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### Centre

### English Medium

### हिंदी माध्यम

Delhi	23 December   8:00 AM	एडमिशन आरंभ
Noida	9 January   6:00 PM	16 जनवरी   सुबह 11:30 बजे
Jaipur	16 January   8:00 AM	16 जनवरी   शाम 5:30 बजे
Indore	Admissions Open	एडमिशन आरंभ



**HIGH-LEVEL TRIP**  
Jaishankar to begin six-day U.S. visit today

NEWS » PAGE 10



**CHANGE IN RULES**  
Centre scraps 'no detention' policy for Classes 5, 8

NEWS » PAGE 12



**CAUSING A FLUTTER**  
Raghu stuns Sathish, meets Mithun in final

SPORT » PAGE 16

## Three suspected Khalistan operatives shot dead in U.P.

The deceased were involved in a grenade attack at Bakshiwal in Punjab on Dec. 18, say police; Punjab DGP calls encounter a 'breakthrough' against terror module sponsored by Pakistan's ISI

**Samridhi Tewari**  
NEW DELHI

Three pro-Khalistan operatives linked to a recent grenade attack in Punjab were killed in an encounter in Pilibhit district of Uttar Pradesh, the police said.

The three men killed in the joint operation by Uttar Pradesh and Punjab police personnel were identified as Gurvinder Singh, 25; Vaider Singh, 23; and Jaspreet Singh, 18. All were residents of Gurdaspur in Punjab.

Gaurav Yadav, Director-General of Police, Punjab, said the encounter was a breakthrough against the "Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) terror module" sponsored by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The deceased were



**Terror trail:** Police personnel and others at a hospital after the encounter in Pilibhit district of Uttar Pradesh on Monday. PTI

involved in a grenade attack at a police post in Bakshiwal in Gurdaspur on December 18, he added.

"The KZF had claimed responsibility for the act," Mr. Yadav said.

"Following reliable inputs that the accused had fled to Uttar Pradesh, a joint operation was

Police, said. The police recovered two AK-47 rifles and two 9mm Glock pistols from their possession.

#### 'British man linked'

The police also suspect the mastermind of the Bakshiwal attack to be a British Army man.

"Jagjeet Singh, reportedly working in British Army and having assumed the identity of Fateh Singh Baghi, also claimed responsibility for the grenade attack," officials said.

On December 18, unidentified men who arrived in an autorickshaw had thrown hand grenades and bombs at the Bakshiwal police post. The KZF took responsibility for the attack in a social media post.

**CONTINUED ON**  
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## Bangladesh writes to India seeking Hasina's extradition

**Kallool Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

Bangladesh has sent India a *note verbale* seeking the extradition of its deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the adviser on foreign affairs to the interim government Touhid Hossein informed the media in Dhaka on Monday.

The confirmation came hours after Lieutenant-General Mohammad Jahangir Alam Chowdhury (retd.), adviser on home affairs, informed that the interim Bangladesh government has written to the Government of India seeking the extradition of Ms. Hasina. The Ministry of External Affairs confirmed receiving the request.

"We have sent a letter to the Foreign Ministry seeking repatriation of Sheikh Hasina. The matter is being processed. We have an extradition treaty with India," he told presspersons in Dhaka.

Following the communication from Bangladesh, official spokesperson of Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Jaiswal said, "We confirm that we have received a *note verbale* from the Bangladesh High Commission today in connection with an extradition request. At this time, we have no comment to offer on this matter."

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## Domestic needs have to be prioritised: Joshi

**A.M. Jigeech**  
NEW DELHI



On National Consumer Day, the Union Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry will launch Jago Grahak Jago App, Jagriti App, and Jagriti Dashboard to protect consumers from the dark patterns on the Internet.

Talking to *The Hindu* on Tuesday, Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said the government's efforts are to balance between the interests of consumers and producers.

Mr. Joshi, also responded to a recent statement by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on enhancing minimum support price, and said interest of consumers is served when there is abundant availability of food commodities produced by the farmers.

On the ban on exports on certain agricultural commodities, the Minister said it will not be advisable for India to gamble on international trade when it comes to food security. Domestic requirements have to be prioritised over trade gains, he said.

**INTERVIEW ON**  
» PAGE 11

## Benegal, giant of Indian cinema, bids farewell at 90

**Shilajit Mitra**  
MUMBAI

Filmmaker Shyam Benegal, a giant of Indian cinema and one of the guiding lights of the parallel cinema movement, passed away due to kidney-related ailments in Mumbai on Monday. He was 90.

His daughter, Pia Benegal, confirmed the news of his death to PTI.

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**OBIT ON**  
» PAGE 12

**INTRODUCTION**  
» PAGE 11

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LIC/P/2024-25/2/Eng

## Kashmiri artisans give wings to the dodo

Made by locals in the Valley's *karkhanas*, over 50,000 papier mache models of the bird that became extinct in 1681 have been shipped to markets of Europe and Mauritius this year

**Peerzada Ashiq**  
SRINAGAR

This Christmas, papier mache artisans in Srinagar have given wings to thousands of dodos, a bird that became extinct in 1681 within 80 years of its interaction with humans and exposure to depleting forests.

Reyaz Jan, in his 70s, who was giving final touches to a papier mache model of the bird at a *karkhana* in Zadibal area of Srinagar, says, "I was introduced to the shape and size of the bird from pictures. Of late, we

download images. The shape and size of the bird is endearing. I fell in love with it at first sight. It's sad that the bird is no more seen anywhere."

The dodos, which originally had grey or brown plumage, come in many colours in the papier mache form with floral and forest prints adorning its body.

"The floral prints symbolise how it was the depleting forest cover that

resulted in the extinction of the bird," Mr. Jan says.

Besides dangling balls, jingles, crescents, Santas, stars and boxes, this year, Kashmir has exported these dodos in large quantities.

**Christmas orders**  
Over 50,000 papier mache dodos have set their feet in markets of Europe and Mauritius in East Africa this year, just ahead of Christmas.

"Dodos were last seen in Mauritius. The

bird is important to the place and is the national emblem there. We mostly export papier mache dodos to the country.

There is a huge demand for dodo products, which come in different sizes," Faizan Mir, who runs Mir Arts, an exclusive papier mache arts showroom at Srinagar's Hawsal, says.

It takes five to 10 days to create large-sized dodos in *karkhanas* located in the Valley. "Our *karkhana* produced over 3,000 dodos this season for exports," says Mr. Mir.

**CONTINUED ON**  
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\* T & C Apply

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### Rural Works Department

Notice Inviting Tender (No-RWD/State Scheme)/HQ/FT/01/2024-25  
(Through e-Procurement mode only on <http://pmgsyestendersbih.gov.in>)

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

Sl. no	Package No.	Name of District	Division	Description of the Works	Length (m/ Km)	Construction Amount (In Lacs)	Maintenance Amount (In Lacs)	Total Amount (In Lacs)	Earnest Money Payable* (In Lacs)	Cost of BOQ	Amount Payable to Works Division
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Aurangabad/01	Aurangabad	Aurangabad	Construction of Approach Road from Patna Main Canal to Bhalua RCC Culvert	0.8 km	77.022	7.112	84.134	10.38	10000	Aurangabad
2		Aurangabad	Aurangabad	Construction of Approach Road from Barun Patna Main Canal to Chura Village RCC Culvert	1.75 km	163.234	14.513	177.747			
3		Aurangabad	Aurangabad	Construction of Approach Road from Barun Patna Main Canal to Dhuriya and Mahuari village RCC Culvert	1.35 km	110.642	11.482	122.124			
4		Aurangabad	Aurangabad	Construction of Approach Road From Patna Main Canal to Janpur Culvert	1.6 km	121.615	13.388	135.003			
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>5.500</b>	<b>472.513</b>	<b>46.495</b>	<b>519.008</b>				
5	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Forbisganj/01	Araria	Forbisganj	Construction of R.C.C. Bridge at Devganj Patra PMGSY ke Dharmendra Gupta Ghar se (Ktindilipur) via Jay ke Ghar Tak at Ch-1.400 Km.	17.500 m	131.19	4.62	135.81	5.57	10000	Forbisganj
6		Araria	Forbisganj	Construction of RCC Bridge in L056 Rampur To Belsandi at CH-14.00 Km	17.500 m	137.61	5.25	142.86			
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>35.000</b>	<b>268.80</b>	<b>9.87</b>	<b>278.67</b>				
7	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Kishanganj/01	Kishanganj	Kishanganj-1	Construction of RCC Bridge in Murmula Chowk to Addiwashi Tola Road	17.500 m	145.45	4.55	150.00	18.63	10000	Kishanganj-1
8		Kishanganj	Kishanganj-1	Construction of RCC Bridge at Tena Sundarbari REO Road To Mala Road MMGSY Road	52.500 m	454.04	8.80	462.84			
9		Kishanganj	Kishanganj-1	Construction of RCC Bridge in PMGSY road Dalbabi to Mohammad Nagar via Narriyal Badi Saidul	17.50 m	148.60	4.97	153.57			
10		Kishanganj	Kishanganj-1	Construction of RCC Bridge in Paritalpur to L032 MMGSY road	17.50 m	160.07	4.87	164.94			
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>105.00</b>	<b>908.16</b>	<b>23.19</b>	<b>931.35</b>				
11	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Chakia/01	East Champaran	Chakia	Construction of approach road of bridge situated on kalyanpur banghat panchayat,bangsht village over danda river	0.330 km	30.774	3.857	34.631	0.70	10000	Chakia
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>0.330</b>	<b>30.774</b>	<b>3.857</b>	<b>34.631</b>				
12	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Mahua/01	Muzaffarpur	Mahua	Construction of loha pul over noon river on Sukhi saraya ghat in patapur prakahnd	96.840 m	874.73	15.25	889.98	17.8	10000	Mahua
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>96.840</b>	<b>874.730</b>	<b>15.250</b>	<b>889.98</b>				
13	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Bikramganj/01	Rohtas	Bikramganj	Construction of RCC Bridge in Rehi village of Dinara Block	32.120 m	335.47	1.80	337.27	6.75	10000	Bikramganj
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>32.120</b>	<b>335.468</b>	<b>1.801</b>	<b>337.27</b>				
14	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Pupri/01	Sitamarhi	Pupri	Basotara to ghughal approach road	0.21 km	61.553	2.076	63.629	1.27	10000	Pupri
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>0.21</b>	<b>61.553</b>	<b>2.076</b>	<b>63.629</b>				
15	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Pupri/02	Sitamadhi	Pupri	Const of box culvert on marha river ar rimahi piprahi road	10 m	49.92	0.83	50.75	1.02	10000	Pupri
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>10.00</b>	<b>49.92</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>50.75</b>				
16	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Samastipur/01	Samastipur	Samastipur	Construction of RCC Bridge in Shanti River in Larwara village of Warisagar Block	26.10 m	186.80	1.63	188.43	3.77	10000	Samastipur
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>26.10</b>	<b>186.80</b>	<b>1.63</b>	<b>188.43</b>				
17	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Gopalganj-2/01	Gopalganj	Gopalganj-2	Construction of RCC Bridge over Ghoghari River under L041 to L039 Bathrol Kurmi Tola	29.06 m	299.62	1.74	301.36	6.03	10000	Gopalganj
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>29.06</b>	<b>299.62</b>	<b>1.74</b>	<b>301.36</b>				
18	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Patori/01	Samastipur	Patori	Noon River at Rajwara Ghat in Chakphad to Musapur via Rajwara PMGSY Road	0.3 Km	131.5	3.66	135.16	2.71	10000	Samastipur
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>0.69</b>	<b>131.5</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>135.16</b>				
19	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Muzaffarpur East-1/01	Muzaffarpur	Muzaffarpur East-1	L045-T04 Murauli Harjan Tola (VR4) ka Pahunch path Nirman	0.5 Km	66.72	4.36	71.08	4.20	10000	Muzaffarpur East-1
20		Muzaffarpur	Muzaffarpur East-1	Basantpur Gaus me noon nadi ke son ghat par HL Bridge ka Pahunch path Nirman	0.8 Km	96.74	6.94	103.68			
21		Muzaffarpur	Muzaffarpur East-1	Majhaliya Railway Gunuti se somar hat hotel hue sona tola Makrahsanpur tak ka Pahunch path Nirman	0.22 Km	33.26	1.915	35.18			
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>1.52</b>	<b>197.72</b>	<b>13.22</b>	<b>209.94</b>				
22	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Mahnar/01	Vaishali	Mahnar	Vaishali Jila Antargram Baliva and Bishnupur ke Beech Gaaghra Nadi par Nirmal HL RCC Bridge ke Approach Path ka Nirman	0.69 Km	384.3	8.30	392.6	7.85	10000	Mahnar
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>0.69</b>	<b>384.3</b>	<b>8.30</b>	<b>392.6</b>				
23	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Rajgir/01	Nalanda	Rajgir	Construction of Approach Road of H.L. RCC Bridge over to River Palmar Near Village Beldariya in the Rajgir Block	0.055 Km	7.135	0.386	7.521	0.15	5000	Rajgir
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>0.055</b>	<b>7.135</b>	<b>0.386</b>	<b>7.521</b>				
24	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Chapra-1/01	Chapra	Chapra-1	NH-722 Kamalpur to Near Gautam B.Ed College	0.435 Km	37.33	6.86	44.19	0.88	5,000	Chapra-1
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>0.435</b>	<b>37.33</b>	<b>6.86</b>	<b>44.19</b>				
25	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Chapra-2/01	Chapra	Chapra-2	Saran Jila Antragat Dumri Nadi par Kali Singh ke pass pul ka Pahuch Path Nirman	0.225 Km	48.09	0.00	48.09	0.96	5,000	Chapra-2
<b>Total for the Group</b>				<b>0.225</b>	<b>48.09</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>48.09</b>				

\* The 2 %Earnest Money will be applicable on the sanction cost of B.O.Q. only.

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**Online Bid Opening Date and Time** : 20.01.2025 at 15:30 Hours.

**Place, date and time of Pre-Bid Meeting (Office of Respective Works Circle, RWD)** : 06.01.2025 from 11:00 Hours.

For further details please visit : [www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar](http://www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar)

(Engineer in Chief)

PR-015355 (RWD) 2024-25

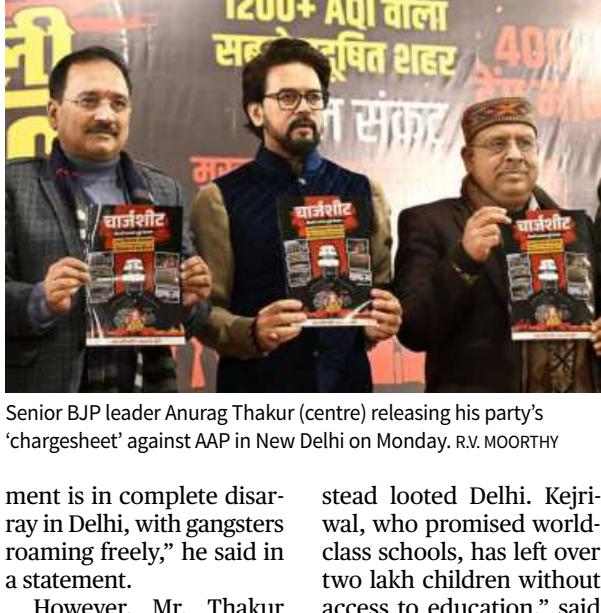
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# Kejriwal turned Capital into 'lab of corruption', says BJP

BJP releases 'chargesheet' against Delhi's ruling AAP, accuses it of indulging in multiple scams; former CM hits back, says city's law and order in 'complete disarray' under the BJP-led Centre

#### The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



Senior BJP leader Anurag Thakur (centre) releasing his party's 'chargesheet' against AAP in New Delhi on Monday. R.V. MOORTHY

Senior BJP leader Anurag Thakur on Monday released a "chargesheet" against Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and accused its national convener and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of turning the Capital into a "laboratory of corruption" through multiple scams.

Hitting back, Mr. Kejriwal said the BJP's sole strategy seems to be targeting him as it lacks a chief ministerial face and any meaningful

Stampede case: notice to Allu Arjun

The Hindu Bureau  
HYDERABAD

The Chikkadpally police in Hyderabad have issued a notice to actor Allu Arjun, requesting his presence for questioning in connection with the stampede at Sandhya Theatre during the *Pushpa 2* premiere on December 4, which resulted in the death of a woman.

The actor has been asked to appear at the Chikkadpally police station at 11 a.m. on Tuesday. Police have named Allu Arjun as 'Accused No. 1' in the case.

Timings	DELHI
TUESDAY, DEC. 24	
RISE 07:12 SET 17:31	
RISE 01:06 SET 12:53	
WEDNESDAY, DEC. 25	
RISE 07:12 SET 17:32	
RISE 01:58 SET 13:21	
THURSDAY, DEC. 26	
RISE 07:12 SET 17:32	
RISE 02:52 SET 13:52	

Delhi Weather max min  
Delhi City 18 09  
Safdarjung 18 09  
Palam 19 12

Delhi Palam Today  
20°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cold with shallow to moderate fog. Day will be pleasant. Night also will be cold and hazy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
22°C Morning will be cold with shallow to moderate fog. Day will be pleasant. Night also will be cold and hazy. Dry weather to continue.

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THE HINDU  
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# AAP govt. begins registration to give monthly aid to women

After launching the drive, Kejriwal also kicks off campaign to collect names of senior citizens for Sanjeevani Yojana; BJP accuses ruling party of enrolling women 'without issuing notification' for it

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Am Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Monday inaugurated the registration for the Delhi government's Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana to provide women aged 18 and above monthly aid of ₹1,000.

Mr. Kejriwal had earlier promised to hike the aid to ₹2,100 if his party retains power in the Delhi Assembly election due in February next year.

The former Delhi Chief Minister also launched AAP's drive to collect the names of those aged 60 and above for the Sanjeevani Yojana, under which the party has promised to provide free treatment for senior citizens at all go-



Arvind Kejriwal, Atishi, and Manish Sisodia during the registration drive for the Sanjeevani Yojana in Jangpura on Monday. PTI

vernment and private hospitals in Delhi on returning to power next year.

Mr. Kejriwal said the benefit under the proposed health plan will be extended to all senior citizens in the national capital irrespective of their socio-economic background. The scheme is yet to be cleared by the Delhi Cabinet.

Reacting to it, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said Mr. Kejriwal's politics is based on "lies". He alleged that Mr. Kejriwal and Chief Minister Atishi went forward with the registration of women "without issuing a notification" for it.

"The Cabinet note written by Atishi contains a provision to give monthly honorarium of ₹1,000, but she is making women fill a non-governmental form to provide honorarium of ₹2,100," he said.

Kejriwal helps fill forms Around noon, Mr. Kejriwal accompanied Ms. Atishi to South Market in East Kidwai Nagar and helped women register for the monthly aid scheme. The AAP chief urged women to keep safe the "yellow cards" issued to them following their registration. "This is, in a way, a special card for women," he said.

Around 4 p.m., accompanied by senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia and Ms. Atishi, Mr. Kejriwal visited Jangpura and assisted senior citizens in filling forms for the Sanjeevani Yojana. He also handed over 'Kejriwal Kavach cards' to them.

# Congress fact-finding panel's interim report on Haryana loss says 'mismatch in EVMs, votes'

Press Trust of India  
CHANDIGARH

The head of the Congress's fact-finding committee that went into the details of the party's loss in the Haryana Assembly poll released an interim report on Monday alleging discrepancies in the electronic voting machines (EVMs) during counting of votes.



Congress leader Karan Singh Datal. FILE PHOTO

tive term winning 48 seats; the Congress won 37.

Mr. Datal alleged that "the issue of batteries of EVMs having remained charged even up to 99% was registered by the Congress and the counting having been slowed down was also an issue".

"A detailed analysis depicts the mismatch of EVM votes at various booths. The hike of votes in areas where the BJP won with slender margins and the increase of 10.52% and

11.48% EVM votes in Panchkula district and in Charkhi-Dadri district respectively after the end of the polls are other serious indicators," he alleged.

"All these pointers indicate that there has been some serious manipulation," he said.

While the Congress had levelled several allegations immediately after results were out, the EC had said the party was raising "the smoke of a generic doubt" about the credibility of an entire electoral outcome.

Mr. Datal added, "Data suggest that the mismatch in the figures of votes polled and made available immediately after polling and later ... is a pointer to the fact that either EVMs had been tampered with or the EVMs were changed/replaced, which makes the entire exercise unreliable/suspect."

# AI-generated content splices up the AAP-BJP narrative war in Delhi

Ishita Mishra  
NEW DELHI

strength from Ambedkar to fight those "who spoke ill of the one who drafted the Constitution".

To counter the narrative, the BJP's Delhi unit posted a video on social media platforms in which AI-generated versions of Mr. Kejriwal and Delhi CM Atishi were shown speaking to each other stating how they "duped" the people of Delhi in the name of scholarships for Dalit students.

In another video posted by the BJP, the Dalit icon was shown slapping the



An AI generated image of AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. X@AMAADMIPARTY

AAP chief for his "overacting". It was widely shared by BJP supporters across social media platforms.

Within hours of the counter-attack by the BJP, AAP came up with another video in which Mr. Kejriwal

was seen sitting next to Mr. Shah, "daring him to use bad words for Ambedkar".

With the Delhi Assembly poll due in February next year, AI-generated videos, deepfakes and cloned voices are flooding the social media.

AAP, which is making personalised calls to voters across constituencies, said the party is using AI to ensure that the message reaches the masses in the "most effective way".

"The reaction was positive and we'll continue us-

ing AI more in our campaign," said an AAP leader.

The BJP, too, said that the party had heavily relied on AI in the recently held State polls and the response from the public was encouraging.

He is not alone as many fact-checkers and political strategists raise concerns about ethics and the lack of regulation in the use of AI in political campaigns.

"People do fall for misinformation in this age. This also leads to riot-like situations and hence AI must be used wisely," said Mohd. Zubair, a well-known fact-checker.

## KIND ATTENTION



## RESIDENT WELFARE ASSOCIATIONS/ BUILDERS/ PROJECT PROPONENTS/ NGOs/ CITIZENS

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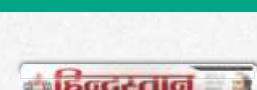
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## INBRIEF



## Rajnath Singh pays tributes to ex-Haryana CM O.P. Chautala

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday visited Teja Khera in the Sirsa district and paid tributes to former Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala, who passed away last week. Mr. Singh reached the Chautala family's farmhouse in the Teja Khera village and met the departed Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) chief's sons Abhay Singh Chautala, who is an INLD leader and Ajay Singh Chautala, who heads the JJP party. He also met O.P. Chautala's younger brother and former Haryana Minister Ranjit Singh Chautala and offered condolences to the Chautala family. O.P. Chautala died in Gurugram on Friday. He was 89. PTI

## Excluded from Mahayuti govt., Bhujbal meets CM Fadnavis

Senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Chhagan Bhujbal, who has expressed displeasure over being excluded from Maharashtra's newly formed Mahayuti government, met Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in Mumbai on Monday. Mr. Bhujbal said he had a detailed discussion with the Chief Minister about the current political and social landscape in the State. NCP president and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar refused to comment on the meeting and said "It's our party's internal issue, and we will resolve it in our style".

## BJD alleges discrepancies in voting patterns in Odisha polls



Biju Janata Dal MPs coming out of the Election Commission office in New Delhi after submitting a memorandum. ANI

## Satyasundar Barik

BHUBANESWAR

Six months after facing its first electoral defeat since its inception, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Monday raised serious concerns over alleged discrepancies in the voting patterns observed during the 2024 general and Assembly elections in Odisha. The party's claims came after an analysis of the voting data of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

"The ECI's conduct of election is always expected to be fair and transparent. However, BJD has identified some serious discrepancies in the data provided by the various returning officers, vis-a-vis the data provided by the ECI," the regional party said in a memorandum submitted to the ECI on Monday.

The party said there were massive differences in votes polled in a booth

and the total votes counted from the same electronic voting machine (EVM). "How is this possible? This should not be the case as the total number of votes counted by the returning officer cannot vary from the report of votes polled by the presiding officer especially when EVMs are used," the party said.

"The variance in these cases at single booth level is high enough to possibly impact the final outcome of the election in that As-

sembly and parliamentary constituency, when collated across all booths. These variations also raise questions about the integrity of the whole process," it said.

**'Yet to get copies'**

"In this, we would also like to add that under provisions of RTI and Representation of the People Act, we had asked all districts to supply the copies of Form 17-C, but despite repeated requests, we have still not received it," the party said.



A plea before the Delhi High Court has sought conjugal visitation rights for the inmates of Delhi's jails. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

sons, including security concerns," said Mr. Aggarwal.

"When women come to avail of the facility, it is not feasible to conduct a thorough body check. This makes it challenging to ensure that no prohibited items are being concealed," he said.

In October last year, the Director General (DG) of Prisons had submitted the proposal to the Delhi go-

## Leaders of ruling, Oppn. parties in J&amp;K join protesters over reservation policy

## Peerzada Ashiq

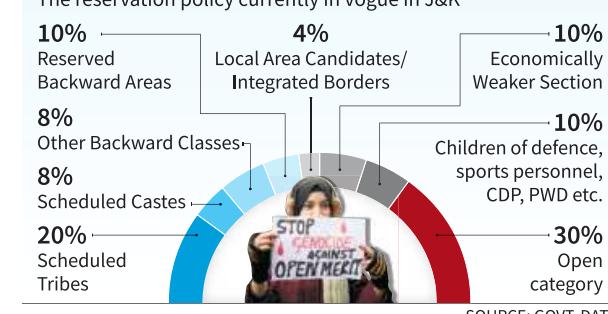
SRINAGAR

Cutting across party lines, several mainstream leaders, including ruling National Conference (NC) MP Aga Syed Ruhullah and Opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader Iltija Mufti, joined hundreds of students on Monday to protest outside the residence of J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in Srinagar to seek rationalisation of reservation quotas.

An online protest has been gathering momentum in Kashmir for many months over the new reservation policy approved during Central rule in the Union Territory. Aggrieved general category students and job aspirants allege that the new reservation policy under the J&K Reorganisation Act increased the reservation quota of Scheduled Tribes by 20% by including Paharis, and in-

## Numbers now

The reservation policy currently in vogue in J&K



creased the OBC quota to 8%. At present, the quota for reserved category in J&K has risen to over 60% and the open category has reduced to less than 40%, aggrieved students said.

Joining the protesters in Srinagar despite being from the ruling party, Mr. Ruhullah said, "We are not against reservation to any community that requires government hand-holding because of being down-trodden. However, any irrational reservation deserves jus-

tice." The NC MP said reservation should be done as per the population ratio or follow the Supreme Court ruling capping reservation at 50%.

Leaders of the PDP and incarcerated MP Engineer Rashid-led Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) also joined the protest in Srinagar.

"Unemployment rate has touched over 35% in J&K. We want equitable distribution and an end to students' distress in J&K," said Ms. Mufti. AIP legislator

Sheikh Khurshid said the current reservation policy is "anti-people and anti-youth". "Our future is in the dark if the current policy goes on," he said.

Meanwhile, a group of five protesting students under the banner of 'Open Merit Students Association' met the Chief Minister at his residence. Sources said Mr. Abdullah has sought time to address the issue, which is also being heard by the J&K and Ladakh High Court. A month ago, the J&K government also constituted a Cabinet subcommittee to study the issue and file a report.

Monday's protest was also the first major demonstration witnessed in Srinagar since the Centre ended J&K's special constitutional position in 2019 under Article 370. However, Hurriyat chairman and Kashmiri's chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq was disallowed from joining the protesters.



Laxmi Hebbalkar

## Will complain against BJP MLC to PM, President for obscene slur'

## The Hindu Bureau

BELAGAVI

Karnataka Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar has said she will complain to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi against the alleged obscene slur used by BJP MLC C.T. Ravi against her in the Legislative Council on December 19.

"I am deeply hurt by the abusive words of BJP MLC C.T. Ravi against me. He insulted me on the floor of the House by using unparliamentary language. I will complain against this to the President and the Prime Minister," she told reporters.

She also said her legal battle against the former Minister would continue.

"I have risen in public life by struggle. It was never a red-carpet walk for me. I will hold my ground. I had surrendered to silence for the last two days as I was hurt and shocked. But I am back now," she said.

**Support from CM'** The Minister said she had received valuable support from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar after the incident.

She released clips of Mr. Ravi's statements not only allegedly insulting her but also Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on the floor of the House. To a query on Mr. Ravi's plans for a 'Chalo Belagavi' yatra, she said that anyone with a pure heart and peaceful attitude was welcome to her city.

## Delhi govt. reassessing conjugal visits in prisons after initiative halted in Punjab

## Soibam Rocky Singh

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government is reassessing a proposal to permit conjugal visits for prisoners in the city's jails after a pilot project in Punjab was suspended a few months after its launch.

Considering Punjab's experience, the Delhi Chief Minister has sought further inputs from the Law Department on the feasibility of implementing such a project, according to Delhi government standing counsel Anuj Aggarwal. The Chief Minister has also sought to know if similar schemes are being implemented in other States.

Conjugal visits, also referred to as 'private family visiting', involve allowing prisoners to spend private time with their legal partners or spouses, including intimate relations, within the confines of a prison.

Notably, India lacks a specific policy framework governing the conjugal rights of prisoners.

Earlier this month, during the hearing of a 2019 public interest litigation (PIL) plea seeking necessary arrangements for providing conjugal visitation rights to prisoners lodged in the city's jails, the Delhi High Court was informed that the Delhi government is re-evaluating the issue based on the outcome of the initiative in Punjab.

In September 2022, Ludhiana Central Jail had introduced the 'Parivar Mukat (Family Visit)' programme, which allowed inmates to have face-to-face meetings with loved ones in specially designated rooms on its premises.

"We informed the court that conjugal visits in Punjab jails were suspended shortly after being introduced due to various rea-



A plea before the Delhi High Court has sought conjugal visitation rights for the inmates of Delhi's jails. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

sons, including security concerns," said Mr. Aggarwal.

"When women come to avail of the facility, it is not feasible to conduct a thorough body check. This makes it challenging to ensure that no prohibited items are being concealed," he said.

In October last year, the Director General (DG) of Prisons had submitted the proposal to the Delhi go-

vernment to consider allowing prisoners to have conjugal relations with spouses within the prison precincts.

**'Denial of basic rights'** Advocate and social activist Amit Sahni, who had filed the PIL plea before the Delhi High Court, said conjugal visitation rights are not provided by jail authorities in the national capital though most prisoners, over 85%, fall under the sexually active age group of 21-50.

He emphasised that the denial of conjugal visits is a denial of basic human rights to the spouse of the prisoner, who is "punished without any wrongdoing".

In 2019, the DG (Prisons) had filed an affidavit in response to the PIL plea, stating that "the State of Delhi grants temporary leave to convicts and prisoners in the form of facil-

ties such as parole and furlough for maintaining family and social ties, and therefore the purpose of conjugal relations between the prisoner and his/her spouse, while in prison, is served during the leave period".

Experts argue that a law and a policy framework are necessary to regulate conjugal visits. "It would be necessary to make a law and frame rules for such visits, particularly when there are various riders and impediments with regard to outsiders even touching inmates or making any kind of physical contact," said S.D. Singh, an advocate in the Supreme Court.

He emphasised that the legislature must recognise conjugal visits as an "important legal right by enacting a law, enabling its implementation with and without court orders".

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PRESS NOTICE

In cancellation to the earlier press notice published vide No. Arch II/616499/2024 dated 02.07.2024 The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Building), Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam re-invites Bids for Technical & Financial offer as per Request for Proposal from qualified and experienced firms (criteria as per RFP document) for providing "Project Management Consultancy Services" for the following works:

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approx. Value of the project	Approx. PMC Value
1	PMC services for "Construction of Open Stadium at Amingaon Sports Complex, Kamrup, Assam"	Rs. 274.07 Cr	Rs. 6.46 Cr including GST

- The details/RFP document may be seen in e-procurement portal website i.e. [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in)
- The validity period of the Bid shall be 180 days from the date of submission.
- The Bidders must be registered with the E-tendering system (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam. (website: <http://assamtenders.gov.in>)
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Chief Executive Officer, TNIDB

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शुद्धि पत्र

इस कार्यालय द्वारा आमंत्रित किये गये अत्यक्तानि पुनर्निवाद आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या- 05 SBD/2024-25 यथा पूर्णिया शास्त्री नवर के विद्युत 118.00, विद्युत 139.00, विद्युत 164.00 पर क्षेत्रिक्ति इमूंप यार्प सी० जी० संखना तथा विद्युत 129.00, 140.00 एवं 167.00 पर एवं 0 आर०/सी० आर० का पुनर्निवाद कार्यों जो दैनिक जगत्तन सामाजिक पर्यावरण के प्रकाशित हुआ है और जिसका PR-014541 (WRD) 2024-25 है, अपरिहार्य कारबाह विनाकित संशोधन किया जाता है। अपरिहार्य कारबाह विनाकित संशोधन किया जाता है। और जिसका PR-014541 (WRD) 2024-25 है, अपरिहार्य कारबाह विनाकित संशोधन किया जाता है।

- उत्तरार्थ निवादा के क्रमांक 04 पर अपितृत निवादा कारबाह डाउनलोड /अपलोड करने की अपील दिनांक 18.12.2024 से 21.12.2024 के बदले दिनांक 18.12.2024 से 30.12.2024 तक।
- उत्तरार्थ निवादा के क्रमांक 06 पर अपितृत तकनीकी बोर्ड खोलन की तिथि एवं समय दिनांक 21.12.2024 के बदले दिनांक 30.12.2024 तक।

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**The Calendar of events for various activities is as follows:** (a) The last date and time for submission of queries is : **07-01-2025 upto 17:30Hrs.**

The applicants may submit their queries through electronic mail: [cekrdc@gmail.com](mailto:cekrdc@gmail.com) (b) Pre-bid meeting will be held on **08-01-2025 at 16.30 Hrs.** in office of the Joint Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru City Police, No.5, Traffic Management Centre, 2nd Floor, Infantry Road, Bengaluru - 560 001. (c) The last date and time for submission of bids is **21-01-2025 up to 17:30 Hrs.** (d) Date and time of opening of Technical bids is : **23-01-2025 at 11:00 Hrs.**

\*Please note henceforth, any changes in the schedule will not be published through Newspapers and further changes will be updated only on Karnataka Public procurement portal Website.

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## Selective indecision

The latest GST Council meeting's outcomes signal a capricious approach

**W**ell into the eighth year of India's revamped indirect tax regime, the apex body governing the system met last Saturday and unveiled a flurry of decisions – including some rate changes and clarifications – that were punctuated by some broader issues it chose to kick down the road. That the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, with the Centre and States on board, had to wait for its 55th gathering to figure out that it needed to clarify that pepper and raisins supplied by farmers, gift vouchers and penalties levied on borrowers by banks and non-banking finance companies, are not taxable, is instructive. Similarly, the switch to a three-tiered levy for something as banal as popcorn – despite the rationale of taxing sweetened varieties more in the name of health – after all these years, is worrying. Such moves neither reflect well on the Centre's claims around its hurried July 2017 rollout that the GST is a 'Good and Simple Tax', nor does it bode well for a meaningful overhaul of its multiple and complex rates' structure through a long-delayed rationalisation exercise.

That the Council also did not bother to consider initial recommendations of a ministerial panel tasked with rejigging the GST rates, nor take up a panel's suggestions to review life and health insurance policies' taxation despite a commitment to expedite this rethink, only diminishes expectations from the panel going forward. That the panel's head left the meeting early, stating it will hold further deliberations on insurance policies' levies soon, is not comforting, if not entirely causal – especially as the government has been promising action on this front since the Budget session. The dithering, for whatever reason, is beginning to hurt the industry too. In November, new life insurance business tanked for the first time this year as consumers held off on buying a cover in anticipation of a GST cut. The longer this indecision, and the feet-dragging on the broader rate rationalisation plan, launched over three years ago, persists, the worse will be the implications on consumption that has already turned tentative, and private investment plans that hinge on consumption as well as tax certainty. The Council's decision to reverse an October verdict of the Supreme Court letting realty players claim input tax credits on costs of construction for commercial structures intended for renting or leasing purposes, will also have ramifications on India's investment climate. With legal changes to take retrospective effect from July 2017, this is a blast from the past for investors spooked by similar taxation misadventures over the past decade.

## Canary in the canopy

Economic growth cannot be allowed to bypass environment laws

**T**hrough history, forests for humans have been sites of shelter, food, livelihoods, protection, and strength of spirit. According to the new *India State of Forest Report* 2023, 25% of India's land is covered by forests or trees, on its face a healthy figure and a step closer to the National Forest Policy's prescriptions. But big numbers always hide problems. Post-Independence, India's forest governance has been typified by attempts to break free from European colonialists' insular view of forests as sources of timber, codified in laws the country inherited. Two significant achievements in this regard were the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 and the Forest (Rights) Act 2006. The counteracting forces of industrial development and the pressures of climate change on the state have however troubled the implementation of both Acts and the government has, sadly, chosen the easy way out.

Courts and conservationists have demanded that the state follow the dictionary definition of forests whereas the administration has been muddying it to exclude "community" forests, among others, while including plantations and orchards. Even if the administration's impetus is murky, it is allowing India to claim it is growing its carbon sink towards its climate commitments while allowing developmental activities to continue unimpeded. Thus, the 25% figure hides forest cover loss in the biodiverse Western Ghats, the Nilgiris and the northeast, the shrinking of mangroves in the Kutch and the Andamans, and of 'moderately dense' forests and the ongoing endangerment of open natural ecosystems. The report also lacks details about whether its estimates of the carbon sequestration potential of degraded land account for the specific uses to which they are currently being subjected. Forest loss in biodiverse areas cannot be adjusted with new plantations elsewhere, the consequences of which are exacerbated by the decision to include even commercial plantations, which have lower sequestration and ecological value, and the continued use of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act. Indeed, the growing gap between theoretical and actual forests also extends to finances. In several northern districts, the extent of forest cover that suffered fire losses has increased by an order of magnitude in two years. Ground reports by *The Hindu* have documented a paucity of human resources, skill, and equipment to control fires. Economic growth is essential and trees will be lost, but this is precisely why the friction that laws impose on the growth impulse is essential too. Yet, the government has been weakening environmental safeguards – more recently, the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act 2023 further contracted the 1980 Act's purview – and distorting its official inventory of forests. It is hard to imagine anyone winning in the end.

**I**ndia's governance challenges demand urgent reforms to modernise its bureaucracy. The country's economic story, which is marked by significant strides in growth and innovation, is juxtaposed with enduring issues of income inequality, underinvestment in critical sectors, and bureaucratic inefficiency. Central to this narrative is the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), which has for long held sway over the nation's governance. However, persistent challenges within the IAS and the wider bureaucracy have highlighted the urgent need for administrative reforms to unlock India's true economic potential.

**The legacy and challenges of the IAS**  
The IAS, often called India's "steel frame", traces its origins to the colonial Indian Civil Service (ICS). Post-Independence, it became the backbone of India's administrative machinery, with officers occupying pivotal roles in governance. Yet, this legacy has not been without its cracks. Political interference, lack of specialisation, and outdated personnel practices have gradually eroded its effectiveness.

One of the pressing issues is the politicisation of the IAS. Frequent transfers, suspensions, and promotions influenced by political loyalty rather than merit, have undermined morale and professionalism. Officers often struggle to develop domain expertise due to frequent rotations across departments, preventing them from becoming effective policy specialists in an increasingly complex governance landscape.

Corruption and inefficiency plague the bureaucracy further. According to the World Bank's measure of government effectiveness, India ranks only moderately, reflecting the poor quality of policy implementation and administrative independence. Without reform, these systemic inefficiencies threaten to stymie India's economic growth and governance objectives.

Executive-led governance in India, characterised by centralised decision-making, has yielded mixed results. While it has facilitated rapid economic reforms and infrastructure development, it has also led to bottlenecks in policy implementation and a lack of accountability. The centralised power structure often sidelines bureaucrats' insights and expertise, reducing their ability to act as effective policy executors.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the government has attempted to address some of these shortcomings by curbing politicised transfers and introducing measures to



**Vinod Bhanu**  
the Director of the Centre for Legislative Research and Advocacy, New Delhi

enhance bureaucratic accountability. However, critics argue that centralising power in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) risks undermining the autonomy of senior bureaucrats, leading to further disempowerment of the IAS.

The need for administrative reforms in India is not new. Since Independence, over 50 commissions and committees have been tasked with reimagining the country's administrative apparatus. The First Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) in 1966 and subsequent commissions, have consistently emphasised the need for specialisation, accountability, and merit-based promotions within the bureaucracy.

The Second ARC, set up in 2005, laid out a blueprint for administrative reforms. It included recommendations for lowering the permissible age of entry into the civil services, introducing performance-based promotions and lateral entry, and establishing safeguards against arbitrary transfers. However, many of these recommendations remain unimplemented, stalled by bureaucratic inertia and political resistance.

**Government's push for reform**  
Recognising the limitations of the IAS-centric administrative model, the Modi government has sought to diversify governance by introducing lateral entry into senior bureaucratic positions. This move is aimed at bringing domain experts from the private sector and other government services into key policymaking roles, infusing fresh perspectives and specialised knowledge.

Since 2018, the central government has pursued lateral recruitment to bring individuals with specialised knowledge and domain expertise into specific assignments. By 2023, this initiative saw the appointment of 57 officers, many of whom were drawn from the private sector, reflecting a deliberate effort to infuse fresh talent and perspectives into governance. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) recently advertised 45 posts for lateral entry, including positions for Joint Secretaries and Directors across various ministries. This shift has disrupted the IAS's traditional dominance, with only 33% of Joint Secretaries at the Centre now belonging to the IAS, compared to near-total dominance a decade ago.

However, the lateral entry initiative has faced resistance. Critics, including retired civil servants, argue that it could undermine incumbent morale and distort promotion incentives. Opposition parties have also voiced concern about the lack of reservation provisions for marginalised groups in these appointments. The Modi government's recent U-turn on lateral entry appointments,

Persistent challenges within the Indian Administrative Service and the wider bureaucracy have highlighted the urgent need for administrative reforms

reportedly due to political pressure from political allies, underscores the contentious nature of this reform.

The U.S.'s proposed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), under U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, offers an intriguing model for reforming India's administrative apparatus. DOGE aims to streamline government operations, reduce inefficiency, and eliminate redundant agencies, all while leveraging the expertise of leaders such as Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy.

DOGE's focus on cutting wasteful expenditures and introducing accountability mechanisms resonates with the challenges faced by the Indian bureaucracy. A similar advisory body in India could help identify inefficiencies within the civil service, promote data-driven decision-making, and develop metrics to assess bureaucratic performance. A time-bound commission, such as the DOGE's expiration date tied to the U.S. semi-quintennial, could also ensure that reform initiatives remain focused and actionable.

**Challenges to reform**  
Reforming India's bureaucracy is no small task. Despite its flaws, the IAS remains deeply entrenched in the country's governance structure. Proposals for lateral entry, performance-based promotions, and specialised training often face resistance from within the service, where seniority-based progression and generalist approaches are deeply institutionalised. Political interference further complicates reform efforts. Proposals such as the Civil Services Standards, Performance, and Accountability Bill (2010), which sought to protect bureaucrats from arbitrary transfers, have languished in legislative limbo. Even judicial interventions, such as the Supreme Court of India's directive to establish civil services boards in 2013, have had limited impact due to lack of enforcement.

A multifaceted approach to administrative reform is vital to address the challenges of India's bureaucracy. Recruitment must prioritise merit and domain expertise, with promotions tied to measurable performance rather than seniority. Protecting bureaucrats from politically motivated transfers and fostering specialisation in policymaking roles would enhance accountability and efficiency. Further, the government should invest in a robust data infrastructure to track bureaucratic performance, enabling informed decisions on placements, promotions, and policy implementation. Reform is essential for India's economic aspirations and ensuring governance effectively serves its people.

## The GATT-ification of the World Trade Organization



**Prabhash Ranjan**  
Professor and Director, Centre for International Investment and Trade Laws, Jindal Global Law School

**T**he Geneva-based World Trade Organization (WTO), which serves as a multilateral trade referee, is set to miss yet another crucial target of revitalising "a full and well-functioning dispute settlement system" by the end of 2024. It has been five years since the Appellate Body (AB), the second tier of the WTO's two-tier dispute settlement system, has been non-operational due to the persistent blocking by the United States, of the appointment of the Appellate Body members.

This obstruction began during Barack Obama's administration, escalated under Donald Trump's first presidency, and has continued under President Joe Biden, reflecting a bipartisan political consensus in the U.S. The U.S.'s hostile stance towards the Appellate Body will intensify further under what is anticipated to be a highly protectionist Trump 2.0 administration. While the WTO panels, the first stage of dispute settlement, continue to operate and render decisions resolving trade disputes between WTO member countries, this is of little significance because the losing country uses its legal prerogative to appeal to a non-operational AB, and thus stall the adjudicatory process. However, it is a fool's errand to put the Appellate Body back on track because the real issue is the WTO's existential crisis and its quest to be a relevant player in global trade. The larger game is not about killing the Appellate Body but, rather, making the WTO dysfunctional.

**The promise**  
To understand the future, it is important to first reflect on the past. The establishment of the WTO in 1995 marked a milestone in international law. The rise of neoliberal ideology in the 1990s played a critical role in this development. The WTO established a comprehensive system of

rules governing trade in goods, services, and intellectual property, along with a binding two-tier dispute settlement system featuring an appellate function, compulsory jurisdiction, and effective retaliation for non-compliance. The WTO's promise of international rule of law was so compelling that it could not be matched even by the International Court of Justice. Scholars in international law began to regard the WTO as a constitutionalism project that would ensure the triumph of international law over international politics.

As the international trading community witnessed the transition from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) era that held sway from 1948 to 1994 to the WTO, it marked a shift from diplomacy-based trade multilateralism to a rule-based system. Celso Lafer, a former Chairman of the WTO's dispute settlement body, described the creation of the WTO as the "thickening of legality" in international trade relations. Put differently, countries were willing to accept several restrictions on their state conduct and subject themselves to the binding jurisdiction of the WTO's dispute settlement system including the Appellate Body.

**The unravelling**  
However, things began to unravel as the global landscape changed due to China's significant rise over the last two decades. The U.S. facilitated China's accession to the WTO in 2001, hoping this would lead Beijing to dismantle its state-led industrial policies which were detrimental to international trade, and adopt free-market principles. However, this expectation did not materialise. There is a widespread belief in the U.S. that China exploited the WTO system to its advantage. The WTO and its institutional controls

hinder the U.S. from dealing decisively with China. As a result, the U.S. aims, in the words of international lawyer Daniel C.K. Chow, to "wreck" the WTO system, including the Appellate Body, which would provide it with a free hand to address the perceived Chinese threat. The U.S. can now employ trade remedial measures and develop industrial policies to counter the Chinese challenge, even if these actions violate WTO law, as there is no one to call it out. A classic example of this is the Trump administration's decision in 2018 to impose a 25% tariff on Chinese products across various sectors. Mr. Trump's promise to impose further tariffs during his second term, which could trigger another round of trade war, indicates that international politics, rather than international law, will dictate international trade.

**Regime change**  
This has led international lawyers such as Geraldo Vidigal to argue that there is no longer a crisis in the WTO but a regime change. As against the thickening of the legality of international trade relations that we saw from a period of 1995 to 2019, we are witnessing its thinning. In other words, while there is no complete de-legitimisation of international trade relations, countries are reclaiming significant control that was previously ceded to the WTO in managing their state conduct. The legal revolution of international trade multilateralism that began in 1995 has not only been paused but is being reversed, moving us back to the era of GATT diplomacy. Understanding this "GATTification" of the WTO, as Prof. Vidigal puts it, is crucial for grasping the current state of the international trading order. No amount of technical negotiations in Geneva can obscure this fact.

*The views expressed are personal*

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Centralisation push

A single election diminishes the role and priorities of the States and can only marginalise them. The drive towards 'one nation, one election' is to have India as a unitary, unidimensional, single-language nation, which it certainly is not. We are one because we are different. ONE is essentially to dislodge regional parties as they appear to have stymied the Bharatiya Janata Party's expansion moves. This push from the government leads to needless structural

imbalance and a disruption of the concept of cooperative federalism. 'One nation, one election' is another step towards the centralisation of many aspects of administration and schemes. The 'cost' angle is unclear, as to date, the savings for simultaneous polls have not been quantified.  
**H.N. Ramakrishna**, Bengaluru

**Rural employment scheme**  
The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is meant to eliminate seasonal

unemployment in the agrarian sector. Put differently, the services of farmers/agricultural labourers during the lean season are utilised in the said scheme to create infrastructural assets in rural areas. It is disheartening that corruption plagues the scheme in West Bengal (Page 1, December 23). India is a federal country, and it is imperative that the Union government and States work in unison to ameliorate the economic condition of the poor in rural and urban areas.

**Politics, red-tapism and corruption are least expected in labour-intensive and socio-economic welfare programmes.**  
**S. Ramakrishnasayee**, Chennai

**Music season, safety**  
This time of the year, Chennai is busy with its annual Margazhi music season. City residents and non-resident Indians alike throng the numerous *sabhas*, enjoying music and the other performing arts apart from tasting exotic food items despite their exorbitantly priced.

**But what is not so great about the situation is that many of the *sabhas* are not implementing the required statutory fire safety regulations, putting lives at risk. Statutory fire safety regulations such as smoke detection systems and alarms, unimpeded passage ways, fire evacuation plans and strategies, and, importantly, trained employees to handle a possible fire outbreak, are conspicuously absent in many of the *sabhas*.**  
**B. Swaminathan**, Chennai

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to sit on staircases. More chairs are brought in to seat more people, blocking all escape routes. The live kitchen adjoining the auditorium in many places is another potential fire hazard! The authorities concerned should, in the interest of public safety, inspect the various performing centres and have the required fire safety protocols implemented immediately.

# Envisioning India as a global skill supplier

In an address in August, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that he was hopeful that India's skilled workforce will play a prominent role in the global job market.

Global mega trends, such as demographic transitions, globalisation, technological advancements, and climate change, are significantly altering the demand for, and the supply of, international migrant workers. Among the various facets of such changes, the skills of these workers are assuming centrality in public policy discourse.

Reviews of immigration policies of the traditional and major migrant destinations (the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and Gulf Cooperation Council countries) and of the new destinations (Germany, South Korea, Japan, etc.) reveal the increased prioritising of skill-selective and skill-intense immigration. Most of the destination countries recognise that their ability to respond to certain developments, such as an ageing society, digitalisation, declining fertility rates, and the need for economic diversification strategies to tackle the challenging global economic environment, can be met only by welcoming international migrant workers with the relevant skills.

Can India rise to the occasion and bridge the global skills gaps? Responding effectively to the skill needs of different destination countries is a complex task. Robust and evidence-based policy interventions are essential to facilitate skill-centred international labour migration outflows from India.

**Fragmented policy structure**  
However, India still lacks a comprehensive policy architecture for international labour mobility. The policy interventions are fragmented and are often not based on evidence. The only data source for annual migrant labour outflows from India is the data on emigration clearances, which covers only those with an

**S.K. Sasikumar**

Labour and migration analyst and former senior faculty, V.V. Giri National Labour Institute

educational attainment below matriculation and low skilled workers migrating to 18 select countries. Such data inadequacy stands as a major obstacle in formulating constructive policies.

India's efforts have mostly revolved around bilateral agreements on international labour mobility with different countries covering aspects such as social security, skills, protection, and welfare. These are primarily one-off exercises, not situated within a composite policy framework. Further, there are hardly any evaluations available on the outcomes of these pacts and the learnings from them.

India must design and operationalise a comprehensive national policy on international labour migration, with skill-centred migration anchored as one of the fundamental pillars. Such a policy should clearly set the road map for the different processes involved in transitioning India as the global skill capital.

#### The way forward

The critical step in this direction is to identify and anticipate the ever-changing skills in demand in select destination countries and the emergent skill gaps across their key sectors and occupations. Organisations such as the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training are actively involved in skill forecasting for European countries using rigorous methodologies. Data and insights obtained from regional and national skill-forecasting exercises, especially for the U.S., the U.K. and Canada, that mostly cover the medium term (2-5 years), can help India respond to skill needs. This should be supplemented by big data analytics of real-time online job vacancies in destination countries for which India seeks to become the lead supplier of skills.

Once this is done, India's capacity to provide the requisite skills must be assessed. This will entail systematic mapping of the country's skill development efforts

related to skill mobility and follow-up actions: introducing identified skills and competencies as a part of the curriculum in specific institutions; reorienting skill programmes of India's International Skill Centres to meet the global skill gaps; creating customised short-term skill training geared towards destination countries; and so on. The priority must be to raise the quality of skill development to international standards. This calls for the convergence of the skill qualification systems of India and the destination countries. India also needs a review of the National Skills Qualification Framework to assess its effectiveness in aligning our qualifications with those of the major destination countries.

Considering that contemporary immigration policies encourage temporisation, return migration is gaining prominence in international skilled migration flows. This is another area where India falls short: the optimum utilisation of return migrants' skills is one of the most neglected aspects of the country's migration policies. The best way to effectively reintegrate return migrants is to ensure that the skills and competencies they acquire in the destination countries are accredited by specialised skill certification institutions in those countries so that migrants can transition back effectively to the Indian labour market when they return.

Another pressing need is a skill-centred international labour migration information system, encompassing quantitative and qualitative indicators. Such a platform should regularly collate, generate, analyse, and report information and data on key indicators of skills and migration to enable evidence-based interventions. This will be pivotal in fostering skill partnerships between India and the principal destination countries, boosting skill-centred mobility, and improving migration and developmental outcomes.

India must design a comprehensive national policy on international labour migration, with skill-centred migration anchored as one of the fundamental pillars

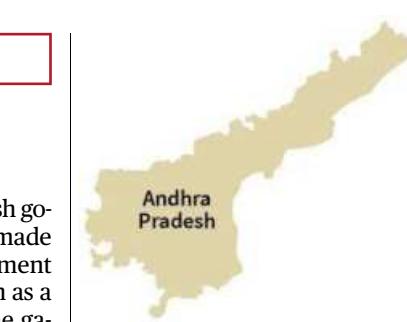
# All eyes on Kurnool

The Naidu government has charted out ambitious plans to develop the district

#### STATE OF PLAY

Hareesh P.

hareesh.p@thehindu.co.in



The Andhra Pradesh government has made several development plans for Kurnool, known as a backward district and the gateway to Rayalaseema. It has proposed a drone hub, enhanced industrial activity with the development of the Orvakal industrial node, greater flight connectivity, and the establishment of a High Court Bench.

Kurnool was the capital of Andhra Pradesh from October 1, 1953 to October 31, 1956. On November 1, 1956, the Telugu-speaking areas of the erstwhile Hyderabad province were merged with Andhra State to form Andhra Pradesh. During the merger, the Sribagh Pact, an agreement between the political leaders of Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema regions, promised that a High Court would be set up in Kurnool. However, this did not happen.

The idea was proposed again not too long ago. As part of its decentralised development plan or the 'three capitals' proposal, the previous Jagan Mohan Reddy government said it would develop Kurnool as the judicial capital. A few judicial bodies and commissions were shifted to Kurnool and the district was notified as the headquarters of the State Human Rights Commission in 2023. However, the High Court remained in Amaravati. The 'three capitals' proposal ran into hurdles.

This year, Chandrababu Naidu returned as Chief Minister. In November 2024, the Andhra Pradesh Assembly passed a resolution for a High Court Bench in Kurnool. The idea was proposed again not too long ago. As part of its decentralised development plan or the 'three capitals' proposal, the previous Jagan Mohan Reddy government said it would develop Kurnool as the judicial capital. A few judicial bodies and commissions were shifted to Kurnool and the district was notified as the headquarters of the State Human Rights Commission in 2023. However, the High Court remained in Amaravati. The 'three capitals' proposal ran into hurdles.

The Centre recently announced that it would pump in about ₹2,700 crore for developing infrastructure in the Orvakal node of the Hyderabad-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor. The government plans to integrate several manufacturing clusters between Hyderabad and Bangalore in the Orvakal node near Kurnool.

The plan to set up a 300-acre drone hub at Orvakal, the first-of-its-kind in the country, will also boost industrial development as it serves as a centre for training, innovation, and drone-related business. This is

part of the government's ambitious plans to turn the State into a drone capital. The Andhra Pradesh government is also planning to draft a drone policy. Drones are especially useful in the healthcare and agriculture sectors, and during calamities, as the government found out during the recent floods in Vijayawada.

The government believes that attracting investors to set up units at the Orvakal node will reap dividends. Orvakal is located near the Kurnool airport, which began commercial operations from March 2021. Air connectivity to Orvakal is also likely to increase as the government is trying to persuade flight operators to run services to Vijayawada.

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MPs recently submitted a representation to the Centre seeking a railway line that will connect Kurnool to Amaravati, which will further propel growth in the district.

Historically, Kurnool was a stronghold of the TDP. However, this changed when Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy became Chief Minister. Later, Mr. Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSR Congress Party dominated the undivided district of Kurnool in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections. In the 2024 elections, however, the National Democratic Alliance managed to flip Rayalaseema's long-standing political dynamics. Of the 14 seats in undivided Kurnool, the TDP secured 12.

Given the TDP's dominance and as Mr. Naidu has proved his capability in transforming grand visions into reality in the past, there is hope that Kurnool may finally see a brighter future. The TDP government is also at an advantage compared to the YSRCP government as the Bharatiya Janata Party is also part of the government in the State.

# Indian visa denials linked to fraud, not housing crisis, in Australia

While students were blamed for the housing crisis, visa grant rates for Chinese students remain unaffected

#### DATA POINT

**Sambavi Parthasarathy**  
**Vignesh Radhakrishnan**  
**Amitha Reji George**

Affordable homes are becoming increasingly scarce in Australia. The government attributed last year's sharp rise in immigration as a key factor that is contributing to the crisis. In response, it has implemented measures to restrict the inflow of students whose numbers skyrocketed last year, significantly outpacing the numbers of skilled migrants and other categories.

An Australian government department's analysis shows that 60% of international students live in apartments, 26% in detached houses, and the remainder in hostels or university housing. These numbers, read along with the unprecedented surge in international students in 2023, shed light on the acute housing crisis, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne, which attract most of these students.

**Chart 1** illustrates the Rental Affordability Index in the greater capital areas of Sydney and Melbourne, where a higher index indicates better affordability. Rent affordability has plummeted in both regions, with the decline being much steeper in Sydney than Melbourne. This coincides with the sharp increase in student arrivals.

The answer might lie in another problem – mounting visa fraud. The Australian government's Department of Education says there is a higher proportion of "high-risk" student visa applications from India, Nepal, and Pakistan.

**Chart 2** shows the visa processing time in days for Chinese and Indian students between April and July this year and last year. The processing time is separately denoted for three types of student visa applications: straightforward (satisfies most necessities), typical, and complex (lacks many requirements). Although the processing time has increased for Chinese and Indian students, Indian student visas are processed for a much longer time, which is attributed to their classification as "high-risk". Thus the higher rejection rate for Indian students is better explained by an increase in visa fraud rather than the housing crisis.

**Chart 3** shows the number of students from India and China who began courses in New South Wales and Victoria over the years. K=1,000.

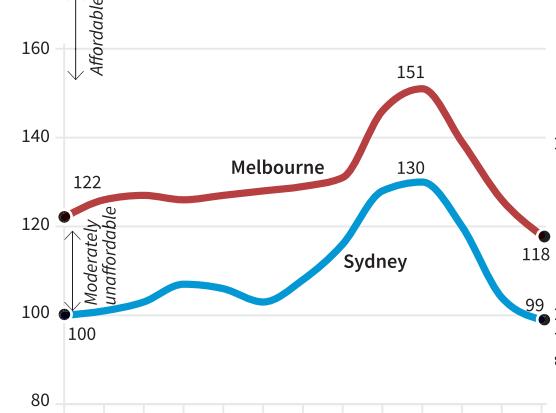
**Chart 4** depicts the visa grant rates for students from India, China, and all countries who applied for higher education and vocational education and training courses in Australia.

#### Stricter down under

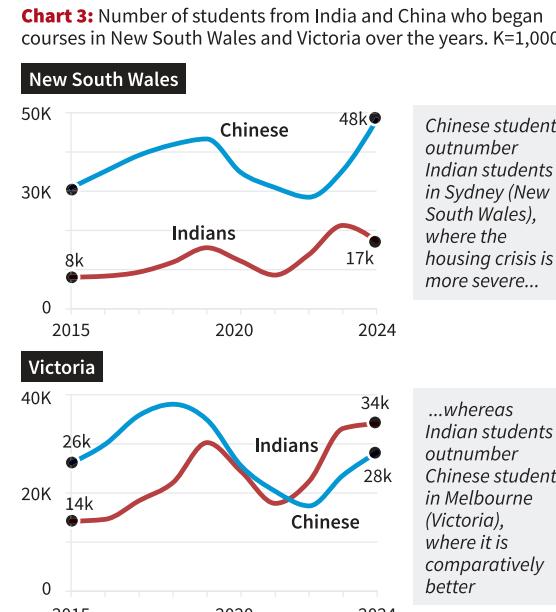
The data for the charts were sourced from the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Education, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Housing Dashboard, SGS Economics and Planning's 2024 Rental Affordability Index, and the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council's State of the Housing System 2024 report.

In the charts China and India are shown separately because they are the top two sources of international students. In all the charts, data is as of October 31, 2024.

**Chart 1:** The chart illustrates the Rental Affordability Index in the greater capital areas of Sydney and Melbourne, where a higher index indicates better affordability.



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Amitha Reji George is interning with The Hindu Data Team

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

**The Hindu**

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 24, 1974

#### An old Kerala musical instrument

Madras, Dec. 23: At the meeting of the Experts Committee held to-day in connection with the 48th conference of the Music Academy, Sri Chummar Choondal presented a paper on Nanthuny, an old musical instrument of Kerala in vogue among Mannars (Vannar in Tamil) – the washerman community. It was used as a tala and sruти accompaniment for the recital of songs on Bhagavati. The instrument is 4.5 feet hollow wooden body, with two fibre strings and played with a plectrum made of horn. Although it has five frets only the middle and lower are pressed. The fibre strings produce two or three notes and the sruти provided is approximately one kattai. Nanthuny seems to be a corruption for Nan-dhvani meaning "good sound". It is in vogue chiefly in Central and North Kerala among Mannar Velan and Perumannan communities during Bhagavati worship and other rituals. There were references to this instrument in Malayalam works of the end of 14th century. Oomanattu Sankunni, 76, gave a demonstration on the instrument.

Sri Titte Krishna Iyengar, speaking on the contribution to music of the Maharajas of Mysore, said the first Maharaja of Mysore who started the Navaratri festival for which Mysore became famous, was Raja Wadiyar (1578-1670). Chikka Devaraja Wadiyar (1673-1704) played the Kalavati Veena and composed the musical poem Gita Gopala in the style of Gita Govinda. Krishnaraja Wadiyar (1895-1940) encouraged many distinguished musicians. Sri Jayachamaraja Wadiyar was a scholar and composer who continued the patronage extended by Mysore Court.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 24, 1924

#### Bolshevism in China

Paris, Dec. 23: The anxiety regarding the forthcoming events in the Far East was voiced by M. Outrey, Deputy for Indo-China, in the course of the debate on colonial estimates in the chamber. M. Outrey said he apprehended one organisation of a Bolshevik Government in China. He knew that Japan had protected herself against the movement by an understanding with Mr. Changtsolin, and Japan and Korea would certainly be saved from the wave of Bolshevism. But it was also certain that the wave would spread beyond China, and soon reach Indo-China, Burma, and India.

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### Manipur police recruits passing out from Assam Academy

**2,000** Nearly 2,000 recruits of the Manipur police passed out from the Lachit Borphukan Police Academy on Monday, strengthening the force in the violence-hit northeastern State, an official said. [PTI](#)

### Casualties suffered by North Korea in Russia-Ukraine war

**1,100** More than 1,000 North Korean soldiers have been killed or wounded in Russia's war with Ukraine, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said on Monday. The new figure follows a report by Seoul's spy agency to MPs last week. [AFP](#)

### Police personnel to be deployed in Prayagraj for Maha Kumbh Mela

**50,000** The 2025 Maha Kumbh Mela will see a strong force of 50,000 police personnel fanning out across Prayagraj to respond to potential terror threats, cyber attacks, rogue drones and human trafficking. [PTI](#)

### India's oil imports from West Asia in November

**2.28** In billion barrels per day (bpd), India's November crude imports showed West Asian oil at a nine-month high while Russia accounted for its smallest share in three quarters. Refiners in India have been gorging on cheaper Russian oil. [REUTERS](#)

### Highest-ever monthly traffic recorded in Lucknow Airport

**6.29** In lakh. The Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport has managed an all-time monthly high of passenger movement in November. Dubai, Muscat and Dammam were the top three international destinations. [PTI](#)

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## India's reliance on China for critical minerals

Does China have unparalleled dominance in the critical minerals sector? How was it able to do so? What are the minerals for which India is heavily dependent on China? Why has India not been able to excavate the lithium reserves found in Jammu and Kashmir?

### EXPLAINER

**Rakshit Shetty**

**The story so far:** The Ministry of Mines in 2023 identified 30 critical minerals deemed essential for the nation's economic development and national security. While the report highlighted India's complete import dependency for 10 critical minerals, it did not fully address a more pressing concern – the extent and nature of dependency on China.

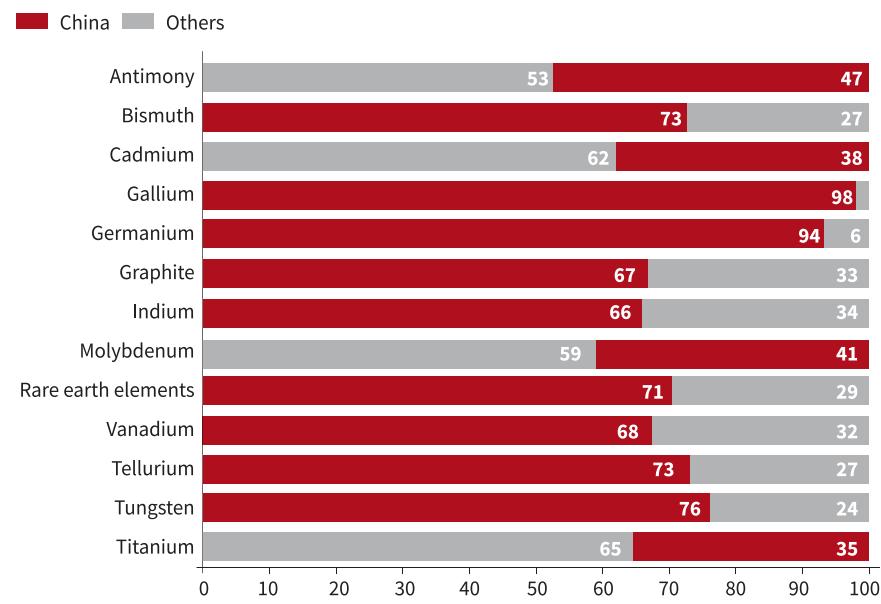
**Is China a dominant player?** China's unparalleled dominance in critical minerals stems from its vast resource base and strategic investments across the value chain. As the world's largest mining nation, China has discovered 173 types of minerals, including 13 energy minerals, 59 metallic minerals, and 95 non-metallic minerals. Reserves of nearly 40% of these minerals, particularly copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, lithium, gallium, germanium, and crystalline graphite, increased significantly last year, supported by an exploration investment of \$19.4 billion. This led to the discovery of 132 new mineral deposits, including 34 large ones. China's dominance extends beyond reserves to include processing and refining, with control over 87% of rare earth processing, 58% of lithium refining, and 68% of silicon processing. Furthermore, China has strategically invested in overseas mining projects and built unparalleled midstream refining capabilities, raising supply chain vulnerabilities for countries including India, the U.S., and EU nations.

**What about China's export controls?** When it comes to China's approach to weaponising critical mineral exports, it is strategic and calculated. Beijing primarily targets minerals deemed critical by Western nations and their allies, especially those essential for

### China, a leading player in critical minerals

China's dominance in critical minerals stems from its vast resource base and strategic investments across the value chain. As the world's largest mining nation, China has discovered 173 types of minerals

**China's global market share (in percentage) across various minerals as of 2022**



semiconductors, batteries, and high-tech manufacturing. However, China carefully balances these decisions against two constraining factors: it avoids controlling minerals which heavily depend on Western raw material imports, and it refrains from actions that could disrupt its domestic industrial enterprises or export-dependent sectors. This strategic calculus was evident in China's 2010 rare earth embargo against Japan, its recent restrictions on antimony, gallium, and germanium exports, and its December 2023 ban on rare earth extraction and processing technologies.

#### Is India dependent on China?

An in-depth examination of import data of 30 critical minerals spanning 2019 to 2024 reveals India's acute vulnerability to Chinese supplies, particularly for six critical minerals where dependency

exceeds 40%: bismuth (85.6%), lithium (82%), silicon (76%), titanium (50.6%), tellurium (48.8%), and graphite (42.4%). Bismuth, primarily used in pharmaceuticals and chemicals, has few alternative sources, with China maintaining an estimated 80% of global refinery production. Lithium, crucial for EV batteries and energy storage, faces processing bottlenecks, despite alternative raw material sources, as China controls 58% of global refining. Silicon, vital for semiconductors and solar panels, requires sophisticated processing technology that few countries possess. Titanium, essential for aerospace and defence applications, has diversified sources but involves high switching costs. Tellurium, important for solar power and thermoelectric devices, is dominated by China's 60% global production share and finally graphite, indispensable for EV

batteries and steel production, faces supply constraints as China controls 67.2% of global output, including battery-grade material.

#### Why does India rely on imports?

Despite being endowed with significant mineral resources, India's heavy reliance on imports stem from several structural challenges in its mining and processing ecosystem. Many critical minerals are deep-seated, requiring high-risk investments in exploration and mining technologies – a factor that has deterred private sector participation in the absence of adequate incentives and policy support. The country's processing capabilities are also limited. This is particularly evident in the case of the recently discovered lithium deposits in Jammu and Kashmir, where despite the presence of 5.9 million tonnes of resources in clay deposits, India lacks the technological capability to extract lithium from such geological formations.

#### What is the way forward?

India has initiated a multi-pronged approach to reduce its dependency on China. The government has established KABIL, a joint venture of three State-owned companies, to secure overseas mineral assets. India has also joined strategic initiatives like the Minerals Security Partnership and the Critical Raw Materials Club to diversify its supply sources and strengthen partnerships. The country is also investing in research through institutions like the Geological Survey of India and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research while promoting recycling and circular economy practices to reduce virgin mineral dependency. Production-linked incentives for extracting critical minerals through recycling also seem promising. However, transitioning away from China will require sustained investment and long-term commitment to these various initiatives.

*The writer is a research analyst at The Takshashila Institution.*

### THE GIST

China's dominance extends beyond reserves to include processing and refining, with control over 87% of rare earth processing, 58% of lithium refining, and 68% of silicon processing.

An in-depth examination of import data of 30 critical minerals spanning 2019 to 2024 reveals India's acute vulnerability to Chinese supplies, particularly for six critical minerals where dependency exceeds 40%.

Despite being endowed with significant mineral resources, India's heavy reliance on imports stem from several structural challenges in its mining and processing ecosystem.

## Why has the MHA reimposed restrictions in three NE States?

What is the protected area regime? What did the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958 stipulate? Did the ethnic violence in Manipur lead to imposing restrictions on movement and mobility?

**Vijaita Singh**

#### The story so far:

In December 17, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reimposed the Protected Area Regime (PAR) in the States of Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram to restrict and monitor the movement of foreigners. From now on, foreigners visiting the three States would have to seek prior permission and Protected Area Permits (PAP) from the government. The circular stated that the relaxation provided to the three States under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958 was being withdrawn with immediate effect.

#### What does the 1958 Order entail?

The Order stated that no foreigner shall enter into or remain in any protected area except under and in accordance with a

permit issued by the Central government or any office authorised by the Central government. The permit shall include the following details – place of entry, place of residence and period of stay. The areas falling between the inner line and the international Border of the following States and Union Territories were declared as Protected Areas – parts of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand and the whole of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim (partly as protected areas and partly as restricted areas). Another Order in 1963 declared entire Andaman & Nicobar Islands and parts of Sikkim as "restricted area."

#### When was the Order first relaxed?

The PAR was relaxed for the whole of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland on December 30, 2010 in wake of an improved security scenario, and to

promote tourism. The relaxation was initially for a period of one year. It was subsequently extended for a duration of 1-2 years till 2022 when it was further relaxed for another five years till December 31, 2027. On December 17, the relaxation was withdrawn for the States.

#### Why was it withdrawn?

A copy of the circular accessed by *The Hindu* said that the matter was examined by the Ministry in "the backdrop of growing security concerns in border areas of these States." Manipur, bordering Myanmar has been affected by ethnic violence between the tribal Kuki-Zo and the Meitei people since May 3, 2023. Chief Minister N. Biren Singh has attributed the ongoing violence in the State to "outsiders and foreign hands."

After a military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, there was an influx of undocumented migrants – over 40,000

refugees took shelter in Mizoram and around 4,000 refugees are said to have entered Manipur. The migrants belonging to the Kuki-Chin-Zo ethnic group share ethnic ties with the communities in Mizoram and Manipur. India shares a 1,643 km long border with Myanmar which passes through the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. The Free Movement Regime (FMR) between the two countries, allowing movement of people living within 16 kms of the international border, was suspended by the MHA in January.

#### How does one obtain a PAP?

The permits can be secured from Indian missions, the MHA, district magistrates, resident commissioners of a State, Home Commissioners or Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) among others.

Like earlier, citizens of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and foreign nationals having their origin in the three countries would continue to require prior approval from the MHA. All foreigners visiting these States will mandatorily register themselves with the Foreigners Registration Officer of the State or the District they visit within 24 hours of their arrival. Myanmar nationals visiting the three States, who till now were excluded from the requirement of obtaining a PAP if they had an e-tourist visa or any other visa, should compulsorily register with the FRRO within 24 hours of their arrival.

### THE GIST

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A copy of the circular accessed by *The Hindu* said that the matter was examined by the Ministry in "the backdrop of growing security concerns in border areas of these States."

From now on, foreigners visiting the three States would have to seek prior permission and Protected Area Permits (PAP) from the government.

## CACHE

# How does Google's GenCast AI, which predicts the weather, work?

Like ChatGPT can identify what the next word in an unfinished sentence could be, GenCast can guess what the future weather will be given the weather until some point

**Vasudevan Mukunth**

**The story so far:**

**I**n December 4, Google DeepMind unveiled GenCast, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) model the company said could forecast the weather better than most existing tools as well as more days in advance. Details of the model were published in a peer-reviewed paper in the journal *Nature*.

**How do we forecast weather?**

"Weather predictions ... are produced by running multiple numerical simulations of the atmosphere," Vassili Kitsios, senior research scientist at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation of Australia, wrote earlier this month. "Each simulation starts from a slightly different estimate of the current weather. This is because we don't know exactly what the weather is at this instant everywhere in the world. ... By solving equations describing the fundamental physical laws of nature, the simulations predict what will happen in the atmosphere."

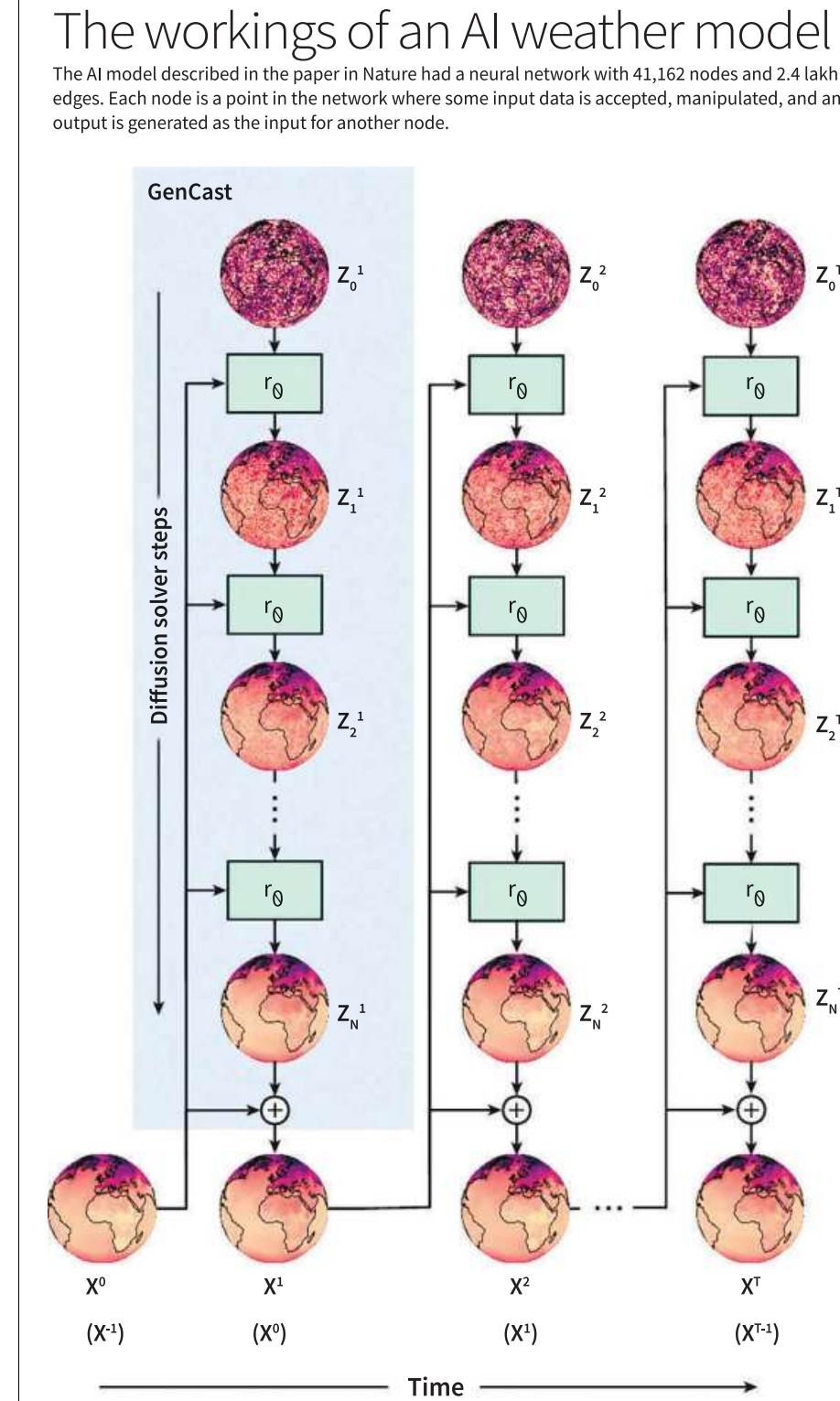
This process is called Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP). The best NWP forecasts require the use of powerful supercomputers as well as high-quality data about the weather at a particular location. Even then NWPs can predict the weather only a week or so in advance.

Ensemble forecasts entered the picture in the 1990s. Here, scientists use an NWP model to produce multiple forecasts at a certain location in time, with different starting conditions. This collection of forecasts is called an ensemble and indicates the range of meteorological possibilities.

**How does GenCast perform?**

Google's GenCast uses ensemble forecasting too but the options in the ensemble come from an AI model rather than an NWP. Engineers at Google trained this AI model on 40 years of reanalysis data, from 1979 to 2019. According to the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), "Reanalysis data provide the most complete picture currently possible of past weather and climate. They are a blend of observations with past short-range weather forecasts rerun with modern weather forecasting models."

GenCast was trained in two steps: step I in 3.5 days and step II in 1.5 days, both with 32 TPU v5 instances. "TPU" is short for 'tensor processing unit', an integrated circuit Google developed to run machine-learning models, sold via Google Cloud. In December 2023, Google Cloud launched a TPU called v5:



Schematic diagram showing how GenCast generates a forecast. PRICE, I., SANCHEZ-GONZALEZ, A., ALET, F. ET AL. PROBABILISTIC WEATHER FORECASTING WITH MACHINE LEARNING, NATURE (2024)

It contains 8,960 chips interconnected with a bandwidth of 4,800 Gbps/chip, and costs \$4.2 per chip-hour on demand.

Just like ChatGPT is good at identifying what the next word in an unfinished sentence could be, GenCast is good at guessing what the weather will be in the next moment given the weather until some point. According to the *Nature* paper, GenCast had "greater skill than ENS on 97.2% of 1,320 targets we evaluated and better predicts extreme weather, tropical cyclone tracks and wind power production." ENS refers to the ensemble forecasts generated by ECMWF, considered one of the best in NWP.

Google also said GenCast was more

accurate than ENS on 99.8% of the 1,320 targets when asked to predict the weather more than 36 hours in advance.

**How does GenCast work?**

The AI model described in the paper had a neural network with 41,162 nodes and 2.4 lakh edges. Each node is a point in the network where some input data is accepted, manipulated, and an output is generated as the input for another node. An edge is a connection between nodes.

For how this setup processes data, see the diagram above. The globes at the bottom show a weather prediction at four points of time, one after the other. Each prediction is generated by combining existing weather data with a noisy input. GenCast's challenge is to extract from the noisy input – the globes on the top – a weather prediction for the next moment in time. To do this, the model begins by accepting X<sup>1</sup> as the input and starts afresh with a noisy input. The green boxes have the neural networks.

The ability to de-noise a noisy input is a common feature of a diffusion-type AI model, which GenCast is. Other famous apps that use diffusion models include OpenAI's text-to-video model Sora and Stability AI's text-to-image model Stable Diffusion, both of which are also examples of generative AI.

GenCast produces at least 50 forecasts at a time for the ensemble, and Google has said each forecast can be produced in parallel. In all, the ensemble contains forecasts for 15 days at a time, with a spatial resolution of 0.25° x 0.25°

data, runs a second refinement, then combines the new output with the input data, runs a third refinement, and so on until it finishes 30 refinements. The final de-noised output, called X<sup>T</sup>, is the final weather prediction for the next moment in time. To predict the weather for the moment after, the model begins by accepting X<sup>T</sup> as the input and starts afresh with a noisy input. The green boxes have the neural networks.

**GenCast was trained in two steps:**

**step I in 3.5 days and step II in 1.5 days, both with 32 TPU v5 instances.** 'TPU' is short for 'tensor processing unit', an integrated circuit Google developed to run machine-learning models, sold via Google Cloud. In December 2023, Google Cloud launched a TPU called v5

(latitude-longitude) and temporal resolution of 12 hours. The researchers found this entire process took GenCast running on one TPU v5 unit eight minutes, much shorter than the several hours required by supercomputers for NWP.

**Will GenCast replace NWP?**

GenCast's forecasts are probabilistic rather than deterministic, that is, "there will be 25% chance of rain in Chennai on December 25" rather than "there will be 5 mm of rain in Chennai on December 25". Current NWP models and their ensembles are deterministic. Experts have said probabilistic weather forecasts are better at revealing the possibility of extreme weather events.

"We should make more use of these probabilistic forecasts for extreme events instead of relying on quantitative predictions. Probabilistic forecasts provide more lead time, which can be used for better preparation," former secretary to the Indian government Madhavan Rajeevan wrote in *The Hindu* in December 2023.

This said, while GenCast's performance suggests AI weather models will soon surpass the abilities of NWP models, both NWP and GenCast are founded on more fundamental weather data still acquired using the laws of physics.

Experts have said understanding the weather using these laws remains important because the weather is changing rapidly in many parts of the world, in ways in which historical weather conditions can't prepare us for. GenCast itself requires more reanalysis data to train itself. As Google said in a public statement: "We deeply value our partnerships with weather agencies, and will continue working with them to develop AI-based methods that enhance their forecasting.

Meanwhile, traditional models remain essential for this work. For one thing, they supply the training data and initial weather conditions required by models such as GenCast." The code to run GenCast is available on GitHub.

DeepMind has also been working on a model called GraphCast to develop "deterministic medium-range forecasts". Google Research has been developing a model called NeuralGCM that combines AI and NWP models to generate deterministic forecasts, and at least two other models to predict extreme floods and to quantify forecasting uncertainties. Elsewhere, Huawei's Panghu-Weather model can predict the weather one week at a time with accuracy comparable to NWP but much faster. Nvidia's FourCastNet model can already outperform a state-of-the-art NWP facility at ECMWF at predicting extreme rainfall, in less than two seconds.



**FROM THE ARCHIVES**

## Know your English

**K. Subrahmanian  
S. Upendran**

"Why is writing difficult?"

"Real language is spoken language. Almost everybody acquires his/her mother tongue and speaks it satisfactorily. We speak much of the time. But very few write. Writing is a skill you develop with more and more writing. Writing came into being after invention of the alphabet. We reduce into writing what we want to say, what we feel. So many thoughts crowd into our mind. They don't come to us one by one. Normally, when we write, we choose one thought at a time and give it a linear form. There is a spontaneity in speech, it is not there in writing. Before we write, we sit down and think of what we should write. It is a mental activity. I am not talking about inspired poets and others who say that they don't think and write but words flow through them and they write them down. We are not talking about such people. We are talking about those who want to write letters, articles, etc. When we are asked to say orally what we want to, we do it reasonably well. When we are asked to put it down in writing, we find some difficulty. We worry or must worry about clarity, simplicity and the appropriate vocabulary. We look at the ceiling, scratch our head hoping for the right word to fall from heaven! We write, rewrite, chop and change. Writing is a wrestle with words. Every sensitive writer feels what Eliot says in 'East Coker': So here I am in the middle way, having had twenty years..."

Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt

Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure

Because one has only learnt to get the better of words

For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which

One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture

Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate

With shabby equipment always deteriorating

In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,

Undisciplined squads of emotion."

"So each venture is a new beginning, raid on the inarticulate. But this is true only of great writing. Isn't it?

"It is true of all writing. The moment you start writing, you realise how true it is. You write and rewrite because you are dissatisfied. You feel you have not conveyed adequately what is in your mind."

"O.K. So the first rule says that I should use familiar words and not pompous, far-fetched words."

"Yes."

"What does the second rule say?"

"We'll take it up next week."

Published in *The Hindu* on November 1, 1994.

**THE DAILY QUIZ**

### A quiz on the occasion of the birth centenary of the legendary singer Mohammed Rafi

**V.V. Ramanan**

**QUESTION 1**

Rafi's first public performance was at the age of 13, when he was allowed to sing at a concert featuring which famous singing star of the era?

**QUESTION 2**

His vocal talents were discovered when he entertained customers while indulging in what profession?

**QUESTION 3**

Name the song composed by Husnlal Bhagatram that he rendered immediately after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi that touched a chord with PM Nehru?

**QUESTION 4**

Rafi recorded around 7,405 songs in

all genres during his wonderful career and won many awards. For which song did he get his only national award in 1977?

**QUESTION 5**

Why is the number 'Tasveer Teri Dil Mein' from *Maya* infamous in Rafi's career?

**QUESTION 6**

Which Rafi number was used in the soundtrack of the Hollywood flick *Ghost World*?

**QUESTION 7**

What is the significance of these lines 'Tere aaney ki aas hai dost, Shaam phir kyun udaas hai dost, Mehki mehki fiza yeh kehti hai, To kahin aas paas hai dost' from a song in *Aas Paas*?



**Visual question:**

This screenshot shows the first on-screen appearance of Rafi in the song 'Tera Jalwa Jisne Dekha'. Name the film.

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. This person said that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was "the greatest revelation in the Spanish language since 'Don Quixote'". Ans: Pablo Neruda

2. García Márquez began giving his manuscripts to this person before submitting them. Ans: Fidel Castro

3. García Márquez consider this his "true profession". Ans: Journalism

4. García Márquez considered this as an exceptional piece of work in journalism. Ans: 'Hiroshima' by John Hersey

5. García Márquez wanted this novel to be destroyed, but his sons published it a decade after his death. Ans: Until August

6. García Márquez considered this his most important book from a literary viewpoint. Ans: The Autumn of the Patriarch

Visual: The location of this statue. Ans: Aracataca

Early Birds: Sonali Das| Tito Shiladitya| Tamal Biswas| Piyali Tulsi| Sumana Dutta

### Word of the day

**Require:**

make repayment for or return something

**Synonym:** repay

**Usage:** She did not require his love.

**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/requitepro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /rɪ'kwɪt/

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

**From Page One****3 Khalistan operatives' shot dead in U.P.**

Preliminary investigation revealed that the terror module was controlled by Pakistan-based Rajeev Singh Nita, the chief of KZF, and was operated by Greece-based Jaswinder Singh Mannu, a native of Agwan village in Gurdaspur's Kalanaur, Mr. Yadav said. "Varinder, who led the module, belonged to Agwan, and was further controlled by U.K.-based Jagjeet Singh," the police said.

A senior police officer from the Punjab Police said one of the deceased accused was earlier working as a driver, while another had criminal cases against him. "Now, we shall investigate what their plan was in Pilibhit, if they were planning to move towards another location, and who was sheltering them and helping them with logistics. It is an entire network that we need to crack down on," the officer said.

Explaining the commonality between those suspected of Khalistani activities, another officer said, "They are usually men involved in criminal activities, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who are radicalised and involved in influencing youth. We are investigating these trends, and if the accused were lured in a similar pattern."

**Bangladesh seeks Hasina's extradition**

Ms. Hasina left Dhaka on August 5 and ever since has been living in exile in India. Soon after her departure, dozens of cases were filed against her and members of the erstwhile Awami League government by students and activists who faced the brunt of the police crackdown during the last weeks of her rule.

Ms. Hasina is also facing cases of kidnapping and deaths in encounter during her 16-year-long rule. She is also facing inquiries over the Pilkhana killings case of 2009 and the killings in a rally of Hefazat-e-Islam. Several members of her Ministries and several other members of the armed forces who served under her are facing inquiries.

Bangladesh issued an arrest warrant against Ms. Hasina in October but the legal process is yet to unfold.

In 2015, India had extradited convicted killer Nur Hossain of the infamous Narayanganj seven murders case. He was given a death sentence in 2022 by a Dhaka court. That apart, the extradition of Prashanta Kumar Halder, accused of committing multiple financial frauds in Bangladesh, is pending. Mr. Halder remains wanted by the authorities in Bangladesh.

**Benegal, giant of Indian cinema, bids farewell**

"He passed away at 6.38 p.m. at Wockhardt Hospital Mumbai Central. He had been suffering from chronic kidney disease for several years but it had gotten very bad," she said.

Mourning the *Ankur* director's death, Naseeruddin Shah shared over a text message: "It is impossible to describe in a few words what Shyam meant to me. I wonder what I would have become if he hadn't had faith in me when no one else did. He and Nira (Benegal's wife) were a huge support in my difficult days. He did whatever he could with his life-right to the end. Not many people can claim to have done that."

Benegal, celebrated for poignant and hard-hitting films like *Ankur*, *Nishant*, *Mandi*, *Manthan* and *Zubeidaa*, examined the many fault lines of Indian society, tackling issues of feudalism, caste, and women's emancipation while ceaselessly experimenting with the cinematic form. His vast filmography boasts several masterpieces that altered the course of Indian cinema.

Known for his unflagging energy and intellect, Benegal worked across a range of media, using photography, film, theatre and long-form television to chronicle the journey of post-Independence India. He was born in Hyderabad in 1934; his paternal grandmother hailed from Indian director Guru Dutt's family; they were thus second cousins. After an early career in advertising, Benegal taught at the Film and Television Institute of India and made documentaries, directing his first feature, *Ankur*, in 1974.

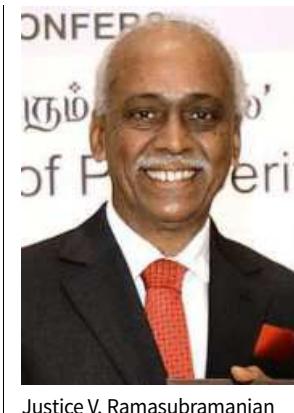
Even as the nation and its cinema transformed, Benegal continued to work, carving out a niche in mainstream Bollywood. The recipient of 10 national awards, he was conferred the Padma Shri and the Padma Bhushan, India's fourth and third-highest civilian awards.

**Kashmir artisans give wings to the dodo**

Most papier mache artisans do not know much about how dodos were introduced in Kashmir's art scene. The bird is a very recent addition to the craft, which has been practised in Kashmir for over 600 years now.

"There were tourists from Mauritius who visited Kashmir and introduced the bird around two decades ago. There is no written record though of who exactly got it here," Mr. Jan said.

Thanks to those unknown tourists, the dodos have got wings and the demand for them is only growing with each passing day. "Papier mache artisans of Kashmir are keeping the memory of dodos alive," Mahmood Shah, who served as Director Handicrafts and Handloom in Kashmir till recently, told *The Hindu*.



Justice V. Ramasubramanian

**Former SC judge named human rights panel chief**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The President of India on Monday appointed former Supreme Court judge, Justice V. Ramasubramanian (retd.), as Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission. The post of NHRC chief was lying vacant since June this year.

President Droupadi Murmu also appointed child rights advocate Priyanka Kanoongo and retired Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi as NHRC members. A committee led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met on December 18 to select the NHRC chief. Opposition leaders in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi respectively, also attended the meeting.

The External Affairs Minister will hold talks with Antony Blinken, others in what may be the last engagement with Biden administration; he will also meet members of Trump transition team

**Suhasini Haidar**

NEW DELHI

Weeks ahead of the swearing-in of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is travelling to the United States to meet with officials of the outgoing Biden administration, as well as the Trump administration team. Mr. Jaishankar, who will be in the U.S. from December 24-29, will join Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, who is already in Washington for Foreign Office Consultations.

In a statement about Mr. Jaishankar's previously announced visit on Monday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) provided no specific details on which U.S. officials he would meet during the week.

"Mr. Jaishankar will be meeting counterparts to discuss key bilateral, regional and global issues," the MEA's statement said, adding that, during the visit, the External Affairs Minister would chair a conference of the Consul Generals of India in the Un-



Diplomatic dialogue: S. Jaishankar with Antony Blinken at the G-7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in November. PTI

ited States.

Sources confirmed to *The Hindu* that the Biden administration is also keen on scheduling one last meeting of the National Security Advisor (NSA)-level Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (ICET) before demitting office, and are working on a possible visit by American NSA Jake Sullivan to Delhi in early January.

The two sides have also discussed cooperation in biotechnology, space cooperation, quantum technologies, Artificial Intelligence, and semiconductors, most recently when Mr. Sullivan travelled

to Delhi to meet with the government just after elections in June this year.

Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Misri are also expected to engage with members of the Trump transition team, as well as some of the top nominees for the State Department and Department of Defence about high-level meetings soon after the Trump inauguration on January 20, as well as an early date for Mr. Trump to travel to India for the Quad Summit to be hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi next year.

The visit by Mr. Jaishankar mirrors a similar visit he undertook in November

2016 as the then Foreign Secretary, to meet with the Trump transition team. Mr. Modi had travelled to Washington within a few months of Mr. Trump's first tenure in 2017, and officials didn't rule out another visit by him to the U.S. in 2025 itself.

However, there was no clarity on whether Mr. Trump would invite Mr. Modi to his inaugural ceremony.

This is also Mr. Jaishankar's first visit to the U.S. since the announcement of the Department of Justice, and Securities and Exchange Commission indictments on Gautam Adani and key Adani Group officials. While both governments have brushed off the impact of the case, as well as the indictments against an Indian government official in the alleged Pannun assassination case, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had alleged the U.S. State Department was orchestrating "attacks" against Mr. Adani and others to target Mr. Modi. The U.S. Embassy had said it was "disappointed" by the BJP's statement.

**Kharge urges Modi govt. to fulfil promises to farmers**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday urged the Modi government to not do further "injustice" to farmers by pursuing "anti-farmer policies".

On the occasion of former Prime Minister Charan Singh's birth anniversary, which is celebrated as Kisan Diwas, Mr. Kharge hailed farmers as the people who make India.

"It is hoped that the Modi government will not do further injustice to our farmers through its stubbornness and anti-farmer policies and will implement its old promises," he said in a post on X.

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, also greeted farmers on Kisan Diwas in a post on X.

In a separate message, the Congress also targeted the government on high inflation.

"The bullet train announced by the Modi government has not arrived, but inflation, which is running faster than bullet train, has broken the back of the common man," the party's communications chief Jairam Ramesh said.

**At Christmas celebrations, PM condemns attempts to incite violence in society**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday condemned the attempts to incite violence in society, stating that it is disheartening when there are attempts to spread disharmony and violence which cause disruption in society.

"Just a few days ago, the world saw what happened at the Christmas market in Germany. The teaching of Jesus Christ celebrates love, harmony, and brotherhood," Mr. Modi said while addressing a Christmas celebration hosted by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India in New Delhi. India must come together to fight such challenges, he said.

This is the first time that the Prime Minister has attended such a programme at the headquarters of the Catholic Church in India.

In his address, he highlighted the need to work in



Seeking blessings: Narendra Modi attends Christmas celebrations hosted by the CBCI in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

a united manner for national interest.

Mr. Modi highlighted the evacuation of Indians stranded in war-torn nations, saying that no matter where they are or what crisis they face, today's India sees it as its duty to bring its citizens to safety.

"We brought back nurses who got stuck in the Gulf countries. It was a very satisfactory moment for me when we safely brought Father Alexis Prem Kumar from war-torn Afghanistan. All these missions are

not mere diplomatic ones but an emotional commitment to bring back family members," he said.

Mr. Modi also expressed pride on Father George Koovakad's elevation as a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. "It is a moment of pride that His Holiness Pope Francis has made His Eminence George Koovakad a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Catholic Church," the Prime Minister said, adding that he has invited Pope Francis to visit India.

He wrote on X, "The murder of Somnath Suryavanshi is government sponsored. People who believed in Manusmriti have taken their lives." Mr. Gandhi hit out at Maha-

**Rahul meets kin of Dalit man who died in judicial custody in Maharashtra**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Monday met the family of Somnath Suryavanshi, who died in judicial custody after being arrested in connection with a protest triggered by the alleged desecration of a replica of the Constitution in Maharashtra's Parbhani on December 10.

Mr. Gandhi said Suryavanshi was a "defender of the Constitution" and was "murdered because he was a Dalit". The Congress leader, who spent 25 minutes with Suryavanshi's family, said strict punishment should be meted out to those responsible for the man's death.

He wrote on X, "The murder of Somnath Suryavanshi is government sponsored. People who believed in Manusmriti have taken their lives." Mr. Gandhi hit out at Maha-



Offering support: Rahul Gandhi with the family of Somnath Suryavanshi on Monday in Parbhani, Maharashtra. PTI

rashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and said, "The family showed me the post-mortem report, videos and photographs. This is cent percent a custodial death. The police officials have killed him. The Chief Minister has lied in the Legislative Assembly regarding the case to give a message to the police."

In Pune, Mr. Fadnavis hit back at the Opposition's allegations and said Mr. Gandhi had gone to Parbhani for "political reasons". "Once the judicial

inquiry is over, the truth will come out. I assure the people that nothing will be hidden. If the investigation reveals that the death happened due to assault in police custody or any other reason, no one will be spared."

After meeting Suryavanshi's family, Mr. Gandhi met the family of activist Vijay Wakode. Wakode, a prominent activist of the Ambedkarite movement, died of heart attack while trying to control the violence in Parbhani.

**Chargesheet against youth for 'passing' data to Pak. handlers**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Monday filed a chargesheet against a Srinagar resident for allegedly passing critical data about Pandit migrant employees to the handlers based in Pakistan for issuing online threats.

The chargesheet was filed before the 3rd Additional Sessions Judge, Jammu. According to the J&K Police's special cell, State Investigation Agency (SIA), it apprehended Farhaan Muzaffar Mattoo. "The probe revealed that Mattoo acted as a conduit, using encrypted communication

platforms to pass critical data about migrant employees to handlers based in Pakistan, who then issued threats through the 'Kashmir Fight' platform," the police said.

The SIA launched an investigation in February after threatening posts were published on social media by the terror outfit.

The chargesheet also named Sheikh Sajjad Ahmad alias Sajjad Gul, a Srinagar resident, "now operating from Pakistan", as the mastermind. "Sajjad is accused of coordinating the campaign to intimidate migrant employees and disrupt communal harmony," the police said.

**Remain in touch with current affairs, experts tell Civil Service aspirants**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Good communication skills, sound knowledge of the chosen subjects, confidence, honesty, and listening, among others are some of the key traits the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Board looks for in candidates while selecting future bureaucrats for the country, according to experts who spoke at a webinar held on Sunday.

The panellists were speaking at the "UPSC Interview – Tips from Experts" webinar organised under the Career Counselling Series of *The Hindu Education Plus* in collaboration with Fortune IAS Academy.

"If you have already cleared the CSE (Civil Services Examination) Main exam, it means you have a sound knowledge of your core and optional subjects; the PT (Personality Test) is not a cross examination or viva-voce but an intellectual and healthy discussion about the country, governance, policies and development between

the Board members and the candidate," D.P. Agrawal, former Chairperson, UPSC, said.

Addressing the audience, largely comprising of aspirants who have cleared the 2024-25 Mains exam, and are preparing for interviews in January 2025, the three speakers – Mr. Agrawal, Kiran P.B., IPS, and P.K. Sidharth Ramkumar, IAS Officer Trainee – echoed and reiterated that the UPSC Personality Test is not to be feared.

All the three speakers exhorted candidates to read newspapers and remain in touch with current affairs, and acknowledged that all those who qualified

in the CSE were invariably readers of *The Hindu*.

Mr. Kiran and Mr. Sidharth shared their experiences preparing for the CSE, addressing myths and doubts.

They emphasised the importance of seeking mentorship to navigate the interview process effectively, including dress code and body language.

Mr. Sidharth said the interview accounts for 15% of the total marks, and that one can sail through the interview with an average score as well, if one did well in the Mains exam.

"Ultimately, you should deliver your best and be satisfied with your performance," Mr. Kiran said.

# 'Centre committed to protecting farmers and consumers'

Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister says export curbs have not adversely impacted farmers because of higher domestic prices and the procurement of crops at MSP, which has been increased year after year by the government; he says the prices of onion and tomato have come down in the recent weeks; potato prices have been at elevated levels this year due to slightly lower production

## INTERVIEW

### Pralhad Joshi

A.M. Jigesh  
NEW DELHI

**U**nion Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi says the government's efforts are to create a balance between the interests of both consumers and producers. On the ban on export of certain agricultural commodities, he says it will not be advisable for India to gamble on international trade when it comes to food security. Excerpts:

The consumer-producer balance has been a long-debated topic. Recently Vice-President Jagdeep

Dhankhar opined that enhancing MSP will result in overall improvement of the society, benefiting consumers too. How do you respond to this?

There is no fundamental conflict between the interest of farmers and consumers, and the government is committed to protecting both farmers and consumers. The MSP has been increased year after year by the government.

For example, if we look at the rate of increase in MSP during last 10 years: Gram/Chana from ₹3,100 per quintal in 2013-14 to ₹5,650 per quintal in 2024-25 (82%); Tur from ₹4,300 per quintal in 2013-14 to ₹7,550 per quintal in 2024-25 (76%); Masur from ₹2,950 per quintal in 2013-14 to ₹6,700 per quintal in 2024-25 (127%). The inter-

est of consumers is served when there is abundant availability of food commodities produced by the farmers.

**I**ncreasing prices of tomato, potato, and onions have remained a worry for consumers. How do you assess the steps taken to curb inflation in the last six months?

The onion buffer has played an important role in making onions available during lean months of September to November. Retail sale at ₹35 per kilogram in major consumption centres has provided the consumers at a highly affordable price. Bulk transportation of onions by rail wagons this year has been a game changer. Over 11,000 MT of onions have been transported by 14



trains to five cities – Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Guwahati, and Lucknow.

The prices of onion and tomato have come down in recent weeks. Kharif onion sowing and production are reported to be normal. In case of tomato, prolonged monsoon rain has led to crop damage and high per-

ishability, leading to high prices during October.

The situation has now normalised with good weather condition. Potato prices have been at elevated levels this year due to slightly lower production. Now we are entering the harvest season for potato, which will continue till

March 2025. Sowing progress has so far been normal.

**E**xport curbs are another issue. While one section favours export curbs to ensure domestic availability and reasonable domestic prices, another argument is that Indian farmers and traders should get the benefit of global trade disruptions due to Ukraine situation. How do you see this?

For a large country like India, it will not be advisable to gamble on international trade when it comes to food security. Therefore, domestic requirement has to be prioritised over trade gains.

Restrictions imposed on exports in certain agricultural crops, in recent past,

have not adversely impacted Indian farmers in real sense because of higher domestic prices and the procurement of these crops at the MSP.

**T**he Centre is issuing a series of Quality Control Orders (QCOs) in several goods and services. How do you assess these QCOs impact on exports?

This has been beneficial in both imports and exports. We did not have a standard for many products. We brought standardisation for 769 products. QCOs are issued by various Ministries/Departments (Regulators) of the Union government under the provisions of the BIS Act, 2016. BIS acts as the certification and enforcement authority for implementing these QCOs. To minimise disrupt-

tions, sufficient time is provided by the regulators to manufacturers for smooth implementation of QCOs. If concerns arise regarding the impact of QCOs on production of certain products, such matters are dealt with by the respective regulators whenever industry raises their concerns and makes representations before the regulators concerned.

The regulators are conducting stakeholder consultations in coordination with the BIS to address these issues and may take appropriate measures, including extensions or modifications to the implementation timeline, to prevent potential supply gaps and ensure a balanced approach. It may be mentioned here that timelines have been extended in most of the QCOs based on request from stakeholders.

## House committee flags excess spending by four Ministries

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI



K.C. Venugopal

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), headed by senior Congress leader K.C. Venugopal, in a report tabled during the recently concluded Winter session of Parliament, revealed that the Ministries of Finance, Defence, Railways, and Chemical & Fertilizers spent ₹1,291.14 crore in excess of the 2021-22 Budget sanctioned by Parliament.

In the report titled "Excesses over voted grants and charged appropriations (2021-22)", the PAC took the government to task, saying that "over-spending should not continue in the age of e-governance and e-payment systems, where Ministries have access to real-time tools to monitor expenditure".

**Furnish explanations'** The committee found that for the financial year 2021-22, a total of ₹1,291.14 crore was incurred by the Ministry of Finance (₹742.56 crore), Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers (₹493.38 crore), Ministry of Railways (₹55.16 crore), and the Ministry of Defence (₹3.17 crore).

When the allocated money for a year's expenditure is not enough, the government can request an excess grant. This is pro-

## Congress has always insulted Ambedkar, it must apologise: BJP

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI



Ravi Shankar Prasad

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday accused the Congress of "always insulting" Dr. B.R. Ambedkar during his lifetime, and said the party was now indulging in "a drama of remembrance of his legacy".

Former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said this while reacting to the Congress's week-long nationwide campaign against Union Home Minister Amit Shah's speech in Parliament during the Winter Session, which the Congress maintains, had "insulting" references to Dr. Ambedkar.

Mr. Prasad accused the Congress of using a small portion of Mr. Shah's speech in the Rajya Sabha out of context in a bid to "establish its political identity".

"The Congress which always insulted B.R. Ambedkar is holding press conferences across the country... Stop this drama. Stop this hypocrisy," he said at a press conference at the BJP's headquarters in New Delhi.

"The Congress must tender an unconditional apology for all the insults and humiliations done to B.R. Ambedkar during his lifetime and to his legacy after his death," he said.

Mr. Prasad said the peo-

ple of the country were very mature and the Congress's "efforts will not succeed".

"The Congress party had forced Ambedkar to resign during elections, and they made sure he couldn't build a memorial. Now, Congress is holding a press conference in Ambedkar's name. When Ambedkar was resigning, he wasn't even allowed to speak," he said.

"The BJP demands that Congress apologise for the mistreatment of Ambedkar, which is also documented in papers. [Narayan Sadobal] Kajrolkar [who defeated Ambedkar in the 1952 Lok Sabha polls] was honoured with an award, and this was done by Congress. Dr. Ambedkar was never in favour of partition. There is a significant difference in the thinking of the BJP and the Congress. We believe in respecting even our staunchest opponents," Mr. Prasad said.

## Left parties call for Shah's resignation, to hold demonstration on December 30

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The leaders of five Left parties have announced a day-long protest on December 30 to press for the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah over his "disrespectful and derogatory" comments on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

The leaders of the Communist Party of India, CPI (Marxist), CPI (Marxist-Leninist), Revolutionary So-

cialist Party, and the All India Forward Bloc met on Sunday in Delhi. The meeting was the first of many planned, as the parties decided to work closely and hold joint action on issues.

In a statement issued on Monday, the parties noted that Mr. Shah's "disrespectful and derogatory" remarks on Dr. Ambedkar in the Rajya Sabha led to widespread anger and protests across the country.

"However, neither Amit

Shah nor Prime Minister Narendra Modi are willing to own up responsibility and take remedial action," the statement said.

The parties also unequivocally opposed the proposal of simultaneous elections, for which two Bills including a Constitutional amendment Bill, were introduced in Parliament.

"The proposed amendments to the Constitution are a direct assault on the federal structure and the

rights of State legislatures. It is a recipe for centralisation and truncating the will of the people by arbitrary reduction of the five-year term of legislatures," the Left parties said.

They also demanded the withdrawal of the amendment to the Conduct of Election Rules whereby the right of public inspection of electronic documents such as CCTV cameras and video footage was annulled.

## RSS chief's statement aimed at misleading country: Congress

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI



If the RSS chief is really honest, Bhagwat should publicly declare that the Sangh will never support leaders who endanger social harmony

JAIRAM RAMESH

ing up such issues.

Responding to the RSS chief's statement, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, in a post on X, said it reflected the difference between "their words and actions".

"If the RSS chief is really honest about his statement, he should publicly declare that in future, the Sangh will never support

## 'CISF is not probing scuffle in Parliament'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

such leaders who endanger social harmony," Mr. Ramesh said, adding, "But they will not say this because the temple-mosque construction is happening at the behest of the RSS".

He said in many cases, those who incite such divisive issues have connections with the RSS".

"They are associated with Bajrang Dal, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) or BJP, and the RSS helps them completely from getting a lawyer to filing a case. It is clear that Mr. Bhagwat's statement is only to mislead the society. He thinks that by saying such things, the sins of RSS will be washed away, and his image will improve. But his reality is before the country," Mr. Ramesh said.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is not carrying out any investigation into the scuffle that took place among MPs on Parliament premises during the Winter Session, a senior official said on Monday.

"There is no order to CISF for carrying out an enquiry into the incident," Shrikant Kishore, Deputy Inspector-General (Operations), CISF, said at a press conference. He added that there was no lapse on the part of the CISF on the day of the event, and no weapon was allowed to be carried inside.

Tenders Available at : <https://smetender.mahatransco.in>; Due date for online submission upto: 13.01.2025, 17:00 Hrs; Tender Opening 13.01.2025, 18:00 Hrs if possible.

-sd-

Chief Engineer EHV PC O&M Zone Nagpur.

76155/12/3744/2023/40146

GHTP - 101/24

Tender Enquiry No.: 162/MG-I/MAMC-268/O&M/GHTP/2024

Dy. Chief Engineer, Mechanical Mtc. Circle-GHPT, Lehra Mohabbat invites E-tender for renewals & replacement of existing centralized Air Conditioning system of UCB control rooms of 2x250 MW unit-3 & 4 Stage-II, GHPT, Lehra-Mohabbat. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 23-12-2024 from 16:00 PM onwards.

Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any, will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

76155/12/3744/2023/40146

GHTP - 101/24

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

(Material Management & Contract Wing) NEW POWER HOUSE,

INDUSTRIAL AREA, JODHPUR-342008 PHONE: (0291) 2742223, FAX: (0291) 2746539

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

E-Procurement Tender is invited for purchase of Four Core LT PVC Insulated and PVC Sheathed Armoured Cables Size 4Cx16 Sq.mm and 4Cx6 Sq.mm under TN-2021 (UBN JV2425GLB00694), RG, Clamp for Panther, Dog and T-Clamp Panther Conductor under TN-2033 (UBN JV2425GSCB00695) and LT XLPE Insulated PVC sheathed armoured cables of sizes 4C x 400 Sq. MM and 4C x 185 Sq. MM under TN-2036 (UBN JV2425GLB00696).

Details regarding Quantity, Tender cost, Estimated Money, Schedule date of tender opening for aforesaid tenders are available on our website at <http://e-proc.rajaasthan.gov.in/jdvnl> and also at <http://sppt.rajaasthan.gov.in>.

Raj.Samwad/C/24/9403

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (MM&C)

(Regd. Office: PSEC Head Office, The Mall, Patiala)

Corporate Identification Number: U40109PB10SGC03381 | Website: [www.pspcl.in](http://www.pspcl.in) | Contact No: 9646117605

Tender Enquiry No.: 162/MG-I/MAMC-268/O&M/GHTP/2024

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Raj.Samwad/C/24/9403

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (MM&C)



**Showing the way:** Shyam Benegal's works will continue to be admired, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

## End of a glorious chapter: President

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, filmmakers Shekhar Kapur and Hansal Mehta, and actors Manoj Bajpayee, Akshay Kumar, and Kajol paid rich tributes to Shyam Benegal, remembering the director as someone who ushered in a "new kind of cinema".

President Murmu said the passing of Benegal marks the end of a glorious chapter of Indian cinema and television. "He started a new kind of cinema and crafted several classics. A veritable institution, he groomed many actors and artists. His extraordinary contribution was recognised in the form of numerous awards including Dadasaheb Phalke Award and Padma Bhushan. My condolences to the members of his family and his countless admirers," she wrote in a post on X.

Mr. Modi said he was "deeply saddened" by the death of Benegal. "His works will continue to be admired by people from different walks of life. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti," he said.

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi called Benegal "a visionary filmmaker" who brought India's stories to life with depth and sensitivity.

## Centre scraps 'no-detention' policy for Classes 5, 8; lays stress on remedial measures

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Centre has done away with the "no-detention" policy for Classes 5 and 8, paving the way for schools to hold back students who are unable to clear year-end examinations.

The Ministry of Education has published a gazette notification dated December 16, titled "Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Rules, 2024", which states that if a child fails to fulfil promotion criteria in Classes 5 or 8 in the regular examination, they can be held back. In the Rules, the Ministry also emphasised the need for remedial measures for such students to close learning gaps.

While the Right to Education Act, 2009 had been amended to scrap the no-detention policy as early as



Students who do not fulfil the promotion criteria can sit for a re-examination in two months

2019, the Rules have been notified only now. "Since the National Education Policy (NEP) was announced in 2020, we waited for the National Curriculum Framework document which was published in 2023, before coming out with the Rules," a senior Ministry official said.

After all other options are exhausted, if there is a need to detain the student,

they shall be detained. "At the same time, no student should be expelled from school until Class 8," said Union School Education Secretary Sanjay Kumar.

The Rules further state that if a child fails to fulfil the promotion criteria, as notified from time to time, they shall be given additional instruction and opportunity for re-examination within a period of two months, from the date of declaration of results. If the child fails to clear the re-exam, they should be held back.

When the child is held back, the class teacher shall guide the child as well as the parents, if necessary, and provide specialised inputs after identifying the learning gaps at various stages of assessment. Mr. Kumar further said, "We also want the learning outcomes of the students to be better."

He also highlighted the need to take prompt and decisive action against

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Monday that "divisive forces are still active in the country today" emphasising that disinformation, misinformation, 'malinformation', and fake news had the power to disrupt the social fabric of the society with the help of new technology.

Mr. Shah spoke on the need to develop an intelligence coordination strategy with friendly nations to detect anti-India organisations and networks, and this strategy "must include offensive measures as well". He mentioned that merely sharing information was not enough and it should be ensured that vital intelligence was received from those nations as well.

He also highlighted the need to take prompt and decisive action against

Amit Shah warns of disruptive powers of fake news in society

**The Hindu Bureau**

RAIPUR

A senior Naxal leader, carrying a reward of ₹25 lakh on his head, was arrested by the police in Kanker district of Chhattisgarh on Sunday.

Prabhakar Rao, alias Balmuri Narayan Rao, 57, was in charge of logistics supply, mainly weapons, to the Maoist cadres in the conflict zone of Bastar, the police said in a statement. He was also the in-charge of Mobile Political School or MOPOS in the active North Sub Zonal Bureau of Maoists. These schools still the ideology and even provide basic literacy to new recruits in the Maoist organisations. Rao has been associated with the Maoist organisation for 40 years.

A senior police officer said Rao's arrest was a major development because it would disrupt a well-esta-

Senior Naxal leader Prabhakar Rao held in Chhattisgarh

**The Hindu Bureau**

RAIPUR

blished supply network, as Rao was a close associate of top Maoist leaders in Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Chhattisgarh. He said a veteran Maoist out of the MOPOS would adversely impact indoctrination, a more crucial aspect for the security forces.

It will give a significant boost in curbing Naxal activities in the area, said the officer.

On the arrest, the officer said that for the past few days, the police had a tip-off about Rao's activities in Kanker district and he was arrested in the blockade operation conducted by the police under the Antargarh police station area of Kanker district on Sunday. He did not reveal the further details of the operation citing confidentiality.

The police statement added that Rao was the cousin of top Naxal leader Ganpati.

11 detained for a year on ship off the Odisha coast released

**The Hindu Bureau**

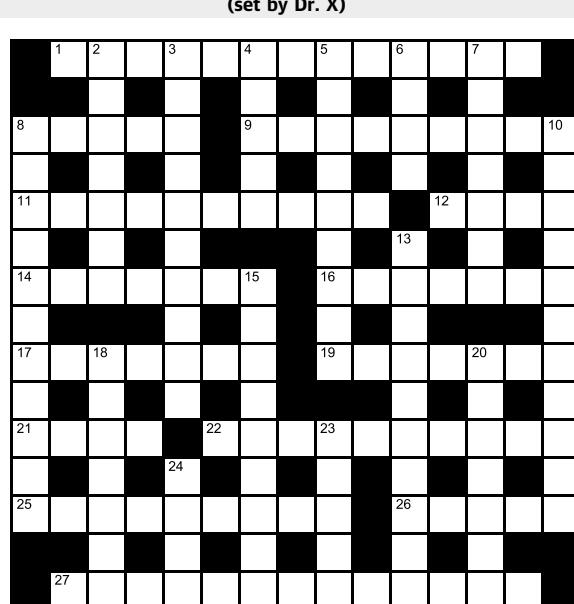
BHUBANESWAR

More than a year after remaining confined aboard a ship anchored in the high seas off Odisha's Paradip coast following the seizure of cocaine valued at ₹220 crore, 11 of the 21 crew members of MV Debi have been released.

The sailors had been stranded onboard as the Indian Customs Department continued its investigation.

As per the Customs, the 11 crew members, including six Vietnamese nationals, were allowed to disembark the ship. They will have to comply with the regulations of the immigration department. The Asia Pacific Shipping Company, a Vietnamese firm that owns the Panama-registered vessel, will have to ensure proper maintenance of the ship with 11 new crew members.

## TH CROSSWORD 14364



Across

- 1 Plug of TV set remained loose (13)
- 2 Surprises mother, finally cuts long hair (5)
- 9 / 2 Seem promising but ultimately disappoint with tale for detective novel (7,2,7)
- 11 Raw food consumed in a puerile manner (10)
- 12 Lounge in flames! Save boy (4)

Down

- 10 Generous doctor! He operated without remuneration finally (4-7)
- 13 Popularity of new dinner sets (10)
- 15 The rat scurried into apartment over unsafe structure (9)
- 18 Folk tale character acting upset about protecting immature girl (3,4)
- 20 Egg-shaped cavity in gemstone, not soft (7)
- 23 Renovate retreats surrounding lake, becoming more decrepit (5)
- 24 Wish hot guy removes top (4)

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



## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

AGGLOMERATION  
UQUOIIRVAYA  
BOATSWAINIBEAM  
OTTISGURE  
ASSAYMUSKMEIION  
TKAIVYD  
SHIVERDAIS  
NNCGERS  
SILCOGIVEUP  
AAGPBRD  
LORDMAYORAWRE  
IRABEGLE  
GHOSTDOGGOLLARS  
NYIIFARAFI  
CONCATENATION

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

## FAITH

Christ's certitude on mercy

Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. It is believed that the saviour, Lord Jesus Christ, through his expiatory and redemptive suffering, paid for the sins of the world. The Holy Bible proclaims that God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son, said Prof. Kumool Abbi.

In his teachings, Jesus emphasises the importance of love, peace, humanism, compassion and forgiveness. He proclaims that those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the pure in heart and the peacemakers, the persecuted are blessed.

The redeemer stated the importance of being meek, loving, kind, humble and ethical. He taught that to be meek is not to be submissive, passive or weak. To be non-violent is rather being powerful and not to retaliate and offer the other cheek is a divine quality. He stated that 'come to me all those who are burdened'. Thus he reassured us of the eternal certitude, mercy and promise of the love of God. He had come to comfort the meek, the afflicted, oppressed and wretched. He assured the weary, the lost, those who struggled to cope with sorrow by his own suffering. He benevolently showed us how to bear our cross, our trials and tribulations and resign to the will of the Lord. He showed us that true love lay in surrender and acceptance of suffering and surrender to the will of the Lord. Thus Jesus Christ through his birth and death assured us of hope, salvation and promise of the eternal love of the Lord. Through his life and death he taught us to cope with sorrow and suffering.



**MAGDEBURG**

**Far-right AfD holds march after Germany Christmas market attack**



Germany's far-right AfD party held what it called a "memorial" rally for five victims of a car-ramming attack on a Christmas market that has newly inflamed debate on migrant and security policy. Meanwhile, an anti-extremist initiative called "Don't Give Hate a Chance" was gathering nearby in the eastern city of Magdeburg. AFP

**WASHINGTON**

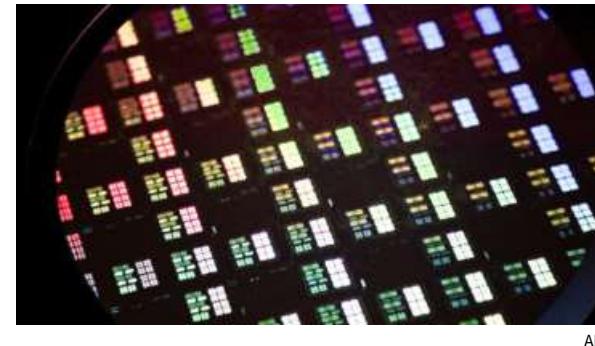
**U.S. House report finds Matt Gaetz paid thousands for sex and drugs**



The U.S. House Ethics Committee has found that former Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz paid tens of thousands of dollars to women for drugs and sex, including with a 17-year-old girl. He had resigned from the House of Representatives last month after he was selected by Donald Trump to be Attorney-General. REUTERS

**WASHINGTON**

**U.S. probes China chip industry on 'anticompetitive' concerns**



The U.S. said it is opening an investigation into China's policies for its semiconductor industry, over concerns that Beijing is turning to "extensive anticompetitive and non-market means" to undermine other economies. It centres on foundational semiconductors — which go into everything from cars to medical devices. AFP

**PARIS**

**French President announces fourth government of the year**



French President Emmanuel Macron named a new government, putting together a team under Francois Bayrou, his fourth Prime Minister of the year, to drag the second-largest EU economy out of political crisis. Mr. Macron named former Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne Education Minister in a new Cabinet under Mr. Bayrou. AFP

## Some progress made on Gaza hostage deal, says Netanyahu

Israel PM's comments come a day after three Palestinian militant groups said a deal was closer than ever; Israeli strikes kill 58 people across Gaza during past 24 hours taking death toll to 45,317

**Agence France-Presse**

JERUSALEM

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that "some progress" had been made in negotiations to secure the release of hostages held in Gaza.

His comments in parliament come two days after three Palestinian militant groups said in a rare joint statement that a deal for a ceasefire in Gaza war and to exchange prisoners was "closer than ever."

In recent days, indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas mediated by Qatar, Egypt, and the U.S. were held in Doha, rekindling hope of an agree-



**Same story:** Rescuers inspect the carcass of a bus hit by an Israeli strike in the Mawasi area west of Khan Yunis city on Monday. AFP

ment, more than 14 months into the Gaza war.

"Everything we are doing cannot be disclosed. We are taking actions to bring them back. I wish to

say cautiously that there has been some progress, and we will not stop acting until we bring them all home," Mr. Netanyahu said in parliament.

On Saturday, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said in a joint statement that progress had been made to reach a ceasefire deal.

"The possibility of reaching an agreement (for a ceasefire and prisoner exchange deal) is closer than ever, provided the enemy stops imposing new conditions," the three groups said after they held talks in Cairo a day earlier.

Meanwhile, the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said on Monday that 58 people had been killed in the Palestinian territory in the past 24 hours, taking the overall war death toll to 45,317.

## Bangladesh anti-graft panel to probe Russia-backed Rooppur nuclear project

**Kalol Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI

An anti-corruption outfit in Bangladesh has initiated an investigation into the \$12.65 billion Rooppur nuclear powerplant that is being constructed with Russian assistance. A statement from the Anti-Corruption Commission of Bangladesh has alleged that around \$5 billion financial irregularities have been discovered in the project that has been progressing for more than a decade.

**\$5 billion**

The Anti-Corruption Commission said in its statement that "Bangladesh's ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her son Saieeb Ahmed Wazed Joy and niece Tulip Siddiq – who have embezzled \$5 billion



The Rooppur nuclear power plant is located 160 km from Dhaka and is one of the largest nuclear projects built by Russia. FILE PHOTO

from overpriced \$12.65 billion Rooppur nuclear power plant through various offshore bank accounts in Malaysia".

The commission further said that Tulip Siddiq who is a Labour MP in the United Kingdom and has been facing scrutiny in the U.K. since the fall of the government of her aunt Sheikh

Hasina was involved in an elaborate scheme to launder money that involved her paternal uncle Tarique Ahmed Siddique.

**Money laundering**

"Tulip Siddiq and her family members are stakeholders in a company named Prochchaya which along with another entity Destin-

ty Group had laundered \$900 million," it has been alleged.

Earlier, *Sunday Times* in the U.K. reported that U.K. Treasury Economic Secretary Tulip Siddiq was questioned by the Cabinet Office's propriety and ethics team over allegations of siphoning around £3.9 billion from the Rooppur nuclear power plant project.

Ms. Siddiq's mother Sheikh Rehana is the younger sister of Sheikh Hasina and was evacuated by a Bangladesh military helicopter to India on August 5 when the Awami League government fell in Dhaka.

The under-construction Rooppur nuclear power plant is located 160 km from Dhaka and is one of the largest nuclear projects that Russian nuclear major Rosatom has been building.

## Philippines set to acquire U.S. Typhon missile system

**Agence France-Presse**

MANILA

The Philippines said Monday it planned to acquire the U.S. Typhon missile system as part of a push to secure its maritime interests, sparking warnings from China of a regional "arms race".

The U.S. Army deployed the mid-range missile system in the northern Philippines earlier this year for annual joint military exercises with its longtime ally, and decided to leave it there despite criticism by Beijing that it was destabilising to Asia.

Philippine Army chief Lieutenant-General Roy Galido told a news conference on Monday that the missile system would be "acquired because we see its feasibility and its functionality in our concept of archipelagic defence implementation".

"I'm happy to report to our fellow countrymen that your Army is developing this capability for the interest of protecting our sovereignty," he said, adding the total cost of the acquisition would depend on "economics".

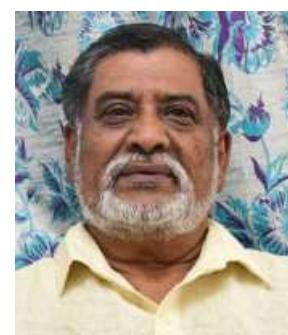
The presence of the U.S. missile launcher had angered Beijing, whose navy and coast guard forces have engaged in escalating confrontations in recent months with the Philippines over disputed reefs and waters in the South China Sea.

**'Provocative move'**  
And on Monday, China swiftly condemned the decision to acquire the system as a "provocative and dangerous move" and warned it risked triggering an "arms race".

## Modi's silence on 13A due to lack of pressure from T.N., Sri Lankan Tamil parties

**T. Ramakrishnan**

CHENNAI



A. Varatharaja Perumal

not make any effort to implement it. Instead, they said it was the responsibility of India, the Indian government, to do the job, he said. Besides, none of the parties of Tamil Nadu had highlighted the need for 13A's full implementation. Those who spoke about the political settlement were raising the concept of Tamil Eelam, which the Indian government would never agree with, he added.

**Genuine pressure**

Moreover, "the government of India will act only when there is genuine pressure domestically," Mr. Varatharaja Perumal observed, while recalling that it was the presence of the domestic factor that paved the way for the involvement of the Indian government in addressing the Sri Lankan Tamil issue in the 1980s.

The former Chief Minister, who shuttles between India and Sri Lanka, pointed out that the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the dominant constituent of the ruling National People's Power (NPP) in Sri Lanka, was once opposed to the system of provincial councils.

Over the years, it changed its position, saying that it was not against the councils, and, at the same time, it would not accept 13A.

"Its traditional stand is that the Amendment is not a solution to the basic problem. It has also been saying that Tamils themselves have not accepted it," Mr. Varatharaja Perumal said, expecting that the ruling coalition might strengthen local bodies.

**Unitary nature'**

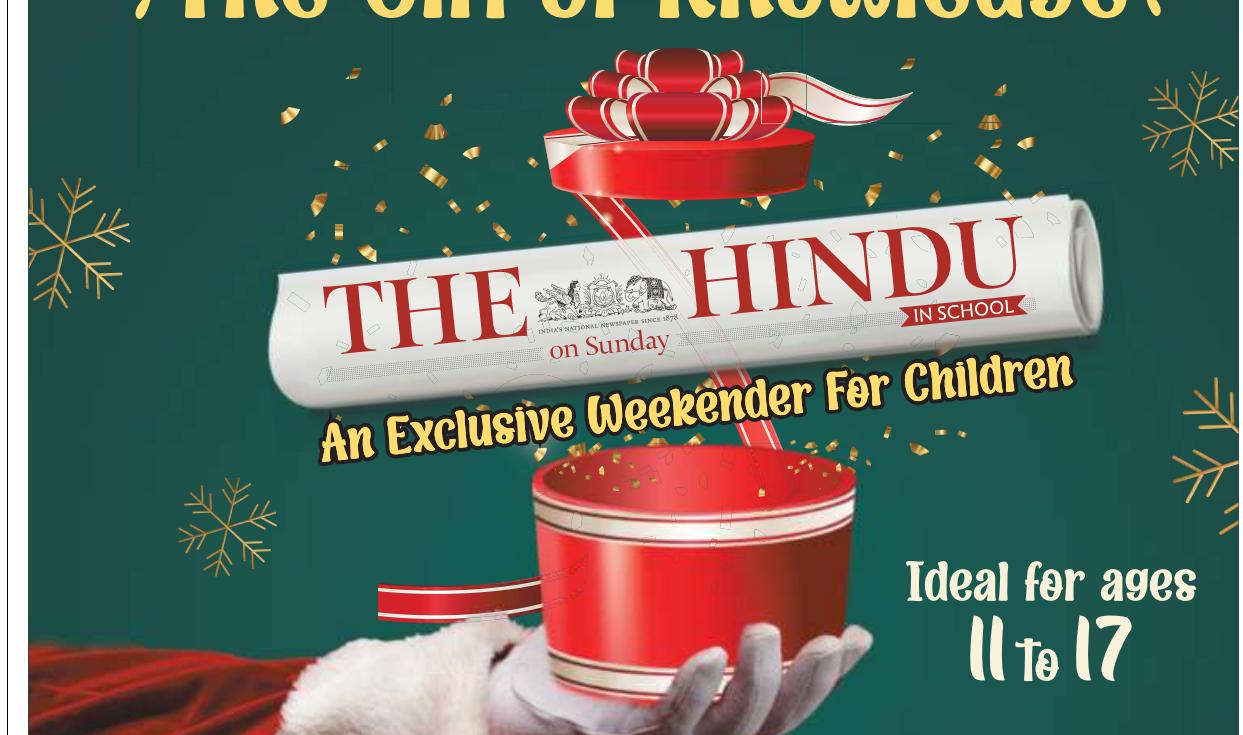
But, in reality, "it is impossible to change the unitary nature, a matter that G. Parthasarathi, a mediator sent by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi after the 1983 anti-Tamil riots in Sri Lanka, had understood quite early."

All proposals including the 1987 Accord were mooted between 1983 and 1987 for political settlement, considering the inevitability of the unitary system.

"The mindset, reflected by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which had rejected all those ideas then, continues to be present," observed the former Chief Minister, who was a leader of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), an organisation that was in the anti-LTTE camp.

Even on instances when Sri Lankan Tamil parties spoke about 13A, they did

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**SETBACK**

Shami won't take any part in Border-Gavaskar Trophy



FILE PHOTO

Mohammed Shami has been ruled out of the last two Border-Gavaskar Trophy Tests in Melbourne and Sydney following swelling in his left knee. The BCCI medical team explained that the pacer would require more time before getting fit to play Test cricket, considering the volume of bowling needed of him.

**MAIDEN CALL-UP**

Mumbai all-rounder Kotian to join Indian Test squad Down Under



GETTY IMAGES

Mumbai's spin-bowling all-rounder Tanush Kotian has received a call-up to join the Indian squad in Melbourne for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Kotian, who bowls off-spin and bats right-handed, will leave for Australia on Tuesday. The 26-year-old's departure to Australia follows R. Ashwin's retirement last week.

**BIG CONCERN**

India's bowling attack lacks ability to take 20 wickets: Pujara



AP

The Indian team in Australia lacks a bowling attack that is good enough to take 20 wickets in a Test, Cheteshwar Pujara said on Monday and called it the side's biggest concern heading into the last two matches of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. "The Indian bowling is looking a little weak," Pujara told Star Sports.

**WAY FORWARD**

Katich's advice to Australian batters on tackling Bumrah



AP

Former cricketer Simon Katich has advised Australian batters to concentrate on rotating the strike and maintaining a solid defence to succeed against the peerless Indian pacer Jasprit Bumrah. Katich noted that since Bumrah rarely bowls loose deliveries, the Australians must be strategically good in their approach.

# Pant has the X-factor to leave his imprint on Australian shores again

Quick hands, sharp reflexes and a fluidity at the crease remain the India wicketkeeper-batter's allies as he looks to increase his yield with the willow

**INDIA IN AUS**

**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**  
MELBOURNE

Australia was the terrain that shaped Rishabh Pant's halo. His unbeaten 89 that helped India snatch a terrific win at Brisbane's Gabba in 2021, is the stuff of legend. Ajinkya Rahane's men won that Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, and seemingly there was no looking back for Pant.

Down Under yet again, Pant, in the intervening years has dealt with a debilitating car accident and has made a mind-boggling comeback. So much of India's fortunes rest on Pant's ability with the bat, besides his skill-set behind the wickets. The southpaw can scatter the finest of attacks and ruin well-laid fielding plans.

He is the maverick, who brooks no resistance. In the current series, there was this lovely moment

one morning when he sidled behind Adam Gilchrist and closed the latter's eyes with his hand. A blinded Gilchrist turned around and soon the wicket-keeping club closed ranks. Hugs and words were exchanged before Pant left to join his teammates.

It is in this world of the Gilchrists and M.S. Dhonis, Pant has galloped in with a witty remark, an athletic catch and muscular shots. In the current series, striding in at five, Pant has had scores of 37, 1, 21, 28 and 9. While India and Australia are locked in a 1-1 stalemate, and with two Tests to play, a lot will rest on how Pant can increase his yield with the willow.

**In a quandary**

So far, Pat Cummins and his fellow speedsters have tried to cramp Pant, either bowling into him, or attempted to lure the batter with a wider line. The short ball with some fielders placed in an arc from the square-leg fence to fine-leg,



The destroyer: Pant can scatter the best of attacks. GETTY IMAGES

has also been pressed into service. Often walking in with an anaemic score, Pant has been lost between the twin stools of aggression and caution.

It doesn't help that below him, the others haven't rallied around while Nitish Kumar and the last-wicket heroics of Jasprit Bumrah and Akash Deep, have been

the exceptions. Pant often has to paper the cracks while also factoring in a lower-order that may not necessarily turn up with gumption.

The link between Virat Kohli at four and skipper Rohit Sharma at six, Pant is expected to be this left-handed X-factor, charting new ways for his team. Quick hands, sharp reflexes and a fluidity at the batting crease remain Pant's allies. But having established himself over the years, he has also become a subject of intense scrutiny and every perceived vulnerability has been analysed to the hilt.

In this tour so far, more than Pant, it has been Nitish's turn to be the surprise factor. He has clattered fours and offered handy runs. With K.L. Rahul and Bumrah being the exemplars of consistency through this tour, India will prosper if Pant and the rest join the party.

The Boxing Day fourth Test here at the Melbourne Cricket Ground followed by the final one in Sydney, offer fresh roads for Pant to leave his imprint yet again in these hostile Australian shores. And India waits.



Boland. AFP

land) in there and make it four. Every time he comes in, he does well. A lot of batters around the country breathed a sigh of relief when he came into the Test team."

Whatever be the circumstances, Abbott wants to be prepared: "Just be ready to go. I have done the white-ball stuff and I put my best foot forward. It's the same, no matter what format you play." And as for a rival legend, the seamer declared: "Watching him (Jasprit Bumrah) as a fellow fast bowler, it seems that with every ball he could take a wicket. He swings it both ways, has accuracy and pace. He ticks all the boxes."

## Curator expects the pacers to have a ball



What's in store? Page reckons the fast bowlers will relish the track for the Boxing Day Test. AFP

**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**  
MELBOURNE

A cold wind hustled through the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). A mild drizzle ensued and on the fringes of the turf, stood the man, who tends to the venue's surface, and is clued into the dynamics of soil and its interplay with moisture, sun and grass. A jacket and cap in place, Matt Page held court on Monday afternoon.

In the lead-up to the fourth Test here from Thursday, the MCG curator expressed his satisfaction over how the pitch has shaped up. "We have been happy with what we have served up in the last couple of years and we don't see any reason to change that. Seven years ago, the pitch was quite flat. We sat down as an organisation and said we want to create more exciting Tests, so we leave more grass on now, and that brings the bowlers into it a bit more, but the surface is still good for batting

once the new ball goes off. We have been running at six millimetres of grass and we will monitor that," Page said.

As for the spinners, he added: "It doesn't really break up for spin. Look at our long format games over the last four or five years and they were probably more seam friendly. We are never going to be as quick as Perth and Brisbane, but over the last few years we have managed to get some pace in it. If you are a fast bowler, you probably will get excited. It will seem around the whole game with the new ball."

Asked about the variable bounce encountered on pitches that Rohit Sharma's men trained on, Page explained: "We prepare the practice pitches three days before the game and if India had turned up today, they would have got fresh ones. It is standard procedure." And that hopefully would end the debate over why India did not get fresh ones for nets.

## Herath reckons Washington will play a bigger role in post-Ashwin era

**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**  
MELBOURNE

To be in the shadows and then grab your slice of sunshine is never easy. Rangana Herath precisely did that. For a large part of his early career, the former Sri Lankan left-arm spinner had to deal with the greatness of Muttiah Muralitharan, and then he carved out his own path.

Having bowed out in 2018 with 433 Test wickets, Herath has been a busy presence in the international coaching realm. He had a stint with Bangladesh and now has a flexible role with New Zealand. Having shifted base to Australia, Herath said: "I moved to Australia with my family, about two-and-a-half years ago. Considering all the angles, this is one of the best places to live. I do a bit of one-on-one coaching here."

**Not a full-time job**  
Explaining his coaching stints, Herath said: "With New Zealand, I am not doing a full-time job. Basically, they hire me for the subcontinental games." And how big was New Zealand's 3-0 sweep in the Test series in India?

"I played many years for Sri Lanka, and we never won a Test in India. So, winning 3-0 series on their soil, that's special. If they (New Zealand) can win one game in India, that will be a good achievement, that was the initial thought. That first innings of India when they got 46 in Bengaluru, after that the thinking was if we can win one game, then why can't we win another game?"



Making a difference: Washington has made a big impression on his return to the Indian Test team. GETTY IMAGES

good achievement, that was the initial thought. That first innings of India when they got 46 in Bengaluru, after that the thinking was if we can win one game, then why can't we win another game?"

Looking at the current state of Sri Lankan cricket,

and he knows the kind of language that Sri Lankan players need to be addressed."

Gazing across the seas, Herath praised R. Ashwin: "He is such a clever guy and a very smart bowler, I would like to congratulate him and wish him for his future. I thought Washington (Sundar) bowled brilliantly in the series against New Zealand and he played the first game in Perth here as well. He has a long way to go. He can bat as well, and after Ashwin, I think Washington will do most of the work."

"And Jaddu (Ravindra Jadeja) is completely different. He tends to go a bit faster and is a bit of a back of a length as well. He keeps the batters under pressure and takes wickets."

**Natural ability**

Speaking about the quirky talent that Sri Lanka is famous for, Herath elaborated. "Sri Lanka always produces different kinds of guys, mystery bowlers like Ajantha Mendis, we have Matheesha (Pathirana) now, before that we had Lasith Malinga."

"We play street cricket in Sri Lanka, and in backyards. You can't produce these cricketers with coaching, it has to come naturally. I am sure there will be a few other cricketers like this in the future as well."

## Rookie Konstas reveals his gameplan



Up for the challenge: Konstas says he likes to take the game on and put pressure on the bowlers. AFP

**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**  
MELBOURNE

An air of expectation swirled around Sam Konstas. The 19-year-old was part excitement, and part nervous energy. Understandable as he is all set for his international debut in the fourth Test commencing at the Melbourne Cricket Ground here on Thursday.

In a chat with the media on Monday, he was asked about whether he saw tapes of Jasprit Bumrah. Dealing with the verbal bouncer, the youngster had his counter ready: "No, not really. I watched a bit but I am just trying to be in the moment and hopefully I will get the opportunity of playing him."

Later when pressed on probable strategies against the Indian spearhead, the opener offered a straight bat: "I do (have plans), I am not going to say what it is, but it is just about trying to put pressure back on the bowlers." Once Australia's optional nets started, Konstas practised what he preached and essayed a range of shots against Marcus Labuschagne's throw-downs and occasional spin.

Cutting back to the press-conference, Konstas gave a hat-tip to his idol Shane Watson: "I admire Shane Watson a lot. He is a legend of the game. (Like him) I like to take the game on and put pressure on the bowlers and hopefully I can do that this week if I (make my) debut."

Reacting to the big break while he is yet to turn 20, the batter quipped: "This is an amazing opportunity at my age. Pat Cummins and the group have welcomed me in and this feels like family. This is a dream-come-true and I feel pretty relaxed and am living in the moment."

# Raghu to take on Mithun in the summit clash

The former stuns No. 1 seed Sathish while the latter beats Rounak; Devika faces off against Shriyanshi for the big prize in women's section after getting past Adarshini and Tasnim

## NATL. BADMINTON

**N. Sudarshan**  
BENGALURU

Karnataka's M. Raghu entered his maiden men's singles final at the Senior National badminton championship following a convincing 21-17, 21-17 victory over top seed K. Sathish Kumar of Tamil Nadu at the KBA courts here on Monday.

In the summit clash, the 26-year-old will meet Statemate Mithun Manjunath – representing Railways – who beat Chhattisgarh's Rounak Chouhan 21-15, 21-13. For Mithun, it will be a chance to win his second National title after his success two editions ago (2022 held in February 2023).

The women's final will be between Haryana's Devika Sihag and Telangana's Shriyanshi Valishetty who beat Tamil Nadu's N.B. Adarshini Shri and Gujarat's Tasnim Mir respectively.

It was sweet revenge for



**Big scalp:** Raghu knocked out top seed Sathish in straight games to reach his maiden National final.

K. MURALI KUMAR

Raghu after having been ousted by Sathish in just 28 minutes just over a week ago at the Odisha Masters BWF Super 100.

The local boy played a clean first game, erased a four-point deficit twice in the second before triumphing when Sathish sent a forehand drive long.

### The results (semifinals):

**Singles: Men:** M. Raghu (Kar) bt

K. Sathish Kumar (TN) 21-17, 21-17; Mithun Manjunath (Rly) bt Rounak Chouhan (Chg) 21-15, 21-13.

**Women:** Devika Sihag (Har) bt N.B. Adarshini Shri (TN) 21-13, 21-10; Shriyanshi Valishetty (Tel) bt Tasnim Mir (Guj) 25-23, 21-13.

**Doubles:** Men: P. Naveen & V. Lokesha (TN) bt Ashish Surya & Vaibhav (Kar) 17-21, 21-12, 22-20; Arsh Mohammad (UP) & Sanskar Saraswat (Raj) bt Suraj Goala (Asm) & Dhruv Rawat (Utk) 14-21, 21-18, 21-19.

**Mixed doubles:** Rohan Kapoor (Del) & G. Ruthvika Shivani (Pet) bt Deep Rambiya & Akshaya Warang (Mah) 21-16, 21-17; Ayush Agarwal & Shruti Mishra (UP) bt Shivam Sharma & Poorviasha S. Ram (RBI) 21-16, 21-19.

# Fit-again Mithun eager to get career back on track

**N. Sudarshan**  
BENGALURU

In August 2023, Mithun Manjunath was in sporting dreamland. He was ranked just outside the top-40, had just beaten the then World No.7 and former World Champion Loh Kean Yew, and was bought for a handsome ₹14.5 lakh at the Grand Prix Badminton League (GPBL) auction. Two months after that, he was part of the Indian team that won a historic team silver at the Asian Games.

In the 12 months since that high, Mithun has seen his fortunes nosedive. From a career-high rank of No. 33 in January 2023, he is now 79. From March to October, he was troubled by back spasms which ensured that he won back-to-back main draw matches on the BWF World Tour just once all year – at the Thailand Masters way back in January-February.

It is only now that he is picking up the pieces. Last month at the CM Trophy India International in Raipur, he stood first. On Monday, watched on by the legendary Prakash Padukone, he entered the singles final of the Senior Nationals, a title he won in



**On the mend:** Mithun is making a return after being laid low by back spasms over the last 12 months. K. MURALI KUMAR

hab... but I still had that injury. But once I started my recovery at a slow pace, it was better. Now I am okay and my mindset is good".

"I know that I have the game and I know how to play," Mithun told *The Hindu*. "I just need to bounce back".

"That [GPBL] bid amount showed by value. I got the highest bid. I was a bit worried when the GPBL did not happen, but it showed how people portrayed me and how they wanted me in the team. Now, I just want to return to where I was and improve further".



Kambl with a fan who admitted him to hospital. PTI

## Kambl hospitalised but in stable condition

**Press Trust of India**  
MUMBAI

Former India cricketer Vinod Kambl has been admitted to a hospital due to deterioration in his health.

The 52-year-old was brought to the hospital on Saturday by one of his fans, who also owns the hospital in Bhiwandi's Kalher area in Thane district, and his condition was said to be stable, even though the exact reasons for his hospitalisation could not be ascertained.

Kambl, who played 17 Tests and 104 ODIs for India between 1993-2000, had recently attended the inauguration of coach Ramakant Achrekar's memorial at the Shivaji Park here.

# Women In Blue will look to sustain momentum

**Shayan Acharya**  
VADODARA

India, after the thumping win in the series opener, will look to pull away further when it meets West Indies in the second ODI at the Kotambi Stadium on Tuesday.

The Women in Blue have performed well over the last few days, having clinched the T20I series 2-1 against the West Indies followed by a dominant show in the first ODI with a 211-run win.

While Smriti Mandhana has been in sublime form - hammering five consecutive fifties across formats - the seasoned campaigners like Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol and the captain Harmanpreet Kaur have also chipped in with crucial knocks in the last game, helping India put up a mammoth total. On a sluggish black-soil surface, the



Smriti... in sublime form. VIJAY SONEJI

home side will be hoping to tick all the boxes, again.

As overcast conditions prevailed on Monday, dew is expected to play a role once again. However, India will be banking on its India's fast bowling unit, spearheaded by Renuka Singh.

*Match starts at 1.30 p.m.*

# Shahu wins air rifle gold



**Podium finish:** Dhanush, champion Shahu and Yash Vardhan. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Sports Bureau

Shahu Tushar Mane beat Dhanush Srikanth by 0.1 point to clinch the men's air rifle gold in a spectacular climax in the 67th National shooting championship at the Madhya Pradesh Academy in Bhopal on Monday.

Shahu led by 0.1 point before the last two shots, and Dhanush matched him on the last two shots with identical 10.6 and 10.5, for an unbelievable finish.

A determined Rudranksh marched to the junior gold later with a strong performance in the final, as he shot 254.9 to beat Abhishek Shekar by 4.5 points. Himanshu managed to climb to the bronze.

Himanshu was eventually able to assert his class in the youth final as he beat Yash Pandey by 2.2 points for the gold.

Meanwhile, in the skeet competition at the Dr. Karni Singh Range in Tughlakabad, Fatehbir Singh Sher-

gi and Munek Battula topped the men's field with 123 out of 125. Bhavtegh Singh Gill and Divyarak Singh took the next two spots in the final with 122, while Olympians Maiyal Ahmad Khan and Angad Vir Singh Bajwa made the cut with 121.

In women's skeet, Olympian Raiza Dhillon was a class apart as she shot 122, following rounds of 25, 24, 23 and 25, to be four shots ahead of World Cup medallist Ganesh Sekhon. Yashasvi Rathore, Vanishi Tiwari, Asees Chhina and Shivi Raikwary were the others to make the final.

**The results: Air rifle: Men:** 1. Shahu Tushar 252.3 (631.3); 2. Dhanush Srikanth 252.2 (631.1); 3. Yash Vardhan 230.0 (631.1).

**Juniors:** 1. Rudranksh Patil 254.9 (630.9); 2. Abhishek Shekar 251.4 (629.0); Himanshu 229.9 (632.5).

**Youth:** 1. Himanshu 253.0 (632.5); 2. Yash Pandey 250.8 (628.2); 3. Abhinav Shaw 229.6 (628.2).

**Sub-youth:** 1. Naraen Suresh 629.2; 2. Ansh Dabas 628.3; 3. Yash Pandey 628.2.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, ANGUL**  
No. 3074// E-Mail: sonerwangul@yahoo.co.in, Ph.no.06764-236404  
**Cancellation of Tender for Road work** Dt. 21/12/24//

The tender for Road works invited vide this office Tender Call Notice No.2749 dt.14.11.2024 ( Bid Identification No. Road Online-AGL\_12/2024-25 ) by the Procurement officer, Chief Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Angul is hereby cancelled.

Chief Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Angul.

OIPR-25180/11/0026/2425

**WORKS DEPARTMENT**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, EASTERN CIRCLE (R&B), BALASORE**  
e-mail:- sec\_e\_bis@rediffmail.com  
**Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice**  
**Bid Identification No. CCEC-10/2024-25**  
No.: 4725 / Dt.: 20.12.2024

Nature of work Roads Works  
Number of works 1  
Amount put to Tender Rs.7,83,58,657/-  
Class of Contractor "A" Class & "Special" Class  
Date & Time of availability of bid document in the Portal Dt.04.01.2025 at 10.00 AM  
Last Date / Time of receipt of bid in the portal Dt.18.01.2025 up to 05.00 PM  
Date of opening of bid Dt.19.01.2025 at 11.00 AM  
Name & address of the Office inviting bid Chief Construction Engineer, Eastern Circle (R&B), Balasore.

The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "<http://tendersodisha.gov.in>". All future corrigendum will be available on ONLINE mode only.

Chief Construction Engineer, Eastern Circle (R&B), Balasore  
OIPR-34026/11/0007/2425

**OFFICE OF THE COLLECTOR AND DISTRICT MAGISTRATE, BALANGIR (ODISHA)**  
(In front of Collectorate, Balangir-767001, Phone No.-06652-231886, Email-dcpo.bolangir.od@nic.in)  
Notification No 1224/DCPU, Balangir, Odisha, Date 21.12.2024

It is hereby informed through this Notification that, following 02 nos. of girls child have been residing at the Specialised Adoption Agency(SAA), Palaceline, Balangir who have no parents/family. During their staying at the SAA, Balangir nobody of the children have visited or inquired about the Children. Hence, this advertisement is published for tracing out of biological parent, guardian, legal claimant (if any) to claim the children. The biological parent/guardian, legal claimant (if any) of the following children are required to claim within 30 days of publication of this advertisement in the Office of the District Child Protection Officer, DCPU, Balangir (Mobile No.8249481400, email: dcpo.bolangir.od@nic.in) / Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Balangir (Mobile No. 7639982122, email: cwcbalangir@gmail.com), Superintendent & Programme Manager, SAA, Balangir (Mobile No.9437241894) with proper and authentic proof/documents. After completion of 30 days, no claim will be entertained and action deem proper shall be taken as per provisions made under Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of the Children) Act, 2015 & its amendment Act, 2021 for the best interest of the children. Detail particulars of the children are given below;

SL. No.	Details Particulars	Photograph
02	SIKHA :(Girl child, aged Below 01 month, DOB-26.11.2024), Body color-wheatish, Height-37cm and Weight-2.100 Kg) Rescued from the village of Nursing under Deogaon Police Station, Balangir as abandoned child on dated 29.11.2024 and since then the child has been residing at Specialized Adoption Agency, Balangir vide Case No. 897, dated-29.11.2024 of the CWC, Balangir.	
03	BEENA :(Girl child, aged Below 01 month, DOB-01.12.2024), Body color-white, Height-36cm and Weight-2.360 Kg) Rescued from the premises of the District Head Quarter Hospital, Balangir as abandoned child on dated 04.12.2024 and since then the child has been residing at Specialized Adoption Agency, Balangir vide Case No. 900, dated-04.12.2024 of the CWC, Balangir.	

Sd/- Collector & District Magistrate, BALANGIR  
OIPR-33036/11/0011/2425

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER & BASIN MANAGER, MAHANADI, BRAHMANI & BAIRATANI SYSTEM, CHANDIKHOLE**  
E-mail ID : cembbschandikhole@gmail.com  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
**E - Procurement Notice No:- CE&BM, MBBS 04 OF 2024-25**  
**Bid Identification No.: CE & BM, MBBS JPD 02 OF 2024-25**

The Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, Mahanadi, Brahmani & Bairatani System, Chandikhole on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites on-line percentage rate tender through e-procurement in double cover system.

Table-1 : Details of Critical Details, details of work, Bid Security

Pkg. No.	Name of works	Approx. Tender Cost	Class of Contractor	Bid Security / EMD-(on-line) - (in INR)	Cost of tender document (on-line) - (in INR)	Period of Completion
1	Protection to Scoured Bank Bodak Tinter Saline Embankment on Bairatani Left from Bodak to Muuan,	Rs.1236.30 Lakh (Excluding G.S.T.)	'A' & 'Special' Class	Rs.12,36,400/-	Rs.10,000/-	18 (Eighteen) Calendar Months

Table-2 : e-Procurement Details

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender on-line for bidding	Date of Seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender	Place of Opening
		From	To	Technical Bid	Financial Bid
Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, Mahanadi, Brahmani & Bairatani System, Chandikhole	CE&BM, MBBS JPD 02 OF 2024-25	at 10.00 hours	up to 17.00 hours	17.01.2025 to 17.01.2025 at Office during office hours	Office of Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, Mahanadi, Brahmani & Bairatani System, Chandikhole

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**KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)  
# 49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road Bengaluru – 560 001. Phone No. 080-2265383 website : [www.kiadb.in](http://www.kiadb.in)

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## IN BRIEF



## Manipur women retain the National football crown

Manipur rode on Asem Roja Devi's 55th-minute strike against Odisha in the final to retain the senior women's National football championship, for the Rajmata Jijabai Trophy, in Manipur (Chhattisgarh) on Monday. It was Manipur's 23rd title out of the 29 editions played, while Odisha suffered its sixth defeat in seven finals, all against Manipur.

## Ayub continues merry run as Pakistan sweeps South Africa

Saim Ayub hit his second century of the series as Pakistan completed a clean sweep over South Africa in the third ODI at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on Sunday. The opener made a sparkling 101 off 94 balls. Heinrich Klaasen smashed 81 off 43 balls for South Africa – but the host was beaten by 36 runs, chasing a revised target of 308. The match was reduced to 47 overs a side because of rain.

**The scores:** Pakistan 308/9 in 47 overs (Ayub 101, Mohammad Rizwan 53, Babar Azam 52, Sami Agha 48, Kagiso Rabada 3/56) bt South Africa 271 in 42 overs (Klaasen 81, Corbin Bosch 40 n.o.); **Pakistan won by 36 runs via DLS method; POM & POS:** Ayub.

## NorthEast United thumps Hyderabad FC in the ISL

NorthEast United FC beat Hyderabad FC 5-2 in an Indian Super League fixture at the GMC Balayogi Stadium in Hyderabad on Monday.

**The result:** HFC 2 (Correia 5, 12) lost to NEUFC 5 (Fernandez 18, 61, Rodrigues og-54, Ajarai 73, Saji og-78).



## Dabang Delhi seals a spot in semifinal with big win

Dabang Delhi confirmed the second semifinal spot of PKL 11 after a 41-35 victory over Gujarat Giants and extended its unbeaten run to 15 matches in Pune on Monday. Patna Pirates beat Telugu Titans 41-37 in the other match of the day.

## LIVE TELECAST

**India Women vs West Indies Women:** 2nd ODI, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 1.30 p.m.

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

## Had a dream to be a GM when there was none in Asia: Torre

## P.K. Ajith Kumar



Eugene Torre became Asia's first Grandmaster in 1974, two years after Bobby Fischer's historic victory in the World championship match against Boris Spassky. The Filipino living legend would go on to form a close friendship with Fischer, the most influential figure of all time in chess.

Torre was Fischer's second when the American played a sequel to his World title match with Spassky in 1992. In a famous game in 1976, he defeated the reigning World champion Anatoly Karpov. In 2016, at the age of 64, he won the bronze medal, playing on the third board for the Philippines.

At 73, his affair with chess continues.

"Back in my time, the Grandmasters from Europe, the United States, or the Soviet Union would treat the Asian players as their easy victims," Torre told *The Hindu* in Singa-

# Rawat, Saini set up Delhi's win over Madhya Pradesh in a low-scoring tie

Ninad and Krunal star as Baroda gets the better of Kerala in a run-fest; Azharuddeen's stunning century goes in vain

## HAZARE TROPHY

V.V. Subrahmanyam  
HYDERABAD

**A**nuj Rawat's superbly-paced knock (78, 103b, 8x4, 5x6) didn't look like a match-winning effort at the start of the innings for Delhi. But, a fiery third spell (4-11-4) by pacer Navdeep Saini proved to be a game-changer as it came back strongly to record a 79-run win over Madhya Pradesh in the second round of the Vijay Hazare Trophy one-day championship Group E match at Gymkhana Ground here on Monday.

The accuracy of left-arm spin duo of Kumar Kartikeya Singh (two for 24) and Sagar Solanki (two for 27)

saw Delhi score a modest 211 despite opener Sarthak Ranjan (41, 68b, 4x4, 1x6) and the free-stroking Hritik Shokeen (28, 22b, 3x4, 2x6) batting with great freedom at the top.

It was wicketkeeper-batter Rawat again who showcased his impressive range of strokes to accelerate the scoring rate in the slog overs with some lusty blows like the six which went out of the ground over long-on off Solanki.

Chasing 212, MP batting faltered after a 68-run stand for the first wicket in 13 overs between wicket-keeper-batter Harsh Gawai (42, 43b, 5x4, 1x6) and Subhranshu Senapati (55, 72b, 9x4), the latter lucky to see Himmat Singh drop a regulation catch at slip when on zero off Saini in

the second over of the innings. But once Hritik Shokeen induced a poor sweep stroke to dismiss the well-set Gawai and captain Rajat Patidar (2) was bounced out by Saini, MP was reduced to 106 for four. And, MP, missing the injured Venkatesh Iyer, never really came back into the game as Saini was at his best testing the batters with pace, bounce and accuracy.

In another Group-E match at Rajiv Gandhi Stadium, opener Ninad Rathava's brilliant century (136, 99b, 13x4, 3x6) and captain Krunal Pandya's unbeaten 80 (54b, 7x4, 3x6) helped Baroda record a 62-run win over Kerala for whom Mohammed Azharuddeen's century (104, 58b, 8x4, 7x6) went in vain.

## VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY - SECOND ROUND SCORES

## Group-A

**Jaipur:** Manipur 253/7 in 50 overs (Kangabam Priyojit 43, Johnson Singh 69) lost to Jharkhand 255/2 in 28.3 overs (Ishan Kishan 134, Utkarsh Singh 68); **Toss:** Manipur; **Points:** Jharkhand 4(8), Manipur 0(0). Goa 271/7 in 50 overs (Ishaan Gadekar 83, Darshan Misal 75) lost to Haryana 275/2 in 44.4 overs (Himanshu Rana 101, Ankit Kumar 128 n.o.); **Toss:** Haryana; **Haryana 4(4), Goa 0(4).**

Odisha 267/5 in 50 overs (Swastik Samal 40, Kartik Biswal 76 n.o., Aasirwaran Swain 58) lost to Assam 271/5 in 50 overs (Rishabh Das 73, Sumit Ghadigaonkar 47, Sibskankar Roy 66); **Toss:** Assam; **Assam 4(4), Odisha 0(0).**

Gujarat 280 in 48.1 overs (Aarya Desai 106, Umang Kumar 87, Agrim Tiwari 3/39) bt Uttarakhand 275 in 49.4 overs (Yuvraj Chaudhary 50, R. Samarth 82, Aditya Tare 47, Priyajit Singh Jadeja 4/50); **Toss:** Uttarakhand; **Gujarat 4(8), Uttarakhand 0(4).**

**Group-B** Mumbai: Services 204 in 48 overs (Mohit Ahlawat 61, Pradeep Dadhe 3/38, Satyajeet Bachhav 3/36) lost to Maharashtra 205/1 in 20.2 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 148 n.o.); **Toss:** Maharashtra; **Maharashtra 4(8), Services 0(4).**

Andhra 262/7 in 50 overs (K.S. Bharat 64, Y. Sandeep 80 n.o.) lost to Rajasthan 266/1 in 43.4 overs (Ram Chouhan 120 n.o., Mahipal Lomor 134 n.o.); **Toss:** Rajasthan; **Rajasthan 4(4), Andhra 0(4).**

Himachal Pradesh 322/7 in 50 overs (Prashant Chopra 134,

Rishi Dhawan 82 n.o.) bt Sikkim 227/7 in 50 overs (Nilesh Lamichaney 42, Lee Yong Lepcha 41 n.o., Apporav Walia 3/42); **Toss:** HP; **HP 4(8), Sikkim 0(0).**

**Navi Mumbai:** Railways 332/7 in 50 overs (Suraj Ahuja 112, Sahab Yuvraj Singh 71, Upendra Yadav 77 n.o.) bt Meghalaya 200/8 in 50 overs (L. Sangma 47, Yuvraj Singh 3/34); **Toss:** Meghalaya; **Railways 4(4), Meghalaya 0(0).**

**Group-C** Ahmedabad: Arunachal Pradesh 131 in 33.5 overs (Pranav Karolia 4/44) lost to Saurashtra 132/2 in 9.3 overs (Sheldon Jackson 45 n.o., Jay Gehol 41); **Toss:** Arunachal; **Saurashtra 4(4), Arunachal 0(0).**

Pondicherry 211/9 in 50 overs (Arun Karthick 71, Aman Khan 45, Vidyadhar Patil 4/27) lost to Karnataka 214/7 in 40.5 overs (R. Smaran 100 n.o., Shreyas Gopal 40, Viju Raja 3/40); **Toss:** Karnataka; **Karnataka 4(8), Pondicherry 0(4).**

Nagaland 216/8 in 50 overs (Dega Nischal 77, Chetan Bist 69 n.o., Raghu Sharma 3/33) lost to Punjab 217/5 in 34.5 overs (Abhishek Sharma 41, Anmolpreet Singh 55, Anmol Malhotra 45 n.o., Jagadeesha Suchith 3/38); **Toss:** Punjab; **Punjab 4(8), Nagaland 0(0).**

Hyderabad 169 in 38.1 overs (Tannay Agarwal 64, Aravely Avanish 52, Athvara Ankolekar 4/55, Uyash Mhatre 3/17) lost to Mumbai 175/7 in 25.2 overs (Shreyas Iyer 44 n.o., Saranu Nishanth 3/42); **Toss:** Mumbai; **Mumbai 4(4), Hyderabad 0(4).**

**Group-D** Vizianagram: Jammu & Kashmir 221 in 44.2 overs (Vravant Sharma 63, Paras Dogra 47, Arne Slot 4/44) lost to Bihar 228/5 in 48.2 overs (Bikramkumar Das 77, Sridam Paul 34, Bishal Ghosh 43 n.o.); **Toss:** Tripura; **Tripura 4(4), Bihar 0(0).**

42, Auqib Nabi 45 n.o., Nachiket Bhute 3/33, Harsh Dubey 3/49) lost to Vidarbha 225/4 in 37.1 overs (Karun Nair 112 n.o., Jitesh Sharma 43); **Toss:** Vidarbha; **Vidarbha 4(4), J&K 0(2).**

Chandigarh 322/5 in 50 overs (Shivam Bhamori 152, Tushar Joshi 59, Ankit Kaushik 51 n.o.) bt Chhattisgarh 299/4 in 46.3 overs (Sanjeet Desai 54, Amandeep Khare 121 n.o., Gagandeep Singh 51); **Toss:** Chhattisgarh 4(6), Chandigarh 0(2).

**Vishakhapatnam:** Mizoram 141 in 34.3 overs (Mohit Jangra 70, Shivam Mavi 5/29, Mohsin Khan 3/34) lost to Uttar Pradesh 144/1 in 20.3 overs (Abhishek Goswami 47, Aryan Juyal 86 n.o.); **Toss:** UP; **UP 4(6), Mizoram 0(2).**

**Group-E** Hyderabad: Delhi 211 in 48.4 overs (Sarthak Ranjan 41, Anuj Rawat 78) bt Madhya Pradesh 132 in 37.1 overs (Harsh Gawai 42, Subhranshu Senapati 55, Navdeep Saini 4/37, Hritik Shokeen 3/26); **Toss:** MP; **Delhi 4(4), MP 0(4).**

Baroda 403/4 in 50 overs (Ninad Rathava 136, Parth Kohli 72, Krunal Pandya 80 n.o., Vishnu Solanki 46) bt Kerala 341 in 45.5 overs (Rohan Kunnummal 65, Ahammed Imran 51, Mohammed Azharuddeen 104, Akash Singh 3/70); **Toss:** Kerala; **Baroda 4(8), Kerala 0(0).**

Bihar 226/8 in 50 overs (Mangal Mahroo 106, Manisankar Murasingh 3/27) lost to Tripura 228/5 in 48.2 overs (Bikramkumar Das 77, Sridam Paul 34, Bishal Ghosh 43 n.o.); **Toss:** Tripura; **Tripura 4(4), Bihar 0(0).**

## EURO LEAGUES

Agencies  
LONDON

Mohamed Salah dropped another hint that his future could lie away from Liverpool as the Egypt star said he would be happy "whatever I am going to end my career" after starring in Sunday's 6-3 demolition of Tottenham.

"It's great to achieve that at such a big club, but the most important thing is that we won the game. Wherever I am going to end my career I am happy about it," Salah told *Sky Sports*.

The 32-year-old is the first Premier League player to bag at least 10 goals and 10 assists before Christmas, while his brace also took him into fourth place on Liverpool's all-time list of scorers with 229 in all competitions.

Salah's immense value to Arne Slot's team is clear, but Liverpool has been unable to persuade the forward to sign a new contract as speculation mounts about his future.

Meanwhile, Kylian Mbappe said he had bounced back from hitting rock bottom after a run of four straight draws in the league with a hard-fought 2-1 win at relegation-threatened Monza.

**The results:** Serie A: Atalanta 3 (De Ketelaere 34, 86, Lookman 45+1) bt Empoli 2 (Colombo 13, Esposito 57-pen); Monza 1 (Birindelli 22) lost to Juventus 2 (McKenzie 14, Gonzalez 39).

**LaLiga:** Real Betis 1 (Isco 37-pen) drew with Rayo Vallecano 1 (Palazón 51).

tending 11th consecutive league victory. Juventus ended a run of four straight draws in the league with a hard-fought 2-1 win at relegation-threatened Monza.

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**LaLiga:** Real Betis 1 (Isco 37-pen) drew with Rayo Vallecano 1 (Palazón 51).

## Ayub's strike puts J&amp;K in the quarterfinals

## SANTOSH TROPHY

Sports Bureau  
HYDERABAD

Jammu and Kashmir booked a quarterfinal berth with a 1-0 win against Rajasthan in the Santosh Trophy National football championship at Deccan Arena here on Monday. In another match, Manipur outplayed Telangana 3-1.

Manipur was dominant in the second half and missed some scoring chances before Khullakpam Zahir Khan found a way in the 85th minute and sent in a left-footer into the bottom corner.

Shoraisham Sagar Singh added a third minutes later to compound Telangana's agony and cement Manipur's win.

**The results:** J&K 1 (Adnan Ayub 74) bt Rajasthan 0; Manipur 3 (Kangabam Lammgamba Singh 16, Khullakpam Zahir Khan 85, Shoraisham Sagar Singh 87) bt Telangana 1 (Syed Imtiaz Ahmed 40); Bengal 1 (Badudeb Mandi 46) bt Services 0.

**Credit:** CM YK

## HIL

K. Keerthivasan  
CHENNAI

Talking with captain Amit Rohidas and engaging with other Indian young Indian players, drag-flick specialist Jip Janssen was a picture of confidence and composure on his first day of training here on Sunday. "Upa Upa" (in Hindi), he shouts, with a wry smile, to his players, signalling them to play the aerial ball.

The 27-year-old defender, a part of the Netherlands men's team, that won a gold medal in the Paris Olympics, is one of the key players for Tamil Nadu Dragons in the Hockey India League (HIL) beginning in Ranchi and Rourkela on January 28.

Janssen, roped in by the Dragons for ₹54 lakh, is the second-highest paid foreign player after Gonzalo Peillat (Germany) for Hyde-

bad Toofans (₹68L). It was a different matter the Indian players who commanded significant bids with Harmanpreet Singh (Soorma HC) fetching ₹78 lakh, Abhishek joining Bengal Tigers for ₹72 lakh, and Hardik Singh signing with UP Rudras for ₹70 lakh.

The Dutch defender felt that the top Indian players going for higher amounts were justified.

Janssen said: "They (Indians) are amazing players.

And besides you can only play five international

# I made a comeback in 2017 because of the HIL

I am happy that the Dragons team has given me an opportunity. We are a good side. We will work on the plan the coaches have given us



GETTY IMAGES & SIVA SANKAR

## INTERVIEW

### AMIT ROHIDAS

K. Keerthivasan

Amit Rohidas has been one of the core players of the Indian men's team for the last five to six years. As the best person for the rushers job during penalty corners in the Indian team, the 31-year-old defender has proved his value time and again. The year 2017 was an important landmark for Amit for he made a strong comeback to the Indian team and has never looked back since. All thanks to HIL where he represented Kalinga Lancers. Lancers went on to win the tournament in 2017.

The two-time bronze medallist in Olympics is now getting ready for HIL as part of Tamil Nadu Dragons to be held in Ranchi and Rourkela from December 28. "I am a big fan of the HIL because it supported me to come back to the Indian team. After that, I continued. I will try to maintain my fitness and skills which will help me in the future.

**You have completed 200 internationals in the recent friendly against Germany in New Delhi. When you look back, how do you feel?**

I was surprised because no one knew and I didn't know either. I knew that the last 200 match was going to be 199. But when I reached the ground, Vikram(pal) (Competition Manager, Hockey India) bhai told me that I was going to score 200. Everyone was shocked including the coaching staff and our teammates. When they told me that I was going to complete 200, I was very happy. Because it is a big thing to play 200 matches for the country. At this level, I am happy that I have completed 200 for the country.

**How do you see your career? How have you evolved in the 11 years since you made your Senior International debut in 2013?**

Yes. I made my senior debut in 2013. After that, in 2014, my last World League Grand Final was in January. After that, I had a three-year break. I made a comeback in 2017, thanks to the Hockey India League. Otherwise, I don't know where I would be today.

I am a big fan of the Hockey India League because it supported me to come back to the Indian team. After

that, I continued. I will try to maintain my fitness and skills which will help me in the future.

**You were out of the team for three years. Were you injured or out of form?**

I didn't have an injury. It's ups and downs any sportsperson faces. You learn a lot from that. I don't know why I was out. But I continued my hard work. I made a comeback in 2017 because of the HIL

**What improvements did you make in 2017?**

I continued to focus on my basics. I maintained my fitness. You can make a comeback if you have the age. Otherwise, it's difficult. I played in HIL and the department tournaments. If you don't maintain your fitness, you can't do anything.

**How was the three years being out of the Indian team?**

The three years were a difficult time. It's difficult to make a comeback. My family supported me a lot. They didn't let me down. They told me to believe in myself and work hard.

**Any changes you made in your game to make a strong comeback?**

I was trying to give my 100% in my basics. I was getting results from that. We (Kalinga Lancers) won the HIL.

**What do you think about the Tamil Nadu Dragons team in the HIL?**

I feel proud. I am happy that the Dragons team has given me an opportunity. We are a good side. We will work on the plan the coaches have given us.

**Jip Janssen was part of the gold medal-winning team in the Netherlands team in the 2024 Paris Olympics. He is a very good defender. There are other good foreign players. How do you feel about that?**

Jip Janssen is my good friend. Definitely, ours will be a good combination. We will do well in the HIL. It will be fun to play with them.

**Odisha won the Senior National men's championships in Chennai recently. In the team, many players hail from Sundergarh where you were born.**

We (Odisha) have been working hard for many years. We won the bronze



After we won the bronze medal in Paris, we went back to our homes. Everyone had different functions to attend. It was a busy schedule. I could not stay at home for a day. I left in the morning and came back in the evening. After 20 days, there was the Asian Champions Trophy (ACT). We had to manage. But once India called us, we had to come. We could not leave. At ACT, we had six senior players and the remaining were juniors. We were guiding the new players to play with a free mind. There is no pressure on us.

**Will HIL be a selection of sorts for the FIH Pro League?**

I think the selectors will select the team from HIL.

**Are there any areas of improvement in the Indian team?**

There has been a lot of improvement. From the facilities to equipments, there has been improvement in everything. Gradually, the team's performance has improved. Hockey India, the Government of Odisha, and Sports Authority of India have worked hard. Now, you can see the improvement. There will be more improvement. We will play HIL and the players will get better. That's the main target of HIL.

**In the Paris Olympics, the conversion rate of penalty corners has been quite low. Is it because the rushers and overall defence have got better?**

For example, if I am the first usher, the opponent has to do all the analysis. They have to watch our videos. For that, we are working hard. The opponent also is working hard. Sometimes, their plan is successful and sometimes not successful. This happens in a game. Sometimes, our drag flicker scores a good goal and sometimes not. If he doesn't score a goal in penalty corner, then we have to convert it into a field goal. We have to keep this balance.

**Your coordination with Harmanpreet Singh has been very good.**

We are in the same core group. We have the same relationship with everyone. We don't lack anything. We talk freely. If you have any problem or if you need anything, we talk to each other. On the ground, the more you are involved with the players, the better your performance is. That's why you can see the medals.

**You had your hockey lessons at Panposh Sports Hostel in Rourkela where the HIL will be held. How does it feel?**

I joined the hostel in 2004. It will be great because I have played many matches there. All the fans are great.

**How come the fans regularly throng to the Stadiums for all International hockey matches in Odisha?**

The atmosphere is different there. Hockey is very famous in Sundergarh district. Hockey players come to Odisha to learn, to enjoy and to support.

**Host India lost the series to Germany in a shootout. The lessons learnt...**

Our target was to give more opportunities to younger players and showcase our potential. You must have seen which players were playing, who were resting. If we don't give them (the youngsters) an opportunity, when will they improve? We have to show them a good performance and lead them. We lost the first match, but in the second match, we won but lost in the shootout with a good margin. We have to improve from there. We have to learn from there. We've learnt a lot from there.

**What are your personal goals?**

I don't look far ahead. Need to take it one match at a time. At the moment, it is HIL.

**Who is your inspiration among the defenders?**

My inspiration is Dilip Tirkey. I consider him my idol. Among foreigners, it is Germany's Moritz Furste. I played with him in HIL as an opponent and as a teammate. His behaviour, his game sense. I have learnt a lot from him.

**Your HIL experience?**

For three years, I played with Ranchi Rays and Kalinga Lancers. Among youngsters, all of them who are selected are good. All the teams have youngsters. The system is made so that the youngsters get chances to show their performance. So that they can lead the Indian team in the future. The system and rules are good. It's time to get together as a team and perform well in the HIL. As a senior player, I will share as much as I can. I will treat everyone equally.

# SCIENCE

# Octopuses and their kin are a new animal welfare frontier

It appears that cephalopods as a group may be similar in intelligence to vertebrates as a group. Since many societies have animal welfare standards for mice, rats, chickens, and other vertebrates, logic would suggest that there's a case for regulations enforcing humane treatment of cephalopods

Rachel Blaser

**W**e named him Squirt – not because he was the smallest of the 16 cuttlefish in the pool, but because anyone with the audacity to scoop him into a separate tank to study him was likely to get soaked. Squirt had notoriously accurate aim.

As a comparative psychologist, I'm used to assaults from my experimental subjects. I've been stung by bees, pinched by crayfish, and battered by indignant pigeons. But, somehow, with Squirt it felt different. As he eyed us with his W-shaped pupils, he seemed clearly to be plotting against us.

Of course, I'm being anthropomorphic. Science does not yet have the tools to confirm whether cuttlefish have emotional states or whether they are capable of conscious experience, much less sinister plots. But there's undeniably something special about cephalopods – the class of ocean-dwelling invertebrates that includes cuttlefish, squid, and octopus.

As researchers learn more about cephalopods' cognitive skills, there are calls to treat them in ways better aligned with their level of intelligence. California and Washington state both approved bans on octopus farming in 2024. Hawaii is considering similar action, and a ban on farming octopus or importing farmed octopus meat has been introduced in Congress. A planned octopus farm in Spain's Canary Islands is attracting opposition from scientists and animal welfare advocates.

Critics offer many arguments against raising octopuses for food, including possible releases of waste, antibiotics, or pathogens from aquaculture facilities. But as a psychologist, I see intelligence as the most intriguing part of the equation. Just how smart are cephalopods, really? After all, it's legal to farm chickens and cows. Is an octopus smarter than, say, a turkey?

## A big, diverse group

Cephalopods are a broad class of molluscs that includes the coleoids – cuttlefish, octopus, and squid – as well as the chambered nautilus. Coleoids range in size from adult squid only a few millimetres long (*Idiosepius*) to the largest living invertebrates, the giant squid (*Architeuthis*) and colossal squid (*Mesonychoteuthis*), which can grow to over 40 feet in length and weigh over 450 kg.

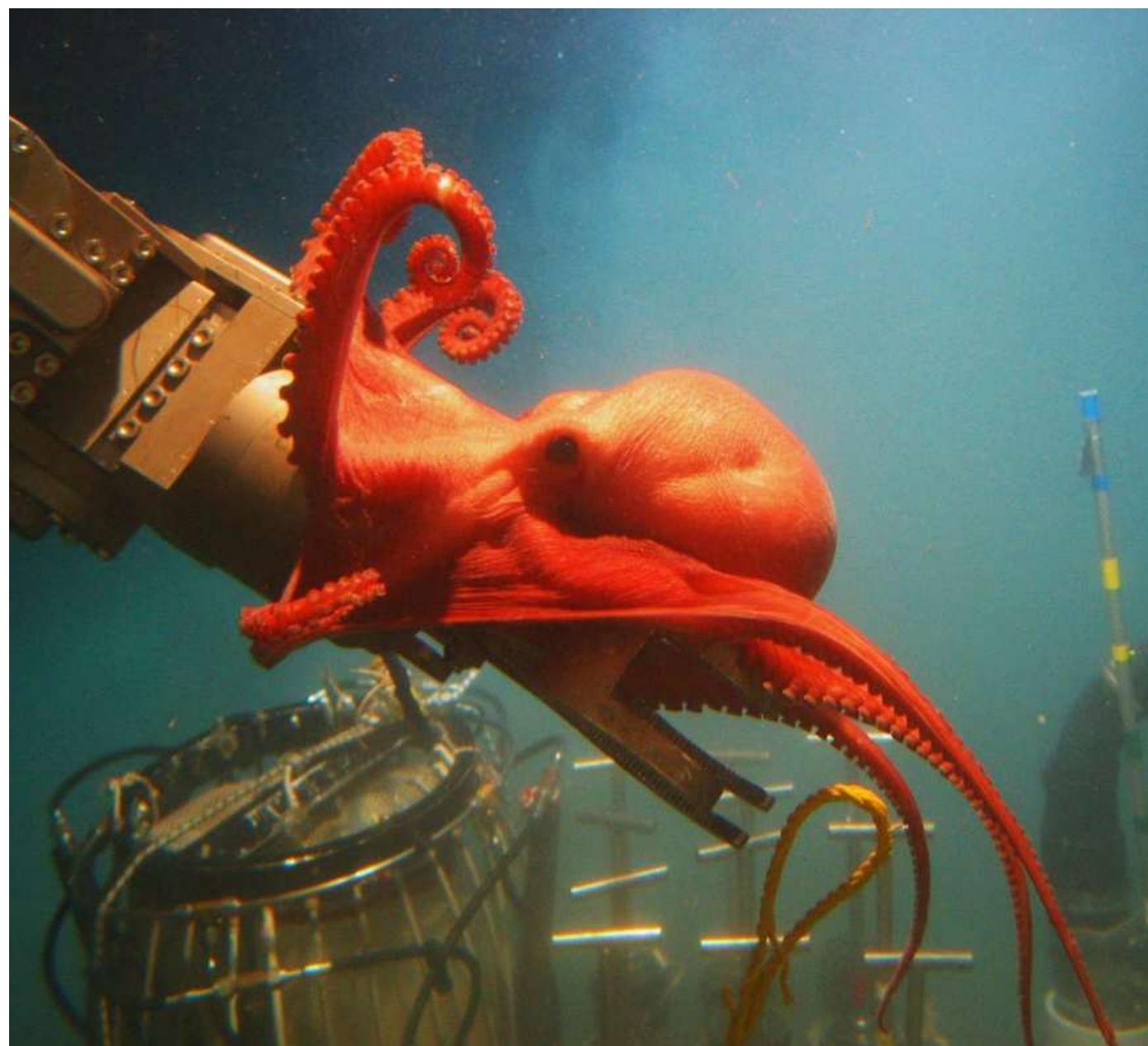
Some of these species live alone in the nearly featureless darkness of the deep ocean; others live socially on active, sunny coral reefs. Many are skilled hunters, but some feed passively on floating debris. Because of this enormous diversity, the size and complexity of cephalopod brains and behaviours also vary tremendously.

Almost everything that's known about cephalopod cognition comes from intensive study of just a few species. When considering the welfare of a designated species of captive octopus, it's important to be careful about using data collected from a distant evolutionary relative.

## Can we measure alien intelligence?

Intelligence is fiendishly hard to define and measure, even in humans. The challenge grows exponentially in studying animals with sensory, motivational, and problem-solving skills that differ profoundly from ours.

Historically, researchers have tended to focus on whether animals think like humans, ignoring the abilities that animals may have that humans lack. To avoid this problem, scientists have tried to find more objective measures of cognitive abilities.



A deep-water octopus investigates the port manipulator arm of the ALVIN submersible research vessel. US NOAA

One option is a relative measure of brain to body size. The best-studied species of octopus, *Octopus vulgaris*, has about 500 million neurones; that's relatively large for its small body size and similar to a starling, rabbit, or turkey.

More accurate measures may include the size, neurone count, or surface area of specific brain structures thought to be important for learning. While this is useful in mammals, the nervous system of an octopus is built completely differently.

Over half of the neurones in *Octopus vulgaris*, about 300 million, are not in the brain at all but distributed in "mini-brains," or ganglia, in the arms. Within the central brain, most of the remaining neurones are dedicated to visual processing, leaving less than a quarter of its neurones for other processes such as learning and memory.

In other species of octopus, the general structure is similar, but complexity varies. Wrinkles and folds in the brain increase its surface area and may enhance neural connections and communication. Some species of octopus, notably those living in reef habitats, have more wrinkled brains than those living in the deep sea, suggesting that these species may possess a higher degree of intelligence.

## Holding out for a better snack

Because brain structure is not a foolproof measure of intelligence, behavioural tests may provide better evidence. One of the highly complex behaviours that many cephalopods show is visual camouflage. They can open and close tiny sacs just below their skin that contain coloured pigments and reflectors, revealing specific colours. *Octopus vulgaris* has up to 1,500,000 chromatophores, or pigment sacs, in a single square inch of skin.

Like many cephalopods, the common cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis*) is thought to be colour-blind. But it can use its excellent vision to produce a dizzying

array of patterns across its body as camouflage. The Australian giant cuttlefish, *Sepia apama*, uses its chromatophores to communicate, creating patterns that attract mates and warn off aggressors. This ability can also come in handy for hunting; many cephalopods are ambush predators that blend into the background or even lure their prey.

The hallmark of intelligent behaviour, however, is learning and memory, and there is plenty of evidence that some octopuses and cuttlefish learn in a way that is comparable to learning in vertebrates. The common cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis*), as well as the common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) and the day octopus (*Octopus cyanea*), can all form simple associations, such as learning which image on a screen predicts that food will appear.

Some cephalopods may be capable of more complicated forms of learning, such as reversal learning – learning to flexibly adjust behaviour when different stimuli signal reward. They may also be able to inhibit impulsive responses. In a 2021 study that gave common cuttlefish a choice between a less desirable but immediate snack of crab and a preferred treat of live shrimp after a delay, many of the cuttlefish chose to wait for the shrimp.

## A new frontier for animal welfare

Considering what's known about their brain structures, sensory systems, and learning capacity, it appears that cephalopods as a group may be similar in intelligence to vertebrates as a group. Since many societies have animal welfare standards for mice, rats, chickens, and other vertebrates, logic would suggest that there's an equal case for regulations enforcing humane treatment of cephalopods.

Such rules generally specify that when a species is held in captivity, its housing

**Cephalopods are capable of visual camouflage. They use tiny sacs just below their skin that contain coloured pigments and reflectors, revealing specific colours. *Octopus vulgaris* has up to 1,500,000 chromatophore in a single square inch of skin**

conditions should support the animal's welfare and natural behaviour. This view has led some U.S. states to outlaw confined cages for egg-laying hens and crates too narrow for pregnant sows to turn around.

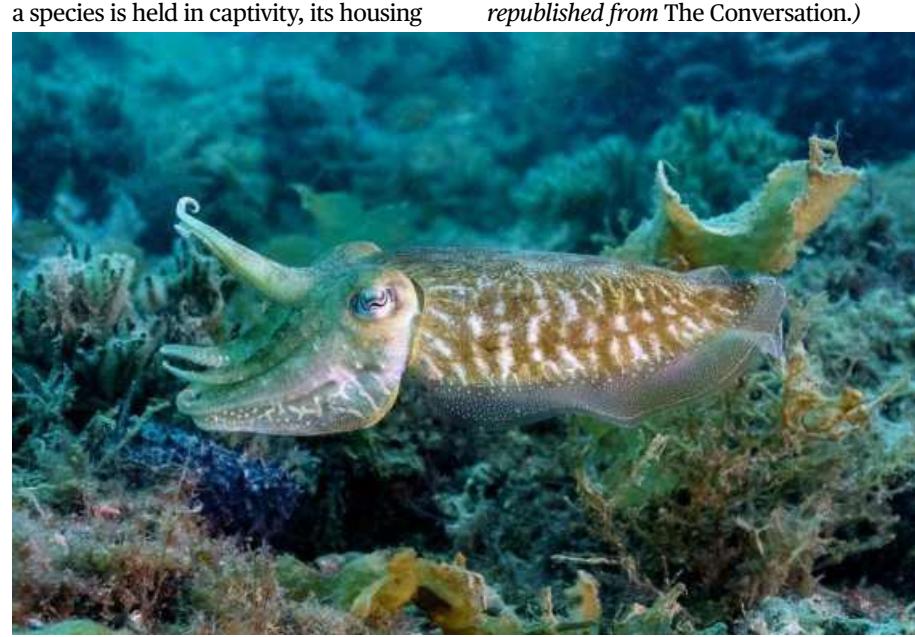
Animal welfare regulations say little about invertebrates, but guidelines for the care and use of captive cephalopods have started to appear over the past decade. In 2010, the European Union required considering ethical issues when using cephalopods for research. And in 2015, AAALAC International, an international accreditation organisation for ethical animal research, and the Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations promoted guidelines for the care and use of cephalopods in research. The U.S. National Institutes of Health is currently considering similar guidelines.

The "alien" minds of octopuses and their relatives are fascinating, not the least because they provide a mirror through which we can reflect on more familiar forms of intelligence. Deciding which species deserve moral consideration requires selecting criteria, such as neurone count or learning capacity, to inform those choices. Once these criteria are set, it may be well to also consider how they apply to the rodents, birds, and fish that occupy more familiar roles in our lives.

(Rachel Blaser is professor of neuroscience, cognition, and behaviour at the University of San Diego. This article is republished from The Conversation.)



A common octopus. ALBERT KOK (CC BY-SA)



A common cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis*) in Portugal's Arrábida Natural Park. DIEGO DELSO (CC BY-SA)



A Kashmiri boatman breaks the frozen surface to make his way through Dal Lake, Srinagar. AP

**Kashmiris forced to burn wood for heat as weather turns frigid**

Press Trust of India

Residents of Kashmir are going back to traditional ways of coping with intense cold wave conditions as frequent and unscheduled power cuts have rendered modern heating gadgets useless.

Kashmir is dealing with Chilai Kalan, a 40-day winter period notorious for being the harshest part of the season. On Saturday, Srinagar city witnessed the coldest night in 33 years after the minimum temperature dipped to a bone-chilling -8.5 degrees C. Other places in the valley also experienced extreme sub-zero temperatures, which caused water pipes in many areas to freeze.

Over the past couple of decades, residents of urban Kashmir had done away with traditional heating arrangements, including wood-based hamams, bukhari, and wicker-claypot kangris, as the supply of electricity improved year after year.

But with the region experiencing one of its toughest winters in recent memory, power supply in most parts of Kashmir has been erratic at best, rendering electric heating redundant.

"Over the past few years, we had become accustomed to using electric gadgets to keep ourselves warm. With 12-hour cuts every day, we have now gone back to kangris," Yasir Ahmad, a resident

**Over the past decades, urban Kashmiris had done away with wood-based hamams, bukhari, and wicker-claypot kangris, as the supply of electricity improved year after year**

of the posh Gulbahar colony in Srinagar, said.

Ahmad said his investment in an air conditioner had "gone to waste."

Abdul Ahad Wani, who lives in the old city's Rainawari area, said he recently converted his wood-fuelled hamam to an electricity-powered one. "I felt the wood hamam was cumbersome, and an electric hamam would be available at the push of a switch," Mr. Wani said.

"But people in power have a habit of proving us wrong."

With limited LPG and kerosene in the open market, power cuts have fuelled business for wood and charcoal vendors.

"All I can say is the demand for wood has been good this winter. People have to keep themselves warm, and there is nothing better than wood in these times," Mohammad Abbas Zargar, a firewood dealer, said.

An official of the Kashmir Power Development Corporation (KPDCL) said that while there had been load-shedding due to the sharp rise in demand, claims of 16-hour cuts may be exaggerated.

"We are trying our best to follow the load-shedding schedule that has been announced already. However, due to overloading of the circuit, distribution transformers and other allied infrastructure sometimes get damaged, leading to longer power cuts," he said.

The official added that although the KDPCL has maintained a transformer bank to keep disruptions to a minimum, the bank also suffers more damage during winter. "Our staff is doing its job. We request people to use electricity judiciously and as per their load agreement," he added.

Meanwhile, traffic authorities have asked motorists to drive carefully as roads in many places are covered by a layer of ice at dawn, rendering them slippery.

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