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Morning Batch

**8<sup>th</sup> Jan**

8:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Morning Batch

**15<sup>th</sup> Jan**

11:30 AM - 2:30 PM

Evening Batch

**15<sup>th</sup> Feb**

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

### LIVE-ONLINE BATCHES

Morning Batch

**8<sup>th</sup> Jan**

8:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Evening Batch

**15<sup>th</sup> Feb**

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

### BHOPAL OFFLINE BATCHES

Evening Batch

**16<sup>th</sup> Jan**

5:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Evening Batch

**19<sup>th</sup> Feb**

5:30 PM - 8:30 PM

### JAIPUR OFFLINE BATCH

Evening Batch

**1<sup>st</sup> Feb**

5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

More batches to be announced soon.

## Optional Foundation Course

Offline and Live-Online Batches

### ECONOMICS

by VIBHAS JHA SIR

Batches started recently

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by ALOK RANJAN SIR

Batches started recently

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‘Agnipath rolled out after consultations’

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**PANNUN MURDER PLOT**  
U.S. against giving case  
materials to Gupta

NEWS » PAGE 16

#### PARLEY

**Are antibiotics  
over-prescribed  
in India?**

Recent survey by NCDC  
has raised questions

OPINION » PAGE 13



**FACILE VICTORY**  
Dube helps India  
win opening T20I

SPORT » PAGE 21

#### IN BRIEF



**Sena ruling ends  
doubts about  
stability of govt:**

**PUNE**  
A day after the Speaker declared the faction led by CM Eknath Shinde as the ‘real’ Shiv Sena, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said the verdict left no doubt that Maharashtra will continue to have a stable government. » Page 4

**NIA cracks down  
on terror outfits  
and gangsters**

**NEW DELHI**  
The NIA on Thursday seized illegal arms in a crackdown on the banned Babbar Khalsa International, the Lawrence Bishnoi syndicate and others across five States and a Union Territory. » Page 16

## Direct tax kitty crosses 80% of 2023-24 target

Net collections touched ₹14.7 lakh crore by January 10, a growth of 19.4% over the corresponding period of 2022-23; provisional direct tax collections continue to register a ‘steady growth’

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**I**ndia's net direct tax collections touched ₹14.7 lakh crore by January 10, meeting over four-fifths of this year's target and reflecting a growth of 19.4% over the corresponding period of 2022-23.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on Thursday said provisional direct tax collections continue to register ‘steady growth’ with gross collections rising 16.77% to ₹17.18 lakh crore, led by a 26.1% rise in Personal Income Tax (PIT) inflows.

Corporate Income Tax or CIT collections grew at a relatively muted pace of 8.32%.

“After adjustment of refunds, the net growth in CIT collections is 12.37% and that in PIT collections is 27.26% [PIT only],” the

#### Tax mop-up

Direct tax collections are at 80.61% of the Budget estimates for FY24 as of January 10

- Gross direct tax collections amount to ₹17.18 lakh crore, showing a year-on-year growth of 16.77%
- Net direct tax collection, after refunds, stands at ₹14.70 lakh crore, reflecting a year-on-year growth of 19.41%
- The net corporate income tax has grown by 12.37%, and the net personal income tax has grown by 27.26% year-on-year
- Refunds amounting to ₹2.48 lakh crore have been issued between April 1, 2023, and January 10, 2024

Board said in a statement. Net of refunds, PIT and Securities Transaction Tax receipts were up 27.22%.

The net direct tax collection has grown by ₹1 lakh crore since December 17, when it had surpassed ₹13.7 lakh crore.

“Direct Tax collection, net of refunds, stands at ₹14.70 lakh crore, which is 19.41% higher than the net collections for the corresponding period of last year. This collection is 80.61% of the total budget estimates of direct taxes

for FY 2023-24,” the CBDT said.

Refunds amounting to ₹2.48 lakh crore had been issued to taxpayers by Wednesday, about ₹23,000 crore more than the refunds that had been sent by December 17.

Rating agency ICRA said it expects the full year's direct tax collections to exceed the budget estimates by ₹1 lakh crore.

“Direct tax revenues are projected to grow by 12% in 2024-25, based on expectations that benign levels of commodity prices would augur favourably on the profitability of corporates,” ICRA economists said. “Hence such tax collections and the continued efforts by the government to improve compliance are likely to support personal income tax inflows amid widening of the tax base.”

## Trinamool, Congress spar over LS poll seat-sharing

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI



The Trinamool wants to take into account the performance of the parties in the 2019 Lok Sabha and 2021 West Bengal Assembly polls.

Bengal Assembly election. The Congress, Trinamool sources said, garnered a vote share of less than 5% in the State's 39 Lok Sabha seats. The Congress has been arguing that two seats is a “humiliating” figure. The ball is now in Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee's court on whether it made the decision.

The Trinamool's generosity in West Bengal will also depend on the Congress returning the favour in Meghalaya and Assam.

The Trinamool has asked for one seat in Meghalaya and wants four seats in Assam, though it has not yet made its demand, claiming it is trying to trim its expectations, in keeping with the INDIA spirit.

“We also have an aspirant for one seat in Goa. But we can't allow our aspirations to come in the way of the INDIA's success,” the Trinamool MP added.

## S. Africa accuses Israel of genocide in Palestine, asks UN court to step in

**Associated Press**  
THE HAGUE



South Africa insisted Israel committed genocide by design.

#### Israel response

In a sign of how seriously Israel is taking the accusation, it has sent a strong legal team to defend its military operation.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to continue fighting Hamas, the extremist group that stormed through Israeli communities on October 7 and killed 1,200 people.

“This is an upside-down world – the state of Israel is accused of genocide while fighting genocide,” he said in video statement. “The hypocrisy of South Africa screams to the heavens.”

Nothing will stop the suffering except an order from this court,” she said.

declared in advance, but this court has the benefit of the past 13 weeks of evidence that shows incontrovertibly a pattern of conduct and related intention that justifies as a plausible claim of genocidal acts,”

Genocides are never

**Netflix removes  
Annapoorani after  
right-wing outrage**

**Ishita Mishra**  
NEW DELHI

The Nayanthara-starred Annapoorani was withdrawn from Netflix on Thursday on the request of its co-producer, Zee Entertainment, following protests by right-wing groups claiming that the film hurt the sentiments of the Hindu community, especially Brahmins.

Zee Entertainment gave a written apology to the Vishva Hindu Parishad, an outfit of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), saying

that it had never intended to hurt the sentiments of the community and promising that the film would not be released again until it was edited.

The film, which was released in theatres on December 1 last year had been streaming in multiple languages on Netflix since December 29 after approval by the Chennai regional office of the Central Board of Film Certification.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 16

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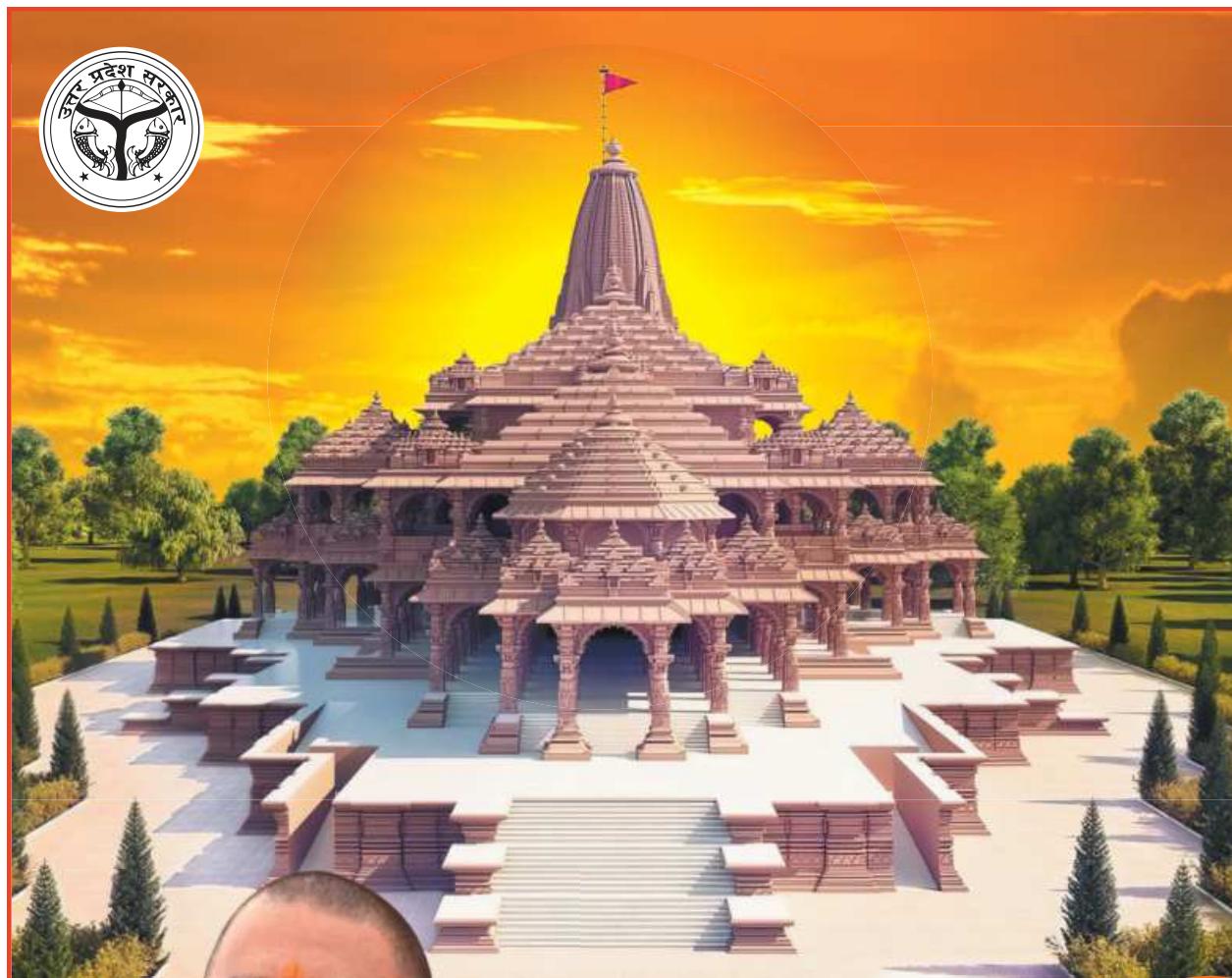
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The overall development of 'Dharmnagar' Ayodhya is one of the top priorities of the government in line with the vision of the respected Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji. The people of the country and the world are eager to see a Divya, Bhavya, Navya Ayodhya. We have to ensure that every devotee, tourist visiting Ayodhya goes back with a special sense of peace, contentment and joy.

**Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh**

## Historic Decisions

First city to be developed with the **artificial intelligence** technology

Formation of **Uttar Pradesh Shri Ayodhya Ji Teerth Vikas Parishad**

Ayodhya to become the first **solar city**

**Divya Deepotsav**, listed in Guinness Book of World Records

**State fair status** accorded to all fairs organised at Ayodhya, including Deepotsav

**International Status** given to Ayodhya Research Institute

**Temple Museum** will be established in Majha Jamthara

**Cabinet meeting** of Yogi Government at Ayodhya after Prayagraj

**Lata Smriti Chowk** in honour of legendary singer Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar

**National Highway** status granted to 84 Kosi parikrama marg

57,400 sqft. temple construction area

Total 3 floors of 20 ft. each

360 ft. length 235 ft. width 161 ft. height

5 pavilions and peak in the temple



Since the ascent of the double engine government, comprehensive development plans for Ayodhya have been set in motion. Besides restoring its glory, the sacred city is undergoing a modernisation process, introducing a range of amenities. Initiatives such as smart city, safe city, solar city, and greenfield township are shaping Ayodhya in alignment with these modernisation efforts to elevate it into a world-class city. The government's dedication to realising Ayodhya's transformation into a globally recognised city is approaching fruition.

### TEMPLE MUSEUM

A showcase for history of famous Indian temples

### WAX MUSEUM

To come up on 2 acres, the museum will be dedicated to key characters from Ramayana and also have statues of famous personalities

### AYODHYA HAAT

Ghats of the Saryu to be developed with food kiosks and vending carts and attention to

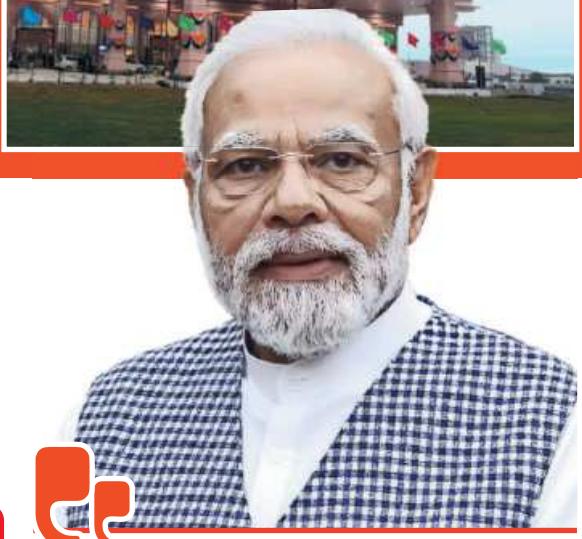
ensuring zero waste generation

### SANDHYA SAROVAR

Open air food zone with multiple restaurants, food stalls. Three lagoons/water bodies to be created with boating, ziplining, slacklining facilities

### TENT CITY

Multiple tent cities planned to house tourists, providing luxury and budget options



Ayodhya should manifest the finest of our traditions and the best of our developmental transformations. The human ethos of this city must be matched by futuristic infrastructure, which is beneficial for everyone, including tourists and pilgrims. The coming generations should feel the desire to visit Ayodhya at least once in their lifetime. It is our collective endeavour to celebrate the identity of Ayodhya and keep its cultural vibrancy alive through innovative ways.

**Narendra Modi, Prime Minister**

**Construction is in full swing of 147.2 km long Ram Van Gaman Path at a cost of 4403 crore**

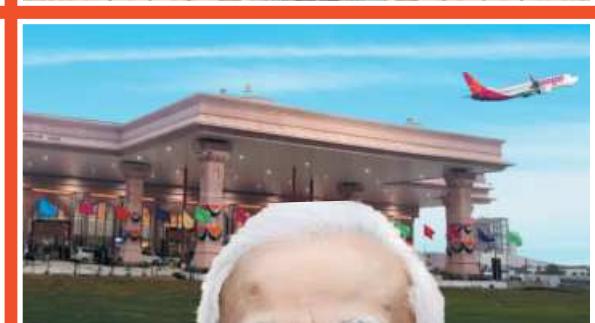
## Glimpse of Ayodhya

- Greenfield Township Project of 1,407 acre: ₹ 2,182 crore
- Construction of Maharshi Valmiki International Airport Ayodhya Dham: ₹ 1463 crore
- Construction of Ram path from Sahadatganj to Naya Ghat road (12.94 km.): ₹ 845 crore
- Construction of Rajarshi Dashrath Autonomous State Medical College: ₹ 246 crore
- Redevelopment of Ayodhya Dham Junction Railway Station: ₹ 241 crore
- Undergrounding of overhead electricity wires: ₹ 167 crore
- Construction of ROB at Badi Bua Railway Crossing located at Railway Crossing No. 112 Panchkosi Parikrama Marg: ₹ 74 crore
- Installation of heritage decorative poles in various wards of the city: ₹ 72 crore
- Construction of Maharishi Arundhati Parking, Sankul (East & West): ₹ 68 crore
- Construction of road from Bhakti Path to Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Path via Hanumangarhi (29 km.): ₹ 68 crore
- Widening and expansion of road from NH 27 to Naya Ghat old bridge (2 km.) (Dharmpath): ₹ 65 crore
- Establishment of CIPET: ₹ 40 crore
- Multilevel Parking Near Collectorate: ₹ 37 crore
- Strengthening and renovation work of the Bhakti path from Ram Ki Paidi to Rajghat and from Rajghat to Shri Ram Temple: ₹ 23 crore
- Construction of audience gallery for Deepotsav and other fairs/festivals at Ram Ki Paidi: ₹ 23 crore
- 140 TPD capacity solid waste management plant in tehsil Sohawal village Pirkhali: ₹ 18 crore
- Conservation and beautification of four historical entrance gates in Ayodhya: ₹ 15 crore
- Installation of 410 smart solar street lights from Guptar ghat to Raj ghat: ₹ 12 crore



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## IN BRIEF



## Chhattisgarh was a collective loss for Cong.: Sachin Pilot

On his first visit to Chhattisgarh after taking over as the All India Congress Committee general secretary in charge for the State, Sachin Pilot on Thursday described the party's electoral loss in the Assembly elections as a collective failure. "The Congress is a national party. When we win elections, it's everyone's victory; when we lose an election, it is everyone's loss. I don't think any one person can deliver a win or a loss, the entire organisation fights polls," he said at a press conference in Raipur.

## Mamata asks PM Modi to list Bengali as 'classical language'

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asked the Central government to officially list Bengali as a "classical language". Ms. Banerjee pointed out, that considering the fact that six Indian languages have already been notified as Classical Languages, "I would be grateful if you kindly issue necessary instructions to the Ministry of Home Affairs so that the claim of Bengali as a Classical Language is accepted at the earliest". The Chief Minister said that based on scientific research, it has been established by her State team that Bengali had its origins 2,500 years ago. She said that her government has sent four volumes of documents to the Ministry.

## Sandeshkhali case: Calcutta HC orders interim stay on FIR against ED officers

Shiv Sahay Singh  
KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday ordered an interim stay on proceedings in an FIR lodged against officers of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) who were attacked by locals when they went to search the premises of Trinamool Congress leader Shahjahan Sheikh at Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district on January 5. Justice Rajeswar Mantha ordered the interim stay till March 31.

The complaint was filed by Didar Baksh Molla, the caretaker of Mr. Sheikh's residence, and he accused the ED officers of theft, assaulting people and outraging the modesty of women during the raid in connection with their probe into the alleged PDS scam. The ED filed a cross-FIR over the violence.

The counsel for the ED pointed out that when officers were starting the raid,



West Bengal BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar at the party's protest against attack on ED officers, in North 24 Parganas on Thursday. PTI

they spoke to Mr. Sheikh and informed him about the search. The line then went dead and a mob of about 800-900 people soon assembled and attacked them. Three ED officers sustained injuries and the team fled the place.

## PIL dismissed

A Division Bench of Chief Justice T.S. Sivagnanam and Justice Supratim Bhattacharya also dismissed a PIL petition seeking an in-

## The caretaker at TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh's residence has accused the ED officials of theft and assault during the raid

demonstration near the Nazat police station in North 24 Parganas district against the attack on the ED officers and sought the arrest of Mr. Sheikh, who continues to abscond six days after the incident. The protest drew a huge police response.

"If the State government is unable to find Mr. Sheikh, it can request the Central government and within days central forces will find him," State BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar said. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee told journalists at the State Secretariat that she will not comment on the matter as "this is sub-judice".

## Once a 42-km drive, Atal Setu to reduce Mumbai-Navi Mumbai commute to 20 minutes

Purnima Sah  
MUMBAI

Equipped with cutting-edge Japanese technology, the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), also known as the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nava Sheva Atal Setu, promises to cut short the arduous two-hour-long journey between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai to a mere 20-minute ride.

The project, which has been nearly six years in the making, will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday.

The project, built at a cost of almost ₹20,000 crore, is being branded as a boon to Mumbaiites, who normally have to drive 42 km between the two destinations through endless traffic. The Atal Setu instead spans 22 km, and aims to save hours of

travel time and litres of fuel, said Sanjay Mukherjee, Metropolitan Commissioner of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA).

"The line originates at Sewri in south Mumbai, and terminates at Chirle near Nava Sheva in Navi Mumbai, but also provides interchanges at Sewri, Shrivillipettri, State Highway-54, and NH-348, extending much-needed connectivity to Pune, Goa and parts of southern India," said Mr. Mukherjee.

## Six-lane project

Touted as India's longest sea bridge, the six-lane project comprises a 16.5-km-long sea bridge, and a 5.5-km-long elevated road on land. The bridge, according to officials, is designed to carry a daily capacity of 70,000 vehicles

travelling at an average speed of 100 km per hour.

The project boasts of a variety of progressive materials and technology – the body of the bridge itself has been constructed with corrosion-resistant material that promises to stand firm against earthquakes, cyclones, high wind pressures and tides.

The entire stretch of the Atal Setu will also be monitored by a comprehensive

surveillance system, while the toll management process will incorporate Open Road Tolling to facilitate the connection of tolls without interrupting the passage of vehicles.

The bridge is also fitted with technology to oversee a smooth commute, including an Intelligent Traffic Management system, Video Incident Detection system, Speed Enforcement system, emergency call boxes, and more.

The project is expected to generate substantial growth in and around Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, thanks to the heightened

accessibility it will provide to once-remote areas, and make way for economic growth across various fields that would augment job opportunities.

"The intuitive placement of interchanges at strategic locations allows easier connectivity within Mumbai, and to Goa and Pune on a grander scale. A consistent increase in business opportunities and economic growth will be just one of the many positive outcomes of the Atal Setu," said Mr. Mukherjee.

Sustainable development, however, remains a key plank – the act of reducing travel time and therefore cutting fuel consumption alone is a major tactical move aimed at preserving the environment, said the MMRDA Metropolitan Commissioner.

MMRDA officials said that while building the

## Amid police action, T.N. Governor visits Periyar University

M. Sabari  
SALEM

Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi visited Periyar University on Thursday, even as Salem City Police conducted searches at the university

for over nine hours and arrested 150 people who staged a black flag protest against him.

In view of the Governor's visit, over 400 police personnel were deployed on the university premises. The Federation of Students Organization-Tamil Nadu (FSOT) announced the protest.

Hundreds of people gathered in front of the university in the morning and raised slogans against the Governor's visit.

Meanwhile, speaking to reporters in Mumbai, Sena (UBT) leader and Mr. Thackeray's confidant Sanjay Raut lashed out against Mr. Narwekar for behaving like a lawyer for the Shinde group of the Sena.

He said the Speaker's verdict was "a fixed match" and that it was hardly surprising.

Expressing the hope that his party would secure justice in the Supreme Court, Mr. Raut accused the ruling BJP of turning even the apex court's strictures upside down.

staff members of the Tamil department and the DDU-GKY centre.

Even when the searches were going on, the Governor reached the university around 12.50 p.m. and Vice-Chancellor R. Jaganathan welcomed him. Sources said the Governor had a one-on-one meeting with the Vice-Chancellor for 20 minutes.

Thereafter, he had a 10-minute meeting with the heads of all departments and went to the university guesthouse for lunch. Around 2 p.m., he left for Coimbatore by road, the sources added.

**'No knowledge'** University faculty members claimed that they did not know about the visit. On Thursday morning, the heads of departments received a message about a meeting with the Governor at 12 p.m., with no details of the agenda.

The case against the Vice-Chancellor was expected to come up for hearing at the Madras High Court on Friday. But the Governor visited the university and met the Vice-Chancellor a day earlier, raising questions, they said.

## HC dismisses OPS appeal against order restraining his use of AIADMK symbol

Mohamed Imranullah S.  
CHENNAI

The AIADMK's expelled leader, O. Panneerselvam, suffered yet another setback on Thursday, with a Division Bench of the Madras High Court dismissing his appeal challenging a single judge's November 7, 2023 order restraining him from using the party's flag, election symbol and letterhead.

Justices R. Mahadevan and Mohammed Shaffiq said the single judge had granted the interim injunction, at his discretion, only for a limited period. Hence, such an order would not fall under the definition of the term, 'judgment,' found in the Letters Patent, to be assailed through an appeal.

The judges agreed with senior counsel Vijay Narayan, representing AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami who was the respondent in



Another setback: Judges concur with the argument that the only remedy available to Mr. Panneerselvam was filing an application before the single judge for vacating the interim injunction.

the appeal, that the only remedy available to Mr. Panneerselvam was to file an application before the single judge for vacating the interim injunction.

The Division Bench granted liberty to the appellant to approach the single judge by filing an application to vacate the injunction and said that if any such application gets filed, the learned judge shall consider and pass appropriate orders on own merits and in accordance

with law". In his grounds of appeal, the appellant had contended that he could not be restrained from using the AIADMK's flag, election symbol and letterhead.

The judges agreed with senior counsel Vijay Narayan, representing AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami who was the respondent in

Clause 15 of the Letters Patent.

"The law is well settled that when no final orders have been passed by the learned judge determining any right or liability, affecting the merits of the disputes between the parties, no appeal would lie under Clause 15 of the Letters Patent," the verdict read.

"...The order passed by the learned judge, as an interim measure, is based on a sound discretion vested on him and in the interest of justice. Such discretion exercised by the learned judge cannot be normally interfered with by the appellate forum unless it is pointed out that the order was passed on the basis of irrelevant materials..." the Bench said.

It further said the interim injunction made it clear that the single judge wanted to grant an opportunity of hearing to Mr. Panneerselvam before passing final orders.



An aerial view of Atal Setu, which will be inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi on Friday. EMMANUEL YOGINI

bridge, preserving mangroves and mudflats, and securing the natural habitat of migratory birds, was emphasised. The privacy of sensitive areas, including the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and the oil terminals belonging to the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, has also been protected with the help of visual barriers.

**Ecological fallout** However, people residing on the coast feel otherwise. According to Nandakumar Waman Pawar, president of the Maharashtra Small-Scale Traditional Fish Workers' Union, traditional fishing communities will have to pay a heavy price for all the development projects being carried out in fishing zones without their consent.

Mr. Pawar said local traditional fishers possess exclusive rights to the fishing zones as per the Maharashtra Revenue Land Code, 1966, under Article 20. He demanded that government agencies consult the fishing community before announcing such projects that have an impact on their livelihood.

hundreds of concrete pillars constructed in intertidal fishing zones. Moreover, the cumulative impact of all these coastal projects has not been considered yet," Mr. Pawar said.

He added that the deposition of sediments in these zones has wreaked havoc on the ecology of these areas, leading to hundreds of hectares of rich fishing zones being transformed into thick mangrove cover, which impacts biodiversity as well as the thousands of traditional fishers.

Mr. Pawar said local traditional fishers possess exclusive rights to the fishing zones as per the Maharashtra Revenue Land Code, 1966, under Article 20. He demanded that government agencies consult the fishing community before announcing such projects that have an impact on their livelihood.



A New Epoch of India's Infrastructural Future



— AAMCHI MUMBAI GETS GIFT OF —

# INDIA'S LONGEST BRIDGE

*Inauguration of*

## ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE SEWRI-NHAVA SHEVA ATAL SETU

by

### NARENDRA MODI

Prime Minister

Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024

at

3:30 PM

Sewri, South Mumbai



**ATAL SETU:** An Engineering Marvel Furthering 'Ease of Mobility' of Citizens

21.8 km long 6-lane Atal Setu is longest bridge as also longest sea bridge of India

Connecting Millions from Sewri, South Mumbai to Nhava Sheva, Navi Mumbai

Movement of over 70 thousand vehicles everyday

Reduction in travel time from 1.5 hours to just 20 minutes

Developed as Mumbai Trans-harbour link, it will ensure seamless connectivity between Mumbai Port & Jawaharlal Nehru Port

Environmentally Friendly Design strengthening the Commitment to Sustainability

Built at a cost of about ₹ 17,800 crore



Devendra Fadnavis  
Deputy Chief Minister, Maharashtra

Narendra Modi  
Prime Minister

Eknath Shinde  
Chief Minister, Maharashtra

Ajit Pawar  
Deputy Chief Minister, Maharashtra



Eknath Shinde  
Chief Minister, Maharashtra



Watch the event  
live on DD News

# MCD ranks 90th in Centre's Swachh Survekshan; AAP says performance improved; BJP kicks up dirt problem

446 urban local bodies spanning area with population over one lakh covered under cleanliness survey; civic body attains 28th slot among cities with population over 10 lakh; this was first time a unified MCD took part in Centre's yearly exercise

**Satvika Mahajan**

NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was ranked 90th among 446 urban local bodies in the Swachh Survekshan Awards-2023, the results of which were announced by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on Thursday.

The 446 urban local bodies are the ones that span areas having a population of more than one lakh.

The MCD, however, ranked 28th among 45 cities with a population of more than 10 lakh.

This was the first time the MCD took part in the Central government's annual cleanliness survey after the three civic bodies – North Delhi Municipal Corporation, East Delhi Municipal Corporation and South Delhi Municipal Corporation – were unified again into a single entity in 2022.

The civic body excelled in the open defecation-free category attaining the ODF++ ranking, which means that at any point of

## Clean sweep

The cities were adjudged on several parameters like solid waste management, litter-free commercial areas, community-level composting and access to toilets, and liquid waste management.

	Municipal Corporation of Delhi	New Delhi Municipal Council
Rank	90 out of 446	7 out of 446
Score	6,114.68 out of 9,500	8,728.31 out of 9,500
Open-defecation free status	725 out of 2,500	1,125 out of 2,500
Garbage-free status	1 star out of 7 (525 out of 2,500)	5 star out of 7 (1,175 out of 2,500)
Citizen voice	1,546 out of 2,170	1,985 out of 2,170
Population	1,30,40,059 (2011 Census)	2,57,803 (2011 Census)

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS

the day, not a single person is found defecating or urinating in the open, all public toilets are functional and well maintained.

However, the civic body scored poorly on garbage management, getting only one star out of seven.

The cities were also adjudged on "citizen voice", which included people's opinion on civic services.

The MCD scored 71% in door-to-door garbage collection, 100% in source se-

gregation, 86% in waste processing, 59% in cleanliness of residential areas, 100% in cleanliness of water bodies, and 97% in cleanliness at public toilets.

Reacting to the survey results on X (formerly Twitter), Mayor Shelly Oberoi claimed that the city's ranking improved after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) came to power in the civic body in December 2022, ending the 15-year

rule of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

However, Ms. Oberoi said there is still room left for improvement.

The ruling AAP in a statement said, "The last year's data clearly shows that the MCD has made a lot of improvement in the cleanliness system." Ms. Oberoi said the survey shows that the city has seen 15% improvement in cleanliness compared to 2022, when the BJP helmed the civic bodies.

## 'Situation deteriorated'

However, the BJP's Delhi unit slammed AAP over the "deteriorating" sanitation situation in the national capital, with its chief Virenra Sachdeva saying the services related to it have declined after AAP came to power in the civic body.

Mr. Sachdeva said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had promised to give additional resources to the MCD to improve sanitation services in the city, but a year later, people are feeling cheated.

## SEE ALSO

» PAGE 18

## NDMC climbs two spots to seventh rank

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) bagged the seventh position in the eighth edition of the cleanliness awards, jumping two slots from the previous survey results.

The NDMC in a post on X (formerly Twitter) said it received five of seven stars for garbage management.

It scored 99% in the door-to-door collection of waste, 87% in source segregation, 100% in waste processing and remediation of dumpsites, cleanliness of water bodies and public toilets, and 93% in the cleanliness of residential and market areas.

NDMC areas last year had seen a facelift ahead of the G-20 summit. Civic body chairperson Amit Yadav congratulated the NDMC staff and promised that it would strive to attain the top slots next year.

## Delhi HC bats for 'true love', quashes FIR against man for eloping with 'minor'

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

refused to abort the child as it was born out of her "marital union with and love for Mr. Khan".

A daughter was born to the couple. In her statements before the police as well as the magistrate, she stood by her stand that she married the man for love and was 18 years of age at the time of their marriage. Mr. Khan remained in jail till April 2018 when he was granted bail and since then the couple is "living happily" and has given birth to another daughter.

## 'Scales of justice'

"In none of the statements at any stage after the FIR lodged by the father of Ms. 'A', did Ms. 'A' allege that she had been kidnapped or was a minor or was sexually assaulted or sexual intercourse was committed by Mr. Khan against her will," the court said.

"This judgment portrays

the story of love between

Ms. 'A' [the girl], who was

allegedly a minor as per the

State and Mr. Khan, who

eloped at the calling of their

love," the court said.

The couple got married

as per Islamic rituals since

they both belonged to the

same religion, with the

blessings of Mr. Khan's pa-

rents.

It said, "When the scales

of justice have to be

weighed, they are not al-

ways on the basis of mathe-

matical precision or mathe-

matical formula. At times,

while one side of the scale

carries the law, the other

side of the scale may carry

the entire life, happiness

and future of toddlers, and

their parents."

Charges to be framed against Senthilbalaji on Jan. 22

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

The Principal Sessions Court on Thursday ordered that jailed Minister V. Senthilbalaji be produced before it on January 22 for framing of charges in connection with a money-laundering case filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

The DMK Minister, who arrested by the ED in June 2023, has been in judicial remand for over 200 days.

**Timings DELHI**

FRIDAY, JAN. 12
RISE 07:16 SET 17:44
RISE 08:09 SET 18:40
SATURDAY, JAN. 13
RISE 07:16 SET 17:45
RISE 08:57 SET 19:52
SUNDAY, JAN. 14
RISE 07:16 SET 17:46
RISE 09:39 SET 21:01

**Delhi Weather** max min  
Delhi City 18 06  
Safdarjang 18 06  
Palam 15 07

**Delhi Palam Today**  
17°C The weather will dry. Morning will be cold with dense fog and sky obscured. The day will be cool with cold breeze.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
18°C Morning will be cold with Dense fog and mist. The day will be cool and hazy. Night will be cold in fog and mist. A dry weather to prevail.  
© Copyright Skymet Weather 2024 All rights reserved.

GOVT. OF ASSAM  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER :: GUWAHATI  
EAST W. R. DIVISION GUWAHATI-08

## SHORT NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION

No. GED/NIT-NIQ/2019-20/

Sealed quotation in prescribed form to be eventually drawn up in A.P.W.D. F-2 form affixing non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty Five Paise) only are hereby invited from the registered contractor under W.R. Deptt. for fixing up the rates for the enlisted items. The quotation will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 PM of 17.01.2024 and will be opened on the same date, time and place. In case the date fixed declare as Holiday / Bondh, the quotation will be received on next working day up to 2.00 PM and will be open on the same date, time and place.

Details NIQ papers may be collected from the office of the undersigned during office hours on all working days till the closing day. Please note that this quotation is only for the purpose of fixation of rates for the ongoing revision of Schedule of Rates 2024-25.

## Terms & Conditions:

- Rate should be quoted inclusive of all taxes both in words and in figure clearly against each item of work.
- No over writing / incomplete quotation will be accepted and will be rejected forthwith.
- Registered contractor should clearly mention their Regn. No. Labour licence No. PAN, GST No. etc. (to be enclosed the attested copies of the same) & full address else quotation will be rejected.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
Guwahati East W.R. Division  
Guwahati-08

Janasanyog /C/14878/ 23/11-Jan-24

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM  
DIRECTORATE OF TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ASSAM  
DISPUR, GUWAHATI-06

Ecf No. TP/OBPS-Tender/421562/2024/10

## NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Request for Proposals (R.F.P.) is invited by the office of the undersigned in two bid system (Technical and Financial bids) from experienced and reputed System Integrators/IT Firms/Pvt. Ltd. companies for "Design, Development, Implementation and Maintenance of Single Window System with Integrated CAD Based Automated Building Drawing Scrutiny for Online Building Permission System" of Assam.

Authority proposes to evolve a CAD based Automated building permission system, thereby the whole system of building permission is proposed to be made transparent, speedy, hassle free and user friendly for the persons seeking permission for construction of building within the state of Assam.

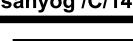
Interested S.I./IT firms/Pvt. Ltd./Ltd. Companies having experience in execution of similar work are therefore invited to submit their bids through the Assam Govt. e-procurement portal https://assamtenders.gov.in only and no other mode of submission shall be accepted for the said purpose.

Detailed Terms of Reference and other conditions may be seen and can only be downloaded from website https://assamtenders.gov.in. The RFP documents can be downloaded from 12th January, 2024

Online submission of RFP will be from 12th January, 2024, 10:00 am up to 2nd February, 2024 till 5:00 pm.

Director  
Town and Country Planning Assam  
Dispur, Guwahati-781006

Janasanyog /C/14922/ 23/12-Jan-24



GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU

DIRECTORATE FOR WELFARE OF THE DIFFERENTLY ABLED

5, LADY WILLINGDON COLLEGE CAMPUS, KAMARAJ SALAI, CHENNAI-600 005.

Roc.No.9270 /A&A/RIGHTS/2023 TENDER NOTICE Dated: 10.01.2024

Expression of Interest (EOI) applications are invited from potential Consulting agencies to design Curriculum for the Life skills education for persons with disabilities and to support its implementation in Tamil Nadu through e-procurement portal. The complete details are available on the department website www.scd.tn.gov.in as well as on the tender website nt-tenders.gov.in.

Applications are requested to be uploaded through e-procurement portal at http://nt-tenders.gov.in Project Director - TN RIGHTS / Director for welfare the Differently Abled, Chennai-600 005 reserves the right to accept or reject the tenders without assigning any reason.

Project Director - RIGHTS / Director for Welfare of the Differently Abled

DIPR/ 217 /TENDER/2024



GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA - DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, ANGUL IRRIGATION CIRCLE, ANGUL, ODISHA

pin- 759143 e-mail: seangulirrigation@gmail.com

Government of Odisha "e-Procurement Notice"

Bid Identification No: ACEAC-04/2023-24

SL. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Period of Completion	Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	Last date/ time for receipt of bid in the portal	Name & Address of the Officer Inviting Bid
01	Improvement to Right Main Canal from RD 0.00m. to RD 7160m., under Nuabaga Barrage of Sapua Badjore Irrigation Project.	Rs.638.15 Lakh (Approx.)	12 (Twelve) Calendar Months including rainy season	25.01.2024 up to 10.00 AM	12.02.2024 up to 5.30 PM	Additional Chief Engineer, Angul Irrigation Circle, Angul
02	Improvement to Left Main Canal from RD 200m. to RD 6770m. under Nuabaga Barrage of Sap					



Narendra Modi  
Prime Minister

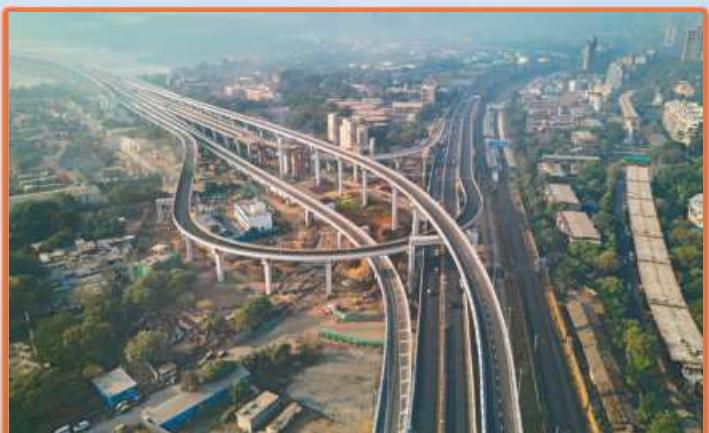


Eknath Shinde  
Chief Minister

**Dynamic & Modern Project's Shaping India's Progress!**

# Inauguration, Foundation stone laying ceremony and Dedication to the nation

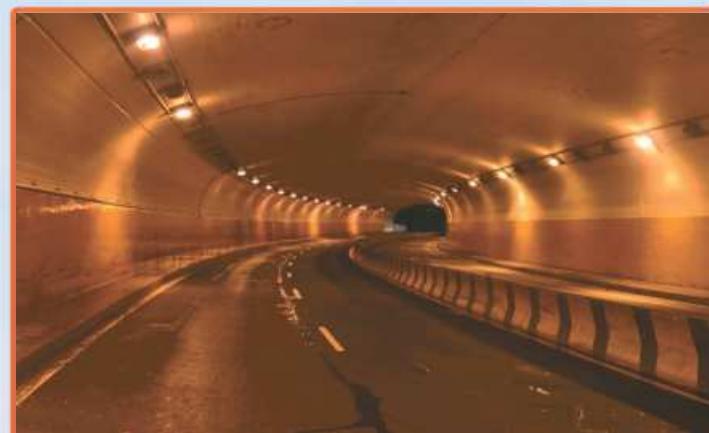
## Various development works by the auspicious hands of Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**



Atal Bihari Vajpayee  
Sewri Nhava-Sheva Atal Setu



NaMo Mission – Chief Minister  
Women Empowerment Scheme



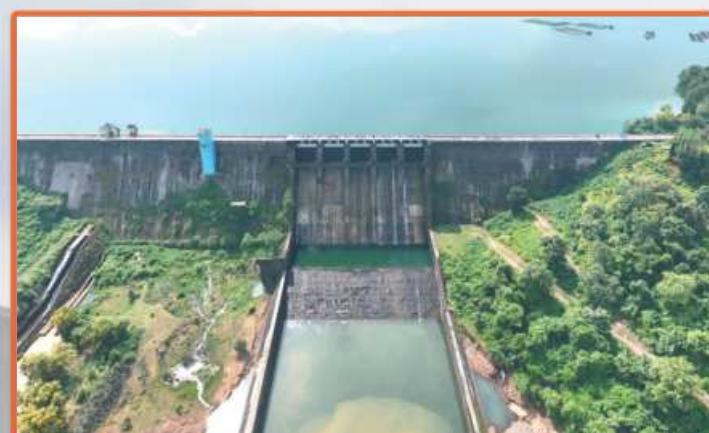
Orange Gate to Marine Drive  
underground tunnel project



Nari Shaktidoot App



Navi Mumbai Metro-1 from  
Belapur to Pendhar



Surya Regional Water Supply project  
for the cities located in the Western  
Division of Mumbai Metropolitan Region



Date: 12 January 2024 | Time: 4 PM

**Navi Mumbai International Airport Ground Opp. the office Building,  
Tehsil-Panvel, District Raigad, Pin-410206.**

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER  
DIV (COMMERCIAL), GLADNI, JAMMU  
JAMMU & KASHMIR POWER TRANSMISSION  
CORPORATION LIMITED**  
(e-mail-ldmtdivisionjmu@gmail.com)

**Tender Cancellation Notice**

Reference No:- ENIT No.:CD/JKPTCL/J/07 of 2023-24 Dated: 21.11.2023

SUB: CONSTRUCTION OF SHED FOR STORAGE OF VARIOUS DISMANTLED AND NEW MATERIALS AND SERVO AND ALLIED WORKS PERTAINING TO SLDC SUB-DIVISION COMMERCIAL WING JAMMU.

The above said tender notice dated 21/11/2023 stands cancelled, due to administrative reasons.

Executive Engineer,  
Division (Commercial),  
DIP/J-4840-P/23



**CITY UNION BANK LIMITED**  
Credit Recovery and Management Department  
Administrative Office: No.24-B, Gandhi Nagar,  
Kumbakonam - 612 001. E-Mail: crmd@cityunionbank.in,  
Phone: 0435-2432322, Fax: 0435-2431746

**RE-TENDER-CUM-AUCTION SALE NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002**

The following properties mortgaged to City Union Bank Limited will be sold in Re-Tender-cum-Public Auction by the Authorised Officer of the Bank, under Rule 8 (6) & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, under the SARFAESI Act, 2002, for recovery of a sum of Rs.74,48,957/- (Rupees Forty Nine Lakh Forty Eight Thousand Nine Hundred and Fifty Seven only) as on 09-01-2024 together with further interest to be charged from 10-01-2024 onwards and other expenses, any other dues to the bank by the borrowers / guarantors (No.1) Ms. K.R. Agencies, D-16/295, Sector 7, Rohini, Delhi - 110085. Also at, Ms. K.R. Agencies, Shop No.52 and 61, Ground Floor, Sarja Village Naharpur, Sector-7, Rohini, Delhi - 110085. No.2) Mr. Rajnish Bansal, S/o, Ram Babu, Bansal, D-16/295, Sector 7, Rohini, Delhi - 110085. No.3) Mrs. Santosh Bansal, W/o, Rajnish Bansal, D-16/295, Sector 7, Rohini, Delhi - 110085. No.4) Mr. Ankit Bansal, S/o, Rajnish Bansal, D-16/295, Sector 7, Rohini, Delhi - 110085.

Note : 1) That our 244-New Delhi-Rohini Branch has also extended Financial Assistance (CUB OSL SPECIAL-BR\_50181208090733) dated 04-07-2022 requested by No.1 of you represented by No. 2 of you as Partner for which No.2 of you stood as Co-obligant and No. 2 of you stood as Guarantor for the facility for a total amount of Rs. 26,00,000/- at a ROI of 15.75%. The same has been also classified as NPA on 28-10-2022 and the outstanding balance as on 09-01-2024 is Rs.33,76,123/- plus further interest and penal interest of 2.00% with monthly rests to be charged from 10-01-2024 till the date of realization.

2) That our 244-New Delhi-Rohini Branch has also extended Financial Assistance (OTHER EDUCATION LOANS:50111201002235) dated 03-11-2016 requested by No.4 of you for which Nos.2 & 3 of you stood as Co-obligants for the facility for a total amount of Rs. 23,50,000/- at a ROI of 15.50% and the outstanding balance as on 09-01-2024 is Rs. 35,62,697/- plus further interest and penal interest of 2.00% with monthly rests to be charged from 10-01-2024 till the date of realization.

**Immovable Properties Mortgaged to our Bank**

1) All that piece of the Residential Flat, Entire Second Floor (without Roof right) of Property Bearing No.299, Block D, Pocket 16, Sector 7, Rohini with the proportionate rights of the land admeasuring 25.90 sq.mtrs in the name of Santosh Bansal which is bounded as under: North: Property No.301, South: Open Area, West: Property No.300. 2) All that piece of the Residential Flat, Entire Second Floor (without Roof Right) of Property Bearing No.300, Block D, Pocket 16, Sector 7, Rohini with the Proportionate rights of the land admeasuring 25.90 sq.mtrs in the name of Santosh Bansal which is bounded as under: North: Road, South: Open Area, East: Open Area, West: Open Area.

**Schedule - B : (Property Owned by Mrs. Santosh Bansal, S/o, Rajnish Bansal)**

3) All that piece and of the Residential Flat, Entire Second Floor (without Roof right) of Property Bearing No.301, Block D, Pocket 16, Sector 7, Rohini with the Proportionate rights of the land admeasuring 25.90 sq.mtrs in the name of Rajnish Bansal which is bounded as under: North: Road, South: Open Area, East: Open Area, West: Open Area.

**Reserve Price : Rs.90,00,000/- (Rupees Ninety Lakh only) (For Schedule B & C)**

**RE-AUCTION DETAILS**

Date of Re-Tender-cum-Auction Sale	Venue
07-02-2024	City Union Bank Limited, New Delhi-Rohini Branch, C-9/115, Sector 8, Rohini, New Delhi, Delhi - 110085. Telephone No.011-27941336, Cell No.9350011173.

**Terms and Conditions of Re-Tender-cum-Auction Sale :**

(1) The intending bidders should be present in person for the auction and participate personally and give a declaration in writing to the effect that he/she is bidding for himself / herself. (2) The intending bidders may obtain the Tender Forms from The Manager, City Union Bank Limited, Faridabad Branch, E510, BP Railway Road, Near Neelam Baba Chowk, Faridabad - 121001. (3) The intending bidders should submit their bids only in the Tender Form prescribed in sealed envelopes addressed to The Authorised Officer, City Union Bank Ltd., together with a Pay Order / Demand Draft for an EMD of 10% of the Reserve Price, drawn in favour of "City Union Bank Ltd.", or on or before 01.00 p.m. on the date of Tender-cum-Auction Sale hereby notified. (4) For inspection of the property and other particulars, the intending purchaser may contact Telephone No.011-27941336, Cell No.9350011173. (5) The properties are sold on "As-is-where-is". "As-is-what-is" and "whatever-there-is" basis. (6) The sealed tenders will be opened in the presence of the intending bidders at 01.00 p.m. on the date of Tender-cum-Auction Sale hereby notified. Though in general the sale will be by way of closed tenders, the Authorised Officer may, at his sole discretion, conduct an Open Auction among the interested bidders who desire to quote a bid higher than the one received in the closed tender process, and in such an event, the sale shall be conferred on the person making highest bid. The sale, however, is subject to confirmation of City Union Bank Limited. (7) The successful bidder shall have to pay 25% (inclusive of EMD paid) of the sale amount immediately on completion of sale and the balance amount of 75% within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale, failing which the initial deposit of 25% shall be forfeited. (8) The Sale Certificate will be issued by the Authorised Officer in favour of the successful purchaser only after receipt of the entire sale consideration within the time limit stipulated herein. (9) The successful purchaser shall bear the charges / fees payable for conveyance, such as stamp duty, registration fee etc., as applicable under law. (10) The successful bidder should pay the statutory dues (lawful house tax, electricity charges and other dues), TDS, GST if any, due to Government, Government Undertaking and local bodies. (11) The Authorised Officer shall have all the powers to accept or reject the bids or postpone or cancel the sale without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Place : Kumbakonam, Date : 10-01-2024 Authorised Officer

Regd. Office: 149, T.S.R. (Big) Street, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu - 612001, CIN - L65110TN1904PLC001287, Telephone No.0435-2402322, Fax: 0435-2431746, Website: www.cityunionbank.com

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

It is notified for the Information General Public as the President of Sanstha "Parvasi Nepali Mitr Munch" (Registered), having registration Number S-22191, I, Bishnu Prasad Khanal, am proud to announce our exciting evolution. Effective immediately, our Sanstha will be known as "Mitra Manav Kalyan (Bharat)", signifying our renewed dedication to serving all in need across India. This decision has been taken by our board of members on the meet held on 1st of January 2024. President Mr. Bishnu Prasad Khanal

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given that in respect to DCM Shriram Limited the share certificate No. 15271 with Distinctive Numbers 175023 to 1750590 & 88601899 to 88602250 with respect to Folio No. 37399 Registered in the name of Mr. Usha Handloom Industry, Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu, India - 602002 Limited with Letter of Agreement No. 2161 dated 07.06.2019 for setting up an industrial project of manufacturing of Cloth. Further, HSIDC vide letter No.2043 dated 04.02.2016 had made the change in constitution (with in family) in favour of M/S SARASWATI INDUSTRY having registered office at C-531, Lawrence Road, New Delhi-110023 through its Letter of Agreement No. 2161 dated 07.06.2019 for setting up an industrial project of manufacturing of Cloth. 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## IN BRIEF



## Around 65,000 candidates enrol for Yuva Nidhi scheme

As the fifth and final guarantee scheme of the Congress government, Yuva Nidhi, will be launched officially in Shivamogga town in Karnataka on Friday, around 65,000 candidates had registered by Thursday evening for the scheme. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will launch the scheme and the allowance will be credited to the bank accounts of the eligible candidates on Friday after the inaugural session. Sharan Prakash Patil, Minister of Medical Education and Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood, said unemployment allowance for two years will be given to those who passed degree/diploma in 2022-2023, under the scheme. Unemployed graduates will get ₹3,000 per month while diploma holders will receive ₹1,500. Training will be provided by registering them on the portal.

## Google keen on working with Telangana govt., says its V-P

The Hindu Bureau  
HYDERABAD

Google has evinced interest in working together with the Telangana government. Google vice-president Chandrasekhar Thota, who met Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday, said the company was excited to partner with the State in developing a digitisation agenda in farming, education and health. The IT major had deep technology and expertise for bringing quality service to serve the needs of the people.



**Investment plans:** Google vice-president Chandrasekhar Thota with Telangana CM A. Revanth Reddy in Hyderabad on Thursday.

He discussed the company's investment plans and told Mr. Reddy that Artificial Intelligence was set to bring major transformation in various sectors. Mr. Reddy discussed about improving road safety using Google Maps and Google Earth platforms.

## CPI(M) and Congress wrangle over YC Kerala chief's health

CPI(M) says the court found no merit in Mamkootathil's claim that he was not healthy; Opposition alleges the Kerala government persuaded GH resident medical officer to certify he was healthy

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Rahul Mamkootathil

The Congress on Thursday sought to cast the dawn arrest and subsequent incarceration of Youth Congress (YC) Kerala president Rahul Mamkootathil on Tuesday as the latest example of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government's contempt for the Opposition and intolerance to democratic dissent.

**Remanded in custody**

Even as a district court here in Thiruvananthapuram deferred the hearing on Mr. Mamkootathil's bail plea, the Congress and the CPI(M) disagreed over

whether the YC leader had furnished a fabricated medical examination report to dodge judicial remand.

CPI(M) State secretary M.V. Govindan provoked the war of words by stating that the court found no merit in Mr. Mamkootathil's

claim that he was not healthy enough to endure judicial remand.

The magistrate ordered a medical examination by a team of government doctors who submitted that Mr. Mamkootathil was healthy and suffered no serious ailment.

The court subsequently remanded him in judicial custody till January 22.

Mr. Govindan alleged that Mr. Mamkootathil's action contrasted with his earlier statement that he would not "develop chest pain" during the time of the arrest.

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Sathesean challenged Mr. Govindan to furnish proof that Mr.

Mamkootathil had faked the medical report issued by a prominent super-specialty hospital.

He alleged that the government pressured the resident medical officer at General Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram, to certify that Mr. Mamkootathil was healthy.

"The RMO merely checked Mr. Mamkootathil's blood pressure and deemed he was alright. Mr. Mamkootathil had sustained a head injury in a police action on December 20. The doctors advised him rest. The party had planned to take him to Bengaluru for further treatment when the arrest occurred," he said.

## Case against five for beating up woman, man in Karnataka

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BELAGAVI

They slapped and kicked the man and threatened to kill them.

The victims are from a neighbouring district and are about 30-40 years old.

The accused are Aftab Makabul Ahmed Chandankatti, 24; Madarsab Mohammad Isak Mandakki, 23; and Samiulla Lalanaivar. Two other accused are yet to be identified. All the accused are from Akki Alur in Haveri district.

The FIR was registered based on a complaint by Vinay Kyasanur, who works in the hotel.

Meanwhile, former CM Basavaraj Bommai urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to break his silence on the incident. He demanded a comprehensive probe covering all aspects.

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Dedication of

by Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya Hon'ble Minister of Chemicals & Fertilizers and Health & Family Welfare, Government of India & Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Assam

In August Presence of

Shri Bhagwanth Khuba Hon'ble Minister of State (Chemicals & Fertilizers), Government of India

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12<sup>th</sup> January 2024 Changsari, Kamrup, Assam

## SPOTLIGHT



**Long struggle:**  
Residents of Duanmunda village of Jharsuguda district in western Odisha, displaced by the Hirakud dam, get land registered in their names after 67 years.  
BISWARANJAN ROUT

# From legacy displacement to land ownership

Last year, the Odisha government appointed a task force to solve the State's complex problems with *pattas*, some dating back over a century.

**Satyasundar Barik** untangles some of the 30 terrain troubles that people faced and what it means to them to have deeds registered in their names now

**J**anakram Pradhan, 81, remembers events in 1956 when the Odisha government had sent trucks to vacate Duanmunda village in Jharsuguda district. In one of India's first major post-independence multipurpose river valley projects, the government was about to impound the Hirakud reservoir, formed as a result of damming the Mahanadi river. Duanmunda was one of the 19 villages in the district that were majorly hit. But less than a couple of kilometres away, at an elevation of 630-632 feet above the reservoir, were 3,231 acres acquired by the government, but not submerged. It was here that the villagers moved, continuing to call the area Duanmunda.

Janakram and his family of 11 have lived here for 67 years, among others from the village, gradually building concrete houses. It was only in December 2023 that he received the *patta* (land deed) for 74 decimals of land (about 435 square feet). He is delighted, but says, "The government that forced my family to surrender my land still owes us ₹300 from the ₹5,300 we got as compensation for the 9.5 acres we once owned."

In a large-scale land records regularisation initiative, a part of the 'Vision 5T' that aims to transform Odisha, the government is attempting to resolve decades-old legacy issues. Some of these 30-odd problems related to land classification go back as far as India's first war of independence in 1857, explain officials from the Revenue Department, under whose purview land records fall. "In Jharsuguda, this has benefited 1,749 families," says District Collector Aboli Sunil Naravane.

The initiative – that will see rules and laws implemented – will impact almost all those in the State who own agricultural land because Odisha's land records have complexities that range from lands that were sublet by rulers to subjects in pre-independence times to those seized by the British after 1857. Parts of the State were once under the Madras Presidency and some under the Bengal Presidency, making the inheritance of different systems a problem.

Last year, a Revenue Task Force was set up to help resolve land-related problems. "Experienced officials with expertise in land administration examined various aspects of land legacy issues," says Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue and Disaster Management) Satyabrata Sahu, who heads the task force. One of the key recommendations was the emphasis on a satellite-based land survey to reduce the time required to a little over two months.

#### Problems on ground

The Hirakud dam project submerged 73,923 hectares (1,82,590 acres) – 49,920 hectares (1,23,303 acres) of agricultural land, and 24,003 hectares (59,287 acres) of government land, including forests. This resulted in the complete submersion of 111 villages, with 108 located in Odisha. Additionally, 174 villages expe-

Although we reside on the banks of the Hirakud reservoir, our agricultural land never received water for irrigation. Due to absence of government records, we were not eligible for the State-funded irrigation facility

**JOGIN德拉  
PRADHAN**  
Resident of Duanmunda



The Hirakud reservoir in Lakhapur tehsil in Jharsuguda district of western Odisha; about 15,000 families were evicted to construct the dam; (below) Baidhehi Pradhan, 75, one of the few women who received a *patta*. BISWARANJAN ROUT

rienced partial submersion, with 141 in Odisha and 33 in Chhattisgarh. According to government sources, approximately 18,000 families were displaced in the process. In the reservoir area, 15,000 families were evicted from 1,47,363 acres. Only 3,790 acres of government-owned land was made available to 1,410 families for resettlement. They were given land deeds.

The project saw the rehabilitation and resettlement of people for years, with cases reaching the Orissa High Court and the National Human Rights Commission.

Jogindra Pradhan, another octogenarian from Duanmunda, had lost count of the innumerable representations made before successive State governments for legal allotment of land. Both he and Janakram had even been jailed for staging agitations in support of their demand. "Almost seven decades is a long time to live like occupants in an informal settlement. This is like a second independence day for us," he says.

Jogindra explains the problems the villagers have faced over the years: "We reside on the banks of the Hirakud reservoir, but our agricultural land never got water for irrigation. Due to absence of government records, we were not eligible for the State-funded irrigation facility."

In Lachhipalli village, Sashibhusan Pradhan, 76, expresses relief, saying, "Now, people can freely sell or buy land as their property rights have been officially provided. Over the decades, villagers endured immense difficulties as they couldn't sell land in times of extreme need. The absence of *pattas* led to a lack of interest from buyers."

Baidhehi Pradhan, 75, is one of the few women who

ed as Sikim. The cut-off date for regularising Sikkim-category land was 1977. Many missed it.

In response, the State government has now amended Section 4(l)(i) of the Odisha Land Reforms Act, 1960, providing relief. Farmers now can change their land classification and record their land in their own name in the next two years. To expedite the matter, tehsildars have been asked to start *suo motu* regularisation of the record of rights categorised as Sikkim. The government believes approximately 2,54,033 farmer families across 26 districts, of the total 30, will benefit from the initiative.

There are distinct classifications of land with unique characteristics in the State. *Khasmahal* land, governed by the Bengal Land Revenue Settlement Regulation (Regulation VIII of 1822 and Regulation XI of 1828), involves leases granted for a specific term. It required permission of the previous landlord for transfer of land. This clause has now been removed.

The processes for regularisation for many other types of land, to record it in the name of the occupant if they claim it, have been simplified. The cost of settlement has been brought down from 10% and 20% of the value of the land to 1% and 2%, respectively. Those hoping to convert agriculture land to homestead land will benefit. Earlier, the rate of conversion was dependent on the land's distance from major roads; now it has been standardised to 1%, from an earlier cost that could go up to ₹3 lakh per acre.

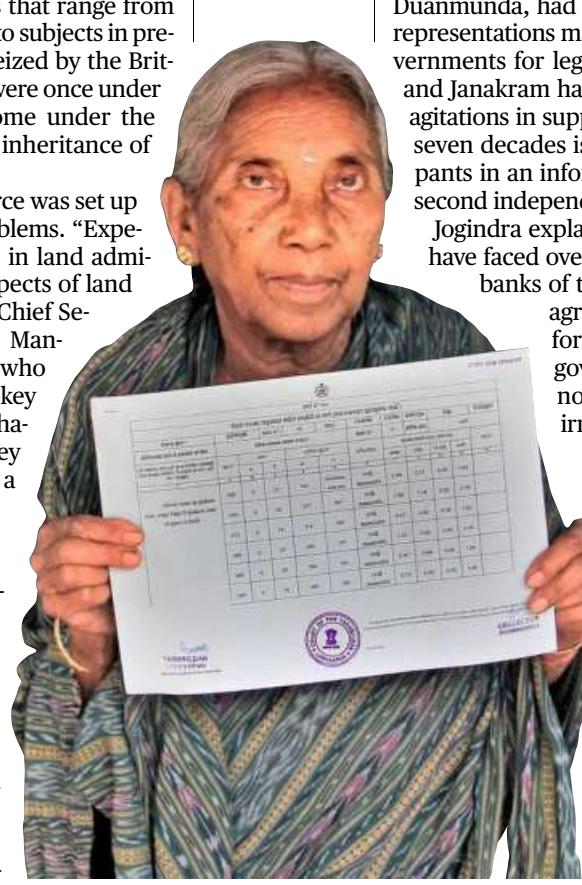
*Nazul* land stands for escheated properties, seized after the first war of independence in 1857, often managed directly by the government, and occasionally used for public purposes or leased for 30 years in areas such as Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Kesinga, Bhawanipatana, Junagarh, and other urban zones.

*Poramboke* land, denoting uncultivated lands in villages reserved for communal purposes despite being in possession of individuals for generations, is a result of the State's Tamil association. These can be reinstated to individuals.

*Abadi (basti)* land comes under Section 71 of the Central Provinces Land Revenue Act, 1917. Settlement officers in inhabited villages determine reserved land for residents or ancillary purposes, observed in Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Baragarh, and Nuapada.

*Chaka* land, a result of consolidation of agricultural land in eight districts under the Odisha Consolidation of Holdings and Prevention of Fragmentation of Land Act, 1972, will also see changes. This land could not be sold in parts but only as a whole. Recognising the increasing demand for land for housing and other development, the government amended the law in 2023.

V.K. Pandian, the chairperson of the 5T initiative, talks about touring the districts, where people pressed him for streamlined land records. "The administration addressed these concerns, with decisions made within the Revenue and Disaster Management Department. While these adjustments did not impose a significant burden on the State's resources, they had a profound and positive impact on the lives of the people," he says. The State is in the process of identifying and resolving projects stuck for over 10 years.



have received a *patta*. She moved to Duanmunda only after she was married, but has lived here for about 50 years now. "This has always been home for me," she says.

#### Displaced by another dam

In Gundurabadi village in the Ganjam district, 350 km south of Duanmunda, four generations of the family of Somanath Swain, 63, have lived a life of squatters in their own village. More than a century ago, the British government had envisioned a reservoir between the Khunteswari and Raipada hills, by damming the Jarau river. The foundation stone of the project was laid in 1896 – up to 22 villages would have gone under water. The British soon decided that far too much land would be impacted, and shifted the reservoir to another site.

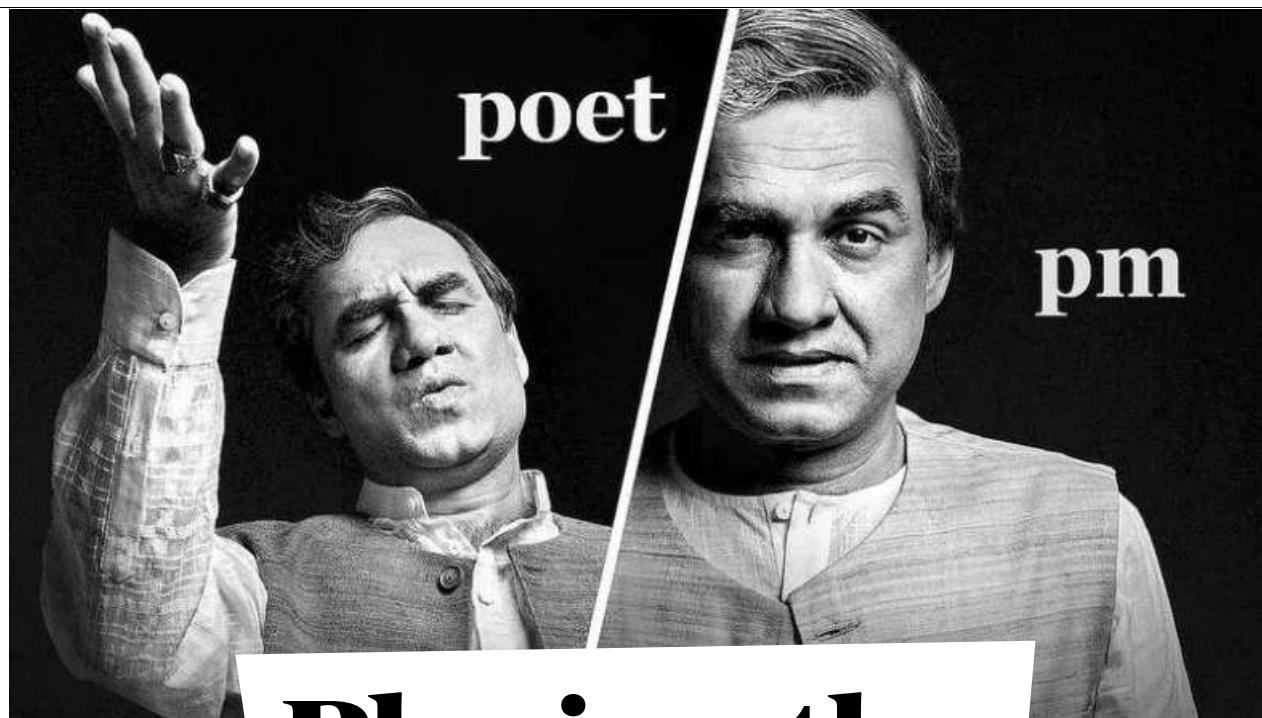
The residents of the 22 villages lived without any documentation. During the settlement process in 1983, the land they occupied was recorded as belonging to the Water Resources Department, classifying it as *jalasaya* or reservoir, despite not being within the current Surada reservoir's boundaries.

For the past century, the residents of Gundurabadi village have relied on possession notes (documents that do not allow resale) to validate their occupation. In December last year, up to 1,662 *pattas* (962 homestead and 700 agricultural pieces of land) for 1,363.049 acres were issued to residents of 17 villages. In Surada tehsil, villagers had developed their own system for land transactions in the absence of official records. Bichitra Kumar Gouda, a resident of Gundurabadi, explains, "During events like marriage or hospitalisation, land needs to be sold. In reservoir-affected villages, elders acted as witnesses or guarantors, and land was transferred verbally, in good faith. But without land records, its value was not realised."

#### Odisha's unique problems

In the past, several farmers enjoyed land as tenants under the *ryoti* system (institutionalised under the British as a way to collect revenue), and as successors-in-interest (legal heirs), record-

# metro PLUS



Versatile  
Pankaj Tripathi  
as Atal Bihari  
Vajpayee.  
SPECIAL  
ARRANGEMENT

## Playing the poet-politician

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**A**fter a long time, Hindi cinema will see a dhoti-kurta-clad hero, says Pankaj Tripathi as we discuss the takeaways of his latest and perhaps the biggest role of his career. Playing Atal Bihari Vajpayee is a challenge but Tripathi says he identified with the understated resolve of the former Prime Minister. "It was slightly instinctive for me to understand his sensitive side and perhaps that's why I was cast."

Often seen as a liberal man in a conservative party, Vajpayee meant different things to different people at different points in history. For Tripathi, it was the "deeply democratic" nature of the man in "challenging situations" that left a mark. He advises to wait for the critics' verdict on the intent of the film.

Edited excerpts from an interview:

**Question:** What was your impression of Atal Bihari Vajpayee during your student days and how did you react when you were selected to play him on big screen?

**Answer:** He was my favourite leader. I remember listening to his speech in Patna in 1995-96. There was such a crowd that I could not go near him despite trying. It was like a wide angle shot with Vajpayeeji speaking and Shatrughan Sinha standing behind him. It was the first time, I saw a film actor. *Aage priya neta aur p Peeche ek achche abhineta...*

At that time I was just getting by. I had yet to make up my mind about acting. I had not even dreamt that one day I will get to play him. So, during the

**Ahead of the release of Main Atal Hoon, actor Pankaj Tripathi says he has tried to bring out the core consciousness of the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee**

shoot when Raviji (director Ravi Jadhav) would say, take a tight close up of Atal ji, at the back of my mind that wide angle shot of Gandhi Maidan would play. Life shows different colours....

**Q:** The biopics of political leaders are always fraught with the danger of getting reduced to hero worship or a tool to push a political narrative...

**A:** We have tried to portray him as a person with as many complexities as can be put together in 120 minutes so that the audience can take at least a sense of Vajpayeeji's big personality with them. In his centenary year, the film is the journey of the little boy Atal who went on to become Atal Bihari Vajpayee, taking his party from two seats in the Lok Sabha to forming the Government. We have covered his personal, poetic and political side till 1999.

Every thought comes with a problem. People of each ideology believe that only they are right and others should believe in what they think is right. In art, however, intent is important. We have not made the film keeping in mind the socio-political churn after 2014 when the BJP came back to power. It is about the man who created the party.

**Q:** Being a popular leader who has been mimicked a

**lot, how did you construct his personality?**

**A:** The idea is to understand his core consciousness. Mannerisms are ornamental. I was conscious that my performance should not sound like mimicry or look caricature-like. I was more interested in understanding his state of mind before a crucial event or speech.

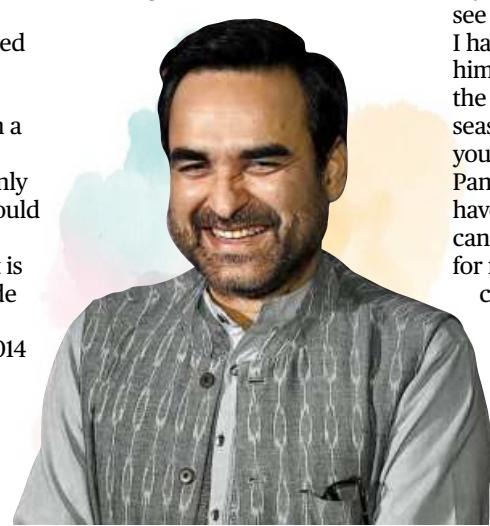
I am adept at acting and know cooking. In cooking, every ingredient can be measured but in acting the only barometer could be the gaze of the director. His eyes would tell me if I had to tone down or pitch it up. Vajpayeeji never got offended by his mimicry. In fact, he encouraged Shekhar Suman when he copied his style for laughs.

**Q:** And image fatigue?

**A:** I haven't consciously built an image. Director Amit Rai was apprehensive before casting me as a devout believer in *OMG-2* because of

my *Mirzapur* character. I could see the tension on his face and I had to make an effort to make him believe. In the age of OTT, the trend of sequels and seasons forces you to repeat yourself. I am tired of playing Pandit in the *Fukrey* series as I have explored all possibilities. I can only continue doing it for money because it is not creatively satisfying any more. If I keep getting challenging roles, I will request directors to keep me out of future seasons. But if my bank balance plunges, I would again say yes to sequels.

Survival comes first.



### STEP OUT

#### Music concert

HCL Concerts and Gurukulam Foundation is presenting Swar Sangam with Sudha Ragunathan in a Carnatic music recital. Entry open to all.



At Basement auditorium, ISKCON Temple, A-5, Maharaja Agrasen Marg, Opposite NTPC office, Block A, Sector 33, Noida; January 13; 3pm

#### Laughter fest

Kanupriya Theatre Company and Shaswat Entertainment have lined up two musical comedies *Baap Ka Baap* and *Zamana Kya Kahega* featuring Asrani, Padmini Kolhapure, Rakesh Bedi, Delnaz Irani and others.

At Kamani Auditorium, Copernicus Marg, Mandi House; January 13 and 14; 3.30pm and 7.30pm; Tickets on bookmyshow



#### Visual spectacle

Oil on canvas titled *Eternal Reminiscence*, is artist Hemraj's unique perspective on the concept of now. The week-long solo exhibition is presented by Dhomimal Gallery.

At LTC Gallery Bikaner House (near India Gate); Open to all from January 14; 10am to 6pm.

#### Shailaja Tripathi

**C**arved into a horseshoe-shaped cliff along the Waghora River in Maharashtra, 30 Ajanta caves date back to the 2nd Century BC. Within them, they nurture a treasure of rock-cut architecture and exquisite mural paintings. Film-maker, art-historian and photographer Benoy K Behl shines a light, quite literally, on these gems.

In Lost Ancient Art Revealed!, Behl's ongoing show at the India International Centre (IIC), visitors get a glimpse of the paintings based on the life of Buddha. Weighed down by time and the vagaries of Nature, the frescoes – one of the finest examples of Buddhist art in India, are in a fragile state today. It is vital that people find wonder and pleasure in these incredibly

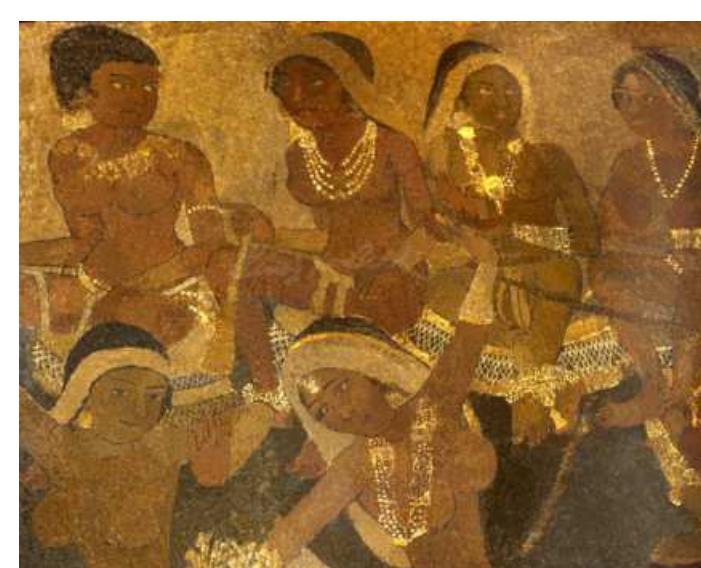
detailed paintings inside the caves, painted in complete darkness centuries ago. "They are spiritual in nature; not just elaborate but also advanced in technical virtuosity," says Behl, who has taken over 53,000 photographs of Asian monuments and art heritage and made 146 documentaries.

Behl has painstakingly showcased 40 pictures of paintings after digitally restoring them. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the senior art historian documented the site, which is a complex comprising viharas and shrines with approximately 29 caves. He subsequently carried out digital restoration but was reluctant to exhibit.

"During COVID-19, I got time to review my work and realised it's time to release it in view of the haphazard digital restoration work that was being carried out regarding the site. I wanted to underline how

## Into the spotlight

**Benoy K Behl's show reveals the hidden gems of the Ajanta Caves to the world**



thoughtfully technology can be used in the world of art," says Behl, who also unveiled the new edition of his book *The Ajanta Caves* (Thames & Hudson).

While he has documented the entire complex, the exhibition showcases a few eminent works from caves numbers 1, 2, and 17. Behl has captured the *Mahajanaka Jataka*, depicting the story of



**Restorative art** (From left) Digitally restored photograph of a 2nd century BC mural in Ajanta Cave 10; kitchen scene in Cave 1; and Benoy K Behl. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

prince Janaka of Mithila. "There is another beautiful mural from cave number 1 that shows women grinding spices. In the digitally restored work, I have been able to clearly show the one in the middle is pushing back her hair while grinding spices. I have digitally restored much of the damage of the paintings. They can now be seen nearer to their original glory," says Behl.

Another interesting mural is Queen and Attendants from Cave 3, Badami, 6th century AD. It has been revealed through Behl's photography in 2001 and his subsequent careful digital restoration, that also removes graffiti from the works.

How did Behl capture the damaged remnants of ancient painting in the dark interiors of

caves and temples? Well, by using low-light photography. "I pioneered the technique of low-light photography about three decades ago. In 1991, the then Director-General of the Archeological Survey of India wrote to me, 'You have conquered the darkness!'"

Low-light photography is taking images in dark environments with limited or no light. He reveals his exposures went up to 20 minutes.

"Low-light can give you accuracy and depth that strong lights can't give. In low light, you concentrate more. There is a saying in Japanese that says in low light, you see better."

At Art Gallery, Kamaladevi Complex, IIC, Max Mueller Marg; Till January 19; 11am to 7pm

## Focus on Delhi's romance with Urdu

In his translation of the 1894 book *Sawaneh-i-Delhi*, Ather Farouqui gives a glimpse of Delhi, also the city of Urdu poet, Mir Taqi Mir, whose third centenary falls next month

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**F**or years, Ather Farouqui has been bringing little-known gems of medieval Indian history to readers through his English translations of Urdu originals. His richly researched books have helped bridge the gap at a time when Urdu seems to be losing readers.

Based in New Delhi, Farouqui writes about Delhi for Delhiites. Now, soaking in the applause for his latest book, *Sawaneh-i-Delhi*, Farouqui hopes the legendary Urdu poet Mir Taqi Mir, whose third centenary falls next month.

Three books – *Bazm-i Aakhir, Delhi in Historical Perspectives* and *Sawaneh-i Delhi* – explain Farouqui's abiding love for Delhi, where he has lived for four decades. To not fall in love with the history of the city, which is so liberally dotted with graceful historical ruins, would be oddly detached, he says.

Farouqui's knowledge of Urdu elevated his interest in the city as he took to translating some rich books on Delhi. What perturbs him is the gradual demise of Urdu as a functional language. "Many primary sources will soon no longer be consulted, and we will have only a distorted history of Delhi based on secondary sources, and imagination and bias," he fears.

**Growth and decline**  
Farouqui's latest translation, *Sawaneh-i Delhi*, is a biography of the city published by Roli Books. It was first published in 1894 by Bahadur Shah Zafar's grandson Mirza Ahmed Akhtar Gorgani, and was the most talked about book when it had not yet been translated into English. Farouqui says it was glorified because of the author's relationship with Bahadur Shah Zafar.

"Excerpts from the book were quoted quite frequently without those quoting it realising that it had been written at the behest of the British. Had this book not been translated, its excerpts could have become a primary source for the distortion of history," says Farouqui of his work.

Talking about the city's decline during the British days, Farouqui says, by the time they took over, the Mughal dynasty was already on the decline. The book talks about how Delhi was used to the cycle of growth and decline.

"Architecturally and culturally, this cycle is what has given Delhi its distinctiveness and magnificence," says Farouqui.

#### Multiple cities

Delhi is a composite of many cities. Each dynasty built its own city, often choosing a new location – although sometimes using the construction material of older ruins – and brought its own culture.

"There is no doubt that the city reached an architectural and cultural zenith under the Mughals, especially from the time of Shah Jahan. The decline was more tragic because the British never became indigenous rulers unlike the earlier conquerors. Theirs remained a foreign



city of tombs

Farooqui rues that Delhi became a city of tombs after Partition. He terms 1947 as the watershed moment in South Asian Muslim history, whose major victim city is Delhi.

Not many organisations dedicated to Urdu bother to celebrate Urdu. This year marks the third centenary of Mir and Farouqui's latest translation brings the focus back on Urdu and its importance in relation to history.

"Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu (Hind), the oldest Urdu literary institution for the preservation and promotion of Urdu language, with its meagre resources and no government grants, is celebrating Mir, in its own way by publishing his autobiography, *Zikr-i Mir*, which was censored by the Anjuman in 1928.

"The publication of the complete text is the best tribute to Mir," says Farouqui.

# Editorial



## The Speaker's court

**The power to disqualify should be in independent hands**

The Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar's ruling on the disqualification petitions filed by rival factions of the Shiv Sena demonstrates why the adjudicatory function under the anti-defection law should not be in the hands of Presiding Officers in the legislature. In a matter that many thought would decide the survival of the Eknath Shinde regime, the Speaker has ruled that there was no case to disqualify members of the Eknath Shinde faction, or 14 members in the Uddhav B. Thackeray (UBT) group. The ruling was based mainly on the finding that loyalists of Eknath Shinde, the Chief Minister now, constituted the 'real political party' when rival Shiv Sena factions emerged on June 21, 2022. Mr. Narwekar's verdict conveniently draws upon some aspects of the Supreme Court's final verdict of May 11, 2023, in which a Constitution Bench ruled that the Governor was wrong in asking the then Chief Minister, Uddhav Thackeray, to undergo a floor test and that the Speaker was wrong in recognising the Shinde faction's appointee as the party's whip. In contrast to the Court ruling, the Speaker has declared that Sunil Prabhu, an appointed of the UBT faction, 'ceased to be the duly authorised whip' from June 21, 2022, and that Bharat Gogawale of the Shinde group was 'validly appointed' as the whip. As a result, Mr. Narwekar found no reason to sustain the charge that the Shinde loyalists violated any whip. He also ruled that there was no proof that the UBT group violated the other side's whip as no such whip was served on them.

The Uddhav Thackeray group may approach the Supreme Court again, possibly on the ground that the Speaker's ruling contradicts key conclusions of the Bench. While acknowledging the split in the Shiv Sena Legislature Party, the Court had said: "... no faction or group can argue that they constitute the original political party as a defence against disqualification on the ground of defection". The Speaker has also referred to the Shinde faction's "overwhelming majority" (37 out of 55 MLAs of the original party). On the other hand, the Court had observed that the percentage of members in each faction is irrelevant to the determination whether a defence to disqualification is made out. However, the Court had conceded that the Speaker may have to decide on which faction is the real party when adjudicating a question of defection. It favoured reliance on a version of the party constitution and leadership structure submitted to the Election Commission before rival groups emerged. It is these observations that the Speaker has utilised to determine which group is the real party. As long as defection disputes are in the hands of Speakers, and not any independent authority, political considerations will undoubtedly cast a shadow on such rulings.

## Show of fairness

**Tableau rotational plan for States and Union Territories is an equitable one**

The Defence Ministry has finalised a rotational plan which will ensure that all States and Union Territories get a chance to display their tableaux at the Republic Day parade within a three-year cycle. This is a welcome step that will potentially avoid controversy over the selection of tableaux that has become an unfortunate and frequent accompaniment of the parade. This year, tableaux of 16 States/Union Territories (UT) were selected for the January 26 parade following an established process but the Opposition-ruled Delhi, Punjab, Karnataka and West Bengal that were not qualified cried foul. Karnataka's Congress Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has said that seven proposals sent by the State were rejected by the Centre. A political motive behind selection and exclusion has often been suggested, under the current BJP regime and the previous UPA regime. Only around 15 or 16 tableaux from States/UTs are selected each year, and, obviously, all cannot be accommodated. Those States that have not been selected for the parade this year were invited to showcase their tableaux at the Bharat Parv from January 23 to 31 at the Red Fort. The new plan, that has been agreed to by 28 States, is aimed at giving everyone an equitable chance at participation.

The Defence Ministry already has an elaborate screening mechanism for participants in the parade. A committee of distinguished persons drawn from various fields including Padma awardees was set up this year too that screened proposals from States and organisations. The Ministry of Culture had empanelled 30 agencies for design and fabrication of tableaux through an open selection process and States/UTs were advised to engage these agencies following appropriate procedure. The allegations by States of discrimination with respect to their proposals may or may not be unfounded, but the selection process has to be apolitical and conducted in a transparent manner while maintaining standards to avoid questions in the first place. While the marching contingents and military platforms at the parade showcase the nation's military might, the tableaux and the performances hold a lens to the country's cultural splendour and diversity. In the backdrop of controversies year after year, the new proposal of a rotational opportunity for each State/UT offers a fairer, more transparent mechanism. The assertion by officials that the Government, Minister or Secretary do not have any role in the selection process, is reassuring. It will go a long way in keeping the festivities free from bickering.

# The Indian Parliament, a promise spurned

**T**he relative distance from the din and dust that the lamentable turn Indian Parliament took in December 2023, gives us a vantage point to review the state of this foundational institution of public life of the most populous country in the world today. It was one of the gravest security lapses the House has witnessed in its history when two young men with gas canisters jumped on to the floor of the Lok Sabha from its gallery and spread pandemonium there for reasons little known so far.

The incident led to a stand-off between the Opposition and ruling party, eventually leading to the suspension of 146 members of both Houses of Parliament, from different Opposition parties. Much of the discussion on both these unprecedented events has hitherto focused on procedural and regulatory concerns. While they are important, it is also necessary to see the bearing of these events on the conception of a parliamentary government for India.

### Having a parliamentary government

In historical hindsight, it may be worth noting that while progressive expansion of representation under the colonial aegis exposed a section of Indians to legislative processes, and some of them came under the spell of the Westminster system, the choice of the parliamentary form of government was the outcome of a closely deliberated process. There was much contestation within the Constituent Assembly, as well as outside it, regarding the form of government best suited for India: There were at least four stances around which the debate raged: presidential, Indian orthodoxy, Swarajist, and parliamentary.

Those who argued for the presidential system adduced reasons of stability, unity of the nation, primacy of centralisation, and drew heavily from the American model. Some of its apologists were also tilted towards religious and social majoritarianism. Those who argued for Indian orthodoxy pointed out that one of the cardinal beliefs of Indian anti-colonial movement was to establish a regime founded on Indian classical and tested institutional wisdom, although what it all meant was never spelled out. Those who argued for the swarajist model, defended themselves by invoking Gandhi, and sought a regime resting on village panchayats enjoying maximum powers and autonomy, the higher levels being endowed with those powers lying beyond the compass of the lower rungs.



**Valerian Rodrigues**

has co-authored with B.L. Shankar the book, 'The Indian Parliament: A Democracy at Work'

This debate was decisively won by those who were arguing for the parliamentary model. Those who marshalled this argument pointed out that there needs to be a decisive authority which can claim itself as the voice of the citizen community at large and being guardians of its mandate. The executive must be collectively responsive to this representative authority. If the executive loses the trust of the popularly elected House, it can no longer continue in office.

While this argument is akin to the defence of parliamentary representative democracies elsewhere, there were two additional arguments the protagonists of this position drew up. They pointed out that a parliamentary system marks a better space for minorities, in the political arena, to make their case in comparison to the presidential system and does not assume what is good for the citizen community in advance as other competing models do. The good of the citizen community is an outcome of debate and discussion in the representative body as a whole. Second, it has better capacity to reach out to ethnic and cultural differences as they can effectively rally in the choice of the representatives. Both these arguments implied that India's representative model encompassed great doctrinal, ethnic, and cultural pluralisms. Some of them may coalesce into a common fold overtime, but others may not, and new ones may sprout forth under conditions of freedom. Those who defended the parliamentary model on this ground also pointed out it was the authentic representative of the true spirit of India.

### Pangs of creating an opposition

From the nature of the parliamentary system, it is obvious that such a regime can endure and be effective only if it has stable support, but it has to be questioned and challenged to ensure that it remains faithful to the common good. It is a paradoxical demand: a majority that is elected regards that it has found endorsement from the citizen community, but the reason of the system says such endorsement must be constantly and critically validated by keeping the common good in view. Although the term, political party, did not find a mention in the Indian Constitution till the enactment of the Tenth Schedule, the dialectics of stable support and effective opposition could be institutionally operated only through a competitive party system.

Given the commanding position the Congress party enjoyed in the First Lok Sabha, Jawaharlal Nehru was sensitive to the absence of

an effective opposition, although when such an opposition took shape in the Parliament, he was not very comfortable with it. It is also important to point out that once the Opposition found its effective voice within the House, those radical voices which initially claimed that they took the route of franchise to wreck Parliament from within, were largely absorbed within it. Given the paradoxical challenge that a parliamentary system throws up, the ruling party at the Centre as well as in States, has not found it easy to face a sustained Opposition and employed all subterfuges to limit its space, but the logic of the system has constrained it to live with it.

### The present state

Given the centrality of Parliament to India's chosen public life, its security breach is a breach inflicted on the nation as a whole. The demand of the Opposition to make this issue central in Parliament is, therefore, understandable. In this context, it was the duty of the leadership of both Houses to ensure necessary assurances and explain the lapses. It did not seem that the present leadership exerted itself in that direction.

On the contrary, they converted the insistent demand of the Opposition, however excessive it might have been, as an affront to the working of the Parliament. There are a range of parliamentary committees. The presiding officers could have taken the Opposition into confidence to form a committee on security, at the least. Was the leadership of the Houses kowtowing to the executive at the expense of their dignity?

Madhu Dandavate mentions an incident when Jawaharlal Nehru sent a note to Speaker Mavalankar which read, 'Sir, I have some urgent work with you. Will you come to my chamber?' Mavalankar wrote on the same note, 'According to the accepted conventions of parliamentary life, a Speaker does not go to the chamber of any executive, including that of the Prime Minister. However, if you have any work, you are welcome to my chamber.' Nehru apologised and obliged.

While the Opposition in the present Parliament is not a paragon of parliamentary virtue, it is the responsibility of the leadership of the House, including its presiding officers, that it becomes the voice of the nation. The suspension of almost the entire Opposition from both the Houses, can hardly meet this test. It is also important to restate the principle that it is not the truth that a ruling dispensation upholds that serves its claim to rule but its ability to defend the course that it pursues as the truth.

## A Bangladesh 'one-party state' and India's options

**I**ndia has been joined by China and Russia in congratulating Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her return to power in yet another election without the participation of the principal opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party-Jamaat-e-Islami coalition. Unlike China and Russia, India is a functional democracy and will have to live with allegations of United States-type double standards of 'democracy at home and support for autocracies abroad' to suit strategic interests.

With Ms. Hasina back in power for a record fifth time (fourth in a row), India stands assured of continuity in the excellent bilateral relationship it has with Bangladesh, as Ms. Hasina has certainly addressed India's security and connectivity concerns unlike any other foreign leader. But she cannot turn Bangladesh into a one-party state and count on Indian support as she often tends to.

### Issue of irregularities

The world's most populous democracy having to back a friendly government sustained by three highly controversial elections sits uneasy on India's image as a global big player (if not big power). This also explains why anti-Indian sentiments are at an all-time high in Bangladesh – India's support for an increasingly autocratic regime sustained by rigged and non-participatory elections has not gone down well, especially with the youth (60% of the population in Bangladesh is below 25 years) who resent the massive corruption through large-scale bank defaults and extensive money laundering, the mismanagement of economy and the abnormal price rise that tainted the Hasina government in its third term after a decade of substantial economic growth.

That India's strategic partner, the United States, and its European and Asian allies are intensely critical of the Bangladesh elections makes it doubly difficult for India to defend elections where large-scale false voting under the



**Subir Bhaumik**

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active watch of the uniformed forces has been reported to boost voter turnout statistics or to ensure the defeat of candidates unacceptable to Ms. Hasina's close circles.

The Bangladesh Parliament now resembles an extended national Council of the ruling Awami League, with 61 independents from the party (allowed to contest to boost participation) emerging as the main 'Opposition bloc' to the League's 223 elected Member of Parliament in a 300-member House.

### An adviser's long shadow

Analysts see this election as "a firm step towards a one-party police state". But Ms. Hasina's adviser, Salman F. Rahman, sought to justify the absence of Opposition by referring to the Indian situation. "The Indian parliament does not have an Opposition leader because the Congress failed to get the mandatory ten percent seats needed to get that. Should we call India a one-party state?" Mr. Rahman was quoted as saying.

Mr. Rahman is at the heart of many unseemly controversies faced by the Awami League such as stock market scams, large-scale money laundering and bank defaults, and now electoral frauds such as the use of under-age children caught on camera voting by turn several times over. His Bangladesh Export Import Company Limited (Beximco) conglomerate is synonymous with crony capitalism eating into the vitals of a vibrant economy and his political influence on Ms. Hasina has earned him the adage of being the de facto Prime Minister.

He is also spearheading the Awami League's new Islamist agenda that operates at the political and social levels – electoral understanding with Islamist groups such as the Hefazat-e-Islam and a push for the government's plans to create 560 model mosque cum Islamic cultural centres which could supplant the vibrant syncretic and secular Bengali linguistic cultural space that paved the way for Independence and sustained Bangladesh's largely secular identity.

Immediately after securing her fourth consecutive term in office, Ms. Hasina described India as a "trusted friend" and recalled her seven years of personal uncertainties after the 1975 military coup that left almost her entire family dead. But most pro-Indian elements in the Awami League have been eliminated in three stages – nominations, poll process and then during the formation of the cabinet and parliament committees. So, India's only hope of having some actual influence is to push Ms. Hasina hard to induct some pro-Indian leaders in the cabinet.

### Subject of New Delhi's regional influence

India battling with its western allies over Bangladesh will be at considerable diplomatic cost at a time when New Delhi needs them to keep China in check. The loss of influence, both at the decision-making and popular levels, in Bangladesh is unacceptable and a double-whammy, more so because it comes in the wake of India's loss of influence in almost the entire neighbourhood, from Nepal to the Maldives, and calls into question Prime Minister Narendra Modi's much trumpeted "Neighbourhood First" policy.

A very prominent Indian business house and its political patrons may feel happy over the lucrative power purchase agreement signed by the Hasina government, but it is poor compensation for the actual loss of influence.

It is time India stops putting all its eggs in the Awami League basket and takes a close look at genuinely secular platforms in the gender, minority, labour and youth spaces where there could be potential for a party like India's Aam Aadmi Party to emerge. This could also help India avoid a dilemma that it faced in 2001 when the A.B. Vajpayee government tried to establish good relations with the BNP-Jamaat coalition government (Ms. Hasina blamed India's Research and Analysis Wing for her defeat) only to regret the spurt in Islamist radicalism spilling over into Indian territory.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### 'No' to Ayodhya event

The decision of the Congress party to decline the invitation to attend the consecration ceremony of the Ayodhya temple reminds us of Jawaharlal Nehru's commendable commitment to the separation of state and religion during the opening ceremony of the Somnath temple in 1951. However, the political situation now is vastly different, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) waiting to pounce on even the slightest opportunity in this highly

sensitive religious issue. By prioritising an idealistic position over practical political considerations in an election year, the Congress may have further diminished its electoral prospects.

**Michael Jom,**  
Thiruvananthapuram

The BJP leadership's outbursts against the Congress following the grand old party's decision should not come as a surprise, given the BJP's propensity to weaponise religion as a political tool. It

is noteworthy that even before the Congress's decision was made public, some of the Shankaracharyas too announced their decision to stay away. One wonders whether the BJP will now denounce the Shankaracharyas! It is more than evident that a purely religious ceremony is being converted into a virtual state function and being rushed through before a Model Code of Conduct for the Lok Sabha election is in place.

**S.K. Choudhury,**  
Bengaluru

X/Twitter, most often, is reduced to being a site built around knee-jerk reactions. Its word limit often leads to the spouting of one-liners that are meant to incite emotions rather than conversations. When it becomes a free for all and a tsunami of hate from both sides drowns out the reasonable voices, a crisis will emerge. Those in positions of power must realise the need to use social media carefully.

**Anany Mishra,**  
Bhilai, Chhattisgarh

**Minister's remarks**  
Rajasthan Minister Babul Kharadi's remarks asking people to have more children as Prime Minister Narendra Modi "will build more houses for them" and also provide subsidised LPG cylinders leaves one at a loss for words. Mr. Kharadi is reported to have a large family himself. At last we have a Minister who leads by example!

**P.G. Menon,**  
Chennai

**'Lit Fest' library on wheels**  
It is encouraging that

*The Hindu* Lit Fest's mobile library is in its second year of operation, in 2024 (in Chennai), and will try and promote literature, encourage the love for physical books, and foster discussion. Today's reader is tomorrow's leader.

**T.S. Karthik,**  
Chennai



Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address.

# Are antibiotics over-prescribed in India?

**PARLEY****Dr. Sumit Ray**

is Head of Department, Critical Care Medicine, Holy Family Hospital, Delhi, and Secretary, Indian College of Critical Care Medicines

**Dr. Abdul Ghafur**

is Consultant in Infectious Diseases, Apollo Hospital, Chennai



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

**T**he National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) recently found that over half of the nearly 10,000 hospital patients surveyed for a study were given antibiotics to prevent, rather than treat, infection. The survey mapped patients treated on one to five days each at 20 tertiary care institutes across 15 States and two Union Territories between November 2021 and April 2022. It found that 55% of the patients surveyed were prescribed antibiotics as prophylaxis, or as a preventive; only 45% were prescribed antibiotics to actually treat infections; and of them, only 6% were prescribed the drugs after identifying the specific bacteria. This is worrying as India carries one of the largest burdens of drug-resistant pathogens worldwide. Are antibiotics being over-prescribed in India? Sumit Ray and Abdul Ghafur discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Bindu Shajan Perappadan. Edited excerpts:

**What is antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and how did India reach this stage?**

**Sumit Ray:** AMR is defined as resistance of micro-organisms to an antimicrobial agent to which they were first sensitive. The present serious concern about AMR is that multiple types of bacteria, particularly in the Indian context – *E. coli*, *Klebsiella*, *Acinetobacter*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Enterococcus* – have even become resistant to some of the latest generation antibiotics. Patients who get infections with these resistant strains of bacteria have a higher possibility of poorer health outcomes due to the resistance.

We reached this stage due to a combination of factors. First, the inappropriate use of antibiotics in non-bacterial infections, both because of prescribing practices and the use of over-the-counter antibiotics. Second, inadequate laboratory facilities to inform clinicians rapidly about what would be an appropriate antibiotic even in bacterial infections, based on cultures. So, most clinicians are shooting in the dark. Third, the lack of adequate training in antibiotic selection, escalation, and de-escalation. Fourth, inadequate monitoring of AMR and control of antibiotic prescription and dispensing practices by health systems in spite of repeated warnings. And fifth, the incentivisation of prescribing practices by the pharmaceutical industry.

**Abdul Ghafur:** Inappropriate use of antibiotics and other molecules used to treat or prevent infections in the human, animal and agricultural sectors generates bugs that are resistant to these drugs. Inadequate sanitation in the community

and improper infection prevention in healthcare institutions helps spread these superbugs. AMR is a complex socio-economic and political challenge and not just a scientific issue to be solved by doctors and researchers alone.

**In the light of the recent NCDC report, should there be standardisation for ensuring uniformity in prescribing antibiotics?**

**SR:** There are already NCDC guidelines and multiple other guidelines to initiate antibiotics in different types and sites of infection. Doctors prescribing antibiotics need to be trained in appropriate use. But the problem is in diagnosing whether the patient has a bacterial infection or not. The criteria for differentiating bacterial from non-bacterial infections or a non-infective cause is still strongly based on clinical judgment. Laboratory and radiological investigations only aid us in this. So, the initial diagnosis of a bacterial infection will remain clinical till more accurate and rapidly available methods are developed.

**AG:** The NCDC survey results are relevant, but not at all unexpected. It is a known fact that more than half the antibiotics prescriptions in most countries are unnecessary. But why do doctors make these unnecessary prescriptions? Are they doing this purposely to harm the patient? Are they doing this to increase the AMR rate? Of course not. Both the NCDC and the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) have guidelines for the use of antibiotics. There is no scarcity of guidelines, but implementation is a different story.

We should look into the root causes of this over-prescription. First, look at any government or private hospital outpatient unit and you will see that they are overcrowded. Taking the patient's health history, examining the patient, getting speedy investigations done... these don't happen as much as they should. What is lacking is access to rapid diagnostics and a large, good



The rate of AMR is directly proportional to steady and strong governance, infrastructure, sanitation, poverty, access to clean drinking water, etc.

**ABDUL GHAFUR**

network of laboratories. A course of antibiotics is cheaper than any blood culture and investigation. So, for a doctor who doesn't have the time to examine patients, the time to examine their health history, and for patients who can't afford investigations in a country where most parts do not have enough laboratories, antibiotics are the cheaper and less time-consuming option. Unless we correct these factors, nothing is going to change.

**Following COVID-19 and now with the knowledge that humankind is vulnerable to the ever-present threat of an outbreak due to climate change, zoonotic spillovers, resistance creeping in from agriculture products and poultry, how important is the judicial use of antibiotics in the world and what is the immediate danger that we face?**

**SR:** The immediate threat is clear. I am an intensivist and I see people dying because of AMR. The study that we are quoting has also shown that nearly 75% of the surveyed patients who had an *E. coli* or a *Klebsiella* infection in hospital were resistant to what we simply called a third- or fourth-generation antibiotic. What is more worrying is that resistance to the next generation of antibiotics (carbapenem resistance) is also high. The trickle-down effects from poultry and agriculture are also high, particularly in industrialised agriculture, which is more common in the U.S. and China. But more importantly, our prescription practices are proving to be a hurdle. What is essential is the linking of labs to all levels of clinical setups and the fast transmission of infection-related data between the lab and the clinician.

**AG:** I treat infections in cancer patients, who are the most immuno-compromised patients you can come across. Patients are losing their lives because of AMR. But to tackle this challenge, we should think far beyond the prescription or consumption of antibiotics.

AMR is not a stand-alone entity. The rate of AMR is directly proportional to steady and strong governance, infrastructure, sanitation, poverty, access to clean drinking water, etc. So, in a country with high AMR, reducing consumption of medicines alone will not make any significant change in the rate of resistance.

While rationalising antibiotics is indeed important not just from the AMR perspective but also as a patient safety measure, other factors such as sanitation in hospitals, basic access to personal hygiene and infection control, are vital. COVID-19 taught us the importance of small steps, such as washing our hands and wearing a mask when in public, to counter a huge threat. Fighting AMR needs us to start with these basic steps.

**What measures have been put in place by the Central government most recently to control AMR in India? And are they enough?**

**AG:** I have been a technical advisory committee member for the national policy on antibiotics for years, so I can give a detailed picture. In 2011, we brought out the first National Policy for Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance. We also banned over-the-counter use of antibiotics (H1 rule), though this was not implemented. In 2013, inspired by the Chennai Declaration, a new H1 rule banning only second- and third-line antibiotics was brought out. Even this modified rule has not been implemented. While health is State subject, to control AMR we need strong Centre-State coordination. AMR cannot be tackled in isolation. The pandemic has taught us that everything is interconnected. So, we must work with all the stakeholders, including patients. While India has taken some strong and long-term measures to tackle AMR, there is scope to do more, including better enforcement of laws. The 2019 ban by the Indian government on the use of colistin as a growth promotional agent in poultry farming is a significant step in regulating antibiotic use. May I remind you that colistin is the most powerful antibiotic that is available to treat infections in humans?

**SR:** There is a need to restrict access to reserve antibiotics, so that chances of resistance are reduced. What is interesting is that the highest per capita in antibiotic usage is seen in countries with the highest privatised healthcare. This trend clearly indicates that improving public health systems and public health delivery, including sanitation, is key to curbing any rise in AMR. Even within the country, States with good public health systems have lower AMR. This is the way forward. Planned expenditure, structured delivery of services, and robust accountability of the public health system are all important factors that will help.



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**NOTEBOOK**

## Outrage, outrage into the dying of the light

Journalists are often shown the power that social media has on policy

**Suhasini Haidar**

**J**ournalism and diplomacy in the "Dark Ages", i.e., pre-Internet, was a different world. Officers of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Ambassadors were not available on mobile or on messaging services such as WhatsApp and Telegram, but only on a landline, and calls would be routed through a personal secretary. When news broke, we didn't receive mass social media messages with the government's statement. We had to go to Shastri Bhawan, to the MEA's External Publicity (XP) Division, to gather information, navigating past the secretarial team. Major statements on foreign policy, notifications, and postings were printed and distributed right there on cyclostyled sheets and the spokesperson would meet print journalists nearly every day and explain the government's position on a subject. Diplomatic relations were equally discreet. If an Ambassador was summoned or a major spat broke out, journalists had to rely on their sources to confirm that, which sometimes took days, if not weeks, by which time the issue may have cooled off. Much has changed since. Today, diplomatic spats are not only created in an instant; the whole story plays out in real time, worldwide.

This week's India-Maldives tussle is a great example of a diplomatic crisis created and dealt with on social media. The trigger: egregious social media posts by Maldivian ministers about Prime Minister Narendra Modi in particular and Indians in general. The ministers, who have since been suspended by their government, appeared to be responding to a social media campaign in India that promoted Mr. Modi's visit to Lakshadweep not just as a pitch for Indian tourism, but as a "masterstroke" to "checkmate" the Maldives, whose newly elected government has taken a number of decisions that have upset New Delhi. Eventually, the outrage by Indians on social media forced the MEA to act. It issued a tough statement and summoned the Maldives Ambassador to South Block. An online #BoycottMaldives

campaign, promoted by Indian travel companies and celebrities, even targeted journalists who travelled to Male to cover the story. The outcome overshadowed the diplomatic narrative however, and probably did more damage to the bilateral relationship than the MEA may have bargained for.

The Maldives incident was unusual as the offensive tweets were put out by ministers themselves. But nowadays, the MEA reacts to statements by non-officials as well. Most recently, a video by an Indian student in Europe showed posters outside a United Nations building criticising Mr. Modi and the government. The Indian student was upset and video went viral as activists on social media demanded that the MEA take up the "insult" firmly. Within hours, the Ambassador of the European country was "summoned" to the Foreign Office, and a press note was issued on social media. It is puzzling to imagine what the MEA thought the European country could actually do about posters outside the UN office, where protests against dozens of countries are recorded every day. Diplomats were even more perplexed when the MEA decided to respond directly to social media posts by a famous popstar and by a teenage environmental activist who criticised the government for action against farmers protesting three farm bills on the outskirts of Delhi. The MEA termed the interest of international celebrities in the protests as "vested" and "agenda-driven". It was unclear why the Ministry was responding to them at all.

As journalists, we are often shown the power that social media has on policy. Questions we ask at briefings receive less response than a viral post does. We find ourselves covering made-on-the-Internet stories rather than real developments. The answer may not be, paraphrasing the poet Dylan Thomas, to "Outrage, outrage against the dying of the light", but instead to separate the issues that affect India's foreign policy from the non-issues that don't, and to address them without allowing an Internet storm-in-a-teacup to overtake normal diplomatic discourse.

**PICTURE OF THE WEEK****Taming the bull**

At advocate K.M. Thiruppathy's farm in Kulamangalam, some 12 kilometres outside Madurai city, a swimming pool has been built to train bulls for jallikattu. Across Madurai in Tamil Nadu, bulls are trained year-round to ensure that they are not caught by players during the traditional sport, played during Pongal. Moorthy G.

**FROM THE ARCHIVES****FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 12, 1974****Free access to maps: plea to Centre**

Madras, Jan 11: Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, Director of the Madras Institute of Development Studies, to-day urged the Centre to give up its practice of classifying maps as top secret documents and allow geographers free access to them. Delivering the inaugural address at the seventh annual conference of the Association of Geography Teachers of India, Dr. Adiseshiah said geographers could

not carry on their work purposefully if they were not provided with the maps – the tools of their trade. It was strange Indian geographers should be denied authentic maps of the country while detailed maps of India were easily available abroad.

Dr. Howard F. Hirt, Fulbright Lecturer in Geography, Madras University, in his presidential address called upon geography teachers to incorporate in their classroom teaching new concepts and insights developed by modern geographers. They would, in particular, take up two subjects of vital interest to India – the interaction between man and the environment and the development of cities.

**A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 12, 1924****Queen Mary's College**

Last evening at the Queen Mary's College, Her Excellency Lady Willingdon performed the interesting ceremony of unveiling the marble bust of Her Majesty Queen Mary, the gift of the Hon'ble the Rajah of Panagal. In presenting the bust, the Chief Minister said that he felt that the installation of the bust in the College would be a source of inspiration to the young ladies who would attend the college. In Her Majesty they had the ideal of womanhood. With these ideas, in his mind he selected Mr. Nagappa to undertake the work. Referring to the institution the Rajah of Panagal said that it had a splendid future before it.

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**Growth in net direct tax collection so far this fiscal**

**19.4** in percentage. Direct tax collection grew to ₹14.70 lakh crore, the Income Tax Department informed. The government has budgeted to collect ₹18.23 lakh crore from direct taxes. PTI

**Number of teachers to lose their jobs in Madrasas in U.P.**

**21,000** The State has stopped paying teachers in Muslim religious schools, or Madrasas, and they could lose their jobs altogether. PTI

**Coronavirus death toll around the world in December**

**10,000** The head of the World Health Organization attributed holiday gatherings to the increased transmission of COVID-19. PTI

**Number of children to succumb to cold weather in Pakistan**

**36** The children have died due to pneumonia caused by cold weather in Pakistan's Punjab province, prompting the authorities to impose a ban on holding morning assemblies in schools till January 31. PTI

**Number of people killed in Gaza since conflict broke**

**23,469** According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, about 70% of those killed are said to be women and children. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## Strained ties in India-Maldives relations

How did disparaging remarks on social media lead to the suspension of Maldivian Ministers? What concerns did India express through diplomatic channels in response to the escalating row? Why did President Muizzu insist on the withdrawal of Indian soldiers after coming to power, and how did India respond?

### EXPLAINER

Sumeda

#### The story so far:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tourism push for Lakshadweep triggered a social media spat, escalating into a diplomatic clash between India and the Maldives, worsening the already strained relationship between the Indian Ocean neighbours. Disparaging remarks led to the suspension of three Maldivian Ministers. India expressed concerns, impacting travel bookings, and 'boycott Maldives' trended on social media. India-Maldives relations have hit a rough patch since Mohamed Muizzu was elected President last year on the back of an 'India Out' campaign.

#### What led to the 'India out' campaign during Solih's administration?

The Maldives is a key maritime neighbour of India in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The country's location holds significant strategic importance to India, especially amid China's growing engagements in the region.

Although Maldives-India ties have been mostly cordial over the years, there was a noticeable tilt towards China during the presidency of Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) leader Abdulla Yameen from 2013 to 2018. It was under Mr. Yameen that China included the Maldives as a part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Bilateral ties improved when Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) took over the reins from Mr. Yameen in 2018.

Aiming to reset ties with "one of its closest bilateral partners," Mr. Solih adopted an 'India first' foreign policy to establish a closer relationship with India in the areas of defence, security and economics. The Maldives "makes no apology" for close ties with India, he told *The Hindu* in a 2021 interview.

However, the growing proximity between New Delhi and Male and high-level military exchanges sparked



**Disputed diplomacy:** Narendra Modi in a meeting with Mohamed Muizzu. FILE PHOTO

concern in certain quarters, leading to an 'India out' campaign spearheaded by the Opposition. The critics of the Solih administration alleged that the government was compromising the sovereignty of the island nation and "allowing Indian boots on the ground." The Opposition sharpened its attack after the government signed the Uthuru Thila Falhu (UTF) deal with India in 2021 to jointly develop the National Defence Force Coast Guard Harbour.

The anti-India campaign emerged as the main poll plank in the 2023 presidential race under the leadership of former pro-China Maldivian President Yameen.

With a few months to go, PPM's Mohamed Muizzu emerged as the joint Opposition candidate following a series of dramatic events which prevented former President Yameen from contesting the presidential election. A protege of the PPM chief, Mr. Muizzu was then serving as the Mayor of Male. Mr. Yameen returned to prison and Mr. Muizzu entered the poll fray.

Mr. Muizzu built on the 'India out' campaign to persuade voters. He promised to remove Indian troops from the Maldives shores and balance trade relations, which he claimed were heavily tilted in India's favour.

He refused to be labelled pro-China and maintained that he was "pro-Maldives", saying his government

wouldn't allow Indian, Chinese, or any other country's military presence in the archipelago. He, however, signalled his intentions to build strong ties with Beijing, highlighting the benefits of Chinese assistance to the Maldives.

In September 2023, Mr. Muizzu won the contest with 54% of the votes, and in November, took oath as the eighth President of the island nation.

The first signs of a shift in foreign policy emerged when the new Maldivian President skipped India and instead travelled to Turkey in November on his first official visit. The Ankara trip marked a departure from a long tradition of Maldivian heads visiting New Delhi first.

Mr. Muizzu has since travelled to the UAE and is currently on a five-day visit to China at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping. The Maldivian President has termed China as its "valued ally and integral collaborator".

**Why did President Muizzu insist on the withdrawal of Indian soldiers?** In his first address to the nation after taking the oath, Mr. Muizzu insisted on the withdrawal of Indian soldiers from the Maldives as he pledged to safeguard the sovereignty and independence of the Maldives. The President's remarks that the country "will not have any foreign military personnel" grabbed headlines in India, viewed as an attempt to officially turn the compass from his predecessor's

'India first' policy to an 'India out' policy.

A disappointed New Delhi urged the Maldives to look at the presence of its military personnel in the "proper perspective."

The new President made another formal announcement on this matter following his meeting with PM Modi on the sidelines of the UN's COP-28 climate summit in the UAE in December, claiming that Mr. Modi had agreed to his demand. While statements issued by the two governments didn't mention any such agreement, sources in the Indian government countered the claim, saying the discussions on the issue were still "ongoing".

Male's hesitance to maintain defence ties with New Delhi was again evident from the absence of a Maldivian government representative in the latest round of the Colombo Security Conclave held in Mauritius last month.

#### Why did the decision to revoke the survey pact with India cause a stir in political circles?

The Muizzu government caused a stir in political and strategic circles with its decision to revoke a key 2019 agreement with India for conducting surveys in Maldivian waters. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for hydrographic surveying, signed during PM Modi's state visit to the islands when President Ibrahim Solih was in power, backed the commitment of the two countries to maintain close cooperation in defence and maritime security. Critics of the Solih government, however, had claimed that it harmed national security.

In December, Mr. Muizzu announced that the pact would not be renewed.

Abhijit Singh, Head of the Maritime Policy Initiative at the Observer Research Foundation, says that the Muizzu administration's refusal to renew the pact seems less to do with the President's sensitivities about sovereignty than with his special relationship with Beijing. "Getting Indian hydrographic ships out of Maldivian waters appears intended to aid China's marine surveys of the surrounding seas," Mr. Singh notes in his analysis.

### THE GIST

Prime Minister Modi's tourism promotion for Lakshadweep sparked a social media and diplomatic clash with the Maldives, worsening relations.

Disparaging remarks led to the suspension of three Maldivian Ministers, and India expressed concerns, impacting travel bookings.

Ties improved under President Solih in 2018, adopting an 'India first' policy, but concerns arose, leading to an 'India out' campaign.

PPM's Mohamed Muizzu emerged as the Opposition candidate, winning the 2023 presidential election with a shift in foreign policy.

Mohamed Muizzu's presidency was marked by distancing from India, prioritising ties with China, the UAE, and Turkey.

## Is tableau selection turning into a political battleground?

How have previous non-BJP ruled States responded to their tableau rejections in Republic Day parades? What criteria does the Ministry of Defence use to determine the alignment of tableau proposals with the theme?

The Hindu Bureau

#### The story so far:

The ongoing dispute between the Central government and non-BJP States regarding Republic Day parade tableaux has taken a political tone, with the Opposition accusing the Modi government of bias. The Centre denies the allegations, citing a misalignment with this year's theme and emphasising that similar controversies occurred under previous regimes.

#### How are tableaux selected?

Republic Day celebrates India's adoption of the Constitution and transition to a democratic republic. The parade, led by the President in New Delhi, showcases military strength and cultural heritage, featuring tableaux from States, Union Territories, Ministries, and departments. The Ministry of Defence oversees parade

coordination and preparations. This process includes the selection and shortlisting of tableaux.

#### Who makes the selection?

The Ministry follows a standardised procedure for Republic Day parade tableau selection, inviting submissions months in advance based on a specified theme. Proposals undergo expert evaluation, including a basic assessment and a presentation of three-dimensional models.

Factors like visual appeal, theme alignment, and local resource use contribute to final selections. A State can pitch multiple proposals to the committee, but only one is chosen for the final parade. The Defence Ministry emphasises time constraints for the limited number of tableaux.

However, the exclusion of proposals from Opposition-ruled States has led to accusations of 'discrimination' by several

State governments.

#### What are the politics over the rejection of tableaux?

This year, tableau proposals by Punjab, Delhi and West Bengal – all non-BJP ruled States – failed to make the final cut. While the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is in power in Punjab and Delhi, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) is the ruling party in West Bengal. As per designs uploaded on the MyGov platform, Delhi submitted four sketches, proposing to showcase its mohalla clinics and education services.

West Bengal proposed two designs exhibiting its cultural heritage and the Kanyashree scheme that seeks to improve the status of girls.

Punjab, meanwhile, submitted seven designs for three ideas – the history of the sacrifice of Mai Bhago, the State's heritage, and the history of the freedom struggle and sacrifices made by freedom fighters.

Controversy erupted last week when Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann remarked that the BJP government had "demeaned" the sacrifices made by Punjabis in the freedom struggle by rejecting the State's tableau. A war of words followed between the AAP and the BJP after State BJP chief Sunil Jakhar claimed that the CM intended to use the tableau for personal promotion. The Centre dismissed the charges and clarified that Punjab's proposal didn't align with the broader theme. In a statement, the MoD said Punjab was shortlisted six times in the last eight years, from 2017 to 2022. The Ministry added a similar clarification on the exclusion of West Bengal, saying the State's tableau was shortlisted five times in the last eight years.

In 2022, a similar situation played out in the run-up to the parade, when proposals from Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal were excluded from the final list. The Communist Party of India had termed the Centre's decision an attack on federalism. The governments of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal later showcased their tableaux during celebrations across the States. Last year, Karnataka's tableau was approved by the Centre following backlash after the then BJP government announced that the State had not made it to the final list – a first in 13 years. Under the UPA, proposals by the BJP-led Gujarat government were similarly rejected for several years until the saffron party came to power at the Centre in 2014.

### THE GIST

Tableau proposals from non-BJP ruled States like Punjab, Delhi, and West Bengal faced rejection for the Republic Day parade.

The Ministry of Defence clarified that the rejected proposals didn't align with this year's broader theme and provided historical shortlisting information for Punjab and West Bengal.

Similar controversies occurred in 2022 and previous years involving States like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka, leading to accusations of attacks on federalism and subsequent clarifications or approvals.

## IN THE LIMELIGHT

Hidden voices: Amitabh Bachchan in a scene from *Eklavya*, directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Unveiling the imbalance in heroic narratives of Hindi mainstream cinema

Despite its global recognition, mainstream Hindi cinema often sidelines the experiences of socially marginalised groups, especially Dalits; a majority of top Hindi films feature upper-caste characters, reflecting a hegemonic domain that neglects Dalit-Bahujan-Advisas' experiences

Harish S. Wankhede

**H**indi cinema is known for its outstanding heroic tales that not only entertain the cinemagoers but also inspire them to perform their moral duties. *12th Fail*, the recent sleeper hit by Vidhu Vinod Chopra that is trending in the mainstream cinema discourses for portraying an impressive rag to rich story of an IAS officer Manoj Kumar Sharma (played well by Vikrant Messy), endorses such values.

On the flip side however, like many other blockbusters, this narrative too revolves around the concerns of the social elites and portrays cultural and political values that are distanced from the experiences of socially marginalised groups, especially the Dalits and the Advisas. Though a lot many can find an emotional connection to the portrayal of the protagonists' precarious poverty and struggles, it has little resemblance with the Dalit-Bahujan-Advisas' (DBA) socio-cultural experiences.

## On and off the screen

Hindi cinema is globally recognised for its fictional masala-coated tales that entertain its audience with superlative songs, dance and dramatic action scenes. The mainstream films with big stars earn impressive box-office success whereas films with creative content and social realism hardly find a good audience. Such popular notions are utilised to limit the critics from examining cinema's intellectual calibre, its artistic-creative skills and the role cinema shall play in shaping the general attitude of the audience. Importantly, such assertions

further disallow the critics from noticing the overt domination of the social elites in the film business and how there is perpetual neglect of DBA characters, their experiences and aspirations on and off the screen.

The major hit films of the past year, mainly *Jawan*, *Pathaan*, *Animal*, *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* and *Oh My God* showcase the upper caste person as the lead protagonist.

A cursory survey of the top 100 Hindi superhit films will show the perpetual exclusion of the DBA characters and their world view in mainstream Hindi cinema barring some exceptions, making the film industry a hegemonic domain that represents the concerns and interests of the social elites.

For example, in Amitabh Bachchan's illustrious filmography of over 200 films, he has played a Dalit character only in *Eklavya*. Similarly, other big actors like Shah Rukh Khan or Akshay Kumar never played any role on the screen that closely represented the concerns and identity of the DBA groups.

**Serving the interests of the elites**  
The protagonist with an upper caste identity is overtly valorised while denying the possibility that a DBA person/character can also play identical 'heroic' roles on screen.

The general audience is also comfortable with the fact that the on-screen heroes and legends perpetually represent the identities and interests of the social elite.

Ironically, very few observe that the cinema has been disinterested in portraying various social ills like caste

discrimination, untouchability or violence against Dalit women.

In various political and social events, the arrival of the DBA groups is appreciated and seen as a crucial marker of substantive democracy, however, the private economy, including the Hindi cinema industry, has remained aloof. Because of its exclusivity and undemocratic nature, the film industry appears as a crony capitalist enterprise that serves the class and political interests of the powerful elites.

Like the other capitalist models, cinema makers create the product (films) for the general consumption of the audience and earn profit and popularity.

The domination of the social elites in each format of the filmmaking, performances, distribution and exhibition business has made the Hindi film industry a fiefdom of a few privileged social elites, alienating the others mainly as passive consumers.

**Protectors and heroes**  
The DBA audience is a mere spectator of the cinema industries end product, having little influence over the business and cinematic narratives.

When they watch cinema, they often see the social elite characters as heroes, struggling protagonists and key protectors of the nation's cultural and moral identity. Because of this social history and caste identity, the DBA person appears unfit to represent the heroic values that the upper caste character plays so naturally on the screen.

The visible absence of the DBA on the screen also means that behind the silver screen, the filmmakers, writers and other

technicians are least interested in the DBA life experiences, their struggles and aspirations.

To make cinema democratic, it is required that conventional filmmakers engage with the issues and concerns of DBA groups and provide them equitable space on the screen.

Also, behind the screen, in the process of filmmaking, more technicians and artists from the DBA background shall be given enough opportunities.

**Democratise the cinema'**  
The way due to the presence of creative Muslim minds in the creative and technical sphere of filmmaking has provided cinema with a vibrant genre of Muslim social films and secularised the narratives, the assertion of DBA here would democratise the cinema with new narratives that are closer to social realities.

With the arrival of filmmakers like Pa Ranjith, Nagraj Manjule, Mari Selvaraj, Neeraj Ghaiwan and others, a nascent 'Dalit genre' of cinema has been initiated, especially in Tamil and Marathi film industry.

It has showcased new techniques of storytelling, introduced powerful DBA characters and entertained the audience with creative narratives.

However, the possibility that the Dalit-Bahujan cinema genre will democratise the film industry is a farfetched thought.

Cinema should represent the social interests and political values of the DBA groups and the profits and privileges of the film industry should be distributed equitably.

## THE DAILY QUIZ

On January 12, 1966, the smash-hit live-action TV series *Batman*, starring Adam West premiered on ABC. In honour of the campy show, here is a quiz on the caped crusader

Abhinaya. K

## QUESTION 1

Batman made his first appearance in the world of comics in the Detective Comics #27 series in May 1939. Apart from him, another key character from the Batman-verse makes an appearance in this edition. Gary Oldman played the character in The Dark Knight trilogy. Name the character and the title of the story.

## QUESTION 2

Who was the first actor to play the role of the caped crusader on screen? Also, name the latest actor to have taken up the role.

## QUESTION 3

Adam West, who played the superhero in the 1966 movie, also had a guest role in the *Batman: The Animated*

Series playing the character of a washed-up actor. Is the statement true or false?

## QUESTION 4

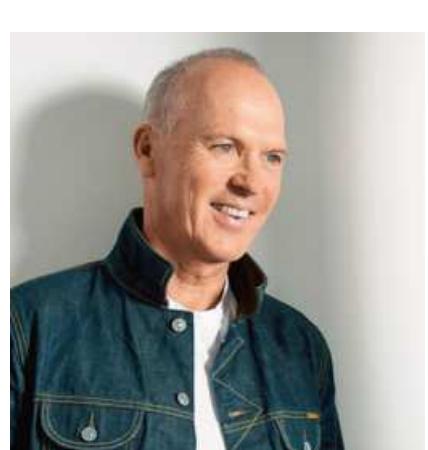
For over three decades, this actor voiced almost every iteration of Batman in cartoons, animated movies or video games. He spent more time playing the character than any other actor and brought the superhero to life in over 60 productions. Name him.

## QUESTION 5

This actor, well known for his role in an epic space saga franchise, has lent his voice to the iconic Batman villain - Joker. Recently in an interview, he said that after the death of his longtime collaborator (answer to question 4), he will never voice the character again. Identify the actor.

## QUESTION 6

Will Arnett, Keanu Reeves, Jensen Ackles, Josh Brolin. Who among the four has not voiced Batman?



## Visual question

This actor reprised his role as the superhero in a recent film along with two others who have also played Batman on screen. Name the movie and the other two actors. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Who designed and built the first flight simulator? Ans: Edwin Albert Link

2. What is October 4, 1958, famous for? Ans: BOAC's de Havilland Comet 4 beat Pan Am by three weeks in the first transatlantic jet flight. Two Comets took off from London and New York, passing each other over the Atlantic

3. In 1924, this airline was created as the government's chosen instrument of air travel. Ans: Imperial Airways

4. What is the connection between an airline and the Apollo-11 lunar mission? Ans: On July 24, 1969, Qantas Australia operated a special flight to witness the re-entry of Apollo 11 after the first ever manned mission to the moon. The flight flew about 450 kms parallel to the Apollo's re-entry path, giving passengers a view of the spacecraft's entry into the earth's atmosphere

5. The code for this airport is AVJ. What are its short and full names? Ans: Ayodhya airport or Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham

Visual: Name the terminal and the airport. Ans: Terminal-2 of Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), also known as 'garden terminal'



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

Dr. K. Sankaranarayana, Adoni, wants to know the meaning of 'bar' in 'Bar Council'.

In British English 'the Bar' means 'the members of the profession of barrister'. In American English, it means 'the members of the profession of lawyer'. When you are called to the Bar in Britain, you become a barrister. When you are called to the Bar in America, you become a lawyer. A barrister is one 'having the right of practising as an advocate in the higher courts'. The bench means '(a) law court (b) a judge's seat in a court (c) judges or magistrates as a group'. A bench 'was a long, wooden seat hence the official seat of judge or magistrate'. When someone talks about the bench and the bar, he refers to judges and barristers respectively. We have to await the decision of the bench. To be raised to the bench' is 'to be made a judge'. He was raised to the bench ten years ago. A bencher is a member of a governing body of the Inns of Court in London. Inns of Court are 'legal societies with the exclusive right to admit people as barristers'. The Inns of Court with such an exclusive right are the Inner Temple, The Middle Temple, Lincoln's Inn and Gray's Inn. Each has a board of benchers. The 'bar' in the Inns of Court was a partition that separated the benchers from the rest of the hall. When students got the necessary qualifications to become barrister, they were asked to move to the bar from the hall. This is the origin of the term 'bar'. From this, we have several other meanings of 'bar' relating to Courts of Justice.

Dr. Meena Ravichandran, Cheyyar, wants to know the meaning of 'cut-and-dried'.

'Cut and dried' means 'already settled and unlikely to be changed'.

*He is noted for his cut and dried arguments.*

When you need wood, you cut down a tree and dry it. When it is dried, it is ready for use. From this, we get the expression 'cut and dried'. You can also say 'cut and dry'.

Ms. S. Majumdar, Chandigarh, wants to know the meaning of 'full of beans'.

'Full of beans' means 'energetic', 'lively'.

*He is full of beans. I have never seen him dispirited.*

*It is believed that horses that are fed on beans are very energetic.*

Hence the expression 'full of beans'. Human beings fed on beans won't be as energetic. But they won't have constipation and hence won't be dispirited.

Mr. K.B.B.K. Rao, Main road, Kakinada, wants to know whether the plural of 'premium' is 'premia' or 'premiums'.

It is 'premiums'. Some other words like 'premiums': albums, asylums, forums, museums, pendulums, harmoniums.

Published in The Hindu on September 18, 1990

## Word of the day

## Gusto:

vigorous and enthusiastic enjoyment

## Synonyms:

delight, relish, spirit

## Usage:

Everyone joined in the singing with great gusto.

## Pronunciation:

bit.ly/gustopronoun

## International Phonetic Alphabet:

/gʌstəʊ/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'.

## From Page One

## Annapoorani pulled from Netflix

It tells the story of a temple cook's daughter who dreams of becoming the country's best chef and learns to make non-vegetarian food against her family's wishes. Netflix has now removed the film in all languages and all countries, though it was the Hindi version that had sparked anger among a section of the community.

On Wednesday, the Jabalpur police lodged a first information report (FIR) against Ms. Nayanthara, debutant director Nilesh Krishna, and the film's writer and producers, under Section 153A (promoting enmity between groups) and 3A of the Indian Penal Code.

VHP spokesperson Vinod Bansal hailed the streamer's decision as a 'victory of Hindus' in a post on X. "Zee Studios has now apologised. It is important to wake up on time and it is our compulsion to prevent attacks on the faith of Hindus," he wrote.

Zee Entertainment's letter says that the producers have taken note of the VHP's allegations that the film contains scenes, verses, and dialogues that attribute false and contradictory statements to Lord Ram, suggesting that he had consumed animal flesh during his 14 years of exile.

The VHP's Mumbai unit had also alleged that this portrayal of Lord Ram not only disrespected the deeply cherished beliefs of millions, but also spread misinformation about revered figures of Hinduism. "Such content not only has the potential to create social unrest but also reflects a lack of sensitivity towards the sentiments of a significant section of the society," the VHP had said.

In its response, Zee Entertainment said it was in the process of coordinating with its co-producers M/S. Trident Arts to address the VHP's concerns, and also with Netflix to immediately remove the film from the platform until it was edited. "We have no intentions as co-producers of the Film to hurt the religious sentiments of the Hindus and Brahmins community and would like to hereby apologize for the inconvenience caused and hurt caused to the sentiments of the respective communities," Zee Entertainment said.

## 'Minorities' right to open institutions not for ghettoisation'

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday observed that the right given to religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer their own educational institutions under Article 30 (1) of the Constitution was not intended to "ghettoise".

The minority character of an educational institution is not lost if its founders, who belong to a particular minority community, chose administrators from other communities, including the majority group, to run the institution, Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud observed.

The Chief Justice is heading a seven-judge Bench hearing a reference related to the minority sta-

tus of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

"Article 30 does not mandate that the administration of a minority educational institution should be only by members of that community," Chief Justice Chandrachud said.

The provision confers on the minority the discretion to choose the administrators of the institution, the CJ added.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who represents the AMU Old Boys' Association, said whether or not an educational institution has minority character should be learnt from its genesis.

In its written submissions, the Centre has contended that the AMU, established in 1875, cannot be considered a minority institution given its "national character".

## NIA cracks down on nexus of terror outfits, gangsters at 32 locations

Devesh K. Pandey  
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday seized illegal arms and ammunition in a crackdown against the banned Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), the Lawrence Bishnoi syndicate and others across five States and a Union Territory.

In connection with three cases, the Central agency conducted searches at 32 locations in Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi.

The seizures during the operation included two pistols, two magazines and ammunition, along with ₹4.6 lakh in cash, besides documents and digital devices.



NIA officers attach a house of a member of Lawrence Bishnoi's gang on January 6, PTI

terror activities being carried out by the BKI and the terrorist-gangster networks operating in the country. "Such activities include smuggling and induction of terrorist hardware, such as arms and ammunition, explosives, improvised explosive, etc., across the borders," said the agency.

The cases relate to the

## Agnipath scheme was brought after consultations: Army chief

General Manoj Pande says there is zero tolerance for human rights violations in J&K, says the Army is taking steps to improve human and technical intelligence in the UT; he adds that situation along border with China is 'stable but sensitive'

Dinakar Peri  
NEW DELHI

Acknowledging concerns about the situation in the Rajouri-Poonch sector of Jammu and Kashmir over the past five to six months, as well as the high attrition rate for Army personnel, the Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande said on Thursday that local support was crucial. The Army was engaging with the local community there, he said, emphasising that there will be "zero tolerance" for human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir.

On the Agnipath scheme, he reiterated that its final framework came about "after an iterative process, after consultations, and it took into account whatever issues we had to put across".

The Army chief outlined the problem in the Rajouri-Poonch sector, in response to a question from *The Hindu* at the annual press conference ahead of Army Day. "If we look at the entire Jammu and Kashmir, in terms of the number of terrorists neutralised in the entire State in 2023, it is 71, of which 51 are in the



Annual gathering: The Chief of the Army Staff, General Manoj Pande, addressing a press conference in Delhi. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

[Kashmir] valley and 21 in the Rajouri-Poonch region. Our own casualties in Kashmir have been seven; in Rajouri-Poonch, it has been 20. The figures, especially in Rajouri-Poonch, is something we have taken note of," Gen. Pande said.

## Human rights

"My guidance to soldiers and commanders there is unambiguous, in terms of respect for human rights and zero tolerance for any actions on that account," he said. The Army chief's statement comes in the wake of allegations of recent civilian deaths in Army custody.

"We have clearly laid down guidelines which spell out what you must

do, and what you must not do in those areas and for soldiers to be able to act in a professional manner and whatever they're doing. This is something which I have emphasised and re-emphasised. But let me assure you that our counter-terrorism operations in those areas will continue in a relentless fashion so that we get back to normalcy at the earliest," he added.

Gen. Pande highlighted several measures being taken to improve the situation, of which the first is the strengthening of the Army's human intelligence network, as well as those of other agencies, and also outreach to the local population. "We have increased or enhanced our deploy-

ment in those areas as also reorientated some of the units which were earlier operating in the last five to six months," he said.

Strengthening the Army's ability to get technical intelligence in terms of communications and better synergy with other agencies, and the local and Central police forces is also key, the Army Chief said.

## Agnipath scheme

Gen. Pande declined to comment on his predecessor's remarks that the armed forces had been "taken by surprise" regarding the Agnipath scheme.

Launched in June 2022, the scheme is aimed at short-term recruitment of soldiers, sailors and airmen for a four-year period.

Agnipath had taken the Army "by surprise" while it was a "bolt out of the blue" for the Navy and Air Force, former Army Chief Gen. Manoj Mukund Naravane has written in his upcoming memoir, *Four Stars of Destiny*.

"It would be unfair for me to say anything on that," Gen. Pande said, when asked about Gen. Naravane's observations, adding, "From here on, we

need to move forward."

He elaborated on the current status of the scheme. "As I said, the acceptability, the positivity and integration of the Agniveers in the units is happening well. There are few challenges in terms of training, most of which are at the tactical level which entail tweaking of our policies, limited training period, harmonising firing standards between Agniveers and regular soldiers," Gen. Pande said.

The Army Chief characterised the situation on the northern border with China as "stable but sensitive". "We continue to talk to find a solution to address the balance issues between the two sides. Operational preparedness is very high, and deployment is both robust, and balanced," he added.

On the situation in Myanmar and the impact on the border, Gen. Pande said that it has been of concern. The activities of the Myanmar Army and ethnic groups have resulted in 416 Myanmar Army personnel crossing over to India, as well as some civilians crossing into Mizoram and Manipur, he said.

Will give case material to Gupta after he appears in NY court: U.S.

Press Trust of India  
NEW YORK

The U.S. government has objected to providing defence materials to Indian national Nikhil Gupta, detained in a Czech prison on murder-for-hire charges in a foiled assassination attempt on a Khalistani separatist, saying it will provide the information only upon his appearance in a New York court and arraignment in the case.

Mr. Gupta, 52, was charged by federal prosecutors here with working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, who holds U.S. and Canadian citizenships, on American soil. The indictment was unsealed in November.

Mr. Gupta was arrested in Prague on June 30, 2023 and is being held there currently. The U.S. government is seeking his extradition to the U.S.

Mr. Gupta's attorney moved the U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, requesting the court to direct federal prosecutors to provide "the defence materials relevant to its ability to defend the instant charges".

## Four men feared dead in Manipur; combustible fluid mixes in rivulet

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI/IMPHAL/NEW DELHI

## Officials couldn't be contacted for confirmation but people say 3 bodies were recovered

West, Kakching, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Imphal East and Churachandpur districts on Wednesday.

## Black fluid in rivulet

Meanwhile, the Manipur government on Thursday sounded an alert after a gooey black fluid blanketed a rivulet on Wednesday night. It said a First Information Report (FIR) had been registered over the incident and that an expert team had been formed to look into the cause of and circumstances surrounding the incident.

Residents in the Imphal Valley discovered the viscous fluid, found to be

combustible. "Leakage of heavy fuel from the Leimakhong power station has been reported, leading to spillover of the discharge along streams passing through Kantosabal, Sekmai, etc. The stream meets the Imphal river downstream by flowing through Khurkhul-Loitang-Kameng-Iroisemba-Nambul," the office of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh said in a statement.

But even before the statement from the government came, several social media accounts claiming to represent the interests of the Meitei community had started accusing members of the Kuki-Zo community for the contamination.

## Security at plant

On Thursday, the Manipur government's Home Department directed the Di-

rector General of Police to deploy adequate security forces at the power plant and in and around it, further directing to register an FIR over the incident and seal nearby areas.

In a notification, the Home Department notified that a three-member expert investigation team had been formed by the order of the Governor and is headed by IPS officer Ashutosh Kumar Sinha. The members of the panel include the Commissioner-cum-Secretary of the State's Power Department and an Additional Secretary of the Home Department.

The government said the Department of Public Health Engineering is working with technical teams from IIT-Guwahati, Manipur University and NIT-Manipur to assess any contamination.

## States can also seize assets of 2 'unlawful' J&amp;K outfits: Centre

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

the said Act shall be exercised also by the State governments and the Union Territory administration in relation to the two unlawful associations.

While Section 7 of the UAPA pertains to "power to prohibit the use of funds of an unlawful association", the Union Home Ministry on Thursday said States could also seize funds and confiscate properties associated with the two organisations within their jurisdictions.

The two organisations were declared unlawful under the anti-terror Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) last month.

The Ministry, in a notification, said that in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 42 of the UAPA,

"the Central Government hereby directs that all powers exercisable by it under Section 7 and Section 8 of

the Centre reveal that the regulatory regime had been further strengthened since 2012 to ensure that a transparent and science-based framework was in place for environmental risk assessment of GM crops. He said the conditional approval granted for environmental release of GM mustard was an example of effective implementation of the strengthened regulatory framework.

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday questioned the government on whether the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) had considered the reports of the court-appointed Technical Experts Committee (TEC) on the biosafety of transgenic mustard hybrid DMH-II before approving it for environmental release.

"The reason why we are asking this is because the GEAC was not working in a

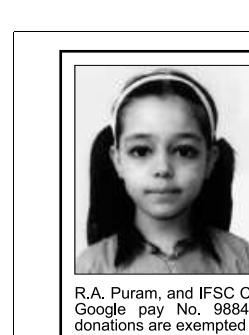
vacuum... These are reports included a dissenting note by [agricultural scientist] R.S. Paroda submitted to the court on the issue. Will these reports be consigned to the record room?" Justice Nagarathna asked.

**Transparent framework** Mr. Venkataramani submitted that a detailed analysis of the TEC's recommendations and steps taken by

## Simultaneous polls won't work: Mamata

The Hindu Bureau  
KOLKATA

reservations about the 'one nation, one election' idea and said it was an attempt to bring in a presidential form of government. She said there were practical problems in the proposal.



**APPEAL**  
Ms. Mannat Ritesh Dalwani daughter of Ritesh Dalwan 9 years admitted in Mazumdar Shaw Medical Center, Bangalore suffering from Leukaemia bone marrow transplant. The estimated cost of the transplant is Rs. 24,50,000/- Please send donation however small and save the girl. Cheque/D.D./M.O. favouring Save Poor Lives A/c. Mannat Ritesh Dalwani. Our Account Details: S/B Account No. 20000913487, State Bank of India, Bangalore. Google pay No. 9884697577, UPI ID: savepoorlives@oksbl. All donations are exempted under 80G of the Income Tax Act.

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Mayawati's 'successor' reaches out to people

**The Hindu Bureau**  
LUCKNOW

Akash Anand, considered the heir apparent to Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati, on Thursday reached out to people asking them to give a missed call on a phone number to get directly connected to him.

The initiative holds significance as Ms. Mayawati reportedly declared at an all-India meeting of the party here last month that her nephew, Mr. Anand, would be her political successor.

"To join this mission, give a missed call on +91-991278181 and connect with me directly. *Mere sath chale, BSP se judey* (Walk with me, join the BSP)," Mr. Anand, national coordinator of the BSP, said in a post on X.

Mr. Anand, 28, said that "to fight for our rights, to struggle for social change, to build an egalitarian society in the country, we need to be organised, and it will start with you".

# Malice against Modi has made Congress oppose even God: BJP

Reacting to the decision not to attend Ram Temple event, it says Cong. tends to boycott key moments in India's history; party spokesperson rejects the Opposition party's contention that the BJP and RSS have appropriated the entire event

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday termed the Congress leadership's decision to "respectfully decline" an invitation to attend the consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya as an example of the Opposition party's "tendency" to boycott events that mark the "turning of a page of history" due to its feelings of "jealousy, malice and inferiority" complex towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Due to its feelings of jealousy, malice and inferiority complex towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Congress had gone to the extent of opposing the country and is now opposing God," BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said, addressing presspersons in New Delhi.

Mr. Trivedi noted that



**Key event:** Carvings made on pillars of the Ram Temple. The consecration ceremony will be held on January 22 in Ayodhya. ANI

Iqbal Ansari, the Muslim litigant in the land dispute case involving the temple and the Babri mosque which once stood at the spot, had also been extended an invitation, reflecting "Hinduism's generosity". Mr. Ansari had accepted the invitation, even while the Congress chose to boycott the ceremony, Mr. Trivedi said.

He said it had been the main Opposition party's tendency to create hurdles during historic moments for the country. "Whenever the page of history turns, the Congress, instead of standing with it, has opted to boycott," he

said, citing a host of recent events, including the inauguration of the new Parliament building, enactment of the GST, and addresses to Parliament by President Droupadi Murmu and former President Ram Nath Kovind.

Mr. Trivedi rejected the Congress's contention that the BJP and RSS had appropriated the entire event, scheduled to be held on January 22 in Ayodhya, saying that there was no division among people in the temple.

"It should not be linked to any organisation or ideology," he said.

The BJP spokesperson wondered whether the Congress still stood by the idea of rebuilding the mosque, which was torn down by a frenzied mob in Ayodhya in 1992.

**Nehruvian legacy**  
Noting that former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had opposed the associa-

tion of then-President Rajendra Prasad and some Congress leaders with the rebuilding and inauguration of the Somnath temple, Mr. Trivedi said that the Congress was continuing this Nehruvian legacy and had disowned the 'Ram Rajya' concept of Mahatma Gandhi.

A Congress government under Indira Gandhi had fired upon saints protesting against cow-slaughter, said the BJP spokesperson, adding that under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, the Congress had described Lord Ram as an imaginary figure.

Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Wednesday "respectfully declined" the invitation to attend the Ram Temple consecration ceremony, with the party accusing the BJP of making it into a "political project" for electoral gains.

**While it attempted to delink its politics from faith, the party's flip-flops on the issue do not allow such a strict separation**

motion in 1992, the party and its leaders have been shifting their positions.

Even now, despite the statement from the top leadership, opinions are divided. A section of the party was keen on attending the event.

A senior leader argued that the "absence of the principal Opposition party will allow the BJP to target us as anti-Hindu and use it to polarise the electorate".

Hours after the party issued the statement, Himachal Pradesh Minister Vikramaditya Singh, son of the late Virbhadra Singh, former Chief Minister, reiterated his earlier position of attending the event.

**Religious matter**  
Earlier he had said, "My father was always in favour of Ram Temple movement. It is not a political issue for us; it is a religious matter."

"We are Hindu and taking our religion forward, and entrusting faith in our traditions is our culture, and we will keep moving in this direction," Mr. Singh had said.

Senior party leader Arjun Modhwadia, who served as the Leader of the Opposition in the Gujarat Assembly, struck a discordant note.

"Lord Shri Ram is a revered god. This is a matter of faith and belief of the countrymen. @INCIndia should have stayed away from taking such political decisions," Mr. Modhwadia said in a post on X (formerly Twitter) on Wednesday.

Leaders of the Uttar Pradesh Congress unit too had announced plans to visit Ayodhya on January 15.

## Ensure a 'spotless' election, CEC tells State poll officials

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Kick-starting preparations for the Lok Sabha election to be held this year, the Election Commission (EC) held a conference here on Thursday with the Chief Electoral Officers of all States on issues such as electronic voting machines, electoral rolls and expenditure monitoring.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar asked all State Chief Electoral Officers to deliver a "spotless" election even as he complimented the officials in the States where Assembly elections were held recently. He said "a solid



**Gearing up:** Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and others during a meet on poll preparations in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

set of preparations" was in place for the upcoming election.

The two-day conference is being held to share experience and learnings from the recently held Assembly elections, along with thematic discussions on election planning, expenditure

monitoring, electoral rolls, IT applications, data management and electronic voting machines (EVMs), the Election Commission said in a statement.

**Detailed presentations**  
The Chief Electoral Officers of the States where Assembly elections were recently held gave detailed presentations about the experiences, learnings and innovative practices they adopted, while those from other States presented their status of preparation for the conduct of elections.

Other senior officers from the commission were present.

Earlier, a similar exercise had been held with the Election Commission officials and State Chief Electoral Officers at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNA), Mussoorie, along with five regional conferences in Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Chennai and Lucknow in the past few weeks.

**Learning platform**  
Election Commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey said the conference provided a platform for cross-fertilisation of ideas where participants gain to learn from each other about challenges, solutions and their best

practices in election management.

He noted that the conference was a culmination of the exercise that started with various conferences, workshops and trainings organised over the past six months as part of preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

Election Commissioner Arun Goel described the Chief Electoral Officers as the "commanding officers" of the 10-million strong team collectively.

The Election Commission also launched a redesigned website for enhanced user experience and easy access to information for all stakeholders.

## Maharashtra Speaker's ruling a farce: Sibal

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

A day after the declaration of the Eknath Shinde-led faction as the 'real' Shiv Sena by Maharashtra Speaker Rahul Narwekar, Rajya Sabha member Kapil Sibal said that the entire scenario was a pre-scripted play, and a farce with no available recourse.

Wednesday's ruling, favouring Shinde's faction as

the legitimate political party, solidified Mr. Shinde's position, and enhanced his political influence within the ruling coalition.

"Speaker (as Tribunal): Shinde's faction is real Sena. The play was scripted long ago. We watch the farce being played out with no recourse," he said in a post on X (formerly Twitter). "That is the tragedy of this 'mother of democracy,' he said.

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232413	Procurement of Pigment Dyes (Violet & Blue) for Paper Machine # 1,2 & 3	27.01.24
232423	Bentonite for TNPL Unit-II	29.01.24
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232423	ASA Sizing Chemical for TNPL Unit-II	02.02.24
Email	232413006397; 6398; 6399 - purchase.packing@tnpl.co.in 232413006409 - purchase.rawmat@tnpl.co.in 232423004031; 4032; 4033 - purchase.rsm.u2@tnpl.co.in	

Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNPL Website and NIC Portal only.  
Detailed Terms & conditions are available in tender document at our websites: [www.tnpl.com](http://www.tnpl.com) / [www.tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app](http://www.tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app)

DPR/178/Tender/2024

TNPL - Maker of bagasse based eco-friendly Paper

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER,**  
**CENTRAL (R&B) CIRCLE , BHUBANESWAR.**  
Mail i.d.: [seccbbsr@gmail.com](mailto:seccbbsr@gmail.com)

**E-procurement Tender Call Notice No.26 of 2023-24**  
No.89 (Estg.) Bhubaneswar the 6<sup>th</sup> January-2024

The Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for and five number road works and two numbers building works to be received in online bidding, double cover system for construction work as detailed in : <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website from 5:00 P.M of 11.01.2024 to 3.00 P.M of 25.01.2024. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened at 5.00 P.M. of 25.01.2024 in the Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle Bhubaneswar.

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in). Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.

Sdr/- Er. P.K.Mohanty  
Chief Construction Engineer,  
Central (R&B) Circle, Bhubaneswar.

OIPR-34005/11/0010/2324

**भारत सरकार - अंतर्रित विभाग / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA - DEPARTMENT OF SPACE**

निर्माण एवं अनुसंधान समूह, एसडीएससी/शार / CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE GROUP, SDSC-SHAR

श्रीहरिकोटा / नेल्लूर (जिला), आंध्र प्रदेश-524124

संक्षिप्त इ-निविदा सूचना / Brief E-TENDER NOTICE

सं.प्राची-सी शिविल: अनुसंधान समूह, एसडीएससी/शार / CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE GROUP, SDSC-SHAR

भारत के राष्ट्रपति की ओर से एसएलपी में विवादों का कार्य । (टी/सी-23-088, अनुगमित लागत ₹ 22.26 लाख)

हेतु मद दर इ-निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं । निविदा दस्तावेजों को 22.01.2024 को 14:30 बजे तक डाउनलोड किया जा सकता है । इच्छुक निविदाकार विस्तृत सूचना के लिए हमारी वेबसाइट [www.isro.gov.in](http://www.isro.gov.in) या [www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO](http://www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO) देखें ।

On behalf of President of India, Item Rate tenders are invited through e-tendering for "Arresting leakages @ SLR" (T/C-23-088, Est. cost ₹ 22.26 Lakhs). Tender documents can be downloaded up to 22.01.2024, 14:30 hrs. Interested tenderers may visit [www.isro.gov.in](http://www.isro.gov.in) or [www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO](http://www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO) for details.

हस्तानि-समूह प्रबन्ध, सी.एस.पी. / एसडीएससी शार / Sd/- GROUP HEAD, CMG / SDSC SHAR

### ODISHA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED

(A Government of Odisha Undertaking)  
Regd. Office: Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022  
CIN:U40102OR2004SGC007553

#### TENDER ALERT

1) CPC-26/2023-24: Engineering, Supply, Erection, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 2 x 40 MVA, 132/33 KV Sub- station with SAS at Bijepur and associated 132 KV LILo line on 132KV New Barghara- Ghess Line (Approx. Line Length 5.00 Kms.) in Bargarh district of Odisha on Turnkey Contract basis. Estimated cost is Rs. **27,76,54,458.00**.

2) CPC-29/2023-24: Engineering, Supply, Erection, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 2 x 40 MVA, 220/33 KV Grid Sub-Station with SAS at Janhpada, Parjap and 220 KV D/LILO line Meramundai-Duburi D/C Line (Approx. Line Length 1.00 Kms.) in Dhenkanal district of Odisha on Turnkey Contract basis. Estimated cost is Rs. **37,43,61,670.25**.

3) CPC-31/2023-24: Engineering, Supply, Erection, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 2x20 MVA, 132/33KV Grid Sub-station at Raigarh with SAS and associated 132KV LILo Line from existing 132KV Dabugaon-Umerkote DC Line (Line length 36.360KM) on Turnkey contract basis. Estimated cost is Rs. **47,39,83,056.00**.

4) CPC-30/2023-24: Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of 2x40 MVA, 220/33KV Sub-Station at Hatabasta with SAS along with 220KV LILo Line from Existing 220KV Mendhasal-Bhanjanagar D/C Line (Line length 5 Kms. approx.) on Turnkey contract basis. Estimated cost is Rs. **52,69,10,689.00**.

5) CPC-34/2023-24: Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of 2x40 MVA, 220/33KV Sub-Station at Nuabetanda along with 220KV D/C LILo Line from proposed 220KV Pratapsasan-Ersama Line (Line length 11.6 Kms. approx.) on Turnkey contract basis. Estimated cost is Rs. **75,51,61,878.00**.

6) CPC-32/2023-24: Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of 132KV SC line through UG cabling from 400/220/132/33KV GSS Mendhasal to 220/132/33KV GSS Chandaka with one no 132KV bay extension at both ends, Mendhasal & Chandaka on Turnkey contract basis. Estimated cost is Rs. **115,56,36,740.00**.

7) CPC-24/2023-24: Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of 132KV SC line through UG cabling from 220/132/33KV GSS Samagara to 132/33KV GSS Puri with one no 132KV bay extension at both ends, Samagara & Puri on Turnkey contract basis. Estimated cost is Rs. **23,24,84,514.00**.

## IN BRIEF



## Former J&amp;K CM Mehbooba survives 'terrible' car accident

Former J&K Chief Minister and People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti had a narrow escape on Thursday as her car met with an accident in Anantnag, leaving two people injured. National Conference (NC) vice-president Omar Abdullah has sought an inquiry into the incident. Ms. Mufti was travelling to Anantnag to meet victims of a fire when the car was hit from the front and sustained damage. Ms. Mufti's driver and personal security officer were injured in the accident. Describing it as "a terrible accident", a PDP spokesman said Ms. Mufti had a providential escape. "Her security, however, does not match her status. It's unfortunate," Dr. Harbakash Singh said.

## Parliament's Budget session likely from Jan. 31 to Feb. 9

A brief Budget session of Parliament is likely to be held between January 31 and February 9, sources said on Thursday. President Droupadi Murmu will address a joint sitting of the two Houses on January 31, they said. The government would present a vote-on-account or an 'interim budget' on February 1. The new government will present a full-fledged budget later. Since the term of the 17th Lok Sabha ends on June 16, it is set to be the last Session of Parliament before the Lok Sabha election is announced. In 2019, the Lok Sabha polls were announced on March 10 and voting was held in seven phases between April 11 and May 19. PTI

No tolerance policy on sexual abuse: Odisha govt.

## Satyasundar Barik

BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government said it had codified a 'zero tolerance' policy for any sexual offences against students by teaching or non-teaching staff in residential schools managed by the SC and ST Development Department.

In a statement issued on Thursday, it said: "Any violation of zero tolerance policy is dealt promptly and in the most stringent manner. Any sexual offences against any student shall be treated as a major offence under the Odisha Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1962, and shall be liable for dismissal from services."

The State government was responding to a *The Hindu* report published on January 7.

## Mandaviya, Akhilesh lock horns over urea prices

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Union Fertilizer Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and Samajwadi Party president and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav locked horns on social media on Thursday over the price of urea. Mr. Yadav alleged that the Centre is exploiting farmers by making urea costlier, a charge denied by Mr. Mandaviya.

Mr. Yadav said on X that the BJP government has become synonymous with exploitation of farmers. "The bag of urea has now reduced in weight to 40 kg.

The farmer understands this simple mathematics very well that earlier ₹266.50 kg of urea would cost 45 kg i.e. one kg urea would cost around ₹5.92, but now 40 kg would cost ₹266.50 i.e. an increase of around ₹6.66 per kg. Urea has become costlier by more than 12%.

If this 'sack thief' continues under the BJP rule, then one day farmers will get only empty sacks," he said, adding that in the next elections, farmers will defeat the BJP.

Responding to this, Mr. Mandaviya said neem-coated urea was priced at ₹266.5 per 45-kg bag earlier and at present, and would continue to be available in the future too.

## Surat, Indore cleanest cities; Maharashtra tops State list

Visakhapatnam, Bhopal, Vijayawada, Delhi, Tirupati, Hyderabad figure among top 10 clean cities; President calls for elimination of manholes to establish our true identity as a sensitive society'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**S**urat in Gujarat and Indore in Madhya Pradesh were on Thursday jointly declared the cleanest cities of India at the annual clean city awards for 2023 of the Union Urban Affairs Ministry. The next best is Navi Mumbai.

The Swachh Surveykshan awards were given away by President Droupadi Murmu here.

Indore has been adjudged the cleanest city for the seventh time in a row.

The list of top 10 cleanest cities with a population of more than one lakh includes Greater Visakhapatnam, Bhopal, Vijayawada, New Delhi, Tirupati, Greater Hyderabad and Pune.

In the State rankings, Maharashtra came first, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Odisha is ranked fourth, followed by Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Karnataka, Goa, Haryana and Bihar.

In the category of cities with a population of less than one lakh, Sasvad and Lonavala in Maharashtra

## Ranking cleanliness

The tables list the cleanest cities with more than 1 lakh population and the best-performing States, according to the Swachh Surveykshan Awards. Indore bagged the tag of India's cleanest city for the seventh consecutive time

Cleanest cities with >1 lakh population		States ranking	
Rank	City	Rank	State
1	Indore	1	Maharashtra
1	Surat	2	M.P.
3	Navi Mumbai	3	Chhattisgarh
4	Greater Visakhapatnam	4	Odisha
5	Bhopal	5	Telangana



and Patan in Chhattisgarh secured the top three spots. The Mhow Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh was adjudged the cleanest cantonment Board.

Varanasi and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh won the top two awards for the cleanest Ganga towns. Chandigarh won the award for the safest city for sanitation workers. Twenty zonal awards were given to medium and small cities.

Madhyamgram, Kalyani and Haora, all cities in West Bengal, have the dubious distinction of being placed at the bottom of the list, while the States at the

development. She expressed confidence that such a system will prove to be very useful in the field of waste management also.

Ms. Murmu also launched the 'Swachh Surveykshan' 2023 dashboard at the function.

**People's movement'** Union Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said: "Today, every city in India is ODF (open defecation free). This became possible because the Swachh Bharat Mission went from being a government programme to becoming a Jan Andolan (people's movement)."

Mr. Puri said that in 2014, there was only 15-16% scientific processing of waste, while today the number is almost 76%; in the next two to three years, 100% will be achieved. "By the end of this mission, we would have fully transitioned from manhole to machine hole," he said.

The Swachh Surveykshan, which began with a modest evaluation of 73 major cities in 2016, now covers 4,477 cities. The evaluation this year was done by over 3,000 assessors. Nearly 12 crore citizen responses were received.

## Indian History Congress calls for protecting Delhi mosque

**Ziva Us Salam**  
NEW DELHI

The Indian History Congress (IHC) has raised its voice for the late medieval age Sunehri Masjid in New Delhi, facing demolition.

The IHC said the mosque should not be demolished. A resolution was passed by the IHC at its conclave.

The historians said, "The Indian History Congress strongly urges the NDMC not to go ahead with its proposal to remove this historical structure."

The resolution came in response to a public notification issued by the NDMC to demolish the Sunehri Bagh Mosque to ensure sustainable mobility of the traffic. The IHC said, "According to the definitions of Grade III buildings, Clause 1.12, Annexure II of the Unified Building By-laws, buildings included in this category are those of

'of importance for townscape; that evoke architectural aesthetics, sociological interest, contribute to determining the character of the locality and can be representative of the lifestyle of a particular community of the region'. Indeed, there has been a constant attempt to erode our medieval architectural heritage in recent times."

## Crimes in Delhi railway stations rise by 105% in two years, says RTI reply

## Maitri Porecha

NEW DELHI



**Criminal act:** In 2021, Delhi railway station recorded 2,108 crimes which rose by 45% to 3,065 cases in 2022. R.V. MOORTHY

ber 30, 2023, a whopping 93% increase as compared to 2021, according to the information supplied by Apoorva Gupta, DCP (Railways), Delhi Police.

Instances of snatching of personal valuable items increased from 19 in 2021 to 85 in 2022, a 347% increase and 96 in 2023, an increase of 405%. More cases of under the Touting Act, which includes unauthorised carrying on of business of procuring and

Thefts are rampant in Old Delhi Railway Station and New Delhi Railway Station with 2016 cases registered in 2021. Cases of theft rose by 18% to 2,831 in 2022 and 3,909 cases till Novem-

supplying of railway tickets, were registered in 2023, up to 124, much higher than six cases registered in 2021 and eight registered in 2022.

**Robberies case doubled** Robberies over doubled from 10 in 2022 to 22 cases registered in 2023. The number of kidnappings also rose from nine cases in 2021, to 14 cases in 2022 and later increased to 24 cases in 2023.

Cases registered under miscellaneous sections of the Indian Penal Code rose from 14 cases in 2021, to 26 in 2022, increasing to 104 in 2023.

Other categories in which crimes were recorded are murder, attempt to murder, rape, eve teasing, accident, hurt, cheating, extortion, drugging, narcotics, gambling, arms, excise cases.

Another disturbing trend is that since 2021, 1,897 people have died on railway tracks. In 2021, 507 people died, while in 2022 the number stood at 714 people and in 2023 up to November 2023, 676 people succumbed. "These are run over incidents," Apoorva Gupta, DCP (Railways), the Delhi Police told *The Hindu*. Also, 468 people were injured on railway tracks – 144 (2021), 174 (2022) and 150 (2023).

The police have not made any arrest. Assistant Superintendent of Police, Phulwarisharif, Vikram Sehgal said the investigation was going on, and a five-member Special Investigation Team had been formed.

"We are still awaiting the post-mortem report and the cause of the death. We will get some details

## Two minor Mahadalit girls raped in Bihar, one dead; police yet to identify culprits

## Amit Bhelari

PATNA

once the second girl is able to record the statement after two or three days," he said.

The first information report has been lodged at the Phulwarisharif police station.

## Locals protest

Primary investigation revealed that the girls, who were friends, went to collect firewood and were found in a field adjacent to the road leading towards the Indo-Tibetan Border Police post the next day. Local people blocked the road in the area on Thursday and demanded the immediate arrest of the culprits.

Bihar BJP president Samrat Choudhary on Thursday met the victim's family, and said the party would continue to fight for justice until the culprits are awarded the death sentence.

The rape has happened about 3 km from the police station, and criminals are roaming freely in the city. It is a matter of shame for the police that the criminals have not been identified yet. Such criminals should be encountered and their houses should be demolished," he said. He gave the police a 24-hour ultimatum to find the culprits and produce them before the court with the appeal for death sentence, adding that the BJP would otherwise launch an agitation in the State. He alleged that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad had become mute spectators to the "goonda" rule in Bihar.

**TH CROSSWORD** (set by Crescent) **14070**

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>

**SCAN TO PLAY**

**ACROSS**

- Company providing drinks shown around centres of activity (4)
- Dictator's assistant uses Nationalist mania in a riot (10)
- City that is inspired by courage and drive (3,5)
- Stellar rating secured by Southern Railway (6)

**Down**

- Edible stem of wild oat grass? Quite the opposite! (6)
- Somebody in Government opening tender, unknown sum given upfront (3,5)
- Cheap yarn marks woven tissue (10)
- Pine tree at house lit up ringing in a century (3,4,5,3)
- India wanting Mars trips (4)
- Never turning tail in public with everyone standing by (2,4)
- Leader disposed to vent involved in insult causing splits (8)
- Victory over the enemy line playing with fire (10)
- PIN hacked by criminal for a Prince's vault (8)
- Villain in effect about to lead mounted cops (8)
- Work on model's face (6)
- The fuzz perhaps coming from edges of machine cutting fine linen (6)
- Fruitcake rolls to end in festive air (4)

**IN BRIEF**

Former J&K CM Mehbooba survives 'terrible' car accident

Crimes in Delhi railway stations rise by 105% in two years, says RTI reply

Two minor Mahadalit girls raped in Bihar, one dead; police yet to identify culprits

## SUDOKU

2						9	4
			7		8		
7	8	9		1	3		
1				7	5		
6	4			8	7		
5	3				6		
6	9		8	5	3		
1			3				
7	8				9		

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

E	S	G	W	C	F	F	S
D	I	P	L	O	P	E	R
I	R	W	N	N	L	R	M
T	R	A	N	E	T	S	E
O	N	E	F	O	W	S	S
R	E	S	G	R	E	W	E
E	S	G	R	E	W	E	S
R	E	S	G	R	E	W	E

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

**FAITH**

Be guided by Ayyappan

In the Kali Yuga, humanity struggles to walk the talk on dharma. Looming large as a guide and a beacon of protection

# World

## KABUL

**Earthquake rattles Afghanistan again, no casualties reported**



A 6.4-strong earthquake hit northeastern Afghanistan, shaking buildings from the capital Kabul to Islamabad in Pakistan. There were no reports of casualties or serious damage as of several hours after the quake. In October, Afghanistan was hit by a series of quakes measuring between 4.2 and 6.3 killing 1,000 people. AFP

## ISTANBUL

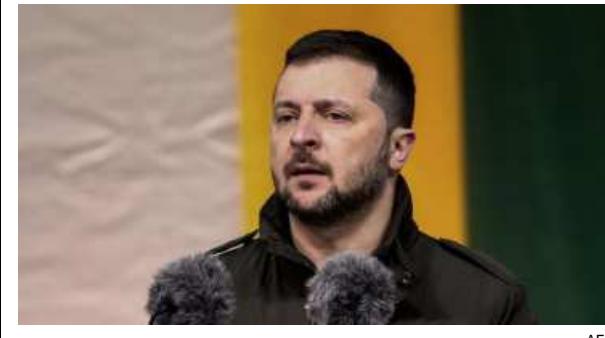
**Turkiye, Bulgaria, Romania join forces to hunt Black Sea mines**



NATO members Turkiye, Bulgaria and Romania signed a pact on demining the Black Sea to ensure safe passage after Russia's war in Ukraine. Russia mined Ukraine's Black Sea coastline in the early stages of its invasion nearly two years ago. Some of the mines have since been found in the waters of the three countries. AFP

## KYIV

**Ceasefire will help Russia regroup, rearm, says Ukraine's Zelenskyy**



Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ruled out a ceasefire as his country fights off the Russian invasion, saying Kremlin would use the pause to rearm and regroup. Limited ceasefires have occasionally been proposed since Russia launched its full-scale war in February 2022 but have never taken hold. AFP

## DUBAI

**Tanker in Gulf of Oman boarded by men in military uniforms**



An oil tanker once at the centre of a crisis between Iran and the U.S. was boarded in the Gulf of Oman by "unauthorised" men in military uniforms early on Thursday morning. It is suspected that Iran was involved in the incident on the ship once known as Suez Rajan and had the U.S. seize 1 million barrels of Iranian crude oil from it. AP

# Maldives, China commit to greater strategic cooperation, sign 20 MoUs

During President Muizzu's visit, the two countries agreed to draw up an 'action plan' for building a "China-Maldives Strategic Partnership" from 2024 to 2028; Beijing said it 'firmly opposes' any external interference in Male's internal affairs

**Meera Srinivasan**  
COLOMBO

**N**oting that the "strategic significance" of China-Maldives relations has become more prominent, the two countries committed to greater strategic cooperation this week, while China said it "firmly opposes" external interference in the internal affairs of the Maldives, according to a joint press communiqué.

The two sides agree to elevate China-Maldives relations to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, better leverage the political guidance of high-level engagement, expand practical cooperation between the two countries in various fields, strengthen collaboration on in-



**Timely ties:** Mohamed Muizzu and Xi Jinping with their wives during a welcome ceremony in Beijing. AFP

ternational and multilateral affairs, enhance the well-being of the two peoples, and work toward a China-Maldives community with a shared future," said the communiqué, issued on January 11, on the penultimate day of Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's five-day state visit to China.

The move is among many initiatives the two countries announced, including Maldives's participation in the Global Security Initiative (GSI), following Sri Lanka's affirmation in October 2023. The two governments agreed to draw up an "action plan" for building a "China-Maldives Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership" from 2024 to 2028.

The decisions assume greater significance, a month after the Muizzu government decided to skip the India-led Colombo Security Conclave's NSA-level meet, held in Mauritius in December.

Mr. Muizzu's visit coincides with a diplomatic row between the Maldives and India, after three junior Ministers in the Maldives posted controversial remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, referring to his recent trip to Lakshadweep. While Mr. Muizzu has not comment-

ed on the tensions, the deputy Ministers in his government have since been suspended.

In his meeting with President Xi, the newly elected Maldivian leader hailed the BRI, and said his country looks forward to expanding new channels of cooperation and promote high-quality partnership in the construction of the Belt and Road.

Two governments agreed to cooperate – the two leaders presided over the signing of 20 MoUs – in several areas including blue economy, digital economy, disaster and risk mitigation, and news cooperation, through an MoU between the Public Service Media of the Maldives and the Xinhua news agency of China.

# Israel strikes south Gaza as Blinken is in Egypt for talks

**Agence France-Presse**  
GAZA STRIP

Israel bombarded the southern Gaza Strip on Thursday as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken landed in Egypt on the final leg of regional talks aimed at preventing the Israel-Hamas war from spreading.

His arrival coincided with the start of a hearing at the UN's top court over accusations Israel has committed "genocidal acts" in Gaza.

"The situation is such that the experts are now predicting that more people in Gaza may die from starvation and disease" than from military action, said Adila Hassim, a top lawyer for South Africa, which has brought the case against Israel.

In Cairo, Mr. Blinken was to meet Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi,



**Repeated blows:** Smoke billows over Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip during Israeli bombardment on Thursday. AFP

whose country is a mediator in the Gaza war now in its fourth month.

+

Mr. Blinken's nine-country West Asia trip is concluding after Wednesday's UN Security Council resolution that demanded Iran-backed Yemeni rebels "immediately cease" attacks which have disrupted shipping in the Red Sea.

In Gaza's southern city of Rafah, on the border with Egypt and overrun

with displaced people fleeing fighting further north, Palestinians expressed hope the ICJ could render justice on their behalf.

"Israel considers itself above the law. We ask from the international judges to judge Israel," said Hisham al-Kullah.

Another Rafah resident, Mohammad al-Arjan, expressed hope that "the court stops the war".

# Hasina sworn in as Bangladesh Prime Minister for fifth term

**Agence France-Presse**  
DHAKA

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was sworn in for a fifth term on Thursday after a landslide victory in an election boycotted by the opposition.

Ms. Hasina's ruling Awami League party won nearly three-quarters of elected seats in parliament, with allied parties and friendly independent candidates making up nearly all the remainder.

The vote was criticised by the U.S. and the UN following a crackdown late last year that saw thousands of Opposition party members arrested.

# China calls Taiwan poll frontrunner a 'severe danger'

**Agence France-Presse**  
TAIPEI

China warned Taiwan's voters on Thursday to make the correct choice in the island's weekend elections, describing the presidential

frontrunner as a "severe danger" who would threaten peace by following the "evil path" of independence.

China views Taiwan as a renegade province and has never renounced the use of

force to take it one day.

Vice President Lai Ching-te, the frontrunner candidate for the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), has portrayed himself as a defender of Taiwan's democracy but

has drawn ire from China in the past over comments about independence – a red line for Beijing.

**U.S. officials' visit**

China's Taiwan Affairs Office said in a statement on

Lai comes after Washington announced it plans to send an unofficial delegation to Taiwan after the election, a move that drew a sharp rebuke from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing on Thursday.

**Office of the Director General, Medical Health & FW**  
Danda Lakhound, Sahastadhara Road, P.O. Gujra, Dehradun, Uttarakhand  
Letter No: 27P/PPP/10/2023/2024  
**Government of Uttarakhand E-tender Notice**  
1. Name of Work- 300 bedded Cancer Care Hospital Harrawala, Dehradun, Uttarakhand  
2. Date and time of e-publishing of tender - 16/01/2024 till 14:00 PM  
3. Pre Bid Meeting - 15:00 PM on 25/01/2024  
4. Closing date of online submission of Tender- 05/02/2024, till 14:00 (IST)  
5. Opening date of technical bid Tender - 05/02/2024, till 15:00 (IST)  
6. Details of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the website <https://uktenders.gov.in>.  
7. **Portal Registration:** The bidder intending to participate in the bid is Required to register in the portal using his/her active personal/ official email id as his/her Login id and attach his/her valid digital signature certificate (DSC) to his/her unique login.  
Pre Bid meeting shall be held in the office of Director General, Medical Health & Family welfare, Danda Lakhound, P.O. Gujra, Sahastadhara road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand  
For further queries, the bidders may contact through email- [mhvuttarakhand@yahoo.com](mailto:mhvuttarakhand@yahoo.com) and at Room No 52, Office of the Director General, Medical Health & Family welfare, Danda Lakhound, P.O. Gujra, Sahastadhara road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Director General

**TRANSMISSION CORPORATION OF TELANGANA LIMITED**  
e-TENDER NOTICE  
The TTRANSCO (Transmission Corporation of Telangana Limited) invites online Bids on e-procurement platform for supply of the following item. Tender Specification No.: TSPMM41 - 01/2024. Description of Equipment: 132kV PTs.  
Bidders can have further details and download the tender schedule from e-procurement platform at [www.tender.telangana.gov.in](http://www.tender.telangana.gov.in) (Telangana state).  
Contact Nos: O/o: The Chief Engineer/P&M, TSTRanco, Hyderabad, Phone: 040-23396000, Extn: 3670/3583/3276/3522, Fax: 040-23303736, [www.tstranco.in](http://www.tstranco.in)  
DPR No.9359-PIPLADVT/1/2023-24 Dl, 10/01/2024  
Sd/- Chief Engineer/P&M

**Karnataka Municipal Data Society(R)**  
Government of Karnataka  
(Directorate of Municipal Administration)  
6th Floor, #1-4, IT Park, Rajajinagar Industrial Estate, Bengaluru - 560 010.  
Ph : 080-3003100 E-mail: [mckmds@mrc.gov.in](mailto:mckmds@mrc.gov.in) Web: [www.mrc.gov.in](http://www.mrc.gov.in)  
No: E77749 KMDs/ADMN/1/2023 Date: 10.01.2024  
**TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
(Through e-Procurement portal only)  
Tender is invited through e-procurement portal in two cover system for "Selection of reputed Consultancy firms/agencies for setting up of Project Implementation Unit (PIU) to supply Technical Manpower to KMDs for development of web/mobile applications". Please visit <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> to submit bid.

- Tender No: 27P/2023-24/SE1923
- Tender Publish Date: 12-01-2024
- Tender Pre-bid meeting Date & Time: 19-01-2024 at 12:00 PM
- Last Date & Time for receipt of tender: 12-02-2024 at 5:30 PM
- Technical bid Opening Date & Time: 15-02-2024 at 11:00 AM
- Financial bid Opening Date & Time: 27-02-2024 at 11:00 AM
- Sd/- Joint Director(R), Karnataka Municipal Data Society, Bengaluru.

DIPR/CP/YC/2981/2023-24

Karnataka Municipal Data Society, Bengaluru.

**KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice**  
Tender No : Re-e-Tender No . 208 to 210/2023-24/SE/PHC/ALP/RT-1, KIFB-KUTTANAD DRINKING WATER PROJECT- Package VII-VIII-K- Construction of OHRS and distribution network at Ramankary, Champakulam, Nedumudy, Kainakary, Veeyapuram & Construction of Staff Quarters and office building at Edathua-Pipeline Work, EMD : Rs.1,00,000/- and Rs. 5,00,000/- Tender fee : Rs. 9,759/-, Rs.19,518/-, Last Date for submitting Tender : 27-01-2024 02:00 pm, Phone : 0477-2237954, Website : [www.kwa.kerala.gov.in](http://www.kwa.kerala.gov.in), [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in) KWA-JB-GL-6-2042-2023-24 Superintending Engineer, PH Circle, Alappuzha

**KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice**  
Tender No : HO/SP-13/2023-24/Alum, Supply and delivery of Alum Grade IV to various Division offices of Kerala Water Authority on Running Contract basis for the year 2023-24, EMD : Rs.10,81,844/-, Tender fee : Rs. 25,000/-, Last Date for submitting Tender : 29-01-2024 03:00 pm, Phone : 0821597973, Website : [www.kwa.kerala.gov.in](http://www.kwa.kerala.gov.in), [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in) Chief Engineer (HRD&GI), KWA-JB-GL-6-2055-2023-24 Jalabharan, Thiruvananthapuram

**KRISHNA BHAGYA JALA NIGAM LIMITED**  
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)  
Office of the Executive Engineer, KBJNL, Dam Division, Almati-586201. Tq:B.Bagewadi Dt: Vijayapur. Phone:08426-281027 E-mail:dam\_division@rediffmail.com No: KBIN/DDA/Quotation/2023-24/3215 Dated:11.01.2024

**SHORT TERM QUOTATION**

Requesting to submit the quotation rates for the following works related to the Almati Dam works. The details of the works are as follows.

- 1) Providing Upstream underwater treatment to the Masonry and concrete portion and Block Joints on upstream surface of Almati Dam. The quotation shall include rates for:
    - Underwater pointing using high strength cement mortar
    - Underwater re-surfacing high strength cement mortar
    - Underwater horizontal grouting
    - Underwater PU grouting
    - Reaming and re-drilling of porous holes in Drainage Gallery
    - Crocodile Cages and Identifying leakages
    - Underwater block joint treatment
    - Underwater cavity filling
- For further details it is requested to visit the undersigned office personally and get the details of work. The quotations should be submitted in sealed cover or by mail. The last date of submission of quotation is on: 25-01-2024.
- Contact e-mail Address: [dam\\_division@rediffmail.com](mailto:dam_division@rediffmail.com) [aegates26@gmail.com](mailto:aegates26@gmail.com)
- Contact Mobil No: Sri.Vithal Jadhav, A.E. Ph.No. 9480165309. Sd/- Executive Engineer, KBJNL, Dam Division, Almati

# U.K. eyes its biggest nuclear power expansion in 70 years

**Agence France-Presse**  
LONDON

The U.K. government announced plans for what it said was the country's "biggest expansion of nuclear power for 70 years" to bolster its energy independence and meet carbon emission targets.

The Civil Nuclear Roadmap includes exploring the construction of a major new power station, £300 million (\$382 million) of investment to produce an advanced uranium fuel and "smarter regulation". Taken together, the measures would quadruple U.K. nu-

clear power by 2050 to 24 gigawatts.

The government says it is committed to the 2050 net zero target but has come under fire after announcing last summer it will issue "hundreds" of new oil and gas licences in the North Sea.

"Nuclear is the antidote to the energy challenges facing Britain," Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said.

Energy Minister Claire Coutinho said the plans would mean the U.K. would "never again be held to ransom over energy by tyrants like Vladimir Putin".

Further details can be seen @ <https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in>

Preliminary and Pre Bid Meeting Venue : O/o SE, IB., TB Board, TB Dam

Ph: 08394 – 259114 Sd/- Superintending Engineer I.B., TB Board, TB Dam

**Office of the Director General, Medical Health & FW**  
Danda Lakhound, Sahastadhara Road, P.O. Gujra, Dehradun, Uttarakhand  
Letter No: 27P/PPP/08/2023/2024  
**Government of Uttarakhand E-tender Notice**  
1. Name of Work- 200 bedded Mother and Child Health Wing (MCH Wing) at Chain Rai Hospital, Haridwar  
2. Date and time of e-publishing of tender - 16/01/2024 till 14:00 PM  
3. Pre Bid Meeting - 15:00 PM on 29/01/2024  
4. Closing date of online submission of Tender-05/02/2024, till 14:00 (IST)  
5. Opening date of technical bid Tender - 05/02/2024, till 15:00 (IST)  
6. Details of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the website <https://uktenders.gov.in>.  
7. **Portal Registration:** The bidder intending to participate in the bid is Required to register in the portal using his/her active personal/ official email id as his/her Login id and attach his/her valid digital signature certificate (DSC) to his/her unique login.  
Pre Bid meeting shall be held in the office of Director General, Medical Health & Family welfare, Danda Lakhound, P.O. Gujra, Sahastadhara road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand  
For further queries, the bidders may contact through email- [mhvuttarakhand@yahoo.com](mailto:mhvuttarakhand@yahoo.com) and at Room No 52, Office of the Director General, Medical Health & Family welfare, Danda Lakhound, P.O. Gujra, Sahastadhara road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Director General

**Business****IN BRIEF****Reliance, ACME, seven others to get green-hydrogen sops**

Reliance Green Hydrogen and Green Chemicals, ACME Cleantech Solutions, and Greenko Zero are among the nine firms that have emerged as successful bidders for the Centre's incentives to produce up to 4.5 lakh tonne of green hydrogen. In January last year, the Union Cabinet had approved the National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM) at an outlay of ₹19,744 crore with the aim of making India a global hub for manufacturing this clean source of energy. PTI

**'Ex promoters, directors of firms at IBC can submit bids'**

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) said former promoters and directors of a company going through insolvency process are not barred from submitting bids until they are ineligible under clauses of Section 29A of the insolvency law. NCLT had said Section 29A of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) restricts such persons from submitting a resolution plan as it could have an adverse effect on the entire Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process. PTI

**'GST unit found ₹1.98-lakh cr. worth tax evasion in 2023'**

The GST intelligence unit detected tax evasion of more than ₹1.98 lakh crore last year and arrested 140 masterminds for defrauding the exchequer, the Finance Ministry said. In 2023, the Directorate General of GST Intelligence detected significant GST evasion in diverse sectors such as online gaming, casinos and secondehand (import of manpower services). In 2022, 4,273 cases were detected, amounting to a duty of ₹90,499 crore and voluntary payment of ₹22,459 crore. PTI

**TVS Holdings floats arm in Singapore for acquisitions****The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

TVS Holdings Ltd. (formerly Sundaram-Clayton Ltd.) has incorporated a wholly owned subsidiary in Singapore for overseas activities relating to acquisitions/investments.

TVS Holdings (Singapore) Pte. Ltd. has issued share capital worth 1 share of 1 SGD each fully subscribed by the parent company, TVSH said.

Separately, TVS Srichakra Ltd. said it had entered into an agreement with its unit Super Grip Corporation, U.S., to extend an unsecured loan of \$5-million at 6% interest rate.

**Bitcoin ETFs begin trading in the U.S.****Reuters**

Several exchange-traded funds (ETFs) tied to the spot price of bitcoin began trading in the U.S. on Thursday in a landmark moment for the cryptocurrency industry that has been demanding regulatory approval for more than a decade.

The green light from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission finally came late on Wednesday as it approved 11 such ETFs, ending months of negotiations with top asset managers such as BlackRock, Ark Investments/21Shares, Fidelity, Invesco and VanEck.

"The approval has the potential to simplify and



secure Bitcoin investments for a broader investor base, which may reshape the dynamics of cryptocurrency investments," said Rajeev Bamra, senior vice-president of digital finance at Moody's Investors Service.

BlackRock's iShares Bitcoin Trust and Grayscale Bitcoin Trust began trading in early premarket hours.

**Reuters**

NEW DELHI

Rating firm ICRA said on Thursday it expects the government to set a fiscal deficit target of 5.3% of GDP in the upcoming Union Budget for next year, covering half the distance to achieve a deficit of 4.5% of GDP for 2025-26.

While this year's deficit is unlikely to overshoot the ₹17.9 lakh crore target, given that the National Statistical Office has estimated a lower nominal GDP growth of 8.9% compared with the Budget estimate of 10.5%, the fiscal deficit is, however, expected to hit 6% of GDP for 2023-24, instead of the 5.9% target.

Factoring in the 3% Gross State Domestic Pro-

**Govt. said to plan deficit cut of 50 bps****Reuters**

NEW DELHI

India plans to lower its budget deficit by at least 50 basis points in 2024-25 from this year's target of 5.9% of GDP, while also looking to raise capital spending by as much as 20%, two government officials said.

Shrinking the fiscal deficit and yet at the same time raising capital spending will depend on an increase in revenues and efforts to curb subsidies, said Devendra Pant, an economist at India Ratings.

Moves to cut welfare spending and subsidies would be unusual for a government facing a national election in just a few months, but Prime Minis-

**Infosys Q3 profit slides 7.3%, dull demand tightens outlook**

Management says Q3 was affected by furloughs and fewer working days in global markets; firm narrows revenue growth guidance for the full fiscal year to 1.5-2% due to reduced market visibility

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

Infosys Ltd. on Thursday reported third-quarter net profit fell 7.3% to ₹6,106 crore from a year earlier amid challenging global demand that spurred the IT services provider to tighten its full-year revenue guidance. Q3 net slid 1.7% sequentially.

Revenue grew 1.3% year-on-year to ₹38,821 crore, from ₹38,318 crore.

Infosys said business in the quarter was adversely impacted by furloughs and fewer working days due to



**IT's tough:** As we get closer to the end of the year, variability reduces says CEO and MD Salil Parekh. REUTERS

the number of annual holidays in global markets.

The company narrowed its revenue growth guidance for the full fiscal

year to 1.5-2% owing to reduced market visibility; however, it retained its operating margin guidance at 20%-22%.

The Q3 performance was a demonstration of Infosys' strong execution capabilities reflected in improved operational efficiencies despite a challenging global environment, said CFO Nilanjan Roy.

While digital programmes were fewer, cost and efficiency automation was much more and generative AI was seeing a lot of traction, Mr. Parekh said.

"As we get closer to the end of the year, just the variability reduces. And that's how we've narrowed the guidance," said CEO & MD, Salil Parekh.

The Q3 performance was a demonstration of Infosys' strong execution capabilities reflected in improved operational efficiencies despite a challenging global environment, said CFO Nilanjan Roy.

While digital programmes were fewer, cost and efficiency automation was much more and generative AI was seeing a lot of traction, Mr. Parekh said.

**TCS Q3 net grows 8.2% to ₹11,735 cr.****The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. reported third-quarter (ending December 31, 2023) net profit grew 8.2% to ₹11,735 crore as compared with the year-earlier period due to strong double-digit growth in emerging markets led by India.

This is despite a seasonally weak quarter and the global economic situation on the ground remaining unchanged, its CEO said.

TCS's revenue during Q3 increased 4% year-on-year to ₹60,583 crore and



grew 1.7% YoY in constant currency terms.

"Our strong performance in seasonally weak quarter buffered by macroeconomic headwinds, demonstrates the strength of our business model," said CEO K. Krishivasan.

**Group insolvency law required, says Das****The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday envisaged a group insolvency mechanism for better recovery of creditors' dues under the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC) process.

"Globally, there are two diverse facets of group insolvency. Some jurisdictions have adopted either procedural coordination or substantive consolidation. Substantive consolidation pertains to the consolidation of assets,

**The RBI Governor also suggested developing a vibrant secondary market for stressed assets**

liabilities, and operations of multiple entities within a group, disregarding their separate legal entity status," Mr. Das said while speaking at the annual conference of RBI's think-tank CAFRAL.

Mr. Das also suggested developing a vibrant secondary market for stressed assets.

**Firms can list directly in GIFT City soon: FM****The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Indian companies would be able to list their stocks directly in the GIFT City soon, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman assured on Thursday, even as the International Financial Services Centre's chairman Hasmukh Adhia said efforts were afoot to make it an aircraft leasing hub.

Noting that most Indian airlines had leased a large part of their fleet, and also ordered 2,000 more aircraft that would be delivered in the coming years, Mr. Adhia said that all the aircraft leasing activity currently happens in Ireland.

"We need to bring that activity to GIFT City as that will be big business but there are some issues of these companies and the lessors have got some issues. So we will sort them out... we'll make sure that all these activities that are right now offshore will be brought onshore. That is our attempt by tweaking the regulatory framework," he said.

Ms. Sitharaman said that attracting leasing entities to the financial services hub could help India access finance for capital-intensive activities like shipbuilding and make the country a manufacturing hub for shipping lines.

"I am confident that it [direct listing in GIFT IFSC] will happen at the earliest. With that, Indian companies should be able to access global funds easily being listed in India," the minister asserted.

**MARKETS****MARKET WATCH**

	THURSDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	71,721	0.09
US Dollar	83.01	0.02
Gold	63,150	—
Brent oil	78.92	0.37

**NIFTY 50**

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	3080.90	-17.30
Adani Ports	1202.95	-11.40
Apollo Hosp	5869.90	69.00
Asian Paints	3288.20	1.35
Axis Bank	1125.75	18.75
Bajaj Auto	7298.85	245.10
Bajaj Finance	7669.75	-10.80
Bharti Airtel	1062.85	0.15
BPCL	458.70	7.45
Britannia Ind	5136.70	50.05
Cipla	1325.65	-3.55
Coal India	384.35	2.30
Divis Lab.	3905.20	2.55
Dr Reddys Lab	5692.45	-94.75
Eicher Motors	3888.80	46.25
Grasim Ind	2083.70	15.15
HCL Tech	1484.80	-7.30
HDFC Bank	1649.00	-6.95
HDFC Life	644.00	-0.95
Hero MotoCorp	4324.20	204.15
Hindalco	576.95	-3.10
Hind Unilever	2536.20	-41.20
ICICI Bank	991.15	-1.90
IndusInd Bank	1657.85	17.70
Infosys	1494.20	-25.70
ITC	462.65	-0.65
JSW Steel	822.05	-7.75
Kotak Bank	1822.20	2.05
L&T	3504.85	-40.65
LTIMindtree Ltd.	5959.95	12.45
M&M	1628.65	-4.15
Maruti Suzuki	10011.10	0.90
NestleIndia	2557.20	-20.90
NTPC	312.90	-0.45
ONGC	211.85	-0.25
PowerGrid Corp	241.95	2.80
Reliance Ind	2719.80	69.70
SBI Life	1427.80	-23.65
State Bank	620.20	-1.55
Sun Pharma	1316.25	-8.60
TataConsumerProduct	1119.25	5.30
Tata Motors	815.65	7.20
Tata Steel	134.90	0.80
TCS	3735.55	22.50
Tech Mahindra	1249.40	8.50
Titan	3698.60	-15.85
UltraTech Cement	9920.45	144.25
UPL	562.25	3.65
Wipro	448.20	-5.40

**EXCHANGE RATES**

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit excepted at 4 p.m. on January 11

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	82.83	83.15
Euro	90.83	91.18
British Pound	105.54	105.95
Japanese Yen (100)	56.92	57.14
Chinese Yuan	11.56	11.61
Swiss Franc	97.33	97.71
Singapore Dollar	62.27	62.52
Canadian Dollar	61.94	62.19
Malaysian Ringgit	17.84	17.92
Australian Dollar	55.55	55.78

Source: Indian Bank

# Sport

## WELCOME EXPERIENCE

Presence of Kohli, Rohit will give India solidity: Raina



Suresh Raina on Thursday termed the selection of veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli into the national squad for the T20I series against Afghanistan a wise call with the World Cup approaching. "The World Cup venues' wicket will be tricky. India will need the experience of Rohit and Kohli. Their presence will boost India's batting."

## DAZZLING SHOW

Hasaranga spells Zimbabwe's doom, Sri Lanka wins ODI series



Leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga claimed a career-best seven for 19 to help Sri Lanka win by eight wickets in Thursday's rain-hit final ODI in Colombo. The host won the three-match series 2-0. **The scores:** Zimbabwe 96 in 22.5 overs (Wanindu Hasaranga 7/19) lost to Sri Lanka 97/2 in 16.4 overs (Kusal Mendis 66 n.o.) by DLS method.

## NEARLY THERE

Nagal one match away from making Australian Open main draw



Sumit Nagal is just one match away from making the main draw of the Australian Open tennis tournament as he reached the final round of the qualifying tournament here on Thursday. Nagal beat Australian Edward Winter, a wild card, in the second qualifying match 6-3, 6-2. He will face Alex Molcan of Slovakia in the final round on Friday.

## CLOSER TO GLORY

Giants dethrone Juggernauts, to meet Quick Guns in the final



Gujarat Giants edged defending champion Odisha Juggernauts 29-27 in the first semifinal of the Ultimate Kho Kho Season 2 in Cuttack on Thursday. Later, Chennai Quick Guns scored a come-from-behind, last-gasp 31-29 victory over Telugu Yoddhas to make the summit clash. The final would be played on January 13.

# Dube rises to the occasion to take India past the finish line in opener

Nabi and Najibullah's final flourish takes Afghanistan to a modest 158 after Mukesh and Axar pick up two wickets each to apply the brakes

## AFGHANISTAN IN IND

Rakesh Rao  
MOHALI

**W**ith a calculated assault, Shivam Dube finished the job in style in the first T20 match against Afghanistan and provided Rohit Sharma with a much-needed healing touch.

The six-wicket victory in the 18th over of the first T20 match brought a smile on the face of the Indian skipper, livid after his first-over run out saw him give a mouthful to non-striker Shubman Gill before walking off.

Player-of-the-Match Dube's unbeaten 40-ball 60 proved decisive in the chase of Afghanistan's 158 for five. Rinku Singh once again remained not out, this time in a supporting role, scoring a nine-ball 16 during the unfinished 22-ball 42-run stand.

It was the kind of soothing balm Rohit needed. After winning an important toss, taking a catch and dropping a difficult one, the captain was looking to make the most of chasing a modest target on a good batting pitch in what could well be the last international match at the PCA Stadium here.

However, disaster cut Rohit's innings to just two deliveries. The dismissal left a guilty Shubman to deal with the expressed anger and exasperation of an otherwise cool captain.

After Rohit drove to mid-off and took off for a regulation single, Gill kept watching the ball and paid no attention to his partner reaching the non-striker's end. Ibrahim Zadran's diving stop-and-throw to 'keeper Gurbaz saw Afghanistan celebrating this bonus wicket.

Shubman had an opportunity to make amends by playing a match-winning role but that was not to be. After five delightful boundaries off 12 deliveries, he was stumped off Mujeeb ur Rahman.

Tilak Varma looked good till he lasted. After hitting two boundaries and a six, Varma fell to an acrobatic catch by Gulbadin at backward square-leg.

Mujeeb returned to lure Jitesh Sharma to his doom. Preferred over Sanju Samson, Jitesh scored a brisk 31 with five boundaries to keep India in control.

Afghanistan recovered to 158 after trading two-wickets-in-an-over for 101 runs in the last 10 overs. Though a sub-par score at this venue, Afghanistan rallied reasonably well after the top-order trio of Rahamanullah Gurbaz, skipper Ibrahim Zadran and Azmatullah Omarzai spent time



**Acing the chase:** Dube's unbeaten 60 ensured that India had an easy passage to victory. R.V. MOORTHY

in the middle without making the starts count for much.

With Axar Patel (2/23) showing how effective he could be on a pitch that did not assist spin, Afghanistan was clearly struggling. If the team briskly moved from 57 for three to 105 in five overs, Ravi Bishnoi leaking 35 runs in three overs had much to do with it. Bishnoi never found the

right length and ended up being hit for two sixes and three boundaries.

Mohammad Nabi's counter-attack started the resurrection. He smashed a six and two fours off Bishnoi, then Mukesh Kumar for two sixes in succession in 27-ball 42.

After Mukesh returned to remove Azmatullah and Nabi in one over and bring an end to the 43-ball, 68-

run stand for the fourth wicket, Najibullah Zadran and Karim Janat finished with a flourish. They smashed 13 runs off the penultimate over from Washington Sundar and 15 off the final over by Arshdeep Singh.

But in the end, it did not

prove enough to challenge India that calmly finished the job with plenty to spare.

# Rhythm seals Olympic quota with bronze in 25m sports pistol

## ASIAN SHOOTING

Sports Bureau

Rhythm Sangwan won the Olympic quota with a bronze medal in women's 25-metre sports pistol in the Asian shooting championship in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Thursday.

It was the 16th Olympic quota for the Paris Games for Indian shooting, an improvement from the 15 shooters fielded for the Tokyo Olympics. A country can win a maximum of 24 Olympic quota places. India has won all possible eight quotas in rifle, and six in pistol, apart from two in shotgun.

The 20-year-old Rhythm top-scored in qualification with 588. Having missed her chance of winning the quota despite figuring in the finals of the last two World Championships in 2022 and 2023, Rhythm was determined to make this one count. Eventually



Rhythm. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

(NRAI), and the acting president, Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo, was happy with the record 16th Olympic quota, and expressed confidence that the team would win more. "Indian shooting is poised to reach greater heights in the near future", said Deo.

The secretary-general of NRAI, Sultan Singh, said, "this increases expectations of better performances by our shooters in big events like the Olympics. We are confident that we can deliver".

India continued to stay on top of the medals table with nine gold, seven silver and seven bronze medals. China was second with five gold, four silver and four bronze.

**The results: 25m sports pistol:** 1. Yang Jin (kor) 41 (WR) 583; 2. Kim Yeji (kor) 32 (585); 3. Rhythym Sangwan 28 (588); 4. Esha Singh 578; 15. Simranpreet Kaur Brar 577. RPO: TS Divya 578; Rahi Saranabat 576.

**Team:** 1. Korea 1750; 2. India 1743; 3. Chinese Taipei 1731.

# Ashwini-Tanisha and Satwik-Chirag through



**Big win:** Tanisha and Ashwini in action against Japan's Matsumoto and Nagahara. AP

## MALAYSIA OPEN

Press Trust of India

KUALA LUMPUR

Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto stunned the seventh-seeded Japanese pair of Wakana Nagahara and Mayu Matsumoto 21-19, 13-21, 21-15 to enter the quarterfinals of the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here on Thursday.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty continued their impressive run to advance to the last eight but K. Srikanth failed to cross the second round. World No. 2 Satwik and

Chirag beat France's World No. 36 Lucas Corvee and Ronan Labar 21-11, 21-18 to set up a clash with China's World No. 32 He Ji Ting and Ren Xiang Yu.

Srikanth, however,

failed to rein in his errors

and went down 13-21, 17-21

to Hong Kong's Ng Ka Long Angus in the second round.

**The results: Men: Second round:**

Angus Ng Ka Long (HKG) bt K. Srikanth 21-13, 21-17.

**Doubles (round of 16):**

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag

Shetty (Fra) 21-11, 21-18.

**Women's doubles (round of 16):**

Ashwini Ponnappa & Tanisha

Crasto bt Wakana Nagahara &

Mayu Matsumoto (Jpn) 21-19,

13-21, 21-15.

# It all depends on form and performing consistently: Humpy

## CHESS

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

HYDERABAD

Konneru Humpy will be targeting the right to challenge the reigning world champion Ju Wenjun when she competes in the Candidates Matches to be held in Toronto from April 3 to 25.

"Well, being the senior most of all in the fray (at the age of 36), I do feel that experience plays a big role even as it might also go either way. It all depends on the kind of form you will be in during the event and performing consistently," the former world rapid champion Humpy said in an exclusive, telephonic chat with *The Hindu*.

### To hire 'seconds'

"I am planning to hire 'seconds' and this is nothing new for me having done earlier. We will see what best has to be done to realise that ultimate goal of being a world champion in the classical format," she said.

"Honestly, the prepara-



K. Humpy.

FILE PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

too," she said. "The main challenge for me can be from Alexandra Gorochkina and Kateryna Lagno of Russia and the Chinese girl Lie Tingjie," she said.

"It is important to sustain the energy levels through such a long event and it will be definitely demanding and a different kind of challenge too," said Humpy.

"Thanks to the AICF, which for the first time, is funding the preparations to all the five Indians (R. Praggnanandhaa, V. Vidit Gujrathi, D. Gukesh, R. Vaishali and Konneru Humpy) who made it to the Candidates Matches, we have the liberty to stay more focused and not to worry about the other issues," the senior official in ONGC said.

"For me the other major challenge at home is to leave my daughter Ahana who is studying in first standard. Fortunately, with my husband and family backing me, I have the liberty to keep playing chess at the highest level," Humpy said.

## IN BRIEF



## Vihari steps down as Andhra captain; Bhui to lead

G. Hanuma Vihari has quit as Andhra captain a day before its Ranji Trophy league clash against powerhouse Mumbai. Senior batter Ricky Bhui has been appointed skipper for the match at the Sharad Pawar Cricket Academy ground starting on Friday. "He has some personal reasons, so he has stepped down from captaincy. He wants to concentrate on his batting. That's the reason," Bhui said after Andhra and Mumbai sweated it out at the nets on Thursday.

## Cricket Association of Nepal suspends Lamichhane

Nepal spinner Sandeep Lamichhane was on Thursday suspended by the country's cricket body after being sentenced to eight years in prison. The Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) issued a statement responding to the development. "We inform you that Sandeep Lamichhane has been suspended from any kind of domestic and international cricket activities as he has been convicted and sentenced," CAN said.

## Haas axes Steiner, brings in Komatsu as team principal

Formula One outfit Haas on Wednesday parted ways with colourful team principal Guenther Steiner with the struggling American stable appointing Ayao Komatsu in his place. Steiner, 58, had been in charge of the team since it entered F1 in 2016. Komatsu, 47, takes over having previously filled the role of trackside engineering director.

## Brazil confirms Dorival Junior as new football team coach

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) has confirmed that former Sao Paulo boss Dorival Junior has been named coach of the men's national team, taking over the five-time World champions after a string of poor results. Dorival, whose appointment to the job was first announced on Sunday by his former club, will be formally presented at CBF headquarters in Rio de Janeiro, the confederation said in a statement. The CBF did not specify the length of contract.



## Australian Open fitness fears for Norrie

Britain's World No. 19 Cameron Norrie pulled out of the Auckland Classic with a wrist injury on Thursday, leaving his fitness in doubt just three days before the Australian Open. Norrie withdrew from his quarterfinal clash, handing Chile's Alejandro Tabilo a walkover. Tournament director Nicolas Lampert said Norrie had woken with a sore left wrist and "quickly found out that he wouldn't be able to play" during his warm-up.

## RANJI TROPHY FIXTURES - ROUND 2

**Group-A:** Saurashtra vs. Haryana (Rajkot); Maharashtra vs. Jharkhand (Pune); Services vs. Rajasthan (Delhi); Vidarbha vs. Manipur (Ahmedabad).

**Group-B:** Andhra vs. Mumbai (Mumbai); Bihar vs. Chhattisgarh (Patna); Bengal vs. Uttar Pradesh (Kanpur); Kerala vs. Assam (Guwahati).

**Group-C:** Punjab vs. Railways (Mullanpur); Tripura vs. Tamil Nadu (Agartala); Chandigarh vs. Goa (Porvorim); Gujarat vs. Karnataka (Ahmedabad).

**Group-D:** Odisha vs. Madhya Pradesh (Indore); Uttarakhand vs. Himachal Pradesh (Dharamsala); Baroda vs. Puducherry (Vadodara); Delhi vs. Jammu & Kashmir (Jammu).

**Plate:** Meghalaya vs. Hyderabad (Shillong); Arunachal Pradesh vs. Sikkim (Anand); Mizoram vs. Nagaland (Nadiad). All matches begin at 9.30 a.m.

## LIVE TELECAST

**Ranji Trophy:** Jio Cinema App, 9.30 a.m.

**New Zealand vs Pakistan:** 1st T20I, Prime Video, 11.40 a.m.

**PKL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m. onwards

**Bundesliga:** Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1 a.m. (Saturday)

**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 1.15 a.m. (Saturday)

**LaLiga:** Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 1.15 a.m. (Saturday)

# Indian women hope to ride on fans, familiarity to book Olympic ticket

Exclusion of drag-flicker Gurjit will mean the side has to step up in defence, skipper Savita focused on the present instead of thinking far ahead

## HOCKEY

**Uthra Ganesan**  
RANCHI

**B**ack in the city after less than two months and with a much bigger target, the Indian women's hockey team will be hoping the massive crowd support that propelled it to the top last time around will continue when it begins its pursuit of a Paris ticket at the Olympic Qualifiers here beginning on Saturday.

On Thursday, the team played its second practice match, winning 2-0 against Czech Republic after a 4-2 defeat to Germany on Tuesday.

## Combination

As the players and coach Janneke Schopman worked out the best possible combination, there was one interesting figure in the defence – Gurjit Kaur, the drag-flicker seemingly out of favour but here as one of the stand-byes.



**Confident:** Captain Savita and coach Schopman back India to do well in the Olympic Qualifiers. ANI

With the experienced Deep Grace Ekka excluded, Schopman refused to say anything during the media interaction earlier in the day with a cryptic "Grace needs to tell herself why she is not here" – Gurjit's presence was intriguing in as much as it showed In-

dia's lack of options in both defence and the penalty corner department.

From outside, her fitness level and on-field performance seemed to throw up more questions than answers. With Vandana Kataria also out with injury, India's task will be cut out

over the next nine days. PCs were also the main focus during the interaction with Schopman reiterating her faith in Deepika while playing down expectations.

"PC is an important part of the game and Rupinder (Pal Singh) is very good and experienced. It was a great help for the drag-flickers talking to him and learning from him during the camp we had before coming here. Deepika is young but I am pleased with her performance," she insisted.

Captain Savita preferred

to focus on India's strengths. "We will definitely be counting on the crowd again, we saw how it helps lift performance during the Asian Champions Trophy. It won't be easy because everyone is here to qualify for the Olympics but we will focus on our strengths instead of the opposition."

"Our ultimate target is to do our best to not just qualify but also do well in Paris. But we are not looking that far ahead at the moment, we have worked hard and are focused on the immediate target here," she added.

Asked about favourites Germany, Savita admitted the team slipped in the practice match.

"If you remember, till a few years back we would even struggle to enter their half during a game. Now we are able to challenge them and even the practice match we lost, it was because of us not sticking to our plans in the 4th quarter. So we know what we can do," she said.

## Wrestler Sehrawat claims gold at Zagreb Open

**Press Trust of India**  
ZAGREB

Indian wrestler Aman Sehrawat bagged the gold in the Zagreb Open ranking series tournament, defeating China's Wanhai Zou 10-0 by technical superiority late on Wednesday.

The 13th ranked Sehrawat started off with a 15-4 win over Muhammet Karavus of Turkey. Aman achieved technical superiority within 21 seconds of the second period of three minutes.

Sehrawat made the semi-final defeating American Richards Zane Raye Rhodes by technical superiority (11-0). In the last-four, he defeated Roberti Dingashvili of Georgia 11-0.

Deepak Punia could not make it to the 86kg medal round after he lost in his first bout to Kazakhstan's Azamat Dauletbekov.

## Rethin meets top seed Bilozersev in semifinals

## TENNIS

**Sports Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Rethin Pranav sustained the Indian hopes as he cruised past fourth seed Rohan Belday 6-3, 6-1 in the quarterfinals of the ITF junior tennis tournament at the DLTA Complex on Thursday.

In the semifinals, Rethin will challenge top seed Nikita Bilozersev of Ukraine.

The other semifinal will be between Ognjen Milic and Luc Wieland.

In the girls' section, Maria Golovina continued to keep a check on the Indian talent.

After having beaten Maaya Rajeshwaran in the first round, Maria won her third three-setter in a row as she blanked Rishitha Basireddy 6-0, 6-0, 6-0.

Rishitha had beaten the second seed Maya Iyengar in the first round, and got

be between top seed Lidia Podgorichani of Thailand and third seed Christasha McNeil of USA.

## The results:

**Boys (quarterfinals):** Nikita Bilozersev (Ukr) bt Vihan Reddy 6-0, 6-2; Rethin Pranav bt Rohan Belday (USA) 6-3, 6-1; Ognjen Milic (Srb) bt Dje Markovina (Cro) 6-2, 4-6, 6-1; Luc Wieland (Sui) bt Roshan Santhosh (USA) 6-3, 6-2.

**Doubles (semifinals):** Egor Gorin & Ognjen Milic (Srb) bt Rohan Belday (USA) & Vojtech Vales (Cze) 6-3, 6-2; Kuzma Gomziakov & Roman Kharlamov bt Iliya Maratuly (Kaz) & Daniil Stepanov 6-4, 6-3.

**Girls (quarterfinals):** Lidia Podgorichani (Tha) bt Jo-Leen Saw (Mas) 7-5, 6-1; Christasha McNeil (USA) bt Tzeng Mu-Jie (Tpe) 3-6, 6-3, 6-2; Daria Shadchneva bt Polina Berezina 2-6, 6-3, 6-0; Maria Golovina bt Rishitha Basireddy 4-6, 7-5, 6-0.

**Doubles (semifinals):** Maya Iyengar & Anya Murthy (USA) bt Anna Pushkareva & Daria Shadchneva bt Polina Berezina 2-6, 6-3, 6-0; Maria Golovina bt Rishitha Basireddy 4-6, 7-5, 6-0.

**Doubles (semifinals):** Maya Iyengar & Anya Murthy (USA) bt Anna Pushkareva & Daria Shadchneva bt Polina Berezina 2-6, 6-3, 6-0; Maria Golovina bt Rishitha Basireddy 4-6, 7-5, 6-0.

**Art of Romance (T) Srinath 54.5, 7 Mericle Beauty (G) Vivek 54.5 and 8. Super Bold (4) Arshad 54.5.**

**1. PROMISE KEPT, 2. GOLDEN TIME, 3. MEASURE OF TIME**

**7 C.M. VARMA AND B.M. VARMA MEMORIAL MILLION (1,200m)** maiden 3-0 only, (Terms), 4-30; 1. Exceed (5) Trevor 56, 2. Golden Light (8) I. Chisty 56, 3. Hyder (2) Saddam H 56, 4. Makoto (I) Antony 56, 5. Pericles (6) Darshan 56, 6. Art of Romance (7) Srinath 54.5, 7 Mericle Beauty (3) G. Vivek 54.5 and 8. Super Bold (4) Arshad 54.5.

**1. EXCEED, 2. MAKOTO, 3. ART OF ROMANCE**

**8 ABBEY FALLS PLATE (DIV. II), (1,200m)**, rated 20 to 45, 6-3, 6-0 & over, 3-0: 1. Striking Memory (7) P. Siddaraju 62, 2. Chios (8) L.A. Rozario 59.5, 3. Schafenberg (10) Saddam H 58.5, 4. Remontoir (4) Antoni 59.5, 5. Altamonte (5) Jagadeesh 56, 6. Singhssab (1) G. Vivek 56, 7. Antelope (2) Antony 55.5, 8. Moving Ahead (6) Shreyas S 54, 9. Noble Ruler (3) Darshan 53.5 and 10. Eco Friendly (9) Tousif 51.5.

**1. ALKANANDA PLATE (DIV. I), (1,400m)**, rated 00 to 25, 3-0: 1. She's A Lady (3) Anthony 62.5, 2. Tankinika (10) Tousif 62.5, 3. Apollo Light (4) P. Siddaraju 62, 4. Sea Diamond (5) I. Konichi 61.5, 5. Konichiwa (11) S. John 61, 6. Lady Godiva (7) Darshan 61, 7. Debonair (2) Saddam H 60.5, 8. Emeraldo (1) Mark 60.5, 9. Quevega (5) M. Rajesh K 59.5, 10. Way Of Life (8) R. Pradeep 59 and 11. Max Mueller (9) Shreyas S 54.

**1. MARCO POLO, 2. RAFFLES, 3. STAR CITIZEN**

**9 ABBEY FALLS PLATE (DIV. III), (1,200m)**, rated 20 to 45, 6-3, 6-0 & over, 3-0: 1. Super Kind (3) R. Pradeep 60, 2. Embosom (2) P. Siddaraju 57.5, 3. Ultimate Chance

**10 DOMINA - GLOW IN THE DARK (JKT)**: 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8; Tr (i): 3, 4 and 5; (ii): 6, 7 and 8.

## Bopanna-Ebden duo enters the semifinals in Adelaide

## TENNIS

**Sports Bureau**

Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden fought their way past Nicolas Barrientos and Rafael Matos 6-2, 6-7(4), [10-7] in the doubles quarterfinals of the \$739,945 ATP tennis tournament in Adelaide on Thursday.

It was the first match on court this season for the second-seeded Indo-Aussie pair which had a walkover in the pre-quarterfinals after a bye in the first round.

In the semifinals, Bopanna and Ebden will play Gonzalo Escobar and Aleksandr Nedovyesov.

**The results:** \$739,945 ATP, Adelaide: Doubles, quarterfinals: Rohan Bopanna & Matthew Ebden (Aus) bt Nicolas Barrientos (Col) & Rafael Matos (Bra) 6-2, 6-7(4), [10-7].

**\$82,000 Challenger,**

**Nonthaburi, Thailand: Doubles, quarterfinals:**

Salvatore Caruso & Giovanni Fonio (Ita) bt Saketh Myneni & Ramkumar Ramanathan 6-3, 6-2; Manuel Guindí & Gregoire Jacq (Fra) bt Rithvik Bolipalli & Niki Pooncha 7-6(3), 4-6, [10-6].

**€74,825 Challenger, Oeiras, Portugal: Doubles, pre-quarterfinals:** Arjun Kadhe & Marcus Willis (GBR) bt Tiago Pereira & Francisco Rocha (Por) 6-1, 6-4.

**\$15,000 ITF men, Kish Island, Iran: Pre-quarterfinals:** Hazem Naw (Syr) bt Parth Aggarwal 6-4, 6-2.

**\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir, Tunisia: Doubles, pre-quarterfinals:** Alexander Brown (USA) & Daniel Vishnick (GBR) bt Chirag Duan & Michalis Sakellaridis (Gre) 4-6, 7-5, [11-9].

**\$35,000 ITF women, Naples, USA: Doubles, pre-quarterfinals:** Clervie Ngounoue & Malkia Menguegne (USA) bt Riya Bhatia & Savanna Ly-Nguyen (Vie) 6-4, 6-1.

**\$35,000 ITF women, Antalya, Turkey: First round:** Carmen Herera (Row) bt Vasanti Shinde 6-1, 6-3.

## Exceed primed to deliver in C.M. Varma and B.M. Varma Memorial Million

**BENGALURU:** Exceed, who has been well prepared, is expected to score in the C.M. Varma and B.M. Varma Memorial Million (1,200m), the feature event of the races to be held here on Friday (Jan 12).

False rails (width about 8.5m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

**1. ARAKANNA PLATE (DIV. II), (1,400m)**, rated 00 to 25, 3-0: 1. Aldila (7) John 61.5, 2. Isabelle (1) L.A. Rozario 58.5, 3. Lady Invictus (2) Tousif 58, 4. Sunway Lagoon (10) M. Naveen 58, 5. Vyasa (8) I. Chisty 55.5, 6. Glow In The Dark (3) Srinath 55, 7. Sea Jack (6) Koshi K 55, 8.

# Cricket legends unite to mobilise the power of sports for a good cause

Gavaskar, Tendulkar, Yuvraj, Muralitharan, Vaas, Irfan Pathan, Panesar, Morrison and many more will assemble for the One World One Family Cup – a charity cricket match to be played near Bengaluru

Kamesh Srinivasan

**C**ricket is the most powerful tool that unites the country. The power of cricket can be positively channelised to transform society. Especially so in uplifting the underprivileged and providing education, nutrition and healthcare to the needy.

That is the goal for Sunil Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar, Yuvraj Singh, Muthiah Muralitharan, Chaminda Vaas, Irfan Pathan, Monty Panesar, Danny Morrison and so many more who will assemble for the One World One Family Cup, a charity cricket match to be played at the Sai Krishnan Stadium in Muddenahalli near Bengaluru.

"Being part of this initiative fills me with immense joy and a sense of responsibility. Cricket is more than just a game. It is a powerful force that can bring people together for a greater cause. Contributing to humanitarian activities is a privilege. It is heartening to witness the cricketing community uniting for a purpose beyond the boundaries of the pitch, emphasising the shared responsibility of creating a better world for all," said Sunil Gavaskar, about being associated with the match to be played on January 18.

The match will feature 24 players from seven countries, with Tendulkar and Yuvraj Singh being captains of the two teams.

To support the cause, some of the members of the 1983 World Cup winning team will also be present.

One of the greatest cricketers of the world, Gavaskar has been working together with the champion humanitarian, Sri Madhusudan Sai, to mobilise resources for many noble projects.

"Cricket in India is more than a sport. It is a cultural phenomenon. Its popularity provides a unique platform to address social issues," said Gavaskar.

More than his pivotal role, Gavaskar was happy to point at the spontaneous response from the other cricketers.

"The response from fellow cricketers has been truly heartening. Just one call or email was enough for the cricketing fraternity to come together for this event. They understand the impact we can collectively make beyond the boundaries. We all understand the shared responsibility to contribute to society. It is inspiring to witness how our shared love for the game translates into a shared commitment to creating positive change, reinforcing the idea that we are indeed one world, one family," said Gavaskar.

Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai leads a global mission across 33 countries, establishing institutes of excellence in education, healthcare, nutrition and spirituality.

Most importantly, millions of school children are being given morning nutrition on a regular basis for more than eight years.



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"Hosting the cricket match at Sathy Grama is a vital part of our mission to create awareness about embracing all as our own. The strategic inauguration of the cricket stadium is a conscious move to bring everyone together and draw attention to the challenges faced by the underprivileged, reinforcing our commitment to creating initiatives that impact lives through education, sportsmanship and community development. We encourage everyone to join hands and support the broader mission of feeding children, educating them, providing access to healthcare and uplifting the needy across the nation," said Madhusudan Sai.

He expressed gratitude for the cricketers, commanding their effort in supporting the mission.

"I am deeply grateful for the unwavering commitment and generosity of the cricketers who have graciously spared time for this noble cause. Their willingness to contribute for the larger cause of nation building reflects not only their passion for cricket, but also their dedication to make a positive impact on society," said Madhusudan Sai.

It is not just cricket, but many other sports and games that will be part of the initiative. In fact, the new cricket stadium will also have tennis, basketball and

volleyball courts, apart from an indoor facility. Pullela Gopi Chand and Somdev Devvarman are already part of the advisory team, planning schemes for badminton and tennis.

"Our vision is to create a cultural shift, promoting sportsmanship, teamwork, and physical fitness across a wide spectrum of activities", he said.

Of course, the main objective is to utilise the power of sports towards building better citizens.

"Sports is a balanced combination of mental stability and physical dexterity. This lesson can be learnt only outside the confines of a classroom, on a playground. Sports facilities are not just venues for physical activity but serve as transformative space for character building. Through structured sports programmes, children are instilled with values of discipline, teamwork and resilience. These activities also contribute to their mental and emotional well-being, fostering a sense of confidence and self-esteem. Through sports, individuals learn to set goals, work hard with determination and overcome challenges. It builds leadership qualities. They learn to handle success and failure with grace," said Madhusudan Sai.

The key point he chose to highlight was, "the amalgamation of sports, yoga

and meditation, not only promotes physical fitness but also nurtures holistic development, shaping children into persons with strong character, compassion, and a profound understanding of their inner selves".

The free medical college, part of the educational network, will soon have a biomechanics laboratory, apart from departments for sports medicine and sports psychology.

When all that is done right, excellence may not be a distant dream for the rural children in the region, any more.

"We have a lot of rural talent in sports. Their natural build and stamina remains under-utilised, due to lack of training and opportunities. Availability and affordability are often the crux of the problem. One goal of our sports mission is to bring out the best from the rural youth, and hopefully help them win medals at international sporting events. We look forward to working with the Khelo India programmes of the government to synergise and support these initiatives in rural areas," he said.

From cricket to chess to swimming and more, it is going to be a big sports drive, powered by cricket and the superstars Gavaskar, Tendulkar and so many more. Indeed, the world is one family.

## THE GIST

▼ The match will feature 24 players from seven countries, with Tendulkar and Yuvraj Singh being captains of the two teams

▼ To support the cause, some of the members of the 1983 World Cup winning team will also be present

▼ Just one call or email was enough for the cricketing fraternity to come together for this event, says Gavaskar

## Australian Open: Djokovic could face Murray in third round; Swiatek begins campaign against former champion Kenin

Agence France-Presse

MELBOURNE

Top seed Novak Djokovic was drawn on Thursday against a qualifier or lucky loser to begin his bid for an 11th Australian Open crown, and could meet fellow Grand Slam champion Andy Murray in the third round.

The Serbian, who has won 24 Majors, defeated Stefanos Tsitsipas in last year's final then added the French and US Open titles to his collection.

But the 36-year-old will begin his defence under an injury cloud after a wrist problem hampered him at the United Cup, where he lost to Australian Alex de Minaur.

Greek seventh seed Tsitsipas has a tough task to repeat his 2023 feat with former top 10 Italian Matteo Berrettini his opening opponent and Djokovic a potential quarterfinalist.

Spanish World No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz, the only man to beat Djokovic at a Slam last year to win Wimbledon, gets his campaign underway against French veteran Richard Gasquet.

Like Djokovic, third seed Daniil Medvedev, a Melbourne finalist in

first round.

The Russian could face 27th seed Felix Auger-Aliassime in the third round, with the Canadian facing a stern opening test against former World No. 3 Dominic Thiem.

On the women's side, Polish top seed Iga Swiatek will open her account with a blockbuster rematch of the 2020 Roland Garros final that she won against Sofia Kenin, who went into that match as the Australian Open champion.

There will be no let-up for whoever wins, with a second round clash looming against either 2016 Australian Open winner Angelique Kerber or 2022 Melbourne Park finalist Danielle Collins.

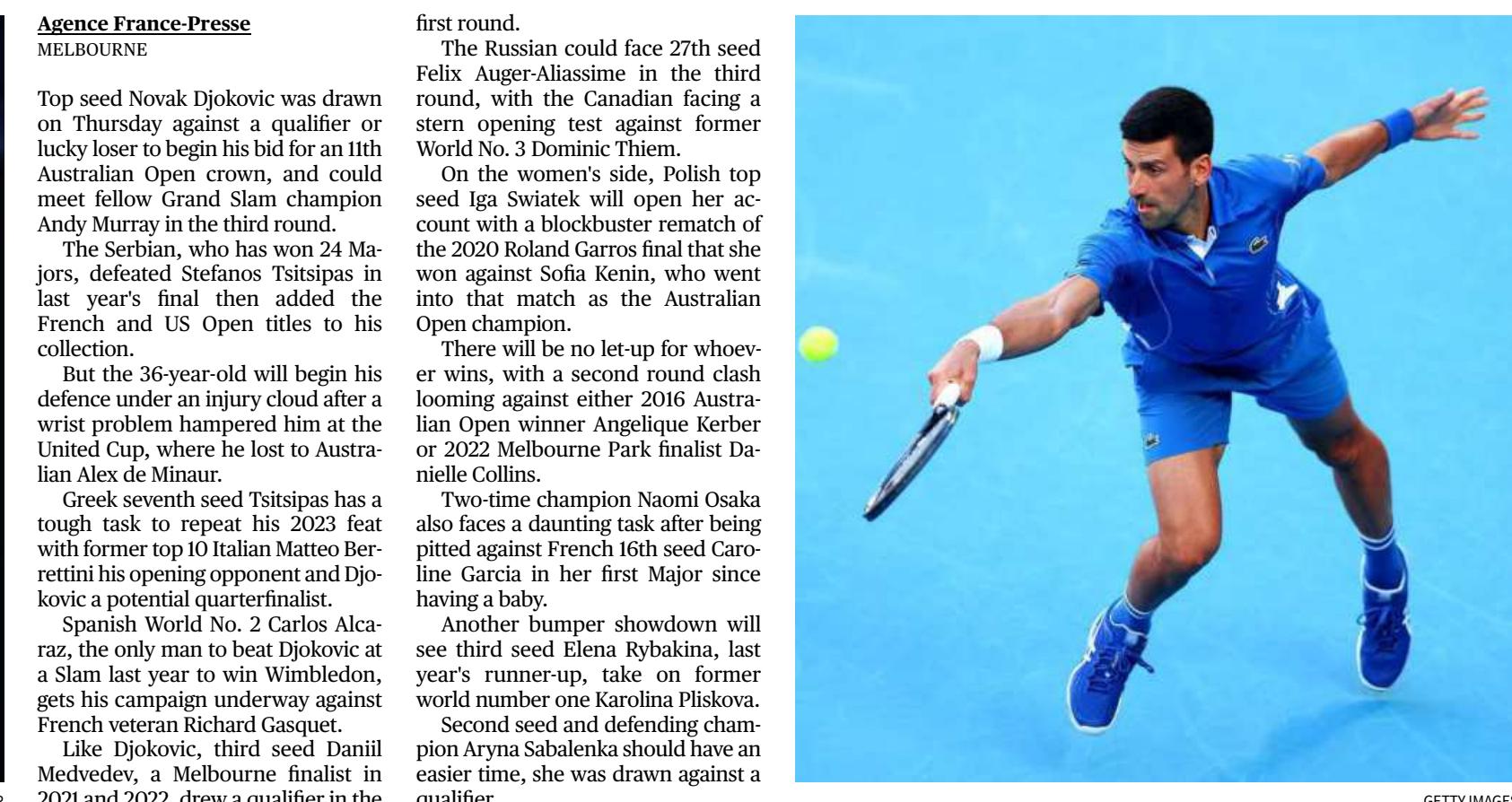
Two-time champion Naomi Osaka also faces a daunting task after being pitted against French 16th seed Caroline Garcia in her first Major since having a baby.

Another bumper showdown will see third seed Elena Rybakina, last year's runner-up, take on former world number one Karolina Pliskova.

Second seed and defending champion Aryna Sabalenka should have an easier time, she was drawn against a qualifier.



AFP



GETTY IMAGES

## SCIENCE

# Entrepreneurship: turning the tide against antimicrobial resistance

Microbes are everywhere, from the farthest corners of the earth to the inner workings of our own bodies, reminding us that we are as much microbial as we are human. While many microbes play a positive role, there are those that have learned to defy the medicines we rely on

**Abdul Ghafur**

In life's great design, microbes are the original masters, setting the stage long before humans came into the picture, outnumbering us in an astonishing display of their survival skills. These tiny beings are everywhere, from the farthest corners of the earth to the inner workings of our own bodies, reminding us that we are as much microbial as we are human. This fact is a mixed blessing: although many microbes play a positive role in our health, there are those that have learned to defy the medicines we rely on, leading to a challenging issue known as antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Our confrontation with these ancient organisms can't be about winning; it's about learning to live alongside them. This calls for the creation of new medicines, quick disease detection methods, and cutting-edge technologies, all part of a larger plan that considers the intricate microbial ecosystem. Our approach to AMR shouldn't be combative but should aim for a careful balance with these microscopic life forms. The future of our health depends on how well we adapt and innovate to coexist with the microbes that are so intricately woven into the fabric of our lives.

#### The next chapter in antibiotics

In our fight against the rising challenge of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the search for new antibiotics is critical. Zosarabipal stands out as a promising new candidate, offering a potential new way to tackle drug-resistant Acinetobacter infections. Its early promise has been noted in *Nature* magazine and it's now going through the first phase of clinical trials. It's a start, but there's a long road ahead – it could take five years or more to become available, if it passes all the necessary checks. This development is significant because it's been decades since the last new class of antibiotics for harmful Gram-negative bacteria was approved. If zosarabipal proves effective, it could be an important tool in our medical kit against a tough set of bacterial enemies. Right now, it's a sign of progress, but we must wait and see how it fares in the next stages of its development.

The Indian pharmaceutical landscape is witnessing a leap forward with Wockhardt's cefepime-zidebactam, which is currently in international Phase 3 trials. This molecule holds immense promise, showing the capacity to neutralise most resistance mechanisms exhibited by Gram-negative bacteria. The in-vitro and clinical data available point to its potential as a 'Brahmastra' – a formidable weapon – against the drug-resistant Gram-negative bacterial infections that are causing havoc not just in India but globally. We are hopeful that this drug will soon become a part of our medical arsenal.

On another front, cefiderocol, already approved for use in various countries, stands out as another beacon of hope. Developed by the Japanese firm Shionogi and now distributed by GARDP (Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership), cefiderocol is making its mark as a potent agent against resistant infections. For India, where such infections are a growing concern, the timely availability of these drugs is critical. They show great promise and should be fast-tracked for use, bypassing the usual requirement for local data. The urgency is real; as we face the grim reality of patients succumbing to drug-resistant infections, the luxury of waiting for additional clinical trial data from Indian patients is one we cannot afford. The immediate licensing of cefepime-zidebactam and cefiderocol could save countless lives and bring a new dawn in the treatment of resistant bacterial infections.

#### Catalysing startup innovation

The landscape of pharmaceutical innovation is changing, with many new and promising molecules being developed by startups rather than established pharmaceutical giants. A notable example is the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, which was developed by the relatively small German startup BioNTech, underscoring the pivotal role that nimble, innovative companies play in advancing medical science. This trend highlights the need to foster a supportive environment for startups in India and beyond, ensuring they have the necessary financial and research support to continue their crucial work. Encouraging and nurturing these ventures is not just about funding; it's about building an ecosystem that values innovation and



Infection control is a major issue in Indian hospitals. GETTY IMAGES

rapid development of life-saving drugs.

Moreover, India has a burgeoning biotech landscape, with companies like Bug Works in Bangalore leading the way in antibiotic development. Supporting these enterprises is not just an investment in their individual success but an investment in the future health of our population. By championing these innovators, we can ensure a steady pipeline of new treatments and maintain the momentum in our ongoing battle against antimicrobial resistance.

#### Rapid tests, swift start-ups

The urgency for advanced rapid diagnostics is unambiguous. Prompt and precise detection of infections is essential for effective treatment and curbing the spread of resistant microbes. As a jury member and adviser for the Longitude Prize – a ten million Sterling pound initiative aimed at fostering transformative rapid diagnostic tests – I've witnessed a remarkable array of innovative solutions from startups around the globe, including those from India, over the past decade. These ventures are pioneering the frontier of rapid diagnostics, with Indian companies like Module Innovations making notable advancements. Despite these successes, there's a pressing need for more Indian enterprises to venture into this vital field. Expanding the pool of innovators is crucial to accelerating the development of diagnostics that are not only rapid but also accessible and reliable, thereby fortifying our defences against the ever-evolving threat of antimicrobial resistance.

#### Phages: turning viruses on bacteria

Alongside the usual medical treatments, it's crucial we explore alternative methods like bacteriophage therapy. Bacteriophages, simply known as phages, are viruses that specifically target and annihilate bacteria. They're emerging as a potent weapon against bacterial infections in humans, thanks to their ability to selectively hit harmful bacteria. Phages' benefits stretch across human health to animals, agriculture, and food processing. They hold the promise of preventing bacterial illnesses in livestock, reducing antibiotic use and thereby antibiotic resistance. For crops, phages present a natural solution to fight plant diseases, and in the food industry, they can help keep edibles safe from bacterial spoils, thus ensuring consumer health and lengthening the storage life of food items. Currently, India imports high-quality phages from seasoned phage producers in Eastern Europe, like the Eliava Institute in Georgia. But there's a pressing need for India to cultivate our indigenous phage therapies. Several Indian researchers are also making strides in phage research, with Gangagen, a



For India, where such infections are a growing concern, the timely availability of these drugs is critical. They show great promise and should be fast-tracked for use, bypassing the usual requirement for local data

start-up leading the way. It's about time we channel investment and hasten research in this field to develop home-grown phage solutions.

#### Empowering vaccine entrepreneurs

India's prowess in vaccine manufacturing is well-recognised on the global stage, but there's tremendous scope for further contribution, particularly in the development of new, innovative vaccines, such as therapeutic ones. These aren't your usual preventive vaccines; instead, they are designed to prevent the recurrence of infections, which are particularly troublesome for immunocompromised patients, like those repeatedly suffering from E. coli urinary tract infections. Given India's robust biotech sector and pool of scientific talent, the country is well-positioned to take the lead in this cutting-edge area. It's imperative that we support and invest in these efforts, as developing therapeutic vaccines isn't just a step towards advanced healthcare; it's a stride towards effectively combating persistent infections, improving patient outcomes, and cementing India's status as a frontrunner in medical innovation globally.

#### Service delivery

Ensuring robust infection control is paramount in curbing the spread of bacteria and warding off hospital-acquired infections. Regrettably, out of the 1 lakh hospitals across our nation, fewer than 1,000 meet satisfactory standards for infection control. This alarming scenario indicates that the vast majority of our hospitals lack the requisite policies, committees, and expertise essential for effective prevention of the transmission of drug-resistant infections to patients, leading to increased morbidity and mortality. To tackle this critical issue, innovative service models that go beyond mere academic training or theoretical courses are urgently needed.

As we explore the intricate world of microbes, the adverse effects of overusing and misusing antibiotics in humans, livestock, and crops become starkly clear. The crux of the problem isn't about cutting down on necessary treatments; it's about fine-tuning them. The aim is to prescribe antibiotics only when absolutely needed and in the right doses.

This careful management is vital to keep current antibiotics working and to make sure that new ones remain effective for longer. Yet, in India, a significant hurdle is that most hospitals don't have enough trained specialists to put such careful antibiotic use into practice. This calls for innovative service models that can provide the needed guidance and support for hospitals to start and keep up effective antibiotic stewardship and infection control measures. QuorumVeda, an innovative Indian startup (which I am involved with), has introduced a pioneering online service delivery model aimed at enhancing the quality of infection control and antibiotic stewardship in mid-size and small hospitals across India. This programme is not just about imparting knowledge; it's about providing continuous, on-ground support through a digital platform. Infection control and antibiotic stewardship experts from across the country come together to provide hands-on assistance to hospitals in need, all via an online interface. This collective approach holds the potential to revolutionise infection control measures and antibiotic stewardship, offering a scalable and accessible solution to support thousands of hospitals across the nation and significantly reduce the incidence of hospital-acquired infections.

#### Entrepreneurial hope

Entrepreneurship is the beacon of hope. To conquer the AMR challenge and pioneer new antibiotics, rapid diagnostics, vaccines, preventive strategies, and service models, we must adopt an entrepreneurial approach. My experience in AMR policy-making has taught me that policies, while crucial, are not enough without tangible implementation and cutting-edge technology.

Thus, fostering entrepreneurship to innovate and develop new technologies and service models is critical. India, blessed with ample resources, has the capacity to stimulate entrepreneurship in the AMR domain and take a leading role in this global fight. It's through entrepreneurship that we can find sustainable solutions to the AMR conundrum. In the entrepreneurial spirit, we find our most potent weapon and our greatest hope against AMR. AMR, isn't just a health concern but a complex socio-economic puzzle, deeply entwined with sanitation and education. Without tackling these foundational issues, our fight against AMR resembles a battle with a hydra – chop one head, two more spring up.

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The contamination of cough syrup has left the pharma sector under a cloud. GETTY IMAGES

## Ministry notifies revised rules to ensure quality of medicines

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare late last week notified revised rules under Schedule M of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945. The revision aims to ensure that the pharma sector re-commits to the manufacture of safe, effective, and high-quality drugs in compliance with international quality standards, thus benefiting both patients and industry. This is a response to the backlash India has been receiving over reports of sub-standard medicine exports.

Last year, the country felt intense global scrutiny after the World Health Organization (WHO) issued an alert about cough syrups being contaminated with diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol. These are considered toxic to humans and can prove fatal. The contamination was allegedly found in samples taken from a batch of cough syrup made by QP Pharmachem Ltd, based in Punjab. QP Pharmachem Ltd's manufacturing licence was suspended after cough syrup, linked to child deaths in Gambia and Uzbekistan, were found to be contaminated. Other cases of alleged contamination have also been reported from cough syrups made in India.

The latest revision includes five new categories of drugs – pharmaceutical products containing hazardous

substances such as sex hormones, steroids (anabolic and androgenic), cytotoxic substances, biological products and radiopharmaceuticals. It also has additional sections including – introduction of a pharmaceutical quality system (PQS), quality risk management (QRM), product quality review (PQR), qualification and validation of equipment, and a computerised storage system for all drug products.

According to the notification, the manufacturer must assume responsibility for quality of pharmaceutical products to ensure that they are fit for use, comply with requirements of the licence, and do not place patients at risk due to inadequate safety, quality or efficacy. Additionally, companies must market a finished product only after getting "satisfactory results" from tests of the ingredients and retain enough of the samples of intermediate and final products to allow repeated testing or verification of a batch.

Explaining the rationale, a Health Ministry official said the pharmaceutical manufacturing and quality domain has evolved significantly in last 15-20 years. "Our understanding of the domain has increased because of development in pharmaceutical and manufacturing sciences. The linkage between manufacturing and product quality and the interdependence has been established. Also, observations from ongoing risk-based inspections further emphasise the need for a relook at current Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) regulations and quality management systems being followed by pharmaceutical manufacturers." Based on the above factors and to keep pace with fast changing manufacturing and quality domain, there was a need to revisit and revise the principles and concept of GMP mentioned in current Schedule M. "This would bring our GMP recommendations on a par with global standards, especially those of the WHO, and ensure production of high quality, globally acceptable drugs," he added.

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