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Alok Ranjan Sir



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SCIENCE TECH & GENERAL SCIENCE



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Manjul Tiwari Sir



Nitish Sharma Sir

GS FOUNDATION BATCHES FOR CSE 2025-26

DELHI

Old Rajinder Nagar
15th Feb | 26th Feb | 4th Mar
6:00 PM-9:00 PM | 11:30 AM-2:30 PM | 8:00 AM-11:00 AM

Mukherjee Nagar
18th Apr
6:00 PM-9:00 PM

BHOPAL

14th Feb
5:30 PM-8:30 PM

JAIPUR

5th Feb | 11th Mar
5:00 PM-8:00 PM | 5:00 PM-8:00 PM

15th Feb | 26th Feb | 4th Mar
6:00 PM-9:00 PM | 11:30 AM-2:30 PM | 8:00 AM-11:00 AM

LIVE-ONLINE



Scan to Enroll

More batches to be announced soon.

Delhi Centre :

Old Rajinder Nagar : 27-B, Pusa Road, Metro Pillar No. 118,
Near Karol Bagh Metro, New Delhi - 110060 | Ph : 8081300200

Mukherjee Nagar : 1422 Main Mukherjee Nagar Road,
Near Batra Cinema | Ph : 9311667076

Bhopal Centre :

Plot No. 46,
Zone - 2, M.P. Nagar,
Bhopal - 462011
Ph : 8827664612

Jaipur Centre :

A-1, Lion's Colony, Sitabari,
Near The Theme Hotel,
Tonk Road, Jaipur - 302018
Ph : 9358200511

Our Other Initiatives



ESE & GATE



CBSE K-12 School (Delhi & Gurugram)



NEET & IIT-JEE



हिन्दी

सामान्य अध्ययन फ़ाउंडेशन कोर्स

सिविल सेवा प्रारंभिक व मुख्य परीक्षा 2025-26

अनुभवी एवं प्रतिष्ठित शिक्षकों की टीम



आलोक रंजन सर



उपेन्द्र अनमोल सर



कमल देव सर



मंजेश कुमार सर



हेमन्त झा सर



आर.सी. सिंह सर

भूगोल

भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था,
विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी

इतिहास,
अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संबंध एवं निबंध

भारतीय राजव्यवस्था
एवं शासन

इतिहास,
कला एवं संस्कृति

रसतंत्रता के
पश्चात् भारत



के.एम. पथि सर



संजीव श्रीवास्तव सर



राहुल सेंगर सर



नीतीश शर्मा सर



प्रशांत सिंह सर

नीतिशास्त्र
(ऐथिक्स)

भूगोल
एवं पर्यावरण

प्राचीन भारत का इतिहास,
कला और संस्कृति

आंतरिक
सुरक्षा

विश्व का भूगोल
एवं आपदा प्रबंधन

... एवं अन्य

दिल्ली (मुख्य नगर)

14 फरवरी 2024

11:30 AM - 2:30 PM

जयपुर

15 अप्रैल 2024

11:30 AM - 2:30 PM

लाइव-ऑनलाइन

14 फरवरी 2024

11:30 AM - 2:30 PM



आगामी बैचों
की धोषणा शीघ्र
एडमिशन प्रारम्भ

नामांकन के लिए स्कैन करें

CSE 2022 : Top 20 Rankers from NEXT IAS

AIR
2
GARIMA LOHIA



Interview
Guidance Program

AIR
3
UMA HARATHI N



GS Mains Test Series,
Essay Guidance

AIR
5
Dr. MAYUR HAZARIKA



GS + CSAT foundation Course,
Interview Guidance Program

AIR
7
WASEEM AHMAD BHAT



GS Mains Test Series,
Interview Guidance Program

AIR
8
ANIRUDDH YADAV



Interview
Guidance Program

7
in Top 10

14
in Top 20

38
in Top 50

71
in Top 100

624
Selections
out of 933 vacancies

AIR
9
KANIKA GOYAL



GS Mains Advance Course, Essay
Guidance, GS Mains Test Series,
Interview Guidance Program

AIR
10
RAHUL SRIVASTAVA



Interview
Guidance Program

AIR
12
ABHINAV SIWACH



Optional Advance Course,
(Sociology), GS MTS, Essay,
Anubhav Prelims & IGP

AIR
13
VIDUSHI SINGH



Economics Foundation
Course, Economics Optional
Advance Course & IGP

AIR
14
KRITIKA GOYAL



Interview
Guidance
Program

AIR
15
SWATI SHARMA



GS MTS &
Interview
Guidance Program

AIR
16
SHISHIR KUMAR SINGH



Interview
Guidance
Program

AIR
18
SIDDHARTH SHUKLA



Interview
Guidance
Program

AIR
19
LAGHIMA TIWARI



Interview
Guidance
Program

The results shown,
include all courses
offered by NEXT IAS.

Delhi Centre :

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Mukherjee Nagar : 1422 Main Mukherjee Nagar Road,
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Ph : 9358200511

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ESE & GATE
CBSE K-12 School (Delhi & Gurugram)





#MyTaxMyRight



Sri D. K. Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister

Sri Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister



To protest against the financial atrocities committed by the Central Government on Kannadigas and Karnataka

Chalo Delhi

7th February 2024
11.00 am

 Jantar Mantar
New Delhi

Let's Go To Delhi
Let's Fight for
Financial Justice

Losses to Karnataka by
Central Government
from 2017-18

Rs. 1,87,000 Crore

- Disparity in allocation of Grants to Karnataka
- Injustice to Kannadigas in providing facilities

▪ Not even a penny for Drought Relief
Demand of State : **Rs. 18,177 crore**
Given by Central Govt. : **Zero**

▪ Special Grant is now a Mirage
Recommended by 15th Finance Commission : **Rs. 5,495 crore**
Released by Centre : **Zero**

▪ Disparity in Tax Share
Reduced from 4.72% to 3.64%
Loss to the State: **Rs. 62,098 crore**
(5 years)

▪ Cut in grants for Collaborative Schemes
2021-22 : **Rs. 20,000 crore**
2022-23 : **Rs. 13,000 crore**

▪ Neglect of Bhadra Upper Bank Project
Announced in 2023-24 : **Rs. 5,300 crore**
Contribution by Central Govt.: **Zero**

▪ Unfulfilled dreams
AIIMS still a dream
No approval to Mahadayi Project



As enshrined in our Constitution - to safeguard public property and to abjure violence is the fundamental duty of every citizen of India.

X f CMofKarnataka https://dipr.karnataka.gov.in/

Your feedback will keep us Cleaner, Sharper and Bolder

Call our toll-free number
1800 102 1878
Or write to us at
customercare@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU businessline.
FRONTLINE SPORTSTAR THE MUSIC WORLD THE HINDU

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT E-Procurement Notice INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer, Tauri Devi Division HP-PWD, Tauri Devi on behalf of Governor of H.P. invites the Item rate/ Percentage rate bids, in electronic tendering system from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD for the work as per detail given below:-

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (in Rs.)	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	Time Starting date for downloading Bid	Deadline for submission of Bid
1.	Annual maintenance plan for the year 2024-25 on Langwan to Tauri Devi road Km.3/350 to 7/310. (SH-P/L 25mm thick B.C.paver block and 2.5mm thick road marking thermoplastic strip in km. 3/350 to 4/00,400 to 5/00,500 to 6/00,600 to 7/00 & 7/00 to 7/310). (Under PMGSY),(HP0302VR0005)	44,34,837.00	74000.00	Two Month	08.02.2024 13.02.2024
2.	Annual maintenance plan for the year 2024-25 on Matial Tikkar road Km.0/0 to 2/0. (SH-P/L 25mm thick B.C. in km.0/0 to 1/00 and 1/00 to 2/00). (Under PMGSY) (HP0301VR0053)	20,85,842.00	39000/-	Two Month	08.02.2024 13.02.2024

The bidders are advised to note all details of tenders, changes, if any i.e. date, amount etc. from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in.

1. If opening day is a holiday, the tenders shall be opened on next working day at the same time.

2. The officer inviting tender shall not be held liable for any delay due to system failure beyond its control. It is the bidder's responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

For details log on to website [https://www.hptenders.gov.in](http://www.hptenders.gov.in).
Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Tauri Devi Division,
HPPWD Tauri Devi, Pin Code 177023
Tel. No. 01972-27842
e-mail : ee-tou-hp@nic.in
For and on behalf of Governor of HP.
HP / 5618/23-24 HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

idco ODISHA NEW OPPORTUNITIES
ISO 9001 & 14001 Corporation
File No.HO/Civil/T&E-5021/01/2023/ 3832
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (CIVIL), IDCO, IDCO TOWER, BHUBANESWAR
Bid Identification No.Civil/EST-53/2023-24
NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
SHORT TENDER CALL NOTICE

1. Name of the Work : Site Development Works at Sports Complex, Dhenkanal.
2. Value of the Work : Rs.1,206.97 Lakhs (Approx.)
3. Period of Completion : 04 (Four) Calendar Months
4. Availability of tender online for Bidding
I. Start Date : 18:00 Hours of dt.07.02.2024
II. End Date : 17:00 Hours of dt.16.02.2024
III. Opening Date : 17:30 Hours of dt.16.02.2024

Tender details can be seen from the e-procurement portal: www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Correspondence or Addendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.
Sd/- Chief General Manager (Civil), IDCO, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-14003/11/0382/2324

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
E-Tendering Tender Notice No.06/2024
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) N.E. Railways Itaznagar For and behalf of President of India invites "OPEN" e-tender through on Line (E-tendering) for the following work.
S.N. 1- Description of works: Provision/Improvement of trolley refugees in PWBM-BK-KJC Section. Approx. Value (Rs.): ₹ 1,28,70,015.09, E.M.D Money (Rs.): ₹ 2,14,400/- Cost of Tender Forms Rs.NIL Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter 09 Months.
1. On line e-tender can be submitted up to 15 hours of dated 28.02.2024
2. For Full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in
Divisional Railway Manager(Engg.) CPRO/W-529 Itaznagar
Never travel on roof and foot boards.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE
DEATH
P.K.BHARDWAJ (75), Retired Special Correspondent, The Hindu, New Delhi passed away on 06-02-2024. Address: B-3, 125, Ekti Gardens, Patparganj, I.P Extension, Delhi - 11002. Contact : 9810762571

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES
FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Smt. USHA RAJAGOPAL
08.03.1958 - 07.02.2023
P.G.T (Hindi) Retd., Kendriya Vidyalaya, Chennai, etc.
She taught values beyond textbooks.
Fondly remembered by Family, Relatives & Friends
99629 26578 / 95386 46688

15TH ANNIVERSARY

R RAJALAKSHMI
W/O. Late Navalpakkam Rajagopal
"You are living in our hearts"
Fondly Remembered by
Raaghavan and Sudha
Krishnamurthy and Sandhya
Sampath and Jayshree
Radha and Selvakumar
Kalyani and Suryanarayanan
Grand Children and Great Grand Children...

REC wins Best Green Bond - Corporate Award at The Asset Triple A Awards for Sustainable Finance
REC Limited, a Maharashtra CPSE under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, has been bestowed with the prestigious Best Green Bond - Corporate REC's tableau showcases 'Vikas Bharat-Samridhi' theme in Republic Day Celebrations 2024. Under the guidance of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh has once again received national recognition for its commitment to sustainable development.

CM YK

JHARKHAND BIJLI VITRAN NIGAM LIMITED (CIN: U40108JH2013SGC001702)

Registered office :- ENGINEERING BUILDING, HEC, DHURWA, RANCHI-834004

(Department of Rural Electrification)

<https://www.jbvnl.co.in>

Emergent Short E-Tender Notice

(Through e-procurement mode only www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in)

Online Emergent short e-tender is invited by General Manager (RP), JBVNL for Electrification of un-electrified habitations/Tolas/households of rural & urban areas of Jharkhand State under Mukhyamantri Ujjawal Jharkhand Yojana on fully turnkey basis for following District of Jharkhand as detailed below:-

Sl. No. **Name of Package (District)** **NIT No.** **Estimated Cost (In Rs.)** **Bid Security (EMD) (In Rs.)** **Cost of BOQ (Tender) + processing fee (In Rs.) including GST**

1. Gumla 419/PR/JBVNL/2023-24 Rs. 66,16,81,768 Rs. 1,32,33,635 Rs. 29,500

2. Hazaribagh 420/PR/JBVNL/2023-24 Rs. 63,25,16,464 Rs. 1,26,50,329 Rs. 29,500

3. Koderma 421/PR/JBVNL/2023-24 Rs. 18,40,83,279 Rs. 36,81,666 Rs. 29,500

Date of publish of tender notice 07.02.2024

Date of publish of tender documents 07.02.2024

Last date of online submission of tender Upto 16:00 Hours (IST) of 15.02.2024

Date of opening of technical & commercial Part After 16:00 Hours (IST) of 16.02.2024

Date of opening of price part will be notified after technical bid Evaluation. The tender documents will be available at website www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in. Tender Fee and EMD will be received through online mode only. Bidders can use internet banking facility for faster processing of tender fee and EMD. Alternatively, Bidders can use NEFT/RTGS challan generated for the tender from jharkhandtenders.gov.in portal and upload payment evidence /details along with bid documents.

Refund will only be issued to the originated bank account used for the payment of Tender Fee and EMD. So, Bidders are advised NOT to close Bank Account used for online payment/(NEFT/RTGS) of tender fee and EMD.

No Hard copy/physical copy is required to be submitted for tender opening /Evaluation. However, Department may ask original documents for verification before award of contract.

स्वाहित एवं राष्ट्रहित में ऊर्जा बचावे। कृपया अपनी शिक्षकों को 18003456570 (कैल सेंटर) पर जरूर करायें।

Sd/- General Manager (RP)
PR 318094 Jharkhand Bijlee Vitran Nigam Ltd (23-24)_D

SD/- General Manager (RP)

SECTION 1
Superintending Engineer, 4th Circle, HPPWD Shimla HP
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

The Superintending Engineer, 4th Circle, HPPWD Shimla-3 on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the Percentage Rate Bids, in electronic tendering system, for construction of road under National Project for Agriculture and Rural Development for following work from the eligible and approved contractors registered with HPPWD and HP Jal Shakti Vibhag (Contractors of HP Jal Shakti Vibhag are eligible to participate for the works, having amount put to tender above Rs. 100 Lacs). Non registered contractors may submit the bids, however successful bidder has to register in appropriate class with appropriate authority in HPPWD.

District RIDF Name of the work Estimated Cost(Rs.) Total cost Period of Completion Bid Security (Rs.)

Shimla XXIX Construction of Bridge over River at Lakhoti C/o 75.243mtrs, Double lane Bridge on Lakhoti, Koti Shergao road (Portion Dubli to Shergao) Over Girri River at RD 6/00 to 7/00 (SH-L/C/o sub structure, Super Structure, Rival & B/wall for both side approaches, Metalling and Tarring, Catch water Drain in RD 6/00 to 7/00) Under NABARD NI 9,60,26,940/- 24 Months 19,20,600/-

2. Cost of Bid Form: Rs. 5000/- per package/job (non-refundable) only (Online) in favour of Executive Engineer, Shimla Division No1, HPPWD, Shimla.

3. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website www.hptenders.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in NABARD may obtain the same from the website: www.hptenders.gov.in. Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the valid digital signature issued from authorized CA can use the same in this tender.

Non-registrered bidders may submit bids; however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

4. Submission of Original Documents: Nil

5. Last Date / Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering: 16.02.2024 upto 1000 hrs.

6. The date for the work is available.

7. Only online submission of bids is permitted; therefore, bids must be submitted online on website www.hptenders.gov.in. The technical qualification part of the bids will be opened online at 11:00 Hours on 16.02.2024 in the office of Superintending Engineer, 4th Circle, H.P.W.D., Shimla-3 by the authorized officers. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day at the same time.

8. The bidder is not required to quote his rate for routine maintenance. The rates to be paid for routine maintenance are indicated in the Bill of Quantities and the bidder is required to accept the rates in the Bill of Quantities. Further, the payment for routine maintenance to the contractor shall be regulated based on his performance of maintenance activities.

All the required materials like Cement/Steel/Bitumen/Explosive etc. shall be arranged by Contractor at his own level.

9. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than Seventy Five (75) days after the deadline for bid submission.

10. Bidders may bid for any one or more of the works mentioned in the Table above. To qualify for a package of contracts made up of this for which bids are invited in the same NIT, the bidder must demonstrate having experience and resources sufficient to meet the aggregate of the qualifying criteria for the individual contracts.

11. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidder's responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

Superintending Engineer, 4th Circle, H.P.W.D., Shimla-3
E-mail: hp-sh3@nic.in

4th Circle, H.P.W.D., Shimla-3
E-mail: hp-sh3@nic.in

HP / 5555/23-24

A Business Initiative

Award at The Asset Triple A Awards for Sustainable

level recognition. In the Republic Day Parade 2024 organized on the Kartavya Path in New Delhi, Uttar

Prahalad Singh Samarth Virasat received the second

prize on the 75th Republic Day Ajay Bhatt, the

Minister of State for Defence, Government of India,

presented the commendation letter and memento to

Shishir, the Director of the Information and Public

Relations Department of Uttar Pradesh, in New Delhi.

Notably, twenty-five tableaux of 16 states and Union

Territories, along with nine different ministries and

departments, were displayed on January 26. It is

noteworthy that Uttar Pradesh secured second place

on the basis of people's choice in this. This tableau of

Uttar Pradesh, adorned with the theme of recently

constructed Ram temple in Ayodhya, captivated

onlookers. It depicted a five-year-old Ramila holding a bow. The tableau showcased the magnificence of

Sanatan Dharma and Mahakumbh, featuring sages.

Additionally, it offered glimpses of Uttar Pradesh's

self-reliance, showcasing the Rapid Rail and BrahMos

missile technology, UP received the honour for the fifth

consecutive year. Uttar Pradesh has been honoured for

the fifth consecutive year for its captivating tableau

in the Republic Day parade. UP's tableau got second

prize in 2020, first prize in 2021 and 2022. The state

received recognition for its tableau in the People's

Choice category in 2023, securing the second

position. Similarly, in 2024, UP's tableau held the

second position in the People's Choice category,

showcasing the state's consistent excellence in the

parade over the years.

It is noticed that suit for permanent injunction and declare the sale deed as null and void and Interim Petition filed by the plaintiff against you and others. You are hereby summoned to appear before this Hon'ble court on 07-03-2024 at 10:00 AM to answer to the Hon'ble court ordered notice to you by way of this paper publication. Hence you are here by requested to appear before the Hon'ble court on 07-03-2024 at 10:00 AM, either in person or through advocate duly instructed on 14.03.2024 at 10:00 AM to answer to the suit and interim petition and material question relating thereto take that in default

IN A WORLD OF LIMITS, ACES IS ABOUT THOSE WHO DEFY THEM.

The Sportstar ACES Awards celebrate India's biggest sporting champions every year. The ones that go above and beyond, hoist our flag the highest and create new milestones. Join us to cheer for the legends. Watch and applaud them as they receive the accolades they truly deserve.

Date: February 8, 2024

Time: 6 PM onwards



Visit the link: sstar.news/AcesLive
to watch the event live on the day.



Amul

Presents

»SPORTSTAR ACES 2024 INDIA TRIUMPHS

#SSaces2024

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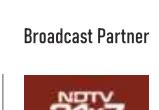
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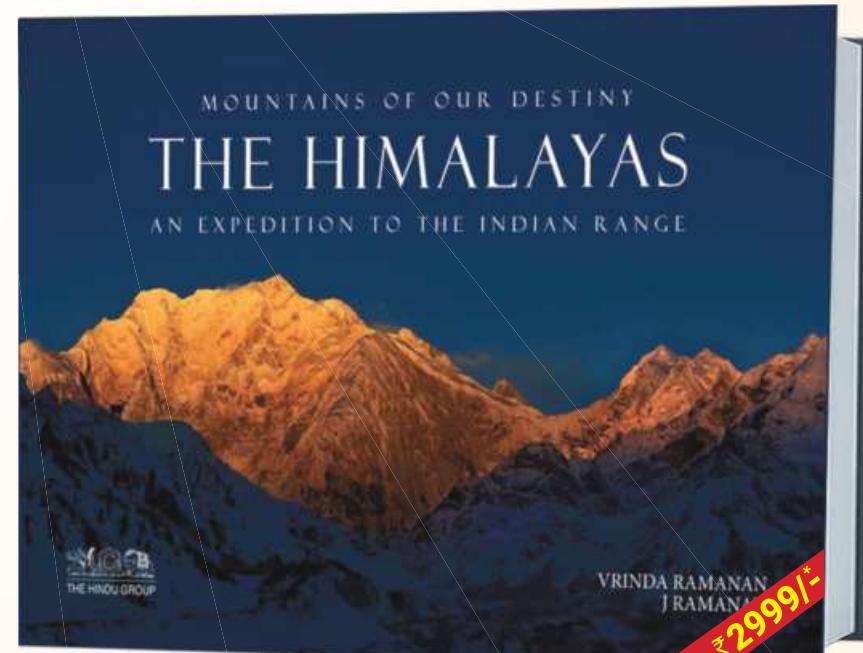
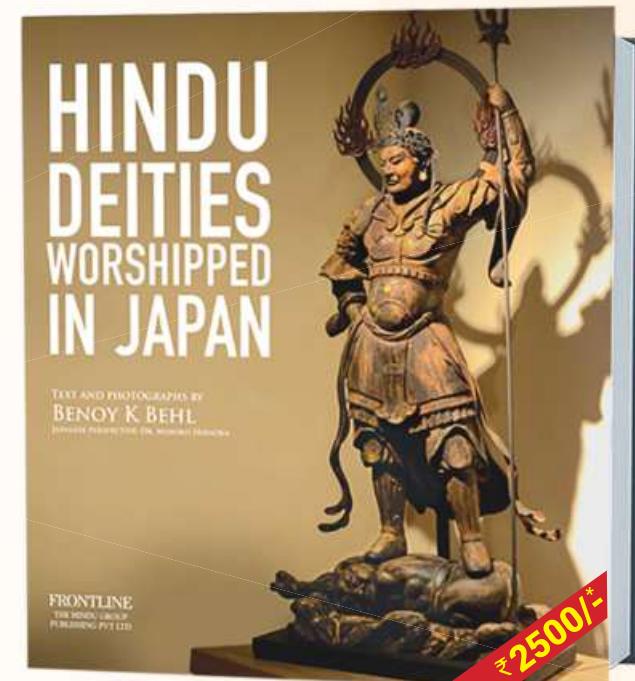
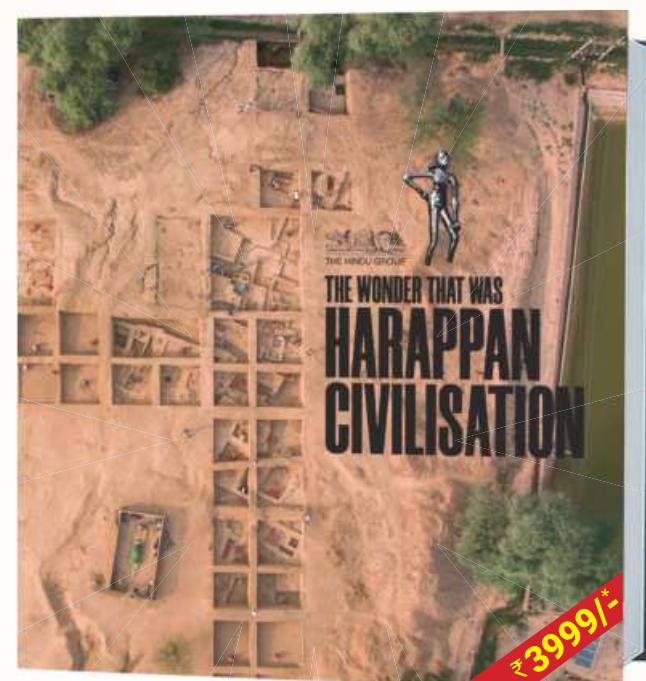
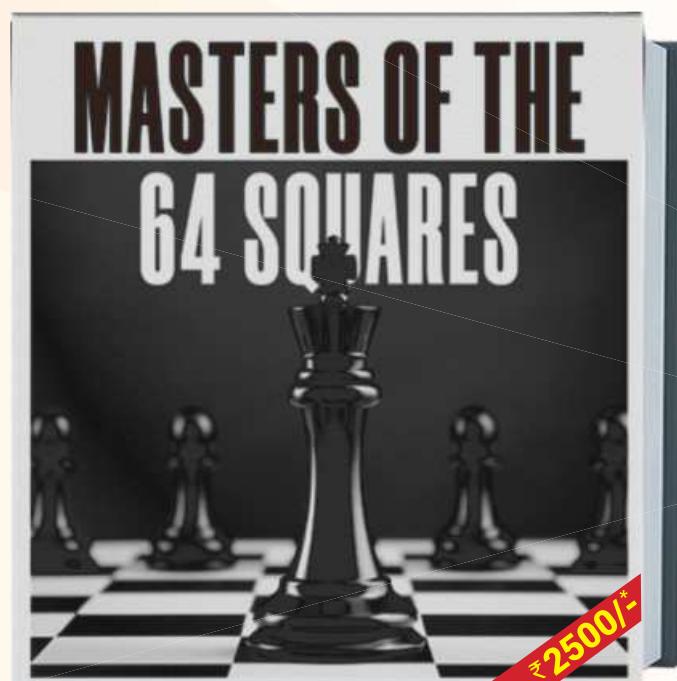
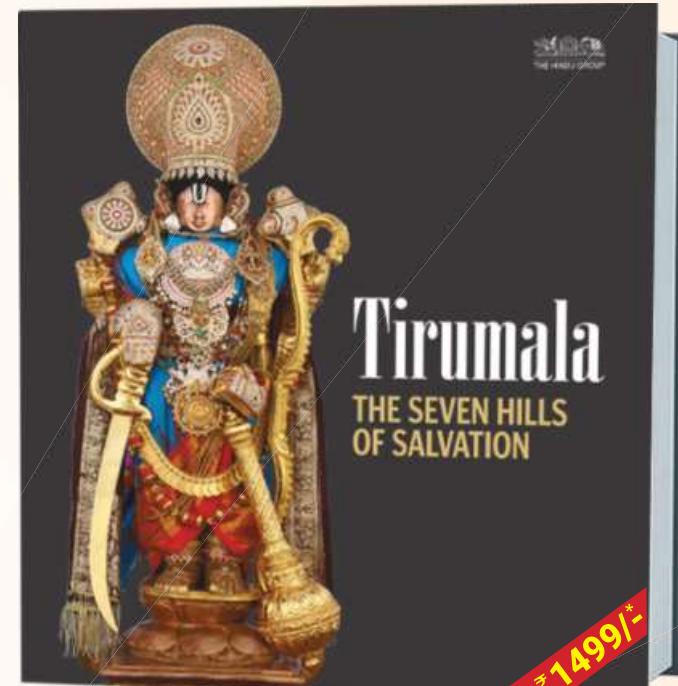
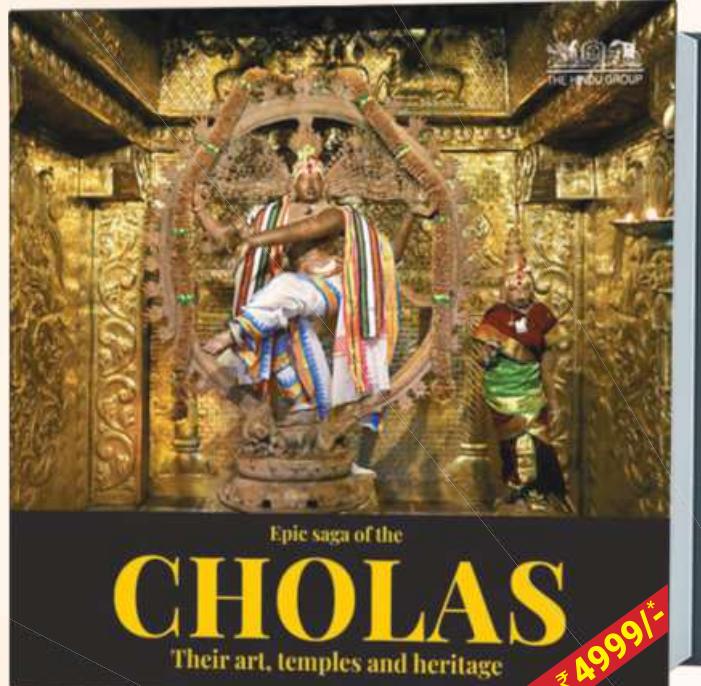




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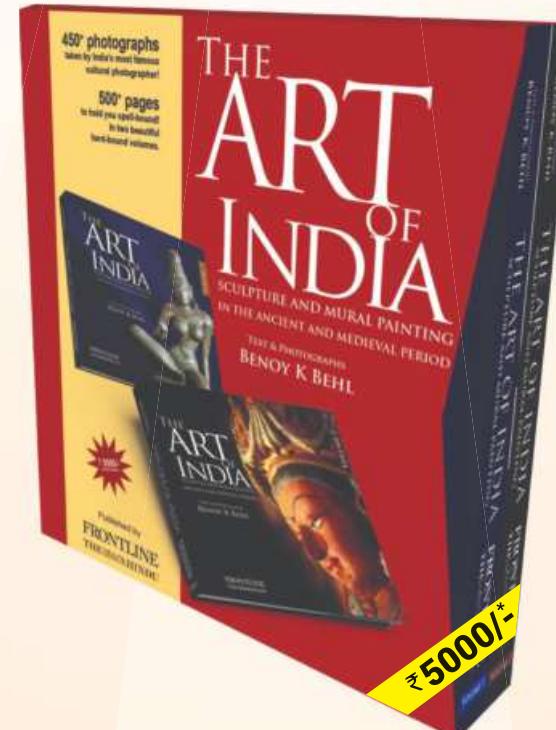
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PLEA ON SUB-CLASSIFICATION

Should affluent groups exit quota list, asks SC

NEWS » PAGE 10



ELECTION SUBVERSION
Court says Trump is not immune from charges

WORLD » PAGE 14



PROJECTIONS FOR FY25
'Tax-to-GDP ratio to hit record high'

BUSINESS » PAGE 13



DATA POINT
More Chinese visit the Maldives

Male wants to reduce dependency on India across sectors

OPINION » PAGE 7



MAJOR VICTORY
Ajit Pawar faction is real NCP: EC ruling

NEWS » PAGE 11

IN BRIEF



Govt. will fence border with Myanmar: Shah

NEW DELHI

The government has decided to construct a fence along the 1,643-kilometre border with Myanmar, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said in a post on X (formerly Twitter) on Tuesday. » Page 10

11 killed, 149 injured in massive blast at M.P. firecracker unit



Tragic incident: Rescue personnel and residents gathering near the factory in Harda district following the explosion on Tuesday. AFP

Mehul Malpani

BHOPAL

At least 11 people died and 149 were injured in a massive blast followed by a fire in a firecracker factory in Madhya Pradesh's Harda district on Tuesday.

A rescue operation to find workers still trapped in the debris of the collapsed building was interrupted by continuing explosions, and officials were forced to evacuate at least 100 houses in the vicinity.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Uttarakhand tables UCC Bill in Assembly

It has provisions on live-in relationships, divorce; Scheduled Tribes have been kept out of the ambit of this Bill; Opposition terms it a poll gimmick

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

In what he called a "historic moment", Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami tabled the State's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill in the Assembly on Tuesday. The Opposition termed it a "poll gimmick".

If the Bill is passed, Uttarakhand will become the first State in independent India to enact a uniform law on all communities with regard to marriage, divorce, succession, and live-in relationships. In fact, Goa also has a uniform civil code for people from all religions as it retained the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 after its liberation in 1961.

However, the Scheduled Tribes, who constitute 2.9% of the State's population, have been kept out of



On the cards: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami after the Uniform Civil Code Bill was tabled in the Assembly. PTI

the ambit of this Bill.

According to Mr. Dhami, the Bill would end "evil practices" such as 'Halala' and 'Iddat'. Apart from matters related to divorce, the Bill has provisions on live-in relationships and property inheritance.

"Under the UCC, marriages will only take place only between one man and one woman. Special attention has been paid to the rights of children and their

protection, whether legitimate or illegitimate. The age of marriage has been set at 21 years for boys and 18 years for girls," he said.

The Chief Minister said that the legislation did not tamper with the traditions and customs of any religion, caste, or sect.

SEE ALSO
» PAGE 4 & 12
CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

T.N. backs Kerala suit in SC against Centre's move to 'stifle' States

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin wrote to his Kerala counterpart Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday, appreciating the State for moving the Supreme Court against the Union government's attempts to "stifle State governments" over finances, and further hoped to collaborate to address this "crucial challenge".

Mr. Stalin said Tamil Nadu faced a revenue shortfall of ₹20,000 crore per annum in comparison with the pre-GST regime, and that the Union had been refusing to extend the compensation regime.

Criticising the "discriminatory and unconstitutional attempts" pushed by the Centre, he said its intent seemed to be aimed at "crippling" States' abilities to raise resources and fund crucial developmental initiatives. This needs to be resisted by like-minded

progressive States, he said.

Mr. Stalin said although this had been happening for quite some time, the situation had rapidly deteriorated in the past few years and there was a clear consensus emerging among progressive State governments that such indirect control over finances needed to be removed.

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» PAGE 10
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KARNATAKA TO PROTEST
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Advt.No.P&A.II/01/SSSC/SCTIMST/2024, Dated: 05.02.2024

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(A Government of Karnataka Enterprises)
Office of the Executive Engineer, KNNL,
MRBCC Division No.3 Byahatti,

Taluk: Hubballi, Dist: Dharwad Pin - 580023.

Phone No: 0836-2315225 E-Mail : eemrbcc3byt@gmail.com

No:KNNL/MRBCC-3/AE-2/Q-tender/2023-24/2646 Date: 06-02-2024

QUOTATION SUBMISSION DATE EXTENSION NOTIFICATION

On behalf of the Managing Director, KNNL, Bengaluru, the quotation rates of various items, invited by this Office Notification No. 2605 Dated: 03-02-2024 in relation to the work mentioned below under the jurisdiction of **Executive Engineer KNNL, MRBCC, Division No.3, Byahatti** has been extended and the details are as below.

"Design, Manufacture, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of SCADA based automation system for main canals - LBC, RBC and NBC branch canal of Malaprabha Irrigation Project including 5 years of Operation and Maintenance on Turnkey Basis"

The quotation rates to be submitted to the **Office of the Executive Engineer, KNNL, MRBCC Division No.3 Byahatti till 5.30 PM on 15-02-2024**. For detailed inquiries, this office can be contacted at Phone Number: 0836-2315225 or in person at the above office during office hours.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
KNNL, MRBCC Div. No.3 Byahatti.

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
Office of the Executive Engineer, Road Infrastructure (TEC Division), N.R. Square, Bengaluru-560002.

No: EE/RI-TEC/TEND/11/2023-24 Date: 06-02-2024

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) (Two Cover System) (Through GOK KPP Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Road Infrastructure - TEC Division, BBMP, Bengaluru invites tenders from eligible Agencies / Consultancy Firms who have registered in any State Government Organizations and License Holders from Labour Department for the Man Power Supply detailed below.

Sl. No. Name of the Work Approx. Amount of Work/Service (Rs. in Lakhs) EMD Amount (In Rs.)

1	Providing Engineering Graduate Employee and Diploma in Engineer Employee in Civil Engineering to Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike.	5,00,000/- (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-Payment & Balance Bank Guarantee)	456.75
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Calendar of Events: 1) The Tender Documents may be Downloaded from the GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> from 07-02-2024. 2) Last Date for Tender Queries: 15-02-2024 upto 3.00 PM. 3) Pre Bid Meeting will be held on 15-02-2024 at 3.30 PM at the Office of the Chief Engineer, No.109, 1st Floor, Annex Building-2, N.R. Square, Bengaluru. 4) Last Date for Receipt of Tender is 22-02-2024 upto 4.00 PM. 5) Date of Opening of Technical Bid is 23-02-2024 at 4.30 PM. 6) Date of Opening of Financial Bid: after approval of Technical Bid. Further details can be had from the above office.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
Road Infrastructure (TEC) Division, BBMP.

UTTARAKHAND POWER CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking) Victoria Cross Vijeyta Gobar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwalli Road, Dehradun-248001

Corporate ID. No. U40109JR2001SGC025867/2358, Telephone-0135-2763727-5, Fax-0135-2763830 website : www.uktenders.gov.in

E-TENDER NOTICE TENDER SPECIFICATION NO 13/SE(MM)/2024

In reference to this office following tenders are hereby invited from experienced transports/ service for carriage of stock material in Hill area of Garhwal Zone, Distribution Transformers in Hill Area Garhwal Zone & in Plain Area of Uttarakhand, from one Store Centre/Place to another Store Centre/Place (including loading, unloading & proper stacking etc.) under Electricity Store Division, Dehradun for the period of one Year.

Sl. No.	Tender No.	Name of Work	Average Turnover for Previous 3 years (In Rs.)	Estimated Value	Earnest Money (FDR/CDR) (In Rs.)	Cost of Tender Document including GST (Draft) (In Rs.)	Last Date & time of Purchase and submission of tender in online & offline mode	Date of opening of Bid part-Ist in online & offline mode
1	13/SE(MM)/2023-2024	Transportation Of Transformer from one stop Centre/Place, Rishikesh to another Store Centre/Place, Srinagar (G), Chamoli, Tehri (G)/Uttarkashi including Loading, Transit Insurance, Unloading & Proper Stacking etc. under Electricity Store Division, Dehradun.	90.00 Lakh	30.00 Lakh	60000.00	2360.00	21.02.2024 upto 17.00 Hrs.	22.02.2024 at 15:30 Hrs.

For further details, please visit website www.uktenders.gov.in

No. 70/ EE(CM) / UPLC / A-2 Dt. 05.02.2024

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Excise case: 'ED tampered with footage of questioning'

AAP leader Atishi charges agency with 'coercing' witnesses to depose against party leaders, calls investigation into the case a 'scam'; BJP says AAP has lost people's trust due to 'false statements'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



Finance Minister Atishi addressing the media on Tuesday. R.V. MOORTHY

for questioning on five occasions, but he is yet to appear before the agency.

Ms. Atishi claimed that one of the witnesses was assaulted by ED officers who forced him to give a statement against AAP leaders.

"Another witness was told that his wife would also be arrested by the ED if he did not give a statement against AAP leaders. Again and again, people were threatened and forced to sign statements by the ED. How will one know that a statement submitted by the ED in the court is right or wrong?" the Finance Minister said.

The AAP leader said to stop such threats, the Supreme Court in 2020 had told probe agencies to videograph interrogation of people. "One of the accused in the case had sought the CCTV footage [of his interrogation]. The ED submitted the footage

after deleting its audio. AAP knows through reliable sources that the ED has deleted audio of all footage of the investigation into the case in the past year and a half," she alleged.

'Why delete audio?'
"Who is the ED trying to save by deleting the audio," she also asked.

"I'm challenging the ED to place all audio recordings of the footage of the investigation before the nation. We have filed an application in special courts of the ED and the CBI and have sought [copies of] the recordings," she said.

Reacting to the allegations, BJP's Delhi secretary Bansuri Swaraj accused AAP leaders of making false statements and said they have lost credibility among the public.

BJP leader Harish Khurana said the Kejriwal government is trying to "cover up" its corruption.

Pramod Kumar Bhardwaj, former reporter with *The Hindu*, dies at 75

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Pramod Kumar Bhardwaj, a former Chief Reporter of *The Hindu*, passed away on Tuesday. He was 75. Bhardwaj retired as a Special Correspondent in 2008 and

was among those instrumental in the launch of the newspaper's Delhi edition on September 11, 1986.

Known fondly as "chief" by many reporters to whom he was a mentor, Bhardwaj is survived by his wife, Meera Bhardwaj, a

two-time MLA from Mandawali, and daughter, Priyadarshini. Several colleagues remembered him for his never-say-die attitude. "For him, nothing was impossible. He was the go-to person for all," recalled a former colleague.

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2	Construction of storage reservoirs, structures and other ancillary works including 5 yrs operation and maintenance in connection with the work "Improvement of water supply to Rambla NAC under AMRUT 2.0 (Sw-11)"	Identification No. ACEPHCBAM 06/2023-24 DT.05.02.2024	701.11	12 (Twelve) Calendar Months	11.00 Hrs. of 13.02.2024	17.30 Hrs. of 28.02.2024 Addl. Chief Engineer, P.H. Circle, Berhampur
3	External power supply with pumping arrangements at intake well, WTP & MBRs including 5 yrs operation and maintenance in connection with the work "Improvement of water supply to Rambla NAC under AMRUT 2.0 (Sw-11)"					



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IN BRIEF



NCM seeks report from Delhi govt. on mosque demolition

The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) took a suo motu cognisance of a news report on the demolition of a mosque in Mehrauli last month, believed to be over 600-years-old. The commission asked the Delhi Chief Secretary to submit a report on the matter by February 15. The Delhi Development Authority on January 30 carried out an "unannounced" demolition of the mosque, with officials citing the action as part of the agency's drive against encroachments. Following the demolition, the Delhi High Court had pulled up the urban body, seeking an explanation for their "anti-encroachment" drive while addressing a plea by the Delhi Waqf Board.

Hockey player Varun Kumar booked under POCSO Act

Indian National team hockey player Varun Kumar, 28, has been booked by the Bengaluru Police under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, for allegedly sexually assaulting a 17-year-old minor girl in 2019. Varun Kumar is an Arjuna awardee and was part of the Indian team that won gold medal at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year. The complainant, now an airline staffer, was being trained for volleyball at a Sports Authority of India facility in the city, when she reportedly met Varun Kumar. In her complaint, she alleged that he emotionally blackmailed her and persuaded her to enter into a physical relationship.

'Assam govt. footed ₹58-crore flight bills of CM and others'

The Assam government spent more than ₹58 crore on hiring helicopters and chartered flights for Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and other dignitaries since May 2021. Consumer Affairs Minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass on Tuesday told the 126-member Assembly that the State government incurred an expenditure of ₹58.23 crore on helicopters and chartered flights from May 2021 to January 2024. He provided the details while replying to Rajior Dal chief Akhil Gogoi, who sought to know how much the Chief Minister's aerial travels cost the State. Mr. Gogoi had earlier accused Mr. Sarma of misusing State funds to hire helicopters and chartered planes.

Father of missing tourist from T.N. announces ₹1 cr. reward

Father of a tourist from Tamil Nadu announced a reward of ₹1 crore to anyone who finds his son who has been missing since an accident in in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur district, officials said on Tuesday. The car he was travelling in plunged into Satluj river near Pangi Nallah on Sunday. The driver was killed in the incident while one tourist was injured and the other was still missing, they said. Vetti was one of two tourists from Tamil Nadu who fell 200 metres down into the river after the driver lost control over the vehicle. The ill-fated vehicle was on its way to Shimla from Kaza when the accident took place. PTI

ED conducts raids over MGNREGS 'irregularities' across Bengal districts

The action, the agency's first as part of its probe, comes days after Mamata Banerjee announced that her govt. will release wages to 21 lakh workers who worked under the scheme on Feb. 21.

Shiv Sahay Singh

KOLKATA

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted multiple raids across several districts of West Bengal on Tuesday in connection with an investigation into alleged embezzlement of MGNREGS funds.

This is the first time the agency has conducted searches in connection with the MGNREGS irregularities. Funds to the scheme were stopped in December 2021 over 'irregularities'.

The ED searched the residence of a former block development officer (BDO) at Salt Lake, a former BDO's home at Dhaniakhali in Hooghly district, and the office of a businessman in Chinsurah in Hooghly district.

Wages imminent

The searches come days after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced that her govt.



Members of Trinamool Mahila Congress taking part in a dharna against the Centre in Kolkata on Tuesday. PTI

overnment would release wages to 21 lakh MGNREGS workers on February 21.

The Centre and West Bengal government have been at odds over release of MGNREGS wages.

State Minister and senior Trinamool Congress leader Sashi Panja said the raids follow Leader of Opposition Suvidhu Adhikari's visit to Delhi. Mr. Adhikari was in Delhi on Sunday.

"This is an attempt to divert public and media at-

tention from the Trinamool Congress's ongoing dharna demanding clearance of dues to the State. This is a clear example of vendetta politics," Dr. Panja said.

The Trinamool Congress leadership is staging a dharna near the statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Red Road to press for immediate clearance of West Bengal's dues by the Centre. Trinamool Congress chairperson and Chief Minister Mamata Ba-

neree took part in the sit-in on February 2 and 3. Party members will continue the demonstration until February 13.

Mr. Adhikari said a large number of BDOs, MGNREGS supervisors and Trinamool Congress panchayat members are involved in MGNREGS irregularities.

Mired in graft

"The reality is that the Trinamool Congress is deeply mired in corruption, with nearly every leader facing corruption allegations," BJP spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said.

With the raids, the central investigation agencies have opened a new front against the Trinamool Congress leadership.

On Monday, the agency moved the Calcutta High Court, seeking transfer of investigation of all cases pertaining to an alleged Rs 10,000-crore ration distribution scam in West Bengal from the state police to the CBI.



Siddaramaiah

curred losses of ₹1.87 lakh crore from 2017-18 by denying its due share in devolution of funds, special grants and under the centrally sponsored schemes, the government said. The letter also appealed to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who denied any discrimination in allocation of funds to Karnataka on Monday, to participate in the protest.

Off to Delhi
Mr. Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar, Ministers and legislators of the Congress of the State left Bengaluru on Tuesday evening to stage the protest on Wednesday at 11 a.m. Perhaps, this is for the first time the entire team of State government is protesting against the Centre at the national capital.

Mr. Siddaramaiah termed the protest as "apolitical" and wrote to members of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, and Union Ministers from Karnataka, to take part in the protest to "fight for financial justice". Karnataka in-

Court again allows Sanjay Singh to take RS oath

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday granted permission to jailed Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) MP Sanjay Singh to take oath as a member of the Rajya Sabha for the second consecutive term.

Mr. Singh is in jail since October 2023 after his arrest in connection with the now-scraped Delhi excise policy.

The order was given by Rouse Avenue court special judge M.K. Nagpal while hearing an application filed by Mr. Singh seeking permission to take oath either on February 8 and 9.

The court had previously allowed the MP to visit the Rajya Sabha on February 5 to take oath.

Mr. Singh, however, was not allowed to take oath as it was reportedly not listed in the House business for the day.

Mr. Maurya in post on X also recounted the core

UCC to be introduced in U.P. at 'appropriate time', says Maurya

The Uttarakhand Bill

LUCKNOW
has led to talks that other BJP-ruled States may come up with similar laws

agendas of his party implemented by the Narendra Modi-led Centre.

"The BJP government abolished Article 370 [abrogation of special status of Jammu and Kashmir], constructed a grand temple at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi [Ayodhya], and now the UCC has come in Uttarakhand," he said.

'States can't bring UCC'
Meanwhile, Amroha Lok Sabha member Kunwar Danish Ali said the Uttarakhand government tabled the Bill in view of the Lok Sabha poll. "States have no right to bring the UCC. It comes under the purview of the Centre," said Mr. Ali.

The statement added that the *yatra* in U.P. will successfully dovetail with the social justice movement and the PDA (Pichda, Dalit

Akhilesh finally gets Cong. invite, will join U.P. leg of Rahul yatra

The Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party (SP) on Tuesday confirmed the participation of its president Akhilesh Yadav in the Congress's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra when it reaches Uttar Pradesh, either in Amethi or Raebareli.

"Our national president Akhilesh Yadav received an invitation from Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge to join the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra of Rahul Gandhi. Mr. Yadav, while congratulating the Congress, accepted the invitation for the Yatra which will enter U.P. on February 16 and is likely to participate when it reaches Amethi or Raebareli," read a statement issued by the SP.

The statement added that the *yatra* in U.P. will successfully dovetail with the social justice movement and the PDA (Pichda, Dalit

'CWC better placed to decide on Mekedatu'

T. Ramakrishnan

CHENNAI

Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) chairman S.K. Haldar on Tuesday defended the decision to refer back the Vennar sub-basin improvement project and the Mekedatu balancing reservoir project to the Central Water Commission (CWC) for further action.

Mr. Haldar told *The Hindu* that the move was based on a decision taken at a previous meeting of the CWMA (held in December 2022) that "as a matter of principle", both the Vennar and Mekedatu projects or any other project would be treated "on the same footing".

Besides, the CWC, with its multi-disciplinary machinery, was well-equipped to examine any irrigation project from all angles.

Leave us out of your conflict, Naga organisation tells Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities

Rahul Karmakar

GUWAHATI

Claiming that the Nagas are increasingly becoming victims of an ethnic conflict they are not involved in, an apex organisation of the Nagas in Manipur – the United Naga Council (UNC) – has asked the Meiteis and Kuki-Zos to insulate the community from the violent clashes erupting in the State.

The UNC made the request to the two communities while issuing a list of atrocities committed against the Nagas both in the Meitei-dominated Imphal valley, as well as the hills, which are primarily inhabited by the Kuki-Zo people.

The Meiteis, Nagas, and Kuki-Zos form the principal communities in Manipur. The Nagas, since the conflict between the Meiteis

and Kuki-Zos broke out on May 3 last year, had decided on a "position of neutrality", declining to take a side.

Caught in crossfire
The first instance of the community being caught in the crossfire, however, took place on May 24, when four Naga women from Ukhral were attacked by a mob in Imphal.

A Liangmai Naga house was burnt down at Leimakhong on June 18, while a Maring Naga woman was shot dead in Imphal on July 16, the UNC said in a statement on February 2.

A Liangmai farmer was beaten on Imphal-Tamei Road on September 5 for refusing to pay illegal tax, and a Naga leader was fired at in Kangpokpi on September 27, said the UNC, adding that three Tangkhul Naga men were beaten up

by armed groups in Imphal on December 3.

On December 11, two Rongmei Naga girls were thrashed in Bishnupur Bazaar in Imphal Valley, and a Naga driver from Tamenglong received a similar treatment in Imphal. A week later, four Naga girls working at a beauty parlour in Imphal were abducted, the statement alleged.

If that were not enough, roads leading to Naga villages

have been cut off or blocked, and armed extremists and women have been checking, frisking, and extorting from Nagas along the National Highways in the hills. Radical groups and women vigilantes have been similarly frisking, looting, abducting, and extorting from Na-

gas in the Imphal Valley, the UNC pointed out.

"Churches have been burnt and demolished, and sacrilegious acts committed inside religious places of worship by radicals in the name of waging war against a community," it said.

The organisation said

the "common admission of mistaken identity" had been cited in all these acts of violence, intimidation, disrespect, and insult".

Call for restraint

"In the interest of peace despite the extreme provocations, Nagas have addressed the many sensitive situations and sought to resolve them through customary laws and practices. Yet time and again, our people have been attacked with impunity, making a mockery of the many agreements and resolutions for restoration of peace and good relations," the UNC said.

The apex body added that Meitei legislators, by answering the radical group Arambai Tenggol's call to attend a meeting at the Kangla Fort in January 24, could not claim any more to represent the en-



Several houses, including those of migrants from Bihar, Haryana, and Naga people, were set on fire by miscreants in Imphal last year. (Right)



FILE PHOTOS

tire State of Manipur. "Not to speak of reining in the non-State actors, it has allowed itself to be dictated and co-opted into a radicalised organisation," alleged the UNC.

The organisation urged the Meiteis and Kuki-Zo communities to immediately desist from targeting, provoking, and attacking the Nagas, their homes, and properties in the Imphal Valley and the peripheral hill areas.

"Should this appeal go unrespected, we will have no option but to call upon the Nagas to vacate the Imphal Valley to take up appropriate measures thereafter," the UNC said, adding that if their community continued to be targeted in the hills, free access to Naga towns and villages, and free passage across Naga areas would "have to be prohibited".



A travesty

Manipulation of Chandigarh mayor poll has grave implications for democracy

The Supreme Court of India's stinging remarks on the manner in which the Mayor of Chandigarh was elected has confirmed suspicion that the victory of Manoj Sonkar, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate was obtained through manipulation. After viewing footage of the videographed electoral process, the Chief Justice of India found it appalling that the presiding officer himself appeared to be defacing the ballots, and termed it a "mockery of democracy". Many had noted as soon as the election was called in favour of the BJP that it was a travesty that took place on January 30, as eight votes cast by elected councillors were declared invalid. The election held on January 30 itself was based on a direction from the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Earlier, it was due to be held on January 18, but it was deferred to February 6 at the last minute as it was disclosed that Anil Masih, a nominated councillor and a BJP minority wing functionary, fell ill. However, thanks to the court's intervention, it was advanced to January 30. The Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) allege that the election was put off only because two parties, which were contesting jointly, were set to win. AAP has 13 members and the Congress seven in the Corporation, but the AAP candidate Kuldeep Kumar polled only 12 votes, with eight votes being declared invalid. Mr. Sonkar, with 16 votes, was declared the winner.

The Mayor is chosen by the 35 elected Councillors and the Member of Parliament for Chandigarh. A simple method for a comparatively small elected body choosing its mayor is by a show of hands or the members rising in support of the respective candidates. That they had to record their preferences through voting slips indicates that there was suspicion of possible cross-voting. What made the process dubious was that Mr. Masih, who presided over the election, was accused of not showing the 'invalid' ballot papers to the candidates. As a result, no one knew why exactly these votes, presumably those that ought to have gone to the AAP candidate, were declared invalid. The apex court has done the right thing in ordering the ballots and the records be handed over to the High Court's Registrar-General and the proposed Corporation meeting postponed until further orders. The development may concern only one municipal corporation in the country, but the idea that an election can be so brazenly rigged has grave implications for democracy. A political party seeking to be re-elected for a third consecutive term at the national level cannot be seen as manipulating any election in this manner. Only a verdict invalidating the election and ordering a fresh one, with safeguards against manipulation, will be in the interest of justice.

Mint Street musings

The interim Budget gives the central bank some more room to manoeuvre

The latest bi-monthly meeting of the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), whose outcomes will be revealed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday, is widely expected to result in a status quo on interest rates yet again. At its last review in early December, five of the six MPC members had voted to persist with the 'withdrawal of accommodation' stance and the panel had raised its GDP growth forecast for the year to 7% from 6.5%. Hopes of a stance shift to 'neutral' are slim, but it would be instructive to see if the growth estimate is revisited in light of the National Statistical Office projection of a 7.3% uptick in 2023-24. The US Federal Reserve held interest rates for the fourth straight review last week, and chairman Jerome Powell was vague about the proximity of much-anticipated rate cuts this year, seeking more data to establish that inflation had been reined in sustainably. India's policymakers may not take a direct cue from the US Fed, but the concerns are similar as Governor Das had articulated in December. The 4% inflation target remains elusive for now – December's inflation rate hit a four-month high of 5.7%. The RBI expects inflation to average 5.2% in this quarter, which it only expects it to cool to 4% in the July-September phase, providing a window for a rate cut consideration if the monsoon is normal.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's interim Budget for 2024-25, however, could give the central bank some more room to ease liquidity constraints in the economy. While the government did not provide a prop for weak consumption trends, it is also not adding to inflation pressures. A stronger than expected pursuit of fiscal consolidation in this year and the next, and a promise to lower gross market borrowings from ₹15.4 lakh crore this year to a tad over ₹14 lakh crore in 2024-25, should help. The Minister asserted that this will free up more credit for the private sector now that industry is beginning to invest 'at scale'. Gross market borrowings as a share of the fiscal deficit will also drop below 84% from 89% this year. With foreign capital inflows into Indian government bonds likely to spike following their inclusion in global bond indices, banks which are the major holders of these securities and are facing elevated credit to deposit ratio growth rates, should get more space to lend. Economists expect this to help lower borrowing costs for the entire economy. Yields on government bonds have already dropped from 7.14% ahead of the Budget to about 7.05% and could drop further, even as systemic liquidity has improved a tad. For Mint Street hawks, that is no small comfort.

Union government's reins on financial transfers to States

Ever since the start of the Fourteenth Finance Commission award period (2015-16), the Union government has been reducing financial transfers to States. This is particularly strange given that the Fourteenth Finance Commission recommended devolving 42% of Union tax revenues to States, which is a clean 10 percentage points increase over the 13th Finance Commission's recommendation. The Fifteenth Finance Commission retained this recommendation of 41%, excluding the devolution to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh, which were categorised as Union Territories. If we include the shares of J&K and Ladakh, it should be 42%. The Union government not only reduced the financial transfers to States but also increased its own total revenue to increase its discretionary expenditure. The discretionary expenditures of the Union government are not being routed through the States' Budgets, and, therefore, can impact different States in different ways.

Some basic math on tax revenue
The Finance Commissions recommend the States' share in the net tax revenue of the Union government. The difference between the gross and the net tax revenue includes collection costs, tax revenue to be assigned to Union territories, and cess and surcharges. Though the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Finance Commissions recommended 42% and 41%, respectively, of the net tax revenue to be the shares of States, the share of the gross tax revenue was just 35% in 2015-16 and 30% in 2023-24 (Budget Estimate). While the gross tax revenue of the Union government increased from ₹14.6 lakh crore in 2015-16 to ₹33.6 lakh crore in 2023-24, the States' share in the Union tax revenue increased from ₹5.1 lakh crore to ₹10.2 lakh crore between these two years.

In other words, the gross tax revenue of the Union government more than doubled while the share of States just doubled. Grants-in-aid to States is another statutory grant recommended by the Finance Commission. The grants-in-aid to States declined in absolute amount from ₹1.95 lakh crore in 2015-16 to ₹1.65 lakh crore in 2023-24. Thus, the combined share of the statutory financial transfers in the gross tax revenue of the Union government declined from 48.2% to 35.32%.

One of the reasons for the States' share in gross revenue declining during this period is that the net tax revenue is arrived at after deducting the



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The Union government's moves, which reduce the aggregate financial transfers to States, are weakening cooperative federalism

revenue collections under cess and surcharge, revenue collections from Union Territories, and tax administration expenditure. Among the three factors, revenue collection through cess and surcharge is the highest and increasing. The cess and surcharge collection in 2015-16 was 5.9% (₹85,638 crore) of the gross tax revenue of the Union government, and this ratio increased to 10.8% (₹3.63 lakh crore) in 2023-24. This calculation is excluding the Goods and Services Tax (GST) cess that is collected to compensate for the revenue loss of the States due to implementation of GST till June 2022. The Union government is increasing tax collection under cess and surcharge categories mainly to implement its own schemes in specific sectors, and at the same time, the revenues so raised need not be shared with the States.

More centralisation of public expenditure
When the financial transfers to States either as tax devolution or grants-in-aid decline on the one hand, or do not increase at least proportionately to increase in gross revenue of the Union government on the other, the resultant effect is the availability of larger discretionary funds for the Union government to spend. This could affect the equity in distribution of financial resources among States. The Union government has two other routes of direct financial transfers to States, i.e., Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and Central Sector Schemes (CSec Schemes). The Union government influences the priorities of the States through CSS wherein the Union government provides partial funding and another part is to be committed by States. In other words, the Union government proposes the schemes and States implement them, committing their financial resources as well. Between 2015-16 and 2023-24, the allocation for CSS increased from ₹2.04 lakh crore to ₹4.76 lakh crore through 59 CSS. Thus, the Union government compels the State to commit more or less an equivalent quantum of financial resources. Moreover, the actual financial transfers to States under CSS is only ₹3.64 lakh crore (2023-24), retaining nearly ₹1.12 lakh crore of CSS allocation for other expenses.

An important aspect of CSS shared schemes is that the States that can afford to commit matching finances from the State budgets alone can avail of the matching grants. This creates two different effects in terms of inter-State equity in public finances. Wealthy States can afford to commit equivalent finances and leverage Union

finances inwards through the implementation of CSS. Less wealthy States will have to commit their borrowed finances in these CSS, thus increasing their own liabilities. These differential trajectories of the public finances of States accentuate inter-State inequality in public finances, the major reason being CSS.

The CSec Schemes are fully funded by the Union government in sectors where the Union government has exclusive legislative or institutional controls. The allocation for CSec Schemes increased from ₹5.21 lakh crore in 2015-16 to ₹14.68 lakh crore in 2023-24 to implement more than 700 schemes. Thus, it is clear the Union government allocates a larger share of the finances to CSec Schemes. It is quite likely that the Union government can allocate financial resources with a motive to benefit specific States or constituencies through the CSec Schemes. Since the CSec Schemes are directly implemented by the Union government, only ₹60,942 crore is devolved to States under this scheme in 2023-24. The combined allocation for CSS and CSec Schemes in 2023-24 is ₹19.4 lakh crore and only ₹4.25 lakh crore is devolved to States.

Scope for anti-federal fiscal policies
The financial transfers through CSS and CSec Schemes are non-statutory transfers as they are based on neither any legal provisions nor any formula determined by the Finance Commission. This non-statutory grant forms 12.6% of gross tax revenue. Together with statutory grants, the total financial transfers as a proportion to gross tax revenue were only 47.9% in 2023-24. Further, the non-statutory grants are tied grants, i.e., they have to be spent on specific schemes for which the grants are allocated. This reduces the freedom of States in conducting public expenditure. In addition to retaining more than 50% of gross tax revenue, the Union government incurs a fiscal deficit to the extent of 5.9% of GDP. Thus, the Union government wields enormous financial powers with limited expenditure responsibilities.

Further, the Fifteenth Finance Commission noted that the Union government had argued for the downward revision of States' share in Union tax revenue from 42% and the Commission retained the share at 41%. Citing higher expenditure commitments, the Union government may repeat the argument before the Sixteenth Finance Commission. So much for cooperative federalism!

Understanding the nuances of the liberal arts

Liberal arts degree programmes are on the rise in the context of Indian private higher education. At the same time, liberal ideologies are gravely misunderstood and viewed with scepticism in contemporary popular and right-wing articulations. As a faculty in a liberal studies school, I find that a greater understanding of the value of liberal arts education and what it offers to future citizens are extremely essential for a more harmonious future. By better understanding the nuances of what a liberal arts education can offer, students who opt for this degree can better respond to their contemporary problems – whether it is the on-going Israel-Palestine war or the politics of merging the state and religion.

The importance of context
A liberal arts education seeks to enable students and future leaders to understand contemporary social problems in context. This is to suggest that to understand and respond to any situation, we must engage with the historical, sociological, economic, and psychological contexts. Such an approach would necessitate openness, require an ability to comprehend a problem from multiple perspectives, and recognise the complexity of the issue at hand. No quick answers or solutions would be possible. Another important aspect of a liberal arts education is to learn how to historicise our contemporary problems. This can enable us to have a view of the present in a way that does not ignore the past but instead teaches us how historical events have led to contemporary crises.

This is why a historian may have a stronger and clearer opinion about present crises than someone in a non-liberal arts field. A nuanced perspective, fertile with critical thinking, would



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A greater understanding of the value of liberal arts education is essential for a more harmonious future – a point being lost sight of in contemporary popular and right-wing articulations

require us to recognise how and why we do have a problem or a conflict. Is there a context to the crises at hand? What are the larger geopolitical issues that affect the issue? Who is being affected and what is at loss?

For example, any armed conflict is not about a battle for physical resources or religious dominance, but represents multi-dimensional fault-lines over culture, language, perceptions of truth and justice. The construction of the idea of 'sovereignty' is itself often hinged on subjective perceptions of historical claims and injustices. Geopolitical and military interests add to the complications of a narrative of conflict. A liberal approach at the very minimum should recognise these complexities before denouncing any particular voice or narrative.

The subject of identity
People's identities are intrinsically linked to regional, national, religious, gender, and other markers. There is nothing reductive about recognising identities of people. No social scientist or historian or economist is, as often labelled as doing so, trying to reduce identities to characteristics. This would be a grave misunderstanding of these liberal disciplines. Instead, recognising identities means acknowledging difference, which is innate in human society. How can we forget the history of human evolution, the formation of societies, cultures, and groups, and speak from a naive position of "simply being human"?

In making sense of conflict between two groups, a student of the liberal arts would instead first ask the question 'when and why do national identities matter?' Does the erasure of identity of some lead to the dominance/flourishment of

other identities? If identities did not matter, then why do passports matter when we travel? Why do nations not open up their borders to all religious and national subjects?

Power as a central vector
In aiming to answer these questions, the role of power in societies can be recognised as being extremely significant. Liberal arts education allows students to learn that power is a central vector in understanding contexts and crises. Incorporating the role of power in any analysis does not denude it of nuance, as Allison Schrager argues in a 'premium' media online article of December 3, 2023, "There is an economic case for redefining liberal arts education". Rather, it deepens the engagement with contemporary crisis situations. Ignoring power relations and hierarchies between identities often leads to flat, homogenised narratives that are hardly of use in the real world. It would be naive and ignorant to deny the role of power in war, or in societies at large.

Power itself may operate in a society, or between nations, in a complicated, multi-layered fashion, and thus a nuanced liberal understanding should anchor itself on a complex treatment of power – not by excluding or wishing it away. A liberal arts education, seeking to be transformative, encourages students to be more humane, while recognising differences and identities, and understanding how power operates within our societies. By asking critical questions first and then understanding the problems in-depth, students can learn to think about solutions, take informed stands, and find resolutions – which shall also have to be complex and nuanced.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Defacing the ballot

One ought to have gauged the Chief Justice of India's anguish aplenty when he was provoked to say that 'democracy is being murdered' in the defacing of the ballot in the Chandigarh mayoral elections (Page 1, February 6). The sanctity of the election process has vanished into thin air. Is it not a shame on the part of a learned government official to be sullying his role and duties?

Mani Natarajan,
Chennai

I can only recollect the glee with which India's leading television anchors were crowing from the rooftops when the election result was declared. All of them

were unanimous in saying that the election result marked the end of the INDIA bloc. I would like to see the faces of these same TV anchors now. The state of Indian (television) journalism is abysmal.

John Samuel Jesupatham,
Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu

The flagrant flouting of the process and procedures annihilates the sanctity of democracy. The perceptual horror of the transgression lies in a scenario ahead – of a similar situation in the Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections.

N. Sadasivam Pillai,
Guntakal, Andhra Pradesh

As a senior citizen, it was

distressing to read about the surreptitious manner in which the mayoral elections were held. The Returning Officer was expected to be non-partisan and conduct the elections in a smooth and orderly way. Instead, he was an active participant in derailing the process. With the national election due in a few months, one prays that the Supreme Court of India will issue instructions to the authorities concerned to ensure free and fair elections.

H.N. Ramakrishna,
Bengaluru

The Chief Justice of India's strong words are of immense significance even as the country braces for the mammoth general

election ahead. Given the vulnerabilities of the poll staff for ostensible reasons, the Election Commission of India has the onerous task of ensuring an infallible election process.

G. Ramasubramanyam,
Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

Award conferment
It would be appropriate to describe the conferment of the Bharat Ratna on L.K. Advani more as a reward than an award. He

H.N. Ramakrishna,
Bengaluru

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Corrections & Clarifications

In the front-page report titled "White Paper on economy this session" (February 6, 2024, some editions), the second sentence, "Deliberations are on and they had already consulted States and Central government staff associations, he said", was with reference to the status of the committee formed to review the National Pension System for government employees, and not the white paper on the economy as it seems to suggest.

spearheaded the Rath Yatra movement which led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid. It cannot be denied that Mr. Advani's concept of a national movement was narrow and exclusionary. He subscribed to Hindutva. If such a prestigious award is given with such divisive considerations in mind, it will hurt the concept of an inclusive nation. To be

N.G.R. Prasad,
Chennai

Technology to the rescue

Technology has its pros and cons and it was stunning that a man used it in an efficient way (Tamil Nadu, "Man recovers father's stolen phone using Google Maps", February 6). This generation is comfortable using technology and there are lessons to learn.

Pragyal S.,
Madurai

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

The severe erosion of fiscal federalism

In February 8, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will lead a protest in New Delhi against the Centre for "placing Kerala on a financial embargo". The Kerala government has accused the Centre of pushing the State into a severe financial crisis by imposing a limit on its borrowings. Kerala has moved the Supreme Court contending that the Centre's imposition of a Net Borrowing Ceiling (NBC) on the State, which limits borrowings from all sources, violates Article 293 of the Constitution. The wide array of constitutional issues that are now thrown open point at the severe erosion of fiscal federalism in the country.

What is net borrowing ceiling? The NBC limits the borrowings of States from all sources including open market borrowings. The Centre has decided to deduct liabilities arising from the public account of the States to arrive at the NBC. In addition, borrowings by state-owned enterprises, where the principal and/or interest are serviced out of the Budget, or through assignment of taxes or cess or any other State revenue, are also deducted from the NBC.

Kerala is particularly agitated by the inclusion of debt taken by state-owned enterprises as the State's own debt. Major infrastructure projects initiated by the State government are funded by the government statutory body called the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), primarily through extra-budgetary borrowings. Since the debt of KIIFB is now included in the NBC, the State government claims that it is not even able to fund pensions and meet expenses for welfare schemes. Is the Centre within its constitutional limits to impose such harsh conditions on the finances of States?

Determining State finances According to Article 293(3) of the Constitution, the State has to obtain the consent of the Centre to



Mukund P. Unny

is an Advocate-on-Record at the Supreme Court of India

raise 'any loan', if 'any part of the previous loan' extended by the Centre is outstanding. The imposition of the NBC is done by invoking the powers of the Centre under Article 293(3).

On close scrutiny, the Centre's decision to include extra-budgetary borrowings by state-owned enterprises in the total debt of the State is constitutionally suspect. The Union Finance Minister justified the decision by relying on the 15th Finance Commission Report, which says, "Governments at all tiers may observe strict discipline by resisting any further additions to the stock of off-budget transactions and contingent liabilities which is against the norms of fiscal transparency and detrimental to fiscal sustainability. One very important purpose of our recommendation for higher borrowing limit to the Union and State Government is to foster transparency and to avoid build-up of non-transparent liabilities." Notably, the Finance Commission has not called for the inclusion of the debt of state-owned enterprises in the NBC.

Parliament does not have the power to legislate upon the 'Public Debt of the State' as this finds place in Entry 43 of the State List of the Constitution. Therefore, the power to make laws on, administer and determine aspects of the public debt of the State falls squarely on the State Legislature.

The State government raises another crucial argument that the balances in the public account of the State should not be included in the NBC. The State relies upon Article 266(2) of the Constitution which indicates that the money collected by the Central or State government, which do not pertain to the consolidated fund, can be brought under the head of 'public accounts'. Small savings, security deposits, provident funds, reserve funds and other treasury deposits constitute 'public accounts'. All activities related to public accounts fall within the domain of

the State Legislature and the Centre has no power to include the withdrawals from public accounts in the NBC.

State territory

The Kerala Fiscal Responsibility Act, 2003, which is enacted by the State Legislature, spells out the fiscal deficit targets for the State. It says that Kerala shall reduce the fiscal deficit to 3% of the GSDP by 2025-2026. When a State Act provides for budget management and fiscal discipline, it is not desirable to have external supervision on the finances of the State by the Centre. Under Article 202 of the Constitution, it is the State government that is tasked with determining the revenue and receipts and corresponding expenditure and with presenting the Budget of the State before the Legislative Assembly. Budget management of the State is the discretion of the State government. The territory occupied by the State executive and legislature cannot be ceded to the Union executive and Parliament in the name of fiscal management. Even otherwise, Kerala's fiscal deficit is reported to have significantly reduced to 2.44% and revenue deficit to 0.88% of the GSDP. In the Centre's case, the fiscal deficit is estimated to be 5.8% for 2023-2024.

The KIIFB was a novel idea in Kerala to fund infrastructure and development projects through extra-budgetary spending. But the State's responsibility to fund development work cannot come in the way of it delivering justice to pensioners and beneficiaries. If the Kerala Finance Minister is to be believed, not permitting the State to borrow will affect the State's spending on welfare schemes. This can lead to a catastrophic situation in the revenue-scarce State. The character of India's federalism is moving rapidly from cooperative to one that is destructive and annihilative. The borrowing restrictions are an example of 'annihilative federalism' at play.

Borrowing restrictions on States are an example of 'annihilative federalism'

The BJP's new plank in Mandya

The removal of a saffron flag in a village in the district has sparked controversy

STATE OF PLAY

Laiq A. Khan

laiq.khan@thehindu.co.in

The political discourse in Mandya district, known as the sugar bowl of Karnataka, has long been dictated by the Cauvery issue or by Vokkaliga identity. The traditional rivals in the State, the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular), have always shared the electoral spoils. With the exception of winning a by-election in 2019 from the K.R. Pet Assembly constituency, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has not won any Lok Sabha or Assembly seat in the district.

The party, therefore, is leaving no stone unturned to change this. Recently, a saffron flag with an image of Hanuman, which was flying from a 108-foot tall flagpole on government land in Keragodu village, about 12 km from the district headquarters, was replaced by the government with the national tricolour. The sensitive issue comes close on the heels of the BJP joining hands with the JD(S), a potent electoral force in the Vokkaliga heartland, to fight the Lok Sabha elections.

The saffron flag was replaced by the national flag amid strong protests on January 28. The local administration pointed out that permission had been given to a private trust to hoist either the national flag or the Karnataka flag on the flagpole.

A day later, the BJP took out a march from Keragodu to the Deputy Commissioner's office in Mandya. The march was led by the BJP's former national General Secretary, C.T. Ravi, and comprised mostly activists from the party and its frontal organisations such as



the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. The activists sported saffron flags and shawls and shouted 'Jai Sri Ram'. JD(S) leader and former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy also turned up at the protest site near the Deputy Commissioner's office in Mandya wearing a saffron shawl.

At the protest site, Mr. Kumaraswamy shared the BJP's anger over the lowering of the saffron flag by the government. He blamed the Congress government, led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, for "communalising" the atmosphere. The next day, reacting to Mr. Siddaramaiah's accusations that the JD(S) leader, alongside the BJP, was inciting violence, he told reporters that he will not support illegal activities of the BJP. As Mr. Kumaraswamy's saffron shawl came under media glare, party supremo H.D. Deve Gowda felt that he could have instead sported the JD(S)'s colours. But he added that there was no need to read too much into it.

Clearly, the JD(S) leader appeared to be focusing more on countering the Congress, which had stormed the party's citadel in Mandya by defeating it in six out of seven constituencies during the 2023 Assembly elections. Even though the Mandya Lok Sabha seat is held by film actor Sumalatha, an independent candidate who had declared her support for the BJP after defeating Mr.

Kumaraswamy's son Nikhil during the 2019 polls, the JD(S) is expected to bargain hard for Mandya during its seat-sharing talks with the BJP.

With the BJP-JD(S) combine calling for a Mandya bandh on February 9, the Congress leaders see a political game plan by the BJP and its new-found political ally in the State to "polarise" voters before the Lok Sabha elections. The Congress has said that the BJP is trying to convert Mandya into another Hindutva laboratory in the State, after its experiments in coastal Karnataka.

Congress leaders in Mandya have also predicted that that the flag row could boomerang on the BJP. Agriculture Minister N. Cheluvayraswamy, who is also Minister in charge of the district, and Malavalli MLA P.M. Narendraswamy have argued that the bandh call is indirectly against the national flag that is now flying from the flagpole.

The flag row is not the first sensitive issue to rock Mandya in recent years. In the run-up to the 2023 Assembly elections, BJP leaders had similarly tried to build a narrative around Uri Gowda and Doddananege Gowda. The party claimed that these Vokkaliga warriors had killed Tipu Sultan, the erstwhile ruler of Mysuru, even though there are no historical records to back this claim. The efforts failed to yield any electoral dividends.

However, unlike the past when the JD(S) strongly opposed the BJP's "communal" planks such as the hijab issue and the Uri Gowda and Doddananege Gowda narrative, the regional party has now aligned with the saffron party. The alliance could either help the BJP-JD(S) combine or it could prove to be counter-productive like it did for the Congress-JD(S) alliance in 2019.

Maldives accelerates plan to lower dependence on India

The Chinese make up for the minor reduction in Indian tourists in the Maldives following the diplomatic row between New Delhi and Malé

DATA POINT

Soniika Loganathan & Vignesh Radhakrishnan

In January, controversial tweets by deputy ministers of the Maldives on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Lakshadweep led to a diplomatic row between the two countries. The consequences of this row have been two-fold. The tweets sparked a call by some Indians on social media to boycott the Maldives. This was an attempt by them to puncture the biggest money-maker for the Maldives, the tourism industry. Meanwhile, Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu strengthened ties with one of India's rivals, China. Just a few days after tensions between the Maldives and India flared up, Mr. Muizzu visited China, met with Chinese President Xi Jinping, and appealed to Chinese tourists to visit his nation in large numbers and reclaim the top spot in tourist arrivals, which they once held.

Mr. Muizzu and Mr. Xi signed key agreements, including agricultural schemes that would "end its [Maldives'] dependence on one country for imported staple foods such as rice, sugar, and flour," by growing them locally. Currently, the Maldives relies heavily on India for a number of products.

The Maldives imports over 95% of its granite, 40% of its steel bars and coils, over 30% of tubes/pipes, electric motors and cement, 65% of flat-rolled iron and stainless steel sheets, and over 50% of bulldozers from India (Chart 3). Moreover, it sources over 80% of rice, 60% of eggs, close to 30% of cattle meat, 50% of onions, melons and nuts, 25% of wheat, over 45% of crabs/shrimp/prawns and cabbages, and 40% of tomatoes from India. Essentially, the tourism boom in the Maldives – from food to stay – relies heavily on the supply of raw materials from India.

The decline in Indian visitors did not have an impact on the overall number of tourists to the Maldives. In fact, if the first 35 days of 2023 and 2024 are compared, the

number of tourists went up slightly from 1,97,252 to 2,22,502. This increase is entirely due to the sudden surge in the number of Chinese tourists from just 6,563 to 25,303 in the period.

More worryingly, the impact of the diplomatic fallout has been felt by more than just the tourism industry. Generally, 20,000 to 40,000 medical tourists from the Maldives visit India annually for treatment (Chart 2). On January 13, Mr. Muizzu announced that the government's health insurance scheme will cover visits to the UAE and Thailand too, to "diminish reliance on a select group of countries". He made this announcement immediately after his return from China. He also said that a 100-bed hospital with Chinese aid will be built.

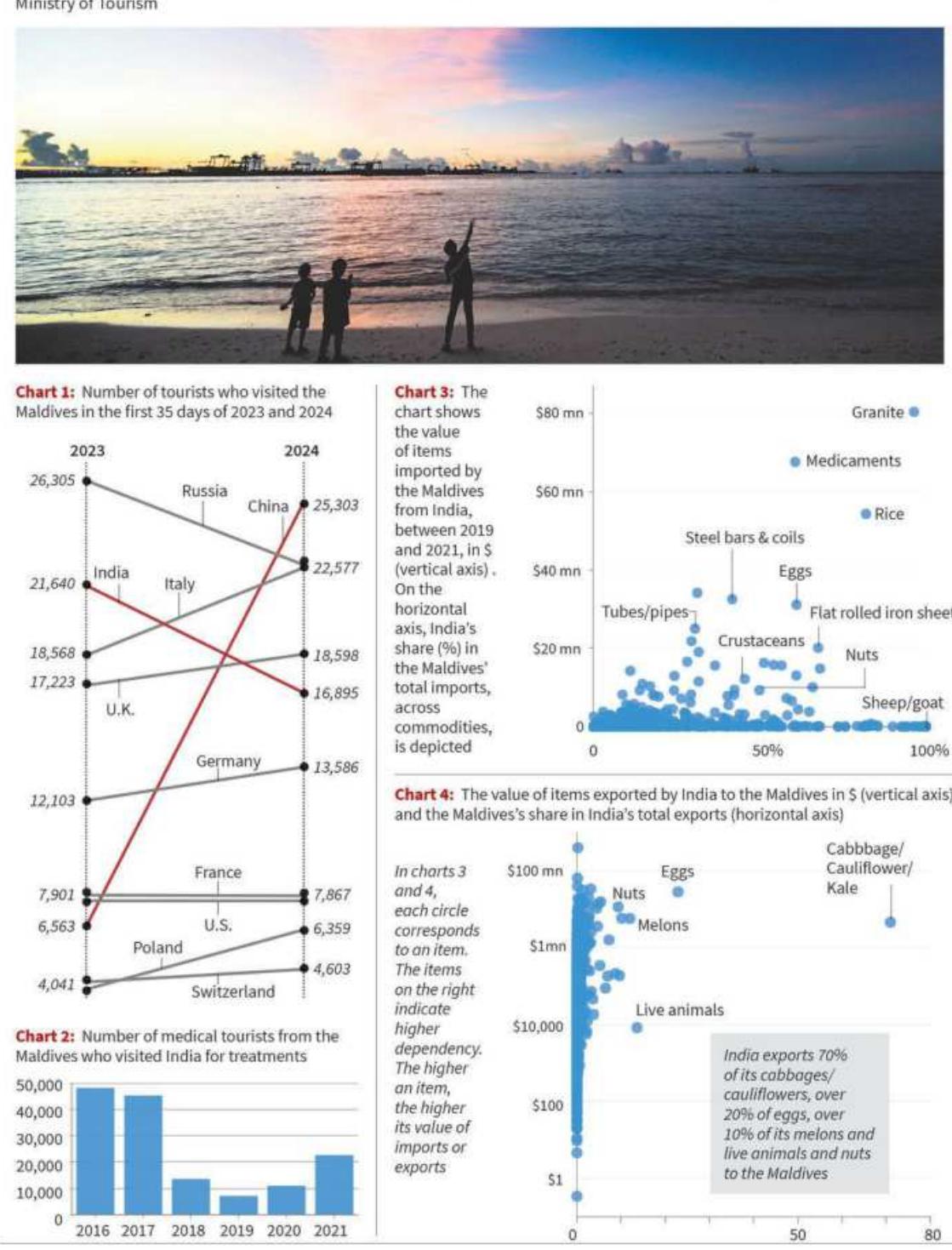
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India exports 70% of its cabbages/cauliflowers, over 20% of eggs, over 10% of its melons and live animals and nuts to the Maldives. The archipelago's key agreements with China after the fallout with India threatens this mutually beneficial relationship, and gives China more sway in the Indian Ocean region.

Dragon checks in

The charts are based on data sourced from the UNcomtrade portal, India Tourism Statistics and the Republic of Maldives' Ministry of Tourism



Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The number of sedition cases filed from 2018 to 2022

701 As many as 5,023 cases were lodged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari informed Parliament. He added that sedition cases against the State came down from 149 in 2021 to 68 in 2022. PTI

Number of fraudulent loan apps removed from Play Store

2,200 Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat K. Karad informed Parliament that the loan apps were suspended or removed by Google between September 2022 and August 2023. PTI

Number of teaching positions vacant in Uttar Pradesh

85,152 Minister of State for Basic Education Sandeep Singh said that of the 4.17 lakh sanctioned posts, more than 80,000 posts were vacant in schools run by Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Council. PTI

The number of farmers enrolled under the PMKMY

23.38 in lakh. Launched in September 2019, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PMKMY) is meant for old age protection and social security of Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs). PTI

The passengers on the no-fly list in the last four years

247 Minister of State for Civil Aviation V.K. Singh said that 108 individuals were barred from flying by airlines in 2023. The passengers placed on the 'no-fly' list increased from 10 in 2020 to 66 in 2021. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Understanding the delimitation exercise

What does delimitation mean and what are the constitutional provisions which deal with it? Why were the seats frozen as per the 1971 Census? Will the fresh exercise go against the federal principle, giving an advantage to certain States over others?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R

The story so far:

The delimitation of constituencies for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies is to be carried out on the basis of the first Census after 2026. The 2021 Census was originally postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently due to delays on the part of the Central government.

What is delimitation?

Delimitation means the process of fixing the number of seats and boundaries of territorial constituencies in each State for the Lok Sabha and Legislative assemblies. It also includes determining the seats to be reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in these houses. Article 82 and 170 of the Constitution provide that the number of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative assemblies as well as its division into territorial constituencies shall be readjusted after each Census. This 'delimitation process' is performed by the 'Delimitation Commission' that is set up under an act of Parliament. Such an exercise was carried out after the 1951, 1961 and 1971 Censuses.

What is the constitutional requirement?

'Democracy' means 'rule or government by the people'. It follows that the government is elected by a majority with the broad principle of 'one citizen-one vote-one value'. The number of seats in the Lok Sabha based on the 1951, 1961 and 1971 Census was fixed at 494, 522 and 543, when the population was 36.1, 43.9 and 54.8 crore respectively. This broadly translated to an average population of 7.3, 8.4 and 10.1 lakh per seat respectively.

However, it has been frozen as per the 1971 Census in order to encourage population control measures so that States with higher population growth do not end up having higher number of seats. This was done through the 42nd Amendment Act till the year 2000 and was extended by the 84th Amendment Act till 2026. Hence, the population based on which the number of seats is allocated refers to the population as per the 1971 Census. This number will be re-adjusted based on the first Census after 2026. The boundaries of territorial constituencies were readjusted (without changing the number of seats) and seats for SC and ST were determined as per the 2001 Census and will again be carried out after 2026.

In a normal course of events, the delimitation process for the number of seats, boundaries of territorial constituencies and determining the reserved seats for SC and ST would have happened based on the Census of 2031 as it would have been the first Census after 2026. However, with the 2021 Census now being postponed and the year 2026 nearing, there have been talks about the impending delimitation exercise.

What are the issues?

The number of seats were frozen based on the 1971 Census in order to encourage population control measures. The population explosion that happened in our country during the last five decades has been uneven with some States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan having a greater increase than States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. There are two options that are being discussed in the public domain with respect to the



GETTY IMAGES

THE GIST

▼ Delimitation means the process of fixing the number of seats and boundaries of territorial constituencies in each State for the Lok Sabha and Legislative assemblies.

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Skew scenarios

Delimitation is the process of fixing the number of seats in each State for the Lok Sabha and Legislative assemblies. Article 82 and 170 of the Constitution provide that the number of seats shall be readjusted after each Census

Table 1: If the number of seats is retained at 543 and reapportioned among States based on the projected population in 2026

State	Number of seats at present	Number of seats projected	Net gain/loss
U.P.	80	91	11
Bihar	40	50	10
Rajasthan	25	31	6
M.P.	29	33	4
Tamil Nadu	39	31	-8
Andhra + Telangana	42	34	-8
Kerala	20	12	-8
Karnataka	28	26	-2
Punjab	13	12	-1
Himachal	4	3	-1
Uttarakhand	5	4	-1

Table 2: If the number of seats is increased to 848 based on the projected population in 2026

State	Number of seats at present	Number of seats projected	Net gain
U.P.	80	143	63
Bihar	40	79	39
Rajasthan	25	50	25
M.P.	29	52	23
Tamil Nadu	39	49	10
Andhra + Telangana	42	54	12
Kerala	20	20	-
Karnataka	28	41	13
Punjab	13	18	5
Himachal	4	4	-
Uttarakhand	5	7	2

Source: Based on Vaishnav et al, Carnegie Endowment

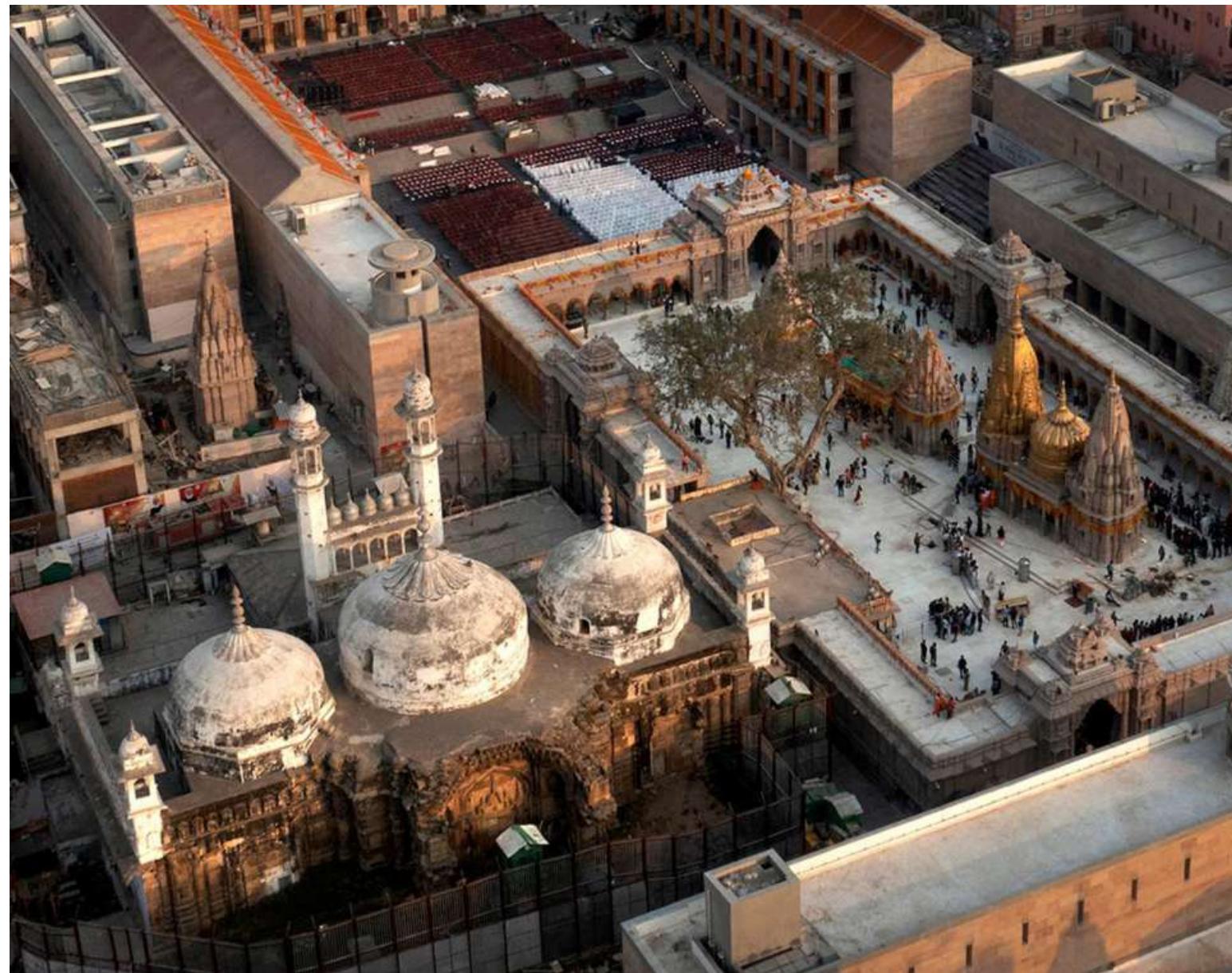
lakh has 15 seats (average population of 4 lakh per member) as against Germany with a population of 8.3 crore having 96 seats (average population of 8.6 lakh per member).

ensure no disruption in the present representation from various States. This will maintain and uphold the federal principle. The number of MLAs in each State may be increased in line with current population (without changing the number of Rajya Sabha seats) to address the democratic representational requirement.

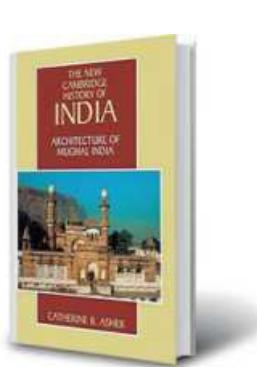
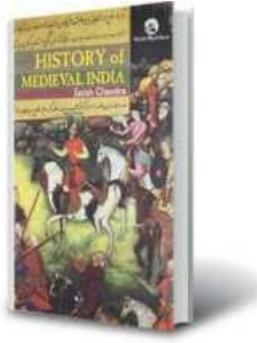
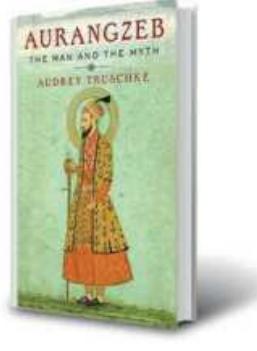
However, the most important reform for strengthening democracy is to empower the local bodies of panchayats and municipalities who engage with the citizens on a day-to-day basis. The devolution of powers and finances to these bodies must be significantly increased to strengthen democracy at grass root levels.

Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. He currently trains civil-service aspirants at 'Officers IAS Academy'. Views expressed are personal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY



The remains of history: The Gyanvapi mosque, and the Kashi Viswanath temple on the banks of the Ganges in Varanasi. AP



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

"Ms. S. Patnaik, Baroda, wants to know the difference between I am reading a book about animals and I am reading a book on animals."

"'On' is used when the book is written for specialists, academics in a scholarly style. 'About' is used when the book is written in an informal style for the general reader.

It was a lecture on China.

It was a seminar on the government's fiscal policy.

He spoke about the political situation.

"Mr. V. Sundar, Lodhi Colony, New Delhi, wants to know the difference between 'assumption' and 'presumption'."

"'Assumption' is from 'assume' and 'presumption' is from 'presume'."

'Assume' means 'to take as being true, for purpose of argument or action'. You take as true something that has not been proved to be true.

Let's assume that he visited India.

We had assumed that he would like this dish.

'Presume' means 'suppose something to be true', 'take something for granted'.

I presume he is away in Calcutta.

You presume something when you feel that it is most likely, when you make a logical inference from the facts available.

He is presumed to have died in the accident.

Assumption is rather arbitrary, presumption is about what is likely.

Let us assume he is a liar.

I presume he is a liar.

You presume when there is at least some semblance of evidence, you assume for the sake of argument. In Law, presumption is an inference as to the existence or truth of a fact not known for certain. 'Presumption' also means 'disrespectful behaviour that shows too high an opinion of oneself'.

It was presumption on his part to tell the teacher how she should teach.

"Mr. B. Mohan Murali wants to know the meaning of 'the rank and file'."

"It means 'common soldiers, not officers'. Figuratively, it means 'the ordinary members of an organisation'. A good leader is one who can carry the rank and file with him."

The rank-and-file workers revolted against the Party President.

'Rank' has several meanings. One of them is the 'number of soldiers drawn up in single line abreast'. One of the meanings of 'file' is 'line of persons one behind another'. So soldiers as distinct from officers; from this we get the figurative meaning 'followers as distinct from leaders'."

"Mr. Paritosh Uttain, wants to know which of the following spellings is correct: (a) Czar (b) Tsar."

"Both are correct. There is also a third one. 'Tzar'. All these are acceptable. 'Czar' is the title of the emperor of Russia and 'Tsarina' is the title of the empress."

Published in The Hindu on January 8, 1991.

Temples and mosques as a marker to study the life and times of Aurangzeb

For the Mughal emperor, say historians, the decision to demolish a place of worship or not was often taken for political reasons; Benares became a place of interest for Aurangzeb because of anti-Mughal factions, 'troublesome zamindars and Hindu religious leaders'

Ziya Us Salam

On February 2 this year, Muslims thronged the Gyanvapi Masjid in Varanasi in almost unprecedented numbers for Friday prayers. It was not out of a new-found love for the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb who is said to have built the mosque in the 17th century but a desperate bid to stand up for a mosque, now under increasing pressure from Hindutva forces. On the same day, local Hindus thronged for darshan at the cellar or 'Vyasji ka tekhkhan'a.

When and how did the masjid come up? Well, in one line, Aurangzeb demolished a temple on the land occupied by some recalcitrant zamindars and built a mosque to deprive the local warlords of their bastion. It did not start on that note though. Soon, after Aurangzeb replaced his father Shah Jahan on the Mughal throne, he is said to have shown great respect towards Brahmins and even requested them to pray for the well-being of the empire.

Political motives

Writing in *Aurangzeb: The Man and The Myth*, historian Audrey Truschke explains, "Hindu and Jain temples dotted the landscape of Aurangzeb's kingdom. These religious institutions were entitled to Mughal state protection, and Aurangzeb generally endeavoured to ensure their well-being. By the same

token, from a Mughal perspective, that goodwill could be revoked when specific temples or their associates acted against imperial interests. Accordingly, Aurangzeb authorised targeted temple destructions." Another noted historian, Richard Eaton, puts the figure around 12 for such temples. Amazingly, some time before he became the Emperor, Aurangzeb is said to have condemned any king who resorted to bigotry! A couple of years after assuming power, he issued a 'farman' in 1659 wherein he asked his officials not to disturb the Brahmins of Benares.

Expresses Truschke, "Writing in February of 1659 Aurangzeb said he had learned that 'several people have, out of spite and rancour, harassed the Hindu residents of Benares and nearby places, including a group of Brahmins who are in charge of ancient temples there.' The king then ordered his officials: 'You must see that nobody unlawfully disturbs the Brahmins or other Hindus of that region, so that they might remain in their traditional place and pray for the continuance of the Empire.' Indeed, of the tens of thousands of temples during his almost 50-year reign, most stood safe and secure when his reign ended in 1707. Unfortunately, the Benares temple was not among them.

Writing in *Architecture of Mughal India*, noted historian Catherine Asher, states: "The destruction of Raja Man Singh's famous Vishvanath [Vishwanath] temple

in Benares was largely to punish Hindus, especially those related to the temple's patron, who were suspected of supporting the Maratha Shivaji." According to Asher, "The demolition of the Vishvanath Temple was intended as a warning to anti-Mughal factions, in this case troublesome zamindars and Hindu religious leaders who wielded great influence in this city."

It is a point agreed upon by Truschke who writes, "Political events incited Aurangzeb to initiate assaults on certain Hindu temples. For example, Aurangzeb ordered Benares's Vishvanath Temple demolished in 1669." Incidentally, the temple had been built during the reign of his great-grandfather Akbar by Raja Man Singh. It was believed Man Singh's great-grandson helped Shivaji flee from Aurangzeb's court in 1666, and hence Aurangzeb's wrath. A new Vishwanath temple was built on an adjacent site to the Gyanvapi Masjid by the Maratha ruler Ahilyabai Holkar in the 18th century.

In *History of Medieval India*, Satish Chandra provides a different take on the temple destruction. "He (Aurangzeb) began to look upon temples as centres of spreading subversive ideas.... Thus, he took strict action when he learnt in 1669 that in some temples in Thatta, Multan and especially at Benares, both Hindus and Muslims used to come from great distances to learn from the Brahmins."

While there is concurrence on the temple's destruction in 1669 among

Asher, Chopra and Truschke, architectural historian Madhuri Desai contends that the Vishvanath Temple was only built in the 18th century, perhaps in a reference to Holkar.

Nine lives

In *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Desai writes that the Vishvanath temple was built long after the Gyanvapi Masjid and stands adjacent to it. The masjid, incidentally, is actually called Masjid Alamgiri or Jama Masjid; Gyanvapi being the name of the locality. Even today, some locals call it Gyanvapi wali Masjid or Masjid of Gyanvapi by the name of the neighbourhood. Surprisingly, there are two other Alamgiri Masjids in the vicinity, which, however, aren't referred to as Gyanvapi.

Others believe the temple was built before the entry of Muslim invaders, probably in the 12th century and was first attacked by Qutubuddin Aibak, who later founded the Slave or Mamluk dynasty.

The temple was rebuilt during Akbar's reign by Raja Man Singh. It was once again demolished during Aurangzeb's reign, they contend. As a three-domed mosque came up, a portion of the wall, facing the prayer direction, was kept intact as a warning to defiant elements.

Today, as the mosque is caught in the midst of a legal and social controversy, it is important to remember that it is a medieval monument, and a marker to study the life and times of Aurangzeb.

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

Charles Dickens was born on this day in 1812. Get your creative juices flowing, and test yourself on one of the greatest novelists in English literature

Sindhur Nagarak

QUESTION 1
This is a collection of short pieces Dickens originally published in various newspapers and other periodicals when he started his career as a journalist. What is the name of the collection?

QUESTION 2
What is the term used to describe something reminiscent of Dickens and his writings, such as poor social or working conditions or comically repulsive characters?

QUESTION 3
This Dickens' character is a wealthy spinster, once jilted at the altar, who insists on wearing her

wedding dress for the rest of her life. Name her.

QUESTION 4
Which writer and critic once remarked that Dickens' Great Expectations was more seductive than Karl Marx's Das Kapital?

QUESTION 5
Traditionally, this word means a person or object that behaves deceptively or dishonestly. However, in modern usage, this is most associated with the character Ebenezer Scrooge. What is the word? How is it referred to in his novella A Christmas Carol?

QUESTION 6
Name the two cities in Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities.



Visual question:
In this image, identify the character standing on the chair, and addressing the members of his club. Which novel is the character from?

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. This Ritwik Ghatak film inspired K. Balachander's Arangetram in Tamil. Ans: Meghe Dhaka Tara

2. The other two films of a trilogy which dealt with the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal. Ans: Komal Gandhar, Subarnarekha

3. The Ghatak film one will associate with the phrase "pathetic fallacy". Ans: Ajantik; The attribution of human feelings to inanimate things

4. Ghatak won the Best Director award from the Bangladesh Cine Journalists' Association for this film. Ans: Titash Ekta Nadir Naam

5. Name the Hindi film, scripted by Ghatak, which marked the directorial debut of Shrikhand Mukherjee. Ans: Musafir

Visual: Name the two actors in this image.

Ans: Anil Chatterjee, Supriya Choudhury
Early Bird: Sadhan Kumar Panda

Word of the day

Detritus:

the remains of something that has been destroyed or broken up; loose material (stone fragments and silt etc.) that is worn away from rocks

Synonyms: Debris, dust, rubble

Usage: Rotting food and detritus of every kind is scattered all around.

Pronunciation: bit.ly/detrituspro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /dɪ'trɪtəs/

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

From Page One**Uttarakhand tables UCC Bill in Assembly**

The Chief Minister added that after the UCC Bill was passed, Uttarakhand would become the first State to implement uniform laws for all.

In matters related to divorce, men and women would have the same rights, he said. The UCC Bill provides for a three-year imprisonment or a fine of ₹1 lakh, or both, for a person found committing 'halala'. The Chief Minister asked the Opposition to support the Bill. However, Leader of the Opposition Yashpal Arya said that he failed to understand the logic behind the urgency being shown by the BJP government in tabling the Bill.

"They expect us to read such a lengthy document, which was submitted a couple of days ago, and start the discussion. It looks like the government is trying to hide something," he said.

The Bill says that if one person in a married couple changes his religion without the consent of the other person, then the other person will have the full right to file for a divorce and maintenance allowance. It will also prohibit a second marriage if one of the spouses is alive. The Bill will make it mandatory to register marriages and divorces, failing which the couple concerned will be deprived of the benefits of all government facilities. In case of a divorce or domestic dispute between husband and wife, the custody of any child up to five years of age will remain with the mother.

The Bill also has stringent provisions for a failure to register live-in relationships. If a couple does not register their live-in status with the district administration within a month, they can face a maximum punishment of up to three months imprisonment. Also, if live-in partners share any false information during the registration, they will face imprisonment for up to three months or a fine not exceeding ₹25,000, or both.

The children born out of such live-in relationships will be considered the legitimate children of the couple under the UCC.

11 dead, 149 hurt in blast at M.P. firecracker unit

A State Congress leader said that the factory's owners, who are missing, are being protected by the government. The CM announced ₹4 lakh in financial aid to the kin of the deceased, who were also promised ₹2 lakh by the Prime Minister's Office. The Chief Minister and the Prime Minister each promised ₹50,000 to the injured as well.

According to officials in Harda, the incident took place around 11 a.m. in the Bairagarh village area when a fire broke out in the three-storey factory building, leading to massive explosions and the collapse of the building within minutes.

Kailash Chand Parate, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Harda, told *The Hindu* that 10 people have been confirmed dead at the Harda District Hospital. One more person died while undergoing treatment at Bhopal's Hamidiya Hospital, another official said. Another district official said that 149 people have been admitted in hospitals in the district so far, while 25 critical patients have been sent to hospitals in various cities, including Bhopal, Indore, and Narmadapuram.

The Chief Minister formed a three-member high-level committee headed by Sanjay Dubey, Principal Secretary (Home), to investigate the incident. Ramdas Prajapati, Harda's Additional Superintendent of Police said that the three owners have been identified as Rajesh Agrawal, Pradeep Agrawal, and Somesh Agrawal.

Mr. Parate noted that the same factory had been sealed about four months ago after a probe by the District Magistrate had exposed some violations, and added that the factory had only been reopened after the owners produced the documents.

T.N. backs Kerala suit in SC against Union govt.

Endorsing that public debt to finance public expenditure of States was within the exclusive purview of the State Legislature as per the Constitution, Mr. Stalin said the Union government, however, had been misusing its powers under Article 293 of the Constitution to restrict the borrowing space of the States.

"The prior consent from the Union government, mandated by this section, has been converted into a restrictive tool to limit deficit financing beyond the limits prescribed by the State FRBMs," Mr. Stalin said. As a result, the fundamental principle of fiscal federalism envisioned by the Constitution makers was under "grave threat", Mr. Stalin said and pointed out how such steps had caused a significant dent in the mobilisation of funds for Tamil Nadu. The Union government had fixed the GSDP growth for calculating the net borrowing ceiling at a mere 8% for 2023-24, despite T.N. consistently achieving about 15% nominal growth in the last two years. This had resulted in a loss of ₹6,000 crore in the borrowing space in the current year.

The mandatory condition of funding gross losses of State power distribution companies (discoms), under the guidelines for additional borrowing for power sector reforms, has forced Tamil Nadu to provide ₹17,11 crore to Tangedco (T.N. Generation and Distribution Corporation) in the current year.

The "intentional delay" in approving the Chennai Metro Rail Phase-II project as a Central sector project had resulted in the "entire debt" of ₹33,594 crore for the project being included within the State's net borrowing ceiling, he said.

Affluent among sub-castes could be omitted from quota list, observes SC

Sub-castes which have done better should compete with general category, says Justice Nath; Constitution Bench examining question of whether States can identify and sub-classify groups within Scheduled Castes who deserve greater reservation

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

A seven-judge Constitution Bench on Tuesday questioned why affluent sub-castes among backward classes should not be "excluded" from the reservation list and made to compete with the general category.

"Why should there be no exclusion [from the reservation list]? Some of these sub-castes have done better and gone forward. They should come out of reservation and compete with the general category... Why stay there?" asked Justice Vikram Nath, one of the seven judges on the Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud.

Justice Nath said that these advanced sub-castes could exit the domain of reservation to make room for sub-castes who were relatively more marginalised or most backward. "The remaining sub-castes who are still backward, let them have reservation," Justice Nath said.

"Once a person gets into IPS or IAS, his children do not suffer from the disad-



Some of these sub-castes have done better and gone forward. They should come out of reservation and compete with the general category... Why stay there?

JUSTICE VIKRAM NATH
SC judge

vantages of others from his group who live in a village... Yet his family will get the benefits of reservation for generations," Justice B.R. Gavai, on the Bench, remarked. He added that it was for the Parliament to decide whether a "powerful or influential" group should be excluded from the quota list or not.

Chief Justice Chandrachud indicated that exclusion may be implicit in the concept of reservation. The forward classes were necessarily excluded while reserving seats for backward classes, but this was approved by the Constitution as the nation believed in substantive equality, the Chief Justice observed orally.

The seven-judge Bench is examining the question of whether States can iden-

tify and sub-classify groups within the Scheduled Castes (SC) who deserve greater reservation.

Punjab law

The Punjab government opened arguments by submitting that States were empowered to identify sub-castes within the SC category and grant them more reservation on the ground that they were "relatively more marginalised than the marginalised".

Punjab Advocate-General Gurminder Singh argued that, if communities could be classified into general and backward, the same could be done within the backward communities.

The Constitution Bench had further declared that SCs were a "homogenous group" and that sub-classification would be a violation of the right to equality. Mr. Singh argued that the sub-classification made in the 2006 Act was not in "breach of equality but as an aid to equality". He said that by giving first preference to the "most backward among the backward or the weakest among the weak", there was no exclu-

sion practised.

"You are saying that in a federal structure, every State within a nation is particularly conversant with the castes and communities in that State. The President, under Articles 341 and 342, has designated castes and tribes for the entire nation. But that does not take away the power of the States to identify more backward sub-castes or groups among them who require special attention and benefits. The Constitution does not prevent it. A State has an obligation to look after all of its people," Chief Justice Chandrachud addressed the Punjab side.

Punjab Additional Advocate-General Shadan Farasat said that efficiency in government needed more diversity. Sub-classification was a mode to deepen the impact of reservation, so that the benefits could reach all the backward groups, he said.

"We have not yet seen what true efficiency is because we are yet to arrive at true equality... The State here is helping the weakest person. The State should be inclusive... After all, the business of the State is its people," he argued.

LS passes Bill for OBC quota in J&K local bodies

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed the Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies (Amendment) Bill, 2024, to provide reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) in panchayats and municipal bodies in the Union Territory.

Minister of State for Home Nitayand Rai said the Bill would introduce three amendments to the existing Acts. There is no current provision for seats to be reserved for OBCs in panchayats and municipalities in J&K.

J&K National Conference MP Hasnain Masoodi asked why the Union government was amending a Bill that came under the purview of the Assembly.

Mr. Masoodi said that over the past three months in J&K, 20 security personnel had been killed.

"A commanding officer has never been killed even in times of regular war. J&K has been made into a laboratory and is being marketed to seek votes. Why is there uncertainty in Jammu? Why are people in Ladakh out on the streets in sub-zero temperatures? In-spect on the August 5, 2019 decision," he questioned.

Modi-headed committee to meet today to select new EC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet on Wednesday to select a candidate for the post of Election Commissioner.

The meeting will be held to fill the vacancy that will arise when Election Commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey demits office on February 14, sources said.

This is the first meeting of the committee since a new law for the appointment of the CEC and other ECs came into on January 2. The other members of the panel are a Union Minister nominated by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

Senior Ministers urged Mr. Baalu to apologise, but he did not accept their demands. Speaker Om Birla expunged the exact word. The DMK MPs and their Congress and Left counterparts staged a walkout.

The face-off happened when DMK's A. Raja and Congress's Manickam Tare were asking supple-

T.R. Baalu's remark against Minister sets off uproar in House

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday witnessed an uproar after Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leader T.R. Baalu made a controversial remark against BJP leader and Minister of State L. Murugan during the Question Hour. BJP members accused the DMK MP of insulting a Dalit.

Senior Ministers urged Mr. Baalu to apologise, but he did not accept their demands. Speaker Om Birla expunged the exact word. The DMK MPs and their Congress and Left counterparts staged a walkout.

They claimed a Dalit Minister and the entire community has been insulted and demanded an apology.

mentary questions related to flood relief for Tamil Nadu. When the DMK and Congress members expressed dissatisfaction with the reply of Minister of State for Home Affairs Nitayand Rai, Mr. Baalu got up to ask another supplementary question.

At that time, Mr. Murugan said the DMK leader was asking an "irrelevant" question.

Hitting back, Mr. Baalu then questioned his competence as a Minister. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi, his deputy Arjun Ram Meghwal, and BJP MPs protested against the remark by Mr. Baalu.

The accused persons include four Bangladeshis and one Rohingya. The NIA had initially arrested 29 persons during the raids conducted across 39 locations in Tripura, Assam, J&K, and West Bengal in coordination with the State police agencies.

NIA files case against 24 'operatives' of syndicates

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has charged 24 alleged operatives of international syndicates involved in the trafficking of Bangladeshi nationals and Rohingyas of Myanmar origin into India based on forged Indian identity documents. The syndicates also sold some Rohingya women to older men for marriage.

The accused persons include four Bangladeshis and one Rohingya. The NIA had initially arrested 29 persons during the raids conducted across 39 locations in Tripura, Assam, J&K, and West Bengal in coordination with the State police agencies.



Open border: Houses built on the Myanmar side are seen along the banks of Tiau river. GETTY IMAGES

Myanmar border will be fully fenced: Shah

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

on X, the Minister said, "It (government) has decided to construct a fence along the entire 1,643-kilometre Indo-Myanmar border."

"Of the total border length, a 10-km stretch in Moreh has already been fenced. Two projects to create a fence are under execution. They will fence one km each in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur."

Mr. Shah said that the "Modi government is committed to building impenetrable borders". In a post

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

After months of a pause on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) that was launched during the G-20 summit in September 2023 but stalled due to the Israel-Hamas conflict, the government is expected to take talks on the project forward this month, when Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis visits India. Mr. Mitsotakis, who is due to visit as a chief guest at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)-Observer Research Foundation's (ORF) annual Raisina Dialogue from February 21 to 23, had held initial discussions on building Greece as a regional hub for trade into Europe, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi had travelled to Athens in 2023.

Officials said that in addition to bilateral talks with the Greek delegation, high-level meetings with U.S.



Kyriakos Mitsotakis

signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in New Delhi have only held informal consultations, the sources said. They include the European Union, France, Germany, India, Italy, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the U.S.

According to the MoU signed on September 9, the participants had planned to meet "within the next sixty days to develop and commit to an action plan with relevant timetables".

However, after the October 7 terror attacks in Israel and Israel's bombardment of Gaza, countries like the UAE and Saudi Arabia have been unwilling to discuss "normal" ties with Israel, and the IMEC meeting hasn't taken place more than 150 days later, leading experts to suggest that the project is unviable without progress on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

"This is a multilateral effort in which so many countries are involved, but

the progress [on the IMEC] so far is very good," Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said in response to a question from *The Hindu*. "There is clarity that this is a very big insurance against any disruptions in the trade routes," he said, adding that the alignment of the route and "missing links" had been identified.

Diplomats and officials *The Hindu* contacted also insist that the IMEC project would not be paused indefinitely, given the strong commitment by all other parties involved, especially the U.S. and the European Union, that will be required to fund the initiatives through the G-7-led Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), as well as India, which hopes to benefit from the trade lines generated, and the possible railway contracts India might win in the Gulf region.

(With inputs from Maitri Porecha.)

Lok Sabha passes anti-cheating Bill

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, to check malpractices and organised cheating in government recruitment exams. The Bill proposes a minimum of three years imprisonment and a fine up to ₹1

million for personnel. Jitendra Singh said that he wanted to clarify that no candidate will be harassed as the legislation is against people who misuse the system.

"There is no attempt to centralise the system. When an examination is cancelled, it affects the students, their years are wasted. While a time-bound completion of such [cancelled] examinations may not be assured, the efforts are on," Mr. Singh said.



APPEAL
Krishikhan is a 4-months-old boy. He is advised to undergo complex Infant Heart Surgery (TAPVC Repair) at the Madras Medical Mission, Chennai. The total expenditure is Rs. 5,00,000/- His family is very poor and cannot afford this huge cost. Please help him to have a bright future. The cost is being met through C.H.D.E.F Trust & GOOGLE PAY (Canada Bank, Nungambakkam Branch, A/C. No. 60162010063310, IFSC No. CNRB0016016) favouring WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE is exempted under 80G IT.

All correspondence is done through WWS, Regd. No. GF 1, Cordeel Apartments, O.No.13, N.No.29, Pycroft Garden Lane, Chennai - 600006. Ph. 044-42137401/28235324/33897802. E-Mail ID: womenswelfaresyndicate@gmail.com. Website: www.womenswelfaresyndicate.org.

WWS

Ajit Pawar faction the real NCP: EC

Poll body gives NCP name, clock symbol to the group; tells Sharad Pawar that he can claim a name for his faction by today; commission says 'test of legislative majority' clinched the symbol for Ajit faction in view of disputed organisational elections

Sreeparna Chakrabarty

NEW DELHI

In a setback to veteran politician Sharad Pawar, the Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday held that the faction led by his nephew, Ajit Pawar, was the real Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and was entitled to use the party name and symbol.

Making a concession to the faction led by Mr. Sharad Pawar, who is one of the founders of the NCP, the commission allowed it a "one-time option" to claim a name for his political outfit and provide three preferences by Wednesday in view of the upcoming Rajya Sabha election.

The EC order came after more than 10 hearings over six months.

In July 2023, Mr. Ajit Pawar had walked away with a majority of the NCP



Final word: Ajit Pawar with NCP leaders Praful Patel and others during a meeting in Mumbai. ANI

MLAs to support the BJP-Shiv Sena government led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in Maharashtra. Over 40 out of NCP's 53 MLAs sided with him.

In its order on Tuesday, the commission said: "The faction led by petitioner Ajit Anantrao Pawar is the Nationalist Congress Party

and is entitled to use its name and reserved symbol 'Clock' for the purposes of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment), Order 1968".

Three tests

The commission said it had examined the applicability of all three tests – the test

'Invisible power' behind decision, says Supriya Sule

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

In a subtle jab at the BJP, Baramati MP Supriya Sule, who is the daughter of Sharad Pawar, said an "invisible power" was behind the EC's decision to recognise the Ajit Pawar faction as the real NCP.

"What is happening is not good for democracy... 'ICE' (Income Tax, CBI, ED) is being used by this government to cause a rift in parties," she said.

She said the party workers were with Mr. Sharad Pawar and that they would challenge the EC order in the Supreme Court.

of aims and objectives of the party's constitution, the test of the party's constitution, and the test of majority – to adjudicate the dispute.

In the end, it was the 'test of legislative majority' that clinched the symbol for the Ajit Pawar faction in view of disputed internal

organisational elections.

"The Commission provides a one-time option to the respondent [Mr. Sharad Pawar] for the purpose of forthcoming election to the Rajya Sabha in Maharashtra, to claim a new name to its new political formation," the poll body said.

Cong. ranks want senior leaders to contest LS polls

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI



Ashok Gehlot

With the Lok Sabha election around the corner, there is growing pressure from the Congress ranks on senior leaders, including former Chief Ministers Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel, to lead from the front by contesting the election.

In 2019, the Congress won 52 seats across the country. However, out of the 184 seats it contested in the nine northern States – Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh – it got only 12 seats.

According to sources, at a recent meeting of party functionaries in Rajasthan, former Speaker C.P. Joshi exhorted all senior leaders, including Mr. Gehlot and party State president

Govind Singh Datasra, to contest the Lok Sabha election. "Last time, Ashok Gehlot's son, Vaibhav, contested from Jodhpur and lost the seat by a margin of 2.74 lakh votes. Instead of the son, we would like the father to contest, so that we can wipe out the ignominy of not winning a single seat in two consecutive general elections," a Congress leader from Rajasthan said.

In Himachal Pradesh, the party is trying to convince its Cabinet Ministers to contest the election.

a similar demand that Mr. Baghel should contest, so that the party can improve its 2019 tally. But Mr. Baghel, according to sources, is not amenable to the idea, arguing that contesting the Lok Sabha polls would prevent him from campaigning for the party across the country. In Haryana, Rajya Sabha MP Deepender Hooda is bracing for the election from Rohtak which he represented thrice. In 2019, he lost by a margin of 7,500 votes. However, there has been no official announcement so far.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party has made it clear to the Congress that if it fields "serious" candidates prodding the party to field senior leaders, it could consider increasing their share.

In Chhattisgarh, there is

Congress to reach out to lakhs of Agnipath scheme aspirants

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Promising a rollback of the Agnipath scheme, the Congress, as part of the *Jai Jawan* campaign, is planning to reach out to more than 35 lakh young men and women who, on average, appear for recruitment rallies every year.

Under the scheme, men and women in the age group of 17.5-21 years are recruited for the Army, the Navy and the Air Force for a four-year period. Only 25% personnel of a retiring batch would be selected for permanent commission.

The Congress has assured that it would press for a rollback of scheme if it came to power

"Each year, 35-40 lakh personnel appear for the recruitment rallies. But since the Agnipath scheme has been launched, this number has drastically reduced. In 2023-24, only 10 lakh persons appeared for the rally. It clearly shows the simmering discontent and a feeling of betrayal," a source in Congress said.

On January 31, during the course of the Bharat Jo-

do Nyay Yatra, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi met a group of aspirants in Bihar.

The Congress uploaded a short video of the interaction, where Mr. Gandhi assured that, if his party came to power, they would press for a rollback of the scheme, and if not, then at least ensure that Agniveers received the same benefits as the permanent cadres, which is currently denied.

While the party insists that this outreach is not aimed at electoral gains alone, by the Congress's own estimates, the scheme could help them target first-time voters.

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

There are no desertions from the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) other than Janata Dal (U) president Nitish Kumar, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tried to play down the trouble within the INDIA bloc.

"If you look at Mamata ji's statement, Mamataji is very much part of the INDIA alliance and most of the other members, who

were part of the Opposition bloc.

Addressing a press conference at Gumla in Jharkhand, before the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra entered Odisha, Mr. Gandhi tried to play down the trouble within the INDIA bloc.

"If you look at Mamata ji's statement, Mamataji is very much part of the INDIA alliance and most of the other members, who

were part of the INDIA alliance are still members in it," he said.

"Of course, Mr. Nitish Kumar has left the INDIA alliance and he has gone to the BJP. You can guess as to what the reasons are for him leaving. It's fine, we will fight in Bihar as the INDIA alliance. So, I don't agree that lot of our partners are not part of the alliance," Mr. Gandhi added.

poor. Responding to a question on removing the 50% cap on reservation, the former Congress president said it was an artificial and unfair cap.

He said that the 50% cap would be removed while protecting the reservation rights of the Dalits and Adivasis. This, he claimed, would benefit the economically weaker sections from the general category.

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APPOINTMENT TO THE POST OF CHAIRPERSON/CONSUMER GRIEVANCES REDRESAL FORUM

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for Two (2) posts of Chairperson/CGRF. The applicant shall be a retired Judicial Officer or a retired Chief Engineer (Electrical)/Chief General Manager/Manager of Distribution/Transmission Licensee or a retired Chief General Manager/Accounts Services of a Distribution Licensee, having 20 years of service in the State of Telangana. For detailed notification refer TSSPCL website www.tsouthernpower.com at Careers link.

Place : Hyderabad,
Date : 06-02-2024
R.O. No.: 914-PPCL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2024

Sd/- CHAIRMAN & MANAGING DIRECTOR TSSPCL

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WALK-IN-INTERVIEW FOR VARIOUS POSTS (On Contract)

Advt No. 01/2024

National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) is the technical arm of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Govt. of India established to serve as technical focal point for orderly development of Wind Power deployment. This institute proposes to recruit the following posts purely on contract basis.

Sl. No.	Details	Post Code	No. of positions
1.	Administrative Executive	F&A-ADMIN-01	1 No.
2.	Accounts Executive	F&A-ACCOUNTS-02	1 No.
3.	Purchase Executive	F&A-PURCHASE-03	1 No.
4.	Security Officer	F&A-ADMIN-04	1 No.

Details of essential qualification, experience, age limit, other terms & conditions are available in the website, [https://niwe.res.in/careers.php](http://niwe.res.in/careers.php). Interested candidates are requested to attend Walk-in Interview in this office will be held on 15.02.2024 and 16.02.2024 as mentioned in the website. Candidates reporting later than 9.30 a.m. will not be considered for interview.

Additional Director
(Finance & Administration)

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT & PANCHAYAT RAJ

(An Organisation of the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India)
Rajendranagar, Hyderabad-500030

Admission Notification for Distance Mode Courses

- Post Graduate Diploma in Sustainable Rural Development (PGDSRD) 16th Batch (2024-25)
- Post Graduate Diploma in Tribal Development Management (PGDTDM) 13th Batch (2024-25)
- Post Graduate Diploma in Geo-Spatial Technology Applications in Rural Development (PGGDARD) 9th Batch (2024-25)

4. Diploma Programme on Panchayati Raj Governance & Rural Development (DPPGRD) 6th Batch (2024)

Applications from aspiring candidates are invited for admission into above Distance Mode Courses commencing in the month of February 2024. The minimum educational qualification for admission is Graduation in any discipline from UGC recognized Universities. Please visit our Website www.nirdpr.org.in/des.aspx for further details and to apply online. The last date for receipt of filled-in online applications is 15.03.2024. For queries, please contact Tel No. 040-24008442 / 7416860345, Email ID: dec.nird@gov.in

File No: CGPSDE/DE/ADMISSION

NOTIFICATIONFORACADEMIC YEAR2023-24 Comp. no. 14868

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Dated: 1.2.2024

Petition No. 253/TL/2023

NOTICE UNDER CLAUSE (a) OF SUB-SECTION (5) OF SECTION 15 OF THE ELECTRICITY ACT, 2003

An application under Sections 14, 15 and 79 (1) (e) of the Electricity Act, 2003 (the Act) has been made by Fatehgarh III Beawar Transmission Limited, DLF Cyber Park, Tower-B, 9th Floor, Udyog Vihar, Phase-III, Sector 20, Gurugram-122008, Haryana for the grant of a transmission licence for the establishment of "Transmission system for evacuation of power from REZ in Rajasthan (20 GW) under Phase III – Part G" ("the Project") on Build, Own, Operate and Transfer ("BOOT") basis.

Transmission System Evacuation of Power from REZ in Rajasthan (20GW) under Phase III Part G

S. No.	Name of the Transmission Element	Scheduled COD in months from Effective Date
1.	Fatehgarh 3 – Beawar 765kV D/C (2nd) along with 330 MVAR Switchable line reactor for each circuit at each end of Fatehgarh 3 – Beawar 765kV D/C line. - Switching equipment for 765kV 330 MVAR switchable line reactor – 4 nos. - 765kV, 330 MVAR switchable line reactor – 4 nos	18 Months
2.	2 nos. of 765kV line bays at both at Beawar & Fatehgarh-3 - 765kV line bays – 4 nos.	

Note:

- Developer of Fatehgarh-3 S/S to provide space for 2 nos. of 765kV line bays at Fatehgarh-3 S/S along with space for 765kV switchable line reactors.
- Developer of Beawar S/S to provide space for 2 nos. of 765kV line bays at Beawar S/S along with space for 765kV switchable line reactors.
- The Central Transmission Utility of India Limited vide its letter dated 6.9.2023 has recommended for the grant of transmission licence to the applicant to establish the proposed transmission system.
- Based on the material available on record, the Commission vide order dated 1.2.2024 in Petition No. 253/TL/2023, has proposed to issue transmission licence to the applicant for establishment of the transmission scheme as noted in para 1 above.
- A copy of

IN BRIEF



IRCTC launches Ramayana circuit tourist train service

Following the inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has designed a comprehensive tour programme based on places of pilgrim importance as cited in the *Ramayana*. The first of such tours began on February 4, and a group of 122 tourists from the United Kingdom (60), Portugal (52), and India (10) are touring multiple sites, including the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya, the Bharat-Hanuman temple in Nandigram, the Janaki Mandir in Nepal's Janakpur, the Purna Dham in Sitamarhi, the Rameshwaram Temple in Buxar, the Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi and so on.

HC calls CBI arrest of Chanda Kochhar, her husband illegal

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday ruled the arrest of ICICI Bank's former Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Chanda Kochhar, and her husband Deepak Kochhar by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the Videocon loan case as illegal. Justice Anuja Prabhudessai and Justice N.R. Borkar granted the couple interim bail on January 9, 2023. Giving the verdict, the Bench rejected the reasons given by the CBI – non-cooperation and non-disclosure of true facts of the case – in its arrest memo in December 2023. The couple was arrested by the CBI for alleged irregularities in a loan of ₹3,250 crore granted to the Videocon Group in 2012.

New science research board, ANRF, comes into effect

The Centre on Monday said the provisions of the newly constituted research board, the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), had come into effect and announced the appointment of Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, as interim CEO of the body on Tuesday. The ANRF aims to be a research funding organisation that will have a corpus of ₹50,000 crore with nearly ₹36,000 crore projected to come from the private sector. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has provisioned ₹2,000 crore for the ANRF for 2024-25. It subsumes the existing Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB).

Another setback to BRS as Peddapalli MP joins Congress

In another setback to the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), its MP from Peddapalli Lok Sabha Constituency Birlakunta Venkatesh Netha joined the Congress party in New Delhi on Tuesday in the presence of Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister M. Bhatti Vikramarka. About five years ago Mr. Venkatesh quit the Congress to join the then Telangana Rashtra Samithi. He was welcomed back into the Congress by All India Congress Committee general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal. Accordingly, he was given ticket and he won the election defeating A. Chandrasekhar of the Congress.

ED searches premises of Kejriwal's aide, AAP MP

Central agency alleges corruption in award of ₹38.02-cr. contract in Delhi Jal Board; Delhi CM says 16-hour search did not yield anything, while Revenue Minister alleges Centre is trying to scare AAP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday searched the premises linked to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal assistant Bibhav Kumar, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) treasurer and Rajya Sabha MP N.D. Gupta, and others in connection with a Delhi Jal Board (DJB) case.

The premises of former DJB member Shalabh Kumar was also searched.

The development comes days after the ED arrested Jagdish Kumar Arora, who was the DJB chief engineer, and one Al Kumar Aggarwal on graft charge.

The ED probe is based on a first information report registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation alleging that Mr. Arora awarded a DJB contract worth over ₹38.02 crore to NKG Infrastructure Limited, which allegedly did not



In the dock: Security personnel at AAP MP N.D. Gupta's house in New Delhi on Tuesday when ED search was under way. R.V. MOORTHY

meet the eligibility criteria.

The ED alleged that NKG Infrastructure got the bid by submitting forged documents. Mr. Arora allegedly knew that the company was not eligible for the tender involving the supply and installation of electromagnetic flowmeters.

It was also alleged that NKG Infrastructure subcontracted the work to Integral Screws, a proprietorship firm of Mr. Aggarwal. On receipt of the funds, he

transferred about ₹3 crore to Mr. Arora. "...bank accounts of close associates of Jagdish Kumar Arora and their relatives were used to transfer the bribe amounts," the ED had said.

Political malice'

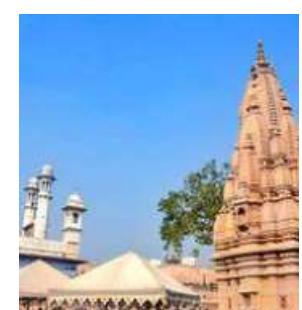
Reacting to the searches, Mr. Kejriwal said in a post on X: "My PA's house was raided by 23 ED officers for 16 hours today, but they found nothing. They raided [former Deputy CM]

The Delhi BJP welcomed the ED searches, stating that the AAP-led government had turned the DJB into a den of corruption and nefarious activities.

Manish Sisodia's place and found nothing. They raided [ex-Minister] Satyendar Jain's place and found nothing. They raided [MP] Sanjay Singh's place and found nothing. Can ED enter someone's home without any reason? Isn't this hooliganism by the government? It is clear that all these raids and arrests are being done only out of political malice, to crush the AAP. People will never tolerate this kind of hooliganism."

AAP senior leader and Delhi Revenue Minister Atishi said the BJP-ruled Central government is trying to scare the AAP. "I want to tell Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP, and their CBI and ED that AAP is not going to be scared of your threats," she said at a press conference.

The Delhi BJP welcomed the ED searches, stating that the AAP-led government had turned the DJB into a den of corruption and nefarious activities.



The Gyanvapi mosque and the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi. PTI

premises, cellar no. N1 to N5 (in the north) and S1 to S3 (in the south) exist and cellars nos. N1 and S1 are completely not accessed because their entrances are blocked. Hence, survey of the unaccessed area of the mosque should be done by removing the blocked entrance and debris, through a safe methodology," he added.

The Hindu petitioners claim the mosque is a part of the adjacent Kashi Vishwanath temple.

Saurabh Tiwari, the petitioner's counsel, said the acting District Judge, Anil Kumar, has admitted the case. "In the application, my client has maintained that within the Gyanvapi

+

Rajya Sabha passes Bills to add PVTGs of Odisha, A.P. in ST lists

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order Amendment Bill, 2024 and Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order Amendment Bill, 2024.

The passage of the Bill cleared the way for the addition of many new communities to the ST list of Odisha and the inclusion of synonyms and phonetic variations of existing tribes in the ST lists of both Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Both Bills got support from MPs across party lines.

Among the additions were notably seven Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) (a subset of STs) – four in Odisha and three in Andhra Pradesh – whose independent names had been specifically added as synonyms or sub-tribes of communities already on the ST lists of these States.

While replying to the discussion on the Bills for

Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, which were taken up together, Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda took a dig at previous non-NDA governments for considering the most vulnerable STs – the PVTGs – as tribals just in name but never thinking about including them as entries in the ST lists.

Mr. Munda claimed that at least nine of the 75 designated PVTGs were never explicitly included in the ST lists of their respective States. "But it is our government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that is bringing legislation like this," he said.

In Odisha, the PVTG communities added are Pauri Bhuyan and Paudi Bhuyan as synonyms of Bhuyan tribe; the Chuktia Bhunja as a synonym of Bhunja tribe; the Bondo as a sub-tribe of Bonda Poraja tribe. In Andhra Pradesh, the PVTG communities included were Bondo Porja and Khond Porja as synonyms of Porja tribe.

"Good order and discipline must be maintained

Fliers break into song with drum, raise safety concerns

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI



Pilots point out the need to curb such activity inside a confined space. FILE PHOTO

A video went viral on social media on Tuesday showing a passenger aboard an IndiGo aircraft singing a devotional song on Lord Ram and playing the *dholak* (drum) as others joined him, leading to calls from pilots to end displays of "religious fervour" during flights as it could become a safety issue. Pilots point out it would be difficult to make vital announcements and possibly create dangerous conflicts.

In the viral video, a male passenger is seen playing the *dholak* placed in his lap and singing a version of the hymn, *Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram*. He is also joined by others, some of whom are clapping along. The one-minute and 25-second-long video ends as the singing approaches a crescendo. All this while, the seatbelt sign is on. It is not known how long the singing continued, or on what route the aircraft was flying.

The DGCA did not respond to a query on whether it condoned such conduct. A response from IndiGo was awaited till the time of going to press.

As per the DGCA's regulations. If someone complains about a song of a particular religion being sung, or about disturbance being created onboard, things could easily spiral out of control," said Amit Singh, Founder of Safety Matters Foundation dedicated to aviation safety.

Communication hit'

He added that in such a situation it would also be difficult for the cabin crew to communicate important safety instructions to passengers, say if there was a turbulence.

Though the singing incident of Tuesday can't be deemed as disruptive behaviour as per the DGCA's rules on unruly passengers, all pilots *The Hindu* spoke to were unanimous in their view that it could easily escalate into an alteration mid-flight given the sensitivities around religion.

The DGCA's rules categorise unruly behaviour into three types – verbally abusive, physically abusive and life threatening – and could result in a ban on flying for a period of three months to a lifetime.

Jamiat slams Uttarakhand govt. move to impose UCC

Ziya Us Salam
NEW DELHI

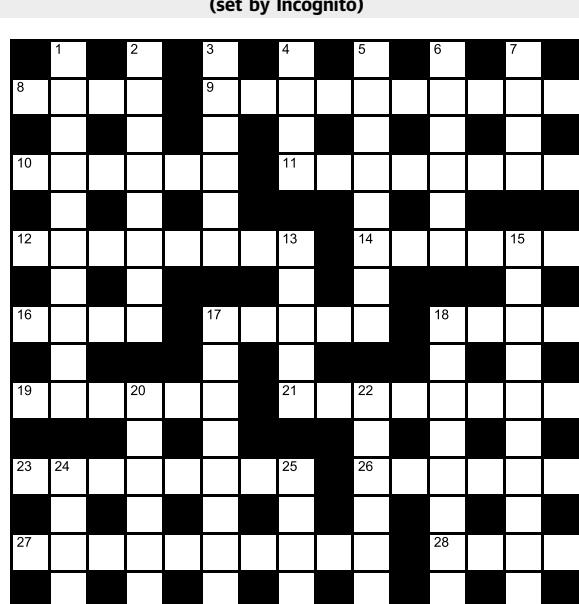
The oldest Muslim body in the country, Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind, has strongly opposed the Uttarakhand government's move to usher in the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), calling it "discriminatory in nature" and "an attempt to curtail religious freedom of the citizens".

The Uniform Civil Code has been tabled in the Uttarakhand Assembly and the Scheduled Tribes have been exempted from the new law under sub-section 342 of Chapter 25 of Article 366 of the Constitution. It has been argued that their rights are protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. What about Muslims and the rights given to the minorities," asked Jamiat president Arshad Madani. "If it is actually a uniform civil code, then why this distinction between citizens?"

The Jamiat is studying the Bill after which a decision will be taken to approach the judiciary.

+

TH CROSSWORD + 14091



Across

- 8 Spiritual leader from Central America (4)
- 9 Stress, "Below 20" (10)
- 10 6 feet of water. Understand? (6)
- 11 Damaged ball placed amongst playthings in dressers (8)
- 12 Father Brown consumes half of kisel in South Asian country (8)
- 14 Things shaking? Dark times! (6)

- To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>
- SCAN TO PLAY**
- 1 A chartered accountant accompanying settler gets a fruit (4)
- 17 Order stout with Washington (5)
- 18 Send explicit message: "Get around 10 or 12 in daytime" (4)
- 19 Check. Tutor is walking around railway terminus (3,3)
- 21 Poster showing Chinese army vehicle with leaders of defeated soldiers (8)
- 23 Mad United Nations editor consumed asafetida (8)
- 26 European college head's den makes pastry (6)
- 27 Live adders coiled around swashbucklers (10)
- 28 Baker's equipment from Coventry (4)
- Down**
- 1 Insane military officer from Turkey gets Mark in African country (10)
- 2 Doctor Hakim, sir? He probably lives in Srinagar (8)
- 3 For example, diamonds covering a small length top (6)
- 4 Meditates after mates leave? Correct! (4)
- 5 Building kraals in Ceylon (3,5)
- 6 After removing tip of rapier from broken rib cage, get equipment for cold compression (3,3)
- 7 Partially destroyed city (4)
- 13 Hundred retiring skywards and still sleeping (3,2)
- 15 Cobbler arrived wrongly around 11... behind time... (10)
- 17 Obese soldier returned by end of June wearing American battle dress (8)
- 18 Male horse "Number One" returned at back of part of stable (8)
- 20 Spanish cries about four fruits (6)
- 22 Disinclined academician gets a bit of poetry (6)
- 24 Next to body removed from bone-yard (4)
- 25 Intravenous feed for boring person (4)

SUDOKU

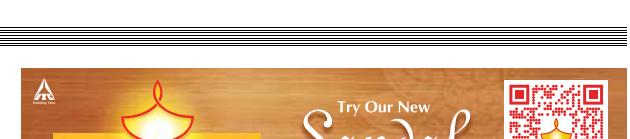
4	5		8		6			
			7	6			9	
			5	9	8			
8	7			1	9	4		
3	2	9			8	6		
	3	4	5					
6	7	3						
2	8		4	7				

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

M	C	S	J	S	M			
P	A	T	W	I	S	O	D	E
M	S	A	G	E	U	A		
T	A	R	S	I	N	S	I	N
A	C	O	S	T	E	S		
C	H	W	T	E	S	T		
B	R	Y	A	S	I	T		
K	E	R	E	R	E	L		
M	U	R	A	G	A	S		
A	V	T	R	T	R	R		
B	E	R	I	D	U	M		
P	N	G	N	E	O	F		
W	E	L	A	R	G	S		
E	Y	S	S	T	I	S		

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Morals from Dhruva's life

The young child Dhruva went to see his father King Uthnapadha when the child's cousin sat on the king's lap. Sri Damodara Deekshithar asked in a discourse: "Why should Dhruva go at that time? Why should he yearn to sit on his father's lap? Why should his stepmother drive him away with harsh words? Why should Dhruva's mother not pacify him? Why should sage Narada cross before the child head to the forest?" All these took place at the will of God.

NEW DELHI

India asks its citizens in Myanmar's Rakhine State to leave immediately



India on Tuesday asked its citizens in Myanmar's Rakhine State to leave the troubled-region immediately in view of deteriorating security situation. The Rakhine State and many other regions have witnessed severe fighting between armed ethnic groups and the Myanmarese military since October last year. PTI

TBILISI

Georgia denounces Russian plan for Navy base in breakaway region



Georgian President Salome Zurabishvili on Tuesday denounced a Russian plan to set up a Navy base in the breakaway Abkhazia region. Last October, as Ukraine stepped up attacks on Moscow's Black Sea fleet, Abkhazia's separatist leader Aslan Bzhania said he has signed an agreement with Russia for the base. AFP

ISTANBUL

Three die in 'terrorist' attack outside Istanbul's main court



The Turkish police on Tuesday shot dead two assailants from a leftist organisation, branded "terrorists" by authorities, who attacked a security checkpoint outside Istanbul's main court, killing one person and injuring five. The assailants were members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front. AFP

MALINDI

Kenya cult leader charged with murdering nearly 200 children



A Kenyan court on Tuesday charged the leader of a starvation cult and dozens of suspected accomplices with murdering nearly 200 children in a forest near the Indian Ocean. Paul Nthene Mackenzie is alleged to have incited hundreds of his acolytes to starve to death in order to "meet Jesus". AFP

Trump is not immune from election subversion charges, rules U.S. court

Court rejects Trump's claim that he cannot be prosecuted because the allegations relate to his responsibilities as President; case is on pause until at least February 12 to give Republican presidential frontrunner time to appeal to U.S. Supreme Court

Reuters
WASHINGTON

A federal appeals court on Tuesday ruled that Donald Trump does not have immunity from charges that he plotted to overturn his 2020 election defeat, bringing the former U.S. President a step closer to an unprecedented criminal trial.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit rejected Mr. Trump's claim that he cannot be prosecuted because the allegations relate to his official responsibilities as President.

"For the purpose of this



Latest blow: Donald Trump has repeatedly voiced his immunity claim on the campaign trail and social media. AFP

criminal case, former President Trump has become citizen Trump, with all of the defences of any other criminal defendant," the unanimous panel wrote.

"But any executive immunity that may have protected him while he served as President no longer protects him against this prosecution."

The ruling, which Mr. Trump is almost certain to appeal, rebuffs his attempt to avoid a trial on charges that he undermined American democracy and the transfer of power, even as he consolidates his position as the frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination.

The case will remain paused until at least February 12 to give Trump time to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Trump's lawyers argued that former Presidents were entitled to sweeping legal protections and could not be criminally prosecuted for official actions unless first impeached by the House of Representatives

and removed from office by the Senate.

Mr. Trump was impeached twice by the House, but each time Senate Republicans cast sufficient votes to acquit him of the charges.

Judges homed in on the broad nature of Mr. Trump's claim at a January 9 hearing, questioning a Trump lawyer over whether even a President who ordered military commandos to assassinate a political rival could escape criminal prosecution without initial action by Congress.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly voiced his immunity claim on the campaign trail and social media.

Blinken to push for Gaza truce during tour of West Asia

Associated Press
CAIRO



Antony Blinken

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is on a diplomatic tour of West Asia on Tuesday, meeting Egyptian leaders as part of his efforts to secure a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war in exchange for the release of hostages.

Mr. Blinken's visit also comes amid growing concerns in Egypt about Israel's plan to expand the combat in Gaza to areas on the Egyptian border.

Mr. Blinken was meeting on Tuesday with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi in Cairo.

Saudi Arabia's stand
Mr. Blinken said that Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Mohammed bin Salman reiterated

King Charles's cancer was 'caught early', says PM Sunak

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

King Charles III's cancer was caught early, U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said on Tuesday, after treatment began for the monarch who is just 18 months into his reign. Buckingham Palace has not specified the type of cancer afflicting the 75-year-old monarch.

Charles's diagnosis will prolong a frontline shortage of royals created by Charles's prostate procedure and the almost simultaneous hospitalisation of Catherine, Princess of Wales.

"Thankfully, this has been caught early and everyone will be wishing that he gets the treatment that he needs," Mr. Sunak said.

Biden confuses Macron with ex-French leader Mitterrand

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden confused his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron with France's long-dead former leader Francois Mitterrand, in a speech that went viral in video footage on Monday.

Addressing a campaign event in Las Vegas on Sunday, the 81-year-old U.S. leader described Mr. Macron's reaction to a speech at a G-7 meeting in 2020.

As well as getting Mr. Macron's name wrong, he misstated the country he leads.

The 81-year-old U.S. President has made similar mistakes in the past, notably in September 2022

"And Mitterrand – Macron, from Germany – I mean, from France looked at me and said, said 'You know, what – why – how long you back for?'" Mr. Biden said, according to a White House transcript.

Mitterrand was French President from 1981 to 1995, and died in 1996.

Video of Mr. Biden's mix-up has been viewed

thousands of times on X, and shared hundreds of times.

Mr. Biden has made similar public mistakes in the past, notably in September 2022 when he called on a deceased congresswoman at a conference she helped organise.

Trump's gaffe

Mr. Biden's predecessor and probable opponent in the November presidential election, Donald Trump, made a similar gaffe last month, confusing his party rival Nikki Haley with former House speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Houthi's uncrewed surface vessels a new threat

NEWS ANALYSIS

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

The ongoing tensions in the Red Sea are seeing the emergence of a new trend, the increasing use of Uncrewed Surface Vessels (USV) by Houthis to target ships in the high seas. On Monday, U.S. military destroyed two explosive-laden USVs. The first instance of a USV use since the beginning of Houthi attacks on commercial shipping was in the first week of January, according to the U.S. military.

"CENTCOM Self-Defense Strikes On February

5, at approximately 3:30 p.m. (Sana'a time), U.S. Central Command forces conducted a strike in self-defence against two Houthi explosive USVs.

U.S. forces identified the explosive USVs in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen and determined they presented an imminent threat to U.S. Navy ships and merchant vessels in the region," U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) posted on social media platform X.

On the measures in place to thwart such attacks, Indian Navy sources said that force protection measures are in place for both surface and aerial threats in case such a

threat was to arise.

On January 4, Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, commander of the international Combined Maritime Forces and also head of U.S. Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet, said the "low-profile" USV came within a couple miles of U.S. Navy and merchant ships and exploded. This he said was the first time the Houthis had used an USV, since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war. Houthis had used USVs in the past. "We all watched as it exploded. No more details on that for right now," he said then without getting into further details.

The second instance was on February 1, when

U.S. forces noticed a USV "heading toward the international shipping lane" and shot it down which resulted in "significant secondary explosions".

Control measures

On the measures in place for such contingencies, a Navy source said all frontline ships have anti-drone systems fitted onboard. Indian Navy has close to 12 warships in the Gulf of Aden, North and Central Arabian Sea for anti-piracy and maritime security duties, in the backdrop of Houthi attacks as well as increasing piracy incidents by Somalian pirates.

"Whether manned or unmanned platform

doesn't make much of a difference. Main aspect is the nature of the threat. There is detection by radar and optic sensors and there are gun mounts and close-in weapon systems among others in place," the source stated.

From a perspective of aerial or surface threats, there is constant radar surveillance, surface surveillance and there are fire control systems attached to them and also visual and optic sensors, the source explained. In addition, when on deployment there are regular look outs as part of standard procedures, the sources said adding, "These cater to any surface and aerial threats."

Sport

Fantastic year for Indian sports: Bindra



Abhinav Bindra.

of the decision-making process to select the winners for the Awards' sixth chapter.

"This jury has some legendary figures, and it's an absolute honour for me to be a part of this panel and the process. The discussions were very fruitful. When you have different points of view, everyone needs to have a chance to share those views and allow room for debate. That was done very well here. It

was a chance for us to live some of the highs and reflect on the areas we can improve," Bindra said about the process.

With success at the continental and world levels in many disciplines, Bindra believes the road ahead looks bright for a growing pool of aspiring athletes in India. "It's been a fantastic year. Right from the Asian Games [in Hangzhou], where we got 107 medals, to a heartening show in Paralympics and the performance of the men's cricket team, even though they didn't win, 2023 has been a good one for the country," the 41-year-old said.

During the jury meeting, Bindra's way of judging a hotly debated category was to go with a key element of team sports and leadership.

I look forward to seeing the winners on the day of the Awards. My heartfelt congratulations go out to the athletes for their scintillating performances and for all the hard work they've put in, not just over the last year but for many years prior."

Not easy, but it's great fun: Aparna



Aparna Popat.
Aces Awards jury panel, said.

"There have been some great moments, especially with athletes winning gold medals or getting World No. 1 rankings or records to go along with them."

Speaking about the process of selecting winners, Aparna, a 16-time National badminton champion, is happy to have a well-rounded perspective on every nominee. "It still doesn't get easy because

we've had so many great performances by Indian sportspersons. There's a wide array of sports to choose from. There are different considerations, from the age of the athletes to the impact the performance has had or just the scale of the performance itself. There are different perspectives to consider. It's not easy by any measure, but it's great fun."

The winners of the 2024 edition of the Sportstar Aces Awards will be announced in Mumbai on Feb. 8. When asked what her message to those being honoured is, Aparna said, "Just enjoy the victory. Huge congratulations for what you've achieved, for the hard work you've put in, and to all your teammates and family members. This is an award

Sports Bureau

Abhinav Bindra, an Olympic gold medal-winning shooter, is serving as a member of the jury for the Sportstar Aces Awards for the second year in a row. He was thrilled to be a part

DIFFERENT TEMPO

Root is losing balance and natural game in Bazball era: Cook



Joe Root's desperation to fit into skipper Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum's 'Bazball' plans is making him lose his "balance" and natural game, feels Alastair Cook. "He is England's best batter there's ever been in all formats - but he does struggle sometimes with the tempo of this Bazball era," Cook said.

GETTING INTO THE GROOVE

Expect India to come back even harder in remaining Tests: Hussain



Nasser Hussain believes that India's win in the second Test over England has set up the rest of the series perfectly. "I think it will be a tight series but England is going to have to expect India to come back even harder... I would expect a stronger Indian side in those last three games of the series," Hussain said.

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

We don't do theories, will find way to counter Bumrah: McCullum



England was at the receiving end of Jasprit Bumrah's sensational spell in the second Test. "We don't really do theories. It is about making sure the guys are totally clear and present, confident and have conviction in their method," McCullum said on how his players will tackle the star Indian pacer.

IMPRESSIVE

Jaiswal's was a stunning innings: Atherton on Visakhapatnam knock



Former England cricketer Michael Atherton lauded Yashasvi Jaiswal, calling his innings "stunning". "Some of the sixes he hit were very powerfully struck showing that he had the drive and desire to make himself into a great cricketer. He also took the game on in T20 style which all the players have now. I thought it was a stunning innings."

Sachin and Saharan deliver in chase as India makes final

The in-form batters join forces to string together a 171-run partnership to help the team scrape through to a two-wicket win with seven balls remaining, after South Africa leaves it in tatters at 32 for four

U-19 WORLD CUP

Press Trust of India
BENONI

Defending champion India, powered by splendid knocks from skipper Uday Saharan and Sachin Dhas, battled past South Africa by two wickets in an exciting contest and stormed into the final for the fifth consecutive time in the ICC Under-19 World Cup here on Tuesday.

Sachin (96, 95b, 11x4, 1x6) and Saharan (81, 124b, 6x4), the guiding force in the previous match against Nepal with a hundred each, garnered 171 runs for the fifth wicket as India hunted down the target of 245 with just seven balls to spare.

India will face either Australia or Pakistan in the summit clash to be played at this venue on Sunday, searching for its sixth trophy in the marquee event.

But the beginning of India's chase resembled a debris yard, as it lost four wickets for just 32 runs in the 12th over.

Earlier, bowlers played a significant part in shaping India's victory, limiting 2014 champions South Africa to 244 for seven on a pitch that offered them considerable assistance.

South Africa found fight through Lhuan-dre Pretorius (76, 102b, 6x4, 3x6) and Richard Seletswane (64, 100b, 4x4, 2x6) after early blows, but those efforts were not enough.



Eye on the ball: Sachin and Saharan negotiated a tricky phase to put India on course. GETTY IMAGES



and Saharan reached his half-century in 88 balls with a cover drive off off-spinner Juan James. In the process, Saharan also became the highest run-getter in this World Cup with 389 runs.

Earlier, bowlers played a significant part in shaping India's victory, limiting 2014 champions South Africa to 244 for seven on a pitch that offered them considerable assistance.

South Africa found fight through Lhuan-dre Pretorius (76, 102b, 6x4, 3x6) and Richard Seletswane (64, 100b, 4x4, 2x6) after early blows, but those efforts were not enough.

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA
Lhuan-dre Pretorius c Abhishek b Musheer 76 (102b, 6x4, 3x6), Steve Stolk c Avanish b Limbani 14 (17b, 2x4, 1x6), David Teiger b Limbani 0 (2b), Richard Seletswane c Moliya b Tiwari 64 (100b, 4x4, 2x6), Oliver Whitehead c Dhas b Musheer 22 (34b, 4x4), Dewan Marais c Abhishek b Saumy 3 (7b), Juan James c Avanish b Limbani 24 (19b, 1x4, 1x6), Riley Norton (not out) 7 (7b, 1x4), Tristan Luus (not out) 23 (12b, 1x4, 2x6); Extras (b-1, lb-1, w-9): 11; Total (for seven wkt. in 50 overs): 244.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-23 (Stolk, 4.5 overs), 2-46 (Teiger, 8.1), 3-118 (Pretorius, 30.2), 4-163 (Whitehead, 39.6), 5-174 (Marais, 42.2), 6-214

(Seletswane, 46.3), 7-220 (James, 47.4).
INDIA
Limbani 9-0-60-3, Tiwari 8-0-52-1, Abhishek 4-0-14-0, Arshin 2-0-10, Saumy 10-0-38-1, Musheer 10-1-43-2, Moliya 7-1-25-0.
INDIA
Adarsh Singh c Pretorius b Maphaka 0 (1b), Arshin Kulkarni c James b Luus 12 (30b, 1x6), Musheer Khan c James b Luus 4 (12b), Uday Saharan run out 81 (124b, 6x4), Priyanshu Moliya c Pretorius b Luus 5 (10b, 1x4), Sachin Dhas c Teiger b Maphaka 96 (95b, 11x4, 1x6), Aravelly Awanish Norton b Maphaka 10 (18b, 1x4), Murugan Abhishek run out 0 (1b), Raj Limbani (not out) 13 (4b, 1x4, 1x6), Naman Tiwari (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (lb-2, nb-2, w-23): 27; Total (for eight wkt. in 48.5 overs): 248.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-0 (Adarsh, 0.1), 2-8 (Musheer, 3.2), 3-25 (Arshin, 9.2), 4-32 (Moliya, 11.2), 5-203 (Dhas, 42.1), 6-226 (Avanish, 46.6), 7-227 (Abhishek, 47.2), 8-244 (Saharan, 48.4).
SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING
Maphaka 10-0-32-3, Luus 10-1-37-3, Norton 9-0-53-0, Mokoena 7.5-0-45-0, Stolk 2-0-18-0, James 8-0-44-0, Whitehead 2-0-17-0.
Toss: India; **PoM:** Saharan. India won by two wickets with seven balls remaining.
Final: Feb. 11: India vs winner of Australia vs. Pakistan (second semifinal).

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Toss: India; **PoM:** Saharan. India won by two wickets with seven balls remaining.
Final: Feb. 11: India vs winner of Australia vs. Pakistan (second semifinal).

Rohit's men showed they had the depth and resilience to bounce back

ENGLAND IN INDIA

P.K. Ajith Kumar
VISAKHAPATNAM

The mood must have been sombre in the Indian team's dressing room after the first Test ended in Hyderabad. India had lost after taking a lead of 190.

That was not all. K.L. Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja got injured. The two key men who did well in the Hyderabad Test were not available for the second. And there was no Virat Kohli. And, of course, there was no Mohammed Shami, either. Rishabh Pant was still recovering from his injuries from the terrible car accident.

So India took the hour-long flight from Hyderabad to Visakhapatnam without nearly half of its best possible eleven. Captain Kohli had already left to attend the birth of his first child. And it was a series in which India was bowled out for 36 in the first Test.

Greatest victory
Yet, India won in Brisbane, breaching Australia's fortress at the Gabba and that remains India's greatest Test victory.

The win scored here on Monday may not have been as thrilling, as dramatic or as soul-stirring, but it is important and should count among the finest. It was a perfect Test win by a team that had been made less than perfect by circumstances.

Pat first, put up a large enough total with at least one batter willing to play a patient innings in these impatient times and then make the rival chase the game, with Bazball or whatever style it prefers, and give it a big target – 399 – to chase, even if one of its players expresses the con-

fidence that they would be ready to chase 600.

Rahul Dravid and his boys should be proud of the victory. This was not a win achieved on a wicket where the ball began to turn even before the match began. This was a proper Test match pitch that offered something to the batter, the seamer and the spinner. That was the case at Hyderabad, too.

It wasn't the spinners who turned the match in India's favour here. It was the genius of Jasprit Bumrah.

What Bumrah did on the second day of the match defied belief. Bazball had no answer to his reverse swing. Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis would have been proud of that spell. Yashasvi Jaiswal, who scored a double hundred, is 22. Shubman Gill, who made a second-innings hundred ending a frustrating run, is 24.

The mood must be anything but sombre in the Indian dressing room now.

Foden's hat-trick fires City closer to the top

EURO LEAGUES

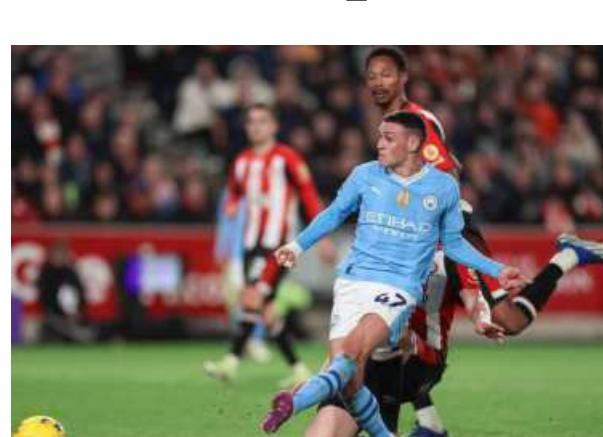
Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Phil Foden scored a hat-trick as Manchester City came from behind to beat Brentford 3-1 on Monday and leave the Premier League's top three separated by just two points.

City moves alongside Arsenal on 49 points, two behind Liverpool, but Pep Guardiola's men have a game in hand to move out in front.

The defending champion became the first side in Premier League history to win four consecutive away games despite falling behind in all of them. Neal Maupay fired the Bees in front, but there was little doubt over the outcome once Foden levelled it in first-half stoppage time.

Kevin De Bruyne and Erling Haaland then teed up the England international to



Hot streak: Foden eases in City's third against Brentford. AP

complete his second career hat-trick after the break. City's rivals for the title may not be opening up an advantage while De Bruyne and Haaland were sidelined by injury in recent months as it looks primed to become the first side to ever win four consecutive English top-flight titles.

Paulo Dybala scored twice as Roma eased to a 4-0

Shrivalli gets past second seed Nao Hibino

MUMBAI OPEN

Kamesh Srinivasan
MUMBAI

Qualifier Shrivalli Bhamidipaty and wild card entrant Rutuja Bhosale joined Sahaja Yamalapalli in the pre-quarterfinals of the L&T Mumbai Open WTA tennis tournament at the CCI courts here on Tuesday.

Shrivalli bounced back from a slow start to beat the second seed Nao Hibino of Japan in the third set tie-break. She was able to step up her game and closed it out against the tough Japanese, ranked in the top-100.

With the confidence of having already negotiated two matches in the qualifying round, Shrivalli handled the ebb and flow of the match with equanimity, unleashing her strong strokes at every opportunity. At 6-4 in the tie-break, Shrivalli perhaps felt the nerves and delivered a

double fault. The Japanese, however, hit long on the next point to tumble out.

Shrivalli will get the chance to gauge her game against the 16-year-old sensation Alina Korneeva, who has already won three titles in the women's circuit.

Rutuja had earlier in the day overcome a sedate start and a crafty Peangtarn Plipuech by sticking to her game plan.

Ankita Raina played well but was unable to progress as she was up against the young and energetic eighth seed Katie Volynets of the USA. There was more for the home fans, as Prarthana Thombare combined with Arianne Hartono of the Netherlands to beat the Thais, Lukksika Kumkhum and Plipuech 10-6 in the super tie-break of the doubles pre-quarterfinals.

Kumkhum had won the singles at the same venue last time when the event was held in 2018.

Sahaja, who had beaten the top seed Kayla Day on Monday, will next play the champion of the last tournament in Indore, Polina Kudermetova.

The results: First round: Polina Kudermetova bt Anastasia Zakhrova 7-6(8), 6-0; Amardine Hesse (Fra) bt Lina Glushko (Isr) 6-1, 6-1; Arina Rodionova (Aus) bt Suzan Lamens (Ned) 6-2, 7-5; Moyuka Uchijima (Jpn) bt Carole Monnet (Fra) 6-3, 6-3; Dalma Galfi (Hun) bt Kimberly Birrell (Aus) 6-2, 4-6, 7-5; Katie Volynets (USA) bt Ankita Raina 6-4, 6-2; Rutuja Bhosale bt Peangtarn Plipuech (Tha) 6-4, 7-5; Camilla Rossetto (Ita) bt Anastasia Tikhonova 7-5, 3-6, 6-2; Storm Hunter (Aus) bt Fanny Stollar 3-0 (retired); Shrivalli Bhamidipaty bt Nao Hibino (Jpn) 2-6, 6-1, 7-6(5).

Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Valentini Grammatikopoulou (Gre) & Darja Semenitaja (Lat) bt Polina Kudermetova & Suzan Lamens (Ned) 7-6(7), 6-4; Arianne Hartono (Ned) & Prarthana Thombare bt Lukksika Kumkhum & Peangtarn Plipuech (Tha) 6-4, 2-6, [10-6]; Anastasia Tikhonova & Moyuka Uchijima (Jpn) bt Julia Lohoff (Ger) & Conny Perrin (Sui) 6-4, 7-5.



Focused: Rutuja during her victory over Plipuech. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

IN BRIEF



Narender and Sahil shine as Thalaivas stay in the hunt

Tamil Thalaivas kept its hopes of reaching the playoffs alive with a 32-25 win over U.P. Yoddhas in Delhi on Tuesday. Thalaivas' raider Narender scored an impressive Super 10 while skipper and defender Sahil Gulia got a High 5. Thalaivas moved to eighth, just two places below the playoff spots.

India to tour Zimbabwe for five-match T20I series in July

Indian men's team will tour Zimbabwe for a five-match T20I series starting July 6, the BCCI announced on Tuesday. The series that will be held immediately after the conclusion of the T20 World Cup in the USA and the West Indies on June 29, is unlikely to feature any top Indian players as it has been the case during previous tours of the African nation. The five matches will be held at the Harare Sports Club on July 6, 7, 10, 13, and 14.

India enters SAFF u-19 women's football final

Neha struck twice in the second half as India defeated Nepal 4-0 in its last league match to storm into the final of the SAFF under-19 women's football championship in Dhaka on Tuesday. India will face defending champion Bangladesh in the title clash on Thursday. Neha scored in the 54th and 80th minutes while Sulanjana Raul (85th) and Cindy Remruai Colney (90+3) got the other goals for India.

TN women and Rajasthan men advance to quarterfinals

Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Odisha women advanced to the quarterfinals of the Junior National basketball championship in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday. In the men's event, Rajasthan's Muhammad Ishan scored 29 points, leading his team to a comfortable win over Karnataka.

Other results: Men: Rajasthan 92 (Muhammad Ishan 29, Akshith Hooda 21, Banti Choudhary 20) bt Karnataka 61 (Avinash Nayak 22, N.M. Vishnu 12); Kerala 96 (Krishnalal Mukesh 19, Muhammed Sahal 18, Mohammed Irfan 14, Jims K. Joby 10) bt Mizoram 65 (Lalmachhuana 33, Abhram Lallawmawma 11); Punjab 86 (Bhanu Pratap Singh 32, Jaddu Maan 19, Shabbir Singh 13, Babu Maan 10) bt Madhya Pradesh 64 (Goutam Pal 18, Bhagath Singh 15, Ajay 12). Women: Maharashtra 81 (Ananya Bhavas 23, Sanika Phule 22, Mansi Nirmal 15, Bhumika Sarje 12) bt Karnataka 80 (M.K. Yashaswini 20, Adhya Nagalingam 13, S. Sanjana 13); Tamil Nadu 89 (Harima Sundari 26, T.S. Chenchanna 17, Ruth Anna Blessen 15) bt Kerala 73 (Amanda Maria Rocha 24, P.A. Akla 20, Liya Sonda 15); Madhya Pradesh 70 (Kushi Pal Singh 21, Ananya Mheswari 17) bt Uttar Pradesh 53 (Ruby Rajput 10); Punjab 74 (Manmeet Kaur 22, Komal Preet Kaur 16, Anchal 16, Nadar Dhillon 15) bt Chhattisgarh 63 (D. Anusha 13, Ishika Singh 12, Janat Ali 11); Andhra Pradesh 58 (A. Tally 20, Hasini 11) bt Jharkhand 57 (Ashmi 21).

Anirudh and Vijay Sundar enter Dallas quarterfinals

Anirudh Chandrasekar and Vijay Sundar Prashanth knocked out the second seeds Nathaniel Lammons and Jackson Withrow of USA 6-4, 7-6(2) in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the \$841,590 ATP tennis tournament in Dallas, USA.



Manchester United's Martinez out for at least eight weeks

Manchester United defender Lisandro Martinez will be out for at least eight weeks after sustaining knee ligament damage, the club said. The Argentina international was injured on Sunday during a 3-0 win over West Ham in the Premier League. United said he suffered medial collateral ligament damage to his right knee.

LIVE TELECAST

ISL: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.
PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.

New Zealand vs South Africa: 1st Test, day 5, Prime Video, 3.30 a.m. (Thursday)

CYK

Malik downs Tushir, wins freestyle 74kg crown

The latter gives a close chase despite hurting his right ankle early in the contest; in another match, 2022 World junior bronze medallist Kalkal beats Rohit to take the 65kg title

NATL WRESTLING

Y.B. Sarangi
JAIPUR

Commonwealth Games gold medalist Naveen Malik overcame a robust challenge from Yash Tushir to win the men's freestyle 74kg, one of the most competitive weight classes, in the National wrestling championships and put himself in a strong position for the Olympic qualifying spot.

Malik edged past former World junior bronze medallist Tushir 5-4 in a neck-and-neck summit clash, in which the latter gave a close chase despite hurting his right ankle early in the contest.

Tushir fought back to erase a three-point deficit, but Malik's second takedown fetched him a crucial 5-3 lead. Tushir gave his best despite the pain but could manage to bridge on only one more point as Malik escaped thrice from leg attacks.

In another competitive Olympic weight, 2022 World junior bronze me-



Tough fight: Malik, right, edged past Tushir 5-4. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

daylist Sujeet Kalkal recorded five comprehensive wins to take the 65kg crown. He employed his swift attacks and fine defensive skills to convincingly beat Rohit 12-2 in the final.

Due to a large number of entries and a delayed start, the freestyle bouts continued well past midnight on the concluding

day of the championships.

The medallists:

Freestyle: 57kg: 1. Rabul (Tri), 2. Arvind Kumar (WB), 3. Udit (RSPB), Kuldeep (Goa); **65kg:** 1. Sujeeet Kalkal (Har), 2. Rohit (SSCB), 3. Mangal (Guj), Anuj (Goa); **70kg:** 1. Parveen (Har), 2. Sahil (Man), 3. Sharwan (SSCB), Naveen (Goa); **74kg:** 1. Naveen Malik (SSCB), 2. Yash Tushir (RSPB), 3. Chander Mohan (Har), Rahul (Goa); **79kg:** 1. Sagar

Jaglan (RSPB), 2. Parvinder Singh (Man), 3. Sachin Mor (Tri), Vijay (A&N); **86kg:** 1. Sanjeet (SSCB), 2. Rahul Rathi (SkM), 3. Munir Ahmed (J&K), Deepak (WB).

92kg: 1. Akash (RSPB), 2. Parveen (Har), 3. Neeraj (Man), Parveen Chahar (Chg); **97kg:** 1. Vicky (Har), 2. Karandeep Singh Nahal (Pun), 3. Gaurav Balyan (UP), Deepak (SSCB).

125kg: 1. Anirudh (RSPB), 2. Dinesh (SSCB), 3. Mahendra (Mah), Monu Dahiya (Del).

on Thursday.

On the other hand, Sakshi (57kg) outclassed Selmouni Chahira 5-0 and will take on Mamajonova Khumorabou of Uzbekistan in the last-eight clash on Thursday.

Preeti goes down
Preeti lost 2-3 to Niamh Fay of Ireland in the 54kg.

Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) was disqualified in the third round of her pre-quarterfinal after three warnings of excessive grappling against Ireland's O'Rourke Aoife.

Nikhat, Sakshi begin with victories; Lovlina disqualified

STRANDJA MEMORIAL

Agencies
SOFIA

Nikhat Zareen and Sakshi Chaudhary began their campaign with contrasting victories in the 75th Strandja memorial boxing tournament here on Monday.

Nikhat defeated Mongolia's Oyunsetseg Yesegen 3-2 in a split decision verdict in a 50kg bout and will face Lkhadiri Wassila of France in the quarterfinals

Qualifier Snigdha rallies to enter quarterfinals

Sports Bureau

Qualifier Snigdha Ruhil overcame a hard start to beat Mrinalini Sharma 0-6, 6-4, 7-5 in the women's pre-quarterfinals of the ₹200,000 AITA ranking tennis tournament at the CLTA Complex on Tuesday.

The results (first round):
Men: Atharya Sharma bt Sahajveer Bajwa 6-2, 6-3; Bikramjeet Chawla bt Arnav Bishnoi 6-1, 6-4; Rakshak Tarun bt Sahil Sarang 6-1, 6-1; Paramveer Bajwa bt Ashwajit Senjam 6-1, 6-0; Bhicky Sagolsheer bt Yagnesh Pamari 6-2, 6-2; Aditya Mor bt Sagar Kumar 6-4, 6-2; Arjun Rathi bt Aditya Kothari 6-2, 6-0; Dalinder Singh bt Jagmeet Singh 6-2, 6-2.
Women: Anjali Rathi bt Radhika Vasudev 6-2, 6-2; Ritu Rai bt Sanjitha Ramesh 6-4, 7-5; Rumma Gaikwari bt Staksika Sahayak 6-4, 1-6, 6-4; Mahika Khanna bt Ganya Gupta 6-1, 6-2; Ishwari Matere bt Shreya Pasricha 6-2, 6-3; Saily Thakkar bt Hridayeshi Pal 6-4, 6-7(3), 6-0; Snigdha Ruhil bt Mrinalini Sharma 0-6, 6-4, 7-5; Sahira Singh bt Poorvi Bhatt 6-1, 6-2.

Nagal eases past Prajwal; Mukund stops Kasnikowski

CHENNAI OPEN

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

India's Sumit Nagal and S. Mukund posted contrasting wins in the first round of the Chennai Open ATP Challenger tennis championship here on Tuesday.

India's top player Nagal had an easy day at the office, beating qualifier S.D. Prajwal Dev 6-1, 6-2 while wild card entrant Mukund eked out a fighting 6-3, 4-6, 7-5 victory over Maks Kasnikowski of Poland in two hours and 25 minutes.

Earlier, in the first match at the Centre Court, Australia's Bernard Tomic, a former top 20 player in the world, changed all his six T-shirts in hot and humid conditions to defeat Olaf Pieczkowski of Poland 2-6, 6-4, 7-6(2). Tomic will take on the top-seed Luca Nardi of Italy in the second round.

Mukund led 5-3 in the third set and even had a match point on the Pole's



Walk in the park: Nagal hardly broke sweat against Prajwal. R. RAGU

serve in the ninth game, but failed to capitalise. Mukund finally sealed the match in the 11th game when Kasnikowski's backhand went wide.

Prajwal was no match for Nagal in the first set. However, in the second set, the qualifier got his groundstrokes going from the baseline and started to trouble Nagal. He, however, wasn't consistent enough.

Nagal will meet Giovanni Fonio of Italy in the second round. "It was a good first round match. I played

solid in the two sets. It was unfortunate that two Indians ended up playing each other," Nagal said.

The results:
Luca Nardi (Ita) bt Eric Vanhelboim (Ukr) 6-2, 6-2; Sumit Nagal bt S. D. Prajwal Dev 6-1, 6-2; Dalibor Srvicna (Cze) bt Bogdan Bobrov (Rus) 6-3, 2-6, 6-2; Ugo Blanchet (Fra) bt Jonas Forejt (Cze) 6-3, 3-6, 7-5; Samuel Vincent Ruggieri (Ita) bt Aziz Douzagh (Tun) 6-3, 6-3; Bernard Tomic (Aus) bt Olaf Pieczkowski (Pol) 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (2); S. Mukund bt Maks Kasnikowski (Pol) 6-3, 4-6, 7-5; Evgeny Donskoy (Rus) bt Tung-Lin Wu (Tpe) 3-2 (retd.).

SA IN NZ

Agence France-Presse
MOUNT MAUNGANUI

Kane Williamson crafted his second century of the match on Tuesday as New Zealand took complete command of the first Test on day three against South Africa here.

Daryl Mitchell was at the crease on 11 and Tom Blundell on five, with the Black

Caps looking to declare early on Wednesday with South Africa facing a mammoth target on a deteriorating Bay Oval pitch.

The depleted Proteas were dismissed for 162 soon before tea in response to New Zealand's first innings 511.

The scores: New Zealand 511 & 179/4 in 43 overs (Kane Williamson 109) vs South Africa 162 in 75.2 overs (Keegan Petersen 45, David Bedingham 32, Henry 31, Santner 3/34).

Australia completes clean sweep in style



On song: Bartlett left the batters clueless with a brilliant spell. AFP

WI IN AUS

Agence France-Presse
CANBERRA

Australia needed just 6.5 overs to thrash West Indies by eight wickets in an embarrassing end to its One-Day International series in Canberra on Tuesday, with Jake Fraser-McGurk slamming 41 off 18 balls.

Australia skipper Steve

Smith won the toss and sent it to bat but crumbled to 86 all out in the 25th over.

Australia plundered the runs needed with 259 balls remaining to cap a stunning capitulation.

The scores: West Indies 86 in 24.1 overs (Alick Athanaze 32, Bartlett 4/21) lost to Australia 87/2 in 6.5 overs (Fraser-McGurk 41, Josh Inglis 35 n.o.).

Toss: Australia.

Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia was ranked as high as 16 on the ATP Tour in 2019, but he now languishes outside the top 500. By his own admission, it was an error of judgement to have continued to play with an elbow injury and not opted for protected rankings.

Playing as a wild card in the main draw of the Chennai Open ATP Challenger, Basilashvili said: "For the last 6-7 years I was playing on the ATP Tour, and it is difficult to play in the Challengers. I got the injury in the beginning of 2021. I continued to play and lost my rankings as I did not

opt to have protected rankings. It was a mistake," the 31-year-old said, after a tiring practice schedule with his coach at the SDAT-Nungambakkam Stadium here on Monday.



Setback: Basilashvili says surgeries took a toll on his game.

FILE PHOTO

whole year to recover. I only started playing a couple of months ago. I felt that I was not ready, but at the same time I thought I needed to move on and practice. Now am fine. There is no pain," said Basilashvili, who had beaten Roger Federer in an ATP Tour event in Doha in 2021 and has won five career ATP titles.

Basilashvili is confident of getting back to his peak form and maintains that it is only a matter of time before he gets back to the ATP Tour.

"I am improving more and more. I must start winning matches. My confidence is not that good because I had not had any good wins (so far)."

He was forced to undergo multiple surgeries on his right elbow this year and it took a toll on his game.

"I did three surgeries on my elbow in 2023. It took a

whole year to recover. I only started playing a couple of months ago. I felt that I was not ready, but at the same time I thought I needed to move on and practice. Now am fine. There is no pain," said Basilashvili, who had beaten Roger Federer in an ATP Tour event in Doha in 2021 and has won five career ATP titles.

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"I am improving more and more. I must start winning matches. My confidence is not that good because I had not had any good wins (so far)."

Garammy Garam snack ke liye!



Sahaja revives promise with riveting fare

The 22-year-old, who stunned the top seed Kayla Day in the first round of the WTA tennis tournament in Mumbai, said she was really glad that she was able to pull it off since it was not only a big win for her at this point of her career, but also one which motivated her towards achieving more success

WTA

Kamesh Srinivasan

Stay calm and face the storm. If possible, be the storm for your rival!

That has been the guiding principle for Sahaja Yamalapalli who stunned the top seed Kayla Day in the first round of the WTA tennis tournament in Mumbai.

Two weeks of training and interaction with Ashley Hobson during her last stint of tournaments in the USA had made the 22-year-old Sahaja see her tennis in a different perspective. More importantly, she understood the meaning of staying in the moment, being aware of what was happening on court, thinking and playing smart, depending on the demands of the situation. She has learnt to enjoy the challenge thrown at her by every opponent and find her way.

Sahaja had beaten the 158th-ranked Ekaterina Makarova in winning her last title, the \$25,000 event in Solapur. However, after that she won one match in four tournaments in Navi Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune and Indore.

Luckily, she not only got the wild card for the WTA event, but also had a long-time coach at the PBI in Bengaluru, Rituplavan Gogoi to travel for the event in Mumbai.

"He came to help me to get back my confidence and do some tweaks in my game because I was travelling without a coach for several weeks leading to Mumbai," said Sahaja. Understandably delighted to be able to play her best when facing her first top-100 opponent, Sahaja put things in perspective, expressing her gratitude.

Very high level

"I was happy and grateful to get this opportunity to play on the big stage. The level is very high. To be around these players, training with them, you get the confidence and belief that you belong here, I was telling myself that I can do this even though Kayla was first seed and top-100," said Sahaja.

To perform well one needs conviction in one's ability. "I just wanted to give everything out there and see what happens. In the end, when I got the match-points, I was shaking. Oh My God, am winning this! Am really glad that I was able to pull it off. It is a big win for me at this point of my career. This win is motivating. It pushes me to do better, train harder in practice. Go out there and get more wins," said Sahaja.

For many, the high quality of tennis



that Sahaja sustained for more than two hours and 30 minutes may have been a surprise, but Sahaja knew what she was capable of executing on the court.

"I know I can produce this quality of play. It is all mental. I was preparing myself, I can do this. Earlier when I was this close against a top-200 player, I did not come out on the winning side. At that time, I was a bit less confident. I wasn't sure that I could win that. This time all that experience helped me. I have the confidence to beat anyone," said Sahaja.

Quite remarkably, Sahaja tightened her game and built on her strengths to be able to match a top pro in her craft.

Augmenting fitness

"I have fitness and physical strength built over the years. My forehand has been my biggest strength in my game. Lately, I have been working a lot on the serve. I have big groundstrokes. My serve was only very decent. So I worked on it last

couple of weeks. Today, I was able to serve better than what I had in my earlier matches," said Sahaja.

To play great through the match is one thing, and to handle the climax well is really something.

"I did not play the second set well, made many unforced errors. She was solid. I was not hitting the ball well like I did in the first set. I was not able to control the points. I told myself that this had to stop. I can't let her dominate. Third set, I tried to go for it. Hit the balls I had to and not hold back. If I make it, I win, if I don't, it is ok. That match was on my racquet," recalled Sahaja.

Overcoming nerves

Missing two match-points, Sahaja overcame the nerves and could think clearly. "Anyone at that point would feel those nerves. At deuce, I said, I had to go for it. I was kind of holding back, hoping for her to miss. It was not going to happen

at this level. I had to take charge and create my opportunity. I was just going for it in the end," said Sahaja.

Anyone may be disheartened to face the top seed in the first round of a big event. But, Sahaja had waited for long to play Day.

"I had seen Kayla (Day), especially when I was in USA. I had watched a lot of her matches. I have been wanting to play her. I was kind of happy that I drew her. I wanted to see where I stand in terms of game level. I was thinking that this match would all come down to whether I make my shots or not. I had to stay in, step in, and hit those balls," said Sahaja.

Sahaja said she would continue to have fun on court and enjoy the challenge every opponent poses so as to achieve her goal for the season of getting into the qualifying events of the Grand Slams.

For sure, Sahaja and company promise exciting times ahead for Indian women's tennis.

THE GIST

▼ Sahaja had beaten the 158th-ranked Ekaterina Makarova in winning her last title, the \$25,000 event in Solapur. However, after that she won one match in four tournaments in Navi Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune and Indore

▼ Anyone may be disheartened to face the top seed in the first round of a big event after the string of losses, but Sahaja says she had waited for long to play Day

▼ Sahaja said she would continue to have fun on court and enjoy the challenge every opponent poses so as to achieve her goal for the season of getting into the qualifying events of the Grand Slams

Veteran and rising US women gymnasts all set to light up the 2024 Paris Olympic Games

Agence France-Presse
KATY

Superstar Simone Biles leads a list of veteran champions vying with a talented new generation aiming to make a US women's Olympic gymnastics team that could be one for the ages.

Biles, who dazzled in winning four gold medals at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016, returned last year from a two-year absence to win four world titles – taking her career tally to 23 as she battled back from the bout of the disorientating "twisties" that cut short her Tokyo Olympics campaign.

Sunisa Lee, who won Olympic all-around gold in Tokyo, and London 2012 all-around champion Gabby Douglas are also in training as what promises to be a hyper-competitive Olympic year gets underway.

Add in Tokyo floor champion Jade Carey and team silver medallist Jordan Chiles, two-time world all-around medalist Shilese Jones and two-time world team champion Skye Blakely, it is clear the US has plenty of experienced talent to draw on.

"The depth this year is



actually really insane," said 17-year-old Joscelyn Roberson, who is hoping to be in the Paris 2024 conversation when Minneapolis hosts the US trials in June.

"I honestly think this

will be one of the best teams the United States has ever had and one of the best teams that the world has ever seen," Roberson said on Sunday at a media opportunity during a USA

Gymnastics training camp in Katy, Texas. "So it'll be really cool to see. I honestly feel like the United States could make three teams and they'd all be amazing."

Roberson qualified for last year's World Championships and helped the US team win gold before her campaign was cut short by injury.

Roberson has had Paris

and I'm looking forward to it."

Big test

The first big test for many of America's hopefuls will be the Winter Cup held on February 23-25.

The Core Hydration Classic in May will be another key competition before the US championships on May 30-June 2, with the US trials from June 22-30.

Alicia Sacramone Quinn a former world champion who won team silver at the 2008 Olympics and is now part of the US women's elite team leadership, said she likes the mix of old and new blood.

But she cautioned it would be months before a team coalesces as the seasoned competitors she calls the "super seniors" ramp up their training and youngsters chase competitive experience. "I think the expectations are a case by case," she said.

"Right now each athlete's in a different point, either they're nursing some aches and pains or had an injury or they're a seasoned vet who doesn't need to be really ready for early spring meets."

"Each athlete's journey is their own," she added.

SCIENCE

In zodiacal dust mystery, PRL Ahmedabad study points to a familiar source

Zodiacal light — visible from the earth as a faint, diffuse glow on completely dark nights — is sunlight scattered by interplanetary dust. This light is present throughout the path along which the Sun moves in the sky over a year. The source of this is an open question in astronomy

Unnati Ashar

Say you send a spacecraft into the outer reaches of the Solar System on a scientific mission. But on its way, somewhere around Mars, fast-moving dust particles hit its body, including the solar panels, chipping off little pieces. Fortunately the spacecraft is robust and it continues its journey towards Jupiter relatively unfazed. But the solar panels have suffered significant damage.

This is the fate that befell Juno, a spacecraft that NASA launched in 2011 to study the gas-giant Jupiter and its moons. Juno entered a polar orbit around the planet on July 5, 2016. But before it did, according to data reported in a 2021 paper by a group of researchers from Denmark and the U.S., dust particles struck the solar panels attached to the Juno spacecraft.

A pocket of dust

A scientist at the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad, decided to make the best of Juno's situation.

In a paper published in the *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, Jayesh P. Pabari used the data in the 2021 paper to calculate the number of dust particles Juno might have encountered between 1 and 5 AU.

'AU' stands for 'astronomical unit', which is the distance between the earth and the Sun. Mars is at a distance of 1.52 AU and Jupiter at 5.2 AU from the Sun.

The 2021 paper reported a peak in the number of dust particles impacting Juno at 1.5 AU. Dr. Pabari used this data to calculate the flux of dust between 1 and 5 AU. (The flux is the number of dust particles flowing through a given area per second.) He found the flux at 1.5 AU to be 10-times higher than at other distances.

Scientists have known that this dust is the source of zodiacal light. Zodiacal light is sunlight scattered by interplanetary dust. From the earth, it is visible as a faint, diffuse glow on completely dark nights. Zodiacal light is present across the entire path of the ecliptic, which is the path along which the Sun moves in the sky over the course of a year.

Where could this dust be coming from? This is an open question in astronomy. In his paper, Dr. Pabari compared the flux of dust in the vicinity of Mars, and the number of particles escaping the two moons of Mars and concluded that these moons could be the dust source. He also found no other phenomenon in the neighbourhood of this area that could release as much dust.

Gods of dread and panic

Mars's two moons are called Deimos and



The Submillimeter Array radio telescopes at the summit of Mauna Kea, Hawaii, with zodiacal light in the background. STEVEN H. KEYS (CC BY 4.0)

Phobos. Mars in Greek mythology is the god of war and the planet's moons are named for his twin sons, the gods of dread and panic, respectively. The American astronomer Asaph Hall discovered both of them in 1877.

Phobos is the bigger of Mars's two moons. It is drifting closer to Mars at a rate of six feet per century. Eventually, astronomers expect it will either crash into the planet or break up into a ring around it.

The most prominent feature on Phobos is a 10-km-wide crater named in honour of Hall's wife Angelina Stickney. In 1877, Hall had almost given up studying Mars's surroundings when Stickney — a mathematician — encouraged him to continue. He did so and spotted Phobos the next day and Deimos six days later. Stickney crater is in fact half as wide as the entire moon.

On its day-side, the temperature on Phobos is around -4 degrees C, while just a few kilometres away on the night side, the temperature often drops to an even-lower -12 degrees C. This large temperature difference (around 108 degrees C) arises because the surface of Phobos is covered with fine dust that lacks the ability to hold heat. Phobos also has no atmosphere that can trap heat.

Deimos is quite different: astronomers believe its actual surface is buried under



Juno launched by NASA in 2011 to study Jupiter entered orbit around the planet on July 5, 2016. But before it did dust particles struck the solar panels attached to the spacecraft. Data from the incident is being used to calculate the number of dust particles encountered

almost 100 metres of dust.

Dusty welcome

In his study, Dr. Pabari incorporated the shapes of the two Martian moons along with the gravitational effects of Mars, incoming and outgoing dust particles, the effect of spacecraft ejecta on the velocities of dust particles, and other parameters in his models of dust. Based on their output, he estimated the net rate of mass influx at Deimos and Phobos.

This in turn he combined with observational data and finally found a mechanism that could explain how Deimos and Phobos could be contributing to the zodiacal dust.

Micrometeorites are very small dust particles. They weigh no more than

one-ten-thousandth of a gram. But they can move really fast, and when they do they can pack a punch. Dr. Pabari found that such micrometeorites fly into Mars's moons just as they do into the earth. In the latter case, they burn up and disintegrate in the atmosphere. But Deimos and Phobos don't have atmospheres, which means most micrometeorites slam into their surfaces and kick up small clouds of dust.

These dust particles can easily escape Phobos and Deimos because of the moons' low gravity. (The more gravity a planetary body has, the more spherical its shape. Deimos and Phobos are not at all spherical.) In this way, Phobos has lost more dust.

The smaller of these dust particles escape into space whereas Mars's gravity pulls in the larger ones. The latter collect in the form of a dust ring around Mars. Over time, they drift closer towards or away from the planet but stay in orbit.

According to Dr. Pabari's work, a future mission to Phobos and Deimos could confirm his study's findings — especially whether they are really losing more mass than they are gaining and whether his calculations are correct. We can only hope the mission spacecraft's solar panels will be strong enough to withstand the moons' dusty welcome.

(Unnati Ashar is a freelance journalist.)

THE GIST

▼ The study compared the flux of dust near Mars, and the number of particles escaping the two moons of Mars and concluded that these moons could be the dust source. No other phenomenon in the neighbourhood was found that could release as much dust

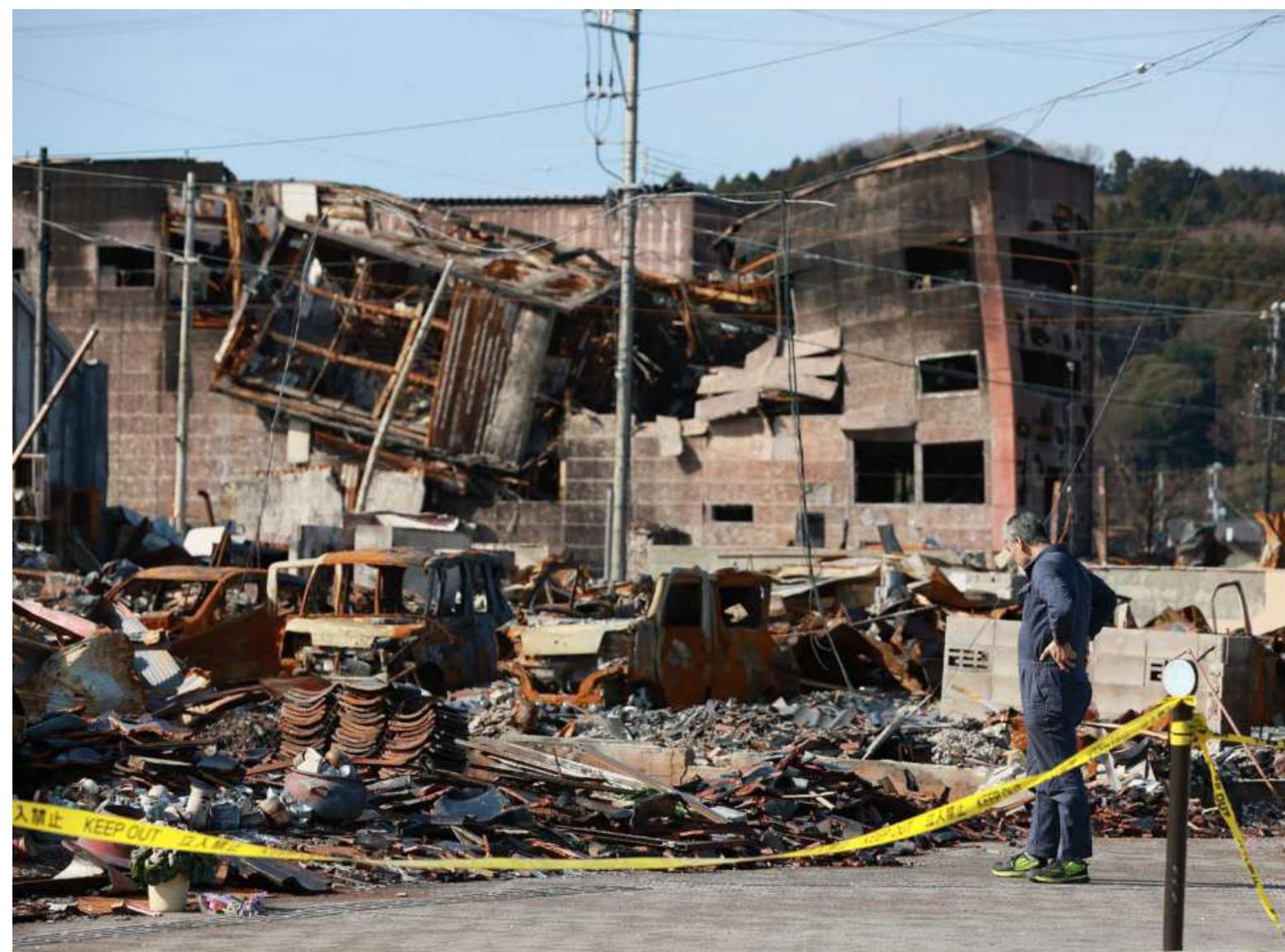
▼ The study incorporated the shapes of the two Martian moons along with the gravitational effects of Mars, incoming and outgoing dust particles, the effect of spacecraft ejecta, and other parameters in models for the dust. From this the influx at Deimos and Phobos was estimated. This combined with observational data led to a mechanism that could explain how Deimos and Phobos could be contributing to the zodiacal dust

▼ These dust particles can easily escape Phobos and Deimos because of the moons' low gravity. The smaller of these particles escape into space whereas Mars's gravity pulls in the larger ones

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BIG SHOT



A locality of Asaichi Dori which was destroyed by fire in the city of Wajima, Ishikawa prefecture after a 7.5 magnitude earthquake struck Japan's Noto region in January. AFP

QUESTION CORNER

Mist-free wind screens



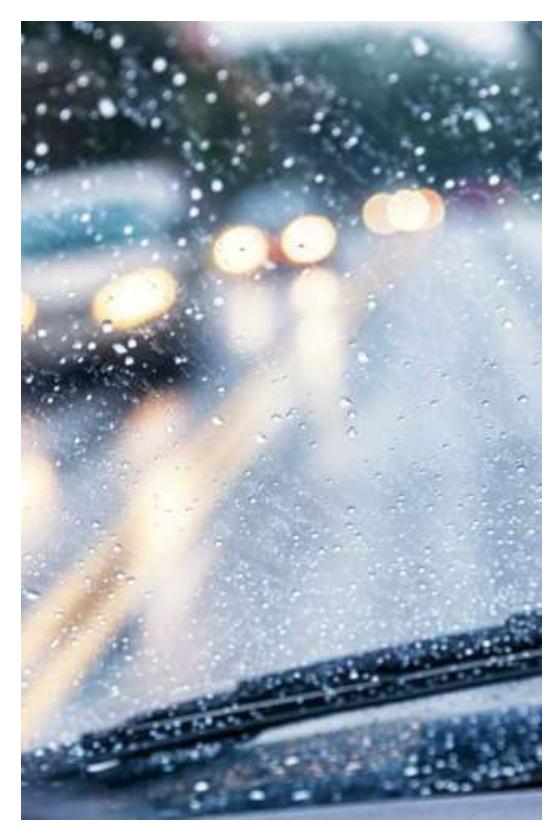
Q: When a piece of cloth soaked in a washing detergent is used to wipe the inside of a vehicle's windscreen during rains, the windscreen does not become misty even if the windows are closed. Why?

A: Mistiness is caused by tiny droplets of water that scatter light and make the glass opaque.

Wiping the glass with a cloth which is soaked in a detergent leaves a residue which lowers the surface tension of the water droplets — enough to allow them to spread as a thin film.

The effect can be seen using a bar of soap to write on a dry bathroom mirror, according to an article in *New Scientist* magazine. Once the message is written on the mirror, it can be wiped dry to remove the excess soap and the writing then disappears.

However, when the steam from a hot bath or shower condenses on the mirror, the areas of writing do not mist up whereas the background does, and the message becomes visible again.



Mistiness is caused by tiny droplets of water that scatter light. GETTY IMAGES

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