



CHOI TAKES OVER
S. Korea votes to oust
Acting President Han

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Suzuki legend Osamu passes away at 94

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FRESH RECORD LOW
Rupee falls 21 paise,
now 85.48 to the dollar

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NAVY SPEEDBOAT ACCIDENT

In Mumbai, a joyride that turned fatal

Concerns over possible negligence in trial run

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Australia has India under the cosh

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Brahmaputra dam will not affect India, Bangladesh: China

Press Trust of India
BEIJING

China on Friday defended its plan to build the world's largest dam on the Brahmaputra in Tibet, saying the project would not "negatively affect" the lower riparian states of India and Bangladesh and that safety issues had been addressed through decades of studies.

China on Wednesday approved the dam's construction, close to the Indian border. At a media briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning played down apprehensions.

The \$137-billion project is located in the ecologically fragile Himalayan region, along a tectonic plate boundary where earthquakes occur frequently.

Ms. Mao said China had studied in depth hydropower development in the region for decades, and safeguard measures had been taken to ensure the project's security and environment protection.



Mao Ning

"The project will not negatively affect the lower reaches," she said referring to the concerns in India and Bangladesh.

"China will continue to maintain communication with countries at the lower reaches through existing channels and step up cooperation on disaster prevention and relief for the benefit of the people by the river," Ms. Mao said.

She said hydropower work on the river aimed to speed up development of clean energy and respond to climate change and hydrological disasters.

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Manmohan's funeral: Congress demands rites at memorial site

Home Ministry announces state funeral with full military honours at a public cremation ground today; Congress alleges 'deliberate insult' to the first Sikh Prime Minister of India; Kharge had spoken to Modi and Shah for allocation of land

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry, in an order on Friday, said former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would be accorded a state funeral with full military honours at the Nigam Bodh Ghat, a public cremation ground in north Delhi, on Saturday.

The Congress, which had demanded a funeral in a place where a memorial to Dr. Singh could be built, called it a "deliberate insult to the first Sikh Prime Minister of India". "The people of our country are simply unable to understand why the Government of India could not find a location for his cremation and memorial that is befitting of his global stature, record of outstanding achievements, and exemplary service to the nation for decades," Congress communication chief Jai-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays his last respects to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

ram Ramesh said in a post on X. "This is nothing but a deliberate insult to the first Sikh Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh."

The government decision came hours after Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had spoken to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Congress general secretaries K.C. Venugopal and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had taken up the issue of a memorial with De-

fence Minister Rajnath Singh, an informed source said.

The source told *The Hindu* that government officials had conveyed it to Mr. Kharge as well as the former Prime Minister's family that land for a memorial would be earmarked in the next few days, but it would not be the place where the funeral took place. In fact, it was the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government that had de-

cided to have a common memorial ground – Rashtriya Smriti Sthal – near the Raj Ghat because of a shortage of land next to the Yamuna in central Delhi.

The government's response came after Mr. Kharge had followed up his telephonic conversations with a letter to the Prime Minister to press for a funeral site where a memorial can be built. "This is in keeping with such tradition of having memorials to statesmen and former Prime Ministers at the very place of their funerals," he said in his two-page letter.

The Congress chief said Manmohan Singh holds a highly revered place in the psyche of the country and the people of this nation, and his contributions and achievements were phenomenal. "Coming from a humble background and having experienced the pains and sufferings of Partition, it is through his sheer grit and determina-

tion that he rose to become one of the leading statesmen of the world," he said in his letter.

Earlier, the Union Cabinet observed a two-minute silence and adopted a Condolence Resolution. "Dr. Manmohan Singh has left his imprint on our national life. In his passing away, the Nation has lost an eminent statesman, renowned economist and a distinguished leader," it said.

In a video message, Mr. Modi described his predecessor's death as a big loss to the nation, asserting that his commitment to the people and the country's development would always be respected.

He recalled Dr. Singh's life journey after his family's migration to India, leaving behind everything following Partition.

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NEARBY

Waqf panel calls for transaction document

KOCHI

The Waqf tribunal has sought a 122-year-old land transaction document between the then ruler of erstwhile Travancore and Siddique Sait, a trader, to decide on the nature of the Munambam land, which is mired in controversy. » Page 4

Prasanth seeks clarification from Chief Secretary

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
N. Prasanth, an IAS officer who is under suspension, has written to Chief Secretary Sarada Muraleedharan seeking clarification on the charge memo issued to him earlier this month. He sought clarifications concerning procedural aspects and enclosures in the articles of charges against him. » Page 4

PROPERTYPLUS » PAGE 15

Snowed up

White town: Vendors pitch umbrellas to protect their wares as the season's first snowfall blankets Srinagar on Friday. Hundreds of vehicles are stranded on the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway. Many passes connecting the Valley are shut. IMRAN NISSAR

SC gives Punjab govt. 24 hours to hospitalise farmer on hunger strike

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

An "anxious" Supreme Court on Friday gave the Punjab government 24 hours to act on medical advice to hospitalise farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, whose indefinite fast is posing a danger to his life.

Mr. Dallewal has been on a hunger strike at the Khanauri boundary since November 26 to press the Centre to accept the agitating farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

Appearing before a Va-



Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal has been on a hunger strike at the Khanauri boundary in Sangrur district since November 26. PTI

cation Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia, the Punjab government said its efforts to move Mr. Dallewal to a hospital had been met with stiff resistance.

State Advocate-General Gurinder Singh said that a delegation of eight Cabinet Ministers had made no progress in convincing him to go to a hospital. The farmer leader had made it

clear he would not budge until the Centre opened a dialogue with the farmers.

The State warned that forcibly shifting him to a hospital may trigger "physical jostling" with farmers at the protest site, which may prove extremely risky for the septuagenarian leader.

The Punjab Chief Secretary and Director-General of Police are facing contempt action in the Supreme Court for not hospitalising Mr. Dallewal despite repeated orders, the latest on December 20.

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HC nod for takeover of estate land to house Wayanad landslides-hit

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Friday upheld the State government's decision to take over a portion of the land in possession of Harrisons Malayalam Limited and Elstone Tea Estate Limited for establishing new townships for rehabilitating Wayanad landslides survivors.

Justice Kauser Edappon gath passed the verdict while disposing of the writ petitions filed by the estate companies challenging the government's decision to acquire 65.41 acres from Harrisons Malayalam Limited's Nedumbala Es-

tate in Vythiri and 78.73 acres from Elstone Estate at Pulpara near the Kalpetta bypass.

The court ordered that the government was free to proceed to take over the properties for rehabilitation/reconstruction of landslides survivors in accordance with the law.

The court also directed the State government to determine the total amount of compensation to be awarded to the petitioners for taking over the land in accordance with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Act, 2013. The com-

pensation amount shall be paid to the petitioners before taking possession of the land with the petitioners executing a bond that in the event the titles of the properties were declared against them in the suits already filed by the State government, they shall refund the amount.

The court made it clear that the petitioners shall be entitled to pursue the statutory remedies available to them under the provisions of the LARR Act for enhancement of compensation.

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CM TO MEET SPONSORS
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Average household spending rose 3.5% through Aug. 2023-July 2024, shows government survey

Vikas Dhoot

NEW DELHI

India's average household consumption spends on a per capita basis rose about 3.5% in real terms through August 2023 to July 2024 from a year ago, as per the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, and the Centre said this signals a decline in consumption inequality and a narrowing gap between urban and rural spends.

The initial HCES findings, which are used to assess trends in economic well-being, estimate poverty levels and update the basket and weightages of consumer goods and ser-

vices used to formulate the Consumer Price Index (CPI) that measures retail inflation, were released by the Union Statistics Minis-

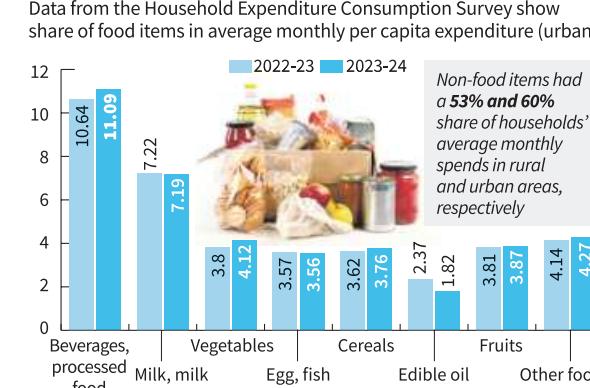
try on Friday.

This is the second year in a row that the HCES was conducted and its findings were released, after a 11-year hiatus as the government had junked the results of the 2017-18 survey citing "quality" concerns about the data. "Sustained momentum in rural consumption continues as urban-rural gap narrows down further in 2023-24 from the level of 2022-23," the Ministry said.

In real terms, the average rural Monthly Per Capita Expenditure or MPCE rose 3.53% over 2022-23 levels to ₹2,079 and grew at a fractionally slower pace of 3.48% for urban households. Non-food items had a 53% and 60% share of households' average monthly spends in rural and urban areas, respectively.

Despite the ratio of food spends to non-food spends suggesting a dip in expenditure on food and beverages, this was primarily due to a decline in spending on edible oils.

CONTINUED ON
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A K KIE

IN BRIEF**Key accused in alleged murder case arrested**

A special investigation team led by District Police Chief Vaibhav Saxena arrested the key accused in an alleged murder at Aluva Manappuram on the night of Christmas. The arrested is Arun Babu, 28, of Ulyanoor in Aluva. After the alleged crime, he reportedly stayed at a friend's house at Thodupuzha. He was nabbed while returning from there.

₹59.71-crore Central funds for Ashtamudi biodiversity hub

Union Minister of State for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Tourism Suresh Gopi has informed N.K. Premachandran, MP, that the Ministry of Tourism has approved a ₹59.71 crore project for the development of tourism in the Ashtamudi lake and its surrounding areas. This allocation of ₹59.71 crore is part of Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASI) to develop the Ashtamudi Biodiversity and Eco-recreational Hub which has to be completed within two years period. Various allocations made as part of the project include ₹6.01 crore for Kollam Marina, ₹5.19 crore for Punarjani complex, ₹5.4 crore for floating restaurant, ₹7.08 crore for biodiversity heritage trail, ₹9.6 crore for adventure park, ₹11.31 crore for children's park and ₹6.01 crore for Ashtamudi lake walkway. Additionally, ₹9.11 crore has been set aside for GST. The State government will have the full responsibility of implementing the project which must adhere to the conditions set by the Centre. The Centre has mandated that the project be completed within two years.

Spotlight

Read longform articles from our regional editions

- Andhra Pradesh: Barefoot trek on a raw road to education newsthrive/Trektoreducation
- Delhi: Pocketing the queen, and other carrom connections newsthrive/Carromconnections
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Udupi-CSL bags order for eight tugs from Adani Ports & SEZ

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Udupi Cochin Shipyard Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), has bagged an order for eight 70-tonne bollard pull ASD (azimuthing stern drive) tugs, placed by Adani Ports & SEZ through its subsidiary Ocean Sparkle Limited.

This is in addition to three 70-tonne bollard pull tugs already under construction at Udupi-CSL for Ocean Sparkle Limited. These tugs have a length of 33 metres, beam of 12.2 metres, and draft of 4.2 metres.

The vessels will be propelled by two main engines of 1838 kW and 2.7-m propellers and will be built based on the design by a world's leading design house for harbour tugs.

The tugs are built to the approved standard tug design and specifications (ASTDS) promulgated by the Centre for promoting Atma Nirbhar Bharat initiatives.

Udupi-CSL, since its take-over in 2020, was revived by CSL and was turned around in a short period, and the order book of the yard has now crossed ₹2,000 crore.

"CSL and Udupi-CSL have benchmarked the delivery timelines and the quality of tugs being constructed in India," said Madhu S. Nair, chairman and managing director, CSL.

High pathogen levels found in sewage discharged from flats

The faulty sewage treatment plant has resulted in the overflow of untreated wastewater on the premises of Shwas Mystic Heights apartment complex at Kaniyampuzha. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The results of samples collected from wastewater discharged into the public drain and vacant land near an apartment complex at Kaniyampuzha near Eroor in Thripunithura have shown alarming levels of faecal contamination.

In an order dated December 18, the Kerala High Court had asked the apartment owners to initiate immediate steps to revamp the sewage treatment plant under the supervision and assistance of the board.

The order issued by Justice Ziyad Rahman A. stated that the wastewater generated had to be transported to the septage treatment plant at Bramhapuram at the expense of the apartment owners.

The court said the motor pumps seized by the municipality on the board's instructions should be returned only after the authorities were satisfied that the sewage treatment plant had turned operational and complied with the standards prescribed.

officials of the Thripunithura municipality had seized two electrical motor pumps used in violation of norms to discharge untreated sewage into a nearby open land and drain on November 28.

Another one, put up by Cochin Carnival Committee, will be set afire at Parade Ground as part of the New Year programmes.

Justice Harisankar V. Menon on Friday directed Gala De Fort Kochi, a local club that erected the nearly 50-feet-tall Pappanji at Veli Ground, to set up safety barricades at a circumference of 70 feet from the base of the effigy.

The court, which stayed a notice issued by the police to remove the effigy on safety grounds, observed that the club, which had obtained the required clearances from government departments, was not to be prevented from burning the effigy.

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Two Pappanjis (effigies of old men) will be set afire in Fort Kochi to ring in the New Year, with the Kerala High Court giving a conditional nod for the one put up at Veli Ground.

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Gearing up: Gala De Fort Kochi's 50-foot-tall effigy of Pappanji at Veli Ground in Fort Kochi. THULASI KAKKAT

teams, 280 volunteers, and 32 surveillance cameras would be deployed around Veli Ground, with monitors at the Fort Kochi police control room and the Corporation office, they said.

Meanwhile, the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Mattancherry, informed the court that the police had issued notices to all clubs to remove effigies taller than 10 feet. The notices were issued to curb the possibility of miscreants setting them on fire.

The Veli Ground area had witnessed untoward incidents earlier, including the act of some miscreants reportedly trying to forcibly pour beer into the

mouth of a young girl on December 23 and manhandling her friend.

Around 1,000 police personnel will have to be deployed at Parade Ground, and Veli Ground will require even more personnel.

Moreover, police personnel will have to be deployed all along city roads to check rash, negligent and drunk driving, the official pointed out.

The official argued that the Corporation had not permitted the club to erect and burn the effigy. The practice of erecting and burning effigies at multiple locations in close proximities could not be permitted on safety and security grounds, he said.

Closed for maintenance

The Atlantis and Konthuruthy railway level crossings will remain closed during the day on Saturday for repair work. H. VIBHU

Timings
KOCHI

SATURDAY, DEC. 28	RISE 06:40 SET 18:13
MOON 04:10 SET 15:55	
SUNDAY, DEC. 29	
RISE 06:40 SET 18:14	
MOON 05:05 SET 16:47	
MONDAY, DEC. 30	
RISE 06:41 SET 18:14	
MOON 06:01 SET 17:44	

Kochi Weather	max min
Aluva	31 25
Perumbavoor	31 25
Kochi	31 25

Kochi Today
33°C Morning will be pleasant. Day will be warm. Night will be pleasant. Spells of light rain and thundershowers may occur.

Kochi Tomorrow
34°C The weather will be warm. Night will be pleasant. Dry weather to prevail.

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THE HINDU

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Suchitwa Mission blacklists private agency involved in dumping waste in Tamil Nadu

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Suchitwa Mission has blacklisted Sunage Ecosystems Private Limited, a private agency empanelled for non-biodegradable waste collection, following the controversy over the dumping of biomedical and other waste from Kerala in neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

The company was empanelled in September this year to collect waste from Thiruvananthapuram district.

For three years
The blacklisting will be effective for three years.

The Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had taken a suo motu case over the dump-

The move follows the failure of the company to respond to a Suchitwa Mission show-cause notice on December 23

ing of the waste. Probes conducted by the Tamil Nadu government and the Kerala State Pollution Control Board had revealed that Sunage Ecosystems was responsible for dumping waste in parts of Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

Explanation
Following this, the Suchitwa Mission had issued a show-cause notice to the company on December 23, seeking an explanation within three days for the il-

legal dumping of waste. However, the company failed to respond to the show-cause notice following which it was decided to blacklist it.

Tracking
The State government is planning to step up the monitoring and tracking of waste movement by private agencies contracted for the purpose. Several truckloads of waste dumped in Tirunelveli have been brought back to the State.

Lower grade waste
Used syringes, gloves, medicine cartons and other lower grade medical waste were seen mixed with the large amount of general waste in these waste dumps.

Contractors' association to stage Raj Bhavan march

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Kerala Government Contractors' Association (KGCA) will organise a march on January 6 from Jala Bhavan to Raj Bhavan and hold a dharna in front of Raj Bhavan and the State Secretariat, protesting against the alleged attempts by the Kerala Water Authority (KWA) to distribute, in violation of priority norms, a ₹288-crore interest-free loan that the Centre had allotted to the State for the Jal Jeevan Mission Scheme.

The KWA issued an order in this regard to favour vested interests, in violation of an order issued by the Kerala High Court. The Centre would allot another ₹638 crore only if the KWA handed over a similar sum that had been given to it earlier. This sum totalling ₹1,336 crore would be of considerable help to contractors to whom a total of ₹4,000 crore ought to be paid under the Jal Jeevan Mission Scheme whose tenure would end on March 31, KGCA president Varghese Kannampilly said.

Even worse, Kerala is ranked 31st among States in implementing the scheme. In this situation, the tenure to provide drinking water to all rural homes under a ₹44,000-crore project must be extended by at least three years. Moreover, ₹12,750 crore must be promptly made available by the Central and State governments, he added. He added that the repair, maintenance, and modernisation of PWD roads and buildings and of the KWA's assets had suffered due to non-allocation of funds.

Man allegedly waylaid, robbed in Kalady

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The manager of a wholesale vegetable dealership on a scooter was allegedly waylaid, stabbed, and robbed of a sum claimed to be running into lakhs by a motorcycle gang at

Chengal in Kalady on Friday evening.

The victim, Thankachan, sustained a stab injury to his abdomen but is said to be stable. The police recovered a pepper spray bottle from the area leading to suspicion that it was sprayed at his face.

K.V. Poulan, Kalady panchayat ward member, said Thankachan regularly used to take the same route to his employer's house to hand over the day's collection. According to the victim, ₹32 lakh was robbed though it remains to be verified by the police.

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From Page One

HC upholds govt. move to take over estate land

The court observed that the right of a State or sovereign to its own or his own property was absolute, while that of the subject or citizen to his property was only paramount. "The citizen holds his property which is always subject to the right of the sovereign to take it for a public purpose. The decision of the government to take possession of the properties for the purpose of rehabilitating landslides victims is a public purpose."

Advocate General K. Gopalakrishna Kurup submitted that around 1,210 families rendered homeless as a result of the landslides had been accommodated temporarily on rented premises, and thus, it was "a very urgent and imminent necessity" to rehabilitate them permanently as part of disaster management measures taken.

Accordingly, the Wayanad Collector, who is the Chairman of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), identified these properties for rehabilitation and reconstruction after taking into account all relevant factors and the suitability of the land, including environmental feasibility and also the fact that it is not landslide-prone.

He contended that the government was well within its powers to take possession of these properties for disaster management, invoking the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The apprehension expressed by the petitioners that the attempt of the government was to acquire property without payment of adequate had no basis.

The petitioners contended that the government could not take over the land from private entities under the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 without payment of compensation. The petitioners had also attributed "mala fides and malice" from the government for taking over their land.

IN BRIEF

Youth held for circulating pirated version of *Marco*

The Ernakulam cyber police arrested a youngster on charge of circulating a pirated version of the new Malayalam film *Marco*. The arrested was identified as Aquib Hanan, 20, of Aluva. The police said he sourced the video from a website and shared with his followers on Instagram the link to watch the film, thus committing a violation of the copyright Act. An investigation is under way to trace those who made the pirated version of the film and uploaded it online. The police are yet to come across evidence linking him directly to the actual act of piracy. The cyber police station, Infopark, has registered a case.

One killed, 18 injured in road accident near Angamaly

A van driver was killed and 18 women injured, one seriously, after the vehicle in which they were travelling collided with a timber-laden lorry along MC Road near Angamaly around 3 a.m. on Friday. The deceased was identified as Abdul Majeed, 58, of Palakkad. The women were returning after a catering assignment at a wedding at Ranji. The condition of Jalaja, a resident of Wadakkanchery, remains critical. According to the police, the van rammed the timber protruding from the lorry.

CM hails Manmohan's 'revolutionary' policies

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan and a host of leaders across the political aisle condoled the passing of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at a hospital in New Delhi on Thursday.

The Kerala government flew the national flag at half mast in its offices and facilities across the State as a mark of respect to Dr. Singh. It also cancelled official entertainment from December 26 to January 1, the seven-day mourning period.

Upholding secularism Mr. Vijayan remembered the late former Prime Minister as a politician who upheld the secular and democratic nature of the Union of India. Mr. Vijayan said Dr. Singh's first loyalty was to the Indian Constitution, and it never wavered.

Mr. Vijayan said Dr. Singh's opposition to the Left on economic and political matters was well within the principles of de-

mocracy and civic etiquette. He said that as Foreign Minister, Dr. Singh strove to improve India's relationship with the world. The Chief Minister said Dr. Singh was unlike other politicians. He was a globally renowned economist instrumental in re-casting India's fiscal planning and policy, he added.

"Some of his policies were revolutionary and pro-people. They included the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the National Rural Health Mission, the passage of the Right to Information (RTI) Act and the Right to Fair Compensation Act, banking sector reforms, and the waiving of agricultural loans," said Mr. Vijayan.

Satheesan's view Mr. Satheesan termed Dr. Singh as "a leader unlike many others." He said Dr. Singh harnessed his financial expertise to push India toward rapid development and economic growth, adding that the former Prime Minister was known for his honesty and forthrightness,

Munambam: Waqf tribunal seeks documents of 1902

An understanding of the nature of the land transaction between the then ruler of erstwhile Travancore and Siddique Sait, a trader, will be crucial in deciding on the dispute, says judge

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHE

The Waqf tribunal has sought a 122-year-old land transaction document between the then ruler of erstwhile Travancore and Siddique Sait, a trader, to decide on the nature of the Munambam land, which is mired in controversy. The transaction between Sait and the former king took place in 1902.

A socio-political issue The Munambam dispute had snowballed into a socio-political issue, with the residents of the area demanding the restoration of their revenue rights on the

holdings and opposing the enlistment of the property as a Waqf. The successors of Sait and the Kerala Waqf Tribunal argue that Farook College, Kozhikode, which got the property from the successors of Sait as a Waqf, illegally sold the property. However, the college authorities argue that they obtained the property from the successors of Sait as a gift, which they could transact.

The college authorities later moved the tribunal challenging the board's decision to register the Munambam land as a Waqf property. Rajan Thattil, judge (Chairman) of the Waqf tribunal, who considered the case on Friday

The question of Waqf does not arise if the then ruler had leased the property to Sait, observes the judge

asked the parties to the litigation to produce the document when the case is taken up on January 25.

The judge said only those properties on which the possessor had absolute title could be dedicated as Waqf. The question of Waqf does not arise if the former king had leased the property to Sait. An understanding of the nature of the land transaction would be crucial in deciding on the dispute at hand. Such

an understanding will also go a long way in resolving the crisis, noted the judge.

It should be found out whether the Waqf (the one who makes the dedication of the property) got the property by way of sale, gift or lease in Munambam. If the holding was sold or gifted to Sait, he and his successors could dedicate the property as a Waqf.

Knowing the nature of the transaction will also help the judicial commission appointed by the State government in this regard and to decide litigations, including the petitions of two agencies committed to the restoration of Waqf properties, he orally observed.

Prasanth asks Chief Secretary to clarify on charge memo

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

N. Prasanth, an IAS officer who is under suspension, has written to Chief Secretary Sarada Muraleedharan seeking clarification on the charge memo issued to him earlier this month.

In a December 16 letter, Mr. Prasanth sought clarifications concerning procedural aspects and enclosures in the articles of charges against him, saying that he required them to "respond appropriately and in adherence to the principles of justice and procedural fairness."

Mr. Prasanth requested information, including the source of the "alleged social media posts," which was purportedly relied upon when issuing the

chargesheet, and how "official cognizance" was taken of a particular social media exchange.

Legal notice

Earlier this month, Mr. Prasanth had sent a legal notice to Industries director K. Gopalakrishnan (who is under suspension), Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) A. Jayathilak, Ms. Muraleedharan, and a Malayalam daily accusing them of fabrication of documents, among others. The issue pertains to an inquiry report allegedly prepared by Mr. Jayathilak blaming Mr. Prasanth for the disappearance of files related to the Unnathi project, when he was its CEO.

Ms. Muraleedharan declined to comment on the latest development.

CM to meet Wayanad township projects' sponsors on Jan. 1

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Revenue Minister K. Rajan on Friday said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan would on January 1 hold a meeting of those willing to contribute to the rehabilitation of families displaced by the landslides at Mundakkai and Chooralmala in Wayanad.

Several entities had expressed interest in underwriting the cost of two model townships at sites at Harrisons Malayalam Estate (65.41 hectares) in Nedumbala and Elstone Estate (78.73 hectares) near the Kalpetta bypass.

Mr. Rajan said the High Court's order backing the State government's move to acquire the plantation land would catalyse the rehabilitation package's implementation.

In October, the State government invoked the Disaster Management Act, 2005 to acquire the land for two model townships.

Mr. Rajan said the government would give the owners "deserving amount" and dismissed the charge that the land acquisition was a "hostile takeover of privately owned" plantation land.

Land survey Mr. Rajan said the High Court had cleared the decks for the government to survey the land for acquisition, thus fast-tracking the township projects.

Mr. Rajan said the government would give the owners "deserving amount" and dismissed the charge that the land acquisition was a "hostile takeover of privately owned" plantation land.

Santas' day out



Spirit of the season: Around 15,000 children dressed as Santa Claus dance to carols on Swaraj Round, Thrissur, on Friday, as part of Buon Natale, a Christmas celebration organised by the Thrissur archdiocese and the Thrissur Pouravali. K.K. NAJEEB

Govt. allots ₹494 cr. to cover KSEB loss

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The State government has approved the release of ₹494.29 crore to the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) as part of taking over 90% of the latter's losses for the 2023-24 fiscal.

The State government had given an undertaking

to the Union government in this regard so as to avail of additional borrowing space linked to power sector reforms. The KSEB had incurred a loss of ₹549.21 crore in 2023-24.

For availing of additional borrowing space, the State government is required to take over 90% of the losses incurred by pu-

blic sector distribution companies, in this case, the KSEB. The State government had, in its undertaking, agreed to take over the "future losses" of the KSEB "in a graded manner" in this regard.

Presenting the State's wish list at a pre-Union Budget discussion convened by Union Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at Jaisalmer on December 20, Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal had urged the Centre to extend the additional borrowing of 0.5% of the gross state domestic product (GSDP) tied to power sector reforms to 2025-26, the final year of the 15th Finance Commission.

He revived the economy with a magician's touch: Antony

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

former Prime Minister forged stronger ties with most countries. "About 50 countries inked defence deals with India during the period. Though there were border disputes he patiently dealt with these issues without ceding even one inch of land," he said.

Mr. Antony lauded Dr. Singh for following the true spirit of federalism. "He had always taken a liberal approach to Kerala's demands, both under the tenure of the Congress and the Left. Kerala got defence-related industries for the first time during his tenure," he said.

Mr. Antony also reminisced about the former Prime Minister's simplicity, honesty and sense of justice. "While getting out of an aircraft, he never let anyone take his bag, preferring to carry it himself. He was that simple a man," he said.

Thrissur Mayor's meet with Surendran triggers a row in LDF

The Hindu Bureau
THRISSUR

Communist Party of India (CPI) leader V.S. Sunilkumar, who unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha elections this year from Thrissur, has criticised M.K. Varghese, Mayor of the Left Democratic Front (LDF)-led Thrissur Corporation, for his meeting with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State president K. Surendran on Christmas day.

Mr. Sunilkumar accused the Mayor of political opportunism and claimed that accepting a cake from Mr. Surendran was part of a calculated political move. The CPI had earlier called for Mr. Varghese's removal as Mayor, citing concerns over his shifting political loyalties.

Mr. Surendran had visited Mr. Varghese as part of the BJP's Sneha Sandesh Yatra campaign and given him a Christmas cake. Mr. Sunilkumar said the

LDF should remove Mr. Varghese from the post. In the 55-member council, the LDF and the UDF have 24 seats each and the BJP has six. So Mr. Varghese's stand as an independent councillor is crucial.

No political motives' Mr. Varghese defended his actions, stating that he would "welcome anyone" who visited his residence on Christmas Day. He described Christmas as a time for love and goodwill and made it clear that he had no political motives behind receiving Mr. Surendran on Christmas day.

Mr. Surendran also weighed in on the controversy and suggested in a Facebook post that the "bitterness" of the CPI leader's loss to the BJP candidate Suresh Gopi in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections was "still evident."

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SAD DEMISE



Mrs. HUSNARA RAZA
It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of beloved wife of Mr. Moosa Raza and cherished mother of Jafar, Shahla, Gazala & Maliba. She departed this world peacefully on 26 Dec 2024, leaving behind a legacy of love, kindness & grace.

She will be dearly missed by her children, grandchildren, extended family, friends. While her absence leaves an immeasurable void her memory will continue to inspire & guide us.
Funeral Details:
The Namaz Janaza will be held on Saturday, 28 Dec 2024 after Zuhra prayers at Amirunnisa Begum burial ground, Royapettah Chennai. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

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DONATE EYES - GIFT SIGHT

Webinar unveils ways to manage emotional well-being of students



Psychologist and author Aruna Sankaranarayanan addressing the webinar on Friday. Sridhar Aranala of The Hindu Group spoke.

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

The Hindu in School hosted a webinar on "connecting with students and understanding their emotions" on Friday.

Over 5,000 educators from across the country attended the webinar that focused on the emotional well-being of students. Understanding and connecting with students' emotions is fundamental to effective teaching and learning, and the webinar was aimed at addressing this need by offering insights and practical tools for educators.

Aruna Sankaranarayanan, psychologist, author, and visiting faculty at Azim Premji University, provided practical solutions for connecting with students emotionally. She shared methods that educators can adopt for better understanding of students' emotions.

One of the highlights of her talk was the introduction of the RULER model of emotional intelligence, which offers a structured framework for educators to improve their interactions with students.

It stands for recognising emotions in oneself and others, understanding the causes and consequences



of emotions, labelling emotions accurately, expressing emotions appropriately, and regulating emotions effectively.

She highlighted how these techniques could be integrated into daily teaching practices to foster better emotional awareness in both teachers and students.

Sridhar Aranala, vice-president, sales and distribution, The Hindu Group, explained how understanding and managing the emotional landscape of Generation Z is crucial for teachers, especially considering diminishing attention spans. The webinar was held exclusively for subscribers to The Hindu Group's educational products. To stay updated on upcoming events, educators can scan the QR code provided and register for notifications about future value-added initiatives by The Hindu Group's school vertical.

Kerala 13th among States in women voter turnout in LS election

The Hindu Bureau

TIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala stood 13th among States and 17th overall in the percentage of women electors who cast their votes in the 18th Lok Sabha polls held earlier this year, reveals a detailed statistical report released by the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Thursday.

Of the 1,43,36,133 women electors for the Lok Sabha polls in Kerala, 1,03,02,515 (excluding postal votes), or 71.86%, queued up at the polling booths to exercise their franchise.

A perusal of the data on 'Participation of Women Electors in Poll' shows that the Union Territory of Lakshadweep recorded the highest women turnout (85.46%) overall, while Assam topped the list among States with 81.71%.

States with better women voter turnout also include Andhra Pradesh (80.3%), Himachal Pradesh (72.55%), and West Bengal (80.16%).

Highest

Interestingly, women constituted 51.56% of the electorate in Kerala, the highest at the national level after the Union Territory of Puducherry (53.03%). Of the 2.78 crore electorate in Kerala (general + NRI + service) at the time, over 1.43 crore were women. Also, the votes polled by women

Anna varsity sets up panel to look into sexual assault

Around 80% of CCTV cameras on the campus are working, says T.N. Higher Education Minister. Overgrown shrubbery on the campus will be removed and more street lights will be installed

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Higher Education Minister Govi. Chezhiaan said on Friday that Anna University had constituted a separate committee, comprising senior faculty members, women members, and students' representatives, to look into the case of sexual assault.

He added that the government would take measures to improve security on the Anna University campus, where a girl student was sexually assaulted earlier this week.

"The unfortunate incident was brought to the notice of the government.

The university has a committee constituted under the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) at Workplace Act," he said. "This is an issue concerning the university and the education of students. The university is fully cooperating with the inquiry conducted by the police and the National Commission for Women," he added.

The Minister said around 80% of the CCTV cameras were working on the campus, and the overgrown shrubbery therein would be removed and more street lights would be installed soon.

He said measures would

be taken to improve security and prevent such incidents at other universities.

Gnanasekaran, the man arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting the student, had easy entry to the campus as his wife was one of the workers hired to maintain the campus, Mr. Chezhiaan said.

"The incident happened around 8 p.m. The man was a frequent visitor to the campus, according to the security staff. Henceforth, visitors will have to produce identity cards and vehicles must be photographed before they are allowed entry," he said.

"We shall hold meetings to enhance security at all engineering colleges and

universities," he said.

On December 23, two mechanical engineering students, both hostellers, went for a walk after dinner in a less frequented area of the campus, when Gnanasekaran approached them.

He allegedly sexually assaulted the girl, a first-year student, after beating up her friend, a final-year student.

The girl then lodged a complaint with the Kotturpuram police station. Mr. Chezhiaan said the student did not approach the POSH committee at the university after the incident.

However, the students said they were not aware of such a committee.

Annamalai flogs himself in protest

The Hindu Bureau

COIMBATORE



BJP Tamil Nadu State president K. Annamalai protesting outside his residence in Coimbatore on Friday. S. SIVA SARAVANAN

In protest against the sexual assault of a girl at Anna University in Chennai and wanting to oust the DMK government in the State, the Tamil Nadu BJP president, K. Annamalai, on Friday flogged himself six times in front of his house in Coimbatore, barefoot.

Later, speaking to journalists, he said the stir that the BJP had undertaken (on Friday) would intensify. This agitation was not against an individual but against the deteriorating

standards of education, economic depletion, and police apathy on women safety issues. "After deep deliberation, I took a decision not to wear footwear

until the DMK government, which has indulged in all wrongdoings, is ousted," he said.

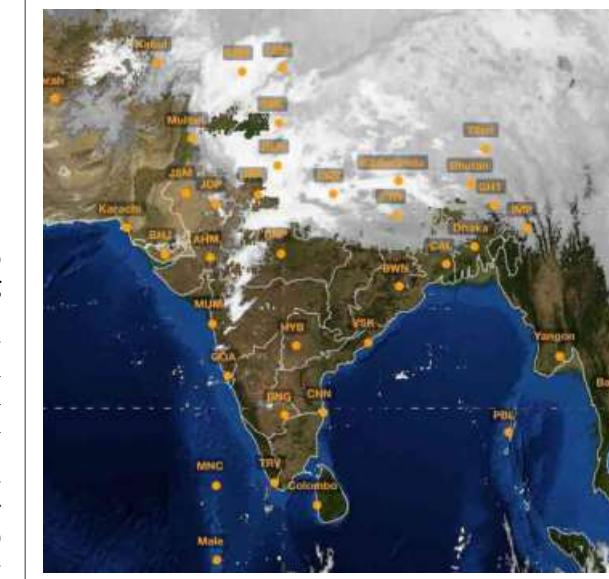
In the Police Department, there is no question

of a technical glitch resulting in the leaking of the FIR, he said. "Releasing the FIR is a tool to silence the other victims," he added.

Quoting Chennai Police Commissioner A. Arun, Mr. Annamalai wanted to know in what context was the victim quoted as saying that police action was satisfactory. He also alleged that there were a lot of contradictions between the statements of Minister for Higher Education Govi Chezhiaan and Mr. Arun regarding the manner in which the complaint was filed by the victim.

WEATHER WATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Thunderstorms accompanied with hailstorms & lightning at isolated places over Madhya Pradesh and Sikkim; with lightning at isolated places over Uttar Pradesh, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Madhya Maharashtra and Marathwada.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	27.0	12.0	Kozhikode	—	34.0	25.0
Ahmedabad	—	28.0	16.0	Kurnool	—	30.0	22.0
Aizawl	—	26.0	15.0	Lucknow	—	27.0	14.0
Allahabad	—	29.0	15.0	Madurai	—	33.0	24.0
Bengaluru	0.9	27.0	20.0	Mangaluru	—	33.0	23.0
Bhopal	—	28.0	17.0	Mumbai	—	33.0	21.0
Bhubaneswar	—	28.0	17.0	Mysuru	—	30.0	18.0
Chandigarh	—	19.0	7.0	New Delhi	4.9	18.0	13.0
Chennai	2.0	30.0	23.0	Patna	—	26.0	13.0
Coimbatore	0.1	31.0	23.0	Port Blair	—	31.0	25.0
Dehradun	—	20.0	8.0	Puducherry	3.9	30.0	24.0
Gangtok	—	14.0	—	Pune	—	31.0	16.0
Goa	—	—	—	Raipur	—	28.0	17.0
Guwahati	—	27.0	13.0	Ranchi	—	27.0	13.0
Hubballi	—	28.0	20.0	Shillong	—	22.0	12.0
Hyderabad	—	27.0	20.0	Shimla	—	14.0	6.0
Imphal	—	23.0	8.0	Srinagar	—	5.0	7.0
Jaipur	—	19.0	8.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	33.0	23.0
Kochi	—	31.0	24.0	Tiruchi	0.6	31.0	23.0
Kohima	—	15.0	5.0	Vijayawada	—	30.0	21.0
Kolkata	—	27.0	16.0	Visakhapatnam	—	28.0	22.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	.11	.38	49	284	200	—
Bengaluru	.16	.27	66	88	—	—
Chennai	.15	.38	38	37	34	—
Delhi	.21	.67	69	413	318	—
Hyderabad	.14	.8	24	53	103	—
Kolkata	.27	.47	14	188	144	—
Lucknow	.15	.7	16	241	167	—
Mumbai	.7	.56	2	264	170	—
Pune	.23	.84	56	142	125	—
Visakhapatnam	.9	.47	33	113	88	—

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease



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E-TENDER NOTICE

Notice Inviting EXPRESSION OF INTEREST for the "Selection of ICT Solution Provider"

Expression of Interest (EoI) is invited from reputed, professional and registered firms/companies/agencies, to partner with Kerala Tourism as ICT solution provider, in its various Information & Communication Technology related marketing and promotional activities. The agency should be able to assist Tourism Department of Kerala to maintain the brand equity of the State and ensure that it can overcome competition from national and international destinations.

Category no., Title of Agency E-Tender ID no. Tender Ref no.

1 ICT Solution Provider, 2024_TOUR_719723_1 DOT_205_2024_RST

The firms/agencies should have tourism domain expertise, creative competency, adequate exposure and qualified & experienced manpower to handle the various aspects of tourism marketing and promotion, ranging from research to conceptualization of ICT tools, from creative content development to execution of ICT related projects.

The entire procedure of bidding will be as E-Tender. Interested firms/companies/agencies may log on to <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in> or www.keralatourism.org.

Last date and time for the receipt of EoI - 6.00 pm on 13/01/2025

28-12-2024

Sd/- Director, Kerala Tourism

THE HINDU GROUP

REWIND 2024 TRIVIA QUIZ

DAY 28

What is the name of the mascot for the 38th National Games, inspired by Uttarakhand's state bird, symbolizing the



Letter and spirit

The new detention policy seeks to address a real issue, but it fails

Among the key school education reforms instituted by the UPA government as part of the Right to Education were Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) and a 'no detention' policy up to Class 8. Both sought to create a benign environment in school so that there was no pressure of final examinations and "standards" on the child. The CCE was to be executed from Class 6, in discrete steps throughout the year, which meant no scary final test of just academic achievement based on a year-long curriculum. Whether those reforms contributed to the current situation or not, the reality is that a significant number of students passing out of primary school do not have foundational numeracy and literacy. And they do not seem to catch up by the time they leave middle school. Recognising the gap in achieving learning outcomes, the NDA government sought to do away with the no detention policy, in 2019, leaving it to the appropriate State governments. The CCE was given up too. But the COVID-19 pandemic intruded and made it impossible for schools to even consider detaining students. The recent notification of the Ministry of Education has removed the discretion given to State governments. It has mandated a final examination at the end of Class 5 and Class 8, which will assess a child's competence. If he or she is not found to be competent, the child will be re-examined after two months after additional instruction. If the child fails again, he or she will be detained. The rules say no child should be expelled before completing elementary education.

Practical necessity is driving this change in norms. Steps do need to be taken to address the gap in the learning outcomes achievement. An educated, capable and skilled population is needed to reap the demographic dividend. It takes an entire neighbourhood to educate a child, not just the school and parents. The dismal situation in learning outcomes is a collective failure of society that needs to be addressed. But it would take a lot more than this particular change in policy to trigger a turnaround. CBSE-affiliated and other private schools can easily implement the new policy. However, for some States, it will be a political hot potato. Private schools should not use this as an excuse to expel poor performing students – safeguards would be needed. A sad consequence of the policy is that it brings back a single final examination as an arbiter of a child's promotion or detention. While NEET or the JEE may be taken as special cases applying to extremely competitive professions, to bring back one final test at the school level is a regression. The National Education Policy 2020, for instance, wants to replace summative assessment with formative, and promote self and peer assessments. It promises a "holistic, 360-degree, multidimensional progress report card" detailing the "progress and the uniqueness of each student". The new detention policy does not reflect the NEP's spirit.

Security in safety

Authorities must ensure public spaces are safe environs for all

People derive a sense of ease from what they perceive to be safe cloisters; they let their guard down in these areas and, relax. When an attack happens in safe environs, it would be a harsh betrayal of that sense of trust. In the recent case of sexual assault within the campus of Anna University, Chennai, there has not only been a vile violation of a young student's bodily integrity, but also, possibly as painful, a gross betrayal of trust. On December 23, in one of Tamil Nadu's top engineering institutes, Anna University, a public State-run institution, the engineering student and her friend, also a student, decided to take a walk after dinner. As they walked into a rather secluded neck of the woods, the horror began for them. A stranger there accosted the male companion, threatened him and then went on to sexually assault the girl. Traumatised by her ordeal, the girl called the police helpline – 100 – the next day, and a team from the all women's police station nearby reached the university and took her complaint. She gave a full account of the incident, assuring them that she would be able to identify the culprit if she were to see him again. On Wednesday, police arrested Gnanasekaran, a roadside vendor who has a bunch of petty cases against him, after he had been identified in an identification parade. Apparently, though not an employee, he used to frequent the varsity campus as his wife was a contract labourer employed by the university to work within the premises.

In the aftermath of the incident, the Higher Education Minister said more lights would be provided across the campus, and all the overgrown bushes trimmed. Efforts have also been initiated to regulate who enters the campus, by conducting an ID check before allowing visitors in. While the incident has provoked widespread outrage, it has also acquired varied political hues, with reactions from some quarters bordering on the absurd. What is essential is for the government to ensure, without a doubt, that every corner of all its educational institutions and their vast cloisters are safe for all students. Whatever needs to be done in aid of that should be done, costs notwithstanding. Additionally, the personal details of the complainant were revealed in the public realm, a clear violation of the law and repeated court guidelines. This too must never be allowed to happen another time. The alacrity displayed in apprehending the culprit should be extended to the filing of charges and securing a conviction for a just closure to this horrific crime.

Atul Kumar, the son of a daily wage worker and from the Scheduled Caste community, lost his seat at IIT Dhanbad after he was unable to pay the seat booking fee of ₹17,500 that was required to secure his admission. His case gained widespread attention on social media, prompting the Supreme Court of India to intervene by exercising its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to grant him admission. There are many and similar cases like Atul's, but which never draw media attention or receive justice, leaving many deserving students without opportunities due to financial constraints and systemic inequalities.

The rise in tuition fees
The struggles that Dalit students face echo the challenges of pre-Independence India when they were barred from enrolling in educational institutions because of their caste. While these historical restrictions were overt, the situation now is more insidious. Under the "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan", the Government of India has been pushing for self-reliance in institutions, leading to a significant increase in fees in many government colleges and universities such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), the Indian Institutes of Management, the central universities, and the National Law University. For instance, in 2016, the IIT council's standing committee agreed to increase the undergraduate tuition fees by 200%. This meant a fee increase from ₹90,000 to ₹3 lakh a year.

In response to the criticism regarding the fee increase, the committee set up by the government asserted that students from marginalised communities would benefit from the Vidyalakshmi scheme, which offers interest-free scholarships. However, while this initiative aims to provide support, it remains insufficient to fully address the financial challenges faced by these students, especially as fees continue to rise. The hike in fees that was implemented in seven IIMs including increased tuition fees; IIM-Lucknow hiked it by nearly 30%, IIM-Ahmedabad and IIM-Shillong by 5%, IIM Lucknow by 29.6%, IIM-Calcutta by 17.3%, IIM-Kozhikode by 23.1%, IIM-Ranchi by 19% and IIM-Tiruchirappalli by 20%. IIT-Delhi increased tuition fees for full-time M.Tech students in the semester in 2022-23. The total academic fee is now ₹53,100, which does not include hostel fees. This is a 100% increase from last year's fee of ₹26,450.

The frequent hikes in fees have made it increasingly difficult for students from the marginalised communities to afford higher education or even pursue studies through loans.



Suman Kumar
Associate Professor at the Alliance School of Liberal Arts, Alliance University, Bangalore

With rising costs in the Indian education system, many students from the marginalised communities are unable to even consider enrolling in prestigious institutions such as the IITs and the IIMs despite securing competitive ranks. As a result, while some students manage to cope with the financial burden, there are others who are overwhelmed by the stress and the inequality in academic institutions. This pressure, exacerbated by the high cost of education, has a human angle too. In 2021, data showed that over the past seven years, 122 students from the IITs and the IIMs had ended their lives, many due to the financial strain of rising fees and the anxiety of securing employment.

The issue of dropouts

Another harsh reality is that many students who manage to enrol themselves in prestigious institutions eventually drop out due to their inability to afford rising education fees. The Human Resources Development Ministry reported that 2,461 students dropped out of IITs in just two years (2017 and 2018). Last year, this issue was raised in the Lok Sabha, revealing that over the past five years, more than 13,500 students from the Scheduled Castes (SC), the Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) had dropped out of courses in the central universities, the IITs and the IIMs. Government data showed that in the central universities, 4,596 students from the Other Backward Classes, 2,424 SC students, and 2,622 ST students dropped out during this period. In the IITs, 2,066 OBC students, 1,068 SC students, and 408 ST students left. Similarly, the IIMs saw 163 OBC, 188 SC, and 91 ST students drop out over the past five years. These numbers highlight the significant challenges faced by marginalised communities in accessing and sustaining higher education in India.

One of the key reasons behind the poor economic conditions of the Dalit community is that their identity in India is still largely defined by caste. Dalits continue to be denied the opportunity to perform work that is on a par with others in society. This has not only left them economically marginalised but also socially vulnerable. Dalits in India are considered an oppressed and discriminated class, often labelled as "untouchable". Historically, this stigmatisation has meant that Dalits have been denied access to education. The term "untouchables" also refers to those who have been forced into the most undesirable and degrading jobs. A recent survey in 29 States on urban sewer and septic tank workers revealed that 92% of these workers belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled

Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). A 2019 report by former Education Minister Ramesh Pokhrayan revealed that 95% of faculty positions in IITs were held by individuals from upper caste backgrounds, with only 5% allocated to SC, ST, and OBC categories, despite these groups representing 70%-80% of India's population. An RTI filed by IIT-Bombay students further exposed the disparities, showing that 24 departments had no SC faculty, 15 lacked ST representation, and nine had no OBC faculty. These statistics highlight the deep-rooted caste-based inequalities that persist in both employment and education.

The barriers still exist

After Independence, with provisions in the Constitution and welfare mechanisms, Dalit school enrolment rates have improved over time. However, Dalit children continue to face significant barriers in education, including poverty, social discrimination, and caste-based prejudice. Dalit students are often judged based on their clothes, language, and other markers, making it difficult for them to integrate with their upper caste peers.

In many cases, caste-based remarks and discrimination wound these students, leading to social isolation. Some students succumb to the emotional toll of this prejudice – there are cases such as a woman postgraduate medical student in a medical college in Maharashtra and two students from IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi that are painful reminders of this reality. These incidents underscore the persistent shadow of casteism and harassment over the aspirations of many Dalit students. This troubling situation raises a critical question: how can these prestigious institutions effectively address this issue and foster a safe, inclusive environment for all students?

The unfortunate incidents of student suicides point to the immense pressure students face in the education system. Many students are burdened by their families' expectations that completing a degree will solve their economic problems. But unemployment in India is also high. An RTI filed in 2024 about IIT placements showed that approximately 8,000 students (38%) across 23 IIT campuses remained unplaced this year. For students from the marginalised communities, this struggle is even more pronounced, as their caste identity often doubles the challenges they face in securing jobs. These issues underscore the pressing need for systemic reforms in education and employment to alleviate the pressures on students and address caste-based disparities.

Rules that still manacle the captive elephant

In India, where elephants are revered as sacred symbols of wisdom and strength, privately-held captive elephants live a stark contradiction. Reflecting on this grim reality, the Kerala High Court recently likened the lives of these captive animals to an "eternal Treblinka", drawing a poignant comparison to the infamous Nazi extermination camps. Elephants used for religious purposes, entertainment and tourism are subjected to much cruelty and forced to behave in unnatural ways. These social animals are subjected to isolation and abusive training methods to break their spirit. Although elephants have the highest protection under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, they have been at the forefront of practices that seek to capture them from the wild for a life in captivity.

New rules and loopholes
In its intent to regulate potential misuse of captive elephants in private custody and curb illegal captures from the wild, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) published the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules in March 2024. These rules facilitate the transport and the transfer of elephants and also specify the procedure of transfer of ownership.

However, the ambiguity in procedures and rationale for transport and/or transfer of wild elephants could pave the way for further commercial exploitation. For instance, it states that when an owner is no longer able to maintain an elephant, the ownership of that elephant may be transferred. However, there is no obligation for this exchange to be non-commercial. Elephants can, therefore, be traded as movable property.

The rules also provide for transport of the elephants temporarily. Again, there is no explicit requirement to justify the transportation of a privately owned elephant across or within State borders on an interim basis. States with a high



Shubhra Sotie
an environmental lawyer and Specialist, Wildlife Policy and Research at Humane Society International (HSI) India

number of privately owned elephants could potentially lease their elephants to serve as props, from religious ceremonies to weddings to political rallies. These are activities that compromise the welfare of elephants even as they objectify and commodify them. This regularisation of the transfer of elephants for religious activities, tourism, or any other commercial ventures effectively contributes to the economic valuation of elephants, treating them as tools for generating income. Thus, the legislation could be misused by private elephant owners to essentially "rent out" their animals, which risks incentivising the capture of wild elephants and directly undermines elephant conservation.

Microchip misuse, births in captivity

As of January 2019, there were 2,675 documented captive elephants in the country, with a deeply disturbing implication. It has been reported that when these animals die, they are replaced by elephants captured from the wild. Most captive elephants were microchipped as part of a 2002 initiative that Project Elephant launched to track all captive elephants in India that have valid certificates of ownership. Anecdotes suggest that these microchips are retrieved from an elephant posthumously and then inserted into an elephant caught in the wild to legalise an illicit capture.

Despite this popular *modus operandi*, the Rules do not require the removal and the destruction of microchips implanted in captive elephants, which should be done in presence of forest officials. Moreover, the Rules do not require the submission of a post-mortem report in cases where an elephant dies during transfer or transportation, leaving a critical gap in monitoring and accountability. Worse, this fuels the never-ending cycle of elephants in captivity. This cycle is perpetuated by a provision in the Rules that recognises the birth of calves in captivity, allowing them to be legally classified as

There are ambiguities in the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules that may facilitate illegal trade in elephants

owned captive elephants.

What is required instead, is a mandate to implement humane, non-invasive birth control measures for elephants in private custody, to break the cycle of commercial exploitation and prevent more elephants entering captivity through birth. Additionally, a shift from using live elephants in temples, processions, and tourism to alternatives such as electronic elephants is crucial. Civil society, temple committees and the government should lead this change to protect wild elephants.

The trade between States

Further, there are numerous reports of elephants being transported from the northeastern States to the southern and western States. One such instance involved an elephant being "gifted" to a Delhi temple by a private owner in Assam. Unfortunately, in all these transfers, the new rules have served as an enabling agent for trade in an endangered species.

In August, following reports and objections submitted by this writer and others, the Elephant Project, under the aegis of MoEFCC, took action. It issued an office memorandum that flagged the illegal transfers of captive elephants. The memorandum reiterated the need for the strict adherence to Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024 and emphasised the mandatory digitisation of the genetic profiles of captive elephants. The Ministry's efforts to address captive elephant transfers are commendable. Yet, they fail to adequately remedy these key issues in the Rules.

Regrettably, the legislation lacks the teeth to ensure the meaningful protection of captive elephants. Without language that speaks the welfare of elephants and safeguards them from any form of commercial exploitation, the paradox of the elephant being venerated as a sacred animal while also being the most exploited wild animal will persist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mammooh Singh

The passing of former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh will be felt for long (December 27). Yet in his lifetime, he could best be faulted on being reticent, more correctly lacking a liberal tongue to grandstand on a Dalit theme or denigrating leaders in the Opposition at the drop of a hat. He went about his remit assiduously, much as a craftsman jeweller would be stringing the choicest pearls. He

charted a new highway to India's economic progress. He steered the nation fairly through the economic epidemic that struck from the West. The astuteness he brought through his policies laid the foundation for the present-day vibrant economy.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

India has lost a tall leader. When he was the Prime Minister, we felt safe. He was a leader who was

respected by one and all. There was no deviousness and no vile and polarising talk. There was much respect for the diversity in India's demography.

Tara Fonseca,
Ponda, Goa

Dr. Manmohan Singh was a rare leader whose statesmanship and decency resonated across the political divide. He was the first Prime Minister who saw the tomorrow. The way he

shepherded the civil nuclear deal was a master move, earning him the moniker, 'Singh is King'. The gentle sardar of politics will continue to inspire us.

Dr. A.S. Farida,
Bengaluru

Dr. Manmohan's legacy is

Corrections & Clarifications

In the front page report, "Nation mourns former PM Manmohan Singh..." (December 27, 2024), the name of his wife was mentioned as Gurcharan Singh. It should have been Gursharan Kaur.

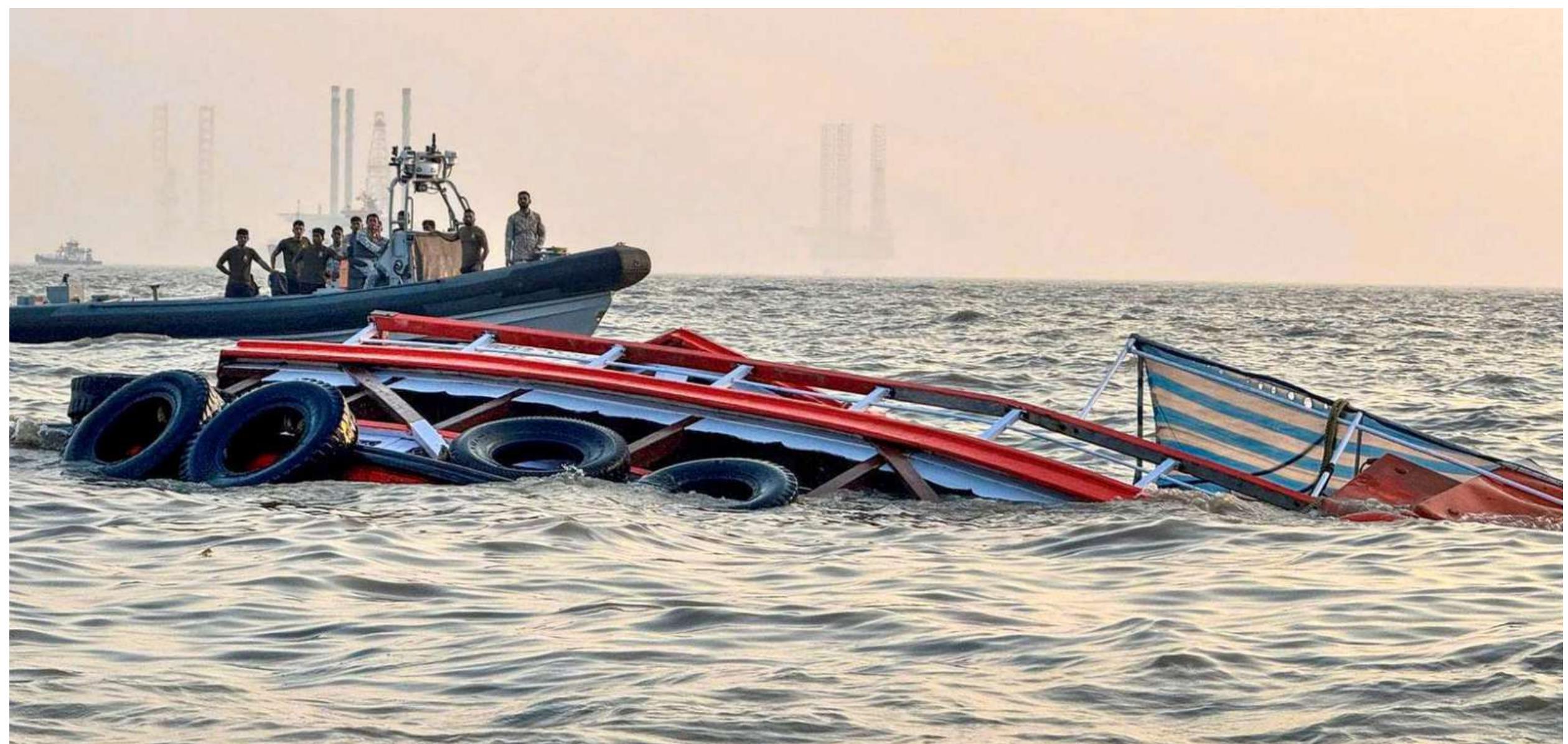
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Manmohan Singh's journey, from humble beginnings to the pinnacle of Indian leadership, is an inspiring tale of intellect and perseverance. He will remain a symbol of transformative leadership and public service. His legacy of progress will inspire generations.

Amarjeet Kumar,
Hazaribagh, Jharkhand

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

GROUND ZERO



Rescue work underway after a ferry capsized off the coast of Mumbai when a Navy speedboat crashed into it on December 18, 2024. PTI

In Mumbai, a joyride that turned fatal

On December 18, a collision between a ferry and an Indian Navy speedboat in the Arabian Sea off the coast of Mumbai claimed 15 lives, raising concerns about safety and alleged negligence by the Navy. **Snehal Mutha** reports on the tragedy, the problem of overcrowding, the lack of adequate life jackets for passengers on ferries, and the complaints of ferry operators regarding the Navy's speedboats

It was at noon on December 18 that Tanvi Wakchaure saw her father, Deepchand, for the last time. Deepchand, a 45-year-old plumber, had dropped Tanvi, 17, at college in Govandi, an eastern suburb of Mumbai. He did not tell her where he was headed to next.

When he did not return by night, Deepchand's family, who live in the same area, started getting worried. "We began calling his friends one by one," says Tanvi.

They learned that Deepchand, an avid explorer, had boarded a ferry to Elephanta Island, located 9 nautical miles off the coast of Mumbai from the Gateway of India. Every day, about 3,000 people visit the UNESCO world heritage site, says Sardar J. Mahadkar, president of Jal Vahatuk Sahakari Sanstha Maryadit, an organisation representing ferry owners. The island is home to the rock-cut Elephanta Caves, which were constructed in the mid-5th and 6th centuries AD and reflect Hindu and Buddhist iconography.

"He liked to explore the city," says Deepchand's friend, Chandrakant Hevale. "That happened to be one of those days. When we found out that he had boarded the ferry and there had been an accident in the Arabian Sea, we rushed to the Colaba police station in the early hours of December 19." The Colaba police station is located about 600 metres from the Gateway of India.

The police asked the family and friends to go to the state-owned JJ Hospital. On rushing to the hospital, the family found Deepchand's body.

"Just a day earlier, he and my mother had celebrated their wedding anniversary," remembers a distraught Tanvi.

At around 3.30 p.m. on December 18, an Indian Navy speedboat had rammed into the passenger ferry not far from Elephanta Island. The ferry capsized. Thirteen people, including Deepchand, died. Two remained missing, including a child. On December 19 and 21, their bodies were also recovered. The death toll increased to 15.

In deep water

Every day, during the off season (the rainy months of July-October), at least 25-30 rides are scheduled from the Gateway of India, an arch built in the Indo-Islamic style in the 20th century to commemorate the landing of King George V in India, to Elephanta Caves. During holiday season (October-January), this number increases to 50 or even 100, says Sardar.

On December 18, the last ferry of the day, Neel Kamal (blue lotus), had left the Gateway at 3:00 p.m. Neel Kamal had a capacity of 80 passengers, but it was carrying 110-115 passengers that day, says an investigation officer on the case from the Colaba police station.

Natharam Chaudhry, 24, a carpenter based in Kurla, was on the upper deck, enjoying the breeze, when the ferry was around 20 minutes from its destination, the Gharapuri jetty at Elephanta Island. He says many of his co-passengers were lounging on the lower deck.

Natharam was among the first to spot the Navy speedboat, but there seemed to be no cause for alarm. "I was fascinated, so I started shooting the speedboat with my phone camera," he says.

The speedboat took two sharp turns before

We raised concerns regarding the speed limits of the speedboats and about possible accidents

IQBAL MUKADAM
Secretary of Jal Vahatuk Sahakari Sanstha

hurtling towards the ferry. It rammed into the right side of the vessel "with a loud bang, like an earthquake," Natharam recalls. "We ran downstairs. The ferry started sinking on the right side, so everyone congregated on the left side."

Realising that there was no way he could balance himself on the sinking ferry, Natharam grabbed a life jacket, strapped it on, and jumped with his cousin and uncle into the cold water.

"The moment I jumped in, I thought of my parents. I panicked about what they would do without me. People were in the water shouting for help," he says.

Natharam went blank for a bit after that, but it was this quick-thinking action that saved his life. His uncle and cousin survived too.

Survivors allege that the ferry did not have enough life jackets. One survivor says, "The people who managed to access life jackets managed to live, while some others drowned."

Natharam was the complainant in the First Information Report (FIR) registered at the Colaba police station against the Navy speedboat which was carrying two Navy personnel and four workers. The driver of the Navy speedboat has been booked under Sections 106(1) (causing death by negligence), 125 (actions that endanger personal safety), 282 (rash navigation of a vessel), and 324 (mischievous causing damage to government or local authority property) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita, 2023. Natharam's video is now being treated as evidence by the police.

Within a few hours of the accident, the Indian Navy released a statement. It said that the speed boat, which was undergoing engine trials, "lost control and collided with a passenger ferry, Neel Kamal, off Karanja, Mumbai."

A Defence spokesperson explained the accident: "The throttle (acceleration) was stuck in the top position, preventing them from taking a turn or slowing down the boat."

Of the 115 people who were rescued, 13 people – one Navy personnel and 12 civilians, including three workers on the speedboat – were declared dead by Mumbai's civic body and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. By December 21, two missing bodies were recovered from the sea.

The Chief Minister announced financial assistance of ₹5 lakh to the families of the dead. The Prime Minister's Office also announced an ex-

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When I reached the spot, I found that nearly 95% of the ferry had sunk. Approximately 50 people, including children, were clinging to the tiny bit that remained above water.

ANMOL SHRIVASTAV
Captain of the JNPA pilot boat

gratia of ₹2 lakh for each family of the dead and ₹50,000 for the injured from the Prime Minister National Relief Fund. The Indian Navy has constituted a Board of Inquiry to probe the accident.

The rescue operation

The survivors say they received help within 20-30 minutes of the accident.

A Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) patrol boat and a Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) pilot boat were the first to reach the spot. "We heard people screaming for help. We saw some people holding children tight and some clutching on to the boat, which was partially submerged in the water. We first focused on rescuing children," says a CISF officer, who was patrolling a 2-kilometre radius from the accident spot.

The officer says the biggest challenge was oil spillage. "The diesel from the ferry had spilled on the passengers. It became difficult for us to hold them and haul them up from the water as they kept slipping from our hands."

The captain of the JNPA pilot boat, Anmol Shrivastav, says he heard a distress call on radio channels 12 and 13 from an oil tanker, Tony, moored at Jawahar Dweep 5, a jetty at the Jawahar Dweep oil terminal on an island off the coast of Mumbai. The tanker reported that a ferry was sinking and requested urgent assistance.

"I checked my location and realised that I was only about five minutes from the incident site. When I reached the spot, I found that nearly 95% of the ferry had sunk. Approximately 50 people, including children, were clinging to the tiny bit that remained above water. There were 20-25 people floating nearby. Some were wearing life jackets and some were not," says Anmol.

Eleven Navy boats, three Marine Police boats, two Coast Guard boats, and four helicopters were also deployed in the area for the search-and-rescue operation, says a Defence spokesperson.

Along with the help of CISF personnel, the JNPA rescued 57 people, says Anmol. "The CISF's boat was lower in the water, allowing easier transfers. Together, we created a chain of rescue operations. The CISF pulled people from the water and transferred them to our pilot boat."

Later, the Mumbai Port Authority (MPA) pilot boat, Purva; the Naval ferry, Suvidha; and two fishing boats also began assisting in the rescue operations. Arif Bamne, a master (boat driver) with the MPA, says, "All we could hear was 'ba-chao ba-chao' (help, help). It felt like a scene from a film. A foreign couple helped us in rescuing people and performing CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) on those who were critical." The MPA helped in rescuing at least 35 passengers, he says.

The passengers also helped one another. "A German man who could swim well helped rescue a three-year-old child and gave him CPR. He also helped us rescue other passengers," says Anmol.

All the passengers were taken to the JNPA hospital, the Navy Dockyard, Ashwini Hospital, St George's Hospital, and Karanja Hospital. The passengers were mostly from other districts, including Sangli, Dhule, Nagpur, and Nashik; and Goa and other regions.

The autopsy of 11 out of the 15 dead was carried out at the Indira Gandhi Rural Hospital in Uran in Navi Mumbai. "The reason for the death was asphyxiation due to drowning," said Medical Superintendent Dr. B.M. Kalel. The rest were taken to JJ Hospital.

Navy personnel Karmveer Yadav is still in a critical stage and undergoing treatment. Two people, a six-year-old boy and a 43-year-old man, went missing after the accident. Six Navy and three Coast Guard personnel were deployed to

search for them.

On December 19, the rescue team found the body of the man, identified as Hansaram Bhati, a Malad-based proprietor. The next afternoon, they found the body of the boy identified as Zohan Pathan.

Hansaram's son Tarun, who had held the hands of Natharam Chaudhry and his cousin, was rescued. Since then, he has been in a state of shock. "Tarun has got a fever and is constantly asking about his father," says Jongaram Bhati, 58, Hansaram's brother.

Zohan had come to Mumbai on vacation with his family from Goa. While his maternal aunt, his father, and his 10-month-old brother survived the accident, Zohan and his mother Shafina Pathan, 35, died in the accident.

Sitting outside the Indira Gandhi Hospital in Uran, his maternal aunt, Sonali Gonde, recalls the tragic turn of events. "My sister and her elder son went down to the lower deck looking for a life jacket. She informed me that no life jackets were left, so I asked her to come up. But when I looked down she was gone. All I had were her chappals in my hand. We had shopped for those in Colaba market before taking the ferry ride." Sonali says her sister died because there were not enough life jackets on the ferry.

While the owner of the ferry, Rajendra Padte, refuses to respond to questions, his brother, Shekhar, had only one thing to say: "The ferry was new. It was launched just a year ago."

Trials and tribulations

Locals and ferry operators demand to know why the Navy was conducting trials in an area that is extensively used by ferries. "For the last 3-4 years, the ferries have been tolerating all kinds of shenanigans by the Navy boats. They perform stunts and sometimes come very close to the ferry," claims a tourist guide, Trikal Patil.

Kavita, who sells caps at Elephanta Caves, echoes this allegation. She says, "In the last 5-6 years, we have seen altercations between people in the ferry and Navy personnel."

A Defence spokesperson dismissed these allegations. "This is not a joyride [for the Navy]. It is for the safety of the harbour. The nature of trials is to check extremities. These may seem like stunts but they may be part of trials."

The secretary of Jal Vahatuk Sahakari Sanstha, Iqbal Mukadam, points out that several oral and written complaints have been lodged with the Maharashtra Maritime Board and the Mumbai Port Authority about the movements of the Navy's speed boats. "We raised concerns regarding the speed limits of the speed boats and about possible accidents," he says. Minor collisions between ferry boats and Navy boats have been reported in the past, he adds.

In fact, on December 12, a few days before the accident, Jal Vahatuk Sahakari Sanstha had written a letter to the authorities about the "unauthorised speedboat berthing from jetty 1, 2, 3, and 4", instead of using "dedicated jetty 5". The letter also cited safety concerns and warned about the risk of accidents.

On December 19, given the mounting concerns about safety, especially after the accident, the Gateway of India is less crowded than usual. A man sitting at a ticket counter made out of tin sheets says, "Today, we have very few passengers."

The police have sprung into action and are busy counting passengers, checking life jackets, and the licences of ferries. A police officer, Jayesh Chavan, who has been stationed at the base of Elephanta Island, says, "This is a routine inspection. But due to the accident, we are being more careful than usual."

The survivors continue to deal with the trauma of the incident. Ishtiyak and Ariha, a newly married couple, had landed in Mumbai after their honeymoon in Kashmir. "They thankfully survived the accident," says the couple's uncle, Rafique Shriv. "But they are so distressed that they have decided to stay away from all water bodies, especially the sea."

snehal.mutha@thehindu.co.in



A video grab shows the speedboat before it crashed into the passenger ferry.

From Page One**Manmohan Singh's funeral to be held today**

Dr. Singh's numerous achievements since then were no mean feat, Mr. Modi said.

The Congress's insistence on a memorial can also be seen as one to counter allegations that former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's cortège was not allowed inside the All India Congress Committee headquarters. Dr. Singh's body will be taken to the Congress headquarters for party workers and public to pay their respects before the official funeral takes place.

On Friday, draped in the Tricolour, the former Prime Minister's body was kept at his 3 Motilal Nehru Road residence for leaders and public to pay respects. President Droupadi Murmu, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former President Ram Nath Kovind, BJP chief J.P. Nadda, the Home Minister and Defence Minister were among those who offered their respects.

Chief Ministers M.K. Stalin, N. Chandrababu Naidu, A. Revanth Reddy, and Atishi; AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal, and CPI general secretary D. Raja paid homage at Dr. Singh's residence.

Dam won't affect India, Bangladesh, says China

The dam will be built at a huge gorge in the Himalayan reaches where the Brahmaputra makes a huge U-turn to flow into Arunachal Pradesh and then to Bangladesh. The total investment in the dam could exceed \$137 billion, which would dwarf any other single infrastructure project on the planet, including China's own Three Gorges Dam, which is regarded as the largest in the world, the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* reported on Thursday.

China has already operationalised the \$1.5 billion Zam Hydropower Station, the largest in Tibet in 2015. Concerns arose in India as the dam would allow China to release large amounts of water flooding the border areas in times of hostilities. India too is building a dam over Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh.

SC gives Punjab a day to hospitalise farmer

The court directed both to be present online for the next hearing on Saturday.

"We have serious doubts about those farmers who are not concerned or aware about the danger to his [Dallewal] life. Why should they resist saving his life," Justice Kant asked. He said the State must deal with any law and order problem with an iron hand.

"Please take this very seriously. Somebody's life is at stake," Justice Dhulia intervened.

Mr. Singh suggested the Centre could pitch in and "defuse" the impasse with the farmers.

Letter to PM

He pointed out that States normally could request the Centre to step in. In fact, Mr. Dallewal had addressed a letter to the Prime Minister about meeting the farmers' demands.

"He [Dallewal] wants to make some headway for the farmers," the Advocate General conveyed.

However, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said the first priority for the State should be to save Mr. Dallewal's life.

Besides, he said the Centre's intervention now would only make the situation more complicated. "All this can be discussed. First, let him shift to a hospital," he said.

Mr. Mehta alleged that a "few people around Mr. Dallewal [were] keeping him hostage".

Justice Kant asked Mr. Singh to assure the farmer leader that he would get his day in court as soon as he recovered his health.

"You can assure Mr. Dallewal that the moment he is safe and sound from the health point of view, we will have him online and hear him. We will request the Solicitor-General to assist us in the matter. But please tell him that our primary concern today is his health," Justice Kant told Mr. Singh.

Household spending rose 3.5%: govt. survey

Reduced spending on edible oils offset spikes in wallet shares of items like vegetables over a period of generally high food inflation.

The urban-rural gap in MPCE has declined to 71% in 2022-23 from 84% in 2011-12, and dropped further to 70% in 2023-24, while the increase in the average MPCE in 2023-24 from the level of 2022-23 has been the maximum for the bottom 5% to 10% of India's population, for both rural and urban areas, the fact sheet said.

Consumption inequality declined

"Consumption inequality, both in rural and urban areas, has declined from the level of 2022-23. The Gini coefficient has declined to 0.237 in 2023-24 from 0.266 in 2022-23 for rural areas and to 0.284 in 2023-24 from 0.314 in 2022-23 for urban areas," the Ministry concluded.

The MPCE estimates from the latest survey are based on data collected from 2,61,953 households across all States and Union Territories, with about 59% of those households surveyed in rural India.

Indian visionary dedicated to regional peace: South Asia leaders on Manmohan

Leaders of neighbouring countries remember former Prime Minister; former Afghan President Karzai recalls the guidance offered by him, former Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe pays respects at his home; Pakistan's Deputy PM Ishaq Dar recalls his role in improving relations

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Take steady steps and take your time", was the advice former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh gave Hamid Karzai, who became President of Afghanistan at the age of 45, when he first met him in 2004.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Friday, Mr. Karzai said India and Afghanistan had the "best relations" during Dr. Singh's tenure, as India became Afghanistan's first Strategic Partner in 2012.

"I was in a hurry, as a young President, and one day he told me - you can't build a nation in a hurry, you have to have patience for institutions to be built and human capital to develop," Mr. Karzai said, recalling Dr. Singh's famous speech on South Asian connectivity and a vision of being able to have "Breakfast in Amritsar, lunch in Lahore and dinner in Kabul".

As tributes poured in from around the world, many of the personal anecdotes came from leaders in



Hamid Karzai greeting former Indian President Pranab Mukherjee and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the Rashtrapati Bhavan during his visit to India in 2012. REUTERS

India's neighbourhood, who remembered Dr. Singh for his particular interest in South Asian ties. On Friday, Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu, Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, Bangladeshi Chief Executive Muhammad Yunus, Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and Bhutan PM Tshering Tobgay were among those sitting heads of government and state that sent condolences.

"Dr. Singh's wisdom, compassion, and leader-

ship touched many lives, and also strengthened the bond between our two countries," wrote Mr. Tobgay in a social media post, calling the former Prime Minister "a remarkable statesman and cherished friend of Bhutan".

"Nepal will forever remember his support for democracy and lasting friendship," wrote Mr. Oli, and said that Dr. Singh's "wisdom, humility, and dedication shaped India and inspired the region".

Mr. Yunus, a fellow eco-

2006, Dr. Singh had written to him, and Mr. Yunus was invited to address members of both Houses of Parliament at an annual parliamentary lecture.

Look East policy

"Dr. Singh's commitment to progress, and his leadership to strengthen the 'Look East Policy' played a pivotal role in fostering development and cooperation across the South Asia region," wrote Mr. Muizzu in a social media post, where he credited Dr. Singh's 2011 visit to the Maldives for the SAARC summit as a "significant milestone in advancing our economic and social development".

Praising Dr. Singh for his "humility and intellect", Mr. Dissanayake said he was "a tireless advocate of international collaboration", adding that he had "countless admirers worldwide", and influence that "transcended national boundaries".

Former Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is in New Delhi at present, visited Dr. Singh's home and paid his

respects to the former Prime Minister. In 1992, when they first met, Mr. Wickremesinghe was the Sri Lankan Industries Minister and Mr. Singh was Finance Minister, and both held deep discussions about liberalising their economies, and remained in contact years later.

"Dr. Singh was a distinguished economist and political leader," said Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar in a statement. "Beyond his remarkable achievements in the field of economics, Dr. Singh demonstrated a commitment to promoting regional peace," Mr. Dar said, adding that he had played a "notable role in improving Pakistan-India bilateral relations during his tenure as Prime Minister."

Although India and Pakistan came close to a non-territorial resolution to the Kashmir dispute, the process was derailed after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. Mr. Singh famously recited a couplet about the situation that said "mistakes were made in moments, for which the price was paid for ages".

Manmohan an outstanding statesman, says Putin; Anwar calls him 'my mitra, my bhai'

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Leaders from across the world, including France, Russia, and Malaysia, expressed grief over the passing of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and recollect their interactions with him.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was one of the first to recall his personal exchanges with Dr. Singh as the Prime Minister of India.

Dr. Singh and Mr. Ibrahim both served as Finance Ministers during the 1990s when they collaborated extensively.

Subsequently, when he was imprisoned, Dr. Singh reached out to help his family. "Not many people know this, and it is time



Close ties: Manmohan Singh with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in 2013. PTI

that I share it with Malaysians: during the years of my incarceration, he extended a kindness that he didn't have to - one that was neither politically expedient nor, as one can imagine, appreciated by the Malaysian government at that time. Yet, true to his

character, he did it anyway. He offered scholarships for my children, particularly my son, Ihsan. Although I had declined the gracious offer, such a gesture undoubtedly showed his extraordinary humanity and generosity, demonstrative, as the Bard

would have it, of a man so full of the 'milk of human kindness', Mr. Ibrahim said in a social media post, describing Dr. Singh as "my mitra, my bhai".

Russian President Vladimir Putin described Dr. Singh as an "outstanding statesman".

"He also made a major personal contribution to strengthening friendly ties between our two countries by elevating them to the level of a special privileged strategic partnership," he said.

The Palestinian Embassy's Charge d'Affaires, Abed Elrarez Abu Jazer, conveyed Palestine's tributes to Dr. Singh and shared a photo of the late PLO leader Yasser Arafat meeting Dr. Singh in New Delhi on January 21, 1992,

when he was the Finance Minister. It was during the second tenure of Dr. Singh as Prime Minister that Palestine got its brand new embassy in Chanakyapuri.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in a statement, described Dr. Singh as "one of the greatest champions of the U.S.-India strategic partnership" and gave him credit for laying the foundation for bilateral cooperation over the past two decades. "His leadership in advancing the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement signified a major investment in the potential of the U.S.-India relationship," he said.

The process of framing charges against a total of 54 persons, including Mr. Chatterjee in the ED case related to irregularities in the primary teacher requirement is also going on.

Chargesheet filed against Trinamool leader Partha

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

The CBI on Friday filed a chargesheet against Trinamool Congress leader Partha Chatterjee in the school recruitment scam case. The development comes at a time when the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has started the process of framing charges in the recruitment scam.

In the chargesheet, the CBI has brought charges against two other persons Ayan Shil and Santu Gangopadhyay.

The process of framing charges against a total of 54 persons, including Mr. Chatterjee in the ED case related to irregularities in the primary teacher requirement is also going on.

Gah village in Pakistan mourns its 'Mohna'

Press Trust of India
GAH (PAKISTAN)

"The entire village is in mourning. We feel that someone from our family has died today," Altaf Hussain said as a group of local residents held a meeting to condole the death of village boy Manmohan who became Prime Minister next door.

Mr. Hussain is a teacher at the same school in Gah village where Dr. Manmohan Singh studied up to Class 4. His father Gurumukh Singh was a cloth merchant and his mother Amrat Kaur a homemaker. His friends called him 'Mohna'. The village lies about 100 km southwest of capital Islamabad and was part of Jhelum district when Dr. Singh was born.

Surrounded by lush green fields, the place can be reached from M-2 motorway linking Islamabad to Lahore, as well as from Chakwal city.



Residents of former PM Manmohan Singh's ancestral village mourn his death in Gah village in Chakwal district of Pakistan. PTI

The former Prime Minister died at the AIIMS in New Delhi on Thursday night. He was 92.

Raja Ashiq Ali, nephew of Raja Muhammad Ali, a schoolmate who travelled to Delhi in 2008 to meet him, addressed the meeting. "All these villagers are deeply moved... They were eager to attend his last rites in India, but it is not possible. So, they are here to mourn," he said.

Dr. Singh's rise brought to spotlight his forgotten ancestral village. Some classmates who were around when he became

ED searches places linked to Chirag Paswan's associate

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday carried out searches at three locations linked to Lok Janshakti Party (RJD) leader Hulas Pandey, a close associate of party president and Union Minister Chirag Paswan.

The Central agency conducted the searches in a case related to alleged disproportionate assets and sand mining. In Patna, the searches were conducted at Gola Road and Danapur. The third search was in Bengaluru.

Mr. Pandey, a former MLC, had resigned as the chairman of the LJP (RV) Parliamentary Board in December 2023, after his name appeared in the supplementary chargesheet filed by the CBI in the Brahmeshwar Mukhiya murder case in Bihar. Mukhiya was murdered on June 1, 2012,

by unknown persons and the Central Bureau of Investigation had accused Mr. Pandey of plotting the murder. However, Mr. Pandey had termed it a political conspiracy.

Mukhiya was the founder of the private upper caste militia Ranveer Sena responsible for over two dozen caste massacres, killing many from Backward and Dalit communities. The CBI had alleged that Mr. Pandey feared "loss of his political clout" due to Mukhiya's growing popularity among "upper caste farmers" in the Shahabad region of Buxar, Bhojpur, Rohtas and other districts. Mr. Pandey was elected an MLC in 2010 from the Ara-Buxar seat on Janata Dal (U) ticket. However, he later switched to the LJP (RV).

In April, a special court dismissed the CBI chargesheet against Mr. Pandey. The CBI had filed a chargesheet against Mr. Pandey in the Brahmeshwar Mukhiya murder case in Bihar. Mukhiya was murdered on June 1, 2012, by unknown persons and the Central Bureau of Investigation had accused Mr. Pandey of plotting the murder. However, Mr. Pandey had termed it a political conspiracy.

Manmohan's work profoundly shaped India's destiny: Congress

CWC resolution says the former PM 'embodied the very best qualities of a true statesman, including compassion, honesty, and a deep commitment to public service'; in a message, Sonia mourns the loss of 'my friend, philosopher and guide'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was a true statesman whose "life and work have profoundly shaped the destiny of India", the Congress Working Committee (CWC) said in a resolution on Friday.

The highest decision-making body of the Congress held a special meeting to pass the resolution to honour the departed leader. Calling Dr. Singh a towering figure in India's political and economic landscape, the CWC resolution said his contributions transformed the country and earned him respect worldwide.

"Dr. Singh embodied the very best qualities of a true statesman – compassion, honesty, and a deep commitment to public service. His life was a living example of how grace and



Bidding adieu: Rahul Gandhi pays floral tribute to Manmohan Singh at the Congress headquarters in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

humility can coexist with great power," it noted.

Endorsing his policies of "deregulation, privatisation, and the encouragement of foreign investment", the CWC noted that he had laid the foundation for India's rapid economic growth.

"As Finance Minister in the early 1990s, Dr. Singh was the architect of India's economic liberalisation. With unmatched foresight,

he initiated a series of reforms that not only saved the nation from a balance-of-payments crisis but also opened the doors to global markets," the resolution said.

"Under his stewardship, India emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, a testament to his brilliance and vision," it added.

The party listed out legislation such as the Ma-

hatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Right to Education, National Food Security Act, Land Acquisition Act, Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, the 93rd Constitutional Amendment to further social justice for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, and the Indo-U.S. civil nuclear deal as achievements of his 10-year-long tenure.

"As the 13th Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh led the country with a sense of calm determination and exceptional wisdom," the resolution said. "His tenure was marked by sustained economic growth, global recognition, and social progress."

The party acknowledged his role in shielding India from the worst effects of the global financial

crisis in 2008 by taking strategic measures.

"Dr. Singh's dedication to inclusive growth, international diplomacy, and economic modernisation strengthened India's position in the global arena, while simultaneously focusing on the welfare of the common man. His legacy as a compassionate, reformist leader who prioritised stability and development will forever be etched in India's history," the CWC observed.

In a separate condolence message, Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi described the loss as a "personal one".

"He was my friend, philosopher and guide. He was so gentle in his manner but so resolute in his deeply held convictions. His commitment to social justice, secularism and democratic values was deep and unwavering," Ms. Gandhi said.

Activists credit Manmohan for rights-based legislation, providing space for dialogue

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's 10-year tenure, several rights-based laws from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to the Right to Information and Forest Rights Acts were passed in Parliament. Activists remember the space for dialogue that Dr. Singh provided.

Former bureaucrat-turned-activist Aruna Roy told *The Hindu* that Dr. Singh was always willing to listen and gave space for dialogue and deliberation.

"He afforded easy access. One could go up to him and ask for time for an issue of importance. The views and opinions from advisory bodies, parliamentary committees and study groups in Planning Commission and elsewhere were taken into consideration for policy formulation, which is dramatically different from the present



The Tricolour flies half-mast at Parliament on Friday to mourn former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. AFP

regime," Ms. Roy said.

She explained that even in case he had differences with the position the civil society or the National Advisory Council (NAC) took, he heard them out. "We had our share of differences. For example, we wanted a stricter penalty clause in RTI but he argued that already the legislation is a great leap for the bureaucracy from impunity to transparency. So, we did have the penalty clause but not as stringent as we

wanted," Ms. Roy said.

The country's first Chief Information Commissioner, Wajahat Habibullah, said Dr. Singh was "a little uncertain" about the impact of RTI on the government's functioning. "He was a true bureaucrat who understood the importance of secrecy in the government. So, he was a little apprehensive, but he was committed to the idea of accountability and transparency," he said. (With PTI inputs)

Manmohan was humility personified; criticism did not deter him: T.K.A. Nair

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was humility personified and had a genuine respect for the people whom he met, recalls T.K.A. Nair, who was Principal Secretary to Dr. Singh when he was the Prime Minister.

"He never sought to project himself as the architect of any remarkable achievement, and as a democrat at the core, warned us in the Prime Minister's Office against such a portrayal," Mr. Nair told *The Hindu* on Friday.

"Criticism, however ruthless and uncharitable, did not deter him from pursuing what he thought was good for the country. During the first United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, he was fully aware of the fact that he



T.K.A. Nair with Manmohan Singh. FILE PHOTO

was not an elected Prime Minister. He knew his limitations, but UPA-1 was a crowning success. Many of the programmes today were begun by him. Undoubtedly, his greatest challenge was inking the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, which faced strong headwinds. The Ministry's future was at stake, but he was undaunted by criticism as he strongly believed that the deal was good for the country. The

interests of the country remained uppermost for him," said Mr. Nair.

To a question on Dr. Singh's PMO being mocked as a "Mallu Club" for featuring many Malayali officers, Mr. Nair said Dr. Singh was aware of this.

"It was not by design," I told him. It just so happened that many senior officers were brought in based on their performance and seniority," he said.

Former PM adopted policies that he believed were in India's interest: CPI(M)

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Mourning former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which had withdrawn support to the first United Progressive Alliance government led by him over the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal, said on Friday that he was a leader of "unquestioned integrity".

At the same time taking a nuanced stand, the CPI (M) Polit Bureau said in a statement in New Delhi that Dr. Singh "adopted policies which he believed were in the interests of the country", hinting at the inflection point between the two outfits which led to the eventual disassociation in July 2008.

Conveying their condolences to his wife, Gursharan Kaur, and daughters, the statement said, "Dr. Manmohan Singh during his ten-year tenure as Prime Minister stood firm-



Sitaram Yechury with Manmohan Singh. FILE PHOTO

ly for secular and democratic values."

Polit Bureau coordinator Prakash Karat, who was closely involved in the 2008 talks before the CPI (M) and the Congress split paths over the nuclear deal, said there were points of convergence too.

"There were areas of convergence on many policies, like rural employment guarantee, right to information, forest rights and so on, which were part of the common minimum pro-

gramme of the UPA," he said. He said the CPI(M)'s opposition to the nuclear deal went beyond the deal itself. "What we were opposed to was India becoming a strategic ally to the US. But it was former PM Singh's conviction that it was the right path for the country to follow. We had frank exchange of views but couldn't reconcile our differences," he said.

Counting the former PM as one of the "finest leaders" he has known, CPI

general secretary D. Raja said his "humility and politeness in both personal and public life were unmatched and these qualities shone even in the most challenging of times". Mr. Raja said that Dr. Singh's leadership and the Left's collaboration during the first UPA government proved to be transformative. Monumental decisions such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, and the Right to Information Act were taken during that administration.

"Dr. Singh had deep respect for democratic values. Despite ideological and policy disagreements, he maintained a spirit of decency, civility and fairness. His ability to engage with diverse views, his willingness to listen, and his unwavering commitment to the principles of democracy made him a statesman who earned the respect of all, regardless of political affiliation," Mr. Raja said.

Manmohan was pragmatic on Kashmir: J&K leaders

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir leaders on Friday paid tributes to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and praised his handling of the Kashmir issue through multiple dialogue processes as "pragmatic and considerate".

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah recalled Dr. Singh's "deep concern for the development of J&K". He said Dr. Singh will also be remembered for fostering peace and development in J&K. National Conference president Farooq Abdullah recalled Dr. Singh's efforts to bring Kashmiri Pandits back to J&K.

People Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti held a special commemoration ceremony in Srinagar. Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz also expressed sadness over his demise.

'History will count Dr. Singh as a founding father of modern India'

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's life reads like the ultimate dream. Rising from humble beginnings to a glittering resume replete with degrees from the world's best universities, positions of the highest office in public life, global fame and repute, and feted with every coveted award.

A tribute to his legacy would inevitably include a long list of the positions of power and responsibilities he held and his stunning professional accomplishments. In the modern meritocratic era of credentials and positions, his dazzling array of achievements would be Dr. Singh's (as I called him) defining legacy.

But in my view, his defining legacy is to illuminate a virtuous path to extraordinary success in the harsh and treacherous terrain of politics and public service. His whole life is a standout exception to the belief that one has to necessarily sacrifice principles of probity, integrity, sincerity, loyalty, and humility to succeed in politics. His true legacy is about what he was not – the typically duplicitous, virtueless, self-obsessed political leader that is successful. His enormously successful pursuit of the politics of purpose and principles offers tantalising hope and inspiration to millions of idealistic youth to enter public life and dedicate themselves to nation-building. This is perhaps the



Praveen Chakravarty
Chairman,
All India
Professionals'
Congress

His life story is about how in the desert of political cynicism there can be a flowing oasis

legacy that Dr. Singh himself would have been proud to leave behind for the nation that he loved so dearly.

I am very fortunate to have been the recipient of Dr. Singh's fondness for well over a decade. Over the past few years, as Dr. Singh became physically weaker, rendering him unable to venture much outside, his graceful wife, Gursharan Kaur, would tell me to visit regularly and "engage him intellectually". I visited him nearly every month for the past five years and interacted with him closely, including writing some articles for this paper. During these interactions, I learned copiously from and about him. I am shattered that it is now time to write his obituary and distraught that I am stuck outside India, unable to bid my last goodbye to him.

Perennial nation-builder
Even in the private confines of his living room, Dr. Singh was scrupulously polite, warm, thoughtful, and modest. He may have been the wise sage to the external world but his curiosity for new information and learning was boundless. In the long years that I have known him closely, not once was there a semblance of even an intent to lecture or sermonise from a bully pulpit, a trait that typically plagues most accomplished people. I watched with amazement on the day after demonetisation in 2016, how despite being a former Prime Minister, Finance

Minister, and RBI Governor, he sought information from junior RBI officers to senior former Ministers and only after that he formed his opinion on the move. He was so deeply concerned about its deleterious impact on the poor that he felt he owed it to the people to warn the government, through an uncharacteristically strong speech in Parliament and an article in this paper, which then set the tone for the nation's response and actions. This was quintessential Dr. Singh – the unflinching patriot, the humble knowledge seeker, the thoughtful opinion maker, the constant guardian of people's welfare, and the perennial nation-builder.

Dr. Singh's devotion to his duty was simply mind-boggling. In the past two years, when his health was frail and he was wheelchair-bound, he still insisted on being taken to the Congress party office to cast his vote in the Congress presidential election in 2022 and in the next year, to Parliament to fulfil his duties as an MP to cast a vote on behalf of the Opposition, both of which were neither crucial nor compulsory.

History will rightfully count Dr. Singh as a founding father of modern India. He acutely understood that building a nation like ours, with its enormous complexities and contradictions, is necessarily a political project of consensus-building on a foundation of strong institutions. His inclusive growth

paradigm of economic development and a rights-based social welfare framework continue to be the twin pillars of India's governance model regardless of which government is in power.

'Be attached to purpose'

At the same time, Dr. Singh had a Keynesian philosophy to change his mind when presented with new credible information. When I met him last in October, he discussed the shifting political landscape in many nations caused by free trade and its attendant impact on people and seemed open to changing his previous doctrinaire position on the benefits of free trade. It takes the sagacity, curiosity, and humility of someone like Dr. Singh to yearn for new information, process it, and alter their views, in the twilight of their hugely successful life.

Dr. Singh's greatest challenge was navigating the mines of India's and the Congress party's politics. But he believed strongly in the medium of politics for nation-building, however harsh and rough it may be. While his contributions to governance and policy are both legendary and highly lauded, it was his outlook on politics that was the most endearing to me. There have been reams written about the 1991 economic reforms that he championed as India's Finance Minister and the enormous foreign policy successes that he

achieved as Prime Minister. But as he often said, those were possible only because he had his resignation letter handy, ready to sacrifice power if the cause was not right. He was able to effect dramatic turns in India's governance landscape, not only due to his intellectual heft but also through the power of his integrity and righteousness. "Be detached to power and attached to purpose," he would often tell me.

Dr. Singh will surely fill many chapters of history books in India and the world. There will be abundant information on his governance achievements and the course of the nation under his stewardship. But the true legacy of Dr. Singh, as he may have preferred, would be to inspire and motivate young people to enter public life and uphold the highest ideals in service to the nation. His life story is about how in the desert of political cynicism there can be a flowing oasis. That it is possible to uphold the highest principles and still succeed in public life. At a time when devious, demagogic politics is hailed as 'Chanakyan', when the pursuit of power has supplanted all decency and decorum in public life, when showmanship trumps workmanship, one wonders if the era of the politics of sincerity, humility, integrity, and service will end with Dr. Manmohan Singh's passing. I pray not, and so will Dr. Singh.

IN BRIEF



Jaishankar meets NSA Sullivan at White House

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan at the White House during which both the leaders had a wide-ranging discussion on the progress of India-U.S. strategic partnership. Mr. Jaishankar is currently on an official visit to the U.S. during which he is scheduled to meet his U.S. counterpart, Antony Blinken, and other senior members of the outgoing administration. He will also chair a conference of the Consuls-General of India in the U.S. PTI

Odisha govt. identifies over 40 lakh ghost beneficiaries

Over 40 lakh ghost beneficiaries of the public distribution system have been detected in Odisha during the current e-KYC verification, the Mohan Majhi government said on Friday. Speaking to presspersons, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krishna Chandra Patra said on average, 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh ghost beneficiaries were found in every district in the verification process, which was yet to be complete. The Minister said diversion of resources through ghost beneficiaries would be done away with.

'22% rise in enrolment after smart classroom initiative'

The initiative has improved learning experiences and attendance of students besides resulting in improved comfort of teachers and preference for smart classroom facilities, says an IIM study

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Introduction of smart classrooms under the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) has led to a 22% increase in overall enrolment as per data reported by 19 cities between 2015-16 and 2023-24, says a study by the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.

The national-level study said that 71 cities have developed 9,433 smart classrooms in 2,398 government schools. The highest number of smart classroom projects are in Karnataka (80), followed by Rajasthan (53). Tamil Nadu has 23 and Delhi 12. West Bengal, with just two, is among the States at the bottom of the table.

According to the report, teachers generally agree with the idea that the smart classroom initiative is improving learning experiences and attendance of students across select smart cities of the country. Special training provid-



The study says that 71 cities have developed 9,433 smart classrooms in 2,398 government schools. FILE PHOTO

ed to teachers improved their comfort and preference for using smart classroom facilities, with senior secondary teachers showing the highest comfort levels, as compared with others.

Apart from this, 41 cities have developed digital libraries with a total of 7,809 seat, it said, highlighting the significant impact of digital libraries in cities

such as Raipur in Chhattisgarh and Tumakuru in Karnataka by providing essential educational resources and supporting students in preparations of competitive exam.

The Smart Cities Mission (SCM) was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in June 2015. The objective of the Mission is to promote cities that provide core infras-

tructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens – a clean and sustainable environment and application of 'smart' solutions.

As on November 2024, 91% of the projects under SCM have been completed, according to the Ministry.

The mission launched a platform in 2022, named 'SAAR' (Smart Cities and Academia towards Action and Research), to bring together the academia and government to document and research new urban initiatives.

Under the SAAR initiative, the Smart Cities Mission has initiated 50 impact assessment research studies as "Sameeksha Series".

Twenty nine premier institutions of India have undertaken these 50 impact assessment studies, which include six Indian Institutes of Management, eight Indian Institutes of Technology, three Schools of Planning and Architecture and 12 specialised research institutes.



Video recordings by classical musicians should be uploaded by January 5

The contest offers a unique platform for artists – from emerging talent to seasoned performers – to showcase their skills and connect with the timeless magic of Margazhi. Indian Oil is the associate sponsor for the contest.

Exciting prizes await outstanding performers. QR CODE

IIT-Bombay team makes needle-free 'shock syringe' for painless injections

Purnima Sah
MUMBAI

In a welcome move for patients who have a fear of needles, a team of researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, has developed a needle-free "shock syringe".

The study, led by Professor Viren Menezes from the Department of Aerospace Engineering, was published in the *Journal of Biomedical Materials and Devices*.

The researchers tested the effectiveness of drug delivery by a shock syringe on laboratory rats. "Unlike syringes with needles, the shock syringe does not rely on piercing the skin with a sharp tip. Instead, it uses high-energy pressure waves (shock waves) that can travel faster than the speed of sound to pierce the skin. These waves, when generated, compress the surrounding medium, such as air or liquid, through which they travel. A similar effect happens during a sonic boom; when



The development of a shock syringe could make immunisation drives more efficient for everyone. FILE PHOTO

an aircraft flies faster than the speed of sound, it creates shock waves that push and disturb the air," Professor Menezes said.

Working mechanism
The shock syringe, developed in 2021 in Professor Menezes's laboratory, is slightly longer than a regular ballpoint pen. The device has a micro shock tube consisting of three sections: the driver, driven, and drug holder, which work together to create the shockwave-driven microjet for drug delivery.

Pressurised nitrogen gas is applied to the shock syringe that is the driver section of the micro shock tube part; it is filled with liquid drugs to create a microjet of the drug. The microjet travels at a speed nearly twice as fast as a commercial aeroplane at take-off. This jet stream of drug passes through the nozzle of the syringe before penetrating the skin. The entire process of delivering drugs using a shock syringe is rapid and gentle; most patients wouldn't feel a thing, he said.

Priyanka Hankare, lead author of the study, said, "The shock syringe is designed to deliver medication rapidly... To minimise tissue damage and ensure consistent and precise drug delivery, the pressure in the shock syringe is continuously monitored and rigorous testing on tissue simulants (such as synthetic skin) helps to calibrate the force and speed of jet insertion, ensuring safety and comfort."

The development of a shock syringe promises more than pain-free injections. It could make immunisation drives quicker and more efficient for both children and adults. It could prevent the occurrence of blood-borne diseases caused by needle-stick injuries due to mishandling or improper disposal. Shock syringes are designed to perform multiple drug delivery shots (example, over 1,000 shots tested), offering reliability and cost-effectiveness over time at the expense of nozzle replacement," Ms. Hankare said.

Bengal Forest Department deploys new 'torch' teams to trap elusive tiger Zeenat

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

The West Bengal Forest Department has set up four teams with *Hula* (torch) party members to trace Zeenat, a female tiger, in Purulia district as the three-year-old big cat has been elusive for more than two weeks. The tiger had escaped from the Simlipal Reserve Forest in Odisha on December 10.

The *Hula* party workers are generally used by the department to drive out elephants from human habitats.

The tiger, which had stayed in the Bandwan area of Purulia district for five days, has now moved to the Dangardi forests in Manbazar. According to forest officials, they have set up traps in multiple locations to capture the big cat. They are also using drones with thermal imagery, goats as baits, night vision equipment, monitoring teams, and more to capture the tiger or drive



Till now, Zeenat has managed to kill three domestic goats, spreading fear among residents in the area. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

her out through the same route she came in.

Till now, Zeenat has managed to kill three goats, spreading fear among residents in the area. Forest officials have also put up fencing in multiple places where there is human habitation to reduce the chances of conflict with the tiger.

The department held a meeting on Thursday and made a new strategy to capture the tiger. They have made four teams, which include the *hula* party members. The teams have been equipped with radio trackers, tranquillisers, cages, and traps. These teams will fan out across Purulia's mountains and forest areas to help with the operation.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Debal Roy, Chief Wildlife Warden, said, "She may have been captured with traps and baits before so she knows what it is like, that may be the reason why she is avoiding all traps, and knows the pattern."

Aviation body suspends two top officials at Akasa Air

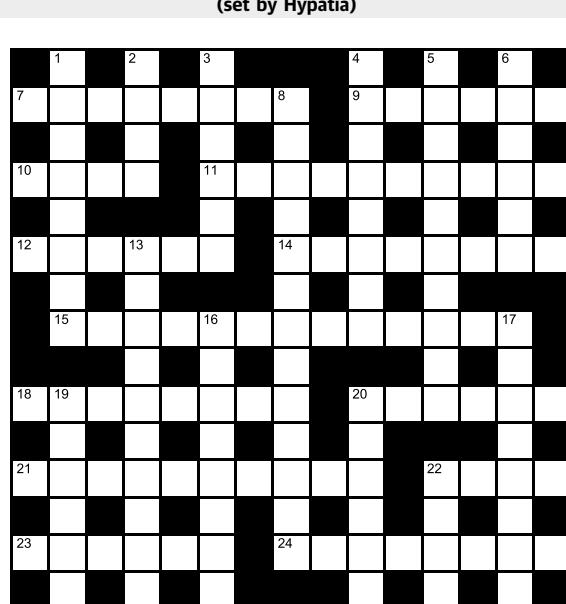
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Friday suspended Akasa Air's head of operations and head of training for six months each for lapses in training.

In an order, the DGCA wrote, "Director Training of M/S SNV Aviation private Limited (Akasa Air) dated 30th October 2024 has been examined and was found unsatisfactory." It said that the Director of Operations, Captain Floyd Gracious, and Director of Training, Neeraj Bhatia, were being suspended for six months.

This action follows a regulatory audit in October. The DGCA audit had found that pilots were being trained navigation approaches on a simulator which was not certified for the procedure. The DGCA said this was in violation of its rule and issued a show cause notice to the airline, but found the airline's response to be unsatisfactory.

TH CROSSWORD + 14368



- To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/jipTn>
- SCAN TO PLAY**
- ACROSS**
- Covers alien in space shuttle initially (8)
 - Contests in online outlets (6)
 - Won after revolutionary champ (4)
 - Just bore a son - a blessing to cherish (10)
 - New users supply tenders (6)
- DOWN**
- Notwithstanding a husband parting, strong lady moves ahead (8)
 - Second present's white (4)
 - Noblemen backing president? Maybe, they're cultured (6)
 - Reminiscences of viral images featuring Boris in the centre (8)
 - Doctor, male attender tackling pressure in section (10)
 - Criminal lost near leaderless hideout acquired illegally (6)
 - Likes prawn and gin cocktail drink (9,4)
 - Genius got puzzles accepting small hint (10)
 - Per Spoooner, evil media got Diana, say (8)
 - Essentially asked to reveal blueprint (8)
 - Seldom undercooked meat's gutted liberally (6)
 - Pined and attacked having love for you, eventually (6)
 - Bill and Bob made USA think ultimately (4)

Across

- Covers alien in space shuttle initially (8)
- Contests in online outlets (6)
- Won after revolutionary champ (4)
- Just bore a son - a blessing to cherish (10)
- New users supply tenders (6)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

G	U	E	S	W	H	O	P	O	P	S	U	P		
A	A	T	A	C	P	T	A	S	I	N	O	R	L	
S	I	N	O	R	E	A	T	L	E	A	M	S	O	
B	L	R	R	A	E	A	M	A	B	E	A	M	S	
L	A	T	R	E	A	T	R	E	A	T	R	E	A	
T	R	E	A	T	R	E	A	T	R	E	A	T	R	
M	A	T	R	E	A	T	R	E	A	T	R	E	A	
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R	E	A	T	R	E	A	T	R	E	A	T	R	E	
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S	I	E	R	N	T	E	R	N	T	E	R	N	T	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

HERZLIYA

Israel says suspected Palestinian attacker stabs woman to death



A woman in her eighties was fatally stabbed in Herzliya, Israel, on Friday morning. The suspected attacker, a 28-year-old Palestinian from the West Bank, was "neutralised and arrested" at the scene, the police said. Despite resuscitation efforts at Tel Aviv Ichilov hospital, she was pronounced dead upon arrival. AFP

BEIJING

62-year-old who killed 35 in China car ramming sentenced to death



A man named Fan Weiqiu was sentenced to death on Friday for killing 35 people in a car attack in Zhuhai, China, on November 11. Fan, 62, drove into a crowd exercising outside a sports complex, motivated by anger over his divorce. This incident marks the deadliest attack in China since 2014. AFP

LAHORE

Pakistan-based LeT's deputy leader Abdul Rehman Makki dies



Hafiz Abdul Rahman Makki, the brother-in-law of Mumbai attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed and deputy chief of banned Jamaat-ud-Dawa, died of a heart attack in Lahore on Friday. Makki had been ill due to diabetes and was undergoing treatment. He was designated a global terrorist by the UN in 2023. PTI

BEIJING

China sanctions 7 companies over U.S. military assistance to Taiwan



China imposed sanctions on seven U.S. companies in response to recent American military aid to Taiwan, which China claims as its territory. The sanctions follow U.S. President Joe Biden's authorisation of \$571 million for Taiwan's defence and a military spending Bill that includes "provisions against China". AP

S. Korea's National Assembly votes to impeach Acting President Han

The impeachment of Han Duck-soo passed with a 192-0 vote, despite protests from the ruling People Power Party; Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok will assume Han's duties; situation in the country remains volatile as public discontent rises

Associated Press
SEOUL

South Korea's Opposition-controlled National Assembly voted on Friday to impeach Acting President Han Duck-soo despite vehement protests by governing party lawmakers, further deepening the country's political crisis set off by President Yoon Suk Yeol's stunning imposition of martial law and ensuing impeachment.

The single-chamber National Assembly passed Mr. Han's impeachment motion with a 192-0 vote, despite protests from the rul-



Unstable chair: Han Duck-soo leaves the Government Complex in Seoul after his impeachment motion was passed on Friday. AFP

ing People Power Party (PPP), which boycotted the session and claimed the vote was invalid.

Mr. Han's impeachment

means he will be stripped of the powers and duties of the President until the Constitutional Court decides whether to dismiss or reinstate him. The court is already reviewing whether to uphold Mr. Yoon's earlier impeachment. The impeachments of the country's top two officials has worsened its political turmoil, deepened economic uncertainties and hurt its international image.

In statement, Mr. Han called his impeachment "regrettable" but said he respects the Assembly's decision and will suspend his duties to "not add to additional confusion and uncertainty". He said he will wait for "a swift, wise decision" by the Constitutional Court.

Mr. Han's impeachment

motion accuses him of collaborating and abetting Mr. Yoon's declaration of martial law. It also accuses Mr. Han of attempting to obstruct the restoration of the Constitutional Court's full membership and of delaying investigations into Mr. Yoon's alleged rebellion by not appointing independent counsels.

Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok will assume Mr. Han's duties during this period. The situation in South Korea remains volatile, with ongoing investigations into Mr. Yoon's actions and rising public discontent regarding political stability.

Azerbaijan plane crash due to 'external interference'

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW



Emergency specialists working at the crash site of an Azerbaijan plane which crashed near the city of Aktau on Wednesday. REUTERS

the plane had tried to land, but the Kremlin has declined to comment on reports the plane was accidentally shot down by Russian missiles.

Statements from Azerbaijan citing the investigation suggest Baku believes the plane was hit mid-air.

"Based on the opinion of experts and on the words of eyewitnesses, it can be concluded that there was external interference," Azerbaijani Transport Minister, Rashad Nabiyev, told reporters. "It is necessary to find out from what kind of weapon," he added, citing reports from survivors of hearing "three explosions" as the plane was over Grozny.

Germany's President dissolves Parliament, sets polls for Feb. 23

Associated Press
FRANKFURT

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Friday ordered Parliament dissolved and set new elections for February 23 in the wake of the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition, saying it was the only way to give the country a stable government capable of tackling its problems, he says

ember 6 when he fired his Finance Minister in a dispute over how to revitalise Germany's stagnant economy.

Mr. Steinmeier said he made the decision because it was clear after consultation with party leaders that there was no agreement among Germany's political parties on a majority for a new government in the current Parliament.

Mr. Scholz lost a confidence vote on December 16 and leads a minority government after his unpopular and notoriously ran-

corous three-party coalition collapsed on No-

Central University of Himachal Pradesh
(Established under Central Universities Act, 2009)
Employment Notice No. 003/2024, Dated 24.12.2024 for TEACHING POSITIONS

Central University of Himachal Pradesh invites online applications from eligible candidates for various teaching positions to be filled on regular/contract (against lien vacancy) basis. The Candidates may apply online from 24.12.2024. Last Date 23.01.2025. For further details please visit University Website i.e., www.cuhimachal.ac.in

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No. 3732 Date: 19.12.2024

NOTICE INVITING BID
NIB No 35-37 YEAR 2024-25

Bids for Watershed Development Works are invited from interested bidders up to 06.01.2025 at 06:00 PM as per following details. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> or <https://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in> of the state departmental website.

Sr. No.	Block	NIB No.	Estimate (Rs in Lacs)	NIB Code	UBN Code
1	Baytu	35/2024-25	264.38	WSC2425A0445	WSC2425WSRC00898
2	Baytu	36/2024-25	136.00	WSC2425A0446	WSC2425WSRC00899
3	Baytu	37/2024-25	51.58	WSC2425A0447	WSC2425WSRC00900

SE CUM PROJECT MANAGER, WCDC, WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT & SOIL CONSERVATION, BARMER

DIPR/C/13460/2024

Yemen's Houthis claim missile attack on Tel Aviv

Agence France-Presse
SANAA

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis rebels said they have fired a missile at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport on Friday, following Israeli air strikes on Sanaa's International Airport that killed four.

The Houthis also launched drones targeting Tel Aviv and a ship in the Arabian Sea, asserting that Israeli actions would strengthen Yemeni resolve to support Palestinians.

Israel reported intercepting the missile before it reached its territory. The attacks come amid escalating tensions and retaliatory strikes between Israel and Houthi forces since the Gaza conflict intensified.

KERALA MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD
(DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE, GOVT. OF KERALA)
Head Office : Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram-14,
(Phone Number 0471-2945600, 2945646)
E-mail : edrugs.kmscl@kerala.gov.in,
website : www.kmscl.kerala.gov.in, CIN No. U24233KL2007SGC021616
No. KMSCL/ED/8/2024 Date : 27.12.2024

E-TENDER NOTICE

Online bids are invited from manufacturers/direct importers / loan licensees on behalf of Department of Health, Govt of Kerala for the procurement of following categories of drugs / supplies for the year 2025-26.

Sr. No.	Tender No. and Date	Category	No. of Items
1.	KMSCL/ED/I&II/RC/2024/031 dtd. 27.12.2024	Drugs	419
2.	KMSCL/ED/III-VIII/RC/2024/032 dtd. 27.12.2024	Consumables & Surgical items	163
3.	KMSCL/ED/SPL/RC/2024/033 dtd. 27.12.2024	Specialty Drugs	153
4.	KMSCL/ED/ACD/RC/2024/034 dtd. 27.12.2024	Anti Cancer Drugs	119

Schedule of dates

	Date	Time
Pre-Tender meeting	Will be published in the official website of the Corporation	
Last date of online uploading of tenders	20.01.2025	05.00pm.
Date of technical bid opening	23.01.2025	11.00 am. onwards

Tenders shall be downloaded and submitted online through the e-tender portal www.etenders.kerala.gov.in.

(Sd/-) MANAGING DIRECTOR (Tender Inviting Authority)

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THE HINDU GROUP

RECOGNITION

Melbourne Cricket Club
honour for Tendulkar



FILE PHOTO
The Melbourne Cricket Club on Friday said Indian icon Sachin Tendulkar has accepted its invitation to become an honorary member of the prestigious institution. Founded in 1838, the club is one of the oldest sports clubs in Australia and is responsible for the management and development of the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

IN GOOD TOUCH

Thought we were in for a Kohli masterclass: Smith



Australia batter Steve Smith said that Virat Kohli looked set for a big knock before falling for 36 on the second day of the fourth Test at the MCG. "It was probably the first ball I think he actually played on that fifth, sixth stump line (when he got out). He was really disciplined and I thought we were in for a bit of a masterclass."

GAINING GROUND

Bosch's breezy knock takes the game away from Pakistan



Debutant Corbin Bosch, in pic, hit 81 not out and Marco Jansen claimed two wickets as South Africa took control on the second day of the first Test against Pakistan at SuperSport Park on Friday. **The scores:** Pakistan 211 & 88/3 in 22 overs vs South Africa 301 in 73.4 overs (Markram 89, Bosch 81 n.o., Khurram 3/75, Naseem 3/92).

NEW HIGH

Ervine, Bennett score centuries in record total for Zimbabwe



Craig Ervine, in pic, and Brian Bennett scored tons as Zimbabwe posted its highest ever total on the second day of the first Test against Afghanistan in Bulawayo. The Afghans were 95 for two at stumps. **The scores:** Zimbabwe 586 in 135.2 overs (Sean Williams 154, Ervine 104, Bennett 110) vs Afghanistan 95/2 in 30 overs.

Smith's hundred & late strikes put Australia in a dominant position

The Aussie great registers his 34th Test ton; Cummins stars both with bat and ball while Boland proves his value yet again; India's hopes rest on Pant and the all-rounders as Jaiswal, Kohli flatter to deceive after another failure for Rohit

IND IN AUS**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**

MELBOURNE

A modern great's ton ensured Australia's dominance while a youngster's counter-punch helmed India's brief resistance. Steve Smith's fluent 140 placed the host in a dominant position in the fourth Test on Friday.

The former Australian captain's ton helped Pat Cummins and his men post 474 in the first innings. At the second day's close here at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, India, after riding on Yashasvi Jaiswal's 82, finished with 164 for five. The 22-year-old was set for a big knock before a mix-up with Virat Kohli, triggered a run-out.

Prior to this evening meltdown, India's first innings commenced with Rohit Sharma returning as an opener.

The skipper punched Cummins for initial runs and with Jaiswal looking confident, India nursed hopes. But they were dashed when Rohit attempted to pull Cummins, paused mid-stride and popped a catch.

Crucial strike

K.L. Rahul walked in and drove with elan while southpaw Jaiswal uppercut Cummins. The duo settled in but on the brink of tea, Cummins castled Rahul with a delivery that curled in and then straightened to rattle the timber. India 51 for two, and in trouble.

In the last session, Kohli was greeted with a mixture of boos and the 'Kohli' chants. His petty run-in



Mix-up: The Australian players are cock-a-hoop as Jaiswal and Kohli are stranded at the non-striker's end. GETTY IMAGES

with Sam Konstas on Thursday, has obviously split his fandom. Shutting out the noise, he drove Cummins and Mitchell Starc on either side of the pitch.

Meanwhile, Jaiswal tucked into Starc, lofted Nathan Lyon, and hoisted Mitchell Marsh for six. More was on offer when he dabbed Scott Boland straight to Cummins and scampered for a risky single, Kohli did not budge. It became a triple blow as the latter edged Boland and nightwatchman Akash Deep fell for a blob.

Earlier in the morning, Australia resumed at the overnight 311 for six. Just as the sun lit up the venue, the host's first innings gained runs through shots and the odd edge as Smith and Cummins stitched a fine seventh-wicket partnership.

Pitch intruder

Some avoidable drama happened when a fan ran

SCOREBOARD**AUSTRALIA — 1ST INNINGS**

Sam Konstas lbw b Jadeja 60 (65b, 6x4, 2x6), Usman Khawaja c Rahul b Bumrah 57 (121b, 6x4), Marnus Labuschagne c Kohli b Washington 72 (145b, 7x4), Steve Smith b Akash 140 (197b, 13x4, 3x6), Travis Head b Bumrah 0 (7b), Mitchell Marsh c Pant b Bumrah 4 (13b, 1x4), Alex Carey c Pant b Akash 31 (41b, 1x6), Pat Cummins c Nitish b Jadeja 49 (63b, 7x4), Mitchell Starc b Jadeja 15 (36b, 1x6), Nathan Lyon lbw b Bumrah 13 (18b, 1x4), Scott Boland (not out) 6 (36b); Extras (lb-11, nb-6, w-10); Total (in 122.4 overs):

474.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-89 (Konstas, 19.2 overs), 2-154 (Khawaja, 44.1), 3-237 (Labuschagne, 65.1), 4-240 (Head, 66.3), 5-246 (Marsh, 68.6), 6-299 (Carey, 82.1), 7-411 (Cummins, 104.1), 8-455 (Starc, 113.3), 9-455 (Smith, 114.1).

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 28.4-9-99-4, Siraj 23-3-122-0, Akash 26-8-94-2, Jadeja 23-4-78-3, Nitish 7-0-21-0, Washington 15-2-49-1.

INDIA — 1ST INNINGS

Yashasvi Jaiswal (run out) 82 (118b, 11x4, 1x6), Rohit Sharma c

Boland b Cummins 3 (5b), K.L. Rahul b Cummins 24 (42b, 3x4), Virat Kohli c Carey b Boland 36 (86b, 4x4), Akash Deep c Lyon b Boland 0 (13b), Rishabh Pant (batting) 6 (7b), Ravindra Jadeja (batting) 4 (7b, 1x4); Extras (lb-2, nb-2, w-5); Total (for five wkts, in 46 overs): 164.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-8 (Rohit, 1.6), 2-51 (Rahul, 14.6), 3-153 (Jaiswal, 40.6), 4-154 (Kohli, 42.1), 5-159 (Akash, 44.3).

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Starc 13-0-48-0, Cummins 13-2-57-2, Boland 12-4-24-2, Lyon 5-1-18-0, Marsh 3-0-15-0.

Smith (140) remained aggressive but when he failed to clear Akash over the infield, the ball grazed his bat and rolled onto his stumps.

With Mohammed Siraj bowling wide bouncers, runs were gifted. Australia had a lunch score of 454 for seven with the morning session yielding 143 from 27 overs.

In the afternoon, Jadeja got one to beat Starc's bat. runs concluded when Cummins freed his arms against Ravindra Jadeja and offered a catch in the deep.

Smith (140) remained aggressive but when he failed to clear Akash over the infield, the ball grazed his bat and rolled onto his stumps.

The last-wicket pair of Lyon and Boland added some mirth with two successful reviews.

Finally Rohit leant on Bumrah (four for 99) to prise out a wicket, and then prepared for his short-lived opening stint.

Deepti magic seals India's series sweep over West Indies

Shayan Acharya

VADODARA

On the eve of the final women's ODI, India's bowling coach Aavishkar Savali referred to Deepti Sharma as a 'modern-day legend'.

At the Kotambi Stadium on Friday, Deepti showed why she is rated highly in international cricket as her all-round performance — a six for 31, followed by an unbeaten 39 (48b, 3x4, 1x6) — guided India to a five-wicket win against West Indies and a 3-0 series sweep.

The visitor opted to bat and the decision backfired as Renuka Singh Thakur (four for 29) made the most of the hazy weather and removed Qiana Joseph, Hayley Matthews and Deandra Dottin inside the first five



On the prowl: India clinched the ODI series 3-0 and continued its dominance over West Indies. PTI

overs. Reeling at nine for three, it seemed to be an uphill task for West Indies to recover. However, with Shemaine Campbell (46, 62b) and Chinelle Henry (61, 72b) adding 97 runs for the fourth wicket, WI breached the 100-run mark.

Looking to be aggres-

sive, Campbell raced down the track, hoping to go over long-on, but was caught by Pratika Rawal on the fence as Deepti provided the Women in Blue with the much-needed breakthrough. Deepti then spun her web en route to her second six-wicket feat in the format as West Indies lost

its last six wickets for just 62 runs and ended its innings at 162.

However, it wasn't an easy chase for India as it lost Smriti Mandhana and Harleen Deol in quick succession. Youngster Pratika Rawal, too, failed to capitalise on a steady start, but captain Harmanpreet Kaur



I like challenges as those are the moments when you can step up and deliver for your team. Crunch situations don't come too often, so when I am in that phase, I always enjoy being there. I back my all-round skills to handle those situations.

DEEPTI

held her nerve and went on a counter-attacking mode as the host crawled back.

Though Afy Fletcher cleaned up Harmanpreet, India did not lose the plot as Jemimah Rodrigues and Deepti came up with a 56-

run stand for the fifth wicket.

Jemimah relied on her natural game, while Deepti made the most of a reprieve to anchor the innings. By the time, Karishma Ramharrack ended Jemimah's innings, India had inched closer to the finish line and Deepti stood firm and added 38 runs along with power-hitter Richa Ghosh.

As the crowd chanted her name, Richa flexed her muscles and sealed the deal with a couple of maximums.

The scores: West Indies 162 in 38.5 overs (Shemaine Campbell 46, Chinelle Henry 61, Renuka Singh 4/29, Deepti Sharma 6/31) lost to India 167/5 in 28.2 overs (Harmanpreet Kaur 32, Deepti 39 n.o.); **Toss:** West Indies; **PoM:** Deepti; **Pos:** Renuka.

Steelers to meet Pirates in PKL final

Saikat Chakraborty

PUNE

Haryana Steelers edged past UP Yoddhas 28-25 in Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) first semifinal here at the Sree Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex, Balewadi, on Friday, booking its place in the final for the second successive season.

The first half was closely contested. However, Steelers intensified its efforts in the second, inflicting an all-out on Yoddhas.

The UP-based team mounted a comeback, with Gagan Gowda's Super Tackle with seconds remaining to secure the



Steelers edged past Yoddhas.

victory. In the grand finale, Steelers will face Patna Pirates, which defeated Dabang Delhi 32-28 in the second semifinal.

The final will be played at the same venue on Sunday.

IN BRIEF



Injured Halep withdraws from Australian Open

Two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep on Friday pulled out of Australian Open qualifying and a warm-up tournament in Auckland citing pain in her knee and shoulder.

Honours even as MSC and OFC fail to score

Mohammedan SC and Odisha FC failed to break the deadlock as the two sides played out a 0-0 draw in an Indian Super League fixture at the Kishore Bharati Krirangan in Kolkata on Friday.

Bengal to meet MP in women's one-day final

Bengal beat defending champion Railways, while Mumbai lost to Madhya Pradesh in the semifinals of the senior women's one-day trophy in Rajkot on Friday.

The scores (semifinals): Railways 300/5 in 50 overs (C.H. Jhansi Lakshmi 120, Nuzhat Parveen 116, Sneha Rana 30 n.o., Saika Ishaque 3/48) lost to Bengal 301/4 in 49 overs (Dhara Gujjar 123, Mita Paul 76, Tanusee Sarkar 35). Mumbai 161 in 35 overs (Ira Jadhav 35, Khushi 35 n.o., Shuchi Upadhyay 5/48) lost to Madhya Pradesh 165/3 in 47.2 overs (Ananya Dubey 75 n.o., Ayushi Shukla 44 n.o.).

LIVE TELECAST

South Africa vs Pakistan: 1st Test, day 3, JioCinema App, 1.30 p.m.
ISL: Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 5 & 7.30 p.m.
Hockey: HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6 & 8.15 p.m.
Australia vs India: 4th Test, day 4, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 5 a.m. (Sunday)

HIL returns in a new avatar as Pipers take on Gonasika in the opener

Uthra Ganeshan
ROURKELA

Returning after seven years in a new form with new players, colours and franchises, the Hockey India League will finally become a reality on Saturday night when Delhi SG Pipers take on Team Gonasika in the opening game of the second iteration of a competition that laid the foundation for the revival of Indian hockey in its previous avatar.

The start, however, will be a sober affair with the opening ceremony at the huge Birsa Munda Stadium, initially planned to be big and glamorous, is now expected to be limited to a light show following the na-

tional mourning announced after the demise of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The teams are also likely to play with black armbands on Saturday.

The gains from five years of HIL 1.0 – from 2013 to 2017 – was reflected both in personnel and performance of the national side, discovering new talent that learnt from the best in the world to culminate in consecutive Olympic medals.

With many from that generation gradually stepping aside, Hockey India is hopeful that HIL 2.0 will do something similar for the coming years. The mandatory inclusion of eight junior players is a step in that direction.

For Delhi, it has been a busy period since the auction with the team suffering most pull-outs from its first-choice foreign players including the talismanic German Christopher Ruhr. That may well prove to be a trump card given how it now has a chance to prove that performance, not names, get results.

"We all know how to play hockey. We're all good players but the important thing is to spend some time together and know each other so the connections become a lot stronger on the field. In that sense, the last few days have been really fun. We want to play well and we're doing that at the moment," Australian Jake Whetton, co-captain

of the side, said on Friday.

Gonasika, on the other hand, put its trust in a strong Indian core, led by former captain Manpreet Singh. The likes of Birendra Lakra, S.V. Sunil, S.K. Uthappa and Mandeep Singh bring in the experience while the youngsters Araijeet Singh Hundal, Vishnukant Singh, Yashdeep Siwach and Amir Ali will be trying to prove they are ready to take on the mantle going forward. Hockey India has claimed that a revived HIL had been planned for almost two years. Saturday will finally be the test of its success.

Saturday's game: DSGP vs Gonasika, 8.15 pm (live on Sony and Doordarshan).

Cast your votes for India's sporting heroes

SPORTSTAR
ACES

Sports Bureau

As we bid farewell to an extraordinary year for Indian sports, it's time to express our gratitude to the trailblazers who brought us glory at the seventh edition of the Sportstar ACES Awards.

We invite you to cast your vote in the five Popular Choice categories – Sportsman of the Year, Sportswoman of the Year, National Team of the Year, Club/State Team of the Year, and Sporting Moment of the Year.

Simply scan the given QR code to vote. The voting lines for #SSaces2025 will

remain open until January 31, 2025.

Elite panel

The winners of the 17 Jury Awards will be chosen by an elite panel headed by legendary Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar. Sporting greats Abhinav Bindra, M.M. Somaya, Viswanathan Anand, Anjali Bhagwat, and Aparna Popat complete the jury.

We'll be presenting a special Chairperson's Award for Sports for Social Good, which recognises individuals or organisations that have leveraged the power of sports to create a positive impact in society.

Simply scan the given QR code to vote. The voting lines for #SSaces2025 will

Harika in joint second place after four rounds

WORLD RAPID CHESS

Sports Bureau

Arjun Erigaisi and Raunak Sadhwani were in the joint fifth place at the end of the fifth round of the World rapid chess championship in Singapore. They were on four points, along with nine others.

Volodar Murzin, Shant Saryan and Leinier Dominguez Perez and Daniel Naroditsky were sharing the lead with 4.5 points each. In the day's biggest upset, 18-year-old Denis Lazavil defeated top seed Magnus Carlsen.

Sadhwani also caused a stir when he beat seventh seed Alireza Firouzja in the second round. Among the other Indians, V. Pranav Koneru Humpy, Divya Deshmukh and Vantika Agrawal have some catching up to do.

was placed 32nd, followed by R. Praggnanandha (56th) and Diptayan Ghosh (69th). Eight rounds remain.

In the women's event, Alice Lee took the sole lead with four points, after winning all her four games. India's D. Harika was among five players in the second place, with 3.5 points; the Chinese duo of Ju Wenjun and Tan Zhongyi, Nino Batsiashvili of Georgia and Guyma Mammadzada of Azerbaijan were the others.

After Harika, R. Vaishali was the best-placed Indian, with three points, she was in the 15th position, with another seven rounds remaining.

Konner Humpy, Divya Deshmukh and Vantika Agrawal have some catching up to do.

Sport

Kerala's victory march continues

The southern outfit beats J&K 1-0 to seal its 31st entry into the semifinals and will face Manipur, which downed Delhi in Thursday's quarterfinal

SANTOSH TROPHY

Sports Bureau
HYDERABAD

Naseeb Rahman scored the match-winner for Kerala as it recorded a 1-0 victory over Jammu & Kashmir in the quarterfinal of the 78th Santosh Trophy national football championship at the Deccan Arena here on Friday.

Rahman found the target in the 73rd minute and is now the joint second-highest scorer of the tournament (alongside Tamil Nadu's K. Lijo) with seven goals to his name.

This is Kerala's 31st entry into the semifinal and will next face Manipur on Sunday.

With a potent attack, Kerala's team dynamics allowed it to score an impressive 29 goals in the campaign while its defence too stood firm, conceding only four goals so far.

J&K, under the tactical guidance of former Indian defender and coach Mehrajuddin Wadoo, showed



Surging ahead: Kerala showed why it is a powerhouse in the tournament. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

flashes of brilliance. In the 27th minute, Aakif Javaid dashed down the right flank and delivered a cross to Talib Nazir inside the penalty box. Despite having ample time and space, Nazir's shot sailed over the crossbar as the first-half ended goalless.

After the break, Joseph Justin delivered a cross that the defenders failed to clear, allowing Naseeb Rahman to take control with his chest. He showcased his composure and

fired a decisive volley past the goalkeeper, putting Kerala ahead.

J&K came close to scoring the equaliser in the 88th minute when Kerala custodian S. Hajmal's effort to clear the ball went astray. The ball landed at the feet of Shahmeer Tariq, whose shot agonisingly soared over the crossbar.

The results: Quarterfinals: Kerala 1 (Rahman 73) bt J&K 0; Meghalaya 1 (L. Mawnai 86) lost to Services 2 (Bidhysagar Singh 33, Rahul Ramkrishnan 46).

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY: FOURTH-ROUND FIXTURES

Group-A: Jaipur: Assam vs Haryana, Goa vs Uttarakhand, Jharkhand vs Gujarat, Manipur vs Odisha.
Group-B: Mumbai: Meghalaya vs Rajasthan, Railways vs Sikkim.
Navi Mumbai: Maharashtra vs Himachal Pradesh, Andhra vs Services.

Visakhapatnam: Chandigarh vs Vidarbha.

Group-C: Ahmedabad: Arunachal Pradesh vs Karnataka, Hyderabad vs Pondicherry, Nagaland vs Saurashtra, Mumbai vs Punjab.
Group-D: Vizianagaram: Jammu & Kashmir vs Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh vs Uttar Pradesh.

Group-E: Hyderabad: Baroda vs Bengal, Delhi vs Kerala, Madhya Pradesh vs Tripura.
Group D matches begin at 8.45 a.m.

Rest of the games start at 9 a.m.

Liverpool surges seven points clear; Man United in tailspin

PREMIER LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
LIVERPOOL

Liverpool powered seven points clear at the top of the Premier League as it beat Leicester 3-1, while Bruno Fernandes was sent off in Manchester United's dismal 2-0 defeat at lowly Wolves.

The rampant Reds, who hold a game in hand on Chelsea, have beaten just once in 17 league matches this season.

Arne Slot's side was shocked by Jordan Ayew's early strike at Anfield, but the leader recovered its composure to equalise just before the interval through Cody Gakpo.

England midfielder Jones marked his 100th top-flight appearance with the second goal soon after half-time.



That winning feeling: Curtis Jones celebrates scoring Liverpool's go-ahead goal against Leicester. AFP

matches this season.

They have won 22 of their 26 games in all competitions in a remarkable run since Slot arrived from Feyenoord in the close-season to replace Jurgen Klopp.

The results: Wolves 2 (Cunha 58, Hwang 90+9) bt Manchester United 0.
Liverpool 3 (Gakpo 45+1, Jones 49, Salah 82) bt Leicester 1 (Ayew 6).

KERALA ROUND-UP

Wins for Calicut and MG

TENHIPALAM: Host Calicut and MG posted wins in the South Zone inter-university football championship here on Friday.

The results: Boys: Idukki 43 (S. Rohit 12) bt Palakkad 40 (Samuel Bibin 23); Thiruvananthapuram 52 (Seeyadli 14, Kesay Muraleekrishna 12) bt Annamalai 0; MG 3 (Hari Sankar 27 & 47) bt Joy 2 (Ebin Das 20, Tony 55).

An easy win for Kozhikode girls

ALAPPUZHA: Defending champion Kozhikode breezed past Palakkad 23-2

in a girls' league match of the State Kids Basketball championships here on Friday.

The results: Girls: Idukki 43 (S. Rohit 12) bt Palakkad 40 (Samuel Bibin 23); Thiruvananthapuram 52 (Seeyadli 14, Kesay Muraleekrishna 12) bt Annamalai 0; MG 3 (Hari Sankar 27 & 47) bt Joy 2 (Ebin Das 20, Tony 55).

Mixed luck for New Kids

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: It was a mixed day for New



THE HINDU

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remain open until January 31, 2025.

WORLD RAPID CHESS

Sports Bureau

Arjun Erigaisi and Raunak Sadhwani were in the joint fifth place at the end of the fifth round of the World rapid chess championship in Singapore. They were on four points, along with nine others.

Volodar Murzin, Shant Saryan and Leinier Dominguez Perez and Daniel Naroditsky were sharing the lead with 4.5 points each. In the day's biggest upset, 18-year-old Denis Lazavil defeated top seed Magnus Carlsen.

Sadhwani also caused a stir when he beat seventh seed Alireza Firouzja in the second round. Among the other Indians, V. Pranav Koneru Humpy, Divya Deshmukh and Vantika Agrawal have some catching up to do.

was placed 32nd, followed by R. Praggnanandha (56th) and Diptayan Ghosh (69th). Eight rounds remain.

In the women's event, Alice Lee took the sole lead with four points, after winning all her four games. India's D. Harika was among five players in the second place, with 3.5 points; the Chinese duo of Ju Wenjun and Tan Zhongyi, Nino Batsiashvili of Georgia and Guyma Mammadzada of Azerbaijan were the others.

After Harika, R. Vaishali was the best-placed Indian, with three points, she was in the 15th position, with another seven rounds remaining.

Konner Humpy, Divya Deshmukh and Vantika Agrawal have some catching up to do.

Elite panel

Sports Bureau

The winners of the 17 Jury Awards will be chosen by an elite panel headed by legendary Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar. Sporting greats Abhinav Bindra, M.M. Somaya, Viswanathan Anand, Anjali Bhagwat, and Aparna Popat complete the jury.

We'll be presenting a special Chairperson's Award for Sports for Social Good, which recognises individuals or organisations that have leveraged the power of sports to create a positive impact in society.

Simply scan the given QR code to vote. The voting lines for #SSaces2025 will

IN BRIEF

Sports Bureau

As we bid farewell to an extraordinary year for Indian sports, it's time to express our gratitude to the trailblazers who brought us glory at the seventh edition of the Sportstar ACES Awards.

We invite you to cast your vote in the five Popular Choice categories – Sportsman of the Year, Sportswoman of the Year, National Team of the Year, Club/State Team of the Year, and Sporting Moment of the Year.

Simply scan the given QR code to vote. The voting lines for #SSaces2025 will

remain open until January 31, 2025.

കേരള സംസ്ഥാന ഭോഗക്കുറി നിർമ്മ നിർണ്ണയം 27.12.2024	
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SC. AL. ANNUAL DRAW, Director of State Lotteries, Thiruvananthapuram. The prizes mentioned are subject to verify the winning numbers and the results published in the Kerala Government Gazette are the winner's details with 30%.

SMART CITY THIRUVANANTHAPURAM LIMITED CIN U75302KL2017SGC50527				
E-TENDER NOTICE				
E-Tenders are invited for the following projects of Smart City Thiruvananthapuram Limited				
Sl. No.	Name of Project	E-Tender ID	PAC Amount (Exclusive Of GST)	Bid Submission Last Date
1	Development of Chalai Warehouse and Commercial Complex in Thiruvananthapuram	2024 SCTL_71610_1	Rs.7,38,42,276/-	30-DEC-2024 03:00PM

All the RFP documents and details are available on the e-Tender Website. Bids are only accepted online on the Website <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in>

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Ow/CSMC/E-Building/2024/112 Corrigendum-2
Extension of Last Date for Submission of Bids
Subject: Development of Museum using Modern Technologies at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research Centre, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar
Reference: 1) Tender ID 02024 AMCA, 1121223_1
2) Corrigendum-1: Ow/CSMC/E-Building/2024/103 dated 17/12/2024
In reference to the Tender mentioned above for the work of Development of Museum using Modern Technologies at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research Centre, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar where in the last date of submission of Proposals was "30th December 2024 by 5:00 PM" is rescheduled as per the discussion in pre bid meeting. Revised dates are as follows:-
1. Last Date and Time for receipt of Bids: 13th January 2025 by 5:00 pm
2. Time and Date of Opening Technical Bids: 15th January 2025 by 11:00 am.
The Common set of Deviations to the Tender issued dated 5th December, 2024 would be provided soon. Please take note.

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- Offering** landing/parking fee waivers for airlines operating flights to EU destinations.



GETTY IMAGES

Harry Brook: generational talent or simply at the vanguard of a generation?

The 25-year-old's ability to destroy bowling attacks is symbolic of how Test batting has changed – or certainly of how a Gen-Z batter perceives his craft. Australia's bouncy tracks and India's turners will tell us whether he is an all-timer or merely on the crest of the modern wave

Vivek Krishnan

This is the big league. This is Test cricket. It will humble you as a player and person."

This was Dean Elgar, in September 2022, offering a gentle warning to Harry Brook on the eve of the latter's Test debut against South Africa at The Oval. The middle-order batter had hammered 140 for England Lions against the visiting Proteas at Canterbury a month earlier and was being talked up as an incredibly exciting prospect, but South Africa's then captain and seasoned pro seemed to be telling the budding rookie that Test cricket wouldn't be quite so easy.

Ready on arrival

Well, little did Elgar know that Brook would indeed make Test cricket look easy. That he would take to the big league like he had always belonged. That he would race to 2,281 runs after 24 Tests at an average of 58.48 and a strike rate of 88.37, with eight hundreds. That he would become the first England batter since Graham Gooch in 1990 to amass a triple ton. One that he would get to, against Pakistan in Multan in October, in just 310 deliveries, second only to Virender Sehwag's 278-ball effort against South Africa in Chennai in 2008.

Brook is also the third-fastest Englishman, be-

hind Herbert Sutcliffe and Len Hutton, to 1,000 Test runs. Among his countrymen, only Sutcliffe, whose debut dates back to a century ago, got to 2,000 runs quicker than him.

Brook has done all of this while veering away from conventional wisdom about batting in the longest format requiring copious patience and a copybook defence. As a product of the new generation that has grown up consuming a considerable volume of T20 cricket, the 25-year-old, athletic and affable, lends weightage to scoring runs at a fast rate.

In essence, he fits right into the attacking philosophy espoused by captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum. Although the circumstances of Brook's entry weren't ideal – Jonny Bairstow, in the form of his life, slipped on a golf course and fractured his left leg in a freak accident before the final Test of the English summer – the think-tank had little hesitation in thrusting the young Yorkshireman into the arc lights.

"There are just things that stand out about certain players, like the time they have at the crease, the shots they play," Stokes said at the time of Brook's induction.

The first inkling that the youngster can turn promise into performance came just a few months later in his second Test, against Pakistan in Rawalpindi, when he walloped 153 off 116 deliveries and deflated the host's morale altogether. A 65-ball 87 and two more hundreds on that

tour as England whitewashed Pakistan set Brook firmly on his way.

As impressive as his numbers have been so far, it is his precious ability to take the game away from the opposition in a trice that turns heads and embodies what Bazball – the term attributed to England's unfettered approach under Stokes and McCullum – is all about.

Whether England is 20 for three on a green top in Manchester or 200 for three on a flat surface in Multan, Brook always looks for ways to mount the pressure back on the bowlers. That impulse



Brook has been able to conjure up three-figure knocks that dovetail ball-striking flair with a calm temperament, indicating a distinct trait to thrive under pressure

STACKING UP

**ATP Men's Top 15**

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Jannik Sinner	23	11,830	17
2	Alexander Zverev	27	7,915	21
3	Carlos Alcaraz	21	7,010	18
4	Taylor Fritz	27	5,100	22
5	Daniil Medvedev	28	5,030	17
6	Casper Ruud	26	4,255	25
7	Novak Djokovic	37	3,910	18
8	Andrey Rublev	27	3,760	27
9	Alex de Minaur	25	3,745	23
10	Grigor Dimitrov	33	3,350	19
11	Stefanos Tsitsipas	26	3,165	22
12	Tommy Paul	27	3,145	21
13	Holger Rune	21	3,025	23
14	Ugo Humbert	26	2,765	26
15	Jack Draper	23	2,685	22

Top Indians ▶

Sumit Nagal

Rank 98 ▲ No change

**WTA Women's Top 15**

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Aryna Sabalenka	26	9,416	21
2	Iga Swiatek	23	8,295	18
3	Coco Gauff	20	6,530	22
4	Jasmine Paolini	28	5,344	20
5	Qinwen Zheng	22	5,340	21
6	Elena Rybakina	25	5,171	20
7	Jessica Pegula	30	4,705	19
8	Emma Navarro	23	3,589	25
9	Daria Kasatkina	27	3,368	24
10	Barbara Krejcikova	29	3,214	17
11	Danielle Collins	31	3,178	19
12	Paula Badosa	27	2,908	20
13	Diana Shnaider	20	2,895	27
14	Anna Kalinskaya	26	2,743	20
15	Jelena Ostapenko	27	2,588	21

Top Indians ▶

Ankita Raina

Rank 286 ▲ 1 spot

**English Premier League Standings**

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Liverpool	17	13	3	1	40	17	23	42
2	Chelsea	18	10	5	3	38	21	17	35
3	N. Forest	18	10	4	4	24	19	5	34
4	Arsenal	17	9	6	3	34	16	18	33
5	Newcastle	18	8	5	5	30	21	9	29
6	Bournemouth	18	8	5	5	27	21	6	29
7	Man. City	18	8	4	6	30	26	4	28
8	Fulham	18	7	7	4	26	23	3	28
9	Aston Villa	18	8	4	6	26	29	-3	28
10	Brighton	17	6	7	4	27	26	1	25
11	Tottenham	18	7	2	9	39	26	13	23
12	Brentford	17	7	2	8	32	32	0	23
13	West Ham	18	6	5	7	23	30	-7	23
14	Man. United	18	6	4	8	21	24	-3	22
15	Everton	17	3	8	6	15	22	-7	17
16	Crystal Palace	18	3	8	7	18	26	-8	17
17	Wolves	18	4	3	11	29	40	-11	15
18	Leicester City	18	3	5	10	22	40	-18	14
19	Ipswich Town	17	2	6	9	16	32	-16	12
20	Southampton	18	1	3	14	11	37	-26	6

Spanish LaLiga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Atletico Madrid	18	12	5	1	33	12	21	41
2	Real Madrid	18	12	4	2	41	18	23	40
3	Barcelona	19	12	2	5	21	22	29	38
4	Athletic Bilbao	19	10	6	3	29	17	12	36
5	Villarreal	18	8	6	4	34	30	4	30
6	Real Mallorca	19	9	3	7	19	21	-2	30
7	Real Sociedad	18	7	4	7	16	13	3	25
8	Girona	18	7	4	7	26	25	1	25
9	Real Betis	18	6	7	5	21	22	-1	25
10	Osasuna	18	6	7	5	23	27	-4	25
11	Elche	18	7	3	8	27	28	-1	24
12	Rayo Vallecano	18	5	7	6	20	21	-1	22
13	Las Palmas	18	6	4	8	23	27	-4	22
14	Sevilla	18	6	4	8	20	27	-7	22
15	Leganés	18	4	6	8	17	28	-11	18
16	Alaves	18	4	5	9	21	30	-9	17
17	Getafe	18	3	7	8	11	15	-4	16
18	Espanyol	18	4	3	11	16	30	-14	15
19	Valencia	17	2	6	9	16	26	-10	12
20	Real Valladolid	18	3	3	12	37	25	-12	12

German Bundesliga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS

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'Chess imprisoned me with its beauty; now my life's mission is to reproduce myself'

In this freewheeling conversation, Maurice Ashley, the world's first Black Grandmaster, talks about falling in love with the game, making history, launching his commentary career in the Kremlin, and working to remove barriers to ensure that young talent from under-served communities can emulate his success

INTERVIEW

Maurice Ashley

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Maurice Ashley's sister Alicia is a former World boxing champion. His brother Devon is a former World kickboxing champion. But he chose chess to make his mark and created history: in 1999, he became the world's first-ever Black Grandmaster. During the World Chess Championship match between Ding Liren and D. Gukesh, Ashley was a familiar face – and voice – as the television presenter and moderator at the press conferences. Excerpts from an interview with the Jamaica-born American Grandmaster in Singapore:

How do you look back at your life, as someone who broke through the glass ceiling?

I learnt chess in Jamaica as an eight-year-old, or maybe I was nine. I remember surprising everybody by discovering the four-move checkmate. I just figured out the scholar's mate. But I didn't do any chess again for another six years. When I was 14, two years after we moved to the United States, I saw a friend in school playing chess. And then I saw a chess book in the library and the love affair started. I remember just seeing the strategies and tactics. The positions, the diagrams. I played with my friend. He crushed me again. I taught myself chess. I had no coach until I was 21 and my rating was 2400. I just studied like a complete maniac. I learnt chess history and about all the world champions. I became like a PhD student of the game.

At that time, were there many from the African-American community that played chess?

There were, thankfully, people who played in the park. And a group of men – they called themselves the Black Bear School – who played chess. They were the reason I became 2400, because they were all 2200. I met them at the park in New York, and at one of their homes. I ended

up beating this guy who knew them. And he was so mad, he wanted to humiliate me by taking me to this group. Little did he know that I was tough enough that I could fight a couple of them in the group, but most of them were better than me. So I ended up playing against these men, and they became essentially my sparring partners. They would crush me, the top ones. And I would go home and study some more, then come back. I just kept going. As long as there existed people who were better than me, I wanted to get better.



P.K. AJITH KUMAR



My biggest problem with my accomplishment is that others haven't followed in my footsteps in great numbers. The way India has followed Anand. And I recognise that it took a while for such a great champion like Anand even to move the needle in India

ed that just this November to find money for young, talented Black kids. In Jamaica, I convinced the government to give a quarter million dollars to developing chess year.

And I am working with kids in Africa as well. So I am actively participating in what has become the mission of my life. The mission of my life is to reproduce myself. Not just in terms of Black players, but also in terms of Black girls who are, truly, completely invisible in chess.

How did you become a commentator?

I was discovered by Bob Rice, who was the commissioner of the PCA [Professional Chess Association] that sponsored the World Chess Championship [outside FIDE]. I had coached some young kids to a national championship title, junior high school. I was able to communicate with them, with ease, the difficulty of chess. Bob found out about it and said, 'I think you could do commentary for us, because we have got this new league, with Kasparov and we're planning to do tournaments all over the world.'

I remember when I went to Moscow, that first time, and was in the Kremlin building. I was supposed to just do stuff for Eurosport, but the commentary was in Russian, and Bob and all the Americans were like, listen, we need somebody to talk about it in English, because we can't understand what is going on. So they put me in a booth in the Kremlin, and I stood up there, I thought of basketball, and just called it like I was calling basketball. I was calling it at the top of my voice. Like, what a move by Garry Kasparov!

And it was so entertaining, they said, that Kasparov's mother, Clara, said she would change the channel from the boring Russian to listen to me, even though she barely spoke any English.

What are your memories of the World title match between Anand and Kasparov in New York in 1995?

The first memory is that it took place at the World Trade Centre, the Twin Towers, on September 11. And another memory I have is Garry winning Game 10 after losing the previous one [the first eight games were drawn]. And the way he won was with supreme preparation. He would come into the room. Anand would make a move. He would come in and just play instantly and then walk out of the room. Just play the move, walk out. He did it for the first 20 moves. And poor Anand was just caught in deep preparation. After that, he just crushed him for the rest of the match. And I think Vishy was still young, still had a lot to learn before he became the great champion that he became. But that match was about Garry asserting his dominance.

**When did you start thinking of becoming a Grandmaster?**

When I was 14. I read about these Grandmasters in books, and I just wanted to be among the best. It didn't matter the obstacles in my way or not having any trainers when I was a kid or whatever. The game caught me and imprisoned me with its beauty. So it was a long journey to the Grandmaster title. I was elated, of course, and relieved more so because I had been trying for so long. I didn't get it until I was 33. It only taught me one of the biggest lessons I have ever had in my life, and it is in my current book, *Move by Move*, that I arrived at the Grandmaster title and became an advanced beginner. You thought you were there somehow, and then you realised, oh my god, the ocean is bigger than you thought it was.

Did it matter to you that you were the first**Black person to do it?**

All the Black people around me were saying, 'Do it for us'. It is easy to be Black, I am Black. That wasn't the problem. But to become a Grandmaster is hard. I knew a lot of people would be happy, and they were when I finally accomplished it. But my biggest problem with my accomplishment is that others haven't followed in my footsteps in great numbers. The way India has followed Anand. And I recognise that it took a while for such a great champion like Anand even to move the needle in India.

So I should give myself some grace in having not seen the rush that I would have expected of young Grandmasters. More has to be done. And I am doing more now, actively, myself. I am giving free lessons to young prodigies that I think have potential.

I have put a fellowship together, the Maurice Ashley Chess Fellowship in the US. Yeah, I start-

GAME THEORY

Asian Test spinners in SENA

This week, we take a look at the Asian spinners with the best Test bowling averages in South Africa, England, New Zealand, Australia (SENA), venues that traditionally don't favour the style of bowling:

**Best bowling averages:**

Asian spinners in South Africa, England, New Zealand, Australia

Spinner	Country	Tests	Wkts	Ave	Econ	SR
Mushtaq Mohammad	Pakistan	27	38	26.26	2.61	60.2
Muthiah Muralidaran	Sri Lanka	23	125	26.69	2.64	60.6
Mushtaq Ahmed	Pakistan	19	84	28.10	2.74	61.3
Bapu Nadkarni	India	11	26	29.46	1.85	95.5
Erapalli Prasanna	India	20	78	29.94	2.42	73.9
Bishan Bedi	India	25	90	30.98	2.36	78.6
Iqbal Qasim	Pakistan	9	29	31.06	2.58	72.0
Shakib Al Hasan	Bangladesh	8	28	31.07	3.20	58.1
B.S. Chandrasekhar	India	19	71	31.33	2.67	70.3
Saglani Mushtaq	Pakistan	11	40	34.37	2.73	75.4
Ravi Shastri	India	21	47	34.63	2.25	92.3
Dilip Doshi	India	8	29	36.51	2.22	98.5
Anil Kumble	India	35	141	37.04	2.76	80.2
Danish Kaneria	Pakistan	19	75	38.50	3.13	73.6
Ravindra Jadeja	India	22	52	39.05	2.71	86.4
Saeed Ajmal	Pakistan	8	27	39.18	2.78	84.2
R. Ashwin	India	26	72	39.55	2.82	84.1
Harbhajan Singh	India	19	62	39.93	3.09	77.3
Vinoj Mankad	India	11	32	40.87	2.40	102.1
Rangana Herath	Sri Lanka	21	57	42.75	2.93	87.4
Intikhab Alam	Pakistan	22	47	42.85	2.84	90.4
Abdul Qadir	Pakistan	16	43	49.04	2.79	105.2
Yasir Shah	Pakistan	16	46	55.08	3.87	85.3

PICTURE THIS

**Tide's out!**

Veteran footballers play on the wet sand during the 64th Campeonato de Futbol Playero de Santander at the Sardinero beach in Spain earlier this month.

The idea behind the tournament — a long-standing tradi-

tion that dates back to 1960-61 — is to bring together the large community of football enthusiasts on the vibrant Santander coast.

The games are played when the tide is low. So the championship calendar is intricately linked to the tide schedule, with matches arranged around the times when the receding water reveals the playing surface.

Every team is represented by a delegate who acts as the 'owner' of a specific area of the beach, where the playing field is set up for each matchday. The fields are marked out to measure 100 steps in length and 60 meters wide and 2 meters high.

Each team is responsible for marking and preparing its half of the field before the match.

The championship, which features players aged 28 and older, has attracted retired LaLiga footballers, including the likes of former Barcelona manager Quique Setien.