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5-6 February '25

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Govt. of Bihar

BIHAR STATE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD
A Govt of Bihar Undertaking

TENDER NO. 42/E-TENDER/ BSTDC/ EPC/2024-25
(Through e-procurement mode only – www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

- Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation Limited (BSTDC), a nodal agency for executing tourism infrastructure projects in the state of Bihar, India, intends to execute tourism infrastructure projects at its tourism potential locations.
- Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. (BSTDC Ltd) invites sealed bids from eligible experienced Agencies registered with central Government/ any state Government or any PSU or an agency of International or National repute for execution of works as given below on EPC mode.
- Registration with any works department of Bihar will be essential after issue of L.O.A. and before executing the agreement:-

SL. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (in Lac)	Bid Processing fees (Beltron)	Bid Document Cost	Bid Security (EMD) (in Lac)	Contract Duration
1	DEVELOPMENT OF LUV KUSH ECO TOURISM PARK AT VALMIKI NAGAR, BIHAR.	Rs-4798.15	Rs-5,900.00	Rs-10,000.00	Rs-57.99	18 Months
4.	Date of Inviting tender	: Date- 04.02.2025				
5.	Date of downloading of bid document	: From 28.02.2025 to 25.03.2025 up to 3:00PM. Through website www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in only				
6.	Place & Date of Pre-bid meeting	: Date 07.03.2025 Time 03:00PM. (Office of Chief Engineer B.S.T.D.C., Patna)				
7.	Last date and time for receipt on eproc2	: Date 25.03.2025 up to 3:00PM				
8.	Last date and time for receipt of hard copy of EMD or other document (if any)	: Date 26.03.2025 up to 3:00PM				
9.	Time and date of opening technical bids	: Date 26.03.2025 Time 3:30PM Through website www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in				
10.	Time and date of opening of financial bids	: To be communicated later on				
11.	Place of opening of bid	: Through website www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in				
12.	Period of bids validity	: 120 days				
13.	Officer inviting bids	: Executive Engineer (North), BSTDC Ltd.				

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

PR. No.18845 (B & C) 2024-25

Executive Engineer (North)
BSTDC Ltd, Patna.

नशे की मार, बर्बाद करें सुखी परिवार।

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
MAIN ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING, SECTOR-5, NOIDA, G.B. NAGAR (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <http://etender.up.nic.in>

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

(A)

- 41/GM/Sr.M. (E&M)-II/2024-25/ET, Annual Electrical Maintenance of Staff Quarter at Sector-14A, Noida. Cost Rs. 65.41 Lacs.
- 42/GM/Sr.M. (E&M)-II/2024-25/ET, Annual Maintenance of Operational and Security of Fountain at Sec-19, 20, 26, F, D-Block Sec-27, 55, A, F, D-Block Sec-56, Sec-26, Nehru Park & DM Complex Noida. Cost Rs. 47.44 Lacs.
- 54/GM (E&M)/S.M./E/M- III/24-25, Annual maintenance and repairing of 16/30 Mtr High mast in Sector-39,40,41,46,47,48 and MP-3 road, Noida. Cost Rs. 39.11 lacs.

Which can be uploaded by **date:-18.02.2025 Upto 5.00 PM**. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on **date:- 19.02.2025 at 11.00 AM**.

(B)

- 35/DGM/Sr.M. (E&M)-II/2024-25/ET, Annual Maint. Of Community Center, Authority Building at Sec-19,20,27,55,56,66,68 Vill-Garhi Chaukhandi, Noida. Cost Rs. 43.45 Lacs.
- 40/GM/Sr.M. (E&M)-II/2024-25/ET, Annual Maintenance of Window/Split Type Air-Conditioner in Staff Quarter, Sector-14A, Noida. Cost Rs. 61.23 Lacs.

Which can be uploaded by **date: 11.02.2025 Upto 5.00 PM**. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on **date: 12.02.2025 at 11.00 AM**.

Office: Sector-5, Noida

General Manager (E&M)
NOIDA

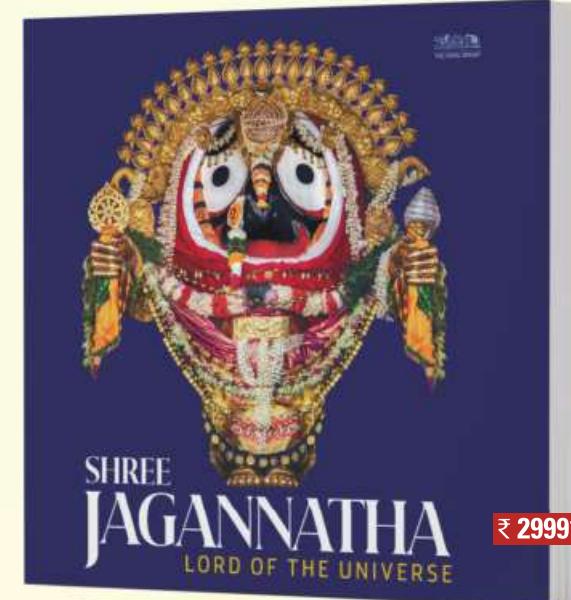
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TENDER NOTICE
INVITES SEALED TENDERS FROM
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SVPISTM, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, Coimbatore invites sealed tenders from Technical Textile Machinery Manufacturers for supplying prototype / Laboratory model / Miniature equipment/Instruments dedicated only for academic activities in Textile / Technical Textile domain. For further details, visit www.svpistm.ac.in

Director

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PWD
KAMRUP ROAD CIRCLE, FANCY BAZAR, GUWAHATI - 01

No.GRC/NIT/510/2021-22/Pl.I/

PRESS NOTICE INVITING RE-TENDER

The Superintending Engineer PWD (Roads), Kamrup Road Circle, Guwahati - 01 on behalf of Governor of Assam invites re-bids online from approved and eligible registered contractors of APWRD for "Construction and Improvement of Road under SODP-G for the year 2024-25" under Jalukbari Territorial Road Division for 3(Three) nos. of work, amounting to Rs. 344.55 Lakh(Aprox) (including 12% GST +1% LWC) etc. Details may be seen in the website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the office of the undersigned from 10/02/25 to 19/02/25 during office hours.

Superintending Engineer PWD (Road),
Kamrup Road Circle, Guwahati - 01

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(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking) Corporate Identity No. UA40109UP2001SGC025867/2358
Victoria Cross Vijeta Garbar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwali Road, Dehradun-248001,
Telephone-(0135)-2763672-75, Fax-(0135)-2760289, Website: www.uktenders.gov.in

E-TENDER NOTICE (NT)
TENDER SPECIFICATION No. CCP-II/19/2024-2025

Uttarakhand Power Corporation Ltd. Dehradun invites e-tender for following items:

Sl. No.	Name of items	Quantity (Nos.)	Estimate cost (in ₹ Crore)	Average yearly Turn Over of Preceding Three Financial Year (in ₹ Crore)	Earnest Money Deposit (in ₹ Lakh)	Cost of tender document including GST (in ₹)	Last Date & time of online request for Tender and submission of tender in online & off line mode	Date of opening of Part-I of tender in online & off line mode
1	Portable CT-PT Combined Test equipment (Secondary injection based)	20	6.097	9.145	12.193	23 600	24.02.2025 upto 17:00 Hrs.	25.02.2025 at 15:30 Hrs.

For further details, please visit our website www.uktenders.gov.in.

No.: 57/EE(CM)/UPCL/A-2 Date: 05.02.2025

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Corporate (Contract & Procurement-II)

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देवी अहिल्या विश्वविद्यालय, इन्दौर
विश्वविद्यालय भवन, आर.एस.टी. मार्ग, इन्दौर-452001

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म.प्र. माध्यम/118690/2025

कुलसंचिव

Himachal Pradesh
Jal Shakti Vibhag
"Notice Inviting e-Tender"

Online bids on item rate basis are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division, Jawali on behalf of the Governor of Himachal Pradesh in Electronic Tendering system in two covers for the under mentioned works from the Eligible Contractors/ Firms enlisted with Himachal Pradesh, Jal Shakti Vibhag:-

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Bid security	Time of completion	Cost of Form
1.	Mitigation of landslide/Flood Hazard for Kotla town in Tehsil/Jawali Distt. Kangra HP - Construction of wire crates in various reaches, Channelisation of Nallah and construction of RCC Duct= 495.00 mtr)	48901677/-	521561/-	Six Month	5000/-

The tender documents and other instructions can be downloaded or viewed online from the portal <https://hptenders.gov.in> on the website by the firms/individual registered contractors.

Key Dates:

I	Date of online publication	04.02.2025 at 6.00 PM
II	Uploading of e-tender Documents	04.02.2025 at 6.00 PM
III	Last date of submission of e-tenders (Online)	11.02.2025 at 11.00 AM
IV	Date of opening of Eligibility Information(Cover)	11.02.2025 at 11.30 AM
V	In case of offline mode payments, physical submission of original Demand Draft on account of cost of Bid documents, Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in the shape Demand Draft NSCs/ Savings Account/ Time Deposit Receipts/ FDRs	Eligibility Information/ Technical Bids i.e. by 11.02.2025 to 11.30 either through Registered Post or By Hand failing which the Bids shall stand non-responsive.
VI	Date of opening of online Financial Bids(Cover-2)	The Financial Bids of the successful Contractors/Firms shall be opened after the approval of Eligibility Criteria/Technical Bids by the competent authority of the department

TERMS AND CONDITION:-

- The e-tender documents shall be uploaded online in two covers i.e. Cover-1and Cover-2.
- Cover-1 shall contain scanned copies of "Eligibility Information"
- Cover-2 shall contain "Financial Bid" on the prescribed form.
- Cover-1 shall contain Scanned copies of following "Eligibility information" (Scanned copies to be uploaded)
 - The bid/lender of those contractors who do not deposit the cost of tender document and the earnest money in the prescribed manner will summarily be rejected.
 - Receipts of the payment made through e-procurement on account of cost of tender documents and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in case of online payments. In case the payment through offline mode, scanned copies of Demand Draft and NSCs/ FDRs on account of cost of tender documents and Earnest money Deposit (EMD).
 - Certificate of registration with Jal Shakti Vibhag in appropriate class and latest Renewal thereof.
 - Copy of valid exemption letter, in case, the Contractor/ Firm has deposited lump sum amount with the Engineer-in-Chief/ Chief Engineer/ Superintending Engineer of Jal Shakti Vibhag. He will be exempted from payment of earnest money in individual case for the work allocated in different parts of the State at the time of tendering. This facility will be limited to two times of the deposited amount in single or more tenders. If the Contractor/ Firm has already availed this facility, he has to deposit the earnest money up to the balance amount up to the limit, it falls short of requirement of the bid after adjusting the limit of the double the amount deposited through online (e-payment) or offline. However, in the event of acceptance of tender, the Contractor/ Firm shall have to deposit the amount equivalent to the earnest money in the prescribed manner before issue of the award letter.
 - In the event of availing EMD exemption facility, the Contractor/ Firm is required to upload scanned copy of affidavit duly attested by Notary/ Oath Commissioner regarding number of tenders in which the Contractor/ Firm is participating and total value of the earnest money involved. In case of giving false affidavit/ information, the offer of the Contractor/ Firm will be liable to be rejected summarily and the Contractor/ Firm shall also be blacklisted.
 - Copy of Income tax (Assessment Year 2023-24) & PAN No. and GST Registration No.
 - Copy of EPF registration. If not registered then the successful bidder should get registered within one month after acceptance of the bid by the employer.
 - Annual Turnover of last three years
 - scanned copy of undertaking that I have carefully studied all the terms and condition in the schedule of quantity before quoting the rates.
 - Joint venture is not allowed.
 - However the Firm/bidder shall be free to engage any number of specialist firms (execution of specialized components of the project.
 - The authorization letter regarding digital signature certificate (DSC) of the person authorized by the registered bidder to upload the bid , be uploaded along with other documents online .
 - Scanned copy of Form No. 6 & 8 to be uploaded duly signed by the bidders.
- In supersession to this department notification number IPH-B(A)-9/1-2010-I dated 30.08.2018, the Governor of Himachal Pradesh is pleased to modify the tendering limit in column No. 4 of Table-1 attached to the rules of Enlistment of contractors notified vide notification No. IPH -B (C) 17-4/2008-I dated 29th Oct. 2013 in Jal Shakti Vibhag in respect of A, B, C & D Class contractors further amendment Notification Secretary of JSV to the Government of Himachal Pradesh vide No. IPH-B (A)-9/1-2010-I dated Shmba-2 11.10.2022.

Sr. No.	Category	Class	Existing Tendering Limit	Enhanced Tendering Limit
1	Civil	A	Without any limit	Without any upper limit and not eligible to participate for the tenders in the limit of Class "C" & "D"
2		B	Upto Rs. 2.00 crore	Upto Rs. 5.00 Crore and not eligible to participate for the tenders in the limit of class "D"
3		C	Upto Rs. 80 Lakh	Upto Rs. 2.00 Crore
4		D	Upto Rs. 30 Lakh	Upto Rs. 50 Lakh

3. The bids/tenders of the contractors/firms, who fail to fulfill any of the above eligibility information as required in Cover-1, shall be summarily rejected.

4. Any documents/information found false/fabricated during scrutiny or later anytime, the tender will be liable to be cancelled immediately and the earnest money shall be forfeited.

5. Cover-2 shall contain Financial bid (SOQ) where contractor will quote his offer for each item.

6. The clarifications, if any will be taken from the successful Contractor/ Firm only in respect of error and omission, technical aspects and not, in any case on financial bid.

7. The representatives of the Contractors/ Firms should inspect the site(s) of work(s) himself so as to make him well conversant with the site condition.

8. If opening day of the bid/tender is a holiday, the bid/tenders shall be opened on next working day of the month.

9. The offer of the tender shall be kept open for 70 days.

10. Instructions for e-tendering:-

- All tendering process such as tender documents, processing fee, deposit of earnest money and submission of bid documents etc. shall be carried out online through e-procurement website <https://hptenders.gov.in>. The contractor should register himself on the website and obtain user ID & password before bidding.
- All payments regarding purchase of bid documents and deposit of earnest money shall be strictly through online mode (e-payment) only. The contractors/firms are advised to open their bank account(s) with the Core Banking solutions Branches (With NEFT/RTGS facility) to participate in the tendering.
- No physical submission of the documents will be allowed except original Demand Draft as cost of Bid documents and original NSCs/ FDRs on account of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in case of payment through offline.
- Any documents/information found false/fabricated during scrutiny or later anytime, the tender will be liable to be cancelled immediately and the earnest money shall be forfeited and the Contractor/ Firm can also be blacklisted.
- Before submission of online Bids, contractors/firms must ensure that scanned copies of all necessary documents have been uploaded with the bid.

No. EE-JSV-JWL-EA-I-e-Tender/2024-9452-9502 Date: -03.02.2025

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HP / 5035/24-25

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LEGAL NOTICE

Publication Notice (Dasti)
IN THE HONOURABLE COURT OF DELHI
AT NEW DELHI
Notice Under Order V
Rule 20 Code of Civil Procedure
RFA No. 670/2023 (U/O XL) Rule 5 Read with Section 151 C.P.C) Appeal against the Order dated 11.04.2023
Passed by Sh. Vishal Singh, ADD-03, West, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi In Suit No. USJ.DNo. 6098



SYSTEM MALFUNCTION
IAF fighter plane crashes near Gwalior

NEWS » PAGE 12

INSTRUCTIONS TO ARMY
Prepare plan for 'voluntary departure' of Gazans: Israel

WORLD » PAGE 16



UN ISSUES WARNING
80 killed as militants, Army clash in Sudan

WORLD » PAGE 16

PARLEY
Sovereignty versus financial constraints

Should India build a foundational AI model?

OPINION » PAGE 9



BRIGHT START
India cruises past England in first ODI

SPORT » PAGE 17

IN BRIEF



BJP attempting to poach candidates, says AAP chief

NEW DELHI
AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday accused the BJP of trying to poach his party's candidates. Instead of directly naming the BJP, he said "the party that engages in hurling verbal abuses" had offered ₹15 crore each to 16 candidates to switch over. » Page 2

Massive rigging in Milkipur bypoll, alleges Akhilesh

LUCKNOW
Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday alleged that the BJP indulged in large-scale rigging with assistance from the administration in the Milkipur bypoll. » Page 4

Proposals worth ₹4.40 lakh crore received: Mamata

KOLKATA
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said investment proposals worth ₹4.40 lakh crore were received during the two-day Bengal Global Business Summit, 2025. » Page 4

Centre plays down U.S. handling of deportees

Both Houses erupt in protest over handcuffing and chaining of Indians; Jaishankar says the use of such restraints is a standard practice; US has sent back over 15,000 Indians since 2009, says govt.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Amid protests from the Opposition members over the way undocumented Indian nationals were handcuffed and chained by the U.S. while deporting them to India, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday informed Parliament that the deportation of undocumented migrants was not a new development, and the use of restraints was a "standard operating procedure".

Mr. Jaishankar said the Centre would be engaging with the U.S. government to ensure that the deportees were not mistreated in any manner while being sent back. The Minister made the statement as both the Houses witnessed an uproar over the treatment meted out to 104 illegal Indian immigrants who landed in Amritsar on Wednesday on a U.S. military plane.

Speaking in the Rajya Sabha first, Mr. Jaishankar said a total of 15,756 illegal Indian immigrants had been deported to India from the U.S. since 2009.

The Lok Sabha witnessed multiple disruptions and was eventually adjourned after Mr. Jaishankar made the statement amid protests.



In shackles: Chained undocumented Indian nationals being deported to India on a U.S. military aircraft. X @USBCPHIEF

tions and was eventually adjourned after Mr. Jaishankar made the statement amid protests.

He stressed that it was the obligation of all countries if they were found to be living illegally abroad. "Sir, honourable members would be aware that the process of deportation is not a new one, I repeat not a new one, and has been ongoing for several years," Mr. Jaishankar said, while sharing a year-wise breakup of deportees since 2009.

The highest deportation was witnessed in 2019 with

2,042 illegal Indian immigrants being sent back to the country, he said.

Mr. Jaishankar also asserted that it was in the collective interest of the House to discourage illegal movement, and the focus of the government would be to "crack down on the illegal migration industry".

Expressing outrage over the handcuffing of deportees, Opposition members staged a protest outside Parliament.

CONTINUED ON

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RELATED REPORTS ON

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U.S. doubles down on deportations

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Amidst outrage over the treatment of Indian deportees, the United States doubled down on its decision to fly the alleged illegal immigrants shackled and handcuffed aboard a military plane.

FULL REPORT ON

» PAGE 13

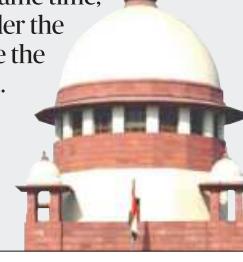
What was 'gross' about the 12 Bills kept pending for 3 years: SC to T.N. Governor

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked what Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi found so "gross" about the 12 Bills the State government sent him for assent that they were kept pending for over three years.

You [Governor] are saying 'I withhold consent', but at the same time, I will not ask them to reconsider the Bills. This would only frustrate the procedure under Article 200... The Governor seems to have adopted his own procedure here

JUSTICE J.B. PARDIWALA
Supreme Court Judge



SC to hear Kerala's plea on Governors in March

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The State of Kerala on Thursday pushed for an early hearing in the Supreme Court its writ petition arguing that Governors in Opposition-ruled States

have triggered a tendency to delay assent or indefinitely sit on crucial Bills passed by the Legislative Assemblies. The matter is likely to be listed in March.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 4

The judge further observed that the Tamil Nadu Assembly had re-passed the 10 Bills in a Special Session and sent them again to the Governor for assent. Ultimately, when the State government approached the court against the Governor's perceived inaction in November 2023, the latter had quickly referred two of the Bills to the President for consideration. The President had subsequently assented to one Bill, rejected seven and not considered the remaining two proposed laws.

"We do not want to undermine the powers of the Governor... But, tell us, what is that something gross the Governor found that he kept these pending for over three years?" Justice Pardiwala asked.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

Congress practises politics of appeasement: Modi in RS

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Comparing the Congress rule with his government's record, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday that the Congress practised the politics of *tushthikaran* (appeasement) while his government implemented the policy of "*santushthikaran*" (satisfaction of all).

He was replying to the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address. In his 90-minute speech, he said the Congress had only "hatred and anger" towards B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of



the Constitution. This was reflected in its failure to give due recognition like the Bharat Ratna to him. Without naming the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, he said those carrying copies of the Constitution had

CONTINUED ON

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UGC extends date to submit feedback on draft guidelines

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A day after the Education Ministers of six non-BJP-ruled States passed a resolution against the University Grants Commission's draft guidelines on faculty, including appointment of vice-chancellors, the commission decided to extend the last date to submit feedback to February 28. A public notice issued by the UGC said the decision was taken in view of requests received from stakeholders to extend the last date.

Union Education Minis-

ter Dharmendra Pradhan said it was unfortunate and concerning to see how some political leaders, including Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, "twisted progressive educational reforms into imaginary threats" to sustain outdated political narratives.

"The draft regulations aim to broaden horizons, not narrow them. They seek to include more voices, not silence them," he said on social media.

RAHUL JOINS PROTEST

» PAGE 14

Yunus planned to kill me, says Hasina in speech

Kalol Bhattacharjee
DIBRUGARH

Bangladesh has become the "land of terrorists and militants", said its former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in a speech delivered online from New Delhi on Thursday.

The nearly hour-long speech was streamed on the web pages of the Awami League soon after a "bulldozer rally" by a mob demolished the historic 32, Dhamondi residence of Bangladesh's founding



In shambles: A man hammering the debris around the vandalised residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Dhaka on Thursday. AP

leader and Ms. Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, earlier in the day. Ms. Hasina, who is in ex-

ile in India after the fall of her government on August 5, said the people of Bangladesh would do justice

for the demolition of the house where she grew up. She said she would have to accomplish "some important assignment" in the coming days. "A game of destruction has started around Bangladesh, which is going through a phase of chaos and upheaval. Bangladesh, which was a role model of development across the world, has become the land of terrorists and militants," she said.

Ms. Hasina criticised the current government, led by Nobel laureate Moham-

mad Yunus, calling it "completely unconstitutional". "He has come to power using money power and by stepping on the dead bodies of many people of our country," she said. "There was meticulous planning by Yunus sahib to kill me and my sister," she added.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh protested "strongly" after Ms. Hasina's speech was disseminated online.

CONTINUED ON

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Delhi CEO: EVMs kept in strongrooms with three-tier security

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The EVMs and VVPAT machines used in the Delhi Assembly election have been kept in 70 strongrooms and are secured by a three-tier cordon, Delhi Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) R. Alice Vaz said on Thursday.

"These strongrooms, one for each Assembly constituency, are being safeguarded with stringent security measures as part of the Election Commission's protocols," read a statement by the CEO.

Forces on guard
It added that paramilitary forces personnel are guarding the innermost perimeter of the strongrooms, while the State armed police have been tasked with securing the outer perimeter.

"24x7 CCTV surveillance is in place, covering all sealed doors and corridors, and a double-lock system ensures additional security," the Delhi CEO said. The statement added, "The strongrooms are ac-

R. Alice Vaz said re-polling would not be conducted in any seat as none of the candidates had lodged complaints regarding the election process

cessible only through a single entry/exit point to prevent unauthorised access."

No entry for vehicles
Operational control rooms have been set up adjacent to the strongrooms and entry is prohibited for all vehicles, including those of VIPs and officials, the CEO also said.

In addition, Ms. Vaz stated that all election-related documents were found to be in order during the scrutiny, and added that the presence of observers, candidates and representatives ensured fairness in the electoral process.

She said that re-polling would not be required in any of the 70 constituencies, as no complaints were received from any of the 699 candidates.

16 party candidates were offered ministerial berths, ₹15 cr. each to switch sides, claims former CM; AAP leaders, who've resorted to levelling baseless allegations, are clearly frustrated: Delhi BJP chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Am Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of trying to poach his party's candidates. While making the claim on X, the AAP chief, instead of directly naming the BJP, said that "the party that engages in hurling verbal abuses" had offered ₹15 crore each to 16 AAP candidates to switch over.

"In the last two hours, 16 of our candidates have received calls saying they should leave AAP and join their party. They [the BJP] will make them [AAP's Assembly poll candidates] Ministers and will give them ₹15 crore each," Mr. Kejriwal claimed in the post issued at 8.47 p.m.

"If their party is getting more than 55 seats, then what is the need to call our candidates? Obviously, fake surveys have been conducted so that an atmosphere is created in



Keeping vigil: Security personnel near a strongroom in Gole Market on Thursday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

their favour, and they can steal our candidates," the former Delhi Chief Minister said in the post in Hindi, adding, "They will not be able to break away even one of our candidates."

Denying the allegations, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said AAP leaders have been in a state of panic ever since the Election Commission announced the poll schedule for the national capital.

"The frustration of AAP leaders after being rejected by the public in yesterday's polling is now clearly visible. In their desperation, AAP leaders have resorted to making baseless allegations," he said.

'Operation Lotus'
Addressing a press conference on the issue, senior AAP leader and party's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh said, "Two things are

clear. First, the BJP has accepted defeat in Delhi, and second, it has started 'Operation Lotus' to poach our candidates." He didn't reveal the names of the party candidates who had received the purported offer, but said that "the proof will be shared at an appropriate time".

Polling for the 70-member Assembly was held on Wednesday. The result will be declared on Saturday.

election in-charge Baijayant Panda.

"We will win by a bigger margin than what the exit polls have predicted. People from all sections of society have voted against the corrupt, anarchic, and incompetent government of AAP," said the Delhi BJP chief.

A senior leader who attended the meeting said the party, which conducted rallies, roadshows, and door-to-door drives, was successful in denting AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal's "clean" image.

While AAP and the Congress fought on all 70 seats, the BJP fielded candidates in 68 constituencies, leaving a seat each for NDA allies – Janata Dal (United) and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas).

Will come to power with over 50 seats, says Delhi BJP chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva on Thursday said his party is poised to come to power in the Capital by winning more than 50 of the 70 Assembly seats. "People have given a decisive mandate to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's double-engine government," he said, addressing mediapersons after the conclusion of a review meeting with the 70 National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidates, their election agents, and the party's district presidents at the Delhi BJP office.

The meeting was chaired by BJP national president J.P. Nadda and included senior leaders of its Delhi unit, including



Senior BJP leaders at a meeting on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bomb threats to schools: Class 9 student apprehended

Press Trust of India

A 15-year-old student of Class 9 was apprehended for sending bomb threat emails to four schools in Noida, the police said on Thursday.

He was later presented before the juvenile court,

an officer said.

According to the police, the student said he sent the emails because he did not want to attend school. He used a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to hide his location and IP address so that the emails could not be traced, an officer said.

"A police team, a fire bri-

gade team and a bomb squad were rushed to the schools after the school administration discovered the emails. The premises were evacuated first, and then thoroughly searched, but nothing suspicious was found," Noida Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Ram Badan Singh said.

At JNU convocation ceremony, V-C highlights rising 'nari shakti'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Vice-Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit on Thursday said she has seen a rise in "nari shakti (women empowerment)" after she took over the post as the head of the educational institution in 2022.

She made the comments at the 8th convocation ceremony of the university, which was held at the Prajan Bhawan, All India Council for Technical Education.

"After I've taken over as V-C, 'nari shakti' has increased. The number of women in leadership positions at JNU has increased to 27%. We have proved that in many areas, women are as good as men," she said.

A total of 2,721 students received their degrees on Thursday, including 798 PhD scholars, 1,310 master's students and 364 undergraduate students. Of the 798 PhD degrees awarded, 408 were to fe-



JNU Vice-Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit with former ISRO Chairman S.P. Somanath at the 8th convocation ceremony of the university on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

male scholars and 390 to male scholars.

rashtra while a special Centre for Tamil Studies was given ₹10 crore by the State government of Tamil Nadu, the V-C noted.

Among the dignitaries present at the event were former ISRO Chairman S.P. Somanath and the university's Chancellor and former Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal.

While the university was established in 1969 and its first convocation was held three years later in 1972, this was the 8th convocation as the ceremony was halted for 46 years. The second convocation took place in 2018.

Hearing of Cong. leader's defamation case on Feb. 19

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday deferred the hearing of a defamation case filed by Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit against Delhi Chief Minister Atishi and AAP MP Sanjay Singh to February 19. The hearing, which was earlier scheduled for Thursday, was deferred after the counsel for the AAP leaders sought more time to argue on the cognisance of the complaint.

Mr. Dikshit claimed that Ms. Atishi and Mr. Singh had alleged that he accepted money from the BJP to sabotage AAP's chances of winning in the Assembly election. He has sought ₹10 crore in damages for the harm caused to his reputation.

On January 16, the court had issued a notice to the AAP leaders on the complaint of Mr. Dikshit, who has contested against AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal in the New Delhi constituency in the Assembly poll.

Centre must decide fate of Sainik Farms colony: HC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday asked the Centre to decide on the regularisation of Sainik Farms in south Delhi, saying the "fate of the colony has to be decided".

The court, while dealing with several petitions seeking the regularisation of the colony, said the matter could not be kept pending and asked the Centre's counsel to take "complete instructions" from the Union government.

"Why should such a matter be kept pending? The fate of the colony has to be decided. We cannot permit it to go on like this. You have to make a decision," said the court.

It posted the next hearing to March.

HC seeks NIA stand on custody parole to jailed MP Rashid

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought the stand of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on allowing jailed MP Engineer Rashid, facing trial in a terror funding case, to attend the ongoing Parliament session on custody parole.

"He can, in the meantime, attend the session in judicial custody. He is an elected MP. What is the difficulty in sending him in custody?" said Justice Vikas Mahajan. The court granted time till February 7 to the NIA to seek instructions on the issue. The NIA counsel said the matter was "not that simple" as there was an issue of security. Custody parole entails a prisoner to be escorted by armed policemen to the place of visit.

The court was hearing Mr. Rashid's plea alleging he was left without remedy after the NIA court dealing with his bail application left him in limbo following his election to the Lok Sabha as it wasn't a special MP/MLA court. During the hearing, the counsel appearing for the High Court administration said an application was filed in the Supreme Court for a clarification and it would be mentioned on February 7 for listing. According to the top court's website, the matter would come up on February 10 or 11, he added.

Senior advocate N. Hariharan, appearing for Mr. Rashid, said the first leg of the Parliament session was ending on February 13 and his client ought to be permitted to represent his constituency.

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SPOTLIGHT



The men who play women under the stars

For centuries, men in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg region and parts of northern Goa have been playing women characters in Dashavtar performances that tell stories of Indian mythology. Purnima Sah talks to them to understand the complexities of their identities on and off stage, and their challenges in their roles and in society

Men apply make-up to transform themselves into mythological characters before a Dashavtar play at Zarap village of Sindhudurg district in Maharashtra. EMMANUEL YOGINI

Zarap village of Kudal taluka in Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra, is bustling. It's the evening, and the lanes are alive with Marathi devotional songs and stalls selling toys and *vada-pav*, *shakkarpura* and *khaja*. The village temple and its surroundings are lit up with twinkling lights. The fragrance of night jasmine and incense is in the air.

At 10.30 p.m., the Dashavtar artistes gather at Samir Tendolkar's house for dinner. Samir is the owner of the Tendolkar Paramparik Dashavtar Natya Mandal, a theatre company that has been conducting shows on stories of Indian mythology for the past 40 years. After eating chicken, rice, and sliced onion for dinner, the artistes head to the temple, a kilometre or so away. There, in the green room, behind the curtains of the concrete stage, they get ready for the show that will begin at midnight.

Artistes pray to a *petara*, a box where the props used in the show, including the Ganesha mask, are stored. Ganesha is the god of auspicious beginnings. Then, they sit in a row next to each other with a mirror placed over their iron trunks that hold costumes, hair, and make-up. Incandescent light bulbs hang over the boxes. A few children from the village squeeze themselves onto a cloth mat and watch two of the men transform into female characters.

Omprakash Chavan, 56, from Amdos village, is playing Rani Sukhanti, a character in her 20s, in a play from the *Shiva Purana*, a text considered sacred by the Hindus. Ganpat Ankush Manjarkar, 52, from Mochemad village is playing Ladkyा, the wife of a drunk farmer. She's a comic in the play, who later saves the queen's life.

Dashavtar is a form of theatre that relies on improvisation around a mythological narrative, and practitioners claim it has a history of at least 800 years in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district and northern Goa. Ever since it began, men have been playing women's roles. The men are usually farmers or small business owners or daily wage labourers for some part of the year.

Gender blender

Every year, the Dashavtar season begins after the paddy harvest, towards the end of the Navaratri fast in October and continues until May of the following year.

The plays are based on a clutch of stories of the 10 incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu: Matsya (the fish), Kurma (the tortoise), Varaha (the boar), Narasimha (the lion-man), Vamana (the dwarf), Rama from the *Ramayana*, Parashurama (Rama with an axe), Krishna (or his brother Balarama) from the *Mahabharata*, Buddha, and Kalki (an avatar yet to come).

The temple authorities from villages offer contracts to Dashavtar theatre companies to perform during the annual fair, called *jatra*. The companies sign up Dashavtar artistes through a verbal contract that they will be touring and performing with them for the season.

In Sindhudurg, there are around 400 Dashavtar artistes, of which about 25 experienced men play women characters. Prashant Tendolkar, 48, who has been playing only male characters for two decades, says, "For a society that has placed men and women in two brackets with a certain identity, we have a long way to go before people see artistes as just artistes."

He recalls instances when men who play women have difficulty finding a woman to marry. "People question their gender identity which is hard to deal with. Most want to play male characters as they are seen as strong, powerful, and dominating." Prashant has a motorcycle seat cover shop in Tendoli village in Kudal taluka.

Dinesh Gore is an 11th generation practitioner, who claims his family started the Dashavtar in Sindhudurg. His house has what he claims is an

For a society that has placed men and women in two brackets with a certain identity, we have a long way to go before people see artistes as just artistes

PRASHANT TENDOLKAR
Dashavtar artiste who only plays male roles

800-year-old Ganesha *mukhavata* (face masks) used by his ancestors. He says his forefathers saw Karnataka's Yakshagana performances and felt the need to promote mythological stories in Maharashtra.

Eight brothers split into different locations and formed Dashavtar companies. Gore, who runs Balkrishna Gore Dashavtar Natya Mandal, claims, "Those days Dashavtar was only performed by Brahmins, but after the death of the brothers, the Devli community (also known as Devadasi, considered low-caste people who clean temples) began performing to keep the tradition alive." Two years ago, Gore formed a women's Dashavtar group, but participation and acceptance have been low.

A woman on stage

The night grows deeper in Zarap. Omprakash, who says he has performed in over 8,000 renditions across 40 years, cleans his face with water, puts on moisturiser, then layers it with foundation, lipstick on his cheeks for blush, and powders the whole look into place. He carefully wears eyeliner, kajal, mascara, and shapes his eyebrows using a kajal pencil. He combs his shoulder-length black curly hair into place.

"When I performed the Dashavtar at Mumbai's J.J. Hospital 25 years ago, the organisers had hired professional make-up artistes. That is when I realised how make-up is done. Earlier, I would use powdered colours mixed with water to paint my face," Omprakash says, adding that the same colour is used to paint clay idols. "Many still use it." He was 10 when he first watched *Wah-to he durvanchi judi*, a Marathi stage play, at a high school in his village. He dreamt of training as a professional actor, but the closest he could get was Dashavtar, because it required no trained acting. All it needed was knowledge of Hindu mythology and a sense of improvisation.

At 14, when his father passed away, his mother took up daily wage labour jobs and sculpted clay idols. Omprakash would draw science projects for his classmates to earn in stationery, to keep his schooling going. "I managed to study till class 10. At 19, I performed at the Dashavtar near our village. I had two reasons to join: one to fill my stomach and another, to act," he says.

Until about 30 years ago, artistes would pack a few cloths in a bedsheet and travel with theatre companies for six months, sleep in temples and move to the next location on foot. Omprakash's first performance was of Vatsala, the daughter of Balarām. The Walavalkar Dashavtar company, which is over 100 years old, liked his work and offered him a two-year contract.

Later, he joined Naik Mochemadkar Dashavtar company and performed with them for 29 years. Omprakash says he has played a 20-year

old woman, a pregnant woman, a young bride, a queen, Draupadi and many more. He modulates his voice, pitching it higher, making movements that are fluid, to mimic a woman's voice.

Once he wears a blouse, Omprakash covers his chest with a piece of cloth to finish hair and jewellery, before draping the sari. "I grew up around my mother and have watched Pranali (his wife). By society's definition, men are supposed to be hot tempered, strong. But women have layers of emotions that they use when required. I was very nervous when I performed first as I was aware how society perceives a man dressing as a woman," he says, as he slips on green glass bangles that represent fortune and fertility in a happy married life.

He has been married 32 years now, and Pranali is an ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) worker. They have two sons and a daughter. From being childhood friends to falling in love, Pranali has seen her husband's journey. "I have always loved watching him get dressed and perform. I tell people my husband is more beautiful than I am," she says at their home before he sets out for the performance.

Pranali has her own challenges. She is often bullied for loving a man who takes on women's characters. "My parents were against our marriage. Most women don't find a man who is sensitive and calm," she says. Omprakash sells homemade spices, sculpts clay idols and makes soft drinks under the brand name PO, the first letters of both their names, and a word that means 'drink' in Hindi.

"There are two theories about why only men perform in Dashavtar: one is based on the tale of Lord Vishnu assuming the form of a beautiful Mohini, a female avatar to outsmart the demons. The other is that menstruation restricts women from participating in any religious events," says Omprakash, as he gets up to drape *nauvari* (nine-yard) sari. It is almost time for the performance.

The stars shine bright

As the night gets darker and the stars get clearer in the open sky, residents of Zarap and nearby villages gather at the temple ground. They sit on plastic sheets and wrap themselves in shawls to watch the show.

This Dashavtar revolves around Dambhasur, a demon king, who wants to kill Raja Sukant, his

son-in-law. Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction, had promised Dambhasur that no one would be able to kill him except his son-in-law. So, the demon would kill every daughter born to him and his wife. However, his daughter, Rani Sukhanti, was rescued and she married Sukant. Each play has all the nine rasas, including anger, humour, and sorrow. There is music with a harmonium, a *pakhawaj* (a percussion instrument), and sym-

bols. Musicians sit in a corner of the stage. The bench on the stage changes its role depending on the requirement of the character and what they must do. At one point it is Mount Kailash, where Shiva resides; at another, it is the edge of a well that Rani Sukhanti climbs onto, to jump into the make-believe water. Ladkyा, the comic, climbs up to rescue her and they both fall off the bench, behind the curtain that separates the green room and the stage.

The audience is so impressed by the performance that they offer cash (*bakshish*) ranging from ₹50 to ₹2,000. People walk up to hand over money to an actor, who stops for a second, collects it, and carries on.

The three-hour-long show runs without a break, and while the story line and movements are plotted, several aspects of it remain impromptu. Most actors get paid between ₹200 and ₹500, while senior artistes like Omprakash get ₹1,000 per show. Samir, the troupe head, distributes the *bakshish* after the show.

"People love Omprakash's performance and the mention of his name brings a good crowd," says Samir, who admits that there isn't enough money in the business to make it a full-time profession. "For one show we get around ₹8,000 to ₹10,000 from the temple authorities. I distribute some among the artistes and the rest is used for expenses. A company does at least 200 shows each season," says Samir, who is a mechanic and owns a garage.

The future

Ravi Bibhishan Chavare, Director of Maharashtra's Cultural Affairs Department, says that for the last 15 years, the State government has been organising Dashavtar festivals at different locations in the Konkan region. This year's festival is across January and February.

In March, at the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, a Central government programme aimed at fostering cultural exchanges, Dashavtar will be performed in Odisha. "Maharashtra has over 350 art forms and we can only select five for the league," Chavare says.

"There are more than 70 troupes who perform Dashavtar. Our aim is to preserve and promote the art form by organising such festivals that are completely funded by the government," he says. He adds that the government offers an honorarium of ₹60,000 per troupe along with lodging and travel expenses. "The State government also gives ₹5,000 monthly to artistes above 50."

Omprakash has never been a part of a government initiative. In fact, he worries that the art form may be dying. It began when television came to the village, about 30 years ago, he recounts. "Today there are several distractions. It is not the fault of the audience if they lose interest in Dashavtar. It is up to us to keep them coming back to our performances," says Omprakash, who refuses to join social media to promote Dashavtar. "Only those looking for validation need such tools."

In Omprakash and Pranali's home, set in the middle of open land, the walls are covered with photographs of performances. There are deities and awards next to each other on a table. In one of the wooden cupboards with a glass front are a few props. One is a baby wrapped in a cloth. "When I play the role of a mother, I carry this doll with me," Omprakash says.



Omprakash Chavan displays images of the women characters he has played; (right) he gets ready for a performance. THE HINDU



Barry Rodgers
barry.nathaniel@thehindu.co.in

For Kashmir native Krishan Anand, Gulmarg is more than just a picturesque ski destination – it is a repository of memories. He recalls stories of his grandfather, who, in the 1960s, would ride up to the town (situated in Baramulla district, North Kashmir) on horseback, leaving his car in Tangmarg below. Back then, Gulmarg was a serene retreat, where newlyweds like his grandparents spent their days playing golf on lush meadows and savouring steaming cups of *kahwa* at the historic Nedous Hotel, established in 1888 – a tradition that continues.

While Gulmarg has earned international recognition as a premier ski destination, famed for its pristine powder snow – a result of its high-altitude location and favourable climate, which brings an average annual snowfall of 14 metres to 20 metres – Krishan believes its true essence lies in its enduring traditions.

"The same waiter who served my grandfather *kahwa* in the 1960s, when life in Gulmarg was quieter and simpler, still welcomes me today in his green uniform at Nedous. That kind of continuity is magical," he says.

A rich skiing heritage
Gulmarg's skiing history dates back to the early 20th Century. In 1927, two British Army officers established the Ski Club of India in the town, making it a central hub for skiing activities during that era. Following independence in 1947, skiing in the region waned but saw a revival in the 1960s. In 1968, the Indian Institute of Skiing and



Pristine
Snowboarding in Kashmir; the bar at the Nedous Hotel in Gulmarg. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK AND FAHEEM QADRI

Ski, sip, repeat

As Gulmarg embraces its status as a global ski destination, its après-ski culture reflects a perfect balance – traditional Kashmiri hospitality paired with modern experiences

Mountaineering (IISM) was established to promote winter sports and train ski instructors.

The development of the Gulmarg Gondola, now one of the world's highest cable cars, further boosted the region's appeal. Phase one, connecting Gulmarg to Kongdoori, was completed in 1998, while phase two, extending to Apharwat Peak (4,390 metres), became operational in 2005. This infrastructure opened up the higher reaches of the mountains to skiers, transforming Gulmarg into a hub for both backcountry skiing and heli-skiing.

Culture of camaraderie

The magic of Gulmarg does not end when the ski runs do. Its après-ski culture is steeped in warmth and camaraderie, evoking the charm of

Europe's golden age of skiing. As a local hotelier says, Gulmarg feels like what Chamonix (a resort area situated in the French Alps) was decades ago – before the glitz of social media and late-night parties turned such destinations into Instagram hotspots.

"Here, the rhythm of the day revolves entirely around skiing," says the hotelier, referring particularly to the exclusive Highlands Park Hotel, which, he believes, embodies the spirit of traditional après-ski. "Guests are up by 7 for breakfast, on the slopes by 9 o'clock and skiing continues until late afternoon. By 4 or 5pm, they're back, unwinding in the lounge where they share stories of the day's runs over a drink."

Dinner is served by 8, and by 9.30pm, the hotel quiets down, as skiers retire early to prepare for another day on the slopes. This contrasts with other hotels catering to

domestic tourists, where late-night parties and Instagram-driven activities often overshadow skiing itself. "Here, the focus remains the mountains," says the hotelier.

A new era

Javeed-ur-Rehman, Assistant Director (Tourism), Gulmarg, says, the town recorded a staggering 1.65 million visitors in 2023. The post-pandemic surge in travel has ushered in new energy especially during the ski season, from December to mid-March.

Gulaam Gouse Deewani, who runs OMG Luxury Holidays, says tourism has grown exponentially since 2021. "Winter tourism, in particular, has surged. Many visitors are from cities like Delhi and Mumbai – people who used to travel to Europe for skiing are now realising that Kashmir offers comparable experiences in terms of snow quality, terrain, and infrastructure," he says.

Modern thrills

Heli-skiing is an integral part of Gulmarg's evolution and is a major draw for global adventurers. Participants are dropped by helicopter onto remote, untouched slopes, such as Apharwat Peak, Sunset Peak, and Shark Fin, offering some of the best powder snow and longest descents in the world.

Night skiing has also gained popularity with illuminated slopes offering an extraordinary way to experience the mountains under the stars. Visitors can even book private

sessions, tailoring their skiing experience hour by hour.

Beyond skiing, Gulmarg offers unique nighttime activities such as leopard-spotting treks through its forests, where lucky adventurers might catch a glimpse of the region's elusive wildlife.

Gulaam says these developments have fostered a sense of community among visitors. "It's not just about skiing anymore; it's about connection," he says. Skiers bond over shared experiences, meeting on the slopes and later gathering around bonfires, enjoying DJ nights, live music, and traditional Kashmiri barbecues.

Modern luxury

Krishan is also bringing a fresh twist to Gulmarg's winter scene with his Secret Ski Party (@secretsskiparty), a series of three boutique, invite-only ski festivals scheduled for February and March 2025. Set at the historic Nedous Hotel, the events will host an exclusive group of 40 global tastemakers, blending skiing with luxury experiences like snow yoga,

a fashion showcase (and an after party) by celebrated designers Shivan & Narresh, and dinners at the longest table in the Himalayas.

"We're combining adventure with indulgence," says Krishan, who sees this as a way to showcase Gulmarg's unique charm while supporting local communities.

"The abrogation of Article 370 has opened up new opportunities, but it has also created resistance from locals who fear losing their livelihoods to larger players," he says, and adds, "by involving locals in tourism as ski instructors, porters, or chefs, one can strike a balance between modernisation and preserving Gulmarg's soul."



STEPOUT

Collective dialogue

Group art exhibition Forms///Formation shows over 80 pieces of painting, sculpture, traditional printmaking, photography and ceramics in an interesting formation of artistic practices. The exhibition features works of ceramist Ira Chaudhuri, sculptor Biman Das, photographer Aditya Arya and artist Anandamoy Banerji, among others.

At The Stainless Gallery, MIRA Corporate Suites, Friends Colony, Mathura Road; Till February 16; 11am to 7pm



An ode to dance forms

The golden anniversary of Ganesa Natyalaaya, started by Saroja Vaidyanathan, will be celebrated with a tribute to dance traditions. Bharatanatyam dancer Priya Murle of Chennai will present Nidhi-Thanjavur's Treasures highlighting how Thanjavur's unique style of Bharatanatyam has impacted South Indian culture. Kathak dancer Vidha Lal will present Sannidhi - In the Proximity of the Guru delving into the relationship between a teacher and disciple.

At the Natyalaaya auditorium, C-16 Qutub Institutional Area; February 9; 6.30pm

Garima Verma

Enrico Derflinger's Prince Charles Risotto is a paradox. Except for shavings of Urbani Tartrifi's precious black truffles, it is almost frugal. It consists of carnaroli rice cooked in vegetable stock, followed by a generous amount of butter and gorgonzola cheese, and a dash of white wine. The ingredient screaming royal in it is saffron. Yet, devoid of any pretence, it is comfort epitomised on a winter evening.

"It might come as a surprise, but the British royal family was not very demanding when it came to food," says Derflinger, in Delhi for an exclusive two-day pop-up at Tonino, where his menu will be available till February 12.

Born in Lecco, Italy, Derflinger was 26 years old when he became the first Italian Personal Chef in the British royal kitchen. The then Prince of Wales and current King Charles III, "is very fond of Italian food. He was quite particular about the ingredients and paid a lot of attention to what was served. It was he who decided to break the tradition of serving French cuisine," he says, adding that while the late Princess Diana preferred stuffed pasta, the boys (princes William and Henry), just like other kids liked their pizzas, burgers, and all things sweet.

From 1987 to 1990, Derflinger was not only supervising the kitchens at Buckingham Palace, Charles-Diana's residence – Kensington Palace, and elsewhere, but also accompanied the royal family on

Power cooking

Chef Enrico

Derflinger has been feeding the world's most powerful people for decades. Now, he is in the city serving up his signature Prince Charles risotto



The Delhi menu

Appetiser: Cappuccino Cherry Tomatoes, Roman Style Artichokes; **First Course:** Prince Charles Risotto; **Main Course:** Slice of Seabass with Thyme, Black Olives, and Tomatoes / Polenta with Cheese; **Dessert:** Chocolate Almond Cake with Coffee and Lemon Cream; Cafe Special Coffee-Cantuccini

At Tonino, 76/27 MG Road; Meal costs ₹5,500 plus taxes per person. For reservations, call 8882796678.



High profile Chef Enrico Derflinger with Tonino's Chef Suman Sharma; Seabass with thyme, olives, tomatoes

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

complete his menu at Tonino, his plates are unembellished and carry "the feeling of home".

In 1991 Derflinger found himself on the other side of the Atlantic, cooking at the White House for President George W Bush senior for two years. "A true Texan, he liked his meats and barbecues," Derflinger says. "He loved garden parties, where I would make pastas and risottos, but he preferred meat and beef cooked in a mix of Texan and Italian styles."

Despite the rules and protocol, the chef says that cooking in the corridors of power was more forgiving than cooking for the high and mighty of Hollywood.

"Political leaders are the least fussy; we have a list of what they eat and don't. At a gala dinner, most of them eat almost everything on the menu," says Derflinger, who cooked the vegetarian truffle risotto as the head chef for the G7 Summit in 2024, attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

numerous trips.

His three-ingredient lemon cream was born on one such trip with King Charles – to an island in the Shetland archipelago. "The trip was extended due to weather and we were getting low on supplies. So, I made that dessert. He liked it so much that

As good as home
Still, simplicity continues to be his trademark; Derflinger is not an admirer of excessive demonstration in the name of cooking. Be it Roman style artichokes or seabass with thyme, olives, and tomatoes that

he liked it so much that

Reliving memories

At the ongoing show 'Khula Aasman', artist Seema Kohli reveals the ephemerality of all belonging through multimedia exhibits

S Ravi

Nostalgia need not be sorrowful or painful, Russian novelist Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977) said "One is always at home in one's past..." This sums up Seema Kohli's ongoing multimedia solo exhibition Khula Aasman in the city.

The varied works connect Kohli with her past, forefathers and ancestral home in Pind Dadan Khan (now in Pakistan's Jhelum district). "I am articulating a tenuous link to a home that my father never returned to. This project is deeply personal, nonetheless, it reveals the ephemerality of all belonging," she says.

This bridging of the past and present is exhibited in the silver gelatin prints. Using the images clicked by her father, KD Kohli, the artist has added colours, ink and pen drawings, some pictures from her archives and recent ones of Pind Dadan Khan by Maria Waseem, providing a fresh perspective. Urdu poetry and heart motifs on these prints make them engaging. Many of the original pictures are of Seema's mother Uma who was her father's muse.

The works portraying the journey of Kohli's family from Pakistan to India are also fascinating. One shows a train which was a vital means

of transport for refugees during the Partition along with the image of Seema's studio when it was being constructed, thereby connecting the past with the present. Equally riveting is the work juxtaposing Seema's ancestral house with her New Rajinder Nagar residence wall with images of her grandfather and his friends between the two structures, signifying the passage of time.

Works highlighting Kohli's family occupation of hikmat or practice of Unani and Ayurveda medicine are also exhibited. While all are absorbing, one stands out. It lists the eight generations of doctors in the family, ending with her grandfather, Hakim Chunni Lal Kohli. Seema's eyes on the top, looking at the names of her illustrious forefathers,



Nostalgia Untitled artwork at Khula Aasman exhibition; artist Seema Kohli. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

reflect admiration and awe!

A charpoi covered with a bedsheet showing belladonna herbs and a pill-making machine provide the ambience of a *dawakhana*. The 12 works outlining the herbs used for preparing medicines, their scientific names, and properties along with glass jars containing *murabba* and *gulkand*, and anatomical drawings of body organs take one to an era when this indigenous medical system thrived.

The show's essence comes alive in Seema's *Gulab Ki Khet* (acrylic colours and ink on canvas with 24-carat gold and silver leaf). She has painted the blooming rose fields of Choa Saidan Shah, a town in the Punjab province of Pakistan, showing camels used by the pilgrims to visit shrines at Katas Raj, at the back. Beyond these stand the mighty Hindu Kush mountain range and birds soaring in the sky pointing to the futility of man-made borders.

The artist says Khula Aasman is a "project of memory of memories". She adds, "The book *Mitr Pyare Nu* (KD Kohli's autobiography) was cathartic for my father and Khula Aasman, based on my father's autobiography relives my father's memories."

At Seema Kohli Studio, B85, Pocket X, Okhla Phase II; Till February 18; 11am to 6pm





A call for chaos

The U.S. should push for a two-state solution, not displace an entire people

When the state of Israel was created in Palestine in 1948, more than 7,00,000 Palestinians, the land's original inhabitants, were displaced. Palestinians remember this forced mass expulsion as the Nakba (catastrophe). More Palestinians were expelled during the Six-Day War in 1967. Some moved to Gaza, others to the West Bank, while the majority fled to other countries, where they and their descendants are refugees. In successive peace talks, Israel has outrightly rejected their right to return to their homes, a fundamental right. Now, U.S. President Donald Trump wants to forcibly transfer the 2.3 million Palestinians out of Gaza, the Mediterranean enclave that has suffered relentless Israeli bombardment for 15 months. His plan involves relocating Palestinians to neighbouring Arab countries, taking over the 360 sq. km strip which he calls a "hellhole" and redeveloping it into the Riviera of the Middle East. At a press conference in Washington DC, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, he also stated sending troops to Gaza "if necessary". The White House later claimed that he meant a temporary relocation of Palestinians. It also clarified that he had not committed to deploying U.S. troops but reaffirmed that his "out-of-the-box" proposal for Gaza was a serious one. However, Mr. Trump's plan has at least three fundamental problems.

First, Palestinians are not an imperial possession that Israel and the U.S. can bomb and relocate at will. They are a people with a national identity, whose collective history, present and future, is deeply tied to the Palestinian land. Despite relentless Israeli bombardment, the Palestinians of Gaza have refused to leave. Now, Mr. Trump is advocating what is essentially a call for ethnic cleansing, another Nakba. Second, Arab countries, including many of America's allies, have unequivocally rejected Mr. Trump's proposal. They understand that Palestinians who were forcefully removed never managed to return. Even authoritarian Arab rulers, regardless of their dependence on U.S. aid, must pay attention to the sentiments of their people, who overwhelmingly support Palestinian rights. Third, Mr. Trump's vision of rebuilding Gaza aligns closely with the Israeli far-right's agenda: resettling the land with Jewish settlers. This will further alienate an already desperate population and plant yet another time bomb in West Asia. Mr. Trump must abandon his calls for the ethnic cleansing and instead use America's influence to ensure a successful ceasefire in Gaza. The U.S. should be working toward a lasting, just solution – one that acknowledges Palestinian rights and upholds the principles of peace and stability in the region.

Crippling aid work

The fallout of U.S. foreign assistance freeze will be far-reaching

Insularity often stems from contempt, and the kind now being exhibited by U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration is no exception. Withdrawing from international commitments has become a defining feature of Mr. Trump's foreign policy, and the latest decision to freeze foreign assistance adds to the list of drastic moves, following the withdrawal from WHO and the Paris Accord. This decision will disrupt established global aid structures and have dire consequences for the millions who rely on U.S. assistance for survival. While the full impact is yet to unfold, it is clear to those in the development sector that a cascade of negative repercussions is imminent. On his first day in office, Mr. Trump imposed a 90-day freeze on foreign assistance, citing inefficiencies and ideological opposition to USAID. His administration argues that USAID misallocates funds and operates at odds with his policies. Elon Musk, head of the Department of Government Efficiency, went so far as to label USAID a viper's nest of radical-left Marxists who hate America. The official USAID website has been stripped of its content, but announced that all personnel would be placed on administrative leave, with only a few exceptions for mission-critical staff. The administration also ordered the rapid repatriation of overseas USAID personnel within 30 days.

USAID was established in 1961 as an independent agency under the Foreign Assistance Act, designed to provide global humanitarian and development aid. According to the U.S. government's official spending tracker (USASpending.gov), USAID was allocated \$44.2 billion in the 2024 budget. While this amounts to just 0.4% of the total U.S. federal budget, media reports indicate that it accounted for nearly 42% of all humanitarian aid tracked by the UN in 2024. USAID funds a range of programmes which include health care, food aid (including assistance to Gaza), and policy advocacy. The agency has maintained a strong presence in India since the 1960s, supporting initiatives in education, immunisation, HIV/TB prevention, polio eradication, and child health. Though direct financial aid to India has declined in recent years, USAID contributions still amounted to over \$150 million for the latest fiscal year. However, in many conflict-affected regions, USAID remains a lifeline. Withdrawing from international aid efforts is more than a bureaucratic shift: it risks leaving millions without food, medical assistance and critical resources. The decision reflects an inward-looking approach that dismisses the interconnectedness of global affairs. As the U.S. retreats from its historical leadership in international development, the world will be left grappling with the consequences of this reckless policy shift.

The tragic mid-air collision on January 29, 2025 between a United States Army Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and an American Airlines CRJ-700 flight while it was on the final approach path to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Washington DC, killing 67 people, brings out several aspects of human factors that can result in a tragedy.

In this case, the first was having politicians jump the gun by blaming others, even before a formal investigation began and the bodies were yet to be recovered from the watery grave of the Potomac river. U.S. President Donald Trump was quick to blame former U.S. Presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden for diluting U.S. air safety standards, forgetting that it was he who held the reins in the interim four-year period.

Pressures, opaque investigations in India
One saw the same kind of political one-upmanship just after the air accident at Mangalore in May 2010 when the Minister of Civil Aviation, Praful Patel, declared that the airport conformed to all standards of ICAO Annex 14, volume 1. Dutifully, the court of inquiry committee that was headed by a retired Air Marshal of the Indian Air Force, glossed over all the blatant violations of the Airports Authority of India, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the airline, i.e., Air India Express, by blaming only the pilot. In all the air accident reports in India, one never gets detailed data from the digital flight data recorder and the cockpit voice recorder.

Unlike in India, where the truth is hidden and restrictions placed on all access to information on the accident, photographs or data on the state of infrastructure, it is open in the rest of the world where one can analyse data with vital clues that are available. There is a big lesson to be learnt from the air accident in the U.S. The radar track and the air traffic control audio tracks were openly available and one could analyse and disseminate the facts instead of having doctored data and reports that have been vetted by a bureaucrat who ensures that there is nothing incriminating against the government and its agencies is published in the final report.

Let us take what has been put out by media sources in the U.S. What is generally known is that the American Airlines flight was given a runway change by air traffic control to accommodate a departure. The change was accepted by the crew. The helicopter, PAT25 (or Priority Air Transport) had taken off from a base



Captain A. (Mohan) Ranganathan

is a former airline instructor pilot and aviation safety adviser. He is also a former member of the Civil Aviation Safety Advisory Council (CASAC), India

nearby for a Proficiency training flight at night and had been informed about the passenger flight. The air traffic controller had asked the helicopter crew whether he had the passenger flight in sight. The pilot responded by saying he was visual with the plane and he was given clearance to maintain visual and pass behind the passenger flight. This is where the human factor plays a big part. The flight was at night. Other than the navigation lights and the rotating beacon, the helicopter pilot had no other clue to make out the type of aircraft he had visual sighting with. His only information was based on the flight number.

If one looks at the radar picture available to the public and the information from the air traffic tape recording, there was another flight which was behind the American Airlines flight, but approaching the main runway that the American flight was originally approaching before the American crew accepted a side step to a different runway.

The 'hurry syndrome'

Did the helicopter pilot wrongly identify this second flight to be the American flight when he reported visual to air traffic control? If one looks at the radar track of this second flight and the track being followed by the helicopter to "cross behind" (as instructed by air traffic control), it is quite likely that the helicopter crew had focused on the second flight rather than the American Airlines flight and were fixated on being behind the aircraft they had perhaps misidentified. As both the helicopter and the American Airlines flight were below 1,000 feet above ground level, the collision avoidance system would not have sounded as it would have been inhibited below 1,000 ft.

In aviation parlance, this is what one calls "Press-on-its", or the 'hurry syndrome', where once you get fixated, all other inputs cannot influence your judgement. One needs a fresh and clear mind to be able to maintain situational awareness and spatial orientation. Fatigue and stress have a major role in these situations. The initial reports indicate there was only a single air traffic tower controller at Reagan handling the flights when, normally, two controllers are on duty.

Soon after the Reagan accident, the visual media in India went on overdrive, with graphic presentations of the Charkhi Dadri mid-air collision in India, near New Delhi, on November 12, 1996. In this accident, a Kazakhstan Airlines flight from Chimkent, Kazakhstan to Delhi

collided with a Saudi Arabian Airlines Boeing 747 flight from Delhi to Dhahran, killing 349 people. The pilot of the Kazakh flight was blamed for not complying with air traffic control clearance. What people are not aware of was a DGCA official who was in-charge of the investigation was removed from the investigation when he submitted his findings. It was another official who finalised the report. It is needless to say that the last nine minutes of the digital flight data recorder of the Saudia flight was a blank.

In the recent crash in South Korea, in December 2024, where a passenger flight landed with retracted wheels and crashed into an embankment housing the instrument landing system localiser antenna, South Korea, like India at the time of the Mangalore crash, had not complied with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 14, Volume 1 Standard that mandated that all structures in operational area shall be frangible (from January 1, 2010). Yet, ICAO gave them a clean chit during the audits conducted. The Korean jet's digital flight data recorder was also blank for the last four minutes.

Incidents in Bengaluru, Tiruchi

Let us not forget the case of two Indigo flights, on January 7, 2022 – one bound for Kolkata, and the other for Bhubaneshwar – that were departing from parallel runways at Bengaluru airport. The air traffic controllers had cleared planes for take-off. In the two runways at Bengaluru, one runway was to be used for take-offs and the other for landings simultaneously. It was a narrow escape for both planes.

Neither the airline nor the air traffic control reported the matter but the incident came to light during a safety audit. The lack of situational awareness and the lack of knowledge of the pilots on the functioning of the collision avoidance system were safety issues that were all swept under the carpet.

On October 11, 2024, an Air India Express flight from Tiruchirappalli to Sharjah experienced hydraulic failure in one system. It circled for close to three hours before landing. But the political class in Tamil Nadu and the media went to town making a hero out of the captain who had exhibited very poor judgement when he could have made an overweight landing immediately.

This is another example of people with no knowledge of aviation passing judgements and influencing investigation agencies. The mid-air tragedy should open the eyes of the travelling public and know that safety is being compromised for brownie points.

The saga of regulating India's thermal power emissions

In December 30, 2024, India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) issued a notification amending the Environment Protection Rules by pushing back the deadline for thermal plants to comply with sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emission norms by three years without any reasons being given. As it happens, the existing deadline for about 20 gigawatts (GW) of thermal plants, all located in close proximity to densely populated areas, was December 31, 2024. This is the latest instance in a nearly decade-long saga that fans of Franz Kafka would find appealing.

The MoEFCC revised the emission norms for Indian thermal plants in December 2015 after public consultations, and all thermal plants were expected to comply with them by December 2017 despite it being a tight deadline.

This notification tightened the prevalent norms for particulate matter emissions and introduced norms for other emissions, including SO₂, for the first time. These norms were understood to be broadly on a par with existing practices in countries such as Australia, China and the United States.

The morphing of a debate

Indian coal generally has a lower sulphur content than other coal, which should have made it easier for Indian thermal plants to meet the SO₂ emission norms. But rather than focusing on the best ways to meet the norms – given Indian coal's characteristics – the debate morphed into the challenges around implementing the flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) technology for desulphurisation of high-sulphur coal. Despite the norms never mandating FGDs, the discussion became one about issues such as the scheduling of FGD installations given their long gestation periods and the likely costs of installing them.

In parallel, a different discourse questioning the SO₂ emission norms themselves also took



Ashok Sreenivas

is with the Prayas (Energy Group)



Maria Chiravil

is with the Prayas (Energy Group)

Electricity consumers are likely to pay for installed but unused equipment, even as citizens living around thermal plants do not get the benefit of cleaner air

shape, often driven by different arms of the government. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) published papers in 2020 and 2021, questioning the need for uniform norms across the country and proposing that its country-wide implementation be phased out till 2035. The CEA also commissioned a study from IIT Delhi in 2022 which concluded that the installation of FGDs does provide air quality benefits but argued for extending the timelines due to issues such as FGDs being expensive, their supply chain being inadequate, and their operation leading to increased coal consumption (and hence greenhouse gas emissions).

In 2024, NITI Aayog commissioned the CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute to conduct a study on this. This study concluded that SO₂ emission norms are not important to achieve good ambient air quality in India, and instead the focus should be on particulate emissions. There was also one strand of debate about secondary aerosol formation from SO₂ emissions as the reason to have norms for it even though Indian coal is relatively low sulphur. Thus, rather than debating these issues and building a consensus before notifying the first set of norms, it continues robustly nearly a decade after their notification.

Different deadlines

In the midst of these debates, the MoEFCC diluted some norms and also extended, multiple times, the deadlines for compliance, with the notification of December 2024 being the fourth in the series. As a result, there are different deadlines for thermal plants in different locations and for different types of emissions, with SO₂ emission deadlines being well after the deadline for other emissions.

Indeed, the final deadline for compliance with other emissions, which include particulate matter emissions that are considered important by all

government agencies, was December 31, 2024 with many plants having to comply from December 31 of 2022 and 2023. But it is not clear if various pollution control boards are verifying adherence to even these norms as there is no public source easily available that provides this information.

Consumer pays

Given the evolving timelines in the various notifications by the MoEFCC, many thermal plants have already tendered contracts to install FGDs – though not at a pace required to meet their deadlines before the latest notification. This was enabled by electricity regulators introducing regulations to pass on the costs of installing FGDs and other pollution control equipment to electricity consumers, irrespective of whether emission norms are met (so that it is not a burden on thermal plants).

As a result, though the earliest deadline for meeting SO₂ emission norms is now December 31, 2027, 22 GW of thermal plants have already installed FGDs. Additionally, 102 GW (nearly 50% of installed thermal capacity) is in advanced stages of setting up FGDs.

Given the new timelines for compliance, the chances are that plants with FGDs will not run them since this would increase the cost of generation and hence push them down the preferred list of generators. Thus, electricity consumers are likely to be paying for installed but unused equipment, even as citizens living around thermal plants do not get the benefit of cleaner air for at least three more years, if not longer.

Perhaps this modern variant of Birbal's *khichdi* will get cooked one day, but the institutional, environmental, health and financial costs of doing so are likely to end up being high. And, unlike the original fable, it is not even clear whether the right lessons would be learnt from this saga.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Deportation, human rights

I write this letter as a former Union Minister for Law and Justice. The heart-rending ordeal of Indian citizens deported to India on a U.S. military aircraft is the ultimate denunciation of American pretensions as the global defender of human rights and democracy. The reported chaining and handcuffing of helpless captives aboard the plane, completely restricting their movement and even their access to the washroom, must put to shame all those responsible for the infraction of our citizens'

right to dignity and privacy. The mental and physical torture of our citizens by the American authorities merits a firm and suitable response from the Indian government. I would appeal to the External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, to take up the matter at the highest level in the U.S. administration. Clearly, protecting the dignity and the basic human rights of Indian citizens is the first charge on the resources of the Indian state.

Ashwani Kumar,
New Delhi

It is unfortunate that the BJP government at the Centre has not only failed to condemn the inhuman treatment meted out to the Indians deported by the American government but has also gone on to defend the act. It was audacious that the External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar stated casually in the Rajya Sabha yesterday that it is the practice of the American government – the Standard Operating Procedure provides for the use of restraints'. One also wonders why the Prime Minister has maintained a

pronounced silence. Does it mean that he considers his friendship with Mr. Trump to be more important than the basic rights of Indians?

Tharcius S. Fernando,
Chennai

Trump and Gaza plan
The United States President, Donald Trump, is setting a dangerous precedent by proposing a

Corrections & Clarifications

In front page report, "60% polling recorded in crucial election in Delhi" (February 6, 2025), the Chief Justice of India's name was erroneously mentioned as Sanjeev Kumar instead of Sanjiv Khanna.

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have Palestinians displaced by his own ally?

V. Ganapathy Subramanian,
Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu

Besides setting a dangerous precedent for international relations, Mr. Trump's proposal will upset the rules-based international order. A megalomaniac cannot ride roughshod over the rules-based system the civilised international community has in place.

Kurian Mathew,
Kochi, Kerala

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Should India build a sovereign, foundational AI model?

**PARLEY**

Pranesh Prakash
co-founded the Centre for Internet and Society, and is currently an Associate Fellow at the Yale Law School Information Society Project



Tanuj Bhojwani
was until recently the head of People + AI, and has worked extensively on IndiaStack projects like UPI and Aadhaar as a part of iSPRT

Sovereignty is something that we should be concerned about from the perspective of things such as sanctions, which we have seen the U.S. apply over specific kinds of chips, especially those that are used for training AI models, and export controls over things like software or models. Those may be coming down the road.

But I do not think you need to be worried about that. As things stand, what we have are not just proprietary models which are closed, under licence, and cannot legally be used without the permission of the person who created that model. We also have a lot of open weights models and a few open source models, such as DeepSeek RI. And because we have these, for which you do not need permission and can deploy locally, we do not need to approach these from the perspective of national security and sovereignty and concerned about sanctions, and so on.

If there are sanctions tomorrow which are applied to the usage of any models produced in the U.S., Indians can just "fork" the code of many of the existing open source models, refashion those, and build on top of them.

As long as these models exist, are state-of-the-art, and are competing well against proprietary models – and I believe we will soon come to a point where they will out-compete proprietary models – we do not need to be concerned about this from the perspective of sovereignty.

In 2023, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman's remarks in India on the cost of training foundational AI models – like the ones that power ChatGPT – sparked a debate on whether Indian firms should spend millions of dollars on the aim of that technology. The issue pits sovereignty and national pride against financial constraints. Is it necessary for sovereignty and business reasons for India to work towards a foundational model, as the IT Ministry's IndiaAI Mission has announced it will? Pranesh Prakash and Tanuj Bhojwani discuss the question in a discussion moderated by Aroon Deep. Edited excerpts:

Does India need to build a sovereign foundational AI model for its local needs?

Pranesh Prakash: I believe that India should be working on foundation models, but not for the purpose of sovereignty. It is important to have people who are able to build foundation models and also to have people who can build on top of foundation models to deploy and build applications. We need to have people in India who are able to apply themselves to every part of building AI.

More sovereignty is something that we should be concerned about from the perspective of things such as sanctions, which we have seen the U.S. apply over specific kinds of chips, especially those that are used for training AI models, and export controls over things like software or models. Those may be coming down the road.

But I do not think you need to be worried about that. As things stand, what we have are not just proprietary models which are closed, under licence, and cannot legally be used without the permission of the person who created that model. We also have a lot of open weights models and a few open source models, such as DeepSeek RI. And because we have these, for which you do not need permission and can deploy locally, we do not need to approach these from the perspective of national security and sovereignty and concerned about sanctions, and so on.

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As long as these models exist, are state-of-the-art, and are competing well against proprietary models – and I believe we will soon come to a point where they will out-compete proprietary models – we do not need to be concerned about this from the perspective of sovereignty.



The DeepSeek page is seen on a smartphone. AP

Tanuj Bhojwani: I would say that for sovereignty we should do this, but if they really wanted to block you, they would start with chips, as Mr. Pranesh pointed out. Even if you had your own model, you need Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) to run it. DeepSeek uses Huawei's [Ascend HiSilicon] 910C chips – India cannot even put that up. We have no contract with manufacturers such as Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company Limited (TSMC) to produce chips of even a previous generation.

More than sovereignty, there is an element of pride here; we are ambitious people, and want our own model. We have done this in other areas; we have reached beyond, in GDP per capita terms, what our *aukar* (station) would be. Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani's point and my point is this: do this if you see returns. Do this if anybody sees the returns on it, whether the pride is the return for the investment, make sure the investment is proportionate to that end.

Does the emergence of DeepSeek at low cost make this more attainable? Is it worth the expense?

TB: Even with DeepSeek, this remains a game of a few hundreds of millions of dollars. DeepSeek V3's training run cost \$5.6 million. But in cutting-edge research, there are a lot of failed attempts at that goal. So we are still talking about hundreds of millions of dollars in investments. Even if you produce a foundational model in India, there is still a lot to do – paying salaries and so on – before you can make money back on that investment.

The market is still majority U.S.-dominated. About 60% of the market cap of the entire globe is in the U.S. Even today, business-to-business



We should acknowledge that we have limited resources, and then we should think about what is the wisest way to spend them. Competing with a [ChatGPT] o3 or [DeepSeek] RI may not be the best idea with the absolute quantum of resources we are talking about

TANUJ BHANJI

software-as-a-service founders in India are largely selling to the U.S. If we believe we will make an Indian model with local language content, you are capping yourself on the knee because the overall Indian enterprise market that will purchase AI is much smaller.

Spending \$200 a month to replace a human worker may be possible in the U.S., but in India, that is what the human worker is being paid in the first place.

To succeed here anyway, the government needs to create an institute that has autonomy and spending power. 90% of the spending will go to failed experiments. Our public procurement system is not geared for that kind of error tolerance.

PP: There is a lot we can do even in terms of software, in which India has been seen as a success. We need more focus on what is built on top of models – how we commercialise the AI models that are already in use. The enthusiasm among young developers is very much there, even if they are not always well-versed. Students nowadays in their first year are learning how to use six different development tools right from the very beginning.

We should also promote innovation based on constraints, as Alibaba and DeepSeek have shown.

TB: I think the real question to ask is not whether we should undertake the Herculean effort of building one foundational model, but to ask what are the investments we should be making such that the research environment, the innovation, private market investors, etc., all come together and orchestrate in a way to produce – somewhere out of a lab or out of a private player – a foundational large language model (LLM). The real questions we are not paying attention to are: Why does it not happen? What is wrong with our research? What is wrong with our R&D investments, the spending both by the private market and government?

The IndiaAI Mission under the IT Ministry has announced that it is making GPU clusters

available to startups and academia at subsidised rates. What is your take on this announcement and on government AI policy in general as an impetus to investment?

PP: The capital expenditure is a good sign. I think the government should look at other ways of promoting the responsible usage of these technologies, including amongst them doing careful studies of what kinds of regulations ought to be put and, very importantly, what kinds of regulations ought not to be put.

TB: This does bring down the cost of renting a GPU significantly downwards, but even then somewhere in all of this are the margins that we are paying to data centre operators, providers, etc., to do these things. It is my understanding that both DeepSeek and, of course, all the large labs definitely have dedicated contracts wherein they are buying, installing the GPUs and using them completely by themselves for training runs.

Even with its low training run bills, DeepSeek has over a critical threshold of captive GPUs – they are known to have at least one cluster of Nvidia H100s, and a calculation doing the rounds puts their investments at \$1.3 billion. The Big Tech firms are investing \$80 billion a year on infrastructure.

We have resource constraints here; the budget for this is less than the cost of training Meta's Llama 4 model, and that budget then has to be spread out equitably and fairly among the whole country. The government is not taking that concentrated bet. We are taking very sparse resources that we have and we are further thinning it out.

The subsidy is still a very good thing if people are using it for the right purposes. AI for Bharat is trying to train IndicTrans2, and a text-to-speech system for Indian languages. And those are critical things we need, and you can get away with, say, 500 or 1000 GPUs for that task, and you can get very good results compared to the state-of-the-art. So I think that is really the message that we should acknowledge that we have limited resources, and then we should think about what is the wisest way to spend them. Competing with a [ChatGPT] o3 or [DeepSeek] RI may not be the best idea with the absolute quantum of resources we are talking about.



To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

NOTEBOOK

What community mental health could mean for journalists

Journalists try and balance truth with sensitivity, ensuring stories are accurate, while considering their impact on readers and communities

Sunalini Mathew

Last week the NWMI (Network of Women in Media, India) held its annual meeting, which 189 women from across the country travelled to Guwahati to attend. One of the sessions was on navigating mental health. Pushpa Rokde, who works with the Hindi daily, *Prakhar Samachar*, was a panelist.

Pushpa reports from Bijapur, in Bastar, a left-wing-extremist-hit area in Chhattisgarh, part of the red corridor in India. Last month, a journalist from the area, Mukesh Chandrakar, who ran a YouTube channel, was killed, allegedly for exposing corruption in a road construction business.

I imagined Pushpa would talk about the challenges she suffers reporting from a Maoist-affected area. Instead, she said, "We need to consider what impact our story will have on the reader. How will it affect the community we are writing about?"

The *Hindu* has mental-health guidelines, so we use language carefully: For instance, we treat suicide as an outcome of many different factors and do not refer to an attempt as a crime ('committed suicide'). Nor will we ever have a headline that screams that a child took their life after a fight with their mother.

But Pushpa's talk went beyond the framing of guidelines, which is important of course because it is one small way of helping to change society's narrative around mental illness as some personal failing or 'mental weakness'.

"Why are we doing the story?" she asks us to consider. Caught up in the 'routine' filing of stories, we do not usually pause to ask this question. Or, something terrible has happened and we are so focused on getting various elements of the story out, that we may not have time to think about the 'why'.

Journalists do stories for many reasons. But as the book *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, tells us, journalism's first obligation is to the truth.

Telling the truth while being mindful of

its impact on readers and the communities we write about requires a balance. We must accurately depict events while avoiding over-the-top details. After all, a child of a family caught in a fire may someday read about how their parent died – we would not want to add to their sense of loss now or trauma even a decade later. This balancing act is usually taken care of at the editing table.

As an editor, I have an internal dialogue with myself: 'What if this happened to me, and my child had to read about it – what parts would I not want him to read?' Or, 'Do I want my community to be referred to as 'marginalised' – how would that make me feel about my situation?'

At an in-house workshop last year, where we delved into a long-form story on the Hathras stampede that took place in July 2024, the team attending said there were too many disturbing details of injuries a minor had suffered. They did not think it was necessary and felt we should have cut out certain graphic details at the editing stage. These internal checks and balances keep us on our toes, and we are now doubly conscious of carrying a trigger warning on any story that has violence or destruction.

Last week, I attended a workshop by Tammooy Goswami, who runs the "independent mental health storytelling platform" *Sanity*. Tammooy, a journalist, who writes from a lived experience lens, said one of the big themes of 2025 would be community mental health, which he calls "human touch at scale".

The media reaches crores of people. By asking ourselves a few questions, we can bring in this human touch. Questions like: How do we frame the narrative so that people are disturbed enough to seek answers, but not triggered into a freeze? But also, as Pushpa says: "If there has been an incident between Naxals and the police, we must speak to both sides, but also to the villagers caught in the crossfire, so every voice is heard."

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PICTURE OF THE WEEK**A flight of fate**

A C-17 wide-bodied aircraft of the U.S. Air Force, carrying around 100 Indian migrants deported from the U.S., lands at the Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport in Amritsar on February 5. AFP

FROM THE ARCHIVES**The *Hindu*.****FIFTY YEARS AGO** FEBRUARY 7, 1975**President's call for wise use of wood resources**

New Delhi, Feb. 6: The President, Mr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed to-day called upon the rich and poor nations alike to pool their resources, experiences and talents to evolve a strategy for wise use of the world's wood resources. Mr. Ahmed was inaugurating here the third world consultation on wood-based panels, sponsored by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in collaboration with the Government of India.

Over 500 delegates from India and abroad, comprising scientists, technologists, administrators and industrialists, are attending the consultation, the first one to be held outside the developed world.

Mr. Ahmed said a unique merit of wood panel was that it was both a poor man's mainstay and a rich man's luxury. For a poor man, panel products constituted low-cost building material. To a rich man, they furnished attractive and costly material to satisfy his vanity.

He said panel products were an exception to the general phenomenon that a high rate of consumption would exhaust natural resources in course of time. Timber was a renewable resource which improved, if wisely used.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 7, 1925**Tagore's "letters from abroad"**

London, Feb. 6: Wishing that the collection of Tagore's letters written during the Americo-European tour to Mr. Andrews, published in Madras, will be more accessible to the British public, *Manchester Guardian*, in a leader, expresses the opinion that apart from the charming style, they express generous and broad humanity full of insight into the underlying difficulty of Anglo-Indian relations that they fully deserve the consideration of statesmen and the educated classes. Tagore pleads for mutual Anglo-Indian understanding.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Amount received by India in climate finance so far

1.16 In \$ billion. This includes \$346.52 million from the Global Environment Facility, \$803.9 million from the Green Climate Fund, and \$16.86 million from the Adaptation Fund. Funds are got through the financial mechanism of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. PTI

Illegal Indian immigrants deported from U.S. since 2009

15,756 A total of 15,756 illegal Indian immigrants have been deported from the US since 2009, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said. The highest deportation was witnessed in 2019 with 2,042 illegal Indian immigrants being sent back. PTI

Number of pending cases where the Central govt. is a party

7 lakh. The Central government is a party in nearly seven lakh cases pending across courts, with the Finance Ministry alone being one of the litigants in nearly two lakh cases. The Law Minister said as of December 31, 2024, a total of 406 POCSO (e-POCSO) courts, are functional across 30 States and UTs. PTI

Number of public grievances redressed in 2024

28 In lakh. Over 28 lakh public grievances were redressed last year, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Thursday. These complaints were received on the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System — an online mechanism that allows citizens to raise public grievances. PTI

Number of medical colleges served show-cause notices

18 The University Grants Commission has issued show-cause notices to 18 medical colleges for not complying with anti-ragging regulations. The defaulter colleges include two each in Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Puducherry. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Under the scanner: Adani's project in Sri Lanka

Why is Adani Green's power plant in northern Sri Lanka controversial? What are the environmental concerns linked to it? What did current President Anura Kumara Dissanayake promise before he was elected? Why did the Chairman of the Ceylon Electricity Board resign?

EXPLAINER

Meera Srinivasan

The story so far:

In January 24, news agency AFP reported that Sri Lanka revoked a 2024 power purchasing agreement signed with Adani Green Energy Limited. A Sri Lankan official told the agency that while the project itself had not been cancelled, the government has appointed a committee to review it. The Adani Group "categorically denied" cancellation of the project. The move drew attention, with many in Sri Lanka flagging President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's pre-poll pledge to cancel the "corrupt" project that has been mired in controversy from the time it was approved.

What is Dissanayake's position? In its latest clarification, the Dissanayake government has said that there is no decision to cancel the project, but that it would renegotiate a lower rate of power purchase with the firm. Cabinet Spokesman Nalinda Jayatissa stated that the government is seeking a lower tariff that is below six cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh), instead of the formerly agreed rate of 8.26 cents per kWh.

The Minister's announcement stood out, since the Dissanayake government in October 2024 told the Supreme Court, in an ongoing case, that it would reconsider the approval granted by the previous government to the Adani Group for the wind power project.

Furthermore, Mr. Dissanayake and his party have in the past underscored the need for a competitive bid. "We welcome foreign capital, including from the private sector. But all investments should come through a fair tender process," Mr. Dissanayake told *The Hindu* in September 2024. "If the government had gone for a fair tender process, we could have got it for half the price," he said in the interview.



Still raging: Former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa with Adani group Chairman Gautam Adani.

What is the project?

Adani Green Energy Limited is to build a wind power plant project in the Mannar and Pooneryn towns in Sri Lanka's northern province, investing \$442 million. According to Sri Lankan authorities, the project is expected to add at least 350 MW to the island's national grid by 2025.

In October 2021, Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani visited Colombo and called on then President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, weeks after his company sealed a deal with State-owned Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) to develop and run the strategic Colombo Port's Western Container Terminal, which is currently proceeding. At that time, officials of the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) told media that the Group also "explored the possibility of investing in Sri Lanka's wind and renewable energy sector".

When was the project approved?

In March 2022, the CEB signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Adani Green for the wind energy project, but the development was kept under wraps. It was a report in the local *Sunday Times* that brought the move to light. Ever since, the project has remained in the spotlight, amid dramatic developments on the island. The Gotabaya Rajapaksa administration came under fierce attack from the Opposition, for "choosing" the Adani Group for the project without calling for competitive bids, and bypassing due process. The Group's "back door" entry into Sri Lanka's energy sector disrupted the country's competitive electricity generation system, the main opposition party Samagi Jana Balawegaya contended, accusing the government of "pampering" Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "notorious friends".

In June 2022, Chairman of the CEB M.C. Ferdinand resigned, days after he told a parliamentary panel that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had "pressured" Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to clear the Adani Group project. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka experienced a crushing financial meltdown, owing to an acute twin deficit problem. As a result, Mr. Gotabaya was dramatically ousted from office by a citizens' uprising, following which former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe took his place in July 2022, even as the crisis endured.

There was renewed thrust on bringing in foreign investment in to the country to rebuild its battered economy. In February 2023, Sri Lanka's Board of Investment approved a project to set up two wind power plants in northern Sri Lanka, with a \$442 million investment from Adani Green Energy Limited. The two wind power plants – 250 MW capacity in Mannar and 100 MW in Pooneryn – were scheduled to be commissioned in two years, and the project would generate around 2,000 new jobs, the Board had announced. Despite U.S. short seller Hindenburg accusing the Adani Group of serious corruption in January that year, then Foreign Minister Ali Sabry told *The Hindu* that Colombo sees the Adani projects in Sri Lanka as a "government to government kind of deal" and was confident of their future. In May 2024, President Wickremesinghe's Cabinet cleared a proposal to purchase power at \$0.0826, or 8.26 cents, per kWh from Adani Green Energy.

Why are locals opposing the project? Residents of Mannar have been raising concerns over the project's likely impact on a crucial bird corridor in the region and on the livelihoods of local fisherfolk. Environmentalists, too, are opposing the plant. The Central Asian Flyway, an important migration route for many waterbird species, runs through Mannar. Last year, multiple petitioners challenged the Adani wind power project. The next hearing of the case is scheduled in March.

THE GIST

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On the appointment of ad-hoc judges to High Courts

What did the Supreme Court order? Have such appointments been made previously? What did the rule set in the *Lok Prahar* judgment state? What does Article 224-A mandate?

Aaratrika Bhaumik

The story so far:

To address the growing backlog of criminal cases, the Supreme Court on January 30, allowed High Courts to appoint retired judges on an ad-hoc basis, provided they hear only criminal appeals as part of a Bench led by a sitting judge. A Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna and Justices B.R. Gavai and Surya Kant relaxed a rule set in *Lok Prahar Through Its General Secretary S.N. Shukla IAS (Retd.) vs Union of India* (2021), which had limited such appointments to High Courts where judicial vacancies exceeded 20% of the sanctioned strength.

How are ad-hoc judges appointed? Article 224-A, introduced by the Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 1963, allows the appointment of retired

judges to High Courts on an ad-hoc basis. Such appointments require the consent of both the retired judge and the President of India. These judges receive allowances as determined by the President's order and exercise the same jurisdiction, powers, and privileges as a sitting High Court judge. The detailed procedure for such appointments is outlined in the 1998 Memorandum of Procedure (MoP).

When are such appointments made? In *Lok Prahar*, the Court identified specific circumstances that could warrant the appointment of ad-hoc judges in certain High Courts. At the time, nearly 40% of judicial positions across all High Courts were vacant. The Court also referred to Law Commission reports from 1979, 1988, and 2003, which advocated for the temporary appointment of retired judges as an effective measure to address the mounting backlog of cases. However,

the Supreme Court expressed concerns that Article 224A could result in "inaction in making recommendations" for regular judicial appointments. Consequently, the Court clarified that ad-hoc judges can only be appointed when recommendations for filling less than 20% of vacancies have not been made, after considering both the number of sitting judges and the pending proposals for judicial appointments.

The Court outlined several "trigger points" for such appointments, although the list is not exhaustive. These include – 1) if vacancies in a High Court exceed 20% of its sanctioned strength; 2) if cases in a specific category have been pending for more than five years; 3) if more than 10% of the High Court's cases are pending for over five years; 4) if the case disposal rate is lower than the rate at which new cases are filed (case clearance rate). The Court also recommended that each Chief Justice

form a panel of retired judges, along with soon-to-retire judges, for appointments.

What does the latest order say?

The CJI-led Bench noted that, as of January 25, there are 62 lakh pending cases across High Courts, according to data from the National Judicial Data Grid. Of these, over 18.2 lakh are criminal cases, while more than 44 lakh are civil cases. To tackle this growing pendency, the Court decided to set aside the condition laid down in *Lok Prahar*, which permitted the appointment of ad-hoc judges only when judicial vacancies exceeded 20% of the sanctioned strength.

It further ruled that ad-hoc judges can only hear criminal appeals. Additionally, the number of ad-hoc judges cannot exceed 10% of a High Court's sanctioned judicial strength, meaning each High Court can have only 2 to 5 such appointments.

Have there been prior instances?

There have only been three documented instances of ad-hoc judicial appointments. In 1972, Justice Suraj Bhan was appointed to the Madhya Pradesh High Court shortly after his retirement to adjudicate election petitions. Justice P. Venugopal was similarly appointed to the Madras High Court in 1982. More recently, in 2007, Justice O.P. Srivastava was appointed to the Allahabad High Court to preside over the Ayodhya title suits.

THE GIST

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IN THE LIMELIGHT

America's long-standing affair with television espionage

The reputation of 'the spy' in worldwide media has certainly undergone severe rehabilitation. What was considered in early literature a profession of deceit, has become a personification of national interests

Pallavi Keswani

For Netflix, 2025 began with a worldwide streaming hit – *The Night Agent: Season 2*. The pervasiveness of spy entertainment in American media meant that success was more a matter of routine, and Americans have indeed eagerly loved and followed along with the fictional pursuits of their national intelligence agencies. It took a little over a decade since the television boom for spycraft stories to start syndicating over the medium. Since the 1950s, there has not been a decade in American television devoid of a spy staple. With each show shaping, deepening, and reflecting the anxieties of the public watching it, U.S. spy shows have come to define an omnipresent storytelling medium.

The reputation of "the spy" in worldwide media has certainly undergone severe rehabilitation. What was considered in early literature a profession of deceit, has become a personification of national interests. The rise of spy fiction in literature coincided with official efforts following the Second World War to establish a robust intelligence agency. The United States formed the CIA in 1947, and the Agency has since then built a symbiotic relationship with Hollywood.

Through radio shows and then early television, the American audience was made familiar with the "agent". They become an invisible, imagined first line of defence against enemy infiltration. Poring through declassified FBI and CIA files, showrunners created a prototype of the spy that continues to live on our television sets today. Driven by morals of patriotism over the greed of materialism, spies are compelling characters. With the U.S.' tendencies to play World Police, the spy genre has always had an interested audience in need of comfort and reassurance.

That comfort is usually found at the end of a long drawn-out violent sequence, which is justified by the fact that the violence benefits American democracy. The plot structure of spy shows has shown little evolution, either safely transporting a secret object from point A to point B, or escaping something or chasing someone. Often, their enemies range from international counterparts, criminal organisations, or domestic terrorists creating mischief at home. The contours of the enemies do not matter as much as their existence.

The Cold War and James Bond

It may be a lucky accident for the CIA that the commercial usage of television, the peak years of the Cold War, and the most powerful years of McCarthyism overlapped to brew an espionage storm. In the early 1950s, spies on television were less the result of creative imagination and more the derivation of FBI files. With communism as the main villain, shows carried the binary understandings of WWII world order. Scripts often parroted the black-and-white doomsday scenarios promoted by the government and justified the existence of intelligence agencies as guardians of the American ideal. Things had to be more relaxed in the coming decade, even as the



Gabriel Basso as Peter Sutherland in *The Night Agent* Season 2. NETFLIX

American government was running amok internationally.

Buoyed by the success of the first few James Bond films, espionage found a loyal audience and television was fast to respond. The 1960s saw television reach a saturation point with multiple shows running parallelly. Shows like *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1964), and *Mission: Impossible* (1966) cemented the essentials of the American spy genre. Unlike their predecessors, these shows were optimistic, self-assured in the might of America, comprising a stylish core group who jetted off to European locations and mixed with suspense and humour, while bringing contemporary issues of race and gender to the fore. The decade saw genre blending as well with *The Wild Wild West* (1965), bringing cowboy spies to the

screens. Finally, *Get Smart* (1969) wrapped the decade up with show-mocking and satirising the genre.

The next two decades were a moment of self-reckoning for the American public who would go on to learn some uncomfortable truths about its government. In the last few years, the United States had not only faced the missile crisis, but had also actively contributed to the death toll of the Cambodian civil unrest, and still had troops on the ground in Vietnam. These international tensions were bookended by the Watergate scandal which seemed to blow the lid off. Accordingly, spies on TV adjusted and took a flight back home to spend more time on domestic issues. The agents started to become more cynical, with the 80s ushering in the age of the

disillusioned spy. The political shift to conservatism, with the landslide 1980 election of Republican Ronald Reagan to the White House, was reflected in Tom Clancy's *Jack Ryan* novel series which hit the press in 1984 and was appreciated publicly by Reagan. Meanwhile, on television, *MacGyver* (1985) and *The Equalizer* (1985) featured disenchanted leads, who were reconsidering the American espionage methods.

With the fall of Soviet powers in the early 1990s, the American spy setup had to change its goalpost, and in the meantime invited influences from science-fiction and fantasy to release shows like *The X Files* (1993).

Hollywood's relationship with CIA

Within two months of the 9/11 terrorist attack, three U.S. espionage shows were airing simultaneously: J.J. Abrams' *Alias*, Michael Frost Beckner's *The Agency*, and the Kiefer Sutherland-starring *24*. Needless to say, these shows answered President George W. Bush's call for a "war on terror" with a jingoistic spirit that reignited public interest in intelligence agencies. When Sutherland as Jack Bauer completed his decade of American counter-terrorism, Claire Danes' Carrie Mathison came in from the wings to take the mantle of the spy who allayed American fear in *Homeland* (2011). The show shared the public's espionage enthusiasm with Joe Weisberg's period Cold War drama *The Americans* (2013).

This decade-upon-decade of television media wouldn't have been possible without the tacit support of the agencies portrayed in it. Information about covert missions is not made public in real-time. In this fog of secrecy, these fictional shows occupy the space of facts. The fact that it is common knowledge that the CIA and FBI commonly consult on the scripts, add a veneer of perceived legitimacy.

Since the 1950s, the CIA has been eager to consult on scripts. Presently, it has become a more structured affair with FBI/CIA entertainment-industry liaisons working closely with Hollywood directors. *Homeland* producer Alex Gansa, in a 2016 interview to *IndieWire*, candidly revealed the levels of access Hollywood gets. He admitted that a big part of the pre-production involved spending days in Washington DC, in a "three-to-five-day information-gathering summit with CIA officials and intelligence officers" who inform them of the most relevant risks to the U.S. These, he said, contributed to the Season 5 plot lines referencing Edward Snowden, West Asia, and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

These agencies, therefore, script these shows themselves – setting the agenda and deciding the next villain for American television.

Spy shows have consistently ranked in the top 10 most-watched American shows each year. They now not only target the American public but seek to invite a global audience. The first season of *Night Agent* is the seventh most-watched English-language Netflix show ever. Yet, these shows have failed to grasp a semblance of nuance. Truth and facts often find themselves lost in exaggerated plots. Since this escapist thrill is what drives the audience to them, there is little incentive for change.

What makes spies compelling to the audience beyond being civilian heroes, is their cool professionalism that ensures the safety of the American public. Maybe not in the real world, but in the world of spies, your national "enemy" is bound to lose. With *Night Agent*, we see this enemy taking the shape of the U.S. government itself, with corruption seeping into the bones of the White House. The U.S. isn't letting go of its spies, and what remains to be seen is who these agents will fight against on TV, in the Trump 2.0 era.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian
S. Upendran

Long time, no see."

"Yes. Long time, no see, no know your English."

"True. I have a few questions for you. Please answer them first before discussing the principles of good writing."

"O.K."

"I hear a lot of people say 'cope up'. Is it correct?"

"No. You 'cope with something' and not 'cope up with something'. Raju is not able to cope with his work."

"What is the meaning of flippant?"

"'Flippant' means 'lacking in seriousness, treating serious things lightly'. Krishna is noted for his flippant remarks. The other day when his friend, Rama, was talking about his new-born baby, Krishna said: 'A baby is a being with a loud voice at one end and no responsibility at the other! This flippant remark did not amuse Rama.'

"What is the difference between 'notify' and 'notarise'?"

"'Notify' means 'to make known, announce'. This is used generally in official communications. The department has not so far notified the dates of the departmental examinations. 'Notarise' means 'to certify as a notary'."

"Who is a notary?"

"A notary or a notary public is a person authorised to perform certain legal formalities, especially to draw or certify contracts, deeds, etc.". A notary is generally a lawyer. So notarise means to certify as a lawyer. It is different from 'notify'. By the way, the 'aw' in 'lawyer' is pronounced like the "au" in 'caught'."

"How is 'sow' pronounced?"

"It is pronounced like the word 'sow'. It is not pronounced like the word 'sue'. A 'sowing machine' and not a 'suing machine'."

"Does the word 'several' mean 'many'?"

"No. It means more than two or three but not many: a small number but not very many. In India, it is used generally in the sense of 'many'. This is not correct."

"Last question. What is 'mythomania'?"

"'Mythomania' is an abnormal tendency to exaggerate or utter lies'. The 'y' in the word is pronounced like the 'i' in 'fit'. A person who has this tendency is a 'mythomaniac'."

"You have been emphasising the importance of brevity. Can you tell me a story in two sentences?"

"Sure. I will tell you two stories. Long, long ago, there was an Indian. Now there are millions of them!"

"You are being flippant. What's the other story?"

"Here it goes. A asked B, 'Do you believe in ghosts?' 'Yes' said B and vanished. Now you get lost."

Published in *The Hindu* on April 18, 1995.

THE DAILY QUIZ

On February 7, 1940, Disney's second animated feature film, *Pinocchio* premiered in New York city. In honour of the film, here is a quiz about the movie and its legacy

Abhinaya. K

QUESTION 1

The actor who voiced the titular character Pinocchio, also voiced another small character in the film. Name the other character and the actor.

QUESTION 2

Name the island in the Pinocchio world which is cursed. It has an amusement park that is designed to turn mischievous boys into donkeys.

QUESTION 3

The movie is based on the works of Carlo Collodi, who wrote the original story in

short installments in an Italian magazine. It was later published as a book. Name the weekly periodical and the original title of the story.

QUESTION 4

Pinocchio was the first animated feature film to win a competitive Academy Award. It won two awards for Best Original Score and Original song. Who sang the song which won the Best Original song award?

QUESTION 5

Styled with a signature blue top hat, this character is the narrator of the movie. The answer for question 4 is the person who voiced this character. Name the character.



Visual question:

This director created a stop-motion animated version of the film which went on to win many awards, including an Academy Award. Name the director.

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. In 1918, Great Britain allowed men over the age of 21 and women over this age to vote. **Ans: 30 years**

2. Since 1838, the _____, the United Kingdom's sole overseas territory in the Pacific Ocean, has given women the right to vote. **Ans: Pitcairn Islands**

3. Name the first place in India that gave women the right to vote, in 1920. Name the first princely state which granted rights, to vote and run for office, to women. **Ans: Travancore; Rajkot**

4. During the December 2015 municipal elections in _____, the government allowed women to vote for the first time in its history. **Ans: Saudi Arabia**

5. Name the world's first major country to grant both women and men the right to vote at the same time. **Ans: Thailand**

Visual: Name the canton in Switzerland which was one of the last places in Europe to grant women the right to vote. **Ans: Appenzell Innerrhoden**

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

Word of the day

Arboretum:

a facility where trees and shrubs are cultivated for exhibition

Synonym: botanical garden

Usage: The government arboretum has been struggling financially for many years now.

Pronunciation:

newsth.live/arboretumpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ə:(u)bə'i:təm/

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

From Page One**Centre plays down U.S. handling of deportees**

Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, his counterpart in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, K.C. Venugopal, and Left MPs were among those who participated in the protest. Some of the MPs protested with their hands in chains.

"Prime Minister, listen to this man's pain. Indians deserve Dignity and Humanity, NOT Handcuffs," Mr. Gandhi said in a post on X, while sharing a video of a deportee narrating his ordeal.

"We, the INDIA parties, shall not tolerate the humiliation of Indian nationals," Mr. Kharge said, adding, "...why did we not send our own planes to bring back the Indians with dignity and respect, instead of a military plane landing on our soil?"

The External Affairs Minister said the deportations were executed by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) authorities, and "the standard operating procedure for deportations by aircraft used by the ICE, effective from 2012, provides for the use of restraints". "There has been no change from the past procedure for the flight undertaken by the U.S. on February 5. We are, of course, engaging with the U.S. government to ensure that the deportees are not mistreated during the flight," Mr. Jaishankar told the Rajya Sabha.

The Minister said the ICE informed the Indian government that women and children were not restrained. The needs of deportees during transit related to food and other necessities, including possible medical emergencies, were attended to, he added.

What was 'gross' about 12 pending Bills, asks SC

The State government, represented by senior advocates Rakesh Dwivedi, Mukul Rohatgi, A.M. Singhvi and P. Wilson, argued the Governor's conduct was that of a political opponent. Once the Bills were re-passed, Governor Ravi had no option but to give consent. Here, the Governor had countermanded the will of the people expressed through their elected representatives.

Mr. Venkataramani said the State, through its submissions, was portraying the Governor as an "insignificant" authority occupying a "small place" in a constitutional democracy.

Mr. Venkataramani argued the Governor had only expressed his wish to withhold consent. The top law officer said the Governor found the Bills contained provisions giving the State government more powers, both as an authority over university appointments and over the Vice-Chancellors. Higher education was a subject in the Concurrent List.

Justice Pardiwala said the Governor's submissions "did not make any sense". "You [Governor] are saying 'I withhold consent', but at the same time, I will not ask them to reconsider the Bills. This would only frustrate the procedure under Article 200... The Governor seems to have adopted his own procedure here," Justice Pardiwala addressed the A.G.

The next hearing is scheduled for February 7.

Cong. practises politics of appeasement: Modi

"I can never forget the Emergency... The word Constitution does not suit them..." he said.

Mr. Modi also hit out at the economic policies of the Congress government and the 'licence quota raj' gave rise to corruption and affected the country's economic progress and growth.

The Prime Minister said the Congress' priority was "family first" and its policies had been focused around it.

He said his government worked for the upliftment of the poor, and it stood with the middle class and the "neo-middle class" in the country.

"Nation first is the BJP's priority," he said.

Yunus planned to kill me, says Sheikh Hasina

Dhaka's concerns were conveyed to Pawan Badhe, who is currently serving as the Head of Mission in the High Commission of India in Dhaka.

"Through the protest note, handed over to the Acting High Commissioner of India in Dhaka, the Ministry conveyed the deep concern, disappointment and serious reservation of the Government of Bangladesh, as such statements are hurting the sentiments of the people in Bangladesh," said the MOFA, Bangladesh in a press note.

It was on Wednesday that a mob called for demolishing the 32 Dhammendi residence of Bangladesh's founding father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The crowd then started dismantling the building using heavy earth-moving machinery despite police presence.

In a statement, the Awami League accused the interim government of providing "immunity" and said, "Dr. Yunus and the government cannot escape liability for last night's destructive acts."

"The house was burnt in August but now they are breaking this house," said Ms. Hasina.

The External Affairs Ministry termed the demolition regrettable.

Civilian dead after alleged 'police torture' in Jammu

He was detained over false charges and forced into confession, says Mehbooba Mufti; another man was shot dead by the Army in Kashmir after allegedly speeding away from a checkpoint

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR/JAMMU

A civilian was shot dead by the Army in north Kashmir's Baramulla after he allegedly sped away from a checkpoint on Thursday. In Jammu's Kathua, another civilian was found dead after allegedly facing torture in police custody.

An official identified the victim in the Baramulla incident as Waseem Ahmad Mir of Sopore.

The Army, in a statement, said, "On February 5, 2025, based on a specific intelligence input about the movement of terrorists, a mobile vehicle check post was established by security forces. One speeding suspicious civil truck was spotted. When challenged, the truck didn't stop despite repeated warnings instead accelerated further while crossing the check post."



On duty: Jammu and Kashmir Police and BSF check a car during a search operation, in Samba on Wednesday. ANI

The Army said troops pursued the vehicle for over 23 km. "Shots were fired aiming on tyres which forced the vehicle to halt. After a detailed search, the injured driver was immediately evacuated to Government Medical College, Baramulla, where he was declared dead."

The J&K police said it has lodged an FIR at the Baramulla police station.

links with militants.

They said he had even made a video inside a mosque where he swore that he had never seen a militant in the area.

Former J&K Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, in a post on X, said Din was detained by the SHO of Billa-wara on false charges of being an overground worker (OGW).

"He was reportedly subjected to brutal thrashing and torture, forced into a confession, and tragically found dead today. The area has been sealed off, and internet services have been cut, leading to widespread panic. There's an ongoing crackdown, with more individuals being picked up."

This incident appears to follow a troubling pattern of targeting innocent youths on fabricated charges. I urge the Director General of Police to initiate an immediate investigation," she said.

lowed by a detailed application form, where they have to fill the service and cadre preference.

Spelling mistakes

Aspirants took to social media to state that the online form spelled university as "Universitiy" and characters as "charachers", and had grammatical errors. The page to upload photograph and signature also had glitches, applicants said.

Sources in the government told *The Hindu* that the administration was aware of the issues being faced by candidates, and the UPSC had published a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page.

The information sought at different stages of the examination has been clubbed this time, and candidates have to furnish all details at the registration stage, sources added.

Candidates complained that emails and calls to the UPSC's helpline remained unanswered.

New website for CSE prelims registration has errors: applicants

**Vijaita Singh
Maitri Porecha**
NEW DELHI

Spelling mistakes and failure to generate one-time passwords are among several glitches reported by applicants applying online for the civil services preliminary examination to be conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) in May.

Months after the alleged scam by sacked IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, who forged documents to clear the exams, the UPSC introduced changes.

These updates now require applicants to submit documents, including educational, caste and physical disability certificates, at the stage of the preliminary examination, unlike in previous years, when these documents were only uploaded after a candidate qualified for the Mains examination.

In a first, all candidates have to fill a one time registration (OTR) form fol-

₹10,147-crore worth contracts signed for Pinaka ammunition

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Defence Ministry on Thursday signed contracts worth ₹10,147 crore for a variety of ammunition for the Army's Pinaka Multiple Rocket Launch Systems (MRLS). The ammunition also enhances the range of the Pinaka systems.

Contracts were inked with Economic Explosives Limited (EEL) and Munitions India Limited (MIL) for the procurement of Area Denial Munition (ADM) Type-1 and High Explosive Pre-Fragmented (HEPF)-Mk-1 (enhanced) rockets respectively for Pinaka MRLS at a total cost of ₹10,147 crore, a Ministry statement said.

A contract for upgrades in Shakti software has also been signed with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).

The ADM Type-1 ammunition has a specialised warhead to deliver a quantum of sub-munitions over a larger area targeting me-

chanised forces, vehicles and personnel, thereby denying specific areas to the enemy, the statement said.

The upgraded Pinaka is going to be the mainstay of the Army's long range rocket artillery.

Last November, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) announced the successful completion of flight tests of guided Pinaka rockets of 75 km paving the way for its induction doubling the original range. Work is on to enhance the range to 120 km and further to 300 km.

The fully automated 214-mm Pinaka MRLS battery can deliver a salvo of 72 rockets on the target up to 75 km in 44 seconds.

Opposition parties must speak up for Modi critics, says Kshama Sawant

Kunal Shankar
CHENNAI

Kshama Sawant, an Indian-American politician and a critic of India's Hindu Right, has urged the country's political Opposition to speak up for critics like her, saying it is in their interest to do so.

In a virtual interview to *The Hindu*, Ms. Sawant referred to the "complete inability of the political opposition to put forward a unified agenda for the working people, not just in India, but globally. And this is what has led to the election of [Donald] Trump [in the U.S.] and [Narendra] Modi [in India]."

"I would urge India's political opposition to speak up for those like me, Ashok Swain, Avani Dias, and other Modi critics being denied a visa," said Ms. Sawant, whose visa application to visit her ailing mother in Bengaluru, was denied twice last year. She said that the Opposition



Indian-American politician Kshama Sawant says there is political retaliation against critics like her. REUTERS

parties should come together to state that they would not support "an inhumane agenda where Indian citizens, like my mother, are not allowed to meet their own families".

"We have not had such an outcry from the political opposition," Ms. Sawant, a former City Council Member of Seattle, said.

Ashok Swain is a Sweden-based professor of Indian origin, whose Overseas Citizenship of India was revoked in July 2023 for "indulging in activities

grant executive orders. This was evident from the 104 Indians without proper documents being shackled and sent back on a U.S. military plane. We must remember that Trump rode to power with promises of mass deportation like these and letting loose a whole series of workplace raids. So, there's a chill, but there's an utter failure on the part of the Democratic party on speaking up against these measures. And it's a similar case in India," Ms. Sawant said.

Ms. Sawant said she is exploring a legal challenge to her visa denial, but hasn't begun the process yet.

Blaming liberal politicians in the U.S. and in India for the Right wing tilt in both countries, Ms. Sawant said, "it is in their interest to win ordinary people back."

"There is no viable opposition," Ms. Sawant said, "the only way out is an independent working-class movement."

SEBI fraud case: court summons ED director

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court summoned Enforcement Directorate (ED) Director Rahul Navin over the Central agency's failure to supply legible copies of documents to the accused in a ₹88-crore fraud case related to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

Special Judge Aparna Swami of Patiala House Court ordered the Director of the ED and investigating officer (IO) of the case to appear before the court and give in writing information on the status of the documents to be provided to the accused.

The IAF said the fighter plane was out on a routine sortie and crashed after encountering a system malfunction.

The IAF said in a post on X that an inquiry had been ordered to ascertain the cause of the accident.

During the hearing, the accused submitted in the court that they were unable to defend themselves properly in the absence of the documents as they are essential for the trial.

The next hearing will take place on March 26.

IAF's Mirage 2000 crashes near Gwalior after system malfunction; pilots safe

The Hindu Bureau
BHOJPAL

An Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft, a twin-seater Mirage 2000, crashed on Thursday in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh after a system malfunction. Both pilots safely ejected before the accident, authorities said.

The IAF said the fighter plane was out on a routine sortie and crashed after encountering a system malfunction.

The IAF said in a post on X that an inquiry had been ordered to ascertain the cause of the accident.

The plane crashed around 2.30 p.m. near Surana village in the Karera police station limits, according to the local police.

Shivpuri Superintendent of Police (SP) Aman Singh Rathore told *The Hindu* that the plane had taken off from the Gwalior

airbase and crashed near Karera town. The authorities were alerted by the local people who spotted the plane in a field, he added.

Mr. Rathore said the two pilots had safely ejected from the plane before the crash and received minor injuries. A team of IAF officials arrived in Shivpuri on a helicopter and airlifted the pilots back to the base, he added.

The IAF operates three squadrons of the Mirage 2000 fighters, manufactured by Dassault Aviation of France, which have

since been upgraded, and are based at Gwalior.

local person suffered injuries in the incident. "Local police, an ambulance, and a fire tender reached the spot immediately," he said.

Videos from the crash site surfaced on the Internet showing the aircraft in pieces and flames.

The IAF has three squadrons of the Mirage 2000 fighters, manufactured by Dassault Aviation of France, which have

HC to 'supervise' framing of charges in R.G. Kar graft case

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday said it would "strictly supervise" proceedings before the special court of the Central Bureau of Investigation at Alipore concerning the framing of charges in the case of alleged financial irregularities at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital.

Sandip Ghosh, former principal of the hospital,

charged with allegations of corruption at the institution, and other accused had moved a Division Bench of the High Court.

In his appeal, Mr. Ghosh alleged that the CBI did not leave them enough time to peruse the documents for a response. The High Court said due process of law must be adhered to, and as such, the accused need to be given sufficient time before the charges were framed in the case.



APPEAL
Master Kedar, MRN No.10020001674297, 4 years old son of Basavaraj, admitted Mazumdar Shaw Medical Center, Bangalore is diagnosed with BEТА Thalassemia Major. The only curative treatment is Bone Marrow Transplant. Fortunately he has complete HLA matched sibling donor and can be stem cell donor for the patient. The estimated expenses for the treatment is Rs. 21,50,000/-

Kindly send donation however small by Cheque/ Demand Draft/Saving S/c/Po/ Lives A/c/Kedar. Our Account Details: Name - N. Kedar, Account No. 10020001674297, State Bank of India, R.A. Puram, IFSC Code: SBIN0001855. All donations are exempted under 80G of I.T. ACT.

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Opposition attacks govt. over 'inhumane' deportation by U.S.

Opposition parties say Indians are migrating in search of better opportunities because of a 'failing economy'; they ask why govt. did not send its own aircraft to bring back Indians, demand steps to track down agents who sent them to the U.S.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Opposition cornered the government on Thursday, both inside and outside Parliament, on the issue of deportation of 104 Indian migrants from the U.S. Citing the warm personal relationship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump, and the BJP's claim of making India the *Vishwaguru* (world leader), they questioned why migrants were "deported in shackles" on Wednesday.

The Opposition also said the struggling Indian economy was driving people out of the country, and they had put their trust in unreliable agents out of desperation. The Lok Sabha was adjourned four times amid sloganning as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar delivered his statement.

As the Lower House got adjourned barely 10 minutes after it took up Question Hour, Opposition MPs staged protests outside the Parliament building.

"It was said that President Trump and Prime Minister Modi are very good friends. Why did Mr. Modi let this happen? Couldn't we have sent our own aircraft to bring them back? Is this how humans are treated? That they are sent back



Opposition MPs including Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge hold a protest outside Parliament on the issue of deportation on Thursday.

handcuffed and shackled?" Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra asked.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav added, "Those who were showing the dream of making India *Vishwaguru*, why are they silent now? Indian citizens are deported to India handcuffed like slaves and in inhumane conditions. What is the External Affairs Ministry doing?"

Congress MP K.C. Venugopal said the entire episode threw light on the desperation and helplessness of the people caused by economic hardship.

In the Rajya Sabha, Opposition members were offered the opportunity to ask questions after Mr. Gokhale said.

Jaishankar's statement. Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala, the Trinamool Congress's Saket Gokhale, John Brittas of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and the Aam Aadmi Party's Sanjay Singh, citing the example of Colombia which had sent an airplane to bring back its deportees, asked why India did not do the same.

Mr. Brittas said that military aircraft were rarely used for deportations, and asked why it was done in India's case. "These deportees are among the people who ran away from India, which is a failing economy, looking for better opportunity," Mr. Gokhale said.

SP leader Ramgopal Yadav asked the government whether it knew that the deportees had left behind their property and other belongings. "Will the government help them bring it back too?" he asked.

The Nationalist Congress Party (SP)'s Fauzia Khan asked if the visas of Indian students who participated in anti-Israel protests at universities will be canceled.

The AIADMK's M. Thambidurai asked if the action against Indian deportees was influenced by the fact that Kamala Harris, who is of Tamil heritage, fought against Mr. Trump in the election. CPI leader P. Sandosh Kumar said that in many house-

holds, the legal status of the family members may vary. "Do we have information on how many such Indian families are there?" he asked. The members demanded that the government take every possible step to track down the agents who sent these deportees to the U.S. and the route they took.

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau in a statement here called the deportation "deplorable and unacceptable". "The Modi government has shown a craven attitude by not objecting to such treatment of its citizens. Since more batches of Indians are expected to be deported, the government should ensure that they are treated in a humane and dignified manner," the party said.

The CPI condemned the inhumane and undignified manner in which the U.S. administration deported Indian citizens. The government must immediately and firmly raise this issue with the U.S. authorities, CPI general secretary D. Raja said.

Former Union Minister for Law and Justice Ashwani Kumar said the ordeal Indian citizens were subjected to while being deported was the ultimate denunciation of American pretensions as the global defender of human rights and democracy.

'Women, children were handcuffed; deportees had their feet tied with ropes'

Alisha Dutta
Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI/KAITHAL

Hands cuffed, feet tied with ropes, and face covered with a mask, Robin Handa, 18, arrived in Amritsar on Wednesday, days after the United States Border Security Police arrested him from the U.S.-Mexico border on January 22.

He was among the 104 Indians who were deported from the U.S. and brought back to India by an American military aircraft on Wednesday, following U.S. President Donald Trump's hardline stance on illegal immigration.

Along with him were 19 women and 13 minors, including a four-year-old boy, all of whom were handcuffed and had their feet tied with rope for 36 to 40 hours, recalled many of the deportees who spoke to *The Hindu* as they reached their hometowns on Thursday.

A motor electrician's son, Mr. Handa's father took a loan of ₹30 lakh to send his son to the United States, after he completed a course in computer science from the Industrial Training Institute in Ambala. "My father put together his savings of over ₹15 lakh from selling land and loaned ₹30 lakh to pay an agent who promised to send me to the U.S. via the U.K., only for me to be chained like an animal and



Deportee Omi Devi's brother Rajesh Kumar shows a photograph of his sister at Kheri village in Kaithal, Haryana. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

brought back to the country," Mr. Handa said.

He added that he had made the "expensive" journey all the way to the U.S. only after he realised that there were no jobs for him in his hometown nor any prospect of making a decent living.

"My agent instructed me to board a flight to Ghana from Mumbai on July 24, and then unlike what he promised, I was taken to Brazil via road. I had to cross seas, wade through rivers, and traverse the Amazon jungles to reach Peru, and then Ecuador and Colombia, and from there to the U.S.-Mexico border, from where I was arrested on January 22," Mr. Handa said, adding that it took him nearly six months to reach the U.S.

Like Mr. Handa, 45-year-old Omi Devi, her husband and their two teenagers, had decided to take the 'donkey route' to get to the

U.S. "Omi's eldest daughter is already studying in California. The kids were dreaming about starting their lives there and the family thought it would be best to earn some dollars and come back to India," Rajesh Kumar, Ms. Devi's brother, told *The Hindu*, hours after he met them at their Kukurshera home.

Ms. Devi's husband Parameet, the primary breadwinner of the family, had been relying on farming as a livelihood.

Ms. Devi and her family travelled for a month via Italy, France, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and finally Mexico. "We crossed into the U.S. near Tijuana on January 23, and within hours were caught by men in uniform who did not appear to be the police," she told her brother.

For 10 days, they were kept in a camp with 6x6 ft cabins for each person to sleep.

No word from govt. on U.S. cancelling Chabahar waiver

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI



A view of the Shahid Beheshti Terminal in Chabahar port, Iran with cargo ships. GETTY IMAGES

A day after U.S. President Donald Trump signed an order that could impose sanctions on India for its investment in Iran's Chabahar port, the Union government on Thursday remained silent regarding the order and its implications.

The U.S. order, titled the 'National Security Presidential Memorandum', specifically named the port as it called for "maximum economic pressure" on the Iranian government, directing U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to cut off Iran's recourse to all funds, including through oil exports, ports, and ancillary businesses.

Mr. Trump told reporters that he has left directions that in case of his assassination, Iran should be "totally obliterated" if it is found responsible.

Sanctions waivers

"The Secretary of State shall modify or rescind sanctions waivers, particularly those that provide Iran any degree of economic or financial relief, including those related to Iran's Chabahar port project," says the order. India has developed the Shahid Beheshti Terminal at the Chabahar port under a 2016 trilateral agreement with Iran and Afghanistan.

The Treasury Secretary will also issue guidance for all relevant business sectors - including shipping, insurance, and port operators - about the risks to any person that knowingly violates U.S. sanctions with respect to Iran or an Iranian terror proxy," added a fact-sheet.

U.S. doubles down on deportations amid outrage over shackled Indian immigrants returned on military plane

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Amid outrage in India over the treatment of Indian deportees, the U.S. has doubled down on its decision to fly the alleged illegal immigrants shackled and handcuffed aboard a U.S. military C-17 plane.

This is the first time a military plane has been used for such a flight, according to officials, and its use had been expressly ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump.

New lobbying effort
The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) declined to respond to requests for a comment on the U.S.'s latest threat, that came even as the U.S. deported a military plane-load of illegal Indian immigrants back to India. The Chabahar issue is expected to be discussed when Prime Minister Narendra Modi travels to Washington to meet with Mr. Trump between February 12 and 14. Officials said that the Trump order required a full study by New Delhi, as well as discussions on how best to lobby with the new U.S. administration for another waiver.

Asked about the reason for the unusually harsh transport methods, which caused a furore in Parliament, U.S. Embassy spokesperson Chris Elms said here on Thursday that the U.S. considered the move "critically important".

"I can share that enforcing our nation's immigration laws is critically important to the national security and public safety of the United States. It is

the policy of the United States to faithfully execute the immigration laws against all inadmissible and removable aliens," Mr. Elms said. On Wednesday, he said that the actions had sent a "clear message: illegal migration is not worth the risk".

Cuffed and chained
The tough statements indicate that the U.S. decision to use military planes for deportations is deliberate. Apart from India, the U.S. military's C-17s and C-130s have been used for a number of countries including Guatemala, Peru, Honduras and Ecuador as well as Colombia, whose President Gustavo Pedro objected to the use of the "undignified" manner of transport.

In a video he released online, U.S. Border Patrol chief Michael W. Banks showed how the Indian deportees were lined up for the flight, with legs in



The police escort the deportees in masks who were brought back from the U.S., at the Ahmedabad airport on Thursday. AP

chains and wrists held in cuffs.

They entered the military transport plane with its rows and rows of seats crammed together for the longest such deportation flight thus far by a U.S. military aircraft.

The 24-second video showed masked security personnel overseeing boarding. The video was set to loud and seemingly ominous music.

"US Border Patrol and

partners successfully returned illegal aliens to India, marking the farthest deportation flight yet using military transport," Mr. Banks posted on social media along with the video. "This mission underscores our commitment to enforcing immigration laws and ensuring swift removals. If you cross illegally, you will be removed," he added.

Military support
Asked about the reason for

the use of military aircraft, which is considerably more expensive than chartered aircraft or commercial flights, the spokesperson said the U.S. military was "supporting the administration's efforts to expedite the removal of illegal migrants globally".

Shortly after he was sworn in on January 20, Mr. Trump signed a number of executive orders, including one declaring a national emergency on the border.

Speaking to Republican members of the U.S. Congress, he said the U.S. was deporting aliens on military aircraft "for the first time in history", and that as a result "America was being respected again".

More deportations
According to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) website, its arm, the Immigration Air Operations (IAO), is mandated to conduct the

Congress to hold protests across the country today over deportation issue

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Questioning the use of a military plane to deport undocumented Indians from the United States, the Congress has announced that all its State units will stage protests on Friday.

"We strongly oppose both the inhuman treatment of our citizens and the government's weak stance on this issue," Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal said in a social media post, adding all Pradesha Congress Commit-

tees (PCCs) would hold protests in State capitals and district headquarters.

On Thursday, Indian Youth Congress chief Uday Bhanu Chib led a protest in the national capital against the "inhuman treatment of Indian deportees". "This is an insult to India and Indians on the world stage," Mr. Chib said.

A U.S. military plane carrying 104 undocumented immigrants landed in Amritsar on Wednesday, the first batch of Indians deported by the Donald Trump administration.

Ahead of House session, Manipur CM prays for peace at Maha Kumbh

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

tion. The Assembly currently has 59 members, 10 of them belonging to the Kuki-Zo community who have been absent since the ethnic clashes in May 2023.

The CM and his team went to Prayagraj from Delhi, where they flew to in a chartered flight on Wednesday after Home Minister Amit Shah reportedly summoned them. Rural Development Minister Yumnam Khemchand and MLA Thokchom Radheshyam reached Delhi on Tuesday, triggering speculations of a leadership tussle.

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(An Autonomous Organization of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, GOI)

ADMISSION NOTIFICATION: 2025-26 (AICTE - MHRD - GOI - Approved Programmes)

1. Post Graduate Diploma in Management: Agribusiness and Plantation Management (PGDM-ABPM) 2025-27 (25th Batch) (NBA Accredited and Equivalent to MBA by AIIU) Twining Programme with Royal Agricultural University, UK
2. Post Graduate Diploma in Management: Food Processing and Business Management (PGDM-FPB) 2025-27 (9th Batch) Academic Collaboration with University of Wisconsin Madison, WI-USA. Twining Programme with NTU-UK Under Approval Stage
3. Post Graduate Diploma in Management: Agricultural Export & Business Management (PGDM-AEBM) 2025-27 (6th Batch)
4. Fellow Programme in Management: (FPM-Ph.D) 2025-29 (6th Batch)
5. Executive Professional Certificate Programme in Agribusiness & Plantation Management (EPCP-ABPM) 2025 (11 months) 4th Batch

For detailed eligibility, selection criteria and application procedure, please visit website: www.iipmb.edu.in

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E-mail: admissions@iipmb.edu.in ipmb.program@gmail.com aebm.ipmb@gmail.com

Date: 07.02.2025
Notification No. 04/2025

DIRECTOR

CM YK

IN BRIEF



CBI books nine persons for 'sabotaging' IT Dept. scheme

The CBI has booked nine persons, including an Income Tax Deputy Commissioner and two Inspectors, apart from five chartered accountants (CAs), for allegedly attempting to sabotage the "Faceless Scheme of Assessment" of the department. In 2019, the Union government had launched the faceless assessment system to eliminate face-to-face interaction between taxpayers and the Income Tax Department. However, it is alleged that to circumvent the system, a group of CAs in a criminal conspiracy with some income tax officials was clandestinely disclosing the names of pending high-value assessment, appeal, or refund cases.

EPFO claims record number of settlements in 2024-25

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has settled claims of five crore subscribers in the financial year 2024-25. Claiming that the achievement is a record, Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday that the pension fund regulator disbursed more than ₹2.05 lakh crore in this financial year. "We have implemented key measures, including an increase in the ceiling and categories of auto-settled claims, simplified member profile changes, streamlined PF transfers, and improved KYC compliance ratios. These reforms have significantly improved the efficiency of EPFO," he told reporters.

SC shifts pleas against CLAT 2025 results to Delhi HC

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered petitions pending in various High Courts challenging the results of the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT), 2025 to a Division Bench of the Delhi High Court for expeditious disposal.

The CLAT is a national-level entrance exam for admissions to undergraduate and postgraduate law programmes offered by 24 national law universities in the country. A three-judge Bench of Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K.V. Viswanathan directed the petitions to be transferred from various courts to the Delhi High Court within seven days of the publication of the copy of this transfer order from the top court.

Sports champions, actors to feature in Modi's pre-examination event

Maitri Porecha

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with school students, parents and teachers across the country in his annual *Pariksha Pe Charcha* event scheduled for February 10.

Mr. Modi will discuss exam preparation, stress management and personal growth during the event aimed at students appearing for Board examinations.

The Education Ministry said here on Thursday that the event would have eight episodes in a revamped format, and would feature personalities such as M.C. Mary Kom, Deepika Padukone and Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev.

First interaction

The first interaction of students with Mr. Modi will be telecast on Doordarshan, the educational portal

SC gives charge of kabaddi federation to governing body

Top court commends Justice Garg for ensuring transparency in the AKFI, asks the federation to prepare the women's team for the Senior Asian Kabaddi Championship to be hosted by Iran

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday requested the former Delhi High Court judge Justice S.P. Garg (retd) to hand over charge of the Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India (AKFI) to a governing body elected in December 2023.

The court directed the federation, which is recognised by the Union Sports Ministry, to facilitate the selection and conditioning of the women's team set to participate in the Senior Asian Kabaddi Championship to be hosted by Iran from February 20 to 25.

A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and N. Kotiswar Singh commanded Justice Garg, who was appointed the administrator of the AKFI by an order of the Delhi High Court, for ushering in transparency and reforms in the sport's administration.

The apex court ordered the handing over of the reins and compliance with its order by February 11. It sought a compliance report to be filed by the AKFI in the next court hearing



Players participating in senior kabaddi selections in Sangareddy district in November. MOHAMMAD ARIF

on March 3, when counsel of the governing body must be present in court.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta appeared for the Centre, while senior advocates Gopal Sankaranarayanan and Menaka Guruswamy and advocate Sharan Kumar represented veteran players.

Conditioning camp

During the hearing, senior advocate K. Parameshwar, appearing for the women players Priyanka and Pooja, submitted there was an immediate need for "condi-

tioning camp". The senior advocate informed the court that even the selection of the team had been in limbo.

The court said that with the entrustment of the AKFI administration with its governing body, the International Kabaddi Federation (IKF) must abide by its positive assurance in a February 6 letter to allow the Indian team to participate in the upcoming championships. Mr. Sankaranarayanan urged the court to bring the Constitution of the AKFI in consonance

with the National Sports Code of India, 2011, and to conduct fresh elections.

The Bench clarified that handing over the charge of the AKFI to the governing body did not, by default, mean that the court had already recognised it. The arrangement was described by Justice Kant as "*ad hoc*".

In the previous hearing on February 4, the court had directed Mr. Mehta to find out whether the electoral roll of the AKFI was valid and transparent, and if the State units were represented by genuinely elected or nominated persons.

The court had in the earlier hearing also made clear its intention to examine allegations of opacity, monopoly and corruption against individuals, including the family of a former Rajasthan Minister, Janardhan Singh Gehlot, who had run the AKFI for decades, culminating in the loss of its IKF affiliation.

It had asked Mr. Mehta to explore diplomatic channels for the resolution of the conflict regarding the recognition of sports associations, most urgently the AKFI.

UGC draft rules bid by RSS to impose its agenda, says Rahul

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Addressing a protest by the DMK's student wing against the University Grants Commission's (UGC) draft rules in Delhi's Jantar Mantar on Thursday, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said it is another attempt by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)



Rahul Gandhi and DMK MP Kanimozi during a protest against the UGC draft rules at Jantar Mantar on Thursday. ANI

Each State has its tradition, each State has its history, each State has its language. That is why in the Constitution, India is called a Union of States," he added.

The Tamil people have a history that goes back 3,000-4,000 years, Mr. Gandhi said. "This is an insult to the Tamil people and to all the States where the RSS is trying to impose its hegemony," he said.

The Congress MP expressed his support for such protests, stating that the RSS needs to be held accountable for its actions.

"I wish that multiple protests like this happen because the RSS needs to be made to understand that they cannot attack the Constitution. They cannot attack our cultures, our traditions, and our histories," Mr. Gandhi said.

"This attempt that it is doing with the education system of the different States is just another attempt to push its agenda."



Prime Minister interacting with the students, teachers and parents, during the 6th edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha in 2023. ANI

provide insights on leading a healthy lifestyle.

On the topics of technology and finance, Gaurav Chaudhary, who is known as "Technical Guruji" and is CEO of Edelweiss Asset Management, will speak.

Radhika Gupta will explore technology as a tool for smarter learning and financial literacy.

In the episode dealing with creativity and positivity, actors Vikrant Massey and Bhumi Pednekar will inspire students to visualise and release negative thoughts. For mindfulness and mental peace, spiritual leader Sadhguru will share techniques to help students maintain focus.

This year, 36 students from across the country have been selected from government schools, Kendriya Vidyalayas, sainik schools, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, and CBSE and Navodaya Vidyalayas.

Prime Minister's speech is full of lies and half-truths, says Mallikarjun Kharge

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, in a sharp rebuttal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reply to the Motion of Thanks to the President on Thursday, slammed Mr. Modi for living in the past.

"How can a person who just lives in history build the present and the future," Mr. Kharge said in a post on X.

The Congress president alleged that the Prime Minister's speech was "full of lies and half-truths".

The future is 'dark'
Mr. Kharge claimed that in the hands of this government, the "country's future is dark" as Mr. Modi only kept cursing the Con-



dari, introduce land reforms and extend reservation for backward classes.

Countering Mr. Modi's claim that the Congress didn't want B.R. Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly, Mr. Kharge said his party had made its member M.R. Jayakar resign from Mumbai to bring Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar to the Constituent Assembly.

"He [Dr. Ambedkar] became the first Law Minister of the country in Pandit [Jawaharlal] Nehru's government. The Congress wanted Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar himself wrote a letter and revealed that S.A. Dange and [Vineyak Damodar] Savarkar were responsible for his defeat," the Congress chief said.

gress instead of talking about unemployment, inflation, economic inequality, recession, falling rupee, falling private investment and the failed 'Make in India'. Referring to the first amendment to the Constitution, Mr. Kharge said it was done to abolish zamindari,

FAITH

Remedy for confused mind

A person is said to be confused if he cannot make decisions properly. An error in memory affects decision-making. If his thinking capacity is impaired, he cannot judge and forecast the outcome of his activities. Making wrong decisions out of bewilderment may land a person in deep peril.

Thiruneppalli Sri Krishnan Swamy said in a discourse that joy and sorrow do not arise from material things but from a person's mental disposition. An alcoholic feels pleasure by drinking, whereas a teetotaller does not prefer the beverage.

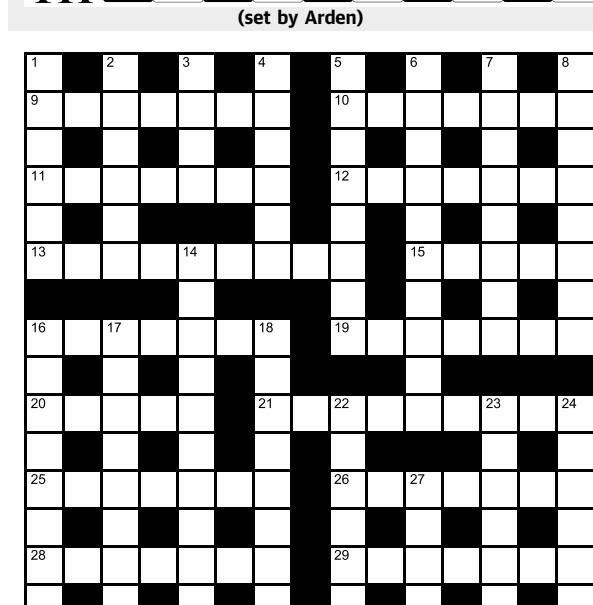
Will people ever prefer to undergo suffering rather than enjoy comforts and pleasures? Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that people should try to hold pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat alike so that they do not incur any sin (*Sukha Dukhe - CH-2-Verse 38*).

Joy and sorrow are temporary only. People should neither be too ecstatic for happiness nor sombre for unhappiness. Surrendering to God's feet will help a person treat both alike. Hanuman asked Sita whether she could undergo such severe pangs at Ashokavanam. But Sita replied that sins would not be extinguished without experiencing them.

Thiruveppillai says a person who does not long for joy will never be upset by the pain of sorrow. Confused in the battle, Arjuna pleaded to Lord Krishna, "With my heart stricken by the fault of weak compassion, with my mind perplexed, I request you to say what is good for me." When we are at a loss, we should seek the advice of great Acharyas and pious people to help and guide us.

TH CROSSWORD

14402



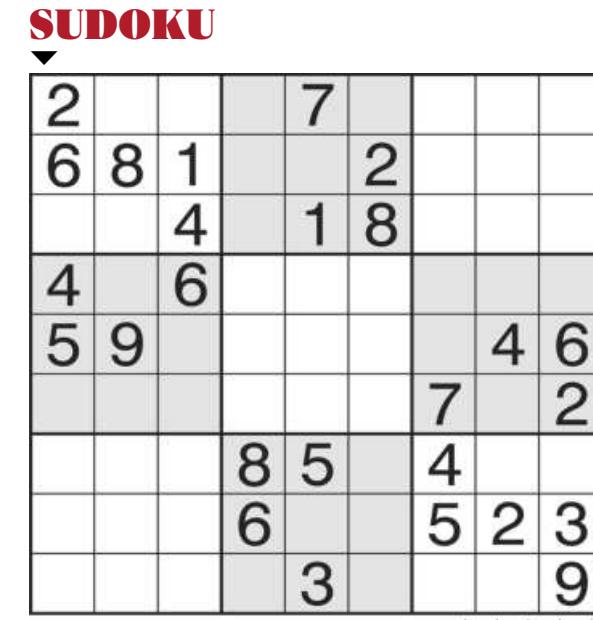
Across

- 9 Obscure figure, exchanging 100 for 50 at first (7)
- 10 Ideal uniform - a point to tailor (7)
- 11 Mr. Patel lost a knight (7)
- 12 Agree to disrobe - it's nothing in Spanish country (7)
- 13 Representation of light coming through the entrance (9)
- 14 Return to a team (5)

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



SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

T	I	S	A	N	E	A	S	I	T	W	E	R	O	T	A	T	E	S	M
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No SS6423 Distribution www.karthigeebooks.com

Solution to previous puzzle

T	I	S	A	N	E	A	S	I	T	W	E	R	O	T	A	T	E	S	M
9	8	7	4	2	5	1	3	6											
3	1	5	6	7	8	9	4												

IN BRIEF



Akasa Air gets funding from Azim Premji, Pai family offices

Tech tycoon Azim Premji's global investment arm and Manipal group chief Ranjan Pai's family office have invested an undisclosed sum of money to pick up a stake in Akasa Air, India's youngest airline. In a statement, the airline said promoter Jhunjhunwala family has also committed more funds to Akasa. The Jhunjhunwala family and Vinay Dube, the founder and CEO of Akasa Air, own a majority stake in the airline. PTI

Rupee slips 16 paise to close at 87.59 against U.S. dollar

The rupee plunged 16 paise to close at an all-time low of 87.59 against the U.S. dollar on Thursday, as rising odds of a rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India in its monetary policy meeting on Friday pressurised the rupee. Forex traders said the Indian rupee plunged to fresh record lows amid weak domestic markets and importer demand for dollars. Moreover, risk aversion in global markets amid ongoing uncertainty over US trade tariffs may further weigh on the rupee. PTI

Byju's suspended RP, former promoters approach NCLAT

The former Resolution Professional (RP) of insolvency bound edtech firm Byju's moved appellate tribunal NCLAT against disciplinary action recommended against him by Bengaluru bench of the NCLT. Also, ex-Byju's promoters and Byju Raveendran's brother Riju Raveendran also moved the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) against NCLT order restating Glas Trust and Aditya Birla Finance in Committee of Creditors (CoC) of the edtech firm. PTI

Odisha joins States' pitch for 50% share of divisible tax pool

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha has joined the growing demand for the Finance Commission to raise States' share in India's divisible tax pool to 50%, from about 41% currently. The Sixteenth Finance Commission chairman Arvind Panagariya acknowledged the broader call by many States for a higher allocation.

The Constitutional panel, in Odisha from February 4 to 7 as part of its consultation process, has discussed the criteria for deciding the financial needs and the devolution formula with Chief Minister Mohan Majhi, political leaders, trade bodies, experts and urban local bodies.

"We have placed a demand that States' share in the tax pool be enhanced to 50%. Besides, the gross tax income of Government of India is distributed among the States on the basis of a defined formula. Accordingly, share of Odisha stands at 4.528%. We have demanded to enhance the share of Odisha to 4.964%," the Odisha CM said.

Odisha also demanded an increase in the central share in the corpus of the State Disaster Relief Fund from 75% to 100%, as the State faces frequent disasters. The Odisha CM has sought ₹12,59,148 Crore from the Commission for the five-year period from 2026-27 to 2030-31, noting that "the funds will help the State in steering the roadmap to a *Samruddha* (prosperous) Odisha by 2036."

Acknowledging the State's demand, Mr. Pan-



Indus stake sale boosts Bharti Airtel's Q3 net profit

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Bharti Airtel Ltd. reported a five-fold surge in its consolidated net profit for the third quarter ended December 31 to ₹16,135 crore on a one-time gain of ₹7,546 crore from the sale of a majority stake in the Indus Tower business.

Consolidated revenue grew 19% to ₹45,129 crore driven by 'strong momentum in India and continued underlying growth in constant currency in Africa', the company said.

"A better approximation of the government liability would be population share modified by the share of vulnerable population (say SC and ST) and those requiring special attention (people above 80 years of age and widows without any support). We suggest that such a modified population variable be used in the devolution formula instead of the entire population with a weight of 15%", the State government emphasised in its vice-chairman and MD.

The firm's ARPU (Average Revenue per user) for the quarter stood at ₹245 up from ₹208 last year.

"Our balance sheet remains solid, supported by robust cash generation, prudent capital allocation and continued deleveraging," said Gopal Vittal, vice-chairman and MD.

Moreover, the government said that "using area as a proxy for density of population is incorrect because even smaller States may be sparsely populated, while a State large in size is not necessarily sparsely populated," he noted.

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

The country's largest lender, State Bank of India (SBI), posted a 84.3% year-on-year growth in its third-quarter net profit to ₹16,891 crore compared with ₹9,164 crore a year ago.

The bank's Q3 profit had been hit last year by a one-time ₹7,100 crore provision for wage revision and pension costs. Net Interest Income grew 4.6% to ₹41,446 crore. However, the bank's net interest margin fell from 3.46% to 3.27%.

Asset quality improved with gross non-performing



Firm footing: SBI maintains its guidance of 14-16% growth in advances and 10% growth deposits, its chairman said. REUTERS

assets (GNPA) falling 2.75% to ₹84,360 crore, and net NPA dipping 4.60% to ₹21,378 crore.

Deposits at ₹52,29,384 crore grew 9.81% while gross advances rose 13.49%

come tax relief in the Budget for those earning upto ₹12-lakh annually, Mr. Setty said: "This is definitely a positive step for the banking system. A large number of clients are from this category and the TDS benefit for senior citizens announced in the Budget is also a big positive."

To a question from *The Hindu* on U.S. tariff action, Mr. Setty said, "There is also a positive side depending on which country will be hit by the tariffs. India's export basket is highly diversified in geographies and product profile. So, I do not see an immediate impact of tariff action."

ITC's Q3 net slips 7% on cost surge, to pay ₹6.50 dividend

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) major ITC Ltd. reported a 7% dip in its consolidated net profit for the third quarter ended December 31 to ₹5,013 crore, owing to a sharp escalation in input costs. Consolidated revenue grew 8% to ₹20,350 crore.

The ITC board recommended an interim dividend of ₹6.50 per share for FY25. The record date will be February 12. It was a resilient performance amid



subdued demand environment and sharp escalation in input cost, ITC said in a filing. Revenue growth was driven by agri-business, hotels and cigarettes.

The company said it witnessed sharp cost escalations in key input materials (edible oil, wheat, potato, leaf tobacco, wood, etc.) in the third quarter.

FMCG revenues grew 4% amid muted demand. Cigarette revenue rose 8.1% while ITC's agri-business saw 9.7% revenue growth.

Paperboards, paper and packaging segment remained impacted due to low-priced Chinese and Indonesian supplies in global markets, including in India, soft domestic demand conditions, and an unprecedented surge in wood prices, the company said.

In Q3, Hero MotoCorp net up 12%, to pay ₹100 dividend

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Hero MotoCorp, the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters, reported a third quarter standalone net profit of ₹1,203 crore, up 12% year-on-year.

The company's revenue from operations stood at ₹10,211 crore compared with ₹9,724 crore a year ago. Hero MotoCorp declared an interim dividend of ₹100 per share [5000%].

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	THURSDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	78,058	-0.27
US Dollar	87.59	-0.18
Gold	86,070	0.31
Brent oil	74.92	0.34

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2312.45	-12.15
Adani Ports	1164.05	19.70
Apollo Hosp	6874.25	-70.40
Asian Paints	2263.40	-11.80
Axis Bank	1020.70	7.40
Bajaj Auto	8846.35	-81.45
Bajaj Finserv	1788.00	-8.75
Bajaj Finance	8507.30	2.15
Bharat Elec.	279.75	-9.20
Bharti Airtel	1619.75	-40.70
BPCL	262.55	1.30
Britannia Ind.	4956.05	23.40
Cipla	1471.50	34.70
Coal India	379.60	-3.25
Dr Reddy's Lab	1236.65	9.10
Eicher Motors	5342.00	-75.20
Grasim Ind.	2499.00	9.00
HCL Tech	1723.50	10.65
HFDC Life	631.95	4.10
Hero MotoCorp	4230.05	-40.35
Hindalco	595.45	-5.15
Hindustan Unilever	2372.70	-18.35
ICICI Bank	1272.40	4.70
IndusInd Bank	1065.55	4.35
Infosys	1915.65	18.60
ITC	441.10	-7.05
ITC Hotels Ltd	172.11	3.59
JSW Steel	948.40	-1.50
Kotak Bank	1915.95	4.20
L&T	3352.75	-30.45
M&M	3139.95	-38.80
Maruti Suzuki	13074.00	-12.80
NestleIndia	2239.45	9.50
NTPC	312.80	-6.80
ONGC	256.15	-5.50
PowerGrid Corp	281.15	-4.05
Reliance Ind.	1281.55	3.35
SBI	1465.10	-4.05
State Bank	752.25	-13.80
Shriram Finance	566.35	-4.95
Sun Pharma	1742.00	-10.75
Tata Consultancy Services	1023.35	8.05
Tata Motors	709.65	-7.40
Tata Steel	132.54	1.86
TCS	4082.75	-8.35
Tech Mahindra	1669.60	8.60
Titan	3410.75	-80.15
Trent Ltd.	5277.10	-472.85
UltraTech Cement	11477.35	-108.35
Wipro	317.95	0.85

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on February 06

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	87.38	87.70
Euro	90.57	90.90
British Pound	108.59	108.99
Japanese Yen (100)	57.31	57.53
Chinese Yuan	11.99	12.03
Swiss Franc	96.52	96.89
Singapore Dollar	64.57	64.82
Canadian Dollar	60.86	61.10
Malaysian Ringgit	19.69	19.79
Australian Dollar	54.74	54.94

Source: Indian Bank

Jumpstarting January: Auto retail sales up 7%, passenger vehicles 16%

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Automobile retail sales in India rose 7% year-on-year in January at 22,91,621 units, driven by robust demand across segments, dealer's body FADA said on Thursday.

Overall retail sales stood at 21,49,117 units in January 2024.

"Our observations indicate that each vehicle category - 2W, 3W, PV, tractor and CV- witnessed positive momentum, pointing toward sustained consumer confidence and steady market recovery," the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) president C.S. Vigneshwar said in an official statement.

Passenger vehicle retail sales jumped 16% year-on-year to 4,65,920 units last month. Many dealers noted improved demand but also pointed to last year's heavy discounting, which helped clear older models and shift registrations, Mr. Vigneshwar said.

Inventory levels with dealers improved, dropping by around five days to 50-55 days, suggesting an improved supply-demand balance, he added.

Two-wheeler retail sales stood at 15,25,862 units last month, marking an increase of 4%, as compared with 14,65,039 units in the same month last year.

Dealers cited new model launches, marriage season demand and improved financing as key growth drivers, he added.

GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH DEPARTMENT OF MPP & POWER NOTICE INVITING PROPOSALS

The Director (Energy) on behalf of Governor, Himachal Pradesh invites proposals from 'Eligible Bidders' for the implementation of the following Hydro-electric Projects, in Private Sector on Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT) basis:-

S

MANILA**U.S. military-contracted plane crashes in Philippines killing 4**

A U.S. military-contracted plane crashed in a rice field in the southern Philippines, killing all four on board. Philippine officials confirmed the crash in Maguindanao del Sur province. The bodies of four foreign nationals were recovered from the wreckage. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command will issue a more detailed statement. AP

PARIS**French Parliament finally adopts Budget after tumultuous process**

France's Parliament on Thursday adopted the 2025 Budget after a tumultuous process. Prime Minister François Bayrou survived no-confidence votes on Wednesday. The Senate approved the Budget with 219 votes. This Budget aims to reduce the public deficit to 5.4% of GDP in 2025 through savings and tax increases. AFP

GENEVA**Israel has no plans to exit other UN bodies after rights council boycott**

Israel on Thursday said that it was not planning to withdraw from other United Nations bodies besides the Human Rights Council, which it is boycotting over perceived bias and "anti-Semitism". Foreign Minister Gideon Saar on Wednesday announced that Israel would halt its participation in the UN's top rights body. AFP

TEHRAN**Iran Revolutionary Guards unveil first drone carrier in Gulf waters**

Iran's Revolutionary Guards revealed their first drone carrier, the *Martyr Bahman Bagheri*, in Gulf waters on Thursday. The vessel can launch long-range missiles, carry 60 drones and helicopters, and support electronic warfare. It can remain at sea for a year. The ship is the Islamic republic's largest naval military project. AFP

Israel tells Army to prepare for 'departure' of Gazans

Trump had proposed that U.S. 'take over' Gaza to relocate residents, sparking major international condemnation; Palestinians firmly reject any forced exile, asserting their right to remain in Gaza

Reuters
JERUSALEM

Israel's Defence Minister ordered the Army on Thursday to prepare a plan to allow the "voluntary departure" of residents from Gaza, after U.S. President Donald Trump drew widespread condemnation for announcing plans to take over the strip.

Defence Minister Israel Katz hailed Mr. Trump's announcement that the United States would aim to take control of Gaza, resettle the more than 2 million Palestinians living there and transform the territory into the "Riviera of the Middle East".

"I welcome President Trump's bold plan, Gaza residents should be allowed the freedom to leave



Last resort: Palestinians take shelter in tents set up amid heavily damaged buildings in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip. AFP

and emigrate, as is the norm around the world," Mr. Katz said on X. He said his plan would include exit options via land crossings, as well as special arrangements for departure by sea and air.

Displacement of Palestinians is one of the most sensitive and explosive is-

sues in the West Asia. Forced or coerced displacement of a population under military occupation is a war crime, banned under the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Israeli strikes which killed tens of thousands of people over the past 16 months have forced Pales-

tinians to repeatedly move around within Gaza, seeking safety. But many say they will never leave the enclave because they fear permanent displacement, like the "Nakba", or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands were dispossessed from homes in the war at the birth of the state of Israel in 1948.

Driven out
Many were driven out or fled to Gaza, the West Bank and neighbouring Arab states including to Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where their descendants still live in refugee camps. Israel disputes the account that they were forced out.

Mr. Katz said countries who have opposed Israel's military operations in Gaza should take in the Palestinians.

Trump's Gaza plan appears to be on hold amid furore

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration appeared to backtrack on Wednesday after his proposal to take over Gaza sparked uproar, with the United Nations warning against "ethnic cleansing" in the Palestinian territory.

Facing a wave of criticism from Palestinians, Arab governments and world leaders, Mr. Trump's Secretary of State Marco Rubio, describing it as a "generous move", said any transfer of Gazans would be temporary, while the White House said there was no commitment to sending U.S. troops.

Mr. Trump, however, insisted "everybody loves" the plan, which he announced to audible gasps during a White House press conference with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Trump signs order barring trans athletes from women's sports

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Wednesday seeking to ban transgender athletes from participating in women's sports, in his latest move targeting transgender people since returning to office.

"From now on women's sports will be only for women," Mr. Trump said before he signed the order at the White House, surrounded by dozens of children and female athletes.

"With this executive order the war on women's sports is over."

Top Republicans including U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson and firebrand Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene were among those in the audience to watch the signing ceremony.

"We will defend the proud tradition of female



Donald Trump

athletes, and we will not allow men to beat up, injure and cheat our women and our girls," Mr. Trump added.

Mr. Trump's order allows U.S. government agencies to deny funds to schools that allow transgender athletes to compete on women's teams.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which regulates student athletics in colleges across the country, welcomed the order and said they would align to it "in the coming days".

Argentina bans gender transitions for minors

Agence France-Presse
BUENOS AIRES

Argentina said on Wednesday it would ban gender transition procedures for minors, part of President Javier Milei's war on what he calls "woke ideology".

President spokesman Manuel Adorni said the government would amend a 2012 law to "ban hormone treatment and body adaptation surgery for people aged under 18". He argued that gender transition treatments posed a "serious risk" to the physical and mental health of minors.

"In many cases the effects of these treatments and surgeries are irreversible," he said, listing Finland, Sweden, Britain and the United States among countries that are restricting access to gender transitions for minors, including treatment such as puberty blockers.

Guatemala gives Rubio a second deal of deportation

Associated Press
GUATEMALA CITY

Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo said on Wednesday his country will accept migrants from other countries who are being deported from the United States, the second deportation deal that Secretary of State Marco Rubio has reached during a Central America trip that has been focused mainly on immigration.

Under the agreement announced by Mr. Arévalo, the deportees would be returned to their home countries at U.S. expense. Previously, including under the Biden administration, Guatemala had been accepting on average seven to eight flights of its citizens from U.S. per week.

Panama rebuffs U.S. claim of free travel through the Canal

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

Panama on Thursday rejected the United States' claim that it had secured free passage for government vessels through the Panama Canal.

Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino told reporters the U.S. assertion about the waterway was "intolerable, simply and plainly intolerable," adding that he rejected "bilateral relations based on lies and falsehoods".

Since winning the U.S. election in November, U.S. President Donald Trump has refused to rule out the use of force to seize the canal built by Washington over a century ago and later handed over to Panama.

Around 40% of U.S. con-

tainer traffic passes through the narrow body of water linking the Caribbean Sea with the Pacific Ocean.

The new row between Panama and Washington erupted after the U.S. State Department claimed that Panama had agreed to let U.S. government vessels through the canal for free after talks last weekend between Mr. Mulino and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

In a post on X, the State Department claimed the decision would save the U.S. government "millions of dollars a year". The Panama Canal Authority, which runs the waterway, quickly rejected the claim, saying it had "not made any adjustments" to its tariffs.

Of the 26 Mirage 2000-5 aircraft owned by the French air force, six were to be transferred to Ukraine, according to a Budget report published by France's Lower House of Parliament.

France sends Mirage 2000 fighter jets to Ukraine

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

France has delivered a first consignment of Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets to Ukraine to help Kyiv defend its airspace against Russia, Defence Minister Sébastien Lecornu said on X on Thursday.

Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy hailed the delivery, which comes amid fears of decreasing support from Washington since U.S. President Donald Trump's inauguration.

Since April 2023, creating a widespread humanitarian crisis. Mr. Hilu's unaffiliated faction of the SPLM-N has clashed with both since the war broke out. In recent days, the Army and the SPLM-N have accused each other of launching attacks and targeting civilians in an attempt to capture territory.

The UN warned the escalating violence would only worsen the already dire humanitarian situation.

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e-Tenders are invited for supply of (1) 1,80,000 Kgs of Dried Grapes (Indian Brown) (2) 40,000 Kgs of Roasted Vermicelli (Branded) (3) 60,000 Kgs of Cardamom (ELACHI) 8 mm size (AGB) variety (4) 48,00,000 Kgs of Sugar (S-30) (5) 1,20,000 Kgs of Cashew Wholes (W320 variety) and (6) 60,000 Kgs of Chaiwai Splits 'S' Grade through e-tenders to the Marketing Department, TTD, Devasthanams. For Tender Notice and Tender details log on to the website <http://www.tirumala.org> and <https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in>. For further details contact Phone Numbers: 0877-2264079, 22640555, Fax No.0877-2264554.

TTD-40021(31)/1/2024-PRO SEC (Advt.No.310) Date:06-02-2025

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE BANGALORE-560 012

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Indian Institute of Science invites bids in two cover system through e-procurement platform <https://eprocure.gov.in> for the work of "Tank Cleaning of water Storage Reservoirs, Underground Sumps, RCC/masonry/Synthetic Overhead tanks at IISc, Bangalore". Estimated Cost of Project is Rs.40,66,149.00. Last date of receipt of application is 20th Feb 2025 at 1530Hrs. Any other details can be obtained from the office of the Centre for Campus Management & Development, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore on all working days or e-mail office.cmdm@iisc.ac.in.

REGISTRAR

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL S.M.S. MEDICAL COLLEGE & CONTROLLER OF THE ATTACHED HOSPITALS, JAIPUR

No. 1727-31/F/MC/Store/2024-25

Dated: 24.01.2025

Notice Inviting Bid - 166/2024-25

E-Bid for Providing composite work (Mechanized/Automated and Manual Cleaning, Housekeeping, Pest Control, Security, Repair and Maintenance of AC and PC Plant, RO and Water Cooler, Lift, DG Set, Solar Panels, Fire Fighting System, Parking Management, Operationalization and Management of Gym & Swimming Pool, Maintenance of Garden and Cricket Ground, Minor Civil & Electrical Repair and Maintenance Work) at SMS Medical College, Jaipur, Rajasthan. Estimated Value Rs. 10.00 Crore+GST are invited from interested bidder's up to 17-02-2025 at 11.00 AM. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.raj.nic.in>) of the state and SMS Medical College, Jaipur, Rajasthan. For qualifications, eligibility and other details, please visit NSTFDCs website <http://nstfdc.tribal.gov.in>. The last date of receipt of applications is 30 days from the date of publication of this advertisement in the Employment News.

Office of the Superintending Engineer, PWD, Circle, Kekri

Date:-27.01.2025

NIB No.: PWD2425A3936

Notice Inviting Bid No. 05/2024-25

Bid for No. 0 Package. Applications are invited from interested bidders upto 6.00 PM on 17.02.2024. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.raj.nic.in>) of the State; and DIPR departmental website. The approximate value of the procurement is Rs. 325.91 Lacs.

S.No. 1 - UBN No.: PWD2425WSOB14209,

S.No. 2 - UBN No.: PWD2425WSOB14290

(प्रिंटर इन्सेप्ट ग्राम पुस्तक), अधिकारी प्रशासन, सा.नि.सि. कृष्ण केन्द्री

DIPR/C/1236/2025

National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

NBCC Tower, 5th Floor, 15 Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi - 110066

Tel. Ph: 011-26712583 Website:<https://nstfdc.tribal.gov.in>

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation, a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India, is seeking applications from eligible candidates on direct recruitment basis as per details here under:

Name of post and Pay Scale	No. of Post (s)	UR	SC	ST	BC	Total
GENERAL MANAGER (PROJECT) E-6 (Rs. 90,000 - 2,40,000/-)	01	01	-	-	-	01
CHIEF MANAGER (Finance) E-3 (Rs. 60,000 - 1,80,000/-)	01	-	01	-	-	01
CHIEF MANAGER (Personnel) E-3 (Rs. 60,000 - 1,80,000/-)	01	-	-	-	01	01
DEPUTY MANAGER (Project) E-1 (Rs. 40,000 - 1,40,000/-)	02	01	-	01	-	02

For qualifications, eligibility and other details, please visit NSTFDCs website <http://nstfdc.tribal.gov.in>. The last date of receipt of applications is 30 days from the date of publication of this advertisement in the Employment News.

S/d- Dy. Manager (Personnel), NSTFDC.

<p

SET IN STONE

Three-star Harshit enters record books after another stellar debut



With his three for 53 against England on Thursday, Harshit Rana became the first Indian to pick three or more wickets on his debut across all formats. He registered figures of three for 48 and one for 69 in the Perth Test against Australia last year. The 23-year-old also struck thrice in the T20I against England in Mumbai last month.

TURNING IT ON

Jadeja bags 600th international wicket, joins elite club



India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja scalped his 600th international wicket when he bowled Adil Rashid in the first ODI against England at Nagpur on Thursday. He has 223 ODI wickets to go with 323 Test wickets and 54 in T20Is. The Saurashtra cricketer became the fifth Indian after Kumble, Ashwin, Harbhajan and Kapil Dev to achieve it.

NIGGLE

Sore right knee keeps Kohli out of the Nagpur ODI



Virat Kohli missed the first ODI against England in Nagpur because of a sore right knee. The 36-year-old had a forgettable Australian tour, barring a ton in the first Test at Perth. With just two weeks left before the Champions Trophy, the team will hope it is not a serious injury and that he can be fit for the final two games in this series.

KEY MOMENT

Salt's run-out was the turning point in first ODI, says Buttler



England skipper Jos Buttler felt Phil Salt's dismissal changed the momentum of the match. "I think Salt and Duckett played brilliantly in that PowerPlay, putting the opposition under much pressure. An unfortunate run-out changed the momentum, and we lost four wickets quickly. We were probably 40 or 50 runs short."

India's batting might crushes England in Orange City

Gill forges alliances with Shreyas and Axar as the Men in Blue kickstart their Champions Trophy preparation in style; Harshit, Jadeja restrict the visitors to 248 despite a rapid start by Salt and Duckett

ENGLAND IN INDIA

S. Dipak Ragav
NAGPUR

Shubman Gill (87, 96b, 14x4) and Shreyas Iyer (59, 36b, 9x4, 2x6) ensured India kickstarted its ICC Champions Trophy preparation on the right note, guiding the side to a comfortable four-wicket win over England in the first One-Day International at the VCA Stadium here on Thursday.

In front of a packed house, the duo put on a stellar display of free-flowing strokeplay, sending the English bowlers on a leather hunt. Their 94-run alliance off 64 balls for the third wicket ensured the host chased down a target of 249 in the 39th over.

Earlier, a disciplined bowling performance led by debutant pacer Harshit Rana (three for 53) and Ravindra Jadeja (three for 26) – playing his first ODI since November 2023 – helped the home team bundle England out for 248.

In reply, India started poorly when Yashasvi Jaiswal, making his debut and skipper Rohit Sharma, fell cheaply.



I wasn't supposed to play. The funny story is I was watching a movie last night and then got a call from the skipper saying I may play.

However, Shreyas came out guns blazing and took on the English pacers who attempted to pepper him with short-pitched deliveries. After flicking Saqib Mahmood to get going, the Mumbai batter pulled and ramped Jofra Archer for consecutive maximums to signal his intentions in the seventh over.

The 30-year-old then carved Brydon Carse for three boundaries – two square on the off-side and an exquisite cover drive – as India raced to 71 for two in 10 overs.

At the other end, Gill was not to be left behind and punished the English pacers' unidimensional plan of trying to bang it in short by deploying his trademark short-arm jab pulls without any risk.

Shreyas brought up his half-century in style by sweeping left-arm spinner Jacob Bethell to the fence



Stamping their authority: Gill and Shreyas were in imperious form as India won with 11.2 overs to spare. K.R. DEEPAK



off just 30 balls. Later, Axar Patel ensured the momentum was not lost and took on the spinners from the get-go.

The left-hander swept,

cut and went inside-out en route his rapid half-centu-

ry. In the 29th over, when Axar and Gill each collected a brace of boundaries off Carse to take India past 200, the match was pretty much done and dusted.

Earlier, England elected to bat and got off to a flyer

in the PowerPlay when Phil Salt went after Harshit.

He welcomed the 23-year-old by hitting him for two boundaries in his first over and then smashed the youngster for three sixes and two fours in a 26-run

six over. But against the run of play, Salt was run out, giving an opening for Rohit's men.

Harshit came back strongly, backing his strength of bowling into the pitch and troubled the

SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND
Phil Salt run out 43 (26b, 5x4, 3x6), Ben Duckett c Jaiswal b Harshit 32 (29b, 6x4), Joe Root lbw b Jadeja 19 (31b, 1x4), Harry Brook c Rahil b Harshit 0 (3b), Jos Buttler c Hardik b Axar 52 (67b, 4x4), Jacob Bethell lbw b Jadeja 51 (64b, 3x4, 1x6), Liam Livingstone c Rahul b Harshit 5 (10b), Brydon Carse b Shami 10 (18b, 1x4), Adil Rashid b Jadeja 8 (16b), Jofra Archer (not out) 21 (18b, 3x4, 1x6), Saqib Mahmood st. Rahul b Kuldeep 2 (4b); Extras (b-1, lb-2, w-2); 5; Total (in 47.4 overs) 248.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-75 (Salt, 8.5 overs), 2-77 (Duckett, 9.3), 3-77 (Brook, 9.6), 4-111 (Root, 18.3), 5-170 (Buttler, 32.6), 6-183 (Livingstone, 35.4), 7-206 (Carse, 39.5), 8-220 (Bethell, 42.4), 9-241 (Rashid, 46.4).

INDIA BOWLING

Shami 8-1-38-1, Harshit 7-1-53-3, Axar 7-0-38-1, Hardik 7-1-37-0, Kuldeep 9-4-0-53-1, Jadeja 9-1-26-3.

INDIA

Yashasvi Jaiswal c Salt b Archer

15 (22b, 3x4), Rohit Sharma c Livingstone b Mahmood 2 (7b), Shubman Gill c Buttler b Mahmood 87 (96b, 14x4), Shreyas Iyer lbw c Hardik 52 (47b, 6x4, 1x6), K.L. Rahul c & b Rashid 2 (5b), Hardik Pandya (not out) 6 (6b, 1x6), Ravindra Jadeja (not out) 12 (10b, 2x4); Extras (lb-8, w-4, nb-1); 13; Total (for six wkts. in 38.4 overs) 251.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-19 (Jaiswal, 4.3), 2-19 (Rohit, 5.2), 3-113 (Shreyas, 15.6), 4-221 (Axar, 33.4), 5-225 (Rahul, 35.4), 6-235 (Gill, 36.2).

ENGLAND BOWLING

Archer 7-1-39-1, Mahmood 6.4-0-47-2, Carse 5-0-52-0, Rashid 10-1-49-2, Bethell 3-0-18-1, Livingstone 5-0-28-0, Root 2-0-10-0.

Toss: England.

PoM: Gill.

India won by four wickets with 68 balls remaining to lead three-match series 1-0.

Second ODI: February 9, Cuttack, 1.30 p.m.

batters with his bounce to pick two wickets in the 10th over.

He first had Duckett top-edging a pull to Jaiswal and then dismissed Harry Brook caught down the leg-side, trying to fend a well-directed, short-pitched delivery into the body.

Skipper Jos Buttler (52)

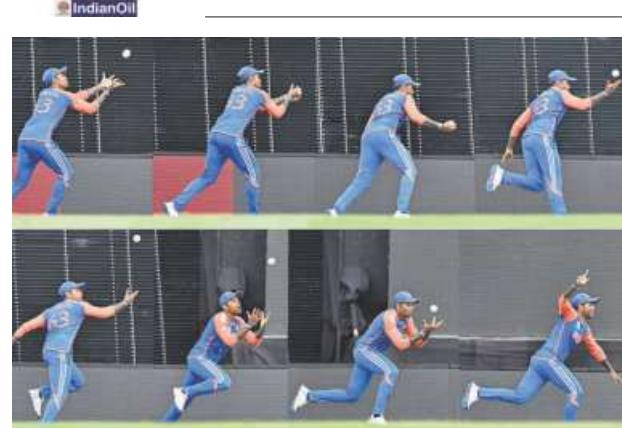
did not try anything extravagant and kept the innings on track. Once he was dismissed, the innings fell apart as Harshit, Jadeja, and Shami ran through the lower-order.

Though the hosts stuttered close to the finish, they would be pleased with their clinical performance.



Nominees for Sporting Moment of the Year

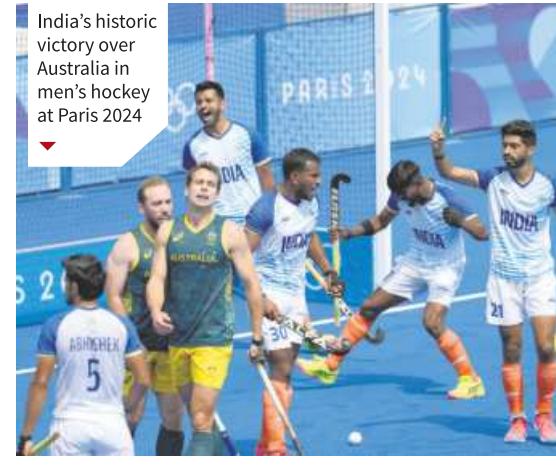
2024 was a landmark year for Indian sports, with a host of achievements across several disciplines. The annual *Sportstar Aces Awards* seek to honour the trailblazers.



▲ Suryakumar Yadav's catch in the T20 World Cup final



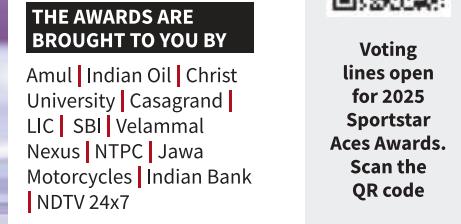
Vinesh Phogat beating Yui Susaki at Paris 2024



India's historic victory over Australia in men's hockey at Paris 2024



Navdeep Singh winning gold in Paris Paralympics



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D. Gukeesh winning the Candidates

The awards ceremony will be held in Mumbai on February 14

CMYK



Voting lines open for 2025 Sportstar Aces Awards. Scan the QR code.

Maaya, Shrivalli continue to dazzle

MUMBAI OPEN WTA 125

Tarun Shastry
MUMBAI

An anxious parent, sitting in the top-most corner seat of the main gallery at Centre Court, finally broke into a smile when Kazakhstan's Zarina Diyas retired due to illness during the sixth game of the second set.

Maaya Rajeshwaran, only 15, advanced to her first quarterfinal with a 6-3, 3-2 (ret'd) scoreline in the L&T Mumbai Open WTA 125 at the Cricket Club of India here on Thursday.

The Indian, solid from the baseline, produced some stunning cross-court return winners as she raced to a 5-1 lead against the former World No. 31.

Though Diyas won the next two games with her sharp play, Maaya sealed the set with a spectacular volley.

The Kazakh held a 2-0 advantage in the second after breaking serve early, but the Indian bounced back in the third game.

Maaya continued to be aggressive as she broke Diyas for a 3-2 lead. A struggling Diyas retired midway through the sixth game.

Shrivalli Bhamidipaty outclassed Aleksandra Kruncic 6-4, 6-0.

After trailing 0-3, the 23-year-old won six straight



games and never looked back.

Earlier, Ankita Raina gave second seed Rebecca Marino a run for her money before losing 5-7, 6-2, 6-7(5). In a tight first set, Ma-



rino broke Ankita in the 12th game. The Indian roared back to take the second set 6-2 and force a decider, which the Canadian won 7-5 after a tense tie-break.

Other results (round-of-16):

Doubles: Prarthana Thombare & Arianne Hartono bt Nao Hibino & Oksana Kalashnikova 6-1, 6-3.

Eden Silva & Anastasia Tikhonova bt Jessie Aney & Jessica Filla 7-5, 7-5.

IN BRIEF



Trisha and Varun in the fray for ICC Monthly award

India spinner Varun Chakaravarthy was on Thursday nominated for the ICC Men's Player of the Month following a stellar outing against England in the recent five-match T20I series. He bagged 14 wickets from five matches at an excellent average of 9.85 and at an economy rate of 7.66. G. Trisha, player-of-the-tournament in the ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup, was nominated for the award in the women's category. The leading run-scorer with 309 runs, she also became the first-ever century-maker in the event.



Aussies take day one honours despite Lankan fightback

Australia was in the driving seat despite a Sri Lankan fightback on day one of the second Test in Galle on Thursday. The host reached 229 for nine at stumps as Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon claimed three wickets apiece.

The scores: Sri Lanka 229/9 in 90 overs (Chandimal 74, Kusal Mendis 59 batting; Starc 3/37, Lyon 3/78) vs Australia; **Toss:** SL.

Rithvik-Barrientos go down fighting in Dallas

Rithvik Bollipalli and Nicolas Barrientos of Colombia lost 7-6(4), 5-7, [10-6] to fourth seeds Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram of the USA in the doubles quarterfinals of the \$3,035,960 ATP tennis tournament in Dallas. Yuki Bhambhani was entered in the \$2,563,150 ATP event in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, along with Giovanni Perricard of France, but had to withdraw as his partner fell sick.

The results: \$3,035,960 ATP, Dallas: **Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Austin Krajicek & Rajeev Ram (USA) bt Nicolas Brrientos (Col) & Rithvik Bollipalli 7-6(4), 5-7, [10-6]. **\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir: Pre-quarterfinals:** Manas Dhamne bt Alejo Quilez (Esp) 6-3, 6-3; **First round:** Manas bt ikolai Barsukov (Ger) 6-1, 4-6, 6-1.

FC Goa puts it past Odisha FC in ISL

FC Goa scored a 2-1 win over Odisha FC in the ISL in Mysuru on Thursday. The win helped the Gaurs move to 36 points and jump to the second spot ahead of Jamshedpur FC (34).

The result: FC Goa 2 (Brison Fernandes 29, Lalithathangha Khawhiring 47) bt Odisha FC 1 (K.P. Rahul 54).

Marcelo, former Real Madrid and Brazil player, retires

Marcelo, the former Real Madrid and Brazil left back, announced his retirement on Thursday at the age of 36. In a video on X, Marcelo said: "My journey as a player ends here, but I still have so much to give to football. Thank you for everything." At Madrid, he won Champions League five times, the Spanish league six times and 25 titles in total.

East Bengal edges past HOPS in IWL

East Bengal shrugged off its defeat in the previous match to collect full points as it defeated HOPS FC 1-0 in the Indian Women's League in New Delhi on Thursday. Soumya Gugulotra struck the match-winner in the 40th minute. East Bengal stays on the top of the table with 15 points from six matches with five wins and a loss while HOPS continues at the bottom with one point.

LIVE TELECAST

Sri Lanka vs Australia: 2nd Test, day 2, Sony Sports Ten 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 10 a.m.

Zimbabwe vs Ireland: Only Test, day 2, FanCode, 1.30 p.m.

I-League: Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 4.30 & 7 p.m.

Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1 a.m. (Saturday)

Serie A: gxr.world, 1.15 a.m. (Saturday)

LaLiga: gxr.world, 1.30 a.m. (Saturday)

Confident Niraj shoots to glory in the men's rifle 50m 3-position

The Services' marksman outshines Olympic medallist Swapnil and Aishwary to land the prize; Suruchi pairs up with Parmod to take her second gold

NATIONAL GAMES

Stan Rayan
DEHRADUN

With Olympic bronze medalist Swapnil Kusale and another Paris Olympian Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar beside him, Niraj Kumar should have felt a shiver as he lined up for the men's rifle 50m 3-position final in the 38th National Games' shooting competition here on Thursday. But that was not the situation.

"I was just acting like a robot, just following my process and gave my best in every shot," the 25-year-old Niraj told *The Hindu* after surprising the Olympians to win the gold.

"There was nothing in my mind because every athlete in the final is of the



Day to remember: Niraj is all smiles after his remarkable win while Suruchi and Parmod are on their way to success. RITU RAJ KONWAR

same level, whoever has better control over his mind will win the title."

Niraj, from Hoshiarpur in Punjab and representing Services here as he is with the Indian Navy, was calm and collected as he led almost all through the kneeling,

prone and standing events to take the gold beating Madhya Pradesh's Aishwary Pratap 464.1-462.4. Swapnil (447.7) finished with a bronze.

"My preparation was not up to the mark, I was busy with other things...

...that is why I was a bit worried," said Swapnil.

Meanwhile Haryana's Suruchi Phogat, who finished with an empty bag at the last Games in Goa in 2023, paired up with Parmod and won the 10m air pistol mixed team gold,

brushing aside Rajasthan's Anjali Shekhawat and Umesh Choudhary 17-7 in the title clash.

That brought the 18-year-old her second gold here and saw her emerge as the shooting star of these National Games.

"I was not in form today. I thought my first gold came easier," said Suruchi.

Maharashtra's Arvind Patil and Olympian Rahi Sarnobat crushed host Uttarakhand's Abhinav Deshwal and Yashavati Joshi 17-3 for the bronze.

Juyel, Deepika take recurve golds; Karnataka to meet TN for men's tennis team title

Stan Rayan
DEHRADUN

West Bengal's Juyel Sarkar surprised Olympian Tarundeep Rai to win the men's individual recurve archery gold in the National Games at the Rajiv Gandhi cricket stadium here on Thursday.

Juyel defeated Services' Indra Chand Swami 6-4 in the title-decider while Olympian Tarundeep Rai took the bronze.

Meanwhile, Olympian Deepika Kumari lived up to expectations, taking the women's gold with a 6-4 victory over Bihar's talented youngster Anshika Kumari 6-4.

"This is my second National Games gold but I'm not very happy, I could not get the scores I wanted," said the 30-year-old Deepika.

Impressed with juniors
She was impressed with the juniors who are coming up, including the 18-year-old Anshika.

"The juniors are motivating me to perform better and the competition is getting tougher day by day," she said.

In tennis, No. 1 seed Karnataka and second-seeded Tamil Nadu will clash in the final of the men's team event while the top-seeded Maharashtra will play Gujarat in the women's final.



Hitting the bull's eye: Recurve archers Deepika and Juyel fired their arrows to the top prize. RITU RAJ KONWAR

The results: Recurve archery:

Individual: Men: Gold: Juyel

Sarkar (WB) bt Indra Chand

Swami (Ser) 6-4. **Bronze:**

Tarundeep Rai (Sik)

Women: Gold: Deepika Kumari

(Jha) bt Anshika Kumari (Bih) 6-4.

Third place: Komalika Bari (Jha).

Team: Mixed: Gold:

Karnataka bt Services 2-1;

Tamil Nadu bt Maharashtra 2-1.

Women: Maharashtra bt Tamil

Nadu 2-0; Gujarat bt Haryana 2-0.

Men: Gold: Jharkhand bt Uttar

Pradesh 4 (29)-4 (27).

Bronze: Services.

Women: Gold: Maharashtra bt

Jharkhand 6-0.

Bronze: Haryana.

Tennis: Team (semifinals):

Men: Karnataka bt Services 2-1;

Tamil Nadu bt Maharashtra 2-1.

Women: Maharashtra bt Tamil

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Bronze: Services.

Women: Gold: Maharashtra bt

Jharkhand 6-0.

Bronze: Haryana.

Tennis: Team (semifinals):

Men: Karnataka bt Services 2-1;

Tamil Nadu bt Maharashtra 2-1.

Women: Maharashtra bt Tamil

Nadu 2-0; Gujarat bt Haryana 2-0.

Men: Gold: Jharkhand bt Utta

r Pradesh 4 (29)-4 (27).

Bronze: Services.

Women



A.M. FARUQUI

Diya's ultimate goal: win a medal for India at the Olympic Games

After dominating podiums in age-group National championships for more than half-a-decade, the young paddler clinched a double crown, including the coveted singles title by dethroning Sreeja Akula, at the Senior National table tennis championship in Surat

Amol Karhadkar

If you walk past Diya Chitale on a busy street of suburban Mumbai, you will possibly not even notice that you are around an Asian Games athlete. It's only when you notice the determined look on her face and the confident gait that you realise that she lives by the adage 'big things come in small packages.'

The 22-year-old's nearly 15-year-old obsession with table tennis leaves little time for anything else though. In the last week of January, the right-handed paddler added another feather to an already stacked cap by clinching a double crown at the Senior National table tennis championship in Surat.

Wise beyond her age

The crown of the National champion has eluded her for well over a decade, despite topping the podium in five age-group National championships. So when she ticked the milestone in Surat, the relief of getting the monkey off her back trumped everything else.

"Honestly, it's a feeling of relief that all the hard work over the years has paid off. But there's still a long way to go. It's one step at a time," Diya, employed by the Reserve Bank of India, tells *The Hindu*.

"Having won the sub-junior, junior and youth, I wanted it so badly. But when you keep thinking about it so much, it only moves further out of reach. One match, one point at a time and eventually it paid off in the end."

Despite being one of the top paddlers in the country and having silverware from National-ranking tournaments to show for it, Diya had failed to cross the quarterfinal hurdle in all her previous Senior Nationals. This time around, though, Diya and her coach Sachin Shetty had planned the Nationals campaign for well over eight weeks.

Blueprint

"We began two months ago. We had two designated sparring partners (Jignesh Rahatwal and Kheya Shah) and planned for almost each of the top 16 players that she could face, depending on the draw. We didn't want to leave any stone unturned this time around," said Shetty, whose younger brother Sanil became the men's National singles champion in 2013.

When Sanil won, Sachin couldn't witness it from the gallery or be by his side as he was the coach of Maharashtra at the sub-junior Nationals whose schedule clashed with that of the Senior



Coach Sachin Shetty, assistant coach Sudhir Jadhav, Diya along with sparring partners Kheya Shah (pink) and Jignesh Rahatwal. AMOL KARHADKAR



Nationals. Nothing would come in the way this time. When top seed Sreeja Akula netted a forehand topspin down-the-line off what was Diya's first match-point after a tense hour-long final, Sachin dropped down to the floor with his hands folded as his ward jumped with joy.

For the first few years after taking Diya under his wings, Sachin juggled coaching duties with his management role at the academy. But when she continued to surge in rankings and win laurels at various levels, Sachin decided to offload other responsibilities to his assistants and concentrate solely on Diya's career.

With Sachin by her side wherever she went, and expert advice from former India coach Peter Engel and Korean coach Shin Min Sung, Diya has managed to emerge as a force to reckon with in the table tennis community.

Old-school

While a majority of female paddlers are exploiting the advantage of the pimpled rubbers, Diya is a flag-bearer for the conventional plain rubbers. It means she needs more skills, strength, stamina and agility than most of her peers. And she showcased all these aspects in a come-from-behind win against World No. 21 Sreeja. Trailing 2-0, despite being in the

game for most part, not too many in the enclosure thought that Diya would be able to stop Sreeja's march to a hat-trick of National titles.

But just like her penchant for surprising naysayers, Diya staged a stunning comeback, consistently combining her backhand prowess with finishing skills to put Sreeja under pressure.

All the hard yards that Diya and her team had put in over the last two months bore fruit.

Considering the fact that four of the top eight-ranked paddlers in India use long pimples, Kheya was roped in as a long-pimpled sparring specialist while Jignesh's speed came in handy for Diya to get used to the speed of rallies.

With Sachin and assistant coach Sudhir Jadhav keeping a close watch on each of the training sessions at the Khar Gymkhana, and parents Parag and Reshma taking care of every little aspect off the table, Diya was able to focus on the tournament with confidence. She also had support from Olympic Gold Quest.

Soon after clinching the doubles title along with Sreeja, Diya beat Syndrela Das – the next big sensation in women's table tennis who stormed into the semis as a 15-year-old – to set up a singles summit

clash against Sreeja later in the afternoon. She knew she had little time to plan and recover for one of the most important matches of her life.

"Diya was quite confident. I told her to relax and take a nap if possible while I focussed on coming up with specific plans to target Diya's forehand corner," Shetty said. "When we discussed it on the way to the venue for the final, she was also thinking on similar lines and executed them to near-perfection. To pull off a tight match against a solid opponent is extremely difficult but Diya did it!"

For the diminutive Diya, though, coming through a tense final was a reason to rejoice, particularly when the opponent was someone as close to her as Sreeja.

"We have played so many matches against each other that we know each other's game very well. It boiled down to pressure in the end. Just a relief that I was able to win this match," Diya said.

With a major milestone crossed, Diya now has the space to focus on larger ambitions.

"The ultimate goal is to win a medal for India at the Olympic Games but just like I have been trying to do, it's just one step at a time and the ultimate goal will always remain the same".

THE GIST

▼ The 22-year-old bounced back to deny Sreeja a hat-trick of singles crowns at the Nationals

▼ Diya and her coach Sachin Shetty had planned the Nationals campaign for well over eight weeks

▼ As she plays with the conventional plain rubbers, Diya needs more skills, strength, stamina and agility than most of her peers

SCIENCE

What ails India's massive diagnostics sector: putting labs under the lens

Industry experts estimate that there are around 300,000 labs across the country, and this number is growing. Within the healthcare sector, diagnostics accounts for around 9% of the industry, estimated to be worth ₹860 billion in the financial year 2024, and projected to grow to about ₹1,275 billion by the financial year 2028

The Hindu Bureau

Shankar Dhangre, 27, has been fighting a lone battle against the private diagnostics sector in Maharashtra for years now, but he is yet to make any headway. Six years ago, his sister, Sarika Bhonglat, lost her life following complications after a surgery. Shankar believes that the tests his sister underwent prior to the surgery were incorrect, and this led to the wrong treatment being given, causing her death. "The treatment that my sister was given was based on a lab report that was signed off by a technician and not a pathologist. It was this that led to incorrect treatment and complications and finally her death. How can a Class 12 graduate be allowed to sign off on medical imaging and diagnostic tests?" he asks.

Shankar's case is not unique and delves into the heart of what ails the diagnostics sector in India today – a shortage of trained personnel to meet the rapid burgeoning of medical laboratories/diagnostic facilities in the country.

While there are no exact figures available, industry experts estimate that there are around 300,000 labs across the country, and this number is growing. Within the healthcare sector, diagnostics accounts for around 9% of the industry, estimated to be worth ₹860 billion in the financial year 2024, and projected to grow to about ₹1,275 billion by the financial year 2028.

This staggeringly huge sector, however, remains under-regulated, fragmented, and biased towards urban areas.

The regulations

The Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act 2010 aims to bring all diagnostic centres and labs under its ambit, with their registration with respective State councils as clinical establishments. The Act also aims to provide guidance on the minimum standards of facilities and services that should be provided by diagnostic centres and labs.

To date, the Act has been adopted by 12 States – Sikkim, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Assam, and Haryana – and all Union Territories, except Delhi. Some other States, including Kerala and Karnataka, have their own legislation to bring labs under the ambit of clinical establishments. However, implementation has, in many cases, not begun, or where it has, it often remains poor.

The fragmented nature of the sector

Given the low entry barriers and the lack of a strong regulatory environment, there are many standalone players in the sector, making it competitive, fragmented, and prone to varying standards.

Diagnostic centres in India can obtain accreditation voluntarily from organisations such as the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL).

N. Venkateswaran, CEO, NABL, in an email interview with *The Hindu* highlighted the challenges created by the fast-paced growth of the private sector. India, he noted, has a highly fragmented market with many small, unorganised labs, largely not accredited and following uneven quality standards. "This is in terms of resources to bring in advanced diagnostic technologies, a large variation in pricing even for routine tests, and inadequately skilled manpower," he said.

He said that while the emphasis is on the quality and accuracy of results, lab regulation needs attention. "There has to be more awareness about biomedical waste management to prevent outbreaks; maintaining better labs and hospital environments is in focus, but there is much more to be done to ensure reliable and accurate results."

The shortage of manpower

There is a significant shortage of full-time doctors and staff in the diagnostics industry. This situation makes it difficult for standalone diagnostic centres which may not be able to employ well-trained lab technicians and pathologists, affecting the quality of outcomes. Accredited labs must mandatorily employ a full-time lab technician/phlebotomist and a radiologist.

The Health Ministry's own research has indicated that India has the disadvantage of not having enough microbiologists and some places do not even have enough qualified doctors or technicians to operate a lab. There is also a lack of upgrading and training, as well as



geographical inequality in quality of services, the research said.

A top management official from a leading diagnostics chain based in North India points out: "The challenge lies in defining an unregulated lab. How do you define one? We do not have enough pathologists to run the number of labs there are in the country. This is where the problem comes in: some lab reports are issued with 'bought out' signatures from doctors, where signatures are obtained in exchange for money, but the lab has a licence obtained from local authorities and shows the presence of ghost employees and doctors."

This problem persists across most States. In Karnataka, the Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (KPME) Act governs healthcare facilities; however, the scope and enforcement of this Act in the laboratories and diagnostics sector is limited, particularly in areas like quality assurance and patient safety.

Many hospitals and doctors running clinics have side laboratories and sample collection centres. "These are 'technician-only' facilities that are not run or owned by qualified pathologists. With one pathologist connected to multiple laboratories, reports only have e-signatures of the pathologists. Although e-signatures are allowed, there is no rule on the number of laboratories a pathologist can be connected to," sources said.

Lack of proper regulations is an area of concern in Tamil Nadu as well, said V. Parthasarathy, general secretary, Tamil Nadu Government Medical Laboratory Technicians Association. He pointed out that an announcement made in the Assembly to constitute a State Council for Laboratory Technicians in 2009 is yet to be implemented. "We still have private laboratories run by unqualified persons," he said.

What does this mean for patients? In 2019, Shankar tried to file an FIR with the Paranda police station and raised his concerns with the Graha Manch (consumer forum), but to no avail. He has now appealed at the Aurangabad Bench of the Bombay High Court against the doctors of a local hospital in Barshi, where he got his sister treated.

Doctors from the Maharashtra Association of Practising Pathologists and Microbiologists (MAPPM) indicate that this is not the only such case – and their number is only rising. "A complex diagnosis requires a report from a pathologist. The machine doesn't give reports; it gives readings. A pathologist is required to analyse it," said Sandeep Yadav, president of MAPPM.

The issue affects doctors too: in November last year, a Maharashtra-based

There is a shortage of full-time doctors and staff in diagnostics. This makes it difficult for standalone centres that may not be able to employ well-trained lab technicians and pathologists, affecting the quality of outcomes

doctor, Rahul Mayur, filed a complaint of identity theft, stating that a diagnostic lab in Jalgaon was fraudulently using his name, degree, and signature to give fake reports to patients.

The Maharashtra Paramedical Council Act, 2011, has established a council to regulate paramedical personnel, including medical laboratory technicians. This Act and the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP) Act 2021 do not permit laboratory technicians to practice independently and issue reports without certification by a pathologist. However, Dr. Yadav said such fraudulent practices were common. He highlighted the issue of "ghost pathologists" at many labs and underscored: "everything done at a lab needs to be supervised by pathologists and not technicians."

The urban-rural divide One of the other issues in India is the concentration of labs in the urban areas. As of the financial year 2023, only 24% of diagnostics revenue came from rural areas in India, though nearly 70% of the population in the country resides rural. This is also mirrored in the government-private labs divide, with both doctors and patients pointing out that multiple gaps exist in government labs that make them a less favoured option.

For instance, in Telangana, a government doctor said lack of essential upgrades was a hindrance. Both Osmania and Gandhi hospitals – major State healthcare facilities in Hyderabad – urgently required improvements, the doctor said, further noting that limited operational hours at government laboratories restricted access. "Even after diagnosis, the unavailability of specialists at government hospitals discourages patients and forces them to seek private care," the doctor added.

The problem of varying standards and shortage of staff ails the government sector too.

Paramita Sarkar, a final-year MD pathology student from Medical College, Kolkata, said there was a huge workload – over 800 tests per day – but a serious staff shortage. "Three of us work in shifts in the labs, but that is not enough. We need more technicians and people who can run the testing machines to ensure

work gets done on time and faster." Tapas Pramanick, a medical officer at R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, also said that with many district hospitals lacking decent testing facilities, most tests come to city hospitals, increasing the workload.

The pricing problem

Pricing, as is always the issue when it comes to the private health sector, is of concern in diagnostics as well. A few government programmes and certain States are going some way towards addressing this. In January 2018, Telangana began the Telangana Diagnostics Programme or 'T-Diagnostics' initiative. As of October 2024, over 18.10 crore tests have been conducted benefiting 1.01 crore individuals, collectively resulting in an estimated saving of ₹1,100 crore in out-of-pocket expenses for patients. However, supply issues such as those of reagents are marring the programme, a lab technician said. In Kerala, the government has invested significantly in upgrading primary health centres to family health centres to provide a range of services, including basic laboratory investigations (at nominal rates) as part of its 'Aardram Mission.'

Issues faced by labs

While there are many issues in terms of regulation that still need to be streamlined and implemented, representatives from the diagnostics sector say they too, want change.

In Kerala for instance, lab representatives say the space and educational requirements under the Kerala State Clinical Establishments Act are unviable. "There are some 6,500 independent small and medium paramedical labs in the State and if one were to go by the minimum standards only about 1,000 will be able to function. We have sought relaxations in the clauses regarding space requirement," says Shareef Paloli, State General Secretary of Kerala Private Medical Technicians' Association, and head, Kerala Paramedical Coordination Committee.

The State government also does not recognise paramedical degrees/diplomas even from recognised institutions in other States, he says. A two-year MLT Diploma/BSc MLT or MSc MLT conducted by medical colleges or other government approved agencies is required. "We are cooperating with the government, but our request was that rather than render professionals who have studied outside the State jobless, the government could conduct a training programme/exam for them. The government has now agreed to this in principle," he says.

The space constraints are a problem in T.N. as well: in November 2024, the Health Department, brought in amendments to the Tamil Nadu Clinical Establishments (Regulations) Rules, 2018, stipulating minimum space for sample collection for clinical laboratories – 300 sq ft in rural areas and 500-700 sq ft in urban areas. P. Kalidasan, national president, Paramedical Laboratory Educational and Welfare Association, says there is no need for such specifications. "There are nearly 10,000 laboratories in the State. Of these, at least 80% are small-sized. Among them, 30% are in rural areas. Small labs cater to around 10 patients a day and mandating 300 sq feet area for clinical laboratories cannot be accepted. The focus should be on adherence to quality programmes," he said.

The sector is willing to have regulations to bring in standardisation: the Karnataka Chapter of the Indian Association of Pathologists and Microbiologists (KCIAPM) is asking for the strengthening of the Karnataka Act. "The KPME Act must be expanded to include licensing criteria, accreditation mandates, and penalties for non-compliance. Mandatory SOPs for sample collection, testing, and reporting should be put in place to minimise errors," said Aditya Agnihotri, KCIAPM secretary.

KCIAPM president Vijay Shankar S. said ensuring every lab is supervised by qualified pathologists and supported by trained technicians was vital. "Licensing should include a needs assessment to prevent over-saturation in certain areas while ensuring coverage in underserved regions," he said.

(Collated by Zubeda Hamid, with inputs from Maitri Porecha and Bindhu Shajan Perappadan in Delhi; Afshan Yasmeen in Bengaluru; C. Maya in Thiruvananthapuram; Siddharth Kunar Singh in Hyderabad; Snehal Mutha in Mumbai; Shrabanee Chatterjee in Kolkata and Serena Josephine M. in Chennai)

THE GIST

India has a highly fragmented market with many small, unorganised labs, largely not accredited and following uneven quality standards

Some reports are issued with signatures obtained in exchange for money. The lab has a licence but the rolls indicate 'ghost employees and doctors'

Some States are addressing the price issue. Telangana has the T-Diagnostics initiative. Over 18.10 crore tests have been conducted. Kerala has its 'Aardram Mission' which provides basic laboratory tests at nominal rates

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