

Centre to take all measures to contain food prices: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre will pull all stops to ensure prices of essential food items from onion to tomatoes to pulses do not spike particularly during the elections, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said as he cited the Modi government's track record of controlling rates within days of any temporary hike.

He highlighted that the government has spent in the last few years about Rs 28,000 crore to the price stabilisation fund to support the effort to fight against food inflation. "We will continue to be there with our sisters and mothers and make sure that we do not give stress...We are pro-actively on the job to make sure that we respect our Nari- Shakti and respect that they need to get a better household budget," Goyal asserted.



some countries of the developed world were showing 40-year high inflation, India was a bright spot in the subject of inflation," he said.

spikes beyond a point. If we saw any product going expensive, very often for reasons beyond our control, we acted immediately," he said.

To provide relief to the common man, Goyal highlighted that the Centre has introduced Bharat Chana daal at Rs 60 per kg; Bharat Atta (wheat flour) at Rs 27.50 per kg and Bharat rice at Rs 29 per kg for sale in the open market.



Open access solar capacity addition at record 3.2 GW in 2023: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India added a record 3.2 gigawatt of open access solar capacity during 2023, posting a 6.66 per cent rise supported by factors, including reduced module cost, according to a report.

solar and other clean energy sources, Raj Prabhu, CEO of Mercom Capital Group, said. "The potential cost savings for businesses are hard to ignore, especially as solar costs continue to decrease while retail electricity prices rise.



Office space demand will remain healthy this year: Report

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Office space demand in India's six major cities will remain healthy this year as domestic and foreign firms are expected to lease 50-55 million square feet area to expand their businesses, according to a FICCI-Colliers report.

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As the world looks to double the data centre industry size to about USD 8 trillion, India has an opportunity to leapfrog into accelerated computing as it has no legacy infrastructure, a senior official of GPU major NVIDIA said on Friday.

India can leapfrog to accelerated computing as it has no legacy: Vishal

(cabinet decision) is a signature to that fact," Dhupar said. The Cabinet has approved the India AI Mission with an outlay of Rs 10,372 crore for five years to encourage AI development in the country.



speed compared to CPU-based servers. "It makes more sense to go accelerated computing because the world is about a data centre and not about chip, not about a system, node or interconnect.

factories to translate what you nation's sensitivities, nation's culture, the way we think, all this will get codified into it and the nation will benefit from accelerated compute," Dhupar said.

language barriers that restrict growth of businesses. He said there is a need to develop AI models around Indic languages that will help address language barrier and expedite the growth of businesses.

First cargo of ONGC crude oil from KG basin block reaches Mangalore refinery

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The first cargo of ONGC's newly explored crude oil from KG basin deep-sea block was received at Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) on Saturday, the refinery said in a statement.



expected to reach 45,000 barrels of oil per day of crude oil and 10 million standard cubic metres per day of natural gas," the statement said.

India, EFTA to sign trade pact; services sector, investments to boost

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and four-nation European bloc EFTA will sign a free trade agreement on Sunday, which is likely to help promote investments and exports of key domestic services sectors such as IT, audio-visual, and movement of skilled professionals, an official said.

linked incentive scheme) are expected to figure in the agreement. Items such as soya, dairy and sensitive agricultural products would be kept in the exclusion list, meaning no duty concessions would be provided in the agreement for these items.



benefit from the agreement. "India's agricultural exports are minimal and unlikely to increase significantly due to strict quality standards and non-tariff barriers," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

jewellery, shops and boats, machinery, certain types of textiles and apparels. Switzerland is the largest source of gold imports for India, with about 41 per cent share during April-October this fiscal, followed by the UAE (about 13 per cent) and South Africa (about 10 per cent).

BUSINESS BRIEF

TRUST GIVES 100 HOMES TO POOR FAMILIES
PALAKKAD (KERALA): Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust, established by realty firm Sobha Group founder PNC Menon, on Saturday handed over 100 homes free of cost to women-led underprivileged families.

RAHUL JOHRI RESIGNS FROM ZEE ENTERTAINMENT
New Delhi: Zee Entertainment Enterprise Ltd on Saturday announced the resignation of Rahul Johri and changes in the revenue vertical of the broadcast business implemented by its MD & CEO Punit Goenka.

NCLT denies interim relief to IFFCO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Company Law Tribunal has directed Swan Energy-IFFCO joint venture Triumph Offshore to hold a board meeting before April 4 to discuss issues raised by minority shareholder IFFCO regarding feasibility and viability of offering services to operate vessels.

onshore gas distribution terminal business. The joint venture was formed to set up a floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU). FSRU is a floating vessel having tanks for LNG storage. SEL has a 51 per cent stake and IFFCO owns 49 per cent in Triumph Offshore.



"The Respondent No 1 (Triumph) is directed to convene a board meeting before the next hearing and discuss the issues raised regarding the feasibility and viability of offering services to operate vessels and the inclusion of applicants in the committees as per Memorandum of Association," the NCLT said in its latest order.

member NCLT bench on Thursday directed the fertiliser maker to file a rejoinder within 7 days over it. NCLT also directed listing the matter on April 4 for further arguments.



International Women Day celebrated

New Delhi: Sycoriaan Matrimonial Services Limited, a leading matchmaking platform, celebrated International Women's Day in Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi.

“My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God’s side, for God is always right”
— Abraham Lincoln



MODI'S LEADERSHIP

PATH TO RENEWAL

KK SRIVASTAVA delves into Jungian psychology’s influence on Modi’s leadership, unveiling its role in societal renewal and global impact for a prosperous future

Democracy is a psychological institution as much as it is a political, social, economic, or cultural one. It necessitates the assimilation of human psychology, and one way to comply with this requirement is to delve into the past, particularly the past of the country in question. There are two classes of people for whom meeting this requirement is mandatory: first, political leaders. For any leader, the past serves as a valuable teacher; understanding it provides clarity regarding their vision and mission, enabling them to handle collective human psychology efficiently and effectively for the greater welfare of all. Second, writers. Let me begin with a writer who speaks of India: “India is old and India continues.” This sentiment is expressed in the book *“India: A Wounded Civilization”*, a title that reflects the anguish of a young writer — VS Naipaul’s mind.

One might recall the TV serial “Ek Din Ek Jeevan”, hosted by the eminent media personality Tavleen Singh, in which she used to converse with well-known personalities. In one of these programmes, VS Naipaul, when confronted with a parting question from her, “What is it about India that draws you?” said, “Well, I suppose my religion is... is... being Indian. But that’s my background, and I just have to explore it in various ways...” Furthermore, in 2004, when he was a Nobel laureate, Naipaul visited the Bharatiya Janata Party headquarters in Delhi, and people saw in this visit a symbol of ideological moorings.

Much more amplification about his enquiry into India, i.e., “the residue of old history” as he calls it in his novel *“Magic Seeds”*, is available in some of his indispensable books. In *“Literary Occasions: A collection of Naipaul’s essays”*, he reiterates, “We were an immigrant Asian community in a small plantation island in the New World. To me, India seemed very far away, mythical, but we were still full of the instincts of people of the Gangetic plain... The Ramayana was the essential Hindu story... and even with the divine machinery, the matter was very human... the epic was like a moral education for all of us.”

Naipaul’s ancestors left India in the late eighteenth century, and he was born almost five decades later, in Trinidad in 1932. He visited India for the first time in 1962, roughly eighty years after his forefathers left the country. He did not have a personal, direct memory of his religion and culture as they existed in India. Naipaul continues in *“Literary Occasions”*, “The two Indias were separate. The political India, of the freedom movement, had its great names... The other, more personal India was quite hidden; it vanished when memories faded. It wasn’t an India we could read about... It was to this personal India... that I went when the time came.”

But Naipaul was aware of the limitations that lay beneath the unconscious place of human memories. So, he admits in another novel, *A Way in the World*, “I can give you that historical bird’s-eye view. But I cannot really explain the mystery of inheritance... We can go back and back, forever; we go back all of us to the very beginning; in our blood and bone and brain, we carry the memories of thousands of beings... We cannot understand all the traits we have inherited. Sometimes we can be strangers to ourselves.”

What could be the explicable reasons for Naipaul’s pursuit of India, his culture, and religion? To answer this question, let me turn to Carl Gustav Jung, one of the most significant psychiatrists of the last century, and some of his concepts: “the collective unconscious”, “inner self-experience”, “wholeness”, and “shadow”.

Out of the two layers of the mind — conscious and unconscious — Jung splits the unconscious into the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The personal unconscious implies contents that were previously conscious but have become dormant, forgotten, or repressed. On the contrary, the collective unconscious is home to all accumulated historical, collective memories, and experiences of humanity. It refers to the pattern of deep unconscious instincts held collectively by human beings, which are retained in what Jung calls archetypes. Archetypes connote ancestral, inherited experiences that are collectively registered in the human brain, manifesting as the collective unconscious. Jung believed that in addition to one’s personal unconscious, each individual also has a collective unconsciousness. Naipaul’s repeated return to his country had deep roots in his personal and collective unconscious. When he talks about “the instincts of people of the Gangetic plain” or “We cannot understand all the traits we have inherited”, instincts here refer to the Jungian collective unconscious.”

Jung believes that the collective unconscious plays an enormous role in both personal and cultural growth. He says a person’s destiny is “the result of the collaboration between the conscious and the unconscious”. Individually, access to the collective unconscious leads to personal growth and the integration of various aspects of the self. As a group, the collective unconscious influences the development of

culture, symbols, and rituals. By understanding and exploring the collective unconscious, individuals and societies gain insights into their own past, identities, and the broader human experience. The collective unconscious influences every aspect of our lives, especially the emotional ones.

While Jung talks about “inner self-experience”, he stipulates that everything within the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, necessitating the integration of the collective unconscious, which implies taking cognisance of the world and adapting to it. Individuals achieve “wholeness” when things repressed within the collective unconscious become available to the conscious self. Full development of the self is not attained by individuals who live out their lives in the safe confines of luxury. Only those who achieve selfhood attain wholeness and fulfillment.

Let us, in the light of Jungian literature, dwell upon the relationship between democracy, leadership, and people’s hidden strengths.

Carl Jung, underscoring the value psychological factors have in a genuinely functioning democracy, writes in his book, *“Essays on Contemporary Events”*, “True democracy is a highly psychological institution which takes account of human nature as it is and makes allowances for the necessity of conflict within its own national boundaries.” Jung also speaks of the “shadow side of the self”. In the shadow, there are many undeveloped strengths. Jung says, “Most of the shadow is solid gold.” And he adds, “It is surely better to know your worst enemy is right there in your own heart.” This concept has been utilised by theorists dealing with models of leadership, leading to the concept of integral leadership, which can cope with issues amid complexity. An integral leader has a larger vision of the welfare of all, including global issues. Servant Leadership is a vital requirement for such leadership, where the leader becomes a servant of the whole. This leads me to the arena of leadership, particularly in the context of India.

Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi considers himself a “Pradhan Sevak”, whose visionary qualities have enabled the creation of platforms for synergistic and systematic solutions to emerge in various areas: be it economic, social, cultural, motivational, or international. This includes the abolition of Article 370, handling issues in the northeast region, tackling the menace of black money, focusing on investment strategies, reaching out to marginalised strata of society, digitisation, managing the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath, and equally importantly, awakening old cultural ethos and values.

Prime Minister Modi has realised that the enemy is not only external but also within us. The best leaders are endowed with the capability to confront the unacknowledged or semi-acknowledged aspects of the collective unconscious and address them effectively. Such leaders are best suited to lead the transformation of historically inherited, complex problems like the ones mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

Undoubtedly, Prime Minister Modi is such a leader. When Jung asserts, “Most of the shadow is solid gold,” he suggests that the rejected material bequeathed to the shadow is a strength we possess, but we neither know we have it nor do we accept it. When a leader like Narendra Modi, through his creative leadership, enables people to harvest the shadow, he helps them reclaim those disowned, forgotten strengths. He enables people to achieve Jungian ‘wholeness.’ This is enormously empowering, as people free and develop additional gifts and strengths sequestered within the collective unconscious. Not only has Prime Minister Modi gained insight into the collective unconscious of people, but he has also managed the collective outpouring with charismatic competencies. When Jung asks, “Where are the superior minds capable of reflection today?”, he essentially searches for great leaders capable of successfully establishing a “collaboration between the conscious and the unconscious.” This also activates catharsis, which serves as an antidote. I think of the following example.

In the very first episode of the programme “Mann Ki Baat”, after saying, “We have forgotten ourselves. We have become hopeless,” Prime Minister Narendra Modi began a voyage into the collective unconscious by recounting what Swami Vivekananda used to say, “Once, a lioness with her two cubs spotted a flock of sheep. She chased the flock with one cub accompanying her and the other left behind. The cub left behind was reared by a mother sheep. Growing up among the sheep, he started speaking the language of sheep and adapted to their ways of life. When the fully grown cub reunited with his brother, who had been left behind, he was shocked to hear him speak like a sheep. ‘What are



IN THE INTRICATE TAPESTRY OF LEADERSHIP, PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI EMERGES AS A MASTER WEAVER, SKILFULLY INTERTWINING JUNGIAN PSYCHOLOGY WITH POLITICAL PROWESS. AS HE NAVIGATES THE LABYRINTH OF INDIA’S COMPLEX HISTORY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY, MODI’S LEADERSHIP BECOMES A BEACON OF HOPE, ILLUMINATING THE PATH TOWARDS COLLECTIVE RENEWAL AND GLOBAL INFLUENCE

you doing, brother? You are a lion,” he said. “But the brother left behind refused to believe, ‘No, I am a sheep; I speak like a sheep. I was brought up by them.’ The lion took his brother to a well, and both of them saw their reflection in the water. As soon as the lion saw the similarity of their faces, his self-esteem awakened, and he realised his true nature.” Having narrated this, the Prime Minister said, “My fellow countrymen, we, the 125 crore Indians, have tremendous strength and capabilities. We need to understand ourselves, carry our self-respect, and move forward in life to be successful, which will make our country a winning and successful nation.”

This is how Prime Minister Modi’s “superior mind, capable of reflection,” began the exploration into the collective unconscious, thereby stirring, through such motivating speeches, a mass movement. In the first episode itself, glimpses of addressing the collective unconscious and catharsis are noticed, both intended to bring about positive change in individuals’ and collective lives. Such leadership has the effect of integrating compensatory moves of the unconscious into consciousness in an individual. This integration of unconscious contents by individuals leads to a greater understanding and knowledge of self and society. This is a very important psychological contribution of Prime Minister Modi to the strengthening of Indian democracy and making India’s contribution to world affairs unique. Now, India’s voice at the international level is not

only heard but also respected. Last but not least, let me briefly address the restoration of cultural issues.

Let me turn to yet another highly celebrated book of Jung: *The Undiscovered Self*, where he explains his vision about the relationship between religion and the unconscious thus, “...the unconscious is the only accessible source of religious experience. This is certainly not to say that what we call unconscious is identical with god or is set up in his place. It is a medium from which the religious experience seems to flow.” The Jungian view has relevance in the context of what ensued after independence in 1947.

Somnath temple was renovated, and Hindus were overwhelmed with a sense of pride. History was badly in need of correction, and the renovation of Somnath temple introduced this correction. Similar discussions to rebuild the Ram temple at Ayodhya could have taken place, and historical wrongs corrected. But then politics assumed a different colour. The policy of appeasement became fashionable. Instances like the removal of the idol of Lord Ram or the halting of the rath train in Bihar or further ordering of police firing on car sevaks, in which many were killed, deeply wounded the collective unconscious of Hindus. The idea of *“India: A Wounded Civilization”* had sunk deep into the collective unconscious. Hindus deserve full praise and honour for their magnanimous and accommodating attitude in the face of adversaries and the ignominy caused to them due to appeasement policies. Addressing

collective agony began when Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in 2014, and his unceasing meditation on historical ironies (for example, Article 370), in any field, has singularly contributed to not only dismantling what went wrong earlier but also timely correction of many such wrongs.

Restoring cultural heritage to the country has been one of the most important contributions of Prime Minister Modi. The construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya after five centuries of struggle and suffering, along with the Pran Pratishtha ceremony of the Ram Temple, is a moment of catharsis not only for Hindus but also for all right-thinking individuals. Catharsis has served as a cure, relieving people of the psychological burden of accumulated agony and anguish. India is now a psychologically much more mature country, as people have unwavering confidence in their leader Narendra Modi; they feel they are in safe hands, and thus they are psychologically much more secure and evolved.

The best way to conclude this article is to reproduce some lines from Narendra Modi’s poem “Dawn of Wonder” from his book of poems “A Journey”:

*Now there is no story of sorrow or grief,
No mourning, no more to torment.
The storm has gone far away,
And amid the sky’s huge spread,
Thorny crises forever banished,
As dazzling hopes are born and set free.
A brave dawn, time for glee.
We keep the faith of ‘Ram’ in our hearts,
There is no occasion for melancholy.
A brave dawn, a time to be free.*

These lyrical musings constitute a sure guarantee from Prime Minister Narendra Modi for more prosperous and brighter times ahead, not only for India but also for the world. It is not just India; even the globe requires Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister after the 2024 national elections.

(The writer is former Additional Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General. He is a poet, writer and columnist. He writes for *The Pioneer*, *The Daily Guardian* and *Brazilian Literary Magazine SIBILA*. Views expressed here are his personal views)

Grim outlook for Russia-Ukraine conflict

Russia's invasion of Ukraine completed two years last week even as the world is witnessing it silently. This conflict is affecting not only Europe and Eurasia but the entire world. However, there is no sign of hope for now.

If recent history is the correct guide, one must remember that Russia's assault on Ukraine began a decade ago when Russia occupied Crimea, the southern peninsula of Ukraine, in 2014. Initially, when the conflict began, the Russian operation was a reconnaissance in force, preceded by the rapid destruction of Ukrainian forces and their armed installations.

However, neither Putin nor Zelenskyy could gauge that this war would last so long. Many, like US General Mark Milley, prophesied that Ukraine might fall within three days, but for the past two years, the country has survived and fought bravely against the advancing Russian Army.

Now the question arises: can NATO and the US help Ukraine win the war against Russia? So far, NATO has scrambled to pull out all its resources to give a tough fight to Russia, though there are differences among its own members.

All member states have already offered their weapons, expert support, money, and other supplies to Kiev to fight Moscow. On the other hand, Putin stands alone, though many countries are supporting Russia in stealth. So far, Russia has been punished with the most severe economic sanctions ever imposed on a major world power after the Second World War.

By now, Russia has been completely excluded from major global financial transactions. Moreover, about 222 billion pounds of its central bank assets have already been frozen. At the same time, Russia has also imposed sanctions and restrictions on many Western agencies and high-profile personalities.

According to estimates from the International Monetary



Fund, Russia's GDP has plummeted by 7 per cent compared to the pre-war days. Some experts on Russian politics suggest that after 35 years since the fall of the historic Berlin Wall, one of the remnants of the Cold War in Europe, Russia is facing an economic crisis that may push the erstwhile superpower into an unprecedented situation worse than its neighbours, like Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Hungary. Only Putin and his inner circle know how they are managing the current crisis. Despite presenting a united front against Moscow, NATO and the US remain divided — or rather, they are wavering together — on the issue of Ukraine's entry into the security bloc. This has complicated their complete financial and military support for this battered country to date. Currently, the European Union has voted for a \$54 billion multi-year assistance package to Ukraine, and individual support from powerful members like the

UK, France, and Germany is assured to Zelenskyy. However, opinion in the US Congress is divided on the country's overseas engagement, especially in wars, conflicts, and other sensitive missions. Thus, a \$60 billion package for Ukraine has been stalled in Congress. It is well-understood that US security agencies and experts are now largely focusing their attention on the Israel-Hamas war, Taiwan, and its continued border row with Mexico, through which millions of migrants cross over to the country from poor and disadvantaged countries in Central and South America.

Another problem diverting the attention of major Ukraine backers, especially the US, from the current onslaught is the ongoing Israel-Hamas war that started on October 7, 2023. The US is seriously engaged in this conflict in West Asia. The manner in which Israel is advancing and destroying Palestinian territories and

civilians in the name of rooting out Hamas militants is shocking. Even Washington is appalled by the civilian casualties that have occurred so far. However, the Israeli government, under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, shows no signs of relenting, as it is determined to vanquish Hamas and its firepower.

This situation is disturbing and is causing more unrest and civilian casualties in all Palestinian territories. Consequently, this crisis is making it increasingly difficult for Biden to focus more on Putin and his advances in Ukraine. The recent Munich Security Conference (MSC), a yearly gathering of politicians, diplomats, military brass, and intelligence chiefs in Germany, was alerted by the faltering advances of Kiev and the tactical gains made by Moscow. With the withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from the eastern city of Avdiivka, NATO and its allies are quickly considering all alternatives to prevent

aggressive Russian military action on the battlefield. Meanwhile, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg warned that Europe can't deter Russia without US help.

He said, "I welcome all efforts by Canada and European allies, but the most important single decision is a decision of the US to agree to a package of support, because of the magnitude and the military capabilities of the US. We are dependent on the US...it is vital."

This is a trying time as the US and some major global powers like India are all approaching their national elections. Most importantly, the chances of Donald Trump returning to the White House for a second term are causing mounting disquiet among NATO members.

Because Trump, with all his rhetoric, "Make America Great Again," and a possible review of overseas funding to many top global agencies including NATO, might be an unimaginable disaster for Ukraine and its allies in Europe.

The battle between the two neighbours is still raging, with no end in sight. Neither Zelenskyy nor Putin is blinking, even though they may be sending signals for negotiation; the demands and conditions set by both sides are not acceptable to either. The bottom line is clear—both Ukraine and Russia want to continue the chaos at the cost of their own people and resources!

Moscow's wall of aggression may only fall when the US and its NATO allies join the war. This is a near-impossible task for now because everyone wants to avoid a large-scale military confrontation with Russia. The result of such aggression would be disastrous and would impact both sides.

By the end of March last year, after completing one year of the Ukraine offensive, Putin met with his high Security Council. He told the Council that Russia has a "unique historical mission," and his elite and powerful policymakers were well aware of this mission.

The Kremlin then adopted a new "foreign policy doctrine" that identified the US as the "main source of threat to Russian security". This war has given Putin enough opportunity to gather a wide spectrum of Russian people against the West, particularly targeting America.

This week, the Kremlin warned that a Russia-NATO conflict would be inevitable if European members of the organisation start sending their troops to the Ukrainian battlefield.

At the beginning of this week, French President Emmanuel Macron opened the door for European nations to send their forces to Ukraine, though there was no consensus on the issue so far. At the moment, the European allies of Ukraine are only in favour of delivering more munitions to the war-ravaged nation, but the UK Ministry of Defence has clearly stated that it has no plans to send its troops to Ukraine, a similar stance expressed by Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, and finally by

Stoltenberg as well.

This indeed is a great relief for the entire region, as such steps would immediately trigger a big war on the continent.

Russia's tactics, strategy, and action since the beginning of the war have undergone several changes. During these two years of war, Moscow has replaced its generals, Defence Ministers, and ground commanders both to spring more surprise actions, stay in the course for the long haul, and finally for bringing home the image of war heroes who have been on the frontline.

Putin is sharp, action-oriented, and aggressive. His goal is to reclaim the glory of the Russian Empire. But this war, by now, is largely marked by attrition. Both sides are looking for an immediate solution to end the war, but the way they are advancing is making any peace deal near impossible.

Today, the real concern in Europe is that the continent is once again militarised like never before. The Trans-Atlantic security framework, NATO, is not facing any potential threat for now. Rather, it is emboldened by the joining of two new members to the network, Finland and Sweden, which has extended NATO's border with Russia.

What is worrying is that the EU and NATO are solely dependent on the security guarantee of the US. Otherwise, they are vulnerable to Russian aggression. This is an advantage for Putin, but this time around, Ukraine and Europe have once again come together against Russia.

It is a bad time. Trouble is just beginning. The Kremlin needs to understand that there is a limit to war and violence in Ukraine. Putin cannot take over the whole of Ukraine even if he wants to. Crimes and atrocities committed by the armed forces from both sides must come to an end. It is time to talk and practice peace!

(The writer is currently President of the Global Research Foundation)

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MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

Congress faces insurmountable challenges

Kharge's critique of Modi's personal guarantee for welfare scheme implementation is baseless. While taxpayers money can be misused, Modi's assurance ensures their proper use and delivery to deserving recipients, safeguarding against fraud and ensuring effective utilisation



BK SINGH

Pre-poll surveys suggest that despite winning the Karnataka Assembly election handsomely, the Congress party is on the back foot regarding their prospects in the forthcoming Lok Sabha poll. Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra took a six-day break on February 25 after reaching Agra in Uttar Pradesh. He resumed it after his return from Cambridge and has been continuing towards the western part of the country, with the journey set to conclude in Mumbai. The Yatra has already covered the northeastern States, Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, where Rahul addressed supporters, making personal attacks on PM Modi, questioning him about the state of the economy, unemployment, inflation, spreading hate, and undermining democratic institutions.

Besides the JMM and the RJD supporting the Yatra in Jharkhand and Bihar, the only other INDIA Bloc member who joined it was the SP's Akhilesh Yadav, albeit only at Agra during its last leg of the Uttar Pradesh tour. Rahul took another day off from the Yatra and participated in the INDIA Bloc rally at Patna, where RJD leaders again targeted PM Modi.

Karnataka organised the "Constitution and National Unity Convention 2024" in

Bengaluru on February 24-25. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah invited academician Nitasha Kaul, a faculty member at the University of Westminster, United Kingdom, as a delegate for the convention. She is known for her anti-India propaganda. Kaul has roots in India and is an OCI cardholder. Of course, the Government of India had issued a preventive lookout circular against her. Her pro-separatist and anti-India role is evident from her written testimony to the US House of Representatives committee two months after the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. She called the Indian Parliament's action undemocratic for the people of Kashmir. In her addresses and writings, she refers to it as "Indian-administered Kashmir". Moreover, she justifies terrorism there as an armed struggle for freedom and consistently denies the genocide of Kashmiri pundits. Pakistan's ISI has constantly amplified her statements and writings and used them against India. She was rightfully deported from Bengaluru airport.

The denial of entry to an Indian-origin professor at the airport has triggered a political slugfest. The Congress has criticised it, citing concerns over individuals' rights and the autonomy of the state. They

have further questioned the state of democracy in India, respect for constitutional values, and freedom of speech. In contrast, the BJP criticised Congress's move to invite an anti-India propagandist for the convention and further supporting sympathisers of the "tukde tukde" gang. I leave it to the readers to judge whether we should waste the State's funds and invite pro-separatist supporters for any convention anywhere in India.

The convention was attended by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, among others. While speaking at the valedictory function, Kharge attacked the BJP and PM Modi, saying that there are efforts to amend the Constitution to suit the saffron party. He added that people should stand together and fight it out during the Lok Sabha election, and also warned that if the people do not fight it, we will soon see a dictatorial regime.

"In public, Modi speaks of protecting the constitution and its spirit, but his government uses agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to target opposition voices," Kharge said. Karnataka CM also urged the people to defeat BJP in forthcoming elections, lest the constitution, social justice, and equality in society would be compromised.

The convention was not held

to save the Constitution but was an election campaign for the Lok Sabha 2024 polls for the INDIA Bloc. The bloc is no longer united, as the Janata Dal (United) has already moved out of it and joined the NDA. The TMC is refusing to share seats with other constituents of the INDIA Bloc; the AAP and the Congress have not announced seat sharing for 13 seats in Punjab. When constituents of the bloc are in disarray and pre-poll surveys suggest a massive mandate in favour of the BJP-led NDA, the Congress has to use all tactics and spread false narratives against a government in office for ten years. The pro-incumbency wave in favour of the ruling party has made the Opposition rattled and hide behind such meaningless conventions.

Why is there pro-incumbency? India is the fastest-growing developing economy, and post-COVID, amid the Russian invasion in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war, the country stands as the only bright spot in the world economy. Under the ten years of BJP rule, we have progressed from being part of the "fragile five" and the 11th largest economy to becoming the 5th largest. Modi's guarantee is that we will rise to the third largest economy in his third term. To compare this with the Opposition's vision, it should

be noted that the UPA's Finance Minister in 2013-14 had projected that we would reach this position in a 30-year period, i.e., by 2044. Civil and digital infrastructures have flourished during the NDA's ten-year tenure, showing greater speed and scale compared to the UPA's decade in power. This has undoubtedly contributed to better economic growth. The use of digital infrastructure has facilitated social connectivity and put an end to the era of leakages from government funds intended for beneficiaries.

When there was a need to develop telecom infrastructure and boost the economy, 2G and 3G scams were perpetrated. Similarly, when efforts were made to modernise sports infrastructure for the country, the Commonwealth Games scam was orchestrated. And when we aimed to strengthen defense infrastructure, submarine and helicopter scams occurred. Members of the INDIA Bloc are decrying the actions of the ED and CBI, labelling them as vendetta politics, while turning a blind eye to large cash seizures, breakdowns of cash counting machines, and compelling evidence pointing to scams such as the liquor scandal in Delhi, the Mahadev App scam in Chhattisgarh, teachers' recruitment in West Bengal,

and the land-for-job scam of the RJD. Modi is fulfilling his duty by holding those who have looted the country accountable.

Our progress in creating infrastructure for the transition to renewable energy is advancing at a pace faster than what was committed to in the Paris Climate Accord of 2015. Additionally, when considering the electrification of the entire country, it must be acknowledged that reaching remote villages poses significant challenges, particularly in extending transmission lines to every household. While we may have completed about 90 per cent of the electrification job before 2014, the remaining 10 per cent presents the most formidable obstacles. Nevertheless, the government has now successfully electrified all villages and households across the nation. Moreover, without any discrimination based on caste, creed, or religion, the government is steadfast in its commitment to providing piped water to all citizens.

Similarly, initiatives such as the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, which offers health coverage of up to ₹5 lakh annually per family, and the Kisan Samman Yojana, providing ₹6000 in cash support annually to each of the 11.68 crore families in the country, exemplify the government's

dedication to uplifting marginalised and deprived communities. Other schemes include providing free rations to 800 million beneficiaries for the next five years and constructing four crore houses for impoverished families. These efforts underscore the government's commitment to social justice and equality.

Farmers, as providers of food (Annadata), are being supported by government schemes aimed at transforming them into energy providers (Urjadata) through the installation of solar panels on farmlands, as well as into fertilizer providers (Urvarakdata) through the composting of biodegradable waste. If this is not social justice and equality, then what is?

Congress chief Kharge's criticism regarding how Modi can personally guarantee the implementation of welfare schemes funded by taxpayers' money is unwarranted. Taxpayers' money could indeed be misappropriated for fraudulent activities, but Modi's guarantee ensures the proper utilisation of funds, the implementation of welfare schemes, and their delivery to deserving families.

(The writer is a retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force) Karnataka)



YOUR WEEK AHEAD



MADHU KOTIYA

ARIES March 21-April 19

Currently, life is progressing favorably, with a significant aspiration coming true, enhancing harmony at home. Celebrate this joyfully, but be aware of a tendency to guard against deep emotions to avoid pain. Midweek brings a chance for closer family bonds and a period ripe with blessings, urging you to embrace fulfillment and peace. Address any family discord to rebuild harmony. By week's end, expect a meaningful reward, prompting spiritual and charitable actions. Your generosity not only secures your well-being but also allows you to share your abundance with others, fostering a cycle of giving and contentment. This period is also a reminder to open your heart to the beauty of simple moments and the strength found in unity, guiding you towards a path of emotional and spiritual growth.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Mauve
Lucky day Monday

LEO July 23-Aug 22

Life is set for a rollercoaster of changes, swapping good phases with challenging ones and vice versa. Financial or business worries may surface, prompting self-doubt, yet you'll find solace in optimism, awaiting outcomes with patience. Expect shifts in work, home, and relationships, marking a period of significant upheaval yet offering a chance for renewal. Embrace these transitions to foster personal freedom and a positive mental state. The urge to connect with others or succeed in new ventures will be strong. Your actions and decisions will critically influence your path forward. With your vibrant, trustworthy nature, and a mix of ambition and humor, you navigate through life's ups and downs, making a memorable impact in both professional and social arenas.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Turquoise
Lucky day Thursday

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

You embody strength, mastering your emotions to unlock nearly limitless possibilities. This week, you navigate a delicate balance between authority and feelings, learning that true control comes from inner discipline. Your ability to steer your own course sets a strong example, making you a reliable source of guidance for those around you. Your insights are valued because you maintain a clear perspective, allowing logic to guide your decisions without being swayed by emotions. As the week closes, you find yourself ignited by a sudden burst of inspiration, leading you towards innovative pursuits. This creative awakening may coincide with the arrival of uplifting news or a joyful family addition, marking the beginning of an exciting chapter.

Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Thursday

TAURUS April 20-May 20

The week unfolds with the challenge of harmonizing various demands, fostering teamwork, and advancing with a balanced approach. Trust in your capabilities and tackle obstacles head-on, equipped with everything necessary to achieve your objectives. Reflect on past experiences of managing multiple responsibilities—friends, work, family, finances, and personal well-being—and recall how you've navigated the timing of action versus pause. Midweek, stay vigilant against misleading pursuits. Be cautious of potential safety hazards at home or work, including the risk of fire, or the possibility of an accident. It's a time for careful inspection and prevention. By the week's close, a sense of fulfillment and contentment emerges. Expect significant financial gains, with investments or business endeavors yielding rewarding outcomes, marking a period of both material and personal achievement.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Wednesday

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

You are on the path to achieving lasting financial stability and material prosperity, with an improvement in your financial situation on the horizon. Unexpected gains, possibly through gifts or inheritance, alongside significant personal commitments, are likely. It's essential to adopt a practical approach during this time. The key to success lies in dedication and hard work, rather than indulging in daydreams. To enhance focus and productivity, consider incorporating practices like yoga and meditation into your routine, and be open to adopting new perspectives. As the week concludes, you'll find yourself in a position of leadership and authority, guiding others with confidence and a steady hand. Your ability to lead by example, offer guidance, and ensure stability will make you a respected figure, passing on your knowledge to future generations.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Coral
Lucky day Sunday

CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

A significant shift is on the horizon, presenting opportunities for favorable outcomes in legal matters or decisions. This period marks a fresh start, allowing you to move forward free from previous obligations and concerns. It's an invitation to leave past challenges behind and embrace a new beginning with optimism. The trials and competitions that once seemed daunting are now behind you, paving the way for a moment of triumph and relief. Recognition for your dedication and effort may soon arrive, affirming your path and efforts. This phase reassures you that your direction has been correct, encouraging you to proceed with confidence and enthusiasm. Your ambitions and diligent work are nearing fruition, promising acknowledgment and celebration from those around you.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Saturday

GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week, individuals are filled with desires for prosperity, aesthetic satisfaction, tranquility, a harmonious household, and the well-being of their offspring, aspiring to attain these goals simultaneously. In pursuit of these ambitions, there's a risk of overlooking various obligations, highlighting the importance of finding equilibrium in your endeavors. It's crucial to ground your aspirations in reality, prioritize practically, and take actionable steps towards making your visions tangible. Adopting a pragmatic stance and utilizing available resources efficiently is advised against getting lost in wishful thinking. As the week progresses, opportunities for financial growth and professional advancement present themselves, including promising business connections, projects, or employment prospects that are likely to be advantageous. However, by the week's end, there's a tendency to prioritize the needs of others over your own, potentially leading to feelings of self-sacrifice.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Marigold
Lucky day Saturday

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week heralds a period brimming with opportunities for significant achievements in all facets of life. You find yourself in a robust state, both physically and financially, demonstrating exceptional proficiency in your professional realm. Your comprehensive understanding and application of your career skills are recognized, leading to the assignment of a pivotal project that promises skill enhancement and personal growth. Your determination and resolve are at their peak, enabling you to tackle ambitious goals with ease. This is an opportune time for strengthening friendships, as your confidence and clarity dispel any doubts. Your dedication and resilience serve as a powerful inspiration to your children, positioning you as a commendable role model. They admire your achievements and are guided by the strength of your character, showing you respect and admiration throughout the week.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Lavender
Lucky day Saturday

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Your ability to communicate effectively captivates everyone, leveraging your eloquence to make an impact. With a foundation of wisdom and confidence, you harness these attributes positively. The moment has arrived to transform your dreams into tangible goals and your ideas into concrete actions, turning aspirations into real-world successes. Should you encounter setbacks, this phase offers a chance to pivot those experiences into victories. Unexpected opportunities for new beginnings might surface, such as forming new connections, welcoming new life, or discovering deeper joy in existing relationships, highlighting moments of emotional renewal. Your empathetic and caring nature naturally seeks harmony, and while your creative and artistic inclinations flourish, they also bring about fluctuating moods, tied to your deep connection with the emotional and spiritual realms.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Mustard
Lucky day Friday

CANCER June 21-July 22

You are entering a period marked by deepening connections, where feelings of closeness and affection are set to flourish. Embrace this time by listening to your intuition and aligning with your inner desires. This phase is ripe for experiencing the joy of new or unconditional love, whether it manifests as a significant romantic development, a commitment, or the joy of a new beginning. Alongside these developments, you may find yourself engaging more passionately in competitive activities, striving for personal bests. However, challenges in the form of disagreements or intense rivalries could surface, urging the need for compromise and understanding. Striving for equilibrium is key—acknowledge differing perspectives and work towards unity and peace. In doing so, you'll find that harmony can be achieved, even in the face of adversity.

Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Tuesday

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, you find yourself in a position of both financial gain and emotional satisfaction. Your innate ability to offer support and healing makes you a beacon of comfort for those around you. Your pure heart and appealing essence draw others towards you, enhanced by your deep understanding of human nature and motivations. There's an emerging focus on sharing your riches, embracing both tangible assets and intangible wisdom, with future generations. This sharing could manifest through various means, emphasizing the lasting impact of wisdom and guidance. As the week concludes, you experience a profound joy stemming from deep, meaningful connections. The bonds you share with others deepen, promising stability and mutual growth. This period marks a celebration of love and the strengthening of partnerships, highlighting the importance of emotional foundations.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Lavender
Lucky day Friday

PISCES Feb 19-March 20

You're entering a period of genuine joy and fulfillment, having successfully navigated through previous challenges and rivalries. This phase marks the celebration of your achievements, with your efforts gaining widespread appreciation. Whether the acknowledgment is grand or understated, it will undoubtedly be present. This moment also serves as an affirmation that you're moving in the correct direction, though the journey ahead remains extensive. Embark on this path with optimism and assurance. It's also a time to practice financial prudence, ensuring that your expenditures are well-considered and aligned with your long-term objectives. Additionally, embrace the opportunity for personal growth and learning that comes with this new chapter. Let your experiences sharpen your wisdom and guide your decisions, paving the way for continued success and stability.

Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour White
Lucky day Tuesday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Lord Shiva – Existence personified

We have just celebrated Mahashivratri this week. For someone not keen about following a specific belief system, the occasion, however, raises a question. Vedanta conceptualises God as formless and attribute-less. Yet we offer prayers to a form-god such as Shiva. Are they not contraindicative? And why is Shiva one of the most sought after? There is no conflict. True, Vedanta hypothesises existence of a formless and attribute-less eternal reality, which spontaneously manifested into a world of names and forms with all its enormity and diversity. It, however, could not have been one stroke event. The process excited by the primal source progressively evolved – step by step – into a very intricate but an orderly system. The system as such includes the primal source, manifest world, and lot of intervening dynamisms propelled by play and interplay of primal energies further aided by differentiated energies evolving in the process. It is important to be aware of such a complex system in place to figure out where and how we fit into this exhaustive game plan. We may then be able to sail through such an intricate living order, known for throwing fresh challenges every moment along with opportunities it unfolds. The irony, however, is that given the varying levels of intelligence, and lingual diversity, it is difficult to bring such intricate knowledge within mental comprehension of all. And mere academic awareness would not be enough. The idea needs to be reflected again and again to get firmly registered in the inner realms of mind. Following which, it will spontaneously reflect in our usual conduct. Our Rishis and Munis found an easy answer in symbolic imageries that can find immediate appeal and emotional connect. To lay importance to these imageries, they were accorded the status of deity (form-God). Meditation with focus on these deities helps inculcate values identified with them. It is in this spirit that each deity carries educative inputs offering lessons in different aspects of human conduct. Hence the relevance of offering prayer to form-Gods. Of all the deities, the concept underlying Lord Shiva is the most profound. For, it not simply offers a look at the unified picture of the world process,



covering both the seen and unseen sides. Also, it offers lesson in how to relate to the world around. See how beautifully, vital truths relating to worldly existence has been portrayed through two imageries of Lord Shiva. First, Lord Shiva seated in meditative posture on Mount Kailasha, and second with his entourage. Read together, it comes out that Lord Shiva is 'Existence

Personified'. For, the pictures put together cover the primal source, the manifest, intervening dynamisms between the two, and the conduct rules of life on earth plane. In the first imagery Lord Shiva is shown with lunar crescent over His head. He is perceived almost bare bodied, with just the private part covered with tiger skin. His poison fed blue neck is encircled by venomous snake. River Ganges flows down His hair locks. He is perceived holding a trident in one arm, Damru (double headed hand drum) in another, rosary in the third, and the 4th palm in blessing mode. Lord Shiva's meditative posture symbolises reflecting within on the run of the life cycle. As the rosary keeps going round and round, so does life cycle keeps moving in succession. Different beads of the rosary imply varied existences on the run. The blessing mode implies that all existences draw succour out of his inexhaustible potential. Mount Kailasha, said to be the place of abode of Lord Shiva, is one of the high peaks in the Himalayan range to which lot of perennial rivers are sourced. Contextually, however, only the river Ganges alone emerging out of Shiva's hairlock has been named for the sake of understanding. Being one of the highest peaks, it is closest to the cosmic world, simultaneously having all round view of life down below. Lord Shiva, with lunar crescent over the head, read together with his place of abode, the Himalayan range having in store perennial rivers, is symbolic of eternity, infinity. The presence of lunar crescent symbolizes the convergence of all nature driven forces. For, Moon's luminosity is drawn out of the Sun, as well as all the planets and stars up above in the sky. But before all light drawn thus, flows down the line, Moon does its own stamping by turning them into an amiable form, to facilitate creation of form-existences on earth plane. The obvious implication is that Moon symbolises convergence of all nature driven energy streams.

The issue continues.....

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