

www.pdgroup.in

₹ 125/-

## PRATIYOGITA DARPAN

Monthly Magazine

### Foundation of Success

A Complete Magazine For UPSC, PSCs and Higher Competitive Examinations

Available At Book Stalls By 7th of Every Month

PRATIYOGITA DARPAN

₹ 125/-

## PRATIYOGITA DARPAN

WHERE EXCELLENCE GUIDES THE SUCCESS

- India Celebrates Her 75th Republic Day 2024
- Centre and Assam Sign Peace Pact with ULFA Faction
- INS Imphal Inducted into the Indian Navy
- Lithium Deal: Argentina, Australia and Chile
- Gol Constitutes Sixteenth Finance Commission
- Indian Economy to Grow at 7.3 per cent in FY 2023-24: 1st Advance Estimates
- India Climbs Eight Places to 127 in Global Hunger Index 2023
- States' Start-up Ranking, 2022 • Padma Awards, 2024
- Former Bihar CM Karpoori Thakur (Posthumously) and L.K. Advani Honoured with Bharat Ratna
- BWF India Open 2024 • Australian Open 2024

Semi Annual Current Affairs Special



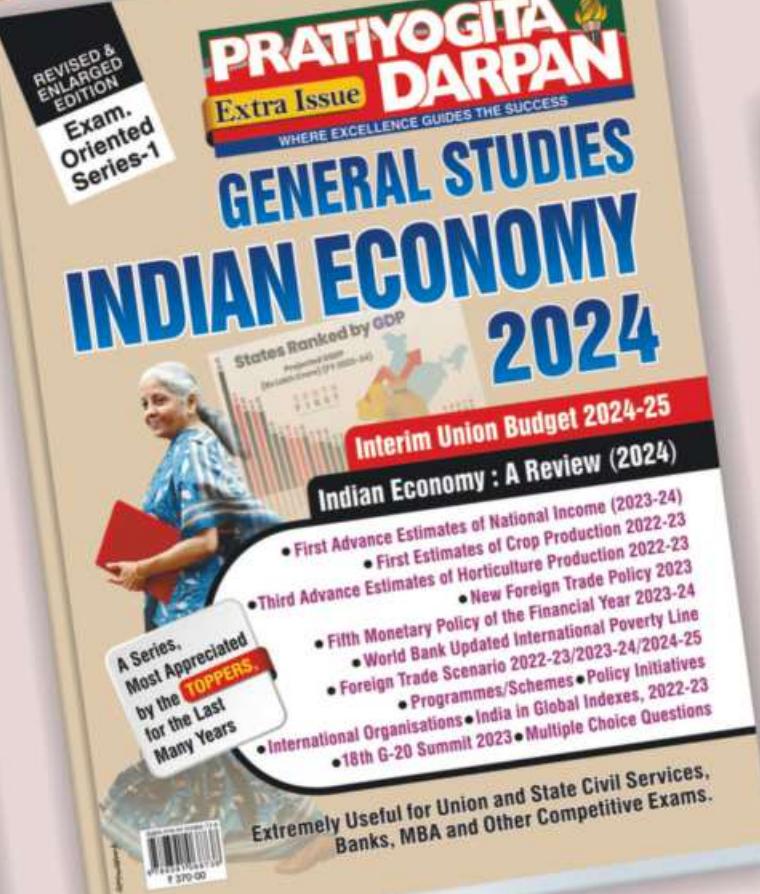
### TREASURE OF KNOWLEDGE FOR UPSC EXAM.

Code No. 801

Code No. 790

Code No. 819

Available by 25<sup>th</sup> Feb.



Scan the QR code and Pre-book now



Available on || pdgroup.in || amazon || Flipkart ||  
Scan the QR Code with your mobile and open the link to see the range of extra issues.



Download FREE QR Scanner app from the app store

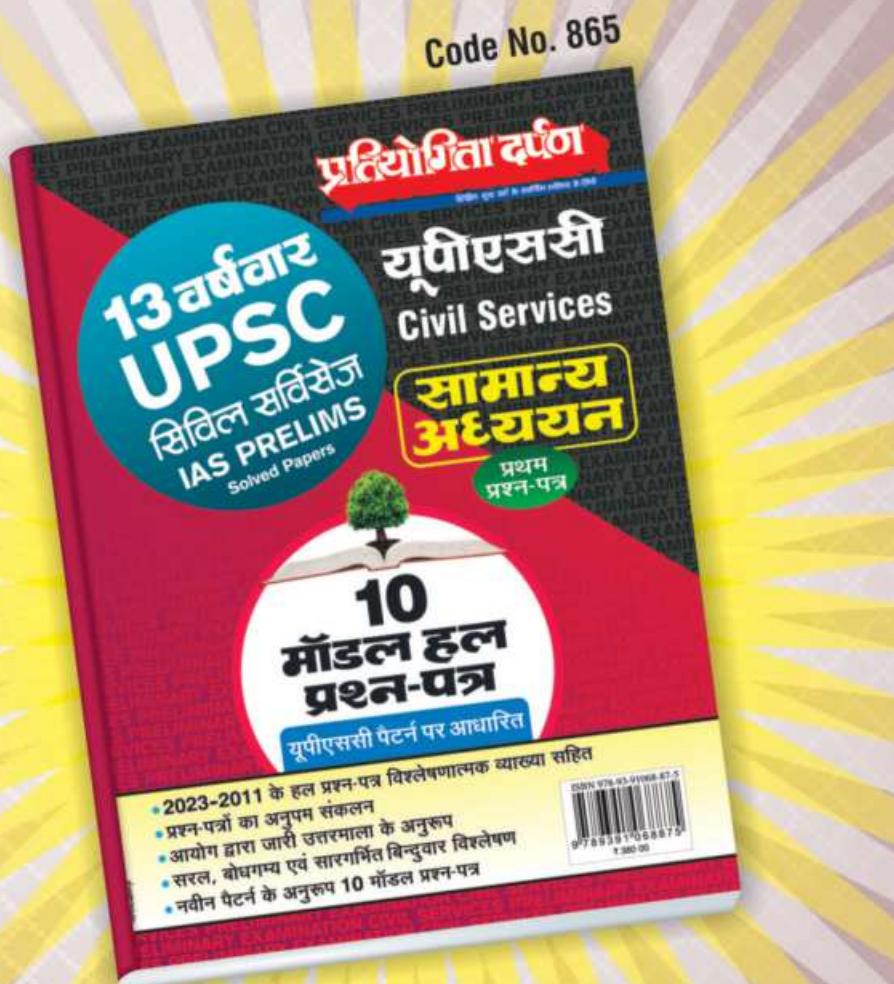
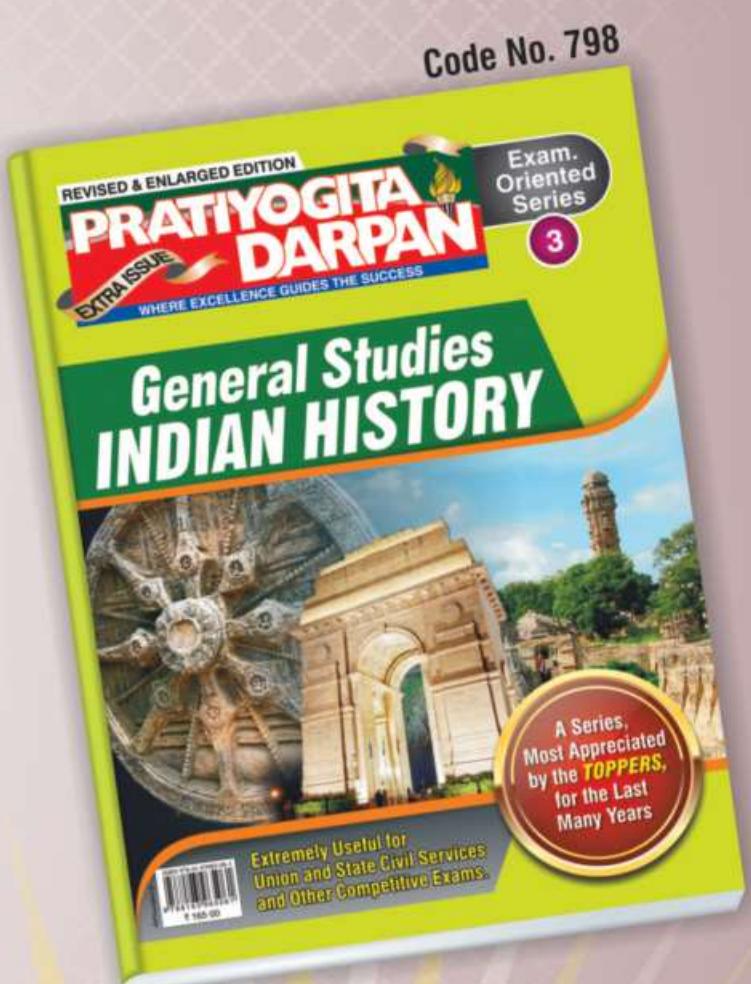
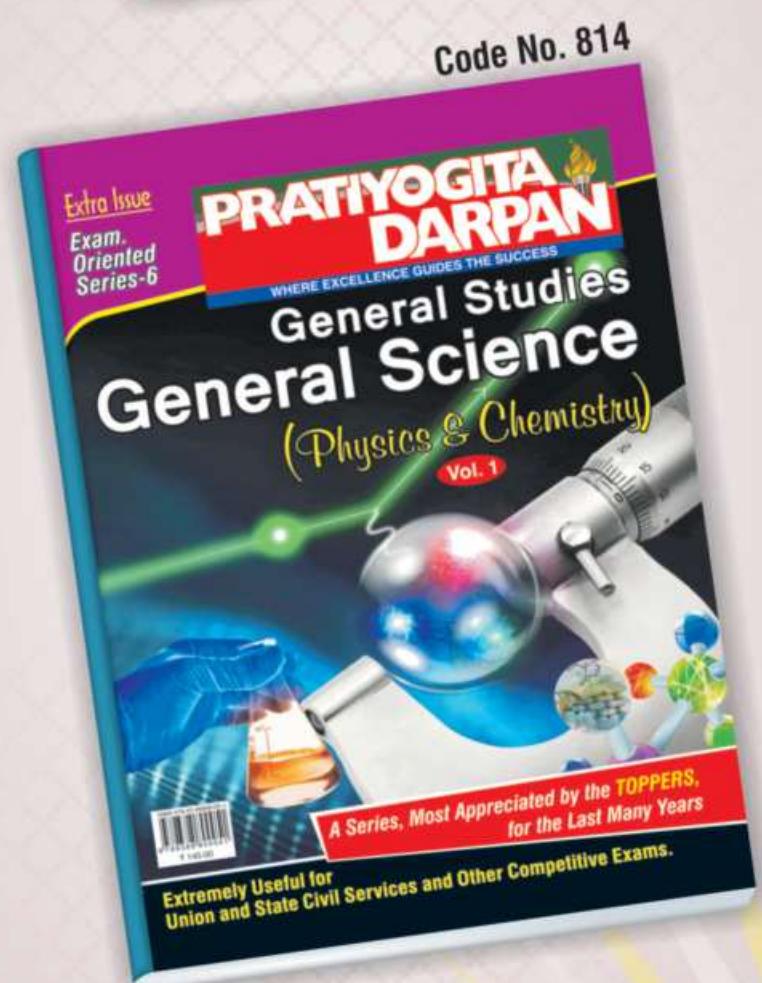
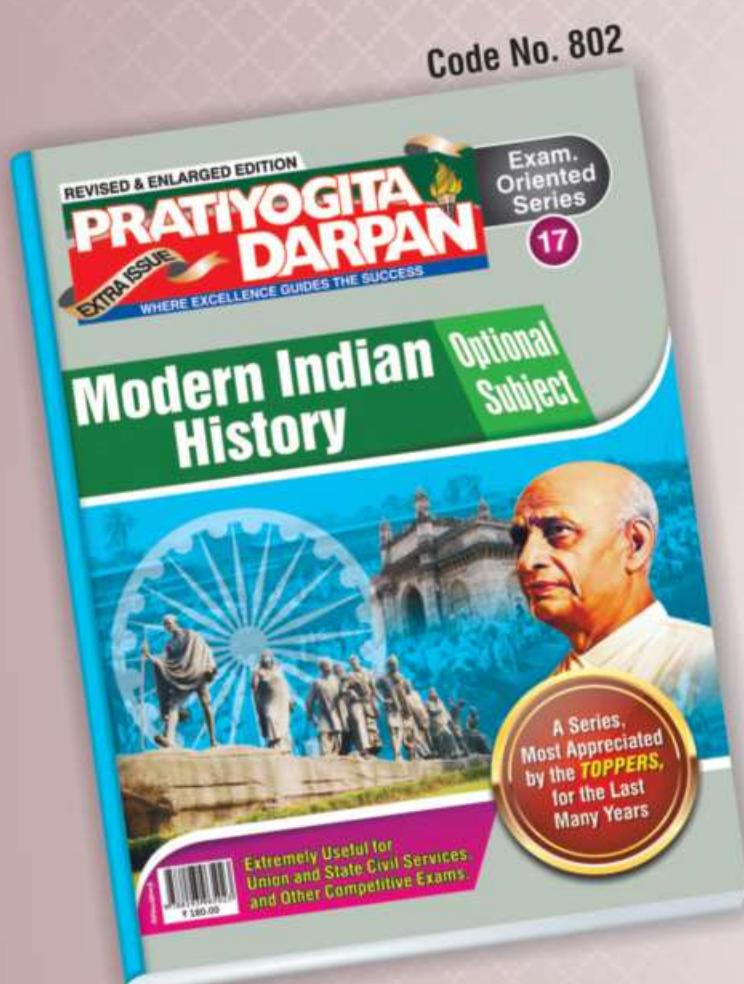
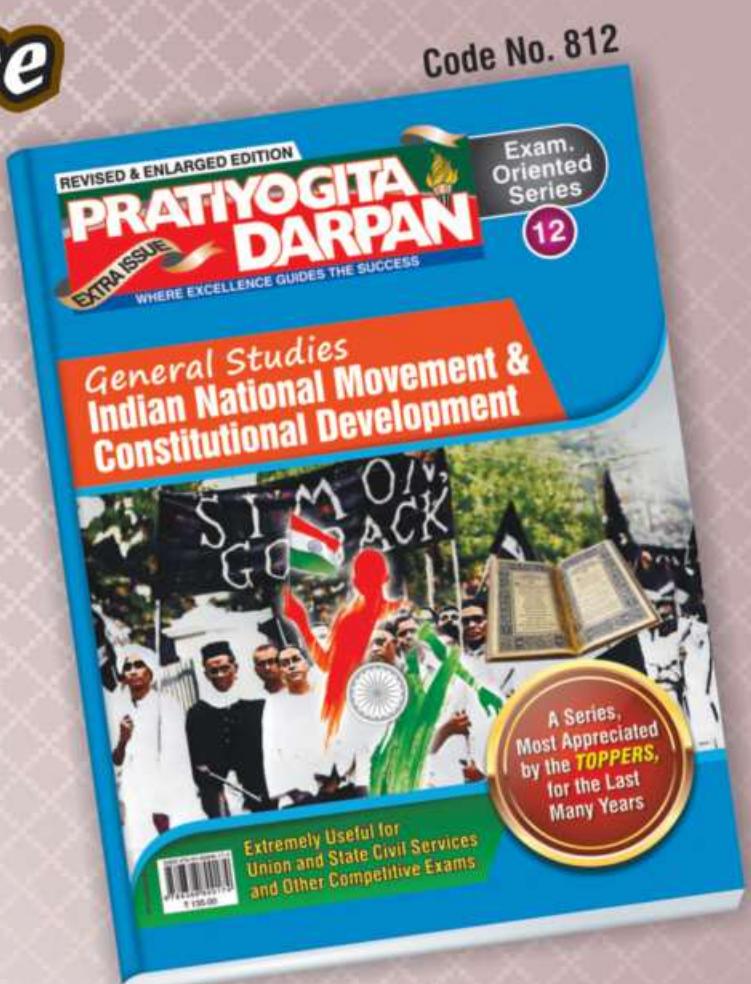
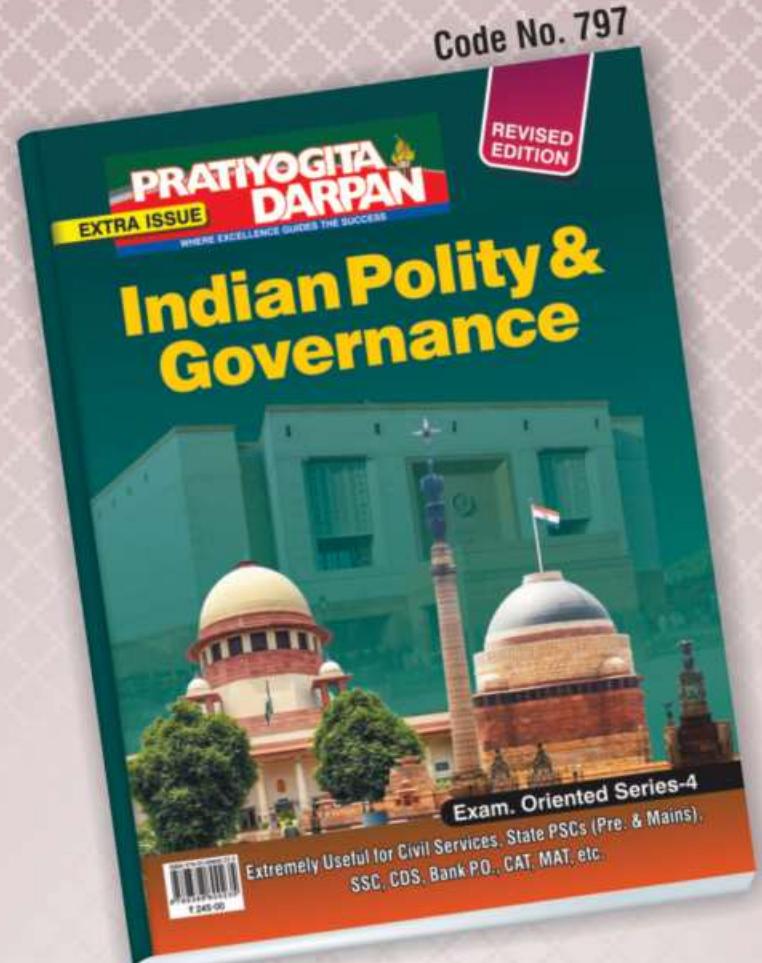
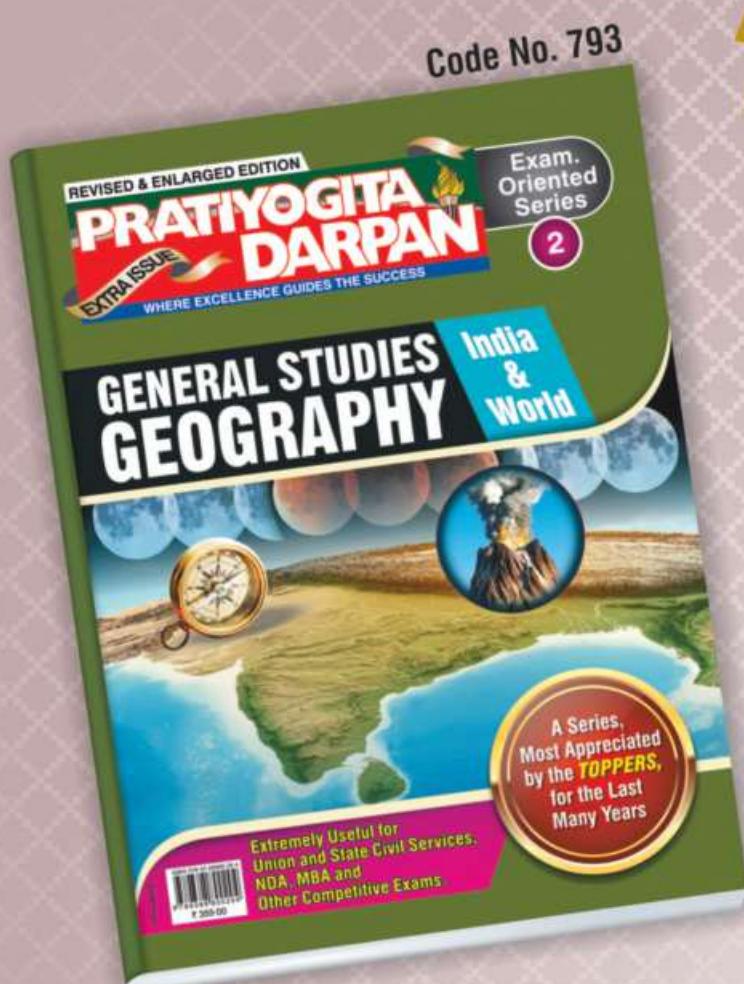
HINDI EDITIONS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

**MOST  
USEFUL  
FOR**

# UNION & STATE CIVIL SERVICES EXAMS. (Pre. & Mains)

**Toppers' First Choice**



Available at Nearest Book Stalls

Please visit our "Stall K-11, Hall No. 3 & Stall O-16, Hall No. 2" in the World Book Fair, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Experience the unique content of newly launched and most useful series for UPSC and various competitive examinations

PRATIYOGITA DARPAN GROUP

1, State Bank Colony, Khandari, Agra-Mathura Bye pass, Agra-282 005 E-mail : sales@pdgroup.in | Website : www.pdgroup.in

Agra 2530966, 4040735 | New Delhi 23251844, 43259035 | Hyderabad 24557283 | Patna 2303340 | Haldwani M. 07060421008

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.



## Drishti Judiciary

...an initiative by Drishti IAS

Dr. Mukherjee Nagar, New Delhi

8010 208 000

### Judiciary Foundation Course

Modes: Offline (Hybrid) | Live Online (Drishti Learning App)

Batch Commences from

11 March, 11 AM

Offline

Live Online

₹99,000/- ₹49,000/-

Register Now



Admissions Open



OFFENSIVE CONTINUES

Israel storms hospital in southern Gaza

WORLD » PAGE 18

ETHICAL DILEMMA

Use of AI to clone voices for creative purposes

A disruptor in progress of creativity, humaneness?

OPINION » PAGE 11



BOUNCING BACK

India rides on Rohit and Jadeja's hundreds

SPORT » PAGE 19

## Modi invites Qatar's ruler to visit India

Kalol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has invited the ruler of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, to visit India. The invitation was extended during their interaction in Qatar earlier on Thursday.

His visit came days after Qatar's legal authorities freed eight Indian Navy veterans, who were accused in an alleged espionage case and given death sentence by a lower court in October 2023.

"My visit to Qatar has added new vigour to the India-Qatar friendship. In-



Friendly visit: Narendra Modi meets Qatar's Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani in Doha, Qatar on Thursday. REUTERS

dia looks forward to scaling up cooperation in key sectors relating to trade, investment, technology and culture. I thank the government and people of Qatar

Briefing the media, Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra expressed India's gratitude for the release of the eight individuals, seven of whom were flown back home earlier this week.

"The Prime Minister thanked His Highness, the Amir, for his support for the welfare of the Indian community and, in this regard, expressed his deep appreciation to His Highness, the Amir, for the release of eight Indian nationals of Al-Dahra company," said Mr. Kwatra in a press release from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

for their hospitality," said Mr. Modi at the end of the visit, which came after a phase of tense relations marked by the arrest of the former Navy personnel.

## India has rejected demand for data exclusivity in drug development in FTA talks

Jacob Koshy

NEW DELHI

India has rejected the demand for 'data exclusivity', as part of ongoing discussions with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) towards a free trade agreement, Sunil Barthwal, Secretary, Department of Commerce, said on the sidelines of a press briefing on Thursday.

Data exclusivity pertains to a clause in the draft agreement that puts a minimum six-year embargo on clinical trial data generated during the testing and development of a drug. Thus, manufacturers interested in making a copycat product would have to generate such data on their own, which is an expensive proposition, or wait out that period before applying to

register and sell their version in India. This could also apply to drugs that are not patented in India. India's generic drug industry has over the years made affordable versions of expensive drugs and become a global supplier itself, and such a clause could hamper the industry.

Demands for data exclusivity have cropped up since 2008 from the European Union and the EFTA – Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein – as part of trade negotiations with India, but these have been consistently rejected.

However, as *The Hindu* reported on Tuesday, a leaked draft of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), available on the website bilaterals.org, an organisation that tracks international free

trade agreements, suggested that this clause was present in the negotiating text even as India and the EFTA indicated that negotiations were at an "advanced stage". "We rejected their demand. We are with our generic industry... There is no fear for any generics industry in India...", Mr. Barthwal said.

"We welcome the Ministry's strong stand against the inclusion of data exclusivity in its trade talks with EFTA," Dr. Farhat Manto, Executive Director, Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF) South Asia, said in a statement. The MSF had earlier this week written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the potential harm from India accepting data exclusivity provisions.

(With inputs from Vikas Dhoot)

Maharashtra Speaker names Ajit-led faction the real NCP

Abhinay Deshpande

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar on Thursday ruled in favour of the Ajit Pawar-led group as the real Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). The Speaker said his decision was based on legislative majority and added that Mr. Ajit Pawar's faction had more numbers than his uncle Sharad Pawar's group when the former joined the ruling alliance of BJP and Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena in the State last year.

The Speaker also dismissed disqualification petitions from both the NCP factions. "The MLAs cannot be disqualified as their action did not amount to voluntarily giving up the membership of the party," he said.

FULL REPORT

» PAGE 4

## SC strikes down electoral bonds scheme, calls it unconstitutional

5-judge Bench terms the mode of funding 'manifestly arbitrary'

It says voters' right to information about political funding is violated

Scheme authorised influence of corporates in electoral process

### Pulling the plug

Major takeaways from the Supreme Court verdict striking down the electoral bonds scheme are:

- Issuance of electoral bonds to be stopped
- SBI to submit full details of bonds purchased by donors and subsequently encashed by political parties since April 12, 2019 to the Election Commission of India by March 6
- ECI to publish the entire information given by SBI on its website by March 13

Verdict provides level playing field in polls: Congress

NEW DELHI Welcoming the Supreme Court verdict, the Congress on Thursday said striking down the 'Black Money Conversion scheme of the Modi government' would ensure transparency in funding and a level playing field in elections. » PAGE 15

BJP says scheme was meant for transparency

NEW DELHI The BJP said that it "respects" the Supreme Court verdict, but insisted that the scheme had a "laudable objective of bringing transparency in poll funding". The party said the government introduced electoral bonds as part of its efforts to reform election funding. » PAGE 15

scheme and the amendments authorised "unrestricted influence of corporates in the electoral process", it said.

**Money-politics nexus**  
The judgment belied the cat on the deep nexus between money and politics, saying that "contributions

made by companies are purely business transactions made with the intent of securing benefits in return". It noted that the scheme allowed the inflow of "huge contributions" by multinational corporations with major business stakes in the country, overruling or even concealing the re-

latively small financial contributions of people who believe in the ideologies of a political party without expecting any substantial favours in return.

CONTINUED ON

» PAGE 14

UNBONDED

» PAGE 10



As per Insurance Act, 1938 (amendment 2015), Section 38 (5) "Subject to the provisions in sub-section (2), the transfer or assignment shall be complete and effectual upon the execution of such endorsement or instrument duly attested but except where the transfer or assignment is in favour of the insurer, shall not be operative as against an insurer, and shall not confer upon the transferee or assignee, or his legal representative, any right to sue for the amount of such policy or the moneys secured thereby until a notice in writing of the transfer or assignment and either the said endorsement or instrument itself or a copy thereof certified to be correct by both transferor and transferee or their duly authorized agents have been delivered to the insurer:

Provided that where the insurer maintains one or more places of business in India, such notice shall be delivered only at the place where the policy is being serviced."

**Hence only those assignments registered with LIC of India, are taken cognizance of.**

**Please note to register assignment of LIC policies, by giving notice to the servicing branch only, if not done earlier.** This would facilitate prompt claim settlement to rightful titleholders of the policy, even if the claim settlement requirements including production of policy bonds are dispensed with or modified.

Contact your Agent/branch with all requirements for prompt claim settlement.

Download LIC Mobile App



Visit: licindia.in

Call Centre Services

(022) 6827 6827

Our WhatsApp No.

8976862090

Say Hi!



LICAI Regn No.: 512



LIC

भारतीय जीवन सेवा निगम

LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

Har Pal Aapke Saath

LIC/P1/2023-24/24

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

## L-G lauds govt's achievements in House address

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena in his customary address to the Delhi Assembly on Thursday on the first day of the Budget Session said that the Delhi government was "working with dedication and sincerity to match the immense faith placed in it by the people to transform Delhi into a world-class city".

The L-G, who highlighted several achievements of the government across sectors while sticking to the script, was interrupted multiple times by BJP MLAs. Speaker Ram Niwas Goel subsequently asked marshals to escort seven of the eight BJP MLAs out of the House, with the exception of the Leader of the Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri.

"The economy of Delhi witnessed real Gross State Domestic Product expansion of 9.18% in 2022-23 as compared to a growth of 7.2% in the national Gross Domestic Product. Delhi's per capita income has also been 2.6 times higher when compared to the national average, with a consistently surplus revenue," Mr. Saxena said.

He added that five lakh citizens in the same time period had availed free medical treatment, including surgery and diagnostic services, through identified private hospitals under the 'Delhi Arogya Kosh' scheme, and that propo-



L-G V.K. Saxena addressing the House on Thursday. PTI

sals for five new hospitals across the Capital were in the process of being approved.

Mr. Saxena lauded the Delhi government in the field of education as well, saying that 15 new government schools had been opened in the 2023-24 academic session, and that the government was "focusing on entrepreneurship development" to equip students with skills required for starting a business.

He added that the government had made efforts to curb pollution, and that the city's annual average PM10 levels had dropped, dipping from 324 ppm in 2014 to 219 ppm in 2023. PM2.5 levels too, he said, had come down.

Mr. Bidhuri termed the claims of the AAP government's achievements in the L-G's address a "white lie". "The address given by the Kejriwal government to the L-G to read out is nothing but a bundle of lies. The government has failed on every front," he said.

Finance Minister says budget cannot be presented before February 25 due to 'slight delay' in preparation; BJP questions reasons behind delay, says Kejriwal using tactics to dodge ED probe

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**F**inance Minister Atishi informed the House on the first day of the Budget Session that there had been a "slight delay" in the preparation of the budget document for 2024-25, and requested for the session to be extended till the first week of March.

A proposal on the same was then passed in the Assembly amid interruptions from BJP MLAs, who questioned the reasons for the delay. The session was earlier scheduled to end on February 21.

Ms. Atishi, who is scheduled to deliver her first budget speech as Finance Minister, did not specify what brought about the delay, but admitted that it was caused by the Delhi government, which was "not blaming anybody" for it.

**Sent for MHA approval**  
"There have been some delays in the finalisation of the budget due to some reasons. We received approval for it from the Lieutenant-Governor yesterday. It has been sent for further approval to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) today. Approval from the MHA and Presidential assent will take at least 10 to 15 days. It is not possible for us to pre-



In the House: CM Arvind Kejriwal welcoming Delhi L-G V.K. Saxena on the opening day of the Budget Session on Thursday. Finance Minister Atishi arriving at the House. ANI/SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

sent the budget before February 25, so I request that the Budget Session be extended till the first week of March," she said.

The date for presenting the budget before the House, however, has not been decided yet. "I hope that the budget will be presented either in the last week of February or in the first week of March," Ms. Atishi said.

Last year as well, the presentation of the budget was delayed by a day after the Centre had objected to some of its provisions. The budget was only cleared after clarifications were given. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had, then, slammed the Union government, and had written

to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the delay. "I want to tell the Prime Minister that we want to work, not fight, with you. We don't know politics, we have only come here to work," he had said.

**Using budget to hide'**  
Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri hit out at the AAP government at a press conference after the proceedings, alleging that it had made even an important document like the budget a "victim of mockery and politics".

"Mr. Kejriwal is trying to use a sacred document as a weapon to escape the investigation into the excise policy, but no matter how

hard he tries, he cannot escape. This is a clear administrative failure on the part of the government," he said, adding that BJP MLAs would meet the L-G and demand that the government be dismissed.

The Chief Minister has been summoned to appear before a Rouse Avenue Court on February 17, and has received summons from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning on February 19 for the sixth time, in connection with the now-scrapped excise policy. "Mr. Kejriwal is taking the help of the budget to postpone the probe so he can tell the court and ED that he is busy finalising the budget," Mr. Bidhuri added.

## Centres with 20-plus students told to move to commercial spaces

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday said coaching centres in the Capital with more than 20 students should move out of residential areas and operate from commercial spaces.

The High Court, which was hearing a petition filed by the Coaching Federation of India (CFI), observed that students are at high risk at coaching centres operating from residential buildings that do not have the requisite safety infrastructure such as two staircases. "There must be hundreds of students attending your classes. You should not be in a residential building. Where students are more than 20, you must move to a commercial building," the court orally remarked.

The CFI petition was listed for hearing on Friday before another Bench dealing with the issue of fire safety at coaching centres while stating that it cannot stay a notation that came out in 2020.

The petitioner's lawyer submitted that under the UBLB, educational institutes are required to have several features, including two staircases, which may not be possible in an already-existing residential building. The plea said there is a distinction between a coaching centre and an educational institute as the latter offers a degree/diploma at the end of a course.

## Additional Chief Secy. has blocked one-time water settlement scheme'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

the past few years.

However, the AAP leaders said in a press conference that the Additional Chief Secretary "refused" to propose the scheme in the Cabinet. "The Lieutenant-Governor has been informed about this constitutional crisis, and he has stated that the proposal should come to the Cabinet. Upon his suggestion, we have sent the Cabinet note file to the Chief Secretary," Mr. Bharadwaj said. Ms. Atishi said she hoped that the Chief Secretary will "ensure that the scheme is tabled soon" before the Council of Ministers.

ODISHA STATE SEEDS CORPORATION LIMITED (A GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKING) SANTARAPUR, BHUBANESWAR- 751002. Tel-MD 0674-234073, E-mail - mdosscctd456@gmail.com			
NIT No.OSSC/Mktg(Hort)-66/2024			
OSSC Ltd. invites e-Tender only from Producers (and in case of GOI PSUs, their authorized Agencies) on item wise rate contract basis in double cover system through online mode only for the works below.			
Name of the work			
Purchase of TL Ginger Rhizomes for 2024-25			
No of work	One		
Availability of bid documents in Portal	15 hours on 19.02.2024 to 17 hours of 04.03.2024		
Last date of receipt of tender in portal	17 hours of 04.03.2024		
Date and Time of Opening of Bid	10.30 hours of 06.03.2024		
The detailed descriptions of crops, varieties, quantity, parameters, terms and conditions and other details of tender specified in the tender schedule would be made available in the e-Tender portal <a href="http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in">www.tendersodisha.gov.in</a> . Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation can also be seen in the said website.			
CAD-4130:	Sd/- Managing Director, OSSC Ltd. OPR-0106/11/0106/2324		

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT E-Procurement Notice INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)			
1. The Executive Engineer HP.PWD Rohru Distt, Shimla H.P on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the online bids on item rates, in electronic tendering system, in 2 cover system for the under mentioned work from the eligible and approved contractors/firms registered with HP.PWD Department.			
Sr. No. Name of work Estimated Cost Starting Date for downloading BID E/ Money Deadline for submission of BID			
1. C/O Link road from Telga to Bangsar km 0/0 to 4/360 (SH- F/C 5/7 mtr wide road at RD 1/165 to 2/70 )	4310690	22.02.2024	86214 28.02.2024
2. C/O Link road from Telga to Bangsar km 0/0 to 4/360 (SH- F/C 5/7 mtr wide road at RD 3/765 to 4/700 )	2372326	22.02.2024	47447 28.02.2024
3. R/R damages on Link road from Bhajan Kenchi to Kui road km 0/0 to 9/0 (SH-C/O R/Wall at RD. 5/820 to 5/840)	708567	22.02.2024	14171 28.02.2024
4. R/R damages on Samoli Parsoa road km 0/0 to 8/0 (SH-C/O R/Wall in PCC. 1:36 at RD. 1/077 to 0/089 )	916321	22.02.2024	18326 28.02.2024
5. C/O Tamshai to Khera road km 0/0 to 2/600 (SH- C/O R/Wall in wire crat at RD 0/225 to 0/240, 0/285 to 0/305, 1/06 to 1/075, 1/03 to 1/045, 0/435 to 0/480, 1/0 to 1/015, 1/195 to 1/210, 1/885 to 1/960 and B/Wall at RD 0/620 to 0/705, 1/510 to 1/540 )	3481813	22.02.2024	69636 28.02.2024
6. C/O Link road from Tarti Pull Bhagdhara Meherunda road km 0/0 to 1/375 (SH-PL/Kharanja stone soiling at RD 0/0 to 0/700 )	949827	22.02.2024	18997 28.02.2024
7. C/O Link road from Khashadhar Rausa Nagarai Dogri road km 0/0 to 1/375 (SH-PL/Kharanja stone soiling at RD 0/0 to 0/700 )	1402564	22.02.2024	28051 28.02.2024
The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders and letter No.PWD (B/A)3/1/2023 dated 12.01.2023 issued by secretary PWD to the Govt. of himachal Pradesh public works department from the department website <a href="http://www.hptenders.gov.in">www.hptenders.gov.in</a> , and any corrigendum will be uploaded on the website only.			
Executive Engineer HP /5915/23-24			
HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPARK HPPWD Division Rohru			

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA - DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, CENTRAL IRRIGATION CIRCLE, BHUBANESWAR.								
e- Procurement Notice No. ACEC-40/2023-24								
Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Name of Work Cost of Work (Rs. Lakhs) Bid Security (Rs. E.M.D.) Cost of Bid Documents Available online for bidding From To Date of opening of Technical Bid Period of Completion of Work								
NGR- 18/ 2023- 24	Construction of A/C & Pumping Station building for Chief Engineer, Brutanga & Hadua Irrigation Project, At-Basapala Irrigation Colony, Dist-Nayagarh.	364.56 (On Line )	10000/- (On Line )	"A" Class	16.02.2024 At 10.00 Hours	01.03.2024 At 17.00 Hours	02.03.2024 At 11.00 Hours	12 (Twelve Calendar Month)
ACE, CIC, Bhubaneswar PRD- 18/ 2023- 24	Protection to Sagar Bank of KSDR Embankment from RD.8.940 Km to 9.500 Km and construction of 2 Nos spur rd.8.350 Km and 8.350 Km	677100/- (On Line )	10000/- (On Line )	"A" & "Special" Class	16.02.2024 At 10.00 Hours	01.03.2024 At 17.00 Hours	02.03.2024 At 11.00 Hours	12 (Twelve Calendar Month)

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA CORRIGENDUM			
SR. NO.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT	OLD REFERENCE/ NIT NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM
1	UHBVN	TENDER NO. 109/ HPPC/BIMOMAS/ LTPIII/100MW DATED 07.12.2023	EXTENSION OF TIMELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF BID & TIME FOR PURCHASE OF 100 MW PURCHASE OF BIOMASS AND NON-FOSIL FUEL BASED COGENERATION POWER PROJECTS THROUGH COMPETITIVE BIDDING PROCESS ( FOLLOWED BY E- FORWARD BIDDING ) AS PER THE BHARAT-ELECTRONIC TENDER PORTAL LAST DATE AND TIME OF SUBMISSION OF BID & EMD - 27.02.2024 UP TO 15:00 HRS
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : <a href="http://www.haryanaprocurement.gov.in">www.haryanaprocurement.gov.in</a> OR <a href="http://www.eservice.haryana.gov.in">www.eservice.haryana.gov.in</a>			

SAMVAD- 13/2024/60/25036/I/199/7

**Jharkhand BijliVitran Nigam Limited**  
(CIN : U40108JH2013SGC001702)  
Regd. Office : Engineering Building, H.E.C., Dhrura, Ranchi-834004,  
Telephone :-0651-2400799 & Fax :



Scan QR CODE to  
get UPSC Preparation  
Insights from VisionIAS  
Toppers' Talk



make your  
**IAS**  
Dream  
come true



## General Studies Foundation Course 2025

Prelims cum Mains

INNOVATIVE CLASSROOM PROGRAMME

Scan to know more  
& REGISTER



For FREE COUNSELING  
connect with our  
Experts  
8468022022

ENGLISH MEDIUM

DELHI: 9 FEB, 1 PM | 23 FEB, 9 AM | 28 FEB, 5 PM

हिन्दी माध्यम

दिल्ली: 17 जनवरी, 9 AM | 20 फरवरी, 1 PM

AHMEDABAD  
8 JAN

BHOPAL  
5 APR

CHANDIGARH  
5 APR

HYDERABAD  
6 MAR

JAIPUR  
21 FEB

JODHPUR  
7 MAR

LUCKNOW  
12 MAR

PUNE  
15 MAR

भोपाल  
11 जून

जयपुर  
21 फरवरी

लखनऊ  
5 जून

जोधपुर  
7 मार्च

### FEATURES OF OUR CLASSROOM PROGRAMME



#### Coverage of GS Prelims, GS Mains, CSAT and Essay syllabus

- Comprehensive syllabus coverage in classes through live interactions with highly experienced and senior faculties.



#### Daily Assignments, Weekly Mini-Tests and Monthly Revision Tests

- Enhance answer writing with continuous practice, expert evaluation, and personalized & concrete feedback.



#### Holistic Current Affairs Coverage

- Comprehensive coverage of Current Affairs through Monthly Current Affairs Revision Classes (MCAR), PT-365, and Mains-365 Classes.



#### All India Test Series for GS Prelims, GS Mains, CSAT and Essay

- Mock tests with Innovative Assessment system consisting of Post-Test Analysis, Test-Discussions, and All India Ranking.



#### Comprehensive Study Material

- Access to updated Classroom material with enriching value addition material, reference material, and Quick Revision Material (QRMs) for effective study.



#### Continuous Mentoring and Support System

- Personalized guidance with tailored mentoring featuring regular one-on-one and group interactions with a dedicated Classroom Mentor.



#### Classes with Real-time Query Resolution

- Personalized Student Portal having access to Live & recorded classes with query resolution and academic resources beyond course duration.



#### Tech-Enabled Classrooms

- Enhanced learning with interactive animations & videos and a personal portal for tracking progress, feedback, support and administrative updates.

### OTHER VISIONIAS PROGRAMS FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESS IN UPSC CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION

#### LAKSHYA PRELIMS MENTORING PROGRAM 2024



- A Strategic Plan of Revision for Prelims 2024
- Personalised guidance through highly experienced mentors
- Access to Lakshya Prelims Practice Tests
- Interaction with Toppers and Bureaucrats

16 FEBRUARY



LIVE ONLINE  
CLASSES ALSO AVAILABLE

ENGLISH MEDIUM | 15 FEB, 5 PM

#### PT 365

##### 1 YEAR CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR GS PRELIMS 2024 IN 60 HOURS

- Focus on Prelims-specific Current Affairs and Smart Revision
- Access to Updated PT-365 Material.
- One-to-One Mentoring Support for Doubt-clearing.
- Access to Recorded Classes on Student Personal Portal.

हिन्दी  
माध्यम | 23 फरवरी, 5 PM

#### ALL INDIA TEST SERIES

##### PRELIMS

- General Studies
- Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT)

ENGLISH MEDIUM 2024: 25 FEBRUARY  
हिन्दी माध्यम 2024: 25 फरवरी

##### MAINS

- General Studies
- Sociology
- Anthropology
- Philosophy
- Essay
- Geography
- PS & IR

ENGLISH MEDIUM 2025: 18 FEBRUARY  
हिन्दी माध्यम 2025: 18 फरवरी



Karol Bagh

1st floor, Apsara Arcade, Near Gate-7 Karol Bagh Metro Station, 1/8 b, Pusa Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi - 110005



+91 8468022022, +91 9019066066



Mukherjee Nagar

Vision IAS Classroom, Test centre & Enquiry office, metro gate no 2, above GTB Nagar Metro Station, Delhi - 110009



www.visionias.in

#### OUR CENTERS

AHMEDABAD | BHOPAL | CHANDIGARH | GUWAHATI | HYDERABAD | JAIPUR | JODHPUR | LUCKNOW | PRAYAGRAJ | PUNE | RANCHI | SIKAR

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

## IN BRIEF



## Mimi Chakraborty submits resignation as MP to Mamata

Asserting that politics was not her cup of tea, Trinamool Congress MP and well known actor Mimi Chakraborty on Thursday said she has resigned as a parliamentarian. The Jadavpur MP made the announcement months ahead of the Lok Sabha poll after meeting West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee during the day. "Today, I met our party chief. I had submitted my resignation to her on February 13. I have understood in all these years that politics is not my cup of tea," Ms. Chakraborty told the media persons.

## Odisha govt. official amasses properties worth over ₹10 cr.

The Vigilance Directorate of Odisha Police has uncovered assets exceeding ₹10 crore linked to a Regional Transport Officer (RTO) that eclipses the total earnings from his entire career by a substantial margin. The officer, accused of amassing properties disproportionate to his known source of income, has been identified as Basant Kumar Mohapatra, who is currently posted as RTO, Boudh. During searches on Thursday, properties unearthed included apartments and outlets in big malls. Vigilance Directorate sources said the number of seized properties could further increase as sleuths were in the middle of search and examinations.

**Man killed in group clash in Gujarat town; 30 booked**

## The Hindu Bureau

AHMEDABAD

One person was killed in a clash between members of two communities in Gujarat's Sabarkantha district on Wednesday night. The police have booked 30 people in connection with the incident.

The incident took place in Khodiyar Kuva area of Prantij town. "It started after an altercation between two persons identified as Mayur Bhoi and Imran Kadi over a financial matter. Soon, members of both communities attacked each other, resulting in a man named Raju Bhoi succumbing to injuries," Sabarkantha Superintendent of Police Vijay Patel said.

"An FIR has been filed against 30 persons for Bhoi's murder. Seventeen have been identified. A large police contingent is at the spot to maintain law and order," the SP said.

## Betting on 'outsider' discontent within ruling Cong., BJP fields RS candidate from Himachal

## The Hindu Bureau

CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI



BJP Rajya Sabha candidate Harsh Mahajan. FILE PHOTO

In a surprise move, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday fielded Harsh Mahajan against Congress candidate Abhishek Singhvi for the lone Rajya Sabha berth from Himachal Pradesh, despite not having enough MLAs to win the seat.

In the 68-member Assembly, where 35 votes are needed to win the Rajya Sabha poll, the ruling Congress has 40 MLAs. The BJP has 25 MLAs, while there are three independent MLAs.

On paper, given the electoral arithmetic, the Congress seems set for a comfortable victory. However, the BJP is banking on apparent discontent among a section of Congress MLAs against their party high command for fielding Mr. Singhvi, an

"outsider" in the State. "There is high chance of cross-voting," a senior leader said.

**Outsider vs veteran**

Mr. Singhvi — who handles most legal issues for the party and its top leadership, notably the Gandhi family — was chosen over former Union Minister Anand Sharma, a party veteran from Himachal Pradesh. This is the first time since 1952 that a non-Himachali has been nominated to the Upper House from the State.

A section of Congress MLAs pointed out that Mr. Singhvi had represented a private energy company in the Himachal Pradesh High Court last year against the Congress government's decision to impose a water cess on power and energy companies.

A few Congress MLAs were reported to have skipped an official dinner hosted by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu on Wednesday evening to garner support for Mr. Singhvi. The reason for their absence is, however, not known.

A source said that the Chief Minister had sent only one recommendation, that of Mr. Sharma, to be sent to the Upper House from the State. Mr. Sharma too is said to be "deeply upset" and may have played a hand in turning the Rajya Sabha election into a contest.

## BJP puts its eighth candidate in the ring for RS polls from U.P.

## The Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW



Sanjay Seth filed his papers in Lucknow on Thursday.  
SANDEEP SAXENA

An eighth Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate on Thursday filed nomination for the Rajya Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh, setting the stage for a contest with the Samajwadi Party (SP) on February 27.

Sanjay Seth, an industrialist and former SP leader, filed his nomination papers at the State Assembly complex, in the presence of Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, State BJP president Bhupendra Chaudhary and other senior leaders. With Mr. Seth's nomination, 11 candidates are now in fray for the 10 Rajya Sabha seats getting vacant from the State.

The scrutiny of the nomination papers will be held on February 16.

Earlier, seven BJP candidates — Sudhanshu Trive-

di, former Union Minister R.P.N. Singh, former Agra mayor Naval Jain, former State Minister Sangeeta Balwant, former MLA Sadhna Singh, Amarpal Maurya and Chaudhary Tejveer Singh, had filed their nominations on Wednesday.

"We will emerge victorious," said Mr. Chaudhary, after filing of nomination papers by Mr. Seth. The SP has fielded three candidates for the polls.

## CM's take on magical healing misleading: Assam Christian body

## The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

An umbrella body of church organisations in Assam has criticised Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for his "misguided and misleading" statement equating magical healing with proselytisation.

The Assam Christian Forum (ACF) has also rejected the demands of a radical Hindu group for the removal of Christian symbols from missionary schools across the State. The pro-Hindu group claimed missionaries use such symbols subtly to convert students from other faiths.

The Chief Minister told journalists recently that the Assam Cabinet passed a resolution endorsing a bill to ban magical healing practices with the explicit goal of curbing evangelism.

"As leaders representing the ACF, we find this state-

Setback for Uddhav as senior party leader resigns

## The Hindu Bureau

PUNE

The depleted ranks of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) saw further attrition on Thursday after former Maharashtra Minister and ex-MLA Babanrao Gholap resigned from the primary membership of Mr. Thackeray's faction.

Mr. Gholap, a five-time MLA from the Deolali constituency in Nashik between 1990 and 2014, was reportedly unhappy with Mr. Thackeray for some time now. A deputy leader of the Sena (UBT), Mr. Gholap sent a terse one-line letter of resignation to Mr. Thackeray on Thursday which he posted on X, formerly Twitter.

## May join Shinde Sena

As per sources, both he and his son Yogesh Gholap, along with other local leaders, are expected to join Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena faction.

Mr. Gholap had been repeatedly raising his complaints with the party leadership but allegedly had failed to get any response.

He had earlier resigned as Deputy Leader of the Sena (UBT), but his resignation had not been accepted.

ment both misguided and needless. The Assam Cabinet's assertion that Christians engage in magical healing is misguided and misleading. Our numerous dispensaries and hospitals operate within the recognised medical frameworks, providing essential services to the sick," a statement said on Thursday.

The statement was signed by ACF president, Archbishop John Moolachira, ACF general secretary, Reverend Chowaram Daimari, and ACF spokesperson Alen Brooks.

## Not proselytisation

"Healing, in our context, is not synonymous with proselytisation. It is a compassionate response to human suffering, irrespective of religious affiliations," the ACF said, insisting that labelling prayer as magical healing oversimplifies the profound spiritual dimensions of faith and life.

## After RLD's bonhomie with BJP, farmers of western U.P. are in wait-and-watch mode

## Anuj Kumar

GHAZIABAD

Major khap panchayats and farmer unions of western Uttar Pradesh have adopted a wait-and-watch policy for now with Delhi Police making massive arrangements at the Ghaziabad and Chilla borders to stop farmers from the region entering the Capital in support of agitating peasants from Haryana and Punjab. They want to see whether the BJP walks the talk after bestowing the Bharat Ratna on Chaudhary Charan Singh.

"It is a test of how much the government believes in the ideology of Chaudhary Charan Singh and what role our leader Chaudhary Jayant Singh [Charan Singh's grandson and Rashtriya Lok Dal chief]

would get to play after he joined the National Democratic Alliance," said Shyam Singh of Gathwala khap. He said farmers of western U.P. identify with the demands of their counterparts in Punjab and Haryana. "We are waiting for directions from the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU)."

The Tikait faction of the BKU that led the protests in the region in 2021 is assessing the situation before giving a call to farmers to reach the Delhi border. The Tikait brothers, Nareesh and Rakesh, have appealed to the government to talk to farmers and fulfil the unkempt promises, particularly the legal guarantee of minimum support price.

BKU national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said the union would partici-



**On the warpath:** Bharatiya Kisan Union leaders staging a protest at the Ghaziabad border demanding a law guaranteeing minimum support price for crops, in Delhi on Thursday. ANI

part in the Samyukt Kisan Morcha's call of Bharat Bandh on Friday and added that a panchayat had been called in Muzaffarnagar on Saturday to decide the future course of action. He, however, sidestepped questions on RLD joining the NDA.

BKU (Airajanaik), formed after the U.P. As-

sembly polls in 2022 after the division in the Tikait faction, has also criticised the government for heavily barricading the borders to stop farmers from raising valid demands. "The government should not treat farmers as citizens of a neighbouring country," said Dharmendra Malik, its spokesperson.

However, there is a sense of disquiet on RLD, the political arm of a large section of farmers in the region, shifting sides at a time when farmers have returned to the borders.

Gaurav Baraut, the nephew of the chiefs of Desh and Balyan khaps, who has done his PhD on the impact of farmers' agitation,

felt the RLD had missed an opportunity: "The BJP lost four out of five Assembly seats in Muzaffarnagar Lok Sabha and all three in Shamli district. Before that, it won Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, and Baghpat Lok Sabha seats by thin margins. The perception has been that the administration helped them win these seats. Ironically, now, both the winner and loser are on the same side."

He said unless Mr. Singh made the ruling party see sense in the demands of farmers and pushed it to tweak the Agniveer scheme, his followers would feel cheated by the sudden shift.

Meanwhile, the RLD leadership is giving a sense that the BJP had tied up with it because of its base among farmers and minor-

ities and how the Samajwadi Party (SP) was trying to pressure them by fielding its candidates in RLD pocket boroughs. They feel they could help in BJP's outreach towards minorities the way Apna Dal (Sonelal) contested the Suan bypoll and successfully fielded a Muslim candidate without any base in western U.P.

**Proof of strength'** For a long time, political analysts have seen parallels between the RLD chief and AD(S) president Anupriya Patel. Both are well-educated and represent the dominant Jat and Kurmi communities in West and East UP. "The proof of our strength lies in how the Congress had to abandon its west U.P. leg of Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra," said a senior leader requesting

anonymity. RLD spokesperson Mohd. Islam asserted the party would not shift from its stated position on farmers and secular ethos. For now, the party's two Muslim MLAs have shown faith in the leadership of Mr. Singh. Siwalkhas MLA Ghulam Mohammad said he had been able to mend the social fabric in his constituency and still had three years to go. In politics, he said, when two seemingly different ideologies come together, there is a possibility of give and take.

On Thursday, however, as the news of BJP fielding an eighth candidate for U.P. Rajya Sabha polls spread, Mr. Singh called the nine MLAs to Delhi to rule out the possibility of give and take with the SP, his partner till recently.

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

## Fire at paint factory in Delhi kills seven



The fire broke out at the main market of Alipur in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

A blaze in a paint factory in Alipur, in Delhi's Outer North police district, on Thursday claimed seven lives and left at least three persons injured.

The police said the fire broke out after a blast happened in the factory in Dayalpur Market and the death toll is likely to increase.

The police recovered seven charred bodies from the debris even as search and rescue operations

were under way in the evening. A senior Delhi Fire Service official told *The Hindu* that they received a call regarding the fire at 5.25 p.m. and rushed 22 fire tenders to the spot, finally managing to contain the blaze around 9 p.m.

The blast that preceded the fire is suspected to have occurred due to chemicals, officials said.

An officer added that a search operation has been launched to locate a few missing people. Police teams have been formed to probe the matter further.

## Delhi Police orders 30k tear gas shells ahead of 'Bharat Bandh'

Fortifications have been bolstered in preparation for the nationwide strike called by farmer unions on Friday; over 5,000 deployed security personnel told to ensure borders aren't breached

**Samridhi Tewari**

NEW DELHI

**F**armer and trade unions have called for a 'Bharat Bandh' on Friday amid the persisting blockade at the Singhu and Tikri borders between Delhi and Haryana, where 5,000 security personnel continue to be deployed, among other strategic locations, as the farmers' protest enters its fourth day.

The Delhi Police on Thursday placed an order for more than 30,000 tear gas shells from the Border Security Force's Tear Smoke Unit to prevent the farmers from entering the Capital as part of their 'Dilli Challo' protest, an official said, adding that the police will be "extra vigilant" on Friday.

The security personnel deployed at the borders are already equipped with a large number of tear gas shells, water cannons, and other anti-riot equipment, and have been given strict orders to ensure that not a single farmer is able to enter the national capital.



**Exhaustive preparations:** Police personnel place tyre-killers at the Delhi-Gurugram border ahead of the 'Bharat Bandh'. ANI

The Delhi Police has also imposed Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure for a month, banning the gathering of five or more people taking part in processions or rallies, and has banned the entry of tractor-trolleys into Delhi.

In Noida, too, the Gautam Buddha Nagar police have imposed Section 144 across the district, and have cautioned commuters travelling to and from Delhi of traffic diversions. The use of metro rail ser-

vice has been recommended as far as possible.

The protesting farmers at the Shambhu border between Punjab and Haryana have, so far, been stopped from entering Delhi by the Haryana Police. The fortifications at all the borders include multiple layers of concrete barricades; barbed wire and concrete blocks have also been placed at all the borders. The streets connecting Haryana's Sonipat to Delhi near the Singhu border have also been dug up to further deter the protesters.

Board examinations, meanwhile, were conducted smoothly in the areas near the Tikri border, despite the security measures in place. Police and para-military forces also arranged vehicles to help students reach their respective examination centres near the border.

## Graft charge: Mahua submits her response to CBI's questions

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI



Trinamool leader Mahua Moitra

remained unanswered and the CBI has also maintained silence on the issue.

### ED summons

The Enforcement Directorate has summoned Ms. Moitra for questioning in a FEMA contravention case next week, official sources said on Thursday.

"The CBI is examining the response after which it will send a report to anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal which had referred the matter to the agency," they said. The agency is conducting a preliminary inquiry into the allegations against Ms. Moitra on the reference from the Lokpal.

### 'Lawyer spoken to'

"The CBI is also understood to have spoken to lawyer Jai Dehadrai and businessman Darshan Hirandani in connection with its inquiry," they said. Queries sent to Ms. Moitra

Produce ex-Minister before court for framing of charges'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

The Principal Sessions Court on Thursday ordered that former Minister V. Senthilbalaji, who is in prison, be produced before it on Friday for framing of charges.

Mr. Senthilbalaji was arrested by the Directorate of Enforcement on June 14 last year on the charge of money-laundering in a cash-for-jobs scam case filed against him by the Central Crime Branch of the Chennai Police.

The allegation against him was that he and his associates had collected money from aspirants to various posts in the transport corporations when he was the Transport Minister.

He had filed a petition seeking not to frame charges against him till the disposal of charges of predicate offences made by the Central Crime Branch. On Thursday, Principal Sessions Judge S. Alli dismissed his petition.

## Security at Delhi HC beefed up after bomb threat received via email

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Security at the Delhi High Court was beefed up on Thursday after the Registrar-General received a bomb threat via email on Wednesday.

The email read, "February 15 will witness the biggest explosion in Delhi. Have your security beefed up. Will blow everything up".

Speaking to *The Hindu*, a senior police officer from the Delhi High Court's security wing said that while local police were investi-



Tight security at the Delhi High Court. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

gating the matter, the security on the court's premises and several other district courts in the Capital had been beefed up.

"The entire premises,

including vehicles and all those who entered and exited, have been thoroughly checked. Nothing suspicious has been found yet," he said, adding that CCTV

cameras were also being thoroughly scanned for any sign of suspicious activity.

The High Court authorities, meanwhile, requested tighter security, and have sought a detailed inquiry into the matter.

In the past few months, multiple public places in the national capital have received bomb threats via email. "These threats have turned out to be hoaxes, but we must ensure that no situation that has the potential to harm a large number of people arises," added a senior officer.

## No need for Opposition in Assam, says Himanta

**The Hindu Bureau**  
GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on February 15 said the performance of his Bharatiya Janata Party-led government has virtually negated the need for an Opposition in the State.

He also claimed all Congress MLAs were keen on joining the saffron camp although the BJP does not have space to accommodate them.

"What is the need for an Opposition in Assam where the government's

performance leaves no room for questioning," he said, claiming that the BJP-led government has been working tirelessly for the welfare of the people of the State.

The BJP leads the ruling alliance with 63 MLAs followed by the Asom Gana Parishad with eight, the United People's Party Liberal with seven, and a lone independent.

The alliance is backed by Kamalakhy Dey Purkayastha and Basanta Das, two Congress MLAs who declared their support to the government on

Wednesday.  
He said two more Congress MLAs – Shashi Kanta Das and Siddeque Ahmed – have also joined his government's *vikas yatra* (development march).

"Of the 25 Congress MLAs in Assam, four have joined our mission. The remaining 21 will join us too," he said, taking a dig at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

"It seems that the Bharat Jodo Yatra started by Rahul Gandhi has turned into a Congress Todo Yatra (Break Congress March)," the Chief Minister added.

**OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE**

**DEATH**

**SAD DEMISE**

**M. A. N. Prasad, age 81 yrs**

has completed his journey on Feb 11, 2024. An accomplished professional, a scholar and a gentleman, Prasad was well known for his work with various organisations such as the Mysuru Association of Mumbai, Palashali Narayaniyenger Charities, The Kalapremi Foundation, and Mandayan Sabha. He has published multiple books and has been the editor of several magazines.

Prasad will be sorely missed and the loss of his pleasant nature and calm demeanor will be felt deeply, but he will always have a special place in our hearts.

**Bharathi Prasad, Chetan Prasad, Shree Aier, and the Palahalli and Chitrakoota families.**

**TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT**  
**Mr. N SELVA KUMAR**  
PH: 9820350726  
selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in  
**THE HINDU**  
India's National Newspaper

Your feedback will keep us Cleaner, Sharper and Bolder  
Call our toll-free number  
**1800 102 1878**  
Or write to us at  
customercare@thehindu.co.in  
THE HINDU businessline  
FRONTLINE SPORTSTAR YOUNG WORLD THE HINDU

### OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RCD, ROAD DIVISION, JAMSHEDPUR, JHARKHAND

Short e-Procurement Notice For National Competitive Bidding

Short e-Tender Reference No. RCD/JAMSHEDPUR/338 Date-15.02.2024

1. Name of the work	IRQP/ Strengthening work of (A) Tata timkan main road to Babudih basti road .Bhuviyadih park to main road (Kali mandir ), bhuviyadih Nirmal nagar road & cross road, Babudih main road to Jharna ghat road . (L-4.00KM ) . (B) Birsanagar Thana main road (Ganesh sweets) to ice cream factory Siddhu Kanhu main road & Link road , Ganesh sweets to Birsanagar zone 8 hari Mandir,sarni puja asthal & link road , Kali mandir to zone no 6 upto culvert road . (L-4.00KM ) Total length -8.00 km .FY-2023-24
2. Estimated Cost of Work (in INR)	Rs 8,98,89,754.46 (Rupees Eight Crore Ninety Eight Lakh Eighty Nine Thousand Seven Hundred & Fifty Four and Paise Forty Six Only)
3. Initial Bid Security ( Rs In Lacs)	Rs 9.00 Lakh (Rupees Nine Lakh only).
4. Initial Bid Security in the shape of	Initial Bid Security - As per SOP issued by Information Technology and e-Governance Department, Govt. of Jharkhand vide Letter No.120, Dt. 03.10.2023
5. Cost of Bidding documents	Rs 10,000.00 (Rs Ten Thousand) only.
6. Time of Completion	07 (Seven Months)
7. Date of Publication of Tender on website	17.02.2024 at 12.30 P.M.
8. Start date of bidding	17.02.2024 from 12.30 P.M.
9. Last date & Time for online bidding	02.03.2024 up to 02.00 PM.
10. Type of Bid	Two envelope mode (Technical and Financial Bid)
11. Last date & time for receipt of Bid Security and other documents in Online form	02.03.2024 Through e-tendering portal www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in As per SOP issued by Information Technology and e-Governance Department, Govt. of Jharkhand vide Letter No.120, Dt. 03.10.2023
12. Date & time for opening of Technical Bid	04.03.2024 at 3.00 PM by e-Procurement Cell, Room No. 330A, 3rd floor, Road Construction Department, Jharkhand Mantralaya, Dhurwa , Ranchi
13. Name & address of office Inviting tender	Executive Engineer, RCD, Road Division, Jamshedpur, Road No.- 1, CH Area.
14. Contact no. of Procurement officer	0657-2227724
15. Helpline number of e-Procurement cell	0651-2401010

Above informations are only indicative. Detail NIT & SBD published on Tender portal shall be final and mandatory. Details can be seen on website <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>

Executive Engineer  
RCD, Road Division, Jamshedpur

PR 319010 Road (23-24)\_D

### CLASSIFIEDS MART

**TO ADVERTISE VISIT**  
**www.thehinduads.com**

**CALL: 011-43579738 • 011-43579797**

or Contact your nearest Authorised space sellers

### EDUCATIONAL GENERAL

CONCISELY Every Word Matters

### Step into UPSC's past to shape your future!

concisely.in/CSE24

contact@concisely.in

88 779 55 785

### VACANCIES

**Faculty Required**  
In a reputed coaching institute for civil services in Arunachal Pradesh for Sociology Optional Subject

Please send your resume at [successpointarp@gmail.com](mailto:successpointarp@gmail.com)  
M: 76308 31122

### PUBLIC NOTICE

To get on rent of Shri Durga Mandir campus Nauchandi Meenur for Hindu New Year and Navratri Fair Vikram Samval 2021, You can submit your application 17.02.2024 from 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. and to get more information about terms and condition Contact to Shri Durga Mandir Trust Office Nauchandi Meenur on the same day.

Jaipakash Sharma (Secretary)  
Shri Durga Mandir Trust, Nauchandi Meenur mob no: 9412701218

### PERSONAL

#### CHANGE OF NAME

I, SANTOSH Mo Rohtash Kumar No -1567854W Rank - Hav, R/o Vill- VPO Khorda Pora - Arya Nagar Teh - Charikot Dist - Bihari State - Haryana PIN - 127308. Have changed my name from Santosh to Santosh Devi and Date of birth from 01.07.1974 to 25.01.1951.

ASSISTANT REGISTRAR (O) FOR REGISTRAR GENERAL (SPS)

[www.eprocure.gov.in](http://www.eprocure.gov.in)

Chief Mechanical Engineer

### LEGAL NOTICE

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF

# Centre didn't respond positively to issues raised on tax sharing: Kerala

Kerala Minister Balagopal says Centre wants the State to drop the case in the SC and then continue discussions; State has filed a petition in the top court accusing the govt. of regulating the State's finances by imposing a ceiling on net borrowing

## The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



K.N. Balagopal

After the discussion with the Centre on Thursday, Kerala Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal said that the Union Finance Ministry did not respond positively to the issues raised by his government on devolution of revenues.

It instead told the Kerala delegation that filing a case would only add more hurdles in the process of revenue sharing, he said. The discussion with the Centre was held as per the suggestion of the Supreme Court.

The Kerala government has filed a petition in the Supreme Court accusing

suggested that both the State and the Centre discuss the issues, including making amendments in laws allegedly devised to push States to a position of penury.

Accordingly, Mr. Balagopal, Chief Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister K.M. Abraham, Finance Department Principal Secretary Rebindra Kumar Agarwal and Kerala Advocate-General Gopalakrishnan Kurup represented the State in the meeting.

The Centre's team was led by Union Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan, Additional Solicitor-General N. Venkatraman, Additional Secretary Sajjan Singh Yadav and Joint Se-

cretary Amit Singh Negi. "We had conveyed our demands politically and through administrative mechanisms. The discussion will continue at the secretarial level. We hope it will be taken up at the ministerial level by the Centre," Mr. Balagopal said, adding that there was no breakthrough or benefit for the State after Thursday's discussions.

He said issues on accounting and calculations would also be continued. "They want us to withdraw the case and continue discussions. But we will tell the Supreme Court about our inferences after the discussions. But we cannot agree to the suggestion

from the Centre that the case can be withdrawn," he said.

Mr. Balagopal added that the approach of the Centre against the case was also discussed in the meeting that lasted for more than three hours.

He said that there was no positive response from the Centre on immediate demands and basic issues of the State as well.

In the original suit filed under Article 131, Kerala said the Constitution bestows fiscal autonomy upon States to regulate their finances under various articles, and the borrowing limits are regulated by State legislation.

(With PTI inputs)

## Bill on use of Kannada on signboards passed

## The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU



A fine will be imposed and trade licence cancelled if business establishments in Karnataka fail to comply with the new rules. PTI

A fine will be imposed and trade licence cancelled if business establishments in Karnataka fail to display name boards with 60% of text in Kannada in the upper half of the boards, Minister for Kannada and Culture Shivaraj Tangadagi informed the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Thursday.

Explaining the purpose of the Kannada Language Comprehensive Development (Amendment) Bill,

officials, would be formed to monitor name boards, particularly in Bengaluru. All eight zonal commis-

sioners would also be held responsible in Bengaluru for effective enforcement of the law and rules, Mr. Tangadagi said. The Assembly passed the Bill by voice vote.

### App to be launched

Mr. Tangadagi said an app would be launched soon to enable the public to upload complaints against business establishments that fail to display their boards as per the rule.

Earlier, Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok, senior BJP members S. Su-

resh Kumar, Araga Jnanendra, C.C. Patil, K. Gopalaiah and others demanded the imposition of heavy penalties on MNCs, malls, and other big establishments who violate the law and decline to display name boards in Kannada.

Mr. Ashok suggested imposing an on-the-spot fine on business establishments if they are found violating the rule. Mr. Suresh Kumar said people as well as department officials have to change their mindset to ensure display of name boards in Kannada.

Political circles are abuzz about possible cross voting. On Thursday, accompanied by JD(S) and BJP leaders, Mr. Reddy filed his nomination.

"I am confident of winning and I have not tried to contact any Congress legislators. I have friends in all parties," he said. Mr. Reddy retired as a Rajya Sabha MP in 2020 to pave way for the election of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda to the Upper House. He lost the Rajya Sabha elections in 2022.

Congress sources said they were not expecting trouble in the polls and that the party is confident of retaining the three seats.

## Now, illegal liquor seized from bullock cart in 'dry' Bihar

### Amarnath Tewary

PATNA

After trucks, pick-up vans, tankers, tractors, ambulances, cars, trains, boats and motorcycles, the latest mode of transport to feature in the smuggling of liquor in dry Bihar is the humble bullock cart.

Officials of the Prohibition, Excise and Registration Department detained a bullock cart laden with illegal liquor worth ₹5 lakh in Gopalganj district on Febr-

uary 13. Officials of the Prohibition, Excise and Registration Department detained a bullock cart laden with illegal liquor from the State's border districts, including West and East Champaran; neighbouring States such as Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal; and as far afield as Haryana, Punjab, and Nepal, have persisted.

### Desperate steps

Illegal liquor has been unearthed from oil tankers, under sacks of vegetables, wrapped in shrouds inside ambulances, milk canisters, the pantry cars of trains, cooking gas cylinders, cars, and even from boats plying the rivers of bordering States.

To check smuggling of illegal liquor into the State, the police have formed around 180 anti-liquor task force teams, 25 trained dog squads, deployed drones, arranged speedboats for riverine areas, and installed image mapping scanners at border check points.

The police have registered 72,062 FIRs, arrested 1.43 lakh people, and seized 17,183 trucks and containers under the liquor law.

Besides, hundreds of police personnel Excise Department officials have been placed under suspension for violations of the Prohibition Act.

In Bihar, 25.09 lakh litres of IMFL and 14.53 lakh litres of country-made liquor were seized between April 2016 to 2023, and 39.63 lakh litres of liquor seized in the State since April 2016.

### Connecting India'



Purulia Chhau, a folk dance from Bengal, being performed by Tarapada Rajak and team, at a college in Kozhikode on Thursday. K. RAGESH

## Deve Gowda hospitalised with respiratory illness

Former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda was admitted to a private hospital in Bengaluru on Thursday following high fever and cough. He is under treatment at Manipal Hospital. According to a statement from the hospital, he has been admitted for respiratory illness. "His current condition is stable and he is being monitored by a team of specialists," the hospital said. C.N. Manjunath, former director of Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research, who is Mr. Gowda's son-in-law, said "Although his condition is stable, he will be under observation for the next three days."

## Cost of Kaleshwaram project may exceed ₹1.47 lakh cr.: CAG

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India said that the project cost of the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project in Telangana is likely to exceed ₹1.47 lakh crore. The cost was understated in the Detailed Project Report due to preparation of estimates at old price levels and non-inclusion of provision for price escalation. This, coupled with subsequent changes made in the works, resulted in the cost of works increasing. The report was tabled in the State Assembly on Thursday.

## A.P. officials stop screening of *Rajadhani Files* after HC stay

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Thursday granted an interim stay on the release of the movie, *Rajadhani Files*, till Friday. This came after YSRCP leader Lella Appi Reddy filed a petition in the High Court seeking a stay on the movie by contending that it was related to the three-capitals' proposal, which was sub judice, and that it defamed his party, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and other leaders. The movie was released as scheduled on Thursday, but the government officials stopped its screening at some places, following the stay.

## Search for wild tusker continues in Kerala

### The Hindu Bureau

KALPETTA

The combing operation of the Forest Department for capturing the wild elephant, Belur Makhana, that had killed a farmer last week, was unsuccessful for the fifth consecutive day on Thursday.

A team of officials comprising trackers, darting experts, and four trained elephants searched for the tusker in the Manivayal forest area near Panavally under the North Wayanad forest division, but they could not locate the animal.

### The Hindu Bureau

KALPETTA

A meet of people's representatives in Wayanad, chaired by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, has decided to appoint a special officer in the rank of a Chief Conservator of forest in the district to mitigate the accelerating human-wildlife conflict in the district.

The conflict has been escalating considerably and this was the time to think about a solution on how to tackle the issue without harm to the public, Mr. Vijayan said. The meeting also reviewed the decisions taken by an online meeting of top-level officials of the Forest department in Kerala.



**Seeking safety:** A march to protest the alleged apathy of officials in ensuring protection against wildlife attacks in Wayanad. FILE PHOTO

Ia, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu recently. Mr. Vijayan directed to convene such meetings regularly. The command control centre of the officials of Revenue, Forest, and Police

## INSAT-3DS mission to be launched from Sriharikota tomorrow

### The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

### According to ISRO, the INSAT-3DS is an mission designed for enhanced meteorological observations

The GSLV-F14 carrying INSAT-3DS is scheduled for a launch at 5.35 p.m. on Saturday from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said on Thursday.

The launch was earlier scheduled at 5.30 p.m.

The GSLV-F14 is the 16th flight of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV), and the 10th flight with the indigenous cryo stage. This is the seventh operational flight of the GSLV with an indigenous cryogenic stage.

The GSLV-F14, with indigenous cryogenic stage, will place INSAT-3DS satellite in a geosynchronous transfer orbit.

According to the ISRO, the satellite is an exclusive mission designed for enhanced meteorological observations.

The primary objectives of the mission are to monitor Earth's surface, carry out oceanic observations, provide the vertical profile of atmospheric parameters of the atmosphere and provide satellite aided search and rescue services.

also be set up with the full support of civic body members.

The Chief Minister also directed the strengthening of the rapid response teams and utilise modern systems like community radio, wireless systems and WhatsApp groups to alert the public on the presence of wildlife in human habitats.

**Aid for victims** All steps have been taken to disburse a sum of ₹1.15 crore as compensation to the kin of the deceased and those who sustained injuries in wildlife attacks.

The Chief Secretary was directed to discuss utilising the services of MGNREGS workers to clear the under-

growth in private plantations with the Karnataka and Union governments.

Priority should be given to protecting the life of the public. Restoration works of trenches and fencing on forest fringes should be completed quickly and a people's committee with ward members should be constituted to watch the movements of wildlife where the fencing works have been completed, the Chief Minister added.

Night patrolling should be intensified on the fringes of forest and afforestation projects should be executed on fallow lands of protected areas with the assistance of MGNREGS workers, the Chief Minister said.

Rural Works Department Notice Inviting Re-Tender (No.-RWD/MMGSY(AWSESH)/HQ/ET/2023-24/27(R)											
The Government of Bihar has applied for a loan/credit through the Govt. of India (GoI), to the New Development Bank (NDB), for Bihar Rural Roads Project (Phase-II) (Mukhya Mantri Gram Sampark Yojana- AWSESH) and intends to apply the funds to cover eligible payments under the contracts for construction of works as detailed in the Table-1.											
Engineer-in-Chief, Rural Works Department, on behalf of Governor of Bihar invites, SBD based Percentage rate tender in electronic tendering system under Mukhya Mantri Gram Sampark Yojana-AWSESH for each of the following works including their maintenance for five years from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with RWD/RCD/CPWD/MES /Railways/Other State/Central Govt. departments.											
Table-1											
Sl. No.	Package	Description of the Works [CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF ROADS (A) / BRIDGES (B)]			Length (KM)	Construction Amount (In Lacs)	Maintenance Amount (In Lacs)	Total Amount (In Lacs)	Earnest Money Payable* (In Lacs)	Amount Payable to Works Division	
1	2	From	To	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-04-DARBHANGA-2	A1	Rcd Raudi Das	Khatyot Sherha Ratnapur	1.025	102.95	9.52	112.47	4.944	Darbhanga-2	
		A2	Rcd Near House Abdhesh Thakur	Kodai Gachhi	0.85	88.54	7.02	95.56			
		A3	Rcd Jahangir Tola	Mushari Tola	0.3	37.657	1.501	39.158			
Total		3		2.175		229.147	18.041	247.188	4.944		
2	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-38-SASARAM-1	A1	T012	Mathiya Village	0.69	72.022	6.429	78.451	5.808	Sasaram-1	
		A2	Usranw Gaura Path	Amesihedra Pashchimi	0.85	90.265	7.06	97.325			
		A3	Khairi Road	Mahabirganj	1.02	105.653	8.995	114.648			
TOTAL		3		2.56		267.94	22.484	290.424	5.808		
3	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-67-DEHRI	A1	PCL Colony RWD Road	Katar Road	1.1	106.217	7.157	113.374	4.703	Dehri	
		A2	Devariya Mahadilat Tola	Bancor Tola Be	1.3	110.946	10.819	121.765			
Total		2		2.4		217.163	17.976	235.139	4.703		
4	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-68-DEHRI	A1	Dehri-Yadunathpur Road To Boulia	Bansi Bigha	1.45	135.849	11.757	147.606	2.952	Dehri	
		Total		1		1.45	135.849	11.757	147.606		
5	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-121-JAMUI	A1	Mirzaganj-Gahlaur RWD Road	Ratanpur Manjhi Tola	0.885	68.492	12.412	80.904	1.618	Jamui	
		Total		1		0.885	68.492	12.412	80.904		
6	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-139-ARERAJ	A1	RWD ROAD YADAVPUR	BHIKHAR SAH TOLA	1.45	141.38	10.2	151.58	8.99	Areraj	
		A2	Matiyaria English Rwd Road	Dhanuk Tola Loukaria	1.05	113.23	10.15	123.38			
		A3	Rwd Road Goethha	Asari Tola	0.69	72.05	4.69	76.74			
		A4	Areraj To Motihari Pwd Near Dom Chouk Serseia	Sariswa Math Tola	0.92	87.33	10.58	97.91			
Total		4		4.11		413.99	35.62	449.61	8.99		
7	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-145-RAXAUL	A1	Chainpur Harijan Tola	Chainpur Bichla Tola	0.81	75.04	5.64	80.68	10.31	Raxaul	
		A2	Palana Pokhar	Bharwalia Pashchimi	1.5	144.17	19.06	163.23			
		A3	T04	Parsauna Narwa Tola	0.842	66.84	7.29	74.13			
		A4	Gasgodown	Laukaha Purab	0.521	50.971	5.525	56.496			
		A5	Railway Dhalia	NH28	0.68	72.11	7.38	79.49			
		A6	Harnahi School	Harnahi	0.535	57.198	4.295	61.493			
Total		6		4.888		466.329	49.19	515.519	10.31		
8	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-164-ROSERA	A1	Reo Road Near Navki Pokhar	Agraul Mahadilat Tola	1.489	127.18	28.71	155.89	7.14	Rosera	
		A2	Bharhar Chawk	Akona	1.293	119.77	25.13	144.9			
		A3	Pmgys Jalbari Road	Pokhar Tol Pabra	0.511	51.82	4.39	56.21			
Total		3		3.293		298.77	58.23	357.000	7.14		
9	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-175-SIWAN-1	A1	Siwan MaharajganjRcd Road	Baishakhi Bathani Tola	1.335	130.24	11	141.24	4.13	Siwan-1	
		A2	Rasulpur To Jolha Tola	Rasulpur Giri Tola	0.685	58.574	6.576	65.15			
Total		2		2.02		188.814	17.576	206.39	4.13		
10	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-201-DEHRI	A1	Bhaluari Road Near High School Bhaluari	Sujanpur RWD Road	0.65	57.998	5.209	63.207	5.199	Dehri	
		A2	NH 2C (Bhuara More)	Bhuara Village	0.7	66.069	5.354	71.423			
		A3	Nimiyadip PWD Near Veer Kunwar Temple	Near Primary School Uchchaila	1.2	118.621	6.723	125.344			
Total		3		2.55		242.688	17.286	259.974	5.199		
11	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-209-BUXAR	A1	PMGSY Road	Sandhila Dalit Tola	0.205	20.413	1.63	22.043	1.62	Buxar	
		A2	PMGSY Road	Jagdishpur Dalit Basti	0.65	50.544	8.389	58.933			
Total		2		0.855		70.957	10.019	80.976	1.62		

12	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-210-BUXAR	A1	Basahi to Sikhti Road	Orwar Yadav Tola	0.5	36.546	7.074	43.62	4.598	Buxar
		A2	Raghunathpur Ora Road	Trilochanpur Bala Singh Ke Dera	0.345	34.028	4.955	38.983		
		A3	Basahi to Sikti Road	Bawan Bandh Gauri	0.544	39.378	7.711	47.089		
		A4	Jalahara Rasen Rcd Road	Rasen Kala	0.57	54.648	8.415	63.063		
		A5	Semariya Mmgsy	Dipapur	0.32	34.104	3.046	37.15		
	Total		5		2.279		198.704	31.201	229.905	4.598
13	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDB-BRRP2-232-DANAPUR	A1	Tubewell	New Khaprailchak	0.713	68.18	3.94	72.12	1.442	Danapur

# SPOTLIGHT



Farmers try to advance towards Delhi to seek enactment of a law on minimum support price at Shambhu barrier in Punjab. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

# Farmers at the bottom of the food chain

Delhi is surrounded by *annadatas* demanding fair pay and fair play. Thousands from Punjab and Haryana attempt to march into the Capital two years after the previous mobilisation, even as they are blockaded and tear gassed at the borders by the police, while hundreds from Uttar Pradesh contemplate joining them, reports **A. M. Jigeesh**

**T**he scenes of farmers and agriculture workers protesting at Delhi's borders are a throwback to 2020-21: long lines of about 1,000 trolleys attached to brightly-coloured tractors, large *dekkhis* of sweet chai boiling on wood-fuelled stoves to serve hundreds, voices of peacefully organised dissent. In this time's Delhi Chalo call, though, police and paramilitary forces are 'better prepared': on Day 1 of the protest that began on February 13, concrete barricades, 10-12 layers deep, were in place; nearly 4,500 tear gas shells were fired to disperse gatherings on the Haryana-Punjab border, most using drones; the number of Delhi Police personnel swelled to 6,000.

On February 14, the day of Basant Panchami, farmers flew kites, traditional for the first day of spring, and called for a *grameen* (rural) and industrial strike on February 16. Rail tracks will be blocked; so will roads, with support from truckers and transporters. Movement into and out of Delhi will be halted, even as the city is turned into a fortress citing security.

The farmers' main demand is a legally guaranteed minimum support price (MSP), with about 12 other asks, including the banning of foreign direct investment (FDI) and corporatisation of agriculture. The protest on the Punjab-Haryana side is led by two groups: the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) formed in November 2020 in Delhi's Gurdwara Sri Rakab Ganj Sahib, after three controversial laws farmers said heralded corporatisation were enacted in Parliament; and the SKM (Non-Political), a splinter section that has the support of about 200 organisations. The SKM is an umbrella for about 500 groups and works closely with 10 main central trade unions that collectively have a 6 crore membership.

On February 14, Shardanand Solanki, a lawyer in his 80s and the SKM's Sonipat district leader in Haryana, addresses about 100 farmers near Bhadana village in Sonipat. There are many micro-meetings being conducted on varied issues. This one is on the laying of high-tension power cable posts in the fields. "The governments at the Centre and the State are doing this without even legally acquiring farmlands," says Solanki.

On a stage, one of about 20 minor ones in the area bordering Delhi, he compares police action against farmers to lathi charge injuries suffered by freedom fighter Lala Lajpat Rai in 1928, during the Simon Commission visit to Lahore. He also tells listeners not to get sucked into whether the SKM or SKM-NP is leading the protest.

Solanki, a white-haired farmer sporting a blazer, says to his compatriots, "*Jitna daman karega, kisan utna mazboot hoga* (Repression will strengthen the farmers). He uses Rai's famous statement about lathi blows being "like coffin nails for British imperialism", changing it to: "Each lash that lands on farmers' bodies will act as a nail in the coffin of the Narendra Modi government." On February 11, the SKM had issued a press release

They acquired land from farmers for the airport at ₹2,300 to ₹3,100 per square metre. This land has been transferred to corporate companies at rates ranging from ₹20,000 to ₹80,000 per square metre.

**DIGAMBER SINGH**  
U.P. farmer leader

in solidarity with farmers in the EU, where farmers are agitating. The communication urged the Central government to "learn a lesson from struggles in Europe".

Over the last few weeks, as the fanfare around the Ram temple in Ayodhya reached a crescendo, the SKM visited about 25,000 villages with the message of "livelihood issues" over "Hindutva politics". Several farmers' organisations that work with the SKM-NP had or continue to have the support of the volunteer-based Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

After the meeting beside fields of wheat that will be ready to harvest in March and April, he politely refuses the hookah offered by an elderly farmer. "Delhi will soon be encircled by farmers and workers who struggle to make ends meet," he says, after he gets off stage.

#### Delhi central

About 100 kilometres from Sonipat, in front of Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida Authority in the National Capital Region, G.D. Sharma, a farmer, sits in protest with others. They are demanding a fair compensation for land acquired by the government for 'development', including an upcoming international airport at Jawar. They first sat on the road under shamanas (tents) outside the government building in December, but went home after being assured of action. When none was forthcoming, they came back in January's sub-10 degrees Celsius temperatures.

"From 1976 to 2000, the government acquired 45 bighas (about 113 square km) of my land. In 1976 I got a compensation of ₹3 for a square metre and in 2000, I got ₹2,600. I was promised preferential treatment for my children and family in education, health care, and employment. We were even offered 10% back after development of the area. None of this has happened," he says. He wants the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, properly implemented to ensure market value.

A leader in Noida and Greater Noida, Digamber Singh, says farmers are protesting in front of the Noida Authority, the Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority, and the Yamuna Expressway Authority offices. "They acquired land from farmers for the airport at ₹2,300 to ₹3,100 per square metre. This land has been transferred to corporate companies at rates ranging from ₹72,000 to ₹80,000 per square metre. This is exploitation," Singh says. He adds that they will continue to seek justice for those who gave up their land for "so-called development".

On February 17, U.P.'s 500 farmer organisations will meet to decide on how to support their

Punjab and Haryana counterparts. He says farmers are willing to march to Delhi again, the way they did two weeks ago, resulting in a complete stoppage of traffic in and around Noida.

#### From Singhu to Shambhu

Meanwhile, in Jind, a district in Haryana bordering Punjab, Shiv Kumar Kakka, known as Kakka ji, says more than 60 farmers were injured in the police action. Kakka, a farmers' leader from Madhya Pradesh, was earlier with the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, a farmer outfit of the RSS. He and a few others formed the Rashtriya Kisan Maha Sangh in 2017, after ideological differences emerged. "The Narendra Modi government must understand that Delhi belongs to farmers too, not just to leaders. We will march to Delhi with our demands," he says, his brow furrowed. He condemns what he calls the undemocratic approach of the Centre. Despite the Internet shutdown, farmers have managed to gather at certain preset locations to meet and plan

further movement.

One of the key organisers of the SKM-NP is K.V. Biju, a former leader of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, another RSS outfit. Biju, from central Kerala, was brought to the farmers' movements by the late Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, a Minister and later Supreme Court judge.

"Justice Iyer told me that those who oppose neoliberal policies should fight in a united manner. So I started working with him against the policies imposed on farmers by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Centre and State governments. Later, when farmers leaders such as Kakka ji and [Faridkot-based] Jagjit Singh Dallewal formed the Rashtriya Kisan Maha Sangh, I became its national coordinator," Biju says, his *jhola* falling from his shoulder, as he explains his connection with farmers in north India. The WTO policies he opposes are those that impact Indian farmers negatively, like import of tariff-free agro-products. Biju cites the example of Indonesian and Vietnamese pepper flooding the Kochi market.

For SKM-NP, the decision to enter Delhi was not taken in a day. "From September 2023, we have held 27 *kisan mahapanchayats* (farmer mega-meetings) in 20 States. Thousands of farmers attended these," says Biju, who is one of 500 farmers from south and east India in the Delhi Chalo march. The SKM-NP is also aligned with Sarwan Singh Pandher's Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM), a powerful voice in the areas around Amritsar in Punjab.

#### Ready to go

Both Dallewal and Pandher claim they have come prepared for the long haul. "There are more farmers in this protest than the protests against the three farm laws," Dallewal says. Farmers have foodgrains, pulses, grocery, and medicines.

The key demand for a legally guaranteed minimum support price is based on the formula of C2+50% (crop cost including the cost of capital and land rent + 50% of the crop cost) mooted by the National Commission on Farmers, constituted in 2004 under agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan. After the withdrawal of the three farm laws in 2021, the Centre constituted a committee to address the farmer crisis. It has met on thrice so far and is yet to submit its report.

The SKM-NP's demands include an increase in import duty on all agricultural products, for India to delink itself from the WTO and cancel free trade agreements, and for a ban on FDI in agriculture and agro-retail, including e-commerce. They also want the government to cancel farmer debts, refrain from privatising electricity, and a monthly farmer pension of ₹5,000.

Apart from an MSP and guaranteed procurement, the SKM wants guaranteed employment to be a fundamental right, a loan waiver to small and middle farm households, comprehensive crop insurance in the public sector replacing the PM Fasal Bima Yojana, a minimum wage of ₹26,000 per month for workers, repealing of four Labour Codes passed in Parliament between 2019 and 2022 that relaxed labour laws, and calling back of the amendments proposed to the Electricity Act, 2003 that allow for privatisation of power distribution boards.

While these are the big asks, there are the seemingly small ones that impact farmers' daily lives, keeping the protests alive. Kapil Dev, from Sonipat, speaks against the "forceful" acquisition of land for electricity lines that began in the area two months ago. "At various points bordering Delhi, farmers have started protests. We will help those from Punjab march to Delhi," Dev says.

Leaders like Kakka ji believe farmers can cross the barricades to enter the Capital. As Sharma says, "The real power sits in Delhi."



Multi-layered barricading to seal the Capital's borders to prevent protesting farmers from entering the city; (right) farmers run as police personnel fire tear gas canisters at them. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP



## The puppets have a story to tell

**The 20th edition** of the Ishara International Puppet Theatre Festival is here with verbal and non-verbal performers from eight countries

Neha Kirpal

Once again, puppets from India, Brazil, Spain, Korea, the USA, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Russia have travelled to the capital for the annual Ishara International Puppet Theatre Festival. The 10-day festival starts at the India Habitat Centre today.

"Ishara's legacy is one of empowerment, nurturing countless talents and fostering a global stage for productions that redefine the boundaries of the craft of puppetry," says Sanjoy K Roy, managing director, Teamwork Arts which produces the festival.

This year, Beto Andretta from Brazil presents *Gigantes de Ar* (Air Giants) by Pia Fraus. A Brazilian open-air circus spectacle featuring larger-than-life animals, whimsical characters and unique performers, it marks the group's research into the use of large inflatable puppets and uses various circus techniques, such as clowning and acrobatics.

The show is inspired by circus shows in Brazil and other western countries and their relationship with animals – often one of mistreatment. "The show has toured some countries around the world, and we are happy to debut with an improvised version in India, with new scenes and puppets," says Andretta.

The Kurt Hunter Marionettes from



Minneapolis will present *Penguin in My Pocket*, directed by Laura Wilhelm.

The musical show, which required a great deal of engineering skills and artistic imagination to put together, features marionettes, rod puppets, audience member puppeteers and live concertina music. It is created around the idea that imagination is a common thread between the arts and science – a topic close to Hunter's heart, because in addition to a long career in

puppetry, he also has degrees in Physics and Engineering.

There were challenges in designing the marionettes and quickly assembling a stage. "We now have a show that I hope encourages people to dig into their imagination and look at things a bit differently," says Hunter.

Russia's famous puppet *Petrushka* is coming back to life with a celebration of 400 years of tradition.

Performed by Novosibirsk Regional Puppet Theatre and

### Colourful fare

Performers from Korea and (below) Taiwan for the Ishara International Puppet Theatre Festival.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

directed by Svyatoslav Pankov, it is a traditional performance that unfolds as short comic vignettes, filled with colourful puppets and foot-tapping music. "Petrushka argues with the audience and the host, sneers and jokes rudely. During his challenging adventures, he learns about being kind, and re-educates himself, with help from his friends – a doctor, a dog, the narrators and his bride, Marpha," elaborates Pankov.

*Wings and Roots* is an evocative performance by Fanny Tissot-Giordanna/Compagnie Arketal from the National Theatre, Nice.

Directed by Sylvie Osman, it imparts profound lessons in humanity. There is *Hiss & Arf*, a non-verbal performance from Taiwan presented by Puppet on the Workbench and directed by Mong-Han Liang/Chia-Hao Chen. It blends comedy, wit and bravura, portraying heartwarming adventures between an owner and his pets, while showcasing traditional Taiwanese glove puppetry techniques.

### Traditional show

A traditional string puppet show will be performed by Sri Lanka's Mango Friends Puppet Society. Directed by Indika Gamini, this visually stunning spectacle consists of colourful puppets of diverse shapes and sizes, accompanied by dance and music. The story pays homage to Sri Lanka's vibrant past and present.

Apart from this, Culture Art Bakery from Korea will present *Hong Dongji & Isimi*, directed by Hwang Seokyung, and Trapusteros Teatro from Brazil will entertain the audiences with *Mamulengo De La Mancha* directed by Izabela Brochado.

India will present *Be Yourself*, directed by Dadi D Pudumjee. An adaptation of Hans Christian Anderson's *The Ugly Duckling*, this enchanting show adds a touch of magic to a timeless tale. Each animal puppet character in the play will wear textiles from various regions of India, illustrating the rich diversity of Indian weavers.

"The festival has grown, the audiences have grown," says Pudumjee, festival director and founder of The Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust, adding, "Our puppets have spread peace and goodwill towards all the birds, clowns, animals and monsters."

At India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road; February 16 to 25; 7.30pm daily; Tickets ₹499 per person per show, available at the venue or <https://www.zoonga.com/ishara/>



**The festival has grown, the audiences have grown and our puppets have spread peace and goodwill towards all the birds, clowns, animals and monsters**

DADI D PUDUMJEE  
Founder, Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust



Soma Basu

soma.basu@thehindu.co.in

For 50 years now, the New Delhi World Book Fair (NDWBF) has brought together thousands of book lovers, readers, authors, publishers, scholars, educationists, students and literary enthusiasts from all over the world. This year too a mammoth crowd has been gathering at the newly constructed International Convention Centre at Pragati Maidan – home to the nine-day long World Book Fair-2024.

Over the past seven days nearly 15 lakh visitors have roamed the colossal venue where more than 1,000 publishers from 40 countries including the United Kingdom, Argentina, Spain, France, Turkey, Iran, Italy, the UAE, Nepal, Bangladesh and more, have put up 2,000-plus stalls.

Organised by the National Book Trust (NBT) under the Ministry of Education, this



## The world in books

The New Delhi World Book Fair-2024, on at Pragati Maidan, creates a reading ethos and establishes India's prowess in the global book market



### For bibliophiles

Visitors to the New Delhi World Book Fair at Pragati Maidan.

SHIV KUMAR

PUSHPAKAR

year's book fair celebrates the mosaic of Indian languages under the theme Bahubhashi Bharat - Ek Jeevant Parampara (Multilingual India - A Living Tradition), with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the guest country fostering cultural exchange, literary discourses, and dialogues among the two nations. Prof. Milind Sudhakar Marathe, chairman, NBT-India, says the NDWBF is a platform for promoting intellectual dialogue and readership.

**Growing bigger**  
Anindya Chatterjee, who migrated from Kolkata to the

capital for work remembers book fairs as the apex of childhood magic.

He has not missed a single edition of the NDWBF in the last 30 years. "I am delightedly blown away by how it gets bigger each year; the extensive display of books across genres, the huge halls throughout the expo, the diverse crowd, invigorating sessions and a host of other cultural activities," he says.

"It is the beauty of the NDWBF," says NBT director Yuvraj Malik, "where the inherent fabric of India's unity manifests itself through its

diverse spectrum of languages, dialects and cultures, but one expression. The melting pot of art, literature, knowledge and culture here appeals to national and international audiences."

The fair is divided into special zones hosting 500 academic discussions, book launches, meet-the-author corners and networking opportunities with publishers and exhibitors to push and contribute to the rising literary interest among populations and use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to expand the publishing business across nations.

This year an e-learning platform, Jaadu Pitara, in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, was unveiled. Comprising puzzles, riddles and stories, the inclusive and informative content, translated into 22 languages using AI is aimed at transforming childhood education. "We are committed to the objective of developing a reading culture in the country; an e-library platform is

available to everyone to download books of their choice," says Malik.

Aesthetically designed installations at the theme pavilion showcasing the evolution and heritage of Indian languages and scripts, and the children's pavilion focussing on shaping future writers of multilingual India through storytelling sessions, illustration and writing workshops, have piqued the interest of visitors.

"The book fair transforms into both creative and business opportunities for visitors of all kinds," Malik adds.

At Halls 1 to 5, International Convention Centre, Bharat Mandapam (Pragati Maidan); Till February 18; 11am to 8pm. Tickets @ ₹20 for adults and ₹10 for children – available at the venue, select Metro stations and on the official website of ITPO and National Book Trust. Entry is free for children in school uniform, senior citizens, and the differently-abled.

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

## Extraordinary in the ordinary

Artist Shibu Natesan's works at Art Alive Gallery compel the viewers to look beyond the usual through fresh lens



**Simplicity** Artworks from Shibu Natesan's exhibition.  
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



artists – Sargent, Manet, Goya, and France Halls. By selecting masters of oil painting from different centuries, Natesan pays homage to the rich tradition of European art that continues to inspire him.

Driven by the logic of still life, a European genre that holds a special allure for Natesan, he compels viewers to pause and contemplate the beauty found in the simplicity of everyday objects. Through his brushstrokes and keen observation, Natesan elevates the ordinary to the realm of the extraordinary.

At Art Alive Gallery, S-221, Panchsheel Park; Till March 2; 11am to 7pm

## STEP OUT

### Group art

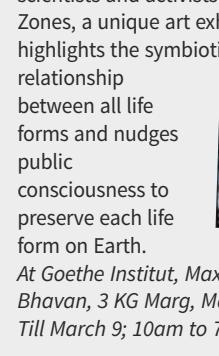
Journey of love, faith and inspiration is a group show curated by Amrita Kochchar. It features works of Sakti Burman, Maite Deltiel, Suman Chandra, Nandan Purkayastha, Ranjita Kant, Krishnendu Porel and Maya Burman.

At Nayan Naveli Gallery, B-18 Greater Kailash Enclave 1; Till March 1; 11am to 7pm



**Interconnectedness**  
Takshila Education Society brings Co-Existence, a captivating solo show of octogenarian artist Sham Sharma's extraordinary prints. Curated by Alka Pande, the exhibition delves into a world where life and Nature intertwine harmoniously on a journey of transformation.

At Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road; Till February 22; 11am to 6pm



**Ecological sustainability**  
An extensive collaboration between international artists, designers, scientists and activists for Critical Zones, a unique art exhibition, highlights the symbiotic relationship between all life forms and nudges public consciousness to preserve each life form on Earth.

At Goethe Institut, Max Mueller Bhavan, 3 KG Marg, Mandi House; Till March 9; 10am to 7pm



available to everyone to download books of their choice," says Malik.

Aesthetically designed installations at the theme pavilion showcasing the evolution and heritage of Indian languages and scripts, and the children's pavilion focussing on shaping future writers of multilingual India through storytelling sessions, illustration and writing workshops, have piqued the interest of visitors.

"The book fair transforms into both creative and business opportunities for visitors of all kinds," Malik adds.

At Halls 1 to 5, International Convention Centre, Bharat Mandapam (Pragati Maidan); Till February 18; 11am to 8pm. Tickets @ ₹20 for adults and ₹10 for children – available at the venue, select Metro stations and on the official website of ITPO and National Book Trust. Entry is free for children in school uniform, senior citizens, and the differently-abled.



## Unbonded

The electoral bonds verdict is a blow for freedom of expression

**A**nonymous donations of high value tend to undermine electoral democracy and governance as they facilitate a *quid pro quo* culture involving donors and beneficiaries. In striking down the Electoral Bond Scheme (EBS) under which anyone could buy electoral bonds and donate them to political parties for encashment, the Supreme Court of India has recognised this malaise and struck a blow for democracy and transparency in political funding. The Court found that the entire scheme violates the Constitution, especially the voters' right to information. It further found manifestly arbitrary, the amendment to the Companies Act that removed the cap of 7.5% of a company's profit that can be donated to political parties without any requirement to disclose details of the recipient parties in its profit and loss accounts. It has also mandated disclosure of donation details since 2019. The judgment is one more in a long line of verdicts the Court has handed down to promote voter rights and preserve the purity of elections. Its earlier interventions led to the featuring of the 'None of the Above' option on the ballot, the removal of the protection given to legislators from immediate disqualification on conviction for a criminal offence, the mandatory disclosure of the assets and criminal antecedents of candidates in their election affidavits and expedited trials for MPs and MLAs involved in criminal offences.

The Court's reasoning is unexceptionable. It found that the primary justification for the EBS – curbing the use of 'black money' for political or electoral funding by allowing donations through banking channels – failed the test of proportionality, as it was not the least restrictive measure to abridge the voters' right to know. It has made the logical connection between unidentified corporate donations and the likelihood of policy decisions being tailored to suit the donors. The judgment is a natural follow-up to a principle it had laid down years ago that the voters' freedom of expression under Article 19(1)(a) will be incomplete without access to information on a candidate's background. The principle has now been extended to removing the veil on corporate donors who may have been funding ruling parties in exchange for favours. While the verdict may help ease the hold that donors may have on governance through money power, a question that arises is whether the validity of the scheme could have been decided earlier or the issuance of bonds on a regular basis stayed. How much of the thousands of crores of rupees given to parties under this scheme resulted in policy measures favourable to the donors or helped fund the deployment of additional campaign resources will never be known. This was a fit case for the grant of an interim stay.

## Strongman at the helm

Indonesia must avoid the trap of populist nativism of authoritarian rulers

**I**n Indonesia's presidential election, Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, a former general linked to violent actions by the military in East Timor, Aceh, and West Papua, appears likely to emerge victorious after early trends indicated more than 57% of votes in his favour. His probable win indicates a vote for continuity, as he had the torch passed to him by his predecessor, the popular Joko Widodo, suggesting that the latter's policies on non-alignment in the strategic tussles between the U.S. and China and plans to build a new capital city, Nusantara, will be pursued as before. While full results are not expected for the next few weeks, the "quick counts", or government-approved polling samples, suggest that Mr. Subianto succeeded in winning the support especially of younger voters, who might have been impressed by his image makeover on social media, including Tik Tok appearances hinting that he was more a friendly grandfather figure than a 72-year-old strongman leader with a shadowy past and questionable human rights record. In a sense, his political career has come full circle too, because his likely win will wipe his slate clean of memories of bitter rivalry with Mr. Widodo, to whom he lost the presidential race in 2014 and 2019. Their conciliatory moves that followed the 2019 election paved the path to political redemption and renewal for Mr. Subianto, as he was transformed from Mr. Widodo's rival to his trusted aide and Defence Minister.

While Indonesia held out hope at the turn of the century as one of Asia's great tiger economies with immense potential for developmental uplift impacting the lives of the poor, the persistence of populist political leadership, with echoes of the dictatorship era under Suharto, has vexed those who hoped for democracy to take deeper roots. For example, Mr. Subianto already has a reputation for pushing populist policies such as support for Islamist extremists and denigrating ethnic and religious minorities such as the Chinese and Christians. There is also an unsavoury thread of nepotism favouring the elites within political circles, such as his bringing in Mr. Widodo's 36-year-old son, Gibran Raka, as his running mate despite the latter falling short of the age threshold to run for high public office. Indonesia is a critical nation on the global stage, not only because its strategic calculus matters to the great power game between the U.S., China, India and others but also because it is a potential ray of hope for Asian resurgence in a post-COVID world. Yet, if it falls into the trap of populist nativism heralded by iron-fisted authoritarians, its prospects for steady economic progress could be hobbled by the baser collective instincts of its polity.

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

# Places of worship and an unsettling judicial silence

**W**hen the Supreme Court of India passed its verdict in November 2019, in what is popularly known as the Babri Masjid case, it was a slight beacon of hope for all backers of the idea of India. Though the Court ended up giving the plot of land to the party that was responsible for the desecration and demolition of the mosque, the Court's glowing reference to the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 was like applying a little balm to an embattled soul. It promised to shut the door with a finality on further contentions of other places of worship, notably the Gyanvapi Masjid in Varanasi and the Shahi Idgah in Mathura.

The unanimous view of the five-judge Bench was, "In providing a guarantee for the preservation of the religious character of places of public worship as they existed on 15 August 1947 and against the conversion of places of public worship, Parliament determined that independence from colonial rule furnishes a constitutional basis for healing the injustices of the past by providing the confidence to every religious community that their places of worship will be preserved and that their character will not be altered. The law addresses itself to the State as much as to every citizen of the nation...The Places of Worship Act imposes a non-derogable obligation towards enforcing our commitment to secularism under the Indian Constitution....Non-retrogression is a foundational feature of the fundamental constitutional principles of which secularism is a core component. The Places of Worship Act is thus a legislative intervention which preserves non-retrogression as an essential feature of our secular values."

**A peace that prevailed for only a while**  
The light for peace and harmony burned bright. Not for long though. Over the next year or so, petitions began to be filed for the so-called liberation of Hindu temples where the mosques in Mathura and Kashi stand. These mosques have been on the radar of Hindutva forces ever since the Babri Masjid-Ramjanambhoomi agitation began, when the oft-heard slogan was, "Ayodhya to jhanki hai, Kashi, Mathura baqi hai (Ayodhya is a mere trailer, Kashi and Mathura are still left)". The Kashi mosque now faces almost 15 identical petitions; the Mathura mosque has 12 petitions.

More petitions have been filed in the lower judiciary against mosques such as the Shamsi



Ziya Us Salam

Jama Masjid in Badaun, Teele Wali Masjid in Lucknow, Kamal Maula mosque in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, Adhai Din ka Jhonpra in Ajmer, the Jama Masjid in Srirangapatnam, and even the Quwwat-ul-Islam Masjid at the Qutub Minar in New Delhi. The claims of the mosques having been built after restructuring or demolishing ancient temples have been questionable. If in the case of Badaun, the protesters were not sure whether the mosque was built after demolishing a temple or merely restructuring one, in the case of Kamal Maula Masjid, an idol was sought to be placed in September last year to buttress the contention that the mosque was an 11th century temple dedicated to the Hindu goddess Saraswati. There was no proof to back any of the contentions by little-known right-wing activists but the petitions were still admitted in various district courts.

### Surveys and hearings

These were new territories being tested by revisionist forces. Barring a rap on the knuckles, as in the case of Quwwat-ul-Islam Masjid, the district and High Courts were silent in what amounted to a deliberate challenge to the Places of Worship Act which the Supreme Court spoke so glowingly of in the Babri judgment. They probably got their encouragement from an oral remark made by the Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud who is reported to have stated, "the ascertainment of the religious character of a place as a procedural instrument may not necessarily fall foul of the provisions of sections 3 and 4 of the Act of 1991". The remark probably opened a Pandora's box.

Almost on cue, when the Allahabad High Court ordered a survey of the Gyanvapi mosque, a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court upheld the decision. The religious character of Gyanvapi could indeed be ascertained. It did, however, earlier this year, stay the Allahabad High Court's order for a court-monitored survey of Shahi Idgah Masjid in Mathura.

Further, the Supreme Court agreed to hear a clutch of petitions against the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act itself. Even as it maintained that the dependency of petitions did not affect the maintainability of the Act, its action of admitting the petitions itself was a signal that nothing was above debate. One of the petitioners even objected to the cut-off date of August 15, 1947, something the top court had spoken glowingly of in the Babri verdict. The petitioner, a

former spokesman of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Delhi, insisted that the cut-off date should be 1206, the time when Qutubuddin Aibak laid the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate. That his objection was not dismissed at the first stage was of significance.

The petitions seeking the restoration of places of worship to their alleged status three to eight centuries ago should not have come as a surprise, but the speed and the frequency of petitions at various levels were a little alarming. The courts were probably prepared. In 1994, barely three years after the Places of Worship Act came into force, the top court expressed its apprehensions over the provisions of the Act being flouted.

Drawing a parallel with the razings of the Babri Masjid by those unconcerned with the provisions of the Indian Penal Code for violating a place of worship, the Court said, "Similarly minded people are as little likely to be deterred by the provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1991". Incidentally, the Places of Worship Act, which made an exception for the Babri Masjid, virtually envisaged the conversion of the Ayodhya mosque, but, in the same breath, wanted to put an end to demands on other monuments. With the Babri mosque having lapsed into history, challenges to the Act of 1991 itself amount to a breach of public trust. These petitions are being used as a political weapon today. They help further a certain political narrative in the run-up to the general election 2024. The public gets excited, and fringe leaders become vocal and aggressive.

### A moment to ponder

Even as petitions pile up in courts across the country, let us not forget what happened in Ayodhya in 1986. It was the order of a district court in Uttar Pradesh which kick-started the flow of events that ultimately led to the destruction of the mosque and the final possession of its land by the assailants. The district court's permission changed the way India looked at places of worship. The question today is this: will the Supreme Court step in to uphold the integrity of the Places of Worship Act? Or, will the continued extensions granted to the Union government to specify its stance pave the way for the repeal of the Act by Parliament? Noises against the Act are already being heard in the Lok Sabha. It is the silence of the top court which is unsettling.

ziya.salam@thehindu.co.in

The higher judiciary needs to send out a strong signal upholding the integrity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act

**T**he Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law, and Justice recently submitted a significant report on legal education, making several path-breaking recommendations to strengthen the quality of legal education in India. Since Independence, legal education, unlike medicine and engineering, has not been a top priority for India's policymakers.

Things started to change for the better in the 1990s with the advent of the national law universities (NLUs) in India. Buoyed by the winds of liberalisation and globalisation, the Indian economy in the 1990s threw up many new opportunities for lawyers, which, in turn, led to bright young students opting to study law right after school. Several NLU graduates got placed in high-paying law firm jobs while many others went abroad to study at top universities, with quite a few bagging prestigious scholarships such as Rhodes and Chevening.

However, the same cannot be said about hundreds of other law schools nationwide that essentially represent a "sea of institutionalized mediocrity". Most of the NLUs too, while successfully attracting excellent students, have failed to emerge as centres of excellence in legal research. This is borne by the fact that only two Indian law schools, Jindal Global Law School and National Law School of India University, figure in the QS rankings of the top 250 law schools worldwide.

**A new regulator**  
Against this backdrop, a key recommendation of the committee is to limit the powers of the Bar Council of India (BCI) to regulate legal education. The BCI's role in regulating legal education that pertains to acquiring basic eligibility to practise in the courts is indispensable.

However, several other facets of legal education, especially at the post-graduation level, do not pertain to litigation. The committee recommends, and rightly so, that regulating these parts of legal education should be entrusted to an independent body called the National Council for



Prabhush Ranjan  
teaches at the Faculty of Legal Studies, South Asian University

Legal Education and Research (NCLER). This proposed body will develop qualitative benchmarks to regulate legal education. Eminent legal academicians who deposed before the parliamentary committee batted for the creation of the NCLER. In addition to judges and practising lawyers, the NCLER should have eminent law professors with an unimpeachable track record of research and serving legal education.

### Bolstering research

Many of India's 1,700-odd law schools principally focus on teaching, with scant attention to research. Consequently, India is chiefly the consumer of legal knowledge generated in the West, not its producer. An important data point that reveals this is that out of more than 800 law journals globally indexed in Scopus (an internationally recognised database that lists leading journals in all fields) barely a handful are Indian law journals. This shows the abysmally poor level of research in India's law schools.

The committee emphasises the need to prioritise and promote research in legal education, which, in turn, will lead to better teaching outcomes and help students develop a critical perspective. As Albert Einstein said, "The value of a college education is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think" To strengthen research, there is a need to recruit "world class global faculty who are top researchers". While this is easier said than done, the fact that the committee has highlighted this aspect is an encouraging development.

As the committee remarks, augmenting the research ecosystem in our law schools undoubtedly involves a greater need for state funding. Bolstering research will also equip India's law schools to thrive in the globalising world. The committee is cognisant of the effect of globalisation on legal education. It thus correctly recommends developing and delivering a global curriculum, promoting student and faculty international exchange programmes, incorporating more international law courses in

the curriculum, and increasing students' exposure to different legal systems.

### Changing mindsets

The parliamentary committee's suggestions are like a breath of fresh air that may help many law professors keep their chin up. In some form or the other, such suggestions have been made before. But none of this will be implemented as long as higher education does not become the topmost priority for everyone.

Additionally, legal education reform is impossible without these: first, the leadership positions in our university's law faculties and law schools should be held by passionate, charismatic, and visionary academicians who inspire and create an enabling and supportive environment that allows younger academicians to realise their potential as outstanding teachers and brilliant researchers. Sadly, barring a few notable exceptions, the deans of law faculties and vice-chancellors of law universities in India have failed to provide professional leadership. These flawed academic leaders detest talented professors and are the biggest bottleneck in striving for excellence. No amount of money or perks can overcome such a primary institutional deficiency.

Second, to boost the culture of legal research in our law schools, there should be complete academic freedom and autonomy. As Jawaharlal Nehru said, "a university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth". A law school or any other academic institution can accomplish this goal only if academicians are free to offer their well-researched views without any fear, even if these views are at variance with popularly held beliefs in society or contest the dominant ideas of the time.

The parliamentary committee's intervention is a welcome development, and one expects all stakeholders to work together to improve the quality of legal education in India.

The views expressed are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Marching to Delhi

The oft-repeated shibboleth, 'farmers are the backbones of our country', appears to have lost its import and importance given the stance of the government at the Centre. One wonders whether this second sti by the farmers will have the desired effect. Madhura Swaminathan has a point in requesting the Centre not to treat the farmers as criminals. But is anyone hearing this appeal?

Mani Natarajan,  
Chennai

The traditional wheat-paddy cycle is no longer remunerative and has also dried up groundwater resources. It has now reached a stage where substantial increases in production have become uneconomical and unsustainable for these crops despite assured MSP procurement. The imperative need is to change current practices with new technology to ensure sustainability. It is not about farmers being obstinate but about the

government having to give us a new package.  
**Harmanjeet Singh Sidhu,**  
Taruana, Sirsa, Haryana

In a scenario where climate resilience is the need of the hour and sustainability reigns supreme by eschewing anachronistic practices in the farm sector, the adamant stance of disillusioned farmers over MSP seems impractical, more so if we take into account the fiscal health of the economy. However, farmers' stagnant incomes

and the pain labourers face pertaining to the laws made need to be deliberated threadbare. Everyone involved must show sagacity, leaving no chance for fragile situations to go down the slippery slope. The contours of welfare must be kept in mind.  
**Pushpendra Mistry,**  
Sersa, Sonepat, Haryana

The ongoing protest underscores the need for comprehensive agricultural reforms. While demands for MSP and farmer welfare are

crucial, there is a necessity to address regional disparities in procurement and promote sustainable farming practices. The government must engage in inclusive political discussions to revamp public support for agriculture, ensuring a balanced and resilient system beyond market uncertainties.  
**Haneen Maryam A.,**  
Bengaluru

**Focus on cervical cancer**  
The announcement in the

interim Budget "encouraging vaccination for girls in the age group of 9 to 14 years for prevention of cervical cancer" is welcome. However, boys and men should be covered as well as they too are equally susceptible to related infections. Vaccination will address the issue of transmission.  
**Dr. V. Purushothaman,**  
Chennai

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

# Is it ethical to use AI to clone voices for creative purposes?

**PARLEY****Sai Shravanam**

is sound engineer and music producer

**Haricharan Seshadri**

is a playback singer

**R**ecently, music composer A.R. Rahman tweeted that the song *Thimiru Yezhuda* from the Tamil film *Lal Salaam* uses an Artificial Intelligence (AI) software to recreate the voices of singers Bamba Bakya and Shahul Hameed. Bakya died in September 2022 at the age of 42 and has sung songs in films including *2.0* and *Bigil*. Hameed, who died in 1998, worked extensively on movies such as *Gentleman* and *Kadhalan*. Though their voices were used with the permission of their families, who were also compensated, the move has raised a debate among artists about the use of AI. Is it ethical to use AI to clone voices for creative purposes? Sai Shravanam and Haricharan Seshadri discuss the question with **Srinivasa Ramanujam**. Edited excerpts:

**As musicians, what were your first reactions when you heard the song?**

**Sai Shravanam:** I was extremely happy to hear the voices of Hameed and Bakya. I was also happy to see that their families were remunerated for the song. A lot of artistes are like comets - they come, deliver big hits, and then vanish. Both these artistes are physically not here now and bringing their voices back brings back incredible memories. A.R. Rahman gave us *Roja*, which shook every boom box in the country, and now he is bringing the latest technology to the audience. He is timeless, and he has now used 'Timeless Voices' to give us this. I am in awe of this technology that brought someone "back to life". For me, it's a beautiful feeling.

**Haricharan Seshadri:** When I first saw their names, I thought it was a mistake. Then, I saw the news and heard the song. I was overwhelmed and curious about how this process happened. It was bound to happen sometime in the music industry. But it also made me think about my future as a singer.

**Is it ethical to use AI to clone voices for creative purposes?**

**Sai Shravanam:** Ethics is personal. AI [in this case] is [doing] nothing but mimicking human talent. An atom bomb is an incredible invention, but it has been put to bad use. The invention is not the problem; there is an issue with the way



A still from the film 'Laal Salaam'. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

human beings use it. Even without AI, you may hear a song somewhere, recreate it, and make billions of dollars with it. Ethically, you know it's not your work. And that is wrong. But AI can never replace human singers and the output that is the result of a creative process.

**Haricharan Seshadri:** We have been using technology for a long time now to produce songs and make them sound good. Even the auto-tuner that is common in the music industry is a form of AI: it corrects notes based on the inputs given. A process to legalise the use of voices and safeguard the intellectual property of every person and voice needs to be in place. I feel the use of AI voices can be governed.

The other aspect revolves around permissions. If a person is alive and approachable, an AI tool need not be used, but if the person has passed on and their voice needs to be recreated, their family and friends need to be aware that such a thing is happening, and also be properly compensated. This is important, especially in a country like India where policies are not enforced. As a singer, I am still fighting for royalty rights for songs I have sung.

**Can you elaborate on some instances where technology and AI tools have helped you in**



A real singer cannot be replaced with AI, because we add bhaavam or feeling to a song. I fear that that the increased use of AI tools would result in mediocre music.

**HARICHARAN SESADRI****your line of work?**

**Sai Shravanam:** AI has been a very important part of my journey. You might have seen documentaries talking about how auto-tune helps people who cannot sing, but you will still have to provide something for auto-tune to work. In Indian classical music, you have ragas like Thodi and Begada which have micro notes. In those cases, auto-tune sometimes helps, but sometimes it does not. As a

musician-cum-engineer, when I know how to use the tool correctly, I have been successful in using auto-tune even for a raga like Miyan

Malhar or Thodi. It is up to us engineers to use it properly.

These days, I sometimes get 200 tracks of audio, with many musicians recording them in different places. They are of different quality - some are very loud and some very quiet. It is overwhelming to hear 200 tracks that are not standardised. If we put them all into the plug-in, it levels everything so that I have an optimal mix that my session requires. AI saves me at least seven hours of work, and I can concentrate on creativity. Today, we have smart dynamic processors and that help us save time. If I didn't have those tools, I wouldn't have the luxury of delivering an incredibly sounding master within the deadline. AI as a tool has helped me greatly in areas that are not creative-driven; it has helped me in mundane activities.

**Haricharan Seshadri:** AI helps not only in music. Recently, a presenter used ChatGPT to come up with 75 questions to pose to me and I was overwhelmed. Though I am a musician and singer, I have to sometimes record myself at home and send it to a composer. I know how to sing and how good a take is, but there are other aspects in a project such as editing, fading in, and so on that a sound engineer usually does professionally. AI helps me do all that. I have even tried training my own AI voice model and used it to record a song, and then compared it with my original style of singing. But a real

singer cannot be replaced with AI because we add bhaavam or feeling to a song. I fear that that the increased use of AI tools would result in mediocre music.

**Do you feel it may disrupt the progress of creativity and humanness. And if yes, how do we tackle that?**

**Sai Shravanam:** Creativity is God's gift. It doesn't come from you but rather through you. Art is not about learning, but about exploration. AI mixing and mastering tools are here, but human interactions and emotions can change everything. To me, AI can help in mundane activities but never in the creative process. It can never replace a Haricharan walking into my studio, learning the lines, and delivering them.

**Haricharan Seshadri:** It will disrupt creativity, but only for a short while. People will get tired of it soon. From a film industry perspective, a lot of mediocrity is glorified because of reels and social media views. Lyrics are not meaningful; rather, they are just based on some rhyme scheme so that they trend online. AI will have its day. It will be glorified and then we will grow tired of it.

**In this marriage of music and AI, where is the future headed?**

**Sai Shravanam:** There is responsibility among human beings to use AI the right way. We must understand that the arts and music are not just products. They have unfortunately become products. The human brain is about perception. What I hear today as a sound engineer will not be what I hear tomorrow. A computer can only give one output, and we should realise that the arts are not just a money-making industry.

**Haricharan Seshadri:** There needs to be an AI ethical usage board in every industry. Deepfake videos also pose a threat, so there needs to be some kind of regulation. All intellectual property needs to be registered. Tomorrow, someone might be able to use my voice for a song without permission. I should be able to sue them through proper legal channels.



To listen to the full interview  
Scan the code or go to the link  
[www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)

**NOTEBOOK**

## Knowing the inside story

Leaders often use reporters to convey their thoughts to colleagues, allies, or adversaries without making a public statement

**Sandeep Phukan**

"Why does he sound like he is part of the Left Front?" a senior government official asked a colleague of mine.

It was 2008. Tensions were high between the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the Left Front over the India-U.S. nuclear deal. I was a television reporter then. I covered the Left parties while my colleague reported on foreign policy.

"He even pointed out that you refer to leaders of the Left as 'comrades,'" she told me while conveying the official's observation about me. His was less of an observation and more of a complaint. It questioned my neutrality as a reporter.

I don't remember the explanation I gave then, but I promptly stopped using the word 'comrade' in my live reportage.

More than 16 years later, after Janata Dal (United) (JDU) president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's latest political switch, I have a clear answer to why political reporters may appear biased despite their efforts to stay neutral.

Leaders often use reporters to convey their thoughts and opinions to their colleagues, allies, or adversaries without making a public statement – at least, until a final decision is made. Reporters are used as an advanced warning system. The statements reported are meant to warn the other party about what is coming or even suggest a course correction. For instance, during the negotiations between the Left and the UPA over the nuclear deal, news breaks often formed the basis of further negotiations.

Even when a public statement is made, the stated reason could be different from the unstated one. When Mr. Kumar rejoined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), he said that things were not going well in the 'Mahagathbandhan' or Grand Alliance with the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Congress in Bihar.

The signs of an impending divorce were there much before the formal announcement. Mr. Kumar became the president of the JD(U), replacing his close aide Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh. He refused to accept the post of convener of the INDIA bloc and did not take on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Amid strong denials from the JD(U), the RJD, and the Congress, most journalists started report-



ing about the imminent break-up. There were reports about Mr. Kumar's growing unease with his partners. Quoting unnamed sources, journalists said that Mr. Kumar was upset with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for suggesting that the Bihar leader's appointment as convener of the INDIA bloc would have to be endorsed by leaders including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. As he had brought the Opposition parties together to give shape to the Opposition alliance, Mr. Kumar is said to have been livid at this suggestion. The convener post could have placed him as the front runner in the prime ministerial race. But with Ms. Banerjee proposing Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge as the prime ministerial face, Mr. Kumar decided to ditch the alliance.

In public though, the Mahagathbandhan insisted that all was well in the alliance. Former Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Prasad chided the media for writing "baseless" stories. Mr. Kumar's party went to the extent of saying that the JD(U) chief didn't want anything for himself and only wanted to strengthen the Opposition. Mr. Kharge first said that he did not know about Mr. Kumar's plans and later claimed to have kept the plan close to his chest for the "sake of the INDIA alliance".

But reporters covering the JD(U) knew what was happening. Much like the Left had conveyed its displeasure with the Manmohan Singh government through reporters, the Nitish Kumar camp has kept us updated. It is true that reporting unnamed source-based information is fraught with risks. But every political reporter gets asked the question – 'What's the inside story?' – for a reason.

## PICTURE OF THE WEEK

### Protest in the capital



Workers remove a sign board that reads 'Welcome to Delhi' in view of the 'Delhi Chalo' protest led by 250 farmers' unions at the Singhu border, outside New Delhi, on Wednesday. Farm union leaders are demanding a law that guarantees Minimum Support Price for all crops. Sushil Kumar Verma

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### The *Hindu*

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 16, 1974

### France doubts validity of U.S. approach to West Asia

London, Feb. 15: The Washington energy conference has once again displayed the fragile nature of trans-Atlantic relations and is a sad reflection on the diplomacy of Dr. Kissinger, the U.S. Secretary of State, who has now convinced a majority of Europeans that he is determined to divide and rule Western Europe. Europeans are also disappointed because the Washington conference initiated a confrontation within the Atlantic Alliance

rather than against oil producers. The conference has forced countries like Britain and Germany to make a choice and although their choice at present is in America's favour, the French do not believe that this could be sustained for long. The tug of war between Washington and Paris will continue for a long time.

In the French Foreign Minister, Mr. Jobert, Dr. Kissinger has met his intellectual match and although the British and Germans may take comfort in the fact that their attitude at the Washington conference was not dominated by elements of anti-American pique, the French was determined to convince the European Economic Community members about the validity of their policies

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 16, 1924

### Kerala Punch

Kerala Punch - This humorous monthly hailing from Trichur is a well-edited production which does credit to its young editor. Its sallies of wit and humour have a relish of their own and it provides a variety of quips and quiddities which lighten the crowded hour. Humour as a solvent of pain has not yet received its full and proper place in our economy of life, and Indians often take their pleasures sadly. Punch therefore has to invade every home with his smiles and there ought to be no cultured man who has not learnt to enjoy a bit of laughter at his own expenses.

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

Rise in India's exports in January this year: govt. data

**3.12** in percentage. The country's exports increased on-year to \$36.92 billion in January. Imports rose by about 3 per cent year-on-year to \$54.41 billion in January this year. PTI

Growth in iron ore output of State-owned NMDC in Q3

**15** in percentage. State-owned National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) has registered a rise in its iron ore production to 12.22 Million Tonne (MT) in October-December 2023. PTI

Indian football team's position in FIFA rankings

**117** The Indian football team dropped 15 places in the FIFA rankings, after the recent debacle in the AFC Asian Cup, where it lost all its three group matches. The worst ranking was 173 in 2015. PTI

Investments India needs to meet its emission cut

**30** in ₹ lakh crore. India needs the investments over six fiscal years to meet its carbon emission reduction commitments made, according to Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency. PTI

Decline National Coal Index (NCI) in December

**4.75** in percentage. The NCI was at 155.44 points in December 2022, the Coal Ministry informed. This decline shows a strong supply of coal in the market. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

Follow us [facebook.com/thehindu](https://facebook.com/thehindu) [twitter.com/the\\_hindu](https://twitter.com/the_hindu) [instagram.com/the\\_hindu](https://instagram.com/the_hindu)

# What is behind Ladakh's unrest?

Why did Ladakhis initially support the creation of a UT, and what led to the subsequent caution and anger? How has the reorganisation impacted the demography, ecology, and identity of Ladakh? What are the demands put forth by LAB and KDA? How have unemployment and economic disempowerment fuelled the protests?

## EXPLAINER

### Sumeda

#### The story so far:

**T**housands returned to Leh's streets in sub-zero temperatures earlier this month, demanding full Statehood for Ladakh and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule to safeguard land, culture, language, and environment. The 'Leh Chalo' protest led by Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) resulted in a shutdown. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) set a date for the second round of discussions, but the movement, backed by engineer-activist Sonam Wangchuk's fast unto death proposal, is expected to intensify.

#### Why has Ladakh turned to protests?

Ladakh has experienced multiple shutdowns, marked by frequent street protests and demonstrations over the past four years after the region was carved out of Jammu and Kashmir as a separate UT, leading to concerns among locals about the loss of identity, resources and bureaucratic overreach.

The growing resentment can be traced to August 2019 when the dilution of Article 370 abrogated the special status of the erstwhile State of J&K. Ladakh, which was then one of three divisions of J&K, was established as a UT without a legislature, unlike J&K. Ladakh had been represented by four members in the J&K Assembly and two in the Legislative Council before the abrogation. The Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils of Leh and Kargil, formed to administer the region, also have limited powers.

The reorganisation took Ladakhis by surprise. Initially, there was optimism as religious minorities in the region had for long supported the demand for UT status, alleging discrimination at the hands of Kashmir-centric parties. Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted that a new era had begun in Ladakh. The jubilation, especially in Leh, however, soon gave way to caution, uneasiness and anger. Ladakhis worried that opening up the



**Public outcry:** People holding placards take part in 'Leh Chalo' on February 3. ANI

region to nonlocals and industrialists would impact the region's demography, eventually leading to the alienation and loss of distinct identity.

Dorjay Lakruk, former president of the local BJP unit, told *The Hindu*, "We are not saying that we will shut Ladakh for investments but we should get a say in it, which area will be developed and for which purpose? When they talk about mega solar power projects, thousands of acres of land are required, and it's not like the land is lying unused – it sustains wildlife, medicinal herbs grow there and nomads keep migrating. [But] people from outside think that the land is of no use."

Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, BJP MP from Ladakh raised the issue in Parliament. He urged the Centre to fulfil the aspirations of the people, demanding constitutional safeguards through the amendment of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act.

A jobs crisis and lack of political representation added to the unrest.

These apprehensions led to a string of protests in the Muslim-majority Kargil which wanted to remain a part of the erstwhile State and not join the Buddhist-majority Leh. Civil society and religious outfits in Leh also felt vulnerable with the reorganisation taking away the protection enshrined under Article 35A. Hundreds joined Mr. Wangchuk in his five-day hunger strike in January and a

week-long 'climatic fast' in June last year. In an interview with *The Hindu*, Mr. Wangchuk said Ladakh was better off with Article 370 which prevented industries from exploiting their resources.

#### Who is behind the agitation and what do they want?

The growing anger over unfulfilled promises prompted two ideologically distinct factions to join forces. After hectic parleys, the Leh Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance – an alliance of civil society, religious, political and student organisations – reached a consensus and finalised a four-point agenda in 2021. The umbrella organisations have since spearheaded the campaign, organising protests not only in Ladakh but also in J&K and Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, calling for shutdowns on multiple occasions. Their main demands include having a full-fledged legislature, constitutional safeguards under the Sixth Schedule, separate Lok Sabha seats for Leh and Kargil districts, and job reservations for locals. Activists and leaders of the socio-political bodies are demanding an increase in the number of Lok Sabha seats from one to two (one each for Kargil and Leh) to ensure representation of Ladakhis in Parliament and a full-fledged elected legislature.

"Earlier we had four MLAs in the State Assembly [of Jammu and Kashmir], now we have zero representation. The L-G,

who is an outsider, is sent to govern us. 90% of the ₹6,000 crore allocated to Ladakh is at the dispensation of a non-elected person. By the time he understands the issues, it will be time for him to leave. We demand full Statehood so that our voices are heard," Mr. Wangchuk had said.

The LAB and KDA have demanded the government to extend Ladakh's territorial control up to Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and demanded reservation of seats for the area. In a memorandum to the MHA, the alliance reiterated that Statehood will ensure stability in the region and highlighted the geopolitical importance of Ladakh to counter the twin threat of China and Pakistan. The other demand, for constitutional safeguards has served as a major rallying point, with the LAB and KDA urging the government to grant special status to Ladakh on the lines of Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim and other northeastern States. The Schedule protects tribal populations and provides autonomy to the communities through autonomous development councils. This assumes significance considering nearly 80% of Ladakh's total population of 2.74 lakh are tribals. Mr. Wangchuk says the Schedule will ensure that the local population is consulted on decisions that impact them.

The separation from J&K shrunk the region's share in the State pool, and the Centre has also failed to create new avenues for the locals in the past four years. "Ever since Ladakh became a UT, there have been no gazetted job openings in the region while two batches have already been commissioned in J&K and the third batch is going to get commissioned soon... Ladakh immediately needs to have a Public Service Commission of its own..." Haji Ghulam Mustafa, legal adviser of the group, said.

**How has the Centre responded?** The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nitin Gadkari, is scheduled to meet representatives from the region on February 19 in New Delhi. All eyes will be on the meeting which will determine the tone of protests in the coming days as the country goes to the polls.

## THE GIST

Thousands in Leh protest for Ladakh's full Statehood and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule.

The shutdown unfolded in the two districts of Leh and Kargil in response to a 'Leh Chalo' protest (march to Leh) called by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance organised by Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance.

Concerns stem from Ladakh's status change post-Article 370 abrogation, leading to identity loss and bureaucratic challenges.

LAB and KDA demand a full-fledged legislature, Sixth Schedule safeguards, separate Lok Sabha seats, and job reservations.

# Why did Kosovo face delays in Schengen approval?

What factors contributed to the landmark development of Kosovo gaining visa-free access to the Schengen zone? What complexities arise in Schengen entry?

### Garimella Subramaniam

#### The story so far:

**K**osovo recently secured visa-free access to the Schengen zone in Europe, world's largest zone of free movement, becoming the last western Balkan non-European Union nation to be waived visa requirements. The zone is known after Schengen, the tiny Luxembourg village bordering France and Germany, where the agreement was signed in 1985 among five of the six EU founding members except Italy. Citizens of Kosovo can now enter the Schengen as tourists for 90 days within 180 days. Croatia, a European Union (EU) member since 2013, joined Schengen in 2023, while Romania and Bulgaria, EU members since 2007, will gain partial Schengen entry in March.

#### Why was Kosovo's application kept pending for years?

The case of Kosovo is egregious given that the European Commission had in 2018 cleared Pristina's preparedness to tackle illegal migration and corruption, preconditions for the entry.

Arguably, the single biggest obstacle to the country's Schengen visa waiver was strong opposition from several EU members, which do not recognise the 2008 unilateral declaration of independence by the breakaway state from Serbia.

Kosovo has not been accorded legal statehood by the UN and denied recognition by Russia and China.

#### Is admission to Schengen mandatory for EU members?

Yes and no. When the Schengen agreement took effect in 1995, only seven

of the entire 15 member union at the time joined the passport-free area. Today, 23 of the 27 EU states are part of the passport-free zone, excluding Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria and Ireland. But then, the Schengen area comprises 27 countries, including four non-EU members: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Norway.

It is important not to confuse the status of the four countries with the recent entry of Kosovo and the other five western Balkan entrants which are not counted among the Schengen 27 members.

#### How did the region cope with the COVID-19 crisis?

Schengen had come under enormous strain following the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis during the last decade, the arrival of thousands of migrants from conflict zones in Africa and West Asia and

the anti-immigrant politics stoked by the continent's far-right populist parties. The EU had even considered removal from Schengen, countries located on the bloc's Mediterranean border, as individual states contemplated unilateral reinstatement of borders.

While the frontier states such as Italy called for an effective system of burden sharing by the entire EU, the final destination states in western Europe, especially France and the U.K. resorted to questionable methods of offering incentives to prevent the arrival of refugees.

The EU's attempt to fashion a humane policy under the Dublin Regulation to protect asylum seekers, while maintaining the integrity of the Schengen, has itself come under severe scrutiny from human rights groups and the UN Refugee Agency.

#### What are the advantages of the EU's border-free policy?

For nationals of any country, the benefit is the freedom to travel with a single Schengen visa to other European nations within the borderless area. For EU states, the Visa-free borderless travel, alongside the single currency adopted by 20 EU countries, is the most visible symbol of European integration.

The integrity of Schengen cannot be overstated for the success of the post-war European project.

## THE GIST

Kosovo recently gained Schengen visa waiver, becoming the last Western Balkan non-EU nation to do so.

Kosovo's application faced opposition due to non-recognition by several EU members and geopolitical implications.

Kosovo has not been accorded legal statehood by the UN and denied recognition by Russia and China.

Admission to Schengen is not mandatory for EU members.

## IN THE LIMELIGHT

# Kore-eda's films: a symphony of hope and reality in childhood

Hirokazu Kore-eda's films explore deep aspects of Japanese family life, focusing on children; he emphasises listening over intervention in both documentary and scriptwriting, capturing genuine childhood experiences

Pallavi Keswani

**J**apanese filmmaker Hirokazu Kore-eda's films are as easy to watch but difficult to digest. Four abandoned siblings living in a tiny apartment, a family resorting to shoplifting to overcome poverty, brothers who have been separated from their parents, and infants who were exchanged at birth. The stories Kore-eda chooses to tell are deep visual incisions into the contemporary Japanese family units. At the centre of this, he places the child.

This is not particularly a novel trick. In cinema, along its evolution and across countries, children's characteristics have been made the site of exploring a nation's emotions. They have been represented as keepers of innocence when the world around them has gone corrupt. Subsequently, children have also stood for a vulnerability, threatened by a changing society, especially during the Second World War. Their ability to hope has doubled up as a community's hope for a better time, and they have been made a conduit for complex adult feelings.

Kore-eda has worked with children for over two decades now, starting first as a documentary filmmaker with *Lessons from a Calf* (1991). The documentary ends up foreshadowing the kind of themes Kore-eda would return to in his films. Young children, learn to take care of life and gain wisdom from that experience.

Kore-eda is not the first filmmaker to centre children, but he is unique in the way he centres them even in the production stage. Weaving the adult understandings, around the children's assumptions of the world, his films are harrowing because they present the stark realisation of the gap between the different realities inhabited at different stages of life. His 2023 film *Monster* dialls up the intensity of this emotion and makes it even more obvious.

**'More listening'**

When working on one of his most seminal films, *Nobody Knows* (2004), Kore-eda used to regularly update the 'Messages' section of his website. An entry from March 2003 focuses on his approach to documentary, which he says relies more on listening, rather than the filmmaker's intervention. "Listening is much more difficult than speaking," he wrote.

Unsurprisingly, he extends the same principles to his scripts, which are often keen on listening to childhood.

In *Nobody Knows*, Kore-eda's follows four siblings who have never met their fathers and are abandoned by their mother.

Akira, the eldest one, is left with some amount of money, and unconvincing promises by his mother that she will come back. He holds out some hope, but soon makes peace with reality, and attempts to find ways for his siblings to survive. Their predicament is made worse by the fact that they cannot openly ask for help, because this will result in them being separated by the social services. They end up living invisible lives, which is what the filmmaker is interested in depicting. Often placing Akira in crowded marketplaces, he forces the audience to realise how none of the adults around him are unaware of his reality.

Akira and his siblings have been raised to uphold themselves, much like other children in Kore-eda's films whom we



A still from the movie 'Monster'.

usually meet in tough situations. In *I Wish* (2011), brothers Koichi and Ryunosuke live separately, with one parent each following the parents' divorce. While not as dire as what Akira and his siblings go through, Koichi and Ryunosuke share with them the ability to hope – a concept that finds its way in nearly all Kore-eda features.

**Expanding universe**

Minato and Yori, the two leads from *Monster* are shown discussing the concept of 'The Big Crunch', which Yori describes as a phenomenon according to which "the universe will keep expanding, and in the end when it can't get any bigger, it will split."

Kore-eda's universes expand too. Sometimes inspired by real life events, and sometimes taking cues from the actors, Kore-eda's scripts follow an identifiable pattern. They begin with hopelessness, caging the child in a situation created by the adults around him. Yet, being a child, he seeks out a solution with the hope that things will work out. It plays out almost like indulging in a fantasy, a hopeful version

of a world that the child believes in. Then, usually, Kore-eda likes to dismiss this notion with a finality. He tends to make the child's version of the world around him meet the adult version, like an imposed new reality.

The Shibata family, in *Shoplifters* (2018), seems to be slowly finding its footing on solid ground. Buoyed by a system of shoplifting, and later cashing in on the pensions of dead grandparents, Kore-eda charts an alternate reality for them, which is later shattered by Shota, the young boy. When he watches his younger sister also begin to shoplift, it confirms his suspicions that maybe the 'ethical' explanations of shoplifting that he has been given by the adults who encouraged him, will not be of use when his sister gets into trouble. It ends up breaking the family apart.

Similarly, the audience follows Koichi and Ryunosuke as they make their way to a bridge to see two bullet trains pass each other, believing that they hold miraculous powers. When the time comes, neither of them can bring themselves to wish for their parents to reunite. Instead, they just resignedly agree to the current situation.

The disconnect between adults and children is heightened and made most obvious in *Monster* when Kore-eda opts to show the same incident from different perspectives. The adults (like the audience) are barely able to make sense of what is happening until Minato lets us into his frame of reference. The final sequences of the film, according to Kore-eda, reflect a reconciliation of Minato and Yori with their own queer identities, as they shed society's imposed realities, and accept themselves.

The risk fantasy of a better reality, that even adults indulge in, is shattered by the child who seeks truth, meaning behind his actions.

**'Detached approach'**

Several of Kore-eda's interviews include some variation of the question asking him about his experience of working with children when every other director finds it difficult. As a director, Kore-eda's consistent response has been that he simply doesn't direct these children.

Marrying the imaginations of fictional films, with the realism of documentaries, Kore-eda opts for a more detached approach when it comes to working with children. Seeking the most natural possible reactions from them, while in the presence of several cameras and filming equipment, he ensures that they know as little about the film's technical details as possible. This often plays out with him not giving them the screenplays, or even dialogues. He explains the scene to them on the day and briefs them on the dialogue.

What resulted is the youngest-ever winner at the Cannes film festival in 2004 for best actor, Yuya Yagira for his portrayal of Akira in *Nobody Knows*.

While detached and impersonal, Kore-eda's approach ultimately results in tender performances. Though he may not want the actors to be influenced by what he has written for the film, he borrows a lot from them to make the onscreen character more lived-in.

Koichi and Ryunosuke in *I Wish* are portrayed by real-life brothers whose interactions led Kore-eda to revise the script for the film.

*Nobody Knows* which shows the siblings grow over a year, was filmed in the same time frame. When the children returned to the set after weeks-long breaks, he asked them to write and draw what they remembered about the apartment, which he later used as inspiration to tweak his script.

In the case of *Monster*, he took a more conventional approach when directing the child actors but asked them to "show what they are hiding, what they don't want other people to see."

**An act of replication**

In her book, *The Films of Kore-eda Hirokazu: An Elemental Cinema*, Linda C. Ehrlich calls Kore-eda's technique "listening to childhood", which she likens to listening to what is unsaid.

It is not possible to "capture" childhood on film, not in the most honest sense of the way unless you're shooting a documentary or a home movie. When filming fiction, a pre-written script is acted upon, in certain directions. It then therefore becomes an act of replicating, or acting out childhood.

How Hirokazu Kore-eda builds his stories around characters that are inspired by the actors themselves, how he frames the shots to accommodate the habits of the actors, and how he encourages the inputs of children, allowing to them somewhat authentically bring their childhood to the set.

Meanwhile, where Kore-eda's writing is concerned, it remains unflinching in hammering home an unpleasant truth: we can only observe, appreciate, and maybe recall the experience of childhood, but can never fully understand it again in all its complexity because it is impossible to fully suspend our belief in our current reality.

Please send in your answers to [dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in](mailto:dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in)

## THE DAILY QUIZ

A day since Test debutant Sarfaraz Khan scored a scintillating half century, here's a quiz on noteworthy Test cricket debuts

**Srinivasan Ramani**

**QUESTION 1**

This batsman still holds the record for scoring the most runs in his debut Test match – 314 runs. Name him. Also, what was the peculiar allergy that he suffered that hindered him (among other injuries) from reaching his fullest potential as a Test batsman?

**QUESTION 2**

The answer to question 1 also holds the record for scoring the third highest runs in his debut Test innings. Who still holds the record for the most runs in the very first inning he batted?

**QUESTION 3**

Only six debutants have scored double hundreds in their first innings that they batted and two of them are answer

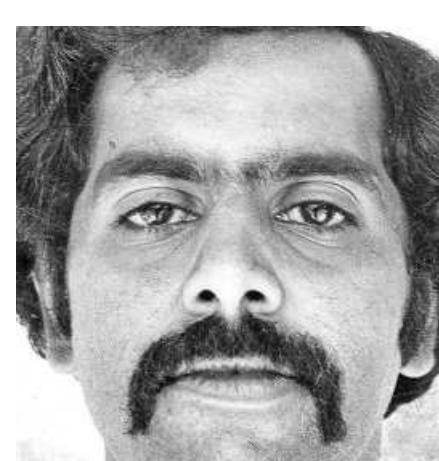
questions 1 and 2. Name the other four and the countries that they represented.

**QUESTION 4**

Charles Bannerman, the Australian batsman who debuted in the very first Test that was played, scored an unbeaten 165 in the first innings he played in that match. While doing so, he also set a record that has endured to this day. The closest that anyone came to that record were Australian opening batsman Michael Slater in 1999 and Indian stalwart V.V.S. Laxman in 2000. What is the record?

**QUESTION 5**

Narendra Hirwani picked up 16 wickets on debut against the West Indies in Chennai, equalling the record set by which other bowler on debut? Also which team did he represent?



**Visual Question:**

Name this cricketer who still holds the record for the highest number of catches taken by a fielder (not a wicketkeeper) on debut in the first innings itself.

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. What is the primary objective for the participants in Jallikattu? **Ans: The primary objective is to successfully hold onto the hump of the bull for a specific distance or time, while the bull attempts to escape.**

2. The ancient Indian sport "Mallakhamb" combines gymnastics and martial arts. What is the apparatus used in Mallakhamb primarily made of? **Ans: The apparatus used in Mallakhamb is primarily made of wood.**

3. A popular board game in India, Pachisi is believed to be the predecessor to which modern board game? **Ans: Ludo**

4. Modern Polo is believed to have originated in Manipur. What was the original name of Polo in ancient India? **Ans: Sagol Kangjei**

5. Known for its unique chase and dodge style, in Kho-Kho, how many players from each team are on the field during a match? **Ans: Nine**

**Visual:** Identify this sport. **Ans: Kambala**

**Early Birds:** Samir Gupta | K.N. Viswanathan | Rajinikanth | V. Prashant Nair | Vikas Singh



**FROM THE ARCHIVES**

## Know your English

**K. Subrahmanian**

Mr. S. G. Kasinath, Sandur, wants to know the meaning of 'eponymous'.

'Eponymous' means '(of a character in literature) being the character after whom the stated book play, is named.'

*Macbeth* is the eponymous hero of the play *Macbeth*.

Mr. A. A. Raju, Old Bus Stand, Srikakulam, wants to know the meaning of 'backhander'.

'Backhander' is a backhanded blow or stroke or remark'. In tennis, 'backhand' refers to a strike or a blow 'made with the back of the hand turned towards the opponent'.

*It was a superb backhander.*

'Backhander' also means 'bribe'. It is slang.

*He expects a backhander for doing this.*

Mr. M. Natarajan, Munirka, New Delhi, wants to know whether it is 'an SC candidate' or 'a SC candidate'.

When you say 'SC', the first sound is 'e'. 'Essee'. So we should say 'an SC', 'an ST'. But it is a 'Scheduled Caste candidate'. The first sound in 'scheduled' is 'sh' and not any vowel. An MP, a MLA, but a Member of Parliament, a Member of the Legislative Assembly. We use 'A' when the following word begins with a consonant sound and use 'an' when the following word begins with a vowel sound.

Mr. A. Nasuriddin, Ranchi, wants to know the meaning of 'flesh out'.

'To flesh out' means 'to add more information to'. When you flesh something out, you give more information about it.

*Last week, I mentioned just the bare bones of the matter. Now I'll flesh it out.*

Ms. N. Mrudulata, Patiala, wants to know the meaning of 'impinge on' and how to use it.

'Impinge on' or 'impinge upon' means 'to have an effect on, influence'.

*Corruption is impinging on the life of every citizen of the country.*

*Any increase in taxes impinges upon the general public.*

Mr. V. Seetharaman, Purasawalkam, Madras, want to know the difference between 'bother' and 'worry'.

Both refer 'to interfere with one's peace of mind'. 'Bother' is a mild term.

*I am not bothered by his caustic remarks.*

When you are worried, you are 'afflicted with mental distress or agitation'.

*Her son bothered her with silly questions.*

Mrs. S. Mangeshkar, Pune, wants to know whether 'bona fides' is singular or plural.

'Bona fides' is not plural. It is a Latin expression meaning 'in good faith'. It is used in English to mean 'genuineness, sincerity'. Strictly speaking, it should take a singular verb.

*His bona fides is unquestionable.*

But some use the plural verb.

*His bona fides are unquestionable.*

This is also acceptable now. 'Bona fide' looks like a singular noun. But it is an adjective. It means 'genuine'.

*He is a bona fide candidate.*

'Bona fides' is a legal term. 'Bona fide' is used in formal contexts. The 'o' in 'bona' is pronounced like the 'o' in 'bone' and the 'a' like the 'a' in 'India'. The 'f' in 'fide' is pronounced like the 'f' in 'find', the 'e' is pronounced 'i' as in 'bit'. 'Es' in 'fides' is pronounced 'iz' as in 'fizz'.

*Published in The Hindu on February 2, 1991*

## Word of the day

**Condone:**

excuse, overlook, or make allowances for

**Synonyms:** disregard, forgive, pardon

**Usage:** Our school does not condone that behaviour.

**Pronunciation:** [bit.ly/condonepro](http://bit.ly/condonepro)

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /kən'dəʊn/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) with the subject 'Text & Context'.

**From Page One****Top court strikes down electoral bonds scheme**

He said that the scheme and the amendments promoted "economic inequality" by giving corporations with financial power an unsurpassable advantage over ordinary citizens in the electoral process and political engagement. "This is violative of the principle of free and fair elections and political equality captured in a value of 'one person, one vote,'" Chief Justice Chandrachud said.

**Voters' rights vs donors' rights**

The court dismissed the Union government's argument that the anonymity of political donors afforded by electoral bonds incentivised financial contributions through banking channels.

The court agreed that the fundamental right to privacy covers a person's political affiliation. However, it said, there should be a balance between informational privacy and the voters' right to information.

Chief Justice Chandrachud drew a clear distinction between donations by corporates for favours and contributions by individuals as a mark of their political beliefs.

"Not all contributions are made to alter public policy. Contributions are also made by people to political parties which are not substantially represented purely with the intent of extending support... Contributions made for *quid pro quo* are not an expression of support," the Chief Justice distinguished.

**SC dismisses black money argument**

The court rubbished the government's claim that the scheme was meant to curb the injection of black money into the electoral process. It ruled that "curbing of black money" was not a reasonable restriction to the exercise of the voters' fundamental right to information about political funding enshrined in Article 19(I)(a).

The judgment noted that the entire electoral bonds scheme had hinged on the anonymity provided under Clause 7(4). Without this, the scheme was indistinguishable from other modes of financial contributions, including cheques, direct debit, and electronic transfers. Sans the clause, the scheme had to fall.

The judgment referred to the way that amendments had been introduced in Section 29C of the Representation of People Act, Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, and Section 182 of the Companies Act via the Finance Act 2017, introduced as a Money Bill, to pave the way for blanket anonymity in financial contributions through the electoral bonds route notified in January 2018.

Prior to the amendments, these provisions had maintained the needed balance between donors' privacy and voters' right to know, the court said.

**Removed restrictions**

The original Section 29C required political parties to publicly disclose contributions in excess of ₹20,000, received even through cheques and the electronic clearing system. The amendment, however, allowed a complete exemption for political parties to publish contributions received through electoral bonds.

The amended Section 13A freed parties from the obligation of keeping a detailed record of contributions received through electoral bonds.

Before the amendment, Section 182 had mandated that companies could donate only up to 7.5% of three years of their net aggregate income. The amendment lifted this cap and made room for unlimited and anonymous corporate donations to political parties.

The pre-amendment provision had also banned government companies from making contributions to prevent them from entering the political fray. It had, moreover, classified loss-making companies and profit-making ones.

The petitioners in the case were the Association for Democratic Reforms, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPIM), represented by advocate Shadan Farasat. The government was represented by Attorney General R. Venkataramani and Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta.

**BJP foments trouble in Sandeshkhali, says Mamata**

**Shiv Sahay Singh**

KOLKATA

Under attack from the Opposition parties over allegations of torture and sexual assault of women at Sandeshkhali, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of fomenting trouble at Sandeshkhali, and said that Sheik Shahjahan was targeted by the agencies.

The Trinamool Congress chairperson and Chief Minister, who so far maintained a silence over the developments said that Sandeshkhali has been a "vulnerable riot area", and that the BJP has been trying to foment trouble in the area.

**Sonia pens emotional letter to Rae Bareli voters, says she won't be contesting LS polls****The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

In an emotional letter to the people of her constituency, Rae Bareli, Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi informed them that health concerns and age would not allow her to contest the upcoming LS election.

"I am proud to say that whatever I am today, I am because of you and I have always done my best to honour your trust. Now, on account of health and age issues, I will not contest the next Lok Sabha election," Ms. Gandhi said in her letter written on February 14 but released on Thursday.



After this decision, I will not have the opportunity to serve you directly but my heart and soul will always remain with you  
**SONIA GANDHI**  
CPP chairperson

speculation that her daughter and Congress general secretary, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, could contest from Rae Bareli.

Ms. Gandhi will be the second member of the Gandhi family to enter the Rajya Sabha after Indira Gandhi who was a member of the Upper House from 1964 to 1967.

After Ms. Gandhi's shift to the Rajya Sabha, there is

**Achievements of DMK govt. are blueprints for other States: Stalin**

CM highlights T.N.'s growth rate, contribution to the GDP, efforts to curb inflation, and measures to improve the lives of those living on the margins

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday listed what he said were 10 achievements of the 'Dravidian Model' government of the DMK. He said they had become the blueprints for other States to emulate.

"These are not merely 10 achievements. Ministers and government officials from other States have come to see for themselves the 'Dravidian Model' of government in the southern corner of the country. This is a historic achievement," he said in reply to the motion of thanks to the Governor for his address to the Assembly.

According to Mr. Stalin, the 33 months since he became the Chief Minister had been months of achievements and development.

The first achievement, he said, was Tamil Nadu's

9% contribution to the Indian economy. This showcased the State's economic growth.

The second achievement is that Tamil Nadu has secured the second place in contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the nation. The State's growth rate has become 8.19%, while the country's growth rate is 7.24%. This is the third achievement," Mr. Stalin said, amid thumping of desks by members of the DMK and its allies.

The Chief Minister said the State had curbed inflation, which had fallen to 5.97%, while the national figure was 6.65%.

"Tamil Nadu has topped the Export Preparedness Index in the country, and this is the fifth achievement. This is followed by its first rank in the export of electronic goods," he said.

Mr. Stalin said the DMK government had created a conducive climate for industrial investment and this helped Tamil Nadu reach the third position, up from the 14th position, in a "childish behaviour".

"We have overcome many such obstacles. Let me say in my capacity as the leader of a movement that is capable of pulverising obstacles that I am Muthuvel Karunamidhi Stalin. I cannot be browbeaten or stopped," he said in his reply to the motion of thanks to the Governor's address to the Assembly.

"Protocol demands that the Governor address the House at the beginning of the session. The Governor, however, behaved in such a way that made us believe that he was using the Assembly as an extension of his political activities. Was

**'Will not be cowed down into submission by T.N. Governor's behaviour'****The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin alleged on Thursday that Governor R.N. Ravi had used the Assembly for extending his political activities and said his 'Dravidian Model' government, which had been challenging the "fascist and autocratic" rule in India with a brave heart, would not be cowed down into submission by such a "childish behaviour".

"We have overcome many such obstacles. Let me say in my capacity as the leader of a movement that is capable of pulverising obstacles that I am Muthuvel Karunamidhi Stalin. I cannot be browbeaten or stopped," he said in his reply to the motion of thanks to the Governor's address to the Assembly.

"Protocol demands that the Governor address the House at the beginning of the session. The Governor, however, behaved in such a way that made us believe that he was using the Assembly as an extension of his political activities. Was



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin speaking in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday. ANI

it not an act that denigrated a century-old Assembly? Was it not an act that slighted the people of Tamil Nadu? Was it not amounting to violating and denigrating the Constitution by which he took the oath of office," the Chief Minister asked, referring to Mr. Ravi's refusal to read the prepared text of his address to the Assembly.

Mr. Stalin said there was a time when "we raised the slogan that the north is progressing and the south is languishing. Now we have achieved growth, and we even contribute to the north. It has become possible because of the Dravidian Movement."

**IN BRIEF**

**Praful Patel, Milind Deora, Handore file RS nominations**

National Congress Party leader Praful Patel, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena's Milind Deora and Congress candidate Chandrakant Handore on Thursday filed their nomination papers at the Assembly complex in Mumbai for the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls from Maharashtra. Mr. Patel was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, NCP leader Sunil Tatkare and ministers Chhagan Bhujbal and Dhananjay Munde. PTI

**Nadda files nomination papers for RS elections from Gujarat**

The BJP national president J.P. Nadda and three other candidates who were declared as the party's nominees for the Rajya Sabha elections from Gujarat filed their nomination papers on Thursday in Gandhinagar. The party has not repeated two Union Ministers – Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya and Parshottam Rupala – whose Rajya Sabha tenure is coming to an end. There is a buzz in the party circles that both leaders may be asked to contest the upcoming Lok Sabha election.

**Vaishnav files nomination for Rajya Sabha polls from Odisha**

Union Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav filed nomination here on Thursday for his re-election to the Upper House of Parliament from Odisha. Mr. Vaishnav came to State Legislative Assembly accompanied by State BJP president Mammotha Samal and other party MLAs earlier in the day. Minutes after declaration of his candidature by the BJP on Wednesday, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) issued an official statement extending its support to him.



**APPEAL**  
Master Aarav Pundlik Kadam, son of Pandit Devidas Kadam 3 years admitted in Mazumdar Shaw Medical Centre, is suffering from Thalassemia Major. The only curative treatment is Bone Marrow Transplant. Hence planned to take him for Bone Marrow Transplant. The approximate cost estimation of the procedure is Rs.20,50,000/-.

Please send donation however small and save the boy. Cheque/D.D/M.O favouring Save Poor Lives A/c Ojasvi Mangesh Bhone. Our Account Details: S/B Account No.2000901855, State Bank of India, R.A.Puram and IFSC CODE: SBIN001855. You can donate through Google pay No.9884607377, UPI ID: savepoorlives@oksbi. All donations are exempted under 80G of I.T. ACT.

SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, Flat No.1, Ceebos Garden, Ground floor, OH No.76 Kamrajar Salai, Raja Annamalaiapuram, Chennai - 600028. Contact No.044-42044165 & 044-35691848, Mobile: 9884607377 Email: savepoorlives@gmail.com Our website: www.savepoorlives.com

**BJP to hold two-day National Council meet over weekend****The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Lok Sabha election, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will hold a two-day meeting of its National Council with over 11,500 delegates in attendance in New Delhi starting February 17. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president J.P. Nadda are set to address the meet.

Former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, at a presser at the BJP's national headquarters in New Delhi, said the National Council would have "a comprehensive organisational agenda". He spoke of the exercise of internal organisational democracy within the BJP.

"The Congress and the Communists make various kinds of comments but the BJP is the only party which does maximum organisational work in a democratic manner, be it holding in time the party's national convention, national executive and other programmes," Mr. Prasad said.

"This is in our DNA."

"Two resolutions are in the agenda. There will be detailed discussions on the the upcoming election," he said.

**Modi had set a target of winning 370 LS seats and the party will work towards it, said Prasad**

"The Congress and the Communists make various kinds of comments but the BJP is the only party which does maximum organisational work in a democratic manner, be it holding in time the party's national convention, national executive and other programmes," Mr. Prasad said.

"This is in our DNA."

"Two resolutions are in the agenda. There will be detailed discussions on the the upcoming election," he said.

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

In an emotional letter to the people of her constituency, Rae Bareli, Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi informed them that health concerns and age would not allow her to contest the upcoming LS election.

"I am proud to say that whatever I am today, I am because of you and I have always done my best to honour your trust. Now, on account of health and age issues, I will not contest the next Lok Sabha election," Ms. Gandhi said in her letter written on February 14 but released on Thursday.



After this decision, I will not have the opportunity to serve you directly but my heart and soul will always remain with you  
**SONIA GANDHI**  
CPP chairperson

speculation that her daughter and Congress general secretary, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, could contest from Rae Bareli.

Ms. Gandhi will be the second member of the Gandhi family to enter the Rajya Sabha after Indira Gandhi who was a member of the Upper House from 1964 to 1967.

After Ms. Gandhi's shift to the Rajya Sabha, there is

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

Modi is willing to put every national resource on sale in return for political funding. But, a farmer demanding MSP is frowned upon since he cannot invest in electoral bonds. What an irony

RAHUL GANDHI  
Congress leader



The government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made efforts to reform election funding and the introduction of electoral bonds was a part of such measures. The BJP respects the Supreme Court verdict

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD  
BJP leader



This will restore people's faith in democracy. This is the greatest thing that could have happened. This is the most historic judgement that we have got from the Supreme Court in the last five to seven years. It is a great boon for democracy

S.Y. QURAISHI  
former Chief Election Commissioner

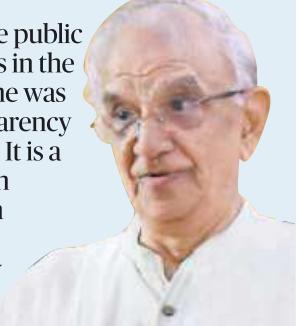


We respect the judiciary. We welcome its decision. One party will not sleep well for the next few weeks. You all know who they are!

DEREK O'BRIEN  
Trinamool MP

I had made public statements in the past that this scheme was not right for transparency in political funding. It is a historic judgment in the interest of clean democracy

T.S. KRISHNAMURTHY  
Former CEC



## Political contributors can influence govt. decisions, says SC

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said the influence of money over electoral politics is not limited to poll outcomes but spills over to government decisions as well.

"The legal regime in India does not distinguish between campaign funding and electoral funding. The money which is donated to political parties is not used by the political party only for the purposes of electoral campaigns. Party donations are also used, for instance, to build offices for the party and pay party workers," observed Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, heading a Constitution Bench that struck down the electoral bonds scheme.

Again, the window for financial contributions to political parties is not open for a limited period prior

to the elections, the Chief Justice noted.

### 'Seat at the table'

At a primary level, political contributions give a "seat at the table" to the contributor or enhanced access to legislators. "The access also translates into influence over policy-making. An economically affluent person has a higher ability to make financial contributions to parties, and there is a legitimate possibility that financial contribution to a political party would lead to *quid pro quo* arrangements because of close nexus between money and politics," the court said.

The Chief Justice said the influence of money over politics has made it necessary for voters to access information on political funding, which will enable them to assess if there is a correlation between policy-making and financial contributions.

**Sreeparna Chakrabarty**

NEW DELHI

As the Supreme Court struck down the electoral bonds scheme as unconstitutional, the big question is whether the public can know which individual or corporate entity contributed how much through the bonds to which political party. Some petitioners and activists feel this is a tricky area.

According to data by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), which was the chief petitioner in the case in the court, the collective amount of funds generated through the sale of electoral bonds between March 2018 and January 2024 is ₹16,518.11 crore.

On Thursday, the top court asked the State Bank



**Paper's worth:** The SC has asked State Bank of India to submit details of electoral bonds purchased since the interim order of the court dated April 12, 2019 till date to the Election Commission.

of India (SBI) to submit details of the electoral bonds purchased since the interim order of the court dated April 12, 2019, till date to the Election Commission. The SBI shall also submit the details of political parties that received contributions through the bonds.

The bank has to submit the above information to the EC within three weeks from the date of Thurs-

day's judgment, i.e., by March 6, 2024. The EC in turn has to publish the information shared by the SBI on its official website within one week of the receipt of the information, that is, by March 13, 2024, the court said.

Prof. Jagdeep Chhokar, founder-member and trustee of ADR, said if one goes by the court's directions to the SBI and the EC, then it

can be known who contributed to which party.

RTI activist Anjali Bhardwaj, a member of the board of Common Cause, one of the petitioners, though feels this will be a tricky area even as she hailed the judgment as a "landmark verdict". According to her, despite the disclosures, it may be difficult to know exactly who contributed to which party through electoral bonds since the design of the scheme is such that each bond by itself is not uniquely traceable and the bonds are of fixed denominations.

Sanjay Hegde, one of the lawyers, who appeared for an intervener in the case, told *The Hindu* that the SBI will have to disclose the name of the buyers and the date of purchase. "But

recipients may not be mapped immediately. A bond may have changed many hands before donations."

### BJP got lion's share

An analysis of the electoral bonds scheme shows that the ruling BJP garnered the lion's share of nearly 55% of the funds till March 2023, while the Congress got a mere 9.3%. The highest sale of bonds was during the last Lok Sabha election in 2019 from April 1 to 20 when bonds worth ₹2,256.37 crore were sold.

The BJP, till March 2023, received ₹6,566.11 crore through electoral bonds, while the Congress got ₹1,123.29 crore, according to annual audit reports submitted by parties and made public by the Election Commission.

## Secretive right from the start

Following is the chronology of events in the case related to validity of the electoral bonds scheme, a mode of funding to political parties, in which a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on Thursday delivered a landmark verdict annulling it

**2017:** The electoral bond scheme was introduced in the Finance Bill

**Sept. 14, 2017:** NGO 'Association for Democratic Reforms', lead petitioner, moves SC challenging the scheme

**Oct. 03, 2017:** SC issues notices to Centre and EC on PIL filed by the NGO

**Jan. 02, 2018:** The Central government notifies the electoral bond scheme

**Nov. 07, 2022:** The electoral bond scheme was amended to increase the sale days from 70 to 85 in a year where any Assembly election may be scheduled

**Oct. 16, 2023:** SC Bench headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud, referred to a five-judge Constitution Bench

**Oct. 31, 2023:** A five-judge Constitution Bench headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud commences hearing on pleas against the scheme

**Nov 2, 2023:** SC reserves verdict

**Feb 15, 2024:** SC delivers unanimous judgment annulling the scheme, saying it violates Constitutional Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression as well as the Right to Information



## Court upholds right to keep political affiliations away from state intrusion

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

NEW DELHI

The fundamental right to privacy covers information about individual political affiliations, the Supreme Court ruled on Thursday.

In its judgment quashing the electoral bonds scheme, a five-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said the state could misuse information about people's political beliefs to suppress dissent, to discriminate in giving employment, and even subjecting such people to trolls.

Forming political beliefs and opinions is the



first stage of political expression. Political expression cannot be exercised freely in the absence of privacy," Chief Justice Chandrachud observed.

He added that a lack of privacy about political affiliations would be "catastrophic" in the context of electoral franchise. Dwell-

whose views do not match with that of the mainstream.

**'Catastrophic results'** The court said the lack of privacy about political affiliations would be "catastrophic" in the context of electoral franchise. Dwell-

ing on the dangers of the state knowing individual political affiliations, Chief Justice Chandrachud said that such knowledge could be used by those in power to disenfranchise voters or put them under "surveillance".

"A voter database developed through surveillance can identify voting patterns of electors and attempt to interfere with their opinions," the Chief Justice observed.

On a systemic level, the Chief Justice noted that information on the political affiliations of voters could be used for "gerrymandering".

## Parties in power got the highest share: SC

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

NEW DELHI

The Indian National Congress (INC) is far below at ₹171.02 crore while the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) received ₹325 crore and the DMK ₹185 crore in 2022-2023.

"It is clear that majority of contributions through bonds went to ruling political parties in the Centre and the States," Justice Khanna observed.

The judge also gave details of the denomination-wise sale of electoral bonds from March 2018 to July 2023. Justice Khanna said that the BJP got ₹210 crore in 2017-2018 at the start of the scheme and raked in ₹1,294.14 crore in 2022-23.

## Welcome judgment, say former CECs

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Former Chief Election Commissioners welcomed the Supreme Court order.

"If the whole electoral bonds scheme had been brought in for transparency, then it had the opposite effect," says former CEC Navin Chawla. "The shadow of anonymity was so great that it gave contributors and political parties great advantage," he said.

Another former CEC, O.P. Rawat, said: "This has addressed all the concerns expressed by the Election Commission when the scheme was brought in."

## Bonds were brought in to curb black money: BJP

**Nistula Hebbal**

NEW DELHI

The BJP said that it "respects" the verdict of a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court terming electoral bonds unconstitutional, but insisted that the scheme had a "laudable objective of bringing transparency in poll funding".

BJP leader and former Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad articulated the party's response to the judgment at a press conference held at its national headquarters on Thursday.



leged that the bonds could also work as a bribe to the ruling BJP from corporate groups, he said that parties whose "DNA is based on corruption and bribery" should not level such charges.

Mr. Kohli said the government had introduced the electoral bond scheme to address the issue of black money in elections. "The largest perspective is that this has been a journey for several decades and a concern has been how to prevent black money or slush money getting into the electoral process," he said.

"The Supreme Court has held that this scheme in this format could not have been there. Therefore, it passed a set of directions," he said.

BJP spokesperson Nalin Kohli also accused Opposi-

## Court order will ensure level playing field in elections, say Congress leaders

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

resorting to such "mischievous" ideas in future.

Mr. Kharge said the Congress had called the scheme "opaque and undemocratic" on the day of its launch and had promised to scrap the "dubious scheme" in its 2019 Lok Sabha manifesto. "We welcome the decision of the Supreme Court today,

which has struck down this 'Black Money Conversion' scheme of the Modi government, calling it 'Un-

constitutional'. We remember how the Modi Govt, PMO and FM bulldozed every institution - RBI, Election Commission, Parliament and Opposition to fill BJP's coffers. No wonder, 95% of the funding under this scheme was received by BJP," Mr. Kharge said.

"We hope that the Modi government will stop resorting to such mischievous ideas in future and listen to the Supreme Court, so that democracy, trans-

parency and level playing field persist," he added.

### 'Transparency wins'

Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said the top court's order had placed people's right to know above all the clever legal arguments marshalled to defend the "illegal electoral bonds scheme".

"The judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court is a great victory for transparency," he said on X.

## Petitioners say it will ensure transparency in funding

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Activists on Thursday welcomed the Supreme Court order scrapping electoral bonds as historic and said it was a major step towards bringing transparency in electoral funding.

The scheme had been challenged in the top court by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), the CPI(M), Congress leader Jaya Thakur, and activist Sandip Biswas.

ADR, the chief petitioner, termed it a landmark verdict. "The Supreme Court has given a big boost to Indian democracy, something our freedom struggle fought for," said Prof. Trilochan Sastry, ADR chairman and founder-member.

In a statement, the CPI(M) Polit Bureau hailed the judgment as historic. "By this verdict, this unscrupulous scheme designed to finance the ruling party by anonymous corporate donors has been completely scrapped," it said.

dline prescribed by the top court for the Election Commission (EC) to publish the information on contributions received by political parties via electoral bonds on its website. The parties also hoped that this would be the first step towards bringing in further electoral reforms.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Sitaram Yechury said this world "expose the murky

deal makings of the ruling party".

He said the CPI(M), which was one of the petitioners in the case, had never accepted electoral bonds. "We have always maintained and even now maintain, that electoral bonds legalise political corruption," he said in a post on X.

The Opposition's reactions were also tinged with taunts for the ruling party. "The Trinamool Congress' leader in the Rajya Sabha, Derek O'Brien, said: "We respect the judiciary. We welcome its decision. One party will not sleep well for the next few weeks - you all know who they are!"

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said that the judgment would pave the way for the revival of democracy. He termed electoral bonds the BJP's "corruption bond".

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

## IN BRIEF



## Will contest Lok Sabha poll independently, says Farooq

National Conference (NC) president Dr. Farooq Abdullah, a member of the INDIA alliance, on Thursday said his party "will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha polls on its strength". In an unanticipated announcement, Mr. Abdullah said his party will contest on its own strength. "I want to make it clear that the NC is not going to enter into any alliance before the polls and will contest independently," Mr. Abdullah said. He said the talks within the INDIA alliance have "failed to achieve anything positive till date". However, Mr. Abdullah's son Omar Abdullah said the party was open for talks with Congress for Jammu seats only.

## NHRC seeks report on sale of drugs with identical names

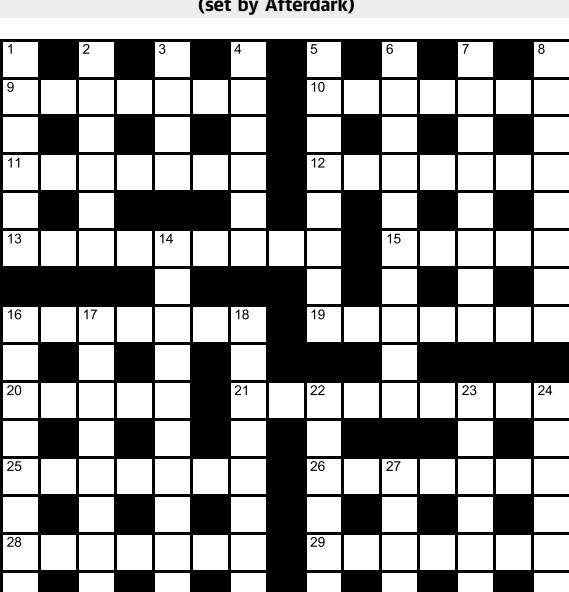
The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken *suo motu* cognisance of a newspaper article, which said that a large number of drugs is being sold in India with identical brand names for treating entirely different conditions. In its release earlier this week, it stated that the consequences of confusion between these medications at the pharmacy can be serious for patients as these drugs are being prescribed by the doctors for treatment of different diseases. The commission has observed that the contents of the article, if true, "amount to a serious issue of human rights".

## Hemant Soren remanded in 14-day judicial custody

Former Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Hemant Soren, was sent to the Birsa Munda Central Jail on Thursday after his 13-day custody of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) ended in the alleged land scam case. He will be lodged in judicial custody for 14 days. Earlier in the day, Mr. Soren was produced in the Special PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court after the remand period was over. Mr. Soren was arrested by the ED on January 31 in connection with allegedly forging the land documents of 8.5 acres. After his arrest, the Central agency had taken Mr. Soren on remand from the special court thrice for questioning.

## Privileges panel summons West Bengal Chief Secretary

The privileges committee of the Lok Sabha issued a notice summoning the West Bengal chief secretary and others on a complaint filed by BJP MP Sukanta Majumdar alleging "misconduct, brutality and life-threatening injuries to him". The committee has asked Chief Secretary Bhagwati Prasad Gopalika, Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar, North 24 Parganas District Magistrate Sharad Kumar Dwivedi, Basirhat Superintendent Hossain Mehdil Rehman, and Additional Superintendent Partha Ghosh to appear before it on February 19, the notice said. Mr. Majumdar was reportedly injured as party workers clashed with police on Wednesday after being stopped from entering Sandeshkhali.

TH CROSSWORD + 14099  
(set by Afterdark)

## Across

- 9 Tea with Karan essentially engrossing primarily; commercial in between is a farce (7)
- 10 Instrument for carotid endarterectomy; doctor visiting to look (7)
- 11 College lists topmost entries to purge (7)
- 12 In Metro, setter is carrying an ornament (7)

## Farmers' protest: third round of talks under way

Farmers continue to camp at different locations on the Haryana-Punjab inter-State boundary; Haryana government extends suspension of mobile Internet services for two more days

**Vikas Vasudeva**  
CHANDIGARH

Protesting farmers from Punjab continued to camp at different locations on the inter-State boundaries with Haryana on Thursday, even as the meeting between farmer representatives and Union Ministers was under way amid the ongoing stand-off between farmers and the Union government.

The Kisan Mazdoor Morcha and the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) – the two umbrella bodies of around 200 farmers and farm labourer unions – had given the call for the 'Delhi Chalo' march as they planned to lay siege to the national capital to press for the fulfilment of their demands.

Union Ministers Arjun Munda, Piyush Goyal and Nitinavand Rai, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, and farmer leaders



**Protest mode:** Farmers shout slogans as they protest at Shambhu in Patiala district on Thursday. AFP

Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Sarwan Singh Pandher, among others, attended the meeting that commenced here late on Thursday.

Ahead of the meeting, in which deliberations over the farmers' demands, including legal guarantee for minimum support prices (MSP) are being discussed, farmers asserted that the meeting would be fruitful only if the government came out with something "positive" to offer. After

the first two meetings remained inconclusive, this is the third meeting between farmers' leaders and the Centre.

On their third day of protest, farmers continued to camp in huge numbers at other inter-State boundaries in Haryana, including Shambu-Ambala and Khanauri-Jind. There were no reports of clashes between the police and farmers.

Addressing a press conference at the Shambu border, Sarwan Singh Pandher showed tear gas shells, alleging paramilitary personnel deputed by Haryana were using force against the farmers, injuring many of them. Mr. Pandher said "smoke cell air bursts and smoke cell ground bursts" were being used against farmers.

Meanwhile, the Haryana government extended the suspension of mobile Internet services in seven districts for another two days, till February 17.

## Will make tolls 'free' for 3 hours: farmers' group

**GURUGRAM**  
The Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni), a Haryana-based farmers organisation, has announced to toll plazas in Haryana, Punjab, and Rajasthan "free" for three hours and hold tractors march on Friday.



Troops from a unit of Punjab Regt., deployed along the LAC in Kibithu, practice martial arts. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Indian martial arts training for Army post Galwan clash

**Dinakar Peri**  
KIBITHU

it of the Punjab regiment deployed close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Kibithu in eastern Arunachal Pradesh displayed the martial arts training to a group of visiting presspersons.

Major Kartikey Jaiswal of the unit said the terrain here had its own peculiarities and added to the challenges faced during patrolling. "These are in the form of fast flowing rivers, continuously changing weather conditions. To face these challenges, we continuously undertake training and the martial arts is one of them," he said.

+

Various Indian martial arts are now part of the routine training of regiments of the Army. Post the Galwan violent clash between India and China, the Army has added martial arts to the regular training of troops in addition to the usual physical exercise, officials said.

For instance, the Punjab regiment has incorporated Gatka in the training regime, the Gorkha Regiment the Khukuri dance and the Kalaripayattu by the Madras regiment. A un-

## Mob storms SP office in Churachandpur

**Vijaita Singh**  
NEW DELHI

A mob stormed the office of Superintendent of Police and the mini-Secretariat in Churachandpur district of Manipur on Thursday, hours after a head constable from the Kuki-Zo community was suspended for "grave misconduct."

Earlier in the day, Chu-

rachandpur SP Shivanand Surve suspended head constable Siamalpal based on a video on social media which showed him sitting with "armed miscreants". "This tantamount to very grave misconduct, being a member of the police force," an order by the SP said. Following the suspension, a mob of around 400 stormed the SP office, setting it on fire.

## Global meet urges India to augment pulses production to meet nutritional needs

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Global Pulses Conference, an annual meeting of pulse producers, processors and traders, has suggested India to augment production of pulses to meet the nutritional requirements. Ministers Arjun Munda and Piyush Goyal said the Centre has taken adequate measures to improve pulses cultivation in the country by increasing the minimum support price regularly. The two-day conference is jointly organised by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) and the Global Pulse Confederation (GPC).

Mr. Goyal said, over the last decade pulses production has grown by 60% from 171 lakh tonnes in 2014 to 270 lakh tonnes in 2024.

"The partnership between NAFED and GPC will continue to grow to make pulses not only India's wonder-diet but to make



India will benefit from the global conference with sharing of technological advancements in the field from other countries.

the wonder-diet of the world," he said.

On MSP, he said the Centre has assured a price of 50% over the actual cost of production to our farmers, thereby providing an attractive return on investment. "The MSP is the highest today with increases as high as 117% in *masoor*, 90% in *moong*, 75% more in *chana dal*, 60% more in *tur* and *urad* over the amount provided a decade back," he said.

Mr. Munda said India has become self-reliant in chickpeas (*chana*) and many other pulses crops, with

## New drug to treat chronic kidney disease gets approval

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**  
NEW DELHI

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has approved Jardiance (empagliflozin) 10mg tablets to reduce the risk of sustained decline in patients with end-stage kidney disease, cardiovascular death, and hospitalisation in adults with chronic kidney disease (CKD) at risk of progression.

According to a release issued by the organisation, this indication approval allows nephrologists and cardiologists to use Jardiance 10mg tablets for the treatment of CKD in eligible patients. "Jardiance is not recommended for the treatment of CKD in patients with polycystic kidney disease," the release noted.

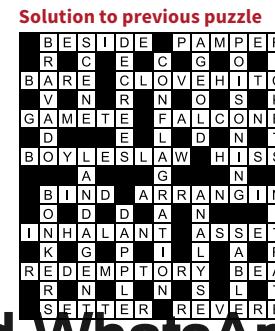
"We are very excited about the approval and the potential for empagliflozin," Gagandeep Singh Bedi, managing director, Boehringer Ingelheim (India), a biopharmaceutical company which manufactures the drug, said.

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



Try Our New  
**Sandal**  
With Sandalwood Oil



FOLLOW US FOR  
MORE CONTENT

## FAITH

## Efficacy of Ratha Saptami

Falling on the seventh day from Thai amavasai, Ratha Saptami is one of the most important festivals. This is the day that Surya's Uttarayan journey, which took off on the day of Pongal, attains the correct altitude, as it were, and positions his chariot drawn by seven horses for the onward journey for the next six months. As Surya is the source of energy, the day (today) is observed as Arogya Saptami. Also known as Surya Jayanti, he is worshipped both independently, and as Surya Narayana Perumal, along with Vishnu, said Dhamal S Ramakrishnan in a discourse.

The numeral seven is one of great significance and is an auspicious one. Ratha Saptami is celebrated on a huge scale, with a daylong Brahmotsavam, starting with the Surya Prabha vahanam. Devotees should observe Ratha Saptami by bathing at dawn with seven leaves of the calotropis plant, pray to Surya and recall Bhishma, in order to get rid of ill health and also wash away one's sins.

Yasoda tells Bhishma that due to his failure to stop the insult to Draupadi, his seven organs were entwined by sin. Only Surya's rays can singe the sins, however, no mortal can withstand that level of energy and suggested that Bhishma be washed with seven leaves of the calotropis plant, which has the property to absorb and retain sun's energy.

## IN BRIEF



## Morgan Stanley said to axe wealth management jobs

Investment banking giant Morgan Stanley is planning to cut hundreds of jobs in its wealth management unit, according to a person familiar with the matter, the latest in a string of layoffs that Wall Street firms have undertaken since last year. The cuts will impact less than 1% of the division's employees, the person said, requesting anonymity. While hopes of a soft landing for the economy have grown in recent months, companies are still looking to trim costs amid uncertainty around the trajectory of interest rate cuts by the U.S. Federal Reserve. REUTERS

## Revenue dept. seeks members for GST Appellate Tribunal

The Department of Revenue on Thursday kicked off the process to set up the long-awaited Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) by inviting applications for 96 posts of Judicial and Technical members. The GSTAT will have one Principal Bench located at Delhi and 31 State benches in different locations across States. Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra had told *The Hindu* earlier this month that the appellate tribunal would be functional by July or August 2024.

## Govt. raises windfall tax on crude petroleum, diesel

The government on Thursday increased windfall tax on domestically produced crude oil to ₹3,300 per tonne from ₹3,200 per tonne with effect from Friday. The tax is levied in the form of a Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED). According to an official notification, SAED on the export of diesel too has been raised to ₹1.50 a litre from nil earlier. On petrol and jet fuel or ATF, the levy will be retained at nil. The new rates are effective from February 16. India first imposed windfall profit taxes on July 1, 2022. PTI

## India, Nepal sign pact to link UPI, NPI for faster remittances

## The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) on Thursday signed and exchanged Terms of Reference (ToR) to integrate fast payment systems of India and Nepal through Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India and National Payments Interface (NPI) of Nepal, respectively.

"The integration is aimed at facilitating cross-border remittances between India and Nepal by enabling users of the two systems to make instant, low-cost fund transfers,"

the RBI said in a statement. The collaboration between India and Nepal in linking their fast payment systems through the UPI-NPI linkage would further deepen financial connectivity and "reinforce the enduring historical, cultural, and economic ties between the two countries," the central bank said.

Based on the ToR exchanged between RBI and NRB, necessary systems would be put in place to link UPI and NPI. Formal introduction of the linkage, that is, commencement of operations would follow shortly, it added.

## Credit growth to moderate in FY25: S&amp;P

## Reuters

MUMBAI

Funding conditions in India are likely to play a crucial role in constraining loan growth for many banks in the country, and credit expansion could moderate by 200 basis points in the next fiscal year, S&P Global Ratings said in a note on Thursday.

The rating agency expects system-level credit growth to moderate to 14% in FY25, starting April 1, from about 16% annual growth in the first three quarters of FY24, with margins also set to fall.

"Credit demand is strong," the agency said.

## Japan slips into recession, raises BOJ policy doubts

## Reuters

TOKYO

Japan's economy slipped into a recession as it unexpectedly shrank for two straight quarters on weak domestic demand, data showed, raising uncertainty about the central bank's plans to exit its ultra-easy policy sometime this year.

The surprisingly weak performance saw Japan lose its title as the world's third-largest economy, replaced by Germany.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell an annualised 0.4% in the October-December period after a 3.3% slump in the previous quarter, government data

## January trade deficit narrows to 9-month low of \$17.5 billion

Exports rise 3.1%, marginally outpacing imports' 3% growth; goods trade logs expansion despite Red Sea crisis, weak demand in advanced nations

**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI

**I**ndia's merchandise trade deficit, which had hit a record high of \$29.9 billion in October, narrowed sequentially for the third straight month, provisional estimates show



tion in the Red Sea.

"We told banks that whatever credit can be extended to exporters, it should be done, while the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation and the Exim Bank were told not to increase insurance rates. Given such difficult circumstances, if we have grown, that speaks volumes about our exporters. We will continue our efforts to ensure that growth is recorded in the coming period also," Mr. Barthwal added.

## Services exports boost

Services exports, whose actual numbers will be released later, are estimated to have expanded 17.5% to \$32.8 billion in January, taking the combined export tally last month to \$69.72 billion, 9.28% higher than a year earlier.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said the uptick in exports was significant as it was achieved "despite the Red Sea crisis, the recessionary conditions in advanced countries and despite the falling commodity prices".

The ministry, the top official said, had been working with other departments to help exporters navigate the difficult situ-

ation now. Separately, efforts were underway to identify new territories for Indian exporters to tap, as well as new products that may have global demand.

## Cumulative exports

Cumulative merchandise exports in the first 10 months of 2023-24 now stand at \$353.9 billion, 4.9% below their tally in the corresponding year-earlier period.

"The merchandise trade deficit during April-January 2023-24 is \$207.2 billion, compared to \$229.37 billion during April-January 2022-23, registering a decline of 9.66%," the ministry said in a statement.

Out of the top 30 export sectors, 18 registered positive growth in January led by iron ore (109.8%), tobacco (47.3%), meat, dairy and poultry products (26.1%) and spices (20.5%).

On the imports front, 17 sectors clocked a decline in shipment values, including fertilisers (-69.1%), project goods (-43.9%), and raw cotton (-32.3%).

## IRDAI mulls 30-day 'free look' for plans

**N. Ravi Kumar**  
HYDERABAD



Some of the other changes proposed are to advise the insurer to collect details of bank accounts of the insured at the proposal stage to enable electronic transfer of refunds and claims; nomination provisions relating to general, where applicable and health insurance policies; and issuing plans meeting defined criteria in electronic form.

Tender No	Construction of Road Over Bridge in lieu of	Cost of Work in Cr
01-KRDCL-ROB-2024-OT	LC No. 115.	27.08
02-KRDCL-ROB-2024-OT	LC No. 164.	25.59
03-KRDCL-ROB-2024-OT	LC No. 173, LC No. 225 and LC No.259	85.44

Tender documents can be downloaded from [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in). For more details visit [www.keralarail.com](http://www.keralarail.com)

Kerala Water Authority e-Tender Notice			
Tender No : 225-226/2023-24/PHC/KNR(Re-Tender), Jal Jeevan Mission - Kannur District - WSS to Peravoor and adjoining Panchayaths - Aralam Ayyankunnu Panchayath - Zone IV and V - Laying Distribution and Providing FHTCs. EMD : Rs. 500000/Each, Tender fee : Rs. 19518/Each, Last Date for submitting Tender : 27-02-2024 03:00pm, Phone : 04972705902, Website : <a href="http://www.kwa.kerala.gov.in">www.kwa.kerala.gov.in</a> & <a href="http://etenders.kerala.gov.in">www.etenders.kerala.gov.in</a>			
Superintending Engineer PH Circle, Kannur			
KWA-JB-GL-6-2361-2023-24			
Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNPL Website & NIC Portal only. Detailed Terms & conditions are available in the tender document at our websites: <a href="http://www.tnpl.com">www.tnpl.com</a> / <a href="http://tnpl.tenders.gov.in/nicgp/app">http://tnpl.tenders.gov.in/nicgp/app</a>			
DIPR/954/Tender/2024 TNPL - Maker of bagasse based eco-friendly Paper			

TNPL TAMILNADU NEWSPRINT AND PAPERS LIMITED			
Kagithapuram - 639 136. Karur Dist. Tamil Nadu. Ph.: 0424-277001 (10 Lines). Email: <a href="mailto:pmd8@tnpl.co.in">pmd8@tnpl.co.in</a>			
Tender No.	Material Description	Date of publishing Tender document in TNPL/NIC website	Due date
232413 007191	Design, Manufacture, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of Fire Hydrant System in Paper Machine 182 and Balance Area in Finishing House Godown at TNPL Unit-I.	21.02.2024	12.03.2024
Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNPL Website & NIC Portal only. Detailed Terms & conditions are available in the tender document at our websites: <a href="http://www.tnpl.com">www.tnpl.com</a> / <a href="http://tnpl.tenders.gov.in/nicgp/app">http://tnpl.tenders.gov.in/nicgp/app</a>			
DIPR/954/Tender/2024 TNPL - Maker of bagasse based eco-friendly Paper			

WEST BENGAL STATE ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED			
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)			
Regd. Office: Vidya Bhawan, Block-D, Sector-II, Bidhan Nagar, Kolkata-700091			
CIN: U40109WB2007GNC11347, <a href="http://www.wbseedcl.in">www.wbseedcl.in</a>			
Request for Proposals			
e-Tender cum e-Reverse Auction No.: WBSEDCL/PTP/e-NIT/01/2024 dt.: 16.02.2024 is invited by the Chief Engineer (PTP), WBSEDCL, Vidya Bhawan, Bidhan Nagar, Kolkata-700091, for purchase of power on Short Term Basis for the period from 1st April, 2024 to 30 June, 2024, through Traders/Licenses/Bidders. Interested parties may download the tender documents from the website <a href="http://www.mstccommerce.com">https://www.mstccommerce.com</a> directly with the help of Digital Signature Certificate from 11:00 hrs of 16.02.2024 and submit the same on or before 17:00 hrs. of 27.02.2024.			
For details, visit <a href="http://www.wbseedcl.in">www.wbseedcl.in</a>			
ICA- T3858(3)/2024			

THE NATIONAL SMALL INDUSTRIES CORPORATION LIMITED			
(A Government of India Enterprise)			
Corporate Identification No. U74140DL1955GOI002481			
Request for Proposal (RFP) for Selection of Agency for Providing Digital Solutions to MSMEs			
NSIC invites online bids on CPP Portal from the eligible bidders against the RFP stated in the title above, which is published on 10.02.2024 on CPP Portal.			
The details of RFP are available under the web link <a href="https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app">https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app</a> or <a href="https://nsic.co.in/tender/Current-Tenders">https://nsic.co.in/tender/Current-Tenders</a> .			
Pre-Bid Meeting Information is published on NSIC Website.			
Last date & time for submission of Proposal is 02.03.2024 by 17:00 hours.			
Any further announcement/ corrigendum regarding RFP will be made available on above two web links.			

External demand, or exports minus imports, contributed 0.2 percentage point to the GDP. The yen, which changed little following the release of the data and last stood at 150.42 per dollar, pinned near a three-month low hit earlier in the week. The Nikkei rose 1%, reversing some losses made from the previous session, possibly on expectations the BOJ may continue with its massive easing programme for longer than expected. On a quarterly basis, GDP slid 0.1%.

Private consumption, which makes up more than half of economic activity, fell 0.2% while capital expenditure, another key private-sector growth engine, fell 0.1%.

External demand, or exports minus imports, contributed 0.2 percentage point to the GDP.

The yen, which changed little following the release of the data and last stood at 150.42 per dollar, pinned near a three-month low hit earlier in the week.

The Nikkei rose 1%, reversing some losses made from the previous session, possibly on expectations the BOJ may continue with its massive easing programme for longer than expected. On a quarterly basis, GDP slid 0.1%.

</div

## DHAKA

My firms 'forcefully' taken over: Bangladesh Nobel winner Yunus



Bangladesh Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus said on Thursday that several of his firms were "forcefully" taken over. He is credited with lifting millions out of poverty with his microfinance bank but has earned the enmity of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has accused him of "sucking blood" from the poor. AFP

## KUWAIT CITY

Kuwait dissolves parliament as political crisis persists



Kuwait dissolved parliament on Thursday after a protracted stalemate between Ministers and lawmakers dragged on despite the accession of a new Emir in December. The announcement came after Ministers boycotted a parliamentary session on Wednesday in objection to a speech delivered by one lawmaker. AFP

## ISLAMABAD

Imran Khan's party nominates Umar Ayub Khan as PM candidate



Jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party on Thursday nominated as its prime ministerial candidate the party secretary general Umar Ayub Khan, grandson of former military dictator Ayub Khan. Mr. Umar, 54, joined PTI before the 2018 general elections after losing the 2013 polls as a candidate of the PML-N. PTI

## ATHENS

Greece parliament set to legalise same-sex marriage and adoption



Greece's parliament was set to legalise same-sex marriage and adoption, a landmark reform promoted by the conservative government over the opposition of the country's powerful Orthodox Church. Dozens of ruling party MPs are expected to oppose the Bill. But support from Opposition parties means it is certain to pass. AFP

99 journalists killed in 2023, 77 in Gaza war: report

**Agence France-Presse**  
NEW YORK

Seventy-seven of the 99 journalists killed in 2023 were killed in the Israel-Hamas war, making the last 12 months the deadliest for the media in almost a decade, the Committee to Protect Journalists said on Thursday.

Killings of reporters would have dropped globally year-on-year had it not been for the deaths in Gaza, Israel and Lebanon, the CPJ said, although fatalities were stable in Somalia and the Philippines. The toll is the highest since 2015 and an increase of nearly 44% on 2022's figures. "More journalists were killed in the first three months of the Israel-Gaza war than have ever been killed in a single country over an entire year," the CPJ said.

## Israeli forces storm main hospital in southern Gaza

Israeli Army calls it a limited operation seeking the remains of hostages taken by Hamas; overnight attacks on the hospital complex had killed a patient and wounded six others

**Associated Press**  
RAFAH

Israeli forces stormed the main hospital in southern Gaza on Thursday, hours after Israeli fire killed a patient and wounded six others inside the complex. The Israeli Army said it was a limited operation seeking the remains of hostages taken by Hamas.

The raid came a day after the Army sought to evacuate thousands of displaced people who had taken shelter at Nasser Hospital in the city of Khan Younis, the focus of Israel's offensive against Hamas in recent weeks.

The military said it had "credible intelligence" that Hamas had held hostages at the hospital and that the



Dangerously exposed: Children rest outside Rafah after they were evacuated from Nasser hospital in Khan Younis. REUTERS

remains of hostages might still be inside. Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the chief military spokesperson, said forces were conducting a "precise and limited" operation there and would not forcibly evacuate medics or patients. Israel accuses Hamas of using hospi-

tals and other civilian structures to shield its fighters.

A released hostage told The Associated Press last month that she and over two dozen other captives had been held in Nasser Hospital. International law prohibits the targeting of

medical facilities, but they can lose those protections if they are used for military purposes.

## No treatment

The troops were searching several hospital buildings after ordering all medical staff and patients to move into an older building in the compound, said Shaban Tabash, a nurse at the hospital. Doctors were unable to provide treatment to the patients in the building, which was not properly equipped. "The situation of patients is difficult," he said.

Overnight, a strike slammed into one of the hospital's wards, and video showed medics scrambling to wheel patients on stretchers down a corridor filled with smoke or dust. Hezbollah confirmed

## Hamas vows to retaliate as Israeli air strikes kill 10 Lebanese civilians in a day

**Associated Press**

NABATIYEH

The civilian death toll from two Israeli air strikes in Lebanon has risen to 10, Lebanese state media reported on Thursday, making the previous day the deadliest in more than four months of cross-border exchanges.

Israel's military said it killed a senior commander with the militant Hezbollah group's elite Radwan Force, Ali Dibs, who it says played a role in a sophisticated attack last year that unnerved Israelis, as well as other attacks directed at Israel over the past four months.

It said Dibs was killed along with his deputy Hassan Ibrahim Issa, as well as another Hezbollah operative, in a strike in the southern city of Nabatiyeh. Hezbollah confirmed



Collateral damage: Mourners attend the funeral of a woman and two children killed during an Israeli air strike in Lebanon. AFP

three of its fighters were killed.

Hezbollah has vowed to retaliate for Wednesday's strikes, which hit Nabatiyeh and a village in southern Lebanon, just hours after projectiles from Lebanon killed an Israeli soldier.

More Israeli strikes were reported in south Lebanon

on Thursday and Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati condemned the escalation.

The UN peacekeeping force deployed along the Lebanon-Israel border, known as UNIFIL, expressed concerns over the latest "exchanges of fire," and urged all sides involved to halt hostilities.

## Ukraine reinforces 'critical' frontline town of Avdiivka

**Agence France-Presse**  
KYIV

Ukraine has rushed soldiers to the embattled eastern town of Avdiivka, surrounded on three sides by Russian forces, where the military said the situation was "extremely critical".

The announcement of reinforcements came as a Ukrainian rocket strike on the Russian border city of Belgorod killed at least six persons and wounded another 17, officials there said. A one-year-old girl

**Kyiv's rocket strike on the Russian border city of Belgorod kills at least six persons**

was among those killed

Both sides are escalating aerial attacks as the war nears the end of its second year. Ukraine's position around Avdiivka in the eastern Donetsk region has grown increasingly precarious.

"The Third Separate As-

sault Brigade confirms that it was urgently redeployed to strengthen Ukrainian troops in the Avdiivka area," the brigade said in a Telegram post. It described the situation as "extremely critical," "threatening" and "unstable", adding that Russia was "throwing new forces and resources into the town".

Russian troops, who have managed to almost encircle the town through a series of attacks launched last year, have made progress in recent days.

**Sriram Lakshman**

LONDON

The U.K. economy slipped into a "technical" recession in 2023, with the final quarter for last year showing a decline in GDP of 0.3%, on the back of a 0.1% decline in growth in the third quarter, as per data released by the country's Office for National Statistics (ONS) on Thursday. The news was quickly deployed by the Opposition Labour Party as a reason to vote out Rishi Sunak's Con-

servative government in elections later this year.

"Rishi Sunak has failed to turn the corner on 14 years of Tory economic decline," Labour leader Keir Starmer said, adding that Labour alone could deliver the change that was needed.

Construction, production and services were all down in the final quarter of 2023. The U.K. grew at 0.1% over 2023 – the weakest growth registered since the 2009 financial crisis, barring 2020, when the pandemic began.

Labour's shadow chancellor said Mr. Sunak's plan to grow the economy was "in tatters".

"Growing the economy" was one of five promises Mr. Sunak had made in January 2023 to energise his party's flagging poll prospects.

With an eye on the elections, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt is expected to cut taxes in the Budget, which is due on March 6. The tax cuts are reportedly being financed by billions of pounds in funding cuts for

public services, which are already in disarray.

"But I would only cut taxes in a way that was responsible," Mr. Hunt told Sky News on Thursday, adding that he did not want to jeopardise inflation levels, which have fallen since last year. Despite being faced with the latest GDP figures, Mr. Hunt insisted that the economy was "more resilient" than most people had predicted, as he pointed to falling inflation and growing real wages.

**Judge sets March date for Trump's criminal trial**

**Agence France-Presse**  
NEW YORK

Donald Trump returned to court in Manhattan on Thursday where his attempts to dismiss charges of covering up hush money payments were rejected, setting the first criminal trial of a former U.S. President to begin on March 25. He faces 34 counts of accounting fraud linked to payments to porn star Stormy Daniels.

## Bayern Munich lurches into more trouble with loss to Lazio

**CHAMPIONS LEAGUE**

**Associated Press**  
ROME

Four days after a damaging loss in the Bundesliga, Bayern Munich again didn't meet expectations in a 1-0 loss at Lazio in the first leg of the Champions League's round of 16 on Wednesday.

Lazio captain Ciro Immobile converted a penalty kick when Bayern was reduced to 10 men midway through the second half after the German club failed to capitalise on a series of chances.

Bayern has reached the quarterfinals or better in 11 of its last 12 Champions League campaigns – the



Composed finish: Immobile makes no mistake from the spot to hand Lazio a slim advantage over Bayern. GETTY IMAGES

exception being a last-16 elimination by Liverpool five years ago. Bayern defender Dayot Upamecano was sent off for a foul on Gustav Isaksen and Immobile sent goalkeeper Manuel Neuer the wrong way with the ensuing spot kick. Kylian Mbappe grabbed

## Indian men's team loses to China

**BATC**

**Press Trust of India**

SHAH ALAM

The Indian men's team felt the absence of star doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty as it suffered a narrow 2-3 loss to China in the Badminton Asia Team Championships group tie here on Thursday.

Star shuttlers H.S. Pranoy and Lakshya Sen won their singles matches but China fought back with wins in the two doubles contests to make it 2-2. National champion Chirag Sen then lost 15-21 16-21 to Wang Zheng Xing in the fifth match as India conceded the tie.

Already through to the knock-out stage, India finished second in the group, with China taking the top spot.

World No. 1 pair of Satwik and Chirag and 2021 World Championships silver medallist Kidambi Srikanth were rested by the team management as India had already made it to the quarterfinals after the 1-4 win over Hong Kong on Wednesday.

The results:

**Men: China bt India 3-2** (Weng Hong Yang lost to H.S. Pranoy 21-16, 18-21, 19-21; Chen Bo Yang & Liu Yi bt M.R. Arjun & Dhruv Kapila 21-15, 19-21, 21-19; Lei Lan Xi lost to Lakshya Sen 11-21, 16-21; Ren Xiang Yu & Xie Hao Nan bt Suraj Gopal & Pruthvi K Roy 21-13, 21-9; Wang Zheng Xing bt Chirag Sen 21-15, 21-16).

## Knotty Legend primed to make it three-in-a-row in feature event

BENGALURU: Knotty Legend, who is in fine fettle, is poised for a hat-trick in the Roach Lifescapes Bangalore Juvenile Million (₹1,400m), the feature event of the races to be held on Friday (Feb. 16). There will be no false rails.

**1. SABARIMALA PLATE** (₹1,200m), rated OO to 25, 6-y-o & over, 2-p.m.: 1. Madhu Drifter (I) Koshi K 62.5, 2. Jersey Legend (T) John S. 62.5, 3. Sacred Creator (O) Rajesh K 61.5, 4. Spirit Dancer (II) Siddaraju 61.5, 5. Dawn Rising (9) Vivek 59.5, 6. Air Blast (3) Rozario 58, 7. Amazing Luck (4) Rayan 58, 8. Infinite Spirit (P) Surya 57, 9. Akasi (5) Arvind K 56, 10. Perfect Halo (6) B. Harish 56, 11. Max Mueller (8) Sardham 53 and 12. Star Citizen (P) Sat Kumar 50.

**2. TURKOMAN, 2. JE NE SAIS QUOI**, 3. ECO FRIENDLY

**4. SHIVAGANGA FALLS PLATE** (₹1,200m), rated 20 to 24, 3-y-o & over, 2-p.m.: 1. Star Concept (4) Siddaraju 62, 2. Rembrandy (3) B.L. Paswan 60.5, 3. Knotty Challenger (I) Vivek 57, 4. Lex Luther (5) N. Pradeep 56, 6. Benzema (10) Rayan 55, 7. Springsteen (7) Rozario 55, 8. The Welcome (9) Jagadeesh 54, 9. Princess Gold (2) Shreyas 53.5 and 10. Tigerking (8) Sardham H 51.5.

**5. HIGH SPEED DIVE**, 6. STORM SHADOW (2) Vivek 55 and 5. Vafadar (1) Srinath 55.

**7. KNOTTY LEGEND, 2. MASATO**

**8. BELLLARY PLATE** (₹1,400m), rated 40 to 65, 6-y-o & over, 5-p.m.: 1. Devils Magic (2) Srinath 60, 2. Armory (7) Rajesh K 57.5, 3. Millbrook (3) R. Pradeep 56, 5. Augusto (8) Suraj Narredu 55, 6. Memorable (5) Siddaraju 55.5, 7. Own Legacy (10) Sardham 55.5, 8. Southern Power (11) Rayan 55.5, 9. Osiris (6) P. Sai Kumar 54, 10. Subernaristorat (7) Jagadeesh 54.5.

**1. LOCKHEED, 2. MAKOTO, 3. NYX**

**4. ROACH LIFESCAPES BANGALORE JUVENILE MILLION** (₹1,400m), 3-y-o only, (Terms), 4-15, 1. Knotty Legend (3) P. Trevor 55, 2. Masato (5) Suraj Narredu 55, 3. Priceless Prince (4) Ashok K 55, 4. Storm Shadow (2) Vivek 55 and 5. Vafadar (1) Srinath 55.

**5. R.R. BYRAMJI MEMORIAL MILION** (₹1,200m), maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 4-15, 1. Amazing Stride (12) Darshan 56, 2. Fallon Of My Love (8) M. Naveen 56, 3. La McQueen 56, 4. Sardham 56, 5. Silver Strike (6) P. Pradeep 56, 6. Pursuit Of Wealth (5) R. Pradeep 56, 7. Silver Strike (6) P. Pradeep 56, 8. Ashwa Vedha (5)

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

**EXCEPTIONAL**

**Collingwood all praise for Rohit, Jadeja and Sarfaraz**



VIJAY SONEJI

England assistant coach Paul Collingwood complimented captain Rohit Sharma, Ravindra Jadeja and Sarfaraz Khan for making the most of the conditions. "The two guys who got hundreds (Rohit and Jadeja) and Sarfaraz at the end played exceptionally well. We threw everything at them, in terms of plans and field positions," he said.

**PRIOR NOTICE**

**Dravid had told Sarfaraz 'to be ready for either No. 5 or 6'**



VIJAY SONEJI

India debutant Sarfaraz Khan wasn't surprised to see Ravindra Jadeja walk in after India had a poor start losing three quick wickets with the last one falling when the score was 33. The Mumbai middle-order batter revealed that head coach Rahul Dravid had told him "to be ready for either No. 5 or 6".

**RARE FEAT**

**Jadeja third Indian to achieve 3,000 runs-200 wickets in Tests**



VIJAY SONEJI

Ravindra Jadeja on Thursday became the third Indian player to register 3,000 runs and 200 wickets in Tests. Former captain Kapil Dev tops the elite list with 5,248 runs and 434 wickets in 131 matches, followed by star spinner R. Ashwin (3,271 runs, 499 wks., 98). Jadeja, playing his 70th Test, has 3,003 runs and 280 wickets.

**ALL FOR THE TEAM**

**'Woody runs in tirelessly, and he always does it with a smile'**



VIJAY SONEJI

Paul Collingwood heaped praise on England pacer Mark Wood. "Woody runs in tirelessly for this team, and he always does it with a smile. The wicket of Rohit came at an important time. The bouncer plan, you have to think outside the box on how to take wickets," he said. "The best was the run out, he was chuffed to bits with that."

# Rohit, Jadeja's tons & Sarfaraz's blitz highlight opening day

The India skipper and the all-rounder put on a partnership of 204 after England pacer Wood's early strikes reduce the host to 33 for three; an unfortunate run out cuts short the debutant's stroke-filled innings of 62

**ENGLAND IN INDIA****Amol Karhadkar**

RAJKOT

**M**ark Wood, who steamed in at full tilt all through the day, ended the day with the 'most prized' wicket and a direct hit to keep England in play. But, in between the pacer's exploits, two veterans got India out of the woods before a debutant almost gave the home team an upper hand on the opening day of the third Test.

Riding on captain Rohit Sharma (131, 196b, 14x4, 3x6) and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja's partnership of 204 runs, India got out of a hole after being reduced to 33 for three. Sarfaraz Khan's breezy 62 (66b, 9x4, 1x6) on debut helped the host end the day at 326 for five at the Niranjan Shah Stadium on Thursday.

When Jadeja was promoted to bat on his home turf, ahead of Sarfaraz, India was in a spot of bother. Wood had accounted for opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (caught in slips with a delivery that rose) and a shaky Shubman Gill (beaten for pace to be caught behind) to make the most of the early moisture.

And Rajat Patidar – who started off with a delightful punch off the back-foot – found himself in no man's land and was caught while attempting to cut left-arm spinner Tom Hartley.

With the conditions easing and Rohit looking solid at one end, Jadeja took the



Leading from the front: Skipper Rohit mixed caution with aggression as he propped up the Indian innings. VIJAY SONEJI

pressure off by holding on to the other. Had Joe Root been able to latch on to a difficult lunging catch at slip off Hartley, after Rohit's attempted heave misfired just after the drinks interval, India may have been staring down the barrel after electing to bat.

Following the reprieve, Rohit got into his groove and entertained a moderate crowd with marvellous stroke-play. While his supple wrists were on display while flicking pacers, especially Anderson, the opener went after the spinners, literally toying around with the trio when the surface hardly had anything to offer.

The only bowler who

persistent asked questions of Rohit was Wood and it was in the last session that the Englishman's short-ball ploy was rewarded with Rohit miscuing a pull. By then, however, Rohit had notched up his 11th Test hundred and was looking on course to convert it into a big one when he departed.

**Targeting the spinners**

Jadeja, at the other end, was rock-solid and was forced to take a back seat once Sarfaraz took guard. Once the nerves had settled in, Sarfaraz kept himself busy and made the most of aggressive fields set by Ben Stokes by going after spinners.

Sarfaraz, who displayed his ability to clear the infield, especially with straight hits, raced past his fifty in just 48 balls. Jadeja, meanwhile, had slowed down in quest of a second successive Test hundred at home. When on 99, he called Sarfaraz for a non-existent single before sending him back. Wood's direct hit from mid-on cut short Sarfaraz's innings.

Kuldeep Yadav, promoted to shield the other debutant Dhruv Jurel, saw off the evening along with Jadeja (110 batting, 212b, 9x4, 2x6), who tucked the ball on to the on-side immediately after Sarfaraz's dismissal for a timid celebration.

**SCOREBOARD**

**INDIA — 1ST INNINGS**  
Yashasvi Jaiswal c Root b Wood 10 (10b, 2x4), Rohit Sharma c Stokes b Wood 131 (196b, 14x4, 3x6), Shubman Gill c Foakes b Wood 0 (9b), Rajat Patidar c Duckett b Hartley 5 (15b, 1x4), Ravindra Jadeja (batting) 110 (212b, 9x4, 2x6), Sarfaraz Khan run out 62 (66b, 9x4, 1x6), Kuldeep Yadav (batting) 1 (10b); Extras (b-1, lb-3, nb-2, w-1): 7; Total (for five wkt. in 86 overs): 326.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-22 (Jaiswal, 3.5 overs), 2-24 (Gill, 5.4), 3-33 (Patidar, 8.5), 4-237 (Rohit, 63.3), 5-314 (Sarfaraz, 81.5).

**ENGLAND BOWLING**  
Anderson 19-5-51-0, Wood 17-2-69-3, Hartley 23-3-81-1, Root 13-1-68-0, Rehan 14-0-53-0.  
**Toss:** India.

## Suryakumar's heartfelt message did the trick



Emotional moment: Sarfaraz hugs wife Romana, as his proud father Naushad looks on, after getting his India cap. VIJAY SONEJI

**Amol Karhadkar**

RAJKOT

India Test cap No. 311 belongs to Naushad, Sarfaraz Khan's father-cum-coach, as much as it does to his son.

Naushad and Romana, Sarfaraz's wife, were visibly emotional as former India captain Anil Kumble presented the debutant with the prized blue cap at the Niranjan Shah Stadium on Thursday morning.

Had it not been for Suryakumar Yadav's insistence, Naushad would not have been present on the sidelines to cherish the moment that he has aspired for ever since Sarfaraz was 326.

"When my family was around when I received the Test cap last year in Nagpur, it was a surreal moment for all of us. You have to be there," Suryakumar said in his message.

"That message forced me to alter the plans and we tried to see if all of us can come down. Due to limited flight connectivity to Rajkot, we could get only one plane ticket. After watching the dream of the family come true, I feel it is worth coming down at the last minute," said Naushad, with moist eyes.

"It's just the beginning, there is a long way to go," added Naushad.

Having himself gone through a prolonged period of waiting for an India call-up, albeit in a different format, Suryakumar has been watching Sarfaraz's back ever since the maverick batter was recalled into Mumbai's side in 2019-20.

Sarfaraz has often said how he and Musheer "have been living our father's dream of playing for India."

**'Waiting game' all the way for Sarfaraz**

**Amol Karhadkar**

RAJKOT

Sarfaraz Khan is no stranger to waiting. After waiting for a consistent run at First Class level, he left for Uttar Pradesh. When he returned in 2018, he had to first wait and serve a mandatory one-year cooling-off period to be eligible for Mumbai selection again.

The following season, he had to wait till midway through the Ranji Trophy season to get a chance.

Since then, he has been scoring tons of runs and awaiting a Test call-up. When the big moment finally came, he had to wait again as Ravindra Jadeja – promoted ahead of Sarfaraz at No. 5 – piled on a 204-run partnership with captain Rohit Sharma.

"I was padded up for almost four hours. I kept thinking that I have kept so much patience in life, so there is no harm in keeping some more," Sarfaraz said after marking his debut with a 66-ball 62. "After I went in, I was nervous for the first few balls, but I have practised and worked so hard that everything went well."

And rather than being bogged down by the pressure of Test match cricket, Sarfaraz displayed his game awareness by attacking the spinners as he is used to in domestic cricket.

"I have been doing this for a long time and the field was also up. I had an opportunity and they had one too – they had the chance against a new batter who could make a mistake resulting in another wicket for them and I had the opportunity when the field was up and I also play the spinners well," he said.

# Nagal surmounts Wong's challenge to make it to the quarterfinals

**BENGALURU OPEN****N. Sudarshan**

BENGALURU

Sumit Nagal passed a stern test, overcoming Hong Kong's Coleman Wong 6-2, 7-5 to enter the singles quarterfinal of the Dafan News Bengaluru Open ATP Challenger at the KSLTA courts inside Cubbon Park here on Thursday.

The World No. 98 breezed through the first set, breaking in the second and eighth games. In the second stanza, he mostly wobbled, with his serve coming under tremendous pressure.

But like a Weeble toy from the 1970s, he did not fall down, recovering in time to book his place in the last eight.

Wong struggled with his



Stretched: Nagal had to dig deep to get past Wong. SUDHAKARA JAIN

timing all evening. He had the right ideas, opened up the court to line up potential winners, but fell short in his execution.

He often closed the racket face early and that resulted in many an almighty shank.

The 19-year-old, however,

did not leave without showing glimpses of his talent. A trainee at the Rafa Nadal Academy, Wong is a two-time junior Major doubles champion (2022 Australian Open and 2021 US Open) and a singles semifinalist at the 2022 junior US Open.

He broke Nagal's serve in the fifth game of the se-

cond set and erased two match-points in the 10th game with thunderous serves. But Nagal's superior experience held him in good stead, especially in games three, seven and nine across which he saved eight break-points.

The 26-year-old Indian's most authoritative hold was in game 11 and that meant Wong was serving to stay in the match. Nerves took over and Nagal executed a fine forehand crosscourt pass on his third match-point to end Wong's resistance.

**Other results:**  
**Singles: Second round:** Adam Walton (Aus) bt Gauthier Onclin (Bel) 6-2, 6-2; Moez Echagui (Tun) bt Enrico Dalla Valle (Ita) 6-2, 6-2; Stefano Napolitano (Ita) bt Vasek Pospisil (Can) 6-4, 4-6, 6-4.  
**Doubles: Quarterfinal:** Myneni & Ramkumar bt Schnaitter & Wallner (Ger) 6-4, 6-4.

# Fighting India goes down to Australia

**FIH PRO LEAGUE****Uthra Ganeshan**

BHUBANESWAR

Indian men went down 4-6 to Australia in their FIH Pro League match on Thursday in a game that was enthralling and frustrating in equal measure.

To come back from being 0-2 down inside two minutes to lead 4-2 at half-time showed a fight that would have pleased coach Fulton. India has often folded up in the past when down against Australia, a team that India seems to fight as much on field as in the mind. The Dutch may be tough opponents, but Australia, at its best, is a beast that never stops.

To India's credit, it not only recovered enough after the opening whirlwind but stuck to its plan and structure, fighting back to snatch control and matching the Aussies at their own game.

India kept the pressure, took charge, denied the Aussies space much as the opponents had tried to do and made moves of their own, so much so that the second quarter was all about Indian attack and Australian errors. It was a high-intensity, end-to-end game that gave little time to settle, recover and regroup.

But India did that, earned four penalty corners in the first 30 minutes and converted three. Har-

manpreet getting two of those. And then he sent a long diagonal pass from near the half-line to a lonely Mandeep inside the circle, the latter receiving, controlling and smashing in a reverse in one move at the stroke of half-time.

Thursday was perhaps one of the fastest games the team has played in recent times and any doubts of the Aussies fading away were laid to rest. They started with a bang, Blake Govers getting two inside the first

two minutes as the Indians tried to understand what hit them before getting the defence in place.

Post break, however, the Aussies simply upped a gear – if that was possible. The attacks spread out, the pace increased, the forward line kept pressing high and the defence did not concede a single PC. India's biggest weapon was blunted and there was no Plan B.

**The results:**  
**Men:** Spain 4 (Enrique Gonzalez 13, 57, Marc Miralles 18, Marc Reyne 41) bt Ireland 2 (Matthew Nelson 24, Lee Cole 52). Australia 6 (Blake Govers 2, 2, 40, Lachlan Sharp 52, Jacob Anderson 55, Jack Welch 58) bt India 4 (Harmanpreet Singh 12, 20, Sukhjeet Singh 18, Mandeep Singh 29).  
**At Rourkela: Women:** Australia 4 (Alice Arnott 7, Maddison Brooks 21, Rebecca Greiner 30, Claire Colwill 44) bt USA 0. Netherlands 4 (Burg Joosje Burg 8, Fay Van Der Elst 12, Yibbi Jansen 34, Felice Albers 39) bt China 2 (Anhui Yu 15, Bingfeng Gu 59).



Rewarding move: Mandeep lines up a strike. BISWARANJAN ROUT

## INBRIEF



## Bedingham helps Proteas set Kiwis a target of 267

South Africa's David Bedingham scored a maiden century on Thursday to leave New Zealand with the challenging task of scoring 267 to win the second and final Test in Hamilton.

**The scores:** South Africa 242 & 235 (David Bedingham 110, Keegan Petersen 43, Will O'Rourke 5/34) vs New Zealand 211 & 40/1.

## Sathi Reddy &amp; Fabio Fognini go down in pre-quarterfinals

Sathi Reddy Chirala and Fabio Fognini lost 6-1, 6-3 in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the \$164,000 Challenger tennis tournament in Manama.

**The results:** \$164,000 Challenger, Manama: Doubles, pre-quarterfinals: Marco Bortolotti & Alessandro Giannessi (Ita) bt Sathi Reddy Chirala & Fabio Fognini (Ita) 6-1, 6-3.

\$25,000 ITF men, Nakhon Si Thammarat:

**Pre-quarterfinals:** Tsung-Hao Huang (Tpe) bt Nitin Kumar Sinha 3-6, 6-3, 6-1; **Doubles, quarterfinals:** Mitsuki Leong (Mas) & Nitin Kumar Sinha bt Nikita Ianin & Boris Pokotilov 6-3, 6-2.

\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir: **Pre-quarterfinals:** Fausto Tabacco (Ita) bt Chirag Duhar 6-4, 6-2.

\$15,000 ITF women, Monastir: **First round:** Beatrice Ricci (Ita) bt Sandeepi Singh Rao 6-2, 6-2.

## LIVE TELECAST

**India vs England:** 3rd Test, day 2, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 9.30 a.m.

**Ranji Trophy:** Jio Cinema App, 9.30 a.m.

**Bengaluru Open tennis:** Eurosport, noon.

**PVL:** Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6.30 & 8.30 p.m.

**ISL:** Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.

**PKL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.

**Serie A:** Sports 18-1 & Jio Cinema App, 11.30 p.m.

**LaLiga:** Sports 18-1 & Jio Cinema App, 1.30 a.m. (Saturday).

**New Zealand vs South Africa:** 2nd Test, day 5, Prime Video, 3.30 a.m. (Saturday).

# Bengal hopes to give captain Tiwary a befitting farewell

Takes on Bihar in its last group engagement; seamer Mukesh Kumar's return will be an advantage for the home team at the Eden Gardens

## RANJI TROPHY

**Y.B. Sarangi**  
KOLKATA

**B**engal will be keen to give its captain Manoj Tiwary a befitting farewell and finish a forgettable season on a positive note in its last Ranji Trophy Group-B engagement against Bihar starting at the Eden Gardens here on Friday.

Bengal, placed sixth with 12 points from one win, two defeats and three draws, was out of the knockouts race after its consecutive losses to Mumbai and Kerala.

It will aim at securing a morale-boosting outright win.

## Key batters

Abhimanyu Easwaran, Anustup Majumdar and Tiwary, who completed 10,000 First Class runs this season, will be among the key batters for the home side.

The return of seamer Mukesh Kumar, who was released from the Indian team to play domestic cricket, will be an advantage for the hosts as he will combine with an in-form Suraj Jaiswal and Mohammad Kaif in the pace department.

## Balance

All-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed will provide balance to the side.

"Our main aim is to fin-



**Main aim:** Manoj Tiwary wants the Bengal team to finish its campaign with a victory.

FILE PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

ish the campaign with a victory.

"No doubt, it will be an emotional match for me, but I don't want the focus to be entirely on me," said Tiwary, who led the side to the final in the previous season.

The bottom-ranked Bihar, which has five points from three losses and as

many draws, will also look to sign off the season with a heartwarming result.

Sakibul Gani and Bipin Kumar Saurabh are the leading run-getters this season, while medium pacers Veer Pratap Singh is the top-wicket-taker for Bihar.

The visitors need to raise their game to stop Bengal at its home.



Our main aim is to finish the campaign with a victory.

No doubt, it will be an emotional match for me, but I don't want the focus to be entirely on me

— TIWARY

## RANJI TROPHY SCHEDULE (ROUND SEVEN)

- Kerala.
- Group C: At Salem:** Tamil Nadu vs. Punjab.
- At Porvorim:** Goa vs. Gujarat.
- At Agartala:** Tripura vs. Railways.
- At Hubballi:** Karnataka vs. Chandigarh.
- Group D: At Delhi:** Delhi vs. Odisha.
- At Indore:** Madhya Pradesh vs. J&K.
- At Dehradun:** Uttarakhand vs. Baroda.
- At Puducherry:** Pondicherry vs. Himachal.



**Aggressive:** Defenders' Angamuthu, right, smashes past the Blitz block. M. VEDHAN

## Defenders breeze past Chennai Blitz

## PVL

**Netra.V**  
CHENNAI

pite the setback, the Defenders came in strong after a timeout from coach Draagan Mihailevici to clinch the first set 15-10.

The Chennai libero Ramamanthan R showcased his acrobatic skills with a few attempts to save the ball, but it went in vain as S. Nandhagopal's cross-court smash concluded the second set 15-11 for the Defenders.

A tussle of points ensued in the third set with a super point won by Chennai resulting in an 8-8 tie. This was before the Defenders led by Muthusamy Apavu, pulled past the hosts 15-12 to end the match.



TITAN.CO.IN

# TITAN



Make TIME for FUN | UPTO 30% OFF\*

Offer valid till 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024

T&C apply

Available at: **TITAN WORLD**

HELIOS

Authorised Retailers

SHOPPERS STOP

lifestyle<sup>®</sup>

TRENDS

pantaloons

CENTRO

and all leading departmental stores

Shop online: amazon.in

Flipkart

CliQ

TATA NEU

Myntra

NYKAAY FASHION

AJIO

Helpline: 1800-266-0123

To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

# Indian hockey's dummies guide: why Fulton thinks this team is special

*'They can inspire a generation by the way they play – they are attacking, dynamic and score goals; they are a good group, very ambitious but also very proud Indians'*



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## INTERVIEW

### Craig Fulton

**Uthra Ganesan**  
BHUBANESWAR

**F**ar too often the Indian sporting ecosystem tends to get tied up with strategies, technical jargon and details with everyone involved assuming the fans who watch and support them know everything about the sport. For a large number of people out there, however, their favourite player or team has more to do with 'connect' and an indescribable faith and hope.

As Craig Fulton closes in on his first anniversary with the Indian men's hockey team, *The Hindu* asked the South African about his experience so far and to explain to the fans, without jargon, why this team is special. *Excerpts:*

#### How has your experience been so far?

The main thing we wanted back then was

to be Number One in Asia, that was really important and we did that, in a very short period of time, which is good. But it's now time to try and maintain that and then challenge the European top-ranked sides. I think we have bettered a new way of playing, not necessarily changing everything massively but just a different storyline and narrative from what we had after the World Cup. That was obviously a very tough place for everyone but it's been really positive. I have enjoyed working with the group and we are progressing in the right direction. We have a lot of depth and we are trying to create more.

#### Why is this team special?

I think they can inspire a generation by the way they play – they are attacking, dynamic and score goals. They are a good group, very ambitious but also very proud Indians, so I think they are a great role model. There are a lot of seniors still playing in the group who have been through a tough place – we know Indian hockey wasn't always a very happy place because of the results – and they have got the benefits of that.

#### Why should an Indian fan follow this team?

I think because they are trying to break a mould and create something new. Indian hockey has had a lot of success previously and so now any team that comes up will be compared to those in the past. They are in a difficult place because they haven't won gold (in Olympics and WC) for a long time and everyone is putting their hopes on this group to do that. If they get the opportunity and they do it, it's the fairy tale everyone wants. But they obviously will have a lot of obstacles in their way because it's very, very difficult.

#### Why should an Indian fan look forward to this team in Paris?

If you look at the last eight-year cycle and where the team finished – eighth in Rio, 3rd in Tokyo – many are still playing. 14 from the group at Tokyo are still in the squad so it's progressing in the right direction. It's not like there is a complete overhaul – that's a very exciting side note – but it's also important to pick the right players, not just the best players, you have to work

together, especially when the chips are down. We saw that during the ACT final, being 3-1 down at half time and finding a way back – that is also a good reason to get behind this team. When I got here, I was warned that the team does this or that but that's the old Indian team, the future is bright.

#### And why should the other teams look out for them?

You can respect this Indian team for what it's good at or you don't, at your peril. But anyone can tell that it's very difficult to play against when the Indian team is on fire.

#### Is it a pressure or a privilege to shoulder an entire continent's hopes?

I think it's both. The expectation is high because none of the other Asian teams were able to qualify, unfortunately, and it just shows how hard it is to do it. It always comes down to details in every way and I am glad we got over the line. I think it also brings in a focus on where we are and who we represent. If you are from Asia and you don't support the only Asian team in the tournament, that will be a shame. But I am sure the AHF and all the Asian supporters would want India to do well, even though their team is not there.

#### Is there anything you want the players to guard against?

Buying into all the social media hype that they have already won a medal and that it's really great and all those things – that's the side show. You have eight games to play and no one can say you get a medal before they play the first game. It's about staying firmly on the ground, one game at a time.

#### Talking about social media, did you have to work hard to get the Tokyo result out of their minds?

I didn't have to do anything because of the disappointment of the World Cup – maybe that conversation could have been held before the WC. But now you got brought down straight to earth, that's what happens in sport – you can't live in the past but there is no guarantee for the future either. You have to win now but you also have to be ambitious to strive for what you want and this team is ambitious, which is good.

## THE GIST

▼  
It's important to pick the right players, not just the best players, you have to work together, especially when the chips are down

▼  
Anyone can tell that it's very difficult to play against when the Indian team is on fire

▼  
In sport, you can't live in the past but there is no guarantee for the future either



To read newspaper at 6 am, send WhatsApp to 8168305050 now.

# SCIENCE

# The diversity blindspot in health policy

A new study found men, doctors, bureaucrats and individuals from New Delhi are over-represented in key health policy committees – neglecting diverse perspectives critical for public health systems. The over-representation of privileged actors and lack of diversity indicates a ‘centralisation’ of the health policy

Saumya Kalia

**T**he math seems to be off, in the equation of health and healing. Official data suggests women constitute almost half of all of India's health workers. Yet, only 18% of them make it to the top of the pyramid, reaching leadership positions across health panels, committees, hospitals, colleges and ministries. That means for every woman, there are more than four men in a health setting.

Emerging research is putting the health sector's worst-kept secret on display: diversity gaps. The cone of the pyramid has an “over-concentration” of not just men, but of doctors, individuals from Delhi-NCR, and bureaucrats, according to a new analysis of India's National Health Committees between 1943 and 2020. The over-representation of privileged actors and lack of diversity indicates a “centralisation” of the health policy. If power is concentrated in circles – with gender, geography and socio-economic markers at their compass – it risks creating skewed health systems ridden with inequality, experts note.

This constitutes a very middle-class, or an upper-middle-class elite set of policymakers, making decisions for 70% of people whose lives they don't understand, says Vandana Prasad, a public health professional associated with Public Health Resource Network. In another reality, with a more equitable representation from stakeholders, “the policy, programme and implementation will all be different and the outcomes will be much better. The lack of participation is one of the reasons we are not arriving at the outcomes we want.”

#### The gender question

The present study was the first to analyse the composition of India's National Health Committees – a body that recommends what policies to introduce and how to implement health programme. Gender, experience and location of decision-makers are known to impact their decisions, wrote authors Disha Agrawal, Parth Sharma and Vikash Keshri. Only 11% of women were present in 23 health committees, and there was no woman present in 36% of the committees studied.

Take the Devi Shetty Committee on Prevention and Management of COVID-19 Third Wave in 2021. Public health expert Prashanth N. Srinivas pointed out the committee is primarily led by male clinicians, lacking the diverse expertise needed to tackle a global health crisis. The committee, initially comprising only men, added two women after facing criticism. Agarwal et. al. found that gender diversity improved marginally in committees formed post-2000, rising from 9% to 15%.

Diversity impacts policies made,



Only 18% of women make it to leadership positions across health panels FILE PHOTO

“because you are looking only from a certain lens”, says Dipa Sinha, a professor at Ambedkar University with a focus on public health and gender. “The committees can have well-meaning people, but if these are all upper-caste, privileged men located in urban areas” then it stymies the level of detail, care and attention needed for inclusive health policies, she added.

When officials started deliberating on rising anaemia and malnutrition among women, the public health messaging was to encourage women to eat better: green, leafy vegetables, or eggs. “There was no recognition that women might not be able to afford it and even if they do, there is an intra-household difference,” says Dr. Sinha.

The premier institution is designed in a way that women are concentrated at the frontline low-paid positions at the lower end of the hierarchy, and find limited opportunities to climb the ladder. Women make up 29% of doctors, 80% of the nursing staff, and nearly 100% of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) in the country. Moreover, their job is classified as ‘care work’, not technical enough, further devaluing their knowledge. Women across the workforce, on average, earn 34% less than men, according to another report by Dasra NGO. In the present study, the only committee with six nurses in attendance was the High-Power Committee on Nursing and Nursing Profession. “There is a lot of mansplaining...Women will need much more evidence and support to say the same thing as a man to get heard,” says Dr. Sinha. “They also often fall into the trap of being blamed for bringing up these ‘sensitive’ or gendered issues.”

Culturally, a “system of patriarchy definitely seems to affect women”, says Dr. Prasad. Choices are often made based on norms, childbearing and familial expectations; careers interrupted. The National Sample Survey Office found that around 31% of women with medical education in 2018 were out of work because they were engaged with household tasks. Medicine itself, with

if we truly want to build health systems that serve everyone, we need to redress the inequality that has side-lined women from leadership and start listening to women.

ROOPA DHATT

long working hours and demanding rotas, is seen as being untenable for women who are the primary caretakers in a family.

Step back, and the trend reflects globally: a report from Women in Global Health found women occupy only 25% of senior positions and 5% of leadership roles in the healthcare sector, despite making up 70% of the overall global health workforce. The underrepresentation of women in medical leadership sets in motion a cycle: fewer women, fewer mentors, and fewer safe spaces for women. “Current leadership structures are failing to address issues of low or no pay, procedures and protective equipment are tailored to male measurements and sexual abuse and harassment is too common” pushing women out of the health workforce, said executive director Roopa Dhatt. It also “severely impacts” health delivery and health security.

In an Indian context, Dr. Sinha and Dr. Prasad also recommend reserving seats for women and marginalised people on health committees.

Affirmative policies will give them a starting point. “There are women who would be appropriate [for leadership roles]. They may have to travel further, they may have to be encouraged to come...but efforts need to be made to find them,” Dr. Prasad adds.

#### A ‘top-down approach’

India's National Health Policy promotes diversity in political, policy, technical, and managerial leadership at both national and state levels. However, there

is a “larger leadership competency gap” in Indian health policy, which has many dimensions, and gender is a part of it, a *Lancet* paper noted.

India is unique on two accounts: medical leadership is concentrated in Delhi-NCR (with almost half of the members present there), and there is a high degree of influence from doctors and government officials. “The North-Eastern states have very low representation in the committees, while the metropolitan cities are disproportionately represented,” Agarwal et. al. pointed out. The present study noted that post-2000, committees are getting more diverse, in including women, NGOs and non-medical academia. At the same time, centralisation has increased too, from 53% before 2000 to 83%.

The research also pointed to a noted “domination” of doctors in health committees. Scholars Julie Davis and Kamal Gulati wrote in an article noted that doctors often reach executive leadership roles “based on seniority without ever receiving formal management training”, suggesting they “lack appropriate management and leadership competencies and practices”.

On the matter of government officials, Dr. Prasad says: They are often perceived as “controlling”, playing a “policing role”. “A lot of times dissenting views are not recorded,” she says. “Even how much time is given to people to speak is regulated,” Dr. Prasad adds.

What is more important is the balance of power, Dr. Prasad notes, adding that “the bureaucracy wields much more power than any individual or expert coming in.” Some experts have voiced concerns about conflicts of interest. The Alliance for Sustainable & Holistic Agriculture (ASHA) report alleged a “conflict of interest” in the committee charged with the fortified food programme, noting that some stakeholders were “profiting financially” from expanding fortification drives.

#### Redefining policy making

The composition of India's health committees reveals more than its gender or geographical make-up. A tendency to view health from the lens of clinical medicine only. Always disease not dignity, cure not care. The “neglect of preventive care” reflects in how nurses are treated, how ASHAs are paid, and how medical doctors are over-represented in these committees, says Dr. Sinha.

A missing piece in who makes our health policies, also, is the people themselves, says Dr. Prasad.

The 80 crore people who are going to be handed the rice through government schemes deserve representation.

“What do we want to do? Do we only want to create an illusion?” she asks. And, “If we wanted to know the truth, to take good action, there's no other way but to ask and include people,” Dr. Prasad adds.

(saumya.kalia@thehindu.co.in)

## THE GIST

Diversity impacts policies because it stymies the level of detail, care and attention needed for inclusive health policies

Premier institutions are designed in a way that women are concentrated at the front line low-paid positions at the lower end of the hierarchy, and find limited opportunities to climb the ladder. Women make up 29% of doctors, 80% of the nursing staff, and nearly 100% of Accredited Social Health Activists

Around 31% of women with medical education in 2018 were out of work because they were engaged with household tasks. Medicine with long working hours and demanding rotas, is seen as untenable for women who are the primary caretakers in a family

## HUMERUS

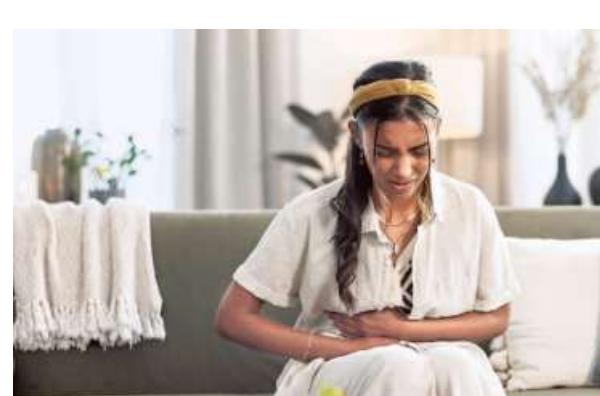


## Will endometriosis be exempt from the gender pass over?

Ramya Kannan

The gender pass over in health care is as alive as it is in other fields; women's health needs are passed over, feminine conditions given rare attention in medicine or research. In a report published last month, consulting firm McKinsey, claimed the women's health gap equates to 75 million years of life lost due to poor health or early death per year, the equivalent of seven days per woman per year. The report, ‘Closing the women's health gap: A \$1 trillion opportunity to improve lives and economies’ makes the case for addressing the 25% more time that women spend in poor health. It would not only help improve the health and lives of millions of women, but could also boost the global economy by at least US\$ 1 trillion annually by 2040.

Women spend more of their lives in poor health and with degrees of disability, the McKinsey report claims. A woman will spend an average of nine years in poor health, affecting her ability to be present and/or productive at home, in the workforce, and in the community and reduces her earning potential. Now, let's set aside the economics and follow the pain trail.



and in the community and reduces her earning potential. Now, let's set aside the economics and follow the pain trail.

An important and often debilitating condition that affects women worldwide, with an estimated 190 million girls and women in the reproductive age suffering globally, is endometriosis. According to the World Health Organisation, endometriosis is a disease in which tissue similar to the lining of the uterus (endometrium) grows outside the uterus, causing inflammation and formation of scar tissue in the pelvic region. It can cause severe pain in the pelvis and make it harder to get pregnant. It

hi and Assam among women above the age of 18 years. Patients complained that diagnostic delays and uncertainty about treatment compelled them to run around, shopping for anything to relieve their pain, and infertility. They reported difficulty in focusing on education and missed classes in school and college during menstruation, missing out on higher education in many instances. Among those who were employed there were women who claimed they were forced to curtail their ambition to grow, as a consequence of endometriosis alone.

All women reported reducing participation in social activities due to the need to be near a lavatory, and fear of experiencing symptoms in public.

Preeti Rajbangshi of The George Institute says that policy makers are only ever concerned with the maternal health of a child bearing woman. Seldom is attention paid to other health conditions that too have an impact on women, sometimes seriously.

Only over the last few years have we seen news about trials and efforts to understand endometriosis and find drugs to help pa-

tients. More recently, media reported the success of trials in Scotland, leading to a near-term possibility that women might see the first working drug. *The Economist* reported that the first endometriosis drug, in four decades, is on the horizon. It arose from a finding that many women with endometriosis had significantly higher levels of a chemical called lactate in their pelvis, than those without.

The report noted that a small group of patients who were part of the EPIC clinical trial at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, who were treated with dichloroacetate reported lessened pain and better quality of life.

A trial with a larger cohort, plus a placebo arm, is next. And possibly, more research to understand endometriosis in its entirety.

(ramya.kannan@thehindu.co.in)

**For feedback and suggestions**  
for ‘Science’,  
please write to  
[science@thehindu.co.in](mailto:science@thehindu.co.in)  
with the subject  
‘Daily page’