



IN BRIEF

Alipur paint factory was illegal: MCD

NEW DELHI
The fire at a paint factory in north Delhi's Alipur has claimed the lives of 11 people so far, the police said on Friday. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi said the factory was operating illegally. » Page 2

Seat-sharing talks between SP, Cong. in U.P. hit impasse

NEW DELHI
Seat-sharing talks have hit an impasse in Uttar Pradesh, with the Congress insisting on 20 seats and seeking "winnable seats" instead of the ones offered at present by the Samajwadi Party. » Page 4

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Cong. gets relief on appeal after I-T lien on accounts

Appellate tribunal steps in after Income Tax dept. sets high lien on II bank accounts of the party for discrepancy in 2018-19 tax returns; accounts can now be operated after setting aside ₹115 crore

Sanjeev Phukan
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday said that all its bank accounts had been frozen by the Income Tax (IT) department over a discrepancy in filing its 2018-19 tax returns, terming the action an "assault on democracy by the Narendra Modi government" in the run-up to the Lok Sabha election.

The Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) subsequently provided partial relief to the party by allowing it to operate its accounts after setting aside ₹115 crore in lien. "This means that ₹115 crore has been frozen. This amount is much more than we have in our Current Accounts," Congress treasurer Ajay Maken said.

In a post on X, Mr. Ma-

ken shared copies of the notices sent to bank branch managers holding them personally liable for ensuring the payment of the Congress's dues, and asked, "Is this not attacking / seizing / freezing our accounts?"

In all, 11 bank accounts were frozen, including two accounts of the Indian

Youth Congress. Mr. Maken said that the accounts were frozen due to an Income Tax department demand of ₹20 crore for the assessment year 2018-19, and a dispute regarding cash receipts of ₹14.4 lakh given to the party by its MLAs and MPs as donations from their salaries.

The party learnt of the IT department's action on Wednesday, when banks refused to honour cheque payments. "You all know that 2019 was an election year and the deadline to file returns was extended up to December 31, 2019. We were late in filing our returns only by 40 to 45 days," Mr. Maken said.

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SCUTTLING OPPPOSITION
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» PAGE 10



Alexei Navalny

Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny dies

Reuters
MOSCOW

Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny died on Friday after collapsing and losing consciousness at the penal colony north of the Arctic Circle where he was serving a jail term, the Russian prison service said.

Mr. Navalny, 47, rose to prominence more than a decade ago by lampooning President Vladimir Putin and the Russian elite whom he accused of vast corruption, avarice and opulence.

Later, they met Governor C.V. Ananda Bose. "We will submit our report to our party," Ms. Devi said.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has said 17 per-

Police stop central BJP delegation from visiting Sandeshkhali

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA



The BJP delegation addressing mediapersons at Raj Bhavan on Friday. DEBASISH BHADURI

sons have been arrested in connection with the violence, while the police maintain that "no complaints of rape of women have been received so far".

'Impose President's rule'
The National Commission for Scheduled Castes on Friday said it has submitted a report to President Droupadi Murmu recommending imposition of President's rule in the State over alleged harassment of women in Sandeshkhali.

Reap before sweep



From the fields: Tribal people carry broom grass at Umswai village in Karbi Anglong district of Assam on Friday. The harvest season of the cash crop will continue till the end of February. Assam is the largest producer of broom grass in the country. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Kejriwal moves motion of confidence in Assembly

Nikhil M. Babu
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday moved a motion to seek a vote of confidence in the Assembly. "I want to demonstrate through this motion that once again, the BJP's 'Operation Lotus' has faltered in Delhi," Mr. Kejriwal said.

"I want to show that none of our MLAs defected, and all remain steadfastly aligned with us, none broken," he added. Discussion on this motion will be taken up on Saturday.

7 BJP MLAs SUSPENDED
» PAGE 2

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LIC/1/2023-24/2/ENG

Congress passing through its worst phase in history, NDA will cross 400-seat mark: Modi

The Hindu Bureau
GURGAON



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing a public rally in Haryana's Rewari on Friday.

Coining the slogan 'Abki Baar, NDA Sarkaar 400 Paar (NDA to cross 400-seat mark this time)', Prime Minister Narendra Modi tore into the Congress at a public rally in Haryana's Rewari on Friday, saying that "the party was passing through its worst phase in history".

Mr. Modi was speaking at an event to lay the foundation stones for a new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Rewari's Majra Balkhi village and for a metro project in Gurugram, besides a few railway projects.

The people have resolved that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which abrogated Article 370,

one family above the interests of the country.

On the one hand was the "bad governance" of the Congress and on the other, the "good governance" of the BJP, the Prime Minister said, claiming that the Congress had a track record of being responsible for the biggest scams in Indian history, promoting terrorism and separatism, and weakening the Army and soldiers.

Without naming anyone, Mr. Modi said that a Congress leader who could not even handle a start-up was dreaming of running the country.

The old leaders are leaving the party and those who wanted to come along with it have also left. The party doesn't even have its own workers. They can't

even handle their governments wherever they are in power," he said.

Hatching conspiracies' The Congress thought it was its birthright to stay in power, Mr. Modi said, claiming that it had hatched conspiracies against him since he had become the Prime Minister because he came from a poor family.

He added that he, however, had the blessings of the people, who were equivalent to God, and the mothers and the sisters were acting as his shield.

The Prime Minister said that people were talking about his guarantees, both within and outside the country, as his guarantees were for those who had nothing to offer as security.

INBRIEF



City saw 2.5% dip in heinous crimes in 2023: police chief

Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora on Friday said the national capital had witnessed a dip of 2.5% in cases of heinous crimes in 2023 compared to the previous year. Speaking at an event in New Police Lines to mark Delhi Police's 77th Raising Day, Mr. Arora said that over 100 police personnel had been injured in the line of duty last year.

DCPCR moved plea based on non-existent press release: HC

The High Court on Friday said that the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) had acted irresponsibly by filing a petition over its funding being allegedly stopped by Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena on the basis of a non-existent press release, which the commission claimed was issued by Raj Niwas. It posted the case for hearing on February 29.

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JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Janajgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

Government of Jharkhand, Rural Works Department
JHARKHAND STATE RURAL ROADS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (JSRDA)
 3rd Floor, F.E.P. Building, Dhurwa, Ranchi 834004

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

(National Competitive Bidding through e-Procurement)

Rec-Tender No.-3160/4

PR No.-3160/4

Dated 13.01.2024 (2nd Call)

Dated: 15.02.2024

The undersigned bid/no. of Government of Jharkhand invites tenders bids through e-Procurement from the eligible bidders registered¹ in appropriate class with any State/Central Government/State /Central Government Organization for construction and maintenance for five years of the following works of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna, Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas (PMGSY-RCP/LAW).

The bid should be submitted online in the website pmgsytenders.jhrwn.gov.in. The bidders should have valid Digital Signature Certificate for online submission of bid.

Sl. No.	District	Block	Tender Package	Name/Bridge Name	Lengt h (in Kms./m)	Total const. Cost (in Lakhs)	Total project cost (in lakhs)	E/M (in Lakhs)	Time of Completion (in Month)
1	Latehar	Guru	JH17RC-1B	Construction of Bridge over Chhota Kala via Latehar Banari Road via Gotap at Ch. 7100 m	186.68	629.214	5.39	634.604	12.70
2	Latehar	Guru	JH17RC-1B1	Construction of Bridge over Dhoti Kusum Nallah from Latehar Banari Road via Gotap at Ch. 5075 m	59.18	277.075	2.84	279.915	5.60

RCPLWEA (2017-18)

3	Palamu	Chattarpur	JH17RC-PAL-01	O-Khanbari to Sanki Kala via Debari Bazar, Rajewa, Bakaspur	8.13	716.03	79.86	795.890	15.92	06
4	Palamu	Chattarpur	JH17RC-PAL-02	O-Sahpur to Debari Bazar	3.82	369.35	35.06	404.41	8.09	06
5	Palamu	Manatu	JH17RC-PAL-05	O-Mehra Bazar to Mundhi	6.65	618.72	66.40	685.12	13.71	06
6	Palamu	Patan	JH17RC-PAL-03	O-Gram Role to Tilaiya Sikani	5.37	475.32	51.52	526.84	10.54	06
7	Palamu	Patan	JH17RC-PAL-04	O-Gram Budhara to Gram Budhara	6.47	573.07	62.50	635.57	12.72	06

RCPLWEA (2019-20)

Procurement Officer	Place of Opening	Availability of tender (on-line) for bidding	Date & time of opening (on-line) of tender		
				From	To
Chief Engineer, JSRDA, Ranchi	20.02.2024 at 10.30 AM	27.02.2024 upto 5.00 PM	27.02.2024 at 5.30 PM	To be informed later	

*Non-registered bidders may also submit bid, however the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authority before signing the contract.

Note:-

- Amount of Bid Security should be taken as mentioned in the Bid Data Sheet of the Bidding Document.
- Cost of Bid Document (Rs. 10000) and Bid Security (as mentioned in the Bid Data Sheet) shall be deposited in form as mentioned in Bid Data Sheet failing which the bid will be treated non responsive and action shall be taken as per Sec. 2 of ITB-Bid (2.2.6).
- It is found, even after the award of work that the bidder has submitted/ uploaded any false/inaccurate/fraudulent statement/document, he/she is liable for blacklisting and forfeiture of Bid Security.
- Bidders must submit GST registration certificate without which bid is liable to be rejected.
- Bidders whose names appear in the Debari/blacklist of RWD, any department of GoJ/Gof (including JSRDA) shall not be allowed to participate in the above bids.
- Bidders may be rejected by the govt, who have long pending ATR(s) / made inordinate delay in execution of earlier allotted contracts/maintenance works of PMGSY, may be rejected summarily.
- In case of any discrepancy/dispute about units in BOQ, units as mentioned in Current SOR on which BOQ has been prepared shall prevail.
- Participating bidders are free to submit grievances, if any, against the decision of technical evaluation within five working days from the date of uploading of decision of technical evaluation only through email at jh17rc@pmgsy.nic.in. Grievance submitted after stipulated period shall not be considered.
- Bidders must have valid registration with Employees Provident Fund organization under EPF and pension scheme under EPFO as on 01.01.2022 failing which the bid shall be rejected.
- Bidders must quote the cost of routine maintenance. The amount for routine maintenance as indicated in the Bill of Quantities must be acceptable to bidders.
- For unbalanced bids, extra security will be required to be deposited by the bidder by the time of Agreement.
- All other details can be seen in the bidding document which is available in website pmgsytenders.jhrwn.gov.in as per schedule mentioned above.

PR. No. 319205 Rural Work Department (23-24)_D

Alipur paint factory was illegal, says MCD; 8 of 11 blast victims identified

Chief Minister announces ₹10 lakh ex gratia for kin of deceased; DNA test may be conducted to identify three charred bodies; police say the paint-making unit was running for the past seven years, exact cause of blast yet to be ascertained

Alisha Dutta
NEW DELHI



Reduced to ashes: The rubble at Dayal Market (left); officials inspecting the site. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The fire at a paint factory in north Delhi's Alipur has claimed the lives of 11 people so far, the police said on Friday. On Thursday evening, a blast took place at 'Om Sons Paint and Chemicals', setting off a massive fire that incinerated a drug rehabilitation centre and several shops nearby.

An officer said the factory was owned by Ashok Kumar Jain and had been operating at Alipur's Dayal Market since 2017.

Jain, 62, is among eight of the 11 victims whose charred bodies have been identified. DNA testing may be conducted to identify the remaining three, the officer added.

The others identified are Ram Surat Singh, 44;

Vishal Gaund, 19; Anil Thakur, 46; Pankaj Kumar, 29; Shubham, 19; Brijkishore, 19; and Mira, 44.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday evening reached the spot to take stock of the situation.

He announced an ex gratia of ₹10 lakh for the next of kin of the deceased, ₹2 lakh compensation for two persons who sustained serious injuries, and ₹20,000 for two others with minor injuries.

The four injured persons are currently undergoing treatment.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi, in a statement, said the factory was located in a densely populated *Lal Dora Abadi* area (designated for habitation) and operating illegally with flammable substances used for making paint.

He added that fire tenders were delayed due to a traffic jam near GT Karnal Road.

The police and the DFS are yet to ascertain the exact cause of the blast.

'Not taken seriously'

A nurse at the scorched drug rehabilitation centre, Devendra Saini, told *The Hindu* that multiple complaints had been made about the factory storing inflammable chemicals. "We were worried as the area has seen many fires in the past, but our complaints were not taken seriously," he added.

Gaurav Kumar said he, along with Vishal, Pankaj, and Shubham - who were among the victims - worked for a private company. On the fateful day, the three had gone to the factory to fit some racks, Mr. Gaurav added.

According to a DFS official, the blaze was doused by 8 p.m., but police and fire teams worked through the night to recover the bodies and rescue the injured persons as smoke billowed from the collapsed factory.

Delhi Fire Service (DFS) Director Atul Garg said that the blaze was reported around 5.30 p.m. on Thursday and 22 tenders were sent to the spot.

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100 PERCENTILERS
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Soukanya Bhattacharya
4 Year Classroom



Akshat Bansal
4 Year Classroom



Rajasrieth M R
4 Year Classroom



Amritansha Sinha
4 Year Classroom



Archisman Dhar
4 Year Classroom



Krishna Sai Shishir Vuppala
4 Year Classroom



Rohan Ramprakash Shukla
2 Year Classroom



Zaman Husain
4 Year Classroom



Swapnil Prakash Pani
4 Year Classroom



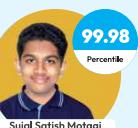
Kishnuk Joshi
4 Year Classroom



Priyanshu Kumar
4 Year Classroom



Rithvik Perumalla
2 Year Classroom



Sujal Satish Motagi
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INBRIEF



**Kavita Chaudhary of 'Lalitaji',
Udaan fame passes away**

Actor Kavita Chaudhary, the canny, kind Lalitaji from 1980s ad for Surf detergent and star of the popular Doordarshan serial *Udaan*, died at a hospital in Amritsar following a cardiac arrest. She was 67. Chaudhary – still remembered for the two roles, one a homemaker and the other an IPS officer, more than three decades ago – was hospitalised a few days ago and died on Thursday night. A graduate of the National School of Drama, she acted, wrote and directed *Udaan*, a progressive show about women empowerment centred around an IPS officer, Kalyani Singh. *pti*

'No Cong-AAP rift, Goa seats would be contested as allies'

Days after his party took Congress by announcing its candidate for the South Goa Lok Sabha constituency, AAP's Goa unit chief Amit Palekar on Friday said there was no rift between the two INDIA allies. The Congress and Aam Aadmi Party would contest the coming elections together, he said. AAP announced Venzy Viegas as its candidate for South Goa earlier this week, even though the seat is currently held by the Congress's Francisco Sardinha. The announcement was part of election strategy, Mr. Palekar said, adding that it should not be seen as a rift in the Opposition's INDIA grouping. "The alliance is intact," he said. *pti*

Senthilbalaji seeks discharge from ED case; judge extends judicial remand till Feb. 20



Judge deferred framing of charges against V. Senthilbalaji

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

DMK MLA and former Minister V. Senthilbalaji on Friday filed a petition at the principal sessions court in Chennai seeking discharge from the case registered against him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). His counsel N. Bharanikumar filed the petition when principal sessions Judge S. Alli took up the case to frame charges against him. Consequently, the judge deferred the framing of charges.

Mr. Senthilbalaji was arrested by the ED on June 14 last on the charge of money-laundering that arose from the case of cash-for-jobs in the Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC). The case was filed against him by the Central Crime Branch of the Greater Chennai Police. The allegation against him was

crime against him had no basis because he, as the Transport Minister, had no role in appointments. The entire case, he said, had been foisted on him to wreak vengeance. Mr. Senthilbalaji was produced before the judge through videoconferencing from the Central Prison, Puzhal. The judge extended his judicial remand until February 20.

ED in HC

On Thursday, the ED had told the Madras High Court that the total proceeds of crime in the money-laundering case booked against Mr. Senthilbalaji was ₹67.75 crore, not ₹1.34 crore as projected by him before the court. Additional Solicitor-General A.R.L. Sundaresan also refuted the petitioner's charge of digital evidence in the case having been tampered with and manipulated.

U.P. invokes ESMA, imposes six-month ban on protests

Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Friday invoked the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), banning strikes by government employees in all State departments, corporations and authorities for a period of six months. "In exercise of the powers under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Uttar Pradesh Essential Services Maintenance Act, 1966 (UP Act No. 30 of 1966), the State government prohibited strike for six months from the date of the notification," reads the notice issued by Additional Chief Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi.

Despite nature's fury, Himachal's GDP to see growth at 7.1%

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

Even as a relentless monsoon in Himachal Pradesh brought the hill State to its knees this year, causing immense damage to life and property, the growth in the financial year 2023-24 is seen at 7.1%, up from 6.9% in the financial year 2022-23.

The State Economic Survey, 2023-24, which was presented by Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu on Friday during the ongoing Budget session of Himachal Pradesh State Assembly, said despite the adverse situation arising out of the unprecedented monsoon and flash floods in the monsoon and rain floods of 2023, the State government has strived to put untiring efforts, and make strategic



initiatives to ensure economic growth, and overall development of the State.

"State's real Gross Domestic Product or GDP at constant prices will grow by over ₹9,428 crore dur-

ing the current financial year 2023-24 as compared to the previous FY 2022-23. This translates into growth in real GDP during FY 2023-24 at 7.1% as compared to 6.9% in FY 2022-

23, according to first advance estimates of State income," the survey said.

The survey pointed out that tourist arrival is one of the main indicators of the demand for tourism in a

particular destination. "After the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic tourist arrivals have increased from 32.13 lakh in the year 2020 to 56.37 lakh in 2021 and 151 lakh in 2022 and further to 160.05 in the year 2023 in absolute terms. It shows that the tourist arrivals are reaching the pre-pandemic levels," it said.

Hydroelectric potential
Pointing out that Himachal Pradesh has a large number of hydroelectric resources, the survey said the State has about 25% of the national potential, and about 24,000 MW of hydroelectric power can be generated by the construction of the five perennial river basins. "Of the total hydroelectric potential, 11,209 MW have been harnessed so far," it said.

The report will aid the government in introducing

Seat-sharing talks between SP, Cong. in U.P. hit impasse

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

The Congress-Samajwadi Party talks on seat-sharing have hit an impasse, with the Grand Old Party insisting on 20 seats and also demanding that it be given "winnable seats" instead of the ones offered at present. The Samajwadi Party (SP), meanwhile, is questioning the "seriousness" of the Congress's



seats it gives them.

The Congress contends that the SP's insistence that the seat-sharing has to be based on the electoral performance of the two in the last few elections [both Lok Sabha and Assembly] is a flawed approach.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Salman Khurshid, who is part of the Congress's National Alliance Committee, said both sides had factored the long duration for the negotiations. "We want to maximise and optimise the sum of the whole that we create together and it takes time," he said.

Senior SP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Javed Ali Khan, speaking on similar lines, said, "Has the BJP even begun talking to their allies in States? Such negotiations take time and go on till the very end. There is nothing unusual about it," he said.



Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren's younger brother Basant Soren becomes a Minister for the first time; another round of expansion of the Cabinet likely to take place soon

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren on Friday expanded his Cabinet by inducting eight new Ministers, including Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) supremo Shibu Soren's son Basant Soren and Chaibasa MLA Deepak Birua.

With the addition of the two new faces, the strength of the Jharkhand Cabinet has increased to II.

Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan administered the oath of office at the Raj Bhavan.

Those who retained their ministerial berths include Rameshwar Oraon, Banna Gupta and Badal Patralekh of the Congress besides JMM's Mithilesh Kumar Thakur. Hafizul Hasan, and Bebi Devi.

Earlier on February 2, Alamgir Alam of Congress and Satyendar Bhokta of RJD were sworn in along with the Chief Minister.

Ms. Devi, who was the Excise Minister in the pre-

vious Hemant Soren government, has now been given the Women and Child Development, and Social Welfare portfolios.

Mr. Patralekh will continue to be Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Minister. The Minorities Welfare, Registration and Tourism, Sports and Youth Affairs portfolios went to Mr. Hasan.

Mr. Basant, is a first-time Minister and the younger brother of former Chief Minister Hemant Soren, who

given charge of the Industry department, while Mr. Gupta retained the Health and Disaster Management portfolios.

Mr. Patralekh will continue to be Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Minister. The Minorities Welfare, Registration and Tourism, Sports and Youth Affairs portfolios went to Mr. Hasan.

Sources in the JMM said a further expansion of the Cabinet is likely to take place soon.

is currently in judicial custody in connection with a money laundering case. Mr. Hemant had to resign following his arrest on January 31 this year.

First-time Minister

The sixth member of the Soren family to enter politics, Mr. Basant became a member of Jharkhand Assembly after winning the Dumka by-election held in 2020 by defeating BJP's Luis Marandi, a former Minister. Before that he contested the Rajya Sabha election in 2016, but had to face defeat.

Ahead of the Cabinet expansion, sources said, a few in the Congress had expressed anger over repeatedly addressing the same leaders as Ministers.

However, they were pacified by Jharkhand Congress chief Rajesh Thakur and State Congress in-charge Ghulam Ahmad Mir.

Sources in the JMM said a further expansion of the Cabinet is likely to take place soon.

Issues are not solved by making speeches in Parliament, taking selfies, Ajit's salvo against Sule

Shoumojit Banerjee
PUNE

The Rajasthan and the Punjab governments had agreed to work jointly for increasing the water supply to Nohar irrigation project. Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat convened a meeting of officials from both the States recently for taking up renovation work at Baruwali distributary and Fatehabad branch.

The Rajasthan government has sent a pre-feasibility report with an estimated expenditure of ₹13.95 crore to Haryana, where Baruwali distributary is situated. The progress of work was reviewed at a meeting of the Rajasthan and Haryana government officials with the Bhakra Beas Management Board last month.

The Central Water Commission has also asked the Punjab government to prepare a detailed project report for reconstruction of the Ferozepur feeder.

"Issues on the ground are never resolved by making speeches in Parliament and getting 'Best Parliamentarian' awards," said Mr. Pawar, alluding to Ms. Sule being awarded the



Taking more potshots at Ms. Sule, Mr. Pawar said that some people were slandering him by saying that he aligned with the ruling alliance [BJP-Shinde Sena] as he was facing corruption charges.

'No work, no criticism'
"However, I want to tell everyone that this same person [Ms. Sule] never became a minister. So, why would anybody make corruption allegations against this person. Only those who work on the ground and become ministers face criticism and allegations. But those who do not work, never face any criticism," said Mr. Pawar, taunting Ms. Sule.

The Deputy CM's salvo at Ms. Sule comes at a time of intense speculation that Sunetra Pawar (Ajit's wife) could be the ruling 'Mahayuti' coalition's candidate for Baramati LS seat.

Committee submits its Maratha survey report to CM Shinde

Abinav Deshpande
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (MSBC) on Friday submitted a comprehensive report on its survey, covering nearly 2.5 crore families, that assessed the social, economic, and educational backwardness of the Maratha community.

The report, presented to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde by MSBC chairperson Justice (retd.) Sunil Shukre, will be discussed in the upcoming State Cabinet meeting, the Chief Minister's Office said.

The report will aid the government in introducing

a law to ensure reservation for Marathas. The government has announced a special Assembly session on February 20 to discuss the community's demands.

Data-driven approach
Acknowledging the efforts of the commission, Mr. Shinde expressed confidence in the data-driven approach to addressing the community's concerns without affecting existing quotas for other groups.

The survey, initiated on January 23 and executed with the assistance of 3.5 to 4 lakh government personnel, involved comprehensive data gathering using modern technology.

U.P. invokes ESMA, imposes six-month ban on protests

Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Friday invoked the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), banning strikes by government employees in all State departments, corporations and authorities for a period of six months. "In exercise of the powers under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Uttar Pradesh Essential Services Maintenance Act, 1966 (UP Act No. 30 of 1966), the State government prohibited strike for six months from the date of the notification," reads the notice issued by Additional Chief Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi.

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CM

MND-DE

Notice to U.P., Haryana over use of term 'non-binary' in school form

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPNR) has issued a notice to the Education Departments of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana over the use of the term "non-binary" in a question related to gender by Delhi-NCR-based Shiv Nadar schools.

In response, the school said, "As of now, we are not aware of any such notice; hence, [we] cannot offer any comment." In a notice to Haryana's Secretary

NCPNR asked the State governments to ensure that 'no such term is used by any school'

of the Directorate of School Education and U.P.'s Principal Secretary, the NCPNR said that it had received a complaint regarding the use of "inappropriate terminology" by these schools with respect to children's gender.

"As highlighted in the com-

plaint, the school, in its Pa-

rent's Feedback Survey, has a

question on children's gender.

The options given are 'Female', 'Male', and 'Non-binary'.

It may be noted that the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 defines and uses the term 'transgender,' the commission said.

"The National Education Policy also refers to transgender children/students and does not use any other term," it added and asked the State governments to ensure that "no such term is used by any school in any form."

Two undertrials booked for clash

Two undertrials Ajinkya Shinde and Kisan Bhoshe were booked on Friday for clashing with each other in Taloja jail, a Navi Mumbai police official said.

North Eastern Railway
Open Tender Notice No. SrDEE-TRD-BSP-2023-24-T3 date 15.02.2024 Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/ TRD and on behalf of President of India, invites said "OPEN" E-tender for the following work:

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No. of Bidding : 01 Reference No. : SRDEE-TRD-BSP-2023-24-T3, Approx. Cost (in Rs.) :

₹ 1,60,66,898.32, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : ₹ 1,60,66,898.32, Date of Commencement of the Work : Mr.

E-Tender Closing Date and Time : 08.03.2024 upto 14:45 Hrs.,

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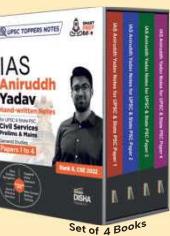
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Road Construction Department,

Road Division, Garhwa.

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(3rd Call) Date : 15.02.2024

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D17. Sri Chekka Sesha Krishna Chaitanya, S/o. St. Ch, S.R.C, Murthy, D.No. 16-4-35, Sri Surey Enclave, Apt. No.201, Vijayawada - 520020.

D18. Sri Chekka Sesha Krishna Chaitanya, S/o. St. Ch, S.R.C, Murthy, D.No. 16-4-35, Sri Surey Enclave, Apt. No.201, Vijayawada - 520020.

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Telangana
House passes
caste survey
resolution

M. Rajeev
HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has decided to take up a comprehensive door-to-door household survey for assessing social, economic, educational, employment, political and caste status of the people with a special focus on the backward classes.

The Assembly passed a resolution, tabled by Backward Classes Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, to this effect after a marathon debate spanning over five hours.

"This is not a secret exercise and will take it up in a transparent manner. There is no scope for any doubts in the caste survey for the conduct of which we have decided to allot ₹150 crore in principle," he said.

Supporting the government's move, members of the BRS, AIMIM, BJP and CPI raised questions relating to the assurance given by the Congress on the passage of a Bill paving the way for the conduct of survey, the agency that will conduct it, time frame by which the survey would be completed, proposed budget for the entire exercise and legal backing.

BRS MLA K.T. Rama Rao recalled that similar exercise taken up in Bihar encountered legal hurdles and came to a grinding halt. The exercise would be fruitful only if it had legal backing and the government should accordingly enact a legislation in this direction.

Siddaramaiah tables welfare-centric Budget ahead of Lok Sabha election

Borrowings pegged at ₹1,05,246 crore, which is 28% of Budget size of ₹3,71,383 crore; the govt. proposes to allot ₹1.2 lakh crore for various welfare programmes; it will spend ₹52,000 crore on its five guarantees; BJP and JD(S) stage walkout

Nagesh Prabhu
BENGALURU

Projecting the "Karnataka Model" of development as an example by focusing on five guarantees that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah promised would ensure positive changes in the lives of crores of people – mainly women and marginalised sections – the State Budget for 2024-25 sought to demonstrate that welfare has the pride of place in the Congress government.

Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Mr. Siddaramaiah has not levied any new taxes. The Budget pegged borrowings at ₹1,05,246 crore, which is

28% of the Budget size of ₹3,71,383 crore in 2024-25. Revenue deficit is expected to touch ₹27,354 crore.

Mr. Siddaramaiah, who holds the Finance portfolio, presented his 15th Budget in the Assembly on Friday which not only provided financial support for five guarantees, aimed at achieving equitable distribution of wealth in society, but also added more schemes for the welfare of women SHGs, gig workers, and anganwadi workers. A sum of ₹1,20,373 crore was allocated for various welfare programmes.

Targeting Centre
In a three-hour-long speech, Mr. Siddaramaiah defended the five guarantees



Siddaramaiah with his colleagues after presenting the State Budget in the Assembly on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and hit out at the Union government's "anti-people" policies for the last one decade, which he said, had led to widening inequality, concentration of wealth in few hands, and "crony capitalism".

The Chief Minister's tirade against the Centre left the BJP and the Janata Dal(S) fuming, and both staged a walkout, terming the Budget as "empty".

Mr. Siddaramaiah hit out at the Opposition for their criticism, saying that they rest on the soaring aspirations of the people. The Budget proposed to

spend ₹52,000 crore in 2024-25, which is 23.68%

of GSDP.

Gruha Jyothi, Gruha Lakshmi, Yuva Nidhi, and Anna Bhagya.

The Budget displayed an 18% increase in GST and 12% growth in State-owned taxes. Mr. Siddaramaiah added that the Centre's "unscientific" implementation of GST has caused loss of ₹59,294 crore to the State during 2017-2024.

Of the total expenditure, the revenue expenditure was estimated at ₹2,90,531 crore and capital expenditure at ₹55,877 crore.

The fiscal deficit was

estimated at ₹82,981 crore,

and the total outstanding

liabilities was estimated to

reach ₹6,65,095 crore in

2024-25, which is 23.68%

of GSDP.

Drama in KU Senate as LDF opposes Governor's nominee

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

High drama unfolded at the Kerala University Senate meeting on Friday as it witnessed the unusual participation of Higher Education Minister R. Bindu for the discussion on nominating a representative to the Vice-Chancellor selection committee.

While the Left Democratic Front (LDF)-backed members, who constitute the majority in the Senate, opposed Governor Arif Mohammed Khan's directive, pro-United Democratic Front (UDF) members and those nominated by the Governor proposed separate candidates to be chosen as the university's nominee.

Soon after Ms. Bindu read out the agenda for the meeting, the LDF members highlighted its purported illegality and moved a motion to call off the discussion. The Minister soon declared the resolution as passed and concluded the meeting.

However, this was contested by Prof. Kunnummal, who reasoned that he was the chairperson of the meeting. However, Ms. Bindu stood her ground and claimed that she was empowered by the University Act to preside over Senate meetings in her capacity as Pro Chancellor.

Nonetheless, the UDF members proposed the name of the former Vice-Chancellor of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit M.C. Dilip Kumar, while the Governor's nominees recommended former Vice-Chancellor of the Kerala University of Health Sciences M.K.C. Nair as the representative to the selection committee.

Elephant claims one more life in Wayanad

The Hindu Bureau
KALPETTA

An employee of the Kuruvai Deepa eco-tourism centre in Wayanad who was attacked by a wild elephant, succumbed to his injuries on Friday. The deceased, Paul, 52, of Pakkam, near Pulpally was a temporary guide at the centre.

The incident occurred around 9.30 a.m. when he was on duty at the centre. Though Paul was rushed to

the Government Medical College Hospital at Mananthavady and to Kozhikode, he succumbed to his injuries.

Preliminary reports revealed that internal injuries were the cause of death. An autopsy would be performed on Saturday.

The BJP, UDF, and the LDF called for a separate hartal on Saturday seeking a permanent solution to protect the lives of re-curving wildlife attacks from

Karnataka HC rejects plea by Kerala CM's daughter

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court on Friday rejected the petition filed by Exalogic Solutions Private Limited, a company owned by T. Veena who is the daughter of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, questioning the action of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) ordering a probe by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) into



Pinarayi Vijayan

the affairs of the company.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna told the advocates representing the petitioner and the Centre that a copy of the Act, has not reached its logical conclusion.

the order would be released on February 17.

The court has rejected the contention of the petitioner that there exists a bar on the Union government ordering an investigation under Section 212 of the Companies Act in larger public interest when the probe, ordered earlier through the Inspectors of the Registrar of Companies (RoC) under Section 210 of the Act, has not reached its logical conclusion.



Senate members nominated by Governor Arif Mohammed Khan outside Kerala University.

quarters under a tight security blanket in anticipation of untoward incidents.

Soon after Ms. Bindu read out the agenda for the meeting, the LDF members highlighted its purported illegality and moved a motion to call off the discussion. The Minister soon declared the resolution as passed and concluded the meeting.

However, this was contested by Prof. Kunnummal, who reasoned that he was the chairperson of the meeting. However, Ms. Bindu stood her ground and claimed that she was empowered by the University Act to preside over Senate meetings in her capacity as Pro Chancellor.

Fearing the possibility of protests by the Students Federation of India (SFI) as seen at Calicut University, 13 of the newly nominated members, supposedly backed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), reached the Senate hall two hours before the meeting.

The Thiruvananthapuram City police brought the Kerala University head-

IN BRIEF



Formulate policy to manage man-animal conflict, says HC

The Kerala High Court on Friday asked the State government about formulating a comprehensive policy to deal with man-animal conflict in the State. Justice Devan Ramachandran, while hearing a case relating to wild boar attacks on humans, observed that the government should formulate a comprehensive plan for the management of man-animal conflicts as permitted under the Wildlife Protection Act. The court said that unless the plan was formulated immediately, it would be difficult to deal with the situation in a few years from now.

Fibernet case: A.P. CID files chargesheet against Naidu

Alleging that the former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu indulged in manipulation of tender process to allot the work order for the Fibernet Project in 2015 to favour a company, the A.P. Crime Investigation Department filed a chargesheet on Friday at a Vijayawada court. It alleged that Mr. Naidu was responsible for removing M/s Terasoftware Pvt. Ltd. from the blacklist and awarding the tender. He also influenced the officers to include Venuri Harikrishna Prasad (another accused) in various tender evaluation committees.

Lender tries to kill boy after parents fail to repay loan

A moneylender allegedly attempted to kill a boy after his parents reportedly failed to repay their loan in Nandyal district in Andhra Pradesh on Friday. Bhoopal and his wife borrowed money from several people through a woman Venkata Lakshmmma, but failed to repay. Later, the woman approached a person Sudhakar, who kidnapped their son. He reached Vinopenta forest area, strangled him and left the spot. However, passersby admitted him to the GH. The parents shifted him to a hospital in Kurnool.

Elephant calf rescued from well in Ernakulam



The rescued elephant calf. PTI

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A nearly four-year-old elephant calf that accidentally fell into an open well on Friday morning at the Malayattoor Forest Division was rescued.

Rescue operations began a few hours after the forest officials mobilised their workforce and machines. Earth was dug using an excavator to create a pathway for the animal to walk out of the well.

The calf was safe as there was not much water inside the well. The animal walked through the pathway to safety, said a senior forest official.

The rubber plantation is located close to the forest area. It's also an elephant range area occupied by the herd, the official added.

A 15-member herd was waiting for the calf nearly two kilometres away from the well. The rescued calf was seen moving towards the herd. The forest officials were tracking movement of the calf to ensure that it reunites with the herd, the official said.

Forest officials from the Kodanad and Malayattoor Forest ranges, Fire and Rescue Services personnel and veterinarians were part of the rescue mission.



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Bihar Bio-Fuels Production Promotion Policy, 2023

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Bihar Industrial Investment Promotion Policy, 2016

- STAMP DUTY & REGISTRATIONS FEE : 100% Exemption
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- INTEREST SUBVENTION INCENTIVE : 10% of Term loan for a period of five years, maximum Rs. 20 crs.
- TAX RELATED INCENTIVES : 100% SGST reimbursement and 100% Electricity Duty reimbursement for a period of five years.
- EMPLOYMENT COST SUBSIDY : 50%-100% reimbursement of expenditure on account of contribution toward ESI and EPF.
- SKILL DEVELOPMENT SUBSIDY : Rs 20,000 per employee.

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(Directorate of Soil Conservation)
Jharkhand Agriculture Machinery testing & Training Center (JAMTTC)
4th Floor Room No. 403, Krishibhawan, Kanke Road Ranchi-834008
E-mail-edjanmttc@gmail.com, Website- www.jamttc.org.

CORRIGENDUM
Tender notice PR 317415 Agriculture 23-24_D date 31.01.2024
Selection of Third-Party Assessment Agency (TPAA) For Monitoring & Evaluation of State Mechanization Scheme titled as "Distribution of Agriculture Equipment to Farmers, Women SHG Etc." implemented/ implementing During Financial Year 2020-21 to 2024-25, tender document dated 31.01.2024
In continuation of the implementation of Tender notice PR 317415 Agriculture 23-24_D date 31.01.2024 a Pre-Bid meeting was held on 12.02.2024. The decision taken the following amendment is incorporated & same amendment has been incorporated as a part of the tender document published on the website www.jamttc.org
Read the following amendment/ incorporation with both Para no 10 & 11 page no 9 Registered MSEs may be exempted from document fee & EMDB only with the provision of "Jharkhand Procurement Policy 2014"
Rest all the term & condition will be same as published in Tender notice PR 317415 Agriculture 23-24_D date 31.01.2024
Sd/-
Executive Director (Ag Engg) JAMTTC Ranchi
PR 319144 (Agriculture)23-24'D

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PUBLIC NOTICE
Public at large are hereby informed that below mentioned documents have been registered with us:-
(1) Original Sale Deed dated 27.02.1973 over plot no. 10000000000000000000 Limited in favour of Mrs. Savitri Dubre duly registered as Doc. No. 1394, (2) Power of Attorney dated 07.05.2007 in favour of Mr. Anil Kumar Dubre, Eight pages (which includes the original power of attorney and the witness page) of the Original General Power of Attorney dated 07.05.2007 in favour of Mr. Anil Kumar Dubre, Eight pages (which includes the original power of attorney and the witness page) of the Original Gift Deed dated 20.05.2007 executed by Mrs. Savitri Dubre in favour of Mr. Pratap Dubre in favour of Mrs. Monika Dubre duly registered as Doc. No. 1395, (3) Deed of Assignment dated 25.10.2013, Greater Kailash-II, New Delhi-110048 A copy of the Deed of Assignment has already been lodged dated 25/12/2023 in P.S. - Crime Branch Delhi, Deed no. 1373447 dated 15.12.2023 and the same is under investigation. And now Mr. Anil Kumar Dubre, Mrs. Monika Dubre and Mr. Pratap Dubre Agarwal and Mrs. Indira Agarwal has approached us for registration of the NOK BANK for loan against mortgage of above said property. If any person has doubt about the genuineness of the knowledge of above said Original Sale Deed dated 27.02.1973 or doc no. 1394, please approach the concerned Power of Attorney dated 07.05.2007 and Deed of Assignment dated 25.10.2013 and the original Gift Deed dated 20.05.2007 doc no. 1395 or has any claim/rights of any kind in the above said property then submit /transmit within 15 days in writing to VIKAS SHAKTI, 101, GROUND FLOOR, 19-20, KALI NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110015. Thereafter any kind of claim will not be accepted.

HISTORY v. S. BALIYAN

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Address: Superintending Engineer, 10th Circle, HPWD Bilaspur, Email id: hp-bil@nic.in

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)
The Superintending Engineer, 10th Circle HPWD, Bilaspur on behalf of Governor Himachal Pradesh invites the pre-qualified contractors for the execution of works for maintenance of roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-III of 2023-24 in the District of Bilaspur as detailed in the Table below from the eligible contractors registered with HPWD Govt./Central Govt. agencies.

Job No.	Division	Package No.	Name of the Road	Package Length (in Kms)	Job Length (in Kms)	Period of Completion (Months)	Estimated Cost Excluding GST (Rs Lakh)	Total Cost excluding GST (Rs Lacs)	Bid Security in Lakh	
3 (CTB)	Bilaspur Dist. II	HP01172	T01-Galewali Ghatwali	25.640	25.640	18 months	2382.91	154.17	2537.08	50.74

Last Date/Time and place for receipt of bids through e-procurement:
Bids can be submitted 2nd time online from 17.02.2024 at 10:30 Hours to 28.02.2024 at 10:00 Hours and will be opened on 28.02.2024 at 11:30 Hours in the office of Superintending Engineer, 10th Circle, HPWD, Bilaspur.

The bidders are advised to note other details of tender from the department website: www.pmgsytenders.gov.in

All terms and condition will be applicable as per approved/uploaded bidding documents.
The undersigned has right to extend or cancel the bids without bearing any reasons thereof.

Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted on website www.pmgsytenders.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the website which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the ID number of CA can apply for e-tendering in PMGSY may obtain the same from the website: www.pmgsytenders.gov.in

Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the valid digital signature issued from authorized CA's can use this same in this tender.

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

The rate for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than ninety days after the deadline for bid submission.

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

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

Superintending Engineer
10th Circle, HPWD,
Bilaspur-174001
(For & on behalf of the
Governor of Himachal Pradesh)

HP / 5853/23-24
HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

Rural Works Department
Notice Inviting Tender (No.-RWD/MMGSY(AWSESH)/HQ/EI/2023-24/28)

Government of Bihar has applied for a loan/credit through the Govt. of India (GoI), to the New Development Bank (NDB), for Bihar Rural Roads Project (Phase-II) (Mukhya Mantri Gram Sampark Yojana- AWSESH) and intends to apply the funds to cover eligible payments under the contracts for construction of works as detailed in the Table-1.

Engineer-in-Chief, Rural Works Department, on behalf of Governor of Bihar invites, SBD based Percentage rate tender in electronic tendering system under Mukhya Mantri Gram Sampark Yojana-AWSESH for each of the following works including their maintenance for five years from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with RWD/RCD/CPWD/MES /Railways/Other State/Central Govt. departments.

Table-1

Sl. No.	Package	Description of the Works [CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF ROADS (A) / BRIDGES (B)]		Length (KM)	Construction Amount (In Lacs)	Maintenance Amount (In Lacs)	Total Amount (In Lacs)	Earnest Money Payable* (In Lacs)	Amount Payable to Works Division
		From	To						
1	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDS-BRRP-2-166-SAMASTIPUR	A1	Soman Saw Ke Ghar	Rameshwari Thakur Ke Ghar	0.252	24.47	1.63	26.1	0.52
	Total		1		0.252	24.47	1.63	26.1	0.52
2	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDS-BRRP-3-336-BARSOI	A1	Talmoni Tola, Alhanda	PMGSY Road Teghara to Bidiyapur	0.4	46.301	2.769	49.07	0.981
	Total		1		0.4	46.301	2.769	49.07	0.981
3	MMGSY(AWSESH)-NDS-BRRP-2-322-KISHANGANI 1	A1	Bansbari Hot Near Ayub Mill	Jamauddin Tola	0.802	84.383	10.262	94.645	
	A2	Natwara Eidgah	Natwara Bagwan Tola	1.074	129.665	16.416	146.081	6.66	Kishanganj-1
	A3	Piyankuri PMGSY Road	Bengal Border	0.808	80.349	12.167	92.516		
	TOTAL		3		2.684	254.397	38.845	333.242	6.66
	GRAND TOTAL		5		3.336	365.168	43.244	408.412	8.161

Table-2

Downloading of Bidding Documents	From 01.03.2024 (0900 Hours) to 21.03.2024 (1500 Hours)
Online Bid Submission last Date	on 21.03.2024 up to 1500 Hours
Offline Bid Submission last Date	on 21.03.2024 up to 1530 Hours
Online Bid Opening Date	on 21.03.2024 at 1530 Hours
Cost of Bid	Rs. 10,000.00 per package (non-refundable) only in form of Demand Draft in favour of concerned Executive Engineer.
Place, date and time of Pre-Bid Meeting	Concerned office of Superintending Engineer on 07.03.2024 from 1100 Hours

* The Earnest Money will be 2% on the sanction cost of B.O.Q only and as prescribed in clause 16.1 of Appendix to ITB of Bidding Document.

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

PR- 017430 (RWD) 2023-24

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Brave new world

India must invest in fundamental research to develop reliable drugs

Expectations are high that a free trade agreement involving India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is close to fruition. However, a bone of contention relates to intellectual property rights, and has persisted as an issue since 2008. Switzerland and Norway, which are prominent members of EFTA, host several of the pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies that are responsible for several of the drugs and therapeutics that underpin health care globally. The nature of the pharma industry – it costs much to discover a useful effective drug and relatively little to make generic copies of it – with demand that is far disproportionate to affordability, means that there is a constant tussle between the inventors and the generic-drug companies. Patenting, or an exclusive monopoly for a fixed number of years to originators and a reciprocal right by governments to issue directions for ‘compulsory licensing’ thereby selectively breaking such monopolies in the interest of public health, has brokered the peace and sustained the global pharma industry for decades. But new legal innovations such as data exclusivity continue to ingale themselves in free trade negotiations. Under this provision, all the clinical-trial data that concerns the safety and efficacy of a drug generated by the originator firm becomes proprietary and out of bounds for a minimum period of six years. Permission to make a generic is possible if a country’s regulator can rely on supplied clinical trial data to approve a drug. For this, generic makers usually rely on the originator’s published data.

The principle of data exclusivity is present among European countries as well as in agreements involving many developing countries. Were it to take effect in India, it could significantly hinder India’s drug industry which is also a major exporter of affordable drugs. Indian officials have rejected data exclusivity as a point of negotiations in the FTA, though leaked drafts of the agreement suggest that it is alive. However, India’s rise up the drug manufacturing chain in the last few decades means that it must invest in an ecosystem that can conduct ethical drug trials and make new molecules and therapeutics from scratch. The paradigm that drug development will always be expensive and confined to the West need not be permanent, as was seen in the development of several novel technology approaches to developing vaccines in India during the COVID-19 pandemic. But as preparation, India must invest substantially more in fundamental research to incubate the local drug industry into the future.

Scuttling opposition

Income-Tax department's stalling of Congress accounts seems political

In a politically loaded move, the Income-Tax department has raised a demand of ₹210 crore in penalty and as dues from the Congress, which the party says has effectively stalled the operation of all its bank accounts. On the face of it, the action seems disproportionate to the charges, and an appellate tribunal has subsequently allowed the political party to operate the accounts on the condition that an amount of ₹115 crore is kept in lieu until the case is heard next week. The party says it does not have such amounts in its current accounts. Just weeks before the general election, the principal Opposition party of the country finds itself restrained by a central agency. It is worrying that this falls into a pattern of enforcement agencies targeting those fighting the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Income-Tax department action against the Congress relates to tax returns filed by the party for FY2018-19. The party had missed the deadline of December 31, 2019 by about 45 days to file the returns. Of the receipts of ₹199 crore recorded in the income-tax returns, ₹14,40,000 was in cash, which the party says was given by its Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly. The demand of a penalty of ₹210 crore is for a 45-day delay in filing the returns, and a discrepancy, if at all, of ₹14,40 lakh. The Income-Tax department’s action appears high-handed and is clearly meant to pressure the Congress.

This unusual I-T move came to light a day after the Supreme Court of India expanded on the link between money and politics in a verdict that held the secretive electoral bond scheme to be unconstitutional. Money has the power to influence politics, and disparity in access to funds can create political inequality and distort electoral outcomes. The Court’s judgment echoed this in its verdict which held the electoral bond scheme as violative of fundamental rights. The BJP has championed the scheme that allows anonymous donors to contribute unlimited amounts to parties as an instrument to combat electoral corruption. Stalling the bank account of the Opposition, regardless of the Income-Tax department’s allegations, cannot be viewed as routine law enforcement. Weaponisation of the law against political opponents of the ruling party has become a serious threat to India’s democracy. The brazen partisanship of central agencies that target the critics of the government is undermining the political system. The claim that all this is being done for fighting corruption and ensuring transparency cannot be taken at face value. All stakeholders must be accountable in a democracy, and the ruling party more so. When accountability is invoked for scuttling the political activity of the Opposition, that can only bore ill for democracy.

A chance to stop the laundry cycle of Pakistan’s elections

With the results of last week’s elections in Pakistan, voters there have delivered their politicians a unique moment in history – one which could present the polity an opportunity to change the endless cycles of the past. These cycles have always brought those favoured by the military establishment to power in the country, followed by a period of tensions and fracture between the military and the political rulers, the dismissal of that government, the appointment of another, and then another election. Rinse, repeat.

The consistency with which each of the periods of political governments in Pakistan has met its end has produced three constants: first, none of the country’s 30 Prime Ministers thus far has completed a full term in office. Second, every current major political party, i.e., Bhutto’s Pakistani People’s Party (PPP), Sharif’s Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), and Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has at some point been the military’s ‘favourite’ in an election. And third, each of those parties has by turn fallen out of favour as well, and its leaders have found themselves imprisoned or ‘exiled’ from the country.

A rotation of the same leaders
While previous decades after 1947 saw a few political governments interspersed between military rule and martial law, since 2008, the military has played its role without actually taking over the reins of government. In this elaborate game of master-puppetry, military chiefs have had the support of all government arms and the judiciary, that have dismissed a number of Prime Ministers in a series of conveniently timed Supreme Court judgments. In 2012, PPP Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani was dismissed for contempt of court for refusing to reopen cases against then-President Asif Ali Zardari, and in 2017, PML-N Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was dismissed over the Panama Papers leak about a London apartment. Given the limited number of players in Pakistan’s polity, however, the same leaders are re-introduced into the political spin cycle by the judiciary as well. So, Mr. Sharif was able to return to Pakistan last year just in time for elections because the cases against him were overturned, and Mr. Zardari’s PPP is essaying another term for him as President if it enters into a coalition deal for the next government.

Meanwhile, Imran Khan was dismissed after a no-confidence vote in Parliament, which was ordered by the Supreme Court (it had reversed its dissolution of the house and his call for general elections in April 2022). Mr. Khan has since been convicted on charges that range from corruption to insurrection, and is also serving a seven-year prison term along with his wife Bushra Bibi for an “illegal marriage” (deemed “un-Islamic” by the courts). Apart from Mr.



Shashini Haider

Khan’s incarceration, the Pakistani courts have passed a slew of verdicts against the PTI, allowing cases against many PTI party members – some of them have quit politics rather than face repeated arrests. The country’s media regulator had already banned the PTI leader’s speeches from being aired on television. The Supreme Court also endorsed the Election Commission’s decision to deregister the PTI, and take away the party symbol (cricket bat), forcing the party to field all its candidates as independents.

With the independents surging ahead in most seats despite all this, the counting of votes, which is normally an exercise that takes some hours in Pakistan, slowed down to a crawl. Days later, the Election Commission showed a three-way result, reversing many of the early leads, which led to the current tally where none of the parties has enough to form a majority on their own; while the PTI Independents have the biggest haul of seats, the single largest party at present is the PML.

Predictably, the PML and PPP have decided to form a government together. The Election Commission will complete the formal notification of these results over the next few days, after which the Independents will have 72 hours to pledge allegiance to one or another political party, or risk losing out on a further share of proportional seats for women and minorities (allotted on a pro-rata basis to parties). One can be sure that each of the elected 93 members is already receiving threats and incentives to break away from the PTI in order to produce the establishment’s desired outcome, and perpetuate the rinse, repeat laundry cycle of previous Pakistani elections. However, Pakistan’s polity still has a chance to take the unique moment that Pakistan’s voters have provided them to change the course of that history, and to break the cycle of the past.

On the Pakistan voter

To begin with, the importance of the Pakistani voter’s actions cannot be downplayed, especially those who came to vote despite the cynicism over a pre-selected outcome. This is the voter who knew from past elections that their votes may not be counted and their mandate not respected, but still chose to vote differently from what was expected. If Mr. Khan wants to respect that vote and thwart the establishment, then the answer is not to go it alone and sit in the opposition, but, instead, to find ways to be in the government. For the PML-N and PPP, to form a government that cuts out the PTI would be a travesty of the vote as well, as this was a voter who clearly rejected the previous PML-PPP government, also led by Shahbaz Sharif (2022-2024), before the elections.

Second, each of the three major parties and leaders have suffered in more or less the same way as the others. Nawaz Sharif and Asif Zardari have an even longer history of being jailed along

with their family members, not to mention Benazir Bhutto’s struggles after her father was hanged. While none of them is blameless for the crimes they have been charged with thereafter, it is clear that those charges can vanish at the click of the establishment’s fingers, when one of the politicians is deemed serviceable or becomes the ‘laadda’ (chosen son). Before he was disqualified for corruption in 2017, Nawaz Sharif had been sentenced to life imprisonment in 2000 on charges of hijacking and terrorism, and yet, returned as Prime Minister in 2013. It would be more pragmatic then, if all of Pakistan’s leaders were to decide to be on the same page with each other, rather than with the military, and drop the practice of jailing the opposition when they are in power.

Third, given the state of Pakistan’s economy, the next government will need to adopt harsher reforms and measures to stay within the International Monetary Fund’s programme that has mandated four priorities: severe budget cuts; return to market-determined foreign exchange rates which will plunge imports; a tight monetary policy to curb inflation, and structural reforms particularly for the energy sector. There is little chance that any government, let alone one that has not won the popular vote, will emerge from this process unscathed. The only way forward is for political parties to forge a common economic agenda.

Fight authoritarian forces

There are other lessons going forward for not just Pakistan but also for other ‘hybrid’ democracies around the world, where governance comes from a merging of democratic and authoritarian forces. The first is that an electorate can never be taken for granted. If voters are a part of the system, then no matter what propaganda, pre-poll measures, or post-poll rigging are employed, it is difficult to ensure 100% predictable outcomes. Pakistan’s first elections in 1970 were able to show just that as the Awami League won the elections and insisted on forming the government even though Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was jailed. In choosing to muzzle the people of East Pakistan thereafter, its military rulers lost a large piece of their country.

Another significant outcome in 2024 is the poor showing by religious parties such as the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam and Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, and the even worse performance of violent extremists such as the Tehreek-e-Labaik, not to mention Lashkar-e-Taiba chief Hafiz Saeed’s son Talha Saeed. The real lessons, however, are for the polity globally: in the larger laundry cycle of governance, democratically-minded leaders must learn to hang together against authoritarian forces, or risk being hung out to dry sooner or later.

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Pakistan’s polity still has an opportunity to use the unique moment that voters have provided, to change course

The clear message in the Court’s ‘no’ to electoral bonds

The judgment of the Supreme Court of India, on February 15, 2024, striking down the electoral bonds scheme, is a landmark moment. Democracy requires transparency and the fact is that the electoral bonds scheme was opaque.

Voters in India have no idea who has been funding political parties and the amounts given. In all leading democracies, transparency is the basis of campaign funding. The Court has restored that transparency.

Funding limits removed

There are other legal issues. The first is the limit on funding by a corporate house or organisation. Again, the world over, this amount is limited to prevent undue influence on the government. We had such a provision India before electoral bonds were introduced. The judgment says: “The chief reason for corporate funding of political parties is to influence the political process which may in turn improve the company’s business performance.”

Electoral bonds also removed the earlier limits on how much of its profits a company could donate to political parties. The scheme even allowed loss-making companies to make donations. This could have opened the door for shell companies to be formed with the purpose of channelling funds to political parties. The Election Commission of India has said, “This opens up the possibility of shell companies being set up for the sole purpose of making donations to political parties.” This too has been reversed by the Court.

Democracies went through a phase of crony capitalism, where big money funded political parties. In return, laws, policies, schemes and incentives were made for the benefit of the donors. In a limited way, the Supreme Court’s judgment prevents this from happening in India.

There was an Amendment to the Finance Bill. In any country, the central bank alone has the authority to issue currency such as notes and bonds. Section 31 of the Reserve Bank of India



Trilochan Sastry
is Chairman and Founder, Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Professor, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore

(RBI) Act says “only the RBI or the Central Government authorized by the RBI Act shall draw, accept, make or issue any bill of exchange or promissory note for payment of money to the bearer of the note or bond.”

The Government amended the RBI Act using a Finance Act, and allowed under a new clause 31(3), the central government to authorise any scheduled bank to issue electoral bonds. This amendment to the Finance Act too has been struck down.

A well thought-out plan

We need to pause for a minute to understand a few issues. The Amendment to the RBI Act was passed in a Finance Bill as this does not have to be passed by the Rajya Sabha. At the time of the introduction of the electoral bonds scheme, the ruling party did not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha and wanted to avoid a vote in the Upper House. But can any issue be inserted into a Finance Bill? Electoral bonds have nothing to do with the provisions for a Finance Bill. Again, a number of laws were amended to introduce the electoral bonds such as the RBI Act 1934, the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951, the Income Tax Act 1961, and the Companies Act 2013. It was clearly thought-out. It was in response to a Central Information Commission (CIC) ruling that political parties have to be completely transparent about their funding. The electoral bonds were introduced to bypass the CIC ruling. But why are political parties afraid of transparency?

The legal system remains opaque to the so-called ordinary citizen and voter. When four laws are amended to introduce a scheme that strikes at the root of democracy, namely transparency, layers of obfuscation are drawn over the scheme so that the citizen gives up trying to understand it. But these are not technical issues. These are issues that affect the very basis of democracy.

This also raises fundamental issues in a democracy. Any government with a majority can

pass any Bill, which becomes law. There is no concept of an independent vote in India and ruling party members have to vote in favour of the government unlike in the United States. This means that a few people at the top of a ruling party can get almost any law they want passed. In the case of electoral bonds, processes for public consultation, and discussions in Parliament were not followed.

The essence of the judgment

The Supreme Court judgment can be summarised as follows. The electoral bonds scheme has been struck down. All Amendments to the RPA Act, the Finance Act 2017, and the Companies Act 2013 are violative of Articles 19 and 14 of the Constitution. Article 19 refers to the right to information, and Article 14 to the right to equality, where arbitrariness in law is not permissible. These Articles are part of the Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution, and cannot be violated. The Supreme Court has directed the State Bank of India (SBI), the sole bank receiving funds in exchange for electoral bonds, to stop issuing them. The SBI has to submit the full details of all electoral bonds that have been issued so far, to the Election Commission of India (ECI) by March 6, 2024. In turn, the ECI has to publish this information on its website within two weeks.

We need to note that two constitutional bodies, the ECI and the Supreme Court, have acted in favour of democracy. The power of judicial review of laws passed by Parliament on the basis of the Constitution is precious. We need to applaud the Constitution and those who framed it.

The issue of money in elections, which includes the use of black money and bribing of voters using campaign funds and freebies, remains. It is said that the price of democracy is eternal vigilance. The Supreme Court’s judgment is the outcome of vigilance by citizens. We need political parties, but it is up to us to ensure that they work for the good of society and the nation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Electoral bonds verdict

The Supreme Court judgment striking down the electoral bond scheme is assuring to every voter who now feels that his/her right to information about political funding has been restored. But, the case also contrasts how the much

lauded RTI Act was/is being continually watered down for all to see.

P.R.V. Raju,
Pondicherry, Kerala

The top court is certainly the saviour of last resort for democracy in India. One cannot help contrasting

how the ruling party has got the lion’s share of funds with how the same party has gone about financially throttling NGOs and think-tanks.

S.R. Patnaik,
Bhubaneswar, Odisha

With the scheme now

unconstitutional, the moot question is whether the earlier fund raisings are to be treated as illegal, and whether this money is tainted. Also, will the funds pooled, unutilised and lying in the bank accounts of the parties be transferred to the sovereign account or Prime

Minister’s National Relief Fund?

Sitaram Popuri,
Bengaluru

Transparency in electoral funding is one of the basic tools to ensure the healthy functioning of a democracy. That the Supreme Court

took nearly six years to see the opacity of the electoral bonds is nothing sort of a lesson for the court itself. The higher judiciary must now ensure better handling of critical cases which affect the health of democracy.

Kshitij Bhardwaj,
Rewari, Haryana

GROUND ZERO



Security personnel check motorists at the Banhoolpura area of Haldwani in Uttarakhand four days after violence broke out in the city following the demolition of a mosque and school by the authorities. R.V. MOORTHY

Sticks, stones, and bullet wounds

On February 8, municipal authorities in Haldwani, Uttarakhand, demolished a mosque and a madrasa claiming they were illegal structures. The consequent clash between the residents of the area and the police claimed the lives of five people and has left over 100 injured. Ishita Mishra reports on the incident and its aftermath

On the afternoon of February 8, Aman Hussain's brother Anas, a student of Class 8, was not home when violence broke out in Haldwani, the largest city in Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, and a gateway to Nainital, one of the most populated hill stations of north India. Worried that Anas would get caught in the melee, his father Zahid Hussain, a 48-year-old construction material supplier, went looking for him.

"Minutes later, our neighbours told us that my father was lying in a pool of blood," recalls Anas. "I took him to a clinic nearby. My stomach turned when I saw Anas lying there on a stretcher with a bullet injury below his waist."

That evening, Anas and Zahid bled to death. They were two of the four people who died during the violence that day. A fifth victim, who had been shot, succumbed to injuries days later.

Leading up to the deaths was a single event. A few hours earlier, on that cool afternoon in the foothills of the Himalayas, municipal authorities proceeded towards the Banhoolpura area with bulldozers and other heavy machinery to demolish the Mariyam mosque and the Abdul Razzaq Zakaria madrasa. Scores of angry residents, including children, gathered at the spot to protest against the demolition. The two structures were built decades ago on government land in an area popularly known as Malik Ka Baghicha, which, the authorities alleged, had been encroached upon by a contractor named Abdul Malik.

The officials claimed that the demolition was taking place as part of an ongoing "anti-encroachment drive". The stated aim of the drive was to free acres of Nazool land in order to broaden roads or build schools and bus stops. Nazool lands once belonged to kings and were later taken over by the British. After Independence, the British vacated these lands, but as there was no proper documentation of many parcels, they came to be owned by the government. Nazool land is often leased out to entities for 15 to 99 years for public purposes. Uttarakhand has over 2.42 square metres of Nazool land.

The district administration claimed that the structures under their scrutiny were not registered as a mosque and school and were illegal. They contended that they had sent notices to the "encroachers", giving them an opportunity to prove ownership of the land. When ownership could not be proved, the authorities decided to proceed with the demolition "as per due process," they said.

The police, who were accompanying the officials, managed to disperse the crowd. The demolition began and the structures, one painted green and the other cream, turned into rubble.

Minutes later, violence broke out. The police claim that the residents began throwing stones, while the men and women allege that the police began to lathi-charge them. Violence surged and the mob allegedly set fire to a police station. Dozens of vehicles, both government and private,



We have demolished over 250 structures, including temples, shops, and houses. We will not bow down to rioters.

PANKAJ UPADHYAY
Former Municipal Commissioner of Haldwani

were burnt and around 100 police personnel were injured. Several civilians received bullet, stone, and cane injuries.

To maintain law and order, the authorities imposed a curfew in the area which includes at least 8,000 homes and 50,000 people. They issued shoot-at-sight orders. Paramilitary forces were deployed, forcing residents, including those whose relatives had been admitted in hospital, to remain confined within their homes. Three First Information Reports were filed and 5,000 unidentified people booked for rioting and arson. Malik was named as the main accused.

'He was shot in the back'

When his father Mohd Israr, 55, was struck by a bullet that day and admitted in the Sushila Tiwari government medical college, Mohd Suhail, 23, stayed with him for five straight days. His mother Naseema, younger sister, and wife remained at home due to the curfew. As Internet had been suspended in the area, the family could not even call one another on video. On the fifth day, Israr, who operated a goods vehicle, died.

Israr's younger son Amaan is distraught. "My mother was brought to the hospital only to see my father's body," he says. Amaan alleges that the police fired the bullet that got lodged in his father's skull.

The fourth victim of the violence was Mohd Shabbani, 22, who ran a grocery shop. Much like how Hussain went in search of Anas on the day of the violence, Shabbani went looking for his brother Shabaz, says Riaz Mohammed, his brother-in-law. "He was shot in the back," says Riaz.

The victims' relatives say the administration

ignored the intelligence inputs which had suggested that tensions may flare up if the demolition was carried out.

Faheem Qureshi, a driver, too died that day. But his son, Javed, says that the motive for the killing was revenge. "My brother was not killed by the police or by rioters. Our neighbour, Sanjay Sonkar, had an issue with us for a long time over the construction of a wall. He got an opportunity to take revenge that day as shots were being fired from all directions," he says. The family has submitted a written complaint to the police against Sonkar but no action has been taken so far, they say.

The Senior Superintendent of Police, Haldwani, Prahlad Narayan Meena, says all the deaths are being investigated. It is during such an investigation that the police found that Prakash Singh, who had also been included in the list of victims on the day of the violence, was in fact murdered.

"Prakash was in a relationship with the wife of a police constable," says a senior police official involved in the investigation. "He happened to reach Haldwani on the day of the violence to meet her. The constable shot him dead and threw his body near the railway tracks, about a kilometre from Banhoolpura. Initially, it appeared that he was also killed in the violence. Sabre behit Ganga me haath dhoya (everyone tried to benefit from the situation)," he says.

A deserted city

Days after the violence, there are charred vehicles in every second lane of Banhoolpura. The windows of the mostly small, single-storey, and poorly constructed houses are cracked or broken. The lanes are deserted. The stench from the ditches, which have not been cleaned, has forced everyone to cover their faces. The district administration says the area has been cleaned and essential supplies provided to people.

Most houses are locked from the outside; their occupants fled Haldwani when the violence broke out. Many men have been picked up by the police for interrogation or have run away fearing arrest. The women have stayed.

Hina Bibi, 24, is six months pregnant. She runs from lane to lane asking for cooking gas. The paramilitary forces guard every corner and she cannot take the risk of violating the curfew as she has left her two-year-old child at home.

Anam Ali, 28, is inconsolable. She holds the hand of one child and carries the second in her arms. Anam alleges that the police barged into her house on February 10, two days after violence

broke out in Haldwani, thrashed her husband Rizwan, and took him away. She has neither seen nor heard of him since. "Please ask them to take me as well," she pleads while sobbing. "My husband is innocent. I can't live without him."

Firoza, whose nephew Mohd Shobir was beaten by the police, claims that the participants in the violence were not residents of Banhoolpura.

Abid Siddiqui's single-storey house, located 200 metres from the demolition spot, a paper pasted on the door announces that he saved the life of a constable, Laxshmi, who was attacked by the mob on February 8. It also provides her phone number.

"I had saved the life of the constable when a mob was beating her up. She was bleeding profusely. I pulled her into my house, gave her first aid, and helped her rejoin her squad after the situation was brought under control. I had to paste this paper on the wall after the police attempted to pick me up as well," says Abid. He alleges that police action against men, women, and children continued for days after the violence.

Taking a communal turn

Pankaj Upadhyay, the municipal commissioner of Haldwani who was transferred to Udham Singh Nagar days before the violence, says the anti-encroachment drive will continue. He believes that the violence was aimed at challenging the state machinery. "Those who are calling the demolition an attack on a particular community must know that our drive to free Nazool land has been going on since May 2023. We have demolished over 250 structures, including temples, shops, and houses. We razed the famous Rakhriya Baba temple in January. In Metropole, we demolished 164 houses built on Nazool land. We will not bow down to rioters," he says.

Condemning the violence, Sumit Hridayesh, the Congress MLA from Haldwani, says everyone involved in the violence must be punished. He alleges that the district administration and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led State government are unnecessarily playing politics over the incident.

"I heard some officials saying that the violence was an attempt to threaten the State which had passed the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) a day earlier. I found this vague and irresponsible. Why would only Haldwani's Banhoolpura, which has many Hindus, and no other place in the State have a problem with the UCC?" Hridayesh feels that the administration was playing with religious sentiments by going ahead with the demolition of the mosque without taking religious leaders into confidence.

The violence, which the administration insists is not communal, has taken a communal turn in other parts of the city. Nawab Khan, 48, who rented a house in the Chaupla Chauraha area, says he was threatened to vacate the house by a resident named Manu Goswami, who aims to be a politician. "Manu told me that Muslims will not be allowed to live in Hindu-dominated areas. My children have exams. Where will I go on such short notice?" Khan was finally forced to move out of the place on February 15 as the police issued a challan to his landlord.

Goswami says he harbours no ill-feeling towards Khan, but if a Muslim lives in an area dominated by Hindus, "it will create tension".

Ahrar Baig, a lawyer practising in the Uttarakhand High Court, says that Banhoolpura has been a "target" for some time. Last year, about 4,000 families, mostly Muslims and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes living in a 2 km stretch along the railway track in Banhoolpura, were served eviction notices by the Indian Railways on the orders of the High Court. The Railways claimed that the houses had been built illegally on its land. After weeks of protest, the residents moved the Supreme Court. The matter is now sub judice.

Baig is representing many families in this case. "During that time, the government told the High Court that there is no Nazool land in Haldwani. Now it has demolished the mosque and madrasa saying the land is Nazool," he says.

According to an interim fact-finding report published by the advocacy group Association for Protection of Civil Rights, Muslims across the State are being targeted. The members of the body visited Haldwani on February 14, and concluded that the violence was a result of "a steady rise in communal tempers...over recent years." It went on to say, "The State government...and radical right wing citizen groups have together contributed to a highly polarising narrative.... One strand of this discourse is about creating Uttarakhand as a Devbhoomi, the holy land for Hindus, which would have no place for other religious minorities. Other strands of this divisive discourse include unsupported extravagant claims of a series of jihads allegedly waged by the Muslim population of the State including love jihad, land jihad, vyapar jihad, and mazaar jihad. One consequence of this discourse has been calls for economic and social boycotts of Muslims."

In 2023, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami launched a State-wide drive to remove encroachments from forest land under which over 500 mazars (Muslim shrines) were demolished. The government says scores of temples were also razed. Dhami stated a few days after the incident in Haldwani that the situation was under control and a police station would come up at the demolition site.

Those who suffer

In the medicine ward of the Sushila Tiwari government medical college, Shahnaaz Ahmed sits next to his brother Sarfaraz, 26, who was shot in the chest on February 8. Sarfaraz, a tailor, had gone to deliver clothes to a client near the demolition site when the incident took place.

Five days since he brought Sarfaraz to the hospital, Shahnaaz has been wearing the same blood-soaked clothes. In his hurry, he forgot his wallet. He barely has money to buy clothes or even eat two meals. He sleeps on the floor without a blanket every night. "It is only the poor who get punished every time, whether during a pandemic or an incident of violence," he says. "It is better to die than to be poor in India."



Hina Bibi, 24, and the women of Banhoolpura area say many men have been picked up by the police or have fled. R.V. MOORTHY

From Page One

Congress gets relief on appeal after I-T lien

The Congress's appeal to release the hold on its accounts will be heard by the ITAT on February 21, according to Rajya Sabha member and senior advocate Vivek Tankha, who appeared before the tax tribunal on behalf of the party.

"The government hasn't just frozen our accounts, but democracy has been frozen if the principal Opposition party's account is frozen just weeks before the general elections. Will our country have a single party rule?" the Congress treasurer asked.

Assault on democracy'

Calling the I-T action "an assault on democracy", Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge appealed to the judiciary to "save the multi-party system and protect India's democracy".

In a post on X, he said: "Power drunk Modi Govt has frozen the accounts of the country's largest Opposition party - the Indian National Congress - just before the Lok Sabha elections. This is a deep assault on India's Democracy! The UNCONSTITUTIONAL money collected by the BJP would be utilised by them for elections, but the money collected by us through CROWDFUNDING shall be!"

"That is why I have said that there won't be any elections in the future... We will take to the streets and fight strongly against this autocracy!" the Congress chief said.

Youth Congress chief Srinivas B.V. led an impromptu protest in Delhi, while the party's State units plan to hold protests against the I-T department's action on Saturday.

Russian Opposition leader Navalny dies

The Federal Penitentiary Service of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District said in a statement that Mr. Navalny "felt unwell" after a walk at the IK-3 penal colony in Kharpy, about 1,900 km northeast of Moscow.

He lost consciousness almost immediately, it said.

"All necessary resuscitation measures were carried out, which did not yield positive results. Doctors of the ambulance stated the death of the convict," the prison service said, adding that causes of death were being established.

Mr. Putin has been told about Mr. Navalny's death, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. Mr. Putin, who is running for re-election in a month, was shown on a television clip visiting a factory in the Urals.

Supporters of Mr. Navalny said they could not confirm he was dead, but that if he was then they believed he had been killed.

"Russian authorities publish a confession that they killed Alexei Navalny in prison," Navalny aide Leonid Volkov wrote on social media. "We do not have any way to confirm it or to prove this isn't true."

Condemnation quickly poured in from Western governments.

"Dreadful news about Alexei Navalny... If the report about his death in Russian prison is true it represents another terrible crime by Putin's regime," Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström said on X.

"The ruthlessness against Navalny shows again why it is necessary to continue to fight against authoritarianism."

Tribal body threatens to shut govt. offices in Churachandpur

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

A day after two people were killed in Manipur's Churachandpur district during protests against the suspension of a Kuki-Zo policeman, the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) on Friday issued an ultimatum to the district Superintendent of Police, Shivanand Surve, and District Collector S. Dharan Kumar to "leave the district within 24 hours".

The ITLF, representing tribal associations in Churachandpur district, threatened to shut all government offices if the two officials did not move out. The duo would be responsible should anything untoward happen to them, the forum said.

Internet suspended

This came even as the Manipur government on Friday issued orders to suspend Internet services (including through VPNs) throughout Churachand-

pur for five days. Security forces also conducted a flag march in the area.

The protests on Thursday night were triggered by the suspension of head constable Siamlalpaul, whom the SP accused of "grave misconduct" for appearing with "village [defence] volunteers" in pictures on social media.

ITLF spokesperson Gina Vtzualong said, "The officers are not tribal-friendly. They know the situation yet they suspended a police official for merely posting images with village volunteers. No such action is taken against security forces from the Meitei community who are seen with Arambai Tenggol [armed Meitei group]. This hurt the sentiments of the people and when they gathered at the SP's office seeking an explanation against the suspension, tear gas was thrown to disperse the crowd. This further aggravated the mob. Soon, the situation went out of control."

ED probe finds no FEMA violations in Paytm case

Sources say no scheduled offences under PMLA were made out in the case of PPBL and a money laundering investigation cannot be done; the agency examined over 50 lakh wallets/accounts

Devesh K. Pandey

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has not found any violation under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) during its inquiry into Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) transactions. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has the authority to take action against certain other instances of alleged non-compliance, according to the sources privy to the matter.

On January 31, the RBI had issued a circular barring PPBL from taking further deposits, top-ups or undertaking credit transactions into its customer accounts, wallets, FASTags, and National Commuter Mobility Cards (NCMC) after February 29. The deadline has now



RBI directive: The RBI issued a circular barring PPBL from taking new deposits after February 29, which was extended to March 15.

Audit report

The action was taken on the basis of the Comprehensive System Audit report and a subsequent compliance validation report of the external auditors' reports disclosing "persistent non-compliance and continued material supervisory concerns in the bank, warrant-

ing further supervisory action".

The ED was also asked to scrutinise the financial transactions under the scanner. The agency investigates suspected violations or offences under the FEMA and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

According to sources, as there are no scheduled offences under PMLA involved in the case of PPBL, the RBI may take appropriate action in this regard.

a money laundering probe cannot be done. "If no crime is made out, there is also no generation of 'proceeds of crime' and so, PMLA does not apply," said a government official. Therefore, the ED looked into the transactions to determine if there was any violation under the FEMA provisions.

KYC compliance

It is learnt that the ED examined more than 50 lakh wallets or accounts, largely having small deposits, which did not reveal any foreign exchange rule contravention. The other alleged violations mainly pertained to Know Your Customer (KYC) compliance and other issues, on which the RBI is empowered to take action. The RBI may take appropriate action in this regard.

Sharad Pawar seeks urgent hearing in SC over EC decision

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) founder Sharad Pawar on Friday appealed to the Supreme Court for an urgent hearing of his case, saying a "strange situation" is arising by which he will be subject to the whip of his politically estranged nephew and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

Mr. Sharad Pawar had earlier moved the Supreme Court against the decision of the Election Commission (EC) to recognise Mr. Ajit Pawar's breakaway faction as the 'real' NCP. Mr. Ajit Pawar had joined the BJP-Shiv Sena coalition government.

Appearing before a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, for the elder Pawar, said his client's faction had still not been allotted a symbol.

"A strange situation is upon us. Sharad Pawar will be subject to the whip of Ajit Pawar when the Assembly starts next week," Mr. Singhvi submitted.

He said the circumstances were "worse" than what the Uddhav Thackeray faction had faced within the Shiv Sena when Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had rebelled with his camp of MLAs.

The Chief Justice assured that he would look into the plea for early listing.

Mr. Ajit Pawar has already filed a caveat in the Supreme Court, urging it to be heard before any order is passed in the special leave petition (SLP) filed by the elder Pawar.

The EC said that it had come to a conclusion in favour of Mr. Ajit Pawar after testing the aims and objectives of the party's constitution, the test of majority, and the test of majority.

I-T action on Congress bank accounts part of routine procedure

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Income-Tax department's action of freezing the Congress' main bank accounts was part of its "routine procedure" against defaulters, carried out in connection to claims for the tax assessment year 2018-19, according to sources close to the government.

Alleging partisan politics, the Opposition party claimed that its accounts had been frozen on "flimsy grounds".

According to the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) order issued on Friday, Revenue Department representatives said they "do not claim to have issued any order or direction to the concerned bank(s) for freezing the transactions in the bank account(s), but only for a lien on the amount lying in the bank account(s) up to the outstanding tax demand".

The freezing of its accounts "has affected all political activity" of the party barely weeks before the general election is to be announced, Congress leader Ajay Maken said.

However, sources close to the government said the freezing of accounts was only up to ₹105 crore, adding that the Congress was free to do other banking activities.

"The action was based on the assessment year 2018-19, wherein a claim of ₹103 crore was first lodged, and later raised to ₹105 crore, with interest added raising the claim to ₹135 crore," said a source.

"What has happened is a routine procedure, something that every tax-paying citizen has to face if they default on taxes," said the source.

The I-T Commission dismissed the cases in 2021-22, after which the Congress went to the ITAT in May 2023.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday said he had recently spoken to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the BJP "poaching" Opposition leaders by "scaring" them. His remarks comes days after former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Congress leader Ashok Chavan joined the BJP.

After inaugurating a party training camp in Lonavala, Mr. Kharge said: "During a tea meeting in Lonavala, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi was present, I asked him how many people are you [BJP] going to poach, as Ministers and ex-Chief Ministers are joining your fold?"

"He [PM] said what could he do if people want to join the BJP. I told him that [BJP] are carrying out this work [poaching] by scaring people," Mr. Kharge added.

Spoke to PM about BJP's 'poaching', says Kharge

Press Trust of India
PUNE

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday said he had recently spoken to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the BJP "poaching" Opposition leaders by "scaring" them.

His remarks comes days after former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Congress leader Ashok Chavan joined the BJP.

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"He [PM] said what could he do if people want to join the BJP. I told him that [BJP] are carrying out this work [poaching] by scaring people," Mr. Kharge added.

Mahadev promoters had plans to expand to Zimbabwe: ED

Shubhamoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) said on Friday that the Dubai-based promoters of Mahadev Online Book were planning to extend the activities of the alleged betting syndicate into Zimbabwe.

The agency made the claim on the basis of a purported disclosure by a Bhiwani resident, Nitish Diwan, 25, who was arrested on Thursday. Mr. Diwan is said to be a close associate of Sourabh Chandra and Ravi Uppal, the promoters of Mahadev app, and it is alleged that he had helped them in money laundering.

He was close to the promoters of Mahadev Online Book in Dubai and were also being used to route the illegal betting proceeds. Thus, Nitish Diwan was found to be knowingly assisting the promoters of Mahadev Online Book in their money laundering activities, it said.

The statement added that companies had also been set up in his [Mr. Diwan's] name in the UAE. "These companies provided visa services to the staff of Mahadev Online Book working in Dubai and were also being used to route the illegal betting proceeds. Thus, Nitish Diwan was found to be knowingly assisting the promoters of Mahadev Online Book in their money laundering activities," it said.

The probe into the alleged money laundering scam is based on the FIRs registered by the Chhattisgarh police.

Uttarakhand police release posters of miscreants

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Uttarakhand police on Friday released posters of nine miscreants wanted in connection with the violence at Banbhopur in Haldwani city.

Senior Superintendent of Police Prahlad Narayan Meena said 42 people had been arrested so far based on CCTV footage. "Illegal weapons and cartridges were recovered from those arrested," the SSP said.

He added that the posters of the nine miscreants involved in the incident have been stuck across the city. He hoped that people would reach out to the police in case they have any information about the rioters' whereabouts.

Meanwhile, Additional Director-General of Police Amit Sinha took stock of the situation at Banbhopur on Friday, after the district administration relaxed curfew in the area.

Ahead of polls, FCI plans to deliver foodgrains in bags with PM's photo

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI



With an imprint: Under PMGKAY, free foodgrains are to be provided to 81.35 crore beneficiaries. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

In the run-up to the Lok Sabha election, the Union government is ensuring that the brand of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is displayed conspicuously on foodgrain bags to be distributed under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKAY).

Under the PMGKAY, free foodgrains are to be provided to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries of Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AYA) and Priority Households (PHH). The Central government has claimed that during the implementation of the PMGKAY in financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22, more than 75 crore beneficiaries have received foodgrains.

In a circular dated January 12, 2024, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) wrote to all its 26 regional offices asking them to float tenders for procuring woven laminated bags with an indicative logo of Mr. Modi, in order to distribute food-

grains under the PMGKAY. The branding of bags with faces of political figures has begun in 2024, ahead of the election, said an official in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. The official added that Kerala may shy away from placing orders for bags with the branding.

While Rajasthan and Nagaland have issued supply letters, the FCI's regional office in Dibrugarh, in the RTI reply. The reply also stated that Nagaland had ordered a quantity of 329 bales, without elaborating on the number of bags contained in each bale.

"During the free grain distribution under the scheme, the agency may seek information about the transactions from her. During the inquiry, sources said, the

ED inquiry into NRE account triggered summons to Mahua

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has initiated an inquiry under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) into transactions made using a Non-Resident External (NRE) account, over which it has summoned Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra for questioning, sources said.

Ms. Moitra has been asked to appear before an ED team at the agency's New Delhi headquarters for recording her statement on February 19.

It is learnt that the Income Tax department had earlier found the details of the account, which were shared with the ED, for a follow-up inquiry to ascertain if there was any violation of FEMA provisions. As Ms. Moitra was allegedly linked to the account, the agency may seek information about the transactions from her. During the inquiry, sources said, the

agency may also look into Ms. Moitra's expenses made overseas and source of funds. Under FEMA provisions, the ED may impose a penalty or attach assets worth the amount sent overseas if any violation is established.

The former Trinamool MP had been accused of taking bribes for asking questions in Parliament. In December 2023, she was expelled from the House after a report of an ethics panel held her guilty of "unethical conduct" for sharing her Lok Sabha credentials with unauthorised persons.

M. ND

Cong slams police action on protesting farmers

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Condemning the police action on protesting farmers at the Shambhu Barrier, the Congress on Friday urged the Narendra Modi government to fulfil its promises on providing legal guarantee for minimum support price and other demands.

Addressing a press conference here, Punjab MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira, who heads the All India Kisan Congress, hit out at the Haryana government and alleged that the State police were creating impediments and committing brutality on peaceful farmers who want to proceed to Delhi to remind the Union government of its promise.

Mr. Khaira said the government should withdraw all criminal cases against the farmers booked during the last agitation two years ago and adequate compensation be paid to families of 700 farmers who lost their lives during the long protest.

"Farmers cannot be called secessionists given that they die for the country and their sons are defending the country's borders," Mr. Khaira said. He further said while M.S. Swaminathan had been named for the Bharat Ratna, none of the recommendations made by him had been accepted.

SKM's nationwide shutdown call evokes mixed response

Strike a success, say Morcha and trade unions, even as farmers continue to camp on inter-State boundary on day four of the protest; Centre and farmers to hold next round of talks tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

The nationwide shutdown call given by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) evoked mixed response in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh on Friday.

The 'Grameen Bharat bandh' call was given by the SKM to press the Central government to accept the farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP).

Normal life was disrupted in Punjab owing to the bandh. Shops and commercial establishments were seen completely or partially closed in most of the rural parts of the State. In major cities including Patiala and Ludhiana, shops and commercial establishments were open.

Farmers squatted on roads, including national highways in Pathankot, Tarn Taran, Bathinda and Jalandhar, disrupting traffic. As buses stayed off the roads, commuters faced problems.

In Chandigarh, the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana, shops and commercial establishments were open in most of the markets. Vehicular traffic was also close to normal in the



Major closure: Farmers blocking the Chandigarh highway in Patiala during the Grameen Bharat bandh on Friday.

city.

In Haryana, the bandh had a partial impact. Members of the Bhartiya Kisan Union (Churu) staged demonstrations at several toll plazas across the State. In Hisar, the Haryana Roadways services were affected as its employees stayed away from work.

Demonstrations were held against the Centre in parts of Himachal Pradesh including the State capital, Shimla.

The SKM and 10 Central trade unions (CTUs) claimed that the strike was a "big success."

Separately, the protesting farmers from Punjab, who had been stopped from marching to Delhi, continued to camp at different locations on the inter-State boundary with Haryana on Friday even as another round of meeting between farmer representatives and the Union Ministers is scheduled for Sunday.

Tear gas shelling on

On the fourth day of protest on Friday, tension was palpable as the Haryana Police again fired tear gas shells to disperse the protesting farmers when they moved towards the barricades at the Shambhu barrier near Ambala. In its post on X, the Haryana Police said vio-

lence can't be allowed under the guise of a farmers' movement and urged the protesters not to disrupt law and order, and to protest peacefully. The police alleged that despite their assurance of a peaceful protest, the protesters were creating a ruckus.

Farmer leaders, meanwhile said that they were adhering to peace, and it was the Haryana security personnel who were using force against protesters by hurling tear gas shells and firing rubber bullets.

'Positive discussions'
Amid the continuing protest, the Union Ministers and farmer leaders said they held "positive" discussions in the meeting that concluded on the intervening night of Thursday-Friday. This was the third meeting between the farmer leaders and the Centre, after the first two meetings remained inconclusive.

After the meeting, which discussed the farmers' demands, including giving a legal guarantee to the minimum support price, Union Minister Arjun Munda said the meeting was held in a very cordial manner in which positive deliberations took place. "Together, we will find a solution peacefully," he said.

He added that the Union government has had a good round of talks with the farmers' leaders and the next round of talks will be held on Sunday. "I am fully confident that the talks will be cordial on Sunday as well and we will work towards a resolution of issues," he said.

He added that "no government at the Centre has done as much for farmers as the Modi government".

INBRIEF



'Doors always open' for Nitish in Mahagathbandhan: Lalu

Replying to a question whether Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar would be invited back into the Mahagathbandhan (grand alliance), Rashtrastra Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad on Friday said his "doors are always open" for Mr. Kumar. He was on his way to Jandahe Bihar's Vaishali district to attend a private event when presspersons posed the query. Later, Janata Dal (United) spokesperson Neeraj Kumar, reacting to Mr. Prasad's comment said, "We have locked the doors with an Aligarh lock. Our leader Nitish Kumar has clearly said that whenever RJD had shared power with us, it engaged in corruption. There is no question of going back."

CBI facilitates return of life convict from UAE

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has coordinated the return of a life convict from the UAE through Interpol channels. The Interpol Red Notice subject Narender Singh was wanted by the Haryana police. He was tracked down to the UAE through a close follow-up by the CBI with its counterparts there. Subsequently, a team of the State's special task force escorted him back to India. Singh was wanted in a case registered for the offences of murder, rioting and voluntarily causing grievous hurt. He was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment on October 24, 2009. However, as alleged, Singh had escaped to the UAE by then.

On the draw



INDIA bloc will ensure MSP legal guarantee: Rahul

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

If the INDIA bloc comes to power, it will ensure that farmers get a legal guarantee that they will be paid minimum support prices (MSPs) for their crops. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi vowed on Friday. He added that farmers are currently "not getting the right price" for their produce.

Thousands of farmers are currently in a face-off with the Union government at the Punjab-Haryana border as they at

tempt to march to Delhi with a seven-point agenda, including a long-standing demand for legally guaranteed MSPs. An umbrella farmers' group, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), called for a nationwide strike on Friday to press

their demands.

Addressing the Kisan Nyay Mahapanchayat in Sasaram in Bihar's Rohtas district as part of his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, Mr. Gandhi said that things would be different if the Opposition alliance, which includes the Congress, is voted to power in the up-

coming Lok Sabha election.

"I can guarantee one thing, whenever farmers have asked anything from the Congress party – be it waiving their loans, MSPs, or the Green Revolution – we have never backed out. We have always protected you and will keep protecting the farmers," he said.

"Farmers are not getting the right price for their yield such as paddy, wheat, pulses and vegetables. I have taken a revolutionary decision to implement a legal MSP guarantee if the INDIA bloc

comes to power. We will implement what the Swaminathan report says," he added.

A report by a panel headed by the late M.S. Swaminathan, posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna last week, had recommended a formula for MSPs which would result in higher rates being paid to farmers.

'No time for farmers'
Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav, who was accompanying Mr. Gandhi,

also slammed the Union government's attitude toward farmers. "Prime Minister [Narendra Modi] has time to meet [actor] Priyanka Chopra, but he does not have time to meet our brother farmers," Mr. Yadav said.

This was the first time that Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Yadav have shared the stage since their erstwhile ally, Janata Dal (United) leader and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, snapped ties with them to rejoin the BJP-led NDA. The Congress leader praised Mr. Yadav's efforts against unemployment.

'We did nothing wrong, we are not enemies of Qatar'

Former Navy Commander Amit Nagpal, who was released by Qatar, says he still does not know why he and his colleagues were arrested for espionage and thanks Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian Embassy for their efforts to get them released; he dismisses reports about Israel links



Commander Amit Nagpal with his family. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

I came to know I was going to be free only when I walked out of that facility [prison in Haryana on February 11] and I saw [Indian Ambassador Bipul] standing in front of me. I asked him, "Are we out? Are we going home?" He said, "Yes, you're going home." And that's the moment I realised... Before that we had no clue at all about what's going to happen. The suddenness with which we went in... with the same suddenness we came out. Even my wife who had been in Qatar throughout this ordeal had no clue this was going to happen. So it was a very, very pleasant surprise.

Why did you decide to move to Qatar?

Well, there was this opportunity to train the Qatari Navy. I have been a career naval officer since 1990. I joined NDA in 1987. So, this is my core competence,

and they gave me an opportunity to train another country, which I was happy to do. India has been training in this region for a long time. We were the first to go in there... So it was great to get connected to a company which was training in the Middle East and we did immensely well. Unfortunately, it had to end this way.

Tell us about the arrest...

The minute I was arrested, I knew things were very serious, but I always believed that as I had done nothing

wrong, if not today, certainly tomorrow I would be out of this mess. And I had full faith that the authorities would understand that we had done nothing wrong at all. So I didn't really think about the charges because I knew I was innocent.

And then in October 2023, the court pronounced the death sentence against all eight of you...

Those were the most difficult days. When I spoke next to my wife, she said that the government is

now going to take the charges more seriously. They were going to meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and that gave me a lot of confidence.

It was after that sentence that we saw the intervention at the highest level by Prime Minister Modi on December 1. Do you wish it had come earlier and who do you credit with your freedom?

I can't go into whatever has happened, but I guess so... If [the intervention] could have happened now, it could have happened earlier as well. But it's behind us now. I want to thank my wife, my children, and my mother who were alone at home most of the time. I would credit the government and our Prime Minister – this [release] could have happened only at the highest level. There's no doubt in my mind that the release order would have come from the Emir. [Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani] would have only given the order if the Prime

Minister had spoken to him. I am sure that is connected. So I would like to thank both the Emir, Government of Qatar as well as our own Prime Minister. He is definitely the man who got us out.

Many reports suggested geopolitical factors were behind your arrest – some connected it to India's position on the Israel-Hamas conflict, others pointed to a Pakistani connection. How did these factors affect you?

Why were we arrested and why did we go through this – I have no clue why it happened. I hope in the future, sometime, I do come to know why we actually went through this [ordeal]. Were we really to blame, because we did nothing wrong. All these media reports about Israel – these are all utter nonsense. We had done nothing at all. We are not enemies of Qatar.

Full interview: bit.ly/aminagnpal

Farmers and youth neglected under BJP regime, says Rahul

Mavankumar
LUCKNOW

Alleging that the Modi government is working for a "select group of rich people", senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Friday that injustice is being done to farmers, poor and unemployed youth of the country.

"There is a fight of ideologies going on in the country. People think that it is a political fight, a fight for power, but the foundation of this fight is of ideology, of two opposing ideologies. Injustice is being done to farmers, poor and unemployed youth of the country.

"During the temple consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Mr. Gandhi highlighted the presence of India's elite there, adding that the poor are neglected by the ruling dispensation in all spheres, much like the Ram Temple ceremony.

"Speaking about the consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Mr. Gandhi highlighted the presence of India's elite there, adding that the poor are neglected by the ruling dispensation in all spheres, much like the Ram Temple ceremony.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi waving to supporters during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Chandauli, Uttar Pradesh, on Friday.

Speaking about the consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Mr. Gandhi highlighted the presence of India's elite there, adding that the poor are neglected by the ruling dispensation in all spheres, much like the Ram Temple ceremony.

INTERVIEW

Commander Amit Nagpal

Suhasini Haider

Days after returning to India along with his colleagues after being released by Qatar in an alleged espionage case, former Indian Navy Commander Amit Nagpal says he has no idea why they were arrested. Protecting his innocence, Commander Nagpal speaks about his ordeal, and that of his family for the past 18 months. He thanks Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian Embassy for their efforts to have them released. While seven men have returned to India, the eighth, former managing director of Daha Global Technologies and former Commander Purvendu Tiwari, is still in Doha, believed to be under a travel ban. Excerpts:

How did you hear about

CM

YK

ND-ND

INBRIEF



Ensure that wheelchairs are available, DGCA tells airlines

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has served a show-cause notice on Air India and issued an advisory to all airlines to ensure availability of adequate wheelchairs after an 80-year-old passenger collapsed at Mumbai airport and later passed away. The octogenarian, Babu Patel, and his wife arrived on Air India's New York-Mumbai flight on February 12. They had both requested a wheelchair. Only one wheelchair was available which Mrs. Patel used. The DGCA said in a press statement that Air India was served a show-cause notice for violating the Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR) on the carriage of persons with disability. The airline has to submit a reply to the DGCA within seven days.

SC orders district-wise review of facilities in jails for women

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered a district-wise consideration of conditions and facilities available for inmates within the four walls of women's jails across the country. Issuing notice to the Centre and States, a Bench headed by Justice Hima Kohli tasked committees in districts comprising the senior most women judicial and police officers along with superintendents of women's jails, wherever possible, to inspect the security, hygiene, healthcare infrastructure, and welfare measures for women prisoners and children residing with them. The court directed State governments to collate the data and file a status report on April 5.

Refinery told to pull down wall in elephant corridor

The Gauhati High Court declined to provide relief to an eastern Assam refinery that challenged an order by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to demolish a boundary wall of its planned township built in an elephant corridor. Dismissing two writ petitions by Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) against an eight-year-old NGT order, Justice Devashish Baruah said the public sector company was not entitled to any relief. The NGT asked the Assam government not to allow any activities within a radius of 15 km of NRL and notify the conversion of Deopahar, an elephant corridor, into a reserve forest.

Law panel recommends law to register NRI marriages

The Law Commission, in a report submitted to the Union government, has suggested a comprehensive law to register marriages of non-resident Indians (NRIs) to deal with situations arising out of "fraudulent marriages". Chairman Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi (retired) said the commission is of the opinion that the proposed legislation should be enough to cater to all facets involving marriages of NRIs as well as foreign citizens of Indian origin with that of Indian citizens. "It is further recommended that all marriages between the NRIs/OCIs and Indian citizens should be made compulsorily registered in India," Justice Awasthi said.

Torpedoes, refueller aircraft in new deals cleared by DAC

The acquisition projects worth ₹84,560 crore also include new-generation anti-tank mines, radars, medium-range maritime reconnaissance and multi-mission maritime aircraft for Navy, Coast Guard

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) on Friday accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN), the first step in the procurement process, for proposals worth ₹84,560 crore.

The proposals include some long-pending deals – such as for heavy weight torpedoes (HWT) for the Navy's Scorpene-class submarines and flight refueller aircraft (FRA) for the Indian Air Force (IAF) – beginning afresh.

Other major deals include medium range maritime reconnaissance and multi-mission maritime aircraft for the Navy and the Coast Guard, new generation anti-tank mines, air defence tactical control radar, and software-defined radios.

"Further, to keep the Indian naval ships one step ahead of the threats posed by the adversaries, the AoN under Buy (Indian) category has been accorded for procurement of active-



The DAC has accorded nod for procurement of torpedoes to enhance the attacking capabilities of Kalvari class submarines.

towed array sonar having capabilities to operate at low frequencies and various depths for long-range detections of adversary submarines. The AoN has also been accorded for procurement of HWT for enhancing the attacking capabilities of Kalvari class submarines," the Defence Ministry said. "The DAC accorded AoN for procurement of FRA for enhancing the operational capabilities and the reach of the IAF."

Deals for HWTs, FRAs and towed-array sonars have been repeatedly de-

layed and the process now begins again. The delays were due to allegations of corruption and in the interim, the existing older generation torpedoes have been customised to fire from the Scorpene. With delays in their procurement, the IAF has been looking to lease aircraft for training purposes and keep the existing six IL-76 aircraft for operational tasks.

The AoN for procurement of medium-range maritime reconnaissance and multi-mission maritime aircraft, has been

granted by the DAC for strengthening the surveillance and interception capabilities of the Navy and the Coast Guard over the country's vast maritime area.

DAP 2020'

The procurement of a new generation of anti-tank mines having seismic sensors and the provision of remote deactivation with additional safety features has been approved under Buy (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured category of Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020.

The DAC has approved amendments in the DAP 2020 with respect to benchmarking and cost computation, payment schedule and procurement quantity.

The DAC also cleared the AoN for sustainment support through repair replenishment for the 24 MH-60R multi-role helicopters procured by the Navy from the U.S. under the foreign military sale route.

Coaching centres can't use misleading ads: draft guidelines

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), an arm of the Consumer Affairs Ministry, has released draft guidelines for the "Prevention of misleading advertisement in coaching sector", which bring such offences under the radar of the Consumer Protection Act. The CCPA has invited public comments on the three-page guidelines. The CCPA had formed a subcommittee to draft the guidelines earlier after discussions with several stakeholders. The last date for submitting suggestions is March 16.

The Ministry said in a release that the draft guidelines have been framed after detailed deliberations with all stakeholders, including coaching institutes, law firms, government and voluntary consumer organisations. It has defined coaching as "tuition, instructions or academic support or learning programme or guidance" provided by any person. Any individual who engages in coaching

shall be considered to be engaging in a misleading advertisement if important information related to the course, such as whether it is free or paid, and duration opted by the successful candidate, is concealed.

Such guidelines were initiated after widespread complaints against certain coaching centres for misusing the names and photos of successful candidates in various competitive examinations, including the civil services exam. Making false claims regarding success rates, number of selections, or rankings of students in any competitive exam without providing verifiable evidence, falsely representing students' success as solely attributable to the coaching, without acknowledging the individual efforts of the students and creating a false sense of urgency or fear of missing out that may heighten anxieties amongst students, or parents will be considered as misleading under the new guidelines.

"Guidelines would be made applicable to every person engaged in coaching...," the Ministry said.

No reprieve for AAP's Kejriwal, Sanjay Singh in Modi degree row

Mahesh Langa
AHMEDABAD

In a major setback to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his colleague and Member of Parliament Sanjay Singh, the Gujarat High Court on Friday dismissed their plea to quash the summons issued against them in a criminal defamation case filed by the State University over their comments on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's educational qualification.

Mr. Kejriwal and Mr. Singh had challenged the summons by a trial court in the case filed by the Gujarat University and the subsequent order of the sessions court dismissing their revision applications against the summons.

Rejecting their applications, Justice Hemashuk Suthar directed the two AAP leaders to make their submissions before the trial court.

Justice Suthar held that

the magistrate's preliminary opinion – that statements made by Mr. Kejriwal and Mr. Singh are prima facie defamatory to the University, "is tentative in nature and not conclusive", with such issues being "subject to trial", with all defences being available to the accused during trial proceedings.

Seeking the quashing of the summons, the two leaders had said that the University cannot file a defamation case before a magistrate court and rather should move the sessions court.

The metropolitan court had summoned both the leaders on April 15 last year in the defamation case filed by GU over their "sarcastic" and "derogatory" statements in connection with PM Modi's degree.

Subsequently, the two leaders had filed a revision application in the sessions court challenging the summons.

Justice Suthar held that

Use Chabahar port, India tells Central Asian countries

Kailash Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India has urged Central Asian countries to use the port of Chabahar located on the southeast coast of Iran to enhance connectivity and trade with India and other countries in the world.

Participating in the sixth Regional Dialogue of Secretaries of Security Councils/National Security Advisers on Afghanistan in Kyrgyz capital Bishkek, India's Deputy National Security Adviser Vikram Misri called for an "inclusive and representative" government in Afghanistan and said the approach towards the Taliban-ruled country should be based on consensus.

During his interaction with delegates from Iran, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Mr. Misri invited "Central Asian neighbours to utilise the Chabahar port as well as the Shahid Beheshti terminal by diplomats from over in Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad by diplomats who did not leave India.

The discussion at Bishkek came days after barely a fortnight after the head of the Indian 'technical team' at Kabul participated in a discussion in Kabul with the stakeholders in Afghanistan that was chaired by the Taliban's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. India's participation at the regional discussion had raised eyebrows. On February 15, India highlighted "legitimate economic and security interests in Afghanistan" and argued that New Delhi "steadfast with its policy in support of peace, security and connectivity in the region."

India has not recognised the Taliban outfit which came to power in August 2021 after the end of the U.S. occupation. Last November, the old embassy of Afghanistan that was being run by diplomats aligned with the old regime of President Ashraf Ghani shut down and the facilities have been taken over in Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad by diplomats who did not leave India.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES
"Our common immediate priorities include providing humanitarian assistance, ensuring formation of a truly inclusive and representative government, combatting terrorism and drug trafficking and preserving the rights of women, children and the minorities," the Indian side stated in Bishkek.

'Centre studying SC order on poll bonds'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A day after the Supreme Court struck down the electoral bonds scheme as unconstitutional, government sources said the order "was being studied".

While no precipitate action is being contemplated with the polls around the corner, the scheme had been brought to reduce black money in the electoral system, a source said.

"The election bonds scheme was brought in to reduce the magnitude of black money pre-2017, and inject white money into poll funding. That was the main aim of the scheme. Keeping information of donors anonymous was to provide comfort to the donors," said the source.

Asked if other models of poll funding like trusts that distribute contributions received by individuals to parties, were being looked at, the source said they had their "own challenges".



The Chabahar port is located on the southeast coast of Iran. FILE PHOTO

dia and other countries of the world," said a source privy to the discussion that focused on terrorism, drug trafficking apart from connectivity in the region.

India has not recognised

the Taliban outfit which came to power in August 2021 after the end of the U.S. occupation. Last November, the old embassy of Afghanistan that was being run by diplomats aligned with the old regime of President Ashraf Ghani shut down and the facilities have been taken over in Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad by diplomats who did not leave India.

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SUDOKU

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23

SCAN TO PLAY
<https://ergo.page.link/jipTn>

SUDOKU

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

A	P	L	H	A	A	P	S
Z	C	R	E	Z	C	R	E
F	A	N	G	F	A	N	G
I	B	D	E	I	B	D	E
O	M	N	O	O	M	N	O
N	O	M	N	N	O	M	N
S	T	U	S	S	T	U	S
T	U	S	T	T	U	S	T

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Caring for one's parents

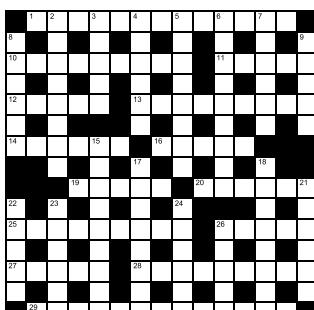
Try Our New
MANGALDEEP
With Sandalwood Oil

Dharma Sastras say that we should care for our parents, elaborated Sri Velukkudi Krishnan in a discourse. We should not analyse whether they are deserving of our respect and care. It may happen that some parents might have been irresponsible. But that is no reason to spurn them. The very fact that they are our parents is enough to merit our attention. There are people who do elaborate pujas, but fail to look after their parents. Of what use are their pujas, for is this not a violation of what the dharma sastras say? In fact, one should go beyond just one's parents, and help the larger extended family too.

When sage Yavistha requests Rama to return to Ayodhya, Rama tells him that it is imperative that we pay heed to our parents. He says that we can never adequately repay our parents for what they do for us. They think of their child's welfare all the time. They give the child oil baths, speak sweet words to him and provide him with nourishing food.

Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that to give without expectation is the best form of dana. It is saatvika daana. Parents look after their children without expecting anything in return. What parents do for us is, therefore, saatvika daana. Santi Parva of Mahabharata stresses the importance to be given to one's parents.

M ND-NE



CROSSWORD
(set by Afterdark)

1. Source in soldiers' training field... (7,6)
10 ...surrendered as per heartless order in a bizarre decision primarily (9)
11 One taking cover from a mammal... (5)
12 ... allowed at Florida Keys, say (5)
13 Close school at Spain, talented one is expelled (9)

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

SCAN TO PLAY
<https://ergo.page.link/jipTn>

14 Rechristen king at England? Amen everywhere (6)
15 Unusual to let go of female for some rum that's diluted (5)
16 Marriage on 1/1/ ending early (5)
17 Avoid fish fed with some yeast having phosphorus (6)
18 Used of money for a certain purpose for fringe characters to develop knocked often (4-5)
19 Singer seen in promos sabotaged shows in retribution (5)
20 Difficult to blend... (5)
21 ...all fats, kale tips possibly with petiole (9)
22 Only fine to set free? No way (3,2,4,4)
23 Down
24 Relegate team option (8)
25 A small young horse with tip of tail clipped at racecourse (5)
26 Current and old top songs on television primarily (6)
27 Hermes's staff beat up accused stealing some umbrellae (8)
28 In Delhi, chacha and aunt frequently left yard in a soiled manner (9)
29 Delirious to leave London last decade stable (6)
30 Auditor with the help of last vendor got salmon eggs (6)
31 Wanted new idea to win first match (5)
32 Announcement by man & wife on losing weight before Easter essentially by order (9)
33 Make light of daughter's personal hobby (8)
34 Say, Sir John to lose control almost on employees (8)
35 Weird seen in that rickshaw... (5)
36 Fraud seen in that rickshaw... (5)
37 ...completely in tatters primarily with glasses covering tension (2,4)
38 Fantastic lake right near university in a place in Ladakh (6)
39 Herb is basically bawling like a lady (5)

WASHINGTON

U.S. sanctions on Houthis for attacks on ships Red Sea take effect



REUTERS

The U.S. on Friday returned the Houthis to a list of terrorist groups as planned, hitting the Iran-aligned group with harsh sanctions that the UN fears could hurt Yemen's fragile economy and civilians. The U.S. announced the move in January to cut off funding and weapons the group has used to attack ships in Red Sea. REUTERS

WASHINGTON

U.S. House of Representatives passes China-Tibet dispute Bill



AP

The House of Representatives has passed a Bill that will strengthen the efforts of the United States to push the Chinese government to resolve the longstanding Tibet-China dispute through dialogue with Tibetan leaders. It aims to pressure the Chinese government to resume negotiations with the Dalai Lama's envoys. PTI

ATHENS

Despite church opposition, Greece legalises same-sex marriages



AP

Greece on Thursday became the first Orthodox Christian country to legalise same-sex civil marriage, despite opposition from the conservative Greek Church. A cross-party majority of 176 MPs in the 300-seat parliament voted late in favour of the Bill drafted by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis' centre-right government. AP

BERLIN

Ukraine's Zelensky signs 'historic' security agreement with Germany



AFP

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a security deal with Germany on Friday in Berlin, hailed as Chancellor Olaf Scholz as a "historic step" anchoring sustained support for Kyiv in its raging battles against Russia. Zelensky will also seal a similar deal with France later on Friday as his forces struggle to retain Avdiivka. AP

Israeli strikes in south Lebanon kills five extremists

Agence France-Presse
BEIRUT

Israeli strikes on targets in south Lebanon killed five fighters from Hezbollah and the allied Amal movement, the groups said on Friday, adding to an upturn in violence causing international alarm.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) said Israeli warplanes hit five villages in southern Lebanon overnight between Thursday and Friday.

Hezbollah's warning

Meanwhile, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah vowed that Israel will pay "with blood" for civilians killed this week in Lebanon, warning his group has missiles that can reach Israel's far south.

Five patients die after Israeli forces seize Gaza hospital

They died after oxygen ran out in Khan Younis's Nasser Hospital that was stormed by troops; talks for ceasefire stall as Netanyahu rejects U.S.'s vision for a Palestinian state after the end of war

Associated Press
RAFAH

Five patients in intensive care died after their oxygen ran out in southern Gaza's main hospital that was stormed by Israeli troops, causing chaos for hundreds of staff and wounded people inside, health officials said on Friday. Troops were searching the complex, where the military said it believes the remains of hostages abducted by Hamas might be located.

The raid came after troops had besieged Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis for nearly a week, with staff, patients and others inside



Unrelenting pain: Mourners react near the bodies of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes in Khan Younis on Friday. REUTERS

struggling under heavy fire and dwindling supplies. The Israeli military said on Friday had detained dozens from the facility, including some it alleged were involved in Hamas'

October 7 attack on Israel. Also on Friday, an assailant opened fire at a bus stop on a busy intersection in southern Israel, killing two persons and wounding four before being shot

dead by a bystander.

Negotiations over a ceasefire in Gaza, meanwhile, appear to have stalled, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday pushed back hard against the U.S. vision for after the war – particularly its calls for the creation of a Palestinian state. After speaking overnight with President Joe Biden, Mr. Netanyahu wrote on X that Israel will not accept "international dictates regarding a permanent settlement with the Palestinians."

Two Israeli airstrikes on Rafah overnight killed at least 13 persons, including nine members of the same family, officials and relatives.

The main Labour oppo-

U.K. Conservatives suffer double election defeat

Agence France-Presse
WELLINGBOROUGH

Britain's ruling Conservatives lost two more parliamentary seats to Labour in by-elections on Friday, highlighting the mountain Prime Minister Rishi Sunak must climb to win a general election due this year.

The losses capped a dire week for the U.K. leader, struggling to revive support for his beleaguered party, as official data showed Britain is in recession after economic contraction for two successive quarters.

In power since 2010, the Conservatives are widely tipped by pollsters to lose the nationwide vote that 43-year-old Mr. Sunak has said will be held in the second half of the year.

The main Labour oppo-



Big implications: Labour Party MP Gen Kishen after winning the by-election in Wellingborough in England on Friday. AFP

The defeats in Wellingborough, central England, and in Kingswood, in the southwest, were the Conservatives' ninth and tenth losses this parliament.

"People want change and are ready to put their faith in a changed Labour Party to deliver it," said its leader Keir Starmer as he hailed the "fantastic results".

French scribe says she is leaving India due to threats

Agence France-Presse
NEW DELHI

A French journalist said on Friday she was leaving India, where she had worked for more than two decades, after authorities threatened to expel her for what they termed "malicious and critical" reporting.

Vanessa Dougnac, a contributor to several French-language publications including the weekly magazine *Le Point*, had worked in India for 23 years.

The Home Ministry sent her a notice last month saying that her work was "inimical" to national interests and said it had provisionally decided to cancel her permanent residency.

Tech firms to combat poll threats born out of AI

Associated Press

Major technology companies signed a pact on Friday to voluntarily adopt "reasonable precautions" to prevent artificial intelligence tools from being used to disrupt democratic elections around the world.

Tech executives from Adobe, Amazon, Google, IBM, Meta, Microsoft, OpenAI and TikTok gathered at the Munich Security Conference to announce a framework for how they will respond to AI-generated deepfakes that trick voters.

Army cracks down on leaders of Imran's PTI party in Pakistan

Press Trust of India
LAHORE

A fresh round of crackdown has been launched allegedly by the Pakistan Army against jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party in a bid to put pressure on the winners in the elections to change their loyalties to parties backed by the powerful military.

The confrontation between Mr. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the military establishment comes after the party won the lion's share in the general elections in Pakistan on February 8.

The police arrested successful independent candidates backed by the PTI, and conducted raids on their properties across Punjab province, partly said.

Arrest warrants have been issued for the PTI-nominated candidates for the slot of Chief Minister in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

Besides, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has summoned Imran Khan's sister Aleema Khan for inciting the public against the state.

Ayub's pre-arrest bail
PTI's Prime Minister candidate Omar Ayub on Friday secured a pre-arrest bail from a local court to anticipate his possible arrest in any unknown case to stop him from going to parliament to compete against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz-led six-party alliance candidate Shehbaz Sharif for the coveted slot of Prime Minister.

Mr. Omar said that PTI-backed MNA (Member of the National Assembly)

Myanmar's new law may trigger mass exodus

Kallop Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Myanmar's plans for conscription have triggered fear that it may create a new wave of exodus of young Myanmar nationals leaving for neighbouring countries in the south and Southeast Asia.

The announcement of conscription that took place during the last weekend has made it compulsory for all Myanmar male citizens in the age group of 18 to 35 to join the armed forces as the military junta deals with nationwide insurgency that has freed large parts of the provinces like Arakan, Chin, Kachin, and Sagaing and a few areas in the southeast of the country near the Thai-Myanmar border.

Grim picture
Sources in the democratic opposition of Myanmar who spoke on condition of anonymity painted a grim internal picture of Myanmar and said the situation could get out of control as the desperate military rulers in Naypyidaw tries to reclaim areas that it lost to groups like the Arakan Army.

Already a trickle of soldiers from Myanmar have been seeking refuge in Bangladesh and India over the past few months and both New Delhi and Dhaka have been in talks with the junta to return the soldiers who have been entering Indian and Bangladeshi territory seeking refuge.

Myanmar has flown air sorties to retrieve its soldiers from Mizoram. However such sorties are increasingly becoming difficult for the junta as it faces constraints.

THE HINDU
on Sunday

NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY
SPECIAL ISSUE DATED 25TH FEBRUARY 2024

AN EXCLUSIVE WEEKENDER FOR CHILDREN

Get the answers to these interesting questions and read a set of articles written by scientists, educators, and research scholars.

How students can inculcate scientific temper?

What major deep-tech innovations are disrupting the Indian startup market?

Is India spending enough on R & D?

How space junk is a growing menace?

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INBRIEF**VW Group, M&M ink supply chain pact for EV parts**

German automotive major Volkswagen Group and Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. on Friday announced their first supply agreement for electric vehicle components under their joint vision for electric mobility collaboration. Under the agreement, Mahindra will become the first external partner to use Volkswagen's "groundbreaking unified cell concept", the core element of its battery strategy, the two companies said in a joint statement. **PTI**

India said to resume Sokol oil purchase after 2-month hiatus

India has resumed imports of Russian Sokol oil after a two-month gap with at least 2 refiners so far taking deliveries of the light sweet crude in February, four trade sources said, data showed. HPCL has bought Sokol oil from a trader, the sources said. HPCL is likely to pay for the oil in UAE dirhams, three of them said. Indian state refiners had to stop buying the grade last year after the government advised them against using Chinese yuan to pay for Russian oil. **REUTERS**

India begins anti-dumping probe on Chinese solar glass

India has initiated an anti-dumping probe into imports of certain solar glass from China and Vietnam, following a complaint by domestic players. The commerce ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) is probing the alleged dumping of "Textured Tempered Coated and Uncoated Glass" made or from China and Vietnam. The product is also known by various names such as solar glass or solar photovoltaic glass in market parlance. **PTI**

RBI lets Paytm Payments Bank users deposit, pay via wallets till March 15

Banking regulator extends earlier stipulated deadline of February 29; RBI also directs the Paytm unit to facilitate withdrawals of available balance from all accounts and wallets, excluding the ones frozen by law enforcement agencies

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has given Paytm Payments Bank customers and users of its wallets time till March 15 (instead of February 29 stipulated earlier) to make deposits and access credit transactions.

After that date no further deposits, credit transactions or top-ups would be allowed in customer accounts, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags,



Making it clear: The RBI on Friday issued FAQs to offer better understanding of the impact of its January directive. **FILE PHOTO**

etc., other than any interest, cashbacks, sweep in funds, the RBI said in a circular issued on Friday.

No banking services other

than fund transfers, Bharat Bill Payment Operating Unit (BBPOU) and UPI facility would be provided by the bank after March 15.

The RBI has directed the bank to facilitate withdrawals of available balance from all accounts and wallets, excluding the ones that are frozen or marked by law enforcement or judicial authorities.

"Further, it is directed that the bank shall facilitate a seamless withdrawal

of customer deposits that are parked with partner banks under the automatic 'sweep-in-sweep-out' facility without causing any inconvenience to such customers," the central bank said in the circular.

Separately, Paytm said it had shifted its nodal account to Axis Bank to "continue seamless merchant settlements as before".

For a better understanding of the impact of its January 29 directive, the RBI has uploaded a detailed list of FAQs on its website.

SBI in talks with RBI to lower CRR on green deposits**Press Trust of India**
MUMBAI

State Bank of India (SBI) chairman Dinesh Khara on Friday said that the national lender was in talks with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to reduce the cash reserve ratio (CRR) requirement on green deposits.

The country's largest public sector lender had last month announced a green deposit scheme – a first in the domestic banking – to attract long-term retail deposits to be used only to fund green transition projects or climate-friendly projects.

Iagrithi Chandra
NEW DELHI

SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh and Sharjah-based aviation company Sky One on Friday submitted competing bids for bankrupt airline Go First.

Mr. Singh, who is the chairman and managing director of the publicly held company that operates the budget carrier, submitted a bid in his personal capacity along with Busy Bee Airways Private Limited, which counts among its largest shareholders Nishant Pitti, a co-founder of the travel booking portal EaseMyTrip. The committee of creditors would now meet

to vote on the resolution plan submitted by the bidders, which would then be presented before the insolvency court, said people closely involved with the process who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Singh's acquisition of Go First, if successful, would lead to "synergies between the two carriers, leading to improved cost management, revenue growth, and a strengthened market position within the Indian aviation industry," SpiceJet said in a statement. It added that the airline operator's role as the "operating partner" for the revived carrier

would involve providing essential staff, services, and industry expertise.

SpiceJet had only recently announced cost-cutting measures to save up to ₹100 crore. The measures included plans to lay off up to 1,400 staff members.

"Go First comes with cotted slots at domestic and international airports, international traffic rights and a substantial user base, which makes it a reliable bet for us," Sky One's chairman Jaideep Mirchandani said in a statement.

Go First suspended operations in May and approached NCLT for voluntary insolvency resolution.



Ajay Singh

Tech CEOs see revenue uptick in H2 of FY24 despite headwinds**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

Tech CEOs in the country were expecting a revenue growth uptick in the second half of the current fiscal despite continued macroeconomic headwinds for FY2025, industry apex body National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) said on Friday.

With a roughly 50% slide in tech spending and a 6% decline in tech consumption in 2023 globally, the Indian tech industry, similar to global markets, was currently navigating a tough terrain, stated NASSCOM's Strategic Review.

Yet, growing at 3.8%, the industry was expected to add \$9.3 billion incremental revenue and the total in-



Keeping steady: The tech industry is expected to add \$9.3 billion in incremental revenue in FY2024. **REUTERS**

dustry revenue (including hardware sales) was anticipated at \$25.9 billion in FY2024, the study said.

Brighter future
Rajesh Nambiar, Chairperson, NASSCOM, said, "While headwinds like global economic slowdown,

inflation, recessionary fears, and geopolitical conflicts continue to pose challenges, we are confident that the industry will bounce back."

With digital tech spending expected to grow in 2024, the country's tech sector would also witness

the emergence of alternative demand sources, customer retention, and faster go-to-market strategies in newer markets for enterprises, he added.

On her outlook for next year, Debjani Ghosh, President, NASSCOM said, "We do see FY2025 as the year of capability building as the new normal. Navigating the current challenges will require the industry to focus on 4Rs: Reshape, Reskill, Rewire growth and Raise IP and Research & Development investments."

SHFL aims to double disbursements in Maharashtra: MD**N. Anand**
CHENNAI

Sundaram Home Finance Ltd. (SHFL) said it aims to double home loan disbursements in Maharashtra to ₹450 crore next year.

"In Maharashtra, we have presence in Pune, Nashik and Nagpur outside Mumbai region. We registered annual disbursements of over ₹225 crore, said MD D. Lakshminarayanan.

As part of the expansion plan, SHFL recently opened a second home loan branch in Navi Mumbai (Mumbai region) and plans to add two more branches. It will add 25 jobs in Maharashtra to take the headcount to 100 over

MARKETS**MARKET WATCH**

	FRIDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	72,427	0.52
US Dollar	83.01	0.04
Gold	62,450	0.28
Brent oil	83.12	0.73

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	3223.60	25.60
Adani Ports	1306.85	39.80
Apollo Hosp.	6600.60	-27.05
Axius	809.00	0.00
Axia Bank	1988.75	-3.45
Bajaj Auto	3825.05	202.00
Bajaj Finserv	1575.05	6.59
Bajaj Finance	9816.20	0.20
Bajaj Shriram	1120.60	-0.70
BPCL	1654.60	1.85
Brilliant Ind.	4913.70	-36.85
Cipla	1440.70	18.35
Godrej India	4848.00	2.55
Divi's Lab.	3720.20	20.35
Dr Reddy's Lab.	6317.15	64.50
Eicher Motors	3828.65	12.10
GlobeIn	2200.00	-25.00
HCL Tech	1667.45	4.90
HDFC Bank	1419.90	5.85
HDFC Life	592.45	7.35
Henzl MotorCorp	4064.00	17.75
Hindustan Zinc	515.70	2.55
Hind Unilever	2375.25	24.40
ICICI Bank	1023.25	6.60
IndusInd Bank	1403.65	16.70
ITC	1702.00	25.00
JCB	404.60	0.70
JSW Steel	819.95	7.60
Kotak Bank	1755.25	-4.00
Larsen & Toubro	848.00	8.85
LTMIndradev Ltd.	5380.40	58.10
M&M	1835.55	70.50
Maruti Suzuki	11380.40	290.15
NestleIndia	2487.65	54.10
NTPC	2321.00	3.50
ONGC	274.70	-2.60
PowerGrid Corp.	274.55	-7.10
Reliance Ind.	2921.15	-20.00
SBI	1588.00	53.10
State Bank	1745.70	7.00
Sun Pharma	1509.95	0.05
Tata Consumer Pro- ducts	1147.45	16.05
Tata Motors	1356.60	18.00
Tata Steel	142.30	1.10
TCS	4128.30	25.10
Tata's Mahindra	1165.55	5.32
Orion's Yuan	3655.00	33.25
Saxa Finance	329.86	24.35
Singapore Dollar	61.51	61.76
Malaysian Ringgit	17.31	17.41
Australian Dollar	54.62	54.23
Upiper	409.90	3.55
	543.00	24.50

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on Friday, 16 Feb.

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	83.54	84.81
Euro	89.54	90.49
British Pound	104.23	104.64
Japanese Yen (100)	55.11	55.32
Chinese Yuan	11.58	11.62
Saudi Riyal	3655.00	3655.00
Singapore Dollar	61.51	61.76
Malaysian Ringgit	17.31	17.41
Australian Dollar	54.62	54.23

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As part of the expansion plan, SHFL recently opened a second home loan branch in Navi Mumbai (Mumbai region) and plans to add two more branches. It will add 25 jobs in Maharashtra to take the headcount to 100 over

the next 12 months. "We currently disburse home loans of about ₹100 crore annually in the Mumbai region and believe we can double this, next year," he said. Asserting that Mumbai was the largest and fastest growing real estate market in the country, he said that the company would continue to focus on the mid-range housing segment in Mumbai.

The competitive position of banks resulted in them capturing a major share of the segment, which led to growth moderating for NBFCs. That said, NBFCs are expanding reach and clientele to regain market share amid fierce competition from banks and new-age fintech companies," it was said in the report.

"The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*

India's tech industry, like global markets, is navigating a tough terrain, says NASSCOM

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'Bangladesh apparel exports via Delhi hits India shipments'**M. Soundariya Preetha**
COIMBATORE

Apparel exports, that slid 3.46% year-on-year in January, are facing more challenges as 20-30 truck-loads of cargo are entering the Delhi Air Cargo Complex every day from Bangladesh for transhipment to third countries.

According to Sudhir Sekhri, Chairman of the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC), the continuing Red Sea crisis had raised logistical costs for exporters while leading to a shift in the mode of shipping consignments from sea to air. Permitting Bangladeshi cargo transhipment to

RBI must probe loan-to-value norms: gold loan firms**K. Ram Kumar**
MUMBAI

The Association of Gold Loan Companies has urged the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to examine violations by some banks' branches of the norm that caps the amount of loan that can be given against the pledge of gold jewellery.

The plea comes in the backdrop of banks sustaining focus on growing gold-loan portfolio even after the RBI's temporary relaxation (from August 6, 2020 to March 31, 2022) in the LTV (loan-to-value) norm.

"We have taken up the matter with the regulator because some of the banks (both public and private sectors) and some of their

branches violating the LTV norm," said George Alexander Muthoot, MD, Muthoot Finance.

He emphasised the 75% LTV norm (that is the loan amount cannot exceed 75% of the value of the collateral) is uniform across banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).

The RBI had raised the permissible LTV norm for banks against pledge of gold ornaments and jewelry for non-agricultural purposes to 90% from 75% in August 2020 to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on households. The LTV relaxation was available only till March 31, 2021.

"Some of the bank branches are lending gold loans up to 80-90. This is something the bank

branches are violating," Mr. Muthoot, also President of the Association, said. He also flagged the issue of customers without agricultural activity taking

agricultural loans. "These are all bank/branch-specific cases that adds to business," Mr. Muthoot said.

Banks are now focusing more on agriculture gold loans as it gives them the benefit of priority sector lending classification and recovery in case of default is relatively easier. Growth in gold loans in the non-agriculture segment continues apace.

Gold-loan growth
According to a Crisil Market Intelligence and Analytics Research report, gold loan finance saw a CAGR of 15% between fiscal 2018 and 2022, led by stable gold prices and a surge in gold loan offtake from NBFCs during the pandemic. Credit growth is estimat-



ment from Delhi Air Cargo Terminal at this juncture had only increased logistic challenges and transportation costs for Indian apparel exporters.

Earlier, such transportation

of Bangladesh export cargo was allowed only via Kolkata Air Cargo Complex. Textile and apparel exports contracted 2.29% year-on-year in January.

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ed to have moderated to 5.7% in fiscal 2023 before recovering to 10-12% in fiscal 2024, as per the report.

As of March-end 2022, banks' and NBFCs collectively had outstanding gold loans of ₹85,09,400 crore. Of this, banks' and NBFCs shares stood at 78% and 22% respectively.

"The competitive position of banks resulted in them capturing a major share of the segment, which led to growth moderating for NBFCs. That said, NBFCs are expanding reach and clientele to regain market share amid fierce competition from banks and new-age fintech companies," it was said in the report.

(The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)

With new life breathed into United, Solskjaer urges club to move with the times

The former Red Devils player and manager has welcomed the arrival of INEOS owner Jim Ratcliffe, who is set to acquire a minority stake in the club. In the cut-throat world of the Premier League, Solskjaer says United risks 'falling behind if we are staying in the same place'



Ashwin Achal

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is inextricably linked with Manchester United. He gained plaudits in his 11-year stint as a United forward, before serving the club as an ambassador, reserve team manager and manager.

As a player, Solskjaer was an integral part of a powerful side which won trophies galore. The Norwegian built his reputation as a 'super sub', for his knack of coming on and scoring crucial goals as the clock wound down.

Fans will remember an incredible outing in 1999, when Solskjaer smashed four goals in 12 minutes against Nottingham Forest. Brought on by manager Alex Ferguson to replace Dwight Yorke, he powered United to an 8-1 win.

A moment for the ages

It was in the same year that Solskjaer created a career highlight for the ages. In the Champions League final against Bayern Munich, Solskjaer's toe poke past goalkeeper Oliver Kahn, into the roof of the net, in injury time gave United its most famous win.

These epic performances gave rise to his nickname, 'Baby-faced Assassin'. Though Solskjaer built his career on making a big impact as a substitute, it was not his preferred approach. Like all footballers, he wanted a spot in the starting eleven. But once he understood that this was not to be, he made mental adjustments to adapt to his role.

"Ideally, I would have liked to play every minute of every game. But I quickly realized that I played alongside some of the best players in the world, so this was not possible," Solskjaer, who



[Being United manager is] a great job, but it is also hard. You are the face of the biggest club in the world. You are scrutinised all the time. I needed the break



was in Bengaluru on a visit hosted by Tilak Gaurang Shah, founder of 'Ace of Pubs', said.

"I was privileged to play at Manchester United, under the best manager in the world, and at the best club. Manchester United was always home. My job as a substitute was always to be prepared. This quality came from my father, who was a humble and hard-working wrestler," Solskjaer said.

There can be no room for entitlement when given a perceived lesser task, he added. "There are players who will be disappointed if they don't start in the eleven. They may feel entitled, but that's not my personality. I believed that I have to give a good account of myself and my family every time I step onto the pitch."

In the hot seat

After Solskjaer called time on his playing career in 2007, he became the club's reserve team manager for a period. In 2018, Manchester United ap-

pointed Solskjaer as caretaker manager, taking over from Jose Mourinho. He was given a permanent role a few months later.

Solskjaer's reign as manager yielded hope, as the club secured back-to-back top-three finishes in the Premier League for the first time in the post-Ferguson era. A string of poor results, however, brought Solskjaer's exit.

"It was the best job in the world. Of course, it is more difficult when [Liverpool manager] Jurgen Klopp and [Manchester City manager] Pep Guardiola are going great guns. It was just bad timing for me, but that is the challenge. You want to go up against the best managers in the world," he said.

"It's a great job, but it is also hard. You are the face of the biggest club in the world. You are scrutinised all the time. I needed the break."

After parting ways with the Red Devils in 2021, Solskjaer has not taken up a managerial assignment. But this is not to say that he is done with the job.

"I'm sure I have at least one more manager gig left in me. I want to feel that pressure. I miss it a little. But with due respect to other clubs, after you manage Manchester United for three years, where do you go?" Solskjaer stated.

The 50-year-old acknowledges that it will be tough to find a gig at a club with as much legacy and stature as United. The prospective employer must also allow Solskjaer to practise his managerial style – giving players freedom to be creative on the field.

"Many coaches now tell players exactly what to do. This is difficult and dangerous to implement. When a player is on the field, he has to make decisions on the spot. Yes, everyone must operate within a framework, but a player cannot

pass to the left when the obvious pass is to the right. The likes of Xabi Alonso, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo make decisions on the pitch. This is what makes them great," Solskjaer said.

A new beginning

The Norwegian explained that it is time for United to build a new stadium in place of Old Trafford, which is not in the best shape.

"We have to move on with the times. At the moment, something has to happen at Old Trafford, either a renovation or a new stadium. We are falling behind if we are staying in the same place. We have seen modern stadiums like Tottenham Hotspur Stadium come up. Other stadiums like Bayern Munich's Allianz Arena, Camp Nou [Barcelona] and Bernabeu [Real Madrid] have all been renovated."

"It is going to divide fans for sure. But we traded The Cliff [training ground], which was iconic for United and the Busby Babes, with Carrington. While history is important, it looks like we might have to build a new stadium," he said.

Solskjaer is happy with the arrival of INEOS owner Jim Ratcliffe, who is set to acquire a minority stake in United. Titles, however, will only come as a result of consistent shows on the pitch.

"These are very exciting times with Sir Jim Ratcliffe and INEOS coming in. It has breathed life and belief into the club and supporters. Obviously there needs to be more consistency for a title push."

"The better teams are not as consistent as they were even two years ago. Two or three years back, Manchester City and Liverpool had 100 and 99 points. That is consistency. Now, if you want to get to the top, you need to get 88-90 points per league season."

+

STACKING UP

ATP Men's Top 15

#	Player	Name	Age	Points	Events
1	Igor Sijsling	29	9,851	19	
2	Carlo Alcaraz	20	9,255	18	
3	Daniil Medvedev	28	9,165	21	
4	Jannik Sinner	22	8,070	21	
5	Andrey Rublev	26	5,059	24	
6	Alexander Zverev	26	5,050	27	
7	Holger Rune	26	3,695	23	
8	Hubert Hurkacz	27	3,595	26	
9	Taylor Fritz	26	3,150	26	
10	Stefano Tsitsipas	25	3,026	24	
11	Alex Minaur	24	2,970	25	
12	Casper Ruud	25	2,965	23	
13	Grigor Dimitrov	23	2,905	24	
14	Tommy Paul	26	2,255	27	
15	Frances Tiafoe	26	2,065	22	



Top Indians

Samir Nagaj	Rank: 98	23 spots
Mukund Sasikumar	Rank: 437	49 spots

WTA Women's Top 15

#	Player	Name	Age	Points	Events
1	Iga Swiatek	22	9,770	19	
2	Aryna Sabalenka	25	8,905	16	
3	Coco Gauff	19	7,200	19	
4	Elena Rybakina	24	6,088	18	
5	Jessica Pegula	29	5,705	21	
6	Ora Jabeur	29	4,183	21	
7	Qinwen Zheng	21	3,766	21	
8	Marketa Vondrousova	24	3,736	15	
9	Maria Sakkari	28	3,630	24	
10	Karolina Muchova	27	3,520	14	
11	Jelena Ostapenko	26	3,473	23	
12	Barbara Krejcikova	28	3,134	21	
13	Daria Kasatkina	26	3,063	25	
14	Bearitz Haddad Maia	27	2,960	23	
15	Liuqiang Sunmora	25	2,590	24	

Top Indians

Arindra Bhaini	Rank: 224	1 spot
Sahaja Yamalagalli	Rank: 224	12 spots

English Premier League Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Leicester	24	16	6	2	55	37	32	54
2	Man. City	23	16	4	3	56	21	35	52
3	Arsenal	24	16	4	4	53	22	31	52
4	Tottenham	24	14	5	5	51	36	15	47
5	Aston Villa	24	14	4	6	50	32	18	46
6	Man. United	24	13	2	9	33	33	0	41
7	Newcastle	24	11	3	10	51	39	12	36
8	West Ham	24	10	6	8	36	42	-6	36
9	Brighton	24	9	8	7	37	40	-3	35
10	Chelsea	24	10	4	10	41	40	1	34
11	Wolves	24	9	5	10	37	39	-2	32
12	Fulham	24	8	5	11	33	39	-6	29
13	Bournemouth	23	7	6	10	31	44	-13	27
14	Brentford	23	7	4	12	39	35	-4	25
15	Crystal Palace	24	6	12	27	43	46	-2	24
16	N. Forest	24	5	6	13	30	44	-14	23
17	Luton Town	23	5	5	13	35	45	-12	20
18	Everton *	24	8	5	11	26	32	-6	19
19	Burnley	24	3	4	17	25	50	-25	13
20	Sheffield	24	3	4	17	22	60	-38	13

Spanish LaLiga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Real Madrid	24	19	4	1	52	37	15	57
2	Girona	24	17	5	2	52	29	23	56
3	Barcelona	24	15	6	3	50	33	17	51
4	Atletico Madrid	24	15	3	6	45	26	19	48
5	Athletic Bilbao	24	13	7	4	42	21	21	46
6	Real Betis	24	9	11	4	28	35	-7	38
7	Real Sociedad	24	9	10	5	27	36	-9	37
8	Las Palmas	24	10	5	9	25	32	-7	35
9	Valencia	24	10	5	9	29	29	0	35
10	Getafe	24	8	7	9	32	33	-1	33
11	Osasuna	24	8	4	11	27	36	-9	29
12	Alaves	24	7	6	11	24	31	-7	27
13	Villarreal	24	6	7	11	34	48	-12	25
14	Rayo Vallecano	24	5	9	11	21	37	-16	24
15	Sevilla	24	5	8	11	27	37	-10	23
16	Real Mallorca	24	4	11	9	21	31	-10	23
17	Celta Vigo	24	4	8	12	26	35	-9	20
18	Cadiz	24	2	11	11	15	33	-18	17
19	Granada	24	2	1	7	15	46	-31	13
20	Almeria	24	0	7	17	22	51	-29	7

German Bundesliga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Leverkusen	21	17	4	0	55	41	14	55
2	Bayern	21	16	2	3	59	22	37	50
3	Stuttgart	21	14	1	6	49	27	22	43
4	Dortmund	21	11	7	3	43	26	17	40
5	RB Leipzig	21	11	4	6	46	28	18	37
6	Eintracht	21	8	9	3	36	25	6	32
7	Hoffenheim	21	7	6	8	30	36	-6	27
8	Werder Bremen	21	7	5	9	30	34	-6	26
9	FC Augsburg	21	5	8	8	31	39	-8	23
10	Wolfenbüttel	21	6	5	10	25	33	-8	23
11	Monza	21	4	7	8	21	28	-7	20
12	Genoa	21	4	7	8	25	30	-5	29
13	Leice	21	4	5	10	24	37	-13	24
14	Frosinone	21	4	6	5	32	49	-17	23
15	Ildirne	21	3	13	8	24	37	-13	22
16	Empoli	21	5	6	13	18	37	-19	21
17	Sassuolo	23	5	5	13	29	42	-13	20
18	Verona	24	4	7	13	21	32	-11	19
19	Capri	24	4	6	14	22	45	-22	18
20	Salernitana	24	2	7	15	20	47	-27	13

Geman Bundesliga Standings

#	Team	GP	W</th

'Our eight golds were great but who saw them happen?'

Former India hockey coach Harendra Singh
 talks about how a lack of documentation has hurt the game in the country, what the solution is, why the women fell short at the Olympic Qualifiers, how his American experience is shaping him and whether he will return at some stage

INTERVIEW

Harendra Singh

Uthra Ganesan

Three years ago, Harendra Singh made a life-changing decision. The former India coach, one among a handful of certified master coaches in world hockey, decided he had enough of playing second fiddle to foreign appointees at home and moved to the United States of America.

As the USA men's chief coach, Harendra readily agreed to help the women's team. Its success at the recent Olympic Qualifiers owed a lot to his inputs. Back in the country for the FIH Pro League, Harendra spoke candidly to *The Hindu* on a range of subjects. Excerpts:

Three years in professional American sport, how has the experience been?

My practical and theoretical knowledge was self-generated – why my teams succeeded or failed and how to convert the failures to success. Unfortunately, it began and ended with me. There is no documentation of anything in India.

We are only depending on a player's natural aptitude. In the use of technology and research, we are far behind. We have the potential to be in the top five at any major event, including the Olympics, but not without the back-room work.

This has been my biggest learning experience in the USA. There is proper documentation at every step. Let me give an example. If I need to know about a particular player, I have everything in front of me – what his speed is, whether he is injury prone, his physiology, what needs to be done, how it is to be done, who will work on what aspect. This is a big reason for the USA being on top in terms of golds at every Olympics.

How would you compare it to coaching in India?

In the use of science we are far behind although I believe, from my experience, that Hockey India and our players are still way ahead of all other Olympic sports and, in some areas, even the BCCI. But that is limited to the top. Across the country, players still don't know about biomechanics, physiology, periodisation (a cyclical method of training through the year, divided into phases focusing on different goals), tempering or transition period. Which is why our players take time to adapt when they come into the national set-up. A player is the most important person for a team to succeed and if you don't discuss all this with him he cannot per-



The solution is not with the national team, you need to find it at the domestic level with Indian coaches taking modern learning to the grassroots



Craig [Fulton] is a good coach... but the [men's] team remains unpredictable. When they maintain their structure, they are brilliant and unbeatable

form. You need to give him a specific deliverable and a pathway to reach there.

How do you see the Indian team's development and the road ahead?

This team has given good results between 2016 and the Tokyo Olympics. We are on top in Asia and at least for the next five years, I don't see any team challenging it. Having said that, top-level hockey is now limited to India, Australia and four Euro teams – Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, England – with Argentina as an outlier. Against these, we have a lot of work to do.

Craig [Fulton] is a good coach and is doing well but the team remains unpredictable. Who makes what decision on the field at what moment is still not certain, there is a fragility in mind that mirrors on field. When they maintain their structure, they are brilliant and unbeatable. Talent-wise, there is depth for now. But I am sceptical about the future groups for the '28, '32, '36 Olympics, I cannot see those players at the moment.

What is the solution?

The solution is not with the national team, you need to find it at the domestic level with Indian coaches taking modern learning to the grassroots. Skill is just one part, there are other subjects – nutrition, biomechanics, physiology, mental health, injury prevention, strength & conditioning – I don't think there is a single coach in India willing or able to discuss these topics.

It is time for the government, the federation and the IOA to be on a single platform and use it

to provide facilities and create a pathway for players and coaches. If we are bidding for the 2036 Olympics, this is the right time to bring in radical changes.

Germany coach Valentin Altenburg spoke about legacy inspiring confidence. We have a hockey legacy bigger than anyone else but that hasn't translated into results.

Altenburg has been part of a legacy-creating team at Rio so he knows what he is saying. But I believe any team can create a legacy when you work on three things – passing, receiving and tackling. If these are good in your players, the confidence level automatically goes up.

We talk about legacy but it is useful when you learn from the past. I suggest 'Legacy' by James Kerr on the NZ rugby team to understand the actual idea of legacy. Our eight golds were great but who saw them happen? If I have to use that to teach the Indian team, how do I explain or show them practically? Again, no data, no video to make them believe and continue the legacy.

Is it disappointing to see the women's team not qualify for the Olympics? And is there a conflict when the USA plays India?

Of course you feel bad when your country, where you have worked for 25 years, doesn't qualify. But I also felt good for the USA. They had missed out on Tokyo after losing to India and there was a desire to change that. Credit to the federation and especially coach David Passmore.

But I still think the Indian women's team deserved to be in the Olympics and has a better

chance of winning medals compared to men. When I took charge of the women's team, I had only one regret – coming in so late. All credit to coach Baldev Singh who pestered me for almost five years but I did not take him seriously. But when I took charge, I realised the satisfaction a coach feels in actually developing players is with the women's team. If you demand something, they deliver. In speed we are level with the top teams, strength is less, yes, but that is made up for in agility. Our girls are emotional but we need to make it their strength, not weakness.

Can you list a few specific reasons for the women's team's failure?

One, coaches have ignored the drag-flick and continue to do so. If the men are today among the top teams, a big reason is Harmanpreet and there is a big group as back-up. Two, the inability to be present in the moment inside the attacking 25-yard circle and allowing too much space to the opponents inside that zone defensively is a big concern.

Finally, can we see you back in India as a coach?

Coaches are professionals, no doors are ever permanently closed or opened. It all depends on demand and supply from both ends. For now, I am very happy working with USA Hockey. I don't know if I have been successful in giving something but I know there was a big chunk missing from my coaching life and here I have got a lot – enough for the FIH to include me in the panel of the world's top seven coaches. So it's good.

GAME THEORY

Owning the under-19 stage — and stepping up thereafter

Australia recently won its fourth Under-19 Cricket World Cup title, which is second only to the team it beat in the final. It was the fourth time India finished runner-up, again the most for any country in the event. Both teams, however, rank in the bottom three in terms of the percentage of players who have appeared at the Under-19 World Cup and also earned a senior international cap.



MOST SUCCESSFUL TEAMS AT THE U19 WORLD CUP

Team	Appearances	Titles
India	15	5 (2000, 2008, 2012, 2018, 2022)
Australia	14	4 (1988, 2002, 2010, 2024)
Pakistan	15	2 (2004, 2006)
Bangladesh	14	1 (2020)
South Africa	14	1 (2014)
West Indies	15	1 (2016)
England	15	1 (1998)

SOURCE: ICC

KOHLI

PICTURE THIS



Cruise control

Kristof Rasovszky was in prime form at the Doha 2024 World Aquatics Championships, beating all comers – humans and seemingly even the odd floating vessel – to claim the 10km open water gold.

The Hungarian won in 1 hour,

48 minutes and 21 seconds to earn his first gold at the distance in an international event, underlining his credentials ahead of the Paris Games.

The choppy conditions – 4.8 kmph winds whipped the cool water at Doha Port – played in the favour of Rasovszky, whose stroke worked with the waves.

Leading for most of the race, the Olympic silver medallist held off a spirited comeback by Frenchman Marc-Antoine Olivier. Great Britain's Hector Pardoe took bronze.

Open water events form a part of the marathon swimming discipline, which severely tests physical strength, endurance

and strategic thinking.

Tides, surface currents, and wind-chop are variables that change quickly at sea, forcing athletes to adapt and manage their energy over the race.

Marathon swimming was added to the Olympic programme in 2008, with the 10km race introduced in Beijing.

CM

MND-NDE

THE LANDMARKS

Ashwin's wicket journey in 100s: from the first to the 500th



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

R. Ashwin's maiden wicket in Tests was WI batter Darren Bravo in 2011 in New Delhi. His 100th was WI's Darren Sammy in the 2013 Mumbai Test. Kiwi Kane Williamson was Ashwin's 200th scalp (Kapur, 2016) and Sri Lankan Lahiru Gamage his 300th (Nagpur, 2017). Jofra Archer was his 400th (Ahmedabad, 2021) wicket.

THE MASTER

Ashwin is a professor of spin bowling, says Swann



PTI

Former England off-spinner Graeme Swann paid tribute to R. Ashwin. "It's very difficult for people but not Ashwin. His character demands that. He is a student of the game... like a professor of spin bowling," said Swann on Ashwin's tendency to experiment and evolve. "Ashwin has got the cleanest action since me," he added.

SKILL AND WILL

He used to tell us to look for excellence and not just survive'



VIJAY SONEJI

R. Ashwin's Tamil Nadu teammates heaped praise on him. "I have seen him grow with courage, intelligence, and skill in every stage of his career," said L. Balaji. "What he has achieved is unbelievable. I always remember that he used to tell us to look for excellence and not just survive," said Vijay Shankar.

UNINTENTIONAL

I would've been in Olympics, why play cricket: Ashwin



GETTY IMAGES

When R. Ashwin ran on the dangerous area, the umpires awarded England five penalty runs. "If the English media and players think it is about position, it wasn't. Those spikes are wafer thin. I went to Joel and Kumar (the umpires) and said it's pure motor skills. If I was any better, I would've been in Olympics. Why play cricket?" Ashwin said.

Ashwin's 500th Test scalp takes centrestage on engrossing day

India swells its total to 445; debutant Jurel scores 46, while Wood finishes with a four-wicket haul; opener Duckett's aggressive, unbeaten century helps England reach 207 for two; Ashwin withdraws from Test for family emergency

ENGLAND IN INDIA

Amol Karhadkar

RAJKOT

When a feature film trudges along till the interval, suddenly picks up pace and even has a memorable scene and a great climax, it seldom has takers. That's where live sport differs from a work of fiction. The same was on display in plenty on the second day of the third Test between India and England.

After the proceedings of the first half plodded long at the Niranjan Shah Stadium, a stark contrast was witnessed later on Friday. A milestone moment that the cricket world eagerly awaited since the start of the series came into reality.

As much as R. Ashwin scaling Mt. 500 – only the second Indian bowler to do so – the day's play will be remembered for England opener Ben Duckett's unbeaten blitzkrieg. As a result, after India's late-order frustrated England before being bowled out for 445, England sprinted to 207 for two in just 35 overs to leave a tantalising weekend on the cards for the cricket fans.

Duckett started off his flurry with a backfoot punch off pacers. And surviving the six-over spell before tea despite adopting a hit-and-miss approach, Duckett was at his finest when it came to executing high-risk shots.

The left-hander swept – occasionally reverse-swept – Kuldeep Yadav's Cinema man out of attack. Even after Ashwin was introduced into the attack, he continued to target the on-side – against turn, although the pitch hardly had anything to offer – and swept



Milestone moment: Ashwin did not have to wait for long to achieve the feat as he got rid of Crawley in his second over. GETTY IMAGES

with panache.

Just when Zak Crawley had started opening his arms up, the moment of reckoning came in the eighth over of the last session.

Crawley's attempted sweep off Ashwin resulted in a top-edge and Rajat Patidar a short fine-leg accepted the catch neatly to make the off-spinner only the second Indian bowler – ninth overall – to achieve the feat. The landmark led to each of the India team-member congratulating him and the rest of the stadium – including Anil Kumble, the only other Indian to have achieved it who was commenting – giving him a standing ovation.

Duckett though was unperturbed as he continued his spree. Even in the 90s, he first creamed Jasprit Bumrah along the ground for a four and then completed his third hundred in

the next over with another on-drive off Mohammed Siraj.

Ollie Pope joined the act as he played an audacious reverse-scoop off Ravindra Jadeja over the 'keeper's head. While Siraj got Pope with an incoming delivery, Duckett marched on if he had not survived a close lbw shot that could not be confirmed due to DRS, India would have breathed easily by close of play.

Earlier in the morning, despite losing Kuldeep and Jadeja early on, Ashwin and the rest of the stadium – including Anil Kumble, the only other Indian to have achieved it who was commenting – giving him a standing ovation.

Duckett though was unperturbed as he continued his spree. Even in the 90s, he first creamed Jasprit Bumrah along the ground for a four and then completed his third hundred in

INDIA DOWN TO 10 men for rest of Rajkot Test

Hours after reaching his 500th Test wicket, Ashwin withdrew from the Test squad due to a medical emergency at home. "In these challenging times, the BCCI and the team fully supports Ashwin," secretary Jay Shah said in a statement. India will have to play with 10 men for the rest of the Rajkot Test as a substitute is not allowed.

SCOREBOARD**INDIA – 1ST INNINGS**

Yashas Jaiswal c Root b Wood 10 (10b, 2x4), Rohit Sharma c Stokes b Wood 131 (19b, 14x4, 3x6), Shubman Gill c Foakes b Wood 0 (12b, 1x4), Rajat Patidar c Duckett b Hartley 5 (15b, 1x4), Ravindra Jadeja c & b Root 112 (22b, 9x4, 2x6), Sarfaraz Khan run out 62 (6b6, 9x4, 1x6), Kuldeep Yadav c Foakes b Anderson 4 (10b, 2x4), Dhruv Jurel c Foakes b Rehan 46 (10b, 2x4, 3x6), R. Ashwin c Anderson b Rehan (79b, 6x4), Jasprit Bumrah lbw B Wood 26 (20b, 3x4, 1x6), Mohammed Siraj (not out) 3 (21b); Extras (b-1b, 4b-2b, w-1); 9; Total (in 130.5 overs): 445.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-22 (Jaiswal, 3.5 overs), 2-24 (Gill, 5.4), 3-33 (Patidar, 8.5), 4-237 (Rehan, 63.3), 5-314 (Sarfaraz, 29.6).

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 8.0-34-0, Siraj 10-1-54-1, Kuldeep 6-1-42-0, Ashwin 7-0-37-1, Jadeja 4-0-33-0.

Ashwin has carved a niche in his own unique way

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

CHENNAI

In the oriental land of spin with its legacy further embellished through the famous quartet led by Bishan Singh Bedi, the slow-art's conveyor belt had additional luminaries like Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh. Among these Indian stalwarts of guile and the wicked grin, R. Ashwin has carved his unique niche and "Mount 500" in Tests is the latest milestone to greet the off-spinner.

Dismissing England opener Zak Crawley to register his 500th wicket during the Test at Rajkot, Ashwin's success had an inevitable air. After Kumble's 619 scalps, Ashwin is placed second among Indians and, among all, he occupies the ninth slot with Aussie Nathan Lyon (517) just a touch ahead.

The man from Chennai has charted his own path, being a constant bugbear to rival batters and like the late maestro Shane Warne, Ashwin plays an evangelical role in promoting spin. He will hint at new mystical products buzzing from his twitchy fingers and cultivate an air of mystery.

Having made his Test debut in 2011, he is intrinsic to the Test XI. At times overseas, the odd musical-chairs have been played with Ravindra Jadeja and "Mount 500" in Tests is the latest milestone to greet the off-spinner.

and catching the eye through his exploits in the Indian Premier League, Ashwin, the Test star, has a durability that may have eluded him in his later years in the blue shade. Yet, he forced his way back into the national squad during last year's World Cup in India.

Forging a potent combination with various fellow-spinners including his latest partner Jadeja, Ashwin has consistently delivered for India. To get to 500 in his 98th Test is a measure of his remarkable consistency. It also helps that he is a multidimensional personality. He does these free-flowing conversations in the digital space, with athletes, actors and members of the public. There is always a tickling mind. More laurels are in store, especially his 100th Test, but for now Ashwin will look back at a splendid career which has more chapters in store.

Even non-strikers are wary about him as he will quickly whip the balls off if they stray. It reflects Ashwin's game-awareness. He has held his own with the bat too, scoring critical runs.

Having done the hard yards in domestic cricket

+

Ashwin scales Mt. 500

Ashwin became the second Indian after Kumble to reach the milestone of 500 wickets in Tests. A look at the elite club and the off-spinner's remarkable journey.

THE 500-CLUB

	M	Inns	Wkts	Broads	309	604
Muralitharan	133	230	800	McGrath	124	243
Warne	145	273	708	Walsh	132	242
Anderson	185	344*	696	Lyon	127	238
Kumble	132	236	619	Ashwin	98	184*

ASHWIN'S TEST RECORD SO FAR

	M	Inns	Wkts	BBI	BBM	SR	5WI/10WM
Overall	98	184	500	7/59	13/140	51.4	34/8
Home	58	112	347	7/59	13/140	46.7	26/6
Away	39	70	149	7/71	12/131	62.8	2/8
Neutral#	1	2	4	2/17	4/45	37.5	0/0

#WTC final vs. New Zealand in England, 2021

BY OPPONENT

	M	Inns	Wkts	BBI	BBM	SR	5WI/10WM
Australia	22	42	114	7/103	12/198	62.8	7/1
England	22	40	98	6/55	12/167	60.8	6/1
West Indies	13	25	75	7/71	12/131	42.1	6/1
New Zealand	9	17	66	7/59	13/140	35.7	6/3
Sri Lanka	11	21	62	6/46	10/160	43.9	3/1
South Africa	14	26	57	7/66	12/98	53.0	5/1
Bangladesh	6	11	23	5/87	6/137	53.8	1/0
Afghanistan	1	2	5	4/27	5/59	23.6	0/0

* till the end of day 2 of Rajkot Test

SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO

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Nagal in semifinals, Ramkumar bows out

Loses in three sets to South Korea's Seongchan Hong in the quarterfinals after seemingly losing focus after run-ins with chair umpire

BENGALURU OPEN

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Ramkumar Ramanathan put up a spirited fight before losing 5-7, 7-5, 4-6 to South Korea's Seongchan Hong at the singles quarterfinal of the data-News Bengaluru Open ATP Challenger at the KSLTA course inside Cubbon Park here on Friday.

Capricious for most part, the match saw some quality tennis, with both players attacking with aplomb. But it was also marked by Ramkumar's repeated run-ins with the chair umpire in the third set, because of which he



Going full stretch: Hong prevailed over Ramkumar in a match that witnessed quality tennis. SUDHAKARA JAIN

seemingly lost focus and withered away. Hong broke Ramkumar's serve in the first game of the contest, but the Indian evened matters in the

10th. The crosscourt forehand winner Ramkumar hit on break-point with very little room to work with was indicative of his aggressive mood.

But he got a tad overambitious and that cost him as he lost serve to love in the 11th game and ceded the set soon after.

With his tail up, Hong made the play in the ninth game of the second stanza, but Ramkumar sliced and diced his way out of trouble and saved all four break-points.

But when Hong served at 5-6, Ramkumar converted the first break opportunity to level the tie. However, at 30-all in the first game of the third set, Ramkumar lost his cool over a line call that went against him.

On the subsequent break-point, he doublefaulted.

From then on, he remon-

strated to no end and even when he earned a break-point in the sixth game, the match never seemed his.

Later in the evening, India No.1 Sumit Nagal brought back the cheer on the supporters' faces with a 7-5, 6-2 victory over Australia's Adam Walton to move into the last four.

Other results (Indians unless specified): Indians

Quarterfinals: Stefano Napolitano (Ita) bt Moez Echargui (Tun) 6-7(6), 6-4, 6-4; Orlol Roca Batalla (Spa) bt Maks Kasnikov (Pol) 7-6(5), 4-6, 7-5.

Doubles: Semifinals: Bittou Kouzmine & Janvier (Fra) bt Matuszewski (Pol) & Romios (Aus) 6-3, 3-6 [10-6].

Myneni & Ramkumar bt Alcantara (Phi) & Uchida (Jpn) 6-2, 6-2, [10-7..]

[10-4] in the \$25,000 ITF men's tennis doubles semifinals in Nakon Si Thammarat, Thailand, on Friday.

Nitin Kumar in doubles final

THAMMARAT (THAILAND): Nitin Kumar Sinha and Mitsuki Leong of Malaysia beat Orel Kimhi and Ofek Shimanov of Israel 2-6, 7-5,

[10-4] in the \$25,000 ITF men's tennis doubles semifinals in Nakon Si Thammarat, Thailand, on Friday.

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E-Tender Notice

National Competitive Bidding

CMRL invites tenders through CIP-eProcurement Portal from reputed, experienced, financially sound, eligible applicants, who fulfill the qualification criteria as mentioned in the tender document through National Competitive Bidding under Single Stage Two Envelope (Technical & Financial) system for the works as detailed below:

Tender No.: CMRL/P&D/ICON/MISC-01/2024: "Construction of Civil, Architectural, MEP & Allied Works in 12th floor of Metro's Building in Nandanam, Anna Salai, Chennai."

(i) Document available from : 27/02/2024

(ii) Deadline for Bid Submission : 26/03/2024 upto 15:00 Hrs.

Tender No.: CMRL/P&D/ICON/MISC-02/2024: "Detailed Design and Construction of Salaiyalpalli Commercial Complex comprising of 12 Stories + 2 Upper Floors, Architectural, Structural, MEP Works including Lifts, Facade Works, Signages, Landscaping and Horticulture Works."

(i) Document available from : 27/02/2024

(ii) Deadline for Bid Submission : 27/03/2024 upto 15:00 Hrs.

For further details, please visit : www.chennaimetrorail.org

For NIT : www.chennaimetrorail.org

For Downloading Bid Documents : <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>

Sd/- Director (Projects)

DIPR/1038/Tender/2024

Director (Projects)

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

3rd & 4th Floor, Chanakya Complex, 36 Janpath,

New Delhi -110001, Phone 23353503 Fax: 23759323

Petition No.: 379/T/2023 Dated: 14.2.2024

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

An application for the grant of a Category-2 license for inter-State trading in electricity across India has been made before the Commission by Serenica Renewables India 2 Private Limited, DLF Cyberpark, Tower - B, 9th Floor, Udyog Vihar, Phase III, Sector 20, Gurgaon, Haryana, India, 122008.

A copy of the application, along with its annexures and enclosures, made by the applicant for the grant of an inter-State trading license is available online at 2. Private Limited website. The Commission can be accessed at the website www.serenicabtc.com or inspected by any person in the Commission's office by following the laid down procedure.

3. On consideration of the material available on record, the Commission is satisfied that prima facie the applicant qualifies for the grant of a licence for inter-State trading in electricity and by order dated 14.2.2024, the Commission has proposed to grant a Category-2 license to the applicant for inter-State trading in electricity across India.

4. Notice is hereby given in pursuance of clause (a) of sub-section (5) of Section 15 of the Act to invite suggestions or objections, if any, to the proposal to grant the licence for inter-State trading in electricity as aforesaid by the Commission to be received by the undersigned latest by 13.02.2024 at the above noted address. The objections or suggestions received after the specified date shall not be considered.

5. The Commission has fixed the application for final disposal on 15.3.2024 and the person who files the suggestions or objections may in his discretion attend the hearing, for which no TA/DA shall be paid by the Commission.

Sd/-
(Harpreet Singh Pruthi)
Secretary

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer (Vijayanagara),
Shasakara Bhavani, 1st Floor, 3rd Main,
Vijayanagara, Bangalore-560040

No. EE/VJN/AE/TNL/08-2023-24 Date: 16.02.2024

CORRIGENDUM-2

Subject: Regarding Cancellation of Tender,
Ref. Tender notice No. EE/VJN/AE/TNL/08-2023-24/234 Date: 23/01/2024, Dated: 01.02.2024.

With respect to the above subject, referred tender serial number (1) for Construction of 25 bedded Hospital, Dialysis center building including supplying of furniture & fire extinguishing works at GK Naidu Rangamandira in Ward No. 134, Bapujinagar in Vijayanagara Assembly Constituency, Est. Cost Rs. 450.00 Lakh works tender has been cancelled due to technical reasons.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Vijayanagara Division, BBMP

राजीव बालन निर्माणी

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Short Advertisement for

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Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited (AVNL) is a new Defence PSU with its headquarters at Avadi (Chennai). It has five (05) constituent production units and has around 12,000 employees. AVNL produces battle tanks T-72, T-90, MBT Arjun and Infantry Combat Vehicles, support vehicles (MPV, AERV etc.) and defence mobility solutions (Stallion, LPTA etc.) for the armed forces and homeland security agencies. It is the current market leader in this segment. It is a new Government Company with Great Future. It offers great work environment and challenging opportunities for the professionals to prove their mettle. Applications are invited from professionals for the following positions on fixed term contract basis in Heavy Vehicles Factory – Unit of AVNL located at Avadi, Chennai - 600 054. Engagement is based on selection through short listing and interview.

Sl. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Vacancies	Total Consolidated Remuneration (Per Month) (All Inclusive)	Nature of Appointment
1.	Design Engineer / Mechanical (Contract)	04 [03-UR, 01-OBC]	Rs.50,000/-	
2.	Senior Design Engineer / Mechanical (Contract)	01 [01-UR]	Rs.60,000/-	Engagement of Professionals on Full Time Fixed Term Contract Basis.
3.	Senior Design Engineer / Electrical (Contract)	01 [01-UR]	Rs.60,000/-	
	Total	06		

The last date of receipt of application will be 21 days from the date of publication of this advertisement in the Employment News. For further information please visit our AVNL website (www.avnl.co.in) for detailed job specification, scope of work, reporting mechanism, remuneration, allowances, qualification, experience, age limit, tenure and procedure for applying for the said posts.

Note:

Any corrigendum/amendment in this advertisement will be published/ uploaded on AVNL website (www.avnl.co.in) only.

HR Division, HVF- Unit of AVNL

Email: hvf@ord.gov.in

Tele: 044-26843211

M ND-NDE

CMK

BENGALURU METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT CORPORATION
Central Office, Mechanical Engineering Department K.H.Road,
Shanthinagar, Bengaluru-560 027, Tel No.080-22357519
TENDER NO: BMTC/2023-24/SE0295 Dated: 16.02.2024

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER (Through e-procurement mode only)

(i) BMTC invites tenders through E-Procurement System for Selection of Service Provider for Provision of Maintenance of 320 Nos. Iow floor, 400mm floor height City type AC Electric Buses on Gross Cost Contract (GCC) Model. (2) Date for Bid Submission in e-procurement portal on 23.2.2024 at 17:30 hrs. Further, any amendment or modification to the tender documents, scope, tender terms & conditions etc., will be uploaded/ Published through e-mail portal only. NOTE: Interested Bidders need to register in the GK e-procurement portal (<https://kppk.karnataka.gov.in>) for details. In case of any bid related matter, may be contacted on e-mail for support: 080-25162000, 080-65340777 or email at eprocurementhelpdesk@gmail.com. Interested suppliers may also contact e-procurement cell for training on bid submission. E-mail to eprocurementhelpdesk@gmail.com for further information if required.
Sd/- CHIEF MECHANICAL ENGINEER (Tender Inviting Authority)

Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development and Finance Corporation Limited
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Regd. Office: Nagarabhavi Bhawan,
22, 17th Cross, Old Madras Road,
Indiranagar, Bengaluru-560 038.
Website: www.kuidfc.com; E-mail: kuidfc@karnataka.gov.in

No. KUIDFC/KUWNSMP/ER/2-295/V-4/2023-24 Date: 15/02/2024

Request for Proposal to appoint an "Expert Reviewer" to provide independent expert review support to the parties under the Operations Agreement for KUWNSP Project in Hubballi-Dharwad, Belagavi and Kalaburagi cities.

(Through KPP Portal Only)
Indent No.: KUIDFC/2023-24/SE0012

KUIDFC is implementing 24x7 Continuous Pressurized Water Supply Scheme under the World Bank assisted "Karnataka Urban Water Supply Modernization Project" (KUWSP) in Hubballi-Dharwad, Belagavi and Kalaburagi cities. KUIDFC intends to appoint an "Expert Reviewer" to provide independent expert review support to the parties under the DBOT contracts in respect of the 3 project cities of Belagavi, Kalburgi and Hubballi-Dharwad.

Interested Expert Reviewer may submit RFPs online through KPP Portal by 17:30 Hrs on 16/03/2024 (as per KPP Portal time). Details of the RFPs on the proposed assignment is available on the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal (<https://kppk.karnataka.gov.in>) and KUIDFC website: www.kuidfc.com from 15/02/2024. For any clarifications please contact the Task Manager, KUWNSP, PMU, KUIDFC Bengaluru.

Note: Any Addendum/Corrigendum shall be notified only in the above said websites and no paper notification shall be issued.

Telephone: +91 080 2516124; Facsimile: +91 080 2516110.
Sd/- Task Manager, Project Monitoring Unit,
KUWNSP, KUIDFC, Bengaluru

CMK

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"- PROCUREMENT NOTICE WORKS DEPARTMENT

E-mail : cswrdbankprojects@gmail.com

Bid Identification No. CE-W.B.R.O - 55 / 2023-24

No. 439 / Date 09.02.2024 /

The Superintending Engineer, Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for E.I. works which are to be received through online bidding, double cover system as detailed in : <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website from dt.16.02.2024 at 05.00 PM. to dt.26.02.2024 up to 15.30 PM. The bidder must possess complete Data Sheet and Bid Form in Class-I & III. Bids received online shall be opened on 26.02.2024 at 05.30 PM. The Office of the Superintending Engineer, Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, Bhubaneswar, Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in.

Superintending Engineer,
Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, BBSR,
OPR/34006/11/040/2324

B:

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"- PROCUREMENT NOTICE

WORKS DEPARTMENT

E-mail : cswrdbankprojects@gmail.com

Bid Identification No. CE-W.B.R.O - 55 / 2023-24

Date: 15.02.2024

1. The Chief Engineer (World Bank Project), Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Construction of Road & Bridge work as detailed below:

2. Nature of work : Bridge Work

3. No. of work : 01 No.

4. Tender Cost : Rs.10,00,000 (On-line)

5. Class of Contractor : 'A' / 'Special' Class Contractor

6. Available of bid document : From 10.00 A.M. of 13.02.2024 to 5.00 PM of 27.02.2024

7. Date of opening of Bid : 01.03.2024 at 11.30 AM

8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website : <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Engineer-in-Chief

(IC) Chief Engineer (Bridges), WBPR, Odisha, Bhubaneswar.

OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL), ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR

BPR/34174/11/0003/2324

B:

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

49, East Wing , 4th & 5th Floor, Kanchi Bhavan, Race Course Road, Bengaluru - 560 001. Phone No. 080-22265383. Website: www.kiadbl.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-57/725/2023-24 Date: 15.02.2024

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER

(Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)

Item rate Tender under two cover bid system is invited for the work mentioned below as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Contractors holding valid Class-III & above (Civil) issued from KPWD, Government of Karnataka who have got adequate financial resources & sufficient past experience for the following work of Providing & Laying of Speed Brakers to Road No.30, 29 Cheeluru Village Road No-18,10,6,5 and Providing & Fixing Gantry Reflective Direction Board at Road No.6 & 10 and signboards at Harohalli 3rd Phase Industrial Area, Kanakapura Taluk, Ramanagara District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : 26.02.2024 upto 04:00 pm.

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal <https://kppk.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/- Chief Engineer - 1

DPR/CP/JA/369/2023-24

B:

Sd/- Task Manager, Project Monitoring Unit, KUWNSP, KUIDFC, Bengaluru

CMK

India registers a hard-fought victory

Gurjant sounds the board with a last-minute shot in a match that made for boring visuals and fascinating lessons: Australia beats Netherlands



Last-gasp effort: Gurjant, right, being congratulated by teammates after finding the target in the dying seconds of the game. BISWARANJAN ROUT

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Uthra Ganeshan
BHUBANESWAR

India won 1-0 against Ireland in their final FIH Pro League match here on Friday, courtesy of a last-minute shot from Gurjant Singh, but it was a game the host would hope to remember and learn a lot from about how much work it still needs to do and forget in terms of the result.

It was a tactically brilliant game between coach Fulton's current and former wards, one for the textbooks but nothing for the viewers.

Plans in place

The Irish had their plans clear – defend in numbers, don't bother much with attack unless in with a clear chance, and deny India any shot at goal.

They did it admirably almost till the very end. With clean tackling and precise defending, they negated anything India tried to throw at them. It made for boring visuals and fascinating lessons.

For extended periods, all 11 Irishmen were packed inside the circle and still India could not find a way to get too many PCs. When it did – six in total – the Irish defence and goalkeeper Jamie Carr stood firm.

And yet, despite the relentless pressing, there was little creativity from India to disrupt the defence. India seemed to be waiting for things to happen rather than making them happen.

Poor basics including trapping and passing did not help, off-target hurried shots threatened little and for once, the Indians looked spent, both in body and mind. Post-break, the Irish got a little more adventurous and attacked more but were unable to score.

The deadlock-breaker came when Hardik passed the ball to Gurjant, who waited for it to cross into the circle before smashing from the top, finally managing to beat Carr for India's second win in the tournament.

The day's earlier game was a contrast with the Dutch showing how to cut

Australia's speed and get open goals without waiting for PCs, at least for the first half. They raced to a 3-0 lead before the Aussies regrouped, changed plans and struck five goals, including three in the final quarter, for a 5-4 win, the winner coming with less than 40 seconds on the clock.

Contrasting styles

The clash of contrasting styles seemed to go the Dutch way – building patiently, switching flanks smoothly, long, grounded passes with pin-point accuracy and one-touch hockey of possession that curbed the natural Aussie blistering pace with perfect positioning inside the circle – post-break, the Australians restricted the zones, stuck to short passes to gradually push back and, once past the 25-yard line, accelerating at will to break into the Dutch circle.

The results:

Australia 5 (Blake Govers 33, 53, Jeremy Hayward 40, 48, Tim Brand 60) bt Netherlands 4 (Ducco Telgenkamp 6, Koen Blijen 12, 20, Jip Janssen 56). India 1 (Gurjant Singh 60) bt Ireland 0.

Manu bags a bronze in air pistol

Sports Bureau

Manu Bhaker won the air pistol bronze and missed the chance for a better medal by 0.5 point in the shooting World Cup in Granada, Spain, on Friday.

Interestingly, Mirinda tied with Klaudia Bres of Poland at 236.2 after 24 shots in the final, but the latter won the shoot-off 10.2 to 9.8 for the gold.

India continued to stay on the top of the medals table with four gold, three silver and three bronze.

The results: Air pistol: Men: 1. Juraj Tuzinsky (Svk) 244.2 (58), 2. Lauris Strautmanis (Lat) 242.4 (584), 3. Bugra Selimzade (Tur) 220.6 (585); 10. Sarabjeet Singh 581.

Women: 1. Klaudia Bres (Pol) 236.2 (10.2) 576, 2. Andrea Miranda (Mex) 236.2 (9.8) 576, 3. Manu Bhaker 215.1 (576); 8. Rhythm Sangwan 111.4 (580).

Sangwan's strike proves the difference as Chennaiyin prevails over Blasters

ISL-10

Sankar Narayanan E.H.
CHENNAI

Chennaiyin FC extended its unbeaten run at home against Kerala Blasters FC to nine games with a 1-0 victory at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on Friday.

Aakash Sangwan found the net for the host – his first in the Indian Super League – right on the hour mark. Farukh Choudhary received a throw from Sangwan and flicked a pass to the Chennaiyin defender who cut across the KBFC defence and sent in a shot with the outside of his left foot, which beat the dives of Marko Leskovic and goalkeeper Karanjit Singh.

KBFC, currently on a



Matching wits: Sangwan, right, and Sakai in an intense piece of action. M. VEDHAN

five-match winless run, is fourth on the points table with 26 points from 15 games. Owen Coyle's side lies eighth with 15 points from 14 outings.

The first-half saw both teams finding it tough to piece together productive passes as CFC and KBFC only had 74 and 55% passing accuracy respectively.

in the period. However, Rafael Crivellaro and Rahim Ali linked well together and tested the KBFC defence a couple of times.

The visitor had to replace custodian Sachin Suresh after he injured himself in the 33rd minute.

The second essay saw CFC dominating proceedings. However, the home side was reduced to 10 men in the 81st minute as Ankit Mukherjee was given a second yellow card for pulling on Karanjit's jersey.

Ivan Yukomanovic's team, which missed the services of striker Dimitrios Diamantakos due to an injury he picked up during training, could not equalise despite trying its best.

The result: Chennaiyin FC 1 (Sangwan 60) bt Kerala Blasters FC 0.

Mumbai Meteors outslug Delhi Toofans in humdinger

PVL

Netra. V
CHENNAI

Mumbai Meteors edged past debutant Delhi Toofans 3-2 in a five-set thriller in the Prime Volleyball League at the SDAT multi-purpose indoor stadium here on Friday.

After a flurry of mistakes from both sides, Delhi slowly took a slender 6-5 lead. Colombian middle blocker Daniel Aponza led the charge for the new franchise, but consecutive super points helped Mumbai level scores 10-10. Mumbai eventually sealed the set 15-13, courtesy a super serve from Shubham Chaudhary.

Despite a few errors making their way into the Meteors' execution, Mumbai kept calm to clinch the second set 17-15. Santhosh and his opponent close but the set eventually went to Delhi.

With much pressure on the final deciding set, there

were errors aplenty from both outfits, but Mumbai did just enough to win and clinch two points.

Ashwali Rai's Kolkata Thunderbolts lost to the 2023 runner-up Bengaluru Torpedoes 14-16, 16-14, 13-15 on Thursday.

The results: Mumbai Meteors bt Delhi Toofans 3-2 [15-13, 17-15, 13-15, 13-13, 17-19].

The results: Bengaluru Thunderbolts lost to Bengaluru Torpedoes 1-3 [14-16, 16-14, 13-15, 10-15].



China downs a spirited India

Sports Bureau

Top seed China stopped a fighting India 3-2 in the opening women's group match of the World team table tennis championship in Busan on Friday.

After Aiyhika Mukherjee gave India a rousing start with a stunning win over World No.1 Sun Yingsha in the first rubber but China levelled things when World No. 4 Wang Manyu script ed a 11-3, 11-8, 13-15, 11-7 victory over Manika Batra.

Sreeja Akula outwitted

Wang Yidi to hand India a 2-1 lead. Hopes hinged on Manika, but she was inconsistent and lost to Yingsha. In the decider, Aiyhika couldn't find an encore as she went lost to Manyu. In three straight games.

The results: China bt India 3-2 [Sun Yingsha lost to Aiyhika Mukherjee 10-12, 11-2, 11-13, 6-11; Wang Manyu lost to Manika Batra 11-3, 11-8, 13-15, 11-7; Wang Yidi lost to Sreeja Akula 7-11, 9-11, 11-13; Yingsha bt Manika 11-3, 11-6, 11-13, 11-9; Manika bt Aiyhika 11-9, 11-11, 11-6].

Tough match:



Tough match: The Meteors pipped Toofans 3-2 in a five-set thriller. R. RAVINDRAN

Palmer returns to City as Chelsea's star, Liverpool aims to tame Brentford

PREMIER LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
MANCHESTER

Chelsea appear lambs to the slaughter ahead of a trip to Manchester City on Saturday as the English champion has hit top form as the business end of the season approaches.

However, Pep Guardiola's men could have ground to make up in the Premier League title race by the time it kicks-off at the Etihad with Liverpool and Arsenal in action before Saturday.

At the other end of the table, Everton is hoping to move out of the bottom three when struggling Crystal Palace come to town on Monday.

Of the over £1 billion splashed out by Chelsea on new players over the past two years, only the initial £40 million outlay on Cole Palmer has yielded an undoubted hit.

The 21-year-old looked set to play a bigger part for City this season after scoring in both the Community Shield and UEFA Super Cup, but headed to London on the promise of more first-team minutes under Mauricio Pochettino.

Even in a difficult season for the Blues, Palmer has shone with 12 goals and



The standout: With 12 goals and nine assists, Palmer is undoubtedly Chelsea's main man as it takes on a rampant City. GETTY IMAGES

nine assists in 28 appearances, including a late equaliser when City was held 4-4 at Stamford Bridge in November.

Cheelsea will need Palmer in top form if it is to halt the 11-game winning run that has put City in contention for another title.

City trails Liverpool by two points and is ahead of Arsenal on goal difference, but has a game in hand on both.

Liverpool could open up a five-point lead at the top in Saturday's lunchtime kick-off, but does not have good memories of

trips to the Brentford Community Stadium.

Brentford has been revitalised by the return of Ivan Toney from an eight-month ban for breaching betting rules.

But the league leader could have its talisman back too, as Mohamed Salah returned to Liverpool training this week after suffering a hamstring injury at the Africa Cup of Nations.

Salah's return is timely for Jurgen Klopp as other key injuries have begun to pile up.

Trent Alexander-Arnold and Dominic Szoboszlai are set to miss next wee-

kend's League Cup final after recurrences of knee and hamstring injuries respectively.

Crystal Palace could be hauled into the relegation fight should the out-of-sorts Eagles fail to another damaging defeat at Everton on Monday.

Rumours spread on Thursday morning that Roy Hodgson was about to be sacked after a run of three wins in 19 games.

However, the club then said a planned press conference with Hodgson, 76, had been cancelled as the former England manager had taken ill.

Verstappen says Hamilton set for 'awkward' last season at Mercedes

FORMULA ONE

Agence France-Presse

MILTON KEYNES

Formula One World champion Max Verstappen believes Lewis Hamilton faces an awkward final campaign at Mercedes after his title-rival's dramatic move to Ferrari for the 2025 season.

Hamilton, 39, stunned motorsport by announcing even before next month's opening 2024 Grand Prix in Bahrain that he would be leaving Mercedes, with whom he has won six of his seven World titles, to race for Italian giant Ferrari next

year. On Wednesday, Hamilton – without a win in two years – made his first public appearance since news of his dramatic switch to Ferrari became public by insist-

ing he was determined to

get Mercedes "back to where we once were".

But Verstappen, speaking at Red Bull's car launch on Thursday, predicted

that would be easier said than done now it was known Hamilton would be leaving the 'Silver Arrows' for the red of Ferrari.

The Dutchman, who won 19 out of last season's 22 races as he surged towards a third consecutive Drivers' Championship, even suggested Hamilton would be barred from some Mercedes team meetings during the 2024 season because he was destined to join a rival outfit.

"For the rest of the year, I would say it's a little bit awkward," said Verstappen.



Perez: GETTY IMAGES

dium as Verstappen reeled off an unprecedented 10 successive wins.

Former Ferrari racer Eddie Irvine once said driving in the same team as Michael Schumacher was like being hit over the head with a cricket bat every two weeks but Perez said his situation was less painful.

"It's not as bad," he told reporters at the launch of the team's new car for what will be the longest ever season starting in Bahrain on March 2.

Perez is out of contract

at the end of the season, with plenty of candidates to replace him including Australian Daniel Ricciardo and sister team Visa Cash App RB and seats available elsewhere.

The Mexican said he was not finished yet.

"If we are performing well on track, there will be plenty of opportunities out there," he said.

"I still think that I'm at my best, I still have a lot to give, being part of the Red Bull family for four years. It's a massive bonus. It's a great opportunity."

Perez says he still has a lot to give and achieve

Reuters

MILTON KEYNES

Sergio Perez topped a round robin at the Formula One race in Bahrain on Saturday, but the Mexican has used the winter break to reset and recharge for another 24 rounds against the dominant World champion.

Verstappen won a record 19 of 22 races last year on his way to a third successive Formula One title while Perez started strongly with two wins from the first four races

before suffering a sudden slump.

The 34-year-old finished second overall but struggled to get on the po-

m

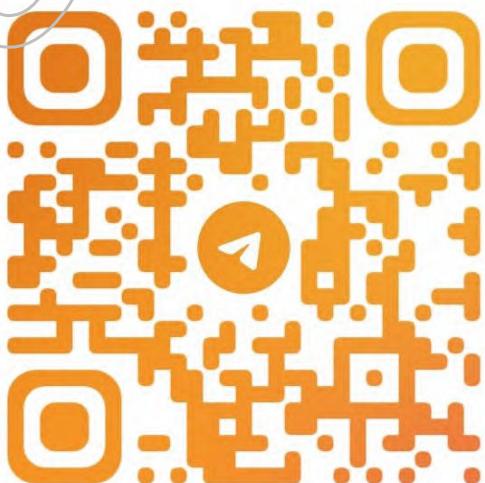
MOND-DE

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