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Haryana DGP denies use of pellet guns

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Russia claims capture of key Ukrainian town

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BIGGEST MARGIN

India 2-1 up with 434-run win

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RULING ASIA

Indian women pip Thailand, clinch title

SPORT » PAGE 15

Third term crucial for country: Modi

Prime Minister asks BJP cadre to work hard to win confidence of voters, says completing 10 years of unblemished governance is no ordinary feat

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday exhorted the BJP cadre to keep their nose to the grindstone for the next 100 days to win the confidence of voters for a third successive term. He added that it was imperative that the BJP be elected back into power as the next five years were crucial for the progress of the country.

Delivering the valedictory address at the BJP's National Council meeting held in New Delhi, Mr. Modi said that his attitude to power was like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. "I am not someone who lives for his own happiness. I am advocating for a third term for the BJP not for political gains, but for the benefit of India. My efforts are dedicated to the people of India. The dreams of Indians are my commitments," Mr. Modi said.

He added that the next five years would be crucial for India's journey.

"We have to take a big leap towards 'Viksit Bharat' [Developed India]. The first imperative is to ensure the return of the BJP to power in strong numbers," he said.

The Prime Minister noted that completing 10 years of unblemished governance while pulling 25 crore people out of poverty was no ordinary feat. "A senior leader once told me I had done enough as PM and CM, I should rest. But I am working for *rashtraniti*, not *rajeeti*," he said.

He also addressed the talk of a North-South divide in party support that broke out just after the BJP swept the Hindi-speaking States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh in the recent Assembly polls, and the Congress swept Telangana. Mr. Modi, however, claimed that the BJP was the only party that was devoted to the ideals of "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat". Referring to the 11 days of religious rituals he observed ahead of the consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, he noted that it had also involved visiting various sites associated with the Ramayana.

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Prime Minister

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BJP's policies dealt a 'double blow' to U.P. youth: Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

A third of Uttar Pradesh's youth are unemployed, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged on Sunday, claiming that the policies of the BJP's "double-engine" government in the State and the Centre had dealt a "double blow" to jobless youth in the country's most populous State.

"More than 1.5 lakh government posts are vacant. Graduates, postgraduates and PhD holders are standing in line even for the posts that require minimum qualification," Mr. Gandhi said in a post on X, accompanied by a photograph of thousands of candidates jammed into a Kanpur railway station to appear in the Uttar Pradesh police constable recruitment exam. "Lakhs of students have become ov-

eraged after waiting for years for recruitment, from the Army to Railways and from education to the police [department]. A student trapped in this vicious cycle of despair is falling victim to depression," added the Congress leader.

Mr. Gandhi is undertaking the U.P. leg of his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and resumed the journey from Prayagraj on Sunday afternoon, attending events and a roadshow in the city.

"Paper leak is an injustice to those youth and their parents who dream of a secure future by investing all their capital and hard work. There is no one else responsible for this injustice but the Prime Minister of the country," he said, while talking to job aspirants at the roadshow.

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Congress leader Rahul Gandhi greets supporters at a roadshow during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Prayagraj on Sunday. PTI

IN BRIEF



House ransacked:
Sandeshkhali rape survivor

SANDESHKHALI
A woman who alleged sexual assault by Trinamool Congress leaders in Sandeshkhali on Sunday said unidentified persons ransacked her house on Saturday. » Page 10

Kejriwal meets Kharde; talks for Delhi 'on track'

NEW DELHI
AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said seat-sharing talks with the Congress are in progress after meeting Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge over lunch. » Page 4

Manipur initiates magisterial probe into violence

NEW DELHI
The Manipur government on Sunday ordered a magisterial inquiry into the killing of two persons and torching of government buildings by a mob in Churachandpur district on February 15. » Page 10

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 17

Centre to clarify on Aadhaar as birth date proof, with risk riders

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

To avoid inconvenience to the public and beneficiaries of government schemes and quell a sense of anxiety about a recent directive to cease the usage of Aadhaar as a proof of 'date of birth', the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is likely to issue a clarification soon that those relying on the ID proof for age may do so after undertaking a "risk-based assessment".

The UIDAI, in a December 2023 missive, asked all agencies that use Aadhaar to authenticate identities to delete it from the list of acceptable documents for verifying a person's date of birth.

The authority said this was an iteration of its stated position and had been highlighted by different High Court judgments. Now, Aadhaar cards come with a prominent disclaimer that they are "a proof of identity, not of citizenship or date of birth".

A senior Electronics and Information Technology Ministry official indicated to *The Hindu* that the UIDAI would not withdraw the directive but would soon issue an advisory for agencies that rely on Aad-



The government aims to quell anxiety about a recent directive. FILE PHOTO

haar authentication for welfare benefits and KYC (Know Your Customer) compliance purposes.

'Reiterates stance'
"The UIDAI circular in question reflects and reiterates our stance that an Aadhaar number can be used to establish the identity of an individual subject to authentication and is not per se proof of date of birth. However, the UIDAI is likely to issue a clarification, putting the onus on user agencies to accept the date entered into Aadhaar records or verify it further, with the emphasis being on risk-based assessment," the official said, requesting anonymity owing to the sensitivity of the issue.

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Shri Vinod Kumar IFS (Retd.)
Former High Commissioner to Fiji and Ambassador to Uzbekistan

Mrs Sangeeta Gupta, IRS (Retd.)
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IN BRIEF



Meghalaya's concerns over CAA addressed: CM Sangma

Concerns of Meghalaya over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) have been addressed as most areas of the State come under the Sixth Schedule, which exempts them from the law, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma has said. Mr. Sangma, who heads the National People's Party, also stressed on the requirement for the Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime in his State, which will restrict the entry of "outsiders". Expressing concern over the "spillover effect" in Meghalaya if the CAA is implemented in other States, he said that "we have just requested the Government of India if we can still have the ILP".

Disqualification plea against 7 Nagaland NCP MLAs rejected

Nagaland Assembly Speaker Sheringin Longkumer has dismissed the disqualification petition against seven Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) legislators in the State. Hemant Take, a senior leader of the Sharad Pawar-led faction of the NCP, had filed the disqualification petition against the seven MLAs – Picto Shome, P. Longon, Namri Nchang, Y. Mhombemo Humtsoe, S. Toilo Yetho, Y. Mankhao Konyak, and A. Pongshi Phom on August 30, 2023 alleging that they had indulged in anti-party activities. The legislators had given a letter of support in favour of the faction led by Ajit Pawar.

'Centre trying to stop aid by deactivating Aadhaar cards'

Cong. says Kamal Nath not leaving party, 'BJP using media to spread rumours'

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday alleged that the BJP-led Central government "deactivated" the Aadhaar cards of people in the State before the upcoming Lok Sabha election so that they do not get the benefits of various social welfare schemes of the State government through their bank accounts.

Speaking at a public distribution programme in Birbhum district, Ms. Banerjee said her government would continue paying the beneficiaries of the various welfare schemes of the State government even if a person does not have an Aadhaar card.

Referring to the agitation of the farmers in Haryana and Punjab demanding the Central government's guarantee on minimum support price for their produce, Ms. Banerjee said farmers in Bengal do not face any problem. "I salute the farmers' protest. I condemn the attacks on them," she said.



Madhya Pradesh Congress president Jitu Patwari. (Right) Security personnel outside Congress leader Kamal Nath's residence in New Delhi on Sunday. A.M. FARUQUI AND SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

"no plans of leaving the Congress". Speculations that Mr. Nath and his son Nakul Nath may join the BJP were further fuelled by Mr. Nath reaching New Delhi on Saturday. Reports claimed that Mr. Nath may hold talks with BJP leaders. Meanwhile, Mr. Nath said he didn't hold talks with anyone.

Mr. Singh said the Congress had given Mr. Nath various posts, from Union Minister to CM to State party chief. "I don't think that he will leave the party," he said, adding, "Pressure of the ED, the CBI, and the IT... he is under the same pressure as everyone else."

"But Kamal Nathji's character has not been of bowing down to pressure," Mr. Singh said.

Mr. Verma also said Mr. Nath was focusing on Lok Sabha poll ticket distribution in Madhya Pradesh. "Kamal Nathji said I have no such thought nor have I discussed this with anyone," he said. Mr. Verma on Saturday hinted that Mr. Nath was "considering the move due to his honour and self-respect".

Another loyalist of Mr. Nath and former Congress MLA Deepak Saxena, while alleging that he had been neglected in the party, said the people of Chhindwara

wanted Mr. Nath to join the BJP for the development of the district.

"There is a group of 11 senior Congress members [of Chhindwara]. We all discussed and decided that if we are neglected it would be better to go to BJP and get the work done," said Mr. Saxena, claiming that many MLAs are likely to follow Mr. Nath if they are promised a ticket in BJP.

At least six MLAs, loyal to Mr. Nath, have reportedly reached Delhi, and other leaders have gone incommunicado, forcing State Congress leaders to try and hold one-on-one conversations with one another.

Wild animal attacks: Rahul visits victims' kin in Wayanad; a tourist in his own constituency, says BJP

E.M. Manoj
KALPETTA

Congress leader and Lok Sabha MP from Wayanad Rahul Gandhi paid a whirlwind visit on Sunday to families who lost their breadwinners to fatal wild animal attacks in the hill district and listened to a litany of grievances against the Kerala government's alleged failure to mitigate man-animal conflict.

Mr. Gandhi had taken a break from the Uttar Pradesh leg of his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra to visit his constituency, which had seen street protests on Saturday.

Some parts of Wayanad are under curfew after the District Magistrate issued prohibitory orders to prevent public anger from spiralling out of control.

Mr. Gandhi reached Wayanad via road from Kannur around 7 a.m. He first visited the house of Ajesh, a farmer who was trampled to death by a radio-collared wild elephant. Later, he called on the next of kin of ecotourism guide Paul, another wild ele-

phant victim, at Pakkom. He also interacted with the family of Prajeesh, who was mauled to death by a tiger in December 2023.

The members of the bereaved families later told television news reporters that they had flagged the forest department's "inefficient" response to wild animal threats and the "lack of facilities" for specialised care in State-funded hospitals in the district.

Later in the day, Mr. Gandhi urged the administration to expedite steps to mitigate the sudden spurt in man-animal conflict in the district. He said the solution to the kin should be

disbursed quickly and more effectively as there was a delay in payment in the past couple of months.

BJP takes a swipe
Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs V. Muraleedharan took a dig at Mr. Gandhi by calling him "a tourist in his own constituency." "Wayanad does not have a medical college where such people can be treated. Rahul Gandhi should have taken care of his constituency and ensured that basic medical facilities were present," Mr. Muraleedharan told mediapersons in New Delhi.

In Punjab, AAP faces Oppn. heat for going back on 'assurance' of procuring crops at MSP

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

Even as farmers from Punjab continue their protest, seeking a legal guarantee for a minimum support price (MSP) on crops from the Union government, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in the State is facing heat from Opposition parties for going back on its "assurance" of procuring crops at MSP in the run-up to the Assembly election in 2022.

Cornering AAP on the issue, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Congress accused the State government of "betraying farmers

after coming to power". The ruling AAP, meanwhile, maintained that the government was doing its best with whatever resources the State had at its disposal.

AAP failed'
Former Minister and senior SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia on Sunday said that AAP has failed to address farmers' issues even after two years in power.

He said that during campaigning for the 2022 Assembly election in the State, AAP leaders had said crops would be procured from farmers at MSP, but



Past forward: AAP's Sanjay Singh and Bhagwant Mann protesting over farmers' issues in Parliament in 2020. FILE PHOTO

after forming the government, they failed to do so. "It's been two years since AAP came to power, you

still haven't given MSP. No promises fulfilled," Mr. Majithia said.

Referring to an old post

by AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on social media platform X (formerly Twitter), he said, "Your boss Arvind Kejriwal also made all these promises. Now, where are those promises? I am sharing your boss Arvind Kejriwal's tweet from 2020 where he is telling Captain Amarinder [then Chief Minister of Punjab] to bring MSP law in Punjab. Now you have a government – do it and solve the issue."

Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly, Congress's Partap Singh Bajwa, also hit out at the AAP government.

He said that Bhagwant Singh Mann, before becoming the Punjab Chief Minister, had favoured procuring 22 crops at MSP, but has now backtracked.

"The farmers have been demanding MSP. So, the Punjab Chief Minister must explain what has stopped him from providing MSP. After becoming Chief Minister, he persuaded farmers to grow moong (green gram) with the promise to ensure the purchase [of the crop] at MSP. Contrary to his commitment, he failed to ensure MSP on moong. Approximately 80% of farmers were forced to sell their moong

crop below MSP in 2022 and 2023," Mr. Bajwa alleged.

AAP's Punjab unit chief spokesperson Malvinder Singh Kang told *The Hindu* that the Union government is the authority on MSP.

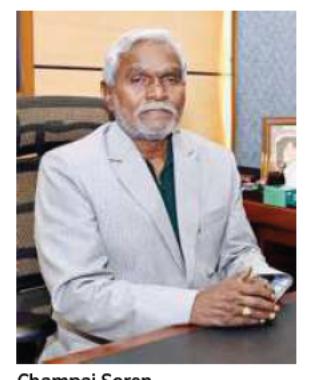
'Centre's call'
"The authority on MSP for crops is with the Central government. Whatever resources we have with us, we are doing our best. Last year, we made efforts to procure moong and maize. States don't have any authority or resources. The AAP government has taken many pro-farmer decisions," Mr. Kang said.

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

On February 13, as farmers from Punjab arrived at Shambhu-Ambala and Khauri-Jind, the inter-State boundaries between Haryana and Punjab, they were stopped from entering Haryana, where they have been camping.

Alliance strong, no threat to govt. in Jharkhand: CM

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI



The JMM-led alliance in Jharkhand is "strong" and there is no threat to the coalition government in the State, Chief Minister Champai Soren said on Sunday, amid reports of resentment brewing among a section of Congress legislators over the induction of four party MLAs into the State Cabinet as Ministers.

Mr. Soren, who is in the national capital, made the remarks before meeting Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

He told reporters that it was a courtesy meeting after taking charge as the Chief Minister.

On a section of Congress MLAs being disgruntled over the recent Cabinet formation, Mr. Soren said it was an internal matter of the Congress.

In a post on X after the meeting, Mr. Kharge said, "Today, along with Jharkhand Chief Minister Shri Champai Soren ji and leaders of the Jharkhand Congress, we again resolved to fight the dictatorial government [Centre]."

"We will continue our journey of progressiveness, public welfare, and hand is ready."

A NO-DE

IN BRIEF



Karnataka top among States in terms of EV charging stations

Karnataka tops the nation in terms of public electric vehicle (EV) charging stations with 5,059, showed statistics from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, under the Union Ministry of Power. Bengaluru Urban district has the most stations with 4,281, accounting for 85% of the State's charging infrastructure. In terms of number of EVs, the report showed that Uttar Pradesh is on top with 7.45 lakh, followed by Maharashtra (4.15 lakh), and Karnataka (3.31 lakh).

'Kerala CM should step down till the end of Exalogic probe'

Opposition leader in the Kerala Assembly V.D. Sathesan on Sunday said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan should step down until the investigation into financial dealings of Exalogic Solutions Private Limited, a company owned by his daughter, T. Veena, was completed. Addressing presspersons in Thrissur as part of a Statewide yatra organised by the Congress, Mr. Sathesan said crores of rupees has reached the company during Mr. Vijayan's tenure as the CM.

Top officer R.K. Gaur hangs up boots after 26 years in CBI

R.K. Gaur, who was the backbone of the information wing of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), has hung his boots after 26 years of service at the agency, officials said on Sunday. Fondly called Gaur 'Saab', he was the face of the CBI in a number of media briefings, and handled many tricky situations during his service at the agency, which he had joined as an inspector on deputation from the Central Reserve Police Force in 1997. *pti*

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DIPR/CP/SPAN/3683/2023-24

Controversy over KU Senate meeting refuses to die down

Governor calls Higher Education Minister R. Bindu a 'criminal' for presiding over the meeting; she says such remarks do not warrant a reply; V-C in-charge sends detailed report to Khan

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The controversy surrounding the Kerala University Senate's decision to reject Governor Arif Mohammed Khan's ultimatum to nominate a representative to the Vice-Chancellor selection panel continued to simmer on the third day.



Violation of the law will be taken cognisance of. In my opinion, illegality has happened and the law will take its course

ARIF MOHAMMED KHAN
Kerala Governor

said such comments did not warrant a reply.

The Raj Bhavan appeared to project strong indications that the senate meeting could be invalidated as the Governor held talks with Kerala University Vice-Chancellor in-charge

Mohan Kunnummal as well as his nominees in the Senate who are allegedly backed by the BJP.

Speaking to presspersons, Mr. Khan maintained that the Minister had flouted norms while "intruding into the meeting". "Viola-

tion of the law will be taken cognisance of. In my opinion, illegality has happened and the law will take its course," he said.

Prof. Kunnummal is learnt to have apprised the Governor of the developments that had unfolded at the meeting in a detailed report. He also reportedly conveyed the illegalities behind Ms. Bindu's decision to chair the Senate meet. Meanwhile, Ms. Bindu appeared to challenge the Governor by saying he is entitled to adopt legal measures if he harboured doubts about the meeting.

Dogs shot in Telangana: suspect taken into custody

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

An ex-serviceman was taken into custody by the Mahabubnagar police in connection with the shooting of 20 dogs at Ponnakal village in Telangana's Addakal mandal by a gang of four persons in the early hours of February 16.

"We have taken eyewitness accounts from several villagers who were able to identify the make of the car. Based on that, CCTV footage from the nearby toll plaza is being checked," said the official.

Telangana Chief Minister
A. Revanth Reddy. PTI

He said the government had a clear policy in this regard and there was no room for misconceptions, while asserting that it would go forward with the advice of the experts.

"We have adopted the approach of thinking first and then making decisions," he said.

Referring to the city's development, he said Hyderabad was competing with the world and was ideal for investments.

Timings

DELHI	
MONDAY, FEB. 19	27°C
RISE 06:57	SET 18:14
RISE 13:30	SET 03:22
TUESDAY, FEB. 20	
RISE 06:56	SET 18:15
RISE 14:26	SET 04:16
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 21	
RISE 06:55	SET 18:15
RISE 15:24	SET 05:05

The Hindu Bureau

HYDERABAD

The Telangana government will bring out Mega Master Plan-2050 for the comprehensive development of the State soon, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy said on Sunday, adding the development was envisaged in three categories – urban, semi-urban and rural.

As part of the plan, the Telangana government intends to set up a city with health, sports and pollution-free industries on sprawling 25,000 acres near the Outer Ring Road, while steps would be taken to expand the Metro rail services in tune with the requirements of people.

Speaking after inaugurating the Telangana State Fire Services headquarters building at Nanakramguda, the CM said the government would set up pharma villages, not pharma cities.

Delhi Weather

max min

Delhi City 30 09

Safdarjung 30 09

Palam 29 11

Delhi Palam Today
27°C The weather will be comfortable with gusty winds. Chances of light rain & thunder shower with gusty winds. Night will be pleasant & hazy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
25°C Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Spell of light to moderate rain and thunder shower to occur.

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LEGAL NOTICE



Misplaced priorities

Free movement regime between India, Myanmar had more benefits than costs

A nation is defined not by the borders that demarcate it but by the people who live in it. This is not just an abstract adage but a vision of nation-building and sustenance, especially for a country that emerged out of colonial rule. The idea of neighbourly relations and borders was tied not just to the interest of national security for the post-colonial nation-state but also to the interests of the people in border areas and their imagined histories. When Home Minister Amit Shah announced that the "Free Movement Regime" (FMR) in place in Indian States bordering Myanmar from 2018 would be scrapped and that the India-Myanmar border be fenced, he was decidedly negating this idea. The ostensible reason for this demand and the need for fencing is because the porous border has served as a conduit for narcotics, besides helping insurgent groups in the north-east to establish bases within areas in Myanmar where the junta's writ is relatively non-existent or weak. But these reasons are not convincing in themselves. Most insurgent groups have weakened substantially and successive Indian governments have been able to neutralise their threats through force or peace efforts, ongoing or completed. Besides, the drug trade is enabled not only by the border's porosity but also by the relative lack of strong law enforcement with the cooperation of residents.

That the demand to scrap the FMR has been most vociferously endorsed by one section of the currently conflict-prone Manipur but has also been fervently opposed by Nagaland and Mizoram should provide a hint about the sentiments of the people in these States. Myanmar is in the throes of a civil war with civilians from its western regions and States such as Sagar and Chin State seeking refuge and humanitarian relief in neighbouring Mizoram and Manipur. The Mizo of Mizoram and the Kuki-Zo community in Manipur feel kinship with the Chin community and have been organising relief for the refugees. The opposition to the FMR has come from Meitei majoritarian forces in the Imphal valley who have raised the bogey of Chin refugees entering Manipur as a case of illegal migration. The institution of the FMR, as a formalised regime of the movement of citizens across the sparsely populated border to within 16 kilometres of it, for trade and commerce, was a nod to India's Act East policy. This was also an expression of the will of people of the region who share ethnic relations but are divided by colonially drawn boundaries. The reversal of this regime and the humongous exercise of fencing a border situated in rugged mountains and forests is a case of misplaced priorities and needs reconsideration.

Ties across the sea

Tolerance and pluralism are values that India shares with the UAE

At first glance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's UAE visit last week, might have seemed like any other bilateral visit he has undertaken. But this visit, Mr. Modi's seventh to the UAE since 2014 indicates the government's desire to signal more about the salience and prominence of the Emirates, than it has with any of the other country in the Gulf region. The timing may have been related to an invitation to address the 'World Government Summit' in Dubai and to inaugurate Abu Dhabi's first Hindu temple, but the 10 bilateral agreements signed need a closer look. The speed with which India and the UAE concluded the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2022 has been matched by last week's Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT). This makes the UAE not only the first country the Modi government has signed these agreements with but also the only country that India has both a trade and an investment agreement with. The UAE is now India's third largest trading partner, India's second largest export destination, and fourth largest source of FDI. The inauguration of the Bharat Mart for Indian MSMEs is also expected to strengthen trade ties. A second raft of agreements dealt with technological ties including building digital infrastructure; R&D for energy security and trade focusing on green hydrogen and energy storage, and digital cross-payments. Third, the Agreement for an Intergovernmental Framework on the India-Middle East Economic Corridor paves the way for multilateral cooperation between the two countries, that also coordinate over the I2U2 initiative with the U.S. and Israel, and, from 2024, will cooperate within the BRICS framework, as the UAE is now a member. Finally, the discussions on the Israel-Gaza operations and the Red Sea attacks, indicate that in a region roiled by conflict, India considers the UAE to be a stable interlocutor.

India-UAE ties are also built on a bedrock of history and cultural engagement that includes centuries-old maritime trade and a diaspora contributing about 18% of India's global remittances. While India's technological prowess and the UAE's positioning as a trade and industry hub bring complementarities, the changes in their polity and societies bring possible friction points. As the UAE, a theocratic monarchy, seeks to democratise its governance and have a more pluralistic system, such as the decision on the temple in Abu Dhabi, it has expressed concern over the rise of majoritarian and sectarian forces in India. To that end, Mr. Modi's words in Abu Dhabi, where he rejoiced in the mutual values of tolerance and pluralism, and "shared heritage of humanity" may be the most significant bonds between the two countries separated by the Arabian Sea.

A ruling that gives primary school teaching a new slate

In August 2023, the Supreme Court of India upheld the decision of the Rajasthan High Court in ruling that the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree cannot be considered appropriate for primary school teaching – the relevant degree for this level of school is the Diploma in Education (DEd) or Diploma in Elementary Education (DElEd) or Bachelor of Elementary Education (BElEd). Effectively, this nullified an earlier notification by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) that the BEd degree can be accepted. This may seem like a minor point with regards to a profession that is widely believed to not be very aspirational. But this is a decision that has wide implications for recruitment and policy – and rightly so.

Primary teaching has different requirements
Teaching young students in primary grades is quite different in its requirements when compared to being a subject teacher for middle and high school. Understanding Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), and being able to design and involve all students in a manner that ensures that they grasp these basic and foundational competencies is a very non-trivial task. Almost all of us have forgotten how we learned to read or manipulate the number system. Hence, teaching these competencies has to be learnt by prospective primary schoolteachers, through specialised teacher education for this stage, i.e., the DEd, or DElEd or BElEd. It cannot be reconstructed through autobiographical memory; love for children and good communication skills are not enough, and by no means does the BEd degree, with its focus on teaching subjects to students in middle school upwards, prepare teachers for this. The Right to Education Act 2009, therefore, not only lay emphasis on the need for professional qualification but also the appropriate qualification to teach. Yet, 15 years later, we find that graduates with BEd qualification continue to be employed for this stage of school.

The overall extent of professionally qualified teachers in the system looks good. The State of Teachers, Teaching and Teacher Education Report 2023 (SoTTTER-23) shows that 90% of teachers have some form of professional qualification. Of the 10% who do not have professional qualifications, 61% are in the private sector; 61% of this group are in rural areas. However, it is a different picture when it pertains to the issue of appropriate qualification. Overall, only 46% of teachers teaching primary grades have the DElEd (and equivalent) qualification; 30% of teachers in this stage have the BEd

Padma M. Sarangapani
is with the Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

Iyoti Bawane
is with the Indian Institute of Education, Pune

Kamlesh Goyal
is with the Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

Mythili Ramchand
is with the Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

It sets the stage for ensuring suitably qualified teachers as the B.Ed degree does not serve all school stages

degree, and 10% have no professional qualifications. The proportion of DElEd qualified teachers in the government and aided sectors is between 60%-68%, as government recruitment norms, by and large, have regulated recruitment.

However, in the primary school level of the private unaided sector, 22% have the DElEd or equivalent; 43% of primary schoolteachers in private schools have BEd degrees, and another 17% do not have any professional qualification. In the relatively elite English medium schools run by government societies, which include the Kendriya Vidyalayas, the Army, Sainik, and Railway schools, the proportion of DElEd or equivalent holders at the primary school level is only 24%, with about 56% being BEd degree holders.

Following the Supreme Court ruling, these anomalies that have crept into the system will have to be set right. First, greater attention will need to be paid to increasing the supply of good quality DEd/DElEd/BElEd programmes in the country. Analysis of Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) data from one State shows that quality in this sector is only from the government-funded institutions (District Institutes of Education and Training, or DIETs, and aided colleges), while the self-financed sector is doing very poorly: 59% of students from DIETs qualified with a mean score of 86/150 in comparison with only 31% of students from the self-financed sector qualified with a mean score of 77/150.

In all DIETs, at least 50% of their students succeeded in qualifying. Only 7% of the self-financed sector were able to ensure that at least 50% of their students qualified. This suggests that better students seem to prefer government-funded institutions and that these institutions are probably functioning more effectively, more regularly and with less corruption.

However, there are concerns for the sector as a whole: only 14% of qualifying candidates had a mean score of 60% or above. The low mean scores in mathematics, at 46%, are cause for concern. There will have to be more attention in ensuring higher quality and pedagogical content knowledge of candidates. The Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) may also need to have section-wise qualifying cut-off marks included in addition to an overall qualification cut-off mark, to ensure that primary schoolteacher competence in mathematics.

Need for government support
There is an urgent need to strengthen government support and innovation in this sector. Programmes such as BElEd offered by the

Delhi University have demonstrated successful curriculum to strengthen knowledge, understanding and practice for this level/stage, long neglected in the university space. The recently announced Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) holds out the possibility of extending the successful model of bringing primary schoolteacher preparation into the university/Higher Education space. It is, therefore, disappointing that the bulk of the new ITEP programmes approved in 2023 are for BEd (about 3,400 seats), with only about 10% for the preparatory and foundational stage.

Survey's findings

Additionally, there is value in crafting innovative programmes which can provide pathways for BEd holders to receive professional development and gain credible certification for primary school teaching, without having to re-enrol for the entire degree/diploma programme. The SoTTTER 2023 survey finds that 4% of students enrolled in DElEd already have a BEd. Most developed countries offer multiple pathways into the teaching profession, recognising that the decision to become a teacher can also occur at different stages and the value of having teachers with different life experiences in the system. The two-year BEd is appealing for mature and older students who are looking to change careers.

The SoTTTER survey shows about 22% of BEd students (and 26% women students) are married. Offering the two-year BEd with specialisation for the preparatory/primary level could also be an option to consider, rather than requiring these students to join under graduate programmes.

The Union Budget 2023 announcement included commitment to continue the Scheme of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers & Teaching (launched in 2014) to strengthen teacher education in the country. The scheme was finally unveiled on September 5, but, disappointingly, had a focus only on faculty development in higher education, neglecting schoolteacher preparation and innovation in the university space.

A recent Ministry of Education initiative to strengthen DIETs is welcome. With a full Budget expected in a few months' time, one hopes that the government will respond in a comprehensive way to these issues, and provide allocation to strengthen primary/preparatory stage teacher education through greater government support and incentives for innovation in this sector.

The writers are the lead authors of The Right Teacher for Every Child. State of Teachers, Teaching and Teacher Education Report for India, 2023

Recalibrating merit in the age of Artificial Intelligence

The concept of meritocracy, wherein individuals are rewarded and advance based on their abilities, achievements and hard work, rather than their social status or background, has been extensively debated. Proponents and critics of meritocracy offer compelling arguments about its impacts on society, highlighting its virtues and shortcomings. The evolution of meritocracy has witnessed significant transformations, influenced by the critiques and analyses of thinkers such as Michael Young, Michael Sandel, and Adrian Wooldridge.

Varied views
Young, a British sociologist, foresaw a dystopian meritocratic world in his satirical book, *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1958). He envisioned a future, specifically 2034, as a society where social class and mobility were determined solely by intelligence and effort, as measured through standardised testing and educational achievement. It was a critique of the then-emerging trend towards a merit-based system, which he feared would lead to a new form of social stratification.

Sandel's critique focuses on the divisive consequences, arguing that meritocracy fosters a sense of entitlement among the successful and resentment among those left behind, thereby eroding social cohesion. Critical theorists, including those from the Frankfurt School, also argue on similar lines by critiquing meritocracy for masking deeper power dynamics and inequalities. They say that meritocracy can perpetuate social hierarchies by legitimising the status of the elite under the guise of fairness and neutrality.

Post-structuralists challenge the notion of merit, questioning who defines merit and how it is measured. They argue that concepts of merit are socially constructed and reflect the biases and interests of those in power. Post-structuralism highlights the fluidity and contingency of merit, suggesting that meritocratic systems are inherently subjective and can reinforce existing inequalities.

In contrast to Young's dystopian vision of meritocracy leading to a rigid class system and



Aditya Sinha
is Officer on Special Duty, Research, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister

There needs to be a sophisticated understanding of the interplay between technology and societal structures

Sandel's emphasis on its moral and social repercussions, Wooldridge lays stress on the practical evolution of meritocracy and its potential for reform. In his book, *The Aristocracy of Talent*, he explores how meritocracy, initially a force for progress and social mobility, has inadvertently fostered new inequalities by becoming somewhat hereditary, with privileges being passed down generations. Despite recognising the potential for meritocracy to create a new elite, Wooldridge believes in its intuitive fairness and proposes reforms that include making selective schools as "escalators into the elite" while improving access for underprivileged students and advocating better technical education.

AI as a disruptive factor
However, introducing Artificial Intelligence (AI) into this equation completely complicates the idea of reforming meritocracy. AI, with its rapidly evolving capabilities, will be reshaping merit and the idea of meritocracy in six ways.

First, by its very nature, AI questions the basis of human merit by introducing a non-human entity capable of performing tasks, making decisions, and even 'creating' at levels that can surpass human abilities. If machines perform the majority of tasks previously deemed as requiring human intelligence and creativity, the traditional metrics of merit become less relevant. OpenAI's Sora is evidence that creativity is not an exclusive human trait any more.

Second, the advent of AI challenges the traditional notion of individual merit by prioritising access to technology. Individuals with access to AI tools gain a significant advantage, not necessarily due to their personal abilities, but because of the enhanced capabilities of these tools.

Third, AI systems trained on historical data can perpetuate and even exacerbate biases present in that data, leading to discriminatory outcomes in areas such as hiring, law enforcement, and lending. These biases can disadvantage groups which are already marginalised.

Fourth, a recent paper published in *Nature*

Medicine showed that an AI tool can predict pancreatic cancer in a patient three years before radiologists can make the diagnosis. Capabilities such as this can lead to the displacement of jobs that involve routine, predictable tasks. This also means that AI would impact high-wage jobs.

Regardless of these, AI would push the workforce towards either high-skill, high-wage jobs involving complex problem-solving and creativity or low-skill, low-wage jobs requiring physical presence and personal interaction, which AI cannot replicate yet. This polarisation will exacerbate socioeconomic disparities, as individuals without access to high-level education and training are pushed towards lower-wage roles.

Fifth, the opaque nature of many AI algorithms, coupled with the concentration of power in a few tech giants, poses significant challenges to accountability. In a meritocratic society, individuals must understand the criteria by which their efforts and talents are evaluated. However, the 'black box' nature of many AI systems can obscure these criteria, making it difficult for individuals to know how to advance or challenge decisions made by AI, thus eroding the meritocratic ideal.

Sixth, at the organisational level, the core of AI's power lies in data and algorithms that process this data. Tech giants with access to unprecedented volumes of data have a distinct advantage in training more sophisticated and accurate AI models. This data hegemony means that these entities can set the standards for what constitutes 'merit' in the digital age, potentially sidelining smaller players who may have innovative ideas but need access to similar datasets.

Thus, recalibrating meritocracy in the face of AI advancements demands a sophisticated understanding of the interplay between technology and societal structures. It calls for a deliberate rethinking of how merit is defined and rewarded when AI tools can both augment human capabilities and deepen existing inequalities.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A party in crisis

Expectedly, the internal frictions in the Congress party have metamorphosed into widening cracks, with the possibility of a steady stream of exits with each passing day ("Amid buzz, M.P. Cong. leaders recall Nath's ties with Gandhi kin", February 18). More than ideological considerations,

it is clear that personal interests count more for the Congress's stalwarts in cosying up to the BJP. The oft-repeated assertions by the Prime Minister that the NDA will be reaching the 400-plus mark in the parliamentary elections, apart from a slew of political inducements offered by the ruling party

should have been the main inducement. The much touted INDIA bloc has considerably shrunk in size and image. With many free floaters waiting in the wings, the distraught Congress party needs to brace itself to face a huge crisis.

V. Johan Dhanakumar,
Chennai

Deadly conflict

Rising human-elephant conflicts, especially in Kerala, can be traced to a multitude of factors that include agricultural expansion, industrial intrusion, mining, infrastructural activities, 'colonisation' of vital elephant corridors by resorts/hotels, plantations,

deforestation, and even climate change. There have to be sustainable development activities, ensuring that wildlife corridors are safe from intrusion. There has to be afforestation and also the vital step of setting up a special task force that has local people, eco-activists and the Forest Department

on its advisory panel.

R. Srivatsan,
Chennai

Mission accomplished
In ISRO's launch of its weather satellite, the words of its chairman S. Somanath at *The Hindu's* Liftest came alive: "It is all team work." V. Subramaniam, Chennai

In Gaza, peace prospects remain distant

As the conflict in Gaza neared its fifth month, the wanton death and destruction wreaked upon its Palestinian residents spurred major peace initiatives that brought together intelligence officials from the U.S. and Israel engaging with counterparts from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, and the Prime Minister of Qatar. To push the process forward, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken also embarked on his fifth visit to the region mainly to convey to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the need to accept a ceasefire and allow increased humanitarian assistance to reach the beleaguered people in Gaza.

Peace negotiations

A peace plan emerged in Paris at the end of January following talks among the intelligence chiefs and the Qatari Prime Minister. It called for a two-month cease fire when the remaining hostages held by Hamas would be released in return for a several Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody. Hamas fine-tuned this proposal by calling for a 135-day truce when the release of hostages would take place in three stages, along with an increased flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza. This would be followed by a full cease fire and the withdrawal of all Israeli troops from Gaza.

Mr. Blinken carried this proposal to Mr. Netanyahu on February 7. Within a day, Mr. Netanyahu rejected it, terming the terms set by Hamas "delusional". Mr. Blinken later said he had told Mr. Netanyahu that "the daily toll...on innocent civilians remains too high" and had insisted that delivery of life-saving assistance should not be blocked. President Joe Biden said from Washington that Israel's military campaign had been "over the top" and called for a sovereign Palestinian state.

Mr. Netanyahu paid no heed to U.S. advice: he insisted that his war aim remained "total victory" – the total destruction of Hamas and the re-occupation of Gaza by Israeli armed forces till all hostile

**Talmiz Ahmad**

is a former diplomat

elements had been flushed out. He assured his American interlocutors that "we are nearly there with total victory".

However, it appears that the peace negotiators have still not given up: as Mr. Blinken left for home, he said the Hamas proposal "creates space" for an agreement to be reached, even as a Hamas team reached Cairo a day after Mr. Blinken's departure to discuss arrangements relating to prisoner exchanges and movement of humanitarian assistance. These expectations are perhaps unrealistic: on February 12, Israeli special forces rescued two hostages in Gaza, convincing Mr. Netanyahu that the remaining hostages could be freed through military force.

Mr. Netanyahu is regarded as Israel's most wily, self-centred and ruthless politician, with the capacity to turn even the most adverse circumstances to his advantage. In December 2022, he formed a government with hard right-wing elements. He included in his cabinet Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir who represent groups that exhibit the most visceral animosity for Arabs and reject any possibility of compromise with the Palestinians. Given his dependence on right-wing support, Mr. Netanyahu has consistently rejected the 'two-state solution' and called for a sovereign Palestinian state in the occupied territories.

The Gaza war is perhaps Mr. Netanyahu's greatest challenge in his long career. He is viewed by most Israelis as responsible for the failures that facilitated Hamas' brutal attacks on October 7 last year. While the hard right in his Cabinet rejects any accommodation with Hamas, his war cabinet includes opposition moderates such as former army chiefs Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot who have gained considerable political standing during the ongoing conflict. More seriously for Mr. Netanyahu, if his government were to fall, he faces the prospect of immediate arrest

As Biden and Netanyahu struggle for their survival on the chess board of domestic politics, scores of Palestinians are dying daily under the lethal barrage of Israeli firepower

and court proceedings for corruption and abuse of office.

Thus, his hardline posture in response to peace initiatives is possibly influenced by concerns relating to his personal rather than national interests. A major source of his complacency is his shrewd assessment of the limits of the pressure that the U.S. can bring to bear upon him. In the forthcoming presidential elections, Mr. Biden faces a formidable challenge from the resurgent Donald Trump. Again, given the total backing for Israel that animates most Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate, Mr. Biden has no capacity to make unacceptable demands of the Israeli Prime Minister. Hence, Mr. Netanyahu has dismally shrugged off all the advice addressed to him by the U.S. President and his Secretary of State. Israeli reports suggest that Mr. Netanyahu would like to prolong the Gaza conflict until Mr. Trump, his friend and benefactor, is elected to the White House.

The Saudi Arabia card

The one card that the U.S. is hoping to use to push Mr. Netanyahu towards a cease fire is the prospect of normalisation of ties with Saudi Arabia once a sovereign Palestinian state is conceded. But Mr. Netanyahu believes he can get around this with a United Nations Security Council resolution recognising a Palestinian state; this would trigger normalisation of ties with Saudi Arabia without Israel having to actually give formal shape to the resolution. This may be misplaced optimism: the kingdom has recently reiterated that normalisation of ties with Israel would follow the setting up of a sovereign Palestinian state along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Meanwhile, as Mr. Biden and Mr. Netanyahu struggle for their survival on the chess board of domestic politics, scores of Palestinians are dying daily under the lethal barrage of Israeli firepower.

Are the BJP and BJD foes or frenemies?

The two parties have shared a strange relationship in Odisha for about 15 years

STATE OF PLAY

Satyasundar Barik
satyasundar.b@thehindu.co.in

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD)'s recent nomination of candidates to the Rajya Sabha would have passed off as a routine affair if not for the fact that the party chose to announce only two names and not the third. This was especially surprising as Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's firm leadership usually leaves no room for interference within the BJD. Speculation was rife that the BJD was awaiting the nod from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The mystery unravelled on February 14 when the BJP's Central leadership announced the name of Union Minister of Railways, Communication, and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav as its Rajya Sabha candidate from Odisha despite the national party not having adequate strength in the State Assembly. The BJD lost no time in issuing a brief statement extending support to him. This episode exhibits the complex relationship of more than a decade between the BJD and the BJP, who were once coalition partners, in Odisha.

While the BJP is trying to displace the BJD, which has held power for over two decades in the eastern State, the regional party is deploying every trick in its playbook to resist the BJP's advances. Yet, on critical Bills in Parliament, constitutional positions, and contentious national issues, the BJP appears to always bank on the BJD's support.

Mr. Naveen Patnaik formed the BJD in 1997 soon after the death of his father, Biju Patnaik. The BJD emerged as a regional force opposed to the Congress. In 1998, Mr. Naveen



Patnaik became a Cabinet Minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpeyi government. The BJP and the BJD were allies till the anti-Christian riots broke out in Kandhamal district in 2008. The next year, the BJD broke ties with the BJP and fought the national and State elections on its own.

However, Mr. Vaishnav's nomination has brought the State BJP's initiative back to square one. It is alleged that the Central BJP's priorities differ from those of the State unit. The Congress has demanded to know why the BJP singles out Mr. Pandian while it has no problem with Mr. Vaishnav. "Both are former bureaucrats and have served the State. Both belong to other States and have held important positions in government. The people are no fools. The nomination has confirmed that the BJP is not waging a serious fight against the BJD. It is involved in shadow boxing," said a senior Congress leader.

When Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in 2014, the equation between the two parties began to change. The BJP grew on its own and displaced the Congress as the principal opposition party in the State in the 2017 panchayat polls. In most of the elections that followed, the BJD and the BJP were in a direct contest, while the Congress occupied a distant third position, except in some regions in southern Odisha.

However, according to Sandip Sahu, a political commentator, realisation grew in the BJP camp that the BJD could not be dislodged for as long as it was helmed by Mr. Naveen Patnaik. "The party decided, if you cannot beat them, join them. That's how this undeclared understanding came into force. It has worked well for

both the parties as they have managed to keep the Congress at bay," he said.

Now, in the run up to the 2024 general and State elections, the State BJP leadership sees an opportunity to make a serious dent in the BJD's citadel by taking advantage of the reported fatigue with the two decade-long regime. It has built a public perception against the domination of V.K. Pandian, a close aide of the Odisha Chief Minister, in the BJD and government. It has succeeded to an extent in triggering debates among the public about power being flexed by a "non-Odia".

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The enormity of the Indian electorate and its State-wise variances

The prospect of delimitation based on electorate variances in States will have to grapple with federal questions

DATA POINT

**Vignesh Radhakrishnan,
Rebecca Rose Varghese
& Srinivasan Ramani**

With 97 crore voters eligible to register their mandate in the general elections later this year, India will yet again go through a process confirming its status as the world's largest electoral democracy. The electorate will register a 6% rise this year in comparison to the number of eligible voters in 2019.

India's 28 States and eight Union Territories are home to a large number of voters comparable to some of the world's biggest nations. **Map 1** shows the countries whose electorate numbers come close to those of the States in India, with the name of the country printed over the respective State.

For example, the electorate size of Uttar Pradesh (14.6 crore) is comparable to that of the world's seventh most populous country – Brazil. Maharashtra's and Bihar's electorates match those of Mexico and the Philippines, respectively. Even Goa's electorate size compares well with that of Bahrain and Cyprus.

There is also significant variance State-wise in the number of electors that the winning Member of Parliament represented in the Lok Sabha from 2019 to 2024. While an elected MP from Delhi, on average, represented 20.5 lakh voters, an MP from Uttar Pradesh represented 18.3 lakh voters, from Andhra Pradesh 15.8 lakh voters, and Tamil Nadu 15.4 lakh voters, the corresponding numbers for Kerala and Tripura were 13.1 lakh each. **Map 2** shows the State-wise average number of voters for each MP.

This is why experts have cautioned against a delimitation exercise that could result in a skewed federal representation hurting the numbers for States that have done the most to address the issue of population explosion. Various ideas ranging from continuing the freeze in delimitation to retaining the size of the Lok Sabha and its representation as it is nationally while increasing the size of the State Assemblies in respective States have been espoused.

galore North (28.5 lakh) had the highest number of electors.

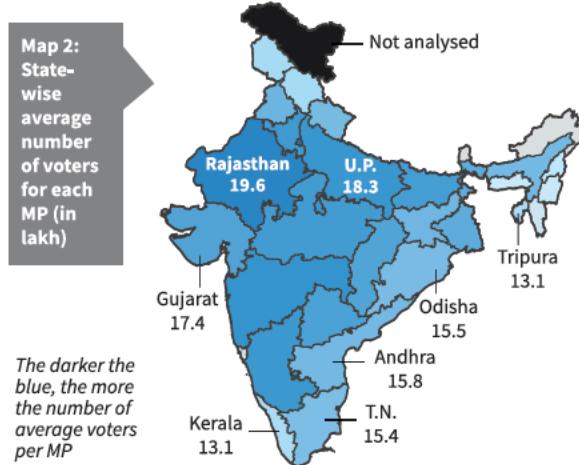
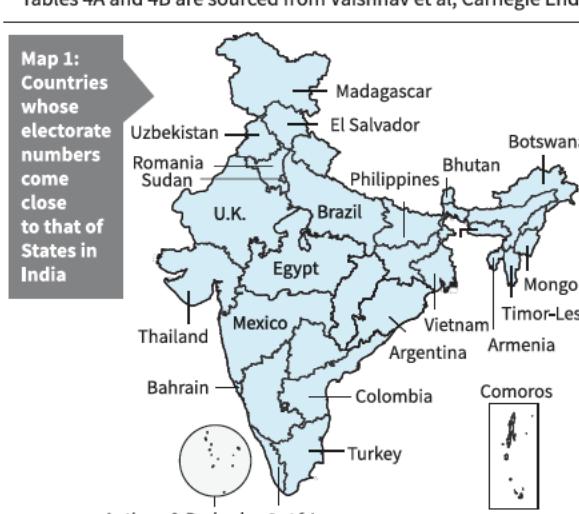
The variance across States in the number of electors that each elected MP represents is also a consequence of the frozen delimitation exercise, last conducted after the 1971 Census, that has not updated the numbers corresponding to the one-person-one-vote principle. This was done to encourage States which controlled the population effectively. But the idea of delimitation in its present form is fraught with consequences. It could affect States that have worked hard to limit their birth and death rates, and who could see their total number of MPs being reduced if the Lok Sabha size is retained in a prospective delimitation exercise or a modest rise in an expanded House compared to some of the most populous States which have not addressed the birth and death rates to the same extent.

A recent paper (Vaishnav et al, Carnegie Endowment) pointed to the fact that U.P. and Bihar might gain 11 and 10 seats each if the size of the Lok Sabha is retained as it is, while Tamil Nadu and Kerala will experience a net decrease of eight seats each (**Table 4A**). On the other hand, if the Lok Sabha size is increased to 848 based on the projected population in 2026, the increase in the number of MPs for U.P. and Bihar will be 63 and 39 each, in comparison to 10 and zero for Tamil Nadu and Kerala (**Table 4B**).

This is why experts have cautioned against a delimitation exercise that could result in a skewed federal representation hurting the numbers for States that have done the most to address the issue of population explosion. Various ideas ranging from continuing the freeze in delimitation to retaining the size of the Lok Sabha and its representation as it is nationally while increasing the size of the State Assemblies in respective States have been espoused.

One election, many issues

The maps and tables are based on data collated from the Election Commission of India and Ashoka University's Lok Dhara. Tables 4A and 4B are sourced from Vaishnav et al, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace



State	Seat	Highest electors per seat		Lowest electors per seat		
		Voters (lakh)	Autonomous	State	Seat	Voters (lakh)
Telangana	Malkajgiri	31.5		Assam		8.0
Karnataka	Bangalore North	28.5		Assam	Silchar	12.0
U.P.	Ghaziabad	27.3		Jharkhand	Khunti	12.0
Karnataka	Bangalore Rural	25.0		Kerala	Idukki	12.0
Telangana	Chevella	24.4		Kerala	Kottayam	12.1



Table 4A: If the number of seats is retained at 543 and reapportioned among States based on the projected population in 2026

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

Table 4B: If the number of seats is increased to 848 based on the projected population in 2026

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

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu</

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

People detained in Russia for mourning Navalny's death

400 As per the OVD-Info rights group, more than 200 arrests were made in St. Petersburg. The news of Alexei Navalny's death came a month before presidential elections in Russia. AP

The worth of equities offloaded by Foreign Portfolio Investors

3,776 in ₹ crore. Foreign investors adopted a cautious approach to offloading Indian equities so far this month owing to a spike in the U.S. bond yields. PTI

Jaiswal is third Indian to hit a consecutive double ton

3 After Vinod Kambli and Virat Kohli, Yashasvi Jaiswal is the third to hit double hundreds in two consecutive Tests. Jaiswal also hit 12 sixes in the second innings of the third Test, the most by an Indian in a Test innings. PTI

The rise in tourist arrivals to Himachal Pradesh in 2023

6 In percentage. Tourist arrivals in Himachal Pradesh increased from 1.51 crore in 2022 to 1.60 crore last year, despite the disruptions caused by heavy rainfall, floods and landslides in mid-2023. PTI

European Union set to fine Apple for alleged breaches

500 in million euros. The EU is set to fine Apple over alleged breaches of the EU competition law, the Financial Times reported on Sunday. REUTERS
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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What are IPCC's assessment reports?

What do these reports by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change aim to do? When will the seventh assessment report (AR7) be published? Will it be ready by 2028? What are the topics that will be covered in AR7? What is meant by a global stocktake?

EXPLAINER

Indu K. Murthy

The story so far:

Since 1988, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has produced six assessment reports, three special reports, and methodology reports that provide guidelines for estimating greenhouse gas emissions and removal. Three reports from the IPCC's sixth assessment cycle (AR6) were published in 2021-2022. These documents – prepared by scientists from the 195 countries that are part of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) – examine the science, consequences, adaptation, and vulnerability as well as the mitigation aspects of climate change. Over the years, these reports have substantiated the fact that the planet is warming and that humans bear primary responsibility.

What did the recent report say?

The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) warned that the time to limit the rise of the world's average surface temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius from the pre-industrial era – as agreed in the Paris Agreement – is running out and that we are close to breaching adaptation limits. It also suggested some options and strategies to slow warming, and to adapt and build resilience in natural systems, in human-made systems, and in communities.

After the AR6 synthesis report, the IPCC initiated its seventh cycle (AR7) by electing an IPCC bureau. In January 2024, bureau members met for the first time in Turkey to discuss budgeting issues, timelines for the various reports, and the work programme. Before this meeting, the co-chairs and rapporteurs of the Informal Group on Lessons Learned had produced a paper consolidating the learnings from the AR6 cycle and submissions from 66 of the 195 member



Need for immediate action: Greenpeace activists display a banner prior to a press conference of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) in Incheon in 2018. AFP

countries regarding the types of reports, the need for special reports, and the value of 'full assessment reports'. The paper also emphasised a recommendation by member countries to "ensure adequate input from the IPCC is available for the second global stocktake to be concluded in 2028".

This paper, along with a report entitled 'Options for the Programme of Work in the Seventh Assessment Cycle' – which discussed options for publication, including ways in which the reports could be clustered for production of any special or additional reports, and their pros and cons – fed into the discussions in Turkey.

What is meant by 'global stocktake'? To assess the world's progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement, UNFCCC countries conduct a 'global stocktake'

(GST) every five years. The GST is a mechanism to measure collective progress, identify gaps, and chart a better course of climate action.

The first GST started in 2022 and ended at the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the UNFCCC in 2023. The first GST text, to which member countries agreed to at the COP28 in Dubai last year, requested the IPCC to consider ways in which its work can be aligned with subsequent stocktakes. The second GST is due in 2028; and member countries have requested the IPCC to publish its AR7 assessment reports before so that countries could measure their progress against the state of the planet.

What will the AR7 cycle produce? In Turkey, the Bureau agreed to produce

the full assessment and synthesis reports, the methodology reports, and a special report. The full assessment reports will include reports from three Working Groups (as in the previous assessment cycles) plus a synthesis report. This decision considered the time available for significant new literature to be published, time required to run climate models, time to engage with under-represented communities, and the stress imposed on the IPCC technical support unit and the authors. The two methodology reports will be on short-lived climate forcers (like methane) and on carbon removal. The bureau also decided to revise the technical guidelines on impacts and adaptation. While countries suggested producing special reports spanning 28 topics, the bureau decided it will produce only one, on climate change and cities.

What is the timeline for reports? Several member countries also asked the bureau to ready the assessment reports by 2028 to coincide with the GST. But the bureau couldn't reach a consensus on the release date, partly due to its experience with authors and countries over the time required to review, finalise, and publish the approved texts. Each assessment report in the past has required at least four years from start to finish.

Countries also said a shortened cycle could compromise the content as not enough new research papers may be published in the window and modelling efforts to understand the changes in climate to the full extent may also remain incomplete. Many member countries also said a constrained timeline would complicate engagements with individuals and institutions in under-represented countries. A decision on the timeline with respect to the assessment reports is pending and will be taken at the 61st session of the IPCC. However, the special and methodology reports will be published in 2027.

Indu K. Murthy is a Principal Research Scientist heading the Climate, Environment and Sustainability Sector at CSTEP.

THE GIST

▼ Three reports from the IPCC's sixth assessment cycle (AR6) were published in 2021-2022. These documents examine the consequences, adaptation, and vulnerability as well as the mitigation aspects of climate change.

▼ The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) warned that the time to limit the rise of the world's average surface temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius from the pre-industrial era – as agreed in the Paris Agreement – is running out and that we are close to breaching adaptation limits.

▼ To assess the world's progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement, UNFCCC countries conduct a 'global stocktake' (GST) every five years.

Why have fresh protests erupted in Senegal?

Why were opposition leaders dragged out of the National Assembly by riot police? Is Senegal's legacy as the only coup-free West African nation hanging by a thread?

Garimella Subramanian

The story so far:

In February 3, weeks before the end of his second and final term, Senegal's President Macky Sall postponed Presidential elections due on February 25. Opposition legislators, who were dragged out of parliament by riot police, were furious that the vote was deferred on grounds of a dispute between the National Assembly (parliament) and the Constitutional Council over the manner of selection of candidates. The house thus packed with government lawmakers has effectively allowed Mr. Sall 10 more months in office by resetting the next election for December 15. Protests have emerged across the country, with the police cracking down on protesters through indiscriminate detentions and violence leading to the death of one of them. The unprecedented decision in Dakar has been decried as a

Constitutional coup d'état by the government's critics.

What is the background to the current crisis?

The current unrest is a repeat of the bloody violence witnessed on the streets of Dakar last year, the worst in decades, when more than 20 lives were lost and hundreds were injured, according to Amnesty International. The clashes followed a two-year prison sentence slapped on the leading opposition candidate Ousmane Sonko, a former populist tax inspector who targeted the country's elites for corruption and resisted the influence of the former colonial power France. Mr. Sonko, leader of the banned African Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics and Fraternity was convicted in a trial for immoral behaviour against a woman. In the protests that erupted in 2021, security forces reportedly shot dead 12 persons. In January this year, the Constitutional

Council barred Mr. Sonko from the Presidential race.

President Sall took office in 2012 riding a wave of popular resistance against his predecessor seeking a third term. Yet he asserted last March that he was legally permitted to run for a third term. Mr. Sall's reasoning was that since the Presidential tenure was reduced from seven to five years during his first term, the new constitutional clock should be assumed as ticking from 2019, when he was re-elected under the new rule, thus entitling him to run for another term this year. The decision to delay polls has sparked speculation over Mr. Sall's machinations to consolidate his position between now and the elections.

What has been Senegal's recent democratic record?

Mr. Sall's retrograde decision to defer elections marks a break with the country's periodic and smooth transfer of power witnessed for decades under a

multi-party democratic system. Unlike all of its neighbours, Senegal has never undergone a military coup or a civil war since it gained independence from France in 1960. This is a country viewed as a beacon of democracy in a region increasingly under the grip of military takeovers.

Moreover, President Sall has been instrumental in pushing military dictators in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to facilitate a timely transfer of power to elected governments. In early 2017, Senegalese troops successfully led a regional mission to force out long-time leader Yahya Jammeh in the Gambia, when he refused to step down after losing elections.

Dakar has evidently abandoned this important regional role at a juncture when a number of west African states have recently descended into military dictatorships. The situation in Senegal raises the awful spectre of misrule, as in Guinea, where President Alpha Condé's controversial re-election for a third term in 2020 ended up in a coup the following year. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are already under military rule.

The return of military dictatorships in African countries has been a recurrent theme in the 2020s and a serious regression after the heroic liberation struggles they waged in the 1960s. The big powers must reconsider their traditional role in the region as a whole.

The writer is Director, Strategic Initiatives, AgnoShin Technologies.

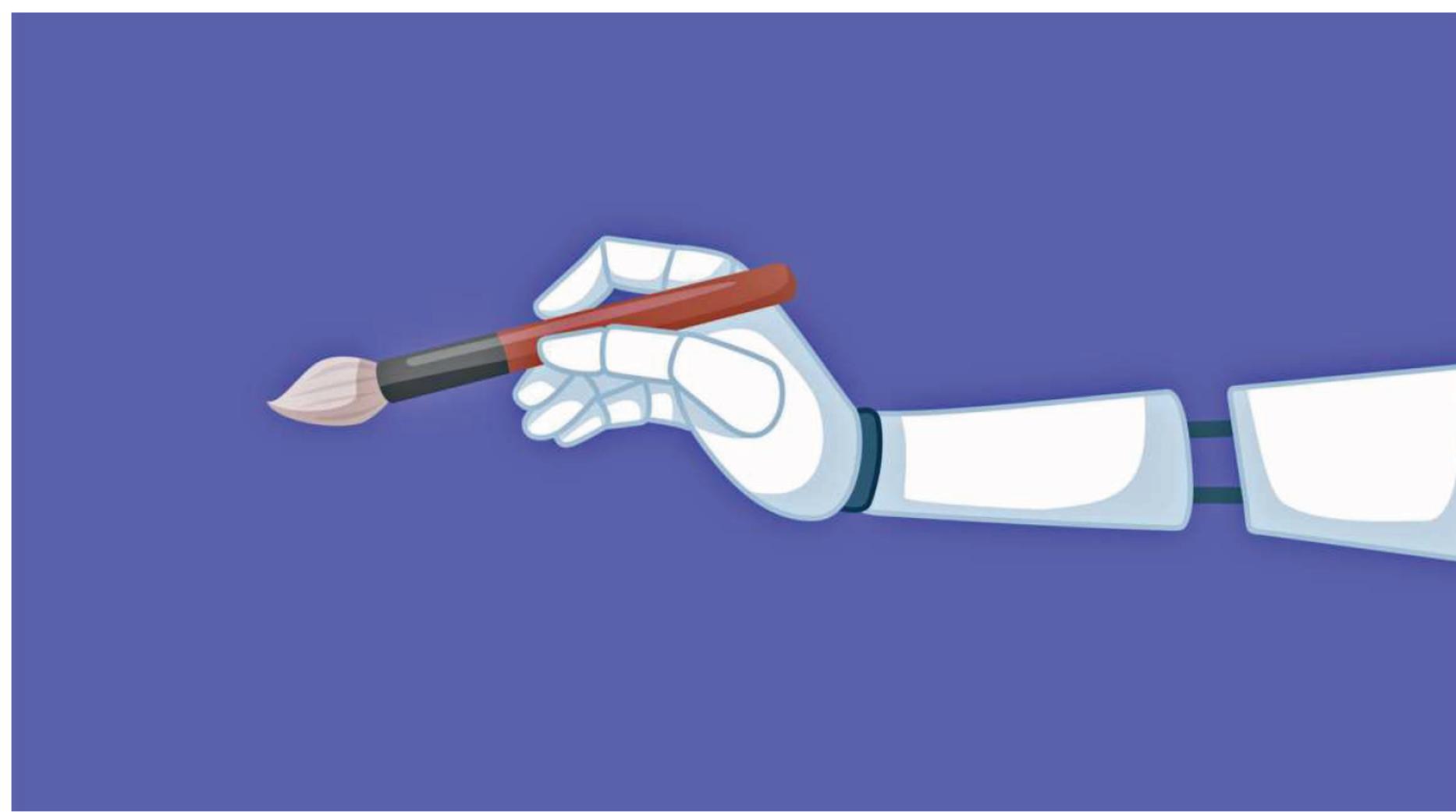
THE GIST

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CACHE



ISTOCKPHOTO

Why OpenAI's new video generator, Sora, is making a splash

Sora in Japanese means sky, an imagery that evokes 'limitless creative potential'. The video clips produced by the AI-based image generator are so photorealistic that they will stun anyone who looks at them for the first time

**John Xavier
Poulomi Chatterjee**

OpennAI is in the spotlight again. This time, for building an artificial intelligence (AI) model that can create near flawless one-minute-long videos based on text prompt. The video creation AI model, called Sora, is trained on videos and images of various durations, resolutions, and aspect ratios to generate crisp, clear, and photorealistic output.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman announced the AI model on Thursday through X (formerly Twitter), asking people to send prompt suggestions so he could make the tool churn out videos. Shortly thereafter, he showcased the tool's prowess with videos of two dogs podcasting on top of a mountain, woolly mammoths roaming on snow-capped mountains, and a bustling night in Tokyo. The videos were high-definition and looked cinematic at first glance. While generating videos from texts aren't new, Sora's achievement dwarfs Meta's Make-a-Video and Google's recently announced Lumière text-to-video tools. Unlike the output from Meta's, Google's, or other earlier AI video tools, Sora provides studio-grade final product.

What is Sora and what can it do?
Sora in Japanese means sky, an imagery that evokes 'limitless creative potential', per the company's engineering team. This new diffusion-based AI model is built on the foundation of transformer architecture, similar to large language models like ChatGPT. It can create images and videos with near-accuracy on a given subject. It can construct a video from an image and also fill gaps in existing video clips.

Diffusion models are used to generate high-quality images and videos. They are named after the physical diffusion process in which molecules move from high-concentration to low-concentration zones. In machine learning, these models generate new data by reversing the diffusion process. The simple idea here is to add noise to data and then reverse the visual data back to its original state by filtering out the noise.

According to OpenAI, Sora works by "turning videos into patches by first compressing videos into a lower-dimensional latent space, and subsequently decomposing the representation into spacetime patches." Patches is to Sora what tokens is to ChatGPT. Tokens unify diverse modalities of text like code, data, and natural languages. In a similar way, patches unify videos by compressing them – a form of tokenisation for visual data. When a user sends prompts to Sora, it creates a video by stitching together compressed patches of visual data.

How good is Sora's output?
The video clips generated by Sora are so photorealistic that they will stun anyone who looks at them for the first time. It is a top-class AI-based image generator. But a closer look reveals there is work to be done in object tracking.

While OpenAI claims Sora can handle occlusion, a term in computer vision for objects disappearing when two or more of them come too close to each other, the text-to-video model does suffer from this limitation to an extent. For instance, in one of the clips shared by the Microsoft-backed company, people in the background disappear when the focus moves past a couple walking. In another

video, when a half-filled glass breaks on a table, the contents of the glass are spilt on the table before the glass is broken. In one clip, which shows four men walking near a chair, one person goes missing when the camera pans out. It was also easy to spot a person with a missing arm in a clip, and a cat with two left paws in another. Such mishaps show that the AI model needs to understand space and time better.

It must be noted that Sora is not available to the public yet. The videos were handpicked by OpenAI so they may not be indicative of the tool's average output. OpenAI plans to start sharing the model with third-party testers to receive feedback to improve the model.

Some experts are of the view that more systemic glitches will surface as more people gain access to the tool.

Can occlusion be remedied?
While AI researchers are looking to solve the object tracking problem, some AI experts predict it will be hard to set it right. They note that the fault does not stem from data, but from how the system builds reality.

"One of the most fascinating things [about] Sora's weird physics glitches is most of these are not things that appear in the data. Rather, these glitches are in some ways akin to LLM 'hallucinations', artefacts from decompression and lossy compression," AI expert Gary Marcus said in a Substack post. That means more data is not going to solve the problem, and generative AI-based models are not going to understand or function as per the physical laws of nature.

What about the training data?
OpenAI's achievement through Sora is monumental and it will disrupt video

creation and gaming industries. But the critical question on most people's minds is on what visual data was Sora trained. Speculation is rife that the video generation tool was trained on data from game engines, movies, documentaries, YouTube videos, and possibly videos scraped from every corner of the web.

The company's monk-like silence on the training data, while blowing the trumpet on the method of training, implies that data underpins Sora's success in making near perfect videos. But this data could possibly include copyrighted work. Unless OpenAI shares this information, it will be hard to know.

The question of whether companies like OpenAI using unauthorised material scraped from the web to train AI violates copyright law is yet to be addressed by the courts. Tech firms claim they are protected by the copyright's fair use doctrine and that lawsuits against them will stifle a growing AI industry.

What about misinformation?
Photorealistic video generation capabilities are worrying considering the burgeoning misuse of generative AI tools to spread misinformation. This is possibly the reason why OpenAI took the red-teaming route ahead of its public launch. Sora already has a filter that will block prompt requests that mention violent, sexual, or hateful language, as well as images of well-known personalities. A second filter will check frames of generated videos and block content that violates the company's safety guidelines. OpenAI has also said Sora uses a fake-image detector developed for DALL-E 3, but given the industriousness of bad actors, none of these steps are watertight.

THE DAILY QUIZ

The 75th edition of the Formula 1 World Championship is set to commence from February 29 in Bahrain. A quiz on the history of the World Championships

Soorya Prakash. N

QUESTION 1
Who holds the record for the most races entered, started and finished in a career?

QUESTION 2
Two drivers won the Driver's championship with six races left in the season. Who are they?

QUESTION 3
Who has won the Driver's championship with four different constructors — the most for any F1 driver so far?

QUESTION 4
Who are the two pairs of father and son to have won the

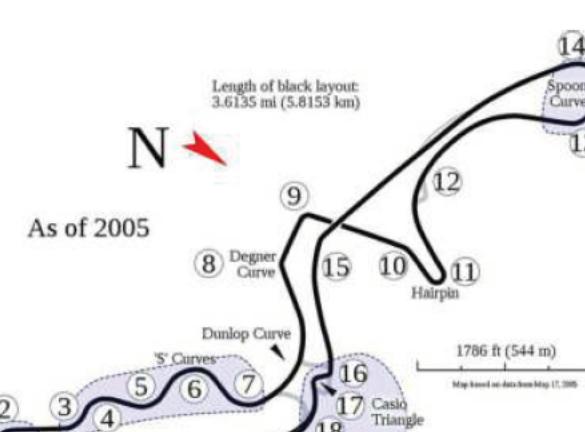
Driver's Championship?

QUESTION 5
Who holds the record for having raced with a single constructor for the most number of races?

QUESTION 6
India hosted the F1 race for three years from 2011 to 2013. In which city and what is the name of the circuit?

QUESTION 7
Which circuit has hosted the F1 race the most number of times?

QUESTION 8
Which new type of format introduced in qualifying races from 2021 determined the pole position for the final race?



Visual question:
Identify this circuit and its uniqueness?

Questions and Answers to the February 16 edition of the daily quiz: 1. This batsman still holds the record for scoring the most runs in his debut Test match. This allergy hindered him from reaching his fullest potential as a Test batsman. Ans: Lawrence Rowe; Allergy to grass

2. This player holds the record for the most runs in the very first innings he batted. Ans: Reginald "Tip" Foster, England

3. Another four debutantes who scored double hundreds in the very first innings they batted. Ans: Jacques Rudolph (222 not out), South Africa; Matthew Sinclair (214), New Zealand; Brendon Kuruppu (201 not out), Sri Lanka; Devon Conway (200), New Zealand

4. Charles Bannerman, the Australian batsman who debuted in the very first Test that was played, set this record. Ans: The highest percentage (67.34%) of the team's runs in a completed innings

5. Narendra Hirwani picked up 16 wickets on debut against the West Indies in Chennai, equalling the record set by this bowler on debut. Ans: Bob Massie from Australia

Visual: Name this cricketer. Ans: Yajurvindra Singh

Early Birds: Guruvayurappan Krishnan| K.N. Viswanathan| Samir Gupta| M. Suresh Kumar



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Be wary of the boss, he has a short fuse

The entire department knew that he was jealous of the new joinee's accomplishments

S. Upendran

"Hey, come on in! Congratulations, by the way! Heard you've entered the third round of the tennis tournament. Who do you play next?"

"It's probably going to be Joseph."

"That's great! You should be able to beat him quite easily."

"I'm not sure about that. Of late, Joseph's had my number."

"Everyone has your number."

"I'm not talking about my phone number. When you say that someone has your number, what you're suggesting is that the individual knows you very well. In this case, what I'm implying is that Joseph knows my game very well."

"Since he knows every aspect of your game, he'll be able to anticipate what you're going to do. He will, therefore, be able to deal with you easily."

"I guess you could say that! If you're going to do business with Roy, take Shalini with you. She won't let him cheat you. She's got his number."

"Everyone says that about Roy! I wouldn't dream of doing business with someone who has such a reputation."

"Good for you!"

"In the early 1980s, the West Indies cricket team had everyone's number. They were simply unbeatable."

"What a fantastic team it was. Here's another example. Most people are scared to talk to Kunthala because of her temper. But Radhika, has her number. She knows what to do when Kunthala gets angry."

"Kunthala gets angry! Really? I wasn't aware that she had a temper."

"Looking at her, you wouldn't think so. But, she has a short fuse."

"Short fuse? What does it mean?"

"Someone who has a short fuse gets angry very quickly. The person has a temper. A really bad one, at that! It's an expression mostly used in informal contexts. For example, all the students knew that the professor had a very short fuse. They were never late for his class."

"My grandmother says she had a short fuse when she was young."

"Your grandmother had a short fuse! That's hard to believe! She's always so calm now."

"Maybe Kunthala will become a calm individual when she grows old."

"Kunthala may have a bad temper, but she's absolutely brilliant. Many people I know are jealous about her achievements."

"Jealous about? You mean 'jealous of', don't you?"

"What's the difference?"

"Native speakers of English generally avoid saying 'jealous about'. You're usually 'jealous of' someone or something. Everyone in class was jealous of Sunita's good looks."

"Two-year-old Arjun was jealous of all the attention that his baby sister was getting."

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Frenetic:

excessively agitated; distraught with fear or other violent emotion

Synonyms:

phrenetic, frantic, frenzied

Usage:

The accident was followed by frenetic screams from the bystanders.

Pronunciation:

bit.ly/freneticpro

International Phonetic Alphabet:

/fren'etik/

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

From Page One**Third term crucial for country, says Modi**

"India's relations with countries across the world have grown, especially with Arab countries, so much so that five Arab countries have conferred their highest civilian honour on me, as a representative of 1.4 billion Indians," he said. Pointing to the invitations for bilateral visits he has received for dates beyond the poll cycle, he said they proved that "duniya main bhi sab jaante hain ki aayega toh Modi hi (everyone in the wider world also knows about the inevitability of Modi's return)".

"We rid the country of mega scams and terror attacks, and made efforts to improve living standards of the poor and the middle class," Mr. Modi said.

Will clarify on Aadhaar as birth date proof: govt.

"The birth date and even the address mentioned in Aadhaar are only a reasonable assessment of the age and location of an individual, based on documents provided at the time of enrolment. But it cannot be construed as foolproof evidence for either of those details... it is up to the concerned entity to decide whether to accept them or seek more documents after assessing the risks involved in their use cases for Aadhaar authentication," the official explained.

Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan said: "I am certain that Central Ministries will work out an appropriate arrangement to see that the public and beneficiaries of various schemes are not adversely affected."

The date of birth can be verified by using documents such as birth certificates or school-leaving certificates, wherever knowing the precise age is critical, be it opening a bank account for a minor or a senior citizen, or transferring pension benefits, he pointed out. Even passport or driving licence can be used to confirm a person's age.

Some entities like the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) have already scrapped Aadhaar's use as birthdate proof, while other departments and user agencies are still evaluating the impact. Central Board of Direct Taxes Chairman Nitin Gupta said Aadhaar is linked to about 59 crore PAN cards and issues arising from the UIDAI diktat would be assessed.

Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra noted that Aadhaar is being used for registrations under the GST regime as well, but the date of birth is not vital in those cases. "For date of birth, generally in government, it is the birth certificate or the Class 10 passing certificate that works," he said.

'BJP dealt a double blow to U.P. youth'

Prayagraj is a major centre in the State for students preparing for government recruitment examinations.

The Congress leader is travelling from Manipur to Mumbai, covering 15 States, pushing for "economic, social and political justice" for every Indian through the yatra, which entered U.P. via Chandauli on February 16.

He is likely to spend a week in India's most politically crucial State, which sends 80 MPs to the Lok Sabha.

No tie-up with any national party, says AIADMK chief

The Hindu Bureau
MAYILADUTHURAI



The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) will not form an electoral alliance with any of the national parties for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, its general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced in Sirkazhi on Sunday.

Mr. Palaniswami's comments came against the backdrop of the Congress high command appointing K. Selvaperunthagai as the president of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee on Saturday. Given that the new incumbent shares good relations with the DMK leadership, it is unlikely that the national party would exit the alliance and look to tie up with the AIADMK.

Addressing the media, the Leader of the Opposition, who was in Sirkazhi to participate in a public meeting where thousands of cadre "from other parties" joined the AIADMK,

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami

ruled out the possibility of the AIADMK forming an alliance with either of the national parties. The AIADMK exited the BJP-led NDA last year.

He added that Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had failed to obtain Tamil Nadu's due share of Cauvery water from Karnataka, which resulted in the loss of over 3.5 lakh acres of kuruvi crop in the delta districts. "Mr. Stalin is busy trying to accumulate power within his family and not concerned about the people's welfare," he said.

The Kuki-Zo body announced a shutdown in

Haryana DGP denies use of pellet guns on farmers

Farmer leaders have alleged that several persons have sustained pellet injuries and some may lose their vision as metal shrapnel had pierced their eyes, deny claims of raising anti-India slogans

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Haryana Director-General of Police Shatrudeep Kapur on Sunday said the police were using "minimum force" and denied the usage of pellet guns against farmers who have been blocked at two locations – Khanuari and Shambhu Barrier – along the Punjab-Haryana boundary since February 13.

The farmers were stopped by the Haryana Police as they prepared to march to Delhi, over 200 km away, to protest over 12 demands which include a guaranteed minimum support price (MSP) on crops.

Farmers leaders have alleged that several persons suffered pellet injuries and some may lose their vision as metal shrapnel had pierced their eyes. In the past, pellet guns were used in Jammu and Kashmir during the 2016 unrest, leaving several people partially or fully blind. Last year, they were used in Manipur.

Mr. Kapur told *The Hindu* that a standard operating procedure (SOP) was being followed by the police to deter the protesters and the aim was not to injure the people.



Deep scars: A man shows the injuries purportedly caused by pellets fired by police officials on February 15. REUTERS

jure the people.

He said the mob was raising "anti-India slogans and indulged in extreme provocative actions".

'SOP being followed'

Asked specifically if pellet guns were used against protesters, Mr. Kapur said, "No, the SOP being followed by the police is to first use tear gas, then water cannons, cane charge, and lastly firing rubber bullets from a distance of 50-60 yards. The rubber bullets are not aimed directly at the mob, they are pointed to the ground which ricochet and then hit the target. We do not want to injure the people," Mr. Kapur said.

Told that there were several videos and photographs showing metal shrapnel lodged in the bodies of protesters, the DGP said, "I have not come across photographs or reports in newspapers of pellet-gun injuries. Our response is limited to rubber bullets. This is a different kind of atmosphere. They are hurling anti-India slogans. There are many disturbing images and videos. They [mob] are taking provocative actions."

The officer visited the two locations where farmers have been stopped. Mr. Kapur said the Rapid Action Force (RAF), an anti-

riot Central police force, was assisting the State police. Around 65 companies of Central police forces have been deployed in Haryana.

'Around 200 injured'

Amrik Singh, a farm union member said, "Around 200 people have received serious injuries, including by pellet guns. Some are still admitted to hospitals in Chandigarh and Patiala."

He said that for the first two days, the police were firing tear gas from drones, which had stopped for now. "They are firing at us as if we are terrorists or belong to an enemy country. No anti-India slogan is being done here. We simply want to march to Delhi to press the Union government to fulfil the commitments they made during the 2021 agitation," Mr. Singh said.

Earlier, the Haryana Police posted videos of protesters on X with a message in Hindi, "Despite the assurance of peaceful protest on the Shambhu border bordering Punjab, continuous efforts are being made by the protesters to provoke the policemen. Appeal of Haryana Police – Cooperate in maintaining law and order."

Talks with farmers inconclusive but positive, says Goyal

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

The fourth meeting between Union Ministers and farmer representatives to deliberate on their demands, including a legal guarantee for minimum support price on crops, remained inconclusive, however, the meeting was "positive", said Union Minister Piyush Goyal.

After the meeting, Mr. Goyal said it was held in a cordial manner. "Discussions have been held on their demands and we have presented a road map. We hope farmers will come with a positive reply by tomorrow. The next round of meeting could then be held. I urge farmers to call off their protest," he said.

Meanwhile, protesting farmers from Punjab continued to camp near the inter-State boundary with Haryana.

Mr. Goyal and Union Ministers Arjun Munda and Nityanand Rai, and farmer leaders Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Sarwan Singh Pandher were among those who attended the meeting. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann was also present. The three meetings held earlier had also been inconclusive.

Farmers from Punjab have been camping on two stretches – Shambhu-Amabal and Khanauri-Jind –



Farmers are stopped as they march to the frontline of a protest. REUTERS

on the Haryana boundary since February 13 as their 'Delhi Chalo' march was stopped from entering Haryana amid elaborate security arrangements with multi-layer barricades.

The Kisan Mazdoor Morcha and the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) – the two umbrella bodies of around 200 farmers' and farm labourer unions – had given the call for the 'Delhi Chalo' march to press for the fulfilment of their demands.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), the umbrella body of farmer unions that spearheaded the 2020-21 protests, as well as the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKA), one of the largest outfits in Punjab, announced that they would hold day-and-night protests and demonstrations in front of the residences of BJP MPs, Ministers and MLAs in the State from February 20 to 22.

Haryana farmer unions, khaps to join protest, if talks fail

Ashok Kumar
KURUKSHETRA

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni) national president Gurnam Singh Charuni on Sunday said the farmer unions and khap panchayats in Haryana would put up a united fight with the protesting Punjab farmer organisations in support of their demands if the talks with the government fail.

He also announced a four-member committee to initiate discussions with Delhi farmers and seek their support.

Mr. Charuni made the announcement after the representatives of several farmer organisations, khaps and toll committees met at Brahm Sarovar here to discuss the situation arising out of the farmers' agitation. Mr. Charuni said the strategy to take forward the agitation would be formulated on the basis

of the outcome of the meeting between the farmers and the government on Sunday evening.

The BKU (Charuni) was a constituent of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha which had spearheaded the 13-month-long farmers' agitation. The group has, however, stayed away from the ongoing agitation.

Sarv Khap Panchayat co-ordinator Om Prakash Dhankar, who is also a member of the committee that will hold a meeting with Delhi farmers, said there was no need for the Punjab farmers to bring tractors as the "farmers in Delhi have around 12,000 tractors and are ready to join us". Earlier, Mr. Dhankar also suggested two more additions to the farmers' charter of demands – withdrawal of the Agniveer scheme for recruitment in the Army as well as a boycott of electronic voting machines.

"Had I been at the house

House ransacked; don't feel safe, says Sandeshkhali rape survivor

Shiv Sahay Singh
SANDESHKHALI

A woman who has alleged sexual assault by local Trinamool Congress leaders in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali on Sunday said that some unidentified persons had ransacked her house on Saturday.

"Last night, I was not at home. A group of miscreants came and vandalised the house. They hurled abuses at me and my father-in-law," the survivor told *The Hindu*.

These allegations come only a day after the West Bengal Police said that it had added charges of gang rape on the basis of a complaint by the woman before a magistrate. The woman made these allegations on February 16 and named local Trinamool Congress leaders Utam Sardar and Shiboprasad Hazra in her complaint.

"Had I been at the house



Members of Sangrami Joutha Mancha hold placards during a protest against the Sandeshkhali issue on Saturday. PTI

at night, they would have certainly killed me," the survivor said, pointing to parts of her thatched house that appeared to be damaged.

The woman said that no protection had been provided to her by the police. "I had thought that they would spare me after I made a complaint to the authorities, but things are getting difficult every day. We deserve at least some dignity," she said.

The woman said that those who had attacked her house identified themselves as the "police" and were angry with her for registering the complaint of sexual assault. Despite the arrest of Mr. Sardar (on February 10) and Mr. Hazra (on February 17), the survivor said that she did not feel safe as their supporters were still roaming free.

The survivor reached out to other women on the island, who arrived at her

house, and suggested that she should lodge a police complaint.

The police officials at Sandeshkhali denied receiving any complaint about the attack on the survivor's house till Sunday afternoon.

On Saturday, West Bengal Director-General of Police Rajeev Kumar had said that the police had reached out to the survivor but she chose to make allegations under Section 164 of the CrPC before the magistrate.

Meanwhile, the island in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas continues to seethe in anger against the local Trinamool leadership. The State administration has also started setting up grievance redressal booths.

Sandeshkhali has been on the boil since February 6, when locals erupted in protests against the alleged atrocities of local Trinamool Congress leaders.

Manipur govt. initiates magisterial probe into Churachandpur violence

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Churachandpur district following the February 15 incident. The incident was triggered by the suspension of a Kuki-Zo policeman, who was seen posing in a video with "armed miscreants and village defence volunteers". The ITLF demanded that the suspension be revoked, and issued an ultimatum to the Superintendent of Police Shivanand Surve and Deputy Commissioner Dharun Kumar to leave Churachandpur within 24 hours.

"In case of any violation of the above orders, the person(s) concerned without any exception shall be booked and prosecuted under relevant provisions of the law of land..." the order said.

"No work, no pay" shall also be enforced by all the

medical, and educational institutions against those employees who do not attend their official duty without authorised leave," the order said.

"A large number of relief camps operate in the districts where many children, aged persons, pregnant and lactating mothers, and specially abled persons reside. Their regular care is being ensured," the order said.

The inquiry that should be completed in 30 days will ascertain the facts and circumstances leading to the incident and suggest remedial measures to avoid the recurrence of such incidents in future.

Chandigarh Mayor Manoj Sonkar resigns ahead of SC hearing

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Haryana High Court alleging fraud and forgery in the process of elections.

The court had refused to grant the AAP any interim relief, following which Mr. Kumar approached the Supreme Court.

On February 5, the Supreme Court gave the BJP win in the election a jolt, threatening to order fresh election after a video played in the open courtroom showed Returning Officer Anil Masih "obviously defacing" ballot papers.

The next hearing on the matter is likely to come up on Monday.

IN BRIEF



BCAS tells airlines to ensure timely arrival of baggage

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has directed airlines to ensure that all baggage of passengers are delivered within 30 minutes of landing of a flight at an airport. The measures are to be in place by February 26. The directive was issued on February 16 to seven airlines – Air India, IndiGo, Akasa Air, SpiceJet, Vistara, AIX Connect and Air India Express. The BCAS has been monitoring arrival of baggage at belts of six major airports in January 2024. "The mandates require the first baggage to arrive at the baggage belt within 10 minutes of shutting off the aircraft engine and the last bag within 30 minutes of the same," it said. **PTI**

Vistara flight develops snag, makes emergency landing

A Vistara flight that took off on Saturday evening from Mumbai to Hyderabad made an emergency landing within 30 minutes after take-off. Officials from Vistara airlines call it a technical snag that made the pilot to turn back to Mumbai International Airport. A Vistara airline spokesperson said, "As a precautionary step, in accordance with the standard operating procedures, the pilots decided to turn back and landed the flight safely at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International airport, Mumbai. The aircraft is undergoing necessary checks before resuming operations. An alternative aircraft was arranged, which departed shortly thereafter."

Coal miners abducted from Arunachal-Assam boundary

Suspected extremists abducted at least three coal miners from the Arunachal Pradesh-Assam boundary early morning on Sunday. The incident happened in Phimbra, a village straddling the inter-State boundary. While the authorities in Assam's Tinsukia district said the miners – two from Arunachal and one from Assam – were abducted from across the border, their counterparts in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district claimed otherwise. Locals, however, said a seven-member group of extremists belonging to at least two outfits took 10 miners at gunpoint toward the India-Myanmar border through Changlang.

Rape survivor alleges sexual abuse by judge in chamber

A rape survivor has alleged that she was sexually abused by a magistrate inside his chamber in a court in Tripura. A three-member panel headed by Dhalai District and Sessions Judge Gautam Sarkar has initiated a probe into the allegation, a senior advocate said on Sunday. The woman alleged that the incident of sexual abuse took place on Friday when she went to the chamber of first class judicial magistrate, Kamalpur, to get her statement recorded in connection with her rape. It was then that the judge groped her, she said in her complaint. The woman's husband also lodged a separate complaint with the Kamalpur Bar Association. **PTI**

Army upgrades firepower in eastern Arunachal near LAC

Chinook heavy-lift helicopter becomes a 'game changer' as it can carry the M777 howitzer, which weighs four tonnes, and fly to posts that are difficult to reach due to rough terrain and thick forest

Dinakar Peri
WALONG

After strengthening defences as well as firepower in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh, the Army has now beefed up its combat potential along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the rest of the State with the induction of its entire range of arsenal, from the latest firearms to M777 ultra light howitzers.

The CH-47F(I) Chinook heavy-lift helicopters have become a "game changer" in terms of their ability to lift heavy loads, including the M777s, and reach remote posts that are air maintained.

All helipads constructed or under construction in the past few years in Arunachal are to Chinook specifications. "All seven valleys have been connected with Chinook-specific helipads to ensure aerial connectivity," an Army source said. Between 2020 and 2023, nine helipads were constructed and six more are under construction in the Army's 3 Corps area. "Of these, five helipads of Chinook standards were constructed and three more are under construction in the districts of



Long range: The M777 ultra light howitzer is a 155-mm, 39-calibre towed artillery gun. DINAKAR PERI

Lohit, Anjaw and Dibang," an officer said during a visit to the area last week.

"The Chinook has been a game changer with the amount of loads it can carry across valleys especially given the uneven terrain and thick forest cover here," the officer explained.

Adding to this, the M777 gives significant flexibility in employment options for long range fire power as it can be transported under-slung the Chinook. The M777 weighs four tonnes.

Last week, an Army unit operating the M777s and the 105-mm Indian field guns showcased a drill on

the operation of the howitzers to a small group of journalists visiting the area near the LAC in eastern Arunachal Pradesh.

In the past few years, a range of new generation equipment ranging from SIG-716 rifles, Negev light machine guns, and Sako TRG-42 sniper rifles, and a range of tactical drones have been inducted. "A range of new generation equipment has been inducted for augmentation and upgrading of communication infrastructure. This includes satellite terminals for remote and forward areas, man portable communication terminals

for smooth and seamless communication to forward areas," another Army source stated.

Another demonstration was of a platoon of Ghatak commandos of the Army in full combat gear being briefed before they embarked on a long-range patrol which can range from seven to 30 days.

The Indian Air Force operates 15 Chinook heavy-lift helicopters procured from Boeing through the Foreign Military Sales programme of the U.S. government under a deal in September 2015. Talks are on for procuring seven additional Chinooks.

Rajasthan told to pay ₹10 lakh to labourer over frivolous case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

For 22 years, the State had fought against a Labour Court order in favour of the worker

get the fruits of the award of the Labour Court," the Supreme Court noted.

"It is unfortunate that the State of Rajasthan has been harassing the poor litigant, a part-time labourer, who was extended benefits by the Labour Court in the year 2001, i.e. for the last 22 years he has been litigating. This is totally a frivolous petition. It is, accordingly, dismissed with costs of ₹10 lakh to be paid to the respondent within four weeks," said a Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath.

In November 2001, the termination of his services was set aside by the Labour Court. The State was ordered to regularise him.

The State then failed to impress the High Court, which ordered the government to pay him minimum wages from May 1993.

Though the State had agreed to consider Mr. Bijawat for regularisation in three months, it, instead, appealed to the Division Bench of the High Court.

The Division Bench only confirmed the orders of the Labour Court and the High Court. Then, the State went to the top court.

When Nepal's Maoist leaders reached out to Vajpayee

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Nepal's top Maoist leaders reached out to the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra through an Indian academic, a new book has claimed. In *Dabbling in Diplomacy: Authorised & Otherwise, Recollections of a Non-Career Diplomat*, Professor S.D. Muni, who taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University for over three decades, has revealed that Nepal's current Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and former Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai travelled to India and met him, initiating a process that ultimately led to the overthrow of the monarchy.

"In late 2003, Bamdev Chhetri, a Nepali national working in JNU library and known to me, visited my home one day. He said Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, who

was then Maoist second in-command, was in town and wanted to meet me urgently," Mr. Muni has written in the book published by Konark Publishers of New Delhi.

Professor Muni, who is well-known for his widespread social and political contacts in Nepal, has claimed. In *Dabbling in Diplomacy: Authorised & Otherwise, Recollections of a Non-Career Diplomat*, Professor S.D. Muni, who taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University for over three decades, has revealed that Nepal's current Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and former Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai travelled to India and met him, initiating a process that ultimately led to the overthrow of the monarchy.

Mr. Bhattarai met Professor Muni and explained that the Maoists had noted a growing consensus between India and the United States in supporting King Gyanendra (who took charge after the assassination of King Birendra and

Twice, the Maoists were asked to give it in writing that they would not act against India's interests.

After much diplomatic hustle, the matter reached Vajpayee himself. "Muniji, we have got your message on Nepal. Will do something," he had said. A few months later, intelligence surveillance on Nepali Maoists in India was relaxed, letting them move more freely.

Thus began a process of intense consultation with the Vajpayee government, followed by the Manmohan Singh government when negotiations by Karan Singh and Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran with King Gyanendra yielded results.

The proclamation of April 21, 2006 led to the restoration of the Nepali parliament. Another proclamation three days later reinstated Mr. G.P. Koirala as the Prime Minister, ushering in democratic transi-



Baburam Bhattarai

his family in 2001) in crushing the Maoist insurgency.

Alarmed by this possibility, Mr. Bhattarai had been sent to the Vajpayee government "to explain to them that the Maoists were not terrorists, as then External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh had labelled them during his August 2001 visit to Nepal".

The decision to adopt a soft line towards the Maoists was a serious turn in the road and Indian policymakers were cautious.

tion and mainstreaming of Maoist parties.

India's current stand

Professor Muni has continued to engage with the Nepali political system and has often been consulted by its current rulers. After the arrival of the Narendra Modi government, Asarfi Shah, former Minister of Nepal, reached out to Professor Muni and informed him that the Modi government had assured deposed King Gyanendra that "monarchy and Hinduism represent two faces of the same coin that India would support in Nepal".

In 2017, a former RAW official informed Professor Muni that Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was "keen to get monarchy restored in Nepal" and sought his help. "I firmly communicated that he had approached the wrong person for a wrong cause," Professor Muni records in his book.

Assam police probe threat to missionary school

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The police in eastern Assam's Jorhat have begun probing a threat to a missionary school. An anonymous poster was pasted on the wall of Carmel School a few days ago, warning the school authorities not to turn education into a religious affair.

The school authorities lodged a complaint at the Chinamara police outpost, attaching a photo of the threatening poster. "We are investigating the case and trying to question some suspects," a local police officer said.

The threat came a week after a fringe hard-line Hindu organisation named Kumbha Suraksha Parishad issued a similar warning to missionary schools.

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



SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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



Try Our New
Sandal
With Sandalwood Oil



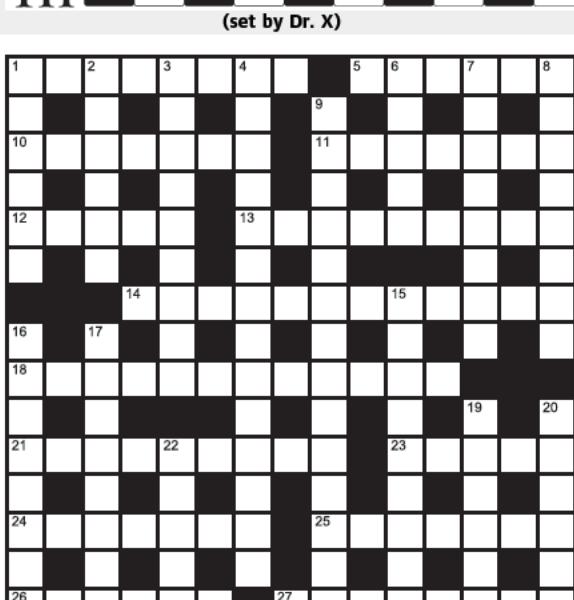
FAITH

Peep into the future

Vidura tells Dhritarashtra how the exiled Pandavas left. Yudhishthira's face was covered with a cloth. Bhima walked away looking at his arms. Arjuna scattered sand all around. Sahadeva coloured his face. Nakula covered his body with dust. Vidura explains the reasons for the behaviour of the Pandavas, said Kidambi Narayanan in a discourse.

Yudhishthira had always kept to dharma. And so he knew that if he looked at the Kauravas with anger, they would be burnt to ashes. So he did not want to look at them. Bhima looked at his strong arms because he knew that when the time came, he was going to kill his enemies. Arjuna scattered grains of sand to show that he would shoot his arrows in all directions against enemies. Sahadeva painted his face as he did not want to be recognised when his family had been shamed. Nakula covered his body with dust, to conceal his good looks. Draupadi departed weeping. Her tears indicated that at the end of the exile, the wives of those who had reduced the Pandavas to this state, would weep for their husbands and sons. The learned Dhaumya went behind Pandavas, chanting Sama Veda mantra pertaining to Yama. This was to show that when Kauravas died, their priests would chant these mantras. In this scene, we get an idea of future events.

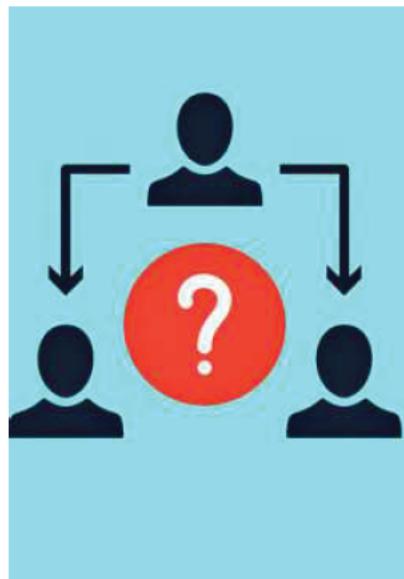
TH CROSSWORD + 14101



Across
1 I turned confused during audition, being most nervous (8)
5 Worries about one getting tooth decay (6)
10 English poet's fantastic response, expressing love (7)
11 Maniac in a cult perhaps (7)
12 Mites in a vehicle on island (5)
13 Discussion about extreme of lassitude with cocaine withdrawal (9)

Down
1 Italian model initially under scrutiny (6)
2 Frenzied woman and guy consuming ecstasy on a date (6)
3 Break up as boyfriend imbibes, continues to drink (9)
4 Hair starting to fall, right? Operation certain to tackle medical problem (6,8)
6 Declines to entertain new girl (5)
7 Thing I true terribly - ignoring husband's love affair (8)
8 Assisted criminal in vile deeds (8)
9 Coach's advice to rugby players lifting device (5,3,6)
15 High society females heartily entertained by hot nude male models (4,5)
16 Interrupts a con stealing Japanese vases (8)
17 Discovered silicon close to the area of folded rock strata (8)
19 Prince in trouble facing tense reprimand (6)
20 Princess wanting separate carriage (6)
22 Legally bar shadiest opium houses (5)

MONEYWISE



Worrying about a different future

COVERNOTE

Ensuring your money goes where you want it to after your time is as important in personal financial management as is growing your money safely. The rules try to derisk this process and they should move apace with the needs of the society

K. Nitya Kalyani

Following the previous instalment of CoverNote which mulled reviewing statutory restrictions on who can be nominated to various financial investments, I received a call from a very senior insurance executive, now retired.

Recalling the column that such rules would have had valid reasons in a historical context, and agreeing that they need to change with our changing times, he had interesting and thought-provoking information to share. Too many death claims, he said, were lying unsettled because of 'erroneous' nominations. For example, there is an inclination in Kerala to nominate life policies to the church. This, at the time of the claim, can lead to litigation from the next of kin. The insurance company is caught holding the claim cheque.

To avoid such family vs institution/friend/charity face-offs there is a concept of beneficial nominee and receivee nominee.

Under The Insurance Laws (Amendment) Act of 2015, immediate family members such as spouse, children, or parents are entitled to receive the claim amount as a beneficial nominee implying that they have a right to receive the money over any other legal heir.

If a policyholder wishes to nominate anybody else, the insurance company will want to know why and, if there are potential beneficial nominees, will decline to register the nomination. If it goes through, the receiver nominee acts only as a custodian of the death benefit, and legal heirs can file a claim, so it is better to keep them informed.

Apart from this, another reason to discourage non-family nominees is moral hazard. That is, an outsider nominee could have a vested interest in the death of the nominator. Debatable seeing the crime stories in the news, but an argument nonetheless.

Other twists in the plot can always come up. If the nominee predeceases the nominator, the nomination is void and the investment title becomes open again. Here comes the reason to nominate someone younger and maybe make successive or cascading nominations. That is, nominee is A, and if A predeceases the nominator, B is the nominee, for example.

So, don't just nominate, but think through.

The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.



Rental value: To monetise lease rentals, many lenders offer property owners the facility of Lease Rental Discounting, under which the loan amount offered to the property owner is based on the potential rent receivables from the property let-out on lease. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Loan against property: 8 benefits you need to know

Loan against property allows one to leverage an existing property to raise funds for personal or business needs without losing ownership; unlike other options, LAP offers the longest duration

LAP LOAN



Ratan Chaudhary

Loan against property (LAP) allows you to leverage your existing property to raise funds for your personal or business needs without losing its ownership. Both residential and commercial/industrial properties, including vacant plots, can be used as collateral for availing LAP. Here I will list out some major benefits of availing LAP.

No end use restriction

Just like personal loans, there are no restrictions on the end usage of LAP loan proceeds. Except for speculative purposes or any illegal activities, LAP borrowers are free to use the loan amount to finance diverse needs as home renovation, child's higher education or marriage expenses, medical emergencies, international travel or any other personal purposes. Self-employed individuals can also avail LAP to finance their business expansion or raise working capital.

Longer loan tenure

Lenders usually offer loan tenure of up to 15 years in case of LAP. Some lenders offer loan tenures of up to 20 years also. When compared with other loan options having no-end usage restrictions like personal loans, gold loans or loan against securities, LAP offers the longest loan duration. In case of personal

Self-employed

individuals can also avail loans against property to finance their business expansion or raise working capital

loans, lenders usually offer loan tenures of up to 5 years, with a few lenders offering maximum loan tenures of 6 or 7 years.

As longer tenure results in lower EMIs, it increases the borrower's ability to afford big ticket loans. Hence, applicants who cannot avail big-ticket loans due to their lack of repayment capacity can consider LAP with longer tenures.

As longer tenure results in higher interest cost, LAP borrowers can later make prepayments to reduce their interest cost. Note that just like other floating-rate retail loans, lenders do not charge prepayment/foreclosure fee on part-prepayment or foreclosure of LAPs availed by individual borrowers at floating interest rates.

Non-individual borrowers should check with the lenders regarding the pre-payment/foreclosure fees charged, if any, on floating rate LAPs.

Larger loan amounts

In case of LAP, the loan amount is usually determined on the basis of the market value of the underlying property and the repayment capacity of the loan applicant. Lenders

may sanction up to 75% of the property's market value as LAP loan amount. When coupled with the benefits of higher affordability and eligibility due to longer tenures, LAP becomes an ideal option for those seeking to finance big ticket expenses.

Lower interest rates

The secured nature of LAPs reduces the credit risk for the lenders as they have the option to sell the property in case of a default by the borrower. Lenders, thus, pass on this benefit to their LAP applicants by offering lower interest rates than personal loans.

The difference can be significant for loan applicants having low credit scores as most lenders usually charge very high interest rates for personal loans offered to individuals having low credit scores.

Higher chances

As lenders have the option to sell the mortgaged property in case of a default by LAP borrower, lenders usually tend to be more lenient with credit scores while reviewing LAP application. As a result, those unable to avail personal loans due to their low credit scores or are being charged higher interest rates due to it can consider availing LAP.

OD for working capital

Many lenders offer LAP with overdraft facility, in addition to the term loan facility, mostly to allow businesses to meet their short-term working capital

requirements. Under the overdraft facility, a credit limit is set for the borrower from which the borrowers can withdraw as per their requirements. The interest is charged only on the amount drawn, not on the set limit, and till its repayment. The borrowers are free to make n' number of withdrawals and repayments as per their financial requirements. This feature makes the LAP overdraft facility an excellent option for businesses.

Potential rent

Many individuals or businesses earn rent from their own commercial spaces by offering them on lease. To monetise such lease rentals, many lenders offer property owners the facility of Lease Rental Discounting (LRD). Under this facility, the loan amount offered to the property owner is based on the potential rent receivables from the property let-out on lease.

Debt consolidation

Improved credit access is leading many people to avail loans for financing their lifestyle. This has left many of them with multiple EMIs, often at high interest rates, leaving very little to spare for investments and financial security. Lower interest rates and longer tenures of LAP make it an excellent option for consolidating multiple loans/credit card facilities into a single loan at lower interest rates and for lower EMIs.

(The author is Head of Home Loans, Paisabazaar)

Diversity through diversification

THINKINVESTOR

Your portfolio is diverse if it contains different asset classes such as equity, bonds, and commodities. Diversification is the process by which you achieve diversity

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

In farming, polyculture refers to the simultaneous cultivation of diverse crops. The idea is to build resilience to pest attacks through diversity; for pests that attack one kind of crop may be unable to affect a different kind of crop. In this article, we discuss how to apply diversity to build some resilience to your investment portfolio.

Creating diversity

Your portfolio is diverse if it contains different asset classes such as equity, bonds, and commodities.

Diversification is the process by which you achieve diversity. You may, based on an asset allocation rule, decide to invest, say, 50% in equity with the rest in other asset classes.

Your goal-based portfolios typically contain equity and bonds. Now, consider your equity investments whose values can decline because of, say, geo-political tensions and inflation – two factors that are of concern to most individuals in recent times. Empirically, gold prices have moved up during global crisis and during times of geo-political tension. So, gold ETF can be considered for your investment portfolio. Commodities have proven to be good investments during inflation. You should, therefore, consider commodities such as crude and metals that can lead to higher price levels (inflation) in the economy. Currently, exposure to commodities that have a strong linkage to inflation can be made only through derivatives. If you are uncomfortable taking exposure to derivatives, you will not, for now, have the diversity cushion in your investment portfolio to meet the adverse effect of inflation. Your goal-based investment portfolio will then contain equity investments (preferably large-cap ETFs), bonds (bank deposits) and gold (gold ETFs).

Conclusion

In a core-satellite framework, your core portfolio is tailored to meet your life goals, and your satellite portfolio is positioned to gain from short-term fluctuations in the stock market. Each life goal will have a different core portfolio, as the maturity of the bank deposit (your bond investments) will have to match with the time horizon for your life goal.

How does gold ETF fit into this investment framework? You can allocate some of your monthly savings through systematic investment in a gold ETF. This investment will be independent of any life goal, as the objective is to provide diversity to your total investments.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%)			
	Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Small Finance Banks				
AU Small Finance Bank	8.00	6.75	7.50	7.25
Capital Small Finance Bank	7.60	7.50	7.15	7.10
Equitas Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.20	8.00	7.25
ESAF Small Finance Bank	8.25	6.00	6.75	6.25
Fincare Small Finance Bank	8.61	7.65	8.11	8.00
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.50	7.25	7.25
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	8.65	6.85	8.60	8.25
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.25	7.20	7.20
Unity Small Finance Bank	9.00	7.85	8.15	8.15
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.00	8.50	7.50
Private Sector Banks				
Axis Bank	7.20	6.70	7.10	7.00
Bandhan Bank	7.85	7.25	7.25	5.85
City Union Bank	7.00	6.75	6.50	6.25
CSB Bank	7.75	5.00	5.75	5.75
DBS Bank	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.50
DCB Bank	8.00	7.15	7.60	7.40
Federal Bank	7.50	6.80	7.00	6.60
HDFC Bank	7.25	6.60	7.00	7.00
ICICI Bank	7.10	6.70	7.00	7.00
IDFC First Bank	7.75	6.50	7.25	7.00

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.)		
	Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
(In ₹)			
Public Sector Banks			
State Bank of India	8.40-10.15	8.40-10.05	8.40-10.05
Bank of Baroda	8.40-10.65	8.40-10.65	8.40-10.90
Union Bank of India	8.35-10.75	8.35-10.90	8.35-10.90
Punjab National Bank	8.45-10.25	8.40-10.15	8.40-10.15
Bank of India	8.30-10.75	8.30-10.75	8.30-10.75
Canara Bank	9.75-12.00	9.75-12.00	9.75-12.00
UCO Bank	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30
Bank of Maharashtra	8.35-11.15	8.35-11.15	8.35-11.15
Punjab and Sind Bank*	8.50-10.00	8.50-10.00	8.50-10.00
Indian Overseas Bank	8.40*	8.40*	8.40*
Central Bank of India	8.45-9.80	8.45-9.80	8.45-9.80
Private Sector Banks			
Kotak Mahindra Bank	8.70*	8.70*	8.70*
ICICI Bank	8.75*	8.75*	8.75*
Axis Bank	8.70-13.30	8.70-13.30	8.70-9.10
HSBC Bank	8.45*	8.45*	8.45*
South Indian Bank	9.84-11.24	9.84-11.04	9.84-11.69
Karur Vysya Bank	9.00-11.05	9.00-11.05	9.00-11.05

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.)		
Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh	

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World

SEOUL

S. Korea PM asks doctors not to quit over planned medical reform



South Korea's Prime Minister pleaded with doctors, a day before they are about to quit to protest a plan to increase medical school admissions and the number of physicians. Increasing the number of doctors, they say, would prompt unnecessary medical care and worsen the finances of the national health insurance plan. REUTERS

Over 400 held while paying tribute to Navalny

Associated Press

Over 400 people were detained in Russia while paying tribute to opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died at a remote Arctic penal colony, a prominent rights group reported.

The news reverberated across the globe, and hundreds of people in dozens of Russian cities streamed to ad-hoc memorials and monuments to victims of political repressions with flowers and candles on Friday and Saturday to pay a tribute to the politician. In over a dozen cities, police detained 401 people by Saturday.

More than 200 arrests were made in St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city. Courts in St. Petersburg have ordered 42 of those detained on Friday to serve from one to six days in jail, while nine others were fined.

Ukraine said it had withdrawn its soldiers to save troops from being fully surrounded after months of fierce fighting. Mr. Putin hailed the fall of Avdiivka

as an important victory and congratulated Russian troops.

"The head of state congratulated Russian soldiers on this success, an important victory," the Kremlin said.

But Russia said some Ukrainian forces were still holed up at the Soviet-era

waz (PML-N) and Bhutto-Zardari's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) held a meeting on Saturday that made "a lot of progress" while discussing several issues but did not make any announcements on a coalition government. The two parties had formed a post-poll alliance earlier this week.

Addressing a rally in the Thatta city of the Sindh province, the 35-year-old PPP Chairman Mr. Bilawal revealed the power-sharing formula offered to his

party, which he refused, the Dawn newspaper reported.

"I was told that let us be the Prime Minister for three years, and then you can take the premiership for the remaining two

years," he said.

"I said no to this. I said I do not want to be a Prime Minister like this," Mr. Bilawal said. "If I become the Prime Minister, it would be after the people of Pakistan elect me," he added.

Asserting that the country needed a political party that talked about the people's problems, the former Foreign Minister said the brewing economic and political crisis had divided society.

"What should happen is

that politicians and all political parties, rather than focusing on their personal benefit, should think about the people of this country," he was quoted as saying.

His remarks came a day after Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha

alleged that the candidates who were "losing" the elections "were made to win" in the city. Before resigning from his post, he claimed that 13 candidates from Rawalpindi were declared winners.

An air strike in Rafah overnight killed six persons, including a woman and three children, and another strike killed five men in Khan Younis, the main target of the offensive over the past two months.

In Gaza City, which was isolated, largely evacuated and suffered widespread destruction in the initial weeks of the war, an air strike flattened a family home, killing seven people, including three women.

Mr. Netanyahu has vowed to continue the offensive until "total victory" over Hamas and to expand it to Gaza's southernmost town of Rafah, where more than half the enclave's population of 2.3 million Palestinians has sought refuge from fighting elsewhere.

"It's not a war of soldiers against soldiers. It's a war between a highly prepared Army and women and children," added the veteran leftist.

Two killed in West Bank

Israeli forces killed two Palestinian men during a raid in a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank on Sunday.

EURO LEAGUES

Reuters

MANCHESTER

Rodri's late goal salvaged a 1-1 Premier League draw for Manchester City against Chelsea on Saturday as the champion avoided its first home loss in 15 months but had a 12-game winning streak across all competitions ended.

Raheem Sterling scored for Chelsea in the 42nd minute. Rodri equalised in the 83rd minute.

Unbeaten in the last nine league games, City remains third in the table on 53 points, four behind leader Liverpool.

In the LaLiga, Robert Lewandowski's penalty seven minutes into added

time earned Barcelona a 2-1 win at Celta Vigo.

The results:

LaLiga: Rayo Vallecano 1 (De Tomas 27-pen) Real Madrid 1 (Jesu 3).

Saturday: Premier League:

Manchester City 1 (Rodri 83) drew with Chelsea 1 (Sterling 42).

LaLiga: Celta Vigo 1 (Aspas 47) lost to Barcelona 2 (Lewandowski 45, 90+).

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EURO LEAGUES

Reuters

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Rodri...City's saviour. AFP

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<p

DOUBLE DUTY

Jadeja performs the 100 and five-for act for the second time



Jadeja scored a century and picked up a five-for (112 & 5/41) for the second time in a Test (175 n.o. & 5/41 vs SL, 2022). Ashwin has done it thrice (103 & 5/156 vs WI, 2011; 113 & 7/83 vs WI, 2016; 106 & 5/43 vs England, 2021). Vinoo Mankad (184 & 5/196 vs England, 1952) and Polly Umrigar (172 n.o., 5/107 vs WI, 1962) are the other Indians to do so.

DELIGHTFUL DOZEN

Jaiswal smashes a record 12 sixes, emulates Akram's feat



Yashasvi Jaiswal's 12 sixes is the most by an Indian in a Test innings, overtaking the eight by Navjot Sidhu (vs SL, Lucknow, 1994) and Mayank Agarwal (vs Bangladesh, Indore, 2019). He equalled the overall record of Wasim Akram (vs Zim, Sheikhupura, 1996). Jaiswal smashed three consecutive sixes in an over off James Anderson.

Sport**YASHASVI'S DAY OUT**

Jaiswal third youngest batter to score two Test double centuries



Yashasvi Jaiswal (22 years 49 days) became the third youngest to score two double hundreds in Tests. Vinod Kambla (21y 54d) is the youngest while Sir Don Bradman (21y 318d) is the second youngest. Jaiswal also emerged the second fastest (13 innings) to three 150-plus scores. Neil Harvey holds the record (10 innings).

TEAM SHOW

A fantastic triumph, I am hopeful about the future, says Gopi Chand



P. Gopi Chand hailed India's first-ever gold medal at the Badminton Asia Team Championships. "It has been a fantastic performance and every member of the team contributed. We beat some really top teams, not many teams in the world can talk about beating China, Japan and Thailand... it has been a total team performance."

Jaiswal, Jadeja fashion India's biggest win in its Test history

The southpaw shatters batting records on his way to consecutive double hundreds this series, adds 172 with Sarfaraz who scored his second fifty on debut, Jadeja's 13th five-wicket haul spins the visitors to their doom



Spinning a web: Jadeja's five for 41 saw the England batters fall like a pack of cards. VIJAY SONEJI

ENGLAND IN INDIA**Amol Karhadkar**
RAJKOT

From being competitive to losing the plot, England had been on the verge of conceding the lead at the start of the penultimate day's play of the third Test. Coming super Sunday, India gave the visiting team the biggest reality check of the series.

From tightening its noose in the first half to winding the game up on the fourth evening itself, things moved swiftly in favour of Rohit Sharma and Co. as India took the series lead with a thumping 434-run win - its biggest ever victory margin in terms of runs - at the Niranjan Shah Stadium.

Shubman Gill and night-watcher Kuldeep Yadav

saw off the early-morning spells. Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sarfaraz Khan then treated England bowlers with disdain.

Jaiswal's record double - only the third instance of an Indian batter scoring double hundreds in consecutive Test matches, Sarfaraz's second fifty on debut and the duo's unbroken association of 172 off just 158 balls meant India declared its second essay at 430 for four halfway into the afternoon session.

Chasing a mammoth target of 557 England's aggressive approach fizzled out for the second day in succession. Ravindra Jadeja used the home advantage to perfection as India skitted England out for a paltry 122.

R. Ashwin who had rushed home on Friday night due to a family medical emergency, arrived in Rajkot on Sunday afternoon

and took the field at the tea break. Ashwin was required to bowl just six overs, with Jadeja running through the batting order with his 13th five-wicket haul.

Had it not been for Shubman Gill's bizarre run-out in the 90s, after being sent back by Kuldeep Yadav, Jaiswal wouldn't have been able to resume his onslaught.

Having recovered from his backache that forced him to retire on 104 on Saturday evening, Jaiswal hardly looked in trouble. Once Sarfaraz joined him at the crease, the duo offered a real treat to the spectators.

Going berserk

Jaiswal went after Anderson, the peak of his assault came in the 85th over that saw him tonking the spear-head for three consecutive sixes - over fine-leg, extra

cover and straight down the ground. Jaiswal added two more sixes to take his sixes count for the innings to 12, the joint-most by a batter in an innings in Test match history.

England's chase got off on a wrong-foot with Ben Duckett being run-out thanks to confusion between the batters combined with Dhruv Jurel's smart work in collecting Mohammed Siraj's throw on the run and whipping the balls off.

England batters continued to sweep-and-miss to get Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav on the go. Once England lost Joe Root, Ben Stokes and Rehan Ahmed to be reeling from 50 for four to 50 for seven, it was all but clear that the game was to be over on Sunday itself.

It was fitting that Jaiswal was involved in the last action - completing a catch at

SCOREBOARD

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS
445 in 130.5 overs
ENGLAND – 1ST INNINGS
319 in 71.1 overs
INDIA – 2ND INNINGS
Yashasvi Jaiswal (not out) 214 (236b, 14x4, 12x6), Rohit Sharma lbw b Root 19 (28b, 3x4), Shubman Gill run out 91 (151b, 9x4, 2x6), Rajat Patidar c Rehan b Hartley 1 (10b), Kuldeep Yadav c Root b Rehan 27 (91b, 3x4, 1x6), Sarfaraz Khan (not out) 68 (72b, 6x4, 3x6); Extras (lb-9, w-2): 11; Total (for four wkts. dec'd in 98 overs): 430.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-30 (Rohit, 11.3 overs), 2-191 (Patidar, 47.4), 3-246 (Gill, 63.6), 4-258 (Kuldeep, 71.4).

ENGLAND BOWLING
Anderson 13-1-78-0, Root 27-3-111-1, Hartley 23-2-78-1, Wood 10-0-46-0, Rehan 25-1-108-1.

INDIA – 2ND INNINGS
Zak Crawley lbw b Bumrah 11 (26b, 2x4), Ben Duckett run out 4 (15b), Ollie Pope c Rohit b Jadeja 3 (14b, 1x4), Joe Root lbw b Jadeja 7 (40b, 1x4), Jonny Bairstow lbw b Jadeja 4 (3b, 1x4), Ben Stokes lbw b Kuldeep 15 (39b, 1x4), Ben Foakes c Jurel b Jadeja 16 (39b, 2x4), Rehan Ahmed c Siraj b Kuldeep 0 (5b), Tom Hartley b Ashwin 16 (36b, 2x4, 1x6), Mark Wood c Jaiswal b Jadeja 33 (15b, 6x4, 1x6), James Anderson (not out) 1 (9b); Extras (b-5, lb-4, nb-3): 12; Total (in 39.4 overs): 122.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-15 (Duckett, 6.1), 2-18 (Crawley, 8.2), 3-20 (Pope, 9.4), 4-28 (Bairstow, 11.1), 5-50 (Root, 21.5), 6-50 (Stokes, 22.5), 7-50 (Rehan, 24.4), 8-82 (Foakes, 35.5), 9-91 (Hartley, 36.1).

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 8-1-18-1, Siraj 5-2-16-0, Jadeja 12-4-4-11-5, Kuldeep 8-2-19-2, Ashwin 6-3-19-1.

Player-of-the-Match: Jadeja. India won by 434 runs to lead series 2-1.

Fourth Test: Feb. 23 to 27, Ranchi.

long-off to hand Jadeja a five-for to add to the first innings hundred.

Anmol rallies to clinch decider as Indian women win thriller, script history



Watershed moment: Indian women celebrate a monumental triumph at the Asian championships. AFP

BATC**Press Trust of India**
SHAH ALAM (MALAYSIA)

Anmol Kharb yet again performed when it mattered, winning the decisive fifth rubber, to lead Indian women to a historic Badminton Asia Team Championships title with a tight 3-2 victory over Thailand, here on Sunday.

It is the first-ever Major crown for Indian women in team championships.

"It is a great moment for Indian badminton. I give a lot of credit to these youngsters.

"They displayed great spirit, they were supporting each other and the atmosphere was just like it was when India won the Thomas Cup. So this is a special moment for India," former India coach Vimal Kumar said.

Two-time Olympic medallist P.V. Sindhu provided India a confident start. The former World champion was back to her aggressive best as she rode on her power and placement to outclass World No. 17 Suparna Katethong 21-12, 21-12 in the first singles.

World No. 23 Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand continued their splendid run, dishing out another gritty performance to shock the pair of Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Pra Jongjai 21-16, 18-21, 21-16 to put India in the driver's seat.

Playing the second singles Ashmita Chaliha stayed in the match against Busanan Ongbamrungphan till 14-14 in the second game but a string of unforced errors thereafter cost Ashmita dearly as she went down 11-21, 14-21 against her experienced rival.

It was going to be a tall task for Shruti Mishra and Priya Konjengbam, the senior National champions, to tame the combination of Benyapa Aimsaard and Nuntakarn Aimsaard and they lost 11-21, 9-21.

The tie evenly poised at 2-2, Anmol again shouldered the responsibility of taking India through and she did that with a dominating 21-14, 21-9 victory over World No. 45 Pornpicha Choeikeewong.

The results:

India bt Thailand 3-2 (P.V. Sindhu bt Suparna Katethong 21-12, 21-12; Treesa Jolly & Gayatri Gopichand bt Jongkolphan Kititharakul & Rawinda Pra Jongjai 21-16, 18-21, 21-16; Ashmita Chaliha lost to Busanan Ongbamrungphan 14-21, 11-21; Shruti Mishra & Priya Konjengba lost to Benyapa Aimsaard & Nuntakarn Aimsaard 11-21, 9-21; Anmol Kharb bt Pornpicha Choeikeewong 21-14, 21-9).

Glad to have contributed to the victory: Sindhu

V.V. Subrahmanyam
HYDERABAD

P.V. Sindhu said it was a complete team effort and that she is really glad to have played a lead role in India's historic women's team gold at the Badminton Asia Team Championships, beating Thailand 3-2 in the final at Selangor in Malaysia on Sunday.

"Frankly, we weren't expecting this kind of result. But, hats off to the entire team. It was just amazing and I am glad that I could contribute to the team's win," Sindhu said in a telephonic chat with *The Hindu*.

The double Olympics medallist said the gold was very important in terms of getting the confidence back.

"Coming back from an injury lay-off was never easy. I have always wanted to ensure a winning start being the lead player. It is just



Sindhu and Anmol... architects of the triumph. AFP

fabulous the way the girls have responded in such style," the former World champion said.

"It is a whole new team with a new coach and support staff. Prakash Sir being a legend himself knows what exactly I need to be back at my best. So, it was never too late to join him. New resolutions and I am happy I am at the right place at the right time," she added.

"There is a lot of scope to improve for sure given the fact that the women's circuit is very challenging and competitive."

Credit to the young boys who have come in and shown a lot of character, says Rohit



Praiseworthy: Rohit lauded Ashwin's decision to rejoin, saying that the bowler put the team above everything else. VIJAY SONEJI

Amol Karhadkar
RAJKOT

Two debutants. Two players with less than 10 caps combined. The team in trouble at 33 for three on the first morning. Losing your most experienced bowler on the second evening who had to rush home to address a family emergency.

Despite all the odds stacked against it, Rohit Sharma's men managed to steamroll England with its highest margin ever in India's 92-year history in Test cricket, that too with the last day's play to spare.

No wonder then that the captain was extremely happy and proud of the team's effort in Rajkot.

EE

Our batting line-up is full of international class players. We give them the freedom to play what's in front of them. You can see the difference in approach playing out in India

BEN STOKES
England skipper
"Big victory, obviously it's a very good feeling to win a game like that, and especially with such a young team as well. Two debutants and not a lot of Test matches amongst the playing XI as well, so a lot of these guys are learning from the experience in the

middle," Rohit said.

"We got a lot to learn about how we played in Hyderabad, and then in Vizag when we won, obviously we knew it's not going to be an easy one for us to just come out here and win this series. We have to work really hard, especially with a lot of our front-line players missing."

"A lot of credit to these young boys who have come in and shown a lot of character. Looks like they belong here, and they actually want to stay here as well. So yeah, it is quite satisfying when you win a Test match like that. We always talk about the bench strength. Today and even in Vizag, we got to see a lot of bench strength as well."

Reflecting on her game, Sindhu said the break and the subsequent training at Prakash Academy in Bengaluru taught her a lot to be more patient, positive, and keep working hard.

"Everything takes time. But you have to believe in yourself. There is a big change in skills, technique and other related issues as far as my game is concerned," Sindhu said.

"It is a whole new team with a new coach and support staff. Prakash Sir being a legend himself knows what exactly I need to be back at my best. So, it was never too late to join him. New resolutions and I am happy I am at the right place at the right time," she added.

"There is a lot of scope to improve for sure given the fact that the women's circuit is very challenging and competitive."

IN BRIEF



Easy for Thalaivas against Warriors in high-scoring game

Tamil Thalaivas scored a convincing 74-37 win over Bengal Warriors 74-37 in its last match of the Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 in Panchkula on Sunday. Thalaivas scored the most points by a team in a single PKL match, the total of 111 points is the highest number of points scored in a single PKL game, and Thalaivas recorded the most number of 'All Outs' (seven) in the match. In the second match, Dabang Delhi recorded a 46-38 verdict over Bengaluru Bulls.

Afsal makes the men's 800m final at Asian Indoor Athletics

India's Muhammed Afsal topped his 800m heats in 1:53.54s and qualified for the final while V.K. Elakkia Dasan (6.75s) was third in the men's 60m heats in the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Tehran on Sunday. In the women's triple jump, China's Chen Jie won the gold.

The results (gold medallists & Indian performances):
Women: 60m: 1. Farzaneh Fasih (IRI) 7.20s ECR. 400m: 1. Nanako Matsumoto (Jpn) 55.14s. **High jump:** 1. Matveyeva Yalizaveta (Kaz) 1.86m. **Triple jump:** 1. Chen Jie (Chn) 13.63m. **Saturday: Men: 60m hurdles:** 1. Yefremov David (Kaz) 7.60s. 5. Tejas Shirs (Ind) 7.80.

LIVE TELECAST

Ranji Trophy: Jio Cinema App, 9.30 a.m.
PVL: Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6.30 p.m.
Sri Lanka vs Afghanistan: 2nd T20I, Sony Sports Ten 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 7 p.m.
PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.
LaLiga: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

RANJI SCORES, ROUND 7, DAY 3

Elite: Group-A: At Nagpur: Vidarbha 423 & 113/4 in 38.2 overs (Dhruv Shorey 43, Atharva Taide 49) vs Haryana 333 in 96.2 overs (Nishant Sindhu 131, Rahul Tewaria 59).
Jamsedpur: Jharkhand 188 & 269 in 76 overs (Aditya Singh 72) vs Rajasthani 210 & 120/6 in 51 overs.
Delhi: Maharashtra 225 Services 430/9 in 189 overs (Rajat Palwal 51, Nakul Sharma 87).
Rajkot: Manipur 142 & 144 in 51.5 overs (Bikash Singh 64 n.o., Dharmendrasinh Jadeja 5/55) lost to Saurashtra 529/6 dec.
Saurashtra 7(29), Manipur 0(0).
Group-B: Vizianagaram: Andhra 272 & 19/1 in 7 overs vs Kerala 514/7 dec. (Sachin Baby 113, Akshay Chandran 184, Salman Nizar 58, Mohammed Azharudeen 40, Manish Golamara 4/161).
Kolkata: Bihar 95 & 112 in 35.1 overs (Mukesh Kumar 6/32, Suraj Sindh Jaiswal 4/34) lost to Bengal 411/5 decl. **Bengal 7(19), Bihar 0(5).**
Lucknow: Chhattisgarh 414 & 124/5 in 37 overs UP 238 in 67.5 overs (Saurabh Kumar 55, Nitish Rana 54, Yash Dayal 55).
Group-C: Hubballi: Chandigarh 267 & 61/0 in 11 overs vs Karnataka 563/5 decl. in 136.5 overs (Hardik Raj 82, Manish Pandey 148, S. Sharath 100 n.o., V. Vyshak 103 n.o.).
Agartala: Tripura 149 & 333 in 83.2 overs (Abhijit Sarkar 48, Rana Dutta 47 n.o., Yuvraj Singh 4/97, Himanshu Sangwan 4/55) vs Railways 105 & 270/4 in 69 overs (Prathmesh Singh 113 batting, Mohammad Saif 106).
Porvorim: Goa 317 & 143 in 37.4 overs lost to Gujarat 346 in 96.5 overs (Priyank Panchal 171, Arjun Tendulkar 4/49) & 117/3 in 29.3 overs. **Gujarat 6(25), Goa 0(4).**
Salem: TN 435 vs Punjab 274 in 93.5 overs (Anmol Malhotra 64 n.o., Ajith Ram 6/83) & 180/4 in 40 overs.

(Nehal Wadhera 103 batting).

Group-D: Puducherry: HP 463 bt Puducherry 202 in 57.5 overs (Akash Kargave 111, Gurvinder Singh 4/37) & 198 in 43.3 overs (Gaurav Yadav 40, Mayank Dagar 5/52). **HP 7(11), Puducherry 0(13).**

Dehradun: Uttarakhand 382 & 221/6 decl. in 67 overs (Kunal Chaudela 103, Aditya Tare 89) vs Baroda 180 in 43.4 overs (Shashwat Rawat 93, Deepak Dhapola 5/43) & 50/2.

Indore: MP 200 & 409/8 in 124 overs (Yash Dubey 68, Harsh Gawli 147, Shubham Sharma 55, Rishabh Chouhan 61, Abid Mushtaq 5/103) vs KHD 242.

Delhi: Odisha 440 vs Delhi 451 in 130.3 overs (Yash Dhull 112, Jonty Sidhu 105 n.o., Kshitiz Sharma 64).

Plate final: Hyderabad:

Meghalaya 304 & 0/1 in 0.3 overs vs Hyderabad 350 in 87.5 overs (Nitesh Reddy 122, Pragnay Reddy 102).

came Delhi's way.

The scores:

Odisha — 1st innings: 440.

Delhi — 1st innings: Anuj Rawat b Roul 40, Gagan Vats run out 66, Yash Dhull c Swain b Roul 112, Ayush Badoni c Poddar b Samantray 22, Himmat Singh lbw b Samantray 6, Jonty Sidhu (not out) 105, Kshitiz Sharma b Mohapatra 64, Sumit Mathur b Poddar 3, Pranshu Vijayan lbw b

Poddar 8, Prince Choudhary c Samal b Mohapatra 1, Himanshu Chauhan b Mohapatra 6, Extras (b-12, lb-3, nb-3) 18, Total (in 130 overs) 451.

Fall of wickets: 1-67, 2-144, 3-217, 4-235, 5-266, 6-413, 7-420, 8-430, 9-439.

Odisha bowling: Mohanty 20-4-74-0, Poddar 21-3-66-2, Roul 23-0-116-2, Rathod 27-5-69-0, Samantray 14-3-34-2, Mohapatra 21-1-63-3, Mishra 4-0-14-0.

"I am so happy to retire



Bidding adieu: Tiwary kneels down as he pays gratitude on his retirement after Bengal's match against Bihar. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mike Procter, 77, passes away

Agence France-Presse

JOHANNESBURG

South Africa cricket legend and former National coach Mike Procter died on Saturday at the age of 77. "He suffered a complication during surgery, became unconscious and never woke up," said his wife Mariana Procter.

Procter, an outstanding all-rounder, became South Africa's first coach in the post-apartheid era and had a stint as an International Cricket Council (ICC) match referee.

Procter was renowned primarily as a fearsome fast bowler, taking 41 wickets at an average of 15.02 runs in his seven Tests before his career was cut short in 1970 when his country was banished because of Apartheid.

But he was also a flamboyant batsman, and equalled a World batting record when he hit six First-Class centuries in success-



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Napolitano rallies to claim his second ATP Challenger crown to cap a fine week

BENGALURU OPEN

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Stefano Napolitano capped a fine week by capturing only his second ATP Challenger title with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 victory over Seongchan Hong in the final of the dafaNews Bengaluru Open at the KSLTA courts inside Cubbon Park on Sunday.

The triumph will make the Italian richer by \$18,230 but more importantly the 100 points earned will propel the 28-year-old – who last won a Challenger more than seven years ago – into the 160s (from No. 204 in the world).

In South Africa, he played most of his cricket for Natal, the province where he was born. He scored 21,082 runs in first-class cricket at an average of 36.92, hitting 47 centuries, and took 1,357 wickets at an average of 19.07 runs.



Italian Job: Napolitano with the big prize after his triumph. SUDHAKARA JAIN

appear to settle. Napolitano's was the heftier stroke, but Hong scurried all over

the turf, redirected his opponent's pace and seemed omnipresent as he took the first set 6-4. But the 26-year-old relaxed a tad at the start of the second and

Contrasting outings for Indian teams

TABLE TENNIS

Sports Bureau

The Indian men's and women's teams had contrasting outings in the World team table tennis championships in Busan on Sunday. While the men's team lost to Poland 1-3 the women pulled off a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Hungary, with India's top paddler Manika Batra playing a crucial role.

The results: Men: Group 3: Poland bt India 3-1 (Jakub Dyas b Sharath Kamal 11-8, 8-11, 11-4, 12-10; Maciej Kubik lost to Harmeet Desai 12-10, 11-13, 9-11, 5-11; Milos Redzimski bt Manav Thakkar 11-9, 9-11, 14-12, 6-11, 11-7; Dyas bt Harmeet 11-7, 11-7, 8-11, 14-12).

Women: Group 1: India bt Hungary 3-2 (Manika Batra bt Dora Madarasz 8-11, 11-5, 12-10, 8-11, 11-4; Sreeja Akula lost to Georgina Pota 3-11, 7-11, 11-9, 11-9, 8-11; Aythika Mukherjee bt Bernadett Balint 7-11, 11-6, 11-7, 11-8; Sreeja lost to Madarasz 4-11, 6-11, 11-5, 7-11; Manika bt Georgina 11-5, 14-12, 13-11).

A NO-NO

Dhull and Sidhu tons give Delhi the edge over Odisha

The latter joins forces with Kshitiz Sharma to add 147 runs that was instrumental in the hosts getting a slender 11-run lead and most likely three points from the fixture

RANJI TROPHY

Rakesh Rao
NEW DELHI

Yash Dhull and Jonny Sidhu hit timely centuries to take a struggling Delhi past Odisha's 440 for a slender 11-run lead on the third day of their Ranji Trophy league match on Sunday.

The former champion was in danger of falling short of its target when the ninth wicket fell at 439. Joined by last-man Himanshu Chauhan, Sidhu ensured the first innings lead worth three points. Given the placid nature of the pitch and just a day left in the contest, an early draw appears most likely on Monday.

In his 16th outing, Dhull's 112 was his fourth century in the competition and Sidhu's unbeaten 105 was second in his 22nd match.

Delhi resumed the third day at 187 for two but lost Ayush Badoni, skipper Himmat Singh and Dhull, in that order, in the space of 49 runs.

At this stage, Delhi was 266 for five and Odisha held the upper hand.

Once Sidhu and Kshitiz Sharma came together, Delhi recovered through their 147-run sixth-wicket stand that took the total to 413 to move well in sight of taking the lead.

But Odisha hit right



Defining hundreds: Sidhu and Dhull's hundreds have ensured their side vital points.

SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP



came Delhi's way.

The scores:

Odisha — 1st innings: 440.

Delhi — 1st innings: Anuj Rawat b Roul 40, Gagan Vats run out 66, Yash Dhull c Swain b Roul 112, Ayush Badoni c Poddar b Samantray 22, Himmat Singh lbw b Samantray 6, Jonty Sidhu (not out) 105, Kshitiz Sharma b Mohapatra 64, Sumit Mathur b Poddar 3, Pranshu Vijayan lbw b

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Tiwary calls time on domestic career

Y. B. Sarangi

KOLKATA

Manoj Tiwary, one of the legendary players to don Bengal colours, hung up his boots after captaining his state team to a convincing win over Bihar in the team's last Ranji Trophy match of the season at the Eden Gardens here on Sunday.

It was an emotional moment for the 38-year-old Tiwary, who served Bengal for more than 19 years. After the match, he knelt down at the pitch to pay his gratitude to the game and posed for photographs with his teammates, who presented him a signed T-shirt and a framed photo of the side, fans and the ground staff.

In the evening, the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) felicitated Tiwary, who is also the junior Sports Minister of the state, and presented him a golden bat for being the fourth batter from Bengal to achieve the milestone of scoring 10,000 first class runs earlier this season.

"I am so happy to retire

on my favourite ground. My only regret will be not winning the Ranji Trophy for Bengal," said Tiwary.

Former India captain and Tiwary's idol Ganguly said, "Having played with you I know your passion and dedication and I hope the youngsters emulate your achievements."

Tiwary, who led Bengal to the Ranji Trophy final last year, had announced his retirement before the start of the season, but came out of it despite having a sore knee after the CAB president Snehasish Ganguly requested him to lead the side in red ball cricket for one more year.

Tiwary played 148 first class matches and gathered 10195 runs at an average of 47.86, with a career-best 303 not out and an aggregate of 30 centuries.

Tiwary played for India in 12 ODIs, scoring 287 runs, including a knock of 104 not out against West Indies in Chennai in 2011. He also featured in three T20Is.

Tiwary played for India in 12 ODIs, scoring 287 runs,

Sumit Nagal keeps Indian tennis shining

Saketh-Ramkumar pair, which won the doubles titles in the last two Challengers, will face off against Matuszewski and Romios in first round

MAHA OPEN

Kamesh Srinivasan PUNE

Sumit Nagal has been shining bright in the season so far. He has brought the focus on the singles court thanks first to his exploits at the Australian Open, and now consistently in the Challengers at home in Chennai and Bengaluru. Otherwise, it was left to Rohan Bopanna and the other doubles stars to keep the fire alive in Indian tennis.

Even though he lost in the semifinals in Bengaluru, after having won the title in Chennai and broken into the top-100 of the ATP ranking for the first time in his career, the 26-year-old Sumit will be tough to beat in the third Challenger this week in Pune.

The \$133,250 Maha Open Challenger has traditionally been a happy hunting ground for the Indian players, as tournament director Sunder Iyer pointed out.

Yuki Bhambri won the singles title twice. Prajesh Gunnswaran made it to the final twice, and Ramkumar Ramanathan lost to Yuki in three sets in 2017.

Five Indian pairs have bagged the doubles titles from 2014. Purav Raja, Ramkumar and Niki Poonacha for Indian presence, there are 11 Indian players in the doubles draw, which should ensure a lot of entertainment for the fans at



Earning his place: Former World No. 25 Pospisil entered the main draw after going through the qualifying event. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

Anirudh Chandrasekar have all won the doubles crown.

Interestingly, Saketh and Ramkumar have won the doubles titles in the last two Challengers. They have their first round against Rithvik Bollipalli and Niki Poonacha.

The fact that Vasek Pospisil of Canada, the former World No. 4 in doubles and No. 25 in singles, had to endure the qualifying event should give a hint about the high-quality field.

The seedings: 1. Sumit Nagal, 2. Duje Ajdukovic (Cro), 3. Adam Walton (Aus), 4. Valentín Vacherot (Mon), 5. Dalibor Srdic (Cze), 6. Oliver Crawford (GBR), 7. Dane Sweeny (Aus), 8. Federico Gaio (Ita).

The results (Provisional):

MRF Formula 2000 (Race-2, 10 laps): 1. Jaden Rahman Pariat (Shillong) (15mins, 44.717secs); 2. Chetan Surineni (Bengaluru) (16:02.706), Tarun Muthiah (Bengaluru) who finished third was disqualified for a black flag violation. **Race-3 (8 laps):** 1. Jaden Rahman Pariat (12:35.788); 2. Chetan Surineni (12:50.154); 3. Tarun Muthiah (13:31.154).

MRF Formula 1600 (Race-2, 10 laps): 1. Abhay Mohan (Bengaluru) (17:14.365); 2. Zahan Commissariat (Mumbai) (17:26.618); 3. Monith Kumaran (Chennai) (15:47.911+1 lap).

Performance Racing (19:44.608); 3. Yug Italia (Mumbai, Team N1 Racing) (19:54.746).

Race-3 (8 laps): 1. Abhay Mohan (13:51.711); 2. Zahan Commissariat (Mumbai) (14:00.143); 3. Raaj Bakhru (Mumbai) (14:03.179).

Indian Touring Cars (Race-2, 10 laps): 1. Biren Pithawala (Mumbai, Team N1 Racing) (19:14.983); 2. Pratik Sonawane (Pune, Buzzing Hornet Motorsport) (19:35.983); 3. Deepak Rakavikar (Chennai, Performance Racing) (19:36.365).

Race-2 (10 laps): 1. Anirudha Arvind (Chennai, Redline Racing) (20:47.868); 2. Jai Prashanth Venkat (Coimbatore, Redline Racing) (20:54.145); 3. Diana Pundole (Pune, Redline Racing) (20:54.735). **Race-3 (8 laps):** 1. Diana Pundole (16:31.795); 2. Anirudha Arvind (16:33.562); 3. Kesara Godage (Sri Lanka, Redline Racing) (16:43.645).

Formula LGB 1300 (Race-1, 8 laps): 1. Viswas Vijayaraj (Nellore, DTS Racing) (14:57.600); 2. Arya Singh (Kolkata, DTS Racing) (15:00.136); 3. Balaprasath (Coimbatore, DTS Racing) (15:14.379). **Race-2 (8 laps):** 1. Arya Singh (15:07.040); 2. Viswas Vijayaraj (15:11.098); 3. Balaprasath (15:15.423). **Race-3 (8 laps):** 1. Viswas Vijayaraj (14:56.286); 2. Arya Singh (15:01.417); 3. Balaprasath (15:06.693).

Super Stock (Race-2, 10 laps): 1. Angad Matharoo (Chandigarh, Buzzing Hornet MS) (21:03.892); 2. Manan Patel (Mumbai, Redline Racing) (21:04.737); 3. Anirudha Arvind (Chennai, Redline Racing India) (21:13.128).

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MRF Saloons (Toyota Etios) Race-2 (10 laps): 1. Anirudha Arvind (Chennai, Redline Racing) (20:47.868); 2. Jai Prashanth Venkat (Coimbatore, Redline Racing) (20:54.145); 3. Diana Pundole (Pune, Redline Racing) (20:54.735). **Race-3 (8 laps):** 1. Diana Pundole (16:31.795); 2. Anirudha Arvind (16:33.562); 3. Kesara Godage (Sri Lanka, Redline Racing) (16:43.645).

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Anmol Kharb – the teen prodigy who scripted history for India

India was level 2-2 against Thailand in the final before Anmol demolished World No. 45 Pornpicha Choeikeewong 21-14, prompting National coach Gopi Chand to wrap her in a bear hug and her teammates to hold her aloft amidst cheers



AFP

Jonathan Selvaraj

He'd have hardly known it but in 2017, when Devender Kharb and a group of his neighbours got together to build a cement badminton court at their residential complex in Sector 16 Faridabad, he was putting together the first step in a sequence of events that would eventually see his 17-year-old daughter Anmol guide India to their first Asian Team championships title.

India was level 2-2 against Thailand in the final before Anmol demolished World No. 45 Pornpicha Choeikeewong, prompting National coach P. Gopi Chand to wrap her in a bear hug and her teammates to hold her aloft amidst cheers. The win was Anmol's third consecutive one over a far higher-ranked opponent at the Asian Championships - she had earlier beaten China's World number 149 Wu Luo Yu 22-20 14-21 21-18 in the group stage and then sealed India's win in the semifinal over Japan by beating World number 29 Natsuki Nidaira. Both wins would be the decisive victories in the respective ties.

Gopi Chand would lavish praise on the youngest and at World number 472, the lowest-ranked member of the Indian team. "To take the pressure on and show that kind of nerve, it is very refreshing. She is fearless. The kind of strokes that she plays, it all comes naturally to her. She is reading the game well, you can see her intelligence. She played beautifully," Gopi Chand would say.

Indeed as she effortlessly matched older and higher ranked opponents and as comparisons get made to illustrious predecessors like Saina Nehwal, it certainly seemed that this elite level of badminton was right where the 17-year-old belonged. Badminton though came to Kharb just by chance though. Her father Devender represented Delhi at the national level in kabaddi, before an injury forced him off the mat and into a career as a lawyer. Brother Hardik was a skater who also competed at the national level before a high speed fall made him rethink his interest in the sport.

"He was really good in studies and after that fall he didn't want to take a chance with injuries so he gave that up. But I still wanted him to play some sport so I decided to set up some cement courts in our housing society," says Devender. While the court was meant for his son, it was Anmol, then just 10 who took a

fascination for the sport. "She was really small but she wouldn't let anyone else play on the court until she first got a game. And at that age we all indulged her," recalls Devender.

Not a passing one
He soon realised though that Anmol's interest in the sport wasn't a passing one. "There's a saying in Hindi - *Pooth ke paon palne me dikhaye*. (A person's future can be determined by their present actions) I looked around for coaching classes to put her in. There might have been a hundred kids along with her but her first coach told after a few sessions that she would go further than all of them," recalls Devender.

It wasn't obvious right away in terms of results that Anmol would go as far as she did. At her first state championships she got to the finals but she lost in the quarterfinals of her first under-13 Nationals the same year. The next year she lost at the under-15 Nationals to the then Indian No. 1 Samayra Pawar. These were not results that worried either her or her father.

"At that time she was really very small. She was competing against girls who were two years and more older to her. But despite losing she never got disheartened. I'd always see her smiling. She'd make friends and get along with girls from all

the other states. After a tournament, I'd be looking to take her home and I'd find her chatting with some opponent or the other," he says.

Anmol would get her breakthrough season towards the end of 2021 when she finally became the U-15 champion. "That was when she actually started hitting her growing years. She was always very quick but now she was finally being able to reach shuttles that she otherwise wasn't able to," says Devender.

It was right about then that Anmol started getting serious about her training. "Although she was very good in studies, she decided to take a non science stream. She also shifted her training centre," says Devender.

Anmol now trains in Noida under coach Kusum Singh – once a contemporary of Saina Nehwal. Her mother Rajbala making the three hour round trip with her every day from her home in Faridabad. Her training though isn't restricted solely to badminton training. "We are from Haryana so we have some traditional ways of preparing her. She drinks a lot of milk and eats halwa and *bajra roti* for strength. But we also have some methods that people can say are different. Every day in the morning, Anmol wakes up at 5 am and heads to a park where a former international boxer takes a physical

training class. She's one of about 40 kids but she's the only badminton player. The idea was her mothers because she felt Anmol needed to have that kind of power in her game," says Devender.

It's unusual but there's no doubt it's worked. If her coach once competed against Nehwal, Anmol who idolises her fellow Statemate, emulated her feat by winning the national championships last year.

The national title though would be small fry compared to the Asian title she helped seal for India. While it's a historic achievement, father Devender, who's travelled to Malaysia where he watched from the stands, says he doesn't expect Anmol to change much.

"She's always been a very happy-go-lucky girl. She's always pulling pranks. Like when she comes back from her training, she will come from the back gate and then hug me from behind just to scare me. Even when she wins a match or a tournament, she'll expect a reward like a meal from a restaurant. But in particular she will demand chocolate ice cream. Because that is something she's not allowed to eat generally," he says.

With a historic Asian team gold around her neck, Anmol's bargaining from a strong position this time around though. "You can't really say no after a win like this," Devender says.

THE GIST

▼
Gopi lavished praise on Anmol, calling her "fearless"

▼
To take the pressure on and show that kind of nerve is very refreshing. The kind of strokes she plays, it all comes naturally to her. chief National coach

▼
Anmol's father Devender reveals that she's always been a very happy-go-lucky girl and always pulling pranks



SCIENCE

What our ancestors' genomes can tell us about modern health

In a number of recent papers, researchers have reported being able to use sequences of ancestral DNA to understand genetic diseases that may have affected ancient humans, and through that open windows onto the medicines and tools that early human communities used

Sridhar Sivasubbu
Vinod Scaria

Where did we come from? What did our ancestors eat? What adversities did our ancestors face? Why did some of our ancestors suddenly disappear?

These and many such questions have fascinated people for a long time. Ancient DNA (aDNA) studies powered by cutting-edge genomic techniques have opened a window into the past, providing unprecedented insights into the genetic makeup of our ancestors. And by extracting and analysing DNA from ancient skeletal remains, scientists can reconstruct the genetic profiles of these people.

Studies of such ancestral DNA have provided glimpses into the genetic diversity and population dynamics of ancient communities, their migration patterns, interactions, and adaptations to local environments, and even into the diseases these people confronted and how the afflictions shaped human evolution.

For example, genomic technologies have given researchers a way to understand pathogens that spread in the distant past, and trace their origins and evolutionary trajectories. By reconstructing the genomes of these lifeforms, they have been able to piece together the emergence, spread, and adaptation of infectious diseases throughout human history.

Ancestral DNA and health
In a number of recent papers, researchers have also reported being able to use sequences of aDNA to understand genetic diseases that may have affected ancient humans, and through that open windows onto the medicines and tools that early human communities used. Such insights enrich our knowledge of evolutionary history as well as have implications for modern healthcare, since they can teach us about the diseases to which our genes have rendered us susceptible as well as how health disparities arose between different populations.

For example, some of the more common genetic diseases are the result of chromosomal abnormalities. Many chromosomal abnormalities result in chromosome number changes - that is, extra copies or deletions of entire chromosomes - resulting in different clinical syndromes. For example Down's syndrome is caused by an extra chromosome 21; Klinefelter's syndrome due to an extra X chromosome; and Turner syndrome by the loss of one of the two X chromosomes in women.



Insights into the lifestyles of ancient humans can be gleaned from their genetic remains. Representative illustration. PUBLICDOMAINPICTURES/PIXABAY

Ancestral DNA and a disease's history

Chromosomal karyotyping is a method to visualise the complete set of chromosomes in a cell, and is among the best techniques to diagnose such abnormalities. However, karyotyping requires live cells, which in turn requires scientists to adopt laborious methods to culture and stain them.

But thanks to advances in the last decade, scientists today can fortunately use whole-genome sequencing data from fragmented and/or degraded DNA to understand chromosomal abnormalities. Scientists have since adopted these approaches to study chromosomal abnormalities in aDNA as well.

For example, on January 11, researchers at the Francis Crick Institute in London published evidence of some of the earliest known instances of Turner syndrome, Klinefelter's syndrome, and Down's syndrome in aDNA dating from the Iron age in Britain.

Similarly, a research group from Italy, Germany, and the U.S. reported an interesting analysis of genetic variants associated with cardiovascular diseases in modern humans. They studied DNA isolated from 22 mummified individuals from a variety of geographical regions and time periods. Some 17 samples from ancient Egypt were dated to 3600 BC whereas those from Bolivia, Peru, Switzerland, and Australia were from 1500-1900 AD.

These scientists used a novel approach to enrich specific parts of each genome that we know are associated with atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease in modern humans. Then, once they had



Ancient DNA (aDNA) studies powered by genomic techniques have opened a window into the past, providing unprecedented insights into the genetic makeup of our ancestors

sequenced these parts, the scientists computed the ancient people's risk of developing the disease based on 87 genetic variants that mapped to 56 genes - also well-studied in modern humans. This way, the team concluded that five of the mummified samples had significantly high risk of developing cardiovascular disease and two had calcified heart vessels, suggesting they already had the disease.

In all, the scientists said they believe cardiovascular disease has been widespread in human populations for at least 5,000 years.

Linking ancestral DNA to diets

Insights into the lifestyles of ancient humans can also be gleaned from their genetic remains. One such material is pitch from the birch tree. There is some evidence that ancient humans extensively used birch pitch to repair stone tools and possibly fix arrowheads. Microbes from the pitch sample can thus reveal information about the oral health of the individuals who chewed it.

In a January 18 study, for example, scientists from Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Turkey analysed DNA from three

pieces of chewed pitch estimated to be around 9,500 years old, obtained from a site in Sweden. Upon sequencing the pitch samples, the scientists identified organisms associated with the sort of imbalance of microbial species observed in people with inflamed gums (periodontitis). The team also matched DNA with a number of plant and animal species, hinting at the ancient people's diet.

What else can ancestral DNA reveal?

Studies of aDNA could also provide big clues about the creation and development of stone tools. In the 1930s, for instance, researchers dug a cave in Ranis, Germany, where they identified a number of ancient stone tools. This site was believed to have been occupied by an old human population, from around 50,000 years ago, when modern humans, neanderthals, and denisovans coexisted. So the question was who actually made these tools.

A tide of interest in this question prompted archaeologists to re-excavate the cave more recently, when they found several bone remains. When they sequenced genetic material from these bones using high-throughput sequencing, the DNA sequences they found unequivocally pointed in the direction of *Homo sapiens*. When they dated the samples using radiocarbon dating, the samples were found to be some 45,000 years old.

(The authors are senior consultants at Vishwanath Cancer Care Foundation and Adjunct Professors at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur. All opinions expressed are personal.)

THE GIST

Scientists are using whole-genome sequencing data from fragmented or degraded DNA to understand chromosomal abnormalities. These approaches are now used to study chromosomal abnormalities in aDNA as well

There is some evidence that ancient humans extensively used birch pitch to repair tools. Microbes from the pitch sample can reveal information about the oral health of the individuals who chewed it

Sequencing was used to determine the origin of tools found in the 1930s at a site where humans, neanderthals, and denisovans coexisted. Archaeologists re-excavated the cave recently, and found bone remains. Genetic material unequivocally pointed to *Homo sapiens* and they were dated to be 45,000 years old

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BIG SHOT



Workers from Oil Mop Environmental Services (OMES) pump out oil from a spill off Lambeau Village river mouth, in Tobago Island, Trinidad and Tobago, on Friday. The country is considering declaring an international emergency to deal with the spill, which has stained kilometres of its shores and threatens to spread to its Caribbean neighbors. The owner of the vessel whose sinking caused the spill is yet to be determined. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

Ultradian rhythms: the cycles of life

Arkatapa Basu

We are told life is a cycle. These words could not be truer than when they are applied to the biological processes that support and help life survive on the earth. One such cyclical process is the ultradian rhythm. We can observe these rhythms as physiological patterns that all living things - from single-celled creatures to humans - adopt to function properly.

While circadian rhythms such as the sleep-wake cycle follow a 24-hour cycle, ultradian rhythms are biological rhythms that recur more frequently than once every 24 hours. They govern various physiological processes, including heartbeat, breathing, hormonal release, and brain-wave activity. As such, ultradian rhythms play a vital role in orchestrating essential bodily functions.

One of the more better-known among them is the sleep cycle, characterised by alternating periods of rapid eye movement (REM) and non-REM sleep. Through the night, individuals cycle through these stages multiple times, with each cycle typically lasting around 90 minutes. During REM sleep, the individual dreams, while



Ultradian rhythms play a vital role in orchestrating essential bodily functions. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

non-REM sleep is crucial for the individual to restore themselves physically and consolidate their memories.

Ultradian rhythms also influence patterns of hormone release, such as the pulsatile secretion of growth hormone, cortisol, and insulin. These hormonal fluctuations are essential for individuals to regulate metabolism, energy levels, and stress responses through the day.

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