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*T&C apply. Above representation is for X200 (12+256GB) variant with 24 months EMI. Scan the QR Code for detailed offers. Free 1 year Additional Extended warranty offer is applicable on the purchase of X200 Pro or X200 till 23rd Dec 2024 or from 19th till 23rd December 2024 only. **Active Noise Cancellation (ANC) - to ensure high quality noise reduction effect, appropriate size of ear tips to be selected. **Inclusive all taxes. Buy vivo X200 Series & get vivo TWS 3e ANC at ₹1499. Disclaimer for AI - AI features require internet connection & vivo account login. The availability of AI features may vary based on apps, device settings, country, region, and language. Please refer to the actual use. Picture shown is for illustration purpose only. Other product names, logos and brands are property of respective owners. Use of other product names, logos and brands does not imply endorsement.

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POLL INTEGRITY

EC has a lot to answer for, and it's not about EVMs

Parties ignoring serious issues related to elections

EDITORIAL » PAGE 6



NEWS » PAGE 11

Positive signals emerge from India-China talks

India, China take part in first meeting of Special Representatives in five years; Doval and Wang affirm outcome of LAC disengagement, discuss resumption of Mansarovar yatra, border trade

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India and China "positively affirmed" the outcome of their disengagement agreement on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), as National Security Adviser Ajit Doval met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on Wednesday for the first boundary talks between the Special Representatives (SRs) since 2019.

During the talks, Mr. Doval and Mr. Wang said that it was important to "draw from the lessons" of the four-year-long military stand-off at the LAC, in order to maintain peace and tranquillity on the border. They also discussed other ties that were derailed due to the frictions at the boundary, providing "positive



One step forward: National Security Adviser Ajit Doval with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on Wednesday. PTI

directions" for cross-border exchanges, including the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage from India to Tibet, data sharing on trans-border rivers, and border trade.

A statement issued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Mr. Doval

and Mr. Wang held "substantive discussions" during the Special Representatives dialogue and reached a "six-point consensus", which would see efforts to maintain peace at the borders and develop bilateral relations.

While the Ministry of Ex-

ternal Affairs did not refer to a "six-point" consensus, it reiterated most of the same points on promoting exchanges.

No talk of direct flights

Significantly, in the statement issued after the talks, the SRs did not refer to the resumption of direct flights and the restoration of journalist exchanges, which were discussed when Mr. Wang met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in Rio de Janeiro last month.

However, after a meeting between Mr. Doval and Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng in Beijing, an official readout stressed the need to restore exchanges in "economic, cultural and trade" areas.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

13 killed after Navy boat crashes into ferry off Mumbai



Fatal trial: A video grab of the Navy boat moments before it crashed into a ferry off the Mumbai coast on Wednesday. PTI

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Thirteen persons, including two children, were killed after a Navy boat crashed into a ferry off the Mumbai coast on Wednesday, the Navy said. At least 101 persons were rescued.

A Navy man and two others on board the Navy vessel were among the deceased.

The incident took place around 4 p.m. when the Navy craft, undergoing en-

gine trials, lost control and collided with the passenger ferry, *Neel Kamal*, off Karanja near Mumbai, the Navy said in a statement. The ferry was carrying passengers to the Elephanta Island, a popular tourist destination.

According to a Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation official, at least four passengers are in a critical condition.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

IN BRIEF

Foreigners' entry curbed in Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland

NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has reimposed the Protected Area Regime in Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram to monitor the movement of foreigners amid "growing security concerns", the Manipur government said on Wednesday. » Page 10

ULFA chief's death penalty commuted to life sentence

NEW DELHI

A High Court in Bangladesh on Wednesday granted relief to the United Liberation Front of Asom's self-exiled chief, Paresh Baruah, commuting his death penalty to a life sentence. » Page 12

Our doors are always open to hear the demands of protesting farmers, says SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



SGPC president Harjinder Singh Dhami meets Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on an indefinite fast at the Kharau border, on Wednesday. PTI

cluding Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, said in open court.

Come directly to court Justice Kant was informed by Punjab Advocate General Gurminder Singh that the farmers had refused to interact with the Supreme Court then. "We have opened our judicial platform to help their voices be heard... However, to what

tee led by retired Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Justice Nawab Singh.

Justice Kant said the farmers should come directly to the Supreme Court then. "We have opened our judicial platform to help their voices be heard... However, to what

'RAIL ROKO' IN PUNJAB
» PAGE 4

extent they will accept, only time will tell," Justice Kant said.

However, the court put its foot down when the Punjab government expressed its inability to convince Mr. Dallewal, a cancer patient, to accept treatment. "You have to provide him medical aid forthwith... Otherwise, the entire State machinery will be blamed," Justice Kant cautioned the State.

Mr. Dallewal has been on an indefinite fast at the Kharau border since November 26 in a bid to convince the Centre to accept the agitating farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee of MSP for crops.

RAIL ROKO' IN PUNJAB
» PAGE 4

Laapataa Ladies out of Oscars race

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Laapataa Ladies, India's official entry in the best international feature category of the 97th Academy

Awards, is not part of the shortlist of 15 features that will vie for a spot in the final five, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced on Wednesday.

The Hindi film, directed by Kiran Rao, stars Nitaishi Goel, Pratibha Ranta, and Sparsh Shrivastav.

DETAILS
» PAGE 12

Kejriwal promises free treatment for senior citizens at all Delhi hospitals if AAP retains power in election

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday promised free treatment for senior citizens at all government and private hospitals of Delhi if his party retains power in the Delhi Assembly poll due in February next year.

The former Delhi Chief Minister said the benefit under the 'Sanjeevani Yojana' will be extended to all people above 60 years irrespective of their socio-economic background.

"There will be no upper limit on the treatment and the full cost will be borne by the Delhi government," he said, asking residents to



"register for it with AAP workers" so that their government could clear the scheme on coming to power again.

"The registration will start in one or two days. You do not have to go

anywhere for it. AAP workers

will come to your house for registration and will give you a card that you will have to keep safe," Mr. Kejriwal said addressing party workers at the party headquarters in the

national capital.

Mr. Kejriwal described himself as a "son" to senior citizens and said, "I know many people, even from well-off families, whose children do not take care of them in their old age. I have seen parents and elderly individuals suffer in some of the best families, abandoned by their children. But you don't have to worry - your son is still alive."

Fraud on people'

Hitting back, the BJP termed the announcement a "fraud" on people, with its South Delhi Lok Sabha MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri saying Mr. Kejriwal had also been claiming to have provided free treatment to

Delhi residents for the past 10 years. "If such a system already exists under AAP rule, then what is the need for this scheme?" he said.

Mr. Bidhuri said the announcement came as AAP is looking for revival ahead of the poll. "The truth is that the promises of providing a monthly stipend of ₹1,000 to women and free treatment for senior citizens cannot revive it."

Delhi BJP president Vi-

rendra Sachdeva too ac-

used the AAP chief of being the "master of lies".

Delhi Pradesh Congress

chief Devender Yadav said Mr. Kejriwal has been an-

nouncing freebies to woo

the voters that have drifted away from AAP due to its "false promises".

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www.thehinduads.com**DONATE EYES - GIFT SIGHT****PUBLIC NOTICE**

It is informed to the general public that 2 Stalls at PF-2 & PF-3, at Shukr Basti Railway Station were owned by Sh. Leela Dhar Rana who died on 13/12/2024. Now the agreement is being considered to be transferred in the name of Mukesh Kumar Rana Sir Late Sh. Leela Dhar Rana House No-334, Pocket-14, Sector-22, Rohini, Delhi-86. If any person has any objection, he may inform the same in writing to the Office of the Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055 within 21 days from the date of publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE
 It is informed to the general public that Syed Mohammad, son of Syed Mehndi Hasan, son of Syed Hasan Mohammad, and resident of House No. 42, Shia Imambara, Shah Nizam, Under Pashar, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, India, has died on 13/12/2024. There is no objection in stating that I am dispassing Syed Hasan Mohammad from our life and property. We are deeply saddened by his son's actions, and we cannot continue to support him. His decision to convert our religious community is unacceptable, and we have no choice but to sever all ties with him. Syed Mohammad's family members, including his brothers and other relatives, have also expressed their support for the decision to disown Syed Hasan. Moreover, Syed Hasan has no right to change or spoil the tradition of our religious name by marrying with other religions. We will not tolerate violation of the Shia Muslim community. Syed Hasan has no right to bring changes in the religion of the Shia Muslim community and our ancestors.

TENDERS
Expression of Interest
The Sudershan CGHSL
 Plot No.82, I-P Extension, Patparganj, Delhi-110092 invites application from experienced firms/ contractors for feasibility / installation of lifts in its premises (Society). Contact Persons: Mr. Gurdeep Singh (9810883024) and Mr. Srinivas Patil (9557798333). Last date for submitting Application: 31.12.2024 (1600 hrs.) at Society Office. Managing Committee of Society reserves right to accept / reject any application without assigning any reason. Hon. Secretary

WESTERN RAILWAY - VADODARA DIVISION**VARIOUS WORKS OF CENTRALIZED TRAIN CONTROL SYSTEM**

E-Tender No. EPC_BRC_SNT_02 Dated

11-12-2024. Department: Signal &

& Telecom, Executive: Dy. Chief Signal &

Telecom, Engineer Works, Western

Railway, Vadodara, Work and location:

Design, supply, installation, testing and

commissioning of CTC (Centralized train

control system) system in Surat-

Ahmedabad and Vadodara-Godhra

section of Vadodara division of Western

Railway, Approx. Cost of Work: ₹ 114.32

Cr. Cost of Tender Form: Nil. Particular

office where E-tender open: Dy.CSTE/

Works (S2T), 2nd Floor, Annex Building,

Divisional Railway Manager's Office,

Pratapnagar, Vadodara-393004. Earnest

Money Deposit: ₹ 57,16,100/-

Completion Period: 730 Days, Validity

of Offers: 180 Days, from the date of

opening. Type of E-tender: Open E-

Tender, Single Stage Two Packet System,

Pre-Bid Conference Date Time: 30-12-

2024 (15:00 Hrs. IST) Tender Closing

Date: 20-01-2025 (15:00 Hrs. IST).

The tender can be viewed at web site

<http://www.reps.gov.in>

BRC-248

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O/o Executive Engineer, JSV Division Arki

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E-mail: jpharki@gmail.com website: www.hipiph.org

NO-JSD-Arki-CB-TA-Corrigendum-2024-9035-9110

Dated: 17-12-2024

CORRIGENDUM

e-Tender/2024-25- 8756-8836

With reference to this office e-Tender Nit No: JSD-Arki-CB-TA Online / e-Tender/2024-25- 8756-8836 Dated:04-12-2024 and e-Tender ID 2024_HIPIPH_96151. 1 uploaded on website <https://htptenders.gov.in> and published in newspapers Amar Ujala and The Tribune on 05.12.2024 and Corrigendum No. 9390-9460 dated 12.02.2024 uploaded on departmental website and published in Newspaper Amar Ujala and The Tribune on 17.12.2024, all the prospective bidders are hereby informed that, wall thickness of Rising Main pipe 150 mm dia X-42 grade from node C to D and from RD 0 to 300 and RD 300 to 800 shall be read as 4.8mm and all other specifications shall remain same. Further, last date of submitting Technical Bid is also extended upto 26.12.2024 (11:00 AM) and the Technical Bids received shall be opened same day (11:00 AM). All other terms & conditions given in the above mentioned original tender advertisement remains the same.

Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division, Arki

HP /3972/24-25 HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

Dated: 17-12-2024

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

SOUTHERN RAILWAY**Palakkad Division****E-Tender Notice No. PG1/OT/23/2024 dated 17.12.2024**

For and on behalf of the President of India, Sr. Divisional Engineer/Co-ordination/Southern Railway/ Palakkad invites E-TENDERS for the following works.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approx. cash value ₹ in lakhs	Bid Security Amount ₹	Tender closing date on 15.00 hrs	Completion Period in months
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	Palakkad Division Replacement of steel OHT with RCC OHT-45 KL capacity -06 Nos. at Sr. Divisional Engineer/West/Palakkad Jurisdiction.	165.77	2,32,900/-	17.01.2025	Eight
2	Palakkad- Repairs to Officers quarters which includes type-IV, V and bungalow.	299.95	3,00,000/-	17.01.2025	Six
3	Walayar - Ettimada - Provision of IBH between Walayar-Ettimada on B line.	25.24	50,500/-	08.01.2025	Four
4	Palakkad Division Improvements to Gang rest room (Gents staff) at Assistant Divisional Engineer/Mangalore Jurisdiction.	252.67	2,76,300/-	17.01.2025	Eight
5	Palakkad Division Divisional Engineer/East jurisdiction-provision of new Foot Over bridges at Madukkarai, Walayar and Kanjikode stations duly dismantling the old distressed FOBs.	939.67	6,19,800/-	17.01.2025	Twelve
6	Palakkad division- Replacement of steel OHT with RCC OHT-225 KL capacity at Palakkad Jn station.	79.02	1,58,000/-	08.01.2025	Six
7	Palakkad division- Replacement of steel OHT with RCC OHT- 250 KL capacity at PGTN (Palakkad Town) station.	79.02	1,58,000/-	08.01.2025	Six
8	Palakkad division- Replacement of steel OHT with RCC OHT-90 KL capacity -02 Nos. at Senior Section Engineer/Works/Palakkad Jurisdiction.	77.55	1,55,100/-	08.01.2025	Six
9	Palakkad division- Replacement of steel OHT with RCC OHT-90 KL capacity -02 Nos. at Senior Section Engineer/Works/Shoranur Jurisdiction.	77.55	1,55,100/-	08.01.2025	Six
10	Palakkad division- Replacement of steel OHT with RCC OHT- 45 KL capacity -03 Nos. at Divisional Engineer/East/Palakkad Jurisdiction.	82.49	1,65,000/-	08.01.2025	Six
11	Palakkad Division Provision of side pathway for Br.No. (604 A)-B line at Km.529/820-890 (15x9.14 m); 943 Up & Dn at Km.655/233-463 (7 x 30.48 m), Br.no.24 Dr at Km. 15/329-517 (9 x 18.29 m).	193.90	2,47,000/-	17.01.2025	Twelve
12	Sr.Divisional Engineer / West jurisdiction Repairs to PSC girder bridges in Kannur & Mangalore sub division (replacing teared bulged Elastomeric bearings) (List enclosed).	135.88	2,18,000/-	08.01.2025	Six

- All the contracts on Works/goods/services will be subject to the new GST Act applicable from time to time.
- Contractors/Suppliers have to register themselves with GST authorities and to furnish the GST registration number in order to process the bills from 01.07.2017 onwards.
- For complete details of the above tenders please visit "<http://www.reps.gov.in>".

Note: It is the responsibility of the Tenderer to check any corrigendum issued for any correction or modifications uploaded subsequently in website; the same shall be taken in to account while submitting Tender.

Sr.Divisional Engineer/Co-ordination/Palakkad

Himachal Pradesh Public Works Department**Standard Bid Documents for NABARD****SECTION-I**

Executive Engineer HPPWD Kasauli Distt Solan

(Name of Authority Inviting Bids)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

The Executive Engineer HPPWD PWD Kasauli Distt Solan HP on behalf of Governor of HP invites the percentage rate, in electronic tendering system, for construction of roads under National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development for the following works including maintenance for five years from the eligible and approved contractor registered with HPPWD and HP Jal Shakti Vibhag (Contractor of HP Jal Shakti Vibhag are eligible to participate for the works having amount put to tender above Rs.100 Lacs) Non registered contractor may submit the bids, however successful bidder has to register in appropriate class with appropriate authority in HPPWD.

Sr. No.	Division	RIDF	Name of the work	Estimated Cost (Rs.Lacs)	Total Cost (Rs. Lacs)	Period of completion (Months)	Bid Security (Rs. Lacs) The bid security is 2% percent of the total cost, rounded to the nearest thousands
Constr- action	Maint						

Row erupts in Kerala as ADGP under probe gets promotion nod

Ajith Kumar is facing allegations of corruption and 'disrupting' Thrissur Pooram celebrations; Oppn. points finger at CPI(M)-RSS symbiotic ties'

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Cabinet accepted the recommendation of a high-level screening committee that Additional Director-Generals of Police M.R. Ajith Kumar and S. Suresh be promoted to the rank of Director-General of Police. Mr. Suresh is currently on central deputation.

Mr. Ajith, who was caught in a vortex of accusations of corruption, nepotism, illegal wealth amassment, criminality, and clandestine meetings with the top Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leadership, was removed from the post of ADGP, Law and Order, in October.

Subsequently, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan ordered a multi-tiered probe into the politically bipartisan accusations that Mr. Ajith had connived with the RSS to "disrupt" the iconic Thrissur Pooram to aid the BJP harness the "resultant Hindu majoritarian sentiment" to its advantage in the last Lok Sabha elections.

Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala said the government had initially



Ongoing row: Protests demanding Pinarayi Vijayan's resignation after P.V. Anvar levelled allegations against Ajith Kumar. FILE PHOTO

shown a marked reluctance to suspend Mr. Ajith from service to facilitate a free and fair inquiry into the serious allegations against the officer.

Congress leader K. Muralidharan said the Cabinet decision testified to the CPI (M)'s symbiotic relationship with the RSS and BJP's top leadership.

Independent MLA P.V. Anvar attributed his acrimonious break with the Left Democratic Front to Mr. Ajith's alleged association with the RSS and the latter's "overwhelming and pernicious influence" over the Chief Minister's Office and law enforcement.

However, Law Minister

P. Rajeeve said the decision was well within established rules and procedures.

'Rules followed'

CPI(M) central committee member A.K. Balan said the ongoing inquiries against an officer in service did not preclude a recommendation for promotion. Significantly, service rules prevented Mr. Ajith Kumar from publicly responding to accusations against him.

Mr. Ajith Kumar, in a letter to the government, had also sought a free and fair probe into the charges and permission to resort to legal action, including libel, if the investigations proved the allegations baseless.

Umar Khalid gets interim bail to attend wedding in family

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday granted a seven-day conditional interim bail beginning from December 28 to former Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student Umar Khalid to attend a wedding in his family.

He will have to surrender at Tihar Jail by the evening of January 3, the Karkardooma court of Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai ordered.

Mr. Khalid has been in jail since September 14, 2020, after his arrest in a conspiracy case related to the north-east Delhi riots that had claimed 53 lives and left hundreds displaced.

He has been named as a "key conspirator" in the case and booked under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Granting him the bail, the court barred him from using social media or contacting any witness.

The court also asked him to only meet his relatives and restricted his movement to his home or places where the wedding-related programmes are to be held.

Earlier, he has been denied regular bail by several courts, including the Supreme Court.

Capital fixture



Now open: Former Union Minister Dr. Karan Singh inaugurating 'The Force of Imagination', an exhibition curated by Nanak Ganguly, at the Chawla Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, in New Delhi on Wednesday. Participating artists include Neeraj Gupta, Narayan Lakshman, Pabitra Ganguly and K.R. Nariman, among others. It is on view till December 31. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Case against Sanjay Singh ploy to keep him away from poll: AAP

Press Trust of India

PANAJI

The Aam Aadmi Party in Goa on Wednesday alleged that the defamation suit filed against party leader Sanjay Singh by Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's wife was a "ploy to keep him away from the Delhi assembly election campaign."

Goa CM's wife Sulakshana Sawant filed a defamation suit against Mr. Singh on Tuesday in a court at Bicholim village in North Goa. She has sought ₹100 crore in damages from the AAP Rajya Sabha MP for allegedly naming her in the "cash-for-jobs scam."

The court issued a notice to Mr. Singh, seeking his reply by January 10, 2025. He had recently addressed a press conference in Delhi hurling allegations against Ms. Sawant.

Addressing at a press conference here, AAP's Goa unit general secretary Walmiki Naik said since Mr. Singh is one of the star campaigners of the party for the upcoming Delhi election, the defamation case has been filed to "waste his time in Goa."

When Mr. Singh held the press conference in New Delhi, why the case against him was filed in Bicholim in Goa, Mr. Naik asked.

H.P. CM 'roasted' over junglee murga; defamation case filed

Press Trust of India

SHIMLA

The Himachal Pradesh police on Wednesday registered a case of defamation and fake news against unknown persons after a video showing Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu allegedly encouraging his associates to eat 'junglee murga' (Grey Junglefowl) at a dinner in a remote area surfaced online.

Attacking Mr. Sukhu, the BJP in Opposition underlined that 'junglee murga' was an endangered species listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act and its hunting or eating was a punishable offence.



Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu at a villager's house in Shimla. FILE PHOTO

Police said the case had been registered following a complaint by Kulag village head, Suman Chauhan, and a local, Nitu Kumar.

In a video that faced last week, Mr. Sukhu is purportedly heard saying, "Give them junglee murga, I will not eat it." The video was recorded at the remote Tikkar of Shimla, where the Chief Minister was having dinner with Health Minister Dhani Ram Shandi. The BJP has been demanding an apology from Mr. Sukhu, even though he claimed he does not eat non-vegetarian food.

Kerala HC rejects plea against donating CPI(M) leader's body

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Wednesday dismissed an appeal filed by Asha Lawrence and Sujatha Boban, daughters of the late CPI (M) leader M.M. Lawrence, against a single judge's order to hand over their father's body to Ernakulam Government Medical College.

The Bench had asserted earlier this month that the matter be resolved amicably by the family members and not by the court.

This suggestion was made while hearing the appeal filed by Ms. Lawrence and Ms. Boban challenging a Single Bench order that allowed their brother, M.L.

Sajeevan, to donate their father's body to the college. The daughters' contention was that the body ought to be buried as per Christian rites.

A mediator appointed by the court had earlier reported that he could not arrive at a settlement as the parties were not amenable to any suggestions and stuck to their views.

The Single Bench had previously directed the Principal of the medical college to consider Ms. Lawrence's objections before taking a decision. After reviewing her objections, the Principal rejected them and accepted the body for educational purposes and the Single Bench upheld this decision.

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E-TENDER NOTICE

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

S.No.	Job no./Work name	Amount (Rs. In Lacs)
1.	34/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2024-25, M/o Park (R/o Boundary wall, MS Grill and other civil maintenance work in different parks of LIIG flat Udyog Vihar and Kendriya Vihar in Sector-82), Noida.	41.39
2.	45/D(H)/DD(H)-I/2024-25, M/o Park/green Belt (Civil Maintenance Work in sector-20 and 23 Under Horticulture Division- 1st area for One Year) Noida.	40.85
3.	53/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, Mo Park (M/o boundary wall, Footpath and gate in Ambedkar park village Sorkha and repair of Boundary wall of green belt, sector-115) Noida.	34.82
4.	54/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, Mo Park/Green Belt (Civil Maintenance Work in Sector-74,75, 76 and 77 Under Horticulture Division-II Area for One Year) Noida.	37.66
5.	55/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, Mo Park (R/o Footpath, Boundary wall And Gazebo Hut in Tikona Park Sector-99) Noida.	39.23
6.	56/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, Annual Maintenance work (M/o Park and Green Belt in A, B, C and D Block Sector-105 Under Horticulture Division-II Area for One Year Civil Work Maintenance) Noida.	41.14
7.	57/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, M/o Green Belt (Reconstruction of Boundary wall and S/f of MS Grill in Green Belt From Ambedkar Park to Golf Course Metro Station Sector-37) Noida.	53.92
8.	58/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, M/o Green Belt (C/o Boundary wall And Fencing Chain link near Civitech Society Sector-77 and Raising of Boundary wall and Fencing Concertina Coil and repairing of Footpath in Sector-74) Noida.	48.19
9.	59/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, M/o Park (C/o MS Gazebo Hut in Park Sector-108) Noida.	33.87
10.	60/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, Annual Maintenance work (M/o Park and Green Belt in Sector-39 and 40 Under Horticulture Division-II Area for One year Civil Work Maintenance) Noida.	38.55
11.	61/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, M/o Park (R/o boundary wall and S/f MS Grill in Central Park Sector-105) Noida.	47.06
12.	62/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, M/o Park/Green Belt (Civil Maintenance Work in Sector-33 & 35 Under Horticulture Division-II Area for One Year) Noida.	38.42
13.	64/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, M/o Green Belt (Construction of Footpath in A and B block Green belt sector-33) Noida.	31.31
14.	65/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, M/o Park/Green Belt (Civil maintenance Work in sector-49 and 50 under horticulture division-II area for one year) Noida.	34.30
15.	66/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, M/o Green Belt (Theme painting work on both side wall of underpass near City Centre) Noida.	37.61
16.	67/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2024-25, M/o Park (R/o footpath, toilet, guard Room, store and other civil maintenance work in loop park Sector-108) Noida.	45.17
17.	69/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2024-25, M/o Green Belt (M/o boundary wall, Gate and fixing of concertina coil alongwith 45 mtr wide road near D-Block Hosiery complex, Noida.	53.11
18.	03/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2024-25, M/o Green Belt & RSP along with Express Highways 15.00 to 20.00 Km RHS Service Road, 02 year maintenance.	99.07
19.	17/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2024-25, M/o RSP and Green belt along with Express Highway 10.00 Km to 15.00 Km RHS Service Road, two year Maintenance.	98.73
20.	25/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2024-25, M/o RSP, 02 year Maintenance along Express Highway 15.00 Km to 20.00 Km Service Road and Green Belt LHS.	83.23
21.	26/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2024-25, M/o Park, 02 year Maintenance of Village Mahiyapur Jhatta Gulawali Kondli Yakupur Rohilpur Nagli Wazidpur Chauprauli Shahdra.	80.09
22.	28/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2024-25, M/o Park & RSP Sector-110 Central Verge & Both Side 02 Year maintenance.	61.02

Which can be uploaded by date 01/01/2025 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 02/01/2025 at 11.00 AM

नहत्पूर्ण सूचना— नवीन ओखला औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण के अधिसंचित क्षेत्र में शासन से स्वीकृत मास्टर प्लान एवं उत्तर प्रदेश औद्योगिक क्षेत्र विकास अधिनियम, 1976 के विपरीत लॉटिंग या किसी भी प्रकार का अन्य निर्माण पूरी तरह अवैध है। जनरामान्द के आगाह किया जाता है कि इस प्रकार की अवैध कॉलोनियाँ एवं अवैध निर्मित भवनों में गूप्तपड़ों अपार्मेंट/दुकान/गोडान/फार्महाउस की खरीद-फरोखा से पूर्णतः संबंधित होती है। याथ से नीरज अधिसूचित क्षेत्र के हिफ्जन एवं यमुना नदियों के ढूब क्षेत्र (Flood Plain Zone) में अवैधकृत अवैध लॉटिंग एवं फार्म हाउसों के बारोबार में सलिल भूमानियाँ के चंगुल में न फैले।

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IN BRIEF



UCC will be implemented in Uttarakhand from Jan.: Dhami

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) will be implemented in Uttarakhand from January, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said on Wednesday. During a meeting of the Uttarakhand Investment and Infrastructure Development Board in Dehradun, Mr. Dhami said the State government has completed its "homework" and UCC will be implemented from January 2025. With this, Uttarakhand will become the first State in the country to implement UCC after independence. On the last day of campaigning for the 2022 Assembly election, Mr. Dhami had promised to implement UCC if the BJP retained power. PTI

2 soldiers killed while loading ammo in tank during training

Two soldiers were killed and one injured in Bikaner's Mahajan field firing range while loading ammunition in a tank during a training exercise on Wednesday. The charger exploded while they were loading the ammunition, said Defence spokesperson Lt.-Col Amitabh Sharma. Local police officers rushed to the spot as soon as information about the blast came in. "Three soldiers were practising with the tank. Ashutosh Mishra and Jitendra died in the explosion. The injured soldier has been taken to Chandigarh in a helicopter," Circle Officer Lunkaransar (Bikaner) Narendra Kumar Poonia said. PTI

Cong. holds protest in Jaipur against BJP over Adani issue; march stopped by police

Press Trust of India

JAIPUR

The Congress on Wednesday held a protest in Jaipur on the Adani issue and attacked the BJP government over a range of issues.

PCC chief Govind Singh Dotasra, former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, former Deputy CM Sachin Pilot and others addressed the party leaders and workers at Shaheed Smarak in Jaipur and gave a call to the workers for a march to the Raj Bhavan.

However, the police stopped them by putting barricades and using water cannon.

"Serious allegations have been levelled on industrialist Gautam Adani and his group by the U.S. The allegations have exposed corruption, fraud and deceit, and a disturbing pattern of bribery, money



Police using water cannons to prevent Sachin Pilot and other Congress leaders from marching in Jaipur on Wednesday. PTI

laundering and market manipulation that tarnish the reputation of Indian business and finance," Mr. Dotasra said.

He accused the Central government of deliberately blocking discussions in Parliament and alleged it was "silent" on the issue. "The silence is a worrying sign of avoiding responsibility," he said.

Mr. Gehlot called the RSS and the BJP leaders

"fascists" and said they do not have faith in democracy. "Their intentions are bad," he added.

Mr. Pilot alleged that the BJP government in Rajasthan has been "exposed" in just one year as it has not done any significant work.

He added the Congress leaders are united, and exuded confidence that the party will form the next government in the State.

NIA chargesheets two key aides of Khalistani terrorist Landa

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has charged two key aides of designated terrorist Lakhbir Singh alias Landa of the banned Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) outfit in a Punjab terror conspiracy case, according to the probe agency on Wednesday.

Jaspreet Singh of Punjab's Ferozepur district and Baljeet Singh of Madhya Pradesh's Barwani district were charged on Tuesday before the NIA special court in Mohali, it said.

They were identified by NIA as members of a terror gang formed by foreign-based Khalistani terrorist Landa, said a statement issued by the probe agency.

A NIA probe found Mr. Jaspreet to be an important on-ground operative of

NIA seized arms, ammunition, narcotics and drug money from the accused

Landa and his associate Pattu Khaira, while Mr. Baljeet was involved in supplying weapons to the members of the Landa gang and others.

It further emerged during the investigation that Mr. Jaspreet was involved in Landa's drug smuggling and extortion network aimed at generating funds for BKI, the NIA claimed.

Mr. Baljeet was manufacturing weapons locally and using social media to supply them to operatives of the Landa gang, it added. NIA also seized arms, ammunition, narcotics and drug money, digital devices, and other incriminating articles from the accused.

Govt. school principal in Bihar caught on camera stealing eggs meant to be served to students

Amit Bhelari

PATNA

The principal of a government school in Bihar's Vaishali district was caught on camera stealing eggs meant for schoolchildren under the midday meal scheme. The incident, which took place on December 13, came to light after a video showing principal Suresh Sahani purportedly stealing the eggs went viral on social media, prompting the Education Department to conduct a probe.

The department has now issued a show-cause notice to him, seeking an explanation within 48 hours, failing which he will face disciplinary action.

"We have conducted a probe into the incident and found it to be true. A letter has been sent to him seeking his response or else dis-



Every Friday, one boiled egg each is served as part of the mid-day meals. FILE PHOTO

ciplinary action would be taken against him," District Education Officer Birendra Narayan told *The Hindu*.

In the video, Mr. Sahani could be seen purportedly filling a plastic bag with eggs as soon as a van with midday meal ration arrives at the government middle school in Rikhar village of Lalganj sub-division, around 48 km from State capital Patna.

Under the scheme, meals are served to students six days a week. Every Friday, they are given one boiled egg each as part of the midday meal.

Several students said they do not always get the food items prescribed under the scheme by the Bihar government. At times, green vegetables and eggs are not being served, they said, adding that *chokha* (mashed potatoes) served with *khichdi* is often found missing.

Sources in the education department said there is a possibility that the principal may be "forgiven" as he is set to retire in January next year and a suspension order or any other action can affect his post-retirement benefits".

Attempts to contact Mr. Sahani failed to elicit any response.

Drive to find illegal immigrants in Delhi puts slum cluster on edge

Ashna Butani

NEW DELHI

Seated in a sunny spot in Bengali Basti, a slum cluster near Vasant Kunj inhabited by migrant workers, two sisters, who hail from Bihar and have lived in Delhi for around 20 years, expressed anguish over a verification drive to trace illegal migrants that started in their area on Tuesday.

"Why do we have to prove that we are Indian?" said the younger of the two, who works as a domestic help in the area. Like many others *The Hindu* spoke to for the story, the 28-year-old did not wish to be identified.

Their neighbour, who works as a driver in Vasant Kunj as well, added, "I don't see the verification drives

happening in the posh colonies in this area."

L-G's orders

The police launched a special two-month drive across the national capital on December 11 to identify illegal Bangladeshi immigrants on the orders of Centre-appointed Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena.

At least two persons from the neighbouring country have been arrested so far and over 1,000 have been found to be living illegally, the police said last week.

The drive comes amid a tussle between Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party and the BJP, which is in power at the Centre, over the presence of Rohingya and Bangladeshis in the city ahead of the Assembly election due in February



Delhi Police's drive to trace illegal migrants in the Bengali Basti area of Vasant Kunj started on Tuesday. ASHNA BUTANI

next year.

While a few were unhappy about being asked to prove their citizenship, some, who claimed not to have documents linking them to their home towns, said they were afraid of being labelled "Bangladeshis" or "Rohingya".

Some others said they were confused about why and how the drive was being conducted.

A 36-year-old resident who works as a rag-picker said, "My father moved to Delhi from Bihar many years ago and my grandparents did not have address

proof. Even a land deed would work, but my family did not think of retaining a copy when we sold the land, and now I am stuck."

"I am worried now. If someone finds out that I don't have the necessary documents, they could easily spread the rumour about me being a Bangladeshi," he added.

Everyone confused?

Another resident, Bulbul, said, "Everyone is confused about what is happening and why we are being asked to prove where we are from."

Bengali Basti draws its name from the migrant workers from Cooch Behar in West Bengal who originally settled here several years ago.

Over time, people from several States, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, As-

sam, and Rajasthan, settled here.

Many residents say that since the slum cluster, which is home to around 4,000 people, has a significant presence of Bengali-speaking Muslims, they are often branded "Rohingya" and "Bangladeshis" by others.

Suspicious cases

Talking about the progress of the drive in the area, a senior police officer said they had found some "suspicious" cases.

"So far, no one from the area has been deported or detained. However, if a person does not have the necessary documents or is found to have recently made an Aadhaar card in Delhi without linking it to their original address, they are classified as 'suspi-

Mehbooba tells Omar to stop development on agriculture land

The Hindu Bureau

SRINAGAR

Former J&K Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday sought Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's intervention to stop railway lines, satellite towns, and highways being constructed in ecologically fragile forests, orchards, and agriculture lands in Kashmir.

"We do not expect this government to deliver on bigger promises. However, Mr. Abdullah's government should stop construction of the satellite towns on the Ring Road bypass in Srinagar on agriculture land, road from Rajouri to Bar-

mulla through forest area and the railway line extension through orchards," Ms. Mufti, who held a press conference in Srinagar, said.

She said the proposed ₹3,300 crore Rajouri-Baramulla highway project posed a "potential environmental and economic disaster". "The highway, to connect Rajouri in Jammu to Baramulla through the fragile Pir Panjal range, has sparked debates over its ecological and social consequences," Ms. Mufti said.

She said she was not against infrastructure development but it "cannot come up at the cost of our environment and the livelihoods of our people".

U.P. Congress worker dies during march from party office to Assembly

Mavank Kumar
LUCKNOW

A 28-year-old Congress worker died in Lucknow on Wednesday as party leaders and cadre tried to march from the State party office to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly to stage a protest against the State government over issues such as the recent violence in Sambhal, unemployment, inflation, privatisation, and law and order concerns.

The march saw Congress workers clashing with the police, who had set up barricades in a bid to prevent the protesters from reaching the Assembly premises during the ongoing winter session.

The police citing curbs under Section 163 (power to issue an order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, which are in place in Lucknow, did not allow the Congress workers to move ahead from the party's Mall Avenue office.

Senior Congress leaders, including State party president Ajay Rai and State in-charge Avinash Pande, were detained for a few hours and taken to Eco Garden, a protest venue in the State capital.

Mr. Rai claimed that party worker Prabhat Pandey, a native of Gorakhpur, died due to "police brutality" and termed it

"extremely sad and condemnable".

"Today, while going to gherao the Assembly, our young colleague Prabhat Pandeyji passed away due to police brutality. Our Congress family is hurt and angry by this incident. We will not tolerate this at all. The Yogi [Adityanath] government should give financial aid of ₹1 crore to the family of the deceased and a government job to one member of his family as compensation," Mr. Rai told *The Hindu*.

The State Congress chief also accused the police of suppressing the party's voice by "forcibly making us sit in Eco Garden, but our spirit is not going to break".

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E-Tender Enq. No. 584/P-1/EMP-W-12870 dated 05.12.2024.

Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-1) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2024_POWER_131545_1 for Routine Cleaning of Tech & Non-Tech Buildings and boiler area including toilets and cleaning of sewerage line at GGSSTP, Ropar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 17.12.2024 from 02:00 PM onwards.

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

RTP-133/24 76155/12/3732/2023/40046

TIME CHARTERING OF ONE SELF-TRIMMING PAMAX/ KAMSAKMAX GEARLESS BULK CARRIER VESSEL WITH THE LAYDAYS FROM 01.02.2025 TO 15.02.2025 FOR A PERIOD OF 3 MONTHS +/- 15 DAYS DCHPTION

Submission of E-Tender: THROUGH THIS HYPERLINK <https://intenders.gov.in/nicgepapp> as per instructions in the tender specification Coal (SHIP) - 178 Dated 18.12.2024 for time chartering of One Self-Trimming PAMAX/ KAMSAKMAX gearless vessel for coastal movement of coal by TNPGCL.

St. Specification No. Description of Work / Materials Due Date & Time for submission of e-tender

Coal (SHIP) 1 - 178 Dated 18.12.2024 TIME CHARTERING OF ONE SELF-TRIMMING PAMAX/ KAMSAKMAX GEARLESS BULK CARRIER VESSEL WITH THE LAYDAYS FROM 01.02.2025 TO 15.02.2025 FOR A PERIOD OF 3 MONTHS +/- 15 DAYS DCHPTION

04.01.2025 Upto 14:30 Hours

Submission of E-Tender: THROUGH THIS HYPERLINK <https://intenders.gov.in/nicgepapp> as per instructions in the tender specification Coal (SHIP) - 178 Dated 18.12.2024 for time chartering of One Self-Trimming PAMAX/ KAMSAKMAX gearless vessel for coastal movement of coal by TNPGCL.

Time & Date of commencement of download of Tender Specification: 17.12.2024

Time & Date of closing of download of Tender Specification: 14:30 hrs on 04.01.2025

Soft copy of Tender Specification:

Downloaded from TANGEDCO website www.tangedco.gov.in, from Tamil Nadu Government Web site i.e. www.tenders.tn.gov.in and from National Informatics Center website www.tenders.gov.in/nicgepapp free of cost.

Tender will be opened: Through the NIC portal <https://intenders.gov.in/nicgepapp>

CHIEF ENGINEER / MECH / COAL / TNPGCL / CHENNAI - 2

DIPR/5562/Tender/2024

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पत्रांक- 18 दिसंबर 2024

जिस हेतु पात्र अत्यधिकारों द्वारा निम्न तालिका में वर्णित विवरण अनुसार आवेदन पत्र दिनांक 04 जनवरी 2025 समय 05 PM तक ई-मेल: ceo-shauk@uk.gov.in पर आवेदन किया जा सकता है।

राज्य स्वास्थ्य प्राधिकरण उत्तराखण्ड के अधीन रखते हुए एक सापेक्ष आवेदन आमंत्रित किये जा रहे हैं।

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जिस हेतु पात्र अत्यधिकारों द्वारा निम्न तालिका में वर्णित विवरण अनुसार आवेदन पत्र दिनांक 04 जनवरी 2025 समय 05 PM तक ई-मेल: ceo-shauk@uk.gov.in पर आवेदन किया जा सकता है।

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Electronic distraction

The Election Commission has a lot to answer for, but EVMs are not the issue

After consecutive electoral losses, in the Haryana and Maharashtra Assembly elections, the Congress has raised the tempo with regard to its concerns about electronic voting machines (EVM). While there are numerous issues related to the integrity of elections that the Election Commission of India (ECI) needs to come clean on, the risk of electronic tampering with EVMs is not among them. The Congress is barking up the wrong tree – that too selectively and only when it loses. Some of its party leaders have publicly expressed the view that there is no evidence that suggests the risk of manipulation, remotely or through preprogramming. At least two Opposition leaders, NC leader and J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, and Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee, have distanced themselves from the allegations. To assume that EVMs are so elaborately and precisely manipulated that the BJP wins in some States and loses in some others in a detailed conspiracy, defies logic. After all, the BJP ended up short of a majority in the 2024 general election. Moreover, all these results, particularly those of Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand are well explained by the social and political dynamics at play.

By repeatedly raising the spectre of EVM manipulation, the real and serious questions of election integrity are being overlooked. Among them, the possibility of old style, manual capture of EVMs in booths dominated by one party and where polling agents of opponents are absent. This is pertinent against the backdrop of questions about a massive turnout recorded in many places in the closing hours of polling. This trend has not yet been satisfactorily explained by the ECI. Large-scale additions and deletions of voter names are now a pattern, and the ECI seems to be brazening it out. In Delhi, where elections are now due, allegations of the selective removal of Muslim voters have surfaced. In the Uttar Pradesh by-elections, partisan police actions that restrained voters expected to vote against the BJP have been controversial. The scheduling of elections is another serious question that the ECI has been less than transparent about. For a country that is preparing to conduct all elections in one go, it scheduled the three recent Assembly elections in two batches, and the BJP is the one party that gained the benefits. As is evident, some of these issues are local, some related to the vast capacity gap between the BJP and the Opposition while some others are squarely in the court of the ECI. The Opposition needs to focus on the real questions of election integrity, and an EVM scare should not act as a distraction.

Persistent instability

Social Democrats are at a disadvantage as Germany heads for election

German politics has been in turmoil ever since Chancellor Olaf Scholz lost his parliamentary majority last month, when the pro-market Free Democratic Party exited his three-way coalition. Mr. Scholz initially tried to cling on to power, heading a minority government, but amid criticism and concerns that delaying an inevitable snap election could further damage the chances of Mr. Scholz's Social Democrats, the Chancellor called for a vote of confidence on Monday. The outcome was known beforehand – his government collapsed the same day, pushing the country into early elections. The Scholz government, which was formed after the 2021 federal elections in which the Social Democrats won most seats, remained fractious from day one. While the Social Democrats and the Greens supported more public spending, the Free Democrats pushed for austerity. The government lacked coordination and what made the intra-coalition fighting worse was the financial crisis. Germany, once the engine of the European economy, has been in recession for two years. With no consensus within the coalition on how to tackle the financial crisis, the government's popularity plunged. In November, Mr. Scholz sacked his Finance Minister, Christian Lindner (Free Democrats), sealing the government's fate. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will now call for elections, most likely in February 2025, seven months earlier than planned.

When Angela Merkel was in power, her conservative coalition managed to offer political stability, economic growth and a fine balancing between great powers. Even during the Russia-Ukraine tensions over the 2014 Crimean annexation, Ms. Merkel and the French leadership engaged with the Russians, which resulted in the two Minsk agreements. But two months after Mr. Scholz became Chancellor, Russia invaded Ukraine. Germany could do little to prevent the war, but it joined the West in imposing sanctions on Russia, which hit the European economies as well. The Nord Stream pipeline, built to bring Russian gas to Germany, was blown up, allegedly by the Ukrainians. The war worsened the West's energy crisis, in turn impacting the cost of living crisis. It then snowballed into a larger economic meltdown, triggering political instability. Germany is not the only country battling economic woes and political instability. In neighbouring France, a government collapsed in three months, and President Emmanuel Macron has appointed a new Prime Minister, who also lacks a majority in Parliament. Elsewhere in the continent, far-right parties with neo-Nazi views are resurgent. Mr. Scholz is likely to lead the Social Democrats in the elections but the conservative Christian Democrats are the frontrunners. A trial by fire awaits whoever wins.

Section 6A of the Citizenship Act — why it fails Assam

The 4:1 majority ruling by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India, in October 2024, that upheld the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 is significant. This provision establishes a distinct framework for migrants from the former East Pakistan (Bangladesh) who settled in Assam, allowing them to acquire Indian citizenship if they arrived before March 25, 1971. It is worth analysing the judgment for constitutional violations that were overlooked by the majority decision, and also discussing the potential negative implications of the ruling.

The judgment seems to suffer from arbitrary reasoning. The then Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud, while justifying the test of Article 14, i.e., taking out of Assam against other States, said, "Though other states such as West Bengal (2216.7 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Tripura (856 km) and Mizoram (318 km) share a larger border with Bangladesh as compared to Assam (263 km), the magnitude of influx to Assam and its impact on the cultural and political rights of the Assamese and Tribal populations is higher... The impact of forty lakh migrants in Assam may conceivably be greater than the impact of fifty-seven lakh migrants in West Bengal because of Assam's lesser population and land area compared to West Bengal. Thus, the singling out of Assam is based on rational considerations." However, while testing the law against Article 29, the Court held that the influx of the people did not affect the language, script, or culture of the Assamese people nor did it affect their ability to protect the same. A simple examination of the contradictory reasoning indicates that the judgment was crafted to support the provision rather than to evaluate it against constitutional principles.

The background

Section 6A of the Citizenship Act was introduced in 1985 following the Assam Accord, an agreement reached between the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement. The movement arose in response to the migration from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) into Assam, sparking concerns about the preservation of the local culture, economic strain, and political imbalance. The Assam Accord sought to resolve these issues by setting specific cut-off dates for granting citizenship to migrants: before January 1, 1966 – all Indians who migrated to Assam were declared Indian citizens; between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971 – citizenship can be granted to



Ravi Singh Chhikara

an advocate at the Supreme Court of India and also the Delhi High Court



Arnav Roy

a third-year student at the National Law University, Delhi

The top court's recent ruling upholding the constitutional validity of Section 6A, fails to address key constitutional concerns, particularly those that impact Assam's indigenous population

the people after 10 years of residence in Assam; after March 25, 1971 – all these people were declared illegal migrants and were liable to detection and deportation.

Gaps in the reasoning

There are constitutional pitfalls in Section 6A of the Citizenship Act. There is a violation of Article 29 of the Constitution – cultural and linguistic displacement. Article 29 of the Constitution guarantees the protection of distinct cultural and linguistic identities within India. In its ruling, the Court held that Section 6A was not violative of Article 29(1), stating that the mere presence of different ethnic groups in a State does not automatically infringe upon the cultural rights guaranteed by the Constitution. It said Article 29(1) confers the right to "conserve" culture, which it interpreted as allowing a section of citizens to take positive steps to protect their language, script, or culture, and that the law must not prevent such efforts. The Court emphasised that the petitioners failed to prove that the influx of migrants, facilitated by Section 6A, directly hindered the Assamese people's ability to take steps to conserve their culture.

However, this reasoning is completely flawed. While the Court laid emphasis on the abstract right to "conserve" culture, it overlooked the fact that the provision creates hindrances to the people in meaningfully preserving their cultural identity. It failed to observe that mere formal recognition of the right to conserve culture is insufficient if the State allows circumstances to unfold which erode the very culture it seeks to protect. Research by Dinesh Bhugra and Matthew A. Becker found out that during the acculturation process, both the immigrant and host cultures may change. Changes in attitudes, family values, generational status and social affiliations can occur in both the majority and minority cultures as the two interact. Further, the Court also took note of the research paper titled "The Change of Religion and Language Composition in the State of Assam in Northeast India: A Statistical Analysis Since 1951 to 2001", which indicates that between 1951 and 2001, the percentage of the Bengali-speaking population in Assam had increased by 29.7%, from 21.2% to 27.5%, while the proportion of Assamese-speaking people had declined by 12.26%, from 69.3% to 60.8%. Further, as per the submissions of the petitioners recorded by the Court, from 1951 to 2011, the percentage of the Bengali-speaking population in Assam had increased by 36.36% (from 21.2% to 28.91% of the total population of Assam), while

the proportion of Assamese speaking people in the State had declined by 30.18%, i.e., from 69.3% to 48.38% of the total population of Assam. This demographic shift is not a mere coexistence of ethnic groups but represents a cultural and linguistic displacement that has severely undermined the distinct identity of the Assamese people.

One of the most striking constitutional flaws of Section 6A is its temporal unreasonableness, a concept under the doctrine of manifest arbitrariness. Laws that are constitutional at the time of enactment can become unreasonable over time due to changing circumstances, and Section 6A is a clear example of this.

The law lacks any temporal limitation on its operation, allowing individuals from this stream to apply for citizenship indefinitely. More than 40 years after the cut-off date, the law still remains in force, which has rendered it ineffective in addressing the original problem it was designed to solve.

Faulty mechanism, its impact

The mechanism for identifying and processing these migrants under Section 6A(3) is flawed because it places the burden of initiating proceedings on the state, without providing a means for voluntary self-identification by migrants. This means that suspected illegal immigrants must be referred to a foreigners' tribunal, which then determines their status. However, the absence of any deadline for making such referrals allows the law to remain operational indefinitely, perpetuating a system that no longer serves its intended purpose.

Further, the foreigners' tribunal, which is responsible for determining the citizenship status of individuals referred under Section 6A, has become bogged down by the sheer volume of cases. Even individuals who do not qualify under Section 6A can claim to fall within its purview, slowing down the entire process and leading to widespread confusion.

It seems the Court wrote the judgment to merely justify the enactment of Section 6A. The ruling fails to address key constitutional concerns, particularly those regarding the cultural and demographic impact on Assam's indigenous population. The judgment overlooked how unchecked migration has eroded the linguistic and cultural identity of the Assamese people, in violation of Article 29's protective intent. Moreover, the Court's neglect of the provision's temporal unreasonableness perpetuates arbitrary and outdated policies.

Strengthening the roots of an agri-carbon market

Carbon markets hold the potential to transform Indian agriculture, turning sustainable farming practices into a lucrative opportunity for farmers while combating climate change. In this, carbon pricing is a critical tool for mitigating climate change. It functions through compliance and voluntary carbon markets. Compliance markets, regulated by governments or international bodies such as the United Nations, impose emissions caps on companies. Businesses exceeding these caps must either purchase carbon credits from projects that mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, such as agroforestry or sustainable agriculture projects, or pay carbon taxes for their extra emissions. In contrast, the voluntary carbon market operates without regulation, allowing organisations to trade carbon credits through mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism, Verra, and Gold Standard, among others. Together, these systems aim to reduce GHG emissions and support global climate goals.

Carbon markets, their working

Carbon markets are gaining momentum. At COP29, in November 2024, for instance, a centralised carbon market under the UN got a green signal. Last year, India announced that it would launch its own compliance and voluntary carbon markets. Recently, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and State universities, listed five agriculture carbon credit projects in Verra.

Carbon markets rely on two key principles: additionality and permanence. Additionality ensures emission reductions happen only due to carbon credits, requiring farmers to adopt new practices. This means that those who already use sustainable methods are not eligible for credits. Permanence refers to the long-term durability of these benefits. Permanence guarantees these benefits last, such as ensuring carbon stored in soils through reduced tillage is not lost due to a return to conventional ploughing. Therefore, projects that aim to generate and trade carbon credits must adhere to certain conditions, including additionality and permanence.



Adeeth A.G. Cariappa

an Environmental and Resource Economist in the Sustainable Agrifood Systems (SAS) Program, CIMMYT-India



Vijesh V. Krishna

Lead Economist (Adoption and Gender) in the SAS Program, CIMMYT-India

In India, existing carbon credit projects listed under non-governmental entities need to be examined to ensure inclusivity and efficiency

To assess the readiness of India's agriculture sector for a full-scale carbon market, we must examine the existing carbon credit projects listed under non-governmental entities such as Verra. This highlights challenges and the necessary fixes before scaling up. If projects fail to deliver promised environmental benefits, producing unreliable credits, buyers may lose confidence and stop purchasing agriculture carbon credits. This deprives farmers of extra income and discourages the adoption of sustainable practices. Ensuring high-quality credits from the start of Indian carbon markets is crucial for trust and long-term farmer participation.

In just four years, over 50 agriculture carbon farming projects have been listed in the Verra registry, targeting 1.6 million hectares of farmland in India. These projects aim to generate approximately 4.7 million carbon credits annually, equivalent to offsetting the GHG emitted from 11 billion miles driven by an average gasoline-powered vehicle. However, none of these projects is registered, which means carbon credits have not been issued and that farmers have not received the money.

Carbon farming projects in India

A recent study by the writers of this article published in Climate Policy – "Carbon farming in India: are the existing projects inclusive, additional, and permanent?" – examines seven such carbon farming projects in Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, focusing on socio-economic inclusiveness, additionality, and permanence. The findings show that marginalised communities and small farmers were largely excluded, with women making up only 4% of participants. Carbon farmers in these States cultivated significantly more land – 51% more in Haryana and 32% more in Madhya Pradesh – than non-carbon farmers. Among non-carbon farmers, 46% of the land was owned by non-marginalised castes (general castes) and 17% by Scheduled Caste-Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) farmers, whereas among carbon farmers, 63% of the land was under non-marginalised castes and only 13% was owned by SC/ST farmers.

Further, while some sustainable practices were already in place before the projects began, others such as zero tillage, alternate wetting and drying,

intercropping, reduced chemical fertilizer use, micro-irrigation, and tree planting were newly adopted, which satisfies the additionality condition. This demonstrates that, when implemented effectively, these projects can genuinely reduce GHG emissions.

Significant challenges remain in these projects: 45% of farmers reported no communication, over 60% lacked training in new techniques, and 28% stopped sustainable practices by the second year, mainly due to insufficient financial incentives. Alarmingly, 99% had not received carbon credit payments, with additional issues including yield penalties and inadequate information on carbon farming.

Despite these setbacks, projects managed by startups focused solely on carbon credits, termed "Carbon Core" in this study, performed better than those run by subsidiaries or offshoots of larger corporations. However, these projects were less inclusive of smallholders and marginalised communities.

To address these issues, India's carbon market must incentivise socially inclusive projects by offering higher prices for carbon credits from projects that include smallholders and marginalised communities. Effective communication, regular training, and guaranteed, timely payments can enhance farmer participation. Collaborating with national and international research institutions to target suitable regions and interventions can prevent yield penalties and protect food security.

An improving science

The science of measuring soil carbon and GHG emissions is expected to improve over time. In recent years, digital technologies have advanced significantly. Tools such as remote sensing, satellite imagery, drones, and sensors for monitoring project activities will soon become more accessible. However, for carbon markets to succeed, the critical focus must be addressing the grand old implementation challenges.

Building a thriving agricultural carbon market in India requires collaboration among policymakers, researchers, and private entities to ensure inclusivity, transparency, timely rewards for farmers, and improved project implementation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'One election' Bills

It is surprising that the government has taken the trouble of preparing and introducing the Bills for implementing the concept of simultaneous national and State Assembly elections knowing fully well that the Bills may not muster the necessary two-thirds votes in

Parliament for their passage (Page 1, "Two Bills on simultaneous elections rock Parliament", December 18). The government has a valid point when it puts forth the reasoning that simultaneous elections would save expenditure and the country would be rid of the situation of 'constantly being in election mode'.

But, given the negative impact of such simultaneous elections on the polity, democracy, existing State legislatures by way of curtailment of their tenure, and the federal structure as enshrined in the Constitution, the implementation of the concept of simultaneous elections is not desirable.

The cost of conducting separate elections cannot be considered prohibitively high, compared to the country's total revenue expenditure. In a democracy, the cost of conducting elections should never be a matter of debate, as the exercise of conducting elections is the basic necessity for the

survival of democracy in a country. **Kosaraju Chandramouli**, Hyderabad

While 'cost reduction' appears to be a reasonable benefit, it cannot be the sole justification. In reality, the government has not adequately addressed other forms of wasteful spending.

Nor has it tackled the issue of using money to unfairly influence elections. The primary focus of any change should be on what is best for voters, not politicians. **V. Nagarajan**, Chennai

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

Making affordable generics more reliable

Generic drugs are crucial for addressing healthcare affordability in a population marked by significant income disparities. Bioequivalent to branded drugs, generics offer cost-effective alternatives. India leverages economies of scale and low production costs to supply affordable medication domestically and internationally.

With out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure at 39.4% of total health expenditure in 2021-22, generics reduce financial burdens and improve treatment adherence. By August 2024, generic medicines worth ₹5,600 crore sold through Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana over a decade saved consumers an estimated ₹30,000 crore.

Ensuring the quality of generic medicines in India is vital to make them affordable and effective as innovator drugs. Despite being bioequivalent to brand-name drugs, quality control lapses have occasionally compromised their efficacy and safety.

A study by doctors of the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, published in *Mycoses*, investigated the efficacy of itraconazole in treating chronic pulmonary aspergillosis using the innovator drug and 22 generic formulations. The innovator itraconazole achieved therapeutic drug levels in 73% of patients within two weeks, compared to only 29% for generics, which often required 6-8 weeks, dose escalation, or switching to the innovator. Further, generic capsules had significant defects, including fewer and unevenly sized pellets, critical for optimal drug absorption and bioavailability.

But why do generic and innovator drugs differ in some cases despite being made from the same active ingredient? Generics can differ significantly in their excipients and manufacturing processes, leading to variability in therapeutic outcomes. First,

**Aditya Sinha**

Public policy professional
Views are personal

differences in excipients – such as binders, fillers, disintegrants, and coatings – can alter a drug's dissolution rate, stability, and delivery mechanism.

Second, manufacturing processes, including the type of punching machines, compression force, and granulation methods, can influence the drug's physical and chemical properties. Variations in tablet hardness, particle size, and porosity can affect disintegration and absorption. In some cases, while an innovator drug is designed to release the API slowly to achieve a sustained therapeutic effect, generics may release the API more rapidly, potentially leading to fluctuations in drug levels.

Third, the limitations of bioequivalence thresholds contribute to the problem. Regulatory standards often allow pharmacokinetic parameters to fall within 80%-125% of the innovator drug's range. These thresholds may be insufficient for medications with a narrow therapeutic index. Even minor deviations in drug release or bioavailability can lead to subtherapeutic effects or adverse reactions. Stability issues can also further undermine the drug's shelf life and reliability.

The key issue lies in India's decentralised drug regulation system, which grants significant authority to State Drug Regulatory Authorities (SDRAs), leading to inconsistent enforcement and quality standards. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) can only recommend action, leaving States to act. Despite repeated calls for centralisation, crucial functions remain with States, enabling regulatory arbitrage as manufacturers exploit weaker oversight. India must centralise drug regulation, strengthen CDSCO with resources and personnel, and establish more central drug-testing labs to address this issue.

Another reason is the inadequate enforcement of stability testing to ensure drug

efficacy under diverse climatic conditions. Stability testing, mandated by the CDSCO in 2018, requires manufacturers to demonstrate that drugs maintain their quality, strength, and identity under specified conditions. However, inconsistent implementation by State licensing authorities and the absence of clear, centralised guidelines undermine compliance. Moreover, the lack of retrospective applicability to generics approved before 2018 perpetuates the presence of substandard drugs in the market. India must enforce uniform stability testing protocols, ensure centralised regulatory oversight, and mandate periodic reassessment of all approved generics to build confidence in drug quality.

Thirdly, India's Pharmacopoeia permits higher drug impurity levels than U.S. and EU standards. The Pharmacopoeia Commission (PC) and CDSCO rejected stricter ICH guidelines as "too expensive". Thus, these standards should be made a bit more stringent. In that case, action needs to be taken at the level of PC, CDSCO, and Centre.

Centralising drug regulation will only be effective with a comprehensive overhaul of the CDSCO. It must be reorganised to deliver robust regulatory safeguards, protecting patients from the dangers of substandard and counterfeit medicines through stringent regulatory protocols and effective inspection and enforcement mechanisms.

We must champion generics – they are indispensable for ensuring equitable access to medicines. But, equity cannot come at the expense of quality. States must relinquish their fragmented control over drug regulation, which has long undermined public confidence in generics. It is time to act on the decades-old recommendations of the Bhatia (1954), Hathi (1975), and Mashelkar (2003) committees, all of which have called for centralised oversight.

AP's CM is calling for a comprehensive water policy to address State's challenges

STATE OF PLAY

Srinivas Chokkakula
srinivas@cprindia.org

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has recently called for a comprehensive water policy for Andhra Pradesh while reviewing the water resources development. The idea of such a policy must be welcomed. The fledgling state of Andhra Pradesh requires, at any rate, a territorial re-imaging of its water futures especially given the multiple challenges it confronts as a result of its bifurcation a decade ago.

Water policymaking at the State level is often underrated, yet it is both desirable and imperative for subnational and national water security. This is so at least for three fundamental reasons.

First, the fulcrum of water governance in India lies with and within the States. The much-needed paradigmatic choices and shifts – say, in supply augmentation to demand management – can be accomplished when these are leveraged at the State level.

Second, water resources development is deeply localised and territorialised for contextual reasons. For instance, Maharashtra, advanced in water resources development, may need to focus on regulation, whereas Jharkhand on supply augmentation strategies.

Third, the current Anthropocene world warrants re-visioning water resources management paradigms and practices. As the eminent Professor Asit K. Biswas puts it, the effects of climate change are most profoundly manifested in the ways of water, largely as risks get extreme and frequent. Coping with these risks



sets a new agenda for policy-making, both at national and subnational scales, more so for the latter.

Mr. Naidu's contemplated comprehensive water policy relies on conventional approaches of supply augmentation.

While the Polavaram Project was a priority, he also stressed the longer-term river interlinking projects. The interlinking projects are, however, expensive, distant, and increasingly infeasible for political reasons. This reliance on supply augmentation is not surprising for a downstream State though. While these may remain part of the water policy portfolio, the State will do well to make beginnings in some key strategic directions.

Making the shift away from supply augmentation must be a top priority for the State. Many other States' water policies articulate aspirations for such a shift, but these often fizzle out due to the problem of institutional inertia. Deeply entrenched institutional cultures of water resources departments are premised on supply augmentation through engineering solutions. These are ill-equipped to adapt or promote demand management strategies.

Reimagining these cultures must accompany other elements of institutional reforms. This includes incorporating proven institutional models, such as an independent water

resources regulatory authority. This is critical for Andhra Pradesh given the acute and politically sensitive regional imbalances within the State. Such reforms could also help with another good starting point for improving water use efficiency.

The important direction is to cope with risks. While climate change presents an overarching source of these risks, water security involves addressing other emerging risks such as groundwater depletion, river pollution and water quality, and dam safety. With over 32 dams aging past 50 years, and perhaps the highest average storage per structure in the country, dam safety is an important concern.

As a downstream State with a long coastline, Andhra Pradesh is exposed to compounded climate change risks. The Vijayawada floods in September is a case in point. The intense rainfall in the upstream stretches and poor conditions in the downstream to moderate the floods led to inundation in large parts. While the Chief Minister personally led the response efforts, institutionalisation of more efficient and effective mechanisms is necessary. The State must evolve robust monitoring and response systems to address climate risks, including cyclones. This brings to the fore the crucial element of intergovernmental multi-jurisdictional coordination to cope with such an extra-territorial nature of risks. The State must be conscious of these challenges of institutional reconfiguration towards a more comprehensive water policy.

Srinivas Chokkakula is president and chief executive, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. Views are personal

State water policymaking matters

Outstanding spinner, capable batter, match winner

The cerebral Ashwin's record is highlighted by his exceptional strike rate, best among spinners

DATA POINT

Srinivasan Ramani

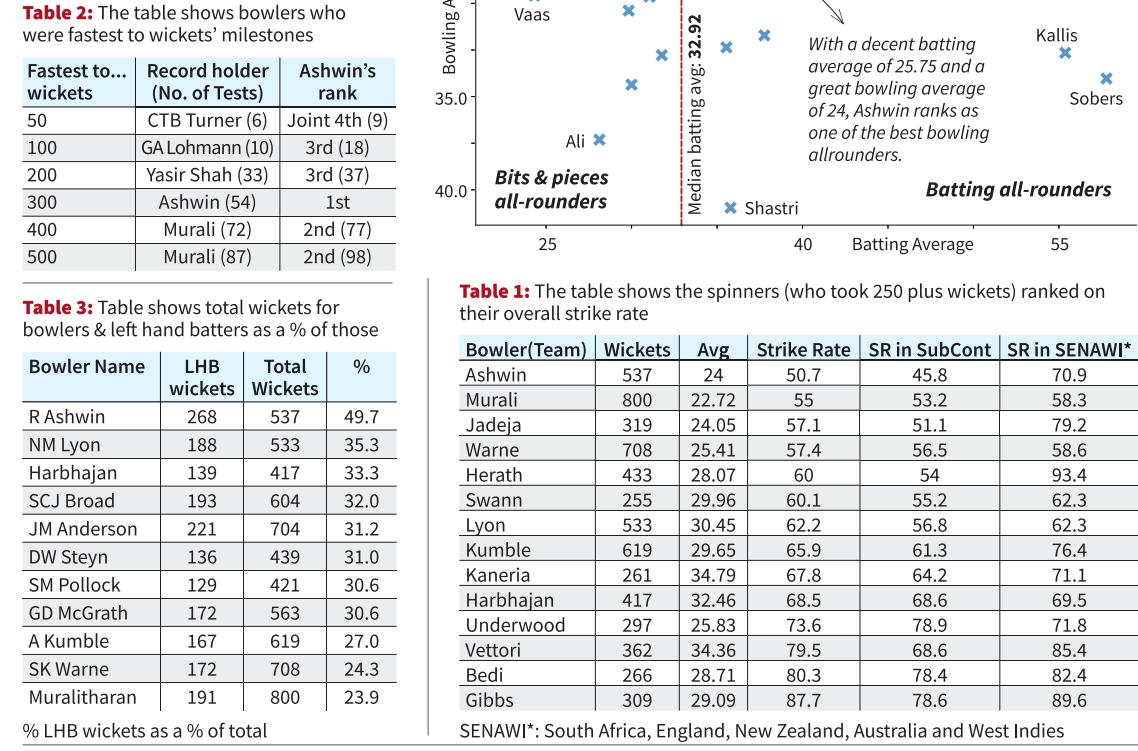
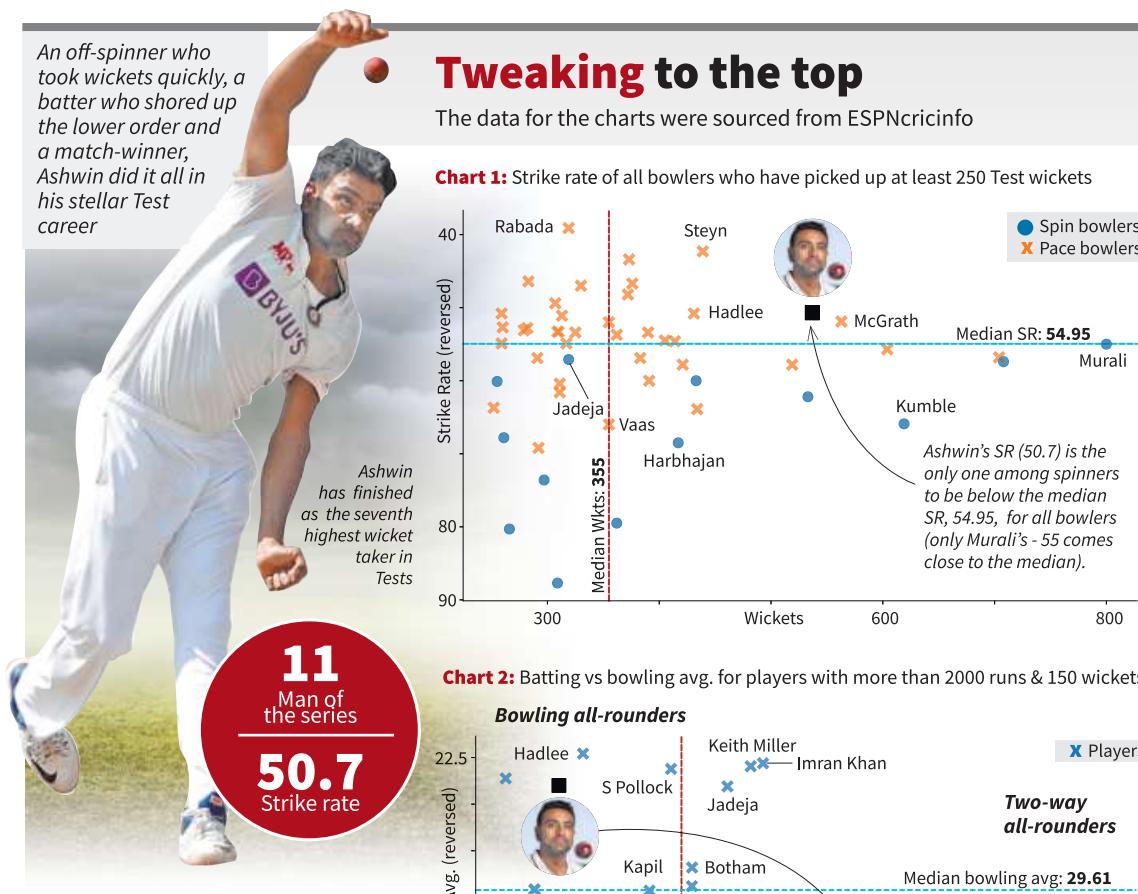
Ravichandran Ashwin, a colossus in Indian cricket, hung up his kit bag and called it quits in international cricket after a stellar career on Wednesday, just as the third Test between Australia and India in Brisbane pattered out to a draw. This article will focus only on his Test record.

Ashwin's retirement announcement meant that he finished as the seventh-highest wicket-taker in Tests (537 wickets) at a stellar average (runs per wicket) of 24 and a strike rate (SR, deliveries bowled per wicket) of 50.7. He also scored 3,503 runs at an average of 25.75. Only his former Indian coach Anil Kumble managed a higher wicket tally (619) and only 20 Indian batsmen scored more Test runs than him, indicating his strong all-round ability and performance in cricket's classical version.

Ashwin's batting has been an underrated ability and one of the reasons he has won several Man of the Series awards has been his ability to score vital runs as a lower-order batsman. Along with spin twin Ravindra Jadeja, Ashwin not only formed a strong spin tandem but their batting prowess strengthened the batting lineup, pulling the team out of many a batting crisis.

Chart 2 plots all-rounder cricketers' (those who have scored at least 2,000 runs and captured at least 150 wickets in Test) batting and bowling averages (reversed). Ashwin falls under the category of "bowling all-rounders" who could score decent runs and were outstanding bowlers including stalwarts such as Richard Hadlee, Shaun Pollock, Wasim Akram, and Chaminda Vaas. Another attribute of Ashwin that sets him apart from other bowlers – his hegemony over left-handed batsmen. Nearly 50% of all his wickets were that of left-handed batters (**Table 3**).

Table 1 shows the spinners with 250 or more wickets, ordered on overall SR. Ashwin's phenomenal record in the subcontinent (India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh), he did not play in Pakistan), where he

**FROM THE ARCHIVES**

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 19, 1974

Exchange of visits: Indian Board's suggestion to Pak.

Bombay, Dec. 18: The Working Committee of the Board of Control for Cricket in India at a special meeting here today suggested to the Pakistan Cricket Control Board that they could exchange visits beginning from September to December next year.

The Pakistan Board had suggested to the Indian Board that an Indian team should visit Pakistan in the winter of 1975 to play five Test matches and nine other matches and immediately after that a Pakistan team would tour India from January to March 1976 to play an identical number of matches.

The Board considered the proposal from Pakistan at full length and since India had a heavy schedule in 1976, including a visit to New Zealand and West Indies, the Pakistan Board's suggestion could not be accepted. Instead, the Indian Board had proposed that India played three Test matches and three other matches in Pakistan, lasting in all five weeks. The Pakistan team will come to India after the conclusion of the matches there and play here three Test matches and four other matches.

The Board also considered the preparation of the Indian team for participating in the World Cup (Prudential Cup) tournament. In order to condition the players for this tournament, the Board has decided to suggest one day matches at five different centres.

The Indian selectors will watch the performance of the players and finalise the team for the World Cup to be staged in England, beginning from May 29 to June 25.

The Indian team will leave early in May to accustom itself to the weather conditions there and to play matches against Counties before the World Cup.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 19, 1924

American music in India

Bombay, Dec. 19: For the first time in the Radio history in this country American broadcasting was received in India in the early hours of Wednesday morning when the Marconi Company's engineers heard American music. While the former were able to pick up one of the new short wave transmissions, Mr. Hebbard listened to one of regular programmes on normal wave length of K.D.K.A station.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Bottles of generic medication recalled by Dr. Reddy Labs

3.3 in lakh. Dr Reddy's Laboratories is recalling over 3.3 lakh bottles of a medication used to treat high calcium levels in blood and hyperparathyroidism in the U.S. due to manufacturing issues. The recall is due to the "presence of N-nitroso Cinacalcet impurity above FDA recommended interim limit". The affected lot was produced in India. PTI

Germany's funds for Pakistan forest protection project

20 An agreement for financial support for the 'Billion Tree Afforestation Support Project' (BTASP) was signed in Islamabad on Saturday between Pakistan Economic Affairs Secretary Dr. Kazim Niaz and Director of German Development Bank KfW, Esther Gravenkotter. The first phase of BTASP is already under implementation, according to *The Dawn* newspaper. PTI

Death toll in Gaza since Israeli troops began the invasion

43,341 The Health Ministry in Gaza said on Sunday that at least 43,341 people have been killed in the war between Israel and Palestinian militants. The toll includes 27 deaths in the previous 24 hours, according to the ministry, which said 1,02,105 people have been wounded since Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023. AFP

Number of people injured in Srinagar grenade attack

11 This attack comes a day after security forces eliminated a top Pakistani commander of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in the Khanyar locality of downtown Srinagar. The blast took place close to the weekly flea market, known as the Sunday market. An official said the attack was borne out of the desperation of terrorists following the killing of the LeT commander. PTI

Amount invested by the Union govt. into RINL despite issues

1,650 in Rs cr. Rashtriya Ispat Nigam (RINL) is a steel manufacturing company under the Ministry of Steel which owns a 7.5 million tonne plant at Visakhapatnam. The government is taking various measures to keep RINL as a going concern, as the RINL is in "serious financial trouble". PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why were Romanian polls annulled?

What prompted the constitutional court to declare the European nation's presidential polls invalid? Who is Calin Georgescu and what has been his role in the elections? What are the allegations levelled against Russia and has the country faced similar accusations in the past in the region?

EXPLAINER

Garmella Subramaniam

The story so far:

In an unprecedented ruling on December 6, Romania's constitutional court unanimously annulled the country's presidential elections, two days before the run-off ballot, amid allegations of Russian interference. Suspicions of foul play were fuelled when Calin Georgescu emerged frontrunner, securing 22.9% of the vote, after the first round of polling on November 24. A professor of environmental sciences who fought as an independent and had polled in single digits until then, Mr. Georgescu is an ex-honorary member of the far-right Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) party. He has been portrayed as an admirer of Russian President Vladimir Putin, and a critic of Romania's membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Mr. Georgescu was even suggested as the Prime Minister candidate by the AUR party, which came second in the legislative elections of December 1.

The Constitutional Court in Bucharest had ordered a recount in response to complaints by two of the contestants who were eliminated in the first round. Once the exercise confirmed the previous tally, the judges had given the go ahead for the knock-out round on December 8. However, the unfolding dramatic turn of events prompted the court to call off the elections altogether, concluding that the process was marred by multiple irregularities.

How serious are the allegations? Days before the aborted run-off, Romania's National Security Council declassified troves of documents from the Interior Ministry, detailing how the country had been a target of Russian cybercrimes, information leaks and sabotage. It said some 800 TikTok



Catalin Georgescu has been portrayed as an admirer of Vladimir Putin and a critic of Romania's membership of NATO and the EU. AFP

accounts created in 2016 were activated in support of Mr. Georgescu a month before the ballot and thousands closer to the polling date. More than 100 paid influencers with a few million followers were deployed to boost Mr. Georgescu's prospects. Romania's secret service (SRI) has claimed it has identified thousands of cyberattacks originating from Russian platforms, which routed their operations from several countries, and distorted the information presented to the public. The agency singled out Mr. Georgescu, who had claimed that he had no access to campaign funds, as having received preferential treatment from TikTok, because the platform owned by ByteDance did not label his video posts as political advertisement. TikTok has denied any wrongdoing and taken down thousands of disputed posts and promised full cooperation with the authorities. Telegram and Discord are the other channels Romanian authorities have blamed for involvement in these covert and coordinated operations.

What is the status of the probe?

In a complaint filed with the EU regulator, Romania's media watchdog has alleged that TikTok's algorithms amplified Mr. Georgescu's content to the disadvantage of other candidates. Subject to available evidence, the commission could investigate the Chinese social media platform for potential violations under the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA). The law stipulates content moderation obligations on large online platforms to mitigate systemic risks, including the electoral processes and imposes penalties of up to 6% of global annual turnover. TikTok has already been served an order under the DSA to preserve for scrutiny all its data relating to European elections.

What explains Georgescu's appeal?

The TikTok messenger that spectacularly propelled his victory does not detract from the resonance of Mr. Georgescu's ultra-nationalist message among an electorate disenchanted with the dominance of the mainstream Social

Democratic Party and the National Liberal Party since the fall of communism. High inflation, a ballooning fiscal deficit and balance of payments challenges, not to mention rampant corruption in high places and contempt for the rule of law, have been weaponised by populist and extremist groups to peddle propaganda and conspiracy theories.

How widespread are concerns of Russian meddling in the region?

From orchestrating a so-called hybrid warfare of spreading disinformation, cyberattacks and sabotage, to paying off pro-Russian MEPs (Members of the European Parliament), Moscow's controversial role came into sharp focus during the European parliament elections in June.

In response, Belgium and the Czech Republic coordinated investigations that led, among other actions, Prague to impose sanctions on an oligarch close to Mr. Putin for promoting a pro-Russia narrative via Voice of Europe website, which has since been taken down.

While a German MP from the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party is under a probe for receiving money from a pro-Russia campaign, the Belgian government in April passed legislation to criminalise foreign interference in the political process.

In Moldova, the fragile post-Soviet republic, Moscow is accused of plotting to destabilise the pro-EU government, and interference in President Maia Sandu's re-election and the referendum on EU accession in October.

What next?

While a re-run of the presidential contest is expected next year, the Mayor of Bucharest has thrown his hat in the ring. The ultra-nationalist Mr. Georgescu has vowed to challenge the decision in the Supreme Court. Romanian tax authorities have launched financial investigations against the social influencers behind Georgescu's campaign, some of whom have since fled the country.

THE GIST

Romania's presidential elections were annulled amid allegations of Russian interference

Suspicions of foul play were alleged after Calin Georgescu from the political fringe emerged frontrunner, securing 22.9% of the vote, after the first round of polling on November 24

In a complaint filed with the EU regulator, Romania's media watchdog has alleged that TikTok's algorithms amplified Mr. Georgescu's content to the disadvantage of other candidates

What did the U.S. Congressional report on COVID origins find?

How did the U.S. government, in the report, arrive at the conclusion that SARS-CoV-2 emerged from a laboratory leak? What is a furin cleavage site and how does it come into play in this case?

Priyali Prakash

The story so far:

A U.S. Congressional committee led by Republican Brad Wenstrup has concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic was the result of the spread of a virus that likely leaked from a research facility in Wuhan, China.

The final report of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic, established in 2023, was published on December 2, 2024.

The report runs over 500 pages and, according to committee members, will serve as a roadmap for government action during future pandemics.

"A future pandemic requires a whole-of-America response managed by those without personal benefit or bias," Mr. Wenstrup wrote. "We can always do

better, and for the sake of future generations of Americans, we must."

What is the lab-leak theory?

The report stated that SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic, possibly emerged from a laboratory leak.

It based this conclusion on inferred or circumstantial claims made early during the pandemic.

It quoted an unclassified factsheet from January 2021 published by the U.S. State Department that said: "The U.S. government has reason to believe several researchers inside the WIV [Wuhan Institute of Virology] became sick in autumn 2019, before the first identified case of the outbreak, with symptoms consistent with both COVID-19 and common seasonal illness."

The report itself does not directly

prove the lab-leak theory, however.

The report also quoted statements by molecular biologist Alina Chan in June 2024 in support of the lab-leak hypothesis.

In one statement, Dr. Chan said the virus emerged in Wuhan, which is also home to China's "foremost research lab for SARS-like viruses", and that Shi Zhengli, a senior virologist at WIV, "has been researching SARS-like viruses for over a decade and even initially wondered if the outbreak came from the WIV".

But at a conference in Japan on December 4, Dr. Shi reportedly refuted the claim that the viruses she was studying were ancestors of the SARS-CoV-2 pathogen.

She had earlier promised to sequence the genomes of 56 betacoronaviruses she and her team had collected between 2004 and 2021 and were studying. She

presented the sequencing data and their analyses at the conference. (The latter have yet to be peer-reviewed.)

The Select Subcommittee report also noted an observation by Nicholas Wade, former science editor at *The New York Times*, in January 2024, that SARS-CoV-2 "possesses a furin cleavage site, found in none of the other 871 known members of its viral family, so it cannot have gained such a site through the ordinary evolutionary swaps of genetic material within a family."

A furin cleavage is the process by which the furin enzyme breaks up specific proteins to activate them. The furin cleavage site in SARS-CoV-2 controls how it interacts with human cells to cause the disease.

A letter published in *The Lancet* in August 2023 by researchers from Cornell University refuted Mr. Wade's idea and said the site could have evolved naturally, as opposed to being genetically engineered.

What else does the report say?

The report also said the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded gain-of-function research at WIV.

Gain-of-function research refers to studies where researchers genetically alter organisms to give them additional functions, like enhanced transmissibility or infectivity.

THE GIST

The report claims several researchers inside the WIV became sick in autumn 2019 with symptoms consistent with both COVID-19 and common seasonal illness

However, the report itself does not directly prove the lab-leak theory

The report also says the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded gain-of-function research at WIV

BIBLIO



Nature may be complicated to write about but a gendered outlook can help to enhance the understanding of how to value biodiversity. PTI

Nature whisperers: women's unique connection with the environment

Exploring literature on climate and nature through the perspective of women authors helps to reflect on what it means to live ethically, responsibly and healthily in consonance with nature. The writers exhort stakeholders to listen to women's voices in the larger fight for climate justice

Soma Basu

Scientists and activists have warned the world about climate crisis for long. Yet, climate commitments fall short of actions needed to avoid disastrous consequences. The annual international climate summit (COP) or the environment-related days (nine in a calendar year) remind us of the challenges we face due to climate change but that effort on climate justice is too little and late.

Do we not care enough or we do not know enough to care for the environment?

Interestingly, Amitav Ghosh argues that nature does not need humans to stand up and defend it and so, instead of seeking out new ideas to address the ecological crisis, we should return to ancient stories the earth has been telling us. "We can confront the crisis not by trying to save the planet but by listening to it," he writes in an essay, *Brutes: Meditations on the Myth of the Voiceless*.

American environmentalist Charles Eisenstein underlines in his 2018 book, *Climate A New Theory*, that much of the climate derangement comes from direct disruption of ecosystems. He says the core of the crisis is ecocide, the killing of the ecosystem, and not warming.

Vital cog in the wheel

The work of writers such as American naturalist Henry David Thoreau or environmental philosopher John Muir have helped to shape the way we view nature. But women too are vital voices who are often missing from the proverbial table.

The relationship between women and the land is difficult to trace due to lack of documentation, though women sow and till fields and shape the way their cultures

relate to the land. Travel writer Suzanne Roberts gives food for thought on the masculinity of wilderness: "I realised I had been relying on a male translation of nature rather than listening to my own voice".

In his novel *Hungry Tide* (2004), Ghosh portrays nature as mother and writes human beings have to take help of nature for a comfortable life. As nurturers, women have a connect with nature and fight climate change through nature-connectedness. But their voices have remained in a minority in climate discourse and nature writing.

Environmental thinker Vandana Shiva is among the few who has to her credit a score of influential books on the subject. She is one who believes women and nature are associated not in passivity but in creativity and in the maintenance of life. In her new book, *The Nature of Nature: The Metabolic Disorder of Climate Change* (2024), she explores the intimate links between food and climate to look deep into the root causes of climate change.

"What we eat, how we grow the food we eat, how we distribute it, will determine whether humanity survives or pushes itself and other species to extinction," writes Shiva, while explaining the incontrovertible connections between a global warming climate and an agricultural system based on techno-optimism. She says food is the currency of life, indivisible from earth and its natural systems, and argues powerfully for a food and climate future based on regeneration or biodiversity, in partnership with the biosphere.

Turning back to nature

Like Ghosh, she writes that in an age of climate catastrophes, we need to turn back to nature and learn once again how

to live sustainably on planet earth, offering alternatives that work according to nature's ecological laws and are the real solutions to rejuvenate and regenerate the planet. Shiva analyses the false promises made by technology-oriented lab-intensive digital agriculture and calls out the fake and ultra-processed food industries that are impacting the world's health and food security.

Another widely published author, Prerna Singh Bindra, lobbies with governments on conservation issues and in her book *The Vanishing – India's Wildlife Crisis* (2017), she exhorts thinking citizens to acknowledge the Indian wildlife crisis due to development projects tearing into their habitats.

Sixth extinction'

Bindra travels to far-flung forests to put the spotlight on the vanishing natural heritage. India is in the midst of mass 'sixth extinction' is her worry, as she writes, "We are losing species in our backyard." The once ubiquitous sparrows, or the fireflies that lit up the nights have dwindled; in the forests, great Indian bustards are down to a 100; the end of the gharial indicates the poisoning and death of the clear and fast-flowing rivers. She tells readers why extinction matters and how the fate of wildlife is linked to humans. She pushes against this "ecocide."

Arati Kumar Rao journeyed across India's diverse landscapes for more than a decade to study the slow violence inflicted in the fragile environment and how it impacts livelihoods. Her book, *Marginlands – Indian Landscapes on the Brink* (2023) throws light on the subtle tectonic changes taking place across ecosystems in India.

She cites examples of the Thar where miners bulldoze sand dunes that guard

life-sustaining water; the Gangetic dolphin that now struggles for survival as its riverine habitat is fragmented by dams and roiled by incessant shipping; the cataclysmic floods that unleashes fury on Mumbai due to encroachments.

"As the spectre of climate change compounds natural and human-induced disasters, India's most endangered landscapes are pushed to the precipice of destruction," she warns, making her book a haunting read about failed government schemes, exaggerated promises and human follies.

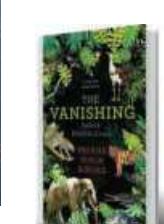
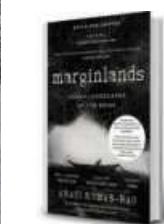
Leadership qualities

There are few other books by women writers that attempt to demystify climate change, explain what the fuss is all about and why it matters to our survival.

Named one of the best books of the year by Smithsonian Magazine, *All We Can Save* (2020) by Ayana Elizabeth and Katherine K. Wilkinson contains essays from women at the forefront of the climate movement and reveals their leadership rooted in compassion, connection, and collaboration. "To change everything, we need everyone," is their message.

A groundbreaking perspective is a rare anthology, *Women on Nature* (2021) by Katharine Norbury which has 100+ voices on place, landscape and the natural world. Another book *Everglades: River of Grass* (1947) by journalist and conservationist Marjory Stoneman Douglas is about her efforts to protect the fragile wetlands of Florida.

Nature may be complicated to write about but a gendered outlook can help to enhance the understanding of how to value biodiversity. These books are both a balm and a guide for knowing what has been done to the world, and how to save our collective future.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

'..... the place was terribly crowded. When I finally made it to the table, I couldn't believe my eyes'.

'Lots of good things to eat?'
'No. Nothing but sandwiches were left'.
'Was left'.
'What?'
'Nothing but sandwiches was left.
'Nothing but' is followed by a singular verb'.

'But, 'sandwiches' is plural, isn't it?'
'That's right. But as I said 'nothing but' takes a singular verb. Normally you would say, there were only sandwiches on the table. In this case, you use the plural 'were'. But when you use 'nothing but', you use the singular 'was'. Nothing but crumbs was on the plate. Nothing was on the plate but crumbs'.

'Things weren't that bad in my case. At least I had sandwiches. And guess who I met at the party?'

'You tell me'.
'Mr. Jain, my physics teacher'.
'Did you cozy-up to him?'
'Co... what?'

'Cozy, rhymes with 'nosey'. To 'cozy-up' means 'to try to be close, friendly; try to be liked'. For example, Raju is cozying-up to Jaggu in order to make it to the cricket team'.

'That's nothing unusual. Everyone tries to cozy-up the captain'.

'It's cozy-up to the captain'. The expression is usually followed by 'to'.

'Cozy-up' is considered slang by the way. So, did you cozy-up to your teacher?'.

'No, I had no time to cozy-up to him. You see, he doesn't like sandwiches and was feeling terribly hungry. So I suggested he go to the Mayuri'.

'Cosy up' is also written without the hyphen, with 's' instead of 'z'.

'The Mayuri!' That's become one of your stamping grounds, hasn't it?

'Stamping ground? What does it mean?'.

'A stamping ground is a place 'where a person spends much of his time', his favourite place!'

'If that's what stamping ground means, then Mayuri is certainly not one of my stamping grounds. It's the small tea shop next to it. My friends and I meet there after school'.

'So the tea shop is an after school stamping ground?'.

'Yes.'

'What did your teacher think of Mayuri?'

'He didn't like it one bit. When he went in, he was told that the kitchen staff were on strike. All that they could offer him were cheese sandwiches!'

'A nice man is a man of nasty ideas' – Jonathan Swift

K Subrahmanian
S. Upendran
21-06-1994

THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz on R. Ashwin, who retired from international cricket

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

V. V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
Who was Ashwin's opponent in his Test debut?

QUESTION 2
Ashwin was part of two ICC tournament-winning Indian teams. Which were the tournaments?

QUESTION 3
In which year did Ashwin win the ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year and ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year awards?

QUESTION 4
In the context of his career, what is common to the following Test matches:
against West Indies at Mumbai (2011) and Antigua (2016),



Visual question: Ashwin is being congratulated after scalping the first of 537 Test victims. Who was the batter? THE HINDU

ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS DAY'S QUIZ:

- Which amendment to the U.S. Constitution outlawed slavery on December 18, 1865? **Ans:- 13th Amendment**
- Which Swiss-born German citizen was born on this day with styles rooted in expressionism, cubism, and surrealism? **Ans:- Paul Klee**
- What happened on this day during Donald Trump's presidency? **Ans:- He became the third U.S. president to be impeached by the House of Representatives**
- Name this TV special, an adaptation of Dr. Seuss's classic children's book, aired for the first time on this day, in 1996, and became a holiday staple. **Ans:- How the Grinch Stole Christmas!**
- Two Hollywood celebrities, who, although have never worked together in the same film, were born on this day, one in 1963 and the other in 1946. **Ans:- Brad Pitt, Steven Spielberg**
- Name the British guitarist of the rock band the Rolling Stones was born on this day. **Ans:- Keith Richards**
- Identify this Czech writer and later, President, who died on this day in 2011. **Ans:- Václav Havel**

Early Birds

Piyali Tuli - Tamal Biswas - Sonali Das - Sumana Dutta - Siddhartha Viswanathan

Word of the day

Diabolical:

of, relating to, or characteristic of the devil

Synonyms:

sinister, malicious, evil

Usage: The police quickly mobilised to track down the diabolical criminals before they struck again.

International Phonetic Alphabet: /dər.ə'bəl.ɪ.kəl/

Pronunciation: bit.ly/diabolicalnew

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

From Page One**Positive signals emerge from India-China talks**

"This was the first meeting of the SRs since frictions had emerged in the Western Sector of the India-China border areas in 2020. The SRs positively affirmed the implementation of the latest disengagement agreement of October 2024, resulting in patrolling and grazing in relevant areas," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement issued after the meeting.

The resumption of the SRs process – started in 2003 to work on finding a satisfactory resolution to the decades-long India-China boundary dispute – marks a major step towards the resumption of diplomatic mechanisms that have been paused for the past few years. Mr. Doval last met with Mr. Wang in Delhi in December 2019, just four months before the Chinese army amassed troops and transgressed along the LAC, leading to skirmishes with the Indian Army. This eventually led to the deadly Galwan clashes, the first time there had been casualties between the two armies in more than four decades.

Mr. Doval, who arrived in Beijing on Tuesday, also called on Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng. According to a readout quoted by official agencies, Mr. Han said that as "ancient civilisations and emerging global powers", India and China's ties hold global influence and strategic significance. Both sides should "restore political trust and promote collaboration in economic, trade, and cultural areas, thus ensuring stable development in their bilateral relations," he said.

According to the readout, Mr. Doval had responded, saying that the resumption of SR talks after a five-year hiatus was significant, and that India is committed "to strengthening strategic communication with China" and injecting new momentum into the relationship.

Navy boat crashes into ferry off Mumbai; 13 die

Rescue work underway after a ferry capsized off Mumbai coast when a Navy craft crashed into it on Wednesday. PTI

The Navy and the Coast Guard launched a massive rescue operation. Eleven naval boats, three Marine Police boats, one Coast Guard boat, and four helicopters were deployed. The survivors were taken to various hospitals, including the JNPT Hospital, Ashwini Hospital, St. George Hospital, Navy Dockyard Hospital, and the Karanja Hospital.

Kin of deceased to get ₹7 lakh

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced a financial assistance of ₹5 lakh each to the families of the deceased from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his condolences to the families of the victims. He announced an *ex gratia* of ₹2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would get ₹50,000.

"Thirteen people have been declared dead by the Navy doctors – three Navy personnel and 10 civilians – as per Vice-Admiral Sanjay Jagjit Singh," Mr. Fadnavis told reporters in Nagpur.

"Deeply saddened by the loss of precious lives. Injured personnel, including naval personnel & civilians from both vessels, are receiving urgent medical care," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh posted on X.

The Colaba police have filed an FIR against the Navy speed boat driver and others responsible, on a complaint from survivor Natharam Chaudhary.

All 17,130 police stations in the country linked through centralised online platform CCTNS**Vijaita Singh**
NEW DELHI

Nearly 15 years after it was launched, all 17,130 police stations in the country have been linked through the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS), a centralised online platform to file first information reports (FIRs), chargesheets, and investigation reports. The online database can be accessed by law enforcement authorities across the country.

The last of nearly 40 police stations in Manipur, Nagaland, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Lakshwadeep, and Odisha have been connected to the system in the past three months, completing 100%



The CCTNS was launched in 2009 with a budget of ₹2,000 crore. MARI RAMU

CCTNS deployment across 28 States and eight Union Territories in the country, a senior government official said. "Police stations are registering 100% FIRs through CCTNS," the official added.

Launched in 2009 with

Foreigners' entry restricted in Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland

Centre reimposes Protected Area Regime amid 'security concerns arising out of influx from neighbouring countries'; foreigners will have to seek permission and permits to visit the 3 States

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has reimposed the Protected Area Regime (PAR) in Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram to monitor the movement of foreigners amid "growing security concerns arising out of influx from neighbouring countries", the Manipur government said on Wednesday.

From now on, foreigners visiting the three north-eastern States would have to seek prior permission and special permits from the government. The relaxation has been withdrawn after a gap of 14 years.

According to Ministry guidelines, a foreigner is not encouraged to visit protected areas unless there are "extraordinary reasons to justify a visit".

On Tuesday, the Ministry wrote to the Chief Secretaries of Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland regarding the changed norms for the PAR under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958. The letter said the relaxation provided to Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland under the PAR had been "withdrawn with immediate effect" and henceforth, the entire areas of these States would again fall under the PAR. The relaxation was given earlier to promote tourism.



From now on, foreigners visiting Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram must seek prior permission and special permits from the Centre. ANI

16, 2022 and was valid till December 2027, an official said.

The Manipur government said in a press statement that the PAR had been reimposed in the three States. "With this reimposition, the movement of foreigners visiting Manipur will be closely monitored, and they are required to obtain the necessary Protected Area Permits (PAP) in accordance with the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958," it said.

The statement said that

no such organisation called "Kuki-Zo Council" existed in Manipur, claiming that the "origin and authenticity of this group are highly questionable".

"There is no district by the name Lamka, mentioned as a headquarters in Manipur. This raises strong suspicions regarding the external origins of such organisations that appear to operate outside legal and administrative framework," it said.

The State government urged national and local media houses to refrain from giving publicity to such press releases from unauthorised organisations or individuals. It also appealed to the "Central government and its agencies to disregard such claims from unverified organisations".

The new group comprising members of the Kuki-Zo community had on Tuesday warned Chief Minister N. Biren Singh to not travel by road via the Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi to inaugurate a festival in Senapati district, a Naga-dominated area.

SC questions action against BJP MPs in Deoghar airport case**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday questioned the State of Jharkhand's action of initiating a case of criminal trespass and 'endangering lives of others' against BJP MPs Nishikant Dubey, Manoj Tiwari and others for entering the Air Traffic Control (ATC) room at Deoghar airport to seek clearance for their chartered flight.

"How is criminal trespass committed here? Was there any ingredients of Section 441 [criminal trespass] of the IPC like an intention to intimidate, insult or injure involved in their actions? How were they endangering the lives of others? Section 336 of IPC would have applied if they had taken off in the aircraft," Justice A.S. Oka, heading a Bench including Justice Manmohan, asked senior counsel appearing for the State government.

"Whether an offence is made out under the Aircraft Act or not, we will leave that question open," Justice Oka orally said, reserving the case for judgment.

The Jharkhand counsel said the ATC was a prohibited area.

HC adjourns cases on Gyanvapi survey**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The Allahabad High Court on Wednesday adjourned hearing in multiple petitions, seeking a survey of the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi.

During his recent visit, President Dissanayake said he assured Prime Minister Narendra Modi that "Sri Lanka will not permit its territory to be used in any manner inimical to the security of India as well as towards regional stability".

Briefing the media soon after, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said Mr. Dissanayake's statement could have a bearing on Sri Lanka's clearance for foreign vessels. Further, speaking at an event in New Delhi, Foreign Minister Vijay Herath said the Sri Lankan government had appointed a committee to review the moratorium.

Following his first state visit abroad to India, Mr. Dissanayake is scheduled to travel to Beijing next month.

After India visit, Dissanayake discusses maritime research and development with China**Meera Srinivasan**
COLOMBO

Anura Kumara Dissanayake

A day after returning from India following a three-day visit, Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake discussed Chinese development partnership, investments and a possible resumption of maritime research with a visiting member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

In a meeting with Qin Boyong, vice-chairperson of the National Committee of the CPPCC, held on Wednesday, Mr. Dissanayake expressed "gratitude to the Chinese government for its support during debt restructuring as well as in the face of the economic crisis", his office said.

Mr. Dissanayake "emphasised the continued need for China's support in the future," the Presidential Media Division said in a statement that outlined discussions on unfinished

Chinese projects and potential investments.

Ms. Qin stated that there are "plans to restart maritime research activities, which were temporarily halted for various reasons, along with initiating relevant projects", the President's office said. The statement assumes significance, with Sri Lanka's one-year moratorium on

research vessels – imposed by Colombo after New Delhi raised concern over Chinese research vessels calling at Sri Lankan ports – expiring soon.

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The Hindu and Naruvi Hospitals present webinar on treatment of UTIs**The Hindu Bureau**
CHENNAI

The Hindu, in collaboration with Naruvi Hospitals, has launched a 15-part webinar series on the theme "Prevent illness, promote wellness".

The first webinar, scheduled from 11.30 a.m. on Sunday, will focus on "Recurrent urinary tract infection (UTI) in women – management and prevention".

The speakers include Nitin Kekre, consultant urologist at Vedanayagam Hospitals, Coimbatore, who will speak on the definition, clinical presentation, and evaluation of UTI.

at NU Hospitals, Bengaluru, will provide insights on "UTIs in special situations such as pregnancy and menopause".

The session will be moderated by Ramya Kannan, Health Editor, *The Hindu*.

To participate, register at newsht.live/HIIHUIE or scan the QR code. The free webinar is part of a public interest initiative, "Healthy India, Happy India", which was launched at Naruvi Hospital in Vellore on December 7 with the aim of fostering a culture of awareness, prevention, and wellness.

a budget of ₹2,000 crore, the CCTNS has become key to the implementation of the three new criminal laws rolled out on July 1.

The system has past and current crime records, including details of an accused, charge-sheeted persons, convicts, habitual offender, proclaimed offender, and others. The police can also search the database for missing persons, unidentified persons, unidentified bodies, and stolen vehicles involved in crime incidents.

The platform can generate analytical reports regarding criminal cases, property cases, and crime statistics at the police station level.

The National Crime Records Bureau has made 23

functional modifications in the existing CCTNS application for the three criminal laws – the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita that replaces the Indian Penal Code, 1860; the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam that replaces the Indian Evidence Act, 1872; and the Bharatiya Na-garik Suraksha Sanhita that replaces the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.

The changes include seeking permission of senior officers before making arrests in certain cases; providing information of arrest to relatives or friends, designated police officer and display of arrest information; serving of summons; provision to send daily diary reports to the magistrate on a fortnightly basis; forensic in-

vestigation in all cases punishable with imprisonment for more than seven years; mandatory videography of the crime scene and forensic evidence collection; biological samples to be collected on request of any police officer; police to inform progress of the investigation to the victim within 90 days; and new timelines under the new laws.

The scope of the CCTNS has been enhanced over the years to integrate the police data with other pillars of the criminal justice system namely courts, prisons, prosecution, forensics and finger prints, and accordingly a new system called the Integrated Criminal Justice System (ICJS) has been developed.

CM YK

Our reverence for Ambedkar is absolute, says PM

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday strongly defended Union Home Minister Amit Shah against the charges levelled by the Congress that Mr. Shah had insulted Constitution-framer B.R. Ambedkar in his speech in the Rajya Sabha. "The rotten ecosystem of the Congress and its malicious lies cannot hide its misdeeds," Mr. Modi said.

"They [the Opposition] are clearly stung and stunned by the facts he [Mr. Shah] presented, which is why they are now indulging in theatrics. Sadly, for them, people know the truth," Mr. Modi said in a series of posts on the social media platform X.

"When it comes to Dr. Ambedkar, our respect and reverence is absolute," Mr. Modi said.

He said the people of India had seen time and again how one party, led by one dynasty [in a reference to the Nehru-Gandhi family], had indulged in "every possible dirty trick" to obliterate Ambedkar's legacy and "humiliate the Scheduled Caste (SC)/Schedule Tribe (ST) communities".

Mr. Modi said the list of the Congress's sins against Ambedkar included having him defeated in elections not once but twice, Jawaharlal Nehru campaigning against him and making his loss a prestige issue, denying him a Bharat Ratna, and not allowing his portrait a pride of place in the Central Hall of Parliament.

Slams Congress

"The Congress can try as much as they want but they can't deny that the worst massacres against SC/ST communities have happened under its regimes. For years, they sat in power but did nothing substantive to empower the SC and ST communities," Mr. Modi said.

He added that it was due



Narendra Modi

to Ambedkar that "we are what we are", even as he listed a series of measures taken by his government to implement Ambedkar's vision and accord respect to the iconic personality.

Ambedkar's vision

He said his government had worked tirelessly to fulfil Ambedkar's vision over the past decade.

"Take any sector – be it removing 25 crore people from poverty, strengthening the SC/ST Act, our government's flagship programmes such as Swachh Bharat, PM Awas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, Ujjwala Yojana and more, each of them has touched the lives of the poor and marginalised. Our government has worked to develop Panchteerth, the five iconic places associated with Dr. Ambedkar," Mr. Modi said.

Mr. Modi said there had been a pending issue involving land for the "Chaitanya Bhoomi", where Ambedkar was cremated. "Not only did our government resolve the issue, I have gone to pray there as well," he said.

"We have also developed 26 Alipur Road in Delhi, where Dr. Ambedkar spent his last years. The house where he lived in London has also been acquired by the government," Mr. Modi said.

Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha witnessed protests by the Congress and other Opposition parties over Mr. Shah's alleged insult of Ambedkar, resulting in both the Houses being adjourned.

Parliament stalled over Shah's Ambedkar remarks

Both Houses failed to function as the Opposition collectively demanded an apology from the Home Minister for his remarks in Rajya Sabha; Congress leads INDIA bloc's protest on the issue

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Both Houses of Parliament failed to function on Wednesday amid protests by the Opposition over remarks made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on B.R. Ambedkar in the Rajya Sabha a day earlier. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the Opposition was misleading the country by selectively quoting Mr. Shah's comments.

Targeting the Congress, Mr. Shah, in his 90-minute reply to the debate on "Glorious journey of 75 years of the Constitution of India", said it had become a "fashion" for the party to chant Dr. Ambedkar's name. "It has become a fashion to say 'Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar'. If they had taken God's name so many times, they would have got a place in heaven," Mr. Shah had said on Tuesday.

The Congress led a protest of the INDIA bloc parties in the morning. Standing between the new Parliament building and



Loud protests: Opposition MPs protest holding posters of Ambedkar, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

the old one, MPs holding aloft posters of Dr. Ambedkar raised slogans of "Jai Bhim" and demanded an apology from Mr. Shah for insulting the architect of the Constitution. The Trinamool Congress was conspicuous by its absence at the Opposition protest.

They [BJP] always said they would change the Constitution. They are against the Constitution, against Ambedkar ji, his ideology. Their entire work is to finish Ambedkar ji's contribution," Mr. Gandhi told presspersons after the protests outside Parliament.

The mood at the protest was carried over to both the Houses.

In the Rajya Sabha, immediately after the customary laying down of papers, the Opposition was on its seats raising slogans. Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said he had the honour and privilege to be a Member of Parliament and the Council of Ministers when Dr. Ambedkar was honoured with Bharat Ratna. His entreaties to bring order in the House went unheeded as the Opposition continued raising "Jai Bhim" slogans forcing adjournment till 2 p.m.

When the House reassembled at 2 p.m., Mr. Rijiju rose to defend Mr. Shah, and accused the Congress of misleading the country by using only a part of Mr. Shah's remarks. At this, Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge repeated Mr. Shah's remark, and said it only showed the Minister's disrespect towards the architect of the Constitution. The Trinamool staged a walkout. The party's Rajya Sabha leader, Derek O'Brien, submitted a privilege notice against Mr. Shah.

Leader of the House J.P. Nadda rejected Mr. Kharge's plea, and alleged it was the Congress that had disrespected Dr. Ambedkar during his lifetime, due to which he had resigned from the Union Cabinet. This led to an uproar as Mr. Kharge again rose to counter Mr. Nadda and Mr. Dhankhar to adjourn the House for the day.

The Lok Sabha was adjourned till 2 p.m. within minutes of its convening amid loud protests from Opposition MPs. Speaker Om Birla's efforts to run the Question Hour did not yield results.

When the House reconvened, similar scenes were witnessed, forcing BJP MP P.C. Mohan to adjourn the House for the day.

Congress 'twisting' my comments, will seek legal options, says Minister

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday accused the Congress of twisting his comments in the Rajya Sabha with regard to Constitution-framer B.R. Ambedkar, attributing it to "the way that the BJP had exposed how the Congress was anti-Ambedkar, anti-Constitution and anti-reservation."

At a press conference at the BJP's headquarters here, Mr. Shah, flanked by his Cabinet colleagues J.P. Nadda, Kiren Rijiju, Answini Vaishnav and Piyush Goyal, said the BJP would look into the possibility of exploring legal options against the Congress for twisting his statement.

Mr. Shah said that in his speech he had revealed how the Congress was "anti-Ambedkar, anti-Constitu-

tional and anti-reservation" and the Opposition party had, by splicing an 11-second footage from this speech, tried to misrepresent what he had said. "The Congress has done this even in the past, and even Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statements have been distorted to mislead the people," he said.

He said the Congress had insulted V.D. Savarkar and blew to smitethereens

Constitutional values by imposing Emergency. Asked about Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's demand for his resignation, Mr. Shah said he had expected better from Mr. Kharge who belonged to a category for whom Ambedkar had devoted his life, but the Congress leader was acting under pressure of Rahul Gandhi to join the "malicious" campaign.

Shah should either step down or PM should sack him, says Congress chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Wednesday that if Prime Minister Narendra Modi holds any respect for B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution, he should remove Amit Shah from his Cabinet if the Home Minister did not resign on his own.

The Congress stepped up its attack against Mr. Shah's comment on Ambedkar with the party's State units taking out protest marches and gheraoing the Raj Bhavans across the country to build pressure on the Modi government.

Trinamool Congress supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) chief and Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin, Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav and Left leaders also criticised the Home Minister.

Replies to the debate on the Constitution in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, Mr. Shah had said that it had become a "fashion to keep repeating Ambedkar's name but if the Opposition had taken God's name as



Mallikarjun Kharge

many times, they would have got a place in heaven".

Mr. Kharge said he should apologise to the nation for the "insult", and said that the Home Minister's comment reflects the mindset of *Manusmriti*.

"We want Amit Shah to quit his post and, if he doesn't, I want to tell the Prime Minister that if he has even a little respect for Babasaheb, he should dismiss Amit Shah from his post before midnight," Mr. Kharge said. "If there is no resignation, there will be protests all over the country. Babasaheb Ambedkar ji belongs to everyone because he used to talk about every person of society, including the Dalits, the oppressed and the deprived. He had sympathy for eve-

BJP's P.P. Chaudhary to lead panel on simultaneous polls

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government has announced a 31-member Joint Committee of Parliament to examine the two Bills that seek to put in place a mechanism to hold simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies.

The committee will have 21 members from the Lok Sabha and the remaining 10 from the Rajya Sabha.

According to the terms of reference, it has to submit the report "on the first day of the last week of the next session" of Parliament which will be the Budget Session.

Prominent members

Prominent members from the Bharatiya Janata Party's P. P. Chaudhary, Anurag Thakur, Bansuri Swaraj, Bhartruhari Mahtab and Sambit Patra, Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Manish Tewari and Sukhdeo Bhagat, the Trinamool Congress's Kalyan Banerjee, the Nationalist Congress Party's Supriya Sule, the Samajwadi Party's Dharmendra Yadav and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's (DMK) T.M. Selvaganapathi.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will be part of the panel.

Mr. Chaudhary, who has been a Minister of State for Law and Justice, will head the joint committee that will examine the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws Amendment Bill, which seeks to align elections in the Union Territories of Puducherry, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir with the Lok Sabha election.

Allies find place

From BJP allies, Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde and Telugu Desam Party's G. M. Harish Balayogi have been nominated. Most political parties have given the name of their nominees from the Rajya Sabha as well. The Congress's Ranadeep Surjewala and the DMK's P. Wilson are likely to find a place on the committee.

Modi-led panel meets to select next NHRC chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A high-power committee led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi met on Wednesday to select the next Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

Both Leaders of the Opposition (LoPs), Mallikarjun Kharge in the Rajya Sabha and Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha, attended the meeting in which they were supposed to have given the name of retired former Chief Justices of High Courts to fill up the posts of other members of the NHRC lying vacant. They include Justices S. Muralidhar, Akil Kureshi and former Supreme Court judge Justice V. Ramasubramanian.

Informed sources said the two LoPs were likely to submit a dissent note on the selection process as the shortlisted names were not shared with them in advance.

Office of the Additional Chief Engineer (Project) PHED Bharatpur E-mail :- aceproj.bha.phed@rajasthan.gov.in			
Notice Inviting Bid No. 02/2024-25			
On behalf of the Governor or Rajasthan, online tender are hereby invited from eligible bidders for the following works of water supply projects as per criteria mentioned in the detailed NIT/Tender document available on website : http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in & http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in Tender are to be submitted online in electronic format on website http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in with 27.01.2025 last date of submission.			
NIT No.	Name of Project	Estimated Cost	SPPP UBN No.
02/24-25	Water Supply Scheme of 190 villages of Rajakhera & Dholpur Block of District Dholpur from Lift Irrigation cum Drinking Water Project for providing FHTCs including 10-year O&M	Rs. 205.20 Crores	PHE2425 WL0B07095
(Surendra Sharma) DIPR/C/13115/2024 Additional Chief Engineer (Project), PHED Bharatpur			

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PHED, REGION AJMER PHONE NO. 0145-2624748 Email:-aceregionajmer@gmail.com			
No.F/Ar./MP/2024-2025/11667-11720 Dated : 16.12.2024			
NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR WORKS			
Bids for the work for Augmentation of Urban Water Supply Project Kekri and Sarwar including 5 years O&M after 1 DLP under AMRUT 2.0 (NIT No.07/2024-25; Estimated Cost Rs.1314.58 Lacs) are invited from interested bidders up to 13.01.2025 Other particulars of the Bid may be visited on the procurement portal http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in and http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in of the state.			
UBN No. PHE2425WL0B07191 NIB No. PHE2425A3389			
(Ram Chandra Rar) Additional Chief Engineer, PHED, Region Ajmer			
DIPR/C/13147/2024			

Office of the Additional Chief Engineer (Project) PHED Bharatpur E-mail:- aceproj.bha.phed@rajasthan.gov.in			
Notice Inviting Bid No. 03/09/2024-25			
On behalf of the Governor or Rajasthan, online tender are hereby invited from eligible bidders for the following works of water supply projects as per criteria mentioned in the detailed NIT/Tender document available on website : http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in & http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in Tender are to be submitted online in electronic format on website http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in with 10.03.2025 last date of submission.			
NIT No.	Name of Project	Estimated Cost	SPPP UBN No.
03/24-25	Work for Construction of Water Treatment Plants, CWRs & CMWPs Near WTPs Clear Water transmission main From WTP various IPSS, Laying of Rising mains to different ESRs, Construction of ESRs, Distribution system in villages, providing FHTCs including all Allied works under Jal Jeevan Mission with 10 years O&M including		

IN BRIEF



Cong. leader dies during 'Raj Bhavan Chalo' stir in Assam

An Assam Congress leader died on Wednesday after police fired tear gas shells at protesters during a "Raj Bhavan Chalo" programme in Guwahati. Mridul Islam (in photo), an advocate by profession, was the secretary of the Assam Congress's legal cell. He collapsed after the shelling and died at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital later. "Mridul Islam did not die. The Himanta Biswa Sarma government murdered him through a planned crackdown on peaceful protesters. We have declared him the first martyr of our war against the corrupt BJP-led government," State Congress president Bhupen Kumar Borah told presspersons.

Bhutan's royal honour conferred on Arun Kapur

Indian educationist Arun Kapur, who set up schools in India, Bhutan and Oman, has been conferred the 'Bura Marp' (red scarf) and 'Patang' (ceremonial sword) by Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel at the 117th Bhutanese National Day celebrations in Thimphu's Changlimithang stadium on Tuesday. The honour is rarely given to non-Bhutanese residents and comes with the honorific 'Dasho' title, otherwise used for senior officials. In 2019, Mr. Kapur was awarded the 'Druk Thuksey' for his work in setting up the Royal Academy school, and in developing the Bhutan Baccalaureate educational system.

Shutdown in Jammu's Katra over ropeway to Vaishno Devi

A shutdown was observed in Reasi's Katra by local shopkeepers on Wednesday to oppose a ropeway that will connect Tarakot Marg to Sanji Chhat, along the 12-kilometre steep track of the Vaishno Devi shrine, in the Jammu region. "The board [running the shrine] is out to snatch the bread and butter of over 60,000 families. From hoteliers to shopkeepers, from pony operators to labourers and transporters, all have come out against the ropeway project," Bhupinder Singh Jamwal, president of the Vaishno Devi Trek Mazdoor Union, said. BJP leader Jugal Kishore Sharma criticised the government for "failing to resolve the issue by the December 15 deadline".

BJP worker in U.P. allegedly threatens Muslim shopkeepers

A BJP worker in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad courted controversy when she was allegedly seen threatening Muslim shopkeepers against selling meat in the area, which is considered to be dominated by the Hindus. In a viral video, Sunita Sharma is seen holding a microphone on a road where she warns Muslim shopkeepers to refrain from selling meat or other non-vegetarian items on Tuesdays in Hindu-dominated areas, with supporters chanting slogans such as 'Jai Shri Ram'. She threatened to organise demonstrations against renting out shops to Muslims. Opposition parties, including the Congress, demanded action against the BJP activist's rhetoric.

Formulate policy to manage sacred groves, SC tells govt.

Union Environment Ministry asked to develop plan for nationwide survey of groves, which are traditionally safeguarded by local communities, for its ecological value and cultural significance

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to create a comprehensive policy for the management of sacred groves across the country.

Sacred groves are patches of trees traditionally protected by local communities for their religious and cultural significance. They also contribute to the conservation of the local biodiversity. These small forests are commonly found in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra. The recommendation by a Special Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai, S.V.N. Bhatti and Sandeep Mehta was based on a petition highlighting the vanishing groves of Rajasthan.

Significant move
The court's suggestion to the Centre to frame a policy is significant as the Centre has usually maintained that the management



Save biodiversity: These small forests are commonly found in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra. THULASI KAKKAT

of wildlife and its habitat is primarily the responsibility of the States. The Centre had noted that the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, empowered States for declaration of any private or community land, as a community reserve, for protecting fauna, flora and traditional or cultural conservation values and practices.

However, the judgment aligned the preservation of sacred groves with the cultural and traditional rights of entire communities, while asking the Ministry of Environment, Forest

and Climate Change to spearhead the efforts to protect these precious sources of biodiversity. The Ministry was asked to develop a plan for a nationwide survey of sacred groves. The court said the survey must identify the area and extent of the groves. It said the boundaries of the groves have to be clearly marked but left flexible to accommodate future growth of the forests. It said the Centre should provide instructions against the reduction of the groves.

Justice Mehta reminded

"Sacred groves have immense ecological value. Sacred groves should be identified and protected as community reserves to ensure their preservation against unauthorised land use changes," he observed.

the Centre that the National Forest Policy of 1988, backed by the top court's interventions through the T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad batch of cases, encouraged communities with customary rights to improve these forest patches on which they depend for their needs.

Village's efforts

The judgment narrated the story of Piplantri village in Rajasthan, where barren land was transformed to lush green groves due to the efforts of the people. "Piplantri village shows how a community-driven initiative came to effectively address social, ecological and environmental challenges in a cohesive manner," Justice Mehta underscored.

"Sacred groves have immense ecological value. Sacred groves should be identified and protected as community reserves to ensure their preservation against unauthorised land use changes," he observed.

India's official entry *Laapataa Ladies* out of Oscars race

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Laapataa Ladies, India's official entry in the best international feature category of the 97th Academy Awards, is out of the Oscars race.



A scene from the movie *Laapataa Ladies*.

Dahomey (Senegal), and *How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies* (Thailand).

Titled *Lost Ladies* in English, Kiran Rao's film is a gently subversive feminist drama which is set in rural India in the early 2000s. Sneha Desai wrote the screenplay and dialogues of *Laapataa Ladies*, based on a story by Biplob Goswami. Divyanidhi Sharma penned additional dialogues.

Laapataa Ladies follows two brides who go to the wrong marital homes after their wedding. It stars Nitanshi Goel and Pratibha Ranta as the brides Phool and Jaya, respectively, with Sparsh Srivastav playing a groom in search of his wife.

The other contenders are *Touch* (Iceland), *Kneecap* (Ireland), *Vermiglio* (Italy), *Flow* (Latvia), *Armand* (Norway), *From Ground Zero* (Palestine),

2 airlines oppose plan for reduced night flying time for pilots

Jagruti Chandra
NEW DELHI



IndiGo, Air India have also rejected the proposal to raise weekly rest hours for pilots.

plemented from June 1. But these were put on hold on March 26 following stiff opposition from airlines.

Subsequently, in April, the regulator asked airlines to inform the timeline for implementation they were comfortable with.

The airlines have submitted their replies nine months later.

IndiGo has shunned the DGCA's suggestion to raise the definition of night flying from flying between midnight and 5 a.m. by an hour to include flying till 6 a.m. in a letter from its COO, Isidro Porecuras, to the DGCA on December 4.

The Hindu has reviewed a copy of this letter.

Bangladesh HC cancels death for ULFA chief

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

A High Court in Bangladesh on Wednesday granted relief to the United Liberation Front of Assam's self-exiled chief, Paresh Baruah, commuting his death penalty to a life sentence.

The verdict was given by Justices Mustafa Zaman and Nasreen Akhtar of the High Court division of the Bangladesh Supreme Court, in what is known as the "ten trucks arms haul" case of 2004.

The ULFA chief was sentenced to death in 2014, at a time when Bangladesh was cracking down on extremism and militancy across the country.

On April 1, 2004, 10 trucks filled with arms and ammunition were apprehended at the State-run jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Ltd., even as the weapons were being offloaded from two trawlers. It was alleged that the weapons were meant for insurgent groups active in India's northeastern States.

Gagan Gill, Easterine Kire to get Sahitya Akademi awards

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Hindi poet Gagan Gill and English writer Easterine Kire are among the 21 recipients of the annual Sahitya Akademi Awards, the organisation announced on Wednesday.

Recommended by jury members in 21 languages, the awards recognise works in different categories.

Ms. Gill was selected for her book on poetry *Main Jab Tak Aai Bahar*, Ms. Kire made it to the coveted list for her novel *Spirit Nights*. The winning list includes eight poetry books, three novels, two short stories, three essays, three works of literary criticism, one play and one research.

Sohan Kaul will receive the award for her Kashmiri novel *Psychiatric Ward*, while Paul Kaur has been selected for her Punjabi book on poetry *Sun Gunvanta Sun Budhivanta: Itihasnama Punjab*.

The recipients of award in poetry include K. Jayaraman (Malayalam), Haobam Satyabati Devi (Manipuri), Dileep Jhaveri (Gujarati), Sameer Tanti (Assamese), Mukut Maniraj (Rajasthan) and Dipak Kumar Sharma (Sanskrit).

Aron Raja also made it to the winning list in the novels genre for his fiction book *Swrni Thakhai* in Bodo. Yuva Baral's *Chhichimira* (Nepali) and Hundraj Balwanji's *Purzo* (Sindhi) were the picks in the short stories section.

Mukesh Thali (Konkani), Mahendra Malangia (Maithili) and Baishnab Charan Samai (Odia) will receive the award for their essays, while A.R. Venkatachalapathy (Tamil) was recognised for his research, and Maheshwar Sorn for his play *Seched Sawnta Ren Andha Manmi* (Santali).

SC mulls tree census with Forest Survey of India's help

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday proposed a tree census to be conducted by the Tree Authority in the national capital by employing the Forest Survey of India (FSI).

A Bench of Justices A.S. Oka and Manmohan also highlighted the need for a supervisory authority over Tree Officers under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994.

Justice Oka said Tree Officers should not be allowed to give indiscriminate permissions to fell trees.

"There should be an expert committee to vet the felling orders of Tree Officers and to see if the trees can be saved. The committee could also supervise the tree census," Justice Oka observed.

Additional Solicitor-General Aishwarya Bhati said both the FSI and the Forest Research Institute were equipped to conduct the tree census.

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

N	F	S	P	T	P			
PARLEY	USE	HAIL						
ZAL	NE	UD						
DIABOLICAL	MAGI							
CONFAB	UPPRISING							
AGAINST	THEGRAIN							
R	ISER							
COMMANDER	REWTER							
UNION	NR							

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Rama's saranagati principle

Surrendering to the Lord is the best way to achieve life's true mission, which is to reach God. Fuelled by desire or affection (towards family members), the ordinary man fails to focus on the ultimate goal. However, scriptures remind one of the efficacy of *saranagati*, said Damal S Perundevi in a discourse.

True to his principles, Rama never failed to accept those who surrendered to Him. When Vibhishana sought asylum with Rama, the latter's counsellors had a suspicion that he was his brother Ravana's spy. However, Rama conducts a lesson on dharma by informing the gathering, "The man who is resolute in his adherence to dharma should protect, even at the cost of his own life, the fugitive from the enemy ranks who throws himself on his mercy, whether he does it in abject distress or from pride."

Rama not only offered *saranagati* to Vibhishana, but he also followed his own advice, when He Himself surrendered to the lord of the ocean, seeking a pathway to Lanka and rescue Sita. However, when, even after three days, the ocean king failed to appear, a wrathful Rama asked Lakshmana to fetch his bow and arrows, vowing to render the ocean dry. Immediately, the lord of the ocean appeared and said, "Rama, the sea creatures are under my care and I cannot fail to protect them." Rama appreciated his steadfast stand. The lord of the water further resolved the issue by pointing out that Nala, who was at the seashore was under a strange curse, whereby anything he cast into the water would float. The army of apes quickly gathered rocks and stones and brought them to Nala who threw them into the water, and a bridge took shape, for the army to cross.

CROSSWORD

14360

(set by Crescent)

- To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/ijpTn>
- SCAN TO PLAY
- 1 About to install a bar in tent by the beach (6)
16 Large number from district switching sides (6)
19 Obey cops to withdraw from complicated situation (10)
21 Deviant king departing in jet (4)
23 Reportedly extra power and position in activity on the side (6)
24 Gondola's front scratched from punting on river meandering (8)
26 Sad tale does upset (8)
27 Watch the heart (6)
Down
1 Stake in front of a fish shop (6)
2 Each behind counter essentially filling welcome drink (5,3)
3 Capable of plotting (2,2)
4 Managed to fire rifle (7)
5 Friendly bears one's perhaps writing about in one's book (10)
6 Bend over wide opening (6)
7 Strange action involving money Earl inherited (4,4)
13 Chicken's cry as acted out (7-3)
15 Shocking crime, heart

IN BRIEF



Cybercrime portal saved ₹3,431 crore, Lok Sabha told

The national cybercrime reporting portal has helped save more than ₹3,431 crore through the resolution of 9,94 lakh complaints, Minister of State for Food and Consumer Affairs B L Verma informed Parliament. In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Mr. Verma highlighted the portal's effectiveness in addressing financial cybercrimes. Ministry of Home Affairs has issued advisories to all States and Union Territories to publicise the portal and its toll-free helpline number 1930. PTI

Indian economy likely to grow at 6.6% in FY26: Ind-Ra

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) projected the Indian economy to grow at 6.6% in 2025-26, up from 6.4% in the current financial year. Ind-Ra believes investments will be a key growth driver for the Indian economy in FY26. The Indian economy has experienced a cyclical growth slowdown in the past three quarters, which it expects to reverse from the December quarter. Ind-Ra expects retail inflation in FY26 to average at 4.4%, lower than the FY25 forecast of 4.9%. PTI

Powergrid board gives nod to raise ₹4,250 crore via bonds

State-owned Power Grid Corporation of India said its board approved a proposal to raise up to ₹4,250 crore through bond issue on a private placement basis. "Committee of Directors for Bonds approved raising of bonds as unsecured, non-convertible, non-cumulative, redeemable, taxable, Powergrid Bonds - LXXX (80th) Issue up to ₹4,250 crore on private placement basis," it said. The base issue size is ₹1,000 crore with a greenshoe option of ₹3,250 crore. PTI

Zomato's Goyal, DMart's Damani top Hurun's list of self-made entrepreneurs

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Avenue Supermarkets Ltd. (DMart) promoter Radhakrishnan Damani, Zomato founder Deepinder Goyal and Swiggy's Sriharsha Majeja and Nandan Reddy have secured the top three positions respectively in the second edition of IDFC First Private Banking and Hurun India's 'India's top 200 self-made entrepreneurs of the millennia 2024' which was released on Wednesday.

In the face of emerging challenges from quick-commerce, Mr. Damani grew his company's valuation by 44% to ₹3.4 lakh crore while Zomato and Swiggy saw their valuation growing up by 190% and 52% respectively to ₹2.52 lakh crore and ₹1.01 lakh crore. Kaivalya Vohra, 21, and Audit Palicha, 22, co-founders of Zepto, were the youngest self-made entrepreneurs with their valuation more than doubling to ₹41,000 crore.

Happiest Minds Founder Ashok Soota, 81, was the eldest in the list of self-made entrepreneurs.

Among the 19 women on the list, Falguni Nayar of Nykaa leads as the highest-ranked woman, breaking into the top 10 with a 30% valuation gain.

Ghazal Alagh (36) of MamaEarth has become the youngest woman entrepreneur, with her company's valuation increasing 55% to ₹15,500 crore.

As many as 56 founders representing 32 companies were added to this year's list.

Net direct tax collections rise 16.5%

Corporate taxes, after factoring in refunds, grew just 8.6% to ₹7.43 lakh crore while non-corporate taxes rose at a much faster pace of 22.5% to ₹7.97 lakh crore; Securities Transaction Tax receipts jumped a sharp 85.5% to over ₹40,100 crore

Vikas Dhoot

NEW DELHI

With a little over three months left in 2024-25, India's net direct tax collections were up 16.5%, crossing ₹15.82 lakh crore by December 17, with non-corporate taxes leading the growth.

Net corporate tax receipts were up just 8.6% to close to ₹7.43 lakh crore, while net collections from non-corporate taxes rose at almost thrice the pace at 22.5% to ₹7.97 lakh crore, surpassing the corporate receipts. At the same juncture of last year, corporate taxes accounted for more



Back in hand: Refunds rose 42.5% by December 17 to nearly ₹3.39 lakh crore, with corporate tax refunds surging 70.3% and non-corporate taxpayers seeing a relatively lower 19.8% uptick in refunds.

Data shared by the Central Board of Direct Taxes on Wednesday showed that gross tax receipts had grown 20.3% so far this year to cross ₹19.21 lakh crore, with corporate taxes rising 16.9% and non-corporate

receipts up 22%. With stock market volumes holding up despite some tumult in valuations in recent months, receipts from the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) were up a sharp 85.5% to over ₹40,100 crore.

Refunds were up 42.5% by December 17 to nearly ₹3.39 lakh crore, with corporate tax refunds surging 70.3% and non-corporate taxpayers seeing a relatively lower 19.8% uptick in refunds. Advance tax collections had risen 20.9% to over ₹7.56 lakh crore from ₹6.25 lakh crore a year ago, but a similar pattern emerged on this front with corporate taxes growing

16.7%, less than half the 35% increase in non-corporate receipts. In 2023-24, net direct tax revenues had risen 17.7% to ₹19.58 lakh crore, with Personal Income Tax (PIT) share rising to 53.3% from 50.06% in the previous year. Recently, the government stopped sharing data with the PIT nomenclature, calling the category non-corporate taxes instead.

Other taxes, that include Equalization Levy, Fringe Benefit Tax, Wealth Tax, Banking Cash Transaction Tax, Hotel Receipt Tax, Interest Tax, Expenditure Tax, Estate Duty and Gift Tax, rose a mere 5.9% from a year ago.

Vishal Mega Mart, One MobiKwik list at premium

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Retailer Vishal Mega Mart Ltd. and payment aggregator One MobiKwik Ltd. listed at a premium on the BSE on Wednesday.

Vishal Mega Mart Ltd. listed at ₹110 a share, a 41% premium over the issue price of ₹78 apiece. The share closed at ₹111.95, up 43.5% over the issue price.

One MobiKwik Ltd. listed at a premium of 58.5% at ₹442.25 apiece. The share closed at ₹530.3, or 90% over the issue price.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	WEDNESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	80,182	-0.62
US Dollar	84.94	-0.03
Gold	79,100	-0.25
Brent oil	74.05	1.85

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2457.40	-30.20
Adani Ports	1210.05	-21.85
Apollo Hosp.	7237.40	-18.65
Asian Paints	2345.45	-10.55
Axis Bank	1122.25	-14.00
Bajaj Auto	8956.75	61.75
Bajaj FinServ	1630.75	-12.40
Bajaj Finance	7074.45	-78.35
Bharti Airtel	1601.90	-13.40
BPCL	288.30	-4.70
Britannia Ind.	4782.65	5.90
Cipla	1472.40	21.55
Coal India	395.80	-7.10
Dr Reddys Lab.	1275.40	-27.75
Eicher Motors	4749.85	-7.20
Grimson	2594.15	-5.55
HCL Tech.	1960.35	9.75
HFDC Bank	1810.70	-22.55
HFDC Life	624.55	-2.20
Hero MotoCorp	4389.45	-25.65
Hindalco	633.00	-6.45
Hindu Unilever	2359.20	-4.05
ICICI Bank	1314.15	-19.60
IndusInd Bank	965.20	-10.45
Infosys	1979.15	2.55
ITC	470.50	0.95
JSW Steel	946.85	-20.00
Kotak Bank	1780.00	-4.05
L&T	3758.15	-49.05
M&M	3051.20	9.70
Maruti Suzuki	11004.25	-106.10
NestleIndia	2188.00	-14.90
NTPC	341.75	-7.30
ONGC	244.15	-3.25
PowerGrid Corp.	321.55	-8.25
Reliance Ind.	1253.25	7.95
SBI Life	1398.00	-11.70
State Bank	838.15	-12.40
Shriram Finance Ltd.	2931.40	-45.50
Sun Pharma	1801.05	12.00
TataConsumerProduct	909.35	-4.45
Tata Motors	755.70	-24.05
Tata Steel	144.46	-1.22
TCS	4347.85	19.35
Tech Mahindra	1778.90	8.15
Titan	3401.90	-4.20
Trent Ltd.	711.75	172.10
UltraTech Cement	1173.95	-11.00
Wipro	312.60	3.75

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on December 18		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	84.75	85.07
Euro	88.99	89.33
British Pound	107.77	108.18
Japanese Yen (100)	55.18	55.39
Chinese Yuan	11.63	11.68
Swiss Franc	94.81	95.17
Singapore Dollar	62.74	62.99
Canadian Dollar	59.17	59.40
Malaysian Ringgit	18.95	19.04
Australian Dollar	53.51	53.72

Source: Indian Bank

northern state of Bihar, bought 18-carat jewellery for her daughter's wedding instead of 22-carat.

Indians traditionally prefer jewellery made in 22-carat gold, which contains 91.7% pure gold, while 18-carat gold contains 75% pure gold and 25% other metals. The price of 18-carat gold is nearly a fifth lower than that of 22-carat gold. "Lower prices and greater durability are making 18-carat jewellery increasingly popular," said Surendra Mehta, secretary, India Bullion and Jewellers Association.

Buyers are also switching to lower carat jewellery to reduce costs, jewellers said. Guddi Devi, a teacher from Jamalpur in the



22% so far this year, after rising 15% in 2023.

Most Indian buyers prefer traditional jewellery, but now they want it crafted in lightweight designs to fit their budgets, said Bachhraj Bamalwa, partner at jewellery retailer Nemai

chand Bamalwa & Sons.

"Recognising this preference, we are stocking more lightweight jewellery sets while scaling down our inventory of heavier designs," Mr. Bamalwa said. Advances in manufacturing technology have enabled jewellery makers to craft traditional designs in lighter weights, said Sachin Jain, CEO of the World Gold Council's Indian operations.

Buyers are also switching to lower carat jewellery to reduce costs, jewellers said. Guddi Devi, a teacher from Jamalpur in the

state of Bihar, bought 18-carat jewellery for her daughter's wedding instead of 22-carat.

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myTVS enters quick com segment for distribution of auto parts, lubricants

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI



G. Srinivasa Raghavan

try's largest digital catalogue of parts and lubricants, featuring eight million stock-keeping units (SKUs) for both commercial vehicles and passenger cars. myTVS aims to connect 50,000 garages and retailers across the country by 2025.

BRUSSELS

Georgia's outgoing President urges EU to pressure pro-Russia govt.



Georgia's outgoing President Salome Zourabichvili urged the EU to pressure the pro-Russia government for new elections amid police crackdowns on protests. Tens of thousands have protested against the suspension of EU accession talks, criticising the government's increasing authoritarianism and violence against demonstrators. AP

LONDON

British court allows seizure of over \$2.5 million from Andrew Tate



A British court has authorised police to seize over £2 million (\$2.5 million) from Andrew and Tristan Tate for unpaid taxes on £21 million in revenue from their online businesses. The court deemed their financial activities a "straightforward cheat" of tax authorities amid ongoing legal troubles in Romania. AP

TEHRAN

Iranian lawmakers seek amends to Bill on stricter hijab penalty



Iranian lawmakers have requested amendments to a Bill imposing stricter penalties on women who refuse to wear the mandatory hijab. The Bill, approved by Parliament, has sparked debate following protests against the dress code. Vice President Shahram Dabiri has requested to hold off on sending the Bill for approval. AP

LATAKIA

HTS says it will dissolve armed wing, integrate into national forces



The military chief of Syria's Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Murhab Abu Qasra, known by his nom de guerre Abu Hassan al-Hamawi, announced plans to dissolve the group's armed wing and integrate into the national forces, rejecting federalism. He also demanded the lifting of the group's terrorist designation. AP

Arms control is a thing of the past: Russia's top General

Decreased emphasis on arms control is due to the waning trust with West, says Valery Gerasimov; he accuses U.S. of undermining key treaties; says Moscow intends to strengthen ties with China

Reuters
MOSCOW

Russia now views arms control over the vast nuclear arsenals that were built up during the Cold War to be a thing of the past due to the lack of trust between Moscow and the West, Russia's top general said on Wednesday.

Russia and the United States, by far the biggest nuclear powers, have both expressed regret about the disintegration of the tangle of arms control treaties which sought to slow the arms race and reduce the risk of nuclear war.

Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov accused the United States of stoking conflicts across the world and sinking key Cold War arms control treaties. He said Russia, in response, would develop ties with China, India, Iran, North Korea and Venezuela.

"On the whole, the topic of arms control remains in the past, since a return to a minimum level of trust is impossible today due to the double standards of



Changing stance: President Vladimir Putin and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov during a meeting of the Russian Defence Ministry Board at the National Defence Control Centre in Moscow. AP

the West," Mr. Gerasimov was quoted as saying by the Defence Ministry.

"Without trust, it is impossible to create an effective mechanism for mutual control," he said. "Many countries have begun to think about adequate response measures."

The United States, which casts Russia and China as the biggest nation-state threats to the West, blames Russia for the collapse of agreements such as the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Mr. Gerasimov said that

The United States formally withdrew from the INF Treaty in 2019, citing Russian violations which Moscow denied. The United States withdrew from the ABM treaty in 2002.

President Vladimir Putin in 2023 suspended Russian participation in the New START treaty that limits both sides' strategic nuclear weapons, blaming U.S. support for Ukraine. However, Moscow has kept to the warhead, missile and bomber limits imposed by the agreement - as has the United States.

Mr. Gerasimov said that the deployment of U.S. missiles in Europe and Asia was stoking "a strategic offensive arms race", with a build-up of U.S. forces in the Philippines of particular concern to Russia.

He said Russia had seen increased activity by the U.S.-led NATO military alliance near Russia's borders.

After Ukraine struck Russian territory last month with long-range missiles supplied by the United States, the U.S. had become a direct participant in the conflict in Ukraine, the general added.

'Suspect in killing of senior Russian General held'

Associated Press
MOSCOW

Russia's security service said on Wednesday that it has detained a suspect in the killing of a senior General in Moscow.

The suspect was described as an Uzbek citizen recruited by Ukrainian intelligence services.

Lt. Gen. Igor Kirillov was killed on Tuesday by a bomb hidden in a scooter outside his apartment building in Moscow, a day after Ukraine's security service levelled criminal charges against him. His assistant also died in the attack. A Ukrainian official said the service carried out the attack.

Israeli strikes kill at least 12 Palestinians in shelter

Agence France-Presse

GAZA STRIP

Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes on Monday across the territory killed at least 12 people, the majority displaced Palestinians taking shelter in a house in the north.

More than 14 months into the Israel-Hamas war, the violence raged on even as the United States expressed "cautious optimism" about the prospects of reaching a ceasefire in Gaza.

Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that 10 Palestinians were killed when an Israeli strike at dawn hit a house in northern Gaza's Beit Lahiya, where several dis-



Palestinian houses stand badly damaged during the ongoing Israeli military operation in Beit Lahiya, Gaza, on Wednesday. REUTERS

placed families had sought refuge.

Elsewhere in northern Gaza, Mr. Bassal said a child was killed and several others wounded in a strike that hit a house in Jabalia, where Israeli forces have focused their operations.

Overnight, a tent in an

Israeli-designated safe zone in the southern Gaza Strip was hit, killing one Palestinian, according to the civil defence spokesperson.

Parties to long-stalled ceasefire talks said a deal could be secured soon to halt the fighting.

Pakistan postpones polio vaccination drive

Press Trust of India

QUETTA

Authorities on Monday launched the final nationwide polio vaccination campaign for the year, aiming to protect 45 million children.

According to the World Health Organisation, Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan remain the only two countries where the potentially fatal, paralysing

virus has not been eradicated.

Anwarul Haq of the National Emergency Operation Centre for Polio Eradication, said the polio vaccination campaign in Balochistan was delayed until December 30 for "better preparedness".

However, other health and government officials

said the campaign in Balochistan was postponed after health workers refused to join it and demanded that the government stop plans to privatise state-run hospitals where they work. Representatives of health workers have also urged the government not to employ unqualified workers to carry out the campaign.

Trump jokes Canada becoming the 51st U.S. State 'a great idea'

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump said on Wednesday it would be "a great idea" for Canada to become the 51st U.S. State, teasing on social media that "many Canadians" welcome the idea, as Ottawa is wracked by a political crisis.

"Many Canadians want Canada to become the 51st State," Mr. Trump posted on Truth Social. "They

would save massively on taxes and military protection. I think it is a great idea. 51st State!!!" he added.

The post is not the first time Mr. Trump has publicly mused at the idea, a joke that some have found in bad taste, particularly following the shock resignation of Canada's Deputy Prime Minister on Monday.

However, a recent poll indicated that 13% of Canadians favour the idea of Statehood.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL PWD TENDER NOTICE

1st Corrigendum to e-N.I.B. No. 02 of 2024-2025 of The Superintending Engineer & Project Director, Project Implementation Unit-I, circulated vide This office Memo No. 290-R/PIU-I, Dated: 27.11.2024 for the work "Construction of bridge over river Muriganga including approaches to connect Kachheria Sagar Island with Kadwip in the district of South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, through 2 km long bridge, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Contract." Tender ID: WBPWD_774881_1. Pre Bid Meeting: 05.02.2025 at 2.00 PM, Bid Submission Start Date: 20/02/2025 at 3.00 PM, Bid submission closing date (online): 10/03/2025 upto 3.00 P.M. Details of N.I.T and Tender documents may be downloaded from : <http://wbttenders.gov.in> Sd/- SE & PD, PIU-I, PWRD, GOVT. OF W.B., ICA- T23388(5)/2024

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कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, सा.नि.वि. वृत्त चूर्ण

क्रमांक :-1886 दिनांक :-16.12.2024

इच्छुक निविदादाताओं से जिला चूर्ण में आर.यू.वी. का निर्माण कार्य (मय पौर्ण वर्ष के दोष निवारण व सुधार अवधि) कुल एक अर.यू.वी. कार्य है और अनुमति लाभ गर्हण रु. 397.15 लाख की अंत लाभ निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। कार्य के निविदा प्रपत्र दिनांक 07.01.2025 सारे 96.00 कोड तक अनिलालिङ अपलोड करना आवश्यक होगा। उक्त निविदा से सम्बन्धित विवरण राज्य सरकार के प्रोविडरमेंट पोर्टल <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> व विभागीय वेबसाइट <http://pwwd.rajasthan.gov.in> पर देखे जा सकते हैं। एन.आई.डी. नं. :- PWD2425WSOB12253

DIPR/C/13129/2024

अधीक्षण अभियन्ता सा.नि.वि. वृत्त चूर्ण

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER WATER RESOURCES ZONE, JAIPUR

Sinchai Bhawan, J.L.N. Marg, Malviya Nagar, Jaipur

E-mail-acejpr.wri@gmail.com

No.-F(352)/ACE/JPR/Accnts/2024-25/105 Date: 14.12.2024

e-NIB No.- 11/2024-25

On behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan, bids are invited from eligible bidders for the work of Flood Protection work of Drains of Bandiya village and Muhami village with Causeway Tehsil Ajmer. Estimated value is Rs. 450.00 Lac. Last date of submission of Bid is 01/01/2025. Detailed Bid & Bid document can be seen on & downloaded from official website (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> & <http://sppp.raj.nic.in>)

UBIN No.: WRD2425WSOB1366 NIB Code No.: WRD2425A0369

Additional Chief Engineer WRD, Zone Jaipur

DIPR/C/13093/2024

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT BUILDINGS (C&M) CIRCLE, TRICHY-1.

e-TENDER NOTICE No.10/ 2024-25 / SE / B / C&M) / C / TRY-1/ Dated: 17.12.2024

PRE QUALIFICATION APPLICATION TENDER / ITEM WISE RATE TENDER (TWO COVER SYSTEM)

FORM OF CONTRACT : LUMPSUM

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, e-tenders are invited by the Superintending Engineer, PWD., Buildings (C & M) Circle, Trichy-1 from the eligible registered contractors of PWD for the following work.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Approximate value of work Rs.in lakhs	Amount of EMD (in Rs.)	Period of Completion	Eligible Class of Contractor
1	Construction of Grand Library and Intellectual Centre at Trichy in Trichy District.	Rs.17552.81	Rs.87,87,000/-	18 Months	Class IA (As per revised class)

1. For Tender documents Visit <https://nttenders.gov.in>

2. Tender documents available at Website: From : 27.12.2024 to 30.01.2025 up to 3.00 P.M

3. Last Date and Time for submission of tender documents through online: 30.01.2025 upto 3.00 P.M

4. Date and Time of opening of the e-tender: 31.01.2025, 3.30 P.M on wards.

DIPR/5536/TENDER/2024

Superintending Engineer, P.W.D. Buildings (C&M) Circle, Trichy-1.

Xi, wife visit Macao to mark 25 years of its return to Chinese rule

Associated Press
MACAO

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday began a three-day visit to Macao to mark the 25th anniversary of the casino city's return to Chinese rule.

Mr. Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, were welcomed at the airport by a lavish ceremony with lion and dragon dances. Mr. Xi told repor-

ters that Macao, a former Portuguese colony of 6,87,000 people, is "the pearl in the motherland's palm".

Like Hong Kong, Beijing has ruled Macao under the "one country, two systems" principle that allows the cities to retain their own legal and economic systems. Macao is the only city in China where casino gambling is legal.

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD (A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

49, East Wing , 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan, Race Course Road, Bengaluru – 560 001.

Phone No. 080-2265383, email: cdce2@kiadb.in, Website: www.kiadb.in

Date: 18.12.2024

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR PROVIDING

DEJA VU

Ashwin joins Dhoni & Kumble in retiring midway through Oz series



A sense of *deja vu* accompanied R. Ashwin's retirement from international cricket as it reminded the cricket fraternity of the days when M.S. Dhoni and Anil Kumble, just like the spinner, exited the scene in the middle of a series against Australia. Dhoni retired from red-ball cricket in 2014, while Kumble stepped away in 2008.

ACCOLADES APLENTY

ICC and BCCI praise Ashwin on a glorious career



The ICC and BCCI have lauded Ashwin, who has announced his retirement. "A magician with the ball and an astute thinker of the game. An international career to be proud of," ICC chief Jay Shah posted on X. Ashwin's contributions to Indian cricket are nothing short of exceptional, the BCCI said in a release.

RICH HAUL

Ashwin exits as top wicket-taker in World Test Championship



R. Ashwin, who bid goodbye to international cricket on Wednesday, was the first in World Test Championship (WTC) history to take 100 wickets. He achieved the milestone in March, 2022. Ashwin tops the overall list too with 195 scalps from 41 Tests followed by Australian off-spinner Nathan Lyon (190 from 46).

SOUVENIR

Cummins and Lyon present signed Australia jersey to Ashwin



Skipper Pat Cummins and top Australia spinner Nathan Lyon on Wednesday presented a signed Australian jersey to R. Ashwin as he bid adieu to international cricket. "Well done mate, thank you, you have been great," Cummins said while giving the jersey to the talisman Indian spinner.



I've always admired how you approached the game with your mind and heart in perfect sync. From perfecting the carrom ball to contributing crucial runs, you always found a way to win

SACHIN TENDULKAR

Spinning into cricketing folklore

Master craftsman Ashwin will be known as much for his wily bowling as the

765
wickets he took on the international stage

TEST BOWLING CHART

	M	Inns	Wkts
Muralitharan	133	230	800
Warne	145	273	708
Anderson	188	350	704
Kumble	132	236	619
Broad	167	309	604
McGrath	124	243	563
Ashwin	106	200	537

ASHWIN'S TEST BOWLING RECORD

	Matches	Innings	Wickets	BBI	Average	5WI/10WM
	106	200	537	7/59	24.0	37/8

THREE-FIGURE KNOCKS		
103 vs West Indies, Mumbai (2011)		
124 vs West Indies, Kolkata (2013)		
113 vs West Indies, North Sound (2016)		
118 vs West Indies, Gros Islet (2016)		
106 vs England, Chennai (2021)		
113 vs Bangladesh, Chennai (2024)		

ASHWIN'S BOWLING RECORD (TESTS)

	M	Inns	Wkts	BBI	BBM	Avg	SR	5WI/10WM
Overall	106	200	537	7/59	13/140	24.00	50.7	37/8
Home	65	127	383	7/59	13/140	21.57	46.0	29/6
Away	40	71	150	7/71	12/131	30.55	63.1	8/2
Neutral*	1	2	4	2/17	4/45	11.25	37.5	0/0

*WTC final vs New Zealand in England, 2021

BY OPPONENT

	M	Inns	Wkts	BBI	BBM	Avg	SR	5WI/10WM
Australia	23	43	115	7/103	12/198	28.58	63.2	7/1
England	24	45	114	6/55	12/167	27.72	55.9	8/1
New Zealand	12	23	75	7/59	13/140	18.53	39.2	6/3
West Indies	13	25	75	7/71	12/131	20.48	42.1	6/1
Sri Lanka	11	21	62	6/46	10/160	21.93	43.9	3/1
South Africa	14	26	57	7/66	12/98	22.28	53.0	5/1
Bangladesh	8	15	34	6/88	6/117	24.35	47.1	2/0
Afghanistan	1	2	5	4/27	5/59	11.80	23.6	0/0

ASHWIN IN WHITE-BALL FORMATS

	M	Inns	Wkts	BB	BBM	Avg	Econ	4W
ODIs	116	114	156	4/25	33.20	4.93	1	
T20Is	65	65	72	4/8	23.22	6.90	2	

THE GREATEST INDIAN OFF-SPINNER

Your journey has been nothing short of extraordinary! With over 700 international wickets and a keen cricketing mind, you are one of the finest to have graced the field

ANIL KUMBLE



Glad you were part of the international game for so long with such excellence. You taught, you educated and you entertained

IAN BISHOP



Well done for being the flag-bearer of Indian spin for more than a decade

HARBHAJAN SINGH

For me, you are the greatest Indian off-spinner, true Test all-rounder and a modern-day great

MOHD. KAIF

ANIL KUMBLE

I have had a lot of fun and created a lot of memories

Sports Bureau

BRISBANE

A legend bowed out of the game in a matter-of-fact way at the Gabba here on Wednesday evening. Shortly after the third Test concluded in a draw, R. Ashwin accompanied his skipper Rohit Sharma to the press-conference hall. Soon the ace spinner made it obvious why he was there as he announced his retirement from international cricket with immediate effect.

His statement: I really didn't want to make this about myself. Honestly, I think it would have been better if (Jasprit) Bumrah was here or Akash Deep

was here. But Rohit (Sharma) is unfortunate to have me along his side. I am not going to take too much of your time. This will be my last day as an Indian cricketer in all formats at the international level.

I do feel there is a bit of punch left in me as a cricketer but I would like to expose and probably showcase that in club-level cricket but this will be the last day.

I have had a lot of fun. I must say I have created a lot of memories alongside Rohit and several of my other teammates even though I have lost some of them over the last few years. We are the last bunch of OGs. Obviously

there are a lot of people to thank but I would be failing in my duties if I don't thank the BCCI and fellow teammates. I want to name a few of them. All the coaches who have been part of the journey, most importantly Rohit, Virat (Kohli), Ajinkya (Rahane), (Cheteshwar) Pujara, who have taken those splendid catches to give me the number of wickets I have managed to get over the years.

Also a big thank you to the Australian cricket team who have been very fierce competitors. I have enjoyed my time playing against them. I think it is already getting long. I wouldn't be taking any questions. But it is truly a

very emotional moment. I don't think I am in a position where I would be answering the questions in the right way. So please pardon me for that. Once again, that is my time. Thanks for being the journalists that you have been, writing good things and, of course, writing nasty things on occasions.

That's a relationship I think we would maintain forever and I hope the cricketers to come in the future will also get the same amount of love.

Once again, thank you all and yeah, see you all soon. As a cricketer, I'll just stop and I might go on to be involved with the game because this is a game that has given me everything.



Convinced Ashwin to stay till the pink-ball Test, says Rohit

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
BRISBANE

It was a Wednesday of speculations while the rains drenched the Gabba. Talk of a retirement hung in the air and once R. Ashwin made it clear that he is bowing out of the international game, all speculations instantaneously died.

Rohit Sharma had an inkling since the first Test at Perth. Facing the media after Ashwin left the press-conference hall, the Indian skipper said: "Some decisions are very personal and I don't think too many questions should be asked. If a player has a choice, he has to be given that choice and somebody like Ashwin, who has been there for so many years, is allowed to make these decisions and we as teammates have to respect it. He was very sure about what he wanted to do."

Speaking about the genesis of this decision, Rohit elaborated: "I heard this when I came to Perth. There are obviously a lot of things that went behind it. Ash will be able to answer that. But he understands what the team is thinking, the kind of combinations we are thinking about. When I arrived in Perth, this was the chat we had. I somehow convinced him to stay for that pink-ball Test (at Adelaide), and then after, you know, it just happened that he felt that if 'I am not needed right time to say goodbye'."

Asked about his personal memories specific to Ashwin, Rohit said: "I have played cricket with Ash since under-17. He was an opener then. And then a few years later, I am hearing news from Tamil Nadu that R. Ashwin is taking five wickets, seven wickets. I played him as a batter and then suddenly he turned out to be a bowler who's taking five-for. Then in international cricket we met again and had a long journey together since 2010."

Rohit turned effusive while describing Ashwin's contribution to Indian cricket: "He is a true match winner that India has ever seen. Whenever there was a crisis, we looked at Ash and he was there to deliver for us. His record speaks for itself. He has been a servant of Indian cricket and has not left any stone unturned."

CM YK

IN BRIEF



It's time somebody from NCA talked about Shami: Rohit

Rohit Sharma stressed that the last word on Mohammed Shami's return to the Indian team, belongs to the physios at the NCA in Bengaluru. "About Shami, it's time somebody from the NCA talks. Those guys are the ones who need to give us an update. I understand he is playing a lot of cricket back home, but there have been some complaints about his knee. The last thing you want is a player coming here and then pulling out in the middle of the game," the Indian skipper said.



Salman, Saim take Pakistan past South Africa in first ODI

Career-best performances by all-rounder Salman Agha and a hundred by opener Saim Ayub led Pakistan to a three-wicket win over South Africa in the first ODI here on Tuesday. Salman's unbeaten 82 from 90 balls finished off Pakistan's well-paced chase with three balls remaining. That came after Salman took 4/32 with his part-time off-spin and started the Proteas' gradual decline to a below-par 239/9.

The scores: South Africa 239/9 in 50 overs (Heinrich Klaasen 86; Salman Agha 4/32) lost to Pakistan 242/7 in 49.3 overs (Saim Ayub 109, Salman 82 not out); **PoM:** Salman.

Bangladesh seals T20I series against the West Indies

Bangladesh defended a modest total of 129 to claim a series-clinching 27-run victory over the West Indies in the second T20 International of a three-match series at the Arnos Vale Stadium in St. Vincent on Tuesday.

The scores: Bangladesh 129/7 in 20 overs (Shamim 35 n.o., Motie 2/25) bt West Indies 102 in 18.3 overs (Chase 32, Akeal Hosein 31, Taskin 3/16, Rishad 2/12, Mahedi 2/20).



Perez leaves Red Bull after a season of struggles

Red Bull announced on Wednesday that Sergio Perez has departed the Formula One team after four seasons. Perez helped the team earn two constructors' titles and completed a drivers' standing one-two with Max Verstappen in 2023. During the 2024 season, Perez and Red Bull signed a contract extension (until 2026). However, his form dropped drastically after that deal.

NATIONAL BADMINTON

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Karnataka will take on Railways in the men's team final on Thursday at the Senior National Badminton Championship being held at the KBA courts here. In the women's summit clash, Gujarat will meet Haryana.

In the semifinals on Wednesday, Karnataka men beat Chhattisgarh 3-1, with S. Bhargav and M. Raghu winning their singles matches and the pair of Nicholas Nathan Raj and Tushar Suveer the doubles.

After D.S. Saneeth lost the first match for the hosts against Rounak Chouhan despite putting

up a commendable fight in the second game, the onus was on Bhargav to get his team back on track. The 23-year-old did just that, beating Yash Yogi in straight games.

From there on, it was smooth sailing for Karnataka, and it would now be eager to make amends for the lost opportunity last edition when it lost to Airports Authority of India in the final.

The other last-four tie saw a blow-out 3-0 win for Railways over RBI, with only the Chirag Sen-Priyanshu Rajawat singles match resembling a close contest. Chirag had quite a task, for Rajawat is No. 34 in the World and has beaten Anders Antonsen (now World No.2) this season.

But the Railways athlete

cracked open Rajawat's tight defence and managed to keep the fleet-footed Gopichand Academy train-



On to the final! Chirag cracked open Rajawat's tight defence in Railways' easy win over RBI; Bhargav set the wheels in motion for Karnataka against Chhattisgarh. K. MURALI KUMAR



The results: Semifinals:
Men: Karnataka bt Chhattisgarh 3-1 (D.S. Saneeth lost to Rounak Chouhan 14-21, 21-18, 21-19; Nicholas Nathan Raj & Tushar Suveer bt Ishan Bhatnagar & Ayush Makhija 20-22, 21-8, 21-19; S. Bhargav bt Yash Yogi 21-8, 21-19; Chirag Sen bt Priyanshu Rajawat 21-18, 21-19; Ayush Shetty bt Kiran George 21-10, 21-12; K. Pruthvi Roy & K. Sai Prateek bt Anjan Buragohain & Ranjan Buragohain 21-17, 21-17). **Women:** Haryana bt Railways 3-0 (Devika Sihag 21-10, 21-15; Unnati Hooda bt Vaidehi Choudhari 21-16, 21-18; Unnati & Anmol Kharb bt Vaidehi & Kanika Kanwal 21-8, 21-11). **Quarterfinals: Men:** Chhattisgarh bt Uttarakhand 3-1; RBI bt Arunachal Pradesh 3-0; Railways bt Rajasthan 3-0; **Women:** Haryana bt Karnataka 3-2; Uttarakhand bt RBI 3-1; Gujarat bt Assam 3-1.

Rain has the final say in Gabba Test; all to play for in the final two matches

Last-wicket stand between Bumrah-Akash plays a big part in India staying afloat; weather gods prevent Australia from having a crack at the tourists

INDIA IN AUS

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
BRISBANE

Awednesday of pouring rain, crumbling wickets and runs, both blitzkrieg and tentative, added some pulsating drama to a contest that finally ended in a draw. The third Test's fifth and final day wound to an early close with damp weather forcing a quick covering of the pitch here at the Gabba.

Pursuing 275 in the second innings for a miraculous triumph, India started cautiously even as Yashasvi Jaiswal and K.L. Rahul were alive to the quick single. Just as the score moved to eight for no loss, dark clouds swept across and the players retreated to the pavilion, never to return again.

Earlier, nursing a lead of 185, keen to force a result and with one eye on the dark skies, Australia stepped out with an aggressive veneer in the second innings. The script was soon torn between quick runs and rapid wickets. Usman Khawaja launched an airy drive and heard his timber rattle while Jasprit Bumrah exulted. The latter then drew an edge from Marnus Labuschagne. Nathan McSweeney chased a wide delivery



Spoilsport: Australian players walk off the field for one final time in the third Test. AFP

from Akash Deep, who also scalped Mitchell Marsh. Travis Head hit a few but he and Steve Smith fell to Mohammed Siraj. Alex Carey and Pat Cummins then swung their bats around as the quest for quick runs continued. Finally a bit after Bumrah induced a miscued shot from Cummins, the latter implemented the declaration at 89 for seven.

In the morning, a gloomy one with clouds billowing around, India resumed

its first innings at the overnight 252 for nine. The visitors' first innings stretched for another four overs. Bumrah was all straight bat and the odd missed sweep.

Akash, meanwhile, seemed eager to press ahead. This trait also meant that he had overstepped a little while countering Head and when Carey whipped the bails, the batter's feet was on the crease and not behind.

Rightly, he was ad-

judged stumped and India finished with 260 but by then the last-wicket pair had added 47 runs, a critical yield that helped India avoid the follow-on and stay afloat in the series.

Just as the decks were cleared for Australia's second innings, match officials and ground authorities instructed the players and the sparse audience to step back as thunderstorms were expected.

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA — 1ST INNINGS

445 in 117.1 overs
INDIA — 1ST INNINGS

Yashasvi Jaiswal c Marsh b Starc 4 (2b, 1x4), K.L. Rahul c Smith b Lyon 84 (139b, 8x4), Shubman Gill c Marsh b Starc 1 (3b), Virat Kohli c Carey b Hazlewood 3 (16b), Rishabh Pant c Carey b Cummins 9 (12b), Rohit Sharma c Carey b Cummins 10 (27b, 2x4), Ravindra Jadeja c Marsh b Cummins 77 (123b, 7x4, 1x6), Nitish Kumar b Cummins 16 (61b, 1x4), Mohammed Siraj c Carey b Starc 1 (11b), Jasprit Bumrah (not out) 10 (38b, 1x6), Akash Deep st. Carey b Head 31 (44b, 2x4, 1x6); Extras (b-8, lb-2, nb-3, w-1); 14; Total (in 78.5 overs): 260.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-11 (Khawaja, 2.4), 2-16 (Labuschagne, 6.1), 3-16 (McSweeney, 7.3), 4-28 (Marsh, 9.5), 5-33 (Smith, 10.6), 6-60 (Head, 14.4), 7-85 (Cummins, 17.1).

Bumrah 8 (7b, 2x4), Marnus Labuschagne c Pant b Bumrah 1 (9b), Mitchell Marsh c Pant b Akash 2 (13b), Travis Head c Pant b Siraj 17 (19b, 2x4), Steve Smith c Pant b Siraj 4 (5b, 1x4), Alex Carey (not out) 20 (20b, 2x4), Pat Cummins c Rahul b Bumrah 22 (10b, 2x4, 2x6), Mitchell Starc (not out) 2 (2b); Extras (b-1, lb-6, nb-2); 9; Total (for seven wkts., decl. in 18 overs): 89.

FALL OF WICKETS
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INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 6-1-18-3, Siraj 7-0-36-2, Akash 5-1-28-2.

INDIA — 2ND INNINGS

Yashasvi Jaiswal (not out) 4 (6b), K.L. Rahul (not out) 4 (7b); Total (for no loss in 2.1 overs): 8.

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Starc 1-1-0-4, Cummins 1-0-4-0.

Match drawn. Five-match series level 1-1.

Player-of-the-Match:

Head.

Fourth Test:

December 26 to 30, Melbourne.

Match starts at 5 a.m. IST.

Skipper Rohit happy to see the batters fight hard

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
BRISBANE

Caught up in the aftermath of R. Ashwin's retirement, it took a while for Rohit Sharma to reflect on the third Test here at the Gabba on Wednesday. The Indian skipper took his time but once he got into the groove, there was no holding back.

After snatching a draw in a rain-marred game, Rohit said: "As a team we don't give up easily. We keep fighting. When we came to bowl in the second innings, we came with the intensity of seeing them (Australia) all out for 60, 70." Rohit did not flinch while holding a mirror to himself: "I have not batted well and there is no harm in accepting that. Sometimes, these numbers can tell you that it's been a

while since I got big runs, but for a person like me, it's about how I feel in my mind and what kind of preparation I am doing."

Lauding Ravindra Jadeja, Rohit said: "He was disappointed with his bowling but that can happen. It's not easy to not play and then suddenly play. He showed his value with the bat. We needed somebody to stitch a partnership and

take the game as deep as possible, Jadeja was there to do that."

Asked about the mini-celebrations in the dressing room after Jasprit Bumrah and Akash Deep helped avoid the follow-on, he replied: "It was a little victory for us. Eventually, we ended up with a draw. We saw two guys fighting for the team and we were really happy."

Cummins admits it was a 'frustrating game'

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
BRISBANE

A gripping but weather-beaten Test that wound to a draw was nearly relegated to the background once R. Ashwin announced his retirement.

Just as stunned cricket writers grappled with their thoughts, Pat Cummins strode into the press-conference hall at the Gabba here on Wednesday evening.

With the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series still very much in the balance at 1-1 after the conclusion of the third Test, the Australian captain stressed that his team has a lot to feel good about this game: "The runs and partnership in the first innings, to score 445, to bowl out India for 260, they were all good signs. I don't think I have ever

played a game with so many (rain) breaks and yeah it was frustrating."

Cummins was also quick to stress that not much should be read into the way Australia batted (89 for seven) in its second outing: "Well I would dismiss that. It was all part of a plan and I was happy to see the way the batters

stepped out. We get a bit of a break now and then we will get to Melbourne."

Queried about Josh Hazlewood's recurring injuries, Cummins said: "It is a bit of a shame and Josh will miss the rest of the series. I am sure Mitch (Marsh) will get a crack as the fourth seamer in the next few games."

It's Karnataka vs Railways men while Gujarat women take on Haryana

NATIONAL BADMINTON

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

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Dynamic duo: Madhura and Fuge were at the forefront of Maharashtra's stunning show. R. RAGU

Maharashtra shows its class

After disappointing results in the early events, the State's archers turn it around and enter the finals of compound men, women and team events

NATIONAL ARCHERY

Y.B. Sarangi
JAMSHEDPUR

Led by Prathmesh Fuge and Madhura Dhamangaonkar, Maharashtra's archers shrugged off their disappointing performances in individual competitions to enter the finals of compound men, women and team events in the National archery championships at the Gopal Maidan here on Wednesday.

Maharashtra, studded with international archers, including World champions Ojas Deotale, Aditi Swami and World Cup gold medallist Fuge, witnessed disheartening moments in the morning as none from the State could reach the semifinals.

However, Maharashtra's archers bounced back later

in the day.

The men's team, comprising Fuge, Sahil Jadhav and Tejbir Singh Jahagirdar, defeated Jharkhand 235-223, Rajasthan 232-230, Haryana 236-229 to set up a title clash with Services.

The women's team, consisting of Madhura, Aditi and Prithika Pradeep, beat Manipur 235-225, Delhi 230-228 and Railways 229-224. It will meet Rajasthan.

Good coordination

Training partners Madhura and Fuge showed good coordination and shot consistently well to eliminate Jharkhand 157-153, Services 159-154 and Rajasthan 159-153 to reach the mixed team final.

They will face the Punjab pair of Parneet Kaur, who survived a scare in the first round of the women's individual elimination phase, edging past Goa's

Anuradha Boruah 140-140 (shoot-off: X-X) by shooting closer to the centre in the tie-breaker, and Uday Kamboj - the finalists in individual events.

Abhishek Sharma displayed his composure as he scored a perfect 150 in succession in the quarterfinals and semifinals on his way to the men's individual final.

The results:

Compound: Semifinals:

Individual: Men: Abhishek Verma (Del) bt Aman Saini (Del)

150-148, Uday Kamboj (Pun) bt

Simranjeet Singh (Rlys) 148-145;

Women: Parneet Kaur (Pun) bt Swati Duhdwal (Raj) 149-144,

Srishti Singh (MP) bt Jasveer Kaur (Rlys) 144-144 (shoot-off 9-9).

Team: Men: Services bt Punjab 234-230, Maharashtra bt Haryana 236-229.

Women: Rajasthan bt Punjab 231-230, Maharashtra bt Railways 229-224; **Mixed:** Maharashtra bt Rajasthan 159-153, Punjab bt Manipur 159-156.

Y.B. Sarangi
JAMSHEDPUR

Nurturing the dream of winning an Olympic medal in Los Angeles 2028, the Olympian archer duo of Deepika Kumari and Atanu Das have roped in former international archer Rahul Banerjee as their coach.

Deepika has competed in four Olympics and Atanu has featured in two, though without any success.

Even though both belong to Kolkata, Atanu understood Rahul's coaching philosophy only recently. "I and Rahul bhai were commentating during the Olympics, when we dis-



New insight: Coach Rahul hopes that his inputs will help Atanu and Deepika. R. RAGU

cussed a few things. I liked his ideas, and we started working (in August). Then Deepika joined," Atanu told *The Hindu* at the National archery championships

here.

"We are approaching the sport with a different mindset. We are doing gap analysis and pushing ourselves against different

challenges. The hunger and dream to win an Olympic medal has not diminished," said Atanu.

Deepika added, "Rahul bhai has identified mistakes which others could not. It's a good start, and I am enjoying it. I could not win an Olympics medal due to my mistakes."

A medallist in elite international events, Rahul, the younger brother of decorated archer Dola Banerjee, could relate to Deepika-Atanu's hunger. "We had similar thoughts. I have won medals almost everywhere except for the Olympics," said Rahul, who runs a fully-equipped facility, DRB

Academy, jointly with Dola, in Kolkata.

"There were multiple pieces of advice. For example, Deepika has this issue of 'let-down' (drawing the bowstring but not being able to complete the shot) during ranking rounds. It leads to hurrying everything to finish within the stipulated time. We have sorted out her 'blinking' issue. Atanu had an issue with his left hand.

"The training prepares them well so that they don't feel the pressure at the Olympics. There was a gap, and I am bridging that gap. This is the first trial of what we have done so far".

NEW DELHI ROUND-UP



Key component: Mukund in action for champion Navy on Wednesday. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

with 12 hand-picked by the team owners and four through an open auction. The organisers insisted two more teams would be announced soon but it looks unlikely with the auction slated for Wednesday evening. Each team will have to include at least two ladies and one each from juniors, senior citizens, government officials and armed forces among the 12 owner picks.

The league will have three competition days – January 4, February 1 and March 1 – with 12 players from each team participating on Individual Stableford Format with the team with the highest cumulative total winning the league, to be played at the Qutab Golf Course, India's first public course. There will also be two golf masterclasses. The winner's purse has been

kept at ₹12 lakh.

Mukund propels Navy to the tennis title

The country's No. 2 singles player S. Mukund played a key role in helping Indian Navy to a 3-0 victory over Army Red in the final of the inter-Services tennis championship at the DLTA Complex on Wednesday.

Mukund won his opening singles match against Sriram Balaji and later partnered Siddhant Bantia to win the doubles against Balaji and Mohit Mayur. Played on a Davis Cup format, best of five matches, with reverse singles to be played if required, Navy made it a straight forward affair by clinching the doubles late in the evening.

The result: Final: Indian Navy bt Army Red 3-0 (S. Mukund bt Sriram Balaji 6-4, 4-6, 6-3; Ishaque Eقبال bt Rishabh Agarwal 6-1, 4-6, 6-4; Mukund & Siddhant 7-6(1)).

Banthia bt Sriram Balaji & Mohit Mayur 2-6, 6-3, 6-1).

Third place: Indian Air Force bt Army Green 2-0 (Sunil Kumar bt Zothan Puia 6-1, 6-1; Ajay Malik bt Manish Ganesh 6-4, 6-1).

Mayank ousts Bushan

Mayank Sharma battled past second seed Bushan Haobam 6-2, 6-7(6), 7-6(1) in the quarterfinals of the seventh Rajesh Patel memorial ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament at the Tennis Vidyalaya in Sector-61 in Gurugram, on Wednesday. In the semifinals, Mayank will play Bhicky Sagolshem, and the other semifinal will be between Parth Aggarwal and Sarthak Suden.

The results (quarterfinals): Parth Aggarwal bt Deep Munim 6-2, 6-2; Sarthak Suden bt Arjun Pandit 7-6(5), 4-6, 7-5; Bhicky Sagolshem bt Samuel Jones 6-2, 2-6, 6-3; Mayank Sharma bt Bushan Haobam 6-2, 6-7(6), 7-6(1).

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

Engineering Department OPEN TENDERS

E-tender on behalf of the president of India acting through Sr. Divisional Engineer (Co-ordination), Divisional Railway Manager (Works), West Central Railway, Jabalpur for the following works: **NIT No.-DRMW-BJP-240-2024 Dated: 16/12/2024, Name of work with location:** Enhancement of Clear Standing Length/ Clear Standing Room of lines at Sigma, Markundi and Barhamuafai stations of Satna-Manikpur Section under Divisional Engineer (North) Jurisdiction. **Approx. cost of the work (Rs.)-51,92,28/-, Earnest money (In Rs.)-1,03,900/-, Completion period-12 months, Last date & Time for submission of tender (Up to 15.00 Hrs. On)-07/01/2025, Tender to be opened at 15:15 Hrs on-07/01/2025. The complete information of the above e-tender is available on website <https://ireps.gov.in> and also placed on notice board of the Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Office, West Central Railway, Jabalpur. Tenders other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against above tenders.**

DRM (Works)/WCR, Jabalpur

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM						
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (BUILDING)						
ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3						
No. CE/TB-VII/193/2023/36						
PRESS NOTICE FOR E-TENDER						
The Addl. Chief Engineer, PWD (Building), Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam re-invites bids from Govt. registered eligible Contractors having experience in similar nature of works for the following work.						
Details of bid may be seen at e-procurement portal www.assamtenders.gov.in						
The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in						
SI. No.	Name of work	Bid security drawn in favour of	Approx value of work	Completion Period	Bid Security 2 % of Bid value for General category, and 1% of Bid value for Reserved category	Cost of Bid
1	Jagannath Community and Skill Centre at Kokrajhar TE under Kokrajhar East LAC (Pkg. No. 110)	E.E. Kokrajhar District & Chirang Dist TBD	Rs. 1,40,73,143.00	12 (Twelve months)	Rs. 2,81,463.00 for General Category and Rs. 1,40,731.00 for Reserved Category	Rs. 2900.00
N.B.: 1. Value of work may vary according to the detail NIT. 2. The Press Notice will form a part of the Bidding Document.						
Addl. Chief Engineer, PWD, Bldg., Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3						
Janansyog /C/5334/ 24/0-Jan-00						

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No. EE/PC-1/TEND/02/2024-25 Date: 18.12.2024

INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT) - 2nd Call

Short Term Tender Notification (Only through GoK KPP Portal)
The Executive Engineer, Project - Central - 1, BBMP, Bengaluru on behalf of the Chief Commissioner, BBMP invites Tenders from eligible contractors registered in BBMP or equivalent registration with CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES / National Highway or any State Govt. Organisations for the following work.

SI. No.	Name of the Work	Approx. amount put to tender (Rs. in lakhs)
1	Construction of Nursery and Primary School at Austin Town, Bengaluru.	187.48
	EMD Amount : Rs. 1,874 lakhs. (Rs. 1.00 lakh through e-Portal & Remaining as specified in the bid document).	

Period of completion : 11 Months.

Calendar of Events: (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from KPP Portal <https://kpp.karnataka.gov.in> from 19.12.2024. (2) Date of submission of tender through online : on or before 17.30 hrs. on 02.01.2025. (3) Last date for receipt of queries : 23.12.2024 upto 17.30 hrs. in the above office. (4) Date of Pre-bid Meeting : 27.12.2024 at 16.00 hrs. in the office of the Chief Engineer, Project-Central, BBMP. (5) Date of opening of Technical Bids : 03.01.2025 at 17.30 hrs. Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours or from KPP Portal <https://kpp.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Project - Central-1

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

No. : Comm-E-auction/2024/123 Date 16.12.2024
उक्त के सदर्भ में विज्ञापन गाड़ियों में एसरलआर और वीपीयू लीजिंग पर विज्ञापन— (OHO) / विज्ञापन के रासाय बैटरी अंपरेटेड कार्ट्स (BCA) और पार्किंग स्टैंड के ठेकें हैं इं-ऑपरेशन आमित्रित की गई हैं। केटलॉग ईरेप्स वेबसाइट पर प्रकाशित किए जा रहे हैं।

1. कार्य का नाम	(1) जोडपुर मंडल के विज्ञापन स्टेशनों पर थोकियिक विज्ञापन के ठेके हैं। (2) जोडपुर मंडल से सचालित गाड़ियों में एसरलआर और वीपीयू लीजिंग स्थानों पर लोज पर माल पारसेल की लोजिंग हैं। (

IN BRIEF



Federer hails 'true legend' as Australia says farewell to Fraser

Australian tennis great Neale Fraser was honoured with a state funeral on Wednesday with Roger Federer among those paying tribute to "a true legend". Fraser, a former world number one and winner of 19 Grand Slam titles during the amateur era, died aged 91 earlier this month. Australian former tennis players Lleyton Hewitt, Todd Woodbridge and John Fitzgerald were among the mourners at a service at Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral.

Kho Kho World Cup to start with India-Pakistan clash

India and Pakistan will clash in the opening match of the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, New Delhi, next month. The competition, which will be held from January 13 to 19, will see the participation of 24 countries, 21 teams making up the men's section and 20 in the women's category. The Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) has roped in actor Salman Khan as brand ambassador for the event. Asked whether there could be hurdles preventing the participation of Pakistan's players, KKFI president Sudhanshu Mittal said: "I am very confident that everything will happen smoothly. Their players have already applied for the visas. Till now, I have not heard anything adverse."

LIVE TELECAST

Zimbabwe vs Afghanistan: 2nd ODI, FanCode, 1 p.m.
South Africa vs Pakistan: 2nd ODI, JioCinema, 5.30 p.m.
India Women vs West Indies Women: 3rd T20I, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 7 p.m.
PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.
West Indies vs Bangladesh: 3rd T20I, FanCode, 5.30 a.m. (Friday)

Bengal advances after breezing past Rajasthan

J&K holds Manipur with a late goal to secure its first point in the final round this season

SANTOSH TROPHY

Sports Bureau
HYDERABAD

Bengal secured a spot in the quarter-final of the 78th Senior National football championship with a 2-0 win over Rajasthan, while Manipur was held to a 1-1 draw by Jammu & Kashmir at the Deccan Arena here on Wednesday.

Bengal, the 32-time champion has nine points from three matches while Manipur has seven.

J&K earned its first point this season in the final round.

Bengal's Rabilal Mandi (45) opened the scoring just moments before the half-time whistle, as he pulled the trigger from afar to plant his snapshot in the bottom corner.

Mandi essayed a splendid cross from the right



Crucial goal: J&K's equaliser hurt Manipur's prospects. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

which was capitalised by Shreshtha (56) to net the second.

In the other match, Manipur, with two wins against defending champion Services (1-0) and Rajasthan (2-1), needed a win

against J & K to make it to the knock-out.

After a strong start, Naoroibam Romen Singh (45+2) put the side in the lead in the first-half injury-time, as he flicked a Shunjanthan Ragui free-kick with his head into the goal.

To the dismay of Manipur, Aakif Javaid scored in injury-time, nodding in a

corner, to level the scores.

The results: Manipur 1 (Naoroibam Romen Singh 47) drew with J&K 1 (Aakif Javaid 91). Bengal 2 (Rabilal Mandi 45, Naro Hari Shreshtha 56) bt Rajasthan 0. Services 3 (Sreyas 15, Kamei 65, Thapa 75) bt Telangana 1 (Yumnam 31).

Singles titles for Ankur and Yashaswini

Sports Bureau

BENGALURU

Ankur Bhattacharjee and Yashaswini Ghorpade claimed the men's and women's singles titles in the UTT National-ranking table tennis championship at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium here on Wednesday.

Ankur recorded a commanding win over Olympian Manav Thakkar in the men's final. Local player Yashaswini edged out Swastika Ghosh in the wo-

men's summit clash.

Ankur claimed a double, winning the Youth boys' under-19 title.

The results:
Finals: Men: Ankur Bhattacharjee (PSPB) bt Manav Thakkar (PSPB) 11-9, 11-6, 11-5, 11-9.

Women: Yashaswini Ghorpade (PSPB) bt Swastika Ghosh (AAI) 11-9, 5-11, 11-2, 4-11, 11-8, 10-12, 11-7.

Under-19 Boys: Ankur bt P.B. Abhinand (TN) 11-6, 11-2, 13-11, 11-4.

Girls: Taneesha Kotecha (Mah) bt Pritha Vartikar (Mah) 11-6, 10-12, 12-14, 11-9, 11-2, 9-11, 11-9.



Happy time: Yashaswini, Ankur and Taneesha with their winnings.

Flintoff to coach son Rocky on Lions tour of Australia

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Ashes hero Andrew Flintoff is to coach his son on next month's England Lions cricket tour of Australia. Rocky Flintoff, 16,

has been included in England's second-string side during a tour that will include two four-day matches against a Cricket Australia XI in Brisbane followed by a 'Test' against Australia-A in Sydney.

Kiran wins 50-metre rifle 3-position gold

NATL SHOOTING

Sports Bureau

Kiran Jadhav beat Olympian Aishwary Pratap Tomar by 2.7 points to clinch the gold in the men's 50-metre rifle 3-position event in the 67th National shooting championship at the Madhya Pradesh Academy in Bhopal on

Wednesday.

Olympic bronze medalist, Swapnil Kusale had topped qualification by equaling the national record of 593 out of 600, and led field till the 40th shot of the 45-shot final.

However, a string of 9s and an 8 pulled him down to the bronze medal.

Niraj Kumar, Nishan Budha, Babu Singh Panwar, Goldi Gurjar and Ro-

hit Kanyan were the others to make the final and placed fourth to eighth in that order.

Adriyan wins

In the junior section, Adriyan Karmakar rose to the gold with a four-point margin over Kushagra Singh Rajawat.

Rundranksh Patil who had missed the men's final with his score of 587, made

the junior final but placed sixth.

The results:

50m rifle 3-position:
Men: 1. Kiran Jadhav 465.8 (590); 2. Aishwary Pratap Tomar 463.1 (592); 3. Swapnil Kusale 451.8 (593).

Junior men:

1. Adriyan Karmakar 462.0 (586); 2. Kushagra Singh Rajawat 458.0 (586); 3. Deependra Singh Shekhawat 445.6 (581).



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Gukesh's impact will be effective with support from corporates

Huge money is being spent by millions of parents on cricket coaching. That is not going to happen in that great numbers in chess. Because somewhere that type of atmosphere has not been created. We need to create a system wherein the top 300-400 youngsters get free coaching, the system being supported by sponsors



PHOTOS: M. KARUNAKARAN, FIDE, PTI & CH. VIJAYA BHASKAR

INTERVIEW

PRAVIN THIPSAY

G. Viswanath

D. Gukesh, just 18, won the World chess championship in Singapore after beating China's Ding Liren in a 14-game contest that went the distance. Gukesh, as predicted by many, got the better of Ding playing a style of chess that was perhaps not his own, according to Grandmaster Pravin Thipsay. Excerpts:

How would you distinguish the two feats of Anand, who won five World titles, and Gukesh?

Anand won the World junior championship title in 1987 when he was 17. He became a Grandmaster in 1988 and then, in 2000, won the World Championship for the first time. Anand had a different journey. But both players are unique in their own way. They have unique styles.

Perhaps Anand's path be traced back to some way in the past, some similar styles, a great attacking master like Alekhine or Bobby Fischer. Gukesh has greater originality, his style is like Karpov's. It was more difficult to be the champion in Anand's time.

The opportunities were less, airfares were very expensive, participating in tournaments abroad was not possible, training was not available, there were no computers, and material was not available.

So, the challenges faced by Anand, or rather our generation, were utterly different from those faced by Gukesh. When Anand became an International Master, he had hardly played 200 games, whereas I think Gukesh must have played 200 games when he was very young.

Anand more or less played an aggressive style, whereas Gukesh's style is more balanced. He is good at defence too.

They were different in originality and creativity. Gukesh is more open to ideas from different parts of the game. He is sort of an expert in more fields in a game than Anand, who is a great natural talent. In that aspect, Gukesh is

not equal, but he has a number of aspects of the game; his defence is superior and he is more or less like a young Karpov.

Anand was already in the top five at the age of 21 or thereabouts, and Gukesh is three years younger. As you see, there are benefits of being young; they have competitive advantages. But even then, all the other youngsters are not emerging up to expectations.

Was 1988 breakthrough year, with Anand becoming the first Indian Grandmaster?

Even before that, winning the World junior title was not great just for India alone. He was the first Asian to win any World championship in chess, so it was a breakthrough for Asia itself. Now we saw two Asians competing for the World championship, for the first time ever.

How would you compare the opponents of Anand and Gukesh for the World championship matches?

Ding is a stronger player than all of Anand's opponents. The top players are stronger today than the ones twenty years back.

When Boris Gelfand played the match against Anand, both were in form. Anand had a particular style, which was very difficult to understand. It is much easier for the opponents to prepare, more challenging to progress today because everybody can hire some players.

In the earlier days if you were having a second, it had to be a powerful player who could teach you. Now you just hire a player with around an ELO rating of 2200, pay him a specific fee and ask him to analyse a specific variation on the engine, and within 30 hours or 40 hours, they give back the data saying that the engine likes this position and this move.

As a result, everybody comes prepared this way, and it's very difficult to guess the opponent's moves. And in almost every game, Gukesh caught Ding in preparation.

There is more exposure, experience and the number of hours spent on chess is more these days. Now, what you need is money to take you to



tournaments, perhaps to purchase this and that material or get authentic coaching and also to travel.

I and Anand had a lot of strategic discussions when he became GM. We were of roughly the same strength. We had a lot of debates and we played a lot of games, particularly in the Spanish Opening. We played several games in which he was better sometimes and I was better sometimes.

Things have become easier, but hard work is more important. Memory has played a more important role because if you study, and if you don't remember the variations, then it's of no use. The weapons have changed from sword or bow and arrows to bombs and guns.

Q: Anand lost the title to Magnus Carlsen in 2013 in Chennai. Was Carlsen a superior player on all counts then?

A: Actually, now I can say that Magnus was a much better player at that time. I was probably biased then because I had seen Anand from childhood and also because Anand had studied Magnus' games really well. Anand was very strong then. But I had not checked his games even in 2012. I think in 2012 he played really badly the entire year. The Gelfand match was also of a very poor quality. I started respecting Carlsen and was ready to look at my views again. Then I found that it was a very one-sided match because Carlsen was the highest rated player in the world in 2010 itself, three years before the fight against Anand. And if one looks at the quality of the

game or the analysis of the game, every time he was able to foresee more than Anand at that time. Even today, I must say that he is the best player in the world.

Carlsen chose not to play this and the previous World championship cycles. He cited a lack of motivation for classical chess. Can this happen to any player, even a top chess player? And has it diminished the World Championship match itself?

In a way, the importance of the World championship has been reduced because Carlsen is still very successful. Whenever he plays in important tournaments, he is able to outclass any player.

Somewhere, it's a question of motivation. And I would say more than that of patience (in classical chess) and lapse in concentration.

But he's very quick and his originality is very great. He has been World No. 1 for 14 years.

And so, how can we expect somebody else to be considered a World champion? Particularly considering Ding's low ranking and Gukesh was probably No. 5. They qualified to play the most important match in the World. But the world is going to be a little sceptical about it. Only a match between two top rated players is generally viewed as the real World championship.

Gukesh said after the win that he respects Ding and that his win doesn't mean that he is the best player in the world.

I agree with Gukesh. Ding is a very strong player and everyone respects his imagination, knowledge, creativity and accuracy, but his blunders are often subject to criticism. Gukesh certainly knows that he is stronger than Ding. When he says 'winning the championship doesn't mean that he is the best player in the world', he could be referring to not Carlsen, but also to others who are higher rated than him.

Can rapid and blitz formats affect classical chess?

Yes, I am afraid that somewhere the society is losing patience. And when

you play in different time controls, and when you have got that excitement of blitz and rapid, then classical games could seem very long and boring.

Some of the players are getting addicted to blitz, not the top players though. I have seen many examples.

Look at cricket. If somebody specialises in one-day cricket, probably they will not be able to play well in Test cricket.

What will Gukesh's win do to Indian chess?

Most of the print media and a lot of TV channels have been covering the match between Gukesh and Ding. (The print media has always been supporting, but the electronic media has stopped covering chess for 10 years).

I think the interest from the public point of view, it's the electronic media that makes a game popular. And that is where I think it's going to have an impact, which is more than what Anand winning the first World championship did.

He won when there was not much electronic media.

The number of online chess players is very large. I think there are already more than 6-7 crore in India. But they are casual players.

But the impact remains. However, this impact doesn't necessarily decide the strength of a country. And here our players are strong enough, because they and their parents have sacrificed everything else in their life.

It doesn't mean that somebody else is going to do the same because the number of our players who have played in tournaments this year is only 36,000, compared to 1,06,000 before lockdown. And the number of women players is less than 10%.

Huge money is being spent by millions of parents on cricket coaching. That is not going to happen in that great numbers in chess. Because somewhere that type of atmosphere has not been created.

We need to create a system wherein the top 300-400 youngsters get free coaching, the system being supported by sponsors, the corporates. Then the 'Gukesh impact' will be really effective. Otherwise, like China (after 2018), things will evaporate.

How scientists are exploring what extraterrestrial life could look like

Advanced forms of life on alien planets could be so strange that they are unrecognisable. As astrobiologists try to detect life off earth, they will need to be creative. One strategy is to measure mineral signatures on the rocky surfaces of exoplanets, since mineral diversity tracks biological evolution

Chris Impey

We have only one example of biology forming in the universe: life on earth. But what if life can form in other ways? How do you look for alien life when you don't know what alien life might look like?

These questions are preoccupying astrobiologists, who are scientists who look for life beyond earth. Astrobiologists have attempted to come up with universal rules that govern the emergence of complex physical and biological systems both on earth and beyond.

I'm an astronomer who has written extensively about astrobiology. Through my research, I've learned that the most abundant form of extraterrestrial life is likely to be microbial, since single cells can form more readily than large organisms. But just in case there's advanced alien life out there, I'm on the international advisory council for the group designing messages to send to those civilisations.

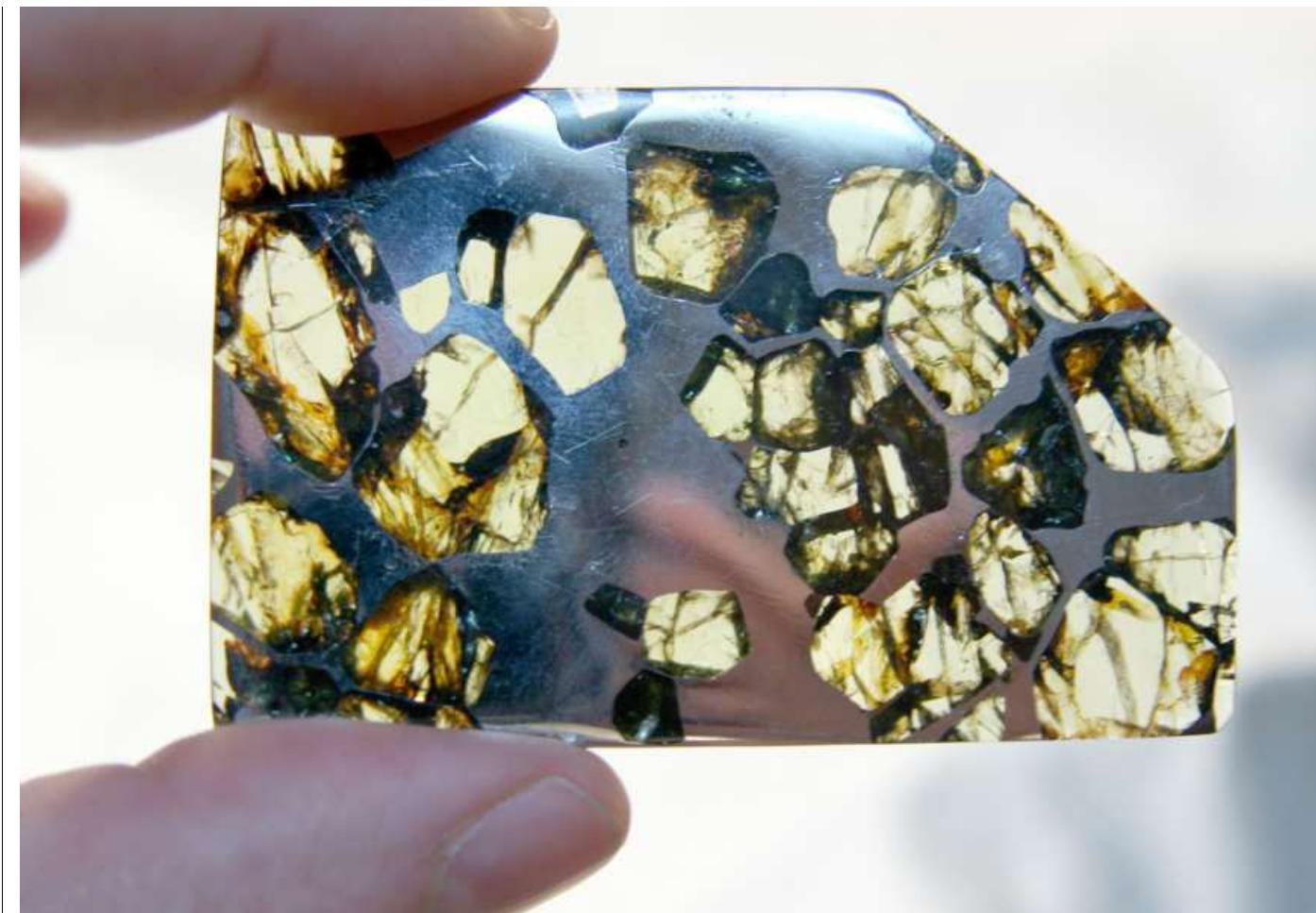
Detecting life beyond earth

Since the first discovery of an exoplanet in 1995, over 5,000 exoplanets, or planets orbiting other stars, have been found. Many of these exoplanets are small and rocky, like earth, and in the habitable zones of their stars. The habitable zone is the range of distances between the surface of a planet and the star it orbits that would allow the planet to have liquid water, and thus support life as we on earth know it.

The sample of exoplanets detected so far projects 300 million potential biological experiments in our galaxy – or 300 million places, including exoplanets and other bodies such as moons, with suitable conditions for biology to arise. The uncertainty for researchers starts with the definition of life. It feels like defining life should be easy, since we know life when we see it, whether it's a flying bird or a microbe moving in a drop of water. But scientists don't agree on a definition, and some think a comprehensive definition might not be possible.

NASA defines life as a "self-sustaining chemical reaction capable of Darwinian evolution." That means organisms with a complex chemical system that evolve by adapting to their environment. Darwinian evolution says that the survival of an organism depends on its fitness in its environment. The evolution of life on earth has progressed over billions of years from single-celled organisms to large animals and other species, including humans. Evolution is the process of change in systems. It can describe how a group of something becomes more complex – or even just different – over time.

Exoplanets are remote and hundreds of millions of times fainter than their parent stars, so studying them is challenging. Astronomers can inspect the atmospheres and surfaces of earth-like exoplanets using a method called spectroscopy to look for chemical signatures of life. Spectroscopy might detect signatures of oxygen in a planet's atmosphere, which microbes called blue-green algae created by photosynthesis on earth several billion years ago, or chlorophyll signatures, which indicate plant life. NASA's



A slice of the Esquel meteorite. This type of meteorite is from the core-mantle boundary of an ancient planetoid that was smacked apart billions of years ago. DOUG BOWMAN

definition of life leads to some important but unanswered questions. Is Darwinian evolution universal? What chemical reactions can lead to biology off earth?

Evolution and complexity

All life on earth, from a fungal spore to a blue whale, evolved from a microbial last common ancestor about 4 billion years ago. The same chemical processes are seen in all living organisms on earth, and those processes might be universal. They also may be radically different elsewhere. In October 2024, a diverse group of scientists gathered to think outside the box on evolution. They wanted to step back and explore what sort of processes created order in the universe – biological or not – to figure out how to study the emergence of life totally unlike life on earth. Two researchers present argued that complex systems of chemicals or minerals, when in environments that allow some configurations to persist better than others, evolve to store larger amounts of information. As time goes by, the system will grow more diverse and complex, gaining the functions needed for survival through a kind of natural selection.

They speculated that there might be a law to describe the evolution of a wide variety of physical systems. Biological evolution through natural selection would be just one example of this broader law. In biology, information refers to the instructions stored in the sequence of nucleotides on a DNA molecule, which collectively make up an organism's genome and dictate what the organism looks like and how it functions. If you define complexity in terms of information theory, natural selection will cause a genome to grow more complex as it stores more information about its environment.

Complexity might be useful in

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measuring the boundary between life and nonlife. However, it's wrong to conclude that animals are more complex than microbes. Biological information increases with genome size, but evolutionary information density drops. Evolutionary information density is the fraction of functional genes within the genome, or the fraction of the total genetic material that expresses fitness for the environment. Organisms that people think of as primitive, such as bacteria, have genomes with high information density and so appear better designed than the genomes of plants or animals. A universal theory of life is still elusive. Such a theory would include the concepts of complexity and information storage, but it would not be tied to DNA or the particular kinds of cells we find in terrestrial biology.

Implications for search for life

Researchers have explored alternatives to terrestrial biochemistry. All known living organisms, from bacteria to humans, contain water, and it is a solvent that is essential for life on earth. A solvent is a liquid medium that facilitates chemical reactions from which life could emerge. But life could potentially emerge from other solvents, too. Astrobiologists William Bains and Sara Seager have explored thousands of molecules that might be associated with life. Plausible solvents include sulfuric acid, ammonia,

liquid carbon dioxide, and even liquid sulphur. Alien life might not be based on carbon, which forms the backbone of all life's essential molecules – at least here on Earth. It might not even need a planet to survive.

Advanced forms of life on alien planets could be so strange that they're unrecognisable. As astrobiologists try to detect life off earth, they'll need to be creative. One strategy is to measure mineral signatures on the rocky surfaces of exoplanets, since mineral diversity tracks terrestrial biological evolution. As life evolved on earth, it used and created minerals for exoskeletons and habitats. The hundred minerals present when life first formed have grown to about 5,000 today. For example, zircons are simple silicate crystals that date back to the time before life started. A zircon found in Australia is the oldest known piece of earth's crust. But other minerals, such as apatite, a complex calcium phosphate mineral, are created by biology. Apatite is a primary ingredient in bones, teeth, and fish scales.

Another strategy to finding life unlike that on earth is to detect evidence of a civilisation, such as artificial lights or the industrial pollutant nitrogen dioxide in the atmosphere. These are examples of traces of intelligent life called technosignatures. It's unclear how and when a first detection of life beyond earth will happen. It might be within the solar system, or by sniffing exoplanet atmospheres, or by detecting artificial radio signals from a distant civilisation. The search is a twisting road, not a straightforward path. And that's for life as we know it – for life as we don't know it, all bets are off.

(Chris Impey is University Distinguished Professor of Astronomy, University of Arizona. This article is republished from The Conversation.)

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Nobody can hear your answers in the void...

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

In 1643, X filled a tall cylindrical container closed at one end with liquid mercury, then turned it upside down on a basin of mercury until the container was fully vertical. The mercury in the container dropped by some height but not further, leaving behind a vacuum in the receptacle. Name X. Hint: One unit of measuring vacuum is named for him.

QUESTION 2

An incandescent light bulb contains a vacuum or an inert gas so that the filament doesn't undergo a chemical reaction called _____ when it is heated to produce light. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 3

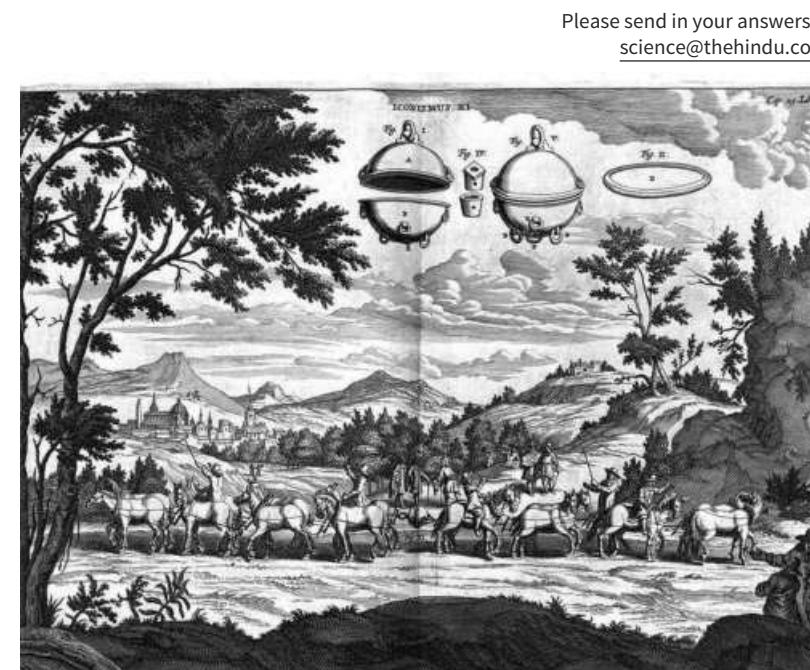
The world's first practical Y consisted of a chamber containing a vacuum, a heated cathode, and an anode. When an alternating current was applied to the circuit, electrons could only flow from the heated electrode to the unheated one. Thus, Y allowed current to flow in only one direction. Name Y.

QUESTION 4

An important part of quantum field theory describes the vacuum of empty space as being full of _____, which are subatomic particles rapidly popping in and out of existence. If these particles didn't exist, the electron's bare charge would be infinite. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 5

While space is mostly empty, it's nowhere a perfect vacuum. It's filled instead with photons – the particles



Visual: Name the two hemispheres at the centre of the famous experiment depicted in this 1657 engraving. When they were latched, had their air pumped out, and sealed, they couldn't be taken apart by multiple horses pulling from either side. PUBLIC DOMAIN

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in



Space One President Masakazu Toyoda announces the failure of the second attempt to launch the Kairos No. 2 rocket on Wednesday. AP

Japan space startup aborts second launch minutes after liftoff

Associated Press

A Japanese space startup said its second attempt to launch a rocket carrying satellites into orbit had been aborted minutes after liftoff Wednesday and destroyed itself, nine months after the company's first launch attempt ended in an explosion.

Space One's Kairos No. 2 rocket lifted off from a coastal site in the mountainous prefecture of Wakayama in central Japan.

The company said it had aborted the flight after concluding that it was unlikely to complete its mission.

"We are very sorry that we could not achieve as far as a final stage of the mission," Space One President Masakazu Toyoda told a news conference Wednesday. "We don't consider this a failure because we are getting valuable data that will help our pursuit toward a next challenge."

He said he hoped to find the cause to address the problems as soon as possible to achieve success next time.

Company executive and space engineer Mamoru Endo said the abnormality in the first-stage engine nozzle or its control system is likely to have caused an unstable flight of the rocket, which started spiraling in midflight and eventually destroyed itself about three minutes after liftoff, using its autonomous safety mechanism.

The rocket, which rose higher than 100 kilometers above ground, entered space

Issues with the first-stage engine nozzle are likely to have caused unstable flight, and the rocket started to spiral. It eventually destroyed itself about three minutes after liftoff

before it was destroyed, officials said.

Space One aims to be Japan's first company to put a satellite into orbit, hoping to boost Japan's lagging space industry with a small rocket for an affordable space transport business.

Wednesday's flight, postponed twice from Saturday because of strong winds, came nine months after a failed debut flight in March, when the rocket was intentionally exploded five seconds after takeoff. The flight was carrying a government satellite that was intended to monitor North Korea's missile launches and other military activities.

Kairos No. 2 rocket was carrying five small satellites, including one from the Taiwanese space agency and several from Japanese startups.

Space One said it had fixed the cause of the debut flight failure, which stemmed from a miscalculation of the rocket's first-stage propulsion.

Japan hopes the company can pave the way for a domestic space industry that competes with the United States.

Tokyo-based Space One was set up in 2018 with investments from major Japanese companies, including Canon Electronics, IHI, Shimizu, and major banks, to commercialise space delivery services at lower costs and regular flights as many as 20 times a year, compared to six currently planned by the government-led space program.

Japan's space development programmes are led by Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, and industry leaders such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and IHI, as they develop two main flagship rockets, the large H3 rocket and the much smaller Epsilon, to cater to the growing satellite transport business.

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