

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



His govt lays out agenda, Uddhav says 'still with Hindutva, can't be separated from me'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 1

ADDRESSING A special session of the Maharashtra Assembly Sunday, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said he would never abandon the ideology of Hindutva, and that Hindutva could not be separated from him. Days after the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress thrashed out a Common Minimum Programme (CMP) with a "pre-amble" mentioning "secular", Thackeray said, "I am still with the ideology of Hindutva which cannot be separated from me..."

Our Hindutva was there yesterday, it is still with us today and it will remain tomorrow as well. But my Hindutva includes keeping my word. My Hindutva is not of saying Jai Shri Ram and not keeping my word."

The Sena has accused former ally BJP of not keeping its "promise" of sharing the CM post between them, reportedly made before the elections.

Addressing the session in Marathi, Maharashtra Governor B S Koshiyari said the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was concerned about unemployment and would enact a law soon to ensure 80 per cent



CM Uddhav Thackeray, Speaker Nana Patole and Governor Koshiyari at the Vidhan Bhavan in Mumbai Sunday. Express

reservation in private sector jobs for "sons of the soil". The government would also come out with a white paper on the financial status of the state, as well as provide compensation to farmers.

The Governor's speech, to the joint sitting of the state legislature, indicated that the broad agenda of the Sena-NCP-Congress government would be in line with the CMP finalised by the three parties.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

FIRST HIKE IN 5 YEARS

Call, data rates to be dearer by up to 40 pc from tomorrow

Seen as the return of 'sensibility' in industry stressed due to competition

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

SETTING THE stage for a shake-up in the telecom sector, the country's three top service providers Sunday announced tariff hikes for the first time in around five years. While Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea Limited announced rate hikes on pre-paid packages by up to 42 per cent beginning December 3, Reliance Jio said it is introducing "all-in-one" or AIO plans, which will see tariffs marked up to 40 per cent higher than previous plans and will be effective from December 6.

While the move may impact over 900 million customers served by the three carriers, analysts hailed the move and termed it as "the return of pragmatism and sensibility" within the industry. Competition within the sector had forced the carriers to operate on low tariffs that were putting their bottomlines under stress and had rendered the business model unsustainable.

Though Jio did not provide more details about its new plans, it claimed that it was "determined to strengthen the telecom sector" and that it will take measures, including "appropriate increase" in tariffs, in a manner "that does not adversely impact data consumption or

EXPLAINED

Expected hike was 10-20%

THE HIKEs in tariffs would enable the telecom companies enough elbow room to get out of the financial mess that they are currently in. While the hikes are higher than the 10-20% expected by the market, these could help Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel significantly improve their bottomlines. Pre-paid packages of the two telcos cover almost 95% of their customers and around 75% of their revenues.

growth in digital adoption" and sustains investments.

Airtel raised prices across its plans. For example its bundled pre-paid plans offering unlimited calling and data, that were earlier priced at Rs 249 (28 days validity) and Rs 448 (82 days validity), will now cost Rs 298 and

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AAREY CASES TO BE DROPPED PAGE 12

Editor of MP paper that carried reports on honey trap case raided

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, DECEMBER 1

DAYS AFTER *Sanjha Lokswami*, an Indore-based evening, carried reports and photographs regarding the 'honey trap' case and uploaded at least one video and transcripts of audio conversations on its website, police raided its office and other establishments owned by its editor Jitendra Soni.

The raids, including on Soni's home, a hotel, a restaurant and a night club, started late on Friday and continued for hours. While Soni is missing, his son Amit, also an accused, has been detained.

After publishing stories on a former BJP minister and a powerful bureaucrat in the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government, the evening had in the past three days carried reports on the honey trap case complainant, Harbhajan Singh, and announced that more articles would follow, suggesting it was in possession of other videos of politicians and bureaucrats.

In September, based on Singh's complaint, the Indore police had arrested five women and a driver in what came to be known as the honey trap case.

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Tremors within Chhattisgarh govt over encounter probe report: 'Cabinet misled'

DIPANKAR GHOSE
RAIPUR, DECEMBER 1

THE REPORT of the Justice V K Agarwal enquiry commission, which found no evidence to support claims by security forces that 17 people killed in an alleged encounter in Bijapur in 2012 were Maoists, will be tabled in the Chhattisgarh Assembly Monday — a day after its key findings were first published in *The Sunday Express*.

Sources told *The Indian Express* that the state government decided to table the report after a hurried Cabinet meeting



Key findings published in *The Sunday Express*

late Saturday. During the meeting, sources said, at least two ministers claimed the Cabinet had been "misled" earlier about

the contents of the report. Contrary to claims made by security forces about the alleged encounter in Sarkeguda in June

2012, the one-member judicial commission found that there was no firing by the villagers; the villagers were assaulted and killed from close quarters; security forces may have fired "in panic"; and one of the victims was shot in the morning, several hours after the encounter at night.

Sources in the Congress, which came to power in the state late last year, said the report was first raised Saturday during a meeting of ministers and MLAs to discuss the urban body polls scheduled in December.

"It was pointed out that since such a damning report has since

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THE GOVERNANCE PAGE



LIGHTER SCHOOL BAGS IN RAJASTHAN
PAGE 15

Ganguly says player approached by bookies in top T20 tournament

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 1

AT LEAST one player involved in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy was approached by bookies during the latest edition of the premier national T20 tournament, according to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly.

The former Indian captain also said that two teams of the Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL) have been suspended



BCCI met Sunday. PTI MORE REPORTS, PAGE 21

and the Karnataka Premier League (KPL) is on hold. Ganguly was speaking on the sidelines of the BCCI's AGM about the steps being taken to curb alleged spot-fixing in cricket tournaments.

The Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy final between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu was held on Sunday and some of India's top cricketers, including R Ashwin, Shikhar Dhawan, K L Rahul and Manish Pandey, are among those who participated in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

States with poor health systems show lowest average PMJAY claims

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

AN ANALYSIS of utilisation patterns of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana — the NDA government's flagship health programme — shows wide variation in average claims of states. States with already functioning secondary/tertiary care programmes, such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, show 2-2.5 times the average spend per patient compared to traditional health laggards like Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand.

PMJAY data till July 9 shows that of the total Rs 3,482.9 crore given out to settle claims so far,

TOP STATES BY PMJAY CLAIM AMOUNT

| State | Average claim size |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Andhra Pradesh | ₹28,709 |
| Maharashtra | ₹25,333 |
| Tamil Nadu | ₹21,141 |
| Gujarat | ₹17,090 |
| Madhya Pradesh | ₹13,355 |

**Till July 9, 2019*

the highest share was of Gujarat, with Rs 748.1 crore, for 4,37,774 hospitalisations. Chhattisgarh came second with Rs 449 crore of claims and 5,69,456 hospitalisations, and Tamil Nadu third

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Tiger's 1,300-km walk over six months strains population theory

VIVEK DESHPANDE
NAGPUR, DECEMBER 1

IN WHAT may be the longest trek by a tiger in India, a sub-adult of the species reached Dnyanganga Wildlife Sanctuary in Buldhana district of Maharashtra on Sunday, walking 1,300 km over six months, from Tipeswar Wildlife Sanctuary in Yavatmal district.

What intrigues conservationists is that T1C1 appears to not have stopped anywhere for more than four-five days, and that too only when he made a kill, mostly of cattle. Maharashtra Chief Wildlife Warden Nitin Kakodkar said the tiger didn't travel in a linear fashion



T1C1 travelled between two Maharashtra sanctuaries. File

but moved back and forth several times, over farmlands, water bodies and highways, thus adding hundreds of kilometres to its journey.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Jailed for sedition after Pulwama, PM scholarship student struggles to put his life back together

Out on bail after 7 months, he is trying to get college suspension lifted, scholarship back

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

RITIKA CHOPRA
BENGALURU, DECEMBER 1

FEBRUARY 14, 2019, is an important marker in Haris Manzoor's life.

In the nine months since that day, Manzoor has become a changed man. He is religious and prays five times a day. He rarely steps out of his home. And, unusually for a 20-year-old, he's no longer on any social networking sites.

"My faith has taught me the patience to cope with what happened," says Manzoor, a Kashmiri nursing student in Bengaluru from Dahama village in Kupwara district and a recipient of the Prime Minister's Special Scholarship Scheme.



Haris Manzoor's college in Bengaluru. Abhishek N Chinnappa

a classmate over the incident. After spending seven months in Bengaluru's Central Jail,

Manzoor was released on bail on September 20, and is struggling to get his life back.

He remains suspended from Spurthy College of Nursing, and his PM's scholarship has stopped. And, in between writing to the government to restore his scholarship and pleading with the college to revoke his suspension and marking attendance at a police station, Manzoor attends court hearings to prove he isn't guilty of sedition.

"When we filed a complaint with the police, we didn't know this would become a case of sedition," says Babu Dharmaraja, principal of Spurthy College of Nursing. Manzoor was studying in the second year of the BSc (Nursing) programme, and Mushtaq (22) was pursuing a

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0-50 Good

ANAND VIHAR

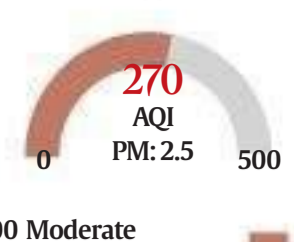
Poor



51-100 Satisfactory

SIRIFORT

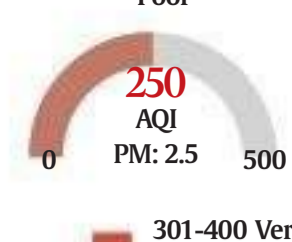
Poor



101-200 Moderate

SHADIPUR

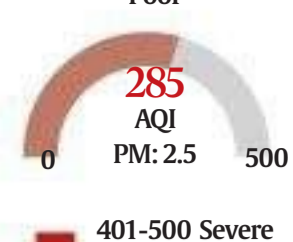
Poor



201-300 Poor

DWARKA-SECTOR 8

Poor



301-400 Very poor

401-500 Severe

DDA to enlist agencies for geo-tagging houses

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

THE DELHI Development Authority (DDA) will empanel agencies for fixing geo-coordinates of houses — a necessary step for residents of unauthorised colonies to seek ownership rights of their properties.

Additionally, residents will also have to upload detailed illustrations of architectural components in homes and ownership documents.

The DDA will launch a portal on December 16 to start the process of PM-UDAY (Unauthorised Colonies in Delhi Awas Adhikar Yojana) to confer ownership rights on residents of over 1,700 unauthorised colonies.

DDA officials said the agency will arrange help desks at various places — details of which shall be displayed on the portal and at the Suvridha Kendra — where an applicant can produce original documents for verification.

The agency has finished demarcating boundaries of 625 colonies and maps of over 200 such settlements are already up on its web portal for RWAs to file their objections and suggestions.

A senior DDA official said that the DDA will create another web portal and empanel agencies for fixing geo-coordinates of plots. The agency plans to hand over ownership certificates to 100-150 people in December.



The agency has finished demarcating boundaries of 625 colonies. *Archive*

Flung off scooter, three teenagers crash into pole near Delhi Gate, die of injuries

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

THREE TEENAGERS who were riding a scooter allegedly without helmets died after the two-wheeler rammed the pavement and they crashed into a pole near Delhi Gate, suffering severe head injuries. Police said the incident took place around 11.30 pm Saturday, when they were returning from a wedding near Turkman Gate.

The victims were identified as a 15-year-old, his 14-year-old cousin and their 17-year-old friend. Police recovered the damaged scooter from the spot and suspect it was being driven by the 15-year-old, whose grandfather owned it.

According to his family, it was purchased in July.

Police believe the boys may have been speeding and lost control of the vehicle, causing it to skid and hit the footpath. The impact was such that they were thrown off the vehicle and hit a pole with a hoarding.

The scooter was found around 10 feet away from the bodies, said police.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central district) Mandeep



(Above) The spot near Delhi Gate where the accident took place; (right) the scooter rammed the pavement and the victims were thrown off the vehicle. *Prem Nath Pandey*

Singh Randhawa said a bystander informed them about the incident around 11.34 pm.

"A PCR van reached the spot within four minutes. By then, the boys had been taken to Lok Nayak Hospital by bystanders... they were declared dead by doctors. We called a district team to conduct an investigation and a team from the Forensic Science Lab in Rohini to collect blood samples from the pole and road. We believe the boys were speeding."

On Sunday, families of the victims sat outside the mortuary at Lok Nayak Hospital waiting for

the post-mortem examination.

The 15-year-old's father, said, "We were at the wedding when he told us he wanted to go out with his friends. He left around 10.45 pm and said he would be back within half an hour. When I called him at 11.30, he didn't pick up. I got scared and called his cousin, whose phone was also switched off. Later, around midnight, I received a call about the incident. I rushed to the hospital and saw the boys, bleeding from the head and nose. He was our only child."

The families claimed the



boys were chased by a police van because they didn't have helmets or a licence. "They would be speeding only if the police were chasing them. Some vehicle must have hit their scooter, causing the accident," alleged the 14-year-old's mother.

Police said they have checked CCTV footage from the area and didn't find any police vehicle. The FSL team also said the scooter wasn't hit by any other

vehicle.

The cousins studied in a private school in Nizamuddin and lived in Turkman Gate. Their friend was studying at a madrasa near Delhi Gate. "He wanted to become a maulana and was learning the Quran Sharif," said his mother.

A case has been registered against unknown persons under IPC section 279 and 304A at IP Estate police station, police said.

Delhi wants mercy plea of Dec 16 rape convict rejected

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

THE DELHI government Sunday recommended rejecting the mercy petition of Vinay Sharma (25), one of the four death row convicts in the December 16, 2012, gangrape case, saying there was no room for any review in light of the "extreme brutality" involved.

On October 29, Tihar Jail authorities had given seven days to the four convicts to file mercy petitions, if they desire. Out of the four, only Sharma filed a petition, which was forwarded to the Delhi government before President Ram Nath Kovind.

As per internal file notings, Delhi Home Minister Satyendar Jain wrote, "This is the most heinous crime of extreme brutality committed by the appellant. This is the case where exemplary punishment should be given to deter others from committing such atrocious crimes. There is no merit in mercy petition, strongly recommended for rejection."

The file will now be placed before L-G Anil Bajaj and, thereafter, be sent to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and the President.

Earlier, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Satya Gopal had also turned down the plea, terming the 2012 incident as the "fittest case to reject mercy petition".



The convict and three others were sentenced to death in the December 16, 2012, gangrape case. *Archive*

On December 16, 2012, a 23-year-old woman was gangraped and assaulted on a moving bus in South Delhi by six persons. She was airlifted to a Singapore hospital, where she died on December 29, 2012.

Accused Ram Singh hanged himself in jail while another, a juvenile, was convicted of rape and murder and given the maximum sentence of three years' imprisonment in a reform facility. The rest are lodged in Tihar.

Last week, the victim's mother had asked a Delhi court to execute the death sentence awarded to the four convicts.

The matter had come up for hearing before Additional Sessions Judge Satish Arora, after District Judge Yashwant Kumar transferred the case to him from a vacant fast track court following an application by the victim's mother.

4,500 ad-hoc teachers left in lurch as DU principals' body defers their appointment, DUTA to protest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

THE DELHI University Principals Association's (DUPA) decision to put joining of ad-hoc teachers on hold has left 4,500 teachers in the lurch. The DU Teachers' Association (DUTA) has called for an indefinite strike over the issue, including boycotting evaluation and invigilation of exams, from December 4.

The decision comes in the backdrop of an August 28 letter

by DU's Assistant Registrar (Colleges). It said, "DU has adopted the UGC Regulations on Minimum Qualifications for Appointment of Teachers and Other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education, 2018", with the approval of Academic Council and Executive Council... Colleges are advised to fill up permanent vacancies at the earliest; till permanent appointments are made, colleges may appoint guest faculty, if required,

against new vacancies arising... in academic session 2019-20." On Saturday, Moti Lal Nehru College asked ad-hoc teachers to sign an undertaking which said, "I am well aware of the varsity instructions on contractual appointments in place of ad-hoc teachers. In case of any action of recovery of previous salary or non-release of further salary considering ad-hoc appointment, I will abide by the same. I shall not hold any college authority responsible for such action."

On November 19, Swami

Shraddhanand College issued an office memorandum, which "put on hold" the appointments of two assistant professors done in October-November. Their appointment and joining letters "stood withdrawn with retrospective effect".

Current and former EC members Sunday wrote to Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Tyagi pointing out ramifications of the decision, where one professor who was Dean of Faculty of Applied Sciences was also appointed as Director, South Campus, as an in-

terim measure, as well as that of Dean of College and Pro Vice-Chancellor.

"This is nothing but adhocism... How can one person justify all these positions?" wrote EC members V S Negi and Rajesh Gogna, and former EC member A K Bhagi.

DUTA president Rajib Ray had said, "We are anguished to see the August 28 letter is being interpreted by the DUPA to deny livelihood to 4,500 ad-hoc teachers who are already in service." Tyagi did not respond to calls and texts.

Flying as passenger, pilot takes charge of flight to deal with fog

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, DECEMBER 1

ON SATURDAY morning, a pilot travelling on a Pune-Delhi flight as a passenger stepped in to operate an IndiGo flight after the airline received a message that there was dense fog at the Delhi Airport. In such situations, only pilots with CAT IIIB qualifications are allowed to land. As the pilot assigned for the flight didn't have the requisite qualification, the airline approached the passenger.

The flight departed for Delhi at 9.10 am — a delay of about 100 minutes — and landed safely at IGI Airport.

"This morning, Delhi Airport had implemented low visibility procedure. All incoming aircraft

were expected to have Cat IIIB crew. On flight 6E-6571 (PNQ-DEL), the assigned Captain was not Cat 3B cleared.

"Rather than delay the flight so weather at Delhi could improve, another IndiGo Captain who was Cat 3B cleared was requested to operate this flight to avoid delay and inconvenience to passengers. All necessary approvals were taken before changing the flight crew," said IndiGo in a press statement released late Saturday.

According to sources at the Pune airport, the captain, who was returning to Delhi after flying a flight to Pune, went through the Breath Analyser Test and other set procedures. He also flew the plane minus the uniform.

Sources said the airline took

the step to avoid delay in departure of the flight and possible cancellations. The Captain on board was also provided an option to wait for one-two hours till another qualified pilot could be summoned.

As per news agency ANI, India's aviation watchdog, Directorate General of Civil Aviation, issued a statement saying it is aware of the matter and will look into it.

Airports located in the northern part of the country suffer from low visibility during winter and Indian airlines deploy CAT-IIIB trained pilots to operate flights during this time. CAT-IIIB refers to Category III B approach and landing, with no decision height lower than 50 feet (15m) and a runway visual range (RVR) less than 700.

Guard poses as IPS officer to harass women, held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, DECEMBER 1

A 38-YEAR-OLD security guard was arrested for allegedly posing as an IPS officer, offering women government jobs and harassing them by sending obscene content on their phones.

Police said the accused, Gauri Shankar, was caught after a woman filed a complaint against him in South Delhi. He was booked for sexual harassment and arrested from Gurgaon.

Police said Shankar used to work in a mobile shop in UP and retrieved data of several women customers. After he met with an accident, he moved to Delhi to work as a security guard.

DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said, "The woman claimed Shankar had been sending her offensive content, including texts and videos, for the last month."

Centre has stopped supply of onions: Sisodia

New Delhi: The Centre did not supply onion trucks to Delhi after November 24, Deputy CM Manish Sisodia said Sunday, demanding a guaranteed supply of 10 trucks to the capital everyday.

Sisodia alleged the Union government was "consciously creating a scarcity of onions" in the city. Retail price of onion has crossed Rs 100 in some pockets of the city.

On September 5, the Union Consumer Affairs Department told the Delhi government it has a stock of 56,000 metric tonnes of onions, which can be retailed by the state through mobile vends or fair price shops.

The Delhi government placed a requisition, and onions were sold through mobile vends. When prices stabilised, the mobile vans were discontinued. Later, prices soared again, and on November 22, the state demanded the resumption of 10 trucks from the Centre's buffer.

"We asked for provision of onions on a daily basis till December 9, 2019. But we received three to four trucks on av-



Sisodia demanded a supply of 10 trucks of onions to the capital every day. *Archive*

erage per day instead. The Delhi government has been prepared to sell 10 trucks of onions per day..." Sisodia said.

"We have teams and facilities in every constituency to sell onions at lower price. Unfortunately, the Centre stopped provision of onions... It shows it is trying to create an onion scarcity across the country, probably for the benefit of hoarders and other vested groups," he added.

The Union Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Ministry did not respond to the allegations till late night. **ENS**



Admission process to entry-level seats in private schools started last week, with thousands of parents vying for spots in the capital's most reputed institutions. Amid fierce competition and with each school tailoring its own criteria, new start-ups are trying to lend a hand to anxious parents. SUKRITA BARUAH reports

EVERY YEAR, starting late November and lasting over three months, the national capital begins buzzing with anxiety around the futures of lakhs of three-year-olds. In a city with well over 4,000 private, government and municipal corporation schools, the race to get a seat in nursery for a child in a reputed private school is competitive, frenetic and an altogether serious business.

And as is the case in metropolitan cities, where there's a problem, there are those offering a solution — in the form of start-ups. Over the last few years, a small economy has started to emerge around the process of getting children into school, with third parties seeing an opportunity in the trials of flustered parents.

Sanghamitra Pattanayak, a resident of South Delhi, recalled the long fretful process of trying to get her child admitted into nursery a few years ago. It involved her applying to 29 different schools; her child eventually got a seat in two.

"It took us a lot of time to understand the process and identify which schools to apply to. It involved sorting through so many, finding out about their fees, how far they are from home. My husband and I were both working at the time, and it was very difficult for us to get leaves to carry out the work. I took several half-day leaves over a period of 20 days just to complete the application process," she said.

Over the last few years, the application process has increasingly moved online, which can save parents a few trips to the schools. But many of the core problems remain.

There are 1,400-odd private schools in the city which are recognised by the Delhi government. In these, 25% of the entry-level seats are reserved for children from the economically weaker sections, disadvantaged groups and children with special needs.

Admission to these is a centralised, completely online process governed by the Delhi government, through a common form in which applicants list their school preferences. Selection of candidates to these seats is conducted through a centralised draw of lots process conducted by the education department.

Unlike this, admission to general seats in these schools is a completely decentralised process, conducted at the individual school level. Each school has its own admission form. To ensure the process is fair and objective, a 'points system' is followed. In this, schools are free to select a set of criteria — such as distance, applicant having a sibling in the school, or the applicant having a parent who is an alumni of the school among others — against which applicants will be allocated points.

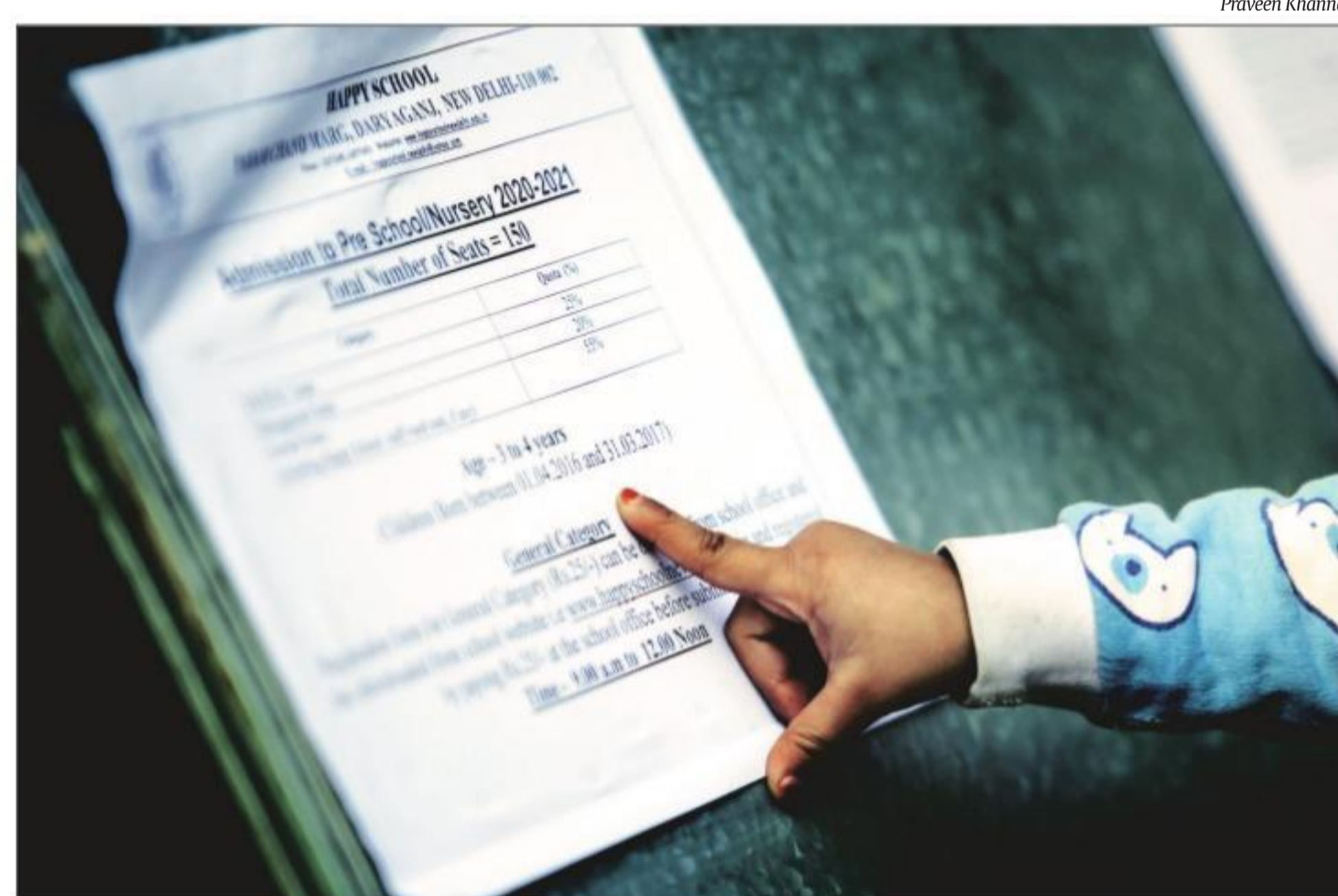
Parents find themselves having to apply to multiple schools because of the fear that their child will not get a seat in a single school, because, as Pattanayak's experience illustrates, the odds can be stacked against them.

However, this is not because of a dearth in the number of seats up for grabs. It is because parents are primarily interested in getting their children admitted to the more limited number of top- to mid-range schools in the city, and everyone finds themselves competing for seats in those.

For instance, a well-reputed school like Springdales School in Dhola Kuan has 67 seats at the entry-level available for open admissions. Principal Jyoti Bose estimates that the school gets over 3,000 applications against these seats — which gives a ratio of around 45 applicants against every seat.

"As multiple applicants get allotted the same number of points, we have to have at least one round of draw-of-lots every year and we have a long waiting list. It's a real pity for the parents. It's no wonder that they apply to so many schools even though there's only a handful of schools that they would ideally like to send their children to," she said.

The number is far less in a moderately



Praveen Khanna



Amit Mehra

Praveen Khanna

There are 1,400-odd private schools in the city which are recognised by the Delhi government. Each school has its own admission form

placed school like Lovely Public Senior Secondary School, Priyadarshini Vihar, which receives around three-four applicants per seat. Other smaller schools struggle to fill their seats.

The massive number of applications filled on behalf of each child, and the limited number of schools that are sought out, is what makes the admission process in Delhi an annual mega-event.

When Anupama Kapoor, a resident of Gurgaon, had a hard time trying to get her daughter admitted to a school in 2018, she began talking to her friends and found that they too found the process tedious and difficult. An IT professional, she began thinking of a way to make the process easier for other parents in the future, and set up Schoolato, a start-up that will begin its operations this admission season.

The model that Kapoor and her team — around 15 members, most of whom are mothers who have gone through the admission process themselves — is that of doing the running around for parents.

The process involves parents filling out a form created by the organisation with various details required by different schools; submitting documents like copies of Aadhaar card, birth certificates, medical certificates and photographs; and selecting which schools they would like to apply to.

"We do everything manually. We collect individual forms from the schools and fill them for parents, using the information that they provide to us in our common form. We

| KEY DATES | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| NOV 29: | Admission process begins |
| DEC 27: | Last date for submission of forms |
| JAN 24: | First list out |
| FEB 12: | Second list out |
| MAR 6: | Subsequent list (if any) |
| MAR 16: | Admission process closes |

upload scanned copies for them to verify, submit the forms manually in the schools, and upload the receipt for the parents to see. We are basically trying to help them save time," said Kapoor.

The cost of buying application forms from the schools is Rs 25, set by the Delhi government. In addition to that, Schoolato charges a fee of Rs 499 for every school that the parents apply to through them. Kapoor said that most parents who have reached out to them apply to at least 20.

One of the earlier players to enter this area was Ezyschooling, which began in the 2017 admission season. This was started by a student of Delhi Technological University (DTU), Mayank Jain, when he saw his brother trying to get his son admitted to school. His brother had applied to 20 schools, and his nephew eventually got a seat in just one.

Unlike Schoolato, Jain has developed a completely automated application process. The company developed a common online admission form and tied up with schools which agreed to accept that form for admis-

sions to choose this route. "Nursery admissions are seen as crucially important and a once-in-a-lifetime thing. I completely understand that parents might not want to entrust this to a third party and do it manually for every school to make sure that no stone is left unturned," she said.

The second challenge was getting schools on board for the online process. "We had tied up with around 25 schools that year. We found them not supportive of moving to a common process. If there are only a handful of schools that come on board, it can't be useful to parents. Then they can apply to just a couple of schools through the portal's common process, and will anyway have to apply to another 10 or so schools through the individual processes," she said.

Admission season is stressful not just for parents, but also for schools. With the scramble largely focused around the more established and well-known schools, there are many that don't get enough applications to fill all nursery seats.

Here, too, start-ups have found room to work with. Ria Gupta, a student of Sanskriti School, began her start-up, Staria, last year to offer admission across different grades, including nursery. Her start-up claims to 'guarantee' admission to anyone who reaches out, and instead of charging parents, they charge schools they have tied up with.

"We help parents identify the optimum school depending on fee and criteria which will determine their likelihood of getting a seat, such as distance. We identify schools which have not been able to fill as many seats as they'd like to and refer children to those," she said.

For instance, Kataria International School, located in Bhim Enclave in West Delhi's Vikas Nagar, finds itself struggling with applications.

"Our school is located in a very low-income area where families are not even able to pay Rs 200 per month as school fee, so they don't apply because we need to charge a monthly fee of around Rs 3,000 to pay our teachers. As we don't have a website for our school, parents in better off areas such as Vikaspuri and Janakpuri — which is where we need to attract applications from — perhaps are not aware of our school," said school chairperson R C Kataria.

That the needs of certain schools to seek these kinds of tie-ups can be contingent to how well they are able to fill their seats is reflected in the observations of the team at Ezyschooling, which said they do not yet have any tie-ups with schools in Central Delhi and very few in South.

"Most popular schools in Delhi will see long waiting lists but the most serious competition is limited only to a fraction of the total private schools. There are others which struggle to find applicants and students," Deputy Chief Minister and Education Minister Manish Sisodia had told *The Indian Express* last week.

Over the past 15 years, the city has tried several formulae for nursery admissions including a government-mandated points system where distance was to be given the highest weightage.

After a prolonged legal battle which reached the Supreme Court, private schools were given a free hand in deciding the points system, provided they do not flout the Right to Education Act and do not test kids or their parents before admissions.

"Across the world, distance is accepted as the main criteria to decide where a child studies. But since our public schooling system has largely failed to keep the middle class engaged, private schools have a free hand. The only solution to the nursery admission mess and anxiety is to improve the level of public schooling so that the middle class has viable options," said a senior Delhi government official, who did not want to be named.

POINT SYSTEM

| CRITERIA | POINTS |
|----------------------|-------------|
| DPS RK PURAM | |
| CRITERIA | |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD | |
| 0-6 km | 50 |
| 6.1-8 km | 40 |
| 8.1-15 km | 30 |
| 15.1-20 km | 20 |
| Sibling | 25 |
| Parent alumni | 10 for each |
| Girl child | 5 |

| CRITERIA | POINTS |
|---|--------|
| VASANT VALLEY SCHOOL | |
| CRITERIA | |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD | |
| 0-10 km | 30 |
| Above 10 km | 15 |
| Parent alumni | 5 each |
| Sibling | 20 |
| Staff child | 10 |
| ACHIEVEMENT IN SPORTS (of parents) | |
| State level | 2 |
| National level | 4 |
| International level | 6 |

OTHER CRITERIA include contribution in the area of social service, recognition in the area of arts; Original research/publication; awards received (of parents)

| CRITERIA | POINTS |
|--|--------|
| THE MOTHER'S INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL | |
| CRITERIA | |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD | |
| For areas specified in the website | 40 |
| Girl child | 10 |
| Sibling | 30 |
| Alumni | 20 |

| CRITERIA | POINTS |
|--|--------|
| SPRINDALES SCHOOL | |
| CRITERIA | |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD | |
| Living in areas specified in registration form | 39 |
| Not living in areas specified in the registration form | 29 |
| Sibling | 35 |
| ALUMNI | |
| Former students who have been in the school for 14 years (Nursery - Class XII) | 26 |
| Former students who have been in the school for 12 years (Nursery to Class X) | 16 |
| Students who joined in Class XI-XII (2 years) and have become members of the Old Springdaliens Association | 11 |

| CRITERIA | POINTS |
|--|--------|
| AHLCON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL | |
| CRITERIA | |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD | |
| 0-3 km | 45 |
| 3-6 km | 35 |
| Over 6 km | 25 |
| Sibling | 25 |
| Staff ward | 15 |
| Single parent | 10 |
| Parent alumni/ first child/ girl child | 5 |

| CRITERIA | POINTS |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| SARDAR PATEL VIDYALAYA | |
| CRITERIA | |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD | |
| 0-8 km | 40 |
| 8-10 km | 38 |
| 10-12 km | 30 |
| 12-14 km | 25 |
| 14-15 km | 20 |
| Over 15 km | 0 |
| First-born child | 10 |
| Parent alumni | 10 each |
| Sibling | 15 |

| CRITERIA | POINTS |
|---------------------------|--------|
| GYAN BHARTI SCHOOL | |
| CRITERIA | |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD | |
| 0-10 km | 10 |
| Above 10 km | 0 |
| Parent alumni | 30 |
| Sibling | 20 |

| CRITERIA | POINTS |
|--|--------|
| SANSKRITI SCHOOL (FOR THOSE IN NON-GOVT CATEGORY) | |
| CRITERIA | |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD | |
| 0-8 km | 30 |
| 8-10 km | 20 |
| 10-12 km | 10 |
| Above 12 km | 0 |
| Sibling | 25 |
| Parent alumni | 25 |

| CRITERIA | POINTS |
|---|--------|
| AIR FORCE BAL BHARTI SCHOOL | |
| CRITERIA | |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD | |
| Upto 5 km | 25 |
| 5-10 km | 20 |
| 10-15 km | 15 |
| Sibling | 20 |
| Parent alumni | 10 |
| Single parent | 10 |
| Single girl child | 10 |
| Children of ex-Air warriors, NC(E)s | 25 |
| Children of deceased air warriors/NC(E)s | 25 |
| Children of ex-Army/ ex-Navy personnel | 15 |
| Children of Ex-Air Force civilians | 15 |
| Children of IAF NPF employees | 15 |
| Children of deceased Ex-Army/ Ex-Navy personnel | 15 |
| Children of deceased AF civilian employee | 15 |

| CRITERIA | POINTS |
|---------------------------------------|--------|
| BLUEBELLS SCHOOL INTERNATIONAL | |
| CRITERIA | |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD | |
| Areas in bus route | 50 |
| Parent alumni | 20 |
| Staff ward | 10 |
| Sibling | 20 |



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Business case for governance

A balance can be found — between demands of shareholders and interests of society



VIKRAM S MEHTA

GOOD GOVERNANCE IS a chant heard in every boardroom and management discussion. The phrase has not been precisely defined. It is variously interpreted but common to all interpretations is the understanding that it means transparent, fair and ethical corporate behaviour, the full and accurate disclosure of financial and operational information and the adherence to the letter and spirit of the law. People start arguing when the somewhat nebulous concept of "social responsibility" is added to the chant. It then falls upon corporate management to define this phrase and to find a pathway that balances the demands of the shareholders for maximum dividends and capital appreciation with the pressures to contribute to societal welfare. The search for this pathway is what has prompted this article.

The benefits of "good governance", however imprecisely defined, has been quantifiably established. The "Reputation Institute", an NGO, estimates that intangibles like reputation make up approximately 81 per cent of a company's value and a "strong reputation yields 2.5 times better stock market performance" compared to the overall market. One could debate the methodologies behind these calculations but the central message is indubitable. Well-governed companies have easier access to capital, they pay lower interest rates, secure better credit terms and attract the best and brightest of talent. Good governance is good business.

The message is further reinforced by the anecdotal evidence of the prohibitive costs of "poor governance". The whistleblower allegation of a breach in the disclosure of financial data by the management of Infosys is a case in point. The market cap of the company dropped by about Rs 50,000 crore in one trading session. The twists and turns of the IPO of the Saudi government-owned oil and gas company Aramco is another example. The Saudis had valued their company at around \$2 trillion. Their financial advisers, however, came back after testing the market with a valuation of \$1-1.2 trillion. They told the Saudis that the discount was, inter alia, because of perceptions of opacity in the

Saudi governance structure. The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia was not pleased and decided to pull back the IPO from the European and US markets.

Few question the business case for good governance. But many wonder how exactly it can be delivered. How, it is asked, can management be motivated to balance the interests of the shareholder with that of society when the incentive structure is skewed disproportionately in favour of short-term financial performance? The chant of "good governance" is fundamentally hypocritical, it is suggested. And will remain so until a process is engendered to create a balanced incentive structure that motivates the generation of financial returns through societal welfare than the current structure that regards one as a trade off for the other.

There is no one size fits all response to this conundrum but a tale from 6,000 years ago may offer guideposts for stakeholders of governance to initiate such a process. Gilgamesh was the king of the Sumerian town of Uruk in 4,200 BC. He was a courageous leader and a builder. He had created, by all accounts, a remarkable city with wide boulevards, open spaces and excellent public facilities. He was, however, an unabashed tyrant. No one was safe from his roving eyes. He treated the citizens of Uruk as his personal chattel and trampled on their rights like a wild bull. In despair, the people appealed to Anu, the principal deity of the Sumerian pantheon. The goddess responded by creating an exact double of Gilgamesh. His name was Enkidu. He was Gilgamesh's equal in every respect — strength, vision and character. They fought and whilst Gilgamesh did eventually prevail, it was not before Enkidu had checked his worst excesses and secured his agreement to work together to restore peace and harmony to Uruk. Thereafter, the two cooperated and collaborated as partners.

In the context of corporate governance, this epic contains two messages. One, to get otherwise competing forces to work together, all parties must converge on the same page and have comparable powers and authority to check and balance each other into

collaboration and cooperation. And two, a new world ("peace in Uruk" or "balanced incentive" structures) cannot be created as an event. It is a process. All stakeholders must appreciate they are on a journey and they will reach their destination only if they learn to work together despite their differences.

These two messages should be internalised by the four divergent and often competing stakeholders that bear on corporate India. One, the management, which is the custodian of operational performance. It is driven, understandably, by the objectives of short-term financial metrics. Two, the independent directors (ID) who have a fiduciary obligation towards the minority shareholder as well as a strategic responsibility to facilitate long-term growth and profitability. Three, the regulator whose role is to prescribe the rules and procedures of governance and to enforce them through broad-based juridical authority. And finally, the government, which is the law maker and, more pertinently in the context of governance, the agency for bringing corporates into the developmental net.

Currently, each of these stakeholders chant the same mantra of "good governance" but they operate autonomously within their own spheres. There is no formal forum that brings them together. The management and the IDs do, of course, face each other at the quarterly board meetings, but the interface is constrained by the board agenda and time. The Gilgamesh solution would recommend that these spheres be perforated. It would posit that, squeezed between the demands of the shareholder, on one side, and the expectations of society on the other, there is a passageway that balances the interests of the shareholder and society. And that the four stakeholders should find this space and move into it as equal and collaborative partners. They will not find it easy given their differences but if they did so, they could eventually flip the current zero-sum dilemma of governance into a positive sum outcome of balanced incentives.

The writer is chairman and senior fellow, Brookings India

THOSE WHO QUESTION

Will government listen to Manmohan-Bajaj message, or read a conspiracy, create a spectre? Much depends on its response

On Saturday, one of India's most respected industrialists spoke about fear to power. Rahul Bajaj, at an awards function organised by *The Economic Times* in Mumbai, with ministers Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman and Piyush Goyal on stage, spoke of corporates afraid to criticise government, of an environment of impunity for phenomena like lynchings, of terror-accused Pragna Thakur's political journey to Parliament with the BJP's full backing and support. A day earlier, from another public stage, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had talked about how the precarious state of the economy is linked to the state of the society in which it operates, how a "toxic combination of deep distrust, pervasive fear" is "stifling economic activity and hence economic growth". Also on Friday, came news of the GDP growth rate for the second quarter of this financial year hitting a 26-quarter low. It is up to the Narendra Modi government now to join the dots — not to see another conspiracy in the three events, or to create another spectre to deflect and divert attention from them, but to acknowledge and respect their sobering message.

Even as they were strikingly similar in their burden, the difference of tone in the interventions of Bajaj and Singh was telling. Bajaj spoke with the self-conscious hesitancy and bravado of one breaking a taboo and a silence, rushing in where so many others visibly fear to tread. "Nobody from our industrialist friends will speak... I will say openly... we don't have the confidence that you will appreciate if we criticise you openly..." The fact is that in the hall full of distinguished industrialists in which he spoke, Bajaj stood up alone. The fact also is that if his peers and other prominent industrialists had echoed Bajaj's apprehensions in the last few years, articulated them publicly and to government, if they had, for instance, received news of the plunging GDP growth figures with a concern as audible as were their cheers for the government's corporate tax cut, his intervention on Saturday would not seem quite so extraordinary, or as courageous. Former PM Singh, on the other hand, spelt out the current predicament with an understated authority. His message was devoid of drama, but his warning was grave. He spoke of economic development stalling because of the "profound fear and distrust among our various economic participants", eroding public trust in independent institutions and of the "root cause of this" — "the government's policy doctrine that seems to suspect every industrialist, banker, policymaker, regulator, entrepreneur and citizen..." The Modi government seems to view everything and everyone through a tainted prism of suspicion... and it has positioned itself as some saviour, resorting to foolhardy moral policing... "The way out of the economic slump, the former PM cautioned, does not lie in more enlightened economic policy-making alone. It will need, also, the restoring of confidence and exuberance.

The government may, of course, dismiss Singh's words as the lament of the loser. But the extent of the economic downturn has already indicated that the strategy of delinking the political-electoral from the economic could be reaching its limits. Another message is now writ on the wall: To revive the economy, the BJP will have to review its social and political ethos and philosophy. It may well be that nothing less will do.

A TIME TO REBUILD

As Delhi and Colombo renew ties, they must proceed with wisdom, resist being pushed back to square one

AT THE end of his talks with the visiting Sri Lankan president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Prime Minister Narendra Modi affirmed that "the security and development of our two countries are inseparable. Therefore, it is natural that we should be aware of each other's safety and sensibilities." This proposition appears self-evident. Yet the reality of recent decades has been the intense discord between Delhi and Colombo, triggered by India's involvement in the prolonged civil war in Sri Lanka. India's support for Tamil insurgent groups in the early 1980s followed by a military intervention during 1987-90 and political pressure on the rights of the Tamil minority had convinced the Sinhala majority that Delhi was hostile to the island nation. India had grievances of its own — due to Colombo's steady strategic drift towards Beijing and its lack of progress on political reconciliation with the Tamil population after a decisive victory against the insurgency a decade ago.

Efforts in the last few years to resolve these contentions went nowhere, thanks to inter-cabinet battles in Colombo between the president and prime minister. The decisive mandate for Gotabaya in the recent elections has opened up space for a renewed effort at rebuilding bilateral relations. In Delhi, Gotabaya affirmed that Sri Lanka will do nothing to undermine India's security interests and promised that his government's engagement with China will be strictly commercial. India, in turn, has extended strong support to Gotabaya's plans to counter the resurgence of terrorism in Lanka and to the new president's ambitious economic goals.

But the Tamil question remains a ticking time bomb that could once again wreck bilateral relations. Modi said Gotabaya briefed him on his plans to address the concerns of the Tamil minority and expressed hope that the Lanka president will meet their aspirations. Gotabaya argues that talk of devolution has delivered little to the Tamils, but only angered the Sinhala majority. He says he would like to transcend Lanka's identity politics by producing meaningful change in the economic conditions of the Tamil population. For many in Chennai, this approach will be unacceptable. But Delhi surely knows that it cannot impose external solutions to Sri Lankan problems. Colombo knows that doing nothing for the Tamils will inevitably escalate Chennai's pressure on Delhi to intervene in Lanka's internal politics and push the two nations back to square one. There is only one way to manage this complex political interdependence — for Colombo to make visible progress on the Tamil condition and for Delhi to support indigenous solutions for Sri Lanka's political reconciliation.



AJITA BANERJEE

THE PASSAGE OF the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019, has caused great disappointment to the transgender community in India that had urged the Rajya Sabha to refer the Bill to a select committee.

The Bill failed to incorporate crucial recommendations of the Parliament Standing Committee and several depositions by the transgender and intersex community. According to the Bill, a transgender person "may make an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity indicating the gender as 'transgender'" and a revised certificate may be obtained "if a transgender person undergoes surgery to change gender either as a male or female". This is in direct violation of *NALSA v Union of India* that had affirmed the right to self-determination of gender as male, female or transgender without the mandate of any medical certificate or sex-reassignment surgery (SRS).

Also, despite including identities such as "gender queer" and "persons with intersex variations" in the definition of "transgender", the Bill has failed to incorporate the rights of such persons, putting them in danger of being excluded by a system which certifies people based on medical examination.

While the Bill seeks to prohibit discrimination, it does not explicitly define what constitutes as discrimination. It also fails to extend protection to transgender persons who might face sexual abuse as the Indian Penal Code recognises rape in strict terms of men and women as perpetrator and victim, re-

THE FIGHT FOR DIGNITY

Transgender Persons Bill has let down the community's long struggle for self respect

spectively. While the Bill makes "sexual abuse" punishable, it does not define the acts that constitute sexual offences, making it complicated for transgender persons to report such crimes.

The Bill also raises concerns around the government's motive behind "the rescue, protection and rehabilitation of transgender persons", which could potentially give rise to police crackdowns against transgender persons, especially sex workers. This clause might also grant impunity to the police to arbitrarily arrest transgender persons under the pretext of "rescuing" them, and, use provisions of anti-beggar laws whose vagueness allows for disproportionate violence against the most marginalised communities.

The Bill also raises concerns around the government's motive behind "the rescue, protection and rehabilitation of transgender persons", which could potentially give rise to police crackdown against transgender persons, especially sex workers. This clause might also grant impunity to the police to arbitrarily arrest transgender persons under the pretext of 'rescuing' them.

On the rights of transgender children, the Bill fails to include "gender non-conforming" children and "children with intersex variations". It falls short of addressing and penalising surgeries on infants born with intersex variations with the intention of "correcting" their bodies to fit the binary gender: Many parents subject their children to medical "conversion" therapies or "correction" procedures, including shock therapy, to make them "normal". Further, the Bill states, "no child shall be separated from parents or immediate family on the ground of being a transgender, except on an order of a competent court." This poses a potential threat to the safety and well being of the child as it could give the family the leeway to harass the child and exclude them from their prop-

erty. It also makes the courts the moral guardians for deciding the fate of the transgender persons by sending them to rehabilitation homes where they could face abuse at the hands of their peers or the staff. The Bill puts the young person in a conundrum — of choosing between the violence of the family and that of state rehabilitation centres.

Another major flaw of the Bill is that it does not provide for reservation in education and employment for transgender persons, going against the mandate in *NALSA*, which had clearly stated that the state must take measures "to treat them as socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and extend all kinds of reservation in cases of admission in educational institutions and for public appointments". The Bill does not tackle the question of realisation of civil rights — such as marriage, civil partnership, adoption and property rights, thereby continuing to deprive transgender persons of their fundamental rights and the constitutional guarantee provided by the Supreme Court in *NALSA*.

The Bill has made a mockery of transgender persons' lives and by passing it, Parliament has let down the community that fought for their rights for decades. But the transgender community is resolute in their will to continue the fight against this injustice that's been done to them.

The writer is a human rights activist and researcher based in New Delhi

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



DECEMBER 2, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

CONGRESS-I MANIFESTO THE CONGRESS-I ELECTION manifesto, which was released by Indira Gandhi in New Delhi, can be summed up in a single sentence that occurs in the manifesto: "The Indian National Congress-I is the only party and Mrs Cndira Gandhi is the only leader who can save the country, after its recent traumatic experience." To back up this thesis, the manifesto asserts that the experience of the last two-and-a-half years has clearly shown that only a stable and progressive government can fulfil the expectations of the masses and lift the country out of the chaos created by the Janata and the Lok Dal governments. The stable government envisaged in the mani-

festos would have a majority in Parliament. And it would have a "leadership that has been tested in times of internal and external upheavals and pressures".

ALLIANCE DISRUPTION THE LOK DAL-CONGRESS electoral alliance seemed on the brink of disruption with Lok Dal General Secretary Narendra Singh admitting that both parties will contest against each other in a number of seats. Singh said his party was trying to reach an accord on as many seats as possible but if differences persist, there would have to be "some friendly contests". Though he would not admit it, it was also learnt that the Lok Dal's differences

with the Congress were not confined to seat distribution alone. A reliable Lok Dal source admitted that there was disagreement over the manifesto also.

KOYA QUILTS KERALA CHIEF MINISTER Mohammed Koya called on Governor Jyothi Vencatachellum and tendered the resignation of his 51-day-old ministry. The governor accepted the resignation and requested Koya to continue in office till alternative arrangements were made. Koya, after submitting the resignation, said that the parties presently with him would jointly fight the Lok Sabha poll and state assembly elections likely to be held soon.

NCRB silence on farmer suicides: Reason given by govt fails against earlier data

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

THE UNION Ministry of Home Affairs told Parliament last week that the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) had done away with diversified data on farmer suicides in its latest report as many states reported the figure to be "nil", and hence recording reasons for the suicides was "untenable".

However, an analysis of previous NCRB data shows that states such as Bihar and West Bengal have never sent any data on farmer suicides. Still, the agency published the data with reasons for suicides.

The *Indian Express* had reported on November 9 that the latest NCRB report does not enlist reasons for farmer suicides. In its previous reports, the agency had listed reasons under categories such as farm distress, crop failure, loans, family problems, illness, etc.

Former NCRB officials have questioned the reason cited by the government not to classify farmer suicides data, as resulting from agrarian crisis or debt or personal reasons. "In the 2015 and 2016 reports too many states reported 'nil' farmer suicides. That does not mean the available data must not be categorised according to causes of suicides. If this argument was valid, farmer suicide

data itself should not be published," an ex-NCRB officer said.

The latest NCRB report, which compiles 'Accidental Deaths and Suicides' in 2016, shows that as many as nine states reported "nil" suicides by farmers — including Bihar, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Goa and Himachal Pradesh.

Of these, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttarakhand have consistently sent "zero" as the figure for "farmer/cultivator" suicides (including in 2014 and 2015). Doubts have been raised about this decision by the states earlier as well, with a large section of the population in Bihar and West Bengal engaged in agriculture. In previous reports, even

where loans were cited as reason for farmer suicide, these were sub-categorised as per the source of the money, such as banks, moneylenders and micro-finance institutions. The reports also recorded socio-economic status and landholding of each suicide victim.

This too was done away with this time.

On November 27, to a question by Rajya Sabha Congress MP Husain Dalwai on why such data had been withheld, MoS Home G Kishan Reddy had said in a written reply, "As informed by NCRB, many States/ Union Territories reported 'Nil' data on suicides by Farmers/ Cultivators and Agricultural laborers after

several validations, even while reporting suicides in other professions. Due to this limitation, national data on causes of suicide in farming sector is untenable and not published separately."

The government has refused to answer other questions too in Parliament recently on farmer suicides, with the Ministry of Agriculture saying only data till 2016 as published by the NCRB was available.

In contrast, in July 2018, in response to a question by an MP on "rising" farmer suicides, then agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh had released "provisional data" for 2016, more than a year before the data was actually published by NCRB.

AAREY PROTESTS

Uddhav issues orders to withdraw cases

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 1

CLOSE ON the heels of the announcement by Shiv Sena chief and Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray that "not a leaf will be cut in Aarey", the CM on Sunday said that he had ordered withdrawing the cases against green activists who had protested against the tree-cutting.

"Two days back, I ordered a halt on the Metro car shed in Aarey Colony. Some people had come there to protest against the tree-cutting and cases were filed against them. I have given orders to withdraw all the cases. So, there will be no cases against them," said Uddhav.

Earlier on Sunday, NCP leader Jitendra Awhad had tweeted that the government should drop the FIR against the activists who had taken part in the Aarey protests. The case was registered by the Mumbai Police that comes under the state Home department. The NCP is touted to get the Home portfolio in the state Cabinet.

After the Bombay High Court ruled in its favour on October 25, Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) the same night began chopping trees at Aarey to make way for a Metro car-shed. Several activists gathered at the spot and started protesting.

These activists were then detained by the police and an FIR registered against 29 people. No chargesheet has been filed in the case yet.

While the earlier BJP government had said that it made more financial sense to have the depot at Aarey, all three parties that make up the Maha Vikas Aghadi — Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress — had protested the chopping of trees.



Speaker Nana Patole and NCP leader Ramraje Naik Nimbalkar receive Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari at Vidhan Bhavan on Sunday. *Express*

Cong's Nana Patole elected Speaker unopposed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 1

CONGRESS'S NANA Patole was elected unopposed as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly on Sunday after the BJP withdrew its candidature.

BJP's Kisan Kathore had filed nomination but it was withdrawn following a request to the BJP from ruling parties.

After his election, Patole said that he needs cooperation from both sides to run the House proceedings.

"The four Ds — 'Discuss, Debate, Dialogue and Do not disturb' — are important in democracy to run the House and I need cooperation from both sides to run the House proceedings. I have always given preference to farmers' issues. My aim will be to give justice to the issues of farmers and deprived sections of

society," said Patole, responding to the congratulatory motion after his appointment.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said that he was happy a farmer's son had become the Speaker. "You (Patole) are known as a rebel who will not tolerate injustice. The ruling and opposition parties are in the House. So I expect that there should not be any injustice on anyone while running the proceedings of the House," said Uddhav. He further said that equal attention should be given to both sides? ruling and opposition.

Former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said that he expects the Speaker's cooperation when "we raise the issues of people". "His experience will help in running the House proceedings. I hope he will maintain the decorum of the post," he added.

'KARTARPUR CORRIDOR GEN BAJWA'S BRAINCHILD'

Claim has exposed Pakistan's nefarious intent: Amarinder

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 1

PUNJAB CHIEF Minister Amarinder Singh on Sunday said Pakistan Railway Minister Sheikh Rashid's claim that the Kartarpur Corridor was the brainchild of their Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, had "exposed Islamabad's nefarious intent behind the initiative".

Asserting that the Pakistani minister's words had validated his (Amarinder's) stand on the issue, the CM said Rashid had laid bare the "wicked design of Pakistan behind the corridor", which India had hoped would be a bridge of peace between the countries.

Amarinder also took strong exception to Rashid's remarks that "the corridor would hurt India, which would forever remember the wound inflicted on it by Gen Bajwa with the Kartarpur Corridor." Calling it an "open and blatant threat" against



Amarinder Singh

India's security and integrity, Amarinder warned Pakistan not to attempt to indulge in any misadventure against its neighbour.

"Don't make the mistake of reading weakness in our gratitude for the opening the corridor," he warned, asserting that India would give a befitting response to any bid by Pakistan to attack its borders or its people.

Amarinder recalled that he had all along maintained that while he was extremely happy, as a Sikh, about the opening of the corridor which has given

Indian devotees access to the historic Kartarpur Gurdwara, the threat it posed to India could not be ignored. He said he repeatedly warned that Pakistan was "trying to win the sympathies of Sikhs" by opening the corridor "to further the ISI-backed Referendum 2020 agenda".

"This had been quite evident from various facts, most notably that Bajwa had disclosed the Pakistani decision to build the corridor to then Punjab Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu at the time of Imran Khan's swearing-in ceremony," Amarinder said. "Imran had not even taken over then, yet their Army Chief had spoken about this to Sidhu. How was it possible unless Bajwa was the one behind the corridor decision."

Amarinder also urged Sidhu to be more cautious in his dealings with the Imran Khan government and not allow his personal friendship with the Pakistan PM cloud his judgement in any way.



(From left) Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Swami Gyananand, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and Ram temple activist Sadhvi Rithambra at the Geeta Prerna Festival at Red Fort in New Delhi on Sunday. *Prem Nath Pandey*

Men need to be educated on how to treat women: Bhagwat

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

IN THE backdrop of outrage over the rape and murder of a Hyderabad veterinarian, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said that men need to be educated on how to treat women.

Addressing the Gita Mahotsav Programme at the Red Fort, Bhagwat said, "Jo apraadh karne wale hain, unki bhi mata-behenen hain, isiliye to unka astiv hai, unko yeh kisi ne sikhaaya nahin. Apne ghar se praarambh karna hai, purushon ki matrsakti ki or, mahilaon ki or dekhane ki drshti shuddh honi chahiye, yehi in sab baaton

ko band karega (Those who commit crimes, they also have mother and sisters, so they exist, no one has taught them. You have to start from your home, men's glance at the mothers, towards women, should be pure, this will stop all these things)."

He added, "The government has made the law, the law is not being followed properly. The administration's laxity can no longer go on. But leaving everything on government and administration will not work."

Union Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani, Ram temple activist Sadhvi Rithambra and spiritual leaders were also present on the dais.

Irani too stressed on the importance of conduct to arrest the issues of atrocities/violence against women. She said that sants have an important role to play in getting society to reflect on why crimes against women take place.

She also raised the issue of under-nutrition among women and children.

Interestingly, senior Congress leader and former Rajya Sabha MP Janardan Dwivedi too shared the dais with Bhagwat.

Later, Dwivedi clarified that he came to the event in "individual capacity" and not as a Congress leader, and that he was invited.

Lucknow govt school principal booked for 'beating up' Dalit students, probe on

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 1

LUCKNOW Police has booked a principal of a government-run middle school for allegedly targeting the students from the Dalit community.

Police said Pradeep Kumar Mishra, principal of the school in Ahmamau area, has denied the allegation, even as the parents have accused him of beating up their children as they "belong to the Dalit community".

The parents and children held a protest on Sultanpur road on Saturday, demanding action against Mishra, following which the police lodged an FIR under IPC Sections 506 (criminal intimidation), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace), 323 (voluntarily

causing hurt) and under relevant sections of the SC/ST Act.

"We have lodged the FIR after we received a written complaint from five parents whose children study in the school," said Raj Kumar Shukla, Circle Officer (CO) of Mohanlalganj, who is also the investigating officer in the case.

One of the parents said the principal beat up her two children (daughter in Class VI and son in Class VII) and some others

on Saturday. "He (Mishra) told us that he beat them up because they were absent from school for two days. My girl has received injuries on her head and one hand. He beat up only Dalit students. He also abused them using casteist slurs," the mother said.

The complaint stated that five students were beaten up by the principal because they belong to the Dalit community. "They are regularly harassed and locked inside the toilet of the school by the principal," it was alleged in the complaint.

CO Shukla said police are investigating the matter. "The principal has denied the allegations and claimed that the complaint has been lodged due to some internal politics in the school. We will question all the employees and other students of the school," said Shukla.

190 teachers dismissed in UP over 'fake marksheets'

Lucknow: The services of 190 teachers of primary and upper primary government schools have been dismissed in Uttar Pradesh's Etah and Mainpuri districts following an inquiry, which found that they had secured jobs after allegedly providing fake and tampered B.Ed marksheets and certificates.

Criminal cases are being filed against them and the state has also decided to issue notices to them to recover salaries they had received during their service.

The dismissal orders were passed on the basis of the inquiry report submitted by a UP Police ST probing irregularities linked to the issuance of fake B.Ed degrees by the Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar University in 2004-2005. **ENS**

MoS Dhotre inaugurates India Pavilion at Mexico book fair

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

INDIA AND Mexico represent old civilizations and both undertook a sustained struggle to get independence from colonial rule. Minister of State for Human Resource Development Sanjay Dhotre said while inaugurating the India Pavilion at the International Book Fair at Guadalajara, Mexico.

India is the guest of honour at the book fair, and is the first Asian country to have received this honour.

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy 'Let Our Lives Be Open Books' is the theme of the India pavilion at the fair.

Dhotre, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony, highlighted the deep literary connection between India and Mexico.

He also said that India and Mexico are in opposite directions on the world map and are thousands of kilometres apart, but both the countries have great similarities in terms of their people, bio-diversity, family and cultural values, and even climatic conditions.

The Guadalajara International Book Fair will continue till December 8.

15 THE GOVERNANCE PAGE

MAKING SCHOOLING EASIER

In Rajasthan, integrated books make school bags lighter, students happier

Baste ka Bojh Kam project, being piloted in one govt school of each district, has reduced weights to a third

HAMZA KHAN

JAIPUR, DECEMBER 1

"BILKUL KUM ho gaya hai (yes, the weight has reduced drastically)," says Naina, a Class 3 student at the Government Senior Secondary School Vatika of Jaipur as she talks about her school bag.

"I walk to school, which is about 25 minutes from home. Earlier, I carried four books, but now I carry just one," she says. She is not the only one enjoying the relief. Her classmate Neeraj says, "Earlier we used to carry Hindi, English, Mathematics and Environment textbooks, now we carry just one. Dev, who is in Class 2, says his home is about 20 minutes walk away and his three books have now been replaced by just one."

The weight of Dev's textbooks has reduced from 0.95 kg to 0.30 kg. For Naina and Neeraj, it has decreased from 1.35 kg to 0.5 kg. The changes are across the board (see box)

Naina, Neeraj, Dev and 60 other students between Classes 1 and 3 at this government school on the outskirts of Jaipur are part of a state-wide pilot project in Rajasthan — one school in each of the state's 33 districts — where the government has implemented Baste Ka Bojh Kam (BKBK) project to make the school bags weigh less. "The psychological pressure has reduced since they have to face just one book now, and the new books are more colourful and interactive too," says Dr Bhawna Nehla, the Principal.

It was from this school that Rajasthan's Minister of State for Primary and Secondary Education (Independent Charge), Govind Singh Dotasra, had launched the project in September. While it was initially announced for Classes 1 to 5, the pilot project was eventually restricted to Classes 1 to 3.

"It is a pilot project, the outcomes can be gauged from studying Classes 1 to 3 as well," says Pradeep Kumar Borar, Commissioner, Rajasthan School Shiksha Parishad.

Srivashist Sekar, Program Manager, Piramal Foundation for Education Leadership, says that "All books reached the target schools by the first week of November. Next, we will scale up the project to include Classes 4 and 5".

The books these children hold now were rebid trimester-wise, instead of being subject-wise. For example, a Class 1 student will carry 1 book in a trimester, and this book has all the topics to be covered from Hindi, English, Maths for that trimester, instead of 3 books — one each per subject. Thus, rather than taking 3-4 books of the individual subject, the students are taking just one book to school.

The project comes in the backdrop of the



Students enjoying their new interactive books at a govt school in Jaipur. Express

WHY INTEGRATED BOOKS WERE THE BEST OPTION TO LIGHTEN SCHOOL BAGS

| SOLUTION AVAILABLE | LIKELY COST | SCALABILITY | TIME REQUIRED |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Locker facility | High | Low | appx 10 years |
| Tablets | Very high | Low | appx 5 years |
| No books at all | Low | High | Training teachers |
| Reduce Curriculum | Quality cost | N/A | Govt-level decision |
| Teach 1-2 subjects/day | Avg cost training teachers | High | 1-2 years to train all |
| INTEGRATED BOOKS | ZERO | VERY HIGH | NA |

Ministry of Human Resource Development asking all states and Union Territories last year to fix the weight of school bags. Following the directions, the Rajasthan government partnered with Piramal Foundation and started the BKBK project to implement a pilot project and study the scalability of the concept.

Following several meetings with experts, the available solutions (see box) were studied and the government zeroed in on term-wise rebidding of textbooks.

The idea of such books was first thought of by Commissioner Borar. In 2003-04, as director of Lok Jumbish Parishad, a primary education project, he had prepared drafts of such textbooks. The books also drew inspiration from comics and converted chapters with conversations into comic strips. The idea, however, was rejected. "They found small mistakes and magnified them," says Borar. Back then, he had

called those books "Aao Khelein (Let's play)". Fifteen years on, the new textbooks are also called "Aao Khelein".

The new books were drafted and went through a three-stage review process, starting from Deputy Director to Deputy Commissioner and then the Commissioner.

While it was ensured that the existing syllabus remains untouched, the experts proposed and incorporated the concept of "divider pages" — these are pages between individual subjects within a book. During their field visits, experts had observed that students were playing certain games on their own. Hence, subject-specific and age-appropriate games were designed to enhance and create "joyful" learning.

Class 2 textbook, for example, has a simple "join the dots and colour" for a camel and a cartoon as well as "identify objects and match them with their names" exercise, among others.

EXPLAINED E.

How lighter school bags help

WHEN RAJASTHAN did a study, 73% of the students asked, said they were bothered by the weight of their school bags. About 42%, in fact, saw the weight saw it as a hindrance to schooling. About 40% of the parents agreed. When integrated books — one book for multiple subjects — were introduced, teachers overwhelmingly approved of them.

MUCH LIGHTER NOW

| | |
|---------|---------------------|
| Class 1 | 0.90 kg to 0.40 kg |
| Class 2 | 0.95 kg to 0.30 kg |
| Class 3 | 1.35 kg to 0.50 kg |
| Class 4 | 1.45 kg to 0.50 kg |
| Class 5 | 1.25 kg to 0.50 kg. |

As part of the study, feedback was sought from as many as 531 students, 172 parents, 92 teachers, 18 principals and 12 officials. A total of 72.9% students said that they were bothered about heavy bags, and a good 42 per cent said that heavy bag acts as a hindrance for them from going to school. Among parents, too, 40.70 per cent felt that the heavy weight of bags was one of the reasons for their child's unwillingness to go to school. However, after the distribution of the new book, 69 per cent students said that they feel "lighter," both physically and mentally.

Every single teacher who was interviewed said that the initiative was able to bring a "huge difference" in students, with the weight of the new books being just one of the reasons. As many as 91.3% teachers also said that the project should be implemented in the entire state.

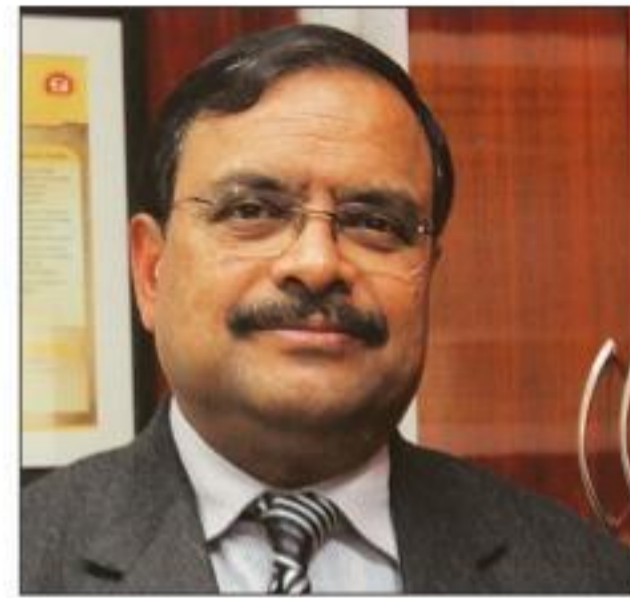
"We are the first state... I appeal to other states and private schools to adopt this initiative," Education Minister Dotasra said.

'India to achieve its emissions and renewable energy targets before time'

THE 25th annual climate change meeting is opening in the Spanish capital of Madrid today. India, being the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, is crucial to the global plans to fight climate change. Ahead of the meeting, Environment Secretary CK Mishra spoke to AMITABH SINHA on the actions that India had taken to combat climate change.

Somehow there is an expectation from the global community that India needs to do more on the climate front

We are already doing much more than what we should be doing if we look at the historical responsibilities of countries in creating this problem. We are definitely doing better than most of the other countries. There have been some recent assessments from independent international organisations which show that India is among a handful of countries, barely four or five, whose actions are compliant to the target of keeping the global rise in temperatures below 2 degree Celsius. India is the only large country in that list, the only one among the top emitters.



THE POLICY INTERVIEW

C K MISHRA

Environment Secretary, Government of India

other countries account for that.

Additionally, there is a huge contribution from the agriculture sector which we are not factoring in. At some places, change in agricultural practices have led to the creation of additional carbon sink. Degraded forest land when used for agriculture also create new carbon sink. Then there is a question of baseline. All our other targets are benchmarked to the 2005 baseline. Somehow, the forestry target was assumed by some to have a 2015 baseline when we submitted our targets. If we take the 2005 baseline, we would have already achieved the targets. But we want to do more.

The results of the latest forest survey will be known by December. Initial indications are that our carbon sink has been growing at the rate of about 75 to 80 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year.

What about our adaptation efforts? We do not even have a very credible threat assessment for the country.

You are right. A comprehensive threat assessment for the country has not been done yet. Many sectoral assessments have been made and are ongoing as well. But we do need a composite and comprehensive threat assessment because the impacts of climate change are already visible. And we need to take pre-emptive adaptation measures. Some of it is happening. For a country like India, adaptation is extremely important. That is why we keep stressing on that even at international negotiations.

Full interview on indianexpress.com

With electric buses, West Bengal makes an ambitious push for curbing city pollution

SWEETY KUMARI AND ATRI MITRA

KOLKATA, DECEMBER 1

AIMING TO bring down the air pollution caused by buses operated in the city, the West Bengal government has introduced around 80 electric buses; in the next 10 years, it plans to introduce more than five thousand such buses. As a result, the state government has already bagged the C40 Cities Bloomberg Philanthropies Award in the "Green Mobility" category.

"In the next few months, nearly 150 electric buses will be in use. While 80 buses are being used in and around Kolkata, the remaining 70 buses will be distributed in Haldia, Asansol and Siliguri," a senior transport official told *The Indian Express*.

The government also plans to increase the number of charging stations in and around the city. If things go as per plan, the transport department would convert its entire bus fleet to electric models in a few years from now.



Electric buses have been introduced in Kolkata. Partha Paul

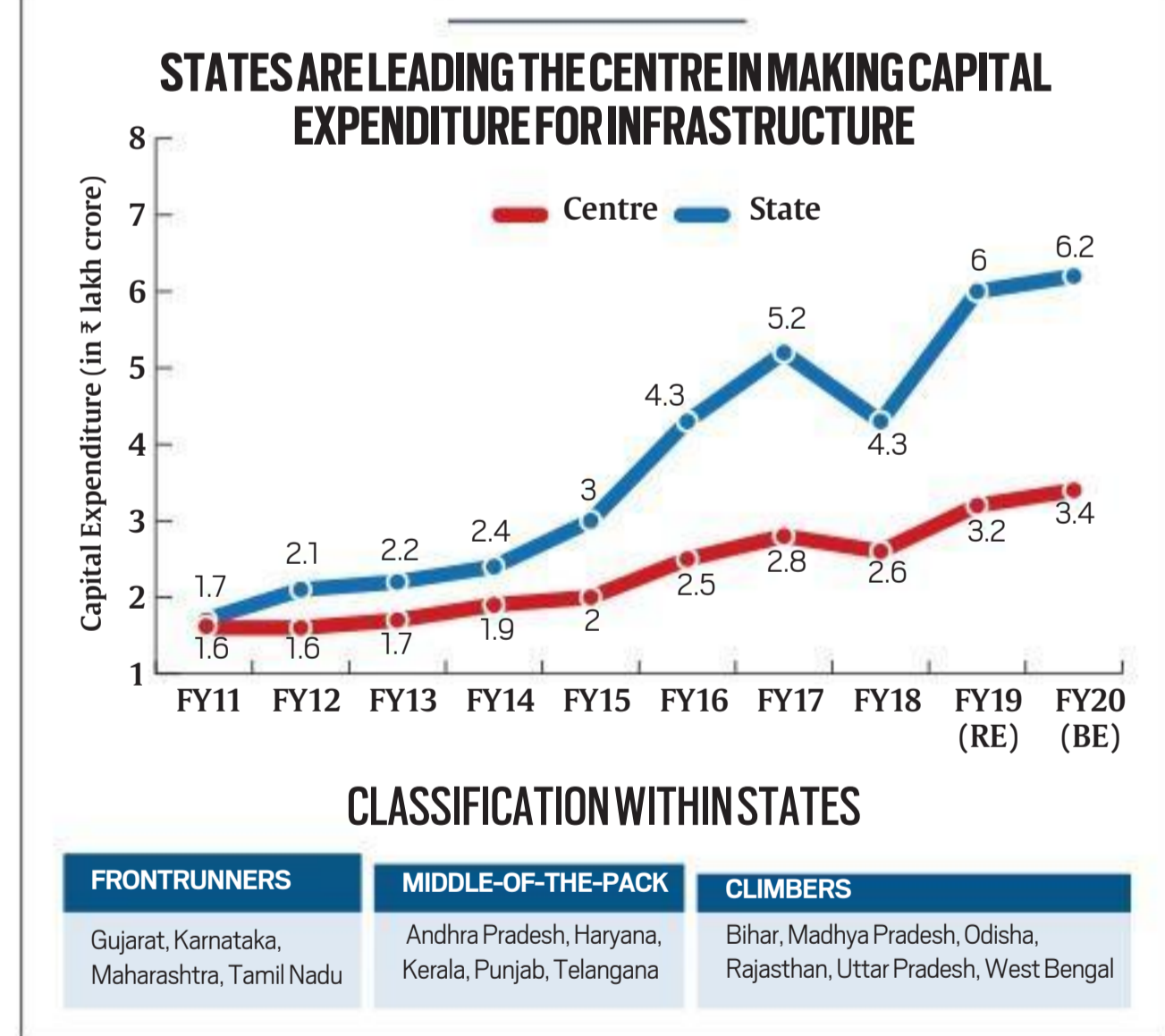
"Electric buses have many advantages. Their running costs are 60 per cent lower than the diesel buses," said Narayan Swarup Nigam, Transport Secretary, Government of West Bengal. Moreover, according to an official of the state pollution control board, "an analysis of different sources of air pollution in Kolkata has revealed that motor

vehicles are the leading contributor to air pollution nearly 51.4 per cent, which is followed by industry at 24.5 per cent and dust particles at 21.1 per cent". Transport department officials claim that switching to cleaner fuel would reduce emission burden of the city drastically.

As per officials, the state's transport department is purchasing these buses with the help of the central government. Officials said the central government would shoulder half the expense. The state has already disbursed Rs 60 crore for electric buses and these buses are already plying in areas like New Town, Kamalgaazi, Airport, Belghoria, Joka etc.

There have been other steps to control emissions from automobile exhausts. The state has Auto Emission Testing Centres (AETCs). The AETCs have upgraded their testing facilities with opacity meter (for smoke density testing of diesel-driven vehicles), gas analysers (for testing of exhaust emission of petrol-driven vehicles), web camera and compatible software.

IN NUMBERS



CHHATTISGARH/ HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

A single healthcare scheme to raise efficacy, accountability

DIPANKAR GHOSE

RAIPUR, DECEMBER 1

THE CHHATTISGARH government recently announced that it was shifting from an "insurance model" to a "trust model" in the field of healthcare and that as many as six insurance schemes run by the state government and the centre would now be subsumed in a single new healthcare scheme, which would be run by the state government. The idea, the state government said, was to fix accountability on the state health infrastructure itself, and to lessen the amount of public money that was going to the private sector under the insurance model.

On November 15, after a meeting of the state cabinet, a press statement stated that the state was entering a "new phase of healthcare". Accordingly, a new scheme — Dr Khubchand Baghel Swasth Sahayata Yojana — will provide coverage up to of Rs 5,00,000 per

year to not only Pradhanmantri Jan Arogya Yojana families but also to Pradhmitka & Antoyaday Ration cardholders. The new scheme will increase the beneficiary family count from 42 lakhs to 56 lakhs families. "The scheme will be implemented in Trust mode (assurance)," the cabinet release said.

Health Minister TS Singhdeo told *The Indian Express* that the primary aim is to fix accountability on the healthcare system itself and to increase the financial efficacy of the department. "The job of the minister must be to increase delivery through the pyramid structure which has mitanins (who are the ground-level health workers) at the base and medical college doctors at the top... We took this up as a challenge on several fronts. One could be the financial aspect. Second is the better use of public funds. And the third is (the) deliverables," he said. Singhdeo explained that the state had as many as six overlapping schemes where the services were being delivered. "What was being provided by one scheme was also being



A health camp in Surguja, Chhattisgarh. Express

provided by two-three schemes," he said, claiming that this has been streamlined.

The minister also said that under the existing "insurance model" there were suspicions of misuse of funds. "In our system, we are fixing accountability on ourselves," he said.

On the financial benefits the new scheme will accrue, Singhdeo said, "We have not asked for a paisa more than the Rs 845 crore that is the budget for the insurance schemes as well as Rs 277 crore from the Centre. This amount of money, where is it going? As we saw it, straight away 15 per cent of public money was going into the administrative expenses of the insurance company. This was around Rs 100 crore. We want to minimise that. So within the same budget, we make a saving. Take on the responsibility to deliver and have the funds for strengthening your public infrastructure. Part of the 15 per cent will go to the government's administrative costs but it will not be more than half, so half you will be saving."

TOP OF THE WORLD



ANTONIO GUTERRES UN Secretary-General

UNITED NATIONS Guterres warns of 'point of no return' on climate change

Madrid: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Sunday that the world's efforts to stop climate change have been "utterly inadequate" so far and there is a danger global warming could pass the "point of no return".

RUSSIA 19 killed as bus plunges onto frozen river in Siberia

Moscow: A passenger bus plunged off a bridge onto a frozen river in Siberia on Sunday, killing 19 of the more than 40 people on board, authorities said.

USA Chicago cop suspended for slamming man to ground

A CHICAGO police officer was suspended this week after video recorded by a bystander showed him hurling a man forcefully onto the sidewalk during an arrest, in footage described by Mayor Lori Lightfoot as "highly disturbing."



Forensic personnel conduct a fingertip search at the cordoned off area on London Bridge on Sunday. AP

ISIS claims London attack Stabbings carried out 'in response to calls to target citizens of coalition countries'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LONDON, DECEMBER 1

THE ISLAMIC State terror group has claimed responsibility for the knife attack in central London where a convicted terrorist killed two people before being shot dead by police.

THE VICTIMS: CAMBRIDGE GRADUATES WHO SET OUT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The two who died in the attack were identified as Saskia Jones, 23, and Jack Merritt, 25. Both were involved in a programme to help prison inmates.



Saskia Jones, a graduate of Cambridge University, was described by her family as having "a great passion for providing invaluable support to victims of criminal injustice, which led her to the point of recently applying for the police graduate recruitment programme".



The family of Jack Merritt, also a Cambridge University graduate and coordinator of the Learning Together programme, said he "lived his principles" and "believed in redemption and rehabilitation, not revenge, and he always took the side of the underdog".

scribed by the judge who sentenced him for terrorism offences in 2012 as an ongoing risk to the public with a "serious, long term venture in terrorism".

clearly, a key line of enquiry now is to establish how he came to carry out this attack," Scotland Yard's Head of Counter Terrorism Policing Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu said Saturday.

The profile of Khan dating back to his conviction in 2012 reveals his links with terror groups. He had been secretly recorded talking about plans to recruit UK radicals to train at a camp in PoK, the region his family comes from.

MEANWHILE RELIC 'FROM JESUS' MANGER' IN BETHLEHEM

A tiny wooden relic that some Christians believe to be part of Jesus' manger arrived at its permanent home in the city of Bethlehem, 1,400 years after it was sent to Rome as a gift to the pope.



After polls, new wave of protests in Hong Kong

Thousands take to streets after brief pause, police fire teargas

EILEEN NG HONG KONG, DECEMBER 1

THOUSANDS TOOK to Hong Kong's streets Sunday in a new wave of pro-democracy protests, but police fired teargas after some demonstrators hurled bricks and smoke bombs, breaking a rare pause in violence that has persisted during the six-month-long movement.



Pro-democracy protesters flood a street during a rally in Hong Kong on Sunday. AP

EXPLAINED A good week for the protesters, but not much has changed

THE PREVIOUS week began with a sweeping victory for pro-democracy candidates in district elections. Days later, US President Donald Trump signed into law a Bill aimed at putting pressure on China to maintain Hong Kong's autonomy.

been relatively peaceful during the two weeks around the Nov 24 elections, but Sunday's disruption indicated there may be more violence if Lam fails to yield to protesters' demands. AP

Plane crash kills 9, injures 3 in S Dakota amid winter storm

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 1

A PLANE crash in the US state of South Dakota killed nine people, including two children, and injured three others while a winter storm warning was in place, officials said.

The flight left the airport just before noon local time, with a destination of Idaho Falls Regional Airport in the western state of Idaho.

The FAA said investigators were en route to the crash site and that the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) would be in charge of the investigation.

Saudi Arabia takes over G20 presidency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA RIYADH, DECEMBER 1

SAUDI ARABIA became the first Arab nation Sunday to take over the G20 presidency as it seeks to bounce back onto the world stage following global uproar over its human rights record.



The Saudi Crown Prince

The oil-rich kingdom has promoted a liberalisation drive, including granting greater rights to women, but faced strong criticism over a crackdown on dissent and the murder last year of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

21 killed in Mexico shootout between cartel gunmen, police

ASSOCIATED PRESS MEXICO CITY, DECEMBER 1

MEXICAN SECURITY forces on Sunday killed seven more members of a presumed cartel assault force that rolled into a town near the Texas border and staged an hour-long attack, officials said, bringing the death toll to 21.

Governor Miguel Angel Riquelme said at least 14 people had died by that afternoon, four of them police officers. He also said then that several municipal workers were missing. It wasn't clear if they had since been located.

Starbucks worker fired after cops gets cup with 'pig' written on label

MARIEL PADILLA DECEMBER 1

AN OKLAHOMA police officer working on Thanksgiving made a Starbucks run for emergency dispatchers to thank them for working during the holiday.

The New Orleans Police Department said via its Twitter feed that no arrests had been made and investigations were ongoing. PTI

TIMOTHY WEEKS AND KEVIN KING WERE RELEASED LAST MONTH IN A PRISONER SWAP Freed hostage on Taliban: Some of them were compassionate, lovely

ASSOCIATED PRESS SYDNEY, DECEMBER 1

AN AUSTRALIAN teacher held captive with an American colleague by the Taliban for more than three years believes US Navy SEALs tried and failed six times to free them.

"I believe now that it was the Navy SEALs coming in to get us," Weeks said. "I believe they were right outside our door. The moment that we got into the tunnels, we were 1 or 2 metres underground and there was a huge bang at the front door. And our guards went up and there was a lot of machine-gun fire. They pushed me over the top into the tunnels and I fell backwards and rolled and knocked myself unconscious."



Timothy Weeks, 50, is an Australian teacher

their captivity, and were often kept in tiny, windowless cells. While their lives were often at risk, he said he never gave up

hope of being rescued. "I never, ever gave up hope, and I think in that sort of situation, that if you give up hope, there is very little left for you," said Weeks, flanked by his sisters Alyssa and Jo Carter.

Abdul Mahdi's decision to quit on Friday came after a call by Iraq's top Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani for Parliament to consider withdrawing its support for Abdul Mahdi's government to stem the violence.

population in poverty, without opportunity. Demonstrations are continuing in Baghdad and other southern regions and security forces killed one protester and wounded nine others near a key bridge in the capital on Sunday, police and a medical source said.

GLOBAL TRADE

It's the end of the World...

And America feels fine



Delegates outside the World Trade Organisation headquarters in Geneva. The WTO underpins 96% of global trade. Reuters

"WINTER IS coming," warned a Norwegian representative on November 22nd, at a meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The multilateral trading system that the WTO has overseen since 1995 is about to freeze up. On December 10th two of the judges on its appellate body, which hears appeals in trade disputes and authorises sanctions against rule-breakers, will retire—and an American block on new appointments means they will not be replaced. With just one judge remaining, it will no longer be able to hear new cases.

The WTO underpins 96% of global trade. By one recent estimate, membership of the WTO or General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), its predecessor, has boosted trade among members by 171%. When iPhones move from China to America, or bottles of Scotch whisky from the European Union to India, it is the WTO's rules that keep tariff and non-tariff barriers low and give companies the certainty they need to plan and invest.

The system is supposed to be self-reinforcing. Mostly, countries follow the WTO's rules. But if one feels another has transgressed, then instead of starting a one-on-one trade spat it can file a formal dispute. If the WTO's ruling displeases either party, it can appeal. The appellate body's judgments pack a punch. If the loser fails to bring its trade rules into compliance, the winner can impose tariffs up to the amount the judges think the rule-breaking cost it. It is that punishment that deters rule breaking in the first place.

It is no surprise that President Donald Trump has axed these foreign arbiters, given

his general distaste for internationally agreed rules. On November 12th he declared himself "very tentative" on the WTO. But the problems run far deeper than dislike of multilateral institutions. They stem from a breakdown in trust over the way international law should work, and the more general failure of the WTO's negotiating arm. Had the Americans felt that they could negotiate away their grievances, resentment towards the appellate body might not have built up. But with so many members reluctant to liberalise, including smaller countries fearful of opening up to China, that has been impossible.

America has had some wins at the WTO: against the European Union for subsidies to Airbus, an aircraft-maker, and against China for its domestic subsidies; theft of intellectual property; controls on the export of rare earths, which are used to make mobile phones; and even its tariffs on American chicken feet. But it has also been dragged before the appellate body repeatedly, in particular by countries objecting to its heavy-handed use of "trade remedies": tariffs supposed to defend its producers from unfair imports. Time after time, it has lost. In such cases, it has generally sought to become compliant with the rules rather than buy the complainant off.

Though previous administrations had grumbled, and occasionally intervened in judges' appointments, the Trump administration went further. Its officials complained that disputes often dragged on much longer than the supposed maximum of 90 days, and—more seriously—that the appellate body made rulings that went beyond what WTO mem-

bers had signed up to. They made it clear that unless such concerns were dealt with, no new judges would be confirmed.

Judicial overreach is in the eye of the beholder. Losers will always feel hard done by, and America has been quick to celebrate the WTO's rulings when it wins. But plenty of others think that the appellate body had overstepped its remit. A recent survey of individuals engaged with the WTO, including national representatives, found that 58% agreed with that verdict.

Getting so many countries to sign up to the WTO was a remarkable achievement. One way negotiators managed this was by leaving the rules vague, and papering over their differences with ambiguous language. Take "zeroing", for example: using dubious mathematics to calculate defensive tariffs on unfairly traded imports. The Americans claim that the rules do not say they cannot do it. But others counter that the rules do not say they can. It is such long-running differences that have set the scene for the latest showdown.

Offer me solutions
The American trade lawyers happy to kill the appellate body see a fundamental difference between their attitude to international law, and that of Europeans. Their position is that only clear contractual terms can be enforced, and they see Europeans as more comfortable with resolving ambiguities by going beyond what is written. Essentially, they regard the appellate body as too European. Moreover, in its eagerness to rule where terms are unclear, and in the American government's willingness to change its laws in response,

they feel an affront to America's sovereignty.

Under the GATT, which lacked a proper enforcement system, ambiguities were hashed out in smoke-filled rooms. But the WTO was supposed to make naked power politics over trade obsolete. Had it worked as intended, there would have been a balance between settling disputes and writing new rules. Policy is best made with a vibrant judiciary interpreting the law, and a functioning legislative arm to fix any mistakes. Whenever the appellate body made decisions that annoyed members, they could have resolved their differences at the negotiating table. Perhaps America could have got others to agree to higher tariffs on imported steel, or been granted some flexibility in its defensive duties.

But the WTO's negotiating arm has been broken for years. With the current count of members at 164, it has become more inclusive, but is unable to get much agreed. Each member has a veto over any further multilateral trade liberalisation. And without new negotiations, resentment towards the appellate body has built up.

Had the multilateral system been more effective at dealing with the rise of China, perhaps the single biggest issue of its times, then calls to save it might be louder in Washington. Although various American administrations pursued and won several cases, the process was slow and occasionally frustrating. America can justly claim that, when it tried to hold China to account for its breaches of trade rules, it got little support. America has been responsible for more than half of all complaints against China. And other WTO mem-

bers' complaints were generally copycat, filed in America's wake.

Now that the Trump administration has bypassed the WTO and taken the fight straight to China, there is nothing remaining that it particularly wants from the WTO. And so the chances that it will relent and allow nominations to the appellate body by December 10th are slim to none. In response to proposals from other members to change the body's rules, an American representative said that they were not persuaded that the rules would be stuck to.

On November 26th the Trump administration suggested slashing the pay of members of the appellate body. In October Chuck Grassley and Ron Wyden, the top Republican and Democrat politicians on the Senate Finance Committee, published an editorial saying that while they saw the value of an appellate body, it "needs to operate as the members agreed".

Of the WTO's 163 other members, 117 have signed a joint letter calling upon America to end the impasse. Although America has been the heaviest user of the dispute-settlement system, others will miss it too (see chart). Some have already begun preparing, for example by agreeing at the start of any disputes to forgo the right to appeal. The EU, Canada and Norway have agreed on an interim arbitration mechanism that will use retired members of the appellate body as judges. And the EU is considering beefing up its own enforcement mechanism to fill the hole left by the appellate body, though it would probably cleave more closely to the outcomes of first-stage rul-

ings in WTO disputes.

But some members are likely to shun such alternatives—especially those that expect to be sued a lot. And it is unclear how robust they will be if disputes turn nasty. Some WTO members may try to choose their dispute-settlement mechanism case by case. An organisation as ambitious as the WTO, for all its faults, will be easier to break than replace.

All this means that global trade is about to become a lot less predictable and a lot more contentious. Without the appellate body to act as honest broker, disputes between the biggest members may escalate. Under the GATT America acted as global trade sheriff, launching investigations at will and bullying disputatious countries into submission. It is not impossible that it will resume this role. On November 27th the Trump administration announced that it had nearly finished an investigation into a French tax on digital services, which America reckons discriminates against its tech giants. That could lead to tariffs.

You'll miss it when it's gone

In the 1980s American unilateralism was no fun for countries on the receiving end. But at least back then Uncle Sam could point to the lack of any other power even theoretically capable of doing the job. Now the absence of independent referees is America's own doing. And of all Mr Trump's trade policies, it may prove the hardest to reverse and have the longest-lasting effects.

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DEMOCRACY

A clarion call

Hong Kong's elections were a rebuke to its government

DISTRICT ELECTIONS in Hong Kong are normally about rat control and bus routes. The polls on November 24th were a vote on Hong Kong's future as a liberal Chinese enclave. The question, in effect, was whether ordinary people support the government and its backers in Beijing in their illiberal methods. The answer was a resounding no. The turnout, of over 70%, was higher than any recorded in any kind of election in Hong Kong in which the public has a say. Pro-democracy politicians almost swept the board.

For Hong Kong's leaders and China's Communist Party, this is a rebuke—compounded three days later when President Donald Trump signed into law a bill that supports Hong Kong's democracy. Irked by months of protests, but unwilling to use troops to crush the demonstrators, they had hoped ordinary Hong Kongers would turn against the black-clad pro-democracy protesters. The election result destroys that dream. The "silent majority" turns out to back the protesters' cause, despite the vio-

lent tactics of some.

In a true democracy a vote in which opposition candidates took control of 17 out of 18 councils, having previously held none, would end political careers. But Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's hugely unpopular chief executive, shows no inclination to give in to the protesters by stepping down. That is a pity. Even though Mrs Lam's successor would be chosen in effect by the Communist Party, a change of leader would allow both sides to draw a deep breath. Concessions are easier to make when they do not involve a climb-down by the person offering them. Mrs Lam has too much at stake.

Whoever leads Hong Kong has to seek the Communist Party's approval when making important decisions. So it is in Beijing that the next crucial steps for Hong Kong will be worked out. An obvious one would be to launch an independent inquiry into police conduct since the unrest began in June. This has long been one of the protesters' main demands—they allege that the police have

been brutal, just as the police accuse the protesters of dangerous aggression. Mrs Lam has approved an investigation, but only by a body that tends to side with the government. She would not have to shift much to win a cheer from the streets.

The next, harder, step should be to restart a public debate about political reform. This was suspended in 2015 after pro-democracy legislators rejected a party-backed proposal that would have let the chief executive be chosen for the first time by popular vote, but from candidates picked by a committee stacked with the party's supporters. Were the offer revived, the democrats should consider it favourably. Such an arrangement, though far from ideal, would encourage chief-executive candidates to appeal to ordinary Hong Kongers. Sunday's elections show that voters would spurn a party yes-man.

Sadly, there is no sign that leaders in Beijing are contemplating any concessions. The Communist Party's media have depicted



Pro-democracy supporters celebrate after pro-Beijing politician Junius Ho lost his seat in Hong Kong last week. AP

the district elections as unfair. They say pro-establishment politicians were intimidated by the "black terror" unleashed by protesters whom officials accuse of being trained and paid for by America and Britain. They point to the roughly 40% of voters who went for pro-government candidates, and say this

suggests that many people are repulsed by the protest movement.

Some Hong Kongers are indeed sickened by the violence and fed up with the loss of business that the protests have caused. But disaster will follow if the party concludes that Hong Kong welcomes its relentless encroach-

ment, or that it should never be trusted with democracy because votes can produce embarrassing results. The vote halted the unrest. China's leaders should seize the moment, not assume that the lull will last.

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19 TALK

ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD



WORDS HAVE POWER

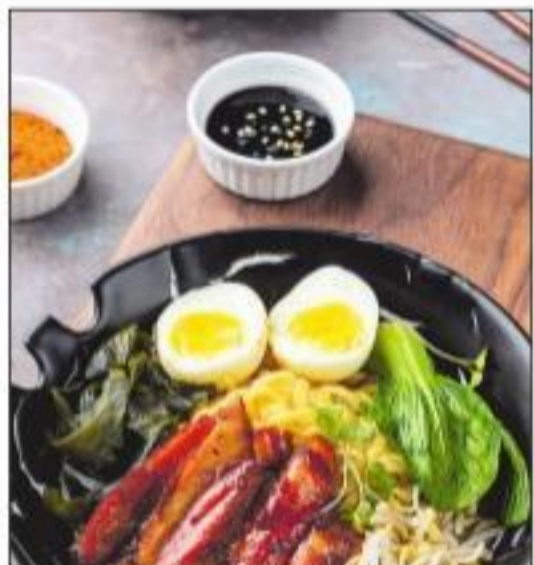
British independent publisher Waterstones has chosen two titles for its annual awards. Charlie Mackesy's *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* is the Book of the Year, and Greta Thunberg, who wrote *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference*, is the Author of the Year.

WEEK AHEAD



Jazzy Nights

THE GIANTS of jazz music festival is bringing together the best Indian and international artists such as Simon Thacker from Scotland (pictured), The Shuffle Demons from Canada, and Ivan Santos Trio from Brazil, to trace the evolution of the music form in the last century. Till December 8 at The PianoMan in Gurgaon and Delhi. Tickets available at bookmyshow.in.



Meal in a Bowl

AT THE Ramen festival at YUMEE, on till December 8, enjoy Vegan Dreams, a meal bowl with tofu, broccoli, pok choy, mushroom, lettuce in miso broth or Teriyaki Chicken Ramen, a Chef's special teriyaki glazed chicken ramen with a healthy miso broth, wakame and nori. There are desserts to satisfy sweet cravings too. At M-27, Ground Floor, GK2, 11 am to 11.30 pm.



A Crafty Affair

CRAFTSMEN AND artisans from around the country will get together at the India Craft Week to hold workshops on forms like phulkari, wood carving and pottery. There will be talks, installations and films on rare crafts of India. From December 4 to 8, at GMR Aerocity. Tickets on insider.in.

In Tune

BOOK YOUR tickets now as Ustad Chand Nizami, Shadab Faridi and Sohrah Faridi Nizami — the Nizami Bandhu — perform on December 22. They are known for their qawwalis by Amir Khusro, and songs in *Rockstar* and *Bajrangji Bhaijaan*. At Kamani Auditorium. Tickets on Bookmyshow.

'I have always believed in playing my age'

Actor Purab Kohli on his new webseries *Out of Love*, the Channel V days and riding the digital wave



EKTA MALIK

ACTOR PURAB KOHLI believes in playing his age, which doesn't go very well with the management. In the last year itself, we have seen him play a single father twice, and his latest offering, *Out of Love*, a web mini-series, we see him playing a 40-year-old married man with a school-going child. "I have always believed in playing my age and playing characters who are closer to who I am. Even when I started, as an 18-year-old, with the TV show *Hip Hip Hurray*, I was playing a high school kid. My management kept bringing me roles of men in their twenties, and I just couldn't relate to them. I was quite happy with *It's Not That Simple* (Season 2), where I had a teenaged daughter, and even in *Typewriter*; I was a single father," says Kohli, over the phone from London.

In Hotstar's *Out of Love*, Kohli plays Akarsh Kapoor, a real-estate developer. The show is a faithful remake of BBC's *Dr Foster* and has been directed by Tigmanshu Dhulia and Aijaz Khan. "I had seen the show. Akarsh's character is such a contrast to who I am. He is 40, immature, and just wants to have fun. He just thinks this support from his wife is an interim thing, and he will eventually make it on his own. He doesn't realise that it's her who keeps his whole world together. He is living in this bubble. I am sure that there are people like this, but I found it very hard to relate to him," says Kohli.

The show, which has been received quite well, focuses on the themes of adultery, infidelity and betrayal. Set in the serene hills of Coonoor, the narrative unfolds through the perfect marriage of the lead couple — Kohli and Rasika Dugal. "Earlier, adultery, cheating and infidelity were taboo topics. We as a society didn't believe that these things existed, or even if they did, they existed in a far-off distant place. These issues are so common now, that it's stupid to not talk about them. For how long can we talk in black and white tones? The world is grey and the digital space is doing a great job of telling these stories. We are moving away from the moralistic view of things," says Kohli, who divides his time between London and Mumbai.

Having traversed diverse media — TV, films, Vjing — and now riding the digital wave, Kohli has seen it all. "TV had to cater to five-six people, sitting together and consuming that story. At times you go back to a story even after 10 episodes and you can pick up right where you left off. A film meant you had to drag people out of their



Purab Kohli (above); on the sets with Rasika Dugal and Aijaz Khan

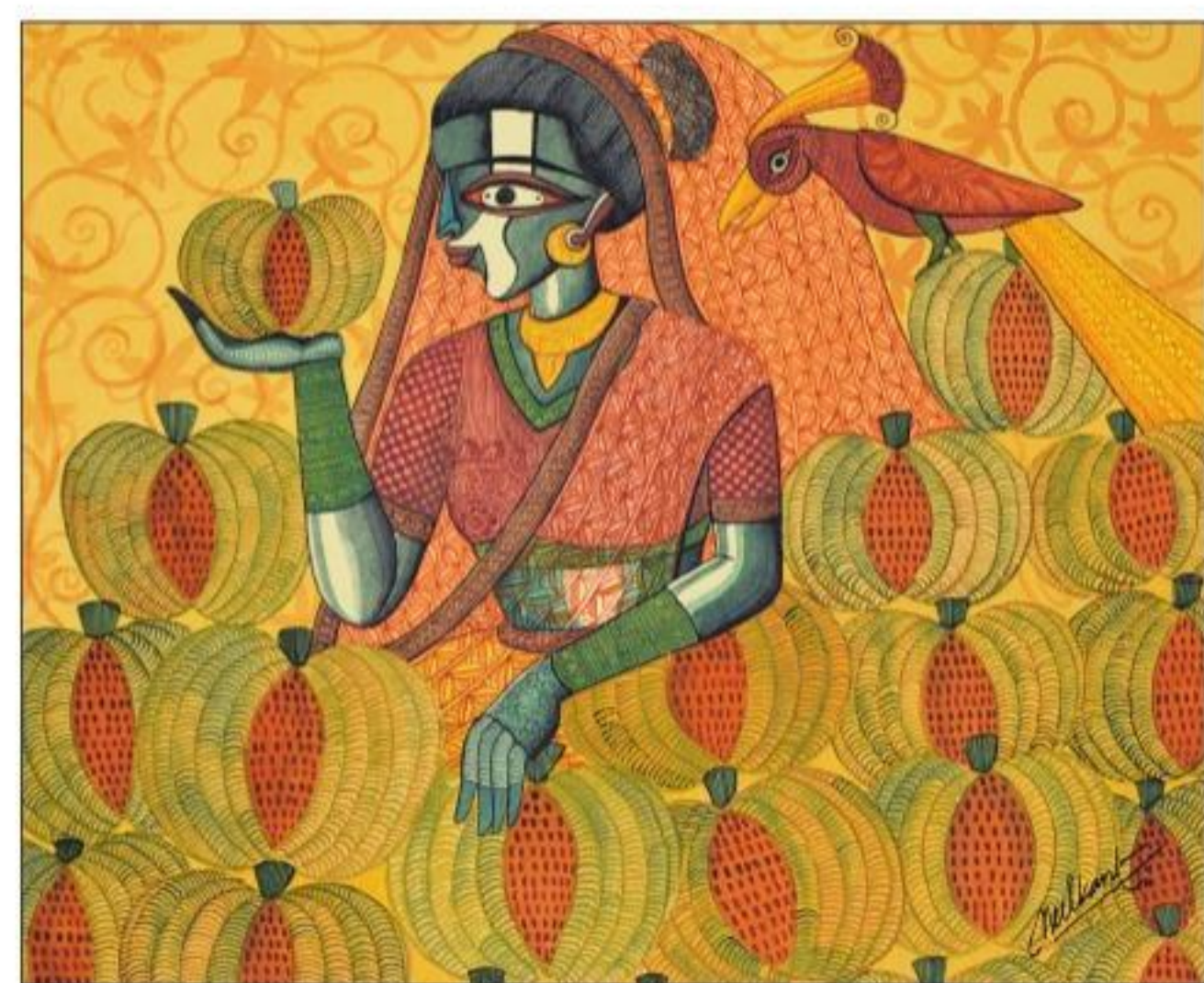
The world is grey and the digital space is telling these stories. We are moving away from the moralistic way of looking at things

PURAB KOHLI

homes, and make a blockbuster that will blow them away. The digital space is a new beast and caters to those who are left out and are underrepresented in TV and films. It's an interesting time, but yes, there are trappings, since there is so much content being made. As I am based in London now, I have to really pick and choose my projects. If I were in Mumbai, I would perhaps take up all the work that is being offered to me," says the former Channel V veejay. Kohli, who became a household name,

courtesy his Vjing stint with Channel V, gets nostalgic about those days. "People often ask me, 'what happened to Channel V', and I answer 'it became Instagram or TikTok'. We really thought we were cool. I had a cool life, and by the time I was 25, I had travelled a big chunk of the country, because of my travel show *Gone India*. It was a heady time. But we were really people who played music."

Talking about how music was integral to the plan, he says, "We had a mad energy, and we could do anything. It was an absolute party. We did live concerts with Sukhbir, Lucky Ali, and Kailash Kher, and we even got Elton John. We all saw the rise of the Indian independent music scene. We still have a WhatsApp group, where all of us from that time — Gaurav, Yudi and me, and even creatives from the channel, and other VJs from rival channels whom we were not supposed to hang out with — are still in touch," says Kohli.



The Feminine Spirit

Madhubani artist Neelkant Choudhary renders a modern interpretation to the art form

PALLAVI CHATTOPADHYAY

NEELKANT CHOUDHARY grew up seeing his mother envelop the walls of the house with Madhubani paintings. As a self-taught artist, he too would be invited to paint for weddings and other auspicious occasions. Often the motifs of the paintings were handpicked from Hindu mythology; there would be gods and goddesses such as Durga, Parvati, Laxmi or Vishnu. Over the years, Choudhary developed a contemporary language for the art form. In his latest solo "Feminine Divine" at Gallerie Ganesha, Delhi, he paints fruit sellers, opera dancers, and sweepers through the ancient art form, adorning them in bright colourful dresses. There are women cleaners, who maintain the interiors of a Jaipur palace, standing with brooms like film stars in his frame titled *Char Women*. There's a pumpkin seller in the company of myriad pumpkins.

Leaning in closely towards his 25 Madhubani paintings on display and carefully introspecting his subjects, Choudhary reveals that divinity does not merely lie in goddesses, and rather pinpoints to how a woman is divine in all the characters she inhabits, be it as a housewife, a worker or a daughter. It is no surprise then that he finds the living goddesses of Nepal an inspiration for one of his frames. "These girls, aged between 6 to 13, sit in the temple like goddesses, and people worship them there," he says.

The 56-year-old, Vadodara-based artist is quick to highlight the art form's long history, which finds a mention in the pages of *The Ramayana*. King Janaka orders the creation of the paintings during his daughter Sita's wedding to Rama. Choudhary has come a long way, following an initial push by well-known Madhubani painter Chandrakala Devi to continue with his craft after initial rejections from art galleries.

His work *Peacock Woman* is a result of watching a stranger in his neighbourhood in Jaipur, in the late '90s. He was amused by the peacocks that flocked around her as she fed them. He decided to paint her in the form of the peacock. Another painting features men wearing the pink *paag*, a headdress integral to the Mithila region and culture, surrounding his young relative's wedding celebrations. In *Solidarity*, he shows women decked in gold jewellery attending a marriage, and engrossed



Choudhary merges the traditional and the modern, with motifs derived from the streets of Delhi and traditional Madhubani templates

in conversation, bearing a resemblance to noted artist Thota Vaikuntam's creations. He says, "To me, women are beautiful. I see a woman as a creative being that god has made."

Choudhary has continued to paint the various manifestations of Durga and Parvati in his other frames, some replete with a contemporary idiom. *Goddess in the Making* serves as a reminder of Durga Puja, where a lady in a purple sari-like attire gives finishing touches to idols. "I cannot paint gods and goddesses all the time. As an artist, it suffocates me. If one is a writer and has to write only one kind of story, he or she will get bored soon. We need different engagements to keep us motivated," he says.

He says his canvases merge the traditional and the modern, with motifs deriving as much from the streets of New Delhi as the traditional Madhubani templates. "My medium varies from vegetable dyes to watercolour, oils and inks. If Madhubani has to survive, it has to adapt to the times without necessarily deserting its traditional essentials."

The exhibition is at Gallerie Ganesha, Greater Kailash II, Delhi, till December 3

What Faith Can Do

An exhibition on the temples of Odisha honours the spirit of worship and the magnificence of art



(Above) The model of Jagannath temple; an idol of Subhadra being painted



people were local, to retain the original flavour. We had stalwarts like Prabhakar Maharana, who has earned a Padma Shri for sculpture, on board. The entire garb is contemporary but the work is of legacy-bearers of tradition," says Das. The exhibition also explores the gamut of living traditions and rituals to understand "why people congregate the way they do". A film on the annual *rath yatra* captures the eight lakh people thronging the three km of the *danda path* outside the Jagannath tem-

ple. "If you're one of the people there, it's incredible but horrifyingly frightening. There are people wanting to just touch the *rath*. They don't care if they faint or get trampled upon. You'd wish you could have that kind of faith, in anything," says Das.

The research behind the project included historians, archaeologists and even the King of Puri, Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb, who's the protector of the temple. The team referenced books and material at the British Library, National Museum, and state and national archives. "We needed original pictures from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), since some parts of the sculptures are now broken," says Das.

The exhibition is at the India International Centre, Delhi, till December 6

ON THE LOOSE

Cast Away

When the comedian turns into a pathetic joke



LEHER KALA

IN A series of tweets last week, disgraced comedian Utsav Chakraborty feebly attempted to clear his name of allegations of sexual misconduct, the fallout of which caused the dynamic All India Bakchod (AIB) to crash overnight, during 2018's #MeToo movement. For the uninitiated, AIB ran a hugely popular YouTube channel and created hilarious spoofs like *Royal Turds* about Bollywood award shows. Ironically, one of their most successful sketches was *It's Your Fault*, a satirical take on patriarchy and victim blaming in India. Which is why it was so shocking that a promising collective run entirely by millennials creating very edgy content, would count among them two founders caught in two separate cases of sexual harassment. While a third, comedian Tanmay Bhat, was outed as the unscrupulous opportunist who wilfully ignored repeated complaints. Needless to say Chakraborty has been untouchable ever since and the rest of the defunct AIB team still struggling with the question, what next?

On a rambling Twitter thread, Chakraborty claims he has been wrongly

maligned by false evidence — altered screen shots of sexts he had with accusers that he insists were consensual. Excruciating details of Chakraborty's allegedly predatory conduct are in the public domain; anyone reading the vile descriptions by so many women will find it hard to believe they're all acting out of sheer malice. However, a phone conversation between Chakraborty and one of his alleged victim's lawyers put out by the online magazine *Mashable India* revealed his desperate anguish. In a choked voice, Chakraborty mentioned how his closest friends have stopped talking to him and the consequences of his irreparable loss of reputation: decades stretching ahead for which he has no employment options, whatsoever.

When someone behaves like a jerk they lose the right to an unbiased, fair, hearing process because people view justice from their own perspectives. Chakraborty's crimes may be much less than a murderer's but by instinctual perception, for a lot of people, they're far worse.

A rising star in comedy, unexpectedly shattered by his own cringe-y lewdness, it's not surprising that Chakraborty sounds almost suicidal. I'm not sure though, despicable though his attitude may have been, if the solution is to ostracise alleged predators to such an extent, they think their lives are not worth living.

Forgiveness is a personal matter and of course, the lives of artists are not more important than their accusers. Sow as you reap, indeed. But till a decade ago, a life sen-

tence for murder in India was 14 years after which a criminal was free to live his life. Right now there doesn't seem to be a way for a sexual predator to seek redemption after serving metaphorical time; it appears he is doomed to exist in no man's land, shoved to the margins of polite society, forever, unforgiven. In July this year, when Bhat revealed he was suffering from clinical depression, senior female comics berated him for using a mental health issue to gain sympathy.

"Depression is only newsworthy when someone who had a corporate throwing money at him, stopped having money thrown at him," said comic Aditi Mittal in a scathing tweet. Surely, it is well within the scope of possibility that Bhat is genuinely depressed. The crucial question again, is how long does our righteous rage last before atonement (by the perpetrator) can begin? There are parables in the Bible and Buddhist scriptures that repeatedly remind us that those who have grievously hurt others can redeem themselves through giving. For public figures capable of raising money and working, condemning them to a time out for the rest of their lives doesn't make any sense. What if there was a system of community service, where for the next 10 years, 20 per cent of their show fees would go towards organisations that empower women? Perhaps, just the thought of parting with funds at being caught for inappropriate behaviour will keep people on the straight and narrow. For those too cynical to believe that engaging in an act of selflessness may trigger some introspection, there is Oscar Wilde's observation to contemplate: Every saint has a past and a sinner, a future.

hutkayfilms@gmail.com

New manager, same old luck

Arsenal's winless run continues in Freddie Ljungberg's first Premier League game as boss

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
NORWICH, DECEMBER 1

CARETAKER MANAGER Freddie Ljungberg could not end Arsenal's long wait for a win as Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's double only salvaged a 2-2 draw at struggling Norwich on Sunday. The Canaries twice led through Teemu Pukki and Todd Cantwell only for Aubameyang to level, first from the penalty spot and then with a clinical finish after the break.

But Arsenal also had goalkeeper Bernd Leno to thank for coming away with a point as the German saved brilliantly from Kenny McLean, Pukki and Emiliano Buendia.

Unai Emery was sacked as Arsenal manager after seven games without a win in all competitions that had seen the Gunners fall well off the pace in the race for a top-four finish. Ljungberg remains a fans' favourite from his title-winning days as an Arsenal player, but he suffered the same problems as his predecessor as the visitors' firepower up front was needed to cover up their defensive problems.

Granit Xhaka returned to the Arsenal side for the first time in the Premier League since an explosive clash with the club's fans as he was substituted against Crystal Palace last month that cost him the captaincy among four changes from Emery's last starting lineup in the league.

Shkodran Mustafi was surprisingly recalled for his first outing in the Premier League this season, but it did not take Ljungberg long to realise the German is not his answer to Arsenal's problems a centre-back.

Ljungberg's side had made a bright start, but fell behind to Norwich's first dangerous attack when McLean's pass played in Pukki, who twisted and turned David Luiz before seeing his shot deflect in off Mustafi for his first goal in nine games.

However, Norwich have also made a habit of giving themselves a mountain to climb this season with defensive errors and gifted Arsenal a route back into the game when captain Cristoph Zimmerman handled a free-kick inside his own box.

Aubameyang saw his first spot-kick saved by Tim Krul, but was given a second chance after a VAR review for encroaching by the Norwich players and fired home the retaken penalty. Just as Arsenal were beginning to get



Freddie Ljungberg could not end Arsenal's long wait for a win, as they laboured to a 2-2 draw against Norwich. Reuters

8 The draw extended Arsenal's winless streak to eight games across all competitions. They have gone six matches without a win in the Premier League.

3 Arsenal have compiled three points from their matches against the three bottom-placed teams in the Premier League (Southampton, Norwich City and Watford).

40 Arsenal have won none of their last 40 away Premier League matches when facing a deficit at half time since a 5-3 win at Chelsea in October 2011.

on top, they were again cut open with ease as Onel Hernandez's cut-back was passed into the far corner by Cantwell to give Norwich a half-time lead.

Aubameyang has now scored half of his side's 20 Premier League goals this season as the Gunners' new captain led by example to smash home at the back post from a corner just before the hour mark.

But it was Norwich who will feel they should have taken all three points as three big chances went begging for just their fourth win of the season. McLean's shot was turned onto the post by Leno, Cantwell's strike from the edge of the area flew just wide and Pukki

was denied by a fine Leno save in quick succession.

Leno had one more big stop to make from Buendia in stoppage time, but a point still leaves Arsenal seven points adrift of the top four in eighth. Norwich remain in the bottom three, but inch to within three points of safety.

Doherty secures draw for Wolves

A superb second-half header by Matt Doherty cancelled out an early goal by Lys Mousset as Wolverhampton Wanderers came from behind to draw 1-1 at home to Sheffield United, extending their unbeaten Premier League run to nine games on Sunday.

The crowd at Molineux had barely taken their seats when Mousset struck after 62 seconds, taking a touch to control the ball in the box before slamming it home to put the visitors ahead. Despite creating a number of decent chances, the home team looked all at sea for much of the first hour until Doherty met a Raul Jimenez cross with a powerful header to put them level in the 64th minute.

Doherty celebrated the goal with an emotional tribute to the two-year-old daughter of former Wolves striker Benik Afobe who passed away on Friday, removing the black arm-band being worn in her honour and kissing it before holding it up to the sky.

World champions France drawn in 'Group of Death'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BUCHAREST (ROMANIA), DECEMBER 1

AFTER SEEING Germany drawn at Euro 2020 with France and Portugal, Oliver Bierhoff was frustrated and fearful about his country's prospects. "Another nightmare," the Germany team general manager said on Saturday. "It is the worst possibility we could catch."

The memories are still raw of Germany's humiliation at the 2018 World Cup where the title defence ended in the group stage.

Germany open against World Cup holders France on June 16 before taking on European champions Portugal four days later. "I didn't want to pick these teams," said Bierhoff, whose goal clinched the European Championship for Germany at Wembley in 1996. "France is the best team in the world."

This time, at least, Germany will have home advantage, playing all Group F games in Munich as the 24-team European Championship is spread across the continent for the first time with 12 stadiums in 12 countries being used. Budapest is also being used for a game which will be competed by a playoff winner.

Only the top two teams in each of the six groups are certain to qualify for the round of 16 along with the four top-performing runners-up. The new complicated nature of qualifying means four of the six groups won't have their final teams confirmed until after the playoffs in March.

It might get even tougher for the Group F runners-up, who could meet England.

That is if Gareth Southgate's side uses the home advantage of playing all three Group D games at Wembley to top the standings.

England open with a June 14 reunion with Croatia, who won their 2018 World Cup semifinal but lost to the Three Lions later in the year in the Nations League. England also face the Czech Republic, the only team to beat Gareth Southgate's side in Euro 2020 qualifying.

"Our analysts won't have to do too much work; they'll be delighted," Southgate said. "They can put their feet up for Christmas. But yeah, these are teams that we've had really good performances and results against and lost to, so we know there's no room for complacency. And, of

| THE DRAW |
|---|
| GROUP A: Turkey, Italy, Wales, Switzerland. |
| GROUP B: Denmark, Finland, Belgium, Russia. |
| GROUP C: Netherlands, Ukraine, Austria, Georgia/North Macedonia/Kosovo/Belarus. |
| GROUP D: England, Croatia, Czech Republic, Scotland/Norway/Serbia/Israel |
| GROUP E: Spain, Sweden, Poland, Bosnia-Herzegovina/Slovakia, Ireland/Northern Ireland. |
| GROUP F: Germany, France, Portugal, Iceland/Bulgaria/Hungary/Romania. |

course, we have to see who comes through the playoff."

Glasgow's Hampden Park is paired with the north London stadium in Group D but Scotland has to qualify by beating Israel and either Norway or Serbia.

Wembley is the main venue for Euro 2020, with seven games including the semifinals and final on July 12. The tournament will open with Italy hosting Turkey in Rome on June 12. Group A also features Switzerland and Wales, who have to play its first two games in the Azerbaijan capital Baku before the team led by Gareth Bale finishes in Rome against the hosts.

Belgium were due to host games in Brussels but lost the games to Wembley because a new stadium project could not get approval. Instead, Belgium will have to open against Russia in St. Petersburg and play Denmark in Copenhagen. Roberto Martinez's side rounds off Group B back in Russia against Finland, who have qualified for a major tournament for the first time.

"In terms of logistics, it's probably the hardest we could've had," Martinez said. "We need to adjust our preparation and we'll make sure that the logistics are just right."

Spain have all three games at home in Bilbao, and open in Group E against Sweden on June 15, then Poland and a playoff winner. Netherlands are at Amsterdam throughout Group C, opening against Ukraine on June 14 and then Austria and a playoff winner.



Lewis Hamilton celebrates the championship win. Reuters

Hamilton signs off with a dominant pole to flag finish

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ABU DHABI, DECEMBER 1

WORLD CHAMPION Lewis Hamilton cruised to victory from pole position at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Sunday, capping another stellar season with an 11th win and 84th overall. The six-time Formula One champion is now only seven wins behind seven-time F1 champion Michael Schumacher's all-time record of 91, which he could realistically overtake next season. After he made a clean start from a record-extending 88th career pole, Hamilton was untroubled as he won on the Yas Marina circuit for the fifth time — four with Mercedes and once when driving for McLaren in 2011.

He finished about 17 seconds ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen in a race bereft of overtaking, except for Verstappen's clean move on Charles Leclerc's Ferrari on Lap 33.

Leclerc was third for a 10th podium in a strong first season with Ferrari, which included an F1-leading seven poles — two more than Hamilton and Bottas — and two wins. However, Leclerc was summoned for a post-race investigation because there was a difference between the amount of fuel in the car as declared by the team and the amount actually inside the car.

Leclerc only just held off Hamilton's teammate Valtteri Bottas, who climbed 16 places to fourth after starting last.

Sebastian Vettel started fourth and finished fifth in a disappointing end to a season where the four-time F1 champion has won only one race. Hamilton made a clean start, but Verstappen was overtaken by Leclerc and held off Vettel behind him on the first lap, which saw Pierre Gasly's Toro Rosso sandwiched between both Racing Point cars and forced to pit for a new front wing.

NUMBER PLATE

11 Lewis Hamilton's victory was his 11th in the 21 races that have been held this season, and equals his previous best performance, achieved in 2014 and 2018.

84 The win also moves his career total to 84 wins, just seven behind the all-time record held by Michael Schumacher.

After just 10 of 55 laps on the desert circuit, Hamilton had pulled five seconds clear of Leclerc. Ferrari pitted both drivers for new tires on the 13th lap, but while Leclerc's tire switch was relatively good, Vettel's took several seconds too long because the mechanics struggled to fit his front left tire on.

It was the latest basic mistake from Ferrari in yet another season marred by errors following similar blunders in the past two seasons. Ferrari replaced Maurizio Arrivabene with Mattia Binotto as team principal, but Binotto has not managed to stem the flow of mistakes.

Hamilton pitted about halfway through the race and such was his on-track advantage that he still came out six seconds clear of Leclerc, while Verstappen was in third place and complaining about engine, braking and throttle issues. Still, the audacious Dutchman then found some extra speed to overtake Leclerc and held the Monegasque driver off as he tried to overtake him back down the right.

Messi, Rapinoe poised to take Ballon d'Or honours

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
PARIS, DECEMBER 1

THE BIGGEST names in world football will descend on Paris on Monday for the 2019 Ballon d'Or ceremony, with Lionel Messi and USA women's World Cup superstar Megan Rapinoe tipped to leave with the honours.

It would be an enormous shock if Rapinoe did not depart the Chatelet Theatre with the women's prize as she returns to the country where she was the driving force on and off the field for the United States as they retained their title.

The suspense surrounds the identity of the men's winner, 12 months after Croatia's Luka Modric claimed the crown thanks to his exploits in dragging his country to the World Cup final and winning the Champions League with Real Madrid.

That ended a decade in which Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo had won the Ballon d'Or five times each, but the smart money now is on the Barcelona man claiming number six.

There are 30 nominees in total for the prize, organised by France Football magazine and voted for by 180 journalists from around the world.

The case for Van Dijk

Among the names is Ronaldo, as well as several of the stars of the Liverpool side who won the Champions League, chief among them Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk.

At one point he looked like the favourite, but Messi already pipped him to FIFA's The Best title in September. The 32-year-old top-scored in La Liga last season with 36 goals as Barcelona won the title. He did not have a great Copa America with Argentina, but his genius is undeniable. "If you give the Ballon d'Or to the best player of this generation then you should give it always to Lionel Messi. That's how it is," admitted Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp. "But if you give it to the best player of last season, then it was Virgil van Dijk. I don't know exactly how it will work but that is how I see it."

The value of individual honours in football is debatable, and the timing unsatisfactory, coming midway through the European club season. Yet surely nobody could suggest Rapinoe would not be a deserving winner of just the second women's Ballon d'Or, an award voted for by a panel of 48 journalists.

Norway's Ada Hegerberg won it in 2018 but will not retain her title after missing the World Cup.

Among the stars of that tournament to be nominated are England's Lucy Bronze, Netherlands striker Vivianne Miedema, Australia's Sam Kerr and the USA trio of Alex Morgan, Rose Lavelle and Tobin Heath.