CTE) एवं Consent to Operate (CTO) प्राप्त करना

उपरोक्त के अलावा सभी संबंधितों को सूचित किया जाता है कि स्थापना सहमति (CTE) एवं संचालन सहमति (CTO) हेतु आवेदन बोर्ड के ऑनलाइन पोर्टल <https://jhkocmms.nic.in/OCMMS> पर करना सुनिश्चित करें, अन्यथा नियमानुसार कार्रवाई की जाएगी।

(राजीव लोचन बक्शी)
सदस्य सचिव

PR 373755 (Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board) 25-26 (D)

The Indian EXPRESS

~ FOUNDED BY ~

RAMNATH GOENKA

IN 1932

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Verdict vindicates

Kejriwal, and due process

THE ORDER of Special Judge Jitendra Singh of Rouse Avenue Court, acquitting former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy CM, Manish Sisodia, among 23 of the accused discharged in the Delhi liquor policy case, is essential reading for the CBI and the government. It is a reminder of the fundamental salience of due process — much needed when central agencies are weaponised by the ruling party on a witchhunt against political opponents. Ever since the CBI filed the FIR in the case of the subsequently scrapped excise policy in August 2022, it cast a lengthening shadow on the Aam Aadmi Party. For the AAP, allegations of corruption were especially fraught, given that it was born in the throes of the Anna Hazare-led movement. The case weighed down the Kejriwal government, led to the spectacle of a sitting chief minister being sent to jail, and overhung the 2025 assembly election campaign in Delhi, arguably playing a role in the AAP's defeat at the hands of the BJP. The court has now called a halt to this saga, and sent an unequivocal message: Not without due process.

While striking down the CBI's case of criminal intent and overarching conspiracy, the court has objected to its method — the CBI's reliance on approver statements acquired after pardoning an accused. It has rebuked the agency, sternly and rightly, for using the expression "South Group" — the CBI claimed that individuals based in Hyderabad paid kickbacks to AAP leaders. "Region-based labelling", the court said, constitutes "constitutional infirmity", because "criminal trials must be about what the defendant did, not who the defendant is". The court takes apart the CBI case, bit by bit, pointing out that the prosecution material does not meet the threshold of legally admissible evidence, that failure of a policy is not by itself proof of criminality, that allegations of conspiracy cannot rest on inferences or uncorroborated statements of witnesses. It points to the holes in the case because of lack of seizures or financial trail. "A procedure which permits prolonged or indefinite incarceration on the basis of a provisional and untested allegation... risks degenerating into a punitive process rather than a regulatory or investigative one," it says.

For the AAP, especially Kejriwal and Sisodia, this is a moment of vindication. For the CBI and the government, this is a chastening moment, which will hopefully have a restraining effect when they next seek to unleash a vindictive politics. In times when checks and balances on power are weakening, a special court in Delhi has sent out a message resonant and reassuring in a democracy: Justice may be delayed but can never be denied.

PM's Israel visit frames a Delhi shift

IT IS unsurprising that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel this week has revived arguments about India's foreign-policy values. Since Independence, India's policy towards Israel and the wider Middle East has been held to a moral standard rarely applied to other bilateral relationships. The expectation that Delhi must express unequivocal outrage at Israeli actions in Gaza — while remaining largely silent on comparable behaviour by other states — reflects this. The debate is further distorted by domestic politics. Congress is often accused of posturing on the Middle East to woo the minority vote, while the BJP's enthusiasm for Israel is seen as an extension of its Hindutva agenda. But India cannot allow internal politics to overwhelm its national interests in a region central to its peace and prosperity.

Undeniably, the PM's visit marks a shift toward greater pragmatism in India's Middle East policy. Arriving at a moment of regional transition, Modi used his address to the Knesset to underscore India's shared interests with Israel in countering terrorism and extremism, and to signal an unambiguous commitment to elevate the partnership to a higher strategic level. At the same time, he signalled that India is not abandoning its support for the Palestinian cause. At the core of this calibrated approach was Modi's endorsement of US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan. India's focus is now shifting from rhetoric to signalling readiness to contribute to peace and reconstruction of Gaza.

The moral burden on India's Israel policy is increasingly untenable in the face of profound changes sweeping the Middle East. Israel has emerged as a dominant military power with expanding ties across the region — including with former adversaries. Meanwhile, the willingness of leading Arab and Muslim states to work with Trump's peace plan — even after accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza and the US of complicity — underscores the gap between their rhetoric and individual national interests. Several influential Islamic countries have joined the Board of Peace and agreed to participate in the Gaza Stabilisation Force. The unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 2803, widely viewed as favourable to Israel, highlights how far the global approach to the Palestinian question has shifted. It also exposes the growing disconnect between global realpolitik on Gaza and the performative moralpolitik embedded in India's domestic discourse.

Because to write is to think

EILEEN GU is the most decorated freestyle skier in the history of the Olympics. She is tough, bright, and fearless. She is also, it turns out, a journalist. In a recent press interaction, the 22-year-old responded to a query about her ability to respond thoughtfully to questions on any subject from "geopolitics to sports to aerodynamics", by talking about the writing habit that helps her "break down her thought processes".

Because thinking is an activity that requires far more intention than merely allowing thoughts to drift in. Left alone, an idea or impression may well float out again and be lost forever. Writing is what makes the nebulous concrete; by forcing the brain to pay attention, it forces the assembling and synthesising of information, pinning down the elusive and making connections that illuminate and define. There is evidence to back up the assertion that writing clarifies thought and shapes understanding and perception. Multiple studies have shown a strong link between the physical act of writing and the creation and deepening of interconnections in the brain's vast neural network, leading to better memory and comprehension.

Writers, of course, have always known this: To write is to think. Indeed, Joan Didion once said that she never really knows what she is thinking until she has put pen to paper — a conviction echoed by other practitioners of the written word, such as Flannery O'Connor, Stephen King and Kurt Vonnegut. In the age of the intelligent machine, it is good to remember that it is these small acts of rigour — of observation, record and clarification — that really shape human knowledge.

THE CAPTIVE *Mind*, Czesław Miłosz's searing anatomy of authoritarianism, tells a story drawn from an older Polish novel by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, *Insatiability*. Europe is about to be overrun by a Sino-Mongolian army that dominates from the Pacific to the Baltic. The country facing invasion is unhappy and paralysed. Suddenly, hawks appear, peddling something called the "Murti-Bing" pill. Those who take it become so happy that they do not even regard colonisation as a tragedy for their civilisation. They adapt cheerfully to their new rulers.

Miłosz's book is a catalogue of the many Murti-Bing pills by which citizens, but especially intellectuals, justified submission to power: Ideological adjustment, self-deception and fear. But even he might not have reckoned that the most effective Murti-Bing pill of our time would be something called "realism" in both international and domestic affairs. In India, realism presents itself as tough-minded and unsentimental. It claims to grasp the world as it is. It prides itself on puncturing the illusions of moralists. In its imagination, moralists are mere sloganeers, whining away. Realism invokes prudence and responsibility, contrasting them with what it portrays as empty idealism.

We are told in international relations to "understand the nature of power". We must adapt to new imperial realities. Of course, bargains with the United States will be asymmetrical; you are dealing with a more powerful actor. Only a dimwit would fail to grasp this. Offering moral *carte blanche* to Israel, as our Prime Minister recently did, is described as realism. To question such policies is to indulge in moral narcissism. It is manlier

to accept the world of power and adapt, any talk of justice be damned.

This supposed realism in international affairs also has an exact domestic analogue. When faced with authoritarian tendencies at home, citizens are told not to ask what their rights are, but to understand how power works and adapt accordingly. Speaking up is naïve. Protesting is foolish. Pointing out that the emperor has no clothes is irresponsible. The logic is identical: Power is truth. Take the Murti-Bing pill of realism and you will sleep soundly. As Miłosz understood, this narcotic sustains both imperialism and authoritarianism.

India needs to be aware of this self-deception. Realists will often lend more succour to imperialists and authoritarians than ideological zealots ever could, because they cloak adaptation in the language of truth. Any serious thinker knows that moral aspiration collides with constraint. Conviction without understanding causal realities can shade into irresponsibility. As Max Weber, a realist of a different mould, reminded us, political action requires an ethics of responsibility, not mere purity of conviction.

But our contemporary realists are not exemplars of tragic wisdom. They practise a subtler alchemy. Miłosz charted the shift whereby we move from a moral question — is this right? — to a seemingly sober question: Is this historically possible? The twist is that historical possibility quietly becomes "whatever those in power declare feasible". What presents itself as analysis becomes a counsel of submission.

Three features define this contemporary Indian realism. First, in



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

Realism promises toughness. In practice, it produces softness: Softness toward power, hardness toward the powerless. This is why the damage realism does is so corrosive. It becomes a 'suck up, kick down' philosophy

international relations, whatever the regime does is christened realist. Submit to American primacy: Realist. Stand up to China: Realist. Engage China: Realist. Buy oil from Russia: Realist. Stop buying oil from Russia: Realist. Placate Benjamin Netanyahu: Realist. Placate Saudi Arabia: Realist. Start a war: Realist. Avoid a war: Realist. Realism here has no criteria independent of power's choices. It does not discipline policy, it ratifies it. This is not tragic responsibility. It is an adaptive preference-formation in service of authority — the Murti-Bing pill administered after the fact.

Second, this realism reveals a curious psychological affinity between imperialism abroad and authoritarianism at home. Anti-imperialism and anti-authoritarianism should spring from the same disposition: Resistance to arbitrary and concentrated power. Yet, the habit of submitting to global hierarchies in the name of historical necessity easily mutates into submission to domestic concentration of power. The underlying disposition is the same.

Third, this realism suffers from a striking lack of imagination. Miłosz's deepest complaint against those who accommodated authoritarianism was not that they were wicked, but that they ceased to think. Appeals to necessity, historical or geopolitical, foreclose political options. Moralists can indeed hide behind slogans. But at least they preserve the possibility that the world might be otherwise. All boundaries are first pushed in the imagination. The comfort of contemporary realism is to insist that adaptation to power is all there is. In doing so, the realist

forecloses the possibility of alternative political action. Often, you open up new spaces and possibilities by trying out new forms of political action, not by taking the constraints of power as fixed.

Realism promises toughness. In practice, it produces softness: Softness toward power, hardness toward the powerless. This is why the damage realism does is so corrosive. It becomes a "suck up, kick down" philosophy. Many well-intentioned realist friends will counsel, "do not criticise Donald Trump or Narendra Modi". They do so not because they might disagree on the substance of the criticism but because it is apparently imprudent. In the next breath, however, they will excoriate a minor bureaucrat, a small-time swindler, a protestor blocking traffic, or even the leader of the Opposition, or some middle-power country. If prudence demands silence before concentrating on executive power, why does it not demand restraint before lesser actors? If power must always be accommodated, why is this accommodation selectively upward? It tells you more about the courage of the realist than it tells you about the demands of the world. If your philosophy of criticism is that you will stay silent in the face of massive power, you ought to forfeit even the right to criticise minions.

The realist uses adaptation to power like a Murti-Bing pill, passing off abdication as wisdom. No wonder we are more genuflecting to imperialism now than when we were weak, and happier with authoritarianism than when we were poorer. This kind of realism is seldom on the side of the future.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

AAP gets a second chance, an opportunity to renew itself



ASHUTOSH

ARVIND KEJRIWAL and his team can now sleep well. They can go to the people and say that he is anything but corrupt. It is not a coincidence or theatrics that Kejriwal broke down before the media after the court verdict exonerating him.

He had emerged as a shining star in Indian politics because of his crusade against corruption. He was a product of the Anna movement, a revolt against a political establishment perceived as highly corrupt. But the Modi government tried to destroy Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party by turning the sword of corruption against them. The results of the Delhi elections show that, in a large measure, the BJP did succeed in painting them as corrupt.

But that does not mean that Kejriwal has not inherited the sins of politics-as-usual. The verdict on the liquor scam is a God-sent opportunity to take corrective measures and reset the party. The AAP had emerged as a beacon of hope and as a revolt. Tragically, those who wanted to change the system ended up absorbed by it.

It is the same system that conspired against Kejriwal. In the last few years, the system has become so brazen and ruthless that it has thrown away whatever semblance of morality it once had.

Now, politics is a race for power in its crudest form. Winning elections is everything; it does not matter how they are won.

Kejriwal was the biggest thorn for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Narendra Modi. Kejriwal and the AAP gave Modi the biggest defeat of his political career. Despite Modi's phenomenal popularity, the BJP could win only three seats in the 2015 assembly election and again only eight out of 70 in 2020.

The 2025 election was revenge for those defeats. The AAP lost its bastion, Delhi. The BJP used corruption, an issue that made Kejriwal's political career, against him. For this, the "liquor scam" and "Sheesh Mahal" proved to be more than handy.

But if the court's verdict has proved Kejriwal innocent and gives him an

opportunity to project himself as a victim, it also exposes the BJP and the Modi government.

The chargesheet filed by the CBI could not withstand the scrutiny of the court. The CBI could not present a single credible witness or piece of evidence to convince the court that the matter should be tried. Let's remember that the chargesheet was so frivolous that the court refused to frame charges against the accused.

This was the same CBI that had arrested a sitting chief minister just before the parliamentary elections. The BJP wove a grand narrative that Kejriwal was the "biggest fraud" on Earth.

I refuse to believe that CBI officers did not know that the case would not withstand the scrutiny of the court. They knew. However, they were bound not by their commitment to the rule of law or to the Constitution, but to their loyalty to their political masters. And now, the CBI has to pay the price.

The court has wondered if departmental action against officers responsible for the case would follow.

I don't know how much dividend Kejriwal will get from this verdict. What is clear is that the entire Opposition has a solid, believable argument that the Modi government is unconstitutionally using central agencies to target the Opposition for its political benefit.

The Kejriwal case is an issue on which the entire Opposition should unite and present their case to the people. They should lodge a criminal case against the CBI to deter officers and agencies from targeting opposition leaders with fake or frivolous cases.

This is also an opportunity for Kejriwal to reinvent himself as a leader, and to renew the AAP as a harbinger of moral politics.

Will it happen? I am not sure. The Kejriwal I used to know would certainly have seized the moment, but I know very little of this Kejriwal. Therefore, I will keep my fingers crossed.

The writer is co-founder of SatyaHindi and author of Reclaiming Bharat

India-Canada reset is vital in the time of Trump



AMEN NAITHANI AND ELIZABETH ROCHE

CANADIAN PM Mark Carney's visit to India this week is expected to place the bilateral relationship — which touched a nadir in 2023 with Ottawa accusing New Delhi of being involved in the murder of a Canadian national — on a more stable footing. The logic for the reset in India-Canada ties was outlined by Carney himself in a speech at the WEF in Davos in January: "The middle powers must act together, because if you're not at the table, you're on the menu." Amid cracks in the global order, Ottawa has pivoted from a "laid-back" observer to a vocal protagonist, aggressively courting new alliances in the Indo-Pacific to absorb the shocks delivered by President Donald Trump to the once unified West.

Canada's transformation also comes at a critical time for India, which is looking to diversify its partnerships. What will prove helpful is Carney's economic expertise. With Canada looking for new markets to replace the business opportunities lost in the US, Carney should look at India, with a middle class comparable in numbers to the entire US population, as an economic opportunity, replacing surface-level engagements with deep-rooted linkages. In September 2023, ties hit a historic low when then PM Justin Trudeau accused the Indian government of involvement in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, an Indian-origin Canadian Sikh. The result was a total diplomatic freeze that lasted nearly two years. But ahead of the visit, Ottawa concluded that India was not involved in violent criminal activity on Canadian soil.

A quiet, constructive meeting between PM Narendra Modi and Carney at the G7 summit in Kananaskis in June 2025, followed by deeper and longer bilateral meetings at the G20 in Johannesburg in November 2025, set the stage for a reset. Incidentally, bilateral goods trade grew to roughly \$13.3 billion in 2024, despite the chill in relations. During Carney's visit, both are expected to conclude a \$2.8-billion deal for uranium supplies to India for a decade. For an India aiming to massively expand its civilian nuclear energy capacity, Canadian uranium is a necessity. The official reboot of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations is also on the cards. CEPA has the ambitious goal of doubling bilateral trade to \$60 billion by 2030.

That being said, challenges remain. The deep-seated disagreements that triggered the 2023 crisis have not vanished; they have simply been moved to a different track. But the diplomatic channels are back to work along with the reinstatement of the high commissioners. NSA Ajit Doval's visit to Ottawa earlier this month ensured the delicate balance. Security dialogues run parallel to economic progress, rather than impeding it. Doval and his counterpart, Nathalie G Drouin, agreed to a "shared work plan" to guide cooperation. The real anchor of this relationship remains the people. With nearly 4,30,000 Indian students in Canada and a diaspora that is deeply integrated into the Canadian political and economic fabric, the people-to-people ties were always too strong to snap. They are the reason why, even at the height of the freeze, the two nations never stopped talking entirely.

Naithani is research associate, CSDR, and Roche is associate professor, O P Jindal Global University

40 YEARS AGO

February 28, 1986



Proposal for Sri Lanka crisis

THE SRI Lankan government has come forward with a "new paper" (set of proposals) to find a solution to the ethnic problem, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi told the Lok Sabha. Gandhi expressed the hope that this would be "a move forward". The PM was replying to a three-day debate on the motion of thanks to the President for his address to the joint session of Parliament. "We are in touch with the Sri Lankan government," he said.

Last-minute plea by MPs

CONGRESS (I) MPs who have been overwhelmingly opposing the Muslim Women's Bill are now set to make a last-minute plea to Prime

Minister Rajiv Gandhi, to leave the controversial Bill to the joint select panel. Over 100 MPs, mostly from the vast Hindi region, have made this suggestion during their meetings with the Law Minister, A K Sen, the Home Minister, S B Chavan, and the Parliamentary Minister, H K L Bhagat.

Kashmiris march in protest

HUNDREDS OF members of the Kashmiri community in New Delhi took out a silent march to protest the large-scale violence against the minority community in the Kashmir Valley. While some had their faces covered with black handkerchiefs and wore black badges, others carried placards calling for an "end to genocide". A large number of

women and children also participated in the march to Boat Club from Jantar Mantar organised by the Delhi Kashmiri Samiti.

Pak may gain from US strategy

US PRESIDENT Ronald Reagan has outlined a four-point strategy that Washington would follow as part of its defence build-up aimed at bringing America to a "position of strength in order to negotiate with the Soviets". Reagan pointed out that his administration had raised the flow of military aid to Islamabad to combat the "Soviet threat" from across the Afghan border. Reagan's reference to Pakistan was seen by South Asian experts in Washington as indicating the possibility of greater military assistance to Islamabad.



SC defends institution's dignity. It must extend its vigilance to communities



S Y QURAISHI

THE SUPREME Court's recent *suo motu* intervention over an NCERT textbook passage allegedly portraying judicial corruption is a welcome and timely assertion of institutional responsibility. By acting swiftly and decisively, it has reaffirmed a foundational principle: That public institutions, especially those entrusted with constitutional authority, must be protected from casual or deliberate disparagement — more so in educational material that shapes young minds. More importantly, the Court has signalled that reputational harm, when normalised, can erode public trust in ways not easily reversible. The authority of institutions rests not only on legal mandate but on public confidence; once this is systematically weakened, constitutional governance itself begins to fray.

This intervention, however, opens up a larger constitutional question. If the dignity of institutions must be protected against misrepresentation, does the same principle extend, by necessary implication, to the dignity of communities who form the fabric of the republic? The Constitution does not recognise hierarchies of dignity. Its guarantees are structured on the premise that respect for persons, groups, and institutions is mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive.

India's textbooks have long been instruments of nation-building. They do more than convey information; they shape civic imagination. What is included, what is emphasised, and what is omitted influence how citizens come to understand their society and each other. Recent revisions have, therefore, drawn attention not merely to what is written, but to what is no longer there.

In 2022-23, references to the Gujarat riots were dropped from Class 12 Political Science textbooks. References to the Babri Masjid demolition were first diluted, then removed, while the treatment of the Mughal period was significantly reduced. The treatment of caste struggles and Dalit assertion was pared down, with much of its earlier texture and nuance diminished. Each of these changes



ILLUSTRATION: C R SASIKUMAR

may be defensible in isolation. But taken together, they suggest a movement away from contested histories that democracies must learn to confront.

The concern is not partisan. Curricular revision is a constant feature of governance, and no political era is untouched by it. The deeper issue is structural: The relationship between education and honesty. A textbook that sanitises history produces ignorance dressed as truth, as shaped by prevailing public discourse.

Representation in textbooks is not merely academic; it shapes civic imagination in ways both subtle and enduring. When a community is encountered largely through episodes of conflict, its contributions recede and its identity risks being reduced to a stereotype. Equally, when a community with a long and well-documented history of oppression is presented primarily through narratives of suffering, an unintended distortion can arise: Its culture, intellectual traditions, reform movements, and leadership risk being overshadowed, leaving an incomplete picture. Acknowledging historical injustice is essential, but so is recognising the fullness of a community's experience.

These are not falsehoods in the conventional sense. They are partial truths, which, repeated often enough, harden into prejudice. The damage is deeper precisely because it is invisible, absorbed before the

A democracy cannot afford selective vigilance. If the law acts decisively when institutions are maligned but hesitates when communities are stereotyped or vilified, it risks creating an unintended hierarchy of concern

tools to question it are formed.

It is in this broader context that the Court's recent articulation assumes far wider significance. Justice Ujjal Bhuyan has observed that it is constitutionally impermissible — whether by the state or non-state actors — to vilify or denigrate any community on grounds of religion, caste, language or region. Grounded in the constitutional value of fraternity, this observation elevates the discussion from institutional protection to a more expansive doctrine of social dignity.

Fraternity, often the least discussed of the Constitution's founding ideals, is in fact the glue that binds liberty and equality into a functioning democratic order. Without fraternity, equality becomes formal and liberty becomes fragmented. The Court's reminder is therefore not ornamental; it is structural. To vilify a community is not merely to injure sentiment — it is to weaken the constitutional promise of belonging.

The constitutional architecture supporting this principle is both explicit and expansive. The Preamble speaks of fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual. Article 14 guarantees equality before the law. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on specified grounds. Article 21, as expansively interpreted, protects dignity as an intrinsic component of life and liberty. Article 51A(e) imposes a duty to promote harmony and common brotherhood. Read

together, these provisions create not merely a set of enforceable rights, but a normative framework within which public discourse must operate.

The statutory framework reinforces this position. Provisions such as Sections 153A, 153B, 295A and 505 of the Indian Penal Code criminalise the promotion of enmity and the vilification of communities. These are not obscure or rarely invoked provisions; they form the backbone of the legal response to hate speech and communal incitement. Yet, their enforcement has often appeared uneven, particularly when such narratives are normalised in everyday discourse. The law exists, the prohibitions are clear, but the threshold of intervention seems to shift depending on context, visibility, and perhaps even the identity of those affected.

This gap between constitutional promise, statutory clarity, and institutional response is where the challenge lies. A democracy cannot afford selective vigilance. If the law acts decisively when institutions are maligned but hesitates when communities are stereotyped or vilified, it risks creating an unintended hierarchy of concern. Such asymmetry does not strengthen institutions; it ultimately weakens them by eroding the moral coherence of the constitutional order.

Seen in this light, the Court's intervention marks more than a defence of institutional reputation. It gestures toward a broader constitutional doctrine: That dignity — whether of institutions or communities — is indivisible. The same constitutional morality that protects courts from defamation must, by extension, protect citizens from vilification.

What this moment offers, therefore, is an opportunity for greater consistency in the application of constitutional values. If dignity is to be defended, it must be defended across the board, with the same clarity, urgency, and seriousness. For the real test of a democracy lies not only in how it protects its institutions, but in how it protects its people.

Let this landmark order mark a turning point — an end to a pattern of judicial hesitation in confronting the broader ecosystem of vilification, and a reaffirmation that the Constitution's promise of dignity must be defended with equal clarity, whether the subject is an institution or a community.

Quraishi is former Chief Election Commissioner of India and the author of books including Democracy's Heartland: Inside the Battle for Power in South Asia

A storm is brewing in the Indian Ocean Region



RAM RAJYA

BY RAM MADHAV

UNTIL A few years ago, we believed that the world's worst trouble spot would be in the western Pacific due to simmering tensions between the Western powers and China over the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, and the East China Sea. The world has heard the aggressive political rhetoric of the Joe Biden and Donald Trump administrations against China, matched by the deployment of American naval assets in great numbers, converting the region between China and Japan into a de facto conflict zone.

But in his second term, President Trump talks less about Taiwan and the South China Sea. It now appears that the world's worst flashpoints have shifted from the western Pacific to the Indian Ocean. The US has begun a massive military build-up around Iran. If that mobilisation is any indication, Iran is going to be the new global flashpoint.

In his State of the Union Address earlier this week, Trump stated: "My preference is to solve this problem through diplomacy. But one thing is certain — I will never allow the world's number one sponsor of terror, which they are by far, to have a nuclear weapon. Can't let that happen." Referring to Operation Midnight Hammer, the American strike on Iranian nuclear facilities in June last year, Trump complained that although "we wiped it out, they want to start all over again". Meanwhile, in Geneva, in the final round of negotiations, US representatives are reportedly insisting that Iran give up its enrichment activities at all the nuclear plants, including Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan.

Conflict over the Iranian nuclear issue would not be a limited one and would drag in the entire Indian Ocean region. Iran's resistance to US pressure, which Trump's special representative Steve Witkoff described as "frustrating" for the president, indicates that it has its own plans in case war breaks out. Iran conducted joint naval exercises with Russia recently in the Arabian Sea. While Israel will be a willing partner in any conflict involving Iran, countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and Jordan, which house important US military bases and assets, could also

be dragged into the conflict.

Meanwhile, Trump is trying to reopen the Diego Garcia issue by insisting that the UK should not hand sovereignty over the Chagos Islands to Mauritius. Ending a decades-old dispute, Mauritius and the UK formally signed an agreement in May last year under which the latter agreed to transfer sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius. In turn, the Mauritius government would lease Diego Garcia back to the UK government for 99 years. The

agreement is yet to be ratified by the UK parliament. Calling the ratification a "big mistake", Trump intensified pressure on the Labour government, contending that he needed the Diego Garcia military base, which the US and UK jointly operate, in the event of a war against Iran. In a Truth Social post earlier this month, he wrote, "Should Iran decide not to make a Deal, it may be necessary for the United States to use Diego Garcia... DO NOT GIVE AWAY DIEGO GARCIA!"

The Diego Garcia issue is not limited to the Iran conflict alone. It is spilling over into a regional conflagration in the western Indian Ocean, too. In early February, Mohamed Muizzu, president of the Maldives, informed the country's parliament that his government had "submitted written representations to the United Kingdom on 8 November 2024 and 18 February 2026, formally objecting to the UK's decision to cede ownership of Chagos to Mauritius". He went on to argue that historical evidence proves that "Chagos forms part of the sovereignty of the Maldivian state" and insisted that "we are committed to reclaiming the lost maritime area". Although under the radar at the moment, this issue has the potential to create serious tensions between the Maldives and Mauritius, irrespective of what happens in Iran.

This week also witnessed tensions peaking between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif called it an "open war" as his country launched airstrikes on Kabul. Earlier, he also accused India of conniving with Afghanistan against it.

Indian Ocean powers like India, Indonesia, and others need to take these developments seriously. India supported the UK-Mauritius agreement to transfer sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius. Iran and Afghanistan have been its traditional allies. In the newly evolving conflict in its immediate neighbourhood, can it remain silent? Is it time India took the lead in building trans-Indian Ocean partnerships to proactively address these regional challenges?

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OPS joins DMK

WITH O Panneerselvam (OPS) joining the DMK, the exodus of other leaders and cadres from the AIADMK has begun ("Former Tamil Nadu CM O Panneerselvam joins DMK in CM Stalin's presence", IE Web, February 27). The manner in which OPS was treated by E Palaniswami, the AIADMK chief who scuttled all his attempts to rejoin the party, only accelerated OPS's decision.

Tharcus S Fernando, Chennai

NCERT row

THE CONTROVERSY surrounding the NCERT textbook raises questions far larger than a single chapter ("The Court's textbook lesson, much needed", IE, February 27). A classroom must remain a space for inquiry, not insulation. If students are introduced to the idea that there can be misconduct within the judiciary, as in any public institution, that acknowledgment need not weaken democracy. On the contrary, it can strengthen young citizens' understanding that accountability is integral to constitutional governance.

Monyu Angla, Bengaluru

THE EXTENT of action by the Supreme Court over the inclusion of a section on "Corruption in the Judiciary" in an NCERT textbook raises many questions about its propriety. The existence of corruption has been acknowledged even by past CJIs on many occasions ("The Court's textbook lesson, much needed", IE, February 27). Now, going one step further, the executive seems to be on a witch-hunt in the name of fixing accountability. Sweeping the dirt under the rug will not solve the rot that is eating into the most sacred pillar of democracy. Discussions may be held on the appropriate grade at which to introduce such a topic, but not on the topic itself. The sanctity of the judicial office in the public's estimation is created by its actions, not by imposing sanctions.

Farouque Sayeed Nasser, Dwarka



ROHINI NILEKANI

CAN YOU recall when you last sent a cheque to organisations for disaster relief? If this question were put up 20 years ago, many readers might have responded positively. Unfortunately, since then, we have been witnessing "disaster fatigue" in the country. This is not surprising, yet it is alarming. Just when disasters have become concurrent and continuous throughout the year, people are withdrawing their generosity.

At my philanthropic foundation, we recently released a report, commissioned with Dalberg, titled 'Resilience — Moving beyond surviving climate disasters to supporting communities to thrive'. We hope it will help shift the mental model in India towards anticipatory action and funding. Climate change has arrived in all our lives, affecting vulnerable communities in particular.

In 2023, 85 per cent of districts experienced floods, droughts, or cyclones. From the Himalayas to the coastline, every region is at risk. Extreme weather events, including severe heat, occurred on 86 per cent of days that year. If the trend lines and modelling we have showcased are any indication, we must be prepared for much worse. The economic toll of these events is severe. The nationwide annual losses were \$12 billion, and for poor households, it can be up to 85 per

Whether in education, healthcare or any other sector, there are climate adjacencies to be addressed. Philanthropy can provide the capital needed to rethink the future

cent of their annual income from just one disaster. We argue in the report that there is no choice left but to build better community-level resilience. India has made remarkable progress in saving lives during cyclones and floods. But that is no longer enough. People want to thrive, not just survive.

To build resilience, we need to reimagine development, such as rethinking dam design, and building trust and capacity at a local level to enable the needed response in the *samaaj* before and after a disaster strikes. *Sarkaar* at the local level has to be financially empowered; the *bazaar* can step in meaningfully. Global evidence shows such investments are sound. Every \$1 invested in risk reduction and adaptation can save up to \$15 in post-disaster response and recovery.

There is much innovation on the ground waiting to be scaled. SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) has pioneered a heat insurance scheme that triggers automatic payouts when extreme heat beyond 40°C persists for two consecutive days. It operates in three states with 50,000 women members. The Council on Energy, Environment and Water has created a climate and heat risk atlas for the country and works closely with governments to build implementable action plans. ASAR and Equi-

noct have helped communities in Ernakulam, Kerala document tidal flooding that impacts lakhs of people. SEEDS (Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society) has innovated an AI-enabled e-disaster wallet that allows communities to authenticate their potential asset losses before an event, so that government and philanthropy aid can flow more seamlessly post any event.

Whether in education, healthcare, skill building, agriculture or any other sector, there are climate adjacencies that will have to be addressed urgently. Philanthropy can provide both the high-risk capital and the patient capital needed to rethink the future.

So far, we have responded to disasters with a top-down, standardised approach. Governments work for communities, not enough with them. This must change — people can be agents of their own resilience.

This is the right time to shift to a nationwide effort to build community resilience and strengthen physical, financial, human, social, and natural capital at the ground level. Most of all, we need to reignite the empathy we all showed ourselves capable of during the pandemic. If we do, there is great hope that India will be ready for the future shock.

The writer is chairperson, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, and author of Samaaj, Sarkaar, Bazaar: A citizen-first approach

Disaster resilience, of, by and for the people

AI leaders have a communication challenge

emotional responses. But context matters.

I was fortunate to be there in person, listening to Altman. Those 60 minutes gave a great insight into his perspective. I urge you to watch the full interview; you'll find something quite different: A technologist deeply grounded in human values.

In the entire conversation, the remark did not land as a moral comparison. It was framed as a technical explanation — an attempt to illustrate that intelligence, whether biological or artificial, requires enormous input. Human cognition is shaped by decades of nutrition, education, care, and social investment. AI systems require data, compute power, electricity and infrastructure.

The analogy was not presented as a statement about the value of human life. It was a systems-level explanation of cost

and creation. What struck me more in the broader discussion was not detachment, but reflection. Altman spoke about a hospital experience where a nurse's empathy left a lasting impression — something he acknowledged no machine could replicate. He was clear that while AI can assist, synthesise and accelerate, it cannot replace warmth, presence or human care. When asked what he would never use AI for, he said he would not turn to ChatGPT for guidance on happiness. Information is

Public trust in AI leaders is fragile. Every metaphor is scrutinised through a lens of anxiety — about jobs, agency, what it means to be human

not wisdom. Data is not lived experience. That distinction remains deeply human.

He also spoke as a parent, expressing concern about excessive screen exposure and the growing culture of infinite scroll. Perhaps the most interesting part of the conversation was his view on value in an AI-driven future. As technology makes knowledge and services cheaper and more abundant, he suggested that what becomes scarce — and more precious — is human connection.

This episode revealed something larger. Public trust in AI leaders is fragile. Every metaphor is scrutinised through a lens of anxiety — about jobs, agency, what it means to be human in a world increasingly shaped by algorithms. In this environment, communication matters more than ever. Engineers often speak in terms of systems and inputs. Audiences

hear implications about identity and value. Both reactions are real.

The challenge before technology leaders is not only to build responsibly, but to communicate responsibly. For audiences, the challenge is to allow space for full conversations before forming definitive conclusions.

The debate around AI's energy consumption is legitimate. So are concerns about its social impact. These are not trivial discussions. But reducing a nuanced exchange to a single line risks oversimplifying both the technology and the intent behind it. AI forces us to re-examine how we define intelligence, value and creativity. That examination deserves depth. In an era when clips outrun conversations, perhaps the most radical act is patience.

The writer is founder and CEO, LS Digital Group

Top court declines to entertain TMC objections to judicial officers' training

Don't make little excuses and stall SIR, says SC

Express News Service New Delhi, February 27

THE SUPREME COURT on Friday refused to entertain the objections raised by the Trinamool Congress to the Election Commission of India imparting training to judicial officers deployed for claims verification in the Special Interim Revision (SIR) process in West Bengal.

While presiding over a two-judge bench, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said, "Don't make little excuses and stall everything. We can't hear like this every day. There has to be an end to it."

Appearing for the TMC, Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal said that "something strange has happened". "What they have done is they have issued directions to the judicial officers and issued a training module saying this is what you should accept, this is what you should not accept."

"How does it matter? Judicial officers will take a call," said CJ Kant. Sibal said that in the February 20 order, the bench said the Chief Justice will decide the modalities. "But they have issued directions on what to accept or not without referring it to

the High Court Chief Justice." To which CJ said that the judicial officers should not be doubted. "The judicial officers will decide, not the Chief Justice. Modalities means the arrangements of this entire process that are to be undertaken."

On the argument that the judicial officers were being given training, Justice Bagchi asked, "Who else will give the training? They are being trained by ECI for the purpose of understanding the modalities of ECI NET and the verification of documents."

Sibal said officials are saying that a domicile certificate issued by the SDO should not be accepted, and urged the bench to say they will decide independently. The court, however, refused to pass any order. "We have already said. Our judicial officers understand our orders," CJ remarked orally.

Justice Bagchi asked the petitioners and ECI to "ensure a congenial atmosphere for our judges to work". "Ask the chief secretary to work in tandem with the judicial officers as well as the special observer."

The CJ said, "My brother rightly pointed out that we should even mention the documents which are required to be believed. Because we thought we would not leave any grey area. Nobody will go beyond that order, whether the Chief Election Commissioner or the state government".

Menaka Guruswamy, Babul Supriyo in TMC list for RS

Ravik Bhattacharya Kolkata, February 27

THE TRINAMOOL Congress (TMC) on Friday announced the candidature of former DGP Rajeev Kumar, state Minister Babul Supriyo, Supreme Court Senior Advocate Menaka Guruswamy, and actress Koel Mallick for the coming Rajya Sabha elections.

Polling for 37 Rajya Sabha seats in multiple states will be held on March 16. Five seats from West Bengal are up for grabs, with the TMC set to win four seats and the BJP one.

TMC insiders said the choice of Kumar, a controversial figure for whom Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee once sat on a dharna, was surprising. He retired as the DGP on January 31. Supriyo, once a Union MoS in the Narendra Modi government, will once again return to Delhi politics and, as a result, his Ballygunge seat will see the party field a fresh candidate in the Assembly polls.

TMC leaders said Banerjee and the party leadership wanted Guruswamy, known for her role in the landmark legal victory that led the court to strike down Section 377, leading to the decriminalisation of homosexuality, as they wanted a strong voice in the Rajya Sabha against the BJP.

Apart from Rajeev Kumar, some TMC insiders said they were also surprised by the candidature of Koel Mallick, a well-known actress in the Bengali film industry and the daughter of actor Ranjit Mallick. With her



(Clockwise from top left) Babul Supriyo, Rajeev Kumar, Koel Mallick and Menaka Guruswamy

candidature, the party continues the tradition of bringing faces from the film industry to Parliament.

While the terms of TMC's Subrata Bakshi, Ritabrata Banerjee, and Saket Gokhale and CPI(M) leader Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya will end on April 2, the fifth seat fell vacant following the resignation of Mausam Benazir Noor last month. Noor rejoined the Congress after quitting the Mamata-led party.

"Fifty per cent of Trinamool's nominees for the Rajya Sabha are non-Bengalis. Couldn't Mamata Banerjee find enough Bengalis to nominate? Or is she obliging those who hold her dirty secrets and are willing accomplices in her crime and corruption syndi-

cate? It is as if she despises Bengalis and uses them merely to garner votes. This completely exposes her pro-Bengal pitch. If anything, she has continuously harmed the interests of West Bengal and Bengal," Bengal BJP posted on X.

Hitting out at the ruling party, former CPI(M) MP Sujay Chakraborty posted on X, Just as the BJP has Ranjan Gogoi, the Trinamool has Rajeev Kumar. Not the state's, not the administration's, Rajeev Kumar stands in Trinamool's colours. The terrifying extent of political brokerage within the judiciary and administrative functioning is becoming increasingly evident. In the game of destroying the Constitution's core spirit, both the BJP and the Trinamool seem equally adept."

OPS finds 2nd life in DMK, promised Speaker's post

Arun Janardhanan Chennai, February 27

A THREE-TIME stand-in Chief Minister who once refused to sit in Jayalithaa's chair and later lost his party, position, and much of his political capital after revolting against the AIADMK leadership, O Panneerselvam resurfaced on Friday, making an unlikely embrace.

At the DMK headquarters in Chennai, Panneerselvam, OPS to friends and rivals, formally joined the state's ruling party in the presence of Chief Minister MK Stalin and senior DMK leaders in a bid for his political resurrection. The inducement was unmistakable. If the DMK returns to power in a few months, OPS will be its nominee for Assembly Speaker, sources said.

For a man who built his public life as an "Amma loyalist", touching Jayalithaa's feet before taking oath in 2001 and twice handing back power to her without hesitation, the move marks a second life, and perhaps the last major turn, in a career defined by loyalty, patience, confusion, and miscalculations. It is also an improbable realignment in a state where memory runs deep.

Panneerselvam became the CM first in 2001, when Jayalithaa stepped down following a court order in the TANSI case. He was then a first-time MLA. In 2014, after her conviction in the disproportionate assets case, he took over again. In 2016, as she was hospitalised, he was allocated the CM's portfolios, though not the title. In each instance, he described his elevation as a "gift of Amma".

Close aides often said after fulfilling his early dream of becoming chairman of Periyakulam Municipality in 1996, everything else — MLA, minister, CM — was a "bonus".

For critics, he was a proxy. For allies, he was the most



Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin and his deputy Udhayanidhi Stalin welcome O Panneerselvam into the DMK, in Chennai on Friday. PTI

trusted and polite aide of Jayalithaa. Even when he fell out of favour briefly in 2016 over allegations about his family's growing clout, he apologised and retained his post.

The DMK calculus His instinct of loyalty shaped his fateful break. After Jayalithaa died in 2016, OPS initially handed over power to V K Sasikala. But as she prepared to take the oath, he rebelled in a midnight sit-in at the Jayalithaa memorial, refusing to step aside. That assertion of independence marked the beginning of his political decline.

Edappadi K Palaniswami consolidated control of the AIADMK. The BJP, which sought to manage the fractured Dravidian space, kept OPS in play, at times promising rehabilitation within the AIADMK. In 2024, he contested independently, with tacit encouragement from the BJP, but failed to regain relevance.

Even two days ago, according to one of his closest aides, there were assurances from an RSS ideologue that reconciliation might yet be engineered. It did not materialise.

Stalin's offer — the Speaker's post — was, for a former CM, both dignified and strategic. It avoids placing him

in direct administrative competition while granting him constitutional stature.

It also secures his home turf of Bodinayakanur in Theni district that becomes a negotiated seat within a larger alliance. Along with him came key loyalists, including former MP O P Ravindranath Kumar, his son, and party figures such as Vaitilingam and Manoj Pandian, who had already drifted toward the DMK. A senior DMK leader described the sequence bluntly: "First the employees joined. Now the CEO has joined."

What OPS offers

For the DMK, the gains are layered. OPS belongs to the Mukulathur, or Thevar, community — a powerful OBC bloc in southern Tamil Nadu. The DMK has historically struggled to make inroads in that belt, where the AIADMK and splinter formations hold influence. Deploying a three-time CM to campaign in the south offers both arithmetic and perception.

The DMK calculates constituency by constituency. Vaitilingam strengthens Orathanadu, Manoj Pandian signals Alankulam, Panneerselvam secures Bodinayakanur, and Iyappan bolsters Usilampatti. In tight contests, these micro-alignments matter.

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Mount Abu now Abu Raj, Jahazpur is Yagyapur and Kaman is Kama Van: Rajasthan CM

Hamza Khan Jaipur, February 27

RAJASTHAN CHIEF Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Friday announced the renaming of cities of Mount Abu, Jahazpur and Kaman to Abu Raj, Yagyapur and Kama Van, respectively, as well as plans to recruit 1.25 lakh persons for government jobs in the coming year.

Replying to the budget debate in the Assembly, CM Sharma said that for skill development of the youth and providing them international level training, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Global Centre for Advanced Skilling will be established in Jaipur at a cost of Rs 450 crore.

On the renaming of cities, CM Sharma said that it was the government's commitment to heritage conservation. He also announced that wheat would be purchased at Rs 2,735 per quintal, with a bonus of Rs 150.

Other major announcements included Rs 9,200 crore to Panchayati Raj institutions and urban bodies as per the recommendation of the State Finance Commission; creation of Rs 2,000 crore school infrastructure fund; Rs 4,000 crore to be spent under VB-G Ram G; and the pension amount under social security to be increased by Rs 150 to Rs 1,450 per month.



A Shakespeare Tragedy

Shalini Langer

AN ABSENCE permeates *Hamnet*. In the forests from where Agnes (Buckley) comes and keeps returning to for sustenance, there is a hollow that draws her. The houses are bare and desolate, and wild, the village of Stratford empty. Even London is dreary and dark, haunted by a pestilence.

As far as establishing the grief that underpins this story — which is an imaginative retelling of William Shakespeare and how he came to write *Hamlet*, based on the bestseller novel also called *Hamnet* — Zhao is very good. With *Hamnet*'s author Maggie O'Farrell as co-screenwriter, Zhao cuts away the trimmings to get more or less right to the point.

It serves her film well, centred as it is on

the most powerful passage of the novel. The drawback is that, with their backstories reduced to a minimum, you get little sense of who Agnes and Will are as people.

Agnes is explained away as “the daughter of a forest witch”, her sensory powers and her strength the shallower for not being fully explored. The blow when grief falls that power and strength, leaving Agnes raw and unseeing, is hence not as keenly felt.

Will (Mescal) is even less fleshed out, his desire to explore worlds away from the shackles of his Stratford village seeming more a factor of a quick marriage and a double-quick first child. He bangs a table in frustration once, scattering the notes he has been scribbling on and waking up the baby — this urge to write coming out of seemingly nowhere.

However, once the couple have settled

HAMNET

★★★★

DIRECTOR: Chloé Zhao**CAST:** Jessie Buckley, Paul Mescal, Emily Watson, Joe Alwyn, Jacobi Jupe, Olivia Lynes, Bodhi Rae, Breathnach

into the more humdrum rhythm of marriage, with three children behind them — Susanna (Breathnach) the eldest, and twins Hamnet (Jupe) and Judith (Lynes) — the film is on surer ground. There is genuine love in the family the couple build together, the scenes of play at home and in the forest between them preparing the ground for the loss that we know will follow.

There is tenderness about bidding farewell to Agnes's pet kite, a gesture that will resonate powerfully later. Even a smaller goodbye ritual that Will and Hamnet have, as he leaves for London — “again” — will break your heart against the realisation that it is their last.

The talented Buckley fills the vast canvas she is given to inhabit. From the other worlds to which Agnes is believed to belong, to the very real worlds of pain and

love and anger she inhabits, Buckley gives the kind of performance the Academy is partial to — her silent scream alone, as she holds the inert body of son Hamnet, would have been enough.

Against this powerhouse show, Mescal's Will is easy to ignore. And it is true that it takes him harder to make his presence felt. But eventually Mescal catches up strongly to his fellow Irish actor Buckley.

However, just as it is a leap to join Hamnet to Hamlet — comforting as it may be to give our favourite artists a human story — Zhao, who is vying for her second Best Director Oscar after *Nomadland*, appears to be jumping through the hoops to land a grand narrative. There is a persistence to impress, to look deeper, to linger longer, to cry more... to stretch.

To paraphrase Shakespeare, lesser sound and fury often signify more.

An Uneventful Delivery

Shubhra Gupta

WHEN YOU have a meaty plot involving a queer couple dealing with a range of problems, both domestic and professional, headlined by an established actor who is always a pleasure to watch, teamed with a promising fresh face, what do you expect?

I've deliberately started with a question which appears rhetorical, because of course the answer should be a resounding yes.

This is what I was hoping for, going into *Accused*, which features Konkona Sensharma and Pratibha Rannta in lead roles, and is directed by Anubhuti Kashyap who gave us the flavourful 2022 medical drama *Dr G*. This one also revolves around hospitals, this time in the UK, and its main characters are either doctors themselves, or involved with medicine.

Top notch gynaecologist Geetika (Sensharma) has little patience for inefficient colleagues, and has no hesitation in dressing them down in public. Her wife Meera (Rannta), in her second outing after the delightful *Laapata Ladies* is the softer, gentler of the two: she is also much younger, and distinctly so. A bump up in seniority for Geetika is expected any moment; the two are on the verge of adopting a baby, and everything

ACCUSED

★★

DIRECTOR: Anubhuti Kashyap**CAST:** Konkona Sensharma, Pratibha Rannta, Aditya Nanda, Monica Mahendru, Masshhoor Amrohi, Sukant Goel, Kallirroi Tzifeta, Daniele Secondi**STREAMING ON:** Netflix

seems to be going fine, until a sexual harassment accusation comes flying in against the former, and everything begins to unravel.

The location makes a difference: this film could only have been set in a country where same sex marriages are legal. The two women dress in accordance with their status and temperament, Geetika in smartly-tailored trousers and coats, Meera in flowy pastels. The appearance is spot on, but you soon start missing the detailing. Just what makes them who they are? As a viewer, I want to be drawn deeper into the worlds of these women, and feel their inner turmoil, but they stay, mostly, on the surface.

The other characters, Monica Mahendru as the supportive HR head, Aditya Nanda as Meera's too-helpful friend, Sukant Goel as a quirky private investigator, Kallirroi Tzifeta as Geetika's still-hurting ex, Daniele Secondi



as Geetika's ambitious older colleague, Masshhoor Amrohi as the nipping-quick outsider brought in to sift through the conflicting she-did-it-no-I-didn't statements, are all confined by their lines.

A character is told, in so many words, in this world of Me-Too, this is a platform meant for victims to come forward, or words to that effect. It feels like a rehearsed speech. Are you saying that I like younger girls, that I have a

type, says another. *Chote sheher ke closet mein dum ghut raha hota*, says yet another. These on-the-nose dialogues give us cues on how we should feel when those characters are on screen, neither allowing the character to breathe, nor giving us a chance to make our way to our own feelings.

We hear these descriptives for Geetika: sex offender, predator, liar, cheater. How wonderful, we think, that Indian films have got to the point where they can give us an unconventional complex female character, who is not forced into being ‘good’, and an actor perfectly capable of pulling it off. Male aggressors there have been aplenty in Hindi cinema, but this has to be a first for the inclusion of a female predator, and that in itself should have given *Accused* some heft.

But the writing offers us little depth, and that's where this film, which had the potential to be a humdinger, falls flat. There's so little passion between Sensharma and Rannta that you wonder what made them get together in the first place; what little we see is so chaste as to be non-existent. It takes an argument for both to break out; the supporting characters come off even worse, and the background music never quite stops tinkling away.

Finally, it all comes down to that thing which is increasingly and disappointingly becoming a streaming bugbear: the idea is bravely out-of-the-box; the underlined writing does it in.

Fails to Pack a Punch

Alaka Sahani

THOUGH NO further proof is required to establish that Priyanka Chopra Jonas is now a bona fide action star, *The Bluff* serves as a strong reminder that the desi girl can be full of fire and fury as she beat up baddies, fires guns, brandishes daggers and navigates hungry crocodiles. After playing a senior MI6 agent in *Heads of State* (2025), Chopra Jonas returns to the streamer to play a deadly pirate who takes on a bunch of mean baddies to protect her family at any cost.

In the film set in the 1800s, Chopra Jonas plays a Caribbean woman, Ercell ‘Bloody Mary’ Bodden, whose secret past is revealed when her island is invaded by vicious buccaneers, led by Connor (Karl Urban). In this film — produced by siblings Anthony Russo, Joe Russo and Angela Russo-Otstot — Ercell's plan of leading a peaceful life in the Cayman Islands with her husband TH Bodden (Ismael Cruz Cordova), her son Isaac, and her sister-in-law Elizabeth are disrupted when Connor, who is Ercell's former captain, comes looking for her and stolen gold.

By now, Chopra Jonas has built a remarkable filmography as an action star, starting with the series *Quantico*, and later *Citadel*. *The Bluff* too makes it evident that Chopra Jonas is indeed the hero of this action thriller. Her fury and fear drive the narrative. As a protective mother and a hardened former pirate, she gets enough screen time and opportunity to showcase her fighting skills. She delivers a fierce and physically intensive performance. Though the movie is rated R for “strong bloody violence”, it is quite compelling to watch her battle ruthless pirates with her wit and swift actions.

It is fascinating how the story, written by Joe Ballarini and Frank E Flowers, remains

**THE BLUFF**

★★

DIRECTOR: Frank E. Flowers**CAST:** Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Safia Oakley-Green, Vedanten Naidoo, Temuera Morrison, Ismael Cruz Cordova, Karl Urban**STREAMING ON:** Prime Video

focused on Ercell, giving her a larger-than-life persona. She is the solo fighter, who keeps her son with a disability safe even when a group of men invade her home. Escaping the evil pirates and navigating a dangerous river infested with crocodiles, she ferries her son and sister-in-law to safety and a secret cave.

When Urban enters the scene, one expects intense face-offs between them. It's interesting to watch their encounters but these sequences needed to be designed better to keep the audience on the edge of their seats. Delving a bit more into Connor's character and his relationship with Ercell would have helped in creating a more gripping drama.

The Bluff starts with the promise of being an entertaining action drama but it ends up as a period action piece that could have packed a punch.

Return of the King

Suanshu Khurana

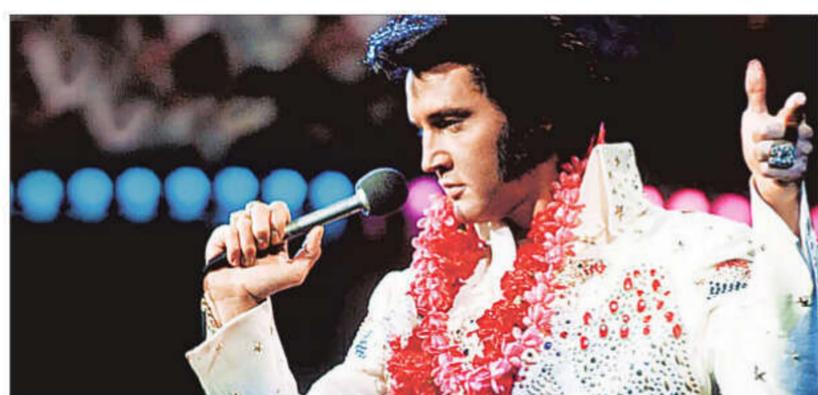
WHILE DIRECTOR Baz Luhrmann's 2022 feature *Elvis* buried its subject in frenzied editing and split screens, his concert documentary, *EPIC: Elvis Presley in Concert*, does the opposite: it finally lets Elvis breathe.

Conjured mainly from 59 hours of unseen footage unearthed from a Kansas salt mine, where Warner Bros stores film reels deep underground, the vibrantly restored documentary shows considerable restraint. And therein lies its triumph.

Nearly five decades after his death at 42, Elvis cuts through decades of noise and myth surrounding him. It is as if Luhrmann is screaming ‘Elvis Lives!’ — a rebuttal to the posters with the famous slogan ‘Elvis is Dead’, once born out of the meteoric rise of The Beatles in the 1960s. Luhrmann simply pans the camera on his Las Vegas residencies in the ‘60s and other performances, and there he is: devastatingly handsome Elvis with the playful curl of his lip and sweat glistening on his face, strutting and crooning on stage in those iconic colourful jumpsuits with winged collars and capes. And no, he doesn't miss a note. Elvis comes alive in the only way that ever mattered: on stage, under the spotlight, crooning those hits such as *I'll be falling in love with you*, *Jailhouse rock*, *You ain't nothing but a hound dog* and *Suspicious minds*, among others. Steeped in gospel and rhythm and blues, shaking that famed left leg, he is electric.

And no, he still doesn't miss a note.

The footage is restored immaculately and screened in IMAX halls with surround

**EPIC: ELVIS PRESLEY IN CONCERT**

★★★★

DIRECTOR: Baz Luhrmann

sound. Luhrmann gives Elvis the world tour he never got due to his exploitative manager, Colonel Tom Parker, an illegal Dutch immigrant who was worried that if he left America, he wouldn't be able to enter back again.

Luhrmann's 2022 biopic, starring Austin Butler and Tom Hanks, left me with the question: What fascinated him about Elvis's music? What drew Elvis politically? The film offered little insight into what Elvis thought and felt or his Republican leanings (He had spoken to Richard Nixon about The Beatles, who were ruling the game then, being anti-American and promoting drugs).

But *EPIC* delivers what it promises: it captures the charisma and hysteria of Elvis: women screaming, tossing undergarments, reaching to touch him, the primal frenzy is there in all its glory. Asked if he scandalised the public, Elvis replies, “I haven't. Because I don't think I've done anything wrong.”

The film still doesn't delve into much of his politics or his personal life: his marriage to Priscilla, his passionate affair with actor and singer Ann-Margret, who was one of the few people to attend his funeral in 1977 at 42,

and his relationship with Parker, who steered his career for better or for worse, is barely examined. When musicians like Bob Dylan were doing protest songs, there is Elvis choosing to not speak on political matters and insisting that he was just an entertainer.

It is amid the rich music that Luhrmann builds the narrative of Elvis's life, about a poor white boy in Tupelo born in 1935, living amid Black kids and music. Growing up with gospel and blues in Memphis, inspired by BB King, this is the music that shaped his sound. For many white kids, this was also their first encounter with the sound otherwise available on what were called “race records”. He took it and made it more.

But what the film thoroughly understands and shows us — through concerts, rehearsals, conversations with the press — is the music of Elvis and the man who built a home inside it. At a time when AI can create almost anything musically, one sees Elvis Presley, this raw, brilliant musician in this concert film, as a reminder of what we've lost. And how there would never be another Elvis.

• STREAMING WATCHLIST



Man On The Run

PRIME VIDEO

THE DOCUMENTARY, directed by Morgan Neville, chronicles Paul McCartney's creative and personal

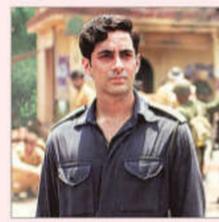
journey in the aftermath of The Beatles' breakup, as he rebuilds from the ground up with the formation of Wings. It blends archival footage, interviews and behind-the-scenes moments as it captures him navigating uncertainty. Ultimately, he carves out one of music's most remarkable second acts.



One Battle After Another

JIOHOTSTAR

THE PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON-directed film recently won six BAFTAs and secured 12 Oscar nominations, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Actor (Leonardo Di Caprio). It follows washed-up revolutionary Bob (DiCaprio), who exists in a state of stoned paranoia, surviving off-grid with his spirited daughter, Willa (Chase Infiniti). When his nemesis (Sean Penn) resurfaces after 16 years and his daughter goes missing, the former radical scrambles to find her.



Ikkis

PRIME VIDEO

SRIRAM RAGHAVAN'S latest directorial outing *Ikkis* tells the true story of 21-year-old Lt Arun Khetarpal, the youngest Param Vir Chakra awardee. During the 1971

Indo-Pak war, he led his tank at Basantar against overwhelming odds. Years later, his father's visit to Pakistan reveals the full measure of Arun's courage and sacrifice. The movie features Agastya Nanda, Dharmendra, Jaideep Ahlawat and Simar Bhatia in pivotal roles.

Bridgerton S4 Part 2

NETFLIX

PART 1 ended with Benedict (Luke Thompson) asking Sophie (Yerin Ha) a loaded question: “Be my mistress?” Sophie, a hardworking maid whose mother was a maid-turned-mistress, flees without giving an answer. However, the new episodes show that Sophie and Benedict have people they can turn to for advice: Anthony (Jonathan Bailey) returns home from India with his wife, Kate (Simone Ashley). Meanwhile, Sophie leans on Alfie (David Moorst), a footman at Penwood House.

ALAKA SAHANI

'Textbook revisions should happen whenever society evolves'

Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan on the changing face of student politics, the AI-conducive futuristic design of NEP 2020 and the BJP election machine. He was in conversation with Vandita Mishra, National Opinion Editor, *The Indian Express*



The NEP was designed as a philosophical and futuristic document that treats technology as a tool to bridge learning gaps. It visualised that education must be rooted in our values and act as a bridge to advancements like AI and quantum computing

Vandita Mishra: As we speak, the countdown has begun to the AI summit and there is a breakdown in Parliament. But first, let us talk about you. You belong to Talcher in Odisha, a town famous for its coal mines, which was once a princely state. Talcher is also home to the story of Baji Raut, a 12-year-old boatman who became one of the youngest martyrs of the freedom struggle, killed by British police after he refused to ferry them across the Brahmani river. How did growing up in a town with a river, the story of a young martyr and coal mines shape you as a person and politician?

I have just come from Kartavya Bhavan (in Delhi), a site I consider a new pilgrimage spot for India as the nation breaks free from a colonial mindset and takes a leap forward. For the past 11 years, our government has been serving the people, and today the prime minister officially dedicated this new centre of service.

To clarify a few details, Baji Raut was actually from the neighbouring princely state of Dhenkanal, though he is very much a hero of our region. I grew up in a 'river civilisation' in a district where both the Mahanadi and the Brahmani rivers flow. My hometown is a major industrial hub; of the 1,000 million metric tons of coal India produces, 110 million tons come from there. Growing up, I was surrounded by mines, power plants and NALCO trains. My grandfather was a soldier in the freedom struggle and my ancestors were part of the Prajamandal movement, moving to a neighbouring state in protest against the king's taxes. This heritage of industrialisation, labour and the freedom struggle inspired me to join student politics and made me sensitive to social life and its challenges.

You began in student politics with the ABVP and rose to become a minister. The ABVP today is very different from what it was in your time; it now appears to have the veto power on campuses, of a kind once enjoyed by the Left. It plays a role in who is invited to seminars, what is talked about and even the appointment of Vice-Chancellors. Increasingly now, student politics is viewed with suspicion, those not in the ABVP must prove their innocence.

ABVP is like an open university where one encounters diverse ideas and finds inspiration. While generations and societal conditions have changed, the core spirit of 'nation first' remains the very inspiration that brings us together in the ABVP today. Regarding governance, the idea of 'veto power' is more of a journalistic perception; in reality, everything runs through a formal process. We have seen leaders such as the late Arun Jaitley, and the current Chief Minister and Education Minister of Delhi emerge from the ABVP movement.

ABVP is a movement but governance is the responsibility of those in power and it involves a democratic process. While everyone has the right to express their views, campuses should not become platforms for narrow political agendas or slogans about breaking the country. Any institution should oppose threats to national sovereignty. Society changes like a face changes expressions; 30 years ago, we lacked the Internet and AI, and society moved at a steadier pace. Today, student movements are different because information reaches them in seconds.

Your government brought a new National Education Policy (NEP) in 2020 after a 34-year gap. Given how AI is currently transforming jobs, roiling the IT sector and global markets, do you believe a policy made in 2020 is preparing the classroom for these challenges of the future?

Although the policy was finalised in 2020, the groundwork began in 2014. It was designed as a philosophical and futuristic document that treats technology as a tool to bridge learning gaps. The NEP visualised that education must be both rooted in our values and futuristic, acting as a bridge to advancements like AI and quantum computing. Currently, we are hosting the Impact Summit, and the Finance Minister has assigned the creation of a Centre of Excellence for AI in Education to IIT Madras. We are bringing together experts, startups and policymakers to discuss how AI can make education more affordable and accessible. I believe AI will be a great catalyst for India's education sector.

Discussions on education mostly focus on a handful of elite institutions such as IITs and IIMs. As Education Minister, how much of your time is spent on primary education, on addressing its needs

in terms of teacher training, resource allocation?

Education is an interconnected subject; you cannot separate primary schooling from research or higher education. We have a massive population of 300 million learners — nearly the population of Europe — including 250 million school students and 10 million teachers. Under the NEP, children now formally join preschool at age three, bringing anganwadis into a proper education platform. In the next 20 years, 400 million students will be moving through these levels and it is the government's responsibility to provide a curriculum that replaces rote learning with critical thinking and 'design thinking'. If we want to be a developed economy by 2047, we must focus on knowledge and research. We are building an end-to-end ecosystem, from the Atal Innovation Mission to the National Research Foundation.

The NEP recommends foundational learning in the mother tongue, advocates multi-linguality. Yet, there are concerns that this government only promotes Hindi, not regional languages. On the ground, parents continue to vote with their feet, as they move their children to English medium schools. How do you navigate these challenges?

The government has never wanted to impose Hindi. The NEP clearly states that education in the early stages should

be in the mother tongue. For example, we say education should happen in Tamil in Tamil Nadu. In Kerala, it should be in Malayalam. In Assam, education should be in Assamese. In Odisha, it should be

in Odia. In Bengal, it should be in Bengali... In Hindi-speaking areas, education should be in Hindi. This is our fundamental belief. The NEP also says the same. Nowhere have we said that Hindi

years before English even existed. The Konark Temple in my state was built in the 13th century. Back then, there was no English model. There was science but it wasn't in English. The basic elements of our civilisation are written in the Vedas. That language wasn't English either. This civilisation, which you and I have reached today, has come through centuries. The language of my civilisation, my Indian language.

So, if we want to take another big leap forward in this country, we have to give importance to Indian languages. The prime minister has clearly said that all languages in India are national languages. We give equal importance to every language.

Do you not see English as having become an Indian language as well?

English is not an Indian language. While we have no objection to its use and people are free to choose it, it has never been the language of India.

In higher education, we are seeing something of a demographic explosion, many of the students are first-generation learners. However, in this moment, when they are most needed, state universities are in decline and central universities rely on ad-hoc appointments. There are islands of excellence but do we have a wider framework that can accommodate and nurture these students?

While we recognise that more work is needed, we have set a target to increase the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50 per cent by 2035. This requires opening new institutions, making regulations more flexible and increasing state and philanthropic funding. This year's budget for education increased by 8 per cent. Notably, India is now a global leader in the number of girls studying in STEM fields. To support them, the finance minister announced the construction of ultra-modern hostels in every district. We are linking education to employability and the startup ecosystem to foster a new spirit among the youth.

The NEP suggested spending 6 per cent of GDP on education, but we are currently at 4.6 per cent. What is the challenge in closing that gap?

Our economy is growing and the prime minister has made education a top priority. Since 2014, our spending has increased from roughly Rs 80,000 crore to Rs 1,40,000 crore. We are also encouraging private investment and alumni funding. As Education Minister, I always believe we should spend more and as our budget grows, we will continue to increase this investment.

There's also been a change in the social composition of the classroom in institutions of higher education. Young people from backward, disadvantaged and marginalised groups who couldn't earlier access higher education are now coming into the system. The UGC regulations responded to the need to ensure that they face no discrimination. They were designed in 2012 and then revised in 2026. Now the court has stayed them. Do you think such regulations are necessary, and if yes, what kind of regulations should there be?

Our Constitution clearly says there should be no discrimination. This is very clearly stated in Articles 14 and 15. The case of the UGC regulations is a sub-judice issue. The Supreme Court has given its opinion on it, there is a hearing scheduled for next month. We have to operate according to the court's order, which is based on our country's constitution and judicial system. The government won't let anyone face injustice. No matter who it is, the government is responsible for it. The court will keep an eye on it.

You and your government talk about Indianisation, decolonisation. In Indian tradition, the king or warrior would lay down their weapons before entering a place of learning. But now, we see the powerful march in, brandishing, as it were, their weaponry. School textbooks get rewritten, rewrites are based on the ruling party's political ideology. Between 2014 and 2024, textbooks were revised, updated or rationalised four times, many of these changes were clearly driven by ideology. The Babri Masjid demolition was erased in three places, the name 'Babri Masjid' was removed and replaced with 'three domed mosque.' Is this how textbooks should be rewritten, should it be done so many times?

Society is dynamic. NCERT has the responsibility, along with its competitor editorial boards, to update the curriculum according to society's evolution so kids can keep up. It should be revised

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Where do you see hope in the 4.5 crore students, especially when the number is expected to double? What about higher education makes you optimistic?



DR ANANYA MUKHERJEE
VICE CHANCELLOR, SHIV NADAR UNIVERSITY

OUR HIGHER education is aspirational. We need to bring technology along just like we created flexibility through multidisciplinary approaches, introduced internship schemes and brought in apprenticeship programmes. Our students should be able to earn while they study. We need to increase interconnectedness and boost employability. This is what society really needs. Even

students with two-year polytechnic diplomas can do certain jobs. We should design our curriculums accordingly. Why are so many big global companies opening their capability centres in India? The workplace doesn't have to be abroad. By leveraging technology and a flexible new curriculum, we aim to connect our 90 million students to a new network over the next 10 years. This is our strategy.

India aims to be a developed nation by 2047. What are the most important changes in school education to prepare a generation that is ethical and globally competitive?



SUBHASH CHANDRA DHINGRA
CHAIRMAN, SNEH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

WE SET up 10,000 Atal Tinkering Labs in schools across the country. The government has approved 50,000 more. Every government higher secondary school will be provided with internet connectivity. This year, Class III onwards, we'll introduce translation as appropriate. We'll also start AI-based learning. We can't afford to fall behind in global development. If we provide our school kids

with a progressive education model, they will be able to meet the needs of not just India but the whole world. We have also introduced a new approach for School Management Committees. Under this, the management will be the government's responsibility but the care, mentoring and partnership will have to be taken up by the local community. We'll need to start a public movement for this.

Under the NEP, there seems hardly any space for standalone institutions like ours. If I look ahead, I either need to merge or I'll be bought out and will eventually disappear.



ANIL SOMANI
CHAIRMAN, FOSTIIMA

THERE'S NO alternative to quality. Once, when I visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, out of ignorance, I asked what board they followed. They said they don't have a board. In the '60s, the UGC had come to supervise them. Their model is well-written, and their student-teacher ratio is 3:1. It's a standalone institution. In my opinion, whether it's a standalone institution,

multidisciplinary or a big university, quality should never be compromised. If that's ensured, all models work. Quality is what matters most. There are plenty of examples in the country. Today, you can even tie up with another institution, there's no problem with that. It's your choice. If we focus on quality, the institution will run smoothly and the students will benefit too.



(Right) Union Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan with Vandita Mishra, National Opinion Editor, *The Indian Express*

every year with new and fresh content. The curriculum should be handled by qualified people.

You asked about ideological controversies. Tell me, should we feel proud about Babri Masjid or about Aurangzeb and Babur in India? These are the people who damaged Indian culture and freedom by destroying temples and building mosques. Then there's the Babri Masjid or issue — the Court has already made its decision. The Supreme Court gave permission to build the temple of Lord Ram. Today, a grand temple stands there. This is the country's ideology. So, is the country going to follow Ram or Babur or Aurangzeb?

Didn't Aurangzeb issue orders to demolish the Kashi Vishwanath temple? That was his decree. Should we get stuck debating this when we should be teaching students India's glorious civilisation?

The youngest martyr of the Indian freedom struggle was an Odia. Was this even part of our studies before? Some people tried to give all the credit for independence to just one group. Our government, under Prime Minister Modi, has only said this much. We need to bring forward the true history of our country, based on our civilisation. We are not making things up; we should take pride in the facts rooted in our folk tales, folk culture and folk history as part of our civilisation. We are committed to this responsibility.

core issue is that the Congress party, particularly Rahul Gandhi, cannot accept defeat. They rely on the crutches of allies and lack genuine public support. Their frustration is dangerous for democracy.

Why does the BJP seem so angry, despite winning? You are in power in your third term, shouldn't you show more magnanimity?

There's no anger. We are just following parliamentary practices. Parliament runs on laws, rules and order. Not all Opposition parties were like how they are today. In fact, during the Budget discussion in the Lok Sabha, there was criticism. All parties participated. The Samajwadi Party criticised us and we accepted that. Our finance minister also gave a strong reply. This can't be a one-sided arrangement. The main deadlock today is because of Rahul Gandhi's stubborn attitude.

What about Nishikant Dubey's substantive motion to expel the LoP?

It's his right to support it. Whether a member is from the BJP or any other party, first they are members of the house, then their parties. But one person's behaviour affects the other person's behaviour too. No matter what you say, just because you come from a big family doesn't mean you can say anything you want. How will this work in a democracy?

There's a lot of talk about the BJP's election machine. Tell us, what is it about the BJP machine that opponents haven't been able to understand or compete with?

Our core mantra is to serve the people and take responsibility for them. Being sensitive to everyone. That's why the prime minister has shaped our philosophy, our approach — *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas*. Our clarity of thought. We have a strong ideological foundation. We are not a hereditary party. We are not a feudal system. We are a democratic setup. We have accountability. And today, above all, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become the centre of trust for the poor and the deprived of the country over the past 12 years. This is who we are. It's all about capital. This is what keeps winning people's trust again and again. The Opposition can criticise us — that's their duty, their right. But they should try to understand our approach first. Only then they might have a chance.

Why is it that education never becomes the centerpiece of any party's campaign in any election. Why is it that Dharmendra Pradhan the Education Minister doesn't make as much news as when he's election in-charge of a state for the BJP?

It's not that education isn't important. Education has always been a priority for our government. After 34 years, we brought in the NEP 2020. And this didn't happen in 2020. From the very day PM Modi took charge, the focus has been on how to bring fundamental reforms in education based on Indian values. How can we meet global demands? How can we fulfill global requirements? How can we create global citizens? For my government, education is a key priority.



Sukanta Dey, Partner & Country Head, Borg Associates



Anil Jai Singh (Retd.), Senior Vice President, Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems India



Dharmendra Pradhan with Ratan Kaul, Founder President, Public Diplomacy Forum



Subhrakanta Panda, Managing Director, Indian Metals & Ferro Alloys Ltd



Yang Xiuhua, Counsellor, The Embassy of People's Republic of China in India



Romonika D Sharan, policy and communications professional



Harsh Shrivastava, Senior Advisor, Grant Thornton Bharat



Dr. Dalbir Singh, National Secretary, INC, with senior journalist Nalini Singh



KP Fabian, Former Ambassador of India to Qatar



Journalist Poonam Dabas with filmmaker Meera Dewan



Pritha Dutt, Chairperson, Centre for Gender Equality & Inclusive Leadership



Mohamed Ali Fazari, Counsellor, Embassy of the Republic of Sudan



Prof (Dr.) M Afshar Alam, Vice Chancellor, Jamia Hamdard

The problem is that you want to erase parts of history.

We draw a simple line. The book shouldn't be confusing. There's no point in repeating any topic unnecessarily. Students should have a clear understanding of history. Our pride — where did the concept of infinity or zero in the intellectual world come from? It came from India. Shouldn't India's proud economic history be included? Should we only accept the story of thousands of years of slavery in the last 1,000 years as our history? The history of any civilised society is like a mirror. When you look into the mirror, it helps make the path ahead easier.

In Parliament, we've seen a breakdown. The LoP was not allowed to speak, there was the suspension of Opposition MPs, a notice for a no-confidence motion against the Speaker. In the past, you have spoken respectfully of a rival like Naveen Patnaik. In Parliament, as the ruling party, shouldn't you be taking the lead in reaching out across the aisle?

Democracy brought Narendra Modi to power, his prime ministership is not a family inheritance. The real problem is the intolerance and hatred shown by Rahul Gandhi towards someone who has led the nation for 12 years. Respect should be mutual, and one must speak respectfully to elders. Parliament runs on rules and laws, not individual whims. Rahul Gandhi is trying to force made-up stories out of the bitterness of defeat and creating a ruckus.

In 2004, when the BJP was in the opposition and Somnath Chatterjee was Speaker, we saw how the ruling party treated Mamata Banerjee; those records are available for anyone to check. The

You talked about AI in education but what are we doing to really connect the kids to the ground? It's so focused on technology. Where does the grassroots fit in?



VANSHIKA SHARMA
RESEARCH FELLOW, GUJARAT INNOVATION AUGMENTATION NETWORK

WE STARTED the country's first Bal Vatika, and for it, we created touch-based learning materials. The priority is singing songs, storytelling and playing. It used to happen mainly in pre-schools and *anganwadis*. Now, the Women and Child Development Department, Education Department and Health Department have come together to start this within an institutional framework. The idea is to connect

it to the ground level. This will help in the overall personality development of the individual. From 6th-12th grade, you should have 10 bagless days every year, when you focus on the entrepreneurship happening in your locality. For the first time, the NEP made three subjects a formal part of education — sports, arts and skill. This is an initiative to connect education with the ground reality.

Kashmir made education compulsory in 1951. But even after 70 years, it still remains at the lowest level. Will you consider a separate policy so that Kashmiris can progress?

YOU HAVE brought up a very pertinent topic — Kashmir. In my opinion, ever since Article 370 was revoked, things in Kashmir have been getting better and safer. The youth, especially, are the biggest beneficiaries there. I got the chance to spend a day at the NBT book fair in Srinagar this year, which has been happening for the last 25 years. The enthusiasm for reading, especially

among girls and female students, was truly impressive.

I also visited Ganderbal after that. The passion I saw in the local Kashmiri students, the scientific research they are doing — it's all very impressive. I'm confident that if we set up the system properly for 2-5 years in Kashmir, the intellectual capacity there will take us to newer heights.

We once had the Programme for International Student Assessment but now we don't know how Indian students rank globally. Are you planning to bring this back?



NALINI SINGH
SENIOR JOURNALIST

PERSONALLY, I'm not a big believer in global rankings. But there's an NGO in the country that conducts an ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) assessment every couple of years.

The government is doing even more. We've created an assessment mechanism based on the NEP recommendations. We're also assessing our own kids through PARAKH

exams. It's our responsibility to develop our children's competencies, as the prime minister has emphasised.

Our degree isn't as important as our competency. Degrees are important, but competency matters way more. It's about what we actually learn. I accept improvement is definitely needed — that's why I mentioned AI. It'll be a big help. Both the teacher and the student will benefit.

Dharmendra Pradhan with guests at Express Adda



Audience at Express Adda in New Delhi

Wankhede stadium to name Level 1 stand after Ravi Shastri



The level 1 stand below the press box will be named after Ravi Shastri by MCA. REUTERS

Devendra Pandey
Mumbai, February 27

THE MUMBAI Cricket Association (MCA) has decided to name one of its iconic stands at the Wankhede stadium on former India player-turned-coach and commentator, Ravi Shastri. The MCA wants its Level 1 stand below the Press Box named on the bombastic icon of Mumbai cricket.

Apart from Shastri, the MCA Apex Council has decided to honour other notable figures, naming the entryway gates after India player, the late Dilip Sardesai, former India women's captain Diana Edulji and former Mumbai spinner late Eknath Solkar. While entrance No. 3 will be called the Dilip Sardesai Gate, Gate No. 6 will be named after Eknath Solkar and No. 5 – the Diana Edulji Gate.

"We have decided to name a stand on Ravi Shastri. He has made great contributions in cricket in various roles. His name was discussed in Mumbai's Apex Council and it was decided to go ahead and name the stand on him. The Apex Council has agreed to name gates on former India women's captain Diana Edulji, late Dilip Sardesai and late Eknath Solkar. The MCA acknowledges their effort for Mumbai cricket over the years," MCA president Ajinkya Naik said.

Earlier MCA had decided to name a stand honouring former India captains Rohit Sharma, and late Ajit Wadekar as well as its former president Sharad Pawar.

Diana Edulji told the Indian Express, "I would like to thank President MCA and the Apex committee for naming gate No 5 after me. It's a double honour for me as naming the bridge after me not only recognises my cricket but also my contribution to Railway Sports."

Shastri's first chirps

While Ravi Shastri is known to the current generation as a commentator and coach, his tryst with getting chirpy at Wankhede dates back to his time as a player. Most significant was the 1984-85 Ranji Trophy final against arch rivals Delhi, right after Shastri had returned from winning the Champion of Champions in Australia – enjoying the most productive phase of his career. He snared twelve wickets in the match (including eight in the fourth innings) and top scored with 76 for the 90-run triumph.

The bombastic Bombay batter and bowler, will now have a stand to honour his bravado and brainy play.

REVISITING THE BATTING BLUEPRINT

A game changing video session

Abhishek watched himself slash. Thursday, he hit through the line. Inside a moment of self-reflection

Venkata Krishna B
Chennai, February 27

ABHISHEK SHARMA watched himself slash. The bat swung across the line, the ball flew to third man, the left-hander walked. Next clip: same shot, different match, identical dismissal. Then another. The montage continued of cross-batted slashes accumulating like evidence.

Across the team room in Chennai, Tilak Varma watched his own reel. The 21-year-old who had scored twin centuries in South Africa's bouncy tracks, waiting, cutting late, playing square, now saw himself swinging early. Rushing into shots. The pre-tournament injury had made him anxious for touch. The anxiety had changed his timing.

Hardik Pandya, who came into the World Cup in punishing form, watched himself muscle when timing would have sufficed. Power when a slice would do. Force when finesse was enough. Video analyst Hari Prasad Mohan's compilation lasted only a few minutes. Inspirational songs threaded through it, yes, but mostly just pictures.

Sharma's slashes. Tilak's rushed swings. Pandya's muscled mistimings.

What you were a year ago. What you've become in this tournament. Head coach Gautam Gambhir and the support staff sat watching the players watch themselves. "We saw that slide, took a lot of positivity from that," captain Suryakumar Yadav would say later. The truth was simpler: they'd forgotten who they were. The video was mirror, not motivation.

Against Zimbabwe the next evening, Sharma took guard: leg and middle stump. Not off stump. Not the line he'd been using since the South Africa series at home when the cross-batted slashes started becoming dismissals. Leg-middle meant fourth-stump deliveries, the ones that had been getting

him out, the ones he'd been chasing with slashes were now in his swinging arc. He could hit through the line, not across it. Stay deep in the crease. His strength. His game. First ball worth hitting; through the line. Six. He didn't chase anything outside his zone. He waited. Ball enters arc, swing. Ball doesn't, watch it pass. Simple. The game the video had reminded him he possessed.

Seventeen sixes India hit that night at Chepauk. Their highest total at the ground. A tournament that had seen them measured, guarded, suddenly looked like the team from the highlight reel. The free-flowing blueprint missing since the World Cup began had returned. Tilak's wagon wheel

told its story without words: three boundaries behind square, three sixes to mid-wicket, one over covers. All his favourite areas. All played late, the ball coming to him, not him chasing it. The fierce cut that made him in domestic cricket. The pull that brought twin centuries in South Africa. He stood tall at the crease, let the ball arrive. Didn't rush. Didn't force. He scored 44 off 16 deliveries, unbeaten.

"Before the game, we discussed that we will go with a good mindset," Tilak said afterward. "After watching videos of past games, everyone got confidence." Not inspiration. Confidence. Recognition. Remembering what worked. Pandya's 50 came off 23 balls. No muscling.

Just timing. When timing is his biggest strength, Pandya had realized watching the video, there's no need for power. Slices suffice. He didn't try to overhit. Just played on merit. The ball did the rest.

The left-handers had a plan against off-spin too. Not to play safely, to play with minimum risk. The difference matters. Against Aiden Markram and Glenn Phillips in the recent series before the World Cup, Sharma and Ishan Kishan had taken the safe option: hitting off-spinners through covers with the turn. In the tournament, they'd drifted away from it. They'd tried hitting against the turn instead. Mid-wicket, cow corner. Against the spin.

Dismissals followed. Zimbabwe didn't open with Sikander Raza as they usually do, but the two southpaws came prepared for the off-spin match-up. The plan was ready: covers with the turn, not mid-wicket against it. If the ball spins, use it. Play the percentages. Don't fight physics. The video had shown them drifting from their strongest suits. Sharma chasing outside his arc. Tilak rushing his cuts and pulls. Pandya muscling instead of timing. The left-handers hitting against turn instead of with it. The video didn't need to explain. It just showed. And they saw.

Wednesday evening: fifteen minutes in a team room. Players watching themselves on screen. No speeches. Just pictures. Thursday night: seventeen sixes. Rhythm restored. Blueprint recovered. The highest total at Chepauk in this tournament. India looked like themselves again. The ultimate test awaits Sunday in Kolkata. Another power-packed lineup that prefers to deal in sixes and boundaries. Batsmen versus batsmen. If India can retain what the video reminded them they possessed – "Sharma hitting through the line, Tilak playing square and late, Pandya trusting timing over power" – there are reasons for hope. But first, they had to remember. The video analyst showed them what words couldn't. Leg-middle guard instead of off stump. Wait for the ball instead of rushing. Play your game, not someone else's. Hit with the turn, not against it. Sharma watched himself slash on screen Wednesday evening. Thursday, he hit through the line instead. Leg-middle guard. Ball in arc. Swing. Sometimes the answer isn't in working harder. Sometimes it's in remembering who you are.

• The course correction



ABHISHEK SHARMA: Take a leg-middle stump line and avoid going for the slash over the covers. His strong suit is hit through the line, so why go for a shot that been his third choice?

HARDIK PANDYA: No need to rely on power when timing can be put to good use.

TILAK VARMA: His strongest suit is to hit through the square, so wait for deliveries to come to him and use the cut to good use. No need to rush into the shots when pacers can take pace off the ball.

Trying to control number of bad balls, says Arshdeep

Express News Service
Mumbai, February 27

HOURS BEFORE the game started, Arshdeep Singh's family was watching the South Africa versus West Indies game in their hotel room in Chennai. "When the West Indies batsmen were hitting, my dad used to chide, saying, 'what are you doing, what are you doing?'" he recounted, chuckling. His reply was practical: "I said, it's okay, don't worry, just enjoy the match, and hope that South Africa wins, and we win both our matches well."

It was how he approached

the game, too, without any nerves but with the belief that India would beat Zimbabwe. "I think if we win, we play good cricket, the result will take care of itself. We had a lot of fun, they played very well, and we'll try to not lose in the finals," he said.

The left-arm seamer's performances had flown under the radar this tournament. In five games, he has nabbed eight wickets and conceded at 7.11 runs an over. But he is happy that he is contributing to the team. "I am enjoying my rhythm right now and just trying to keep things simple and enjoy it as well. Some days are good, some



Arshdeep Singh has picked up eight wickets in five games. PTI

days are bad, so I am just making peace with it and enjoying it. I am trying to control the number

of bad balls, so yeah, mainly that," he said.

The nature of the wickets is not bothering him. "As long as our batsmen are enjoying batting on that wicket, we are more than happy. If we get a run, it's not a problem, but the way our gameplay has been for the past two years, we score a lot and try to defend it," he said.

"So as long as we keep getting wickets where the batsmen can play freely, because we bat up to the 8th number, so as long as they get that freedom from the wickets and they can make runs freely, we are more than happy to do the dirty job and

that's it," he added.

He detailed his mindset when tasked with the new ball in a format as fickle as T20s. "If you get to bowl two overs in power-play, then the chance is that you'll get a lot of wickets, because the batsmen go to make runs at that time. So how can I be proactive, one step ahead of the batsmen, and how can I adapt according to the conditions, how can I change my gameplay? So I'm working on that, with Morne Morkel, and I have some great bowling partners, whether it's Mohammed Siraj or Jasprit Bumrah, and with the new ball, there's Hardik bhai as well."

Crisis man Jacks shows England have the Will



Will Jacks took two wickets with the ball and then carried England home with an unbeaten 32 against New Zealand on Friday. AP

Shankar Narayan
Mumbai, February 27

IN A star-studded England lineup featuring the likes of Harry Brook, Jos Buttler and others, Will Jacks was not expected to be their main attraction at this T20 World Cup. England's batting depth meant attention usually gravitated towards their established match-winners, especially in pressure chases. Yet, through the tournament, Jacks has emerged as their crisis manager, stepping in whenever the game has threatened to drift away.

On Friday, Jacks once again delivered when England needed composure and belief. Chasing a target of 160 in the Super 8 clash against New Zealand in Colombo on a Premadasa surface that had already threatened to tighten their grip. The result also kept Pakistan's semifinal qualification chances alive ahead of their match against Sri Lanka in Kandy on Saturday.

Jacks walked out to bat in the 15th over with the chase looking steep. England needed 60 runs in just over five overs, and New Zealand sensed an opportunity to tighten their grip. Instead of retreating into caution, he made his intent clear almost immediately. In the 16th over, he reverse-swept Ish Sodhi for four, a stroke that signalled both confidence and clarity of approach.

That mindset has been something Jacks has consciously worked on in recent years. "The game is about scoring runs, but before I've just tried to survive, because people say it gets easier after your first 25 balls. However it works better for me if I tell myself I can still score - there's runs here, here, and here. If the ball's there I can still hit it for four. That game I scored 80 and 60, went from there. It worked," he told *The Evening Standard*.

That philosophy was visible again in this chase. Rather than letting the pressure dictate his game, Jacks kept searching for scoring areas and rotated the strike before picking moments to attack. His ability to stay proactive meant England never allowed the asking rate to spiral completely out of control.

The turning point of the chase came in the 18th over. With 43 runs needed from the final three overs, the equation still looked difficult, especially on a surface that had offered assistance to spin right through the match. Jacks, however, shifted the momentum dramatically, collecting two fours and a six in

• HOW PAKISTAN CAN MAKE SEMIS

ENGLAND'S FOUR-WICKET win over New Zealand keeps Pakistan's semifinal qualification hopes alive. The Salman Ali Agha-led side now need to win by at least 65 runs if they are defending a total, or chase down a score within 13 overs against Sri Lanka, to edge past New Zealand on net run-rate and qualify for the semifinals of the T20 World Cup.

a 22-over burst off Glenn Phillips that suddenly brought the target within reach and changed the mood of the contest. Rehan Ahmed, too played a significant role in the end to take the pressure off Jacks.

Following that over, England's belief grew further while New Zealand's had nosedived. The victory came a couple of overs later, ensuring England finished the Super 8 stage unbeaten. In many ways, the innings summed up his tournament. Jacks might not have entered the competition as England's headline name, but he has repeatedly stepped forward when situations have become complicated.

While Jacks' batting ultimately defined the outcome, his contribution had begun earlier in the evening with the ball as well. On a pitch that was beginning to grip, he delivered a tidy spell and finished with figures of 2/23, helping England slow New Zealand's progress at key moments of the innings.

Until that 18th over, New Zealand had remained very much in the game, and a large part of that was down to the earlier influence of Phillips. He had played a key role with the bat, top-scoring with 39 off 28 balls on a used surface against a spin-heavy attack. With England bowling as many as 16 overs of spin, he found a method others struggled to replicate and helped New Zealand post a competitive total.

Phillips then tried to push New Zealand further ahead with the ball. England had begun to steady through Harry Brook and Jacob Bethell when Phillips struck against the run of play, dismissing Brook for 26 with his first delivery. But the momentum shifted late in the chase. His final figures read 1 for 43, and it was the 22 runs conceded in the 18th over that proved decisive in the end.

BRIEF SCORES: New Zealand 159/6 in 20 overs (Glenn Phillips 39, Tim Seifert 35; Will Jacks 2/23) lost to **England** 161/6 in 19.3 overs (Tom Banton 33, Will Jacks 32 not out; Rachin Ravindra 3/19) by 4 wickets.

COMFORTABLE WIN IN HOBART

India's batting proves their undoing as Litchfield, Voll stamp Australia's ODI class

Vinayakk Mohanarangan
New Delhi, February 27

SOON-TO-BE former Australia captain Alyssa Healy, who didn't play the T20Is and is retiring at the end of the one-off Test next week, struck a defiant tone when she spoke to the media ahead of the ODI leg against India. She wanted Australia to throw the next punch, and her words have come true in just a few days as they have trounced Harmanpreet Kaur's side in back-to-back ODIs, winning the second match on Friday in Hobart even more convincingly than they had in the first match.

India's decision to bat first at Allan Border Field had backfired as Australia got to enjoy the best bowling conditions. But when Harmanpreet won the toss and repeated the same at Bellerive Oval, it was fairly

justified because the pitch appeared perfect for India to pile on a big score and put some scoreboard pressure on Australia later.

Openers struggle

Smriti Mandhana and Pratika Rawal were tasked with opening the batting again, and the duo – who average more than 75 for their opening stands in this format – added 78 this time.

But it came off 99 deliveries. Mandhana struggled for rhythm, lived dangerously through her time in the middle, offering quite a few half chances that Australia didn't convert. India openers actually didn't a boundary in the first powerplay after 4.5 overs – a streak of 31 deliveries without finding the ropes with the fielding restrictions in place.

Rawal, on the other hand,



Smriti Mandhana and Pratika Rawal added 78 for their opening stand but took 99 deliveries to get there and struggled for rhythm. CREIMAS

was off to a decent enough start with three elegant early boundaries through the off-side. But from 15 off 18 balls, the right-hander scored just 37 off the next 63 balls she faced. Her 81-ball 52 was a welcome return to

runs after the nasty injury she suffered before the World Cup semifinal, but it once more illustrated the areas she has to improve in her technically correct game. The ability to keep the scoreboard ticking is a key

part of modern ODI batting, and it couldn't have been starker in contrast to how Australia's two young superstars went about their business later in the day.

Even with the concession of batting perhaps getting easier under the lights, Phoebe Litchfield and Georgia Voll – two generational Australian talents – put India's bowling to the sword with a clinical ease. After Healy fell early, Litchfield took the attack to Indian bowlers, especially Kranti Gaud.

The left-handed opener hit three consecutive fours in the sixth over, all three were essentially pull shots, but she showed extraordinary technical mastery to place the ball behind square-leg, through square-leg, and finally, past mid-wicket.

While Voll had the best seat in the house for Litchfield's early fireworks, she moved through the gears and smashed an 82-ball 101. The right-hander rode her luck, as India were generous with their catching, but the stroke-making was of the highest quality, targeting the arc between long on and midwicket.

Their stand of 119 off 94 balls wasn't about blind slog-ging or high-risk cricket; they used their feet to stay busy in the crease and constantly looked for gaps to exploit.

With the obvious advantage of knowing the conditions better, Australia's approach to the run-chase was utterly clinical as no Indian bowler could exert control.

That India managed to reach 251/9 in their 50 overs was due to a gritty half century by Harmanpreet and lower-order cameos but Australia romping home with 83 balls to spare showed how inadequate the visitors' batting had been.

Healy had acknowledged that the 1-2 reversal for Australia in the T20Is – their first such in bilaterals at home since 2017 – was a result of India playing with confidence, on the back of winning that elusive major trophy at the end of last year.

"They've got a big trophy in their cabinet that they're really proud of and have got every right to come out here and play

the way that they have," Healy had said before the first ODI in Brisbane. "It's now a challenge for us to bounce back and throw the next punch in this format and say that this is our turf, these are our conditions, and this is the way that we play this ODI format."

Their turf. Their conditions. Their style of dominating ODIs at home. After all, Australia have not lost an ODI series at home since 1987, when none of the players in either squad was even born. And that has been evident in the way they have played in these two matches. They are, simply, the best in the business.

BRIEF SCORES: India 251/9 (Harmanpreet Kaur 54, Pratika Rawal 52, Ash Gardner 2/39) lost to **Australia** 252/5 (Georgia Voll 101, Phoebe Litchfield 80, Kashvee Gautam 2/47) by 5 wickets.

Team on brink of history, CM Abdullah flies to Hubballi

Express News Service
Mumbai, February 27

JAMMU AND Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah posted on Twitter that he was headed to Hubballi, the venue of what definitively looks like the finest moment for J&K cricket, as they are on the brink of claiming the Ranji Trophy.

J&K lead by 477 runs with Qamran Iqbal on 94 (160) batting along with Sahil Lotra 16 (41), with their second innings steadied at 186/4 after they were 11/2. But the writing has been on the wall with their talismanic pacer Auqib Nabi taking 5 for 54 in 23 magical overs to put them in the driver's seat. His 5-fer included scalps of KL Rahul, Smaran Ravichandran, Karun Nair to which he added overnight defiant centurion Mayank Agarwal.

It sets up Day 5 perfectly, and resulted in CM Abdullah flying out to witness the state's first ever triumph. "On our way to Hubli to cheer the J&K cricket team as they play the final of the Ranji Trophy. They've already made lakhs of people so very proud of their achievements by reaching the final. I'm really looking forward to spending the day tomorrow in the stands cheering them on," he tweeted.

Earlier, the 55-year-old had posted about his excitement at following the events from north Karnataka. "One good bowling innings away from a maiden Ranji Trophy title, but the pitch has little in it for the bowlers. J&K are playing like they were born for Ranji Trophy finals, with confidence & flair plus a bit of aggression when needed. I've never followed a domestic cricket match so closely."

But, J&K has completely dominated the match, starting with the 1000+ deliveries their batters faced to put up a commanding first innings score.

RANJI TROPHY FINAL

Nabi takes J&K on cusp of title, himself closer to India call-up

Fast bowler craftily sets up centurion Mayank Agarwal to secure first-innings lead before skipper Paras Dogra bats out crucial time

Lalith Kalidas
Hubballi, February 27

AUQIB NABI had some unfinished business at hand in Hubballi. He had promised himself a session on Friday to wrap up the job in Karnataka first innings. He stuck to his word on Day Four - two sessions after crafting a dream spell that propelled him closer to an India cap and Jammu and Kashmir to a historic Ranji Trophy triumph in their first attempt.

With just a day left in the final, J&K were 186/4 in their second innings, all but batting Karnataka out of the game after dismissing them for 293 to take a mammoth 291-run lead on first innings.

There was the bittersweet feeling of not getting a steady go at Mayank Agarwal, the rear-guard centurion who had ushered Karnataka to 222 for five overnight. During a jaw-dropping act lasting nine overs across both ends on Thursday afternoon, Nabi constricted KL Rahul, Karun Nair and R Smaran. But Agarwal, the ageing warhorse, got away.

The Karnataka opener faced only four deliveries from Nabi in his first spell, but a trail of breadcrumbs was still left for Nabi to work on.

His conspicuous forward movement helped Agarwal ward off the imminent threat of seam movement. Agarwal then based his knock on a series of cuts, charged drives and flicks

against the spinners, belting a hundred in his first Ranji Trophy final appearance.

"We are hopeful that we can get them out in a session tomorrow," the wily Nabi had said after the third day, insisting that "it would have been good [if I got more balls at Agarwal in the spell]. But he was moving forward to negate the swing."

Heading into the fourth morning, Agarwal stood defiant between J&K and a massive first-innings lead, likely the major differentiator in this slow-burning contest. That was until Nabi served another reminder of his outstanding repertoire. The home crowd forced into deafening silence with his five-wicket haul, Nabi (23-7-54-5) exemplified why his bowling brains have made him an exciting red-ball prospect. Hitting lines that force batters into mistakes isn't as easy as Nabi makes it look.

The lengths and late outward movement off the deck had troubled all the batters, and Agarwal required a recalibrated line of persistence.

Opening the attack with a 69-over-old ball on Friday, the right-arm seamer brought wicketkeeper Kanhaiya Wadhawan up to the stumps before the fourth ball as Agarwal resumed with sprightly feet. He would get another over in before preparing for a spell with the second new ball.

In the 82nd over - his 18th of the innings - Nabi's first loo-



J&K pacer Auqib Nabi returned figures of 5/54 in the first innings as Karnataka were dismissed for 293 on Friday. PTI

sener was smeared to the deep cover fence by No.8 Vidhaydar Patil. When he was expecting truer lengths with the harder ball, Nabi served Agarwal just that - with a spicyness. In his 20th over, Nabi shortened his length in the channel, opening up Agarwal for the first time since his first delivery the previous afternoon. He found a meaty outside edge this time, which burst through substitute wicketkeeper Dikshant Kundal's low right glove on its way to the boundary.

A pre-emptive pull would be timed superbly in the next over, but Agarwal had returned to his swift press forward from the crease.

Nabi immediately found the exact coordinates and zoomed in on the perfect spot at a good length. An exaggerated shuffle to the left, along with the forward motion, caught Agarwal (160) in line of

the middle stump, clipping his pads and Karnataka's wings together.

Nabi burst to his seventh five-wicket haul of the season soon after, pinning Shikhar Shetty LBW in a frame that has been commonplace since last season. A 60th scalp made him only the third fast bowler to record as many wickets in a season in Ranji Trophy history. Karnataka threatened with two wickets in the three overs before lunch after folding for 293, but a 302-run lead had decisively pushed Devdutt Padikkal's men to a corner by then.

Walking in at number four, J&K captain Paras Dogra fronted another short-ball examination, this time with a tighter-knit cordon surrounding the 22 yards. Dogra was eventually castled after 90 minutes of the second session by Prasad Krishna, the India pacer who arguably had his

• GANGULY CALLS FOR PACER TO BE PICKED FOR INDIA

• Former India captain Sourav Ganguly praised Auqib Nabi and said the J&K pacer should be included in the squad for the five-match T20I and three-match ODI tour of England in July.

• "J&K has shown the world what effort and intent can do... They have made that region so proud of them... tuff environment makes tuff people. Aqib Nabi on his way to national colours... England is the place to start in the summer," Ganguly wrote on X on Friday.

best First-Class performance in this match.

Frustrations swelled by late evening when unorthodox J&K opener Qamran Iqbal moved into the nineties, much to the dismay of the Karnataka seamers. He was the eleventh-hour replacement for the injured Shubham Khajuria, and Iqbal's wrong-footed shot-making would rile up seamer Vijaykumar Vyshak's temper and speed three days too late.

With just three sessions of play left, Iqbal (94*) shored up the lead to 477 by stumps with an off-driven boundary off the last ball of the day from Prasad.

Karnataka's pacers and batters increasingly appear second-best to Nabi, the nifty paceman from Baramulla who could soon become India's silken-smooth operator with the red ball.

BRIEF SCORES: J&K 584 and 186/4 in 57 overs (Qamran Iqbal 94 batting) lead Karnataka 293 (M Agarwal 160, A Nabi 5/54) by 477 runs

Oro set to be world's youngest GM, but bigger things await him

Amit Kamath
Mumbai, February 27

IN FOUR days from now, a 12-year-old boy from Argentina will begin his final attempt at defying time and going where no one has ever been in chess history. **Faustino Oro (in pic)**, the boy fondly nicknamed as the Messi of Chess for his Argentinian roots and his mercurial rise at a young age, is just one norm away from being the world's youngest grandmaster.

None of the sport's greatest practitioners, Magnus Carlsen, Garry Kasparov and Bobby Fischer, were this young when they became GMs. Carlsen was closest at 13, while Fischer was 15 and Kasparov 17 when they became grandmasters. Gukesh, the youngest world champion in chess history, ran full pelt towards achieving the record. And missed by 17 days.

The record is currently held by Indian origin American GM Abhimanyu Mishra, who was 12 years, 4 months, and 25 days old when he became a grandmaster, thus lowering Sergey Karjakin's record - which the Russian had held for 19 years - by more than two months. Oro's final shot at making history as the youngest grandmaster in the sport will play out at Moscow's Carlton Hotel at the Aeroflot Open tournament, where the pre-teen will have waddle his way past a thicket of grandmasters like Ian Nepomniachtchi, Andrey Esipenko, Daniil Dubov, Alexander Gri-schuk and Raunak Sadhwani, among others. In fact, the field at the Aeroflot Open will be stacked against him: 14 players in contention are rated over 2600 with 34 players seeded higher than Oro.

This is Oro's last chance at

usurping Mishra's record, which holds an allure for chess players that is second only to being the world champion. But for Oro becoming a grandmaster is just one of those things you have to cross on the way to bigger things.

"There's no pressure about the record," Oro had told *The Indian Express* in an interview. "I try to play my best chess and enjoy chess. For me, it's a sport. I am not focussing on the record of being the youngest grandmaster in history. I will try to do that, obviously. But I am more focused on playing my style of chess and trying to improve a bit more every day. And well, if I improve a bit more each day, the grandmaster title will appear."

For a boy who is constantly hurtling at a breakneck pace past milestones, Oro likes to take his time on the chess board. He likes to build his attacks slowly.

"I don't try to checkmate my opponent in 20 moves. I try to play positional chess. I'm a positional player, but with tactics. I like tactics. I'm not trying to win fast. I try to play good chess and focus on winning the game," said Oro, who delights in putting his opponent under immense pressure on the board before eyeballing them across the 64 squares with such withering intensity that Kasparov would be proud of him.

Such is Oro's feel for the game that Carlsen is already one of the early believers in the Argentine's future.

"He's a great player. He has a wonderful positional feeling for chess which is quite rare among such young players," Carlsen recently said in an interview with the Take Take app while Oro sat next to him. "He seems to really love chess, seeing as he plays a ton online and he plays every tournament that he can play."



सत्यमेव जयते
दिल्ली सरकार

HPV Vaccine Protection Against Cancer

A Decisive Step to Protect
Daughters From Cervical Cancer

Launch of the Free HPV Vaccination Campaign at Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital

28 February 2026 | 10:30 AM

Chief Guest
Smt. Rekha Gupta
Hon'ble Chief Minister

Gracious Presence
Dr. Pankaj Kumar Singh
Hon'ble Minister of Health & Family Welfare,
Government of Delhi

To listen to the Hon'ble Prime Minister's Address LIVE, visit:
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Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of NCT of Delhi

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SCAN TO KNOW MORE

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GROWTH EXCEEDS FIRST ADVANCE ESTIMATE OF 7.4% RELEASED UNDER OLD GDP SERIES

In new GDP series, economy estimated to grow 7.6% in FY26

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, February 27

THE ECONOMY grew 7.6% in 2025-26 under the new GDP series with 2022-23 as the base year, according to the second advance estimates of the Ministry of Programme Implementation and Statistics (MoSPI). This is higher than the first advance estimate of 7.4% released in January under the old GDP series which had a base year of 2011-12.

In the third quarter this year, under the new GDP series with 2022-23 as the base year, the economy grew 7.8%.

The revisions to other growth figures are as follows:

- April-June 2025 GDP growth is now 6.7% versus 7.8% under the old series

- July-September 2025 GDP growth is now 8.4% versus 8.2% under the old series

- 2023-24 GDP growth is now 7.2% versus 9.2% under the old series

- 2024-25 GDP growth is now 7.1% versus 6.5% under the old series

It is expected the MoSPI would be able to complete the 'backseries' showing GDP data

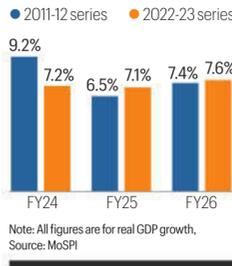
for years before 2022-23 as per the new GDP series by December 2026. The release of the new GDP series with 2022-23 as the base year comes more than a decade after the exercise was last performed by MoSPI.

Back in January 2015, when the erstwhile GDP series with 2004-05 as the base year was revised, growth was raised for some years and lowered for others after MoSPI incorporated several methodological changes to measure the size of the Indian economy more accurately and comprehensively.

The magnitude of some revisions undertaken a decade back had left economists puzzled, with Raghuram Rajan, then the governor of the RBI, saying the central bank found it "hard to see the economy as rolling back" in 2013-14 after growth for that year was raised to 6.9% (later revised to 6.4%) from 4.7% as per the 2004-05 GDP series.

The 2022-23 GDP series has also undergone major changes, the most crucial of which has been how nominal GDP is adjusted for price changes to arrive at real GDP. The single-deflator method used until now

How new GDP series has changed India's growth picture



by MoSPI to calculate the Gross Value Added of all sectors other than agriculture and mining and quarrying, could lead to growth being overstated at times when commodity prices were falling or not rising as fast as consumer prices.

The new GDP series does not use the single-deflator method and instead uses double-deflation — adjusting input and output by their respective inflation rates — with deflators also being used at a more granular level. This allows for more

CEA raises FY27 growth forecast to 7-7.4% after revised GDP series

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, February 27

THE NEW GDP series' numbers show investments have held up well amid global uncertainty, CEA V Anantha Nageswaran said Friday, raising the growth forecast for FY27 to 7-7.4%. Speaking to the media, he said risks to the improved growth projections were to the "upside".

"The Economic Survey had projected a real GDP growth

range of 6.8-7.2%. We were waiting for the benchmark revisions to come through and subsequent to the Economic Survey and the Budget presentation, we also have had the framework agreement with the US arrived at, etc. Therefore, we are increasing our GDP growth outlook for FY27 from 6.8-7.2% previously to between 7% and 7.4% under the new series," the CEA said.

accurate measurement of real GDP growth.

Some other changes in the new series include the use of new sources of data and surveys (GST, e-Vahan, Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprise, Periodic Labour Force Survey, among others).

These changes, along with the new base year, have led to significant shifts in various sectors of the economy. The primary sector — which includes agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishing and mining and

quarrying — is now estimated to be 6.1% larger in absolute numbers in 2022-23, 4.5% larger in 2023-24, and 4% larger in 2024-25.

On the other hand, the new series estimates the secondary sector — comprising manufacturing, construction, and electricity and other utilities — to be 2.1%, 3.1%, and 2.2% smaller in size in the previous three years. The gross value added of the tertiary sector, or services, is also smaller.

GOYAL ON INDIA-US TRADE DEAL

'Situation still evolving, we need to watch'

ENS Economic Bureau
New Delhi, February 27

THE ANTI-DUMPING duty imposed on certain solar products by the US was out of the India-US trade deal ambit, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said Friday, while emphasising that the situation was fluid post the US Supreme Court ruling and the government was keeping a close eye.

The US Department of Commerce has imposed preliminary countervailing duties (CVD) of 126% on solar imports from India, citing unfair government subsidies.

"The anti-dumping duty imposed on certain items is not part of the trade deal. The global environment is evolving rapidly, making it premature to comment on specific outcomes," Goyal said while speaking at the ABP Network Summit in Mumbai.

"The situation is still evolving. Every day new announcements are coming. We need to watch but I can assure that the way dairy, rice, wheat, soybean and maize are kept outside the purview of this deal, they won't be part of the deal," he said.

Goyal said India's Free Trade Agreements are powered by the strength and scale of its 1.4 billion citizens, calling the country's vast domestic market its greatest negotiating asset.

Protecting domestic industry and livelihoods, he said, is central to India's trade policy framework.

Stating that the US is a strategic partner for India, he said, "We have partnerships with them in critical minerals, technology and defence."

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Carmakers, CAQM at loggerheads on EV-only debate for Delhi NCR

Soumyarendra Barik
New Delhi, February 27

DURING A meeting on Friday between Indian carmakers and an expert panel appointed by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to tackle the issue of air pollution in Delhi NCR, the two sides found themselves at loggerheads, with at least three auto industry executives saying that their concerns over the proposed transition pathway were shot down by the chairperson of the committee.

Last year, the CAQM had constituted a committee, headed by Ashok Jhunjhunwala, a professor at IIT Madras, to develop strategies for abatement of air pollution caused by vehicular emissions in Delhi-NCR.

In a report, it said pollution from the transport sector accounts for 23% of PM 2.5 concentrations, making it the largest primary source in winters in Delhi-NCR.

The panel has prepared draft recommendations to tackle the issue, which includes a proposal to only register electric vehicles in Delhi-NCR starting 2030.

During the meeting, carmakers are understood to have raised concerns around the availability of land for public chargers for EVs and how several resident welfare associations push back against setting up such infrastructure. However, the chairperson is said to have downplayed these concerns.

Queries sent to CAQM, Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Tata Motors did not elicit a response until publication. Professor Jhunjhunwala declined to comment.

The *Indian Express* had earlier reported that the likely recommendation of the CAQM panel that only electric cars be

most stakeholders present to "meaningfully present facts and figures during the meeting".

Another executive who attended the meeting said that the chairperson's presentation did not involve scientific calculations that had been done to arrive at the committee's recommendations.

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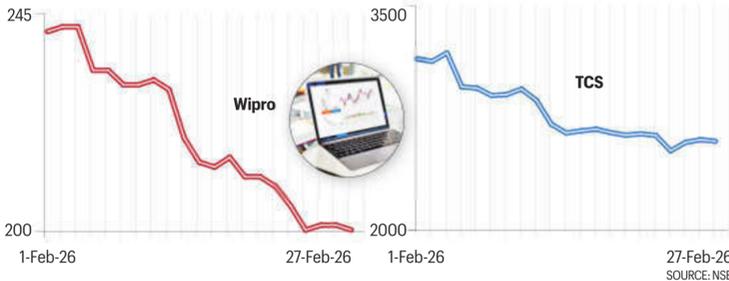
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Markets down in February as IT meltdown overshadows India-US trade deal optimism

IT stocks plunge



IT stocks plunge

INDIA'S STOCK market ended a volatile February lower by over half a percent, as an early rally sparked by the long-awaited India-US trade agreement was wiped out by a sharp sell-off in the IT sector later in the month.

The benchmark Nifty 50 had surged 4.5% in the eight sessions following the trade deal announcement, recovering losses triggered by a lukewarm Union Budget. Investor sentiment had soured after the Budget proposed a hike in the securities transaction tax on derivatives, sparking a market meltdown.

But the rebound proved fleeting as IT stocks tumbled after US-based AI firm Anthropic said on February 3 that its Claude AI tool could automate a range of entry-level tasks, including coding. The announcement amplified concerns that Indian IT services providers could face significant business disruption.

The sell-off persisted through the month as further updates from Anthropic, coupled with a note from US-based research firm Citirini Research, painted a stark picture for the sector.

The report argued that cost of deploying AI coding agents may fall to "essentially the cost of electricity," potentially challenging the long-standing outsourcing-driven models of industry heavyweights such as TCS and Wipro.

As a result, the Nifty IT slumped over 19.5% in February, marking its steepest monthly decline in 23 years.

Shares of TCS, Wipro and Infosys fell between 15% and 21%, with most IT services firms hitting 52-week lows.

The sell-off echoed in the US, where the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite slipped 2.5% during the month.

Despite the sharp correction, analysts maintained that the market reaction may have been excessive, noting that AI tools are still evolving and unlikely to immediately displace

large-scale IT outsourcing.

The episode underscored deep investor anxiety over likely revenue pressures and job losses in a sector that has been one of India Inc's most profitable and its largest private-sector employer.

In February, India hosted the AI Summit, where top global leaders and officials discussed the possibilities amid uncertain times.

Leaders from global IT majors stressed the importance of humans monitoring AI, rather than AI making jobs obsolete. It saw a host of smaller AI-related Indian firms sign partnerships with giants such as Nvidia, which sent their shares soaring.

Of the NSE's 14 major sectoral indices, only three ended lower, with Nifty FMCG and Nifty Realty dropping marginally alongside Nifty IT's big fall. Meanwhile, public-sector banks, pharmaceuticals, and healthcare indices saw highest gains.

Paramount CEO David Ellison's proximity to Trump, as well as the president's own support for Paramount's bid, is also a concern.

In the past, Trump has expressed criticism of CNN coverage of his administration. There is the obvious concern of its editorial independence, as well as of other cable channels under Paramount that have been critical of the regime.

Earlier this week, Trump had also warned Netflix that it would "pay the consequences" if it did not "immediately" remove Susan Rice (who served in both the Barack Obama and Joe Biden administrations)

from its board of directors. Trump's remark of "consequences" was widely perceived to be referring to the Warner deal. Warner Bros' film business has had an exceptional run over the past year, releasing massive successes like Ryan Coogler's *Sinners* and Paul Thomas Anderson's *One Battle After Another*. These films are award-circuit darlings and feature a type of director-driven cinema that is believed to have been given the backseat by major film studios.

In a column for *The Guardian*, Jesse Hassenger argues that Paramount's creative decisions thus far have indicated

anything but an inclination to creative storytelling.

David Ellison has made clear the studio will pursue "patriotic, flag-waving" films and stick to franchises — think DC films and Harry Potter sequels. Paramount also recently revived the *Rush Hour* franchise as a favour to Trump acolyte, Brett Ratner. While the Netflix conundrum centred on its stated intent to restrict theatrical releases to 15 days for awards eligibility, Hassenger posits that the Netflix deal may have — at least creatively, given its support of serious filmmaking — been the lesser of the two evils.

SMALLER PLAYERS LIKE TUBI AND PLEX ARE LIKELY BE PHASED OUT (OR ACQUIRED) IN A CONSOLIDATED MARKETPLACE

Paramount bags Warner Bros: What it means for consumers

Anagha Jayakumar
New Delhi, February 27

NETFLIX DROPPED out of the race to acquire Warner Bros Discovery (WBD) February 26, declining to match the revised bid offered by Paramount Skydance and capping months of bidding war.

Netflix and Paramount were vying for complete ownership of WBD's film and television studios, as well as its vast content library.

What this means for consumers

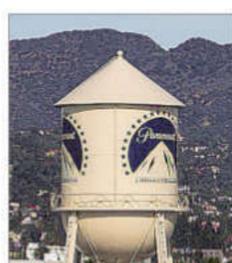
In either outcome, consumers would have to contend with a consolidated market-

place of entertainment providers. With every major studio launching its standalone streaming service, smaller players like Tubi and Plex would likely be phased out (or acquired).

The issue then is with a few, bloated competitors in the marketplace offering the same services at higher prices. In the present case, think of a single enterprise offering products like CBS, Showtime, CNN, HBO, HBO Max, and the film libraries from both Paramount and HBO Studios. Given WBD's debt, Paramount would likely shrink the content catalogues, as it engages in cost-cutting to keep the new giant afloat. Anti-

trust law seeks to prevent just that by encouraging competition — more providers, lower, competitive prices, and better quality products.

Paramount CEO David Ellison's proximity to Trump, as well as the president's own support for Paramount's bid, is also a concern.



REUTERS

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BRIEFLY

Fino Payments Bank CEO Rishi Gupta arrested

Mumbai: Rishi Gupta, MD and CEO of Fino Payments Bank, has been arrested on Friday under the provisions of CGST and SGST Act, 2017. He was arrested by the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), the investigative arm of the GST department, in Hyderabad.

Further, in a special board meeting convened on Friday, Ketan Merchant, CFO of the bank, was appointed as the Head of the organization to carry on and oversee the day-to-day operations of the bank in the absence of Gupta until otherwise resolved by the board or until Gupta resumes office, whichever is earlier, the bank said in an exchange filing.

"The bank is actively taking appropriate measures to address and overcome the above situation," it said. ENS

ahead of the peak demand season. CIL's producing subsidiaries were holding 115 million tonnes (mt) of coal at pitheads as of February 26, 2026, a figure expected to rise further by the close of the fiscal year. Power plants typically require significantly higher quantities of coal during the summer months as electricity demand surges across the country. PTI

Bank of Baroda to raise Rs 10K cr via green bonds

Mumbai: State-owned lender Bank of Baroda plans to raise up to Rs 10,000 crore through issuance of green infrastructure bonds on March 4. The base issue size is Rs 5,000 crore, with a green shoe option to retain oversubscription of up to Rs 5,000 crore, taking the total issue size to Rs 10,000 crore, market sources said. Bonds will have a tenor of seven years and are scheduled to mature on March 5, 2033. The pay-in and allotment date is March 5, 2026. PTI

Coal India ramps up supplies to meet demand

New Delhi: State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) Friday said it is geared up to meet a potential surge in summer coal demand, dismissing concerns of domestic fuel shortages as power consumption begins to rise. The company said a three-tier buffer across the supply chain - pithead stock, coal inventory at thermal power plants and ready-to-extract in-situ reserves - ensures comfortable availability

FDI rises 18% to \$47.87 bn in Apr-Dec FY26

New Delhi: Foreign direct investments (FDI) in India rose 18% to \$47.87 billion during April-December 2025-26, as per government data. Investments from overseas during the nine-month period of the previous fiscal stood at \$40.67 billion. PTI

SENSEX 81,287.19 -961.42 -1.17%

NIFTY 25178.65 -31790 -1.25%

Gold ₹1,64,700

US Dollar ₹90.98

Silver ₹2,68,000

Oil \$70.86

NOTE: GOLD, SILVER RATES AS PER ALL INDIA SARAFI ASSOCIATION DATA GOLD PER 100, SILVER PER 1KG; CRUDE OIL (INDIAN BASKET) AS OF FEBRUARY 26, 2026

GUERRILLA VS GUERRILLA

On the frontline, Bastar's own

At the heart of Battleground Bastar, where the endgame in the Maoist movement is likely to play out, are the District Reserve Guards, a force drawn from the local tribal population to take on the Naxals. JAYPRAKASH S NAIDU travels to Bastar to meet the force — lean, agile and shaped by the land they now patrol

Photographs: CHITRAL KHAMBHATI

IN THE pitch darkness of Bastar's Korcholi forest, a sentry stood guard outside a Maoist hideout. A platoon party committee member, he had a Light Machine Gun slung across his shoulder. It's a deadly weapon, capable of spraying bullets in the blink of an eye. Something stirred in the foliage 20 meters away. The sentry stiffened, cocked his gun and called out in Gondi, "Who is it?"

"It's me," came the reply. The voice was of a former Naxal-turned-District Reserve Guard (DRG) — he had caught the glint of the sentry's gun in the moonlight. The familiarity worked; the sentry let his guard down. Seconds later, he was taken down.

Recalling the operations of that day, April 2, 2024, when 13 Maoists were gunned down in Korcholi, Bijapur district, in a joint operation by security forces, Bijapur Deputy Superintendent of Police (anti-Naxal operations) Sudeep Sarkar says, "The Maoists suffered their highest casualties in Dandakaranya since 2017 in that operation. The DRG played a key role and caused maximum damage."

After four decades of an ideology-driven fight against the State, the Maoist movement in India is at its weakest, battered by a string of encounters and high-profile surrenders, including of Politburo members Malojula Venugopal Rao alias Sonu and, more recently, Thippiri Tirupathi alias Devuji. For the State, this ties in well with Union Home Minister Amit Shah's March 31, 2026 deadline for "eliminating" Naxalism.

The road to that impending rout goes through Chhattisgarh, particularly Bastar, where, as a senior police officer told *The Indian Express*, some militia and cadres, led by lower-rung military commanders, are still active.

Between 2004, when the CPI Maoist was formed, and 2010-2011, while the Maoists suffered setbacks elsewhere, Bastar remained their battleground, the site of many pitched clashes between security forces and the rebels.

But now, the tide has changed. In the 23 years since the state was formed, an average of about 48 Maoists were killed each year in Chhattisgarh. In the last two years, that annual figure has surged to around 250, a rise of over 400%. At the same time, Naxal violence against civilians and the forces has declined. Over those 23 years, an average of 74 civilians and 56 jawans were killed annually. In the past two years, those numbers have fallen sharply to 56 civilians and 21 jawans.

A key part of this pushback is being led by crack units from within the state police, from the DRG to the newer Bastar Fighters — young men and women drawn from the local tribal population.

The rise of a crack unit

Bastar can be unforgiving, more so if

you are an outsider. Thickly forested by sal, teak and bamboo, visibility often drops to a few metres. Besides, the harsh summer months, the steep gradients, rocky outcrops, streams and rivers that swell unexpectedly, the limited infrastructure and the tribal dialects make it almost impossible to navigate for those unfamiliar with the terrain. But those who have grown up in these parts know the land intimately. The bend in the river, the point where the walking trail disappears, the next water source and the escape routes.

It's this familiarity with the land and the people that gave the Maoist cadres — almost all of them local recruits — an edge over the 'outsiders' in Bastar, creating a security vacuum that was larger than in some of the other states.

Officials who have served in Bastar say that for long, the operational planning of the forces stood exposed — they often lacked the depth required to penetrate deep into the forests.

"It was a time marked by frequent ambushes, limited road connectivity, and a significant security vacuum in core areas," says Inspector General of Police for Bastar Range, Sundarraj P, the longest serving IPS officer in Bastar.

What the security forces needed on their side was someone who knew the terrain as well as their rivals did. In 2014-2015, the Chhattisgarh government set up the DRG, drawing personnel from the local tribal population and, in some cases, surrendered Maoist cadres.

Until the DRG entered the scene, anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh were carried out by a mix of the state police, locally recruited auxiliaries and the central paramilitary force, mainly the CRPF and its commando unit, CoBRA.

The DRG was born out of the success story of forces such as the Greyhounds in united Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand's Jharkhand Jaguars and Maharashtra's C60. These lean crack commando units raised out of state police and local population had proved effective in counter-Maoist operations. The security establishment was convinced that only the state police, not the central forces, would prove to be effective against the Maoists.

Many in the security establishment argue that the DRG's seeds were sown by Congress leader Mahender Karma, who helped launch the Salwa Judum movement in 2005, when tribals were armed with State backing to fight the Maoists. However, its semi-formal nature turned it into a vigilante group with disastrous results and, in 2011, the Supreme Court struck it down.

The DRG was thus created from among the same tribal population, but this time, with full legal sanction and under a formal recruitment structure. The government tweaked some of the recruitment norms related to age, physical requirements and



A DRG personnel in Bijapur district; at the funeral of DRG's Mohan Baddi, who died in an operation at Korcholi in Bijapur on December 3, 2025

• Forces on the ground

State forces: District Reserve Guard (DRG), Special Task Force (STF), Bastar Fighters, Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF)

• The DRG, STF and Bastar Fighters, drawn from the local population, carry out intelligence-based operations, area domination, and ensure security in remote regions

CENTRAL FORCES: CRPF, BSF, ITBP

• The CRPF are involved in setting up police camps, conducting Road Opening Parties and outreach programmes. The CRPF's Bastariya Battalion and CoBRA units function as specialised forces trained in guerrilla warfare

• The central forces also include the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). They assist the CRPF in anti-Naxal operations, provide security during elections, help in setting up police camps

Exclusive video from inside bastar on www.indianexpress.com

educational qualifications, especially for candidates from remote tribal regions.

Retired DGP R K Vij says the need for a specialised force to deal with Naxals arose because the district Superintendents of Police never had enough men to spare for anti-Naxal operations. "It was difficult to conduct operations on actionable intelligence. We were dependent on Central forces and whichever personnel we could take out of local police stations," he says.

IG Sundarraj says that soon after the introduction of the DRG, anti-Naxal operations became "proactive, intelligence-driven, and mission-oriented, rather than reactive... Security forces were able to move confidently through dense forests and hilly areas".

Additional Director General (Naxal operations), Vivekanand Sinha says, "The DRG is a force that can sustain even a seven-day operation on their own. They can cover a 45-km stretch in one go without halting. They know the terrain and tracks like the back of their hand. Now they have proved it. Along with local forces like the District Strike Force, the Bastar Fighters and the Special Task Force, they changed the tide."

A police source says that while the DRGs are credited with over 90% of the killings of Maoists and 70% of the arrests in Chhattisgarh, they are complimented by Central forces such as the CRPF, BSF and ITBP, who undertake joint operations, apart from playing a crucial role in the making of police camps, conducting Road Opening Parties and reaching out to villagers with medicines and other government benefits.

'Stop them from retreating'

Mahipal Achla, 29, was 14 when he joined the Maoists. For a decade, he was the bodyguard of retired general secretary Muppala Lakshmana Rao alias Ganapathy, the man most wanted by the forces. In 2022, Achla surrendered; he is now a DRG commander. "I missed my family," he says of his decision to walk out of the forests. "I could meet his mother only twice in 14 years."

Since then, he has been a vital member of the DRG, providing key intelligence and inputs, including that the best way to strike is by going on the offensive.

"When I was Ganapathy's bodyguard (2011 to 2021), we were taught that we need to retreat and hide when the enemy is powerful. They (the security forces) come well prepared when they are heading for an operation and so, that's not the best time to engage with them. We were told to attack only when the enemy is weak, when the forces are retreating," he says.

Be it the 2010 Tadmetla hills ambush, where 76 jawans were killed, or the January 2025 attack in which eight jawans and a civilian driver in Kutru were killed after their vehicle was blown up, Maoists have always

struck when the jawans, tired after an operation, were retreating.

"I knew that when we (DRG) surround the Maoists, their first instinct is to retreat. So, we now cordon off the entire area, stop them from retreating and track them down," he says.

It was a strategy the DRG employed with success in May this year, when Ganapathy's successor and Maoist general secretary Nambala Keshav Rao, 70, better known as Basava Raju, was killed along with 26 Maoists in a fierce gun battle.

Narayanpur Superintendent of Police Robinson Guria says the DRG played a key role in facilitating 90% of the surrenders in the district.

A DRG source who was part of the operation says, "Basava's location was narrowed down thanks to some surrenders months before the final encounter. We got him on the third day while we were retreating. On the first day, his team tried to escape towards Bijapur and an exchange of fire took place. They found Basava's folding stool. On the second and third day, we could not find him though he was near us. We were told to comb a nearby hill before heading back. As soon as undercover police personnel led us towards the hill, Basava's team panicked and opened fire. We then cordoned off the hill and 45 minutes later, it was all over. Basava was killed."

Damini Uikay, 27, a tribal from Bakulwai village in Narayanpur, says she joined the Bastar Fighters in 2022. A graduate, she says she is grateful she has a job when most others in her village struggle for basics. "They do not have clothes... no schools, no income, no food at home. I cannot imagine how they walk all that way, up the hills, crossing streams, to collect rice at the ration shops," she says about those stuck between the Naxals and the security forces.

'It was either him or me'

At the age of six, Nayankumar Kodyyam, 25, witnessed his father Chnaram, sarpanch of Bijapur's Mormed village, being killed by the Maoists. "He ran for his life but they shot him in the leg. Then they dragged him in front of the villagers and tied him up. We begged them not to kill him. But they shot him in the chest, chanted 'Lal Salam' and left."

In 2023, Kodyyam was selected as a Bastar Fighter, a newer version of the DRG formed in 2022. Kodyyam recalls how his team walked over 80 kilometers in three days for a massive encounter at the Indra-

vati National Park in February 2025, when 31 Maoists and two jawans were killed. "On the third day, we had no food or water left and were very tired. The Maoists were constantly changing their locations. We got them on the fourth try," he says.

Growing up in these parts is tough, so when Kodyyam speaks of hardships — his father's death and much later, a colleague's, and an encounter that nearly cost his finger — it's without drama. It's the kind of steel the DRG demands of its men.

Talking of the time he was injured, he says a splinter from a grenade blast hit him during Operation Black Forest, the longest-ever battle with Maoists on the Kare Gutta hills on the Bijapur-Telangana border in April this year, when 31 Maoists were killed.

Kodyyam's index finger was almost ripped off and a rod had to be inserted to keep it in place. In two months, Kodyyam was back in action. Since then, he has taken part in over 100 operations, including in Korcholi, Bijapur, on December 3, when he lost his colleague. Twelve Maoists and three DRG jawans were killed in the operation.

"We were chasing two Maoists when we reached a field where there was no place for us to hide. We lay on the ground below a tree and kept firing but my teammate Mohan Baddi got hit. I dragged him to safety while others provided cover fire. He kept saying, *kuch kar* (do something), but we could not save him," says Kodyyam.

Senior security personnel say the presence of DRG personnel in their ranks cut down operational time. "Back in 2022, we received intel on a divisional committee member, Mohan Katti (now surrendered), around 12 noon. In 45 minutes, we planned the operation and set off for the location which was 60 km away. By 2.15 pm, we had cordoned off the area and neutralised

Katti's bodyguard, though he got away," says Vinod Lakda, a DRG official.

But the daredevilry comes at a cost. As the body bags come home, it often holds a "son of the soil", someone who died fighting those who grew up on the same red earth.

A DRG soldier who spoke on condition of anonymity says, "My cousin was among the 31 Maoists

who were killed in the Indravati National Park in February (2025). I was part of the operation. He had sent a message saying he would kill me. So it was either me or him."

Since the establishment of the DRG, 82 of its personnel have laid down their lives. According to Bastar police's data, 18 DRG jawans have lost their limbs and 32 of their relatives have been murdered by Maoists for being, "*mukhbir* (informers)".

Police sources said personnel, including those of the DRG, who are killed fighting Maoists receive Rs 1.10 crore as monetary support and benefits.

At Uskaled village in Bijapur district, the piercing cries of the mourners tear through the drum beats and the curling smoke from incense sticks. Preparations are on for the funeral of Mohan Baddi, Kodyyam's colleague who died in the December 3 encounter at Korcholi. He leaves behind his family — parents, siblings and their families — and an unfulfilled dream of building a house for them.

As the drum beats get louder outside, Baddi's sister Ravanamma says, "We called him Monu... His childhood was spent in hardships. Our family was poor and he struggled for food and education. We thought he had a job with the government and our lives would improve, but now he is gone. All the other boys are here, but Monu is missing."

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I.S.A. Maring S/o Saka Donmun Maring R/o Plot No. 121, TF, F/5, Bamnoli, South West Delhi, New Delhi - 110077, have changed my name to Saka Akoshan Maring

I Narendra Ram S/o Sh. Dewan Ram Residence RZE-30 First Floor, Raghu Nagar Gali-7, New Delhi-110045 have changed my name from Narendra Ram to Narendara Ram for all purposes in future.

I,Virendra Kumar Gupta,D/o Munshi Lal Gupta,R/o-B-158,Sainik-enclave,part-3,Mohangarden,Uttam Nagar,Delhi,have changed my name to Virender Kumar gupta

I,Indersain Bansal,S/o-Ram Kumar Bansal,R/o-Kh-No.9/56,Nangloi Extension-2C,Near Dukesh-Gym,Nangloi, Delhi-110041, have changed my name,from Indersain Bansal to Ishu Bansal,(DOB-12/11/2000),AadharNo-last4-digit-8633.

My name is Santra Devi W/o Umrao Singh Yadav R/o House No.83, Vivekananda Nagar, Ghaziabad. My identity card also lists the above name. My Aadhaar card incorrectly lists Santar Devi instead of Santra Devi. In future, I would like to be known by my correct name, Santra Devi.

It is for general information that I,Sunil Vats,S/o-Jagdhis Prasad Vats,Residing at,417-E,Shastri-Marg,St.No.4,East Babarpur,Shahdara,Delhi-110032,declare that name of mine has been wrongly-written as Sunil Kumar in my Arms Licence-

no.NEWL/11/1999-2.The actual-name of mine is Sunil Vats,which may be amended accordingly.

I, Stephanie Carolyn Samuel, holder of Indian Passport No. ZA388022, D/o Shri Mathai Samuel, W/o Shri Chesong Monbor Ingti Kathar R/O E-142, First Floor, East of Kailash, New Delhi-110048, have changed my name from Stephanie Carolyn Samuel to Stephanie Samuel for all purposes.

I,hereto known as "Mehar Bhasin Ohson"Daughter of Late Shri Harbans Singh Bhasin and Wife of Mr. Aspan Singh Ohson R/o 6 Westwood Lane,Prior tomy marriage I was known as "Mehar Bhasin"only and after marriage I have changed my name as "Mehar Bhasin Ohson",Both "Mehar Bhasin Ohson"and "Mehar Bhasin" are ONE AND THE SAME PERSON.

I,Vinay Dalal S/o Rajesh Kumar,R/o 346/4,Friends Colony,Line-Par, Bahadurgarh,Distt-Jhajjar (Haryana)- 124507,have changed my name to Vinay.

I,Vaijanti Dagar,W/o Late Shri Krishan Singh,R/o B-33,Chattarpur Enclave, Chattarpur,South Delhi-110074,declare that Vaijanti Dagar & Vaijanti Dabas both names are same and one person and I will be known as Vaijanti Dagar,for all purposes.

I,Vaibhav Dabas,S/o Late Shri Krishan Singh,R/o B-33,Chattarpur Enclave, Chattarpur,New Delhi-110074,declare that Krishan Singh and Krishan Singh Dabas both names are is the same and one person and both names belong to my father.

I,Manish Kumar Sharma S/o Krishan Kumar Sharma R/o S-27, Parampuri Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar,Delhi-59 declare that Manish Kumar Sharma & Manish Kumar both are the name of one & same person.

I,Uddan S/o-Shiv Manjhi R/o,U-25,Sharma-Colony Budh-Vihar Phase-2,Near Trimurti Mandir Sultampur C-block,Delhi-110086,declare that my mother and father name wrongly,written as Leela Wati and Shiv Singh in my educational documents,(B.com)my mother-&father actual name is Mahgi Devi & Shiv Manjhi.

I,Taru Uppal,D/o Pawan Uppal,W/o Vinay Bhasin, R/o-177L, Model Town, Rohtak(Haryana)- 124001,have changed my name to Taru Bhasin.

I,Shahina Bano,W/o-Md. Arashad R/o-14/3,Kotla Village,Near Mayur-Vihar Phase-1,Delhi-110091,have changed my name to Shahina Arashad,for all purposes.

I,Seema Rani,W/o Charanjeet Batra,R/o CD-246, Pitampura Delhi 110034, have changed my name to Seema Batra.

I,Sarita W/o Sarjit Saini R/o-276,Hari-Nagar Ashram Delhi-110014, Have changed my name to Sarita Saini, for all purposes.

I,Sanjeew Sharma,S/o Late Sh.N.N.Sharma,R/o House.no.399/1,Gali No.-2,Shankar-Marg, Mandawali, Delhi-110092, have changed my name, from Sanjeev Sharma to Sanjeev Kumar Sharma, for all purposes.

I,Sanjeew Kumar S/o Sohan Lal Sharma R/o C-168,Brij-Vihar, Chander Nagar, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201011, have changed my-name to Sanjeev Kumar Sharma.

I,Sameer,S/o Late Sh.Both Raj,H.No.24/120,Mahavir Mandir Gali,Main-Bazar, Bahadurgarh,Distt Jhajjar (Haryana)-124507,have changed my name to Sameer Kumar.

I,SUNGHARA DEVI,M/O JC-331894F,Rank-SUB Name-RANJEET KUMAR,R/O-VPO-EKANGAR DIH, TEHSIL-HILSA, DIST-NALANDA, BIHAR-801301, have changed my name, from SUNGHARA DEVI to SANJHARA DEVI and correct Date-of-Birth 15-06-1960, for all, future purposes.

I,SUKARMA KAISTHA,W/O KAMLESH CHAND GUPTA,R/O-95, PANCHDEEP APARTMENTS, VIKASPURI,DELHI-110018,HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SUKARMA GUPTA.

I,SHOBHA KUMARI,DAUGHTER OF SH. ARVIND PRASAD,R/O B2-206,SATYAM APARTMENT,VASUNDHRA ENCLAVE, DELHI-110096, have changed my name from SHOBHA KUMARITO SHOBHA PRASAD, for all, future purposes.

I,SANJAY SOOD Son of Trilok Chand, residing at 647,Sector-6,R K Puram, New Delhi-22,declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as SANJAY KUMAR SOOD in my Service record. The actual name of mine is SANJAY SOOD, which may be amended accordingly.

I,SAJU KALLUMADAYIL THOMAS,S/o,Shri Varkey Thomas R/o,A-22-D,3rd-Floor, Vishal-Kunj, Tagore-Garden, New Delhi-110027, have changed my name to SAJU K THOMAS.

I,Shivani D/o Sumer Singh, 38, Ward No-3, Kanina, Mahendragarh, Haryana-123027, have changed my name to Km Shivani.

I,Raju S/o-Lallu Ram,R/o H.No-D-634,and D-660,J Colony-Camp.No-2, Nangloi,Punjabi-Bagh, WestDelhi,Delhi-110041, have changed my name to Rajender Kumar, for all, future purposes.

I,R JAYAVELU,D/O JC-333473X,Rank-SUB MAJ/HONY LT Name-JAGADEESAN J R/O-VILL-MITHANATHAM COLONY, PO-MAHIMANDALAM, TEHSIL-KATPADI, DIST-VELLORE, TAMILNADU-632516, have changed my name, from R JAYAVELU to JAYAVELU PERIYAMUNI, for all, future purposes.

I,PRAVEEN KUMAR GUPTA S/O RAM CHANDER GUPTA R/O HNO.G-119 PUSHKAR ENCLAVE PASCHIM VIHAR DELHI-110063.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO PRAVEEN GUPTA.

I,Nishtha Grover D/o Manish Grover,H.No.-19, Nathu Ram Park,Tehsil Road,Najafgarh, South West Delhi, Delhi-110043, is also known as Nisha Grover.Both names are of one and the same person.

I,Kunwar Arun Singh S/o Jagdamba Prasad Singh R/O D-46, Sector-47, Noida(U.P) have changed my name to Arun Singh for all future purposes.

I,Khushi,D/O-Rajesh Ridla R/O,House.No. 10A/10784,WEA,Karol Bagh, Central, District, New Delhi-110005, have changed my name to Khushi Ridla.

I,Kailash Chander Katyal,S/o-Ram Rang Katyal,residing at,61/10 Ramjais Road,Karol-Bagh New-Delhi-110005, have changed my name to Kailash Katyal,via-afidavit,dated 27.02.2026,sworn before Notary,Raj Kumar at Delhi.Henceforth,I shall be known as KAILASH KATYAL,for all,purposes.

I,Sayra Begum alias Saira Bano W/o Intzar Ahmad R/o H.No.E-100, New Seelampur, Delhi-110053, have changed my name to Saira Begam.

I,KIRUBA M/O JC-333473X,Rank-SUB MAJ/HONY LT Name-JAGADEESAN J R/O-VILL-MITHANATHAM COLONY,PO-MAHIMANDALAM, TEHSIL-KATPADI, DIST-VELLORE, TAMILNADU-632516, have changed my name, from KIRUBA JAYAVELU, for all, future purposes.

I,HERMA DEVI NEGI,W/O MOHAN SINGH NEGI, L.I.G FLATS-39,SARITA VIHAR-110076,NEW DELHI,HAVE CHANGE MY NAME TO HARMA NEGI PERMANENTLY

I,Govinda,S/O Jai Prakash,R/o 9, K.H.-261, Choonaa-Bhatti, Kirti-Nagar, Ramesh Nagar, New Delhi-110015, have changed my-name to Govinda Verma.

I,Govind Agarwal,S/o Sh.Uma Shankar Agrawal,R/o-B-2/202,Tulip Ace,Patudi Road,Sector-89, Hayatpur(114),Gurgaon, Haryana-122505, having PAN number.ALPPA5987L, have changed my name from Govind Agrawal to Govind Agarwal, for all, future purpose.

I,Chitra Malhotra Sobti,W/o Ashish Sobti,R/O-4206,Top-Floor, Sant-Nagar,Rani-Bagh, Delhi-110034, have changed my name to Chitra Malhotra.

I,Charan Jeet,S/o Ramji Dass,R/o CD-246, Pitampura,Delhi-110034 have changed my name to Charanjeet Batra.

I,ASHU D/O DEEPAK TYAGI,HOUSE'NO.DV.10. NEAR GANGA RAM MANDIR DABUA GAO PALI(13),FARIDABAD HARYANA-121004,have changed my name to ASHU TYAGI PERMANENTLY

I,ARUNA GOLANI W/O VISHAL SINGH R/O 334C 2ND-FLOOR BG-6 PASCHIM VIHAR DELHI-110063.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ARUNA KUMAR.

I,ADITYA VIPUL DODIA S/O VIPUL DODIA R/O C-6/9 TOP-FLOOR RANA PRATAP BAGH DELHI-110007.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ADITYA DODIA.

I,hitherto known as DEEPANSHU son of RAVINDER BATRA residing at Near Railway Line D-295 Gali N.9 Sadh Nagar Palam Colony South West Delhi Delhi-110045 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as DEEPANSHU BATRA.

I, Vibhor R/o 201, Hindon Height, Sec-4, Vaishali, Ghaziabad, have changed my daughter's name from Keshvi to Keshvi Maurya aged 16 years via affidavit dated 23/2/2026

I, Suman, W/O of Pawan Kumar resident of Premi Bhawan, Rani Bagh Colony, Dhampur, Bijnor, U.P., have changed my name to Suman Lata Henceforth, I shall be known as Suman Lata for all official purposes and records.

I, Sonali Raju Jaybhay, W/O- 17006801W,NK Jabhay Raju Shahdeo,At/P-Durgaon,Tehsil-Karjat, District-Ahmed Nagar, Maharashtra-414402.I have changed my name from Jaybhay Sonali Raju to Sonali Raju Jaybhay vide affidavit no- IN- JK11538600279916Y dated 27th Feb -2026, before public notary Srinagar (J&K).

I, Sneh Gupta W/o Anand Prakash Gupta, R/o House No.83, Shanti Vihar, Karkardooma, New Delhi-110092, have changed my name from Sneh, Sneha, Sneh Lata to Sneh Gupta, for all future purposes.

I, Sita Ram Mehta S/O Late Bhawani Das Mehta R/O S/15 second floor Naveenshadara, Delhi-110032 do hereby confirm my correct Date Of Birth is06/01/1952 instead of 25/03/1952 and further declare that SITA RAM and SITARAM MEHTA belongs to the same person. In future know me as SITA RAMMEHTA for all purposes.

I, Sharmila Gulguilia, W/O Dal Chand Gulguilia R/O G-10,Third Floor, Krishna Nagar, Delhi-110051 have changed my name to "Sharmila Devi Gulguilia" for all purposes.

I, Sandhya Singh W/O Mahesh Sisodia R/O House No.1, Rajapur, Sector 9, Rohini, Delhi 110085 have changed my name to Sandhya Sisodia for all purposes.

I, SURAJ KUMAR PAL alias SURAJ PAL alias SURAJ PAUL S/O SANAT PAL, R/O FJ/95, 1st Floor, Rudra Apt., Street No-2, Mahavir Enclave, Palam Village, Delhi-110045, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SURAJ PAUL.

I, PALKIN D/O NITIN GUPTA R/O FLAT NO-401, TOWER NO-5, LA TROPICANA, PARSVNATH, CIVIL LINES, DELHI-110054, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO PALKIN GUPTA FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES.

I, Raj Kumar S/o Om Prakash Sharma R/o B65A, GF, Rampuri, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Raj Kumar Sharma.

I, Rajender Singh S/o Bittu, 49, Sardar Mohalla, Tughlakabad Village, Badarpur, Delhi-44, have changed my name to Rajendra Singh.

I, MANOJ S/o Jai Kishan, R/o Flat No.-190-A, Pocket-I, Mayur Vihar Phase-I, Delhi-110091, have changed my name to MANOJ SAINI for all purposes.

I, Sharukh S/o Akil R/o-842, Maliki Nagar, Muradnagar, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Shahrukh.

I, M D Kalam R/o 25 Feet Road, Ward No-35, Adarsh Nagar, Hari Vihar Colony, Ballabgarh, Faridabad-121004, have changed my name to Md Kalam Shah.

I, Kishan Singh, S/O Late Bishan Singh Bisht, R/o C16-205, 21st Floor, Tower C16, Prateek Grand City, Siddharth Vihar, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201009, have changed my name to Kishan Singh Bisht for all purposes.

I, Intyaj S/o Md Kalam Shah, 5154, Gali No-01, Adarsh Nagar, Ballabgarh, Faridabad- 121004, have changed my name to Md Inttiyaz.

I, Dipak Sharma S/o Kunwar Pal Sharma, H-17/241, Gali No-17, Ratiya Marg, Sangam Vihar, Delhi-62, have changed my name to Deepak Sharma.

I, Bhadra Mittal, W/o Puneet Mittal, D/o Late B. M. Sinha, R/o Y-82, Hauz Khas, New Delhi-110016, have changed my name from Bhadra Sinha to Bhadra Mittal, after marriage for all purposes.

I, Ajay Kumar S/o Late Netra Prakash R/o House No. 9563, Street no. 12, Multani Dhanda, Paharganj, Delhi- 110055 have changed my minor son name from Advitya to Advitya Kumar for all purposes.

I, Narayan Kumar S/o Munnatal Gupta R/o Purana Bazar, Bewar Greenep, PO: Bewar, Dist: Mainpuri, U.P have lost my Allotment Letter Flat No. T7-1501 in Exotica Dreamville at Plot No. GH-01/A, Sector-16C, Greater Noida (U.P.) Any use of it will be considered illegal.

I Uttam Nandi S/o Samir Kumar Nandi R/o C-34, 2nd Floor, Gate No-3, Nangal Dewat, PO-Vasant Kunj, Dist-South West Delhi, Delhi - 110070, have changed my name to Nandi Choudhary

I, Ritu Kumari Tiwari C/O Vinay Tripathi R/O B-368, Sector-3, Greater Noida West, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201306 has changed my name from RITU KUMARI TIWARI to RITU TRIPATHI for all future Purposes.

I Sumit Sharma S/o Subhash Chander R/o B-50, Prashant Vihar, Sector-14, Rohini, Delhi-110085 have changed the name of my minor daughter from Roopani Sharma to Viha Sharma for all purposes.

I Sanjay Kr Agarwal S/o Mahabir Prasad Agarwal R/o House No-88, 2nd Floor, C-3, Janakpuri, Orchid Hospital, Janakpuri B-1, West Delhi, Delhi-110058, have changed my name to Sanjay Kumar Agarwal

LOST & FOUND To be known to all that, I Pawan Kumar S/o Lt. Madan Lal in September 2018 My Father's (Madan Lal) Document ie Election Card and Ration Card (Peergarhi Relief Card) original has been lost at Delhi High Court An online FIR to this effect has been 25/02/2026 vide LR No. 129905/2026

I,Anurag Sharadendu,S/o Sharadendu,R/o-A-27, Gulmohar-Park,New Delhi-110049,declare that I, have lost my Original Lease-Deed,Conveyance Deed,House Tax Mutation Letter,WILL, Electricity-Documents, Death-Certificate,Water Connection-Papers, Occupancy Certificate, D-Form, Sanction-Letter, Sanction-Plan & Share Certificate of DUJ Co-operative Group, Housing Society related to Property, No. A-27, Gulmohar-Park, New Delhi-110049(E FIR No. 130241/2026),Finder Contact-9810104363.

LOST MY ORIGINAL SALE DEED,PLOT KHASRA.NO. 176,SITUATED AT VILLAGE-BHANGEL, BEGAMPUR,TEHSIL DADRJI, DIST. GAUTAM-BUDH NAGAR,U.P.SALE DEED,DATED 05/09/2014,BAHI.NO.1, JILD.NO.4491,PAGE.NO.393 TO 482 SERIAL.NO.4046,Area 1000sqyd,sale deed was executed by vansh enterprises in favour of Rahul khetrapal.FINDER CONTACT:RAHUL KHETRAPAL,S/D/W/O-ASHOK KUMAR,R/o-B-174,EAST OF KAILASH,NEW DELHI-110065.

I, PALKIN D/O NITIN GUPTA R/O FLAT NO-401, TOWER NO-5, LA TROPICANA, PARSVNATH, CIVIL LINES, DELHI-110054, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO PALKIN GUPTA FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES.

NOTICE NOTICE is hereby given that the Certificate (s) for Larsen & Toubro Ltd bearing Equity Share Certificate(s) No(s) 1030044; 254251; 370986 and Distinctive Nos: 4940607 - 4940856; 143264679 - 143264928; 579003618 579004117 under the folio No 10901278 of Larsen & Toubro Limited standing in the name (s) of: Nisha Bharwani, Kishin Bharwani has/have been lost or mislaid and the undersigned has / have applied to the Company to issue duplicate Certificate(s) for the said shares. Any person who has any claim in respect of the said shares should write to our Registrar, KFin Technologies Limited, Selenium Tower B, Plot 31-32, Gachibowli, Financial District, Hyderabad-500032 within one month from this date else the company will proceed to issue duplicate Certificate(s). Advertisement previously published 28/02/2025 Indian Express.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE Divisional Railway Manager, N.W. Rly. Bikaner for and on behalf of President of India invites open e-tender for the following work upto 15.00 Hrs. on 18.03.2026. (1) Tender No.: 291. Name of work with its location: Construction of boundary wall near RPF parade ground, RPF barrack at Lalgarh and near washing line Bikaner to prevent trespassing (Total length 4.8 Km) under ADEHN/O/BKN. Approx. cost of the works: ₹2473376.13/- Earnest Money: ₹612400.00/- Note: Other terms and conditions will be shown on N.W.Rly. website- www.ireps.gov.in

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Metro Railway, Kolkata CORRIGENDUM Corrigendum-2 against Open Tender Notice No. S&T/Works/08-2024-Retender-2. Name of Works: Replacement of Passenger Announcement System (PAS) and Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) in Blue line of Metro Railway, Kolkata. Items Modified-NIT Header: Field Name: Tender Closing Date and Time. Existing Value: 06.03.2026, 15.00 hrs Modified Value: 16.03.2026, 15.00 hrs. Asstt. Signal & Telecom Engineer/Tele

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE DRM (Electrical) NWR, Ajmer on behalf of The President of India, invites E-Tenders for the following works upto 15.00 hrs on the mentioned date. (1) Tender No.: DRM-Elect-36-25-26. Name of work: All Div: Electrical work due to provision of pre cooling facility for coaches on platforms at Ajmer and Udaipur station including stability line of Madar depot and Augmentation of 750V power supply system with separate 11kV HT connection at Udaipur. Approximate cost of work: ₹ 1,55,26,035/- Earnest money: ₹2,27,600/- Date of closing E-tender: 18.03.2026. (2) Tender No.: DRM-Elect-37-25-26. Name of work: Balance work for provision of Central Air Cooling Plants in Various wards of Divisional Railway Hospital, Ajmer and Balance electrical work for provision of RPF barrack at Ajmer, Madar Junction, Pushkar, Beawar & Nasirabad. Approximate cost of work: ₹ 28,00,951/- Earnest money: ₹56,000/- Date of closing E-tender: 19.03.2026. The details of above E-tender are available on website www.ireps.gov.in

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NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE DRM (S&T) NWR, Ajmer on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tenders for the following work up to 15.00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. Tender No. (1) DRM-S&T-40-2025-26-Res-tender (2) DRM-S&T-41-2025-26-Res-tender (3) DRM-S&T-44-2025-25 Name of work: (1) Ajmer Division- Provision of S&T Associated work in C/W Madar-Karjoda TTR (FS+TWS+WCMS)C-1 in 12-111-Nos. in Ajmer Division NWR. (2) Ajmer Division- Provision of S&T Associated work in C/W Beawar Palampur TTR (WCMS)C - 284 Set in Ajmer Division NWR. (3) Ajmer Division: Comprehensive maintenance contract of Electronic Interlocking of Kyosan make installed at 21 stations in various section of Ajmer Division, North Western Railway for Three (03) years. Approximate Cost of work: (1) ₹ 18435142.90/- (2) ₹ 36898649.04/- (3) ₹ 95246871.84/- Bid Security: (1) ₹ 242200.00/- (2) ₹ 334500.00/- (3) ₹ 626200.00/- Date & Time of opening E-Tender: 24.03.2026 at 15.30 Hrs. The details of above E-tender are available on website www.ireps.gov.in

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NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (e-Procurement Systems)

N.I.T. No.	09-CR-2026
Name of work and its location	"Repair of 04 Number of 30/7.5 T EOTs and 01 Number of 2T Semi-Gantry Crane at RCNK/SNP (As Per Scope of Work)"
Approx. Cost of work	Tender Cost: Rs. 5085210.00/- including GST (Rs. Fifty Lacs Eighty-Five Thousand Two Hundred Ten Only)
Earnest Money	Rs. 101700.00/-
Completion period of work	90 days of start of work
Cost of Tender document on cash/by post	NIL
Date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Upto 15:00 hrs on 20/03/2026 Opening of Tender at 15:15 hrs.
Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in

No.09-CR-2026 Dated 26/02/2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 675/26

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Name of work and its location	48-R1-SRDEE-G-DLI-2025-26 Comprehensive AMC of Omega Make Lifts installed over Delhi Division for three years.
Approx. cost of the works in	₹ 86,79,060.00/- Earnest Money ₹ 17,36,000.00/-
Last Date & time of submission of tender	23.03.2026, 16.00 Hrs.
Opening of tender	23.03.2026, 16.00 Hrs.
Address of the office	Sr. Div. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
Website & notice board	www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. Div. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.

SERVING CUSTOMER WITH A SMILE 692/2026

कार्यालय नगर निगम जोधपुर

पॉलिटेक्निक कॉलेज परिसर के अन्दर, गोरव पथ, जोधपुर

फोन संख्या :- 0291-2651491, हेल्पलाइन :- 0291-2651464 e-mail: ceo-nnj@rediffmail.com

क्रमांक-न.नि.जो/ DAY-NULM /SUSV-TVC / 2025-26 / 6919 दिनांक- 25.02.2026

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना

UBN No. DLB2526SLOB35937

नगर निगम जोधपुर द्वारा ऑनलाइन स्टीट वेबसाइट के माध्यम से आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं। विनिर्देश निविदा सॉल्ट www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in एवं <https://isg.rajasthan.gov.in/njodhpur> www.sppp.raj.gov.in से डाउनलोड की जा सकती है।

आयुक्त नगर निगम, जोधपुर

संज.संवाद/सी/25/21590

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82(2) (ii) Cr. P.C.

Whereas a complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Rajender Singh S/o Dal Chand R/o H.No. 51, P.S. Dankaur, Nawada, Gautan Budh Nagar, U.P Dankaur, Sikandrabad, UP**, have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under **CC. No. 2385/2024 U/s 138 NI Act.**, has been registered at **P.S. D.B. Gupta Road, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said, **Rajender Singh** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, **Rajender Singh** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused, **Rajender Singh** of under **CC. No. 2385/2024 U/s 138 NI Act.**, Registered **P.S. D.B. Gupta Road, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **01.04.2026**.

By Order
Sh. Arjun Kiran
Ld. JMFC-05, (NI Act), Central
Room No. 02, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

DP/2625/CD/2026 (Court Notice)

U.P. State Industrial Development Authority

UPSIDA Complex, A-1/4, Lakhnagar, Kanpur-208024

Notice for Public Objection / Suggestion on draft in Layout Plan of Industrial Area Salempur, District - Hathras.

1 (a) The Part Layout Plan of Industrial Area Salempur, District - Hathras of Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) situated in District - Hathras has been prepared.

(b) A copy thereof will be available for inspection at the Regional Manager of the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority, Sector-1 Talanagari Ramghat road Aligarh between 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on all working days till the date mentioned in Para 3 hereafter as well as Website: www.onlineupsida.com

2 Objections and Suggestions are hereby invited with respect of the Draft Layout/Amalgamation Plan.

3 Objections and Suggestions shall be sent in writing to the office of Regional Manager, UPSIDA at Sector-1 Talanagari Ramghat road Aligarh within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice mentioning subject as "Regarding Public Objection/Suggestion on Draft amended part Layout Plan for Industrial Area Salempur, District - Hathras". Any person making the Objections or Suggestions should also give his/her full name & address, Email id and contact number.

(Regional Manager)
U.P. State Industrial Development Authority

Public Notice

BPS GMC FOR WOMEN, KHANPUR KALAN, SONPAT

सर्व सहायक को सूचित किया जाता है कि भारत फूल सिंह महिला मैडिकल कलेज खानपुर कला सोनीत में Book, Stationery items etc. को दुकान को क्रय के लिए खुली नीलामी दिनांक 06.03.2026 (शुक्रवार) को 11.00 AM बजे कार्डिंग रूम डायरेक्टर ऑफिस में आयोजित की जाएगी। नियम व शर्त महाविद्यालय की वेबसाइट www.bpsgmckhanpur.ac.in पर देखी जा सकती है।

Sd/-
Incharge Purchase
BPS GMC for Women,
Khanpur Kalan, Sonapat

No. 43402-HRY

Corrigendum

In the continuation of advertisement no. CS/FBD/Steno/568 dated 13/02/2026 which have been published in Dainik Bhasker Delhi, Dainik Jagran Delhi and Indian Express Delhi on dated 17/02/2026, date of document verification for the post of Cluster Programme Manager (CPM), Clinical Services Officers (CSO), Data Monitoring and Documentation Officer (DMDO) and Cluster Prevention Officer under Haryana State AIDS Control Society (HSACS) was scheduled on 02/03/2026 and 05/03/2026, Now has been re-scheduled on 10/03/2026 (10 AM).

Sd/-
Civil Surgeon
Faridabad

No. 43391/HRY

e-NIT No: CO/F/524/658
Dated: 26.02.2026

For and on behalf of the Chairman, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, eligible bids are invited from the firms for the work - DSITC of Hydroponic System based on IoT as well as manual at Kania Nursery Pasthal, Katra and its maintenance for 3 years. The last date for submission of tender is 17.03.2026 up to 03.00 PM and the bid detail may kindly be downloaded from <http://tenders.gov.in> www.maaavaishnodev.org.

Sd/-
Vinay Khajuria
ACF, SMVDSB

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTICE

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR ENGAGEMENT OF CONSULTANTS FOR OPTIMUM UTILIZATION OF COMMERCIAL SPACE AT RAILWAY STATIONS

In pursuance of Railway Board's letter No. 2025/NFR/31/ABS-SFM dated 17.12.2025, Delhi Division invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from eligible consultants/consultancy firms for optimum commercial utilization of space at the following major Railway stations:

- Shakurbasti Terminal
- Anand Vihar Terminal
- Modinagar

The consultant shall undertake station-wise studies including preparation of Station Balance Sheets and make recommendations for:

- Best commercial use of available space (platforms, circulating areas, covered areas)
- Alternate and improved utilization of existing spaces
- Enhancement of station earnings and passenger satisfaction
- Preparing layout plan for the facilities, proposing various financial models and leasing out options, Bid Process Management, providing business plan in accordance with the various Railway laws and policies.

The assignment shall be completed in a time-bound manner (within three months) as per scope of work. Engagement of consultants shall be as per Model Schedule of Powers (MSOP) and applicable Railway rules. Interested parties may submit their EOI with brief profile and relevant experience on or before 13.03.26 upto 15:00 hrs to the office of Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Delhi Division, in the prescribed manner.

Detailed EOI document / terms & conditions may be accessed through NR website (www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in) under Northern Railway - Delhi Division

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Delhi Division
No. 785/CPIA/Engagement of Consultant/2026 Date: 27.02.26 685/2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE

The Sr. Divisional Engineer-II, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work:-

NIT-73	Name of work: Provision of additional rooms for train handling/ maintenance operations at line no. 37 in GZB yard and 2. Repair of various S&T building in the section of ADEN/GZB under jurisdiction of Sr. DEN-II/DLI. Approx. Cost of work : ₹69,24,012.31 Earnest Money To be deposited : ₹1,38,500/-
NIT-74	Name of work: Elimination of level crossing no. 103 at km 103/8-9 by construction of LHS (5.0 x 5.0m) under ADEN/SML on DSA-SMQL-TPZ Section in the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN-II/DLI. Approx. Cost of work : ₹5,64,82,955.43 Earnest Money To be deposited : ₹4,32,400/-

Date & Time of opening of Tender 24.03.2026 at 15:00 Hrs.

Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen www.ireps.gov.in

- The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system.
- For all terms and conditions please refer tender document.
- No manual offers are acceptable. * Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only.

No.: 128-W/280e-Tender Notice/NIT-73 & 74-25-26-W-II Dated : 26.02.2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 670/2026

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY E-NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Divisional Railway Manager, N.W. Rly, Bikaner for and on behalf of President of India invites sealed open tender for the following work on the date shown as below. (1) Tender No.: S&T-BKN-25-26-41 (2) Name of work with its location: Telecom work in o/w augmentation of facilities at LAHLI, BNWVG, KNL, BHT, BWC Goods Shed of Bikaner Division (3) Approx. cost of the work: ₹ 18457384.95/- (4) Bid Security (IREPS) ₹242300.00/- (5) Date & Time for submission of tender & opening of tender: Upto 15.00 Hrs. on 23.03.2026 (6) Website on which complete Tender details can be seen & downloaded: www.ireps.gov.in 286-DK/26

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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.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD/CORP/ AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/ CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE, KUNDLI	CONSTRUCTION OF FOOTPATH AND BERM AREA AND LAYING OF PIPELINE ON JAATI ROAD IN WARD NO 8 MC KUNDLI (RETENDER) + 2 WORKS	26.02.2026 07.03.2026	Rs. 74.31,778/-	http://tenders.hry.nic.in	7404124681 scynchandia@gmail.com

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in No- 43419/HRY

O/o GENERAL MANAGER HARYANA ROADWAYS, JHAJJAR.

Website:- www.hartrans.gov.in

TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited for hiring of activities i.e 1. Cleaning of Buses with broom. 2. Washing of Buses Haryana Roadways. Jhajjar depot as mentioned in online system i.e technical and financial bid.

Sr. No.	Name of Items	Approximate Value (In Lacs per annum)	EMD Deposited (In Rs.)	Tender No.	Start Date & Time of Bid Preparation & Submission	Expiry Date & Time of Bid Preparation & Submission.
1	1. Cleaning of Buses with broom. 2. Washing of Buses.	10.00	50,000/-	1119/BC dated 27.02.2026	09.03.2026 Start from 10:00 AM	24.03.2026 Up to 15:00 P.M.

Note:- For details information please visit website <https://etenders.hry.nic.in/>

Sd/-
General Manager,
Haryana Roadways, Jhajjar.

No. 43394/HRY

E-AUCTION FOR PRADHAN MANTRI BHARATIYA JANAUSHADHI KENDRA IN RANGIYA DIVISION

E-Auction is invited for Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Kendra (PMBJK) outlet at the circulating area of Rangiya station for a period of 03 (Three) years. Catalogue No.: PMBJK-RNY-26-2. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Days: 1096; Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots) : At 12:00 hrs. on 12-03-2026.

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	PMBJK-RNY-RNY-PMBJK-1-24-1 (PMBJK-Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras)	Awarding contract for operation of the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Kendra (PMBJK) outlet at the circulating area of Rangiya station.

E-Auction Close Date & Time: At 12:30 hrs. on 12-03-2026. Initial Cooling off period is 30 minutes. Successive lots closing interval 10 minutes. Note : Prospective bidder are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in for more details.

Sr. DCM, Rangiya

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

No.: SNT-JP-36-2025-26, Dt: 25/02/2026
DRM (S&T) North Western Railway, Jaipur, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tenders from registered tenderer/bidders for the following work **Name of work with its location:** Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract for Deltron make Universal fail Safe Block Interface (UFSBI) installed in Block Section of RPC, JP-SWM, JP-RGS & 04 IB section of JP division for Two Years. Approx. Cost of Work : ₹ 1,21,27,474.56/- Bid Security: ₹ 2,10,600/- Tender Submission & Closing Date & Time on website: 24/03/2026 upto 15:00 Hrs. Website Particulars & Notice board location: www.ireps.gov.in, DRM office/NWR/ Jaipur. 291-DK/26

Follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NWRRailways) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/NWRRailways) [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/NWRRailways)

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTICE FOR E-PROCUREMENT

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager/Freight Services, Delhi Division, Northern Railway, in terms of Railway Board letter no. 2020/TC(FM)/02/05 dated 17.04.2025, invites open tender through online IREPS Portal (www.ireps.gov.in) for the contract of Supply, Installation and Maintenance of 50 Padlocks (e-Locks) on 25 wagons of 01 NMG rake for a period of 01 year as per details and schedule given below:

Tender Number	Date and Time for Closing of Tender	Padlocks (e-Locks) (per wagon)	Total number of Padlocks (e-Locks)	Period of Contract	Estimated Value (per e-lock) (in Rs.)	Total Estimated Value (For 50 E-Locks) (in Rs.)	EMD (in Rs.)	Tender Cost @ including 18% GST (in Rs.)
1C-MG-NMG-Padlocks-eLocks	On 23.03.2026 at 15:00 hrs.	2	50	01 Year	14,632/-	7,31,600/-	14,600/-	0/-

Important notes:

- For more information, requirement and various aspects regarding this e-Procurement, interested bidders are advised to visit https://www.ireps.gov.in/html/helpdesk/learning_centre.html (E-Tender works).
- Railway Administration reserves the full and absolute rights to terminate this tender / contract at any point of time and / or for taking any decision regarding the discontinuation / continuation of this contract with any modified / additional terms and conditions depending upon its successful execution or any other modified rule issue by the Railways in this regard. 680/2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

AIR FORCE STATION, AGRA TENDER NOTICE

Air Officer Commanding Air Force Station Agra, invites sealed tenders from War Widows/ Widows of Defence Personnel died while on duty, Disabled Soldiers/ Ex Servicemen and Spouses/ Widows of Ex Servicemen only for running of following St Side Shops Tender form can be obtained from St Office, AF Stn Agra from 02 Mar 26 to 15 Mar 26 (Except SAT, SUN & Closed Holiday) between 1030 hrs to 1230 hrs on production of one ID proof out of Passport, Driving license, PAN Card, Aadhar Card, Ration Card or Voter ID Card and one address proof out of BSNL Landline Bill, Electricity Bill, Certificate issued by Sarpanch/Tahsildar/BDO (not issued before one month of this publication). Also applicant for St Side Shops must produce Service Document proof as same is to be attached with tender forms. The cost of tender form, minimum bid and EMD are tabulated below. **Payment mode will be Debit Card Only.**

Earnest Money can be deposited on all working days w.e.f. 02 Mar 26 to 15 Mar 26 (Except SAT, SUN & Closed Holiday) between 1030 hrs to 1230 hrs. The completed sealed tender, duly mentioning the shop applied for on top of envelope along with cash receipt for Earnest Money deposit, ID proof, Address Proof and IT clearance if any are to be dropped in the tender box placed at Ajeet Nagar Gate, Air Force Station Agra by 1000 Hrs on 16 Mar 26. The tender box will be opened in the presence of the tenderers by independent BOO at St Office on 16 Mar 26 at 1300 Hrs. Vendors having proprietor certificate for subject trade will be given preference over beginners. The incomplete tender form will be rejected. Air Officer Commanding reserves the right to cancel/postpone the tender without prejudice to other legal action Contract offer to the successful bidder is valid if all credentials are found fit by the investigating authorities of IAF. Ex Servicemen presently having an SI venture cannot participate in the tender process. Ex-Servicemen should not be an employee of State Government or Central Government or PSU. Ex Servicemen himself should collect the tender form from St office and sign the legal documents in St office himself. No (R) No representatives are allowed to collect the tender forms.

SL No	Shop Name	Location	Minimum Bid Price (in Rs. Per Month)	Earnest Money deposit (in Rs.)	Cost of Tender form
1	Jalpan Grah	Near Station HQ	2700	4500	1500
2	Electronic Repair Shop	Dakota Complex	2430	4050	1500
3	Barber Shop	4 Area	2666	4444	1500
4	Milk & Ice cream	4 Area	1800	3000	1500
5	Puja Samagri Dukan (New shop for tender).	Dakota Complex	1000	1600	1500
6	Tailor Shop (new shop for tender)	4 Area	2000	3200	1500
7	Shoe & Leather Shop (new shop for tender)	Dakota Complex	1000	1600	1500
8	Abhiruchi Restaurant	Near Shivdev hall	44440	74066	1500
9	Cosmetic Shop	Dakota	6614	11024	1500
10	Ice cream parlour	Near CSD	6389	10648	1500
11	Tea Shop Mini Dakota	Near Shivdev hall	28200	47000	1500
12	Barber Shop Officer Mess	Near Officer Mess	2733	4555	1500
13	Veg shop	NP Area	34650	57750	1500
14	Tailor shop	Near sports Section	759	1265	1500
15	Stationary Shop	Dakota	8059	13432	1500
16	Amul Parlour	Dakota	8098	13496	1500
17	Provision shop	5 Area	4138	6897	1500
18	CSD Dealer	Near CSD	1525	2541	1500
19	Suvidha Auto Centre	Near CSD	14520	24200	1500
20	Sweet shop	Dakota	24605	41009	1500

Sd/-
Officer In Charge
Service Institute
Air Force Station Agra

Patna Smart City Limited (PSCL) NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR

Sealed tenders are invited from interested banks or authorized ATM service providers for the allotment of the ATM space located at Multimodal Hub near Bakari Bazar, GPO, Patna Junction, Patna (Through e-procurement mode only- www.eproc2bihar.gov.in)

NIT No. - 20/MD/PSCL/2025-26

- Patna Smart City Limited (PSCL) invites bids from eligible experienced Firms / Contractors / Agencies / Bidders registered in appropriate category in any Government Organization/PSUs for execution of works as given below:-

Name of Work	Bid Document (Non-Refundable)	Bid Security (EMD)	Bid Processing Fee
Sealed tenders are invited from interested banks or authorized ATM service providers for the allotment of the ATM space located at Multimodal Hub near Bakari Bazar, GPO, Patna Junction, Patna	Rs. 11,800/-	29,000/-	As per Eproc website

- Date of Downloading of Bid Document: From 28.02.2026 to 20.03.2026 up to 15:00 hours. Through website: www.eproc2bihar.gov.in
- Place & Date of pre-bid meeting: Date: 07.03.2026, Time 16:00 hours; Patna Smart City Limited, 4th Floor, ICC - cum- PSCL Building, SSP Office Campus, Gandhi Maidan, Patna-800001.
- Last date of Receiving Queries (Online): Date: 07.03.2026, Time 17:00 hours (through e-mail)
- Last Date and time for uploading of bid: Date: 20.03.2026 up to 15:00 hours through website - www.eproc2bihar.gov.in
- Time & Date of opening technical bids: Date: 23.03.2026, Time 13:00 hours
- Time & Date of opening financial bids: To be communicated later on
- Place of opening of Bid: Through website: www.eproc2bihar.gov.in
- Periods of bids validity: 120 Days.
- Officer inviting bids: Managing Director, PSCL, Patna.

Chief Executive Officer
Patna Smart City Limited

PR- 025252 (B & C) 2025-26

विस्तृत सूचना www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar पर भी देखी जा सकती है।

नशे से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से प्यार

बिहार सरकार

कार्यालय- नगर परिषद, टिकारी गया

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना सं- 18 / 2025 - 26

(ई-टेंडरिंग द्वारा : www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

- विज्ञापन दाता का पदनाम एवं पता :- कार्यालय पदाधिकारी, नगर परिषद, टिकारी
- निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना निर्गत की तिथि :- दिनांक- 24.02.2026
- टेंडर कागजात डाउनलोड प्रारंभ करने की तिथि :- दिनांक-12.03.2026 के 11:00 AM बजे से (on website: www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)
- बी-बीड की तिथि/समय/स्थान :- दिनांक-13.03.2026 के 11:00 AM बजे से 03:00 PM तक, स्थान- कार्यालय, नगर परिषद, टिकारी, गया
- संबंधक द्वारा ऑनलाइन निविदा अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि/समय :- दिनांक-19.03.2026 के 03:00 PM तक (on website: www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)
- Last Date and time for submission of Hard: :- दिनांक- 23.03.2026 के 03:30 PM तक
- Copies (Payment Proof in the case of a Bank Guarantee, the Original Copy of the Power of Attorney and documents related to Blacklisting/Debarment Shall be submitted in Original :- स्थान- कार्यालय कक्ष, नगर परिषद, टिकारी, गया
- सकनीकी बीड खोलने की तिथि/समय :- दिनांक-23.03.2026 के 04:00 PM बजे के बाद, (on website: www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)
- वित्तीय बीड खोलने की अंतिम तिथि/समय :- सकनीकी बीड निष्पादन के पश्चात् (on website: www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)
- योजना एवं कार्य की विवरणी:-

क्र. सं.	कार्य का नाम	आकलित राशि रुपये में	अग्रदान की राशि (रु. में)	सुरिश्चन विवरण की न्यूनतम राशि (अग्रवर्णनीय)	प्रोसेसिंग फीस+अन्य कर (रु. में)	कार्य की अवधि
1.	Request for Proposal for selection of Agencies for Providing Outsourced Manpower for Performing and Managing Day to Day Activities related to sanitation work for Nagar Parishad Tekari	8,35,59,672.00	16,71,200.00	10,000.00	As per www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in	24 Month

For any support related to the e-tendering process, bidder may contact the following on website: www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in Helpline No- 1800 5726 572

सफल सूचना www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar पर भी देखी जा सकती है।

PR. No. 25194 (B&C) 25-26

कार्यालय पदाधिकारी
नगर परिषद, टिकारी

नशे की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

Office of the Superintendent District Jail, Jhajjar

Tel:-01251-277800, E-mail:- suptdjhj.jail@hry.gov.in

Notice for Walk-in-interview

The Superintendent District Jail, Jhajjar is invited notice for walk-in-interview against vacant post of Counsellor/psychologist. The detail of posts, their qualification & remuneration are as under-

S. No	Name of Posts	Educational qualification and experience	Monthly remuneration
01.	Counsellor /psychologist	Graduate in any discipline with three years' experience in the field. He/She must hold a Certificate of three months Training Course in de-addiction counseling by NISD and should have knowledge of English as well as one regional language.	25,000/-

Date and Venue of Walk-in-interview:-Walk-in-interview for filling up the vacant contractual posts at the Jail is scheduled on 11.03.2026 at 09:00 A.M. at District Jail Jhajjar:-

S. No	Name of Jail	Posts for which walk-in-interview would be conducted	No. of posts	Duration
01.	District Jail, Jhajjar	Counsellor/psychologist	01	One year or as per direction of Head Office which ever is earlier.

Terms and conditions:

- Applicants are advised to report at above mentioned Jail on 11.03.2026 at 09:00 AM. The original documents will be checked during the interview and any application received there after will not be entertained.
- No TA/DA will be paid to the candidates for appearing in the interview or joining the place of posting after selection and acceptance of offer of appointment.
- Mere fulfillment of the essential qualifications/experience does not guarantee selection. The decision of the selection committee regarding appointment of the candidates will be final and no representation will be entertained in this regard.
- The above posts are purely on contract basis and for the period mentioned above.
- No HRA/Medical claim/Conveyance allowance etc. will be paid to the selected candidates.

How to apply: The eligible and desirous applicant should report for walk-in-interview along with their duly filled application form (proforma attached) and Bio-Data/Resume/CV (with duly affixed with latest passport size photograph along with original certificates and simultaneously one set of self attested photocopy of relevant documents in support of age, qualifications, Mark sheet, Degree, MCI/State Registration, Category & Experience certificate etc. and two recent passport size photographs at District Jail, Jhajjar at 09:00 A.M. on 11.03.2026.

Sd/-
Superintendent Jail,
District Jail, Jhajjar

Annexure-III

Application Form

(Application for appointment on Contract Basis)

- Post applying for _____
- Applicant's Name _____ Sex _____
- Father's name _____ Mother's name _____
- Spouse name _____
- Date of birth _____ Age _____
- Marital Status _____
- Mailing Address _____ Pin _____
- Permanent Address _____ Pin _____
- E-mail address _____
- Telephone number, _____ Mobile number _____
- Educational/Technical/Professional Qualification (High School and above): _____

Attach Certificates

Qualification	Board/University/Institutions	Passing year	Percentage marks	Year

(Proof to be attached: Mark sheets, degree certificate, registration etc.)

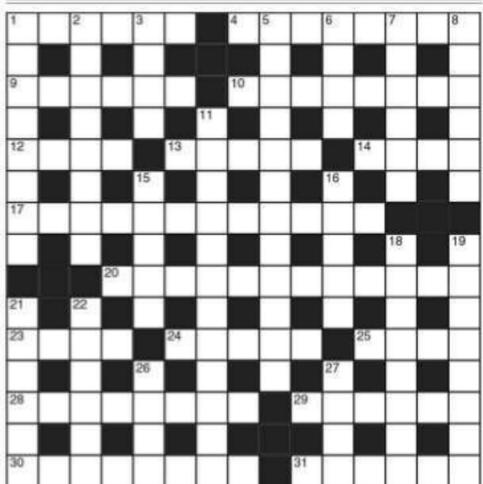
- Computer skills
- Working knowledge of MS Office/E-mail Yes/No
- Having knowledge of English hindi typing Yes/No
- Experience (From present to previous):-

(Attach proof of previous experience like appointment letter, experience certificate, salary certificates etc.)

No. 43422/HRY

CROSSWORD

5924



ACROSS
 1 Jumbo navigator (6)
 4 Dice can't turn round your bad luck (8)
 9 They're purely symbolic (6)
 10 Went up as many called it a day (8)
 12 Approach shot appears to be sliced (4)
 13 Marquetry that's trendy even with unskilled finish (5)
 14 Harry on the guitar (4)
 17 Lacking a centre of gravity? (5-7)
 20 Captains confused by mishap and stress (5,7)
 23 Hydrogen air locks (4)
 24 Father goes before brother in France (5)
 25 Wise men having a different image out East (4)
 28 How a masser might get by (3,5)
 29 She's involved in stage, films and radio (6)
 30 Supports regular girlfriends (8)
 31 It's looped around a dog (6)

DOWN
 1 Spot a complicated clue — but it's of little matter (8)
 2 Matters in hand include stocks and shares (8)
 3 Second-hand but not wasted (4)
 5 Odd thing to say (6,6)
 6 I dry up dessert dishes (4)
 7 Last though almost sure to finish on top (6)
 8 Up to now it's why boys may telephone girls (2,4)
 11 Foolishly name net price showing a lack of restraint (12)
 15 Feeling irritable? (5)
 16 Time to start to relax, kid (5)
 18 Held back free trade when in the red (8)
 19 Judge of knitted ties and cooked meat (8)
 21 It's sung by numbers (6)
 22 Horrid sailor admitted? It's feasible (6)
 26 Hurriedly left without having eaten (4)
 27 I have a turn on stage in Othello (4)

SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 5923 ACROSS: 1 Elbow, 4 Assumed, 8 Pay, 9 Overheads, 10 Excerpt, 11 Rated, 13 Saucer, 15 Isolate, 18 Easel, 19 Canopus, 21 Acropolis, 23 Oar, 24 Digress, 25 Yield **DOWN:** 1 Express, 2 Boy scouts, 3 Wooper, 4 Agents, 5 Spheres, 6 Moa, 7 Dosed, 12 Telephone, 14 Eclipse, 16 Ensured, 17 Scolds, 18 Eland, 20 Nasty, 22 Rag

JUMBLER 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 clue. People are still willing to do an honest day's work. The trouble is they want a ___ for it. Joey Adams (5,3)

BGIEE
 ○ ● ○ ○ ○ ○

SLAGS
 ○ ○ ○ ● ○ ○

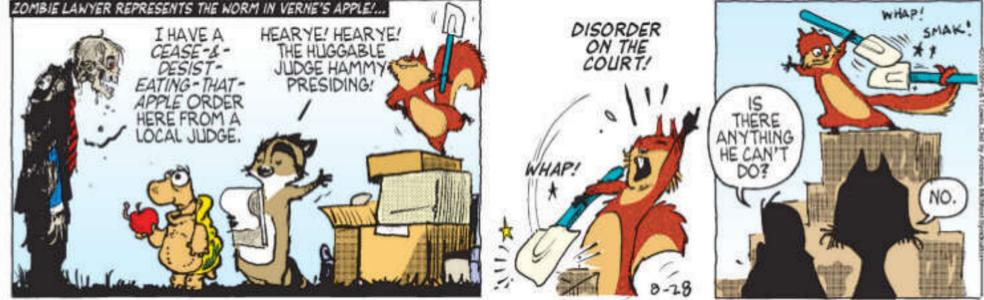
SCYPHI
 ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

CEIRKW
 ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

SOLUTIONS: People are still willing to do an honest day's work. The trouble is they want a week's pay for it. - Joey Adams

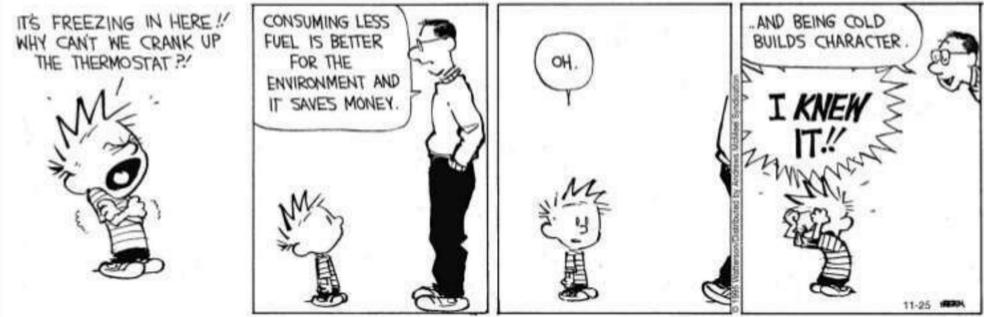
OVER THE HEDGE

BY MICHAEL FRY & T LEWIS



CALVIN & HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON



MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG



SUDOKU 6243

DIFFICULTY LEVEL 4s INSTRUCTIONS
 To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

		2	7					8
1				9				5
4	8			6	9			
				7			3	
			4	5				
8	2							
	4	6			3		7	
9			7					
1					3	2		

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
 1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6242

4	1	5	6	7	8	2	3	9
3	7	9	1	2	5	6	8	4
2	6	8	9	3	4	1	7	5
6	4	7	3	9	1	8	5	2
9	2	1	8	5	6	3	4	7
5	8	3	2	4	7	9	6	1
8	3	4	7	1	9	5	2	6
1	5	2	4	6	3	7	9	8
7	9	6	5	8	2	4	1	3

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP)
 ITBP salutes its bravehearts
 Constable Rameshwar Dass and Constable Laxmi Dutt of 1st Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Bihar in 1998.

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE
 DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Head Constable Ranbir Singh of 32 Bn, who was shot at and seriously injured while chasing insurgents on 28 February 2003 in Tripura and evacuated to a hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries due to excessive blood loss. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

54 Bn
 01-08-1948 To 28-02-1988

54 Bn
 14-01-1947 To 28-02-1988

67 Bn
 21-06-1945 To 29-02-1990

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Lance Naik Om Prakash of 54 Bn, who was seriously injured in an IED blast in Darjeeling, West Bengal on 28 February 1988 and breathed his last on 29 February 1988. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Lance Naik K. K. Singh of 54 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice in a bomb attack by insurgents in Siliguri, West Bengal on 28 February 1988. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Bhim Bahadur of 67 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice when he was shot at by a militant using a silencer pistol from point blank range, taking advantage of the crowd near Exhibition Ground in Srinagar on 29 February 1990. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

E-AUCTION PROGRAMME FOR SALE OF RAILWAY SCRAP MATERIAL
 The special e-auction schedule for Sale of Scrap Lot through e-auction under the jurisdiction of Rangiya Division depot for the month of March/2026 has been fixed as per following details:-

SN	Month/Year	Auction Schedule No.	Auction Start Date/Time
1	March/2026	NFRNRY30N2025033	27-03-2026 / 11:00:00

Interested Bidders are advised to bid through IREPS website (www.ireps.gov.in) for registration, training, participation in e-auction.
 Dy. Chief Materials Manager/Pandua

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 (See Section 82 Cr.P.C./84 BNSS)
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused Sudhir Kumar Awasthi Signatory of M/S Avinash EM Projects P. Ltd A-5 & A-7, DDA Flats, Gazipur Dairy Farms, Delhi also at National Arcade 308 Plot No. 4, CSC main Road, Gazipur, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in CC No. 724/20 U/s 138 NI ACT, PS Shahbad Dairy, Delhi and it has been returned to warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused Sudhir Kumar Awasthi cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Sudhir Kumar Awasthi has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Sudhir Kumar Awasthi in CC No. 724/20 U/s 138 NI ACT, PS Shahbad Dairy, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 02.04.2026.

By order
 Shri Sarthak Panwar
 Judicial Magistrate First Class-05
 North, Court No. 114, 1st Floor
 Rohini Courts, Delhi

DP/2553/ON/2026

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA
 Advertisement for filling up the posts for
 Maharishi Chyawan Govt. Medical College,
 Koriawas, Narnaul, Haryana

Adv. No.: MCGMC/Recdt./2026/01 Closing Date: 18.03.2026

Fifty Seven (57) posts of Senior Residents are proposed to be filled up on Tenure (अस्थायी) basis for Maharishi Chyawan Govt. Medical College, Koriawas, Narnaul. The tenure for senior resident posts will be for one year only extendable up to a maximum 03 (three) years, subject to satisfactory work and conduct report.

The other details like essential qualification, pay scales, fees, application form & other terms and conditions may be downloaded from institute website www.memckoraiwas.com. It is also informed that all interested candidates may visit Maharishi Chyawan Govt. Medical College, Koriawas, Narnaul website on regular basis for all updates. No. of posts etc. which is available only on institute website i.e. www.memckoraiwas.com.

The application form complete in all respect may be sent to O/o Director, Maharishi Chyawan Govt. Medical College, Koriawas, Narnaul latest by 18.03.2026 (during office working hours 09.00AM up to 05.00 PM) through Registered/Speed post & By Hand. No application beyond the stipulated time period will be considered. The date of Scrutiny & interview will be updated on website i.e. www.memckoraiwas.com in later on.

Sd/-
 DR BRIJENDER SINGH DHILLON
 DIRECTOR
 MAHARISHI CHYAWAN GOVT MEDICAL
 No. 43413/HRV KORIAWAS, NARNAUL, HARYANA

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 82 Cr.P.C./84 Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita
 Whereas a complaint has been made before me that that accused person Asim S/o Ayyub Khan R/o H.No. 3, Gali No. 2, Kh. No. 337 near Madina Masjid, Saboli Khadda Mandoli, Delhi, have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under FIR No. 388/2016 U/s 356/379/411 IPC., has been registered at P.S. Welcome, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said, Asim cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, Asim has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused, Asim of under FIR No. 388/2016 U/s 356/379/411 IPC., registered at P.S. Welcome, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 06.04.2026.

By Order
 Ms. Deepakshi Rana
 JMFC-03, Room No.19
 Karkardooma Courts, Shahdara, Delhi

DP/2529/NE/2026
 (Court Notice)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 82 Cr.P.C.
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused person Namely Rafiq Seikh S/o Bablu Seikh R/o H. No. A-26, Gali No. 1, New Usmanpur, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in Case FIR No. 114/2017 U/s 379 IPC PS: Gokulpuri, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Rafiq Seikh cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Rafiq Seikh has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Rafiq Seikh of FIR No. 114/2017 U/s 379 IPC PS: Gokulpuri, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 01.04.2026.

By Order
 Ms. Shruti Saraswat
 JMFC-03, Room No. 22, First Floor
 Karkardooma Courts, Delhi

DP/2602/NE/2026
 (Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 84 BNSS
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Intyaz S/o Riyaz R/o E-49/211, Janta Majdoor Colony, Welcome, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case registered vide FIR No. 235/2023 U/S 25/54/59 Arms Act, PS Welcome, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused Intyaz can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Intyaz has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Intyaz of FIR No. 235/2023 U/S 25/54/59 Arms Act, PS Welcome, Delhi is required to appear before this court (or before me) to answer the complaint on or before the day of 07.04.2026

By Order,
 Ms. Deepakshi Rana
 Judicial Magistrate First Class- 03
 Room No. 19, First Floor, Shahdara District
 Karkardooma Courts, Delhi

DP/2532/NE/2026(Court Matter)

ROYAL STARS

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20): You will feel passionate about things today, especially romance! Warm social vibes are in the air today promoting cozy interactions. Enjoy getting out and chatting with others. Tonight: Socialise.

TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21): Steer clear of intense conversations with parents and authority figures today. Focus on your natural feelings of sympathy for a family member. You also might feel attracted to a younger person or member of a group. Romance is in the air! Tonight: Relax at home.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21): You might be successful in your bid to get approval or permission for something. This is because authority figures will look kindly on you. They will be receptive to your requests. Make sure what you ask for is doable. Tonight: Lively conversations.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23): Although today is full of romantic and fun-loving opportunities, this is also an excellent day for financial matters for your sign. You might make long-range plans for the future. Make sure they are realistic and doable. Tonight: Check your money.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23): Today the Moon in your sign encourages a romance or a flirtation with someone of an age difference. Today bodes well because gifts, goodies and favours from others might come your way. Keep your pockets open and your hopes high. Tonight: You win.

VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23): Secrets might be revealed today. You will be filled with private thoughts, fantasies and crushes about someone. Certainly discussions with close friends, partners and spouses will be very warm. Tonight: Enjoy solitude.

LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23): This is a great day to interact with friends and groups. Co-workers will be supportive. Discussions related to your health and your pet will be upbeat and reassuring. You might get a raise or see ways to boost your income. Tonight: Be friendly.

SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23): People will notice you. Some people will admire you, especially in a romantic way. You have a magnetic and charismatic quality that attracts people. Tonight: You're admired.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22): Break free of your rut and do something different today. Travel if possible. You will enjoy learning new things through books, film and talking to people. Romance with someone "different" is likely. Tonight: Explore.

CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20): While making important financial decisions today, especially about inheritances and shared property, be careful that you don't give away the farm. In conversations with others, you will be particularly charming. Tonight: Check your finances.

AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19): This is a strong money day for you. Discussions with someone close to you might provoke a well-planned but fanciful decision. Steer clear of power struggles with others. Focus on money making ideas and shopping. Tonight: Cooperate.

PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20): Today your appreciation of beauty and your interest in the arts, music and poetry is stimulated. It will be easier to express your affection for someone — a good friend or a romantic interest. Tonight: Get organised.

The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd
 (A Govt. of Kerala Undertaking) Sankaramangalam, Kollam-691 583
 Phone: 0476-2651215 to 2651217, e-mail: md@kmmil.com, URL: www.kmmil.com

TENDER NOTICE
 For more details please visit E-Tendering Portal, <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in> or www.kmmil.com

Sl No.	Tender ID	Items
1	2026_KMML_840765_1	Supply of N301 acid scrubber (Rubber Lined)
2	2026_KMML_839944_1	Rubber lining work of Clarifier (K401) in IBP

Chavara 28.02.2026 Sd/- Managing Director for The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY SUPPLY OF STORES ITEMS THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT TENDERS
 TENDER NOTICE No.: 52255575A Date: 26.02.2026

Sr.DMM/NWR/AJMER acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-tenders on www.ireps.gov.in site as follows. All the E-tenders will be closed at 16 MARCH 2026, 14.25 Hrs.

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Quantity	Unit	Due date
1	52255575A	Phaco System Machine	01 set	Set	16/03/2026 at 14.25 Hrs

Note : (1) Interested tenderers may visit the website www.ireps.gov.in for Full details/description/specification/EMD & tender cost etc. All tenderers 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.

Sd/-
 DR BRIJENDER SINGH DHILLON
 DIRECTOR
 MAHARISHI CHYAWAN GOVT MEDICAL
 No. 43413/HRV KORIAWAS, NARNAUL, HARYANA

294-DK-26

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| <u>2) Hindustan Times</u> | <u>7) Live Mint</u> |
| <u>3) Business line</u> | <u>8) Financial Express</u> |
| <u>4) The Indian Express</u> | <u>9) Business standard</u> |
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