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Will remain in NDA, says Nitish
on Lalu's 'open doors' remark

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Jnanpith for Gulzar, Sanskrit
scholar Rambhadracharya

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Jaiswal's century puts India
in driver's seat

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Down to ruins: Five buildings were completely destroyed in the blast, which took place in Virudhunagar district. G. MOORTHY

10 dead in blast at T.N. fireworks unit

C. Palanivel Rajan
VIRUDHUNAGAR

Ten workers were killed and six injured in an explosion at private fireworks factory unit in Kundayiruppu near Sattu in Tamil Nadu's Virudhunagar district on Saturday.

The blast, which took place at the Ashok Sparklers factory at about 12:30 p.m., completely destroyed five out of the 74 buildings on the premises. Nine people were declared dead on arrival at Sivakasi government hospital and one died while at the hospital, police said. Fire and Rescue Services personnel rushed to the spot to put out the fire.

'Due to overcrowding' Preliminary inquiry revealed that the incident was due to overcrowding at the chemical mixing room, Virudhunagar Collector V.P. Jeyaseelan told presspersons at the site of the incident. The Alangudi

Iam police have registered a case against three persons, including the owner of the unit.

Vignesh, the owner; I. Suresh Kumar and T. Jayabal were booked under Section 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substances), 337 (causing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others), 338 (causing grievous hurt by endangering life or personal safety of others), 304 (part II) (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and under the Indian Explosives Act.

Following the incident, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced a solatium of ₹3 lakh for each of the families of the deceased, and ₹1 lakh for the injured. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also announced an ex-gratia from PMNRF of ₹2 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased and ₹50,000 for those injured.

India wants Israel to be mindful of Gaza civilian deaths

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar says conflict in West Asia needs a permanent, long-term fix; he reiterates India's call for two-state solution

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON



Diplomatic view: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock in Munich on Saturday. AP

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has reiterated India's call for a two-state solution to permanently resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict. Speaking at the Munich Security Conference in Germany, he also said that Israel should have been mindful of civilian casualties in its (ongoing) response to Hamas's October 7 attack, while calling that attack "terrorism".

"No caveats, no justification, no explanation. It was terrorism," Mr. Jaishankar said during a panel discussion with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

"It is important that Is-

rael should be, should have been, very mindful of civilian casualties," he said, adding that it has an obligation to observe international humanitarian law. He called for the return of Israeli hostages taken by Hamas and for the opening of a "sustainable humanitarian corridor" to provide relief in Gaza.

The conflict in West Asia needs a "permanent" and "long-term" fix, Mr. Jaishankar said. "I think today many more countries... feel not just that the two-state solution is necessary, but it is more urgent than it was before," he said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 9

IN BRIEF

AAP wins trust vote; will replace BJP at Centre: CM

NEW DELHI
AAP on Saturday won a trust vote in the Delhi Assembly, with CM Arvind Kejriwal claiming that his outfit will "liberate" the country from the BJP rule at the Centre in 2029 if that party wins the upcoming Lok Sabha poll. » Page 2

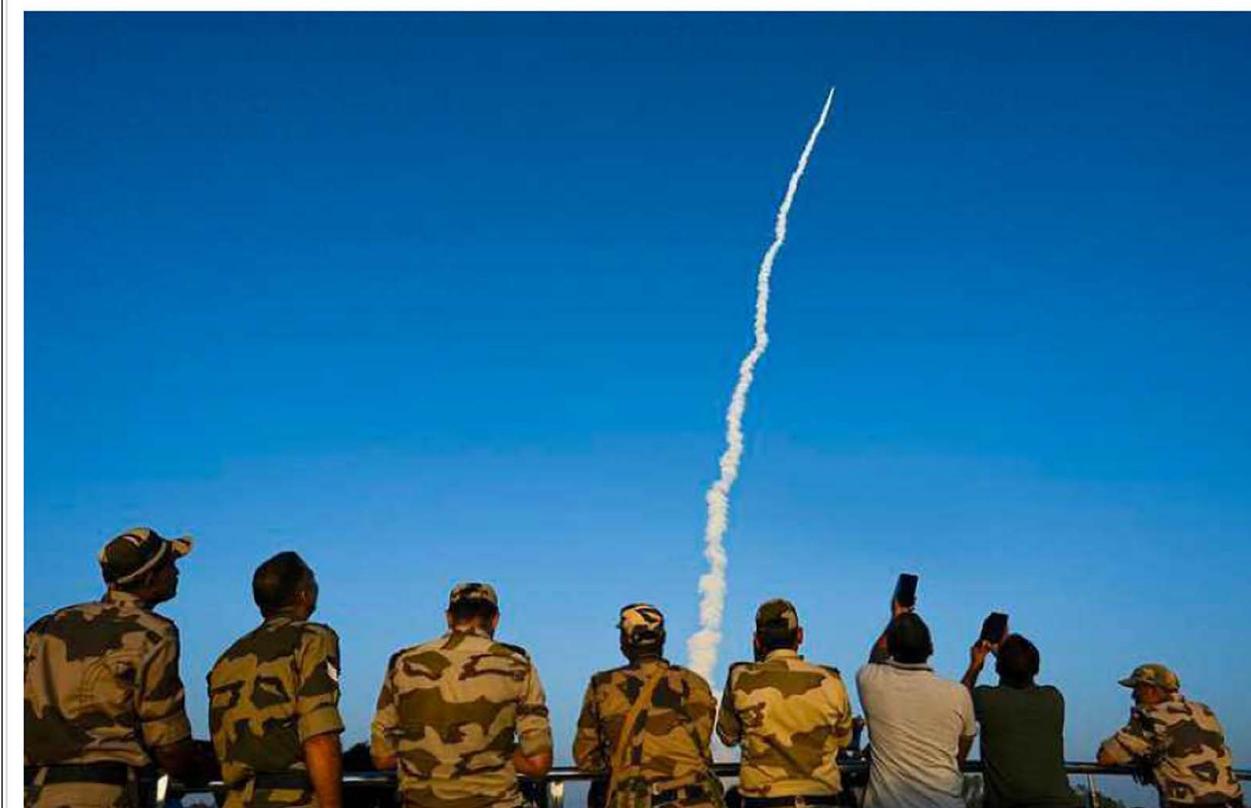
Jharkhand Cong. MLAs want their Ministers replaced

PATNA
Jharkhand Congress legislators on Saturday threatened to boycott the budget session if serving Ministers from their party are not replaced with new faces. » Page 4

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MAGAZINE » 8 PAGES

On the horizon



Cynosure of all eyes: Security personnel watch as GSLV-F14 lifts off with INSAT-3DS satellite from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on Saturday. The satellite is an exclusive mission designed for enhanced meteorological observations. PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 8)

Gang-rape charges added against local Trinamool leaders in Sandeshkhali

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Amid allegations of sexual assault by some women in Sandeshkhali, North 24 Parganas district, the West Bengal police have added sections of gang rape and attempt to murder against local Trinamool Congress leaders Shiboprasad Hazra and Uttam Sardar.

"She (the survivor) did not make any statements before us. She made the complaint before the magistrate," said Director

The fresh charges, the first time the police have registered a formal complaint of this nature, have been added on the basis of deposition by a survivor before the magistrate under Section 164 of CrPC.

On February 14, the police had tweeted that "no allegations about rape of women have so far been received". The DGP said the police remain "com-

mitted to face whatever the truth is and will act on any evidence that is presented to them". While Mr. Sardar remains behind bars, Mr. Hazra was arrested on Saturday from a hideout in Nazat, Sandeshkhali. He will be produced before a local court on Sunday.

RIGHTS PANEL VISIT
» PAGE 4

General of Police (DGP) Rakesh Kumar. He said no allegations were made by anyone in the area before February 6 when Sandeshkhali erupted over allegations of sexual assault.

On February 14, the police had tweeted that "no allegations about rape of women have so far been received". The DGP said the police remain "com-

mitted to face whatever the truth is and will act on any evidence that is presented to them". While Mr. Sardar remains behind bars, Mr. Hazra was arrested on Saturday from a hideout in Nazat, Sandeshkhali. He will be produced before a local court on Sunday.

Political) – the two umbrella bodies of around 200 farmers' and farm labourers' unions – had given a call for a 'Delhi Chalo' march to press for the fulfilment of their demands.

On February 13, as farmers from Punjab arrived at Shambhu-Ambala and Khanaur-Jind, the interstate boundaries with Haryana, they were stopped from entering the State. They have been camping there since then.

The Haryana government had put in place elaborate security arrangements with multi-layer barricades. Tear gas shells and water cannons were used to disperse the agitating farmers.

On the fifth day of their protest march, the farmers remained at Shambhu and

Khanaur areas. Members of the BKU (Ugrahan) sat on dharna outside the residences of BJP Punjab president Sunil Jakhar, former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, and senior party leader Kewal Dhillon.

Tractor march
In Haryana, farmers associated with the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni) took out a tractor march at several places, including Kurukshetra, Yamunanagar and Sirsa, to extend support to the demands.

A mahapanchayat will be held on Sunday at Kurukshetra to devise a strategy for extending support to the farmers, Gurram Singh Charuni said.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna made the observations in his order dismissing a petition filed by Bengaluru based Exalogic, which



Pressing for demand: Sarwan Singh Pandher of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha addressing mediapersons at Shambhu on Saturday. PTI

PM leadership akin to 'Ram Rajya': BJP

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Saturday passed a political resolution at a meeting of the party's National Council in New Delhi, lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, likening it to the realisation of a "Ram Rajya" in the past 10 years under him.

The resolution titled "Viksit Bharat - Modi's Guarantee" was moved by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and seconded by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 10

Bring ordinance on MSP legal guarantee: farmers to Centre

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

On the eve of the crucial meeting with the Centre, protesting farmers from Punjab, camping at different locations along the boundary with Haryana, on Saturday asked the Union government to bring an ordinance for a legal guarantee to Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops.

Union Ministers Arjun Munda, Piyush Goyal and Nitayand Rai and the farmer leaders will meet on Sunday for the fourth round of talks.

At Shambhu, addressing a press conference, Sarwan Singh Pandher of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) said the government should immediately issue the ordinance if it

wants to resolve the farmers' protest. "If the Modi government's intent is clear towards resolving the issue, then they can bring an ordinance for the same formula and then continue deliberations on providing MSP based on the 'C2+50%' formula.

The KMM and the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-

No illegality in ordering probe against firm of Pinarayi's daughter: HC

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In a blow to Exalogic Solutions Private Ltd, a one-person-company owned by Veena T., daughter of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, the High Court of Karnataka said there was no illegality, either statutory or procedural, in the Centre ordering a probe to the SFIO when the government finds such a necessity if Inspectors of Registrar of Companies (RoC), during their investigation, out of serendipity come across information that would *prima facie* touch upon skulduggery, the High Court observed.

The RoC began to inspect documents of Exalogic in January 2021.

had questioned the legality of the January 31, 2024 decision of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs entrusting the probe to the SFIO.

"The court cannot put shackles on the hands of the Central government in assigning the probe to SFIO when the government finds such a necessity if Inspectors of Registrar of Companies (RoC), during their investigation, out of serendipity come across information that would *prima facie* touch upon skulduggery," the High Court observed.

The RoC began to inspect documents of Exalogic, which

A NO-NOD

AAP wins trust vote; will replace BJP at Centre: CM

Confidence motion passed in the absence of suspended BJP legislators; none of our MLAs defected, says Kejriwal, claims his outfit has emerged as the major challenger to BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday won a trust vote in the Delhi Assembly, with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal claiming that his outfit will "liberate" the country from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rule at the Centre in 2029 if that party wins the upcoming Lok Sabha poll.

He made the statement while alleging that the BJP wants to "crush" AAP as it has emerged as a major challenger to it. He also accused the BJP of a bid to topple his government, which he said necessitated the trust vote to prove that none of the MLAs defected from the party.

This was the third motion of confidence brought by AAP in as many as years, alleging that the BJP wants to engineer defection in the party by offering money to its MLAs.

The BJP had refuted the



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addressing the Delhi Assembly during the Budget Session on Saturday. PTI

allegations, lodging a complaint with the police, which had served a notice on the Chief Minister and Finance Minister Atishi, asking them to furnish information substantiating the accusation.

Saturday's trust vote in the 70-member Delhi Assembly was carried out in the absence of seven of the eight BJP members, who were suspended for repeatedly interrupting the Lieutenant-Governor's address

on Thursday.

The AAP government won the trust vote with the support of 54 of its 62 party MLAs. The Chief Minister told the Assembly that two party MLAs were in jail, two others were unwell, three were out of town, and one was absent due to a wedding in his family.

He said two of his party MLAs disclosed that the BJP had approached them with an "offer" to defect.

"They [BJP] said that Kejriwal is going to be arrested [in excise policy case] and after that they will topple the AAP government," the CM said.

Mr. Kejriwal said the MLAs told him that the BJP leaders said 21 AAP legislators were in touch and were offered ₹25 crore each.

Mired in corruption'

Reacting to the trust vote, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said nine years of the AAP government's rule were mired in corruption and misgovernance.

"We have seen a series of scandals that have eroded trust and shattered the illusion of clean governance," he said, alleging that the AAP government was involved in the supply of poor quality medicines at hospitals, carried out expensive renovation of the Chief Minister's official residence and indulged in the excise policy "scam".

He added that the ongoing Budget Session will

continue till the first week of March and requested that the matter be listed after that to enable him to appear before the court personally.

ED complaint

The Central probe agency had approached the court with a complaint on February 3, a day after the Chief Minister skipped the fifth summons issued by it for questioning in a money laundering case linked to the now-scraped excise policy.

The court adjourned the matter till March 16 as Mr. Kejriwal expressed his inability to be personally present for the hearing due to the ongoing Delhi Assembly session.

The ED has arrested several persons, including se-

nior AAP leaders Sanjay Singh and Manish Sisodia, in the case, alleging that they played a key role in the formulation and implementation of the policy for 2021-22, which benefited certain liquor manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers for monetary considerations.

The agency has alleged that the money earned through the "scam" was diverted through "hawala" channels for the AAP's campaign in the 2022 Goa Assembly election.

According to the FIR registered in the case, a huge quantity of inflammable material was stored in the building. Eleven people – 10 workers and Ashok Jain – were killed and four others were injured in a blast, followed by fire at 'Om Sons Paint and Chemicals' on Thursday evening. Jain is said to have been operating the unit since 2017.

Alipur fire case: two, including factory owner's son, arrested

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Two days after a fire at an illegal paint factory in north Delhi's Alipur claimed the lives of 11 people, two persons, including the factory owner's son, were arrested on Saturday, a senior officer said.

The accused were identified as Akhil Jain, 37, the son of factory owner Ashok Jain, who died in the fire, and Rajrani, who owns the land on which the factory was built, the officer also said.

According to the FIR registered in the case, a huge quantity of inflammable material was stored in the building.

Eleven people – 10 workers and Ashok Jain – were killed and four others were injured in a blast, followed by fire at 'Om Sons Paint and Chemicals' on Thursday evening. Jain is said to have been operating the unit since 2017.

Court says Imam's case 'different', rejects bail plea

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

A court here on Saturday dismissed the plea of student activist Sharjeel Imam seeking bail in connection with a 2020 communal riots case involving allegations of sedition and unlawful activities.

Mr. Imam had sought bail on the grounds that he has been in custody for the past four years and the maximum sentence for the offence under Section 13 (punishment for unlawful activities) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is seven years.

Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai said Mr. Imam's case was "different" from other cases because of the nature of allegations against him and his "disruptive activities". The student activist sought bail under 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which states that a person can be released from custody if he has spent more than half of the maximum sentence prescribed for the offence.

After hearing the prosecution's case, the court said the accused's custody could be extended for a further period in "exceptional circumstances".

The court said although Mr. Imam did not incite anybody to pick up weapons and commit murder, his speeches and activities mobilised the public, which disrupted the city and might have been the main reason for the outbreak of riots in 2020.

"Further, through inflammatory speeches and social media, the applicant skillfully manipulated the real facts and incited the public to create havoc in the city," the court also said.



The structure was being erected for a wedding. ANI

29 workers injured as makeshift structure caves in at JLN Stadium

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Twenty-nine workers were injured after a temporary structure that was being erected for a wedding collapsed on them at south Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru (JLN) Stadium on Saturday morning, the police said, adding that no death has been reported so far.

DCP (South) Ankit Chauhan said 18 injured were admitted to AIIMS Trauma Centre and 11 to Safdarjung Hospital.

According to a statement from an AIIMS spokesperson, seven patients were admitted to the emergency department with severe injuries, one of whom had to undergo surgery.

Mr. Chauhan said the incident took place around 11.15 a.m. near JLN Stadium's gate no. 2 after a wooden pillar dislocated from its position, resulting in a domino effect that brought the whole structure down.

"As soon as the structure collapsed, the athletes present in the stadium rushed to rescue the labourers. Police and National Disaster Response Force teams joined them soon after," he added.

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- Narendra Modi
Prime Minister



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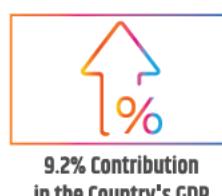
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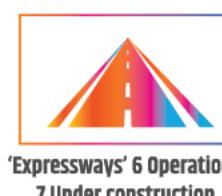
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RISE 06:57	SET 18:14	
RISE 13:30	SET 03:22	
TUESDAY, FEB. 20		
RISE 06:56	SET 18:15	
RISE 14:26	SET 04:16	

Delhi Weather max min
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Safdarjung 26 07
Palam 25 10

Delhi Palam Today
28°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cold with shallow fog & mist. The day will be comfortable with gusty winds. Night will be slight cold.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
27°C Morning will be slight cold with shallow fog and mist. Day will be comfortable with moderate breeze. Chances of light rain and thundershower.

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THE HINDU

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Leopard kills woman in Corbett

Press Trust of India
DEHRADUN

A 48-year-old woman was mauled to death on Saturday by a leopard in the Dhela range in Corbett Tiger Reserve, officials said.

Agriculture a big focus in Himachal's tax-free budget

Rural economy takes centre stage in Sukhvinder Sukhu's second State budget; new scheme launched to introduce farmers to natural farming; no help from Centre during floods, says CM

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday presented a tax-free budget with an outlay of ₹58,444 crore for the year 2024-25, with a focus on strengthening the rural economy.

Mr. Sukhu, who also holds the Finance portfolio, presented the State budget during the ongoing Budget Session of the State Assembly in Shimla, where he announced that a 4% Dearness Allowance instalment for employees would be released from April 1, for which ₹580 crore will be spent annually.

"Revenue receipts in the year 2024-25 are estimated at ₹42,153 crore and total revenue expenditure is estimated at ₹46,667 crore. Thus, the total revenue loss is estimated at ₹4,514 crore. The fiscal deficit is estimated at ₹10,784 crore, which is 4.75% of the State's Gross Domestic Product," he



Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu with the budget papers before presenting it in the Assembly on Saturday. PTI

said.

Calling agriculture the "backbone" of the State's economy, Mr. Sukhu also announced the new 'Rajiv Gandhi Prakritik Kheti Start-up Yojana' scheme, aimed at increasing the income of the farmers in the State. "Under this, in the first phase, 10 farmers from each panchayat will be encouraged to undertake chemical-free farming. The government will

purchase their grain at the minimum support price," he said.

'No relief from Centre'
Mr. Sukhu, in a dig at the BJP, alleged that the Himachal government did not receive any special relief package from the Centre despite the unprecedented natural disaster during the last monsoon season, which saw heavy floods.

"Due to wrong policies

in the past, total liabilities in the form of loans have risen to ₹87,788 crore. Total debt liabilities have increased from ₹47,906 crore in 2018 to ₹76,651 crore in 2022. However, the present government did not allow the pace of development to slow down due to lack of resources," he asserted, adding that after the Congress government took charge, "tough decisions" had to be taken.

Will remain in NDA, says Nitish on Lalu's 'open doors' remark

Amar Nath Tewary

PATNA



Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad.
FILE PHOTO

A day after Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad said that the "doors are always open" for his former ally Nitish Kumar, the Bihar Chief Minister in a response on Saturday insisted that he would now remain with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

"I don't pay attention to who says what. Things were not going well so I left them [the RJD]. I've come to the NDA fold again and will remain here," Janata Dal (United) chief Nitish Kumar told journalists.

On Friday, when asked if

he would consider Mr. Kumar's possible return to the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan (grand alliance), Mr. Prasad told journalists, "Jab aayenge tab dekha jayega (We will see when he comes back)". Pressed further, he added: "Darwa-

ja khula hi rahta hai
(Doors are always open.)"

On Saturday, Mr. Kumar, after responding to Mr. Prasad's remark, said that he has come to know about "several irregularities" that took place when the RJD was sharing power with the JD(U).

"We will not tolerate this and it will be investigated," he asserted.

Meanwhile, sources in the State government told *The Hindu* that several departments previously headed by RJD leaders have already been asked to "review" the decisions taken during the previous government.

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IN BRIEF



Filmmaker Rajkumar Santoshi gets jail in cheque return case

A court in Jamnagar in Gujarat on Saturday sentenced renowned filmmaker Rajkumar Santoshi to two years in jail and also directed him to pay ₹2 crore to the complainant in a cheque return case. The court then allowed Santoshi's appeal for a 30-day stay to allow him to appeal in a higher court. Ashok Lal, in his complaint, said he had lent ₹1 crore to Santoshi to produce a film against which the filmmaker gave him 10 cheques for ₹10 lakh each. When the cheques returned due to lack of funds, Mr. Lal issued him a legal notice, and approached the court in 2017 after Santoshi failed to return the money.

20 street dogs shot dead by masked men in Telangana

Masked men shot dead about 20 street dogs on Friday in Ponnakal village in Telangana's Mahabubnagar. Officials said the village is about 2 km from the national highway, and the culprits, who reportedly used country-made guns, are yet to be identified. Superintendent of Police K. Narasimha said a preliminary inquiry showed a gang of four is suspected to have been involved in the shooting. "We have taken a man into custody for questioning. Further probe is under way," he said. Another official said locals woke up to the gunshots and noticed the carcasses of dogs sprawled across the village with bullet wounds. "Some dogs died on the spot whereas others left a bloody trail before succumbing to their injuries in the nearby locality," the official added.

Odisha political parties urge ECI to ensure neutrality of govt. machinery during polls

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

Political parties in Odisha have urged the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure neutrality of government machinery during upcoming general and Assembly polls in the State.

"Many parties stated the administration is perceived to be non-neutral. They favour the party in power. Therefore, level playing field should be established and the administration should become totally aligned to this principle," said Rajiv Kumar, Chief Election Commissioner, addressing a press conference here on Saturday.

"There were also apprehensions that during elections facilities and entitlements, which are given to political parties, including



Level playing field should be established and the administration should become totally aligned to this principle

RAJIV KUMAR
Chief Election Commissioner

permission for ground and use of loudspeaker, are given instantly to certain political party. The entitlements, political parties asked for, should be given equally," Mr. Kumar said.

Plea to check violence "During the last election, the administration was not alert to check violence. Violence did happen. Government vehicles and ambulances are used for transporting cash and government accommoda-

tions are misused for political purposes. Political parties urged to take steps to stop this," he said.

Political parties also requested increased security around warehouses by including Central police forces. Agents should be provided detailed account of votes polled in a polling station in the 17-C form after voting is over, they said.

Moreover, there are many candidates and political parties that control newspapers and news channels, and favourable news content is created during polls. The ECI was urged to bring those content under the paid news category.

The Opposition parties also drew the attention of the ECI to government advertisements carrying the party symbol of a particular party and demanded that it must be checked.

'Disgruntled' Jharkhand Cong. MLAs reach Delhi, want 4 Ministers to go

Amit Bhelari

PATNA

Internal tensions within the Congress in Jharkhand came to the surface on Saturday after the Cabinet expansion of the Champai Soren-led government when legislators threatened to boycott the upcoming Budget session if serving Ministers from their party were not replaced with new faces.

Gathered at a hotel On Friday, eight MLAs were sworn in as Cabinet Ministers; three of them – Rameshwar Oraon, Banna Gupta and Badal Patralekh – were from the Congress.

One Congress MLA, Alamgir Alam, had already taken oath with the Chief Minister on February 2.

Upset over the issue, the rebel Congress MLAs gathered at a private hotel in Ranchi to discuss the fu-



Making themselves heard: Congress MLAs at a meeting in Ranchi on Saturday before leaving for New Delhi. PTI

ture strategy.

The MLAs present at the hotel were Irfan Ansari, Umashankar Akela, Deepika Pandey Singh, Anup Singh, Sona Ram Sinku, Bhushan Bada, Rajesh Kachchap, and Amba Prasad.

Mr. Ansari demanded that the four Ministers be replaced and that as many as 12 MLAs supported this demand.

He added that the right feedback was not being gi-

ven to the central leadership.

Talks in Delhi

Meanwhile, eight of the 12 MLAs reached Delhi on Saturday evening.

"The others will be reaching tomorrow... We will hold discussions with the Congress leadership. We want replacement of all the four Ministers," said Congress legislator Kumar Jaimangal, also known as Anup Singh.

"A few leaders are misleading the central leadership due to which there is strong resentment among the legislators. Jharkhand Congress in-charge Ghulam Ahmad Mir yesterday [Friday] gave us assurance that new faces would be inducted into the Cabinet but it did not happen. If the JMM can change their Ministers, why not the Congress party?" said Mr. Ansari, who represents the Jamtara Assembly constituency.

'Boycott session'

"We are 12 MLAs and we have all decided not to participate in the upcoming Budget session unless the four Congress Ministers are replaced," he added.

The JMM-led alliance in the State has 47 MLAs – 29 from the JMM, 17 from the Congress, and one from the Rashtriya Janata Dal.

(With inputs from PTI)

3 men who came from Kuwait by boat get bail

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

A court in Mumbai on Saturday granted bail to three men arrested by the city police earlier this month for allegedly entering India unlawfully using a fishing boat from Kuwait.

As no incriminating 'angle' was found in the case except that they allegedly fled with a fishing boat without the permission of its owner, it would not be just to keep them behind bars, said Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Pravin Modi.

The accused – Nitro Datto, 31; Vijay Vinay Anthony, 29; and J. Sahayatta Anish, 29 – contended that they were fishermen from Tamil Nadu who had gone to Kuwait for employment, but had to escape as they were ill-treated by their employer.

Telangana Oppn. persists with questions after Assembly consensus on caste survey resolution

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The caste survey plan of the A. Revanth Reddy-led Congress government in Telangana has received cross-party support but questions over its modalities persisted on Saturday after the Assembly, a day earlier, passed a resolution for the comprehensive door-to-door household survey for assessing the social, economic, educational, employment, political and caste status of the people with a special focus on the backward classes.

'Lacks clarity'

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha, daughter of former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao, on Saturday

day expressed concerns about the execution of caste survey in the State alleging that the resolution passed in the Assembly by the government lacks clarity surrounding key aspects such as the timeline for completion and the procedural framework.

Addressing mediapersons at her residence, Ms. Kavitha raised doubts about the proposed survey and accused the Congress of showing bias against the backward class communities. She emphasised that several States have not only passed similar Bills but also allocated funds for their execution.

Demanding legal sanctity for the caste survey, the BRS leader urged the fulfilment of the Congress's pre-election promise to legiti-



BRS members are trying to create doubts among people on the government's resolve to conduct the survey, says A. Revanth Reddy. FILE PHOTO

The marathon debate in the Assembly on Friday preceding the passing of the resolution had also witnessed several questions being thrown up by Opposition parties.

mise the backward classes sub-plan, along with an allocation of ₹20,000 crore for welfare of the backward classes.

Former Speaker and BRS MLC Sirikonda Madhusudana Chary also highlighted the absence of a nationwide caste census since 1931 and underscored the importance of including backward classes in India's demographic data. He suggested completing the caste survey before the local body elections. Former Minister and BRS leader Ponnala Lakshmaiah echoed similar views.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen member Akbaruddin Owaisi questioned why the government came up with a resolution and not a Bill that would give statutory back-

ing to the entire process. He also asked the government to table the details of a similar household survey conducted by the previous BRS government and said that the new government should have conducted an all-party meeting to take all into confidence before introducing the resolution in the Assembly.

'Enact legislation'

Mr. Owaisi suggested that the government enact a legislation and constitute an inquiry commission to study the status of backward classes, giving statutory backing to the entire exercise. "There is no clarity on which agency will be entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the survey. Are Muslims included in it? The government

should bring a legislation so that doubts are clarified and the census (survey) work did not face any hurdles," he said.

BRS member Gangula Karnalakar questioned the government on the 42% quota it had assured to backward classes in local body elections, ₹1-lakh crore budgetary allocation over five years for welfare of backward classes, and the implementation of the backward classes sub-plan. He also demanded that the government take steps to give legal sanctity to the entire caste survey process by passing a Bill in the House.

'All-party meeting' BJP's Payal Shankar demanded that the government call an all-party meeting to explain the

modalities and appoint a committee to oversee the conduct of the survey so that legal problems could be avoided.

The Chief Minister charged BRS members with trying to create doubts among people on the government's resolve to conduct the comprehensive survey.

He said that the government had introduced the resolution after elaborate discussion in the State Cabinet over the modalities that should be adopted.

"Accordingly, it was decided to conduct the survey for implementation of schemes for empowering the backward classes in a scientific manner. The resolution is aimed at providing funds and opportunities to backward class

communities in proportion with their population. There has to be a beginning somewhere and we are committed to empowering these communities," Mr. Reddy said in the State Assembly on Friday.

'Unveil true picture' Elaborating on the survey, Telangana State Commission for Backward Classes chairman Vakulabharanam Krishnamohan Rao said that it would unveil the true picture on the extremely backward classes.

The government's stated aim for the survey is to yield data that would enable better planning and implementation of welfare measures for backward classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other vulnerable groups.

Lifetime recognition for State's minority institutions: Stalin

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Saturday said the government would grant lifetime recognition to minority educational institutions in the State.

Addressing a meeting of the Tamil Nadu Minorities Welfare Board, he said this has been their long-pending demand and the government had brought out an order on February 2 to issue permanent minority status certificates to all such institutions. These certificates will not have any fixed time limits.

Mr. Stalin said the Minorities Welfare Minister has already launched a web portal designed by the Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency (TNeGA) to simplify the procedure to issue minority status certificates to educational institutions run by minorities.

The Chief Minister also made a slew of other announcements for the welfare of minorities, and said the government was taking steps to issue a standard operating procedure to remove difficulties in getting permission for repair and renovation of places of worship of minorities.

Mr. Stalin said the maximum age for appointment of teachers in the general



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin. FILE PHOTO

category (53), and for other communities (58) in government schools, would also be extended to minority educational institutions. "The State government will soon give recognition, from universities, to teachers recruited by minority colleges as per the University Grants Commission and government rules," he added.

Educational loans Recalling his announcement in the Assembly that the government would consider extending reservations to those of backward classes, and de-notified communities that had converted to Islam, the Chief Minister said hereafter, cooperative banks would release educational loans of up to ₹5 lakh to students of minority communities.

APPOINTMENT

Manickavasagam Charitable Foundation



MRCAS MANIKAM RAMASWAMI COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE
 PAMBAN SWAMY NAGAR, THIRUPPARANKUNDRAM, MADURAI - 625 005.
 Affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University

JOB TITLE
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STAFF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, HR, PRO, LIBRARIAN, PLACEMENT EXECUTIVE, DIGITAL MEDIA MANAGER, PURCHASE OFFICER, PROGRAM MANAGER (TSM) & WARDEN.

TSM MBA / PGDM / PGDDBA / PhD
 SPECIALIZATION IN HR, FINANCE, OPERATION & MARKETING

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 B.Sc. Computer Science(Data Science & Analytics)
 B.Sc. Computer Science(Artificial Intelligence)
 B.Sc. Psychology / B.Sc. Visual Communication
 B.Sc. Costume Designing & Fashion Technology
 B.Sc. Computer Science(Cloud Computing & Cyber Security)

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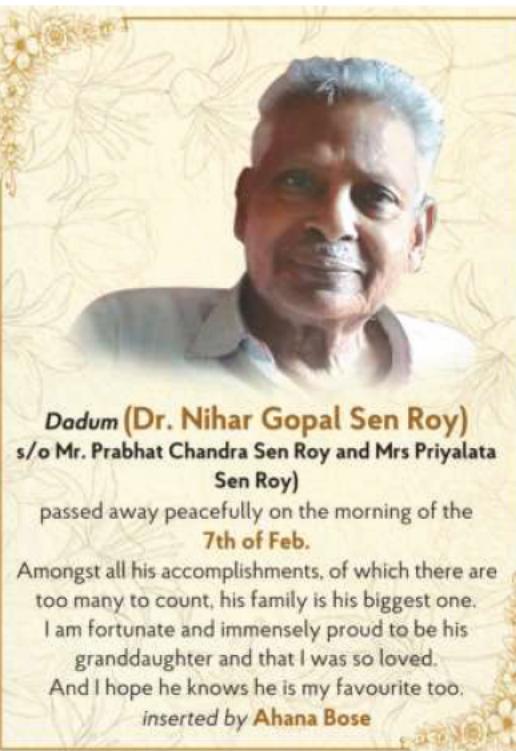
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PhD Qualification As per UGC, Madurai Kamaraj University Norms

PAYSCALE: As per UGC, AICTE norms (Seventh Pay) | Additional Incentives for Journal Publications, Ph.D. Qualification | Participation in Seminar/Conferences | Opportunities to collaborate & work in Funded Projects

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OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



Dadum (Dr. Nihar Gopal Sen Roy)
 s/o Mr. Prabhat Chandra Sen Roy and Mrs Priyalata
 Sen Roy)

passed away peacefully on the morning of the
7th of Feb.

Amongst all his accomplishments, of which there are too many to count, his family is his biggest one. I am fortunate and immensely proud to be his granddaughter and that I was so loved. And I hope he knows he is my favourite too.

inserted by Ahana Bose

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SERICULTURE DEPARTMENT

Office of the Executive Engineer, No. 1 Division, No. 14, Reshma Bhavana, Vatal Nagaraj Road, Okalipuram, Bengaluru-560021.

No: १०८/२२/४-१/१०८/२२/४/२०२३-२४/५२४ Date: 16-02-2024

TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal Only)

Tender is invited for the Appointment of a Civil Engineering Consultant for the preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for a multi-storyed building proposed to be constructed on 4.25 acres of Land owned by the Sericulture Department at Vatal Nagaraj Road, Okalipuram, Bangalore (Opp. to Lulu Hypermarket) through e-Procurement portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>. in Indent No: SD/2023-24/SE0083. Interested Bidders may participate in the Tender by registering through e-Procurement portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>. The Tender Schedule is as follows:
 (1) Pre Bid meeting on: **20.02.2024** at 11.30 A.M. at Office of the Executive Engineer, No.1, 2 Floor, Reshma Bhavana, Vatal Nagaraj Road, Okalipuram, Bangalore-560021. (2) Last Date Scheduled for uploading of Tender Document in e-Procurement portal is: **23.02.2024** upto **4.00 P.M.** (3) Date of Opening of Technical Bid in e-Procurement portal is : **26.02.2024** at 11.30 A.M. (4) Tenders will be intimated on the date of opening of Financial Bid of eligible Tenderers in Technical Bid as per e-Procurement guidelines.

Note: Addendums or Postponements regarding the said tender and the tender documents will be published through e-Procurement portal Only.

Sd/-
 Executive Engineer



KARNATAKA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION

NOTICE INVITING TENDER NO 09 Dated: 17 /02/2024

Tenders (Pre-qualification and or commercial offers) through e-procurement portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>. are invited for supply of the following goods/services/equipments:

Tender Nos as per E-portal	Nomenclature of Items/ Services/ Equipment	Tender Value in crores, (Approx)	Last date for submission of documents
KSRTC/2023-24/ IND0070	Procurement of Engine Coolant	1.99	01/03/2024
KSRTC/2023-24/ IND0071	Procurement of Pre-cured Tread Rubber	12.00	15/04/2024
KSRTC/2023-24/ SE0783	Engaging an agency for providing IT Professionals on Contract Basis (Short Term Tender)	3.24	23/02/2024
KSRTC/2023-24/ SE0784	Engaging an agency for Driver Services on contract basis (Short Term Tender)	17.00	23/02/2024
KSRTC/2023-24/ IND0072	Procurement of Air, Oil and Fuel Filters required for TATA and Ashok Leyland BSVI vehicles.	1.30	04/03/2024
KSRTC/2023-24/ IND0073	Procurement of Cylinder Liners	0.90	15/03/2024

Further any addendum / corrigendum in respect of change in calendar of events, specification, scope, other tender terms and conditions etc, will be uploaded/published through e-portal only.

NOTE:- Interested suppliers need to register in the e-procurement portal. For further information log into <http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>. In case of further assistance, contact e-procurement cell (Phone. No. 080-2230960, 080-22234115). Interested suppliers may also contact e-procurement cell for training on bid submission. Mail to support@eprocelpdesk.com for further information if required. In case of bidders need assistance from KSRTC, can communicate at cosp@ksrtc.org (contact: 7760990225, 7760990224).

Sd/- CONTROLLER OF STORES & PURCHASES (Tender Inviting Authority)
 DIPR/CP/3672/AKAR/2023-24

ज्ञारखण्ड राज्य ग्रामीण पथ विकास प्राधिकरण (JSRRDA)

एफएफपी० भवन, तृतीय तला, धुर्वा, रोंची – ४१३४००४, ज्ञारखण्ड

अल्पकालीन ई-पुनर्निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना (4th Call)

PR No. 314106 Dated 22.12.2023

दिनांक :- 17.02.2024

अल्पकालीन ई-पुनर्निविदा संख्या:- 329/2023-24

मुख्य अभियंता, जे०एस०आर०आर०डी०५०, रोंची द्वारा निम्नवरण के अनुसार e-procurement

पहुँच से निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्र० सं	आईडीटीफिकेशन संख्या / पैकेज संख्या	प्रखण्ड का नाम	कार्य का नाम		प्रक्रिया राशि	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि
			अंक में (लाख में)	अब्द में (रुपये में)		
1	JH-M-CHB-05/2023-24	कुमारदुर्गी 1	धनसारी से बड़ामिता तक पथ का सुदूरीकरण	1 (लो – 2,500 किमी)	1398.877	तेरह करोड़ अङ्गूष्ठे लाख सात सौ रु० मात्र
		कुमारदुर्गी 2	विडियागढ़ से बड़ामिता तक पथ का सुदूरीकरण	1 (लो – 3,950 किमी)		
		कुमारदुर्गी 3	सैलाबक से विहारमासी तक पथ का सुदूरीकरण	1 (लो – 2,330 किमी)		
		कुमारदुर्गी 4	आगरी से नायक टोला तक पथ का सुदूरीकरण	1 (लो – 3,050 किमी)		
		कुमारदुर्गी 5	विरासी काशीबाजार से कराचाकोला भाया कुलाबुल तक पथ का सुदूरीकरण	1 (लो – 2,500 किमी)		
		कुमारदुर्गी 6	कुमुपुडा से कराचाकोला भाया कुलाबुल तक पथ का सुदूरीकरण	1 (लो – 7,300 किमी)		

2. देवभार्ता प्रकाशन की तिथि-20.02.2024

3. ई-निविदा प्राप्त की अंतिम तिथि एस-से-टी-यॉ-26.02.2024 अप्राप्तन 5.00 बजे तक।

4. निविदा खालीने की तिथि एस-से-टी-यॉ-27.02.2024 अप्राप्तन 5.00 बजे।

5. निविदा आमंत्रित करने वाले प्राप्तविदाओं का नाम एवं पाता- मुख्य अभियंता का कार्यालय, जे०एस०आर०आर०डी०५०, रोंची एफएफपी० मध्य भवन, तृतीय तला, धुर्वा, रोंची – ४१३४००४, ज्ञारखण्ड।

6. ई-निविदा प्रक्रिया का दरमान से-टी-यॉ-334004, ज्ञारखण्ड।

परिस्तृत जानकारी के लिए वेबसाइट jsharkhandtenders.gov.in में देखा जा सकता है।

मुख्य अभियंता

जे०एस०आर०आर०डी०५०, रोंची।

PR 319388 (Rural Work Department) 23-24 (D)

जे०एस०आर०आर०डी०५०, रोंची।

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DOCTOR

HINDU TAMIL Yadava 26 MS Surgery PG Tall Fair Good Looking, Mother Vellalar/Mukkulathor Caste. Seeks Good habit doctors / doctors with good family background. Ct: 720063564

MUDHALIYAR: AGE 26, Fair Cast no Bar. MBBS (DCH). Seeks Doctor or any suitable groom. Ct : 78240

NADAR HINDU: 27, Fair, MBBS (DGO). Seeks Doctor or Any Suitable Groom. Contact: 9363570731

Dr. J.Ramya (Nadar) MBBS, M.S Ophthalmology Vitreo Retina Surgeon Doctor from Same Caste Ct: 9840038499

TAMIL VISWAKARMA, 28/165cm, MBBS, M.D. Own Clinic seeks suitable Doctor Groom Ct: 9842170149

SC AD, 30 yrs, MBBS, Doctor, working in NHS, UK. Hashtram, Kannai seeks groom preferably in UK. Ct: 9003107/72

1984, **MBBS** (MD / MS.OBG) Hindu, Tamil, Chennai, CNB. Prefer Dr / Civil Service / Business : 9514518555

M.D. DOCTOR Hindu 30F 175cms, working as SR. AIMS, seeks suitable groom (preference Doctor). Whatapp the details to 9500033303

KANNADA MADHWA Brahmin Girl 25 MD Seeks Professionally Qualified Groom. 9944570175, 9789788673.

GROOM WANTED Reputed Reddy Family in Chennai Invites Alliance for Daughter 33/165. Doctor MBBS, MS, Looking for Tall Educated Groom from affluent family CNB. Call: 89256 40111

DOCTOR GIRL 30/153, MBBS, seeks Tamil Hindu Doctor Groom. Contact: 8056325579.

DOCTOR GIRL 30/156, MBBS, MD General Medicine, seeks Doctors/ suitable grooms Mob : 9447493034, 949168001

KANNADA KANNADA VOKKALIGA wanted bridegroom, bride 32 years/ 167.64 cm software engineer, divorced no issues. Contact: 7795781041

MBA / CA / ICWA PQM4 BTech + MBA Manglik Rajput Girl, working MNC, 50 lakhs/ pkg. 5ft 6inch, 8- Oct-9, 7:39 AM, Delhi, 9899374419

36 Years CA Working in Hyd, 5* Telugu Vaidiki Brahmin Girl, Family settled in Hyderabad, Artistic, Gifted Sketcher Painter, Issueless Divorce, No Encumbrances, seeks well Educated, well settled Groom Working in India from affectionate South Indian Veg Families. Reply to pmsvhyd@gmail.com

NRI HINDU **PILLAI** 32/163 cm B.Tech, M.S. working in Ireland seeks suitable groom (CNB) 91 9443564798.

✓ USA EMPLOYED Brahmin Girl (1984 born) seeking Unmarried Brahmin boy who is employed in USA. Ph:+918122680421

TAMIL TAMIL MUSLIM, Doctor, 40yrs, MBBS, MS (OG), Govt. Hospital Madurai seeks suitable Groom (First / Second Marriage). Ct: 9894788804

TAMIL MUSLIM girl (24/5'7"). B.E working in Singapore. Need religious person with professional qualification and working in Singapore. Contact: 9841981166 / 9841980096

CATHOLIC VELLALAR Girl 31/171 MBBS MPH student visa Texas, USA Seeks professional from USA Ct: 9150153743

CSI CHRISTIAN (AD) Bridegroom for Bride 31 years B.E. (ECE), Preferably South Tamilnadu. Ct: 944373523

TAMIL MUSLIM Bride, 29/159cm, AVP in MNC at Bengaluru, AVP from SC Ad Haribabu. Elite Family. Cast No Bar. 948354277

IYER, TAMIL bharatwajam, 29 years old, punarpoosam (1), BE, cse, software Engineer in Chennai, girls seeks suitable groom working in Chennai same sect, contact no 9443471837, 9443697371

SEEKING EMPLOYED Groom below 36 years, from Elite Family for. Divorced 31 years Employed Bride BE & MBA Fair & Honely from SC Ad Hindu Elite Family. Cast No Bar. 948354277

TAMIL MUSLIM Bride, 29/159cm, AVP in MNC at Bengaluru, AVP from SC Ad Haribabu. Elite Family. Cast No Bar. Ct: 9080505129

TAMIL MUSLIM Girl 37 B.E seeks professionally educated Tamil Muslim Groom(First Marriage) no 944235779

YADAVA GIRL, age 26, B.E. working in Software Company Olacipia Pvt Ltd (Zoo) Feb 2024/Chennai Girl Dr/ Father Nalini Only Ct: 946106495

ALLIANCE FOR Hindu Ad, 33/174 Wheatless Bengaluru based Post Graduate Senior Consultant, MNC Australia girl. CNB: CT: 944900627

B.TECH (NT) MBA(IM) Tamil Girl 30/161 Product Consultant C/R/L No Bar Skls suitable edu groom 8220468277

TELEGU TELUGU KSHATRIYA Naidu, 27 yrs/155cm Barani/Mesham, Completed Ph (Zoo) Feb 2024/Chennai Girl Dr/ Father Nalini Only Ct: 946106495

ALLIANCE INVITED M.Com, MBA, Keralite. 40/175 cm working in Service Industry, Divorced, No children seeks a suitable good looking girl between age 25-36 educated from sound family with no children (Preferably Orthodox, Jacobite, RC, Marthomite, CSI)

9447262792
7034714595
7306385623

MBA / CA / ICWA Settled Widower 61/168/4 needs travel loving Companion cast nobar WhatsApp: 8867634049

URDU Second Marriage Doctor Girl Smp Invite Alliance for their Daughter, 35 Years BDS. (Chennai) MDPH (UK) Kulha Taken (No Kids) Looking for an Educated & Well Settled Groom Cal Ph: 9843531631 / 9490166601.

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MUSLIM GIRL 21/162cm BE(BSE) Very Fair Selected in MNC Chennai Well to do Fmly in Chennai. Ph: 9445556810

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Successful mission: ISRO launching the INSAT-3DS meteorological satellite onboard a GSLV-F14 from Sriharikota on Saturday. ANI

ISRO successfully launches INSAT-3DS weather satellite

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

The GSLV-F14 carrying INSAT-3DS meteorological satellite was successfully launched on Saturday from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. About 18 minutes after the lift-off from the spaceport's launchpad, the GSLV-F14 deployed the INSAT-3DS into the intended geosynchronous transfer orbit.

"The spacecraft has been injected into a very good orbit. The injection conditions were as expected and we also noted that the vehicle has performed very, very well," ISRO Chairman S. Somanath said.

The INSAT-3DS satellite is a follow-on mission of the third generation meteorological satellite from geostationary orbit. The sa-

tellite is an exclusive mission designed for enhanced meteorological observations, monitoring of land and ocean surfaces for weather forecasting, and disaster warning.

The INSAT-3DS satellite will augment meteorological services along with the presently operational INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR in-orbit satellites.

The primary objectives of the mission are to monitor earth's surface, carry out oceanic observations and its environment in various spectral channels of meteorological importance, provide the vertical profile of various meteorological parameters of the atmosphere, provide data collection and dissemination capabilities from data collection platforms, and provide satellite-aided search and rescue services.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has ordered a high-level ministerial meeting in

Wayanad on February 20 to finalise measures to mitigate human-wildlife conflict in the district. Three people have been killed in wildlife attacks in the district since January 30.

Family members of Paul said that he could have been saved had he received timely medical attention, another issue confronting the hilly district. He succumbed to his injuries at the Kozhikode Medical College Hospital, after travelling 100 km on the busy ghat road.

Last week, a farmer, Ajeesh, had been killed by a radio-collared elephant which strayed into a village near Mananthavady.

The situation has prompted Congress leader and Wayanad MP, Rahul Gandhi, to cut short his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in

Uttar Pradesh to visit the kin of the three persons recently killed by wild animals in the district. Mr. Gandhi is scheduled to call on the families on Sunday.

₹50 lakh solatium

The protesters wanted an assurance from the government that a solatium of ₹50 lakh would be given to Paul's kin. They demanded the capture of the elephant that attacked him, and sought steps to cage a tiger that has triggered panic among Pulpally's residents. They also wanted the Chief Minister and Forest Minister to visit the area.

The mob refused to allow Paul's body to be shifted for funeral rites until the government gave an assurance to their demands. Later, Wayanad District

Magistrate A. Devaki and District panchayat members met the victim's family and promised an immediate solatium of ₹10 lakh, along with a recommendation to the government to provide the remaining amount. They also promised to provide a job for the wife of the deceased and offered to bear the educational expenses of his daughter.

Paul's body was later shifted to his house at Pakkam and buried at the St. George Jacobite Cathedral at Pulpally around 6.30 p.m.

Forest Minister A.K. Saheedran told reporters in Kozhikode that the government empathised with the public cause propounded by the protesters. However, he said that wanton violence against wildlife enforcers, police, and elected peoples' representatives would preclude stakeholders from arriving at a sustainable solution to mitigate human-wildlife conflict.

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Sathesan briefed the Chief Minister about the tense situation at Pulpally in a phone call, and urged the government to take steps to address the concerns of the public and ensure protection from wildlife attacks.

Pawar Sr. to move SC over Speaker, EC verdicts on NCP

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

the Supreme Court."

Calling the verdict a complete injustice to those who formed and worked for the party, Mr. Pawar, whose faction was renamed NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) after the EC verdict, said, "This has never happened before that those who formed the party were removed. The entire country knows who founded the NCP and who is the face of NCP. The decision does not align with the judicial system and is unfair."

The Sharad Pawar-led NCP suffered a setback after the EC said Ajit Pawar's faction is the real NCP.

Decisions of BRS rule set to bleed State heavily, says Minister

B. Chandrashekhar

HYDERABAD

cussion on 'Telangana State Irrigation Sector - White Paper', he told the House that leakage of water from Annaram Barrage, was noticed on Friday and the State government had approached the National Dam Safety Authority to assess Annaram and Sundilla Barrages.

Reiterating that poor design, construction, lack of maintenance had reduced the key components of the project to failure in just three years, the Minister said the cost escalation in Kaleshwaram had not happened in any other project.

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From Page One**'Israel should have been mindful of deaths'**

According to the Gaza Health Ministry, at least 28,000 civilians – many of them children – have been killed in Israel's retaliation for Hamas's assault. At least 2.2 million people have been displaced since mid-December.

Images of Mr. Jaishankar interacting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during the conference surfaced on social media on Saturday. Mr. Wang's session was just before Mr. Jaishankar's panel discussion and apparently the two Ministers had an interaction between the sessions.

During his panel discussion, Mr. Jaishankar defended India's foreign policy, which some, especially in the West, have implied is overly transactional. He was asked by the moderator, Rhoula Khalaf, Editor-in-Chief of the *Financial Times*, if India's foreign policy could be accurately described as based on a "multiple choice mindset".

Specifically, he was asked about India buying Russian oil in the context of the U.S.-India bilateral relationship, and whether the U.S. was comfortable with India doing whatever it wanted, whenever it wanted.

"If I'm smart enough to have multiple options, you should be admiring me, you shouldn't be criticising," Mr. Jaishankar said. The Minister said he did not think having an apparent breadth of choice was problematic for India's partners, pointing to his U.S. or German counterparts.

Countries have different pulls and pressures and different histories, and different states of development, Mr. Jaishankar said, adding that he did not want an impression to form that Indian foreign policy was "purely and unsentimentally transactional". "So I agree very much with what Tony [Antony Blinken] said, which is good partners provide choices. Smart partners take some of those choices," Mr. Jaishankar said, noting that sometimes, however, choices are passed up on.

India's purchase of oil from Moscow had been under the scanner in the months following February 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine. Especially scrutinised was how New Delhi and Washington navigated their close and growing partnership despite the U.S. being the main driver behind Western economic and trade sanctions on Russia, and Moscow and New Delhi sharing close ties.

Mr. Jaishankar suggested India is a bridge between the West and other BRICS countries (a grouping originally comprised of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as he emphasised the difference between being non-West and anti-West, saying India was non-Western but had an "extremely strong" relationship with the West that was getting even better. This is not the first time the Minister has made this distinction between anti-West and non-West.

Mr. Blinken echoed Mr. Jaishankar's views, saying the multiplicity and complexity of global challenges required countries to work with each other on a non-exclusive basis. The U.S. would work at the first instance with fellow democracies, Mr. Blinken said, adding, however, that it was willing to work with any country to resolve particular problems in the context of a "rules-based order".

West Asia, Red Sea discussion

On Friday, Mr. Jaishankar held bilateral discussions with Mr. Blinken on the sidelines of the conference. The two Ministers discussed work to "ensure lasting peace and security" in West Asia, as per a readout from the State Department.

They also discussed the crisis in the Red Sea, with Mr. Blinken highlighting India and the U.S.'s "mutually reinforcing" approaches to maritime security and the maintenance of stability in the Red Sea, where Houthi rebels in Yemen have attacked ships following the heightened conflict between Hamas and Israel. India has stationed warships east of the Red Sea and has served as a first responder in some of these attacks.

On Friday, the State Department announced that Houthi rebels had fired missiles at a British tanker carrying crude oil to India.

Greek PM Mitsotakis to attend Raisina Dialogue next week

Foreign Ministers and Deputy Foreign Ministers from European countries will take part in the event, which coincides with G-20 Foreign Ministers' meeting hosted by Brazil; the dignitaries will hold talks with Modi on trade, strategic partnership

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis will travel to Delhi next week as the chief guest for the Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) annual Raisina Dialogue.

While the final schedule for the Raisina Dialogue, to be held from February 21 to 23, is yet to be announced, Mr. Mitsotakis will be one of several international dignitaries arriving for the conference organised by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), and is expected to include several Foreign Ministers and Deputy Foreign Ministers from European countries, including Latvia, Romania, Estonia, Serbia, and the Netherlands, and neighbouring countries like Nepal, Vietnam, and other Ministers from other parts of the world.

The Raisina Dialogue coincides this year with the G-20 Foreign Ministers' meeting hosted by Brazil on February 21 and 22, and



Kyriakos Mitsotakis will be one of the dignitaries arriving for the conference organised by Observer Research Foundation. REUTERS

while External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will stay in Delhi to host the conference, most G-20 Foreign Ministers are expected to be in Rio de Janeiro.

According to sources, Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Minister Irina Borovets is also expected to speak at the event. U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, who was due to attend the conference and hold ICET technology talks in Delhi, is unable to travel to India due to "domestic and international" considerations, sources said, indicating both the Biden administration's campaign commitments, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's recent hospitalisation, and also ongoing developments in the Israel-Gaza conflict as well as Ukraine.

Senior State Department official and former Ambassador to India Richard Verma is visiting India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and he and U.S. Admiral John Aquilino, Commander of its Indo-Pacific Command, are expected to address the conference instead.

The conference will begin with a keynote address by the Greek Prime Minister on Wednesday, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi will accompany him.

Mumbai visit

Mr. Mitsotakis, who has been invited for a State visit, will also travel to Mumbai and is expected to be accompanied by a large business delegation.

Among other discussions, both sides are expected to take forward talks on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, which has hit a pause due to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

"India-Greece relations have been elevated to "Strategic Partnership" during Mr. Modi's visit to Greece in August 2023. They are based on shared cultural values, commitment to foster economic growth, collaboration in the fields of security and defence, shipping, maritime and marked by convergence on regional and global issues," the MEA said.

During his visit to Athens last year, Mr. Modi had made a strong pitch to Greek businesses to invest in India, and the two leaders had agreed to set a target to double bilateral trade by 2030.

India and Greece have been negotiating a migration and mobility agreement to facilitate legal "skilled migration" between the two countries since 2022, but have yet to conclude it.

According to sources, no government to government agreements are ready for finalisation, but several Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) between Indian and Greek businesses are likely to be signed during the visit, including those in banking and finance, insurance, IT, and think tanks.

This is the ninth edition of the Raisina dialogue, organised by the MEA-ORF. Previous editions have had keynote addresses by leaders of Denmark, Rwanda, Israel, the European Commission, Italy, and others.

Income Tax dept. freezes TV channel's bank accounts

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Income Tax department froze the bank accounts of *Jai Hind* television channel, the Congress's mouthpiece in Kerala, on Saturday. An office-bearer of the channel said the I-T department had said that a mismatch in filing outstanding tax demands led them to take the "extraordinary step".

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan told *The Hindu* that the attempt to hobble the Congress's organ was another instance of the BJP-led Union government trying to subvert constitutional agencies to stifle dissent. He said the effort to disrupt the channel's daily operations smacked of authoritarianism and condemned the move as patently anti-democratic.

Jai Hind managing director B.S. Shibu said the action appeared out of the blue and had been hasty. The channel was litigating the settlement of tax arrears in several courts. The current action seemed rash and politically motivated.

Spy cam, smartphone found in prison cell of Khalistan sympathiser

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The staff of eastern Assam's Dibrugarh Central Jail on Saturday detected a major security breach in the National Security Act (NSA) cell where Khalistani sympathiser and Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal Singh was lodged along with nine of his associates.

The jail staff recovered a smartphone with SIM, a keypad phone, a TV remote with keyboard, a spy cam pen, pen drives, Bluetooth headphones, speakers, and a smartwatch during a search, officials said.

Assam's Director-General of Police Gyanendra Pratap Singh said additional CCTV cameras were installed in the public area of the NSA block after reports of unauthorised activities taking place in the NSA cell.

"The source of these unauthorised articles and mode of their induction is being ascertained. Further



Amritpal Singh

lawful action and steps are being taken to prevent recurrence," he said.

Amritpal Singh, 29, was arrested by the Punjab Police under the NSA in April 2023 and transported to Assam on a special flight. His nine associates, also booked under the NSA, were arrested and sent to the Dibrugarh jail later.

The entire jail complex was kept out of bounds for the general public and several high-mast lights and CCTV cameras were installed.

Built in 1857, the Dibrugarh Central Jail is Assam's second oldest prison.

Atmosphere of fear, hatred prevailing in country, says Rahul in Varanasi

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of creating an atmosphere of fear and hatred in the country, adding that true patriotism was in uniting the nation.

"There is an atmosphere of fear and hatred, deliberately built in the country by the BJP, aimed at dividing the society. They [BJP] talk about patriotism, but the real patriotism is towards uniting the nation," said Mr. Gandhi, addressing a gathering on the second day of the Uttar Pradesh leg of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Varanasi, the Lok Sabha constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Congress leader undertook a 12-kilometre-long roadshow in Varanasi interacting with unemployed youth and people from all walks of life.

Mr. Gandhi further attacked the BJP government for doing injustice to farmers.



Listening In: Rahul Gandhi with a supporter during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra roadshow in Varanasi on Saturday. AFP

ers, youth and underprivileged sections.

"Unemployment is the major issue in the country, but they [BJP] will not talk about it, they would try to deviate you whenever the issue of unemployment is raised. We are witness of two different India today, one is for the billionaires, rich and the other for the poor," Mr. Gandhi said.

The yatra entered Uttar Pradesh through Chandauli on February 16 and is likely to spend nearly a week in the State.

Top State Congress leaders including Uttar Pradesh

Congress unit chief Ajay Rai were present during the roadshow. He also interacted with teachers and students of Banaras Hindu University. The roadshow passed through Golgappa, Maidagan, and Manduadhi localities having sizeable minority population.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Gandhi offered prayers at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi, which also led to controversy as the Congress accused the district administration of cancelling the permission

granted to the grand old party to carry a camera inside the temple.

"Today in the morning Rahul had darshan at Baba Vishwanath temple in Kashi. At the last moment, the permission granted to our camera to enter the temple was cancelled. The district administration assured that the photo would be shared by the temple cameraperson. Despite continuous efforts, the photo was not provided. Then some seven photos were sent, not a single one is of darshan, although the photo was taken by the cameraperson of the temple. The district administration proved it is working to satisfy their political masters," said Mr. Rai.

The Congress leader who was scheduled to reach Bhadohi district was forced to cancel his programme and leave for Wayanad. "Rahul Gandhi's presence is required urgently in Wayanad. The yatra will resume at 3 p.m. on February 18 at Prayagraj," Jairam Ramesh said.

With no Census data to depend on, government scrambling to assess population of vulnerable tribes

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

We are not saying all gaps have been identified. What we have now is monumental given where we started just six months ago

TRIBAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY OFFICIAL

for accurate gap assessment and to sanction certain infrastructure projects that have a population criteria that need to be met.

When the package was launched in November 2023 to ensure that PVTG villages had all basic facilities and infrastructure, the government said there were around 28 lakh PVTG people in the country. The government said its goal was to plug infrastructural gaps in the around 22,500

habitats they occupy.

But by the time the operational guidelines were released in January, the Tribal Affairs Ministry claimed the total population of PVTGs stood at 36.75 lakh. By the end of January, the government had further revised the total population tally – pegging it at 44.64 lakh as of January 31. Neither of these estimates had included data from Bihar and Manipur, with officials saying that population of some habitations are yet to be fed into the portal for the rest of the States as well.

"We have to constantly keep revising the population data as and when it is rationalised," one district official in the south of Jharkhand told *The Hindu*, while another one in Chhattisgarh said there is not much uniformity in

how different States and districts were estimating the population figures.

Some districts are using population data from ration distribution charts, others are using data from as far back as the 2011 Census or surveys conducted in 2015 by government institutes; some districts have designed detailed surveys and have conducted a near-headcount of the PVTG population as recently as 2023 while others have only estimated it based on household and habitation surveys, according to some district officials working on the project.

A government official explained that most of the population data being gathered was based on "habitation-level surveys", insisting that it was "not a Census-like exercise". The Tribal Affairs minis-

Mahindra Percussion Festival in Bengaluru on March 23, 24

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI



The second edition of the Mahindra Percussion Festival will be held on March 23 and 24 at the Prestige Srihari Khodiy Centre for Performing Arts, Bengaluru.

The two-day festival will start with the Charu Harilal Quartet showcasing a distinctive performance that merges Kerala and Karnataka's percussion and tribal music. This will be followed by a performance by Mridangam virtuoso Vivek Rajagopal and Anantha R. Krishnan. The festival will also honour south Indian percussion through the legendary Vikku Vinayakram's Ghantam Symphony, featuring Grammy Award-winner V. Selvaganesh, V. Umashankar, and Swaminathan Selvaganesh. The day will conclude with the Swarathma Percussive Experience, featuring Thaval Raja and Beat Gurus.

Day two will begin with the "Rhythms of India" ensemble, bringing together Darshan Doshi, Varijashree Venugopal, B.C. Manjunath, and Praveen Rao. There will also be an avant-garde exploration of the emotional journeys of the Ashtanayika – the eight archetypal heroines from ancient Indian literature. The festival will draw to a close with Taufiq Qureshi's "SURYA". Jay Shah, vice-president

Cultural Outreach at Mahindra Group, said, "At Mahindra, we have always endeavoured to bring our audiences, particularly millennials and Gen Z, closer to their heritage and culture and give a stage to artists and art forms that are at the margins." The Mahindra Percussion Festival, in association with *The Hindu*, is co-sponsored by Mahindra Finance, Paul John Visitor Centre, and Carlsberg Smooth Soda and promoted and produced by Hyperlink Brand Solutions. Tickets are available on bookmyshow.com

Modi has implemented the concept of 'Ram Rajya': BJP

Party passes resolution titled 'Viksit Bharat - Modi's Guarantee'; it spoke about Article 370, construction of Ram Temple; space programmes, and efforts to lift 25 crore people out of poverty

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Saturday passed a political resolution at a meeting of the party's National Council in New Delhi, lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, likening it to the realisation of a "Ram Rajya" in the past 10 years under him.

The resolution titled "Viksit Bharat - Modi's Guarantee" was moved by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and seconded by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, party spokesperson Sambit Patra, and the BJP's Jharkhand unit chief Babulal Marandi also spoke during the passage of the resolution.

The resolution spoke in glowing terms of Mr. Modi's decade-long tenure as PM, and covered a spectrum of topics, from wel-



Voice of support: BJP leaders and workers at the National Council meeting at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

fare to cultural nationalism, revocation of special status of J&K under Article 370, the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, lifting 25 crore people out of poverty, and efforts for farmers such as "Modi's guarantee".

The resolution also condemned in strong terms the incidents at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal, decrying that "the way in which the dignity of women was violated" by leaders of a party led by a woman Chief Minister "puts humanity to shame".

The resolution went into details of how the aim of constructing a Ram Temple in Ayodhya was realised under Mr. Modi, who undertook religious rituals before the consecration ceremony, "setting an example of *sanatan* life" and "also visited various temples associated with Lord Rama".

"Not only has the temple been built but Prime Minister Modi has also effectively implemented the concept of Ram Rajya in the last 10 years. Whenever there will be a discussion

in the future, historians will consider this event as a milestone in the continuous rediscovery of India's civilizational heritage," the resolution said.

The new Parliament House, the passage of the women's reservation Bill, and India's achievements in space were also lauded.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi provides leadership to the entire country from Uttar Pradesh, beginning from Kashi Vishwanath Dham to Ayodhya, where Lord Rama has returned after five centuries," Mr. Adityanath said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh listed out the work done by the Centre for farmers under Mr. Modi. "Farmers are no less than family for Prime Minister Modi," he said.

Ms. Sitharaman, who seconded the resolution, spoke of the global gaze shifting towards the thriving economy of India amid recession in economies around the world.

BJP keen on 6 LS, 20 Assembly seats in A.P. in tie-up with TDP

Nistula Hebbar
Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

+

mily and the party. M.P. Congress president Jitu Patwari told reporters in Bhopal that Indira Gandhi had introduced Mr. Nath as her "third son" at a public meeting when he contested elections for the first time in the 1980s.

Mr. Nath, who reached Delhi after cancelling his political programmes in his bastion of M.P.'s Chhindwara, downplayed the rumours, but did not deny them outright. Responding to a reporter who pointed out that he was not denying the speculation, he said: "You are saying this, you people are getting excited. I am not getting excited, but if there would be any such thing, I would inform you first."

So far, no confirmation has been forthcoming from the TDP. According to party sources, TDP chief N.

Both parties had fought 2014 election together but parted ways later in 2018

Chandrababu Naidu is being tight-lipped about the possible seat-sharing arrangement, but has not denied the speculation.

An alliance is conditioned by several factors, including whether everyone on board is happy with their share of seats. Since the BJP is occupied with its National Council till Sunday, nothing will be finalised until February 20. Till then, it is all speculation and political flexing," a TDP strategist said.

The TDP and the BJP had fought the 2014 polls together, before Telangana

Winning 370 seats will be a true tribute to Syama Prasad Mookerjee: PM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Setting targets: PM Narendra Modi garlanded by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the BJP National Council meeting on Saturday. PTI

at least 370 more votes for those designated "vulnerable" by the party, that is, seats that the ruling party has not won before.

BJP general secretary Vinod Tawde briefed the media after the office-bearers meet and said that Mr. Modi had cautioned party leaders that the Opposition would be raising "unnecessary and emotional issues" during the polls but party members should stick to the issues of development, pro-poor policies, and the country's rising global standing. He also said that efforts should be made by the BJP to win as many seats as they can from

those designated "vulnerable" by the party at each of them" in the upcoming election compared to that in 2019.

Mr. Tawde said the party will launch a campaign to reach out to the beneficiaries of various Central government schemes from February 25.

Giving other details of the speech, Mr. Tawde said Mr. Modi noted that he has been the head of a government, including over 12 years as Gujarat Chief Minister, for nearly 23 years, and there has been no allegation of corruption.

Cong. sweats it out over tribal leader's likely exit

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

The Opposition Congress in Rajasthan is in a tight spot over rumours that its influential tribal leader and former Minister Mahendrajeet Singh Malviya is going to quit the party and join the BJP.

Mr. Malviya, 63, has given enough indications that he is not happy with the way he has been treat-

ed in the party.

A Congress Working Committee (CWC) member, he is four-time MLA from Bagidora in Banswara district.

Mr. Malviya, considered the Congress's prominent face in southern Rajasthan's tribal region, is reportedly miffed at not being appointed the Leader of Opposition after the party's defeat in the 2023 Assembly election.

Nadda urges BJP cadre to ensure third straight win

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Saturday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership was behind the party's current rise, urging the cadre to ensure that the Modi-led government scored a hat-trick of victories in the upcoming Lok Sabha election "with record-breaking numbers".

He was delivering the inaugural address at the BJP's National Council meeting here, with nearly 12,000 delegates present from all over the country.

Mr. Nadda's speech not only talked of the government's work in terms of development and welfare, but also the growth the party has seen since Mr. Modi's ascent to the national political stage.

Coining a new acronym, 'GYAN', which he broke down as "Gareeb" (poor), "Yuva" (youth), "Annadata" (farmer) and "Nari" (women), Mr. Nadda said that Mr. Modi had broken the "Opposition-built silos of vote-bank politics" and worked for these sections regardless of caste and community. He said while the BJP was in power in only around five States before Mr. Modi's rise in 2014, the party is in power in 12 States now and the BJP-led NDA in 17 States.

He rubbished the contention that the party's presence had been limited in South India, pointing out that the BJP had 29 Lok Sabha MPs and eight Rajya Sabha MPs from the region in comparison to 28 and seven, respectively, of the Congress.

"We stand by what we believe in. We are an ideologically driven party," Mr. Nadda said in reference to Article 370 and the Ram Temple.

Aware of NC's talks with BJP to form govt. in 2014: Azad

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) chairman Ghulam Nabi Azad on Saturday attacked the National Conference (NC), claiming that the latter was in talks with the BJP in 2014 to form a government in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The NC had previously formed alliances with the BJP, despite ideological differences, and remained silent on critical issues such as the revocation of Article 370. I was aware of their talks with the BJP in 2014," Mr. Azad, a former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, said.

He accused the NC of political opportunism and power-seeking tactics. "It is regrettable that the NC has consistently put their thirst for power above the welfare of the people," he said.

Mr. Azad said even after the revocation of Article 370, the NC is willing to "beg" the BJP for alliance partnerships, further exposing its opportunistic nature.

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice
Tender No : SE/PHC/MPM/309,310/2023-24, Jal Jeevan Mission Malappuram District - Pipeline works and road rehabilitation works of Wandoor, Tuvar, Kalikavu, Karuvakund, Edapatta in Panchayats Amrit Tanur Municipality Provision of household connection in Road restoration and other related works, EMD : Rs. 5,00,000, Tender fee : Rs. 16,500, Last Date for submitting Tender : 02-03-2024 03:00pm, Phone : 04832974871, Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in & www.tenders.kerala.gov.in

KWA-JB-GL-6-2381-2023-24

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS
TIRUPATI, TIRUPATI DIST.A.P : OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER
TENDER NOTICE
Adv.No.97/D3/CE/TTD/2023-24 & NIT No.391/SE-II & 165/SE-III/TTD/2023-24, Dated 15.02.2024
Name of Project : 31 Reconstruction of Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple with Raja Gopuram and Stone Prakaram (Sub-Temple of Sri KVS Temple) at Narayananayam, Tirupati District. Amount Rs. 690 Lakhs, Time for completion 12 months
2) Providing galleries at North West Corner of Madha streets in Open space at Tirumala, Amount Rs.525 Lakhs, Time for completion 12 months.
Note : For full details log on to the website <https://www.tirumala.org>.
ROC No. PRA/13963/Adv. No.375 / PRO/2024, Dated: 17.02.2024 EXECUTIVE OFFICER

57/F2/2024/I&PRD

KARNATAKA STATE LAW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
Navanagar, Hubballi – 580025
Accredited with 'A' Grade by NAAC
Phone: 0836- 2222901, Website: www.kslu.karnataka.gov.in
Fax: 0836- 222392, Email: kslulibrary@gmail.com

Ref No. KSLU/Lib/2023-24/ Date: 17.02.2024

Notification for Empanelment of Vendors for Supply of Printed Books to KSLU Library

Applications are invited by renowned Vendors/Booksellers /Distributors to seek empanelment as authorized vendors for supply of books to Karnataka State Law University Library for the financial year 2023-2024 which may be extended.

The application form along with the terms and conditions may be downloaded from the university website: www.kslu.karnataka.gov.in. The interested (Vendors/Booksellers/Distributors) can send their application with all the required documents through Post, Couriers or Registered Post. In the name of The Registrar, Karnataka State Law University, Navanagar, Near RTO Office, Hubballi- 580025 Dist: Dharwad, State: Karnataka, India. On the envelope it should be written Applications for Empanelment of Vendors for the Supply of Printed Books to Karnataka State Law University Library. It should reach within 27th February 2024 by 4.00 pm.

Sd/- Registrar
Karnataka State Law University, Hubballi

DPR/Dwd/805/Deshpande/2023-24

Through GoK KPP portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> only

The Executive Engineer Road Infrastructure (TEC), BBMP, Bangalore, 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 in the table below.

Sl. No. Name of the work

1. Providing 35 Engineering Graduate Employee in Civil Engineering to Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike . Approx. Amount put to tender (Rs. in lakhs): 159.29. EMD (in Rs.): 2,40,000/- (1 Lakh through e-Payment & balance Bank Guarantee).

Date of Calender: 1. Tender documents may be downloaded from the KPP portal from 19-02-2024. 2. Last Date for Tender queries: 22-02-2024 upto 3.00 p.m. 3. Pre bid Meeting on 22-02-2024 at 3.30 p.m. at office of Engineering in Chief, No.109, 1st floor, Annex Building 2, N. R. Square, Bangalore. 4. Last Date for Receipt of Tender is 27-02-2024 up to 4.00 p.m. 5. Date of opening of technical Bid is 28-02-2024 at 4.30 p.m. 6. Date of opening of financial Bid : after approval of Technical bid. 7. This tender notice can also be seen on the BBMP Website: www.bbmp.gov.in

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

CMYK

MISSING
Jayan, Age 42 (If you have any information about this person please contact below contacts numbers). Address of the missing person : Nallakkatu Veedu, Chovaloor, Keeprapra, Ezhukone, Kollam, Kerala. Missing from : 22.12.2023, 23.25 Hrs. Height: 175 CM, Complexion : Medium Colour, Details of wearing apparel at the time of missing : Full Sleeve Shirt and Pant. Brief of the case: Crime 2047/2003 U/s 57 of KPC Act. He went missing while travelling from Delhi to Kerala.
District Police Chief : 9497996908
DySP Kottarakkara : 9497940838
IOP Ezhukone : 9497987043
Ezhukone P.S : 0474 - 2462088

57/F2/2024/I&PRD

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike
Office of the Executive Engineer, Road Infrastructure (TEC), N.R. Square, Bangalore - 02
No. EE/RI-TEC/TEND/16/2023-24 Date: 17.02.2024

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP))

(Two Cover System)

The Executive Engineer Road Infrastructure (TEC), BBMP, Bangalore, 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 in the table below.

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

CMYK

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
CUTTACK (R&B) CIRCLE, CUTTACK
(e'- PROCUREMENT NOTICE)
E-mail ID:sectorb_2006@yahoo.co.in
Tel/Fax - 0671-2301751/2302751
Bid Identification No.CCE.Ctc.(R&B) 41/2023-24.

1. The Chief Construction Engineer, Cuttack (R&B) Circle, Cuttack on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites on Percentage rate basis bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Building work as mentioned below.
2. No. of work : 03 Nos.
3. Nature of work : Building works.
4. Class of contractor : 'A' Class.
5. Tender paper cost : Rs.10000/- (online)
6. Available of bid document in the website : From 19.02.2024 to 17.30 Hours of 28.02.2024
7. Date of opening of bid : Dt.29.02.2024 at 11.00 Hours.
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website [https](https://tendersodisha.gov.in)

IN BRIEF

**Dangal** child star Suhani Bhatnagar dies at 19

Suhani Bhatnagar, who played the young Babita Phogat in the Aamir Khan-starrer wrestling drama *Dangal*, has died at the age of 19. "She died at AIIMS yesterday," a close relative of the actor told PTI, confirming her death. The relative did not elaborate on what led to the young actor's death but media reports suggested she suffered medical complications after a leg fracture and was later admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. "Suhani, you will always remain a star in our hearts. May you rest in peace," Aamir Khan Productions said in a post on X. The film's director, Nitesh Tiwari, also mourned the death. **PTI**

VHP moves Calcutta HC over lioness being named Sita

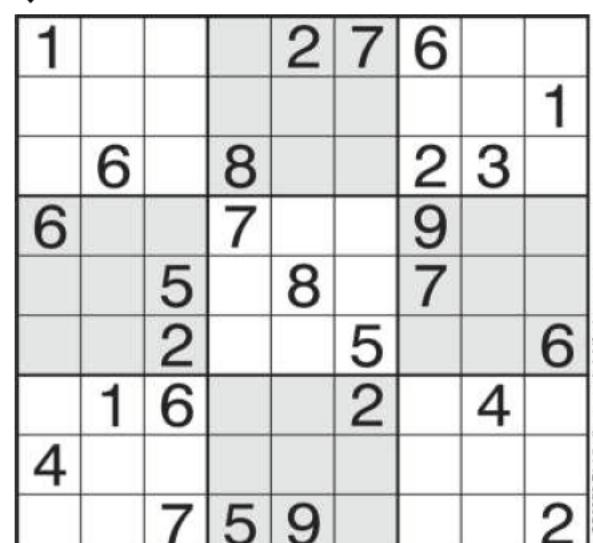
The Bengal unit of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has moved a writ petition in the Jalpaiguri circuit of the Calcutta High Court challenging the Forest Department's move to name a lioness, brought to the Siliguri Safari Park, Sita. The organisation claimed that such an act is sacrilegious, blasphemous and hurts the religious sentiments of Hindus. The writ petition also highlighted that while the lioness was named Sita, a lion which was brought along with it was named Akbar. The plea objected to the "lewd manner" in which the same was represented in the media in Bengal.

CBI moves court against Netflix docuseries on Indrani

The Central Bureau of Investigation on Saturday moved an application before a special court in Mumbai seeking a stay on a documentary series on Indrani Mukerjea, the prime accused in the Sheena Bora murder case, until the completion of the ongoing trial. The docuseries, titled 'The Indrani Mukerjea Story: The Buried Truth', delves into the disappearance of 25-year-old Bora, and is scheduled to premiere on streaming platform Netflix on February 23. CBI Special Judge SP Naik-Nimbalkar issued notices to Netflix Entertainment Services India and others for their response on the application, and listed the case for February 20.

India sends assistance to cholera-hit Zambia

India on Saturday sent medical and material assistance to Zambia as the southern African country deals with a deadly cholera outbreak. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar took to social media to announce the aid consisting of 3.5 tonnes of water purification supplies, chlorine tablets and ORS sachets handed over by the Indian High Commissioner in Zambian capital Lusaka Ashok Kumar. Zambia has been asking for more medical help to deal with the situation that has been described as a "cholera emergency". According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the outbreak began in the Zambian capital region and by early January 2024 had killed around 333 people.

SUDOKU

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

No. SS6072 Distribution: www.mightynews.com
DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

IAF showcases its weapons arsenal, firepower at Pokhran**Dinakar Peri**
POKHHRAN

The Pokhran range near Jaisalmer in Rajasthan reverberated with thunderous explosions and applause as the latest platforms of the Indian Air Force (IAF) – the Rafale jet, the Apache attack helicopter, and the indigenous Prachand light combat helicopter – along with legacy platforms, demonstrated their capability and firepower at the Vayu Shakti exercise on Saturday.

"During the display, approximately 50 tonnes of ordnance was dropped in a short span of two hours over an area of two square km. The event truly showcased IAF's offensive lethality and precision targeting capability," the IAF said in a statement. Chief of De-

fence Staff General Anil Chauhan was the chief guest.

The event began after 5 p.m. with three Chetak helicopters trooping the National Flag and the Air Force ensign, flying past the grandstand with the National Anthem playing in the background. This was followed by a sonic boom created by a Rafale aircraft. Two Jaguar aircraft flying at low levels followed the Rafale, taking high fidelity reconnaissance images of the area. The demonstration was carried out in light, dusk, and night conditions with simulations.

A Rafale fighter engaged an aerial target with the MICA multi-mission air-to-air missiles, while the indigenous Light combat Aircraft fired the Russian R-73



The IAF displays its full spectrum of combat and fire capabilities during Vayu Shakti, 2024 on Saturday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile.

In February 2019, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman shot down a Pakistani F16 jet with an R-73 fired from his MiG-21 before he was shot down and ejected in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The Apaches fired Hellfire missiles and rockets while Pra-

chand fired rockets.

This year, the exercise saw participation by 121 aircraft. Over two hours, the IAF showcased its capability to deliver weapons with long range, precision capability as well as conventional weapons, on target, while operating from multiple air bases. A couple of

the targets were missed, which officials said would have worked in the case of a real target as the proximity fuse would ignite destroying the target.

The Apache attack helicopter demonstrated its firepower in this event for the first time, engaging targets with Hellfire air-to-ground guided missiles, while Mi-17 helicopters engaged ground targets with rockets. In another first, Chinook helicopters demonstrated rapid deployment of combat assets by airlifting the Army's M-777 Ultra-Light Howitzers in an underslung mode, which later destroyed simulated enemy targets on the ground.

Combat support operations by transport aircraft included a "containerised delivery system" drop by a

C-17 heavy-lift aircraft, and an assault landing by a C-130J carrying IAF Special Forces, Garuds.

In joint operations of the Army and the IAF, weaponised versions of Advanced Light Helicopters Mk-IV destroyed simulated enemy targets with rockets. Special operations by the IAF transport and helicopter fleets, involving Garuds and Indian Army elements, were also on display.

Garuds inserted by Mi-17 helicopters carried out an "urban intervention" in anti-terror, insurgency operations aimed at clearing hideouts of terrorists. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles carried out a bomb damage assessment of all targets, which was live-streamed to the operations centre and the audience.

Jnanpith for Gulzar, Sanskrit scholar Rambhadracharya

Gulzar is considered one of the finest Urdu poets of his generation; Rambhadracharya is a Hindu spiritual leader, educator, and writer of more than 240 books and texts, including four epics

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Celebrated Urdu poet Gulzar and Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya have been selected for the 58th Jnanpith Award, considered by many to be the country's highest literary honour.



(From left) Gulzar and Jagadguru Rambhadracharya. PTI/ANI

Sampooran Singh Kalra, popularly known as Gulzar, is considered one of the finest Urdu poets of his generation. He is also known for his work in Hindi cinema. Rambhadracharya is a renowned Hindu spiritual leader, educator and writer of more than 240 books and texts, including four epics. He is the founder and head of Tulsi Peeth at Chitrakoot in Madhya Pradesh.

The Jnanpith Award is presented by the Bharatiya Jnanpith, which was established in 1944. The award carries a cash component of ₹11 lakh, a statue of Vagdevi, and a citation. It is the second time that the award is being given for Sanskrit

languages: Sanskrit litterateur Jagadguru Rambhadracharya and well-known Urdu litterateur Shri Gulzar, the Jnanpith selection committee said in a statement.

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He penned the lyrics for the song *Jai Ho* from the film *Slumdog Millionaire* that received an Oscar in 2009 and a Grammy in 2010.

He is known for his work in *Maachhis*, *Omka-*

ra, Dil Se, Guru, and Aandhi

Gulzar has also directed classics such as *Koshish, Parichay, Mausam, and Jaazat*, as well as the television serial *Mirza Ghalib*. The Bharatiya Jnanpith, in a statement, said: "Gulzar has been setting new milestones in the field of literature. In poetry, he invented a new genre 'Triveni' which is a non-mukaffa poem of three lines. Gulzar has always created something new through his poetry. For some time now he has also been paying serious attention to children's poetry".

Rambhadracharya, a polyglot who speaks 22 languages, is one of the four Jagadguru Ramanandacharyas of the Ramananda sect and has been holding this position since 1982. A poet and writer in several languages, he received the Padma Vibhushan in 2015.

Modi will become a 'dictator' if elected again, says Kharge**The Hindu Bureau**
MANGALURU

All India Congress Committee president M. Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday said that if Prime Minister Narendra Modi is elected to office again, he will become "a dictator" and there will not be any more elections thereafter.

Addressing a State-level convention of the Congress leaders and elected representatives here, Mr. Kharge said the Congress was the only party that could protect democracy as enshrined in the Constitution. He also alleged that the Prime Minister wants to "control every institution in the country" and has been "destroying" their autonomous status one by one.

He told party cadres to ensure the victory of the Congress candidates in the forthcoming elections, "otherwise Mr. Modi would

grow stronger". He was confident that the party would win 20 seats in Karnataka this time, he said. Upon watching the success of the Karnataka government's five promises, Mr. Modi had begun releasing advertisements on "Modi guarantees", he added.

Criticising the Central government for "freezing" the bank accounts of the Congress and the Youth Congress, Mr. Kharge said it was an attempt to completely drown out the Congress. He alleged that BJP got money from electoral bonds from black money holders to whom the Central government returned favours.

Mr. Kharge added that the Congress was the party that got Independence for the country and brought all-round development by establishing public sector undertakings in different fields and opening institutes of higher education.

Joblessness rising in country with education levels: study**A. M. Jigeesh**
NEW DELHI

The country's economy is witnessing a stagnating employment growth rate, weakening employment elasticity, slow structural transformation, and brewing structural problems in the labour market such as low female labour force participation and a rise in the unemployment rate (UR) with education levels, according to a study by D. Tripathi Rao of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Lucknow.

Prepared in collaboration with researchers from the Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani and the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, the study points to a surge in output growth and employment from 1987-88 to 2004-05, followed by "jobless growth" from 2004-05 to 2018-19 and a subsequent trifling rebound thereafter.

In an academic paper based on the study published in the *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, the researchers prescribed that a conscious effort to identify and promote the labour-intensive manufacturing sector will help in accomplishing inclusive growth. The researchers analysed data from the National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO) Employment

and Unemployment Survey and the Periodic Labour Force Survey Dashboard for the study.

They found that the agricultural sector, though employing the most youth, contributed low value addition to the overall economy, resulting in significant employment challenges. "Apparently, economic growth, rather than creating more jobs, has resulted in net labour displacement. Alongside the number of jobs created, it is equally important to examine the quality and decency of jobs, as there is a strong linkage between productivity and job decency," Prof. Rao said.

The study also points to gender disparity in the labour market and a growing level of unemployment for the highly educated youth than the less educated. In 2020-21, the total labour force in India stood at an estimated 556.1 million. "Out of this total, 292.2 million (54.9%) were self-employed, 121.1 million (22.8%) were in regular employment and an esti-

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Former Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar visited a bat-manufacturing unit in Pulwama district of south Kashmir on Saturday.

On a personal trip to Kashmir, the former cricketer, along with his wife Anjali and daughter Sara, went to MJ Sports in the district.

Mr. Tendulkar took keen interest in the process adopted by the local unit to make bats. He inspected the raw cleats undergoing seasoning ahead of the final process. He also took part in bat knocking to check the quality of seasoned cleats. He was briefed by the manufacturers about the bat industry of Kashmir. The cricketer was seen interacting with local people and posing for selfies, besides savouring local tea.

"Master Blaster, the god of cricket, Sachin Tendulkar blessed cricket bat factory, Chersoo, Awantipora, Pulwama, with a visit. Golden day for Kashmir willow bats," Basharat Qayoom, Deputy Commissioner, Pulwama, posted on X.

MHA extends Internet ban in Punjab till February 24**Vijaita Singh**
NEW DELHI

The Central government on Saturday extended the suspension of Internet services till February 24 in the jurisdiction of 20 police stations of Punjab in the wake of the ongoing farmers' agitation. The curb comes a day ahead of the third round of meetings of the protesting farm leaders with three Union Ministers.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on February 10 and February 12 invoked its powers under the British-era Indian Telegraph Act, 1851, to block Internet services in the seven districts of Punjab.

On Saturday, MHA issued fresh orders extending the temporary suspension from 12 a.m. Saturday to 12 a.m. February 24 in the "interest of maintaining public safety and averting public emergency". The orders were issued under the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017, framed under the Indian Telegraph Act.

Though law and order are a State subject, MHA for the first time used the power under the 1851 Act outside of the national capital. Mr. Tendulkar also pitched for the upcoming Khelo India Winter games, starting in Gulmarg on February 20. "I would suggest that you enjoy sports, be yourself. Try and play as fiercely as possible so that those memories stay with you. Sports is something which teaches a lot in life," Mr. Tendulkar said.

SCIENCE

Smoking leaves a lasting adverse impact on immune responses

The Hindu Bureau

Smoking has a lasting effect on specific human immune responses, persisting long after quitting, reports a paper in *Nature* this week. The study, which investigates a range of factors that might contribute to variability in immune responses, also identifies body mass index (BMI) and latent infections of cytomegalovirus (a common virus) as having a substantial influence on im-

mune responses. The findings offer insights into the factors that potentially underlie the risk of developing infections and other immune related illnesses such as cancer or auto-immune disease.

There is wide variability in the way humans respond to immune challenges, such as bacterial or viral infections, as seen with the diverse range of clinical outcomes observed after infection with SARS-CoV-2. Age, sex and genetic fac-

tors play a major role in this variability, but modifiable environmental factors, such as lifestyle, may also contribute. Understanding how such variables affect immune responses could improve the design of treatments and vaccines.

Darragh Duffy from the Institut Pasteur, Université Paris Cité, Paris, France and others investigated the effects of 136 environmental factors on variability of immune responses in

1,000 individuals. Among the environmental factors studied, smoking was shown to have the greatest influence on immune responses. It affected both innate and adaptive immunity – the former is a general response whereas the latter is more specialized and pathogen-specific. While the effects on innate responses (such as increased inflammatory responses) were transient and lost after smoking cessation, the effects on the adaptive re-

sponses persist for many years after quitting, altering the levels of cytokines released upon infection or other immune challenges. "The results collectively show a short-term effect of smoking on innate immune responses, and a long-term effect of smoking on adaptive immune responses," they write.

"Our study identifies a strong link between these previously proposed disease biomarkers and response to immune challeng-

es in smokers versus non-smokers. Furthermore, our findings in healthy donors open avenues for further exploration into understanding how smoking acts as a risk factor for cancers beyond the lungs," they write. BMI and cytomegalovirus are also found to have noteworthy effects on cytokine secretion, but the variance associated with smoking reaches levels equivalent to those linked to factors that cannot be changed.

Nearly 50% of pregnancies in India are high-risk

Prevalence of high-risk pregnancies was highest in Meghalaya (67.8%), Manipur (66.7%), Mizoram (62.5%) and Telangana (60.3%), while lowest in Sikkim (33.3%), Odisha (37.3%) and Chhattisgarh (38.1%)

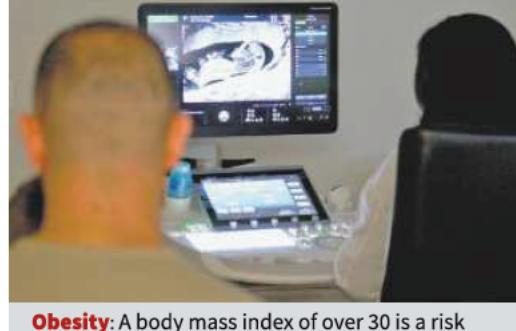
R. Prasad

A study that analysed the data of nearly 24,000 pregnant women in India has found the prevalence of high-risk pregnancies to be high at 49.4%. About 33% of pregnant women had a single high-risk factor, while 16% had multiple high-risk factors. Northeastern States of Meghalaya (67.8%), Manipur (66.7%) and Mizoram (62.5%) and the southern State of Telangana (60.3%) had the highest prevalence of high-risk factors in India, while Sikkim (33.3%), Odisha (37.3%) and Chhattisgarh (38.1%) had the lowest prevalence of high-risk pregnancies. With 33%, women in Meghalaya had the highest frequency of multiple high-risk factors followed by Manipur, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, as per a study published recently in the *Journal of Global Health* by researchers from the ICMR's National Institute for Research in Reproductive and Child Health (NIRRH) in Mumbai.

The study used the nationally representative cross-sectional household survey data of the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021). The researchers used the unit-level data from the Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) programme. Data from around 28,400 currently pregnant women aged 15-49 years were extracted. Of these, 23,853 women who were pregnant at the time of the survey were includ-

Causes for high-risk pregnancies

The study used the nationally representative cross-sectional household survey data of the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021)



Obesity: A body mass index of over 30 is a risk factor for pregnancy. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

■ Of the 23,853 pregnant women, 11,670 (49.4%) of them had one or more high-risk factors and were categorised as high-risk pregnancies

■ The leading high-risk factors were short-birth spacing, adverse birth outcomes (miscarriage, abortion, or stillbirth), and recent delivery being a caesarean section

■ Adolescent pregnancy and pregnancy when older than 35 years, being short (height below 140 cm), and a BMI of over 30 are risk factors for pregnancy

■ Short birth spacing (less than 18 months between previous birth and current conception) was observed in 31% of pregnant women, followed by 19.5% of women with a history of adverse birth outcomes

■ Short birth spacing was the primary reason for high prevalence of high-risk pregnancies

■ Short birth spacing was mainly due to non-usage of contraception to delay pregnancy

(10.3%), while advanced maternal age of over 35 years risk factor was most seen in Ladakh (14.3%), short stature (height below 140 cm) was highest in Puducherry (4.8%), and BMI over 30 was seen in Goa (17.4%). Women with more than

five children (higher birth order) were seen in Meghalaya (10.7%), whereas short birth spacing of less than 18 months was highest in Andhra Pradesh (48.1%), and caesarean delivery was highest in Ladakh and Puducherry (50% each). Women in Chandigarh had the highest adverse birth outcomes (40%) as well as preterm births (37.5%).

"The short birth spacing was the primary factor contributing to the high prevalence of high-risk pregnancies across the country. The major problem of short birth spacing was that half of the Indian women were not using contraception to delay their next pregnancy," the authors write. "The under-five mortality rate for shorter birth intervals was reported to be twice as high as the rate for birth intervals of three or more years."

According to the study, high-risk factors were more commonly seen during the third trimester (51%) than in the first (48.8%) and second trimester (48.6%).

The proportion of multiple high risks was higher among women with no educational category (22.5%) compared with educated women.

ed in the analyses. While 12,183 (50.6%) of pregnant women had no high-risk factors, 11,670 (49.4%) of pregnant women had one or more high-risk factors and were categorised as high-risk pregnancies.

The study found that pregnant women from vulnerable populations such as poor women and those who had no education had the possibility of having one or more risk factors for pregnancy. The leading high-risk factors were: short-birth spacing (the time interval between the last birth to the time of current conception being less than 18 months), adverse birth outcomes such as miscarriage, abortion, or stillbirth, and finally women whose most recent delivery was a caesarean section. Maternal risk fac-

tors included the age of the mother – adolescent women aged 15 to 17 years and women older than 35 years – pregnant women who are short (height below 140 cm), and have a higher body mass index of over 30. Additionally, the gestational weight gains up to 7-11 kg for overweight women and 5-9 kg for obese women were considered high-risk pregnancies.

Risk factors*

Lifestyle risk factors included tobacco use and alcohol consumption, while previous birth outcome risks included pregnant women with more than five children, women with short birth spacing and long birth intervals of over 59 months. Also, women with a history of preterm

deliveries, miscarriages, abortions, or stillbirths were included under the category of previous birth outcome risk factor.

Short birth spacing of less than 18 months between previous birth and current conception was observed in 31% of pregnant women, followed by 19.5% of women with a history of adverse birth outcomes – either miscarriage, abortion, or stillbirth.

Women who had recently delivered through caesarean sections were found in 16.4%. Other high-risk factors were women having longer spacing (15.8%), history of preterm delivery (14.1%) and comorbidities (6.4%).

Risk factor arising from adolescent pregnancies was highest in Tripura

How various coffee varieties differ in taste



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. Balasubramanian

How did the word coffee come about? Coffee came from Ethiopia, where they called it *qahwe*. Late Dr K.T. Achaya, in his book 'A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food' (Oxford University Press, 1998) mentioned that coffee seeds were brought to India by Arab traders for use by the gentry. Arabs introduced coffee plantations in South India and Sri Lanka. And a Sufi, Baba Budan, grew coffee plants around Chikmagalur, Karnataka. Starting in 1830, British pioneers planted coffee estates in two varieties of coffee plants – Coffee arabica at high altitudes, and Coffee robusta in lower reaches. (Arabica, because Arab

traders traded *qahwe* to Europe; Robusta, as this variety from West Africa is more resistant to disease). As I had mentioned in my earlier articles on coffee (December 8, 2019, and May 28, 2023, on South Indian filter coffee), coffee is a healthy drink particularly when mixed with hot milk. Many Americans drink black coffee with no added milk.

In the city called Kumarakom in Tamil Nadu, the residents who are fond of coffee, call their coffee Kumarakom Degree Coffee. They claim that this is unmatched by any other rival in taste. They further say that this coffee is pure Arabica, and not mixed with chicory, which is usual when we buy coffee beans or powder in department stores and coffee shops. Likewise, the Coffee shop in Secunderabad from where I buy my coffee, offers pure Arabica, as

well as Arabica mixed with chicory for those who want it that way.

What then is chicory? It too is a variety of coffee, and India is the third largest producer of chicory. In our country, it is grown in the Far Eastern states (Assam, Meghalaya, Sik-

kim). While some claim that chicory might be nutritionally better than Arabica, due to its lower content of caffeine. This molecule stimulates the central nervous system, but there is no conclusive evidence for it.

Andhra Pradesh is fa-

mous for its special coffee grown in the hilly region of Araku Valley, which they claim is the best coffee not only in India but also abroad. It is pure Arabica. Very good Arabica is also grown around the Shevroy hills of Tamil Nadu and the Manjarabad Fort, Kar-

nataka. Many youngsters in big cities across India buy and drink Starbucks coffee, and also at Café Coffee Day. Starbucks uses pure Arabica alone, while it is not clear whether Café Coffee Day uses pure Arabica or a mixture.

Better brews

Why is this fuss about these various major varieties of coffee?

The answer comes from a recent genetic study of coffee beans, by the Italian geneticist Dr Michele Morganante, who published a paper in January 2024 in *Nature Communications* that several cultivated Arabica coffees can offer better brews. *The Hindu* briefly mentioned this on its science page on January 27, 2024, and *BBC News* writes that these genetic changes promise better brews. It is thus time for Indian geneticists to sequence Indian coffees.



Diverse palate: Coffee seeds were brought to India by Arab traders. GETTY IMAGES

SNAPSHOTS



Why zebras go first in grazing succession in the Serengeti

Researchers have finally unravelled a longstanding question on why Serengeti zebra, wildebeest, and gazelle, which share limited food resources, follow the same migratory routes, in a body size dependent way. The researchers used novel data to show how a balance of species interactions and ecological factors regulate this process. They say competition pushes zebra ahead of wildebeest, and wildebeest then eats plants in a way that facilitates the development of newer growth for the trailing gazelle.



Transplants of lung stem cells for COPD show promise

A trial involving 28 patients with various stages of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease has found that autologous transplants of a type of stem cell derived from the lungs are safe in humans and show signs of being able to improve lung damage. The cell transplants improved the lung's ability to exchange gases and boosted the patients' performance during walking tests. Patients who received the therapy displayed improvements in the gas transfer capacity of their lungs 24 weeks after the transplants.



T cells hold hope against refractory multiple myeloma

Scientists have engineered a new variant of cancer-fighting T cells that can suppress multiple myeloma tumours in mice while showing superior persistence and endurance compared with standard CAR T cell designs. The new cells' promising effects and durability suggest they could grant badly needed treatment options to patients with refractory or relapsed multiple myeloma. Multiple myeloma is the second most common type of blood cancer in adults.



Question Corner

Virus-eating cells

Does the fluid-filled sac around the lungs function merely as a cushion from external damage?

It was long thought that the fluid-filled sac around our lungs function merely as a cushion from external damage. Turns out, it also houses potent virus-eating cells that rush into the lungs during flu infections. These cells are macrophages, which are immune cells produced in the body, and go into the lungs when there's an infection. Using a laser-based technique, researchers tracked macrophages going into the lungs of mice and found that the disease

became worse with more lung inflammation when the macrophages were removed from the mouse. Once the protein signals have been identified, it may be possible to create drugs that boost either the number of macrophages or their activity. The results show that macrophages are recruited to the lung during a influenza A virus infection and contribute to recovery. The researchers have been able to identify the source of lung macrophages independent of monocyte recruitment and local proliferation.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

Why did the SC invalidate electoral bonds?

What were the changes made in existing laws to allow the donor to maintain anonymity?

K. Venkataraman

The story so far:

The Supreme Court has declared the Electoral Bonds Scheme as unconstitutional. Donor anonymity was the main feature of the scheme, which has been criticised for long by transparency activists. These bonds constituted an important means of funding political parties since 2018. The court found that the scheme violated the citizens' right to information about the sources of finances raised by political parties. It directed the full disclosure of all details of contributors, recipient parties and denominations.

What was the scheme?

An electoral bond is in the nature of a promissory note which shall be a bearer banking instrument that does not carry the name of the buyer or payee. Any citizen or company could buy these bonds in denominations of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1 lakh, ₹10 lakh, and ₹1 crore and donate it to a political party. It can be encashed only through a bank account with an authorised bank. The State Bank of India was the bank authorised to issue and encash these bonds.

What changes were made for the scheme?

Section 13A of the Income Tax Act earlier said political parties must maintain a record of contributions above ₹20,000. The Finance Act 2017 amended this to make an exception for contributions through electoral bonds. As a result, parties were not required to maintain any record of what they received through the bonds.

Section 29C of the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951, earlier said parties should prepare a report on contributions in excess of ₹20,000 from any person or company in a financial year. This was amended in 2017

to the effect that contributions through electoral bonds need not be included in the report. Under Section 182(3) of the Companies Act, companies were required to disclose details of contributions to a political party, including the amount and the party's name, in its profit-and-loss account. However, after the amendment, it was only required to reveal the total amount given to parties in a financial year.

How did the government defend it in court?
The government's main points in defence of the scheme was that it allowed any person to transfer funds to political parties of their choice through legitimate banking channels and helped prevent unregulated contributions through cash. The confidentiality assured to the donors is beneficial to them as it promotes contribution and clean money to political parties. The use of banking channels will curb the role of black money in election funding and anonymity ensures that the donors do not fear retribution or coercion from parties to which they have not contributed. In an interesting argument, the government claimed that citizens did not have a general right to know the funding of political parties. The right to know was not general in nature, but one evolved by courts for the specific purpose of enabling the voter's choice of electing clean candidates.

What did the SC rule?
In past judgments, the apex court has held that voters have a right to information that is essential for them to exercise their freedom to vote. The court, therefore, held that information about funding to a political party is essential for a voter to express the freedom to vote in an effective manner. The Electoral Bond Scheme, to the extent that it infringes on this right to information by anonymising contributions through bonds, violates Article 19(I)(a), which pertains to freedom of expression.

As far as the purpose of curbing black money was concerned, the court applied a proportionality test, viz., whether the abridging of the voters' right to know through donor anonymity was achieved through the least restrictive means. It said alternatives such as funding through electronic transfer (for small contributions) and donations to an Electoral Trust (for larger amounts) were available. As the government was unable to establish that the scheme is the least restrictive means to balance the right of "informational privacy" to contributors and the right to information on political contributions, the amendments to IT Act and RPA were unconstitutional.

On the changes to the Companies Act, it ruled that the deletion of the disclosure requirement on details of contributions violated the voter's right to information. Also, the scheme allowed both profit-making and loss-making companies to make political contributions. Earlier, companies could only donate a percentage of their net profit. As the harm in the form of quid pro quo is much higher in the case of loss-making companies, the amendment was ruled manifestly arbitrary.

Is Russia testing a new anti-satellite weapon?

What would be its use? Won't it violate the provisions of the Outer Space Treaty? What kind of damage can it cause? Do Russia and the U.S. have ASAT capabilities? Why do theories about it also include the nuclear question?

Vasudevan Mukunth

The story so far:

In February 14, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, Mike Turner, called the media's attention to "information concerning a serious national security threat" and urged President Joe Biden to declassify it so more experts could be recruited to mitigate the danger it allegedly posed. A flurry of news reports followed, quoting various sources and referring to some kind of Russian space-based weapon.

What do we know about the 'weapon'?

On February 15, a day after Mr. Turner's statement, U.S. National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby confirmed the claims referred to a space-based "anti-satellite weapon" of Russian provenance. Mr. Kirby also said Russia hadn't yet deployed the 'capability' in question – meaning the object wasn't yet in orbit – and that it would violate the Outer Space Treaty (OST), a multilateral agreement that prohibits the placement of weapons of mass destruction in earth's orbit. By this time, some news reports had also quoted anonymous sources saying that the Russian capability was either nuclear in nature or that the satellite bearing the capability would be nuclear-powered. Mr. Kirby's statements didn't directly address these concerns. However, since he said the capability would violate the OST, the nuclear concern isn't out of the question yet. (The OST is against nuclear weapons in space, not nuclear-powered satellites.)

On February 16, President Biden confirmed Mr. Turner had referred "to a new Russian

President Biden says there are no indications what Russia has decided to do with a 'new nuclear anti-satellite weapon'

nuclear anti-satellite capability" and added there were no indications what Russia had decided to do with it. However, the White House has refused to declassify information about it.

What are anti-satellite weapons?

Anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons are designed to debilitate and/or destroy satellites that are already in orbit and operational. ASAT weapons violate the OST through the latter's Article VII, which holds parties to the treaty liable for damaging satellites belonging to other parties, and Article IX, which asks parties to refrain from the "harmful contamination" of space.

Russia, in the form of the erstwhile Soviet Union, has had ASAT capabilities since at least 1968. While the Cold War motivated ASAT weapon tests on either side of the Atlantic, the respective programmes refused to dwindle once relations thawed. Most of these weapons are kinetic, meaning they destroy satellites in orbit by rocketing into them or detonating an explosive near them, and blowing them to pieces. Because of the low gravity and lack of an atmosphere, the resulting debris can stay in orbit for a long time depending on their size. This result violates Article IX of the OST.

Are there space-based nuclear weapons?

In a high-altitude test in 1962 called Starfish Prime, the U.S. detonated a thermonuclear bomb 400 km above ground. It remains the largest nuclear test conducted in space. A Thor rocket launched the warhead to a point west of Hawaii, where its detonation had a yield of 1.4 megatonnes. More importantly, it set off an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) much larger than physicists had expected, damaging a few hundred street-lights in Hawaii, 1,500 km away. The charged particles and radiation emitted by the blast became ensnared in and accelerated by the earth's magnetic field, distorting the ionosphere and resulting in bright aurorae.

Starfish Prime was part of the U.S.'s high-altitude nuclear tests in 1962. The Soviet Union also conducted such tests around then with similar effects. For example, Test 184 on October 22, 1962, detonated a 300-kilotonne warhead 290 km above ground. The resulting EMP induced a very high current in more than 500 km of electric cables and eventually triggered a fire that burned down a power plant.

How will a nuclear weapon affect satellites?

The principal threats to other satellites from a space-based nuclear weapon are the EMP and the release of charged particles.

Starfish Prime itself temporarily knocked out roughly a third of all satellites in orbit at the time

and illustrates a failing relevant to the current context. An EMP from a nuclear weapon in space will affect all satellites around the point of detonation, including Russian satellites, those of its strategic allies (such as China), and of countries not involved in a particular conflict. It would also grossly violate the OST. Depending on the strength, location, and directedness of the explosion, it could also blow a large number of satellites to pieces, more than what a 'conventional' kinetic ASAT weapon might.

Scott Tilley, an amateur radio operator with a name for tracking down 'lost' satellites, wrote on X that "the damage is not immediate to most [satellites] but rather caused by new and intensified radiation belts". (However, researchers have been working on tamping down disturbances caused by space-based nuclear explosions in radiation belts around the earth through a process called radiation-belt remediation). Eventually, the result is more dead satellites and debris, raising concerns of the Kessler effect: when there is a certain level of debris in low-earth orbit, collisions among themselves as well as with other satellites could produce more debris, leading to a "collisional cascade" that rapidly increases the amount of debris in orbit. There is one more possibility. In 1987, the Soviet Union launched a rocket bearing a high-power laser that could target and destroy other satellites. The launch failed. But Marco Langbroek, a lecturer at Delft Technical University, the Netherlands, raised the possibility of the Russians launching a similar laser powered by a nuclear energy source.

What do the U.S.'s claims imply?

Modern civilisation depends heavily on satellites, which means they can be assets or vulnerabilities. But the inability to target a nuclear weapon in space – at certain satellites over others – mitigates its usefulness. This is why some security researchers have suggested that if the Russian capability is nuclear, it will be a weapon of last resort. Some others have said the 'nuclear' component is likely to be limited to the power source. "That Russia is developing a system powered by a nuclear source... that has electronic warfare capabilities once in orbit is more likely than the theory that Russia is developing a weapon that carries a nuclear explosive warhead," Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association advocacy group, told Reuters.

This said, Mr. Turner's comment, which alerted the world to the possibility, provoked sharp reactions in the U.S. His peers in the Republican Party accused him of attempting to drum up support for Ukraine and that he wished to have an "unreformed" version of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act passed, CNN reported. After the U.S. had warned its allies in Europe of the potential threat, the Kremlin called the claim a "malicious fabrication" and a ruse to allocate more funds for Ukraine.



On high alert: House Intelligence Chair Mike Turner speaks with presspersons on Capitol Hill on February 15 in Washington. AP

Can rheumatoid arthritis be prevented?

Can the disease be delayed by repurposing an existing drug? Can it act as a signalling pathway to start the appropriate immune response? What are the concerns? Where does India stand on treating this autoimmune disease?

Ramya Kannan

The story so far:

Earlier this week, *The Lancet* published the results of a study that proposed to repurpose an existing drug to treat rheumatoid arthritis as prophylaxis, to prevent disease. Can doctors prevent the onset of rheumatic arthritis in people (with indicative biomarkers) who have not yet developed the condition? The results of the study showed that "rheumatoid arthritis prevention trials are feasible and targeting the adaptive immunity of such individuals at an early stage, can prevent the onset of rheumatoid arthritis."

What is rheumatoid arthritis?

It is a chronic, autoimmune condition that mostly affects the joints. Scientists have not yet understood why an autoimmune condition occurs, allowing the immune system that protects the body, to attack itself. A patient experiences pain, swelling of joints and loss of function and mobility as a result of stiffness. As can be expected, this is likely to significantly lower a patient's quality of life. As per the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, of the National Institutes of Health, U.S., rheumatoid

If we are able to switch off the autoimmune system going errant, then that has great appeal

arthritis affects the lining of the joints, and damages the tissue that covers the ends of the bones in a joint. It often occurs in a symmetrical pattern, meaning that if one knee or hand has the condition, the other hand or knee is also often affected. Fatigue, occasional fevers, and a loss of appetite are to be expected, and there is a possibility that it may cause medical problems outside of the joints including in the heart, lungs, blood vessels, eyes and skin.

What did the study attempt to do?

Andrew P. Cope et al explain in the paper that the idea was to evaluate the feasibility, efficacy, and acceptability of treating high risk individuals with an existing drug, Abatacept, to treat rheumatoid arthritis.

The drug is a 'co-stimulation modulator' acting as a signalling pathway to start the appropriate immune response.

At the core of their experiment is the understanding that individuals at high risk for rheumatoid arthritis can be identified years before they actually develop the disease, even as early as decades earlier, by detecting autoantibodies associated with rheumatoid arthritis known as Anticitrullinated Peptide antibodies (ACPs), in the blood.

Although the presence of autoantibodies might precede disease onset by a decade or more, the combination of ACPs with symptoms, and evidence of subclinical synovitis (inflammation of the lining of the joint) by imaging, has increased the predictive power of identifying individuals who are most likely to progress to rheumatoid arthritis within two years. These features have provided a framework for evaluating therapeutic strategies that could delay or prevent disease onset, the authors say.

The results show that rheumatoid arthritis prevention trials are feasible and targeting adaptive immunity at an early stage, with Abatacept, an existing drug for RA, before clinically apparent arthritis is manifest, can prevent the onset of rheumatoid arthritis. The drug of choice is Abatacept, a biological disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drug which works by selectively modulating signals to spur

T-cell activation, or begin the body's immune response.

What's the Indian scenario with regard to rheumatoid arthritis treatment?

Rohini Handa, eminent rheumatologist at Apollo Indraprastha Hospitals says: "This is a story that has been going on for years – how do we delay the progression of rheumatoid arthritis?" Abatacept, a drug that comes under the classification 'biologics', he points out, is no longer available in India; it was withdrawn after it did not sell well in the Indian market. But in the last five years, there have been six drugs to treat rheumatoid arthritis. At the moment, worldwide, 10 biologicals are available, and six of them in India. About three years ago, a group of drugs called JAK inhibitors came off patent, and one of those drugs – tofacitinib – is available at ₹900 for a month's supply. It is also an oral drug, as against biologicals that might be intravenous, or a subcutaneous injection, depending on which part of the world one is in, he says. "No biological can compete with this."

Is early prevention of the disease significant?

So far treatment hinges on starting early, Dr. Handa explains. "If someone has a family history, such prevention has intuitive appeal. Autoantibodies come up years before the symptoms appear. If you are able to switch off the autoimmune system going errant, then that definitely has great appeal." However, there are some grey areas in using such preventive methods. "To use drugs for something that will likely happen 20 years from now, you will have to convince someone with a blood abnormality and no physical abnormality to start treatment. What is the end point for this, then? When do we cease treatment?" Dr. Handa asks. The study confirms this apprehension. Pre-disease treatment with Abatacept reduces progression to clinically-apparent arthritis during the 12-month treatment phase, and up to 24 months after stopping treatment. However, by 24 months, the parameters of those who received the drug were similar to those with the placebo group; it was similar between groups, indicating that treatment is not sustained. "We employ a common-sense approach – we tell all patients that smoking is a strong risk factor, and urge them to refrain from smoking, to exercise and eat healthy. These can be implemented on a mass scale, and we should ensure this message gets through," Dr. Handa says.



GETTY IMAGES

PROFILES

The 'reformed' General

Prabowo Subianto

The former military leader and Defence Minister, who is likely to become Indonesia's new President, was once accused of human rights abuses, but ran a campaign with a softer image of himself using Instagram and TikTok

Saumya Kalia

The party started almost a year ago. People commented on Instagram that the 72-year-old former military general, in a white hoodie, looked "ganteng" and "gemoy" – handsome and cute. The general perfected his signature dance moves at election rallies and interviews. The military leader, who was linked to brutality decades ago, is now a cuddly and almost cartoonish figure. His followers call themselves the Gemoy Squad.

Welcome to Prabowo Subianto's dance party; or an invitation to Indonesians to celebrate the 2024 elections – the world's largest one-day electoral exercise. On February 14, preliminary counts pointed to Mr. Subianto's victory in a historic three-way contest. Once confirmed, Mr. Subianto will succeed Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo as Indonesia's next President. Accompanying him as Vice-President is Gibran Rakabuming Raka, Mr. Widodo's son.

The soldier turned statesman two decades ago; so much so that Mr. Subianto is the eternal presidential candidate. For he fought two elections and lost both. His time has come, gone, and come again. But today, he is promoting himself as a new and reformed candidate for President. In 2024, he is no longer a populist but a claimant to Mr. Widodo's legacy. To his supporters, the new Subianto promises political continuity and prosperity. To his critics, Mr. Subianto is a volatile leader, capable of charting a volatile path for Indonesia's democracy.

Mr. Subianto was born into an aristocratic family in Jakarta in 1951. His father, an economist, went into exile upon conflict with the nation's founding President Sukarno. The family shifted from Singapore to London to Kuala Lumpur to Zurich. The young Mr. Subianto spoke in an interview about his early experiences of racism: "Because we were often bullied, often insulted, we became tough." The family returned to Indonesia in the late 1960s, at the beginning of Suharto's autocratic

30-year-long reign. Mr. Subianto would eventually marry Suharto's daughter.

Mr. Subianto has always expressed his love for animals. With humans, "there is betrayal, perfidy and lying", he says. It's easier with animals. "You are loyal to them. They are loyal to you."

Controversial past

A young Mr. Subianto received training from the U.S. military in the 1980s. He rose through the ranks to become commander of the special armed forces. During this period, Mr. Subianto was accused of fomenting anti-Chinese riots and directing the killings of separatists in East Timor, an occupied Indonesian territory at the time. He denied responsibility.

In 1998, Suharto's regime fell at the peak of the Asian financial crisis. Mr. Subianto witnessed a fall of his own: he was dishonourably discharged for his role in human rights abuses, including the disappearance of 23 democracy activists, 13 of whom were never found. He was briefly banned from travelling to the U.S. The allegations have not been proven in court so far.

Mr. Subianto went into a self-imposed exile to Jordan in 2002. With his brother Hashim's financial backing, he started his own party, the Great Indonesian Movement Party (Gerindra). His political role models include Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and Thailand's Thaksin Shinawatra (also accused of human rights abuses). Mr. Thaksin was a "bit abrasive, divisive", but "got things done and the poor love him", he told *Financial Times*. Also on the list is Jawaharlal Nehru, who "came from a wealthy family but always defended the poor".

An internal intelligence assessment by the CIA in 1983 predicted that the "captain could rise to national leadership". "We believe that President Suharto may eventually look to his son-in-law to succeed him both as national leader and as guardian of the Suharto family fortunes."

Mr. Subianto's presidential aspirations have been 22 years in the making. He ran a populist campaign in 2014 claiming that the system was rotten, leaders corrupt and Indonesia



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

was at risk of becoming a 'failed state'. He alleged electoral fraud when Mr. Widodo won, sparking deadly riots in Jakarta. He lost again in 2019, but was given the defence portfolio in Mr. Widodo's Cabinet.

However, 2024 was different. Firstly, he went from being a hardline nationalist and Islamist to a loyalist, integrating himself with Indonesia's political elite. Mr. Subianto cast aside his rabble-rouser image to position himself as a "pengabdian", a "patriot ready to service his people" and a "keen student and follower" of Mr. Widodo's leadership, suggest analysts.

Secondly, Mr. Subianto's popularity drew momentum from Indonesia's young electorate, who make up more than half of the 204 million voters. This is a demographic that has no living memory of Suharto's brutal regime. Spectators note that Mr. Subianto's campaign is designed for a TikTok generation, a "softer" counter-image to his pre-2019 mercurial persona. On Instagram, Mr. Subianto shares pictures of food, vintage family portraits and his cat Bobby. TikTok is flooded with videos of his signature dance moves.

Some worry that with TikTok, Mr.

Subianto is revising history, ensuring young voters remain unaware of the alleged human rights abuses. Others, however, suggest young Indonesians are keen to judge the General based on promises of employment rather than the sins of the past. "...everybody at some point has an intention to reform. And now he is different," a 17-year-old told a media outlet.

Chatham House's Ben Bland argued that people's enthusiasm for Mr. Subianto "reflects their conviction that he will uphold Jokowi's positive economic legacy" and a "faith that their democratic institutions can rein in even a strong-willed President".

Fear for the future

But analysts fear that Mr. Subianto's electoral promises of new jobs and social welfare "lack serious reform commitment". He also pledged to protect Indonesia from the influence of foreign powers. "Don't let us be pitted against each other by foreign nations," he said last week. Mr. Subianto recently called for a status quo "rebalancing" where Indonesia learns not from the West, but from countries like China and India.

Activists fear Mr. Subianto's presidency will breathe new life into Suharto's old repressive regime. With Mr. Subianto's candidacy, the election is "an existential moment for the pro-democracy and human rights movement".

An early sign, they argued, is the way Mr. Widodo's government pushed a controversial law allowing his son to be Mr. Subianto's running mate. With Mr. Gibran and an 'institutionalist' such as Mr. Subianto at the helm, incumbent Mr. Widodo would be the first in Indonesia's political history to have played kingmaker.

It is unclear which persona will govern: the nationalist General, the blazing Islamist, or the *gemoy* grandfather. "...most who know him well emphasise his unpredictable personality. And that is never good for governance," scholar Eve Warburton told BBC. For now, the "reformed" Subianto promises to "protect all citizens". For now, he promises "joy". The TikTok General will soon be Indonesia's President, at last.

THE GIST

Since 2014, Prabowo Subianto ran for the President of Indonesia twice but lost on both occasions. He became Defence Minister in 2019 during Joko Widodo's second term.

During the early political years, Subianto was a hardline nationalist and Islamist. He has now integrated himself with Indonesia's political elite. Widodo's son is his running mate this time around.

One of the reasons for his success is his appeal among the youth who make up more than half of the country's 204 million voters. His social media outreach played a major role in winning over the young voters

Ukraine's star-crossed partner

Starlink

The Elon Musk-owned broadband Internet service has had a rocky relationship with Kyiv over the lengths to which it will aid the country in its war against Russia

John Xavier

Hours before Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Moscow used a malware to disable routers of Viasat, a U.S.-based satellite company, crippling Ukrainian military's command system, and making it impossible to mount a defence.

Deputy Prime Minister Mykhailo Fedorov frantically reached out to Tesla CEO Elon Musk, via platform X, formerly Twitter.

Mr. Fedorov, in a tweet, requested the tech billionaire to activate his low-Earth orbit (LEO) broadband service, Starlink, in the country. In response, Mr. Musk said: "Starlink service is now active in Ukraine. More terminals en route."

Within a few days, Musk-owned SpaceX began shipping Starlink terminals to Kyiv. The rectangle-shaped receivers have since played a crucial role in assisting Ukraine's armed forces.

But recent reports suggest Kyiv is surreptitiously being outmanoeuvred by Moscow as Russia is allegedly procuring Starlink terminals indirectly from private sellers in Arab countries and using them in occupied Ukraine.

While both Russia and SpaceX have denied reports of buying or selling



REUTERS

Starlink terminals to each other, such allegations underscore the rocky relationship between Ukraine and Starlink, a service owned by the world's richest man.

A swarm in space In 2019, when Mr. Musk launched Starlink, a satellite swarm, his idea was to provide space-based Internet to people in remote parts of the world. Each LEO satellite in the network has a mass of about a quarter tonne, and they are positioned on the geosynchronous equatorial orbit, at about 550 km above the earth, surrounding the planet, er 30,000 LEO satellites in the long-term.

As on February 16, 2024, SpaceX has 5,459 Starlink satellites in orbit, out of 5,850 launched, per data maintained by space historian and astrophysicist Jonathan McDowell.

Starlink's constellation delivers high-speed Internet that supports streaming and video calls. Such capabilities, particularly on the battlefield, provide strategic advantage to the military by connecting defence forces to uninterrupted, secure communication channels and helping them deploy state-of-the-art weapon systems.

Ukraine said last year that about 42,000 terminals were being used in the country by the military, hospitals, and aid organisations. The military uses Mr. Musk's satellite Internet to connect drones, coordinate artillery fire systems and attack Russia's positions. Once when Moscow attempted to jam and cut

Ukraine's access to the Internet service, SpaceX countered the sabotage effort by tightening its software.

Taking the tab

All this support comes at a cost, which per Mr. Musk's October 2022 estimate is about \$20 million a month. He also said his company could not support Ukraine's Starlink needs 'indefinitely' for free.

Mr. Musk's comment on who will foot Ukraine's Starlink bill came at a time when relationship between Kyiv and SpaceX owner was starting to sour as the billionaire's Twitter post on urging Ukraine to seek a negotiated solution with Russia and cede Crimea for good brought him the ire of Ukrainians.

Mr. Musk later backtracked and said the company would pay for Starlink service. Eventually, in June 2023, the Pentagon signed a contract with SpaceX to supply Starlink service to Ukraine.

Starlink has played a pivotal role in helping Ukraine mount a strong defence against Russian invasion forces. But Mr. Musk's changing perspective on the war makes it difficult for Kyiv to call it a fully reliable service. Now with Russia allegedly gaining access to the terminals, Ukraine finds itself on the back foot once again.

Chequered Congressman

Ashok Chavan

The former Maharashtra CM's legacy is tainted by the Adarsh Housing Society scam, but his switch from the Congress to the BJP is a victory for the ruling alliance against the erstwhile MVA

Shoumojit Banerjee

In Maharashtra's long season of vertiginous political twists which began in 2019, senior Congressman Ashok Chavan's switch to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was perhaps the least surprising.

Mr. Chavan's putative defection had been in the air ever since rebel Shiv Sena leader and current Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's revolt triggered the fall of the erstwhile Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in mid-2022.

Ashok's father, Congress stalwart Shankarrao Chavan, known by his moniker 'Headmaster', had been a confidante of former Prime Ministers – Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv.

As the scion of this remarkable Congressman, the young Ashok cut his teeth at various positions in the party, starting as a student leader in the University of Pune.

He soon became a force to reckon with in the Maharashtra Congress, particularly the Marathwada region and especially the Nanded district, which became emblematic of high-level corruption by scheming politicians and bureaucrats.

Mr. Chavan's name became the focal point of the probe as the scandal revealed these flats were part of a more significant accumulation of personal wealth by the then Chief Minister and his family, estimating their total worth to be more than ₹2,000 crore.

In firefighting mode, the party high command urged Mr. Chavan to resign.

The 26/11 terror attacks of 2008 on Mumbai turned out to be a silver lining in Mr. Chavan's political career: Vilasrao Deshmukh resigned and the Congress high command nominated Mr. Chavan for the top post. Mr. Chavan steered the Congress out of this crucible of fire in the 2009 Assembly election.

Mr. Chavan's second term as Chief Minister was marrred by the Adarsh Cooperative Housing Society scam which surfaced in 2010. The accused Adarsh high-rise tower, with flats meant for widows of defence person-

nel, became emblematic of high-level corruption by scheming politicians and bureaucrats.

Mr. Chavan's name became the focal point of the probe as the scandal revealed these flats were part of a more significant accumulation of personal wealth by the then Chief Minister and his family, estimating their total worth to be more than ₹2,000 crore.

He was back in Uddhav Thackeray's Cabinet soon after the formation of the MVA government. However, his differences with present Congress chief Nana Patole only widened schisms within the party.

But it is the spectre of the Adarsh scam that has forever rendered Mr. Chavan vulnerable.

the party fielded him from Nanded in the 2014 general election. He proved his mettle by winning the seat.

Mr. Chavan was subsequently made Maharashtra Congress president in 2015. However, his tenure as MPCC chief proved controversial as he was perceived as being 'soft' on the BJP and its leader Devendra Fadnavis.

In the 2019 general election, Mr. Chavan lost the Nanded seat to the BJP and resigned as the MPCC chief. Yet, he managed to salvage pride by winning the Bhokar Assembly seat in the 2019 Assembly election.

He was back in Uddhav Thackeray's Cabinet soon after the formation of the MVA government. However, his differences with present Congress chief Nana Patole only widened schisms within the Congress.

Going beyond the improprieties, Shankarrao and Ashokrao Chavan are the only father-son duo in Maharashtra's history to become Chief Ministers.

Small wonder the BJP is jubilant to have snared Ashok Chavan, as he becomes one more former Congress knight in their arsenal to pierce the MVA's cuirass in Maharashtra.

There followed a period of enforced political oblivion for Mr. Chavan until



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

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IN BRIEF



'Hyderabad saw 1% drop in housing registrations in Jan.'

The Hyderabad region has witnessed a 1% annual fall in registrations of residential properties in January to 5,411 units, according to Knight Frank. As many as 5,454 housing units were registered in January 2023 across the Hyderabad residential market, which includes four districts namely Hyderabad, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Rangareddy and Sangareddy. The data covers transactions of both primary (first sale) and secondary (resale) markets, according to Knight Frank. **PN**

Spirit maker Pernod Ricard's India sales rose 4% in H1

French spirit maker Pernod Ricard has reported a 4% growth in sales in the Indian market during the first half of the current financial year. The company, which follows July to June fiscal year, has witnessed a "strong market demand for spirits" in India, as per the latest earnings statement from Pernod Ricard. Moreover, "strong growth" is expected in the second half (January to June 24) from India, which is the second-largest market globally after the U.S. **PN**

TARC unveils luxury homes costing over ₹9 cr. to ₹12 cr.

Luxury realty developer TARC Ltd. announced its latest residential real estate project, TARC Kailasa at Patel Road, New Delhi, with a ticket size of more than ₹9 crore to ₹12 crore per apartment. The 1.7 million sq. ft. development will spread over a six-acre land parcel and have 418 units in 3BHK and 4 BHK configuration. There will be five high-rise towers with 35 storeys each and these will come up at a development cost of ₹1,200 crore, the developer said.

+ Bharti realty arm to expand Worldmark Aerocity

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Bharti Real Estate has announced the second phase of expansion of its commercial real-estate project the Worldmark Aerocity, Delhi.

This phase comprising Worldmark 4, 5, 6 and 7 form the commercial precinct with about 3.5 million sq. ft. of gross leasable area (GLA) for modern Grade A offices space and 3 million sq. ft. of retail space.

The phase 1 comprising Worldmark 1, 2, and 3 with 1.3 million sq. ft. of space has already been leased out while the second phase is expected to attract marquee customers, it said.

HVAC industry to grow at 16% CAGR: Daikin India MD Jawa

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI



The Indian heating, ventilation, air-conditioning (HVAC) industry is projected to grow at about 16% year-on-year, reaching \$30 billion in size by 2030, an industry executive said.

"The Indian HVAC industry is projected to reach \$30 billion by 2030, with a CAGR growth of 15.8% from 2021, fuelled by progressive policies, infrastructure development, and rising disposable income," said K. J. Jawa, CMD, Daikin India at the ACREX India 2024 exhibition of heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, and intelligent buildings.

He said the government's investments in construction would boost market demand, aligning with the focus on carbon emissions reduction and energy efficiency.

'Smart HVAC' "The shift towards smart HVAC systems is notable, driven by the rising energy consumption and improving system efficiency. Buyers are prioritising intelligent solutions offering enhanced controls, real-time monitoring, and IoT integration," he added.

According to Yogesh Thakkar, President, American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ISHARE), the HVAC segment was observing high growth trajectory through initiatives like the Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC) programme.

"With the substantial government investment of \$1.45 trillion in infrastructure projects over the next 5 years, we stand on the brink of an era marked by unprecedented advancement," he added.

Advancements in HVAC technology were revolutionising energy efficiency and cost reduction.

SLMG Beverages to invest ₹3,000 cr. to expand bottling capacity for Coca-Cola

Lalatendu Mishra

MUMBAI

SLMG Beverages, the largest independent bottler of Coca-Cola in India and South West Asia, plans to invest ₹3,000 crore in calendar year 2024 to expand capacity in its existing territories and facilitate its entry into the Bihar market.

The Coca-Cola Company recently announced its decision to transfer its bottling operations to three territories, including Bihar. SLMG Beverages had bagged rights for the Bihar market and as per the agreement it will assume ownership and operational responsibility of that territory.



Packing fizz: The firm will expand capacity in its existing territories and enter the Bihar market with the investment. THE HINDU

Currently, the company caters to the 250 million population in Uttar Pradesh other than the National Capital Region portion, 4 districts of Madhya Pradesh and the whole of Uttarakhand. With Bihar in its kitty, it will grow its market to 360 million.

Partiosh Ladhani, joint managing director of SLMG Beverages said, "We just acquired the Bihar territory which contributes about 4% of India's

sale. Now SLMG will be contributing to 22% of India's volume, and close to about 23% in value (for Coca-Cola). So, we will cross the turnover mark of ₹7,500 crore in 2024."

On the growth in its area of operations he said, "This industry is all about population. So, the more the population, the more the opportunity for us to grow," he added.

On the investment plan he said, "We had announced to invest more than ₹5,000 crore in the soft drink business in 2023 and 2024. We have already invested about ₹2,000 crore last year. So in 2024 we are going to invest more than 3,000 crore in the business," he added.

Cotton price rise worries mills

Textile mills raise concern over the price of cotton sold by the Cotton Corporation of India, which has gone up to ₹62,000 a candy; mills argue that it is unviable to purchase cotton at the current price and warn they may be at risk of shutting down

M. Soundariya Preetha
COIMBATORE

The recent rise in cotton prices in the international market and of cotton sold by the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) in the domestic market has become a matter of concern to textile mills, especially small-scale units.

Atul Ganatra, president of the Cotton Association of India, said the current Indian cotton prices were lower than the international prices by almost ₹4,000 a candy and the association expects cotton exports this season to be almost 20 lakh bales.

About 65% of the Indian

Rising worries

Cotton price in India is lower than in the global market, but textile mills believe prices should be even lower



Small mills say increase in CCI's cotton prices by almost ₹3,500 a candy in the last one week is a challenge

They argue the price of cotton should be about ₹58,000 a candy for them to sustain their business

Cotton producers say it remains to be seen if current price rise will persist going forward in the Indian market

crop (about 200 lakh bales) have arrived in the market and the domestic demand is "very good".

However, Koti Rao, president of the AP Textile Mills Association, told *The Hindu* on Saturday that the viable price of cotton for

the mills should be about ₹58,000 a candy (254 kg). However, the price of cotton sold by the Cotton Corporation of India went up to ₹62,000 a candy.

A few people have increased the prices when they bid for cotton sold by

The textile industry is also grappling with poor domestic and foreign sales, and rising competition

the Cotton Corporation of India," he alleged.

According to Mr. Rao, there is hardly any sign of revival of the textile industry and if the current situation persists, more textile mills will close down.

N. Pradeep, who runs an MSME mill in Tamil Nadu, said the increase in cotton prices (sold by CCI) by almost ₹3,500 a candy in the last one week poses significant challenges for yarn manufacturers.

The textile industry is grappling with poor international demand and domestic sales and import of finished garments has intensified competition. It is worth noting that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has rated the textile industry as 'red', further highlighting the severity of the situation. The CCI should reconsider its pricing strategy and ensure that future adjustments are reflective of the current market realities," Mr. Pradeep said.

According to J. Thulasidharan, president of the Indian Cotton Federation, it remains to be seen if the current increase in cotton prices would sustain in the Indian market.

Fed signals 'patience' on rate cuts as data deceives

Reuters
WASHINGTON/NEW YORK

A week of disappointing U.S. economic data, including stronger-than-expected inflation and weakening spending, has Federal Reserve policymakers doubling down on their wait-and-see approach to interest rate cuts, but not discounted.

The latest bad news came in the form of a 0.5% month-on-month surge in January's producer price index excluding food and energy, potentially undoing some of what policymakers call 'remarkable' progress on inflation.

That followed reports showing that consumer prices rose more than expected last month, even as a big drop in retail sales and a slide in factory output amid severe cold in some parts raised questions about economic momentum.

Fed policymakers speaking on Friday took it all in stride, seeing continued if "bumpy" progress toward the 2% goal and continued, if cooling, labour market strength that leaves the economy on track to a soft landing.

"It has not shaken my confidence we are going the right direction," San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank President Mary Daly told economists.

"We will need to resist the temptation to act quickly when patience is needed and be prepared to respond agilely as the economy evolves," Ms. Daly stressed.



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The government has raised the authorised capital of state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) to ₹21,000 crore, from ₹10,000 crore, to enhance the operational capabilities and fulfill its mandate effectively, the Food Ministry said on Saturday.

FCI is the government's nodal agency that undertakes procurement of foodgrains at a minimum support price (MSP) to protect

the interest of farmers. It also maintains strategic stocks and distributes the grains under different welfare schemes.

"The increase in author-

ised capital is a significant step towards enhancing the operational capabilities of FCI," the ministry said in a statement.

FCI resorts to cash credit, short-term loan, ways and means etc. to match the gap in the fund requirement. The increase in the authorised capital will reduce the interest burden, decrease the economic cost and ultimately affecting the government subsidy positively, it said.

With this infusion of capital, the FCI should also



THE HINDU GROUP

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Currently, the company caters to the 250 million population in Uttar Pradesh other than the National Capital Region portion, 4 districts of Madhya Pradesh and the whole of Uttarakhand. With Bihar in its kitty, it will grow its market to 360 million.

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SANAA

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels claim latest Red Sea vessel strike



Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels in a statement on Saturday claimed an attack a day earlier on an oil tanker in the Red Sea, the latest in a series of strikes which have led to retaliation by Britain and the U.S. The strike came on the same day that Washington's redesignation of the Houthis as "terrorist" came into force. AFP

TOKYO

Japan launches H3 rocket capable of delivering cargo to the Moon



Japan's space agency toasted a successful blast-off for its new flagship rocket on Saturday, making it third time lucky after years of delays and two previous failed attempts. The next-generation H3 has been mooted as a rival to SpaceX's Falcon 9, and could one day deliver cargo to bases on the Moon. AFP

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Philippines accuses Chinese boats of repeated 'dangerous' actions



The Philippines on Saturday accused Chinese coast guard ships of "dangerous" manoeuvres after they repeatedly blocked a vessel delivering supplies to Filipino fishermen at a reef off the Southeast Asian nation's coast. The incidents happened near the China-controlled Scarborough Shoal on Thursday and Friday. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Afghan women fear going out alone due to Taliban decrees: UN



Afghan women feel scared or unsafe leaving their home alone because of Taliban decrees and enforcement campaigns on clothing and male guardians, according to a report from the UN mission in Afghanistan. The report published on Friday said the decrees are being enforced through arrest, harassment and intimidation. AP

Ukraine withdraws from Avdiivka as Russia pushes on

The Ukrainian withdrawal paves the way for Russia's biggest victory since the May 2023 capture of Bakhmut; the city is key to Russia's aim of securing full control of two eastern 'Donbas' provinces

Reuters
MOSCOW

Russia said on Saturday that its forces had inflicted a series of defeats on Ukrainian forces along the 1,000-km front line just as Ukrainian troops withdrew from the devastated eastern town of Avdiivka. The Ukrainian withdrawal from Avdiivka paves the way for Russia's biggest victory since the May 2023 capture of Bakhmut after a deadly battle that left thousands dead in a devastated city with barely a building intact.

After the failure of Ukraine to pierce Russian lines last year, Moscow has been trying to grind down Ukrainian forces just as Ky-



Final stand: Ukrainian servicemen pile up earthbags to build a fortification not far from the town of Avdiivka on Saturday. AFP

iv ponders a major new mobilisation and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appoints a new commander to run the war. Russian forces made inroads against Ukrainian troops along the front lines in a number of different directions, according to the Rus-

sian Defence Ministry.

"Avdiivka, as a major node of resistance for the armed forces of Ukraine, has fallen," pro-Russian military blogger Yuri Podo-

lyak said on Telegram.

Avdiivka sits in the industrial Donbas region, 15 km north of the Russian-

occupied city of Donetsk. Before the war, its Soviet-era coke plant was one of Europe's biggest.

Both Russian and Ukrainian officials say the battle for Avdiivka cost many thousands of lives, though neither side has given any casualty figures.

Avdiivka is the key to Russia's aim of securing full control of the two eastern "Donbas" provinces - Donetsk and Luhansk. These are among the four Ukrainian regions Russia says it has annexed but does not fully control.

Avdiivka is seen as a gateway to Donetsk city, whose residential areas Russian officials say have been shelled by Ukrainian forces, sometimes from Avdiivka.

Kremlin foe Alexei Navalny's team confirms his death, cause unclear

Associated Press
ST PETERSBURG

Alexei Navalny's spokesperson confirmed on Saturday that the Russian Opposition leader had died at the age of 47 at a remote Arctic penal colony, and said he was "murdered," but it is unclear where his body is.

An official note handed to Navalny's mother stated that he died at 2:17 p.m. local time on Friday, Kira Yarmysh said. She added that an employee of the prison colony said that Mr. Navalny's body was taken to the nearby city of Salekhard as part of a probe into his death. She demanded that his body be handed over to his family.

When a lawyer and Navalny's mother visited the morgue in Salekhard, it was closed, his team said. The lawyer called the mor-



People pay tribute to Alexei Navalny at the Memorial to Victims of Political Repression in Saint Petersburg on Saturday. AP

gue and was told that Navalny's body was not there, his team said.

Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service reported that Navalny felt sick after a walk and became unconscious at the penal colony in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 km northeast of Moscow. An ambulance arrived, but he couldn't be revived. The cause of death

is still "being established," it said.

Maria Pevchikh, head of the board of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, said that the Opposition leader would "live on forever in millions of hearts."

273 detained

At least 273 people have been detained at events across 32 Russian cities since the death of Navalny,

(With Reuters inputs) according to rights group OVD-Info. It is the largest wave of arrests at political events in Russia since Sept. 2022, when more than 1,300 were arrested at demonstrations against a "partial mobilisation" of reservists for the military campaign in Ukraine.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most formidable domestic opponent, had been jailed since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow to face certain arrest after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin. He was later convicted three times, and received a sentence of 19 years for extremism.

The news of his death comes less than a month before an election that will give Mr. Putin another six years in power.

Blinken, China's Wang discuss U.S. sanctions

Agence France-Presse
MUNICH

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken raised concerns over Beijing's backing for Russia's war against Ukraine on Friday in talks with China's top diplomat Wang Yi, who called for Washington to lift sanctions on Chinese entities.

Mr. Blinken and Mr. Wang's meeting on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference follows an extremely fraught period between the two giants over issues including Taiwan, trade and hu-

man rights.

Mr. Blinken underlined the "importance of continuing to implement the progress made" at a November summit between U.S. President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, said State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller.

Mr. Wang echoed Mr. Blinken's sentiments about the Biden-Xi summit, saying both sides needed to work to "promote a sound, steady and sustainable development of bilateral relations", according to China's Foreign Ministry.

Pakistan's CEC, Chief Justice involved in poll-rigging, alleges senior bureaucrat

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD

A senior Pakistani bureaucrat on Saturday alleged that the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the Chief Justice were involved in poll-rigging in the recent election as he resigned from his post, taking the "responsibility for all this wrongdoing".

Speaking to presspersons at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Mr. Chattha said the candidates who were "losing" the elections "were made to win".

Former Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha's remarks came amidst jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

The Election Commission of Pakistan has strongly rejected Chattha's allegations

voted in this," he was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper.

Mr. Chattha resigned from his office after "accepting responsibility" for manipulation of poll results, it said.

He said "stabbing the country in its back does not let him sleep."

The former bureaucrat said there was "pressure" on him to the extent that he contemplated suicide but then resolved to present matters before the public.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has strongly rejected the allegations Mr. Chattha has made against the Chief Election Commissioner.

Punjab's caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has also ordered an "impartial probe" by a "high-level committee" into the allegations made by Mr. Chattha.

loans or insurance terms.

Mr. Trump accused President Joe Biden of driving the case, calling it "weaponisation against a political opponent, and vowed to appeal. As the case was civil, not criminal, there was no threat of imprisonment. But Mr. Trump said ahead of the ruling that a ban on conducting business in New York state would be akin to a "corporate death penalty".

A separate trial on Mr. Trump's attempts to overturn the 2020 election is on hold in Washington, DC.

Surineni and Abhay make a winning start to their campaigns

MOTORSPORTS

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Chetan Surineni and Abhay Mohan won the MRF Formula 2000 and MRF Formula 1600 races respectively for a winning start to their campaigns in the MRF MMSC FMSCI National car racing championships here on Saturday.

Earlier, Biren Pithawalla (N1 Racing) pulled off a fine win in the premium Indian Touring Cars class. Performance Racing's Hatim Shabbir Jamnagarwalla took the honours in the Indian Junior Touring Cars segment, while Angad



Victor: Chetan Surineni, who won the MRF Formula 2000 class.

MRF Formula 2000 (Race-1): 1. Chetan Surineni (12:49.401); 2. Jaden Rahman Pariat (13:20.579); 3. Tarun Muthiah (13:58.255).

MRF Formula 1600 (Race-1): 1. Abhay Mohan (13:49.827); 2.

Zahan Commissariat (14:00.386); 3. Raaj Bakhrus (14:23.370).

Indian Touring Cars (Race-1): 1. Biren Pithawalla (Team N1) (15:21.359); 2. Ritesh Rai (Arka Motorsports) (15:22.782); 3.

Deepak Ravikumar (Performance Racing) (15:34.211).

Indian Junior Touring Cars (Race-1): 1. Hatim Shabbir Jamnagarwalla (Performance Racing) (15:41.732); 2. Srinivas Teja (Performance Racing) (15:53.915).

Super Stock (Race-1): 1. Angad Matharoo (Buzzing Hornet Motorsports) (16:48.478); 2.

Balaprasath (DTS Racing) (16:52.781); 3. Anirudha Arvind (Redline Racing India) (16:54.402).

MRF Saloons (Toyota Etios) Race-1: 1. Diana Pundole (18:10.588); 2. Anirudha Arvind (18:15.446); 3. Jai Prashanth (18:15.850).

MRF Formula 1600 (Race-1): 1. Abhay Mohan (13:49.827); 2.

Sport

Kalki should repeat in the Deccan Bookmakers Welfare Association Alcock Arabian Million

HYDERABAD: Trainer Bharat Singh's colt Kalki, who won well in his last start, should repeat in the Deccan Bookmakers Welfare Association Alcock Arabian Million (Gr. I), the feature event of Sunday's (Feb. 18) races.

SEA BIRD PLATE (1,100m) (Terms), 3-y-o only (Cat. II) 12.40 p.m.: 1. Cannon Rose (4) P. Sar Kumar 56, 2. Glorious Power (3) Afroz Khan 55, 3. Blazing Saddle (1) Md. Ismail 53.5, 4. Peacock (1) Md. Ismail 53.5, 5. Kenna (2) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 54.5, 6. Only The Brave (10) Md. Ismail 53.5, 7. Sangreal (9) Santosh Raj 53.5, 8. Pontefract (4) B.R. Kumar 52, 9. Calista Girl (5) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 56, 10. Shadow Fax (2) Kaviraj 51.5.

1. KENNA,

2. MALIBU,

3. SHADOW FOX

2 DREAM GIRL PLATE (1,800m), rated up to 25 (Cat. III) – 1.00.

Muaser (5) Nakhat Singh 60, 2.

Tortilla Chip (1) P. Sar Kumar 59, 3.

Cash Register (2) Surya Prakash 59, 4.

London Bell (2) S. Jodha 57.5, 5.

Special Effort (6) Md. Ismail 52.5 and 8. Ivanhoe (4) Surya Prakash 59.

1. MIDNIGHT STAR,

2. MISS MAYA,

3. COLT PISTOL

2 RAJA BAHDUR VENKATARAMA REDDY MEMORIAL CUP (Div. I) (1,600m), 5-y-o and upward, rated 60 to 85 (Cat. II) – 3.45. 1. Painted Apache (5) Ajeeth Kumar 61.5, 2. Mireya (4) Ajay Kumar 56.5, 3. Yesterday (7) Surya Prakash 55.5, 4. Miss Marvelous (6) Md. Ekrem Alam 54.5, 5. N. R. I. Sport (1) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 53, 6. City Of

ARABIAN MILLION (Gr. 3) (1,400m) (Terms), 3-y-o only – 2.45. 1. Kalki (2) Surya Prakash 56, 2. Dapper Look (1) Nakhat Singh 56, 3. Malibu (3) Md. Ekram Alam 57.5, 4. Adhut (7) Afroz Khan 55.5, 5. Kenna (2) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 54.5, 6. Only The Brave (10) Md. Ismail 53.5, 7. Sangreal (9) Santosh Raj 53.5, 8. Pontefract (4) B.R. Kumar 52, 9. Calista Girl (5) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 56, 10. Shadow Fax (2) Kaviraj 51.5.

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5 DECCAN BOOKMAKERS WELFARE ASSOCIATION ALCOCK

Blessing (8) P. Sar Kumar 52.5, 7. Del Heights (2) Mohit Singh 52 and 8. Sun Dancer (3) Afroz Khan 51.

1. MIREYA,

Sport

THIS IS BAZBALL!

Duckett backs Root's audacious reverse-ramp shot amidst backlash



Joe Root's audacious reverse-ramp off Jasprit Bumrah that resulted in his dismissal may have received a lot of flak but Ben Duckett has stood right behind his teammate. "I'd be interested to know if those people were against it when he was doing it to Pat Cummins and hitting him for six. I've no words really for it," Duckett said.

MISSIED IT!

I was getting a massage during Jaiswal's blitzkrieg: Siraj



Mohammed Siraj sent the media conference enclosure into splits when he was asked about the mood in the dressing room when Yashasvi Jaiswal shifted gears. "I was getting a massage when Yashasvi was going after England bowlers, so now after going back I will watch his knock," he said, bursting into a smile.

MARK OF RESPECT

Indian team wears armbands in memory of Dattajirao Gaekwad



Indian players wore black armbands in the memory of former captain Dattajirao Gaekwad on the third day of the third Test against England. Dattajirao, who played 11 Tests for India between 1951 and 1962, died on February 13 after remaining hospitalised for 12 days. At 95, he was India's oldest living Test cricketer.

HUMDINGER

Pathirana, Hasaranga help Sri Lanka pip Afghanistan



Sri Lanka defeated Afghanistan by four runs in the first T20I at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium on Saturday. The scores: Sri Lanka 160 in 19 overs (Hasaranga 67, Farooqi 3/25) bt Afghanistan 156/9 (I. Zadran 67 not out, Pathirana 4/24). PoM: Pathirana. Toss: Afghanistan.

Jaiswal blazes away to a century to put India in the driver's seat

Siraj registers a four-for, his best figures at home, as the hosts bowl out England for 319; Gill chips in with an unbeaten fifty as Rohit's men's overall lead swells to 322 with eight wickets in hand

ENGLAND IN INDIA

Amol Karhadkar

RAJKOT

Four is a necessity, five is a luxury. That's been conventionally the case with India's bowling attack, especially while playing at home. In the absence of one of the five – the 500-wicket man R. Ashwin who had to fly back home midway through the game due to a family medical emergency – the other four shouldered the burden.

Promising opener Yashasvi Jaiswal then opened his shoulders with panache to virtually bat England out of the game. India completely dominated the day by having England on the mat at close of play at the Niranjan Shah Stadium.

Thanks to the bowling quartet's magic, led by Mohammed Siraj's best bowling figures at home, India folded England's first essay for 319, with the visitors managing to add 112 runs for the loss of eight wickets to their overnight total.

Hefty lead
Riding on Jaiswal and Shubman Gill jam before the opener had to retire due to backache, India finished the day at 196 for two. With a hefty lead of 322, India will hope to set a gargantuan target.

Jaiswal may have taken the fizz out of England's attack with a charge that would have made even England head coach Brendon McCullum proud, but it was Siraj and Co. that



In great touch: Jaiswal bossed the England attack before he retired due to backache. VIJAY SONEJI

seized the initiative for India in the first-half. Jasprit Bumrah and Kuldeep Yadav – who had been swept out of the attack by centurion Ben Duckett the previous evening – started the proceedings. And Joe Root's attempted reverse-ramp off Bumrah only resulted in a sharp catch to Jaiswal at second slip in the fifth over.

In the next over, Kuldeep turned one in sharply to find Jonny Bairstow rooted in his crease for a blob. The wrist-spinner changed the tactics and stifled the run flow by bowling wide of off-stump with a spread-out field. He was finally rewarded when Duckett chased a real wide one and scooped it to covers.

At 260 for five, it was

down to Ben Stokes, playing his 100th Test, and Foakes to keep England in the hunt.

But Ravindra Jadeja enticed Stokes into an error with the England captain skyling one to long-on. That

dismissal minutes after lunch triggered a collapse as England lost the last five wickets for just 20 runs.

With the ball having started reversing, Siraj used all his variations effectively to wind up the

tail. His perfect yorker to Rehan Ahmed and an incoming delivery that shattered James Anderson's off-stump were a treat to watch as England wound up in the second session.

Changing gears

Despite starting the second essay with twin boundaries off Anderson in the opening over, captain Rohit Sharma missed a sweep off Joe Root to be adjudged leg-before through DRS.

Soon afterwards, Jaiswal changed gears when he had cruised to 35.

A 19-run over off Anderson started the charge and he followed it up with drives, slog-sweeps, lofted sixes and even two reverse-sweeps in a Rehan over that came straight out of England's book.

When he was forced to return to the dressing room due to backache at the start of the 30-minute extension, soon after celebrating his second hundred of the series with a trademark jump, Rajat Patidar threw away his wicket for the second time in the match.

Yashasvi Jaiswal retd. hurt 104 (133b, 9x4, 5x6), Rohit Sharma lbw b Root 19 (28b, 3x4), Shubman Gill (batting) 65 (120b, 6x4, 2x6), Rajat Patidar c Rehan b Hartley 0 (10b), Kuldeep Yadav (batting) 3 (15b); Extras (lb-5): 5; Total (for two wkts. in 51 overs): 196.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-89 (Crawley, 13.1 overs), 2-182 (Pope, 29.6), 3-224 (Root, 39.5), 4-225 (Bairstow, 40.4), 5-260 (Duckett, 50.1), 6-299 (Stokes, 64.6), 7-299 (Foakes, 65.1), 8-314 (Hartley, 69.5), 9-314 (Hartley, 70.2).

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 15-1-54-1, Siraj 21.1-2-84-4, Kuldeep 18-2-77-2, Ashwin 7-0-37-1, Jadeja 10-0-51-2.

INDIA — 2ND INNINGS

SCOREBOARD

INDIA — 1ST INNINGS

445

ENGLAND — 1ST INNINGS

Zak Crawley c Patidar b Ashwin 15 (28b, 2x4), Ben Duckett c Gill b Kuldeep 153 (151b, 23x4, 2x6), Ollie Pope lbw b Siraj 39 (55b, 1x6), Joe Root c Jaiswal b Bumrah 18 (31b, 2x4), Jonny Bairstow lbw b Kuldeep 0 (4b), Ben Stokes c Bumrah b Jadeja 41 (89b, 6x4), Ben Stokes c Rohit b Siraj 13 (37b, 2x4), Rehan Ahmed b Siraj 6 (13b, 1x4), Tom Hartley st Jurel b Jadeja 9 (17b, 2x4), Mark Wood (not out) 4 (3b, 1x4), James

FALL OF WICKETS

1-89 (Crawley, 13.1 overs), 2-182 (Pope, 29.6), 3-224 (Root, 39.5), 4-225 (Bairstow, 40.4), 5-260 (Duckett, 50.1), 6-299 (Stokes, 64.6), 7-299 (Foakes, 65.1), 8-314 (Hartley, 69.5), 9-314 (Hartley, 70.2).

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INDIA — 2ND INNINGS

FALL OF WICKETS

1-30 (Rohit, 11.3), 2-191 (Patidar, 47.4).

ENGLAND BOWLING

Anderson 6-1-32-0, Root 14-2-48-1, Hartley 15-2-42-1, Wood 8-0-38-0, Rehan 8-0-31-0.

Long spells worked for the bowlers, says Siraj

Amol Karhadkar

RAJKOT

Hallmark of a standout player and a great team is their ability to change – and execute – plans midway through a game. A combination of Ben Duckett's onslaught on the second evening and R. Ashwin's withdrawal due to family emergency meant India had no option but to switch into Plan B to keep England at bay.

Mohammed Siraj, the pacer who returned his best figures at home, said, "In the morning when we got to know that Ash *bhai* is not there, more responsibility fell on us. Rohit *bhai* told us that we will need to bowl long spells and I love bowling long spells," Siraj said after the third day's play.

"For a fast bowler in Test match cricket, one



Siraj. VIJAY SONEJI

cannot set up a batsman in three-four overs. And we got success due to long spells. We stopped runs and got wickets."

Long spells indeed turned out to be a blessing in disguise. After the second day's play, Ashwin had stressed how Ben Duckett's onslaught had not perturbed India's bow-

ling unit. While Siraj reiterated the fact that "they were hitting good balls for fours," the third morning saw aggressive fields making way for defensive fields.

Kuldeep Yadav and Jaspit Bumrah regained the control at the start, with Kuldeep bowling a 12-over spell to pick two key wickets.

"Since we were one bowler short, the remaining four bowlers had to bowl long spells. Ash *bhai* (Ashwin) was our fifth bowler and I only wish that his mother gets well soon," Siraj said.

"If you bowl long spells you should not try much but be consistent with it (line and lengths). They are not used to defending all six balls (in an over), if they have defended two, they are going to attack the third."

Jaiswal looks like a superstar in the making: Duckett

Sports Bureau

RAJKOT

Referring to left-handed opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal as a "superstar in the making," Ben Duckett, the England opener, stressed England deserved credit for changing the way Test cricket is being played by various teams.

"When you see players from the opposition playing like that, it almost feels like we should take some credit that they're playing differently than how other people play Test cricket. We saw it a bit in the (English) summer and it's quite exciting to see other



Jaiswal. VIJAY SONEJI

players and other teams are also playing that aggressive style of cricket," Duckett said, when asked about Jaiswal's counterattack that took the game away from England in the last session. "He looks like a superstar in the making. Unfortunately (for us), he is in some very good form at the moment. He is due a couple of low ones."

Duckett gave India full credit. "It was one of those days when we have to give credit to India. This morning they were very good and they didn't make it easy to score. It felt like their plans were better than last night and unfortunately we just kept on losing wickets at the wrong times."

"Then with the ball I didn't think we bowled badly at all and Jaiswal has played another incredible innings there," he said.

Liverpool eases past Brentford

EURO LEAGUES

Agencies

LONDON

Darwin Nunez scored with an exquisite chip as Liverpool kept its foot on the throttle in the Premier League title race with a 4-1 win at Brentford on Saturday to go provisionally five points clear at the summit.

Nunez's first-half effort opened the scoring, and goals after the break from Alexis Mac Allister and the returning Mohamed Salah effectively ended the contest. Ivan Toney pulled one back for Brentford, but Cody Gakpo grabbed Liverpool's fourth to wrap up a comfortable win for the visitors.

The results: Premier League: Brentford 1 (Toney 75) lost to Liverpool 4 (Nunez 35, Mac Allister 55, Salah 68, Gakpo 86).



Exquisite: Nunez chips the ball over Brentford's goalkeeper Flecken for Liverpool's opener. AFP
Burnley 0 lost to Arsenal 5 (Odegaard 4, Saka 41+pen, 47, Trossard 66, Havertz 78).
Fulham 1 (Muniz 63) lost to Aston Villa 2 (Watkins 23, 56); Newcastle 2 (Gordon 58+pen, Ritchie 90+2) drew with Bournemouth 2 (Solanke 51, Semenyo 69).
Nottingham Forest 2 (Awonyi 45+5, Hudson-Odoi 90+4) bt West Ham 0; Tottenham 1 (Kulusevski 46) lost to Wolves 2 (Gomes 42).

Ramkumar-Myneni pair triumphs; Nagal loses to Napolitano in the semifinals

N. Sudarshan

BENGALURU

Stefano Napolitano handed Sumit Nagal his first defeat in nine matches to enter the singles final of the dafaNews Bengaluru Open ATP Challenger at the KSLTA courts inside Cubbon Park here on Saturday.

The burly Italian of 6'5" frame and a power-packed game and his relatively stubbier opponent with agile feet matched each other for long periods.

But it was the visitor who held steady when it mattered the most – in the tiebreaker of the first set and the last two games of the second – to clinch the match 7-6(2), 6-4.

In Sunday's final, Napolitano will play South Korea's Seongchan Hong,



who overcame Spaniard Oriol Roca Batalla 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

Such was Napolitano's court presence and reach that Nagal had to go for the lines repeatedly. That he managed it time and again was credit to his form and belief. But it was also not one of those days when everything came off for the World No. 98.

Napolitano, on his part, hit ferociously when the ball was in his strike zone, but appeared to struggle when it was skiddy and low.

This tussle was evident in the way the duo traded breaks two times each in both sets. But at 4-4 in the second, Napolitano came up with one of his cleanest holds and that meant Nagal had to display nerves of

steel to stay in match.

But two forehand errors

from Nagal and two lucky net cords for Napolitano ended the home favourite's pursuit of a second

straight Challenger title.

Later on, Ramkumar Ramathan and Saketh Myneni won their second doubles title in as many weeks, beating Frenchmen

Constantin Bittoun Kouzmine and Maxime Janvier 6-3, 6-4 in the final. This was also the pair's third trophy together and second in the Garden City.

IN BRIEF

**Haryana women claim U-23 title after beating UP**

Haryana defeated Uttar Pradesh by 62 runs in the final of the BCCI-women's u-23 One Day cricket in Chennai on Saturday.

The scores: Haryana 172/9 in 50 overs (Deeya Yadav 36, Gyanbharti Jangra 31 n.o., Almas Bharadwaj 4/16) bt UP 110 in 43.4 overs (Archana Devi 30, Safali Verma 3/18).

Nitin Kumar Sinha loses in the doubles final

Nitin Kumar Sinha and Mitsuki Leong of Malaysia lost 6-0, 7-6(3) in the doubles final to second seeds Tsung-Hao Huang and Jeong Yeongseok in the ITF men's tennis tournament at Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand, on Saturday.

Parth Deorukhakar and Yashika Shokeen win titles

Top-seeded Parth Deorukhakar defeated doubles partner and sixth seed Omkar Shinde 7-5, 7-6(6) in the boys' final of the National series under-18 tennis championship at the Joygaon Academy in Jhajjar on Saturday.

The results, finals: Boys: Parth Deorukhakar bt Omkar Shinde 7-5, 7-6(6); Doubles: Panshu Uboveja & Akshat Dhull bt Parth & Omkar 5-7, 7-5, [10-6].

Girls: Yashika Shokeen bt Ananya Dhankhar 6-3, 6-1; Doubles: Ananya & Snigdha Patibandha bt Vaishnavi Singh & Samaira Kohli 6-1, 6-4.

**Haryana Steelers gets the better of U Mumba**

Haryana Steelers continued its winning run at home as it dismantled U Mumba to clinch a 46-40 win in the Pro Kabaddi League Season-10 match in Panchkula on Saturday. Haryana Steelers' Vishal Tate, making his PKL debut, was the star of the game with 15 raid points. In the other match of the day, Gujarat Giants recorded a comfortable 36-29 win over U.P. Yoddhas.

U-14 boys top qualification for WJT Asia-Oceania tennis

The Indian team of Tavish Pahwa, Hruthik Katakan and Fazal Ali Meer qualified for the WJT Asia-Oceania under-14 tennis tournament from the pre-qualifying event played in Colombo. India defeated Sri Lanka 2-0 in the final on Saturday. India was already assured of its berth in the Asia-Oceania event in the girls' section. The boys beat Guam and Nepal 3-0 each in the group stage. In the knock-outs, India had a bye in the first round, and defeated Syria 3-0 in the semifinals.

Delhi HC stays VFI election, seeks Sports Code compliance

Elections to the Volleyball Federation of India (VFI) were stayed by a Delhi High Court order issued by Justice Sachin Datta on Friday. A group of eminent players have been trying to clean the VFI, which was derecognised by the Union Sports Ministry after December 31, 2019. Arjuna awardee Amir Singh had filed a writ petition in the Delhi HC, pointing out that the election was being held without the federation being compliant with the sports code.

LIVE TELECAST

Ranji Trophy: Jio Cinema App, 9.30 a.m.
India vs England: 3rd Test, day 4, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 9.30 a.m.
Serie A: Jio Cinema App, 5, 7.30; Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Monday)
LaLiga: Jio Cinema App, 6.30, 8.45 & 11 p.m.; Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 1.30 a.m. (Monday)
PVL: Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6.30 & 8.30 p.m.
ISL: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 7.30 & 10 p.m.
PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.
Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8 & 10 p.m.

Samantray's ton leaves Delhi bowlers with little respite

Features in a century partnership with Swain to prop up the side to 440, Dhull unbeaten on 57 will look to carry on with the hosts still 254 behind, Vats impresses with 66

RANJI TROPHY

Rakesh Rao
NEW DELHI

Delhi gained some lost ground on the second day of its Ranji Trophy league match against Odisha but needed to do a lot more for the first-innings lead at the Jamia Millia ground here.

After keeping Odisha's first innings to 440 on Saturday, Delhi finished the day at 187 for two, needing 254 more runs to seize the lead on a placid surface. When Odisha resumed the day at 314 for four, Delhi was looking for another long day. The duo of centurion Subhranshu Senapati and the seasoned Biplob Samantray were well set to hurt the host but the early fall of Senapati proved a huge relief for Delhi.

However, there was no further respite when Samantray and Ashirwad Swain put on 111 runs for the sixth wicket. Playing his 82nd Ranji Trophy match, Samantray scored 110 - his seventh century - and moved within 100 runs of completing 4000 runs in the competition.

It was the wicket of



Class act: Samantray sent the bowlers on a leather hunt. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Swain that triggered a lower-order collapse. The last five wickets, including Samantray, fell in the space of 10 runs.

Samantray, after hitting 12 fours and a six during his 217-ball innings, surprisingly gave his wicket to Delhi skipper and part-time off-spinner Himmat Singh. Interestingly, Himmat finished with three wickets and his analysis read 9-19-3.

When Delhi batted, opener Gagan Vats was involved in two successive 50-plus stands at the top of the order. Vats and Anuj Rawat put on 67 runs for the first wicket to calm the nerves in the dressing room.

After Yash Dhull joined Vats, the second-wicket stand produced 77 runs and kept Odisha at bay.

Vats, however, missed a big one when he was run out for 66, that included nine boundaries. Dhull and Ayush Badoni denied Odisha any more success and added 43 runs during their ongoing third-wicket partnership.

The scores:

Odisha – 1st innings: Swastik Samal c Rawat b Vijayan 38, Shantanu Mishra c Himmat b Vijayan 76, Sandeep Patnaik c Rawat b Mathur 12, Subhranshu Senapati c Vijayan 111, Govinda Poddar b Mathur 27, Biplob Samantray c Kshitiz b Himmat 110, Ashirwad Swain c Himmat b Mathur 46, Rajesh Mohanty b

Himmat 6, Jamala Mohapatra b Himmat 0, Harshit Rathod b Mathur 0, Sunil Roul (not out) 0, Extras (b-13, nb-1) 14; Total (in 129.2 overs): 440.

Fall of wickets: 1-58, 2-85, 3-165, 4-233, 5-319, 6-430, 7-437, 8-437, 9-440.

Delhi bowling: Vijayan

25-5-74-3, Chauhan 20-1-85-0, Mathur 45-2-9-74, Choudhary 19-10-108-0, Badoni 3-0-11-0, Himmat 16-1-42-3, Jonny Sidhu 1-0-10-0.

Delhi – 1st innings: Anuj Rawat

b Roul 40, Gagan Vats (run out)

66, Yash Dhull (batting) 57, Ayush

Badoni (batting) 15, Extras (b-5,

lb-2, nb-2) 9; Total (for two

wickets in 46 overs): 187.

Fall of wickets: 1-67, 2-144.

Odisha bowling: Mohanty

10-1-46-0, Poddar 8-1-25-0, Roul

9-0-44-1, Rathod 11-2-36-0,

Samantray 3-1-6-0, Mohapatra

5-0-23-0.

RANJI SCORES, ROUND 7, DAY 2

Vijay Shankar (TN, 130). E.
LAKSHMI NARAYAN

Ganesh Satish 62, Yuvraj Singh 4/48 vs Railways 105 in 37.3 overs (Arindam Goswami 62 n.o., M. Murasingh 5/28).

At Hubballi: Chandigarh 267 in 106.4 overs (Karan Kaila 79, Vijaykumar Vyshak 4/77, Hardik Raj 4/56) vs Karnataka 268/3 in 63 overs (Mayank Agarwal 57, Hardik Raj 49 batting, Manish Pandey 102 batting).

Group B: At Mumbai: Assam 84 & 108 in 33 overs (Shardul Thakur 4/31) lost to Mumbai 272 in 64.4 overs (Shivam Dube 121 n.o., Dibakar Johri 5/74).

At Lucknow: Chhattisgarh 414 in 145.5 overs (Sanjeet Desai 202, Amandeep Khare 114) vs UP 110/3 in 27 overs (Saurabh Kumar 55 batting).

At Kolkata: Bihar 95 & 32/1 in 14 overs vs Bengal 411/5 decl. in 104.1 overs (Abhimanyu Easwaran 200 n.o., Abhishek Porel 56).

At Vizianagaram: Andhra 272 in 96.4 overs (Maheep Kumar 81, Ricky Bhui 87 n.o., Karan Shinde 43) vs Kerala 258/3 in 81 overs (Rohan Kunnummal 61, Krishna Prasad 43, Sachin Baby 87, Akash Chandran 57).

Group C: At Salem: Tamil Nadu

435 in 131.4 overs (B. Indrajith 187, Vijay Shankar 130, Sukhwinder Singh 4/99) vs Punjab 141/4 in 46 overs (Anmolpreet Singh 41, Nehal Wadhwa 43).

At Porvorim: Goa 31.7 in 84.2 overs (Darshan Misal 89, Mohit Redkar 80, Arjun Tendulkar 45) vs Gujarat 281/5 in 79 overs (Priyank Panchal 150).

At Agartala: Tripura 149 & 286/9 in 70 overs (Sudip Chatterjee 95, 25/2 in 5 overs)

Tajinder, Jyothi, and Harmilan strike gold

ATHLETICS**Sports Bureau**

Asian performances: Men: 1500m: 1. Keneshbekov Nursultan (Kgz) 3:49.10s, 6. Ajay Kumar Saroj (Ind) 3:52.56. Shot put: 1. Tajinderpal Singh Toor (Ind) 19.72m, 4. Dhanveer Singh (Ind) 18.59.

Women: 1500m: 1. Harmilan Bains (Ind) 4:29.55s. 60M hurdles: 1. Jyothi Yarraji (Ind) 8.12s National record, OR 8.13, Kaz, 2023. Long jump: 1. Xiong Shiqi (Chn) 6.55m, 5. Shalini Singh (Ind) 6.27, 6. Nayana James (Ind) 6.23. Shot put: 1. Sun Yue (Chn) 17.65m.

The results (gold medallists &

Bagan downs NorthEast after an enthralling encounter

ISL-10**Amitabha Das Sharma**
KOLKATA

Mohun Bagan SG came back from a goal down to beat NorthEast United FC 4-2 in an exciting match-week-15 fixture of the ISL-10 at the Salt Lake Stadium here on Saturday. The win took Bagan to the second spot with 29 points from 14 matches.

The Highlanders found the break in the sixth minute off a penalty, converted by Tomi Juric.

Liston Colaco got Bagan's equaliser in the first minute of injury time. The host maintained the pressure and Jason Cummings tapped home the lead after he was set up by Joni Kauko.

The visitor levelled in

the 50th minute off Juric before Bagan took the lead again in the 53rd minute through Dimitri Petrosatos.

Kauko helped Bagan seal the issue in the 57th minute when he released Sahal Abdul Samad with a spectacular pass. The Indian international made no mistake with his finishing.

The results: At Kolkata: Mohun Bagan 4 (Liston 45+1, Cummings 45+4, Petrosatos 53, Sahal 57) bt NorthEast United FC 2 (Juric 6-pen, 50).
At Hyderabad: Hyderabad FC 0 lost to East Bengal 1 (Silva 11).

Indian women edge past Australia

Sports Bureau

Indian women registered only their second win in the FIH Pro League this season in Rourkela on Saturday, but the 1-0 victory over Australia was more than just avenging the loss in the first leg in Bhubaneswar.

This was India's first win against the Hockeyroos since the famous victory at the Tokyo Olympics.

More incredibly, this was India's first success against them, at home, in 28 years – India last beat Australia, in India, in women's hockey during the 1996 Indira Gandhi Gold Cup, with current coach Katrina Powell a playing member.

The results: China 2 (Zixia Ou 7, Jiaqi Zhong 19) bt USA 0; India 1 (Vandana Katariya 34) bt Australia 0.

SNAPSHOTS

Pranati gets bronze, Dipa is fifth

CAIRO: Pranati Nayak bagged a bronze medal while Dipa Karmakar finished fifth in women's vault at the Artistic Gymnastics Apparatus World Cup, an Olympic qualifying event on Saturday.

Pranati, who got 13.166 to qualify for the vault final in seventh position, scored 13.430 and 13.800 in her two attempts to register an overall 13.620 in the final and ensure a podium finish.

Dipa's 12.970 and 13.800 helped her record an overall 13.380. Dipa had logged 13.449 in the qualification round to make it to the final in third place.

The Cairo tournament is the opening leg of a four Apparatus World Cup 2024 series.

The best three scores of an athlete from the four events will be calculated

to decide the overall ranking. The top-two ranked gymnasts of each apparatus per gender, excluding those who have already booked quota places, will make it to the Paris Olympics.

The other three World Cups will be held in Cottbus (Feb. 22 to 25), Baku (March 7 to 10) and Doha (April 17 to 20).

Indian women defeat Japan

SHAH ALAM (MALAYSIA): India



Few patrons: Porters wait on the shore of a frozen lake in a snowless Gulmarg.



Giddy up: Tourists enjoy a horse ride at an unusually dry Gulmarg Ski Resort.



Out of character: The Gulmarg Ski Resort in north Kashmir is seen without snow for the first time in 43 years during peak winter.

Kashmir's dry winter

The 40-day harsh winter spell, Chila-i-Kalan, saw unusually dry weather this year, with late snowfall that lasted only days before giving way to an early spring



Nissar Ahmad
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Kashmir recorded an unusual weather pattern this winter. Many saw it as a fallout of the global *El Nino* effect, which set off warmer weather patterns during winters in other parts of the world too. In Kashmir, the peak winter months of December and January mostly passed without heavy snowfall, especially in the plains of the Valley. The dry weather was unusual for the 40-day harsh *Chila-i-Kalan*, which usually starts from December 20. The dry spell disappointed tourists hoping for a snow wonderland, Gulmarg, in north Kashmir. Ski enthusiasts, from India and abroad, opted for slopes outside the country in December and January. It was only in the last week of January that the region experienced snow.

According to the meteorological (MeT) department, this January was one of the driest

and warmest in the last 43 years for most of the weather stations of Jammu and Kashmir. The mean maximum temperature in Kashmir was about five degrees above the normal for the period, according to MeT figures.

The warm weather spurred early blooming of flowers and orchards, especially apples. Experts worry that early flowering of apple orchards could have an impact on apple industry this year, as the fruit's size and colour could be affected. The apple industry contributes 6.5% - 7% to the Gross State Domestic Product of Jammu and Kashmir, with over 35 lakh people dependent on it. Jammu and Kashmir accounts for 73% of the total apple production in the country at around 22 lakh tonnes. Many now fear a fall in production this year as they wait to see the effects of the disrupted winter.
(Text by Peerzada Ashiq)



Dull business: 'Pony walas' waiting for customers at the Gulmarg Ski Resort.



Dry days: A Shiv temple on the meadows of the Gulmarg Ski Resort seen without snow cover on January 21.



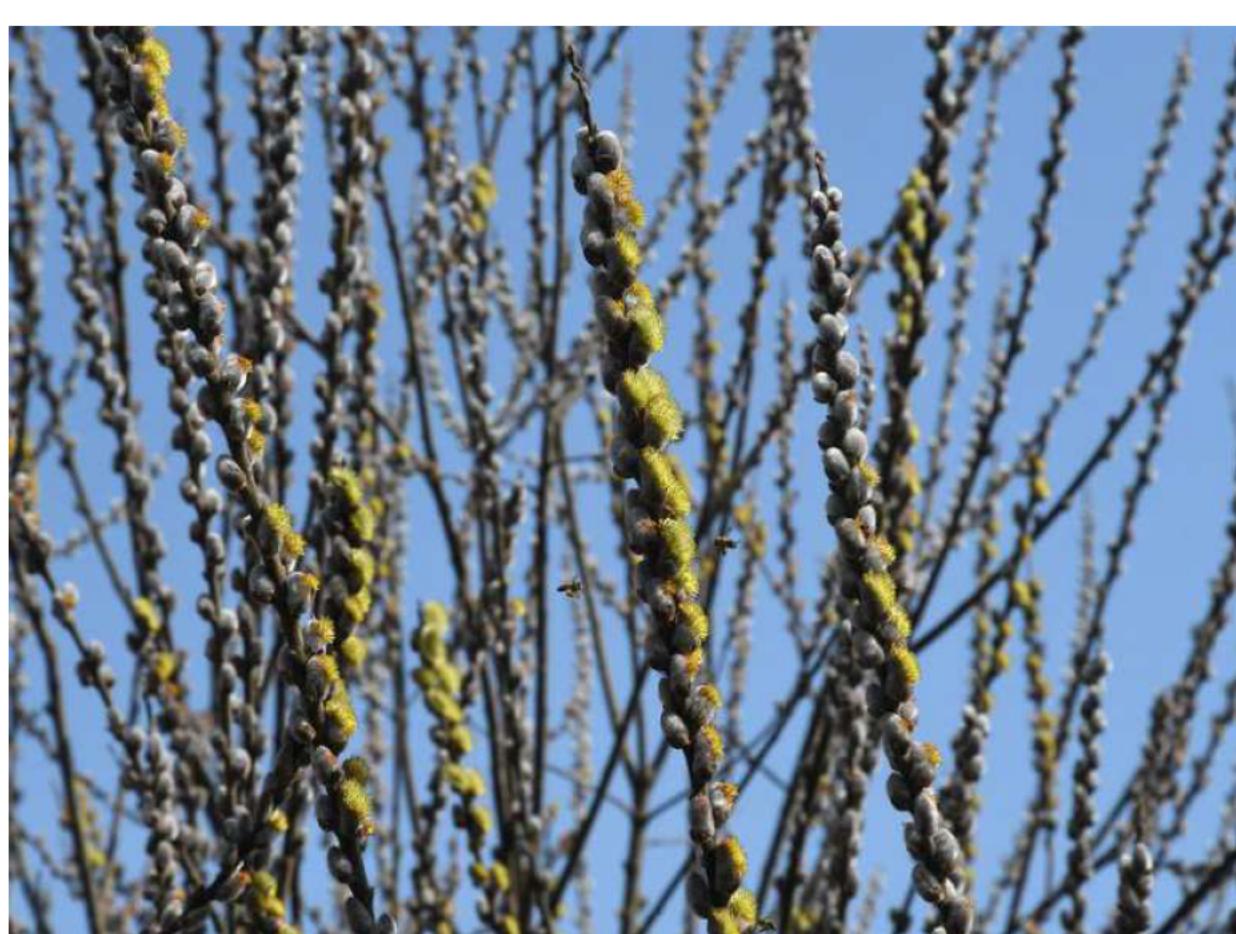
Tables turn: The Shiv temple after snowfall, breaking a two-month-long dry spell, at Gulmarg Ski resort on January 29.



Winter wonderland: Tourists have fun following the snowfall at Gulmarg.



Season of charm: Tourists enjoy the short spell of snow at Gulmarg Ski Resort.



Before time: A pussy willow with catkins usually heralding spring in Srinagar on February 15.