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### Supreme Court takes a stern view of T.N. Minister's reinstatement

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Monday took a stern view of the appointment of V. Senthilbalaji as a Cabinet Minister of Tamil Nadu "straightaway" after getting bail in a money laundering case. A Bench headed by Justice A.S. Oka was hearing an application seeking the withdrawal of its bail order. Mr. Senthilbalaji is accused of playing a "pivotal role" in the "job racket scam" during his tenure as Minister. » PAGE 2

# Logjam ends, Parliament to debate Constitution

At meeting called by Speaker, the ruling party agrees to allow certain topics to be raised, but does not accede to any discussion on Adani indictment; Congress decides not to cause any disruption over the Adani issue, but announces protest outside Parliament complex for today; it says the agreement on debate is a 'climbdown' by the government

**Sreeparna Chakrabarty**
NEW DELHI

In a breakthrough to end the logjam that had plagued the functioning of Parliament for over a week, the government and the Opposition reached a consensus on holding a discussion on the Constitution in both Houses.

The Lok Sabha will hold the discussion on December 13 and 14 and the Rajya Sabha on December 16 and 17.

The ruling side agreed to allow certain issues such as the Bangladesh situation and the violence in Sambhal to be raised during Zero Hour, but did not accede to any discussion on the Adani indictment.

The main Opposition party, the Congress, decided not to disrupt Parliament over the Adani issue, but it will hold a protest outside the Makar Dwar of the Parliament complex at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday.

Before the protest, at a meeting of INDIA bloc leaders, the Congress would ask other parties also to join the demonstration, sources said.

The breakthrough came at a meeting of floor leaders of all parties called by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, where the government conceded to the demand for holding a discussion on the Constitution. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi had made the demand in separate letters to Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar and Mr. Birla, respectively, last week.

**Major breakthrough:** Floor leaders of various parties at a meeting at the chamber of the Speaker in Parliament on Monday. ANI

"The Lok Sabha Speaker met with floor leaders of all the parties. Everybody expressed their frustration on Parliament not functioning. Everybody was of the view that it was not appropriate to waste people's money. The Opposition also put forward their demand, there was a proposal in Business Advisory Committee to have discussion on the Constitution, the government has agreed to it," Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju told presspersons.

However, the government refused to accede to a discussion on Adani indictment, arguing the developments had taken place in a foreign country, the sources said.

Congress sources, however, maintained that the decision to agree to a debate on the Constitution was a "climbdown" by the government.

At the meeting with Mr. Birla, the sources said, it was agreed that Samajwadi Party would be allowed to raise the Sambhal issue, Trinamool Congress the situation in Bangladesh and DMK the devastation caused by Cyclone Fengal in the Lok Sabha during Zero Hour on Tuesday.

**Functioning to resume**

Mr. Rijiju also mentioned the first Bill of the Session would be passed on Tuesday. The functioning of both Houses had been paralysed since the beginning of the Winter Session on November 25. The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha had functioned for just 67 and 93 minutes, respectively.

The development on Monday comes amid increasing isolation of the Congress over the stalling of Parliament over the Adani issue. Some Opposition parties felt that by stalling Parliament, the Opposition was falling into the trap of the government and would not be able to raise issues that concern people.

The Trinamool had notably been uncomfortable in allowing Parliament to be disrupted like this and had not been attending INDIA bloc meetings recently.

BOTH HOUSES STALLED
» PAGE 5

*Marching forward*

**United they stand:** Farmers and Kisan Ekta Sangh members take out a protest march in Noida on Monday demanding the expansion of minimum support prices and other benefits. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA (REPORT ON PAGE 4)

# BJP may name CM tomorrow; Sena yet to decide on deputy CM position

**Snehal Mutha**
**Vinaya Deshpande Pandit**
MUMBAI

With the swearing-in ceremony of the Mahayuti government in Maharashtra two days away, Caretaker Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde is recovering from illness and his party is yet to decide on the Deputy Chief Minister.

The BJP appointed Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and former Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani as central observers for a meeting of its MLAs-elect who will appoint the legislature party leader and the Chief Whip of the party at a meeting on Wednesday at the Central Hall of the Vidhan Bhavan here.

Shrikant Shinde, Eknath Shinde's son, quashed rumours about his name being considered for the Deputy Chief Minister's post. ANI

On Monday evening, Nationalist Congress Party leader Ajit Pawar reached New Delhi.

Mr. Shinde's son, Shrikant Shinde, MP, took to X to deny reports about his name being considered for the Deputy Chief Minister's position.

"The swearing-in ceremony of the Mahayuti government has been delayed, which has led to a surge in the discussions and rumours. Hon caretaker CM Shri Eknath Shinde had to take rest at his native place for two days due to health issues... There have been speculations about me becoming the DCM. But these news reports are baseless and unfounded," he posted.

Top sources in the Shiv Sena told *The Hindu* that the decision on the Deputy Chief Minister had not been made yet and it is not yet clear if Mr. Eknath Shinde will take the post or appoint someone else.

"We have asked for the Home portfolio. But the discussion on it has not yet taken place. We will be a part of the government. It will be a Shiv Sena DCM. We will have our share of the cabinet berths. But the decision on who the face of the DCM will be, has not yet been taken," a senior leader said. Mr. Eknath Shinde has sought 14 Ministerial berths, including the 10 his party had last held.

# Factory activity expansion index slips to 11-month low of 56.5 in November

**Vikas Dhoot**
NEW DELHI

Private sector industrial activity appears to be on a relatively weak wicket even in the third quarter of 2024-25, scotching hopes of a quick rebound from the sharp tumble in the July-September quarter when manufacturing growth slipped to a mere 2.2%, and GDP grew at a seven-quarter low pace of 5.4%.

Factory activity expansion in India's private sector fell to a joint 11-month low in November, while firms raised prices at the swiftest pace in over 11 years as input cost pressures began to bite, as per the survey-based HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI). The index reading fell to 56.5 from 57.5 in October – a reading of over 50 indicates a rise in activity levels.

Output levels at surveyed factories grew at the slowest pace since December 2023. For the first time since August 2017, factories also reported an uptick in their stocks of finished goods, breaking a seven-odd-year sequence of such piled-up stocks declining every month. This signals a mismatch of sorts between production levels and end-users' demand through last month.

**Ray of hope**

New business orders and production levels increased at a softer pace as favourable demand conditions clashed with fierce competition and price pressures. Fresh export orders gained pace to surge at the highest pace in four months, spurring some optimism that goods exports may see yet another healthy uptick after October's 28-month high growth of 17.25%.

Officials had attributed the revival in exports to improved demand from developed markets for the Christmas festivities this year. The 400-odd firms surveyed for the index reported gains in orders from Bangladesh, mainland China, Colombia, Iran, Italy, Japan, and Nepal, apart from major markets such as the U.S. and U.K.

These companies also cited higher outlays on freight, labour, and materials that they passed on to clients, as input cost inflation intensified to the highest level since July.

Producers continued to buy additional inputs to build inventories of raw materials, but the rise in such purchases was the weakest in just under a year, S&P Global, which conducts the PMI surveys, noted.

Incidentally, employment levels continued to be ramped up for the ninth successive month, albeit at a lower scale than in October.

While the PMI reading was down slightly in November, it was still firmly within expansionary territory, and the four-month peak in new export orders led the manufacturing sector's growth in November, said Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC.

**Fading growth**

Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index scotches hopes of a quick rebound

A WAKE-UP CALL
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## Despite past pledges, Biden pardons his son Hunter

**Associated Press**
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden pardoned his son Hunter, sparing him a possible prison sentence for federal felony gun and tax convictions and reversing his past promises not to use the extraordinary powers of the presidency for the benefit of his family.

Mr. Biden had earlier said he would not pardon his son or commute his sentence after convictions in two cases in Delaware and California.

The move on Sunday night comes weeks before Hunter Biden was set to receive his punishment after his trial conviction in the gun case and guilty plea on tax charges, capping a long-running legal saga for the younger Mr. Biden.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 14

# Putin to visit India early next year for summit with Modi

**Suhasini Haidar**
NEW DELHI

In a sign of closer engagement between India and Russia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to India for a summit early next year.

The dates are yet to be decided for Mr. Putin's first visit to India since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Russian President's foreign policy adviser, Yury Ushakov, said on Monday, confirming that the Kremlin has received India's invitation.

The announcement comes weeks after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Russian Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov in India for an intergovernmental meeting, and days ahead of a visit by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to Russia this weekend, indicating that preparatory talks for the visit are under way.

Vladimir Putin

Significantly, Mr. Ushakov confirmed that Mr. Putin would hold the annual summit with Mr. Modi during the visit, which means that the 23rd summit would be held just months after the previous summit was held in Moscow in July 2024.

**Taking turns**

"Our leaders have an agreement to hold meetings once a year. This time, it's our turn," Mr. Ushakov said at a media briefing in Moscow, says a press release by the Russian Embassy in India. "We will figure out the tentative dates early next year."

In addition to bilateral ties, Mr. Modi and Mr. Putin are expected to discuss possible peace moves in the Ukraine war, particularly as their meet is expected to take place as Donald Trump takes office as the U.S. President.

Mr. Modi became one of the few leaders in 2024 to visit both Moscow and Kyiv, where he met President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Mr. Jaishankar has said that India is able to convey positions between the two sides during the war to help end the conflict.

The offer was welcomed in Moscow, where Mr. Putin thanked leaders of India, China, and other countries for their efforts, and has also praised Mr. Trump for backing peace efforts.

*(With inputs from Dinakar Peri)*

## INBRIEF

### 1984 riots: court to hear case against Tytler on December 9

A Delhi court on Monday fixed December 9 for the recording of statements of two former police officers as witnesses in a 1984 anti-Sikh riots case against Congress leader Jagdish Tytler. Special CBI Judge Jitendra Singh deferred the hearing after being informed that the witnesses were not in a position to depose on Monday. The judge on November 23 summoned the witnesses – Ravi Sharma and Dharam Chand. Mr. Tytler appeared before the court in person. The case is linked to the killings of three Sikhs at Gurudwara Pul Bangash in the national capital in 1984. PTI

### Prakash Ambedkar-led VBA announces anti-EVM stir

Former MP Prakash Ambedkar-led Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) on Monday announced the launch of a Maharashtra-wide agitation against the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). In the first phase of the agitation, the VBA will on December 3 start a signature campaign against the use of these machines in elections, and the stir will continue till December 16, said the party. The decision to launch the anti-EVM agitation was taken at the VBA's State executive meeting held in Pune on Sunday, 10 days after the Assembly election results which saw the ruling Mahayuti romping home with a landslide majority. PTI

# SC takes a stern view of reinstating Senthilbalaji

Justice Oka says people will be justified now for their apprehension that witnesses will come under pressure; Senthilbalaji was sworn in as Minister on September 29; next hearing is on Dec. 13

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday took a stern view of the appointment of V. Senthilbalaji as a senior Cabinet Minister of Tamil Nadu 'straightaway' after getting bail from the top court in a money laundering case.

A Bench headed by Justice A.S. Oka was hearing an application seeking the withdrawal of its September 26 bail order. "What is this? There are serious charges against him, and he straightaway becomes a Minister! This must stop. People would be justified now for their apprehension that witnesses would come under pressure," Justice Oka addressed senior advocate Siddhartha Luthra, appearing for the Tamil Nadu government.

Mr. Senthilbalaji, represented by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi and advocate Ram Sankar, was sworn in as a Cabinet Minister on September 29. He is accused of playing a "central and pivotal role" in the "job racket scam" during his tenure as Minister. The case involves kickbacks for jobs in the Metropolitan Transport Corporation of Chennai and Tamil Nadu State Corporation when he was the Transport Minister.

**Under scrutiny:** V. Senthilbalaji is accused of playing a vital role in a job racket scam in Tamil Nadu transport corporations. FILE PHOTO

Justice Oka emphasised that the "basic principle here is that justice should not only be done, but manifestly seen to be done".

Reiterating the law laid down in the Senthilbalaji bail judgment that liberty cannot be withheld as a form of punishment, Justice Oka said its focus now would only be confined to the subsequent factual development of Mr. Senthilbalaji's appointment as a Cabinet Minister in this particular case.

The court, which did not issue formal notice in the case, said it would hear the allegation raised in the current application that now the witnesses would "not be in the frame of mind to oppose the Cabinet Minister". The court listed the case for further hearing on December 13.

The application was filed by K. Vidhya Kumar, one of the alleged victims of the cash-for-jobs scam. The money laundering case is linked to the scam. The application was filed through advocate Neha Rathi. Advocate R. Balaji appeared in the case.

The ED had said bank statements showed cash deposits of ₹1.34 crore in the account of Mr. Senthilbalaji and ₹29.55 lakh in that of S. Megala, his wife. Further, cash deposits of ₹13.13 crore were found with his brother Ashok Kumar and ₹53.89 lakh with his wife A. Nirmala and ₹2.19 crore with B. Shanmugam, Mr. Senthilbalaji's private assistant.

However, the apex court had granted him bail on the ground that the trial of the scheduled offences and, consequently, the PMLA offence were not likely to be completed in three to four years or even more.

"If the appellant's (Senthilbalaji) detention is continued, it will amount to an infringement of his fundamental right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution of speedy trial," Justice Oka, who authored the September 26 verdict, had reasoned.

Mr. Senthilbalaji had by then been incarcerated for over 15 months. The three FIRs and several chargesheets had arraigned over 2,000 accused and more than 600 witnesses.

# Patole cites ads, says contractual hiring back in Maharashtra

**The Hindu Bureau**
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole. FILE PHOTO

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Monday criticised the BJP-led alliance for "reintroducing contractual hiring" in the State, accusing them of dashing the hopes of the youth. He warned that his party would take to the streets if the government failed to revoke the decision.

The Congress leader also criticised the government for its delay in forming a new administration despite days having passed since the election results. "The State is leaderless, with the Chief Minister's post still vacant. Meanwhile, millions of educated youth are waiting for job opportunities, but the government is prioritising contractual recruitment instead of fulfilling its promises," he said.

Stating that the Congress firmly opposes contractual hiring, Mr. Patole referred to recent advertisements for contractual positions in the health and MPSC (Maharashtra Public Service Commission) departments as a "breach of trust" given assurances from former Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis that contractual hiring would be stopped.

He also alleged that these contracts are often awarded to companies linked to BJP affiliates, highlighting "discrepancies" between the party's promises and actions.

**Fare hike concern**

Mr. Patole also expressed concern over a recent fare hike by the Maharashtra State Transport Corporation and cast doubts on the government's commitment to fulfilling key promises such as loan waivers for farmers and assured prices for agricultural produce.

"The BJP-led alliance spoke of job creation during the election campaign but seems to have forgotten its promises. The fare hike and the return of contractual hiring signal their disregard for public welfare," he said.

# Soren tells officers to up revenue collection

**The Hindu Bureau**
PATNA

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Monday held a high-level meeting with the Principal Secretaries and Secretaries of various departments regarding new schemes and preparations for the supplementary budget of this financial year. It was his first departmental meeting after assuming the post of CM for the fourth time.

Mr. Soren instructed the officers to accelerate revenue collection and also explore possibilities for new sources of additional revenue collection. He directed all departments to prepare an action plan to increase revenue collection.

"Revenue management should be strengthened and steps should be taken to control wastage of revenue," the Chief Minister said.

# Bihar govt. cancels health officers' recruitment exam after irregularities surface

**Amit Bhelari**
PATNA

The Bihar government on Monday cancelled the recruitment exam for around 4,500 posts of community health officer across various departments of the National Health Mission (NHM).

While the test scheduled for Monday was not held, the Bihar State Health Committee (BSHC) cancelled the exam held on Sunday following complaints of irregularities. The next dates of the exam will be released by the BSHC later.

"The exam for the posts of Community Health Officers was conducted in two shifts on December 1 at 12 online examination centres in Patna. Similarly, the exam was to be conducted in two shifts today as well. Before the exam, we got information that irregularities at mass level may take place after which we, along with Bihar police, conducted raids at three examination centres yesterday," Deputy Inspector General (Economic Offences Unit) Manavjit Singh Dhillon said while addressing the press in Patna on Monday.

Mr. Dhillon said that Pune-based company WeShineTech Pvt. Ltd, which was responsible for conducting the exam, has been found to be involved in the fraud. One of its employees and 36 others had been detained, he said.

**Tejashwi targets CM**

Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly and Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav slammed the State government over the irregularities alleging that it had taken place under its aegis.

"There is no examination in Bihar in which the government-sponsored irregularities supported by BJP-JD(U) are not taking place. When the irregularities come to the fore, this government cancels the exam out of compulsion, otherwise the money earned from the examination mafia is distributed by declaring the examination as clean," he said.

Attacking the Chief Minister, he said, "Have you ever heard the Chief Minister speak on any paper leak? It cannot be a coincidence that all examinations and paper leaks are always connected to a particular district."

This is not the first time irregularities and paper leaks have surfaced in Bihar. The most recent was National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) 2024 question paper theft case.

# Ahead of mega event in January, U.P. declares Maha Kumbh area a district

**The Hindu Bureau**
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government declared the Maha Kumbh area a new district ahead of the 2025 Maha Kumbh Mela. The temporary district, which is the 76th district of the State, will be known as Maha Kumbh Mela district.

The government order was issued late on Sunday by District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Mandad.

Workers constructing a temporary pontoon bridge over the Ganga as part of preparations for Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. FILE PHOTO

**Eco-friendly initiatives**

The decision is seen as a major administrative move aimed at managing the upcoming religious event that is slated for January next year. The notification for the new district includes 67 villages of four tehsils of Prayagraj district, with 25 revenue villages from Maha Kumbh district's Sadar tehsil, three from Sorav, 20 from Phulpur and 19 from Karchana block.

The U.P. government on Monday said it is set to transform next year's Maha Kumbh into an eco-friendly and world-class event by introducing app-based e-vehicle services and a luxury tent city for the millions of devotees expected from across the globe. Over 2,000 Swiss cottage-style tents with five-star standards will offer accommodation to the devotees from January 1 to March 5, a statement issued by the government noted.

Organised once every 12 years, the Maha Kumbh will be held in Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26. The State government is expecting over 400 million devotees to visit Maha Kumbh 2025.

# Commercial signboards in Bengali made compulsory in Kolkata

**Moyurie Som**
KOLKATA

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has made it compulsory for all shops, restaurants, and other commercial establishments in the city to display their signboards in Bengali alongside other languages.

**February deadline**

According to officials, February 21, 2025, has been set as the deadline for the implementation of this mandate.

Kolkata Municipality Secretary Swapan Kundu told mediapersons that civic body officials have already started communicating with owners of shops, restaurants, and commercial centres in the city about putting up Bengali signboards. They have reportedly been informed that names of the establishments and crucial information should be written in Bengali alongside other languages on their signboards.

**Councillor's proposal**

In October this year, shortly after the Centre recognised Bengali, Assamese, Marathi, Pali and Prakrit as classical languages, Trinamool Congress councillor Biswaroop De had proposed at a civic body meeting in Kolkata that all signboards in public and private offices should include Bengali in addition to other languages. He had also suggested that all notices, letters and documents of the Corporation should also be published in Bengali.

Later in October, KMC Mayor Firhad Hakim had also echoed similar sentiments and said that all hoardings and banners associated with KMC should be displayed in Bengali. He had also said that he would urge private agencies and shops to display their signboards in Bengali.

# Amid ethnic conflict, Kuki body seeks UGC-NET exam centre in Churachandpur; says going to Imphal unsafe

**Rahul Karmakar**
GUWAHATI

The Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO) has asked the National Testing Agency (NTA) to establish a University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) centre in Manipur's Churachandpur district ahead of the exams slated for January 2025.

In a letter to Sadhana Parashar, the Senior Director (Examination) at the NTA, the organisation's education secretary Thangmoi Haokip said the ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur has created significant security risks.

He said this has made travel for Kuki-Zo students to the designated examination centre in the State's capital Imphal, about 60 km away, impossible.

Kuki-Zo students of Manipur trekking on a slushy road to an SSC exam centre in Aizawl in September. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The tribal Kuki-Zo people have been caught in a conflict with the non-tribal Meitei, who dominate Imphal and the valley around, since May 2023. The conflict has claimed more than 250 lives and left some 60,000 displaced.

"The prolonged ethnic conflict has placed our students in a perilous situation. Travelling to Imphal for the UGC-NET examination is not just inconvenient, it's unsafe," Mr. Haokip said in the letter on Monday.

The KSO pointed out that the nearest safe examination centre (from Churachandpur) for more than 300 Kuki-Zo students is Aizawl, Mizoram's capital, about 360 km away. A student has to spend more than ₹10,000 in transport, food, and lodging to appear for the exam.

"Most students cannot afford the expenditure. Even if they do, there is no guarantee of reaching the examination centre in Aizawl on time as some students found out during the Staff Selection Commission exam in September when their vehicles could not proceed beyond a certain point and they had to walk," a KSO leader said.

**'Secure alternative'**

The organisation said Churachandpur, a central and relatively peaceful district, offers a viable and secure alternative, ensuring that students can pursue their education without risking their lives. It emphasised the urgent need for equitable access to educational opportunities and warned that failure to address the issue could exclude many students from participating in the crucial national examination.

Acknowledging the logistical complexities of establishing a new examination centre, the KSO urged the NTA to act swiftly. It also proposed allowing candidates to update their preference of exam centre through a correction window from December 12.

"A local examination centre in Churachandpur is a necessity in these extraordinary circumstances," Mr Haokip said.

# Curbs in force around mosque in Uttarkashi after mahapanchayat

**Press Trust of India**
UTTARKASHI

A day after right-wing Hindu outfits held a mahapanchayat here to protest against an alleged illegally-built mosque, prohibitory orders around the structure remained in force, even as Opposition Congress accused the BJP of raising "meaningless issues" through the event.

The meeting organised by Devbhoomi Vichar Manch was addressed by controversial BJP MLA from Goshamahal in Telangana T. Raja Singh who urged Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami to take a leaf out of his Uttar Pradesh counterpart Yogi Adityanath's book and "teach a lesson" to those indulging in 'land jihad' in the State.

Prohibitory orders were imposed within a 50-metre radius around the mosque on Saturday in view of the Mahapanchayat. "There is peace in the town. No one will be allowed to take the law into their hands," Superintendent of Police Sarita Dobhal said.

**Congress slams BJP**

Uttarakhand Congress senior vice president Mathura Dutt Joshi said the Mahapanchayat was a BJP sponsored programme to "divert attention" of people from real issues. "Unemployment and inflation are at their peak. The BJP government has failed to deliver," Mr. Joshi said.

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Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy inaugurates ambulances and other health initiatives in Hyderabad on Monday.

# Revanth inaugurates 33 exclusive clinics for transpersons

**Siddharth Kumar Singh**
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy virtually inaugurated 33 trangender clinics – one in each of the 33 districts on Monday. These clinics named "Maitri Clinics" aim to provide free health check-ups, diagnostic tests, and medicines for transgender individuals, ensuring accessible and inclusive healthcare across Telangana, the Chief Minister said.

The clinics will operate two days in a week, every Tuesday and Thursday, from 9 a.m to 1 p.m. "This initiative is a milestone for India as it establishes the first comprehensive Statewide healthcare support system for transgender individuals through specialised transgender clinics," said Health Minister C. Damodar Raja Narasimha.

Each clinic is staffed by a team comprising a doctor trained in transgender healthcare, a counsellor, and a transgender individual serving as a Community Champion.

The Chief Minister also flagged off 213 new ambulances, expanding the State's ambulance fleet from 790 to 1,003. This upgrade aims to reduce the average response time from 18 minutes to 14 minutes and improve golden-hour hospitalisation rates from 61% to 80%. With this addition, every Mandal will now have at least one ambulance, equipped with GPS-enabled tracking for real-time monitoring and efficient dispatch.

As part of the Praja Palana-Praja Vijayaotsavalu celebrations being held from December 1 to 9 marking one year of Congress government in the State, multiple initiatives under the Health Department were launched by the Chief Minister along with Mr. Narsimha at a programme titled "Health Festival" held in Hyderabad.

They inaugurated 16 nursing and 28 paramedical colleges too. Each nursing college now offers 60 B.Sc. nursing seats, adding 960 seats this academic year and raising the total from 1,400 to 2,360. Similarly, the new paramedical colleges contribute 1,680 additional seats, bringing the total from 1,492 to 3,172.

# 12 dead, 2.11 lakh hectares of farmland flooded due to cyclone in Tamil Nadu

Detailed assessment on crop damage would be made after the rains subside, says CM M.K. Stalin. In a letter to the PM, he states 2,416 huts and 721 houses have been destroyed across the State

**The Hindu Bureau**
VILLUPURAM

A total of 12 lives were lost and over 2,400 huts were damaged in Tamil Nadu due to cyclone Fengal, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said on Monday.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr. Stalin said 2,416 huts and 721 houses were destroyed, and 963 head of cattle had died. Over 2.11 lakh hectares of agricultural and horticultural land had been inundated, he added.

Over 9,500 km of roads, 1,847 culverts and 417 tanks had been damaged, and 1,649 km of electrical conductors had been affected.

Over 23,664 electric poles and 997 transformers had been affected. Over 4,200 anganwadi centres, 205 primary health centres, 5,936 school buildings, 381 community halls, and 623 water supply schemes had been affected, he said.

"The deluge has caused extensive disruption, inundating vast areas, displacing the population, and severely impacting infrastructure and livelihood," Mr. Stalin said.

The Tamil Nadu government had mobilised all available resources to provide relief and rehabilitation to the affected population, he said.

**Reaching out:** Chief Minister M.K. Stalin receiving a petition at an evacuation shelter in Villupuram district on Monday. S.S. KUMAR

Despite the State government's best efforts, "the scale of this disaster has overwhelmed the State's resources, and the State needs urgent financial assistance to manage the fallout of this natural disaster", Mr. Stalin said.

### Central funds

Mr. Stalin requested Mr. Modi to release ₹2,000 crore from the National Disaster Response Fund to aid the restoration and rehabilitation efforts. He also requested that a Central team be deputed to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the damage. "Based on their findings, I seek your kind consideration for further financial assistance," he said.

The State government had estimated that ₹2,475 crore was required for temporary restoration efforts. "Despite our best efforts, the scale of this disaster has overwhelmed the State's resources. Given the magnitude of destruction and the urgent need for restoration, I humbly request immediate release of an interim relief amounting to ₹2,000 crore from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)," Mr. Stalin said.

He added that the cyclone had "wreaked unprecedented havoc" across 14 districts of Tamil Nadu. Villupuram, Tiruvannamalai, and Kallakurichi in particular received rainfall equivalent to an entire season's average (more than 50 cm) in a single day, resulting in widespread flooding and severe damage to infrastructure and crops, Mr. Stalin said.

Earlier, addressing a press conference after visiting affected areas in Villupuram district, Mr. Stalin said crops on 1,29,000 hectares in Villupuram, Kallakurichi, and Tiruvannamalai districts had been inundated due to heavy rain caused by the cyclone. The Tamil Nadu government would submit a detailed report to the Centre on the extent of the damage, he added.

### Precautionary steps

The government had taken all precautionary measures before the onset of the cyclone. Review meetings were held, and Ministers and monitoring officers were sent to the districts to coordinate relief and rescue efforts, he said.

"I was in touch with the Collectors of the districts concerned through video-conference, and gave them directions on the precautionary measures to be taken," he added. The Chief Minister said seven teams of the NDRF had been sent to Villupuram, and two to Cuddalore, and eight teams of the Tamil Nadu Disaster Response Force had also been sent to Villupuram. He said a total of 7,876 people had been accommodated in 174 relief centres in Cuddalore, Villupuram and Tiruvannamalai.

Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, centre, during a campaign on Waqf row with other BJP leaders in Belagavi on Sunday. P.K. BADIGER

# BJP issues notice to its MLA for attacking Karnataka party unit

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

The BJP central disciplinary committee on Sunday has issued a show-cause notice to 'rebel' leader and senior Karnataka MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal for allegedly violating the party's discipline by indulging in public attacks of the party leadership.

The letter dated Sunday has given a 10-day deadline for Mr. Yatnal, who previously served as Union Minister of State, to show cause as to why disciplinary action should not be taken against him.

This is being seen as a setback to the group of rebel leaders who are in New Delhi now under the leadership of Mr. Yatnal to meet the party central leadership on various issues including that of submitting an initial report on the Waqf row. Mr. Yatnal has been publicly attacking BJP veteran leader B.S. Yediyurappa and his son B.Y. Vijayendra, who is also party State president, for some time. He has particularly accused them of colluding with Congress leaders such as Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar.

What had caused concern for the party leadership was that Mr. Yatnal had become a rallying point for several other disgruntled leaders. This group has also embarked upon a parallel campaign against Waqf row.

### Rebels in Delhi

Incidentally, the rebel leaders, including Mr. Yatnal, reached Delhi on Sunday night to meet the central leaders. They were planning to submit their preliminary report on the Waqf campaign. Their visit was preceded by that of Mr. Vijayendra, who has reportedly drawn the attention of the central leaders on dissidence activities in the State.

The notice says: "Your continuing tirade against the party State leadership and your defiance of party directives, and making public pronouncements and stance in contravention of party's official stand on all matters of political and public importance has been reported in media and different party forums."

# Incessant rain triggered by Cyclone Fengal floods roads and uproots trees in Bengaluru

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

Incessant rain lashing Bengaluru under the impact of Cyclone Fengal resulted in the inundation of multiple roads and tree falls on Monday.

Till 5.30 p.m. on Monday, Bengaluru city received 14.2 mm, HAL Airport 16.6 mm and Kempegowda International Airport 4.3 mm of rainfall. The city recorded a maximum temperature of 22.5 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 20.4. The IMD has forecast a generally cloudy sky and moderate to heavy rain for the next 36 hours.

The city has been receiving showers since Sunday morning and the rain continued the next day morning. On Sunday, the city recorded a minimum temperature of 20.4 degrees Celsius which is 2.3 degrees Celsius lower than normal.

Continuous rains and cold weather prevailed across Bengaluru city for the second day due to the impact of Cyclone Fengal on Monday. K. MURALI KUMAR

BBMP data showed that three trees had fallen in Jayanagar and Malleshwaram, and one near the office of the Criminal Investigation Department. A senior BBMP official said flood mitigation teams are on standby across the city.

The asbestos roof of a house in J.J. Nagar collapsed, and teams from BBMP rescued two people in the building. They have been shifted to a temporary relief centre in the neighbourhood.

Residents returning to Bengaluru after the weekend faced traffic congestion on Mysuru Road, Tumakuru Road, NICE Road and other stretches. Rakesh S., who was travelling from Chitradurga district to Bengaluru on Sunday, said he covered about 182 km in two-and-a-half hours, but to travel 67 km from Nelamangala toll gate to his house took another two-and-a-half hours. Due to rain, there was bumper-to-bumper traffic even on the NICE road as vehicles moved slowly.

On Monday, office-goers faced hardship with flooding at Panathur underbridge, Outer Ring Road, Bannerghatta Road, Kanakapura Road, and Doddanekundi village road.

In Kolar, Chickaballapur, Ramanagara, Mandya, Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Kodagu, Dakshina Kannada, and Udupi anganwadis, schools and colleges will be closed on December 3.

# Bad weather forces closure of three traditional trekking routes to Sabarimala temple

**The Hindu Bureau**
KOCHI

The Kerala government on Monday informed the Kerala High Court that the movement of Sabarimala pilgrims through the traditional trekking paths from Vandiperiyar, Pulmedu and Erumely has been suspended for the time being due to inclement weather.

The submission was made by the government pleader when the cases relating to the arrangements being made for the Sabarimala pilgrims came up for hearing.

The Bench also asked the Travancore Devaswom Board to inform the court about the maintenance of toilet facilities, including bio-toilets and container toilets, at Nilakkal, Pampa and Sabarimala Sannidhanam and also along the trekking path from Pampa to Sannidhanam.

**Patiently waiting:** Devotees waiting for darshan at Sabarimala Sannidhanam on Monday. LEJU KAMAL

### Idukki paths closed

The Idukki district administration has temporarily suspended pilgrims' journey along the traditional forest route through Sathram and Mukkuzhi to the Sabarimala Sannidhanam due to bad weather.

District Collector V. Vigneshwari issued an order under the District Disaster Management Authority Act (DDMA) stating that the pilgrims' entry through the forest route was suspended until further notice.

According to Azhutha range officer Jyothish J. Ozhakkal, the Forest department closed the forest routes based on the order.

# LDF to protest in Kerala against Centre over Wayanad aid

**Press Trust of India**
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala's ruling CPI(M)-led LDF said it will stage a march and sit-in outside the Raj Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram and at Central government offices across the State on December 5 to protest the Centre's "refusal to provide vital aid to landslide-hit areas in Wayanad".

In a statement on Monday, LDF convener T.P. Ramakrishnan stated that everyone should come forward to make the march and sit-in a success.

Earlier, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had accused the Union government of continuing to turn a "blind eye" to the State's need for financial assistance for the rehabilitation of people affected by the devastating landslides in Wayanad in July.

He said that the Centre had provided assistance to Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, and Assam, which experienced natural disasters this year.

# Navy to hold operational exercise in Jan.

**The Hindu Bureau**
VISAKHAPATNAM

An "operational demonstration" by the Indian Navy will be organised by the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) on January 4, 2025, at R.K. Beach here instead of the annual Navy Day demonstration on December 4, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Naval Command Vice-Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar has said here on Monday.

Addressing a press conference, Vice-Admiral Pendharkar said that in line with the Union government's policy of organising celebrations in different cities and historical locations, this year's Navy Day 2024 celebrations will be organised by the ENC in Odisha on December 4.

Rajesh Pendharkar

This year's Navy Day exercise by ships, submarines and aircraft of ENC would be organised at Golden Beach in Puri, Odisha. The President of India will be the chief guest. All arrangements have been made too, he added.

"However, it is not to say that the people of Vizag will miss this annual activity. For residents of Visakhapatnam, we plan to organise an operational demo at R.K. Beach on January 4, 2025. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is scheduled to be the chief guest on the occasion. In addition, other events planned in Visakhapatnam as part of the Navy Week celebrations such as band concert, visit of naval ships by children, interaction with veterans and the much-awaited Navy Marathon will be held on Beach Road on December 15," he said.

Speaking on the ENC's progress over the last one year and development activities, he said in the past year, three ships of the ENC were deployed in the Arabian Sea to augment overall naval efforts. *INS Sumitra* and *INS Sumedha*, along with Marine Commandos, played a stellar role in securing the release of 59 personnel from hijacked vessels, and apprehension of 20 Somali pirates.

*INS Shivalik* was involved in real-time combat situations, wherein the ship provided Anti-Missile Defence cover to merchant vessels being attacked by Houthi rebels.

# TTD to give special darshan tokens to residents of Tirupati

**G.P. Shukla**
TIRUMALA

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Monday addressed a long-standing demand of local residents by issuing them special tokens for the darshan of Lord Venkateswara. Speaking to the media, TTD Additional Executive Officer Ch. Venkaiah Chowdary said that around 2,500 tokens were dispensed through six newly set-up counters in Tirupati and 500 tokens issued at the community hall in Balaji Nagar, Tirumala.

He clarified that the balancing of token allocation between local residents and outstation devotees was crafted with dexterity and also ruled out any reduction in the tickets quota allocated to the pilgrims coming to the town from far away places. The newly constituted board on November 18 had resolved to permit the residents in the darshan of Lord Venkateswara on the first Tuesday of every month.

# Protesters barge into Bangladesh mission in Agartala, pull down flag

External Affairs Ministry expresses regret over the incident in Tripura capital, says government is taking action to step up security arrangements at Bangladesh missions in India; Dhaka says the breach has left its personnel with sense of insecurity

**Syed Sajjad Ali**
**Kallol Bhattacherjee**
AGARTALA/NEW DELHI

After a group of protesters entered the premises of the Assistant High Commission of Bangladesh in Tripura's capital Agartala, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday said the incident was "deeply regrettable".

The Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the incident had left the personnel at the mission with a sense of "insecurity", adding that the protesters were "allowed to aggress".

The MEA reiterated India's commitment to uphold the sanctity of diplomatic premises and promised enhanced security of the diplomatic missions of Bangladesh in India. Against the backdrop of the November 25 arrest of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das in Chittagong, a large group of protesters from the Hindu Sangharsh Samiti on Monday forced their entry into the Assistant High Commission, pulled down the National Flag of Bangladesh, and damaged items before being pushed out.

**Hitting the streets:** Activists stage protest over alleged atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh in Agartala on Monday. PTI

"The incident of the breach of premises at the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala is deeply regrettable. Diplomatic and consular properties should not be targeted under any circumstances. The government is taking action to step up security arrangements for the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi and their Deputy/Assistant high Commissions in the country," the MEA said in a statement.

The arrest of Mr. Das and the subsequent suspension of bank accounts of several of his associates in Bangladesh has caused tension. On Monday, members of the Hindu Sangharsh Samiti organised a protest in Agartala and raised slogans on the road leading to the mission. Witnesses said a large number of people entered the premises of the Assistant High Commission in the Kunjaban area, while their leaders were submitting a memorandum to the Assistant High Commissioner. The protesters removed the flag from the pole and damaged the mission's signage board before being driven out by the security personnel.

Tripura Minister Sushanta Chowdhury said an inquiry had been launched. Prior to visiting the Assistant High Commission, the members of the samiti held a street-corner meeting, where they condemned the alleged attacks and discrimination against Hindus in Bangladesh.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka said, "Bangladesh deeply resents the violent demonstration and attack". "The accounts received conclusively attest that the protesters were allowed to aggress into the premises, by breaking down the main gate of Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in a preplanned manner," it said.

### Protests held in Mumbai

Hundreds of protesters, including members of right-wing groups such as the VHP, gathered outside the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Mumbai on Monday, demanding the immediate release of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das, who was arrested in the neighbouring country. They voiced concerns over "targeted attacks on minority Hindus" in Bangladesh.

# Thousands take part in rally at border in West Bengal

**The Hindu Bureau**
KOLKATA/PETRAPOLE

Protests against the arrest of Hindu monks in Bangladesh reached Petrapole on the India-Bangladesh border on Monday. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has urged the Centre to seek the intervention of the United Nations in deploying a peacekeeping mission in the neighbouring country.

Observing that it is not in her jurisdiction to comment on the affairs of a foreign country, the Chief Minister said, "If required, the government must take up the matter with the United Nations so that peacekeeping missions may be deployed there."

Speaking in the West Bengal Assembly, Ms. Banerjee said that the Minister for External Affairs should apprise Parliament on India's stand on the current situation in Bangladesh. "The statement from the Minister should come during the ongoing winter session, if the Prime Minister is unavailable to do the job himself," she stated.

The Chief Minister said that Indians in Bangladesh can be repatriated and sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue. "We have no problem in sharing our *roti* with them," she said. Ms. Banerjee later clarified that she was speaking about Indians who are stuck in neighbouring countries, not "Hindus" of Bangladesh.

People protesting against alleged atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh, at the Petrapole border in West Bengal on Monday. PTI

Meanwhile, at the Petrapole international checkpost, hundreds of monks from various Hindu religious factions and sects across West Bengal joined the protests. Amidst loud chants of "Jai Shri Ram" and "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", Hindu leaders asked the thousands of participants at the event to become more vigilant in thwarting external threats and urged them to reiterate their Hindu identity. The protests were organised under the banner of the Akhil Bharatiya Sant Samiti against the arrest of Hindu monks in Bangladesh.

According to an ISKCON spokesperson in Kolkata, four monks have been arrested and about 60 monks were not allowed to enter India despite having valid documents.

# U.P. Cong. protests as police prevent team from visiting Sambhal

**The Hindu Bureau**
LUCKNOW

Chaos unfolded outside the Uttar Pradesh Congress office in Lucknow on Monday when hundreds of party workers attempted to scale police barricades during a face-off with the police after a party delegation led by State Congress president Ajay Rai was prevented from leaving for Sambhal.

Mr. Rai, senior Congress leaders, and workers staged a sit-in outside the office. "The day the restrictions are lifted, a Congress delegation will go to Sambhal," Mr. Rai said. The police put some party leaders under house arrest.

"The incident was a well-planned strategy by the BJP to divide society on communal lines. With an eye on the 2027 Assembly polls, more such issues will be raised by the ruling party to polarise the society for electoral benefit," Anil Yadav, State Congress general secretary, said.

On November 30, the Sambhal district administration had issued prohibitory orders restricting outsiders from visiting the district till December 10.

Sambhal, a town in western Uttar Pradesh, has been tense since November 19 when a local court ordered the survey of a Mughal-era mosque following claims that a temple previously stood at the site. Violence broke out on November 24, the second day of the survey, when protesters clashed with the police, leading to stone-pelting and alleged gunshots being fired.

Five people were kiled and several others were injured in the clash.

The Uttar Pradesh police have denied allegations that they had fired at the protesters.

The Supreme Court has since ordered the Sambhal trial court to halt proceedings in the case and the survey.

# No voter must be turned down, SC tells EC over increased voter limit

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**
NEW DELHI

Hearing a petition challenging the poll body's decision to enhance the maximum number of voters per polling station from 1,200 to 1,500, Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna on Monday told the Election Commission that "no voter should be turned down".

The petition said the move leads to disenfranchisement among the "teeming millions", especially the underprivileged, for whom the Constitution works. "We are concerned... no voter should be turned down. You have to explain your position," Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, heading a Bench with Justice Sanjiv Kumar, addressed the EC.

The petition, filed by activist Indu Prakash Singh and represented by senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, advocate Talha Abdul Rahman and Shadan Farasat, challenged an August 7, 2024 communication of the EC. Rather than increasing the number of electronic voting machines (EVMs) or polling stations in every constituency, the EC has chosen to increase the number of electors per polling station, probably in a bid to lower the cost of election, it said.

The Election Commission of India, in a communication in August, increased the limit per booth to 1,500 voters. ANI

"The EC does not realise that such an approach is actually a very expensive step in democracy as it results in exclusion... [The] Representation of People Act, 1951 mandates the Election Commission to provide for a 'sufficient number of polling stations for every constituency'," the petitioner noted.

The petition said the increase would lead to crowding of polling stations, resulting in longer waiting hours and queues. These are factors which would prove unfriendly for daily wagers. The petition called for an immediate intervention from the court as the issue concerned various upcoming elections including in Delhi and Bihar. "Elections must not only be free and fair but also be seen to be free and fair and on the principles of equal participation of electors in the election process," the petition argued.

Chief Justice Khanna asked senior advocate Maninder Singh why the poll body has pushed the maximum limit per polling station from 1,200 (in rural areas) and 1,400 (urban areas) to a uniform 1,500 voters.

The petition had contended that the enhancement from 1,200 to 1,500 was "peculiar", and not backed by any fresh data, as there had been no Census conducted since 2011.

Mr. Singh said the maximum limit had been 1,500 voters since 2015. Electoral technology was advancing. "People have not complained. There is no problem about franchise," the senior advocate justified.

Chief Justice Khanna directed the EC to file an affidavit in three weeks.

# 'Make in India' is now 'make-believe in India', says Congress

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The fall in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) numbers for the last quarter highlights the "unimpressive" manufacturing growth, the Congress said on Monday.

In a statement, Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh said the trend indicates that the Narendra Modi-led government's flagship "Make in India" scheme has become "Make-believe in India".

Mr. Ramesh said the GDP growth figures for the July-September quarter, released three days ago, revealed a "dramatic fall". Of equal concern is the manufacturing growth, which has slowed down to a "shocking" 2.2%, the Congress leader said, adding that export growth has also decelerated to 2.8%.

"The data belies the dismal reality of the Prime Minister's decade-old promise to make India a new global hub for manufacturing exports. The unfortunate reality is that 10 years after the Government's flagship Make in India scheme was launched, India's manufacturing is stagnating, and our exports are faltering," Mr. Ramesh said.

On Sunday, Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi too had raised similar concerns.

"In fact, growth in India's share of global exports grew much faster in the 2005-15 period, largely corresponding to Dr. Manmohan Singh's tenure as Prime Minister," he claimed.

The Congress leader said that in an employment intensive sector like garment manufacturing, countries like Bangladesh and Viternam have taken a lead and cheap imports from China have impacted the MSME sector. "Make in India has simply become Make-Believe in India," Mr. Ramesh claimed.

# Ramgopal Varma gets relief from arrest

**The Hindu Bureau**
VIJAYAWADA

Film director Ramgopal Varma got a reprieve in the Andhra Pradesh High Court in cases pertaining to posting of objectionable messages, allegedly including morphed photos, against N. Chandrababu Naidu, K. Pawan Kalyan and Nara Lokesh on his X account. It gave him interim protection from arrest till December 9.

A single judge passed the order on Monday after hearing the anticipatory bail petition filed by Mr. Varma, who had contended that the messages were posted as part of the promotion of his movie *Vyuham* and doing so was not barred under law as he has the right to express his views under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

# Deals for 26 Rafale-M jets, 3 Scorpene submarines to be signed: Navy chief

**Dinakar Peri**
NEW DELHI

Navy chief Admiral Dinesh Tripathi on Monday acknowledged that the country's second nuclear ballistic missile submarine, *INS Arighaat*, successfully fired a Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) a few days back. In another important remark on the country's strategic nuclear programme, he said the first of the two nuclear attack submarines (SSN) to be indigenously designed and manufactured is expected to be ready by 2036-37.

Two multi-billion dollar deals under negotiation with France to procure 26 Rafale-M fighter jets and three additional Scorpene-class conventional submarines are in advanced stages and could be signed next month, the Navy chief said in response to a question at the annual press conference ahead of Navy Day.

India is in negotiation with France over a multi-billion dollar deal to procure 26 Rafale-M fighter jets soon. K. MURALI KUMAR

"It is just matter of completing the formalities of the acquisition process and we expect that if not this month, next month hopefully, this [Scorpène submarines] and Rafale-M deals should be signed."

On the deal for 26 Rafale-M jets, he said it was "one level short of taking it to the CCS [Cabinet Committee on Security]" for clearance, which will be followed by contract-signing. "It is a government-to-government deal and hence I expect it to happen fast," he said.

The deal for three Scorpene submarines is a repeat order to Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd. (MDL), which is building them in partnership with Naval Group of France. Of the six submarines from the earlier contract, five have been inducted and the last one is expected to be commissioned later this month.

On the nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBN), Admiral Tripathi said the first one, *INS Arihant*, had done a number of deterrence patrols.

The second, *INS Arighaat*, which was commissioned recently, is undergoing trials, including missile test, he said.

"We did carry out test of missile... Launch was successful. Concerned agencies are examining as to what trajectory the missile took," he said on the recent K4 SLBM test with a range of 3,500 km from *INS Arighaat*.

# Farmers stage protest at Delhi borders for MSP, compensation

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Over a thousand farmers gathered at the Delhi-Noida boundary to press for their demands for land allocation and increased compensation for the land acquired by the government, the police said on Monday.

The protesters climbed over the barricades and containers to move forward as they raised flags and slogans. It resulted in long traffic snarls at various entry points into Delhi, including the DND flyway, Delhi Gate and Kalindi Kunj.

The farmers gathered at the Mahamaya flyover on the Dadri-Noida link road and began the march around 11.30 a.m.

According to Shivhari Meena, Additional Commissioner of Police, Noida, the police were in constant talks with farmers regarding the 'Delhi Chalo' march. "Yesterday [Sunday] also we spoke to them for three hours and have also prepared a three-tier security plan."

Farmers and Kisan Ekta Sangh members break police barricades during the protest march in Noida on Monday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The protest was organised by the Bhartiya Kisan Parishad (BKP) along with other farmer groups, and it was being held to demand compensation and benefits related to agricultural reforms, including a legal guarantee for the Minimum Support Price.

The BKP, along with the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha and other farmers' organisations earlier announced it will be marching towards Delhi on Monday to demand compensation and benefits under the new agricultural laws. Farmers from 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh, including Aligarh and Agra, took part.

# Maharashtra village plans a 're-election' with ballot paper; police impose curfew

**Snehal Mutha**
MUMBAI

The police have imposed a curfew at Markadwadi village in Malshiras tehsil of Solapur district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Expressing distrust over the functioning of electronic voting machines (EVMs) in their village during the recent Maharashtra Assembly election, people from Markadwadi, a small village in Malshiras tehsil of Solapur district, have decided to hold a "re-election" using ballot papers on Tuesday.

However, the police have imposed a curfew in the village till December 5 to maintain law and order.

"As per the Constitution, the Election Commission has been entrusted with conducting these elections. This is nothing but a mock exercise now. The available legal remedy in case of doubts is an election petition," a senior government official told *The Hindu*.

Despite winning by a margin of 13,147 votes in Malshiras, the newly elected MLA, Uttamrao Jankar of the Nationalist Congress Party (SP), had demanded that a voting exercise using ballot paper be conducted as he had failed to get a lead in Markadwadi. He is of the view that the village has his most loyal voters, who had consistently given him a lead in the village in past elections. This time, Mr. Jankar's opponent Ram Satpute from the BJP received 1,003 votes whereas he only got 843 votes. The total number of voters in the village is about 1,900.

A village resident, seeking anonymity, said that it was unbelievable that Mr. Jankar did not get a lead in the village, given his popularity.

"There is also the caste equation. Jankar belongs to the Dhangar community, this village is also a Dhangar-dominated village. Villagers came together at the gram panchayat level and made an appeal to the tehsildar to hold a re-election," the resident said.

Their request was turned down so they have decided to conduct the exercise themselves.

A curfew has been imposed in Markadwadi village under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. At least 50 police personnel have been deployed there.

"We have also explained to the villagers about what is legal and illegal and the consequences of their actions. The prohibitory orders are in place; if people still come together then the law will be enforced," Atul Kulkarni, Superintendent of Police, Solapur, said.

"We are just checking where the votes went, whether EVMs are at fault, and why the administration is opposing such an exercise. They are inducing fear in people, but no matter what, the election will be conducted," Mr. Jankar told *The Hindu*.

A BJP worker and supporter of Mr. Satpute said, "Satpute got the votes on merit. He brought funds to this village, and people voted on that basis. It has nothing to do with EVMS."

# Opposition stalls both Houses over Adani row and Sambhal violence

First week of Winter Session, which started on November 25, had been a washout; Opposition leaders were seen going to the Speaker's office together after Lok Sabha was first adjourned; Dhankhar calls upon members to maintain decorum

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned for the day on Monday after Opposition members disrupted the proceedings over the Adani indictment row, the recent violence at Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh and the conflict in Manipur.

The first week of the Winter Session, which started on November 25, had been washed out over the same issues and the start of the second week was no different.

At 11 a.m., when the Lok Sabha proceedings began, members of the Opposition Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance bloc raised slogans over the indictment of industrialist Gautam Adani on bribery charges in a U.S. court and the Sambhal violence.

While Speaker Om Birla urged them to allow the Question Hour, the Opposition members did not relent. He then adjourned the House until noon.

When the House reconvened, similar scenes were witnessed. Amid the din, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal introduced the Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024.

Sandhya Ray of the BJP, who was in the Chair, urged the Opposition members to allow the House to function, pointing out that voters of the country were watching and their issues need to be raised.

With an unrelenting Opposition, Ms. Ray adjourned the House for the day.

Before the House assembled for the day, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju was seen speaking to Congress leader K.C. Venugopal, the party's Deputy Leader in the House, Gaurav Gogoi, and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam leader T.R. Baalu.

After the first adjournment, some of the Opposition leaders, including Mr. Venugopal, Mr. Baalu, Kalyan Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress and Samajwadi Party members Dharmendra Yadav and Zia ur Rehman Barq, were seen going to the Speaker's office together.

**Stalling session:** Opposition MPs protest over the Adani row and Sambhal issue in the Lok Sabha on Monday. ANI

### Disallowed 20 notices

In the Rajya Sabha too, the House was adjourned for the day without transacting any substantial business as the Opposition parties sought to raise the same issues.

Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar disallowed 20 notices served under Rule 267, including eight for a discussion on the U.S. indictment on the alleged payment of $265 million in bribes by the Adani Group to secure solar power supply contracts.

Stating that the notices do not call for admittance, Mr. Dhankhar quoted the Murphy's Law that states, "anything that can go wrong will go wrong".

"It appears that there exists a deliberate algorithm to actualise Murphy's Law in this august House, consequently impeding the proper functioning of Parliament. We find ourselves achieving precisely the antithesis of what our Constitution ordains," he said.

The Chairman appealed to the Opposition in the name of the framers of the Constitution to allow the functioning of Parliament. "Don't make it dysfunctional," he said.

As the Opposition parties continued to raise the issues, he adjourned the proceedings till noon. While Congress MPs sought to raise the charges against the Adani Group, four notices were served by Samajwadi Party (SP) members to raise the law-and-order issues in Sambhal.

Other notices under Rule 267, a rule that calls for suspending the listed business of the House to take up discussion on that particular issue, pertained to the violence in Manipur, increase in crimes in Delhi, atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh and special assistance to the flood-hit Wayanad district of Kerala.

The House was adjourned until noon because of the continued Opposition protests. When the Upper House met at noon, Opposition members raised their issues, including the allegations of bribery against the Adani Group, the recent violence in Sambhal and the conflict in Manipur, but Mr. Dhankhar said "nothing will go on record".

He then took up the Question Hour as Tiruchi Siva of the DMK sought to raise an issue, but made it clear that he would allow it only after the members took their seats and maintained decorum.

As the protests continued, the Chairman adjourned the House for the day.

# Akal Takht hands out punishment to SAD leader Sukhbir Badal

**The Hindu Bureau**
CHANDIGARH

Days after Sukhbir Singh Badal tendered his resignation as president of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) after he was declared '*tankhaiya*', or guilty of religious misconduct, the Akal Takht awarded him '*tankhah*' (punishment) on Monday.

Directing the working committee of the SAD to accept the resignation, it asked the panel to submit a report in this regard in three days.

Along with Mr. Badal, several other Akali Dal leaders, who were part of the SAD-led government between 2007 and 2017, found guilty of religious misconduct, were made to put on plaques around their necks with a note mentioning their confession of sins as the supreme seat equated their mistakes to sins.

Mr. Badal and Sukhdev Dhindsa, the rebel Akali Dal leader, have been asked to perform the duties of a '*sewadar*', sitting outside the Golden Temple and other Takhts for one hour each for two days. Also, they have been directed to clean the utensils and shoes of devotees.

The decisions came as part of punishment from five high priests headed by Akal Takht Jathedar (chief priest) Giani Raghbir Singh, who pronounced the punishment in Amritsar at the meeting of Sikh clergies held to address 'Panthic' (Sikh community) and SAD-related issues.

On August 30, Mr. Badal was declared guilty of religious misconduct for several decisions that hurt the sentiments and interests of the Panth (Sikh community) when the SAD was in power between 2007 and 2017 in Punjab.

The Akal Takht also revoked the title of '*Panth Rattan Fakhr-e-Qaum*' (pride of the Sikh community) bestowed on the late Parkash Singh Badal, the former Punjab Chief Minister.

He was bestowed with the title in 2011 for his service towards the Sikh Panth.

The late Badal was the Chief Minister between 2007 and 2017.

Before the pronouncement of punishments, Mr. Sukhbir Badal admitted the mistakes, which included the pardoning granted to Sirsa-based Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim in a 2007 blasphemy case, and failure of the then SAD-led government to punish those involved in the sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib at Bargari village in 2015.

# Larger parties of INDIA dragging feet on seat-sharing talks: CPI

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The national council of the Communist Party of India (CPI) has observed that larger parties in the INDIA bloc drag their feet when it comes to seat-sharing negotiations.

CPI general secretary D. Raja said the CPI and other Left parties have unblemished secular credentials and they could not be left out of electoral battles. He said the "cold feet" developed by larger parties are harming the Left politically, and the CPI would raise the issue with other parties at appropriate levels.

Mr. Raja said while the INDIA bloc was formed to take on the BJP-RSS and in defence of the values of the Constitution with much enthusiasm, the execution part has not been smooth. "With seat-sharing taking place only at the very end of nominations for elections, smaller parties are left with no option and have no clarity on which seats to contest and be prepared for. These factors are proving detrimental to the INDIA bloc as has been seen in the cases of many States recently," he said.

The CPI decided to observe December 10 as Protest and Demands Day to demand a Joint Parliamentary Committee to investigate the alleged wrongdoings of the Adani Group and expose the Centre for its role in promoting crony capitalism.

# Congress demands CBI probe into 'ponzi scam' in Gujarat

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday sought a Supreme Court-monitored CBI probe into a ₹6,000-crore 'ponzi' scam in Gujarat, allegedly carried out by a person associated with the BJP.

Addressing a press conference, Gujarat Congress chief and Rajya Sabha member Shaktisinh Gohil alleged that Bhupendra Jhala used his BJP connections to lure unsuspecting people to invest in his "ponzi scheme" that promised to double one's money within two years. He said that though the Gujarat Police had registered a first information report (FIR) against Mr. Jhala, he was absconding.

"We want the matter to be investigated by the CBI under the monitoring of the Supreme Court," Mr. Gohil said.

He said that the poor and middle-class people, farmers, and pensioners were among those who lost their hard-earned savings.

Mr. Gohil displayed Mr. Jhala's pictures with prominent BJP leaders, including Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

He said that these photographs were enough to win the trust of unsuspecting people who invested in his company.

"They thought that their money is safe because he is close to the BJP," Mr. Gohil said.

## *Honouring resilience*

Survivors and social activists taking out a torch rally and paying tribute to the 'Mother-Child' Statue of Ruth Waterman, to mark the 40th anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy, on Monday. A.M.FARUQUI

# Manipur records dip in poppy cultivation by 32.13%: MARSAC

**The Hindu Bureau**
GUWAHATI

The operations against poppy cultivation were carried out mostly in 2020-21 and 2022-23.

Poppy cultivation in Manipur decreased by 32.13% during 2023-24 from the previous fiscal but the opium-yielding plant continues to be grown extensively in 12 of the State's 16 districts, a report prepared by Manipur Remote Sensing Applications Centre (MARSAC) said.

Drug smuggling from adjoining Myanmar and large-scale poppy cultivation by clearing jungles on the hills are said to be among the factors behind the ongoing ethnic clashes between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo people in Manipur since May 3, 2023.

According to the MARSAC report, the Manipur police and other law enforcement agencies destroyed illegal poppy cultivation on 19,135.6 acres across 12 districts between 2017 and January 2024. The Kangpokpi district topped the list with 4,454.4 acres of poppy plantations destroyed followed by Ukhrul district with 3,348 acres, and Churachandpur with 2,713.8 acres.

The other districts where illicit poppy fields were destroyed during the seven years include 2,575 acres in Tengnoupal, 1,982.5 acres in Chandel, 1,682 acres in Senapati, and 737.9 acres in Imphal East.

The operations against poppy cultivation were carried out mostly in 2020-21 and 2022-23, during which the flowering plants were destroyed on 8,957.1 acres.

The report said the area under poppy cultivation in nine districts declined from 28,598.91 acres in 2021-22 to 11,288.1 acres in 2023-24.

"The data show that CM N. Biren Singh's war on drugs has had a major impact," a Manipur government official said, declining to be quoted.

# AAP more interested in liquor sales than health of citizens: Mandaviya

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**
NEW DELHI

Former Union Health Minister and current Minister of Labour and Employment Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday said that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Delhi is not allowing people from the EWS category or those aged 70 and above to recieve benefit from the Union government's Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme.

"AAP is more interested in liquor sales than the health of Delhi's citizens," said the Minister, while stating making accessible and affordable health service available for Delhi's people is more important than engaging in politics.

He added that the Health Ministry has written several times to the Delhi government asking it to join the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).

The Minister said this in response to a question on the Delhi High Court seeking the AAP government's stand on a plea by Delhi's BJP MPs wanting implementation of the scheme.

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, he said that it was unfortunate that States like Delhi and West Bengal are not implementing the scheme even after repeated requests by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and letters from the Centre. "There could be political differences but public welfare works must be prioritised in India's federal democratic set up for the welfare of all," he said.

### 'Reversing name'

Mr. Mandaviya also spoke about the Punjab government branding the Ayushman Bharat-Health and Wellness Center (now, Ayushman Arogya Mandir) as Aam Aadmi Clinics (PHC-HWC) instead of using the original name.

"The Punjab government has now given us in writing that they will reverse the name. The earlier step was a breach of agreement with the Union Health Ministry where the Centre is giving 60% of the funding. The State will also be adhering to the required colour scheme and display the mandated logos," Mr. Mandaviya said.

Speaking about the various schemes under AB-PMJAY, he said that while there is no move to increase the insurance limit of ₹5 lakh for treatment, the health services are constantly monitored to weed out any over-charging and waste.

## INBRIEF

### PM watches *Sabarmati Report* with his colleagues

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday watched *The Sabarmati Report*, said to be based on the burning of the Sabarmati Express in Gujarat's Godhra on February 27, 2002. The film, starring Vikrant Massey, Raashi Khanna, and Ridhi Dogra, was screened at the Balayogi Auditorium in the Parliament Library building. After watching the film, Mr. Modi shared photographs on his X handle. "Joined fellow NDA MPs at a screening of 'The Sabarmati Report.' I commend the makers of the film for their effort," he said. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, and several MPs attended the screening.

### Man held in Odisha for killing pig on stage, eating its meat

A man has been arrested in Odisha's Ganjam district for allegedly killing a pig on stage and eating its raw meat while portraying the role of a demon in a traditional 'jatra' (play) performance. The man, Bimbadhar Gouda, was booked by the Forest Department for killing the animal during the play, which was based on the Ramayana. He had procured the pig too. The play organiser has been arrested. Other actors who tried to eat the meat on stage are absconding. The incident occurred on November 24 at Ralaba village under the Hinjili block but gained public attention later when the shocking visuals of the act surfaced online and went viral.

# Delhi curbs will be eased only after fall in air pollution: SC

Bench takes note of the plight of the poor and of non-payment of subsistence allowance for construction workers who are unable to earn a living during the enforcement of the restrictions

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said it wanted to ensure there is a "consistent downward trend" in the pollution in the national capital before easing Graded Response Action Plan stage four (GRAP-IV) restrictions.

Appearing before a Bench headed by Justice A.S. Oka, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said GRAP was an emergency measure and not a policy decision. It said GRAP-IV is disruptive, especially for marginalised communities.

"We know that ultimately some day we have to leave all this to you... We will hear on this issue on Thursday (December 5) after checking the Air Quality Index to find out whether there is any downward trend," Justice Oka said.

When senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for a petitioner, urged the court to take on record more data on the levels of pollution and its impact on public health, Justice Oka highlighted the effect of GRAP-IV on the livelihoods of the poor. "Please remember the plight of the workers. These people are unable to earn," Justice Oka reacted.

Anti-smog gun being used to sprinkle water to curb pollution in New Delhi on Monday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Further, the court directed the Chief Secretaries of Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, who are collectively called 'National Capital Region States', to be present online during the hearing on Thursday.

None of the States have "paid a penny" towards subsistence allowance for construction workers during GRAP-IV enforcement, the Bench noted. The court had repeatedly ordered these States to pay the allowance from their labour cess funds.

**Threatened at work**

Meanwhile, the Bench registered its shock at how its Court Commissioners, who are young advocates tasked with monitoring compliance with GRAP-IV measures at the border entry points to the capital, were threatened in the course of their court-appointed duties.

The Commissioners' report showed that employees of toll contractors at the borders were hand-in-glove with truckers, and would pass on information on WhatsApp about the movement of the Commissioners. "They (Court Commissioners) have risked their lives and faced threats only with a view to discharge their duties," the Bench recorded in its order. The court gave the Commissioners a choice to bow out, and those who still wanted to continue with their task were given the liberty to call the nodal officer in the Delhi Police, who would arrange armed police officers to accompany the Commissioners while they tour the border points.

**Lack of coordination**

Besides, the Commissioners' report also revealed to the court that there was a "complete lack of coordination" among stakeholders such as Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Delhi Police, Delhi government, Pollution Control Board, etc.

The court made it clear that it would endeavour to find permanent solutions to the annual pollution problem that plagued the capital between October and January.

# Oxford study lauds PRAGATI system for fast-tracking projects

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

**The report says that PRAGATI system symbolises India's commitment to overcoming bureaucratic inertia**

A study by Oxford University's Saïd Business School has lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's PRAGATI infrastructure monitoring system for accelerating 340 projects worth $205 billion across the country and bringing about economic transformation.

The study titled "From Gridlock to Growth: How Leadership Enables India's PRAGATI Ecosystem to Power Progress" was authored by Soumitra Dutta, dean at the SBS, and co-authored by associate fellow Mukul Pandya. It was presented at a symposium hosted by the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, on Monday.

The study looked at factors including close monitoring of infrastructure projects and their completion since 2015 through the PRAGATI system, an acronym for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation of projects.

"The platform symbolises India's commitment to overcoming bureaucratic inertia and fostering a Team India mindset and culture of accountability and efficiency," says the report. "PRAGATI has brought together diverse stakeholders from Central and State governments onto a single platform and this collaborative approach has been instrumental in addressing some of the complex challenges in infrastructure development, from land acquisition to inter-ministerial coordination," the report says.

The report adds that the economic impact of PRAGATI is evident. According to studies by the Reserve Bank of India and the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, for every rupee spent on infrastructure, India sees a gain of ₹2.5 to ₹3.5 in GDP. "By fast-tracking projects that provide services like roads, railways, water, and electricity, PRAGATI has improved the quality of life for millions of Indians. It has incorporated sustainability into its core operations, facilitated faster environmental clearances and promoted the use of green technologies. This holistic approach ensures that India's development is both inclusive and sustainable," the report says.

# CJI urged to undo changes made to court building

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association (SCAORA) on Monday asked Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna to undo two alterations made by his predecessor to the court building. The SCAORA, in its letter, conveyed that the changes made by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud (retired) did not "fully align with the Court's historical ethos and history as well as functional needs".

The top lawyers' body said "none of the representatives of the Bar were consulted" when glass partitions were put up in the open air corridors of the court or when the three-storey Judges' Library space was turned into the 'National Judicial Museum and Archive' (NJMA).

# Data on Union government job quotas missing from DoPT's latest annual report

**Abhinay Lakshman**
NEW DELHI

The Union government's Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has removed data on reservation in Union government jobs and positions from its latest Annual Report (2023-24) released last month. A table – which contains details about all Union government positions across Ministries and Departments, and the number of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and Other Backward Classes employees across Groups A, B, C, and D – has been a part of the chapter on reservation in all of DoPT annual reports.

The DoPT has not yet responded to *The Hindu's* queries on why the table was left out this time.

On Monday, the Adivasi Adhikar Rashtriya Manch (AARM), a Left-affiliated rights body, said that "deliberate concealment" of data on reservation in government jobs had emerged as a primary concern at a national convention held on Sunday on the "exclusion of adivasis from jobs".

> Marginalised communities can't even go to court because there is no consolidated data of how many reserved posts remain vacant
>
> **BRINDA KARAT**
> CPI(M) leader

Professor Vikas Rawal of Jawaharlal Nehru University, who is associated with the AARM's Centre for Adivasi Research and Development, said that the DoPT's reports from 2018 onwards have not provided complete data on reservation across Union government posts. "If you peruse the Ministry of Finance's Pay Research Unit records, it would appear that there are over 30 lakh Central government employees, but in the DoPT's annual reports since 2018, the data on reservations is provided for just about 19 lakh employees, with no explanation as to which employees are being left out," Mr. Rawal said.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Brinda Karat said that this "deliberate concealment" of information was a way to "disarm" marginalised communities from seeking and asserting their rights. "They can't even go to court because there is no complete, consolidated data of how many jobs there are, how many reserved posts have been filled and how many remain vacant," she said.

In a charter of eight demands that has emerged from the convention, three calls for complete and comprehensive data on reservation in all government jobs across Ministries, Departments, public sector enterprises, banks, educational and financial institutions, government health sector, and scheme workers. The demands call for reservation to be implemented in all government recruitments, including in contractual posts, posts on deputation, promotions, as well as the private sector.

# Workers must unite against the policies of MNCs, governments, says veteran trade union leader

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Veteran Greek trade union leader and the working president of World Federation of Trade Unions George Mavrikos called for a united fight by workers against the policies of governments that favour big corporations.

Mr. Mavrikos, speaking at a seminar here on Monday on world trade union movement, said no matter who makes governments, policies are not in favour of people and they do not work to improve the lives of people. "For example, in the U.K. or in France, they might have some differences in the parties who form government, but they follow the same policies. They are anti-labour and anti-people," he said.

George Mavrikos

He said on the one hand, there is accumulation of wealth and profits and on the other, extreme poverty and exploitation of work are increasing. He said multinationals are getting stronger every day and there are alliances of giant forces at the expense of the working class and poor farmers. "Unfortunately, the progress in technology has not benefited workers and the people."

He said the capitalist system has hit its limits and has failed to provide solutions to the problems of workers. "The imperialist powers such as U.S., EU, and the NATO have lost their ground. China and other forces are growing. The capitalist countries fear that they will lose their position in the system and they are creating many problems in many countries," he said, citing the examples of Arab Spring, and the U.S. "making their puppets" rulers in many West Asian countries. "They are trying to divide Russia. They tried to establish Israel as the policeman in the region," he said.

Mr. Mavrikos said workers should uphold internationalism and fight imperialist forces. "We need to support Palestinian people. We need to support peace," he said.

## TH CROSSWORD + 14346

(set by Karaoke)

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

SCAN TO PLAY

**Across**

8 A rogue takes primary education to get hold over the world of scholars (8)
9 Very strong emotion on final wide ball (6)
11 Lady enters into crook's compound (5)
12 Yield to split in certain party at Centre (9)
13 What a setter would say when he couldn't set a grid? (5,4,2)
18 Doesn't rely on public utilities. Stops solving crosswords? (5,3,3,4)
20 Playing tennis with niece lacking consciousness (11)
24 Most of energy goes into regular events in French café (9)
27 Original Inuits can get gas in this house (5)
28 Number one and the same (6)
29 Home loans arranged without second mortgage for places that lead to sewers (8)

**Down**

1 Why you shout on poor baby fish? (5)
2 Sensational setter indulging in pleasure-seeking (5)
3 Maybe old news about model's betrayals (3-5)
4 Primarily business institutions appoint sons in jobs for boys (4)
5 Wine shop buying empty bottles around drug party in retreat by academy (6)
6 Multiplied money, say (4)
7 Gets to know of fire spreading in corners (9)
10 Heavy weight hot women avoided tight short gowns (5,3)
14 Bully-boys get furious mainly with unfair treatment by society (8)
15 Lie in wait, conceal uniform for a bird (4)
16 It measures heights in real time? Terrific! (9)
17 "Reject divorce, right away", ladies say (4)
19 View affirmative position for the audience (8)
21 Maybe Anaesthetist's song (6)
22 Silly play regularly in a deceitful manner (5)
23 Actors winning Oscar for taxi (5)
25 Loudly make fun of those which support balls (4)
26 Drink in honour of an event missing essential taste in every detail (2,1,1)

## SUDOKU

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| | 2 | | | 1 | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | 6 | 3 | | |
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

**Solution to previous puzzle**

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**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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

## FAITH

### No excuse for inaction

While the Mahabharata talks about *vidhi*, it points out that we must not use *vidhi* as an excuse for inaction, elaborated P.T. Seshadri in a discourse. When Yudhishthira blames *vidhi* for the plight of the Pandavas, Draupadi tells him what the deva guru Brihaspathi had said about *vidhi*. A person who simply blames *vidhi*, and does nothing to change a situation, is an *adhama* among humans. Draupadi wonders how Yudhishthira can take the insult to his wife so lightly.

The Pandavas send Lord Krishna as a messenger to negotiate with the Kauravas. They are prepared to settle for just five villages. Instead of seeking revenge for what the Kauravas did to Draupadi, they are thinking of land for themselves. Is Draupadi's modesty equal to just five villages? Pillai Lokachariar, in his Srivachana Bhushanam, says that the Ramayana is the story of Sita, not the story of Rama, and this is its significance. The essence of the Mahabharata is the role of Krishna, the messenger of the Pandavas. Draupadi laments to Krishna that the Pandavas have equated her dignity with five villages, and asks if this is fair. Pillai Lokachariar observes that when Draupadi wept, Lord Krishna felt that the Pandavas too, like the Kauravas, deserved to die. He spared their lives because he did not want Draupadi to be widowed. He could easily have changed Duryodhana's mind and got him to agree to giving the Pandavas their share. But Draupadi had surrendered to Him and He wanted the insult to her to be avenged. That is why He ensured that His mission to the Kaurava court was unsuccessful. It was Krishna's intention that there should be a war.

# When a DNA analysis reveals a closely guarded family secret...

DNA analysis can create a 'narrow biologised notion of inheritance', to use the words of Projit Mukharji, for no reason other than that the molecule can reveal more than what we wish to tell. If this isn't a problem enough, consider what it means for laws we have, or don't, to protect our privacy

D.P. Kasbekar

The Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics (CDFD) is a government laboratory in Hyderabad. It provides DNA-based investigative services to the police, the judiciary, and to hospitals that offer organ transplant procedures. Recently, the CDFD handled the case of a family in which the father offered to donate an organ to his ailing son. CDFD technicians generated DNA profiles of the donor, the patient, and also the patient's mother.

While the DNA profiles of the mother and the son were consistent with their claimed mother-son relationship, those of the father and his son were not. The DNA showed that the woman's husband was not the actual father of the patient but a close paternal relative, possibly a brother of the actual father. These findings didn't preclude the organ transplant procedure but by revealing the practice of levirate they created a potentially awkward situation for the family.

Levirate is the custom in some families in which a woman who is widowed or one whose husband is mentally or physically incapacitated has children fathered by her husband's brother. Understandably, the family would prefer to keep such knowledge private. The report from the CDFD was meant to tell doctors they could proceed with the transplant operation because the donor and the recipient belonged to the same family. But by explicitly revealing the woman's husband was not her son's father, it created the risk of an unwanted breach of the family's privacy.

### What are DNA profiles?

Every cell in our body has a nucleus that contains two copies of each of the 23 chromosomes, numbered 1 to 23. This 1-23 lump is our genome. One chromosome of each pair is inherited via the mother's egg and the other via the father's sperm.

When we make our own reproductive cells – eggs or sperm – each egg or sperm receives only one chromosome from a pair, i.e., one genome set. When a sperm cell and an egg fuse, they create a cell with two genome sets. This cell, called the zygote, divides to produce all the other cells of the baby.

Every chromosome contains a single DNA molecule that runs from end to end. A DNA molecule has two strands. Each strand is a long, linear sequence of four chemicals: adenine (A), cytosine (C), guanine (G), and thymidine (T). The As on one strand form bonds with the Ts on the other, while Gs bond with the Cs. The As, Cs, Gs, and Ts on one strand are called the DNA's bases and the A-T and G-C combinations are the DNA's base-pairs.

The largest chromosome in humans, chromosome 1, has more than 240 million base-pairs; the shortest, chromosome 21, has more than 40 million. The 23 chromosomes together have 3.2 billion base-pairs.

At several locations, or loci, on each of the 23 chromosomes, some short DNA sequences are repeated multiple times. These loci are called simple tandem repeats (STRs). For example, one strand of an STR locus might have multiple repeats of GGCCA (GGCCAGGCCAGGCCA...). These are paired with complementary CCGGT repeats on the other strand (CCGGTCCGGTCCGGT...). The repeat number of STR loci can differ in the two chromosomes of a pair. For example, a particular chromosome derived from the father might have 30 repeats while the same one from the mother may have 35.

The DNA profile of a person is simply the number of times the simple sequences are repeated in the STR loci. This number can be found by first creating lots of copies of DNA from a sample (using the polymerase chain reaction, PCR), then segregating the DNA fragments by size using a technique called capillary gel electrophoresis. It is sensitive enough to both accurately and precisely establish the number of repeats in an STR.

For example, the table below shows the number of repeats of the father, the mother, and the son in the case illustrated above – i.e. their DNA profiles.

According to the table, the mother's versions of locus D18S51 had 14 and 15 repeats, while the son's versions had 15 and 17 repeats. But the father's versions of D18S51 had 14 and 14. The son received his 15-repeat version from his mother and the 17-repeat version from his father. But the woman's husband didn't have a 17-repeat variant, so this man couldn't be the actual father. Likewise, for three other STR loci, the son received paternal variants that were absent from the donor.

The son and the man still had identical Y-chromosome profiles, plus identical variants in 19 of the 23 non-Y STR loci. This indicated that the woman's husband is closely related to the biological father – possibly a brother. Thus the marriage is levirate.

### Levirate marriages in India

Projit Bihari Mukharji, a historian of science at the University of Pennsylvania and Ashoka University in Haryana, ably discussed the practice of levirate marriage in India in his 2022 book 'Brown Skins, White Coats Race Science in India, 1920-66.'

Mukharji cited the pioneering anthropologist and writer Irawati Karve (1905-1970) when he wrote that she spoke "of the three debts that any Hindu man owed and upon the repayment of which his ultimate liberation depended. These debts were respectively to the gods, the sages, and the ancestors.

Each of these ... required the making of regular offerings. These offerings could only be made by a son. Hence, the function of a son was the making of ancestral offerings, rather than the maintenance of a biological or genetic lineage."

This pushed families to explore all possible ways, including levirate, to beget a son.

Mukharji added that families are reluctant "to divulge information... not simply... by a modern desire to avert scandal. Rather, it was because, within an older customary framework of kinship, 'descent' itself worked differently and to other ends. ... The refusal... to share sexual information was tacitly rooted in a more radical refusal to accept a narrowly biologised notion of inheritance."

Unfortunately, in the end, DNA analysis appears to have allowed the "narrow biologised notion of inheritance" to win for no reason other than that DNA just doesn't know when to shut up. And if this isn't a problem enough, consider what it could mean for the laws we have – or don't – to protect our genetic privacy.

*(D.P. Kasbekar is a retired scientist.kasbekardp@yahoo.co.in)*

## When DNA creates a privacy issue

DNA has unwittingly opened a Pandora's box where the family skeletons could tumble out of the closet. You offer your DNA to further something that needs to be done and open a gaping wound

DNA analysis has the potential to cause very unpleasant situations. Illustrative image.

**AUTOSOMAL STR DNA PROFILES OF THE INDIVIDUALS**

| Locus | Link Person | Patient | Donor |
|---|---|---|---|
| D3S1358 | 16,16 | 16,16 | 15,18 |
| vWA | 14,17 | 14,14 | 15,18 |
| D16S539 | 11,12 | 11,12 | 11,12 |
| CSF1PO | 10,13 | 12,13 | 11,12 |
| TPOX | 8,11 | 8,11 | 8,11 |
| Yindel | - | 2 | 2 |
| D8S1179 | 13,14 | 14,15 | 13,15 |
| D21S11 | 29,33.2 | 29,33.2 | 28,32.2 |
| D18S51 | 14,15 | 15,17 | 14,14 |
| DYS391 | - | 10 | 10 |
| D2S441 | 9,10 | 10,10 | 10,11 |
| D19S433 | 13,13 | 13,13 | 13,13 |
| THO1 | 7,8 | 7,9 | 6,9 |
| FGA | 24,24 | 24,27 | 23,27 |
| D22S1045 | 11,17 | 11,17 | 11,17 |
| D5S818 | 10,12 | 12,15 | 12,15 |
| D13S317 | 8,12 | 12,12 | 11,12 |
| D7S820 | 8,12 | 11,12 | 11,13 |
| SE33 | 13,29.2 | 13,29.2 | 19,29.2 |
| D10S1248 | 13,15 | 14,15 | 14,14 |
| D1S1656 | 14,14 | 14,17.3 | 8,15.3 |
| D12S391 | 21,24 | 17,21 | 17,17.3 |
| D2S1338 | 19,22 | 21,22 | 19,21 |
| AMELOGENIN | X,X | X,Y | X,Y |

**Y-CHROMOSOMAL STR DNA PROFILES OF THE INDIVIDUALS**

| Locus | Patient | Donor |
|---|---|---|
| DYS576 | 17 | 17 |
| DYS389I | 13 | 13 |
| DYS635 | 23 | 23 |
| DYS389II | 29 | 29 |
| DYS627 | 19 | 19 |
| DYS460 | 10 | 10 |
| DYS458 | 16 | 16 |
| DYS19 | 14 | 14 |
| YGATAH4 | 11 | 11 |
| DYS448 | 21 | 21 |
| DYS391 | 10 | 10 |
| DYS456 | 17 | 17 |
| DYS390 | 23 | 23 |
| DYS438 | 9 | 9 |
| DYS392 | 11 | 11 |
| DYS518 | 40 | 40 |
| DYS570 | 16 | 16 |
| DYS437 | 14 | 14 |
| DYS385 | 12,16 | 12,16 |
| DYS449 | 31 | 31 |
| DYS393 | 12 | 12 |
| DYS439 | 11 | 11 |
| DYS481 | 23 | 23 |
| DYF387S1 | 36,39 | 36,39 |
| DYS533 | 11 | 11 |

**Levirate is the custom in which a woman who is widowed or one whose husband is mentally or physically incapacitated has children fathered by her husband's brother**

A photo taken on July 5 by the New Zealand Department of Conservation shows rangers beside what appears to be the carcass of a rare spade-toothed whale after it was discovered washed ashore on a beach near Taieri Mouth, New Zealand. AFP

# *Scientists in NZ gather to decode puzzle of rarest whale*

Associated Press

It is the world's rarest whale, with only seven of its kind ever spotted. Almost nothing is known about the enigmatic species. But on Monday a small group of scientists and cultural experts in New Zealand clustered around a near-perfectly preserved spade-toothed whale hoping to decode decades of mystery.

"I can't tell you how extraordinary it is," said Anton van Helden, senior marine science adviser for New Zealand's conservation agency, who gave the spade-toothed whale its name to distinguish it from other beaked species.

Van Helden has studied beaked whales for 35 years, but Monday was the first time he has participated in a dissection of the spade-toothed variety. In fact, the careful study of the creature, which washed up dead on a New Zealand beach in July, is the first ever to take place.

None has ever been seen alive at sea.

The list of what scientists don't know about spade-toothed whales is longer than what they do know. They don't know where in the ocean the whales live, why they've never been spotted in the wild, or what their brains look like. All beaked whales have different stomach systems, and researchers don't know how the spade-toothed kind processes its food.

Over the next week, researchers studying the 5-metre male at a research centre near Dunedin hope to find out.

"There may be parasites completely new to science that just live in this whale," said van Helden, who thrilled at the chance of learning how the species produces sound and what it eats. "Who knows what we'll discover?" Only six other spade-toothed whales have ever been found, but all those discovered intact were buried before DNA testing could verify their identification.

**The dissection will be slower than usual, because it is being undertaken in partnership with the Maori, for whom whales are a precious treasure, and the creature will be treated with the reverence afforded to an ancestor**

New Zealand is a whale-stranding hotspot, with more than 5,000 episodes recorded since 1840, according to the Department of Conservation. The first spade-toothed whale bones were found in 1872 on New Zealand's Pitt Island. Another discovery was made at an offshore island in the 1950s, and the bones of a third were found on Chile's Robinson Crusoe Island in 1986.

DNA sequencing in 2002 proved that all three specimens were of the same species and that it was distinct from other beaked whales. But researchers studying the mammal couldn't confirm whether the species was extinct until 2010, when two whole spade-toothed whales, both dead, washed up on a New Zealand beach.

On Monday, the seventh of its kind, surrounded by white-aproned scientists who were measuring and photographing, appeared relatively unblemished, giving no clue about its death. Researchers pointed out marks from cookiecutter sharks – normal, they said, and not the cause.

The dissection will be quiet, methodical, and slower than usual, because it is being undertaken in partnership with Maori, New Zealand's Indigenous people. To Maori, whales are a precious treasure, and the creature will be treated with the reverence afforded to an ancestor.

**For feedback and suggestions** for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

## THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in

### Forty years since the Bhopal disaster...

Vasudevan Mukunth

**QUESTION 1**

X leaked from the Union Carbide India, Ltd. (UCIL) plant in Bhopal on the night of December 2 and early on December 3, killing more than 4,000 people and injuring upwards of 5.7 lakh. Name X.

**QUESTION 2**

The UCIL facility in Bhopal was built in 1969 to manufacture a pesticide called Sevin, the brand name of a compound called 1-naphthyl methylcarbamate. The facility did so by reacting X (from Q1) with Y. Name Y. Y is also used to make the antidepressant sertraline.

**QUESTION 3**

A different way to make carbaryl is to react Y (from Q2) with a large quantity of Z to produce naphthylchloroformate, which, when it reacts with methylamine, creates carbaryl. Name Z —which France used to kill more than 85,000 people during World War I as a chemical weapon.

**QUESTION 4**

X (from Q1) is a gas that's very toxic to humans even at very small concentrations. Although it doesn't have a specific smell even at a concentration of 5 ppm, it is strongly _____. Fill in the blank with the name of a property that induces tears in eyes.

**QUESTION 5**

The trigger for the Bhopal disaster was personnel at the UCIL plant adding a large quantity of _____ to a tank containing X (from Q1). Fill in the blank with a compound whose reaction with X produces heat, which can cause more of the X to react and eventually to boil.

**Answers to November 28 quiz**:

1. Material of which ATOW1996 is made – **Ans: Gravel**
2. Antarctic ice shelf abutting southernmost piece of open ocean – **Ans: Ross ice shelf**
3. Western terminal of longest motorable straight line on land – **Ans: France**
4. Mountain whose peak is farthest point on land from earth's centre – **Ans: Mt. Chimborazo**
5. World's largest city located below sea level – **Ans: Baku, Azerbaijan**

Visual: **Ojos del Salado**

First contact: Jose Joji | Rahul Nair | Anmol Agrawal | K.N. Viswanathan

Visual: Name this comet. Ten years ago a robot touched down on it, and, a year later, scientists used the data it collected to report the first presence of X (from Q1) on a comet.

ESA (CC BY-SA 4.0)

# A wake-up call

## Policymakers must not make light of underwhelming growth numbers

Even the most pessimistic economic forecasters did not anticipate the sharp downturn in economic momentum reflected in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimates for the July-September quarter. From a five-quarter low of 6.7% in the first quarter (Q1), most independent economists expected GDP growth of 6.5% in Q2, citing slackening urban demand indicators such as moderating GST revenue growth, and weak consumer durables' and non-durables' sales. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its October review, pegged Q2 growth at 7%, while RBI officials projected a 6.8% uptick in an article soon after. That the actual number came in at just 5.4% – the slowest since the third quarter of 2022-23 – with the Gross Value-Added (GVA) in the economy rising at a marginally better 5.6%, is, therefore, a significant shock. From a robust 8.2% GDP uptick last year, expectations of another year of 7%-plus growth in 2024-25 now appear precariously poised if not overtly optimistic, with the first half clocking just 6% growth.

The RBI's MPC, which meets again this week, would certainly have to reorient its 7.2% growth forecast for the year, and may find it tougher to keep its focus on reining in inflation amid recent calls from Ministers to cut interest rates to support flailing growth impulses and investments. With inflation at a 15-month high of 6.2% in October, the RBI, which is committed to wait for a durable decline in price rise before switching gears on rates, is unlikely to accede to these calls just yet. It may, at best, unveil measures to ease tight liquidity conditions. Mint Street czars have a tough tightrope walk ahead in the face of the growth slump. North Block officials have, however, sought to downplay the recent streak of weaker economic indicators, and termed the Q2 growth print a 'one-off' number due to an urban demand slack that should dissipate in the months ahead. While rural demand is expected to perk up the economy in the second half of the year, along with a relative ramp-up in public capex that has suffered so far this year – thanks to a Q1 pause due to the general election and tepid Q2 spends amid an extended monsoon – it may be too complacent to assume that urban consumption will rebound on its own and interest rates are the only constraint for growth. Poor wage increases and persistent price rise have caught up on urban wallets, and cannot be wished away. The Centre must shed its 'all is well' approach, and ring in fiscal measures, including cuts on fuel taxes and high GST rates on some items, to ease living costs and revive demand.

# New crimes, old tools

## Fraudsters thrive when they do not fear prosecution; they must be put on notice

At the Conference of Director Generals of Police last weekend, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the growing menace of cybercrime in India, particularly digital frauds and non-consensual intimate deepfakes. Unlike traditional crimes like petty theft, organised digital frauds are not merely the work of financially desperate individuals; they represent a new class of criminals equipped with a variety of tools. Vulnerable telecom infrastructure – ill-prepared for the overwhelming volume of calls and messages from malicious fraudsters – creates fertile ground for cybercrime. These criminals also employ ingenious techniques that constantly stay a step ahead of underprepared law enforcement and security systems. More troubling is the strong network of relationships these fraudsters cultivate with local police in key hotspots, which enables them to carry out their activities with a sense of impunity. The consequences of this rampant cybercrime are grave. Thousands of ordinary citizens face the constant threat of losing their life savings after a single ill-advised phone call or message. It is therefore encouraging that the highest levels of government are addressing this critical issue and pushing for action from those most equipped to combat it.

But talk alone will not solve the problem. It is crucial to pursue aggressive prosecutions with integrity, transparency, and wide publicity. The growing number of these criminals is both a threat and an opportunity: while their continued operations reflect poorly on the law enforcement and public safety apparatus, it also provides a window for significant breakthroughs in investigations and successful convictions. Holding these fraudsters accountable sends an important message – this is not a simple "call centre job" with questionable ethics, but a serious crime that is not worth the risk. Public awareness is another powerful tool in combating cybercrime. Cyber fraudsters constantly evolve their methods and adopt new personas to deceive unsuspecting victims. Alerting the public –repeatedly, creatively, and patiently – that they are at risk of losing money to fraudsters is an essential policy intervention. A little healthy scepticism could prevent many people from falling prey to scams. As the government pushes for universal banking and greater access to digital services, it is critical that these advances do not become vulnerabilities for ordinary people. The issue of non-consensual intimate imagery is also pressing. With advances in artificial intelligence, criminals can now use deepfake technology to place ordinary individuals' faces into pornographic content, causing great harm. But it is a matter of some comfort that though these crimes are new, the tools to combat them remain familiar: a mix of awareness and preventive measures.

A focus on 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities' (December 3), on the Editorial and Opinion pages

# *Citizens with disabilities, making their rights real*

**Pradeep Kumar Bagival**

was Disability Inclusion Adviser to the national governments, the United Nations and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and former Assistant Commissioner for Disabilities, Persons with Disabilities Act-1995, Karnataka

The data from the 2011 national Census of India indicate that persons with disabilities constitute 2.21 % of the total population. This is a grossly underestimated figure. According to the 2019 Brief Disability Model Survey conducted by the World Health Organization across India, Tajikistan and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the prevalence of severe disability among Indian adults is 16%. India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on October 1, 2007 and one of the immediate measures expected out of the state parties to the convention is to ensure alignment of the national disability legislations in line with the principles of the convention. Accordingly, Parliament passed the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 (RPWD Act) that came into force on April 19, 2017 to replace the earlier Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, which fell short of promoting a social and a human rights model of disability rights.

### The role of the State Commissioner

One of the unique points of the RPWD Act in comparison to many disability legislations of the developing countries is the provision for the constitution of the office of the State Commissioners for Disabilities at the State level with a combination of review, monitoring, and quasi-judicial functions to ensure effective implementation of the disability law. According to Section 82 of the RPWD Act, the State Commissioners, for the purpose of discharging their functions under the Act, shall have the same powers of a civil court under the Civil Procedure Code 1908 while trying a suit, and every proceeding before the State Commissioner shall be a judicial proceeding within the meaning of Sections 193 and 228 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860).

Despite the legislation providing far-reaching quasi-judicial powers to the State Commissioners in safeguarding the rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities, the State Commissioners in many States have fallen short of the expectations of citizens with disabilities. This dismal functioning of the office of the State Commissioners is largely due to the lax attitude on the part of the State governments to invigorate the statutory office in discharging its functions in accordance with the law. This reality has been aptly highlighted in the writ petition WPC 29329/2021, *Seema Girija Lal vs. Union of India,* in which the delay in appointment of the state Commissioners has also been highlighted.

Among various reasons for the failure to fulfil the statutory role by the State Commissioners is the manner in which the commissioners are appointed. The RPWD Rules provide an opportunity for persons with substantial experience in law, human rights, education, social work and rehabilitation and with a non-governmental organisation background to be appointed to the position of State Commissioner. In reality, a majority of the commissioners, either independent or holding additional charge, are civil servants from the nodal ministry. According to the latest report (2021-22) of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, only eight States have appointed commissioners who are not part of the mainstream civil service. Having civil servants from the nodal ministry is in conflict with the purpose of having an impartial and independent office that can exercise oversight over the executive and hold them accountable for not implementing the provisions of the disability law.

Some of the progressive States in terms of disability inclusion have appointed representatives of civil society organisations as State Commissioners and the State governments should consider appointing qualified women with disabilities as commissioners as they will be in a better position to address intersectional forms of discrimination that women and girls with disabilities in India currently experience.

The State Commissioners have a substantive role including powers to intervene *suo motu* to identify and inquire about any specific policy, provision, programme and laws that contravene the provisions of the RPWD Act and recommend appropriate corrective measures.

There are many contraventions of the RPWD Act that are highlighted by aggrieved persons with disabilities and by certain proactive organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and the State Commissioners have not been able to intervene *suo motu* to address discriminatory policies and practices which has led to an erosion of faith in the statutory offices created under the disability law to uphold the rights of citizens with disabilities. The State Commissioners should interact consistently with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations to understand which are those policies, guidelines, executive orders that contravene the provisions of the law and initiate necessary remedial action.

> State Commissioners have a vital role in safeguarding the rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities, but in many States, their statutory role has fallen short of expectations

### The example of Karnataka

It is vital for State governments and the office of the Chief Commissioner for Disabilities to build the capacity of the State Commissioners in performing their quasi-judicial role and in functioning as a civil court. As done by the State Commissioner's office in Karnataka, collaborating with law schools and legal experts in strengthening their respective capacities could be a viable option. While some States such as Karnataka and Delhi have been able to infuse confidence among persons with disabilities to register complaints with regard to a deprivation of their rights, it is equally important for State Commissioners to look into complaints and dispose of them expeditiously. The websites of the office of the State Commissioners should – on the dashboard – indicate the number of cases received, disposed of and those pending for action along with other vital information such as annual reports and special reports submitted to the government on implementation of the law by the government with concrete recommendations.

Mobile adalats (mobile courts), as practised years ago by the Karnataka Commissioner's office, could be a good practice for other States to emulate in reaching out to persons with disabilities in remote areas and to look into a deprivation of their rights. Adalats were organised in the State with prior notice to persons with disabilities through the nodal disability office in the districts for aggrieved individuals or institutions to get their grievance redress.

Often, these grievances would be resolved on the spot for persons with disabilities and their families. Designating District Magistrates as Deputy Commissioners for persons with disabilities – as done in the case of Karnataka – is a promising way to make local governance disability inclusive.

The RPWD Act enables State Commissioners to monitor the implementation of various pieces of legislation, programmes and schemes that impact persons with disabilities. To maximise the effectiveness of this critical role, the District Disability Management Review (DDMR) undertaken by the Karnataka State Commissioner's office could be one of the preferred practices for State Commissioners. The DDMR has become an inclusive governance tool for the State Commissioner in Karnataka to have sight of how development and welfare programmes and policies have been implemented by the relevant departments at the district level, and to what extent the quotas earmarked for persons with disabilities have been fulfilled.

### Research as a function

One of the key functions of the State Commissioners is to undertake and promote research in the field of disability rights. This opens up opportunities for the State Commissioners to collaborate with United Nations entities which have a mandate to promote disability inclusion on the basis of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy in undertaking research in areas such as disability inclusive social protection, disability inclusive care economy and the impact of climate change on persons with disabilities. The findings could pave the way for more inclusive policies and in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in India.

# *Frontline nutrition workers foster disability inclusion*

**Elisabeth Faure**

Country Director for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)

**Amneet P. Kumar**

an IAS officer, is Commissioner and Secretary, Government of Haryana

December 3 is International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It is a day dedicated to advocating the rights of people with disabilities by creating awareness and highlighting the inclusion and the needs of persons with disabilities who are among one of the most marginalised and under-represented communities in the world.

In recent years, there has been growing recognition, globally and nationally, of the significant connection between nutrition and disability. Various studies are increasingly underscoring this relationship. There are reports that illuminate the profound impact of nutritional status on overall health and well-being.

### Nutrition, health and disability

Research indicates that countries with high levels of malnutrition tend to exhibit not only poorer health outcomes but also higher rates of disability among their populations. This correlation has far-reaching implications, suggesting that inadequate nutritional intake can lead to a range of health issues that contribute to disability. For instance, malnutrition may weaken the immune system, hinder physical development, and exacerbate chronic health conditions – all of which can significantly impair an individual's ability to function effectively in daily life.

As governments and health organisations strive to improve public health, addressing malnutrition becomes increasingly critical. This is not only for enhancing individual quality of life but also for reducing disability rates on a broader scale. The link between nutrition and disability underscores the need for integrated health policies to improve dietary practices and ensure access to nutritious food for vulnerable populations.

Maternal malnutrition can lead to prenatal disability, malnutrition can contribute to developmental delays and disabilities at different points in the life cycle – for example, vitamin A deficiency can cause blindness), and some disabilities, such as cerebral palsy and Down syndrome, can put persons at risk of nutritional deficiency. There is a real need to make nutrition services, benefits, and information more accessible to persons with disabilities.

In 2023, the Ministry of Women and Child Development introduced the 'Anganwadi Protocol for Divyang Children', a national guideline for frontline community nutrition workers in India regarding disability inclusion. Anganwadi workers are crucial as community nutrition providers, executing and manifesting India's most ambitious development programmes. They engage deeply with the communities, offering vital nutrition services and driving social and behavioural changes related to gender equality, social inclusion, nutrition, and early childhood development. The Protocol for Divyang Children equips them with comprehensive instructions for the early identification of disabilities, monitoring developmental milestones using the POSHAN Tracker, and ensuring referrals in partnership with Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers.

> Anganwadi workers have a vital role in the early identification of children with disabilities and also serving as a referral for children and adults with disabilities

### The experience in Haryana

The Haryana government's Department of Women and Child Development is committed to promoting disability inclusion using Mission Vatsalya and the Integrated Child Development Scheme. It has introduced the Divyang Protocol and a unique podcast initiative, 'Nanhe Farishtey', to educate communities about disabilities and enhance awareness at Anganwadi centres for the early detection and inclusion of children with disabilities

The World Food Programme (WFP) has also partnered with the Department of Women and Child Development for a three-year intervention to transform norms around gender equality and social inclusion, including disability inclusion, by developing the capacity of Haryana's network of 25,000 'Anganwadi' workers.

As part of the collaborative programme, in a recent Needs Assessment Study for its intervention in Haryana, the WFP asked 'Anganwadi workers' across four districts about persons and children with disabilities in the local communities they serve. The study found that Anganwadi workers played an essential role in the early identification of children and referral for children and adults with disabilities. Nearly all the respondents had helped connect persons with disabilities to some form of medical and educational support, register for disability certificates, and help them avail themselves of government-provided benefits, including the National Disability Pension.

Early intervention, accessible medical therapy, and supportive services are crucial for aiding children with disabilities. Anganwadi workers play a vital role in this effort. Alongside building the capacity of Anganwadi workers on the Divyang Protocol, development actors must unite to create supportive services and infrastructure for these children. This includes establishing a group of trained specialist therapists for various disabilities, creating accessible schools and transportation, providing affordable assistive devices, and implementing information-communication systems to promote tailored nutritional well-being practices for individuals with disabilities. Community members and frontline workers can contribute by dispelling the disability stigma.

We all share the responsibility of ensuring that the nutrition and food security of persons with disabilities, particularly children, are at the centre of their rights, equal opportunity and well-being.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Lower courts and suits**

One fails to understand why lower courts are admitting revanchist suits when the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 is clear on the status of places of worship as it existed in 1947. The top court should have also pulled up the trial court for the perfunctory manner in which orders were passed.

It is a matter of great concern that lower courts are kowtowing to a powerful and regressive political establishment.

**Manohar Alembath,**
Kannur, Kerala

**Merkel book**

Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel has joined the list of world leaders to voice concerns over attacks on minorities in India ("In book, Merkel says she had raised concern over attacks on minorities in India with Modi", December 2). We may expect the government to deny the charges — as it normally does — whenever there are reports of religious intolerance under its watch. The government may feel good. But the reality is very different, as is well known.

**V. Padmanabhan,**
Bengaluru

**December 1984, a rewind**

Negligence in Bhopal has still left thousands suffering. India, a proud democracy, failed to hold a corporation accountable, demonstrating how global corporate giants can act with impunity while governments turn a blind eye or even offer support. The report, "40 years after Bhopal gas tragedy, Union Carbide's toxic waste yet to be removed" (Inside pages, December 2), is a stark and ugly reminder of the unfulfilled promises of justice.

**Faisal Bava,**
Malappuram, Kerala

# Enabling a level playing field

**Sanskriti Bhatia**

Former Consultant at Young Leaders for Active Citizenship, an Indian Sign Language Interpreter, and an MPP candidate at the University of Cambridge

**Shivangi Tyagi**

Officer, Programs and Policy Communications at Young Leaders for Active Citizenship

As Harmanpreet Kaur went out to bat during the 2024 ICC Women's T20 World Cup at Sharjah, millions were glued to their screens, including Sanskriti's 86-year-old grandfather, a former player who once captained India's deaf cricket team. While he always marvels at the action on the field, something else caught his attention this time: a sign language interpreter at the corner of the screen, translating every nuance of the game. For the first time, he could follow the commentary and post-match speeches without relying on us. Earlier this year, on Global Accessibility Awareness Day, Star Sports and Disney+Hotstar incorporated features that made live cricket accessible to India's 63 million hearing impaired and five million visually impaired citizens. Finally, the sport Sanskriti's grandfather loved was truly within reach.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2026, we must strive for better implementation of the Convention at the national level, particularly through the recognition of the linguistic human rights of hearing impaired people. This is crucial because, for most Indians, cricket is more than just a sport; it cultivates a sense of national belonging. Yet, this camaraderie unintentionally leaves many behind, especially the 90 million persons with disabilities.

### A sense of isolation

Despite progressive endeavours, such as the Accessible India Campaign and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, glaring gaps remain in the lived experiences of people with disabilities. They feel isolated not because of their condition, but because of social barriers. The world is unfortunately designed for able-bodied people and the exclusion of persons with disabilities persists in the way buildings, sidewalks, stadiums, movie theatres, seating areas, and even washrooms are built. Legal mandates such as ramps and tactile paving are either absent or are merely tokenistic gestures.

The same inaccessibility can be seen in cricketing infrastructure too, whether in stadiums or on live broadcasts. While ongoing state efforts towards inclusivity in the education and health sectors are relevant, the private entertainment sector also requires attention. Persons with disabilities are not just citizens with capacity-building requirements; they are also individuals with the need to explore recreational avenues. That this has not been recognised by entertainment providers begs the question of whether our collective idea of leisure is inherently ableist. In theatres, where cricket matches are increasingly being screened, we rarely pause to wonder about access for wheelchair users or assistive devices for visually impaired people. This highlights the need to integrate accessibility into popular culture so that every person can reclaim their right to leisure.

However, enabling people to exercise their right to leisure does not end with making infrastructure accessible; it also demands showcasing inclusive stories in popular entertainment. Films such as *Margarita with a Straw* (2014) and *Srikanth* (2024) lent great depth and sensitivity to the representation of disability in cinema. Such films challenge the public's unidimensional perspective on disability, while also making persons with disabilities feel seen and heard. They help shed light on the state of accessibility, prompting slow but steady public shifts towards making future entertainment infrastructure more inclusive.

> While ongoing state efforts towards inclusivity in the education and health sectors are relevant, the private entertainment sector also requires attention

### Steps in the right direction

The government is also increasingly aware of the intersection between entertainment and inclusivity. A recent ruling by a Supreme Court bench, headed by former Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, stated that stereotyping differently abled persons in visual media and films perpetuates discrimination. The Court said that creators ought to provide an accurate representation of disabilities rather than mocking them. This is a step in the right direction.

For an inclusive future

Private players are also widening the scope for accessibility in subtle ways. We now have subtitles and audio descriptions on OTT platforms. These measures are convenient for everyone, including able-bodied persons, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. As technology continues to permeate our society, especially with the rise of Artificial Intelligence, we may soon see many more such measures.

Building disability friendly ecosystems is no longer about philanthropic leanings. Globally, the total spending power of 1 billion persons with disabilities, including their family and friends who are likely to make accessibility-based choices, is estimated at $13 trillion, an untapped opportunity. Investing in one's business to serve potential consumers and to build million-dollar revenues in the process is a strategic decision. These endeavours signal the recognition of individuals with disabilities as valued consumers and as crucial contributors to our economy.

Accessibility initiatives undertaken by different platforms in recent times offer a glimpse of what the future can be – a world where persons with disabilities are active participants in the entertainment industry. These efforts redefine the identities of persons with disabilities and give them both respect and a sense of belonging. This shift reminds us that a true community leaves no one behind.

# Breaking barriers with the help of tech

## ICMR has been unlocking opportunities through assistive technology innovations

**Rajiv Bahl**

On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we celebrate the strength, determination, and boundless potential of individuals who constantly push the boundaries of what is possible. It is a moment to reflect on our collective responsibility to build a world where everyone can thrive, regardless of their ability.

This year, India's Paralympians made history at the 2024 Summer Paralympic Games by bringing home 29 medals. Sheetal Devi with her impeccable precision in archery, Sumit Antil with his extraordinary javelin throws, Sharad Kumar with his triumphs in high jump, and many others exemplified excellence and resilience.

While the medals are a result of their determination and talent, we must also acknowledge the role that assistive technology (AT) plays in enabling such success. From advanced prosthetics to precision tools, AT provides the support that athletes need to push past boundaries. The journeys of these sportspersons symbolise the powerful synergy between human resilience and technological advancement.

AT is not just a game-changer in sports, it also empowers individuals to shine in education, employment, and other walks of life. However, the World Health Organization reports that globally, 90% of persons with disabilities lack access to AT. While India has done tremendous work to close the gap, there is an increasing need for such technology given the rising incidence of non-communicable diseases and injuries. Universal access to such technology must become a cornerstone of

healthcare systems if we want true inclusivity.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has been unlocking new opportunities for millions through AT innovations. Recently recognised by the United Nations for its pioneering work, the ICMR has developed life-changing devices such as SmartCane, a mobility aid for the visually impaired, and TacRead, an affordable digital text reader. Created in collaboration with IIT Delhi, these empower individuals to live with greater independence and dignity.

For an inclusive future

To bridge the gap between innovation and accessibility, ICMR has launched the National List of Essential Assistive Products, standardising and improving access to AT across India. Complemented by awareness efforts such as the public launch of assistive devices at IIT Delhi's National Centre for Assistive Health Technologies, these initiatives foster empowerment and dignity for persons with disabilities.

The journey from idea to implementation is often challenging, with many promising innovations struggling to secure funding. I once met a dedicated group of educators who had developed an interactive learning app for students with learning disabilities. Despite their passion and vision, they faced significant challenges in securing the funding to bring their idea to life. Fortunately, programmes such as the BIRAC-Social Alpha Quest for Assistive Technologies and the Attvaran India accelerator play a vital role by supporting startups focused on AT solutions. These initiatives not only provide funding but also offer mentorship to help refine and bring innovative ideas to the market. They ensure that financial constraints do not stand in the way of progress.

The possibilities for AT are immense. New frontiers such as Artificial Intelligence and other emerging technologies offer opportunities to create smarter, more adaptive solutions that cater to diverse needs. Moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, India is investing in customised, user-centric designs that empower individuals and communities alike. As we stride towards our vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, inclusivity and empowerment must guide our development agenda. Integrating rehabilitation into our health systems will not only enhance support for individuals with disabilities but also transform how they are perceived and valued.

The medals won by India's Paralympians show how athletic excellence can be assisted by the transformative power of science. The remind us of the science behind the medals and of the possibilities it offers. They inspire us to build a future where every person has the tools to achieve their dreams.

*Rajiv Bahl is Secretary, Department of Health Research, Government of India, and Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research*

# Joy, fear and anger — the BJP and INC's digital playbook

## Decoding the emotional strategies shaping voter engagement in the digital age of Indian elections

DATA POINT

**Abhishek Sharma**
**Vandita Gupta**

Social media platforms have been transformed into political battlegrounds, where the battle for the national and Assembly elections is not only being fought in rallies and speeches but also through the emotions and grammar of social media posts. Though the role of all social media platforms such as X and Instagram in shaping voters' decisions is still being debated, several studies have suggested a positive link between the use of Meta (formerly Facebook) for political campaigning and electoral victory. To examine the currency of political communication on social media, i.e., emotions, we examined the captions of the social media posts of the BJP and the Congress (INC) in the Haryana and Maharashtra Assembly elections in 2024. This study analyses the emotions and keywords in the captions of posts in the State-specific pages of both parties on Meta. The captions of social media posts are a clear highlight of their key messaging. The captions of 292 posts by the INC and 705 posts by the BJP from their Haryana pages, and the captions of 647 posts of the INC and 508 posts of the BJP from their Maharashtra pages, posted over a 20-day period (which ended on the day of polls in each State), have been examined. The analysis involved manually scraping Facebook posts followed by emotion classification using Hugging Face's Transformers library with the pre-trained model. To ensure accuracy, the results were manually cross-checked before further analysis.

Both parties strategically evoked and utilised various emotions through their posts on Meta. The captions of 2,152 posts across both parties and States were analysed for seven distinct types of emotions (**Table 1**). Posts that did not convey any emotion were classified as neutral. Neutral posts, primarily routine updates, were most prominent for the BJP in Haryana, at 43%. Joyful posts and anger featured moderately, while fear was at 9%. In Maharashtra, neutral posts dropped significantly, while joyful posts increased by 9%, signalling a focus on achievements. Anger rose slightly by 4%, and fear doubled to 18%, indicating a more emotionally charged and confrontational strategy (**Table 1**).

For the INC, neutral posts and joyful posts dominated in Haryana, with anger at 15% and fear relatively low. In Maharashtra, joyful posts saw a sharp 12% decline, while anger rose to 21% and fear increased by 6%. This shift highlights a stronger emphasis on criticising the BJP and alarming voters (**Table 1**).

Overall, the BJP adopted a more emotionally charged strategy in Maharashtra, while the INC balanced its tone in Haryana but became more combative in Maharashtra, highlighting strategy in each regional political landscape. For instance, the BJP used terms such as 'jihad', 'Naxals' and 'Hindutva' in Maharashtra while these were noticeably absent in their Haryana campaign. This highlights the communal and polarising rhetoric that the BJP employed in Maharashtra, while in Haryana, the party's focus was on 'farmers' and 'women'. To examine how the parties used three emotions – fear, anger, and joy – we analysed the caption keywords (**Table 2**). For fear, the BJP in Maharashtra emphasised women's issues and often evoked concerns about 'vote jihad', while in Haryana, it emphasised Dalit issues, youth and development. The INC relied on references to the Constitution, in Maharashtra, while in Haryana, it focused on the youth and unemployment. Under anger, the BJP highlighted farmers and Dalit issues in Haryana, while in Maharashtra, it leaned on women and development. The INC invoked anger through women and farmers issues in Maharashtra whereas the focus remained on Dalit and farmers in Haryana. Joy was primarily conveyed by the BJP through a focus on farmers in Maharashtra, while in Haryana, development and women were dominant. The INC laid emphasis on the youth in Haryana, and youth and farmers in Maharashtra to underscore joy.

It is also essential to examine how these emotions were perceived by those on the other side, as this might ultimately influence and shape the narrative. To gauge the potential impact, average engagement was calculated by adding up total likes and shares on posts that conveyed a particular emotion. The data highlight sharp differences in emotional engagement across parties and States. In Haryana, the INC's posts expressing sadness had the highest engagement, while the BJP's posts on surprise performed exceptionally well. In Maharashtra, the BJP led across all emotions, with joy, fear, and anger receiving significantly higher engagement compared to the INC. Notably, the INC's emotional posts in Haryana generally outperformed those in Maharashtra, while the BJP's emotional strategy in Maharashtra proved more effective, especially in driving impressions for joy, fear, and anger (**Table 3**).

The likes and shares today are often precursors to votes tomorrow. By analysing these digital footprints in over 2,000 social media posts, we uncovered the tactical use of emotions to drive engagement and influence voter sentiment. This shows how social media has transformed not only how elections are being fought but also how voters are being emotionally engaged and mobilised.

*Abhishek Sharma is a researcher at the Lokniti-CSDS and a candidate at the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. He focuses on political communication and digital democracy. Vandita Gupta is a researcher at the Lokniti-CSDS*

### Digital emotions

The tables are based on a study that analyses the emotions and keywords in the captions of posts in Meta by two major parties across two State Assembly elections

**Table 1:** Emotions in posts of the BJP and INC on Meta. Figures show % of posts

| Party | State | Neutral | Anger | Joy | Fear | Disgust | Sadness | Surprise |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BJP | Haryana | 43 | 12 | 26 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| | Maha. | 27 | 16 | 35 | 18 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| INC | Haryana | 36 | 15 | 30 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| | Maha. | 42 | 21 | 18 | 14 | 3 | 1 | 1 |

Maha. = Maharashtra

**Table 2:** Percentage of keywords associated with different emotions in posts

| Party | Fear | | Anger | | Joy | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Maha. | Haryana | Maha. | Haryana | Maha. | Haryana |
| BJP | Women (26%) | Youth (22%) | Women (29%) | Farmers (38%) | Farmers (37%) | Development (42%) |
| | Progress (20%) | Development (22%) | Development (21%) | Women (12%) | Development (22%) | Women (23%) |
| | Jihad (17%) | Dalit (29%) | Constitution (17%) | Dalit (23%) | Women (27%) | Farmers (15%) |
| | Constitution (11%) | Farmers (11%) | Progress (6%) | Youth (10%) | Progress (11%) | Youth (12%) |
| | Farmers (6%) | Women (9%) | Dalit (6%) | Development (9%) | Hindutva (2%) | Dalit (4%) |
| INC | Constitution (57%) | Youth (50%) | Women (34%) | Dalit (22%) | Youth (24%) | Youth (23%) |
| | Women (16%) | Unemployment (20%) | Farmers (27%) | Farmers (19%) | Farmers (20%) | Women (18%) |
| | Farmers (11%) | Dalit (10%) | Inflation (15%) | Youth (16%) | Constitution (16%) | Progress (15%) |
| | Hindutva (6%) | Inflation (10%) | Constitution (12%) | Progress (12%) | Women (15%) | Farmers (12%) |
| | Inflation (5%) | Constitution (10%) | Youth (4%) | Inflation (9%) | Progress (9%) | Development (9%) |

**Table 3:** Average engagement across emotions in posts

| Party | State | Sadness | Joy | Neutral | Fear | Anger | Disgust | Surprise |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BJP | Haryana | 434 | 296 | 260 | 301 | 327 | 444 | 595 |
| | Maha. | 1218 | 3781 | 3611 | 3259 | 3232 | 3074 | 1218 |
| INC | Haryana | 1561 | 93 | 111 | 882 | 441 | 82 | 54 |
| | Maha. | 366 | 294 | 117 | 165 | 178 | 226 | 588 |

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

**FIFTY YEARS AGO** DECEMBER 3, 1974

## Lok Sabha told of accord on Cauvery waters

New Delhi, Dec. 2: The Union Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, Mr. K.N. Singh, informed the Lok Sabha to-day that a consensus was reached at the recent conference of Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala on the setting up of the Cauvery Valley Authority to regulate supplies from the Cauvery and also monitor schemes for effecting savings and allocation of waters so saved amongst the various States on an agreed basis. A broad consensus also emerged regarding the quantum of water which can be saved and the manner in which it may be apportioned, he added.

The Deputy Minister did not give any further details but according to the draft agreement which is under study by the State Governments, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have agreed to effect a saving of 100 tmc ft. and 25 tmc ft. respectively from their present use, in a phased manner over a period of 15 years.

The 125 tmc ft. thus saved will, according to the draft agreement, be apportioned on the following basis: 2 tmc ft. each for the three States to meet industrial and domestic water supply needs and out of the balance 119 tmc ft. Tamil Nadu will get 2 tmc ft., Karnataka 85 tmc ft. and Kerala 32 tmc ft.

The present use has been assessed as 489 tmc ft. in Tamil Nadu, 177 tmc ft. in Karnataka and 5 tmc ft. in Kerala. The quantity of water surplus to the actual needs, based on the present use, in good years and deficit, in lean years will be shared pro-rata of their present use among the three States.

The proposed Cauvery Valley Authority will collect data on availability of water at various points and regulate the available supplies among the three States in such a way as to ensure most equitable distribution of waters without adversely affecting the needs of existing ayacuts.

**A HUNDRED YEARS AGO** DECEMBER 3, 1924

## Mail steamers

Bombay, Dec 2: The Anchor Line "Olympia" sailed for Liverpool from Bombay on the 28th ultimo. P. and O. Mail Steamer "Naldera" with mails from Bombay of the 22nd arrived Port Said at 9 p.m. on the 30th ultimo and left there at 1 a.m. the following day. Ellerman's City and Hall Line Steamer "City of Manchester" is due in Bombay on the 11th December.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### Number of migrants arrested at the U.S. borders

**47,700** The number of migrants caught illegally crossing the U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada fell in November, part of a months-long trend that undercuts Donald Trump's claim that illegal immigration is out of control. REUTERS

### The lawyers covered under CM Advocates Welfare Scheme

**31,000** The AAP government extended its ₹10 lakh health insurance coverage to 3,330 new lawyers under Chief Minister Advocates Welfare Scheme. The government is providing health insurance to over 27,000 lawyers in Delhi. PTI

### Number of days of judicial remand for Imran Khan

**14** An anti-terrorism court on Monday sent former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on a 14-day judicial remand in connection with seven cases related to the recent protests by his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. Khan was presented before the anti-terrorism court judge at Adiala jail. PTI

### Individuals arrested in Shimla under the NDPS Act so far

**557** Till November this year, the Shimla police had arrested 557 individuals in 237 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. This includes 21 females, 142 interstate drug operatives, and 35 Nepalese nationals. PTI

### The people killed in a football match stampede in Guinea

**56** At least 56 people were killed in "deadly stampedes" at a football match in Guinea's second-largest city of N'Zerekore. Protests of dissatisfaction with the referee's decisions led to stone-throwing by supporters. AFP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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# India's 'One Nation, One Subscription' plan

Is the global research ecosystem increasingly embracing open access publishing away from subscription-based models? What is an article processing charge? Do researchers own the copyrights of their work after it has been published in a journal? What are open access repositories?

EXPLAINER

Moumita Koley

**The story so far:**

The Union Cabinet approved the Indian government's 'One Nation, One Subscription' (ONOS) scheme on November 25. The ONOS promises to provide equitable access to scholarly journals in all public institutions.

**What does the ONOS entail?**

First mooted around 2018-2019, the scheme's ambitious rollout comes with a substantial financial outlay of ₹6,000 crore over three years (2025-2027), to be paid to 30 major international journal publishers. For perspective, the Indian public and its academic institutions collectively spend around ₹1,500 crore every year on journal subscriptions. This is a rough estimate and probably includes the cost of subscription to databases as well; if so, the current total public expense to access journals will be well lower than ₹2,000 crore per year.

At the outset, ONOS's promise to offer equitable access to research articles, irrespective of an institution's prestige or financial capacity, which seems like a step towards democratising knowledge. But a closer examination reveals complexities that call for deeper analysis.

**Is ONOS swimming against the tide?**

The central question is: why is India investing heavily in a subscription-based model at a time when the global research ecosystem is increasingly embracing Open-Access (OA) publishing?

In the subscription model, a journal receives manuscripts from scientists (about their studies, etc.), evaluates them through peer review, and accepts (or rejects) them. Once a paper is accepted, the journal publishes it and makes money by charging people and institutions to access it. OA refers to papers that are published to be freely accessible. There are different kinds of OA. A common type is called gold OA, where the journal makes money by charging authors an article processing charge (APC) to publish papers in the journal. The APC for a single paper has been known to be thousands of dollars. For example, *Nature Communications* charges $6,790 per paper. Scientific knowledge, as a public good, should ideally be accessible to all, especially when taxpayers fund it. The COVID-19 pandemic showed why it is important to have immediate and unrestricted access to research, not just for scientists but also for the people at large: to combat misinformation and drive informed decision-making.

Today, more than 53% of all scientific papers worldwide are open access in some way, according to data from Clarivate's Web Of Science platform. This is a significant increase since 2018-2019, when ONOS was first conceptualised, and raises questions about ONOS's financial prudence. If more than half of the research articles are freely accessible, should India not be paying significantly less for subscriptions than before? ONOS risks draining taxpayer money to achieve an obsolete good.

Some international developments further complicate the picture. The U.S. Office of Science and Technology Policy has mandated that from 2026, all publicly funded research articles must be freely accessible without any delay. Similarly, Horizon Europe, the European Union's flagship funding program, requires peer-reviewed publications resulting from its funding be made freely available online. Considering these moves, in another year a significant fraction of research produced worldwide is likely to be freely accessible to everyone.

This timeline raises questions about ONOS's relevance beyond 2025.

Source: Web of Science* The data only covers science, technology, engineering, and mathematics papers.

**What are the challenges of commercial publishing?**

The global scholarly publishing system is dominated by a handful of commercial publishers based in Western countries, and they have long been criticised for excessive subscription fees, inefficiencies resulting in delays in publishing articles, and resistance to innovation.

The scholarly publishing industry is built on publicly funded research. Researchers generate new knowledge, write their findings, and perform peer reviews – all without direct compensation from publishers. In the subscription model, these publishers charge exorbitant fees for access, creating a situation where public institutions must pay to access work they have already supported. Publisher profit margins often exceed 30%, revealing the exploitation implicit to scholarly publishing systems.

Even the shift towards OA has been dominated by gold OA and its high APCs. Many prominent journals in a few disciplines, such as biological science, have transitioned to become fully OA. Indian researchers wishing to publish in these journals will have to pay APCs since the allocation for ONOS doesn't provide for this fee. Moreover, most subscription journals are now hybrid, so researchers – especially from the U.S. and the EU – are paying APCs to publish their articles to be OA in these journals.

India, with its immense pool of talent and resources, has the potential to reimagine this publishing ecosystem, fostering innovation in the workflow. Especially when most of the backend work in the publishing industry is outsourced to India, the infrastructure and knowhow definitely exist in the national ecosystem. But ONOS risks entrenching the status quo by reinforcing reliance on Western publishers.

**What about copyright transfers?**

Another significant issue with the subscription model is the need for researchers to surrender their copyrights to publishers. This allows publishers to use their work without considering the authors' rights or consent. A recent controversy involving *Taylor & Francis* (T&F) and Microsoft exemplifies the extent of this problem. In early 2024, *T&F* had signed a deal allowing Microsoft to use its journal content to train artificial intelligence (AI) models. Since authors don't hold the copyright of their work, there is no need for permission from authors – yet they objected because the use of their work to train AI models was going unpaid. There is an urgent need for policies that protect researchers' intellectual property.

There are ways to address copyright violation concerns. Harvard University pioneered a policy in 2008 that granted the university a non-exclusive, irrevocable right to disseminate the work of university researchers. Researchers retained the right to self-archive their work in OA repositories. Many institutes like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Oxford followed suit. ONOS has the opportunity to emulate these models by incorporating a nationwide 'rights retention' policy, enabling Indian researchers to deposit their work in institutional repositories immediately after publication – a practice known as green open access.

India's own 2014 Open Access Policy requires researchers funded by the Departments of Biotechnology and of Science & Technology to make their work openly accessible – but its implementation has been lacklustre. The ONOS could have been the ideal platform to enforce this mandate, ensuring Indian research becomes globally accessible through open repositories immediately after publication.

**Is digital content preserved?**

Another issue is the long-term preservation of research articles, now that almost all major journals are published online. A recent study in the *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* reported that 28% of articles with Data Object Identifiers (DOIs) – unique IDs to identify published papers – aren't preserved, exposing gaps in current practices. The discontinuation of *Heterocycles*, a journal published by the Japan Institute of Heterocyclic Chemistry, in 2023 left around 17,000 articles inaccessible, highlighting the risks of relying solely on publishers to preserve scientific knowledge. In this case access was eventually restored, but the delay illustrates the need for solutions like self-archiving through green OA.

**Is self-reliance possible in publishing?**

In an era where self-reliance is a national priority, it has been overlooked in scholarly publishing. While Indian researchers may continue publishing in journals like *Nature, Science, Cell*, etc., significant potential exists to elevate Indian journals to world-class standards.

India has the resources and expertise to build a robust indigenous publishing ecosystem. Preprinting and data sharing should also be considered as an integral part of the publishing workflow (preprinting refers to a paper being published online before it has been peer-reviewed). By investing in infrastructure, editorial processes, and global visibility for Indian journals, the country can reduce its dependence on Western publishers and attract high-quality submissions from across the world. This is not just about the money being drained from our ecosystem: it's also about establishing India as a leader in science and innovation.

**What could ONOS have done?**

ONOS can be lauded for its ambition to democratise research access, but it should have addressed deeper structural issues plaguing scholarly publishing. There should have been parallel efforts to allow authors to retain copyright, implement OA through institutional repositories, and, importantly, improve self-reliance in scholarly publishing.

Given the allocation ONOS has received from the Indian government, it certainly had the potential to set a precedent for equitable and innovative publishing by addressing all the issues in parallel – yet it chose to overlook them. Without addressing these challenges, ONOS risks becoming a costly short-term fix. It is time to re-evaluate whether this initiative is a step forward or an expensive detour.

*Moumita Koley is a senior research analyst at Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.*

## THE GIST

- In the subscription model, a journal receives manuscripts from scientists (about their studies, etc.), evaluates them through peer review, and accepts (or rejects) them. Once a paper is accepted, the journal publishes it and makes money by charging people and institutions to access it.
- Open Access (OA) refers to papers that are published to be freely accessible. There are different kinds of OA. A common type is called gold OA, where the journal makes money by charging authors an article processing charge (APC) to publish papers in the journal. The APC for a single paper has been known to be thousands of dollars. For example, *Nature Communications* charges $6,790 per paper.
- ONOS can be lauded for its ambition to democratise research access, but it should have addressed deeper structural issues plaguing scholarly publishing. There should have been parallel efforts to allow authors to retain copyright, implemented OA through institutional repositories, and, most importantly, improved self-reliance in scholarly publishing.

KEYWORD

ISTOCKPHOTO

# Proudhon's theory of mutualism: a critique of capitalism and authoritarianism

Mutualism is seen as a form of libertarian socialism, balancing individual freedom with collective well-being. It offers a radical alternative to both capitalism and state socialism, promoting voluntary cooperation and mutual respect

Rebecca Rose Varghese

Mutualism is an economic and social theory that emphasises voluntary cooperation, reciprocity, and the fair exchange of goods and services. It advocates for a society where individuals and communities engage in cooperative ownership, decentralising and collectively managing productive resources like land or tools for the benefit of all. Such systems would be free from central authority and capitalist exploitation.

While property itself is not inherently exploitative in this theory, ownership of tools or land is acceptable, provided it does not lead to exploitation of others.

Unlike capitalism, which profits from labour exploitation, mutualism envisions a system where individuals and communities own resources for personal and collective benefit. It also promotes the idea of workers controlling the means of production through cooperatives or other voluntary associations, ensuring that production is driven by need, not profit. This model seeks to eliminate hierarchical power structures and promote equality and fairness in economic relations.

**Origins of the theory**

The term "mutualism" was coined by French philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in the mid-19th century as part of his broader critique of capitalism and authoritarianism. While Proudhon is often remembered for his declaration, "Property is theft!" in his seminal work *What is Property?* (1840), his philosophy was more complex. Mutualism was not a call for the outright abolition of property but for its reimagining into a system that serves collective well-being and fairness.

Proudhon was influenced by a secret society of weavers, known as the 'Mutualists', who he encountered during his time in Lyon in 1843. These workers advocated for worker-led cooperative production, envisioning a society where factories and resources could be run by associations of workers. They believed in transforming society through peaceful economic action rather than violent revolution, challenging the centralised political traditions of Jacobinism. Deeply inspired by their ideas, Proudhon adopted the term "mutualism" as a tribute to these working-class visionaries. His adaptation of their ideals sought to build a decentralised society where cooperation and reciprocity replaced exploitation and domination.

**Mutualism and property**

Proudhon's approach to property is central to mutualist philosophy. While he condemned capitalist property for enabling exploitation and monopolisation, he did not call for the complete elimination of ownership. Instead, he distinguished between "property," which allowed control over others, and "possession," where individuals could use resources for personal benefit without infringing on others' freedoms. This distinction is crucial to understanding mutualism, as it emphasises a form of ownership based on usage rather than accumulation and profit.

Mutualism rejected property rights imposed by the state that perpetuated inequality and exploitation. It advocated for a decentralised system of voluntary and equitable exchanges rooted in reciprocity. Mechanisms like worker cooperatives and shared resources were central to aligning ownership with fairness and collective well-being. By balancing individual freedom with collective solidarity, Proudhon's theory sought to challenge the entrenched hierarchies of both capitalism and the state.

**Mutualism and anarchism**

Rejecting state-enforced property rights, mutualism also connects closely with anarchism, particularly in the debate between individualist and social anarchism. Individual anarchists emphasise personal autonomy and freedom, focusing on the liberation of the individual from state control, while social anarchists advocate for the collective management of resources and the organisation of society to promote equality and fairness. Proudhon's work occupies a unique space between these two schools of thought.

While some early anarchists saw mutualism as a form of individualist anarchism, emphasising personal freedom and the right to possess one's tools and land, others interpreted it as a more socialist form of anarchism, in which mutual cooperation and the collective management of resources were key. The tension between these interpretations arose from Proudhon's view that the state, by its very nature, was coercive and counterproductive to the freedom of the individual. However, Proudhon was not opposed to all forms of collective organisation. He argued that a mutualist society could be organised without a state, based on cooperative principles where people freely enter into contracts and mutual exchanges, thus blending both individual freedom and collective responsibility.

**The collective and the individual**

The emphasis on cooperative associations, mutual credit systems, and workers' control over production demonstrates the connection between mutualism and the collective. These ideas aim to foster economic and social environments based on mutual aid and cooperation, rather than competition and exploitation. Mutualism is also inherently tied to the human need for cooperation. By organising society and the economy on the basis of shared interests and reciprocity, mutualism seeks to build a society where individuals are free to pursue their own interests while maintaining a sense of community and mutual respect.

In *General Labour History of Africa: Workers, Employers and Governments, 20th-21st Centuries,* Stefano Bellucci and Andreas Eckert discuss how traditional African societies embodied mutualistic principles. In these communities, communal land ownership and collective labour were the norms, with resources shared and production aimed at the collective good. This reflects mutualism's focus on reciprocity and equitable distribution. The chapter on African mutualism contrasts it with neoliberalism, noting that mutualism promotes shared ownership, fair compensation, and cooperation, while neoliberalism fosters inequality. It also explores the role of governments in either supporting or hindering mutualistic practices across the continent.

Mutualism was also seen as a form of libertarian socialism, balancing individual freedom with collective well-being. It offered a radical alternative to both capitalism and state socialism, promoting voluntary cooperation and mutual respect without centralised power or hierarchy.

**Critiques of the theory**

While mutualism holds significant revolutionary potential, it has faced critiques on several fronts. One major critique is that its reliance on small-scale property ownership may not sufficiently challenge the capitalist system's broader structural inequalities. Critics argue that mutualism fails to address the concentration of wealth and power that is intrinsic to modern capitalist economies. Furthermore, some question the feasibility of creating an egalitarian society based on voluntary cooperation, suggesting that it may be too idealistic or difficult to implement on a large scale.

Marxist critics contend that mutualism does not sufficiently address the core issues of capitalism, such as exploitation and inequality, and fails to dismantle capitalist relations of production. They argue that Proudhon's defence of small property owners and opposition to collectivism overlooks the realities of class struggle, where small producers are squeezed out by larger corporations.

Despite these criticisms, mutualism remains a radical theory that offers an alternative to both capitalist exploitation and authoritarianism. While it may not have fully resolved the challenges of inequality and exploitation, it continues to be a significant concept in the history of anarchist and socialist thought.

*The writer is a freelance journalist.*

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

## The second Test between India and Australia, at the Adelaide Oval, starts on December 6. Here is a quiz on the 22 Day and Night Test matches played so far

Soorya Prakash. N

**QUESTION 1**
Which country has hosted the most number of Day and Night Test matches after Australia?

**QUESTION 2**
Which non-Test playing country has hosted Day and Night Test matches?

**QUESTION 3**
Which country has played in most Day and Night Test matches after Australia?

**QUESTION 4**
Who has scored the most runs and most hundreds in the 22 Day and Night Test matches held so far?

**QUESTION 5**
Who has picked up the most wickets in the 22 Day and Night Test matches held so far?

**QUESTION 6**
Who holds the best bowling figures in an innings?

**QUESTION 7**
Who is the only bowler to pick up five or more wickets in each innings of a Day and Night Test match and thus holds the best bowling figures in a test match?

**QUESTION 8**
What is common to the Day and Night Test matches held between South Africa and Zimbabwe at Port Elizabeth in December 2017 and between India and England at Ahmedabad in February 2021?

**QUESTION 9**
Ashad Shafiq in December 2016 and Jason Holder in June 2018 won Player of the Match award in the respective Day and Night Test matches. What is the connection between their achievements?

**Visual question:**
Identify the players and the connection between their feats. AP, AFP

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. This physicist was the scientific leader of Chicago Pile-1. **Ans: Enrico Fermi**
2. This person was the only woman present when the Chicago Pile-1 went critical. **Ans: Leona Woods**
3. Otto Frisch and this scientist explained a phenomenon in 1938. **Ans: Lise Meitner**
4. American efforts to develop an atomic weapon succeeded because they realised the graphite shouldn't have any atoms of this particular element. **Ans: Boron**
5. Until 1957, the University of Chicago had a football field called the _____ _____. **Ans: Stagg Field**
Visual: Name the world's second artificial nuclear reactor. **Ans: X-10 Graphite Reactor**
**Early Birds:** K.N. Viswanathan| Bharath Viswanathan| Navtosh Arun| Arun Kumar Singh| Parimal Das

FROM THE ARCHIVES

## *Know your English*

K. Subrahmanian Upendran

"Tendulkar is such an excellent cricketer. I often compare myself to him."

"Really? Do you think you're as good a player?"

"Certainly not. He's far superior."

"In that case, you're not comparing yourself 'to' him, but 'with' him."

"You mean there's a difference between 'compare to' and compare with'?"

"Yes. When you say that you're comparing something or someone 'to' something or someone, it means that you think they are in the same class. You're suggesting that there is a likeness between the two objects or persons."

"So when I compare myself to Tendulkar, it implies that I think I'm as good as Tendulkar."

"Exactly. Here are a few more examples. Rajeev's running style is compared often to a cheetah's. As a writer, he is frequently compared to Wodehouse."

"So 'compare to' indicates similarities. What about 'compare with'?"

"When you look for both similarities and differences, you compare something with something else."

"I see. When you compare X 'with' Y, it means they are in the same league?"

"No. it doesn't. X can be better or worse than Y. You can, for example, compare Milton's style with Wordsworth's. You can compare the media in India with the media in the United States. Barzun captures the distinction between 'compare to' and 'compare with' beautifully. 'Any writer can compare himself with Shakespeare and discover how far he falls short: if he compares himself to Shakespeare, then he had better think again'."

'That's a wonderful example. I think I'll copy it down and give it to Gopal. He thinks he's the next Shakespeare."

"He does?"

"He sure does. That good-for-nothing thinks he knows..."

"Stop it. Stop it. I don't want you to bad-mouth Gopal."

"Bad-mouth Gopal! What does it mean?"

"If you bad-mouth someone, it means you deliberately say uncomplimentary things about him in order to damage his reputation. Because of intense competition, cinema stars often tend to bad-mouth one another."

"And you are one of those who think it's not good to bad-mouth people."

"That's right. Besides, why is it that every time Gopal's name is mentioned, you fly off the handle?"

"Fly off the handle?"

" 'Fly off the handle' is an informal expression meaning to 'suddenly and completely lose your temper'. Whenever his team lost, the coach flew off the handle. When Saritha heard she hadn't got the raise, she flew off the handle."

"And whenever I see Gopal or hear his name mentioned, I fly off the handle."

*Published in The Hindu on April 12, 1994.*

## Word of the day

**Victuals:**
a stock or supply of foods; a source of materials to nourish the body; any substance that can be used as food

Synonyms: aliment, nourishment, nutrition, sustenance, provisions

Usage: *I cooked up some victuals for them.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/victualspro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈvɪtəlz/

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

## INBRIEF

### RBI lifts loan disbursal curbs on Sachin Bansal-led fintech

Fintech firm Navi Finserv Ltd. said on Monday that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has lifted the restrictions on its lending operations with immediate effect. The firm had addressed deficiencies and revamped processes and systems to RBI's satisfaction, it said. The firm's CEO Sachin Bansal said they were "committed to ensuring enduring compliance, especially with respect to fairness on loan pricing", and maintaining the highest governance standards.

### Stocks of six Adani Group slide; Adani Total Gas dips 5%

Shares of six Adani firms ended lower on Monday with Adani Total Gas falling almost 5% to ₹772 on the BSE while Adani Energy Solutions tanked 4.04% to ₹806.60. NDTV slid 1.29%, Adani Wilmar by 1.23%, Adani Power by 1% and Adani Enterprises by 0.28%. In the morning, Adani Green Energy jumped 9% after group chairman Gautam Adani committed to compliance. The stock surged to ₹1,445 but gave up most of the early gains and ended at ₹1,327.95, up 0.26%. PTI

### Shares in major Adani group investor GQG plunge

Shares of Australian-listed GQG Partners tumbled 13% on Monday after UBS downgraded the stock and said the firm may have lost A$600 million ($390 million) in funds under management in the two days following the indictment of Adani Group executives. GQG is a major backer of Adani Group, whose founder Gautam Adani and seven company associates have been indicted by U.S authorities on bribery charges. The Adani Group says the allegations are baseless. REUTERS

# Winter Chill: Bangladesh halves power purchase from Adani Power amid dispute

While both sides differ on pending dues, Adani Power had cut supplies to Bangladesh over payment delays; Bangladesh has now told Adani it needed only half the power this winter

**Reuters**
DHAKA

Bangladesh halved the power it buys from Adani Power, citing lower winter demand, government officials told *Reuters*, amid disagreements over dues running into hundreds of millions of dollars.

Adani Power, whose founder has been accused by U.S. authorities of being involved in a bribery scheme in India, halved supply to Bangladesh on October 31 over payment delays as the country battles a foreign exchange shortage. Subsequently, Bangladesh told the firm to keep supplying only half the power for now, officials said, although it will keep paying its old dues.

"We were shocked and angry when they cut our supply," said Md. Rezaul Karim, chairperson of the state-run Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB). "Winter demand is now down, so we have told them there is no need to run both units of the plant," he said.

Adani has been supplying power under a 25-year contract signed in 2017 under ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, from a $2-billion power plant in India's eastern State of Jharkhand that has two units, each with capacity of about 800 megawatts.

**Pricey deal:** Adani Power charges the highest rate among all Indian suppliers to the country. REUTERS

A document seen by *Reuters* showed the plant ran at only 41.82% capacity in November, the lowest this year, with one unit shut since November 1.

Two BPDB sources said Bangladesh had bought about 1,000 MW a month from Adani last winter, adding Adani had asked the board when it would resume normal purchases, but had not received a definitive answer.

**'No sign of pact review'**

An Adani Power spokesperson said the firm was continuing supply to Bangladesh, although mounting dues were a significant concern, making plant operations unsustainable.

"We are in constant dialogue with senior officials of BPDB and the government, who have assured us that our dues will be cleared soon," said the spokesperson.

The firm was confident Bangladesh would fulfil its commitments, just as Adani had upheld its contract obligations, he added.

Mr. Karim said Bangladesh owed Adani about $650 million and paid about $85 million last month and $97 million in October. An Adani Power source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the dues had jumped to about $900 million, hurting its debt profile and risking a higher cost of funds.

Bangladesh wants to sharply lower prices under the Adani deal, unless it is cancelled by a court, which has called for an investigation into it, the de facto Minister for Power and energy told *Reuters*.

The Adani Power spokesperson said the firm had no indication that Bangladesh was reviewing its power purchase pact.

Adani charges the highest rate of all Indian suppliers to Bangladesh, a government document seen by *Reuters* showed.

Its cost per unit was 14.87 taka during the fiscal year that ended June 30 compared with an average of 9.57 for all Indian suppliers. The retail price in Bangladesh is 8.95 taka a unit, leading to an annual power subsidy bill of 320 billion taka ($2.7 billion).

"Because the prices are high, the government has to subsidise," said Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, Bangladesh's power and energy adviser. "We would like power prices, not only from Adani, to come down below average retail prices," he elaborated.

## Govt. scraps windfall tax on domestic crude oil, export of fuels

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

The government scrapped 30-month old windfall tax on domestically-produced crude oil and export of jet fuel (ATF), diesel and petrol following a decline in international oil prices.

Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary tabled a notification in Rajya Sabha scrapping the levy on crude oil produced by firms like State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and exports of fuels done by companies like Reliance Industries.

The notification rescinded the June 30, 2022 order and withdrew levy of special additional excise duty on crude oil (which is refined into fuels like petrol and diesel) and export of aviation turbine fuel (ATF), diesel and petrol, he said.

Alongside, the road and infrastructure cess on petrol and diesel exports has been withdrawn.

India first imposed windfall profit taxes on July 1, 2022 joining nations that tax super normal profits of energy companies.

At that time, export duties of ₹6 a litre each were levied on petrol and ATF and ₹13 a litre on diesel. A ₹23,250 per tonne windfall tax on domestic crude output was also imposed.

The government had garnered about ₹25,000 crore through the levy in the first year of its implementation, ₹13,000 crore in 2023-24 and ₹6,000 crore so far this year.

## MARKETS

### MARKET WATCH

| | MONDAY | % CHANGE |
|---|---|---|
| Sensex | 80,248 | 0.56% |
| US Dollar | 84.72 | -0.14 |
| Gold | 79,200 | -0.25 |
| Brent oil | 71.68 | — |

### NIFTY 50

| | PRICE | CHANGE |
|---|---|---|
| Adani Enter | 2457.05 | -6.10 |
| Adani Ports | 1215.80 | 25.75 |
| Apollo Hosp | 7065.80 | 236.90 |
| Asian Paints | 2479.05 | -0.55 |
| Axis Bank | 1137.10 | 0.80 |
| Bajaj Auto | 9130.35 | 96.70 |
| Bajaj Finserv | 1596.65 | 16.70 |
| Bajaj Finance | 6650.65 | 74.75 |
| Bharat Elec | 306.90 | -1.10 |
| Bharti Airtel | 1643.60 | 16.45 |
| BPCL | 294.15 | 2.05 |
| Britannia Ind | 4907.25 | -33.90 |
| Cipla | 1507.70 | -26.20 |
| Coal India | 421.70 | 5.30 |
| Dr Reddys Lab | 1221.75 | 19.45 |
| Eicher Motors | 4820.70 | -11.15 |
| Grasim Ind | 2693.55 | 87.30 |
| HCL Tech | 1871.50 | 23.45 |
| HDFC Bank | 1804.70 | 8.65 |
| HDFC Life | 640.20 | -17.55 |
| Hero MotoCorp | 4748.45 | -13.25 |
| Hindalco | 662.60 | 6.40 |
| Hind Unilever | 2479.15 | -17.00 |
| ICICI Bank | 1304.65 | 4.55 |
| IndusInd Bank | 990.95 | -4.90 |
| Infosys | 1879.80 | 21.95 |
| ITC | 477.20 | 0.45 |
| JSW Steel | 989.80 | 23.80 |
| Kotak Bank | 1753.95 | -11.30 |
| L&T | 3704.05 | -20.75 |
| M&M | 3016.40 | 50.30 |
| Maruti Suzuki | 11239.30 | 165.10 |
| NestleIndia | 2251.85 | 17.20 |
| NTPC | 358.20 | -5.45 |
| ONGC | 257.55 | 0.85 |
| PowerGrid Corp | 327.85 | -1.55 |
| Reliance Ind | 1309.15 | 16.95 |
| SBI Life | 1422.05 | -15.70 |
| State Bank | 836.40 | -2.55 |
| Shriram Finance Ltd. | 3094.20 | 74.55 |
| Sun Pharma | 1808.55 | 27.65 |
| TataConsumerProduct | 957.00 | -1.65 |
| Tata Motors | 790.05 | 3.60 |
| Tata Steel | 146.41 | 1.87 |
| TCS | 4276.65 | 5.80 |
| Tech Mahindra | 1745.95 | 33.65 |
| Titan | 3306.85 | 57.85 |
| Trent Ltd. | 6805.30 | 9.90 |
| UltraTech Cement | 11648.55 | 446.40 |
| Wipro | 584.55 | 6.70 |

### EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on December 02

| CURRENCY | TT BUY | TT SELL |
|---|---|---|
| US Dollar | 84.50 | 84.82 |
| Euro | 88.90 | 89.24 |
| British Pound | 107.36 | 107.77 |
| Japanese Yen (100) | 56.25 | 56.47 |
| Chinese Yuan | 11.61 | 11.66 |
| Swiss Franc | 95.40 | 95.77 |
| Singapore Dollar | 62.80 | 63.04 |
| Canadian Dollar | 60.22 | 60.45 |
| Malaysian Ringitt | 18.95 | 19.04 |
| Australian Dollar | 54.87 | 55.08 |

Source:Indian Bank

# NBFC advances to personal loans, MFIs to reduce: CRISIL

**The Hindu Bureau**
MUMBAI

Unsecured loans given by non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and credit to microfinance segments, which account for 23% of the overall NBFC assets under management (AUM), are expected to be impacted the most in the current and next fiscals, according to CRISIL Ratings' outlook.

"Recent regulatory pronouncements have brought to the fore the criticality of compliance – both in letter and spirit – and operational risk management," said Krishnan Sitaraman, chief ratings officer, CRISIL Ratings. "Additionally, asset quality metrics are weakening in the past few quarters in some segments. This has necessitated a recalibration of growth strategies, especially in unsecured loans and microfinance," he said.

**Unsecured lending reported rapid growth in the past three fiscals at a CAGR of 45%**

Unsecured lending reported rapid growth in the past three fiscals at a CAGR of 45% and has become the third largest component of the overall NBFC AUM. "But that pace is seen moderating to 15-16% in this and next fiscals," he added.

The microfinance segment is facing asset quality headwinds, so its growth is expected to be muted this fiscal, with a cautious recovery pencilled in for next fiscal. That compares with 25% growth last fiscal, the rating agency said.

According to CRISIL Ratings, the growth in AUM of NBFCs is expected to moderate to 15-17% in the current and next fiscals, a 600-800 basis points (bps) decline from a strong 23% growth seen last fiscal, as they navigate the dynamics of the evolving operating and regulatory environments and recalibrate strategies.

## MPC to kick off interest rate cuts this week: Nomura

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

In contrast to most experts' expectations that the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) would hold off on interest rate cuts in this week's policy review in view of high inflation, Nomura's economists said on Monday they expect the panel to start slashing rates at its December 6 review and pare them by 100 basis points in this cycle. One basis point equals 0.01%.

In a research note, Nomura Securities' economists Sonal Varma and Aurodeep Nandi also lowered the 2024-25 GDP growth forecast from 6.7% to 6%, and also downgraded next year's growth prospects to 5.9% from 6.8% projected earlier. The update comes in the wake of GDP growth tumbling to 5.4% in the July to September quarter (Q2), from 6.7% in the first quarter of this fiscal year.

"Slowing consumption and investment growth amid tepid government spending suggest that domestic growth engines are sputtering," the economists said.

The Nomura India Composite Leading Index points to the start of a longer cyclical slowdown, they noted.

"The moderation reflects a mix of transient factors like a long-drawn monsoon, a pre-festive demand lull and a struggling pace of public capex, which should reverse, as well as more endemic factors such as the ebbing of post-pandemic pent-up demand, slowing income growth, the RBI's macroprudential tightening and weak private capex," they averred.

## Panel preparing new base year for national accounts: Minister

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

A panel comprising representatives of the Reserve Bank, Centre and State governments as well as academia has been set up to revise the base year of national accounts or GDP from 2011-12 to 2022-23, Parliament was informed.

The government has decided to update the base year for compilation of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 2011-12 to 2022-23, said the Minister of State for Statistics & Programme Implementation Rao Indjerjit Singh in a reply to Rajya Sabha.

He informed the House that the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics (ACNAS) has been constituted for identification of new data sources and to advise on the methodology for compilation of National Accounts Statistics in the revised series.

He said steps such as the constitution of ACNAS and standardisation of data structure to boost harmonised quality reporting across the National Statistical System are meant to improve statistical system.

## Q-com did not hit kirana: Zepto CEO

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

Fresh out of a bumper $350 million funding, this time from marquee domestic investors, quick commerce company Zepto says it is on a clear path to becoming a fully Indian-owned entity and hitting a PAT-positive milestone, with co-founder and CEO Aadit Palicha optimistic about a possible 2025 IPO.

Mr. Palicha strongly countered allegations about the quick commerce model disrupting and stunting the growth of traditional kirana stores. He asserted these 'narratives' are not grounded in real data and underrate the 'net positives' achieved so far by the industry, including job creation.

Aadit Palicha

The 10-minute delivery models like that of Zepto had generated lakhs of jobs, been wage-additive, and created all-around 'value' for consumers and workers, he argued.

## Power usage rose 5% to 125.44 billion units in Nov.

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

India's power consumption rose 5.14% to 125.44 billion units (BU) in November as compared with the year-ago month.

In November 2023, electricity consumption was 119.30 GW, according to the government data.

The highest supply in a day (peak power demand met) also rose marginally to 207.42 GW in November 2024 from 204.56 GW in the year-ago period.

The peak power demand touched an all-time high of about 250 GW in May this year.

The previous all-time high peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023.

## From 31-month low in October, credit growth may pick up

**Ashokamithran T.**
MUMBAI

After slowing to a 31-month low uptick of 11.5% in October, non-food credit is expected to recover a tad in coming months to register a 11% to 14% uptick through 2024-25, but this will still remain sharply lower than the 20.2% growth recorded last year, economists at two leading public sector banks said.

While the central bank's regulatory crackdown on non-banking finance companies' credit and unsecured lending was reflected in a slowdown in retail and services sector lending, housing, education and vehicle loans also moderated, said Bank of Baroda economist Aditi Gupta. Credit to industry was a tad higher than last October at 7.9%, but still marked the lowest growth in six months. For medium and large enterprises credit growth improved year-on-year to 19.6% and 6%, respectively, in October, while credit to micro and small enterprises grew just 10%, the slowest this fiscal year and more than half the 16.5% rise recorded last October. SBI economists reckon credit and deposit growth this year will be in the range of 11% to 12%.

Ms. Gupta expects credit growth to improve in the next few months as government capex and festive demand may fuel an economic recovery, and consumption could improve as inflation recedes.

## GST authorities slap ₹722-crore evasion case on crypto firm Binance's unit: MoS Finance

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

GST authorities have booked a ₹722.43-crore tax evasion case against crypto exchange and Binance Group Company, Nest Services Ltd., Parliament was informed on Monday.

In total, cases have been booked against 17 cryptocurrency exchanges for GST evasion of ₹824.14 crore. Recovery of ₹122.29 crore in interest, penalty and taxes has been made by GST authorities, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a reply in the Lok Sabha.

Central GST formations have detected ₹40.51 crore GST evasion by Zanmai Labs Pvt. Ltd. (WAZIRX), ₹16.84 crore by CoinDCX and ₹14.13 crore by CoinSwitch Kuber.

**In action:** In total, cases were booked against 17 cryptocurrency exchanges for GST evasion of ₹824.14 crore, says Chaudhary. ANI

As many as four investors in virtual digital assets have been investigated by the Central GST authorities and ₹1.76 crore evasion has been detected. ₹2.40 crore has been recovered in taxes, penalty and interest.

Mr. Chaudhary said a total of 47 Virtual Digital Asset Service Providers (VDA SPs) have been registered as Reporting Entities with Financial Intelligence Unit-India under the Prevention of Moneylaundering Act, 2002 till date.

## Audi to hike prices by 3% from Jan. on input-cost rise

**The Hindu Bureau**
MUMBAI

Audi India has decided to increase ex-showroom prices of all its models by 3%, citing an increase in transportation and input costs. The new prices will be effective from January 1.

"The correction is essential for Audi India and our dealer partners to ensure sustainable growth. We remain committed to minimising the impact of the price hike on our valued customers," said Balbir Singh Dhillon, head of Audi India.

This is the third luxury car brand after Mercedes Benz and BMW to hike prices. Audi had sold 3,389 units in the nine months ended September 30.

# 'Don't use us to dodge tariffs'

**Bypass route:** Chinese firms 'rebadge' their products via Malaysia to avoid U.S. tariffs. REUTERS

**Reuters**
KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia has urged Chinese companies to refrain from using it as a base to "rebadge" products to avoid U.S. tariffs, its deputy trade minister said on Monday, amid increasing export restrictions and concerns of a U.S.-China trade war.

Washington is expected to further curb exports to Chinese semiconductor toolmakers and sales of certain chipmaking equipment, including products manufactured in Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan, sources have told Reuters.

Malaysia is a major player in the semiconductor industry, accounting for 13% of global testing and packaging, and is seen as well placed to grab further business in the sector as Chinese chip firms diversify overseas for assembling needs.

"Over the past year or so... I have been advising many businesses from China not to invest in Malaysia if they were merely thinking of rebadging their products via Malaysia to avoid U.S. tariffs," Malaysia's deputy trade minister Liew Chin Tong told a forum on Monday.

He did not specify the types of businesses.

Mr. Liew said regardless of whether the U.S. had a Democratic or Republican administration, the world's largest economy would impose tariffs, as seen in the solar panel sector.

Washington imposed tariffs on solar exports from Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Cambodia—home to factories owned by Chinese firms—last year and expanded them in October following complaints from manufacturers in the United States.

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to slap an additional 10% tariff on all Chinese imports when he takes office on Jan. 20.

# Global push for cooperation as space traffic crowds Earth orbit

More than 14,000 satellites including some 3,500 inactive surround the globe in low Earth orbit alongside 120 million pieces of debris from launches; yet there is no centralised system that all space-faring nations can leverage and even persuading them to use such a system has many obstacles

NEWS ANALYSIS

**Reuters**
BENGALURU

The rapid increase in satellites and space junk will make low Earth orbit unusable unless companies and countries cooperate and share the data needed to manage that most accessible region of space, experts and industry insiders said.

A United Nations panel on space traffic coordination in late October determined that urgent action was necessary and called for a comprehensive shared database of orbital objects as well as an international framework to track and manage them.

More than 14,000 satellites including some 3,500 inactive surround the globe in low Earth orbit, showed data from U.S.-based Slingshot Aerospace. Alongside those are about 120 million pieces of debris from launches, collisions and wear-and-tear of which only a few thousand are large enough to track.

"There's no time to lose on space traffic coordination. With so many objects being launched into space, we have to do everything we can to ensure space safety, and that means facilitating the sharing of information between operators, be they public or private, in order to avoid collisions," said panel co-chair Aarti Holla-Maini, director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

**Setting rules:** A global effort is essential to develop enforceable rules akin to air traffic rules. REUTERS

Low Earth orbit must remain safe to prevent costly disruption to the technology behind global communication, navigation and scientific exploration, she further said.

Yet there is no centralised system that all space-faring nations can leverage and even persuading them to use such a system has many obstacles. Whereas some countries are willing to share data, others fear compromising security, particularly as satellites are often dual-use and include defence purposes. Moreover, enterprises are keen to guard commercial secrets.

> With so many objects being launched into space, we have to do everything we can to ensure space safety
>
> **AARTI HOLLA-MAINI**
> Director, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs

In the meantime, the mess multiplies. A Chinese rocket stage exploded in August, adding thousands of fragments of debris to low Earth orbit. In June, a defunct Russian satellite exploded, scattering thousands of shards which forced astronauts on the International Space Station to take shelter for an hour.

Low Earth orbit is the region most congested with human-made objects as it offers a balance between cost and proximity, making it a prime target for the rapidly growing commercial space sector. It has also seen a 17% rise in close approaches per satellite over the past year, Slingshot data showed.

### Risky business

Projections point to tens of thousands more satellites entering orbit in the coming years. The potential financial risk of collisions is likely to be $556 million over five years, based on a modelled scenario with a 3.13% annual collision probability and $111 million in yearly damages, said Montreal-based NorthStar Earth & Space.

Low Earth orbit is densely packed, with bands such as the one for satellite internet service Starlink from commercial space company SpaceX—at an altitude of 540-570 km (336-354 miles). As of Nov. 27, Starlink had 6,764 satellites in orbit, Jonathan's Space Report showed.

SpaceX data showed Starlink satellites performed nearly 50,000 collision-avoidance manoeuvres in the first half of 2024, about double the previous six months.

The European Space Agency, which has fewer spacecraft than SpaceX, said in 2021 its manoeuvres have increased to three or four times per craft versus a historical average of one.

Expired satellites add to the clutter as they stay in orbit until they fall into—and burn up in—Earth's atmosphere years later or are flown to a "graveyard orbit" some 36,000 kilometres away.

Russia drew global criticism in November 2021 when it test fired a missile at a defunct satellite in orbit, creating thousands of fragments of debris. Russia invaded Ukraine three months after the test.

"The potential for conflicts between states has been on a steep rise in the recent past. If these extend to space it could complicate the outer space environment. We urgently need common global rules for coordination," said Anirudh Sharma, CEO of Bengaluru-based Digantara, which specialises in space situational awareness.

Global cooperation is essential to developing enforceable rules akin to those used by the International Civil Aviation Organization for air traffic, industry experts told Reuters.

Such effort would involve the use of existing tools, such as databases, telescopes, radars and other sensors to track objects while improving coverage, early detection and data precision.

Yet geopolitical tension and reluctance to share data with nations deemed unfriendly as well as commercial concerns over protecting proprietary information and competitive advantages remain significant barriers.

That leaves operators of orbital equipment relying on informal or semi-formal methods of avoiding collisions, such as drawing on data from the U.S. Space Force or groups like the Space Data Association. However, this can involve issues such as accountability and inconsistent data standards.

"The top challenges are speed—as consensus-building takes time—and trust," Ms. Holla-Maini said. "Some countries simply can't communicate with others, but the U.N. can facilitate this process."

## Auto headwinds

**Trouble at Volkswagen:** An employee of German car maker Volkswagen (VW) demonstrates in front of the VW plant in Zwickau, eastern Germany, on December 2, as thousands of workers go on strike nationwide. VW has been hit hard by high manufacturing costs at home, a stuttering shift to electric vehicles and tough competition in key market China. It has announced a plan to cut billions of dollars in costs. AFP

# Japan's 2-year bond yield hits 16-year high on BOJ rate hike bets

**Reuters**
TOKYO

Japan's two-year government bond yield hit a 16-year high on Monday as comments from the Bank of Japan's governor drove bets for the central bank to hike interest rates as soon as this month.

BOJ Governor Kazuo Ueda said the timing of the next interest rate hike was "approaching", as the economy was moving in line with the central bank's forecasts, the Nikkei newspaper reported on Saturday, leaving open the chance of a December rate increase.

The two-year JGB yield rose 3 basis points (bps) to 0.625%, its highest level since Oct. 2008.

**Arriving soon:** BOJ's Governor said the economy was moving in line with the central bank's forecasts. REUTERS

"The yields rose on the comments from BOJ Governor Ueda because they have not changed much since then," said Miki Den, senior Japan rate strategist at SMBC Nikko Securities.

Mr. Ueda, however, also said the BOJ wanted to scrutinise developments in the U.S. economy, as there was a "big question mark" on its outlook, such as the fallout from President-elect Donald Trump's proposed tariff hikes, according to the Nikkei.

"Ueda probably does not know whether to raise rates yet. He may want to see the outcome of the U.S. Fed's meeting," said Mr. Den, adding that the BOJ is nervous about the market reaction to its decision.

The BOJ's surprise rate increase in July jolted the market, sending the Nikkei share average falling 12% in a single day on Aug. 5.

"Whether the Fed cuts rates or not, the BOJ wants to see how the market reacts to the Fed's decision," he said.

Japan's five-year yield rose 3 bps to 0.75%, before retreating to 0.745%. The 20-year JGB yield rose 1.5 basis points to 1.865%.

# How Italy's tax system got rigged to benefit the rich

**Reuters**
ROME

Italy's tax system is skewed in a way that lets society's wealthiest 7% pay proportionately less tax than low and middle-income earners, a new study shows, fuelling inequality and hurting public finances in one of Europe's most indebted nations.

In advanced countries, the rich, helped by financial advisers and low levies on investments, find ways to maximise returns on capital and reduce their tax bills, and the top 1-2% often pay proportionally less than those below them. But in Italy the distortions kick in much earlier on the income and wealth scale, according to the study by five economists including former Treasury official Alessandro Santoro.

The paper, which has triggered a debate in the euro zone's third-largest economy, shows the system is regressive not just for the top 1-2% but for the top 7%, involving medium-high salaries as well as the super-rich.

Progressive taxation means the more you have the more you pay as a proportion of your earnings and assets. The system becomes regressive when this principle is reversed.

"There is evidence that regressivity in Italy is remarkable compared with similar economies and affects incomes above 76,000 euros ($80,000) with wealth of about 450,000 euros," Mr. Santoro told Reuters.

**Creamy layer:** Italy's tax system is regressive not just for the top 1-2% but also for the top 7% REUTERS

This situation has major consequences for Italy's broader economy, many economists say.

They say hiking taxation on medium-high and high earners would reduce inequality in a country where poverty has been rising for years and would enable Rome to cut its huge debt pile.

Alternatively, it could provide room to cut taxes for lower earners who spend proportionately more of their income than the rich, potentially helping consumption and growth in the currency bloc's most chronically sluggish economy.

A Treasury spokesperson said the government was against raising taxes and pointed to tax cuts for lower and middle earners in Rome's 2025 budget.

Italy is a relatively high-tax country, with levies of all types amounting to 41.5% of gross domestic product. But the burden is unevenly spread.

The country has low taxation on some property and financial assets that are typical sources of income for the wealthy, favourable rates for the self-employed, and negligible inheritance tax.

Meanwhile, low paid workers in Italy lose more of their gross wages to tax and social security contributions than in any other EU country, European Commission data shows.

Fifty years ago, Italy's top income tax rate, applied on the very highest earners, stood at 72%.

### Middle class burden

As a result of these distortions, people earning between 29,000 and 75,000 euros per year, who account for 21% of taxpayers, contribute more than 40% of income tax revenues, Treasury data shows.

Inheritance tax yields just 1 billion euros per year, compared with 18 billion in France and 9 billion in Germany and Britain.

"Inheritance tax is so low as to be insignificant," said Mr. Leonardi, adding that Ms. Meloni could fund tax cuts for middle earners through even a marginal increase in this levy.

The government, under pressure to ease the burden on the middle classes, is struggling to find 2.5 billion euros in its 2025 budget to cut taxes for those earning 50,000-60,000 euros. Ms. Meloni shows no intention of finding the cash by targeting Italy's better-off, though she recently doubled a contested "flat tax" on income earned abroad which is intended to attract millionaires to the country.

The government, on it's part, argues that the flat taxes, or similar schemes such as the single 15% rate for the self-employed, simplify the system and help reduce tax evasion.

**TBILISI**

## Georgia PM vows 'no negotiations' amid mass pro-EU demonstrations

AFP

Georgia Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze on Monday vowed no negotiations with the Black Sea country's opposition, as thousands took to the streets of Tbilisi to protest his decision to shelve talks on joining the EU. He claimed that the protests were "funded from abroad" and vowed that "there will be no revolution in Georgia." AFP

**BEIRUT**

## Lebanon claims Israel violated truce, killed two in new air strike

AFP

At least two persons were killed on Monday in Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon, Lebanese authorities said, as a ceasefire ending more than a year of hostilities between Israel and Lebanese armed group Hezbollah appeared increasingly fragile. Lebanon and Israel had already traded accusations of breaches. REUTERS

**KATHMANDU**

## Nepal govt. accepts $20 million grant assistance from China

AFP

The Nepal government has accepted projects worth $20 million as grant assistance from China ahead of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli's first official visit to the country after assuming office for the fourth time. Mr. Oli broke away from the tradition of new Nepal Prime Ministers making India their first official destination. PTI

**ISLAMABAD**

## Court issues arrest warrants for Imran Khan, his wife and 94 others

AFP

An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan on Monday issued non-bailable arrest warrants for jailed former Prime Minister and PTI leader Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and 93 others in a case related to last week's protests in Islamabad by his party supporters. PTI

# Biden pardons son Hunter despite past pledges not to

President's pardon covers 'offences against the U.S.' which Hunter has committed or 'may have committed or taken part in during the period from January 1, 2014 through December 1, 2024'

**Associated Press**
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden pardoned his son, Hunter, sparing the younger Mr. Biden a possible prison sentence for federal felony gun and tax convictions and reversing his past promises not to use the extraordinary powers of the presidency for the benefit of his family.

The Democratic President had previously said he would not pardon his son or commute his sentence after convictions in the two cases in Delaware and California. The move on Sunday night comes weeks before Hunter Biden was set to receive his punishment after his trial conviction in the gun case and guilty plea on tax charges.

**Family first:** The U.S. President's decision comes weeks before Hunter Biden was set to receive his punishment. REUTERS

It caps a long-running legal saga for the younger Mr. Biden, who publicly disclosed he was under federal investigation in December 2020.

In a statement released on Sunday evening, Mr. Biden said, "I believe in the justice system, but as I have wrestled with this, I also believe raw politics has infected this process and it led to a miscarriage of justice."

The President's sweeping pardon covers not just the gun and tax offences against the younger Mr. Biden, but also any other "offences against the United States which he has committed or may have committed or taken part in during the period from January 1, 2014 through December 1, 2024."

# Gaza situation is 'appalling, apocalyptic', says UN chief

**Agence France-Presse**
CAIRO

The United Nations chief said on Monday the situation in war-torn Gaza was "appalling and apocalyptic", warning conditions faced by Palestinians in the territory may amount to the "gravest international crimes".

In remarks read out on his behalf at a Cairo conference aimed at increasing humanitarian aid, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres asked the international community to "build a foundation for sustainable peace in Gaza".

The war in Gaza broke out when Palestinian militant group Hamas attacked southern Israel on October 7, 2023, resulting in 1,208 deaths. Israel's retaliatory campaign has killed 44,429 people in Gaza.

**Shrinking hope:** A malnourished Palestinian girl rests on a bed as she receives treatment at a hospital in Deir Al-Balah. REUTERS

"Malnutrition is rampant... Famine is imminent. Meanwhile, the health system has collapsed," he said.

The UN chief added that Gaza now has "the highest number of children amputees per capita anywhere in the world", with "many losing limbs and undergoing surgeries without even anesthesia".

The secretary-general also criticised the severe restrictions on aid delivery, calling the current levels "grossly insufficient".

# Israel bombs north Gaza homes, one strike kills 15

**Reuters**
CAIRO

Israeli forces bombarded houses in overnight attacks in the northern Gaza Strip, including one airstrike that killed at least 15 persons in a home sheltering displaced people in the town of Beit Lahiya, Palestinian medics said on Monday.

The three barely operational hospitals in the area were unable to cope with the wounded from the attack.

Residents said Israeli drones had also dropped bombs outside a school sheltering displaced families in Beit Lahiya, part of what residents have described as a campaign to scare people into leaving.

# Taiwan President discusses 'Chinese threats' with Pelosi

**Agence France-Presse**
HONOLULU

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te discussed "China's military threats" toward the island in a call with former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Sunday, drawing criticism from Beijing.

Ms. Pelosi's long-standing support for Taiwan has infuriated China, which responded to her visit to Taipei in 2022 with massive military drills around the island.

Mr. Lai and Ms. Pelosi discussed "China's military threats toward Taiwan", presidential spokeswoman Karen Kuo told reporters, describing the 20-minute call between the "long-time friends" as "warm and amicable".

China has already fumed over more U.S. arms sales to the island and Mr. Lai's stop in Hawaii, where he was welcomed with red carpets, garlands of flowers and "alohas".

In response to Mr. Lai's conversation with Ms. Pelosi, China called on the U.S. to "stop meddling with Taiwan" and cease "supporting and indulging Taiwan independence separatist forces".

"The Taiwan issue is the core of China's core interests and the first red line that cannot be crossed in China-U.S. relations," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told reporters in Beijing.

## *Voices of Venezuela*

Supporters of Venezuela's Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado release white balloons at a protest in Caracas on Monday against President Nicolas Maduro and in support of people detained during protests challenging the presidential election. REUTERS

# Iraqi militias enter Syria to reinforce government forces

**Reuters**
AMMAN/BEIRUT

Hundreds of fighters from Iran-backed Iraqi militias crossed into Syria overnight to help the government fight militants who seized Aleppo last week, Syrian and Iraqi sources said on Monday, and Tehran pledged to aid the Damascus government.

At least 300 fighters, primarily from the Badr and Nujabaa groups, crossed late on Sunday using a dirt road to avoid the official border crossing.

Iran's militias have been integral to the success of pro-government forces in subduing rebels who rose up against President Bashar al-Assad in 2011.

**At least 300 fighters, primarily from the Badr and Nujabaa groups, crossed late on Sunday into Syria**

Syrian government and Russian warplanes intensified attacks on Monday in areas held by rebels in the northwest, including a strike on a displaced people's camp that killed seven.

The lightning rebel assault last week caught many in the region unaware, dealing Mr. Assad his biggest blow in years and reigniting a conflict that had appeared frozen for years after civil war front lines stabilised in 2020.

# At least 56 killed in stampede at Guinea football match resulting from fan clashes

**Agence France-Presse**
CONAKRY

A stampede at a football match dedicated to Guinea's junta chief killed at least 56 people, the government said on Monday, as the opposition accused the military-led authorities of being "directly responsible" for the tragedy.

Fans at Sunday's game in the second city of N'Zerekore invaded the pitch after one or two players were sent off and a penalty was awarded to the opposing side Labe at the end of the game, witnesses said.

The events had initially been reported as clashes between fans.

Officials watching the match, including two Ministers, were prevented from leaving, prompting stone throwing and the firing of tear gas by security forces, a witness said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Panic quickly set in, leading to an uncontrollable stampede," he said. "People were trampled underfoot or injured as they tried to flee," he added.

### Tournament final

The match in the southeastern city was the final of a tournament organised in honour of Guinea's junta leader, General Mamady Doumbouya, who seized power in a 2021 coup and has installed himself as President.

The opposition has accused the junta of using sport for political ends.

Videos circulating on social media, which AFP was unable to immediately verify, show a huge crowd packed in the dilapidated stadium.

"The thousands of people at the stadium were gripped by panic and fear. It was every man for himself," said a local official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Protests of dissatisfaction with refereeing decisions led to stone-throwing by supporters, resulting in fatal stampedes," the government said in a statement which was read out on national television.

"Hospital services have put the provisional death toll at 56, with several others injured," it added, describing the incident as a "tragic event".

### 'Emergency mission'

Videos posted on social media showed chaotic scenes, with people climbing what appear to be the stadium's perimeter walls to escape.

**Complete mayhem:** People scramble in Nzerekore in Guinea after a deadly stampede ensued at a stadium on Sunday. REUTERS

Others showed numerous bodies lying on the ground.

Doctors said on Sunday that dozens had died.

Access to verified information in the remote part of the West African country is limited.

Local media reported that hospital wards and a morgue were overwhelmed by the injured and dead.

"The government is doing everything possible to respond to this tragic event," Doumbouya said in a statement on social media.

"An emergency mission led by the prime minister has been dispatched," he added.

Doumbouya said a commission of enquiry would be set up "to rule on the causes of this tragedy and to determine who is responsible".

The junta chief called for calm in the West African nation, which has a turbulent political history and remains poor despite considerable natural resources.

### Past instance

The crackdown on an opposition rally at a stadium in the capital Conakry left at least 156 people dead in 2009, according to a UN-mandated international commission of enquiry.

Such football tournaments and other public gatherings have become common in Guinea in recent weeks, in what is widely seen as a campaign to promote Doumbouya's candidacy in any future presidential election.

The military seized power by force in September 2021 by overthrowing civilian President Alpha Conde.

### Junta's empty word

Under international pressure, the junta pledged to hand power back to a civilian government by the end of 2024 but has since made clear it will not.

Several of Doumbouya's aides have recently expressed their support for his possible presidential bid.

One of the last remaining dissident voices in Guinea, the National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC), published a statement expressing its "outrage" at the tragedy in N'Zerekore.

It said it held the junta chief and his government "directly responsible for this disaster, which cost the lives of innocent citizens, including many children".

"This demonstrates the cynical use of sport by the junta, exploiting these images of mobilisation for political ends," the statement added.

### Ex-President's wrath

Former President Conde expressed "profound sadness and boundless outrage" in a social media post.

"In a context where the country is already marked by tensions and restrictions, this tragedy highlights the dangers of irresponsible organisation and a lack of adequate preparation," he said.

Members of Nihon Hidankyo, a Japanese organisation of atomic bomb survivors. GETTY IMAGES

# 30 members from Hidankyo to attend Nobel ceremony

**Agence France-Presse**
TOKYO

Japanese atomic bomb survivors' group Nihon Hidankyo said on Monday that a 30-strong delegation will collect its Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo after a crowd-funding campaign to pay their travel costs.

Those going to the December 10 ceremony will include group co-chair Terumi Tanaka, 92, who witnessed the 1945 Nagasaki bombing as a child, as well as other survivors and their children.

With money provided by the Nobel Committee not enough to cover the travel expenses of such a large delegation, the group launched a crowd-funding campaign, which has so far raised over 36 million yen. Hidankyo member Jiro Hamasumi, 78, told presspersons on Monday that the group was "very surprised" that the campaign raised 10 million yen on the first day alone. "I am delighted to say that our delegation will be able to go," Mr. Hamasumi said.

He was in his mother's womb when the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. His father, who was at work just a few hundred metres from the epicentre, was killed. "I hope I can speak from my own experience (in Oslo) about our desire not to see another victim, and that nuclear weapons must never be used," Mr. Hamasumi said.

The grassroots anti-nuclear organisation was established in 1956 and is the only nationwide association of atomic bomb survivors, who are known as hibakusha.

# Acute economic crisis dominates tight election race in debt-ridden Ghana

Management of the economy will be a defining issue when Ghanaians vote on December 7 to replace President Akufo-Addo who steps down after two terms in office; analysts tip Opposition NDC candidate to emerge victorious, citing voter dissatisfaction over ruling NPP's handling of economy

**Agence France-Presse**
ACCRA

Over the last year, retired Ghanaian school master Richard Tagoe watched his life savings evaporate as Ghana renegotiated its debt in an International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal and slashed the value of his bonds.

For many like Mr. Tagoe, the management of the economy will be key when they vote on December 7 to replace President Nana Akufo-Addo who steps down after two terms in office.

The ballot has shaped into a tight race between Mr. Akufo-Addo's ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) candidate and current Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia and former President and National Democratic Congress (NDC) candidate John Mahama.

Mr. Akufo-Addo's second term was marked by an acute economic crisis, inflation, and weak currency that forced a $3 billion deal with the IMF to manage Ghana's debt load.

Many are still feeling the fallout.

"I worked all my life and saved for my old age, but now, everything is virtually gone," Mr. Tagoe, 82, said. "How can we trust the government after this?"

An oil, gold, and cocoa producer with a history of political stability, Ghana was an investor favourite. But the economic turmoil and a debt default dented the country's appeal.

**Desperate situation:** A man sits next to an election poster of former Ghana President and presidential candidate for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), John Mahama, in Accra, on Monday. AFP

### Heavy burden

Inflation peaked at 54.1% in 2022 before easing to 23.2% by late 2023, but many Ghanaians still struggle with high costs, triggering sporadic protests over government policies.

A depreciating cedi currency and mounting poverty have further strained public confidence in their leadership.

Government's attempts to raise funds through treasury Bills have faltered, with investors shunning what they once considered a safe haven market.

"It will take time to rebuild public confidence in government securities," Courage Boti, research lead at GCB Capital said, refering to the government bonds under restructure.

"The restructuring was necessary for fiscal space, but the damage to trust is profound."

In September, Ghana reached an agreement with international bondholders, negotiating a 37% haircut – a discount – on $13 billion of debt.

While hailed as a milestone, it marked the largest restructuring of African debt to date, underscoring the depth of Ghana's crisis.

Security is also an election issue. Ghana and coastal neighbours Benin, Togo, and Ivory Coast face spillover from jihadist conflicts over their northern borders in Burkina Faso and Niger.

Internal tensions have also been on the rise between NPP and NDC, especially over allegations of pro-government bias in key institutions like the Supreme Court and Electoral Commission.

But with the presidential election days away, economic management has become the defining issue.

NPP candidate Mr. Bawumia touts policies for stabilising the economy and growth in a bid for an unprecedented third term for his party. But he has struggled to separate himself from the government, with his track record as head of Mr. Akufo-Addo's economic management team especially under scrutiny.

"The NPP cannot escape blame for the hardship," said Mustapha Gbande, deputy general secretary of the NDC.

Former President Mr. Mahama, Mr. Bawumia's main rival, promises a fresh approach.

Oxford Economics and other analysts have already tipped Mr. Mahama to win, citing voter dissatisfaction with the NPP's handling of the crisis.

At a bustling market in Kaneshie, a suburb of Accra, traders are quick to express disappointment with the economy.

"The price of onions has tripled, and customers just walk by without buying," said Ama Asante, a vegetable seller.

Daniel Amateye Anim-Prempeh, an economist at Policy Initiative for Economic Development, said inflation was still having an impact on voters.

"The high cost of goods and services continues to burden households. Voters will factor this into their decisions," he said.

Mr. Bawumia has highlighted improvements in macroeconomic stability, pointing to a rebound in growth to 5.8% in the first half of 2024.

"Ghana's economy has come back to life after years of difficulty," Finance Minister Mohammed Amin Adam told NPP supporters on the campaign trail.

But critics argue Mr. Bawumia's policies lack innovation, dismissing them as repackaged old policies.

### Opposition promises

Mr. Mahama has pledged to renegotiate aspects of the IMF deal to free up resources for development, emphasising youth employment, agriculture, and infrastructure.

"We cannot continue with business as usual," Mr. Mahama said at a rally in the northern city of Tamale.

Recovery is still underway. Debt-to-GDP ratios remain at 84%, with the IMF projecting a reduction to 55% by 2028.

Growth is forecast at a modest 3.4% in 2024, and unemployment remains high.

For many Ghanaians, coming ballot is a test in the electorate's faith in the system.

"I will vote for whoever can make life better," market trader Mr. Serwaa said. "We have suffered enough".

# Belgium loses case by biracial women left in orphanages

**Agence France-Presse**
BRUSSELS

The Belgian state was ordered on Monday to pay reparations to five mixed-race women who were forcibly placed in an orphanage 70 years ago under a colonial-era practice that judges said constituted a crime against humanity.

Reversing an earlier ruling that found too much time had passed since the alleged wrongdoing, the Brussels appeals court said the women, born in Belgian-ruled Congo and now in their 70s, were abducted in "an inhumane act of persecution". The state's conduct constituted a crime against humanity and as such was not subject to a statute of limitations, in line with a UN resolution adopted after the Second World War, the court found.

"We won, it is a total victory," the women's lawyer, Michele Hirsch, said.

The verdict was "historic" as it marks the first time a country has lost a court case on this legal basis, for acts committed during colonisation, she added.

"The court orders the Belgian State to compensate the appellants for the moral damage resulting from the loss of their connection to their mother and the damage to their identity and their connection to their original environment," the court said in a statement.

The case was the first in Belgium to shed light on the fate of biracial children born in the former Belgian colonies in Africa who are thought to number around 15,000, though there has never been an official count. Most of the children born of a union between a black woman and a white man were not recognised by their father and were not allowed to mix with either whites or Africans.

As a result, many were placed under state guardianship and put in orphanages,

The five women at the centre of the legal case said they were taken away from their families, brought up in a convent, mistreated and then abandoned when the Belgian Congo gained independence in 1960.

### Widely discriminated

"We lived in a group. We suffered together, we sang together," Simone Ngalula, one of several plaintiffs had recalled when the case was first launched.

"At school, they used to call us *cafe au lait* (coffee with milk). We were not accepted," she said, recalling the discrimination they faced.

They called us "children of sin", said her fellow plaintiff, Lea Tavares Mujinga.

"The appellants, born in the Belgian Congo, were abducted from their respective mothers, without their consent, before the age of seven, by the Belgian State," the court said.

This was "in execution of a plan to systematically search for and abduct children born to a black mother and a white father, raised by their mother in the Belgian Congo, solely because of their origins," it added.

Belgium's rule over what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo was one of the harshest imposed by the European powers that ruled most of Africa in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Belgium had apologised to the mixed-race descendants of its white colonists in 2019.

## *Superhero on the street*

**Festive fever:** A Spiderman balloon paraded through a street during a Christmas festival in Santiago, Chile on Sunday. AP

# New documents shed light on the legal troubles behind split of The Beatles

**Agence France-Presse**
LONDON

Recently found legal documents that shed new light on the demise of music band The Beatles are to go on sale next week, U.K. auction house Dawsons said on Monday.

While creative differences, the strain of stardom, and John Lennon's girlfriend Yoko Ono have all been blamed for the Fab Four's break-up, the documents reveal the numerous convoluted legal battles that also weighed on the band.

The documents, which were discovered in a cupboard where they had been stored since the 1970s, include copies of The Beatles adviser's minutes of meetings, legal writs, and a copy of the band's 1967 Original Deed of Partnership. They show that after manager Brian Epstein died in 1967, the band realised that money was unaccounted for and that they were being pursued by tax authorities.

**Taxing times:** Recently found documents reveal the numerous convoluted legal battles that weighed on the band. AP

Another damaging legal battle erupted when Paul McCartney opposed the decision by other band members to hire Allen Klein as their new manager.

The uncovered stash of files document the subsequent 1970 High Court battle launched by McCartney against the band in London, which exposed Klein's mismanagement.

"It would be almost impossible to exaggerate the actual complexity of the various legal arrangements which have been entered into by Messrs. Lennon, McCartney, Harrison, and Starkey (Ringo Starr)," said notes on one document.

Other legal difficulties besetting the band included deciding when Pete Best left the group and Ringo Starr joined, royalties for film and music rights, and Klein's inability to produce accounts for the tax authorities.

"Even though John, Paul, George, and Ringo had grown tired of being The Beatles and wanted to record and perform as individual artists, this must have been a difficult time for each of them," said Denise Kelly, head of Dawsons Entertainment and Popular Culture department.

"I could sense panic in the room as more and more complexities came to light. One of the lawyers even suggested during one meeting when they had gone round and round and round in circles: 'would it be easier if The Beatles just retired'?"

McCartney said in 1970 that he was no longer working with the group, but the legal process of breaking up the band was only finalised in 1974.

# 'Trump may better ties but unlikely to lift curbs on Russia'

**Reuters**
MOSCOW

The next U.S. administration may make an effort to ease tensions with Moscow but Western sanctions are unlikely to be lifted any time soon, Andrei Kostin, the CEO of Russia's second-largest bank, VTB, has said.

Mr. Kostin, one of Russia's most influential bankers and a former diplomat who served in Australia and Britain, said he believed U.S. President-elect Donald Trump would make a genuine effort to end the conflict in Ukraine, which will be close to entering its fourth year when he takes office for a second time in January.

"Considering the statements Trump made during his election campaign, I believe that he will certainly try to make efforts to resolve the Ukrainian war. But will an agreement be reached?," Mr. Kostin said from his office in one of the Moscow City business quarter's towers, stressing that any peace settlement should be for the long-term.

Mr. Trump has pledged to end the conflict in Ukraine quickly, in part because he does not want the United States to pay to defend the country.

However, Mr. Kostin, who was placed under U.S. sanctions himself during Mr. Trump's first term as President, said he did not believe sanctions against Moscow would be lifted quickly as there was a powerful anti-Russian "vector" in the U.S. establishment.

"A good example is the Jackson-Vanik amendment. It was enacted against the USSR, and it was only repealed in 2012,"

Andrey Kostin

Mr. Kostin said, referring to a Cold-War era law linking trade relations with the Soviet Union to the rights of religious minorities to emigrate.

A powerful insider who regularly meets with President Vladimir Putin, Mr. Kostin said that his own views on the conflict in Ukraine have changed since February 2022 and he now believed that Moscow "did not have much of a choice".

Mr. Kostin, whose bank once had a substantial presence in Ukraine, said he believed that Russia's reserves that were frozen in the West after the start of the conflict would not be returned. Western countries blocked around $300 billion worth of sovereign Russian assets, with the G-7 group and the European Union agreeing earlier this year to use the interest they generated to aid Ukraine's defence. Russia has vowed legal action.

"In the West, they say, let us pay for the reconstruction of Ukraine from the reserves. And they will draw up such a bill that even the reserves will not be enough," Mr. Kostin predicted. "Russia will never again keep its money in U.S. Treasuries. I am sure of it. Anywhere, but not there."

TUNING IN

## Australian team hits the ground running even as the Indians rest

GETTY IMAGES

The Australian players did the hard yards at the Adelaide Oval on Monday. With the second Test scheduled to begin on Friday, the hosts had a long training session. Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne, both looking for runs, batted in the nets. Meanwhile, Rohit Sharma's men flew in from Canberra and opted to rest.

THUMPING WIN

## Amaan's unbeaten century helps India trounce Japan

ACC

Mohamed Amaan scored an unbeaten century, while K.P. Karthikeya and Ayush Mhatre made fifties to hand India a 211-run win over Japan in the Under-19 Asia Cup in Sharjah on Monday. **The scores**: India U-19 339/6 in 50 overs (Amaan 122 n.o., Karthikeya 57, Mhatre 54) bt Japan U-19 128/8 in 50 overs (Kelly 50).

REMARKABLE

## Seales' frugal spell gives Windies control in the second Test

AFP

Pacer Jayden Seales conceded only five runs in almost 16 overs (15.5-10-5-4) to give West Indies the advantage over Bangladesh on day two of the second Test at Jamaica. **The scores**: Bangladesh 164 in 71.5 overs (Shadman 64, Mehidy 36, Seales 4/5, Shamar 3/49) vs West Indies 70/1 in 37 overs (Brathwaite 33 batting).

GUNNING FOR GLORY

## Nitesh nominated for BWF's Para Badminton Player of the Year Award

REUTERS

India's paralympic champion Kumar Nitesh has been nominated along with three others for the men's Para Badminton Player of the Year, the BWF said on Monday. Nitesh will be competing for the award with two-time Paralympic gold medallists Cheah Liek Hou (SU5) of Malaysia, Japan's Daiki Kajiwara (WH2) and China's Qu Zimo (WH1).

# The real contest all set to unfold

Gukesh has displayed greater initiative but defending champ Ding has proved peers wrong so far; action to resume on Tuesday with Game 7

FIDE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SINGAPORE 2024

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**
SINGAPORE

Reaching the venue of the World chess championship, Equarius Hotel at World Resorts Sentosa, from mainland Singapore involves multiple modes of transport for most people.

To get to the small island Sentosa, which used to be called the island behind which lies death (there is no consensus on the reason behind it, though), you have to take an underground Metro, then a monorail that is way overground, up in the air in fact, and then you have to take a bus, if you don't to walk in the sweltering heat.

The journey of the World championship match, which is approaching its half-way mark, thus far has just been as fascinating. Especially given the circumstances – much of the chess world had been dismissive of the reigning champion Ding Liren's chances and was expecting D. Gukesh to dominate.

The 18-year-old from Chennai has shown more initiative and looked keener for intense battles, but the defending champion has so far been able to prove his peers wrong. He may have been happy to look for a draw in most positions and may have also had a tougher time while handling the pressure from the clock, but he has been solid enough.

**Ready for action again:** A refreshed Gukesh will be keen to get going. FIDE

Given the contrast in form between the two players, Ding should not be too unhappy with the way things have gone, though he was rather critical of himself in the self-appraisal at the last press conference before Monday's rest day. He spoke of how he slipped from advantageous positions.

Before the match, he had also talked of having to seek professional help for his mental health issues. Doubts had been raised therefore if he would be in the ideal state of mind for the match.

He has looked fine. He was even joking at the press conference about the memes about 'Ding Chillin', after the sixth game.

It was the game in which Gukesh again showed his willingness to take risks, despite having to pay the price for being more aggressive in the opening game. He had lost that game with white pieces, but came back strongly to win the third game to level the scores. It is still all square at 3-3.

# Gukesh-Ding match-up is more of a psychological duel

The World championship in Singapore has suddenly taken on the flavour of a psychological duel instead of a purely chess match. In the last few games, we have started to see a very clear trend where Gukesh is trying to provoke his opponent into a battle, is ready to decline draws and take risks. Ding, on the other hand, seems to be pessimistic about his position and often goes for the safest line on the first opportunity, in the hope that Gukesh might overreach.

In Game 6, Ding Liren chose the London System which he had used to great effect in the last World title match against Ian Nepomniachtchi. Gukesh's preparation was excellent until move 16. On the next move, he had a couple of easy ways to make a draw, but chose a slightly inaccurate one that allowed Ding to get the unbalanced position he was presumably seeking.

On the 23rd move, Ding thought for a while, then gave up on his winning attempts, and essentially offered a draw by repetition. Even more surprisingly, given that the position slightly favoured Ding, Gukesh turned down the draw and kept playing. He defended accurately, but seemed to be taking extra risks. They agreed to a draw a few moves later.

Gukesh and Ding. FIDE

In Game 5, Gukesh surprised Ding in the opening, by playing a peaceful variation. This year, the line has been somewhat popular though as people have discovered that it contained some venom. Ding was excellently prepared and equalised very easily.

On the 23rd move, Gukesh made a serious mistake, by not exchanging rooks. Ding went for perhaps the smallest of the three advantages. He could have put the knight on 'a4' or activated his rook first, which would have led to a significant advantage.

He made Gukesh's moves easier to find and then shockingly, took his bishop to the wrong square, captured a pawn and then returned it. The audience was astonished by this. In a game where Gukesh would have had to defend precisely for a long time, he managed to draw within a few moves thanks to Ding's inaccuracy.

Game 4 was a fairly uneventful draw. Ding's opening preparation was not lacking in venom, but he did not follow up with the effort required for the precise play. So with a few natural moves, Gukesh solved all his problems.

It is nice to have the rest day at this point because both sides will need to rework their strategies given that neither seems to be getting his desired positions.

Gukesh still hasn't found any chinks in Ding's armour, while the defending champion hasn't been able to take the chances that have come his way in the last few games.

# Arjun's 2800 Elo mark: stupendous feat by a stupendous player

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**
SINGAPORE

That winter evening in Kolkata is fresh in memory.

At the closing ceremony of the Tata Steel Chess India three years ago, the wonderfully articulate Levon Aronian had an explanation why Arjun Erigaisi, just 18 then and nowhere near as well-known as he is now, did not also win the blitz title after winning the rapid.

The Armenian-born American Grandmaster, who won the title after beating the Indian in the tie-breaker, said Arjun was a very strong chess player, but not strong enough physically to carry two cups. The full house at the National Library erupted in laughter.

Later on, during a lengthy interview with *The Hindu* in which he spoke about Indian classical music and Satyajit Ray's films, Aronian said Arjun was going to translate his strength in speed chess to the more demanding classical variety. The boy from Warangal didn't let Aronian down.

Arjun crossed the biggest barrier in chess in the latest rating list released by FIDE. He has touched 2800 Elo points. He is only the second Indian to do it, and the 15th in the history of the game. The first Indian was Viswanathan Anand.

Anand was there in Kolkata too for the Tata event, as the brand ambassador.

Arjun.
FILE PHOTO: DEBASISH BHADURI

He called Arjun a great discovery and new star of Indian chess.

Arjun told this correspondent how much those words meant to him. He had also said that he wasn't getting invitations for stronger tournaments and that was what prevented him from catching up with other Indian prodigies like R. Praggnanandhaa.

That scenario may not have changed, as he has had to gain his Elo points mostly from open tournaments, in which you are likely to come across weaker opponents and risk losing points. But, remarkably, he has risen to be the World No. 4.

"I can't think of another top player who has scored so many Elo points from open tournaments," says Grandmaster Pravin Thipsay.

You may not be able to think of many who could play chess with such creativity and fearlessness, either.

# A lot to ponder for Team India in the lead-up to the pink-ball challenge in Adelaide

INDIA IN AUS

**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**
ADELAIDE

It was a weekend of rain and runs for the Indians at Canberra. The warm-up fixture against the Prime Minister's XI at the Manuka Oval was touted as the ideal base ahead of the second Test here from Friday. A two-day tussle under lights and against the pink ball was also seen as a lens to understand how players were primed for the rest of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series.

In the end, damp skies washed out Saturday's play while a kind sun and floodlights at night ensured a Sunday contest with its facade of a limited overs skirmish but one that had the depth of a Test match. Among India's leading stars, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah and R. Ashwin, played no role while all the others had their turns either as a batter or bowler.

**Adelaide ahoy!** The Indians will be eager to put their best foot forward in the second Test. ANI

India won with ease and even tucked into the host's courtesy and batted the full quota of 46 overs much after going past the winning tape. There were these little stories within perhaps a friendly battle. That K.L. Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal strode out as openers could be seen as a hat-tip to the combined form they revealed especially during their second outing in the first Test at Perth. But does that mean, a rejig is in order?

With Shubman Gill having recovered from an injury and batting well, he obviously slots in at number three, a position earlier strengthened by the broad willows of Cheteshwar Pujara and Rahul Dravid. If the past is a yardstick, then maybe Rohit will continue teaming up with Jaiswal atop the batting tree and yet the Canberra sojourn and the skipper's meagre three from 11 deliveries, does raise some questions.

The Mumbaikar, all fluid sixes and rapid yields in ODIs, has a lone fifty in his last 10 innings from Tests. To be fair, he did try to dig in on Sunday before chasing one outside the off-stump. Till then Rohit looked his part at the crease. He has always put team over self, and never worries about statistical judgements. It remains to be seen if in the twilight phase of his career, he would go back to the middle-order, counter the old ball and be well set to tackle the new cherry.

Perhaps, with Prithvi Shaw losing his way, in a post-Rohit stage, a Rahul-Jaiswal combine may do the opening honours unless Gill moves up again. There is enough strategy to chew upon for the Indian management over the next few days. That Rohit and Gill are back in the playing eleven with Devdutt Padikkal and Dhruv Jurel making way, is the presumed reality.

Kohli's unbeaten 100 at Perth is a good sign and if Rohit can join forces, India will flourish for the rest of the series. Pushed into the opening slot, Rohit had prospered in Tests, maybe he will still do that against a tough rival unless a middle-order foray is what he and the management are looking at for now.

# Hoping for Head(y) days in the immediate future

**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**
ADELAIDE

Under quirky Adelaide skies, sunny at one point, damp at another, Travis Head always feels at home. Back in his city in the lead-up to the second Test against India from Friday, Head is looking for clues from the past and equally gazing with hope into the immediate future.

In his previous two Tests at the Adelaide Oval, Head was adjudged Player-of-the-Match.

Against India, he held his own in the first Test at Perth while many would recall his hundred in the 2023 ICC World Cup final that deflated Rohit Sharma's men at Ahmedabad. Add to it India's 36 during the 2020 Test here, and Head can surely lean on this rich vein of historical optimism.

But he is acutely conscious of India's strengths quadrupled by Jasprit Bumrah's role as a spearhead. "I am lucky that I have faced him a few times and I know what's coming, just need to start well. He is unique. Jasprit is probably going to go down as one of the greatest fast bowlers and it will be nice to tell the grandkids that I faced him," Head told the media here on Monday.

**Home comfort:** Head will look to get going again.
FILE PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

The 295-run loss at Perth has been dealt with and Head elaborated: "We didn't have a very good week but we have got four more opportunities. The writing was on the wall pretty quickly in that Test and we were pushing uphill."

For the southpaw, the pink ball in the day and night Test here, is no threat: "It's still a game of cricket. It's just a pink ball coming down, you face it in the same way and you have got to react to it the same way."

Admitting that the injured Josh Hazlewood will be missed, Head was quick to praise the reserve strength: "Josh is a huge loss but we have got some pretty good stocks in the sheds with Scott (Boland), Sean (Abbott) and (Brendan) Doggett".

## INBRIEF

### Alpine releases Ocon; Doohan to debut in Abu Dhabi

Formula One team Alpine confirmed on Monday that Esteban Ocon has been released ahead of the final Grand Prix of the season and that Jack Doohan will make his debut in Abu Dhabi. The team said in a statement that the line-up change will allow Ocon to take part in post-season tests with his new team Haas. Alpine had announced in June that Ocon would leave at the end of the season.

### Former world snooker champion Griffiths passes away

Former world snooker champion Terry Griffiths passed away aged 77 after a long battle with dementia, his family confirmed. The British player came through qualifying to defeat Dennis Taylor in the 1979 Crucible final and also won the Masters and the UK Championship to complete the sport's illustrious triple crown.

### Jamshedpur eases past Mohammedan in ISL

Jamshedpur FC downed Mohammedan SC 3-1 in an ISL fixture in Jamshedpur on Monday.

**The result:** Jamshedpur FC 3 (Sanan 53, Siverio 61, Eze 79) bt Mohammedan SC 1 (Irshad 88).

# Australian diplomat has a chat with para athletes

Deputy High Commissioner McCaffrey stresses on resilience to cope with defeat and come back; Indian stars Tarun, Nidhi recall journey and say a lot more needs to be done

**Kamesh Srinivasan**
NEW DELHI

The Australian Deputy High Commissioner, Nicholas McCaffrey, stressed on the "resilience to cope with defeat and come back stronger", as he engaged in a sporting conversation with para athletes Nidhi Mishra and Tarun Dhillon at the Australian High Commission here on Monday.

The idea was to strengthen the focus to support para athletes, thoughtfully planned on the eve of the International Day of persons with Disabilities.

**Food for thought:** Nicholas McCaffrey, flanked by para athletes Nidhi and Tarun, makes a point during a discussion in New Delhi on Monday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

PCI CEO Rahul Swami said India had signed an agreement to host the World Para Athletics Championships, for further strengthening the bond of support for persons with different abilities

Para athletes Tarun Dhillon and Nidhi Mishra were brilliant in expressing their thoughts

**Collaboration**

The Deputy High Commissioner reiterated the collaboration between Australia and India, on a wide range of sports, in the run up to the Brisbane Olympics in 2032.

Para athletes, Asian gold medallist Tarun Dhillon and bronze medallist Nidhi Mishra, were brilliant in expressing their thoughts, as they acknowledged the growing support for para sports, and that "a lot more needs to be done", particularly for women athletes, in terms of having friendly and safe sports space.

**Visualisation**

"I believe in the magic of visualisation," said Tarun, while Nidhi said that it was the "burning desire to excel in sports" that drove her to great heights, even as both highlighted that sports had given them everything including the identity.

**Easy transition**

Tarun said that before injuring his knee, he had trained as a normal cricketer at the same club as Virat Kohli, and that it was easy for him to transition into the world of para sports in badminton.

He went on to win the World Championship gold as a 19-year-old, and subsequently made it to the Paralympics in Paris.

Nidhi, a professor of history with a doctorate, said that diminishing vision had driven her to para athletics, and lamented the fact that she did not get leave to train for making the Indian team for the Paris Paralympics.

"We need to prioritise sports," said Nidhi.

Expressing her admiration for Australian athletes, Nidhi said, "like we have military training, we should have training with Australians in sports".

Tarun said that it was the love for sports that defined his career and pointed out, "play sports for the love of it".

Nidhi, on the other hand, emphasised on the need for stringent laws in dealing with the culprits for crime against women.

**Accessible space**

"We don't need separate sporting facilities. We need escalators and ramps in the normal sports facilities. We just need accessible space for sports," Nidhi said.

The CEO of Paralympic Committee of India (PCI), Rahul Swami said that India had signed an agreement to host the World Para Athletics Championships, for further strengthening the bond of support for persons with different abilities.

# Haryana boys enter the quarterfinals

BASKETBALL

**Sports Bureau**
KOLKATA

Haryana boys defeated Chandigarh 105-94 in a Group-B match to make it to the quarterfinals of the National youth basketball championships here on Monday.

From Level 1, the fourth-placed teams will play the pre-quarterfinals. From Level 2, Delhi boys and girls along with Telangana girls and Maharashtra boys qualified to play the pre-quarterfinals.

**Important results: Level 1: Boys: Group A:** Telangana 77 (Sai Dhairya Mani 19, Dhruv Boppana 14, Aadvik Reddy 13, Reyhan Ellore 10) bt Tamil Nadu 57 (Yadesh Kumar 15, Aakash 11, U.S. Sujeeth 10); **Group B:** Haryana 105 (Veer Singh 35, Chirag 20, Ajay 17) bt Chandigarh 94 (Yash 34, Sachin 22, Nikhil 21), Rajasthan 101 (Piyush Choudhary 27, Mohammed Raza Khan 25, Bupendra Singh Rathore 23) bt Kerala 75 (Abhishek Pradeep 25, Millen Jose Mathew 22, Niajal Jacob 11, Kannan Sugunan 11); Uttar Pradesh 69 (Sumit Kumar Singh 10, Sujai Dhariwal 10) bt Punjab 59 (Ajitinder Singh 15, Fate Jeet Singh 12, Manjot Singh 10).

**Girls: Group A:** Rajasthan 62 (Kritika Khatik 22, Jaya Dadhich 16, Divyanshi Sharma 12) bt Madhya Pradesh 57 (Ayushi Yadav 16, Vaishnavi Gupta 13, Bhoomi Prakash 10); Tamil Nadu 80 (A. Jefrin 18, Sumitra Devi 15, Angelina Arun George 15, P. Bhavani 11) bt Maharashtra 47 (Reva Kulkarni 13); Uttar Pradesh 67 (Anshika Sharma 32, Pragya Singh 14) bt Rajasthan 65 (Samiksha Kesvani 16, Kritika Khatik 12, Jaya Dadich 11, Divyanshi Sharma 10); Maharashtra 57 (Reya Kulkarni 25, Pranitha 17) bt Uttar Pradesh 35 (Pragya Singh 10).

**Group B:** Karnataka 92 (Adi Subramanian 23, Nidhi Umesh 22, Nilaaya Reddy 12) bt Gujarat 37 (Dinal Vith Thani 10, Vidhiben Baria 10); Punjab 71 (Gagandeep Kaur 22, Samira Singh 14, Gurasees Kaur 14, K. Vanshika 13) bt Haryana 28; Kerala 69 (Liya Maria 23, Arthika 10, Diya Biju 10) bt Haryana 50 (Gariha 11, Ada Khajana 11).

# India opens against Hong Kong

HANDBALL

**Sports Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Host India will aspire to play its best in the 20th Asian women's handball championship to be played here at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium from Tuesday.

India has been clubbed with Japan, Hong Kong and Iran in the league phase. The other group has Korea, Kazakhstan, China and Singapore. The top two from each of the two groups will qualify for the semifinals. The top four make the Worlds next year.

**The India squad:** Bhawana, Mitali Sharma, Manika Pal, Nina Shil, Shalini Thakur, Priyanka, Diksha Kumari, Sushma, Sonika.

# From gazing at bikes to developing them — the incredible journey of Jagan

**S. Dipak Ragav**
CHENNAI

Timing exit from sports is often tricky for sportspersons, especially those who have enjoyed enduring success. While most hope to bow out on a high, only a few succeed.

Over the last decade and a half, Jagan Kumar has shown clinical efficiency on the race track, competing in the Indian National Motorcycling Championship.

In October, the rider from Chennai managed the perfect bookend to his glittering career when he bowed out of the sport after winning his 11th title.

Heading into the final race of his career, Jagan trailed his TVS teammate K.Y. Ahamed by two points and was ahead of Sarthak Chavan by a similar margin. The equation was simple: whoever wins the race would emerge champion. As Ahamed and Sarthak were battling among themselves on the last lap, it allowed Jagan to pass them on the final corner to clinch the Pro-Stock 165cc title for a staggering 10th time.

**Riding into the sunset:** Jagan managed the perfect bookend to his glittering career, winning his 11th title. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"When I started, I wanted to win one title. Then, once I got three, I wanted five as a whole number but never thought I would win seven consecutive titles or 10 overall (Pro-Stock 130-165cc)," said Jagan in a chat with *The Hindu* recently.

"It has been a big journey. I have been lucky to be part of TVS racing. I used to gaze at a TVS Apache bike at Spencer Plaza. From there, god has been kind to me to help develop the same bikes and feature in an ad for it," adds the 36-year-old, who once delivered newspapers and couriers to fund his career before setting the tracks ablaze.

Though he has hung up his helmets, Jagan will continue to be part of the TVS family, doing R&D work and will be involved in driver development and coaching.

"I had to learn by making mistakes, which took a lot of time. There is a big list of what one shouldn't do. I know some things that I couldn't implement, but these youngsters can do them. It is important that they can do these things when they are the right age and at their peak. It would have made a huge difference if I had known these things during my peak."

"If I can help them, they can reach the next level easily without thinking much. With the right training, a four-year development can be crunched to 1.5 years," says Jagan.

# Backing his strengths key to Bishnoi's T20 success

**Vivek Krishnan**
INDORE

Ravi Bishnoi isn't exactly a conventional leg-spinner. He runs into the crease on a slight angle, whips through his action and delivers a mix of sliders and googlies. When he bowls the leg-break, the ball is usually quick through the air and takes very little turn.

It is perhaps why the 24-year-old's methods have been quite successful in T20s – a format that is also far from conventional. Numbers say so: In 37 matches for India in the shortest version, he has claimed 56 scalps at an economy of 7.3. Notwithstanding his perplexing omission for this year's T20 World Cup given that he was a regular in the lead-up, he has been India's first-choice leg-spinner in the format since making his debut in February 2022.

Bishnoi. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

"I just look to bowl in good areas. If you bowl in good areas, it is more difficult to hit. When you try for something extra, that is when runs are leaked," Bishnoi told *The Hindu* after featuring in a Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy game for Gujarat at the Holkar Stadium. "My mindset is simple. I look to bowl at a good spot. If wickets come, it is fine. If they don't come, that is also fine as long as you keep the runs down."

Despite his effectiveness, there may be those who are critical of Bishnoi's conservative style of bowling. Has he ever felt the need to change and perhaps give the ball more flight?

"If I was listening to what people say, I would have changed by now. I look to back my strengths," Bishnoi said matter-of-factly.

On his exclusion from India's victorious T20 World Cup campaign, he added: "There is nothing better than India winning. I didn't play the World Cup this year, but I can always get an opportunity the next time."

While his T20 credentials are established, Bishnoi is keen on adding to his lone ODI appearance and playing Tests for India too. "My process will be the same. I do vary the pace and everything, but I will try to ensure that the areas I hit don't change".

# Tennis Premier League's sixth edition kicks off today in Mumbai

**Sports Bureau**
MUMBAI

The country's leading tennis players, Rohan Bopanna, Sumit Nagal, Ankita Raina and Sahaja Yamalapalli will be in action in the sixth edition of the Tennis Premier League (TPL) to be played at the Cricket Club of India (CCI) from Tuesday.

All the eight teams will be in action, on a 25-point format, on the first five days. The top four teams, in terms of the highest number of points won, will compete in the semifinals on December 8, which will also feature the final.

The founders of the TPL – Kunal Thakkur and Mrinal Jain – have stepped up the support for players to the tune of ₹2 crore this edition. The focus of the TPL continues to be better traction for Indian tennis and the strengthening of player base. All the matches will be telecast live on JioCinema and Sports 18-2, from 4 p.m. on Tuesday.

The defending champion, Bengaluru SG Pipers, has a balanced side, with Max Purcell, Ankita Raina and Anirudh Chandrasekar. It will play Chennai Smashers, represented by Hugo Gaston, Conny Perrin and Rithvik Bollipalli, in the fourth match on the opening day from 8.30 p.m.

Every match will have men's singles, women's singles, mixed doubles and men's doubles, with the teams fighting for a total of 100 points.

**The teams: Shrachi Delhi Rarh Tigers:** Aziz Dougaz, Iryna Shymanovich, Rohan Bopanna.
**Chennai Smashers:** Rithvik Bollipalli, Conny Perrin, Hugo Gaston.
**Yash Mumbai Eagles:** Karan Singh, Jacqueline Cristian, Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan.
**Punjab Patriots:** Arjun Kadhe, Elina Avanesyan, S Mukund.
**Bengaluru SG Pipers:** Max Purcell, Ankita Raina, Anirudh Chandrasekar.
**Gujarat Panthers:** Sumit Nagal, Sahaja Yamalapalli, Vijay Sundar Prashanth.
**Bengal Wizards:** Sriram Balaji, Petra Martic, Niki Poonacha.
**Hyderabad Strikers:** Benjamin Lock, Harriet Dart, Vishnu Vardhan.

# Manchester City boss Guardiola has a friendly reminder

EURO LEAGUES

**Agence France-Presse**
LIVERPOOL

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola reminded Liverpool fans of his six Premier League titles in the past seven seasons after he was taunted towards the end of Sunday's 0-2 defeat at Anfield. Guardiola was met with chants of "you're getting sacked in the morning" from the home support after City suffered a sixth defeat in seven games to fall 11 points behind the Reds at the top of the table.

The 53-year-old recently extended his contract at the Etihad to 2027, but has said he will not overstay his welcome if results do not improve.

**Down but not out:** Guardiola put up six fingers to remind the jeering fans of his six Premier League titles during the match against Liverpool. AP

Guardiola, though, could not resist hitting back by showing six fingers, one for each of his title triumphs.

Two of those came by denying Liverpool by a single point in 2018/19 and 2021/22. However, defeat continued Guardiola's miserable record at Anfield.

City has lost in six of its 10 visits under the Catalan, with its only win coming behind closed doors due to the coronavirus pandemic in 2021.

Meanwhile, Kylian Mbappe made some peace with the Real Madrid fans as he scored in Madrid's 2-0 win over Getafe in Spanish league.

**The results: LaLiga:** Real Sociedad 2 (Llorente 14-og, Oyarzabal 31-pen) bt Real Betis 0. **Serie A:** Lecce 1 (Rebic 90+3) drew with Juventus 1 (Cambiaso 68).

# We have superstars and money, but badminton as a sport hasn't grown

There is no professionalism and the way the system and the federation is being run, we missed the bus; some part of a coach was always there in me and even as a player, I was always helping out my colleagues; our structure also has to get better; we were capable of a lot more, hopefully we wake up now and push hard

FILE PHOTO: NAGARA GOPAL

INTERVIEW

## *Parupalli Kashyap*

Uthra Ganesan
LUCKNOW

A two-time winner at the Syed Modi India International Super 300, one of only two players to do so, Parupalli Kashyap knows the city and the tournament as well as anyone can. He has also seen the fan frenzy for the biggest stars at the BBD Academy, being the recipient of it more than once. A bonafide star in his playing days, with a career-high ranking of sixth in the world, Kashyap was known for being outspoken both in praise and criticism. Back in the city as a coach this time, the 38-year-old was as vocal about the stagnation in Indian badminton and the way ahead, in an exclusive chat with *The Hindu*:

**On his ward Shriyanshi's loss**

A little disappointed because she didn't capitalise on the conditions in the third game. She was quite brilliant and she is still coming up, so quarterfinals was a good show. She was better than her opponent, reading the conditions also well but maybe there were some jitters. Self-belief has to improve but it will come, winning a few quarters and semifinal matches will help. It looks very positive, she is one of the good stroke players and has powerful smashes. Sometimes you need to dumb down the game a little and in moments when you take lead and put pressure on the opponent, she faltered in those.

**His second innings as a coach**

I think some part of a coach was always there in me. Even as a player, I was always helping out my colleagues like Srikanth, R.M.V. Guru Sai Dutt, Sameer Verma or H.S. Prannoy, the entire batch. Even with Saina (Nehwal). I was always interacting with them and discussing ideas on how to play rallies or how to improve the game, so I guess I am very much in my comfort zone as a coach.

**The change in the Indian badminton scene over the years**

It's quite disappointing actually. There are so many superstars in the sport but the sport itself hasn't grown. It's still the same. Players are coming up, there is so much talent, there has been an exponential rise in the number of players and academies, tournament participation has increased but the money and the magnanimity in the sport hasn't grown.

In Lucknow, when I played semifinals against Tommy Sugiarto or Viktor Axelsen, the stadium used to be packed. I don't know why. Just the broadcast, the PBL not happening for so many years, somewhere we have faltered and it's quite disappointing. Our structure also has to get better. We were capable of a lot more, hopefully we wake up now and push hard.

> I would go so far as to say that a few individuals are doing all the groundwork. We have reached great levels because a few individuals were crazy

**What has gone wrong?**

I am a part of the system and I don't want to sound very pessimistic but it should have been a lot more. Badminton should have been the No. 2 sport after cricket. The players are also making good money, the entire ecosystem has grown since 2010-11 after the Commonwealth Games onwards, the hype was so big and we all became stars. But there is no professionalism.

I feel the way the system and the federation is being run, we missed the bus. People like P. Gopichand sir are still producing players and we will keep doing it but for the sport to grow, there are a lot of other factors and people in charge have to do more.

**So money in sport does not equal professionalism?**

There needs to be a system which needs to be run, there is a long-term plan which needs to be put in place. Look at kabaddi's growth, where are we in comparison? It's very much possible, just the right minds are in place and the right things are done. That's not the case now.

**Does bringing former players like yourself into the coaching system help inspire the next generation?**

It does but frankly, inspiration or passion I feel is an overrated word. Passion dies if you don't see progress. Right now I am very passionate, I have just quit playing and I want to make the next five world beaters from India, make India dominate world badminton, the josh is there – but I don't know how long it will last if I don't see any incentive to continue. It is quite disappointing and frankly embarrassing that you say an Indian coach will be paid 50k or 1 lakh when you go and hire foreigners for 10-15 lakhs. Maybe we didn't have too many top players earlier but now we do.

I have been in the top-10 for four years, Guru has been in top-20. Sumeeth Reddy is an Olympian, Manu Attri an Olympian and top-20 in the world, Sai Praneeth is working somewhere in the US. Why are we even looking at people from outside? I want others like Srikanth and Prannoy to play as long as they can but what after five years? They are not as passionate about coaching but if it is lucrative, it makes sense, it is made rewarding enough, then they will also feel they want to contribute. How long can only passion sustain?

**How do you see the next generation performing?**

Lakshay is, of course, there, Priyanshu is very talented, Kiran George obviously, of the others in the Indian circuit Rithvik Sanjeevi is very good, Tarun Mannepalli is there, Mithun Manjunath has just faltered a little but can pick up. I think the talent is there but the structure is not.

I would go so far as to say that a few individuals are doing all the groundwork. We have reached great levels because a few individuals were crazy. Those who have been there and done that, unfortunately they are not having absolute liberty to structure it properly. There was Prakash sir, there is Gopi sir who has literally produced medallists and after that, among the former top-10 players there is me and another 1-2. But if we have to turn out champions as a factory, hard decisions have to be taken and qualified professionals have to be in charge. In most places in the world it's largely coach centric, whether China, Korea or Japan. Here it is more player centric.