



SHORT CIRCUIT SUSPECTED

2 killed in blast at Kochi firecracker storage unit

STATES » PAGE 5

TALKS WITH CENTRE FAIL

Farmers set to march to Delhi

NEWS » PAGE 10



EXTENDING SERVICES

RuPay, UPI rolled out in Mauritius, Sri Lanka

BUSINESS » PAGE 14

POLITICS OF TODAY

Gandhi's Ram is not in the Ram mandir

Mahatma didn't want religion to be politicised

EDITORIAL » PAGE 6



RAJKOT TEST

Padikkal in squad for injured Rahul

SPORT » PAGE 15

IN BRIEF

Ex-Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan quits Congress

MUMBAI/PUNE

In a jolt to the Congress in Maharashtra, former Chief Minister Ashok Chavan resigned from the party on Monday, casting a shadow on its fortunes in the Rajya Sabha polls in the State slated for February 27. » Page 4

Will build police station on freed land in Haldwani

HALDWANI

Days after violence erupted in Haldwani, the Uttarakhand Chief Minister on Monday said a police station will be built on the land "freed from encroachment". » Page 11

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Further talks: Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said the government will work with the Qatar government for the return of the eighth person to India. ANI

Eight Indian Navy veterans who had been in Qatari custody since August 30, 2022 were released on Sunday in Doha. Indian officials escorted seven of the eight former death row prisoners to New Delhi by a passenger flight during the early hours of Monday.

The development was followed by the announcement that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Qatar on Wednesday afternoon on his way back home from the United Arab Emirates where he will pay a two-day visit during February 13-14.

"We are happy to have seven of those Indian nationals back. The eighth Indian has also been released

and we continue to work with the Qatar government to see how quickly his return to India would be possible," said Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra.

The details of the case in which the men were arrested were not shared with the media by either side while the Indian officials maintained that the case was "sensitive". The men

were given the death penalty by a lower court in Qatar on October 26, 2023. Subsequently, a court of appeals in Doha struck down the death penalty on December 28.

Diplomatic issue
The case of the eight Indian Navy veterans kept India-Qatar relation on tenterhooks as the matter

became an issue of diplomatic tug of war and their cause of the arrest was never publicised. The men had earlier appealed against the death sentence of a lower court in Doha that was subsequently commuted to a sentence of varying periods for the eight individuals.

Appreciating the decision of the Qatari legal authorities to release the Indians, Mr. Kwatra said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi "personally supervised all developments".

Earlier, there were expectations that the eight men would be freed ahead of Ramzan or Id. However, the announcement has come a day prior to Mr. Modi's UAE visit.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

T.N. Governor Ravi refuses to deliver customary address

Pon Vasantha B.A.

CHENNAI



Governor R.N. Ravi arriving at the State Assembly. R. RAGU

Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi on Monday triggered a fresh row in the ongoing rift between him and the State government by refusing to read out the customary inaugural address of the Legislative Assembly for 2024 and at one point walked out of the House.

Mr. Ravi announced his decision after reading the first paragraph of the address prepared by the government that wished "happiness, prosperity and well-being" in the new year and quoted a couplet from *Tirukkural*.

Later in the day, the Raj Bhavan, in a release, said the Governor "with due regard to the constitutional proprieties expressed his inability to read the address as it contained numerous passages with misleading claims and facts

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10
CENTRE FLAYED
» PAGE 4

Jailed Minister Senthilbalaji resigns from T.N. Cabinet

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Jailed Tamil Nadu Minister without portfolio V. Senthilbalaji, who was arrested in June 2023 by the Enforcement Directorate in an alleged money laundering case, resigned from the Cabinet on Monday.

While well-placed sources in the government confirmed that he had sent his resignation to the Chief Minister from the Puzhal Central Prison, at the time of filing this report, there was no official communication.

Cash-for-job 'scam'
The case has its roots in an alleged cash-for-job scam in the Metropolitan Transport Corporation, which took place when he was Transport Minister in the Jayalalithaa Cabinet. Before his arrest, Mr. Senthilbalaji was holding the portfolios of Electricity, and Excise and Prohibition.

NDA govt. wins Bihar trust vote; Opposition walks out

Amarnath Tewary

PATNA

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar won the floor test in the Bihar Assembly on Monday with the support of 129 MLAs. Three legislators of the Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) voted in favour of the government amid a walkout by all non-NDA MLAs. The government needed the support of at least 122 MLAs to win the majority test in the 243-member Assembly.

Ahead of the trust vote, Bihar Assembly Speaker and RJD leader Awadh Bihari Choudhary, who had earlier refused to resign, was removed with 125 MLAs voting in favour of



Power point: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar being greeted by his deputies Vijay Kumar Sinha and Samrat Choudhary after the NDA government won the trust vote in the Assembly on Monday. PTI

the motion and 112 opposing it. Deputy Speaker Maheshwar Hazari of the JD (U) then chaired the House.

After the House passed the resolution for the removal of the Speaker, Mr. Kumar moved the motion seeking trust vote for the new NDA government he

Sharif, Bilawal start coalition talks in Pak.

Reuters
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's two largest political parties were on Monday wrangling over who will be the Prime Minister after an inconclusive poll last week forced them to join forces and try to form a coalition government. Independent candidates backed by Imran Khan formed the largest group of 93 members in parliament.

Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) opened formal talks to form a coalition government, with a statement from the PML-N saying the meeting was "constructive".

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10
TEJASHWI SLAMS NITISH
» PAGE 11

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 13

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Retail inflation eased to a 3-month low of 5.1% in Jan.; food prices sticky

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

India's retail inflation eased to a three-month low of 5.1% in January from 5.7% a month earlier, with food price rise cooling a bit to 8.3% compared with 9.5% in December 2023.

January's headline inflation pace is slightly higher than the 5% average projected by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) last week for the current final quarter of 2023-24.

Any interest rate cut hopes will have to wait till at least August if not longer, as the Central bank expects inflation to average

Cooling down

India's retail inflation slowed to a three-month low of 5.1% in January on the back of lower food prices



5% in the April to June quarter as well, before it hits its stated inflation target of 4% in the next quarter.

While overall inflation faced by urban consumers

dropped to 4.92% from 5.5% a month ago, food inflation remained sharp at 9%, sliding a tad from 10.4% in December. By contrast, rural consumers faced food inflation of

7.91% in January, down from 9% in December, but their overall price rise pace was higher than their urban counterparts at 5.34%.

On a month-on-month basis, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) dropped 0.11% while the Consumer Food Price Index fell 0.73%. A year ago, in January 2023, CPI inflation stood at 6.52%, while food price inflation stood at 6%.

Among food items, vegetables inflation remained above 27%, just slightly below the 27.6% recorded in December.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

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Four convicts in Soumya murder case granted bail

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday granted bail to four convicts serving life imprisonment for the murder of TV journalist Soumya Vishwanathan.

Noting that the men – Ravi Kapoor, Amit Shukla, Baljeet Malik and Ajay Kumar – had been in custody for 14 years, the court suspended their sentence till the pendency of their appeals challenging their conviction.

Vishwanathan was shot dead in the early hours of September 30, 2008 while she was returning home from office on Nelson Mandela Marg. A special court had on November 26, 2023 awarded life imprisonment to the four men and three years in jail to another.

AAP's PAC to meet today as talks with Congress drag on

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party's political affairs committee (PAC) will meet on Tuesday to decide its candidates for the Lok Sabha poll, amid talks with the Congress on seat sharing in Delhi remaining inconclusive so far.

According to AAP sources, the party's highest decision-making body will hold discussions on candidates for Gujarat, Haryana, and Goa.

Earlier, both Opposition alliance partners had decided against a tie-up in Punjab.

The Congress has also maintained that while they are preparing to contest all seven seats, the possibility of an alliance can't be ruled out.

Opposition's INDIA bloc, for seats in the Capital have dragged on for over a month now. Leaders of both parties had met on January 12 last time.

While speaking in Punjab during an event on Sunday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had claimed that people of the city have decided to vote for his party candidates in all seven seats, stoking speculations that both the Congress and AAP may go solo in the Capital.

The order issued under Section 144 of the CrPC by Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora prohibits the gathering of four or more people and will remain in force till March 12.

Meanwhile, the police completely sealed the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders with neighbouring Uttar Pradesh and Haryana by placing multiple layers of barbed wire, concrete barricades, and metal spikes to stop farmers from entering the Capital. Teams of the Rapid Action Force (RAF)

Farmers' march: drones deployed, public meetings banned for a month

Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur borders completely sealed; RAF companies deployed to prevent rioting; rigorous inspection of vehicular traffic from neighbouring States to prevent protesters from entering city; commuters advised to use metro services

Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI



Security personnel deployed at Singhu border on Monday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Hold fresh talks, Rai urges Centre

NEW DELHI
AAP Delhi convener Gopal Rai on Monday urged the Centre to hold consultations again with the farmers marching to Delhi over their demands. Speaking to reporters, Mr. Rai said the security measures taken by the BJP government at the Centre and in neighbouring Haryana were "more cruel than that during the colonial era".

While withdrawing their stir, farmer bodies – mostly from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Punjab – had set a condition that the Centre would bring a law guaranteeing MSP for crops. They are also demanding complete debt waiver and pension for farmers and farm labourers.

TALKS BREAK DOWN
» PAGE 10

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed percentage rate tenders are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, Horticulture Division HPPWD US Club Shimla, in form No. 6 & 7 on behalf of Government of H.P. for the following works from the eligible and approved contractors/Firms having similar experience in Horticultural works registered with H.P.P.W.D. (Horticulture) Department in appropriate class. The tender shall be opened in the presence of the contractors/firms or their representative who wish to be present.

Time schedule of tender:-

- 1) Date and time of receipt of application for tender forms- 19.02.2024 upto 04:00 PM
- 2) Date and time of issue of tender form- 20.02.2024 upto 03:00 PM
- 3) Date and time of receipt of tenders- 21.02.2024 upto 10:00 AM
- 4) Date and time of opening of tenders- 21.02.2024 at 11:30 AM

The request for issue of tenders should be on the PRESCRIBED APPLICATION FORM which can be obtained from the office of undersigned and tender will be issued to only those contractors who qualify the criteria after the scrutiny of application forms by the committee constituted for this purpose.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	EMD	Time Limit	Cost of Tender	Eligible Class of Contractor
1.	Restoration of rain damages and installation of decorative railing in miniparks/ sitouts of Kumarhatti Barog road RD 04/235 to 05/40	₹3,74,318/-	₹8,000/-	Four months	350/-	Class-D
2.	Roadside plantation in Barotiwala Baddi Sain Ramsheher Road RD 00/00 to 10/600.	₹3,52,194/-	₹7,000/-	Six months	350/-	Class-D
3.	Roadside plantation in Manpura Dharampur Road RD 0/0 to 07/500, Haripur Gurumajra road RD 0/0 to 01/500 and Gurumajra Dheha Road RD 0/0 to 01/300.	₹4,05,239/-	₹8,200/-	Three months	350/-	Class-D
4.	Roadside plantation in Baddi Shitalpur road RD 0/0 to 03/00.	₹1,31,847/-	₹2,700/-	Three months	350/-	Class-D
5.	Roadside plantation in Baddi Sain Ramsheher Road RD 0/0 to 10/600.	₹2,10,549/-	₹4,300/-	Three months	350/-	Class-D
6.	Roadside plantation in Barotiwala Gunai Masolkhana road RD 19/160 to 26/130.	₹3,73,464/-	₹7,500/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
7.	Roadside plantation in Oachghat Kumarhatti Road RD 74/300 to 79/500.	₹4,14,960/-	₹8,300/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
8.	Development of terrace garden in Circuit House Kasauli	₹4,98,336/-	₹10,000/-	Four months	350/-	Class-D
9.	Maintenance of Roadside plantation in Haripur Gurumajra road RD 0/0/00 to 01/500 and Gurumajra Dheha road RD 0/0/00 to 01/300.	₹2,72,209/-	₹5,500/-	Six months	350/-	Class-D
10.	Development of roadside Amenity in Shaleghat Arki kunihar Barotiwala road at Kuthar RD 45/250 to 45/300.	₹4,99,918/-	₹10,000/-	Four months	350/-	Class-D
11.	Development of roadside Amenity in Kulharia sera road RD 0/0/770 to 0/0/800.	₹4,99,476/-	₹10,000/-	Four months	350/-	Class-D
12.	Model landscaping of N.H-05 R.D 67/00 to 72/00.	₹4,26,515/-	₹8,500/-	Six months	350/-	Class-D
13.	Bioengineering Slope stabilization of Roadside sliding point Near Jangeshu in Parwanoo Kasauli Road (MDR-06) RD 13/420 to 13/470.	₹4,97,807/-	₹10,000/-	Six months	350/-	Class-D
14.	Maintenance of Lawn, Plants and Pots of HPPWD Circuit House Solar.	₹4,99,816/-	₹10,000/-	Ten months	350/-	Class-D
15.	Maintenance of Roadside plantation on Kala-Amb Tribolokpur Road RD 03/00 to 06/00.	₹4,67,712/-	₹9,500/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
16.	Road Side Plantation of Guggaghat Dangari Patti Jayola road from RD 0/0/00 to 02/00.	₹4,29,709/-	₹8,600/-	Thirteen months	350/-	Class-D
17.	Development of road side amenity/ sitout on Nahan Dadahu road from RD 31/855 to 31/885	₹4,99,879/-	₹10,000/-	Three months	350/-	Class-D
18.	Development of road side amenity on Solan Bye Pass Road from RD 05/110 to 05/162.	₹2,96,081/-	₹6,000/-	Thirteen months	350/-	Class-D
19.	Roadside plantation in Sainj –Deha-Chopal road in RD No. 05/940– 8/460 Kms.	₹4,97,518/-	₹10,000/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
20.	Bio-engineering work for slope stabilization on hill slope on approach road to ISBT Theog RD 0/12/2/035.	₹4,89,674/-	₹9,800/-	Three months	350/-	Class-D
21.	Roadside plantation in Anandpur to Taradevi road in RD No. 0/0/30-2/270 Kms.	₹3,54,482/-	₹7,100/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
22.	Bio-engineering work for slope stabilization on hill slope on approach road to ISBT Theog RD 0/165/0/185.	₹3,68,627/-	₹7,400/-	Three months	350/-	Class-D
23.	Bio-engineering work for slope stabilization on hill slope on approach road to ISBT Theog RD 0/185-0/212 Kms.	₹3,96,525/-	₹8,000/-	Three months	350/-	Class-D
24.	Roadside plantation in Ghanati Bhajol Dev Nagar road in RD No. 07/020-9/200 Kms.	₹4,98,451/-	₹10,000/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
25.	Roadside plantation in Neoli to Barwta (PMGSY) road in RD No. 0/0/10-2/645 Kms.	₹4,96,274/-	₹10,000/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
26.	Roadside plantation in Anandpur to Taradevi road in RD No. 0/0/30-2/270 Kms.	₹3,19,305/-	₹6,400/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
27.	A/R & M/O Horticultural operations in Oak Over Shimla.	₹2,20,864/-	₹4,500/-	Six months	350/-	Class-D
28.	Roadside plantation in Challanda Piran Road in RD No. 21/500-28/500 Kms.	₹3,46,752/-	₹8,800/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
29.	A/R & M/O Horticultural operations in the various roadside amenities/ Sitout on Shimla -Tatapani- Mandi Road RD 19/550 to 25/380 KM.	₹2,82,380/-	₹5,700/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
30.	Roadside plantation in Chamiana Shurala Katian road RD 0/0/10-4/850 Kms.	₹4,98,762/-	₹10,000/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
31.	Restoration of abandoned bridge park Mehli Shoghi Road RD No. 49,076/- ₹10,000/- Three months	₹4,99,076/-	₹10,000/-	Three months	350/-	Class-D
32.	Restoration of edge wall of park at Mehli Shoghi Road RD No. 15/635 to 15/660 and construction of check Dam to control soil erosion.	₹2,38,905/-	₹5,000/-	Three months	350/-	Class-D
33.	Roadside plantation in Ghanati Bhajol Dev Nagar road in RD No. 9/510-11/510 Kms.	₹4,97,518/-	₹10,000/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
34.	Roadside plantation in Neoli to Barwta (State Highway) road in RD No. 0/0/20-2/100 Kms.	₹3,91,795/-	₹8,000/-	Twelve months	350/-	Class-D
35.	Development of road side amenity on Solan Bye Pass Road from RD 05/110 to 05/162.	₹4,99,525/-	₹10,000/-	Three months	350/-	Class-D
1.	The earnest money in the shape of National Saving Certificate time deposit account in any of the post office in H.P-FDR of any bank duly pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, Horticulture Division HPPWD US Club Shimla must be accompanied with the application for receipt of form along with cost of form. Tender application received without earnest money will be rejected.					
2.	i). The contractors /firms should possess the following documents (photo copy) to be attached with application for obtaining the tender documents. ii). Latest enlistment/renewal orders with application for obtaining the tenders documents. iii). GST number issued by the Sale Tax Department. iv) PAN (Permanent Account Number) issued by the Income Tax Department. Shall contain scanned copies of EPP issued from competent authority.					
3.	The Executive Engineer, Horticulture Division HPPWD US Club Shimla, reserves the right to reject any tender without assigning any reason(s).					
4.	The cess charges @1% will be deducted from the gross amount of work done by the Contractor.					
5.	The contractor /firms are required to insert the rate of each item in words as well as figures failing which Executive Engineer reasons the right to accept/reject any overall tender.					
6.	The tender shall be issued to only those contractor/firms who are eligible, suitable and competent					
7.	The tender forms shall be issued to eligible contractors depending upon their past performance and work experience which shall be duly evaluated by the technical evaluation committee.					
8.	The contractor/firms having necessary documents and past adequate experience shall be preferred.					
9.	The contractors who have failed to start complete the work in hand with in reasonable time shall not be issued tender form.					
10.	A contractor enlisted in a particular class shall be eligible to tender for his own class and one step before.					
11.	If 21.02.2024 happens to be holiday, the tender shall be opened on next working day at 11.00.					
12.	GST will be deducted as per rates fixed by the Govt.					
13.	Executive Engineer, Horticulture Division, H.P.P.W.D., U.S. Club Shimla-171001 Telephone No. 0177-2802007, e-mail: ee-hortd@hp.gov.in					
14.	HP / 5799/24-25 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK					

Farmers' march: drones deployed, public meetings banned for a month

Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur borders completely sealed; RAF companies deployed to prevent rioting; rigorous inspection of vehicular traffic from neighbouring States to prevent protesters from entering city; commuters advised to use metro services

Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Monday imposed a complete ban on public gatherings across the city, citing the risk of "social unrest" and "violence" due to the farmers' proposed Tuesday march to Parliament to seek minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

The order issued under Section 144 of the CrPC by Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora prohibits the gathering of four or more people and will remain in force till March 12.

Meanwhile, the police completely sealed the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders with neighbouring Uttar Pradesh and Haryana by placing multiple layers of barbed wire, concrete barricades, and metal spikes to stop farmers from entering the Capital. Teams of the Rapid Action Force (RAF)

have been deployed to prevent any kind of rioting while drones are being used to keep vigil at border points, an official said.

Major prohibitions

The order said the protesters are likely to use tractor-trailers as mode of transport for entering Delhi, "which will inevitably be a great hazard on roads". All traffic originating from ad-

joining States will be subjected to rigorous inspection, it added.

The order said there will

be a prohibition on provocative actions, slogans, speech or messages through verbal, written or electronic means, which may incite or inflame passions leading to the breach of public order. An officer said, "One should use Delhi Metro services to commute

within the city."

The call for the 'Delhi Chalo March' has come more than two years after farmer bodies withdrew their year-long agitation against the Centre's now-re-

pealed

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BHOPAL

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

JAIPUR

14th Feb

5th Feb | **11th Mar** | **15th Feb** | **26th Feb** | **4th Mar**

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14 फरवरी 2024

11:30 AM - 2:30 PM

जयपुर

25 अप्रैल 2024

11:30 AM - 2:30 PM

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14 फरवरी 2024

11:30 AM - 2:30 PM



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Blast in firecracker storage unit for temple fete kills two

25 persons injured and 50 houses severely damaged in explosion near Kochi; Collector says temple authorities had not taken permission to store or display firecrackers; four booked

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Two persons were killed and over 25 others were injured in a blast that ripped through an illegal firecracker storage unit at Choorakkadu during the festival at Puthiyakavu Devi Temple in Thripunithura near here in Kerala on Monday.

The explosion occurred around 10.30 a.m. at the unit housed in a single-storey building of the temple administration at Nadam Thekkumbhagom village. The stored items were meant for a fireworks display on Monday evening.



A vehicle damaged in the explosion at a temple firecracker storage unit in Thripunithura in Kochi. H. VIBHU

The deceased were identified as Vishnu, 27, a native of Thiruvananthapuram, who was reportedly part of the team of workers assembling firecrackers, and Divakaran, 55.

The Department of Fire and Rescue Services and the police say that a possible short circuit from a van that was carrying raw materials for the firecrackers may have triggered the

massive blast.

Nearly 50 houses in the vicinity were severely damaged.

The Hill Palace Police booked Sajeesh Kumar, the Puthiyakavu devaswom president; Rajesh, devaswom secretary; Sathyan, treasurer; and Adarsh, who had taken the contract for supplying the firecrackers. Adarsh was critically injured in the incident.

Ernakulam Collector N.S.K. Umesh said the temple authorities had not taken permission from the district administration for storage of firecrackers and display of fireworks.

Forest officials fail to capture jumbo on Day 2

The Hindu Bureau

KALPETTA

For the second day on Monday, the Rapid Response Team of the Forest Department encountered difficulties in the search for the wild elephant Belur Makna that trampled a farmer to death in Wayanad, Kerala, on Saturday.

Forest officials spotted the animal at the Mannundi forest area, but the animal entered a swampy area inside the forest, hindering the efforts to tranquillise it.

Though the tracking

team again spotted the animal at the Chempakkappara forest, it could not be tranquillised due to the thick undergrowth in the area, a source said.

As many as 2,000 frontline forest staff, including the Rapid Response team from the sanctuary, Nilambur South Forest Division, and Mannarkad North Forest Division, were mobilised for the operation. Four trained elephants and a forest veterinary team also attended the combing.

Meanwhile, the sighting of a tiger in a human habitat at Vadannakkavala, near

Pulpally, on Monday morning triggered panic among the residents. A farmer and his wife who were working on their plantation saw the tiger chasing a wild boar into their plantation. The tiger stayed on the plantation for hours.

A team of forest officials rushed to the spot and found the tiger inside the plantation. They are camping at the site. A few days ago, a tiger was sighted at Anappara, near the area. The officials had set up two cages at Surabhikkavala and Tannitherruvu after two domestic

animals were killed, suspected in tiger attacks.

Karnataka offers help
Karnataka Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said that his government would give all help to mitigate the human-wildlife conflict in Wayanad.

Speaking after inaugurating a public meeting at Kalpetta on Monday in connection with the Samagrani march led by the Congress, he said as the issue was a sensitive and difficult one, coordination between the governments was the need of the hour.



Rural Works Department

Office of the Executive Engineer, Rural Works Department,
Works Division Lakhisarai
(विहार ग्रन्थी पथ अनुस्करण नीति, 2018)

Notice Inviting Re-Tender for Rural Roads Maintenance based on Output and performance based Contract through e-procurement mode on Model Bidding Document (MBD).

(Short Notice Inviting No. - Re-Tender -MR-3054-11/2023-24)

- Designation and Address of the Advertiser : Executive Engineer , Rural Works Department, Works Division Lakhisarai
- Date of Issue of Notice Inviting Tender : 08.02.2024
- Period for downloading of Tender documents : From 16.02.2024 (9:00) to 23.02.2024 up to 15:00 hrs. From website- http://pmgsytenderbih.gov.in
- Date, Time & Place of Pre- Bid Meeting : Date 12.02.2024 time 15:00 hrs.O/o Concerned Superintending Engineer
- Last Date & Time for uploading tender : Date 23.02.2024 up to 15:00 hrs.Document by bidder http://pmgsytenderbih.gov.in
- Date, time for online opening of Technical bid : Date 23.02.2024 time: 15:30hrs.
- Last date, time and place for submission of Original instrument of EMD, Cost of BOQ and Affidavit regarding correctness of information provided with bid document : Till 15:00 hrs on 23.02.2024
Place- O/o-concerned
(i) Executive Engineer
Or (ii) Superintending Engineer
Or (iii) Chief Engineer
- The Engineer in chief, Rural Works Department on behalf of Governor of Bihar invites bids from the eligible bidders for the works detailed below.
- Details of Works:-

Sl. No	Package No.	District	Division	Block	Name of Road	Length (in KM)	Cost of Initial Rectification with Surface Renewal (in Lakhs)	Cost of 5-years Maintenance (in Lakhs)	Total Estimated Cost (in Lakhs)	Cost of BOQ (in Rs.)	Bid Security (in Rs. in Lakhs)	Amount Payable to works Division
1	MR-N/23-24 Lakhisarai/26	Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Chanan	PMGSY Road Bhandar to Bagicha Tola Sangrampur	0.350	11,400	4,730	16,130	10000	8,968	EE. RWD Work Division Lakhisarai
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Chanan	(LO38)Ramsir - Bichawa	0.660	18,760	9,910	28,670			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Chanan	LO58-L038 - Bichawa	0.350	10,250	5,350	15,600			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Chanan	Pmgsy bhandar to matal asthan tola	0.700	19,300	9,810	29,110			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Chanan	Pmgsy road to Balaphur gram via anusukt jati	1.100	31,140	15,240	46,380			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Chanan	Pmgsy road to south mandal tola	1.260	35,200	15,900	51,100			
2	MR-N/23-24 Lakhisarai/27	Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Chanan	Pmgsy shiv mandir to rewta Musahari tola	0.350	17,670	3,420	21,090	10000	13,290	EE. RWD Work Division Lakhisarai
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Chanan	To2 To Basuachak	0.720	34,080	6,900	40,980			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Pipriya	LO41 Aoliupur Chowk To South Tola Aoliupur	0.400	20,454	5,115	25,569			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Pipriya	Dih Pipriya to Basuana	1.070	50,787	12,598	63,385			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Pipriya	Upgraded Primary School Aoliupur to High school Aoliupur	0.923	53,730	8,841	62,571			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Pipriya	Walupur library - walupur middle school (Rescind work)	0.726	40,873	6,939	47,812			
Total for the Group						8.611	343,644	104,753	448,397			
2	MR-N/23-24 Lakhisarai/27	Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	NH-80 To Rishipaharpur	0.500	24,706	4,758	29,464	10000	13,290	EE. RWD Work Division Lakhisarai
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	Imp. (W/s) of Jamalpur - Dharhar-kajra Rd. to Sahimpur Rd. (Rescind)	2.200	102,732	28,235	130,967			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	PMGSY Road to Kalyanpur Harjan toli	0.900	51,239	8,602	59,841			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	LO43 Konipar to soni gachhi Primary School	0.750	38,250	7,150	45,400			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	Bishanpur to Bishanpur Musahari	0.520	30,629	5,132	35,761			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	Construction of Nanakpur village Road	0.800	51,777	7,706	59,483			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	Imp. (W/s) of Pribilash-Basani Rd. to Bulubali Kodasi Rd.	0.800	33,810	9,926	43,736			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	Kali asthan khara to High School Alinagar	0.825	47,208	7,877	55,085			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	LO37-T02 TO LAL (TRACK38)	1.470	56,200	19,919	76,119			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	LO43 Talvanshipur to middle school talvanshipur	1.100	61,300	10,483	71,983			
		Lakhisarai	Lakhisarai	Suryagarha	T05 To Gouspur (alinagar)	0.800	48,154	8,494	56,648			
		Total for the Group						10,665	546,205	118,280	664,487	

For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/probhir

PR- 017133 (RWD) 2023-24

नरो से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से ध्यान

U.P. police arrest four for issuing 'fake' halal papers

The Hindu Bureau
KARIMNAGAR

street on their way to the temple.

They reportedly staged a sit-in near police station seeking action by the police to trace the chain-snatchers and recover their stolen gold chains.

BJP national general secretary and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar spoke to the authorities in Uttar Pradesh, from Karimnagar, on phone and requested them to immediately investigate the incident,

Telangana devotees robbed in Ayodhya

The Hindu Bureau

KARIMNAGAR

A group of devotees from Telangana's Karimnagar district, who had gone to Ayodhya to worship at the Ram temple, were reportedly robbed of their gold chains weighing about 1,200 grams in a crowded street on Sunday.

According to the devotees, miscreants have snatched away their gold chains while they were walking through a main

CMRL case: Centre files statements in HC

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

ing on a petition filed by Exalogic.

"An offence of such scale and grave nature that directly affects public interest would definitely merit an investigation by the SFIO," it has been contend-

ed in the statement. Justice M. Nagaprasanna, who heard the arguments by advocate Arvind P. Datar on behalf of Exalogic and Additional Solicitor-General of India Arvind Kamath, reserved the order on the petition.



Pakistan in turmoil

Instability will follow any attempt to subvert the mandate for Imran Khan

Pakistan's elections, on February 8, were not held on a level-playing field. Former Prime Minister Imran Khan, arguably the most popular politician, has been in jail since May 2023, facing multiple cases and serving convictions. His party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), was barred from using its symbol on the ballot paper, forcing it to field independent candidates. Many of its leaders were also in jail or on the run, while others were forced to quit politics or defect to another party. What Pakistan saw in the run-up to the elections was a systematic effort by powerful quarters to dismantle Mr. Khan's political vehicle. Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) leader Nawaz Sharif, once the nemesis of the army, who returned from exile in London, led his party's campaign with the establishment's blessings. But if the generals thought these measures would destroy the PTI's political leverage and catapult their favourites to power, they were proven wrong by voters. Independents won 101 of the 265 seats (93 went to PTI-linked candidates), the PML-N secured 75 seats while the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won 54, and the Karachi-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan took 17. To form a government, 134 seats are needed.

This does not mean that the PTI, whose independent candidates form the largest bloc, would be able to form the next government. When it was evident that no bloc had an absolute majority, Nawaz Sharif called on every party, barring the PTI, to form a unity government. With Army Chief Gen. Asim Munir backing Mr. Sharif's call, what followed was an in-principle agreement between the PML-N and the PPP "to work together for political stability". All these developments point to political manoeuvring aimed at stitching together a unity government that will keep the PTI and Mr. Khan out of power. The independents could also come under pressure to switch to the coalition parties. The PTI, which has already alleged electoral irregularities, has called for street protests, triggering memories of the widespread clashes in May 2023 after Mr. Khan's arrest. The military may have wanted to turn the page of Mr. Khan's challenge and create a new political reality through the electoral process, but the results have underscored his popularity and public anger towards the establishment. For a long-term solution, the generals should make peace with Mr. Khan and allow the spirit of the results to prevail – an unlikely outcome. As political parties that finished second and third are moving ahead with their plans with blessings from the establishment, public discontent and distrust would remain the unresolved issues. With the PTI's challenge from the streets, Pakistan could face another cycle of instability and chaos.

The real travesty

A Governor who profoundly disagrees with State govt. should not stay in office

The Governor's customary address to the legislature at the first session of every year is being increasingly politicised. More often than not, those responsible for such unseemly controversies overshadowing the solemn occasion are the incumbents in Raj Bhavan. In the latest instance, Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi has expressed his inability to read out the address prepared by the DMK-run government, citing what he termed "misleading claims and facts" in numerous passages. Reading them out, he claimed, would have made the Governor's address "a constitutional travesty". Compounding this constitutional mischief with a partisan claim, he sought to make much of the fact that the national anthem is played only at the end of the address and not at the beginning also. Anyone who understands the Governor's role in a parliamentary democracy will know that it is the one declining to read out the address prepared by an elected government who reduces the address to a travesty. Governments are run by parties that contest elections on a political platform, and it is only to be expected that they would seek to trumpet their achievements, real or exaggerated, in policy statements. It is the role of the political opposition and the people to judge the content of the address, and not that of the Governor.

A simple test to ascertain the tenability of Mr. Ravi's claim that he declined to read out the customary address on factual and moral grounds is to raise the question whether either the President or a Governor in a Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled State would ever do so. He did not spell out what exactly the misleading or factually wrong points were, but it is not constitutionally sustainable to claim that the Governor's address should contain no criticism of the Centre or make no policy pronouncements against the Centre's policies. However, his point that the Speaker should not have launched a tirade against him after reading out the Tamil version of the Governor's prepared speech is justified. Such conduct by constitutional functionaries detract from the Assembly's dignity. The larger issue is still the propensity of Governors to act as political agents of the ruling party at the Centre. It is an unfortunate feature of India's constitutional system that the country is never short of grey eminences eager to occupy gubernatorial office, but once appointed, they are equally eager to enter the political thicket. It is as if they believe that their duty is to obstruct and undermine State governments run by political adversaries. The real travesty is not in a formal address containing questionable claims, but in a Governor who disagrees profoundly with its policy while remaining in office.

Gandhi breathed his last in 1948 with 'Hey Ram' on his lips. Lord Ram was an influence on Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi since his childhood. As the Mahatma noted in his autobiography, that being of the Vaishnava faith since birth, visiting the temples of Rama and Krishna was his habit. But the temples did not instil faith in the boy Gandhi. He noted, "But what I failed to get there, I obtained from my nurse, an old servant...Rambha, that was her name, suggested as a remedy for this fear, the repetition of Rama-nama (the name, Rama)." It became an infallible remedy for him for the rest of his life. However, the Rama-nama which he refers to is no longer the idol to be found in a temple, nor a recitation as a ritual. Instead, it was something deep within the heart.

Rooted in spirituality

Gandhi brought religion into politics. But his religion had its roots in spirituality. Gandhian scholar Raghavan Iyer notes in his book, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, that Gandhi sought to make politics religious and religion practical. In this effort, he built upon a neglected strand of Indian tradition – the path of karma yoga or spiritual realisation through social action. This was action of the kind associated with classical heroes such as Rama and Janaka, and reaffirmed in modern India by Vivekananda and Aurobindo.

Gandhi aimed to work for the purification of politics and reform formal religion. He gave new meaning to Rama, Rama-nama and *Ramarajya* in his discourse. His own journey of continuous self-purification was by chanting Rama-nama from the depth of his heart in the form of prayer.

In the *Harijan*, issue dated March 18, 1933, Gandhi referred to three questions raised by an 'iconoclast schoolmaster' and answered them.

The first was: "Is it necessary for a Hindu, following the life of Shri Ramachandra, also to go and see his image in the temple? Is *darshan* better than action?"

The second: "If we bow our head or join our hands before a living person, he replies in return, but the image does not. Then what is the use of doing it? What is the use of writing letters to one who never replies?"

The third: "The person, whose image a Hindu adores, might have committed some wrongs in his lifetime. Will not the adorer be harmed by



Sudarshan Ivengar

is a Gandhian scholar, a former Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad, a university founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920, and also the co-author of the book, 'Abundant Love', a long form conversation with Satish Kumar, the founder of Schumacher College in the United Kingdom

copying those wrongs, which he is likely to copy if he worships his image?" (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume 54, pp.111-112, Art.125-Posers)

Gandhi held it unfortunate that Rama who should be inside the self is sought in the image. Yet, Gandhi would not disturb the "simple faith" that saw Ram only in the temple. Gandhi's response was as follows: "It is not necessary for any Hindu to go to a temple to worship (the image of) Ramachandra. But it is for him who cannot contemplate his Rama without looking at his image in a temple. It may be unfortunate, but it is true that his Rama resides in that temple as nowhere else. I would not disturb that simple faith."

But deed, or action, was more important than the *darshan*. Mute worship constitutes the letter to god. God is not only in the temple. Gandhi wrote that he did not make any distinction between temple, mosque and church.

On the third question, he wrote, "Though my reason and heart long ago realised the highest attribute and name of God as Truth, I recognise Truth by the name of Rama. In the darkest hour of my trial, that one name has saved me and is still saving me" (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume 54, p.112).

In all of Gandhi's speeches, articles and letters, Rama, Rama-nama and Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* (Ramayana) have been mentioned, commented on and invoked hundreds of times.

Gandhi's Rama

Who is Gandhi's Rama? Is he a Hindu god? He has clarified this several times. In his prayer meeting on April 4, 1946, at Birla House, Delhi, Gandhi said the following. "I laugh within myself when someone says that Rama or the chanting of Rama-nama is for the Hindus only, and that how can Mussalmans (Muslims), therefore, take part in it? Is there one God for the Mussalmans and another for the Hindus, Parsis or Christians? No, there is only one omnipotent and omnipresent God. He is named variously, and we remember Him by the name which is most familiar to us. My Rama, the Rama of our prayers, is not the historical Rama, the son of Dasaratha, the King of Ayodhya. He is the eternal, the unborn, the one without a second. Him alone I worship, His aid alone I seek, and so should you. He belongs equally to all. I, therefore, see no reason why a

Muselman or anybody should object to taking His name. But he is in no way bound to recognise God as Ramanama. He may utter to himself Allah or Khuda so as not to mar the harmony of the sound" (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume 83, p.364).

Gandhi knew the deep and serious implications of upholding Rama as a role model and Rama-nama as a cure for all ills in India where people from many religions live and where the Hindu-Muslim conflict is more than a century-old and the schism was deepened by the British with intent. Hence, he was always careful not to visit temples, mosques and churches. But he used the symbols from Hindu traditions and the religion to which he was born.

In 1929, at a public meeting in Bhopal, he said, "I warn my Muselman friends against misunderstanding me in my use of the word *Ramarajya*. By *Ramarajya*, I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by *Ramarajya*, a divine raj, the Kingdom of God. For me, Rama and Rahim are one and the same deity. I acknowledge no other God but the one God of Truth and righteousness." This was Gandhi's religion in politics and public life.

Gandhi further wrote: "Whether the Rama of my imagination ever lived or not on this earth, the ancient ideal of *Ramarajya* is undoubtedly one of true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice without an elaborate and costly procedure. Even the dog is described by the poet to have received justice under *Ramarajya*,"

The present day

It is important to record Gandhi's Rama, Rama-nama and *Rama-rajya* in today's context. The politicisation of religion is the reverse of what Gandhi stood for. It does not augur well for the country. The Prime Minister of a country, which by its Constitution is a secular state, should have sent enormous good wishes on the occasion of the consecration of the Ram Temple built on the basis of a judgment of the Supreme Court. India claims to be a multi-religious and multicultural society and a Prime Minister appearing partisan to one religion, notwithstanding his religion, faith and dedication, has not sent out healthy signals. This is a celebration in a place where Gandhi's Ram is not likely to be found.

Through *The Billion Press*. E-mail: editor@thebillionpress.org

A global alliance to bridge the gender equity gap

Equality and inclusion are the cornerstones of India's development journey. The New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, which was adopted at the G-20 under India's presidency, is testament to this commitment. By prioritising inclusion at the centre of focus areas such as socio-economic empowerment, bridging the digital divide, driving climate action, ensuring food security, nutrition, health, and well-being, among others, the declaration underlines the need for advocating a growth agenda that is driven by women-led development.

At the World Economic Forum in January this year, India took the mission for gender equity several steps ahead with the launch of the 'Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality'. This multi-stakeholder initiative has placed India centre stage for accelerating the socio-economic cause as it will have a sustained global impact. With the Alliance, India has managed to transition the two buzzwords, equity and equality, to the working agendas of stakeholders around the world.

Bolstering governance

Mainstreaming gender equality and equity has been a key development area for the Government of India for over a decade now. The passage of the Women's Reservation Bill last year, ensuring reservation of a third of seats for women in Parliament and the State Assemblies, is a revolutionary tool for women's empowerment and is expected to contribute extensively to improving the processes of India's governance. Allocations of nearly \$27 billion under the gender budget in 2023-24 are a manifestation of the commitment of the government to advancing women-led development.

There has been an increase in India's female labour force participation rate, from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 37% in 2022-23 (data from the annual



Chandrapratap Banerjee

is Director-General, Confederation of Indian Industry

Periodic Labour Force Surveys). Female enrolment in higher education has gone up by 28% in the last 10 years. In terms of enrolment in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) courses, the share of women is a significant 43%, which is one of the highest enrolment rates in the world. Even within rural India, there is a participation of over nine crore women in 83 lakh self-help groups, improving the socio-economic conditions in rural areas. All these provide a glimpse of women-led development that India is witnessing.

An Indian contribution at Davos

I am happy to observe that global leaders are now acknowledging the success of these initiatives and learning from our success stories, be it in space exploration, sports, entrepreneurship or even in United Nations peacekeeping operations around the world. The changes are there for all to see. The enthusiasm around the We-Lead Lounge set up by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Confederation of Indian Industry at Davos, saw global interest and curiosity. It served as a platform to have many meaningful deliberations around how the world can contribute, join, and drive inclusive development. The Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality now serves as a platform to channelise the resultant enthusiasm and intent into action at the global level.

The Alliance, anchored by the CII Centre for Women Leadership, guided by the Minister of Women and Child Development, Government of India and supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, will have a global network of experts, think-tanks, industry and country leadership that will drive collective actions to augment women empowerment. The partnership of the World Economic Forum as a network partner in this initiative, is testament to the global

relevance and the global resolve to drive growth that is inclusive and equitable.

With an overarching goal to share and develop scaleable and practical solutions for advancing women-led development in the areas of ed-tech, medical capacity building, and delivery of health interventions for women, learning and skill development, agrotech, women enterprise development and unlocking capital to enable stronger gender outcomes, the Alliance brings together stakeholders on this critical global development agenda. India's leadership in these areas is proven, gaining the label of "pharmacy of the world". India's digital prowess is also well known. The alliance is yet another example of leadership, as India accepts responsibility to provide shared direction to stakeholders globally.

An opportunity

For industry across the globe, this is an opportunity: to share some of the practices that we have developed to advance the entry and growth of women in the workspace; to invest in proven programmes and initiatives and enable them reach scale, and to work collectively to make inclusion a business conversation. It is also an opportunity to learn and develop solutions with the global community consisting of industry, think tanks and investors to advance our commitment to increased engagement and leadership of women within the economy, through increased access to health care, education opportunities and economic opportunities.

Given India's abiding commitment to 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - One Earth, One Family, One Future' and its continued efforts towards *Sabka Saath, Sabka Prayaas, Sabka Vikas*, this Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality is poised to be a force to reckon with on all gender-related issues.

India's launch of the Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality is a step towards enabling 'equity' and 'equality'

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Farm issue

Scriptures say that as god shuts one door he opens another. On magnanimity that is similar, even as the government fortifies the Delhi borders for the farmers' march, its Agriculture Minister has gone on record to say that the government is keeping its mind open on talks with them. If this time around the barricades on the borders are seen to be far deeper and more intimidating than those during the earlier agitation, it is only fair to hope that the government is willing to keep its mind open far wider than before. But then why at all the barricades, if the government is confident

of its persuasive powers and its avowed concerns for the farmer?

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

The farmers' demand for guaranteed minimum support prices has remained unaddressed for long. The talks have failed again and it is strange that the government which acts in many ways, with surprise moves – as seen in recent times with the election in mind – has not come forward to accept their legitimate demands. The backbone of the economy in this country is agriculture and the ruling party is very likely to lose a chunk of votes from this distressed

community if its demands are not met.

N. Visveswaran,
Chennai

consecration in Ayodhya could usher a new era that would make generations proud. How will this event solve people's problems? How convenient it is to ignore the burning ethnic issue in Manipur, inflation and unemployment! If the government has made a record increase in MSP for farm produce, then why are farmers on a rally fired up on this issue? The Opposition is not strong enough to point out the deficiencies in the BJP's

policies. People should analyse these before voting.

D. Sethuraman,
Chennai

Title regained
The Australian U-19 cricket team's win demonstrates its dominance in ICC competitions. But our boys did play well and their poise and maturity versus South Africa in the semifinal were a "show stopper" ("Sport" February 12). **K. Akash,** Chennai

Corrections & Clarifications
The story titled "Ahalan Modi": large turnout expected at PM's diaspora event in UAE" (February 12, 2024) erroneously referred to the spokesperson for the event as Nisha Singh. It should have been Nishi Singh.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300. E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

NEET registration

I am a class 12 student and as a NEET aspirant, I am part of many 'NEET groups' on WhatsApp. Recently, we came across a weblink (<https://neet.ntaonline.in/frontend/web/registration/index>) which directs you to register for NEET. There is a document attached which does not list any country outside India as a centre for NEET, which makes many parents believe that an aspirant has to travel to India for the NEET examination on May 5, 2024. No candidate has been able to register on this site, causing much panic and stress. Is it a fake site? **Om Shetty,** Dubai

The state of the Indian economy today

The state of the Indian economy today and its prospects have to be based on mathematics and statistics. We can get a reality check on the economic growth rate by examining the three conclusions that emerge today based on data published by the National Statistical Office. This helps us analyse the Modi government's economic performance as disclosed in Parliament and subsequently published in the media.



Subramanian Swamy

is former Union Minister of Commerce and Law and Justice

Furthermore, not only has the GDP growth rate been declining since 2016, but brazen announcements of rosy predictions were and are being published annually in the media, with outrageous claims made by Mr. Modi. One such claim made in 2019 was that India will become a \$5 trillion economy by 2024. This implied a doubling of the GDP in five years or, in other words, a 15% annual growth rate of GDP. There has been no policy structuring presented to achieve this aim nor has anyone in the government shown willingness to debate it on public fora.

Post-COVID-19, we hear and read in the media that the growth rate of GDP is around 6% + annually. But this is misleading and deliberately so because what is not disclosed is that the growth rate includes recovery as well, since 2020-22. Hence, if we calculate the GDP growth rate between 2019-20 and 2022-23, two normal years, it works out to less than 4% per year for the period. The Modi government was elected democratically. Hence, it is obligated to disclose facts transparently to the people.

In this decade of weak demand and relatively excess supply, resources mobilised by the government should be largely through indirect taxes and also through the liberal printing of currency notes to generate demand from non-rich citizens. The annual interest paid on fixed-term savings in the bank accounts of the middle class should be higher, at 9% or so. The interest rates on loans issued to small and medium industries should be no more than 6% on the loans. These essential reforms need to be carried out to generate non-inflationary demand.

A new economic policy
"Modinomics" has been an unstructured flop. No announced macroeconomic goal has been achieved by the government till date. Thus, India urgently needs a new economic policy that is based

on clearly structured and stated objectives and priorities, and a strategy to achieve the targets, with an intelligent and transparent resource mobilisation plan to finance the policies. At present, from the Finance Ministry, we only have an incoherent hotchpotch of public announcements with no accountability.

The market system is not a free-for-all or ad hoc measure. It is structured with rules of transactions. A market system with transparent and minimal regulation works since the principal drivers are incentives and domestic savings whose deployment for innovation pushes up factor productivity and thus the GDP growth rate. Even a totalitarian state such as China understood this. During Deng Xiaoping's tenure as paramount leader, it allowed the socialist economic system to die, and the economic market-based system to wash in, even while maintaining the system of political dictatorship.

The trade-offs through affirmative action, social security, and safety nets are essential for creating a stake for the poor in the system and level the playing field to create hope, ensure transparency, accountability, trusteeship [philanthropy] as well as corporate governance to legitimise profit-making that will drive the market system. Deregulation should also not mean that we reject government intervention for safety nets, affirmative action, market failures, and creating a level-playing field.

Democratic institutions have to be empowered to guard against public disorder arising from rapid deregulation, as it happened in Russia post-1991. Russia underwent chaos and misery, which meant dictatorship returned for the Russians, and with it came a loss of human rights and democratic values. The current slow slide to autocracy would lead to what has happened in Russia.

Post-COVID-19, we hear that the growth rate of GDP is around 6% + annually. But this is misleading because what is not disclosed is that the growth rate includes recovery as well, since 2020-22.

What the data say
First, India's GDP growth rate declined annually from 2016-17, and fell below 3.5% in the fourth quarter of 2019-20. This four-year continuous decline from a 7% growth rate to 3.5% rate has never been acknowledged by the government. Second, it is essential to recognise that since 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's widely publicised 'vikas' or development model in reality achieved the so-called "Hindu rate of growth" in GDP, which had been "achieved" during the Congress's socialist period of 1950-77. Third, in P.V. Narasimha Rao's and Manmohan Singh's tenures as Prime Minister, India departed from the socialist path and the GDP growth rates rose for the first time to 6%-8% per year and over a 15-year period i.e., between 1991-96 and 2004-2014 (with the usual cyclical ups and downs). That is, it took Rao and Dr. Singh to understand and reform the Indian economic system, reduce state participation, and increase incentives for capital and labour providers, and achieve a higher and faster growth rate.

What is alarming since Mr. Modi assumed office is the serious and continuous decline in the GDP growth rate. The decline had begun in 2016 and continues even today. The Modi government has thus failed to structure economic policy coherently. Incoherence prevailed during the 2014-2023 period and will perhaps continue in the future as well.

A record number of global voters exercise right in 2024

Many countries have a low score in the index that measures free and fair polls; India ranks somewhere in the middle

DATA POINT

Rebecca Rose Varghese & Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Over 50 countries in which close to 45% of the people in the world reside have gone to the polls or will go to the polls this year. This only includes those countries which conducted or will conduct national-level polls this year or are part of the nations which choose the European Parliament. Countries conducting local elections have been ignored. With the world's population on the rise and many countries having elections this year, estimates indicate that 2024 could see the highest number of votes polled in history.

Most of these elections are concentrated in Asia, Europe, and Northern America. Some countries from Africa and South America also choosing their leaders this year. **Map 1** shows the countries which are going to the polls or have already completed elections this year. The countries in Europe that are only voting for the European Parliament and are not choosing their country's government have been highlighted with a different colour.

An assessment of how free and fair the elections are in these countries shows that democracy is on the retreat in many of them. Only a few countries showed improvement in this area. To measure the fairness of elections, **Chart 2** arranges countries according to their scores in the free and fair elections index 2022. This is prepared by the V-Dem Institute based on expert assessments. It captures the extent to which election violence, government intimidation, fraud, large irregularities, and vote buying are absent in a country. It ranges from 0 (least free and fair) to 1 (most free and fair). The bigger the size of the circle in the chart, the higher the voting population of the country.

Chart 3 shows the change in the free and fair elections index between 2012 and 2022. Comoros, India, Hungary, Bangladesh, Poland, and El Salvador are among the countries where the index has deteriorated the most in the past decade. Only countries which showed at least some degree of decline in the index or improvement are depicted in the chart. Uzbekistan, Romania, and Togo are countries which have shown improvement in the index in the last decade.

country in Africa, fared the worst in the 2022 index. According to news reports, President Azali Assoumani was re-elected for the fourth term in January. The Opposition termed the poll "fraudulent". Voter turnout was very low at 16% as the Opposition boycotted the polls. Countries in the subcontinent including India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan were either middling or in the lower half of the index. The two major parties in Pakistan are fighting over who will be Prime Minister, with Imran Khan, one of the candidates for the post, in prison. On the day of the polls, there was a mobile Internet shutdown and the results were delayed. Recently, a Mayor election in Chandigarh, India, was heavily criticised by the Supreme Court for the manner in which a BJP candidate was declared as winner. In the videos, the presiding officer appears to be defacing ballots which the Chief Justice of India called a "mockery of democracy".

Fellow Asian countries such as Russia, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Mongolia also rank relatively low in the index. Earlier this month, in Russia, Boris Nemtsov, who opposes the invasion of Ukraine, was not accepted as a candidate for the presidential election in March. Of the one lakh signatures of supporters he is supposed to get to prove his worth as a candidate, 9,000 were rejected by the Election Commission as invalid. India, with a score of 0.53 is right in the middle of the index.

Chart 3 shows the change in the free and fair elections index between 2012 and 2022. Comoros, India, Hungary, Bangladesh, Poland, and El Salvador are among the countries where the index has deteriorated the most in the past decade. Only countries which showed at least some degree of decline in the index or improvement are depicted in the chart. Uzbekistan, Romania, and Togo are countries which have shown improvement in the index in the last decade.

Democracy on the decline in many nations

The data for charts were sourced from Our World in Data, International IDEA, World Bank and the Association of World Election Bodies

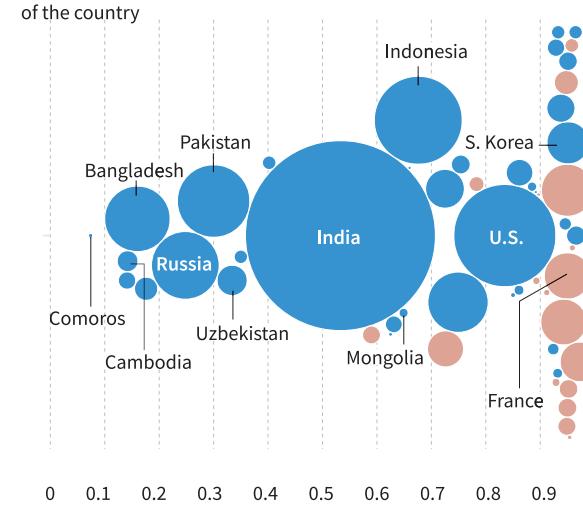


Map 1: The map shows the countries going to the polls or have already completed elections in 2024

■ National-level elections ■ Elections for the EU Parliament



Chart 2: The chart shows the free and fair elections index, 2022. The bigger the size of the circle, the higher the voting population of the country



Telangana's education paradox

While gross enrolment ratio in school is poor, students do well in competitive exams

STATE OF PLAY

Serish Nanisetti
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Telangana presents a rare paradox in the education sector. Its students perform exceptionally well in the All India Joint Entrance Examination every year. In 2023, 11 out of 43 students scored 100 percentile, the highest among all States. But the Annual Status of Education Report for 2022 makes for grim reading. The State also has the highest share of students in the 14-18 group who are not in the education system. Ironically, the students from the State who crack national competitive exams are from the same age group.

Other States with poor social indicators are better off than Telangana. While 22.1% of children in the age group of 14-18 in Telangana were out of the education system, the national average was 13.2%. School students in the State don't have skills that match their counterparts in other parts of the country. For instance, nationally, 43.3% of students could do basic arithmetic calculations, while in Telangana, only 19.75% could do so in the 14-18 age group.

Low investment in education by successive governments lies at the heart of the problem. The State has 3,274 junior colleges of which only 420 are managed by the State government. But it has 1,349 privately run junior colleges, most of them in urban areas. The result is that many students have to travel long distances to reach college. The State also runs other residential junior colleges and facilities, but the admission for them is through a competitive exam. This also keeps a high



share of students out of the education system.

The interim Budget presented by the incumbent Congress government appears to recognise both the quality of education and the funding gap for the sector.

"Our government's biggest priority will be school education. Apart from providing the required funds for various facilities and schemes on a regular basis, the government has decided to set up digital classrooms in the schools," said the Finance Minister, Mallu Bhatti Vilramarka, in his maiden Interim Budget speech.

Funding has been raised from ₹18,955 crore, earmarked in the 2023-24 Budget, to ₹21,839 crore – a substantial increase of 15.21%. But this is not enough. Telangana has consistently under-spent on the education sector over the past decade. The budgetary outlay for education in 2014-15 was 10.89%. If the State had maintained the same pace of sectoral outlay, the education budget for 2024-25 should have been ₹30,044.53 crore.

When the Telangana Rashtra Samithi came to power, it used the slogan of "KG to PG" free education for the poor. But the investment required to fulfil the promise was never made. The State managed to build only one show-piece facility in Sirsilla, the Assembly constituency of former Municipal Administration and Urban Development minister K.T. Rama Rao. Even this was

not developed with State funding, but with monies under Corporate Social Responsibility from a building conglomerate.

NGOs in the State have been highlighting the abysmal state of educational infrastructure by sharing information and photographs of schools without boundary walls and of cattle roaming around in dysfunctional washrooms. The high dropout rate among girls of the 14-18 group is directly linked to the absence of hygienic toilet facilities.

The quality of education has been affected by the slow pace of recruitment in the education sector which has scuppered the hopes of lakhs of aspiring teachers. In 2019, the State government appointed eight serving Indian Administrative Service officers as in-charge vice-chancellors as an ad hoc measure after the tenure of the vice-chancellors ended. The universities which had IAS officers as vice-chancellors included Kakatiya University, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University-Hyderabad, and Osmania University. Only in May 2021 did the universities get academicians as full-fledged vice-chancellors. It was clear that the State cared little about educational institutions.

One of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". It is clear that Telangana will not achieve this goal in time. It will also be unable to achieve the goal of ensuring 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio goal in higher education by 2030, a stated goal of the Union government. It is time for the Telangana government to follow through on its promises in education.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 13, 1974

Trunk automatic exchanges for more towns

Madras, Feb. 12: Trunk Automatic Exchanges (TAX) would be installed at Coimbatore, Madurai and Tiruchi during the Fifth Plan, Mr. Janakiraman, Post Master General, Tamil Nadu Circle said here to-day.

Mr. Janakiraman said besides this, the capacity of the TAX at Madras would also be increased. Already Bangalore and Coimbatore had been connected to this, providing inter-dialling facility.

Work had also been commenced on the coaxial scheme linking Coimbatore, Tirupur, Erode, Salem and Bangalore. A similar scheme to link Madurai with Virudhunagar, Tirunelveli, Tuticorin, Nagercoil and Trivandrum had also been approved. Madras would also be linked with Tiruchi via Pondicherry.

These systems were likely to be completed during the Fifth Plan.

A microwave scheme linking Madurai, Kodaikanal, Theni and Coimbatore was expected to be completed during 1974-75, he said.

Mr. Janakiraman said a wide-band microwave project linking Madras with Bombay and Trivandrum via Bangalore, Mangalore and Panjim would be commissioned by 1976-77. Under this project, a spur route linking Madras with Tirupathi had also been provided and expected to be commissioned during 1974-75.

Mr. Janakiraman said the number of new Savings Bank accounts in October 1973 was 19,000 and it shot up to 50,000 in November of the same year. The deposits had also risen from Rs. 2.5 crores in April 1972 to Rs. 5.4 crores in November 1973.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 13, 1924

New Railway in East Africa

Nairobi, Feb. 12: Sir Robert Coryndon opened at Eldoret on Monday the new Uasin Gishu Railway, which has been completed as far as Eldoret. The Governor's train got through with the greatest difficulty owing to rains and the line not yet being open to traffic. But its completion marks a great forward step and rewards the energy and patience of hundreds of settlers in the Uasin Gishu area.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The number of people SpiceJet airline plans to lay off

1,000 The airline has around 9,000 employees

and is looking at reducing the strength by 10-15%, an official said, adding that layoffs are necessary to reduce costs and annual savings could be up to ₹100 crore. PTI

The primary schools in Gujarat with just one teacher

1,606 "The State government had said in

March 2022 that nearly 700 schools were functioning with just one teacher. Today, that number stands at 1,606..," Congress MLA Shailesh Parmar said. PTI

Palestinian minors killed due to Israel's war in Gaza

12,300 Minors made up about

47% of the total number of 28,176 Palestinians killed so far, the Health Ministry said on Monday. About 8,400 women were also among those killed. AP

The decline in India's vegetable oil imports in January

28 in percentage. The country's vegetable oil imports declined to 12 lakh tonnes in January

from the year-ago period. The SEA said prices of edible oils may go up this year due to lower production, global economic issues and supply constraints. PTI

The death toll due to a landslide in the Philippines

68 The landslide buried three buses and a jeepney waiting for employees of a gold

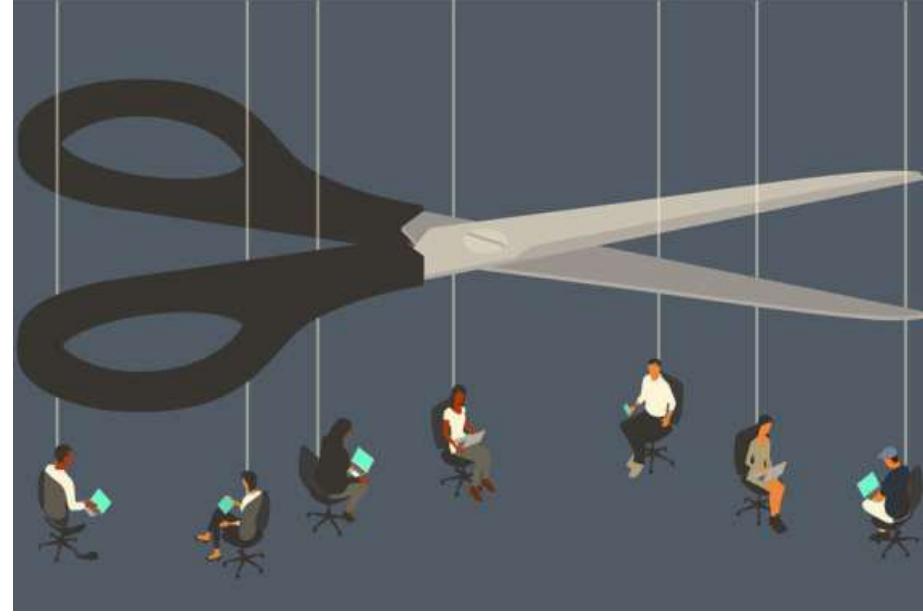
mining firm and 55 nearby houses. Rain has pounded parts of Mindanao, triggering dozens of landslides and floods. AFP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Decoding India's economic realities-II

The Finance Minister has claimed that 1.4 crore youth have been trained under the 'Skill India Mission'. However, data shows that these skilled youth are not gainfully employed. Such excess supply of skilled workers in the economy is working as a dampener on wage and earnings growth



ECONOMIC NOTES

Prasenjit Bose
Indranil Chowdhury
Samiran Sengupta
Soumyadeep Biswas

This is the second of a two-part series on the Union Budgets under the UPA and NDA governments.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) regime has done little to address the major supply side factors driving food inflation, beyond imposing ad hoc export bans. While cash transfer schemes like PM-Kisan or the distribution of free foodgrains to poorer households can provide much needed income support and relief, they can neither improve agricultural productivity nor modernise storage and marketing of food items like vegetables, pulses and cereals, whose prices are driving food inflation today. The only method conceived by the NDA to address these issues was to facilitate a wholesale corporate takeover of India's food and agricultural economy by enacting three farm laws in September 2020, which had to be eventually rescinded following a year-long protest by north Indian farmers. Since then, the NDA-II government has remained as clueless as the UPA (United Progressive Alliance)-II was, in dealing with food inflation and agriculture.

The second problem with UPA's growth story was that while exports grew rapidly, imports grew even faster, partly due to rising global crude prices, which worsened the current account balance and increased external vulnerability. During the NDA regime, both export and import growth declined, which impacted economic growth adversely but improved the external trade balance. Further, during the NDA decade, net FDI inflows increased as a share of GDP but remittance inflows, which remained significantly higher than net FDI inflows, declined compared to the UPA decade. The end-result has been mixed.

The fall in India's foreign exchange reserves during NDA-I could be reversed during NDA-II, but the rupee has continued to depreciate vis-a-vis the dollar. The rupee-dollar exchange rate, which fell from ₹43 to ₹60 per dollar during the UPA rule has fallen further to ₹83 during NDA's tenure. In the context of the post-pandemic surge in global inflation last year, the rupee depreciation has only imported the inflationary trend into the domestic economy.

The problem of NPAs

The third problem with UPA's higher growth and private investment phase was

that it led to rising big ticket corporate defaults, initially concealed through debt restructuring, which ultimately left a huge pile of legacy Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in the banking system. The Modi government is claiming credit for restoring the health of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) by reducing the Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) stock significantly. The fact remains that while cumulative NPA reduction under the NDA rule through all recovery channels, including the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was around ₹10.8 lakh crore (till March 2023), NPA write-offs have amounted to over ₹14.8 lakh crore in the same period (Table 1).

The PSBs, which accounted for over ₹10.65 lakh crore of these NPA write offs had to absorb substantial losses because of NPA provisioning, making net losses between 2017-18 and 2019-20. Simultaneously, since 2017-18 massive doses of capital was infused into PSBs and financial institutions like the EXIM Bank, the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) and the India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL), in order to bail them out. As disclosed in the Receipt Budgets, the Centre's total debt burden on account of these recapitalisation bonds have increased to ₹2.90 lakh crore by 2023-24, and their annual interest expense of over ₹19,000 crore is being met through the central government's revenue expenditure since 2019-20. Bank recapitalisation under the UPA rule, which was of a much smaller magnitude, was audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), covering the period between 2008-09 to 2016-17. However, bank recapitalisation executed under the NDA rule has not been audited by the CAG so far. Such an audit is necessary to evaluate the massive NPA write offs by the PSBs and conclude whether private sector debt defaults have been subsidised through the public exchequer.

Income and employment

The efficacy of Union Budgets needs to be judged in terms of their impact on the lives of ordinary people. The Finance Minister has claimed in the Budget speech that under NDA rule "people are living better and earning better, with even greater aspirations for the future. Average real income of the people has increased by fifty per cent." However, how true is this claim? Official data shows that real per capita income in India, estimated by the inflation-adjusted Net National Income (NNI), registered a growth of 5.03% during the ten years of UPA rule (Table 2). During NDA's ten year rule, real per capita income grew by 43.6%, reflecting a slowdown in inflation adjusted income growth across India.

UPA vs NDA: macroeconomic indicators

The efficacy of Union Budgets need to be judged in terms of their impact on the lives of ordinary people. These tables look at the average income and employment status of the average Indian citizen

Table 1: Macroeconomic Indicators

	UPA-I 2004-05 to 2008-09	UPA-II 2009-10 to 2013-14	NDA-I 2014-15 to 2018-19	NDA-II 2019-20 to 2023-24
Banking Sector				
Bank Credit Growth Rate % (Annual Average)	27.2	16.7	10.3	10.3
Aggregate Bank Deposit Growth Rate % (Annual Average)	20.6	15.0	10.3	9.8
Gross NPA of Scheduled Commercial Banks (₹Crre) # (End of Period) #	68328	264381	936474	571546
Total NPA Recovery of Scheduled Commercial Banks (₹Crre) #	139451	324191	598981	479881
Total NPA Write-Offs of Scheduled Commercial Banks (₹Crre) #	8500	55002	639980	842414
External Sector				
Net Exports of Goods & Services (Exports less Imports) % of GDP (Annual Average)	-3.4	-5.2	-2.8	-2.2
Real Export Growth % (Annual Average)	18.9	8.9	3.5	6.4
Real Import Growth % (Annual Average)	21.7	6.4	5.1	7.5
Net FDI Inflows % of GDP (Annual Average)**	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.3
Inward Remittances % of GDP (Annual Average)	3.3	3.5	2.9	3.1
Foreign & Exchange Rate				
Foreign Exchange Reserves % of GDP (End of Period)##	23.3	16.3	15.1	17.4
Rupee Dollar Exchange Rate (in ₹) (End of Period)	50.9	60.1	69.2	83.0

*CPI-IW till 2008-09, CPI-Combined for Subsequent Periods # NPA and NPA movement estimates are till March 2023.

**4-Yr Average for NDA II (2019-20 to 2023-24) ## Forex Data till January 2024

Table 2: Per Capita Income & Growth

	UPA I & II 2004-05 2013-14	% Growth 10 Year Period	NDA I & II 2014-15 2023-24	% Growth 10 Year Period
Nominal Per Capita Income (NNI) (in ₹)	25987	79118	204.5	86647
Real Per Capita Income (NNI) (in ₹)	45611	68572	50.3	72805

Table 3: Employment, Unemployment & Earnings

	NSS 68th Round - 2011-12 (A)	PLFS 2017-18 (B)	PLFS 2022-23 (C)	Variation (B-A) (C-B)
Unemployment Rates (%)				
Unemployment Rate % (CWS)	3.7	8.9	5.1	5.2 -3.8
Unemployment Rate % (Usual Status, ps + ss)	2.3	6.1	3.2	3.8 -2.9
Unemployment Rate % among Youth (15-29 Yrs) (Usual Status, ps + ss) - Rural	4.9	16.6	8	11.7 -8.6
Unemployment Rate % among Youth (15-29 Yrs) (Usual Status, ps + ss) - Urban	9.2	20.6	15.7	11.4 -4.9
Educated Unemployment Rate % (Secondary and Above, 15 Yrs+) (Usual Status, ps + ss) - Rural	4.7	11.5	6.6	6.8 -4.9
Educated Unemployment Rate % (Secondary and Above, 15 Yrs+) (Usual Status, ps + ss) - Urban	5.1	11.3	8.4	6.2 -2.9
Status in Employment (Usual Status, ps + ss)				
Share (%) of Self-Employed in Usually Employed - Rural	55.9	57.8	63	1.9 5.2
Share (%) of Self-Employed in Usually Employed - Urban	42	38.3	39.6	-3.7 1.3
Share (%) of Regular Wage/Salaried in Usually Employed - Rural	8.8	13.1	12.2	4.3 -0.9
Share (%) of Regular Wage/Salaried in Usually Employed - Urban	43.4	47	48	3.6 1
Share (%) of Casual Labour in Usually Employed - Rural	35.3	29.1	24.8	-6.2 -4.3
Share (%) of Casual Labour in Usually Employed - Urban	14.6	14.7	12.4	0.1 -2.3
Informal Sector (Usual Status, ps + ss) (Rural + Urban)				
Share (%) of Workers engaged in Agriculture	48.9	44.1	45.8	-4.8 1.7
Share (%) of Workers in Usual Status (ps + ss) employed in Informal (P&P) Non-Agricultural Enterprises	37	38.2	40.3	1.2 2.1
Share (%) of Regular Wage/Salaried Employees without Social Security Benefit in Non-agriculture sector	55.4	49.6	53.9	-5.8 4.3
Average Monthly Earnings (Rural + Urban) (in ₹)				
Average Monthly Wage Earnings from Casual Labour work other than public work*	n.a.	5741	8547	48.9
Average Monthly Earnings of Regular Wage/Salaried Employees	n.a.	16847	20039	18.9
Average Monthly Earnings from Self-Employment	n.a.	12304	13347	8.5

*Calculated from data on average earnings per day and actual days worked in a week

Source: Union Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation

The NDA government often cites the annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) findings to claim a reduction in the unemployment rate between 2017-18 and 2022-23. However, comparable estimates from the NSS 68th round on Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, shows that unemployment rates, estimated by both current weekly status and adjusted usual status, grew very sharply between 2011-12 to 2017-18 (See Table 3). Moreover, while the unemployment rates declined between 2017-18 and 2022-23, the open unemployment rates of 2022-2023 were still higher, not only vis-a-vis the NSS 68th round of 2011-12, but compared to all the eight previous NSS rounds conducted since 1972-73. The open unemployment rates have never been so high in India in the last 50 years. Unemployment was particularly high among the urban youth aged 15 to 29 years and among those with an educational level of secondary and above. Within those employed, the share of casual workers show a declining trend both in rural and urban areas, while the proportion of self-employed have increased progressively. In 2022-23, self-employed workers and helpers in own account enterprises made up 63% of the rural labour force and almost 40% of the urban labour force. The share of regular wage/salaried workers has declined in rural areas and increased in urban areas between 2017-18 and 2022-23. However, the share of those without any social security benefit has increased within the salaried workers category.

Even as agriculture's share in Gross Value Added (GVA) has declined to 14.4% in 2023-24, there has been an increase in the share of workers engaged in agriculture between 2017-18 and 2022-23. The share of workers engaged in informal non-agricultural enterprises has also increased since 2011-12. These trends in employment status from the PLFS data point towards growing informalisation of the labour force, contrary to official claims of increased formalisation.

Skilled but not employed

The Finance Minister had claimed in the Budget speech that the government's "Skill India Mission" has trained 1.4 crore youth and 54 lakh youth have been up-skilled and reskilled. However, the dashboard in the official site of the PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana shows that out of 1.10 crore certified candidates, only 24.51 lakh, that is around 22%, have been "Reported Placed". Such excess supply of skilled workers in the economy and growing informalisation is working as a dampener on wage and earnings growth. PLFS data further show that the

LOKINITI-CSDS

The political preferences of first-time voters in Delhi

Data suggests a significant preference for the Bharatiya Janata Party among first-time voters when it comes to running the government at the national level. The study also dissects specific issues that resonate with the younger generation

Lokniti Team

A recent study done by the Lokniti-CSDS among 1,290 first-time voters (47% young men and 53% young women) in Delhi, delves into the intricate realm of their political preferences. The study not only explores their choice of party for governance at both national and State levels but also dissects the specific issues that resonate with the younger generation. Recognising the strategic importance of engaging with this group, political parties are actively initiating efforts to reach out to millions of first-time voters. This outreach seeks not only to establish a connect but also to secure their support for the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

On governing States and the nation
The data suggests a significant preference for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) among first-time voters when it comes to running the government at the national level. The BJP has a substantial lead with 70% support, indicating a widespread belief among first-time voters that the BJP is best suited for national governance. The Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) lag significantly behind in this context (Table 1). However, when it comes to governance at the State level, particularly in Delhi, the dynamics shift. AAP secured the preference of 49% of the youth, closely followed by the BJP at 33%.

Meanwhile, the Congress garnered a minimal mention, with only 3% of young voters expressing support for the party (Table 1).

Upon examining specific issues relevant to the youth, it becomes evident that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stands out as the preferred choice for addressing youth-related challenges and creating employment opportunities. In contrast, other political parties have limited support in this regard. Interestingly, a notable three in ten voters expressed that no party adequately prioritises these critical issues (Table 2). However, when it comes to providing quality education, a distinct competition emerges between the AAP and the BJP. An almost equal number of young voters perceive both parties as strong contenders in this crucial area.

On gauging young respondents' opinion on the Narendra Modi government we asked them what work done by the Modi government did they like the most. Development emerged as the most appreciated aspect, garnering 20% approval, followed by 11% acknowledging the government's efforts in protecting religious interests. Other mentions include 6% approval for maintaining law and order, 5% for initiatives to enhance women's security, and 4% each for reducing unemployment, improving education, and aiding the underprivileged (Table 3).

On the contrary the most disliked work of the Modi government reveal diverse concerns. For 17% of first time voters it was an increase in communalism. Following closely, 15% expressed discontent with the issue of price rise, while 12% were critical of the government's handling of increasing unemployment. A 3% disapproval rate is observed for multiple aspects, including a



Table 1: The best party for running the country and Delhi

	Party best for.....	
	Running the government in the country	Running the government in Delhi
BJP	70	33
Congress	7	4
AAP	5	49

Note: Rest gave other responses or did not respond

Table 2: Party best for specific issues

Which party is the best..	BJP	Congress	AAP	No party
Focusing on the problems of the youth	44	13	14	26
Generating employment opportunities	45	11	10	30
Providing quality education	40	6	41	11

Note: Rest gave names of other parties

Table 3: Standout achievement of the Modi govt.

One work done by the Modi government that you liked the most	(%)
Development	20
Protect my religion/religious interests	11
Good law and order situation	6
Worked for improving women's security	5
Reduced unemployment	4
Improvement in education sector	4
Worked for the benefit of the poor	4
Improvement in health services	3
Reduced corruption	3
All other work combined	26

Note: Rest did not respond

Table 4: Most disliked work of the Modi Government

One work done by the Modi government that you disliked the most	(%)
Communalism has increased	17
Price rise	15
Increasing unemployment	12
Corruption has increased	3
Did not work for the benefit of the poor	3
Situation of education sector is not good	3
Crimes against women have increased	3
All other work combined	18

Note: Rest did not respond

With the recent inauguration of the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, first-time voters were asked how they felt about the construction of the new temple. More than two thirds (67%) expressed a deep sense of pride and another one sixth (15%) indicated being somewhat proud, suggesting an overall positive mood

Table 5: Opinion on the caste Census

Should the caste census be conducted in India	(%)
Yes	48
No	46

Note: Rest did not respond

Table 6: Opinion on the construction of the Ram Temple

How proud do you feel that a Ram temple has been constructed in Ayodhya	(%)
Very proud	67
Somewhat proud	15
Not much proud	8
Not at all proud	8

Note: Rest did not respond

Table 7: Opinion on the significance of the inauguration of Ram Mandir

Opinion on the celebration plan for the inauguration of the Ram Mandir	(%)
The grand celebration for Ram Mandir was necessary	46
It was for vote bank	48

Note: Rest did not respond

Table 8: The vote choice of first-time voters

Vote Choice	(%)
BJP	65
Congress	8
AAP	7
Other parties combined	4
Did not reveal	16

Note: Rest did not respond

rise in corruption, the belief that the government did not work for the benefit of the poor, concerns about the education sector, and the increase in crimes against women (Table 4).

On the temple inauguration

In exploring the perspectives of first-time voters on critical issues, we inquired about their opinions on the caste Census and their stance on the inauguration of the Ram Mandir.

With respect to the caste Census, the data indicates an equal divide regarding the need for conducting a caste Census in India. While 48% favoured the idea of conducting a caste Census, 46% believed it to be unnecessary (Table 5).

With the recent inauguration of the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, we asked first-time voters how they felt about the construction of the new temple. More than two thirds (67%) expressed a deep sense of pride and another one sixth (15%) indicated being somewhat proud, suggesting an overall positive mood.

A further question was posed regarding the significance of the grand celebration, questioning whether it was truly essential or if its inauguration was strategically aligned with the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections to secure a favourable vote bank. On this matter, the younger generation expressed divergent opinions, with a nearly equal split between those viewing it essential and those asserting its connection to political motives (Table 7).

Upon examining the vote preferences of the young who are planning to vote in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, two thirds (67%) expressed their intent to vote for the BJP. The Congress party garnered the preference of 8%, while AAP secured the support of 7%. The collective mention of all other parties amounted to 4%. Notably, 16% of respondents chose not to disclose their voting intentions. The findings of the study emphasise the continuously growing popularity of Mr. Modi, a discernible factor that significantly shapes the voters' preference in favour of the BJP.

A study by the Lokniti-CSDS research team which includes Vibha Attri, Sanjay Kumar, Suhas Palshikar, Sandeep Shastri, Jyoti Mishra and Abhinav Pankaj Borbora. This is the second of a two-part series on first-time voters in Delhi.

THE DAILY QUIZ

In the interim Budget, the Finance Minister announced that Lakshadweep would get funds to improve its infrastructure. How well do you know India's major islands?

Radhika Santhanam

QUESTION 1

This island once flourished as a major port for trade in Gujarat and is now connected to the mainland via two bridges. It is among the least populated districts in India. It is known in conjunction with another district; the two together formed a Union Territory. In 2019 they were merged with a neighbouring UT.

QUESTION 2

The majority of the people on this island are Muslim. Many people here speak Malayalam with a mix of Arabic. There is a tradition of matriliney in this place. Which island is this?

QUESTION 3

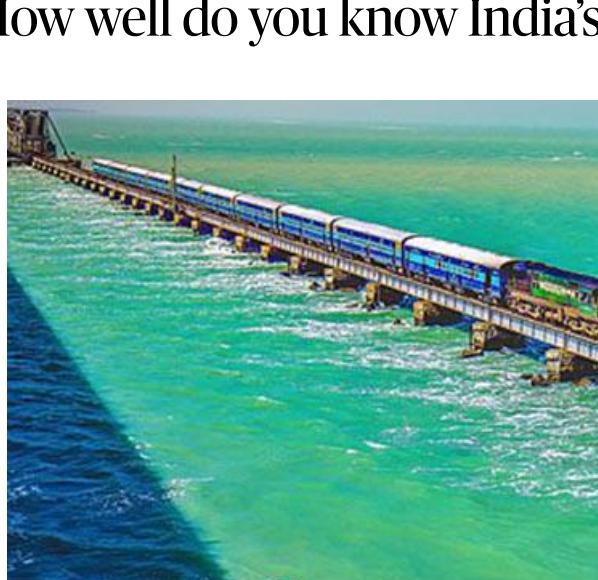
This island was named after a marine

surveyor and shared the name of one of the main characters of the popular sitcom *Friends*. It was renamed in 2019 after an Indian nationalist. Name it.

QUESTION 4
The Great Nicobar is the southernmost part of the Nicobar islands archipelago. Two tribes inhabit this place. One of them is the Nicobarese. Name the other.

QUESTION 5
This Chief Minister was an MLA of this island, which is also known as the first island district of India. Name him.

QUESTION 6
This is a barrier island. As it is located close to the equator, it is synonymous with innovation and exploration and a launch site. Name it.



Visual question:
Identify this Railway bridge which was the longest sea bridge in India until the opening of the Bandra-Worli Sea Link in Mumbai.

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



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

"Mr. R. V. Reddy wants to know the meaning of 'studied indifference'."

"'Studied' is used here as an adjective. It means 'carefully considered, intentional, deliberate'.

What bothered me was his studied indifference to what I said.

He is a very arrogant man. What you saw yesterday was his studied humility.

"Mr. V. N. Jindal, Ganeshganj, Lucknow, wants to know the meaning and pronunciation of 'charade'."

"A charade is 'a game in which each syllable of a word or phrase is acted out by one team while the other team tries to guess the word or phrase'. When you play the game, you have to perform several acts to convey the meaning of the word or syllable. The whole thing very often looks funny and absurd. From this, we get the figurative meaning 'ridiculous pretence'.

The parties had made up their minds about their position. The negotiations were a charade.

The 'ch' in 'charade' is pronounced 'sh' as in 'shall'; the first 'a' is pronounced like the 'a' in 'India', the second 'a' as in 'path'; the final 'e' is silent. The stress is on the second syllable. In American English, the second 'a' is pronounced like the 'ai' in 'paid', 'laid'."

"Miss K.S.L. Maduri, Nagappanagar, Chromepet, Madras, wants to know the meaning of 'kid-glove approach'."

"A kid-glove approach is a gentle, considerate approach.

He tried the kid-glove method but it didn't work.

"Kid" had several meanings. One of them is 'a young goat'. The leather from the skin of a young goat is also called 'kid'. It is used for making gloves, shoes, etc. It is noted for its softness. So a 'kid-glove' is a soft glove. A kid-glove approach is a soft approach.

You must handle him with kid gloves.

"Kid" also means a child. This is used in informal English. In American English, it is also used as an adjective to mean 'younger'.

She is his kid sister.

From Page One**7 Indian Navy veterans return from Qatar**

While Mr. Modi's visit to the UAE was announced earlier, the announcement of his Qatar visit was made by Mr. Kwatra at a special media interaction held here.

Qatar is a major supplier of energy to India and at least eight lakh Indian workers are employed in the Gulf country which continues to be a major source of foreign remittances to the Indian economy. Despite the case involving the eight Indian Navy veterans, economic ties have remained on track and recently the two sides signed a \$78 billion LNG deal that extended an existing agreement on supply of liquified natural gas (LNG) till 2048.

"The bilateral relationship between India and Qatar that has been steadily growing includes a comprehensive span, including political ties, trade and investment linkages, our strong energy partnership and ties in the field of culture, education and security," Mr. Kwatra added.

The Hindu had published earlier that both the United Arab Emirates and Qatar hold around 3,000 Indian prisoners in their prisons and the prisons in the Gulf region hold more than half of the total Indian prisoners in foreign jails.

T.N. Governor skips customary address

Later, the Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution proposed by the Leader of the House and Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan.

As per the resolution, the Speaker said only the prepared text of the speech as provided to the members and nothing else will go on the records of the Assembly. This was similar to a decision taken by the House last year when the Governor skipped certain portions of the address and also made certain extempore remarks.

Mr. Ravi walked out of the House when Mr. Duraimurugan, upon being called by the Speaker, rose to propose the resolution.

Prior to calling Mr. Duraimurugan, Mr. Appavu made certain remarks on the short speech made by the Governor. However, at a press conference in his chamber later, he said both the Governor's remarks and the remarks he himself made stood "expunged".

In its statement, the Raj Bhavan blamed the Speaker for launching a tirade against him in the Assembly instead of playing the national anthem after concluding the Tamil version of the address.

NDA govt. wins Bihar trust vote

The NDA, comprising the BJP, Janata Dal (United), Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular), and an Independent MLA, had support of 128 MLAs while the Opposition *Mahagathbandhan* (grand alliance) of the RJD, Congress, and Left parties had the support of 114 legislators. One MLA of Asaduddin Owaisi's All Indian Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), Akhtarul Iman, was undecided.

During the floor test, JD(U) member Dilip Kumar Ray was absent and party MLA Hazari did not vote as he was in the Chair. Three MLAs from RJD-Prahlad Yadav, Nilami Devi and Chetan Anand switched sides to vote in favour of the NDA. Mr. Prahlad Yadav was a founder-member of the RJD and is a three-time MLA from Suryagraha Assembly constituency in Lakhisarai district. Ms. Devi had won the Assembly byelection from Mokama constituency in 2022 after her husband and *bahubali* (strongman) Anant Singh was disqualified.

Senior BJP leader Nand Kishor Yadav is likely to be the new Speaker of the Assembly.

Retail inflation down to 3-month low in January

The price rise in pulses also cooled marginally from 20.7% in December to 19.5% in January.

Cereals and spices inflation saw slightly better moderation, dropping from 9.9% and 19.7% in December to 7.8% and 16.4%, respectively. Fruits inflation also fell from 11.1% to 8.65% in January, while milk prices rose 4.6% compared with 5.1% in December.

Inflation in eggs, however, picked up pace to touch 5.6% in January, as did sugar and confectionary price rise which hit 7.5% from 7.1% a month earlier.

Most non-food items continued to see weaker upticks in prices compared to food items, with personal care and effects that had clocked a 7.3% rise in prices in December, dropping below 6%. Education inflation inched up a tad from 4.77% in December to 4.93% in January, but the pace of rise in healthcare costs dropped from 5.1% to 4.8%.

Half of the 22 major States for which the National Statistical Office calculates inflation rates registered a price rise below the national average of 5.1%, with Delhi recording the lowest inflation of 2.56%, followed by Madhya Pradesh (3.93%), Kerala (4.04%), and Tamil Nadu (4.12%).

On the other hand, five States reported inflation of over 6%, breaching the RBI's tolerance threshold for price rise. Those States are Odisha (7.55%), Telangana (6.34%), Haryana (6.24%), Gujarat (6.21%), and Karnataka which witnessed 6.1% inflation in January.

Supreme Court to hear plea in Sena dispute case**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear on an early date the question of maintainability of an appeal filed by Shiv Sena Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray (UBT) against the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker's decision to dismiss disqualification petitions against Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and supporting MLAs, while holding them as the "real" Shiv Sena, on January 22.

Appearing before a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sunil Prabhu, submitted that the petition needed to be heard urgently by the court.

Senior advocate Harish Salve, appearing for one of the respondents, said an identical petition was filed by the Shiv Sena (UBT) camp in the Bombay High Court. It was still pending.

Mr. Salve questioned how the same appellant could agitate an identical cause in two different courts at the same time.

Chief Justice Chandrachud said the case would be listed soon by the top court.

Talks with Centre break down, farmers set to march to Delhi

Farmer leaders say Union Ministers did not offer any assurance on MSP guarantee during their meeting in Chandigarh; they said the protests will begin at 10 a.m. today; Delhi Police impose Section 144 for a month to prevent gatherings

A. M. Jigeesh

NEW DELHI

With the second round of meetings held on Monday with Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Arjun Munda in Chandigarh failing, farmers belonging to the Samyukt Kisan Morcha-Non Political (SKM-NP), a splinter group of Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), have decided to continue with the 'Delhi Chalo' protests as planned on Tuesday. The leaders said the protests will begin at 10 a.m.

The farmer leaders said that the Centre failed to give any assurance on their demands during the five-hour-long meeting. The bone of contention was an assurance on guaranteed Minimum Support Price (MSP).

"The Ministers did not give us any assurance on MSP. The talks collapsed. We will continue our protests," K.V. Biju, a senior farmer leader told *The Hindu* after the meeting.

Their other demands – freedom from debt, hiked import duties on all agricultural products, cancellation of all free trade agreements and other deals with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), suspending privatisation of electricity boards, a ban on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and corporatisation in agriculture, and a pension for farmers – remained unanswered as well.

"The Centre has taken an adamant stand. We have no other way before us than continuing the protests," said SKM-NP leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal.



Heavy fortification: Multi-layered barricading in place on Monday to seal the national capital's borders to prevent farmers from entering the city. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Senior SKM-NP leader Shiv Kumar Kakka, Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher and Punjab Minister for Administrative Reforms and NRI Affairs Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal were also present in the meeting.

Mr. Pandher said the Centre was trying to buy time. "We want the Centre to implement the assurances given to us two years ago. But they said they still want time," he added.

Meanwhile, police forces in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi have strengthened the security at Delhi's border, expecting the presence of large numbers of farmers.

The Delhi Police have imposed Section 144 of the CrPC for one month.

An order issued by Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora, which came into effect on Monday, would be enforced until March 12.

Farmers from Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are expected to enter Delhi during their march.

(With inputs from Samridhi Tewari)

Tight security in Haryana as farmers begin Delhi journey**The Hindu Bureau**

CHANDIGARH

With thousands of farmers and farm labourers from Punjab determined to lay siege to Delhi on Tuesday in an attempt to force the government to fulfil their demands, the Haryana government has established multiple layers of barricades to stop them from passing through the State.

The government has imposed traffic restrictions and security has been intensified, especially at entry points from Punjab, which include Ambala-Shambhu border, Khanaur-Jind and Dabwali.

Nails, barbed wire, concrete blocks, boulders and anti-riot vehicles are at hand along with water cannons. Mobile Internet services have already been suspended in Ambala, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Jind, Hisar, Fatehabad and Sirsa.

M.P. Congress chief urges Sonia Gandhi to represent State in RS**Mehul Malpani**

BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Congress president Jitendra Patwari on Monday said that the party's State unit had requested party leader Sonia Gandhi to consider going to the Rajya Sabha from the State.

Speaking to reporters at the MPCC headquarters in Bhopal, Mr. Patwari said the State unit, in a letter on Sunday, had appealed to Ms. Gandhi that if she chooses to go to the Rajya Sabha, she should represent Madhya Pradesh.

Mr. Patwari's remarks come at a time when speculation is rife that various State party leaders, including former Chief Minister Kamal Nath, have been pushing for a seat in the Upper House of Parliament.

A party source said the letter from the MPCC is

"more of a response to the pressure being mounted by Mr. Nath on the high command".

"Many leaders want the Rajya Sabha seat no matter how much they deny it in the public. The chances of Soniaji representing Madhya Pradesh are very dim but if she does, nobody will be able to object to it," the leader said.

As many as 56 seats of the Rajya Sabha, including five from Madhya Pradesh, will go to the polls on February 27. While the BJP is likely to comfortably win four, the Congress has numbers to send only one member.

Mr. Patwari added several of his party leaders have been served notices by the Income Tax department summoning them to Delhi ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

The women alleged atrocities by the local Trinamool Congress members.

The women alleged atrocities by the local Trinamool leadership, including the absconding Sheikh Sahajahan. They expressed fear of being subjected to "more torture" after the Governor left, if the local leaders were not arrested.

The women had also put up posters against the police. Some of them demanded the deployment of Central forces in the area.

"I am not here only as the Governor but also as your brother. It is the duty

Bengal Governor visits Sandeshkhali, promises justice for women victims**Shiv Sahay Singh**

KOLKATA

A tense situation persisted at Sandeshkhali as several women from the area on Monday approached the visiting Governor, C.V. Ananda Bose, with allegations of molestation by Trinamool Congress members.

The women alleged atrocities by the local Trinamool leadership, including the absconding Sheikh Sahajahan. They expressed fear of being subjected to "more torture" after the Governor left, if the local leaders were not arrested.

The women had also put up posters against the police. Some of them demanded the deployment of Central forces in the area.

"I am not here only as the Governor but also as your brother. It is the duty



Venting out: West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose meets a woman affected by the violence in Sandeshkhali, on Monday. ANI

of the brother to ensure protection to sisters," Mr. Bose said. He had cut short his visit to Kerala and arrived in Kolkata on Monday, going straight to Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district.

Describing the developments in the remote island as "shameful", the Governor assured action against the perpetrators of atrocities. "We will ensure that honour and dignity of the

women are restored and violators are brought to book," Mr. Bose told journalists at Sandeshkhali.

"What I saw was ghastly, shocking, shattering to my senses. I saw something which I should never have seen; I heard many things which I should never have heard," he said.

The West Bengal Police have set up a 10-member committee for the women to lodge their complaints.

6 BJP MLAs suspended

KOLKATA Six MLAs of the BJP, including Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, were suspended from West Bengal Assembly on Monday for staging protests and demanding a statement by CM Mamata Banerjee on the Sandeshkhali issue.

Meanwhile, they ruled out any communal angle to the allegations.

BJP MLAs stopped

During the day, 67 MLAs of the BJP – led by Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari – were stopped on the way to Sandeshkhali.

They left the State Assembly in a bus but were stopped near Science City under the jurisdiction of Kolkata Police.

Two celebrity MPs among nine who missed opportunities to speak in LS**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI



On mute: The Lok Sabha proceedings under way during the Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi on February 10. ANI

to him, to utilise the various opportunities offered including Zero Hour when any issue of national importance can be raised, to speak. But he could not be moved," a senior Parliamentary official said.

Mr. Deol represents Gurudaspur Lok Sabha constituency. Mr. Sinha was elected from Asansol seat in West Bengal in a bypoll in 2022 on a Trinamool ticket, after singer Babul Supriyo, who was elected from the seat on a BJP ticket, switched to the Trinamool Congress.

The other member from West Bengal is Dibyendu Adhikari (Tamluk Lok Sabha constituency). Mr. Adhikari is the younger brother of Suvendu Adhikari, the current Leader of Opposition in West Bengal State Assembly.

The four members from Karnataka who fall in this

category include, B.N. Bache Gowda (Chikkabalapur), Anantkumar Hegde (Uttara Kannada), V. Sreenivasa Prasad (Chamrajnagar) and Ramesh C. Jigajinagi (Bijapur). All the four are BJP.

BJP MP Pradhan Baruah elected from Lakhimpur in Assam and BSP's Atul Kumar Singh elected from Ghosi are the other two members in the list.

While six MPs have had at least written participation – by moving questions or making written special mention submission, three members – Mr. Jigajinagi, Mr. Singh and Mr. Sinha – have the distinction of making no contribution in written or oral form in Parliamentary proceedings.

Mr. Jigajinagi has been unwell for a long time and Mr. Singh has been in jail for a significant part of the term. The four members from Karnataka who fall in this

Spoke to party MLAs, cadre on decision to join NDA: RLD chief**The Hindu Bureau**

LUCKNOW

Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) president Chaudhary Jayant Singh on Monday confirmed that his party will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha election with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Mr. Chaudhary said the decision was taken after consultation with the MLAs and party leaders.

"I talked with my MLAs and workers before taking the decision [joining the NDA]. It is not that we did this after a lot of planning or thinking for a long time. We had to decide in a short period due to circumstances. When the Bharat Ratna was conferred on [former Prime Minister] Chaudhary Charan Singh, we were pleased; this respect

is not only for our family but also for the farmers, youth and poor across the country," said Mr. Singh, the grandson of the former Prime Minister, when asked by presspersons about some RLD MLAs being unhappy over the decision.

The RLD chief made the announcement on the birth anniversary of party founder and his late father, Chaudhary Ajit Singh.

A NO-NO



Jayant Chaudhary

Will stop Modi juggernaut in Bihar: Tejashwi Yadav

RJD leader asks if the Prime Minister can guarantee that Nitish Kumar will not switch sides again; he comes down hard on the Chief Minister for snapping ties with the grand alliance in the State

Amit Bhelari
PATNA



Hitting out: RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and others after the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government won the trust vote in Assembly. PTI

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav on Monday came down hard on Bihar Chief Minister and Janata Dal (U) leader Nitish Kumar for joining hands with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

Launching a scathing attack on Mr. Kumar for snapping ties with the *Mahaabandhan* (grand alliance), Mr. Yadav quoted the Chief Minister as saying "Mann nahi lag raha tha (was not liking it)" after tendering his resignation.

"We were not with you to sing and dance to entertain you, we had supported you to do work," Mr. Yadav said. The RJD and the Congress were part of the grand alliance.

The RJD leader said he had never witnessed a person taking oath as Chief Minister nine times, of which three were in a single term. Mr. Yadav also criticised BJP leader Vijay Kumar Sinha, saying that he too had

made a new record of sorts by becoming Deputy Chief Minister, Speaker, and Leader of the Opposition in the same term.

Respectable person'

He compared Mr. Kumar to King Dashrath (father of Lord Ram) and warned him to be aware of the "Kaiky" in his fold.

"Nitishji was always a respectable person for me and will remain respectable in future as well. Many

times, he used to tell me that I was like his son, and I too respected him as my guardian. I used to respect him like King Dashrath who always promoted me. There must be some compulsion the way Dashrath had in form of Kaiky due to which he deserted us. You should be aware to find who is Kaiky in your team," Mr. Yadav said.

He stressed that the people of Bihar wanted to know the reason for the

frequent flip-flops.

"When you had snapped ties with the BJP you said that you will prefer to die rather than be with the BJP. You had also said that you are not interested in becoming Prime Minister and your only goal was to unite Opposition to defeat the dictatorship government of the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha poll," Mr. Yadav said.

The RJD leader said the BJP MLAs always make big claims about "Modi ki guarantee" and asked whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi can guarantee that Mr. Kumar would not make another U-turn.

Mr. Yadav said he would now stop the juggernaut of Mr. Modi in Bihar.

Mr. Yadav hit back at the Chief Minister for saying that he took credit for the developmental work in the State.

"What was wrong in taking credit for the work as being the largest partner in the alliance? Will BJP not take the credit if they did any work in the government?" Mr. Yadav said.

The government also declared launch of 'SWAYAM' under which ₹1 lakh of interest-free bank

On the draw



Kejriwal, Mann visit Ram Temple

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart, Bhagwant Mann, visited the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on Monday.

"I had the divine darshan of Ramlala at the Ram Temple today with my parents and wife. Bhagwantji and his family were also present. Together, we prayed for the progress of the country and the welfare of all humanity," Mr. Kejriwal said on X.

Odisha to give ₹1,000 to all families under PDS

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR



Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik.
FILE PHOTO

In the backdrop of upcoming elections, the Naveen Patnaik government on Monday announced to provide one-time livelihood assistance of ₹1,000 in cash to each of the over 95.90 lakh families covered under the Public Distribution System (PDS).

The government also declared launch of 'SWAYAM' under which ₹1 lakh of interest-free bank

logey) for initiating new business venture.

It is to be noted that 95.90 lakh families comprising 3,35,98,401 members have been covered under the PDS in the State. The government will spend ₹959.05 crore towards the payment of assistance. The State government had disbursed similar assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government has also decided to provide free of cost two jute carry bags for a period of two years.

of 20 kilogrammes and 10 kg capacity to each of the PDS families for their daily use at a cost of ₹278.69 crore.

As far as 'SWAYAM' scheme is concerned, rural youths having family income less than ₹2 lakh are eligible for receiving ₹1 lakh loan. To cover 1 lakh eligible rural youths initially, the government would spend ₹448 crore out of its own budget and the scheme will be operational for a period of two years.

80% of people have not benefited from BJP rule, says Rahul

Shubhamoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

Criticising the BJP's focus on religious symbolism, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Monday that while the ruling party spoke of "Hindu Rashtra", nearly 80% of the population had not benefited from its rule.

Addressing the public in Korba, Chhattisgarh during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, Mr. Gandhi said the marginalised and backward classes who formed 74% of the population as well as the poor from the general castes who accounted for another four to five percent were being denied opportunities under the current regime.

He questioned the absence of these groups at the Ram Temple inauguration ceremony in Ayodhya, contrasting it with the presence of the rich and the influential people.

Cong. cuts short yatra in U.P., cites Board exams

LUCKNOW

The Congress on Monday announced its decision to reduce the duration of Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Uttar Pradesh in view of the Board exams for Classes 10 and 12. The yatra will now skip most of western U.P. It will enter State on February 16 and exit on February 21.

"The BJP talks about Hindu Rashtra. Seventy-four per cent are not getting anything, poor from the general castes are not getting anything. You tell me, at the Ram Mandir inauguration, did you see any poor, even one," he asked.

They have been left to starve; they have conceded defeat, Mr. Gandhi said.

Will build police station on recovered land in Haldwani: CM

Ishita Mishra
HALDWANI

Days after the violence in Uttarakhand's Haldwani over the demolition of an allegedly "illegally built" madrasa and mosque that left five persons dead, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Monday said a police station would be built on the land "freed from encroachment".

In another development, the Haldwani Municipal Corporation served a recovery notice to Abdul Malik, the owner of the ma-

drasa and mosque at Banbhoolpura demolished by the administration on February 8, demanding ₹2.44 crore in damages. The notice issued by the Haldwani Municipal Corporation stated that Mr. Malik, who the police say is mastermind of the violence, has to deposit the amount to the civic body within three days (February 15). He has been fined for damage to vehicles including tractors, goods carriers, etc., and equipment such as helmets and crowdbars.

"After our teams demol-

The Haldwani civic body served a recovery notice to Abdul Malik, the alleged mastermind

ished the structures built by you illegally on government land and were returning back, your supporters engaged in arson and damaged/destroyed/looted properties of the Municipal Corporation and caused loss to government property. Pay the amount within the due date or the

amount will be recovered as per the law," the notice issued to Mr. Malik, who has been arrested, states.

Speaking at a rally in Haldwani, Mr. Dhami said the government wants to send a clear message to anarchist elements that those who try to disturb the peace of "Devbhoomi" (Land of Gods) will not be spared.

"There was a garden in Banbhoolpura which was encroached upon. That encroachment has been removed and several acres of land was recovered," said Mr. Dhami.

From the banks of the mighty river Ganga, I announce that a police station will be built at that place," Mr. Dhami said.

Meanwhile, the police also suspended arms licences of 127 persons of Banbhoolpura to avoid the misuse of the weapons in case of any untoward situation.

Markets and educational institutions in the city opened on Monday while curfew was lifted in the rest of Haldwani late on Saturday. People were seen crowding food joints and parks as businesses operated as usual.

KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - E-Tender Extension Notice
O/o the Executive Engineer, PMU, Electrical Circle, Kattakada, Thiruvananthapuram
Tender ID : 2024_KSEB_644862_1, PAC : 4.50,15.405/-, Last Date : 22-02-2024 03.00pm
O/o the Deputy Chief Engineer, Electrical Circle, Kattakada, Thiruvananthapuram
Tender ID : 2024_KSEB_644884_1, PAC : 7.57,96.749/-, Last Date : 22-02-2024 03.00pm
O/o the Deputy Chief Engineer, Electrical Circle, Kattakada, Thiruvananthapuram
Tender ID : 2024_KSEB_644861_1, PAC : 14.98,90.484/-, Last Date : 22-02-2024 03.00pm
E-tender ID : 2024_KSEB_646661_1, PAC : 13.59,48.182/-, Last Date : 22-02-2024 03.00pm
E-tender ID : 2024_KSEB_647825_1, PAC : 2.35,84.878/-, Last Date : 22-02-2024 03.00pm
E-tender ID : 2024_KSEB_647319_1, PAC : 10.48,00.222/-, Last Date : 22-02-2024 03.00pm
E-tender ID : 2024_KSEB_648185_1, PAC : 7.16,74.124/-, Last Date : 22-02-2024 03.00pm
O/o the Chief Engineer, Distribution (South), Power House, Thiruvananthapuram
E-tender ID : 2024_KSEB_644705_1, PAC : 2658.7 lakhs, Last Date : 22-02-2024 05.00pm
E-tender ID : 2024_KSEB_645766_1, PAC : 2716.62 lakhs, Last Date : 22-02-2024 05.00pm
O/o the Deputy Chief Engineer, Electrical Circle, Shoranur, Palakkad
E-tender ID : 2024_KSEB_643403_1, PAC : 6.12,18.944/-, Last Date : 22-02-2024 03.00pm
E-tender ID : 2024_KSEB_644755_1, PAC : 13.34,18.709/-, Last Date : 22-02-2024 03.00pm
Visit www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and www.kseb.in
Ref: PR/MC1/E467/E-tender/2024

ANDHRA PRADESH POWER GENERATION CORPORATION LIMITED VIDYUT SOUTHA :: VIJAYAWADA
Tender Notification No.610001477
APGENCO invites open tender for Carrying out the Operation of the total Ash Handling System (excluding Bottom Ash, Coarse Ash Operation) and Mechanical Maintenance, Preventive Maintenance, Emergency & Break down Maintenance, Electrical, C&I works of complete Ash Handling System of 1x600 MW Unit for the period from 01.04.2024 or from the date of actual commencement of work to 31.03.2025 for Dr.MVR RTPP/ Stage-IV through APGENCO e-procurement platform.
Schedule available date & time: From 09.02.2024 @ 21.00 onwards. Bid submission closing date & time: 13.00 Hrs on 23.02.2024. For other details visit website, viz www.apgenco.gov.in (or) https://etender.apgenco.gov.in/irj/portal/DIPR_2701PP/CL,DL/12/2024

LOOK OUT NOTICE
Sri. Sajan, S/o Varghese, Age-40, Vilakkezhath House, Eramalloor PO, Ezhupunna Panchayath Ward-2, Cherthala, Alappuzha District who is accused in Cr. 06/2024, U/s 324,307 IPC of Aroor Police Station, Cherthala. He is absconding after the commission of the crime. If any clue or information is obtained about him that may be intimated immediately to Aroor Police station ISHO, Deputy Superintendent of Police Cherthala, & District Police Chief Alappuzha.
Inspector of Police, Aroor PS - 9497980266
DySP, Cherthala - 949799042
District Police Chief, Alappuzha - 9497996982
50/F2/2024/I&PRD

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice
Tender No: Re-e-Tender No.24/2024/2023-24/SE/PFC/ALPKIFB-Alappuzha Municipality - Upgradation of water supply system, Aryad, Mannancherry, Mararikulam South Panchayats - Balance Works - Package 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 Alappuzha Municipality - Pipeline Work, EMD : Rs. 50000/-, Tender Fee : Rs. 19518/-, Last Date for Submitting Tender : 16-02-2024, 02:00 pm, Phone : 0477 - 2237954. Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, www.etenders.kerala.gov.in Superintending Engineer PH circle, Alappuzha

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LIMITED
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in
E-Tender Enq. No. 514/P-2/EMP-W-12570 Dtd 08.02.24 Dy. Chief Engineer / Headquarter (Procurement Cell-2) Ropnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2024_POWER_11748_1 for Complete rewinding/re-staggering of stator of 01 no of 4000KW/1485, 6.6KV HT motors of BFP-5A GSSTP, Ropnagar
For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to [https://eproc.punjab.gov.in](http://eproc.punjab.gov.in) from 09.02.24 onwards.
Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at [https://eproc.punjab.gov.in](http://eproc.punjab.gov.in)
RTP - 22/24 76155/12/2691/2023/3233

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala)
Corporate Identification Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact Number-9646117606)
Tender Inquiry No. 37/MM-I/TGP/OX/GHPT/2024
Dy. Chief Engineer, Mechanical M/c. Circle-I/GHTP, Lehrha Mohabbat invites E-tender for the work of "Routine, Preventive, Breakdown, Maintenance and Overhauling jobs (Mechanical jobs) of Boiler Feed pumps, Condensate Extraction Pumps, CW Pumps, Vacuum Pumps, Turbine Aux. Cooling Water Pumps, BACW Pumps, Boiler fill Pumps, Hotwell Make Up Pumps, Stator Water Make Up Pumps, ACW Pumps, SGDMCW Pumps, TGDMCW Pumps, TG Cycle Make Up Pumps etc. of 2X210MW and 2X250MW Units of Guru Hargobind Thermal Plant (GHTP), Lehrha Mohabbat on Lump sum basis for a period of one year". For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to [https://eproc.punjab.gov.in](http://eproc.punjab.gov.in) from 09-02-2024 from 17:00 PM onwards.
Note: Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at [https://eproc.punjab.gov.in](http://eproc.punjab.gov.in) GHTP-10/24 76155/12/2693/2023/3234

Court extends ED remand of Hemant Soren by three days

Press Trust of India
RANCHI

A special PMLA court on Monday extended the Enforcement Directorate (ED) remand of former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren by three days in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam, lawyers said.

Mr. Soren, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) executive president, was on February 7 remanded to five days of ED custody by the special PMLA (the Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court.

He was arrested on January 31 after a seven-hour grilling by the Central investigative agency in the money laundering case.

He resigned as the Jharkhand Chief Minister before the arrest.

BHUBANESWAR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
AKASH SHOVA BUILDING, SACHIVALAYA MARG, BHUBANESWAR - 751001
PABX No.0674-2392801 / 0998 / 6437. FAX No. 0674-2390633 / 085
Visit us at : <http://www.bda.gov.in>
Invitation For Bids Date: 12/02/2024
Bid Identification No.259/EM/BDA/2023-24 Date: 12/02/2024
Engineering Member, BDA on behalf of Bhubaneswar Development Authority, Bhubaneswar invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for civil works as mentioned below :
1. Nature of Works : Civil Work (Development of Idle bus parking area plot no.200, Baramunda)
2. Total No. of works : 01 (one) No.
3. Amount put to tender : 603.14 Lakh
4. Class of Contractor : 'A' & 'Special' Class
5. Period of Completion : 04 (Four) Calendar months
6. Cost of Bid Documents : Rs.10000/- + 18% GST=Rs.11800.00 (Online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids)
7. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) : 1% of estimated cost put to tender (Online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids)
8. Availability of Tender : From

IN BRIEF



SC extends interim bail granted to Minister's son

The Supreme Court on Monday extended the interim bail granted to Union Minister Ajay Kumar Mishra's son, Ashish Mishra, in the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence, which claimed eight lives. A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and K. V. Viswanathan directed the top court registry to obtain a report from the trial court on the progress of the case and adjourned the matter. On September 26, 2023, the SC had relaxed the bail conditions of Mishra to enable him to look after his mother and for the treatment of his daughter. The case pertains to an incident of violence on October 3, 2021 at Tukinua in Lakhimpur Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh. PTI

NCB busts international drug cartel, arrests nine accused

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has busted an international drug cartel having links in and around Delhi, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Dubai. Among those involved were Indian, Mexican, Canadian, and British nationals. The agency has arrested nine persons, including three alleged Mexican Meth chemists. Based on a tip-off, its Delhi zonal unit had seized about 2.95 kg of methamphetamine at DHL on January 17. "During further course of investigation, two consignors of the parcel were apprehended from Jaipur. The arrested persons disclosed that they collected Meth from a Delhi-based trafficker on a regular basis and used to send the parcels to Australia, as per the direction of their handler," said the agency on Monday.

Press bodies condemn attack on journalist

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Press Club of India and the Indian Women's Press Corps on Monday demanded action against those involved in the attack on senior journalist Nikhil Wagle allegedly by the members of a political party in Maharashtra's Pune on February 9. They also sought withdrawal of criminal charges against the journalist.

"We appeal that the draconian charges against Mr. Wagle for promoting enmity, mischief, and defamation be dropped and urge the Maharashtra government to ensure that the perpetrators of violence are sent a strong message. No one should be allowed to get away with violence," they said in a statement.

Appointing Deputy CMs not a breach of Constitution: SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a petition challenging the appointment of Deputy Chief Ministers in States on the ground that no such position exists in the Constitution.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud found no harm in the appointment of Deputy Chief Ministers, reasoning that they were after all Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) of the States and Ministers of State governments.

"Deputy CMs are first and foremost Ministers in the government of the State. A person who holds the office of the Deputy Chief Minister must at any

event, within a stipulated period, be an MLA. Such appointments do not breach the Constitution," the CJI observed.

He said that these persons appointed did not draw a higher salary and were like any other Minister in the government.

But the petitioner, Public Political Party, said the appointments of Deputy CMs were motivated by religion and sectarian considerations.

The petitioner argued that such appointments were against Article 14 (right to equality) and the tenet of Article 15 which holds that the State ought not to discriminate on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

However, the court dismissed the petition, saying it lacked substance.

A cafe of opportunities opens in Kolkata

The eatery is operated by 16 young adults who have either grown up in rescue homes or have intellectual disabilities; to attract patrons, the cafe plans to hold open mic events, art exhibitions

Bishwanath Ghosh
KOLKATA

On the face of it, 'Opportunity Cafe' could pass off as yet another eatery in a city that loves food, but the place is one of its kind, considering it is run by young people who otherwise rarely get to join the social mainstream.

Young adults who have intellectual disabilities or have grown up in rescue homes are the ones responsible for the functioning of this non-profit cafe that opened last month on Dum Dum Road.

"The most satisfying part so far of setting up this cafe was the six months of rigorous training before the inauguration. Our society



New world: Opportunity Cafe was opened last month on Dum Dum Road in Kolkata. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

usually believe or are rather made to believe, that children with disabilities are not capable of doing anything. But I've seen these young adults transform during the training. One of the boys never spoke, but is now able to talk," Sidhant Ghosh, founder-secretary

of the Rescue and Relief Foundation, and the person behind the cafe, said.

There are 16 young adults who are running Opportunity Cafe. Nine of them – six men and three women – are affected by conditions such as autism and Down's Syndrome,

SC extends interim stay in investigation against ED officer

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday extended its stay order of criminal proceedings by the Tamil Nadu Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) against Enforcement Directorate (ED) officer Ankit Tiwari in a graft case.

A

Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant ordered the interim relief to continue even as Tamil Nadu government sought time to file a response to a petition filed by the ED against the State.

The Central agency has challenged the proceedings against Mr. Tiwari. It has argued that the action against Mr. Tiwari, an ED officer in Tamil Nadu, was a fit-for-tat by the State for money laundering and corruption cases lodged by Central agencies against Ministers and ensuing raids on them. It has sought a transfer of the case from DVAC.

Tamil Nadu, represented by Additional Advocate-General Amit Anand Tiwari, has stated that Mr. Tiwari was caught red-handed accepting a bribe of ₹20 lakh from a doctor in Dindigul district.

On January 25, the top court had stayed both the DVAC and the ED from probing the case against



Tamil Nadu government seeks time to file response to a petition filed by the ED against the State.

Mr. Tiwari. The Bench had directed the material collected so far in the investigation to be placed on record before it.

On Monday, Mr. Tiwari sought two weeks for Tamil Nadu to file a response to the ED petition.

On January 25, the top court had suggested a mechanism to screen if political vendetta or vindictiveness was not the actual reason behind Centre unleashing the ED on officials and Ministers in non-BJP-ruled States.

"We should explore a fair and transparent mechanism or a body which will look into the inter-State ramifications and keep intact the object of punishing the guilty while preventing vindictive arrests," Justice K.B. Viswanathan, on the Bench, had proposed in the previous hearing.

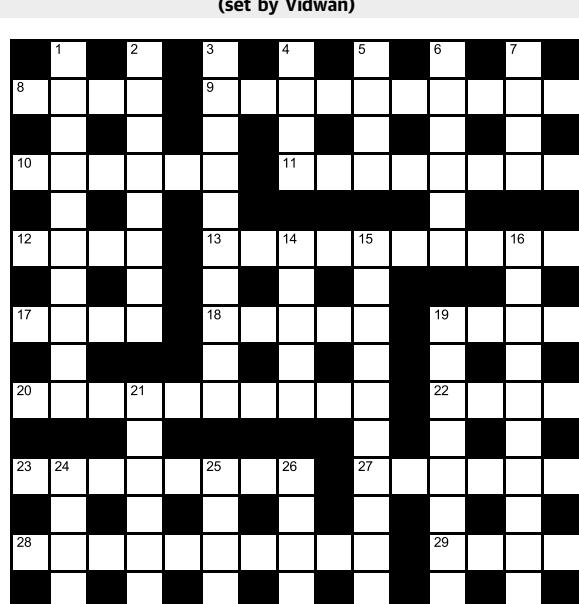
Efforts on to clear Aadhaar hurdle in Assam: CM

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said efforts were on to enable some 27 lakh people in Assam, who have been unable to acquire Aadhaar cards as their biometrics were locked during the process of updating the National Register of Citizens.

Mr. Sarma, in response to a question in the State Assembly, said he hoped "something positive" would emerge from his consultations with the Centre, but his government may have to approach the Supreme Court for a solution.

The apex court has been monitoring the NRC updating exercise, in limbo since the complete draft was published in August 2019.

TH CROSSWORD 14096
(set by Vidwan)

Across

- 8 Temper of snubbed old kid (4)
- 9 All of evil and no suffering? What Cupid makes us do! (4,2,4)
- 10 Shy cop's unstable, disturbed man (6)
- 11 Leader's confused! Right time for warning! (3,5)
- 12 Sensible wife is source of enlightenment (4)
- 13 Men chatted about disconnect (10)

Down

- 1 So, it's a lilt composed about 21st of June? (10)
- 2 Be around! Side-kick will get bruise on the face! (8)
- 3 Modest comrade oddly seen in friendly surrounding (10)
- 4 Almost certain about Left's disgrace (4)
- 5 Tamil defines, encapsulates light (4)
- 6 Love small chaotic obstacle race (6)
- 7 More than complete (4)
- 14 Some adult or child showing light (5)
- 15 About only three schooled in logical manner (10)
- 16 Number one in mad rush wings naked! That is wholesome! (10)
- 19 No end to anguish! Starts anew at heart! Becomes cheerful! (8)
- 21 Not the extreme hurt (6)
- 24 Timelessly feel sound of pain (4)
- 25 Invested millions for Thailand's opening match (4)
- 26 Thank you to company providing a crunchy snack (4)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>

SCAN TO PLAY



SUDOKU

8	5							6

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

F	M	T	B	D	S	N
ALMIGHTY						
USE	E	F	I	M		
TEACUP	S	T	I	N		
NHO	N	O	S			
STAIRWAY	I	N	T	A		
EAT	A	T	A			
PREFERENCE	E	S	H	SH		
ROTGUT	S	K	A	A		
SOH	T	G	R	O		
STATUARY	I	M	L	I		
EOT	O	G	N	D		
PREFAB	G	H	O	L		
SFE	O	E	A	S		

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

A



Try Our New
Sandal
With Sandalwood Oil



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MORE CONTENT

FAITH

Vasant Panchami

In his Saraswati Vandana poem, Suryakant Tripathi Nirala says, "O mother tear apart the shackles of darkness in our heart And let a river of light flow absorbing differences and darkness". This is very relevant at the onset of Vasant Panchami, a festival with immense religious and social significance in our society, said Prof. Kumool Abbi in a lecture.

It is the festival of Saraswati puja in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Odisha and Bihar and many other places. Goddess Saraswati is the embodiment of knowledge, art, music, aesthetics and harmony. In the Shanti Parv in the epic Mahabharata, she is called the mother of the Vedas. The effulgent Saraswati illuminates and removes nescience and darkness. Vasant Panchami is commemorated on the Magh Sud, that is the fifth day of the bright lunar fortnight (Sukla paksham) of the month Magha in the lunisolar calendar.

In many parts, Vasant Panchami heralds the end of winter and the beginning of spring. It signifies a preparation for Holi and a readiness for the harvesting of crops. This is when yellow mustard flowers are in full bloom. The occasion is celebrated with sounds of dhol, the pulsating bhangra, flying of colourful kites, the making of yellow rice and wearing yellow coloured clothes.

KYIV

Kremlin, Musk deny Ukraine claim of Russian Army's use of Starlink



The Kremlin on Monday rejected Ukraine's claims that Russian troops fighting on the frontline were using Starlink terminals. Starlink, owned by Elon Musk's SpaceX, is a network of satellites in low Earth orbit that can provide Internet to remote locations, or areas whose normal communications infrastructure is disabled. AFP

LONDON

U.K.'s Rwanda plan is incompatible with rights obligations, say MPs



The U.K. government's latest legislation to revive its controversial plan to send migrants to Rwanda is "not compatible" with the country's rights obligations, a watchdog panel of British lawmakers said on Monday. The British parliament's own Joint Committee on Human Rights said in a new report that it had various concerns. AFP

DUBAI

Houthi fire missiles at ship bound for Iran, the rebels' main supporter



Yemen's Houthi rebels fired two missiles at a ship bound for a port in Iran on Monday, causing minor damage but no injuries to its crew. The attack on the Marshall Islands-flagged, Greek-operated bulk carrier *Star Iris* shows just how widely the Houthis now target ships travelling through the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden. AFP

WASHINGTON

Hospitalised Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin hands duties to deputy



U.S. Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin was admitted to a critical care ward with a bladder issue after he transferred his duties to his deputy Kathleen Hicks on Sunday, the Pentagon said, as he battles prostate cancer. The latest health scare came weeks after it emerged that Austin, 70, had kept previous hospital stays secret. AFP

Political parties in Pakistan wrangle over premiership

Talks between PML-N and PPP reach nowhere as both parties want their candidate for top job; Shehzad Sharif and Bhutto Zardari are being touted as PM-contenders by both parties

Reuters
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's two largest political parties were on Monday wrangling over who will be Prime Minister after an inconclusive election last week forced them to join forces and try to form a coalition in a parliament dominated by independents.

Former Prime Ministers Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif both declared victory on Friday, with independent candidates backed by the jailed Mr. Khan forming the largest group of 93 members of a total of 264 seats for which results were declared.



Obstacle course: Supporters of Imran Khan block a motorway as part of their protest against alleged poll rigging on Monday. REUTERS

However, Mr. Khan cannot become Prime Minister from jail and his grouping cannot form a government as they nominally ran as independents as his party was barred from standing.

Mr. Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was the largest recognised party with 75 seats and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the son of assassinated former premier Benazir Bhutto, was second with 54.

The two parties opened formal talks late on Sunday to form a coalition government. PML-N and PPP officials, however, said their talks were snagged over which leader would take the top job. However, a PML-N source said it was "most likely" that Shehzad Sharif, 72, who held the post for 16 months until August, will be chosen.

The PPP has always maintained Bhutto Zardari as its political scion, and if successful, the former Foreign Minister will become Pakistan's youngest premier since his mother Benazir.

Maldives parliament votes to postpone general election

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

The Maldives's parliamentary election, which was scheduled for March 17 this year, is set to be postponed after the legislature voted to defer the polls, citing the Ramadan month.

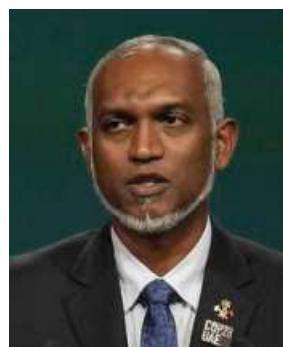
The People's Majlis or parliament on Sunday voted for the amendment to the country's General Elections Act to commence the parliamentary election ten days after the month of religious significance in the Sunni Muslim nation.

The opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and its breakaway, The Democrats, together backed the amendment, citing concerns over a possible drop in voter turnout during the month of fasting and prayer from March 10, 2024, to April 9, 2024.

According to local media reports, MDP legislator Mohamed Shifai proposed the amendment, which was approved with 46 votes in the now 80-member House. Most government MPs abstained from voting. Male-based publication *The Edition* reported.

Constitutional validity
However, the development has raised questions over the constitutional validity of postponing the elections to mid-April. Speaking to media persons in Male on Sunday, a senior official of the Election Commission of Maldives raised concern over this.

"When the Bill says 10 days after Ramadan, that barely allows us enough time to complete the exercise within the 30 days stipulated in the Constitution," he was quoted as saying.



Mohamed Muizzu

ing, in *The Edition*. Meanwhile, the MDP has had to put its earlier pledge, to impeach President Mohamed Muizzu, on hold after the government moved the Supreme Court on the matter.

Muizzu's impeachment
The MDP had based its decision to impeach the incumbent on his foreign policy moves "putting the Indian Ocean Region in danger", and his attempts to curtail the legislature.

The MDP, which has 42 seats in the 80-member People's Majlis, joined forces with The Democrats – with 13 seats – and was confident of its numbers. However, the top court suspended a recent amendment to the standing orders that permitted vacant seats from being included while counting total votes.

Although the development gave some political reprieve to President Muizzu, his government faces major economic challenges. In its recent report, the International Monetary Fund noted that the Maldives is at high risk of debt distress. More recently, the country's Inland Revenue Authority flagged a significant shortfall in government revenue.

Unionist party pushes back against Irish unity referendum

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

Sinn Fein beat the DUP by two seats to get 27 seats with a 29% vote-share as opposed to the DUP's 21.3%.

Mr. Donaldson, whose DUP party is unionist, or wants to be part of the U.K., said the U.K. offered a "far more inclusive" context than a united Ireland could and that consistently it was only 30% of those surveyed in polls who were for Irish unification.

Survey results
A December 2022 Ipsos poll for the *Irish Times* showed 27% of Northern Irelanders surveyed wanted to be part of a united Ireland, while 66% of those surveyed in Ireland wanted Northern Ireland to join their country.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which brought peace to the island of Ireland after three decades of violent struggle, mandates that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, a British functionary, will call for a 'border poll' on Irish reunification if it is "likely" that the majority of those voting would vote for a united Ireland.

The new government, which came together on February 3, is led by the politically equal posts of First Minister (Sinn Fein's Michelle O'Neill) and Deputy First Minister (the DUP's Emma Little-Pengelly).

"Of course they're going to talk about United Ireland to reassure their base," Mr. Donaldson said, pointing out that Sinn Fein, while being the largest party in Northern Ireland, gets less than 30% of the vote. In the last elections for the Assembly or Stormont,

67 Palestinians killed, two Israelis rescued in Gaza raid

Associated Press
RAFAH



Mourners react following the death of Palestinians in Israeli strikes in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Monday. REUTERS

Israeli forces rescued two hostages early on Monday, storming a heavily guarded apartment in a densely packed town in the Gaza Strip and extracting them under fire and covering airstrikes that local officials said killed at least 67 Palestinians.

Israeli military spokesman Read Adm. Daniel Haagani said special forces broke into a second-floor apartment in Rafah under fire at 1:49 a.m. on Monday, accompanied a minute later by airstrikes on surrounding areas. He said Hamas militants were guarding the captives and that members of the rescue team shielded the hostages with their bodies as the battle erupted.

The plight of the hostag-

Stop delivery of F-35 parts to Israel, says Dutch court

Associated Press
THE HAGUE

The Netherlands must stop delivering parts for F-35 fighter jets used by Israel in the Gaza Strip after a Dutch court on Monday ruled there was a "clear risk" the planes would be involved in breaking international humanitarian law.

The Appeals Court in The Hague sided with a group of human rights organisations that argued the parts contributed to violations of law. "The court therefore orders the State to put an end to the further export of Israel within 7 days". The U.S.-owned F-35 parts are stored at a warehouse in the Netherlands and shipped to several partners, via existing export agreements.

BANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED
(Wholly Owned by Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
CIN - U04010KA2002SGC030438

Brief Tender Notification
(Through KPP Portal)

BESCOM invites tender against enquiry No: BESCOM/2023-24/SE0105 date : 12.02.2024 for Project Management Consultancy services to BESCOM for implementation of Upgradation of DAS in Bengaluru city Project

Availability of Bid document : 13-02-2024 From 16:00 hrs. Last date for Receipt of bids : 28-02-2024 Upto 16:00 hrs. The detailed notification can be obtained from the Website: <https://kpp.karnataka.gov.in>. Further details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned.

Sd/-
For electricity related complaints call : 1912
Download BESCOM Mithra Mobile APP

General Manager, DAS,
BESCOM

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
भवन निर्माण विभाग, भवन प्रमण्डल, गढ़वा
Email Id- eengbcdgarhw-jhr@nic.in /
पत्रांक-दिनांक--
-निविदा स्थगित सूचना पत्र-
एतद् द्वारा भवन निर्माण विभाग, झारखण्ड में
निर्बंधित संवेदकों को सूचित किया जाता है कि सूचना एवं
जन सम्पर्क विभाग के PR317633Building(23-
24)D से प्रकाशित निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना जिसका विड
प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि 15.02.2024 थी एवं निविदा खोलने
की तिथि 16.02.2024 थी को अपरिहार्य कारण से रथगित
की जाती है।
निविदा की अन्य सभी शर्तें यथावत् रहेगी।

कार्यपालक अभियंता,
भवन प्रमण्डल, गढ़वा

Rural Works Department
Works Division, Puri
(बिहार ग्रामीण पथ अनुरक्षण नीति, 2018)

Notice Inviting Tender
No:-Re-Tender/RWD/MR/PUPRI/ET/ 20/2023-24

Executive Engineer, Rural Works Department, Works Division, Puri, Bihar invites on behalf of Governor of Bihar Percentage rate tender (Rural Roads Maintenance based on Output and performance based Contract through e-procurement online system, MBD Based) from bonafide, approved and eligible Contractors registered with RWD/RCD/CPWD/MES/Railways/Other State/Central Govt. departments for the following MR(3054) works including maintenance for five years.

Sl. No	Package No.	Block	Name of Road	Length (in KM)	Total Estimated Cost (in Lakhs)	Cost of BOQ (in Lakhs)	Bid Security (In Lakhs)	Amount Payable to works Division
1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	MR-N/23-24 Puri/08	Bajpatti	L039 Harpurwa to Bhagwanpur- Harpurwa	4.200	175.520			
2		Bajpatti	Belmohan Piprahi Gote	2.080	133.990			
3		Bajpatti	Sitamadhi Puri Path me harpurwa se kachharipur (alpsankhyak tola) Koriyahi Pakri pradhanmantri road tak ke sadak ka PCC Path niran	0.600	47.890	10000.00	7.148	EE RWD W.D Puri Payble at Puri
Total for the Group						6.880	357.400	

NOTE:- Contractor should be Registered in RWD before Agreement
Downloading of Bidding Documents : From :21.02.2024 To 29.02.2024 (03:00 PM)
Online Bid Submission end date : 29.02.2024 up To 03:00 PM
Offline Bid Submission end date : 29.02.2024 up To 03:00 PM
Online Bid Opening date : 29.02.2024 up To 03:30 PM
Details of tender related information can be viewed/ downloaded from the website <http://pmgsts.tendersbih.gov.in>. Interested Bidders will have to register with there DSC (Digital Signature Certificate) in the web site <http://pmgsts.tendersbih.gov.in>. For further assistance regarding e-tendering process kindly contact- Rural Works Department, Works Division, Puri - Mob.No- 8986915797, or E-Mail at eerwdpupat@gmail.com

This information is available on state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar also

PR- 17147 (R W D) 2023-24

नशे से बनानी दूरी है, क्योंकि परिवार जरूरी है

Executive Engineer
Rural Works Department
Works Division , Puri

IN BRIEF



Paytm confirms resignation of director at banking arm

Paytm on Monday confirmed media reports of an independent director at its banking arm having resigned. Manju Agarwal resigned from the board of Paytm Payments Bank on Feb. 1 due to personal commitments, the company said in an exchange filing. The payments firm on Friday said it would form an advisory committee on compliance and regulatory matters, a week after India's central bank ordered Paytm Payments Bank to wind down most of its operations. REUTERS

SC issues notice on GST's anti-profiteering provisions

The Supreme Court on Monday issued notices to the Union of India, the GST Council and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, on the constitutional validity of anti-profiteering provisions under the GST regime. The court was urged to examine the issue by advocate Abhishek Rastogi on the ground that the provisions cannot be endless and they are manifestly arbitrary and vague in the absence of a methodology to determine the extent of deemed profiteering.

Chemplast Sanmar reports ₹60 cr. Q3 standalone net loss

Chemplast Sanmar Ltd. reported Q3 standalone net loss of ₹60 crore against a net profit of ₹57 crore in the year-earlier period due to dumping by China and other countries. Revenue from operations to slid to ₹439 crore from ₹630 crore, the specialty chemicals manufacturer said in a statement. "Q3 performance ran into heavy weather due to further correction in PVC prices on account of dumping from China and other countries," said MD Ramkumar Shankar.

Low-cost airline SpiceJet to cut jobs, save \$12 mn annually'

Reuters
BENGALURU

Indian low-cost carrier SpiceJet said on Monday that it has started adopting measures to reduce its workforce, aiming at saving ₹1 billion (\$12 million) annually.

According to a media report, the cash-strapped airline would lay off 1,400 staff, or around 15% of its 9,000-strong workforce.

No confirmation
The carrier, however, did not confirm the number of jobs being cut.

Spicejet said it took the measures as part of its tur-



naround and cost-cutting strategy following fund infusion to help in the revival of its grounded planes.

The airline, once India's second-largest, has so far raised ₹7.44 billion as part of a ₹22.50 billion fundraising effort by selling shares and warrants.

Pilots calling in sick forced Akasa Air to cancel 10 flights'

Forum Gandhi
NEW DELHI

Pilots on 'sick leave', weather and operational reasons reportedly led to a number of cancellations and delays in Akasa Air flights in the last 48 hours.

As per data, at least 10 Akasa Air flights were cancelled on February 10 and 12, while 17-18 other flights were delayed. While the airline expressed regret, it simultaneously underlined that it now has 600 pilots and there was no shortage.

Vinay Dube, founder and CEO, Akasa Air, asserted that the airline did not have shortage of pilots. (The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

staffed with over 600 pilots, enough to operate more than double the size of our current fleet," he said. Akasa Air, with an average on-time performance (OTP) of 83.7% in 2023, had at least 17 flights delayed on February 11, sliding its average OTP to 73.5%. At least 25 flights had late landings.

According to information, over 10 flights were cancelled on February 11 and 12. Sources said the issue was due to some pilots calling in sick. The airline operates 800 weekly flights making it approximately 115 daily flights.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

CG Power forms JV to set up chip assembly unit

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Murugappa Group firm CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd. (CG Power) has entered into a joint venture with Renesas Electronics America Inc. (Renesas) and Stars Microelectronics (Thailand) Public Co. Ltd. (Stars) for setting up an outsourced semiconductor assembly and testing (OSAT) facility in India.

CG, Renesas and Stars have agreed to invest \$205 million, \$15 million and \$2 million respectively towards equity capital, representing 92.34%, 6.76%, and 0.90% respectively, the TII subsidiary said in a regulatory filing.

DGAQA approves localising Airbus C295 parts, assembly

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Airbus Defence and Space (ADS) quality management system for the C295 aircraft has received Directorate General of Aeronautical Quality Assurance (DGAQA) approval to produce detailed parts and sub-assemblies in India.

It is a significant step in the comprehensive quality assurance roadmap agreed between ADS and DGAQA for the C295 Make in India programme. ADS is working with Tata Advanced Systems Ltd. to produce detailed parts and sub-assemblies at various locations in India.



DGAQA Sanjay Chawla (centre)

JSW said to plan making EVs at Odisha in three years

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

The construction of the JSW Group's Electric Vehicle (EV) manufacturing facility in Odisha is expected to begin by the end of the year once regulatory approvals are received and commissioning would happen within 2-3 years. JSW Group Chairman Sajjan Jindal is understood to have told Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and his team at the MoU signing event in Bhubaneswar, it is reliably learnt.

The group has announced the setting up of battery and EV manufacturing units with an investment of ₹40,000 crore.

DGAQA Sanjay Chawla presented the certificate of approval on Monday to ADS CEO Michael Schoellhorn and TASL Head-Aerostructures and Aeroengines Masood Hussaini at the C295 main components assembly facility in Hyderabad, Airbus said.

Industrial output witnessed mild recovery in December

Manufacturing sector's growth picks up pace from a seven-month low of 1.2% to 3.9%; 12 of the 23 segments tracked by the IIP recorded an up tick in Dec., which was double the number in Nov.

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

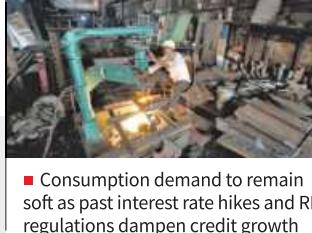
India's industrial output growth recovered from an eight-month low of 2.4% in November 2023 to 3.8% in December 2023, with the manufacturing sector's growth picking up pace from a seven-month low of 1.2% to 3.9%. A dozen of the 23 manufacturing segments tracked to compute the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) recorded an up tick in December, double the number of sectors that grew in November.

In recovery mode

Industrial output growth recovered from an eight-month low of 2.4% in November 2023 to 3.8% in December 2023

■ Consumer durables production recovered in December, albeit aided by a 11.2% dip recorded a year earlier

■ Consumer non-durables also bounced back from a 3.6% contraction in November to rise a moderate 2.1% in December



■ Consumption demand to remain soft as past interest rate hikes and RBI regulations dampen credit growth

Consumer durables production recovered from a 5.4% contraction in November to grow 4.8% in December, albeit aided by a 11.2% dip recorded a year earlier. On a sequential basis, durables' output jumped 7.75% from November 2023 levels, which

marked the lowest production levels since June 2021.

Consumer non-durables also bounced back from a 3.6% contraction in November to rise a moderate 2.1% in December. Output levels were, however, 13.1% higher than November.

Noting that the average IIP growth in the Oct.-Dec. 2023 slowed to 5.9% from 7.8% in the previous quarter, CRISIL's Dharmakirti Joshi said consumption demand is expected to remain soft as transmission of interest rate hikes and RBI's regulatory measures dampen credit growth.

RuPay, UPI rolled out in Mauritius, Sri Lanka

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

RuPay cards and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) connectivity between India and Mauritius, as well as UPI connectivity between India and Sri Lanka were established on Monday to deepen financial integration and to facilitate digital payments among citizens of the three countries, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

An Indian traveller to Mauritius will now be able to pay a merchant in Mauritius using UPI. Similarly, a Mauritian traveller will be able to pay a merchant in India using the Instant Payment System (IPS) app of Mauritius.

Further, with the adoption of RuPay technology, the MauCAS card scheme of Mauritius will enable banks in Mauritius to issue RuPay cards domestically. Such cards can be used at ATMs and PoS terminals locally in Mauritius as well as in India. "Indian RuPay cards would also be accepted at ATMs and PoS terminals in Mauritius," the RBI said in a statement.

The digital payments connectivity with Sri Lanka will enable Indian travellers to make QR code-based payments at merchant locations in Sri Lanka using their UPI apps. The projects had been developed and executed by NPCI International Payments Ltd. (NIPIL) along with partner banks / non-banks from Mauritius and Sri Lanka, under the guidance of RBI.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	MONDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	71,072	-0.73
US Dollar	83.00	0.08
Gold	63,150	-0.23
Brent oil	81.81	-

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	3169.75	-45.45
Adani Ports	1249.35	-22.15
Apollo Hosp	6614.45	177.10
Asian Paints	2953.80	2.15
Axis Bank	1046.70	-4.70
Bajaj Auto	7829.95	-45.10
Bajaj FinServ	1557.25	-13.70
Bharti Airtel	1118.70	-1.55
BPCL	590.45	-23.85
Britannia Ind	4970.20	-1.30
Cipla	1343.75	-5.00
Coal India	432.40	-23.40
Divis Lab	3740.15	87.85
Dr Reddys Lab	6333.50	177.65
Eicher Motors	3871.85	30.90
Grasim Ind	2147.35	-21.15
HCL Tech	1666.95	36.35
HDFC Bank	1390.00	-13.60
HDFC Life	577.20	-6.80
Hero MotoCorp	4687.50	-221.35
Hindalco	582.45	-8.85
Hindu Unilever	2385.65	-38.50
ICICI Bank	996.85	-14.60
IndusInd Bank	1447.15	-39.10
Infosys	1680.10	-10.75
ITC	406.85	-8.65
JSW Steel	811.50	-0.25
Kotak Bank	1709.55	-32.90
L&T	3299.55	-25.00
LTIMindtree Ltd.	5516.50	63.20
M&M	1660.45	14.05
Maruti Suzuki	10709.70	-23.15
NestleIndia	2459.05	8.95
ONGC	316.15	-8.75
PowerGrid Corp	270.30	-2.70
Reliance Ind	2904.70	-16.80
SBI Life	1436.00	-3.70
State Bank	707.90	-17.35
Sun Pharma	1534.45	-0.35
TataConsumerProduct	1122.20	-7.05
Tata Motors	911.60	-3.40
Tata Steel	137.40	-3.90
TCS	4120.70	-13.00
Tech Mahindra	1318.80	7.75
Titan	3585.25	6.25
UltraTech Cement	9963.85	18.10
UPL	458.40	0.45
Wipro	501.45	11.00

EXCHANGE RATES

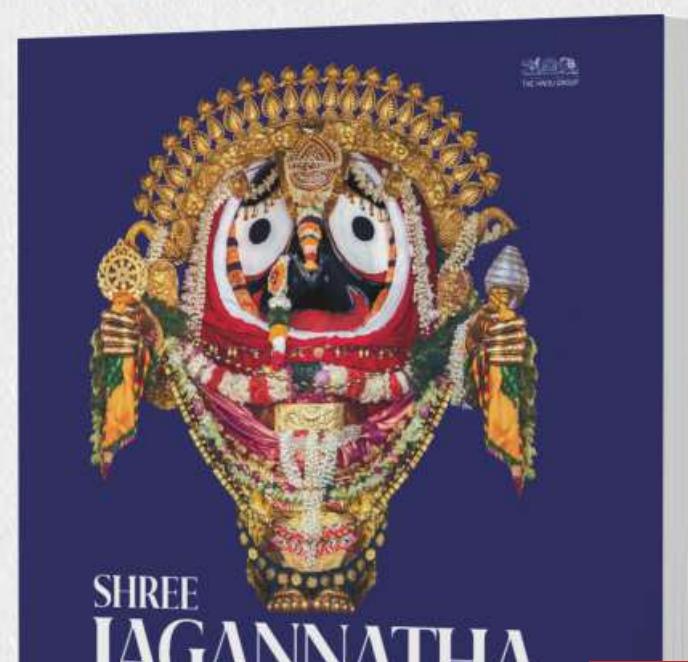
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	82.80	83.12
Euro	89.20	89.54
British Pound	104.52	104.93
Japanese Yen (100)	55.54	55.76
Chinese Yuan	11.51	11.56
Swiss Franc	94.56	94.93
Singapore Dollar	61.54	61.79
Canadian Dollar	61.50	61.74
Malaysian Ringgit	17.36	17.45
Australian Dollar	53.97	54.19

Source: Indian Bank

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION FROM THE HINDU GROUP

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

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



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TOUGH COMPETITION

India have real battle on their hands, says Ian Chappell



K.R. DEEPAK

Former Australia skipper Ian Chappell feels England under Ben Stokes will give India tough competition in the remainder of the Test series but backed the hosts to win it. "As the home side India should eventually win a tough series, but it has a real battle on their hands," Chappell wrote in his column for *ESPNcricinfo*.

REJUVENATED

England arrives in Rajkot after week-long break



K. R. DEEPAK

Fresh from a one-week break in their pre-series base Abu Dhabi, the England cricket team on Monday returned to India for the remainder of the five-match rubber against the hosts, which is locked at 1-1 after two games. The England team landed in Rajkot — venue for the third Test — on Monday evening.

LESS THAN IDEAL

Maxwell opens up about Adelaide night fiasco



AFF

Ending up in hospital after a late-night party in Adelaide was "less than ideal," conceded Glenn Maxwell about the headline-grabbing incident last month. "I think probably it affected my family a little bit more than it affected me. And obviously that incident was less than ideal, and the timing," Maxwell was quoted as saying.

ON COURSE

Pink Panthers ease past Yoddhas to seal a semifinal spot



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Arjun Deshwal top-scored with 20 raid points to help Jaipur Pink Panthers thrash U.P. Yoddhas 67-30 and secure a semifinal spot in the Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 in Kolkata on Monday. In another match, Bengal Warriors got one step closer to the qualification bracket with an easy 46-34 win over the U Mumba.

Rahul ruled out of Rajkot Test, Padikkal named as replacement

The former will continue his recovery process at the NCA to be match-fit for the fourth Test, says BCCI secretary Jay Shah

ENGLAND IN INDIA

Amol Karhadkar
RAJKOT

Devdutt Padikkal, the stylish left-handed bat, has received his maiden call-up after K.L. Rahul – his Karnataka senior – has been ruled out of India's third Test versus England, to be played here from Thursday.

"Rahul has reached 90% of match fitness and is progressing well under the supervision of the BCCI Medical Team," Jay Shah, the BCCI secretary, wrote in a statement.

"He will continue his recovery process at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru to be completely match-fit for the fourth and fifth Test."

Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja – both of whom had missed the second Test after getting hurt during India's loss in Hyderabad last

month – had been named in the squad for the last three Tests pending fitness clearance.

While India's squad that reassembled here on Sunday had its first training session at the stadium on Monday, Rahul is understood to have undergone a fitness test at the NCA. With the selectors and the team-management, in consultation with the BCCI medical team, deciding to not risk a player, the selection committee unanimously zeroed in on Padikkal being given a maiden Test call-up.

Interestingly, chief selector Ajit Agarkar witnessed Padikkal's sensational 151 for Karnataka against Tamil Nadu in the Ranji Trophy's high-profile southern derby over the last four days.

It is understood that Jadeja appeared to be fit during Monday's net session which was played behind closed doors, with no media person being allowed to



In his element: A superb 151 in the Ranji Trophy may have clinched a spot for Padikkal. M. VEDHAN

watch the team train.

It will be interesting to see if Padikkal is made to wait for his India cap, with Sarfaraz Khan being the front-runner to replace Shreyas Iyer in India's mid-

dle-order. Sarfaraz was brought in as Rahul's replacement ahead of the second Test and has been retained in the squad with Shreyas being dropped.

Meanwhile, England

leggie Rehan Ahmed was stopped from exiting the Hiraesar airport – on the outskirts of the Kathiawari city – due to lack of multi-entry visa upon England's arrival here on Monday.

England camp has not named a replacement for Leach.

England's squad spent the week-long break in Abu Dhabi before arriving here on Monday. It was noticed that Rehan had a single-entry visa so the England squad waited at the airport in the afternoon before the formalities were completed.

It is understood that with the help of local authorities, Rehan was granted a two-day visa at the earliest and the remaining paperwork will be completed well in time before the scheduled start of the match.

Leach ruled out

Rehan will be crucial to England's plans with Jack Leach, supposed to be the leader of the spin attack, having been ruled out of the remainder of the series. After sustaining a knee injury in Hyderabad, Leach missed the Visakhapatnam Test and has headed back home. The England camp has not named a replacement for Leach.

Marathon record-holder Kiptum killed in road accident

Reuters

NAIROBI



Kiptum. GETTY IMAGES

World marathon record holder Kelvin Kiptum and his coach Gervais Hakizimana died in a traffic accident on Sunday, former Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga said on social media platform X.

Kenya's minister for sports Ababu Namwamba said on X, "Devastatingly sickening! Kenya has lost a special gem. Lost for words."

Kiptum, 24, set the world record at the Chicago Marathon in October with a time of 2:00:35 to surpass the record of 2:01:09 set by his compatriot Eliud Kipchoge in Berlin in 2022.

Kiptum smashed the London Marathon course record earlier last year and was determined to make magic again in Chicago as he sped up through the 35-kilometre mark before thrusting his arms in the air to cheers from the crowd down the final stretch.

"We are shocked and

deeply saddened to learn of the devastating loss. On behalf of all World Athletics, we send our deepest condolences to their families, friends, teammates and the Kenyan nation", said World Athletics president Sebastian Coe.

"It was only earlier this week in Chicago, the place where Kelvin set his extraordinary marathon world record, that I was able to officially ratify his historic time. An incredible athlete leaving an incredible legacy, we will miss him dearly," added Coe.

Ramkumar claws his way back to get past Janvier

BENGALURU OPEN

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Ramkumar Ramanathan fought back from the brink, from a set and three match points down, to beat France's Maxime Janvier 6-7(4), 7-5, 6-4 and enter the second round of the dafabet Bengaluru Open ATP Challenger, here on Monday.

The wild card entrant's stay in the singles draw at the Garden City seemed set to end the same way as it had last week in Chennai – with a first-round defeat.

But the 29-year-old clawed his way back miraculously for only his first main draw match win since November 2022.

On the day, fortunes swung back and forth in the opening set as Ramkumar and Janvier couldn't calibrate their games to match the pomp of the immaculately laid KSLTA courts inside the leafy and pristine Cubbon Park.

The duo traded breaks early on and the contest inevitably slipped into a tie break.

Once there, Ramkumar made the first move, going up 4-1. But Janvier reeled off six straight points to pocket the set.

In the second stanza, the two kept pace with each other until one bad service game at 4-5 saw Ramkumar staring down



Houdini act: Ramkumar turned it around after being a set and three match points down against Janvier. SUDHAKARA JAIN

the barrel. However, he saved all three, levelled at 5-5 and broke to go 6-5 up.

That last return game showed his heightened confidence, especially the fierce slapped return to bring up the break point.

Ramkumar carried that belief, first to hold serve to take the match into the decider and then break Janvier's serve in the third game of the third set.

From there on, there

was no looking back for the Indian.

Australian Bernard Tomic entered the main draw after defeating Jonas Forejtek of Czech Republic 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 in the final qualifying round.

The results (first round):

Ramkumar Ramanathan bt Maxime Janvier (Fra) 6-7(4), 7-5, 6-4; Moez Echargui (Tun) bt Duje Adukovic (Cro) 6-2, 6-4; Gauthier Oncin (Bel) bt Giovanni Fonio (Ita) 6-4, 1-6, 7-6(5).

Vijay Amritraj – star of the night and toast of the gathering

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
CHENNAI

It was a night of elegance, nostalgia and celebration as Chennai raised a toast to one of its favourite sons, a national icon and global ambassador, all rolled into one. At the Leela Palace here on Monday, Vijay Amritraj was feted for his elevation in to the International Tennis Hall of Fame, which most among the assembled gathering felt came a touch late to a man who deserves all the accolades and more.

A tennis icon, broadcaster, actor, champion of social causes and sports administrator, Amritraj is a star of many parts. However, deep down he is a quintessential Chennai boy with academic roots in Don Bosco School and Loyola College. And this was the return of the native as the who's who of this Southern metropolis rallied around to cherish him.

Tamil Nadu's Minister for Youth Development and Sports Welfare Udayanidhi Stalin effusively lauded the sporting legend to set the tone for a night of appreciation. Chess maestro Viswanathan Anand said:

"Whatever I tried to do, Vijay had been there before."

Amritraj's India teammate Ramesh Krishnan spoke about the deep ties between the two families



Vijay Amritraj.
FILE PHOTO: SUDHAKARA JAIN



Whatever I tried to do,
Vijay had been there
before

VIJAYAMANAN ANAND

and elder brother Anand elaborated about a childhood of dreams and naughty streaks.

Starting quickly and with purpose, India had the upper hand early on and kept the pressure on the Chinese defence with repeated circle entries, one of them seeing Vandana Kataria's backhand pass from close to the backline being deflected in by Sangita Kumari for the lead.

China got one of its own towards the end of the first 1st Quarter through veteran Bingfeng Gu's penalty corner. But once the teams settled down, China's defensive structure held firm against all Indian attempts

Indian women go down to China again, no stopping the Dutch juggernaut

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Uthra Ganeshan

ROURKELA



Strikeforce: Bingfeng netted both the goals for China.

X@FIH_HOCKEY

that slowly went from purposeful to off target to desperate.

India had the ball for long periods without actually appearing threatening, running all around without being able to get into the circle post break. The Chinese appeared content going for the counters and then falling back into their respective zones to cut off space and induce turnovers but barring a few half chances, they didn't have much to show either.

It was one of those games where both teams relied more on mistakes from the opponent.

The Dutch juggernaut, meanwhile, continued to roll on with the World No. 1 side registering a 4-0 win against USA, scoring twice on either side of half time and finding ways to get the goals despite the Americans negating their PC advantage.

The results:
Netherlands 4 (Fay van der Elst 21, 56, Freeke Moes 16, Felice Albers 36) bt USA 0; China 2 (Bingfeng Gu 14, 53) bt India 1 (Sangita Kumari 7).

CM YK

INBRIEF



Argentina eliminates Brazil, books Paris Olympics spot

Argentina secured its spot at the men's football tournament at the Paris Olympics by beating defending champion Brazil 1-0 on Sunday, a result which also eliminated its bitter rival. In the decisive South American Olympic qualifier, Leandro Goudou scored the winner for the Argentina U-23 team. He headed a cross from Valentin Barco in the 78th minute in Caracas.

PGTI season-opener tees off in Kolkata today

Several leading professionals, including Manu Gandas, Khalin Joshi, defending champion Sachin Baisoya, Aman Raj, Karan Pratap Singh, Rahil Gangjee and Udayan Mane, will be seen in action in the season-opening Tata Steel PGTI Players' Championship, starting at the Tollygunge Club golf course in Kolkata from Tuesday.

The event, offering a total prize purse of ₹1 crore, will see the participation of 124 professionals and three amateurs.

India batter Saurabh Tiwary announces retirement

India batter Saurabh Tiwary has announced his retirement from professional cricket and will feature in his final match for Jharkhand against Jamshedpur on February 15 in the Ranji Trophy. Saurabh started playing cricket at the age of 11, in the 2006-07 Ranji season. He made his First Class debut as a teenager. He went on to win the Under-19 World Cup under the leadership of Virat Kohli in Malaysia in 2008. He continued to soar high with his performances for Mumbai Indians in 2010. He earned a call-up for the India team for the Asia Cup. The left-handed batter went on to play three ODIs for the Men in Blue.

Haller hits winner, Ivory Coast pips Nigeria for AFCON title

Sebastien Haller scored a dramatic late winner as host Ivory Coast fought back to beat Victor Osimhen's Nigeria 2-1 in Sunday's Africa Cup of Nations final in Abidjan.

The results, final: Nigeria 1 (Troost-Ekong 38) lost to Ivory Coast 2 (Kessie 62, Haller 81).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FIXTURES, ROUND OF 16

RB Leipzig vs. Real Madrid, Copenhagen vs. Manchester City (both matches at 1:30 a.m. on Wednesday). PSG vs. Real Sociedad, Lazio vs. Bayern Munich (both matches at 1:30 a.m. on Thursday).

LIVE TELECAST

Australia vs West Indies: 3rd T20I, Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 2 p.m.
ISL: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.
PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.
New Zealand vs South Africa: 2nd Test, day 2, Prime Video, 3.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

O Hansini takes the honours in the Kakatiya Million

HYDERABAD: Trainer Rakesh's O Hansini, ridden by Vivek G, won the Kakatiya Million, the main attraction of Monday's (Feb. 12) races.

The winner is owned by Mrs. Namrata Rakesh.

1. SARONAGAR PLATE (DIV. II): GOLDEN INZIO (Ajay Kumar) 1, Wandring Warrior (Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 2, Glimmer Of Hope (Surya Prakash) 3 and Federer (Ashad Asbar) 4, Neck: 3-1/2 and 3/4, Im: 13.85s, ₹51 (w), 19, 11 and 16 (p). SHP: 36, THP: 67, SHW: 40 and 10, FP: 217, Q: 82, Tanala: 1,060. Favourite: Wandring Warrior. Owners: Mr. C.S. Suresh, Mr. Manish Jaiswal & Mrs. Candida Tania Jaiswal. Trainer: S. Sreekant.

2. KAMAREDDY CUP (DIV. II): PARALANE (Md. Ismail) 1, Royal Pal (Nakhat Singh) 2, China Town (Ashad Asbar) 3 and Silver Arrow (Kaviraj) 4, 1/2, 1-1/2 and 3/4, Im: 27.03s, ₹30 (w), 10, 14 and 17 (p). SHP: 43, THP: 46, SHW: 13 and 24, FP: 108, Q: 54, Tanala: 546. Favourite: Park Lane. Owners: Mr. Rakesh Reddy Kondakallu & Mr. Rakesh Ramana Reddy. Trainer: Robin Reddy Kondakallu.

3. RISING STAR PLATE (DIV. II): HUNTINGDON (Mukesh Kumar) 1, Painted Apache (P. Ajeeth Kumar) 2, Soloist (Vivek G) 3 and Beauty Blaze (P. Sai Kumar) 4, 1-1/4, 1-1/4 and Neck: 25, 36s, ₹28 (w), 12, 21 and 12 (p). SHP: 39, THP: 39, SHW: 16 and 37, FP: 234, Q: 219, Tanala: 937. Favourite: Malala. Owners: Mr. Ravinder Reddy Male.

Joseph & Mr. Bharat Venkat Epar. Trainer: L. D' Silva.

NOTE: Originally the result was Huntingdon, Beauty Blaze, Painted Apache and Soloist in that order. An objection raised by jockey Vivek G (Soloist up) against P. Sai Kumar (rider of Beauty Blaze) for causing him interference in the last 150m was upheld by the stewards and the order was revised as above.

4. JANGGA PLATE: COIT PISTOL (Hindu Singh) 1, Li Mirage (P. Sai Kumar) 2, Silk (Ajay Kumar) 3 and Adhut (Md. Ekram Alam) 4, 1-1/2, 1-1/4 and 1/2. Im: 12.07s, ₹51 (w), 16, 12 and 35 (p). SHP: 41, THP: 60, SHW: 36 and 20, FP: 287, Q: 142, Tanala: 2,592. Favourite: Adhut. Owner: Mr. Maddali Sai Kumar. Trainer: G. Shashikant.

5. KAMAREDDY CUP (DIV. I): BEAUTY FLAME (N.B. Kuldeep) 1, Power Ranger (Md. Ekram Alam) 2, Sadia (Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 3 and Master Touch (Mukesh Kumar) 4, 2, 3/4, and 2-1/2, Im: 26.39s, ₹61 (w), 13 and 43 (p). SHP: 30, THP: 124, SHW: 11 and 18, FP: 173, Q: 77, Tanala: 7,114. Favourite: Power Ranger. Owner: Mr. Md. Kashif Khan. Trainer: N. Rawal.

6. VEGAVATH CUP: N R I SUPER-POWER (P.S. Kaviraj) 1, Blazing Gun (Vivek G) 2, Toofee (Md. Ekram Alam) 3 and Detective (Abhay Singh) 4, Head: 4-1/4 and 1/2, Im: 38.28s, ₹18 (w), 26, 12 and 16 (p). SHP: 32, THP: 45, SHW: 34 and 16, FP: 699, Q: 248, Tanala: 4,542. Favourite: Sacred Bond. Owner: Mr. Ravinder Reddy Male.

Trainer: R.H. Sequeira.

7. KAKATIYA MILLION: O HANSINI (Vivek G) 1, Ashwa Morocco (Hindu Singh) 2, Candy Girl (Md. Ekrami Alami) 3 and Brilliant Star (P. Sai Kumar) 4, 1-1/4, Neck and 2-1/2, Im: 10, 39s, ₹51 (w), 12, 13 and 17 (p). SHP: 28, THP: 36, SHW: 20 and 21, FP: 253, Q: 114, Tanala: 1,386. Favourite: Polished Girl. Owner: Mrs. Namrata Rakesh.

Trainer: Rakesh.

8. RISING STAR PLATE (DIV. I): AKIDO (Md. Ekrami Alami) 1, Siddharth (Mukesh Kumar) 2, Strauss (Vivek G) 3 and Mysterious Angel (P. Ajeeth Kumar) 4, 1/2, 1-1/2 and 2-1/2, Im: 24, 76s, ₹49 (w), 21, 16 and 17 (p). SHP: 37, THP: 37, SHW: 16 and 18, FP: 127, Q: 50, Tanala: 298. Favourite: Siddharth. Owner: Mr. A.C. Muthiah. Trainer: K. Sathesh.

9. SARONAGAR PLATE (DIV. I): BLUE BRIGADE (Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 1, Exeter (Ashad Asbar) 2, American Flame (Vivek G) 3 and Setar (Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 4, 1-1/4, 3-3/4 and 1-1/4, Im: 14, 01s, ₹46 (w), 22, 21 and 13 (p). SHP: 70, THP: 59, SHW: 29 and 33, FP: 304, Q: 243, Tanala: 923. Favourite: American Flame. Owner: Mr. G.K. Keshava Murthy. Trainer: S. Sreekant.

10. JACKPOT: (i) 70%: ₹35,397 (3 tks.) and 30%: 968 (47 tks.); (ii) 70%: 20,287s (1 tks) and 30%: 30,894 (10 tks.).

Mini Jackpot: 80, 994 (3 tks.).

Treble: (i) 723 (53 tks.), (ii) 15, 183 (7 tks.), (iii) 2,419 (36 tks.).

Sport

Thampi's late burst gives Kerala first outright win of the season

With just 16 deliveries, the medium-pacer ends the spirited chase of the visitors to give Kerala a 109-run victory after Shabaz and Karan frustrate the hosts; Jalaj ends with match-haul of 13 wickets

RANJI TROPHY

M.R. Praveen Chandran
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A late shot of adrenaline by Basil Thampi gave Kerala its first win of the season in the Ranji Trophy here on Monday. Banished to patrol the ropes for a major part of the day, Thampi was summoned by captain Sanju Samson to bowl only after tea.

Chasing a mammoth target of 449, the Bengal lower-order, led by Shahbaz Ahmed frustrated Kerala in the post-lunch session. The seventh-wicket stand between Shahbaz Ahmed (80) and Karan Lal (40) added 83 quick runs and treated the Kerala spinners with disdain which forced Samson to turn to his medium-pacer.

Thampi responded in style by breaching the defence of Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal (13) and in the next over ran out Akash Deep (1) with a brilliant pick up and throw from mid-on. A pumped-up Thampi then



Say cheese! The Kerala team is a happy bunch after defeating Bengal. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

wrapped up the Bengal innings when he had Shahbaz Ahmed skying a catch to Rohan Kunnummal at deep square-leg. With 16 deliveries Thampi ended Bengal's spirited chase from Bengal to give Kerala a 109-run win.

Until Shahbaz and Karan joined forces, Kerala held the upper hand with spinners striking at regular intervals, reducing Bengal to 234 for six. Jalaj Saxena,

despite bowling with a swollen finger, was relentless and picked up wickets whenever the batters went after him. He finished with match figures of 13 for 172.

Manoj Tiwary, who got a reprieve on seven after being given leg-before off a jalaj no-ball, used the reverse and traditional sweeps to pile pressure on the off-spinner. However, the extra aggression from Bengal batters only resulted

in their dismissals.

Easwaran (65) tried to hit Jalaj over mid-wicket but ended up holing out to N.P. Basil and Tiwary's (35) urge to dominate Jalaj resulted in a catch to Sanju. The trend continued with Abhishek Porel (28), after slamming Shreyas Gopal for consecutive sixes, gave a tame return catch.

Sanju was forced to turn to Basil when the seventh wicket stand between

Shahbaz and Karan became threatening. He gave Kerala a fortuitous breakthrough when Karan (40) swished and nicked and the ball popped out from wicket-keeper Azharuddeen's gloves. However, substitute Krishna Prasad gathered the rebound. After tea, Thampi ran in hard to end Bengal's resistance.

The scores:

Kerala — 1st innings: 363.
Bengal — 1st innings: 180.
Kerala — 2nd innings: 265/6 decl.

Bengal — 2nd innings:

Abhimanyu Easwaran c Basil b Jalaj 65, Ranjot Singh Kharia c Thamip b Jalaj 2, Sudip Kumar Gharami c Akshay b Shreyas 31, Anup Majumdar c (sub) Krishna Prasad b Jalaj 16, Manoj Tiwary c Sanju b Jalaj 35, Abhishek Porel c & b Shreyas 28, Shahbaz Ahmed c Rohan b Thamip 80, Karan Lal c (sub) Krishna Prasad b Basil 40, Sauraj Sindhu Jaiswal b Thamip 13, Akash Deep run out 1, Ankit Mishra (not out) 0, Extras (b-15, lb-10, nb-3): 28; Total (in 87.4 overs): 339.

Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-77, 3-113, 4-151, 5-180, 6-234, 7-317, 8-335, 9-337.

Kerala bowling: Jalaj 36-3-104-4, Akash 14-2-48-0, Shreyas 23-2-96-2, Baby 5-0-26-0, Sanju 1-0-11-0, Basil 6-2-21-1, Thamip 2-4-0-8.

Jordan scores a brace, Punjab silences Blasters in ISL

Stan Rayan

KOCHI

Life without midfield magician Adrian Luna is turning out to be tough for Kerala Blasters. The spark was missing as the side went down to Punjab FC 1-3 in the Indian Super League on Monday with the visitor's Colombian forward scoring two of those goals.

It was only Punjab's

third win this season and saw it climb to ninth spot in the table while the Blasters remain on the third rung.

The stadium was not even half full, probably the fans missed their most popular player Luna and the deafening roar which usually sends rivals into a shell was missing.

That perhaps worked in Punjab's favour. For though, KBFC dominated a major part of the opening half and even took the lead in the 39th minute through its defender Milos Drinic, whose left-footed shot appeared to bounce inside the line, Punjab fought back and after gaining the lead choked the home side with a strong defence.

The result: KBFC 1 (Drinic 39) lost to PFC 3 (Jordan 42 & 61, Majcen 88-pen).

Focus on men's team, Sindhu as India chases glory

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India

SHAH ALAM (MALAYSIA)

Thomas Cup champion India will look to recreate the magic when it chases the elusive crown at the Badminton Asia Team Championships, which will mark the return of P.V. Sindhu from injury.

It won't be a walk in the park for the Indian men's team, which will face China and Hong Kong in its Group A league matches.

However, India, led by H.S. Prannoy, Lakshya Sen and the pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, will back itself to finish in the top two and make it to the knockout stage. The women's team, led by Sindhu, got the rub of the green as China is the only other team in Group 'W' and India is already assured of a knockout berth.

Barcelona escapes with a draw against Granada

EURO LEAGUES

Reuters
BARCELONA

A double by Barcelona winger Lamine Yamal helped his side salvage a 3-3 draw at home to relegation-threatened Granada in a roller-coaster LaLiga match on Sunday.

Xavi Hernandez's side is third in the standings on 51 points, five behind second-placed Girona.

Yamal put the host ahead after 14 minutes with a tap-in into an empty net after Joao Cancelo's cross found him at the far post.

Equaliser
Granada equalised two minutes before half-time thanks to Ricard Sanchez's powerful volley into the top corner.

The visitor grabbed the lead in the 60th minute

with an easy finish by Fábio Cunha before Robert Lewandowski made it 2-2 as he scored from Ilkay Gundogan's pass three minutes later.

Towering header

Ignasi Miquel restored Granada's lead with a towering header in the 66th minute, but Yamal levelled again with a long-range strike for

his second of the night ten minutes from time.

The results:

LaLiga: Sevilla 1 (Romero 15) lost to Atletico Madrid 0; Barcelona 3 (Yamal 14, 18, Lewandowski 63) drew with Granada 3 (Sanchez 43, Pellegrini 60, Miquel 66).

Serie A: Genoa 1 (Malinovskiy 51) lost to Atalanta 4 (De Ketelaere 22, Koopmeiners 55, Zappacosta 90+10, Toure 90+13); AC Milan 1 (Hernandez 25) b Napoli

There have been standout displays by quite a few players: Kanitkar

Head coach of the India U-19 team which lost in the final of the World Cup believes that a couple of them can make it to the senior level



THE GIST

Captain Saharan, who plays for Punjab, ended the tournament as the highest run-getter with 397 runs

No. 3 batter Musheer was the team's most consistent performer with the bat and ended with 360 runs

Sachin revelled in the role of a finisher, and left-arm spinner Pandey snared 18 wickets

Press Trust of India BENONI

India U-19 head coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar is confident that at least a couple of players from the 2024 batch, that ensured a fifth consecutive final appearance for the record five-time champions, will go on to play for the senior team.

Although five-time champion India lost the final to Australia by 79 runs, players like skipper Uday Saharan, Musheer Khan, Saumy Pandey and Sachin Dhas were impressive throughout the tournament.

"Definitely (the future of India is very

bright). As a bowling side and as a batting side, there have been stand out performances by quite a few players.

"They have shown maturity in tough situations and that bodes well for Indian cricket," Kanitkar said at the post-match press conference on Sunday.

Saharan, who plays for Punjab, ended the tournament as the highest run-getter with 397 runs.

His stature grew as the tournament progressed. He scored a century against Nepal before playing a match-winning 81 in the semifinal against South Africa.

Number three batter Musheer, the younger brother of prolific Mumbai batter Sarfaraz Khan, was the team's most

consistent performer with the bat and ended with 360 runs.

The two other stand-out players were Sachin, who revelled in the role of a finisher, and left-arm spinner Pandey, who snared 18 wickets.

Sachin showed temperament, a pre-requisite for the highest level.

The Indian team has always been an age-group powerhouse and the U-19 World Cup has presented stars like Virat Kohli, Yuvraj Singh, Mohammed Kaif, Suresh Raina, Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit Sharma, Ravindra Jadeja, K.L. Rahul, Rishabh Pant, Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal to name a few.

"Every time there are a couple of

guys who step up either in the IPL or the Indian team. I'm sure there will be a couple, but there is great competition back home," Kanitkar added.

Squad members Arshin Kulkarni and Avanish Rao went into the U-19 World Cup having already secured IPL contracts.

Kanitkar feels playing in the U-19 World Cup provides the players with an insight into how playing at the senior level is.

"For the players great journey, everything is highlighted, these performances matter, they are under the scanner. They get used to these situations. They know what expect and are prepared when they play higher cricket," said the 49-year-old head coach.

Safety worries for balconies ahead of the Paris Olympic Games

Agence France-Presse PARIS

Real estate experts in Paris have warned about the danger of people cramming on to balconies around the City to catch a glimpse of the Olympics in July and August.

The National Real Estate Federation (FNAIM) has alerted local authorities to the risk of collapses and accidents unless balconies that are often designed for two or three people are checked beforehand for their structural soundness.

The issue is set to be particularly pressing for residential blocs that overlook the river Seine, which athletes will sail down during a spectacular opening ceremony being planned by organisers on July 26.

"We need to be absolutely sure that the balconies can take the weight and that handrails are well sealed in to avoid any sort of incident," Olivier Princivalle, head, FNAIM in the Paris region, said.

Rare but sometimes deadly
Accidents involving balconies are a rare but sometimes deadly occurrence in France, with two people left seriously injured in the southeast of Paris in May last year when their fifth-floor balcony gave way. Four people died in the central City of Angers in 2016 when a balcony collapsed during a party.

The Paris Olympics from July 26 to August 11, followed by the Paralympics from August 28 to September 8, are set to take place at locations across the City of Light.



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

where many buildings are hundreds of years old.

The issue of balcony safety underlines the immense organisational complexity faced by local authorities as they prepare the first Games in 100 years.

The opening ceremony – the first time a summer Olympics has begun outside of a stadium – represents a huge challenge for French police who have been asked to secure a 6km stretch of the river that will be used during the parade.

The Paris police department said that checking balconies did not fall under its responsibilities, but it was working with the industry and its partners to address the issue.

Under French law, building owners or managers have

responsibility for checking their structures, but "something can slip through the cracks", a French source with knowledge of the preparations said on condition of anonymity.

Advance warnings about security and transport restrictions during the Games have led many Parisians to plan holidays during the event, sometimes in order to rent out their homes for high prices to foreign visitors.

"Don't leave this summer, don't leave! That would be a mistake," Mayor Anne Hidalgo urged the City's inhabitants on Sunday as she inaugurated the only new permanent Olympics sports arena to be built in inner Paris. "It's going to be incredible."

What's the next step for Qatar's Asian Cup star Akram Afif?

Associated Press DOHA

With his flowing curls and thrilling attacking play, it was no surprise that Akram Afif was likened to Liverpool star Mo Salah at the Asian Cup.

With eight goals, including a hat-trick in the 3-1 win over Jordan in the final, the Qatar forward was the leading scorer and most valuable player as his team won back-to-back titles.

But once the celebrations are over, Afif will return to Al Sadd in Qatar, rather than a team from one of Europe's top leagues.

Europe beckons?
In reality, he is a long way off the quality of Salah – one of the world's top players. But based on his performances at the Asian Cup, it is hard to imagine Afif couldn't make a career for himself outside of his homeland, even if not at one of Europe's leading clubs.

Is it simply the case that in an age when scouting networks have never been more extensive, Afif has slipped through the net? Not quite.

After all, he was a youth player with Villarreal at the start of his career and had spells in Spain and Belgium before returning to his homeland.

That move doesn't seem to have stopped him from developing his game.

He outperformed the likes of Tottenham's Son Heung-min and PSG forward Lee Kang-in at the Asian Cup, and, unsurprisingly, the



question of whether he would look to try again in Europe was a consistent theme during Qatar's run to the title.

"It's not me who has to decide, other parties have to decide," Afif said after the final.

"There are so many factors. I'd love to become a professional (in Europe). If it's meant to be, it's meant to be." The 27-year-old Afif was part of Qatar's Aspire Academy, which develops athletes. He joined Villarreal in 2016 and had loan spells with Sporting Gijon in Spain and Eupen in Belgium.

He returned to his homeland to Al Sadd in 2018 and the following year won the Asian Cup with Qatar, providing 10 assists, a tournament record.

Those performances didn't pave the way for a high profile move and he was part of Qatar's disappointing performance at the 2022 World Cup as the host nation was eliminated after three-straight losses in the group stage.

As a whole the Asian Cup showcased the talent that lies outside of elite club football in Europe. Iraq's Aymen Hussein was the second highest scorer.

Of the two finalists, only one player was based in Europe – Jordan's Mousa Tamari, who plays for Montpellier in France.

It points to the possibility that there is talent in parts of Asia that remains largely untapped in terms of scouting from Europe.

SCIENCE

Earth-wide telescope confirms black hole's shadow is 'real'

The Event Horizon Telescope is a global network of radio telescopes that work together. In 2019, it produced the first image of a black hole, the one at the centre of the M87 galaxy. The network has confirmed what it observed and shared evidence of movement in the black hole's neighbourhood

Tejasri Gururaj

Scientists have unveiled new details of a colossal black hole 53 million lightyears away first photographed by the earth-wide Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) in 2017. The feat provided the first visual evidence that black holes exist, confirming a fundamental prediction of general relativity.

In a new paper published on January 18, EHT scientists have reported capturing details at the level of the behemoth's event horizon – the boundary beyond which light from the other side can't reach an observer – showcasing the formation of a distinct ring around it.

The EHT's previous run had revealed the black hole's 'shadow', a result of the event horizon's gravitational effects and a signature of its presence. The picture also helped constrain the black hole's mass and find that its size and shape align with the predictions of the general theory of relativity. The image was hailed at the time as a matter of "astonishment and wonder" for revealing "a part of the universe that was off limits".

The new data, obtained after improving the telescope's coverage and resolution, reiterated the shadow's size and shape.

"The primary finding is the confirmation of the black hole 'shadow,'" Venkatesh Ramakrishnan, a postdoctoral researcher at the Finnish Centre for Astronomy with the European Southern Observatory, wrote in an email to *The Hindu*. "So this shows us as a first step that we are not biased towards making the black hole appear."

Dr. Ramakrishnan has been part of the EHT collaboration since 2017.

Many telescopes as one

The EHT is not a single telescope but a worldwide network of radio telescopes that work together to study a common object in space. They benefit from a technique called very-long baseline interferometry, where the data each telescope collects about the object is correlated with data from the others using extremely precise clocks.

In this setup, the maximum distance between the telescopes defines the network's resolution.

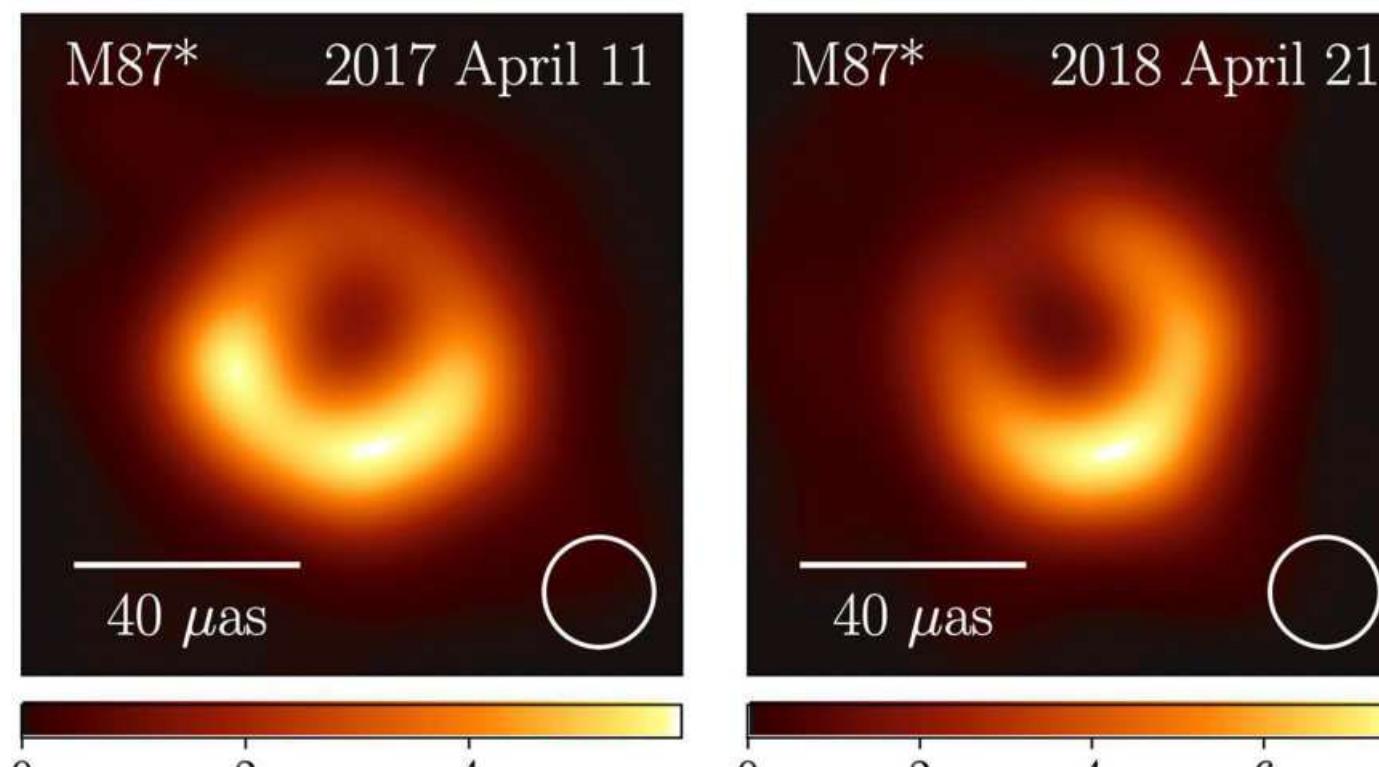
In 2017, the EHT reported detecting a bright, asymmetric ring of light consistent with the presence of a supermassive black hole. Independent analyses of EHT data also supported the ring's presence.

Based on these observations, scientists improved the EHT by increasing its data-recording rate, its ability to track spatial information, and by adding the Greenland Telescope to the array. The last one "improved the resolution of the EHT in the north-south direction," Dr. Ramakrishnan said.

Piecing the data together

In the new campaign, the EHT had nine stations gathering data across six observation days in April 2018, in four frequencies.

Then the scientists correlated the datasets with each other to increase the



The images of the black hole in the M87 galaxy captured by the Event Horizon Telescope in 2017 (left) and 2018. The scale shows the brightness temperature in billions of kelvin. *A&A* 681, A79 (2024)

signal-to-noise ratio. This task and subsequent processing happened at centres in Germany and the U.S.

When comparing the 2017 observations with the new results, they observed significant changes in the closure phase – a measure of the relationship between three telescopes in an array.

Specifically, they found that the way telescopes worked together during the 2018 observations differed from that during the 2017 observations. In this difference, scientists can track shifts in the configuration or structure of the black hole.

The team further used general relativistic magnetohydrodynamic (GRMHD) simulations to create models of the M87 black hole. These models incorporate the way the black hole's gravity influences spacetime around it using Einstein's theory of general relativity. By comparing the simulated black hole with the actual one, scientists gained valuable insights into the intricate dynamics near the event horizon, such as an effect called lensing.

Gravitational lensing

The findings confirmed the presence of an asymmetric ring structure approximately 42 microarcseconds wide. This is like observing a grain of sand from 25 km away.

They also revealed its diameter hadn't changed much between observations in 2017 and 2018 – meaning the black hole's gravity bent light consistently over time to form the observed ring.

This is in line with a prediction from the general theory of relativity that light around a black hole is strongly lensed. Objects with a lot of mass bend spacetime more around them. When light travels in this region, its path is bent in the same way a magnifying glass does. Images carried by the light thus appear to be



The EHT image helped constrain the black hole's mass and determined that its size and shape align with the predictions of the general theory of relativity. The image was hailed for revealing a part of the universe that was considered off limits

larger than they really are, and this phenomenon is called lensing.

This is also why, as the team found, the ring's southwest corner appears brighter than other parts. The black hole is rotating, dragging the spacetime around it along the direction of its rotation and rendering more light in some areas.

In technical parlance, the observations matched predictions for a shadow formed by lensed emission around a Kerr black hole (i.e. a rotating black hole) with a mass of around 6.5 billion times that of the Sun.

The M87 galaxy is also associated with a prominent jet of high-energy particles extending from the black hole into space. Scientists believe the jet is connected to the black hole's accretion disk, a belt-like structure of matter spiralling into the black hole.

Scientists observed that parts of the accretion disk and the jet appeared to be shifted by about 30 degrees between 2017 and 2018 – meaning these structures had changed their position or orientation over time.

"The 30-degree change can be attributed to the spin of the black hole," Dr. Ramakrishnan said. "Now this can't be firmly established yet from two images taken two years apart, but such an expectation was already established in a paper published a few years ago."

This shift is involved in a complex

interplay between the accretion disk and the formation of the jet. For example, models like the GRMHD suggest the observed shift could correspond to variations in the magnetic field structure. This in turn can render observable changes in the radiation emitted by matter in the disc.

By studying these subtle changes, scientists gain valuable insights into the hidden physics that controls the relationship between the accretion disk, the jet, and the magnetic environment around the black hole.

Room for more

Running the EHT to photograph black holes millions of lightyears away is a time-consuming task requiring meticulous observations.

The new results have reaffirmed the features of the black hole reported in 2019, including a very stable ring-formation process and other physical characteristics. The findings also were consistent across two observation periods and multiple frequencies, speaking to their reliability.

Examining how we measure the ring's diameter shows that our observational techniques are continually improving. Image-based techniques to study objects in space tend to underestimate diameters compared to direct modelling methods.

And the EHT's finer measurement of the ring's diameter suggests this gap between the two techniques is closing. Future work could further reconcile the discrepancy and the EHT's overall performance.

Dr. Ramakrishnan also said the telescope collaboration is planning "a so-called 'movie project' in 2026, when we will track the black hole over a month or two to see the brightness changes along the black hole".

(Tejasri Gururaj is a freelance science writer and journalist.)

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

V886 Centauri: a star unlike any other

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

Scientists believe the star V886 Centauri is composed mainly of carbon and oxygen, has a hydrogen atmosphere, and a dense crystal core. And given the core's probable size, on February 13, 2004, the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (CfA) declared it the universe's largest _____. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 2

Researchers at CfA conferred a nickname to the core of V886 Centauri drawn from a song by The Beatles. What is the nickname? The song is from the album 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band'.

QUESTION 3

V886 Centauri is a pulsating X star. There are many subtypes of such stars. V886 Centauri for example is of type Y. The primary component of X is electron degenerate matter. Y is distinguished by light from it appearing to pulsate with a period between half a minute and 25 minutes. Name X and Y.

QUESTION 4

The bodies of stars can oscillate in different ways. Name the branch of science that studies these oscillations. Based on such studies, astronomers reported in 2004 that around 90% of the mass of V886 Centauri may have crystallised, meaning the crystal component weighed at least 5,100 billion kg.

QUESTION 5

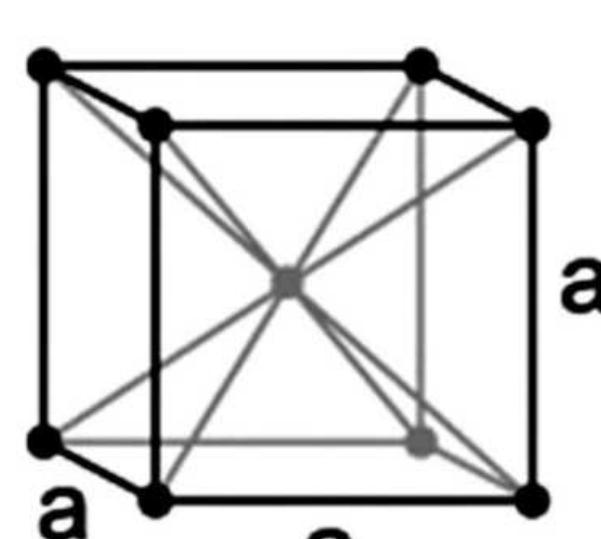
While V886 Centauri may be the largest

_____ in the universe (see Q1), what is its largest counterpart (so far) on the earth named? It was discovered in South Africa on January 26, 1905.

Answers to February 8 quiz:

- Crew of the Skylab 4 mission – **Ans: Gerald Carr, Edward Gibson, William Pogue**
- Skylab 4 mission was first to record this with a space-borne camera – **Ans: Solar flare**
- How the press mischaracterised the incident for which Skylab 4 became famous – **Ans: Strike**
- At least one astronaut onboard this facility would have to be a veteran – **Ans: ISS**
- Skylab 4 mission record broken by Salut 6 EO-1 – **Ans: Longest human spaceflight**
- Visual: **Pogue Seiko**
- First contact: K.N. Viswanathan

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



Visual: The internal structure of V886 Centauri has been designated K, depicted here. This refers to one of three possible cubic structures the repeating unit of a crystal can have. Name K.

DANIEL MAYER, DRBOB (CC BY-SA 3.0)



The LHC at CERN near Geneva, Switzerland.
REUTERS

Scientists plan to build even larger atom-smasher by 2040

Associated Press

Scientists at the world's largest atom smasher have expressed confidence about moving forward with a multibillion-euro project to build a larger and more powerful particle collider that could help unlock more mysteries of the universe.

Leaders of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, or CERN, said planning is on track for its envisioned Future Circular Collider, which is estimated to cost 15 billion Swiss francs (\$17.2 billion) and will probably start operating in a first phase by 2040.

But nothing is certain yet, aside from the interest from mostly European and Western countries that bankroll CERN, which is home to the Large Hadron Collider.

That project is perhaps best known for helping confirm the subatomic Higgs boson in 2012 after a decades-long quest for what was described as "the missing cornerstone of physics."

The aim is to boost energy levels of the particle collisions to 100 TeV, or 100 trillion electron volts, about eight times more powerful than the Large Hadron Collider's 13 TeV

"The Future Circular Collider is a possible facility. I'm saying 'possible' because we are today at the level of feasibility study. It's not yet an approved project," said Fabiola Gianotti, the CERN director-general.

She said review committees had not turned up any "technical show-stoppers" for the project so far.

She touted the proposed collider as "a wonderful instrument to improve our understanding of fundamental physics" and a driver of innovation in areas like cryogenics, superconducting magnets, vacuum technologies and detector-instrumentation technologies that could offer socioeconomic benefits for society.

However, the science that the future collider could generate remains largely unknown.

"It's true that at the moment we do not have a clear theoretical guidance on what we should look for," Gianotti said.

The laboratory that already houses what CERN leaders call the world's biggest machine uses a network of magnets to accelerate particles through a 27-kilometre underground loop along the French-Swiss border and slam them together, capturing and interpreting the results of the collisions to help explain how fundamental physics works.

A briefing last week on the new collider included some proposed changes to the original plan announced in 2019. Among them: the loop will be 91 kilometres instead of the 100-kilometre circuit first envisioned.

But they still aim to boost energy levels of the particle collisions to 100 TeV, or 100 trillion electron volts, about eight times more powerful than the Large Hadron Collider's 13 TeV.

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