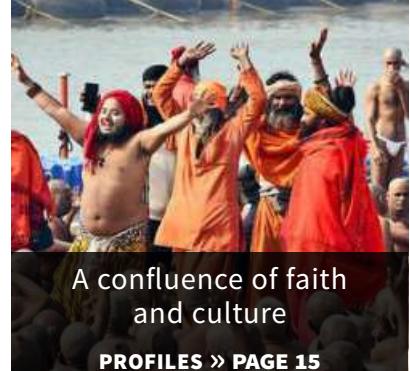


IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS 'ABC'

A scheme hampered by poor resources

Mumbai, Bengaluru are getting it right with WhatsApp groups, QR-code collars, and a consensus between dog lovers & authorities

MAGAZINE » PAGE 1



IN BRIEF



PM issues 65 lakh property cards in 12 States and UTs

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday distributed over 65 lakh property cards to rural families in more than 50,000 villages across 12 States and UTs under the Centre's SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) scheme. » Page 4



Will remove quota cap if elected to power, says Rahul

PATNA

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said the party will remove the 50% reservation barrier and conduct a caste census in the country on returning to power at the Centre. » Page 11

MAGAZINE » 8 PAGES
CLASSIFIEDS » PAGE 5

R.G. Kar rape: ex-police volunteer found guilty

Sentencing to take place tomorrow; accused Sanjay Roy was convicted based on 11 pieces of evidence produced by the CBI; court has lived up to the faith placed in it, say victim's parents

Shiv Sahay Singh
Mouarie Som
Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

AKolkata court on Saturday found former civic police volunteer Sanjay Roy guilty of the rape and murder of an on-duty doctor at the State-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital.

Judge Anirban Das of the Additional District and Sessions Court, Sealdah, pronounced the verdict in the presence of the accused. The parents of the victim were present. The term of the sentence would be pronounced on Monday.

The court said that it found the accused guilty on the basis of evidence put forward by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the crime carried the highest punishment of a death sentence and the lowest of life imprisonment.

The judge said the accused is being held guilty under Sections 64 (rape), 66 (causing death), and 103 (I) (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Reading out the verdict, the judge had mentioned that Roy had entered the hospital on August 9, sexually as-



Keeping peace: Police personnel keep guard outside the Sealdah court where the judgment was being delivered on Saturday. PTI

saulted the victim and smothered her to death.

The victim's body was recovered from a seminar room in a hospital on August 9. While Roy was arrested by the Kolkata police, the CBI took over the case and filed a chargesheet against him on October 7. The chargesheet listed 11 pieces of evidence confirming his role in the crime, including CCTV footage that showed him entering and exiting the scene.

Roy pleaded innocence when the verdict was read out in the court. "I did not

do this, sir. The ones who have done this, why are they not being held," he asked the court. The judge said Roy would get a chance to speak on Monday, before the sentencing.

The parents of the deceased doctor broke down after the verdict was pronounced. "You have lived up to the faith we had placed in you," the victim's father told the judge.

The parents had initially accused the police of trying to hush up the crime. In the past few weeks, they had expressed a lack of faith in the CBI's investiga-

tion as well.

Despite the police denying permission, a crowd had assembled outside the Sealdah court complex, eagerly awaiting the judgment. Junior doctors among them maintained that Roy was not the only person involved in the crime.

The gruesome crime had triggered widespread protests in Kolkata and the rest of the State with people hitting the streets for months after the incident.

MIXED RESPONSE
» PAGE 10

Lit for Life begins with an ode to books and reading

Zubeda Hamid
CHENNAI

Books and reading can change your life, said Abraham Verghese, eminent physician and author, most recently, of *The Covenant of Water*. Dr. Verghese delivered the inaugural address at the 13th edition of The Hindu Lit for Life, in Chennai, on Saturday.

After a nod to his connection with Chennai – he studied at the Madras Medical College – Dr. Verghese said that if you think about it, while human beings have been around for perhaps a million-plus years, the first recorded writing script, the Sumerian script on Cuneiform tablets from Mesopotamia was from around 5,000 years ago – similar writing forms took place in the Indus Valley and China. So, he said, writing has only been with us for about 5,000 years, and printing, in the form of books began only in the 1400s. "So this is a very, very recent endeavour so to speak, and yet it's a wonderful, magical endeavour," he said.

When we read, Dr. Verghese said, the retina takes in the image, the brain recognises and processes it, and makes a sort of mental movie for the reader. He added, jokingly, that he told his medical students that if they were not in the habit of picking



Abraham Verghese, author; Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson, The Hindu Group; L.V. Navaneeth, CEO, The Hindu Group; and Suresh Nambath, Editor, *The Hindu*, at the inaugural event. R. RAGU

The Hindu launches Surf & Dive at lit fest

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI



Shashi Tharoor, MP and writer, launched *The Hindu*'s latest product, *Surf and Dive*, a print offering that gives readers in-depth coverage across a range of issues.

The idea behind *Surf & Dive* was that in a world abuzz with digital distractions, there is a growing

hunger for thoughtful analysis and trusted perspectives.

So, this product presents meticulously curated long-form reads that offer clarity, context, and a 360-degree perspective on the world.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 6

cover the one book that would steer their life in a slightly different way.

"There are no writers without readers," he reminded the audience.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Israel-Gaza ceasefire to begin today: officials

Agence France-Presse
JERUSALEM

The ceasefire between Hamas and Israel will go into effect on Sunday at 8.30 a.m. local time, mediator Qatar announced on Saturday, as families of hostages held in Gaza braced for news of loved ones, Palestinians prepared to receive freed detainees, and humanitarian groups rushed to set up a surge of aid.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu later warned that a ceasefire would not go forward unless Israel received the names of hostages to be released, as had been

agreed.

His statement came almost three hours after Israel had expected to receive the names, which Hamas was to give to Qatar. There was no immediate response from Hamas or Qatar.

The overnight approval of the ceasefire agreement by Israel's Cabinet, in a rare meeting during the Jewish Sabbath, set off a flurry of activity and a fresh wave of emotions as relatives wondered whether hostages would be returned alive or dead.

MORE REPORTS ON
» PAGES 14 & 16

Taking no chances



Policemen keeping vigil in Srinagar on Saturday ahead of Republic Day celebrations. IMRAN NISSAR

Third party help mooted to broker Manipur peace

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

At the first-ever integration training organised by the Assam Rifles for the Manipur Police last month, recruits from all three communities – Meitei, Kuki-Zo and Naga – concurred that peace in the ethnic violence-affected State should be brokered by a "neutral third party", a senior government official told *The Hindu*.

Most recruits were "disillusioned with the inability of their leaders to find a

solution to the issue" and stressed on a larger role by the Central government to tackle the crisis.

The integration training was organised in the first week of December for around 1,900 select police officials in Manipur on the directions of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The need for an integration programme was discussed first at a meeting on June 17, 2024, when Mr. Shah reviewed the security situation in Manipur. One of the issues discussed at the meet was polarisa-



Big picture: Recruits at integration training stress on a larger role by the Central government to tackle the crisis. PTI

tion of the police on ethnic lines.

The meeting highlighted that despite the ongoing

Army existed in harmony. As many as 1,300 recruits from the Meitei community, 350 Nagas and 260 members from the Kuki-Zo community were identified for the integration programme.

Fake news
The recruits who were already undergoing training at the Lachit Borphukan Police Training Centre in Assam for a year were involved in the programme.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Lalu hands over RJD's reins to son Tejashwi Yadav

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

In the run-up to the Assembly election in Bihar, the baton has been officially handed over to Tejashwi Yadav to lead the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD).

Mr. Yadav's stature increased in the party with the passing of a resolution that equals his power to that of the RJD's national president, a position occupied by his father and party chief, Lalu Prasad.

The resolution was passed on Saturday during the RJD's national executive committee meeting in Patna, where senior leaders of the party, including MPs, MLAs, and MLCs, were present along with Mr. Prasad, his wife Rabri Devi, and oldest daughter Misa Bharti.

The resolution allows Mr. Yadav, who has already been calling the shots in the party, to decide, along with Mr. Prasad, on amendments to the party's ticket and symbol.

Mr. Yadav is currently the Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Legislative Assembly. He served as the Deputy Chief Minister when the RJD had formed the government with the Janata Dal (United) in 2015 and 2022.

Addressing the media after the meeting, RJD MP Manoj Jha said, "The party is fully prepared and the people of Bihar are in the mood for change."



Tejashwi Yadav

"I thank all the leaders of the party, including Laluji, for showing trust in me and giving me such a big responsibility. I will discharge my duty with honesty in the upcoming Assembly election in Bihar. The RJD-led grand alliance will surely form the government in the State," Mr. Yadav said in an interaction with the media after the meeting.

Party sources said the decision had been taken keeping in mind Mr. Prasad's declining health. The veteran politician has not been keeping well for some years. He underwent a cardiac surgery in 2014 and subsequently a kidney transplant in 2022.

He added that the RJD subsequently matched the description of the suspect with the Mumbai police.

"They confirmed that he was indeed the suspect. When questioned, he identified himself as Akash Kailash Kanjiya, aged 30, and a resident of Mumbai," said the officer.

Mr. Sinha said a Mumbai police team is expected to reach Durg around 9 p.m. and take the accused into custody.

Saif Ali Khan knife attack case suspect detained

The Hindu Bureau
RAIPUR/MUMBAI

A 30-year-old man was detained in Chhattisgarh's Durg by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) on Saturday in connection with the knife attack on Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan at his Mumbai residence earlier this week.

The suspect, identified as Akash Kanjiya, a Mumbai resident, was on a train that was stopped by the RPF at the Durg railway station, a police officer said.

Sanjeev Kumar Sinha, an RPF Inspector, said the Mumbai police had, earlier in the day, shared a tip-off about the suspect travelling on the Jnaneswari Express, as well as his photo.

"We found him in the general coach," Mr. Sinha told mediapersons.

He added that the RJD subsequently matched the description of the suspect with the Mumbai police.

"They confirmed that he was indeed the suspect. When questioned, he identified himself as Akash Kailash Kanjiya, aged 30, and a resident of Mumbai," said the officer.

Mr. Sinha said a Mumbai police team is expected to reach Durg around 9 p.m. and take the accused into custody.

DELHI ELECTION

Will provide subsidised power, water to tenants: AAP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday promised to provide 200 units of electricity and water up to 20,000 litres free of cost to tenants if his party is voted to power.

The Delhi government already has a scheme that allows tenants to use free electricity of up to 200 units a month through prepaid meters. When asked about it, Mr. Kejriwal said there were "certain issues" with the existing scheme, which would be fixed if AAP gets re-elected.

Attacking the AAP chief, the BJP and the Congress termed the announcement an "old promise".

"Many tenants in the city come from Purvanchal. Many of them are from low-income backgrounds. Soon, all these people will get the benefits," he said.

The former Chief Minister also said he could not fulfil three promises made ahead of the 2020 Assembly poll: cleaning Yamuna, providing 24-hour water supply, and developing world-class roads. He said that he would fulfil them over the next five years.

Kejriwal's car hit by workers of BJP, claims AAP; Sachdeva says ex-CM 'staging a drama'

AAP releases 'video' of a stone hurled at its chief's car; 'BJP bringing jungle raj here,' says Atishi; when faced with questions, Kejriwal sped away in his car, which hit two BJP volunteers: Parvesh

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



AAP released a video showing a stone being hurled at party chief Arvind Kejriwal's car in New Delhi. X/@AAMAADMPIPARTY

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) alleged that the car in which party chief and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was travelling while campaigning in New Delhi on Saturday was attacked by members of the BJP. AAP released a purported video showing a group of people holding black flags and one among them throwing a stone at Mr. Kejriwal's car as it approaches them.

The stone hit the car's roof, and the former CM did not sustain any injury, said a senior police officer.

Chief Minister Atishi condemned the "attack" and accused Delhi's primary Opposition party of introducing "jungle raj" ahead of the February 5 Assembly election.

However, the BJP alleged that the AAP chief had "lied" about the incident. Mr. Kejriwal's rival

candidate from New Delhi, former BJP MP Parvesh Sahib Singh, claimed that people in the area were trying to "ask questions" to the former CM to avoid which he sped away in his vehicle that went on to hit two BJP volunteers, one of whom suffered a fracture in the leg.

The police officer added that no complaint had been received and that no

one had been detained in connection with the incident. The AAP chief is accorded Z-plus security, which includes 60 personnel, two escort vehicles, and armed guards.

War of words

Hitting out at the BJP, senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia, in a post on X, said, "There can be no politics more vile and disgraceful

than what the BJP is indulging in. The BJP must understand that the public will give a befitting reply to this."

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva claimed that they had voiced apprehensions about the former CM "creating stories of attacks on himself", adding that on Saturday, Mr. Kejriwal "proved us right by staging a drama".

It is unfortunate that Kejriwal spread lies about being attacked to avoid questions from the area residents. Arvind Kejriwal is so arrogant that he neither wants to answer questions from the public nor from the BJP," added Mr. Sachdeva.

Attacking AAP and the BJP, Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav said the two parties "have become thirsty for each other's blood in their hunger for power", due to which the national capital is witnessing its "most horrific phase" yet.

Mohan Singh Bisht: a heavyweight even the BJP could not ignore

Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

Mohan Singh Bisht, a five-time MLA, could have upset the BJP's apple cart this Delhi election. The party sensed it too.

Within hours of dropping his name from Karawal Nagar and Mr. Bisht announcing he would contest as an Independent, the BJP named him on January 12 as a candidate but from a different seat — Mustafabad.

After his name was dropped, Mr. Bisht had issued a warning to his party saying,

"You have challenged the *samaj* [Uttarakhand community], not Mohan Singh Bisht. The BJP will lose at least 8-10 seats because of this decision, including Karawal Nagar, Burari, Mustafabad and Gokulpuri."

Attacking AAP and the BJP, Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav said the two parties "have become thirsty for each other's blood in their hunger for power", due to which the national capital is witnessing its "most horrific phase" yet.



The Mustafabad MLA has promised to instal solar plants and implement Centre's schemes in his seat. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

basic facilities like water, electricity, and housing.

He said life is limping back to normalcy and hoped such violence never occurs in future.

Stating that he, too, was a victim of riots, Mr. Bisht said, "In 1984, during the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination, my family was forced to flee Shastri Nagar. I was a teenager then, but I still remember houses and shops set on fire."

CAPITAL FACES

Mustafabad constituency is likely to face a four-cornered contest. AAP

has fielded Adil Ahmad Khan, a former journalist and grassroots-level worker, while the Congress has chosen Ali Mehdi, the vice president of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen has nominated Tahir Hussain, a former AAP councillor, as its candidate.

According to the 2011 census, the constituency has a 39.5% Muslim population.

Assets war continues as BJP, AAP target Sisodia, Parvesh

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP continued its attack on the assets of Aam Aadmi Party leaders, this time questioning a loan disclosure on former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's election

affidavit.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva on Saturday said the loan disclosure — in which Mr. Sisodia has claimed that he was lent ₹1.5 crore by acquaintances for his son's foreign education — could be a "potential manipulation".

"The loan of ₹1.5 crore was pooled by three individuals. They gave ₹86 lakh, ₹58 lakh, and ₹10 lakh as loans to Mr. Sisodia. Who were those people?" Mr. Sachdeva said.

The BJP will approach the agencies for a probe into the loan received by Mr.

Sisodia, he added.

In response to the allegations, AAP said in a statement, "When Manish Sisodia took a loan for his son's education, it sparked havoc in the BJP, while Parvesh Sahib Singh declares liabilities of ₹63 crore, including ₹55 crore as perso-

nal loan, and the party doesn't bat an eye."

'BJP's hypocrisy'

Adding that the BJP must reveal the sources of Mr. Singh's income, the statement called the claims "the real face of BJP's hypocrisy".

DTC buses reduced, air quality dipped on AAP govt.'s watch: Dikshit

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Malnourished children get special ration

Press Trust of India
RANCHI

The Jharkhand government on Saturday started the distribution of 'Shishu Shakti' packets, an enhanced version of the take-home ration (THR) for severely malnourished children, with the aim of making the State malnutrition-free, an official said.

Minister Deepak Birua and Singhbhum MP Joba Majhi launched the initiative as a pilot project in Chakradharpur block of West Singhbhum district.

Timings	
DEHLI	
SUNDAY, JAN. 19	
RISE 07:14	SET 17:50
RISE 22:56	SET 10:26
MONDAY, JAN. 20	
RISE 07:14	SET 17:51
RISE 23:49	SET 10:53
TUESDAY, JAN. 21	
RISE 07:14	SET 17:52
RISE 00:00	SET 11:20

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	21	10
Safdarjung	21	10
Palam	18	09

Delhi Palam Today
18°C The weather will be mostly dry. Morning will be cold with fog and mist. Day will be cool. Night also will be cold and foggy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
19°C Morning will be cold and foggy. Day will be cool. Night also will be cold and uneasy. Dry weather to prevail.

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THE HINDU
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Convicted serial killer who jumped parole held in Delhi

Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

we had," Additional CP (Crime) Sanjay Sain said.

He was travelling back and forth between Delhi and Bihar to avoid arrest for over a year.

Jha migrated to Delhi in 1990 and settled near Azadpur Mandi. Over 13 cases are registered against him.

"Jha followed a definite pattern where he killed the victims by decapitating them. He would then chop off different body parts and throw them outside the Tihar jail and various other places around Delhi," Mr. Sain said.

"He used to inform the police about the crime and the places where he had thrown the bodies, and would also leave a note or letter challenging the law enforcement agencies to catch him," Mr. Sain said.

Netflix documentary *Indian Predator: The Butcher of Delhi* was made on him.

Chandrakant Jha, a serial killer who jumped parole, was traced and arrested, police said on Saturday. Jha, a native of Madhepura in Bihar, was hiding in Alipur, north Delhi.

He has been absconding since 2023 when he was granted parole.

On January 17, Jha was nabbed from Old Delhi railway station while trying to flee to Bihar.

"We received a tip-off about his presence at the railway station. As the crowd was huge, we zeroed in on all trains going to Bihar and found him in one, sporting a long beard. Though he faked his name and origin, his face matched with the photo

India, Bangladesh farmers clash at international border

Argument started at Sukhdebpur outpost, where BSF and BGB had differences recently over fencing, after Indian farmers accused neighbours on the other side of stealing their crop

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Farmers from the bordering areas of West Bengal and Bangladesh clashed on Saturday at the Sukhdebpur border outpost in Malda district. This incident occurred when some Indian farmers, like on normal days, had gone to their fields near the international border. It was at the same border outpost that differences between the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) had surfaced over fencing a few days ago.

"Indian farmers accused Bangladeshi farmers working in the fields across the border of stealing the crop, due to which an argument started between the farmers of both the countries. The incident



BSF has advised Indian farmers to stay away from disputes with farmers on the other side. FILE PHOTO

took a serious turn when farmers from both sides started gathering in large numbers and started abusing and pelting stones at each other," a press statement issued by the South Bengal Frontier of the BSF said.

Since the area is unfenced, the farmers from the Indian side moved along the border outpost without any hindrance.

As soon as the incident came to the light, BSF and BGB jawans reached the spot and brought the situation under control.

Videos on TV channels
The ruckus continued for some time but there were no reports of anyone being injured. Videos of the clashes were also telecast by local television channels.

The BSF statement said, "BSF advised Indian farmers to stay away from such disputes and asked them to inform BSF in case of any problem related to farming on the border in future. BGB also played a positive role in controlling the situation and immediately took necessary action in its area to prevent the situation from worsening."

The court of Special Judge Alka Malik will pronounce the quantum of punishment on January 27.

The court convicted IG Zahir Haider Zaidi, then Deputy Superintendent of Police Manoj Joshi, then Sub-Inspector Rajinder Singh, then Assistant S-I Deep Chand Sharma, then Head Constable Mohan Lal, Surat Singh, Rafee Mohammad and then Constable Ranjit Sateta. Zaidi and seven others were arrested in the custodial death case of Suraj in July 2017. A 16-year-old girl went missing in Kotkhai on July 4, 2017, and her body was found on July 6.

More funds for education, health likely in Rajasthan

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

The pre-budget consultations of Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma with the stakeholders from different sectors held here over the week-end have indicated higher allocations for health and education in the 2025-26 budget. The budget session of the Assembly will be starting on January 31.

Mr. Sharma laid emphasis on infrastructure development and better educational and healthcare facilities in the remote areas. Besides outlining a comprehensive roadmap for improving the healthcare facilities, Mr. Sharma said new measures would be launched for fast progress of tribal-dominated regions.

He also interacted with the Bharatiya Janata Party candidates who were defeated in the 2023 Assembly

ly election and sought their suggestions on public welfare schemes and budgetary support for development of weaker sections. "The government expects their constant support in its endeavours," he said.

In his interaction with medical experts, the Chief Minister said the government had taken several steps during the last one year to improve medical facilities.

There are plans to re-

cruit 50,000 medical personnel in the near future, while a fast progress was being made for making Rajasthan a hub of world-class medical facilities, he said.

For the development of tribal-dominated areas in southern Rajasthan, Mr. Sharma said the people in the region were getting the government's assistance at every step, ranging from basic needs to the opportunities for progress.

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IN BRIEF



Rajnath visits Maha Kumbh, takes holy dip at Sangam

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday participated in the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. He offered prayers and performed a Ganga Aarti. Mr. Singh, a native of Uttar Pradesh, was accompanied by BJP Rajya Sabha member Sudhanshu Trivedi and other party leaders. The Defence Minister began his visit with a holy dip in the sacred waters of the Triveni Sangam - confluence of the rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythological Saraswati. He also performed rituals at neighbouring holy sites such as Akshaya Vat, Patalpuri Temple, Saraswati Kund, and Hanuman Temple.

New BJP chiefs appointed in Arunachal Pradesh, Goa

The BJP on Saturday appointed new State party chiefs in Arunachal Pradesh and Goa. In the Arunachal Pradesh party unit, Kaling Moyong took over the post from Water Resources Minister Biyuram Wahge. A two-time legislator, Mr. Moyong had joined the BJP in 2012. Former Goa MLA Damodar Naik was declared the next president of the State party unit in the presence of BJP's central observer Sunil Bansal, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, Union Minister Shripad Naik, outgoing Goa BJP chief Sadanand Shet Tanavade, and others. The post has been vacant since Mr. Tanavade's term ended. Mr. Naik was earlier the State BJP general secretary.

Maharashtra forms panels to safeguard ancient forts

Purnima Sah

Mahayuti government on Saturday announced the formation of district-level committees to safeguard ancient forts in the State from encroachment.

State Cultural Affairs Minister Ashish Shelar said the decision will not only help in removing existing encroachments, but also work towards preventing further encroachments on forts across the State.

The panels should prepare a detailed list of encroachments and submit it to the government by January 31, Mr. Shelar said. From February 1 to May 31, the task of removing encroachments must be undertaken, he added.

Kerala Governor's policy address suggests shift in Raj Bhavan-govt. political dynamics

NEWS ANALYSIS

G. Anand



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

New Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar's policy address marking the opening of the budget session of the Assembly on Friday appeared to signal an arguably different dynamic in the Raj Bhavan-LDF government relationship.

Mr. Arlekar expressed the State government's concern about experiencing "liquidity stress due to declining share of Union fiscal transfer, tapering of revenue deficit grants, and cessation of GST compensation" without apparent reservations.

The government's non-confrontational approach

also helped. It kept the policy address largely devoid of politics. The government also appeared to gloss over contentious questions that dominated the State's political narrative, including the Centre's alleged trespasses on fiscal federalism and "infringements" on the authority of provincial governments.

Mr. Arlekar followed the script, maintained an officially punctilious note, and struck an optimistic tone,

especially regarding the State's future finances.

The Governor noted that the government highlighted the fiscal problems plaguing Kerala when the 16th Finance Commission visited. The State government requested that the Centre take "ameliorative" measures. "We hope for the best," Mr. Arlekar said.

The ruling coalition did not seem to lose sight of the fact that former Governor Arif Mohammed Khan had kept the government on tenterhooks by objecting to some portions of draft policy addresses, including debatable reflections about federalism, the constitutional bounds of the gubernatorial office, and Centre-State relations.

Mr. Arlekar reiterated that the government was "fully committed to

upholding the constitutional values of democracy, secularism, socialism, and federalism". He also broadcast the government's message that the administration was committed to tangibly improving people's lives.

Focus on govt. approach

The Governor's speech reflected the ruling front's socially interventionist approach to governance. He stressed the government's commitment to rehabilitating the families displaced by the Wayanad landslides.

He also showcased the State's achievements in improving citizens' quality of life and significant infrastructure developments, including the Vizhinjam port and expediting land acquisition for development of national highways.

Parandur airport project: Vijay to meet protesters tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI



Vijay

Villagers have been protesting for over 900 days against the acquisition of farmland for Chennai's second airport project

At the meeting, the TVK office-bearers submitted a letter seeking permission for the event. Later, Mr. Venkatraman told reporters that there was no restriction for the visit, and Mr. Vijay's route would be decided on Saturday night or Sunday.

The villagers have been protesting for more than 900 days against the acquisition of farmland for the project. Activists have also been against the project as the airport would come up on wetlands.

Dust, despair settle on Maharashtra's Chinchavli village as quarrying continues unabated

SPOTLIGHT

Purnima Sah

Soni Varku Warghada, 55, remembers the day in 2007 when she saw the first trucks enter Koparyachiwadi hamlet in Chinchavli village, Thane district, Maharashtra.

"We had never seen such heavy vehicles. Around 25 to 30 men got out of the vehicles and then entered the forest. Some of them took out large blades (tree cutters) and axes," Soni recalls.

Within a year, she says, the forest cover around the village was cleared and levelling of the Chanderi Dhar hill began. "By 2010, rocks were blasted and cut. A big machine began to crush the stones," Soni says.

A member of the Thakar tribe, which worships the forest as its nurturing mother, Soni says the experience was traumatic.

Residents say the forest

earlier provided the population of about 2,000 food and livelihood, but they could no longer depend on it. They claim quarrying has affected their health, depleted natural resources, and upset biodiversity.

In 2015, Laxmi Stone Industries was granted a quarry lease for five years for extraction and sale of stone and earth across four hectares. This was renewed for five years in 2019. However, officials from the Forest Department say the company had never sought permission to start stone quarrying. The company did not respond to requests for comment.

Health trouble

Soni's son, Bhaskar Warghada, 30, points to a well in the hamlet and says, "We stopped drawing water from here since the quarrying began. Many fell sick drinking water from it in the initial years. Within a year, the water bodies started releasing a strong



Toxic air: Mining dust rises from the stone quarry in Chinchavli village, Thane district, western Maharashtra. PURNIMA SAH

stench, and many felt nausea, dizziness, uneasiness, and breathing difficulties."

Bhaskar claims the quarrying company was releasing untreated effluents into the Ulhas river, which flows through the hamlet and supplies drinking water to over three million people in Badlapur and Thane. His son, who is about a year-and-a-half old, has remained unwell

regularly check on the health of people," he says.

Village struggles

Social worker Dhanaji Irmali, 42, says none of the residents were consulted before the stone quarry work began. "Laxmi Stone Industries is owned by Vishwanath Ramchandra Panvelkar, a familiar name in Thane and Badlapur as the Panvelkar Group is known for real estate projects. The tehsildar, gram panchayat, and Collector granted him permission to set up a stone-crushing unit and make ready-mix concrete," he says, adding that it now has four units.

In 2019 and 2023, the members of the gram panchayat opposed the decision and permission granted by two consecutive sarpanches for the stone quarry to operate.

Gram panchayat member and Dhanaji's wife, Usha Dhanaji Irmali, 39, says the villagers wrote to former Chief Minister Ek-

nath Shinde, the District Collector, State Environment Department, and Governor. The villagers claim they then started receiving threats from the quarry owner. This year, the village was to get its first water tank for a central supply, but the work abruptly stopped, and they say Panvelkar is responsible for it.

Panvelkar has released a series of videos on YouTube rubbishing the allegations. He was not available for comment.

Court rulings

On July 8, 2024, Ambernath tehsildar Prashanti Mane issued a notice to Panvelkar to stop quarrying in the village citing health hazards. It warned that the company's licence would be revoked. Mane was transferred soon after the notice was issued.

In 2022, a reply to an RTI query by activist-environmentalist Nandakumar Waman Pawar revealed that stone quarrying was

being done in the Matheran Eco-Sensitive Zone (MESZ). Matheran is a hill station near Mumbai where motor vehicles are banned. As per the Supreme Court notification dated February 4, 2003, any quarrying within the MESZ is prohibited under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

It also states that no mining or quarrying activity can take place in Matheran and its surrounding region – 214.73 sq km and a 200-metre buffer zone.

The RTI response also revealed that the quarry site was located inside the buffer zone of the MESZ, which includes a part of Chinchavli village, as per the zonal master plan prepared by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority in 1987.

On September 4, 2024, a public interest litigation (PIL) plea was filed in the Bombay High Court claiming that though the mining lease and environment

clearance had been granted for operations in four hectares, satellite imagery showed that it covered 9.88 hectares. The PIL stated that this made the area vulnerable to erosion and "the entire village susceptible to landslides while causing extremely high air and water pollution".

In a subsequent order, the High Court directed that the stay order by the tehsildar continue and that the matter be probed. This month, the Thane Collector submitted an affidavit in the court stating that the firm had mined beyond its licence. For this, the State government levied penalties and a fine of over ₹180 crore on the firm.

Despite the court order, when *The Hindu* visited the village in December last year, the sound of stones being crushed and the sight of trucks transporting them continued.

LINK TO FULL STORY
[» https://bit.ly/3DY3Y8v](https://bit.ly/3DY3Y8v)

Classifieds

LIFE MADE SIMPLE

Matrimonial

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

BRIDE GROOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDE GROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification Common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

ASSAMESE

AWADHI

BENGALI

BHOJPURI

BIHARI

CHHATTISGARHI

ENGLISH

GUJARATI

HARYANI

HINDI

KANNADA

KASHMIRI

KONKANI

MALAYALAM

MANIPURI

MARATHI

MARWARI

NEPALI

ORIYA

PARSI

PUNJABI

SAURASHTRA

SINDHI

TAMIL

TELUGU

TULU

URDU

ADVOCATE

BUSINESS

DEFENCE

DOCTOR

ENGINEER

FINANCE/BANKING

GOVERNMENT/QUASI-GOVERNMENT

IAS/ALLIED SERVICES

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Good looking Doctor girl MBBS, MD OG (pg ongoing) 24 yrs / 167 cm Star - Avithan Rasi - Makaram. Doctor Parents /

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Doctor Girl, MD, Anaesthesiology Specialist from Affluent Family

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Mother Tamil.

Looking for doctor groom (or)

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Whatsapp
9677026459

ENGINEER

Mudaliar / Vanniar 30Y/165 cm Doctor MBBS, fellowship in Diabetology seeks Engineer grooms. Ph. 94444 51488

ENGLISH

Vadakalai, Kousigam. Poordam (4), May 1994. B.Com.A.C.A.C.S. Groom seeks Qualified Grooms only lyingar & lyer Contact: 9040598204

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

Tamil/SC/ March 93/ IRS (DC) Groom, seeks Groom from IAS and Allied Service/ Dr. In MD/MS/SS - caste no bar/ Contact: 9042261465.

MALAYALAM

VISWAKARMA GIRL from elite family, 27/158 cm, Poojam, MBA, Operations Analyst in MNC - 9447000579, 9074673232.

DELI BASED Nair Girl 29 /145cm, Pooram 1.5 dosham pursuing PhD in Edinburgh UK seek alliance pref from same community pref Palakkad / Trichur and nearby districts. Contact: 9818364188.

MBA / CA / ICWA

29Y, BE MBA (IIT) Hindu Tamil girl 160cm Rohini Wkg MNC Blore PA Father retd scientist seeks prof qual boy pref Pune Mumbai Blore, Ph: 9371392775.

NRI

Hindu Telugu Never married 44/168 MS USA working seeking 45-47 Never married working in USA CNB 9966274192

ADRAHANA, 30, 170 cm, PG (Health) , Mekam EHO in Australia (Citizen) . Seeks well educated Groom (Neir/ Menon /Pillai / Tamil Brahmin/Mudaliyar), Ct:-91 98414 2804/ WhatsApp +61 91 927 100/ chukrav@ gmail.com

TAMIL

RC CHRISTIAN Vellarai, 31/176 CM, B. Tech MBA. PWC Bangalore 35PLA. Seeks God fearing, well educated working Professional. Contact: 8870520107 / 9952719542

CHRISTIAN, CASTE no bar, 34 Yrs, MCA, Engineer, Income 50 Lakhs, Ct 8138901097

CATHOLIC VELLALAR Girl 32 /171 MMPS MPH student visa Texas, USA Seeks professional from USA Ct:9150153743

GROOM REQD Christian,27yrs, MBA (UK),Well Educated Family,CNB, Need Abroad Profiles 971009399/9710091999

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CHRISTIAN, RC, 31 Yrs, MBBS, Doctor at Kanyakumari, Upper middle class family. Ct 8138901181

CHRISTIAN, CASTE no bar, 34 yrs, Divorced, MS , doctor, Income 50 Lakhs, Ct 8138900372

MUDALIAR 24/160 Fair Beautiful,BE, SWE,Capgemini 80000,PA,Well Settled Family, CNB, 9043991629, 9043987029

CHRISTIAN, CASTE no bar, 34 yrs, Divorced, MS , doctor, Income 50 Lakhs, Ct 8138901181

MUDALIAR 24/160 Fair Beautiful,BE, SWE,Capgemini 80000,PA,Well Settled Family, CNB, 9043991629, 9043987029

CHRISTIAN, CASTE no bar, 34 yrs, Divorced, MS , doctor, Income 50 Lakhs, Ct 8138901181

GROOM WANTED Hindu Nadar,27yrs, MBBS, Arch, Elite Business Family Contact: 971009399/ 9710091999

SC/ST Community Girl (Hindi) 29/155 cm, B.Tech (Chemical Engg) seeks groom from State Govt / Central Govt / Pvt organisation. Contact: 996922897 / 98196 30507

TELEGRAM

Smart, Pretty, Cultured Home Doctor Girl, MD, Anaesthesiology Specialist from Affluent Family of Doctors 35/165

Father Cardiac Surgeon from Kerala, based in Chennai, Mother Tamil.

Looking for doctor groom (or) Engineer from good families

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TELEGRAM

Good looking Doctor girl MBBS, MD OG (pg ongoing) 24 yrs / 167 cm Star - Avithan Rasi - Makaram. Doctor Parents /

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Father Cardiac Surgeon from Kerala, based in Chennai, Mother Tamil.

'Music and spirituality can't be separated'

Music cannot be separated from spirituality, violin maestro L. Subramaniam said at *The Hindu Lit for Life* 2025. Among the compositions of the great Trinity of Carnatic music, all are based on praise of some god, Mr. Subramaniam, the creator of the Global Fusion concept and the Lakshminarayana Global Music



L. Subramaniam also spoke about his book *Raga Harmony*. M. SRINATH

Festival, said in a conversation with journalist and arts entrepreneur Akhila Krishnamurthy.

'Modern poetry put humans in place of god'

Feelings of angst, dread, and alienation have found a distinct voice in modernist Tamil poetry, as in the literature of other languages, poet Perundevi said in conversation with Bogan Sankar on 'How modern is modern Tamil poetry' at *The Hindu Lit for Life* on Saturday. Mr. Sankar, who felt that

Thanipadalkal could be the pioneer of modern Tamil poetry, said it had an audacity in content and expression. "Poetry need not express only lofty ideas and emotions. It is more individualistic, humanistic, and can even be about human weaknesses," said Mr. Sankar.

Perundevi, citing a poem of Gnanakoothan ('Mesa Natarajar'), explained how the human subject has increasingly replaced the locus of god, who became either absent or was reduced to a mere object.



Perundevi in conversation with Bogan Sankar. M. SRINATH

***The Hindu* Lit for Life 2025 streaming live**

Literature enthusiasts can now tune in to *The Hindu* Lit for Life 2025 from the comfort of their homes anywhere in the world. The much-awaited festival, celebrating literature, arts, and culture, is being livestreamed on YouTube. On January 19, sessions will begin at 9.45 a.m. and go on till 7.40 p.m. The sessions being held at the Sir



Mutha Concert Hall are at newsth.live/LFL2025MHL. Discussions at *The Hindu* Pavilion can be viewed at newsth.live/LFL2025TPLS

IN BRIEF**Sex education must start young, says Leeza Mangaldas**

Sex educator, author, and entrepreneur Leeza Mangaldas during her session with filmmaker Latha Menon shared her enthusiasm about speaking on the topic of sex in a public setting, and pointed out that the shame that comes with even uttering the word is built within people from a young age. According to her, sex education needs to begin at a young age. "When you tell your children falsehoods because you are uncomfortable with providing the answer, your child's sense of discernment is going to be impacted," she said. She called for age-appropriate language to educate children.

**Sriram, Narayanan inspect audacious forms of devotion**

Historian V. Sriram and Carnatic singer Ashwath Narayanan took the audience at *The Hindu* Lit for Life through the fearless expressions of *Ninda Stuti*, where saints and poets mock, provoke, and even accuse their gods to forge an intimate connection. Devotion, in its most unrestrained form, can be as audacious as it is heartfelt. Mr. Sriram highlighted how composers of the past had the liberty to write what they wanted to. This daring tradition endures, inspiring modern expressions, and showing that devotion, at its core, is a deeply personal relationship – one that allows for jest, while rooted in unwavering love.

**Prajakta Koli talks on tropes of romance, her debut book**

Content creator, YouTuber, actor, and recently turned author Prajakta Koli dons multiple hats. In conversation with Rosella Stephen, Senior Associate Editor, *The Hindu*, at Lit for Life on Saturday, she spoke about how it has been for her to try different avenues and about diversification. Ms. Koli said her book, *Too Good To Be True*, is an extremely ordinary telling of a story about two people, who, in her opinion are beautiful. She said that there was no right idea to start off than right away. "If you are starting off, you might feel like you have to wait for the right idea and right experience... But you don't. There is no way of knowing what the perfect time or idea is going to be. If you want to start, start now," Ms. Koli said.

Sponsors

The Hindu Lit for Life event is presented by KIA India and is organised in association with Christ University. Associate Partners: LIC, RR Donnelley, Blue Star, Brigade Group, NITTE Deemed-to-be University, PROchure, Singer, Chennai Port Authority & Kamarajar Port Ltd., Uttarakhand Tourism, Vajiram and Ravi, Indian Bank, Akshayakalpa and ICFAI Group. Realty Partner: Casagrand. Bookstore Partner: Crossword. Food Partner: Wow Momo. Beverage Partner: Beachville. Radio Partner: Big FM. TV Partner: Puthiya Thalaimurai. Gift Partner: Anand Prakash. Water Partner: Repute. The event is supported by: U.S. Consulate, Chennai.

Reading made Abraham Verghese a doctor and an 'accidental' writer

There is no way you can experience everything in the world, but through the medium of novels you can live several different lifetimes. The only instrument that can stop time is the novel says the physician-turned writer; he urges everyone to keep a journal to understand what one thinks

Sudipta Datta

What was the moment that moved a renowned physician to become a writer? For the first session of *The Hindu* Lit for Life 2025, Abraham Verghese, author of best-selling novels such as *The Covenant of Water*, *Cutting for Stone*, and *The Tennis Partner*, and a groundbreaking memoir, *My Own Country: A Doctor's Story*, elaborated on the power of words to convey the human condition.

In a talk, 'Writing as a form of self-discovery', sprinkled with anecdotes, references to favourite books, characters and quotes, Dr. Verghese began by saying he is very much an accidental writer and that he achieved the pinnacle of his ambition when he became a doctor.

In 50-odd minutes, he explained how he came to be a doctor and a writer, some of the lessons learnt along the way, and the



Birth of an author: Abraham Verghese speaks on 'Writing as a form of self-discovery'. R. RAGU

journey from India to Ethiopia to the U.S. "I am a big believer in how geography shapes one's destiny," he said.

Love for reading

Pointing out that the only thing going for him was that he loved to read, he mentioned some of his varied early reading influenc-

es, such as D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, and A.J. Cronin's *The Citadel*, and how each led him on to other discoveries, about his own capabilities of becoming a doctor and a writer. For example, he said a line from *Of Human Bondage* – "Philip saw human-

ity there in the rough, the artist's canvas, and he said to himself, 'This is something I can do,' – when the protagonist visits a hospital ward hit him like a bolt of lightning. "That was my calling to medicine," underscoring the magic that can happen between the reader and the writer.

Dr. Verghese would go



AIDS on patients, which got a lot of attention, but he felt that the language of science did not begin to capture the heartache of the journey, did not begin to capture his own grief and tragic experience of the families. "And that was the moment I became a writer, to try and tell that story," he said.

In a powerful message to the young in the audience, exhorting them to read, Dr. Verghese said, "There is no way you can experience everything in the world but through the medium of novels you can live several different lifetimes. The only instrument that can stop time in the world is the novel."

Calling writing a collaborative venture, he said it was imperative to read, because stories provide "instructions for living, and we read in order to get those instructions," Dr. Verghese urged everyone to keep a journal and that he writes one "to understand what I am thinking."

on to study medicine, first at Madras Medical College and then to Boston to specialise, and eventually find himself practising in Tennessee, wading into the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. This led to the birth of his writer's voice.

He wrote a scientific article on the widespread and debilitating effects of

I am not entirely against Indianism, don't go correcting people: Tharoor

Sanjana Ganesh

CHENNAI

"I don't go around correcting people's English as people famously think," said writer-politician Shashi Tharoor as he discussed etymology, Indianism, creative insults by writers, and his tryst with trolls, and memes with the Chief Executive Officer of *The Hindu*, L.V. Navaneeth, at the session titled "A wonderland of words", named after his book.

Mr. Tharoor had tied his tryst with words to his father Chandran, who often challenged him with word games. His father had back then created a nascent version of *The New York Times* word game Wordle.



Shashi Tharoor in conversation with L.V. Navaneeth. R. RAGU

"My father was a self-taught man from a village in Kerala where the standard of the [English] language was not too great. He read and subsequently fell in love [with English]. It is this love that is passed down to us. My father had

a great zeal for life. When I was young, I was happy to escape into a book and ignore the world. He shook me out of it," he said.

The author went on to speak about words that have made it to common Indian parlance including

'non-veg', 'wheatish complexion' and 'passed out'.

He said that Indians often made the mistake of using the word 'until' incorrectly.

He finally added that he was a proponent of the usage of the word 'prepone' as 'advance' seemed alien. "People are often surprised to know that I am not entirely against Indianism," he said.

He added that he invented the word 'Atmami' – a portmanteau of the Sanskrit 'Atma' meaning soul and the French 'Ami' meaning friend to mean soulmate or kindred spirit, at the PUNE Literature Festival earlier, and hoped that the word could be used more often.

The Hindu launches Surf & Dive at lit fest



Shashi Tharoor launches *Surf & Dive* in the presence of Suresh Nambath, Editor, *The Hindu*; Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson, THGPP; and L.V. Navaneeth, CEO, THGPP. R. RAGU

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Shashi Tharoor, MP and writer, launched *The Hindu*'s latest product, *Surf & Dive*, a print offering that gives readers in-depth coverage across a range of issues through long-form reads.

Mr. Tharoor, along with The Hindu Group Chairperson Nirmala Lakshman, Editor Suresh Nambath and CEO L.V. Navaneeth released the first copy of *Surf & Dive* at *The Hindu* Lit for Life festival on Saturday.

The idea behind *Surf & Dive* was that in a world abuzz with digital distractions, there is a growing hunger for thoughtful analysis and trusted perspectives. Readers are seeking quality content that informs, inspires, and empowers.

And at a time when information overload can overwhelm, *Surf & Dive* presents meticulously curated long-form reads that offer clarity, context, and a 360-degree perspective of the world.

Surf & Dive, according to Mr. Nambath, has been

The books present meticulously curated long-form reads that offer context and a complete world view

conceived of as a product that gives readers both breadth and depth as they seek information in a curated format. The subjects are varied: political, social and economic developments in India and the rest of the world, alongside science, technology, medicine and art and culture as well as sports.

The writers are subject experts who provide a deep dive into issues, cutting through the clutter with clarity of thought, in ways that can occupy the mind spaces of readers.

To be published twice a month – 24 books planned each year – each book invites you to 'surf' through a range of significant topics and 'dive' deep into subjects that matter.

Surf & Dive, according to Mr. Nambath, has been

Without Voldemort, Harry Potter is just having a lovely day, says Walliams

Gowri S.

CHENNAI

In his very first literary fest in India, popular children's author and comedian David Walliams began with a loud proclamation to an audience filled with children: "I am here to talk about my favourite subject – Me!"

This very inflated sense of self remained a running joke through a delightfully interactive session at *The Hindu* Lit for Life, peppered with animated readings and hilarious audience interactions.



David Walliams during his special session for children. R. RAVINDRAN

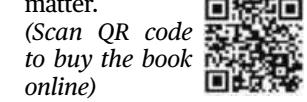
"We all feel different in one way or the other and I want to say this to you kids out there, difference is

your superpower. Never be afraid of that," he said.

Mr. Walliams's journey writing children's books

began with the title *The Boy in the Dress*. From when he made his "world debut" on stage in the 1980s to when his sister dressed him in elaborate wigs and beautiful dresses, he recalled instances that proved as inspiration to his writing.

"One piece of advice I'll give you when you are writing your story – always think about the villains, because villains are very important. They often make the stories happen. Without Voldemort, Harry Potter is just having a lovely day at school!"



CM YK

A ND-NDE

'Nothing lost, much gained with Tamil spirit of openness to diverse cultures'

Author-journalist Nirmala Lakshman speaks of her book *The Tamils: A Portrait of a Community*, written over five years drawing from a wealth of historical information, painstaking research, keen observations of the community, and detailed interviews, to explore the identity of the community

Radhika Santhanam
CHENNAI

The Tamil Sangam poet Cittalai Cattanar wrote: "It looks like a skilled man's work of art, this Jasmine country."

In the Lit for Life session titled "This Jasmine Country", Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson, The Hindu Group, discussed her latest book, *The Tamils: A Portrait of a Community*, with dancer and choreographer Anita Ratnam.

The book is part of a series brought out by the Aleph Book Company portraying various communities in India, and is edited by David Davard.

Dr. Ratnam introduced the book about a community of 90 million people as a "reminder of the great and complex heritage called Tamilakam as well as a message to the Hindi heartland that South India is far from a monolith".

The Tamil people have given India – and the world – scientists, revolutionaries, political leaders, scholars, artists, industrialists, sportspersons, and Nobel Prize winners. Spread across the world now, the Tamils have left an indelible mark in every field. But who are the Tamils? What is the Tamil *gumam* or identity?

Written over five years, Dr. Lakshman's book draws from a wealth of historical information, pain-



Indelible imprint: Nirmala Lakshman and Anita Ratnam speaking at *The Hindu* Lit for Life. R. RAGU

staking research, her own keen observations of the community, and detailed interviews, to explore the history and culture of the Tamil people over centuries. She weaves in her own personal story into the narrative. As she was educated in English and had learned Hindi in school, Dr. Lakshman said her mother insisted that she have a Tamil teacher at home. "But we always had the consciousness of being Tamil," she said.

A vast sweep
Dr. Lakshman begins her book from the Stone Age and travels quickly to the Sangam Age. If she were ever given the choice to live in another period, she said she would happily

choose the Sangam period. "I have a passion for poetry. A.K. Ramanujan's translations of Sangam poetry are not just about love and nature but also war and heroism. They also convey the harsh realities of life, which also resonate with the modern age," she said.

Dr. Ratnam said Dr. Lakshman's book had not just focused on the "so-called glorious periods of the Pallavas, Pandyas, Cholas, and Cheras", but also brought out the "inequities, violence, and atrocities of those periods".

She asked Dr. Lakshman about the thriving Jain community of the time. Speaking of her multiple visits to Sittanavasal, a small hamlet in Pudukkottai district of Tamil Nadu,

Dr. Lakshman recalled the beauty of the faded paintings on the ceilings, much like in Ajanta, and said it transformed her idea of what Jainism was.

The book equally talks of a syncretic region. Dr. Ratnam said the book explored the multiple strands of faith: Vedic religion, the Bhakti movement, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. "Tamilakam was always a welcoming and accommodative region," Dr. Lakshman said.

"There was a Tamil spirit of being open to diverse cultures and adapting to them, adopting them, and making them their own. Nothing was lost, but a lot was gained."

As an example, she



spoke of Muslim traders. "Some of the finest scholarship on Tamil literature came from Tamil Muslim scholars. They were Tamil by birth and Muslim by faith," she said.

Dr. Lakshman said how there was a peaceful movement to Islam. "A lot of traders married women on the western coast. Subsequently, they settled along the coast." For these portions, she said she was assisted by the academic and documentary filmmaker Kombai Anwar and scholar Raja Mohamad in Tiruchy.

She highlighted the journey of the Italian Jesuit priest Roberto de Nobili to India as an example of assimilation. "He realised that the best way was to not impose any particular way of

thinking on the local people. He wore a dhoti and *vibhuti*," she said.

The conversation was peppered with anecdotes, including the history of sambar. The ubiquitous dish with tamarind broth originated in the kitchens of the Thanjavur Maratha kingdom, Dr. Lakshman said. "Rulers wanted to learn and establish themselves in the south. The ruler, Sambhaji, was interested in cooking. So, it came from their courts."

The speakers then discussed how Tamil Nadu played a major role in the nationalist movement, with Mahatma Gandhi visiting the region several times. "In fact, he started wearing his loin cloth in Madurai," Dr. Lakshman said.

"The ideas of Gandhi caught fire and were conveyed by telegram and newspapers. The whole country was entranced. During that period, there were tales of heroism (such as of the fighter Veerapandiya Kattabomman), reform movements (such as widow remarriage and liberation of Devadasis), and tragedies all taking place simultaneously."

At the same time, the Dravidian movement was born with the formation of the Justice Party, as "there was a consciousness that Brahmins had cornered education and jobs," Dr. Lakshman said.

IN BRIEF



'A writer like Sujatha will come only once in 100 years'

Tamil writer Sujatha was unique, versatile, prolific, and thoroughly knowledgeable and people like him would only come once in 100 years, said filmmaker Rajiv Menon at *The Hindu* Lit for Life on Saturday. In conversation with film critic Baradwaj Rangan on the topic 'Memories of a collaboration with writer Sujatha', the filmmaker said: "Sujatha sir had both a sense of humour and in-depth knowledge of writing emotional and powerful dialogues for movies. He had the ability to merge four to six ideas in one scene... Any emotion set up in one scene would increase in the other and then it flowers in the next scene. That understanding of emotions is very important." Mr. Menon also lauded Sujatha's witty narrative and meticulous dialogue.



A reason to live and the recipe for happiness in life

Ikigai is the Japanese word for 'a reason to live'. Spanish author Francesc Miralles describes it as being happily busy, to wake up every morning happily, and do what has value for a person and the world. Unravelling the mysteries of a happy life in a conversation with Vasudha Rai at *The Hindu* Lit for Life, Mr. Miralles – co-author of the one-stop book *Ikigai* with Hector Garcia – offered ways for readers to discover what truly matters to them, and to live lives filled with purpose and joy. "Physical and mental wellness starts from the mind. When you put too many things on the table of life, you get stressed and anxious. Doing less things with all attention and love puts you in a state of natural flow and makes you happy," said the author, whose book has been translated into 70 languages.



Veganism, blood sport, and grey shades of characters

Authors Nandini Krishnan and Kannan Iyer, who are co-authoring the soon-to-be-released *Doom* series, spoke about the grey shades of their protagonists and villains – some of whom are eco-terrorists, 10th century kings, and rogue journalists – at *The Hindu* Lit for Life. They spoke on veganism, the use of fossil fuels, and protecting animals. Introducing the audience to their upcoming book, the duo explained the plot and personalities through diagrams, flowcharts, and cartoons. Ms. Nandini added that in the present day, animals that are being treated terribly and brutally murdered would rather become extinct instead of facing difficult ends. The two authors said they hoped to build a conversation around climate change while discussing the grey shades of people regarded as heroes and villains.

+ 'Too early to celebrate Gaza ceasefire deal'

Radhika Santhanam
CHENNAI



Stanley Johny is the author of *Original Sin: Israel Palestine & The Revenge of Old West Asia*.

that Israel rejected the same deal months ago, but accepted it now largely due to three factors: "First, Israel believes that its position in West Asia is stronger after the fall of the Assad regime [in Syria] and also that Iran will be weakened. Second, the return of Donald Trump may have helped push the deal through. Third, Mr. Netanyahu is confident that his political standing has improved and that his government will survive," he explained. Mr. Johny said the Israeli Prime Minister faced no immediate threat now. "He knows how to bounce back," he added.

The author said that Hamas was not a spent force. "Hamas has recruited as many fighters as it has lost over 13 months. It has reinvented itself," he said.

Mankind needs a mix of capitalism and socialism, says Jenny Erpenbeck

Sudipta Datta

East Berlin-born writer Jenny Erpenbeck waited 30 years to write about the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the changes that it brought to a region – German Democratic Republic or East Germany – which ceased to exist as a country.

In a conversation with historian Ira Mukhoty, Ms. Erpenbeck and Michael Hofmann – who translated her International Booker Prize-winning novel *Kairos* into English – unravelled the reasons why it took so long to tell a story close to her heart.

During the session titled "Love in the time of uncertainty" at *The Hindu* Lit for Life, Ms. Erpenbeck said the issue was too close for comfort and that writing a novel about the transition that was taking place in her country needed some distance. "I was busy taking part in everything... facing new things and new rules; I was busy making a living," she contended, pointing out that adjusting to the new system, which came as a surprise and a shock, took time.

The translation, he said, also gave him an opportunity to bring to English read-



ers an experience of post-war Germany which they are not aware of, where "everything seems to be in a flux".

Asked why after reunification post 1989, there seemed to be a hurry to erase East German memories, Ms. Erpenbeck said the process to make a "united memory" after 40 years of a split history between East and West Germany is an ongoing process.

Ms. Erpenbeck said she wanted to narrate the story of East Germany in all its complexity, including its Fascist past, and tell readers a bit more about the country than what Florian

Henckel von Donnersmarck's 2006 film *The Lives of Others* conveyed.

Different perspectives

Different parts of the world have different experiences with Communism, said Ms. Mukhoty, asking how then should the fall of the Berlin Wall be viewed. Ms. Erpenbeck said there are still some discussions going on about the advantages of a society based on political freedom and a society based on social achievements and justice.

"I think what we should keep thinking about is if freedom needs to be connected with Capitalism.

Freedom is a very important achievement – freedom of speech, and not being put into prison for your thoughts – but if it is connected to a state which has a steep gap between the poor and rich, the best freedom does not reach the people. If the poor has to think about how to make a living, they cannot make any use of the freedom of speech. I think a mixture of both systems, their advantages, is what we need for mankind," she pointed out.

Romulus Whitaker, Janaki Lenin share a serpentine journey into the wilderness



Madhuvanti S. Krishnan
CHENNAI

"Which school would let a kid have a gun? Which school would allow a kid to have an eight-foot python living under his bed? Kodaiakanal was incredible..." said Romulus Whitaker, renowned herpetologist and founder, the Madras Snake Park, the Andaman and Nicobar Environment Trust,

and the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust.

In conversation with Janaki Lenin, co-author of his recent book, *Snakes, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll: My Early Years*, and K.C. Vijaya Kumar, Sports Editor, *The Hindu*, Mr. Whitaker spoke of his lifelong tryst with snakes and other reptiles, adventures with Tamil Nadu's Irula tribes, and more.

Addressing Mr. Vijaya Kumar's questions on the forest cover in India, the tussle over the ban on vehicular traffic at night in Bandipur and Mudumalai,

and how he viewed the eco-space, Mr. Whitaker explained how there was a dichotomy where there were pressures in India for re-development whilst simultaneously a need to protect all the natural re-

sources. "What a strange balance we have to meet! While we blame the government for a lot of the negative stuff going on, it is important to remember that besides the cheetah, India still has every one of the major predators we had a 1,000 years ago. The same cannot be said for the rest of the world. While we are doing well, we also have to be careful and keep

the pressure on to save our resources and wildlife," he said.

Ms. Lenin, shed light on how what she read as a youngster impacted her writings nature.

"While I was growing up... I was reading Enid Blyton and about European nature. What was great about Blyton was that she wrote about hares, rabbits, toads, and frogs – she captivated me in how she wrote about the small creatures like the birds that came to her feeder. Eventually, that is what drove me to write, and I wanted readers to have that relationship with what they see around them. They don't see tigers, and lions, and big animals. It is the little things that would eventually help them connect with wildlife," she said.

Lit for Life



Brain teaser: A quiz under way at *The Hindu* Lit for Life venue in Chennai on Saturday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ



Crowdpuller: Audience at a session at *The Hindu* Lit For Life event in Chennai on Saturday. R. RAVINDRAN



Eye for art: People visiting the Imprint exhibition at the Lit for Life event in Chennai on Saturday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ



Selfie stop: Students visited the literature fest in large numbers. A group gets ready for a selfie at the venue. R. RAGU

From a frozen mass to climate crisis: mapping earth's journey



Historian Peter Frankopan speaking at *The Hindu* Lit for Life event in Chennai on Saturday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Geetha Srimathi CHENNAI

Historian Peter Frankopan began his talk at *The Hindu* Lit for Life by showing the image of a gray celestial body and asking the audience to identify it. "Moon," came the answer. But Mr. Frankopan, amused, said, "No, that's the frozen earth." And with that, he launched into his exploration of *The Earth Transformed*, taking the audience from a lifeless planet to the world that set the stage for a civilization.

Mr. Frankopan highlighted how natural forces, such as monsoons and mountains, have influenced trade, agriculture, and settlement patterns. He discussed the effect of the Rocky Mountains on rainfall in North America and the role of the Himalayas in shaping Indian rivers and farmlands. Such geographical features, shaped millions of years ago, continue to dictate global climate and human activity, he said.

Mr. Frankopan delved into the rise of early civilisations, explaining how geography and resources spurred the growth of cities near rivers such as the Indus, Nile and the Yellow River. These settlements developed sanitation systems, hierarchies and governance. He stressed how humans have always sought to manage natural challenges, with early societies relying on religion and rituals to explain and adapt to the environment.

Moving to the 20th century, decisions made in response to climatic and environmental challenges often exacerbated those challenges, he said. For instance, the Bengal famine of the 1940s saw grain being exported even as people starved. These decisions show the consequences of human choices during crises and remind us that understanding the broader context of climate and environmental changes is important, he added.

Drawing a connection between the rise of empires, such as the Cholas and the Vikings, and climate stability, Mr. Frankopan noted how the current climate crisis exacerbates social inequalities, particularly in regions such as South Asia, where air quality and water scarcity are severe.

Linking the past to the present, Mr. Frankopan reflected on how climate change and resource distribution remain central to global challenges. He said that the work done today, from addressing air quality in cities such as Chennai to responding to climate change globally, can set the stage for a more sustainable future.

The renewable energy transition, if managed correctly, could help us stay within ecological limits, as our current trajectory could lead to dire consequences.

"It's about changing the structure of the world around us, trying to improve where we are, trying to live within our ecological limits rather than push them too far," he said.

Beauty of human beings is in their vulnerability: Leander

Nihit Sachdeva CHENNAI

Towards the end of a long first day of *The Hindu* Lit for Life, the Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall was still packed for the final session. Leander Paes, India's most-decorated tennis star, was in the house.

After a short video featuring some of the greatest moments of his career – from the Olympic bronze

at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta to multiple Grand Slam wins – the conversation began with Mr. Paes becoming the first Asian man to be inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in the player category. In the session moderated by Suresh Balakrishna, Chief Revenue Officer of *The Hindu* Group, the 51-year-old star regaled the audience with his wit and humour. He had a lump in his throat



Tennis legend Leander Paes in conversation with Suresh Balakrishna in Chennai on Saturday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

when he recalled the sacrifices his parents, friends, and he himself had

made.

Sharing his experience of playing with Martina

Navratilova and Martina Hingis – with whom he won two and four Majors in mixed doubles, respectively – Mr. Paes gave a life lesson in leadership. "Martina Navratilova is a born leader. When we would go out into a match and the coin toss would be done, she would always want to choose whether to serve or receive," said Mr. Paes. Ms. Hingis, who had formed a solid partnership with Mr. Paes during World Team

Tennis, was not sure about their pairing for the Grand Slams. "She said, 'What if we lose? What if I am not ready and look bad on the court and the men hit harder,'" he recalled.

But Mr. Paes said the "beauty of human beings is in their vulnerability and the beauty of a partner is in how you protect your partner's vulnerability."

The Paes-Hingis pair

clicked and clinched all four Majors in 18 months.

Need for revisiting history of anti-caste cultural assertion



Looking back: Historian Stalin Rajangam with Neelam editor Vasuki Bhaskar in Chennai on Saturday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

B. Kolappan CHENNAI

Writer and historian Stalin Rajangam said though Dalit politics and culture could sail together, political compulsions and electoral politics have denied a space for Dalit culture.

"Even those who can acquire a space for Dalit culture in politics are not allowed to do so because it could embarrass the alliance partners," he said while interacting with Vasuki Bhaskar, Editor, *Neelam*, on "Revisiting the history of anti-caste cultural assertion" at *The Hindu* Lit

For Life on Saturday.

Mr. Rajangam said even though culture was an integral part of politics, even those who were involved in anti-caste crusades had failed to accommodate Dalit culture. Pointing out that there was negative projection and humiliation of Dalits and their culture which had resulted in creating an opinion that "Dalits lack culture or they suffer from paucity of culture," he said on the con-

"When Ambedkar questioned the need for reading the works full of irrational beliefs, his father had reminded him that though Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana, was a tribal, he had received wider acceptance and it could act as an impetus to Ambedkar's thinking," he said.

He also spoke in favour of Dalits creating a counter path while adopting the policy of "inversion and reversion" towards others.

'Characters from historical fiction should not be taken out of context'

N. Sai Charan CHENNAI

A. Vennila, writer, poet and novelist, has said that characters from historical fiction should not be taken out of context to form the basis of writing authentic history.

She was in conversation with Kavitha Muralidharan, senior journalist, on the topic "People's histories: creative literary approaches", at *The Hindu* Lit for Life on Saturday.

Ms. Vennila cited the example of Kuyili, the woman who carried out a suicide attack on a British armoury, ensuring victory to Rani Velu Nachiyar of Sivaganga. The character was created by author K. Jeeva Barathi, who wrote a novel on Velu Nachiyar. However, Kuyili has now become an historical figure and has a place in the me-



Writing stories: Writer A. Vennila along with senior journalist Kavitha Muralidharan in Chennai on Saturday. M. SRINATH

morial to Velu Nachiyar, Ms. Vennila said while explaining how historical fiction should not be considered history.

She shared her experience of writing *Gangapuram* (her first novel describing societal structures that existed during the Chola period), *Chaalampuri* (her second novel on the lives of grassroots workers against the backdrop of the Dravidian par-

ty's transition from the Dravidian Kazhagam to electoral politics) and *Neerathikaram* (her latest novel on struggles of people involved in the construction of the Mullaperiyar Dam).

"There are several challenges in writing historical fiction. The writer should bring in visual elements establishing the period of the plot. It is like the job of an art director in movies. For *Neerathikaram*, I had tra-

velled quite extensively to several places in the Cumbum Valley and also to London to get authentic information on John Pennyquick (the architect of Mullaperiyar dam)," she said.

Citing the example of Vanhiyathavan and Nandini, characters in the novel *Ponniyin Selvan* by Kalki, Ms. Vennila said, "Though there were fictional elements in these characters, the author did not push beyond reality and history. Likewise, a character from historical fiction should not be picked up out of context and form the basis for writing authentic history... Pennyquick should be celebrated for his actual contributions in playing a pivotal role in construction of the Mullaperiyar dam. Neerathikaram was an attempt to demystify several myths about Pennyquick," she said.

Writer and historian Stalin Rajangam said though Dalit politics and culture could sail together, political compulsions and electoral politics have denied a space for Dalit culture.

"But the anti-caste crusade in the last decades had negatively viewed Dalit culture or its various aspects," he said and drew the attention to the colonial records on the space accorded to Dalits in Maramman, Ekathamman and Pidaramman temples in Chennai.

Stressing the need for working in the cultural space, Vasuki Bhaskar spoke about the advice given by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's father to the Constitution architect to study the Mahabharata and Ramayana.

Mr. Rajangam said even though culture was an integral part of politics, even those who were involved in anti-caste crusades had failed to accommodate Dalit culture. Pointing out that there was negative projection and humiliation of Dalits and their culture which had resulted in creating an opinion that "Dalits lack culture or they suffer from paucity of culture," he said on the con-

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IN BRIEF



NTR was a great visionary and humanist, says A.P. CM Naidu

Paying tributes to N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) on the occasion of his death anniversary on Saturday, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said on X that the TDP founder and former Chief Minister was a great visionary and humanist. He observed that NTR had pioneered the reforms that were aimed at reducing poverty. NTR had introduced a slew of welfare schemes targeted at the people languishing in penury, and achieved impressive results, he said.

Tirumala stampede: senior official to visit shrine today

Union Home Ministry Additional Secretary Sanjeev Kumar Jindal is visiting Tirumala for two days beginning Sunday. The purpose is reportedly to inquire into the recent stampede, and the fire that broke out in a laddu distribution counter, both of which created a scare with regard to public safety. According to reliable sources, Mr. Jindal will meet TTD officials and discuss the likely cause of the incidents which landed the TTD in an awkward situation.

Three sentenced to RI for hunting down wild tusker

An Ernakulam court has sentenced three of the seven accused in the 2009 case involving the killing of an elephant calf in the Kuttampuzha forest range and the attempt to sell its tusks. They were each given four years of rigorous imprisonment along with a fine of ₹15,000. The case pertains to the gunning down of a six-year-old elephant in the Kathippara reserve forest within the Aanakkulam forest station limits in the Kuttampuzha forest range on July 8, 2009.

No notice on attachment of assets by ED: MUDA official

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

The Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) has not received any communication from the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) on the attachment of immovable properties under investigation in the alleged scam relating to the controversial 50:50 scheme. "We have not received any communication from ED on this," a MUDA official said.

It may be mentioned that the ED, in a statement on Friday, had not only termed the allotment of 14 alternative sites to Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi in lieu of 3.16 acres of land acquired by MUDA as 'illegal', but also claimed that the agency had provisionally attached 142 immovable properties with a market value of over ₹300 crore, registered in the name of real estate business people and agents.

While the 14 sites allotted to Parvathi had been returned to the MUDA, sources said the probe into the alleged irregularities in the allotment of alternative sites under the 50:50 ratio scheme was under way by a Commission of Inquiry headed by former High Court judge P.N. Desai.

Meanwhile, activist Snehamayi Krishna, the complainant, told reporters that he was confident that not just 142 sites, but all the sites that had been allotted under the 50:50 ratio scheme would be confiscated by the authorities.

Lok Sabha member from Mysuru Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar has reiterated his demand for Mr. Siddaramaiah's resignation.

Cong., BJP corner LDF govt. over setting up of liquor unit

Both parties have raised the spectre of over-exploitation of groundwater and contamination of groundwater from industrial effluents in the perennially water-scarce Palakkad district

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/
PALAKKAD

The Congress and BJP are poised to stir up a political storm over the Left Democratic Front's (LDF) contentious decision to allow a liquor major, Oasis Commercial Private Limited, to establish manufacturing units in Palakkad.

Both parties have raised the spectre of over-exploitation of groundwater and its contamination by industrial effluents in the water-scarce farming district. Notably, Palakkad is historically a hotbed of water conservation struggles, in-



V.D. Satheesan

cluding the 2002-07 Plachimada agitation that led to the closure of the local Coca-Cola manufacturing unit.

The Congress and the BJP have accused the government of favouritism by 'excluding' other firms from the lucrative contract.

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan, Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala, and BJP State president K. Surendran, alleged that the CBI had arrested the firm's promoters in connection with the Delhi liquor case.

Matters came to a head on Friday when Additional Chief Secretary, Taxes, A. Jayathilak promulgated an order permitting Oasis to establish an ethanol multi-feed distillation unit at an initial investment cost of an estimated ₹600 crore.

Kerala Excise Minister M.B. Rajesh told *The Hindu* that Opposition parties were stirring unnecessary controversy to earn politi-

cal dividends.

People's anger is brewing against the proposed brewery and distillery in Elappally panchayat. People of the panchayat worry that the brewery will adversely affect their agriculture and water availability.

Elappally panchayat president Revathy Babu said she was not aware of the government move, and that the panchayat could not support anything that negatively affects the lives of the people.

Panchayat councillor Rameshan D., who is also district secretary of the INTUC, said the plant would aggravate the dearth of water in the panchayat.

mily annual income is below ₹2.5 lakh are provided monthly allowance of ₹1,500.

Ms. Tatkare said, "There have been complaints about the annual income of some beneficiaries being above ₹2.5 lakh, some owning more than one personal vehicle, employed in government jobs, and moving to other States after marriage."

She said the cross-verification is an ongoing process and will continue.

Launched ahead of the Assembly election last year by the then Finance Minister Ajit Pawar, the Ladki Bahin scheme is said to have played a key role in the victory of the ruling Mahayati.

Scrutiny of Ladki Bahin beneficiaries under way: Minister

Press Trust of India
SHIRDI

Maharashtra Minister Aditi Tatkare on Saturday said the process of scrutinising beneficiaries of the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana is under way with the help of the Transport and Income Tax Departments.

Talking to reporters here, the State Women and Child Development Minister said 4,500 women have filed applications to opt out of the scheme.

Under the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, launched by the previous Eknath Shinde-led government in August last year, women from economically weaker sections whose fa-

Cong. MLA, district chief get anticipatory bail in suicide case

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

A Wayanad court has granted anticipatory bail to I.C. Balakrishnan, Congress MLA for Sultan Bathery, N.D. Appachan, District Congress Committee (DCC) president, and K.K. Gopinathan, former DCC treasurer, in a case of abetting the suicide of N.M. Vijayan, former DCC treasurer, and his son Jijesh.

While granting the anti-

cipatory bail on Saturday, the court asked the Congress leaders to cooperate with the Crime Branch investigation. They have also been told not to influence the witnesses in the case and travel out of Wayanad. The police filed the case against four Congress leaders, including the late P.V. Balachandran, former DCC president, on January 9.

A suicide note left behind by Vijayan had named the MLA and others.

Polls for Karnataka BJP chief post to be held soon: Chouhan

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

With the factional war in the Karnataka unit of the BJP showing no signs of abating, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday said the election to the State unit president's post would be held soon.

Mr. Chouhan said here that the process to elect the new president had started. Interestingly, State BJP presidents have so far

been chosen unopposed.

His announcement comes a day after State BJP chief B.Y. Vijayendra expressed confidence of continuing in the post and the party returning to power in the State with a majority.

The State BJP's image appears to be dented heavily as leaders associated with the groups led by Basanagouda R. Patil Yatnal and Mr. Vijayendra have been washing their dirty linen in public.

18 Naxals killed in Bijapur operation, not 12, say police

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh police on Saturday said that 18 Naxals – not 12, as initially announced – were killed in the South Bastar operation

operation in the forests of Tumrel, Sigampalli, Pujarkanker, and Malempenta in the border areas of the Pamed, Usur, and Basaguda police jurisdictions in Bijapur district.

Security forces had targeted the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army Battalion No. 01 and CRC (Central Regional Committee), considered to be among the strongest military formations in the Maoist hierarchy.

Flying delights



Sky is the limit: Kites on display at Tannirbhavi beach during the International Kite Festival in Mangaluru on Saturday. H.S. MANJUNATH

Audit finds financial mismanagement at university in Kerala

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

An audit report prepared by the Principal Accountant-General (A-G), Kerala, has revealed several systemic irregularities in APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University (KTU), including expenses incurred in violation of government orders, failure to recover excess arrear payments, short payment of stamp duty, retention of several unqualified faculty, and the appointment of contract staff for remuneration higher than government approved rates.

The observations made during the audit conducted at the university during 2024 assume relevance against the backdrop of its e-governance system.

Survey adds 24 new species to Munnar's faunal stock

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A faunal survey in the Munnar Wildlife Division has led to the addition of 24 new species of birds, butterflies, and odonates to its checklist.

The exercise, undertaken by the Forest Department in association with the Travancore Nature History Society, simultaneously surveyed the Mathikettan Shola National Park (MSNP), Pambadum Shola National Park (PSNP), Anamudi Shola National Park (ANP), Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS), Eravikulam National Park (ENP), and Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary (CWLS) from January 8 to 12. The area, lying between 500 and 2,800 metres in elevation, was surveyed by 21 teams comprising 78 delegates.

A total of 217 species of birds were documented



Anamalai Sholakili. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Other notable species spotted included the Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Great Eared Nightjar, Steppe Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Eurasian Sparrow Hawk, Lesser Fish Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Indian Eagle Owl, Spot-bellied Eagle Owl, Indian Grey Hornbill, and Blue-eared Kingfisher.

The MSNP recorded 84 species, PSNP recorded 72,

Doctors transport brain-dead man's heart in 13 minutes

Siddharth Kumar Singh
HYDERABAD

Two green corridors were created on the Metro line and the Outer Ring Road (ORR) in Hyderabad on Friday to rush organs taken from a 34-year-old brain-dead man to recipients in different hospitals.

Malga Naveen had met with an accident and was taken to a private hospital in Hyderabad. Despite medical teams' efforts, his condition worsened and the doctors declared him brain-dead on Friday. Subsequently, his family consented to donate his organs.

The Green Corridor on

the Metro line facilitating the transportation of Naveen's heart to Gleneagles Hospital at Lakdiyalip. A distance of 13 km was covered in 13 minutes across 13 stations. Hyderabad Metro Rail, L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad Limited, hospital managements and the

doctors worked together.

Simultaneously, another team transported Naveen's lungs to the Yashoda Hospital in Hitec City via the Green Corridor on the ORR. The 39-minute journey began at 9.45 p.m. and the team reached their destination by 10.24 p.m.

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8 new butterfly species

Munnar continues to be home to several species of butterflies with 166 species recorded, including eight new records, bringing the checklist to 246 species. The highest number of butterflies was recorded at Chinnar with 148 species, followed by Eravikulam (79 species), and Mathikettan Shola (57 species).

Endemic butterflies such as the Red-disc Bushbrown, Palni Bush-Brown, Palni Fritillary, Palni four-ring, Nilgiri four-ring, Nilgiri Clouded Yellow, and Nilgiri Tiger were observed.

In addition to these, the researchers documented mammals such as the Nilgiri tahr, tigers, leopards, Nilgiri martens, gauras, elephants and 12 species of reptiles and amphibians. The survey was formally launched by Harikrishnan K.V., Wildlife Warden, Munnar Wildlife Division.

As many as 33 species were observed, des-

From Page One

Lit for Life begins with an ode to reading

On the aim and spirit behind Lit for Life, Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson of The Hindu Group and festival chair and founder, said the festival was about celebrating words, ideas and creativity, carrying with it the honest and fearless traditions of *The Hindu* and with a firm commitment to freedom of expression. "We have always strived to be a wide and inclusive platform for artists, writers, thinkers and performers to share their ideas and creative vision with all those who value literature," she said, adding that the biggest measure of the success of the festival was that people attend it, enjoy it, and say they have been enriched.

Suresh Nambath, Editor, *The Hindu*, said that literature was journalism that stays with us forever. "This year, the festival is back as Lit for Life, a reiteration of literature's centrality in human life, its role as an agent of change in the world, its mission as a torchbearer, very much like journalism, in these dark times," he pointed out.

L.V. Navaneeth, CEO, The Hindu Group, said that Lit for Life was more than just a two-day event: engaging and interactive initiatives had been organised prior to the festival as well for the community, including a mobile library, story-telling workshops and literary walks.

Third party help sought for Manipur peace

The training focussed on team building, acknowledging diversity, pride of being "a Manipuri and an Indian", understanding fake news and propaganda, among others.

At least 450 recruits volunteered to fill a feedback form. "Ninety-five per cent of the recruits responded that negotiations are a must and communities need to accommodate each other. Seventy per cent recruits disagreed with the weaponisation of youth and society, while 80% recruits strongly agreed that fake news is a major cause of tension among communities," the official said.

The official added that 95% of recruits agreed with the concept of truth and reconciliation as a primary step to usher in sustainable peace and 75% of recruits disagreed with the deployment of Central forces for restoration of peace. Another 75% agreed that "media has not adequately showcased the issues of Manipur at the national level."

Centre, farmers to meet on Feb. 14; Dallewal set to receive medical aid

Press Trust of India

CHANDIGARH

The Centre will hold a meeting with Punjab's protesting farmers on February 14 in Chandigarh to discuss their demands, thus ending a stalemate over the resumption of a dialogue with the agitators, who have been demanding a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

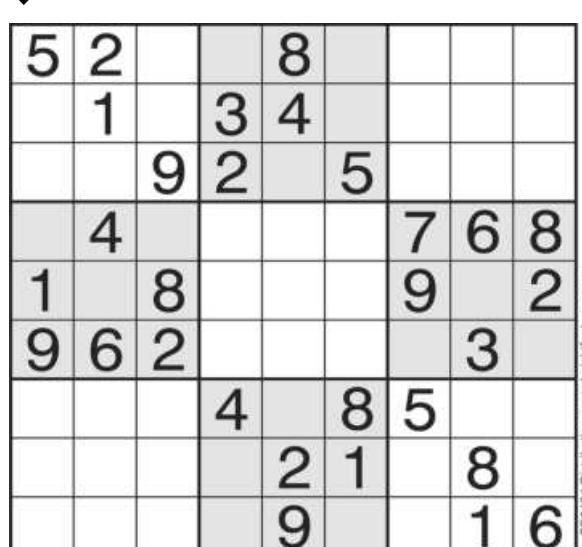
Following the announcement, farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, whose fast-unto-death entered the 54th day on Saturday, agreed to take medical aid. However, he will not end

his fast till a legal guarantee on MSP for crops is given, said farmer leader Sukhjot Singh Hardjohande.

The breakthrough came after a delegation of officials from the Union Agriculture Ministry, led by Joint Secretary Priya Ranjan, met Mr. Dallewal and held a meeting with the representatives of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, which are spearheading the agitation for the last 11 months.

Farmer leaders appealed to Mr. Dallewal to take medical aid so that he can participate in the proposed deliberations.

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

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

CM YK

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

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CM YK

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	8	9	1	3	4	5	2	6

U.P. restores
Y-category
security
of Balyan

Mavank Kumar
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Saturday restored the Y-category security of senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan following an uproar over its withdrawal.

The security was withdrawn earlier this week after Mr. Balyan, a two-term Lok Sabha member, had a face-off with the local administration in Muzaffarnagar over a proposed distillery unit in Mansurpur village.

On Friday, Nand Kishor Gurjar, the BJP legislator from Loni, had written to the State's Principal Secretary (Home) saying the removal of security cover for Mr. Balyan was "disrespect to western Uttar Pradesh". Mr. Gurjar said some State government officers are "working as agents" of the Opposition Samajwadi Party.

Earlier, Mr. Balyan wrote to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath saying the government would be responsible if anything happens to him. "... If the police are behaving in this manner with a former Union Minister, what will be the condition of ordinary BJP workers?" he wrote.

Cong. angling for kingmaker role after election in Capital

The party narrows down its focus to 20 of the 70 Assembly seats in Delhi; its campaign this time is a very candidate-centric one; it is also banking on the return of minority, Dalit voters to its camp

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Fighting for survival in Delhi, the Congress has narrowed down its focus to 20 seats and is running a candidate-centric campaign in the February 5 Delhi Assembly election. The party wants to repeat its 2013 performance, when after being unseated from the throne and pushed to the third position in the Assembly tally, the Congress still held the key to power.

Delhi will vote on February 5 to elect 70 legislators. In 2013, after 15 years of an unbroken stint, the Congress found itself with just eight legislators and 24.6% of the vote share. Since then, the party has been on a downward spiral in the national capital. For two consecutive Assembly elections – 2013 and 2020 – the Congress has not won a single seat.

Chances for 2025
In the 2025 election, hoping to break the dry spell, according to senior party leaders, the Congress has picked out 20 seats where it has a fair chance of giving a strong fight for optimum use of its resources. Se-



Critical fight: The Congress has picked out 20 seats in New Delhi where it has a fair chance of giving a strong fight. Here, candidate Sandeep Dikshit addresses a press conference on Saturday. ANI

cond, it is banking on the return of minority and Dalit voters to its camp.

"AAP remained a mute spectator during Delhi riots after winning by a huge margin. The present Chief Minister, Atishi, went out of her way to blame Tablighi Jamaat for the spread of COVID. These are the issues that minority voters cannot forget easily," a senior Congress leader said.

The three consecutive defeats have had a debilitating impact on the party's organisational structure and the party knowing full well of its de-

pleted strength and the fact that the voters do not see them having any real shot at power, is leaning more on the candidates. "We have carefully selected candidates, persons who with their social capital can pull through this battle," the senior leader added.

It has also fielded its sitting and former Chief Ministers to present the "Congress model" of governance. So far, the party has already fielded former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. Telan-

gana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar have also made an appearance.

With these strategies in place for the Congress the best case scenario is a repeat of 2013, the milestone election which was the beginning of its downside. But for the Congress even that would be a huge leap. In 2013, the Congress won 24.6% votes which came down to 4% in 2020 polls.

"We are fighting to win this election. Rest assured, we will emerge as the king makers," a leader said.

Not in favour of a post-poll alliance with AAP: Maken

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Ajay Maken has ruled out any post-poll alliance with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) – its ally in the INDIA bloc – in case of a fractured verdict in the Delhi Assembly election scheduled for February 5.

Addressing a press conference on Saturday at the Congress's new headquarters, Indira Bhavan, Mr. Maken said, "It is my personal view that there should be no alliance with the AAP."

Mr. Maken, who has been a strident critique of the AAP, recently labelled AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal "anti-national". His remarks led to a backlash from the INDIA bloc allies, but Mr. Maken maintained that it was his "personal view" and he asserted that he stood by his words.

"I also feel that there should not have been any [Congress] support to the AAP in 2013 and neither any alliance for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls," the All India Congress Committee (AICC) treasurer said.

On whether the Congress would still go with the AAP, he said, "I feel that Kejriwal's success in Delhi helps the BJP. To fight the BJP, it is important



Ajay Maken

to have a strong Congress at the national level."

Mr. Maken said if a national party like the Congress was not strong at the national level, it was difficult to fight the BJP.

Noting Delhi's "special significance", Mr. Maken said it was known that whichever party won the Lok Sabha seats in the capital went on to form its government at the Centre. "The AAP has failed to stall the BJP in Delhi," he said.

Mr. Maken said that both in Haryana and Delhi, the Congress wanted to have an alliance with the AAP, but soon after his release from jail, Mr. Kejriwal announced that the AAP would contest all 90 Assembly seats. In Haryana too, he said, the AAP went ahead to contest solo despite the advanced stage of discussion between the two parties.

'Singapore, India are on a new plane of cooperation'

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam on Saturday said India is emerging as a major pole in the global economy with significant potential as an export economy and is a nation with which Singapore aims to deepen its collaboration.

Speaking to reporters while wrapping up his two-day tour to Odisha, Mr. Shanmugaratnam said, "Singapore and India are now on a new plane of cooperation. It reflects India's aspirations and the fact that we are now in a world where we have to work harder at collaborating with each other."

India aspires to be a pole in its own right in a multi-polar world that is true geopolitically, but it is also true economically, the Singapore President said.

Over the next 10 to 20 years, India is set to play a key role due to its favourable demographics, its current stage in the development process, its readiness to advance the skills and value chain, and its vast potential as an export-driven economy, he said.

"India's priorities and Singapore's priorities are also joined very well," Mr. Shanmugaratnam said.

Shah, Naidu to take part in NDRF Raising Day celebrations today

V. Raghavendra
VIJAYAWADA

The 10th battalion of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) will celebrate the 20th Raising Day on its premises at Kondapavuluru in Gannavaram mandal of Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh, on Sunday. Union Home Minister Amit Shah is participating in the event as the chief guest and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will be the guest of honour.

Addressing mediapersons on Saturday, Piyush Anand, Director General of the NDRF, said it was an occasion to rededicate to ensure zero casualties in disasters in close coordination with States and Union Territories.

The NDRF came into existence on January 19,

2006 after the enactment of the Disaster Management Act of 2005. It started with eight battalions and the number increased to 16. It was present at 68 locations, including 28 Regional Response Centres and 24 Tactical Pre-Positioning Locations.

Each NDRF battalion had 18 specialised Search and Rescue teams consisting of specialists like engineers, technicians, electricians, medical, paramedical personnel, and dog squads. The sanctioned strength was 18,556.

Key tasks
Mr. Anand said the NDRF was mandated to deal with all natural and man-made disasters except fires. It would conduct collapsed structure search and rescue during earthquakes,

undertake rescue in building collapses and landslides, floods and incidents of boat capsizes, and tackle chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear contingencies.

Controlling forest fires was assigned to it in 2022, for which three teams were formed on a pilot basis. One team each was positioned in Uttarakhand, Assam, and Andhra Pradesh.

The NDRF conducted more than 12,000 operations, rescued more than 1.58 lakh persons and evacuated more than 8.50 lakh persons during various disasters. It also organised more than 13,000 community awareness programmes and about 8,000 school safety programmes, benefiting more than 93 lakh students and adults, Mr. Anand said.

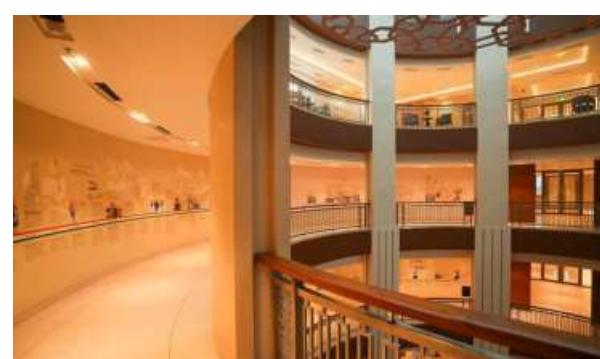
Three days after inaugurating the new premises, the party threw it open to the media for a tour. The building has been in the making for 18 years. Land was allotted to the party in November 2007. The foundation stone was laid in 2009, and the final 'all clear' certificate from the

Inside Indira Bhavan, Cong. retains connect with the past through an array of photographs

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Indira Bhavan, the new Congress headquarters in Delhi, strives to balance the past and the present. Amid Ikea furniture and energy-efficient fittings, the building recollects the party's history in 246 rare photographs, some of them a painful reminder of leaders who left after publicly decrying the Congress and its leadership.

Three days after inaugurating the new premises, the party threw it open to the media for a tour. The building has been in the making for 18 years. Land was allotted to the party in November 2007. The foundation stone was laid in 2009, and the final 'all clear' certificate from the



Legacy walls: The walls inside Indira Gandhi Bhavan in New Delhi reflect the party's journey since 1885, in 246 rare photographs. PTI

relevant authorities was secured only on January 14 this year.

Painted in shades of cream and brown, the building is spread over a total area of 2,100 square metres, and has its own auditorium, with 276 seats. There are 134 trees, 8,675

plants, and 264 works of art and paintings. Mr. Maken, party treasurer said that the building had been constructed at a cost of ₹200-₹225 crore, much of it with contributions by its regular workers.

The cafeteria features paintings by Nandalal

Bose, made on the request of Mahatma Gandhi for the Haripura Congress session of 1938. There are pictures of the meetings of the Planning Commission from 1985, with former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi seen sitting along with three of the then future Prime Ministers – Narasimha Rao, V.P. Singh, and Manmohan Singh; and one future President of India, K.R. Narayanan.

Narasimha Rao, whose images found no space in the old party headquarters at 24 Akbar Road, has been given a pride of place in the new building.

But perhaps the most arresting pictures are the ones with the party's senior leaders, who defected to other parties looking for a brighter political future.

One such on the ground floor is that of Sonia Gandhi leading a march accompanied by Congress leaders, including Suresh Pachauri, Rita Bahuguna Joshi, and P. Sudhakar Reddy, all now with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The former Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, who quit the party after launching a stinging attack on Mr. Rahul Gandhi's leadership, makes an occasional appearance on the walls. Another interesting photograph is that of Ms. Sonia Gandhi and former party president Sitaram Kesari at a campaign rally in Rohtak in January 1998.

A few months later, Kesari was forced out and Ms. Gandhi took over as the party president.

Congress will remove quota cap if elected to power, says Rahul

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, on his first visit to Bihar after becoming the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, on Saturday slammed the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Bharatiya Janata Party for being "anti-Constitution", and said 20-25 billionaires own the wealth of the country.

The 50% reservation barrier would be removed and caste census conducted across the country when the Congress returns to power at the Centre, Mr. Gandhi said while addressing Congress functionaries and workers at the party's State headquarters in Patna, the Sadaqat Ashram.

New caste census
While slamming the Bihar government led by Chief Minister Nitish Ku-



Rahul Gandhi

mar, Mr. Gandhi said, "The caste survey done by the Bihar government [released in 2023] was fake and when our government returns to power, a caste census will be held across the country to know the exact population of castes and their representation in governance".

Earlier, he addressed the 'Samvidhan Suraksha Sammelan' (Save Constitution Conclave) organised by social organisations at the Bapu Sabhagar auditorium in the city.

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Udyog Bhavan, Block No. 16, 4th Floor,
Sector - 11, Gandhinagar - 382 011
Website: <https://www.gujarattourism.com>

TENDER NOTICE

Bids are invited from reputed and experienced parties towards "Development of Hotel at Junagadh, Gujarat". The project requirements, technical specifications, eligibility criteria, selection process, etc. are included in the Tender documents, which shall be available for download from the websites: <https://tender.nprocure.com> and <https://www.gujarattourism.com> from 20/01/2025 onwards.

The last date for submission of the Technical Bid and Financial Bid (online only) is 17/02/2025 up to 6:00 pm, and Technical Bid (physical only) is 19/02/2025 up to 3:00 pm.

Managing Director

GREAT COCHIN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Name of work: Expression of interest(EOI)for DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL CUM RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX AT KADAVANTHRA, KOCHI.

EOI document will be available on www.etenders.kerala.gov.in from 14/01/2025 onwards.

Last date for Submission of EOI document : 27/02/2025

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COCHIN PORT Cochin Port Authority
Mechanical Engineering Department, Cochin - 682 009

TENDER NOTICE

Tender No. F/2/T-13/Floating Solar-1.5 MWp-RT/2020/M Dt- 14/01/2025
E-Tenders are invited for "Request for Selection (RFS) of Bidders for the Implementation of 1.5 MWp Grid connected Floating Solar PV Project at Willingdon Island, Cochin Port Authority including Operation and Maintenance for 25 years under RESCO model".
Estimated Amount: ₹ 6,25,50,000/- For more details please visit: www.gem.gov.in Or www.cochinport.gov.in

CHIEF MECHANICAL ENGINEER

Central Coalfields Limited
A Miniratna Company
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

NOTICE

"All the tenders issued by CCL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on websites of Coal India Ltd. www.coalindia.in/ respective Subsidiary Company (CCL, www.centralcoalfields.in), CCL e-procurement portal <https://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in>, in addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in>."

Office of Additional Chief Engineer PHED, Region Bharatpur
Telephone No 05644-221500, Email: rj_acb@nic.in

Notice Inviting Bid No. 25 to 27/2024-25

Online bids for NIT No. 25 to 27/2024-25 (03 work), Costing Rs. 590 Lacs is invited on behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan from eligible enlisted in appropriate class contractors of PHED, Rajasthan and meeting eligibility criteria. Contractors enlisted with other departments of Government of Rajasthan and enlisted with CPWD/ Postal/Telecom/Railways/MEIS/other State Government/ Central Government undertakings/organization in class equivalent to "A/A'" class of Rajasthan (as applicable) and meeting prescribed eligibility criteria may also apply. Details of this Bid notification and pre-qualification criteria can also be seen in NIT exhibited website www.dpr.rajasthan.gov.in, <http://ppr.rajasthan.gov.in> and <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>. Bids are to be submitted online electronic format on web site <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> from 13-01-2025 to 05-02-2025 (6PM) & Bids are to be opened at 11:00 AM on 06.02.2025.

NIT Code PHE2425WSOB08210
2. PHE2425WSOB08211
3. PHE2425WSOB08212

DIPR/C/641/2025

(Mohan Lal Meena)
Addl. Chief Engineer
PHED, Region Bharatpur

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS, TIRUPATI MARKETING DEPARTMENT

e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
e-Tenders are invited for supply of 1/25,00,000 numbers of Bio Compostable Laddu Carry Covers through e-tenders to the Marketing Department, T.I.T.Devasthanams. For Tender Notice and tender details log on to the website <http://www.trumala.org> or <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in>. For further details contact Phone Numbers : 0877-22645545, Fax No. 0877-22645545

TTD-40021(31)/1/2024-PRO SEC (Adv. No.287) Dated: 18.01.

SCIENCE

RNA, not DNA, is the main cause of acute sunburn

The Hindu Bureau

Over the years, we have been told that sunburn damages the DNA leading to cell death and inflammation. However, a new study conducted on mice as well as human skin cells has found that is not the full truth. The researchers found that instead of the DNA, the acute effects of sunburn were actually caused due to damage to the RNA. The objective of

the study was to describe the impact of UV radiation on the skin and what causes this damage. The researchers found the same skin response to UV radiation exists in both mice and human cells. The results of the study were published in the journal *Molecular Cell*.

mRNA damage triggers a response in ribosomes (protein complexes that "read" the mRNA to synthesise protein), orches-

tated by a protein known as ZAK-alpha – the so-called ribotoxic stress response – the new study shows. The response can be described as a surveillance system within the cells, which registers the RNA damage, leading to inflammatory signalling and recruitment of immune cells, which then leads to inflammation of the skin.

"We found that the first thing the cells respond to after being exposed to UV

radiation is damage to the RNA and that this is what triggers cell death and inflammation of the skin. In mice exposed to UV radiation, we found responses such as inflammation and cell death, but when we removed the ZAK gene, these responses disappeared, which means that ZAK plays a key role in the skin's response to UV-induced damage," Dr. Simon Bekker-Jensen from the Department of Cellular

and Molecular Medicine and a coauthor of the study said in a release.

He adds: "So you could say that everything depends on this one response, which monitors all protein translations occurring. The cells respond to the RNA damage, realising that something is wrong, and this is what leads to cell death."

"Our work highlights ribosomes and the ZAK gene as the most proximal

stress-signal-sensor pair that kickstarts the well-established acute skin reactions to acute UVB irradiation. Our findings also indicate that there are different, or at least temporally and phenotypically distinct, roles for the RSR [ribotoxic stress response] and DNA damage signaling in sun-exposed skin, which likely has implications for skin immunity and skin carcinogenesis," the authors write.

SNAPSHOTS



Red meat consumption increases risk of dementia

Red meat consumption is an established risk factor for chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. A new study has found that eating greater quantities of red meat, especially in processed forms, increased risk for dementia, too. Those eating a daily average of one-quarter or more of a serving (three ounces) of processed red meats compared to those having less than one-tenth a serving each day had a 13% higher risk of developing dementia.



Asteroid impact sulphur release less lethal in extinction

Most studies considered sulphur as the most crucial factor causing mass extinction of dinosaurs. But estimates of the volume of sulphate aerosols released from the vaporisation of the impacted rocks in Mexico have varied widely. A new study used sulphur concentrations and isotopic compositions from new drill cores of impact rocks within the crater region, combined with detailed chemical profiles across K-Pg boundary sediments around the world and found that the role of sulphur has been overestimated.



Reasons for osteoarthritis risk in postmenopausal women

While hormonal changes associated with menopause have long been known to accelerate the development and progression of osteoarthritis, a biological mechanism of why this occurs was largely not known. A study discovered that loss of estrogen and progesterone promotes extracellular matrix degradation and chondrocyte deterioration, while restoring these hormones to pre-menopausal levels protected against cartilage degeneration.



Question Corner

On the wing

Do songbirds socialise during migration?

The flight paths of migrating songbirds may not be entirely innate, a new study has found. Evidence from over 18,300 hours of recorded flight calls suggests songbirds may "talk" to other species as they migrate, forming social connections and – just maybe – exchanging information about the journey. Using a machine learning tool allowed researchers to analyse 18,300 hours of acoustic recording to quickly detect the signature flight calls of 27 species. After identifying species, the team measured how often certain calls co-occurred in

time, testing intervals of 15, 30, and 60 seconds. Regardless of this, they found associations between species that expected by chance alone. Looking to explain these associations, the found species' wing lengths and the similarity of their calls were the key factors. In contrast, birds that "buddy up" during stopovers were not maintaining those relationships in the air, and they were not necessarily flying with closely related species or birds that shared their preferences for specific habitats.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

Development delays in children exposed to Zika in utero

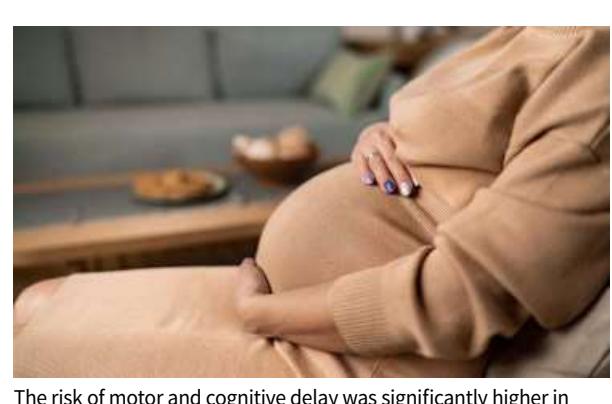
The Hindu Bureau

As per a retrospective-prospective, matched cohort study published recently, exposure to Zika virus while still in the womb can lead to a greater risk for neurodevelopmental delay in early childhood even when children are born without any signs of congenital Zika syndrome (CZS). Compared with the control group, the risk of adverse outcomes in children exposed to the virus in utero was nearly three-fold higher. Also, the risk of motor and cognitive delay was significantly higher in exposed children. The results of the study were published recently in the journal *Pediatrics*.

Researchers enrolled 148 mother-infant pairs, which included 79 Zika-exposed during pregnancy and 69 pairs who were not

exposed to the virus during pregnancy, which constituted the control group. Children were assessed at ages two through five. Among 146 children included in the study, 40 (27.4%) had at least one adverse outcome, including 30 of 77 (39.0%) in the exposed group and 10 of 69 (14.5%) in the control group. This would mean that children who were exposed to the virus in the womb had 2.7 times the risk of adverse outcomes compared with children who were not exposed to the virus in utero. "This suggests a high potential for adverse paediatric outcomes in children born to mothers with confirmed Zika virus infection," the authors write.

According to the authors, recent studies have shown that Zika virus damages neural progenitor



The risk of motor and cognitive delay was significantly higher in children exposed to virus in utero. GETTY IMAGES

cells and the hippocampus, a region crucial for learning, memory, cognition, and emotional response. Studies also found that language function of children was one of the most affected, with about 35% of children evaluated showing language delays.

This study also found that the timing of maternal infection had a significant predictive risk factor. Chil-

dren born to mothers who were infected during the first trimester had significantly higher risks of motor and cognitive delays than when mothers were infected during the third trimester. In the study, no significant associations were found when comparing second and third trimesters of infection for both early and long-term outcomes. "In 44% of pregnan-

nancies wherein maternal infection occurred in the first trimester, at least one adverse event was identified in the child, with 11.2-fold greater odds of adverse outcomes compared with children of mothers infected in the third trimester," the authors write.

Though the study was conducted with participants who knew their Zika status in pregnancy through testing, according to estimates, nearly 80% of infected pregnant women show no symptoms. This complicates the identification of infected individuals. Considering the large percentage of asymptomatic infections during pregnancy, the authors say the findings of the study underlines the importance of considering these cases despite challenges in identification, especially when they do not show imme-



Question Corner

On the wing

Do songbirds socialise during migration?

The flight paths of migrating songbirds may not be entirely innate, a new study has found. Evidence from over 18,300 hours of recorded flight calls suggests songbirds may "talk" to other species as they migrate, forming social connections and – just maybe – exchanging information about the journey. Using a machine learning tool allowed researchers to analyse 18,300 hours of acoustic recording to quickly detect the signature flight calls of 27 species. After identifying species, the team measured how often certain calls co-occurred in

time, testing intervals of 15, 30, and 60 seconds. Regardless of this, they found associations between species that expected by chance alone. Looking to explain these associations, the found species' wing lengths and the similarity of their calls were the key factors. In contrast, birds that "buddy up" during stopovers were not maintaining those relationships in the air, and they were not necessarily flying with closely related species or birds that shared their preferences for specific habitats.

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Why are fertility levels declining in India?

What has a global study shown about the total fertility rate in India? Why are the southern States worried?

C. Maya

The story so far:

A comprehensive demographic analysis of global fertility in 204 countries and territories from 1950-2021 has found that fertility is declining globally and that future fertility rates will continue to decline worldwide, remaining low even under successful implementations of pro-natal policies.

What has it noted about India?

The Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2021, noted that India has moved from a fertility rate of 6.18 in the 1950s to a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 1.9 in 2021. This, it pointed out, was below the replacement fertility level of 2.1 (which is the average number of children a woman should have to replace herself and her generation, for population stability). The GBD study projected that the TFR could fall further to 1.04 – barely one child per woman – by 2100.

The steep fall in fertility levels has triggered concerns about the political and socio-economic fallout, especially in the southern States, which fear the loss of parliamentary seats post the delimitation exercise in 2026.

Why is fertility falling?

Even though the country has had one of the oldest birth control/family planning programmes, increased female literacy, workforce participation of women, women's empowerment and improved aspirations could have contributed more to the steady drop in fertility rates over the decades than the faithful

With an ageing population, increased demands on healthcare, a migrating youth, the consequences of declining fertility are being acutely felt in States such as Kerala. The decline in fertility though no absolute data is available. With an increasing number of young men and women opting to go abroad for higher studies and jobs and choosing to settle down and raise their families there, migration is another key factor that could be in play when one considers the decline in fertility levels.

What are the implications?

Declining fertility rates have resulted in a rapid demographic transition in many southern States. The consequences of this – an ageing population, a declining young workforce and increased demands on healthcare and social security measures for the care of an increasing population of the elderly – are being acutely felt in States such as Kerala. Migration of youngsters in search of better prospects is also an issue.

What is happening in the southern States?

There is concern over the irreversible fertility decline across the country, but more so in the southern States, where fertility rates had dropped below the replacement levels much earlier than the rest of India.

Kerala led the demographic transition in the South, achieving the replacement level fertility rate in 1988, with the other four States achieving this by mid-2000. Along with education and women's empowerment and development in the social and health sectors, which were the hallmark of Kerala's high human development index, the State has also seen low economic investments and growth. Educated youth are leaving the State; the proportion of the aged population is expected to surpass that of children (23% in 2036). Changed attitudes towards marriage and motherhood are beginning to reflect in the health of women, leading to an increasing proportion of older mothers and pregnancy-related morbidities.

Kerala's high labour wages and high quality of life index are attracting internal migration from other States to supplant a shrinking workforce. The State Planning Board reckons that by 2030, the proportion of migrant labour could be close to 60 lakh, about one-sixth of the State's population.

What is the way forward?

Fertility decline is almost always irreversible and the graph, once it starts going down, may never bounce back. Countries like South Korea, which tried to stem the demographic crisis by pumping in millions have failed and the fertility rate plunged from 0.78 in 2022 to 0.73 in 2023.

Demographers suggest that socio-economic policies that propel the growth of the economy, improve job prospects for the youth and tap the potential of a growing population of senior citizens, can help in reducing the impact of a long spell of low, sub-replacement level fertility rates on countries.

Will the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip hold?

How did Israel and Hamas come to an agreement? Why did it take 15 months for a deal? What will it entail? What role did Qatar, Egypt and the U.S. play? How will it affect other countries in the region? How will things change with Trump in the White House?

Stanly Johny

The story so far:

After 15 months of fighting, which was triggered by Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack in which about 1,200 people were killed, Israel and Hamas have accepted a ceasefire in Gaza. On Saturday, Israel's 24-member cabinet gave approval to the agreement, which is expected to be implemented in three phases. The deal, which came into force on Sunday, was reached in talks mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the U.S. If it holds, it would provide a desperately needed relief for Gaza, the tiny strip along the Mediterranean Sea which was relentlessly bombed by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) over the past 15 months in which over 46,000 Palestinians were killed and almost the entire population of the enclave displaced.

What are the terms?

The deal is to be implemented in three phases. In the 42-day first phase, Hamas will release 33 hostages, most of those alive, and Israel will free roughly 1,000 Palestinian security prisoners. Israel will also partially withdraw the IDF from Gaza, and allow the entry of about 600 trucks of humanitarian aid into the enclave every day. The IDF is expected to withdraw from the Netzarim Corridor, which separates northern Gaza, which has seen massive Israeli bombardment from Day one of the war, from the south, where most of the enclave's population have been pushed into. If the Israeli troops withdraw from Netzarim, it

Arab and Israeli media claim that the Trump factor played a key part

would allow some of the displaced Gazans to move from the south and centre to the north.

But in the first phase, Israeli troops will remain in the Philadelphia Corridor on the Rafah crossing – which means Israel will continue to monitor Gaza's border with Egypt. On the 16th day of the first phase, discussions are expected to begin on the second phase. If the first phase is implemented as per plan, 65 hostages will still be in Hamas's captivity and Israeli troops will still be there at Philadelphia and some buffer zones in Gaza. In the second stage, Hamas will be required to release most of the remaining living hostages and both sides should declare a permanent end to the hostilities. The third phase will involve discussions on the 'day after'.

Why did both parties accept a ceasefire now?

The deal accepted by both parties is not essentially different from the deal offered eight months ago. Hamas had announced earlier that it would accept a deal, provided the war is brought to a permanent end.

In May, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed the agreement, saying Israel would continue its military offensive in Gaza until it meets its objectives.

But a lot has changed in the region since.

Israel now believes its regional standing has become stronger. Hezbollah, the Lebanese militia organisation, has lost most of its top leadership in Israeli attacks. The IDF has killed most of the leaders of Hamas, including Yahya Sinwar. Israel carried out a massive air strike in Iran in October, targeting the Islamic Republic's air defences and other military facilities (to which Iran hasn't responded yet). More importantly, the fall of the Assad regime in Syria has further weakened Iran's so-called 'axis of resistance' in West Asia. Mr. Assad's Syria was the land bridge between Iran and Hezbollah. Since this land bridge is disrupted, Hezbollah will find it difficult to rearm itself. These developments have also strengthened Mr. Netanyahu's political standing at home.

These factors probably influenced him to change his position about a deal with Hamas. But that's not all.

After months of fighting, Israel failed to meet its declared objectives in Gaza. When he launched the war, Mr. Netanyahu said Israel would dismantle Hamas. Israeli attacks have degraded Hamas's militant infrastructure, but Hamas reinvented itself as an insurgency, its original avatar. Antony Blinken, the U.S. Secretary of State, recently said the American assessment was that Hamas recruited as many fighters as it had lost.

The inability to meet its objectives through

military means might also have influenced Israel's leaders to take a more pragmatic view of pausing the conflict and getting the hostages freed. Then, there is the Trump factor.

What role did the U.S. play?

The Biden administration has been pushing for a ceasefire for long, but it also offered full support to Israel's war in Gaza. Washington continues to supply weapons to Israel and offer diplomatic protection to Israel at global fora. Mr. Biden's refusal to use effective pressure tactics on Israel meant that the latter continued the war despite Washington's public call and private diplomatic push for a ceasefire. But now, Mr. Biden can claim that a ceasefire was reached just days before he left the White House. Arab and Israeli media claim that the Trump factor also played a key role. Donald Trump had earlier said that "all hell will break loose" if there was no agreement between Israel and Hamas before he takes office on January 20 as the 47th President of the U.S. Mr. Trump's West Asia envoy Steve Witkoff had met the negotiators and the Israeli leadership last week. *Times of Israel* reported, quoting Arab officials, that Mr. Witkoff managed to achieve in a single meeting more than what President Biden did the whole year.

Mr. Trump is known for his pro-Israel positions. But he had promised during his campaign that he would bring the wars in West Asia and Ukraine to an end if returned to the White House. If the war is brought to an end, besides the humanitarian angle, it would offer some stability to West Asia. Mr. Trump may not like the U.S. being drawn into another never-ending war in the region. Also, if the Israel-Hamas war pauses, the Houthis of Yemen could stop attacking Israel and the ships passing through the Red Sea. Both the U.S. and Israel carried out air strikes against the Houthis in recent months but failed to stop their attacks.

If the Red Sea calms down, normal freight traffic through the Suez Canal could resume, tamping down the inflationary pressure on the global economy.

Why is Phase 3 going to be a challenge?

As of now, the focus of both parties would be on implementing the first phase – which has a fair chance of being implemented. The second phase could see the exchange of more hostages for prisoners. But the real challenge would be Phase 3. Hamas has demanded a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza. Israel now realises that it cannot dismantle Hamas – the organisation would survive in one way or another. On a more practical note, Israel doesn't want to leave Hamas as a ruling or fighting force in Gaza. This poses a dilemma for Israel. If it agrees to end the war and leave Gaza, Hamas would remain a militant insurgency in Gaza. If Israel continues to stay in Gaza, there won't be a lasting ceasefire agreement and a war of attrition will go on.

In ruins: Smoke rises over the Gaza Strip after an Israeli strike, as seen from the Israeli border on January 17. GETTY IMAGES

Can Bhopal waste be safely disposed of?

What is the plan on the hazardous gas leak waste? How much has the Central government allocated to the Madhya Pradesh government to incinerate the waste and deposit the residue at a landfill in Pithampur? Why have there been protests?

Priyal Prakash
Vasudevan Mukunth

The story so far:

In January 2, Madhya Pradesh government authorities moved 358 tonnes of hazardous waste from the defunct Union Carbide facility in Bhopal to the Pithampur industrial area in Dhar district. On December 3 last year, the Madhya Pradesh High Court had set a four-week deadline for authorities to dispose of this waste, nearly 40 years after the gas disaster that killed more than 4,000 people and injured or debilitated thousands more.

What is the waste's status?

The disaster on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, was the result of poisonous gases leaking from the plant, which Union Carbide had set up to manufacture fertilizers. The waste at the facility is composed of the ingredients required to make these fertilizers.

After years of lying in Bhopal and multiple petitions from civil society groups, the Madhya Pradesh government was to incinerate the waste at a Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facility (TSDF) in Pithampur more than 200 km away. Officials arranged for the waste to be packaged

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says composite liners at landfills with hazardous waste will degrade and have to be reinstated at intervals

and transported in secure long-haul containers.

But protests in the industrial town by the local population fearing harmful emissions from the incineration have paused the State's plans.

On January 6, the Madhya Pradesh High Court gave the State government six weeks to safely dispose of the waste. The order came after State authorities had also sought time to spread awareness about the manner of disposal and measures to minimise its effects on health and the environment.

The Central government has allocated ₹126 crore to the State to incinerate the waste and deposit the residue in the TSDF landfill.

Why Pithampur?

In 2012, the Supreme Court selected the Pithampur facility as being the most suitable final destination for the waste. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), it is the sole TSDF in the State and includes a landfill and an incinerator. The CPCB submitted an affidavit to the apex court in 2013 attesting to the TSDF's ability to 'handle' the waste.

In 2015, Madhya Pradesh organised a 'trial run' in which it incinerated 10.1 tonnes of the waste at the TSDF. The CPCB monitored the process with help from experts from private laboratories in Chennai and Hyderabad. Notably, the State had secretly advanced the incineration date by a few days to sidestep local resistance.

According to Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department director Swatantra Kumar Singh, the emissions from the trial were under stipulated limits. The State's public relations office also reported no adverse effects on the environment or on public health.

Is the waste harmful?

The 'trial' waste consisted of 4.8 tonnes of excavated waste, 1.6 tonnes of semi-processed residue, 1.3 tonnes of naphthalene waste, 1.3 tonnes of carbaryl residue, and 0.8 tonnes of reactor residue. According to a December 2024 press release from the State's public relations office, the Regional Director (Central) of CPCB Bhopal had collected and tested five water samples from around the Pithampur TSDF. The report

(numbered WW24.25-188.189) indicated the water colour, chloride, sulphate, and fluoride concentrations, hardness, and the amount of total dissolved solids "exceeded permissible limits" specified in the IS 10500 standard in two open wells near the landfill.

However, the release said according to "scientists involved in the analysis" the higher values "reflect groundwater quality and don't appear to be linked to the TSDF operations".

The release also said experts from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhopal and the Indian Council of Medical Research reportedly surveyed 12 villages and found the prevalence of skin and respiratory ailments to be lower than the national average.

Credible media reports in 2015 had said around four-times as much ash and residue as the waste combusted (by mass) had been generated and which the CPCB had said it would dispose of in the landfill, including protections to contain leachates.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has said these protections can degrade and need to be reinstated at periodic intervals.

What next?

Madhya Pradesh has temporarily put off incinerating the waste. Authorities have said the local protests, including two attempts at self-immolation, mean they would first like to improve public confidence in the safety of the disposal process.

"We are preparing 50-odd master trainers, including science teachers, professors, and officials," PTI quoted Dhar collector Priyank Mishra as saying. "They will be informed about the exact status of the waste before they reach out to people to dispel misinformation."

There will also be another trial run: a 90-kg batch will be incinerated at 1,200°C, Mr. Singh said. According to the EPA, most organic compounds (like naphthalene) are destroyed when subjected to 590° to 650°C. Operating hazardous waste incinerators at 980-1,200°C would thus strip the waste of organics.

If the resulting emissions don't breach legal thresholds, the rest will be incinerated in batches of 270 kg each over three months. If the emissions exceed, Mr. Singh had told *The Hindu* the batch size would be reduced and the duration extended to nine months.

The next hearing in the High Court is set for February 18.

With inputs from Mehul Malpani.



Sensitive issue: Trucks with toxic waste inside Pithampur Industrial Waste Management Pvt Ltd in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh on January 11. A.M.FARUQUI

PROFILES

A confluence of faith and culture

Maha Kumbh

The 45-day gathering of Hindu ascetics, saints, ash-smeared Naga Sadhus, skeleton-donning Aghoris and other pilgrims is expected to have a footfall of 450 million this year, nearly twice the population of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous State

Ishita Mishra

Monday, January 13, marked the first day of 45-day long Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, listed by UNESCO as the largest peaceful religious congregation of pilgrims on earth, where devotees walk miles to take a dip at 'Sangam', the convergence of the holy rivers Ganga and Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati. The fair is visited by Hindu ascetics, saints, ash-smeared Naga Sadhus, skeleton-donning Aghoris and other pilgrims. It is expected to have a footfall of 450 million this year, nearly twice the population of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous State.

Kumbh, derived from a Sanskrit word which means a pitcher, is rotationally held every three years at the four riverside cities of Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik. Its schedule is based on the planetary alignments, mainly of that of Sun and Jupiter. The Ardh (half) Kumbh is held every six years at Haridwar and Prayagraj while the Purna (complete) Kumbh takes place in all four cities, every 12 years. The Maha Kumbh happens after 12 Purna Kumbhs in Prayagraj, once in 144 years and is considered the most auspicious.

The mythological beliefs say that drops of Amrit (essence of immortality) were spilled at these sites from an urn which came out during the *Samudra Mantha* (churning of the ocean) done by the gods and demons.

The central ritual of the fair remains bathing in icy cold waters of the sacred rivers where millions immerse themselves with the belief that the act will cleanse them of their sins and liberate them from the cycle of birth and death and will attain spiritual liberation.

A gathering of ascetics

Religious texts also link Kumbh Mela's origins to the 8th-century philosopher, Adi Shankaracharya, who established this practice of gatherings of ascetics from across the country, for discussion on religion. It was Shankaracharya who instituted the monastery system and the 13 Akharas (warrior-saint



PHOTO: PTI

sects) – Nirvani, Atal, Niranjan, Anand, Juna, Awahan and Agni, Nirmohi, Digambar Ani and Nirvan Ani, the two Udasin Akharas (Naya and Bada) and the Nirmala Akhara. The saints from these sects, who sport weapons such as tridents, swords, and lances, are the main attraction at the Kumbh.

The latest in the line of Akharas is the Kinnar (transgender) Akhara, established in 2015 by transgender rights activist Laxmi Narayan Tripathi. The Akhara is still competing for space between the community of religious leaders but remains one of the most visited Akharas in Kumbh.

The Akharas use the fair as an opportunity to elect their chiefs and divide powers at its council meeting called the Dharam Sansad. This year, the meeting, scheduled on January 27, may pass a proposal for the formation of a 'Sanatan Board' (a board

dedicated to safeguard the Hindu religious sites), which will be sent to the government with a request for implementation.

The seers have already placed wishes such as no entry for Muslims and non-Hindus at the Kumbh, which was partially supported by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath who says that those who don't believe in Sanatan Dharma should not visit the event.

Mahatma Gandhi had visited the Kumbh Mela in 1918. Political parties today capitalise on this event to win over Hindus. The fair was also used by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to chalk out the blueprint for the Ram temple construction in Ayodhya in 1989.

With the BJP being in power at the Centre and State, this year's Kumbh is one of the most well-funded religious gatherings being held in the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi dubbed it as "A Maha Yagya of Unity", as the

Centre approved a special grant of ₹2,100 crore for it. About ₹7,500 crore was devoted to ensure proper logistics to host millions.

A sprawling tent city has been carved out within the limits of Prayagraj district, spread across an approximately 4,000-hectare area and divided in 25 sectors, 12 ghats for bathing. A large group of bureaucrats were deployed at the site to ensure smooth management of the fair. The airport was expanded to accommodate more flights while the Indian Railways has announced that it will run 13,000 trains to Prayagraj to ensure maximum devotees arrive at the Kumbh putting immense pressure on the town which exceeds its carrying capacity every time the fair is organised. In the 2019 Kumbh, this gathering generated 18,000 metric tonnes of solid waste.

Approximately 1,60,000 tent shelters have been constructed this

time to accommodate 15-20 lakh *Kalpwasis* – devotees who spend around a month in the fair living a minimalistic life. Although the tents are free for the *Kalpwasis*, they do bear the brunt of rocketing price of groceries, travel and other needs.

Apart from the cubical-shaped hiking tents for *Kalpwasis*, the government has also set aside luxury cottages across the Sangam bank to drive tourism. These cottages cost ₹50,000 to ₹1 lakh per night.

With 1,50,000 toilets, deployment of police offices, hospitals, banks, and eateries, the State has not left any stone unturned to make the Maha Kumbh an event like never before.

The fair has gigantic posters of the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister, advertising schemes and achievements of the BJP government, including the LPG schemes, Swachh Bharat, solar energy, among others.

Business opportunities

The fair presents business opportunities to both local traders as well as multinationals who set up kiosks to expand businesses. From Domino's pizza to Cafe Coffee Day, from RBI to LIC and from medicines to clothes, agriculture products and gadgets, the Maha Kumbh has a stall selling everything. The State has projected to generate up to ₹2 lakh crore from this 45-day long gathering, which will end on February 26.

With millions gathering at the river banks, the Kumbh Melas had seen accidents such as stampedes in the past, which led to the deaths of hundreds of pilgrims. With the humongous footfall at the site, incidents of missing cases too have become synonymous with the fair. Several Bollywood movies have drawn their plots from the Kumbh where heroes get separated from families at the fair and then dramatically reunited decades later.

After the end of the gathering, Sangam city will once again turn into a barren land, which will be used by the farmers to grow melons and children to play, leaving the sand banks to wait for another Kumbh to feel lively again.

THE GIST

▼ Kumbh, derived from a Sanskrit word which means a pitcher, is rotationally held every three years at the four riverside cities of Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik

▼ The Ardh (half) Kumbh is held every six years at Haridwar and Prayagraj while the Purna (complete) Kumbh takes place in all four cities, every 12 years

▼ The Maha Kumbh happens after 12 Purna Kumbhs in Prayagraj, once in 144 years and is considered the most auspicious

Activist short-seller

Nate Anderson

Known for investigative reports on publicly listed companies, the founder of Hindenburg Research says he is disbanding the group

G. Sampath

Nate Anderson, 'activist' short-seller and founder of Hindenburg Research, has decided to disband the U.S.-based investment research group known for its investigative reports on publicly listed companies. In a note shared on the Hindenburg website, he addressed the speculation on what triggered the move. "The plan has been to wind up after we finished the pipeline of ideas we were working on. And as of the last Ponzi cases we just completed and are sharing with regulators, that day is today."

Short-sellers are a rare breed in general, and in what has been a bullish market for the past several years, even more so. Mr. Anderson, with a small team of 11 people, built Hindenburg into a reputed research group that has caused over 100 individuals, including billionaires, to be civilly or criminally charged, and wiped out billions of dollars in companies' market values.

The son of a college professor and a nurse, Mr. Anderson obtained a business degree and started off with a job providing technical and sales advice to a financial analytics company. Subsequently, he moved on to auditing and verification of potential deals for investment firms of wealthy families. But all



along, he had nursed a singular passion: unearthing scams. Aware that translating it into a full-fledged career would not be easy, he set up a brokerage firm that did due diligence for hedge funds, while pursuing "forensic financial research" in his personal time.

But as his brokerage firm failed to take off, debts mounted, and he faced eviction by his landlord, Mr. Anderson sold his brokerage licence and in 2017, plunged into his passion by setting up Hindenburg.

First major success Short-selling involves borrowing the shares of a given company and selling them in the expectation that its price would fall, and when its price duly fell, buying them back at the lower price, and pocketing the difference as profit. The magnitude of the losses if the shorted share prices rose instead of tanking, are potentially unlimited.

Mr. Anderson's first big success came with Nikola, a maker of electric trucks. Hindenburg claimed that its management was lying about the technology status of its product. It famously exposed the fact that its truck, which in a video seemed to be cruising at good speed, was actually rolling downward on a slope in neutral gear. Nikola's shares plunged 15%, its chairman was charged with securities fraud, and Hindenburg made a killing on its short position.

He famously took on the billionaire oligarch Elon Musk by announcing a short position on Twitter following Mr. Musk's deal to buy the social media firm. Mr. Anderson bet that Mr. Musk would walk away from the deal. When four days after the agreement, Mr. Musk tried to do just that, Hindenburg made money. When the case went to court, Hindenburg covered its short and "went long", believing that "Musk's arguments for backing out" won't win. They did not, and as Mr. Musk closed the deal at the

originally agreed price, Hindenburg gained yet again.

Mr. Anderson made news in India for the first time in January 2023 when Hindenburg alleged that the Adani Group was using entities registered in Mauritius to perpetrate stock manipulation and accounting fraud. The Adani Group has denied the allegations.

Hindenburg hit the headlines again last August when it alleged that the Securities and Exchange Bureau of India (SEBI) chief Madhab Buch and her husband held stakes in offshore funds linked to the Adanis. Ms. Buch and the Adanis have denied these allegations. But the Adani group has lost \$150 billion from its market value since the Hindenburg report came out in 2023, and last November, Gautam Adani was indicted on securities fraud charges by U.S. regulators.

Mr. Anderson has now promised to "open-source" his methods of investigations so that others can take the Hindenburg legacy forward. Investors are typically not fond of short-sellers, given the existential danger they pose to the value of their holdings. But there is no denying the immense public interest value of Mr. Anderson's unique contributions in exposing what the state's regulatory apparatus should have prevented in the first place.

Kallol Bhattacharjee

Early morning of May 30, 1981, clouds from the Bay of Bengal lashed Chittagong. Through the heavy pitter-patter of rain on the roof of the Circuit House of Chittagong, President Ziaur Rahman heard the sound of gunfire. A man of action known for his bravery as a Pakistani soldier in the 1965 India-Pakistan war and later as a nationalist officer who rebelled against the Pakistani Army in 1971, Rahman was not someone to hide. Dressed in his night suit, Rahman came out to check the source of the gun fire and just then a hail of bullets literally sliced him into two halves.

The killers, however, failed in their plot to seize power as Abdus Sattar, a seasoned political figure, quickly took charge as President with Army Chief Hossein Mohammed Ershad's support.

It was in this dramatic situation that Khaleda Zia, widow of Rahman, entered the political spectrum. She had reportedly fainted on hearing the news of the assassination of Rahman, but two and a half years later, Ms. Zia took over from Abdus Sattar. On January 13, 1984, Ms. Zia took charge of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) that was founded by Rahman.

The death of Rahman also came at a critical time for the volatile country. On

Return of the Begum

Khaleda Zia

The BNP politician, who has been acquitted in a corruption case, is now back in the limelight as her party is preparing for the next election in Bangladesh



2014, 2018 and 2024.

After being freed from detention following the fall of the Hasina government on August 5, 2024, Ms. Zia reiterated that she does not harbour any ill-will towards the currently exiled Ms. Hasina, giving a hint that she is waiting and watching how long the interim government led by Mohammad Yunus would last. While the BNP boycotted polls in the past, it is also known that the Hasina regime did not stop doctors from Johns Hopkins Hospital in the U.S. from flying into Dhaka to conduct a complex surgery on Ms. Zia in 2021.

With Hasina out of Bangladesh and the BNP enthused by the prospects of returning to power, Ms. Zia, 79, is once again in the limelight, but this time she is far more cautious. Earlier this month, an air ambulance from Qatar flew her for special medical care in London where she was reunited with her elder son Tarique Rahman who has been in exile since he was reportedly tortured by the military during the 2006-08 caretaker rule.

From 1991 till 2006, Ms. Zia dominated Bangladesh's politics, along with her rival Ms. Hasina. She returned to power with the support of the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh at the turn of the century and remained in office till 2006.

Boycott of elections

Though Ms. Zia was kept out of power by Ms. Hasina during the next 15 years, the BNP remained strong on the ground. While Ms. Zia took a backseat during the Hasina era, the day-to-day affairs of the party were handled by Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Amir Khasru Mahmud Choudhury, who maintained the combative attitude of the party which boycotted election thrice –

BEIRUT

Hezbollah chief warns Israel over 'hundreds' of truce violations



Naim Qassem, the leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah, on Saturday accused Israel of hundreds of violations of a ceasefire, to be fully implemented by next week, and warned against testing "our patience". His remarks came during a visit to Lebanon by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. AFP

TEHRAN

Gunman kills two judges in Tehran tied to 1988 mass executions



A man fatally shot two prominent hard-line judges in Iran's capital Saturday, officials said, both of whom allegedly took part in the mass execution of dissidents in 1988. The attacker, who was armed with a handgun, killed himself. The victims were identified as clerics Mohammad Mogheiseh and Ali Razini. AP

ABUJA

Nigeria is admitted as a partner country of the BRICS bloc



Nigeria has been admitted as a "partner country" of the BRICS bloc of developing economies, according to Brazil, the group's chair. BRICS was formed by Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2009, with South Africa added in 2010, as a counterweight to the Group of Seven (G-7) leading industrialised nations. AP

LAHORE

Police, Islamists demolish Ahmadi place of worship in Pakistan



Police and members of the Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan allegedly demolished an 80-year-old worship place of the minority Ahmadi community in Pakistan's Punjab province, an official said on Saturday. The incident took place on Friday at Daska Kalan, Sialkot, some 100 km from Lahore. PTI

Before ceasefire takes effect in Gaza, Yemen's Houthis fire missiles at Israel

The militants 'carried out a specific military operation targeting the Ministry of Defence of the Israeli enemy'; the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas is to take effect on the eve of Trump's inauguration for a second term as U.S. President

Agence France-Presse

JERUSALEM

The Israeli military said it intercepted two missiles fired from Yemen on Saturday, a day before a ceasefire is set to take effect in war-tattered Gaza.

The military activated air raid sirens in Jerusalem and in parts of central and southern Israel ahead of the interceptions during the day, with the first projectile shot down in the morning.

Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed the morning attack, hours after the Israeli military intercepted the incoming missile.

The Houthis "carried



Tense region: Israeli armoured personnel carriers park near the Israel-Gaza border on Saturday, before the ceasefire deal. REUTERS

out a specific military operation targeting the so-called Ministry of Defence of the Israeli enemy... using a ballistic missile" in central Israel, the rebels said in a statement.

The morning attack had triggered explosions over Jerusalem as the military intercepted the missile.

Later, sirens blared across southern Israel as a second missile was fired

from Yemen and intercepted by the Israeli air force, the military said.

"Following the sirens that sounded a short while ago in the areas of Eilat and Arava, a missile that was launched from Yemen was intercepted" before crossing into Israeli territory, it said.

The latest launches from Yemen came as a ceasefire in the war in Gaza would take effect from 0630 GMT (1200 IST) on Sunday.

Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, announcing the ceasefire agreement on Wednesday, said an initial 42-day ceasefire would see

33 hostages released by militants in Gaza.

The truce is to take effect on the eve of Donald Trump's inauguration for a second term as U.S. President.

'Ready for duties'

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said the Palestinian Authority, which has partial administrative control in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, has completed preparations "to assume full responsibility in Gaza" after the war.

Israel has no definitive stance on post-war governance beyond rejecting any role for both Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

Escaped death by a whisker, says Hasina on fleeing Dhaka

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Deposed Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said she and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana escaped death by just 20-25 minutes on August 5 last year when her Awami League government was toppled in a student-led mass uprising.

In a brief audio note released by her party on its Facebook page, Ms. Hasina expressed her gratitude to God for saving her life.

She also recalled two previous attempts on her life she narrowly escaped and said she believed that God had saved her life as part of a divine design to get something greater done by her.

"We escaped death by just 20-25 minutes. I feel surviving the killings on



last year when she fled Bangladesh following a massive student-led protest that toppled her Awami League's 16-year regime.

'I am suffering'

"I am suffering, I am without my country, my home, everything has been burned," Ms. Hasina said.

Ms. Hasina survived several attempts on her life including that of the August 21, 2004 grenade attack on a party rally where she was addressing as the opposition leader. Twenty-four people were killed in the attack.

In 2000, Ms. Hasina, then the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, was scheduled to speak at a rally in Kotalipara Upazila, Gopalganj District when police discovered a time bomb weighing 76 Kg 50 feet from the stage.

Russia captures two more villages in eastern Ukraine

Agence France-Presse

Associated Press

MOSCOW/KYIV

Russia on Saturday said it had captured two more villages in eastern Ukraine, the latest territorial advances in its grinding offensive.

In a statement on Telegram, the Defence Ministry said its forces had "liberated" the villages of Vremivka and Petropavlivka, both in the Donetsk region that Moscow claims to have annexed.

Drone attack on Kyiv
Meanwhile, Russia attacked Ukraine's capital with a barrage of drones and missiles on Saturday, leaving at least three persons dead, while industrial sites in Russia were set ablaze by Ukrainian strikes.

Russia launched 39



Incremental gains: Kremlin claimed to have seized two villages in the Donetsk region that Moscow claims to have annexed. AFP

'Germany may send troops to Ukraine buffer zone'

Agence France-Presse
BERLIN

Germany's Defence Minister said he was open to sending German soldiers to Ukraine to help secure a demilitarised zone there if a ceasefire were agreed with Russia, in remarks published on Saturday.

In an interview with the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper, Boris Pistorius also said Germany should aim to spend around 3% of GDP on defence.

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump wants members of the NATO military alliance to devote 5% of their national output on defence, a demand that has already been rejected as too high by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Asked about a possible deployment of German troops to help secure a buffer zone between Russia and Ukraine if one were agreed, Mr. Pistorius said: "We are the largest NATO partner in Europe. We will obviously have a role to play."

He said the issue would "be discussed in due time".

Mr. Pistorius said Russia was currently occupying "18% or 19% of Ukrainian territory". But despite nearly three years of war, it had "not gained more" than that and had suffered "extensive losses in its own army" in the attempt.

Defence spending
Asked about the contribution Germany should make towards NATO defence spending, Mr. Pistorius said: "We should be talking more about 3% than 2%."

Germany currently devotes around 2% of its GDP to defence.

Impeached South Korean leader argues for his release in court

Associated Press

SEOUL

South Korea's impeached President on Saturday argued for his release before a Seoul judge as the court reviewed whether to grant a law enforcement request for his formal arrest.

Mr. Yoon, who has been in detention since he was apprehended on Wednesday in a massive law enforcement operation at his residence, faces potential rebellion charges linked to his declaration of martial law on December 3, which set off the country's most serious political crisis since its democratisation in the



late 1980s.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with the police and the military, requested the Seoul Western District Court to grant a warrant

for Mr. Yoon's formal arrest. Mr. Yoon's lawyers said he spoke for about 40 minutes to the judge during the nearly five-hour closed-door hearing.

Expected decision
The judge is expected to make a decision by late Saturday or early Sunday.

If Mr. Yoon is arrested, investigators can extend his detention to 20 days, during which they will transfer the case to public prosecutors for indictment. If the court rejects the investigators' request, Mr. Yoon will be released and return to his residence.

**WHERE OTHERS PUT A FULL STOP,
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AVAILABLE

Rohit confirms he will play in Ranji match against Jammu & Kashmir



EMMANUEL YOGINI

Rohit Sharma has confirmed that he will play in Mumbai's Ranji Trophy clash against Jammu & Kashmir in Mumbai from January 23. Rohit has thus decided to lead by example in adherence with the new BCCI policy of making domestic cricket mandatory for players, unless advised otherwise by the medical professionals.

NECK SPRAIN

Kohli unavailable for Delhi's game against Saurashtra



After including Virat Kohli in Delhi's 22-member provisional squad on Friday for the Ranji Trophy game against Saurashtra in Rajkot, the DDCA officially announced an updated list on Saturday that omits the star batter. It is understood that Kohli, nursing a neck sprain, informed the BCCI about his unavailability.

SETTLED

Finding a spot for Karun in this team was difficult, says Agarkar



VIJAY SONEJI

Chief selector Ajit Agarkar admitted that the committee has taken note of Karun Nair's red-hot form in Vijay Hazare Trophy. "We did have a chat about him, there is no doubt about it. But finding a spot in this team is very difficult. Look at the guys who have been picked. All of them average in excess of mid-40s," Agarkar said.

SUPER SATURDAY

India men's and women's outfits make Kho Kho World Cup final



The Indian men's team defeated South Africa 62-42 to advance to the Kho Kho World Cup final in New Delhi on Saturday. India will face Nepal in the summit clash. Indian women also stormed to the title clash, beating South Africa 66-16. Here too, the hosts will face Nepal, which cruised past Uganda 89-18, in the final.

Bumrah, Shami included in Champions Trophy squad

Selection committee chairman Agarkar says they are waiting to hear about the former's fitness and when he is likely to be available; Hardik returns to ODIs; maiden call-up for Jaiswal; Siraj misses out

CRICKET

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Despite concerns over his fitness, Jasprit Bumrah - the backbone of India's bowling - was on Saturday included in India's squad for the Champions Trophy, starting on February 19. While Yashasvi Jaiswal has earned a maiden ODI call-up, Mohammed Shami and Kuldeep Yadav - bowlers who are also on a comeback trail following injury layoffs - have also been selected in the Rohit Sharma-led squad.

The team was picked by the selection committee, chaired by Ajit Agarkar, in the presence of captain Rohit Sharma at the BCCI headquarters here.

After a long meeting that lasted well over two hours, Agarkar announced the squad and said that Harshit Rana will be the additional player for the ODI series against England with Bumrah unlikely to be



Pace pack: Shami is back in the ODI squad while there are concerns over Bumrah's fitness. FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

available at least for the first two ODIs.

"With Bumrah, we are waiting to hear about his

fitness and when he is likely to be available.

"At the moment I don't think he is likely to be fit

for the first couple of games," Agarkar said in a media interaction, hoping that Bumrah will be fit in time.

"I know he was asked to offload for five weeks of bowling, which is early first week February, if I am not wrong. And we'll probably find out a bit more around that time what exactly and with regards to what his medical condition is. I am sure BCCI might just put something out from the physio itself.

"It's better it comes from the medical department than me trying to explain what exactly is wrong with him. But that's the time frame that we have been told. And hopefully, he is okay after that."

Match-fit?

Ever since he walked off the field on day two of the Sydney Test on January 4 due to a back injury, Bumrah has been advised rest.

It will be interesting to see if he is match fit in the 10-day window after his rest and recovery period gets over on February 8.

The Hindu understands that Nitish Reddy and Shivaam Dube's names were discussed as possible back-ups for all-rounder Hardik Pandya, who returned to the ODI set-up since the 2023 ODI World Cup.

Kuldeep's return following a hernia surgery and Ravindra Jadeja's inclusion as the last name on the team sheet instead of Mohammed Siraj, a pacer, meant the selectors have preferred only three genuine pacers and four spinners in the squad.

Jaiswal, India's standout player in 2024, has been handed a maiden ODI call-up as a reserve opener.

Rohit referred to his selection over his "potential."

The squad:

Rohit Sharma (Capt.), Shubman Gill (Vice-capt.), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, K.L. Rahul (wk), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravindra Jadeja. (Harshit Rana to be the additional player for the three ODIs against England.)

Rohit, Agarkar differ in views on BCCI's SOPs for national players

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

It's not a school, it's not a punishment
— AGARKAR

behind it. "Who told you about these rules? Has it come from the official handle of (the) BCCI? Did it come officially?" Rohit asked.

The 10-point document shared with cricketers last week, accessed by *The Hindu*, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had put out various curbs, including restricted stay of players' families on long tours and disallowing personal staff of players along with the squad.

Rationale
While Rohit snapped at a journalist when asked about the new policy, Agarkar explained the rationale

have seen in the last few months the need for some changes, more bonding in the team. It's not a school, it's not a punishment. It's just you have some rules and when you are playing for the national team, you just follow the rules. These are mature individuals.

"They are superstars in their own right in international sport. They know how to handle themselves," Agarkar said.

"But at the end of the day, you are eventually representing your country and there are certain things that you inherently follow as every team does.

"A lot of them have been in place, maybe we have spoken about it now and it has been put out but a lot of them have been in place in any case.

"You keep on refining it as you go along, eventually what suits the team, you want to try and do that."



Satwik and Chirag go down tamely in semifinals

BADMINTON

Uthra Ganesan
NEW DELHI

The Indian challenge at the India Open fizzled out with Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty losing 21-18, 21-14 in the semifinals against Malaysia's Sze Fei Goh and Nur Izzuddin on Saturday.

The World No. 9 Indians struggled all through to control not just the game but their own strokes as well. Despite a good start in the opening game to stay level on points and taking a 15-12 lead, the Indians erred and allowed their opponents to take charge. The second game was largely one-sided with the Malaysians dictating terms and the Indians playing catch-up. To make it worse, Satwik twisted his ankle at 13-14, admitting later it looked bad and will have to be checked out.

"I think we should have closed down in the first game but credit to them they were really good in the service situations, which we didn't really expect because probably we didn't prepare for it," Chirag said after the game. "We should have been a little more calm. We didn't really expect so many flicks going into the game, especially from 15-12 up in the first game."

Satwik added: "We started well but compared to previous matches, the



Dominant: Malaysia's Goh and Nur were just too good for Satwik and Chirag. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

shuttle was fast, whoever controlled it better got the points and they did it much better."

The Malaysians will now face Koreans Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae, who upset fifth seeds Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia 22-20, 21-19.

In the singles last year's runner-up Cheuk Yiu Lee of Singapore won 13-21, 21-10, 21-16 over Hong Yang Weng to reach his second consecutive final in the event while two-time champion Viktor Axelsen stayed on course to become only the second man to win the title thrice with a 21-18, 21-14, 21-15 victory against Indonesia's Jonatan Christie.

The results (semifinals): Men's singles: Cheuk Yiu Lee (Sgp) bt

Hong Yang Weng (Chn) 13-21, 21-10, 21-16; Viktor Axelsen (Den) bt Jonatan Christie (Inda) 17-21, 21-14, 21-15; Doubles: Kim Won Ho & Seo Seung Jae (kor) bt Aaron Chia & Soh Wooi Yik (Mas) 22-20, 21-19; Nur Izzuddin & Goh Sze Fei (Mas) bt Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty (Ind) 21-18, 21-14.

Women: Porntipapwee Chochuwong (Tha) bt Tomoka Miyazaki (Jpn) 11-21, 24-22, 21-19; An Se Young (kor) bt Gregoria Mariska Tunjung 21-19, 21-16; Doubles: Kim Hee Jeong & Kong Hee Yong (kor) bt Pearly Tan & Thinaah Muralitharan (Mas) 21-18, 21-18; Arisa Iguchi & Ayako Sakuramoto (Jpn) bt Li Yi Jing & Luo Xu Min (Chn) 18-21, 21-13, 21-19; Mixed doubles: Thom Gicquel & Delphine Delrue (Fra) bt Chen Tang Jie & Toh Ee Wei (Mas) 21-18, 21-15; Jiang Zhen Bang & Wei Ya Xin (Chn) bt Goh Soon Haut & Lai Shevon Jemie (Mas) 18-21, 21-19, 21-19.

Sinner, Swiatek into pre-quarters; Monfils, Svitolina pull off shock wins

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

Defending champion Jan-Henrik Sinner raced to victory at the Australian Open on Saturday to sweep into the last 16 as Iga Swiatek demolished Emma Raducanu.

Also into the second week is 38-year-old Gael Monfils after he stunned fourth seed Taylor Fritz - with the veteran's wife Elina Svitolina also enjoying a shock win immediately after on the same court.

American qualifier Learner Tien, 19, won in straight sets to extend his fairytale run on his debut in Melbourne.

Italian world No.1 Sinner dropped a set for the first time in 14 matches in the second round.

But there were no such wobbles against the unseeded Marcos Giron as he sprinted home 6-3, 6-4, 6-2, slamming 35 winners and eight aces.

Awaiting him next is Danish 13th seed Holger Rune who prevailed over Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic in five sets.

French showman Monfils rolled back the years to storm back and upset the American Fritz 3-6, 7-5, 7-6(1), 6-4.

The unseeded Monfils, who hit a career-high ranking of six in 2016 but is now 41st, is enjoying a late-career flourish.

He is married to Ukrainer



19 Tien is the second-youngest American man (19 years old) to reach the fourth round Down Under. Sampras achieved the feat as an 18-year-old in 1990.

Sunday's Picks

FOURTH ROUND

Men 2-Zverev vs Humbert, 3-Alcaraz vs Draper, 7-Djokovic vs Lehecka, 12-Paul vs Davidovich Fokina



20 Since her Tour debut in 2019, Swiatek is the only player with 20+ wins at four different events (Australian Open, French Open, US Open, and Rome).

Sunday's Picks

FOURTH ROUND

Men 2-Zverev vs Humbert, 3-Alcaraz vs Draper, 7-Djokovic vs Lehecka, 12-Paul vs Davidovich Fokina

Women 1-Sabalenka vs Andreeva, 3-Gauff vs Bencic, 11-Badosa vs Danilovic, 18-Vekic vs Pavlyuchenkova

Compiled by Anirudh Velamuri

TOP RESULTS

Men: Third round: Michelsen (USA) bt 19-Khachanov (Rus) 6-3, 7-6(5), 6-2; Monfils (Fra) bt 4-Fritz (USA) 3-6, 7-5, 7-6(1), 6-4; 8-de Minaur (Aus) bt 31-Cerundolo (Arg) 5-7, 6-7(6), 6-3, 6-3; Tien (USA) bt Moutet (Fra) 7-6(10), 6-3, 6-3; Sonego (Ita) bt Marozsan (Hun) 6-7(3), 7-6(6), 6-1, 6-2. Tien became the youngest man to reach the fourth round since Rafael Nadal in 2005 when he overcame injured Frenchman Corentin Moutet.

The gifted teenager emerged a 7-6(10), 6-3, 6-3 victor with Moutet collapsing clutching his leg in the third set before gingerly carrying on.

Women: Third round: 2-Swiatek (Pol) bt Raducanu (GBR) 6-1, 6-0; 8-Navarro (USA) bt Jabeur (Tun) 6-4, 3-6, 6-4; 9-Kasatkina (Rus) bt 24-Putintseva (Kaz) 7-5, 6-1; Lys (Ger) bt Cristian (Rou) 4-6, 6-3, 6-3; 6-Rybakina (Kaz) 6-4, 6-4; 32-Yastremska (Ukr) 6-3, 6-4; Kudermetova (Rus) bt 15-Haddad Maia (Bra) 6-4, 6-2; 28-Svitolina (Ukr) bt 4-Paolini (Ita) 2-6, 6-4; 6-0; 19-Keys (USA) bt 10-Collins (USA) 6-4, 6-4.

Reds ride on Nunez double

EURO LEAGUES

Reuters
LONDON

Substitute Darwin Nunez's stoppage-time double gave Liverpool a 2-0 win at Brentford on Saturday, as the Premier League leader left it late to record its first league win of 2025.

The results: Premier League: Newcastle 1 (Guimaraes 25) lost to Bournemouth 4 (Kluivert 6, 44, 90+2, Kerkez 90+6); Brentford 0 lost to Liverpool 2 (Nunez 90+1, 90+3); Leicester 0 lost to Fulham (Smith Rowe 48, Traore 68); West Ham 0 lost to Crystal Palace 2 (Metela 48, 89+pen).

LaLiga: Leganes 1 (Nastic 49) Atletico Madrid 0

Bundesliga: Stuttgart 4 (Rouault 2, Demirovic 17, Woltemade 45+5-pen, Undav 80) bt SC Freiburg 0; Bayern Munich 3 (Goretzka 20, 62, Olise 39) bt Wolfsburg 2 (Amoura 48, Traore 68); Bochum 3 (Boada 48, 56, 61-pen) drew with RB Leipzig 3 (Orban 10, Nusa 13, Raum 21).

Serie A: Bologna 3 (Castro 22, Odgaard 34, Orsolini 69) bt Monza 1 (Maldini 4).

IN BRIEF



Noman and Sajid put Pakistan in the ascendancy

Spinners Noman Ali, in pic., and Sajid Khan guided Pakistan to a strong position against the West Indies on the second day of the opening Test in Multan on Saturday.

The scores: Pakistan 230 in 68.5 overs (Saud 84, Rizwan 71) & 109/3 in 31 overs vs West Indies 137 in 25.2 overs (Noman 5/39, Sajid 4/65).

Bangladesh, SA, Australia post wins in U-19 Women's T20 WC

Bangladesh, South Africa and Australia posted wins on the opening day of the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday.

The scores: Scotland 48 in 15.1 overs (Bray 3/1, Larosa 3/7) lost to Australia 49/1 in 6.4 overs. Nepal 52 in 18.2 overs lost to Bangladesh 53/5 in 13.2 overs. South Africa 91/7 in 11 overs (Botha 32, Lambat 3/6) beat New Zealand 69/5 in 11 overs (McLeod 34). (Match reduced to 11 overs).

DDCA updates Delhi squad sans Virat Kohli

With Virat Kohli unavailable for selection, the Delhi & District Cricket Association (DDCA) officially announced an updated squad list on Saturday for the Ranji Trophy game against Saurashtra in Rajkot.

Delhi's squad: Ayush Badoni (captain), Sanat Sangwan, Arpit Rana, Yash Dhill, Rishabh Pant, Jonty Sidhu, Himmat Singh, Navdeep Saini, Money Grewal, Harsh Tyagi, Siddhant Sharma, Shivam Sharma, Pranav Rajvanshi, Vaibhav Kandpal, Mayank Gussain, Gagan Vats, Ayush Doseja, Rounak Waghela, Sumit Mathur, Rahul Gahlot, Jitesh Singh.

LIVE TELECAST

Women's U-19 T20 World Cup: Hotstar, 8 a.m. & 12 p.m.
Pakistan vs West Indies: 1st Test, day 3, FanCode, 10 a.m.
Badminton: Indian Open, FanCode, 12 p.m.
I-League: Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1 & 3.30 p.m.
Australian Open: Evening session, Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1.30 p.m.
Serie A: gxr.world, 5, 7.30, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Monday)
Hockey: HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6 & 8.15 p.m.
LaLiga: gxr.world, 6.30, 8.45, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Monday)
ISL: Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 7.30 & 10 p.m.
Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8 & 10 p.m.
Kho-Kho World Cup: (final), SS Select 1 & Hotstar, 8.15 p.m.

Manika's pullout leaves C'ship open

TABLE TENNIS

Sports Bureau

SURAT

Despite Manika Batra's last-minute pullout there will be much at stake over the next eight days in Surat at the 86th senior National table tennis championship.

Sreeja Akula – India's top-ranked international paddler, who starred in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) successive women's title runs in the last two editions – will be forced to participate only in women's singles after RBI failed to qualify for the team championship.

It will mean that the Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) – with veteran Mouma Das at the helm – can hope for a miracle. It will face stiff resistance from arch-rival Railways Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) – led by Sunita Mukherjee.

In the men's team championship, however, the PSPB outfit is set to extend its winning run to 23 editions. With veteran A. Sharath Kamal, Harmeet Desai and Manav Thakkar in its ranks PSPB is all set to continue singing "where's the competition" one more time.

Ankita and Naiktha clinch doubles title



Delight: Ankita and Naiktha with their trophy. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

TENNIS

Kamesh Srinivasan

NEW DELHI

Ankita Raina and Naiktha Bains combined strongly to beat Jessie Aney and Jessica Failla of USA 6-4, 3-6, [10-8] in the doubles final of the \$40,000 ITF women's tennis tournament at the DLTA Complex on Saturday.

In an entertaining match in which the Indo-British pair upped the ante at crucial stages, the Americans won everyone's heart for the way they fought right till the end.

Ankita and Naiktha led 7-5 in the super tie-break before Jessie and Jessica levelled the scores. By now Ankita was intensity personified and came up with the right shots to make the breakthrough to the winner's trophy.

Naiktha played her at-

tacking all-court game with a touch of assurance despite the odd errors.

It was the first title together as a pair for Ankita and Naiktha. The 32-year-old Ankita has 30 doubles titles in the professional circuit. It was the 25th doubles title for Naiktha, and the first with an Indian partner.

In the singles semifinals, Tatiana Prozorova tamed top seed Darja Semenistaja of Latvia 7-5, 6-2. Darja bounced back from being 1-4 down in the first set, but Prozorova stroked with punch and precision to race ahead. In the final, Prozorova will play second seed Panna Udvardy beat Yuriko Miyazaki.

The results: Singles (semifinals): Tatiana Prozorova bt Darja Semenistaja 7-5, 6-2; Panna Udvardy bt Yuriko Miyazaki 6-3, 6-2.

Doubles (final): Naiktha Bains & Ankita Raina bt Jessie Aney & Jessica Failla 6-4, 3-6, [10-8].

Duke Of Tuscany maintains his winning form

RACING

HYDERABAD: The four-year-old gelding Duke Of Tuscany, who won the Golconda 2000 Guineas in his last start, maintains his winning form and should win the HPSL Golconda Derby Stakes (Gr.I), the main attraction of Sunday's (Jan 19) races.

1 ROYAL CALCUTTA TURF CLUB CUP (Div. II) (1,100m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-y-o only (Cat. II) – 12.10 p.m.: 1. Country's Dictator (I) H.M. Akshay 56, 2. Racing Ruler (7) G. Naresh 56, 3. Victory Run (2) Ashad Asbar 56, 4. Ashwa Changez (3) Gaurav 54.5, 5. Double Bubble (8) Kuldeep Sr. 53, 6. Emerald Touch (4) Neeraj 54.5, 7. French Lady (6) Md. Ismail 54.5 and 8. Moonlite Rose (5) Saqlain 54.5.

1. EMERALD TOUCH, 2. DOUBLE BUBBLE, 3. VICTORY RUN

2 TURF AUTHORITIES OF INDIA CUP (Div. II) (1,400m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 60 to 85 (Cat. II) – 12.40: 1. Encore (9) R.S. Jodha 60, 2. D Minchi (3) David Allan 59, 3. Adhut (7) Vivek G 58, 4. One N Only (8) Kuldeep Sr. 57, 5. Delhi Heights (5) Mukesh 55.5, 6. Anzio (10) P. Sai K 55, 7. Tipurari (1) B. Nikhil 54, 8. Hurricane Bay (6) Rafigue Sk 55 and 10. Pontefract (2) Afroz K 52.5.

1. D MINCHU, 2. ADBHUT, 3. HURRICANE WAVE

3 ROYAL CALCUTTA TURF CLUB CUP (Div. II) (1,100m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-y-o only (Cat. II) – 11:00: 1. Aquatone (2) Mohit 56, 2. Philodendron (4) Md. Ismail 56, 3. Royal Warrior (5) P. Sai K 56, 4. American Affair (6) H.M. Akshay 54.5, 5. Calabasas (1) P. Ajeeeth K 54.5, 6. Dubai Touch (3) Neeraj 54.5, 7. Live Legend (7) Gaurav 54.5 and 8. Silver Screen (8) Md. Ekrum 54.5.

1. DUBAI TOUCH, 2. CALABASAS, 3. AMERICAN AFFAIR

4 BANGALORE TURF CLUB CUP (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 14.5: 1. Romantic Grey (4) Vivek G 60, 2. Dali's Champion (1) Kuldeep Sr. 58.5, 3. Elegant Lady (8) Rafigue

5 MADRAS RACE CLUB CUP (1,600m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II) – 13: 1. Oliver's Mount (1) Vivek G 60, 2. Trishul (4) Trevor 60, 3. Nonpariel, 4. Alphonse (2) Santosh Raj 55, 5. Exclusive Spark (7) Mohit 55, 6. Mini Jackpot (3) Gaurav 57, 7. Clara 58, 8. Silver Arrow (2) Md. Ismail 55, 9. Tanala: All races.

6 TURF AUTHORITIES OF INDIA CUP (Div. II) (1,400m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 60 to 85 (Cat. II) – 2.50: 1. Barber (5) Mukesh 60, 2. Imperia (1) P. Ajeeeth K 59.5, 3. Reigning Beauty (10) Saqlain 58.5, 4. Brooklyn (2) Mohit 57, 5. Secret Saini (3) Sandesh 57, 6. Seeking Alphina (4) Vivek G 57, 5. Nyx (5) David Allan 55.5 and 6. White Pearl (1) Mukesh 55.5.

1. GATIMAN, 2. CALISTOGA, 3. ARION ONE

9 HPSL GOLCONDA DERBY STAKES (GR. I) (2,400m): LADY INVICTUS (Trevor) 1, My Solitaire (Jagadeesh) 2, Capri Girl (R. Pradeep) 3 and Benzeema (Rayan) 4. 3-1/2, 4-1/2 and 5-1. Arion (3) Sandesh 57, 4. Seeking Alphina (4) Vivek G 57, 5. Nyx (5) David Allan 55.5 and 6. White Pearl (1) Mukesh 55.5.

1. DUKE OF TUSCANY, 2. SEEKING ALPHINA

10 DELHI RACE CLUB CUP (1,400m), 4-y-o and upward, rated upto 65 (Cat. II) – 2.50: 1. Barber (5) Mukesh 60, 2. Imperia (1) P. Ajeeeth K 59.5, 3. Balahaka (6) G. Naresh 61.5, 2. Rani Ruckus (8) Md. Saqlain 61.5, 3. Sadiya (3) Deepak 61, 4. Exclusive Spark (7) Mohit 60, 5. Taaliyah (10) Mukesh 60, 6. Tupaq Fiero (12) Md. Saqlain 57, 7. Anahita (2) Santosh Raj 58.5, 8. Silver Arrow (2) Md. Ismail 55, 9. Tanala: All races.

1. TAALIYAH, 2. SADIYA, 3. EXCLUSIVE SPARK

11 SURYA PRakash (1) (2,400m): 1. Knotty Scotty (Trevor) 2, Supercharge (Ashhad Asbar) 3 and Turkomian (Darshan) 4. 1/2, 1-3/4 and 3-1/2: 1. Knotty Scotty (1) P. Ajeeeth K 58, 2. Supercharge (2) Ashhad Asbar 58, 3. Turkomian (3) Darshan 58, 4. Exclusive Spark (4) Md. Ismail 55, 5. Tanala: All races.

1. TANALA, 2. SUPERCHARGE, 3. EXCLUSIVE SPARK

12 METZINGER (Ashley K) 1, Maple Leaf (Koshi K) 2, Southern Force (Srinath) 3 and Forseti (Shreyas S) 4. 3, 3-3/4 and 3-1/4: 1. 23.96s. Rs. 14 (w), 10, 14 and 28 (p), Shp: 26.89s. Rs. 16 (w), 10, 14 and 58 (p), Shp: 25, THP: 120, FP: 33, Q: 18, Trinella: 1,123/537, Exacta: 2,106/694. Favourite: Circle Of Dreams.

Owners: M/s. DT Racing & Breeding LLP, Mr. Ashok Rampise, M/s. Rapar Galloping Stars LLP rep by Mr. Rajendran and Manjri Horse Farm Pvt Ltd. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar.

6. S.M. RAMAKRISHNA RAO MEMORIAL CUP (1,400m): CIRCLE OF DREAMS (Akshay K) 1, Sweet Winner (Ashhad Asbar) 2, Ziva (L.A. Rozario) 3 and Refreshment (Trevor) 4. 5-1/4, 1-1/2 and 1. 26.97s. Rs. 14 (w), 10, 41 and 23 (p), Shp: 124.89s. Rs. 16 (w), 10, 14 and 58 (p), Shp: 25, THP: 120, FP: 33, Q: 18, Trinella: 1,123/537, Exacta: 2,106/694. Favourite: Circle Of Dreams.

Owners: M/s. DT Racing & Breeding LLP, Mr. Mukul A. Sonawala, Mr. S.R. Sanas and Saraina Racing Pvt Ltd. Trainer: S. Padmanaban.

7. R.W.I.T.C. TURF (1,400m): DESERT KINGDOM (David Allan) 1, Michiko (Trevor) 2, Sea Blush (Vivek) 3 and Mystical Air (Shreyas S) 4. 3-1/2, 4-1/2 and 5-1: 23.96s. Rs. 14 (w), 10, 14 and 29 (p), Shp: 32, THP: 65, FP: 65, Q: 28, Trinella: 442/347, Exacta: 1,037/359. Favourite: Lady Invictus. Owner: Mr. M. Venkatesh. Trainer: S. Dominic.

2. TROMBAY PLATE (1,600m): DESERT KINGDOM (David Allan) 1, Mr. Kersi H. Vachha, Mr. P.J. Vazifdar, Mr. M. Rishad, Mrs. P.J. Vazifdar & Mr. S.R. Sanas. Trainer: S. Padmanaban.

7. R.W.I.T.C. TURF (1,400m): KALAMITSI (Akshay K) 1, Aralina (Sandesh) 2, The Protector (Srinath) 3 and Forseti (Shreyas S) 4. 3, 3-3/4 and 3-1/4: 1. 23.96s. Rs. 14 (w), 13 and 11 (p), Shp: 42, THP: 25, FP: 56, Q: 20, Trinella: 179/91, Exacta: 3/129/257, Favourite: Aralina.

Owners: Mr. Solomon Venkatesh, Mr. Rajendran and Manjri Horse Farm Pvt Ltd. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar.

8. VIJAYANAGAR PLATE (1,400m): METZINGER (Ashley K) 1, Maple Leaf (Koshi K) 2, Southern Force (Srinath) 3 and Lauterbrunnen (Kiran Rai) 4. 3-1/4, 1-1/4 and 1: 21.34s. Rs. 14 (w), 13 and 11 (p), Shp: 42, THP: 25, FP: 57, Q: 20, Trinella: 179/91, Exacta: 3/129/257, Favourite: Metzinger.

Owner: Mr. J.S. Lokesh. Trainer: G.Y. Rajesh Babu.

9. ABBEY FALLS PLATE (DIV. II), (1,200m): ALTAMONTE (Vivek) 1, Emerald (G. Praveen) 2, Breeze Bluster (Kiran Rai) 3 and Mega Success (Jagadeesh) 4. Shd. 3-3/4 and 1/2. 1m 37.95s. Rs. 41 (w), 20, 15 and 16 (p), Shp: 32, THP: 56, FP: 238, Q: 124, Trinella: 327/37, Exacta: 1,373/1,098. Favourite: Breeze Bluster.

Owners: Mr. G. Santhosh & Mr. Francis Agarwal. Trainer: Pradeep Anniah.

10. INDRABA STAKES (DIV. I), (1,400m): LIVE THE DREAM (Akshay K) 1, Thutmose (Jagadeesh) 2, Amazing Stride (David Allan) 3 and

partnership off 137 balls.

Armed with a high back-lift, Smaran broke the shackles with a forceful drive down the ground. The left-handed duo cranked through the gears after the halfway mark, and found their bearings against offies Yash Kadamb and Karun Nair, who conceded 43 runs in the six overs they bowled in tandem.

On the attack
Smaran was strong both off the front and back foot, and it wasn't long before he pounced on Nair with a sledge sweep and a pull, scoring 10 runs off two free-bases.

Shrijith pressed forward with nimble feet to drive in the 'V' and cut with panache square of the wicket to leave the bowlers with little margin for error.

After Shrijith fell, Abhinav Manohar was the aggressor in a 63-ball century stand with Smaran,



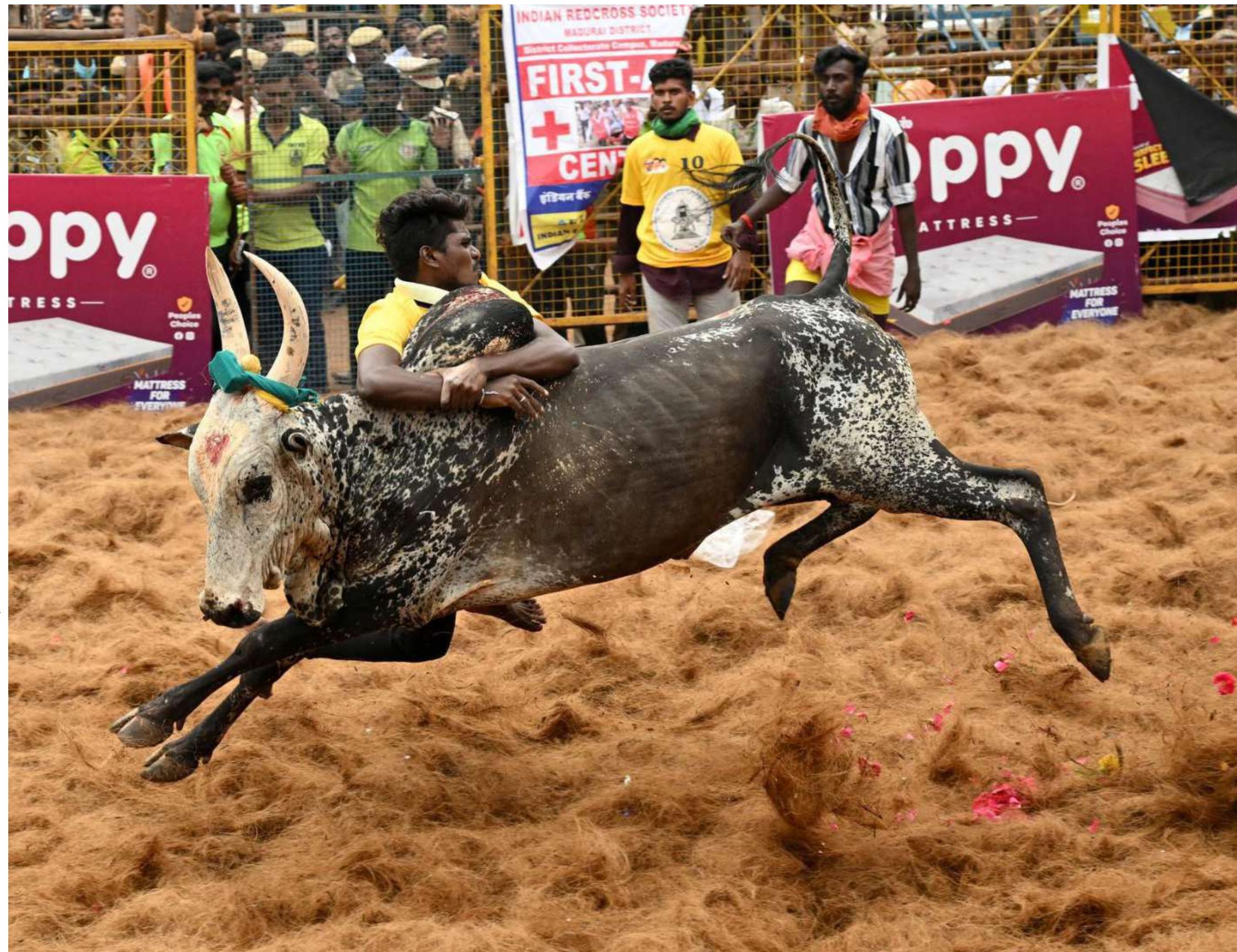
Getting ready: Bulls receive special care as the jallikattu event approaches. This includes baths twice a week and swimming sessions to build muscle. G. MOORTHY



Fury in motion: A bull leaps from the vaadivasal (entry point) at the jallikattu at Alanganallur in Madurai on January 16. R. ASHOK



Taming the beast: A young man tackles a bull at Thachankurichi in Pudukkottai, where the first jallikattu of the year in Tamil Nadu was held on January 4. M. MOORTHY



Battle begins: A bull tamer tries to overpower the animal at the jallikattu event held at Palamedu in Madurai on January 15. G. MOORTHY

The bull and the brave

Jallikattu attracts thousands of spectators during the Pongal festival each year; despite its cultural significance, the event has faced controversy due to safety concerns

The Tamil festival of Pongal is celebrated with great enthusiasm in districts such as Madurai, notably hosting the ancient sport of jallikattu.

The traditional bull-taming event, believed to date back to the Sangam period, attracts thousands of spectators from around the world each year. Avaniapuram, Palamedu, and Alanganallur are some of the places famed for the event.

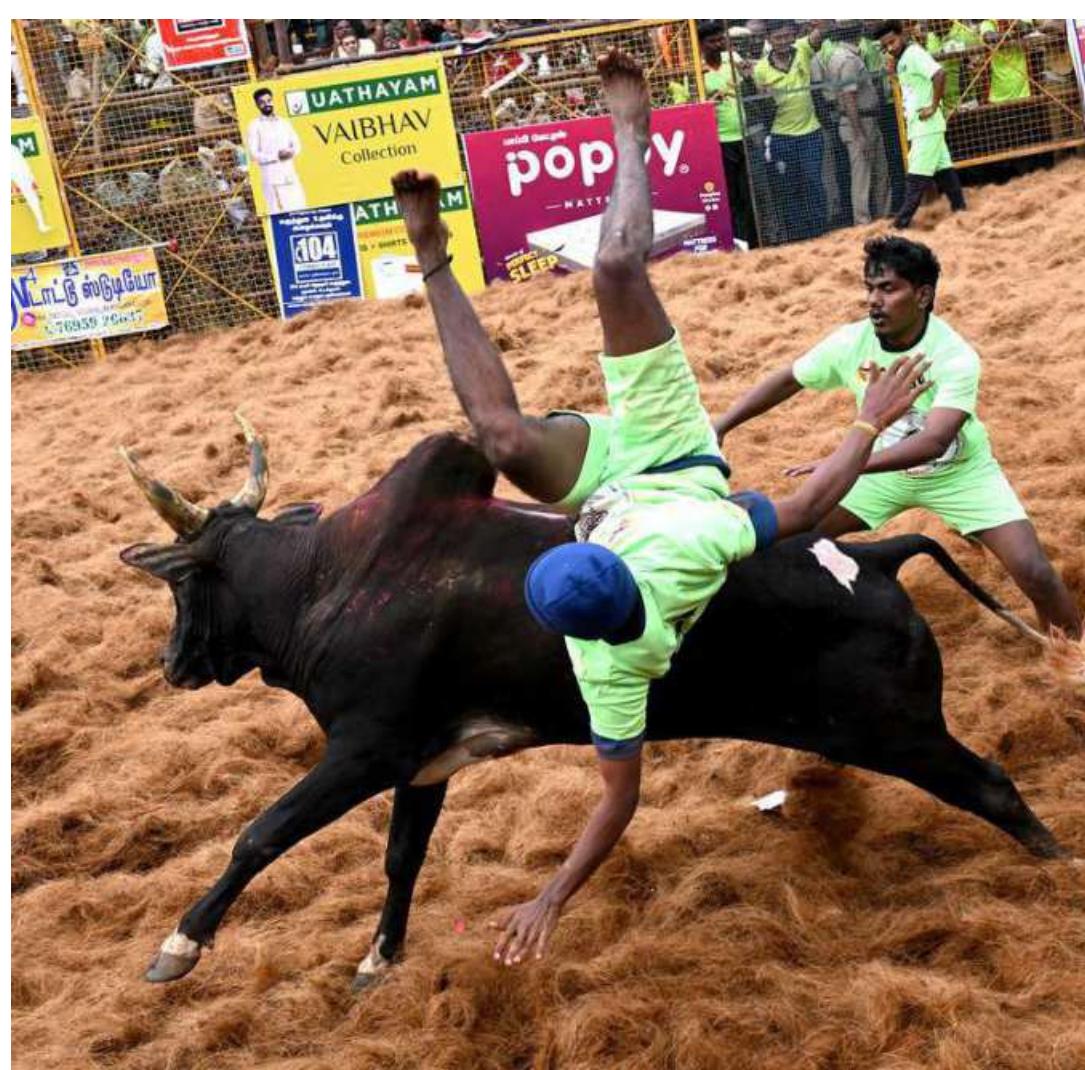
From men waiting in long queues to release their bulls into the arena, to bull-tamers preparing to jump in, photographers with sharp eyes waiting to capture the right moment, and cheering spectators watching from terraces, parapets, and galleries, jallikattu undoubtedly is a vibrant celebration.

The event is promoted as a tourist attraction by the State government and it holds appeal as a symbol of Tamil culture. Tourists from the U.S., the U.K., Australia, France, Belgium, Austria, Brazil, and other countries registered and witnessed this year's event with much joy and enthusiasm.

Traditionally a male-dominated sport, jallikattu has seen increased participation from women and transgender persons in recent years. Each year, alongside men who wait for their turn to untie their bulls in the field, hundreds of women, and transgender persons too train and wait for their turn to tackle their bulls. Many women and a few transgender people who participated in this year's jallikattu events were seen celebrating their victory by kissing or embracing the bulls.

Once looked upon as an event to test the prowess of the young men in the region, jallikattu soon evolved into a competitive sport with high stakes, and, more recently, controversy. Despite its cultural significance, jallikattu has faced criticism due to safety concerns. The event has been associated with numerous injuries and fatalities among both participants and spectators over the years. Animal activists have also alleged that the sport involves cruelty to the bulls.

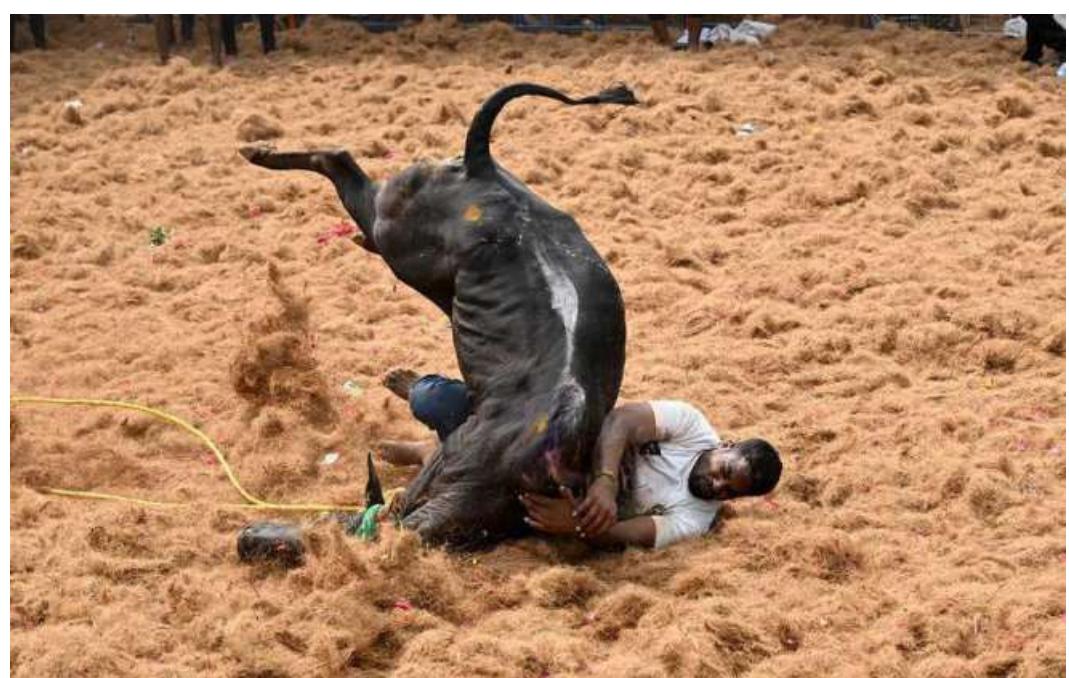
As the echoes of celebration and spirit settle for now, it is time to consider ways to preserve this tradition with more safety for participants and welfare measures for the animals.



Intense moments: A participant is thrown over during jallikattu at Palamedu in Madurai on January 15. G. MOORTHY



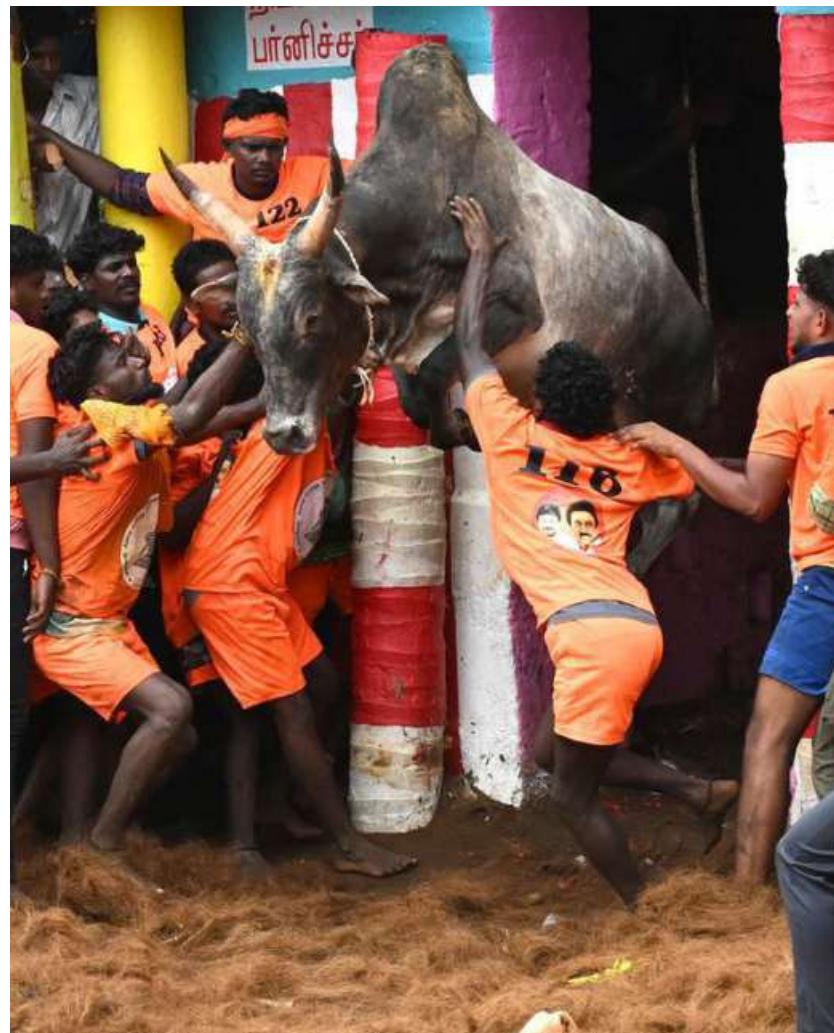
Raging spirit: A bull tamer struggles during the Avaniapuram Jallikattu in Madurai on January 14.
G. MOORTHY



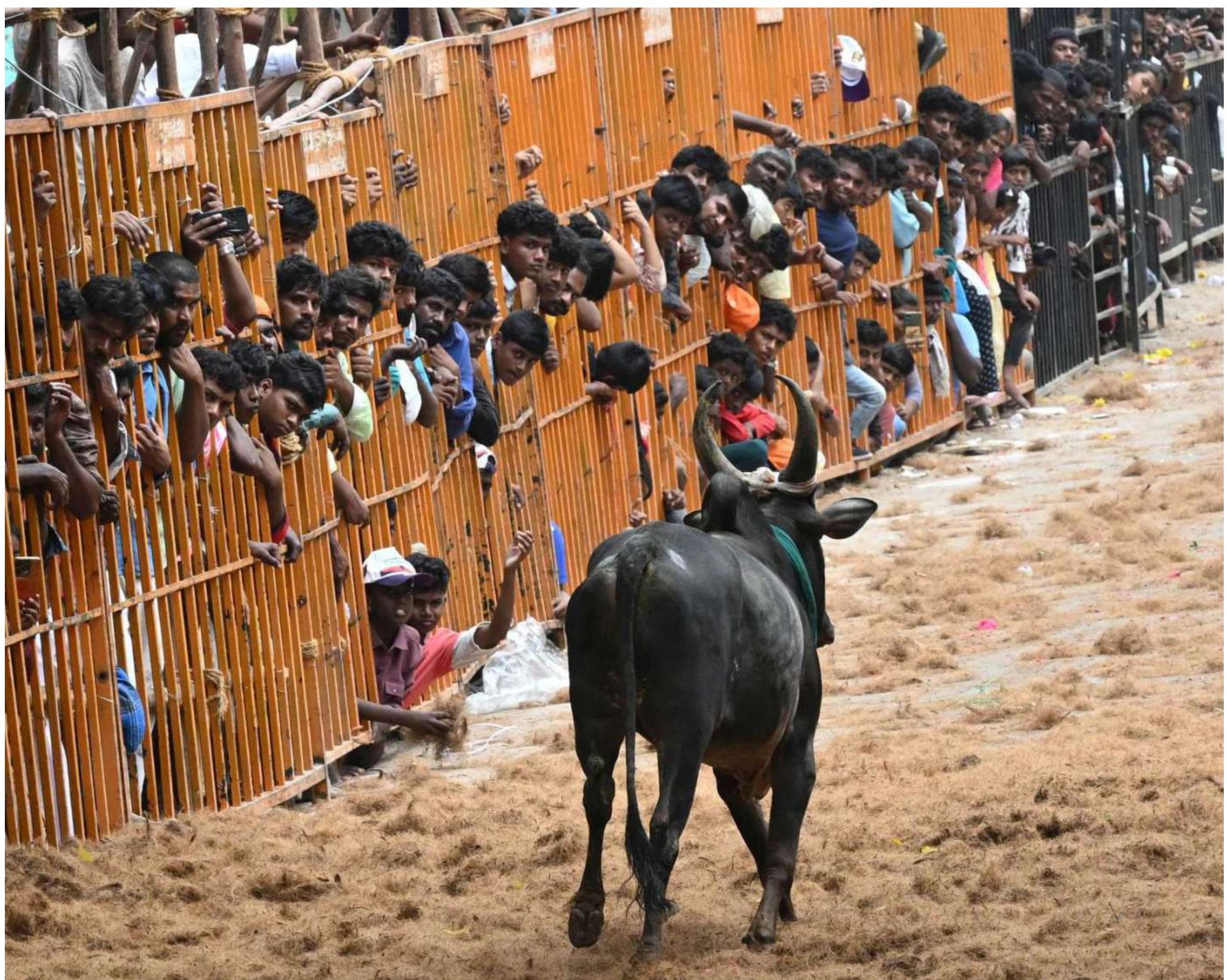
On the mat: A young man trying to tame a bull during the event held at Koolamedu in Salem district in Tamil Nadu on January 17. E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN



Price of tradition: An injured bull is transferred into an ambulance for medical treatment during the jallikattu event held at Koolamedu on January 17.
E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN



Festive roar: A bull enters the arena during the jallikattu event held at Palamedu in Madurai on January 15.
G. MOORTHY



Next time, then: Audience peering through barricades, eager to catch a glimpse of the bull before its exit from the Avaniapuram Jallikattu arena in Madurai. G. MOORTHY