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## Rahul's confidant Sukhu picked as Himachal CM

Mukesh Agnihotri named Dy CM; oath on Sunday

PNS ■ SHIMLA

After deliberations with all the stakeholders and the newly elected MLAs, the Congress high command announced the name of Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu as the new Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh. Sukhu, who headed the Congress campaign committee in Himachal Pradesh is a multi-term MLA from Nadaun in Hamirpur in the lower hills and has been the president of the State Congress Committee in the past.

Mukesh Agnihotri, the Leader of the Opposition in the outgoing Assembly, will be the Deputy Chief Minister, the party said after a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) in Shimla.

Sukhu, the 58-year-old MLA, was elected the CLP leader and will take oath as Chief Minister on Sunday, the party said. After a meeting of the CLP in Shimla, it's second in 24 hours, Congress's central observer and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel announced the election of Sukhu as the CLP leader.

Addressing the media accompanied by another observer, former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, and AICC in-charge for Himachal Pradesh Rajeev Shukla, he announced that Agnihotri would be the Deputy Chief Minister.



Himachal Pradesh Congress president Pratibha Singh's supporters raise slogans during ongoing CLP meeting, in Shimla on Saturday PTI

Soon after, the Congress leadership left for the residence of the Governor to stake claim to form the Government.

The names were finalised by the party leadership following deliberations with the MLAs over two days amid hectic lobbying by aspirants, including State Congress chief Pratibha Singh, the wife of Virbhadra Singh.

In a meeting on Friday evening, the MLAs had unanimously passed a resolution authorising the party president to pick the legislature party leader after the three leaders reached the venue with their supports and raised slogans in their favour.

Sukhu, a former president of the Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee, is a four-term MLA and is close to party leader Rahul Gandhi, sources said. He was known as a detractor of Congress veteran and six-time Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh.

He cut his teeth in politics

as president of the NSUI and Indian Youth Congress in the State and despite hailing from lower hills, fought and won elections for the Shimla Municipal Corporation.

Continued on Page 2



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh being offered sweets by Gujarat Chief Minister-designate Bhupendra Patel during a meeting of newly-elected BJP MLAs, at BJP headquarters 'Kamalam' in Gandhinagar on Saturday. Gujarat BJP president CR Paatil is also seen. Swearing-in ceremony will be held on December 12 PTI

## Bhupendra gets 2nd term as Gujarat CM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bhupendra Patel will be the Chief Minister of Gujarat for a second term as the BJP Legislature Party of newly elected MLAs elected him as its leader.

He will take oath as the 18th Chief Minister of Gujarat at a function at the Helipad ground near the new secretariat in Gandhinagar on December 12. About two dozen MLAs may be inducted in the new Council of Ministers.

The final call on the names of the Ministers will be taken

by the BJP Central leadership.

It remains to be seen if the BJP inducts first-timers Hardik Patel, Rivaba Jadeja, Darshana Shah and Payal Kulkarni as Ministers. The BJP had fielded 45 new faces by dropping sitting MLAs of which 43 won their seats.

Outgoing MoS Home Harsh Sanghavi, among the 11 BJP leaders who won by over one lakh margin, is expected to be retained as Minister, sources said. A number of new faces could be inducted into the Patel Cabinet, sources added.

Continued on Page 2

## Border police station in Punjab hit by rocket

A strategy of Pak to bleed India by thousand cuts: DGP; Opp demands CM Mann's resignation

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A rocket-propelled grenade was fired at a police station in Punjab's border district of Tarn Taran triggering concerns all around with DGP Gaurav Yadav describing the attack as a strategy of the neighbouring nation to bleed India by a thousand cuts.

Soon after the attack, the Opposition demanded Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's resignation, saying he had failed in maintaining law and order in the border State.

The Punjab DGP said that according to preliminary information, it is military-grade hardware and suspected it to have been smuggled from across the border. There was no casualty in Friday night's RPG attack — the second in the State in the last seven months — police said. The grenade damaged some windowpanes of a building.

"There is a clear indication that it is a strategy of the neighbouring nation to bleed India by a thousand cuts," the DGP said. In coordination with the BSF and Central agencies, the Punjab Police will investigate the matter, he said.

Some unidentified people fired the projectile which hit the Saanjh Kendra adjoining the Sarhali police station on the Amritsar-Bathinda highway on Friday night, police said.

Yadav, who visited the site, said that according to a preliminary investigation, the grenade was fired by using an RPG from the highway at 11.22



pm and it hit the Suvidha Centre of the Sarhali police station. "We have registered an FIR under UAPA (Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act) in this regard," the DGP told the media here. Yadav said police have recovered the rocket launcher and propeller.

"We are investigating technically and forensically. We are collecting clues from the scene of the crime to reconstruct what happened," the DGP said. A forensic team and a squad of the army have reached the site. The DGP said that the "cowardly attack" was carried out at night as the "enemy nation was feeling rattled" after the seizure of huge quantities of heroin and cache of arms and ammunition in the last one month which were sent through drones.

"This year alone, there were more than 200 drone crossings and in the last one month, several drones were intercepted, heroin, weapons and ammunition seized," he said, adding, "It appears that our enemy nation was feeling rattled and to distract this, the cowardly attack was carried out at night," the DGP said.

The police are exploring all angles and theories. The handlers and operators in Pakistan and elements which were in touch in Europe and North America and their links are also being probed to arrest the real

perpetrators, he said. The DGP further said the movement of drones has increased, especially in Tarn Taran and Amritsar, and last month many drones were shot down.

Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal said, "This is 2nd time in 6 months police building attacked with rocket launcher in Punjab. It is direct result of the AAP Govt's apathy in maintaining law & order & allowing narco-terrorism to raise its head again. @BhagwantMann should realise gravity of situation & take concrete measures."

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh alleged that the AAP Government had completely failed in maintaining law and order. Referring to the RPG attack and also the recent murder of a cloth merchant in Jalandhar, Chugh said Mann should seek an apology from the people of the State for "failing" in discharging his responsibilities.

Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring dubbed the incident quite serious. "Ominous signals. This is quite serious. Enemies of peace have the audacity to attack police stations. It does not portend well for Punjab. We have to fight against it together. Govt at the Centre and State have to take the lead. Can't take such threats lightly," he tweeted.

## CAPSULE

## ISHAN HITS FASTEST ODI DOUBLE TON

**Chattogram:** Ishan Kishan was an epitome of insane power-hitting as his record-breaking fastest double hundred provided a healing touch in India's crushing 227-run consolation victory over Bangladesh in the inconsequential third ODI.

## GMAIL DOWN ACROSS GLOBE, USERS HIT

**New Delhi:** Google's email service Gmail faced service disruption for over one hour from 7.30 pm on Saturday, according to the company's dashboard.

## SC TO HEAR ON DEC 13 BILKIS BANO'S PLEA

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court is to hear on Tuesday a plea filed by Bilkis Bano, who was gangraped and seven members of her family killed during the 2002 Gujarat riots, challenging the remission of sentence of 11 convicts.

## India abstains from UN vote on aid to sanctioned nations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an apparent rebuff to Pakistan, India has abstained from voting in an UN resolution to allow humanitarian aid to countries facing sanctions.

New Delhi is of the view that Pakistan uses terror groups even while seeking such aid thereby circumventing all laws and efforts to fight terrorism.

India abstained asserting that blacklisted terror groups, including in its neighbourhood, have taken full advantage of such carve-outs and have been able to raise funds and recruit fighters.

The 15-nation Council, currently being presided over by India, voted on the resolution tabled by the US and Ireland to create a sanctions carve-out that exempted humanitarian efforts, with

Washington asserting that the resolution "will save countless lives" after being adopted.

India was the sole abstention while all other 14 members of the Council voted in favour of the resolution that decided that processing or payment of funds, other financial assets, economic resources, and provision of goods and services necessary to ensure the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance are permitted and are not a violation of the asset freezes imposed by the Council or its Sanctions Committee.

Council president and India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, speaking in her national capacity as she delivered the explanation of the vote, said "our concerns emanate from proven

instances of terrorist groups taking full advantage of such humanitarian carve-outs, and making a mockery of sanction regimes, including that of the 1267 Sanctions Committee."

Kamboj also made a thinly-veiled reference to Pakistan and the terror outfits based on its soil.

"There have also been several cases of terrorist groups in our neighbourhood, including those listed by this Council, re-incarnating themselves as humanitarian organisations and civil society groups precisely to evade these sanctions," she said in an apparent reference to Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), which calls itself a humanitarian charity but is widely seen as a front organisation for the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LET).

Continued on Page 2

## TV actress Veena's son bashes her head with bat, dumps body

AGENCIES ■ MUMBAI

Veteran actress Veena Kapoor was killed by her son who hit her on the head with a baseball bat repeatedly in a fit of rage in her posh Juhu home in Mumbai. The accused son has been arrested by the police.

According to the police, Kapoor's son murdered her for property reasons.

After being beaten up repeatedly by a baseball bat, Kapoor later succumbed to her injuries at home, and her son disposed of her body 90 km from her residence, in an isolated jungle.

The murder has shaken up the TV industry.

The shocking news of Veena Kapoor's murder was



revealed by her co-actress Nilu Kohli, who had worked with the 74-year-old performer for several years on TV and film sets.

Shocked and grief-stricken by the death of her friend and colleague, actress Nilu Kohli took to Instagram and revealed the story behind the twisted and brutal murder of veteran actress Veena Kapoor.

## PT Usha first woman IOA president

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ushering in a new era in country's sports administration, the legendary PT Usha was on Saturday elected as the first woman president of Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

The 58-year-old Usha, a multiple Asian Games gold medalist and fourth place finisher in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics 400m hurdles final, was declared elected unopposed for the top post in the polls held under the supervision of Supreme Court-appointed retired SC judge.

The elevation of Usha to the top job marked an end to the long drawn crisis in the faction-ridden IOA, which was warned of a possible suspension by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) if elections are not held this month.

## Soccer writer Wahl dies at WC match in Qatar

AP ■ LUSAIL

Grant Wahl, one of the most well-known soccer writers in the United States, died early Saturday while covering the World Cup match between Argentina and the Netherlands.

US scribes seated near him said Wahl fell back in his seat in the media tribune at Lusail Iconic Stadium during extra time and reporters adjacent to him called for assistance.

Emergency services workers responded very quickly, the reporters said, and the reporters later were told that Wahl had died. Wahl tweeted on Wednesday that he had celebrated his birthday that day. American reporters who knew Wahl said he was 49.

Continued on Page 2

## Morocco shocks Portugal, 'Messi' Argentina in semis

AP ■ DOHA

Morocco became the first African country to reach the World Cup semifinals by beating Portugal 1-0 on Saturday, likely ending Cristiano Ronaldo's chances of winning soccer's biggest prize.

Youssef En-Nesyri scored the winning goal in the 42nd minute to continue Morocco's improbable run that has generated an outpouring of pride in the Arab world during the first World Cup to be staged in the West Asia.

The 37-year-old Ronaldo, one of soccer's greatest players, didn't start for the second straight game but came on as a substitute in the 51st minute.



Morocco's Youssef En-Nesyri celebrates after scoring his side's first goal during the World Cup quarterfinal soccer match between Morocco and Portugal, at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha, Qatar, Saturday AFP

In another quarterfinals on Friday Argentina advanced to World Cup semifinals after beating the Netherlands in penalty shootout. Argentina took a 2-0 lead, conceded an equalizer in the 11th minute of second-half stoppage time to send the match to extra time at 2-2, and then won the shootout 4-3 amid a deafening noise inside Lusail Stadium.

FIFA opened a disciplinary case against Argentina for its players' actions during the quarterfinal match against the Netherlands.

The soccer governing body cited "order and security at matches" in its disciplinary code for charging the Argentina soccer federation.

## IGIA clogged, number of flights cut

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After massive congestion at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport led to thousands of complaints from inconvenienced passengers, the airport authorities at Delhi airport are planning to reduce 14 flights from Terminal 3; 11 from Terminal 2 and eight from Terminal 1.

The officials said that a four-point action plan has been drawn up by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) to put in place immediate remedial measures such as increasing the number of X-ray screening systems to 16 from 14 at present.

Continued on Page 2

## 4 killed in TN, Mandous peters out sans disaster

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Relatively a lesser degree of damage, including those to houses marked the landfall of cyclonic storm Mandous in Tamil Nadu and at least four people were killed in rain-related incidents, authorities said here on Saturday.

"There is no damage on a large scale," Chief Minister M K Stalin said after visiting affected fishing neighbourhoods here and distributing relief assistance to them. Tamil Nadu and particularly Chennai has "come out of the impact of Mandous," he said.

Stalin, answering a question, told reporters that estimation of loss was being done



People watch as sea water covers the beach and the adjoining areas after the Cyclone Mandous landfall in Chennai on Saturday AP

and if required Central assistance would be sought. Four persons were killed, he said,

apparently referring to rain-related incidents.

Continued on Page 2



# Ink attack on Maha Min Patil over Ambedkar, Phule remarks

T N RAGHUNATHA ■  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra's Higher and Technical Education Minister Chandrakant Patil faced a backlash over his controversial statements on Dr Balasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule, as a protester hurled ink on his face in Pune's satellite town of Chinchwad on Saturday evening.

A day after the minister stirred up a hornet's nest through his remark that late Ambedkar and Phule "begged" money from people to set up schools, scores of students owing allegiance to the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) tried to block the convoy of his cars and staged a black flag demonstration while he was on his way to attend a community function.

The ink attack on Patil came little later when he came out of a party worker's residence from where he headed for a community function organised in memory



of Swami Mahasadhu Morya.

Soon after he hurled ink on the minister's face, the police detained him. The identity of the person who indulged in the ink attack on the minister was not immediately known.

Before long, the video of the ink attack on the minister went viral. The ruling BJP leaders hit out at the miscreant and the behind the ink attack on their minister.

Talking to media persons after the attack, Patil said: "I am not going to get scared by this kind of attacks. Whoever behind this attack should come out in the open and take on me directly".

Patil came in severe criticism for his controversial

remark made at a university programme held on Friday at Paithan in Aurangabad, where he said: "Those who set up schools like Ambedkar, Phule did not depend on government aid. They started schools by begging for money from people. They told people: I'm starting a school, please give me money".

Later on Friday evening, Patil issued a clarification saying: Later in the evening, Patil clarified, "Who started schools in the state? Ambedkar and Phule. This is the truth. When I used the word begging, I meant they sought funds along the lines of the donations received under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), donations or crowd-funding."

"Bheek is bhiksha (begging for charity). The concept is a person going door to door, asking for donations to start something for a good cause. This is a vernacular word for the whole concept. But, these days, reporting statements out of context or creating

controversies over words spoken in vernacular language has become a habit with the media," the minister said.

In a related development, the youth Congress put up banners across Pune city saying: "Kothurd is an Assembly seat won (by Patil) through beginning" The banner carried the cartoon of Patil, who won the Maharashtra Assembly polls from Kothurd constituency in Pune in 2019.

Maharashtra's former deputy chief minister and senior NCP leader Ajit came down heavily on Patil for his controversial remarks about Ambedkar and Phule. "We will not tolerate this kind of insult on our icons. What does he mean when he said that late Ambedkar and Phule indulged in begging to raise money for constructing schools. Time has come to show his place to Chandrakant Patil," Pawar said, while speaking to media persons at Indapur in Pune district.

# ED attaches ₹152.31 cr assets of Chhattisgarh CM's Deputy Secy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached movable and 91 immovable properties worth Rs 152.31 crore belonging to Chhattisgarh Chief Minister's Deputy Secretary Saumya Chaurasia (21 properties), IAS officer Sameer Vishnoi (five properties), businessman Suryakant Tiwari (65 properties), coal trader Sunil Agarwal and others in a money laundering case linked to the coal levy scam in the State worth Rs 540 crore.

The attached properties include cash, jewellery, flats, coal Washeries and plots of land located in Chhattisgarh.

"ED investigation revealed that as part of a grand conspiracy, policy changes were made and Director Mining issued a Government Order on July 15, 2020 to modify an existing efficient online system of issuance of transport permits, to introduce a manual



layer where coal users were forced to apply for NOC with State Mining officers," the ED said in a statement.

Armed with this government order, the 'extortion' at the rate of Rs 25 per tonne of transported coal, started in earnest. Suryakant Tiwari was the 'main henchman' at the ground level who deployed his employees in various regions to extort money from coal transporters and industrialists. His team was physically coordinating with lower level government functionaries and coal transporters and representatives of user companies.

Since his employees were spread across the State, they maintained WhatsApp groups, excel sheets of each Coal Delivery Order and the extorted amounts and shared them with Suryakant Tiwari, who in turn maintained detailed handwritten Diaries of the incoming bribe amounts and their utilization for purchase of benami lands, payment of bribes and payments for political expenditure.

"This kind of systemic extortion was not possible without the knowledge and active participation of the State machinery. The fact that it ran uninterrupted without a single FIR etc. and collected around Rs 500 crore in 2 years, clearly indicates that all the accused persons were acting in a concerted manner at the instructions of person(s) at the highest level, having command and control over the State machinery," it said in a statement.

The ED is investigating

the entire gamut of transactions in relation to the extortion racket.

"The ED investigation has revealed that an amount of at least Rs 540 crore has been extorted in the last two years," it said.

The ED has analyzed thousands of hand written Diary entries. ED has not merely relied on the Diary entries, but has done detailed investigation including Bank Account analysis, analysis of seized WhatsApp chats and recording of the statements to corroborate the Diary Entries.

"ED has unravelled the modus operandi where influential members of the Extortion syndicate like Suryakant Tiwari, Saumya Chaurasia, Sameer Vishnoi etc have used their relatives to create benami assets. Land deals were done at a minimum cheque amount and large amounts of cash out of the extortion collection was infused to buy the assets," it said.

# Fugitive JeM commander Nengroo's 2-storey house demolished in Pulwama

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

The residence of Jaish-e-Mohammed commander Ashiq Nengroo was demolished by the authorities in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district on Saturday, officials said.

Nengroo is a wanted JeM commander and an accused in the 2019 Pulwama attack in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed.

The two-storey house in Rajpora's New Colony had come up on state land, officials claimed, adding that it was demolished by the district administration in the presence of the police.

In April this year, the central government declared Nengroo as a "designated terrorist" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

In a notification, the Union Home ministry said Nengroo has been involved in the infiltration of terrorists into Jammu and Kashmir and has also been responsible for perpetrating various terror incidents in the Union Territory.

He is running a terror



syndicate in Kashmir and is now "engaged in a perilous campaign to orchestrate terror in Jammu and Kashmir", remote controlled from Pakistan, the ministry had said.

A police spokesperson said the Pulwama district administration retrieved one Kanal of state land which was under Nengroo's illegal occupation.

"The said terrorist had raised the two-storied concrete structure on the said land a few years ago when he was an active terrorist associate in the area and had illegally occupied the said land by force," the spokesperson added.

He said Nengroo is involved in many terror crimes and is presently managing his terrorist activities across the border.

# 56 crore registered voters link Aadhaar details with electoral rolls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 56 crore of the approximately 95 crore registered voters have linked their Aadhaar details with the electoral rolls, an exercise the Government and the Election Commission believe would weed out duplicate entries from the voters list.

EC officials said between 55 and 56 crore voters have shared their Aadhaar details with poll authorities for linkage with the electoral roll. The Representation of the People Act was amended in December last year to pave way for voluntary linkage of Aadhaar and voter list details.

Subsequently, later this year, the Union Law Ministry had issued rules to bring into force the changes carried out in the electoral law.

According to a law ministry notification, using the newly-introduced Form-6B, existing voters may share their Aadhaar number with poll authorities.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (5) of



Section 23 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 (43 of 1950), the Central Government hereby notifies the 1st April, 2023 as the date on or before which every person whose name is included in the electoral roll may intimate his Aadhaar number in accordance with the said section," read the notification. The new form was introduced with effect from August 1 "for collecting Aadhaar numbers".

In July, the Election Commission had warned of "severe" disciplinary action against electoral registration officers for any leakages of physical forms filled by electors to share their Aadhaar details.

# Rahul's confidant Sukhu picked as Himachal...

**From Page 1**  
Son of a road transport corporation driver, Sukhu had a modest beginning and used to run a milk counter at Chhota Shimla in his early days.

Rising through the ranks, he was a relentless fighter and remained the party's State unit president for a record six years from 2013 to 2019 despite being frequently at loggerheads with Virbhadra, a six-time Chief Minister.

He won the Assembly election for the first time in 2003 from Nadaun in Hamirpur district, retained the seat in 2007 but was defeated in 2012 and won again in 2017 and 2022.

Sukhu will be the first Congress leader from Lower Himachal -- comprising areas merged in Himachal in 1966 such as Nalagarh, Una, Hamirpur, Kangra and lower hills of Kullu -- to occupy the top post. He will be the second chief minister from Hamirpur district, after BJP's Prem Kumar Dhimal.

The Congress wrested power from the BJP in the hill State winning 40 of the 68 Assembly seats.

The polling was held on November 12 and the results were declared Thursday.

The polling was held on November 12 and the results were declared on Thursday.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge earlier said the party observers sent to the hill State were seeking the views of all party legislators individually and they would convey to him their opinions, based on which the party would take a decision on the chief ministerial candidate.

Intense lobbying continued for the chief minister's post on Saturday. From morning itself, Congress MLAs made a beeline to Cecil Hotel in Shimla where the party's central observers - Baghel and Hooda - and AICC in-charge for Himachal Pradesh Rajeev Shukla have put up.

Several leaders, including State Congress Chief Pratibha Singh, leader of the Opposition in the outgoing Assembly Mukesh Agnihotri and head of the election campaign committee Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu, met the observers individually.

# Bhupendra gets 2nd term as Gujarat...

**From Page 1**  
Patel's name was declared as the leader of the legislative party unanimously at the party's State headquarters 'Kamalam' in Gandhinagar. "The newly-elected MLAs met at 'Kamalam', where the proposal to name Patel as the Chief Minister of Gujarat was unanimously approved," the BJP said in a statement.

Pardo MLA Kanu Desai proposed his name, which got the approval of all the MLAs unanimously. Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Arjun Munda and former Karnataka CM BS Yediyurappa participated in the meeting as central observers.

Soon after, Patel met Governor Acharya Devvrat and staked a claim to form the Government. He will visit Delhi to extend formal invitations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and the party's national general secretary BL Santosh to attend his oath-taking ceremony. Patel, 60, had resigned as the Chief Minister along with his entire Cabinet on Friday to pave the way for formation of a new Government in the State

after the BJP registered its best ever victory in the just concluded Assembly elections winning 156 seats.

The State's Assembly has 182 seats and the majority mark in Gujarat is 92. By winning 156 seats the BJP has broken Congress's 1985 record in the State — when Madhavsinh Solanki won 149 seats.

The Congress's tally was reduced to 17, while the Aam Aadmi Party won 6.

Speaking to the media ahead of the meeting of newly-elected MLAs Hardik Patel said once again BJP has formed Government and this is to see how Gujarat becomes strong and goes ahead in the next 5-10 years.

"I don't know, I've played the role of a mere soldier from the beginning. I'll accept whatever role the party assigns me," he said on being asked about a cabinet berth. Sanghavi said the Opposition left no stone unturned to defame the people of Gujarat to win elections but the public gave them a reply. "These elections were not for power, these polls were for relations and trust. In these polls, BJP won once again," he added.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Be it known to all that my client Md. Anis Sabri had purchased a property Khadra no.240 moje piran kalyar pargana nulli dist. Hardwar in 1977 for charitable purpose and name of Md. Dilsheed Sabri,Begum Mussarat, Mh. Sharif Ahmad and Md. Hial Ahmad were also include in sale deed for the said charitable purpose. Begum Mussarat and Md. Sharif expired in 2015 and 2019 subsequently After their death their families and Md. Hial moved to some unknown place and now not traceable. My client giving this notice for public purpose, if any member want to contact please contact with proof with in 15 days from the date of communication. After said period nothing will be considered and will not binding upon my client.

**RITU RASTOGI-Advocate**  
Ch no 239, Setalvad Block,  
Supreme Court of India, 958183999

# IGIA clogged, number of flights...

**From Page 1**  
The Ministry is discussing with domestic airlines ways to address overall congestion at the Delhi airport, including the possibility of reducing the number of flights operated during peak hours.

Long queues at immigration, unorganised security checks, chaos at the lounge at Delhi airport Terminal 3 has become a nightmare for passengers despite authorities reducing flights. Several passengers took to social media to highlight the massive congestion at Delhi airport and complain about the situation to the concerned authorities. Visuals from the airport show men and women lined up in several queues for security check, with some

saying they had to wait for two to three hours at the clearance area.

According to the officials, the effort is to progressively reduce the number of peak hour departures to 14. Generally, peak hours are in the morning and evening. The peak hours are from 5 am to 9 am and 4 pm to 8 pm. On an average, it handles around 1.90 lakh passengers and about 1,200 flights daily. A spokesperson for the airport operator DIAL (Delhi International Airport Ltd) on Saturday said it is working constantly with the stakeholders -- CISF and Immigration -- to cope with the demand which includes deployment of additional systems and manpower.

# 4 killed in TN, Mandous peters out...

**From Page 1**  
As many as 181 houses — hutments — were damaged and information on other kinds of damage was being compiled. In 201 relief camps, 9,130 people belonging to 3,163 families are being sheltered.

Around 400 trees fell in the city under the impact of 70 kmph wind speed, when the weather system crossed the coast.

Civic agencies including the Greater Chennai Corporation here in addition to police, removed the fallen trees, and in total 25,000 personnel were involved in cyclone related relief and rescue tasks. This is in addition to 496 personnel of the NDRF and State DRE.

# Soccer writer Wahl dies at WC match in...

**From Page 1**  
“We could always count on Grant to deliver insightful and entertaining stories about our game, and its major protagonists,” the US Soccer Federation said in a statement.

“Grant’s belief in the power of the game to advance human rights was, and will remain, an inspiration to all. Grant made soccer his life’s work, and we are devastated that he and his brilliant writing will no longer be with us.”

Wahl was covering his eighth World Cup. He wrote Monday on his website that he had visited a medical clinic while in Qatar.

“My body finally broke down on me. Three weeks of little sleep, high stress and lots of work can do that to you,” Wahl wrote.

“What had been a cold over the last 10 days turned into something more severe on the night of the USA-Netherlands game, and I could feel my upper chest take on a new level of pressure and discomfort.”

Wahl wrote that he tested negative for Covid-19 and sought treatment for his symptoms. “I went into the medical clinic at the main media center today, and they said I probably have bronchitis. They gave me a course of antibiotics and some heavy-duty cough syrup, and I’m already feeling a bit better just a few hours later. But still: No bueno,” he wrote.

Wahl wore a rainbow T-shirt in support of LGBTQ rights to the United States’ World Cup opener against Wales on November 21 and

wrote that security refused him entry and told him to remove the shirt. Gay and lesbian sex is criminalised in Qatar, a conservative Muslim nation.

Wahl wrote he was detained for 25 minutes at Ahmed Bin Ali stadium in Al Rayyan, then was let go by a security commander. Wahl said FIFA apologised to him.

US State Department spokesman Ned Price tweeted late Friday: “We were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Wahl and send our condolences to his family, with whom we have been in close communication. We are engaged with senior Qatari officials to see to it that his family’s wishes are fulfilled as expeditiously as possible.” Wahl is survived by his wife, Dr Celine Gounder, an

associate professor at New York University School of Medicine, attending physician at Bellevue Hospital Center and CBS News contributor.

Gounder tweeted that she was thankful for the support of her husband’s “soccer family” and friends who had reached out. “I’m in complete shock,” she wrote.

A voter at times in FIFA’s annual awards, Wahl wrote this week that he had been among 82 journalists honored by FIFA and the international sports press association AIPS for attending eight or more World Cups.

Wahl graduated from Princeton in 1996 and worked for Sports Illustrated from 1996 to 2021, known primarily for his coverage of soccer and college basketball. He then launched his own website.

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> CORRIGENDUM NOTICE**

The advertised tender notice no. No. 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT-93/2022-23/W-3 dated 09.12.2022 in for the work namely "Improvement of Goods Platform and PF No.01 & Provision of Goods Shed at Goods platform (Line No 07) of Adarsh Nagar Station(ANDI) in the section of ADEN/DLI." Contract value has been changed to Rs. 4,48,60,554.46/- and EMD has been changed to of Rs. 3,74,300/- on IREPS on administrative ground. **No. 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT-93/2022-23/W-3 Dated :- 10.12.2022** **3293/2022**

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> CORRIGENDUM NOTICE**

The advertised tender notice no. No. 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT-95/2022-23/W-3 dated 09.12.2022 for the work namely "Provision of shed at Goods Platform at Shakur Basti Station (SSB) & Provision of roads at Goods Platform at Shakur Basti Station (SSB) in the section of ADEN/DLI." Contract value has been changed to Rs. 4,40,06,667.36/- and EMD has been changed to of Rs. 3,70,000/- on IREPS on administrative ground. **No. 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT-95/2022-23/W-3 Dated :- 10.12.2022** **3294/2022**

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**



# BJP trying to buy AAP Councillors: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday sharpened his attack on the BJP as he addressed the newly elected party Councillors and congratulated them for their win in the MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) elections.

"It was a very very difficult election. The way conspiracies were drawn, and the whole machinery were used against us... I think it was one of the most difficult elections we have contested so far," Kejriwal can be heard saying in a video he shared on Twitter. He further alleged the BJP is trying to "buy" its Councillors.

The AAP national convener claimed that the BJP has started telephoning his party's councillors and offering them up to Rs 20 lakh each.

"This election was very, very tough. A few people say it was an easy election, but it was not. The way they conspired against us and the way they used State machinery against us, it was the toughest elections we ever contested. Heavy BJP machinery deployed during campaigning made the MCD

polls the toughest election for AAP so far," he added. Kejriwal spoke about the massive BJP campaign the city witnessed in his latest address. "Seven chief ministers, 17 Union Ministers, Amit Shah, (BJP chief) JP Nadda, all of them were there.

"Besides, the media was used against us. Some or the other clip was released," Kejriwal said, referring to the videos of jailed Delhi Minister Satyendar Jain from Tihar, which were released just ahead of the elections.

The Chief Minister said the BJP pressured the media to spread "propaganda against us".

"They (BJP) will try to buy you. They have started calling the councillors. Somebody is being offered Rs 10 lakh and some Rs 20 lakh," the AAP supremo said.

"I am completely sure no one from you will fall for their offer. However, we need to expose them. Put your phone on recording and whenever there is a call from them, record it," he added.

"Despite all the tricks", Kejriwal said the BJP "could not breach the AAP's reputation" which it has earned through its



work and trust. "Despite their propaganda, the people voted for us in the MCD. It means people trust what we did and earned in the last few years. The BJP thought people are gullible but they are not," he said, adding the saffron party's "propaganda" did not work. The AAP does positive politics

and talks about its work, unlike the BJP which "spreads fake videos and letters" of a jailed conman, he claimed without taking any name. Several purported videos of Jain meeting visitors and the jail superintendent, eating fruits and vegetables and getting massages in his prison cell have gone viral, giving ammunition to the BJP to attack the AAP.

Earlier, jailed conman Sukesh Chandrashekar wrote to the Delhi Lieutenant Governor alleging that Jain "extorted" Rs 10 crore from him in 2019 to ensure his safety in prison. "We do positive politics and talk about our work. The BJP through fake videos and letters of a jailed conman did not allow us to discuss our

work narrative," Kejriwal said.

"Moreover, the way they pressured the media, they scolded the media and twisted its arm, they ran a misinformation campaign against us. There was a new fake video every morning at 9 o'clock," he alleged. Speaking at the event, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said it is going to be a golden era for the MCD.

"...Now we have to clear the mountains of garbage, clean all streets, fix all roads and improve the primary health system," he said. AAP's Delhi convener Gopal Rai said, "The people have ousted the BJP's 15-year-long reign in the MCD with a hope of getting their city cleaned... We have to live up to the test."

# 2 newly elected Councillors return to Cong hours after joining AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After protests erupted in Mustafabad and Brij Puri areas on Friday night, Delhi Congress's vice-president Ali Mehdi and the two sitting Councillors who joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Friday, returned to the Grand Old party early on Saturday. They later also issued an apology.

Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar on Saturday confirmed that the Delhi unit's Vice-president Ali Mehdi and two councillors are still with the party, a day after the latter had defected to the AAP. Kumar introduced all councillors at a press conference. Interestingly, during a press conference, former MLA called Congress leader that he has received a call from AAP MLA Prahlad Singh Swahney who offered him to support in the MCD.

Earlier, posting a video on Twitter and apologising for his move, Mehdi said that he had made a "big mistake" by crossing over to the AAP and asserted that he is a loyal worker of Congress and Rahul



Gandhi. "I made a huge mistake. I accept my fault and ask for an apology from Rahul Gandhi with folded hands," Mehdi said in the video. He also changed his bio on the social media platform from "Indian" to "Worker of Rahul Gandhi".

"I don't want any post. I just want to work for the Congress. I made a big mistake and I apologise for it with folded hands and I want to apologise to Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and all the residents of my area and party workers. I am a worker of Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, I was a Congressi and will always remain a Congress worker," said Mehdi in a tweet, adding that he had also spoken to the councillors and they, too,

would soon post a video apologizing for joining the AAP.

Senior congress leaders like Ajay Maken, social media in-charge of Congress, Manu Jain, and others also criticised Mehdi and called him a "snake" for crossing over to the AAP.

Mehdi and two newly elected councillors from Congress- Sabila Begum and Nazia Khatoon — joined the AAP on Friday, taking its tally in the MCD to 136. Sabila won from Mustafabad, while Khatoon won from Brij Puri.

As Mehdi and two councillors joined the AAP, residents of Mustafabad staged a protest. Videos of protests that emerged on social media showed people raising slogans against Mehdi and burning his effigy. Former Delhi Congress president Subhash Chopra played a major role to bring back Mehdi and two councillors in the party.

After announcing his return to the Congress fold, Mehdi said, "In the areas from which these councillors (Sabila and Nazia) won, people voted for me and my father and not any particular party"

# ‘CM order to recall DDCD V-C Shah infructuous, matter with President’

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Terming Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's order to Planning Department to recall the order restricting Dialogue and Development Commission of Delhi (DDCD) vice-chairman Jasmine Shah from discharging his duties, is infructuous, unconstitutional and an eyewash, sources said that the matter had been referred to the President of India in November itself, hence no decision whatsoever can be taken by anyone in this regard.

In a note, sources stated that the Lieutenant-Governor on November 30, 2022, while disposing of a file sent by the Planning Minister/Deputy Chief Minister, Manish Sisodia and endorsed by the Chief Minister, seeking to override the Planning Department order of November 17, 2022, that had restricted Jasmine Shah from functioning as VC, DDDC and availing facilities thereof, Saxena had invoked difference of opinion under Article 239AA(4) of the Constitution, read with Rule 50 of ToBR, GNCTD, 1993 and referred the



matter to the President of India for a final decision. "The L-G's decision to this effect was also formally communicated to the Chief Minister in writing, then itself," said sources.

According to Article 239A A (4) of the Constitution, if there is a difference of opinion between the council of ministers headed by the Chief Minister and the Lieutenant-Governor, the final decision rests with the President and is binding on them. Till the President takes a call, the L-G is the competent authority to take action in such matters, sources said.

Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena had last month asked Kejriwal to remove Shah from the post of vice-chairman of the DDCD over allegations of mis-using his office for "political purposes". Kejriwal had on Thursday (December 8) directed the Planning department to recall the order restricting Shah from discharging his duties. "... the punitive action visited upon Shah is without any justification and requires to be recalled forthwith.

It is my cherished hope and desire that the L-G will be an active participant in the endeavour to convert Delhi into a world class city and to that end, the implementation of initiatives conceptualised by the DDCD will be facilitated.

"I, therefore, direct the nodal department i.e. the Department of Planning, GNCTD to immediately recall the order November 17, and all actions emanating there from so that the status quo ante as prevailing on November 16 is restored without any further delay," Kejriwal said in his order.

In his November 30 note,

the Lt Governor had directed that Shah be prohibited from discharging the functions of vice chairperson, DDCD, and using the official premises pending the decision of the President, they said. Given the facts, the December 8 order of the CM is not only "infructuous but also unconstitutional. At best it can be termed as an eyewash", the sources said, adding it has been issued to "divert attention and play up to the gallery".

Since the decision is now pending with the President, no decision whatsoever can be taken by anyone in this regard. CM Kejriwal, knowing this constitutional position fully well, passed an illegal order on December 8, they said. A petition filed by Shah in connection with the matter is also pending before the Delhi High Court.

The Lt Governor's action against DDCD chief Jasmine Shah came after BJP MP Parvesh Verma complained that Shah was "working as a spokesperson of the AAP" even as he held the post of V-C of the DDC.

# Councillors’ poaching claims spur BJP-AAP-Cong slanging match

## Kejriwal engaged in breaking Councillors of other parties, says LoP Bidhuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Mayor's election, the Aam Aadmi Party, the BJP and the Congress on Saturday alleged that attempts were being made to lure their newly elected MCD Councillors.

The fresh war of words came as two Congress Councillors who on Friday defected to AAP returned to the party fold and BJP Councillor from Anand Vihar Monica Pant filed a complaint with the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) against an AAP leader Shikha Garg, alleging that she tried to "bribe her for switching sides.

AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, addressing newly



elected Councillors of his party, cautioned them that the BJP would "try to buy them out". The BJP leaders, at a Press conference, also alleged that "an agent" of Kejriwal was trying to poach party Councillors.

The Congress also accused Kejriwal's party of indulging in poaching after two of its defectors returned.

Kejriwal also told Councillors to record audio and video of such offers to expose those involved and to report any bribing attempt by the BJP to party MLAs from their area or MCD coordinators.

BJP leaders including

national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawala and Delhi unit media cell head Harish Khurana at a Press conference lashed out at the AAP on Saturday saying Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has started a "new model" — "Pralobhan for Parshad" (alluring Councillors) — after his city model prove to be a failure and they are trying to poach the party's newly elected councillors. BJP MLA Vijender Gupta along with newly elected Councillor Monika Pant lodged a complaint to the Anti-Corruption Branch seeking a probe in the poaching attempt by the AAP.

"Before the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) elections, Kejriwal claimed that the saffron party will only be able to score 30 seats, which the people of the national capital turned down by making the party win 104 wards," Poonawala said.

Criticising the slogan of AAP "Kejriwal's Government, Kejriwal's Councillours", Poonawala alleged that now their new slogan is 'Kejriwal's agent', as the workers of the

party is doing the work of horse-trading of BJP Councilours by roaming from street to street.

Giving the merits on which the allegations are being leveled against the AAP, BJP Councillor from Anand Vihar, Dr Monika Pant said that the Kejriwal's agent, Shikha Garg called her on Friday to meet.

"When I asked her the purpose of the meeting, she asserted that it is something important. After meeting, she gave me many temptations including extra funds to support AAP, but I refused," Pant claimed.

Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri also alleged that Kejriwal is engaged in breaking the Councillors of other political parties but alleges that efforts are being made to buy the Councillors of AAP. Every one is witnessed who broke two Councillors from the Congress even before they were sworn in," he added.

Khurana claimed that an "agent" of Kejriwal was trying to induce the BJP Councillors to switch to the AAP.

# AAP appoints 4 MLAs to look over 12 administrative zones of MCD

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After winning the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) elections, the AAP on Saturday said they have appointed MLAs Atishi, Saurabh Bhardwaj, Durgesh Pathak, and senior leader Adil Khan to look over 12 administrative zones of the Corporation.

"These people will coordinate with the Councillors of their zones, hold meetings with them and explain their work and visit their areas to understand the problems faced by local citizens. This was done as it was not possible for one person to coordinate with all councillors and therefore responsibility has now been divided

between four people," said a senior AAP official. "These four people will listen to the problems of the councilors and get them resolved.

All the councilors will be in direct contact with these four senior AAP leaders and will get their assistance in resolving the problems of their areas. These senior leaders of Aam Aadmi Party will prepare a report on councilors, on the basis of which decision will be taken to include them in the committees," he said.

"These four senior leaders will sit together with the councilors in their zones and explain their work to them. Apart from this, they will tour their wards with them and understand

problems of local citizens.

This was done as it was not possible for one person to coordinate with all councilors and therefore responsibility has now been divided between four people. These four leaders will listen to the problems of the councilors and get them resolved," he said.

Informing about responsibility of wards being given to AAP senior leaders, he said that Adil Khan will be in charge of Civil Lines, Rohini, and Najafgarh. Saurabh Bhardwaj will be in charge of Narela, Keshavpuram and West Zone. The responsibility of Sadar, Karol Bagh, and Shahdara North will be with Durgesh Pathak.

# Metro services to be hit for a few hours due to maintenance work

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Metro operations on a section of the busy Blue Line will be partially curtailed in the initial few hours on December 11 due to a planned maintenance work, officials said on Saturday.

The hit segment will be between Ramesh Nagar and Kirti Nagar metro stations. "To undertake the scheduled track maintenance work between Moti Nagar and Kirti Nagar on the Blue Line i.e., Line-3/4 (Dwarka Sec-21 to Noida Electronic City/ Vaishali), train services on the morning of

December 11 will be regulated," the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said in a statement. Train services will be suspended from Ramesh Nagar to Kirti Nagar section from the start of revenue services till 7 AM. Hence, Moti Nagar metro station will be closed till resumption of train services on the section, it said.

In the rest of the sections of the Blue Line Line i.e., from Dwarka Sec-21/Dwarka to Ramesh Nagar and Kirti Nagar to Noida Electronic City/Vaishali, train services will continue to remain available according to routine.

# Snake found in Dubai-bound AI plane’s cargo

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A snake was found in the cargo hold of an Air India Express flight that had operated from Calicut to Dubai on Saturday.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has started a probe in the matter. The B737-800 aircraft came from Calicut, Kerala and the passengers were safely deplaned.

The senior official at the DGCA said a snake was found in the cargo hold of the plane on arrival at the Dubai airport and the airport fire services were also informed.



Union MoS for Defence Ajay Bhatt with Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar, Geetika Lidder, wife of Brig LS Lidder and Tarini Rawat, daughter of first Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat during the unveiling of a bust of CDS Rawat, at the United Service Institution of India (USI) in New Delhi on Saturday

PTI Photo

# Staffer held for trying to extort ₹26L from Japanese firm HR

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A man was arrested for allegedly demanding money and threatening to kill an HR of a Japanese company, police said on Saturday. The accused, identified as Pramod (18), worked in the same company, they said, adding he had hatched an extortion plan to pay his debts after being inspired by a crime web series.

According to the complaint filed by Anurag Singh, a native of Lucknow in UP and working as an HR officer in a Japanese company — Hayakawa Electronics — in IMT, Manesar, he received a call on his mobile wherein the caller said he has got money to

kill him. "Around 4 pm on Sunday, I received a call from an unknown mobile number when I was at my home in sector 17 A.

"The caller identified himself as Imran and asked me if I was an official in Hayakawa company. When I said yes, he claimed that he received Rs 26 lakh from an employee of my company to kill me," Singh said in his complaint to the police.

The accused again called Singh and demanded ₹12 lakh. He also threatened to kidnap his daughter, police said. Subsequently, an FIR was registered and a team was formed to nab the caller, they said. The team of crime unit finally nabbed accused on Tuesday.



# Rocket fired at police station in Tarn Taran 2nd since May

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The latest projectile attack on a police station in Tarn Taran district of Punjab is the second such hit as a similar incident had occurred in May at the Intelligence Wing headquarters of Punjab police in Mohali.

The attacks and the operation of an international crime syndicate from Punjab are a pointer to the audacity of the ultras as two key positions at the Centre are manned by Punjab cadre IPS officers with Samant Kumar Goel heading Research and Analysis Wing and Dinkar Gupta is the current chief of NIA. The crime syndicate case is being probed by the NIA.

Further, the menace of the cross border drones for shipping drugs and arms are also on the rise, especially along the frontier with Pakistan in Punjab and all these security challenges are indicative of a

pattern, sources in the security agencies conceded.

A rocket-propelled grenade was fired at a police station in Punjab's border district of Tarn Taran. Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav described grenade as a military-grade hardware.

Citing preliminary information, the DGP said the projectile to be a military-grade hardware and said there was a possibility that it was smuggled from across the border.

"There is a clear indication that it is a strategy of the neighbouring nation to bleed India by a thousand cuts," he said.

Some unidentified people fired the projectile which hit the Saanjh Kendra adjoining the Sarhali police station on the Amritsar-Bathinda highway on Friday night, according to the police.

However, there was no casualty in the incident.



Saanjh Kendra centre provides services like copy of FIRs, passport verification and no-objection certificates.

The DGP further said the grenade was fired by using the RPG from the highway at 11.22 PM on Friday and it hit the Suvidha Centre of the Sarhali police station.

The Punjab police has registered an FIR under UAPA (Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act).

In May, a projectile loaded with an explosive substance

had hit the Punjab police Intelligence Wing headquarters in Mohali. While no one was injured in this hit as nobody was present in the building, a few window panes were broken in the attack.

While the police has been twice lucky as no casualty was reported from the two incidents, a foolproof mechanism is the need of the hour through a syngesised generation of actionable intelligence to avert any possible tragedy from such attacks, officials added.

# Ex-CM Farooq to take part in Bharat Jodo Yatra in J&K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/JAMMU

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi is going to spend eight days during the concluding phase of the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' in Jammu and Kashmir and the former Chief Minister and a towering leader of the State National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah has committed to take part in the yatra. Leaders from other political parties like Sharad Pawar, Aditya Thackeray others have participated in the yatra earlier.

Senior party leader and Rajya Sabha member Rajni Patil who is also AICC in-charge J-K affairs, said Rahul Gandhi is expected to enter the Union Territory in the third week of next month and appealed to the people as well as political, social and NGOs to 'join the yatra which is above politics and meant to unite hearts for the benefit of the



nation".

"Rahul Gandhi is going to spend eight days in Jammu and Kashmir -- four days each in Jammu and the valley -- after reaching here in the third week of January. The date and route were not finalised so far," Patil, flanked by senior party leaders including J-K Pradesh Congress Committee president Vikar Rasool Wani, told reporters in Jammu.

Earlier, she held a series of meetings with senior party leaders including former legislators and ministers in preparations for the smooth conduct

of the yatra in J-K.

Asserting that the Rahul Gandhi-led historic yatra has generated a "good atmosphere" in the country, Patil said the yatra has nothing to do with politics and the party is not evaluating its political benefits.

"Gandhi is leading this yatra to unite the people and strengthen the message of unity in diversity besides understanding the problems, sufferings and aspirations of different sections of the society," the Congress leader said.

She said a rousing reception awaits Bharat Jodo Yatra in Jammu and Kashmir.

"There is great enthusiasm amongst people since Jammu and Kashmir has suffered the most and lost its identity, status and rights of a historical state of the country, apart from record unemployment and recruitment scams," the Congress leader said.

She said the final phase of the yatra in Jammu and Kashmir would be most sig-

nificant for various reasons since it is very close to the heart of the Congress party and Gandhi family and Rahul Gandhi would like to send an important message to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the rest of the country through this yatra.

"People anxiously wait for the yatra and we have positive messages from different quarters of Jammu and Kashmir," she said, hoping that people of all walks would welcome and join it.

She appealed to all like-minded parties, groups, NGOs and individuals and others to welcome and join the yatra to send a message of unity, brotherhood, harmony and strength of togetherness from the soil of Jammu and Kashmir.

"(National Conference) president Farooq Abdullah has announced his decision to join the yatra and we welcome his statement," she said, adding her party would also like others including the PDP to join it.

# SARS-CoV-2 may create viral toxin causing severe Covid infection: Study

Study advises caution as people drop guard against Covid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The SARS-CoV-2 virus may create a viral toxin that causes severe Covid-19 infections, a recent study published in the journal Nature Communications has cautioned even as people across the countries have dropped their guard against the pandemic.

The researchers of the study which comes in the backdrop of the WHO warning that a lethal pathogen may replace the Covid-virus, demonstrated how the SARS-CoV-2 "spike" protein can harm cell barriers that line the interior of blood vessels within bodily organs like the lungs, causing what is known as a vascular leak.

One of Covid-19's deadliest symptoms, pulmonary oedema, which contributes to acute respiratory distress syndrome, may be avoided by blocking the function of this protein (ARDS). "In theory, by specifically targeting this pathway, we could block pathogenesis that leads to vascular disorder and acute respiratory distress syndrome without needing to target the virus itself," said study lead author Scott Biering, a postdoctoral scholar at the University of California, Berkeley.

"In light of all the different variants that are emerging and



the difficulty in preventing infection from each one individually, it might be beneficial to focus on these triggers of pathogenesis in addition to blocking infection altogether."

While many vaccine sceptics have stoked fears about the potential dangers of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein -- which is the target of Covid-19 mRNA vaccines -- the researchers say that their work provides no evidence that the spike protein can cause symptoms in the absence of viral infection.

Instead, their study suggests that the spike protein may work in tandem with the virus and the body's own immune response to trigger life-threatening symptoms. In addition, the amount of spike protein circulating in the body after vaccination is far less concentrated than the amounts that have been observed in patients with severe COVID-19 and that

were used in the study.

"The amount of spike protein that you would have in a vaccine would never be able to cause a leak," said study senior author Eva Harris, a professor of infectious diseases and vaccinology at UC Berkeley. "In addition, there's no evidence that [the spike protein] is pathogenic by itself. The idea is that it's able to aid and abet an ongoing infection."

By examining the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein on human lung and vascular cells, and on the lungs of mice, the research team was able to uncover the molecular pathways that allow the spike protein to disrupt critical internal barriers in the body. In addition to opening new avenues for the treatment of severe COVID-19, understanding how the spike protein contributes to vascular leak could shed light on the pathology behind other emerging infectious diseases.

# SC to hear Bilkis plea against remission on Dec 13

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on December 13 a plea filed by Bilkis Bano, who was gangraped and seven members of her family killed during the 2002 Gujarat riots, challenging the remission of sentence of 11 convicts in the case by the state government.

A bench of justices Ajay Rastogi and Bela M Trivedi is likely to take up the plea of Bano, who has also filed a separate prayer seeking a review of the apex court's May 13, 2022 order on a plea by a convict.

The top court had asked the Gujarat government to consider the plea for premature release of the convicts in terms of its policy of July 9, 1992 about deciding a remission petition within a period of two months.

In her plea against the grant of remission which had led to the release of the convicts on August 15, Bano said the state government passed a mechanical order completely ignoring the requirement of law as laid down by the Supreme Court.

"The enmasse premature release of the convicts in the much talked about case of Bilkis Bano, has shaken the conscience of the society and resulted in a number of agitations across the country," she said in the plea.

Referring to past verdicts, the plea said enmasse remissions are not permissible and moreover, such a relief cannot be sought or granted as a matter of right without examining

the case of each convict individually based on their peculiar facts and role played by them in the crime.

"The present writ petition challenging the decision of the state/central government granting remission to all the 11 convicts and releasing them prematurely in one of the most gruesome crimes of extreme inhuman violence and brutality by a group of human beings upon another group of human beings, all helpless and innocent people - most of them were either women or minors, by chasing them for days together persuaded by hate towards a particular community," it said.

The plea, which gave minute details of the crime, said Bano and her grown-up daughters were shell-shocked with this sudden development.

"The decision of the government came as a shock to the citizens, nationally and internationally, and the society across segments showed anger, disappointment, distrust and protested the clemency shown by the government.

"When the nation was celebrating its 76th Independence Day, all the convicts were released prematurely and were garlanded and felicitated in full public glare and sweets were circulated and this is how the present petitioner along with the entire nation and the whole world came to know about the shocking news of premature release of all the convicts (respondents no. 3-13) of one of the most gruesome crime this country has ever

seen of multiple time gang rape of a pregnant woman," it said.

It referred to wide-virtual public protest in each city, on all social media platforms and news channels, portals.

It was also reported heavily that Muslims of the area started fleeing away from Rahimabad in fear after release of these 11 convicts, the plea said. The separate review plea said Bano was not made a party to the petition by a convict who along with others was released under the state's remission policy which is not in force.

"In view of the development that the policy dated July 09, 1992 stood cancelled vide circular dated May 08, 2003 of State of Gujarat, it was necessary to be examined whether still the policy dated 09.07.1992 would be the relevant policy for remission application of the convicts to be considered, if at all the State of Gujarat is the appropriate Government under section 432 CrPC," the review plea said.

The top court is already seized of PILs filed by CPI(M) leader Subhashini Ali, independent journalist Revati Laul, former vice chancellor of Lucknow University Roop Rekha Verma, and TMC MP Mahua Moitra against the release of the convicts.

Bano was 21 years old and five months pregnant when she was gangraped while fleeing the riots that broke out after the Godhra train burning incident. Her three-year-old daughter was among the seven family members killed.



# NGT order to phase out public transport vehicles below BS-IV in 6 months stayed

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has stayed an order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to phase out all public transport vehicles with BS-IV (Bharat Stage) engines and below in the next six months.

A bench of Justices S K Kaul and Abhay S Oka issued notice to the parties in the case and sought their replies on the appeal filed by the West Bengal government.

The NGT in its order had said the state government must ensure that public transport vehicles with BS-IV engines and below are phased out in six months so that only BS-VI vehicles ply in the state, including Kolkata and Howrah, thereafter.

"It is her (counsel for the West Bengal government) say that in terms of the directions of this court in order dated October 24, 2018, no motor vehicle conforming to the emission standard Bharat

Stage-IV was to be sold or registered in the country with effect from April 1, 2020.

"Thus, registrations were carried out till that date as permitted, and therefore the 15-year period has to be counted from the date of registration. Otherwise, it will amount to making the vehicles unusable in less than 15 years. Issue notice. In the meantime, the operation of the aforesaid direction is stayed," the bench said.

The eastern bench of the NGT had noted that a huge number of private and commercial vehicles older than 15 years was plying in Kolkata and Howrah, which was adding to the air pollution.

The tribunal in its order had said while phasing out the old vehicles, a move towards use of cleaner and greener technology with the introduction of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses and electric buses may be expedited.

# Must consider environmental dimension of justice: Prez

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Climate change is knocking on the doors and people in poorer nations are going to pay a "heavier price" for the degradation of the environment President Droupadi Murmu said on Saturday and asserted that society must now consider the environmental dimension of justice.

In her address at an event hosted here by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to mark Human Rights Day, she also made a fervent appeal that humans must learn to treat nature and biodiversity with dignity and respect.



"I wonder what would the animals and trees around us tell us if they could speak. What would our rivers say about human history and what would our cattle say on the topic of human rights. We have trampled on their rights for long and now the results are before us,"

she said.

Just as the concept of human rights exhorts society to consider every human being as no different, "we should treat the whole living world and its habitat with respect", the President said, adding, "We must learn, rather relearn to

treat nature with dignity. This is not only a moral duty; let us remember it is necessary for our own survival too."

Human Rights Day is observed to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It was approved and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, as a universally accepted value-based document of understanding the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights.

The theme of this year's Human Rights Day is 'Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All'. This is close to the ideals expressed in the Preamble of

India's Constitution, Murmu said.

"I have said before that we should strive to expand the notion of justice. Over the past few years, the world has suffered from a high number of natural disasters caused by unusual weather patterns.

"Climate change is knocking on the doors. People in poorer nations are going to pay a heavier price for the degradation of our environment. We must consider the environmental dimension of justice now," she said.

The President asserted that the challenge of climate change is so enormous that "it forces us to redefine 'rights'".

# Estimated 2.2 mn unknown marine species threatened with extinction

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

While nearly 28,000 deep-sea animal species have been described and named, an estimated 2.2 million other marine species, including deep-sea, are unknown to science, of which many are thought to be threatened with extinction. Leading international marine scientists have warned that many may go extinct due to human activities like pollution and their habitat destruction deep sea before they are discovered.

"It will be the loss of unique, potentially valuable genetic resources resulting in unpredictable effects on global ecosystems essential to human food supplies and climate regulation," the scientists in a new policy brief presented at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) recently in Montreal, underlining that without knowledge of these species, effective deep sea conservation is impossible.

They also urged global policy-makers to support urgently needed new research to fill a critical knowledge gap.

In 2019, the scaly-foot snail (Chrysomallon squamiferum) became the first deep-sea species listed as globally endangered due to the threat of deep-seabed mining. "Conservation of deep-sea species found in 'areas beyond



national jurisdiction' is particularly challenging," the policy brief says.

"We know very little about them, and there is not yet an international framework to guide the implementation of conservation measures," says lead author of the brief, Stefanie Kaiser of the Senckenberg Research Institute and Natural History Museum, Frankfurt.

Knowledge of deep-sea species biodiversity is an obvious first step to effective protection of both the species and the ecosystem processes associated with them.

The scientists warn that deep sea species are increasingly exposed to pollution and habitat destruction. In particular, global warming, ocean acidification and resource depletion could lead to dramatic changes in deep-sea biodiversity with unpredictable consequences for humans as well. The scientists have called for support to develop international research strategies,

infrastructure, cooperation and exploration. "Deep-sea areas seem very distant and insignificant at first glance; it's not immediately clear what this vast ecosystem and its inhabitants are doing for us," explains Kaiser.

"The deep sea -- defined as 200 to 11,000 metre depth and beyond -- is the world's largest habitat, covering more than half of earth's surface. It is essential to global climate regulation by storing carbon dioxide and heat and by maintaining biodiversity."

The 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international meeting bringing together governments from around the world.

Participants will set out new goals and develop an action plan for nature over the next decade. The government of Canada's priority is to ensure the COP15 is a success for nature.

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### "TENDER NOTICE"

Sr. No.	Name of the Department	Name of Work/ Notice/ Tender	Opening Date	Closing Date	Amount (Approx. in lac)	E.Money (in lac.)	Website of the department
	The Panipat Co-op. Sugar Mills Ltd., Panipat, Dahar Village Site.		10.12.2022 at 10:00 A.M.	15.12.2022 at 10:00 A.M.			
	Job Work item for Sugar Mill, Dahar Site						
1.	Transportation of Molasses from New Sugar Plant, Dahar Village to Old Sugar Mill Site (Distance 6 K.M.)				6.50	00.15	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
					6.50	00.15	

The detailed tender have already been uploaded on the website <https://etenders.hry.nic.in> . The tender should be filled on the above website on or before 15-12-2022 at 10:00 A.M. The "TECHNICAL BID" will be opened on 15-12-2022 at 10:30 A.M. If a tenderer qualifies in "TECHNICAL BID" then only "FINANCIAL BID" will be opened on 15-12-2022 at 12:30 P.M. The Negotiation, if necessary will be held in the presence of lowest tenderer or his representative who may be present at that time on 15-12-2022 at 02:00 P.M.

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# Russia grinds on in eastern Ukraine, Bakhmut ‘destroyed’

AP ■ KYIV

Russian forces have “destroyed” the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, while Ukraine’s military on Saturday reported missile, rocket and air strikes in multiple parts of the country that Moscow is trying to conquer after months of resistance.

The latest battles of Russia’s 9 1/2 month war in Ukraine have centered on four provinces that Russian President Vladimir Putin triumphantly — and illegally — claimed to have annexed in late September.

The fighting indicates Russia’s struggle to establish control of those regions and Ukraine’s persistence to reclaim them. Zelenskyy said the situation “remains very difficult” in several frontline cities in east-



ern Ukraine’s Donetsk and Luhansk provinces. Together, the provinces make up the Donbas, an expansive industrial region bordering Russia that Putin identified as a focus from the war’s outset and where Moscow-backed separatists have fought since 2014. “Bakhmut, Soledar, Maryinka, Kreminna.

For a long time, there is no living place left on the land of these areas that have not been damaged by shells and fire,” Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address, naming cities that have again found themselves in the crosshairs.

“The occupiers actually destroyed Bakhmut, another Donbas city that the Russian army turned into burnt ruins,” Zelenskyy didn’t specify what he meant by “destroyed” - and some buildings remain standing and residents still mill about in city streets. The

Ukrainian military General Staff reported missile attacks, about 20 airstrikes and more than 60 rocket attacks across Ukraine between Friday and Saturday.

Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun said the most active fighting was in the Bakhmut district, where more than 20 populated places came under fire. He said Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks in Donetsk and neighboring Luhansk.

Russia’s grinding eastern offensive succeeded in capturing almost all of Luhansk during the summer. Donetsk eluded the same fate, and the Russian military in recent weeks has poured manpower and resources around Bakhmut in an attempt to encircle the city, analysts and Ukrainian officials have said.

After Ukrainian forces recaptured the southern city of

Kherson nearly a month ago, the battle heated up around Bakhmut, demonstrating Putin’s desire for visible gains following weeks of clear setbacks in Ukraine. Taking Bakhmut would rupture Ukraine’s supply lines and open a route for Russian forces to press on toward Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, key Ukrainian strongholds in Donetsk.

Russia has battered Bakhmut with rockets for more than half of the year. A ground assault accelerated after its troops forced Ukrainians to withdraw from Luhansk in July. But some analysts have questioned Russia’s strategic logic in relentless pursuit to take Bakhmut and surrounding areas that also came under intense shelling in past weeks, and where Ukrainian officials reported that some residents were living in damp basements.

## America: Russia, Iran moving towards full defence ‘partnership’



AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration is accusing Russia of moving to provide advanced military assistance to Iran, including air defense systems, helicopters and fighter jets, part of deepening cooperation between the two nations as Tehran provides drones to support Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby on Friday cited U.S. Intelligence assessments for the allegations, saying Russia was offering Iran “an unprecedented level of military and technical support that is transforming their relationship into a full-fledged defense partnership.”

Kirby said Russia and Iran were considering standing up a drone assembly line in Russia for the Ukraine conflict, while Russia was training Iranian pilots on the Sukhoi Su-35 fighter and Iran could receive deliveries of the plane within the year.

“These fighter planes will significantly strengthen Iran’s air force relative to its regional neighbors,” Kirby said.

The U.S. Allegations are part of a deliberate effort by the U.S. To drive global isolation of Russia, in this case targeted at Arab nations who have looked to contain Iran’s regional malevolence and who have not taken a strong stance against Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Earlier this year, the Biden administration accused Saudi Arabia of siding with Russia in the conflict by shepherding cuts by the OPEC+ cartel to boost the price of oil, crucial to funding Moscow’s war effort. Saudi Arabia and Iran have

been on opposite sides of a yearslong proxy war in Yemen.

Kirby said the arms transfers were in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions and that the U.S. Would be “using the tools at our disposal to expose and disrupt these activities.” Concerns about the “deepening and a burgeoning defense partnership” between Russia and Iran come as the Biden administration has repeatedly accused Iran of assisting Russia with its invasion of Ukraine.

The administration says Iran sold hundreds of attack drones to Russian over the summer. Kirby on Friday reiterated the administration’s belief that Iran is considering the sale of hundreds of ballistic missiles to Russia, but acknowledged that the U.S. Doesn’t have “perfect visibility into Iranian thinking on why” the deal hasn’t been consummated.

The White House says Russia has also turned to North Korea for artillery as the nine-month war grinds on. The White House has repeatedly sought to spotlight Russia’s reliance on Iran and North Korea, another broadly isolated nation on the international stage, for support as it prosecutes its war against Ukraine.

The Biden administration recently unveiled sanctions against Iranian firms and entities involved in the transfer of Iranian drones to Russia for use in Ukraine. It all comes as the administration has condemned the Islamic republic’s violent squelching of protests that erupted throughout Iran after the September death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while she was held by the morality police.

## Bangladesh’s Opposition party holds massive anti-Govt rally

Demands resignation of PM Sheikh Hasina

PTI ■ DHAKA

Tens of thousands of supporters of Bangladesh’s main Opposition party BNP on Saturday held a “grand rally” in the capital here demanding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s resignation and fresh elections.

Seven lawmakers of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) announced their resignations to protest against the government led by Hasina. Dhaka’s Golapbagh area, the venue of the rally, was under heavy security surveillance.

The party activists chanted “Sheikh Hasina is a vote thief” as the party leaders addressed the rally eastern part of the capital Dhaka city. Residents of the capital, including office-goers,



faced difficulties and many were seen waiting for public transport on the road since morning. Activists say the rally could attract 1 million people.

The ruling Awami League activists also staged several pro-government processions. Seven BNP lawmakers announced their resignation at the rally. “We had joined the Parliament in line with the party’s decision but now there is no difference

between staying or quitting..We have already emailed our resignations (to parliament secretariat),” BNP lawmaker Rumin Farhana told the rally.

She called the incumbent government an “autocratic” one and alleged it came to power by “rigging the polls”, torturing the Opposition party leaders, carrying out forced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, and engaging in corruption.

## Pro-democracy media tycoon jailed for five years in Hong Kong

AP ■ HONG KONG

A Hong Kong court sentenced a pro-democracy media tycoon to five years and nine months in prison on Saturday over two fraud charges linked to lease violations, the latest of a series of cases against prominent activists that critics say are aimed at crushing dissent in the city.

Jimmy Lai, who was arrested during a crackdown on the city’s pro-democracy movement following widespread protests in 2019 and under the National Security Law imposed by Beijing, was also fined 2 million Hong Kong dollars (USD 257,000).

His media company, Next Digital, published the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily.

The publication was forced to close following the arrests of its top executives, editors and journalists last year. In October, Lai was found guilty of fraud for subletting part of the office space to a secretarial firm,



Democracy advocate Jimmy Lai, center, leaves Hong Kong’s Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong on Feb. 9, 2021. Lai was sentenced to five years and nine months in prison over two fraud charges linked to lease violations in Hong Kong on Saturday, the latest of a series of cases against activists that critics say are aimed at snuffing out dissidents in city

AP Photo

which was also controlled by him, between 2016 and 2020. The second fraud count was for letting the same firm use the media outlet’s office space in an alleged breach of lease agreements from 1998 to 2015.

The court at that time ruled the moves had violated lease agreements with the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corp.

## US bans Lanka military officer for Human Rights violations

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The US has imposed sanctions on yet another Sri Lankan military officer for human rights abuses in their latest action to promote accountability for corruption and human rights abuses around the world.

Marking Human Rights Day on Friday, the US state department, in a statement named Prabath Bulathwatte, the former head of a clandestine Sri Lankan Army platoon known as the Tripoli Platoon, for “gross violation” of human rights and “degrading treatment” of a Sri Lankan journalist.

“Pursuant to section 7031(c) the Department of State is designating Bulathwatte for his involvement in a gross violation of human rights, namely torture and/or cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of Sri Lankan journalist, Keith Noyahar in May 2008”, the statement said.

It said all property and interests in property of individuals or entities in the US or under the control of the US are blocked, and they and their



immediate family members are made ineligible for entry to the US.

Last year, the US state department similarly listed two Sri Lankan soldiers, Chandana Hettiarachchi, Navy officer, and Sunil Ratnayake, a staff sergeant of the Sri Lanka Army holding them accountable for gross violations of human rights.

In 2020, the US State Department similarly sanctioned Sri Lanka’s current chief of defence staff Gen Shavendra Silva, and former Commander of the Sri Lanka Army, on allegations of war crimes committed during the final phase of the armed conflict with the LTTE in 2009.

## Japan’s Parliament enacts law to help Unification Church donation victims

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan’s parliament on Saturday enacted a law to restrict malicious donation solicitations by religious and other groups, which mainly targets the Unification Church, whose fundraising tactics and cozy ties with the governing party caused public outrage.

The South Korean-based religious group’s decades-long ties with Japan’s governing Liberal Democratic Party surfaced after the July assassination of former leader Shinzo Abe.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, whose support ratings tumbled, sought to calm public fury over his handling of the scandal and has replaced three Cabinet ministers - one over his church ties, another over a capital punishment gaffe and a third over political funding problems. The new law,

approved at this year’s closing parliamentary session, allows believers, other donors and their families to seek the return of their money and prohibits religious groups and other organizations from soliciting funds by coercion, threats or linking donations to spiritual salvation. Kishida, who has heard former adherents’ expe-

rience, described their sufferings as “ghastly” and praised the law as a bipartisan effort to help the victims and their families. The law’s passage was one of Kishida’s top priorities that also include Japan’s new national security strategy and defense policy to achieve a substantial buildup of its military over the next five years.



## Explainer: What's at stake in Turkey's new Syria escalation

AP ■ BEIRUT

After weeks of deadly Turkish airstrikes in northern Syria, Kurdish forces and international players are trying to gauge whether Ankara’s threats of a ground invasion are serious.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly warned of a new land incursion to drive Kurdish groups away from the Turkish-Syrian border, following a deadly Nov. 13 bombing in Istanbul.

Turkish authorities blamed the attack on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, and on the Syria-based People’s Protection Units, or YPG. Both have denied involvement.

On Nov. 20, Ankara launched a barrage of airstrikes, killing dozens, including civilians as well as Kurdish fighters and Syrian government troops. Human Rights Watch has warned that the strikes are exacerbating a humanitarian crisis by disrupting power, fuel and aid.

In the most recent devel-

opment, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin flew to Turkey this week for talks on the situation in Syria.

Here’s a look at what various foreign powers and groups embroiled in the Syria conflict stand to gain or lose:

Turkey sees the Kurdish forces along its border with Syria as a threat and has launched three major military incursions since 2016, taking control of large swaths of territory.

Erdogan hopes to relocate many of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey to northern Syria and has begun building housing units there. The plan could address growing anti-refugee sentiment in Turkey and bolster Erdogan’s support ahead of next year’s elections, while diluting historically Kurdish-majority areas by resettling non-Kurdish Syrian refugees there.

Erdogan has also touted plans to create a 30-kilometer (19-mile) security corridor in areas currently under Kurdish control.

## Biden called gay marriage ‘inevitable’ and soon it’ll be law

AP ■ WASHINGTON,

A decade ago, then-Vice President Joe Biden shocked the political world and preempted his boss by suddenly declaring his support for gay marriage on national television. But not everyone was surprised.

A small group had attended a private fundraiser with Biden weeks earlier in Los Angeles, where he disclosed not only his approval but his firm conclusion about a positive future for same-sex marriage.

He predicted, “Things are changing so rapidly, it’s going to become a political liability in the near term for someone to say, I oppose gay marriage.”

“Mark my words. And my job — our job — is to keep this momentum rolling to the inevitable.” The day that Biden



envisioned may have arrived. He plans on Tuesday to sign legislation, passed by bipartisan majorities in Congress, to protect gay unions — even if the Supreme Court should revisit its ruling supporting a nationwide right of same-sex couples to marry. Biden’s signature will burnish his legacy as a champion of equality at a time

when the LGBTQ community is anxious to safeguard legal changes from a backlash on the right that has used incendiary rhetoric, particularly against transgender people.

The politics were far different a decade ago, when gay rights activists were frustrated with President Barack Obama. He had made some changes,

such as eliminating the “don’t ask, don’t tell” rule that prevented gay people from serving openly in the military, but stopped short of embracing marriage equality.

As Obama’s vice president, Biden shared the same stance. So there was some tension in April 2012 when Biden attended the fundraiser at the Los Angeles home of a married gay couple and their children.

Chad Griffin, an activist who had also helped organize the event, decided to ask Biden about it.

“When you came in tonight, you met Michael and Sonny and their two beautiful kids,” he said to Biden. “And I wonder if you can just sort of talk in a frank, honest way about your own personal views as it relates to marriage equality.” Biden responded, “All you

got to do is look in the eyes of those kids. And no one can wonder, no one can wonder whether or not they are cared for and nurtured and loved and reinforced. And folks, what’s happening is, everybody is beginning to see it.”

Just over two weeks later, Biden was on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” and host David Gregory asked whether he supported gay marriage.

Biden said the issue came down to “will you be loyal to the person you love? And that’s what people are finding out is what all marriages, at their root, are about, whether they’re marriages of lesbians, or gay men, or heterosexuals.”

Biden said the president, not him, “sets the policies.” But he said gay couples should have “all the civil rights, all the civil liberties.”

## France to make condoms free for anyone under 25, says Macron

AP ■ PARIS

France will make condoms free in pharmacies for anyone up to age 25 in the new year, President Emmanuel Macron announced on Friday.

The move comes as the government says sexually transmitted diseases are on the rise among young people, and as this year’s exceptional inflation is cutting especially deeply into the budgets of France’s poorest.

Girls and women 25 and under already can get free birth control in France as part of government efforts to ensure that young people of all incomes can prevent unwanted pregnancy. Existing measures don’t apply to men, how-



ever, or specifically address access for transgender or non-binary people. Macron had said Thursday that condoms would be free in pharmacies for anyone 18-25 starting January 1. But after a French TV presenter and others challenged him on social networks on Friday over why the condom measure did not include minors, the president agreed to expand the program. “Let’s do

it,” Macron said in a selfie video that he shot from the sidelines of a summit in Spain. He later tweeted: “A lot of minors also have sex ... They need to protect themselves too.”

Macron, who was France’s youngest-ever president when he was first elected in 2017 at age 39, also promised stepped-up efforts to prevent and test for HIV and other sexually transmitted viruses.

France’s state health care system covers some birth control costs but not all, and doctor appointments for low-income patients often require long waits. Abortions in France are available free for everyone. Several other European countries offer free or subsidized contraception.



# ‘MoCA looks at reducing peak hour flights to manage congestion at IGIA’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Civil Aviation is discussing with domestic airlines ways to address overall congestion at the Delhi airport, including the possibility of reducing the number of flights operated during peak hours, according to officials.

On Saturday, senior ministry officials visited the Terminal 3 (T3) of the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) here to inspect passenger movements and baggage checkpoints, among other aspects, the officials said.

IGIA, also the country's largest airport, has three terminals -- T1, T2 and T3. All international flights and some domestic services operate from T3.

The officials said discussions are also going on with airlines to reduce the number of flights during peak hours at the three terminals.

The effort is to have 14 flights at T3, 11 in T2 and 8 in T1 during these hours, they added.

Specific details could not be immediately ascertained.

Generally, peak hours are in the morning and evening.

In the last two days, the



ministry officials said DIAL has taken various steps, such as having additional traffic marshal at the departure forecourt of T3 to avoid vehicular congestion.

Besides, dedicated people have been deployed at the entry gates to help passengers.

The officials said an additional X-ray machine has been installed at T3 domestic and more manpower has been deployed in the ATRS (Automatic Tray Retrieval

System) area to help passengers with tray preparation and congestion management.

Awareness posters have also been put at the entry gates to make sure that passengers are ready with boarding cards.

IGIA, which is operated by the Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL), handles around 1,200 flights daily.

On December 7, civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia held a detailed discussion with heads of all major

Indian airports, CISF and immigration officials on capacities deployed. The discussion was also on the capacities required at every point to process domestic and international passengers smoothly through the peak travel season.

During the meeting, various initiatives, including plans for peak hour capacity based on passenger processing capacity at each airport, were also discussed.

# Govt to hold apprenticeship fair for youth in 197 districts from tomorrow

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government will hold Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Mela on Monday (December 12) across 197 locations in 25 states and Union territories, in line with its vision to boost career opportunities for youth under Skill India Mission.

Several local businesses have been invited to be a part of the mela to provide local youth with the opportunity to shape their careers through apprenticeship training. The event will witness the participation of various companies from different sectors, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship said in a statement.

Participating companies will have the chance to meet potential apprentices on a single platform and choose applicants on the spot and provide them with an opportunity to be a part of their organisations, it added.

Candidates who have passed Class 5 to Class 12 and have skill training certificates, or ITI Diploma holders or graduates can apply during this apprenticeship mela.

The candidates must carry three copies of their resume, three copies of all the mark sheets and certificates, photo



ID (Aadhaar card/driving licence etc) and three passport-size photographs to the respective venues.

Individuals can register for the mela by visiting [www.Apprenticeshipindia.Gov.In](http://www.Apprenticeshipindia.Gov.In) and to find the mela's nearest location.

Through this fair, the candidates will also earn National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET)-recognised certifications, improving their

employability rate after the training session, the ministry said.

"India has often been compared to other developed economies in terms of apprenticeship opportunities for the youth of today. To bridge this gap, we are trying our best to make apprenticeship opportunities reachable to trainees and students," Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, said.

He informed that the major purpose of this programme is to encourage companies to hire more apprentices, while also assisting employers in discovering the right talent and developing their potential via training and practical experience.

"It is also critical to embed apprenticeship in the educational ecosystem besides building credible pathways from apprenticeship to higher education. With our continuous efforts, our goal is to raise apprenticeship opportunities in India to 10 lakhs by 2022-end, and to 60 lakhs by 2026," the secretary said.

Apprenticeship melas are hosted in the country every month, wherein selected individuals receive a monthly stipend in accordance with government criteria for gaining new skills.

Apprenticeship is considered the most sustainable model of skill development, and it has been getting a big boost under Skill India Mission.

The government is striving to train 1 million youth per annum through apprenticeship training and to fulfil this mission, PMNAM is being used as a platform to increase the participation of establishments and students.

# BMW expects sales momentum to continue next yr; lines up 8 launches

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With 2022 turning out to be the best ever year in terms of sales, luxury carmaker BMW India expects volume to remain robust in 2023 as well as it looks to drive in multiple products, including electric sedan i7.

The carmaker, which sells products under BMW and Mini brands in the car segment and bikes under BMW Motorrad, is all set to introduce eight products over the next eight weeks in the country.

"For us, we believe it (sales momentum) will carry on for sure. We got fantastic products coming next year as well. We are starting with eight big launches with three being super big products, so I am very confident. We will grow in a very strong way in 2023 as well," BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah told PTI in an interaction. He was replying to a query whether the company would be able to maintain sales growth next year as well.

Pawah noted that the domestic car market is witnessing a positive phase and is expected to carry forward to 2023 as well.

"People are looking at buying cars they have always dreamt of..Families are looking at driving (for) holidays..So all this will help carry forward the momentum," he said.

There were some economic chal-



lenges in terms of inflation and rising interest rates but those could be overcome with new products and the traction that is already there in the market, Pawah noted.

Elaborating on the current year, he said: "In the car division if we look at both BMW and Mini brands, we are growing by around 40 per cent year-on-year already (November-end). This is going to be a defining year for us as we have already crossed the best ever sales number."

BMW India had sold 10,405 cars in 2018, its best yearly sales performance till date.

The company dispatched 8,236 BMW and 640 Mini units last year. Pawah noted

that BMW has one of the best electric vehicle portfolios in the country right now and the company will further add products next year.

"We will add to that range over the next eight weeks. It will include the i7 as well early next year," Pawah said.

BMW has already started with the product launches as it rolled out three products on Saturday. The company introduced the new M340i xDrive priced at Rs 69.2 lakh (ex-showroom). It also launched an electrified sports utility vehicle XM tagged at Rs 2.6 crore. Besides, the company launched the S 1000 RR superbike with three trims priced up to Rs 24.45 lakh.

# V-Guard to acquire Sunflame Enterprises for ₹660 crore

ANS ■ KOCHI

Kochi-based V-Guard Industries (V-Guard) on Saturday announced the signing of definitive agreements for acquiring 100 per cent stake in Sunflame Enterprises Private Ltd. (SEPL) for Rs 660 crore.

The all-cash deal is expected to close by mid of January 2023, said a top V-Guard official and it would be funded through a mix of internal accruals and debt.

The acquisition is in line with V-Guard's strategy to become a significant player in the domestic Kitchen Appliances segment.

The Sunflame brand has a pan India presence with a strong brand recall.

SEPL's wide portfolio, product development capabilities and the recently established state-of-the-art integrated manufacturing facility provide the perfect opportunity for V-Guard to scale up its Kitchen Appliances busi-



ness while also unlocking synergy benefits.

Mithun Chittilappilly, Managing Director, V-Guard, said Sunflame is an iconic brand etched in the memories of Indian households and is expected to provide significant thrust to V-Guard's plans to become a leading Indian Kitchen Appliances player.

K.L. Verma, Managing Director, SEPL said that having started this journey in 1984, they have come a long way since then. V-Guard, a name synonymous with trust, is the right organization to take this legacy forward.

# Guyana opens bidding on 14 new offshore oil, gas blocks

AP ■ GEORGETOWN

Guyana on Friday opened bidding on 14 new offshore oil and gas blocks, hoping to capitalise on interest in lucrative fields that are expected to make the South American nation a major oil producer.

Guyana is home to one of the largest oil discoveries in the last decade. In 2019, two years after the find was announced, Exxon Mobil lifted the first batch of oil from the seabed off Guyana's coast. A consortium led by Exxon has since successfully drilled more than 30 wells near the blocks that are currently being auctioned.

President Irfan Ali said the bidding period will run



from Friday to May of next year to give companies time to study the blocks.

Companies can bid through April 14 after paying a USD 20,000 fee to log into a virtual data room that provides information about the offshore area. Bids must be sent in by mid-April and results and awards made by the end of May

next year.

"This, of course, will follow negotiations and evaluation of the bids that we received during this bidding round," Ali said in a live Facebook post.

Guyana's Cabinet has repeatedly said it will work to ensure that the country gets the best deal for what is widely regarded as its last remaining and revenue-producing economic patrimony-oil and gas.

Criticism about the current arrangements with the consortium, which also includes Hess Corporation and China's CNOOC, the production sharing agreement and tax free incentives have received persistent attacks from all quarters of Guyanese society.

# Jammu-based organisations apply for GI tag for 8 traditional items

PTI ■ JAMMU

To ensure protection in the domestic and global markets, organisations have applied for a geographical indicator (GI) tag for eight different traditional items from various districts of the Jammu region, according to officials.

This was revealed at a round table meeting -- A way forward for GIs of Jammu and Kashmir -- at the University of Jammu for assessing the distinctiveness of the Union territory's native and traditional items.

The organisation have applied for GI tags of 8 different products, including Chikri wood products of the Thanamandi belt of the Rajouri district, Sulai Honey of the Ramban district, Kalari of the Udhampur district, Anardana of the Ramban district, Gucchi of the Doda district, Rajmash of Bhabarwah and Pashmina of Bhabarwah.

"We have got 8 applications for GI-tagging of some products from the Jammu region. We will be reviewing them. Our aim is to meet local artisans, local cultivators and farmers (who make these products)... We will be educated on it closely," controller general of patents, designs and trademarks, department of promotion of industry and internal Trade (DPIIT) Prof Unnat Pandit told PTI.

He further said that



another aim was to hold a round table meeting to do brainstorming sessions on the products, which can be GI-tagged and how can we make universities partners in the GI-tagging campaign.

Pandit in his inaugural address focused on the significance of entrepreneurship in India and the expanding role of mentors towards creating an entrepreneurial environment.

He emphasised the need for training and empowering the faculty towards mentoring and creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Pandit further said that experiential learning can offer useful insights to the youth of the nation and create a roadmap for them to explore several entrepreneurial opportunities and tap their potential.

He appreciated the efforts and initiatives undertaken by UOJSPVF, University of Jammu, towards promoting

an entrepreneurial culture in the region.

Amit Khajuria, Assistant handicraft officer, is battling strongly for GI-tagging of Chikri wood products produced in the Thanamandi belt of the Rajouri district.

Similarly, Rahul Rathore of Ramban has showcased 'Sulai Honey' for GI-tag before the review team and said that it is also called van-tulsi honey.

"It is the world's best honey. It was presented to the British queen during an official visit," he said.

Abha Rishi, CEO, AIC-BIMTECH, in her address deliberated upon the need for inculcating a clear vision in the students aligned towards their professional goals.

# WTO rules against Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The World Trade Organisation has rejected the 2018 import taxes that then-President Donald Trump imposed on foreign steel and aluminum, saying they violated global trade rules.

Trump's tariffs of 25% on foreign steel and 10% on aluminum outraged America's long-standing allies, including the European Union and Japan, because he relied on a little-used provision of U.S. Trade law to declare their steel and aluminum a threat to U.S. National security.

China and other trading partners challenged the tariffs at the 164-nation WTO.

In a ruling issued Friday, the WTO said it was "not persuaded" that the United States faced "an emergency in international relations" that would justify the tariffs.

Friday's decision, however, will likely have little real-world impact. If the United States appeals the ruling, it will go nowhere. That's because the WTO's Appellate Body hasn't functioned for three years, ever since the U.S. Blocked the appointment of new judges to the panel. And the Biden administration already reached agreements with the EU, Japan and the United Kingdom to essentially drop the tariffs and



replace them with import quotas under which the Trump taxes do not apply. In return, the trading partners dropped their own retaliatory tariffs against the United States.

Still, the Biden administration criticized Friday's WTO decision.

"The United States strongly rejects the flawed interpretation and conclusions," said Adam Hodge, spokesman for the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. "The United States has held the clear and unequivocal position, for over 70 years, that issues of national security cannot be reviewed in WTO dispute settlement." The WTO, he said, "has no authority to second-guess" the national security decisions of member countries.

Biden's trade team has attempted to find a balance between mending fences with U.S. Allies angry over Trump's "America First" trade policies, and keeping tariffs that are popular with many U.S. Steel and aluminum producers and their workers.



## AP ■ LUSAIL

**AFP**  **LONDON**

AFP ■ DOHA

**AFP** ■ DOHA

"It is a painful defeat but I go in peace," he said. "It is the end of a cycle."

## AFP ■ DOHA

After a goalless 90 minutes

Asked to assess his time in



# INDIA SALVAGE PRIDE IN FINAL ODI

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM

Ishan Kishan was an epitome of insane power-hitting as his record-breaking fastest double hundred provided a healing touch in India's crushing 227-run consolation victory over Bangladesh in the inconsequential third ODI here on Saturday.

Despite the record margin of victory — biggest by any team against Bangladesh, the 1-2 series defeat will certainly rankle the Indian team as both matches slipped away from its grasp after being in pole position.

Virat Kohli (113) struck his 44th ODI hundred. The century came Kohli's way after nearly 40 months of barren spell but it was easily overshadowed by Kishan's blitzkrieg as his 210 off 131 balls formed the cornerstone of India's mammoth total of 409 for 8 after back-to-back inept batting performances.

His innings had 24 boundaries and 10 sixes and double hundred came off only 126 balls.

The total was always going to be insurmountable and Bangladesh were never in contention as they were bowled out for 182 in 34 overs with all the Indian bowlers being amongst wickets.

Axar Patel (2/22), Shardul Thakur (3/30), Umran Malik (2/43), Mohammed Siraj (1/27) and Kuldeep Yadav (1/53) never really allowed the home team batters to dominate as they shared the spoils among themselves.

Kishan's blistering innings and the intent he showed while catching Bangladesh attack by the scruff of its neck would definitely put the team management under pressure to take some tough calls as it moves into the World Cup year. In fact, such



was his domination that Rohit Sharma's world record ODI score of 264 was in danger of being history.

"I got out with 15 (14.1) overs left. I could have got 300 also," Kishan told official broad-

casters during the innings break.

Apart from Rohit's three double tons, the two other Indian batters to achieve the feat are maestro Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag.

"I am blessed to hear my

name between such legends. The wicket was too good to bat on. My intent was very clear -- if the ball is there, I'll go for it," he revealed about his strategy.

Having completed his maiden ODI century in 85 balls,

Kishan batted in T20 mode as records kept on tumbling. That 156 of his runs came in sixes and boundaries tells a lot about the relentless assault he unleashed on the Bangladeshi bowlers.

The short balls were pulled,

the length balls were driven, the ones with width were cut fiercely.

The West Indies' Chris Gayle held the previous record with his 138-ball double ton against Zimbabwe in 2015. After touching the three-figure mark, Kishan raced to next 100 runs in just 41 balls.

Kohli was also at his sublime best en route to his 72nd international century as the duo bossed the innings with a 290-run partnership off just 190 balls.

"I was batting with Virat bhai, and he was spot on with which bowlers I needed to select (to target). I was on 95 and wanted to bring up the hundred with a six but he calmed me down, saying it was my first hundred, get it in singles as it's your first," he said.

Having scored his maiden T20I hundred earlier this year against Afghanistan in the Asia Cup, Kohli recorded his first ODI ton since August, 2019.

In a reminder of the famous six off Haris Rauf in the T20 World Cup, he picked a back-of-a-length delivery from Ebadot Hossain for a six to reach his century in 86 balls. Once both were gone, India managed just 70 runs in the last 10 overs while losing five wickets.

Having already conceded the three-match series after losing the first two ODIs following ordinary batting, India under KL Rahul brought in Kishan to open with the struggling Shikhar Dhawan.

Their opening partnership lasted 4.1 overs as Mehidy Hasan trapped Dhawan lbw for three. The off-spinner nearly had Kohli when he drove straight to short mid-wicket, but skipper Litton Das dropped him on six.

## Could have got to 300: Ishan

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM

The diminutive Ishan Kishan was delighted to score the fastest double hundred in ODI cricket history but rued about missing out on a golden opportunity to become the first triple centurion in the format.

Playing only his 10th ODI, the 24-year-old displayed fearless batting as he shattered Chris Gayle's record of fastest (138 balls) double century in the format when he took just 126 balls to the milestone. India posted a huge 409 for eight. He was out for 210 in the 36th over of the Indian innings.

"I got out with 15 (14.1) overs left. I could have got 300 also," Kishan told the broadcasters 'SonyLiv' at the innings break.

The Jharkhand left-hander became the fourth batter to score a double hundred.

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma has scored it thrice including his highest ODI score of 264 while Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag have scored once each.

"I am blessed to hear my name between such legends. The wicket was too good to bat on. My intent was very clear — if the ball is there, I'll go for it," he revealed about his strategy.

His record-breaking knock came in the company of Virat Kohli and Kishan credited the star India batter to "calm him down" when he was approaching his maiden century.

"I was batting with Virat bhai, and he was spot on with which bowlers I needed to select [to target]. I was on 95 and wanted to bring up the hundred with a six but he calmed me down, saying it was my first hundred, get it in singles as it's your first," he said.

Kishan is very close to Suryakumar Yadav, who has told him to bat before the start of the game.

"I had a chat with Surya bhai — he said when you bat before the game, you see the ball well. I didn't take too much pressure on myself. Just wanted to make use of the opportunity," Kishan said.



## Unadkat picked for India Tests matches after 12 yrs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran left-arm pacer Jaydev Unadkat has received a call-up to the Indian Test squad for the upcoming series in Bangladesh as a replacement for the injured Mohammed Shami.

Unadkat, who is coming off an impressive performance in his team Saurashtra's Vijay Hazare Trophy win recently, is currently in Rajkot and waiting to complete his visa formalities, after which he will join the Test squad in Chattogram.

A BCCI source confirmed the development to PTI.

Shami was ruled out of the series due to a hand injury.

India is set to play two Tests in Bangladesh. The 31-year-old Unadkat played his lone Test in 2010, against South Africa in Centurion. Since then, he has played seven ODIs and 10 T20 Internationals.

The Saurashtra skipper was the highest wicket-taker in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, with 19 scalps in 10 games. In all, he has picked 353 wickets in 96 first-class matches.

Besides Shami, the touring Indian team had been struggling with injuries to players such as skipper Rohit Sharma, youngsters Kuldeep Sen and Deepak Chahar who were earlier ruled out of the ODIs.

## Brook and Duckett put England on top against Pakistan

AP ■ MULTAN

England is well placed to set another difficult target for Pakistan on a turning wicket in the second test despite spinner Abrar Ahmed completing a 10-wicket haul on his debut on Saturday.

Half centuries by Harry Brook (74 not out) and Ben Duckett (79) led England to 202-5 - an overall lead of 281 runs - on Day Two after Pakistan had crumbled for 202 in the first session.

The bespectacled Ahmed, 24, bagged 7-114 to limit England's aggressive batters to 281 in the first innings before Pakistan collapsed by losing seven wickets for 37 runs.

Ahmed then took 3-81 in England's second innings - and also ran out Zak Crawley with a direct throw - to become the second Pakistani to claim a 10-wicket haul on his test debut.

Duckett followed his first innings half-century with another gritty knock before he was clean bowled by Ahmed in the last session off a delivery which kept low and skidded through.

Brook continued a rich vein of form, following his belligerent 153 and 87 in the first test with an unbeaten half century as England looked to challenge Pakistan again after successfully defending a target of 343 in the opening test.

Duckett had a couple of close calls against Ahmed as England played out two relatively quiet sessions with the bat.

Babar Azam dropped a regulation catch off Duckett at short midwicket before the left-



hander eventually fell to Ahmed.

Ahmed earlier bowled Will Jacks for 4 with a googly in his first over, while Abdullah Shafique snapped up a brilliant low one-handed catch at short leg when Joe Root went for a sweep on 21.

Pakistan's batters stumbled against the left-arm spin of Jack Leach and impressive reverse swing bowling by all three England fast bowlers before Faheem Ashraf and Ahmed added 23 for the last wicket.

Leach struck three times on Day Two and Root picked up two wickets in an over as Pakistan's lower order collapsed once Ollie Robinson bowled captain Babar with his second ball of the day.

Leach removed Saud Shakeel (63), Mohammad Rizwan and Mohammad Nawaz to finish with 4-98 while Root took 2-23 as most of the batters fell to poor shots.

Resuming on 107-2, Babar and Shakeel took the score to 142 inside the first half-hour.

Left-hander Shakeel, who made a half-century on his debut in the first test at Rawalpindi, survived a run-out when he charged down the wicket but Crawley became unbalanced and threw wide.

It was Robinson who ignited the slump which saw Pakistan losing seven wickets for 37.

Babar, who had completed his half century on Day One, was on 75 when he was outsmarted by the tall fast bowler's reverse swing and the ball tailed into him to crash into his stumps and end a 91-run stand.

England then tied down Rizwan for 27 balls before he finally got his first runs with a cover drive against Mark Wood.

Shakeel got frustrated and tried to break the shackles before he holed out to wide mid-on to give Leach his 100th test wicket.

Rizwan labored for 43 balls for his 10 runs before being bowled by Leach off a delivery which turned sharply away from him.



## Boland's 3 wickets put Aus in control against WI

AP ■ ADELAIDE

Pace bowler Scott Boland took three wickets in an over on Saturday to put Australia in command of the second cricket test against West Indies.

Australia bowled out West Indies for 214 on Day 3 before declaring its second innings on 199-6 early in the last session, setting the visitors a target of 497 to win with more than two days remaining in the day-night match at the Adelaide Oval.

Boland (3-9) then entered the attack in the sixth over and snared three second-innings wickets without conceding a run to have the tourists reeling on 15-3.

He took a wicket with his

first ball, having skipper Kraigg Brathwaite (3) caught behind with a delivery that straightened.

Boland also trapped Shamarh Brooks (0) lbw with a delivery that moved back off the seam two balls later and had Jermaine Blackwood (0) caught low at gully by Cameron Green.

Left-arm paceman Mitchell Starc (1-11) picked up an unexpected wicket when Tagenarine Chanderpaul, after scoring a watchful 17 from 28 balls, feathered a catch down the legside to wicketkeeper Alex Carey.

It was given not out by the on-field umpire but the Australians reviewed, despite Starc and Carey seemingly not convinced there was an edge, and got the reward as West Indies slipped to 21-4 in the 9th

over. Devon Thomas and Jason Holder each scored eight to help West Indies reach 38-4 at stumps.

It was an eventful day, with West Indies resuming on 102-4 and losing two wickets before adding a run as they quickly surrendered a first-innings lead of 297.

Great hope Chanderpaul (47) was run out off the fourth ball of the day when he prodded into space, took off, turned around and was caught short by a Starc direct hit.

Nathan Lyon finished with 3-57 while Starc ended up with 2-48 after having Holder caught behind for a duck and dismissing Roston Chase off a hook shot for 34.

# I never thought I would become IOA president: Usha

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

"I never thought I would one day become IOA president," track and field legend PT Usha said after she was elected as the first woman head of the Indian Olympic Association on Saturday.

Usha, 58, was officially elected for the top post during the polls, heralding in a new chapter in Indian sports administration.

"In my whole life I had lived just 13 years without sports. Otherwise I have been living with sports, as an athlete, coach and administrator in different roles," she said while addressing a press conference after her elevation to the top job.

"I had never thought that I would one day become IOA chief or member of Parliament. This is all because of my sport," she said with her entire executive council members by her side.

Usha took to athletics at a young age of nine while she was studying in class four at a school at Payyoli near her native village in Kozhikode district of Kerala.

What followed was a stellar career during which she won multiple Asian Games gold medals and achieved a fourth place finish in the 1984 Olympics 400m hurdles final.

She announced her retirement in 1990, got married and returned to the tracks again in 1994 before finally quitting athletics in 2000.

That initial nine years of her childhood and four years between 1990 and 1994 was the 13 years she was referring to. After 2000, she remained associated with athletics as mentor to promising athletes at her academy -- Usha School of Athletics.

She is currently the chairperson of its junior selection committee. She has also served in national award committees of the government.



"The national federations, the Athletes Commission and SOMs (Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit) pushed me to file nomination papers for the president's post. I am thankful to all of them," said Usha, who is also the first Olympian to head the IOA.

"I was earlier not close to IOA and federation (AFI) but now I have come (become IOA chief) because all our sportspersons want to. There are also many sportspersons in the executive committee. I am very happy about that."

She said the IOA will work as a unit and her organisation will be accessible to the federations, athletes and coaches.

"Me and my team, with collective effort, will do our best to work for the betterment of sports in the country. We will take opinions of federations, athletes and coaches and we will work together to bring more medals for our

country.

"Only sportspersons know how tough it is to come from lower levels and win international medals. We will work for the athletes only."

Usha, fondly known as the 'Payyoli Express', is being seen as a candidate of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, which had nominated her as a Rajya Sabha member in July.

She also became the first Olympian and first international medalist to head the IOA in its 95-year-old history, adding another feather to her cap after dominating Indian and Asian athletics for two decades before retiring in 2000 with a bagful of international medals.

Usha is the first sportsperson to have represented the country and also become IOA chief since Maharaja Yadavindra Singh, who played a Test match in 1934. Singh was the third IOA president who held office from 1938 to 1960.



I don't think anybody can be told how to act. I think you can give advice. But you have to find your own way through it  
— Judi Dench



# DECODING THE VERDICT

The BJP landslide victory in Gujarat shows that the party could deal with anti-incumbency of any number of years or any pressing issues if the opposition is divided, writes NAVIN UPADHYAY

The outcome of the assembly polls of Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh as well that of Delhi MCD elections have a huge message for all the three winners and losers. For the BJP a historic victory in Gujarat, the predictable loss in Himachal and debacle in Delhi underlines the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal alone cannot overcome the ground realities and anti-incumbency factors in a straight contest where polls are held on localised issues without polarising context.

The outcome of the assembly polls of Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh as well as that of Delhi MCD elections have a huge message for all the three winners and losers.

For the BJP, a historic victory in Gujarat, the predictable loss in Himachal, and the debacle in Delhi underline the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal alone cannot overcome the ground realities and anti-incumbency factors in a straight contest if the opposition can contest the polls on localized issues without allowing a polarising context.

For the Congress, the humiliating route in Gujarat and Delhi and a face-saver in Himachal reemphasize the fact that the grand old party is caught in a quagmire of its own making, and it would be a herculean task for it to remain afloat and flourish again till the leadership showed it has fire in the belly to overcome the gigantic challenge posed by the BJP and the gradual rise of AAP.

For the AAP the victory in Delhi MCD and satisfactory debut in Gujarat are reassertions of its policy of development populism. On the other hand, the failure of Kejriwal's outfit to even open its account shows that the voters seek more than freebies and are reluctant to experiment where they have a clear choice.

Because of the completely diverse issues and nature of the three contests, it would be unwise to read any universal message in their outcome for the 2024 lok sabha polls, but certain things are more than obvious. First, Congress will remain the prime pan-India opposition against the BJP, and AAP has a long way to go before it could even dream of occupying that spot. In fact, notwithstanding its failure to retain the MCD, the BJP has been able to revise its organizational apparatus in Delhi by launching a massive campaign in the municipal corporation elections. In VK Saxena, they have a

Lieutenant Governor who would continue to make life difficult for the AAP government. The AAP will also have to deal with the growing disillusionment of the Muslim votes who played a key role in the emergence of AAP as a powerful force in Delhi. The AAP candidates did win in several Muslim-majority areas in the Delhi MCD polls, but the margins were lower than those recorded two years ago in the assembly polls. Once the Congress puts its house in order, the AAP may find it tough to expand its base just by replicating the Hindutva avatar of the BJP and populism of the yore of the Congress. AAP is also under scrutiny in Punjab and if the party failed to improve its governance in the border state, it will have to brace up for its repercussion in Delhi in the 2025 assembly polls.

On the other hand, Congress has to come to terms with the reality that there is a difference between a political party and an NGO. It's fine to undertake a six-month arduous padyatra across the country, but in the absence of any serious effort to strengthen the organizational structure of the party to aggressively fight any election seat-by-seat, ward-by-ward, state-by-state, the party cannot hope to regain its lost ground even among those who are sympathetic to the Grand Old Party. A large chunk of Congress sympathizers has abandoned the party because they are either seething with resentment or despair over the way the Congress leadership, especially Rahul Gandhi, conducted himself before undertaking the Bharat jodo yatra. If the Congress did not revive its moribund organization, then the yatra will be at best remembered as a prolonged jamboree, which will pay no political dividend.

Political experts are amazed why the Congress leadership completely deserted Gujarat as if the party had entered into an understanding with the BJP to give a walkover. Congress has not only been routed in Gujarat, but the way Rahul Gandhi abandoned the state will have its repercussion long after the dust has settled in on the poll outcome. In yet another state, the Congress organization has been destroyed, and in yet another state the Congress has allowed the rise of a challenger to fight for the space of the main opposition. Congress should learn a lesson from Punjab. The way the Kejriwal outfit ambushed the congress in the last assembly polls after finding a foothold in 2016, has a grim message for the Congress.

POLITICAL EXPERTS ARE AMAZED WHY THE CONGRESS LEADERSHIP COMPLETELY DESERTED GUJARAT AS IF THE PARTY HAD ENTERED INTO AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE BJP TO GIVE A WALKOVER. CONGRESS HAS NOT ONLY BEEN ROUTED IN GUJARAT, BUT THE WAY RAHUL GANDHI ABANDONED THE STATE WILL HAVE ITS REPERCUSSION LONG AFTER THE DUST HAS SETTLED IN ON THE POLL OUTCOME. IN YET ANOTHER STATE, THE CONGRESS ORGANIZATION HAS BEEN DESTROYED, AND IN YET ANOTHER STATE THE CONGRESS HAS ALLOWED THE RISE OF A CHALLENGER IN AAP FOR THE OPPOSITION SPACE. CONGRESS SHOULD LEARN A LESSON FROM PUNJAB. THE WAY THE KEJRIWAL OUTFIT AMBUSHED THE CONGRESS IN THE LAST ASSEMBLY POLLS AFTER FINDING A TOEHOLD IN 2016, HAS A GRIM MESSAGE FOR THE CONGRESS IN GUJARAT, TOO



## How the Congress was routed in Gujarat

### SAURASHTRA

The BJP Saurashtra winning 40 of 48 seats, regaining its hold over a region where the Congress held sway in 2017 polls, bagging as many as 28 seats. The Congress managed to win just 3 seats, a far cry from the 28 seats it won in the 2017 elections. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), in its maiden Gujarat assembly elections, managed to bag 4 seats, one seat more than the Congress' tally

### NORTH GUJARAT

Of the total 32 seats of the north Gujarat region, eight went to Congress, 22 to BJP and two seats went to independent candidates. These seats include nine of Banaskantha, three of Sabarkantha, four of Arvalli, four of Patan, seven of Mehsana, and five Assembly seats of Gandhinagar district. In 2017, BJP won 14 seats and Congress 17 seats in north Gujarat. In that election, Dalit leader Jignesh Mevani, who contested as an independent with Congress' support, won from Va Vadagam (SC) seat of Banaskantha district. This time he won from the same seat as a Congress candidate. While the BJP improved its tally

significantly this time, Congress' tally has come down from 17 to 8.

### SOUTH GUJARAT

The BJP improved upon its 2017 tally in south Gujarat, winning 33 out of the 35 seats in the region. The Aam Aadmi Party followed, bagging the second spot in 12 seats. Congress managed to win the Vansada reserved seat while AAP won Dediapada, also a reserved seat, in its debut fight. Tribal leader and seven-time MLA Chhotu Vasava lost his Jhagadia seat to BJP's Ritesh Vasava, while BJP clinched five reserved seats from Congress. AAP failed to win in Surat, not winning any of the 16 seats there. BJP won all those seats.

### KUTCH

BJP made a clean sweep in the Kutch region, winning all six seats. The Congress, which carried out a silent campaign in rural areas, failed to retain the two seats it won in the 2017 elections. Aam Aadmi Party failed to win any seat but caused enough damage to the Congress, even leading to its defeat in its stronghold Rapar.

There is no denying the fact that the Bharat Jodo yatra has considerably transformed the image of Rahul Gandhi from a reluctant politician to a caring and dedicated footsoldier as well the supreme leader of the Congress. Every party needs a face, and Rahul has certainly acquired the aura that has been projected to help him as a leader who could even be the face of the opposition in 2024. The yatra has also galvanized the cadres and the Congress sympathizers, and now it was up to the Congress leadership to bring in follow-up measures to cash in on it.

For the BJP, the poll outcomes have a subtle message that the party should gear up to face a certain amount of anti-incumbency in the 2024 Lok sabha polls. Even though voters have often shown that they exercise their franchise differently in the state, municipal, and Lok sabha polls, it is universally accepted that price rise, unemployment, and economic challenges are far bigger issues than any other narratives. If the BJP did not face these issues in Gujarat,

it was because the rise of Narendra Modi, Amit Shah industrialists like Adanis and the domination of officers from Gujarat over bureaucracy have led to the rise of powerful sub-nationalism in the state, which subsumed any other agendas or narratives.

In 2024, the BJP faces major challenges in bigger states such as West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Kerala which account for more than half of the 544-Lok sabha seats. The party is expected to go all out in building the euphoria around the completion of the Ram temple project in 2024 ahead of the Lok sabha polls and hopes that Divine intervention will help it overcome the issue of price rise, unemployment, and economic distress.

Much will depend on whether the opposition realizes that they could never defeat the Saffron outfit if they don't join hands.

(The writer is Executive Editor of The Pioneer)



With proper usage of technology, such sportspersons can be back to track in much shorter time



# Universal health coverage: India needs big push

Universal health coverage (UHC) is widely discussed worldwide as an essential component of the development agenda. The outbreak of Covid-19 has necessitated the need for universal health coverage as the health systems failed miserably across the globe during those times. Considering the importance of UHC, the United Nations declared December 12 as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day) in 2017.

The United Nations defines UHC as “everyone, everywhere should have access to the health services they need without risk of financial hardship.” SDG target 3.8 (“Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.”) also focuses on achieving universal health coverage. UHC can be attained by achieving population coverage, service coverage and financial security.

India is committed to attaining the UHC by 2030. To achieve the UHC goal, the Government of India came up with a rather ambitious health insurance policy Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, under the Ayushman Bharat scheme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 23, 2018, in Jharkhand. It has been popularised as one of the world's largest health insurance policies and a substantial step towards universal health coverage.

However, health insurance coverage among households from any source stands at 41 per cent (NFHS-5, 2019-21), less than in many developing countries. This coverage stands at a low of 30 per cent and 33 per cent for women and men (aged 15-49) simultaneously. It's not only the low coverage that is of concern but also the equity of distribution that is questionable.

Without achieving equity, we cannot achieve UHC, as the former is the guiding principle of the latter. There is substantial State-wise variation as on the one hand Rajasthan (88%) and Andhra Pradesh (80%) stand at the top, on the other



hand, Bihar (17%) and UP (16%) stand at the bottom in terms of coverage of health insurance. The districts within States are also experiencing huge variations.

One of the important agendas of the UHC is to ensure the reach and coverage of the most marginalised population. The NFHS-5 results paint a different picture for India, where insurance coverage is lowest (36.1%) among households with the lowest wealth quintile. Moreover, the coverage among the minorities such as Muslims and Sikhs also falls behind the Hindus.

Another vital pillar of UHC is financial protection, ensuring that health services should not lead to financial hardship. The latest report of

NFHS revealed that the average out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) per delivery in a public health facility is ₹2,916, which in the case of urban and rural stands at ₹3,385 and ₹2,770 simultaneously. This figure is an improvement over NFHS-4, but we should also keep in mind that we are witnessing these numbers even though we have a scheme like Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram, which offers free delivery along with the incentives of ₹1,400 to women delivering in a public health-care facility.

Further, let's explore the situation at the State level. The results of NFHS are rather alarming as the OOPE for most of the North-eastern States (with the exception of

Meghalaya and Nagaland) and even for bigger States (except for Odisha, West Bengal, and Rajasthan) have risen between NFHS 4 and NFHS 5. Given the above scenario, it seems an arduous task to achieve the goal set by National Health Policy 2017 to reduce the OOPE. Although the NFHS-5 does not consider PMJAY implementation, recent studies showed that like the earlier health insurance policies, the PMJAY is also not free from inclusion and exclusion errors where we are witnessing the inclusion of ineligible households and exclusion of eligible households.

The availability of services is also a crucial part of UHC. In terms of hospital empanelment under the PMJAY, out of

the total empanelled hospitals, 56 per cent were in the public sector, and 40 per cent were in the private for-profit sector. Most of the hospital empanelment is in the States where the State has previous experience implementing publicly funded health insurance schemes (Joseph, J, D Hari Sankar and Nambiar, D, 2021).

Therefore the policy implementation in terms of hospital empanelment is facing concentration towards the states like Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The specialties provided by the empanelled hospital also vary hugely. Most hospitals are able to provide very limited specialties, leaving a major chunk of the population deprived of the policy

benefit.

India has shown growth in several health indicators. Growth in health indicators such as Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), achieving the target of Total Fertility Rate (TFR) and polio-free India are some of the crucial landmarks that became a reality. Although when you are looking towards the goal of universalisation of health, fundamental changes need to be affected.

The most important step in this direction should be the enhancement of health expenditure as a percentage of GDP, which currently stands lower than most of the developing nations. Strengthening the primary healthcare sector is

another area of development that needs special attention. In this direction, the establishment of the health and wellness centres under the Ayushman Bharat scheme was proposed in 2018, but the growth in this regard is questionable.

A big push in the health sector is the need of the hour, in the absence of which the health and wellness centres will end up in deplorable conditions similar to the current primary health centres and sub-centres. India needs to make significant progress before making this initiative the imitable one in the world.

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One of the important agendas of universal health coverage is to ensure the reach and coverage of the most marginalised population. However, the NFHS-5 results paint a different picture for India, where insurance coverage is lowest among households with the lowest wealth quintile. Moreover, the coverage among the minorities such as Muslims and Sikhs falls behind the Hindus



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## PERSPECTIVE

# Tell the truth and shame the devil

The fact that Hindus were killed and driven out of Muslim majority Kashmir in 1989/90 is well documented. Despite all, *The Kashmir Files* was pooh-poohed by the liberal media and their agents like Nadav Lapid. Does it mean that truth cannot be shown any longer if it is politically counter-productive



MARIA WIRTH

In connection with the recent focus on “The Kashmir Files”, it was stated that “the movie is part of the culture wars” and that its “real purpose” of the film was to promote the BJP's agenda. The BJP agenda, so it is implied, is to create a Hindu rashtra.

It made me wonder who the players in the “culture wars” are and why a dominant Hindu culture is usually projected as the worst possible scenario by the wrongly called “liberal” media. The same media seems to endorse the non-Hindu cultures. The so-called “liberal” media condones even harsh dehumanising blasphemy laws in numerous Muslim nations and China's inhuman crack-down on the Uyghur Muslims.

So why do the media and leftists vehemently oppose the Hindu culture? They insinuate that minorities (read Muslims and Christians) will suffer in a Hindu nation.

This is a flawed reasoning, because India has an excellent track record of treating minorities respectfully; while minorities like Jews, Parsis and Tibetans have faced persecution in many other countries. For example, in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, not along religious minorities including Hindus, other minority Muslim sects too have faced the societal and legal discriminations.

The fact that Hindus were killed and driven out of Muslim majority Kashmir in 1989/90 is well documented. They were given three options: “convert, leave or get killed”. To show that they meant it, gruesome murders of Hindus were committed. The Kashmiri Muslims who didn't



support the ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits had to sacrifice their lives at the hands of the same Islamist forces.

Strangely, the tragedy didn't make the headline then and now the tragic history is maligned with accusation like “vulgar propaganda”. India and the world soon forgot those brutally killed and the 400,000 refugees who fled Kashmir at that time. Instead, the world hears (and most believe) that the Indian Army brutally oppresses the Muslims in Kashmir.

But then, in March 2022, India was reminded of it. “The Kashmir Files” movie came out which truthfully depicted the abominable historical facts. Each scene was based on documents. Of course, violence needed to be shown, but the movie didn't overly focus on the brutalities. It also talked about the history of Kashmir, that even 800 years ago it was the intellectual capital of India. The profound philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism flourished there

until some 700 years ago when the region turned Muslim-majority.

The movie was a great success. For the first time, people in India and abroad realised the magnitude of the injustice done to Kashmiri Hindus. Obviously, this made the usual counter-narrative that the Muslims of Kashmir are brutally oppressed by the Indian state and deserve the support of the UN and the world community.

Then came the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) festival and the Israeli head of the jury, Nadav Lapid, became the saviour for the “liberal” media. Lapid stubbornly insisted on his right to make political comments. He kept calling the movie “vulgar propaganda”. He could have criticised the movie on parameters of the film making, but rather he choose to make the politically correct statement for the “liberal” media.

Propaganda means that reality is twisted to influence opinions. The reality was not twisted in the movie,

on the contrary. It was exemplarily truthful to reality.

So why did the IFFI jury chair call it propaganda? That he read out his statement, it is clear that it was a planned move. However, when *The Kashmir Files* producer Vivek Agnihotri challenged him to show any one scene in the film that seems to be propaganda and he will quit film-making, Lapid kept on parroting his earlier statement.

Does it mean that truth cannot be shown any longer? Incidentally, Hindus never get this velvet-glove treatment. After Nirbhaya was gangraped, the whole world condemned the ‘patriarchal Hindu culture which results in rapes’.

Or remember the rape of a nun in Kolkata? The Church immediately suspected “Hindu fundamentalists” — wrongly, as it turned out. Was there an apology?

Why this unequal treatment? The reason may be that it all is part of the culture wars. When the narrative of the oppressed Muslims in Kashmir got a dent due to the movie, a remedy popped up in the form of Nadav Lapid's comment: When the jury of the most prestigious Indian film festival considers the Kashmir Files as vulgar propaganda, the movie all of a sudden looks bad. People would feel they were fooled. “Oh, it was only propaganda to defame Muslims. How bad of those mean Hindus,” would be the natural reaction of people who are not well informed, and sadly the majority of people are not well informed.

This may be the reason why

Lapid sticks to his unreasonable comments so fiercely, in spite of the Israeli ambassador reprimanding him and expressing sorry for the lie peddled by his fellow countryman.

The sides are uneven. India is the only surviving ancient culture. All others, like Incas, Mayas, Aztecs, Greeks, Egypt, Mesopotamia or China, have been destroyed either by Christianity, Islam or Communism in relatively short time.

Yet Indian culture still stands and the fight against it has been on since many centuries. Big parts of Greater India have fallen, and life is painful for the few remaining Hindus there.

But why is there so much effort to get rid of the Hindu culture? Moreover, it is a culture which has contributed immensely to world civilisation in many fields, which however is hardly acknowledged. Even today, after all the loot and destruction, India still has some 40 million manuscripts according to Bibek Debroy. Further, the ancient temples hold incredible mysteries.

The reason may be that the Vedic insights about our true nature are a danger for the powers-that-be. They would lose the power to control people by dictating what is the truth and demanding blind belief in unverifiable dogmas, if people came to know about their divine essence.

The Hindu tradition encourages a genuine enquiry into truth. Hints are given, for example in the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads. “Ayam Atma Brahma”, means the consciousness in you (Atman) is the same as in the one great Brahman, similarly as the water in a wave is the

same as the water in the ocean. The wave is not the ocean, but the essence is the same in all waves and all are encompassed by the ocean, and when the wave loses its form, nothing of substance is lost.

When in the 18th century, German philosophers read translations of the Upanishads, they praised Vedic knowledge to the sky, and compared it negatively with their own religious tradition. Ever since, the Church lost power, even though it staunchly maligns Hinduism. I, for example, heard already in primary school about “untouchables” in Hinduism. Yet I came to know about the horrific Jewish holocaust by our own German people only in my teens.

The opposition to the Hindu side is fierce. Hindus are maliciously called all kinds of names - extremists, fascists, rapists, even terrorists, or cow-piss drinkers, often by persons who have no idea what Hindu Dharma is all about.

Yet, Hindus have become more awakened about their Dharma — which was in a subtle way portrayed as inferior to the Abrahamic religions — that is most plural in nature and believes in various facets of truth. And many Hindus have now become vocal and proud about it. This is not appreciated by those who want to eliminate the last surviving ancient Dharma that considers the whole world as one family: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

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