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IN 2022-23

54% of BJP's total income came from electoral bonds

NEWS » PAGE 12



DIARRHOEA TREATMENT
Only a few prescribe ORS: study

STATES » PAGE 6

GYANVAPI DISPUTE

A sense of disquiet in Varanasi

Communal tensions have risen in the ancient city following recent court order

GROUND ZERO » PAGE 9

Swaminathan, Rao, Charan Singh to get Bharat Ratna

The Green Revolution pioneer and two former PMs join former Deputy PM L.K. Advani, former Bihar CM Karpoori Thakur in the list of awardees this year, the longest ever announced in a year

Nistula Hebbar

NEW DELHI

The Bharat Ratna will be conferred on former Prime Ministers P.V. Narasimha Rao and Chaudhary Charan Singh, as well as Green Revolution pioneer M.S. Swaminathan, adding to the two awardees already announced earlier this year – socialist leader Karpoori Thakur, and former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani.



Dr. M.S. SWAMINATHAN
(7 August 1925 - 28 September 2023)

- Agricultural scientist & agronomist
- Born in Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu
- Played an instrumental role in Green Revolution and towards food self-sufficiency in India



P.V. NARASIMHA RAO
(28 June 1921 - 23 December 2004)

- Former Prime Minister of India (1991-96)
- Born in Warangal, Telangana
- Credited with steering the liberalisation of Indian Economy



CHAUDHARY CHARAN SINGH
(23 December 1902 - 29 May 1987)

- Former Prime Minister of India (1979-80)
- Born in Noorpur, Uttar Pradesh
- Leader of the Lok Dal, credited as a leader of farmers in North India

late agricultural scientist Swaminathan's services in the field.

This year's tally of five Bharat Ratna awardees, one more than the four announced in 1999, is the highest that has ever been announced in a single year. Four of the five awards announced this year are posthumous.

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and party president Mallikarjun Kharge both welcomed the announcement.

"On the behalf of Indian National Congress, we welcome the Bharat Ratna being conferred to Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, Chaudhary Charan Singh and Dr. M.S. Swaminathan. Form-

er Prime Minister and

and former Congress president, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao has tremendously contributed to nation building," Mr. Kharge said, in a post on X.

CONTINUED ON

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RJD SET TO JOIN NDA

» PAGE 10



Clashes erupt in Uttarakhand's Haldwani following a drive to clear encroachments. REUTERS

however, alleged that there was provocation by the police, adding that as the community had gone to court against the anti-encroachment notice, the demolition should not have been carried out.

The deceased have been identified as Faiq Qureshi, Zahid, Mohd Anas, Shabban, and Prakash Kumar.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Imran-backed Independents lead Pak. polls

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD

Independent candidates, mostly backed by jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Teh-

rik-e-Insaf (PTI), on Friday sprung a surprise in Pakistan by winning 92 seats out of the 226 results declared, following unusual delays and allegations of rigging, as the

country appeared heading towards a hung Assembly.

While former three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Bilawal Bhutto Zarda-

ri's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) have won 64 and 50 seats respectively, others have won 20.

SHARIF SEEKS COALITION
» PAGE 14

IN BRIEF



Trinamool MP flags Hindi 'imposition' by Union govt.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



The attempts by the current government to forcibly impose Hindi, which is barely spoken by 46% of the population, on the rest of India is a matter of shame

SAKET GOKHALE
Rajya Sabha MP

laws in Parliament and these laws have been given very complicated Hindi names. "Let me remind the House here that outside of north India, Hindi is not the native language of crores of Indians," Mr. Gokhale added.

Our Constitution, he said, chose to retain English as an official language along with Hindi.

"However, the attempts by the current government to forcibly impose Hindi, which is barely spoken by 46% of the population, on the rest of India is a matter of shame," the Trinamool MP alleged.

Mr. Gokhale said there is absolutely no respect for local languages and every new law, every new name that this government gives is in Hindi. "Are languages of the West, the South and the East not important in this country? Do regional languages have no meaning," he asked.

Mr. Gokhale noted that English must be used for

government business and that extends to all of India, including non-Hindi-speaking States.

Noting that he had taken oath under the Constitution, Mr. Gokhale told Mr. Gokhale that Article 351 of the Constitution provided that it shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language. He also read out the relevant portion from the Constitution.

'Consensual approach'
"We have a culture of very rich languages. We are proud of our languages. Our languages have even a global impact. They have a great culture. All I am saying is we must have a consensual approach," the Chairman said.

This invited howls of protests from several DMK members, including their floor leader Tiruchi Siva, and other members from the Left parties, who protested against the Chairman's observation.

Allow MGNREGS workers to choose how to be paid'

NEW DELHI

A plea wants the Supreme Court to direct the Centre to allow workers under the MGNREGS to choose how they want to be paid their wages, and not impose on them "opaque" payment methods like the Aadhaar-based Payment System. » Page 12

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BCI gets notice on plea against decision to allow foreign lawyers to practise

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday issued a notice to the Bar Council of India (BCI) and the Law Ministry on a petition challenging a March 2023 notification of BCI permitting entry of foreign lawyers and foreign law firms in India.

The court asked the

authorities to submit their respective response to the petition filed by several lawyers within four weeks and listed the matter for further hearing on April 24.

During the hearing, the court asked the BCI's lawyer how the council could override a 2018 apex court judgment that forbade foreign law

firms or foreign lawyers from practising in India.

Foreign lawyers are permitted to visit India on a "fly-in-and-fly-out" basis, which would cover a casual visit not amounting to "practice", the Supreme Court had said. The plea said the BCI does not have the authority to allow foreign lawyers to be registered in India.

Clear pending dues of workers or get ready to face action, HC tells MCD

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The High Court on Friday told the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to set its house in order by augmenting resources and paying arrears of salaries and pensions to some of the employees and retired staff members till January, and the arrears of the others

would be cleared within 10 days.

During the hearing, the counsel for the MCD said that the civic body had paid salaries and pensions to some of the employees and retired staff members till January, and the arrears of the others would be cleared within 10 days.

The counsel also sought some time to get instructions regarding payment of arrears under the Seventh Pay Commission.

The lawyer for the Delhi government submitted that ₹803.69 crore had been sanctioned by the government to the MCD on January 24 and that the amount has been credited to the latter's account.

"We are giving you one last opportunity to set your house in order in a week or 10 days, otherwise we will deem this a fit case for the municipality to be wound up," added the court while posting the case for further hearing on March 1.

Will build as many schools as summonses sent by the Centre: CM

Kejriwal seeks people's blessings for LS poll, blames Centre for 'creating obstacles' in Delhi govt's work; schools inaugurated without budget: BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Education Minister Atishi with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal at the foundation stone-laying ceremony of a school in Kondli. X/@ATISHIAAP

appear before it on February 17.

Hitting out at the BJP-led Centre for "creating obstacles" in the Delhi government's work, the CM said,

"You are only greedy for power. I am greedy to serve the people."

Speaking on the upcoming Lok Sabha election, the CM sought the blessings of the city residents. "I don't care about the goons who chase me. They can't fight against your blessings."

Responding to Mr. Kejriwal, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor accused the government of engaging in corruption in the name of building schools. He also charged the CM with laying the foundation of new schools without ensuring the budget for them.

Four members of 'Rose Gang' arrested for bike, mobile theft

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Four men, who were part of a self-styled 'Rose Gang', have been arrested for stealing sports bikes and

mobile phones in and around the national capital, the police said on Friday.

An officer said the fifth member and gang leader, 'Bilora', is absconding.

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THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

CORRIGENDUM-1

Subject: Postponement of download, receipt and tender opening date of tender schedule 'B'.
Reference: Tender notification No. EE/VJN/AE/TN/GL-08/23-24, Date: 01.02.2024

With respect to the above subject and referred tender serial number (1) 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 package works tender schedule 'B' downloading date, date of receipt of filled tender and date of opening of Technical bids have been postponed as below. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

SI.No	Details	Date
1	Date of downloading the work tender forms	From 15.02.2024
2	Date of receipt of filled tenders	23.02.2024 upto 4:00 p.m.
3	Pre-bid meeting for the work	on 19.02.2024 at 3:00 p.m.
4	Opening date of Technical bid	on 26.02.2024 at 11:30 a.m.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Vijayanagara Division, BBMP

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Above E-Auction to be held on 19/02/2024.

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Gokulpuri mishap: police seek details of contractor

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A day after a portion of a boundary wall collapsed at Gokulpuri metro station, the police on Friday said they have sought details from the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) about the contractor involved in the construction of the concerned section.

As per a DMRC official, the section of the elevated station on the Pink Line, where the mishap took place, was opened on October 30, 2018. Vinod Kumar, 53, was crushed to death and four others were injured after a 50-metre section of the wall fell on them at 11 a.m. on Thursday while they were travelling on the road below.

Timings
DELHI

SATURDAY, FEB. 10	RISE 07:04	SET 18:07
RISE 07:30	SET 18:39	
SUNDAY, FEB. 11	RISE 07:04	SET 18:08
RISE 08:09	SET 19:49	
MONDAY, FEB. 12	RISE 07:03	SET 18:09
RISE 08:45	SET 20:57	

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	24	07
Safdarjung	24	07
Palam	22	08

Delhi Palam Today
22°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cold with shallow fog and mist. The day will be pleasant with bright sunshine. Night will be cold.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
23°C A dry weather to prevail. Morning will be cold with shallow fog and mist. Day will be pleasant with light cool breeze. Night also will be cold.
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Water bill settlement scheme soon; may benefit 40% of users

Scheme may unlock ₹2,500 crore revenue for govt, says Bharadwaj, adds that proposal will be placed before the Delhi Cabinet by February 14

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Water Minister Atishi on Friday announced a fresh one-time settlement (OTS) scheme for revising faulty water bills of Delhi Jal Board (DJB) consumers.

Addressing a press conference in Delhi alongside Urban Development Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj, Ms. Atishi said once the proposal is approved by the Delhi Cabinet, it is expected to benefit 40% of DJB consumers, who complain about being saddled with inflated water bills.

Mr. Bharadwaj said he has directed that the proposal be presented to the Cabinet by February 14.

The Delhi government has announced similar provisions over the past few years to offer consum-



Functional water meters will be mandatory to avail of the scheme. FILE PHOTO

ers a specific time period to clear their pending bills.

Under this scheme, a new bill with the revised amount will be generated based on a median reading of the bills over the past few years.

The consumers may accept the new bill and pay it during the four-month period when the scheme will be in force.

The bills of those using

less than 20 kilolitres a month will be waived.

"To avail of this scheme, it is mandatory for consumers to have functional water meters. Those with faulty meters will have to get their meters replaced," Ms. Atishi told reporters.

Mr. Bharadwaj said the scheme could unlock a revenue of ₹2,500 crore for the government.

BJP hits out

Reacting to the announcement, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alleged that faulty meters and corruption by DJB officials were to be blamed for the pending bills of lakhs of consumers.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said, "The government should introduce a plan where consumers can get relief from pending bills by paying 7% to 10% of the pending amount."

Probe against ex-jail official

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

L-G V.K. Saxena has sanctioned a CBI probe against a former Tihar jail official for allegedly helping jailed AAP leader Satyendar Jain extort ₹10 crore from Sukesh Chandrasekhar.



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IN BRIEF



Land-for-job case: Rabri Devi, 2 daughters get interim bail

A Delhi court on Friday granted interim bail to former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi and daughters Misa Bharti and Hema Yadav till February 28 in the Railways land-for-job case. Special Judge Vishal Gogte passed the order after the ED sought time to file a reply to the regular bail applications filed by the accused.

It is alleged that from 2004 to 2009, several people were appointed to Group "D" positions in various zones of the Indian Railways and in lieu, these people transferred their land to the family members of the then Railway Minister Lalu Prasad and A K Infosystems Private Limited. PTI

M.P. blast toll reaches 13 as boy succumbs to injuries

The death toll in the blast at a firecracker unit in Harda in Madhya Pradesh reached 13 on Friday after an 8-year-old boy succumbed to injuries in a hospital in Bhopal, an official said. A massive blast and subsequent blaze on Tuesday levelled a firecracker unit, leaving 11 dead at the time and more than 200 injured. "The toll in the tragedy has reached to 13 after a boy identified as Ashish Rajput succumbed to injuries in a hospital in Bhopal," Harda district hospital's civil surgeon Manish Sharma said. The deceased's father Sanjay Rajput said they live close to the site of the blast and Ashish was in a coma after being hit on the head by a stone during the explosion. PTI

Stalin urges PM to secure release of TN. fishermen

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting him to make diplomatic efforts to secure the release of the Tamil Nadu fishermen who had been arrested by the Sri Lankan authorities.

The SAD and the BJP became alliance partners way back in 1996, but the controversy over the Centre's now-repealed agriculture laws led to the SAD – one of the BJP's oldest allies – breaking away from the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in 2020. The SAD then joined hands with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the parties faced the 2022 Punjab Assembly election together.

While leaders from both parties are tight-lipped on a possible alliance, sources familiar with the development asserted that talks have been under way between the top leadership of

BJP, Akali Dal likely to join hands ahead of Lok Sabha election

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

PM Modi with Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal. FILE PHOTO

Over three years after parting ways, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) are likely to join hands again, ahead of the 2024 general election.

BJP and SAD for some time. The "reluctance" of the top brass of both parties to enter into an alliance seems to have come to an end.

A senior leader of one of the parties, requesting anonymity, said, "Something is cooking. Both [SAD-BJP] sides are willing to get into an alliance. Earlier there was reluctance but it appears to be over now. Negotiations surrounding seat sharing are yet to be finalised, and unless that becomes a bone of contention, the alliance would proceed positively."



Last adieu: Many people gathered outside the residence of former corporator Abhishek Ghosalkar on Friday to pay tribute. ANI

week ago, in Thane, an MLA opened fire at a local Shiv Sena leader and one more person inside a police station. Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress leaders demanded the resignation of Deputy Chief Minister and State Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who refuted the Opposition's allegations and ascribed Ghosalkar's murder to "personal rivalry".

Vowed to kill'
The police are still piecing together the events that led Noronha to call former councillor Ghosalkar for a Facebook livestreaming event at his office in Borivali's IC Colony on Thursday evening and kill him, a senior officer said.

"Mauris had received a notice from the owner regarding his rented office space where the crime oc-

curred. He had defaulted on rent payments for the past six months and had been asked to vacate the premises by March 11," the officer added.

Mauris had recently re-

turned to Mumbai from abroad and had aspirations to contest in the upcoming civic elections against Ghosalkar, the officer also said.

Not only did Noronha consider Ghosalkar his political rival, he also believed that the former councillor had implicated him in a rape case, for which the accused spent five months in prison and for which his wife had divorced him. He was out on bail.

Many speculate that the accused's personal strug-

gles and political ambitions led him to take the extreme step.

The police suspect that Noronha hatched a plan to kill Ghosalkar by offering him a fig leaf in the form of a joint livestreaming event to announce their patch-up on social media.

A few minutes into the event, which took place on the ground floor of Noron-

ha's office, he shot Ghosalkar in the abdomen and shoulder and climbed up the first floor of the building, where he took his own life. The former corporator was rushed to Karuna Hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival.

While Ghosalkar's crea-

mation took place around

4 p.m. on Friday at Daulat Nagar cemetery, local churches in the area reportedly refused to accept Noronha's body for burial.

Noronha was laid to rest at Haines Road Cemetery in Mahalaxmi around 4 p.m., a senior police officer said.

A sea of people from vari-

ous religious denomina-

tions gathered outside

Ghosalkar's residence to

pay tribute, including Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray, Aaditya Thack-

eray, and other party lead-

ers.

Taking on the ruling go-

vernment, Sena (UBT) leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut called for Mr. Fadnavis's resignation. "Abhishek Ghosalkar was a councillor. The way he was killed is very serious. There is a Gundaraj and a Mafaraj in Maharashtra with the blessings of the Eknath Shinde go-

vernment. Where is Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis at such a time?" Mr. Raut said.

War of words

Mr. Aaditya Thackeray, in a post on X, said Maharashtra had never seen such lawlessness before. Likewise, Leader of the Opposition and Congressman Vijay Wadettiwar rued the

Bihar BJP MLAs shifted to Bodh Gaya ahead of floor test on February 12

Decision taken by Central leadership after Nitish met Modi; Cong. has already moved its MLAs to a resort in Hyderabad; all eyes on former CM Jitan Ram Manjhi, whose party has four MLAs

Amit Bhelari

PATNA

With political tensions rising in Bihar ahead of the ruling coalition's floor test in the Assembly on February 12, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), taking a leaf out of the Congress book, has shifted its MLAs to Bodh Gaya, 120 km south of Patna. They are expected to return to Patna a day before the trust vote.

The Congress had shifted 16 of its 19 MLAs to a resort in Hyderabad last week.

Sources in the BJP revealed that the decision to shift the MLAs was taken by the central leadership after Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Wednesday. He requested Mr. Modi to send all BJP MLAs out of Patna before the trust vote to prevent any possibility of the MLAs shifting their loyalties.



Bihar Congress MLAs visiting the Sri Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Devasthanam in Srisailam, Andhra Pradesh. FILE PHOTO

When asked if the MLAs have been moved apprehending poaching by the Opposition, Deputy Chief Minister and BJP State president Samrat Choudhary told *The Hindu*, "No, the allegation is completely baseless. All MLAs have been asked to go to Bodh Gaya to take part in a training programme organised by the party. Unlike other parties which used chartered planes and helicopters, our MLAs are going in

their own personal cars."

Mr. Choudhary further said that all MLAs of the NDA are "intact" and any attempt to lure them would prove futile.

The BJP's alliance partner, Janata Dal (United), had on Thursday alleged that the Opposition was trying to lure its MLAs and "contractors" were being sent to their homes with "offers". The total strength of the Bihar Assembly is 243 and a party needs the support of at

least 122 MLAs to prove its majority.

Going by numbers, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has 128 MLAs, including 78 from the BJP, 45 from JD(U), four from Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) and Independent MLA Sumit Singh. The *mahagathbandhan* (grand alliance) has 114 MLAs.

AIMIM support

The RJD is also counting on the support of the lone All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen MLA.

Sources in the grand alliance said all eyes are on HAM(S) leader Jitan Ram Manjhi, which has four MLAs.

If it tilts towards the Opposition, it would be easier for RJD chief Lalu Prasad to muster the three remaining MLAs to thwart the JD(U)-BJP from proving a majority.

Mr. Manjhi has on record said he was offered the CM's post from "another side" but did not desert the NDA.

AAP's PAC to discuss more LS seats next week

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



Arvind Kejriwal has already named Chaitar Vasava as party candidate from Bharuch

Tired of waiting'

The announcement comes a day after the party said it was "tired of waiting" for seat-sharing arrangements with the Congress to be firmed up and named candidates for three Lok Sabha constituencies in Assam.

Voicing his party's concern over the delay, AAP general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak said,

"We made the alliance to win the election. And if you want to win the election, you have to act in a time-bound manner. Time lag is the problem. We are frustrated with the discussion going on and on. How long will you be discussing? At some point you have to conclude."

However, he said that the alliance has not failed. "From our side, we will do everything possible to keep everyone together and fight together as it is the need of the hour. We became part of the alliance not for us, but to save this country from the BJP and Narendra Modi."

Talks with Congress

Earlier, the AAP leaders had said that the party was in talks with the Congress over seat sharing in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Goa.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal has already announced Chaitar Vasava as the party's candidate from Bharuch seat in Gujarat.

Congress sharpens attack on PM Modi over OBC credentials, whips out Gujarat govt. notification

The Hindu Bureau

AHMEDABAD

The Congress on Friday doubled down on Rahul Gandhi's claim that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not born in the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category, and claimed that he was "misleading" the country in the name of his caste.

Senior Congress leaders Ashok Gehlot and Shakti Singh Gohil said Mr. Modi's caste was included in the OBC list much later and the "Prime Minister never claimed to be an OBC earlier but does it now for political gains".

The remarks came a day after Mr. Gandhi, the former Congress chief, claimed that Mr. Modi was not born into a caste belonging to the OBC, and that his caste was actually brought under the category later. His statement, in a speech in Odisha's Jharsuguda during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, triggered sharp reactions from the BJP at a time when Mr. Modi has been project-

ing himself as the "biggest OBC leader in the country".

"Modi surname is very common among communities engaged in trading and they are all from upper castes. If PM Modi is indeed from the OBC as he claims, then he must immediately accept the demand of the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi for caste census," Mr. Gehlot said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

The former Rajasthan Chief Minister added that Mr. Modi's caste, Ganchi or Teli (engaged in oil

pressing work in the past), was not included in the OBC category initially in Gujarat when the State government had set up the Justice A.R. Baxi Commission to identify castes or communities which were backward and categorised in Gujarat as Socially and Educationally Backward Castes (SEBC) and later identified as OBC nationally.

Addressing a press conference at the Congress headquarters in Delhi, Mr. Gehlot reiterated Mr. Gandhi's claim and stated that

the BJP spreads "lies" repeatedly about the PM's caste status. To buttress his claim, the Congress's Gujarat unit president and Rajya Sabha MP cited a State government notification and said that the date of the notification is January 1, 2002, when Narendra Modi himself was the Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2001.

Gujarat Congress leader Amit Chavda, too, joined the debate and said Mr. Modi's caste was never included in the original list of OBC communities in Gujarat.

'No mention'

"According to the notification, new castes were added. Among them were Ganchi Muslim, Teli, Modh Ganchi, Teli Sahu, Teli Rathore. There is no mention of the Modi community anywhere in this notification issued on January 1, 2002... Modi was neither an OBC before nor is he today," Mr. Gohil said.

"So Modiji is neither a Ganchi nor a Teli, or a lower caste. He belongs to Modi, which is super upper caste," he said, adding that if Mr. Modi is the "biggest OBC" then why does he not write Modi Ganchi or Modi Teli in front of his name.

On Thursday, Mr. Gandhi, in his speech in Odisha, said, "[The PM] was born a Teli, which was in the general category, and it was during the BJP rule that it was included in the OBC category." Later in Chhattisgarh, he reiterated his allegation and said that Mr. Modi was a "Modh Ganchi".

Immediately after, the ruling party leaders rubbished Mr. Gandhi's remarks as a "blatant lie" and condemned the Congress parliamentarian for saying that Mr. Modi got his caste included in the OBC list in Gujarat when he was the State's Chief Minister.



Last adieu: Many people gathered outside the residence of former corporator Abhishek Ghosalkar on Friday to pay tribute. ANI

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vernment. Where is Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis at such a time?" Mr. Raut said.

War of words

Mr. Aaditya Thackeray, in a post on X, said Maharashtra had never seen such lawlessness before. Likewise, Leader of the Opposition and Congressman Vijay Wadettiwar rued the

worsening law and order situation in the state".

However, Mr. Fadnavis refuted the Opposition's allegations of a breakdown in law and order. "I would appeal to everyone not to politicise the incident. The murder was a result of a personal rivalry. To equate it with a breakdown in law and order in Maharashtra is far-fetched," the Home Minister said.

Speaking in Pune, Deputy CM Ajit Pawar assured that the government would conduct a detailed probe to ascertain the cause of the crime.

(With inputs from Shoumoji Banerjee)

Those in distress may contact Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health suicide prevention helpline 011-40769002

Day after Borivali 'live' shocker, a cremation and a delayed burial as Oppn. guns for Fadnavis

Purnima Sah

MUMBAI

A day after the shocking murder of Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Abhishek Ghosalkar during a 'Facebook Live' by a local 'social activist



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Bhagwant Singh Mann

Chief Minister, Punjab

launches

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Shri Arvind Kejriwal

Chief Minister, Delhi

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Grain Market, Village Rahoun, Samrala Road,
Khanna (Ludhiana)



Suchajja Shaasan, Muft Ration

Bhagwant Singh Mann
Chief Minister, Punjab

Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Punjab

Misconception drives under-prescription of ORS

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Most healthcare providers in developing countries know that Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) are a life-saving and inexpensive treatment for diarrhoea in children, but few prescribe it. Taking a closer look at this know-do gap, a new study has found that healthcare providers assume that patients do not want ORS, and this, in fact, played a major role in under-prescribing ORS.

Diarrhoea is a leading cause of death in children, and lives could be saved with a low-cost and widely available treatment – ORS.

The study published in *Science* used a randomised controlled trial to simultaneously study the role of three leading explanations

However, presently, nearly half of diarrhoeal cases around the world do not receive ORS, according to researchers from institutions in the U.S. and India, including the Department of Economics, Sociology and Statistics, RAND Corporation (U.S.), Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University; Center for Public Policy, Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore, Karnataka; and Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California.

could be responding to financial incentives to sell more profitable alternatives (ORS is inexpensive and antibiotics generate nearly double the profit); and ORS stock-outs, the study authors said.



Ready antidote: Corporation health workers preparing oral rehydration solution in Coimbatore. FILE PHOTO

More than 2,000 providers across 253 medium-sized towns in Karnataka and Bihar participated in the study. Standardised patients (actors trained to act as patients) made unannounced visits during which they presented a case of diarrhoea for their two-year-old child. To estimate the effect of ORS stock-outs, the researchers randomly assigned all providers in half of the 253 towns to receive a six-week supply of ORS.

They found that provider misperceptions that patients do not want ORS play the biggest role in the underprescribing of ORS. They estimated that pro-

viders misperceptions explained 42% of underprescribing, whereas stock-outs and financial incentives explained only 6% and 5% respectively.

The study said 28% providers prescribed/dispensed ORS when standardised patients expressed no preference, and 55% prescribed ORS when they expressed an ORS preference.

A press release from the University of Southern California, quoting the authors said these results could be used to design interventions that encourage patients and caretakers to express preference for ORS when seeking care.

Villagers set on fire properties of TMC leaders; 8 detained

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Eight persons were detained on Friday after villagers armed with sticks took to the streets and set fire to properties belonging to Trinamool Congress leaders in Sandeshkhali.

Several areas of the block in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district have been on the boil with villagers demanding the arrest of TMC leaders Sheikh Shahjahan, Uttam Sardar, and Shiboprasad Hazra.

Several properties of Mr. Hazra, including three poultry farms in Jeliakhali area, were set on fire. A couple of days ago, properties belonging to Mr. Sardar were vandalised.

The villagers alleged torture at the hands of the leaders and accused them of taking control of their land to set up fisheries without giving any compensation. The protesters, mostly women, also staged a sit-in outside the Sandeshkhali police station.

CPI(M) leader Tanmoy Bhattacharya said the "illegal occupation" of hundreds of acres and police inaction led to the public outburst. "This was not political, it was spontaneous mob fury," he said.

The TMC, in turn, accused the BJP and the CPI (M) of inciting people to foment unrest in the area. "There could have been discontentment against one or two Trinamool leaders in the area. The conspirators took advantage of that to foment trouble. It is an isolated incident. People's grievances will be addressed," party spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said.



Sheikh Shahjahan

rectorate officials that arrived at his house to conduct a raid in connection with the alleged public distribution system scam.

Targeting the TMC government, the Opposition parties said the protests were a reflection of the anger of the people against the regime's misrule. "The incident in Sandeshkhali is a trailer of things to come. The TMC regime will not last for many days," BJP State spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said.

Police promise action
Additional Director-General (Law and Order) Manoj Verma urged the villagers not to take the law into their own hands. "Investigation is under way into all complaints and action will be taken," he said, adding that the situation is under control and sufficient police personnel have been deployed in Sandeshkhali.

Mr. Shahjahan has been on the run since January 5, when a mob attacked a team of Enforcement Di-

Centre accounts for 60% of India's debt, Kerala tells SC

We account for a minuscule 1.70-1.75% of total debt, says Kerala in response to Centre's allegation that it is one of the most financially unhealthy States that indulged in reckless borrowing

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The State of Kerala told the Supreme Court on Friday that the Union government accounts for approximately 60% of the total debt or outstanding liabilities of India.

The statement in the top court was a retort to an accusation by the Centre that Kerala was "one of the most financially unhealthy States".

Kerala said all the States put together account for the rest of the 40% of the

Kerala had filed a suit in SC accusing the Centre of undue interference in financial issues.

total debt of the country. "In fact, Kerala accounts for a minuscule 1.70-1.75% of the total debt of the Centre and the States put together for the period

2019-2023," the State, represented by advocate C.K. Sasi, noted.

The exchange came in an original suit filed by Kerala criticising the Centre of undue interference, amounting to encroachment in the legislative and executive power of the State, to manage its own affairs. Kerala has accused the Centre of adopting policies and making amendments in law devised to push States to penury.

A note submitted by the Attorney General of India said "reckless borrowing" indulged by States like Ker-

ala affects the credit rating of the country.

In response, Kerala pointed to the Union's "dismal record of reigning in its own debt". The State urged the court to go through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2023 Data Mapper which reveals "the glaring fiscal under-performance of the Union government in managing its own finances over the last decade. It said the IMF country report 2023 had warned that "India's debt could exceed 100% of the GDP in the medium term".

Scientific progress possible only with harmony: Kerala CM

The Hindu Bureau
KASARAGOD

against such tendencies, particularly among those in positions of Constitutional authority.

Drawing parallels with history, the Chief Minister invoked the plight of Albert Einstein who was forced to flee a Germany entrenched in racism. He said scientific progress and the ethos of scientific inquiry cannot flourish in societies marred by hatred and prejudice, emphasising the symbiotic relationship between scientific advancement and social harmony.

The Chief Minister also spoke on the need to balance scientific pursuits with ethical considerations.

Inaugurating the 36th Kerala Science Congress organised by the Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (KSCSTE), at the Government Arts and Science College here on Friday, Mr. Vijayan called for vigilance

Jagan urges PM to release funds, grant special category status to A.P.

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA



With wish list: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his chambers in Parliament in New Delhi on Friday and urged him to expedite several issues related to Andhra Pradesh.

Reminding the Prime Minister that the Finance Ministry had already agreed to remove component-wise expenditure ceiling on the Polavaram irrigation project and release ₹12,911 crore for its first phase completion, the Chief Minister urged him to ensure Cabinet approval for the two pending issues.

He urged the Prime Minister to release, on priority basis, ₹17,144 crore for speedy completion of the project's first phase.

Mr. Jagan Mohan Reddy further sought immediate steps from the Centre to

ensure the release of ₹7,230-crore arrears by the government of Telangana to the AP-Genco for the power supplied to it for three years from 2014.

The Chief Minister also urged Mr. Modi to grant

Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh and implement other assurances given at the time of bifurcation.

Medical colleges

He further sought Centre's financial support for the 17 new medical colleges. While classes commenced in five of these colleges, the remaining were under construction.

The Chief Minister also urged the Prime Minister to grant funds for the 55-km six-lane highway that connects Visakhapatnam city with Bhogapuram International airport.

Mr. Reddy met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman later.

Don't allow BJP to divide State, Owaisi tells Telangana govt.

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

before the Lok Sabha elections. Their efforts were unsuccessful during the last 10 years as the previous BRS government prevented any such attempts.

Stating that two months was too early to judge the performance of a new government, Mr. Owaisi asked the government to settle down and focus on the implementation of pre-poll promises.

CPI's concerns
Member of the Communist Party of India (CPI) K. Sambasiva Rao expressed concerns over huge debt and debt servicing and its impact on the implementation of promises.

IS operative gets 10-year rigorous imprisonment

Riyas Aboobacker, an alleged Islamic State (IS) operative, was sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of ₹1.25 lakh imposed on him by a Special Court for the National Investigation Agency in Kochi on Friday. The prosecution case was that the accused along with two prosecution witnesses, who were declared approvers, was radicalised on the IS/Daesh ideology in 2017. The court held that the accused was found involved in furthering the activities of the IS and had plans to commit terrorist acts in India through suicide attack.

7-year-old girl raped in A.P.; accused yet to be arrested

A seven-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 22-year-old youth in Alluri Sitharama Raju district of Andhra Pradesh. Though the incident occurred on February 7, it came to light after the girl's kin lodged a police complaint on Thursday. Police said the accused allegedly took the girl to an isolated place by sweet-talking her when she was heading to her school and allegedly raped her. The girl's parents started to search for her since she did not return home and traced her near a hill. The Pedabayalu police have registered a case under relevant sections and also invoked the POCSO Act. The accused is yet to be arrested.

Gangsters' assets worth ₹120 cr. attached in U.P.

Press Trust of India
NOIDA

The Noida Police on Friday said it has attached "ill-gotten" assets worth over ₹120 crore belonging to gangster Ravi Nagar, alias Ravi Kanna, and his aide.

The properties attached include around a dozen vehicles, bank accounts and real estate, the police said.

"The action has been taken against gangster Ravi Nagar and his gang member Rajkumar under Section 14(1) of the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 1986, in connection with a case lodged against them at the Beta 2 police station in Greater Noida," a police spokesperson said.

Around a dozen of his gang members have been arrested in last two months by the police. The gang allegedly deals in scrap trade and uses criminal influence to win contracts, according to police.

Ravi, 42, is also accused in a gang rape case lodged at Sector 39 police station last December.

Kerala HC seeks report on torture of temple elephants

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Friday directed the Deputy Administrator (Livestock), Guruvayur Devaswom, and the Range Forest Officer, Social Forestry, Thrissur, to file an affidavit explaining the circumstances leading to the torture of two elephants on the Guruvayur temple premises.

The Bench comprising Justice Anil K. Narendran and Justice G. Girish also directed the Divisional Forest Officer, Flying Squad Division, Ernakulam, to conduct an inspection at the Punnathur elephant care centre and file a report on whether the devaswom are

tured went viral on social media.

The court also directed the administrator of the devaswom to file an affidavit explaining the action taken against the mahouts, who have been arraigned as accused in cases filed by the Social Forestry Range, Thrissur, and the Guruvayur temple police respectively under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and under Kerala Captive Elephants (Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2012 and also under Section 429 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 11(l)(a) of Protection of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. The court directed the Guruvayur Devaswom to ensure proper care for all elephants in the Punnathur centre.

Karnataka BJP leader booked for speech

The Hindu Bureau
HUBBALLI

BJP leader and former Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister K.S. Eshwarappa has been booked by the police for his alleged inflammatory speech at a function in Davangere on Thursday.

In a complaint, a resident alleged that Mr. Eshwarappa, while speaking at the function, had urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "enact a law to shoot the likes of D.K. Suresh and Vinay Kulkarni", terming them "traitors".

Congress MP D.K. Suresh recently said that southern States may have to seek nationhood if funds are unequally distributed. Mr. Kulkarni, an MLA, had seconded the remark.



Re-flooding of Request for Proposal (RFPs) for Selection of Vendors for Supply of Tool Kits under PM Vishwakarma Scheme

NSIC invites online bids on CPP Portal from the eligible bidders against the RFPs stated in title above, which are re-floated on 08.02.2024 & 09.02.2024 on CPP Portal.

The details of RFPs are available under the web link <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app> or <https://nsic.co.in/tender/Current-Tenders>

Last date & time for submission of proposals is 22.02.2024 by 11:00 hours.

It is also brought to the notice that RFPs under PM Vishwakarma Scheme published on 15th & 16th December 2023 have been cancelled. Bidders who have already submitted their bids against the earlier RFPs may treat it cancelled and are to submit fresh proposals.

Any further announcement/corrigendum regarding PM Vishwakarma Scheme will be made on above two web links.



e-Procurement Notice No. 61 /OCCL/2023-24 (on-line)

Name of Work :- Execution of Micro Irrigation system of Lower Indra Irrigation Project under the Scheme CAD & WM, (Electrical Component).

Total No of Works : - 01 (One) No.

Period of completion : - 06 (Six) Calendar months.

Bid Identification No.	Amount put to Tender (Approx.) (Rs.in Lakhs)	Bid Security (through on-line transfer/ Bank Guarantee) (in Rs.)	Availability of Tender (On-line)	Submission of Tender (On-line)
OCCL-LICP/02/2023-24	1086.82 Lakhs	10.87 Lakhs	12.02.2024, 3.30 P.M. to 26.02.2024, 5.30 P.M.	12.02.2024, 3.30 P.M. to 26.02.2024, 5.30 P.M.

Procurement Officer - Managing Director, OCC Ltd., Bhubaneswar
Date of opening of the Technical Bid: 27.02.2024, 12.00 Noon.

Further detail can be seen from the Govt. website (www.tendersodisha.gov.in)

CAD-4062

Managing Director

OIPR-34120/11/0073/2324

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Tender No. Work Description Due date

232413 Renovation of Community hall - Phase I at TNPL Unit-I. 23.02.2024

232423 Civil works for the formation of playground in Nursery and Primary school at TNPL Unit-II. 24.02.2024

Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNPL Website & NIC Portal only. Detailed Terms & Conditions, Bid fee and EMD details are available in the tender document at our websites: www.tnpl.com / [https://www.tnpl.gov.in/nicgep/app](http://www.tnpl.gov.in/nicgep/app)

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Prudence prevails

Policymakers must continue to keep the focus on slowing price gains

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has prudently opted to persist with its objective of 'ensuring that inflation progressively aligns to the target' by keeping benchmark interest rates unchanged, and sticking with its stance of 'withdrawal of accommodation'. With a 5-1 majority, it has committed to keeping monetary policy unambiguously disinflationary so as to anchor inflation expectations, especially at a time when 'large and repetitive price shocks are interrupting the pace of disinflation'. On the rationale to leave the repo rate unchanged at 6.5% for a sixth straight meeting, Governor Shaktikanta Das observed that while domestic economic momentum remained strong, uncertainties in food prices continued to impinge on the headline inflation trajectory. The tangible risk that food price pressures could become more generalised and impact broader headline inflation was the main consideration, he explained. That the majority of the MPC was aligned in prioritising the battle against inflation needs to be seen in the backdrop of the recent trends in retail inflation. Headline retail inflation, which had eased from July's 15-month peak of 7.4% to 4.87% in October, however, rebounded to a four-month high of 5.69% in December, with food price gains gauged by the Consumer Food Price Index racing ahead to 9.53%, a sizeable 292 basis points faster than October's 6.61%.

That the uncertainty surrounding food price gains has begun to vex policymakers is reflected in a recent RBI Bulletin article that pointedly sought to find an answer to the question, 'Are Food Prices the 'True' Core of India's Inflation?'. Concluding that there is enough empirical evidence to support an assertion that 'there are times when food inflation mimics core inflation', the officials caution that given food's substantial share in the consumption basket, large and repeated food price shocks have the potential to ripple outward and undermine the goal of price stability by de-anchoring inflation expectations. The MPC's downward revision of its projection for average retail inflation in the January-March quarter to 5.0%, 20 basis points lower than its December forecast, reflects the small comfort policymakers have taken from the improvement in *rabi* sowing as well as a seasonal correction in vegetable prices. Still, the Department of Consumer Affairs' daily price monitoring dashboard shows the average retail price of more than two-thirds of the key food items it tracks remained higher on a year-on-year basis as on February 8. Policymakers need to stay steadfast in their resolve to durably slow price gains towards the 4% target or risk dampening consumption and thereby undermining the growth momentum.

A failed coup

Lula should not allow the case against Bolsonaro to fracture Brazil's polity

Brazilian police's startling allegations that former President Jair Bolsonaro, his allies and some military officers had attempted to stage a coup, after the 2022 presidential election, expose both the structural fault lines and political challenges the young South American democracy faces. The police adds that they were involved in spreading propaganda on voter fraud, pushing for new elections, recruiting troops to organise a coup, bringing judges under surveillance and encouraging the mob to stage protests defying the results. Well before the elections, Mr. Bolsonaro had raised doubts about the election systems. He had refused to concede defeat to his leftist rival Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, while his far-right supporters continued their protests, which culminated in the January 2023 riots at Brazil's Congress, Supreme Court and Presidential office. A court has ordered Mr. Bolsonaro to surrender his passport, and three of his allies and the head of his party have been arrested. The far-right leader, under whose watch Brazil's economy tanked, social tensions rose, the health-care system crumbled under the weight of COVID-19, and institutions came under attack, says the allegations are politically motivated. But he does not have an easy way out of the mess.

Those who are in power being targeted by the system is nothing new in Brazil. Former leftist President Dilma Rousseff was impeached in 2016 on charges of violating budget rules. Lula, the incumbent President, spent 580 days in jail between his terms, on a corruption conviction, which was later annulled by the Supreme Court. While Ms. Rousseff and Lula were accused of corruption and fell prey to the powerful lobbies in Brazil's Congress and judiciary, the charges against Mr. Bolsonaro, a defender of the brutal dictatorship of 1964-1985, are far more serious. Democracy remains fragile and for the military, memories of the dictatorship are still fresh. Any attempt by politicians or officers to defy the election process and undermine democracy should be dealt with utmost seriousness. But it should be done as per the law, avoiding political vendetta. Lula returned to power on promises that he would strengthen democracy and enable prosperity and growth. His hands are full. He should also make sure that there are impartial investigations and the truth about the riots and the alleged coup plot is uncovered. Earlier, the 'car wash' scandal had exposed deep-rooted corruption in the political system, which led to the weakening of Lula's Workers' Party and the rise of the far-right. He should not allow the coup scandal to further fracture the country's polity and erode the legitimacy of its democratic system.

The three forces that define today's India were unleashed in the 12 months between August 1990 and August 1991. Thirty-three years later, it is these forces that are finally being rewarded with India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna.

The first force, Mandal, was unleashed in August 1990, when the V.P. Singh-led government announced 'backward caste' quotas in central government jobs. While reservations for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes had been recognised in the Constitution itself, quotas for middle castes began in the southern States from the 1950s. Their adoption in the northern States was symbolised in the 1970s by Bihar Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur. And, in 1990, they became central government policy through the implementation of the Mandal Commission report.

The second force that defines today's India is the building of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. The movement began in the early 1980s and was adopted by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a political issue only later. As I argue in my book, *Jugalbandi: The BJP Before Modi*, L.K. Advani's *rath yatra* on a converted Toyota, from Somnath to Ayodhya, that began in September 1990, was a signal to the movement faithful that the party was finally with them.

The third force unleashed on India was Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's liberalisation. Like with Mandal and Mandir, the Market's journey had begun earlier. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had tried to free the economy from red tape but lacked the political skills to navigate reform. It was only in mid-1991 that P.V. Narasimha Rao, the most skilled of political operators, overcame his many political handicaps to finally open up the economy.

They define the leader too

These three forces of Mandal, Mandir, and Market continue to define India; indeed, they define Narendra Modi himself. The consecration of the Ram temple last month brought the decades-long movement to its culmination. Mr. Modi's BJP now brands itself as a backward caste party. As the scholar, Nalin Mehta, has shown in his book, the *New BJP*, the party's candidates and voters represent lower caste Hindus, not just upper castes. The third 'M', markets, is just as central to Mr. Modi's politics. He is spending unprecedented amounts on the capital expenditure required for business to grow, and he has improved India's 'ease of doing business'. The recent choice of Bharat Ratna recipients – conferred on Karpoori Thakur, L.K. Advani, and Narasimha Rao – is the ultimate sign that Mandal, Mandir, and Market continue to define India



Vinay Sitapati

is a Professor of law and politics and the author of 'Jugalbandi: The BJP Before Modi' and 'Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India'

today. I will leave it to others to draw lessons from the two other recipients of the Bharat Ratna, i.e., former Prime Minister of India and farm leader Chaudhary Charan Singh and agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan. Let me, instead, focus on the politician I know best: P.V. Narasimha Rao.

A forgotten Prime Minister

When I decided to write his biography in 2014, Indians had forgotten their Prime Minister from 1991 to 1996. An Ivy-League educated scholar on South Asian politics asked me who Narasimha Rao was. On my drive from Hyderabad airport to the office of Narasimha Rao's son for our first interview, my cab driver had barely heard of him and could only say, 'He's the man after whom a flyover is named'. Rao had been disowned by his own party and forgotten by everyone else (Manmohan Singh being an honourable exception).

Yet, my research showed that Narasimha Rao needed to be resurrected. To help me were 45 cartons of his private papers and over a 100 interviews with those who knew him – from his cook to his physician to his finance minister. It turned out that Narasimha Rao was no bystander. He actively plotted, outmanoeuvring the parliamentary opposition, domestic capitalists, and especially his own Congress party, to open India's economy to the world.

Narasimha Rao's reforms were not confined to economics alone. The former External Affairs Minister reorientated India's foreign policy towards the United States after the fall of the Berlin Wall; he brought in welfare schemes to the national level (thus being the forerunner of today's *labharthi* politics). He also ended militancy in Punjab while managing it in Kashmir. Narasimha Rao had his failures. In the lead up to the demolition of Babri Masjid, the Prime Minister behaved like a politician rather than a statesman (though the allegation that he was part of the conspiracy is without basis). More damaging was his reaction to the anti-Sikh riots in 1984. As Union Home Minister, Narasimha Rao controlled the Delhi police and could have ended the violence. But, he chose to listen to the Prime Minister's Office and do nothing. In my biography of Rao, *Half Lion*, I called it his 'vilest hour'.

These errors apart, the sheer scale of the transformation Narasimha Rao brought about needs a larger audience. In particular, there are three lessons he holds for politicians today.

The first is that India grows best when politicians trust society rather than the state. In economics, this means being open to the global economy as well as the private sector. This was the common sense view across the world in 1991.

Narasimha Rao's genius was to translate this into common practice. Today, this free-market consensus is under threat. The U.S. – once a bastion of free trade – is mouthing tariffs and protectionism. And, for all the talk of "minimum government, maximum governance", the central government seems to think that an economy grows best when the state's hand is clearly visible.

The second lesson is that liberalisation-led growth is a precondition for welfare schemes. For all her talk of 'garibi hatao', Prime Minister Indira Gandhi spent very little to remove poverty; her government simply did not have enough money. What Narasimha Rao's economic reforms did (albeit with a decade-long lag) was to cause a boom in tax revenue. This has enabled the government to spend amounts on the poor that was unthinkable earlier.

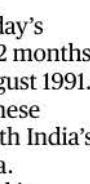
When asked about his economic ideology, Narasimha Rao replied, 'My model is not Margaret Thatcher but Willy Brandt.' He was referring to the social democratic Chancellor of West Germany who, like Narasimha Rao, understood that free market capitalism and state-driven redistribution are two sides of the same coin.

A faith in harmony

The third, perhaps most important, lesson is harnessing the harmony embedded in Indian civilisation. Narasimha Rao was a scholar of Sanskrit and a devout Hindu, as the many astrological charts in his private papers show. But growing up in the Nizam's Hyderabad state, he had Muslim friends. He was also well read in Koranic text and could speak Persian and Urdu with felicity. From this knowledge of both Hinduism and Islam, Narasimha Rao understood the challenges of co-existence, but was hopeful that it was possible.

Amidst Narasimha Rao's private papers, I found a copy of the essay, 'Clash of Civilizations' by the Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington. Written in 1993, the essay paints civilisations at war with one another, in particular, Islam with the West. On the margins, in red ink and in flowing hand, Narasimha Rao had written for his own eyes only: 'Why are there only Western examples being given where violence – on some pretext or the other – is the basic propensity'. Narasimha Rao argued that 'there had been no religious wars in India' and felt that for every example of riots between Hindus and Muslims, there were counterexamples of non-violent co-existence. The ultimate lesson from Narasimha Rao may not be markets, foreign policy, or welfare. It may well be his faith in our civilisational ability to manage religious differences.

Mandal, Mandir, and now Market



Vinay Sitapati

is a Professor of law and politics and the author of 'Jugalbandi: The BJP Before Modi' and 'Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India'

The conferment of the Bharat Ratna on P.V. Narasimha Rao has lessons for the India of today



Krishnan Srinivasan

is a former Foreign Secretary

After the Second World War, the U.S. shaped the rules-based international system. A rules-based order is an abstract concept; in practice it was neither centred on rules nor was it entirely global. It was a power-based system established by the U.S. and its allies, and Washington considered itself exempt from its norms, particularly those prohibiting interference in the internal affairs of other countries. The American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq dissipated America's credibility due to its emphasis on military expeditionism, evidenced by about 750 military bases in 80 countries, though Al Jazeera says the number "may be even higher as not all data is published by the Pentagon".

Polarisation, issue of legitimacy
Actions speak louder than values, and Washington is failing to leverage its standing in the international environment, thereby empowering polarisation politically, economically and culturally. The U.S. withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership that emphasised human rights, transparency and liberal democracy, and also from many other international obligations. While it sought international dominance, domestic polarisation induced ideological separation, rendering cooperation in its two-party system non-existent.

In the West and parts of Asia, open liberalism and globalisation made links of community, family and society brittle, with many feeling excluded from economic progress. Individual freedom was juxtaposed against state, society and law, and the movements of people have resulted in a backlash against immigration, feeding populist movements.

The exercise of power is insufficient to be a dominant geopolitical player; legitimacy is also necessary. The most powerful leaders still crave legitimacy both at home and abroad.

There is now a shift in power equations, with challenges to the legitimacy of institutions and leaderships. Mr. Trump and his supporters

openly question the validity of the U.S.'s electoral system. American soft power, such as its entertainment industry, which is non-government and unregulated, balances some negativity, as do enduring alliances in Southeast Asia and Europe, though U.S. complicity with Israel's violence against Palestinians has scrambled all its pre-existing policies in West Asia.

Moves by China and Russia

The leaders of China and Russia are determined to maintain their authoritarian regimes and seek to reshape the international system, using trade, pressure and diasporic ties to obstruct the spread of western democratic values that have held sway for decades. In parts of Asia and Africa, western liberalism is often interpreted at worst as a smoke screen for neo-imperialism, and at best as an insensitive expression of American and European arrogance. And although there is no chance of dethroning the international financial settlement infrastructure soon, BRICS' policies seem to herald a contest between local currencies and the dollar because the risks in the current dollar-centric system are unacceptably high.

U.S.-China security and economic competition is the central issue in the world today, and will be potentially dangerous in the years to come. China campaigns to project power with traditional and non-traditional techniques, such as the Confucius Institutes, TikTok and gaming. Its prowess in high technology and geo-engineering inspire admiration, along with its programme of overseas infrastructure financing unmatched by any other country. Due to internal dissonance, the U.S. has failed to assume leadership in Artificial Intelligence when compared to China and the European Union, which are setting the standards.

Whether or not the U.S. remains "the indispensable nation", as former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright termed it, India should develop an advantageous relationship with America while keeping in mind its deficiencies.

Washington is failing to use its leverage in the international environment

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A self pat

There is no doubt that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's achievements during the 10-year rule of the Bharatiya Janata Party government such as the dilution of Article 370 and the consecration of the Ram Temple are commendable but his government is trying to create an impression that only the present BJP leadership is the saviour of the country and that earlier

governments did nothing. How can one undermine the Congress's contribution, from its key role in securing Independence, the nationalisation of banks, industrialisation, the ushering in of science and technology, reforms in the financial sector and so on? Nation building is not confined to one individual or party.

Kshirsagar Balaji Rao,
Hyderabad

Opposition's lack of punch
It is surprising that the Opposition, especially the Congress, has been so weak in countering the BJP's "white paper". Had Members of the Opposition done their homework, they could have had the government pinned to the ropes on just the issue of demonetisation. After watching the proceedings in Parliament yesterday, the Opposition has been a huge

disappointment and it was the BJP that stole the show.

R. Vaidyanathan,
Bengaluru

The shadow of politics
The unprecedented long list of people being conferred the Bharat Ratna this year seems to be reflective of the shrewd political strategy of the BJP which is aimed at 'enticing' a wide range of voters of myriad social, political and cultural

leanings. The powerful political narrative being built around Ayodhya, a UCC and the 'North-South divide' is believed by many political scientists to be a game-changer. It remains to be seen whether this political plan will impact the INDIA bloc.

N. Raveendra Babu,
Hyderabad

The highlighting of yoga
Australian Open men's

champion and recipient of the Sportstar Ace of Aces honour 2024 Rohan Bopanna mentioning how Iyengar Yoga helped him is a point that sportspersons and sport authorities must note. While regular fitness and a wellness regime prescribed by sports physios have a place, the need to have a closer look at yoga is the key message.

B. Sundar Raman,
Coimbatore



Two days after the court verdict, Muslims come out of the Gyanvapi mosque after offering Friday prayers, in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. R.V. MOORTHY

A sense of disquiet in Varanasi

With a district court allowing Hindus to conduct pujas in the southern cellar of Gyanvapi mosque, tensions have risen between the two communities. Ishita Mishra reports on the social and structural changes in an ancient city, which have divided people

In a cool, sunny day in February – typical weather for this time in India's Gangetic plains – loud chants of 'Har Har Mahadev' ring through the air inside the heavily guarded Kashi Vishwanath temple in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi, one of the oldest living cities in the world. Devotees try to weave their way in. There is another line of pilgrims, who have purchased a ticket worth ₹300 each to get a *sagam darshan* (comfortable view) of the deity, Shiva. Each of them is first frisked by security personnel before being let in.

Outside, there is tension in the air. Harassed-looking policemen form a human barricade. Hundreds of Muslims have just finished the Friday prayers in Gyanvapi mosque, which sits next to the temple.

"*Jaldi aage badho* (walk fast)," says a policeman to a group of Muslim boys who stop at a shop outside the temple where some Hindu boys are chanting 'Jai Shree Ram'. "Nara mat lagao (don't raise slogans)," he says firmly.

A disputed spot

The gigantic three-domed Gyanvapi mosque, constructed by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1669, has been standing next to the gold-plated Kashi Vishwanath temple, built by Maratha queen Ahilyabai Holkar in 1780, for centuries. However, the mosque has now become a bone of contention between Hindus and Muslims in Varanasi, the parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Hindus say that an ancient Adi Vishweshwar (Shiva) temple was demolished by Aurangzeb and lies beneath the mosque. They want it back. The Muslims wish to retain their prayer space. Their claim to possession is the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which prohibits the conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947, the day of Independence.

The dispute was moved to court in 1991. It intensified in July 2023 when a local court ordered a survey of the Gyanvapi mosque by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to ascertain whether it was "constructed over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple". Weeks later, the ASI submitted its report, concluding that a Hindu temple did exist before the construction of the mosque. On January 31, the local court ordered the district administration to perform a puja, *raag, bhog* (worship the deity, offer food, and bathe it) in the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque.

District Magistrate S. Rajalingam acted swiftly on the court order, delivered by judge A.K. Vishvesha on the day of his retirement. He went inside the mosque the same day, instructed that the iron fence and barricades be removed, and placed idols at the spot. The puja was performed by a priest, who was selected by the Kashi Vishwanath temple trust.

Angry over the sudden turn of events, Muslims

An ASI survey was conducted inside the mosque. Then a puja. Tomorrow someone may even want to demolish the mosque. A Muslim can only watch while this injustice plays out

S.M. YASIN
Joint Secretary of the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee

knocked on the doors of the Allahabad High Court to stop the puja. Hindus have been told that pujas can be conducted by a priest only in the cellar as long as the matter is sub-judice.

A tense town

Santosh Kumar, 37, sells *paan* (betel leaves) near the Godaulia Chowk, which leads to the temple. The area is chock-a-block with pedestrians, rickshaws, shanties, and shops selling cloth, souvenirs, and hot food. There is a police picket every 200-300 meters on this busy stretch. "It is our temple, so we must get it. If some sacrifices are required, we are ready for it," he says.

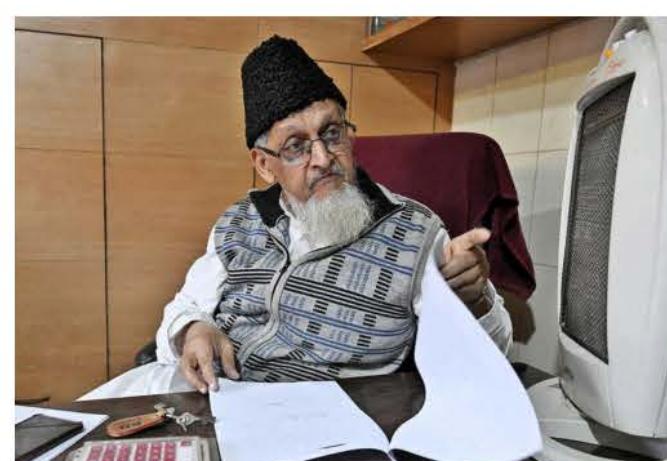
Forty-year-old Amit Seth's land was acquired for the Kashi-Vishwanath corridor. Though he was paid a hefty compensation, he says that the "mandir-masjid fight" is political and has nothing to do with the "common people's faith".

Anand, who sells flowers outside the temple, stares at the mammoth metal door at the entrance of the corridor. He rues that it is only opened when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visit the temple. "Bana janata ke paise se hai, magar janta ke liye nahi khulta ye darwaza (The door is made from public money, but it is never opened for the public)," he says.

As the sun sets, the crowd swells at the Godaulia Chowk. Pragya Pathak, Deputy Superintendent of Police, along with around 30 personnel, begins a flag march in the adjacent lanes which have a significant Muslim population. She says the flag march is a routine drill as "festivals are approaching".

Mohammad Azaher, 43, a resident, disagrees. "The police are trying to provoke us by conducting these flag marches. It is not required. We have already given up," he says.

S.M. Yasin, joint secretary of the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee, which manages the Gyanvapi mosque, believes that the Central and State governments are involved in the dispute. "An ASI survey was conducted inside the mosque. A puja was conducted inside the mosque.



S.M. Yasin, joint secretary of the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee, which manages the Gyanvapi mosque, believes that the Central and State governments are involved in the dispute. R.V. MOORTHY

Tomorrow someone may even want to demolish the mosque. A Muslim can only watch while this grave injustice plays out," he says, adding that he has lost faith in the judiciary.

Yasin wonders why the District Magistrate deemed it so urgent to comply with the court order. "If the administration is so serious about ensuring compliance with court orders, why haven't they opened the Noori Masjid even after the directions of the Supreme Court," he asks.

Located 4 kilometres from the Gyanvapi mosque in the Madanpur area, Noori Masjid is a defaced double storey structure which has been closed for decades. A Shiva temple, the Tilbhaneshwar, is situated 200 m away from it.

"The administration disallows prayers in this mosque citing law and order," says Mohiuddin, who had donated his house to the Waqf Board, a legal body that ensures the proper administration of Waqf, or property donated in the name of god for religious and charitable purposes. His house was later converted into the mosque.

"It was the last wish of my wife Zahida Bibi that our house be converted into a mosque. I won't be able to die in peace as I have failed to fulfil her last wish," he says, waving the Supreme Court order of 2009, delivered by Justice Markandey Katju, which paved the way for prayers in this mosque.



Soon after the court order, people began cancelling their bookings at our hotel. They are afraid of travelling to Varanasi. They think that it is on the verge of riots

MANISH CHANDRA
Staff at hotel

Residents in the area, who are predominantly Muslim, say that prayers are still not allowed in the mosque despite multiple requests.

District Magistrate Rajalingam says he is aware of the issue, but refuses to comment on why it remains locked up.

Muslims in the city are also unhappy that videos of the puja being performed inside the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque are making the rounds on social media. They believe it is being done to "humiliate" the community.

"The court has said a puja can be performed, but it did not say circulate videos of it to provoke sentiments," says Yasin. Moreover, he says, it is strange that these videos are being circulated when phones are not allowed inside the temple. He alleges that the administration circulated the videos. He also wonders why devotees are allowed to perform *darshan* in the cellar, as this was not in the court order.

Refuting Yasin's allegations, the Chief Executive Officer of the Kashi Vishwanath temple trust and vice-president of Uttar Pradesh Provincial Civil Services Officers Association, Vishwa Bhushan Mishra, says that the administration has not recorded any videos of the puja. "We allowed the pilgrims to have a glimpse of the cellar because there was high demand. Each of them was requesting this. We allowed *darshan* from a distance, which neither disturbs the management of the temple nor creates a law-and-order issue," he says.

The changing character of a city

Vishwanath Nath Mishra is the Mahant or the religious head of Varanasi's second-most visited temple, the Sankat Mochan, which is believed by devotees to have been built by the poet and saint Goswami Tulsidas in the 16th century. The temple is dedicated to Hanuman, a devoted companion of Lord Rama. "Hundreds of ancient temples and mosques have quietly witnessed the transformation of Varanasi over the years," says Mishra. "This dispute is taking away from the city's history of peaceful co-existence."

Mishra believes that Varanasi represents a model of India where all religions and communities live together in peace. "Whatever happened is now in the past. It was accepted by the people, and everyone lived amicably," he says.

Terming the structural and social changes happening in Varanasi as "part of politics," Mishra says they are killing the "soul" of the city.

"Have you seen that giant Kashi Vishwanath corridor built with the red sandstone? Does it match the aesthetics of this city which is famous for its ancient architecture, narrow lanes, spirituality, and harmony? First, they change the face of the town and now they want to keep communities divided," he says, alleging that those fighting the Gyanvapi case are "outsiders".

Lacour Sophie, from Paris, is visiting Varanasi for the second time. She feels there is something missing in the city now. "The narrow lanes near the temple are gone. The ghats look cleaner, but the spirituality is missing. There are more tourists here than pilgrims," she says.

Others disagree and believe that development is important. Tribhuvan Nath, 76, from the Kairbhadra district of Chhattisgarh, is staying at Mukti Bhawan, a hostel run by a trust. Here, ailing people check in with the belief that they will attain salvation if they die in Varanasi. Tribhuvan has come with his older brother Nirgun Nath, who suffers from a liver problem.

"My father and mother died in Varanasi. Nirgun will be the fifth person in my family to die here. I have seen this city changing for the good. Earlier, travelling to Varanasi was difficult. Now, the roads are good and so is transport. Even the power supply is uninterrupted," says Tribhuvan.

Nitin and Jagriti Jain, a couple from Ahmedabad, feel that the city has transformed exactly the way it should. "Spirituality and development can go hand in hand. For how long can people keep coming to crowded and narrow lanes with poor accommodation? The Prime Minister's vision is visible in the development of this city," says Jagriti, after giving a sound bite to a television channel praising the court's order of allowing puja inside the Gyanvapi mosque.

Demands and despair

Manish Chandra, who works at a hotel near the temple, says, "Soon after the court order, people began cancelling their bookings in our hotel. They said that they are afraid of travelling to Varanasi as they think that the city is on the verge of riots".

Rajendra Kumar, who owns a saree shop at the city's Maidagan area, says his Muslim workers are fearful. This affects him as the rich Banarsi silk sarees are mostly woven by Muslims, whereas shopkeepers and clients are mostly Hindu.

Firoza Bano, who helps her husband Mumtaz Ahmed in dyeing the silk thread on the veranda of their small dimly lit house in the Reori Talab area, feels that Muslims should hand over the mosque to the Hindus. She asks, "What we will do with the mosque if the future of our children is destroyed?"

Earlier this week, in the State Assembly, Chief Minister Adityanath made a pitch to reclaim the religious sites of Kashi and Mathura where the disputed Gyanvapi and Shahi Idgah mosques are situated. "In the Mahabharata, Krishna asked Durvodhana for five villages for the Pandavas... Hindus are only asking for three shrines, that is, Ayodhya, Kashi, and Mathura," he said.

The situation worries Yasin. "How many mosques will satisfy the Hindus," he asks. He recalls the slogan coined by right-wing groups during the demolition of the Babri Masjid by Hindutva proponents. It went, 'Ayodhya to sirf jhanki hai, abhi Kashi, Mathura baki hai (Ayodhya is only the temple, now Kashi and Mathura remain).'

"They have a new slogan now," he says quietly. "It goes, 'Teen nahi tees hazaar, ab na rahegi koi masjid ya mazaar (Not three but 30,000; now there will be no mosque or tomb).'"



UTTAR PRADESH

Varanasi

It is nothing but a 'white lie paper', says Chidambaram

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The White Paper tabled by the Narendra Modi-led government on the state of the economy under the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) is a "hatchet job" and a "white lie paper", former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said on Friday.

"It is a white lie paper. Even the authors will not claim that it is an academic, well-researched or scholarly paper. It is a political exercise intended to damn the previous government and hide the present government's broken promises, monumental failures and betrayal of the poor," Mr. Chidambaram said.

The former Union Minister said no other government had made so many "wild promises" as the Modi government and then broken them "without an expression of regret".

Mr. Chidambaram said the Centre had promised two crore jobs every year. It also promised to bring back black money parked abroad in 100 days, put ₹15 lakh in every citizen's bank account, bring down prices of petrol and diesel at ₹35 a litre, build 100 smart cities by 2022, double farmers' income, provide house to every family by 2022, and achieve a \$5-trillion economy by 2023-24.

"In fact, the government laughed them away as election *jumlas*," he said, adding, "The paper released today is not a white paper; it is a paper that is intended to whitewash the many sins and commissions of the NDA government in the last 10 years".

Fugitives will be extradited, says FM

Replying to the White Paper debate in Lok Sabha, Nirmala Sitharaman blames 'udderless' leadership of UPA for the 'one big-ticket scam a year' decade; she alleges that Enforcement Directorate was like 'caged bird' to facilitate money laundering

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



In full force: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Budget Session of Parliament. ANI

Fugitive economic offenders like Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, and Sanjay Bhandari will be extradited to India, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Friday, even as she charged former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi of being a 'Super Prime Minister' in the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) years, blaming "udderless" leadership for the "one big-ticket scam a year" decade between 2004-2014.

Speaking on the White Paper on the Economy in the Lok Sabha, the Minister said it was a serious document tabled with responsibility as it impacted the lives of people and shall serve as a record for posterity. "...Entire India's youth should know what

effort it took for a Prime Minister with a vision to restore India to its glory," Ms. Sitharaman said, comparing the Commonwealth Games "flop show" to the "grand" success of G-20 events.

In her opening remarks, she went beyond the UPA decade to remind the House about the LIC of India being forced to invest

in an ailing West Bengal firm run by Haridas Mundhra in the 1950s, which culminated in the then Finance Minister T.T. Krishnamachari's resignation as "a sacrificial lamb".

Stressing that national security was compromised in the UPA years, she said the environment had become a bottleneck for project clearances, hurting de-

velopment, and the leadership of the day "failed" the country.

Terming the National Advisory Council (NAC) headed by Ms. Gandhi as an "extra-constitutional body worse than a Kitchen Cabinet", the Minister asked why 710 government files were sent to the NAC office.

Jayanti Tax'

"*Andolanjeevi* [a person who makes a living through protests] and *Bhrashtacharjeevi* [a person who survives on corruption] gave birth to the 'Jayanti Tax'. Licence Permit Raj was brought back through the Environment Tax," she said, pointing to a rise in average time taken for green clearances from 86 days in 2011 to 316 days in 2014. This has now come down to 70 days, she added, with this government

balancing development and environment needs.

Stating that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) was told to "keep quiet to facilitate money laundering" during the UPA years and kept like a "caged bird", she noted that just 102 prosecutions took place then, compared to 1,200 since 2014. Zero persons were convicted in their tenure, while the number is 58 in our watch, she said, attributing it to the ED being given the "independence to stop money laundering".

"We have got extradition orders passed in four cases [of fugitive economic offenders] and are extraditing them," she said, noting that 12 people have been labelled fugitive economic offenders under their watch, while the number of such extraditions was zero during the UPA years.

IN BRIEF



Resolution on Ram Temple likely today in Lok Sabha

The BJP on Friday issued a three-line whip to all its Members of Parliament in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to be present on Saturday, the last day of the last session of the 17th Lok Sabha, as the government was likely to bring in a resolution on the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Sources in the government said that a resolution under Rule 193 of the House will be brought in by it on the Ram Temple. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to address the Lok Sabha at the end of the discussion. The temple consecration took place on January 22 and the BJP has been at the forefront of facilitating pilgrims to the temple.

'SC turned down need for regional Benches at this stage'

Union Minister of Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal on Friday informed the Lok Sabha that the Supreme Court has made it clear that there is no need for regional Benches of the top court at this stage. Answering a supplementary question during the Question Hour on the regional Benches of the top court, the Minister said it is only a recommendation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee. His statement assumes significance in the wake of recent reports that said the government had accepted the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice.

Parliament clears Bill to curb malpractices in public exams

The Rajya Sabha passed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill on Friday, which was cleared by the Lok Sabha earlier this week. The Bill, aimed at bringing greater transparency, fairness and credibility to the public examination systems, will now go to President Droupadi Murmu for assent. Piloting the Bill, Union Minister of State for Personnel Affairs Jitendra Singh said malpractices led to delays and cancellation of examinations.

INDIA bloc calls document a 'political manifesto'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

of the GST.

They recounted the BJP's pre-poll promises like creating two crore jobs every year, putting ₹15 lakh into the accounts of every citizen after bringing back black money, bringing down the prices of fuel and cooking gas, and making the rupee stronger against the dollar.

Two Opposition members – RSP's N.K. Premachandran and Trinamool Congress's Saugato Roy – moved a substitute resolution to highlight the failings of Modi government.

Most of the members questioned the government on why it had not mentioned in the White Paper the November 2016 demonetisation, unemployment, inflation, and the faulty implementation

Most of the members questioned why the govt. did not mention demonetisation in the White Paper

bers asked the Modi government to spell out the concrete steps it took to put the guilty behind bars in the past 10 years.

"It is a matter of 10 years. Have you taken any action against any political leader?" asked Congress leader Manish Tewari who led the charge from the Opposition benches. "If you wanted to bring a White Paper, you should have brought it in 2014. The in-

tention behind this White Paper is only political. This is a political manifesto, not a White Paper," he said.

Landmark legislation

Mr. Tewari said that under former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, the UPA brought landmark legislation like right to food under the National Food Security Act, right to employment under the MGNREGA, right to compulsory and free education and creation of unique identity under Aadhaar.

"What has been your achievements in the past 10 years?" he asked. The Congress leader in

the House, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, said: "At the fag end of this session, this kind of White Paper only with an objective to tarnish the 10 years of UPA government does not cut much ice."

His deputy, Gaurav Gogoi, accused the government of using the Enforcement Directorate to "welcome the corrupt into the BJP". "The action rate of the raids from 2005 to 2014 was 93%, which has now been reduced to 29%. Only 23 convictions under the PMLA [Prevention of Money Laundering Act] have been secured... Why is the conviction rate so low?" Mr. Gogoi asked.

RS passes Bills to add Paharis, Valmikis to ST, SC lists in J&K

Abhinav Lakshman
Peerzada Ashiq
NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR

Amid ongoing protests in Jammu and Kashmir by the Scheduled Tribe Gujjar-Bakarwali community, the Rajya Sabha on Friday cleared the way for the addition of the Pahari ethnic group to the Union Territory's ST list.

Along with it, the Upper House passed the Bills that added the Paddari Tribe, Gadda Brahmin, and Koli to the ST list.

His attack on Mr. Singh came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed him for his commitment to democracy in the course of the farewell address to retiring Rajya Sabha members.

Speaking on the coal allocation scam, he asked the Congress: "Isn't your Prime Minister an accused in the coal scam?" This led to an uproar, drawing protests from the Congress MPs. Mr. Prasad insisted that all this was a "matter of record".

He further alleged that the coal blocks were allocated to favourites by bending the rules. "Your Ministers used to write letters... dear Prime Minister, so & so is my brother, please help him," he claimed.

Earlier in the day, another BJP MP Nishikant Dubey alleged that the Congress and its allies were blind to corruption and nepotism.

He said, "This Bill will

Isn't your PM a coal scam accused, BJP MP asks Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister and BJP MP Ravi Shankar Prasad on Friday denounced the Congress's 10-year regime from 2004 to 2014, saying that then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was an accused of the coal scam, during a debate in the Lok Sabha on the White Paper on the Indian economy.

His attack on Mr. Singh came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed him for his commitment to democracy in the course of the farewell address to retiring Rajya Sabha members.

In a 25-minute long speech, Mr. Prasad accused the Congress governments in Rajasthan and Haryana of handing over acres of land worth several crores to businessman Robert Vadra, terming it as a "new model of entrepreneurship". He dwelled on spectrum allocation, where he said that the "first come, first serve" model was flawed since artificial impediments were introduced to stop some from coming first.

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UTTARAKHAND CIVIL AVIATION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY			
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Letter No.: 290/UCADA/2024			
TENDER NOTICE			
Date: 09th Feb, 2024			
E.O.I is invited from all the valid NSOP helicopter operators to undertake helicopter shuttle services on route Phata – Kedamath Ji. The E.O.I should comply with all the requisite requirements laid down in the RFP/Tender No. 7524/UCADA/2023 dated 14.01.2023 (and all subsequent addendum/corrigendum) published on www.uktenders.gov.in. The E.O.I. should match the lowest rates (L1) discovered as under:			
S. No.	Sector/Route	Offered Helipads	L1 rate
1.	Phata- Shri Kedamath Ji	1 helipad in Phata Sector	288/-
Duration of shuttle services will be for 02 years.			
Selection process will be as per RFP/Tender No. 7524/UCADA/2023 dated 14.01.2023 (and all subsequent addendum/corrigendum) published on www.uktenders.gov.in.			
If more than two or more Bidders are technically qualified than selection will be done on the basis of past performance/availability of maximum number of helicopters and pilots with bidder at such date by a marking system as devised by UCADA. If in case two or more bidder have the same number of marks then a lottery system as devised by UCADA will be adopted which will be done in the presence of the operators.			
The E.O.I. dated 14.01.2023 (and all subsequent addendum/corrigendum) will reach the above-mentioned official address by 1700 Hrs. on 19-02-2024 along with all the required documents physically as per the above-mentioned RFP in a sealed envelope.			
Any clarifications / queries can be submitted by 1700 Hrs. 13th Feb 2024 on E-mail ops.ucadaodoo@gmail.com. An online meeting for the same will be held on 14th Feb 2024 at 1200 hrs.			
CEO, UCADA			

submitting an application to raise it during Zero Hour four times. Mr. Vanlalvena represents the Mizo National Front, which is a member of the NDA.

He said it was a "burning issue" along the India-Myanmar border, but tribal MPs from there were "not given a single minute to raise this issue".

Not allowed to raise FMR issue, says Mizoram MP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha member K. Vanlalvena from Mizoram on Friday said he was not being allowed to speak in the House on the issue of India's decision to remove the Free Movement Regime (FMR) along the Myanmar border despite

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STATEMENT OF STANDALONE & CONSOLIDATED UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND PERIOD ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023

(Rs. In Crores)

S. No	Particulars	Standalone		Consolidated	
		(Unaudited)	Quarter ended	Period ended	Quarter ended
		31.12.2023	30.09.2023	31.12.2023	30.09.2023
1	Total Income	520.27	302.01	573.55	299.65
2	Net Profit / (Loss) before tax (before Exceptional Items)	28.70	30.51	(51.81)	(5.55)
3	Net Profit / (Loss) before tax (after Exceptional Items)	27.58	30.40	(52.93)	(5.66)
4	Net Profit / (Loss) after tax (after Exceptional Items)	17.61	26.18	(62.90)	(9.88)
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income / (Loss) (after tax)]	17.58	25.28	(62.93)	(10.78)
6	Equity share Capital (Face value of Rs.5/- each)	10.12	10.12	10.12	10.12
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	777.00	759.44	646.87	707.86
8	Security Premium Account	-	-	-	-
9	Networth	787.12	769.56	656.99	717.98
10	Outstanding Debt	861.46	789.97	1,305.72	1,210.91
11	Outstanding redeemable Preference Shares	0.87	0.87		

IN BRIEF



COVID-19 effects have come down substantially: Minister

The COVID-19 virus mutated 223 times across the world, but its harmful effects have come down substantially over time, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said in the Lok Sabha on Friday. The Minister added that COVID-19 will continue to remain like influenza and its present variants are not deadly. "When a virus mutates more than 100 times, its harmful effects are reduced. So far, the COVID virus has mutated 223 times and like influenza, which hits people once or twice every year COVID is with us and it will remain," the Minister added. He added that health is such an issue where all stakeholders and countries should come together and work.

Embraer, Mahindra to jointly bid for IAF's aircraft deal

Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer Defense & Security and Mahindra signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly bid for the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Medium Transport (MTA) Aircraft tender. Embraer is pitching its C-390 Millennium multi-mission aircraft for the deal. The MoU was signed at the Embassy of Brazil in New Delhi on Friday. "We are honoured to announce this MoU with Mahindra. India has a diverse and strong defence and aerospace industry and we have chosen Mahindra as our partner to jointly pursue the MTA programme," said Bosco da Costa Junior, President & CEO, Embraer Defense & Security in a statement.

SC to hear curative petition in Nagpur airport case

A four-judge Bench of the Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear a curative petition filed by the Centre and the Airports Authority of India seeking a re-look of an apex court judgment, allowing the GMR Group to operate Nagpur's Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport in 2022. The Centre and the AAI have argued that they were neither impleaded as parties or heard by the Supreme Court while upholding a decision of Bombay HC decision quashing a March 2020 communication issued by MIHAN, a joint venture by the Maharashtra Airport Development Company and AAI, cancelling an award granted to GMR to upgrade and operate the airport.

Senior journalist booked for 'defaming' Modi, Advani

A case has been registered in Pune against senior journalist Nikhil Wagle for allegedly making offensive remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP veteran L.K. Advani after the latter was awarded the Bharat Ratna, said authorities on Friday. The FIR was filed at Pune's Vishrambaug police station after a local BJP leader, Sunil Deodhar, lodged a complaint against Mr. Wagle. The senior journalist has been booked under Sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups), 500 (defamation) and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), said police authorities, adding that they were probing the matter.

Act against trolls, Pranab's daughter tells Rahul Gandhi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Sharmistha Mukherjee, daughter of former President Pranab Mukherjee, has written a letter to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi complaining that both she and her late father have been subjected to sustained trolling by Mr. Gandhi's supporters on social media after she wrote a book based on her father's memoirs.

In a letter posted on X, Ms. Mukherjee said she had been subject to vicious trolling, "sometimes using the nastiest language". She also identified one social media user in particular, who she adds is "followed by several senior Congress leaders...". The user, she wrote, "abused my father, Pranab Mukherjee and me in such vile language I feel nauseous even to repeat it."

"Nafrat ke Bazaar me Mohabbat ki Dukan [shop of love in the market of hatred] also seems to fall on deaf ears of your own followers as they unleash all their 'nafrat' on anyone daring to criticise you," Ms. Mukherjee said in the letter.

She demanded Mr. Gandhi to take action against the particular X handle.

Cabinet nod to spectrum for Railways without TRAI reply

The Railways had sought additional 5MHz of spectrum for sending real-time data from trains to boost passenger safety; TRAI is assessing whether the transporter should get such an allocation



In discussions with TRAI, Railways had said that it wants additional spectrum for implementing several safety features. BISWARANJAN ROUT

A day after the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) floated a consultation paper on whether Indian Railways should be able to get – largely free – 5 Megahertz of wireless spectrum for carrying real-time data that would enhance passenger safety, the Union Cabinet in a surprise move on Thursday approved the proposal, even though TRAI's response was pending.

The Railways had sought additional 5 MHz of paired spectrum, free of charge, in the 700 MHz band in July last year, a month after the Balasore incident that left 296 dead and nearly 1,200 injured. "As per our understanding, the Cabinet has decided to reserve this 5MHz spectrum to keep it out of auctions, and it has not been allotted to the Railways as of yet," a TRAI official told *The Hindu*.

In the past, when the Railways had received spectrum grants, for which they only needed to pay an annual royalty without bid-

ding for the airwaves, the data transfer capacity was not sufficient to allow trains to continuously upload video footage for safety purposes.

The video feeds were instead "dumped" at railway stations with a WiFi connection.

The Railways wrote to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) that it is important to capture large-scale data and videos from moving trains on a real-time basis. "Dumping at a stopping station, which has high-capacity WiFi, shall not serve the objective," the Railways observed.

The Railways further said that during exigencies, networks of telecom service providers get choked, thereby adversely

affecting relief and restoration operations.

Because the Railways

was only granted 5 MHz of its original demand for 15 MHz in discussions post

the Balasore tragedy, it had

again asked for an additional 5 MHz of paired spectrum in the 700 MHz band.

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Allow NREGS workers to choose how to be paid: plea

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

A plea wants the Supreme Court to direct the Union government to allow workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to choose how they want to be paid their wages, and not impose on them "opaque and cumbersome" payment methods like the Aadhaar-based Payment System (ABPS).

In consultation which is open for comments till March 6 and counter-comments till March 20, TRAI is assessing whether additional spectrum should be assigned to the Railways, and whether it will be sufficient to meet requirement of different rail networks, and also what should be the spectrum valuation and charging methodology.

The application by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, said 34.8% of total registered workers (8.9 crore) under the MGNREGS and 12.7% of active workers (1.8 crore) are still ineligible for ABPS as on December 27, 2023.

The application said the ABPS was a payment with a "number of layers". For the ABPS to work, not only must the worker's job card and bank account be linked with her Aadhaar, but the bank itself must be linked to the National Payments Corporation of India mapper through the bank's Institutional Identification Number. Errors in any steps in the ABPS would result in payment failures or rejections, it said.

T.N. government directs Periyar University V-C to suspend Registrar

M. Sabari
SALEM

Higher Education Secretary A. Karthik has instructed Periyar University Vice-Chancellor R. Jagannathan to suspend Registrar (full additional charge) K. Thangavel, after an inquiry committee found evidence of irregularities committed by the latter.

A section of the university's faculty alleged that the Vice-Chancellor, instead of acting against the Registrar, participated in an event with him on the campus on Friday.

Following various allegations against the university and Mr. Thangavel, the Department on January 9 last year ordered an investigation into 13 complaints, including the appointment of a physical education director and li-

India-Saudi Arabia joint military exercise ends

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The maiden joint military exercise, *Sada Tanzeeq*, between the Indian Army and the Royal Saudi Land Force concluded at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Jaipur on Friday.

The 12-day exercise aimed to achieve interoperability between the two forces and acquaint each other with operational procedures and combat drills under the UN mandate, Col. Amitabh Sharma, Defence spokesperson, said in a statement.

The Indian contingent of the 20th Battalion of The Brigade of Guards Regiment and the Saudi Arabian contingent comprising a group of 45 soldiers of Royal Saudi Land Force participated in the exercise which was conducted in two phases.

54% of BJP's total income came from electoral bonds

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) received ₹1,294.14 crore through electoral bonds in 2022-23, which was nearly 54% of its total income during the year, and seven times higher than that of its main rival, the Congress.

The ruling party's total income rose to ₹2,361 crore in 2022-23 from ₹917 crore in 2021-22, according to the annual audit report of the BJP made public by the Election Commission (EC) on Thursday.

The party got ₹2,120.6 crore from donations (including electoral bonds), while income from bank interest was ₹237.3 crore, compared to the previous fiscal's ₹133.3 crore.

The party spent ₹1,092.15 crore for elections, which is five times

more than what the Congress spent. In 2021-22, the BJP had spent ₹645.85 crore.

The BJP's election expenditure, among others, included ₹432.14 crore spent on advertisements and ₹78.22 crore spent on hiring aircraft and helicopters. Another ₹75.05 crore was given as financial assistance to candidates while press conferences cost ₹71.60 lakh.

The Congress on the other hand saw its total receipts reduce to ₹452.37 crore in 2022-23 from ₹541.27 crore in 2021-22. It spent ₹192.55 crore on elections and ₹71.83 crore for Rahul Gandhi's Kanya-kumari to Kashmir 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' in 2022-23 while its donations through electoral bonds declined ₹171.02 crore from ₹236.09 crore in the previous year.

'Give regular benefit to families of Agniveers'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Families of Agniveers killed in the line of duty should receive the same benefits that are provided to the next of kin of a regular soldier, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence has recommended.

The committee also noted that there was no assured employment or skill development programme exclusively designed for Agniveers, except for some percentage of reservation of jobs in Central Armed Police Forces.

This was conveyed in the report of the House panel headed by Bharatiya Janata Party MP Jual Oram. The report titled "A review of functioning of zila sainik boards in the country" was tabled in Parliament on Thursday.

To a question on noble personalities, Vidhura replied that people who are very much learned or who attained outstanding academic achievements are not noble, but noble are those who plan and execute their lives' aims properly.

Velukudi Sri Krishnan Swamy said in a discourse that three types of experience exist. *Iswaryanubhavam* - experiencing worldly pleasures through our faculties. *Kaivalyanubhavam* - realisation of self and *Bhagavat Prapthi* - realising that God alone gives us everything and He is the ultimate destination. Jeevathma is entirely dependent on Paramarthma. An Apostle says he wants to place his head on the lotus feet of God and nothing else. Bharatha was blessed with the sandals (*paduka*). The elephant Gajendra offered lotus at His feet.

People should hanker to obtain only those that are within the reach of their capacity (*Yatha sakti-Chikeer-shanthi*). We should not neglect even trivial matters and should never insult one's feelings by our disrespectful behaviour, however puny a person may be (*Na kinchith avamanyathe*). All are equal before God - whether rich or poor, learned or ignorant, strong or weak. Though Hanuman had found Sri Sita in Asokavaram and brought the Sanjeevi mountain, Lord Rama treated all the monkey legions equally.

Across

- 1 Tell a story describing good universal order (8)
- 5 Some think it's cheap form of art (6)
- 9 Lord (OBE) and daughter specially like rubies (5-3)
- 10 Starts to defend excessively... average becomes lower (6)
- 12 English less excited to consume flat mid-morning snack (9)
- 13 Sharp, professional tips from rich businessman (5)

CM
YK

- 14 Check contract - insufficient (4)
- 16 Crude iron ore originally found near Colorado river (7)
- 19 Tragic hero collapsed, too full of suffering (7)
- 21 Empress from Spain arriving in retreat (4)
- 24 Wrong to drink tea without a mug (5)
- 25 Able teams fighting for lead, perhaps (4,5)
- 27 Smoother cushion? (6)
- 28 Boss trained most tense novices (8)
- 29 Recruit two leaders each from engineering, literature, statistics (6)
- 30 Ultimately, mankind may do so badly resulting in the end of the world (8)

Down

IN BRIEF



Ex-SEBI chief Damodaran to head Paytm compliance panel

Paytm parent One97 Communications said it would form a group advisory committee on compliance and regulatory matters headed by M. Damodaran, former SEBI Chairman, Paytm said. The RBI last week ordered Paytm affiliate Paytm Payments Bank to wind down most of its business by February 29, citing "persistent non-compliance." Shares of One97 Communications Ltd. tanked more than 15% in two days as investors dumped the stock. REUTERS/PTI

Rane group to merge two units with Rane (Madras)

City-based Rane Group announced the merger of Rane Brake Lining Ltd. (RBL) and Rane Engine Valve Ltd. (REVL) with Rane (Madras) Ltd. (RML) to bring operating businesses under a single entity. The implementation of the scheme is expected to take about 9-12 months, the firms said. The proposed transaction will create a larger company with a combined turnover of ₹3,373 crore for the trailing 12-month period ended December 31, 2023 on a proforma basis.

Murugappa's EV arm mulls next round of fund raise

Murugappa group's electric vehicle arm TI Clean Mobility Pvt. Ltd. (TICMPL) is planning to raise more funds to expand business, said a top official. "We continue to be in the process of raising one more round of funds," said Executive Vice-Chairman Vellayan Subbiah during an earnings call. During the current fiscal, the company had spent about ₹300 crore, and in the next fiscal, it is planning to invest about ₹460 crore for all businesses put together in TICMPL.

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has increased the remuneration ceiling of Non Executive Directors (NEDs) to

of banks from ₹20 lakh per annum to ₹30 lakh. "Considering the crucial role of NEDs in efficient functioning of bank Boards and its various Committees and to further enable banks to

sufficiently attract qualified, competent individuals, it has been decided to revise the aforementioned ceiling to ₹30 lakh per annum," the RBI said. This is applicable to all

private sector banks including Small Finance Banks and Payment Banks as also wholly owned subsidiaries of foreign banks. The instruction has come into immediate effect.

India can purchase natural gas at below market price'

Petroleum Secretary says that with huge buying power India can execute favourable deals to procure natural gas; piped gas connections to homes would drive demand for natural gas, he adds

Lalatendu Mishra
BETUL, GOA

India's emergence as the demand centre for energy in the world provides arbitrage opportunities around the globe for procuring natural gas, said Pankaj Jain, Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.



Arbitrage opportunities: Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri with Petroleum Secretary Pankaj Jain. BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

vernment would encourage such sellers to engage in negotiations.

As a 'bridge-fuel' in the

energy transition, natural gas will see wider adoption in India as terminal capacities and pipeline networks,

are upgraded. Mr. Jain said adding that diversification of fuel sources was key to making the 'cleaner' natural gas available to consumers.

He said scaling of gas-based mobility and expansion of piped gas connections to homes would drive demand. Expanding adoption of bio-fuels requires scaling up production of the fuel at an affordable cost, Mr. Jain added.

(This writer was in Goa at the invitation of the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry.)

MRF Q3 net surges threefold to ₹508 cr.

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

MRF Ltd. reported standalone net profit for the third quarter ended December surged threefold year-on-year to ₹508 crore on strong sales volumes.

Revenue from operations increased by 9% to ₹6,048 crore, while cost of materials consumed contracted by ₹8 crore to ₹3,743 crore. Profit before tax also climbed threefold to ₹679 crore, the tyre major said in a statement released on Friday.

The board declared second interim dividend of



₹3 per share. The company has fixed February 21 as the record date for the purpose of payment of the dividend.

Shares of the company lost ₹5,436.20, or 3.82%, to close at ₹1,37,047.15 on the BSE on Friday.

Petronet plans to treble profit by 2028

Press Trust of India
BETUL, GOA

Petronet LNG Ltd., the operator of the world's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal, will invest ₹40,000 crore in expanding import capacity and petrochemicals with a target to treble net profit by 2028, its CEO A. K. Singh said.

Petronet is making a foray into the petrochemical business by investing ₹12,685 crore in a propane dehydrogenation plant that will convert imported feedstock into propylene, as well as setting up an

LNG import facility at Gopalpur in Odisha at a cost of ₹2,300 crore, he said.

"We have charted a 1-10-40 strategy - increasing turnover to ₹1 lakh crore in 5 years with a net profit of ₹10,000 crore from investing ₹40,000 crore in expansions," Mr. Singh said.

A.K.Singh

LNG import facility at Gopalpur in Odisha at a cost of ₹2,300 crore, he said.

"We have charted a 1-10-40 strategy - increasing turnover to ₹1 lakh crore in 5 years with a net profit of ₹10,000 crore from investing ₹40,000 crore in expansions," Mr. Singh said.

'NBFC-P2Ps underplaying risks; some practices not within norms'

Anshika Kayastha

MUMBAI

Some business practices of NBFC-P2P (peer-to-peer) lenders appear to not be in line with regulatory guidelines and such lenders have been underplaying certain business risks, Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor M. Rajeshwar Rao said. He also dismissed constant requests from NBFCs (Non-banking financial corporations) to convert into banks, saying they have evolved to serve specific economic functions, and it is uncharacteristic for them to act like banks.

"A large proportion of lenders on NBFC-P2Ps are individuals, and they are not expected to be well-equipped to understand the risks involved in providing credit. Instead of educating the lenders about the inherent risks in the lending activity, NBFC-P2Ps have been observed to underplay the risks through various means such as promising high or assured returns, structuring the transactions, providing anytime fund recall facilities," Mr. Rao said at the NBFC Summit organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Since NBFC-P2Ps do not undertake credit risk on themselves and operate as a "meeting place for lenders and borrowers," their regulations have been kept at basic entry-level requirements, Mr. Rao added.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	FRIDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	71,595	0.23
U.S. Dollar	83.07	-0.13
Gold	63,300	—
Brent oil	81.69	0.69

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	3215.20	-46.60
Adani Ports	1271.50	-26.30
Apollo Hosp	6437.35	206.35
Asian Paints	2951.65	22.05
Axis Bank	1051.40	15.50
Bajaj Auto	7784.85	-27.60
Bajaj Finance	6654.50	78.85
Bharti Airtel	1120.25	-21.90
BPCL	614.30	-6.20
Britannia Ind	4971.50	95.95
Cipla	1439.75	19.55
Coal India	456.20	-3.00
Divis Lab	3652.30	-32.10
Dr Reddy's Lab	6155.85	-4.20
Eicher Motors	3840.95	33.65
Grasim Ind	2168.50	111.20
HCL Tech	1630.60	-3.20
HDFC Life	584.00	-7.70
Hero MotoCorp	4908.85	100.95
Hindalco	591.30	-10.00
Hind Unilever	2424.15	7.10
ICICI Bank	1019.70	21.40
IndusInd Bank	1486.25	8.95
Infosys	1669.35	-22.75
ITC	415.50	0.95
JSW Steel	811.75	-10.35
Kotak Bank	1742.45	12.75
L&T	3324.55	-10.95
LTMindtree Ltd.	5453.30	32.50
M&M	1646.40	-39.50
Maruti Suzuki	10732.85	-11.05
NestleIndia	2450.10	27.05
NTPC	324.90	-6.00
ONGC	267.55	-5.60
PowerGrid Corp	237.00	-3.20
Reliance Ind	2921.50	21.25
SBI Life	1439.70	-19.35
State Bank	725.25	25.70
Sun Pharma	1534.80	35.20
TataConsumerProduct	1129.25	-8.65
Tata Motors	915.00	-9.30
Tata Steel	141.30	-2.35
TCS	4133.70	-0.40
Tech Mahindra	1311.05	1.80
Titan	3591.60	42.50
UltraTech Cement	9945.75	-51.90
UPL	457.95	-6.90
Wipro	490.45	1.60

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on February 09

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	82.84	83.16
Euro	89.17	89.51
British Pound	104.44	104.85
Japanese Yen (100)	55.46	55.68
Chinese Yuan	11.52	11.56
Swiss Franc	94.61	94.97
Singapore Dollar	61.52	61.77
Canadian Dollar	61.56	61.80
Malaysian Ringgit	17.37	17.48
Australian Dollar	53.91	54.13

of IndianOil as ED. The JV aims at doubling gas sales in four years and expand infrastructure to more than 600 retail outlets during the period to meet India's rising gas demand.

IndianOil-Adani Gas JV to invest \$300 million to double gas sales

Reuters

QUITOL, INDIA

IndianOil-Adani Gas Pvt. Ltd. will invest ₹25 billion (\$301.24 million) over four years as it looks to double

gas sales to small industries and households in India, a company executive said on Friday.

The company, an equal joint venture (JV) of refiner Indian Oil Corp and Adani

Total Gas, daily sells about one million standard cubic metre of gas through its 300 retail outlets, said S.K. Jha, a director in the JV.

Mr. Jha also heads the city gas distribution business

इंकॉइस

भारतीय राष्ट्रीय महासागर सूचना सेवा केंद्र (इंकॉइस)
Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)
(पुर्वी विद्युत मवालय भारत सरकार के अधीन एक स्वायत्त नियंत्रण)

(an autonomous body under Ministry of Earth Sciences, Govt. of India)

"ओशियन वैली", प्राप्ति नगर(वैली), निजामामपेट(एस.ओ.)हैदरबाद-500090

"Ocean Valley", Pragathi Nagar (B.O), Nizampet (S.O), Hyderabad - 500090

भारत सरकार द्वारा 2021-26 की अवधि के लिए अनुमोदित परियोजनाओं में नियंत्रित अस्थायी पदों के प्रति संविदा के आधार पर भर्ती के लिए पात्र होंगे, जिसे नियंत्रण / परियोजना की आवश्यकता के आधार पर वर्ताया जाएगा। आदेन आमतित हैं। पद शुरू में एक वर्ष की अवधि के लिए होंगे, जिसे नियंत्रण / परियोजना की आवश्यकता के आधार पर वर्ताया जाएगा। अनुमोदित वर्षों में एक वर्ष की अवधि के लिए होंगे, जिसे नियंत्रण / परियोजना की

LAS VEGAS

Trump bumps delegate count with easy Nevada caucus win



Donald Trump strolled to victory in the Nevada caucus on Thursday, adding more delegates in his seemingly unstoppable march to the Republican Party's presidential nomination. Mr. Trump was the only major candidate on the ballot when party members gathered in public buildings across the state to cast their in-person votes. AFP

TUNIS

13 Sudanese migrants dead, 27 missing off Tunisia, says official



Thirteen Sudanese migrants died on Thursday after their boat capsized off the coast of Tunisia, while 27 others remain missing, official said. Only two out of the 42 migrants on board survived. The victims were all asylum seekers from war-torn Sudan who had registered with the United Nations' refugee agency. AFP

Sharif urges rival parties to join hands to form coalition

PML-N chief says he respects the mandate of all parties, including Independent candidates backed by Imran Khan's PTI; a party must win 133 seats out of 265 in the National Assembly to form govt.

Press Trust of India

LAHORE



Friendly stance: Nawaz Sharif, middle, with Shehzad Sharif and Maryam Nawaz, speaking in Lahore on Friday. AFP

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Friday urged rival political parties to join hands to form a stable coalition government to "re-build" Pakistan, saying all institutions should together play a positive role in bringing the cash-strapped country out of its difficulties.

Addressing the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supporters at the party's central secretariat here, 74-year-old Mr. Sharif said his party respects the mandate of all parties, including the Independent candidates backed by jailed former Premier Imran Khan's party.

Mr. Sharif, the three-

time former Premier, said there is a need for all the political parties to sit together and form a government to pull Pakistan out of its difficulties.

"We can't hold elections again and again," he said. "We were all sitting together yesterday, but didn't address you because the re-

sults were not in. We are inviting everyone today to rebuild this injured Pakistan and sit with us," he said as the country appeared heading towards a hung Parliament.

Mr. Sharif announced that he has tasked his younger brother and PML-N president Shehzad

To form a government, a party must win 133 seats out of 265 in the National Assembly.

Ukraine must change war methods'

Putin urges U.S. to push Ukraine to talks, hints at swap of imprisoned WSJ reporter

Associated Press

The Ukrainian Army needs to change its "methods" to win the war against Russia, Kyiv's new commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrsky said on Friday in his first comments in the role.

The Army needs "clear and detailed planning", he said, "taking into account the needs of the frontline for the latest weapons supplied by international partners".

Russian President Vladimir Putin used an interview with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson to urge Washington to recognize Moscow's interests and persuade Ukraine to sit down for the two-year mark.

Mr. Putin repeated his claim that his invasion of Ukraine, which Kyiv and its allies described as an unprovoked act of aggression, was necessary to protect Russian speakers in

It was Putin's first interview with a Western media figure since his Ukraine invasion 2 years ago

Ukraine and prevent the country from posing a threat to Russia by joining NATO.

Mr. Putin pointed at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's refusal to conduct talks with the Kremlin. He argued that

it's up to Washington to stop supplying Ukraine with weapons and convince Kyiv, which he called a U.S. "satellite," to sit down for negotiations.

"We have never refused negotiations," Mr. Putin said. "You should tell the current Ukrainian leadership to stop and come to a negotiating table."

It was Putin's first interview with a Western media figure since his full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago.

Israel's response in Gaza 'over the top', says Biden

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON

cent people who are in trouble and dying, and it's got to stop."

American support for Israel's war on the Palestinian militant group has sparked a flurry of attacks on U.S. troops in the region, as well as criticism of the Biden administration at home and abroad.

Months of bombardment and siege have deepened a humanitarian crisis across Gaza. But Mr. Biden, 81, said he had pushed to get humanitarian assistance into the territory.

Israel Army to evacuate Gaza's Rafah

Associated Press

JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday said he has ordered the military to prepare a plan to evacuate civilians from Rafah ahead of an expected Israeli invasion of the densely populated southern Gaza city.

Rafah had a pre-war population of roughly 280,000, and as per the UN is now home to 1.4 million additional people.

Duke Of Tuscany should repeat in the Godolphin Barb Million

RACES

HYDERABAD: Trainer Laxman Singh's Duke Of Tuscany, who won well in his last start, should repeat in the Godolphin Barb Million, the feature event of Saturday's (Feb. 10) races.

1 BHUPALI PLATE (Div. I) (1,400m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-y-o only (Cat. II) - 12, 40 p.m.: 1. Ashwa Yashvir (7) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 54, 2. Desert Hero (4) Kiran Naidu 56, 3. Oliver's Mount (3) Mukesh Kumar 56, 4. Rolls Royce (9) R.S. Jodha 56, 5. Jungle Girl (1) C. Umesh 54, 6. Newfound Glory (6) P. Sai Kumar 54, 7. Rani Ruckus (2) Md. Ismail Singh 54, 8. Star Of Night (5) Ismail Singh 54, 9. White Pearl (8) Nakhat Singh 54, 10. Oliver's Mount, 2. Star Of Night, 3. Jungle Girl.

2 MEDCHAL PLATE (Div. I) (1,200m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) - 10: 1. Bold Beauty (8) N.B. Kuldeep 60, 2. Precious Gift (II) Deepak Singh 60, 3. Flashing Memories (5) R.S. Jodha 54, 4. Silver Lining (3) Afroz Khan 55, 5. D Battle (1) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 55, 6. Dali's Champion (7) A.A.

Vikrant 55, 7. Rochelle (2) Ajay Kumar 55, 8. Star Cruise (9) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 54, 9. Inderdhanush (6) Md. Ekram Alam 53, 10. Pancho (10) Abhay Singh 52 and 11. Chica Bonita (4) Md. Ismail 51, 5.

1. ROCHELLE, 2. D BATTLE, 3. SILVER LINING

3 ANARAYANET PLATE (Div. I) (1,200m), 5-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II) - 14: 1. Amryta (3) Mukesh Kumar 54, 2. Tripurari (5) C. Umesh 58, 3. Anjelita (10) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 57, 5, 4. Juramento (8) Hindu Singh 56, 5. Garnet (12) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 55, 6. Top In Class (11) Ajay Kumar 55, 7. Divine Connection (4) Md. Ekram Alam 54, 8. Salisbury (7) Mohit Singh 52, 9. Cabello (6) Afroz Khan 52, 10. Clefairy (9) P. Sai Kumar 51, 11. Honourable Lady (1) Surya Prakash 51 and 12. Cosmico (2) G. Naresh 50, 5.

1. TOP IN CLASS, 2. GARNET, 3. JURAMENTO

4 MEDCHAL PLATE (Div. I) (1,200m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) - 10: 1. City Cruise (5) R.S. Jodha 60, 5, 2. Right Time (10) Deepak Singh 59, 3, 4. Deccan Daisy (6) P. Sai Kumar 58, 5, 5. Swiss Girl (2) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 56, 6. Canterbury (9) Md. Ekram Alam 54, 5, 7. Deccan Ranger (11)

5 BONZEE CUP (1,600m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) - 24: 1. KULDEEP SINGH (9) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 53, 10. DESERT SULTAN (8) G. Naresh 51 and 11. SOORYA VAHAN (7) Surya Prakash 50.

1. MIRACLE MARY, 2. SWISS GIRL, 3. DECCAN DAISY

Worchester (8) Afroz Khan 56, 5, 4. Brooklyn Beauty (9) Kiran Naidu 55, 5. Burgundy Black (4) D.S. Deora 55, 6. Wallop And Gallop (2) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 55, 7. Magnum (3) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 54, 5, 8. Encore (7) Md. Ekram Alam 54, 9. Quality Warrior (1) Surya Prakash 53 and 10. N.R.U. Ultrapower (5) Kaviraj 52, 5.

1. ENCORE, 2. REINING BEAUTY, 3. WORCESTER

6 GODOLPHIN BARB MILLION (1,400m), 3-y-o only, (Terms), 3-15: 1. Duke Of Tuscany (3) C. Umesh 56, 2. Get Lucky (5) Nakhat Singh 56, 3. Divine Prophecy (2) Hindu Singh 54, 4. Flying Fury (1) Md. Ismail 53 and 5. Star Forever (4) P. Sai Kumar 51, 5.

1. DUKE OF TUSCANY, 2. DIVINE WITNESS, 3. CARAXES

7 BRAVE HUNTER CUP (1,400m), 7 rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II) - 34: 1. REINING BEAUTY (6) Mukesh Kumar 60, 2. Australia (10) P. Sai Ku-

mar 57, 3. Worcester (8) Afroz Khan 56, 4. Brooklyn Beauty (9) Kiran Naidu 55, 5. Burgundy Black (4) D.S. Deora 55, 6. Wallop And Gallop (2) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 55, 7. Magnum (3) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 54, 5, 8. Encore (7) Md. Ekram Alam 54, 9. Quality Warrior (1) Surya Prakash 53 and 10. N.R.U. Ultrapower (5) Kaviraj 52, 5.

1. BRAVE HUNTER CUP (1,400m), 7 rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II) - 34: 1. REINING BEAUTY (6) Mukesh Kumar 60, 2. Australia (10) P. Sai Ku-

Sport

Siege Courageous expected to score

BENGALURU: Siege Courageous, who has been well tuned, is expected to score in the Aga Aly Askar Sprinters' Trial Stakes (1,200m), the feature event of the races to be held here on Saturday (Feb. 10).

False rain (width about 6.25m) from 1,600m to the winning post will be in position.

1. BIDAR PLATE (1,800m), rated 40 to 65, 5-y-o & over, 2.00 p.m.: 1. Nikolina (3) S. John 51, 2. Stormy Ocean (2) G. Vivek 55, 3. Balor (1) Mark 55, 4. Golden Time (P) Siddaraju 55 and 5. Aquatic (4) I. Chisty 56, 5.

1. BORN DANCER, 2. BALTIMORE, 3. PRINCESS JASMINE

4 HAMPI PLATE (1,400m), rated 60 to 85, 3.30: 1. Peyo (5) S. John 62, 2. Stellantis (1) F. Norton 56, 3. Douglas (7) I. Chisty 55, 4. Michigan Melody (8) P. Siddaraju 55, 5. Inyouwebelieve (6) Arvind 54, 6. Irish Coffee (3) Darshan 54, 7. Pink Jasmine (4) Shreyas 54 and 8. King Of War (2) Saddam H 52.

1. PEYO, 2. STELLANTIS, 3. PINK JASMINE

5 H. B. GUNDAPPA GOWDA MEMORIAL TROPHY (1,200m), rated 40 to 65, 4.00: 1. Air Display (1) Vivek 60, 2. Pneuma (3) G. Vivek 60, 3. Roman Spirit (2) Srinath 59, 4. Czar (10) I. Chisty 57, 5. Marzgovel (7) F. Norton 57, 6. Ricardo (6) Saddam H 57, 7. Classic Charm (8) Darshan 57, 8. The Perfect Choice (8) R. Pradeep 56, 9. Four Wheel Drive (5) Tousif 54, 5, 10. Lauterbrunnen (4) M. Mehriz 54, 6. Star Medal (7) Nakhat Singh 51, 5.

1. MALIBU, 2. MIDSUMMER STAR, 3. DYANOOSH

2 TOPMOST PLATE (1,400m), maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 2.30: 1. Golde Light (7) I. Chisty 56, 2. Hyder (4) B. Dharshan 56, 3. Mandarino (10) S. Shareef 56, 4. Monterio (6) G. Vivek 56, 5. Pericles (1) Shreyas 56, 6. Ranquelino (9) Arvind K 56, 7. Re-defined (3) Norton 56, 8. Art Of Romance (12) Darshan 57, 9. Ladylion (8) Jagadeesh 54, 10. Ladylion (8) Jagadeesh 54, 11. Queen Of Kings (5) Ashok 54, 12. Royal Whisper (1) Vivek 54, 5.

1. ART OF ROMANCE, 2. RE-DEFINED, 3. MONTERIO

3 WINSLOW STAKES (Div. II), 3-yo only, 3.00: 1. Baltimore (8) S. John 60, 2. Slice Of Heaven (5) P. Surya 58, 3. Born Dancer (9) M. Naveen 57, 4. Capri Girl (7) R.

1. PNEUMA, 2. MARZGOVEL, 3. PROPELY

4 AGA ALY ASKER SPRINTERS' TRIAL STAKES (1,200m), 4-y-o & over, (Terms), 4.30: 1. All Attract-

Pradeep 57, 5. Spirit Dancer (2) Darshan 56, 5, 6. Mega Success (6) Jagadeesh 56, 7. Burst Of Blaze (1) Arshad 55, 8. Princess Jasmine (4) G. Vivek 55 and 9. Ice Storm (3) M. Rajesh K 55.

1. SIEGE COURAGEOUS, 2. ISNT SHE BEAUTIFUL

5 BHADRA PLATE (1,400m), rated 20 to 45, 5-y-o & over, 5.00: 1. Remontoir (9) P. Siddaraju 60, 2. Ombudsman (7) Vivek 59, 3. Singhisaab (6) Inayat 58, 4. The Athabasca (1) R. Ravi 58, 5. Glow In The Dark (3) M. Naveen 57, 6. The Omega Man (8) Salman Khan 56, 7. War Trail (5) R. Pradeep 56, 8. My Solitaire (4) Arvind K 54 and 9. Burning Arrow (2) M. Rajesh K 52.

1. GLOW IN THE DARK, 2. OMBUDS-MAN, 3. SINGHISAAB

6 WINSLOW STAKES (Div. D), 1,200m, rated 20 to 45, 5-y-o & over, 5.30: 1. Star Admiral (9) Darshan 62, 2. Rightly Noble (6) Ram Nandan 60, 3. Chisox (4) P. Siddaraju 59, 4. Lady Invictus (5) Inayat 57, 5. Schaeferberg (2) Saddam H 57, 6. Oxytocin (7) R. Pradeep 55, 7. Lady Godiva (1) Arvind K 52, 8. Golden Galaxy (4) G. Vivek 51, 9. Sacred Creator (3) M. Rajesh K 51.

1. GOLDEN GALLERY, 2. OXYTOCIN, 3. LADY GODIVA

Day's best: **SIEGE COURAGEOUS**

Double: **PEYO - PNEUMA**

6 AGA ALY ASKER SPRINTERS' TRIAL STAKES (1,200m), 4-y-o & over, (Terms), 4.30: 1. All Attract-

Pradeep 57, 5. Iron Clad (5) M. Naveen 59, 3. Siege Courageous (2) G. Vivek 59, 4. Amreli

Why Hamilton turned red out of the blue – and what it means for F1

The idea of the sport's most decorated driver joining its most illustrious team, Ferrari, was once deemed impossible. Which is why the news, which broke when nobody expected it, stunned the world. How will this seismic move, set for 2025, affect the key actors and those around them?

S. Dipak Ragav

Modern-day sport is as much about the off-field goings-on as it is about the on-field action. What happens behind the scenes keeps fans glued, sustaining the sport even when it's not being played.

A popular instance of this phenomenon is the transfer day deadline in European football. The palace intrigue that surrounds where a player might go and for how much fills up social media and animates gatherings, with passionate fans getting their managerial hats on.

The bombshell from nowhere

The recent mid-season window closed on February 1 and a big-news signing dropped, shocking the entire sporting world. Only, it was not a football move but a transfer in another billion-dollar global sport – Formula One.

The bombshell was Lewis Hamilton announcing that he would leave the Mercedes F1 team after 12 years at the end of 2024 and join Scuderia Ferrari on a multi-year deal. One of the biggest driver switches ever, it was deemed noteworthy enough to be discussed on a TV show tracking football transfers that day.

In the past, big-name moves have generated buzz and altered the driver market significantly. But in years to come, this seismic moment could stand out for a few reasons.

For one thing, some of the notable team changes in the past had solid reasons underpinning them.

When Michael Schumacher moved from Benetton to Ferrari in 1996 after winning two world titles, he had outgrown the team in stature and fancied a new challenge: getting Ferrari back to winning ways. Alain Prost left McLaren after falling out with the team when battling Ayrton Senna. Later, Senna left McLaren once it declined competitively, to replace Prost at Williams.

This one, though, feels different because Hamilton had signed a deal only last year to keep him at Mercedes until 2025. We have learnt since then that there was a release option on Hamilton's side to leave the team after 2024, and the seven-time champion chose to activate it, take on a different challenge and fulfil a life-long dream by

I feel incredibly fortunate, after achieving things with Mercedes that I could only have dreamed of as a kid, that I now have the chance to fulfil another childhood dream.
Driving in Ferrari red
LEWIS HAMILTON

**STACKING UP**

ATP Men's Top 15						
#	Player	Age	Points	Events		
1	Novak Djokovic	36	9,855	19		
2	Carlos Alcaraz	20	9,255	18		
3	Daniil Medvedev	27	8,765	21		
4	Jannik Sinner	22	8,310	22		
5	Andrey Rublev	26	5,050	24		
6	Alexander Zverev	26	5,030	27		
7	Holger Rune	20	3,775	24		
8	Hubert Hurkacz	26	3,540	24		
9	Taylor Fritz	26	3,195	26		
10	Stefanos Tsitsipas	25	3,025	24		
11	Alex de Minaur	24	2,970	25		
12	Casper Ruud	25	2,965	23		
13	Grigor Dimitrov	32	2,785	23		
14	Frances Tiafoe	26	2,060	22		
15	Tommy Paul	26	2,050	26		



Top Indians ▶		
Sumit Nagal Rank 121 ▲ No change	Ramkumar Ramanathan Rank 459 ▲ 2 spots	

English Premier League Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Liverpool	23	15	6	2	52	22	30	51
2	Man. City	22	15	4	3	54	25	29	49
3	Arsenal	23	15	4	4	47	22	25	49
4	Aston Villa	23	14	4	5	49	30	19	46
5	Tottenham	23	13	5	5	49	35	14	44
6	Man. United	23	12	2	9	31	32	-1	38
7	West Ham	23	10	6	7	36	36	0	36
8	Brighton	23	9	8	6	42	38	4	35
9	Newcastle	23	10	3	10	48	37	11	33
10	Wolves	23	9	5	9	37	37	0	32
11	Chelsea	23	9	4	10	38	39	-1	31
12	Bournemouth	22	7	6	9	30	41	-11	27
13	Fulham	23	7	5	11	30	38	-8	26
14	Crystal Palace	23	6	6	11	26	40	-14	24
15	Brentford	22	6	4	12	32	39	-7	22
16	N. Forest	23	5	6	12	28	41	-13	21
17	Luton Town	22	5	5	12	32	42	-10	20
18	Everton *	23	8	5	10	26	30	-4	19
19	Burnley	23	3	4	16	24	47	-23	13
20	Sheffield	23	2	4	17	19	59	-40	20

Everton deducted 10 points following a breach of the Premier League's Profitability and Sustainability Rules. The decision is currently under appeal

Italian Serie A Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Inter Milan	22	18	3	1	51	10	41	57
2	Juventus	23	16	5	2	36	14	22	53
3	AC Milan	23	15	4	4	46	27	19	50
4	Atalanta	22	12	3	7	40	22	18	39
5	Roma	23	11	5	7	40	26	14	38
6	Bologna	22	9	9	4	29	22	7	36
7	Napoli	22	10	5	7	32	26	6	35
8	Fiorentina	22	10	4	8	31	25	6	34
9	Lazio	22	10	4	8	25	23	2	34
10	Torino	22	8	6	8	20	19	1	32
11	Genoa	23	7	8	8	24	26	-2	29
12	Monza	23	7	8	8	21	28	-7	29
13	Lecce	23	5	9	9	23	33	-9	24
14	Frosinone	23	6	5	12	31	44	-13	23
15	Sassuolo	22	5	4	13	28	41	-13	19
16	Udinese	23	2	13	8	23	37	-14	19
17	Verona	23	4	6	13	21	32	-11	18
18	Cagliari	23	4	6	13	21	42	-21	18
19	Empoli	23	4	6	13	15	36	-21	18
20	Salernitana	23	2	7	14	19	44	-25	13

Spanish LaLiga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Real Madrid	23	18	4	1	48	15	33	58
2	Girona	23	17	5	1	52	25	27	56
3	Barcelona	23	15	5	3	47	30	17	50
4	Atletico Madrid	23	15	3	5	45	20	25	48
5	Athletic Bilbao	23	13	6	4	42	21	21	45
6	Real Sociedad	23	9	10	4	32	21	11	37
7	Valencia	23	10	5	8	29	27	2	35
8	Real Betis	23	8	11	4	26	25	1	35
9	Las Palmas	23	9	5	9	23	20	3	32
10	Getafe	23	7	9	7	29	31	-2	30
11	Alaves	23	7	5	11	23	30	-7	26
12	Osasuna	23	5	9	11	26	36	-10	26
13	Rayo Vallecano	23	5	9	9	20	30	-10	24
14	Villarreal	23	6	6	11	33	45</td		

Reuters
Associated Press

When Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp was asked early this year if his side was the favourite to win the Premier League this season, the German spoke about how tight it was at the top. He talked up the qualities of the contenders, building to a punchline about the most dominant team in England football's recent history – a side that has so often thwarted the Reds, Manchester City. "Kevin De Bruyne is warming up," Klopp said. "The whole country is starting to shake."

The line was delivered with humour, but many a true word is spoken in jest. De Bruyne had been sidelined after aggravating a hamstring injury during City's Premier League opener in August. It was the same problem that forced the 32-year-old to be substituted during the Champions League final win against Inter Milan last June.

Desperately seeking Kevin
Without De Bruyne – he missed 27 games across competitions – City looked beatable. The depth and quality of the squad ensured there were no

Kevin helps to win games and there are few [like him] in the world

PEP GUARDIOLA
Manchester City manager



Age at the end of the player's final match

GAME THEORY

Age just a number for some folk

James Anderson was 41 years and 187 days old at the start of the second Test against India at Visakhapatnam. If he continues performing in the manner that he is, the England swing bowler will enter the list of the oldest Test cricketers in the last 50 years (since 1974). The 10 oldest players of all time were of even more advanced age: all played their final Test well after their 46th birthday.

OLDEST TEST PLAYERS (ALL TIME)

Player	Age	Team	Opposition	Ground	Match Start Date
Wilfred Rhodes	52y 165d	England	West Indies	Kingston	3 Apr 1930
Bert Ironmonger	50y 327d	Australia	England	Sydney	23 Feb 1933
W.G. Grace	50y 320d	England	Australia	Nottingham	1 Jun 1899
George Gunn	50y 303d	England	West Indies	Kingston	3 Apr 1930
James Southerton	49y 139d	England	Australia	Melbourne	31 Mar 1877
Miran Baksh	47y 301d	Pakistan	India	Peshawar	12 Feb 1955
Jack Hobbs	47y 249d	England	Australia	The Oval	16 Aug 1930
Frank Woolley	47y 87d	England	Australia	The Oval	18 Aug 1934
Don Blackie	46y 309d	Australia	England	Adelaide	1 Feb 1929
Bert Strudwick	46y 202d	England	Australia	The Oval	14 Aug 1926

OLDEST TEST PLAYERS (IN THE LAST 50 YEARS; SINCE 1974)

Player	Age	Team	Opposition	Ground	Match Start Date
John Traicos	45y 304d	Zim	India	Delhi	13 Mar 1993
Brian Close	45y 140d	England	West Indies	Manchester	8 Jul 1976
Misbah-ul-Haq	42y 351d	Pakistan	West Indies	Roseau	10 May 2017
John Emburey	42y 344d	England	West Indies	Manchester	27 Jul 1995
Bob Taylor	42y 251d	England	Pakistan	Lahore	19 Mar 1984
Bob Simpson	42y 89d	Australia	West Indies	Kingston	28 Apr 1978
Somachandra De Silva	42y 78d	Sri Lanka	England	Lord's	23 Aug 1984
Fred Titmus	42y 67d	England	Australia	Adelaide	25 Jan 1975
Colin Cowdrey	42y 51d	England	Australia	Melbourne	8 Feb 1975

MOST TEST WICKETS AFTER TURNING 40

Player	Tests	Wickets	Average	Strike-rate	5-fors
Clarrie Grimmett (Aus)	16	96	21.11	68.4	10
Bert Ironmonger (Aus)	14	74	17.97	63.4	4
Sydney Barnes (Eng)	4	49	10.93	27.6	7
Tich Freeman (Eng)	6	44	19.29	44.7	5
Lance Gibbs (WI)	13	44	29.90	94.0	3
James Anderson (Eng)	12	38	25.92	61.8	0



SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO

PICTURE THIS



Hover style

Switzerland's Mathilde Gremaud competes in the women's ski slopestyle final at the Winter X Games 2024 in Aspen, Colorado, recently.

The X Games are a series of extreme sports events founded

by ESPN, with the first winter version being held at the Snow Summit ski resort in Big Bear Lake, California, in 1997.

The annual competition typically has day and evening events, which include skiing, snowboarding and snowmobiling.

Since 2002, the Winter X Games have been staged at As-

pen's Buttermilk Mountain, which is considered one of the best mountains for beginners but has enough to challenge top athletes.

In slopestyle, which reportedly has its roots in action sports such as skateboarding and BMX, competitors ski (or snowboard) down a course which has a

range of obstacles.

The athletes perform tricks – spins, grinds, grabs and flips – and are judged on amplitude

(height of jumps), degree of difficulty, execution, variety, originality, flow (combinations) and style. Slopestyle is a freestyle discipline, much like moguls, aerials, cross, big air and half-pipe.

Weekend Sport

Recharged De Bruyne energises Man City's four-peat bid

Even in such an expensively assembled squad of world-class talent, the 32-year-old Belgian's game-changing genius stands out. The Sky Blues looked a lesser power when he was out injured. With De Bruyne back, City has what it takes to win a fourth straight Premier League title

major alarms, but it was clear that the reigning champion needed him back as the season entered its most hectic, decisive phase.

And it took De Bruyne less than five minutes to prove his value and the truth in Klopp's words – five months after having surgery, he came off the bench to score the equaliser and set up an injury-time winner at Newcastle.

With City trailing 2-1 and Pep Guardiola's team struggling to find the bit of quality needed to break down the host's defence, De Bruyne turned the game around with two perfect touches of his right foot. A pinpoint side-footed finish just inside the near post was the first. A supremely weighted ball, lifted into the box for substitute Oscar Bobb to score his first Premier League goal, was the second. It seemed as if he had never been away.

"I missed this," De Bruyne said. "I think it was more willpower than anything else. It was crazy." That display of game-changing genius at St. James' Park came in the second week of January. More recently, making a second straight start after the long injury layoff on Monday, De Bruyne was threatening against a well-drilled Brentford side that had taken the lead. Phil Foden cornered the limelight for his hat-trick in the 3-1 victory, but De Bruyne was City's agent of chaos.

It was his dangerous cross that Ethan Pinnock headed straight into the path of Foden for the equaliser. An inch-precise delivery then picked out Foden's head for the second goal, illustrating the Belgian's impact. As Guardiola said, "When Kevin has the ball and we have runners, Kevin is unique in the world. He is a really important player for us, not only in the past but in the present."

While there continue to be questions about the legitimacy of City's success – the club's spending since Sheikh Mansour's takeover in 2008 has repeatedly come under scrutiny, with the club facing 115 Premier League charges for alleged breaches of financial regulations – there is no denying De Bruyne's unique gifts as a footballer.

Point of difference

Even in an expensively assembled squad – City has some of the world's most intelligent, versatile, technically gifted players – De Bruyne offers an undeniable point of difference.

Guardiola has often spoken about the difference between players who "help you play better" and those "who win games". The first category of players is central to establishing control whereas the second puts opposition teams away. "Kevin helps to win games and there are few [like him] in the world," said Guardiola. "We can play good football-wise but Kevin, [Erling] Haaland, Phil [Foden], Julian [Alvarez] – these guys win games."

De Bruyne's ability to create situations that



GETTY IMAGES



I think there's only certain players, the likes of Messi and Ronaldo, that you can say are in the same bracket as Kevin. He is at his best when he's playing passes that you don't think are even visible to play

KYLE WALKER
Manchester City defender

Protect the king

Goalkeeper Ederson described De Bruyne as the team's "king". "It's just like chess – you have to protect the king! Now we have our 'king' back," said Ederson. "He's a player that our team missed a lot because he has such ability – he finds passes that very few players can find, he gets assists, scores goals, plays good football, he keeps the ball, so I'm very happy that he's back and that he has returned to his high level."

De Bruyne used the injury-enforced layoff to refresh himself mentally and allow the body to repair the wear and tear. "It's not like I needed a break but I took it, to turn a disadvantage into an advantage," he said. "When I reflect on my career, playing the last 10 years non-stop with a short break, maybe it was good for me to reset a little bit in a way and take care of myself when it is not really possible during the year. I hoped I could work hard and come back in a good way."

With De Bruyne back, City has moved to second place, above Arsenal on goal difference, and two points behind leader Liverpool with a game in hand. "We are where we need to be," said De Bruyne. Maybe "the whole country" isn't shaking but those certainly are words that will cause City's title rivals several sleepless nights.

GAME RECOGNISES GAME

Fantastic Bumrah has taken pitch out of equation, says Steyn



K.R. DEEPAK

India's Jasprit Bumrah has taken the pitch out of equation on his way to acquiring legendary status, said Dale Steyn. "I don't think there's any Test bowlers right now who are able to run in and bowl essentially wicket-taking yorkers... you take the pitch away and I think that's one thing that he's done really well," Steyn said.

BIG WORRY

England has let India back into the series, says Vaughan



K.R. DEEPAK

Michael Vaughan is worried England will become a side that doesn't win much despite putting in the hard yards. "I do worry that it might become a team which does all this great work only to not actually win very much. It didn't win the Ashes when it should have done and now it has let India back into a series," he said.

RARE FEAT

Nissanka becomes first Lankan to smash a double hundred in ODIs



K.R. DEEPAK

Pathum Nissanka (210 n.o.) became the first Sri Lankan to score an ODI double century as he set up the team's win in the series opener against Afghanistan at Pallekele on Friday. **The scores:** Sri Lanka 381/3 in 50 overs (Nissanka 210 n.o., Fernando 88) bt Afghanistan 339/6 in 50 overs (Azmatullah 149 n.o., Nabi 136, Madushan 4/75).

IN THE HUNT

Giants cruise past Warriors, inch closer to a spot in playoffs



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Gujarat Giants inched closer to a playoffs spot after registering a comprehensive 41-32 victory over Bengal Warriors in the Pro Kabaddi League in Kolkata on Friday. Giants moved to the fourth spot with 60 points from 19 matches. Haryana Steelers laid on a masterclass to beat the UP Yoddhas 50-34.

India avenges loss to the USA, gets it right finally

The Indian women had suffered a loss against the opponent in the Olympic Qualifiers, but produced a better display this time around; the win ended the host's five-match losing streak

PRO LEAGUE

Uthra Ganesan
BHUBANESWAR

The Indian women broke a five-match losing streak to end the first leg of the Pro League matches with a 3-1 win against USA here on Friday. The victory ensured the first points for the team in this edition and also helped the team avenge its loss in the Olympic Qualifiers.

The host got early chances but the finishing took time coming. With both sides hoping for an early lead to take control, it was end-to-end hockey but there were too many turnovers in the midfield. The deadlock was broken in the ninth minute as Vandana Katariya proved why being in the right position at the right time is a valued skill.

Sangita Kumari snatched the ball and ran along the baseline to lift it in front of the goal and Vandana made no mistake by smashing it in at the far



Breaking through: Vandana is all set to score India's opener. BISWARANJAN ROUT

post. Deepika made it 2-0, stretching herself to keep the pass from Vandana in play, turn and shoot a backhand into the net all in one motion to give India a 2-0 cushion at half-time.

USA came back strongly and the Indians, despite their twin success, continued to miss chances. The shooting continued to be wayward and the final

pass, too, was often off-target. USA, clawing back gradually into the game, pulled one back through Sanne Caarls in the 42nd minute. But Deepika saved her best for the end. She ran all the way along the sideline, dodged past three defenders and pushed the ball to the far post for a diving Salima Tete to connect perfectly and finish.

The results: Netherlands 6 (Marjin Veen 3, Yibi Jansen 2, Frederique Matla) bt Australia 2 (Tatum Stewart, Grace Stewart); India 3 (Vandana Katariya, Deepika, Salima Tete) bt USA 1 (Sanne Caarls).

Perceived slight from Ferguson spurred me on in Champions League final: Solskjaer

Ashwin Achal

BENGALURU

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was the centrepiece of one of the most dramatic moments in club football. With a stab of the right foot and a late, late winner against Bayern Munich in the 1999 UEFA Champions League final, Solskjaer scripted a famous Manchester United title win.

The Norwegian, who came on as a substitute on that night at Barcelona, stated that the goal came as a result of a perceived slight from his manager Alex Ferguson.

At half-time, with Manchester United trailing 0-1, Ferguson chose to bring Teddy Sheringham on first, which upset Solskjaer. Sheringham, of course, went on to score the equaliser before Solskjaer stole the show.

"At half-time, Sir Alex talked to Teddy and got him ready to go on. But I was in good form that season, so I was thinking, 'Why are you not speaking to me? Why are you talking to Teddy?'. Solskjaer said here on Friday.

"So I got myself ready



Star: Solskjaer, who dreamed of scoring a magical goal as a child, stole the show in 1999. K. MURALI KUMAR

because I knew something special was bound to happen. I play better when I'm a bit angry. I wanted to show Sir Alex that he made a mistake by not putting me on earlier."

The former Manchester United forward and manager is in the city on a visit hosted by Tilak Gaurang Shah, founder of 'Ace of Pubs'.

As a child, Solskjaer often dreamed about scoring a magical goal. "I have scored that goal thousands of times when I was a kid. I remember playing football on my own and telling myself, 'If you score this, you

win the European Cup'. I imagined myself being Marco van Basten or Zico. And when it actually happened in 1999, it was all a blur," Solskjaer said.

Solskjaer weighed in on Marcus Rashford, who was recently fined two weeks' wages for an inebriated night out in Belfast. Asked how current Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag can get the best out of Rashford, Solskjaer said, "Is it the manager's job to get the best out of him, or is it the player's responsibility to get the best out of yourself? I think it is the latter."

Three-match series is a minimum: MCC panel

Press Trust of India
LONDON

A minimum of three-match Test series and the home team footing the bill of the visiting side in a bilateral contest are some of the recommendations made by the MCC's World Cricket Committee.

"In support of the thrilling Test cricket currently being played and the importance of sustaining the traditional format of the game, the WCC recommends men's Test series be played across a minimum of three matches from the next ICC Future Tours Programme from 2028 (next cycle) onwards," said the Committee.

"The game owes a debt of gratitude to India... however, the reliance upon India belies the fact that the game needs to identify new markets to ensure its global growth, at a time when media rights beyond the current cycle are by no means guaranteed."

"From the next cycle, it would be preferable for a more equitable split of matches to provide a more balanced opportunity for nations to access key dates and opposition."

Semenistaja breezes past Kudermetova

MUMBAI OPEN

Kamesh Srinivasan
MUMBAI

Darja Semenistaja scotched the hopes of Polina Kudermetova by racing to a 6-4, 6-3 victory in the quarterfinals of the L&T Mumbai WTA tennis tournament at the Cricket Club of India on Friday.

It was the second victory for the 21-year-old Semenistaja, ranked 120 in the world, over Kudermetova in as many meetings, following the quarterfinal triumph on way to the title last month in Bengaluru.

The 20-year-old Kudermetova had the big game, but unlike the way she stepped it up against Sahaja Yamalapalli from the brink of defeat in the earlier round, the wiry Russian was unable to call her best game when needed.

In contrast, Semenistaja, who has already won 15 singles titles in the professional circuit, played strong in letting Kudermetova hurtle to defeat with a flurry of errors in the climax.

In the semifinals, Semenistaja will play Arianne Hartono who was not challenged much by an indisposed Moyuka Uchijima.

With Katie Volnyets of USA breezing past lucky-loser Sohyun Park, who was unable to find her



Semenistaja. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

Nagal moves a step closer to top-100; Mukund loses

CHENNAI OPEN

Nihit Sachdeva
CHENNAI

Sumit Nagal moved closer to breaking into the top-100 in the ATP Rankings after reaching the semifinals of the Chennai Open ATP Challenger with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Czech Republic's Dominik Palan on Friday.

Nagal, who is at 110 in the live rankings, needs to win the tournament to become the first Indian man since Prajesh Gunneswaran in 2019 to make his top-100 debut.

The 26-year-old Indian, seeded second, produced a mature performance against Palan to record his third straight-set win on the Centre Court of the SDAT Stadium here.

The Czech, three years younger to Nagal, tried to put the Indian under pressure by taking the ball early and got his first break point opportunity in the third game of the opener. However, he failed to convert it, hitting a crosscourt forehand return wide.

Nagal stood a considerable distance behind the baseline and neutralised the big serve of the 63" Czech. The Indian got two break points at 40-15 in the sixth game. While Palan saved



Gameplan: Nagal stood a considerable distance behind the baseline to neutralise the big serve of Palan. R. RAVINDRAN

first with an ace up the T, he followed it up by hitting a backhand down the line wide in the next exchange.

Nagal faced his second break point while serving for the set but managed to save it with a forehand winner down the line. A few moments later, the same shot helped him seal the opener.

He broke Palan in the first and ninth game of the second set to complete the formalities in an hour and 31 minutes. Nagal will take on Dalibor Svrca, another Czech, on Saturday for a place in the final after the

third seed outlasted local wildcard S. Mukund 6-7(6), 6-2, 6-4 in a quarterfinal fixture that finished just six minutes short of the three-hour mark.

All-Indian final

In doubles, the Saketh Myneni-Ramkumar Ramanathan pair will take on Rithvik Choudary Bollipalli-Niki Poonacha duo in an all-Indian final.

Other results:

Quarterfinals: Luca Nardi (Ita) bt Stefano Napolitano (Ita) 6-4, 3-6, 6-0(2); Chun-hsin Tseng (Tpe) bt Enrico Dalla Valle (Ita) 7-5, 6-2.

Glorious night

Best of the best: Sumit Antil received the Sportsman of the year (Para sports) award at the Sportsstar ACES Awards 2024 on Thursday. BCCI treasurer Ashish Shelar and Mohd. Shami collected the National Team award on behalf of the Indian men's cricket team. Neeraj Kapoor, centre, GM CSR, NTPC, got the Best PSU for Promotion of Sports award while Team Tata Steel was honoured with the Best Corporate award. Dr. R. Mohana Krishnan, Director (Sports), SRM IST, was the recipient of the Best University for the Promotion of Sports award. Sheetal and her coach clicked a photo with Sunil Gavaskar. EMMANUEL YOGINI & K.R. DEEPAK

IN BRIEF



Neser recalled to Australia Test squad for NZ series

Bowling allrounder Michael Neser has been recalled to Australia's squad for the team's first Test series in New Zealand in eight years. Neser played the last of his two Tests in December 2022. Fast bowler Scott Boland will also feature in the squad despite suffering a knee injury. The series will begin on Feb. 29 at Wellington.

The squad: Pat Cummins (captain), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Michael Neser, Matthew Renshaw, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc.

Tamil Nadu boys and girls storm into the semifinals

Tamil Nadu boys and girls entered the semifinals of the 73rd junior National basketball championship in Bhubaneswar on Friday. The boys beat Punjab 97-86 while the girls cruised past Rajasthan 102-75.

The results: **Quarterfinals:** Men: TN 97 (Pragalathan 30, Deepak 28, Sugutham Balakrishnan 19, Abhimanyu 12) bt Punjab 86 (Amandeep Singh 18, Babbu Maan 13, Jaddu Maan 13); Chandigarh 91 (Sanju Gajbihi 28, Ravinder Kaushik 20, Vipul 15) bt MP 71 (Bhagat Singh 19, Kriti Raj Singh 15, Suryansh Singh Kushwah 13).

Women: Maharashtra 89 (Ananya Bhavasari 20, Sanika Phule 19, Bhumi Sarje 18, Mansi Nirmalakar 16, Shomira Bidaye 12) bt Chhattisgarh 85 (Anusha 34, Jannat Ali 19, Moni Adla 17); Kerala 67 (Abhrami 31, Amanda Maria Rocha 15) bt MP 60 (Gunvi Agarwal 18, Ananya Maheshwari 12, Kaushal Singh 10); TN 102 (Ruth Anna Blessen 22, Harima Sundari 16, Sruthi 12, Sona Patel 10) bt Rajasthan 75 (Simran Kaur 36, Bhumika Verma 10); Punjab 113 (Komalpreet Kaur 30, Anchal 30, Manmeet Kaur 21, Nadar Dhillon 14) bt Gujarat 52 (Aahana George 15, Archi Patel 12).

Pre-quarterfinals: Men: Kerala bt Delhi 81-71; AP bt Odisha 83-79.

Women: Gujarat bt Karnataka 77-71; Rajasthan bt UP 102-98.

Anirudh-Vijay Sundar duo bows out in quarterfinals

Anirudh Chandrasekar and Vijay Sundar Prashanth were beaten in the doubles quarterfinals 7-6(5), 4-6, [12-10] by Emilio Nava and Ben Shelton in the \$841,590 ATP tennis tournament in Dallas, USA.

The results: \$841,590 ATP, Dallas: Doubles (quarterfinals): Emilio Nava & Ben Shelton (USA) bt Anirudh Chandrasekar & Vijay Sundar Prashanth 7-6(5), 4-6, [12-10].

\$801,335 ATP, Marseille: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Vasil Kirkov & Sebastian Korda (USA) bt Yuki Bhambri & Robin Haase (Ned) 1-6, 6-4, [12-10].

French fencer suspended over 'abnormal' doping test

One of France's leading fencers has been suspended following an "abnormal" doping test result, less than six months before Paris hosts the Olympic Games. Ysaora Thibus won the team foil silver medal at the last Olympics in Tokyo. She was the individual world champion in foil in 2022.



Paramveer Bajwa and Anjali clinch the titles

Coach Paramveer Bajwa beat his trainee from the Roundglass Academy, Arjun Rathi, 6-3, 6-3 in the final of the ₹200,000 AITA ranking tennis tournament at the CLTA Complex, Chandigarh, on Friday. Paramveer had won the doubles title in the company of another of his wards, Aditya Mor. Arjun's sister and the top seed in the women's event, Anjali Rathi outplayed Ishwari Matere 6-0, 6-3 in the final.

LIVE TELECAST

NBA: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 8.30 a.m.

Ranji Trophy: Jio Cinema App, 9.30 a.m.

ISL: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 5 & 7.30 p.m.

Premier League: SS Select 1, 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 6, 8.30 & 11 p.m.

LaLiga: Jio Cinema App, 6.30, 8.45, 11 p.m.; Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)

Serie A: Jio Cinema App, 7.30, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Sunday)

Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8 & 11 p.m.

PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.

Sachin Baby and Akshay put Kerala in a comfortable position against Bengal

The duo adds 153 runs in an unbroken partnership for the fifth wicket; Akash Deep is the most impressive Bengal bowler



Celebrating in style: Sachin Baby is absolutely delighted after reaching his century. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

RANJI TROPHY

M.R. Praveen Chandran
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Bengal captain Manoj Tiwary couldn't hide his disappointment after Sanju Samson won the toss for the first time this season. There was a cry of anguish from Tiwary as Kerala opted to bat in the Ranji Trophy match at the St. Xavier's College ground here on Friday.

There was bounce and slow turn for the spinners on the first day, but another obdurate century by the reliable Sachin Baby (110 batting) and his unbroken 153-run partnership for the fifth wicket with Akshay Chandran (76 batting) carried Kerala to a comfort-

ble 265 for four at stumps on the first day.

Kerala was 112 for four when Akshay joined Baby soon after lunch. Shahbaz Ahmed had just found the outside edge of skipper Samson's (8) bat with Tiwary completing a neat catch at first slip. Sanju never looked comfortable during his stay.

Akshay played fluently and didn't waste his good start unlike some of his fellow batters. When he gets going, Akshay is one of the most stylistic batters in the team. He played upright and drove with aplomb through the covers, swept and used his feet against the spinners.

Akshay got into his groove early with a couple of neatly driven boundar-

ies off Akash Deep, who was the stand out bowler for Bengal.

At the other end, Baby played risk-free cricket to accumulate runs. The Bengal bowling became a bit erratic after tea and Baby cashed on to the loose offerings. He lofted Ankit Mishra over the long-on boundary for a six and then tucked the ball behind square to complete his third hundred of the season.

Earlier, in the morning, Rohan Kunnummal (19) and Jalaj Saxena (40) gave Kerala one of its better starts of the season. Rohan, after smashing a few boundaries, slashed at a wide delivery from Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal and was snapped up by Tiwary at

first slip.
Rohan Prem (3) failed again as Kerala slipped to 40 for two. Jalaj and Baby added 42 for the third wicket, but the former wasted a good start and feathered a catch to wicketkeeper Abhishek Porel off Mishra.

The scores:
Kerala – 1st innings: Rohan S. Kunnummal c Manoj b Jaiswal 19, Jalaj Saxena c Abhishek b Mishra 40, Rohan Prem c Abhishek b Akash Deep 3, Sachin Baby batting 110, Sanju Samson c Manoj b Shahbaz 8, Akash Chandran batting 76; Extras (b-4, lb-3, w-1, nb-1); Total (for four wkts. in 90 over): 265.

Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-40, 3-82, 4-112.
Bengal bowling: Jaiswal 15-3-40-1, Akash Deep 18-5-55-1, Mishra 23-3-53-1, Shahbaz 18-5-59-1, Karan 13-1-35-0, Kharia 3-0-16-0.

Wrestling trials for Olympic qualifiers and Asian wrestling championships postponed

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

The selection trials for the upcoming Olympic qualifiers and Asian wrestling championships have been postponed to March 10 and 11, the ad-hoc committee running the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) said in a statement on Friday.

Earlier, the trials were scheduled to be held from February 27 to 29.

The ad-hoc panel said that the trials are being postponed because of the delay in organising the National championships, which concluded in Jaipur on Monday, and "unavoidable circumstances."

According to reliable sources, the trials were shifted to March in order to give more time to some

India in upcoming Olympic qualifiers, including the Asian Olympic qualifiers (April 19-21) and World Olympic qualifiers (May 9-12)," said the statement.

The second-placed athletes in Olympic categories and the winners in non-Olympic weight categories will compete in the Asian championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, from April 11 to 16.

Antim Panghal (53kg), who landed a bronze in the World championships last year and has been the only Indian wrestler to win an Olympic quota place so far, will be given a direct entry to compete at the Asian championships.

The trials for men (freestyle and Greco-Roman) will be held at Sonepat, while Patiala will host the women's trials. Antim Panghal (53kg) will be given a direct entry to compete at the Asian championships. Indian wrestlers can win 17 more quota places in the remaining two qualifiers.

India and Bangladesh are joint winners

ANI
DHAKA

India and Bangladesh were declared joint champions of the SAFF U19 Women's Championship at the BSSSM Stadium here on Thursday.

India led for the majority of the contest, riding on Sibani Devi Nongmeikapam's early goal before Sagorika equalised for the hosts in injury time to take it into penalties.

After an extraordinary shoot-out which remained locked at 11-11 as every single player on the pitch converted their penalties, the referee performed a coin toss to determine the winner.

India won the coin toss, but the decision was later revoked. After more than two hours of waiting, the trophy was shared.

I want to play freely & consistently: Tilak Varma



Purple patch: Tilak has been in smashing form for Hyderabad in the Ranji Trophy. V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

CRICKET

V.V. Subrahmanyam
HYDERABAD

Tilak Varma, the star performer for Mumbai Indians in the IPL and for Hyderabad in the Ranji Trophy Plate Group, is dreaming to play for India in the T-20 World Cup later this year and helping the team win it too.

In an exclusive chat with *The Hindu* after his century against Nagaland in the Ranji Trophy Plate Group semifinal here on Friday, the 21-year-old Tilak Varma said he never chased any personal milestones like scoring hundreds but always felt he should contribute to the team's success in any format.

"I have been doing what my franchise Mumbai Indians has been looking for from me.

"Focusing on the team's needs and trying to be consistent. Whatever role I am assigned I am ready for the challenge," Tilak said.

"With Rohit Sharma *bhai* being such a successful captain and also my childhood idol, I have been in such a comfort zone and I am lucky to have played under

him," he explained.

"Frankly, there were no real big changes in my game after joining Mumbai Indians.

"A little bit of maturity, a different mindset playing with seniors and also interacting with other big players from different franchises helped me a lot," Tilak said.

"I want to play freely and consistently every time I am given the opportunity," Tilak said.

"Yes, life has changed a lot after playing for India. I am glad all the sacrifices of my parents, my coach Salam sir (Salam Bayash) have finally produced the results.

"A lot of credit goes to Salam sir for he has been with me since childhood, 365 days a year. And he will be with me till the end of my career," a grateful Tilak said.

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Uthra Ganeshan
BHUBANESWAR

The Indian men's hockey team landed in the city hoping to get its Olympic preparations on track in the venue it is most comfortable in, but for the past two days, it has been trying to avoid the contentious issue of a player being accused of sexual misconduct, staying under the radar to focus on the task at hand instead.

On Friday, Captain Harmanpreet Singh preferred to not comment, only saying that he was "named in the list of 29 probables and the coach has said he will keep changing the team so hopefully he (Varun) will get a chance later and be with us."

Coach Craig Fulton was more forthcoming, admitting it had been a challenge but insisting the team was professional enough to do well.

"If you take it from outside in, of course, it's a challenging situation. At the same time, you've got a level of professionalism and you have to have plans in place. If you took it as an injury, what are the plans in place? There was always a plan for anyone who gets injured and if Varun is not here, we are going with the

values we hold in the group. We have a situation but we have plans to keep everyone focused. It's a distraction and it's not great but we need to move forward," Fulton insisted on the eve of the team's opening game against Spain.

These will be India's last matches at home before Paris and the team aims to use them to prepare for the road ahead, including getting closer to the final Olympic squad.

"These games are really important but we are still five months away and we want to get as much out of this block as we can. It is the home stretch but it is also about us confirming our Olympic squad. We have 29 players here, 24 in the playing squad and we will be trying to give everyone a chance across the two legs here."

"Then we have to keep

developing our game, our playing style, individual players and the combinations within that. Valencia and South Africa gave us the ability to do that. At Valencia, we didn't have much of a training block beforehand because of the Nationals but SA was definitely in the right direction. Performance is also a challenge, stringing performances together with consistency is a priority," he stressed.

About the team itself, Fulton admitted finishing was an area the team was looking to get better. "We lacked conversion in the final third, that is something we are looking to work on. We have a nice attacking style, converting those chances into goalscoring opportunities is going to be everyone's focus point but the main thing is to be able to defend and then counter-attack," he stressed.



Looking at the bigger picture: Fulton said that he will try and give everyone chances in the FIH Pro League. BISWARANJAN ROUT

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