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Sharad Pawar faction can use new name: SC

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India's goods exports grew in January

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Bumrah likely to be rested for fourth Test

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INSIDE



Tejashwi to kick off Jan Vishwas Yatra today

PATNA
Rashtriya Janata Dal leader and former Bihar deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav is set to embark on a 10-day Jan Vishwas Yatra beginning Tuesday from Muzaffarpur. Mr. Yadav would cover all 38 districts of Bihar and address 32 meetings. » PAGE 2

Centre to discuss Statehood with Ladakh leaders

NEW DELHI
The Centre has agreed to discuss demands of Ladakh civil society groups, which include Statehood, in a meeting on February 24. Following the agreement, the group puts off an indefinite hunger strike scheduled from Tuesday. » PAGE 4

Farmers reject Centre's offer to resume march

CHANDIGARH
Rejecting the Centre's offer to procure five crops on minimum support price for five years based on a contract system, protesting farmers in Punjab on Monday announced that they would restart their 'Delhi Chalo' march on Wednesday. » PAGE 5

EU launches Red Sea mission as U.S. ship attacked

DUBAI
The European Union launched a naval mission on Monday to protect Red Sea shipping from Yemen's Houthi rebels as a U.S.-owned cargo vessel repeatedly came under fire in the region. The bloc aims at having the mission running in a "few weeks". » PAGE 12

Use dictionary meaning of 'forest', Supreme Court tells Central govt.

The top court, hearing a plea challenging the amended Forest Conservation Act of 2023, asks govt. to revert to the 'broad' meaning upheld in a 1996 order; 1.97 lakh square km of undeclared forest land to come under the ambit of 'forest' now

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday, in a significant order, directed that the expression 'forest' will continue to have a 'broad and all-encompassing' meaning for the time being, and include 1.97 lakh square km of undeclared forest lands.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud passed the order on petitions challenging the amendments introduced in 2023 to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. The 1980 statute was enacted to check further deforestation leading to ecological imbalance.

The petitions had argued that Section 1A introduced through the amended Act had 'circumscribed

or substantially diluted' the definition of forest to two categories – declared forests and lands recorded as forests in government records after 1980.

'Government records' The Centre, however, denied any attempt to trim the extent of forest coverage. It pointed to the 'explanation' to Section 1A, which expanded the term 'government records' contained in the provision to include lands recognised as forest by any State or Union Territory, local body, council or recognised communities.

However, the court directed the government to revert to the 'dictionary meaning' of 'forest' as upheld by it in a 1996 decision in the T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad case.

"The adoption of this

Verdict on woods
Some of the observations made by the SC over the pleas challenging the 2023 amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980



dictionary meaning to forests was made to align with the intent of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. It is clarified that the expression 'forest' will cover but not be confined to lands recorded as forests in government records.

The Bench noted that the dictionary meaning would continue to hold field till the States and Union Territories prepare a 'consolidated record of forest lands'.

ion Territories prepare a 'consolidated record' of all the lands recorded as 'forest' in government records.

"We clarify that pending the completion of this exercise by the States and Union Territories under Rule 16, the principles in T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad must continue to be observed," the court ordered. The court directed the

Union government to re-quire States and Union Territories, within two weeks, to forward the 'comprehensive records' of forest lands their respective expert committees had identified in pursuance of the top court's orders in the Godavarman Thirumulpad case.

The States and Union Territories have to forward the records by March 31. The Environment Ministry has to publish these records on its website by April 15.

Approval for zoos

The Bench further directed that the establishment of 'zoos or safaris' by any government or authority should not be consented to without the final approval of the top court. The court listed the case again in July 2024.

Centre-Kerala talks fail; SC to hear suit

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Kerala, said the Centre is pushing the State to 'financial emergency'

cannot talk and also litigate," he submitted.

Mr. Sibal said Kerala was one of the leading States in human development indices. Its expenditure was mainly in sectors of health and education. The lawyer said the Centre was pushing Kerala to a state of 'financial emergency'. The court listed the case for hearing on March 6 and 7.

Kerala had accused the Centre of adopting policies and making amendments in law devised to push States to a state of penury. The Centre had hit back by accusing Kerala of being "one of the most financially unhealthy States". The Centre had said the poor financial indicators of Kerala point to a 'lack of proper management of its public finances'.

Out of the way



Pathfinder: A snow-cutter machine clears a road in Shopian after parts of Jammu and Kashmir received fresh snowfall on Monday. ANI

Navalny's widow accuses President Putin of killing him, vows to continue his life's work

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

Alexei Navalny's widow on Monday accused President Vladimir Putin of killing her husband and vowed to continue his life's work following his death last week in a Russian Arctic prison.

Yulia Navalny spoke as the Kremlin said it had no details about Navalny's death, while his mother Lyudmila was denied access to his body for a third day.

"Putin took from me the most valuable thing that I had, the closest and most loved person. But Putin also took Navalny from you," the 47-year-old said.

Her address came shortly before she met EU Foreign Ministers in Brussels.

"I will continue the work of Alexei Navalny. I will continue to fight for the freedom of our country," Ms. Navalny said. "And I call on you to stand by me."

"Putin took from me the most valuable thing that I had, the closest and most loved person. But Putin also took Navalny from you," the 47-year-old said.

Ms. Navalny, an economist, stood by her husband as he galvanised mass protests in Russia, flying him out of the country when he was poisoned before defiantly returning to Moscow with him in 2021.



Yulia Navalny with European Union Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell in Brussels, Belgium, on Monday. REUTERS

knowing he would be jailed.

New turn

The announcement that she will replace Navalny is a momentous and unpre-

dictable turn for Russia's exiled and beleaguered opposition, left leaders after Navalny's death.

Ms. Navalny said her husband's team knew "concretely" why Navalny was killed and they would work to "find out the names" of those behind his death.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin said it had no results from an investigation into the death. "At the moment, the results of the investigation have not been released, they are unknown," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. He decried Western statements blaming the Kremlin for Navalny's end as "absolutely unacceptable".

Mr. Peskov refused to say how Putin – who has not commented on the death – reacted to his opponent dying. He also refused to say when the body will be handed over.

SC 'deeply concerned' over horse-trading following Chandigarh mayoral polls

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said it is "deeply concerned" about the horse-trading taking place" post the controversial Chandigarh mayoral elections, and summoned the entire records and video of the polls held on January 30.

The court directive came after it observed that Returning Officer Anil Masih "has to be prosecuted" for interfering with electoral democracy by "defacing" eight ballot papers.

BJP's winning candidate Manoj Sonkar resigned as Mayor ahead of Monday's top court hearing. However, the Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud took note of media reports that three Aam Aadmi Party councilors had since then joined the BJP.

"This matter is very important. We are deeply concerned that this kind of horse-trading is taking place," Chief Justice Chandrachud observed.

The Bench ordered the ballot papers and video of the mayoral elections, which was seized by the Registrar General of the Punjab and Haryana High Court on February 5, to be produced before the Supreme Court on Tuesday at 2 p.m. The Registrar General would depose a judicial officer, who would be provided security during transit.

The Chief Justice refused Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta's request to postpone the hearing to February 21, saying that

"we are keen because of this business of horse-trading which is going on".

Mr. Mehta, initially during the hearing, proposed fresh mayoral elections under a new Returning Officer appointed by the High Court. He said the polls could be videographed and records placed before the High Court.

Fresh count? However, Punjab Advocate-General Gurinder Singh suggested an alternative. He said the votes were clearly cast on January 30 and there was no problem with the Chandigarh mayoral elections until the Returning Officer allegedly "defaced" the eight ballot papers. His answers show that He has to be prosecuted. Interference with electoral democracy by Returning Officers is the gravest possible thing".

The court ordered Mr. Masih to be present in court again on February 20. In the previous hearing, the Chief Justice had termed his conduct as that of a "fugitive" who was making a "mockery of democracy".

AAP FLAYS BJP
» PAGE 5



Switching sides: Chandigarh AAP councillors with BJP leaders as they join the party, in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

now a request for fresh elections," Mr. Singh submitted. But Mr. Mehta said the petition filed by the AAP in the top court has specifically sought fresh elections.

Calling Mr. Masih, who was present, to the front of the courtroom, Chief Justice Chandrachud questioned him about his conduct caught on camera, reminding him that "you are not in a political contest, but in a court of law" and he would be liable for every word he said.

After the brief exchange, the Chief Justice turned to Mr. Mehta, remarking that "he [Masih] has admitted that he put the marks in the eight ballot papers. His answers show that He has to be prosecuted. Interference with electoral democracy by Returning Officers is the gravest possible thing".

The court ordered Mr. Masih to be present in court again on February 20. In the previous hearing, the Chief Justice had termed his conduct as that of a "fugitive" who was making a "mockery of democracy".

AAP FLAYS BJP

» PAGE 5

IN BRIEF



Harassment charge: Centre seeks report from JIPMER

The Union Health Ministry has directed the JIPMER administration in Puducherry to immediately conduct a thorough investigation of a junior resident's complaint of physical and psychological harassment that he was subjected to during the three-year PG residency at the General Medicine Department. In a communication to the JIPMER Dean (Administration), B. Srinivas, Deputy Director General, Directorate General of Health Services, under the Health Ministry, has sought a detailed report within 15 days after investigating the matter.

NCPHR summons Bihar Chief Secretary over madrasas

The apex child rights body, The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPHR), has summoned the Bihar chief secretary over unsatisfactory response to its queries related to mapped and unmapped madrasas in the State. The NCPHR has intensified its scrutiny of the utilisation of State funds for education in Bihar, focusing on the operations of madrasas. The chief secretary has been summoned to appear before the commission on February 22 to provide information on its inquiries along with all related documents. The panel also issued notices to UNICEF and NCERT regarding curriculum adopted by madrasas. PTI

Sale of 'beef': 4 policemen suspended in Rajasthan

Press Trust of India
JAIPUR

Four policemen were suspended and other personnel at a police station in Rajasthan's Khairthal-Tijara district shifted to the police lines for not taking action against people allegedly selling meat suspected to be beef, officials said on Monday.

This came after some people were caught while allegedly selling suspected beef in the open in the district, they said.

On information of "cow slaughter" and selling of "beef", police teams conducted raids in the area and caught some suspects.

Jaipur Inspector General of Police Umesh Dutta said teams were formed for combing operations in four districts in the range. "Following the incident in Kishangarh Bas area, the police detained several people and recovered fresh meat which was sent for testing," he added.

BJD likely to pick new faces for most LS seats to ensure clean image

Satyansundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is likely to field fresh faces for the Lok Sabha poll from Odisha as many sitting members are either unwilling to contest or are embroiled in controversies.

Of the 21 seats from the State, the BJD may retain five to six sitting MPs and pick new faces for the rest and also send senior leaders who are in State politics to Parliament.

If seated in the ruling BJD are to be believed, constituencies like Puri, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Bhadrak, Nayagarh, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj could see new faces.

Voter base diminished In some instances, incoming MPs are facing personal issues, while others have seen their voter base diminish to such an extent that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's charisma may not be sufficient to secure victory.

Potential candidates have been instructed to start visiting Assembly segments in their Lok Sabha jurisdictions. They have been asked to involve all factions within the party.

Women candidates Since the BJD has decided to keep one third of Lok Sabha seats for women, the party may pick women either from self-help groups or professionals.

Though formal announcements are yet to be made, the party seems inclined towards Shreemayee Mishra as its challenger to Parajita Sarangi, the BJD's national spokesperson, for the Bhadrak-Lok Sabha seat.

M. Mishra, is the BJD observer for the Bhadrak-Lok Sabha seat. She has toured constituencies in Bhadrak extensively over the past three months.

Tamil actor gets a month's jail term for sharing offensive post

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

A special court on Monday convicted and sentenced actor and BJP functionary S. V. Shekher to simple imprisonment for one month for sharing a derogatory post on women journalists on his social media page. The court, however, suspended the sentence to enable him to appear before the High Court within 30 days.

A popular Tamil film actor, Mr. Shekher is a BJP functionary and former AIADMK MLA. On April 19, 2018, he shared a post on his Facebook timeline about women journalists that affected the modesty of the women journalists and others.

The Cyber Crime Wing registered a case based on a complaint by State General Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Journalists and Protection Association. The complaint said Mr. Shekher had shared the post as



he was annoyed by a remark made by a woman reporter on an act of the then Governor.

Mr. Shekher contended that on April 19, 2018, he had received a message from one Thirumalaia, who generally forwarded patriotic and spiritual messages regularly.

He said he had forwarded that message without reading the contents under the *bona fide* impression that it contained only such a usual message. However, it was later pointed out by his friend that the contents were abusive; he had also felt that it was not acceptable to him and removed it immediately.

Cong. veteran Mahendrajeet joins BJP in Rajasthan, vows to work for welfare of Vagad region

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

In a major setback to the Congress in Rajasthan, veteran leader and influential tribal leader, Mahendrajeet Singh Malviya, on Monday joined the BJP, ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Mr. Malviya, a four-time MLA, a former Minister and a member of the Congress Working Committee, joined the BJP in the presence of party's State in-charge Arun Singh here.

Selected from Bagdora in Banswara district for the fourth straight term since 2008, Mr. Malviya was reportedly miffed at not being appointed the Leader of the Opposition after the party's defeat in the 2023 Assembly election. He was also elected an MP from Banswara in 1998 and he served as a Minister twice in the Congress regimes in the State.

Mr. Malviya was inducted into the BJP in a brief ceremony at the party's State



Malviya joining the BJP in Jaipur. ANI

headquarters here. BJP State president C.P. Joshi and other leaders welcomed him as a new member of the fraternity. There were indications that the BJP would give the leader a ticket for the Lok Sabha poll from the Banswara-Dungarpur seat, where it has been striving to gain ground.

Mr. Malviya told pressmen that he had joined the BJP with "full devotion" for ensuring development of the Vagad region, comprising the tribal-dominated Banswara and Dungarpur districts. "There is no one else who can work for

Goa Minister injured in stone pelting after unveiling Shivaji statue

Press Trust of India
PANAJI

Goa Minister Subhash Phal Desai on Monday said he was injured when a mob attacked him with stones after he unveiled a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji at a village in South Goa.

There was heavy police presence in São Jose De Areal village near Margao town on Sunday after some people installed a statue of the Maratha king, while another group took objection to the placement of an approach road to the place where the structure was installed.

Monday marked the 394th birth anniversary of the Maratha king, and events were held across the State to celebrate the occasion. The stone pelting occurred in the afternoon when the Minister was getting into his car after unveiling the statue.

Mr. Phal Desai said, "A mob opposing the installation of the statue pelted stones after I had a brief discussion with them."

The Minister said he was trying to handle the situation peacefully when the mob turned violent. He clarified that he would not file a police complaint.

Back in the Opposition, Tejashwi kicks off yatra today to claim credit for successes in office

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav will embark on a whirlwind 10-day tour of the State from Tuesday, days after Nitish Kumar ditched the *Mahagathbandhan* to return to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) fold and formed a coalition government with it.

Mr. Yadav's Jan Vishwas Yatra will be resembling that of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, which was joined by the RJD leader on February 15 in Sasaram.

With Mr. Kumar aligning with the BJP-led NDA just months before the crucial



Tejashwi Yadav's yatra will resemble that of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra. FILE PHOTO

ing its 17-month rule.

Beginning from Sakri in Muzaffarpur district, the yatra will culminate on February 29, while the day Mr. Yadav will be visiting Katihar, Bhagalpur and Jamui districts.

"He is likely to address three to four public meetings every day," said a senior RJD leader.

The RJD is likely to take credit for the creation of employment opportunities among jobless youth," said the leader over the phone

ment, which included the Congress and Left parties.

Mr. Yadav had made unemployment a major issue in the last Assembly election, promising to give 10 lakh jobs in a span of just 17 months.

However, a ruling Janata Dal (United) leader said through the 10-day tour, Mr. Yadav "wants to impress on people it was he who had provided jobs".

"...but the fact is that our leader Nitish Kumar was the Chief Minister of the State and he had distributed appointment letters among jobless youth," said the leader over the phone

"He should instead come out with a yatra yatra. He should first address the corruption allegations against him and his family members," he told media persons on Monday.

Review of works

Meanwhile, the current government has alleged "irregularities" in several departments held by RJD Ministers during the *Mahagathbandhan* regime.

The government has ordered the review of the works in health, road construction, urban develop-

To the Hindu

BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary too slammed Mr. Yadav's proposed yatra and accused him of corruption.

"He should instead come out with a yatra yatra. He should first address the corruption allegations against him and his family members," he told media persons on Monday.

'CM behind corruption'

Meanwhile, the current government has alleged "irregularities" in several departments held by RJD Ministers during the *Mahagathbandhan* regime.

The government has ordered the review of the works in health, road construction, urban develop-

ment and housing, mines and geology, and public health and engineering departments.

"Why probe into all these departments held by RJD Ministers? The CM should order investigation into the works done by all departments," said former Agricultural Minister and RJD legislator Sudhakar Singh.

Benefit to Bihar farmers

From the plans as about 3.75 lakh crore has been spent on these in the past 15 years.

"After two weeks of this order, I had to resign due to political reasons. But, it is clear that corruption is taking place on a large scale in Bihar in the name of agriculture road maps. No probe has been carried out to date. On whose instructions was my order ignored?" he asked.

The first agriculture road map was launched in 2008, second in 2012, third in 2017 and the fourth one in 2023. A total of ₹1.62,268 crore has been approved for the fourth agricultural road map.

"(With inputs from Amit Bhalari)

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A INX

6 water plants sealed in A.P.
after outbreak of diarrhoea

Sambasiva Rao M.
GUNTUR

Corporation officials sealed six private reverse osmosis-cum-packaged water supply plants in Guntur city of Andhra Pradesh on Monday, in the wake of a diarrhoea outbreak in which one died and over 100 were hospitalised on February 9.

The move came on the orders of Guntur Municipal Corporation (GMC) Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri, after water samples from these plants tested unfit for consumption.

The units are Salt Flavoured Water located at Srinagar, Blue Drops at Katukumbari Thota, Sri Tejaswi Purified Drinking Water at Sarada Colony, Lilly Mineral Waters and Anuradha Water Plant at IPD Colony, and Sapthagiri Enterprises in NGO Colony, Ms. Chekuri said.

Testing drive

All the samples were tested at government laboratories in Guntur. It was found that water from these plants did not maintain pH values between 6.5 and 8.5, which is prescribed for consumption.

The GMC has collected samples from all the 151 private water plants in the Guntur city limits, apart from public pipelines, main supply points and overhead water tanks for testing. The corporation has also started repairing damaged pipelines and replacing old ones.

Kerala HC upholds life term in RMP leader's murder case

Court also sets aside acquittal of 10th and 12th accused in the T.P. Chandrasekharan murder case and convicts them; it asks jail officials to produce all the convicts before it on February 26

The Hindu Bureau



The appeal filed by K.K. Rema, the widow of the RMP leader, sought to award maximum punishment to the convicts. FILE PHOTO

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Monday confirmed the sentence of life imprisonment awarded to the convicts in the murder case of Revolutionary Marxist Party (RMP) leader T.P. Chandrasekharan at Onchiam in 2012.

A Bench comprising Justice A. Jayasankaran Nambari and Justice Kaiser Edappagathai passed the verdict while upholding the Kozhikode Additional Sessions Court's order awarding life imprisonment to accused M.C. Anoop; Manoj Kumar, alias Kirmani Manoj; N.K. Sunil Kumar, alias Kodi Sunil; Raheesh Thundikandi; K.K. Mohammed Shafi; Sijith;

alias Annan Sijith; K. Shinoj; K.C. Ramachandran (then CPI(M) Kumunakkara local committee member); Manojan, alias Trouser Manojan (former CPI(M) Kadungapoyil branch secretary); and the late P.K. Kunhanandan (former CPI(M) Panoor area committee member). The Bench also set aside the acquittal of 10th ac-

cused K.K. Krishnan, former CPI(M) area committee member, Onchiam, and the 12th accused Geethi Babu and convicted them under Section 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC. The High Court ordered the jail authorities to produce all the convicted before it on February 26 to hear them out on the plea for enhancing their pun-

ishment awarded by the sessions court. The court also ordered the production of the two accused who were convicted by the High Court. It passed the order while dismissing the appeals filed by the convicted persons against the sentences court order.

The State sought to enhance the life sentence awarded to them. The appeals filed by the prosecution and K.K. Rema, MLA, the widow of the RMP leader, sought maximum punishment to the convicts and pleaded for quashing the acquittal of other accused.

The prosecution contended that the trial court failed to appreciate the evidence in its true perspective while awarding sentences to the accused.

Rejig in YSRCP prompts three A.P. MPs to leave party

G.V.R. Subba Rao
VIJAYAWADA

Three sitting MPs have quit the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) after Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy reshuffled party in-charges for Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies.

Even as the YSRCP leadership is putting in efforts to bring them back to the party's fold again, there is speculation that more sitting MPs or MLAs may follow suit.

The YSRCP began the exercise to field the winning horses in the Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies ahead of the general elections, likely to be held in less than two months.

Leaders upset
The YSRCP leadership has released seven lists and announced in-charges for 68 of the 175 Assembly seats and 16 of the total 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in Andhra Pradesh. However, the exercise resulted in disarray among those leaders who were either dropped or shifted to other constituencies.

At least 10 sitting MLAs are said to be unhappy with the rejig exercise, despite the party leadership making them clear that survey reports were against them. Leaders such as Kapu Ramachandra Reddy, Burra Madhusudan Yadav and Gunnarum Javaram among others are said to be in that group.

Former Minister in Bihar claims graft in agriculture projects

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MLA and former Agriculture Minister Sudhakar Singh on Monday alleged corruption in the Agriculture Department with regard to the implementation of agriculture road maps and called for a probe into it.

He shared relevant data including the letter that he had written while heading the department stressing manipulation of funds on a large scale in Bihar Agriculture Road map.

"As the Agriculture Minister, I had written a letter and recommended a departmental inquiry so that it can be known how much benefit the farmers of Bihar have received after the implementation of the three road maps. About 3.75 lakh crore has been spent so far in the last 15 years in the name of agriculture road map," Mr. Singh said at his residence in Patna while addressing the media.

The former Minister further said: "After two weeks of this order, I had to resign due to political reasons, but it is clear that corruption is taking place on a large scale in Bihar in the name of agriculture road maps in which the Chief Minister is directly involved. Till date, no probe has been carried out. My question is on whose instructions the Agriculture Minister's order was ignored?"

CM Nitish Kumar had given orders to probe irregularities in departments led by RJD leaders

The first Agriculture Road map was launched in 2008, the second in 2012, third in 2017 while the fourth road map came in 2023.

Large allocation

A total of ₹1.62 lakh crore has been approved for the fourth agricultural road map.

Last Friday, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had given an order to probe the irregularities in the department headed earlier by RJD leaders.

Mr. Singh said: "According to the Agriculture Road map, ₹45,000 to ₹46,000 crore is given to the department directly dealing with sectors such as agriculture, animal and fisheries resources, cooperation, sugarcane, environment and forests, food processing and minor irrigation."

"This is 27-28% of the estimated expenditure of ₹1,62,268.78 crore. This means the allocation being made in the name of Agriculture Road map is only 28% and other departmental expenses are 70-72%."

He alleged that expenses related to the Departments of Rural Works, Roads, and Registration have also been made a part of the Agricultural Road map which is a "big fraud".

SC stays trial against Siddaramaiah

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



Siddaramaiah
With an intent to use criminal force to intimidate the then BJP government during a protest march held in 2022.

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed criminal proceedings against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah after he argued that peaceful protest against the ruling dispensation was a fundamental right of every citizen.

Mr. Siddaramaiah and 35 others were charged with assembling un-

The march had been held demanding the resignation of then Minister K.S. Eshwarappa.

"In a democracy, freedom of speech and expression, to assemble and protest is paramount. It is guaranteed... Political protest against the ruling dispensation of the State conducted peacefully without any criminal intent cannot be muzzled by the invocation of penal

provisions," the top court recorded the submissions made by Mr. Siddaramaiah through advocates Kapil Sibal and A.M. Singhvi.

Mr. Sibal said criminal proceedings could not be initiated against protesters mainly based on allegations that the demonstration had obstructed vehicular traffic.

The Supreme Court issued notice and listed the case after six weeks.

At least 10 sitting MLAs

are said to be unhappy with the rejig exercise, despite the party leadership making them clear that survey reports were against them. Leaders such as Kapu Ramachandra Reddy, Burra Madhusudan Yadav and Gunnarum Javaram among others are said to be in that group.

Face-off continues between Kerala Governor, SFI workers

The Hindu Bureau

KOZHIKODE



Police personnel stopping SFI activists moving towards Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan's convoy in Kannur on Monday. ANI

Irked over the continuing protest by activists of the Students Federation of India (SFI) – a wing of the ruling CPI(M) – Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Monday again stepped out of his official vehicle and confronted the agitators who waved black flags at his convoy near Mattannur in Kannur district.

The incident took place when Mr. Khan was on his way to the Kannur International Airport after visiting the family members of those killed in the wild animal attacks in Wayanad district. Seeing the SFI workers who reportedly came close to the convoy with black flags, Mr. Khan

asked the driver to stop his car to face them directly.

Though the security personnel tried to pacify Mr. Khan, he was determined to meet them. He spent five minutes out of his vehicle causing tense moments.

On Sunday too, there

was a similar black flag

protest led by the SFI

against Mr. Khan when he was on his way to Wayanad to meet the kin of the animal attack victims.

Mr. Khan later accused Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the CPI(M) of press-ganging SFI and the proscribed Popular Front of India (PFI) activists into waylaying his motorcade.

against Mr. Khan when he was on his way to Wayanad to meet the kin of the animal attack victims.

Mr. Khan later accused Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the CPI(M) of press-ganging SFI and the proscribed Popular Front of India (PFI) activists into waylaying his motorcade.

vision is one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Western Ghats in the State. Besides, Anakkulam has emerged as a major tourist destination in the district.

According to officials, wild elephants and their calves from the forests under the Malayattoor forest division frequently find their ways up to the Anakkulam river in search of water. The water bubbles in the river that have a particular salty flavour especially attract the wild elephants.

In November 2022, the Forest department installed an AI-enabled surveillance camera system to monitor the presence of wild animals near human settlements.

Debate rages over change of slogan in Karnataka schools

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

The Karnataka Legislative witnessed noisy scenes on Monday with the Opposition BP alleging that the Social Welfare Department had changed the quote displayed at the entrance of its residential schools.

They said that the earlier slogan "Vidya degulavida kai mugudu olage vanni" (This is a shrine of education, enter with folded hands) was replaced with "Janana degulavida dhairavagi prashnishi" (This is a shrine of knowledge, ask questions boldly).

The BJP members said it was Karnataka Social Welfare Department Principal Secretary P. Manivannan's decision to change the slogan and sought action against him. The change in the slogan is an "insult" to Jnanaprithi awardee Kuvempu, who penned the old slogan, they said.

Clarifying the issue, Social Welfare Minister H.C. Mahadevappa said the government had not issued any notification to change the pre-existing slogan and that a discussion was held to inculcate scientific temper and rationality among children.

The discussion revolved around introduction of a new slogan and there were mixed reactions to it. Some schools have used the new slogan that is in good taste. Also, the new slogan is in line with Kuvempu's thoughts stated in essays like "Vichara Krantige Ahvana" (an invitation to revolutionary thinking). The aim of education is also to inculcate the spirit of questioning. There is no controversy," the Minister said.

On the prowl



Flying high: A MH-60 Sea Hawk helicopter during the rehearsals for naval exercise MILAN in Visakhapatnam on Monday. K.R. DEEPAK

JD(S) leader making offers to Congress MLAs for RS election

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Monday claimed that he has information that JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy has been making offers to Congress MLAs to buy votes for the Rajya Sabha elections scheduled for February 27.

Elections would be held for four seats. Congress has fielded three candidates, while the BJP and JD(S) alliance have fielded two candidates. The surprise entry of the fifth candidate from Kuppendra Reddy (JD-S) into the fray has set off talk of cross-voting.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "We are aware of

who Mr. Kumaraswamy is

making phone calls to, what he is speaking and what offers he is making. We are aware of BJP's game plan too."

On whether Opposition parties are attempting to cross-vote, Mr. Shivakumar said, "They would not have fielded a fifth candidate without rhyme or reason. They are obviously trying for cross-voting. We will know on the voting day."

Asked if Congress was working on a counter strategy, he said, "We don't need it. People don't need it. We have it. We need 135 MLAs from Congress and two Independents are with us. We need to talk about anything else at this point."

Sandeep Vellaram

IDUKKI

The Forest department has installed an artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled surveillance camera system at Anakkulam, under the Mankulam forest division in Idukki, to provide imagery of herds of wild elephants reaching the famed waterhole at Anakkulam, which will provide the images round the clock.

According to officials, live images from the spot will be made available to tourists through a Telegram channel named "Anakkulam Elephant Oru". The Mankulam forest division has implemented the project in association with the Government Engineering College, Idukki.

S. Santhosh Kumar, faculty member at the college who led the project,

said that the images will be available within 30 seconds to one minute of being clicked. "An expert team from the college has helped set up an AI camera near the waterhole at Anakkulam receives many phone calls daily about the arrival of wild elephants at the waterhole. A large number of tourists arrive to watch the wild elephants closely

Telegrams channel," said Mr. Santhosh Kumar. Mankulam Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) K.B. Subash said that the nearby forest office at Anakkulam receives many phone calls daily about the arrival of wild elephants at the waterhole. Through the new system, this will be easier," he said.

"Herds of elephants stay in the river here for at least five hours at a time. When aware of the presence, the tourists can easily reach Anakkulam from Mankulam," said the DFO.

The Mankulam forest division is one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Western Ghats in the State. Besides, Anakkulam has emerged as a major tourist destination in the district.

According to officials, wild elephants and their calves from the forests under the Malayattoor forest division frequently find their ways up to the Anakkulam river in search of water. The water bubbles in the river that have a particular salty flavour especially attract the wild elephants.

In November 2022, the Forest department installed an AI-enabled surveillance camera system to monitor the presence of wild animals near human settlements.

Manipur govt. rejects Kuki village's claim over Thangjing Hills

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Amid inquiries being conducted by both the State government and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, the Manipur government on Monday juked the claims of Kuki-Zomi tribal people over swathes of land on the Thangjing Hills, where the installation of a Cross last month led to fresh tensions in the State. The government called the claims "fabricated and concocted".

The hill range, situated somewhere in the middle of the buffer zone created between Churachandpur and Bishnupur districts, has been contested by Kukis and Meiteis as that of religious and cultural significance to their respective communities. Contests over the right to pray and worship on the hill range have only escalated since the ethnic conflict between the two communities began on May 3, 2023.

The Manipur government order of Monday comes in response to a statement issued by a Kuki-Zomi body based in Churachandpur. The outfit, Lomhang Son (LS), calls itself a young forum of the Kuki-Zo people; it issued a statement on February 15, asserting the community's claim over the hill range.

The statement said that



Worshipping rights on the hills was a point of contention even before the 2023 ethnic conflict.

The LS along with village defence volunteers had expected people from nearby areas to erect a Cross on the hills on January 25 this year. But the statement reignited tensions in the area, with the Meitei community claiming that this was a violation of the Supreme Court orders to maintain status quo of all religious places in the State.

Responding to the outfit's statement, the State Forest department on Monday issued orders through the Governor to dismiss the claims made by the LS and the village chief of Uika Loikhai, one of the Kuki-Zomi villages nearby, even though it said that inquiries in this regard were still under way.

The orders said that the claim made over the Thangjing Hills was "fabricated and concocted" and was made "with a maleficent intention to mislead the general public".

SC allows Sharad faction to continue use of new name

Court permits faction to apply for party symbol, asks EC to allot one within a week of application; indicates it will resolve Sharad Pawar's plea against EC order on 'real NCP' before LS election

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday allowed Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) founder Sharad Pawar and his faction to operate under the name "Nationalist Congress Party-Sharad Chandra Pawar" apparently beyond the Rajya Sabha elections scheduled on February 27.

The Election Commission had allocated the new name to the Sharad Pawar faction in an order on February 7 as a one-time measure to participate in the Rajya Sabha elections.

In a further interim relief for Mr. Sharad Pawar, a Bench of Justices Surya Kant and K.V. Viswanathan permitted his faction to apply for a party symbol and directed the EC to allot one within a week of their application.

"At some stage, let the voter have some say. He originally had a say... the little man, the voter, I mean. Otherwise, there would be chaos. The 'clock' symbol [the original symbol of the NCP] is with you now. They are only asking for a name allotted by the EC," Justice Viswanathan addressed Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's counsel,

who was present in the court.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi and advocate Abhilash Pratap Singh,

Mr. Rohatgi raised objections against the interim order, saying the new name was valid only till the Rajya Sabha polls and cannot be used beyond that point.

Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, for Mr. Sharad Pawar, said the objections were aimed to "hurt" his client. "They want me to be left without a symbol or a name," he said.

Justice Kant said the Indian voter was very intelligent. "Ultimately, the voter is going to vote for either Ajit Pawar or Sharad Pawar," Justice Kant observed. Mr. Ajit Pawar had broken away from Mr. Sharad Pawar to join the BJP coalition in power in the State.



The top court directed the EC to allot the faction a party symbol within a week of their application. ANI

less" after the Rajya Sabha polls. He said the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly was due to convene on Tuesday in a special sitting. The State Budget was due by the end of February. The printing and publication of pamphlets for the Lok Sabha election have to start. The Sharad Pawar camp should not be left handicapped without a name or symbol after the Rajya Sabha elections.

"As an interim order, let me continue with the name the EC allotted me," he submitted.

Otherwise, he said, an "absurd" situation would arise by which the Sharad Pawar loyalists would be subject to the whip issued by Mr. Ajit Pawar. "That cannot be... Such a situation would be absurd, astonishing," Mr. Singhvi said.

The court gave Mr. Ajit Pawar two weeks to file a counter-affidavit to the petition. Mr. Sharad Pawar was directed to file his rejoinder in a week thereafter. The case was posted for hearing after three weeks.

"We will resolve this issue by the time of the Parliament election," Justice Kant indicated.

During the hearing, senior advocate Mr. Singhvi said his client would be left "nameless and symbol-

less".

Justice Viswanathan pointed out that Mr. Ajit Pawar had not challenged the February 7 order till date.

The Bench issued notice on a petition filed by the elder Pawar challenging the EC decision on February 6 that Mr. Ajit Pawar's camp was the "real" NCP.

The court gave Mr. Ajit Pawar two weeks to file a counter-affidavit to the petition. Mr. Sharad Pawar was directed to file his rejoinder in a week thereafter. The case was posted for hearing after three weeks.

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less".

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

They have put off an indefinite hunger strike after a meeting with officials of the Home Ministry

Ladakh civil society groups have put off an indefinite hunger strike scheduled from Tuesday after a meeting with officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Monday.

The Centre has agreed to discuss their demands, which include Statehood for Ladakh, granting the region tribal status through inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, and constitution of a Public Service Commission for Ladakh, in a meeting on February 24.

Former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP from Ladakh, Thupstan Chhewang (76), and education reformer Sohum Wangchuk had announced an indefinite hunger strike from Tuesday to demand constitutional safeguards for the Union Territory.

On February 3, Ladakh observed a complete shutdown as thousands gathered in Leh with demands to protect its cultural identity, environment, job reservation for locals, and a parliamentary seat each for Leh and Kargil. A day before the shutdown, the MHA had invited the civil society leaders for the second round of high-powered committee dialogue, which was scheduled on Monday.

The committee com-

prised members of the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) and is headed by Minister of State for Home Nitayam Rai.

On Monday, LAB and KDA issued a statement that a joint sub-committee will be constituted for carrying forward the exercise. The sub-committee will comprise Mr. Chhewang, Chering Dorjay Lakrook and Nawang Rigzin Jora, and representing the LAB, and Qamar Ali Akhoon, Asgar Ali Karbalai and Sajjad Kar-gili from the KDA.

A source said that at the meeting, MHA officials did not want to commit to a discussion on the issue of Statehood and constitutional safeguards, and instead proposed to enhance the financial powers of hill councils of Leh and Kargil.

However, the members were unanimous in demanding time-bound assurance to discuss their demands.

Mr. Lakrook told *The Hindu*, "The MHA has agreed to discuss our demands in the meeting on February 24. We have decided to call off the hunger strike for the time being."

Mumbai BJP chief meets MNS leader Raj Thackeray

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

Mumbai BJP chief Ashish Shelar's meeting with Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray on Monday gave a fresh boost to the speculation about a possible poll tie-up between the two parties. While Mr. Shelar said meetings kept taking place between "old friends", he added that "details will be shared at an appropriate time". "Raj Thackeray and I have been friends for a long time. We also meet and discuss some other topics. We will reveal certain details at the right time," he said.

Political circles in the State are abuzz with speculation that the BJP may join hands with MNS to divide Marathi votes in a bid to cut Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena faction to size. The BJP on Monday demanded the removal of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for questioning the allegations of sexual assault raised by women in Sandeshkhali.

Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district saw violent protests earlier this month over alleged sexual harassment by local Trinamool Congress leaders.

Locked Chatterjee, BJP MP from the State, said the protests by women were spontaneous and there was no politics in it, and that the BJP only tried to "protect them and help them raise their voice".

She also claimed that what happened to women in Sandeshkhali was similar to the atrocities against women in countries like Iraq and Pakistan.

Ms. Banerjee, on Sunday, said "an incident was made to happen" in Sandeshkhali and blamed the BJP for having it scripted along with the media and the Enforcement Directorate.

BJP calls for Mamata's removal, says women feeling unsafe in State

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

What happened to Sandeshkhali women was similar to crimes in countries like Iraq, Pakistan, she says

"Women are most unsafe in a State ruled by the country's only woman Chief Minister," she said.

"Trinamool strongman Shahajan Sheikh, who is seen as a key accused in the complaints of sexual atrocities and land grab, is being protected by Mamata Banerjee," she alleged, adding that this was the reason the police had not been able to arrest him.

Ms. Banerjee, on Sunday, said "an incident was made to happen" in Sandeshkhali and blamed the BJP for having it scripted along with the media and the Enforcement Directorate.

A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud also issued notice to the Lok Sab-

SC stays LS privileges panel from acting on Bengal BJP MP's 'plaint'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed further proceedings before a Lok Sabha Privileges Committee, which has summoned the West Bengal Chief Secretary and other officers on a complaint filed by BJP MP Sukanta Majumdar alleging "misconduct, brutality and life-threatening injuries to him".

Mr. Majumdar was reportedly injured as party workers clashed with police personnel when stopped from entering Sandeshkhali, where women have been agitating over alleged atrocities committed against them by Trinamool Congress leader Shahajan Sheikh and his aides.

In an urgent oral mentioning, senior advocates Kapil Sibal and A.M. Singhvi, for the officials, questioned the very jurisdiction of the Privileges Committee to summon them.

Mr. Sibal said the BJP MP was engaged in "political activity" not associated with his work as a parliamentarian. He had violated a prohibition order against "unlawful assembly" under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. He had climbed onto the bonnet of a police car and was pushed by fellow party workers. It was the police who had taken him to the hospital. Mr. Sibal said the State had video evidence to back its submissions.

Mr. Sibal said the Lok Sabha Speaker had received a complaint from the BJP MP Sukanta Majumdar and had decided to look into it. ANI

ha Secretariat.

The stay order spelt relief for the Chief Secretary and the other officers, who were scheduled to appear before the Privileges Committee on Monday.

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DeepMind, spoke about the project that made structure predictions for over 200 million proteins.

AlphaFold is an AI system developed by DeepMind that predicts a protein's 3D structure from its amino acid sequence. The programme is said to reduce the time taken by scientists to determine protein structure, besides displaying the impact Artificial Intelligence (AI) can have on scientific discoveries.

Mr. Juniper has been developing novel methods to apply AI to protein biology. "We really want to make AlphaFold a better tool for the wider domain and be more useful. There is a tremendous amount of interaction between protein and Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), protein and Ribonucleic acid (RNA), etc, so we really want to achieve this goal of whole Protein Data Bank (PDB), how do we make predictions for all the atoms that you could see within the PDB. This is still work in progress," he said.

Mr. Juniper said that data has to be diverse for ML. "There are a couple of key components for ML. Data has to be diverse. Data has to be as diverse as possible. You are looking to the future. Bigger and more general problems are easier to solve with ML," he explained.

NCW chief demands President's Rule in Bengal

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Rekha Sharma on Monday visited violence-affected Sandeshkhali and sought the imposition of President's Rule in the State.

"Do not think anything is possible without the imposition of President's Rule," Ms. Sharma told journalists. She also demanded that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee resign over the developments at Sandeshkhali.

Ms. Sharma said that she has received 18 complaints from women in the village, of which two were related to rape. She also added that Ms. Banerjee has prevented State government officials from meeting Central officers.

Representing the Lok Sabha Secretariat, senior advocate Devashish Bharuka countered that the Lok Sabha Speaker had received a complaint from the BJP MP, and had decided to look into it. The court refused Mr. Bharuka's request to not stay the Privileges Committee notice. The court listed the case after four weeks.

Representing the Lok Sabha Secretariat, senior advocate Devashish Bharuka countered that the Lok Sabha Speaker had received a complaint from the BJP MP, and had decided to look into it. The court refused Mr. Bharuka's request to not stay the Privileges Committee notice. The court listed the case after four weeks.

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4 acquitted in 2020 Delhi riots case due to lack of evidence

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A court here acquitted four men charged with the murder of two persons during the 2020 violence in north-east Delhi, noting that the prosecution could not even provide evidence that the accused were part of the riotous mob.

In two different orders issued on February 16, Additional Sessions Judge Purna Prakash announced the acquittal of Ashok Kumar, Ajay Singh, Subham Singh, and Jitender Kumar, who were accused of killing Ashraf Hussain and Akbar in Brijpuri.

Breakthrough Prize laureate calls for collecting 'precious' protein structures

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Protein structures are precious and they should be collected and pooled into a central resource, John Juniper, Breakthrough Prize laureate, said here on Monday.

"We are learning about protein sequences three thousand times faster than we are learning about protein structures. We have this enormous gap in which certain things are very easy to measure like genetics and certain things are very hard to measure three-dimensional structures and we would love to close this gap," he said.

It also noted that the eyewitness produced by the prosecution turned hostile and did not support the police's investigation. The judge maintained that circumstantial evidence fails to establish the fact that the accused murdered the victims.



John Juniper

ing the TNQ Distinguished Lectures in the Life Sciences - 2024 on "Highly Accurate Protein Structure Predictions: Using AI to Solve Biology Problems in Minutes Instead of Years" at IIT Madras Auditorium, IISc. Mr. Juniper, who currently leads the AlphaFold2 project at Google

Mahua Moitra fails to appear before ED

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra on Monday did not appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning in connection with an inquiry under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

It is learnt that the ED has given Ms. Moitra a week's time to join the probe.

The agency had summoned Ms. Moitra to record her statement as part of the inquiry concerning a Non-Resident External (NRE) account. The ED was examining whether the transactions made through

the account contravened any provision of the FEMA. The Income Tax department had initially come across the details of the account, which were later shared with the ED for a follow-up inquiry. According to sources, as Ms. Moitra was allegedly linked to the account, the agency summoned her for questioning.

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Farmers reject Centre's offer, to resume march

Govt. wants to procure crops on contract-based MSP, say farmers, who are upset that the plan presented to them was different from what Minister Goyal disclosed to media after their meeting

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

Rejecting the Centre's offer to procure five crops from minimum support price (MSP) for five years based on a contract system, protesting farmers in Punjab on Monday announced that they would restart their 'Delhi Chalo' march on Wednesday.

The Kisan Mazdoor Morcha and the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) — the two umbrella bodies of around 200 farmer and farm labourer unions — had given the call for 'Delhi Chalo' to press for the fulfilment of their demands, which include a legal guarantee for MSP.

"The proposal that was presented before us was different from what Union Minister Piyush Goyal disclosed before the media after the fourth round of meeting on Sunday night. In the meeting, it was proposed that for the five crops, procurement would be done on MSP. But when the Minister conveyed after the meeting that the



No deal: Protesting farmers at the Shambhu Barrier along the Punjab-Haryana boundary on Monday. PTI

procurement would be on a contract system, the real intention was exposed. So after deliberating on the Minister's statement, we have decided to reject the offer," Sarwan Singh Panher, coordinator of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, said at a press conference at the Shambhu Barrier in Patiala.

"On February 21, we will peacefully start our march towards Delhi. We appeal to the Centre to resolve our issues by holding talks and let us march to Delhi by removing the barricades erected on the Punjab-Haryana boundary."

told reporters that the proposed was to divert and dilute the demand of MSP at the rate of "C2 (input cost and rent of the land) +50%" for all crops with guaranteed and legalised procurement.

Asking the BJP to implement its own promise in the manifesto, the SKM leaders said if the Centre was unable to fulfil the promise, then Prime Minister Narendra Modi must honestly tell that to the people.

Expressing anguish at the way discussions were being held only with leaders of SKM (Non-Political), who are now protesting at the Haryana-Punjab border, the SKM said it would step up its agitation seeking justice for farmers. "The Ministers are not ready to clarify whether the MSP they proposed is based on A2+FL + 50% or C2+50%. There is no transparency in the discussions though meetings have taken place four times," the leaders said asking the Centre to reveal every point of discussions. (With inputs from A.M. Jigesh in New Delhi)

SP offers 17 seats to Cong., says it will join yatra if deal is sealed

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party (SP) on Monday said it has offered 17 Lok Sabha seats to the Congress in Uttar Pradesh and that it would take part in the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi once a seat-sharing deal was finalised.

"Right now, talks are going on. Many rounds of talks have happened and lists of candidates have been exchanged. The moment seat distribution is finalised, the Samajwadi Party will join their [Congress's] Nyay Yatra," SP chief Akhilesh Yadav told presspersons.

The party's stand on attending the yatra is contrary to the statement made earlier this month when it confirmed that Mr. Yadav would take part in the yatra.

The SP's participation in the yatra, which will enter Rae Bareli on Tuesday, depends on the Congress's decision on the offer. The Congress had won only in Rae Bareli in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

Awaiting decision'
"The SP gave a final offer of 17 parliamentary segments to them [Congress]. Discussions are going on and we are waiting for their decision," SP chief spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary told *The Hindu*.



Akhilesh Yadav

IN BRIEF



Attempts made to sabotage federal system: Kerala CM

Kerala is making progress in all sectors, including becoming a poverty-free State, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said here on Monday. He was inaugurating the valedictory session of the State Local Self-Government (LGS) Day celebrations at Kottarakara and distributing awards to the best local bodies. "Attempts are being made to sabotage the federal system and encroach on subjects included on the State list. Through interventions in fiscal federalism they are trying to undermine the financial security of the State. Against this backdrop, the LGS day celebrations gain special significance," said Mr. Vijayan.

Not moving to BJP, says Sharad loyalist Jayant Patil

Senior Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction) leader Jayant Patil on Monday quashed speculation that he was planning to join the BJP, ahead of the Lok Sabha election. Rumours were rife that Mr. Patil, considered one of Sharad Pawar's closest aides, was joining the BJP following senior Congress leader Ashok Chavan's defection. Speaking to presspersons in Mumbai, Mr. Patil said that he had not received any offer from the BJP. "No BJP leader has contacted me. I am in touch with all our MLAs. Everyone is in their place and there is no question of anyone going anywhere," said Mr. Patil.

BJP didn't want my temple photo made public, says Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged that the BJP did not want his pictures from inside the Kashi Vishwanath Temple to become public and hence did not allow phones to be taken inside during his visit.

"I believe in Lord Shiva and when I went to Kashi and when I went to Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi, the policemen kept all the mobile phones there. This was done because BJP does not want Rahul Gandhi's photo to be seen inside the Shiva temple," he said during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Pratapgarh.

Mr. Gandhi, who also toured Amethi, the Lok Sabha constituency he represented for 15 years, accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of spreading hatred. He added that there was no place for Dalits, tribal people, and the backward community in Mr. Modi's India.

"The Prime Minister does not know how the Budget is made and where the money goes. He only knows how to give speeches and spread hatred; that is why he has been made to sit there. 'Adani-Ambani' have made him sit there," Mr. Gandhi said.

Strengthening India'
At a meeting in Amethi, he said, "The injustice being done to the backward classes, Dalits, tribals, and poor is making the country hollow from within. Therefore, the Congress is going to take two revolutionary steps towards strengthening the country."

"The first step is caste census, which will be the X-ray of the country. The second is mapping of wealth resources, which will help in knowing who has what. India's prosperity is impossible without making two-thirds of the deprived population a partner in the progress," he said.

Kharge highlights 'deep relation' of Amethi voters with Gandhi family

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge joined the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra on Monday as it reached Rae Bareli Gandhi's former Lok Sabha constituency of Amethi in Uttar Pradesh.

Mr. Kharge recalled the close association of the Gandhi family with the people of Amethi and Rae Bareli. But there is no indication yet on whether Mr. Gandhi or his sister, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, would contest from one of these seats, that have been held by a member of the Gandhi family.

While Mr. Gandhi lost to BJP leader and Union Minister Smriti Irani in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the Rae Bareli seat was held by his mother and Congress Parliamentary



Close ties: Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader Rahul Gandhi at a public meeting in Amethi on Monday. PTI

Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi.

However, after filing her nomination for a Rajya Sabha seat from Rajasthan, Ms. Gandhi announced her decision not to contest the Lok Sabha election because of age and health concerns. She had been representing Rae Bareli for four consecutive terms since 2004 after vacating these seats.

Amethi for her son.

"This is the place where Rajiv Gandhi, Soniaji and Rahulji worked hard. You [voters of Amethi] share a deep relation with them [the Gandhi family]," said Mr. Kharge, addressing a meeting at Amethi on Monday, without spelling out if any member of the Gandhi family would contest from these seats.

"Who will contest from Amethi is something that the CEC will decide. Rahulji has been an MP from here thrice and fought four elections. His father had also represented this seat. So, from the Congress's history, this is a very important seat," Congress leader Jaairam Ramesh said.

There is growing demand from party workers that Mr. Gandhi should contest from Amethi again and Ms. Vaishali should be fielded from Rae Bareli.

In her open letter to the people of Rae Bareli, Ms. Gandhi said, "After this election, I will not have the opportunity to serve you directly but my heart and soul will always remain with you. I know that you will stand by me and my family in future, just as you have in the past."

The Congress, which contested the recent mayoral polls with the AAP, targeted the BJP alleging that the entire election episode had exposed the party.

Three AAP councillors — Neha, Poonam, and Gurcharan Kala — joined the BJP on Sunday. The development came hours after BJP leader Manoj Sonkar resigned as Chandigarh Mayor on Sunday, a day before the Supreme Court was scheduled to hear a case in a fresh mayoral election is held, the AAP

AAP hits out at BJP a day after three of its councillors switch loyalties in Chandigarh

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

A day after three of its municipal councilors switched over to the BJP, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday hit out at the party accusing it of threatening and using unfair tactics to poach them.

The Congress, which contested the recent mayoral polls with the AAP, targeted the BJP alleging that the entire election episode had exposed the party.

Three AAP councillors — Neha, Poonam, and Gurcharan Kala — joined the BJP on Sunday. The development came hours after BJP leader Manoj Sonkar resigned as Chandigarh Mayor on Sunday, a day before the Supreme Court was scheduled to hear a case in a fresh mayoral election is held, the AAP

The development came hours after BJP leader Manoj Sonkar resigned as Chandigarh Mayor

plea alleging irregularities in the mayoral polls.

State AAP chief Sunny Ahluwalia said, "They [BJP] are known for such tactics. These councilors who until a few days ago were sitting in protest against them were threatened... It was all part of some events [connected with the mayoral polls] in which everyone saw how democracy was murdered."

On the issue of whether their alliance would continue in case a fresh mayoral election is held, the AAP

and Congress leaders said they will strategise after the top court hears + matter.

"As of now, 10 councilors of AAP and seven of Congress. We spoke with the Chandigarh Congress chief and we will strategise everything on how to move forward," Mr. Ahluwalia said, responding to a question on the alliance.

Chandigarh Congress president H.S. Lucky alleged that in the entire episode of the mayoral polls, the BJP stands exposed before the public. "Everyone saw what they did. Everyone watched the video of how the presiding officer declared eight votes invalid for mayor's post," he said.

"The BJP is known to play politics of lies and pressure."

Abdullahs hit back as Azad alleges they had sought secret meetings with PM

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) chairman Ghulam Nabi Azad's attack on National Conference (NC) chief Farooq Abdullah and his son Omar Abdullah on February 19 has sparked a war of words.

Mr. Azad, in an interview to a TV channel, suggested that NC leaders would seek late-night meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. "They would meet him at 11 p.m. and 12 a.m. Why not meet during the day? It sounds suspicious," Mr. Azad said.

Late night meetings
He alleged that the NC was "consulted on the decision". "They [NC lead-



Ghulam Nabi Azad

said, "Wah bhai wah Ghulam Nabi Azad, so much bile today. Where is the Ghulam that was begging us for Rajya Sabha seats in J&K as recently as 2015? Abdullahe knew about 370 yet we were detained for more than 8 months including under PSA & you were free, the only ex CM in JK free after 5th Aug."

Mr. Abdullah added, "My father was the one thrown out of his Government house when he wasn't MP and you are allowed to keep your ministerial bungalow? Who is Azad and who is Ghulam, time will tell and people will decide."

Farooq Abdullah also responded to Mr. Azad's allegations.

"He should tell us the names of his agents who are sitting at the residence of the PM and Union Home Minister," he said.

Arvind Kejriwal skips sixth summons by ED in Delhi excise policy case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday skipped the sixth summons by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning on Monday in connection with the Delhi excise policy case.

The AAP in a statement, termed the summons "illegal". The Delhi Chief Minister has skipped all the summonses issued by the probe agency so far.

The BJP said Mr. Kejriwal was disrespecting the law by continuously evading the summonses. "Just like [former Deputy Chief Minister] Manish Sisodia and [Rajya Sabha member] Sanjay Singh who are behind bars in the liquor scam, Kejriwal too will find himself in jail as he is the mastermind of the entire scandal," Delhi BJP chief



Ongoing row: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addressing the media outside the Assembly on Monday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

till March 16 after Mr. Kejriwal expressed his inability to be personally present for the hearing due to the ongoing Delhi Assembly session.

The ED sources said the agency is expected to issue fresh summons to the AAP chief. The agency issued the first summons to Mr. Kejriwal on November 2, last year. The case against the Delhi Chief Minister is based on an FIR by the Central Bureau of Investigation, alleging multiple irregularities in the formation and implementation of the excise policy, which was subsequently withdrawn.

It is alleged that the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22 to grant licences to liquor traders allowed cartelisation and favoured certain dealers who had allegedly paid bribes for it, a charge refuted by the AAP. (With PTI inputs)

IN BRIEF

**J&K High Court rebukes L-G administration for power cuts**

In a rare reprimand, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Monday directed the Lieutenant-Governor's administration to ensure electricity supply during court hours, following a major power failure. The court listed the case for Wednesday. A Division Bench comprising Justices Atul Sreedharan and Moksha Khajuria Kazmi observed that during court hours the High Court in Srinagar suffered "a complete power failure" "The generator is also not working. There are no lights. The air heating unit is also not functional," it said. The power crisis came amid a fresh spell of cold weather on Monday.

Lt. Gen. Dwivedi takes over as Vice-Chief of Army Staff

Lieutenant-General Upendra Dwivedi on Monday assumed charge as Vice-Chief of the Army Staff. Prior to this appointment, he was the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command, based at Udhampur from 2022 to 2024. He will be the senior-most officer in the Army when Army Chief Lt. Gen. Manoj Pande retires from service in May. "On assumption of appointment, Lt. Gen. Dwivedi laid a wreath at the National War Memorial and was accorded Guard of Honour at the South Block Lawns," the Army said in a statement. Lt. Gen. Dwivedi was commissioned into 18 Jammu and Kashmir (JK) Rifles in 1984, a unit he later commanded.

HC refuses to cancel LJP MP's anticipatory bail in rape case

The Delhi High Court has declined to cancel the anticipatory bail granted to Lok Janashakti Party MP Prince Raj in an alleged rape case. The court dismissed the petition by the complainant observing that the relief was granted to Raj by the trial court in 2021 after considering the material before it. It said pre-arrest bail could not be cancelled on "mere asking" as the right to liberty was a crucial right. "The anticipatory bail order was passed on the basis of material collected and placed on record...along with other material pertaining to a FIR regarding extortion registered against prosecutrix prior in time," the court said.

Maharashtra Chief Minister promises quota for Marathas

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday reiterated that the government was committed to providing reservation to Marathas without disturbing the reservation provided to the Other Backward Classes (OBC). "We will give the Maratha community reservation within the legal framework. We will do it in such a way that it does not affect the existing reservation of the OBCs or any other community," Mr. Shinde said. On Tuesday, the quota issue will be taken up during a day-long Special Session of the Maharashtra Legislature, where there will be discussions on report submitted by the chairman of the Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission.

Major projects for education, skilling to be launched**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation for a number of new educational institutions on Tuesday. The projects are worth ₹13,375 crore. The ceremony will be held in Jammu.

The Prime Minister's Office said in a release that the inauguration will be a significant step towards upgrading and developing education and skilling infrastructure across the country. The projects include permanent campuses of IIT-Bhilai, IIT-Tirupati, IIT-Jammu, the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing in Kancheepuram, the Indian Institute of Skills in Kanpur and two campuses of the Central Sanskrit University at Devprayag in Uttarakhand and at Agartala in Tripura. Mr. Modi will also inaugurate three new IIMs in Jammu, Bodh Gaya and Visakhapatnam.

"In the many decades since Independence, the approach of ruling regimes towards development was selective, leaving a numerically sizeable population of the country yearning for basic facilities. But our double engine government changed that; we are making lives of every citizen easier and providing benefits of governments' schemes to the needy people of all the sections of society. It is social justice and secularism in the true sense. This is the social justice that [socialist leaders] J.P. [Narayan] and [Ram Manohar]

We are making the life of every citizen easier: PM

Modi launches 14,000 projects across UP, worth over ₹10 lakh crore; he hails State's infrastructure development, saying it has the highest number of expressways and international airports

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said providing benefits of government schemes to the needy irrespective of caste and religion is true secularism, adding that the selective approach of previous governments towards development forced a sizeable population in the country to yearn for basic facilities.

"In the many decades since Independence, the approach of ruling regimes towards development was selective, leaving a numerically sizeable population of the country yearning for basic facilities. But our double engine government changed that; we are making lives of every citizen easier and providing benefits of governments' schemes to the needy people of all the sections of society. It is social justice and secularism in the true sense. This is the social justice that [socialist leaders] J.P. [Narayan] and [Ram Manohar]



Push for growth: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the U.P. Global Investors' Summit in Lucknow on Monday. SANDEEP SAXENA

Lohia dreamed of," said Mr. Modi in Lucknow. He was launching 14,000 projects across Uttar Pradesh worth more than ₹10 lakh crore at the fourth groundbreaking ceremony for investment proposals received during the Uttar Pradesh Global Investors' Summit.

Lauding the transformation of Uttar Pradesh in the last seven years under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime, the Prime Minister said it was unimaginable seven years ago that such a favourable environment for investments would come in the State, which had been affected by a high rate of crime and communal flare-ups.

Investment potential

"Today, investment worth lakhs of crores is starting on thousands of projects. These initiatives will change the face of the State. When U.P. develops, India will develop. In the last seven years,

able seven years ago that such a favourable environment for investments would come in the State, which had been affected by a high rate of crime and communal flare-ups."

"I have full faith in Uttar Pradesh and the double engine government.... Other States should learn from Uttar Pradesh and then enter the field with a similar spirit," he said.

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and representatives of the industrial sector were among those present at the event.

Earlier, Mr. Modi laid the foundation stone of Shri Kalki Dham Temple in Sambhal district in western Uttar Pradesh.

UAPA invoked in murder case of cow shelter worker

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

The murder of a cow shelter worker in Chhattisgarh's Kabirdham district last month was an "act of terror" aimed at fear ahead of the consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, he said.

Kabirdham Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava confirmed that the provisions of the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act (UAPA), 2008, was slapped on two of the six accused in the case. He added that this was perhaps the first time in Chhattisgarh that the UAPA has been invoked in a case that does not deal with Naxalism.

It was on January 20 that Sudham Yadav, a 48-year-old cow shelter worker, was found murdered with his throat slit. The police arrested six persons, including a minor, in connection with the murder. While the incident that took place in Deputy CM Vijay Sharma's home turf had drawn considerable public attention due to the communal undertone.

Mamata writes to PM over 'sudden' deactivation of Aadhaar cards in Bengal

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday alleged that Aadhaar cards of people belonging to the Scheduled Castes and minority communities in certain parts of the State were being cancelled ahead of the Lok Sabha election. She said that to address the issue, the State government would start an Aadhaar Grievance Portal on Tuesday when citizens can file their complaints.

The Chief Minister also wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the indiscriminate deactivation of Aadhaar cards.

"This is a gross violation of Aadhaar rules. They are planning detention camps like Assam in the State. No NRC (National Register of Citizens) or any detention camp will be allowed in West Bengal," she told presspersons at the State Secretariat. Claiming that

she was a "conspiracy ahead of the polls", she said people from the Muslim community should now realise what all the talk on citizenship by the BJP was about.

She said the State government would issue "alternative" cards to those whose Aadhaar had been deactivated.

In the letter to the Prime Minister, Ms. Banerjee said she had received a number of representations, including from Scheduled Caste organisations, regarding the issue and many people were approaching the district administration over it.



Mamata Banerjee

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No Aadhaar number cancelled, says UIDAI

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The development had caused chaos and confusion among the residents of the State, she said.

"I would like to know from you about the causes for such sudden action of deactivation of Aadhaar cards without assigning reasons. Is it just for the sake of depriving the eligible beneficiaries of the benefit or to create a panic situation among the people at large just before ensuing Lok Sabha elections?" she said.

The process of deactivation of Aadhaar cards with prior intimation was a gross violation of Regulation 29 (1) of the Aadhaar (Enrolment and Update) Regulations, 2016, she added.

Responding to the allegations, Union Minister Santanu Thakur shared a telephone number and an email address that people with Aadhaar-related grievances can use to get clarification.

In the course of the deactivation of Aadhaar database updated, intimations are issued from time to time to Aadhaar number holders. In this connection, it is clarified that no Aadhaar number has been cancelled," the UIDAI said.

Press Trust of India
RAIPUR

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday said students will get an option of appearing for Class 10 and 12 board examinations twice a year from the academic session 2025-26.

Aadhaar, as the most commonly used digital identity, is used to avail of numerous subsidies, benefits and services, the UIDAI said on its website, adding that to maintain the accuracy of the Aadhaar database, the authority had initiated an exercise for update of documents and Aadhaar information.

"In the course of the deactivation of Aadhaar database updated, intimations are issued from time to time to Aadhaar number holders. In this connection, it is clarified that no Aadhaar number has been cancelled," the UIDAI said.

According to the New

'Class 10, 12 exams will be held twice a year from 2025-26'

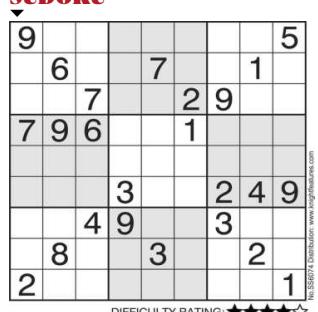
Press Trust of India
RAIPUR

Curriculum Framework (NCF) announced by the Ministry of Education in August last year, board examinations will be held at least twice a year to ensure that students have enough time and opportunity to perform well. They will also get the option to retain the best score.

Mr. Pradhan was speaking after launching the PM SHRI (Prime Minister Schools for Rising India) scheme in Chhattisgarh under which 21 schools of the State will be upgraded. The function was held at the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay auditorium in Raipur.

He said one of the objectives of the new National Education Policy (NEP), unveiled in 2020, was to reduce academic stress on students. He said from the 2025-26 academic session, students will get an opportunity to appear for the Class 10 and 12 board exams twice.

Mr. Pradhan slammed the previous Congress government in the State, saying education was not its priority.

SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle Solution to yesterday's puzzle

FAITH

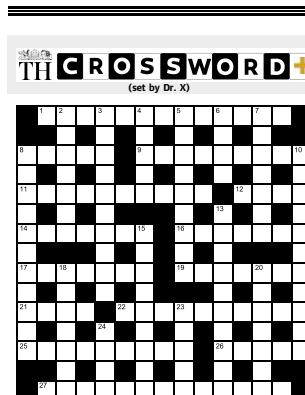
Easy to understand

The Vedas are difficult to understand and can be misinterpreted. For example, the Vedas speak of yugas to destroy enemies. These are called abhicara yugas. But the Vedas also warn that naraka is guaranteed if one performs such yugas. So, one could get mixed up when reading the Vedas. But Srimad Bhagavatam does not say anything that is difficult to comprehend, said Valayapati Ramachar in a discourse.

The karmakanda portion of the Vedas talk about karma. The jnaana kanda portion deals with Vedanta. Thus, the Vedas deal with matters of this world also. But Srimad Bhagavatam talks only of the Supreme One, Lord Narayana. It is not concerned with trivial goals, but only speaks of how to attain moksha.

Being devoted to Bhagavan is the highest dharma, and it is this dharma that Srimad Bhagavatam talks about. While the message is important, equally important is the person who is giving us the message. Srimad Bhagavatam came from Sage Vyasa. And Vyasa is considered an avatar of Vishnu.

Bhagavatam highlights the auspicious qualities of Vishnu. The word stotra often carries with it a negative connotation. We use it when a person is flattered, to obtain some favour from him. But in the case of Bhagavan, stotra of Him, praise of Him, is justified, because He has no negative attributes. When a person listens to Srimad Bhagavatam, his heart becomes like a temple. The Lord is glad to reside in this temple. He is happier to be in the heart of such a devotee, than He is in the milky ocean.



Across
1, 26 Conceived reason to buy new footwear (3,3,3,4,5)
8 Nevertheless getting rid of old planes (5)
9 Prince inherits rare medical condition (9)
12 Wild animal behind mysterious den surrounded by round blue plants (10)
12 Nail criminal crossing river (4)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site at <https://qr.go.page.link/jppTn>
1 Tempts by endlessly seducing artfully (7)
16 One sold fresh strips of pasta (7)
17 Mexican dish contains most cheap brand of sauce (7)
19 Romp with primarily sexy male in escapade (7)
21 Excited since beginning of game (4)
22 Pub having unhealthy, substandard oriental menu (4,2,4)
25 Tripping on pure LSD in show (9)
26 See 1
27 Little shots drunk after consuming drugs - they make women higher? (8,5)
Down
2 Love exotic dance featuring island's sea nymph (7)
3 Spooner's coffin found in wreck (6,4)
4 Bottled spirits? That is gin, rum (5)
5 Postpone broadcast about nuclear rivals (9)
6 Bulldog repeatedly bites fiend (4)
7 Note a bit of lump within the intestine (7)
8 Taken in by charms, misguided by model has an unhappy outcome (4,2,5)
10 Encounter maiden lost in distress around byroads (4,7)
13 Master uttered with enthusiasm about boy's ethical courage (5,5)
15 Angry leader of insurgents played by stalwart engaged in decisive gunfight (4,2,3)
18 Brochure in trunk about deer in retreat (7)
20 Wolf and a deer injured pheasant (7)
22 Passage to be performed slowly by girl in vocal round (5)
24 Reviewed isolated organic compound (4)

Hundred years ago, Satyendra Nath Bose changed physics forever

Bose discovered the correct set of equations to use to work out the behaviour of collections of photons. As physics work goes, Bose's was as fundamental as it got. The physicist and writer Abraham Pais later listed it as one of the six foundational papers of quantum theory.

Nirmalya Kajuri

Satyendra Nath Bose appeared on the physics scene like a comet. The year was 1924. Physics was in the middle of the biggest upheaval in its history. The old foundations had crumbled in the face of new data. The picture of a new 'quantum theory' was emerging. But it was a fractured, disjointed picture with major pieces missing.

The search was on among physicists to find the pieces and complete the jigsaw. In the best universities of Europe, new ideas were being proposed, debated, and discarded every week. Then a lecturer of physics from Dhaka University – located then in the backwater of backwaters – appeared out of nowhere with a major missing piece of the puzzle.

The lecturer, Satyendra Nath Bose, had discovered the correct set of equations to use to work out the behaviour of collections of photons (particles of light). As physics work goes, Bose's was as fundamental as it got. The physicist and writer Abraham Pais listed it as one of the six foundational papers of quantum theory. Few would disagree.

Even so, a paper from an unknown Indian scientist was initially rejected by a journal. Bose then mailed the paper to his favourite physicist, Albert Einstein, hoping to secure the giant's support. Einstein loved the paper, translated it to German, and sent it to a journal himself.

This year marks 100 years of Bose's discovery.

Bose and Saha

Bose was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1894. His mathematical prowess had been noted by his teachers early on. After completing his schooling, he joined Presidency College to study physics. This is where he met and befriended another brilliant young man, Meghnad Saha. The two would remain lifelong friends.

A few years on, both were appointed faculty members in the newly founded Rajabazar Science College.

Physics was changing rapidly at the time. Einstein had reset the understanding of space and time with his theory of relativity. The work of Max Planck, Niels Bohr and, again, Einstein had shown that the old physics was incapable of dealing with the microscopic world – the world inside atoms.

Bose and Saha were tasked with teaching the new physics to their students. The job was made more challenging by the fact that all the important papers at the time were in German. But neither the challenge of learning a new language nor the conceptual novelty of the emerging concepts proved a roadblock for the two young physicists.

While physicists around the world were grappling with the new concepts, Saha and Bose became early adapters. Together they published the first English translation of Einstein's papers on general relativity. Saha was one of the first people to start finding applications of the developing quantum theory to molecular physics. Bose was less prolific, but he immersed himself in the study of the fundamental papers in quantum theory.

Bose's next job was as a lecturer in the



Bose's work was greatly appreciated by Einstein and things were set in motion from that point. PUBLIC DOMAIN

recently established Dhaka University. Among the topics he had to teach was Planck's law of black-body radiation. Bose found he could not explain it to his students to his satisfaction.

Planck's law was the first discovered piece of the quantum puzzle. It agreed perfectly with experiments, but no one could fully explain where it came from. Saha, visiting his friend in Dhaka, introduced Bose to the latest attempts at deriving Planck's law. Bose found none of them fully satisfactory and decided to have a go himself.

Planck's law

Planck's law, named for its discoverer Max Planck, who found it in 1900, describes the pattern that told physicists physics worked differently in the microscopic. It is also probably the most successful guess in the history of physics.

Planck's law is about radiation. All hot objects – from a bowl of hot soup to the Sun – emit radiation in a range of frequencies. Physicists typically assigned them to objects as if they can emit light but not reflect it, a.k.a. black bodies.

The study of black-body radiation was a hot topic of 19th century physics. The question was how the radiated energy is distributed among the different frequencies. Theoretical predictions on this matched experimental results only for a certain range of frequencies.

Planck looked closely at the data and simply guessed the right formula. It worked like magic. The only problem: it violated the rules of physics.

Planck's formula was incompatible with the known laws of physics. Specifically, it required energy to be fundamentally discrete, just like matter is a collection of discrete atoms, energy too



Bose eliminated classical physics from the picture, and stripped the problem to its essence

had to be a collection of discrete packets or 'quanta'. This idea was the birthplace of quantum mechanics.

But even physicists who accepted Planck's radical hypothesis about quantised energy pointed out that his derivation was incorrect. Planck's use of statistical methods did not stand up to scrutiny.

Planck's law was correct, but its derivation was not. It had to wait until Bose.

Bose's derivation

By the time Bose took up the problem, more results on quantum theory had appeared even as the rules remained unclear. Einstein had explained the photoelectric effect using the hypothesis that light carries energies in packets. The American physicist Arthur Compton had demonstrated that light carries discrete units of momentum, too.

There had also been several attempts at deriving Planck's law in the interim. To Bose, all of them suffered from the same problem: they used results from both quantum physics and pre-quantum (or classical) physics. This was not logically consistent.

Planck's own original derivation, for example, was based on a model of the black body, specifically of the mechanism by which it produces radiation. It was through this model that classical physics

had entered the story.

Bose showed all of this was unnecessary. Planck's law was independent of the mechanism that produced it. By making clever use of the results of Einstein and Compton, Bose eliminated classical physics from the picture, and stripped the problem to its essence, finding the most probable way of distributing energy among quanta of radiation. Bose showed that the most probable way translated to Planck's formula.

Planck's law was therefore simply a statistical property of the quanta of radiation, a.k.a. photons.

This was Bose's major result. But there were crucial results implicit in his methods, some of which might not have been apparent to Bose himself. The most important is that the total number of photons is not conserved – photons could appear out of thin air and disappear into nothingness.

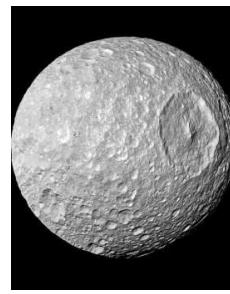
Bose's paper pioneered the field of quantum statistics.

A few years later, when the rules of quantum theory were finally clear, the British physicist Paul Dirac obtained Bose's statistics from them. That is, he showed that fundamental particles can be in one of two categories depending on their statistics (i.e. the set of rules to describe them properly): bosons or fermions.

Despite a long career in physics, Bose published sparsely and never produced another work of similar value. He once described himself as a comet that only came once and never returned.

For a comet as bright, though, once can be quite enough.

(Nirmalya Kajuri is an assistant professor of physics in IIT Mandi.)



A view of Saturn's moon Mimas captured by NASA's Cassini spacecraft from 9,500 km away on February 13, 2010. Its prominent Herschel crater is visible towards the right. NASA/JPL-CALTECH/SPACE SCIENCE INSTITUTE

Saturn's moon Mimas may have ocean under its crust

Priyali Prakash

Astronomers believe Mimas, the smallest of the major moons of Saturn, known as the "big seven" or the "inner moons", may have a liquid ocean around 20-30 km under its heavily cratered ice shell.

Nicknamed "Death Star" for the resemblance of its cratered surface to a space station in the *Star Wars* franchise, Mimas was an unlikely candidate to host an ocean because the presence of these water bodies is generally marked by modifications of the surface by internal dynamics.

In a study published in the *Nature* journal on February 7, 2024, scientists analysed Mimas's orbital motion based on data from NASA's Cassini spacecraft and determined that the moon's librations – or oscillations – indicate it either has an elongated silicate core or a global ocean. These two possibilities would affect Mimas's gravitational interactions with Saturn, slightly changing its orbit over time.

The outer icy layer is viscoelastic while interior interfaces are assumed to be hydrostatic. Calculations suggest the ice sheet would have to be 20-30 km thick to match observations

If Mimas were solid, its librations would depend on a parameter called the gravity coefficient and change in orbit on this and another factor called J_2 . By measuring its librations and orbital changes, scientists could determine the values for these numbers if Mimas is entirely solid.

But when they did, their calculations reached a dead end, so they switched to the possibility of Mimas hosting a subsurface ocean. They used a theoretical approach to understand how an underground ocean would affect the moon's movement, depending on the shape of three deformed layers, the gravity coefficients, and the amount of librations.

The outer icy layer is considered viscoelastic (i.e. both viscous and elastic) in the librational model while the interior interfaces are assumed to be hydrostatic (i.e. at rest). The resulting calculations suggested the ice sheet would have to be 20-30 km thick to match observations. These figures agreed closely with the findings of a 2022 study as well.

Further, the amount of heat released at the surface of Mimas was estimated to be around 25 milliwatt per sq. m., which should reduce the moon's eccentricity – a measure of the extent to which its orbit's shape deviates from a perfect circle – by a factor of two in 4.5 million years.

Based on these values, the scientists ran simulations and found that its ocean may have formed 2.25 million years ago. The predicted surface heat also matched observations of Enceladus – a Saturn moon that has a global ocean beneath its crust – indicating Mimas may have a hydrothermally active core even if surface activity doesn't indicate that.

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



Visual: Name this Austrian-Czech physicist with whom Boltzmann had a long-standing dispute over the primary constituent of the universe. The physicist – famed for his study of shockwaves – believed it to be energy, Boltzmann favoured matter. PUBLIC DOMAIN

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Today is the 180th birthday of Ludwig Boltzmann

Vasudevan Mukund

QUESTION 1

Boltzmann, an Austrian physicist, was famous for developing _____

....., which explains the behaviour of some macroscopic systems by interpreting a large collection of microscopic entities using statistical methods. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 2

Ludwig Boltzmann died on September 5, 1906, by killing himself. His tombstone lies in the Vienna Central Cemetery. The formula for X was inscribed on the stone in honour of one of his most famous contributions to thermodynamics. Name X.

QUESTION 3

In 1872, Boltzmann met Y, who aspired to teach mathematics but couldn't because Austrian universities didn't admit women at the time. When a university also refused to let her audit lectures, Boltzmann supported her appeal and helped her win. Name Y.

QUESTION 4

The formula in Q2 includes a constant called k_B . It describes the proportionality of X to Q to the number of microscopic states whose energies correspond to the system's overall energy. Name the physicist who christened this the Boltzmann Constant.

5. Boltzmann's work foreshadowed the existence of atoms, but his detractors refused to believe in their existence until, in 1909, a French physicist worked

out the value of k_B using the theories of Boltzmann and Albert Einstein. Name the Frenchman.

Answers to February 15 quiz:

- Expansion of ENIAC. – Ans: Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer
- What the Moore School of Engineering hired 200+ women as – Ans: Computers
- First ENIAC programme checked whether this would work – Ans: Thermonuclear weapon
- Methods Ulam and von Neumann used on ENIAC to solve nuclear physics problems – Ans: Monte Carlo methods
- Builder of ARC Assembly program – Ans: Kathleen Booth

First contact: K.N. Viswanathan | Sahil Tukdi | Dishaant Adhikari | Akhil Simha | Yogapriya Karthigeyan

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



Combat mode

The BJP hides its failings by adopting an aggressive strategy

The National Council Meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Delhi on February 17 and 18 has set the tone for the party's Lok Sabha election campaign. Prime Minister Narendra Modi set the party a target of winning 370 seats in the Lok Sabha, compared to the 303 seats that it had won in the 2019 general election. The symbolism of the number is about Article 370, which his government invalidated in fulfilment of a fundamental principle of the party. The hollowing of Article 370 that provided a notion of autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, and the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya were two of the three issues that have propelled the BJP's rise. Having fulfilled them during his second term, Mr. Modi has staked claim to a third, which he said was crucial for the country. In fact, he has raised the stakes by setting a higher target of 370 seats and an additional 370 votes in every polling booth which, if met, can raise the party's voteshare above 50%. Mr. Modi has also told the party leaders that only the symbol, and not the candidates, mattered. A lot many of the sitting Members of Parliament of the BJP are expected to make way for new candidates.

The peripherality of individual candidates of the BJP is also linked to the centrality of Mr. Modi in the election, which was clear at the conclave. The party will also focus on converting the raft of welfare measures that it has either launched or repurposed into votes. Alongside reviving up its organisational engine, the BJP is also seeking to expand its footprint by the continuous induction of leaders from other political parties on the one hand, and tying up alliances with regional parties on the other. Union Home Minister Amit Shah's sharp attack on the Opposition on the question of corruption and dynastic succession, indicated that the party will remain in offensive mode in the run-up to the general election. Its opportunistic alliances with leaders and parties that it has accused of corruption are shrouded by claims of good governance and transparency. The BJP manages to pull off this feat by wrapping its claims in strong communal identity terms. A resolution passed by the Council hailed the Ayodhya temple as a manifestation of Ram Rajya, an ideal type of just and fair governance. The party is trying to mobilise Hindu solidarity around the temple, and simultaneously present it as an emblem of a non-sectarian national agenda of development and progress. It is a hard act, but the BJP seems to manage this by keeping itself constantly in combat mode.

Red Sea blues

January's export numbers suggest global shipping woes yet to hit home

For the second successive month, India's goods exports grew last month, albeit with a mild 3.1% upturn from a 1% rise in December. This marks only the fourth month of growth in outbound shipments in 2023-24, and the overall value of merchandise exports this year is down 4.9% about \$354 billion. While January's \$36.9 billion exports are above this year's monthly average, they are 4% lower than December's tally. To be clear, such sequential, post-Christmas demand dip is not unusual and all of the decline cannot be ascribed to the elephant haunting global trade corridors – the Houthi rebels' orchestrated disruptions of shipping lines' operations around the Red Sea hitting goods flow to the European and U.S. markets. January's trade numbers, to that extent, suggest that the impact so far is not overtly worrying, although a few key segments seem to be feeling some pain. Engineering goods' exports growth faltered to a little over 4% in January while the labour-intensive gems and jewellery slipped into a mild contraction, dropping 1.3%.

Apart from the lack of a broader discernible impact from the Red Sea shenanigans yet, the sharp decline in the goods trade deficit is notable as it hit a nine-month low of \$17.5 billion – just three months after touching a record high of nearly \$30 billion. The flip side is that the recent import bill compression has been driven by some slack in imports of items such as project goods and electronics which suggest weakening of investment and consumption impulses in the economy. The government has exuded confidence that India will match its record export performance of \$77.6 billion in 2022-23, this year as well, despite multiple global headwinds. On the goods front, though, accounting last year's \$451 billion tally looks difficult, especially with cooling commodity prices. Exports of services, reckoned to be up 6.3% this year, may still help bring the overall export figure for the year close to \$760-billion if they sustain this pace. The outlook for the coming year remains mired in uncertainty and risks. There are weak or mixed signals about demand trends from economies such as the U.S. and Germany, even as the U.K. recorded the sharpest sequential jump in retail sales since July 2020. Interest rate cuts remain elusive for now. Finally, despite the U.S.-led Operation Prosperity Guardian to protect commercial traffic through the Red Sea, shippers have warned that the Houthi factor could compel the use of longer routes for several more months. Longer delivery times apart, the spiked shipping rates and operational costs of exports could force some price hikes and deter already frail demand in some markets and make prospective buyers look for more competitive options for Indian wares.

Engineering graduates are steering the service industry

In a rapidly evolving global economy, the services sector has emerged as a significant player, contributing 53% of India's Gross Value Added (GVA) versus the 28% of the industry sector. This dominance, of services, is also evident in employment distribution – 31% of employment is generated in the services sector versus 25% in industries. This massive growth is fueling the demand for entry-level employees across the spectrum of the services sector. This growth is not just limited to IT services, but is more broad based. The organised Indian service sector, that comprises retail, telecom, consulting, hospitality, banking and health care, has been growing consistently. Further, for each of these sectors, India is also the offshore hub, delivering these services for the entire world through captive and third party shared services and Global Business Services (GBS).

The market reality

This massive service industry needs continuous supply of skilled manpower which is being fulfilled from a rather unusual education stream – engineering. According to Statistica, only 57% of engineering graduates are employable. An All India Council for Technical Education commissioned report highlighted that less than 60% of available engineering seats have enrolment. Another industry report claims that about 80% of graduate engineers end up in a non-technical job which is unrelated to their field of education.

It is not surprising to find a number of engineering graduates in India steering towards the services sector not merely due to an ideal alignment of skills and job demand, but propelled by the dynamic and burgeoning nature of service-oriented opportunities and a lack of relevant jobs for their skills in their core sector. As a result, over the last decade, a large number of engineers are employed in non-technical sectors such as banking, insurance, hospitality, health care and retail across a variety of roles such as sales, customer service, back office operations, logistics and supply chain management.

This shift highlights a nuanced reality. Engineers are increasingly finding employment not solely based on a precise match of skills but due to the adaptability and problem-solving mindset ingrained in their education. Employers, who are faced with a dynamic market, are recognising the transferability of engineering skills, even if the roles themselves are not conventionally engineering-centric. Critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, innovation, dealing with ambiguity, adaptability and flexibility are some of the most relevant skills required to succeed in these modern



Milind Kumar Sharma
is Professor at MBM University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan



Sharad Sharma
is Senior Associate Director at KPMG, Gurgaon

organisations. The analytical prowess, problem-solving abilities, and structured thinking ingrained in engineering graduates make them highly sought-after in sectors that may not traditionally be perceived to be engineering-centric. The rising prominence of the services sector has opened avenues for these professionals to be gainfully employed in white-collar jobs.

The need for a generic course

This trend prompts a critical reflection on the evolving nature of job markets and the role of education in preparing graduates for a diverse array of professional challenges. As engineers seamlessly transition into roles such as sales, customer service and finance across a wide variety of sectors, it becomes imperative for the educational ecosystem to evolve and address this need from the service industry, and recalibrate their approach towards curriculum design and pedagogy.

Currently, services-oriented educational courses are only available in niche domains such as health care or hospitality. There is no generic course to cater to the needs of the services sector. As a result, services are consuming engineers, and to some extent management graduates/postgraduates, into entry-level jobs. Rather than focusing on bridging the gap between existing engineering education and job demand, there is a pressing need to develop generic services-oriented courses that can equip students to thrive in white-collar service environments. Just as an engineering education equips the student with the basic skills to find a vocation in an industrial setup, we need an equivalent services skill education that instils the necessary competencies to excel in the service-oriented landscape.

Such a course can offer a holistic blend of technical proficiency, soft skills, and industry-specific knowledge essential for success in service-centric roles. These courses should not only emphasise technical proficiency but also cultivate soft skills, business acumen, and industry-specific knowledge that are essential for success in the service sector.

By integrating cutting-edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things (IoT) into the curriculum, these programmes can enhance students' employability, particularly in emerging sectors such as fintech and edtech. Such a course would foster a cadre of professionals adept at navigating the complexities of modern service-oriented industries, with skills around process engineering, problem solving and client management.

Structured around a diverse curriculum, this course could encompass essential subjects and

skills tailored to meet the demands of today's dynamic service landscape. Professionals enrolled in this course would gain a solid foundation in service delivery fundamentals, covering core sector overview and nuances of service delivery in a physical as well as digital environment.

Additionally, they could receive training in service management principles, process improvement methodologies such as Lean Six Sigma, and critical thinking frameworks, empowering them to optimise service processes, drive operational efficiency, and tackle complex challenges with confidence. An emphasis on client management, communication skills and ethical conduct would foster a culture of professionalism and integrity among professionals, crucial to build strong client relationships and maintain trust in service-oriented roles.

As a growth booster

The introduction of such a course – let us call it "service engineering" – holds transformative potential, offering a pathway to enhanced employability, improved service delivery, and sustained economic growth. Graduates would emerge as highly sought-after professionals, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to excel in white-collar service environments across a variety of industries. Moreover, the affordability and accessibility of service engineering courses would make them an attractive option for students from tier 2 and 3 cities. The recent Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 7 reported the women's participation in the workforce to be 37%. Since services typically offer better flexibility to employees, such a course can also help enable a supportive environment for women to balance work and family commitments while contributing to the workforce.

Unlike conventional engineering programmes that require extensive hard infrastructure, service engineering courses would leverage digital platforms and virtual learning environments, significantly reducing costs and eliminating geographical barriers to education. This democratisation of education not only fosters inclusivity but also unleashes the potential of aspiring professionals from diverse backgrounds to contribute to India's burgeoning services-driven economy. By investing in the development of a skilled workforce tailored to the needs of the services sector, India can position itself as a global leader in service innovation and delivery, driving prosperity and competitiveness in the services-driven economy of the future.

The views expressed are personal

Greece's gateway to Asia, India's gateway to Europe

The state visit by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis to New Delhi (February 21-22) will be another important step in building a strategic relationship between India and Greece – a process which began with the historic visit of the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, to Greece in August 2023. This was a visit that led to considerable excitement in Greece at the highest political levels and among Greek business leaders who sensed the great opportunity that a strategic partnership with India provided.

Ahead of the visit, Mr. Mitsotakis told this writer that he is determined to deepen bilateral ties and cooperation in many fields, adding that "India will find no better gateway to Europe than my country and for Greece there is no better gateway to Asia than a close strategic relationship with India." He said, "PM Modi's historic visit to Athens created a momentum which I hope will be accelerated with my upcoming visit to [India]."

India is perceived as an old and traditional friend of Greece, but also as a rising great power in the fast-changing global scene. Mr. Mitsotakis will be accompanied by a high-level Greek business delegation comprising business leaders not only looking at India's potential as their gateway to Asia but also as a manufacturing base for their global operations.

The importance of security and stability
Greece and India are in many ways 'prisoners' of geography. They are located in areas strategically important to the global system but are areas that are at the same time geopolitically volatile. As recent events in the Red Sea have shown, the security, stability and prosperity of the East Mediterranean region, where Greece is situated, is vitally dependent on the security, stability and



Alexis Papahelias
is a journalist in Greece and the Executive Editor of the Kathimerini newspaper

The political determination to move Greece-India ties forward is linked to the view by Athens that India is both an old and traditional friend, and a rising power

prosperity of the Indian Ocean region.

More than ever before, the political leadership in India and Greece is aware of the compelling strategic reasons and urgency to build a strategic relationship between the two countries.

Cooperation at various levels

Bilateral strategic, military and business cooperation has been moving along over the years, but at a slow and un hurried pace. The Indian Navy and Indian Air Force have been participating in joint exercises with the Greek armed forces and reciprocal exercises are planned from time to time. Businesses have also been looking at each other. An Indian construction company, for example, is involved with a major Greek Construction company in the building of a new airport on the island of Crete. A well-known Indian business family has made major investments in several companies in the food business in Greece. A mid-sized Indian shipping company has already opened a brokerage firm in Athens and looks to become a key player in the trans-Atlantic shipping market. A large systemic bank in Greece has tied up with a major Indian financial institution to sell mutual fund products globally. It is also interesting to note that Greece's most important long-term foreign investor is Indian-Canadian billionaire Prem Watsa, founder and CEO of the Fairfax Financial Holdings. Mr. Watsa often states that "Greece is still by far the best European country to invest in." With knowledge of both countries, he has been a steady promoter of Greek-Indian business cooperation. But the question is, is this enough?

As economic reforms by the Mitsotakis government over the last five years push the Greek economy towards a more sustainable

growth path, and as Greece positions itself as the reliable eastern flank of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the Eastern Mediterranean, also building its defence industry, the idea of constructing the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) is gaining in salience. It is hoped that Greek and Indian business will discover many more reasons to partner with each other. Greece has been a strong supporter of deeper EU-India relations and is now working to ensure the EU-India bilateral trade and investment agreement (BTIA) is rapidly concluded, which would be a further catalyst to bilateral economic ties.

Scope for more links

The value of closer people-to-people ties that will preserve the heritage of our ancient linkages must not be ignored. It must be ensured that there is an attempt to remain familiar to each other even while Greece and India modernise themselves. There need to be more university student exchange programmes, more cultural exchanges and more media cooperation. Think tanks in both countries need to build more scholarship together. And, there definitely needs to be more travel links between the two countries.

The fact that the political leaders of Greece and India are exchanging visits within a short time frame shows not just their determination to move the relationship forward but also the urgency they attach to this task. It is now for government policymakers and businesses to follow their lead. The year 2024 is a critical one for the world and for Europe, and it has become a critical year in the building of the Greece-India strategic partnership.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Electoral bonds judgment

The Supreme Court of India's judgment in the electoral bonds case is not only timely but also stands out as a litmus test of transparency in a democracy. The government of the day was unable to justify the drastic amendments that were made, unmindful of the constitutional guarantees. That the people of India should know where corporate funds end up is indeed important as it will provide answers to the mysterious nexus between

politics and capital. One hopes that future judgments by the Court fall in line with the present thinking.

N.G.R. Prasad,
Chennai

Primary teaching

There is a gainsaying that primary classes, a crucial stage in education where the task is to make sure that children are strong in the fundamentals, should be handled by teachers who have the prescribed qualifications, i.e., DEd or DEd or BEd (Editorial

February 19). Having said that, the degree and diploma mentioned are just a passport to teaching in primary schools. It is imperative that teachers have sound subject knowledge so as to keep their wards absorbed in the classroom and enhance their learning. Students who are not strong in the basics will find the going difficult in the secondary and senior secondary classes. There is even a possibility of them losing confidence in life. Be that as it may, teachers who train 'wannabe teachers'

should be knowledgeable, dedicated and passionate about the subject so as to ensure the flow of quality.

S. Ramakrishnasayee,
Chennai

Cleaning and food safety

Cotton candy was famous as early as 1897 by dentist William Morrison and confectioner John C. Wharton and introduced as 'fairy floss' with great success at the world's fair in 1904. The rest is history as it went on to become a part of everyone's childhood experience globally.

Unfortunately, it has been banned in Tamil Nadu for a valid reason after tests have detected that it is coloured with a carcinogen. Food technologists should formulate a harmless colouring agent, possibly of plant origin such as carotenoids, to ensure that our childhood experience continues to be safe and that there are no threats to people's livelihood options.

Dr. V. Purushothaman,
Chennai

Milestone at Rajkot
Team India deserves all the accolades for its biggest ever win in Test history by beating England in the fourth Test at Rajkot. Despite the absence of a few star players, India managed to pull off the sensational win and will have the momentum going in the fourth Test ('Sport' page, February 19). England was unable to walk the Wagah talk at Rajkot.

R. Sivakumar,

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

Cauvery pact: a controversial journey

M Visvesvaraya (1860-1962), rightly called engineer-visionary, [as Chief Engineer of Mysore] came up with a proposal in October 1910 to build a reservoir, now called Krishnarajagara (KRS). Eventually, in September 1911, an agreement was arrived at building a smaller reservoir of about 11.3 thousand million cubic feet (tmc) capacity in the initial phase of the dam project. But, friction developed immediately on the execution of the next phase of the project. As both Madras and Mysore had agreed for referring the matter to an arbitrator, the Government of India appointed Sir H.D. Griffin, Judge, High Court, Allahabad, as Arbitrator, who commenced his job in July 1913.

Griffin took less than a year to arrive at his award on what was then popularly called – Kannambadi Arbitration Case – and delivered his award on May 12, 1914. The takeaway of the award was the nod to the upper riparian State's plan of constructing KRS with a full reservoir level of 14 ft and capacity of 41.5 tmc ft.

Madras, which had about 1.5 million acres of land under cultivation in its territory of the Cauvery delta, was naturally worried about possible adverse consequences of the KRS dam project and it sent its formal response to the Government of India (GoI) in April 1915.

Three months later, Mysore took up the matter with Resident in Mysore Hugh Daly, seeking modification in the award. Madras suffered a setback in March 1916 when it was informed by GoI that the award had been ratified. Four months later, Madras conveyed to GoI that it desired the matter be referred to the Secretary of State for India.

In November 1919, Secretary of State Edwin Samuel Montagu informed Resident Henry Venn Cobb that his government did not approve the award. Subsequently, GoI indicated to Mysore that the latter could enter into negotiations



T. Ramakrishnan

The 1924 Cauvery agreement, intended to settle disputes between the Madras Presidency and Mysore, remains contentious. While Tamil Nadu saw it as a saviour, Karnataka deemed it detrimental

with Madras or it could submit the main questions to arbitration by a new tribunal. It took over five months for Mysore to convey its willingness to have negotiations with Madras.

The discussions between the two sides paved the way for framing a draft set of rules for the regulation of the KRS by July 1921.

But, it was felt that the proposed rules were, by themselves, "incomplete and ineffectual" in the absence of an enabling agreement. This led to another round of negotiations. Mysore, while agreeing to ensure the prescriptive right of Madras, did not want the lower riparian State to have further locus standi in its future projects. Madras, which was aware that the 1892 Agreement had placed the upper riparian State on a strong footing, was, however, not satisfied merely with the retention of the prescriptive right. It favoured a share, on an "equitable basis" of all the surpluses of the Cauvery basin.

[S] J Gahan (the author of *The Cauvery River Dispute*) points out that even though three broad approaches came up for discussion, what eventually was agreed upon was that both sides should "lay all their cards on the table" which would enable them to share their intentions for future storage and irrigation extension; arrive at a "broader settlement," which would include KRS and Mettur but would not be confined to the two dam projects and allow for re-assessment of surpluses and their possible utilisation, preceded by review, after a reasonable period of time.

On the 33rd anniversary of the 1892 Agreement, the two parties entered into a fresh agreement at Fort St. George, Madras, on February 18, 1924, which even today remains the last such understanding between the two States. A.R. Banerji, Mysore Dewan, and P. Hawkins, Public Works Department's Secretary of Madras, were the signatories to the pact.

The main messages of the agreement were essentially two. The pact paved the way for the construction of KRS up to the height of 124 ft with a capacity of about 44.83 TMC and Mettur dam in Tamil Nadu which would be twice the size of KRS. The pact allowed a review of certain stipulations of the agreement after 50 years, which became the most controversial feature of the agreement.

Among the major elements of the pact were the lower riparian State's consent for limiting the new area of irrigation under the Mettur project to 3.01 lakh acres and the formulation of the Rules of Regulation of KRS and other reservoirs, if and when built, in such a manner that there should not be "any material diminution in supplies" to Madras, as assured in the KRS rules.

Contrary to the subsequent campaign by political leaders of Karnataka that the 1924 Agreement was imposed on Mysore, which was a "vassal Princely State," a statement issued by Banerji, the Dewan of Mysore, and published by *The Hindu* on February 21, 1924, did not betray any such feeling. Banerji called the agreement "a fair and honourable settlement." While lauding technical officers on either side, Banerji said their work "will stand out in history as of first rate magnitude and excellence in view of the fact that while the spirit of 'give and take' reigned throughout, there was not on either side of the slightest determination or willingness to give in on the vital points." No one would argue that there was "no British hand" behind the settlement. But, to interpret it to say that Mysore's interests were brushed aside wholly in the process and to its detriment would not be an act of fairness to history.

(Excerpts from a publication - *Cauvery: a long-winded dispute - to be brought out by The Hindu Group shortly*)

ramakrishnan.t@thehindu.co.in

KFD peaks, vaccine efforts stalled

Private manufacturer's reluctance hampers vaccine production in Karnataka

STATE OF PLAY

G. T. Sathish
sathish.g@thehindu.co.in

Karnataka's Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dinesh Gundu Rao, while answering a question on manufacturing a vaccine for Kyanasur Forest Disease (KFD), a viral infection, during the legislature session in December 2023, said that private manufacturers were not showing any interest in taking it up. The reason for the companies' reluctance, he said, was that the number of people getting infected by the disease was too small and it does not make business sense for them, given the investment required for the research and development of a vaccine. This underlined the limitations of relying on private players in matters of serious public health issues.

Since the Minister made this statement, two people have died due to the disease in Karnataka. From January 1 to February 18, as many as 103 people have contracted the infection in three districts of Shimoga, Uttara Kannada and Chikmagalur in Karnataka, and cases were reported in Dakshina Kannada district. It was traced in Chamarajanagar in the Old Mysore region in 2012. Then, in Belagavi in 2016, reached Gadag in 2017 (both in north Karnataka), and cases were reported in Mysuru and Hassan districts in 2019.

The virus has shown its presence in neighbouring States as well. An autopsy of a dead monkey in the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu in 2012 showed KFD virus. Six people were infected with the disease in Wayanad and Malappuram, Kerala, in 2013-14. An outbreak of KFD was reported in north Goa in 2015-16. Maharashtra also reported cases in 2016.

The number of people who have died since 1956 is above 560. The highest number of deaths in a year was reported in 1983 (110) and 1984 (171), forcing the government to give approval for the manufacture of a vaccine to avoid the spread of the disease.

With the help of the National Institute of Virology in Pune, the vaccine was developed from chick embryo fibroblast culture. It was administered in the KFD-affected areas until 2019-20. In the last year alone, 1.79 lakh people were covered by the vaccination programme. The data shows that the vaccination drive brought down the number of confirmed cases in the 1990s. However, recent tests have shown that the vaccine is now ineffective and the department stopped administering the vaccine. As of now, there is no vaccine and no proper medicine to treat the patients. Treatment is symptomatic.

The trends show that KFD human positive cases peak between December and June. During the rainy season, cases are hardly reported. Those who work in forests, firewood collectors, wildlife personnel, and those who enter forests for trekking are among the most vulnerable. The State government has been distributing tick-repellent oil to the people in the affected areas. Residents of villages close to forests have been advised to consult primary health centres as soon as they develop symptoms like high fever, redness in the eyes, and body pain. The Department of Health and Family Welfare has made it mandatory to treat all KFD patients in hospitals.

Karnataka government has approached the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) about manufacturing vaccines. The ICMR in turn, is in consultation with Indian Immunologicals Limited. However, it is not clear when an effective vaccine will be available. As cases mount, it is clear vaccine will not be available this season for certain.



the KFD outbreak. Studies have shown that it spreads through tick bites. The ticks that come into contact with KFD-affected monkeys carry the disease to human habitats.

For the first 15 years, the disease was confined to Shivasamudram district. However, gradually, it has spread to other areas. It was noticed in Uttara Kannada district in 1972. Later, cases started being reported from Koppa in Chikkamagalur, in 1980. By 1982, cases were reported in Dakshina Kannada district. It was traced in Chamarajanagar in the Old Mysore region in 2012. Then,

in Belagavi in 2016, reached Gadag in 2017 (both in north Karnataka), and cases were reported in Mysuru and Hassan districts in 2019.

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Women shuttlers punch above weight to secure first gold

Teen sensation Anmol Kharb rescued India twice by beating opponents ranked 400 positions above her

DATA POINT

Rebecca Rose Varghese
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Indian women shuttlers made history this year by claiming Gold in the Badminton Asia Team Championships – for the first time in history. Before the 2024 edition, Indian women had never won a medal in this tournament's team events which started in 2016. The men's team had won bronze twice. From this historic win emerged a teen sensation – Anmol Kharb – who beat much higher-ranked and experienced players multiple times in the tournament, helping India secure this hard-fought victory.

Shuttlekha Ashmita Chalih and doubles pair Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand Pullela – both 20-years-old – also defeated higher ranked players helping India create history.

But unmistakably, Anmol was the star of the tournament. In the finals, PV Sindhu secured victory against Supanida Katengthong of Thailand, ranked six positions below her, an expected win. Followed by Treesa and Gayatri pair's three-set thriller win against Rawinda Prajengjai & Jongkolpan Kittharakul of Thailand. India's hopes were high, only for Ashmita Chalih and the doubles pair Priya Konjenbam and Shruti Mishra to lose the next two matches setting up a decider.

When the chips were down, a Himalayan task awaited – Anmol, 17-year-old and ranked 472 world, had to win against world no. 45 Pornpicha Choekiewong – which she did by breezing past the Thai player with a 21-14, 21-9 win. This was a repeat act, for she had rescued India in the semifinals too, winning against world no. 29 and 25-year-old Japanese player Natsumi Niida, again with relative ease.

This tournament win was a hard-fought victory given that the Indian team mostly faced signifi-

cantly higher-ranked opponents, particularly in the semifinals and finals. With the exception of two-time Olympic medalist Sindhu, whose opponents ranked a few positions below her in most of the matches, the other members of the Indian team had to fight and win against opponents ranked ten to thirty positions above them.

Table 1 shows the difference in rankings as of February 13, 2024, between Indian players and their opponents in the knock-out rounds of the Badminton Asia Team Championships. The negative numbers show that India had an inferior ranking. For instance, in the semifinals, the world no. 23 pair Treesa and Gayatri faced world no. 6 pair Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida from Japan and emerged victorious. They upset world no. 10 Thai pair, Winwala Prajengjai & Jongkolpan Kittharakul to give India a 2-0 lead in the finale.

Table 2 shows the stages reached by select Asian countries in the women's championship. Japan has won Gold twice, with China and Indonesia also securing the top-spot once. South Korea had won silver twice. India has just entered the medals table this year.

Table 3 shows the stages reached by select Asian countries in the men's championship. Here, while India managed to secure bronze twice, they never reached the finals.

What's more stunning is that India entered this tournament without a single women's player in the top ten rankings in both singles and doubles. Sindhu was ranked eleventh in singles, the highest ranking Indian women. Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponappa were ranked 21st in doubles, the highest ranking Indian women's pair. Whereas, China had four and three players in the top-ten rankings in singles and doubles, respectively. Japan had three doubles players in the top-ten rankings. This was truly a win for the ag-



Against all odds
The tables are based on data sourced from the Badminton World Federation website

Hard-fought win: Anmol Kharb (L) celebrates with her team after winning against Thailand's Pornpicha Choekiewong. AFP

Table 1: The table shows the difference in rankings as of February 13, 2024, between Indian players and their opponents in the knock-out rounds of the Badminton Asia Team Championships. Wins are in bold and losses are italicised

Level	Indian player	Indian's rank	Opponent	Country	Opponent's rank	Difference in ranking
Finals	Ashmita Chalih	53	Busanan Ongbamrungruang	Thailand	18	-35
Semifinals	Ashmita Chalih	53	Nozomi Okuhara	Japan	20	-33
Quarters	Ashmita Chalih	53	Young Sun Yee	Hong Kong	121	68
Finals	PV Sindhu	11	Supanida Katengthong	Thailand	17	6
Semifinals	PV Sindhu	11	Ayo Ogori	Japan	14	3
Quarters	PV Sindhu	11	Lo Si Yan Happy	Hong Kong	77	66
Finals	Anmol Kharb	472	Pornpicha Choekiewong	Thailand	45	-427
Semifinals	Anmol Kharb	472	Natsuki Nidaira	Japan	29	-43
Finals	Priya Konjenbam, Shruti Mishra	107	Bentapanya Aimsaard, Nuttakorn Aimsaard	Thailand	13	-94
Finals	Treesa Jolly, Gayatri Gopichand Pullela	23	Rawinda Prajengjai, Jongkolpan Kittharakul	Thailand	10	-13
Semifinals	Treesa Jolly, Gayatri Gopichand Pullela	23	Nami Matsuyama, Chiharu Shida	Japan	6	-17
Quarters	Ashwini Ponappa, Tanisha Crasto	21	Yeung Pui Lam, Yeung Nga	Hong Kong	18	-3

Table 2: The table shows the stages reached by select Asian countries in the women's championship

	2016	2018	2020	2022	2024	DNC: Did not qualify
India	QF	QF	DNC	QF	W	QF: Did not qualify
Japan	R	W	W	SF	W	QF: Did not qualify
China	W	R	DNP	DNP	QF	QF: Did not qualify
Indonesia	QF	SF	QF	QF	W	QF: Did not qualify
Thailand	SF	QF	W	DNP	R	QF: Did not qualify
S. Korea	SF	SF	R	R	DNP	QF: Did not qualify
Malaysia	QF	QF	QF	QF	QF	QF: Did not qualify

Table 3: The table shows the stages reached by select Asian countries in the men's championship

	2016	2018	2020	2022	2024	DNC: Did not qualify
India	SF	QF	QF	W	R	QF: Did not qualify
Indonesia	W	W	W	R	R	QF: Did not qualify
Malaysia	QF	SF	R	W	R	QF: Did not qualify
China	QF	SF	R	DNP	DNP	QF: Did not qualify
Japan	R	QF	QF	DNC	W	QF: Did not qualify
S. Korea	SF	SF	QF	QF	SF	SF: Semifinals
Thailand	DNC	DNC	DNC	SF	R	R: Runner up
Malaysia	QF	QF	QF	QF	QF	W: Winner

vignesh.r@thehindu.co.in, rebecca.varghese@thehindu.co.in

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 20, 1974

Oil struck in Bombay High; promise of reserves

New Delhi, Feb. 19: Oil has been struck in Bombay High. An official announcement tonight said that oil is flowing out of the first well drilled in this promising offshore structure under considerable pressure. The pressure of oil flowing out is given as 600 pounds per square inch indicating presumably commercially exploitable reserves. A group of pressmen who landed on the helipad of Sagar Samrat after 75 minutes flight by IAF helicopters from Santa Cruz airport watched young Indian drillers, engineers, geologists, and chemists working 12 hours per day through 14 days at a stretch collecting, analysing and processing every piece of rock and "mud" thrown out by the massive drilling bits for traces of oil or gas.

Even as traces of oil were found in Bombay High, the Oil and Natural Gas Commission met at its Dehra Dun headquarters to chalk out programme to accelerate oil exploration both offshore and onshore.

Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals, Mr. D. Karooah, told the Lok Sabha at question time that the Arab countries had treated India as a friendly nation and had not cut off supplies to India as they had done in the case of some western countries. Besides some Arab countries had given India some cushion.

A hundred years ago FEBRUARY 20, 1924

Prohibition on the Nilgiris

Ootacamund, Feb. 19: The auction of liquor taverns was held on Monday the 18th when Mr. Painter, I.C.S., Sub-Collector with the help of Akbari officials and Revenue officials announced that the hill tribes comprising of the Badagars, the Todas, the Kotas, the Kurumbas and the Irulas are prohibited from having any liquor, unless by medical certificates.

This measure of prohibiting the community alone is not approved by the public as there is every chance for smuggling. So there will be a public meeting shortly to protest against the half measure and to recommend for complete prohibition. But a great enthusiasm is evinced from among those communities who welcome this measure of prohibiting them from drink.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The rural population using traditional fuels for cooking

50 in percentage. In Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, more than 50% of the rural population continue to use traditional solid fuels, leading to release of pollutants as per a study by IIT Mandi. PTI

The contraction of Israel's economy in the fourth quarter

19.4 in percentage. Due to the war with Hamas, Israel's economy contracted in the fourth quarter from the prior three months. For all of 2023, the economy grew 2%. REUTERS

Tamil Nadu's fiscal deficit for the financial year 2024-25

3.44 in percentage. The figure stood at 3.44% of the GSDP despite a decline in the State's Own Tax Revenue (SOTR) due to two successive natural calamities in December 2023. PTI

The amount the Tata Group companies will invest in Karnataka

2,300 in ₹ crore. Air India and Tata Advanced Systems Limited plan to invest in multiple projects which will provide employment to about 1,650 people. PTI

The decline in the sugar output in this marketing year

2.48 in percentage. The country's sugar production was 22.36 million tonnes till February 15 of the ongoing 2023-24 marketing year. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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The recent report on local fintech players

What were the concerns listed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology on the rise of digital payments in India? Why did the National Payments Corporation of India issue a 30% volume cap on transactions facilitated using UPI?

EXPLAINER

Saptaparno Ghosh

The story so far:

In its report presented to Parliament on February 8, the Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology has raised concerns about the dominance of fintech apps owned by foreign entities in the Indian ecosystem and recommended that local players be promoted. It mentioned that the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) commanded a 73.5% share of the total digital payments in terms of volume in FY 2022-23. However, its share in terms of value was only 6.67% in the same period.

What does the report infer about the existing ecosystem?

The Committee in its report emphasised that digital payment apps must be effectively regulated as the use of digital platforms to make payments in India is on the rise. It noted that it will be more 'feasible' for regulatory bodies such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to control local apps, as compared with foreign apps, which operate in multiple jurisdictions.

The Committee observed that fintech companies, apps and platforms that are owned by foreign entities, such as Walmart-backed PhonePe and Google Pay, dominate the Indian fintech sector. PhonePe commands the leading market share in volume terms, followed by Google Pay, at 46.9% and 36.39% respectively. This is for the period between October to November 2023. On the other hand, NPCI's BHIM UPI's market share (in terms of volume) stood at a mere 0.22%. NPCI's data for December last year show that a total of 5,642.66 million transactions were initiated by customers using PhonePe, while another 4,375 million used Google Pay and only about 24.30 million used BHIM.



represents the total number of fraudulent transactions in comparison to the total number of transactions in a financial year, has largely remained around 0.0015%. The trend is notwithstanding the rise in volume of the payment mode in the last five years. In the ongoing financial year (till September 2023) the figure stood at 0.0016%. The percentage of users affected by UPI frauds stood at 0.0189%.

What does it mean for the ecosystem? Vijay Mani and Munjal Kamdar, Partners at Deloitte India, pointed to local fintech players having a "natural advantage" when it comes to understanding the customer, various ecosystem participants, the digital public infrastructure and broader market infrastructure. While foreign fintechs enjoy the same advantage with respect to new technologies, techniques and global connectivity. "A suitably balanced mix to serve the Indian ecosystem needs to be allowed to evolve, and this mix may well vary across different areas such as payments, lending, wealth management, insurance, etc," the partners stated, adding, "In relation to this balance, we also note that the regulator is stressing on the criticality of accountability and compliance with local laws."

Mckinsey's Global Payments Report (September 2023) observed that instant payments in India were only expected to contribute less than 10% of future revenue growth because no fees are charged for the interface (UPI). It however, noted that "although UPI generates minimal transaction fees, these revenues still represent an uplift from no-fee cash events, and the paperless process eliminates the hidden costs of managing cash transactions"; adding, "the associated change in consumer behaviour has enhanced security and increased access to digital commerce channels". For perspective, printing and ensuring availability of cash too entails certain costs for the exchequer, thus, the analogous comparison with transaction costs for digital payments.

The Committee's recommendations are also largely in tune with the NPCI issuing a 30% volume cap on transactions facilitated using UPI, back in November 2020. That is, the total number of transactions initiated by any third-party app (like PhonePe and Amazon Pay) individually, could not exceed 30% of the overall transactions made using the interfaces cumulatively over three processing months. Apps exceeding the specified cap were given two years to comply with the directive in a phased manner. The regulator had stated that it would help "address the risks and protect the UPI ecosystem as it further scales up". However, the timeline for compliance was extended in December 2022 to December 31, 2024. Elaborating on the rationale, the NPCI said, "In view of the significant potential of digital payments and the need

for multi-fold penetration from its current state, it is imperative that other existing and new players (banks and non-banks) scale-up their consumer outreach for the growth of UPI and achieve overall market equilibrium."

What are the concerns about fraud? While examining the different modes used by scammers to dupe people and park illegal money, the Committee observed that fintech companies were also being used for money laundering. It was apprised of one such example – an Abu Dhabi-based app called Pypp! The app was being administered by Chinese investment scammers, it noted. This made it difficult for Indian law agencies to track the trail of money collected through scams on the platform.

The fraud to sales ratio, which

THE GIST

▼ The Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology has raised concerns about the dominance of fintech apps owned by foreign entities in the Indian ecosystem and recommended that local players be promoted.

▼ It noted that it will be more 'feasible' for regulatory bodies such as the RBI and the NPCI to control local apps, as compared with foreign apps, which operate in multiple jurisdictions.

▼ Vijay Mani and Munjal Kamdar, Partners at Deloitte India, pointed to local fintech players having a "natural advantage" when it comes to understanding the customer, various ecosystem participants, the digital public infrastructure and broader market infrastructure.

Why was there a political deadlock in Northern Ireland?

What made the Democratic Unionist Party rejoin the Stormont Assembly?

Ganesh Subramanian

The story so far:

Northern Ireland (NI) has finally developed a new government this month after a hiatus between the two main parties since the 2022 elections to the Stormont Assembly. The pro-Irish unity Sinn Fein party garnered the largest number of seats. This is the first time since the creation of NI that Stormont has its first nationalist Prime Minister in Michelle O'Neill. Emma Little-Pengelly of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), staunchly committed to remaining in the UK, is the deputy first minister.

Why did it take so long to form a government?

The DUP, a constituent of the Conservative-led government, was a signatory to Britain's 2020 withdrawal agreement from the European Union (EU). The party has nevertheless not reconciled itself to the internal trade

border created between NI and the rest of Britain, and has hence boycotted Stormont institutions since the 2022 regional elections. The border in the Irish sea was necessitated by the Conservatives' insistence that the decision to leave in the 2016 referendum meant nothing short of a clean break with the EU. Following tortuous negotiations, the UK, recognised that letting NI stay in the EU customs union was the only option to ensure that the north and south of Ireland remained border-free so as to protect the integrity of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and the EU single market.

Thus, NI functions under the dual jurisdiction of the UK and the EU. That is to say, the region is uniquely both a territory within the UK, as well as governed by EU customs regulations and the single market in trade relations with Britain. The rest of the UK remains entirely outside the EU.

What is the new deal in Belfast? The 2023 Windsor framework addressed

NI's concerns over the U.K.'s withdrawal protocol and simplified the paperwork required to send goods to Great Britain from NI. The framework allowed a green lane to UK firms that joined the so-called Britain Trusted Trader scheme to send goods to NI. Conversely, UK goods destined to Ireland and other EU countries are to be cleared via a red lane after a more stringent scrutiny of documentation.

A proposal announced in January, called the Command Paper, eases procedures even further. It replaces the "green lane" by simply exempting 80% of goods transported from Great Britain to Northern Ireland from checks, besides setting up a body to preserve the latter's status in the U.K.'s internal market. Still, the latest arrangement does not detract from the fact that companies from Great Britain sending goods to NI will continue to process more paperwork, relative to firms that trade between destinations within Great Britain. This is the price of NI's dual jurisdiction.

How will Sinn Fein and DUP cohabit?

Sinn Fein is counting on a clear victory in the upcoming Irish elections and thus occupying office on either side of the divide as a boost to future reunification. Ms. O'Neill, did hint at a referendum on Irish unification taking place a decade down the line. She was however careful to emphasise that her government would work for the prosperity of the whole region. Now that it has rejoined the government, the DUP must deliver for the people as a whole, given that the NI's economy has outperformed that of Britain's post-Brexit. The party may feel comforted by surveys that point to NI majority's preference for the constitutional status quo, even though the Catholics outnumber the Protestants as per the 2021 Census. At the same time, the DUP cannot overlook that 56% of people in NI rejected Brexit in 2016.

What are the challenges ahead?

The pressures exerted by Brexit will invariably persist until an unlikely reversal of the historic decision. But their resolution will not be helped by persistent political deadlock that has undermined the justifiable requirement for compulsory coalitions between the unionists and nationalists. The Irish Prime Minister has recently called for reform of the system he regards as no longer fit for the purpose. It may be time for a rethink at the present arrangement.

The writer is Director, Strategic Initiatives, Agnoshin Technologies.

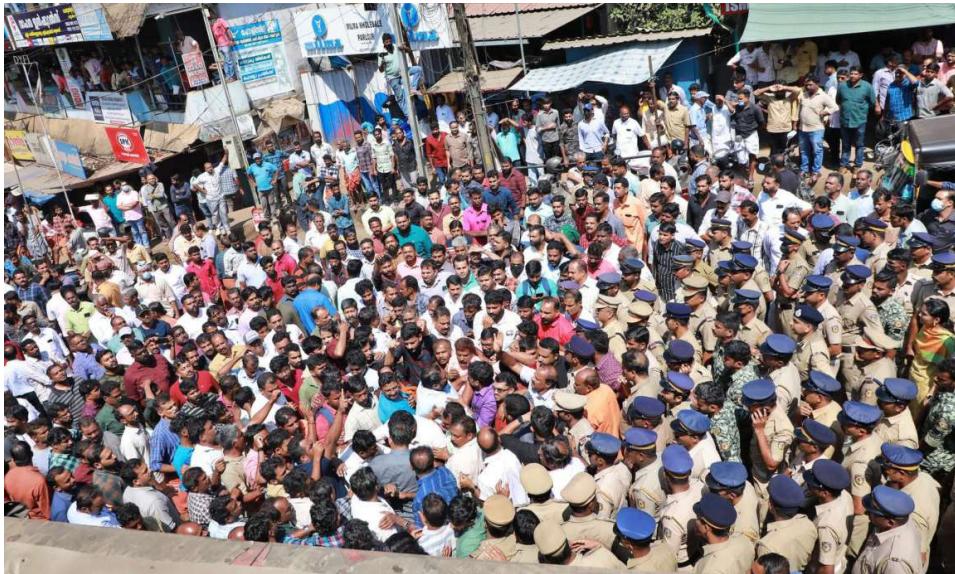
THE GIST

▼ Northern Ireland (NI) has finally developed a new government this month after a hiatus between the two main parties since the 2022 elections to the Stormont Assembly.

▼ The DUP was a signatory to Britain's 2020 withdrawal agreement from the European Union (EU). The party has nevertheless not reconciled itself to the internal trade border created between NI and the rest of Britain, and has hence boycotted Stormont institutions since the 2022 regional elections.

▼ The 2023 Windsor framework addressed NI's concerns over the U.K.'s withdrawal protocol and simplified the paperwork required to send goods to Great Britain from NI.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



Immediate solution: A protest against the alleged apathy of officials in protecting the public from wildlife attacks, at Chaligadha in Wayanad district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Why are human-wildlife conflicts escalating in Kerala?

The increased area under cultivation, changing cropping patterns, significant increase in the population of animals due to conservation efforts, and movement of livestock and humans in wildlife habitats during odd hours are the main reasons for the rise in human-wildlife conflict incidents

Aswin V. N.

Protests have erupted in Wayanad, Kerala after a man was killed by a herd of wild elephants, the third such death in less than a month in the district. This is the latest in a series of such incidents over the last year, and has put the spotlight back on Kerala's escalating human-wildlife conflict. In this article, dated July 11, 2022, Aswin V.N. explains what lies at the heart of such incidents. Edited excerpts:

Forest covers nearly 30% of Kerala's geographical area. For a relatively small state with an average width of just around 70 km and a population of more than 3.46 crore, this means numerous densely populated human settlements are located close to protected forest regions. Moreover, a large number of agricultural plantations too lie near wildlife habitats. This is especially true in the case of hilly reaches, which includes most of the heavily forested eastern part of the State. Although this situation makes human-animal conflict inevitable, in recent years, Kerala has seen a sharp increase in the number of such incidents with those living near forest fringes suffering scores of rupees worth of damage to livelihood, mostly due to frequent raids by elephants and wild boars. Over 600 people have lost their lives in Kerala since 2015 in conflict with animals. This has led to a number of protests by affected villagers with some of them even leading to open confrontation between the protesters and the State

Forest department officials.

What is the scale of human-animal conflict in the state?

As per the State Forest department's own study, Kerala witnessed human-wildlife conflict across 1,004 areas. The study recorded over 48,000 incidents of damage to major crops between 2013-14 and 2018-19. Among the 35 forest and wildlife divisions in the State, Nilambur north (94), Wayanad south (92) and Wayanad north (70) forest ranges had the highest numbers of major conflict locations. Wild elephants were involved in the highest number of incidents in the State. Pachyderms were responsible for 14,611 incidents recorded between 2013-14 and 2018-19. Wild boars (5,518), bonnet macaques (4,405) and snakes (2,531) are the others in this category. Elephants, bonnet macaques and wild boars have caused the most damage to farmers residing in forest fringe areas. Herbivores such as sambar, spotted deer and gaur too have contributed significantly to crop damage.

A total of 814 livestock animals, including cattle, buffalo and goat, have been reported to have been killed or suffered injuries in such attacks, and tigers have preyed on 420 of these.

What are the reasons for the increase in human-wildlife conflict?

Experts cite increased area under cultivation around wildlife habitats, changing cropping pattern, significant increase in the population of animals like elephants and tigers due to conservation

efforts, and movement of livestock and humans in wildlife habitats during odd hours as the main reasons for the rise in human-wildlife conflict incidents. There has also been a substantial increase in the population of prolific breeders like wild boars and peacocks.

However, increased number of incidents involving elephants are due to habitat depletion and fragmentation caused by human activities. Moreover, invasive alien species have reduced the availability of food and water. Monoculture of species such as eucalyptus and acacia has also adversely affected plant biodiversity.

What are the proposed solutions and why are they not effective?

Elephant-proof trenches and solar power fences are widely used in Kerala, and they are considered largely effective, provided they are properly maintained. However, there are several regions where these mechanisms have not been installed. These fences are also often broken by people living nearby to let their cattle into the forests for grazing, and elephants too destroy the fences using their legs and tusks. In a ₹620-crore masterplan to address the issue, the Forest department recommends hanging power fences that will cut off reach of elephants.

Moreover, as part of the State government's new eco-restoration policy, the Forest department is aiming to plant suitable indigenous plants (wild mango, wild gooseberry, and wild jackfruit) in the forest to ensure wild animals' food security and dissuade them from entering

agricultural lands. Such measures need to be supplemented by creating early warning systems that can track the movement of elephants and other dangerous animals using drones and watchers, so that people can avoid going to locations where they have been spotted. However, warning mechanisms are not widely installed in Kerala.

However, the above measures are not effective against wild boars. Although the Centre is yet to accept Kerala's request to declare wild boars as vermin, the State government recently empowered local bodies to cull wild boars that pose a threat to agriculture crops or human life. The other options include capturing and neutering the boars, or relocating them to forests where there are predators like tigers and leopards.

How is human-animal conflict connected to the ESZ norm?

Although Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ) norm has caused a storm in Kerala with the legislative assembly unanimously passing a resolution on July 7 urging the Centre to exempt the State from it, setting up an ESZ has been suggested by conservationists, retired Forest department officials and scientists as a way to reduce human-wildlife conflicts. However, in a state that is densely populated with severe land scarcity and a significant number of people living close to wildlife habitats, this would be difficult to implement.

(Written with inputs from Sarath Babu George, Anandan and Dhinesh Kallungal)

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

THE DAILY QUIZ

A salute is a formal hand gesture used to display respect in military situations. A quiz on various salutes and the traditions that surround it

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

In the 1920s, Nazi Germans adopted a salute in the form of a hand gesture: right hand outstretched, palm facing downward, fingers touching. It closely resembles the _____ salute, created by James Upton to go with the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 2

The _____ salute originated from a 16th century naval tradition in which a ship would deplete its ammunition by firing its cannons into the water, signalling that the vessel came in peace. Today, this salute is conducted usually when an important person dies. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 3

The British Raj denoted the importance of the various princely states by, among other things, greeting their rulers by firing a certain number of guns. The more the guns, the more important the ruler. These states were also called salute states. In which year was this practice discontinued?

QUESTION 4

In many military traditions, the palm of the right hand faces downward in a salute for which branch of the armed forces?

QUESTION 5

X was a distinguished German fighter pilot during World War I. On April 21, 1918, he was shot down over the River Somme. In recognition of his skill, Australia's Major David Blake gave him a full military funeral, including a gun salute. Name X.

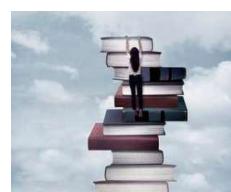


Visual question:

This is a drawing by Stanisław Wyspiański of the two-fingered salute. Officers of the armed forces of which country use it? WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:

1. This driver holds the record for the most races entered, started and finished. Ans: Fernando Alonso
2. The drivers who won the Driver's championship with six races left. Ans: Michael Schumacher, Max Verstappen
3. This driver won the Driver's championship with four different constructors. Ans: Juan Manuel Fangio
4. The two pairs of father and son who won the Driver's Championship. Ans: Graham Hill and Damon Hill, Keke Rosberg and Nico Rosberg
5. This driver raced with a single constructor for the most number of races. Ans: Lewis Hamilton
6. India hosted the F1 race for three years in this city. Ans: Greater Noida; Buddh International Circuit
7. This circuit has hosted the F1 race the most number of times. Ans: The Monza Circuit in Italy
8. This format determined the pole position for the final race. Ans: Sprint race
9. Visual: Identify this circuit. Ans: The Suzuka International Racing Course. It is classified as a clockwise and anti-clockwise circuit
10. Early Birds: Harshit Sharma | Prashant Nain | Rajmohan.V | Suyash Sheel Pal | Aman Srivastava



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

"Ms. Sheela Kaul, Varanasi, wants to know the meaning of the word 'multiversity'."

"It is a portmanteau word. It is a combination of 'multi-' + 'university'. A multiversity is a big university with a number of departments."

"Ms. S. Banatwala, Bombay, wants to know the difference between 'inside' and 'interior'."

"Inside" is the opposite of "outside".

He is inside the building.

It is also used with reference to people who work with others and have private information.

He has inside knowledge of the department as he worked in it.

"Interior" also means "inside" but we use it when we want to refer to the structure of the inside of something.

The interior of the temple is magnificent.

"Interior decoration" is the decoration suited to the inside of a house. The interior features of the country refer to the inland parts.

He went into the interior of Africa.

"Minister of the interior" means Home Minister. This term is used in certain countries."

"Mr. N. Vaidyaram, CIT, Madras, wants to know how to use the word 'acquiesce'."

This is a word that is used in formal contexts. Very rarely is it used in speech. It means 'to agree, often unwillingly, but without complaining or arguing; accept quietly'.

She acquiesced in the proposal to get her transferred to Bombay.

'Acquiesce' is followed by the preposition 'in'. You acquiesce in something. The noun form is 'acquiescence', adjective 'acquiescent', adverb 'acquiescently'. The 'e' is pronounced like the 'e' in 'man', the first 'c' as in 'can', 'qui' as 'kwí' and 'esce' as 'es'. So 'acquiesce' is pronounced 'akwíes'. The stress is on the third syllable. 'Acquiescence' is usually followed by 'in' or 'to'.

His acquiescence to her demands shocked his parents.

In law, 'acquiescence' means 'such neglect to take legal proceedings for such a long time as to imply the abandonment of a right'.

"Mr. A. S. Puranik, Mangalore, wants to know whether we should use 'or' or 'the' before 'breakfast', 'dinner', 'lunch', 'tea' and 'supper'."

"We don't use the article before these words."

I had dinner with him last night.

Come and have breakfast with me tomorrow.

I was invited to tea by her yesterday.

Supper is ready.

Dinner is served at nine.

When we refer to a specific meal on a specific day, we use the article.

I am not referring to the breakfast I had with her. I am referring the breakfast I had with her brother."

"Mr. A. S. Ravichandran wants to know a few synonyms of 'famous'."

"Renowned, illustrious, notable, prominent, eminent, august, distinguished."

Published in The Hindu on February 26, 1991.

Word of the day

Maladroit:

not adroit; unskillfulness resulting from a lack of training.

Synonyms:

ineptitude, slowness,

awkwardness, clumsiness

Usage:

He was a clumsy, maladroite man.

Pronunciation:

bit.ly/madroitpro

International Phonetic Alphabet:

/mælə'draɪt/

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

GENEVA

U.K. plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda blow to human rights: UN



Britain's new legislation on its controversial plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda "undercuts" basic rights principles, UN human rights chief Volker Turk said on Monday. He said the moves to facilitate removals to Rwanda run contrary to the principles of the rule of law and risked delivering a serious blow to human rights. AFP

KABUL

25 killed, eight injured in landslip caused by snowfall in Afghanistan



A landslip caused by heavy snowfall has killed 25 people and injured eight others in the eastern Afghan province of Nuristan, a disaster management ministry spokesman said on Monday. Earth, snow and rubble swept through the village of Nakre in the Tatin valley of Nuristan overnight on Sunday. AFP

PORT MORESBY

At least 64 dead as rival tribes go head to head in Papua New Guinea



The bloodied bodies of at least 64 tribal fighters were found along a remote stretch of road in Papua New Guinea's highlands, on Monday, an escalation of long-running violence between warring clans. The incident occurred near the village of Wapenamanda, about 600 km northwest of the capital Port Moresby. AFP

PARIS

Eiffel Tower shuts down as staff strike over finance management



The Eiffel Tower, one of the world's top tourist attractions, was closed on Monday after staff went on strike. The strike, which was called to protest over the way the monument is managed financially, could be extended. The stoppage is the second strike at the Eiffel Tower within two months for the same reason. AFP

Israel to fight during Ramzan unless Hamas frees hostages

Death count in the besieged strip crosses 29,000 with overnight strikes killing more than 100 Palestinians; Israel declares Brazil's Lula 'persona non grata' for his genocide remark

Agence France-Presse
GAZA STRIP

Deathly fighting raged on in Gaza Monday after Israel warned that, unless Hamas frees all hostages, it will push on with its offensive during the Muslim holy month of Ramzan, including in the far-southern Rafah area.

Global concern has mounted over the fate of 1.4 million Palestinians who have been forced into Rafah near the Egyptian border, enduring bombardment and dire food shortages in crowded makeshift shelters and tents.

Overnight strikes and battles in Gaza killed more



Basic needs: Palestinians carry bags of flour they grabbed from an aid truck near an Israeli checkpoint in Gaza City on Monday. REUTERS

than 100 Palestinians, mostly women and children, pushing the death toll past 29,000, said the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory, with fighting heaviest in Khan Younis, just north of Rafah.

War Cabinet member Benny Gantz warned on Sunday that the Israeli Army is ready to push deeper into Rafah during Ramzan which starts around March

10 as per Lunar calendar. "The world must know, and Hamas leaders must know: if by Ramzan the hostages are not home, the fighting will continue everywhere to include the Rafah area," said Mr. Gantz, a former military chief of staff.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Sunday accused Israel of committing "genocide" and compared its actions to Adolf Hitler's campaign to exterminate Jews.

Mr. Netanyahu labelled the comments "shameful" and Foreign Minister Israel Katz declared the Israeli president "persona non grata" in the state of Israel unless he apologises.

At the ICJ, Palestinians accuse Israel of 'apartheid'

Agence France-Presse
THE HAGUE

Palestinians are suffering "colonialism and apartheid" under the Israelis, Foreign minister Riyad Al-Maliki told the UN's top court on Monday.

"The Palestinians have endured colonialism and apartheid.... There are those who are enraged by these words. They should be enraged by the reality we are suffering," Mr. Al-Maliki told the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The ICJ is holding hearings all week on the legal implications of Israel's occupation since 1967, with an unprecedented 52 countries expected to give evidence.

Israel will not participate in the hearings.

EU launches Red Sea mission as U.S. ship is attacked twice

Agence France-Presse
DUBAI

The European Union launched a naval mission on Monday to protect Red Sea shipping from Yemen's Houthi rebels as a U.S.-owned cargo vessel repeatedly came under fire in the region.

The Iran-backed Houthis, who control much of war-torn Yemen, have been harassing the vital shipping lane since November in a campaign they say is in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza during the Israel-Hamas war.

The EU aims to have the mission - called Aspides, up and running in a "few weeks" with at least four vessels.

The U.S. is already spearheading its own naval coalition in the area.



Sea support: The EU aims to have the mission, called Aspides, up and running in a "few weeks" with at least four vessels. AFP

The dozens of Houthis have roiled shipping in the Red Sea.

Missile attack In the latest incident, a Greek-flagged, U.S.-owned cargo ship was attacked twice in two hours in the Gulf of Aden, which adjoins the Red Sea, maritime security firm Ambrey said.

The ship's master reported "evidence of shrapnel and damage to paintwork" in the second incident, the British Navy's U.K. Maritime Trade Operations said.

PTI-backed winners set to join rightwing Sunni council

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD

Reversing its earlier decision, jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on February 19 said that the party-backed independent candidates, who won the February 8 elections, will join the rightwing Sunni Ittehad Council.

The party's earlier decision was for its members elected to the National Assembly and the Punjab provincial Assembly to join Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM), a Shia party, and those elected in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to be part of Jamaat-e-Islami, which is a hardline Sunni religious party.

The Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) is an alliance of Islamic political and religious parties which represents followers of the school of Sunni Islam.

"Our candidates in the National Assembly, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies will join the Sunni Ittehad Council," PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan said while addressing a press conference along with leaders of the MWM and SIC.

Formal agreement The winning independent candidates had to join a party within three days after the notification of the results of the February 8 elections. Mr. Gohar Khan also said the PTI made a "formal agreement" with the Sunni Ittehad Council and the same would be submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) with a request to allocate the reserved seats according to the party strength and under law.

Two killed as people rush for passports in Myanmar

Agence France-Presse
YANGON

Two persons were killed in a crush outside a passport office in Myanmar on Monday, a rescue worker said, as thousands rush to leave the country to escape a junta military service law.

Two women aged 52 and 39 died early on Monday after hundreds of people surged to get in line at the passport office in second city Mandalay.

Another woman was slightly injured. All three had been selling tokens assuring numbers in the queue.

Earlier this month, the military said it would enforce a law allowing it to call up all men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-27 to serve in the military for at least two years.

Three Myanmar officials sentenced to death for ceding town

Agence France-Presse
YANGON

Myanmar's junta has sentenced to death three high-ranking officers who gave up the surrender of a strategic town on the Chinese border to ethnic minority fighters last month, military sources said.

Hundreds of troops put down their weapons and handed over the town of Laukkai in Shan State to the Three Brotherhood Alliance after months of fighting that saw the military lose swathes of territory.

The surrender was one of the biggest single losses for the military in decades.

After the surrender, the officers and their troops were allowed to leave the area by the alliance.

"Three brigadier generals including the command-

Voiceless in Congo



People gather to denounce the international community's silence in the face of the perpetual crisis in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo on Monday. Fighting has flared around Sake, 20 km from Goma, between M23 rebels backed by Rwanda, and Congolese forces. AFP

Taliban set unacceptable conditions for attending a UN meeting, says Guterres

Associated Press
DOHA

The Taliban set unacceptable conditions for attending a UN-sponsored meeting about Afghanistan, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday.

Taliban demands included the exclusion of Afghan civil society members from the talks in Doha, Qatar, and treatment that amounted to official recognition of the Taliban as the country's legitimate rulers, Mr. Guterres said at the conclusion of a two-day meeting in Qatar.

The two-day meeting



The biggest point of contention between the international community and the Taliban are the bans imposed on women. AP

"I received a letter (from the Taliban) with a set of conditions to be present in this meeting that were not acceptable," Mr. Guterres

told a news conference. Taliban officials were not immediately available for comment.

The biggest point of contention between the international community and the Taliban are the bans imposed on women and girls. The Taliban insist the bans are a domestic matter and reject criticism as outside interference, but Mr. Guterres said meeting participants agreed it was essential to revoke the restrictions.

Another is the appointment of a UN special envoy, which the Taliban oppose.

Sri Lanka will uphold economic, social rights of Tamils: President

Press Trust of India
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Monday that his government has initiated the process to uphold the economic and social rights of the country's minority Tamil community as he expressed gratitude for India's support for a housing project in the island nation.

Mr. Wickremesinghe virtually launched the fourth stage of the Indian Housing project, "Bharat-Lanka," aimed at constructing 10,000 houses with international grant assistance for plantation sector workers in Sri Lanka.

India has generously provided financial assistance for plantation sector workers in Sri Lanka.

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"The Tamil community of Indian origin, who have made significant contributions to the country's economy, have unfortunately suffered great losses due to the lack of land and housing ownership. Today, they have been deprived of their political rights, but it is imperative that their economic and social rights are upheld," he said. "The government is actively initiating this process, starting with negotiations with estate companies to acquire land for the construction of these," he added.



A tiger captured by a camera trap in Cambodia in 2007 where the big cats are now 'functionally extinct'. FILE PHOTO

Cambodia to revive tiger population with India's help

Agence France-Presse
PHNOM PENH

Cambodia hopes to import four tigers from India this year under an agreement signed with New Delhi aimed at reviving the population of big cats in the kingdom, an environmental official said on Monday.

Cambodia's dry forests were once home to scores of Indochinese tigers but conservationists say intensive poaching of both tigers and their prey has devastated their numbers. The last sighting of a tiger in the Southeast Asian kingdom was from a camera trap in 2007 and the cats were declared "functionally extinct" in Cambodia in 2016.

Cambodia and India signed a memorandum of understanding in 2022 restoring tigers and their habitats.

One male and three female tigers "could arrive in Cambodia at the end of 2024", Khay Aritya, spokesperson for the Environment Ministry, said.

The cats will be sent to a 222-acre forest inside the Tatai Wildlife Sanctuary in western Koh Kong province to acclimate before being released into the wild, he said. Officials this week began installing more than 400 cameras at one-kilometre intervals in the reserve in the Cardamom Mountains to monitor wildlife, particularly animals that tigers prey upon such as deer and boar, he said. The information from the cameras "will help with breeding of tigers", he said, adding that twelve more tigers will be imported over the next five years if the project goes smoothly.

India's wild tiger population was estimated to have exceeded 3,600, according to government figures released last year, following a massive conservation campaign.

U.S. lawmakers plan to secure market as Chinese rivalry expands to biotech

Naming four Chinese-owned companies, U.S. lawmakers introduce Bills in the House, Senate to bar 'foreign adversary biotech companies of concern' from doing business with federally funded medical providers; Chinese Embassy calls out 'ideological bias' behind the Bills, demands 'just' treatment

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. lawmakers are raising alarms about what they see as the country's failure to compete with China in biotechnology, warning of the risks to U.S. national security and commercial interests. But as the two countries' rivalry expands to the biotech industry, some say that shutting out Chinese companies would only hurt the U.S.

Biotechnology promises to revolutionise everyday life, with scientists and researchers using it to make rapid advances in medical treatment, genetic engineering in agriculture and novel biomaterials. Because of its potential, it has caught the attention of both the Chinese and U.S. governments.

Bills have been introduced in the House and Senate to bar "foreign adversary biotech companies of concern" from doing business with federally funded medical providers. The Bills name four Chinese-owned companies.

The Chinese Embassy said those behind the Bills have an "ideological bias" and seek to suppress Chinese companies "under false pretenses." It demanded that Chinese companies be given "open, just, and non-discriminatory treatment."

The debate over biotechnology is taking place



Safety check: Members of the U.S. House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party tour Ginkgo Bioworks in Boston on Feb. 12. REUTERS

nology's military applications at the cost of hindering efforts to cure disease and feed the world's population.

In a letter to Senators King, chief executive officer of the trade association Biotechnology Innovation Organization, said the legislation would "do untold damage to the drug development supply chain both for treatments currently approved and on market as well as for development pipelines decades in the making."

But supporters say the legislation is crucial to protecting U.S. interests.

The National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology, a group created by the U.S. Senate to review the industry, said

the Bill would help secure the data of the federal government and of American citizens and it would discourage unfair competition from Chinese companies.

The commission warned that advancement in biotechnology can result not only in economic benefits but also rapid changes in military capabilities and tactics.

Much is at stake, said Rep. Mike Gallagher, chair of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party. Mr. Gallagher, a Wisconsin Republican, introduced the House version of the Bill and last week led a congressional delegation to Boston to meet with biotech executives.

"It's not just a supply

chain battle or a national security battle or an economic security battle; I would submit it's a moral and ethical battle," Mr. Gallagher said. "Just as the sector advances at a really astronomical pace, the country who wins the race will set the ethical standards around how these technologies are used." He argues that the U.S. must "set the rules of the road" and if not, "we are going to live in a less free, less moral world as a result."

The Chinese government has plans to develop a "national strategic technology force" in biotech, which would be tasked with making breakthroughs and helping China achieve "technological independence," primarily from the U.S.

What concerns Anna Puglisi, a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology, is Beijing's lack of transparency and its unfair market practices. "Competition is one thing. Unfair competition is another thing," she said.

Ms. Puglisi described BGI, a major Chinese biotech company identified in both the House and Senate Bills, as "a national champion" that is subsidised and given favoured treatment by the state in a system that "blurs private and public as well as civilian and military."

"This system creates

market distortions and undermines the global norms of science by using research and academic and commercial entities to further the goals of the state," Ms. Puglisi said.

BGI, which has stressed its private ownership, offers genetic testing kits and a popular prenatal screening test to detect Down syndrome and other conditions. U.S. lawmakers say they are concerned such data could end up in the hands of the Chinese government.

The Defense Department has listed BGI as a Chinese military company, and the Commerce Department has blacklisted it on human rights grounds, citing a risk that BGI technology might have contributed to surveillance. BGI has rejected the allegations.

"Both the Chinese government and the Americans have identified biotech as an area important for investment, a sector that presents an opportunity to grow their economy," said Tom Bolyky, the Bloomberg chair in global health at the Council on Foreign Relations. He said any restrictive U.S. measures should be tailored to address military concerns and concerns about genomic data security.

"Naturally there's going to be competition, but what's challenging in biotech is that we are talking about human health," Mr. Bolyky said.

'Skincare routine'



Soft touch: Italian restorer Eleonora Pucci cleans Michelangelo's statue of David at the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence on Monday. The delicate beauty treatment is part of the routine maintenance on one of the world's most recognisable nude sculptures. AFP

Despite being freed from detention, Thaksin may still face *lese majeste*

Associated Press
BANGKOK

Thai prosecutors said on Monday that further investigation is needed to decide whether to bring former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to trial for defaming the monarchy, the *lese majeste* charge, just a day after he was freed from a prison sentence on other charges he was serving in a hospital.

Mr. Thaksin was released on parole on Sunday from the Police General Hospital in Bangkok where he spent six months serving time for corruption-related offences. He had been in self-imposed exile since 2008, but returned to Thailand in August last year to begin serving an eight-year sentence.



Brief respite: Former Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra in a vehicle in front of his residence after being released on parole on Sunday. AP

On his return, he was moved almost immediately from prison to the hospital on grounds of ill health, and about a week after that, King Maha Vajiralongkorn reduced his sentence to a single year. Mr. Thaksin, 74, was granted parole earlier this month because of his age and ill health,

2006 military coup after being accused of corruption, abuse of power and disrespect for the monarch.

Mr. Thaksin was briefly detained on Sunday by the police from the Technological Crime Suppression Division as he left the hospital, but was allowed temporary release to return home as it was not a working day for the prosecutor's office, Prayuth Bejragna, a spokesman for the Office of the Attorney General, said at a news conference on Monday. The Attorney General's office had announced earlier this month that it had revived an investigation into whether Mr. Thaksin almost nine years ago violated the law against defaming the monarch, a crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

To flee or to stay is the question on the minds of Ukrainians living beyond Avdiivka

Agence France-Presse
SELDYDOVE

Olena Obodets rushed to the hospital in east Ukraine moments after a Russian missile tore into its maternity ward last week, sparking a frantic evacuation of dozens of patients in the dead of night.

Days after the strike in the town of Selydove that killed a 36-year-old pregnant woman, a mother and her nine-year-old son, she dabbed her eyes with tissue as she recounted seeing the hospital's caved-in roof and building on fire.

"Tears... Nightmare, Fear," she said.

The bombardment was just one horror in a months-long Russian on-

slaughter that saw President Vladimir Putin's forces last week capture the nearby battered industrial hub of Avdiivka, 30 km to the east.

Apart from handing victory to nearly a year, the advances have renewed an agonising choice for Ukrainians in places like Selydove, declining to give figures.

But the critical moment to leave Avdiivka and its surrounding hamlets was already a year ago, she said – a grim truth that their work over recent weeks had underscored.

"More often now we evacuate killed civilians," she said in a basement police station in the region.

"We transport the bodies of dead civilians so that their relatives can bury them."

Next to a Soviet-era Se-



Collateral damage: A hospital destroyed by a Russian missile attack in the town of Selydove near Avdiivka on Friday. AFP

ond World War memorial in Selydove, a trickle of people were returning to smouldering homes – hit an hour before the hospital – to salvage belongings.

Nearby, State prosecutor Olena Osadcha, 40, who had earlier fled from the Russian-occupied city.

A sushi restaurant re-opened in Selydove this month, pointing to the determination of some residents to remain however bad it gets.

The director of the ruined hospital, Oleg Kryashko, said that after the latest strikes, nearly two dozen staff of the 350 that had remained until now announced they were leaving for safety. Staffs were seen carrying shopping bags of usable medical supplies from the hospital, stepping over shattered glass and strips of bent metal, while municipal workers boarded shattered windows.

"We are all thinking about where it would be better. But if the situation

requires us to be here today, then we are here. I am not going anywhere for now," Mr. Kryashko said during an interview, interrupted by the thump of a close strike.

New defence lines

Several kilometres from Avdiivka, near the village of Progres, Ukrainian troops were digging fresh defensive lines that Russian forces will now be tasked with breaking through.

The last shop in the village, located on Victory Street, was selling off stock and preparing to close, hours after its windows were blown out by shelling. Tearful staff and its owner were mulling if they

would re-open at all, given the up tick in shelling and steady exit of shoppers – some of whom had previously fled Avdiivka.

Outside, 66-year-old pensioner Viktor was packing his bicycle with as many bottles of fresh water as it could hold.

He was nonchalant about the thuds of artillery nearby but conceded they were getting more frequent – and louder. "My neighbours went to Dnipro," he explained, over rounds of incoming and outgoing artillery fire, "but I've got nowhere to go."

Ms. Gavrylyko said the elderly were the hardest to persuade to leave.

"They want to die on their own land."

IN BRIEF



Finance panel will get member in lieu of Rajadhyaksha: FinMin

The Finance Ministry on Monday said that it would appoint a new member for the Sixteenth Finance Commission after economist Dr. Niranjan Rajadhyaksha, executive director, Artha Global, who was appointed as its member on January 31, expressed his inability to take up the responsibility due to unforeseen personal circumstances. "Action will be taken to appoint a Member of the 16th Commission in lieu of Dr. Rajadhyaksha," the Ministry said in a statement.

NCLT orders liquidation of Choksi's Gitanjali Gems

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has ordered liquidation of jewellery retailer Gitanjali Gems, promoted by absconding diamantaire Mehul Choksi, under Section 33 of the IBC, 2016. The bench also appointed Santanu T. Ray as the liquidator, who will complete the liquidation process as per the provisions of the IBC, 2016, according to an NCLT order, filed on BSE. The resolution professional, Vijay Kumar Garg, filed the application for liquidation in NCLT. **PTI**

M&M unveils new variants of Bolero MaXX Pik-Up

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. (M&M) has announced the introduction of new variants of Bolero MaXX Pik-Up range with prices between ₹8,49 lakh and ₹11.22 lakh (ex-showroom). "With its robust build, impressive payload capacity, and unmatched reliability, the Bolero MaXX Pik-Up has become a trusted companion for businesses and individuals alike," Nalinikanth Gollagunta, CEO – Automotive Division, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. said.

Balrampur Chini to set up ₹2,000-crore bioplastic unit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOLKATA

Balrampur Chini Mills Ltd. (BCML), a leading integrated sugar mill company on Monday announced a ₹2,000-crore forward integration project which will be the first-ever "industrial bioplastic" plant in India.

"The new project aims to propel India towards net zero emissions by 2070 with an estimated investment of ₹2,000 crore in phases over the next 30 months," Executive Director Avantika Saragi said.

The project aims to reduce carbon emissions and promote innovation in plastic production, CMD Vivek Saragi said.

Eyeing ₹2 lakh-cr. business by Mar. '26: Karnataka Bank MD

MINI TEJASWI

BENGALURU

Karnataka Bank Ltd. (KBL) which turned 100 on February 18, said it had a mandate to cross ₹1,00,000 crore in gross advances and ₹2,00,000 crore in business turnover by March 2026.

"It is not that Karnataka Bank just survived for a century, instead, we played a dominant role in the banking industry, touching the lives and businesses of millions of the needy and underprivileged," MD and CEO Srikrishnan H. told *The Hindu*.

He said gross advances stood at ₹70,000 crore and business turnover at ₹1,65,000 crore at present.

TVS Mobility, Mitsubishi set up JV, eye auto after market

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHENNAI

TVS Mobility (TVSM) and Japan's Mitsubishi Corp. have formed a joint venture to establish a vehicle mobility ecosystem in India, with the Japanese firm set to make an initial investment of ₹300 crore for a 32% stake, TVSM said.

"We have four business verticals operating under TVSM," TVSM Pvt. Ltd. Director R. Dinesh said at a press conference. "The first vertical of multi-brand dealership business is being off and called TVS Vehicle Mobility Solution (TVS VMS). It would offer a complete portfolio of services to its customers," Mr. Dinesh added.



Demerged from T.V. Sundram Iyengar & Sons Pvt. Ltd., TVSM is a leading player in automotive distribution and aftermarket industry. It will use M's seed capital to develop comprehensive mobility solutions covering new sales, after-sales services, leasing and other automotive operations.

The business model has the potential to achieve ₹5,000 crore revenue in three years from the current ₹5,000 crore, he said.

Mr. Dinesh downplayed the possibility of an IPO, saying any fund crunch would be jointly borne by both parties.

India is the world's third-largest market for new automobiles with sales topping five million in 2023 and expected to grow at 6.7% in the next few years," said Mitsubishi Corporation Automotive and Mobility Group CEO Shigeo Wakabayashi. "To gain a downstream foothold in the rapidly growing Indian market, MC has been fostering its relationship with TVS Mobility group."

Deepak Fertilisers, Equinor tie up for LNG supply

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Deepak Fertilisers and Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd. (DFPCL) on Monday said it had entered into a long-term agreement with Norway's Equinor for supplying Liquified Natural Gas (LNG).

"This agreement is for annual supplies of up to 0.65 million tonnes over a period of 15 years, beginning 2026," DFPCL said in a regulatory filing. "The tie-up provides room for trading some LNG parcels in the growing demands in India as well as accommodating DFPCL's growing captive needs," it said.

The bank will invest more than ₹700 crore in capital expenditure.

of the 99 years it had declared dividends.

"But, we are now transitioning in a big way. We are all set to acquire customers pan India and lay a solid base for our next century of growth," he said.

"We built a huge sales team of 800 people. We now have an army and hundreds of feet on the street. This will accelerate our customer and business acquisition."

The bank was already growing ahead of the industry average. For instance, its advances had been growing at 18% against the industry average of 14% (RBI data).

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"This agreement is for annual supplies of up to 0.65 million tonnes over a period of 15 years, beginning 2026," DFPCL said in a regulatory filing. "The tie-up provides room for trading some LNG parcels in the growing demands in India as well as accommodating DFPCL's growing captive needs," it said.

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India cancels licences of 64 pharma firms



Casting net: As many as 423 firms, including listed entities and drug testing labs, came under scanner. REUTERS

Abhishek Law

NEW DELHI

Indian authorities, in the past year, have cancelled licences of 64 pharma companies, while 17 drug testing laboratories have been asked to shut down for non-compliance with 'good manufacturing practices' and other "continued" procedural lapses.

As per the World Health Organization (WHO), 'good manufacturing practices' refer to that aspect of quality assurance that ensures medicinal products are consistently produced and controlled as per the quality standards appropriate to their intended use and as required by the product specification.

Apart from production and quality control matters, there is also a legal component that covers responsibilities for distribution, contract manufacturing and testing, and responses to product defects and complaints.

Sources in the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare told *businessline*, checks and investigations were carried out during the last 12 months, where 423 companies – including listed entities and drug testing laboratories – came under the scanner. Post the investigation, operations were stopped at 101 pharma firms and there were 52 instances of suspension of licences. Another 28 firms were issued show-cause notices. There were 131 drug testing laboratories, against which action was taken. India is the third-largest drugmaker in the world by volume after U.S. and China. Pharma exports are set to rise to more than \$20 billion in FY24.

(The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)

West challenges China's hold on critical minerals in African continent

The West is now challenging China's tight grip on the mineral riches lying beneath the soil of the Congo and its neighbour Zambia; this new scramble for Africa comes with a post-colonial twist since both the African countries have ambitions to be major actors in the critical minerals race

COMMENT

Reuters

LONDON

China's CMOC Group overtook Glencore to become the world's largest producer of cobalt last year as it ramped up its new Kisanfu mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The company's production leapt by 17.4% year-on-year to 55,526 metric tonne, accounting for over a quarter of global demand of 213,000 tonne.

Kisanfu, in which Chinese battery giant CATL owns a minority stake, has flooded the cobalt market. The Cobalt Institute estimates global production exceeded demand by 12,500 tonne in 2023, making it one of the "biggest surpluses in recent years".

CMOC is unconcerned. It plans to lift output further this year despite a slump in the cobalt price from \$40 per lb in May 2022 to a current \$13.

Others can't afford to be so sanguine. The price implosion has upturned project economics and undermined Western hopes of reducing dependency on China for a metal that is critical both to clean-energy technology and military hardware.

But the West is now challenging China's tight grip on the mineral riches lying beneath the soil of the Congo and its neighbour Zambia.



Terra incognita: Excavators at work at Tenke Fungurume, a copper and cobalt mine in Congo. REUTERS

lying beneath the soil of the Congo and its neighbour Zambia.

This new scramble for Africa comes with a post-colonial twist since both countries have ambitions to be major actors in the critical minerals race.

Back to Africa

The clout is in the name. The Copperbelt straddling Zambia and Congo still contains some of the richest copper and cobalt deposits in the world.

KoBOLD Metals, a California-based metals exploration company backed by billionaires Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos, claims its Mungoma project in Zambia boasts copper grades of around 5%, compared with under 1% for most big



The Copperbelt straddling Zambia and Congo still contains some of the richest copper and cobalt deposits in the world.

mines in Chile, the world's top producer. Few Western mining companies have until now ventured into the renascent Copperbelt, wary of the daunting mix of political risk, poor infrastructure and, in the case of Congolese cobalt, the ethical issues around artisanal mining. Fewer will have lasted.

U.S. producer Freeport McMoRan brought the Tenke Fungurume copper-

cobalt mine into production in 2009. It sold its holding to CMOC in 2016, giving the Chinese company its first foothold in the Congo. Freeport went on to sell CMOC the Kisanfu deposit in 2020 saying it was "no longer strategic" to its long-term growth.

CMOC quite evidently views the copper very differently. And, Western governments seem to be coming to the view that if you're strategically short of energy-transition metals such as copper and cobalt, there's only one place to head: Back to Africa.

The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is planning to near double its financial commitments to try to develop mining in the Copperbelt.

The flagship investment so far is the Llobito Corridor project, which will upgrade the existing rail line from the Angolan port of Llobito to the Congo and then extend it into Zambia.

The aim is to link Copperbelt mines directly with the Atlantic Ocean, reducing both the cost and the carbon footprint of the current trucking corridor to South African ports.

U.S. and European government backing, it is hoped, will de-risk logistics for the private sector, a policy that has already borne fruit in the form of a six-year commitment from Ivanhoe Mines to use the upgraded rail line for copper exports from its giant Kamoa-Kakula mine in the Congo.

Solar power

The United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), meanwhile, is funding a feasibility study into a new 200-megawatt solar power plant in Solwezi. This will not only supply Zambian industry but has the potential to provide power for two critical mineral mines in the Congo, addressing another persistent problem for Copperbelt operators. Infrastructure is just the start of the West's re-engagement with the Congo and Zambia.

The DFC has "a very healthy" pipeline of critical minerals projects in the region, according to depu-

ty CEO Nish Biswas.

Japan's Organization for Metals and Energy Security has just signed a memorandum of understanding with Congo's state-owned mining company Gecamines for technical cooperation at every stage of the mineral supply chain.

The deal falls under the aegis of the Minerals Security Partnership, a U.S.-led alliance of Western countries looking to reduce critical metals dependency on China and other problem suppliers such as Russia.

Regain control

Gecamines has in recent years been a largely passive minority stakeholder in the country's mines. That is changing as the Congolese government looks to grab a greater revenue share of mineral resources.

President Félix Tshisekedi's government is taking a harder line with his predecessor Joseph Kabila.

The amorphous mega deal with China's Sicomines joint venture has been revisited with the Chinese partners committing to \$7 billion in infrastructure spending and annual payment of 1.2% royalties.

The real game-changer, however, could be the Congo's second attempt at formalising artisanal mining

force, which collectively produces over 10% of the world's supply of cobalt.

+ Loosening purse strings



New year splurge: Shoppers visiting China's island province of Hainan spent a record 2.49 billion yuan (\$346.2 million) on duty-free goods over the eight-day Lunar New Year holiday, data from Haikou Customs showed. REUTERS

India's projects in Maldives gain pace, despite strained security ties

Reuters

NEW DELHI

India has stepped up development assistance to the Maldives with projects gaining pace last year, even as ties have soured over new Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's demand for Indian troops to leave his country.

As global powers jostle for influence in the Indo-Pacific region, India and China have wooed the Indian Ocean nation, which has traditionally been close to neighbour India, but recently pivoted towards China under Mr. Muizzu.

New Delhi has spent almost \$7.71 billion or almost twice the budgeted \$4 bil-



Cutting ties: Mohamed Muizzu pledged to end Maldives' 'India First' policy and ensure it removed nearly 80 Indian troops. REUTERS

lion on projects in the Maldives during this fiscal year, which ends in March, said an Indian official and government documents.

That comes despite strained ties since Mr. Muizzu rode to office in Oc-

tober pledging to end the country's 'India First' policy and ensure it removed nearly 80 Indian troops.

Despite the roadblock, "development co-operation has not changed or stopped," said an Indian of-

ficial aware of the matter, who added that New Delhi had a twofold engagement strategy for Male.

Rather, "the pace of the projects is faster," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, attributing the swifter pace to India's increased allocations this fiscal year.

Mr. Muizzu's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The efforts include a \$500-million project for roads and bridges around Male, and two airports worth nearly \$130 million each in the archipelago's distant islands, supported through a line of credit from India. Mr. Muizzu made a state visit to Beijing but has yet to visit India.

Singapore green fuel levy on travellers ignites funding debate

Reuters
SINGAPORE

Singapore on Monday said travellers would need to bear the cost of the transition toward green jet fuel, announcing plans for a levy that will lift ticket prices of departing flights as the aviation industry searches for a viable funding model.

Introduced by Singapore's Transport Minister at an industry summit on the eve of the Singapore Airshow, the city-state said it aimed for all departing flights to use 1% sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) from 2026 and planned to raise that to 3-5% by 2030, subject to global developments and the wider availability and adoption of SAF.



Flying green: An Airbus A350-1000 flies at Changi Exhibition Centre in Singapore. REUTERS

onto passengers in the ticket price.

Singapore's levy will vary based on factors like the flight's distance and travel class.

For example, in 2026

the price of an economy class ticket on a direct flight from Singapore to Bangkok, Tokyo and London is estimated to be around Singapore - \$83 (\$2,23), \$86

and \$16 respectively to pay for the SAF, said the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore, which developed the plan in consultation with industry and other stakeholders.

SAF, which can be made either through synthetic processes or from biological materials like used cooking oil or wood chips, currently accounts for 0.2% of the jet fuel market and costs up to five times more than conventional jet fuel. "A big challenge that we are facing is that contributing to the high costs is actually securing bio-derived fuel," said Ong Shwu Hoon, Asia Pacific vice president at ExxonMobil Asia Pacific.

High costs

Singapore's only current

SAF producer Neste has the capacity to produce up to 1 million metric tons of the fuel annually at its refinery that started operating last year, a company representative said, more than 10 times the volume required for the target of 1% by 2026. Neste produced 25,000 tons of SAF globally in 2023, according to its most recent financial report.

The aviation industry

says SAF use must rise to 65% by 2050 to reach "net zero" emissions by then, which will require an estimated \$1.45 trillion to \$3.2 trillion capital spending. "There will be a cost associated with transitioning to net zero. And ultimately, that cost will have to be reflected in ticket prices, which will have a dampening effect on growth," IATA Director General Willie Walsh said at the Singapore airshow.

IATA, which represents about 320 airlines, estimates the global airline in-

dustry will grow at 3.3%

annually over the next 20 years, significantly lower than between 2010 and 2019, because of environmental and supply chain issues, Walsh said.

He said there were risks

that taxation to pay for aviation sustainability measures would not reduce the number of flights but it could price some people out of flying and lead to empty seats, which is not good for the environment.

"It's got to be a conver-

sation: economics and viability, and environment sustainability," Walsh said.

Luis Felipe de Oliveira, Director General, Airports Council International, said governments must invest in new SAF refineries to help bring down the cost.

IN FULL FLOW

Jaiswal's new record for a left-handed Indian batter



VIJAY SONEJI

Yashasvi Jaiswal's 545 runs (so far) against England is the most by a left-handed Indian batter in a Test series. Sourav Ganguly (534 vs Pakistan, 2007, three-Test series, home), Gautam Gambhir (463 vs Australia, 2008, four-match series, home; 445 vs New Zealand, 2009, three-Test series in NZ) are the other southpaws in the list.

ONE-SIDED

Sri Lanka proves too strong for Afghanistan in second T20I



Sri Lanka beat Afghanistan by 72 runs in the second T20I at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium on Monday. **The scores:** Sri Lanka 187/6 in 20 overs (Samarawickrama 51, Mathews 42 n.o., Nabi 2/25) bt Afghanistan 115 in 17 overs (Mathews 2/9, Fernando 2/18, Hasaranga 2/19).

AFF

BIG MOMENT

Anush gets India its first Paris Olympics quota in Dressage



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Anush Agarwalla, who won an individual bronze at the Hangzhou Asian Games, secured a Paris Olympic quota for India in dressage. Anush booked a berth on the basis of his performances in FEI events in Wroclaw, Poland (73.485%), Groningen, Netherlands (74.4%), Frankfurt, Germany (72.9%) and Mechelen, Belgium (74.2%).

ON THE PROWL

Deshwal helps Pink Panthers finish league stage with a win



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Puneri Paltan registered its fourth successive win as it upped a dominant display to defeat Gujarat Giants 45-36 in a Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 match at Panchkula on Monday. Arjun Deshwal was once again the star, stamping his authority with 13 raid points. Puneri Paltan recorded a 51-36 win over Haryana Steelers.

Jaiswal's jazz left Bazball battered

The sheer dominance of the young left-hander en route an unbeaten 214, including a record-equalling 12 sixes, literally blew England away in the Rajkot Test which will be remembered as much for his brilliance as for Ashwin and Stokes' achievements

ENGLAND IN INDIA

Amol Karhadkar
RAJKOT

There is more to him than rags-to-riches story. There is more to him than selling chaaat at times and spending nights in a tent on a Mumbai maidaan as an aspiring cricketer.

There is more to him than a boy wonder who not so long ago struck thunder at the under-19 World Cup. There is more to him than a potential IPL star.

If you were wondering whether Yashasvi Jaiswal – just like some of his seniors who fizzled out in the recent past despite being hailed as potential torch-bearers of Mumbai's batting legacy – will be able to convert his promise into prowess at the biggest stage, the last seven months have provided an emphatic answer.

"Yes, he can!" one can say, as emphatically as the Jaiswal jump that's become synonymous with the left-

handed opening batter's joyous celebration on achieving a milestone.

On either side of a week-long break in the ongoing series, Jaiswal has made the major difference in the series. In fact, Jaiswal appears to be the trump card that England never prepared for.

In Visakhapatnam, his 290-ball 209 helped India seize control on the opening day. In the third here, Jaiswal marauded James Anderson and Co. with such audacity that it looked like a reincarnation of another Mumbai great who batted right-handed not too long ago.

The sheer dominance of Jaiswal en route an unbeaten 214, including a record-equalling 12 sixes, literally blew England away. The difference between England's Bazball style of batting and Jaiswal's jazz was the mindset.

While the England batters looked to have pre-mediated their scoring plays, Jaiswal created scoring opportunities on the merit of the ball. The result was despite



Rewarding ploy: Jaiswal created scoring opportunities on the merit of the ball in his magnificent double ton. VIJAY SONEJI

the spinners coming into play with every passing hour in the second innings, England surrendered meekly, while Jaiswal ensured that the match, that was billed to be a 'milestone match', will be remembered as much for his

brilliant innings for Ashwin and Stokes' achievements. After all, scoring a double-hundred in consecutive Test matches is an extremely rare achievement in international cricket.

Even rarer is the start of an international cricketer.

While Sachin Tendulkar had to wait for more than a decade since making his debut to score his maiden Test double, Jaiswal has two in his first seven Test matches.

Being a left-handed opener in itself is an advantage. But Jaiswal has shown that he can combine Sehwag-esque aggression with Tendulkaresque work ethic. No wonder then that the who's who of cricketing globe has been heaping praise.

The team management, meanwhile, is doing its best to help Jaiswal – mentored early on by Jwala Singh, a local cricketer-turned-coach in Mumbai and groomed by Zubin Bharucha, a former Mumbai opener who is a key member of Rajasthan Royals support staff – stay grounded.

India captain Rohit Sharma held his praise back.

"I won't say anything on Jaiswal. Everyone is talking about him. Let him play. He is playing well, it's good for us and he is in good form. I am not going to say more," Rohit said after India wrapped up the third Test on the fourth evening.

"Itna bahi abhi ke liye?" (this should be enough for now). Rohit will be hoping that England will have more of Jaiswal over the next three weeks.

Mukesh is likely to be given another opportunity after a lacklustre outing in

Bumrah likely to be rested for fourth Test

Amol Karhadkar

RAJKOT



Bumrah. GETTY IMAGES

the second Test.

Rahul, meanwhile, is likely to undergo a final fitness test two days before the match.

It is understood that Rahul – who suffered a quad injury during the series-opener in Hyderabad – will travel to Ranchi on Tuesday, Bumrah will spend the next week at his home in Ahmedabad.

Bumrah's rest has been in accordance with the pre-series workload management policy devised for him and Mohammed Siraj who was rested for the second game in Visakhapatnam.

It is unlikely that the selectors will call-up an additional pacer into the squad.

The Bengal pace duo of Mukesh Kumar – who picked a ten-wicket match-haul in Ranji Trophy after being released from India's squad – and Akash Deep will be with the squad.

Mukesh is likely to be given another opportunity after a lacklustre outing in

the fourth set 15-10 score after they faced two super points. Hyderabad inched closer, but it was not enough as Mumbai closed the second set 15-12. Mumbai lost steam in the third set 10-15 despite a neck-and-neck scoreline courtesy Hyderabad's Sahil Kumar. Ashish Ullah's consecutive super serves were a four-point giveaway for Hyderabad, who steered five points clear and eventually won the fourth set 15-11.

The Black Hawks' slew of errors let Mumbai gain four consecutive points at the start.

Hyderabad made its mark when Lal Sujan M.V. put to use the empty space on the Meteors' side. Black Hawks' flaws came to light in an attempt to equalise. The defence just proved it. In the face of a Hyderabad comeback, the Mumbai bats were unwilling to let go of its lead and took the first set 15-12.

The second set saw the Black Hawks lead for the first time as Hemant P. forced an error near the net on Mumbai.

While Ashish Ullah's net points helped Hyderabad, Shubham Chaudhary and Amit Gulia helped Mumbai make a comeback with a 13-10 score after they faced two super points. Hyderabad inched closer, but it was not enough as Mumbai closed the second set 15-12. Mumbai lost steam in the third set 10-15 despite a neck-and-neck scoreline courtesy Hyderabad's Sahil Kumar. Ashish Ullah's consecutive super serves were a four-point giveaway for Hyderabad, who steered five points clear and eventually won the fourth set 15-11.

In the second match on Sunday, debutants Delhi Toofans beat the 2023 edition runner-up Bengaluru Torpedoes 3-0 (15-7, 15-12, 10-15, 11-15, 18-20).

Sundays result: Delhi Toofans bt Bengaluru Torpedoes 3-0 (15-7, 15-12, 10-15, 11-15, 18-20).

Results: Mumbai Meteors lost to Hyderabad Black Hawks 2-3 (15-7, 15-12, 10-15, 11-15, 18-20); Sunday's result: Delhi Toofans bt Bengaluru Torpedoes 3-0 (15-7, 15-12, 10-15, 11-15, 18-20).

Press Trust of India

ROURKELA

Experienced goalkeeper P.R. Sreejesh's heroics saw India pull off a 8-7

shootout win against Spain in the FIH Pro League here on Monday.

Sreejesh made one save in the shootout while Harmanpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Lalit Upadhyay, Abhishek and Raj Kumar Pal converted their chances to help India bag a bonus point.

Jarnapreet Singh (first minute) and Abhishek (35th) scored a goal each for India while Jose Basterra (third) and Borja Callejo (15th) were on the scoresheet for Spain in regulation time.

With the scores level 2-2 and 15 minutes left on the clock, India started mounting pressure and earned a PC with 9 minutes remaining.

However, it failed to convert as Amit Rohidas' shot was blocked by the Spain goalkeeper.

Sreejesh made some superb saves in the last few minutes of the game as Spain gave their all, but couldn't find the back of the net, ending the regulation time in a 2-2 scoreline.

India will face the Netherlands in its next match on Wednesday.

Poonacha and Mukund serve up a feast

MAHA OPEN

Kamesh Srinivasan
PUNE

Rank outsider Niki Poonacha served 21 aces and sustained a high-quality game for two hours and 38 minutes to beat Goncalo Oliveira of Portugal 6-3, 6(7), 7(6)-7(6) in the first round of the \$13,250 Maha Open Challenger tennis tournament at the Balewadi Stadium on Monday.

Ranked a modest 793, the 28-year-old Niki came up with the thunderbolts whenever required to tame the 216th-ranked Oliveira. Coached by Borna Bikić, Niki showed that he has sharpened his all-court game, even though he has been more focused in doubles.

"I was happy to maintain the high intensity game right through the match and pull it off, even though I had chances to close it out earlier," said Poonacha.

As if this was not enough to gladden the hearts of Indian fans, Sophie Devine proved the silver lining in Royal Challengers Bangalore's disastrous campaign in Season 1.

Her 266 runs came at an extraordinary strike rate of 172.22.

A clean striker of the ball, Devine also doubles up as a medium pace option for the side.

Full of promise? Smriti will look to get the best out of her players in Season 2. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



BANG! Poonacha serving one of his thunderbolts against Oliveira. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

old Indian converted three of five break points for the clinical execution. More impressive was the fact that Mukund did not let the Italian get to see one break point in the whole match.

While Poonacha will wait for the winner of the match between top seed Sumit Nagal and Yu Hsiao Hsu of Chinese Taipei, Mukund, who had made the quarterfinals of the Chennai Challenger, will play the victor in the clash between Coleman Wong of Hong Kong and qualifier Felix Gilo of Britain.

The fourth Indian in the singles field, Ramkumar Ramanathan, will challenge the Bengaluru Challenger champion Stefano Napolitano of Italy on Tuesday.

The results: First round: Niki Poonacha bt Goncalo Oliveira (6-3, 6-7(3), 7-6(3)); Tristan Schoolgate (Aus) bt Geoffrey Blanchaneaux (Fra) 7(6)-7(6); Balbir Sircina (Cze) bt Philip Sekulic (Aus) 6-4, 6-3; S. Mukund bt Federico Gaio (Ita) 6-3, 6-2.

Hawks down Meteors



Taking advantage: Hawks' slew of errors let Mumbai gain. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Netsra V.

CHENNAI

Hyderabad Black Hawks stunned the Mumbai Meteors with a 3-2 comeback victory in the Prime Volleyball League season three at the SDAT multi-purpose indoor stadium here on Monday.

While Poonacha made a comeback with a 13-10 score after they faced two super points, Hyderabad inched closer, but it was not enough as Mumbai closed the second set 15-12. Mumbai lost steam in the third set 10-15 despite a neck-and-neck scoreline courtesy Hyderabad's Sahil Kumar. Ashish Ullah's consecutive super serves were a four-point giveaway for Hyderabad, who steered five points clear and eventually won the fourth set 15-11.

The Black Hawks' slew of errors let Mumbai gain four consecutive points at the start.

Hyderabad made its mark when Lal Sujan M.V. put to use the empty space on the Meteors' side. Black Hawks' flaws came to light in an attempt to equalise.

As the defence just proved it. In the face of a Hyderabad comeback, the Mumbai bats were unwilling to let go of its lead and took the first set 15-12.

The second set saw the Black Hawks lead for the first time as Hemant P. forced an error near the net on Mumbai.

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Smriti's RCB will hope for a better campaign this time

WPL COUNTDOWN

Mayank Chaudhary

Royal Challengers Bangalore, following a lacklustre performance in the inaugural season of the Women's Premier League (WPL) when it finished second from bottom with two wins in eight matches, will be eyeing a reversal of fortunes this season.

The outfit has shown faith in its core by retaining 11 out of 18 players. Last season, hopes were pinned on its high-profile capped players, right from India regulars like Smriti Mandhana, Renuka Thakur to seasoned international stars like Elyse Perry, Sophie Devine and Heather Knight. However, the pros either failed to fire or failed to consistently.

After letting go of the experienced pacer Megan Schutt, RCB went for Kate Cross at the base price of 30 lakh. Cross is tasked with strengthening RCB's fast bowling alongside Reenuka and all-rounders Devine and Perry. The trans-Tasman neighbours will also be key with the bat, with both known for their big hitting abilities and knack to soak pressure in crunch situations.

The RCB batting pool has an exciting mix of Indians and non-keepers. Batters like Smriti's form after struggles to juggle captaincy and her batting last season, has done well in India colours too.

However, all eyes will be on skipper Smriti's form after her struggles to juggle captaincy and her batting last season. Shreyas Patil, Sophie Devine, Georgia Wareham, Kate Cross, Ekta Bisht, Shubha Satheesh, S. Meaghna, Simran Bahadur, and Sophie Molineux. The WPL begins on Feb. 23.

INBRIEF



Sinner overcomes De Minaur to clinch Rotterdam Open

Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner powered to his first Rotterdam Open on Sunday, breaking down a determined defensive effort from Australia's Alex De Minaur to win 7-5, 6-4 in a high-quality battle. The win extended the Italian top seed's unbeaten streak to 15 and takes him to a career-high third in the world rankings.



East wins NBA All-Star Game with record score

Kobe Bryant All-Star MVP trophy winner Damian Lillard scored 39 points to lead a record scoring performance by the Eastern Conference in a 211-216 rout of the Western Conference in Sunday's 73rd NBA All-Star Game. Boston's Jaylen Brown added 36 points off the bench and Indiana's Tyrese Haliburton had 32.

Matsuyama scintillates to capture Genesis Invitational

Former Masters champion Hideki Matsuyama fired nine birdies in a scintillating nine-under-par 62 on Sunday to rally from six shots back for a three-stroke victory in the Genesis Invitational at The Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, California. He also surpassed South Korea's K.J. Choi for the most PGA Tour titles by an Asian-born player, with nine.

A day to remember for Arjun and Satish



All smiles: The FMSI Blueband Indian National Rally Championship 2023 winners. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sports Bureau

COIMBATORE

Aroor Arjun Rao and his co-driver Satish Kumar Rajagopal of Mandovi Racing were crowned the overall champion of the Blueband FMSI Indian National Rally Championship (INRC) on Sunday.

INRC 2023 champions:
Overall: Aroor Arjun Rao (Mandovi

Racing) & Satish Kumar Rajagopal.

INRC 2: Harkishan Wadia (Arka Motorsports) & E. Shivaprasad.

INRC3: P. Srinivas Gill (Snap

& Suraj Mehta) and

INRC4: Abhin Rai (Ammyfied

Rallying) & Pramod Raman. Gypsy

Cup: Darshan (Ammyfied Rallying)

& C.P. Goutham).

JUNIOR INRC: Jahan Singh Gill

(Snap-Racing). Women: Anushriya

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Unshackled Wadhera finds his form with IPL-style knock in Ranji Trophy

After a subdued domestic season with meagre returns in both the Vijay Hazare and Ranji Trophy, it all came together for the youngster against Tamil Nadu in the final league match of the premier tournament where he slammed a sensational 109

S. Dipak Ragav
SALEM

Nehal Wadhera announced himself as a player to watch out for during the IPL last year with some crucial innings for Mumbai Indians.

The 23-year-old left-handed batter from Punjab hits the ball cleanly and impressed with two half-centuries at an impressive strike rate of nearly 150.

After that, he played a crucial role in Punjab winning the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy last year, including an unbeaten 61 in the final against Baroda.

However, since then, he has had a subdued domestic season with meagre returns in both the Vijay Hazare and Ranji Trophy.

But it all came together for the youngster against Tamil Nadu in the final Ranji Trophy league match, where he slammed a sensational 109 (107b, 12x4, 4x6) at the Salem Cricket Foundation Ground.

"I had the freedom to play my shots and could back my strength. So that's what I did. And I think it played out to be well," said Wadhera about his Bazball-style knock that had the TN bowlers and fielders ducking for cover.

"I don't think I have had a decent tournament because this is my first century of the season. I could have done much better, but it's a part of the game."

Counter-attacking approach

The youngster who had two First Class centuries, including a double last year, felt that in the previous games, he held back himself. But here, with his side already out of the tournament and asked to follow-on, his counter-attacking approach paid off.

"I just played some of the shots I didn't try in the previous games. So now I know that I can back these shots," said the middle-order batter.

"I just had the freedom, and if a particular shot was coming in my mind and the bowler was bowling there, I would go with that shot and just back my strengths. I think this is what this knock taught me, and I will continue to do this in the upcoming games, too."

Speaking about his maiden IPL and what he learned from it, Wadhera explained that his biggest takeaway was not to worry too much about technique and focus on winning games for his team.

"If you have performed well in the IPL, it boosts your confidence, and that was the major thing that IPL had on me."

Coming to the domestic season, I had it in my mind that I have scored well in the IPL against the international bowlers. So I can perform and dominate here as well," he said.

"As you come to the senior level, only



E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN



As you come to the senior level, only one thing gives you an edge: winning matches for the team. How good a technique you have or how sound a batter you are doesn't matter without runs under your name

one thing gives you an edge: winning matches for the team. How good a technique you have or how sound a batter you are doesn't matter without runs under your name. Everyone from Sachin (Tendulkar) sir to Mark Boucher and Rahul Sanghvi they don't focus much on technique. They tell us, 'You need to find a way to score runs, and if you have a problem, come to us'.

Perfect example

Wadhera, who used a mix of sweep and reverse-sweep to throw the TN spinners off their line and length, said, "I think this innings was a perfect example of that, you know, just dominating the bowlers rather than letting the bowler dominate by allowing them to bowl in only one area. I didn't want to let them do that."

"I wanted to (them) bring one more fielder towards that (off-side) region so that my leg-side could open up and I could hit the sweep. Once I hit the reverse-sweep and sweep, the bowler doesn't know where to bowl. That's how I built my innings, and it turned out well," he said.

"As you come to the senior level, only



FILE PHOTO: EMMANUEL YOGINI

THE GIST

▼
Wadhera, the 23-year-old left-handed batter from Punjab, is a clean-hitter of the ball and impressed with two half-centuries at an impressive strike rate of nearly 150 in IPL 2023

▼
With Punjab already out of the tournament and asked to follow-on, Wadhera's counter-attacking approach paid off against Tamil Nadu

▼
Wadhera explained that his biggest takeaway was not to worry too much about technique and focus on winning games for his team

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Dronacharya Suma works towards empowering underprivileged students

Kamesh Srinivasan

Suma Shirur is one of the pillars of Indian shooting. She made the Olympic finals in Athens. She had qualified for the 2004 Olympics with a world record 400 out of 400 in air rifle, an incredible feat in those days.

As a coach, Suma's growth has been meteoric. The High Performance coach of the national team is now more familiar in the shooting fraternity as the coach who guided Avani Lekhara to the gold medal in the Paralympics in Tokyo. No wonder, Suma is among a handful of Indian coaches to be decorated with the Dronacharya award. In fact, she is the only woman shooting coach to be bestowed the honour so far.

What is not well known is Suma's contribution to the sport, especially her attempt to empower the underprivileged students through shooting. She did a pilot shooting Club with her Lakshya Shooting Club with the NMMMC (NNMCC), scouting for talent among students of government schools last year.

Two of the girls, Nutan Chaudhary and Anshika Prajapati, who were studying in ninth standard, latched on to the opportunity and rose to the national standards. In fact, Nutan has gone on to be part of the elite shooters, eligible to compete in the selection trials that identify shooters for the national team.



Despite being totally engrossed in national duty, Suma found time to talk fervently about the project.

"This project is very close to my heart. It was the brainchild of the Deputy Municipal Commissioner of the Sports Department of NMMMC, Manojkumar Mital. He was introduced to shooting during his visit to one of the centres in Navai Mumbai. He was impressed with the facilities and rigour shown by the shooters and coaches. He wanted underprivileged students of Municipal schools to pick up the majestic looking gun and fire away", recalled Suma, about how the seeds for the visionary project were sown, by the fog end of 2022.

"Little did we know then that the vision would lead to a real fairy tale story for the two girls Nutan and

Anshika in just one year", Suma said, as she put things in perspective.

Through the project, a talent hunt was started, giving the chance for 136 students, including 51 girls, to try their hand in shooting. After the first phase, 26 were identified for further training. Eventually, 13 students got the chance to have a six-month training stint at the Lakshya Shooting Club. Four sustained their interest, and two of them made it to the national championship.

While Anshika progressed from scores of 371 out of 400, to 573.1 in the Olympic format and to 595.9 in the national championship, Nutan shot up from 364 and 385 to 593.6 and an impressive 612.2 in the last national championship in Delhi.

"The Lakshya Club along with Agni Charities got together to sustain the pilot project beyond the six-month time frame, bearing the training costs of the four girls who persisted with shooting. It is heartening to see that even though two of the four girls could not cross the pre-national stage, all four continue to train", said Suma.

To touch such high standards in such a short time despite all the shortcomings has been a revelation about the determination of the two girls, and the sincerity with which they were being trained.

"What is special is that they still don't own a single weapon. They share weapons that are almost a

decade old and still manage to deliver the scores", said Suma.

Good work often finds the right people jumping in to support the cause.

"We got support from unexpected quarters. The Tatkashila Prabodhani Samajik Sanstha agreed to fund the jacket-trouser set for Nutan, made to order for her size from Caparie. More support is needed for her to own a rifle and other equipment. In a sport where the entry barrier is high, and the barrier becomes bigger as you grow higher, it is extremely difficult to get a level playing field for the underprivileged", pointed out Suma.

Even as the Lakshya Club tries to sustain the support for the two talented girls who hail from big families with limited income, Suma talks about reviving the project with the current DMC (Sports), Arjuna awardee athlete Lalita Babar and the Municipal Commissioner Rajesh Narvekar.

"We want to revive the project and give wings to more aspirants from schools. I wish the project gets scaled up this year by NMMMC not only in the numbers but also in extending support to their wards for participation in competitions at various levels.

Indeed, the young students need advanced equipment, and support in terms of sports science, strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, psychology sessions, nutrition, for further progress.



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

It was also identified that transport was an issue as majority of the students, staying far from the shooting range were irregular for the practice sessions. The talented kids also needed financial support for participation in competitions at various levels.

With the right support and extended period of training, Indian shooting may find more gems from the underprivileged strata of society.

For the moment, Nutan and

Anshika provide the inspiration for everyone with their exhilarating journey. Of course, it requires the involvement of a pioneer like Suma to put the vision in motion, and take the young talent forward.

When Suma founded the Lakshya Club, one of the goals was, "live for the glory of the game, and strive for perfection".

It is shooting for all in an inclusive society, as one never knows where the stars are hiding!