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## IN BRIEF



**INDIA bloc an 'opportunist' alliance': Shah**

**JAIPUR**  
Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday hit out at the Opposition's INDIA bloc, saying it was an "opportunistic alliance" against the BJP, guided by the family politics of each of its participants. Mr. Shah said the Congress was no match for the BJP. ► Page 3

**Suvendu visits Sandeshkhali after HC steps in**

**KOLKATA**  
The Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, was allowed to visit Sandeshkhali on Tuesday at the intervention of the Calcutta High Court. He was earlier stopped by the police from visiting the area on two occasions. ► Page 16

OPPORTUNITIES ► PAGE 5

## SC declares AAP leader as Mayor of Chandigarh

Top court sets aside results, initiates action against Returning Officer for 'defacing' ballot papers; Bench says it would not tolerate 'subterfuges' that destroy electoral democracy even at local levels

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said that it would not tolerate "subterfuges" that destroy electoral democracy even at the local level, while declaring the Aam Aadmi Party's Kuldeep Kumar as the new Mayor of the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud initiated action against Anil Mash, the Returning Officer, who presided over the controversial mayoral elections on January 30, whose "defacement" of eight ballot papers was caught on security cameras. Mr. Mash's "furive" conduct had swung the electoral results in favour of the BJP's Manoj



Anil Mash, who conducted the Chandigarh mayoral elections, arriving at the Supreme Court on Tuesday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Sonkar. The Supreme Court had intervened on February 5 to sequester the ballot papers and video recording of the polling day.

By declaring Mr. Kumar as Chandigarh Mayor in a single stroke on Tuesday, the court dashed the BJP's hopes for fresh polls to the municipal corporation.

On Monday, Chief Justice

Chandrachud had voiced "deep concern" about the "horse trading taking place". His remark was made in reference to the alliancism of three AAP councillors to Mr. Sonkar's resignation as Mayor on the eve of the SC hearing.

"This court is duty-bound in exercise of its power to do complete justice under Article 142 to ensure that the process of electoral democracy is not thwarted by such subterfuges. Allowing such a state of affairs to take place would be destructive of the most valued principles of democracy our country depends on," he observed.

The Bench said that what had happened at the mayoral elections was an "exceptional situation". The court must step in to ensure that the basic mandate of the electoral democracy, albeit, at the local participatory level, is preserved," Chief Justice Chandrachud said.

CONTINUED ON  
PAGE 14  
THEY STEAL ELECTIONS'  
► PAGE 4

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CONTINUED ON  
PAGE 14  
THEY STEAL ELECTIONS'  
► PAGE 4

## Maharashtra Assembly clears 10% Maratha quota

**Shoumojit Banerjee**  
PUNE



Eknath Shinde, Devendra Fadnavis and Rahul Narwekar celebrate the news outside the Vidhan Bhavan on Tuesday. EMANUEL YOGINI

Supreme Court scrutiny.

The Bill, passed by the Legislative Assembly and Council, is similar to the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Act, 2018 of the government led by Devendra Fadnavis, which was struck down by the top court in May 2021. In fact, this is the third time in the last decade that the State has introduced legislation for a Maratha quota, which is more likely to pass

community, this Bill does not disturb the existing OBC quota. It will push total reservations in Maharashtra to 62%, above the Supreme Court-mandated limit of 50%. This Bill is distinct from the State government's earlier notification on issuing Kunbi OBC certificates to eligible Marathas who had records showing them as Kunbis. Thus, non-Kunbi Marathas will be covered under the legislation passed on Tuesday.

CONTINUED ON  
► PAGE 14

## + Gulf countries keen to invest in J&K: Modi

**Peerzada Ashiq**

JAMMU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who dedicated ₹32,000 crore projects to

J&K in Jammu on Tuesday, expressed satisfaction over the positive outcome of the removal of Article 370, "with the Gulf countries showing keen interest in

investment". There is a positivity about investing in Kashmir. The successful G-20 meeting in the country and Srinagar have echoed in the globe. A re-

cord two crore tourists have visited J&K in the past one year," he said.

FULL REPORT ON  
► PAGE 14

**Indians hired as 'helpers' forced to fight in Russia's war**

**Vijaya Singh**

**Sushma Haidar**

NEW DELHI

At least three Indians were forced to fight alongside the Russians on the Russia-Ukraine border after they were allegedly conned by agents as "army security helpers", one of the victims told *The Hindu*.

Since November 2022, around 18 Indians have been stranded at Mariupol, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Rostov-on-Don along the Russia-Ukraine border, and one person is said to have been killed in the ongoing war, an agent said.

While a few Indians volunteered to join the International Legion in Ukraine in 2022, the presence of Indians on Russian side in combat roles has been reported for the first time.

The family of one of the victims, who is from Hyderabad, has approached AIMIM Member of Parliament Asaduddin Owaisi.

On January 25, Mr. Owaisi wrote to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and the Indian Embassy in Moscow, seeking the government's intervention for their return.

CONTINUED ON

► PAGE 14

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I came to ForumIAS after having given unsuccessful attempts at Prelims. I was able to clear the Prelims Main's and the Interview in one go and secured a place in Indian Police Service. I am indebted to Ayush Sir and Dipin Sir for their support, motivation, and availability throughout the course. - Natasha Goyal, IAS Rank 175, CSE 2022

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## IN BRIEF



**'Pay rent, help us move out'**  
apartment residents tell DDA

Residents of "structurally unsafe" Signature View Apartments (SVA) have written to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), asking it to provide rent to those who are ready to vacate their flats as per the mutually agreed terms. The agency had offered to pay monthly rent to the residents till the redevelopment is concluded as part of a rehabilitation package, the residents say. However, in a letter to the urban body on February 15, SVA's residents' welfare association said that despite a majority of the residents expressing their willingness to vacate their flats, the DDA had not acknowledged their proposal.

### Police destroy ₹1,600 crore worth of contraband

Illegal drugs, weighing 10,361 kg and worth ₹1,600 crore, were destroyed in an incinerator in Jhangirpur in the presence of Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena and Police Commissioner of Delhi Sanjay Arora as part of the police's ongoing campaign against drugs, said Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime) Sanjay Bhatia, adding that cannabis, heroin, cocaine, and psychotropic substances formed the majority of the pile. "We will destroy drugs in the same manner in future," he said.

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Police gear up for farmers' march, fortify Delhi borders

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

The police directed security personnel at the Tikri, Singhu, and Ghazipur borders to stay alert and held mock drills on Tuesday, a day ahead of protesting farmers' proposed march towards the Capital. Security personnel have been directed not to allow even a single protester or vehicle to enter Delhi.

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## INDIA bloc an 'opportunistic alliance' against BJP: Shah

The Hindu Bureau  
JAIPUR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday hit out at the Opposition's INDIA bloc, saying it was "an opportunistic alliance" against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), guided by the family politics of each of its participants. Mr. Shah said the Congress, with its dismal record and lack of direction, was no match for the BJP.

Mr. Shah launched the BJP's campaign for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Rajasthan with a series of events in Bikaner, Udaipur and Jaipur. He addressed the meetings of the BJP's booth-level workers and the party's State election committee before wrapping up his day-long visit with an interaction with voters in the State capital.

**Fight against 'four ills'** The senior BJP leader called upon voters to support the BJP in Rajasthan and help it maintain its record of winning all the 25 Lok Sabha seats in the 2014 and 2019 elections. "At the national level, we have set the target of crossing the 400-mark for the NDA (National Democratic Alliance) with the BJP alone winning at least 370 seats. The vic-

trum and casteism are the legacies of the Congress rule. The nation is marching ahead with the Prime Minister having dealt with them," he said.

Mr. Shah said the BJP had delivered on its election promises, including the abrogation of Article 370 and construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. "The Congress not only kept the Ram temple issue hanging, but it also did not participate in the consecration of Ram Lalla. The Congress boycotted the January 22 ceremony when the entire nation was feeling the spiritual vibes from Ayodhya," he said.

The Home Minister also accused the Congress of trying to divide the country on regional lines.



St. Stephen's rescinds order suspending students

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

In a communication to first-year students, St. Stephen's College, a residential college, said none of them will be suspended for low attendance during the morning assembly, stressing that the earlier email sent to them was a "miscommunication" and "wrongly worded".

The clarification from the principal came after college students said over 100 of them were suspended and barred from taking second-semester exams.

The students had sought clarification on the stated grounds of their suspension. An email sent to the students' parents and guardians on February 17 informed them that their wards had been suspended and barred from taking the examination was claimed to have been written by the personal secretary to the principal.

In an email to students, Mr. Varghese said, "It was a miscommunication, incorrectly worded and my sincere apologies for that."

He added, "The mail was not marked to me, a practice normally followed when I instruct my office to communicate."

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DELHI

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**Delhi Palam Today** 27°C The weather will be comfortable with gusty winds. Changeable light to moderate rain and thunderstorms with gusty winds.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow** 28°C A mostly dry weather to predict. Moderate will be present with very little mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Night will be very cool.

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### FAREWELL FUNCTION ORGANISED

DAV Public School, Sector 14, Faridabad, organized its farewell function for the outgoing batch of class 12. A special cultural extravaganza 'Amalgamation' was presented by the students of class 11 including a variety of dances, songs, medley and so on. Principal Anita Gautam encouraged the students to adhere to Davian values and ethos throughout their lives. Punyakrit was declared as Mr DAV and Juvika was declared as Ms DAV. Aditya Singh, head boy, bagged the award for being a versatile scholar. The programme ended with a vote of thanks proposed by the supervisory head of senior secondary, Rajni Rafhan.

**BACCALAUREATE SERVICE** The Baccalaureate Service for the outgoing batch of grade 12 was organised at Mount Carmel School, Anand Niketan. A PowerPoint presentation touching upon the memories made by the students during their time at school was presented. Student representatives reminisced about their life at school, interspersed with a musical tribute performed by a choir of faculty members. Principal, Neera Emmanuel, then enriched the occasion with a reading from the Holy Bible. Dean, Michael Williams, spoke about the significance of cultivating and cherishing friendships throughout one's life.

### SCHOOL HOSTS MEMORIAL ASSEMBLY

Springdale School, Pusa Road hosted the 47th Y. Kumar Memorial Assembly for Peace and International Understanding. The assembly was a series of events that took place during a week consisting of Essay writing, Quiz competition, Painting competition, Group discussion and Interview. About 80 students from 11 schools across the NCR and Delhi participated in the event. Principal, Mala Gupta, paid tribute to the founder manager of the school Shri Sudhir Kumar and chairperson Rajni Kumar. Babi Moltra Saraf, former principal of Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi, delivered the Y. Kumar Memorial Lecture on Language and Interpretation in Transnational Communication.



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## IN BRIEF



## Centre sanctions new railway line between Puri and Konark

The Union government has approved a new 32-kilometre railway line connecting the temple towns of Puri and Konark that are famous for the Shree Jagannath Temple and Sun Temple (in picture), said Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday, adding that ₹492 crore had been sanctioned for the building of the line, which is set to have trains featuring an all-weather glass ceiling.

## Asaram's son withdraws plea for bail to meet ailing father

Narayan Sat, son of jailed self-styled godman Asaram Bapu, and like his father, also serving a life sentence in a rape case, on Tuesday withdrew his plea in the Gujarat High Court seeking a 20-day temporary bail to meet Asaram. Sat's lawyer withdrew the plea after the Bench was told that the godman had been discharged from hospital and was back in the Jodhpur jail in Rajasthan. *PTI*

## Rajasthan Police arrests 4 in 2020 JEN paper leak case

The Special Operations Group of the Rajasthan Police has arrested four government employees, including a revenue official and a policeman, in connection with the 2020 Junior Engineer (JEN) paper leak case. Additional DGP (ATS and SOG) V.K. Singh said 24 people have been arrested in the paper leak case so far. Of these, five were examinees, and 19 are either part of the gang that leaked the papers or coaching operators. *PTI*

## Seven booked for beating up tribal man in M.P.'s Seoni

Press Trust of India  
SEONI

The Madhya Pradesh police have arrested a man for allegedly thrashing a tribal employee, with six other associates, on suspicion of theft at the shop he was working in, police said on Tuesday. The victim's family was also forced to transfer land to another man's name.

The main accused, Vijay Suryavanshi, was one of the owners of the shop, said Superintendent of Police Rakesh Kumar Singh, adding that an FIR has been registered. The hunt is on for the six other accused.

The victim had alleged that he was beaten with iron pipes and tortured with a piler. The incident took place in Barghat town on December 29, 2023.

## Swami Maurya quits SP, to announce his own party tomorrow

Press Trust of India  
LUCKNOW

Former Samajwadi Party leader Swami Prasad Maurya.

A week after tendering his resignation from the post of Samajwadi Party (SP) national general secretary, Swami Prasad Maurya on Tuesday resigned from the party's primary membership and the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council, and announced the formation of a new party.

The five-time MP had joined the SP after leaving the BJP ahead of the 2022 State Assembly polls, and had contested unsuccessfully from Faizlagarh.

After resigning as the party's national general secretary on February 13, Mr. Maurya accused the leadership of "discriminating" against him and not defending him over his controversial statements.

On the Ram temple consecration ceremony,

"After my resignation from the party post, no initiative of any talks will be taken," he added in a letter to party chief Akhilesh Yadav.

Mr. Maurya has said he will share more details about his new party on Thursday in New Delhi.

## 'Cultural protest' to mark 151 years of Kolkata tram

Bishwanath Ghosh  
KOLKATA

Kolkata's iconic tramway will mark its 151st anniversary on February 24. FILE PHOTO

Fans of the iconic Kolkata tram will gather on February 24 to mark 151 years of the non-polluting mode of transport to "raise their voices against what they think is unjust", and re-group on March 15 in protest. The event is aimed at the government, which has been blamed for presiding over the near-demise of the tram, with only three routes remaining functional today.

"We had a meeting on February 13 when we decided that to celebrate the 151st birthday of the Kolkata tram, we will gather at the Gariahat depot at 10 am. on February 24. Notable people and dignitaries will be invited. It will be more of a cultural event than a direct protest when we will voice our demands

through the dignitaries," Debashish Bhattacharya, president of the Calcutta Tram Users' Association (CTUA), which is organising the event, said.

"On March 15 afternoon, a street corner meeting will be held at the Esplanade. This will be a pure protest gathering in association with other organisations," Dr. Bhattacharya added.

"It is the need of the

hour to transform Kolkata's central landscape with the revival of trams, and create walkable streets and cycling lanes. That way, we can set an example for other cities," Arghyadip Hafta, urban policy adviser and a member of the 2016-founded CTUA, said.

The Kolkata tram dates back to 1873. During the peak of its popularity in the 1970s, it boasted over 50 routes across the city.

## Kamal Nath will join Rahul's yatra in M.P., says State Cong. chief

Press Trust of India  
BHOPAL

Congress leader Kamal Nath.

Congress leader Kamal Nath will join the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra after it enters Madhya Pradesh on March 2, a senior party leader said on Tuesday.

Mr. Nath and other leaders virtually attended a meeting to review preparations for the *yatra* earlier in the day, sources said.

"During the four-day tour of the State, Rahul Gandhi will conduct road shows and meetings. He will perform *puja* at the famous Mahakaleshwar temple and a member of the 2016-founded CTUA, said.

The Kolkata tram dates back to 1873. During the peak of its popularity in the 1970s, it boasted over 50 routes across the city.

Pradesh leg, so there is no spice left for the media and the *yatra*, he said apparently referring to the speculation about Mr. Nath's possible switch to the saffron party. The *yatra* will enter Madhya Pradesh at Morena on March 2. It will pass through Gwalior, Shivpuri, Guna, Rajgarh, Shahapur, Ujjain, Dhar and Ratlam before entering Rajasthan again on March 6 from Sajaiya.

## Jagan grapples with problem of plenty as he seeks first-mover advantage ahead of polls

The Hindu Bureau  
VIJAYAWADA

With Andhra Pradesh heading into a general assembly election months from now, the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has sought to gain first-mover advantage. The Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy-led party leadership has already released seven lists so far and announced in-charges - presumptive candidates for 68 of the total 175 Assembly constituencies and 16 of the 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State.

While the principal opposition party, the N Chandrababu Naidu-led Telugu Desam Party (TDP),

has remained tight-lipped on its plans so far, it is learnt to be inclined towards returning to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance. Negotiations between the two parties are at an advanced stage, and according to BJP sources, it has demanded six Lok Sabha seats and 20 Assembly seats from the TDP, while Pawan Kalyan's Jan Sena Party wants three Lok Sabha seats in what could emerge as a three-way alliance.

While the 2019 Assembly election became a five-way contest between the YSRCP, TDP, BJP, and JSP, alliances have assumed heightened importance this time around because

of the Congress also getting a shot in the arm with Y.S. Sharmila, Mr. Jagan's sister, merging her Yuvalana Sarimilla Rythu Telangana Party with the Congress and

being named as the latter's Andhra Pradesh unit chief last month.

Reiterating his resolve to ensure a "clean sweep" for YSRCP in the general elec-

tion in Andhra Pradesh, the Chief Minister has exhorted the party cadre to do everything possible to register a win in all the 175 Assembly constituencies.

In Andhra Pradesh, the party leadership is unhappy as well after the party's internal survey reports that indicated that their winning prospects were dim. The grapevine has it that more sitting MPs

of party in-charge for Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies - Narasimha Rao MP, L. S. Venkateswaran, Kurnool MP Sanjeev Kumar and Machilipatnam MP Vallabhaneni Balashowmy, all citing personal reasons.

Parties sources said MPs Adala Prabhakar Reddy (Lok Sabha) and Virendra Prabhakar Reddy (Rajya Sabha) might not contest on the YSRCP symbol. At least 10 sitting party legislators are also said to be unhappy as well after the party leadership convened to them internal survey reports that indicated that their winning prospects were dim.

Three sitting MPs after re-

signing of party in-charge for Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies - Narasimha Rao MP, L. S. Venkateswaran, Kurnool MP Sanjeev Kumar and Machilipatnam MP Vallabhaneni Balashowmy, all citing personal reasons.

Sources said that while the Chief Minister is personally speaking to some of the leaders, YSRCP general secretary Sajala Ramakrishna Reddy and others have also been instructed to talk to the disgruntled sitting MLAs and party leaders. Senior leaders are assuring them that their services would be recognised even if they have been denied poll tickets.

With the dissidence among the party MLAs and leaders over the appointment of new coordinators for Assembly constituencies refusing to die down, the YSRCP is redoubling its firefighting efforts.



All hands on deck: While the CM has personally reached out to some disgruntled leaders, he has also met YSRCP general secretary Sajala Ramakrishna Reddy on the job. FILE PHOTO

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## Won't arrest Wankhede until March 1, ED tells HC

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) informed the Bombay High Court on Tuesday that it will not arrest former Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) zonal director Sameer Wankhede until March 1.

The court was hearing a plea filed by Mr. Wankhede against an ED case that alleged that he demanded a bribe of ₹25 crore from actor Shah Rukh Khan's family in the 2021 Corolla cruise ship drug bust case, which saw the arrest of his son, Aryan Khan.

The case was filed by the ED based on an FIR registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

Mr. Wankhede had challenged the Enforcement Directorate Information Report (ECIR) and sought a stay on his arrest as well as protection from coercive action. On February 15, the ED had stated that it would not take any coercive steps against Mr. Wankhede until February 20.

The advocate for the ED, Sandeep Patil, argued in the court, "My earlier statement of no arrest or coercive action would stand extended till the time the plea is taken up for hearing."

A Division Bench of Justices P.D. Naik and N.R. Borkar accepted the ED's statement, and posted Mr. Wankhede's petition against the case for March 1.

## MVA has agreed on 39 LS seats: Pawar

Press Trust of India  
MUMBAI



Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) founder Sharad Pawar on Tuesday said members of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) – Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (Shardachandra Pawar), and the Congress – have arrived at a consensus on contesting 39 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra. He said more rounds of discussions will be held for the remaining five to six constituencies.

Maharashtra sends 48 members to Lok Sabha.

Mr. Pawar was speaking to reporters in Kolhapur after meeting Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, a member of the erstwhile royal family. The veteran politician virtually proposed the candidature of Shahu Maharaj in the ensuing Lok Sabha election as the MVA nominee.

**'Talks on others'**  
When asked about the status of seat-sharing discussions among the Opposition parties, Mr. Pawar said, "There is consensus on 39 seats. We will hold discussions for the remaining five to six seats."

Mr. Pawar said he had not yet spoken to other allies about Shahu Maharaj's candidature.

"I will be glad to see him contesting the Lok Sabha elections. He has

been doing social work for a long time, which aligns with social reformers late Shahu Maharaj, Mahatma Jyothi Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar," he added.

Mr. Pawar said Shahu Maharaj generally stays away from political events, but he has been actively participating in social events and programmes.

In the 2019 general elections, the BJP and Shiv Sena (unindivided) won 41 out of the 48 seats they jointly contested in Maharashtra.

The NCP (unindivided) and the Congress collectively won only 5 seats.

At another meeting in Kolhapur, Mr. Pawar targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said he just spends 20 minutes in the Upper House when the issues of people are being discussed during Parliament sessions.

### CORRIGENDUM

In view of the instructions issued by Hon'ble Punjab and Haryana High Court, Chandigarh vide letter No. 189 Sp.I.E. III/L/80(a)/SE/14E dated 19.02.2024, the advertisement dated 20.01.2024 for 12 posts of Peon and 01 post of Sweeper for Ambala Sessions Division stands modified to the extent that the 01 post of Peon reserved for General (PwBD) (Category-a) (Blindness and Low Vision) is now reserved for General (PwBD) (Category-a) (Low Vision) only.

District and Sessions Judge,  
Ambala

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6 Manager (Design) 1 DGM - Rs.85,000/- 7 38

7 DM / AM (Planning) 2 DM - Rs.75,000/- DM-4 DM-35

8 DM / AM (Quantity Surveying) 3 DM - Rs.75,000/- DM-4 DM-35

9 DM / AM (Civil) 3 AM - Rs.62,000/- AM-2 AM-30

10 DM / AM (Architect) 1 AM - Rs.62,000/- AM-2 AM-30

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## IN BRIEF



## Traditional paddy to be cultivated on 10k acres in T.N.

Tamil Nadu Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister M.R.K. Panneerelvam on Tuesday said traditional paddy varieties, including Aruvadhan Kuruvai, Poonkar, Thooyamalli, Seeraga Samba, Mappillai Samba, Sivan Samba and Karuppu Kavuni, would be cultivated on 10,000 acres across the State in 2025-26. He said seeds of traditional paddy varieties were being produced under the 'Neel Jayaraman Mission on Conservation of Traditional Paddy Varieties.'

## Three killed as vehicle catches fire after accident in A.P.

Three persons were killed when their vehicle caught fire after a road accident in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday. The identities of the victims are yet to be ascertained. The accident occurred when a speeding car hit an autorickshaw at Puspaludu village in Bestavariapeta mandal in the morning, the police said. The car reportedly caught fire in the impact. One person who was injured in the accident has been admitted to hospital.

## Minister unhappy over low funds for Kannada research

Kannada and Culture Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi on Tuesday expressed disappointment over the 'meagre funds' released for research and development of Kannada after it was declared a classical language. Speaking in the Legislative Council on Tuesday during the discussion on the Kannada Language Comprehensive Development (Amendment) Bill, 2024 the Minister said that while Hindi received ₹1,000 crore, Kannada received a meagre ₹3 crore for research.

## Keeping cool



**Take a break:** In view of soaring temperature, Kerala Education department has introduced 'water bell' in schools, asking the students to drink water when the bell rings. A scene from a school in Kochi. THULASI KAKAT

## Man dies after smile design procedure in Hyderabad

The Hindu Bureau  
HYDERABAD

A 28-year-old man died in Hyderabad following a dental procedure.

His family alleged medical negligence, but the hospital denied it. The incident occurred on February 16 when Laxminarayana Vinjam visited the FMS International Dental Centre and underwent a smile designing procedure to beautify his teeth ahead of his marriage. The hospital said the procedure was done under local anaesthesia. The police have filed a case after his father complained that his son died of anaesthesia overdose.

## 182-km stretch of Regional Ring Road in Telangana to be declared national highway

The Hindu Bureau  
HYDERABAD

Hurdles for the declaration of the southern part of the Regional Ring Road spanning 182 km (Choutuppal-Amangal-Shadnagar-Sangareddy) as national highway have been cleared.

Union Road Transport & Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has directed the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to seek proposals for declaration of the southern stretch of the RRR in Telangana as national highway. Mr. Gadkari gave the directions responding to the request made by Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy who called on the former in New Delhi on Tuesday.



**Courtesy call:** Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi on Tuesday.

The Centre had already declared the northern part of the RRR as national highway.

The Chief Minister urged the Union Minister to take steps to upgrade several important State highways as national highways and sought permis-

sion for expansion of some of the national highways. He submitted a list of State highways that needed expansion as national highways to Mr. Gadkari and explained to him about the need to declare them as national highways.

During the meeting, Mr.

Revanth briefed the Union Minister about the problems encountered in the expansion of national highways and ongoing works. The meeting discussed about the stalemate between the State and Union governments over the expenditure that would be incurred on the removal of utilities like buildings and current poles.

The NHAI asked the State government to bear the expenses involved in the process 10 months ago, but there was no response from the State government. The Congress government, which took over the reins in December, has conveyed to the NHAI, the State's consent to bear the expenses.

## Siddaramaiah terms 5 guarantees of State 'good economics'

The Hindu Bureau  
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday described the State government's five guarantees as "good economics" and said taxes are being collected from the rich for the empowerment of the poor.

In his reply to the debate on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address, Mr. Siddaramaiah said: "I believe in good economics." A sum of ₹52,009 crore has been set aside for the implementation of five guarantees in the Budget.

"We are giving economic strength to the poor. This is good economics," he said.

ics. This is the economics of self-respect," he said.

## 'No discrimination'

"The five guarantees – Shree Shakti, Anna Bhagya, Grīha Jyoti, Grīha Lakshmi and Yuva Danithi – will cover the poor Dalits, backward classes and minorities without discrimination," he said. "There are no mid-dilemmas in the delivery of guarantee schemes," the Chief Minister said.

"We will impose tax on rich people as per law and collected taxes will be used for the poor." Mr. Siddaramaiah said. He said the government has kept ₹39,000 crore in 2023-24 for the five guarantees.

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## Tejashwi begins 11-day Jan Vishwas Yatra to win public trust, flays Nitish

Press Trust of India  
PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav on Tuesday launched a blistering attack on Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, whose latest volte-face robbed his party of power and stripped him of the Deputy CM's post.

He said Mr. Kumar, who is also the president of the ruling Janata Dal (United), had neither a vision for the people of Bihar nor a justifiable reason for ditching the RJD and joining the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance.

"He thinks he can trample the people's mandate under his feet (जानादेह की अपनी पार्ती की समृद्धि हात में)" alleged Mr. Yadav, who shared power in the State for close to 17 months.

The RJD leader was speaking to journalists at his residence here, before leaving for Mizaffarpur and starting his 'Jan Vishwas Yatra'. After Mizaffarpur, Mr. Yadav addressed two more public meetings during the day in Sitamarhi and Sheohar, before spending the night in Motihari. During the 11-day-long yatra, he will travel the State's 38 districts.

"The people of Bihar have been showering their love on the RJD, a reason why it has been the single largest party in the assembly for long. I am going to urge them that they support us even more strongly so that we can work for them," he said.

Flanked by his parents



Tejashwi Yadav in Sitamarhi during his State-wide Jan Vishwas Yatra on Tuesday. PTI

Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi, Mr. Yadav said he was drawing strength from his father's 'kshamata' (ability), mother's "mamata" (affection), and the support of wife Rajshree.

## Parents back yatra

Mr. Prasad, the RJD president, said, "My blessings

had neither a vision for the people of Bihar nor a justifiable reason for ditching the RJD and joining the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance.

"He thinks he can trample the people's mandate under his feet (जानादेह की अपनी पार्ती की समृद्धि हात में)" alleged Mr. Yadav, who shared power in the State for close to 17 months.

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Narendra Modi

## PM opens IIT, IIISER, IIITDM in Tirupati and Kurnool

The Hindu Bureau  
TIRUPATI/KURNool

Prime Minister Narendra Modi formally dedicated to the nation the permanent campus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Tirupati and the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER-Tirupati) and the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing (IIITDM Kurnool) through virtual mode on Tuesday.

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister K. Narayanaswamy attended the inaugural event at the IIT campus, where Director K.N. Satyanarayana coordinated the event. At IISER Tirupati, Member of Parliament M. Gurumoorthy attended the inaugural programme along with Collector G. Lakshminisha, who were formally received by the Director Sanatan Bhattacharya.

The IIITDM established on lagannam Gattu in Kurnool as part of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, was formally inaugurated by Mr. Modi, in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister S.B. Amzath Basha. MP Sanjeev Kumar called it a happy augury for the institute. The 15.51 acre site currently accommodates 907 students, 40 regular faculty and 10 adjunct faculty, said Director D.V.L.N. Somayajulu.

## Parliamentary Committee lauds various pro-pilgrim initiatives adopted by TTD

The Hindu Bureau  
TIRUMALA

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs lauded various pro-pilgrim initiatives adopted by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Tuesday.

The committee was also briefed about the various socio-economic activities adopted by the TTD since its inception.

In a 40-minute audio-video presentation to the committee, which is on a two-day visit to the hill temple, TTD Executive Officer A.V. Dharmendra Reddy explained the various as-



The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has been doing various socio-economic activities since its inception. FILE PHOTO

pects of crowd management and upkeep of hygiene in the temple town.

Committee Chairman Brij Lal praised the security measures and manage-

ment systems adopted by TTD with focus on safety of pilgrims as well as its employees who shuttle the Tirumala ghat roads on a daily basis.

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# Rangla Punjab FESTIVAL

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**BHAGWANT SINGH MANN**  
Chief Minister, Punjab

DATE	TIME	EVENT	VENUE
23 February	6:30 PM onwards	Opening Ceremony	Khalsa College
24-25 February	10:30AM -12:30PM	Literature Festival	Partition Museum
24 -25 February	4:00PM - 6:00PM	Carnival Parade	Day 1: Red Cross - Ranjeet Avenue Ground Day 2: Trillium Mall - Ranjeet Avenue Ground
24-29 February	11:00AM - 5:00PM	Seva Street	Townhall Heritage Street
24-29 February	11:00AM - 10:00PM	Foodistan & Shopping Festival	Ranjeet Avenue Ground
24-29 February	7:00PM - 8:30PM	Digital Fest	Summer Palace
24-25 & 27-29 February	7:00PM onwards	Taal Chowk	Ranjeet Avenue Ground
25 February	7:00AM - 9:00AM	Greenathon	Anand Amrit Park - Sadda Pind
26 February	7:00PM onwards	Punjabi Folk Night	Gobindgarh Fort
29 February	6:30PM onwards	Closing Ceremony	Ranjeet Avenue Ground





## मोदी की गारंटी विष्णु का सुशासन

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- 13 लाख किसानों को धान के बकाया बोनस की राशि 3716 करोड़ रुपए तत्काल जारी करने का निर्णय
- किसानों से प्रति एकड़ 21 किंवंटल धान खरीदी का निर्णय
- 'कृषक उन्नति योजना' के तहत 10,000 करोड़ रुपये का प्रावधान

#### ग्रामीणों के लिए

- 50 लाख ग्रामीण परिवारों को निःशुल्क नल कनेक्शन 4,500 करोड़ रुपये का प्रावधान

#### गरीबों के लिए

- 69.92 लाख गरीब परिवारों को पांच वर्षों तक निःशुल्क राशन प्रदाय का निर्णय
- प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना के तहत 18 लाख घरों के निर्माण के लिए 8,369 करोड़ रुपये का प्रावधान
- 'दीनदयाल उपाध्याय भूमिहीन कृषि मजदूर योजना' में भूमिहीन कृषि मजदूरों को 10,000 रुपये वार्षिक सहायता का निर्णय

#### महिलाओं के लिए

- 'महतारी वंदन योजना' के तहत महिलाओं को प्रतिमाह 1000 रुपए की दर से वार्षिक 12,000 रुपए आर्थिक सहायता का निर्णय

#### युवाओं के लिए

- पीएससी परीक्षा घोटाले की सीबीआई जांच का निर्णय
- युवा स्वरोजगार को बढ़ावा देने के लिए छत्तीसगढ़ उद्यम क्रांति योजना लागू करने का निर्णय
- पुलिस विभाग सहित विभिन्न शासकीय भर्तियों में युवाओं को निर्धारित आयु सीमा में 5 वर्षों की छूट का निर्णय

#### सभी छत्तीसगढ़वासियों के लिए

- अयोध्या यात्रा के लिए निःशुल्क 'रामलला दर्शन योजना' लागू करने का निर्णय

#### आदिवासियों के लिए

- टेंदूपत्ता संग्राहकों को 4,000 रुपये प्रति मानक बोरा से बढ़ाकर 5,500 रुपये प्रति मानक बोरा भुगतान का निर्णय
- छत्तीसगढ़ के त्वरित विकास के लिए 300 करोड़ रुपए का प्रावधान

#### सामान्य परिवारों के लिए

- प्रति माह 400 यूनिट तक आधे दाम पर बिजली प्रदाय का निर्णय

#### प्रैषाचार निवारण के लिए

- शासकीय योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन की निगरानी के लिए 'अटल मॉनिटरिंग पोर्टल' की स्थापना का निर्णय
- कोल परिवहन की पारदर्शी प्रक्रिया के लिए ऑनलाइन परमिट व्यवस्था लागू करने का निर्णय
- छत्तीसगढ़ी संस्कृति के संरक्षण व संवर्धन के लिए
- छत्तीसगढ़ के ऐतिहासिक और सांस्कृतिक महत्व के शहर राजिम के वैभव को फिर से स्थापित करने के लिए राजिम कुंम (कल्प) का निर्णय

## सरल, निर्भीक निर्णायक नेतृत्व



श्री विष्णु देव साराय

माननीय मुख्यमंत्री, छत्तीसगढ़

सबका साथ-सबका विकास, सबका विश्वास और सबका प्रयास



## Calm assessment

Clarity on the nature and extent of 'deemed forest' is essential

The Supreme Court of India has put on pause an ambitious effort by the Centre to amend India's Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, that was brought in to check the wanton razing of forests for 'non-forestry uses'. According to the Centre, an estimated four million hectares of forest land had been diverted from 1951-75. Under the provisions of the Act, forests could no longer be diverted without adhering to a regulatory mechanism by the Centre. As a measure of its success, the Centre calculates that from 1981-2022, the annual average diversion of forest had reduced to about 22,000 hectares, or about a tenth of what it was from 1951-75. However, the provisions of this piece of legislation largely applied to forest tracts recognised as such by the India Forest Act, or any other State legislation. Illegal timber-felling in Gudalur, Tamil Nadu, triggered the landmark T.N. Godavarai Thirumulpad judgment that saw the Court take an expanded view of forest tracts worthy of protection. It also said that forests had to be protected irrespective of how they were classified and who owned them. This brought in the concept of 'deemed forests', or tracts that were not officially classified as such in government or revenue records. States have now sought to consult expert committees to identify such 'deemed forests'. In the 28 years that have passed since the judgment, only a handful of States have constituted such committees or made public the extent of such 'deemed forest' within their territories.

The Centre's attempt to amend the Forest (Conservation) Act was ostensibly to bring 'clarity' as there were large tracts of recorded forest land that had already been put to non-forestry uses, with the permission of State governments. There is apparently, the Centre says, a reluctance among private citizens to cultivate private plantations and orchards, despite their significant ecological benefits, for fear that they would be classified as 'forest' (and thus render their ownership void). India's ambitions to create a carbon sink of 2.5 billion-3 million tonnes, to meet its net zero goals have required forest laws to be 'dynamic' and, therefore, the rules have sought to remove 'deemed forest', not already recorded as such, from the ambit of protection. This has triggered a slew of public interest petitions as, on the face of it, the amendments appear as an assault on the Act's ambition of forest protection. While a final judgment is pending, the Court's order to the Centre to compile and make public, by April, States' efforts at recording the extent of deemed forests is welcome. At this point it is mere conjecture on the part of the Centre that India's carbon sink is being impeded due to insufficient private initiative. Only a dispassionate assessment of ground realities can drive forward this very important debate.

## Keep it wholesome

National cervical cancer control scheme must be made accessible to all

Health is seldom uni-dimensional, and it must not be seen as such. Government policy, particularly, must fathom the entirety of the issue, and assimilate multiple aspects in a field strategy, for optimum realisation of the intended goal. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement during the presentation of the interim Budget that the government plans to encourage vaccination against cervical cancer for girls aged nine to 14, is no doubt a step in the right direction. While the scheme will be fleshed out post elections, it is also time to question if any programme to combat cervical cancer would be wholesome if it did not assimilate a screening aspect. Cancer of the cervix (literally, the neck of the womb) is unique among cancers because almost all the cases (99%, according to the World Health Organization) are linked to infection with the human papillomavirus (HPV), a common virus transmitted through sexual contact. While most HPV infections resolve spontaneously and the women remain symptom-free, persistent infection can lead to cervical cancer. It is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women in India (over 77,000 annually), and is estimated to be the second most frequent cancer among Indian women between 15 and 44 years. While the good news is couched in the availability of a vaccine, the sobering fact is that the average national prevalence of cervical cancer screening hovers at just under 2%, and outcomes depend on the stage of detection.

In principle, cervical cancer can be easily diagnosed in a public health setting with minimal tools - the human eye, a dilution of white vinegar, and a dab of Lugol's iodine. These are known as VIA and VILI tests and help look for precancerous lesions and cancer, much before an advanced stage of the disease can be picked up with cytology. A simple, short procedure, cryotherapy, can then be done while the patient is awake, to destroy the abnormal growth. Given that it is easy to prevent, identify and treat cervical cancer, it is unacceptable that so many women are dying of the disease. As the government rolls out its vaccination programme, it must also mandate screening right at the primary health centre, and if abnormalities are identified, offer cryotherapy right then. It is unlikely that vaccination of young girls alone will have a far-reaching impact in the short and medium term. The only way to prevent deaths is to deploy the entire assembly of tools as part of a national cervical cancer control programme, accessible to all women, irrespective of age, education, affordability or social status.

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**W**ith the 17th Lok Sabha having ended, the stage is now set for the general election. The final session of Parliament, unfortunately, proved to be as divisive as several of the previous sessions, with both the ruling and the Opposition parties trading charges and conceding no quarter to each other. This unseemly spectacle has given rise to concerns about the future of parliamentary democracy in the country.

We in India have been more fortunate than many other countries in being able to sustain democracy, and in earning a reputation of adherence to the best of parliamentary practices. The Constitution of India, one of the finest written Constitutions to be found anywhere in the world, includes among other Articles, a set of Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties of its citizens and the Directive Principles of State Policy, which have been our safeguards in sustaining democracy. Looking at the current decline in parliamentary practices, people, however, worry whether Parliament can be depended upon to sustain a stable democracy in the future.

This situation has nothing to do with India's external or internal dynamics. India is today better placed than it has been for many decades in connection with these two points. The global political environment may be murky, but India has hardly been impacted adversely, notwithstanding the ongoing war in Ukraine, the tumults in West Asia and other similar tensions. China remains a matter of concern demanding extreme vigilance, but does not pose an immediate challenge. Pakistan embroiled in its internal problems, is hardly a threat to India.

The internal dynamics, no doubt, are more problematic, but India has been fortunate, of late, to be spared of facing major terror attacks. There are quite a few internal security issues that lurk just below the surface. While some defy early solution, they are not insoluble. The farmers' agitation in the Punjab and Haryana has, no doubt, the potential to turn into a 'prairie fire', but if handled properly, can be controlled. The northeast region remains unsettled, with Manipur representing a microcosm of the problems that have plagued this region for years. But again, it is manageable. Communal violence is under check, even though communal tensions could be exacerbated in an electoral year. Left-wing extremist violence is at a low ebb as of now, even though it could see a revival in an election year.

**A 'divided' nation**  
What is a matter of concern though is that the country today appears more divided than it has at any time in the recent past. The Prime Minister himself has been constrained to observe that the Opposition is creating a 'North-South Divide' and that the Opposition was speaking the language of breaking the country". He has levelled serious



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charges against the Congress, stating that it was intent on "creating a divide among people in the name of caste, language and religion". During the interim Budget session in Parliament, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman went to the extent of personally attacking the former Finance Minister and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, having failed to discharge his responsibilities adequately during his tenure, and of failing the nation in its hour of need. Not to be left behind, the Opposition has been pouring vitriol on the Treasury benches, accusing them of vitiating the atmosphere in Parliament and of violating existing guidelines concerning parliamentary practice and conduct. In an election year, it is not unexpected, or unknown, for political parties to trade barbs. It is, however, the element of viciousness that is seen in these exchanges, which does not augur well for either Parliament or the nation. This departure from past parliamentary traditions has resulted in a widening of the gulf between the ruling party and the entire Opposition. This is most regrettable.

### The impact of a polarised politics

On the eve of what is being posited as possibly the most critical election in this century, politics is highly polarised and is further exacerbating divisive tendencies. No issues appear beyond the pale when caring out winning strategies and ensuring bigger victory margins. Even the consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya - which most Indians have welcomed - has become an election issue with both Houses of Parliament passing a resolution supporting the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya as ushering in a 'new era of governance and public welfare'. The spectre of 'Hindu majoritarianism', whether intended or not, thus looms large in the minds of sections of the public, alongside a perception that 'Mandir' defines the nature of politics in an election year.

Federalism, on which the Constitution-makers placed great store, is becoming a victim of this situation. While some aspects could be viewed as symptomatic of the steady and gradual decline in democratic practices over the years, there is a difference today, and possibly some substance in the Opposition charge that the ruling dispensation at the Centre is breaching the federal principle with impunity. The Opposition charge sheet includes aspects such as attempts to enforce an Uniform Civil Code, alongside manifest attempts to push through the concept of One Nation, One Election, possibly intended to undermine the role of regional parties.

Defections have been a major bane of Indian politics, but engineered defections, particularly of the kind being reported in this election year, are making a mockery of democracy and electoral politics. More to the point, ongoing efforts to induce members to change sides through inducements are undermining the entire election system. A rash of defections have

That the country appears more divided than it has at any time in the recent past, and this worsening in the run-up to the general election, is cause for concern

occurred which includes top leaders from other parties, to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the ruling party at the Centre. A conspicuous example of this kind has been involving the Bihar Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar, to change sides with the implicit promise that he could continue as Chief Minister under a new dispensation (headed by the BJP). Many other instances of engineered high-level defections to the ruling party at the Centre are again taking place across the country, undermining democratic principles and practices. This conveys an impression that electoral democracy stands today at the crossroads; and that constitutionally mandated rules and practices are being trampled upon with impunity. While no one party may be responsible for this situation, given that the majority of engineered high-level defections have been to the ruling BJP in this election year, the import is loud and clear, viz., that those holding the reins of power are better positioned to alter electoral verdicts by other means.

### No rules-based order

Distinct from this, but intrinsically linked to it, are perceived violations of constitutionally mandated conduct by centrally-appointed Governors in certain States. The role of Governors in Opposition-ruled States has become a major issue between the Centre and the Opposition-ruled States of late, with these States alleging - and not without reason - that the Centre was using Governors to checkmate the policies and programmes drawn up by Opposition-ruled States. In some instances, and in certain situations, it is leading to a virtual breakdown of relations between the Centre and the States.

The situation clearly calls for dispassionate analysis. It may be that the ruling dispensation at the Centre is not alone to blame and that the Opposition also demonstrates a disregard for constitutional niceties and the principles of federalism. The onus, however, lies mainly on the Centre. What is apparent, and most lacking today, is the absence of a rules-based order in regard to Centre-State relations, and with regard to party-to-party relationships. In the absence of this, there is every danger that the system could overturn altogether.

All this is tantamount to a virtual collapse of Constitution-mandated rules of business. There is again every danger that if these were to continue, what we understand by democracy under a constitutional mandate would cease to exist. Tolerating differences is, hence, the first order of priority. Next, everything has to be subordinated to the requirements of the Constitution. Third, managing the subtle interplay between interests and values and reaffirming a firm belief in the Constitution is a basic necessity. There are no rivalries that cannot be managed within a constitutionally-mandated system, and this is essential if India, as we know it, is to survive.

## Having panchayats as self-governing institutions

**T**hree decades have passed since the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Acts came into effect, which envisaged that local bodies in India would function as institutions of local self-government. As a follow up, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj was constituted in 2004 to strengthen rural local governments.

When it comes to analysing the status of devolution, it is evident that some States have forged ahead while many lag behind. The commitment of State governments towards decentralisation has been vital in making panchayati raj institutions an effective local governance mechanism at the grass-roots level.

The constitutional amendment has set forth specific details on fiscal devolution which includes the generation of own revenues. Emanating from the Central Act, various States Panchayati Raj Acts have made provisions for taxation and collection. Based on the provisions of these Acts, panchayats have made efforts to generate their own resources to the maximum extent. Participatory planning and budgeting were the end result of such interventions by the Ministry.

That "panchayats earn only 1% of the revenue through taxes", with the rest being raised as grants from the State and Centre was highlighted in a 'Dear Aunt' (Opinion page) in *The Hindu*, February 5, 2023. It specifically pointed out that 80% of the revenue is from the Centre and 15% from the States. This is an eye-opener for the proponents of decentralisation as the net result is that the revenue raised by panchayats is meagre even after 30 years of devolution initiatives.

**Avenues for own source of revenue**  
The report of the expert committee constituted by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj on own source of revenue (OSR) of rural local bodies elaborates on the details of State Acts that have incorporated tax and non-tax revenue that can be collected and utilised by panchayats. Property tax, cess on land revenue, surcharge on additional stamp duty, tolls, tax on profession, advertisement, user charges for water and sanitation and lighting are



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the major OSRs where panchayats can earn maximum income. Panchayats are expected to establish a conducive environment for taxation by implementing appropriate financial regulations. This includes making decisions regarding the tax and non-tax bases, determining their rates, establishing provisions for periodic revisions, defining exemption areas, and enacting effective tax management and enforcement laws for collection.

The huge potential for non-tax revenue includes fees, rent, and income from investment sales and hire charges and receipts. There are also innovative projects that can generate OSR. This covers income from rural business hubs, innovative commercial ventures, renewable energy projects, carbon credits, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds and donations.

### The role of gram sabhas

Gram sabhas have a significant role in fostering self-sufficiency and sustainable development at the grass-roots level by leveraging local resources for revenue generation. They can be engaged in planning, decision-making, and implementation of revenue-generating initiatives that range from agriculture and tourism to small-scale industries. They have the authority to collect taxes, fees, levies, directing the funds towards local developmental priorities, public services, and social welfare programmes. Through transparent financial management and inclusive participation, gram sabhas ensure accountability and foster community trust, ultimately empowering villages to become economically independent and resilient. Thus, gram sabhas need to promote entrepreneurship, and foster partnerships with external stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of revenue generation efforts.

In several States, gram panchayats lack the authority to collect taxes, while in numerous others, intermediate and district panchayats are not delegated the responsibility of tax collection. When gram panchayats collect 89% of own taxes, the intermediate panchayats collect 7% and the

district panchayats a nominal amount of 5%. There is a need to demarcate OSR for the entire three-tier panchayats to ensure equitable sharing.

There are several factors behind the general aversion towards generating own income. With the increase in the allocation of Central Finance Commission (CFC) grants, panchayats are evincing less interest in the collection of OSR. The allocation for rural local bodies from the 10th and 11th CFC was ₹4,380 crore and ₹8,000 crore, respectively. But in the 14th and 15th CFCs there was a huge increase by way of allocating ₹2,00,202 and ₹28,073 crore, respectively. The tax collected in 2018-19 was ₹3,12,075 lakh which diminished in 2021/2022 to ₹2,71,386 lakh. The non-tax collected for the same period was ₹2,33,863 lakh and ₹2,09,864 lakh. At one time, panchayats were in competition to raise OSR for their commitment to fulfil basic needs. This has now given place to dependency on grants allocated through central and state finance commissions. Some States have the policy of incentivisation by providing matching grants but which were sparingly implemented. Panchayats also have no need of penalising defaulters as they believe that OSR has not been regarded as an income that is linked with panchayat finance.

**Overcoming the dependency syndrome**  
Despite every enabling factor to raise revenue, panchayats confront several impediments in resource mobilisation: the 'freebie culture'

rampant in society is the cause for the antipathy in paying taxes. Elected representatives feel that imposing taxes would alter their popularity adversely. Here, the answer is clear. There is a need to educate elected representatives and the public on the significance of raising revenue to develop panchayats as self-governing institutions. Ultimately, the dependency syndrome for grants has to be minimised and in due course, panchayats will be able to survive on their own resources. Panchayats can only achieve such a state of affairs when there are dedicated efforts in all tiers of governance, which includes even the State and central level.

There is a need to educate elected representatives and the public on the significance and the need for panchayats to be able to survive on their own resources

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Court on poll, impact

It is a matter of shame that the act of an election office in the Chandigarh municipal polls, defacing some of the ballot papers, was there for the Supreme Court's issuance of notice to

why he should not be criminally hauled up could snowball into a crisis for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). When the BJP is a political force to reckon with, a mayoral election is significant since its result

will have a 'nil effect' in the overall scenario. But, in the same breath, any political misdemeanour has the potential to damage the BJP's image as the perception that the BJP is a party that will stoop to any

level to win an any election, could gain ground. V. Lakshmanan, Tirupati, Tamil Nadu

### Tamil Nadu Budget

The Tamil Nadu Budget may be making the

noises' in an election year, but for money to be poured over and over again into 'river rejuvenation' when it comes to the vision of 'Singara Chennai' and the Cooum and the Adyar, and the latter is non-viable improvement at all, is painful. Likewise, when it comes to the issue of roads, they should stand for at least five years once they are repaired/re laid.

R. Ganeshan, Chennai

## Judicial clarity on free speech

The 31st January decision of Justice Gautam Patel of the Bombay High Court in a bunch of petitions, popularly known as the Kunal Kamra's case, stands out for its compelling articulation of the constitutional fundamentals in relation to the right of free speech on 'social media.' The learned Judge has reiterated the sacrosanctity of the inviolate constitutional guarantee of free speech, not to be tinkered with or read down, except for the reasonable restrictions thereon as envisaged in Article 19(2), (6) of the Constitution. The affirmation of this constitutional right and its eloquent defence against State encroachment by the judge is reassuring, even though his decision on the subject is not yet binding, because of a split verdict by the Division Bench.

The context of the decision is the amended Rule 30(b)(v) of the IT Rules 2021, widely perceived as arbitrary and unjust. Relevant extracts of the Rule are reproduced below:

"(30)(b) the intermediary shall make reasonable efforts by itself, and to cause the user to its computer resource to not host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, store, update or share any information that, — (v)...in respect of any business of the Central Government, is identified as fake or false or misleading by such fact check unit of the Central Government as the Ministry may, by notification published in the Official Gazette, specify."

Failure to comply with the due diligence obligation would invite penal consequences for the errant intermediary under Rule 7, reproduced below:

"The intermediary shall be liable for punishment under any law for the time being in force including the provisions of the Act and the Indian Penal Code."

The effect of these provisions is to confer unfettered powers on the Fact Check Unit (FCU) to control the digital content in matters connected with the



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business of the Central government without specifying the contours of the government's business.

Declaring the amended Rule unconstitutional, Justice Patel held that the amendment results in a form of censorship of user content that is vague and overbroad, destructive of the right to criticise and debate, does not disclose reasonable standards and objective criteria to determine the validity of the decisions of the FCU as the sole decision maker, that the amendment is not within the boundaries of reasonable restrictions envisaged in Article 19 (2), (6) and that the impugned amendment was unconstitutional for infracting the rule of non-arbitrariness and non-discrimination in Article 14 absent, "clear guidance" and non-application of the Rule to the print media. Invoking, amongst other principles, the doctrine of proportionality and the absolute necessity of the measure to achieve the State's goal, the Judge held the amended Rule as ultra vires. Rule 30(b)(v) of the IT Rules 2021, Article 14 and Section 79 of the IT Act.

The decision of the learned Judge addresses the constitutional conscience in as much as it scoffs at "the potential for wanton abuse" of untrammeled power, a view wholly consistent with the first principles of Constitutional governance. The capping glory of the decision rests on the Judge's elevating enunciation of the democratic principle that "the cacophony of dissent and disagreement is the symphony of democracy at work..." The resounding rejection of the impugned amendment for a "chilling effect" (*Shreya Singh*, 2015; *Zenn*, 1997) and "a frontal assault on the marketplace of ideas" is the Judge's welcome message that fear instilled stiffness ill serves the case of a vibrant democracy.

Importantly, the decision does not discount the need for regulation of digital platforms. Indeed, there can be no doubt

about the imperative of combatting fakey and misinformation, which are a threat to the indefeasible right to the reputation and dignity of individuals. The truth of Jonathan Swift's statement in 1710 that "Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after it," was never more pronounced as now.

This decision a repudiation of the wide ambit and discriminatory nature of the regulatory power under the amended Rule and protection against the potential of its abuse. It validates the logic of judicial review as a bulwark against the excesses of majoritarian assemblies and untamed power. It reaffirms the premise of a democratic State that "the will of the State is subject to scrutiny by those who are affected by the exercise of State power and that democratic power" is "a trust held upon conditions," to secure the inherent rights of the people (Harold Laski, *A Grammar of Politics*, 1937). The judgment tells us that a law that permits its enforcers to become agents of injustice cannot be democracy.

The clarity of thought, the power of a clear statement and its unambiguous constitutional premise lend a unique quality to a defining judicial decision, which represents a convergence of constitutional principles and the nation's felt sensitivities about the right of free speech as a necessary condition of freedom. Hopefully, its irrefutable rationale will attain judicial finality before long. In the interregnum, it is hoped that the Centre will heed the reported suggestion of the Judge (7th Feb) to the Centre, not to notify and operationalise the amended/impugned Rule. The tradition of deference to judicial decisions in matters of import and expectation of self-restraint on the part of the government to foster inter-institutional comity demands that the impugned amendment to Rule 30(b)(v) of the IT Rules 2021 be kept in abeyance.

He is confident that these initiatives will help him secure success in the upcoming 2024 General and Assembly elections.

While the TDP-JSP alliance

has been organising joint meetings and grassroots gatherings involving leaders and members, a concern for both leaders and members revolves around the issue of 'seat-sharing' in the upcoming elections.

Already, a few chinks in the alliance had come to the fore when TDP's national general

## Will the TDP-JSP alliance work out?

The alliance in A.P. faces challenges, including disagreements on seat-sharing

### STATE OF PLAY

**Sumit Bhattacharjee**  
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In September last year, Jana Sena Party (JSP) chief Pawan Kalyan announced that his party would tie-up with N. Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party (TDP), to oust Y.S.Jagan Mohan Reddy from the seat of power in the State.

The announcement came after the actor-turned-politician Mr. Pawan had met the TDP chief who was then under judicial remand for his alleged involvement in the Andhra Pradesh skill development scam.

Mr. Pawan also stated that the alliance was important not only to defeat the YSR Congress party (YSRCP) but also to see that the anti-YSRCP votes

do not get split.

But since the announcement, there has been an element of doubt if the tie-up would hold till the last minute. And if it holds, what would be able to stop the YSRCP juggernaut?

Though there are sufficient indications of anti-incumbency against the Jagannath Reddy-led YSR Congress government, he is entrenched in the rural parts with the welfare schemes.

He is confident that these initiatives will help him secure success in the upcoming 2024 General and Assembly elections.

TDP is primarily a Kamma-based party and Mr. Pawan is looked up as a champion for the Kapu community, which has the largest vote share in the State with about 25 per cent. The Kamas and the Kapus are known not to see eye to eye.

YSRCP is relatively a new party and lacks good MLA faces. While on the other hand TDP,

which has been one of the strongest regional forces in the country, has no dearth of leaders.

Mr. Pawan himself had agreed that his party lacks good MLA candidates and he needs to build that base and that is why he was keen on tying up with the TDP, to see that the votes are not split. The question would be – would Mr. Naidu sacrifice one of his strong candidates to accommodate someone from the JSP and if so, how many seats can he give away.

The equation of vote sharing would be a crucial factor, which is why both parties have so far not been able to announce anything concrete on this factor.

### BJP factor

Another development that can either upset or get the cart rolling, is BJP joining the alliance.

Both Mr. Naidu and Mr. Pawan were summoned to New Delhi by Union Minister of Home Affairs Amit Shah, about a week ago, to discuss the modalities of the alliance and so far nothing has been declared openly.

BJP-TDP-JSP was a winning combination in 2014 when Mr. Naidu became the Chief Minister, but will it work this time is the question as BJP is facing resentment from the State for a number of reasons such as not agreeing to the Special Category Status.

A few senior political analysts say the BJP joining the alliance may also upset the minority voters in the TDP-JSP combination. Moreover, the BJP will also demand some share of the seats, which leaves a lesser number of seats for the TDP.

With all these, the election in Andhra Pradesh looks to be heading toward a high-octane show.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

**The Hindu**

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 21, 1974

## ONGC to drill more wells in Bombay High Region

New Delhi, Feb. 20: With the encouraging strike for oil in the first well on Bombay High, the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) is expected to go ahead drilling more wells in this promising structure, 160 km off Bombay.

Though oil was flowing out from a depth of 962 metres the drill ship "Sagar Samrat" will continue to drill the well to its projected depth of 2,000 metres before moving on to another drilling point, 40 km away from this site.

The news of the oil strike was received here with jubilation and the Minister of Petroleum and Chemicals, Mr. D. K. Barooah, is likely to go to the "Sagar Samrat" to congratulate personally the workers "who have done a good job."

Experts point out that the oil found in the well is of high quality with API gravity of 43.6 which indicates an oil lighter than the light Arabian crude.

The lightness implies that oil from Bombay High, if commercially exploitable, will have very small sulphur content. According to petroleum geologists, this will make extraction of oil considerably easier.

Interrogating the pressure encountered experts say that reservoir pressures varying from 15 pounds to 12,635 pounds per square inch have been recorded in the world and Bombay High's 500 pounds is on the low side.

Since the highest pressure is usually recorded in the first drilling, experts say that increased pressures are unlikely with further penetration.

Geologists, however, feel that reservoirs with pressures greater than 500 pounds per square inch could exist in other zones in the Bombay High region.

As the location is more than 160 km away from the nearest Bombay coast, steel pipelines will have to be laid under the sea bed connecting the oil wells.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 21, 1924

## Lady J. P.'s in Bombay.

Bombay, Feb. 20: Four ladies have been appointed this year for the first time as justices of peace for Bombay. These are Lady Jagmohanidas Varjavandas, Dilshad Begum, Mrs. M. Goldfingern and Lady Cowasji Jehangir.

## Making sense of electoral bond judgment through data

Data published by the Association for Democratic Reforms played a vital role in assessing electoral bonds' impact

### DATA POINT

**Sonikika Logathan  
Vignesh Radhakrishnan**

Last week, the Supreme Court ruled the electoral bonds scheme unconstitutional, saying that the anonymous influx of funding to political parties, especially from corporations, hinders democratic legitimacy. The unanimous judgment squashed the government's argument that the scheme is transparent because donors have to go through official banking channels to purchase these bonds, despite their identity being hidden.

The Bench agreed that the voters' right to know was violated, by the anonymity electoral bonds provide. Justice Sanjiv Khanna's opinion, "access to information which can materially shape the citizens' choice is necessary for them to have a say how their lives are affected?" This meant Solicitor General Tushar Mehta's argument that no black or unaccounted money can be used for bonds was not strong enough as, "denying voters the right to know the details of funding of political parties would lead to a dichotomous situation."

Data from the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), one of the petitioners in the case, shows that the share of unknown sources of income has only increased after the introduction of the electoral bond scheme, in direct contradiction to the government's claim. The ADR categorises the income of political parties into two primary categories: known and unknown. Known income is further divided into two subtypes – voluntary contributions over ₹20,000 with donor details provided to the Election Commission of India, and other known sources of income such as the sale of movable and immovable assets. The unknown income encompasses voluntary donations under ₹20,000 with

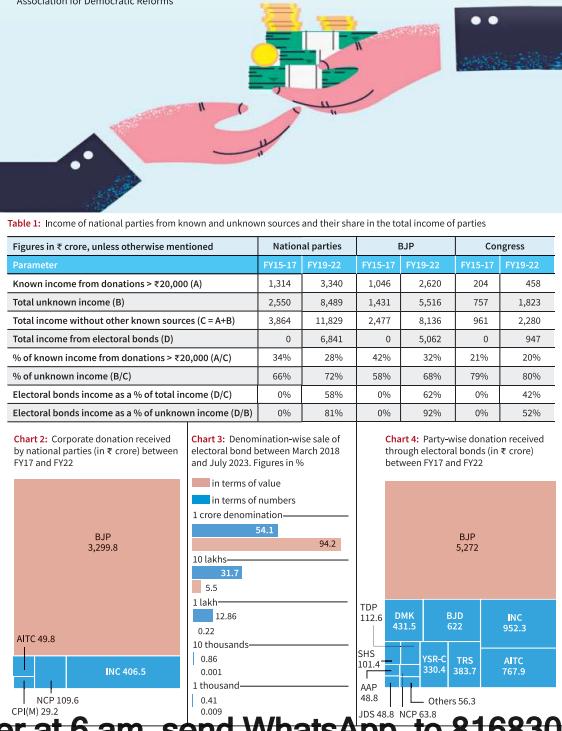
donor details remain undisclosed. Table 1 shows the share of unknown sources of income for national parties increased from 66% between FY15 and FY17 to 72% between FY19 and FY22. The transition year FY18, the year in which the scheme was introduced, was not considered for analysis. The BJP's share of unknown income increased from 58% to 68% in the period, while the Congress' remained at around 80%.

A reason behind the call for transparency is that a bulk of these donations were made by corporations. This gives unfair power to a certain section. "...[T]he amendment to section 182 by permitting unlimited corporate contributions (including by shell companies) authorises unrestricted influence of companies on the electoral process. This is violation of the principle of equal and fair election...", the court observed. Justice Khanna noted that the 25th report by the Law Commission of India states that when importance is given to certain groups, it violates "the right of equal participation of each citizen in the polity." ADR data shows that the BJP received a lion's share of corporate donations in the FY17 to FY22 period – ₹23,300 crore or 84% of them (Chart 2).

Over 90% of the electoral bonds sold in terms of value and over 50% sold in terms of numbers belonged to the ₹1 crore denomination – ₹10 lakhs, ₹1 lakh, ₹10,000 and ₹1,000 – in electoral bond sales, paled in comparison as shown in Chart 3. The court observed that this data pointed to the influence of corporates in the scheme, as not many individuals can afford to donate in crores. Finally, the court also observed that a bulk of the donations from electoral bonds were done in favour of the BJP. ADR data shows that in the FY18-FY22 period, the BJP earned ₹5,272 crore through electoral bonds – 57% of the money donated by all parties in this route (Chart 4).

### Bond villain

The data for charts and tables were sourced from the Supreme Court of India's electoral bond judgment and the Association for Democratic Reforms



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# Text&Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### Surge in the shares of crisis-hit fintech company Paytm

**5** In percentage. The scrip of the company surged \$376.45 and \$376.25 apiece — its upper circuit limit — on the BSE and NSE. The rally comes after the company announced its collaboration with Axis Bank for the continuation of merchant settlements. PTI

### The rise in the number of measles cases globally last year

**79** In percentage. The WHO voiced alarm at the rapid spread of measles around the world, with more than 3,06,000 cases reported last year. The WHO's estimate indicates that there were 9.2 million cases and 1,36,216 measles deaths in 2022. APF

### The decline in Suez Canal revenues due to Houthi attacks

**40-50** In percentage. The canal is one of the main sources of foreign currency for Egypt which is undergoing a severe financial crisis. Several shipping firms have stopped passage through the Red Sea. APF

### The number of EPFO members added in December

**15.62** in lakh. An increase of 11.97% was registered in net member addition during December 2023 compared to the previous month. The data showed that 8.41 lakh new members were enrolled in December 2023. PTI

### Number of investor accounts added in January

**46.7** in lakh. The mutual fund industry saw an uptick in folios. Over the past year, average folio additions were 22.3 lakh per month; the latest figure was more than double this level. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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# Why are farmers protesting again?

What is the primary demand of the farmers who are currently camped out near different locations on the Haryana border? Why have meetings with the Union government failed? What is the government's stance with respect to purchasing crops at Minimum Support Price?

## EXPLAINER

### Vikas Vasudeva

#### The story so far:

**D**On February 13, groups of farmers heeded a call given by the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha and the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (non-political) and began a march to the national capital, to press for fulfilment of their demands, which include a legal guarantee for purchasing crops at Minimum Support Price (MSP) and a farm loan waiver.

**How has the march progressed?** While farmers from different States have reportedly started heading for Delhi, it has been largely from Punjab that scores of farmers started their 'tractor-trolley' march to reach Delhi via Haryana. As farmers arrived at Shambhu-Ambala and Khanauri-Jind, the inter-state boundary between Haryana-Punjab, they were stopped from entering Haryana. The Haryana government had put in place elaborate security arrangements with multi-layer barricades, which included iron rails, barbed wires, concrete barricade-blocks, boulders, trenches and anti-riot vehicles on the roads bordering Punjab. Additionally, the police resorted to the use of tear gas through drones, and water cannons to disperse the agitating farmers. Police-farmer clashes ensued when farmer groups attempted to enter Haryana by pushing and throwing away the multi-layer barricades.

Massive deployment of police and paramilitary personnel have been put in place in areas bordering Delhi to stop protesters from entering that city. As the stand-off continues, farmers from Punjab have been camping near different locations on the inter-state boundary with Haryana and are set to resume their march on February 21.

**What about talks between the two?** So far, four rounds of meetings have been



**A long fight:** Farmers protest near the Haryana-Punjab state border at Shambhu on February 20. AFP

held between the Union government and farmers but they have not resulted in anything concrete. On February 18, after the latest meeting between Union Ministers Arjun Munda, Piyush Goyal, Nitayanand Rai and farmer leaders Jagit Singh Dallewal and Sarwan Singh Pandher, the government offered to procure five crops on MSP by entering into a contract for five years. The protesting farmers, however, rejected the government's offer.

According to Sarwan Singh Pandher, coordinator of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, the proposal presented during the meeting was different than what the Union Ministers discussed before the media after the meeting was over. He pointed out that in the meeting it was proposed that the government would purchase five crops including masoor

(lentil), urad (black gram), arhar (pigeon pea), maize, and cotton at the MSP. However, what was conveyed after the meeting was that the buying would be done for five years under contractual agreements. This, Mr. Pandher said was not acceptable, and hence the offer was rejected. According to Samyukt Kisan Morcha leaders, the government should clarify whether the MSP they proposed is based on the A2+FL+ 50% method (input cost and family labour) or at the rate of 24% (input cost and rent of the land) 50%. They asserted that there has been no transparency in the discussions.

**What are the primary demands?** The primary concern of the protesting farmers is that no law on MSP has been enacted yet, and that the Union government is turning a blind eye to their

other demands despite repeated appeals. The MSP is the price at which the government promises, on paper, to procure agricultural produce from farmers. There are MSPs for 22 crops, primarily grains, pulses and oil seeds, paddy and copra. According to studies, only a small share of farmers in the country benefit from MSPs. Farmers accuse that even as the government promised to look into their demands during the earlier agitation, it has been going slow on its commitments.

**What has been government's stance?** The Union government has repeatedly asserted that announcing a guaranteed MSP will not be possible. The Union Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda told the media that for a law on guaranteed MSP, the Centre would have to look at all sides.

The ongoing farmers' protest rekindled memories of the year-long agitation by farmers during 2020-21 when scores of farmers camped at several places around Delhi's borders. Back then, farmers were demanding a repeal of the three farm laws enacted by the Union government, which they asserted were detrimental to the interests of the agricultural community. These included the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, and the Farmers' Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act. The laws were rolled back in 2021 by the Centre. One of the key demands included a guarantee for purchasing crops at MSP.

Other demands include a complete loan waiver for the farmer and farm labour, a monthly pension for 58-year-old farmers/farm labours, withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill, 2020, replacement of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013 to ensure farmers' consent and compensation at four times the collector rate, 200 days of employment annually at a daily wage of ₹700 under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act etc.

## THE GIST

▼ While farmers from different States have reportedly started heading for Delhi, it has been largely from Punjab that scores of farmers started their 'tractor-trolley' march to reach Haryana.

▼ The primary concern of the protesting farmers is that no law on MSP has been enacted yet, and that the Union government is turning a blind eye to their other demands despite repeated appeals.

▼ The Union government has reportedly asserted that announcing a guaranteed MSP will not be possible. The Union Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda told the media that for a law on guaranteed MSP, the Centre would have to look at all sides.

# On the right to maintenance for divorced Muslim women

Do personal laws debar divorced Muslim women from availing maintenance under Section 125 CrPC?

### Aaratrika Bhattacharya

#### The story so far:

**T**he Supreme Court has decided to examine if a divorced Muslim woman is entitled to a claim of maintenance under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) from her former husband — reigniting the debate on whether secular laws should be given precedence over distinct personal laws. On February 19, a Bench comprising Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih reserved its verdict in the case.

#### How has the law evolved?

The law governing maintenance for destitute wives, children, and parents has been codified under Section 125 of the CrPC. It stipulates that if any person "having sufficient means neglects or refuses to maintain" his wife, – then a magistrate of the first class may, upon proof of such neglect or refusal order

such a person to make a monthly allowance for the maintenance of his wife at a monthly rate as the magistrate thinks fit. The explanation to this provision clarifies that a "wife" includes any woman who has been divorced by, or has obtained a divorce from, her husband and not remarried.

The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 (1986 Act), on the other hand, is a religion-specific law that provides a procedure for a Muslim woman to claim maintenance during divorce. Section 3 of the 1986 Act guarantees the payment of maintenance to a divorced Muslim woman by her former husband only during the period of *iddat* – a period, usually of three months, which a woman must observe after the death of her husband or a divorce before she can remarry. After the completion of the *iddat* period, a woman can approach a first-class magistrate for maintenance in case she has not remarried and is not in a position to take care of herself financially.

**How did the proceedings play out?** The apex court pointed out that Section 3 of the 1986 Act begins with a non-obstante clause ("notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force"), and thus it does not bar an alternative remedy under Section 125 of the CrPC. Senior advocate Gaurav Agrawal, the counsel agreed with Justice B.V. Nagarathna that the 1986

Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in the *Danial Latif versus Union Of India* (2001) case upheld the constitutional validity of the 1986 Act by extending the right of a Muslim woman to get maintenance till she re-marries. It, however, reduced the period of maintenance to the completion of *iddat*. In 2009, a Division Bench of the Supreme Court reiterated a divorced Muslim woman's right to claim maintenance under Section 125 of the CrPC as long as she does not remarry. It highlighted that such a relief would be extended even after the expiry of the *iddat* period.

**How did the proceedings play out?** The apex court pointed out that Section 3 of the 1986 Act begins with a non-obstante clause ("notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force"), and thus it does not bar an alternative remedy under Section 125 of the CrPC, the court asserted that if that were the case then the legislators would have explicitly given an overriding effect to the 1986 Act. "The Act does not say no petition under Section 125 shall be filed by Muslim women. They should have said that. In the absence of such a thing, can we add the restriction to the Act?" Justice B.V. Nagarathna asked.

This observation. He also said that the question of whether the 1986 Act takes away the right under Section 125 of the CrPC was not dealt with in *Danial Latif* and thus there is a requirement of an authoritative pronouncement in this regard.

However, the observations in paragraph 33 of the judgment suggest that the 1986 Act has to be interpreted in such a manner that the divorced Muslim woman is entitled to all rights of maintenance as are available to other divorced women in the country. Consequently, the rights of divorced women cannot be taken away only from one section of divorced women of our country, lest it infringe Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution. Thus, the validity of the 1986 Act was upheld with this understanding that the 1986 Act does not seek to treat Muslim divorced women any less favourably than other divorced women," he elucidated.

Dismissing the petitioner's argument that the provisions of the 1986 Act reflect the Parliament's intent to debar Muslim women from seeking relief under Section 125 of the CrPC, the court asserted that if that were the case then the legislators would have explicitly given an overriding effect to the 1986 Act. "The Act does not say no petition under Section 125 shall be filed by Muslim women. They should have said that. In the absence of such a thing, can we add the restriction to the Act?" Justice B.V. Nagarathna asked.

## THE GIST

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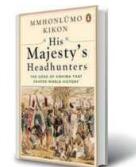
▼ The apex court pointed out that Section 3 of the 1986 Act begins with a non-obstante clause and thus it does not bar an alternative remedy under Section 125 of the CrPC.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY



Voice from the east: Khasi women from the West Khasi Hill district of Meghalaya cross a hanging bridge in 2020. RITU RAJ KONWAR



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

"Ms. A. S. Pramila wants to know the difference between 'He contracted typhoid causing his mother to fear for his survival' and 'He contracted typhoid causing his mother to fear his survival'."

"To fear for his survival" means the fear that he might not survive. His mother is anxious that he should continue to live. She is concerned about his life. "To fear his survival" means that he might survive and his survival will be a cause for fear. The sentence means that his mother is afraid that he may not survive.

"Several readers would like to know (a) what an idiom is (b) whether good writing or speech should contain a lot of idioms."

"I discussed this briefly a couple of years ago. Perhaps it wasn't clear. An idiom is a mode of expression peculiar to a language, an expression characteristic of a particular language not logically or grammatically applicable. Take the sentence 'She drank milk.' The meaning of this sentence is the total meaning of 'she' plus 'drank' plus 'milk' in that order. By and large, the meaning of a sentence is the total meaning of the words in that sentence. Now take this sentence: 'She kicked the bucket.' The sentence means that she died. We don't get this meaning by combining the meaning of 'she', 'kicked' and 'bucket'. That is why we call an idiom a 'peculiar mode of expression'. You cannot change the structure of an idiom as you please. You have to use it as it is. You can't say 'He kicked a bucket' or 'He kicked buckets'. 'To kick the bucket' is the idiom and it must be used in that form. No alteration is permissible except when you want to be humorous. Idioms should be used judiciously. Idioms are like sweets. We enjoy eating sweets occasionally. We can't live on sweets. We live on our staple diet. Ordinary language is like the staple diet and idioms are like sweets. A speech or writing full of idioms would sound odd and funny. Here is an extract from a dialogue I wrote some years ago:

"How are you?"

"Fit as a fiddle."

"How is your father?"

"In the pink of health."

"How is your uncle?"

"He has one foot in the grave."

"Your aunt?"

"She kicked the bucket a year ago."

"Why do you speak like this?" Are you so fond of idioms?"

I am head over heels in love with them. There is more to an idiom than meets the eye, you know. Well, I have to be in another place at nine on the dot..."

If you speak or write in this manner, you will be considered idiotic. 'Idiot' and 'idiotic' are from the same root."

"Palindrome fans, you time has come: 1991 reads the same backward as forward. The last time this happened was in 1881, one of those years that another New York reader thinks should be called a palindromemont. Consider: In every century of this millennium, we have been treated to only one palindrome—100,111,1221 and so on—in intervals of 110 years. But we fortunate humans have the prospect of two such years almost within our lifetime. The year 2002 is just around the corner. We live in interesting times." — William Safire"

Published in *The Hindu* on March 5, 1991.

## Tracking the northeast: new fiction by women and a history of the Kohima Battle

New books on the region chronicle old and new struggles, the history of insurgency and other battles and life in the borderlands; women, important knowledge keepers, throw light on a host of issues from patriarchy to the struggle of everyday life

Sudipta Datta

**P**enguin has just opened a book store in Nagaland's Chiumoleduma town, which lies on the way to its capital Kohima, in association with the White Owl Book Lounge. This is the second exclusive store for the publishing house outside Delhi, and a welcome move in a State with a rich oral tradition and many stories to tell. Nagaland has just held its first literature festival too, earlier this month. Publishers like Zubaan and Speaking Tiger regularly bring out books on the northeast, offering new narratives, chronicling old and new struggles, the history of insurgency and other battles, life in the borderlands and so forth.

In her Introduction to *We Come from Mist, Writings from Meghalaya* (Zubaan), Janice Parlat eloquently writes that much like the rain, the mist is its own entity in this northeastern State, "filled with palpable agency, writhing, slithering, billowing, being." She says: "We come from mist, because our stories come from there – the realm of the intangible, the spoken, the sung, from air, and light, and water, all those elements that exceed beyond the confines of paper, ink and typewriter."

The publishing house, Zubaan, set up in 2003 as an imprint of India's first feminist publishing house, Kali for Women, has launched a series of books by women from the Northeast, including

from Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Meghalaya.

#### Politics of place'

In *We Comes From Mist*, there's a contiguous thread running through many of the stories, poems, illustrations Parlat collected, all by women – that of 'politics of place, emerging in the recounting and remembering of the history of militant insurgency, especially during the 1980s and 1990s.' Meghalaya's 'astonishing landscape' marked by monoliths or mawbynes find mention in both illustration (Balaiamon Khangapkynta) and poem (Amanda Basamaito's 'Shared Stories'). But, as Parlat points out, the recurring theme is that of bonds struck between women.

Written accounts of women's lives are still rare in Mizoram, say the editors of *The Keepers of Knowledge: Writings from Mizoram* (Zubaan). Hmingthanzuali and Mary Vanlaiphantui, but it's changing. They point out that recent research on Mizo oral traditions have shown that despite the fact that women's knowledge and words were disregarded in a patriarchal society, they found other ways to articulate their concerns, one way being composing songs. It is not mere chance, they write, that studies on Mizo folk songs always begin with the story of Pi Hauki, the first song composer who was buried alive on the orders of the village chief and others who were said to be jealous of her talent.

While the tragedy may have prevented other women from raising their voices, "it did not stop them from becoming more active in composing songs," the lyrics speaking out against injustice. When Christian missionaries arrived, women began writing within the enclosure of the Church, but they also dabbled in novels and short stories. And though most of the works on Ramhau, the 20-year conflict in Mizoram from 1966-1986, are by men, there are at least two memoirs by former Mizo National Front women volunteers.

#### The Battle of Kohima

Last year, Mmhonlimo Kikon, writer and politician from Nagaland, wrote about the decisive Battle of Kohima in the Second World War which has been documented about by many American and British historians.

*His Majesty's Headhunters* (Penguin) tells the story from the perspective of the Nagas, and their crucial role in how the Allies forced led by Lieutenant General William Slim defeated the Japanese army led by Lieutenant General Renya Miaguchi and Lt. Gen. Sato.

"In many a conversation," he writes in the introduction, "the Nagas cite three reasons for the victory of the Allied forces over the impudent Japanese Army – first

and foremost being the intelligence inputs

and the labour service provided by Nagaland villagers. Kikon profiles the headhunters who "decapitated with the right blow of the dao" and generals like Yamamoto

Lotha, considered "one of the best headhunters from Phiro village in Lotha country." The second reason for the loss of the Japanese is attributed to their "improper planning" and differences among the top two generals, with the third being the air cover provided by the U.S. Air Force and the supply of ammunition and arms.

#### Stories, myths, legends

But much before it became a battlefield, Kohima (even the name is a corruption, villagers called it Kewhima or Kewhira – the British often mispronounced local names) was the political administrative headquarters of the British colonial government since 1878.

Kikon tells the story of how Kohima became the capital of the Naga Hills and the battle between colonial forces and Angami Nagas. It took the British over four decades to establish their headquarters in Kohima, and many more years to secure it. In telling his version of a famous battle, Kikon also traces the origins of Kohima and its journey to becoming the capital of Nagaland in 1963 when the State came into being with stories, myths and legends.

Writing about Meghalaya, Parlat says, "we are a storied people, fond of tall tales, tall stories, tall superstitions, passing them on to our children and our children's children."

She could be talking about all the other States in the region too.

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

## THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz on languages on the occasion of International Mother Language Day being celebrated on February 21

V. V. Ramanan

#### QUESTION 1

According to the popular writer Stephen King, which language turns dirt into romance?

#### QUESTION 2

Which was the second language, after Tamil, to become a legally recognised classical language of India?

#### QUESTION 3

From which language do we get words like assassin, sugar, and zero?

#### QUESTION 4

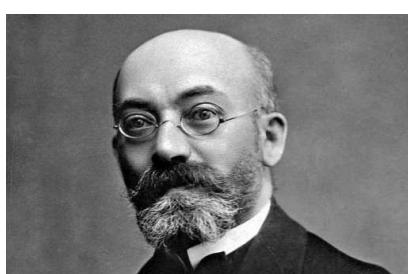
In fiction, which specific type of people spoke 'Khuzzul'?

**QUESTION 5**  
Alphabetically arranged from A to Z, which would be the first and last in the six official languages of the UN?

**QUESTION 6**  
Which letter appears in approximately 11% of all words in the common English vocabulary and is the second most popular key after the space bar on a keyboard?

**QUESTION 7**  
Nepali is an official language of which Indian State?

**QUESTION 8**  
What is 'dramayana'?



**Visual question:**  
Name this famous linguist and what 'universal' language did he create.

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz 1.** The salute adopted by Nazi Germany closely resembled this salute, created by James Upham. Ans: Bellamy salute

2. The salute originated from a 16th century naval tradition in which a ship would deplete its ammunition by firing its cannons into the water. Ans: 21-gun salute

3. The practice of greeting rulers of princely states by firing a certain number of guns was discontinued in this year. Ans: 1971

4. The salute in which the palm of the right hand faces downward is this for branch of the armed forces. Ans: Navy

5. This German fighter pilot was given a full military funeral, including a gun salute by Australia. Ans: Manfred von Richthofen

Visual: The armed forces of this country use this salute. Ans: Poland

Early Birds: Jagrati Shukla| Prashant Nain| Rajmohan, V. M. Suresh Kumar| Kamaldeep Kaur

CM YK

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## Word of the day

### Rapport:

a relationship of mutual understanding or trust and agreement between people

### Synonym:

resonance

**Usage:** He established a good rapport with the boss.

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

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /rə'pɔ:t/, /rə'pɔ:t/, /rə'pɔ:u/

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****SC declares AAP leader as Mayor of Chandigarh**

The decision to declare Mr. Kumar as the winner was taken immediately after perusing the eight ballot papers specially brought to the court. The Bench said that the eight votes were clearly cast for Mr. Kumar, taking his tally to a majority 20 votes out of a total of 36 polled. Mr. Masih's declaration of Mr. Sonkar as winner was quashed and set aside.

The court agreed with Punjab Advocate General Gurjeet Singh, senior advocate A.M. Singhvi and advocate Shadan Farasat that there was no need to call for fresh polls as that would only work to compound the "serious misdemeanour" of Mr. Masih. It said the aberration was only in the counting of votes by the Returning Officer.

The Bench concluded that Mr. Masih misused his capacity as a Returning Officer to unlawfully alter the course of the mayoral elections. He further made a "patently false statement" in the Supreme Court on Monday that the eight ballot papers were already defaced by the time they had reached him.

The Bench ordered the Supreme Court Registrar (Civil) to issue a show cause notice to Mr. Masih under Section 340 (conduct affecting the administration of justice) of the CrPC.

**Maharashtra clears 10% Maratha quota**

While the Opposition parties passed the Bill unanimously, the Congress later denounced it as a "pre-election eyewash," accusing the government of hoodwinking the Maratha community.

Maharashtra's Leader of the Opposition and senior Congressman Vijay Wadettiwar alleged that the Eknath Shinde regime had "fooled" the Marathas. He added that the Opposition had been compelled to support the Bill on Tuesday for fear of accusations of voting against it merely for the sake of Opposition. "We were not allowed to speak in the Assembly. This Bill was brought with the sole aim of winning the Lok Sabha election," he said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray, though a Congress ally, expressed his thanks to Mr. Shinde, noting that the OBC community's reservation had not been affected while granting the quota for the Marathas.

**+ Indians forced to fight along Ukraine border**

Indian nationals fighting along the Russian border in its conflict with Ukraine. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The other victims belong to Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. The Hindu has withheld their names.

One of the victims from Uttar Pradesh, who is in his early 20s and who wished to remain anonymous, said three of them were given basic training in handling arms and ammunition by the "Russian Army" and were packed off to Rostov-on-Don along the Russia-Ukraine border in January where they faced bullets and were forced to fight at gunpoint. "We arrived here in November 2023, were made to sign contracts, which said that we are being hired as army security helpers. We were categorically told that we will not be sent to the battlefield and promised ₹1.95 lakh salary and ₹50,000 additional bonus per month. Except the ₹50,000 bonus for two months, I have not received any money," he said. He said he came to Russia with the help of an agent, Faizal Khan, who runs a YouTube channel titled "Baba Vlogs".

On November 12, the U.P. resident was received in Russia by two Indian agents associated with Mr. Khan. "On November 13, we were admitted into a camp and taken to a deserted place around two-and-a-half hours away from Moscow. We contacted the Indian agents and they assured us that we will be posted as helpers. We lived in tents and were trained to handle weapons. On January 4, we were sent to Donetsk to fight," he added.

He said that after they were forced to fight, he found an opportunity to escape. "But I was caught and threatened at gunpoint. They asked me to transport goods from one building to another. The commander told us to walk maintaining a gap of five metres so that we do not become easy targets. In the short walk, we faced bullets 7-8 times, a local accompanying me was killed. On January 22, I managed to flee and got admitted to a hospital with frostbite injuries," the victim said.

The MEA declined to comment on the specific case of Indian workers in Russia. According to sources, the Indian Embassy has been following up on all such complaints they have received, but pointed out that many of those who claim being forced into labour at the border do not want to leave the country. Many have paid high fees to recruiters to secure opportunities abroad and do not wish to be repatriated without having earned some money.

**BJP pushes for simultaneous polls, with common voter list**

In letter to Kovind-led panel, BJP says elections for Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and local bodies must be held together; it says that frequent polls cause stagnation of economic activities and add financial burden on parties and governments

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

**T**he Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Tuesday pitched for simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha, the State Assemblies, and the local bodies, with the same bodies, with the same voter list for all three.

A presentation was made before a high-level committee formed to look into the feasibility of the "one nation, one election" idea. The panel is headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind.

In both the BJP's eight-page letter to the panel and party president J.P. Nadda's briefing to the media, it was suggested that simultaneous elections, with a common voter list, are desirable and a law based on consensus should be the goal. The BJP wants that the law should be



Bigger goals: BJP chief J.P. Nadda with Home Minister Amit Shah during the party's recent National Council meet in New Delhi. ANI

amended to hold simultaneous elections, Mr. Nadda said.

He also said that the BJP had proposed that if conducting all the three polls together was not possible immediately, then the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections could be held together first.

"But in the long run, local body polls should also be held alongside Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, or it will defeat the purpose due to the frequent nature of the Model Code of Conduct," Mr. Nadda said.

In the letter submitted to the panel, the BJP stated that when elections are imminent, State governments tend to make populist, short-term decisions rather than more policy-based, long-term ones.

**'Govt. paralysed'**

It was also suggested that the frequent imposition of the model code paralysed government in policy terms. In Maharashtra, of the 365 days in 2016-17, some parts of the State or the other were under the code for 301 days. "It would be difficult under these circumstances to have effective governance," the BJP said.

"The committee should evolve a consensus on holding simultaneous elections," Mr. Nadda said, expressing confidence that everyone would move together on this.

"Ongoing development work is stopped during the

period of an election, often three times in a State, causing stagnation of economic activities and adding financial burden on parties and governments," he said, adding that it also gave rise to corruption.

Security forces deployed for internal and external security are also used for election duties, Mr. Nadda said, noting that civil staff like teachers and health sector workers are also part of election work. "This adversely affects administration and pro-peoples work, he said.

Major Opposition parties, including the Congress, the Trinamool Congress, and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, have strongly opposed the idea, first mooted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, dubbing it as an assault on the federal structure.

**Bring back ballot papers, RJD appeals to poll panel**

**Press Trust of India**

PATNA

The Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in Bihar urged the Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday to consider reverting to the old practice of ballot papers, in place of electronic voting machines (EVMs), "to ensure free and fair polls". According to the party's representation, elections ought to be conducted through ballot papers to ensure transparency.

However, the party also said that as long as EVMs remained in use, it must be ensured that VVPAT (voter verifiable paper audit trail) slips were shown to the respective voters after voting and these were kept in a sealed box until counting. The RJD also demanded that postal ballots be continued before EVMs.

Concerns over EVMs were also raised by the CPI(ML) Liberation and the CPI(M), both alliance partners of the RJD.

**CBI searches premises of ex-officer in assets case****The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The CBI on Tuesday searched the premises of Ramesh Abhishek, and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders Madan Rathore and Chumaili Garasia were elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan on Tuesday, which was the last day for withdrawal of nominations for biennial elections to the Upper House. No other candidates were contesting for the three seats.

The Lokpal had directed the CBI to probe the doubtful transactions entered into by Mr. Abhishek and his daughter by way of receiving huge amounts as professional/consulting fee from various entities with whom he had official dealings while he was Secretary of DPPIIT or headed FMC.

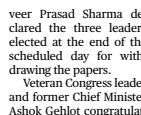
**Sonia, 2 BJP leaders elected unopposed to RS from Rajasthan****The Hindu Bureau**

JAIPUR

Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders Madan Rathore and Chumaili Garasia were elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan on Tuesday, which was the last day for withdrawal of nominations for biennial elections to the Upper House. No other candidates were contesting for the three seats.

The ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress were comfortably placed to win two and one seats, respectively, based on their strength in the State Assembly.

Election Officer and Assembly Secretary Mahesh



Sonia Gandhi

veer Prasad Sharma declared the three leaders elected at the end of the scheduled day for withdrawing the papers.

Veteran Congress leader and former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot congratulated Ms. Gandhi on her election and said her entry into the Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan would give "new energy" to the Opposition.

**Nadda, three others elected unopposed from Gujarat****Press Trust of India**

GANDHINagar

BJP president J.P. Nadda and three other candidates of the party, including an OBC leader and a prominent diamond merchant, were declared elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat on Tuesday.

There were four vacant Rajya Sabha seats in the State.

As there were no other candidates in the fray for the Rajya Sabha elections from Gujarat on the vacant seats besides them, Returning Officer Reeta Mehra declared all the four BJP nominees, including Mr. Nadda, elected unopposed to the Upper House of Parliament, an official said.

**J&K on development path, Gulf countries keen to invest: Modi****Peerrzada Ashiq**

JAMMU



Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who dedicated ₹32,000-crore projects to Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, expressed satisfaction over the positive outcome of the revocation of the special status under Article 370, "with the Gulf countries showing keen interest in investment".

He also congratulated the local youth for liberating themselves from dynastic politics.

"There is a positivity about investing in Kashmir. The successful G-20 meeting in the country and Srinagar have echoed in the globe. A record two crore tourists have visited J&K in the past one year. More visitors will come with the train network expansions from Srinagar to Jammu and the new express highway from Jammu to Delhi," Mr. Modi said.

The Bharatiya Janata Party is fulfilling dreams of people, unfulfilled for the past 70 years, in J&K. Mr. Modi's guarantee is final and is the guarantee that everyone's dreams will be fulfilled. In the past, only said news, like bomb blasts, kidnappings and separations, would emerge from Kashmir. Education, connectivity and development has replaced it. Now, J&K is on the path of progress and development," Mr. Modi said.

"The Bharatiya Janata Party is fulfilling dreams of people, unfulfilled for the past 70 years, in J&K. Mr. Modi's guarantee is final and is the guarantee that everyone's dreams will be fulfilled. In the past, only said news, like bomb blasts, kidnappings and separations, would emerge from Kashmir. Education, connectivity and development has replaced it. Now, J&K is on the path of progress and development," Mr. Modi said.

"These dynasties only see their own interest and not that of people. It's the youth that bears the brunt of this dynastic politics because it does not prioritise welfare schemes for them or the downtrodden," he said.

J&K Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha said, "The incidents of terrorism have been reduced by 75%. Jo bhi tanzeem ka isha top commanders ko uchit jaag pahuch diye gaye hain [all of those top organisational commanders have been sent to the appropriate spot]. Protest calendar is no longer issued, and stone throwing is now history. Markets, schools, and universities now remain open throughout the year."

**New shape?** Mr. Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation of projects worth ₹32,000 crore in several sectors, including education, health, aviation, roadways and railways. "Kashmir is taking a new shape now. The big-

**U.S. awaits India's findings in Pannun case, says U.S. official Richard Verma****Suhasini Haider**

NEW DELHI



Union Minister Piyush Goyal and U.S. Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti with Richard R. Verma, right, in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

hearing on "transnational repression" in December, several senior lawmakers had sharply criticised the Modi government over this case, as well as similar allegations by Canada, and some lawmakers threatened to "activate" U.S. laws against cooperation with India.

At a hearing of the Committee of Inquiry looking into the matter, Mr. Verma engaged with the Indian government and looked forward to their findings. "They've taken it very seriously. And we're grateful for that," he said.

The Ministry of External Affairs has denied any wrongdoing in the case, but set up a "high-level" panel to investigate the allegations in the case.

**U.S. Senate criticism** While the U.S. government has been dealing with the Pannun case diplomatically, behind closed doors thus far, the U.S. Congress has been more vocal about its concerns in the case. At a Senate committee hearing on

the Government of India; there is a Committee of Inquiry looking into the matter. We will stay engaged with the Indian government and look forward to their findings... They've taken it very seriously. And we're grateful for that," he said.

When asked how differences with India's position on the Ukraine war were viewed in Washington, Mr. Verma said that India's "complicated history" with Russia is understood, although the U.S. has a "different responsibility" from those of India.

He said that statements that India and the U.S. had jointly issued, bilaterally and during the G-20 summit, clearly called for "territorial integrity, standing up for the rule of law, and to minimise the humanitarian impact of

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I am Parvaty aged 39 years suffering from Heart ailment and advised to undergo Open Heart Surgery and Valve Replacement at The Madras Medical Mission Hospital. The total cost of treatment is Rs. 8,00,000. I have three children and my husband is a daily wage earner. Please help us to get the treatment done. Your kind donation will bring a bright future. The donations sent through WWS, Regd Public Charitable Trust, Plot No. 100, 1st Main, 10th Cross, 1st Main Road, Anna Salai, T. Nagar, Chennai - 600005, Ph: +91-42137401 / 2353324 / 733897027. E Mail ID: womenwesynclate@gmail.com, Website: www.womenwesynclate.org.

Parvaty

# Police gear up for farmers' march

Punjab DGP says that no earthmoving equipment should be allowed to reach the inter-State boundary with Haryana; police allege that protesters were planning to damage the barricades, which they say will compromise law and order situation

Vikas Vasudeva  
CHANDIGARH

A day ahead of their "Delhi Chalo" march, protesting farmers in Punjab on Tuesday made efforts to mobilise supporters to swell their ranks.

The Punjab Police are leaving nothing to chance, alleging that inputs indicated plans of the protesters to storm the barricades erected by the Haryana Police and enter Haryana, a move which would disturb the law and order situation in both States.

On Tuesday, Punjab's Director-General of Police issued instructions to all Senior Superintendents of



**Destination Delhi:** The protesting farmers are set to resume the Delhi Chalo march on Wednesday. REUTERS

Police and Commissioners of Police that "no PCBs, ploughs, tippers, hydros, and other heavy earthmoving equipment should be allowed to reach the Punjab-Haryana boundary at Khanauli and the Shambu

barrier where the farmer agitation is under way".

Earlier, Haryana's Director-General of Police wrote to his Punjab counterpart saying, "It is reliably learnt that heavy earthmoving equipment, which are

further modified/armoured, have been acquired by protesting farmers and have been deployed at the locations where the protesters are camping right now. These machines are meant to be used by the protesters to damage the barricades thereby posing a serious danger to the police and paramilitary forces deployed on duty and is likely to compromise the security scenario in Haryana."

## 'Not a difficult task'

The Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non Political), the two umbrella bodies of around 200 farmers and farm labourer unions – had given the call

for the march to the national capital to press for the fulfilment of demands such as a legal guarantee for purchasing crops at minimum support price (MSP) and loan waiver.

KMM, coordinator Sarwan Singh Pandher told *The Hindu* that on Wednesday farmers would peacefully start their march towards Delhi. He said if the Centre had an intent to remove the issue, it was not a difficult task.

Meanwhile, while hearing two petitions surrounding the march, the Punjab and Haryana High Court observed that tractor-tippers cannot be plied on highways as per the Motor Vehicle Act.

## Lift Internet ban, road blocks: khap leaders

**The Hindu Bureau**  
GURUGRAM

Farmer unions and *khap* leaders at a *mhaphan-chayari* in Haryana's Jind on Tuesday demanded that the ban on Internet services and the blockade put by the police on various roads should be lifted.

Samyukt Kisan Morcha

leader Azad Palva told *The Hindu* that the *mhaphan-chayari* decided to hold an indefinite sit-in on one of the carriageways of the Delhi-Patiala highway in Uchana.

The *khap* leaders also called for all farmer unions in Haryana to put up a united fight with the Punjab farmers.

## SKM welcomes splinter group's decision to reject Centre's offer

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Tuesday welcomed the SKM-NP's announcement to continue their protest till the common demands are achieved and said the decision was a step in the right direction of greater unity of all farmers across India.

tracts and resume their 'Delhi Chalo' protest from

Kumar Kakka, however, said the SKM was not part of the protest and they had no right to comment on it. "Kisan movement has now split into two. But protest will continue seeking a solution for farmers issues. At a right time, based on these issues, we need to have united struggles."

SKM-NP's leader Shiv Kumar Kakka, however, said the SKM was not part of the protest and they had no right to comment on it. "Kisan movement has now split into two. But protest will continue seeking a solution for farmers issues. At a right time, based on these issues, we need to have united struggles."

## Seat-sharing deal with SP will be finalised soon: Congress

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Amid reports that alliance talks between the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress for the Lok Sabha elections have hit a dead end, Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal on Tuesday asserted that seat-sharing talks are on and a final deal could be announced soon.

"It [seat-sharing] is in final stage. Any time, it can be finalised," Mr. Venugopal told reporters in response to a question on whether the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) had derailed in Uttar Pradesh.

Asked if the Congress



would accept the SP's offer of 17 seats, Mr. Venugopal said, "The discussion is going on. Wait for some time."

The last round of discussion between leaders of the Congress and the SP was

held on February 19, sources added. On Monday, the SP declared 11 more candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha election. The first list with candidates for 16 seats was announced on January 30.

**Other INDIA partners**  
Asked about other INDIA bloc partners talking about fighting the elections alone, he said, "We are in the process. Our alliance team is there and Congress president has appointed a team of leaders for alliance."

"They are discussing with everybody, day after day. We have great hope that a solution will come," he added.

In its first list, the party had announced Dharmendra Yadav, son of party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav's younger brother

## SP declares 3rd list for Lok Sabha poll, fields Shivpal from Budaun

**Press Trust of India**  
LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party on Tuesday declared its third list of five candidates for the Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh, fielding senior leader Shivpal Yadav from Budaun.

Mr. Shivpal, the uncle of party chief Akhilesh Yadav, is party general secretary and a six-time MLA from the Jawsantnagar constituency in Etawah district.

In its first list, the party had announced Dharmendra Yadav, son of party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav's younger brother

Abhay Ram Yadav, from Budaun.

The other candidates in Tuesday's list are Surendra Singh Patel from Varanasi, Iqra Hasan from Kairana, Praveen Singh Arora from Bareilly and Ajendra Singh Rajput from Hamirpur.

With this the Samajwadi Party has so far declared 31 candidates. Uttar Pradesh send 80 MPs to Lok Sabha.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Mr. Shivpal had contested from Firozabad on PSPL ticket but secured a distant third position, with the BJP bagging the seat while Akhilesh Yadav of the SP was the runner-up.

## Modi govt. tweaked definition of forest to help corporate friends'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday applauded the Supreme Court's interim order asking the States and the Union Territories to act as per the definition of a "forest" laid down by the court in a 1996 verdict. It also said that it was committed to protecting the environment when an INDIA bloc government is formed.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh accused the Modi-led government of making laws to make it easier to hand over forests and pollute the environment, to benefit Mr. Modi's "corporate cronies."

"So first, he changed the rules in 2017 so that projects had violated their

forest clearance could be legalised. Over 100 projects of big corporates including coal mines, factories and cement plants were allowed to brazenly start work in violation of environmental clearances," he alleged.

The ruling stopped another set of "blatantly illegal and disastrous" Central schemes, he said.

**Government of Odisha, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur**

**Bid Identification No. Road Tender Online RWSBWP-64/2023-24**

No.954 Date: 11/03/2024

The Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Government of Odisha invites online percentage rate bid from experienced & eligible bidders for Transferred Road Improvement Programme (TRIP) & CMLR for the year 2023-24.

1. Name of work : Transferred Road Improvement Programme (TRIP) & CMLR for the year 2023-24.

2. No. of works : 04 Nos details as per DTCN.

3. Estimated Cost : Approximately varies from Rs.937.43 Lakhs to Rs.1635.93 Lakhs.

4. Mode of award : Bidding through e-auction.

5. Cost of tender paper and mode of deposit : Rs.110/-per set/(to be deposited on behalf of concerned Executive Engineer).

6. Mode of submission of tender : Tenders should be submitted online on website <http://tenderodisha.samsodhikar.org/>.

7. End date and mode of deposit : 11/03/2024.

8. Summary of Key dates are provided below :

Procurement Officer Identification No. Application of funds online for bidding & Time for seeking classification

Identification No. From To Technical Bid Financial Bid

1. Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur, Odisha, 762024 26/02/2024 11/03/2024 12/03/2024 will be Intimated Interim

2. Identification No. From To up to up to 11/03/2024 12/03/2024 Interim

3. Identification No. From To up to up to 11/03/2024 12/03/2024 Interim

4. Identification No. From To up to up to 11/03/2024 12/03/2024 Interim

\*Bidder details can be seen on the e-auction portal <http://www.tenderodisha.samsodhikar.org/>.

\*Bidder identification no. & password required for login.

\*Bidder should visit the e-auction portal <http://www.tenderodisha.samsodhikar.org/> before the bid closing date and quote his/her score accordingly.

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## IN BRIEF



## India to display relics of Lord Buddha in Thailand

India will hold an exposition of some of the relics of Lord Buddha, which are in its possession, in Thailand from February 22 to March 18. The relics (20 bone fragments) have been preserved at the National Museum in New Delhi. At first the relics would be kept at the National Museum, Bangkok, and would then be exhibited at five different venues across Thailand, a Union Culture Ministry official said. The relics of Lord Buddha along with the relics of two of his disciples, preserved in Madhya Pradesh's Sanchi, are being sent on the request of the Thai government, an official said. The Buddha relics were excavated from Piprahwa in Uttar Pradesh.

## Drug worth ₹2,000 cr. seized in Pune, New Delhi; 3 arrested

Policemen seized 1,100kg of synthetic stimulant drug mephedrone, estimated to be worth more than ₹2,000 crore, following raids in Pune district and New Delhi and arrested three persons, officials said on Tuesday. The persons arrested in connection with the biggest-ever drug seizure according to the Pune police were booked under various sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS Act), they said, adding two other men are being questioned in connection with the same case. Pune police commissioner Amitesh Kumar said 700kg of mephedrone was seized from different locations in Pune district. *PTI*

## NHRC seeks report from DGCA on death at airport

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Tuesday issued a notice to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) over the death of an 80-year-old man at the Mumbai airport after he failed to get a wheelchair despite prior request to the airline. According to reports, there were 32 passengers who needed wheelchair on the particular flight, but there were only 15 available with the ground staff. The octogenarian collapsed after walking around a kilometre and a half. The DGCA should send a detailed report to the commission on the matter within four weeks, the NHRC said.

## 800 athletes reach Kashmir for Khelo India Winter games

Around 800 athletes arrived in Kashmir on Tuesday to participate in the fourth edition of the Khelo India Winter Games, as the venue, Gulmarg, received more than three feet of fresh snowfall in the past 48 hours. An official said the athletes from across the country will participate in events like snowboarding, alpine skiing, Nordic skiing, and ski mountaineering. "The field of play has been set up by the best technical teams. We aim to provide international standards to the players. Snow beaters have been made functional to set the stage for the games," Nuzhat Gul, secretary, J&K Sports Council, said. Gulmarg is one of the few destinations in the country deemed fit for winter games.

## Rules that edge out women from jobs due to marriage illegal: SC

Regulations based on gender-based bias unconstitutional, it says; asks govt. to pay compensation to a woman permanent commissioned officer

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

**R**ules that bully women employees out of their jobs for getting married or having domestic issues amount to "coarse gender discrimination" and are plainly unconstitutional, the Supreme Court has said.

"Terminating employment because the woman has got married is a coarse case of gender discrimination and inequality. Acceptance of such patriarchal rule undermines human dignity, right to basic non-discrimination and fair treatment. Laws and regulations based on gender-based bias are constitutionally impermissible," the court said in a recent order.

The observations were part of an order which upheld the rights of a woman permanent commissioned officer in the Military Nursing Service who was discharged for getting married.

A Bench headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna directed the Union Government to pay former Lieutenant Colonel John X60 lobb in compensation within eight weeks as a full and final settlement of all her claims. The government had come in appeal against a decision of the Lucknow Bench of the Armed Forces Tribunal which had ruled in her favour.

Noting that her release from services was both "wrong and illegal", the Supreme Court found that the rule against marriage



The court said terminating employment because the woman has got married is a coarse case of gender discrimination. FILE PHOTO

tice Sanjiv Khanna directed the Union Government to pay former Lieutenant Colonel John X60 lobb in compensation within eight weeks as a full and final settlement of all her claims.

The government had come in appeal against a decision of the Lucknow Bench of the Armed Forces Tribunal which had ruled in her favour.

The court also recorded that the Army instruction concerned with the terms and conditions of service for the grant of permanent commissions in the Military Nursing Service was withdrawn in 1995.

was applicable only to women nursing officers. The rule was "ex facie manifestly arbitrary."

"[R]ule-making marriage of women employees and their domestic involvement a ground for disqualification would be unconstitutional," the order noted.

The court also recorded that the Army instruction concerned with the terms and conditions of service for the grant of permanent commissions in the Military Nursing Service was withdrawn in 1995.

## India to seek \$26 bn private investment in nuclear power sector'

**Reuters**  
NEW DELHI

India will invite private companies to invest about \$26 billion in its nuclear energy sector to increase the amount of electricity from sources that do not produce carbon dioxide emissions, two government officials said.

This is the first time that New Delhi is pursuing private investment in nuclear power, a non-carbon-emitting energy source that contributes less than 2% of India's total electricity generation. The funding would help India achieve its target of having 50% of its installed electric generation capacity use non-fossil fuels by 2030, up from 42%

The government is in talks with at least five private companies who make the investments in the nuclear plants acquire land, water, and infrastructure situated in areas outside the reactor complex of the plants. But the rights to build and run the stations and their fuel management will rest with NPCIL as allowed under the law, they said. The private companies are expected to earn revenue from the power plant's electricity sales and NPCIL would operate the projects for a fee, the officials said.

ding that the plan is still being finalised.

The state-run Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) owns and operates the country's fleet of nuclear power plants, with a capacity of 7,500 MW, and has committed investments for another 1,300 MW.

The Department of Atomic Energy and NPCIL have held multiple rounds of discussions with the private firms in the past year on the investment plan, the officials said.

The Department of Atomic Energy, NPCIL, Tata Power, Reliance Industries, Adani Power, and Vedanta did not respond to queries.

The officials said under the funding plan, the private companies will make the investments in the nuclear plants acquire land, water, and infrastructure situated in areas outside the reactor complex of the plants. But the rights to build and run the stations and their fuel management will rest with NPCIL as allowed under the law, they said. The private companies are expected to earn revenue from the power plant's electricity sales and NPCIL would operate the projects for a fee, the officials said.



## Tharoor gets highest civilian award of France

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor was conferred the "Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur", the highest civilian honour in France, at an intimate ceremony at the French Embassy on Tuesday.

The French government had announced the award for Mr. Tharoor in August 2022, but the formal conferring took place on Tuesday.

Mr. Tharoor said his relationship with France began during his UN stint and that he always "nurtured a sense of profound respect for French democracy" as the land where "the people" first replaced "the king" as the nucleus of the nation. "The conferment of this award to an Indian is also an acknowledgement of deepening of Franco-Indian relations," he said.

## BJP leader Suvendu visits Sandeshkhali after HC intervention

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
KOLKATA

The Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, was allowed to visit Sandeshkhali on Tuesday at the intervention of the Calcutta High Court.

The BJP leader had been stopped by the police from visiting the area on two occasions earlier this month, after protests broke out on the island over allegations of sexual assault and land grab by local Trinamool Congress leaders.

Hundreds of people, including women, came to greet Mr. Adhikari at the island. Women also broke down as they narrated their plight to the BJP MLA.

During the day, the Division Bench expressed its disappointment that the prime accused [Trinamool leader Sheikh Shahjahan] remained absconding.

## Journalist remanded in police custody

A court at Basirhat in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas on Tuesday remanded a journalist from Sandeshkhali in police custody for three days. Santu Pan, a journalist with a TV news channel, was arrested on Monday. The arrest was caught live on television as he was dragged from the Sandeshkhali ferry ghat. The arrest has drawn condemnation from the Editor's Guild.

CPIM leader Brinda Karat was also allowed to visit Sandeshkhali.

She claimed that lawlessness prevailed on the island.

## Study finds rise in blood clots, heart inflammation after COVID vaccination

**Jacob Koshy**  
NEW DELHI

One of the largest assessments of its kind, spanning 99 million people and investigating reports of adverse reactions following COVID-19 vaccination, found that instances of Guillain-Barre Syndrome, myocarditis, pericarditis, and cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) were at least 1.5 times more than expected following inoculation with mRNA and ChAdOx1 vaccines.

This is in line with previous observations by the World Health Organization and the European Medicines Agency, and was what led to these being classified as rare side effects following the vaccination for COVID-19.

The data set did not include patients from India. However, a majority of Indians were administered



The data set did not include patients from India.

the ChAdOx1, or Covishield, vaccines during the pandemic.

The need for rapid development and administration of vaccines saw a range of new approaches to vaccination, namely the use of synthetic viral particles, or protein constructs being administered following shortened testing programmes.

Guillain-Barre syndrome is a disorder in which the immune system attacks the nerves. While rarely fatal, it can cause muscular damage and can

require prolonged treatment. CVST refers to blood clots in the brain. Myocarditis and pericarditis are inflammation of the heart tissue. All of these are serious conditions and potentially fatal.

The Global Covid Vaccine Safety Project, which made the assessment, compiled electronic healthcare data on adverse events related to COVID-19 vaccines from participants across multiple sites, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, and Denmark.

The analysis involved computing the so-called OR ratios, or observed versus expected ratios. This means first healthcare providers, having a baseline expectation of how many adverse events are likely given a certain number of vaccinated people, and comparing it with the number of events actually reported to health systems.

Expectations are formed based on experience with the rates of vaccination, and reactions observed historically. Ratios greater than 1.5 or, in other words, 50% more adverse-reaction reports than what is expected, are considered "potential safety signals," or necessitating a thorough investigation.

"OR ratios >1.5 were observed for Guillain-Barre syndrome and cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (3.23) following the first dose of ChAdOx1 vaccine," notes the study, published this month in the peer-reviewed journal *Vaccine*.

As on December 6, 2022, a total of 92,003 adverse events following immunisation have been reported in India since the start of vaccination, the Health Ministry told Parliament. This is about 0.009% of Indians who took COVID-19 vaccines.

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solutions to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

## FAITH

## Duty of Prapannas

The gist of Vedanta is *saranagathi* or surrender. A person who has taken refuge in God with an absolute surrender through an Acharya is called *Prapanna*; his cherished desire will be to attain *moksha*. What will happen to him if he commits misdeeds after his *saranagathi*? Sri Ananth Padmanabha Charachar Swamy, in a discourse, quoted the 13th passage "Apachara Pariharam" of *Rohasya Ratnavali*.

Lord Krishna says that *Shruthi* and *Smriti*, which deal with the codes of conduct, are His orders, and He does not consider those who transgress them favourably.

A duty is cast upon the *Prapannas* not to commit mistakes, but due to the influence of our past deeds (*prarabdha*), we are disturbed and forced to commit errors. Deeds that are not to be done are done and acts that ought to be performed are omitted (*Kriytha akarana, Akruhya karanam*). Also, sometimes people cite noble and pious elders as examples to justify their mistakes.

A person may commit mistakes or misdeeds in two ways. Knowing fully well with cognisance, and the other, by mistake. Scriptures say there is no punishment for the second type, but for the first type, the person will face some punishments, and God accepts him only after that. If he realises his mistake, repents and resolves not to re-

**CROSSWORD**  
(set by Dr. X)

Across  
1 Difference in attitudes breaking up ageing parent and son (essentially) (10,2)  
8 Forces controlled by Maoist in underground revolution (5)  
9 Men resolved problem with main knob controlling church pipes (5,4)  
11 / 18 Detailed narrative in breezy weather report? (4-2,4,7)

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

CM  
YK

M ND-NE

## IN BRIEF



## Sun to buy 16.33% in U.S.'s Surgimatrix for \$3.05 million

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries has decided to acquire 16.33% stake for about \$3.05 million in Surgimatrix Inc., an Illinois-headquartered firm developing a proprietary soft tissue fixation device for laparoscopic hernia repair and other minimally invasive surgeries. The acquisition is expected to be completed by this month, subject to fulfillment of certain conditions, Sun Pharma said on Tuesday, announcing the signing of an agreement with the U.S. firm.

## TechM acquires Philippines BPO firm for Australian \$5 mn

Tech Mahindra said it has acquired Orchid CyberTech Services Inc. (OCSI), a BPO firm in Philippines that is a service provider to Australia's TPG Co. The acquisition of 100% shareholding is for Australian \$5 million and undertaken through wholly owned subsidiary vCustomer Philippines Inc. OCSI, including its assets and employees, will become part of TechM and TechM will provide customer support and other services to TPG, TechM said in a filing.

## CCI allows Minda Corp to acquire up to 8.79% in Pricol

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved acquisition of up to about 8.79% of equity shares of Pricol by Minda Corporation. The CCI said in a release that the acquirer (Minda Corporation) is engaged in manufacture of auto components and caterers to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and tier-1 suppliers in India, while the target company (Pricol) manufactures auto components for OEMs, tier-1 and replacement markets in India and abroad.

## 'Consumers upbeat, inflation to cool'

Private consumption trends indicate buoyant consumer sentiment, FinMin notes in its monthly economic review; adds it expects household consumption to improve, capital formation prospects to rise with an upturn in the private capex cycle

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he outlook for a reasonably low inflation rate is good", the Finance Ministry said on Tuesday, citing the steady fall in core inflation and moderation in food prices along with higher foodgrain buffer stocks and healthy rabi harvest prospects.

Terming strong private consumption as the "bedrock of high growth", the ministry in its monthly economic review for January said India's private con-

## Bright prospects

FinMin expects headline inflation to be reasonably low due to fall in core inflation and strong agricultural output



■ Total foodgrain stocks, at 3.2 times the buffer norm requirement for Jan.-March to curb inflation

- Improved global trade outlook integration of global supply chain to buoy net external demand
- Commodity prices, tight monetary policy in the West seen as risks

sumption trends now reflect "buoyant consumer sentiment that is generally associated with reduced economic uncertainty".

The ministry said that household consumption was expected to improve, while capital formation prospects were bright owing

to an upturn in the private capex cycle, healthy balance sheets of banks and corporates, and the Centre's capital expenditure thrust.

Although merchandise exports had declined about 5% so far this year, the ministry noted an improvement in the global trade outlook and said rising integration in the global supply chain would support net external demand. However, the ministry said, there were downside risks including a spike in commodity prices from geopolitical shocks, and

more persistent underlying inflation in the developed world, which could extend tight monetary conditions and hurt exports.

With rabi sowing slightly higher than last year, the ministry asserted that high reservoir levels, adequate availability of fertilisers and seeds, and growing tractor sales support improvements in sowing acreage and output. That total foodgrain stocks stood at 3.2 times the buffer norm requirement for Jan.-Mar. would aid in "curbing inflationary pressures," the ministry stated.

## 'Rural consumption slumped to an 18-quarter low in Q3'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

India's rural spending fell for the second successive quarter, slumping 1.9% in the October-December quarter with consumption levels in the hinterland hitting an 18-quarter low, even as urban consumption grew at a five-quarter high pace of 9.8%, Motilal Oswal Financial Services reckoned in a report.

The firm's economists based their conclusion on the simple average of 12 proxy indicators for rural consumption, which had contracted 0.5% in the preceding quarter. Similarly, nine indicators were used to assess urban consumption,

which they said had improved sharply from the 6.9% growth logged in the second quarter.

It is clear that rural spending, especially the agricultural sector, remained weak in Q3, they wrote, citing the continuing deterioration in reserve levels, farm exports, tractor sales and muted

wage growth. These factors outpaced improvements seen in two-wheeler sales, fertiliser availability and real farm credit flows. Urban spending was reflected in "continued robustness" in passenger vehicle sales, personal credit growth and a 10.5% rise in salary bill of BSE 500 firms during Q3, they said.

## Inflation expectations may stabilise, edge down, say RBI officials

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

Inflation expectations may stabilise and edge down although renewed pressures from cereals and proteins cannot be ruled out, Reserve Bank of India officials wrote in an article in the RBI's February bulletin released on Tuesday.

Citing the fact that retail inflation slowed to a three-month low of 5.1% in January, from December's 5.6%, the officials noted that overall inflation developments were turning favourable, providing a stable environment for corporates to plan expansion strategies in anticipation of a demand pick-up.

## 'Inflation events turning favourable, providing a stable environment for corporates to plan'

"Non-food wholesale price inflation remains in deflation," they wrote in the article on the "State of the Economy". "This should augur well for the input cost outlook and selling prices of manufacturing firms," they added.

A fresh round of capital spending by corporates would likely fuel the next leg of growth, they wrote.

## MARKETS

## -1.59 MARKET WATCH

	TUESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	73,057	0.48
US Dollar	82.97	0.04
Gold	62,700	-0.15
Brent Oil	82.22	-1.59

## NIFTY 50

	TUESDAY	% CHANGE
Adani Enter.	3226.60	-3.62
Adani Ports	1300.45	-0.50
Apollo Hosp.	6759.45	-10.30
Asian Paints	3011.65	13.55
Axius Infra	1086.60	-25.65
Bajaj Auto	3220.40	-24.40
Bajaj Finserv	1602.85	-17.30
Bharti Airtel	1145.95	1.75
BPL	635.55	-5.65
Britannia Indl.	4921.15	-4.10
Cipla	1451.65	-18.70
Godrej Agro	446.50	-13.70
Reliance Ind.	3726.30	-17.70
Ricardo Lab.	3478.00	-4.11
Eicher Motors	3824.20	-74.75
Globe Infras.	1000.25	-23.65
HDFC Bank	1454.30	-37.20
HDFC Life	507.95	2.75
Hero MotoCorp	4661.35	-189.25
Hindustan Unilever	2444.10	-16.95
ICICI Bank	1048.75	5.00
IndusInd Bank	1504.20	-20.60
ITC	1050.40	-24.50
JSN Steel	821.20	1.00
Kotak Bank	1762.50	-31.30
L&T Tech.	3333.20	-16.40
LTMRIndustries Ltd.	5504.35	-9.70
M&M	1853.65	5.10
Maruti Suzuki	11445.45	-36.50
Nestle India	2300.20	-24.15
NTPC	347.70	6.95
ONGC	276.60	1.95
PowerGrid Corp.	1504.20	-11.55
Ranbaxy Ind.	2044.45	-1.45
SBI Life	1513.55	24.70
State Bank	760.10	0.85
Sun Pharma	1538.70	8.60
Tata ConsumerProd.	1154.40	-0.60
Tata Motors	906.35	-6.25
TCS	141.05	-0.90
TCS	2620.20	-73.15
Tech Mahindra	1320.55	10.55
Titan	3686.70	-8.35
UltraTech Cement	9978.95	76.75
UPCL	496.05	-0.50
Wipro	513.55	-4.00

## EXCHANGE RATES

Indicates direct rates in rupees & 1 rupee except on Feb 20

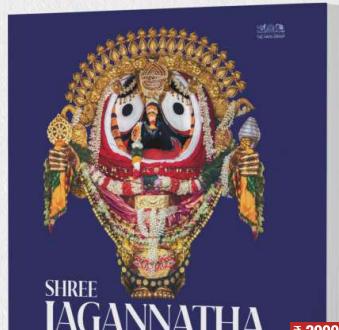
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	82.76	83.08
Euro	90.35	90.72
British Pound	104.36	104.77
Chinese Yuan	55.07	55.29
South Korea	93.86	94.34
Japan Yen	61.53	61.78
Canadian Dollar	61.34	61.58
Malaysian Ringgit	12.43	12.42
Australian Dollar	54.21	54.43



A SPECIAL PUBLICATION FROM THE HINDU GROUP

**Shree Jagannatha- Lord of the Universe** is a picture-rich coffee-table book on the fascinating Lord Jagannatha temple in Puri, Odisha.

The book is a collection of pictures and articles by well-known writers from Odisha on culture and religion. It covers the temple's history, the unique rituals that characterise Jagannatha-worship and, of course, the famous Ratha Yatra.

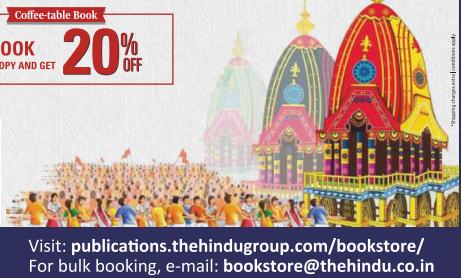


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+ TVS SCS extends contract with Rolls-Royce

## Duties on blueberries, cotton, cranberries from U.S. slashed

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

India effected sharp cuts in import duties on frozen turkey, blueberries and cranberries, and scrapped the duty on extra-long staple (ELS) cotton making it easier for U.S. exporters to tap the Indian market, as per a Finance Ministry decision.

The move, which will make it easier for producers to meet Indian consumers' demand for these items that are generally not produced locally, stems from bilateral trade talks between India and the U.S. held on the sidelines of the G20 leaders summit.

The two sides had agreed to resolve outstanding disputes at the World

Trade Organisation (WTO) concerning the import of certain agricultural products. "These tariff cuts will expand economic opportunities for U.S. agricultural producers in a critical market and help bring more U.S. products to customers in India," U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai's office had said at the time.

Frozen turkey meat and edible offal imports will now attract 5% import levies compared with 30% earlier. Duties on frozen and dried blueberries and cranberries has been slashed to 10% from 30%. Preserved or prepared cranberries will attract a 5% import duty, while packaged blueberries will face a 10% levy.

A textile industry official said 26% of India's cotton imports last year were of the ELS variety, which is not produced here, and ongoing efforts to grow such cotton will take time. "Why would the domestic industry import the cotton if it was available locally? For those using U.S. and Egyptian cotton, the zero import duty on ELS cotton will improve global competitiveness," he added.

## Paytm app back to steady business after RBI's clarifications'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

The clarifications issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) via its Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) has helped Paytm to achieve 'normalcy' in business, a company official said without quantifying the recovery in volume.

"The RBI had confirmed through the FAQ that Paytm QR, Soundbox and card machine will continue to operate seamlessly for all merchant partners," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "After that the company is back to steady business."



Paytm's stock hit the 5% upper circuit for the third straight session on the BSE on Tuesday.

He explained that co-

rporate travel recovery post the COVID-19 pandemic started with small businesses, followed by financial services, which had back-end offices and regional offices in India.

The London-headquartered airline announced the unveiling of its fourth flight to India, which would connect Bengaluru with London Heathrow, from March 31. With Bengaluru being India's IT capital, the airline expects to see flights out of the city to account for its highest share of corporate travellers from India by as much as 30% of the aircraft capacity.

He explained that co-

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MD-NDE

**LONDON**

Prince William appeals for an end to fighting in Gaza at the earliest



Prince William, the heir to the British throne, called on Tuesday for an end to fighting in the Gaza Strip as soon as possible. In a statement released by his office at Kensington Palace, he stopped short of calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza as the House of Commons prepares for a vote on that issue on Wednesday. AP

**CAIRO**

Hamas chief arrives in Egypt for negotiations on ceasefire in Gaza



Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh arrived in Cairo on Tuesday for talks with Egyptian officials, days after mediators said chances for a new truce with Israel had dimmed. The head of Hamas's political bureau will "hold talks with Egyptian officials on the political situation and the situation in the field," a statement said. AFP

**MOSCOW**

Kremlin arrests U.S.-Russian woman on charges of treason



Russia's FSB security services said on Tuesday it had arrested a U.S.-Russian woman suspected of treason for raising funds for the Ukrainian Army. The FSB in Yekaterinburg said it had "suppressed the illegal activities" of a 33-year-old woman, a resident of Los Angeles with dual citizenship, and taken her into custody. AP

**THE HAGUE**

South Africa accuses Israel of apartheid against Palestinians



South Africa argued at the United Nations' top court on Tuesday that Israel is responsible for apartheid against the Palestinians and that Israel's occupation of land sought for a Palestinian state is "inherently and fundamentally illegal." Israel rejects such claims. Israel is also not making a statement during the hearings. AP

Sick Assange absent at extradition hearing

**Agence France-Presse**  
LONDON

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was on Tuesday absent due to illness from a London court hearing his final appeal against extradition to the United States to face trial for publishing secret military and diplomatic files.

Opening the two-day hearing in Mr. Assange's absence, his lawyer Edward Fitzgerald said his prosecution could not be justified.

Washington wants the Australian extradited after he was charged there multiple times between 2018 and 2020 over WikiLeaks' 2010 publication of files relating to the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"He is being prosecuted for engaging in ordinary journalistic practice of obtaining and publishing classified information, information that is both true and of obvious and important public interest," Mr. Fitzgerald said.

## U.S. vetoes UN vote on Gaza ceasefire, pushes alternative

The resolution, prepared by Algeria, had called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Washington says pact would put sensitive negotiations in jeopardy, risking the release of hostages

**Agence France-Presse**  
NEW YORK

The United States vetoed a UN Security Council resolution on Tuesday that called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, even as President Joe Biden faced mounting pressure to dial back support for Israel.

The resolution, which Algeria had been working on for three weeks, had demanded "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire that must be respected by all parties."

"Proceeding with a vote today was wishful and irresponsible... we cannot support a resolution that would put sensitive negotiations in jeopardy," said Washington's Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield, while advocating an alternate resolution drafted by the U.S.

The vote came as Israel prepares to move into the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah, where some 1.4 million people have fled, as part of its mission to destroy the Palestinian militant group Hamas.



**Failed bid:** The UN Security Council holds a meeting on the Gaza war, at the UN Headquarters in New York on Wednesday. AFP

However Israel is facing increased pressure to hold off, including from its closest ally the United States. The draft resolution had opposed the "forced displacement of the Palestinian

so-called civilian population."

It additionally demanded the release of all hostages taken by Hamas in an attack on October 7.

But, similarly to other previous drafts spurned by the U.S. and Israel, the text did not condemn that assault by Hamas, which left about 1,160 people dead in southern Israel, mostly civilians.

UNICEF says one in six Gaza children malnourished

**Associated Press**  
RAJAPAKSHA

Israel's retaliatory campaign has killed more than 29,000 people in Gaza, mostly women and children according to the latest count by the Humanitarian territory's Health Ministry.

### U.S.'s head up

The U.S. warned over the weekend that Algeria's text was not acceptable, threatening to veto it.

Washington had argued that the passage of such a ceasefire resolution would endanger ongoing delicate diplomatic negotiations which could see the release of hostages from Gaza. The U.S. instead circulated an alternate draft.

While that text does include the word "ceasefire" – which the U.S. has previously avoided, vetoing two drafts in October and December which used the term – it does not call for the end of hostilities to happen immediately.

**India, Sri Lanka move forward with talks on trade agreement**

**Meera Srinivasan**  
COLOMBO

India and Sri Lanka are set to take ongoing discussions on the Economic and Trade Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) forward with the next two rounds of bilateral talks scheduled later this month and in March.

The progress in negotiations is significant for New Delhi and Colombo, as the much-discussed pact was stalled in the past, owing to stiff opposition from some worker unions and hardline Sinhala-nationalist politicians.

### The pact was stalled in the past due to opposition from some worker unions and hardline Sinhala-nationalist politicians

Significant step towards strengthening the economic partnership between Sri Lanka and India."

### Sub-committees formed

According to an update issued after the Sri Lankan Cabinet met on Monday, the 13th round of discussions on the proposed ETCA was held in New Delhi for 10 days beginning January 8, 2024. Nine sub-committees tasked with looking into various aspects such as goods trade, service trade, rules of the origin and customs procedure and easing the trade held deliberations.

Official sources familiar with the negotiations told *The Hindu* that the two sides are exploring ways of linking service trade to investments to ensure there is no threat to local labour.

"Free movement of individual professionals is not anticipated in the agreement," a senior official said. Mr. Wickremesinghe on Monday briefed his Cabinet on the talks, and the 14th round of discussions of the proposed agreement is scheduled to be held on the first week of March 2024, the official press release said.

India and Sri Lanka first signed a free trade agreement in 1998. While the two sides have since attempted to upgrade it multiple times, the attempts proved unsuccessful.

Navalny's mother asks Putin to release body

**Agence France-Presse**  
MOSCOW

The mother of Alexei Navalny urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to "immediately" release the body of her son, in her first comments since his death in an Arctic prison.

Navalny's mother, Lyudmila Navalnaya, travelled to the remote IK-3 penal colony on Saturday, the

morning after his death was announced, and has since been barred from seeing his body.

"I appeal to you, Vladimir Putin. The solution to the issue depends only on you," she said in a video published by his team.

"Let me finally see my son. I demand that Alexei's body be released immediately so that I can bury him in a humane way."

## Kremlin rejects claim by Navalny's widow that he was killed by Putin

**Associated Press**

Russian President Vladimir Putin did not see the video in which Alexei Navalny's widow vowed to continue his fight against the Kremlin, his spokesperson said on Tuesday. The spokesman also dismissed her allegations that Mr. Putin had killed the country's opposition leader as "un-

founded" and "insolent."

In the video released on Monday, Lyudmila Navalnaya accused Mr. Putin of killing her husband in the remote Arctic prison and alleged that officials' refusal to hand over his body to his mother was part of a cover-up.

"They are cowardly and merely hiding his body, refusing to give it to his moth-

er and lying miserably while waiting for the trace of poison to disappear," Ms. Navalnaya said.

She suggested her husband might have been killed with a Novichok-style nerve agent.

### 'Unknown cause'

Russian authorities said that the cause of Mr. Navalny's death on Friday is still

unknown and the results of any investigation are likely to be questioned abroad. Many Western leaders have already said they hold Mr. Putin responsible for the death.

"These are absolutely unfounded, insolent accusations about the head of the Russian state," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

## Sport

Ramkumar shocks Napolitano

### MAHARASHTRA OPEN

**Kamesh Srinivasan**  
PUNE

Ramkumar Ramanathan served big and stroked with intelligence to turn the tide in the nick of time in both sets as he knocked out Stefano Napolitano, the champion of the last tournament in Bengaluru, 7-6(5), 7-6(5) in the first round of the \$132,250 Maharashtra Open Challenger tennis tournament at the Balewadi di Stadium on Tuesday.

After the Chennai Challenger champion Sumit Nagal had perspired to a 7-6 (6), 6-4 victory over Yu Hsiong Hsu of Chinese Taipei in the centre court, fans stayed on to cheer Ramkumar.

Ramkumar fired 15 aces



**Great win:** Ramkumar pulled off a sparkling victory.

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

play and uncanny sharpness on the big points won him the match against the 20th ranked Italian.

Ramkumar converted one of the nine break points in the match, while Napolitano won one of two break points, early in the

were of Sriram Balaji and Andre Begemann of Germany continued in doubles, as the fourth seeds lost in the first round, despite having a break point.

The results:

Singles (first round): Sumit Nagal (Maharashtra) bt Yu Hsiong Hsu (Chinese Taipei) 7-6(6), 6-4.

Blitz ease past Spikers, earn their second victory

### PVL

**Netsra V.**  
CHENNAI

Chennai Blitz stamped its authority over Kochi Blue Spikers with a dominant 3-0 win in the Prime Volleyball League season three at the SDAT multi-purpose indoor stadium here on Tuesday.

Spikers was quick to take a 4-1 lead at the start, with Aman Kumar delivering a super serve. However, Blitz did not stay still as Dhillip Kumar showcased resistance, and the host restored parity at 7-7. Chennai captain Akhin G.S. combined with Douglas Blakely and Leandro de



**On the powl:** Dhillip dished out a commendable performance.

JOTH RAMALINGAM

ensure the team clinched the first set 15-10.

The two teams were neck and neck in the second set.

me Chaudhary's one-hand push that cemented the second set 15-12.

Akhin guarded the defence and led its attack with Dhillip. Quiet in the second set, Abhinav came to form in the third with a spike towards Surya Nanjil, who failed to stop it as Kochi ensured a slender 15-14 advantage.

While Kochi commanded most of the third set, three successive points and a timeout saw the host make a comeback at 14-14. Dhillip and Jose teamed up for the double block and earned Chennai two straight points, 16-14, and its second win.

The result: Chennai Blitz bt Kochi Blue Spikers 3-0 (15-10, 15-12, 16-14).

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M NO-NCE

**REALITY CHECK**

Jaiswal has learned from his upbringing, not Bazball: Hussain



VIJAY SONEJI

Nasser Hussain has lashed out at Ben Duckett for suggesting that Yashasvi Jaiswal's aggressive batting was influenced by England's Bazball ploy. "Jaiswal has not learned from Duckett, he has learned from his upbringing and all the hard yards he has put in, he has learned from the IPL. If anything, I'd learn from him," Hussain said.

**BLESSED**

Kohli and Anushka announce the birth of baby boy Akaay



ANI

► Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma announced on Tuesday that they were blessed with a baby boy. "With abundant happiness and our hearts full of love, we are pleased to inform everyone that on February 15, we welcomed our baby boy Akaay and Vamika's little brother into this world," Kohli posted on Instagram.

**ROYAL RETURN**

Rishabh Pant looks on course for much-anticipated IPL comeback



FILE PHOTO

► Rishabh Pant remains on course for a comeback in the IPL after taking part in a practice game organised by his Delhi Capitals in Alur. "The match was part of assessing his mobility. He has been bat training at nets for a while and playing in a practice game was more like an extension of it," said an NCA source.

**THRILLER**

U Mumba and Titans finish their campaigns with a perfect tie



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

► U Mumba and Telugu Titans ended their campaigns on a thrilling note as they shared points in a gripping 45-45 tie in a Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 match at Panchkula on Tuesday. Titans skipper Pawan Sehrawat was the top performer with 14 raid points while U Mumba's Ammir Mohammad Zafardanesh finished with 11.

## Capitals will be keen to go the distance in Season 2

The Meg Lanning-led outfit is one of the most balanced sides on paper; however, lack of multiple left-handed batters is an issue the franchise did not adequately address at the auction table

**WPL COUNTDOWN****Lavanya L**

**D**elhi Capitals did almost everything right in season one of the WPL to get its hands on the inaugural title. The side rose in an associate nation player to give itself a five-foreigner cushion. Power-hitting and stroke-play were both prioritised in the building of a solid batting line-up, and the side's two-pronged pace attack featuring Shikha Pandey and Marizanne Kapp ran riot during the season. Capitals eventually watched Mumbai Indians get its name inscribed on the WPL trophy after falling short in the final and will seek revenge this time around.

A few chinks notwithstanding, the Meg Lanning-led side is still one of the most balanced ones on paper. The recently retired Australian finished as the Orange Cap holder in the WPL last year with 345 runs in nine games with a strike rate of 139.11.

She comes to India after a stellar run with the bat for Victoria in Australia's Women's National Cricket League.

The Lanning-Shafali Verma stand was a spectator's treat in the first chapter. An in-form Jemimah Rodrigues bolsters the middle-order with Alice



Terrific trio: Top-order batters Jemimah, Lanning and Shafali will look to give Capitals rising starts. FILE PHOTO: SPORTSPICS/WPL

**Capitals' schedule**

At Bengaluru
Feb. 23: vs Mumbai Indians
Feb. 26: UP Warriorz
Feb. 29: Royal Challengers
March 3: Gujarat Giants
At New Delhi
March 5: Mumbai Indians
March 8: UP Warriorz
March 10: Royal Challengers
March 13: Gujarat Giants

Capsey providing a finishing option. However, the lack of multiple left-handed batters hurt the team before and is an issue the side has not addressed adequately in the auction.

Jess Jonassen, who seems to have dropped down the pecking order in the Australian national side, will be a useful re-

**Star attraction**

Anabel Sutherland is currently in the form of her life, with match-winning performances in both departments across formats for the Capitals.

The most expensive player in the 2024 auction, the all-rounder will look to put an overwhelming season with Gujarat Giants behind her. She will look to power Capitals to their maiden WPL crown in front of their home fans

source for Lanning.

She also provides the lone left-hand batting option for the side and is a cool customer under pressure with bat and ball. India's Titus Sadhu might find a one-day game time after a commanding show against Australia a few months ago.

However, the player to

keep an eye on will be the side's only leg-spinner Poonam Yadav, who faded away from the national set-up after the 2020 T20 World Cup.

She comes into the tournament in good form (24 wickets in the inter-zonal tournament and 16 in the one-day trophy) and will hope to use the league as an audition to head back to the Indian side ahead of the T20 World Cup in Bangladesh later this year.

**Tough calls**

The leadership group will need to take tough calls to accommodate Tahlia McGrath, their only overseas pace-bowling option, big-hitting finisher Harris and Ecclestone – the joint-highest wicket taker in season one (16) – in the ranks as well.

Harris might prove to be the floaty yet again, coming up depending on oppo-

## UP Warriorz has the arsenal to take the battle to the opposition

**Lavanya L**

From Grace Harris' insatiable love for bunglers to Sophie Ecclestone's chic blings, UP Warriorz perhaps had the most fun in season one of the Women's Premier League (WPL).

Led by the imperious and straight-talking keeper-batter Alyssa Healy, the outfit was slow to find its rhythm but learnt to play to its strengths of explosive middle-order batting and superior spin bowling to finish third in its first rodeo.

Ahead of the 2024 chapter, much remains the same for the Warriorz. The side has overseas options aplenty but only four slots, which leaves the management in an unenviable position yet again.

While season one's conundrums were in the bowling department, it is the top order which will leave the think-tank scratching their heads this time. In Healy, Danni Wyatt, and Chamari Atharaththu, the Warriorz have three accomplished openers.

**Tough calls**

The leadership group will need to take tough calls to accommodate Tahlia McGrath, their only overseas pace-bowling option, big-hitting finisher Harris and Ecclestone – the joint-highest wicket taker in season one (16) – in the ranks as well.

Harris might prove to be the floaty yet again, coming up depending on oppo-



Lynchpins: Healy, right, and Ecclestone are key to Warriorz' fortunes. FILE PHOTO: SPORTSPICS/WPL

**Warriorz' fixtures**

At Bengaluru
Feb. 24: vs Royal Challengers
Feb. 26: Delhi Capitals
Feb. 28: Mumbai Indians
March 1: Gujarat Giants
March 4: Royal Challengers
At New Delhi
March 7: Mumbai Indians
March 8: Delhi Capitals
March 11: Gujarat Giants

Warriorz artillery some options through the season.

Spin twins Deepi Sharma and Ecclestone will be key to wicket-taking strategies for the side.

**Star attraction**

Tahlia McGrath, the Australian vice-captain, was Warriorz' best batsman last season.

She made 50.33 and a strike-rate of 158.11.

McGrath will eye the century she missed the last time around, especially in a batters' paradise like Bengaluru.

tions to a title-winning campaign this time around.

The squad: Alyssa Healy (Capt.), Danni Wyatt, Kiran Navire, Sophie Ecclestone, Deepi Sharma, Grace Harris, Parvashi Chaurasia, Hemlata Patel, Shweta Sehrawat (34 runs in 7 games) will also want to put last season's jitters behind her with contributions.

## Bumrah released from India squad for fourth Test



Heavy workload: Bumrah has been rested for the Ranchi Test. PTI

**ENGLAND IN INDIA****Sports Bureau**

CHENNAI

Jasprit Bumrah has been released from the India squad for the fourth Test against England to be held in Ranchi from February 23 to 27. The decision was taken keeping in mind the duration of the series and the amount of cricket he has played in recent times.

Meanwhile, K.L. Rahul has been ruled out of the

## Brehme, West Germany's 1990 WC winning goal scorer, passes away

**Agence France-Presse**

BERLIN

Andreas Brehme, who scored from the penalty spot to seal victory for West Germany against Argentina in the 1990 World Cup final, died overnight into Tuesday at the age of 63, his former club Bayern Munich said.

"FC Bayern is deeply shocked by the sudden death of Andreas Brehme," the club said in a statement. "We will always keep Andreas Brehme in our hearts. As a World champion and as a very special person."

A versatile left-back, Brehme spent two seasons with Bayern Munich between 1985-1988. His professional career saw him play for Saarbruecken, Kaiserslautern, Inter Milan and Real Zaragoza, among others. He played 86 times for his country, scoring eight goals, the most famous of which, an 85th-minute penalty against Argentina in the Olympic



Hero! Brehme is joy unbound, as Klinsmann rushes in to congratulate, after his penalty conversion gave West Germany the 1990 World Cup.

Stadium in Rome, brought West Germany its third World Cup title.

the German Cup, said the club would "honour his memory".

"Ciao Andy, forever a legend," said Inter Milan, where Brehme played for 10 seasons over two stints, winning the Bundesliga and the Italian



Brehme. GETTY IMAGES

team colleagues Juergen Klinsmann and Lothar Matthaeus.

Brehme's passing comes shortly after the death of another German footballing legend, Franz Beckenbauer, who died in January, was in the dugout for West Germany as manager when the team won the World Cup in 1990.

"Unfortunately, the sad news doesn't stop," said 1990 World Cup winner Pierre Littbarski. "This is very, very sad for German football and especially for us, the 1990 World champions."

"The players' auction for the 2024 season was held in December last year and Australian pacer Mitchell Starc became the most expensive player in the history of the league after being bought by Kolkata Knight Riders for \$24.75 crore.

## IPL 2024 to begin on March 22: Dhimal

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

The much-anticipated Indian Premier League is set to begin on March 22 and will be held entirely in the country despite the coinciding general elections, league chairman Arun Dhimal said on Tuesday.

The elections are expected to be held in April and May and that is the main reason why the schedule for the IPL's 17th edition has not been unveiled yet.

Dhimal said to begin with, only the schedule of the first 15 days will be announced and the roster for the remaining games will be decided after the announcement of the general election dates.

The dates of the Lok Sabha polls are expected to be announced early next month.

"We are looking at a March 22 start for the tournament. We are working closely with the government agencies and we will have the initial sche-



dule. The entire tourna-

ment will be held in India," said Dhimal.

Only in 2009, the tournament, was held overseas (South Africa) while the 2014 edition was partially held in the UAE due to the general elections.

In 2019, the tournament was held in India despite the elections.

The players' auction for the 2024 season was held in December last year and Australian pacer Mitchell Starc became the most expensive player in the history of the league after being bought by Kolkata Knight Riders for \$24.75 crore.

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

## IN BRIEF



## Jota joins Liverpool's injury list, faces long lay-off

Dio Jota faces "months" on the sidelines after damaging his knee in Liverpool's win at Brentford, adding to manager Jürgen Klopp's mounting injury woes as it chases Premier League glory. Saturday's 4-1 win victory in London came at a heavy cost as forward Jota and midfielder Curtis Jones were both forced off in the first-half. Jota departed on a stretcher.

## Ankita-Prarthana pair exits early in Dubai tournament

Wild card entrants Ankita Raina and Prarthana Thomar lost 4-6, 6-3, [7/15] in the doubles first round of the \$321,715 WTA tennis tournament in Dubai. The Indian pair got 10 WTA points and \$9,100 for the effort in a draw of 32.

## Hyderabad wins Plate title, returns to Elite Group

Host Hyderabad defeated Meghalaya by five wickets in the Plate final on Tuesday and qualified for the Elite Group of the Ranji Trophy.

**The scores:** Meghalaya 304 & 243 lost to Hyderabad 350 & 203 in 34.2 overs (G. Rahul Singh 62, Tilak Varma 64).

## LIVE TELECAST

**New Zealand vs Australia:** 1st T20I, Prime Video, 11:40 a.m.

**PKL:** Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 6:30 p.m.

**Sri Lanka vs Afghanistan:** 3rd T20I, Sony Sports Ten 5 & LIV, 7 p.m.

**ISL:** Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7:30 p.m.

**PKL Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.**

**Premier League:** SS Select 1 & Hotstar, 1 a.m. (Thursday)

**Champions League:** Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 5 & LIV, 1:30 a.m. (Thursday)



Rising to the occasion: Berenguer gave Bilbao the lead twice in a thriller. AFP

## Berenguer scores twice, helps Bilbao pip Girona

The Catalan side remains second in the standings with 56 points, two ahead of third-placed Barcelona and six behind leader Real Madrid.

## EURO LEAGUES

## Reuters

BILBAO

Alex Berenguer scored twice as Athletic Bilbao brought high-flying Girona back down to earth with a 3-2 victory on Monday, a result that provided a reality check to the Catalans' lofty LaLiga title ambitions.

Berenguer intercepted a pass from rival Aleix Garcia to score and give Athletic the lead in the second minute but Viktor Tyshankov equalised from close range in the 49th minute.

However, Berenguer put the locals back in front with another strike in the

56th minute and Inaki Williams extended the lead in similar fashion four minutes later.

Eric Garcia put Girona back in the game netting a close-range effort from a Aleix Garcia free kick but the win held on to secure the win.

Despite suffering its second consecutive league loss, Girona remains second in the standings with 56 points, two ahead of third-placed Barcelona and six behind leader Real Madrid. Fifth-placed Athletic moved up to 49 points, and trails fourth-placed Atletico Madrid by two points.

An Amadou Onana goal sealed Everton a 1-1 draw with Crystal Palace and lifted the Merseyside club into 17th place.

**The results:** Premier League: Everton 1 (Onana 54 min) drew with Crystal Palace 1 (Adebayor 69). La Liga: Athletic Bilbao 3 (Berenguer 2, 56, Inaki 60) bt Girona 2 (Tyshankov 49, Garcia 75).

**The results (gold medalists):** Men 60m: 1. Ali Anvar Ali Al Balushi (Oman) 6.52s, 3000m (revised): 1. Nusrat Keneshebekov (Uzbekistan) 8:08.55s, 4x400m relay: India (D.12.05). High jump: 1. Ryoko Akamatsu (Jpn) 2.18m; Triple jump: 1. Su Wen (Chn) 16.74m.

of the Premier League relegation zone, with the match watched by the London side's new manager Oliver Glazner.

Jordan Ayew had given Palace a second half lead just hours after manager Roy Hodgson stood down and his new boss Glazner was confirmed. But Onana rose highest at a corner to head in an equaliser for Everton in a game low on quality, but which moves Sean Dyche's four and above Luton Town into the bottom three and above

the win.

Despite suffering its second consecutive league loss, Girona remains second in the standings with 56 points, two ahead of third-placed Barcelona and six behind leader Real Madrid. Fifth-placed Athletic moved up to 49 points, and trails fourth-placed Atletico Madrid by two points.

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## Roy Hodgson leaves Crystal Palace days after falling ill; Oliver Glazner to take over

## Associated Press

LONDON

Roy Hodgson, the oldest ever manager in the English Premier League aged 76, left Crystal Palace on Monday just days after falling ill during a training session amid widespread reports he was about to be replaced.

The former England coach said he made the decision to step aside so that Palace could bring forward its plans to appoint a new manager. Hours later, the club hired Austrian Oliver Glazner as Hodgson's replacement on a deal until the end of the 2025-26 season. Glazner led Eintracht Frankfurt to the Europa League title in 2022 before leaving last year.

"I understand, given recent circumstances,"



End of a long innings: Hodgson, the oldest ever manager in the Premier League aged 76, left Palace on Monday just days after falling ill during a training session. AFP, REUTERS

Hodgson said, "it may be prudent at this time for the club to plan ahead."

Palace said Hodgson has left the hospital following the training-ground incident on Friday and was "doing well".

Hodgson was in his

second spell in charge of Palace, having returned last March to comfortably steer the team to safety in the league after a poor run of form under Patrick Vieira.

He was also the Palace manager from September 2017 to May 2021, keeping

the London club in the top-flight the entire time.

"This club is very special and means so much to me and has played a big part in my footballing life. I have fully enjoyed my time here across six seasons, as it has given me the chance

to work with top class players and staff doing what I love every day," Hodgson said.

**Future plans?** Hodgson doesn't say whether he would be retiring from football management. When he left after his first spell at Palace, he said he would not be coming back to the sport — only to be hired by Watford eight months later.

He recently said changes to the game, such as handball interpretations and VAR, had made him fall out of love with football after nearly 50 years in coaching.

"Games like today," Hodgson said after a loss to Liverpool in December, "make me realise that when the day comes to leave it behind, I won't be missing anything."

## It isn't just Bazball – India are better, full credit to their supply chain



## Suresh Menon

There are two issues with blaming Bazball for England's defeat in Rajkot. Firstly, a defeat, however crushing, cannot carry greater weight than the 14 wins in 21 matches (this, after 11 defeats in 17 Tests previously). More significantly, it ignores how good the Indian team is, and how strong their supply chain management has become.

Bazball tends to irritate experts. Perhaps it is the

self-confidence of the players. ("We can chase 600 runs"). It demands risk-taking in a format which preaches risk-aversion. There might a touch of schadenfreude too, especially among former players.

All this is shows a mis-understanding of what Bazball stands for. It is not about hitting every ball, nor is it about winning every match. It is a mindset which works on putting pressure on the opposition through positive cricket, but is equally conscious of the need to absorb pressure too.

England have been

playing this game of attacking cricket for a long time now, and it would be a pity — and Sarbanan bad faith — if the criticism got to them and they jettisoned the approach. Sure it needs tweaking, and a better understanding of the concept even among the English players.

**The Root issue** Joe Root might well be the greatest batter to have played for England. The manner of his two dismissals in Rajkot points to a fundamental flaw in Bazball. Despite all claims of letting the players express themselves in the manner they like, bat (or bowl) without fear, and play without any discrimination.

He might want to belong; he has said he wishes to support skipper Ben Stokes like Stokes had supported him when he was captain.

Whatever the case, England's game spiralled downwards from the moment he reverse hit Jasprit

Bumrah into Yashasvi Jaiswal's hands at slip in the first innings. It didn't help that England's approach in the chase was confusing. This lack of decisiveness exposed cracks in Bazball which prides itself on clear messaging.

Root might have been unlucky when his attempted sweep in the second innings failed on the umpire's call. "Everybody has a plan till they are punched in the mouth," said the boxer Mike Tyson. Everybody has a plan till they are 50 for seven.

England's fortunes in the remainder of the series will depend on Root redressing the touch that has let him down in this series.

## Indian teams enter the knockout stage in World TT

## Sports Bureau

While the men blanked

New Zealand 3-0 in their final Group 3 match, the women pulled off a 3-2 victory over Spain in their last Group 1 tie.

**The results:** Men: Group 3:

India bt New Zealand 3-0 (Harmeet Desai bt Timothy Choi 11-5, 11-3, 11-6; Sathiyan bt Alfred Della Pena 11-3, 11-7, 11-6; Manish

Shah bt Maxwell Henderson 10-12, 6-11, 11-8, 11-6, 11-3, 11-4; Manish

bt Srejia Aluka lost to Maria Xiao 9-11, 11-3, 11-4; Srejia Aluka bt Maria Xiao 11-9, 11-2, 11-4; Sreeja Mukherjee bt Elvira Rad 11-8, 11-13, 11-6, 11-8, 11-4, 11-6; Maria Xiao 11-6, 11-3, 11-6; Sreeja Mukherjee bt Sofia Xuan 11-6, 11-3, 11-6,

## Lane infringement costs Gulveer his gold

## ATHLETICS

## Sports Bureau

## Karnataka to lead the challenge in final stage

## SANTOSH TROPHY

## Sports Bureau

Defending champion Karnataka will lead the challenge in the final round of the 77th National football championship for Santosh Trophy, which gets underway at the Goldentop Jubilee Stadium at Yopia near Arunachal Pradesh's capital Itanagar on Wednesday.

A total of 12 teams (nine qualifiers from the group stage and three automatic qualifiers) host Arunachal Pradesh and last year's finalists Karnataka and Meghalaya have been divided into two groups of six each in the final round.

This time the knock-out phase has been enhanced with the addition of the quarterfinals, which will have the top four teams from each group contesting.

The players will be chiefly sourced from I-League 2, which has taken a break to allow the players to represent their states.

The two groups appear to be quite balanced with Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Goa, Assam, Services and Kerala clubbed in group A.

Group B will have holder Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Railways and Bihar on the final round.

Three time big names, including the 32-time champion Bengal and eight-time winner Punjab, have failed to make it to the final round.

On Wednesday, matches will be held in three sessions, with Meghalaya taking on Services in the morning before Kerala meets Assam in the afternoon.

Arunachal Pradesh will face a strong Goa in the last match of the day in the evening.

The group league will conclude on March 2 while the quarterfinals come up on March 4 and 5.

## Final on March 9

The semifinals will be played on March 7 and the final on March 9.

## Indian women hope to do well in Turkish Cup

## Sports Bureau

The highest aggregator of points in the group will lift the title. All three opponents — Estonia, Kosovo and Hong Kong — are placed below India's current ranking of 65.

Asian Games and the Olympic qualifiers in the same month. The players dispersed to join their respective clubs for the IWL before reuniting for the Turkish assignment.

The team will hope to have a good outing considering all three opponents are below its present ranking of 65.

It presents a chance for the Indian team to register its first-ever win over an UEFA side in an official match.

The team was last seen in action in October 2023, when it played both the

Napoli replaces Mazzarri with Calzona

## Agence France Presse

MILAN

Struggling Napoli sacked Walter Mazzarri on Monday and brought in Slovakia coach Francesco Calzona. The 62-year-old Mazzarri became the second man to be sent packing this season by the ailing Italian champion.

He took charge in November after Rudi Garcia was dismissed.

"I thank Walter Mazzarri, a friend of the de Laurentiis family and Napoli, for having helped the team in a tricky period," said Napoli owner Aurelio De Laurentiis on X.

He confirmed that Calzona has been hired, reportedly until the end of the season.

Kohli, K.L. Rahul, Rishabh Pant, their regular mediumpacer (Mohammed Shami) and their best spinner, Ashwin, for the most part. They had two debutants and a middle-order that had played fewer Tests than Root's average in the series.

Since their last tour of Australia where they won the Brisbane Test and the series with what was in effect their third team, India have shown a resilience and a willingness to "run into the danger", to use Stokes' memorable phrase about his team's approach to Bazball.

That series win came three years ago. Only three Tests since then have been

played in Rajkot where Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Dhruv Jurel and Sarfaraz Khan looked like the youngsters preparing to take India into the next decade.

If looks like a 4-1 series for India at this stage, that is merely what was expected before it began. If India plan to rest Jasprit Bumrah to keep him fit for the final Test (and, I suspect, for the IPL), there is a touch of Bazball arrogance about that.

There is much to be said for so-called old-fashioned strategies like retaining a winning combination, defence sometimes being the best form of offence and playing session by session!

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# 'We don't want to just participate, we want to be remembered'

UP Warriorz team owner Jinisha provides an insight into the workings of the WPL franchise on and off the field, and also dwells on her individual journey as a woman in sports leadership



Lavanya Lakshmi Narayanan

**T**he days leading up to the second edition of the Women's Premier League have been frenetic. Players are flying in from around the world, last-minute strategies are being chalked out, training is on full swing and franchises are maximising every operational part of the day to keep the fans involved. Life at the UP Warriorz base in Bengaluru is no different. As team owner Jinisha sits down for a chat, she is finalising a coffee order for the squad winding down in the team room.

"I see myself as a facilitator," Jinisha told *The Hindu* ahead of the league's Season 2.

"The idea is to give the girls as relaxed an environment as possible for them to play the best they can. It's to give some of them the push to get out of their rooms and get to know their teammates," she explained.

#### Going with the flow

As an owner, fostering this camaraderie goes a long way in the kind of results the outfit can manage on the field as evidenced by the side's campaign in 2023. After up-and-down results early on, the team found its rhythm, the playing combinations clicked and the Alyssa Healy-led side found itself in the knockouts.

The hands-on approach isn't restricted to her WPL team, Jinisha, who currently heads Capri Sports – the sporting arm of Capri Global Holdings Private Limited – also manages teams in kabaddi (Bengal Warriors), kho kho (Rajasthan Warriors) and International League T20 (Sharjah Warriors). It's one thing to call the shots in an environment filled with women – what Jinisha calls her 'girl gang' – and a whole new challenge to be the person in charge of men's outfit.

"There is something we recognised quite early... each athlete will view the hierarchy and respond to it differently. We don't want to impose or be chatty and put players in an awkward position. For example, Mani (Maninder Singh), the captain of Bengal Warriors is absolutely fine sitting down and having a relaxed chat about things. Not all kabaddi players are the same way," Jinisha elaborated.

It's been a little over a year since Jinisha took over operations at Capri's sporting ventures. Business ecosystems can be isolating spots for women, particularly in leadership positions. According to a study by Mastercard, women make up only 26.9% of the executive leadership of 31 major international sports federations. Only three are led by women. While the skewed gender ratio is an element the industry has identified as an issue to address, Jinisha feels the hurdle she faces is more age-related.

#### A seat at the table

"Maybe it's in my head," Jinisha added with a cheeky smile. "I often wonder if those around me are taking me seriously enough because I am younger. I am aware of the fact that I am still on a learning curve when it comes to the job."

While I do take a stand when needed on most of the brand stuff, I have a really good team supporting me whom I rely on a lot because of the expertise they have in each area of functioning," she added.

That said, the WPL by itself was formed to allow women parity in opportunities, platform and grandeur. Jinisha is not encouraged by the fact that the number of women in these areas can still be counted on one's fingers.

"I've been trying to get more women into the field, whether it's in contract hiring or via internships. A lot of the time, women don't have the same depth of experience as men do and that comes in the way in getting good positions in operational spaces. We need to actually create opportunities where we can either get someone as an intern who might then be able to improve on this experience, move to the IPL and eventually come back to us in this sphere with a paid contract. I feel like it's a chicken-and-egg situation. The time to think is over, it is time to make things happen," she said.

Her principles found an ally in skipper Healy who insists that the control should be with the players on how their lives would be during the WPL.

#### Templated ecosystems

"I love that Alyssa is very strong. She possesses all of the qualities of a leader... she is not afraid to speak her mind; she's not afraid to say no to things. Sports ecosystems are quite temperamental. There is a certain expectation from players and plenty of off-field responsibilities. You'd imagine it's enough for an athlete to go out there and do their best. But that's not enough."

"They have 1020 interviews and brands they have to perform for, meet and greet and much more. For women's cricket, this is still fairly new. They have never actually had to do this. They have never had to juggle so many balls at once. Now, though, they have to go out there and sell a product too."

In that context, Alyssa was able to draw boundaries and figure out how to shield her players as well as she possibly could. Indian culture focuses on appeasing and obeying elders and hierarchy, but we were able to



I often wonder if those around me are taking me seriously enough because I am younger. I am very aware of the fact that I am still on a learning curve when it comes to the job

give players space to make choices," Jinisha revealed.

#### Passion or pragmatism

Three of the five WPL entities have teams in the IPL, lending their legacies to the women's vertical. UP Warriorz and Gujarat Giants, both franchises with other sporting operations too, do not. Jinisha called this a book for the outfit.

"We are very fortunate that we don't have the men's IPL legacy attached to us and we don't have a format or a template in which we have to fit in. That allows us to actually go out there and do things that have otherwise not been done," she said.

This becomes important when the think-tank sits down to make financial calls and branding decisions which would help sell the Warriorz brand and its experience to a larger audience.

"Last year, we focused on just being there operationally, making sure everything was done. This time, we're kind of playing a little bit more on the front foot with a lot of our partnerships and ideas that we want to implement. We don't want to be a side that just came and played games. I don't want to be a franchise that just exists. I want to ensure that this is a franchise that is remembered," she added.

This quest for a lasting impression can even make gamblers out of the most cautious entrepreneurs. With the seasonal attention coming WPL's way, and, by extension, the larger women's cricket community, it is tempting to cash in and explore merchandising

and other fan-driven initiatives. Jinisha is wary of getting carried away.

"Take the jersey, for instance. It is quite banging, if I say so myself. If I am being honest, though, the data on merchandising is not very positive. We have plans for a limited drop this season," she admitted.

However, the appetite for women's sports doesn't begin and end with material things. While the WPL is still taking baby steps in the franchise world, this toddler is learning to walk at an alarmingly fast rate.

"2023 has been the busiest year for the women's game. This time, the ICC Women's T20 World Cup comes soon after the WPL. I think that's a very good sign that it's not just us, but even the league, even the BCCI and the ICC which is deciding to up the ante."

"We want more. We want more players. We want to increase the pool. Eventually, there will be a sixth team and we know there are more than enough players to stack up that side given the number of quality players we missed out. These are signs that the commercials are looking healthy," she added.

A way to boost the interest in the women's game while keeping the focus lights firmly on the players has led to a docu-series.

The Warriorz have roped in award-winning filmmaker Arlene Nelson and look to do for the women's game what the likes of *Drive to Survive* (Formula One), *Break Point* (Tenni) and *The Test* (Cricket) did for their respective sports.

"We wanted to actually dive deeper into the stories that have made these women cricketers and where they've come from. We've gone to England, we've been around in India to different players' homes."

"We've spoken to their families, giving context to who these girls are and where they come from," Jinisha said.

"I think we are still yet to see that breakout moment for the WPL, where every single person knows about it and is gearing up to be a part of it."

"We're hoping this can push audiences towards that end. You think you know all of these players because you've seen their interviews, you've read about them and you've seen them play, but we're going to peel multiple layers and show you sides to them that you've not seen before," she signed off.

## THE GIST

Jinisha Sharma handles all four franchises under the Capri Sports fold – Bengal Warriors (Kabaddi), Rajasthan Warriors (Kho Kho), Sharjah Warriors (IL T20 cricket) and UP Warriorz (WPL cricket)

Capri Global Holdings bought the Lucknow franchise at an auction hosted by the BCCI for a massive sum of ₹757 crore

UP Warriorz finished third in the first edition, losing to Mumbai Indians in the Eliminator. The team registered four wins and four losses in eight league matches

The franchise is focusing on a number of female-led collaborations and campaigns, including a tie-up with Navita Naveli Nanda to tackle online trolling directed at women in sports

The team is hoping to release the docu-series based the Warriorz before the third season of the WPL



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## SCIENCE

# Amount of tiny plastic particles in bottled water underestimated: study

A study has confirmed the fragmentation of the plastic content of real-world water samples beyond the micrometre scale. Its findings are distinguished by the research team's use of a technique that could reveal a 'hidden world' of even smaller plastic particles that have eluded conventional imaging methods.

Priyali Prakash

**A** litre of bottled water can contain more than one lakh particles of micro- and nano-plastics, with 90% of those being the latter, a new study has reported. Nano-plastics are minute, with dimensions ranging from 1 nanometre to 1 micrometre. The new findings indicate bottled water contains a much greater concentration of these minuscule plastics particles than previously expected.

The study, conducted by scientists at Columbia University in New York and published on January 8, 2024 in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, profiled individual plastic particles to bridge the knowledge gap that exists in the analysis of nanoplastics, as a result of existing techniques. Experts also believe the study can be instrumental in providing information about plastic pollution at the nanometre level.

The prefix 'micro' means one-millionth; 'nano' means one-billionth.

**How was the study conducted?**  
Nanoplastics are difficult to analyse, mainly due to their size and also due to the inability of different diagnostic techniques to identify them.

In their experiment, the researchers addressed these challenges using a custom hyperspectral stimulated Raman scattering (SRS) imaging platform. This set up could capture multiple images of an object's molecules at different wavelengths, allowing the scientists a comprehensive picture with which they could piece together the composition of the object.

SRS microscopy uses the Raman effect, a.k.a. Raman scattering. When light of a certain frequency is beamed at a group of atoms or molecules, the latter both absorb some of the energy in the beam and scatter it to different direction. This is a form of inelastic scattering. (In elastic scattering, the scattered light still has the kinetic energy and the atoms or molecules haven't absorbed any.)

The research team used the SRS imaging platform along with an automated algorithm the team had devised to identify plastics. The algorithm extracted detailed information – i.e. at the single-particle level – about the chemical makeup from the data produced by the SRS platform.

Once the researchers had tested and verified that this combined apparatus could detect plastic particles quickly and accurately, they used bottled water as a



Bottled water hides more gremlins than you can image. BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

model system to look for micro- and nano-plastics.

#### What were the findings?

The investigation revealed the presence of around 2.4 lakh micro- and nano-plastic particles per litre of bottled water (give or take 1.3 lakh). The researchers concluded – based on the magnitude of the result – "two to three orders of magnitude more than the previously reported results, merely focusing on large nanoplastics," according to the paper – that experts may have been underestimating the concentration of nanoplastics in bottled water.

To quote from the paper: "As it pertains to the estimation of human exposure, these values are substantially higher than those currently reported in the literature, which is a result from the newly detected nanoplastic fraction of plastic particulate. The tiny particles previously invisible under conventional imaging actually dominate in number and account for [approximately] 90% of the entire population of plastic particles detected. The remaining 10% identified as microplastics have a concentration of around [30,000] particles per litre, with the majority of them in the size below 2 µm. Larger particles (>2 µm), which are easier to identify under regular optical microscopy, are in the same order of magnitude as the reported nanoplastic analysis depending on the detection limited reported based on different technologies."

Indeed, traditional single-particle chemical imaging techniques like Fourier



The study profiled individual plastic particles to bridge the knowledge gap that exists in the analysis of nanoplastics. Experts believe the study can provide information about plastic pollution at nanometre level

transform infrared spectroscopy and Raman microscopy have lower instrumental resolution and detection sensitivity. As a result, they have a limited ability to study the chemical composition of a material beyond the microscopic scale. At the same time, some of the more sophisticated techniques that can track and study individual particles such as atoms and molecules, like electron microscopy and atomic force microscopy, can't differentiate between different compositions and thus uniquely identify the material.

The study also revealed the presence of particles in the sample that did not match any standards, suggesting the particulate composition of bottled water could go beyond plastic 'contaminants'. These standards refer to international rules that classify different plastic materials based on their physical and chemical properties. Particles that do not match any of these standards implied the presence of other particulate inhabitants.

#### Which plastics are in the water?

The algorithm the research team used to

track the presence of plastics in bottled water could spot following the types: polyamide 66, polypropylene (PP), polycarbonate, polymethyl methacrylate, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polystyrene, and polyethylene terephthalate (PET).

The study confirmed the fragmentation of the plastic content of real-world water samples beyond the micrometre scale. Its findings are distinguished by the research team's use of the SRS platform, which revealed a 'hidden world' of even smaller plastic particles that have eluded conventional imaging techniques.

The researchers also reported that counting the plastic particles in the model system revealed a complex relationship between the compositions, shapes, and sizes of plastic particles. For example, according to them, polystyrene particles are around 100-200 nanometres in size whereas PET particles have a size of around 1.2 micrometres. This, the researchers write, "explains why PET is a more significant component when measuring [the particles] in mass while polystyrene clearly dominates when counting the number of particles".

The study has been published at a time when plastic pollution has become a defining concern of the present era, with nanoplastics being found in all ecosystems from ocean trenches to the tops of Himalayan mountains.

Studies have also found that plastic items can break down into sub-micrometre pieces, meaning they can breach biological barriers and enter different parts of the bodies of living beings.

## THE GIST

Nanoplastics are difficult to analyse due to their size and also due to the inability of different diagnostic techniques to identify them

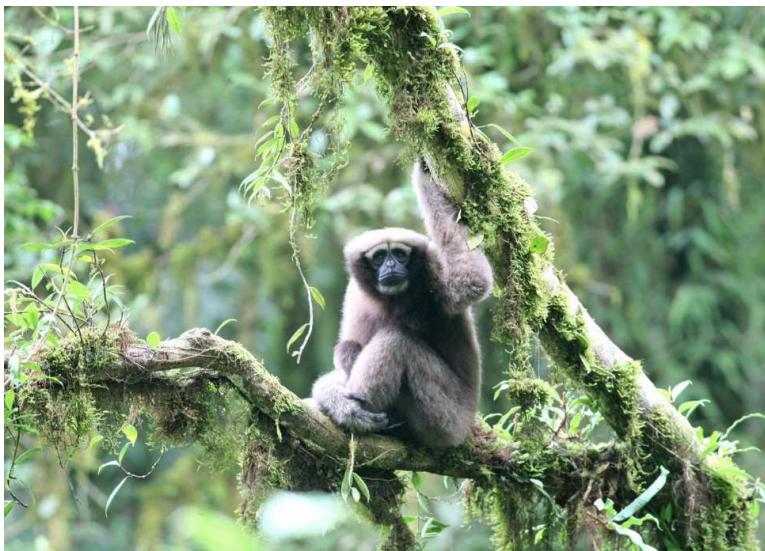
Researchers used a SRS imaging platform along with an automated algorithm to identify plastics. The algorithm extracted detailed information about the chemical makeup from data produced by the SRS platform

Studies have found that plastic items can break down into sub-micrometre pieces, meaning they can breach biological barriers and enter different parts of the bodies of living beings

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## BIG SHOT



This picture released on February 16 shows a Skywalker hoolock gibbon in Myanmar. When the Skywalker hoolock gibbon was first discovered in 2017 by a group of Star Wars-loving scientists, its only confirmed population (fewer than 200 individuals) was in neighbouring China. But in a new study, researchers confirmed Myanmar has the largest known population of Skywalker gibbons in Asia. (AP)

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## QUESTION CORNER

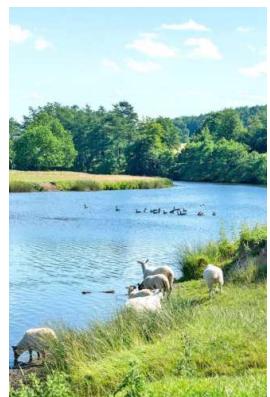
### Sheep are instinctive swimmers

#### Q: Do sheep swim? If so, how do they learn?

A: Yes, sheep do swim, said Edward Spevak, assistant curator of mammals at the Bronx Zoo. "It's basically instinctive, a life-saving device," he said. "They don't go swimming every day, but in case of flooding or falling into a river, in essence they know how to swim."

Sheep have never been known as big swimmers, and most of the habitat where they evolved does not have a lot of water resources, but swimming is part of their survival skills, he told *The New York Times*. First of all, like many animals, they float, Spevak explained. "Then, in struggling to keep their heads above water and to keep breathing, the method they use is basically fast walking, which constitutes a kind of dog paddle."

Other large mammals are swimmers, too, Spevak added. Cattle can swim when herded across a river, as Western movie fans know. Deer can swim as well. "The moose, the largest deer in the world, actually feeds in water and is a very good swimmer," he said.



Sheep can maintain their form in water more than adequately. GETTY IMAGES

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