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**CREDITABLE SHOW**  
Vaishali claims bronze in World blitz chess  
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## IN BRIEF

Union Cabinet extends DAP special package

**NEW DELHI**  
The Union Cabinet extended the one-time special subsidy on Diammonium Phosphate at a rate of ₹3,500 per metric tonne from January 1. It also approved the continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme till 2025-26. » Page 13

**1984 Bhopal gas tragedy toxic waste leaves city**

**BHOPAL**  
Twelve trucks carrying toxic waste from the Union Carbide factory site in Bhopal left for the Pithampur industrial area near Indore at 9.05 p.m. on Wednesday. » Page 10

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## Will accept SC decision on Dallewal stir: Centre

Farmer leader's hunger strike enters 37th day; groups leading the protest say they will not relent unless demands are met; Samyukt Kisan Morcha turns down invitation for discussions

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said here on Wednesday that the Centre will abide by the Supreme Court's directions on the indefinite hunger strike by farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal.

"The Supreme Court is looking into the matter. We will accept whatever decision the top court takes," Mr. Chouhan said at a press conference.

However, farmer and farm labourer groups that have been camping on the inter-State boundary of Punjab and Haryana since February 13, 2024, declared they would not relent unless their demands are met, even as Mr. Dalle-



**For a way out:** Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan meeting officials at the Krishi Bhawan in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

wal's hunger strike entered the 37th day.

### MSP law, loan waiver

Farmer outfits are seeking a legal guarantee for purchasing their crops at a minimum support price (MSP) and a farm loan waiver, among other de-

mands. Farmers under the banner of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political), the two umbrella bodies spearheading the farmers' agitation in Punjab, are camping at Shambhu-Ambala and Khanauri-Jind on the

inter-State boundary, after being stopped from entering Haryana.

### Delhi march plan

KMM coordinator Sarwan Singh Pandher said, "Dallewalji's fast unto death continues for the 37th consecutive day, but the Centre is in slumber. We will continue to struggle until our demands are met. Dates for the 'Delhi march' will be announced in the coming days," he said.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the umbrella organisation of about 500 farmers' organisations, has turned down the invitation for discussions extended by a high-powered committee constituted by the Supreme Court.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 10

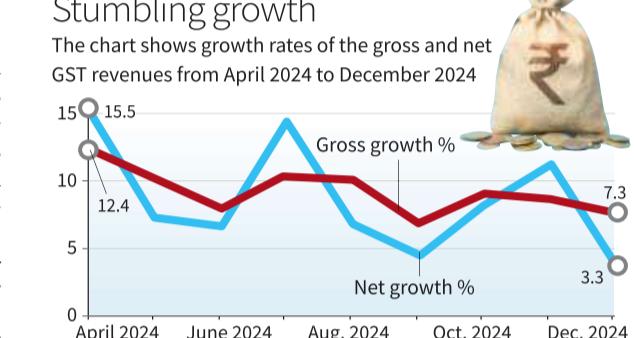
## Net GST growth slumps to 3.3% in Dec., as revenues drop and refunds rise 45%

**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI

India's gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) receipts increased at the second-slowest pace in 43 months in December, while growth in net GST collections, after adjusting for refunds, slumped to 3.3%, the weakest in financial year 2024-25.

December's gross GST inflows, for transactions done in November, were a tad under ₹1.77 lakh crore, hitting a three-month low and reflecting 7.3% growth in comparison to the same month in 2023. Growth has only slumped to these levels twice in over three-and-a-half years: in June 2024, when gross receipts rose 7.3%; and this September, when growth hit a 40-month low of 6.5%.

Part of the sharper moderation in net collections' growth vis-à-vis gross receipts, can be explained by a 45.3% uptick in refunds to taxpayers, which touched ₹22,490 crore. Net receipts stood at ₹1,54,366 crore in December.



tions. By contrast, domestic refunds were up 31% in December, and refunds to exporters were up 64.5%.

Prior to refunds, revenues from domestic transactions were up 8.4% in December, lower than the 9.4% growth in November, while revenues from imports grew just 3.9%, down from 5.9% in November.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 10

## Truck mows down 10 New Year revellers in New Orleans

**Agence France-Presse**  
NEW ORLEANS

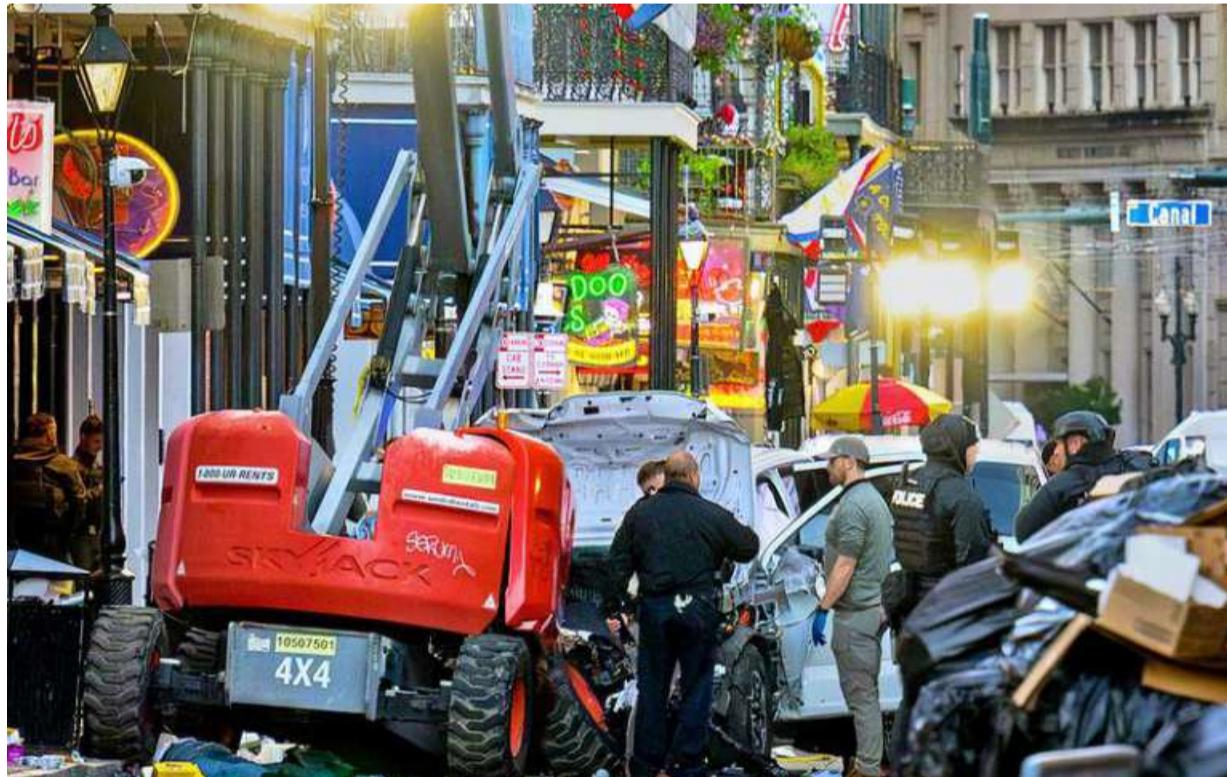
A U.S. citizen with an Islamic State flag "hell-bent" on "carnage" drove a pickup truck at high speed into a crowd of New Year revellers in New Orleans on Wednesday, killing at least 10 people and injuring more than 35, officials said.

The FBI identified the attacker as Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a 42-year-old "U.S. citizen from Texas".

**Bombs found in truck**  
He was fatally shot in an exchange of gunfire with the police. Potential homemade bombs were found in his truck.

"The FBI is working to determine the subject's potential associations and affiliations with terrorist organisations," the FBI said in a statement.

The police said the inci-



**Tragic start:** Police investigators surround a truck that drove into a crowd in New Orleans, Louisiana, on Wednesday. AFP

## Hindu bodies differ on allowing men to wear shirt in Kerala temples

**K.S. Sudhi**  
KOCHI

Major Hindu organisations in Kerala are divided over a suggestion to allow men to wear shirts while entering temples in the State.

"The Yogam will direct all its office-bearers to end the outdated practice in the temples managed by them at a meeting in Kollam on January 4. We will write to all office-bearers at the grassroots levels in this regard. The organisation had been campaigning to end the practice," said Velapally Natesan, general secretary of the Yogam.

The Travancore and Guruvayur Devaswom Boards, which manage major temples in the State, are yet to finalise their positions on the issue.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 10

## Maharashtra govt. forms SIT to probe Beed sarpanch murder

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Wednesday formed a 10-member special investigation team (SIT) to probe the murder of Massajog sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh.

The SIT will be headed by Crime Investigation Department's (CID) Deputy Inspector General Basavraj Teli, stated an order issued by the State Home Department.

Deshmukh was abducted and murdered in Kej tehsil of Beed district on December 9 for allegedly opposing an extortion bid at a windmill company.

**Villagers call off protest after police assure fair investigation into the case**

Earlier in the day, 40 men and women from the village stood waist-deep in a lake seeking the arrest of the three absconding accused in the murder case.

The protest was called off after two hours when District Superintendent of Police Navneet Kanwat visited the village and assured the protesters of a fair investigation into the murder case.

The police have so far arrested Pratik Ghule, Jayram Chate, and Mahesh Kedar in the murder case.

"I have assured the resi-

**Associated Press**  
KYIV

dents that the police are doing their best to nab the absconding accused. The residents have given us 10 days' time, but we are unsure if we will be able to trace them in such a short period," Mr. Kanwat said.

Ukraine's Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko confirmed on Wednesday morning that Kyiv had stopped the transit "in the interest of national security". "This is a historic event. Russia is losing markets and will incur financial losses. Europe has already decided to phase out Russian gas, and [this] aligns with what Ukraine has done today," Mr. Halushchenko said in an up-

date on the Telegram messaging app.

At a summit in Brussels last month, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed that Kyiv would not allow Moscow to use the transits to earn "additional billions... on our blood, on the lives of our citizens." But he had briefly held open the possibility of the gas flows continuing if payments to Russia were withheld until the war ends.

Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom said in a statement on Wednesday that it "has no technical and legal possibility" of sending gas through Ukraine, due to Kyiv's refusal to extend the deal.

Even as Russian troops

and tanks moved into Ukraine in 2022, Russian natural gas kept flowing through the country's pipeline network to Europe, under a five-year agreement. Gazprom earned money from the gas and Ukraine took transit fees.



**Key link:** An underground gas storage facility in Lviv, Ukraine. AFP

through Turkey to Bulgaria.

### Energy crisis

After the war started, Russia cut off most supplies through the Baltic and Belarus-Poland pipelines, citing disputes over a demand for payment in roubles. The Baltic pipeline was blown up in an act of sabotage, but details of the attack remain murky.

The Russian cutoff caused an energy crisis in Europe. Germany had to shell out billions of euros to set up floating terminals to import liquefied natural gas that comes by ship. Users cut back as prices rose. Norway and the U.S. filled the gap, becoming the two largest suppliers.

## Delhi BJP MPs propose new projects for city to Gadkari

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

All seven Delhi BJP MPs on Wednesday met Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari to propose four new projects for the Capital.

The projects include a tunnel from Shiv Murti to

Nelson Mandela Marg, connecting the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway to the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway, and the Urban Extension Road-II (UER) with the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway and UER-II extension near Alipur. The MPs said these projects will help in reducing the traffic.

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Diviniti, Railway Manager  
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PR/01818/DNR/ETRD/T/24-24

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**Delhi Palam Today**  
15°C The weather will be dry. The cold day like conditions to prevail. Sky conditions will be obscured due to fog layer.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
16°C The weather will be dry and uneasy. The cold day like conditions to continue. Night also will be very cold and uneasy.

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# New Year rings in with traffic jams, heavy rush at popular hubs, markets

Long queues witnessed at key metro stations like Rajiv Chowk, Central Secretariat; police say on New Year's Eve nearly 4,500 challans, 34% higher than in 2024, issued; no fatal accident reported

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

**Timings**  
**DELHI**  
**THURSDAY, JAN. 02**  
RISE 07:14 SET 17:37  
RISE 09:16 SET 20:03  
**FRIDAY, JAN. 03**  
RISE 07:15 SET 17:37  
RISE 09:55 SET 21:09  
**SATURDAY, JAN. 04**  
RISE 07:15 SET 17:38  
RISE 10:30 SET 22:12



At India Gate, roads crossing C-Hexagon were worst hit due to the massive crowd; vehicles crawl at Ring Road behind Red Fort on New Year's Day. PTI/SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

**lan Mandir, Khutu Shyam Mandir on GT Road, Jagannath Temple, and Qutub Minar in south Delhi.**

A government official said the Delhi Zoo had 25,343 visitors, over 7,000 more than on January 1, 2024. Anticipating the rush of visitors, additional entry gates, heightened security measures, improved CCTV surveillance, and police deployment were put in place.

There was a huge rush of visitors at the Central Secretariat, Hauz Khas, Lajpat Nagar, Sarojini Nagar Market, Khan Market, Connaught Place, Kamla Market, and Hauz Khas Village, leading to traffic congestion on arterial roads.

Mathura Road too was affected with commuters heading towards Pragati Maidan stuck for long. Other spots that attracted large crowds included Bangla Sahib Gurdwara, Prachin Hanuman Mandir at Connaught Place, Akshardham Mandir, Jhandewala

rain in Delhi, has driven demand for winter clothing boosting sales," said Ashok Randhawa, president of the Sarojini Nagar Mini Market Traders' Association.

New Delhi Municipal Council official said additional provisions were made for sanitation in Connaught Place, Khan Market, and Sarojini Nagar Market.

Long queues were witnessed at the Central Secretariat, Hauz Khas, Lajpat Nagar, Kalkaji, and Rajiv Chowk metro stations.

**Crackdown**  
Nearly 4,500 challans, over 34% higher than the previous year, were issued for various violations on New Year's Eve.

Special Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Ajay Choudhary said no fatal accident occurred during this year's celebration.

Moreover, 558 people were booked between 12.30 a.m. and 8 a.m. on January 1 for driving in an intemperate condition.

The officer told *The Hindu* that the numbers do not reflect the actual data as the police server to issue challans was down from 6.30 p.m. on December 31 to 12.30 a.m. on January 1.

"We identified people, and their photographs were taken for challans," the officer added.

An officer said 35 bike riders were booked in the Jamia Nagar area of south-east Delhi in a crackdown on bikers creating nuisance.

**The police found that hours before his death, Khurana had made a phone call to his estranged wife**

marital dispute, said the officer. "The court had initiated their divorce in September 2024, and had drawn out an MoU that divided their shared property – a cafe and bakery," said the officer.

**Video recording**  
While the family has alleged that the deceased had recorded a video of him explaining how his estranged wife was harassing him, the police said the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) team is investigating the videos found on his device.

The deceased's family filed a complaint at Model Town police station, naming his estranged wife and her family members. The police have sent all devices to the FSL team for a thorough investigation, added the officer.

A similar case had shaken the Internet a few weeks ago, where a man residing in Bengaluru made a video stating how the wife and his in-laws had harassed him and provoked him to end his life.

*Those who require assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts may contact Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health suicide prevention helpline 011-40769002 (10 a.m. to 7.30 p.m., Monday-Saturday).*

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No. Tech-II/177/2024/22

### PRESS NOTICE

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. Building (Health & Education), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites online EPC Mode-I e-tenders in two bid system (Technical and Financial) on Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode-I basis from eligible firms / contractors of repute having experience in similar nature of work, for the following works.

Sl. No	Name of work	Bid Value (Rs in Lakh)	Completion Period	Bid Security	Cost of Bid
1	Establishment of Govt. Law College at Kalibari, Nagaon	2125.28517	24 (Twenty four) months	2% of Bid value for General category and 1% of Bid Value for reserved Category	Rs. 20000.00

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement website i.e. [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in) from 04/01/2025 at 10.00 am onwards.

The bidders must be enrolled with tendering web portal [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in)

All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents. The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents.

The Bid price may vary at the time of detail tendering for which no claim will be admissible.

Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Building),  
(Health & Education)  
Assam, Chanmari, Guwahati-3

## GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

### OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER:: PWD BUILDING:: ASSAM:: CHANDMARI:GUWAHATI-3

No Arch II/877773/2024

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The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Building), Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids for Technical & Financial offer as per Request for Proposal from qualified and experienced firms (Criteria as per RFP document) for Providing Project Management Consultancy Services for the following work:

Sl. No	Name of Work	Approx. Value of the Project	Approx. PMC Value
1	PMC services for Construction of state of the art sports stadium at Kokrajhar, Assam	Rs.92.13 Cr	Rs. 2.17 Cr including GST

The details / RFP document may be seen in e-procurement portal website i.e. [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in). The validity period of the Bid shall be 180 days from the date of submission.

The Bidders must be registered with the E-tendering system (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam. (website : <http://assamtenders.gov.in>)

The Chief Engineer P.W.D. (Building), Assam reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposal without showing any reason what so ever.

Chief Engineer,PWD(Bldg.)  
Assam Chandmari, Guwahati-3

## GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

### OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER: PWD: BUILDING: ASSAM:CHANDMARI: GUWAHATI-3

No. Tech-II/144/2024/14

CPI(M) renews bid to mend ties with Nair society

Hiran Unnikrishnan  
KOTTAYAM

Just as preparations for the 148th Mannam Jayanti celebrations were in full swing at the Nair Service Society (NSS) headquarters at Perunna, Communist Party of India (Marxist) State secretary M.V. Govindan visited the town on December 30 to inaugurate the centenary commemoration of the historic Savarna Jatha led by Mannathu Padmanabhan.

The event, organised by the CPI(M)'s Changanaserry area committee, was ostensibly part of the run-up to the party's four-day district conference in Kottayam.

According to CPI(M) leaders, by organising the event, the party was aiming to resonate with the NSS, which has long lamented the lack of recognition for Mannam's pivotal role in Kerala's social renaissance. The occasion also reflected the Left party's ongoing efforts to repair its strained relationship with the influential community organisation, a rift that deepened after the Sabarmala women's entry issue in 2018.

"The choice of Perunna as the venue seems deliberate. By choosing to honour this legacy, the CPI(M) now stands out as the sole political entity commemorating the event and Mannathu Padmanabhan's contributions," observed a senior leader. According to him, the party has been making consistent efforts to engage with the NSS through its Ministers.

# 'Guru played the lead role in rectifying Sanatana Dharma'

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan reiterates his remarks that Sree Narayana Guru should not be seen as proponent of Sanatana Dharma; Leader of Opposition Satheesan contests CM's claims

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Pinarayi Vijayan made the comments while inaugurating the 92nd Sivagiri pilgrimage, in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. PTI

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday stood firm on his stand that Sree Narayana Guru should not be seen as a proponent of Sanatana Dharma.

Responding to BJP's criticism of the remarks that he had made while inaugurating the Sivagiri pilgrimage on Tuesday, Mr. Vijayan said he stood firm on what he had said. On the BJP's allegation that he had insulted Sanatana Dharma for "vote bank politics," Mr. Vijayan said there is no need to link the Guru with Sanatana Dharma.

"Sree Narayana Guru

cannot be seen as an advocate of Sanatana Dharma. In fact, the Guru played the lead role in rectifying it. You will come to know about it if you examine its history," he added.

He also reiterated his support to Sivagiri Math president Swami Sathchidananda's suggestion that temples should end the practice of making devotees remove their shirts before entering temples saying that it is a good suggestion.

When asked about the BJP's demand for a discussion on the matter, Mr. Vijayan said:

jayan said: "Let it be discussed. That should be done by the Devaswom board, not the government," he added.

## Opposition's charge

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan contested the Chief Minister's attempt to draw a parallel between Sanatana Dharma and Varnashrama Dharma, an inflexible set of obligations and responsibilities based on the adherent's caste-based social status.

Speaking at the Sivagiri Madhom on Wednesday, Mr. Satheesan said Sanatana Dharma, which professes universal welfare, was the collective culture of the people of India.

# T.M. Krishna receives 'Sangita Kalanidhi'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI



T.M. Krishna receives the Sangita Kalanidhi title from David Shulman, Chair, Renee Lang Professor of Humanistic Studies, in the presence of N. Murali, President, Music Academy. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

ready happening, which institutions involved in classical performing arts, need to take serious note of."

Mr. Murali said Mr. Krishnan "distinguished himself in the role as the President of the 98th Annual Conference and Concerts".

"His brilliance absolutely shone through the entire season. The academic sessions have been specially curated for the first time in over 20 years with an overarching theme 'Aesthetics and Syaesthetics: Reflections on Raga in Indian Art,'" he said.

## 'Non-stop action'

Upon receiving the title, Mr. Krishna, who thanked the people of Uroor Olcott Kuppam, along with his friends and family, said his life changed after he was invited to organise a music festival in 2015 in Uroor Olcott Kuppam in Chennai. "My life over the past decade or so has had many rounds of disturbances. Many have lasted about a month or so, but 2024 was different. It was about eight months of non-stop action, if you can call it that. I know I'm tough, but sometimes, it is hard and it can get very lonely," he said.

"All in all, the *rasikas*, young and old, were in such high spirits and bursting with such energy and enthusiasm that the whole atmosphere was surreal in a sense. I would dare say that, if at all there is a musician who could attract into the fold of Carnatic music those outside it, particularly younger audiences, it is Shri T.M. Krishna," he said.

"The Carnatic music ecosystem needs such an induction sorely as there are structural changes al-

For me, it was not about that. It was not about the applause. It was not about the standing ovation. It was not about the screams or the howls and happiness. No, I think what made it unprecedented for me was that everybody here on that day was here for a very personal reason. And I left that morning with a lot of hope and a lot of joy, but above all, truth," he said.

Professor David Shulman said Carnatic music possesses the power to change self and change something in reality. "One of the features of Carnatic music is that you're just capable of changing your life and also changing something in reality. Let me say that part of the reason for this, the magic of that kind of transformation, part of it, of course, has to do with the tremendous interpenetration and interdependence and more than symbiosis of the text, the verbal text, and the musical, melodic and rhythmic text. It's one of the strongest features of this entire tradition, because Carnatic music, we all know it's a music of compositions... as a compositional framework, and even if the composition exceeds itself in the course of performance, and wedding together of words and sounds, that's a magical combination," he said.

## Trinamool's fight for rights of people of West Bengal will go on: Mamata

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister also posted a song that she had composed, and was sung by renowned artist and Minister Indranil Sen.

Later in the afternoon Ms. Banerjee thanked the party members for their "dedication and resilience", highlighting the importance of unity and service. "...every protest, every victory, and even every challenge has reaffirmed our core belief: politics is not about power but

about SERVICE...I urge every Trinamool soldier to remember that the soul of our party is rooted in the ethos of *Maa, Mati, Manush* (mother, soil and people)," she added.

TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee also expressed gratitude toward the party's workers.

The foundation day of the party was also observed across party offices across the State, where the party flag was unfurled.

However, the party will face a challenge in 2026 when the Assembly polls will be held. Another challenge the party is facing is factionalism.

## Factions clash

Meanwhile, in Bhangar, two party factions – led by former Bhangar MLA Arbab Islam and Canning Purba MLA Shakut Mollah – clashed with each other.

The vehicle of Mr. Islam was attacked.

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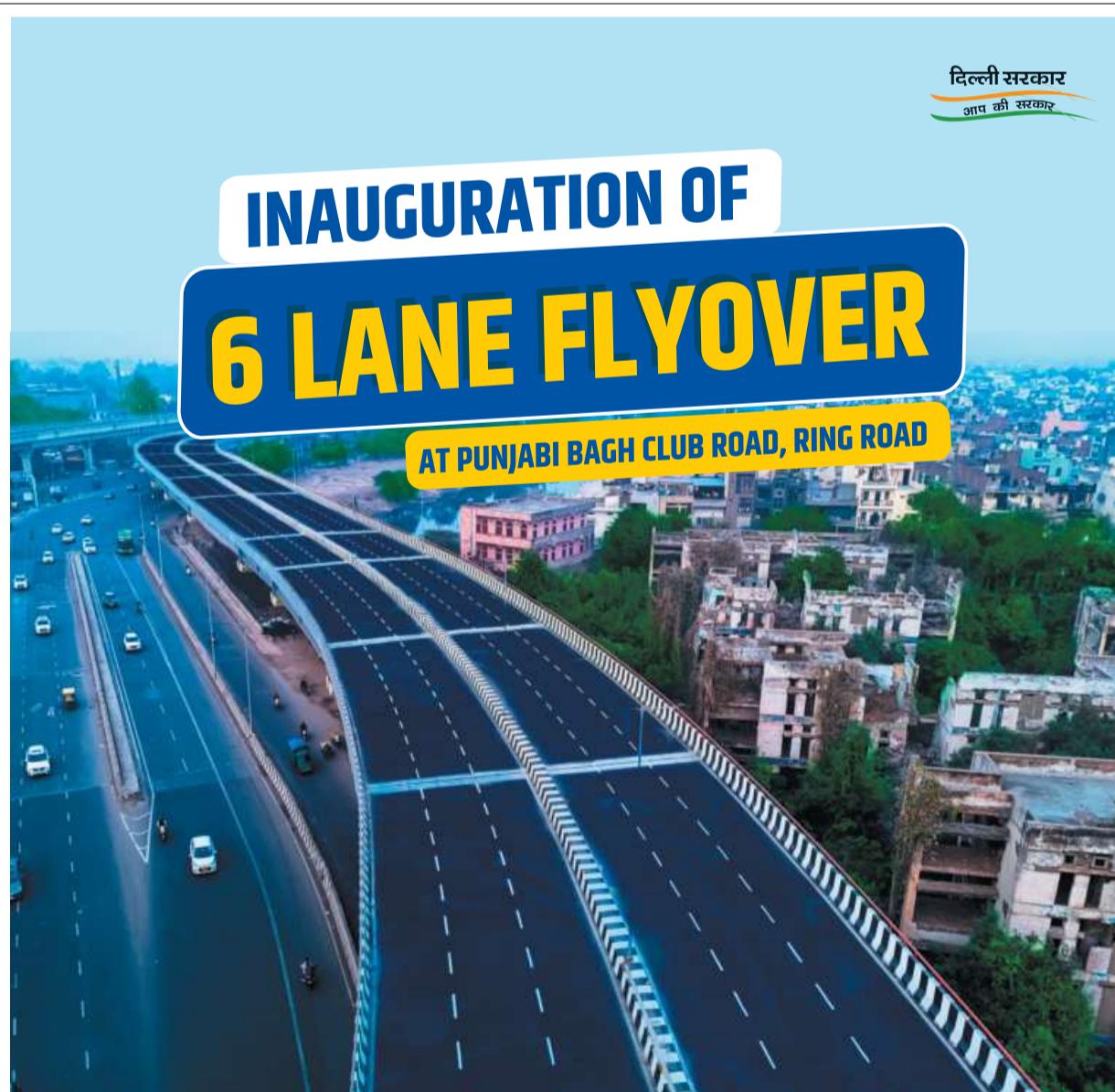
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दिल्ली सरकार  
आप की सरकार

## INAUGURATION OF 6 LANE FLYOVER

AT PUNJABI BAGH CLUB ROAD, RING ROAD



**Inauguration Ceremony**

Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2025

Chief Guest  
**Atishi**  
Chief Minister, Delhi



**IN BRIEF****Himachal to rename institute after Manmohan Singh: CM**

Presiding over the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration (HIPA), Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Wednesday announced that the institute will be renamed after former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who passed away on December 26 at the age of 92. Stating that Singh's policies greatly helped in the development of India as well as Himachal Pradesh, Mr. Sukhu said his efforts brought many benefits and recognition to the hill State. To mark the institute's golden jubilee, the CM unveiled a coffee-table book published by HIPA. PTI

**Athawale seeks ₹200 crore for Koregaon war memorial**

A large number of people, including politicians, gathered at Bhima-Koregaon in Maharashtra's Pune district on Wednesday to mark the anniversary of the 1818 battle of Bhima-Koregaon. Union Minister Ramdas Athawale, who was present on the occasion, requested the State government to allocate ₹200 crore for the expansion and improvement of the memorial and its premises as it draws a large number of visitors every year. The battle, in which the East India Company troops, including 500 Mahars, defeated a stronger Peshwa's force, is commemorated by a victory pillar erected by the British, which also serves as a symbol of Dalit pride.

**Gujarat Cabinet approves nine new municipal corporations****Press Trust of India**

AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat Cabinet on Wednesday approved the conversion of nine municipalities into municipal corporations, taking the total number of civic bodies in the State to 17.

The new municipal corporations are coming into existence after 14 years. The Gandhinagar Municipal Corporation was the last one to be formed by the government in 2010.

The approval for the formation of nine new municipal corporations – Navsari, Gandhidham, Morbi, Vapi, Anand, Nadiad, Mehsana, Porbandar, and Surendranagar – was granted at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.

Gujarat currently has eight municipal corporations: Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Junagadh, and Gandhinagar.

**The new municipal corporations are coming into existence after 14 years; total number of civic bodies will be 17 now**

Health Minister and State government spokesperson Rushikesh Patel told reporters in Gandhinagar that the decision would help the government in proper planning of urban areas and providing more funds to these civic bodies for development.

**Budget proposal**

The announcement to convert Navsari, Gandhidham, Morbi, Vapi, Anand, Mehsana, and Surendranagar municipalities into municipal corporations was made by State Finance Minister Kanubhai Desai while presenting the budget in the Assembly in February.

Later, the State government added Porbandar

# In Gadchiroli, Fadnavis says Naxalism will soon be eradicated from State

Eleven Maoists surrender before Maharashtra CM during his first full-fledged visit to the district since assuming office; he flags off bus services on a stretch connecting directly to Chhattisgarh

**The Hindu Bureau**

MUMBAI

**N**axalism will soon be eradicated from Maharashtra, said Devendra Fadnavis during his first full-fledged visit to Gadchiroli district on Wednesday since assuming office as Maharashtra Chief Minister. Eleven Naxalites, including senior cadre Vimla Chandra Sidam alias Tarakka, surrendered in his presence at the Gadchiroli police headquarters.

The 11 Maoists cumulatively carry a reward of ₹1.03 crore on them. Tarakka, a member of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee, had been involved in the Maoist movement for over 38 years.

The Chief Minister dwelt on the sustained success in combating Left-wing extremism in this hitherto Maoist stronghold, signalling the government's intent to stamp it out entirely by visiting the district on the first day of 2025. He said Maharashtra is on the road to becoming "free



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis interacts with villagers at Pengunda in Gadchiroli district on Wednesday. PTI

from the Naxal menace" with an increasing number of red cadres laying down their arms. In 2024, 33 Naxals were killed, 55 arrested, and another 33 surrendered.

**Praise for PM**

"Maoist dominance in many parts of the district has ended. North Gadchiroli is now free of Maoist activities, and south Gadchiroli too soon would be free," Mr. Fadnavis said after a meeting with senior police officers in the district.

Hailing the leadership of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the CM said it is because of their leadership, along with the joint efforts of the police and local administration, that the Maoists have not been able to do fresh recruitments in the past four-five years.

"Several Naxal commanders have surrendered and disassociated themselves from the movement as they have come to a realisation that Naxalism is just a hollow ideology, and this step has broken the back-

bone of the outlawed movement. They are convinced that they will get justice only through the Constitutional institutions," the CM said.

**Infra outreach**

Becoming the first CM to visit Pengunda, the remotest area of Gadchiroli, which is 200 km away from the district HQ, Mr. Fadnavis also flagged off Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation bus services on a 32-km-long stretch along the Wangetri-Gardewada-Gatta-Aheri route in the district.

"The road will connect Maharashtra directly to Chhattisgarh. The people of Gadchiroli are getting bus services after 75 years of Independence. Gadchiroli is the first district in the priority list of the government," he said.

The CM also promised to create at least 20,000 employment opportunities in the district through mining-related ventures and explore possibilities for an airport in the near future.

# Actor Vijay's political entry poses no threat to DMK's victory in 2026 T.N. poll: Vaiko

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

of the DMK for 29 years before being expelled from the party (in 1994).

To a question on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's willingness to lead a front against the BJP at the national level, Mr. Vaiko said he would prefer Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for the job. "He has acceptance all over the country.

"The period of MGR (former Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran) was totally different. When he launched the AIADMK, MGR mandrums were converted into party organisations. Such a situation does not prevail now," he said, during his customary New Year interaction with the media in Chennai.

The MDMK leader said the country is facing grave danger under BJP rule. "The BJP and Hindutva forces are planning to impose a presidential form of government so that the PM can rule India like the Presidents of the U.S. and Russia," he said.

# As BPSC protests continue, some candidates oppose re-exam for all as 'gross injustice'

**Amarnath Tewary**

PATNA

Even as the protest in Patna by aspirants seeking cancellation of the 70th Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) Combined (Preliminary) Competitive Examination over alleged paper leak continued on Wednesday, a section of those who took the exam contends that there should be no retest as that would be a "gross injustice to the majority of candidates".

**No evidence of leak**  
The mounting protests have made other candidates who do not want a re-examination fear that their voices will get drowned out. They claim that the exam was conducted in a very "peaceful, proper and decent manner" at their centres and there was "no evidence" of any paper leak.

While 3.28 lakh candidates had appeared at 912

centres across the State for the exam on December 13, at one centre, Bapu Pariksha Parivar in Patna, some students alleged there was delay in getting question papers and it was leaked. The students came out of the centre and started protesting and were dispersed by the district administration. While there was no protest by the aspirants for next five days, the BPSC announced a retest at the centre on January 4.

Students started protesting from December 19 for a re-examination for all by organising sit-ins at Patna's Gardanibagh area and politicians such as Tejashwi Yadav of Rashtriya Janata Dal, Prashant Kishor of Jan Suraaj, and independent MP from Purnea Rakesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav expressed their solidarity with protesters.



No retest: Candidates Nayan Kumar Jha and Iqra.

students were not agitated but a few young men in their pursuit to become leaders orchestrated the whole episode."

Another candidate, Tarique Asad Rizwee, whose exam centre was at Katihar, wondered how "just over 1% of aspirants" could agitate and demand for re-examination on behalf of all. "Those who are protesting for the retest are ignorant and their demand will be gross injustice to us, about 99% of the examinees who do not want it," said the IIT graduate. Mr. Rizwee is among thousands of candidates who have sent mails to the BPSC Chairman demanding not to conduct any "retest".

Iqra, a graduate from Bhagalpur who sat for the exam at Saharsa Zila School, said there was no discrepancy at her centre. "The exam was conducted peacefully at all centres barring one in Patna for which retest was already announced. Initially, the

# T.N. cancels smart meter tender to Adani Group

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu's ambitious smart meter project to modernise electricity billing has been stalled after the Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (TNPCL) cancelled the tender awarded to Adani Energy Solutions Limited, which is part of the Adani Group.

Confirming the cancellation of the tender for procuring smart meters, a senior official said currently Adani was the only company making smart meters in the country.

TNPCL officials had conducted negotiations with the company's officials and found that the price quoted was high.

TNPCL had planned to modernise electricity meters at a cost of ₹19,000 crore for nearly 1.20 crore customers in three phases.

# Anganwadi workers await dues for role in Ladki Bahin scheme roll-out

**Purnima Sah**

MUMBAI

Anganwadi workers in Maharashtra are still awaiting payment for their crucial role in implementing the Mahayuti government's flagship Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly election in November last year.

These workers were tasked with enrolling eligible women beneficiaries in the 21-60 age group for the ₹1,500 monthly assistance scheme. A Government Resolution (GR) had promised ₹50 for each online application form filled.

For three months since the launch of the scheme, Maharashtra's 1,08,507 anganwadi workers and 74,746 helpers were engaged in its implementation, bringing to a halt the

education of children at anganwadis in the State.

Recounting the overwhelming experience of handling a large number of applications in cities, Sanjeeta Kamble, an anganwadi worker in Mumbai's Mankhurd, said: "Women would start lining up outside our homes and anganwadis from 7 a.m."

**Technical glitches**  
Initially, in August 2024, the mobile app for filling forms was non-functional, causing frustration and wastage of time, Ms. Kamble said. "At times, we had to use other people's mobile phones with better Internet connectivity. In October, we learnt that only applications filled and uploaded using the mobile phones of registered anganwadi workers would be considered. We do not



FILE PHOTO

know whether we will receive fair compensation for our work," she said.

Shubha Shamim, president of the CITU-affiliated Anganwadi Karmachari Sanghatana and convener of Maharashtra Anganwadi Action Samity, criticised the government for failing to specify working hours and daily targets in the GR, and improving the mobile application's functionality and Internet connectivity. She highlighted the overwhelming workload of anganwadi workers and helpers, who filled over 200 forms daily in rural areas and over 400 forms in urban areas, severely impacting their personal lives.

Chhaya Gangadhar Kagdelwar, an anganwadi worker from Etapalli vil-

lage in Gadchiroli district, said 223 workers in her taluka filled 1.22 lakh forms without fixed working hours. "The government was desperate to win the election, and made us work day and night. While the beneficiaries received assistance, those who implemented the scheme were pushed behind. This is unfair," she said.

Despite technical glitches in the mobile app and untimely power cuts, application forms for the scheme were filled, Ms. Kagdelwar said. However, if the applicants lacked essential documents such as Aadhaar cards, ration cards, or birth certificates, or hadn't completed the KYC details with their banks. She said the scheme was the sole focus of the three months preceding

the election, with anganwadi workers filling forms from 7 a.m. to midnight, causing the education of children to come to a halt.

Kanchan Punjaram Waghule, an anganwadi worker from Dargao village in Jalna district, said there is no clarity about when they will receive compensation for their efforts.

**Funds available: govt.**  
An official from the Women and Child Development Department said funds for anganwadi workers are available, but disbursals will be carried out only after data collection is completed. "The department is currently verifying the number of forms filled by each worker. Remuneration will be credited to their bank accounts by January based on this assessment," the official said.

# 3-year-old pulled out of borewell after 10 days, declared dead

**The Hindu Bureau**  
JAIPUR

A three-year-old girl pulled out from a 170-foot borewell in Rajasthan's Kotputli-Behrur district was declared dead on Wednesday after one of the longest rescue operations in the State.

The girl, identified as Chetna, who fell into the borewell on December 23, could not survive without food and water for 10 days.

She was rushed to the Government BDM Hospital in Kotputli situated 15 km away, where doctors declared her dead after medical examination. The rescue teams of the National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Res-

ponse Force raced against time to pull out Chetna, but multiple layers of sedimentary rock posed hurdles to the drilling work.

**Extensive efforts**  
Chetna had fallen into the borewell while playing in her father's farm at Badiyal Ki Dhani village. The rescuers initially tried to pull out the girl using an iron ring attached to a rope, but they failed despite repeated attempts. A piling machine was brought to the spot after two days and a parallel pit was dug adjacent to the borewell.

Kotputli-Behrur Collector Kalpana Agrawal said this was the toughest rescue operation in the State.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) (E-Procurement Module)						
Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest money (Rs.)	Cost of tender form (Rs.)	Class	Completion period
1.	Repair & Maintenance of Qtr. No. 1 to 4, Type-IV for General Pooled accommodation at Hardaspura Distt. Chamba (SH:- Painting, Distempering, Wood work Shutter work )	8,33,050/-	17,000/-	350/-	D & C Two Months	
2.	Repair and maintenance of Type-I or. No. 1 to 4 (Type No. II or. No. 1 to 4.5 to 8.9, to 12 Block A 13 to 16) (Type-III Qtr. No. 3 to 4.5 to 8) for General Pooled accommodation at Hardaspura Distt. Chamba (SH:- Painting , P/L Wood work , shutter work etc)	24,05,574/-	48,000/-	500/-	D & C Two Months	
1.	Starting Date for downloading	02/01/2025 at 10.00 AM				
2.	Deadline for submission of Bid	11/01/2025 at 11.00 AM				
3.	Date of Technical bid opening	11/01/2025 at 11.30 AM				
	The undersigned has right to extend or cancel the bids without declaring any reasons there-of.					
	The Bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website <a href="http://www.hptenders.gov.in">www.hptenders.gov.in</a>					
	Executive Engineer, Chamba Division, HPPWD Chamba, Pin-176310 Tel.01899-222229 Email-ee-ch-hp@nic.in					
	On behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh					

HP / 4214/24-25

THE HINDU

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HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT Telephone No. 01970233116 E-mail ID: ee-deh-hp@nic.in

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer Dehra Division HPPWD Dehra H.P. on behalf of Governor of H.P. invites the item rate bids, in the electronic tendering system from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD for the works as detailed in the table.

Sr. No. Name of Work- Annual Repair and Maintenance of Bankhandi to Paisa Road (Portion: Paisa Bhatha Road) KM 0.00 to 1/500 (SH: P/L 80mm Interlocking Paver Block at RD 1/00 to 1/500). Estimated Cost (Rs.): Rs. 17,28,000/-, Starting date for downloading Bid:- 02.01.25, Earnest Money:- Rs. 3500/-, Deadline for submission of Bid:- 08.01.25. The bidders are advised to note other details of tender from the department website . www.hptenders.gov.in. Date of opening of tender 09.01.2025. Executive Engineer, Dehra Division H.P., PWD., Dehra, Pin No. 117101. HIM LOK Tel. No. 01970-233116, e-mail: ee-deh-hp@nic.in on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh HP / 4223/24-25

PRESS NOTE FOR TENDERING

The Assistant Engineer Jal Shakti Sub-Division Rantali invites following tenders on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractors for the following works through offline process:-

Sr. No.	Name of works	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Time Limit	Cost of forms
1.	Improvement of LWSS Gahilan Thakurdwara, LWSS Rajiana and Rantali in Tehsil & Distt. Kangra HP./SH- C/O Wire Crate work to protect the Percolation well RD 0.00 To 13.00 Mtr.=13.00Mtr).	181012/-	3620/-	3 Months	250/-
2.	Improvement of LWSS Gahilan Thakurdwara, LWSS Rajiana and Rantali in Tehsil & Distt. Kangra HP./SH- C/O Wire Crate work to protect the Percolation well RD 13.00 To 26.00Mtr=13.00 Mtr).	181241/-	3625/-	3 Months	250/-
3.	A/R & M/O LWSS Daulatpur Jalari (SH:- Rewinding of 110 HP Submersible motor and 9 stage submersible pump Set No-I & P/F of Tee Bolt and P/F of copper leads 25sq mm etc.	110919/-	2218/-	1 Month	250/-
4.	A/R & M/O LWSS Daulatpur Jalari (SH:- Rewinding of 110 HP Submersible motor and 9 stage submersible pump Set No-II & P/F of MCCB 250 Amp and P/F of copper leads 25sq mm etc)	128725/-	2575/-	1 Month	250/-

Last date of submission of Tender :- 10-01-2025 upto 11.00AM. Last Date of Sale of Tender from Sub-Divisional office 09-01-2025 up to 3.30 P.M. No. AE/JSV/ RSD/Tender/NIT/2024-866-95 Dated - 30-12-2024 Assistant Engineer Jal Shakti Sub Division, Rantali

HP / 4243/24-25

Women & Child Development Department Government of Odisha Lokseva Bhawan, Bhubaneswar-751001 Telephone Number - 0674-2392976 Website- [https://wcd.odisha.gov.in](http://wcd.odisha.gov.in) : Email ID- subhadraojana1@gmail.com

CORRIGENDUM

CORRIGENDUM cum Response to Pre-Bid Queries to RFP Ref. no:

03/SUB/HCD Dated: 19/12/2024.

RFP title: REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR SELECTION OF BIDDER FOR OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF COMMAND AND RESPONSE CENTRE UNDER DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT, ODISHA.

In partial modification to the RFP Ref. no: 03/SUB/HCD issued on 19/12/2024, this corrigendum is being issued to all prospective bidders. Details of the corrigendum is available in the Department Website

<https://wcd.odisha.gov.in>.

Sd/- Additional Secretary to Govt., Department of W&CD

OIPR-33001/11/0046/2425

g:-

Karthyapalak Amityata का कार्यालय, लघु सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, बांका (संत जोसेफ रक्षूल के निकट, जगतपुर, बांका-813102) E-Mail ID-ee.mi.ban-bih@gov.in, Mob No-7782917633

शुद्धि पत्र

कार्यपालक अमियता का कार्यालय, लघु सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, बांका

(संत जोसेफ रक्षूल के निकट, जगतपुर, बांका-813102)

PR. No.16079 (MWRD) 2024-25

नशो की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

कार्यपालक अमियता

लघु सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, बांका

PR. No.16079 (MWRD) 2024-25

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कार्यपालक अमियता (पौ) का कार्यालय

सिंचाई यांत्रिक प्रमण्डल, बांसी

Email ID- EEMDBAUNSI@GMAIL.COM

शुद्धि पत्र

इस कार्यालय के अल्पकालीन कोटेश्वर आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या - 01/2024-25 जो दिनांक - 19/12/2024 को साधारण पत्र में प्रकाशित किया गया जिसका PR No-015028 (WRD) 2024-25 है, उसकी तिथियों में अपरिहार्य कारणवश निम्नानकित परिवर्तन किया जाता है:-

क्रो. विवरणी पूर्ण भूमि संधारित तिथि एवं समय संस्थानीति तिथि एवं समय

1. कोटेश्वर कार्यालय डाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की तिथि दिनांक-26.12.2024 से दिनांक-03.01.2025 तक 3 बजे अपराह्न तक दिनांक-03.01.2025 से 10.01.2025 के 3 बजे अपराह्न तक

2. प्री-बीड मॉटिंग का समय एवं तिथि दिनांक-30.12.2024 के 3 बजे अपराह्न तक 3 बजे अपराह्न तक दिनांक-01.01.2025 के 3 बजे अपराह्न तक

3. तकनीकी बीड खोलने की तिथि दिनांक-03.01.2025 को 3:30 बजे अपराह्न

अन्य सभी नियम एवं शर्त पूर्ववत् रहेंगी।

कार्यपालक अमियता (यांत्रिक) सिंचाई यांत्रिक प्रमण्डल, बांसी

PR-015843 (WRD) 2024-25

नशो से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से यारा।

कार्यपालक अमियता (यांत्रिक) सिंचाई यांत्रिक प्रमण्डल, बांसी

PR-016078 (MWRD) 2024-25

नशो की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

कार्यपालक अमियता

लघु सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, बांसी

PR. No.16078 (MWRD) 2024-25

नशो की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

कार्यपालक अमियता (यांत्रिक) सिंचाई यांत्रिक प्रमण्डल, बांसी

PR. No.16078 (MWRD) 2024-25

नशो से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से यारा।

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कार्यपालक अमियता

# Editorial



## Too little, too late

The situation in Manipur belies the Home Ministry's sanguine assessment

**C**onflict resolution and peace building, or the absence of both, and the prolongation of strife are dependent upon certain conditions. If there is a "winning side" in the conflict that seeks to restore and reconcile with the losing side, then there is a guarantee of peace. If there are no winning sides but a honourable compromise is worked out between two sides, then too there is the possibility of lasting peace. There are also situations when conflicts are not resolved but a tenuous yet steady peace is maintained through dialogue and discussion. But a situation where violence raises its head time and again, and when actors in the conflict continue to be hostile without even talking to each other, cannot be described as "peaceful". The Union Home Ministry (MHA) has patted itself on the back by claiming that the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government has managed to "build bridges of unity in the North East... to usher in.. peace with unprecedented success". But if the Manipur situation where outcomes of the conflagration that raged in May 2023 continue to roil the State with sporadic skirmishes, and recurring crises are anything to go by, then the statement is not only a false claim but is also in line with the regime's efforts to portray success where failure is apparent in order to win the battle of perceptions.

Soon after this year-end report of the MHA came out, the beleaguered Chief Minister of Manipur, N. Biren Singh, issued an apology for the ethnic violence in the State. This, in any case, is too little too late in the day as his government does not seem to enjoy the confidence of at least one particular ethnic community in the State. For the MHA to portray that the northeast is on the path to peace and prosperity, even as the embers of the ethnic violence in Manipur refuse to die down and restrictive measures are being reimposed, can only be described as burying its head in the sand. In December, the Union government had also reimposed the Protected Area Regime amid "security concerns arising out of influx from neighbouring countries" – a reference to refugees fleeing the Myanmar junta's repression as infiltrators and this might exacerbate already fragile ethnic relations in border States such as Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. The MHA must instead focus on getting its act together in conducting the census and working with the State governments to bring out a humane policy of addressing the refugee situation. Short of doing so, the Ministry's encomiums to itself will be smug self-satisfaction devoid of all meaning.

## Farm fire

Dallewal should end his fast and press for talks on farmers' demands

**T**he sit-in protest that began almost a year ago by a group of farmers owing allegiance to the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non Political) at the Punjab-Haryana border has taken a new turn with their leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal refusing to end his indefinite fast, which started on November 26. The stand of the 70-year-old leader, a cancer patient, has drawn the attention of the Supreme Court. Farmers in the State, across their organisational and political positions, supported a Punjab bandh on December 30, in solidarity with Mr. Dallewal. The Court has allowed the Punjab government time till Thursday to ensure that Mr. Dallewal gets medical aid. The farmers' outfits have told the Court that their leader would accept medical help only if the Union Government held a discussion with them on their demands such as implementing a legalised Minimum Support Price as per the formula of the National Commission on Farmers (constituted by M.S. Swaminathan), a debt waiver for all farmers and the withdrawal of all cases against farmers for protesting against the three farm laws, which were repealed in 2021. Major farmers' organisations in the State, including the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta-Ugrahan) and the All India Kisan Sabha, have urged the Centre and State governments to address the demands so that Mr. Dallewal ends his fast. Several Opposition parties had also demanded that the Centre start a dialogue with farmers.

It is debatable how helpful the Court's ultimatum is in situations such as these, when policy, law and order and politics are all intertwined. Perhaps, the courts should not be so interfering and governments should be more proactive and preemptive in dealing with such flare-ups. The demands on the table have been pending for long, and the crisis in agriculture is multifaceted. But allowing these permanent sit-in protests is problematic when someone goes on a fast unto death because there is no way to know if he is being forced to starve to death or not allowed to end the fast. Many of the farmers' leaders have met Mr. Dallewal requesting him to end his hunger strike. However, such requests have been turned down with his supporters labelling other farmers' leaders as agents of the government. Sane voices among the farmers have been maintaining that Mr. Dallewal should join the joint protests rather than adopting his fast unto death protest. The Punjab and Haryana governments and the Union Government must ensure that his life is not in danger. Mr. Dallewal and his associates should heed the advice of other farmers' leaders and clear the apprehensions that he is under pressure to continue with the hunger strike.

# The sorry state of India's parliamentary proceedings

**T**he competitive disruptions of Parliament by both the Opposition and, more surprisingly, the Treasury benches, made the recently-concluded winter session of the legislature a travesty. There were more adjournments than discussions, hardly any work was done and the session was adjourned with the widespread sentiment that we had let down the people of India. A new nadir was plumbed when duelling demonstrations by Members of Parliament (MP) on the steps of the House led to accusations of assault and injury on both sides. For many of us who were brought up to regard Parliament as the temple of our democracy, its precincts as hallowed and its procedures and conventions as sacred, this seems a betrayal of everything the institution is supposed to represent as a cornerstone of our democracy.

Why have things come to such a sorry state? One obvious reason (as in everything to do with Parliament) is precedent. The recent demise of the distinguished director, Shyam Benegal, reminded me of the time when he and I both served, as private citizens in 2007, on a round table of eminent Indians invited by then-Speaker Somnath Chatterjee to advise him in the performance of his duties. Our group, which included N.R. Narayana Murthy of 70-hour work week fame, unanimously called for strict enforcement of the rules to ensure higher standards of decorum and debate, and were promptly disabused by the Speaker of our illusions. Disruptions, he said, occurred because an outnumbered Opposition saw them as part of their democratic rights; to thwart them by invoking the rule book would be condemned by all parties, including the ruling party, as undemocratic. So suspending, let alone expelling, MPs was not an option he could easily exercise.

**'Part of convention' now, decline of civility**  
Whatever the merits of this method of parliamentary protest – and, personally, it is not something I have ever cared for – it has become part of the convention of Indian parliamentary practice. Speaker of the Lok Sabha Meira Kumar, whose decency and gentility were shamefully abused by a belligerent Bharatiya Janata Party, still averred that it would be wrong to expel unruly Opposition members without an all-party consensus on doing so.

Though Speakers of the Lok Sabha Sumitra Mahajan and Om Birla have proved more willing to suspend members – Mr. Birla essentially denuded the Lok Sabha of all opposition while steamrolling several Bills through the 2023 winter session – they have usually preferred adjournment to expulsion.



**Shashi Tharoor**  
the fourth-term Congress Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for Thiruvananthapuram and the Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs. He is the award-winning author of 26 books and the recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award, the Crossword Lifetime Achievement Award, and other distinctions

A second factor is, undoubtedly, the acrimony that now prevails between the government and the Opposition. Traditionally, a sense of civility has always reigned in our politics: Atal Bihari Vajpayee loved telling the stories of Jawaharlal Nehru's courtesy to him as a young firebrand Opposition leader, Rajiv Gandhi contriving to get him medical attention in the United States, and, most famously, P.V. Narasimha Rao sending him to Geneva as the head of the Indian delegation to a United Nations meeting on Kashmir.

Today, such episodes are inconceivable. Each side sees itself as the embodiment of righteous virtue, and the others of irredeemable evil. To the ruling party, the Opposition is "anti-national"; the Opposition in turn imagine themselves as doughty outnumbered Pandavas facing the might (and the unfair means) of the Kauravas in power. Democracy requires both sides to accept, as a presumption, the good faith of the other; on all sides of our political divides, we must believe that those on the other side also have the best interests of the nation at heart, and that our disagreements are only over how to achieve them. But in Indian politics today, government and Opposition see each other as enemies, not mere adversaries. Common ground then becomes hard to find.

It is sad that our national politics has witnessed such a breakdown in the relationship of trust that, in any democracy, ought to exist between the government and the Opposition. Both sides are equally guilty: the present ruling party was just as bad when it was in Opposition. The very BJP politicians who had argued the case for disruption – who had used sophistry to justify obstructing the work of Parliament for years in the cause of the higher principle of accountability – suddenly decided that on this issue, where you stand depends on where you sit. Now that they are sitting on the Treasury benches, disruption is wasteful and condemnable. The Opposition, once their victims, will have none of it. Those of us who attended missionary schools learned the golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The new golden rule of Indian politics has become: do unto them what they did unto you.

**The representative in today's Parliament**  
Third, arguably, is the public's own diminished expectations from parliamentarians. Gone are the days when skilled debaters and orators held sway on the floor of the legislature, winning public adulation (in those pre-television days) from admiring accounts of their speeches alone. A Ram Manohar Lohia, a Nath Pai, a George Fernandes, a Madhu Limaye, a Piloo Mody, or a Minoo Masani acquired political importance and

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The diminishing of Parliament is deeply damaging to India's democracy

**R**ecently, the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, N. Chandrababu Naidu and M.K. Stalin, respectively, were quite peeved about the question of the proposed delimitation exercise and the possibility, subsequently, of the loss of parliamentary seats. This is very likely as the two States, along with the other southern States, are ahead of the rest of India in terms of fertility transition – implying a reduced share of the population when compared with the northern region. What is galling to people in general, and not necessarily just the politicians in south India, is that success in "family planning" will surely reduce the number of seats of the less populated States in Parliament.

"The state government [Andhra Pradesh] is thinking of enacting a law that would make only those with more than two children eligible to contest local body elections," Mr. Naidu had said. Earlier, Andhra Pradesh had passed a piece of legislation barring people with more than two children from contesting local polls. Mr. Naidu said, "We have repealed that law, and we are now considering reversing it.... Government may provide more benefits to families with more children."

Mr. Stalin's response was, "Today, as there is a scenario of decreasing Lok Sabha constituencies, it raises the question why should we restrict ourselves to having fewer children?" Mr. Stalin added in jest, "Why not aim for 16 children?"

### The example of China

The question that arises in the light of the reactions and the responses of the Chief Ministers is: would it be possible to arrest fertility decline and, moreover, reverse it by attempting to increase it? It is evident that the attainment of low fertility in the course of fertility transition is hardly reversible by intervention, but in the natural course of events, there might be a minor

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**S. Irudaya Rajan**  
Chair at the International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD), Kerala



**M.A. Kalam**  
Visiting Professor at the International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD), Kerala

It is too simplistic a solution that is being put forth by some politicians in the southern States

Manipur was treated as a ritualistic anti-Modi slogan. But this has now changed maybe after the old saying, 'repeat a lie often enough and it becomes the truth.'

### P.R.V. Raja,

Pandalam, Kerala

**Mannohan Singh**  
There have been many letters in this column paying tributes to former Prime Minister Mannohan Singh. While Dr. Singh was very successful as a Finance Minister, he cannot be

awarded full marks as Prime Minister as it is under his stewardship that there were many scams. Sadder still was his closing his eyes to all the misdeeds.

### Impartial and dispassionate critics see him as a 100%

Finance Minister and a 50%

Prime Minister.

**B.S. Jayaraman**, Coimbatore

The unwarranted spat between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress over Dr. Singh

reversal as suggested by experience worldwide. Despite this understanding, there are attempts being made in some countries to reverse the fertility trend through incentivisation, but to no effect. China's one-child policy was one of the desperate measures to realise population control. The consequences confronting the Chinese state on varied fronts include problems in the marriage market, a dependency burden and, above all, extreme low fertility beyond the scope for reversal.

Quick and forced regulatory measures to restrict reproduction have never paid dividends beyond restricting population counts. In fact, an emphasis on limiting population counts without caring for its composition that sustains the population may well be considered unplanned. China's case is an example wherein the state is facing numerous crises at this point over the familial transitions underway and the consequential burden of social security provisioning on the state.

An imbalanced population composition reached by intruding into the natural course of transition will pose problems that would only be remedied through promoting migration. Efforts at incentivising reproduction and adoption of a pro-natal population policy may not be an alternative as seen in countries such as Japan and South Korea. Hence, the response of the southern States to the emerging threat may well be considered premature and ineffective in the long run.

### Varied population counts

The course of fertility decline in India's States does show signs of a convergence across space and characteristics but a population momentum keeps the demographic divide wider between regions. Given this circumstance, population counts between provinces may not be the appropriate criterion to have political

must not be stoked further as it would be an insult to the memory of the departed leader who always kept the interests of the nation above all else. Dr. Singh is ever alive in every Indian's heart. He has etched his name with his simplicity, statesmanship, constructive work, implementation of welfare measures and, above all, economic reforms which transformed the Indian economy.

### Gregory Fernandes,

Mumbai

stature, out of all proportion to the size of their parties, because of accounts of their verbal duels with a Nehru or an Indira Gandhi. Today there are no equivalents: while the occasional reasoned or impassioned speech enjoys a brief virality on YouTube or WhatsApp, these are few and far between, and the opportunities to deliver them are rarer still. Instead, there is a clear disconnect between electability and parliamentary performance.

People are elected or re-elected for reasons other than their ability to skewer a Minister in Question Hour or tear a government proposal apart through reasoned argument. The quality and the character of political representation has a direct correlation to the quality and the character of floor debates as well. When MPs are corralled by their Whips into breaking all the rules they are sworn to uphold, to troop into the well of the House and disrupt the proceedings through shouting and sloganising rather than effective preparation and forensic skill, they are being judged by their leaders on qualities other than effective parliamentarianism. The talent that should be exhibited on the floor of the House is now paraded in television studios instead. The public in turn no longer judges their representatives by their performance in Parliament but by the constituent services they render and the local political weight they command. Most of the names I mentioned earlier would not find it easy to be re-elected in today's environment.

### Disruption and contempt

Parliamentary standards have been in free fall for a generation. No one is elected or defeated at the polls because of their performance in Parliament. Most MPs have limited interest in legislation and prefer to disrupt the proceedings rather than debate the principles. Meanwhile, the BJP government refuses to reach out to the Opposition and is content to ride roughshod over it to pass its Bills. Its contempt for the legislature is barely concealed. Unlike Jawaharlal Nehru, who attended Parliament daily, Prime Minister Narendra Modi barely deigns to grace the House with his presence. In the last few years, the government has been increasingly treating Parliament as a noticeboard for the announcement of its decisions and a rubber stamp for legalising them, rather than as a consultative body in a deliberative democracy.

The diminishing of Parliament in our political life is deeply damaging to our democracy. Sadly, its custodians are allowing it to be robbed of all value, to the point where the public will not miss it when it is gone. But when it is gone, what will remain of our democracy?

### Impact on women

Encouraging women to have more children may be easier said than done. In the current circumstances, a woman's personal loss in engaging in reproduction is much greater than imagined given the state's approach in facilitating the same. When the state celebrates the fertility decline and its dividend has benefited the larger cause, its implication in a woman's life has been less than expected. Therefore, thinking about fertility reversal needs to be preceded by measures of guaranteeing the state's social support for the additional children on the one hand and compensation for women's engagement in reproduction on the other.

Reversing fertility could well be ideal in terms of maintaining a sustainable population but the regional population imbalance can perhaps be addressed through migration in immediate terms. What needs to be answered is the ensuing disadvantage of a lower population count and political representation that can only be resolved provided the count gets an equivalence in valuation in terms of capability characteristics. Therefore, the ultimate solution lies not in reversing fertility but in revising count-based political representation in the delimitation exercise.

### Going to school barefoot

The feature, "Barefoot trek on raw road to education" (Online – 'Spotlight', December 27, 2024), was a good read. It was on the plight of the children in Kidagari, an interior tribal village in Andhra Pradesh, walking through forests in a hilly region without footwear. But how can the villagers not care about snake bites or multiple dangers from other creatures? Every parent will look at the

safety of his child, no matter how poor or even how remote and treacherous the place. It is puzzling how the villagers or the system can afford to spend money on good uniforms, backpacks and study materials, but ignore basic safety by not providing any footwear.

**Amar Singh,**  
Mumbai

Letters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the full postal address and the full name.

# Youth at the forefront of climate litigation



Nabeela Siddiqui

Assistant Professor,  
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Law School,  
VMRF-DU, Chennai

**Y**outh-led climate litigation is revolutionising the global response to the climate crisis. By holding governments and corporations accountable, young people frame climate inaction as a human rights violation. They argue that the disproportionate impacts on younger generations demand bold, systemic solutions. This litigation emphasises the urgent need for climate action, pushing for transformative change to address the escalating emergency. It serves as a powerful tool for advocating for climate justice and protecting the rights of future generations.

**Major milestones**

A landmark moment in youth-led climate litigation occurred with the *Held v. State of Montana* case in the U.S. In a historic decision, the Montana Supreme Court upheld a district court ruling in favour of 16 young plaintiffs who argued that Montana's fossil fuel policies violated their constitutional rights and failed to address the climate crisis. This 6-1 decision marked the first time a U.S. State Supreme Court affirmed young people's constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment in the context of climate change. The roots of the case trace back to August 2023, when district court judge Kathy Seely ruled in favour of the plaintiffs, making *Held v. Montana* the first youth-led constitutional climate lawsuit in the U.S. to go to trial and secure a victory.

Judge Seely underscored the direct link between greenhouse gas emissions and the worsening climate crisis, emphasising that each ton of emissions amplifies environmental harm. Her ruling broadened Montana's constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment by including the protection of the broader climate system. The Supreme Court upheld her findings, striking down laws restricting greenhouse gas

Youth-driven climate litigation is revolutionising the global climate movement, achieving landmark wins, and demanding government accountability

considerations in fossil fuel permitting and blocking constitutional remedies for environmental harm. This decision mandates Montana to integrate climate and public health concerns into its energy policies, marking a governance shift. It underscores intergenerational equity and inspires youth-led efforts to shape climate policy.

Youth-led climate litigation is gaining traction globally. In Canada, *La Rose v. His Majesty King* case represents a significant step forward. In this lawsuit, young plaintiffs argue that Canada's insufficient climate policies violate their rights to life, liberty, and security under Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Canadian federal government recently announced it would not seek to dismiss the case, paving the way for an eight-week trial scheduled for October 2026 in Vancouver. The plaintiffs contend that current policies disproportionately harm children and youth. They advocate for a mandate requiring the government to implement a comprehensive, science-aligned climate recovery plan.

In the Netherlands, a court ruling compelled the government to adopt stricter emissions targets. Colombia's Supreme Court recognised the Amazon rainforest as a legal entity, mandating its protection for future generations. Germany's Constitutional Court required stronger climate policies to uphold youth rights.

India has seen its share of youth-driven climate litigation, most notably through a petition filed in March 2017 by nine-year-old Ridhima Pandey before the National Green Tribunal (NGT). Her petition sought measures including integrating climate change into environmental impact assessments, establishing a national greenhouse gas inventory, and creating carbon budgets for development projects.

In 2019, the NGT dismissed her case. However, her appeal to the

Supreme Court is pending, with the court appointing *amicus curiae* and requesting government inputs on carbon rules. Ms. Pandey's efforts have profoundly influenced India's climate discourse, showcasing the youth's role in demanding stronger policies and intergenerational equity.

**Transformative implications**

Youth-driven legal battles are transforming climate policy, evolving from awareness campaigns led by figures like Greta Thunberg to courtroom advocacy demanding systemic change. These lawsuits emphasise the intersection of human rights and environmental sustainability, inspiring global movements and compelling governments to rethink inadequate climate strategies.

In India, the path to youth climate activism is complex, with increasing crackdowns on protests and shrinking spaces for public engagement. Despite this, youth groups persist, using digital platforms and aligning with movements led by farmers and tribal communities. This resilience underscores their commitment. As young activists challenge policies in courts, the outcomes of cases could shape the future of climate activism in India.

Protecting their advocacy rights is crucial to amplifying their voices and achieving climate justice.

Youth-driven climate litigation is revolutionising the global climate movement, achieving landmark wins, and demanding government accountability. By stressing intergenerational equity and science-based policies, young activists push governments to prioritise bold and sustainable actions. These legal efforts underscore the crucial role of youth in shaping climate policy and safeguarding the planet's future. By leveraging the law, young people are driving transformative change, ensuring a liveable world for generations to come, and inspiring a new wave of climate leadership and activism.

# Woman Minister on receiving end

The alleged remark of C.T. Ravi against Laxmi Hebbalkar reflects a larger mindset

**STATE OF PLAY****S Bageshree**

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Karnataka

**I**rony died a thousand deaths when the BJP's State president B.Y. Vijayendra said that men in his party were "not wearing bangles" to stay quiet in the face of "police high handedness" while responding to the arrest of MLC C.T. Ravi. The BJP legislator was arrested for allegedly using a derogatory and sexist word about Minister for Women and Child Development Laxmi Hebbalkar during the recently concluded session of the Legislature.

Karnataka has seen much wrangling between political leaders since Mr. Ravi allegedly used a slur in the Legislative Council hall against Ms. Hebbalkar on December 19. This incident occurred after the council was adjourned following a fracas over Union Minister Amit Shah's remarks on B.R. Ambedkar. But, the members had stayed on and continued their loud arguments. With the House not in session at that point, there is no "official record" of the alleged slur used, but the video clip has been freely floating around on social media platforms.

Mr. Ravi initially claimed that he had said "frustrate" and the Minister misheard him. Ms. Hebbalkar, however, said that the word, besides being abusive, trivialised her hard work in building a political career.

Mr. Ravi was booked under Sections 75 (sexual harassment) and 79 (word, gesture, or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS) and arrested soon after. He has alleged that he was harassed in police custody, at the

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**FROM THE ARCHIVES****The Hindu**

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 2, 1975

## Move to delink jobs from degrees runs into difficulties

New Delhi, Jan. 1: A proposal mooted by the Union Education Ministry to delink jobs from degrees is running into difficulties. A preliminary sounding of various Economic Ministries has shown that none of them is in favour of employing persons who do not hold degrees even for class III posts.

The proposal is by no means a new one, and over 15 years ago, it was suggested by a committee headed by Mr. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar that a degree should not be considered a pre-requisite for certain kinds of jobs under the Government. But the Government has not accepted this suggestion and for most of the posts under both the Central and State Governments, a university degree is considered a must.

Suddenly the Education Ministry has come to think that the mad rush to colleges and universities could be reduced only if a degree was not insisted upon for certain types of jobs. Even here, the sponsors of the proposal in the Ministry are motivated only by a desire to restrict admission into higher institutes of learning rather than to throw open jobs which can be held by persons with lower educational qualifications to non-degree holders.

At a recent meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education, considerable concern was expressed over the disillusionment that has set in among the educated youth because of the large-scale unemployment among them. The Education Minister made an announcement that shortly a committee would be set up to consider the question of delinking jobs from degrees.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 2, 1925

## The capital of Norway

Leafield (Oxford), Midnight, Jan. 1: The British Government has been officially notified by the Norwegian Government that Christiana from to-day reverts to its ancient name of Oslo.

In a leading article on the subject the *Times* says: "In this country all of us heartily desire that our relations with Oslo may be as friendly as our relations with Christiana have been for generations. We wish the capital of Norway continuation and expansion of the progress and prosperity which she has enjoyed and deserved."

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# School dropout rates go from bad to worse in Bihar and Assam

Dropout rates in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Haryana are also concerning

**DATA POINT****Vignesh Radhakrishnan  
Samreen Wani**

**T**here has been a marked improvement in the share of students continuing education into higher grades in 2024 compared to 2019, across India, without dropping out of school. Overall, of every 100 girls who started schooling, over 80 completed their secondary education without dropping out in 2024 compared to just 73.5 in 2019. Among boys, the corresponding numbers were 77.2 and 72.4 in 2024 and 2019 respectively, showing an increase, though to a lesser degree.

However, despite this improvement at an all-India level, certain major States such as Karnataka and Rajasthan have recorded significant spikes in students dropping out of upper primary and secondary schools. In Bihar and Assam – States where the dropout rates were already concerning in 2019 – the rates have slipped further in 2024.

For instance, in Karnataka, of the 100 girls who started schooling only 76.5 completed secondary education without dropping out in 2024 compared to 79.3 in 2019. Similarly, for boys, the ratio declined to 70.7 from 73.6. In Bihar, the ratio slipped from bad to worse in the same period. Of the 100 girls who started schooling only 40.3 completed secondary education without dropping out in 2024 compared to 51.6 of them in 2019. Similarly, for boys, the ratio declined to 38.8 from 51.2.

**T**able 1 shows the number of students out of every 100 who completed upper primary and secondary education in 2024 and 2019. The data is provided for all major States across both genders. In direct contrast to States such as Bihar and Assam, where the situation went from bad to worse, in States such as Kerala and Tamil Na-

du, the figures improved from good to excellent.

For instance, in Kerala, of the 100 boys who started schooling, 99.6 completed upper primary in 2019, which improved further to 100 in 2024. The number remained at 100 among girls for both years. Similarly, of the 100 boys who started schooling, 88.3 completed secondary education in 2019, which improved to 95.7 in 2024. The corresponding numbers among girls were 93.2 and 97.5.

Similarly, in Tamil Nadu, of the 100 boys who started schooling, 99 completed upper primary in 2019, which improved to 100 in 2024. Among girls, the number improved from 97.5 to 100. In secondary schooling, among boys, the number improved from 81.3 to 89.2, and among girls, it improved from 89.4 to 95.6.

While the absolute increase or decrease in the share of school students who pass on to higher grades without getting dropped out is one facet of the story, analysing the degree of increase or decrease brings out further nuances. To arrive at the degree of increase or decrease, the States were ranked as shown in **Table 2**.

For instance, in 2019, of the 100 girls who started schooling in Maharashtra, 83.5 completed secondary education, a figure similar to that of Uttarakhand that year. In 2024, Maharashtra's figures improved to 90.5, however, Uttarakhand's numbers increased even further to 92.8. While both States improved, the degree of rise was steeper for Uttarakhand.

Because of this, in **Table 2**, Uttarakhand's rankings improved from 11th to 4th (for secondary girls) while Maharashtra's rankings improved only from 12th to 7th.

States such as Gujarat have remained stagnant at the bottom of the ranking table in both years. Haryana has recorded massive drops in its rankings. The State was part of the top 10 list in all school levels across genders in 2019 and moved out of the list in 2024.

## Falling attendance

The figures in the tables are The Hindu's calculations based on data sourced from UDISE+

**Table 1:** Table shows the number of students out of every 100 who completed upper primary and secondary education in 2024 ('24) and 2019 ('19). Upper primary: Class VI to VIII, Secondary: Class IX and X

■ In Kerala, of the 100 boys who started schooling, 99.6 completed upper primary in 2019, which improved further to 100 in 2024

State	Upper primary		Secondary			
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls		
'19	'24	'19	'24	'19	'24	
Kerala	99.6	100	100	100	88.3	95.7
HP	99.6	99.3	99.2	99.6	90.7	93.5
Tamil Nadu	99	100	97.5	100	81.3	89.4
Punjab	95.7	96.9	95.8	97.8	82.7	90
Uttarakhand	92.2	97.1	93.1	98.1	79.9	88.5
Goa	97.7	98	97.4	98.1	85.4	87.8
Maharashtra	97.1	99.3	96.3	99.5	83.4	88.3
Telangana	95.2	99.9	95.2	100	79.9	86.6
Delhi	98.7	99.4	99.2	99.4	82.6	87.8
Andhra	98.7	98.4	99.1	99.2	81.2	84.2
Odisha	92.2	97.8	91.1	98.3	80.4	83.7
UP	87.3	95.2	81.7	93.5	71.8	85.4
Tripura	91.4	94.7	93.9	96.1	62	84
West Bengal	92.4	100	97.1	100	73	78.5
Haryana	98.3	93	97.7	95.6	82.6	77.3
J&K	87.8	94.9	86.1	95.4	69.9	80.8
Chhattisgarh	88.9	91.8	90.2	94.2	64.7	71.6
Nagaland	82	88.8	86	90.6	56.3	76.6
Manipur	89	91.6	92.1	92.6	76.1	76
Mizoram	88.2	89.6	90.6	91.8	77	74.4
MP	91.3	91.8	90.2	92.8	65.7	72.2
Sikkim	92.2	90.8	94.8	94.3	65.9	69.8
Rajasthan	91.2	84.8	90.8	86.6	78.6	72.6
Gujarat	91.5	96.3	89	95	65.7	73
Karnataka	100	95.2	99.5	96.1	73.6	70.7
Jharkhand	83.1	89.5	85.7	90.8	61	74.3
Arunachal	79.2	87.1	79.9	88.4	42.3	66.7
Assam	93.4	82.6	96.7	88.7	62.6	57.4
Meghalaya	70.7	77.8	76.5	82.1	49.8	54.6
Bihar	78.6	65	81.1	65.4	51.2	38.8
INDIA	91.1	92.7	90.6	93	72.4	77.2

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### The projected increase in India's tobacco exports

**8** In per cent. The country's tobacco exports will likely cross ₹13,000 crore this year. India is the second largest producer of tobacco in the world after China. It is also the fourth largest producer of Flue-Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco worldwide after China, Brazil and Zimbabwe. PTI

### The gross GST collection in the month of December

**1.77** In lakh crore. The gross GST collection rose 7.3% year-on-year in December. The central GST collection stood at ₹32,836 crore, State GST at ₹40,499 crore, integrated IGST at ₹47,783 crore and cess at ₹11,471 crore. GST from domestic transactions grew 8.4%. PTI

### Death toll from mob killings in Bangladesh in 2024

**128** Mob killings in Bangladesh surged after the August revolution last year that toppled the rule of ex-leader Sheikh Hasina. Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a leading Bangladeshi human rights organisation, said it had recorded at least 128 people killed by mobs in 2024. AFP

### Number of accident cases reported in Bengaluru in 2024

**4,784** The Bengaluru traffic police said its ongoing efforts have led to a 1.26% reduction in fatal accidents and a 1.90% drop in deaths caused by mishaps in 2024 compared to the previous year. Non-fatal accidents saw a sharper decline of 4.57%. PTI

### The increase in migrants crossing the Channel to the U.K.

**25** In per cent. The number of irregular migrants arriving in Britain on small boats soared in 2024, data showed on Wednesday, piling pressure on Prime Minister Keir Starmer to stem the Channel crossings. 36,816 people were detected in the Channel last year. AFP  
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## The race for fighters: the IAF's dilemma

China has already fielded two fifth generation fighter jets becoming the only country other than the U.S. to have more than one fifth gen fighter. In comparison, the Indian Air Force is at 31 fighter squadrons, desperately awaiting new inductions and with no fifth gen fighter in the line-up for at least a decade

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### FULL CONTEXT

Dinakar Peri

In the last two weeks, taking the world by surprise, China unveiled a series of high technology platforms establishing its technological supremacy. These include two stealth fighter jets, the launch of an amphibious naval ship, a new "comprehensive" scientific research ship for global deep-sea exploration, a supersonic civil jet prototype and a new bullet train dubbed the world's fastest. The timing couldn't have been starker, highlighting the widening technological gap with the Indian Air Force (IAF) which is struggling to maintain its fighter squadron strength as modernisation is plagued by delayed deliveries.

**Chinese military modernisation**  
Last week, videos emerged on social media of two stealth fighter jets in tail-less configuration. One of them a massive jet with delta-wing design, featuring three engines hinting at a likely long range, flying over Chengdu in Sichuan province went viral on social media 'X'. Videos of the second smaller jet featuring a smaller twin-engine design with swept wings emerged a day later. Reports suggest that the larger jet was designed by Chengdu Aircraft Corporation while the smaller jet is from the rival Shenyang Aircraft Corporation. However, there has been no official comments from China or from their state media so far on the developments.

The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) of China has already fielded two fifth generation fighter jets, the medium J-35 and the heavy J-20, becoming the only country other than the U.S. to have more than one fifth gen fighter. With the two new jets, dubbed by many commentators as sixth gen-fighters which is debatable, China has, undoubtedly, taken giant strides in the race.

The recently released report to the U.S. Congress on the military and security developments involving the PRC for 2024 noted that the PLAAF and PLAN (Navy) Aviation together constitute the largest aviation force in the Indo-Pacific region. "The PLAAF is rapidly approaching technology typical of U.S. standards," it noted. The PLAAF and PLAN Aviation continue to field greater numbers of fourth-generation aircraft (now more than 1,300 of 1,900 total fighters, not including trainers) and probably will become a majority fourth-generation force in the next several years, the report added. In addition, the J-35 and J-20 are being added at a phenomenal rate and flight testing of the latest jets indicate a fairly advanced state, and that they have been under development for sometime.

**The IAF's modernisation plan**  
The IAF is at 31 fighter squadrons as against the sanctioned strength of 42 squadrons, desperately awaiting new inductions and with no fifth gen fighter in the line-up for at least a decade, the only outlier among major countries.

Recent reports state that Pakistan has approved the procurement of 40 J-35s from China.

In an uncanny coincidence, very recently the Defence Ministry has appointed a committee led by the Defence Secretary to look into the overall capability development of the IAF. India has an ambitious plan lined up for the acquisition of over 500 fighter jets, a bulk of them to be indigenously designed and manufactured, majority of them for the



**Need to catch up:** Chinese ground crew members inspect a J-20 stealth fighter in Chengdu, in southwest China's Sichuan province in 2011. AP

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IAF. However, these are at various stages of development and manufacturing and their timely deliveries are critical. Of these, the LCA variants will constitute the bulk. There are 83 LCA-Mk1As on order but their deliveries have been delayed as the F-404 engines by General Electric (GE) have been delayed. A deal for 97 additional Mk1As is under discussion. The LCA-Mk2, fifth generation fighter the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) and the Twin Engine Deck Based Fighter (TED-BF) for the Navy all have very ambitious development timelines but given the complexity and track record, it has to be seen how soon they are ready and available for induction.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is working on the indigenous development of LCA-Mk2 aircraft and the AMCA, the Defence Ministry informed the Parliamentary standing committee on defence as per a report tabled earlier this month. "The deliveries for LCA-Mk2 and AMCA are expected to commence only into the next decade once the development cycle is successfully completed."

It must be noted that of the current 31 squadrons, the phase out of two MIG-21 squadrons has been extended due to the delayed deliveries of LCA-Mk1A. The Jaguars, Mirage-2000s and MIG-29s will begin going out by the end of the decade. For instance, by 2027-28, the first of the MIG-29s, inducted in the late 1980s, will start going out and by early 2040s, when most of these types will be phased out, some of the early lot of SU-30s will also start going out. The IAF has in all contracted 272 Su-30s, and a deal to procure 12 additional Su-30MKIs to replace the ones lost in accidents has just been signed while a major Sukhoi upgrade programme is in the final stages of approval.

Another critical procurement programme that hasn't progressed for several years is the I14 Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA), a foreign jet intended to be manufactured in India with significant technology transfer. The Request For Information (RFI) for I14 MRFA was issued in April 2019 to global aircraft manufacturers but has since made no progress with even the preliminary Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) from the Government yet to be received. Given the long timelines for the procurement process, and factoring in the time to set up facilities in India and for the jets to roll out, the MRFA is unlikely to be available in significant numbers till the middle of the next decade.

As reported by *The Hindu* recently, in the backdrop of the controversy in the procurement of 36 Rafale fighter jets, the government is looking at a procurement model that is transparent and non-controversial for the MRFA.

Underscoring this urgency, IAF Air Chief Marshal A. P. Singh said in October that the MRFA was "needed as of yesterday". The larger and more capable LCA-MK2 is under development and is supposed to do its first flight this October, with December 2027 to be the end of research and development for LCA-Mk2. "If these timelines are met and the MRFA is signed parallelly we are OK. We are not badly off. But if these timelines are pushed, then we need to look at alternatives," the Air Chief had stated.

In October 2022, then IAF chief ACM V. R. Chaudhari conceded that even with the LCA-Mk1A, LCA-Mk2 and the MRFA "we will still be at 35-36 (squadrons) by middle of next decade."

It is pertinent to note that, barring the AMCA which will take sometime the LCA variants and the MRFA are all four gen plus fighters.

On the delay in the LCA-Mk1A,

representative of the Ministry informed the House Panel that it "worries all of us". "LCA Mark 1 is dependent on GE-404 engines. The supply of GE-404 engines has been adjusted by GE for the last two years. Due to COVID, their supply chain has broken down. They have not been able to resume yet. They have promised that they will start giving GE engines from March this year, next year onwards, the supply would get stabilised," the representative submitted.

As soon as the engine problem is sorted out, we have planned to make 24 LCAs every year and then 30 every year, the representative stated. On the agreement between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and GE for the licence manufacture of the F-414 engines in India the Ministry representative expressed confidence that it should get it signed in the "next three to four months."

#### Aero-engine troubles

An aero-engine is likely to remain the single major dependency and the country's Achilles heel for a very long time. Imported engines, directly or 'co-manufactured' will power all indigenous jets and helicopters till the end of this century at the current rate. The license manufacturing for the F-414 engine or the new I10KN engine likely to be co-developed and co-produced with France for the AMCA-Mk2 will still mean that India would be dependent on them for the most critical parts.

It will essentially be between France and the U.S. – U.S. for a part of the fighter fleet and France for the remainder of the fighter fleet and for almost all of the helicopter segment as more indigenous platforms come in.

The country can't claim to be fully self-reliant till it can field an aero-engine that is completely designed and developed in-house.

### THE GIST

▼  
China unveiled a series of high technology platforms establishing its technological supremacy. These include two stealth fighter jets, the launch of an amphibious naval ship, and a new "comprehensive" scientific research ship for global deep-sea exploration.

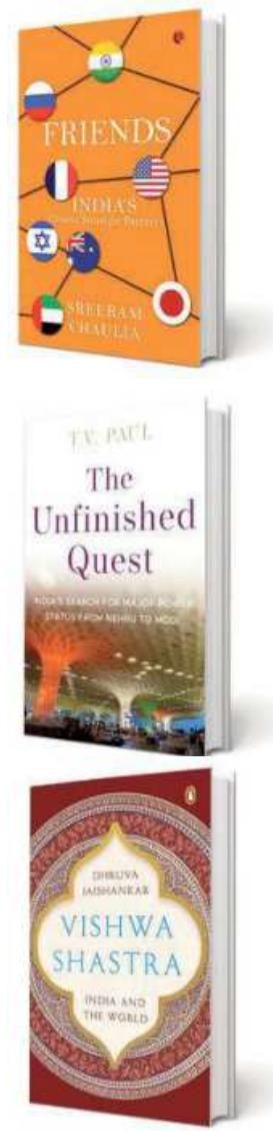
▼  
India has an ambitious plan lined up for the acquisition of over 500 fighter jets, a bulk of them to be indigenously designed and manufactured. However, these are at various stages of development and manufacturing and their timely deliveries are critical.

▼  
An aero-engine is likely to remain the single major dependency and the country's Achilles heel for a very long time.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



**The long game:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed by the Indian diaspora on his arrival at DuPont Hotel, Wilmington, Delaware on September 21. ANI



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Know your English

**K. Subrahmanian**  
**S. Upendran**

"She graduated last year. And she got the gold medal. But companies won't give her a job because she doesn't have any experience. How can she get any experience if nobody gives her a job? It's really crazy."

"It's a catch-22 situation."

"Catch-22! What's that?"

"A catch-22 is a 'condition whereby one fails no matter what action is taken because of a paradoxical rule or situation'."

"You mean, no matter what you do, you just can't win."

"It's a no-win situation. Take, for example, your friend's case. In order to get a job, she needs experience and in order to get experience, she needs a job. It's a paradox. A classic catch-22 situation."

"I think I'm beginning to understand. But tell me why is it called catch-22 and not catch-25 or 24?"

"Catch-22 is the title of a novel by Joseph Heller."

"O.K. And what was the absurd rule or catch-22 in the novel?"

"Read the novel and find out for yourself. I'm going to the library presently. If you want..."

"...You're going to the library right now?"

"In a short while from now. 'Presently' means 'in a little while, soon'. For example, I can say, the theatre will open presently."

"The Minister will be here presently."

"It's PREsently. The stress is on the first syllable."

"O.K. But I thought 'presently' meant 'right now'?"

"Well, you're right. The Americans use 'presently' to mean 'at present, now'. The divorce rate in India is presently at its highest level. My cousin is presently living in USA."

"Is he a U.S. citizen?"

"No, but he's a resident of Georgia."

"What exactly is the difference between a 'resident' and a 'citizen'?"

"A 'citizen' is someone who shares in the political rights of a country. For example, unless you are a citizen of India, you cannot vote during the elections. A 'resident', on the other hand, is someone who stays in a particular place. For example, I can be a resident of Paris, London or Geneva."

"And just because you're a resident of Paris, it doesn't mean you're a citizen of France. Is that correct?"

"Exactly. You can stay or reside in another country without being its citizen. But remember, if you're just a resident, you have no political rights."

"I'm not eligible to vote anyway!"

Published in *The Hindu* on August 2, 1994.

## In search of a 'grand strategy' for India's foreign policy in the 21st century

Three writers explore the past and present of India's relations with the world, and ties in the neighbourhood, to trace the path ahead. In doing so, they ask what should India's strategy be and explain why veering away from its traditionally peaceable and liberal ethos is not the way forward

## Suhasini Haidar

**F**or as long as states have had conflicts, thinkers have tried to set out the terms of a "grand strategy" of a country, one that draws together its national power and resources with its diplomatic, military and economic ambitions. For India's Chanakya (*Arthashastra*), or for military generals like Thucydides (*History of the Peloponnesian War*), Sun Tzu (*The Art of War*) and Carl von Clausewitz (*On War*), the focus was on how to wage war. Amidst present-day realities of relative peace, their writings are now quoted in books on battles for diplomatic influence instead.

## Friends and allies

At least three recent books have aimed to look at a 'grand strategy' for Indian foreign policy in the 21st century, harking in some measure to ancient strategic wisdom. In *Friends: India's Closest Strategic Partners*, Professor at Jindal University Seeram Chaulia writes about the seven countries he thinks are India's most important allies, including Japan, Australia, the U.S., Russia, France, Israel and the UAE. While none of the partnerships constitutes an "alliance", he speaks instead of the need for friendships for India's strategy to "assume its destiny as a leading power" of the world. Chaulia's argument for a world of friendships is three-fold. One, that India cannot depend on a multilateral framework to advance on this path and needs specific bilateral relationships to power it forward. The second, India's friends are by and large those who believe in Indian strategic autonomy. The third, that these friends are invested in India

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using its strategic independence as a countervailing or deterrent challenge to Chinese hegemony. There are obvious exceptions to these rules. The U.S. may not be a fan of Indian strategic autonomy – U.S. Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti recently indicated in a speech that in conflict, partners must choose sides. Russia aims to bring India and China closer (as President Putin sought at the recent BRICS summit with a Narendra Modi-Xi Jinping meet after years). It is also clear that none of India's neighbouring countries qualify in Chaulia's calculus as countries that can help India's rise, a thesis by exclusion that many Indian thinkers would disagree with. The book is remarkable, however, for its clarity of thought in an age where writers often hedge their bets, in line with India's own amorphous and sometimes ambiguous foreign policy choices. The organisation of the chapters, with one for each of India's friends chosen by Chaulia is also helpful, especially for students of each of these important relationships.

## Positioning India's strengths

Also out this season is McGill University Professor T.V. Paul's excellent *The Unfinished Quest: India's Search for Major Power Status from Nehru to Modi*. If Chaulia's 'Friends', works within the silos of each relationship, Paul's 'Quest' flows chronologically from India's independence, in a treatise on Indian power and its practical past. Long before External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that India's ambitions have shifted from being a "balancing power" to a "leading power", Paul points out the Nehru had visualised India as "one of the "four great powers of the post-war international

Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+Bu7senHpQdhlODg1> system", along with the U.S., the Soviet Union and China. Paul also, correctly, positions India's civilisational attributes, including the cultural and religious aspects, now at the forefront of the Modi government's diplomatic forays, as part of its "soft power", adding that the status of "Vishwaguru" or even "Vishwanmitra" would elude India if it veers from its traditionally peaceable and liberal ethos that contribute to it. Paul's evaluation of India's economic and military heft is well researched and worth reading, particularly as he presents them in absolute and comparative terms to other global powers. Unlike Chaulia, Paul does carry a chapter on "The Neighbours", but like Chaulia, he concludes that India's global status will increase even without gaining leverage in South Asia.

## The turning point

Finally, there's Dhruva Jaishankar's *Vishwa Shashtra: India and The World*, a scholarly recounting of Indian foreign policy over the ages, that begins with ancient strategic treatises, goes through pre-independence foreign policy thought, followed by the first few decades of the Indian Republic. Jaishankar marks 1991 as a significant turning point of "fundamental change" in Indian foreign policy – broadly as a reaction to global events like the Gulf war, Israel-Palestine peace process, the collapse of the Soviet Union and withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the resultant period of U.S.-led unipolarity in the world. Jaishankar, the third in his family line of strategic thinkers, weaves the intricacies of India's foreign policy past with considerable ease, leading up to the present period in 2024. Part 1, "History", is scrupulously

well presented, followed by Part 2 titled "Strategy", where it is possible for different schools of foreign policy thinking to differ. Jaishankar lists 14 "priorities" for Indian strategy, ranging from the need to improve military and industrial capabilities, securing partnerships in the Indian Ocean, ASEAN region and Middle East/West Asia, to strengthening multilateral institutions. Jaishankar sets his case on India's challenges by simply saying that "China's rise is likely the primary factor influencing India's grand strategy", and the other priorities he lists – on managing China, working with the Quad and others in the Indo-Pacific etc – speak to this understanding. Unlike Chaulia and Paul, Jaishankar puts much more focus on India's ties with its neighbours, including Afghanistan (Prioritise Neighbours, Talk to Afghanistan), making an exception for Pakistan (Compel Pakistan) for which he recommends a different treatment.

All three books mark a refreshing departure from strategic works of the past decade that focused on the Modi "moment" in Indian foreign policy post-2014. Those works had portrayed policies of the Modi/UPA government as a break from the past, often mistaking innovations such as public rallies for the diaspora, personalised summit-level diplomacy (the Sabarmati swing with Xi or the car ride in the Beast with Obama), social media usage and the promotion of yoga, meditation, Hindi and Sanskrit, the scriptures etc for transformational foreign policy. On this, all ancient strategic thinkers such as Chanakya, Clausewitz et al were clear – a key component of effective policy formation is the ability to discern grand strategy from tactics.

## THE DAILY QUIZ

The Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral was reopened in December following extensive restoration work to fix the effects of a 2019 fire. A quiz in its honour

## Vasudevan Mukunth

## QUESTION 1

Together with the Amiens, Chartres, and Reims cathedrals, the Notre-Dame de Paris is an example of which style of architecture? Structures built in this style tend to be tall, with additional architectural features designed to divert the resulting weight.

## QUESTION 2

Authorities commissioned restoration work on the Notre-Dame de Paris between 1844 and 1864 after a particular 1831 event. Name/describe the event.

## QUESTION 3

The term 'cathedral' comes from cathedra, a characteristically raised throne reserved for the \_\_\_\_\_, denoting this individual's authority in Catholic

Christianity. Perhaps its most famous form is in the Cathedra Petri in Rome. Fill in the blank.

## QUESTION 4

Between the 14th century and 1766, the only clocks at the Notre-Dame de Paris were in the form of two \_\_\_\_\_. These devices measured the passage of time by allowing water to flow into or out of a vessel, with its volume denoting the time. Their name in Ancient Greece means 'water thief'. Fill in the blank.

## QUESTION 5

Until November 1789, the Notre-Dame de Paris belonged to the Catholic Church, but a particular event moved its ownership to the state of France in that year. In 1905, the French government allowed the Catholic Church to use the cathedral for religious purposes forever. Name the event.



## Visual question:

This is a depiction at the cathedral of a mythological bird that, in antiquity, was associated with witches and ill omen. Name the bird.

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. According to India's national calendar, this is the first day of the year. **Ans: March 22, and for leap year March 21**

2. The Calendar Reform Committee in 1952 was headed by this person. **Ans: Professor Meghnad Saha**

3. The different calendars the committee examined before selecting the Vikram Samvat. **Ans: 32. Thirty were from different States of the country, one was the lunar Hijri Islamic calendar and another was the solar Gregorian calendar.**

4. This Iranian poet and philosopher devised the rules for a leap year. **Ans: Omar Khayyam**

5. The unified Saka Calendar was adopted with effect from March 21, 1956 A.D. Saka refers to this. **Ans: Saka refers to Scythians who ruled from Ujjain between 130-395 CE**

Visual: Name this American movie. **Ans: Ocean's Eleven**

**Early Birds:** Nobody got all the answers correct

## Word of the day

## Zeitgeist:

the spirit of the time; the spirit characteristic of an age or generation

## Synonyms:

feel, flavour, spirit, tone

## Usage:

The novel captures the zeitgeist of the late 1960s.

## Pronunciation:

newsthw.live/zeitgeistpro

## International Phonetic Alphabet:

/tsaɪ̯t̪gaɪ̯st̪/, /zɑɪ̯t̪gaɪ̯st̪/

## From Page One



Punjabi singer Babbu Maan meets farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal on Wednesday. PTI

## Will accept SC decision on Dallewal stir: Centre

The committee, headed by former High Court judge Justice Nawab Singh had invited the SKM to join its meeting on Friday. "The SKM in principle does not accept intervention of the court because the farmers are fighting on policy issues with the Union government and hence the court has no role to play. In this context, SKM expresses its inability to accept the invitation for the discussion by the SC-appointed High Powered Committee," the SKM said in a statement.

Mr. Pandher asked the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab to pass a resolution in favour of the farmers' demands in the Assembly. "Besides, the AAP government should reject the Centre's draft National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing," he added.

A group of 101 farmers had made attempts to restart their foot march from Punjab to the national capital, New Delhi, on December 6, December 8 and December 14. However, in the wake of elaborate security arrangements with multi-layer barricades put in place by the Haryana government, their foot march had come to a halt. Mr. Dallewal has been on a fast unto death since November 26 in support of the farmers' demands at Khanauri.

## Net GST growth slumps to 3.3% in December

Overall growth in net GST revenues in the first nine months of 2024-25 now stands at 8.6%, with collections of almost ₹14.45 lakh crore, slowing from the 9.2% growth recorded till November. The Centre has panned in an expected growth of 11% in its Budget arithmetic for this year.

The GST kitty growth is in line "with the bit of a slowdown in GDP growth", reckoned Abhishek Jain, indirect tax head and partner at KPMG. "As it is expected that the GDP growth will inch north in this quarter, the GST collections should mirror the same," he said.

Domestic transactions grew about 8%, as four States recorded a contraction in GST revenues compared to seven in November. Arunachal Pradesh remained the worst hit for the third straight month, with revenues dropping 27% in December, followed by Meghalaya (-12%).

## Concerns in large States

Manipur reported yet another month of revenue slippage, with the pace of contraction doubling to 8% from 4% in November. GST receipts also dropped 6% in Andhra Pradesh, from a 10% decline in November.

Fourteen States reported 8% or higher growth, led by Sikkim (30%), Haryana (28%) and Punjab (22%), but a dozen of them reported lower growth, including large States like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh (up 1% each), Bihar (2%), West Bengal (3%) and Gujarat (4%).

"The below 5% increase in major states like U.P., Bihar, W.B., Gujarat, and M.P. would be an area of concern for policy makers who may be considering the sectoral breakdown of the GST collections in these States to understand the reasons for the same," remarked M.S. Mani, partner at Deloitte India.

## Hindu bodies differ on shirt rule in temples

NSS general secretary G. Sukumaran Nair said there was "no uniformity" in such practices in the Kerala temples managed by the organisation. It is more of a customary practice and would be better if left to the individual temple authorities to decide, he said.

S. Radhakrishnan Potty, State general secretary of the Akhila Kerala Thanthri Mandalam, an organisation of Kerala Brahmin priests, said such practices were part of the pledge jointly taken by devotees, priests and those with the customary temple rights at the time of installation of the deity, which can be seldom modified.

P.S. Prasanth, president of the Travancore Devaswom Board, said while men were allowed to enter temples like Sabarimala wearing shirts, it was not the case with some major temples namely the ones at Karikakkam and Ettumanoor. The board would discuss the issue shortly, he said.

V. K. Vijayan, president, the Guruvayur Devaswom Board, said the decision to allow women wearing churidar to enter the Guruvayur Srikrishna Temple was met with resistance when introduced a decade ago. However, the dress code was modified in tune with the changing times. Men still had to take off their shirts to enter Guruvayur Temple and the issue had not come up before the board, he said.

## After 40 years, Bhopal gas tragedy toxic waste leaves city

The spill-free trucks carrying 337 tonnes of chemical waste are expected to reach Pithampur early today; the waste will be incinerated between a period of three and nine months, says official

**Mehul Malpani**  
BHOJPAL

Twelve trucks carrying toxic waste from the Union Carbide factory site in Bhopal left for the Pithampur industrial area near Indore at 9.05 p.m. on Wednesday amid heavy security. The waste was lying at the site for 40 years after the tragedy that claimed the lives of more than 5,000 people.

While the police had cordoned off the nearby area and blocked traffic, bystanders on the sides could be heard saying, "Bhopal's garbage has left finally."

The spill-free trucks carrying 337 tonnes of chemical waste were expected to reach Pithampur early on Thursday. The authorities had prepared a 250-km green corridor for movement of the trucks, which are expected to reach Pithampur with no stops in



Police personnel deployed during the collection of toxic waste for disposal from the Bhopal's Union Carbide factory. FILE PHOTO

between. The unloading of the waste will begin immediately.

According to authorities, the packing and loading of the waste began on December 28 by more than 100 specially trained workers under the supervision of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board (MPPCB) and various scientific experts.

With the process of dis-

posal beginning with the packing of waste on December 28, it will now be incinerated at a Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facility (TSDF) in Pithampur of Dhar district, according to Swatantra Kumar Singh, Director, Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Directorate.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, he said that the waste will be incinerated between a period of three and nine months. The authorities

will first incinerate a small batch, burning it at a high temperature using diesel, and examine its impact on the local environment.

On December 3, the Madhya Pradesh High Court had set a four-week deadline for the authorities for the disposal of the toxic waste. A Division Bench had pulled up authorities over the delay in the disposal of the waste and had asked the Chief Secretary to appear before the court in case of failure in adherence to the deadline. The government now plans to submit an affidavit on the development in the court on January 3. The next hearing is on January 6.

Meanwhile, locals and activists in Pithampur and Indore have been protesting the shifting of the waste as they fear that it could pollute the local environment and waterbodies. The government has, however, refuted the claims.



Zeenat had been keeping forest officials on their toes for over three weeks.

largely a result of inbreeding.

Under the supervision of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, Zeenat, and another tiger Jamuna, were released into the Similipal Tiger Reserve.

Zeenat was released into the wild following 10 days of acclimatisation in the core area of Similipal's northern division. The dispersing female tiger, in process of establishing her territory, strayed into Jharkhand and then West Bengal in the first week of December. After weeks of hide and seek, Zeenat was captured in West Bengal on December 29.

## Tiger released back into Odisha's Similipal reserve

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BHUBANESWAR

Zeenat, the three-year-old tiger that had been wandering for three weeks near the boundaries of three States before being brought to Odisha's Similipal Tiger Reserve, was released into a soft enclosure in the reserve's southern division on Wednesday, marking a new home for the big cat as the New Year begins.

Zeenat was translocated from the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra to the Similipal Tiger Reserve on November 14 as part of a strategy to boost the genetic diversity of the reserve's big cat population.

It has been a matter of concern that a significant number of tigers in Similipal displayed pseudo-melanism, characterised by black stripes that are much more pronounced than the typical colouration of a Royal Bengal Tiger. This is

## Report FCRA violations by NGOs, govt. asks CAS

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Wednesday notified that chartered accountants filing audit returns on behalf of NGOs need to specify if the organisation violated provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA) or not.

The Act requires a CA to certify if an association or NGO has utilised foreign contribution received for the purposes it was registered for and the annual statements are to be uploaded on the FCRA portal.

In a December 31 notification, the Ministry said that CAs will have to mention the name, email address, and registration number of the auditor while issuing the audit certificate and specify if the NGO has "violated the provisions of FCRA, 2010 or rules made thereunder or notifications issued thereunder," with the details of the violations.

The auditors will also have to specify if the NGO has not made any violation.

"I have examined all relevant books and records, including the items mentioned in column 8 of FC-4, and to the best of my knowledge and belief (name of the person/ association) has not violated any provisions of the FCRA, thereunder or notifications issued thereunder," the CAs will have to specify. The notification amends the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules, 2011.

A member of a voluntary group said the Home Ministry notification will make it more difficult for NGOs who are critical of the government to find auditors to file returns on their behalf. "Even if you find an FCRA donor, CAs will be scared to prepare certificates on the behalf of NGOs who are perceived to be not in the good books of the government," said the member.

Earlier in 2021, the Ministry advised chartered accountants to ensure that foreign funds are received and utilised by NGOs "within the four corners of law".

## Scorpene-class submarine among 3 frontline platforms to be inducted by Navy on Jan. 15

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy is set to commission three frontline platforms into service at the Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, on January 15. These are the sixth and last Scorpene-class submarine, *Vaghsheer*; the fourth and last of the Project-15B stealth destroyers, *Surat*; and the lead ship of the Project-17A stealth frigates, *Nilgiri*.

"This historic event will provide a significant boost to the Indian Navy's combat potential while underscoring the country's pre-eminent status in indigenous shipbuilding. The successful commissioning of these advanced warships and submarines highlights the rapid progress made in warship de-

sign and construction, cementing India's position as a global leader in defence manufacturing," the Navy said in a statement.

All three platforms had been manufactured at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd. (MDL), Mumbai. While the two ships are indigenously designed, the Scorpene-class submarines are manufactured in India under licence from Naval Group of France.

*Nilgiri*, the lead ship of Project-17A, is a major advancement over the Shivalik-class frigates, incorporating significant stealth features and reduced radar signatures through state-of-the-art technology. The Project-15B destroyer, *Surat*, is the culmination of the follow-on class to the Kolkata-class (Project-15A)

Naval boost: The sixth Scorpene-class submarine *Vaghsheer*.

destroyers, featuring substantial improvements in design and capabilities. Both ships were designed by the Navy's Warship Design Bureau and equipped with advanced sensors and weapon packages developed primarily in India or through strategic collaborations with leading global

manufacturers, the Navy stated.

## Aviation facilities

"These vessels have undergone rigorous trials, including machinery, hull, fire-fighting, and damage-control assessments, as well as proving all navigation and communication

## Retiring paramilitary personnel may get honorary senior rank

**Vijaita Singh**

NEW DELHI

Amid delays in promotion, the government is mulling honorary senior ranks for eligible Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel a month before they retire in order to "boost their morale", according to Anish Dayal Singh, who retired as Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Director-General on December 31.

Mr. Singh, in conversation with CRPF officers on the last day in office, said that jawans and officers who benefit from the Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) but have not been granted promotion due to constraints of the organising principle of the security force may use the insignia for the next senior rank on their uniforms a month before they retire. For example, if a person was retiring on the constable rank and was eligible to be promoted as head constable, he or she may use the latter rank.

"For retiring personnel, to display the senior rank on his uniform to his family members and people in his village, it will be a morale

## Four 'terrorist associates' arrested at Tral in J&amp;K

**The Hindu Bureau**

SRINAGAR

Four local people, described as "terrorist associates" by the police, were arrested at Tral in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday.

According to the Jammu and Kashmir police, the four arrested youth were "terrorist associates" of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) in the Tral area.

They were involved in "providing logistics support and transportation of arms and ammunition to active terrorists of proscribed terror outfit JeM in Tral and Awantipora areas". The arrested youth were identified as Mudasir Ahmad Naik, Umar Nazir Sheikh, Inayat Firdoos Rather and Salman Nazir Lone, all residents of Tral.

CAPF personnel are entitled to at least three promotions during service. In the absence of promotion, the MACP ensures financial benefits of the next senior rank on completion of 10, 20 and 30 years of service.

According to the proposal, the promotion or the senior rank will reflect in the service records and personnel will be given the pay eligible, a senior CRPF official said.

"Incriminating materials have been recovered from their possession," the police said.

Meanwhile, in Srinagar, one of the oldest security bunkers in the city has been dismantled, in view of the improved security situation. The bunker was constructed by the BSF in the early 1990s.

## Centre, States roped in 54,800 to monitor online content: report

**Vijaita Singh**

NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs and various State governments have roped in around 54,800 persons as volunteers against cyber crime to flag unlawful content on the Internet, according to the Ministry's annual report for the year 2023-24.

The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry launched the programme in 2020 aiming to "bring together citizens with passion to serve the nation on a single platform and contribute in fight against cybercrime in the country."

According to I4C, the Cyber Volunteer Framework enables citizens to enrol as cyber volunteers for reporting unlawful content, dissemination of cyber hygiene, and as cyber expert to aid law enforcement.

The report stated that 54,833 cyber volunteers have been enrolled, including 22,942 for reporting unlawful content, 22,071 awareness promoters and 9,819 experts.

The Internet Freedom

## 'Any material against sovereignty and integrity of India, against defence of India' can be flagged as unlawful content

Foundation (IFF), a digital liberties organisation, had criticised the scheme stating that it will lead to a "culture of surveillance and constant suspicion in society creating potential social distrust."

A student at a Central university in Gujarat who volunteers with the I4C, said that during the G-20 conference last year in India, he along with others flagged several cyber-attacks on government websites and servers.

The volunteers can register through the portal www.cybercrime.gov.in and flag unlawful content which has been categorised as "any material against sovereignty and integrity of India, against defence of India, and against friendly relations with foreign States". It also includes content aimed at disturbing public order.

Earlier in 2021, the Ministry advised chartered accountants to ensure that foreign funds are received and utilised by NGOs "within the four corners of law".

# SpaDeX first of many as ISRO prepares for Chandrayaan-4

At various points during the moon mission, the modules will undergo a series of docking and undocking manoeuvres before finally transporting a canister of lunar soil back to the earth; docking is a crucial technology for India to master

**T.S. Subramanian**  
CHENNAI

There will be a series of space-docking experiments before the Indian Space Research Organisation embarks on its Chandrayaan-4 mission to bring soil samples from the moon to earth, the ISRO has said.

On Monday, the C60 mission of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) placed two satellites, each weighing 220 kg, in orbit. They will rendezvous and dock with each other as part of the ISRO's first Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX).

ISRO Chairman S. Somanath said "the nominal time" for the docking "will be approximately January 7". He added, "The two SpaDeX satellites have



**Important steps:** The ISRO launching the PSLV-C60 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on Monday. ANI

moved one behind the other, so over a period of time, they will pick up further distance. The distance will increase by 20 km over the next few days and then the rendezvous and docking process will start."

For Chandrayaan-4, the ISRO will launch the mis-

sion's modules in two Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM-3) rockets. At various points during the mission, the modules will undergo a series of docking and undocking manoeuvres before finally transporting a canister of lunar soil safely back to earth.

Mr. Somanath said on Tuesday, "2025 will be an exciting year as the ISRO will launch four GSLV rockets, three PSLV launches as well as an SSLV launch." (GSLV is short for Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle and SSLV for Small Satellite Launch Vehicle).

## Key for future missions

Docking is a crucial technology for India to master for the Chandrayaan-4 as well as its forthcoming orbital Bharatiya Antarksh Station, expected to be ready by 2035, and for its goal to send an Indian astronaut to the moon.

Chandrayaan-4 Study Director P. Veeramuthuvel said, "Docking is important for all future missions of the ISRO because you cannot launch everything in one go. So you need

docking of modules in space.... There will be five modules in BAS, all of which require docking. This technology is crucial for bringing back the lunar soil samples and for India's constant presence in space."

The two satellites in the current SpaDeX mission are in a circular orbit 475 km above the earth. "At that height, the two satellites will be moving at a speed of 28,000 km an hour," said former ISRO Associate Director B.R. Guruprasad. "You must establish the orbit of both the satellites. To bring them together, you have to match their speeds. It is not easy to match and adjust their speeds precisely, make them come close to each other and then dock. There lies the challenge."

# Does RSS support BJP's 'wrongdoings', Kejriwal asks Mohan Bhagwat

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI



Arvind Kejriwal

ful" political behaviour.

"In the letter, Sachdeva made five specific requests for resolutions he hopes Kejriwal will adopt this year: 1. Stop taking false oaths on your children. 2. Stop playing with the sentiments of Delhi's women, elders, and religious communities by making false promises. 3. Apologise to Delhiites for encouraging alcohol consumption," the BJP said.

attention from his "shortcomings".

Mr. Kejriwal asked Mr. Bhagwat if the RSS supported the "large-scale" deletion of Purvanchali and Dalit votes by the party. "There are reports in the media that the RSS will seek votes for the BJP in the Delhi elections. Before this, people wanted to know from you if the RSS is supporting the wrongdoings of the BJP in the past few days," he said in his December 30 letter in Hindi.

Responding to the allegations, Delhi BJP chief Viresh Sachdeva wrote to Mr. Kejriwal on Wednesday, urging him to make a New Year resolution to give up "dishonest and deceptions".

The Congress criticised both sides. Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav said that if the BJP was distributing money to influence voters, and deleting names from the electoral rolls, then that was illegal and undemocratic, but added that the AAP chief should hold up a mirror to see the reflection of his own "misdeeds and unfulfilled promises".

## Cong. campaign on Gandhiji, Ambedkar to kick off tomorrow

### NEWS ANALYSIS

**Sandeep Phukan**  
NEW DELHI



Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge at the CWC meeting in Belagavi. P.K. BADIGER

## Jailed Katra protesters released, L-G asks panel to initiate talks

**The Hindu Bureau**  
JAMMU

Eighteen protesters, who were jailed over the street agitation against the Katra ropeway at Mata Vaishno Devi temple in Reasi, were

released on Wednesday, with Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha mandating a committee to initiate talks with the stakeholders.

Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner, Jam-

mu, said the panel would hold fresh talks with the stakeholders. "All the issues related to faith and the economy will be discussed," he said. Pilgrims welcomed the reopening of shops in Katra market.

**भारत सरकार GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
अंतरिक्ष विभाग DEPARTMENT OF SPACE  
इसरो नेतृत्व कांपनीसम्म ISRO PROPULSION COMPLEX  
महेन्द्रगढ़ी पो ओ MAHENDRAGARI PO  
तिरुनेलवेली जिला TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT- 627 133  
तमின்னாடு TAMIL NADU  
क्रय एवं भंडारण PURCHASE & STORES DIVISION

**१ अधिकारिक की अधिकारित सूचना से: आईपीआरसी/ सीटीई/ आईपीई/ इ.ओ.आई.-०१/२०२४-२५**

Notice Inviting Expression of Interest No.: IPRC/CTE/I/CET/EoI-01/2024-25

सं.प्र.क्र.प्र. / आईपीआरसी/सीटीई/आईपीई/ इ.ओ.आई.-०१/२०२४-२५  
Ref.HPS/IPRC/CTE/I/CET/EoI-01/2024-25 Date: 24 दिसंबर 2024

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प्रधान के राष्ट्रपति की ओ

## IN BRIEF



## Bhuvnesh Kumar takes charge as UIDAI CEO

Bhuvnesh Kumar took charge as the Chief Executive Officer of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), which administers Aadhaar, on Wednesday. Mr. Kumar, a 1995-batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre, is an Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, a post he will continue to hold after this appointment. Mr. Kumar succeeds Amit Agrawal, a 1993-batch IAS officer of the Chhattisgarh cadre, who was also MEITY Additional Secretary prior to his June 2023 appointment. Mr. Kumar has also served as a Joint Secretary at the Ministry.

## Five persons die inside well in Jharkhand's Hazaribag

Five persons died in Jharkhand's Hazaribag district, including four persons who tried to rescue a man from a well, the police said on Wednesday. The incident took place under Charhi police station limits when Sundar Karmali (27) entered a well to retrieve his bike, which he had pushed into it after a domestic dispute with his wife, Rupa Devi. "Karmali climbed down the well to retrieve his vehicle but did not return. Upon hearing Rupa's screams for help, four others attempted to rescue him, one after another, but all of them died inside the well," B.N. Prasad, the sub-divisional police officer of Bishnugarh said. PTI

## 24-year-old man from U.P. kills mother, four younger sisters to 'save their honour'

Ishita Mishra  
NEW DELHI

The Lucknow police on Wednesday arrested a 24-year-old man for allegedly murdering his mother and four sisters in a hotel in the city.

Soon after allegedly committing the crime in connivance with his father, the accused shot a video in which he said he had murdered them as he was helpless before the people of his locality and wanted to save the "honour" of the women.

Raveena Tyagi, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Central Lucknow, said the deceased had been identified as Alia, 9, Aksha, 16, Rahmeen, 18, and Alshia, 19, all sisters of Arshad, and his mother, Asma. She said that a preliminary inquiry had revealed that he

**Preliminary inquiry has revealed that he had taken the step because of domestic disputes, say police**

had taken the step because of domestic disputes. "Forensic teams have been deployed at the crime spot to collect evidence while a detailed probe has been launched," she added.

In the video, Arshad, who hails from Agra, said that the *bastiwale* (people of his locality) had committed "unimaginable atrocities" on him and his family to snatch his house.

Because his house was taken away, he and his family were forced to run from pillar to post, he said. "I have the documents of the house, which my family wanted to donate to a neighbour."

temple and [then later] convert to Hinduism," he said.

In the video, he named some people and accused them of being the land mafia and women traffickers. He urged Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to take strict action against them.

"Their plan was to get me and my father arrested in a fake case and then sell my sisters in Hyderabad. We wanted to save their honour..." he said.

The neighbours of the accused, whose house is located in the Tedhi Bagiya locality in Agra, denied the claims.

"Both Mohammad Badr and his son Mohammad Arshad used to create a ruckus every now and then and have fought with almost every person in the area," said Fatima Begum, a neighbour.

## Workshop on 'positive mind mastery' for students to be held online on Jan. 4 and 5

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

A workshop on "positive mind mastery" will be organised by MiTran Global on January 4 and 5 for students aged 11 to 17 and their parents. *The Hindu in School* is the media partner.

In today's world, negativity and challenges can loom large in the lives of young people. Self-doubt, anxiety, and the pressure to succeed can overwhelm them. Studies show that a positive mindset leads to better academic performance, improved mental health, and a more fulfilling life. The immersive workshop will help students overcome challenges and offer insights to parents on how they can offer support. The workshop will focus on equipping

both parents and teens with the skills needed to cultivate positivity, resilience, and goal-oriented behaviour. It will be held from 3.00 p.m. on January 4 and from 10.30 a.m. and 3 p.m. on January 5. Participants can choose any one slot. Parents must attend with their wards.

The workshop will discuss topics related to building accelerated learning methodologies, practical study strategies, handling peer pressure, negating digital influence, goal setting and visualisation, and affirmation.

Vidyashankar Guru, the co-founder and chief vision officer of MiTran Global, will conduct the workshop. He brings over two decades of experience in training students, teachers, and parents from 40 different nationalities.

The first 25 registered participants will receive a free eBook, *I Love Exams*, which will reinforce the principles discussed during the workshop and provide additional strategies to nurture potential.

To register, visit [hub.mitranglobal.com/services/pmmw](http://hub.mitranglobal.com/services/pmmw) or scan the QR code. For details, call 74832 62507 or email [positivity-hub@mitran-global.com](mailto:positivity-hub@mitran-global.com)

## School enrolment down by over a crore in 2023-24: report

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI



Over the past four years, the enrolment number has hovered around 26 crore.

ment Ratio, Net Enrolment Ratio, dropout rates and so on. Since 2022-23, more efforts have been put in accurately establishing student and teacher credentials to weed out duplicate or ghost entries for specific identification of beneficiaries for various educational schemes.

Apart from Aadhaar, a separate unique educational ID (EID) for every student has been created in the UDISE+ portal to cover each and every child under the ecosystem of UDISE+. Officials said. "Through the creation of unique student and teacher identities, credentials of individuals students and teachers in the education ecosystem can be established more accurately leading to weeding out of duplicate or ghost entries resulting in precise identification of beneficiaries for benefit transfers of Samagra Shiksha scheme, PM POSHAN Scheme, National Scholarship scheme etc. (and) can bring significant savings to government in future years," the report said. While in 2018-19,

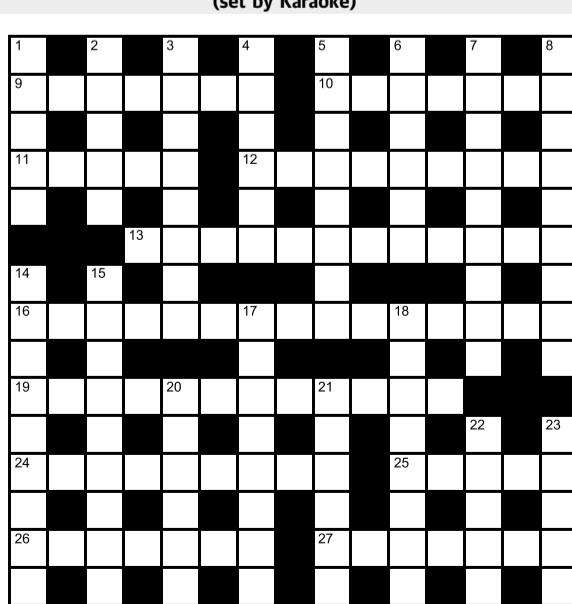
13.53 crore boys were enrolled, this saw a drop to 12.87 crore enrolments in 2023-24 a decrease of 4.87%, while enrolment of girls decreased from 12.49 crore in 2018-19 to 11.93 crore in 2023-24, a decrease of 4.48%.

States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra saw among the highest drop in enrolments. In 2018-19, Bihar reflected an enrolment of over 2.49 crore students which dropped to over 2.13 crore (a dip of over 35.65 lakh students) in the respective years UDISE+ report data.

Similarly, Uttar Pradesh had shown enrolment of 4.44 crore students in 2018-19 which dropped by 28.26 lakh to 4.16 crore in latest data. Maharashtra recorded a decrease of 18.55 lakh students from over 2.32 crore to 2.13 crore in the latest report.

THE CROSSWORD + 14372  
(set by Karaoke)

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



## Across

- 9 The spirit - film cut short after censor (7)
- 10 Learner wearing smiley embarrassingly, it indicates admission of oversight (5,2)
- 11 Moderate rent increase (3-2)
- 12 Honey, we never set out without valet at first (9)
- 13 Proverbially, union members do this without thinking... (5,2,5)

- 16 ...and feel sorry for a long time when they are free (6,2,7)
- 19 ...it's natural for people to make mistakes and perhaps ruin others name essentially (2,3,2,5)
- 24 He sells papers and latest books featuring Mahatma (9)
- 25 He comes back to endorse art world (5)
- 26 Resembling a slippery character, eleven occasionally go around to shoot revolutionary (3-4)
- 27 One in love affair primarily is working in communication channel (7)
- Down
- 1 Fatal disease of middle ear part showing up (5)
- 2 Trouble brewing up for affiliates (5)
- 3 Clergyman takes drink at flat (8)
- 4 I am told old man's spring occasionally spouts hot water (6)
- 5 Ice on the ebb in the backdrop is unusual! (8)
- 6 Problem of girl ends with burning (6)
- 7 Amusing? My bad! It's a place for workout (9)
- 8 Extremely venturesome terrier, trained to find and fetch game for hunter (9)
- 14 One who stakes claim to the throne makes advance submission (9)
- 15 "Veronica, cigarette time" Spooner says (9)
- 17 Served Rwandese in distress (8)
- 18 It is likely that misplaced diary listed namesakes at the centre (1,4,3)
- 20 He works for band touring extremely around Rio with friends heartily (6)
- 21 Inconceivable. Couldn't start off miserably! (6)
- 22 Seize auditor's balance (5)
- 23 Country's cups and saucers (5)

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

## FAITH

## Like the earth and seeds

Yudhishtira asks Bhishma which is more important – vidhi or effort, said P.T. Seshadri in a discourse. Bhishma replies that there was once a discussion between Brahma and Vasistha on the subject. Both vidhi and duty have their place in our lives, explains Bhishma. It is like the connection between seeds and the earth. The earth has been ploughed and manured, and is ready for cultivation. But if we do not sow seeds, can we get crops? We must continue to do our duties. We often make the mistake of thinking that because we have faced something terrible in our lives, everything else in future is going to turn out the same way.

Some problems that we now face are obviously due to some bad karma of ours. They are the results of something wrong that we did in a previous birth. But that does not mean that no matter what we do, we will always end up facing disaster. That is why jnani tell us to disregard misfortune and good fortune, to never see anything in positive or negative terms, but to simply do our duties. Jatayu, the eagle, who gave up his life trying to save Sita, is an example of one who did his duty under the most trying circumstances. Ravana was carrying away Sita, who cried out to Jatayu to save her. Ravana's might was well known. He was considered almost invincible. Yet, Jatayu did not think on these lines. He felt that it was far better to die than to witness such adharma. He tried to advise Ravana about the heinousness of what he was doing. And when that produced no result, he began to attack Ravana, and was cut down by the asura. Thus Jatayu went down fighting for dharma. He is a classic example of a person who did his duty, even if it meant giving up his life.

## Solution to previous puzzle

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

## Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

**IN BRIEF****Tata Consulting Engineers buys U.S. CDI Engineering**

Tata Consulting Engineers (TCE), a design, engineering and project management consultancy, acquired CDI Engineering Solutions (CDI), formerly Comprehensive Designers, Inc. (CDI), a U.S.-based design engineering firm, for an unspecified amount. "The addition of CDI significantly strengthens our ability to deliver impactful engineering solutions across industries and geographies," said Tata Consulting Engineers chairman L. Krishnakumar.

**₹2000 notes worth ₹6,691 cr. yet to be returned: RBI data**

The total value of ₹2000 banknotes in circulation, which stood at ₹3.56 lakh crore at the close of business on May 19, 2023, when the withdrawal of ₹2000 banknotes was announced, has declined to ₹6,691 crore at the close of business on December 31, 2024, as per updated data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). "Thus, 98.12% of the ₹2000 banknotes in circulation as on May 19, 2023, have since been returned," the RBI said on Wednesday.

**Viacom18 Media is now a direct subsidiary of Reliance**

Viacom18 Media has become a direct subsidiary of Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) following the conversion of over 24.61 crore compulsorily convertible preference shares (CCPS) into equity shares. Earlier, the firm was a material subsidiary of Network18 Media & Investments Ltd., a RIL subsidiary. RIL earlier held 70.49% stake on fully diluted basis. Post conversion, RIL holds 83.88% of Viacom18's total equity share capital. PTI

**Cabinet extends DAP special package, crop insurance to stay****The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI



The Union Cabinet extended the one-time special subsidy on fertilizer Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) at a rate of ₹3,500 per metric tonne from January 1, 2025 till further orders.

The Cabinet also approved the continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme till 2025-26.

Briefing on the Cabinet decisions, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw said the package for DAP will be over and above the approved nutrient-based subsidy and it will ensure the smooth availability of DAP to the farmers at affordable price.

**Budgetary need**

Mr. Vaishnaw added that the tentative budgetary requirement for the special package on DAP would be approximately up to ₹3,850 crore.

The Centre is ensuring DAP availability at affordable prices, said Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

tured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme till 2025-26 is ₹69,515.71 crore, Mr. Chouhan said.

"The aim of this decision is to provide risk coverage to farmers against natural calamities. The Cabinet approved setting up of Fund for Innovation and Technology (FIAT) with an allocation of ₹824.77 crore for technology improvements in insurance schemes," he added.

**Auto weather stations**  
He said the Weather Information and Network Data System (WINDS) for augmenting weather data through automatic weather stations will be implemented in 2024-25.

The Agriculture Minister said the Cabinet has also approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on trade of non-Basmati white rice between the Ministry of Cooperation of India and the Ministry of Trade of Indonesia. "This MoU is for trading of one million metric tonne of non-basmati white rice annually based on production and international prices," Mr. Chouhan explained.

**New Year gift'**

Union Minister Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shivaraj Singh Chouhan, later told reporters at a press conference that the new year should bring happiness and prosperity in the lives of farmers.

The total allocation for the *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana* and Restruc-

**Business****Maruti, Toyota lead Dec. auto sales**

Passenger car market leader Maruti Suzuki sold a total of 1,78,248 units to dealers while Toyota Kirloskar despatched 29,529 units, reflecting a 30% and 29% uptick, respectively; Tata Motors' domestic sales rise 1% but is optimistic on passenger cars

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

**J**apanese car firms Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. (MSIL) and Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM), who are in partnership, reported spectacular performance in December, registering wholesales growth of 30% and 29%, respectively.

Indian SUV maker Mahindra & Mahindra reported 16% year-on-year (YoY) growth in total sales while Tata Motors logged 1% rise. South Korea's Hyundai Mo-



**Terra firma:** Maruti Suzuki's wholesales registered a growth of 30% over December 2023. REUTERS

tor India saw its wholesales drop 2.4% YoY.

"We are observing a growing shift of consumer

preference towards vehicles offering sustainability, value proposition of dependability quotient, en-

hanced safety and better resale value which is boosting our sales," said Sabari Manohar, VP, sales-service-unit car business, TKM.

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. sold 69,768 units, including 41,424 SUVs. SUV sales grew 18% YoY the company said. Exports surged 70% to 3,092 units.

Tata Motors Ltd. reported total domestic sales of 76,599 units, up 1% YoY. This includes commercial vehicle sales of 33,875 units and passenger vehicle (PV) sales of 44,289 units.

"Looking ahead, we re-

main optimistic about the outlook for the PV industry. With multiple product launches, innovations and a strengthened multi-powertrain strategy, Tata Motors is well poised for further growth in CY2025," said Shailesh Chandra, MD, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility.

Honda Cars India said it sold a total of 9,460 units in December compared with 11,651 units a year ago.

JSW MG Motor India logged YoY growth of 55%, with sales of 7,516 units.

**MARKETS****MARKET WATCH**

	WEDNESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	78,507	0.47
US Dollar	85.64	0.00
Gold	79,390	0.56

**NIFTY 50**

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2554.85	+26.20
Adani Ports	1218.70	-12.40
Apollo Hosp.	7369.65	-73.30
Asian Paints	2304.65	+23.30
Axis Bank	1071.80	+7.10
Bajaj Auto	8740.55	-58.05
Bajaj Finserv	1576.40	+8.30
Bajaj Finance	6935.30	+12.30
Bharat Elec.	293.90	0.75
Bharti Airtel	1595.70	+7.95
BLPL	295.30	+2.85
Britannia Ind.	4794.75	+32.00
Cipla	1529.10	+0.10
Coal India	386.40	+2.25
Dr Reddy's Lab.	1369.00	+19.50
Eicher Motors	4885.30	+63.40
Grasim Ind.	2442.15	-0.55
HCL Tech	1911.95	+5.45
HFDC Bank	1782.75	+9.90
HFDC Life	617.20	+0.15
Hero MotoCorp	4184.35	+23.75
Hindalco	592.95	+9.50
Hind Unilever	2322.10	+4.75
ICICI Bank	1283.65	+2.00
IndusInd Bank	969.40	+9.25
Infosys	1882.50	+2.50
ITC	483.95	+0.30
JSW Steel	905.45	+3.95
Kotak Bank	1788.40	+2.35
L&T	3667.50	+59.85
M&M	3082.00	+74.90
Maruti Suzuki	11208.30	+349.90
NestleIndia	2169.25	+0.80
NTPC	333.65	+0.30
ONGC	236.55	+2.30
PowerGrid Corp.	310.40	+1.70
Reliance Ind.	1221.25	+5.80
SBI Life	1400.40	+10.00
State Bank	793.20	+1.75
Shriram Finance	2918.65	+29.50
Sun Pharma	1889.95	+3.60
TataConsumerProduct	920.30	+5.60
Tata Motors	749.25	+9.10
Tata Steel	136.74	+1.31
TCS	4112.85	+17.65
Tech Mahindra	1703.85	+2.35
Titan	3253.85	+0.70
Trent Ltd.	7068.05	+55.30
UltraTech Cement	11447.00	+20.65
Wipro	300.30	+1.55

**Anil Ambani firm's Sasan Power repays \$150 million****The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

Sasan Power Ltd., a subsidiary of Reliance Power Ltd., said it has made a bullet payment of \$150 million to IIFCL, U.K., fulfilling its debt obligation on December 31, 2024.

"This repayment will bolster Sasan Power's debt coverage metrics, improve liquidity, and enhance its credit rating," Reliance Power said in a filing.

Sasan Power operates a 3960 MW ultra mega power plant at Sasan in M.P. and has a captive coal mining capacity of 20 MTPA.

**EXCHANGE RATES**

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	85.45	85.77
Euro	88.45	88.81
British Pound	106.99	107.43
Japanese Yen (100)	54.36	54.59
Chinese Yuan	11.71	11.75
Swiss Franc	94.14	94.54
Singapore Dollar	62.55	62.85
Canadian Dollar	59.40	59.64
Malaysian Ringgit	19.09	19.18
Australian Dollar	52.87	53.08

Source: Indian Bank

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on January 01

CURRENT DATE FORM OF CONTRACT: LUMP SUM - TWO COVER SYSTEM (Pre-Qualification and Price Tender) R.C.No.341/2024/E3/Dated:30.12.2024

The Joint Commissioner/Executive Officer, Arulmigu Subramanya swamy Temple, Tiruttani, Taluk, Tiruvallur district is inviting e-tenders (Two cover system) from registered, live, class of qualified contractors of Tamilnadu Government Departments / State Government undertakings / through Official Tendering Website (<https://tntenders.gov.in>) of Tamil Nadu Government. Important details, bidding document and revision if any obtained only from website <https://tntenders.gov.in>

SI. No	Name of work	Tender value Rs. Lakh	EMD Amount Rs	Period of work
1	To the devotees to Arulmigu Subramanya Swamy Thirukkoli, Tiruttanai (Phase I)	9695.00	48,58,000/-	18 Months
Eligible Class of Contractor	:	Registered, live, 1 <sup>st</sup> class of qualified contractors of Tamilnadu Government Departments/State Government undertakings		
Ernest Money Deposit and cost of tender documents to be credited by way of demand draft in favour of	:	Joint Commissioner / Executive officer Arulmigu Subramanya swamy Temple Tiruttani. (Through Online only)		
1. e-Tender documents can be downloaded at free of cost from – 09.01.2025 to 12.02.2025 upto 5.00 pm.				
2. e-Tender documents will be uploaded upto – 13.02.2025 upto 1.00 pm.				
3. e-Tender (Pre qualification) Opening date and time – 13.02.2025 at 04.00 pm.				

K.Ramani B.A.B.L. Joint Commissioner / Executive officer DIPR/ 5738/TENDER/2024 Members of Trustees G.Usharavi, G.Mohanan, V.SureshBabu, M.Nagan

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HINDU RELIGIOUS CHARITABLE ENDOWMENTS ARULMIGU SUBRAMANIYA SWAMY TEMPLE, TIRUTTANI THIRUVALLUR DISTRICT e-TENDER NOTICE FORM OF CONTRACT: LUMP SUM – TWO COVER SYSTEM (Pre-Qualification and Price Tender) R.C.No.341/2024/E3/Dated:30.12.2024

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SI. No	Name of work	Tender value Rs. Lakh	EMD Amount Rs	Period of work


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**ABIDJAN**

French forces to withdraw this month, says Ivory Coast President



Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara on Tuesday announced the withdrawal of French troops in January 2025, marking a significant reduction in military ties with the former colonial power. This decision reflects a broader trend in West Africa, where countries like Mali and Burkina Faso have also expelled French forces. AFP

**SEOUL**

Black box data extracted in South Korea plane crash investigation



Grieving relatives of the South Korea plane crash victims visited the site on New Year's Day to pay their respects. Officials confirmed that data from one black box has been extracted as part of the investigation into the crash, which killed 179 of the 181 people on board the Jeju Air Boeing 737-800. AP

**TAIPEI**

Taiwan President vows to boost the island's defence Budget



In his New Year's address, Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te emphasised the need to bolster Taiwan's defences against increasing Chinese threats, asserting that Taiwan is vital to global democracy. He called for a stronger defence Budget to ensure security, urging all citizens to protect Taiwan's democracy. AP

**ISLAMABAD**

Pak. begins its two-year tenure as non-permanent member of UNSC



Pakistan has commenced its two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on Wednesday, with Ambassador Munir Akram saying that Pakistan will adopt an "active and constructive" approach to tackle global challenges. The country was elected with 182 votes. PTI

## Newborns in Gaza dying from winter cold: medics

Residents face shortages of food, fuel, and medicine, with the UN warning of an imminent collapse of the healthcare system; seven children died from the cold within the span of a week

**Agence France-Presse**

DEIR AL-BALAH

**Y**ahya al-Batran clutched the tiny clothes of his dead newborn son Jumaa, just days after the baby died from the cold in their tent in war-torn Gaza.

"We are watching our children die before our eyes," said the 44-year-old.

Their baby was one of the seven children who died from the cold within the span of a week, the Hamas-run territory's Health Ministry said on Monday.

"We fled the bombing from Beit Lahia, only for them to die from the cold here?" said the child's mother Noura al-Batran,



**Frozen hands:** Yahya al-Batran grieves as he holds the body of his 20-day-old son Jumaa who died from hypothermia. AP

referring to their home town in northern Gaza.

The 38-year-old is still recovering from giving birth prematurely to Jumaa and his surviving twin brother, Ali, who is being

treated in an intensive care unit at a hospital in southern Gaza.

Like hundreds of others now living in a date palm orchard, they have struggled to keep warm and dry

amid heavy rain and temperatures that have dropped as low as eight degrees Celsius.

Like thousands of other families enduring dire conditions, they face shortages of food, fuel, and medicine, with the UN warning of an imminent collapse of the healthcare system.

In southern Gaza's Khan Yunis, Mahmoud al-Fasih said he found his infant daughter, Seela, "frozen from the cold" in their small tent near al-Mawasi beach, where they were displaced from Gaza City.

He rushed her to the hospital in the area that Israel has designated a "humanitarian zone", but she was already dead.

Israeli strikes kill 12 in Gaza as war grinds into New Year

**Associated Press**

DEIR AL-BALAH

Israeli air strikes in the Gaza Strip killed at least 12 Palestinians, mostly women and children, officials said on Wednesday, as the nearly 15-month conflict continued into the new year.

A strike hit a home in Jabalya, killing seven, while additional strikes in Bureij and Khan Younis resulted in more casualties.

Since the war began on October 7, 2023, over 45,000 Palestinians have died, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The Israeli military claims it targets militants but acknowledges civilian deaths due to Hamas operating in residential areas.

Efforts for a ceasefire have stalled amid ongoing violence.

## 'Bangladesh saw a surge in mob killings last year'

**Agence France-Presse**

DHAKA



Protesters during a rally in Dhaka in August 2024. AP

Mob killings in Bangladesh surged after the August protests last year that toppled the rule of ex-leader Sheikh Hasina, three rights groups said on Wednesday.

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a leading Bangladeshi human rights organisation, said it had recorded at least 128 people killed by mobs in 2024.

Of those, 96 took place from August onwards – meaning roughly three-quarters of the killings occurred after Ms. Hasina left the country.

"Lynchings and mob beatings reflect the growing intolerance and radicalism in society," said senior ASK member Abu Ahmed Faijul Kabir.

Two other human rights organisations reported si-

her former ruling Awami League party.

Beauty Ara described how her husband Abdullah Al Masud – a former leader of the student wing of Ms. Hasina's Awami League – was beaten to death on September 7. "I had just given birth, but I rushed to the morgue to see my husband," Ms. Ara said.

Masud had already been beaten in a previous attack, when he lost a leg. "We filed a police case, but there has been no progress so far," Ms. Ara added.

ASK also said it had recorded 21 extrajudicial killings in 2024 – a trademark tactic used by security forces during Ms. Hasina's leadership, when hundreds of her political opponents disappeared.

Twelve killings happened after Ms. Hasina was deposed.

## Saudi Arabia starts humanitarian 'air bridge' to assist Syria

**Agence France-Presse**

RIYADH

Saudi Arabia on Wednesday launched a humanitarian air bridge to Syria, delivering food, shelter and medical supplies, the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

The air bridge, established by the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief), aims to "alleviate the effects of the difficult conditions currently facing the Syrian people", SPA said. The air

## Bangladesh Army chief calls for national consensus, tones down anti-India rhetoric

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI

bridge operates by sending cargo planes directly from King Khalid International Airport to Damascus, Syria, carrying vital supplies needed by the population.

Others, including the European Union and Ukraine, have also announced aid for Syria, where the United Nations said seven out of 10 people need support.

Riyadh's air bridge will "be followed by a land bridge later," said Abdullah al-Rabeeah, the head of KSrelief, SPA reported.

while taking decisions.

"We want a peaceful environment. Peace and stability is very important now for Bangladesh's economy and social development. Without these two factors, there can be no development or good governance. That is why we need to restore tolerance among ourselves. An environment of national consensus must be created," Gen. Waker-uz-Zaman said, touching upon some of the critical issues in the country.

The situation escalated on December 31, 2024,



General Waker-uz-Zaman

when student activists sought to abolish the 1972 Constitution, prompting backlash even from Opposition leaders like Mirza Abbas, who labelled such calls as "fascist".

Gen. Waker-uz-Zaman also cooled down the heated anti-India rhetoric that was heard in the student-led "unity rally" of December 31. "India is an important neighbour [of Bangladesh]. We are dependent on India in many ways," he said.

Gen. Waker-uz-Zaman pledged full support to the interim government led by Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus but, significantly, declared explicitly that the restoration of institutions in the country would depend on a politically empowered government.

## S. Korea's presidential aides offer to resign amid political crisis

**Reuters**

SEOUL

Senior aides to South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol offered to resign en masse on Wednesday, a day after his office expressed regret over acting President Choi Sang-mok's approval of two new judges to a court set to decide Mr. Yoon's fate.

Mr. Yoon's chief of staff, policy chief, national security adviser and special adviser on foreign affairs and security, as well as all

other senior secretaries, tendered their resignation, his office said in a statement, without elaborating.

Mr. Choi said he would not accept their resignation as the priority now was to focus on improving the economy and stabilising state affairs, his office said. The aides had repeatedly expressed their intent to step down in the wake of Mr. Yoon's botched attempt to declare martial law, but their resignations have not been accepted, said a presidential official.

## Sport

### U.S. powers into last four; Zverev injured as holder Germany exits



**On the ball:** Fritz was in top form against Zhizhen. AP

#### UNITED CUP

**Agence France-Presse**

PERTH

Coco Gauff and Taylor Fritz powered the U.S. tournament winner two years ago, into the semifinals of the United Cup mixed team event on Wednesday.

In the first singles match, Gauff got the ball rolling for her team with a gritty 7-6(4), 6-2 win over Zhang Shuai. Fritz then made sure of victory by edging a tight contest with Zhang Zhizhen 6-4, 6-4.

World No. 3-ranked Gauff said: "Shuai was playing amazing tennis out there. I was literally on the ground for most of the match. The harder I hit, the harder she was hitting."

rev's replacement, Daniel Masur, 6-7(5), 6-2, 6-2 to clinch the tie for Kazakhstan while Zverev watched from the sidelines. Germany then won the mixed doubles.

**Kazakhstan advances** Kazakhstan also advanced to the semifinals with a 2-1 win over a Germany team playing without the injured world No. 2-ranked Alexander Zverev.

Zverev was a late scratch for Germany due to a biops injury.

He was scheduled to face Alexander Shevchenko but withdrew at the last minute with Kazakhstan leading the tie 1-0 after Elena Rybakina beat Laura Siegemund 6-3, 6-1.

In singles, Machac gave the Czech Republic the lead with a 7-5, 3-6, 6-4 win over Hurkacz before Swiatek evened the tie with a

6-3, 6-4 win over Muchova.

Katie Boulter's 6-2, 6-1 win over Olivia Gadecki of Australia helped Britain clinch a quarterfinal spot.

Boulter went into the match in the knowledge that a straight-set victory would ensure Britain's progress to the last eight as Group F winner.

**Win not enough for Oz** Alex de Minaur, who is engaged to Boulter, drew the host level with a 6-2, 6-1 triumph over Billy Harris before combining with Gadecki to defeat Charles Broom and Olivia Nicholls 6-3, 7-6(3) in mixed doubles.

Australia's 2-1 victory, though, was not enough to help it reach the last eight.

Italy had earlier won Group D to make it to the quarterfinals.

#### Sahaja enters second round

#### Sports Bureau

Sahaja Yamalapalli beat Kamonwan Yodpatch of Thailand 6-3, 6-4 to move into the second round of the \$60,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Nonthaburi, Thailand, on Wednesday.

**The results: First round:** \$60,000 ITF women, Nonthaburi, Thailand: Jia-Jing Lu (Chn) bt Vaidehi Chaudhari 3-6, 6-4, 6-2; Sahaja Yamalapalli bt Kamonwan Yodpatch (Tha) 6-3, 6-4.

\$30,000 ITF women, Nairobi, Kenya: Yashaswini Panwar bt Sonia Tuishimire (Rwa) 6-0, 6-0;

Angella Okutoyi (Ken) bt Priyanka Bhandari 6-1, 6-0;

Ashmittha Eswaramurthy bt Cynthia Wanjal (Ken) 6-3, 6-3;

Gabriella Mikail (USA) bt Laalita Kalluri 6-2, 6-2; Lexue Xiao (Chn) 7-6(8).

**TOP OF THE CHARTS**

Bumrah registers record by an Indian bowler in ICC rankings



Premier fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah on Wednesday bettered the all-time rating-point record by an Indian in the latest ICC rankings when he touched the 907-point mark. He jointly held the record with R. Ashwin. Ashwin's highest rating was 904, achieved in 2016. Bumrah had drawn level with Ashwin ahead of the Boxing Day Test.

**IMPETUS**

Konstas has brought momentum and intensity, says Carey



Alex Carey said on Wednesday that he was mesmerised by the way Sam Konstas scored an audacious half-century in the Boxing Day Test. "We'll see how he plays out here (Sydney)... to be able to throw a few punches early and get a bit of momentum for us, the opening partnership was probably just lacking that intensity."

**HIGH PRAISE**

Australian PM Albanese hails Bumrah's superb show



Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday interacted with the Indian and Australian cricket teams ahead of the fifth Test and effusively praised Jasprit Bumrah for his exploits in the Border Gavaskar Trophy. According to the local media, Albanese acknowledged Bumrah's superb performance in the series.

**END OF THE ROAD**

Djokovic-Kyrgios pair flatters to deceive, loses in second round



The new doubles team of Novak Djokovic and Nick Kyrgios bowed out of the Brisbane International in the second round. The pair, granted a wild-card entry by tournament organisers, lost 2-6, 6-3, [8-10] on Wednesday to the top-seeded combination of Nikola Mektic of Croatia and New Zealand's Michael Venus.

# One-man army Bumrah at his menacing best Down Under

The pace spearhead has 30 scalps from just four Tests in the ongoing series and what makes his performance even more special is the absence of regular partner Shami; Siraj has slowly found his rhythm while Akash has tried hard without luck

**INDIA IN AUS**

**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**  
SYDNEY

A slow walk gathering pace, legs suddenly whirring while approaching the bowling crease, back arching and the ball being released as if from a high-strung catapult. This is the signature Jasprit Bumrah style, almost similar to the manner in which aeroplanes gently roll before munching tarmac in the blink of an eye and being airborne.

In the latest Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, Bumrah has been at his menacing best. Stumps have been disturbed, edges grazed and such is his impact that even a delivery that may not necessarily demand a wicket would still yield one as batters rushed their shots.

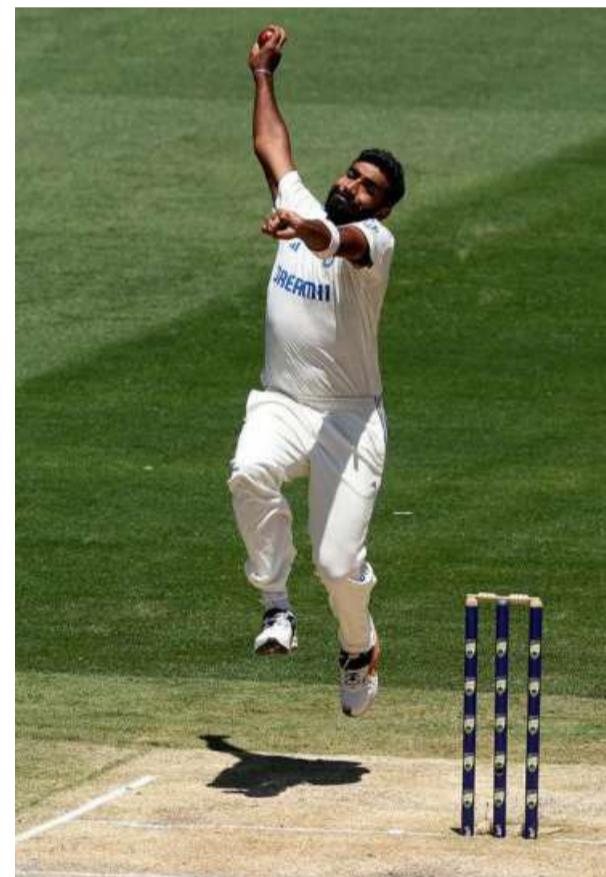
There was theatre when Shane Warne bowled; an equally dramatic rush happens when Bumrah is at work. Great players impose their will on contests. Kapil Dev during India's 1991-92 tour Down Under bagged 25 wickets. Thirty two years later, another In-

dian fast bowler has 30 scalps from just four Tests while the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) awaits the fifth Test here from Friday.

Kapil's was the late wind that lit up a stunning career in its twilight. For Bumrah, aged 31 and with 44 Tests under his belt, this is the middle stage, and his current tally of 203 wickets in cricket's longer format is bound to quadruple. To bag 200 plus with an average of 19.42 is spectacular. He is the first bowler to get to this milestone while the average stayed below the 20 mark.

Prior to Rohit Sharma's return as captain at Adelaide, Bumrah led India well in the triumphant first Test at Perth. While the subsequent contests witnessed Australia's comeback and a series scoreline of 2-1 now favours the host, Bumrah has remained undaunted. Even as a tailender, he has put a price on his wicket.

**Rare show of emotion**  
After casting Sam Konstas in Australia's second dig at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the speed merchant mimicked the opener's crowd-rousing gestures. It was a rare hint of



**Fast and furious:** Bumrah has been simply sensational in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series. AFP

raw emotion. When Nathan Lyon suffered a similar outcome, the timber-dismantler just stood and held a cold gaze.

This was the hero in a Wild Western, gunning

down rivals with a phlegmatic air. After going through the 'Bumrah inquisition' on the pitch, every Australian batter has been subjected to the 'Bumrah question' in press

conferences. Their usual responses reflected shock and awe.

It is not easy to perform consistently while his regular partner Mohammed Shami is yet to resurface at the international level following injury and rehabilitation. The other Mohammed, Siraj, has slowly found a rhythm to gain 16 wickets. Akash Deep, meanwhile, has strived hard without luck.

All this meant that Rohit was often employing Bumrah in repetitive spells. The 'shock' bowler was now doubling up as a stock bowler, and it is a workload that the Indian captain is conscious about. When India strides out at the SCG, Bumrah is expected to replicate his excellence. It would be ideal if the batters too can contribute.

Readers of a certain vintage may remember a Sachin Tendulkar hundred being the lone balm while India lost. Now the roles are reversed. A Bumrah five-for is taken for granted even as the team slumps toward defeat's shadow. He needs support from the rest of the playing eleven. Even then he will do all the heavy-lifting. Bumrah knows no other way.

# Carlsen, Nepomniachtchi share World blitz title; Vaishali clinches bronze

**CHESS****Sports Bureau**

The World blitz championship ended on a bizarre note in New York. Magnus Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi decided to share the title, with the approval from the world chess governing body FIDE.

What if the regulations may not have quite allowed that.

**Tied**  
The final was still tied after three games in the sudden death when Carlsen proposed to Nepomniachtchi that the title be shared. Before the tie-breaks, the defending champion had taken a 2-0 lead but his Russian rival fought back to win the next two.

After the match, Carlsen reasoned: "At that point, we had already played for a very long time. I was very happy to end it. I thought at that point it would have been very, very cruel on both of us if one came first and another second. That's why I thought it was a reasonable solution."

The women, however, were in no mood to share the title, even though both the finalists were from one country – China. Ju Wen-



**Proud moment:** Vaishali, right, with the other medallists. FIDE



**Nothing to separate:** Carlsen and Nepomniachtchi were declared joint winners in a first. FIDE

jun, the defending World classical champion, added the blitz title to her collection after beating Lei Tingjie in the tie-breaks.

The women's event also gave India something to cheer about, as R. Vaishali clinched the bronze medal. She was beaten by Ju in the semifinals.

This was the second medal for India in New York.

Konneru Humpy had won the women's World rapid title on Sunday.

McGrath lauds Bumrah's ability to adapt

**Press Trust of India**

SYDNEY

Jasprit Bumrah's incredible show has prevented the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series from becoming completely lopsided in Australia's favour, said pace great Glenn McGrath, lauding the India spearhead for his control and ability to adapt quickly. "He has been a massive part of the Indian team and without him, the series might have been more one-sided and what he does is special," said McGrath on the sidelines of his foundation's cancer awareness event here.

"Terrific young guy who has found a way to adapt. Absolutely incredible how he powers into bowl the last few steps," McGrath said of Bumrah's short run-up.

The man with 563 Test wickets also found similarities between him and the Indian in terms of hyper-extension of their arms (when the elbow joint bends backward beyond its normal range). He said it allows them to land the ball a few inches further.

## Team management and training are the franchises' prerogative, feels Ikram

**Uthra Ganesan**

International Hockey Federation (FIH) President Tayyab Ikram has made it clear that while the window for the Hockey India League was fixed, the exact dates were up to Hockey India and the franchises.

Many overseas players had cited it clashing with Christmas as reason for pulling out.

"How the franchises plan their training and team management is their prerogative. We have no problem with when it starts – December 28 or January 1 – so long as it is in the exclusive window," Ikram said here on Wednesday.

Ikram also refuted FIH launching a Pakistan-specific project to revive hockey.

**Surprised**  
"Even I was surprised. What I had said in answer to a question was that the FIH was open to help all nations who wish to revive or develop hockey the way it did with India 14-15 years ago.

"It can be Korea, Malaysia, Japan, South Africa, Canada, even the USA. But there has to be equal parti-

## Bengal Tigers find a way past Gonasika, record second victory of the season

**HIL****Uthra Ganesan**

ROURKELA

The rub of the green went Shrachi Rath Bengal Tigers' way as it registered its second win in as many games with a 2-1 victory over Team Gonasika at the Birsa Munda Stadium here on Wednesday.

For a game that was as evenly matched as possible, one moment of defensive error led to a penalty stroke for SRBT, proving to be the difference between the two sides.

For the remaining part, there was little to choose from between the two, matched in their attempts at goal, circle entries and even scoring their respective opening goals within 30 seconds of each other.

It was a tactical game that saw both outfits play strategically, resulting in most of the work being done between the two 23-yard lines. For SRBT, Sukhjeet Singh and Abhishek were the key men with repeated incursions into the circle and Affan Yousaf backing them up, only to find their shots blocked by



**Roaring success:** Rupinder's double sealed it for Tigers. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

goalkeeper Oliver Payne.

SRBT did earn enough penalty corners, however, it had to wait till the sixth one for Rupinder Pal Singh to finally step into the action – Jugraj Singh was entrusted with the responsibility till then but was unable to beat Payne – and the veteran made no qualms in smashing into the net past Payne's shoulder.

It was no surprise that the former India captain got his name on the scoresheet as well, swinging to smash into the board, unmarked on the left after being put through by Struan Walker.

That should have opened up the game but the teams went back to possession play and it looked like yet another HIL match would go into shoo-

touts. However, a 48th minute blunder saw SRBT rewarded with the stroke that Rupinder calmly converted.

Gonasika, faced with the prospect of another loss, finally stepped up the tempo and tried to find an equaliser but the rushing inside the circle saw the side falter at the finish with wayward shots, eventually ending on the losing side.

**The result:** SRBT 2 (Rupinder Pal Singh 31, 48) bt Team Gonasika 1 (Manpreet Singh 32).

## IN BRIEF



## Chebet caps stellar 2024 with 5km world record

The 5000m and 10,000m Olympic champion Beatrice Chebet smashed the women's 5km world record with a time of 13 minutes 54 seconds at the Cursa dels Nassos road race in Barcelona on Tuesday as she finished a blockbuster year on a high. The Kenyan beat her previous record – set a year ago to the day at the Barcelona race – by 19 seconds, becoming the first woman to break the 14-minute barrier in the event. "I'm super happy as everything went according to plan," Chebet said in remarks provided by World Athletics.



## Barca failed to meet Financial Fair Play rules: Spanish league

The Spanish league said on Tuesday that Barcelona has failed to meet Financial Fair Play rules in the latest blow to the club's hopes of keeping Dani Olmo. The league said Barcelona "did not present any alternative" on adhering to the regulations, which was required for the club to "register any player beginning on Jan. 2". Barcelona needed to have another financial lever approved by the league in order to register Olmo after a judge ruled against the club on Monday in the second consecutive court setback ahead of the end-of-year deadline. Without the court's backing or the league's approval, Olmo's contract can't be registered beyond the end of 2024. The Spain international moved from Leipzig to Barcelona in August.

# Batters in focus as the Proteas eye clean sweep

The visitor, on the other hand, will seek to improve its track record in the Rainbow Nation as it looks to breach South Africa's fortress

## PAK IN SA

**Reuters**  
CAPE TOWN

**S**outh Africa has already sealed its place in this year's World Test Championship (WTC) final ahead of the second and final Test against Pakistan at Newlands on Friday but will want to keep its momentum going in the longest format.

Questions around its brittle batting line-up will be a major focus on what has recently been a perilous Newlands pitch.

The previous Test played there against India 12 months ago lasted only 107 overs as the visitors won by seven wickets inside two days, the shortest Test that has had a winner in history.

## Better wicket

The wicket should be better this time round, but at a ground that used to be a fortress for the home team, it has lost two of its last three Tests in Cape Town. "We definitely haven't been clinical or ruthless when the opportunity or the situation is called upon," Bavuma said.

Pakistan will rue not closing out the first Test having reduced South Africa to 99 for eight chasing



**Captain's appeal:** Bavuma wants his team to be ruthless as it looks to sustain the momentum. GETTY IMAGES

148 on a tough Centurion Park wicket, only for all-rounder Marco Jansen and fast bowler Kagiso Rabada to carry the hosts to victory.

Pakistan captain Shan Masood has also spoken of the need for his side to be

more ruthless when on top, both with the bat and the ball.

Pakistan has won only two of its previous 16 Tests in South Africa, and none since 2007. It has lost all four previous visits to Cape Town.

Dabrowski said there



**Tough time:** Dabrowski found a first lump in the second half of 2023 and was initially told not to worry about it. FILE PHOTO

## Dabrowski reveals she played through 2024 after cancer diagnosis

## TENNIS

**Associated Press**  
LONDON

was "a slight delay in further treatment" so she could compete at Wimbledon – where she and New Zealand's Erin Routliffe lost the final in July to Katerina Siniakova and Taylor Townsend – and the Paris Olympics, where she won the bronze medal in mixed doubles with Felix Auger-Aliassime. Dabrowski said she had found a first lump in the second half of 2023 and was initially told not to worry about it.

## Surreal

"It all seems surreal," Dabrowski wrote, saying she now has a "better grasp" of her treatment and side effects. For a long time I wasn't ready to expose myself to the possible attention and questions I'd have gotten before. I wanted to figure everything out and handle things privately with only those closest to me in the loop."

Dabrowski, ranked third in women's doubles, said in an Instagram post that she received the diagnosis in April. She did not play that month and in May because of surgery, but returned to the courts in June.

Dabrowski said there

Maxim knocks out second seed Ramkumar

## Sports Bureau

Maxim Zhukov beat second seed Ramkumar Ramanathan 6-4, 6-2 in the first round of the \$30,000 ITF men's tournament in Indore on Wednesday.

In the pre-quarterfinals, Maxim will play Dhakshin Suresh who beat Grigory Lomakin of Kazakhstan 6-3, 6-4. Qualifier Vishnu Vardhan beat seventh seed Dominik Palan of Czech Republic 7-6(2), 7-6(4). Yuvan Nandal, Chirag Duhan, Sidharth Rawat, Aryan Shah and Dev Java were the other Indian players to progress into the second round.

**Other results: Singles (first round):** Mathys Erhard (Fra) bt Manish Suresh Kumar 7-5, 6-1; Yuvan Nandal bt Yuichiro Inui (Jpn) 3-6, 7-5, 7-6(7); Alastair Gray (GBR) bt Adil Kalyanpur 6-3, 6-4; Florent Bax (Fra) bt Madhwin Kamath 6-3, 1-6, 6-3; Chirag Duhan bt S.D. Prajwal Dev 7-5, 6-3; Sidharth Rawat bt Deep Munim 6-1, 6-1; Egor Agafonov bt Raghav Jaisinghani 7-5, 7-6(3); Yurii Dzhavakian (Ukr) bt Siddharth Vishwakarma 6-2, 6-2; Vladislav Orlov (Ukr) bt Ischaque Eqbal 6-4, 6-4; Aryan Shah bt Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-4, 6-2; Oliver Crawford (GBR) bt Sergey Fomin (Uzb) 1-6, 6-2, 6-3; Samir Banerjee (USA) bt Eric Vanshelboim (Ukr) 6-2, 6-4; Dev Java bt Keerthivassan Suresh 6-4, 6-4.

## LIVE TELECAST

**Zimbabwe vs Afghanistan:** 2nd Test, day 1, FanCode, 1.30 p.m.

**ISL:** Sports 18-3 (SD & HD) & Jio-Cinema, 7.30 p.m.

**Hockey:** HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 & LIV, 8.15 p.m.  
**Australia vs India:** 5th Test, day 1, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 5 a.m. (Friday)

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# The new showman in town

With two titles from three finals in four seasons in the Pro Kabaddi League and the spunk to take opponents head on, Iranian allrounder Mohammadreza Shadlou Chiyaneh's legacy as the latest bonafide superstar of the sport has been cemented

## Lavanya L

**R**emember Amitabh Bachchan's lines from the 2000 film *Mohabbatein? Parampara, prathishta, anushasan* - he declared, in that baritone of his It translates to tradition, honour and obedience. The Indian way of kabaddi often feels modelled on these ideals. Despite the glitz and glamour the Pro Kabaddi League has brought to the sport with its shining lights, switch to the mat and NBA/cricket-style broadcasting, it is still very much a sport of the soil, passed on as a cherished keepsake from one generation to the next. You may be the biggest star in the world but coach sahib is still *numero uno* in the room. It is a culture built on rules, age-old playing styles and respect bordering on blind obedience.

Over the years, a young raider from Iran has emerged as a sort of antithesis of all this. He's not the humble, 'do-your-job-and-return' player. He will walk up to you and try to headbutt you. He brings Iran's proud wrestling traditions onto the mat as he single-handedly smacks opponents down. He relishes the opportunity to put on a show and he now has two Pro Kabaddi League titles to show for it.

He is Mohammadreza Shadlou Chiyaneh.

### First impression

The now 24-year-old took PKL by storm when he was signed by Patna Pirates for Rs. 30 lakh three years ago. There was an air about him as he manned the left corner for the three-time title holder. He was quick, agile, ready to invite raiders to challenge him and when the raider least expected it, he would have their ankles tightly in his grip. He finished with 89 tackle points, the most by a defender that season. With a solid raiding department and this maverick from Iran making a whole part of the mat untouchable, Patna barged into the final with authority only to tumble over the final hard called Dabang Delhi.

His next season with Patna would be his last with the outfit. He finished with 84 points, missing the orange sleeve - given to the top defender - by just five tackle points. A new season brought with it a different hairstyle - the top bun made way for a suave bleached top. This season gave fans and opponents several imperious moments of defensive brilliance to revisit, particularly from the match against Dabang Delhi where Shadlou single-handedly scored 19 of his team's 27 points. That match was emblematic of the outfit's fortunes. Shadlou was a lone wolf as his team crumbled down to 10th place that season.

The auction ahead of season 10 was crucial for Shadlou. He would learn on the flight back from the Hangzhou Asian Games that he was the most expensive foreign player of all time with a massive price tag of ₹2.31 crore paid by Puneri Paltan. Shadlou found himself amidst players of his own age bracket and quickly settled in.

### Big comparisons

By this time, Shadlou's legend had grown. His aggression and ruthlessness evoked fear and adoration in equal measure but what it brought most was comparisons with his compatriot - legendary defender Fazel Atrachali.

Fazel, a winner of the league in season 2 with U Mumba, tops the all-time tackle points tally. He was the most successful captain in the league's history until recently (with Sunil Kumar overtaking him this season). Even internationally, he has been a big sharp thorn eating into the flesh of the Indians each time they faced Iran on the kabaddi mat. Shadlou emerged as his successor or, dare we say, replacement.

In an Iranian set-up that was beginning to lean towards the youth, Fazel's place in that left corner has Shadlou circling the waters below. Even in the PKL, the contests featuring these two would also be intense with Shadlou eager to one up his senior.

Fazel had taken Puneri Paltan to the final in season 9, but an injury-hit team eventually succumbed to the raiding superiority of Jaipur Pink Panthers. A season later, Shadlou had the best opportunity to make gains in the comparison contest with Fazel when he helped Pune make the final with Haryana Steelers standing in the way of the trophy. He largely played second fiddle in this game with just two points to his name, but such was Pune's playing style. The defence rarely operated as a one-man setup. A close 28-25 win went their way and Shadlou's Paltan emerged champion. The Iranian topped the tackles tally with 99 points this time.

You'd expect this to be a hit formula



and for Shadlou to be retained by Pune for the next season, but he wasn't. Back in the auction, he unsurprisingly went for big money yet again with the Steelers paying ₹2.07 crore for his services.

"If you want the best defender in the league, you have to pay," Shadlou later told this publication sheepishly.

However, this acquisition was in the works well before the teams sat down for the auction exercise. After the season 10 final, Haryana coach Manpreet Singh and Shadlou spoke personally for the first time.

"We spoke for about 10-15 minutes," Manpreet told *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the recently concluded 11th chapter of PKL which Haryana won.

"He told me he was happy to see our team come to the final with a young crop of players and we exchanged pleasantries. At that time itself, I wondered how it would be to have him on our side."

"When we had the off-season camp in Bellary, Shadlou came over there for 10-15 days. It was a short visit as he left abruptly to handle something urgent at home, but that stint was very positive and I knew I wanted him in the setup," he added.

### True allrounder

By the time Shadlou took to the mat in his fourth season of the PKL, he was already a bona fide superstar. He had sufficiently annoyed India on the international stage at the Asian Kabaddi Championships in Busan and the Asian Games in China (both in 2023) to be feared by players. But those flamboyant performances also earned him a huge following.

The crew cut from his days with Pune was gone and he was back to sporting his thick black curls, sometimes left open, or tied up with scarves matching Haryana's silks. He looked the part of a mercenary. Men and women alike thronged kabaddi matches with big cutouts of his face and he was happy to oblige them with photos, autographs or sometimes even a mid-match thumbs up or a wink.

Each season, Shadlou worked on bettering his skills on offer. His last run at Patna saw him begging coaching staff to

be sent to raid, but they wouldn't relent. His role was fixed in the defence.

Sometimes, he went anyway, earning stern glares from coach Ravi Shetty in the process. Even BC Ramesh, the head coach at Pune during his time there, was not too keen on Shadlou the raider. By this time, the man was just short of holding a banner and screaming from the rooftops about his abilities in that department.

The cry that went unheard everywhere else found a keen ear in Manpreet at the Steelers. Shadlou eventually turned a full all-rounder with the Men in Blue as he managed not only to top defender standings yet again with 82 points, but he also scored 57 raid points making him only the second player after Manjeet Chhillar to manage at least 50 points in offence and defence in a single season.

"Many people like to call themselves all-rounders, but I've shown them what a true all-rounder is," Shadlou would say on the sidelines of another stellar campaign.

### Something different

"This season I want to show a different performance from Shadlou," the Iranian told *The Hindu* ahead of the playoffs. "I have been raiding more and even in training I am focusing more on it. Because of that, my defence has actually faltered a little. I want to fix it and finish with the orange sleeve," he said, the defender in him always wanting to stay on top. "It's a bit hard but no problem. If the team gets a good performance, I will be happy."

That's not entirely true, and Shadlou would be the first to admit. He is ever the team man, happy to move positions across the mat and do everything to work for a win, but he is not one to let his individual self melt away in the process. In describing his ambitions, he often slips into referring to himself in the third person.

"I want Shadlou to be a big phenomenon. I want to be judged as the best defender at least five to six times. I want to become a symbol in the PKL and make a big career," he said.

The last two final appearances were underwhelming from an individual point of view. Matching his fierce style of play

was his old franchise Patna Pirates, with an audacious raiding duo leading the pack - Devank Dalal and Ayan Lochab.

Shadlou though showed no respect to the nearly 400 raid points between the young pair and targeted them throughout the first half. The Haryana defence did not allow Patna's strength any space to show itself. With seven points to his name on the night, and a mature performance that reflected his experience more than his raw fire, Shadlou clinched his second consecutive PKL crown and helped Haryana to its first.

For his exploits and impact in turning games on its head, he was adjudged the Most Valuable Player of the season.

### Until next time

For all his over-the-top showmanship and provocation on the kabaddi mat, his life back home is the polar opposite. People know him there, but don't profess their love for him the way India does. He runs a construction business in Urmia which is where a large part of his PKL windfall has been channelled. His native city doesn't have a kabaddi mat or a dedicated arena for him to train so once a month, he makes his way to the neighbouring area of Naqadeh in the West Azerbaijan province where mat infrastructure is available.

His kabaddi addiction isn't even passed on, he is the first in his family to play the sport. He belongs to a region known for the volleyball players it produces as opposed to most of his compatriots who come with regions like Golestan which produces athletes who dive into contact sports.

When he isn't training, you'll catch him sharing sufi-themed poetry on his Instagram account. He loves indulging in romantic literature from time to time too... a big softy and a stark contrast to the brash arrogance he has become synonymous with in the PKL.

"I first played kabaddi 12 years ago and in my first mat session, I claimed four to five tackle points. The bug bit me then."

"Kabaddi is now in my blood. It's become a part of me now. When I play this sport, my soul is happy. I am happy here and this is where I'll be. There's more coming. Just wait and watch."

## THE GIST

▼  
Mohammadreza Shadlou Chiyaneh is the latest in a line of exemplary Iranians to feature in the Pro Kabaddi League

▼  
He has consistently been among the top two defenders in the four PKL seasons he has been a part of, topping defender tallies thrice

▼  
Shadlou won the PKL title two years in a row, first with Puneri Paltan in 2023 and then with Haryana Steelers in 2024

▼  
While he is a primarily a defender, the Iranian has worked hard to expand his repertoire to be an adept raider for his club and country

▼  
Shadlou is a big Amir Khan fan and enjoys watching his films, with PK being one of his favourites

▼  
He runs a construction business back home in Urmia, Iran

## SCIENCE

# Four UN environmental summits fell short in 2024. What happened?

At the heart of the breakdown lies a divergence in national priorities. Developing nations, grappling with developmental challenges, economic constraints, and the effects of climate change, have repeatedly demanded more technology and financial support from developed countries

**Indu K. Murthy**

The United Nations' efforts to address critical environmental challenges hit multiple roadblocks this year, with four key summits – in Colombia on biodiversity, Azerbaijan on climate, Saudi Arabia on land degradation, and South Korea on plastics – failing to deliver meaningful outcomes.

These meetings brought together governments, researchers, policymakers, industries, and civil society organisations to ensure their goals were aligned, build equitable accountability, and mobilise adequate finance for action. But all four summits achieved no or partial success on issues they had set to address. In fact, this is the fourth time UN discussions designed to push countries toward significant progress in addressing biodiversity loss, climate change, and plastic pollution have either ended without consensus or yielded unsatisfactory outcomes.

This is a significant setback in global efforts to address biodiversity loss and climate change, potentially leading to delayed action on critical issues such as climate finance, drought mitigation, and plastic pollution, with the most vulnerable countries potentially suffering the greatest impact.

The partial or full failures of these talks raise pressing concerns about the global community's ability to combat biodiversity loss, climate change, and other urgent environmental crises. Understanding the reasons behind these setbacks and their implications for global cooperation is essential to charting a more effective path forward.

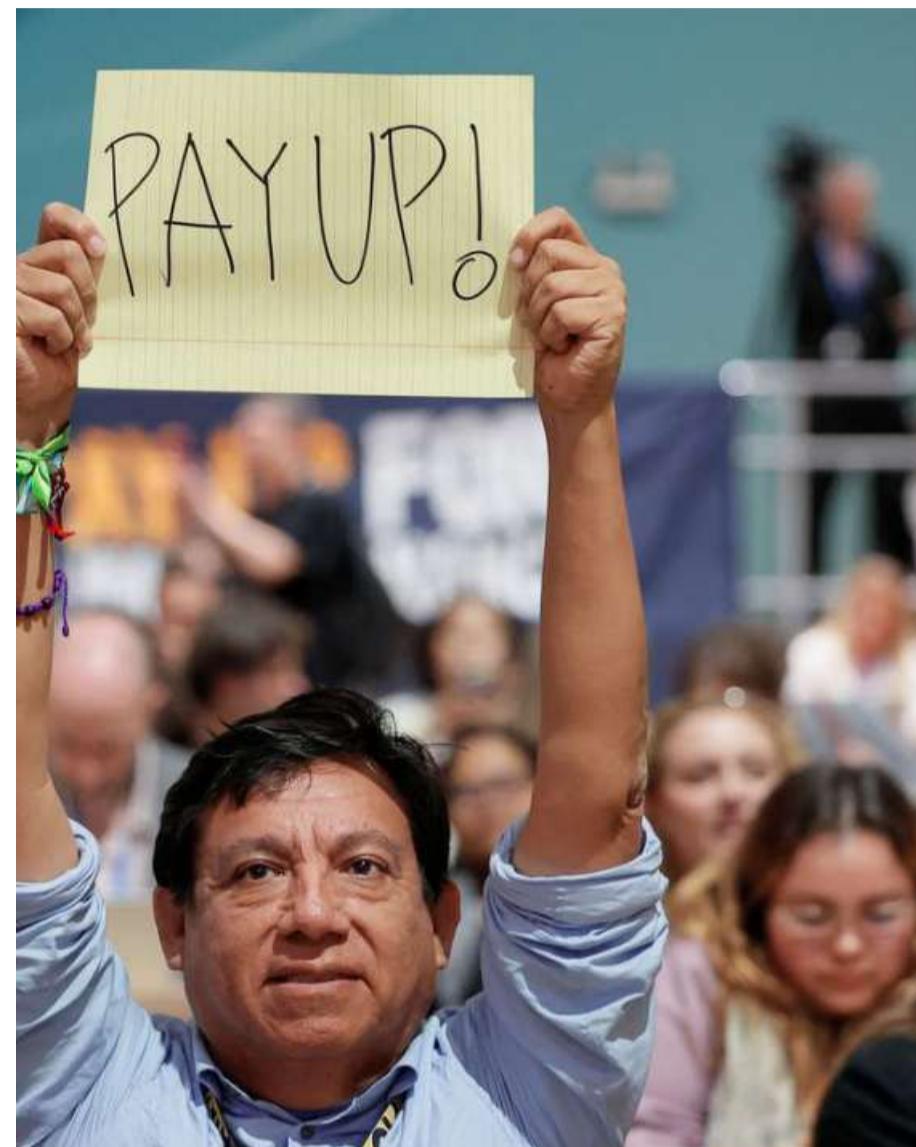
#### Divergent national interests

At the heart of the talks' breakdown lies a stark and growing divergence in national priorities. Developing nations, grappling with developmental challenges, economic constraints, and the impacts of climate change, have repeatedly demanded more technology transfer and financial support from developed countries. But developed nations are reluctant to commit additional resources, citing domestic political pressures and economic challenges of their own.

For example, the Colombia talks on biodiversity conservation faltered as countries failed to agree on financing mechanisms to support sustainable land-use practices. Financing conservation at scale came to a gridlock with countries lagging in ambition, being nowhere close to delivering the \$700 billion-a-year requirement. In Azerbaijan, developing nations demanded \$1.3 trillion a year from developed nations, and the talks ended with the latter loosely agreeing to raise the amount from a wide range of sources, including private investment.

Also in Azerbaijan, countries were divided over the pledge to transition away from fossil fuels, a decision made during the last UN climate summit. The plastic pollution talks in South Korea also brought to the fore a significant divide among participating nations. The meeting concluded without reaching an agreement primarily because countries that rely on economies dependent on ongoing demand for plastics opposed a legally binding treaty. Instead, they

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An activist at the 'People's Plenary' of the COP29 United Nations climate change conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November. REUTERS

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pushed for proper usage and recycling of plastic waste.

#### Consensus and crises

Several talks stumbled on disagreements over the frameworks needed to monitor and enforce environmental goals. In Azerbaijan, discussions on implementing the global stocktake under the Paris Agreement saw divisions over the accountability mechanisms for emission reductions, particularly for high-emission nations.

In Saudi Arabia, industrialised nations clashed with African countries over the establishment of a legally binding drought protocol. While the former wanted a broad operational framework, the African nations demanded a concrete plan with economic commitments.

Global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, economic instability, and geopolitical conflicts, have created significant challenges for environmental action. They have diverted attention and resources away from pressing environmental priorities as governments grapple with urgent domestic concerns such as public health, economic recovery, and social stability.

For many countries, particularly those with limited institutional and/or financial capacity, the challenge to balance economic recovery efforts with long-term sustainability goals has weakened their negotiating positions. This has further reduced their willingness or ability to commit to ambitious environmental targets.

Developing economies, in particular, face heightened difficulties as they navigate inflation, debt burdens, and overall developmental challenges alongside climate vulnerabilities, leading to calls for greater financial and technological support from wealthier nations.

#### Growing divide, lack of consensus

These setbacks in global negotiations complicate the already daunting task of addressing global environmental challenges.

**Delayed action:** The inability and failure to agree on frameworks and commit to concrete actions by nations postpone critical measures required to fight global issues such as biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation, and plastic pollution. This delay increases the likelihood of pushing global systems closer to irreversible tipping points, with severe consequences for communities and economies worldwide.

**Incoherent, fragmented efforts:** As multilateral processes falter, there is a growing risk of countries turning to unilateral regional action. While these initiatives are well-meaning and can make progress, they would lack the global coherence necessary to address environmental issues comprehensively and equitably and could trigger new problems because of a lack of coordination among nations.

**Erosion of trust:** Repeated failures in negotiations risk undermining confidence among nations, making future

**In Azerbaijan, countries were divided over fossil fuels. The plastic pollution talks in South Korea also concluded without agreement because countries that rely on an ongoing demand for plastics opposed a legally binding treaty**

cooperation even more difficult.

**Pressure on future summits:** The failure of multiple global negotiations on the environment further forces upcoming meetings to deliver meaningful outcomes.

#### Rebuilding momentum

To advance global environmental goals, several key strategies must be prioritised. Climate finance is key to this. Wealthier nations must honour their commitments to provide financial and technological support to developing nations. This would create a more equitable foundation for negotiations and help bridge trust gaps between developed and developing economies.

Equally critical is the need to enhance transparency and accountability by establishing robust mechanisms to track progress and hold nations accountable for their commitments. This would play a vital role in restoring confidence in multilateral processes.

Inclusive diplomacy is also essential to address geopolitical tensions and ensure all voices, particularly those of vulnerable nations, are heard in negotiations. By promoting equitable participation, global cooperation can become more effective and resilient.

Further, there must be a strong focus on implementation – shifting the emphasis from ambitious pledges to tangible action – backed by measurable outcomes. This pragmatic approach ensures progress even in the face of broader disagreements.

Finally, it is crucial to acknowledge and address connections between biodiversity loss, land degradation, plastic pollution, and climate change – a complex web of environmental crises that amplify one another. Climate change accelerates habitat destruction, ultimately leading to biodiversity loss, while degraded ecosystems such as deforested lands, desertification and land degradation or overexploited soils release carbon, exacerbating global warming.

Similarly, plastic pollution harms marine and terrestrial ecosystems and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions during its production and degradation. Addressing these issues in isolation has proven insufficient. Global environmental talks must therefore prioritise these interconnections, foster integrated strategies that protect ecosystems, restore degraded landscapes, and reduce pollution while tackling climate change.

The challenges are immense, but so are the stakes. As environmental crises intensify, the world can't afford further stalemates. It is imperative for nations to move beyond short-term interests and embrace a shared vision for a sustainable future.

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A large number of ants can together make more complicated decisions by having different ants make different parts of each decision. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

## Ants team up to make tough decisions

**Arkatapa Basu**

The small size of ants has nothing to do with their stature among insects and, in fact, in the animal kingdom. Over the years, they have colonised almost every major landmass on the planet, and their total biomass is expected to exceed that of birds and mammals combined. They are eusocial insects: their colonies are organised with a great degree of cooperation and division of labour.

A study published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* on December 23 offered to add one more feather to their caps. In the study, Israeli researchers explored how two species – longhorn crazy ants and humans – dealt with challenges by working together.

Just as it's easier to haul a heavier object with a large number of people, the researchers have reported that a large number of ants can together make more complicated decisions by having different ants make different parts of each decision.

In an experiment, the researchers had the ants carry a T-shaped object through a series of ant-sized obstacles. This is a difficult task for ants because they can't talk to each other about how they can fit the object through a particular entrance using only their pheromone-based communication.

In a parallel setup, the team had a bunch of people navigate a similar obstacle course carrying a similarly oddly shaped object.

To level the playing field, the humans were made to wear sunglasses and masks and barred from speaking or gesturing to each other.

The team found that the ant groups outperformed their human counterparts. While individual ants struggled, ant groups were able to coordinate their efforts in ways that exceeded individual

**Ants banked on distributed coordination, allowing them to adjust and align their actions according to the actions of other ants, eventually arriving at the 'correct' solution**

capabilities – an example of emergent persistence.

On the other hand, the people weren't able to discuss and strategise their course, and often failed to improve on individual performances. Sometimes, in fact, human groups fared worse than individual humans.

According to the researchers, in the absence of communication, individuals tended to rush to do what they thought their teammates would do. This phenomenon, colloquially called groupthink, drove participants to pursue incorrect solutions like pulling the T-shaped object directly towards gaps in the wall.

Ants, on the other hand, banked on distributed coordination, allowing them to adjust and align their actions according to the actions of other ants, eventually arriving at the 'correct' solution.

The study highlighted the power of emergent behaviour in collective problem-solving.

"Similar examples in which grouping leads to newly acquired cognitive abilities are rare," the researchers wrote in their paper. "One example comes from fish that can expand their sensing range by grouping, which allows the school to respond to environmental gradients that occur over long length scales. Another example comes from fish that modulate their responsiveness to risk by modifying the spatial structure of the group."

It also remains to be seen how humans habituated to communicating in ways other than talking would perform.



Visual: The tree in the garb of a person in this image is the unofficial mascot of which university? Credit: BrokenSphere

#### THE SCIENCE QUIZ

## Things sort of related to trees

**Vasudevan Mukunth**

#### QUESTION 1

When a strong electric discharge passes through an insulating material, its progression can take the shape of a rapidly branching tree. What are these figures called?

#### QUESTION 2

One example of the many abstract data types in computer science is the \_\_\_\_\_. It's so named because each node in this tree has at best two child nodes. As the tree progresses, it branches out in factors of 2. Fill in the blanks.

#### QUESTION 3

The \_\_\_\_\_ is a fractal shape that's also one of the easiest

to create. Start with a line segment and split one end into two branches. Then repeat the process for all new line segments created in this way. Fill in the blanks.

#### QUESTION 4

In computational linguistics, what is the name for the tree-like representation used to understand the syntax's structure of any given sentence using specific grammatical rules?

#### QUESTION 5

Name the hunting practice whereby hunters use dogs to chase animals up a tree, where they can be spotted and shot more easily. The idiom "barking up the wrong tree" comes from

this practice.

#### Answers to December 31 quiz:

1. Property due to which (almost) all sets are also their subsets – **Ans: Reflexive property**

2. Most abundant polymer on the earth – **Ans: Cellulose**

3. Material that helped popularise motion picture films – **Ans: Celluloid**

4. Condition in which skin becomes lumpy – **Ans: Cellulite**

5. Variety of just-in-time manufacturing prized for agility – **Ans: Cellular manufacturing**

Visual: **Bass violin or violone**

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Please send in your answers to [science@thehindu.co.in](mailto:science@thehindu.co.in)

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