



ASSAM TRAGEDY
Drive to seal rat-hole coal mines begins

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NO CASUALTY REPORTED
Cylinder blast triggers fire at Maha Kumbh

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GAZA CEASEFIRE PHASE 1
Truce takes hold with handover of hostages

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THE HISTORIAN'S LOT
One must note that the past has many layers

One must look at facts & what was dubbed fiction

EDITORIAL » PAGE 6



BLOCKBUSTER
Djokovic sets up a clash with Alcaraz

SPORT » PAGE 17

Of voters' diversity dividend and the BJP's hat-trick lite

N. Sai Charan
CHENNAI

Young India is hankering for a new kind of politics, but neither the BJP nor the Congress fulfils the real aspirations of this India, senior journalist Rajdeep Sardesai said at *The Hindu* Lit for Life festival here on Sunday.

Mr. Sardesai was in conversation with N. Ram, veteran journalist and Director, The Hindu Group Publishing Private Ltd.; Jayanthi Natarajan, former Union Minister; and Varghese K. George at the Lit for Life in Chennai on Sunday. R. RAGU



N. Ram, Director, The Hindu Group; Rajdeep Sardesai, senior journalist; and Jayanthi Natarajan, former Union Minister; with Varghese K. George at the Lit for Life in Chennai on Sunday. R. RAGU

so easy. Last year at this time, after the [consecration of] Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, the general impression was that the 2024 election was a done deal and that the BJP would get more than 400 seats in Lok Sabha. Even though the elections were not a level playing field, particularly the way in which media, agency, and the State power were misused, the party in power didn't get a majority on its own."

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 13
MORE REPORTS ON
» PAGES 10, 11 & 12

Mr. Ram said, "Though the BJP claimed a hat-trick, it was a sort of hat-trick lite, because the party failed to get a majority. The ground has shifted under Prime Minister Modi's feet. They are trying to repair those cracks. We saw that in the Haryana and Maharashtra elections."

The police told the court that the alleged attacker was a Bangladeshi and there was need to probe the motive behind his act.

DETAINED MAN RELEASED
» PAGE 13

The Mumbai police on Sunday arrested a man from Thane in connection with the knife attack on actor Saif Ali Khan.

The police said the suspect, Shariful Islam Shehzada, was a Bangladeshi national who had entered India illegally. He had allegedly broken into Mr. Khan's home on Thursday and attacked him and his staff during a burglary bid.

A Mumbai court remanded Shariful in police custody till January 24 after observing that the police's contention of an "international conspiracy" cannot be ruled out.

The police told the court that the alleged attacker was a Bangladeshi and there was need to probe the motive behind his act.

The police told the court that the alleged attacker was a Bangladeshi and there was need to probe the motive behind his act.

DETAINED MAN RELEASED
» PAGE 13

Saif attack case: suspect held, sent to 5-day custody

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

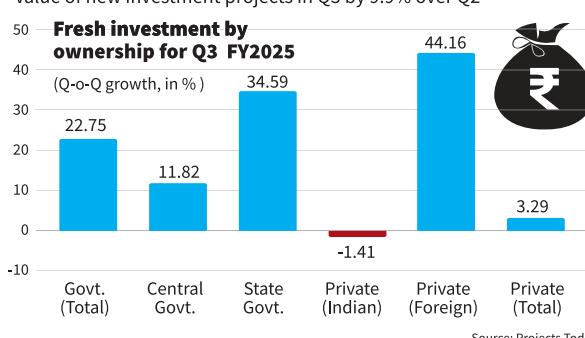
Poor demand hits investments by private sector in Q3

New investments by domestic private players fell 1.4% from Q2 reflecting fears over costs, slow growth; States drive growth in public investments

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Corporate India's capex slips

Government capital spending grows, led by States, to lift overall value of new investment projects in Q3 by 9.9% over Q2



Q2 levels, almost thrice the 11.8% growth in new outlays announced by the Union government.

Domestic investors, however, pulled back fresh investment plans by 1.4% from Q2 to nearly ₹ 6.11

lakh crore in Q3, show data from Projects Today, a firm tracking new and ongoing investment projects in the country since 2000.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 13

IN BRIEF



₹3-lakh cr. aid given to A.P. in six months: Shah

VIJAYAWADA
The Union government had extended financial support of nearly ₹3 lakh crore to Andhra Pradesh since June 2024, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday. » Page 5

SKM plans to hold stir against draft agri policy

NEW DELHI
Both factions of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha have decided to hold joint protests against the Centre's draft National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing as the next stage of their stir. » Page 4

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 5

'Uniquely diverse'
Speaking about the diversity dividend of voters in the country, Mr. Sardesai said that India was uniquely diverse.

"To expect one leader or one party to establish his or her supremacy is not



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CM YK

83 injured in jallikattu in Tamil Nadu

The Hindu Bureau
TIRUCHI

A total of 83 people were injured in the jallikattu organised at Mukkanipatti village in Pudukkottai district and Pallapatti village in Tiruchi district on Sun-

day. A total of 750 bulls were released into the arena, and 315 tamers took part in the event at Pallapatti. Police sources said 60 people were injured, of whom 14 were referred to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Government Hospi-

tal in Tiruchi. At Mukkanipatti, 23 people were hurt.

A total of 586 bulls were released into the arena, and 300 tamers participated in the event. Ten of the injured were referred to Pudukkottai Government Medical College Hospital.

R.G. Kar rape and murder: sentencing of convict today

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

A sessions court in Kolkata will pronounce on Monday the quantum of sentence for the convict in the rape and murder of a doctor at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital.

The Additional District and Sessions Court, Sealdah, on Saturday had pronounced Sanjay Roy, a former civic police volunteer, guilty of rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor.

Judge Anirban Das had convicted Roy under Sections 64, 66, and 103(I) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita and stated that the minimum punishment in the crime will be life imprisonment and maximum will be death sentence.

Meanwhile, the parents of the deceased doctor on Sunday alleged that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) did not investigate the case properly.

Speaking to mediapersons, the parents claimed that if the CBI had properly investigated the case, then several others would have been arrested and convicted. They claimed that the CBI officials had stopped communicating with them and the investigating officer was not present in the court on Saturday.

The parents said they will continue to appeal before the Calcutta High Court and Supreme Court so that the others behind the crime may be booked.

'Will accept verdict'
Meanwhile, Roy's mother said, "If the court decides to hang him to death, I don't have any objection as his crime has been proved in the eye of the law. I will cry alone but accept it."

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DELHI ELECTION

Kejriwal, Parvesh war of words over attack on car

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said the kind of campaign witnessed in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly poll is unprecedented.

"The level of violence, including attempts to assassinate a former CM, was never seen before in Delhi," Mr. Kejriwal said, referring to the attack on his vehicle the previous day.

At a press conference, alongside Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh and Chief Minister Atishi, AAP showed photo and video evidence to pin the attack on members of the BJP with a "criminal history" having close ties with BJP leader Parvesh Sahib Singh, who is Mr. Kejriwal's opponent in the New Delhi constituency.

The BJP leader, in turn, accused AAP of creating a "fake narrative" and said it was being done as Mr. Kejriwal was going to lose the seat by 20,000 votes.

Ms. Atishi alleged that the persons identified in the video were connected to the BJP leader. She also questioned the police and the Election Commission "for not taking suo motu cognisance of the incident".

Sunday snooze for Capital as AAP, BJP tread cautiously

AAP to release manifesto in two to three days, Kejriwal's rallies lined up in 45 constituencies in coming days; Prime Minister to hit the road to campaign for BJP candidates after Republic Day

Nikhil M Babu
NEW DELHI

Barely a fortnight before the Assembly poll, campaigning is yet to gather steam in Delhi with both the Aam Aadmi Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party keeping it down. On Sunday, there were no major public events by heavyweights from both the parties.



Poll call: AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and party MLA Durgesh Pathak addressing a press conference; a cut-out of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the BJP office in New Delhi on Sunday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

While the usual poll frenzy is missing, party insiders from both AAP and the BJP told *The Hindu* that it's part of the strategy to ensure that their campaign does not peak early compared to the other.

New campaigns
An AAP insider said the party has come to know that the BJP will intensify its campaign from January 26, and AAP is waiting to launch a few new campaigns and the party's manifesto around that time.

"During the last 10 days of the 2020 Assembly election, the BJP went ahead with a flurry of events and rallies, and it [BJP] managed to hold more events

as our campaign had peaked early. We don't want that to happen again this time," the source said.

'More interactive drive'
Talking about AAP's campaign in the upcoming days, the source said, "The party will launch a door-to-door campaign, which will be more interactive with the voters than before. Over 250 autorickshaws with LED screens will play showing a 20-minute film on AAP's governance, and town halls with TV channels will be held."

"Kejriwalji will wrap up his personal campaigning in the next two to three

days, and there will be a blitzkrieg of rallies in around 45 to 50 Assembly constituencies in the coming 15 days. He [Mr. Kejriwal] will cover over three Assembly constituencies each day," he said.

AAP is also focusing on hyperlocal meetings this time to help people absorb the message of welfare schemes that people have been receiving under the AAP government.

"This election has been fought very differently by AAP compared to the 2020 Assembly election. We have done about 15,000 meetings in which a woman worker holds a meet-

ing with a group of women. We also did about 30,000 meetings on *revdi pe charcha* [discussion on the freebies]. The announcement of ₹2,100 per month to women has also played in our favour," the source said.

Big-ticket rallies

A BJP leader said the party will get into campaign mode from Monday and streamline canvassing.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and others are expected to hit the streets of Delhi after Republic Day. The big-ticket rallies will be held in the last eight days of campaigning," he said.

Udit Raj turns heat on AAP over poll promise, calls party anti-Dalit

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Udit Raj on Sunday appealed to the Dalit community not to vote for Arvind Kejriwal and the ruling AAP in the Delhi Assembly election as the party is "anti-Dalit".

Mr. Raj, a Dalit leader, said AAP had announced a scheme to provide a monthly honorarium to temple priests and gurdwara granthis but "excluded priests of Valmiki and Ravidas temples".

Demanding their "inclusion" in the scheme, the priests of these tem-

ples will protest against AAP at Jantar Mantar on January 20, he added.

Reacting to the allegations, AAP said, "We are the ones that are turning Ambedkar's dreams into reality. With the 'Mukhyamantri Jai Bhim Yojana', Dalit youth can now dream big."

Kejriwal writes to PM proposing housing for sanitation workers

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday proposed a housing project for retired government employees, particularly sanitation workers, and said he had written to Prime Minister Narendra

Modi asking for land at concessional rates for the scheme.

Addressing a press conference, Mr. Kejriwal said the AAP government would construct an affordable housing unit, and house owners could pay through instalments deducted from

their salaries. "By the time they [employees] retire, they would have a home to call their own," he said.

Sources said since land is controlled by the Central government in Delhi, it was necessary to partner with the Centre for the scheme.

Poll fight with Atishi is over development, says Lamba

Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Alka Lamba has seen Delhi politics closely. As a young student, she won the Delhi University Students' Union presidential poll in 1995 and 20 years later was elected Chandni Chowk MLA. If there is one thing about the city's electoral politics that has remained the same in the past 30 years, it is misogyny, she says.

Fighting the poll from Kalkaji against Chief Minister Atishi, Ms. Lamba says if elected, she plans to bring to Kalkaji her learnings from Chandni Chowk, where she spearheaded a ₹90-crore redevelopment project. "My fight with Atishi is over development," she adds.

Talking about her other opponent, Ramesh Bidhuri, who has faced flak for alleged derogatory comments on women leaders, Ms. Lamba says her BJP rival has made comments that have "spoilt the atmosphere". But she holds AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal equally culpable of "disrespecting women" by portraying Ms. Atishi as a "stopgap CM". "By



Congress's Kalkaji candidate Alka Lamba.

making Atishi a temporary CM and portraying that she's weaker than him, Kejriwal has also disrespected women," says the former MLA.

This is not the first time Ms. Lamba is up against a political heavyweight. In 2003, she fought against Madan Lal Khurana, who had served as a CM of Delhi, from Moti Nagar, albeit unsuccessfully. In 2014, she switched to AAP and won Chandni Chowk seat a year later. In 2019, she returned to the Congress.

Ms. Lamba hopes Delhiites will rally behind the Congress this time. "Delhiites are intelligent enough to see what Congress has done in the past in Delhi. I am confident that they want change."

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	max	min
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Delhi Palam Today

20°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cold and foggy. Day will be cool sun shine. Night also will be cold and foggy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

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Atishi reaches crowdfunding target in a week

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI



Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Sunday closed her crowdfunding drive "Donate for Atishi" after successfully raising ₹40 lakh – the target amount for her election campaign for the February 5 Assembly election – in a week.

Over 740 supporters contributed to the drive, which helped Ms. Atishi

reach her target.

"This isn't just financial support – it's a resounding

endorsement of the clean, honest, and transformative politics of the Aam Aadmi Party," Ms. Atishi said, while announcing the campaign's closure.

'A better Delhi'
Thanking her supporters, the AAP candidate from Kalkaji

Delhi.
The "Donate for Atishi" crowdfunding drive, which was launched on January 12, raised ₹17 lakh in donations within the first 10 hours.

Ms. Atishi is the third senior AAP leader to launch such a drive for the election after Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak.



Externed 1,100 people to control criminal activities: Delhi Police

Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

The police have externed more than 1,100 people out of Delhi for being involved in criminal activities in 2024.

The process of externment is to keep criminals away from an area for a certain period to ensure peace in society. When an individual is found fit for externment, proceedings are initiated against them under Sections 47 and 48 (removal of persons about to commit offences) of the Delhi Police Act.

Special Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Devesh Chandra Srivastava told *The Hindu*, "The focused action on externment ensured that active criminals are accounted for." Further, he said, "Exterminating them out of the limits of Delhi had a salutary effect on other criminals, leading to a reduction in street crimes in 2024."

"After externment orders are issued, it becomes tough for criminals to restart their activities in another State. He has to create new links, which is not easy," an officer said.

Initially, the Delhi police serve a notice to criminals to explain why they should not be externed; if they are unable to give a satisfactory response, further action is initiated against them, he said.

According to the official data, the Delhi police externed 619 people in 2023, 311 in 2021, 176 in 2020, and 302 in 2019.

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करेंट अफेयर्स: CSE प्रिलिम्स 2025

हिन्दी माध्यम

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- सिविल सेवा प्रारंभिक परीक्षा 2025 के लिए 75 घंटों का करेंट अफेयर्स का व्यापक कवरेज
- विषय आधारित पाठ्यक्रम कवरेज
- रिवीजन एवं समेकन के लिए 5 विषय-विशिष्ट फुल लेन्थ टेस्ट (FLTs)



नामांकन के लिए
स्कैन करें

ऑफलाइन/ऑनलाइन

प्रिलिम्स टेस्ट सीरीज़ CSE 2025

हिन्दी माध्यम

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- संकलन निर्माण तथा ज्ञान-आधार को विस्तृत करने पर ध्यान केंद्रित



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स्कैन करें

सामान्य अध्ययन

बैच - 3

10 सम्पूर्ण सिलेबस टेस्ट

16 करेंट से प्रारम्भ

CSAT बैच - 2

10 सम्पूर्ण सिलेबस टेस्ट

16 करेंट से प्रारम्भ



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स्कैन करें

ऑफलाइन/ऑनलाइन

CSE प्रिलिम्स करेंट अफेयर्स ऑपन टेस्ट

परीक्षा तिथि : **25 जनवरी**

(दोपहर 3 से 5 बजे)

हिन्दी माध्यम



नामांकन के लिए
स्कैन करें

IN BRIEF



Mysterious deaths: MHA team reaches J&K; toll mounts to 17

As a team constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) arrived in J&K on Sunday, one more "mysterious" death was reported from Rajouri district, taking the toll to 17 since December 7 last year. Yasmeen, 15, became the latest victim of unexplained circumstances under which members of three families lost 17 relatives in the past 45 days. Officials said Yasmeen was the eighth member of the family of Mohammad Aslam, a resident of Rajouri's Badhal village, to die under mysterious circumstances. The MHA team consists of experts from the various government Ministries.

Milkipur bypoll: SP writes to CEO, asks him to sack 3 SHOs

The Samajwadi Party (SP) on Sunday demanded the removal of three Station House Officers (SHOs) in the bypoll-bound Milkipur Assembly constituency. SP State president Shyam Lal Pal has sent a letter to the Chief Electoral Officer for the removal of the SHOs of Kumarganj, Inayatnagar, and Khandasa police stations. The party has accused the three of harassing SP supporters by lodging fake cases against them. SP's Ayodhya MP Awadhesh Prasad said the police on Saturday lodged complaints against more than a dozen of his party's office-bearers. His son Ajit Prasad is the SP candidate from the Milkipur seat, where byelection will be held on February 5. PTI

Sukhu blames previous BJP govt. for 'financial mess' in H.P.

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Blaming the previous Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Himachal Pradesh for creating a financial mess in the State, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Sunday said his government had taken ₹28,000 crore of loans over the past two years, of which a whopping ₹18,000 crore was spent on repaying old debts and interests.

The Chief Minister said this while addressing a public gathering at Nurpur in

Kangra district.

Mr. Sukhu said that despite financial challenges, the State government had generated an additional revenue of ₹2,200 crore last year and expected to earn ₹2,400 crore this year. He accused the BJP's "double-

engine government" of lowering the standard of public services and providing subsidies to affluent individuals for electoral gains.

The Chief Minister said the BJP government left a debt of ₹75,000 crore along with pending liabilities of ₹10,000 crore for government employees. "Notwithstanding this, the Congress government is striving to deliver quality services to the people through systemic reforms. We are also encouraging financially capable people to voluntarily forgo subsidies," he said.

Parbhani custodial death: Dalit advocates demand dismissal of police officers

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

A group of Dalit advocates in the Supreme Court wrote to President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday demanding the dismissal of police officers in Parbhani over the recent violence in the district and rehabilitation of the family of Somnath Suryavanshi, a Dalit youth who died in judicial custody.

"We urge and demand that the family of Somnath Suryavanshi be immediately rehabilitated and all high

ranking police officers concerned with the crime in Parbhani, Maharashtra, may kindly be dismissed," said Anand S. Jondhale, convenor of the Supreme Court Dalit Advocates' Association, in the letter.

It added that despite "a representation to the Governor, Suryavanshi was killed in custody". "It shows that neither the Hon'ble Governor of Maharashtra nor the police of Maharashtra have even scant regard towards the law," the letter stated.

Sambhal violence: police arrest 10 more people; 70 held so far

Press Trust of India
SAMBHAL (U.P.)

The police on Sunday arrested 10 more people in connection with the November 24 violence near the Shahi Jama Masjid in this Uttar Pradesh district, an officer said.

With this, 70 people have so far been arrested in connection with the incident. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Shirish Chandra said.

Those arrested are Tahzeeb, Azhar Ali, Asad, Danish, Suhaib, Alam, Moham-

NDA attacks Rahul for calling Bihar caste survey 'fake'

Press Trust of India
PATNA

pointed out, "Till recently, Mr. Gandhi used to claim credit for Bihar's caste survey. It is bewildering on his part to call the survey fake."

State Minister Dilip Jaiswal, who is also the Bihar BJP chief, mockingly said, "Before holding forth on caste census, Mr. Gandhi should tell us to which caste does he belongs to."

Congress hypocrisy
Meanwhile, the JD(U) on Sunday accused Mr. Gandhi of hypocrisy on the issue of caste census, charging him with maintaining silence when the Bihar CM raised the matter in INDIA bloc meetings.

The party also asked why the Congress government in Karnataka has not released the State's caste data.

JD(U) working president Sanjay Jha said, "There cannot be a bigger hypocrisy than this. I was a witness to Mr. Gandhi maintaining silence while Mr. Kumar strongly and logically spoke in favour of caste census at INDIA bloc meetings."

The allusion was to a recent remark by Mr. Gandhi in Delhi, which has led to an FIR against the Congress in BJP-ruled Assam.

Senior BJP leader and former Minister Syed Shah Nawaz Hussain expressed similar sentiments and

After Centre's call for talks, SKM plans protest against draft agri marketing policy

Farmers' group says govt. trying to impose annulled farm laws through NPFAM, terms decision to discuss demands 'great victory'; farmer leaders say plan to take out tractor march on Jan. 26 intact

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Following the announcement of a proposed meeting by the Centre to discuss the demands of protesting farmers on February 14 in Chandigarh and their leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal accepting medical aid after a fast-unto-death for about 50 days, both factions of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha - SKM and SKM (non-political) - have decided to hold joint protests against the Union government's draft National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing (NPFAM) as the next stage of their stir.

The SKM said on Sunday that it considered a 'great victory' the government's decision to hold talks with the farmers protesting at the Khanauri border point between Punjab and Haryana to press for their various demands, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price for



Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on a fast-unto-death, receives medical aid at Khanauri, Punjab, on Sunday. PTI

their crops. It also welcomed Mr. Dallewal's decision to receive medical aid and wished him quick recovery and good health.

Divisive strategy

"The efforts made by SKM leaders for farmers' unity and the pan-India agitation against the anti-farmer Union government has forced it to pull back from its divisive strategy," it said in a statement.

The SKM said the Centre is trying to "impose the three annulled farm laws through NPFAM, which, it

said is nothing but a plan to hand over to a few crony corporates' control of agricultural land, agriculture, the food supply chain, and food security of the nation. "SKM's general body shall meet in Delhi on January 24 at which point further agitation programmes and action plans shall be announced," it stated.

The SKM said the joint meeting of the SKM with leaders of the SKM (NP) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) in Patran, Punjab, on Saturday 9 for the model code of conduct was in force until February 9 for the Delhi election.

The farmer leaders said their programme of taking out a tractor march on January 26 is intact.

Meanwhile, speaking to reporters at Khanauri, farmer leaders on Sunday said they had demanded the Central delegation to hold the meeting earlier. Farmer leader Abhimanyu Kohar said the officials told them that Ministers have been deputed for preparations for Republic Day on January 26 and that the

model code of conduct was in force until February 9 for the Delhi election.

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Hardship of harvesting sweetness is wearing down the date palm jaggery makers of Bengal

SPOTLIGHT

Shrabana Chatterjee

Maniruddin Banshi, 59, and his family of seven pack up their lives in November every year and leave their native village in West Bengal's Bishnupur, South 24 Parganas district, to settle in a shack beside a road near Jaynagar, a town in the same district in Sundarbans, 65 km from Kolkata. Maniruddin has been making this journey for the past 42 years with his wife Mabia. Here, for four months, they tap palm trees for sap and boil it to make liquid jaggery.

As the temperature dips to 10 degrees Celsius, the winter air is heavy with fog. Maniruddin wakes up at 2 a.m., wearing a thin lungi and vest, and swiftly walks out of his hut made of dry date palm leaves.

Maniruddin and Mabia work harmoniously, not saying much to each other. "I boil the sap that my husband brings back and make gur. The cold that makes the sap and jaggery sweeter also makes it harder for us to survive in wobbly huts," says Mabia.

Every year, hundreds of shiulis (sap collectors) make the journey from their native villages from across West Bengal for



Fruits of labour: (Clockwise from left) Maniruddin Banshi and his associate collecting sap from date palm trees; Jaynagar moa being prepared with nolen gur at Mahadeb Das's sweets shop. DEBASISH BHADURI

areas such as Jaynagar, Belphari, and Nadia for four months in winter to produce the sought-after date palm jaggery. But their craft is facing an uncertain future due to urbanisation and changes in weather patterns. Its growing popularity across the country, with celebrity chefs such as Ranveer Brar and Bollywood stars like Alia Bhatt talking about it on their social media channels, has also pushed producers to compromise on quality.

Before the sun rises
Maniruddin glides through the farmlands of Jaynagar to find the 600 trees he has leased this winter. In the darkness, he climbs a 15-foot date palm tree in five minutes to bring down a clay pot filled with khejur rosh (sap). At the top, he makes small incisions on the bark with a dabali (sickle) and quickly positions another pot. Even before the first light of day, three shiulis would have collected about 300 pots of sap.

As the world sleeps, the shiulis begin the delicate task of boiling the freshly collected sap before it starts to ferment. The sap must be boiled continuously, with constant stirring, to ensure that it thickens into golden jaggery that smells of sweetness. The entire process demands

patience and precision as even slight overcooking can spoil the batch. By dawn, the liquid thickens. Mono, as Maniruddin's friends call him, is one of the oldest shiulis in Jaynagar. He is accompanied by two associates, who have learnt the craft from him over the years. They climb trees, tie pots, collect sap, boil, and repeat. For the rest of the year, Mono, his friends, and family fish, farm, or do other odd jobs.

It is not the hardship that Maniruddin endures every day that makes him sad, but the fact that he could be the last of the shiulis of Jaynagar. "When a shiuli dies in a home,

another shiuli does not take birth there anymore. This is a tough job; the next generation does not want to take the strain of following these traditions. My art will die with me. The art I learnt from my forefathers," he says.

Jaynagar is known for its moa, a soft, round, moist seasonal sweet made with the local nolen gur and puffed rice made from the Kanakchur heirloom variety. The delicacy, synonymous with Bengal's winter, secured a geographical indication (GI) tag in 2015.

Almost 250 km away, Gulam Mustafa Khan, 61, and his fellow sap collectors face a similar battle in

Jhargram district's Belphari area. Every November, they migrate from Bankura district to different parts of Jhargram to collect date palm sap and make jaggery. They also live in similar-looking homes called gurmohol (jaggery hut). Gulam travels with his two sons and wants them to continue this practice, but he is not hopeful. "Who likes to do this work like a monkey? Climbing trees. It is too risky with the fear of elephants, tigers, snakes. If we had better employment would we continue?"

Gulam is from Jhargram, a rural area of West Bengal. He has been collecting sap for decades and has seen the changes in the industry. "The market for jaggery has changed. Now, people prefer more refined jaggery. The traditional jaggery made by us is less popular now," he says.

Highway, Gulam, Ansar Ali Khan, Islam Nabi Khan, and many others have set up their huts. The huts take three days to build, but they break it before every season of sap collection ends and it is time for them to leave. They are only seasonal settlers after all. They come to Belphari because the story goes that this region has the sweetest nolen gur in the southern part of West Bengal.

Diminishing quality
The number of date palm trees is reducing every year due to urbanisation and associated deforestation. An experienced shiuli like Gulam points out that

due to high demand of nolen gur, people are cutting holes in trees every year to extract sap, but in an ideal situation, the trees need two to three years of rest after every season to keep offering the sweet sap. "The trees here are asking us to give them some rest. We know them like our children," Gulam says.

Maniruddin also says rising average temperatures in winter have made the sap less sweet; the quantity of sap too has reduced drastically.

Bhabani Shankar, a retired engineer and chief adviser to Mishti Udyog, an association to bring together sweet sellers of the State, says adulteration of nolen gur is a reality.

In Jaynagar, an initiative was started in 2021 with the local administration to plant 2,000 date palm trees to promote nolen gur. The trees did not survive due to hurried planting.

Collateral damage
Legacy Jaynagar moa maker and owner of Binapani Mishtana Bhandar in Bahadur of Jaynagar block, Mahadeb Das, 75, whose family business started around the 1910s, says the taste of his family's creation is changing over time. Mahadeb has battled poverty and worked as a child alongside his father. He re-

members his father making moa with their fragrant nolen gur fresh from the clay ovens and heading out on local trains to sell them in Kolkata. He picked up the skills through observation and has carried on the legacy ever since.

Ganesh Das, Mahadeb's son, says no matter how hard he has tried to hold on to the legacy, he has had to accept over the years that every harvester now adds sugar to the nolen gur amid high market demand, harsh working conditions, and low reward. "Maniruddin and his family have been supplying nolen gur to our business for over 20 years, but the quality has deteriorated over time," says Ganesh.

Niljan Mishra, a scholar who works closely with farmers and harvesters in West Bengal, says, "We need to collectivise shiulis to address their issues and struggles of sustainability. If we fail to do that, their art form – and our beloved nolen gur, which is a cultural heritage – will also die."

Mishra also feels that more research needs to be commissioned on why and how climate change is affecting this industry and what steps can be taken for its conservation.

LINK TO FULL STORY
» <https://bit.ly/3E3jqAT>

₹3-lakh cr. financial support given to A.P. in six months: Shah

Home Minister promises full Central support for the Polavaram project; Naidu seeks more hand-holding from Union govt. for State's development

V. Raghavendra
VIJAYAWADA

The Union government had extended financial support of nearly ₹3 lakh crore to Andhra Pradesh since June 2024, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday, while praising Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for taking the State forward "at a great speed" with his experience.

Thanking the people of Andhra Pradesh for giving a stunning victory to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the 2024 election, Mr. Shah called the five-year rule of the YSR Congress Party a "man-made disaster".

Participating as chief guest at the National Disaster Response Force's (NDRF) 20th Raising Day event after inaugurating the southern campus of the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), along with the NDRF's 20th Battalion premises at Kondapavuluru in Krishna district, Mr. Shah said, "The NDRF comes to one's mind during natural disasters while the NDA emerges as a saviour when there are man-made disasters such as the one in A.P. brought by the YSRCP."

He said Andhra Pradesh's potential was destroyed by the YSRCP and people could now feel assured of rapid development under the NDA rule.



Under watch: Amit Shah with CM N. Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM K. Pawan Kalyan on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

By sanctioning a financial package of ₹11,440 crore for the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), Prime Minister Narendra Modi had not only ensured that the historic steel plant survived the crisis but also respected the sentiment associated with it.

Mr. Shah said in tune with the importance given to the development of Amaravati, the Centre had provided financial support of ₹27,000 crore from the World Bank and HUDCO. He said the Centre would fully support the Polavaram project and that Mr. Naidu was confident of supplying water from the project to all parts of the State by the end of 2028.

CM praises Shah
Showing encomiums on the Union Home Minister, Mr. Naidu said he was jealous of Mr. Shah's "dedication to work". "I am impressed by Mr. Shah's effective tackling of law and order problems, Nax-

ites and terrorists. He is working like a machine. He is committed to saving every life during contingencies. Whenever I meet, he shares innovative ideas and advises me to do the same," Mr. Naidu said.

"Under Mr. Shah and Mr. Modi's leadership, India is poised to emerge as a global power by 2047," the Chief Minister said. "The future of Andhra Pradesh will be bright under NDA rule," he said, while stating that the State was destroyed by the YSRCP. "We [the State] just came off the ventilator. But it is still a patient. The Centre should continue to hand-hold us till we recover fully." Mr. Naidu said he was thankful to the Centre for providing ₹15,000 crore for Amaravati development.

Mr. Naidu said he was happy that the Centre facilitated the establishment of the BPCL refinery and gave a ₹11,440 crore package for the revival of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

Bailable arrest warrant issued against Ramdev, aide Balkrishna

A.S. Jayanth
KOZHIKODE

A bailable warrant issued by a Palakkad court against yoga practitioner Baba Ramdev, his accomplice Acharya Balkrishna, and Divya Pharmacy, the marketing arm of their Haridwar-based Ayurvedic drug manufacturing company Patanjali Ayurved, is the first such step being initiated against them in Kerala in the misleading advertisement case.

The warrant was issued on January 16. The case against Mr. Ramdev, Mr. Balkrishna, and their company was registered in the court in 2024. Though the court had earlier issued summons to the accused to appear on January 16, they failed to turn up. The case relates to the company carrying misleading advertisements on its health-care products in the news media in violation of the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954. The advertisements claimed that the Patanjali products could cure high blood pressure and diabetes.

Similar cases are pending against them in courts in Kozhikode and Haridwar in Uttarakhand as well. However, they have not appeared before the courts as yet.

The case in the Palakkad court is now posted to February 1. At least 10 cases have been registered against them in Kerala and one in Uttarakhand (Haridwar).

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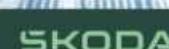


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Albert P' Rayan

The use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education has recently sparked widespread discussion and debate about its impact on student learning. AI tools are now commonly used by students at both the secondary and tertiary levels for several academic purposes. While many educators view this development positively, others express concerns that it may lead to plagiarism, hinder creativity, and reduce originality.

Recently, when speaking at a conference on AI at a Chennai college, I opened my presentation on "Does AI kill creativity?" with a series of brainstorming questions designed to assess familiarity with AI tools and the benefits from using them. Nearly everyone in the audience responded that they use ChatGPT and a few other AI tools for various academic tasks.

How authentic?

It is true that AI cannot create in the same way humans can because it lacks intrinsic creativity. Humans possess immense creative potential that machines cannot match. For example, the music of renowned musicians and the writing style of creative authors are unique. In fantasy and sci-fi author Joanna Maciejkowska's words "I want AI to do my laundry and dishes so that

I can do my art and writing..." No fan of JK Rowling expects her to use AI to write a novel, just as no fan of AR Rahman expects him to compose music with the help of AI. Artificial is synthetic, while natural is authentic. This statement should not be interpreted to mean that AI cannot be used for creative or productive purposes. The purposes for which creative artists use AI tools are quite different from those for which students and teachers use them.

Noam Chomsky provocatively described AI as "plagiarism software".

While some critics argue that AI merely copies and modifies existing words and phrases, generative models do not simply reproduce content. Instead, they synthesize new combinations and generate novel outputs based on the data they are trained on.

However, using AI-generated content uncritically reflects a lack of originality, creativity, and critical thinking. Those who view AI as a threat to academic integrity (honesty, fairness, and responsibility) often fail to see its educational potential. This raises the question of whether AI tools should be banned, restricted, or promoted in educational institutions.

New York City public schools, which had previously restricted access to ChatGPT on school computers and networks, have recently lifted the ban. Rather than thinking of banning AI tools, schools



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

To AI or not to AI?

AI tools, by themselves, do not have the power to enhance or diminish our originality and creativity. It all depends on how we use them.

should teach students how to use them appropriately. This proactive approach can enhance students' understanding of the technology and could prove to be a valuable workplace skill. It is crucial for education boards to implement thoughtful and reasonable AI policies.

Good or bad mentor
In a discussion on the role of AI in education, one teacher remarked that AI acts as a mentor for students. I asked whether he

considered it a good or bad one. The reality is that AI can be either, depending on how we choose to use it. The prompts we provide reflect our intentions, and AI responds accordingly.

AI, as a good mentor or an educational tool, can instill confidence in learners, arouse their curiosity, empower them to critically evaluate generated content, spark creativity, synthesize information, edit or translate content into any language, help them improve their lan-

guage skills, organize study materials, develop learner autonomy, and enhance personalized learning by making it more effective and enjoyable.

On the other hand, as a bad mentor, AI can do everything for the student: generate ideas for homework, complete assignments, prepare presentation slides, and even give the impression that the user is the original author of essays, presentations, and reports it has created.

AI has empowered

many academics, researchers, and students who now feel that language should no longer be a barrier to expressing their novel ideas and research findings, as AI tools assist with language-related tasks. In other words, thanks to AI, academia has become more productive, if not more innovative and creative.

With the ubiquitous smartphone and other gadgets and 24/7 Internet, anyone can learn anytime and anywhere in the 21st century. If individuals be-

come AI literate and learn to use AI tools effectively, they can become self-directed learners with minimal assistance from teachers. Therefore, educators should teach students how AI works, its strengths, and its limitations, so that students understand when and how to use it effectively. This can promote more strategic use of AI and reduce over-reliance on it. They should also address ethical issues, such as plagiarism and emphasise the importance of adhering to AI policies.

AI tools, by themselves, do not have the power to enhance or diminish our originality and creativity—it all depends on how we use them. When applied thoughtfully, rather than as a crutch, they can assist with idea generation, help overcome mental blocks, and refine texts, thereby expanding creative capabilities. However, over-reliance on AI can develop cognitive laziness or mental inertia, weaken problem-solving abilities, reduce independent thinking, and lead us to bypass imaginative processes.

Since AI-generated content often reflects patterns from its training data, excessive dependence on it can further restrict originality. Will we make AI our creative assistant or allow it to become a crutch? The ball is in our court. Let's make the right play.

The writer is an ELT resource person and education columnist. rayanal@yahoo.co.uk

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Courtesy: buddy4study.com



Pyrrhic peace

A united administration under the Palestinian Authority must be in place

After 15 months of war, which saw the deaths of tens of thousands of people, the destruction of much of Gaza and multiple rounds of painstaking negotiations, Hamas and Israel have agreed to a ceasefire. As soon as the news was out, thousands ventured out on the streets in Gaza, hoping that the daily bombardment and shelling would come to an end. Uncertainty still lingered, but both sides resolved their last-minute differences over details about Israel's partial withdrawal from Gaza and the names of the hostages to be released on day one and the ceasefire came into force on Sunday. This is not a permanent end to the war. But given the violence that Israel and Gaza have witnessed since October 7, 2023, even a pause in the war is a great relief, especially for Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians. The agreement is expected to be implemented in three phases. In the first phase, Hamas will release 33 hostages, while Israel will release about 1,000 Palestinian security prisoners. The second phase would see more exchanges of hostages and prisoners and both sides are required to announce a permanent end to the hostilities. The third phase will involve discussions on the 'day after', including who should be in charge of Gaza.

As of now, both sides stay focused on phase one. Trouble could arise when negotiations for the next phases begin. When Israel launched the war, it set two objectives for itself – the destruction of Hamas and the release of hostages. In 15 months of war, Israel has degraded Hamas's militant infrastructure, but the group has survived and reinvented itself as an insurgency. According to Antony Blinken, the outgoing U.S. Secretary of State, Hamas recruited as many fighters as it had lost during the war. Israel's inability to destroy Hamas or secure the release of the hostages through the offensive raises serious questions about the IDF's military tactics in Gaza. This could probably be one of the factors that persuaded Benjamin Netanyahu to accept the ceasefire. But he has not committed to bringing the war to an end. Hamas, on the other side, demands a complete withdrawal of Israel from Gaza. Despite the possible roadblocks, the fact that a ceasefire came into force is welcome news. It provides a desperately needed relief for Gaza and a platform to build further talks. Israel, Palestinians as well as the international mediators should now work towards bridging the gaps in the post-war scenario. Israel will not accept a situation that would leave Hamas as a ruling force in Gaza. A more pragmatic solution is to form a united administration of all Palestinian factions under the leadership of the internationally recognised Palestinian Authority, and then shift the focus towards the reconstruction of Gaza. But for this plan to work and peace to prevail, Israel should be ready to withdraw all its troops from the Gaza Strip.

Murder most foul

Making India safe for all must be a priority for State authorities

The conviction on Saturday of a former civil police volunteer in the rape and murder of a second-year postgraduate trainee doctor in Kolkata has brought some closure to her parents, but the struggle to make systemic changes to make the workplace safe for women continues. The District and Sessions Court, Sealdah, found Sanjay Roy guilty of the horrific crime at the State-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9, 2024, while on duty. Pronouncing the verdict in the presence of the parents and the accused, Judge Anirban Das said the accused was found guilty based on evidence put forward by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The accused is being held guilty under Sections 64 (rape), 66 (causing death), and 103(I) (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita. Reading out the verdict, the judge said the crime carries the highest punishment of a death sentence and the lowest of life imprisonment; the terms of the sentence will be announced today. In his observations, the judge also put the spotlight on the functioning of the hospital administration, saying that the actions of the college's principal and other senior members had "created some confusion" in his mind. In widespread protests after the crime, doctors, the parents, and civil society had alleged that it could not have been the handiwork of only one individual.

Sandip Ghosh, principal of the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital at the time of the murder, was arrested by the CBI on charges of evidence tampering and the delay in filing the first information report (FIR), but was released on bail as the charge sheet had not been filed in 90 days, as is the rule. Inefficiencies in policing have also come to the fore; there was an inordinate delay in filing the FIR, for example, and other lapses. The parents of the doctor said they respect the judgment and sought the highest punishment for the accused but expressed hope that the investigation would not be halted so that all the culprits are nabbed, a sentiment echoed by protesting doctors, activists – and also the Opposition. There are cases pending in the High Court and the Supreme Court of India, which began hearing it *suo motu* after the uproar over the rape. It should not need a rape and murder to wake up to appalling working conditions, such as the lack of basic amenities and a safe room to rest. Kolkata's State-run hospitals are stretched thin and reports of corruption are rife. The State government announced a slew of measures for the protection of health workers, and the onus is on the administration to follow through with the promises.

A surge in radical governments, the hope of democracy

Ine thing seems fairly certain now. If an Islamic radical group were to seize power by force, then the world will be willing to legitimise it and forgive its past deeds. But till the time such a group does not capture power, it will either be fought tooth and nail and/or treated like an enemy.

We had Afghanistan in 2021. We now have Syria in 2024.

When the Taliban captured power on August 15, 2021, 13 members of the United States troops were killed in an Islamic State (IS) suicide attack, and \$7.1 billion worth of U.S. weaponry was left behind in Afghanistan. However, the U.S. and the West as well as China and Russia bent backwards to work with the Taliban. The West justified this by saying that this would wean the Taliban away from supporting terrorism and help in the protection of women's and minorities' rights. They talked about "inclusive government" but democracy was not uppermost in their minds. Then the UN Special Representative to Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, even told the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) that the Taliban was 'misunderstood'.

Treated with kid gloves

The ultimate irony was how "karma" had come full circle. In the days preceding the Taliban's capture of Afghanistan, the "Troika Plus", of the U.S., China and Russia with Pakistan, had tried to coordinate their efforts in Afghanistan to keep India completely out and ignore our vital interests. In the UNSC, even an innocuous reference to the Heart of Asia Conference on Afghanistan was deleted from the draft statement because India was one of the countries attending it.

But when the events of August 2021 unfolded, India was the president of UNSC that month. Any text or resolution required India's concurrence. When UNSC Resolution 2593, after the Taliban takeover, was passed on August 30, India left its imprint particularly in the paragraph relating to Afghan soil not being used for terrorist activities. The express reference to terrorists and terrorist organisations in the UNSC Resolution 1267 sanctions list was inserted at India's behest, where it coordinated closely with the U.S. side. This was necessary to remove any ambiguity about Pakistani terrorist organisations associated with the ISIL (Daesh) and al-Qaeda, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed – listed in 1267 – from using Afghan soil to launch terrorist attacks on India.

In December 2021, the UNSC allowed the Taliban to get donor money directly into its coffers. With no political will among the P-5 or the West to demand accountability for implementing UNSCR 2593, the Taliban soon



T.S. Tirumurti

was Permanent Representative/Ambassador of India to the United Nations (UN), New York (2021-22) and President of the UN Security Council (UNSC) for August 2021

denied girls school education, imposed restrictions on women, and stopped all moves for an inclusive government. Now, the world looks the other way.

Now, Syria and Bangladesh

And now Syria in 2024. We have just witnessed a radical Islamic leader Abu Muhammad al-Jolani or Ahmed al-Shaara of the Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) seize power, culminating in the toppling of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Al-Jolani was earlier leader of the al Qaeda in the region, with links to international terror groups. His radical outfit, the HTS, which was earlier an al Qaeda wing in Syria called the Jabhat al-Nusra, still features in the U.S. State Department list of terror groups. Mirroring what they did with the Taliban, the U.S. and the West have lined up behind the HTS and its leader. The first move of the U.S. was to remove the bounty of \$10 million on al-Jolani's head for his capture. Capturing power can help evade capture also.

This is wonderful news for Islamic terrorists and extremist groups gaining ground, especially in Africa such as in Mali, and adopting IS and al Qaeda techniques to topple governments. But the world is preoccupied with Ukraine and West Asia. Now, India has a situation brewing closer to home, in Bangladesh.

Even if the collapse of the elected government in Bangladesh has been largely due to an autocratic government stifling democratic forces and losing the plot, under the guise of supporting regime change, the U.S. clearly downplayed the interests of its "strategic" partner India.

It is propping up the interim military-led government of Muhammad Yunus, which is seen as tolerating, even encouraging, Islamic radical groups in Bangladesh and is a threat to its minorities. The last thing India needs is the revival of Islamic radicalism in Bangladesh, where the last 16 years have seen the two countries and its peoples come closer in a variety of ways for mutual benefit.

When Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League came to power in 2008, it was seen as free and fair elections with a cleaned-up electoral list and the Bangladesh Army staying on the sidelines. The people overwhelmingly rejected the violent past of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of Khaleda Zia and their Islamic radical partners such as the Jamaat-e-Islami. Just when one thought that the Jamaat-e-Islami stood discredited for siding with Pakistan in the 1971 war and rejected by the people of Bangladesh for causing mayhem and disrupting lives, the popular student protests of 2024 and the ensuing military coup have given them a fresh lease of life.

While there is no doubt that the Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) – affiliated to the Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), the

Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, the Islami Chhatra Shibir, the Hefazat-e-Islam, the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP) have taken advantage of the situation, it is not as if the people of Bangladesh have embraced them wholeheartedly. Consequently, these radical groups have tried to shore up support for their extremist ideologies by attacking the minority communities, forcing the interim government to release Islamic extremists from prison (such as like Jashimuddin Rahmani, head of the ABT), and adopting shrill anti-India rhetoric, conflating the dismantling of Sheikh Hasina's legacy with attacks on India. India should be careful not to fall into this trap.

Religious hate has been on the rise around the world. It was when this writer was India's Permanent Representative to the UN that India brought up, for the first time, in 2021-2022, the rise of religiophobia against non-Abrahamic religions, including against Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. India condemned all forms of religious hate, whether in the U.S. and the West or in Bangladesh and the neighbourhood. While India may have taken its eye off the ball when it came to the Sheikh Hasina government, it cannot ignore Islamic extremism again rearing its head in Bangladesh and posing renewed danger to India's national security – something which New Delhi successfully prevented over the last 16 years.

The larger picture

However, for both sides to view the unfolding events purely through a religious lens – be it an Islamic lens or Hindu lens – would be a mistake. This has been counterproductive before and will be so now. In fact, Islamic radicals are baiting India, and, unfortunately, so are the officials who have been appointed as advisers to Mr. Yunus, precisely to polarise forces within their own country. On the other hand, India has the larger perspective in mind to protect its bilateral relations from damage. It has reiterated its readiness to do business with the interim government. India has removed most irritants in its bilateral relations in the last two decades, except maybe for the sharing of Teesta river waters. What is forgotten is that when Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) revolted in February 2009, just after the first clean elections of Bangladesh in December 2008, it was India which gave its rock solid support to the newly-elected government and helped save democracy.

It is in Bangladesh's own interest that this military coup does not translate into an Islamic coup and goes the way of Syria or Afghanistan. The silver lining is that, having tasted the power of democracy in 2008, and now in 2024, it will be difficult to put the clock back.

The historian must note that the past has many layers

It is of course the historian's professional responsibility to bring knowledge of the past back to life academically for which a rigorous training in the norms and the methods of the discipline is imparted in institutions like universities. The discipline requires the historian to imbibe its basic premises: evidence is the primary basis of one's research; each statement must be supported by evidence which itself has to undergo a critical evaluation for its authenticity, its proximity to the event or phenomenon under review, and its context and compatibility with other bits of evidence which might be corroborative or contradictory. The inferences drawn from the evidence must conform to the test of reason rather than providence or any explanation outside the realm of reason.

The other layers

So far so good. But the past has other layers not susceptible to evidence from the archives, texts, manuscripts or archaeology. One such layer is memory not captured in texts, manuscripts, documents or on the dug up field. It survives in popular memories of events, persons and happenings, often at variance with the accounts given by professional history. The crucial difference is that while the historian has bestowed an image of a person, event or phenomenon meticulously sticking to the prescribed modes and methods of research, popular memory is not bound by any such constraints. It does not have to adduce empirical evidence or even follow it up with an inference that is subject to rational analysis. Yet, its power as an image of the past remains undiminished.

Let us take some examples. Have we not heard of Emperor Akbar's court adorned with the nine jewels (*Nav Ratnas*)? No one had in Akbar's time. The ones counted in the group of nine included some fake ones, but the notion of *Nav Ratnas* is a much later popular creation, perhaps not before



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Today's historian must engage with the 'facts' as well as what has been habitually dismissed as 'fiction'

the 18th century. It does not alter history very much but lends some colour to the past. But some other memories do alter history as well, a little or drastically. The story of Jodha Bai, for instance. One can shout oneself hoarse, as historians might, that there was no Jodha Bai in Akbar's harem and that Jahangir's mother was Harkha Bai, a princess of Amer, but Jodha Bai does not disappear from sight.

But these memories are mere colourful diversions from the rather dry narrative of historical 'facts'. There are others that have proven to be far more powerful than the historians' version. The Babri masjid case is an outstanding instance of this power.

The example of Ayodhya

Several historians, with help from archaeologists, had argued during the 1980s that there was no evidence of the existence of a Ram temple which was demolished to construct the Babri Masjid. Evidence from a large number of sources from the 16th century on was unearthed to strengthen the argument. The first authentic evidence of a link between Lord Ram and the construction of the masjid dates to 1822 in a Persian-language court document which mentions a small platform within the four walls surrounding the masjid as Ram Janmasthan; although no temple is mentioned but Sita Ki Rasoi is. A lot of accretion to this bare mention occurs during the 19th century – some violence is recorded as is the intervention of the Awadh state.

Clearly, some sort of the memory of the association of the site of the masjid with Lord Ram had begun to grow, perhaps a few decades before it got recorded in 1822, and a lot was added on to it – some by its own evolution and some by deliberate action.

In the end, the Supreme Court of India, in its final judgement of 2019, put its stamp on the historians' evidence that no Ram temple, indeed

no temple of any kind was demolished in 1528 to construct the masjid, and recorded the masjid's demolition on December 6, 1992 as a heinous crime and recommended prosecution of those guilty. Yet, going against its own finding, it gave away the small piece of land where the masjid stood for the construction of a Ram temple. In the end, memory proved far more decisive than 'history'.

On a holistic reconstruction

Historians have, in the pursuit of their reconstruction of the past, insulated the memory recorded in archives, texts, documents and archaeological data, from popular memory and popular versions of history – which, in reality, extend to an age, besides persons and events. A holistic reconstruction of the past requires the historian to concern herself with popular memory as much as with archival data to investigate the social/cultural/political context of the origins of this memory, the process of its evolution, including its manipulation for given ends.

If history and social memory had been evolving through their own dynamics in the past, the present is a watershed moment when social media has created a massive space for, on the one hand, real common people's intervention in recollecting the past as well as for the grossest distortions of both the historian's version of the past and inflicting similarly distorted versions of memory.

Thus, today's historian, the professional custodian of the past, must engage with 'facts' as much as with what she has habitually dismissed as 'fiction' comprising the vast array of layers of the past. She must treat these as historical data: popular cultures of the past, gossip, conversations, silences, absences... History speaks most eloquently and consequently only when it speaks in its entirety.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

R.G. Kar case

The verdict may have been pronounced in the R.G. Kar case, but there is still one question to ask – what about the others who were involved, directly or indirectly? This has been a case that led to months of protests by medical staff and students, with the demand for justice for the victim and better security for medical staff. The statement by the parents (Inside pages,

January 19), "... But we believe the investigation will go on and more culprits will be caught", is enough to prove that the case has still to be closed.

Manya Sharma,
Bengaluru

The conviction of Sanjay Roy has reinstated the confidence of the public in the judicial system to some extent. But the fact that the other alleged perpetrators still remain at large shows

that only half the battle has been fought.

Ananya Singh,
Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Animal welfare
I write to express concern and indignation regarding the recent decision to prohibit the feeding of dogs within the site of the Kukkarahalli lake, Mysuru. Let the University of Mysore set an example of progressive governance by upholding compassion,

legality, and ethical responsibility. This directive not only contravenes established legal frameworks but also disregards the basic principles of humanity and animal welfare, thereby warranting immediate revocation. This prohibition violates the guidelines issued by the Animal Welfare Board of India, which uphold the fundamental right to feed and care for stray animals in

public spaces. The Supreme Court of India has, on multiple occasions, reaffirmed the importance of ensuring the welfare of stray animals while maintaining the delicate balance of coexistence.

Tom Hoppe,
Mysuru

'Lit for Life'
The 'Lit for Life' festival was a great effort which will be a harbinger of the reading habits of people, on the

wane now due to digital intrusions. The session by David Walliams (I attended it with my grandson), which saw many children enjoying the programme, will be richly cherished by them. The only disadvantage was the overlapping of the programmes – at the main hall and the pavilion.

Dr. V. Purushothaman,
Chennai

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

Recasting insolvency resolution

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC) is one of India's most significant economic reforms, introduced to address the challenges of insolvency resolution in a structured and time-bound manner.

At the time of its introduction, the IBC was seen as an important tool that would help India's standing in the business world and bring bad borrowers and big defaulters to book. Yet, as the law matured, certain issues have cropped up that demand attention, particularly regarding institutional capacity and procedural efficiency. The recent Supreme Court of India judgment in Jet Airways (*State Bank of India & Ors. vs The Consortium of Mr. Murari Lal Jalan and Mr. Florian Fritsch & Anr.*) has laid bare the many structural infirmities that are plaguing India's insolvency regime.

A double burden

The effective implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) hinges on the performance of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and its appellate body, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT). These tribunals face the dual burden of handling corporate insolvencies under the IBC and cases under the Companies Act. This institutional architecture, however, suffers from what might be termed "temporal disjunction".

Conceived in 1999 based on the Eradi Committee's recommendations and operationalised in 2016, the NCLT's structure reflects the economic realities of a bygone era, leaving it ill-equipped to meet contemporary demands. With a sanctioned strength of 63 members – many of whom divide their time across multiple benches – the NCLT has become a bottleneck for insolvency resolutions and corporate transactions such as mergers and amalgamations.



V.V. Sivakumar

is an advocate in the Madras High Court



Saai Sudharsan Sathiyamoorthy

is an advocate in the Madras High Court

Compounding the issue, several NCLT benches do not operate for the full working day, even when not tasked with handling cases from other benches.

As a result, delays have worsened. According to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), the average time for insolvency resolutions increased to 716 days in FY2023-24, up from 654 days in FY2022-23. This is despite the Supreme Court's repeated calls for adherence to the specific timelines provided in IBC, including in the Jet Airways case, where the Court has stated that the "NCLTs/NCLATs need to be sensitised of not exercising their judicial discretion in extending the timelines...in such a way that it may make the Code lose its effectiveness thereby rendering it obsolete".

The need for domain expertise

The current framework's deficiencies are manifest across other dimensions. What stands out the most is the qualitative dimension of institutional capacity. The current method of appointment ignores the need for domain experience. As the Court noted in the Jet Airways case, "Members often lack the domain knowledge required to appreciate the nuanced complexities involved in high-stakes insolvency matters...". This creates a paradox where an institution tasked with resolving complex cases is hindered by a lack of specialised knowledge.

However, the problems run deeper than capacity limitations. There is also the bureaucratic labyrinth. There is no effective system in place before the NCLTs for urgent listings. And as noted by the Supreme Court, the staff of the Registry is given wide powers to list or not to list a particular matter. Perhaps most troubling is what the Court has termed a "growing tendency" among NCLT and NCLAT members to ignore or defy its orders, which threatens the very foundation of India's judicial hierarchy.

This is not merely about institutional efficiency. It is about institutional integrity.

Sparse use of alternatives

The procedural framework further exacerbates these constraints. The requirement for a mandatory hearing for all applications including for progress reports, which is not in any way necessary from the standpoint of natural justice, results in considerable delays. The limited use of alternative dispute settlement methods adds to the problems of an already overworked system.

Various jurisdictions across the globe contend with similar challenges pertaining to institutional capacity and procedural efficiency. Nevertheless, the magnitude of India's scale, its endemic corruption and its economic ambitions necessitate solutions that transcend mere incremental enhancements. The recent reform proposals, including the initiative for mandatory mediation prior to the submission of insolvency applications, present a degree of optimism.

Further, there needs to be a hybrid model that values judicial experience and domain expertise. Also, the time is ripe for procedural innovations that go beyond piecemeal changes. The creation of specialised benches for different categories of cases could enhance both efficiency and expertise and ensure that mergers and amalgamations are cleared in time.

Pertinently, infrastructure must not remain an afterthought. Adequate courtrooms and a qualified, permanent support staff are critical to sustaining these institutions within the broader economic framework. Above all, India's insolvency regime must evolve beyond mere debt resolution to serve as a proactive driver of economic rejuvenation, especially as the country aims to attract greater foreign investment. At this very important point in time, the choice is clear. The time for a bold reimagining is now.

Parties and their 'presidential' problems

The crucial post of 'State unit President' has ignited much political activity

STATE OF PLAY

Sharath S. Srivatsa

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Karnataka

Over the past few weeks, political circles in Karnataka have been abuzz with intense discussions on the post of the State unit presidents of all the three major political parties, i.e., the Indian National Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Janata Dal (Secular) or JD(S).

Both the ruling Congress and the Opposition BJP have been besieged with dissident activities to unseat the incumbent chiefs, while the JD(S) is anxious about the appointment of a new president amid rumours of the Congress making efforts to poach JD(S) legislators. Ironically, the leaders of all parties are taking pot-shots at rival political leaders on the issue of party leadership. There are some curious subplots too, such as the fact that the Belagavi-based Jarkiholi brothers – Ramesh and Satish – being in the forefront of seeking changes in the BJP and the Congress.

The key issues

In the Congress, the intervention of central leaders seems to have had a limited impact on the discussion of replacing Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President D.K. Shivakumar, who is also the State's Deputy Chief Minister. Senior cabinet Ministers from the Congress continue to make statements in the public domain, and these include K.N. Rajanna, Satish Jarkiholi and G. Parameshwara. Battled by the veiled attacks from his detractors, a miffed Deputy Chief Minister went to the extent of saying that "the president post was not sale in any store".

The Ministers have been speaking about the party's "one man one post" formula and Mr. Shivakumar being saddled with two important portfolios that is affecting organisational work. Internally, however, it is being speculated as the effort by those loyal to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to unsettle and weaken Mr. Shivakumar's hold on the party, who is waiting in the wings to helm the government.

The Chief Minister's loyalists have argued that Mr. Shivakumar, who took charge of the party in March 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, has completed his tenure and what is in place now is only an interim arrangement. A full-fledged president is required to lead the party into the taluk panchayat and zilla panchayat elections. The statements and counter-complaints have been so intense that the All India Congress Committee President, Mallikarjun Kharge, has asked all to "shut up and do their jobs".

The BJP too has been facing rebel trouble, with a section of veteran leaders opposing the first-time legislator and BJP State President, B.Y. Vijayendra. Appointed in November 2023, he is the son of former Karnataka Chief Minister and Lingayat strongman B.S. Yediyurappa.

Not only is the group led by the senior legislators Basangouda R. Patil Yatnal and Ramesh Jarkiholi openly defying

the party's diktats but it is also attempting to undermine Mr. Vijayendra's authority by making personal allegations, ultimately seeking his removal. The dissident group has accused Mr. Vijayendra of making compromises with the Congress on political issues, thus diluting the BJP's core ideology. Both groups have made multiple visits to New Delhi to meet central leaders, and Mr. Yatnal has been issued notice for his actions.

The lack of unity and effective leaders besides perceived groupism have affected the BJP. The saffron party is seen as having lacklustre outings in the legislature sessions where the ruling Congress's powerful Ministers and leaders have successfully defended the government despite there being major allegations of corruption and scandals. Though Mr. Vijayendra has been appointed for a term of three years, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that a BJP State unit President will be elected soon. Mr. Vijayendra has expressed his readiness to face this election just as the dissident group has said it is.

The JD(S), whose fortunes seem to be plummeting with each election, is also looking for a new president since the incumbent, H.D. Kumaraswamy, who is the Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, is unable to find the time to carry out his duties. A perceived move to promote his son, Nikhil Kumaraswamy – he has, so far, faced three consecutive electoral defeats – has been put off for the time being. The party has announced that the new president will be 'elected' by April 2025. In the past, the first family headed by the party supremo and former Prime Minister, H.D. Deve Gowda, had a say in appointing the presidents.

The Jet Airways case is one example of the many structural infirmities affecting India's insolvency regime

What the ceasefire deal means for Palestine and Israel

The process, with effect from Sunday, is to involve the freeing of hostages, the increasing of aid and the beginning of the extensive reconstruction of Gaza

DATA POINT

**Gautam Nirmal Doshi
Godhashri Srinivasan**

After over a year of war, a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took hold in the Gaza Strip on Sunday. Among other things, the ceasefire process would involve the freeing of hostages on both sides and increasing aid as well as a reconstruction of destroyed buildings and a cessation of attacks. The charts show the scale of the humanitarian crisis. The Gaza Strip's access to food and other supplies deteriorated sharply after October 7, 2023, the day of the Hamas attack. The number of humanitarian aid trucks entering the area plummeted from around 500 to 600 a day to a fraction of that (Chart 1). The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification reports show that at least 85% of Gaza's population was categorised as facing 'crisis', 'emergency' and 'catastrophic' levels of food insecurity ever since December 2023 (Chart 2). As of January 15, 2025, there were around 98 hostages. Even fewer were confirmed to be alive. This is of the 251 people taken hostage by Hamas on October 7 (Chart 3).

Analysis by the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT), showed that 69% of structures were damaged in the Gaza Strip, as of December 1, 2024. UNOSAT identified that 60,368 structures were destroyed, 20,050 were severely damaged, 56,292 moderately damaged, and 34,102 possibly damaged (Chart 4). Since September 6, 2024, when the earlier analysis of UNOSAT was carried out, the governorates of North Gaza and Rafah have experienced the highest rise in damage. Around 3,138 new structures were damaged in North Gaza and around 3,054 in Rafah. Within North Gaza, Jabalya municipality had the highest number of newly damaged structures, totalling 1,339 (Map).

Deaths, displacements and hunger

The data for the charts were sourced from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification reports, Reuters, AP and the United Nations Satellite Centre

Map: Damaged structures, by municipality, in Gaza (as of December 1, 2024)

Map is not to scale and not all municipalities have been mapped



Chart 3: Status of hostages held by Hamas (251 in total)

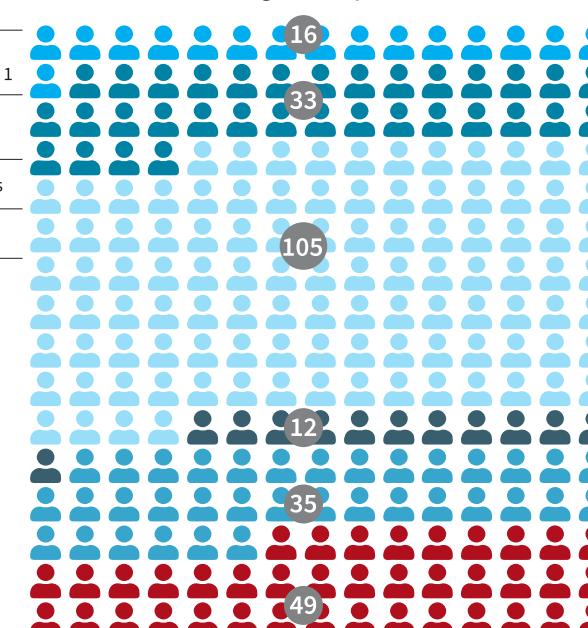


Chart 1: Fewer humanitarian aid trucks reached Gaza after the war

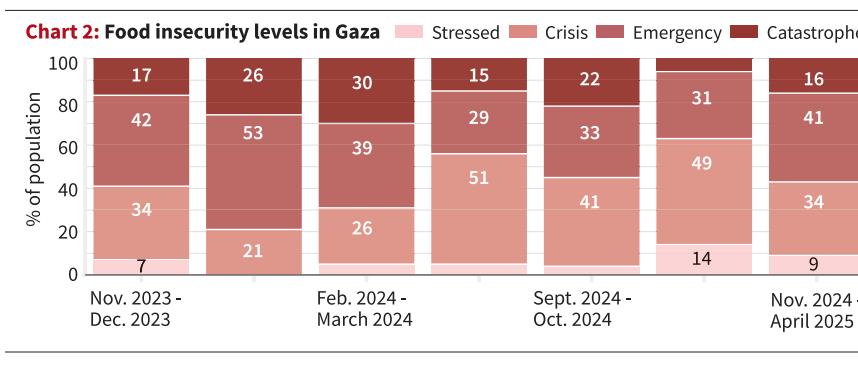
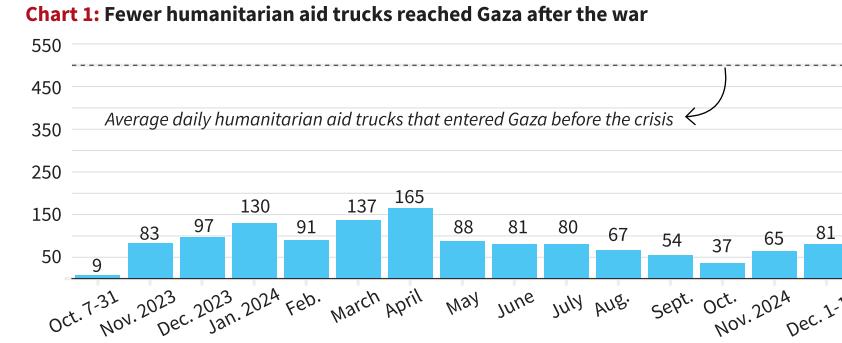


Chart 4:
Status of structures



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 20, 1975

Dock Workers Call Off Strike

NEW DELHI, Jan. 19.

The four-day-old strike of the port and dock workers was called off to-night following an agreement between workers' representatives and the Government.

The announcement of withdrawal of the strike with immediate effect was made by workers' representatives after the 11-hour marathon discussions with the Union Shipping Minister, Mr. Kamlapati Tripathi.

Workers will be paid by way of interim relief an amount of Rs. 120 for the period January 1, 1974 to July 5, 1974 and an amount of Rs. 180 for the period July 6, 1974 to December 31, 1974. For the period commencing from January 1 this year the workers will be paid by way of interim relief a sum of Rs. 50 a month. All these interim reliefs would be subject to the provisions of the Additional Emoluments Compulsory Deposit Act, 1974. The workers' representatives will meet the Minister again after one month to discuss how this interim relief should be treated.

Under the agreement the Government accepted the demand of the port and dock workers that the proposed wage revision should come into effect from January 1, 1974. The President of the Port and Dock Worker's Federation, Mr. S.R. Kulkarni, later said that half of the amount would be paid to the workers in cash. He congratulated the port and dock workers on the peaceful manner in which they conducted the strike. He also expressed his gratitude to Mr. Tripathi for his enlightened approach during the negotiations.

Mr. Tripathi expressed his happiness at the termination of the strike. He also thanked the workers for conducting the negotiations in a cordial manner. He said: "I believe that now the work will go on in ports as usual and the backlog will be cleared soon. It is always good to settle things by negotiations instead of resorting to strike."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 20, 1925

Queen Mother of Nepal

(Associated Press of India)

Her Majesty the Queen mother of Nepal and party left Madras last night at 7:40 by special train for Rameswaram. According to programme they will arrive Rameswaram on Thursday early morning. Enroute to Rameswaram they will halt for six hours at Trichinopoly and about eight hours at Madura. From Rameswaram they will pay a visit to Dhanushkodi on the 23rd. They leave Rameswaram after staying there for about 5 days on 26th instant reaching Arakkonam on the morning of 28th instant.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Habitual offenders extorted by the Delhi Police in 2024

1,100 Done under the Delhi Police Act, the extortions process which is aimed at maintaining peace is used to keep criminals away from specific areas for a set period. Data reveals that in 2022, the Delhi Police extorted 716 people and in 2023, 619. PTI

The five-year rubber plantation target that Tripura surpassed

30,000 hectare. The target was set under an initiative of the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA), and Tripura is now aiming to increase the plantation to 69,000 hectares. PTI

Number of farmers who ended their fast-unto-death protest

121 Dallewal (70), who has refused any aid since he sat on a fast-unto-death on November 26, agreed to take medical aid following the Centre's invitation for talks on February 14 to discuss farmers' demands. A group of 111 farmers had joined Dallewal's fast on January 15. PTI

Number of TikTok users in the U.S., as the app shuts down

170 million. TikTok users in the U.S. are no longer able to watch videos on the social media platform as a federal ban on the immensely popular app takes effect. The company's app was removed from prominent app stores, including the ones operated by Apple and Google. AP

French champagne shipments drop in 2024

10 In per cent. Economic and political uncertainties hit consumers' appetite for the sparkling wine in key markets. Producers had called for a cut in the grapes harvested this year after sales fell more than 15% in the first half of 2024. REUTERS
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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How is TRAI and the govt. combating spam?

How will blockchain technology effectively counter spam? What are some of the steps being taken by the government against unsolicited commercial communications? Have some of the measures already taken been effective against unwanted calls and messages? What is a do-not-disturb registry?

EXPLAINER

Aroon Deep

The story so far: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) will be using distributed ledger technology (DLT) to register spam preferences from customers, TRAI chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti said. Spam rules will be tightened to make commercial messages traceable, the TRAI has indicated.

What is TRAI's role in fighting spam? The TRAI regulates the telecom industry, and its main role is in regulating Unsolicited Commercial Communications (UCC), the official name for spam. Starting in 2007, the regulator implemented a do-not-disturb (DND) registry, which would force telemarketers to abide by customer preferences when it came to commercial calls.

If a telecom customer signs up to the DND registry, they are not supposed to get any spam calls or SMS messages.

TRAI had also worked with an external agency to develop a DND app, which would allow customers to register their DND preference, and accept complaints. Under the Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulation (TCCCCPR), 2018, telemarketers who called or sent messages to DND-registered customers would receive warnings, and if enough warnings accumulated, they would be blacklisted from sending messages to telecom operators.

The DND app has not always been maintained by the TRAI, and was briefly unavailable from 2022 onwards. An SMS reporting facility where users would have to report messages in a particular format was available, but further steps were taken to make the process more user friendly. In 2024, TRAI mandated that DND reporting be made available on every telecom provider's app.



GETTY IMAGES

What role does blockchain play?

In order to fight the deluge of spam messages, TRAI mandated in the TCCCCPR that telcos use a blockchain ledger, also known as a distributed ledger, in order to store a constantly-updated list of approved senders of SMS messages. Telcos would also be required to approve specific formats of messages. For instance, an OTP message that goes, "Your OTP is 432212," would be stored in the blockchain as "Your OTP is ..." with space for a variable. These messages have been required to be sent from sender IDs, and not phone numbers.

This has been one of the most stringent rules that have been issued to fight SMS spam anywhere in the world. Blockchain as a technology allows for so-called immutability, which means that every stakeholder involved in a transaction has

a reliable, un-tamperable version of the same data. At the time of the 2018 regulations, the necessity to use blockchain for the purpose of maintaining a spam exemption database was debated, as enthusiasm about the technology's potential had spilled over beyond cryptocurrencies, where it continues to be a mainstay.

In 2024, the regulations were tightened to ensure "traceability" of messages, thus making sure that telcos would have a complete record of who issued a message before it is sent to an SMS gateway. This was aimed at plugging a crucial flaw in the system that would allow anyone to register on the blockchain solutions implemented by telecom operators and send out fraudulent or spam messages in spite of the systems in place to combat them. These, Mr. Lahoti has said, will be

further tightened in the coming year.

Have these measures been effective?

For those who have registered their DND preferences, communications from legitimate businesses that follow the rules may have reduced. However, spam has a constantly changing character. While much of spam is merely commercial messages that may be annoying but harmless, the wave of digitisation has increased incentives to get around the protections against commercial messaging and calling. A wave of fraudulent calls have also emerged, with cyber frauds seeking to ensnare Indians in financial scams. Many of these operations are done outside the framework of SMS sender IDs, and are run through disposable 10-digit phone numbers, making it hard for real-time enforcement of anti-spam regulations.

There is also the issue of spam and scam calls from international numbers, which can be leased from certain online Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) providers, but appear as legitimate international call traffic.

Which are the other steps taken by the government to end spam? The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has launched the Sanchar Saathi portal, which has a reporting site called Chakshu. DoT has partnered with law enforcement, banks, and other stakeholders in order to accept reports of "suspected fraudulent" calls and messages, and has moved to cancel lakhs of numbers that are associated with unauthorised telemarketers and scammers.

It also set up the Telecom Security Operation Centre at its New Delhi headquarters to monitor suspicious internet traffic in real time. Meanwhile, firms like Airtel have taken steps to declare suspicious calls using Artificial Intelligence as "Suspected Spam," a move that is being replicated by other telcos as well. The telco has also started labelling international calls on smartphones.

THE GIST

▼ The TRAI regulates the telecom industry, and its main role is in regulating Unsolicited Commercial Communications (UCC), the official name for spam.

▼ Spam has a constantly changing character. While much of spam is merely commercial messages that may be annoying but harmless, the wave of digitisation has increased incentives to get around the protections against commercial messaging and calling.

▼ Firms like Airtel have taken steps to declare suspicious calls using Artificial Intelligence as "Suspected Spam," a move that is being replicated by other telcos as well.

What did the ILO report state about international migrants?

Why are there more male international migrants in the global labour force than women? Which are the countries that have absorbed the most international migrant workers?

Garinella Subramaniam

The story so far: By addressing labour market shortages in host nations and contributing remittances to home countries, International Migrants (IM) continue to make contributions to world economic growth, the fourth edition of 'Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers', released by the International Labour Organization (ILO), said.

What did the ILO state? In 2022, IMs made up 4.7% (167.7 million) of the global labour force, defined as both employed and unemployed (but available for work); over 30 million more than in 2013. An estimated 155.6 million were employed and 12.1 million unemployed. The share of IM men in the total employment for males globally was

estimated at 4.7% and that of IM women at 4.4%. However, between 2019-2022, the rate of growth dipped annually to less than 1%, influenced among other factors by the pandemic.

What about age and gender? A higher proportion of IM males were employed – 61.3% out of a total of 102.7 million. Conversely, only 38.7% female IMs were employed out of a total of 64.9 million in 2022. All the same, the number of women IMs has steadily risen ever since the ILO began compiling global estimates in 2015.

One explanation for the smaller proportion of women in the global labour force is their lower representation in the total population of IMs.

At 74.9% (125.6 million), prime-age adult IM workers – those aged between 25 and 54 years, both men and women – constituted the largest majority of IM

workers in the labour force in 2022. Less than one out of 10 IMs were below 25. Way behind the above category, at 9.3% were young IM workers, aged between 15-24 years, numbering 15.5 million, in the global labour force. IMs aged between 55-64 years were 12.5% and those above 65 at 3.4%.

Which economic sectors attract IMs? The largest proportion of IMs, 68.4%, were concentrated in the services sector, even higher than non-migrants. Women IMs held the dominant share in this arena at 80.7%, as against 60.8% among their male counterparts. The corresponding figures for non-migrant women and men in the services industry were 59.4% and 46.3% respectively. Significantly, the dominance of IMs in this sector has remained consistent over the decade, upwards of 67% between 2013-2022. In industry, the proportion of IMs was 24.3%.

and that of non-migrants 24.2%. In agriculture, IMs accounted for 7.4%, whereas non-migrants were at a significantly higher share of 24.3%.

Which are the main host countries?

High-income countries absorbed the largest number of IMs, accounting for 68.4% (114 million people), in key sectors such as services, especially in the provision of care. At about a quarter of this share, 17.4% (29.2 million), were distributed among upper-middle-income countries. For an entire decade between 2013-2022, high-income and upper-middle-income countries have consistently remained primary destinations for IMs.

The share of IM workers in northern, southern and western Europe in the year 2022 was at 23.3%, increasing by less than one percentage point after 2013. In Northern America on the other hand, the share of IMs in the labour force in 2022 was at 22.6%, a more than one percentage point decrease over the same decade. The Arab states accounted for 13.3% of IM workers in 2022, down three percentage points over 2013. A combination of ageing populations, growing demand in the care economy and greater economic opportunities means that high income countries will continue to remain attractive destinations for the bulk of IMs.

The writer is Director, Strategic Initiatives, AgnoShin Technologies.

THE GIST

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CACHE

The impact of H-1B visas on the tech industry in U.S.

Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, both immigrants and Mr. Trump's picks to overhaul the U.S. government, are supportive of the skilled foreign worker visa programme

John Xavier

The last week of 2024 didn't exude the holiday spirit for several folks in the tech world. A section of billionaires, politicians, and tech workers were piqued by a specific U.S. immigration policy that allows skilled foreign workers to work in the country.

A verbal mudslinging began after President-elect Donald Trump appointed Sriram Krishnan as his senior policy advisor on Artificial Intelligence (AI). Within days after the announcement, Laura Loomer, a prominent MAGA supporter, wrote rancorous social media posts against the decision, calling Indian immigrants "third world invaders." The right-wing influencer then doxxed Mr. Krishnan, sharing his domicile details scoured from the U.S. Federal Election Commission (FEC). While Ms. Loomer apologised for doxxing Mr. Krishnan, she remains rooted in the idea that the number of skilled foreign workers must be reduced in the U.S. as the programme is negatively impacting native workers.

Mr. Krishnan, an Indian immigrant who came through the ranks of top tech firms in the Silicon Valley, supports simplifying the legal process for tech workers to enter the U.S. His stance has been echoed by several tech billionaires. His to-be-peer in the Trump administration, former PayPal executive David Sacks, came in support of the AI6z's general partner and clarified that Mr. Krishnan did not advocate for the removal of restrictions for a green card but was only seeking the removal of country-specific caps.

Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, both immigrants and Mr. Trump's picks to overhaul the U.S. government, are supportive of the skilled foreign worker visa programme. The world's richest man even said he would "go to war" to defend the programme. In an X post, he wrote: "The reason I'm in America along with so many critical people who built SpaceX, Tesla, and hundreds of other companies that made America strong is because of H-1B." The H-1B issue has not just split MAGA supporters; it has also turned some prominent Democrats, who were pro-immigration during the election season, into H-1B programme bashers. For instance, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders said the main function of the H-1B visa "is not to hire 'the best and the brightest' but rather to replace good-paying American jobs with low-wage indentured servants from abroad."

Heated debates on the H-1B visa programme are not a new phenomenon. It helps to know the programme's brief history – at least from the time it went through a major revision in the 90s – and its net impact on wages and productivity in the U.S.

A brief history

In the early 90s, the U.S. enacted the Immigration Act of 1990 to increase the number and diversity of immigrants coming into the country and to adapt to the changing economic and social needs of a globalising world. The legislation significantly revised and expanded the H-1B visa programme.

Apart from mandating employers to file



ISTOCKPHOTO

an application with the labour department that hiring H-1B workers will not adversely affect wages and working conditions of U.S. workers, the law established an annual cap of 65,000 new H-1B visas for each fiscal year.

These changes led to a substantial increase in the number of H-1B visas issued and made the programme more accessible to U.S. employers seeking high-skilled foreign workers. This, in turn, contributed to the programme's role in attracting skilled workers at a time when American companies were facing intensifying global competition, especially from Japan in high-tech and manufacturing sectors.

Silicon Valley was emerging as a global tech hub, creating unprecedented

demand for scientists, technology professionals, engineers, and mathematicians (STEM workers). Traditional industries in other parts of the country were also undergoing rapid computerisation, requiring STEM talent that wasn't readily available in the domestic workforce.

The cap on H-1B visas were hiked to 1,95,000 during the dot-com boom before returning to the base cap. Then, in 2004, an additional 20,000 slots were added for advanced degree holders from U.S. universities. Since 1990 to 2019, roughly 4.5 million H-1B visas were issued, and in the fiscal year of 2023, 72% of approved H-1B petitions were for beneficiaries born in India, and 65% of all approved H-1B petitions were for workers in

computer-related occupations.

The impact of H-1B workers

A 2013 study, titled 'STEM Workers, H-1B Visas, and Productivity in U.S. Cities' by economist Giovanni Peri, found that H-1B workers had a positive impact on the wages of native college-educated workers and overall productivity in U.S. cities.

The study examined the influx of foreign STEM workers through the H-1B visa programme and their impact in 219 cities between 1990 to 2010. It noted that H-1B-driven increases in STEM workers boosted wages for native college-educated workers. A one percentage point increase in the foreign STEM share of a city's employment led to an increase of around 7.8 percentage points in the wages of native college-educated workers.

Also, wages of non-college-educated native workers saw a positive, though smaller, increase. These workers experienced a 3-4 percentage point increase in wages for every one percentage point increase in the foreign STEM share of employment. The study estimates that the growth in foreign STEM workers may account for 30% to 50% of aggregate productivity growth in the U.S. between 1990 and 2010. Fast forward to 2024, and the impact of foreign workers on U.S. wages and productivity continued to be positive.

In a follow-up study, titled 'Immigration's Effect on US Wages and Employment Redux,' economists Alessandro Caiumi and Giovanni Peri note that immigrants and native workers complement each other in the labour market. In their research that examines the broader impact of immigration on the U.S. labour market between 2000 and 2022, they found that immigrants often specialise in different and complementary occupations compared to native workers.

In a separate study that documents the impact of H-1B workers on innovation and product commercialisation, Harvard Business School Professor William Kerr notes that skilled immigrants have contributed significantly to U.S. patent activity, particularly in emerging technologies. Jennifer Hunt, Professor of Economics at Rutgers University, has shown in her research that H-1B workers who transition to permanent residency tend to be particularly innovative and entrepreneurial, often founding companies that create jobs for U.S. workers.

Talent conundrum in the age of AI
Despite the positive impact of H-1B workers on the U.S. economy, opponents of the visa programme are clamouring for restrictions and lowering the number of legal immigrants. Some criticisms, particularly the ones against Indian tech services companies like Infosys and Cognizant, are well-laid.

These companies developed a business model that combined offshore development centres in India with on-site presence in the U.S., facilitated by H-1B visas. This model, sometimes called the "global delivery model," transformed how technology services were delivered to U.S. companies, but it did not truly make a path-breaking innovation for the U.S. economy.

These companies typically rank among the top H-1B sponsors annually. For instance, in many years between 2005-2019, Indian companies accounted for a substantial portion of all H-1B visa petitions. This has raised concerns about the programme's concentration among top IT services firms.

It will do well for the incoming Trump administration to look into these practices and redraft a skilled worker immigration policy that prioritises the skill and educational background of an individual over a company's profit-making interests.



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

She isn't pulling her weight in the team

Everyone was supposed to have their hair in two plaits. Please start braiding your hair now

S. Upendran

What is the meaning and origin of 'pull one's weight'? (K. Natarajan)

The idiom 'pull one's weight' is mostly used in informal contexts to mean to do one's share of work; you cooperate with the other members of your team to complete a job. You achieve this by working as hard as them; your contribution towards an enterprise is the same as the others.

Your manager tells me that you haven't been pulling your weight. What seems to be the problem?

He accused several members on the team of not pulling their weight.

'Pull one's weight' is an idiom which has been around since the 19th century. According to scholars, it originated in the sport of rowing. In this sport, several people sit in a boat and attempt to row it as quickly as possible. In order to achieve this, teamwork is essential. The participants need to ensure they are all in sync while rowing, and also, that every individual puts in the same effort as the others. Each individual 'pulls his weight' by applying all his strength to each stroke. If a member fails to do so, he becomes a burden on the team. Nowadays, the idiom is mostly used while discussing the value of an employee.

How is the word 'plait' pronounced? (R. Sangeetha, Nellore)

How this word is pronounced depends on which side of the Atlantic the individual is from. An American would pronounce it like the word 'plate'. An Englishman, on the other hand, would rhyme the word with 'flat'. 'Plait' comes from the Old French 'pleir' meaning 'to fold'. As children, most girls in our country, get their hair plaited by their mother. What is it that mothers do? They take two or three strands of hair and cross them over each other and create a pattern of some sort. This process is called plaiting. Any string like material can be plaited.

The three-year old had fun plaiting her grandfather's beard.

Americans prefer to use the word 'braid' – rhymes with 'trade' and 'grade' – rather than 'plait'. They talk about 'braiding one's hair', rather than 'plaiting one's hair'!

The mother spent a lot of time teaching her daughters how to braid their hair.

What is the meaning of the expression 'to nix something'? (J. Hamsa, Mysore)

The word 'nix' rhymes with 'kicks', 'fix' and 'ticks'. When you 'nix' someone's plan, what you are doing is to prevent it from happening. You put an end to it by saying 'no' to it. This informal expression can also be used to mean 'refuse to accept' or 'veto' something.

I asked for a raise, but my boss nixed it.
upendrankye@gmail.com

THE DAILY QUIZ

Late American filmmaker David Lynch was born on January 20, 1946. Here is a quiz on the acclaimed director and his works

Abhinaya. K

QUESTION 1

Lynch made his first experimental short film while he was a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. The short film is a continuously looping animation of human figures. Name the film.

QUESTION 2

After watching Lynch's first feature film *Eraserhead*, the creator of this very popular space opera wanted the former to direct the third movie of the franchise. Lynch is said to have turned down the offer. Name the franchise and the movie.

QUESTION 3

Lynch appeared in an award-winning film directed by Steven Spielberg. Identify the movie and name the character Lynch played.

QUESTION 4

Lynch was awarded an honorary Academy Award in 2019. How many times has he been nominated for an Oscar and which film earned him his first Oscar nomination?

QUESTION 5

Name the writer who co-created an iconic surrealist mystery-horror drama television series along with Lynch.



Visual question:

Identify this actor who is a long-time collaborator with Lynch. He played the lead Henry Spencer in *Eraserhead*.

Questions and Answers to the January 17 edition of the daily quiz: 1. Name the three Bronte sisters. **Ans:** Anne, Emily and Charlotte Brontë

2. The second novel of Anne Bronte. **Ans:** *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

3. The three of them have worked on a collection of poems, 21 from Anne and 21 from Emily and 19 from Charlotte in this book. **Ans:** *Poems by Currier, Ellis, and Acton Bell*

4. Along with Anne's *Agnes Grey*, name the two well-known novels of the other two sisters. **Ans:** *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily

5. This sister publicly revealed the real identities of all three sisters. **Ans:** Charlotte

Visual: Identify this place. **Ans:** Brontë Parsonage Museum

Early Birds: Siddhartha Viswanathan| K.N. Viswanathan| Tito Shiladitya| Piyal Tuli| Dodo Jayaditya

Word of the day

Widget:

something unspecified whose name is either forgotten or not known; a device or control that is very useful for a particular job

Synonyms: appliance, contraption, convenience, gadget

Usage: These widgets are now more technologically advanced.

Pronunciation: newshtd.live/widgetpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /wɪdʒɪt/

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

Lit for Life

'Language should connect with people'



Carnatic musician Sanjay Subrahmanyam, during a conversation with Krupa Ge, the co-author of his memoir, and Sowmya Ashok, explained how reading Tamil literature influenced the way he sang his songs. In Carnatic music, the language has changed because Thyagaraja composed at a time when Telugu was a court

Sanjay Subrahmanyam

language. But when you want to move the music out, you need to talk or sing in languages that are acceptable and accessible, he said.

The life skill with an anchor to the past

Food anchors us to our past and keeps us rooted while writing recipes are like word paintings, said Sunita Kohli, who has published *The Indian Cookbook*, a compilation of recipes, during the session 'Secrets of the Indian kitchen: stories about food'. Ms. Kohli, with food writer Ruth DSouza Prabhu and Pankaja Srinivasan,

shared personal anecdotes and discussed recipes during their session to highlight that cooking is a life skill, not a task.

Food makes memories and helps to cling on to our traditions, she said.

"Food evolves as it goes along melding together influences of different cultures and places. With our personal histories defining us, cookbooks are a lens to view a particular society or world by those who love food," she added.



Sunita Kohli, right, and Ruth DSouza Prabhu, centre, in conversation with Pankaja Srinivasan. VELANKANNI RAJ B

An ambassador to the world of literature



The former Assistant Secretary-General of the UN and now author Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri spoke about her debut novel, *Swallowing the Sun*, in conversation with artist Latha Menon, recounting her journey from being a diplomat to a writer. Her debut novel is a sweeping narrative set against India's

freedom movement. The novel celebrates Marathi literature, in more ways than one, as the writer intersperses the prose with Marathi spiritual hymns.

IN BRIEF



People wear different hats in different contexts: Manu Pillai

In a special session commemorating four decades of the *Frontline* magazine, author and historian Manu S. Pillai sat down with *Frontline*'s Editor Vaishna Roy to discuss his latest book *Gods, Guns and Missionaries* as an antecedent to exploring the arrival of modern-day Hinduism. Asked why he chose to write on Hinduism, Mr. Pillai said that identity in India has many blurred lines and cannot be boxed easily into binaries. "In India, people hold both religious identity and social identity as equally important things rather than viewing them as opposing forces... People wear different hats in different contexts."



Writing made Kamal Haasan's films stand out, says Nassar

It was the writing that made Kamal Haasan's films stand out, said actor Nassar in a conversation with film academic K. Hariharan and actor Abhirami. "Very few know him (Mr. Haasan) as a writer, because the films he made like *Tevar Magan*, *Hey Raam*... it is always the writing which took the film to a different level," he said. Mr. Hariharan, whose book *Kamal Haasan: A Cinematic Journey*, explores Mr. Haasan's career through 40 films, said when he first told the actor about his project, the latter was surprised. "His first reaction was, 'Are you kidding? Do you really think there are 40 worth watching?'" he said.



Nalini Malani speaks about her revolutionary work of art

Art has been intertwined in Nalini Malani's life since her twenties, with the written word creating space for experimental form of art. At the session, "You can't keep acid in a paper bag", Ms. Malani said her art had been primarily influenced by the books she had travelled with throughout her life. The body of work Ms. Malani presented to her audience at *The Hindu* Lit for Life was a compilation from her art exhibition around the world, each piece addressing a variety of themes, most notably, how she uses art as a form of resistance, speaking to issues such as violence against women, and the plight of dispossessed. "I work in the contemporary times even if I speak about old mythologies, they all have a meaning to me," said Ms. Malani.

Sponsors

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

Liberalism and Hinduism are totally compatible, says Shashi Tharoor

The MP says his book *Why I am A Hindu* was written at a time when it was necessary to offer an alternative view to 'weaponisation of Hinduism for political purposes'; he says no one has monopoly in Hinduism and the assumption that everyone who votes for BJP believes in Hindutva is not true

N. Sai Charan CHENNAI

Hinduism offers an extraordinarily eclectic mix of choices and is totally compatible with liberalism, Shashi Tharoor, MP, said at the Lit for Life on Sunday.

Mr. Tharoor was in conversation with N. Ravi, Director, Kasturi and Sons Ltd., and Francesc Miralles, author of the book *The four purusharthas: The Path To Happiness, Success, and a Meaningful Life*.

Explaining why he wrote a book called *Why I am A Hindu*, Mr. Tharoor said it was done at a time when "weaponisation of Hinduism for political purposes in our country had reached a particular stage" where it was "necessary to offer an alternative view". "I was not prepared to surrender my faith to one particular narrow interpretation," he said, adding that he thought writing this book was necessary "to reclaim the



Current concerns: Shashi Tharoor, MP, in conversation with N. Ravi, Director, The Hindu Group, and writer Francesc Miralles at the Lit for Life on Sunday. R. RAGU

idea of Hinduism" for those Hindus who wish to agree with him. "And it turned out to be awful... [but] found some resonance amongst the new readers," he said recalling the controversy the book evoked when it was published in 2018.

Mr. Tharoor said Hinduism was an ideal faith

for the 21st century. "No one is taking a monopoly in Hinduism. Swami Vivekananda said it is not just a religion that teaches tolerance, it teaches universal acceptance. There are multiple choices of worship and individuals have tremendous amounts of freedom," he said.

Responding to a ques-

tion on the public support for Hindutva reflected in the last three general elections, Mr. Tharoor pointed out that the BJP got 31% of the votes in the 2014 election, 37% in 2019, and 36% in 2024.

"In no case, they have won a majority of the Hindu population, which is 80%. We tend to lose sight



particularly across northern India, than there was 10 years ago. That is partially a reflection of the success of the BJP in politics," the Congress MP said.

Cradle of spirituality

Talking about writing a book on the four Purusharthas, Mr. Miralles said, "India is the cradle of spirituality. Answers to questions like what it means to be human, and what is the meaning of life were answered in Indian philosophies. The roots are here. India is not only an inspiration that comes from the past, but it is an inspiration for the future too."

Speaking about happiness, Mr. Miralles said, "I would define happiness in two ways. The first is simplicity. The happiest people we have met in our lives are very simple. Another one is purpose. When you discover your mission in life, that would give happiness."

Soumya Swaminathan calls for body to regulate environmental health

Geetha Srimathi CHENNAI

India needs a regulatory agency to address interconnected issues of public health and environment, said Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson of M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and former Chief Scientist at the World Health Organization.

Dr. Swaminathan, who was in a discussion on "One Health: guiding our future" along with Supriya Sahu, Health Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu, and Ramya Kannan, Health Editor, *The Hindu*, at Lit for Life on Sunday, said the integration of data on animal and human health is essential to ad-



Interconnected issues: Soumya Swaminathan, right, and Supriya Sahu, left, with Ramya Kannan. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

dress interconnected challenges such as zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, and food security.

She highlighted three critical environmental challenges: biodiversity loss, climate change, and global warming, and pollution of land and water.

She spoke about the interconnectedness of these issues, drawing from conservationist Rachel Carson's insight that "in nature, nothing exists alone".

The speakers agreed that human beings often tend to work in silos.

During events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, people come together, demonstrating the potential of unity. Yet, once the urgency fades, the collaborative spirit often wanes, said Dr. Swaminathan, adding that the challenge lies in sustaining this momentum.

Ms. Sahu said government departments will establish a coordinated mechanism for integrating data on zoonotic diseases, as part of Tamil Nadu's 'One Health' efforts.

Highlighting the role of community involvement in One Health initiatives, Ms. Sahu said the success of various programmes highlights the importance of community participation.

Delving into science of ageing, mortality



In the long run: Venki Ramakrishnan, left, in conversation with Sashi Kumar at Lit for Life. M. VEDHAN

Geetha Srimathi CHENNAI

Nobel laureate and biologist Venki Ramakrishnan, in a conversation with journalist and media entrepreneur Sashi Kumar, at the Lit for Life on Sunday, unpacked the biological and societal implications of ageing.

Drawing from his book *Why We Die: The New Science of Ageing and the Quest for Immortality*, Mr. Ramakrishnan offered a broad view of the science behind mortality, framed by evolutionary theory and emerging research.

A central theme of the discussion was evolution's role in shaping the human lifespan. Mr. Ramakrishnan explained that natural selection prioritised traits that enhanced reproductive success, not longevity. "Ageing is a byproduct of evolution favouring genes that help us pass on our DNA. Beyond that, evolution doesn't care how long we live," he said.

This evolutionary framework also explains why large animals, such as whales, tend to live longer. Their size offers protection

Queen Sembiyan was the real founder of the Chola Empire, says Kanisetti

Dennis S. Jesudasan CHENNAI

In his contentions on the components of the Chola Empire and the elements that made it great, public historian Anirudh Kanisetti argued that Chola queen Sembiyan Mahadevi, in many ways, was the "real founder" of the Chola Empire.

In a conversation with author Ashwita Jayakumar during the session "The mighty Cholas" at the Lit for Life, Mr. Kanisetti said if not for the queen Sembiyan Mahadevi,



Royal musings: Anirudh Kanisetti, right, in conversation with Ashwita Jayakumar at Lit For Life. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

"there would not have been the Chola Empire".

Elaborating on how she patronised temples and

built popular support for the Chola Empire, Mr. Kanisetti said the queen clearly saw temple construction as a very important part of the public persona.

"I am willing to argue that Sembiyan Mahadevi, in many ways, is the real founder of the Chola Empire, as we know it, because she builds this popular support, she builds this tax base and that is what enables her grand nephew Rajaraja Chola to go out on these extraordinary campaigns of conquests," he said, pointing out from his historical records on how one could notice that there were not any royals before her, especially in the Chola Empire.

When geography and displacement are ‘terribly important’ to the story

In the session on ‘How places impact writing’, Abraham Verghese recalls that as a perennial outsider, he was able to notice things that the locals did not notice in Tennessee; Peter Frankopan says while history solidifies people’s names and events, geography dictates how we think about the world

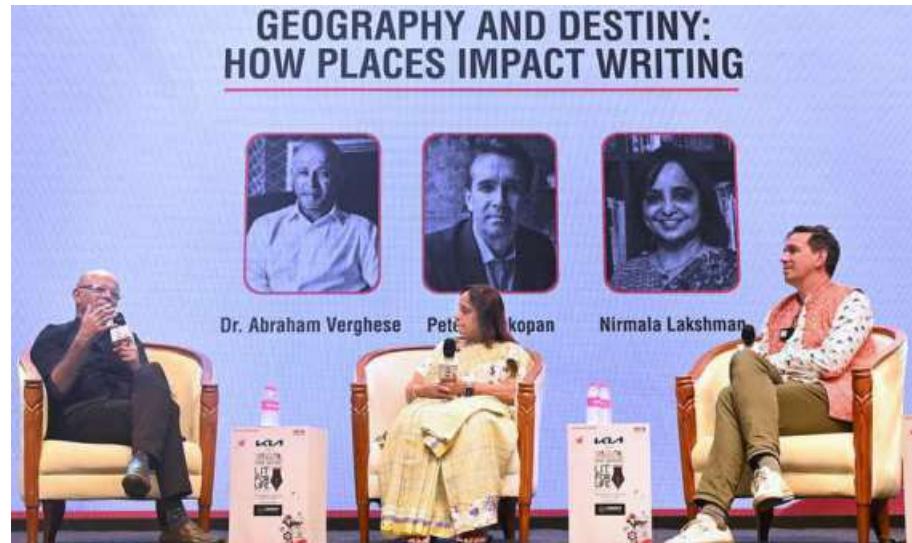
Radhika Santhanam
CHENNAI

How does geography impact writing? How can we make history more inclusive? How important is the concept of home? How does politics affect the movement of people?

These were some of the questions discussed at the Lit for Life session titled “Geography and destiny: how places impact writing”. The conversation between novelist Abraham Verghese and historian Peter Frankopan was moderated by Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson, The Hindu Group.

Dr. Verghese spoke of how geography played a major role in changing his destiny. He was born in Ethiopia to Indian parents and was later displaced by revolution and civil war. From Ethiopia, he moved to India, and then to the U.S. This, he said, changed his concept of home.

“Personally, it’s a disadvantage. But for a writer, this is not a bad thing,” Dr. Verghese said. “It is because I was a perennial outsider that I was able to notice things that the locals did not notice in Tennessee [the location of his



Tale of places: Novelist Abraham Verghese, left, and historian Peter Frankopan, right, in conversation with Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson, The Hindu Group, at the Lit for Life on Sunday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

book, *My Own Country*

History and geography

Speaking of the connections between history and geography, Mr. Frankopan said that first, as a historian, he was not a soloist. “My orchestra is in the voices of many people who have lived before me in many parts of the world and I have the luxury of amplifying their voices,” he said.

Mr. Frankopan spoke of the challenges of writing

about the world. “We always leave a certain set of people behind. In Chennai, this weekend, I don’t think anyone is going to be talking of central or south America. But we can have conversations about geography even while remembering that a large number of people do not leave home. History is not just about geography or destiny, but about how we sit in the large time and space continuum.”

Increasingly regional

Speaking of the challenge of inclusivity while writing

history, he said, “Big buildings and theatres are the products of establishment of hierarchies, whether religious or secular; they are expressions of power. Those are the histories of the elite. But to be all-inclusive, we also need to remember that history is also about the mundane: the voices of women, of labour forces, and so on.”

Dr. Verghese responded saying that though the world was speaking more and more about inclusivity, it was becoming increasingly regional.

Mr. Frankopan under-



ple across geographies. Dr. Verghese said he was struck by the stories that governments tell to make themselves palatable to the people when those stories were, in fact, completely different from reality.

Mr. Frankopan responded to this observation by tracing migration patterns in the U.S.

“We have all heard of the story of the American dream and there is some truth to it. But at some point, if you were Spanish or Portuguese, you were not welcome. In the early 20th century, there was anti-Chinese legislation. The U.S. is highly selective in how it tells its stories,” he said.

The session concluded with Dr. Lakshman speaking of the idea of *ooru* or region, which she elaborated in her book *Tamilis: The Portrait of a Community*. “The earliest communities of Tamil people decided to divide their habitation into five eco-zones or *thinai*. Civilisations and communities grew with specific professions oriented to the geography of the land,” she said.

“This set the tone for the success of local communities right from the early ages of Tamil history.”

IN BRIEF



Miss Malini and Krish Ashok's survival kit for Internet age

Digital influencer Malini Agarwal (also known as Miss Malini) and Krish Ashok, author of *The Masala Lab*, took the audience at *The Hindu* Lit for Life through their journey through the cyber world on Sunday, touching upon the subjects of online etiquette, how to deal with trolls, the creation and consumption ratio, kindness, and even the use of AI, which all act as a survival kit to survive and thrive in the virtual world. The Internet is infested with trolls and bullies, whose only aim is to grab attention. “The anatomy of a troll is generally someone who is really angry about something and in very few cases does the trolling have anything to do with you,” said Ms. Agarwal adding that online trolls must not be taken personally.



Mental health the secret for disease-free life, say doctors

The secret of a healthy, disease-free life is the inner health. Stressing over small issues, and holding grudges could lead to a stressful life, said doctors at the session on ‘The promise of integrative medicine’. Homoeopath and founder of Soukya International Holistic Health Centre Issac Mathai and neuropsychiatrist and founder of Buddha Clinic and Neurokrish Foundation E.S. Krishnamoorthy in a conversation with author Vasudha Rai, explained why disease occurred. Dr. Isaac said he found that physical health bordered on the well-being of a person’s inner health. Youth are more aware of their mental health but they are also under pressure, similarly among older people the issue is the loneliness that predisposes them to depression, Dr. Krishnamoorthy pointed out.



Exhibit details the best of The Hindu's Ground Zero

An exhibit on the best Ground Zero stories from *The Hindu* captivated visitors at *The Hindu* Lit for Life 2025. Ground Zero is a weekly series of narrative journalism on significant events. As Suresh Nambath, Editor of *The Hindu*, describes it, the stories shed light on “the lives of ordinary people caught in extraordinary circumstances”. A book compiling the finest Ground Zero stories from recent years has been published, and the exhibit was centered on this collection. It featured stories and photographs from major events, including the Wayanad landslide, the R.G. Kar rape and murder, and the hoolch deaths in Tamil Nadu. The exhibit, designed by Sunalini Mathew, Associate Editor, Dinesh Krishnan, Visual Editor, and Radhika Santhanam, Senior Assistant Editor, provided an immersive experience of these stories.

When the mighty pen breaks stereotypes



Breaking the bias: Huma Qureshi, centre, and Shinie Antony, right, in conversation with Nandini Krishnan. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Soma Basu
CHENNAI

Challenging gender stereotypes, actor Huma Qureshi who has turned author with her debut novel *Zeba: An Accidental Superhero* and author Shinie Antony with her book *Eden Abandoned: The Story of Lilith*, offered thought-provoking words in their session on “Wonder women: powerful women in fiction” at Lit for Life on Sunday.

Moderated by Nandini Krishnan, the panel explored the portrayal of women protagonists as misfits if they break boundaries and the accepted structure in society.

Ms. Qureshi said her book is a tribute to every woman who breaks every rule. “I am obsessed with the idea of misfits saving the world. My version of reluctant superhero is nothing like the powdered and manicured well-behaved person but a girl like Zeba, a rich New Yorker

Aruna Roy and T.M. Krishna peel off the layers of identity existing in India

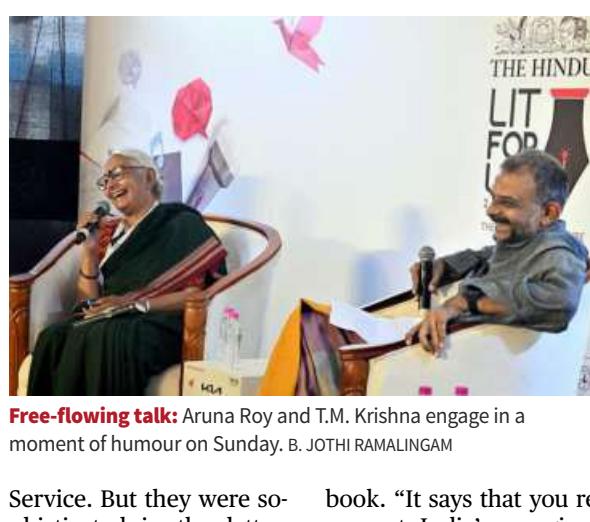
Sanjana Ganesh
CHENNAI

In a captivating session full of wit, punch lines, and laughter, social activist Aruna Roy and Carnatic musician T.M. Krishna attempted to peel the layers off the ‘identity onion’ in their conversation “Personal is political” at the Lit for Life on Sunday.

Even as they began, the two writers who have been friends for 20 years, engaged in repartee. “We have started off with an argument. We have been suggesting that the other begin,” Mr. Krishna said.

The speaker and the moderator have distinct identities outside their books – one is a famous social activist and former IAS officer, while the other is a celebrated Carnatic musician – but decided to jump right in and discuss the theme of the session, fashioned on Ms. Roy’s book *The Personal is Political - An Activist’s Memoir*.

Mr. Krishna wondered aloud how Ms. Roy engaged with the ‘grey’ layers of her identity. Here, she spoke about making choices that propelled equality and prevented misuse of power and discrimination. She added that bullies had existed throughout her life, both in school and in the Indian Administrative



Service. But they were sophisticated in the latter, she said. But the commitment was to fight for what was right. “I have always been an aggressive woman who began fighting battles early on,” she said.

As she had no history of suppression when she moved to Delhi, she only presented parts of her identity that engaged with her gender and class. It did not pervade into her caste, she said.

However, this conversation of intersectionality, particularly on privilege, was one she actively engaged with, she said, quoting how her friend, Naruti, a Dalit woman from rural Rajasthan, often challenged her.

This is when Mr. Krishna interjected with a question that challenged one of the remarks regarding the

whether their deliberation on their respective identities was sometimes narcissistic or limiting, the two had distinct answers.

While Ms. Roy suggested that accountability was key to preventing a sense of over-analysing, Mr. Krishna said that doubt was often not necessarily wrong as it allowed for realignment.

“It is likely that I have blind spots. I have had them for several years. But the intention is to engage with it with honesty,” he said.

Feminist icon

Ms. Roy’s feminism shone through during the session. In her two cents to the youth of today, she highlighted that dreams are manifold. People must hence engage with society in a manner where they are not socially constrained by the expectations of family.

She said India feels like a violent society today. She suggested that people hence protect the nation through active thought and action. She suggested that the country renew its commitment to Gandhiji’s non-violence and the Constitution as they are talismans.

The author concluded by saying that she is confident that women will lead this world.

From Gandhiji to Modi, the role of Gujaratis in building and shaping the country



Radhika Santhanam
CHENNAI

Journalist and author Salil Tripathi, in his new book, *Gujarat: The Portrait of a Community*, discusses the role of Gujaratis in nation building.

In a conversation with entrepreneur and cultural activist Ranvir Shah at the Lit for Life, Mr. Tripathi, a Gujarati who grew up in

Mumbai, described himself as an “outsider looking in and an insider looking out”.

Through several small chapters, Mr. Tripathi has written about the “community of 55 million people in India who consider Gujarati to be their mother tongue and possibly six million more abroad”.

The most famous personality from Gujarat is ar-

guably Mahatma Gandhi. Mr. Shah said that while most Gujaratis equate Gandhi with *ahimsa* (non-violence), Mr. Tripathi’s book also speaks of *asmita* (self-awareness).

Mr. Tripathi explained how the humble concept has changed over the years to acquire a more aggressive tenor.

Mr. Tripathi compared and contrasted Prime Mi-

nister Narendra Modi, who is also from Gujarat, with Gandhiji.

“At the risk of sounding glib, I would say that Gandhiji was passionate about the empowerment of women and cleanliness, just as Mr. Modi is. He was stubborn, just like Mr. Modi is known to be. But while Gandhiji would persuade people to do something, Mr. Modi simply orders pe-

ople around,” he said.

Gujarat has produced some of the most successful industrialists of India (Tata Group, Reliance, Adani, Wipro), excellent cricketers, artists, dancers, among others, he said.

The discussion also focused on the polycultures of Gujaratis. On being asked specifically about the plight of Dalits in Gujarat, Mr. Tripathi pointed

out that the “situation is bad.” He said, “The NGO Navsarjan’s FCRA has been taken away. We saw what happened in Una [In 2016, several Dalits were flogged on the pretext of cow protection]...” However, while there has been violence, there have also been many fighting for peace, he said. “They are little candles lighting up the place.”

Lit for Life



Heartfelt words: Visitors signing a board at The Hindu Lit for Life event in Chennai on Sunday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ



Lending an ear: A youngster holding a placard seeking stories at the festival. B. VELANKANNI RAJ



A piece of history: Lit for Life attendees checking a framed copy of an old front page of The Hindu on Sunday. M. VEDHAN



Interactive session: A member of the audience asking a question after a discussion at the Lit for Life event on Sunday. R. RAGU

Stories of the kings, begums and colonisers of Awadh



Fresh insights: Writer Ira Mukhoty speaking at The Hindu Lit for Life event in Chennai on Sunday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Sanjana Ganesh CHENNAI

Ira Mukhoty's fascination for the Mughal empire began in Delhi. She grew up around the *baugs*, *quillas* and lanes of one of the richest kingdoms in the world. "The Mughals were all around us, in food, buildings, language and some of the words," she says.

When she stumbled upon the history of emperor Shah Jahan's daughter, Jahanara Begum, she realised that little to nothing was said of one of the most powerful and wealthiest women of her time (around 1658). She had controlled trade across the world, commissioned buildings, and connected with agents, authored a biography on Sufi saints, and continued the lineage. Yet, little to nothing was said of one of the most famous women of the 17th Century. "How wide is the lacuna? How many such women have been forgotten," she wondered. This thought led to Ms. Mukhoty's first non-fiction work *Heroines: Powerful Indian Women of Myth and History*.

Ever since, the author has not looked back. In her conversation with Vidya Singh on Sunday at The Hindu Lit for Life, Ms. Mukhoty spoke about piecing together parts of history that interested her the most while contextualising the time and space that people occupied in a side-by-side comparison of the most famous men of the time.

In a session titled "The rise and fall of Awadh", the author read from her latest book *The Lion and The Lily: The Rise and Fall of Awadh*, while also speaking about her writing process. In a fascinating talk, the author spoke about the impact of the French players in Indian courts through the 18th Century; the importance of the Battle of Buxar; the subsequent development of Awadh; and the women (begums) and the royal eunuchs who played a pivotal role in the evolution of this State.

"I like getting into the depth of the matter. I like to speak of art and food and length. I also try to write about the flowers that bloomed in the gardens then. They were marigolds, by the way. I like to get granular with my writing," the author said.

Ms. Mukhoty said that although the French were not politically important after having lost the Seven-Years War fought between them and the English between 1756 and 1763, they continued to leave an impact on Awadh.

She added that history often tends to be written through the lens of war, conquests and territorial expansion but added that women are often in the margins and sometimes, the centre stage, adding to cultural wealth and documentation.

Ms. Mukhoty said that her books are often Trojan horses. They are full of feminist truths that she hopes readers will be capable of uncovering over time. "I try to include multiple points of view and leave it to the reader to judge," she said.

Imprint: a unique display of book and paper projects

Gowri S. CHENNAI

From quirky clip boards to fraying sketchbooks and intricate sculptures, paper, in its many forms, was spread over the Lady Anand School campus at Lit for Life event.

Titled Imprint, the display was largely categorised into book and paper projects and was co-curated by Sharan Apparao and Shijo Jacob.

The display explored the medium of paper and how artists interpret it in their practice. From Priya Sundaravalli's tiny ceramic plates on a clipboard, to Jenny Pinto's amalgamation of wood and paper into sculptures, the display was a celebration of a medium with interesting structural possibilities.

Artists R.M. Palaniapan's iconic linear abstracts and Yuvan Bothy-sathuvar's optical illusion



Interesting show: A visitor taking pictures at the Imprint exhibition at the event in Chennai on Saturday. M. SRINATH

canvases, all made for an interesting show. Janaki Lele's fine paper

cut artworks, sometimes set against coloured backdrops, were testament to

the versatility of the medium. George K.'s life-size paper sculptures on the other hand drew visitors in for a quick glance. Tanjima Kar Sekh's usage of Islamic calligraphy and Mughal motifs also were an instant draw.

Rare sketchbooks of artists were also at the exhibition for visitors to sift through. Each sketchbook was a window into the creative process of an artist – some carried splotches

of ink, while some others had lines and scribbles that perhaps charted the birth of an idea.

A curtain of paper strips, lit from within and installed on the premises, also became a crowd-favourite 'selfie point'.

"It's all about ideas at the end of it. With paper being such an integral part of our literature and media, I thought using paper here made sense," said Sharan Apparao.



Interactive session: A member of the audience asking a question after a discussion at the Lit for Life event on Sunday. R. RAGU

Forgotten history: an invasion that never happened, but led to exodus

Mukund Padmanabhan's *The Great Flap of 1942* tells the story of how the British Raj panicked in anticipation of a Japanese invasion in 1942 which resulted in a fear-induced exodus; the writer in a conversation with Manu Pillai talks about the largely undocumented story and its impact

Gowri S. CHENNAI

An exodus triggered by an unreal fear. A "non-event" that led to many bizarre historical events. A rare incident that went largely undocumented. Mukund Padmanabhan's book *The Great Flap of 1942* is all this and more.

Mr. Padmanabhan, author and former Editor of *The Hindu*, in an engaging conversation with historian Manu Pillai at the Lit for Life on Sunday, elaborated on a latent piece of history that caught his fascination so much that he decided to write a book about it titled the same.

"What exactly was this non-event that actually caused so many events to take place, after?" asked Mr. Pillai in an attempt to set context to the conversation that hinged on how the British Raj panicked simply over the anticipation of a Japanese invasion in 1942. "When the Japanese



Looking back: Author Mukund Padmanabhan (right) in a conversation with historian Manu Pillai at the Lit for Life event on Sunday. R. RAGU

came close, they sent aircraft carriers to the Indian Ocean, they bombed Visakhapatnam and Kakinada but they never had any intention of invading India. In the book I argue that the British took measures that actually stoked a great sense of panic and people fled from all over the coun-

try. I don't think many people know that almost 90% of Madras could have fled. The story was also largely undocumented," Mr. Padmanabhan said. This fear, he believes, shaped the course of the nationalist movement and the author called for the examination of some of the major

events of 1942 – the Cripps Mission and Gandhiji's call for the Quit India Movement – in the context of this fear.

'Different impact'

"Exodus has its own dynamic. The more people leave, the more leave," he said. "Everyone's lives

changed. The flap impacted people in different ways. But what fascinated me was why did so many people flee so many parts of India, like coastal Odisha, coastal Tamil Nadu... for an invasion that was never even planned," added Mr. Padmanabhan, whose focus remained the

dystopian futility of such an event in history.

Why does such stories exist only in families, within their silences and memories, asked Mr. Pillai. One of the reasons is that, traditionally, historians have focused on the Freedom Movement, Mr. Padmanabhan said. "This story slipped between the cracks. No one was paying attention to this and finally it was a non-event. The other thing is that – if 75% to 90% of Madras was evacuated, you would imagine that the newspapers of the time would have photographs or long reports. But there was very little human interest stories at the time," he said. Communication with the Governors and private diaries of bureaucrats at the time, served as references.

The British treated this in a very "cynical and cold" way, he added. For them, the exodus also was convenient in having less people to manage in the event of a Japanese invasion.

While crime doesn't pay, crime fiction is a whole different story

Madhuvanti S. Krishnan CHENNAI

How are Kamal Haasan and Hussain Zaidi connected? Who really is Dawood Ibrahim – a polished, chaste, Urdu-speaking individual, or a *taporis* from the Mumbai underworld? What are the intricacies behind crafting bestseller crime stories?

These and several other intriguing aspects of the world of crime fiction were discussed by authors Ashwin Sanghi and Hussain Zaidi. They were in conversation with K.C. Vijaya Kumar, Sports editor, *The Hindu*, on Sunday.

Mr. Sanghi shed light on how he tended to delve into areas which constitute the what-ifs in a story and elaborated on how there were two words which he focused on – history and



Crafting a crime: Writers Ashwin Sanghi and Hussain Zaidi speaking to K.C. Vijaya Kumar on Sunday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

myth. "When I do myth plus history, in my mind, it triggers a mystery. It is a simple formula. But as long as I stay within that formula, I approach each of those subjects with an ingrained sense of respect rather than sensationalism – one's writing must not trigger someone," he said.

Crime doesn't pay, but crime fiction is a whole dif-

ferent story, he says. Mr. Sanghi spoke about how his foray into crime writing was not with his latest book *Razor Sharp: A Kutta Kadam Thriller*, but *Private India* which he co-authored with James Patterson. He admitted that it was indeed a lucrative genre to write about as James Patterson typically released between seven to

eight crime novels a year.

While several writers use their imagination to shell out a good piece of fiction, Mr. Zaidi explained how his fiction was largely rooted in facts.

"I have penned four fiction stories so far, and most of them have been derived or inspired by facts. For instance, parts of my latest book, *The Black Orphan*, are based on facts – the mysterious death of six nuclear scientists in Mumbai who were either found dead, had committed suicide, or had met with an accident, and a government that was utterly unconcerned about them. I have woven into story form this incident, coupled with other real instances. Essentially, 75% of what is in the story has really taken place, while 25% of it is my imagination," he said.

An ode to Ebrahim Alkazi, visionary of modern theatre



Life of a legend: Theatre director Amal Allana and Ritu Menon speaking at the Lit for Life event on Sunday. R. RAGU

Soma Basu CHENNAI

Theatre director Amal Allana, who recently released a riveting biography of her father *Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive* gave a racy account of Alkazi's revolutionary contributions to arts and culture in the creative landscape that was emerging in pre-Independence India into the latter decades.

She said the title of her book was apt as she found the words scribbled by her father in his notes that read, "I wish I could live longer to hold time captive."

A six-minute documentary on Alkazi charting the journey of his quest for a liberal approach to the arts in the Indian subcontinent preceded Ms. Allana's conversation with Ritu Menon at *The Hindu* Lit for Life session on Sunday.

Setting the narrative in Bombay of the 1940s when Alkazi came as the son of a migrant trader from Saudi Arabia, Ms. Allana spoke

about how his innovative ideas from the young age of 22 coupled with daring new experimental projects transformed the theatre movements pan-India and later led to the establishment of the National School of Drama in Delhi in the 1960s. It was the time when creative history was under-researched and Alkazi strode the stage with arrogance, resoluteness, and brilliance.

A personal perspective
As the daughter, Ms. Allana brought a personal perspective to the intangible landscape of Alkazi's passions as she step-by-step unfolded the layers of his cultural, artistic and nationalistic identity. "His pedagogical skills took form as a response to the social and political life. He introduced language in theatre and nationalised it," she said. Not only was Alkazi interested in training a body of thinking actors but he also trained audiences to appreciate modernity in theatre, she said.



Interesting show: A visitor taking pictures at the Imprint exhibition at the event in Chennai on Saturday. M. SRINATH

cut artworks, sometimes set against coloured backdrops, were testament to

the versatility of the medium. George K.'s life-size paper sculptures on the other hand drew visitors in for a quick glance. Tanjima Kar Sekh's usage of Islamic calligraphy and Mughal motifs also were an instant draw.

Rare sketchbooks of artists were also at the exhibition for visitors to sift through. Each sketchbook was a window into the creative process of an artist – some carried splotches

From Page One**Poor demand hits Q3 private investments**

Total private sector projects slipped sharply from 1,253 in Q2 to 1,061 in Q3. Private investors' share in new investment projects dropped to 62.2% in Q3 from 66.2% in Q2. New investments by foreign players rose 44.2% sequentially, albeit from a low base, to ₹1.02 lakh crore. This spike was largely thanks to a single ₹70,000 crore steel project announced by Arcelor Mittal Nippon.

"The slowdown in domestic private investments during the third quarter of FY2025 reflects the apprehensions of India Inc. over rising input costs, driven by high inflation and ongoing geopolitical uncertainties," Shashikant Hegde, director and CEO of Projects Today, told *The Hindu*.

He added that weak corporate results and flagging urban demand in Q2 may have also dimmed investor appetite. India's GDP growth had slowed to a seven-quarter low of 5.4% in Q2.

"The outlook for 2025-2026 remains optimistic, as favourable economic conditions like easing inflation, and the execution of policy interventions to spur consumption and growth, are expected to stimulate private investment activity," Mr. Hegde reckoned.

New power projects

At almost ₹2.28 lakh crore, new investments by States surpassed the Centre's ₹2.05 lakh crore announcements in Q3, and accounted for almost 20% of all new outlays. In Q2, the value of new projects announced by the Centre was higher than the States.

Mining, irrigation, and pharma, as well as the employment-intensive construction and automobile sectors clocked deep contractions in fresh outlays relative to Q2. Infrastructure investments were only fractionally higher by 0.8% at ₹4.25 lakh crore, but new electricity projects grew a sharper 21.9% to ₹4.5 lakh crore to account for the largest share of 39.3% in new investments through Q3.

"Such investments, particularly in transport and social infrastructure, are essential for sustaining the overall economic momentum, as they not only lay the groundwork for long term growth but also complement private sector initiatives by improving the business environment and reducing operational bottlenecks," Mr. Hegde explained.

There was a significant shuffling among States that accounted for the top shares of new investment projects. Rajasthan emerged as a surprise leader, with fresh project outlays in the State – by both public and private investors – rising almost three times over Q2 to about ₹2.25 lakh crore in Q3.

Maharashtra and Gujarat, which were the top two States in Q2, moved one rank lower as a consequence, while Tamil Nadu was edged out of the top 10 States, after being the third-ranked State in terms of investment plans in Q2. In Q3, new projects in Tamil Nadu amounted to just ₹18,066 crore, 60.8% below its Q2 tally of ₹46,119 crore.

Diversity dividend and BJP's hat-trick lite

Mr. Sardesai said, "In the past 10 to 15 years we have seen changes in terms of the emergence of the BJP as the dominant party of this country, replacing the old Congress and challenging the Nehruvian consensus that dominated Indian politics for about 60 years after Independence. The BJP is not just another political party. It is a party that seeks to conquer India. The emergence of a larger-than-life personality cult is also another feature of politics in the last decade and a half."

On the 2024 polls, Mr. Ram said there were some smaller surprises within the non-surprise. "The exit polls were completely off, almost without exception. Rajdeep, in his book, mentions that only Yogiendra Yadav got it spot on. What I want to highlight is that several journalists who went to the field were very clear that in no way that the BJP as a single party was going to exceed between 240 and 250 seats. This was not based on some speculation, but on solid information, particularly from the Hindi-speaking States."

He said not many expected 40 out of 40 seats in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry for the INDIA bloc. But the leaders of the ruling DMK-led alliance were absolutely clear that they would not lose a single seat. "At the same time, how did Odisha and Madhya Pradesh happen? Why was there a difference between Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan? These were surprises within non-surprises. But what it brings out is diversity and pluralism are the foundation of electoral democracy."

Speaking about the role of media, Mr. Ram said the pandemic demonstrated that people trusted professional media. Surveys had shown all over the world that people relied on professional media rather than social media. That was the major victory and strength of the professional media because of their credibility and trustworthiness.

Jayanthi Natarajan, former Union Minister, said, "The voters of Tamil Nadu always made their voice heard, no matter what the external noise was. In 1980, there were elections held simultaneously to the State Assembly as well as Parliament. The Congress and the DMK went into an alliance. It was a political alliance against MGR [M.G. Ramachandran], whose government had been dismissed by the Centre. The voters decisively rejected the DMK-Congress combine for the Assembly and voted for MGR as Chief Minister, and decisively rejected MGR for Parliament, and voted for the DMK-Congress combine. The women of Tamil Nadu were always very clear about what they wanted. The women of India have a voice now and they want to vote for something more than a mere empty construct of a political narrative."

Cylinder blast triggers fire at Maha Kumbh, 1 injured

The fire was contained after a joint effort by the NDRF and local administration teams; Prime Minister Narendra Modi dials U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to enquire about the situation

The Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW

A fire broke out at the Maha Kumbh campsite in Prayagraj due to a cylinder blast on Sunday. Six tents and 40 mud houses were engulfed in flames. One person was injured while trying to escape from the spot, officials said.

Several fire tenders were rushed to the area to control the blaze. It was contained after a joint effort by the National Disaster Response Force and local administration teams.

"Two or three cylinders exploded in Sector 19 of the Maha Kumbh Mela, causing a massive fire in the camps. The fire has been controlled... An investigation will be conducted," Bhanu Bhaskar, Additional Director-General of Police, Prayagraj, said.

"Today at 4.30 p.m., we received information about fire in Gita Press [camp] of Kumbh Kshetra Sector 19. Fire brigade and police team reached the spot. Along with Gita Press, information about fire spreading in the tent of 10 Prayagwali was also re-



Reduced to ash: Smoke rising from a fire at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj on Sunday. AP

ceived, which was extinguished. The situation is normal," Ravindra Kumar Mandar, District Magistrate, Prayagraj, said in a video statement.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath instructed officials to rush to the spot and expedite relief work. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Mr. Adityanath and enquired about the situation. "The situation is under control," read a statement from the State government.

Devotees being forced to walk miles: Akhilesh

The Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW

Devotees are forced to walk miles to reach the Maha Kumbh as the roads are closed for the movement of VVIP guests, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said on Sunday, accusing the BJP government

of Uttar Pradesh of harming elderly, children and women pilgrims for the sake of "special guests".

"There is a jam-like situation everywhere. The jam should be cleared immediately. No one should be more important than a true devotee," Mr. Yadav said in a post on X.

G.P. Singh appointed chief of Central Reserve Police Force

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



G.P. Singh
Committee of the Cabinet has approved Mr. Singh's appointment as the CRPF

D-G till the date of his superannuation on November 30, 2027, the January 18 order said.

The CRPF is among the largest Central armed police forces (CAPF) in the country.

Senior IPS officer Vitul Kumar has been holding officiating charge of the force after the retirement of Anish Dayal Singh on December 31.

Man detained in Chhattisgarh in actor attack case released

Shubhomoy Sikdar

RAIPUR

"I am not the culprit, boss... I am going home," replied Akash Kanojya to a volley of questions directed at him and a Mumbai Police team escorting him in Chhattisgarh's Durg on Sunday.

Mr. Kanojya, 31, was identified as a "suspect" by the Railway Protection

Force in the Saif Ali Khan stabbing case on Saturday, hours before the Mumbai Police made an arrest in the case.

Even as a police officer said Mr. Kanojya was "just a suspect" and was released after inquiry, journalists raised questions about the 'identification' exercise.

"There was no mistake..." said a member of

the police team, in response to a question. "You people [journalists] made it go viral. We will do our authentic job. If we feel someone is a suspect, we will question him. There wasn't just one team, teams were sent across India," he said, adding that Mr. Kanojya would be dropped at the railway station and was free to go wherever he wished.

Further, the commission has summoned several bureaucrats who worked in the Irrigation, Finance and other line departments as also those who volunteered to share information with the panel such as Adviser to the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti Sriram Vedire, Telangana Jana Samithi MLC M. Kodandaram, Telangana Joint Action Committee convenor K. Raghu and others.

According to sources, the commission is expected to summon elected representatives who held key positions in the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government such as T. Harish Rao and Eatala Rajender, who held the portfolios of Irrigation and Finance, in the final leg of collecting evidence and information.

Ex-CM to be deposed

Before finalising its report, the Commission is expected to collect information from former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao too, who, according to the witnesses deposed before it so far, had played a key role in decision making at different levels of the project execution and used to give oral instructions either in person, or indirectly – in written form.

Centre must eliminate 'tax terrorism', says Congress

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Issuing a prescription for the Narendra Modi-led government ahead of the Union Budget, the Congress on Sunday said that "rajd raj and tax terrorism" that had converted "ease of doing business" to "unease" should be eliminated.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh, in a statement, said that action should be taken to protect Indian manufacturing jobs, and decisive steps needed to be taken to shore up wages and purchasing power, which in turn would incentivise Indian businesses to invest.

"A byzantine, punitive, and arbitrary tax regime covering both GST and income tax – which amounts to sheer Tax Terrorism – is now the greatest threat to India's prosperity and has contributed to an 'unease of doing business,'" Mr. Ramesh said. "This sluggish investment has been accompanied by a mass exodus of high-net-worth individuals. More than 17.5 lakh Indians have acquired the citizenship of another country over the past decade. An estimated 21,300 dollar millionaires left India between 2022 and 2025," he said.

**Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited**

(A Government of India Enterprise and group company of IndianOil)
Regd. Office: 536, Anna Salai, Teynampet, Chennai - 600 018
Website: www.cpcl.co.in; Email id: sld@cpcl.co.in
Tel: 044-24349833 / 24346807
CIN - L40101TN1965GOI005389

**EXTRACT OF THE STATEMENT OF AUDITED STANDALONE AND UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND NINE MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2024 (₹ in crore)**

Sl. No.	Particulars	STANDALONE						CONSOLIDATED						
		Three Months Ended			Nine Months Ended			Year Ended	Three Months Ended			Nine Months Ended		Year Ended
		31.12.2024	30.09.2024	31.12.2023	31.12.2024	31.12.2023	31.03.2024		31.12.2024	30.09.2024	31.12.2023	31.12.2024	31.12.2023	
1.	Total income from operations	15687.64	14447.53	20456.41	50500.45	58459.06	79285.50	15687.64	14429.11	20456.42	50482.20	58456.57	79283.01	
2.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	14.12	(857.37)	481.05	(373.61)	2816.35	3659.87	24.44	(861.57)	486.34	(353.01)	2834.67	3693.69	
3.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	14.12	(857.37)	481.05	(373.61)	2816.35	3659.87	24.44	(861.57)	486.34	(353.01)	2834.67	3693.69	
4.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	10.46	(629.49)	359.99	(276.43)	2098.87	2711.25	20.78	(633.69)	365.28	(255.83)	2117.19	2745.07	
5.	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	11.75	(635.38)	359.99	(282.70)	2098.87	2714.06	22.07	(639.58)	365.28	(262.10)	2117.19	2747.90	
6.	Paid up Equity Share Capital (Face Value - ₹ 10 each)	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	
7.	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)					7092.30	7578.82	8194.01				7340.87	7791.26	8421.97
8.	Securities Premium Account					250.04	250.04	250.04				250.04	250.04	250.04
9.	Networth					7491.25	7977.77	8592.96				7739.82	8190.21	8820.92
10.	Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt (Bonds / Debentures) excluding Outstanding Redeemable Preference Shares					810.00	1585.00	1585.00						

Year-end tax ideas

TAXTIME

Shefali Mundra

Here's a guide to some of the most effective tax-saving strategies you can adopt before this financial year ends.

Tax-loss harvesting

This strategy is crucial for investors holding stocks or mutual funds (MFs) that underperformed. By selling these at loss, you can offset the capital gains on other investments, reducing your overall tax liability. In India, you can set off capital losses against capital gains – short-term losses can be set off against both short and long-term gains (STCG/LTCG), while long-term losses are restricted to being set off against long-term gains only. Let's understand with an example:

Saumya has invested in stocks and MFs. At the end of the financial year, her portfolio has STCG ₹5,00,000 and LTCG at ₹10,00,000. So, the total tax liability is ₹2,09,375. (See Table 1)

However, worried about certain underperforming stocks, she decided to sell them and booked a short-term loss of ₹1,50,000. She took advantage of tax loss harvesting and reduced the overall tax liability for the year.

The total tax liability is ₹1,79,375 (See table 2). The total tax liability was reduced by ₹30,000 (₹2,09,375 - ₹1,79,375).

Set-off of capital gains

The Income Tax Act allows the setting off losses against gains from capital assets, which can be a powerful way to cut taxable income. Short-term capital loss can be adjusted against both short-term and long-term capital gains while long-term capital loss can be only adjusted against the long-term capital gains. Planning sale of assets to align with this can maximise your tax benefits, especially if you strategically realise losses in the same year as gains. Capital losses can be carried forward for eight assessment years.

Capital gains account scheme

If you sell a property and plan to reinvest the proceeds into another property or in specified assets, you can defer paying capital gains tax by depositing the proceeds in a capital gains account under the Capital Gains Account Scheme in any public sector bank. This must be done before the due date of filing Income Tax returns and the funds must be used to buy or construct a new property within the specified time frames.

Maximising deductions

Under Sec 80C you can claim deductions up to ₹1.5 lakh for investments in ELSS, PPF, NSC, life insurance premiums and repayment of principal on home loans. Under Section 80D, premiums for medical insurance can be deducted up to ₹25,000, which rises to ₹50,000 for senior citizens. Under Sec 80G, contributions to charitable organisations can aid tax deductions, of up to 50%/100% depending on the eligibility of charitable organisation.

Advance tax payments

As per Indian tax laws, if estimated tax liability for a year crosses ₹10,000, you must pay advance tax. This is done in four instalments over the year (15th June, 15th September, 15th December and 15th March). Ensuring the payments are made on time on anticipated capital gains income can help avoid interest penalties under Sec 234B and 234C of the Income Tax Act. With the fiscal year-end approaching, now is the time to review your financial portfolio and make smart moves to minimise tax liability. Consulting a tax advisor to tailor the strategies to your personal financial situation is recommended.

(The author is a tax expert with ClearTax)

Table 1

Type of Gains	Applicable Tax	Total Tax Liability
STCG	₹5,00,000*20%	₹1,00,000
LTCG	(₹10 lakh-₹1.25 lakh)*12.5%	₹1,09,375
Total Tax Liability		₹2,09,375

Table 2

Type of Gains	Applicable Tax	Total Tax Liability
STCG	(₹5 lakh-₹1.5 lakh)*20%	₹70,000
LTCG	(₹10 lakh-₹1.25 lakh)*12.5%	₹1,09,375
Total Tax Liability		₹1,79,375

MONEYWISE



Cut the knot: To further reduce their repayment burden, borrowers can also opt for longer tenures while availing new loans. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

How to plot an escape from a debt trap

To emerge unscathed, stressed borrowers must first take clear stock of the situation and embrace some financial discipline; an honest reassessment of one's lifestyle may also be warranted

DANGER LURKS

Naveen Kukreja

As per Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest Financial Stability Report, about 60% of borrowers who availed personal loans in the second quarter of 2024-25 had more than three existing loans at the time of loan origination. It pointed towards rising delinquencies in the unsecured segment, including credit cards' outstanding dues, and elevated slippages of loans with repayment overdue of 60-89 days to the non-performing asset (NPA) label.

While India's household debt ratio of 42.9% is still relatively lower than other emerging market economies, increased slippages and rising delinquencies (in the unsecured segment) may point towards increasing incidence of debt trap, especially among the near-prime and sub-prime borrowers.

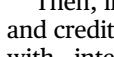
Here, I will present a step-by-step money-management strategy for borrowers to come out of the debt trap.

Review your finances

The first step towards getting out of a debt trap is to assess your current finances. Start the process by listing usual expenses like daily household expenses, insurance premia, school fee, medical bills, utility bills, etc. This will help you to identify avoidable expenses for more savings.



Increased slippages and rising delinquencies may point towards increasing incidence of debt trap, especially among the near-prime and sub-prime borrowers



The RBI has pointed to rising delinquencies in the unsecured loan segment, including credit card outstandings and elevated slippages in such loans to NPA status

Then, list existing loans and credit card debt along with interest rates and EMIs. This will help identify costlier credit facilities.

Finally, categorise existing investments on the basis of their linked financial goals (and the importance) and the rate of returns.

It will allow you to identify the investments that can be redeemed for making quicker repayments. For example, while investments linked to short term unavoidable financial goals or emergency fund should not be redeemed, investments set aside for discretionary spending can be used for debt reduction.

Seek soft loans

After evaluating the financial situation, reach out to family members, friends or close ones for soft loans as these can help in reducing your debt burden at nil or very low interest cost.

Low-yield investments

The interest rates of most credit facilities are higher than the rates or returns offered by fixed income products like savings accounts, fixed deposits and most debt fund categories. For example, home loan

funds for debt consolidation if the interest rates and repayment conditions of these help in reducing overall interest cost.

Personal loan borrowers servicing loans at high interest rates can also explore the options of transferring their personal loans to lenders offering lower interest rates.

Borrowers unable to avail the aforementioned loans or those unable to repay their credit card dues in full can consider personal loans for debt consolidation.

Credit card holders unable to avail any of the aforementioned loan options can convert card debt into EMI. While the interest rates charged on EMI conversions are higher than the personal loan interest rates, these are still a lot lower than the finance charges levied on unpaid credit card dues.

Conclusion

Thus, to come out of debt traps, stressed borrowers would have to ensure consistent financial discipline and prudent debt management strategies. Some may also require an honest reassessment of their lifestyles. While consolidating their residual debt, they should first opt for secured loan options as these have lower interest rates than the unsecured ones. To further reduce their repayment burden, they can also opt for longer tenures while availing new loan(s) for debt consolidation.

(The writer is co-founder & CEO of Paisabazaar)

Beware of switch costs in MF plans

THINKINVESTOR

What if you want to switch from a regular plan to a direct plan? The process is easy, but you must be mindful of the related cost; this is because the switch is considered a redemption of a regular plan

Venkatesh Bangarawuswamy

There are some investment decisions that we took in the past that we would like to modify now. Switching from a regular plan to a direct plan in an equity mutual fund is one such decision. In this article, we discuss the factors you must consider before you make such a switch.

Tax effect

Mutual funds offer two plans – regular plan and direct plan. Suppose you invest in a large-cap active fund of an asset management company (AMC). If you make the investment through a distributor, you typically invest in a regular plan. When you make the investment directly with the AMC, you invest in a direct plan.

Distributors need incentive to market mutual fund products of an AMC. Therefore, AMCs pay commission to distributors when you invest in a fund and for every year you stay invested in the fund. This commission comes from the fee that an AMC charges you. Hence, the regular plan will carry a higher fee than a direct plan. The portfolio and the fund manager for both direct and regular plans are the same.

What if you want to switch from a regular plan to a direct plan? The process is easy, but you must be mindful of the related cost. This is because your switch is considered as redemption of the regular plan and fresh investment in the same fund through the direct plan.

That would attract capital gains tax. If your redemption involves investments that you have carried for more than 12 months, then you must pay long term capital gains tax at 12.5% if your gains are above ₹1.25 lakh in a year.

For investments with holding period of less than 12 months, you must pay 20% short-term capital gains tax. So, you must consider the tax effect of the switch.

Summing Up

If the amount involved falls within the 1.25 lakh exemption limit for long term capital gains tax, you can consider switching in any year. Suppose the amount exceeds that level or you are required to redeem other investments during the same year to meet a life goal. In such cases, you must stop the current systematic investment plan (SIP) on the regular plan and start a new SIP on the same fund through the direct plan. You can switch the accumulated investments from the regular plan to the direct plan subsequently when related long-term capital gains tax falls within the annual exemption limit.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%)				
	Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure	
Small Finance Banks					
AU Small Finance Bank					
AU Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.25	7.50	7.25	
Equitas Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.10	8.00	7.25	
ESAF Small Finance Bank	8.25	6.00	6.75	6.25	
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.25	8.25	8.20	
NorthEast Small Finance Bank	9.00	7.00	9.00	6.25	
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	8.60	8.05	8.60	8.25	
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.25	7.20	7.20	
Unity Small Finance Bank	9.00	7.85	8.15	8.15	
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.00	8.50	7.75	
Private Sector Banks					
Axis Bank					
Axis Bank	7.25	6.70	7.10	7.00	
Bandhan Bank	8.05	8.05	7.25	5.85	
City Union Bank	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.25	
CSB Bank	8.00	5.00	5.75	5.75	
DBS Bank	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.50	
DCB Bank	8.05	7.10	7.55	7.40	
Federal Bank	7.50	7.00	7.10	7.10	
HDFC Bank	7.40	6.60	7.00	7.00	
ICICI Bank	7.25	6.70	7.00	7.00	
IDFC First Bank	7.90	6.50	6.80	6.75	
IndusInd Bank	7.99	7.75	7.25	7.25	
Public Sector Banks					
Bank of Baroda					
Bank of Baroda	7.30	6.85	7.15	6.80	
Bank of India	7.30	6.80	6.50	6.00	
Bank of Maharashtra	7.45	6.75	6.50	6.50	
Canara Bank	7.40	6.85	7.40	6.70	
Central Bank of India	7.50	6.85	7.00	6.75	
Indian Bank	7.30	6.10	6.25	6.25	
Indian Overseas Bank	7.30	7.10	6.50	6.50	
South Indian Bank	7.40	6.70	6.70	6.00	
YES Bank	7.75	7.25	7.25	7.25	

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.)		
Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh	
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KABUL

No excuse for education bans on Afghan women: Taliban official



A senior Taliban figure has urged the group's leader to scrap education bans on Afghan women and girls, saying there is no excuse for them, in a rare public rebuke of government policy. Sher Abbas Stanikzai, political deputy at the Foreign Ministry, made the remarks in a speech on Saturday in southeastern Khost province. AP

LAGOS

Death toll from Nigeria petrol tanker truck blast rises to 86



The death toll from the explosion of a petrol tanker truck in Nigeria that killed people rushing to gather fuel has risen to 86. The truck carrying 60,000 litres of petrol exploded after flipping over on a road in the centre of the country on Saturday, authorities said. Rescuers had previously put the toll at 70 dead. AFP

LANGKAWI

ASEAN tells Myanmar junta to prioritise ceasefire over elections



Foreign Ministers of the ASEAN grouping told Myanmar's junta to prioritise a ceasefire in its civil war over fresh elections during a meeting in Malaysia on Sunday. Malaysia is this year's rotating chair of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Myanmar was represented by the junta's foreign affairs secretary. AFP

SEOUL

Protesters storm S. Korea court after Yoon's detention is extended



Tens of thousands of supporters of South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol stormed a Seoul court on Sunday after a judge extended his detention over his bid to impose martial law. Mr. Yoon said he was "deeply saddened" by the pre-dawn attack on the court, where his supporters smashed windows and doors. AFP

Gaza truce takes hold with handover of first hostages

Delay by Hamas puts off the truce's start by nearly three hours; Israel's strikes during the period kill at least 26 people; Netanyahu says he has Trump's backing to continue fighting if necessary

Associated Press
DEIR AL-BALAH

A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took hold in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, ushering in an initial six-week period of calm and raising hopes for the release of dozens of militant-held hostages and an end to the devastating 15-month war. A last-minute delay by Hamas put off the truce's start by nearly three hours and highlighted its fragility.

Three Israeli hostages released from Gaza have been handed over to Israeli forces there. The three hostages are Romi Gonen, 24, kidnapped from the Nova music festival, and Emily Damari, 28, and Doron Steinbrecher, 31, kidnapped from Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Subsequently, they were united with their families in Israel. Later on Sunday, Israel is expected to release around 90 Palestinian prisoners.

Even before the cease-



Trickling in: Men sit amid the destruction upon their return to central Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday. AFP

fire took effect, celebrations erupted across the territory and some Palestinians began returning to their homes.

The truce, which started at 11:15 a.m. local time, is the first step toward ultimately ending the conflict and returning nearly 100 hostages abducted in Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack.

Hamas was supposed to provide the names before the start of the ceasefire,

as they retreat to a buffer zone inside Gaza.

In a separate development, Israel announced it had recovered the body of Oron Shaul, a soldier killed in the 2014 Israel-Hamas war, in a special operation in Gaza.

Mediation effort

The ceasefire deal was announced last week after a year of mediation by the United States, Qatar and Egypt. The outgoing Biden administration and President-elect Donald Trump's team had both pressed for an agreement to be reached before the inauguration on Monday. Mr. Netanyahu on Saturday warned that he had Mr. Trump's backing to continue fighting if necessary.

The 42-day first phase of the ceasefire should see 33 hostages returned from Gaza and hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and detainees released. Many displaced Palestinians should be able to return home.

Far-right Ministers quit over Gaza ceasefire

Reuters
JERUSALEM

Two far-right Israeli ministers publicly opposed a Gaza ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas on Sunday in another sign of widening cracks in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition.

Hardline National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and two other ministers from his nationalist-religious party resigned from Mr. Netanyahu's cabinet over the deal.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich stopped short of resigning but said that if Israel agreed to a full end to the war before achieving its aims in Gaza he and his party, Religious Zionism, would also leave the coalition.

Awami League mobilises itself against Yunus govt.

Kallop Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

After months of maintaining a low profile, the deposed Awami League of Bangladesh has begun to mobilise itself both inside the country and in different parts of the world. The political party that ruled Bangladesh for over a decade and a half faced serious setbacks when Prime Minister Hasina and her Cabinet colleagues were deposed and fled the country in August. However, over the past few weeks, AL leaders have begun to challenge the interim government headed by Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus.

Earlier this week, the joint secretary of the Awami League, Mahbubul Alam Hanif, lashed out against the Yunus govern-

ment following the recommendations made by the Constitution Reforms Commission seeking fundamental changes to the state of Bangladesh. In a statement, the Awami League leader said in Dhaka that the "commission has recommended removal of secularism, socialism, and nationalism from the 1972 constitution and the recommendations are not acceptable at all."

The main overground political party Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) that was in sync with the interim government in August and September is no longer extending unconditional support. On Sunday, General Secretary of BNP Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alangir echoed the concerns as enunciated by Mr. Hanif of the Awami League. Mr. Mirza Fakhrul said that the far reaching changes suggested by the reform commissions will not be accepted without all party consensus. The statement was made following an event on the 89th birth anniversary of founder of the BNP and late President Ziaur Rahman in Dhaka.

TikTok restoring services, thanks Trump

Reuters
WASHINGTON

TikTok said on Sunday said it was restoring its service after U.S. President-elect Donald Trump said he would revive the app's access in the country when he returns to power on Monday.

The statement came after U.S. users reported being able to access the Chinese-owned service's website while the far more widely used TikTok app itself did not appear to be immediately available.

TikTok stopped working for its 170 million American users late on Saturday before a law shutting it down on national security grounds took effect on Sunday. U.S. officials had warned that under Chinese parent company ByteDance, there was a risk of Americans' data being misused.

Mr. Trump said he would "extend the period of time before the law's prohibitions take effect, so that we can make a deal to protect our national security."

"I would like the U.S. to have a 50% ownership position in a joint venture," he wrote on Truth Social.

Mr. Trump said the executive order would specify there would be no liability for any company that helped keep TikTok from going dark before his order.

Dept.t of Water Resources, Government of Odisha	
"e" Procurement Notice No. ACECDC-CTC-06 / 2024-25	
1. Name of the Works	: Total 02 (two) nos. different Drainage works
2. Estimated cost	: Rs. 270.34 lakh and Rs. 492.44 lakh
3. Period of Completion	: 18 (Eighteen) months
4. Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From 11.00 hours of Dt. 20.01.2025 to 18.00 hours of Dt. 03.02.2025
5. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal	: 18.00 hours of Dt.03.02.2025
6. Name and address of the Officer inviting Bid	: Additional Chief Engineer, Drainage Circle, Gandarpur, Cuttack- 753003. e-mail id :- sedrainagecirclectc@gmail.com
Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal of Odisha Government https://tendersodisha.gov.in . All information, notices, addendum, corrigendum, cancellation notice etc. if required, will be published in this portal.	
Additional Chief Engineer, Drainage Circle, Cuttack OIPR-32174/11/0013/2425	

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER & BASIN MANAGER INDRAVATI & KOLAB BASIN, BARINIPUT (JEYORE), DIST.-KORAPUT, PIN-764006 E-mail Id - cebmkk@gmail.com	
e - PROCUREMENT NOTICE NO.CEBMIKB-01/2024-25	
/ Dated:- 17.01.2025	
No.239	
1. No. of work	: 01 (One) no
2. Value of work	: Rs.348.785 lacs (Excluding GST)
3. Bid Security/EMD	: Rs. 34,87,900/-
4. Class of contractor	: "Super" Class & "Special" Class
5. Period of completion	: 24 (Twenty four) Calendar months
6. Type of contract	: Percentage Rate (Double cover)
7. Cost of Tender paper	: Rs. 10,000/- (Non refundable)
8. Availability of Tender online for bidding	: From 10.00Hrs on 22.01.2025 to 17.30Hrs on 11.02.2025
9. Date & time of Pre-bid conference	: On 28.01.2025 at 11.30AM in Office of the C.E. & B.M., I & K Basin, Bariniput, Jeyore, Dist:-Koraput
10. Date & time of on line bid submission	: From 10.00Hrs on 22.01.2025 to 17.30Hrs on 11.02.2025
11. Date & time of opening of technical bid	: 11.30Hrs on 12.02.2025 in Office of the Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, Indravati & Kolab Basin, Bariniput, Jeyore, Dist: Koraput
12. Date & time of opening of Financial Bid :	: to be intimated to the qualified Bidder(s) after approval of Technical Bid(s).
Further details can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersorissa.gov.in or www.dowordisha.gov.in . Addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation if any required will be published in Govt. website only.	
Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, Indravati & Kolab Basin, Bariniput OIPR-32456/11/0001/2425	

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES Office of the Additional Chief Engineer, Rushikulya Bahuda Basin, Berhampur-760004 e-mail id : se_sicbam@yahoo.com					
e - Procurement Notice No. ACE, RBB- 11 / 2024-25					
1. Type of Work	: Road Work.				
2. Total No. of Works	: 02 (Two) No.				
3. Amount put to Tender	: Varies from Rs.503.81 Lakh to Rs.362.18 Lakh				
4. Period of Completion	: 11 (Eleven) Calendar months				
5. Paper Cost	: Rs.10000/- per each				
6. Class of Contractor	: 'A' Class of Contractor				
Sl. No.	Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount (Rs. in lakh)	Availability & Submission of Bid On-line	Date and Place of Opening of Technical Bids online
1.	Additional Chief Engineer, Rushikulya Bahuda Basin, Berhampur	ACE,RBB(CHID)- 22/2024-25	503.81	From 22.01.2025, 10.00 AM to 06.02.2025, 5.00 PM	07.02.2025 (11.30 A.M.) in the office of the Additional Chief Engineer, Rushikulya Bahuda Basin, Berhampur.
2.	Additional Chief Engineer, Rushikulya Bahuda Basin, Berhampur	ACE,RBB(CHID)- 23/2024-25	362.18		

Bidders are to participate in online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Govt. of Odisha e-Procurement Web-site www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of the tender can be seen in the above website only.

Additional Chief Engineer, Rushikulya Bahuda Basin, Berhampur
OIPR-32411/11/0017/2425

**WHERE OTHERS PUT A FULL STOP,
we put a comma.**

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SPAT WITH BROADCASTER

Djokovic skips customary post-match TV interview



GETTY IMAGES

Novak Djokovic declined to do a customary post-match TV interview after his win on Sunday night to protest comments made on air by official broadcaster Channel 9's Tony Jones. Djokovic said he wants an apology from the channel and Jones who called the 24-time Grand Slam champion overrated and a has-been.

LIFE PARTNER

Neeraj Chopra ties the knot with tennis player Himani Mor



X@NEERAJ_CHOPRA1

Javelin ace Neeraj Chopra on Sunday announced his wedding to tennis player Himani Mor. "Grateful for every blessing that brought us to this moment together. Bound by love, happily ever after," the two-time Olympic medallist wrote on social media while sharing photographs from the ceremony.

DOMINANT

India women power past Nepal, clinch title in kho kho WC



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Indian women won the inaugural kho kho World Cup in New Delhi on Sunday, easing past Nepal 78-40 in the final. The dominant display from the home side was consistent with its superiority right through the tournament. Former captain Nasreen Shaikh, who won the Arjuna Award in 2023, announced her retirement after the final.

SUPER SUNDAY

Indian men beat Nepal in final to ring in the double cheer



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

India completed the double at the kho kho World Cup as the men followed the women in lifting silverware in New Delhi on Sunday. Up against Nepal in the final, the men won 54-36 to live up to the expectations of a buoyant crowd. Captain Pratik Waikar was one of the star performers for the men's team.

Kalinga Lancers script a sensational comeback win

The shootout victory makes thousands of home fans happy while Pipers suffer their seventh consecutive defeat; Reynolds-Cotterill does the star turn with three penalty saves

HIL

Y.B. Sarangi
ROURKELA

Goalkeeper Toby Reynolds-Cotterill saved thrice in penalty shootout as Vedanta Kalinga Lancers made a stunning comeback to pip Delhi SG Pipers in an action-packed high-scoring Pool-A thriller of the Hockey India League at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here on Sunday.

As the men's league entered its second phase, Lancers rode on Alex Hendrickx and Thierry Brinkman's braces to erase a three-goal deficit as the two sides were locked 5-5 in the regulation period. Lancers won the shootout 3-2 to record their fourth win and make thousands of home fans happy, while Pipers suffered their seventh consecutive defeat.

Lancers conducted raids from the left and earned a short corner in the 13th minute. Hendrickx flicked low to put the host ahead.

The second quarter sud-



Acrobatic effort: Reynolds-Cotterill pulls off a save in the shootout. R.V. MOORTHY

denly switched in Pipers' favour as the Graham Reid-coached side converted four penalty corners in the space of five minutes.

Following Jarnampreet Singh's smart effort, Tomas Domene drag-flicked high to equalise.

The Argentinian scored another, giving Pipers the lead by shooting home a low and angled flick to Krishan Pathak's left.

Corey Weyer found Pipers' third goal off a rebound beating Pathak on the right.

Pipers made it 4-1 as Koji

Yamasaki jumped to tap in another rebound and helped Pipers retain their advantage at the halfway stage.

Brinkman slammed in off a free ball inside the circle to pull one back soon after the change of ends.

Amid a hard tussle and heated exchanges, Dilraj Singh finished off Domene's excellent circle entry from the right to score Pipers' fifth.

Lancers, served well by Antoine Kina and Boby Singh Dhami up front, refused to give up.

They pumped in three goals within seven minutes of the fourth quarter to make a sensational comeback. Quick passes from outside the 'D' and deflections enabled Lancers to slot in two through Brinkman and Angad Bir Singh. Hendrickx utilised Lancers' sixth short corner to take it to the shootouts.

The result: Pool A: Vedanta Kalinga Lancers 5 (Hendrickx 13, 52, Brinkman 35, 47, Angad Bir 49) drew with Delhi SG Pipers 5 (Domene 18, 20, Weyer 21, Yamasaki 23, Dilraj 37); Lancers bt Pipers 3-2 via shootout.

Yibbi's brace powers Warriors to top spot

Y. B. Sarangi
ROURKELA

Yibbi Jansen's double penalty corner conversion propelled Odisha Warriors to a 4-1 win over Shrikrishna Rarh Bengal Tigers in the women's competition of the Hockey India League at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here on Sunday.

Warriors' third victory in front of their home crowd took them to the top of the table.

Warriors created a few good chances early on but could not achieve success due to Tigers' alert goalkeeper Grace O'Hanlon.

Tigers replied by launching some raids, led by Hannah Cotter. At the stroke of the first break, Tigers earned a short corner which resulted in a stroke before being cancelled by Warriors' referral.

Warriors showed better coordination while attacking with more intensity in the second quarter. The Dutch duo of Yibbi and Michelle Fillet combined beautifully to draw first blood. Yibbi sent in a diagonal pass from half-line and Michelle unleashed a cracking shot from top of the circle to score a spectacular goal.



Stealing the show: Yibbi leads the celebration after scoring her second goal. R.V. MOORTHY

Yibbi sounded the board to convert Warriors' first short corner in style and double the lead.

Backed by vociferous home supporters, Warriors, featuring four local players, made several forays but Rutuja Pisal and Neha Goyal missed great opportunities.

Tigers' custodian Grace remained vigilant to blunt some attacks, including the one by Neha.

Just before half-time, Tigers pulled one back as Uditia skilfully foiced Jocelyn Bartram with a grounder off a penalty corner

and made some justice to her team's 76 per cent possession at the halfway mark.

Amid interceptions and counters from both sides, Lalremrasi boosted Tigers' attack in the third quarter. Warriors' circle entries got them two more penalty corners.

Yibbi showcased another low drag-flick and Neha struck home in the final period to seal the issue for Warriors.

The result: Odisha Warriors 4 (Michelle 16, Yibbi 18, 47, Neha 58) bt Shrikrishna Rarh Bengal Tigers 1 (Uditia 30).

SNAPSHOTS

Gukesh turns the tables on Giri in opener

WILK AAN ZEE: World champion D. Gukesh battled back from a tough position to beat Anish Giri in the first round of the Tata Steel Masters on Saturday.

The results: Round 1: Masters: D. Gukesh bt Anish Giri; P. Harikrishna bt Arjun Erigaisi; Leon Luke Mendonca lost to Vincent Keymer; R. Pragganandhaa drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov; Wei Yi drew with Fabiano Caruana; Max Warmerdam drew with Alexey Sarana; Jorden van Foreest drew with Vladimir Fedosev.

Challengers: Divya Deshmukh lost to Nodirbek Yakubboev; Oro Faustino lost to R. Vaishali; Nguyen Thai van Dam bt Arthur Pieters; Aydin Suleimanli drew with Benjamin Bok; Ediz Gurez bt Irina Bulmaga; Erwin L'Ami drew with Frederic Svane; Miyo Lu bt Nodirbek Kazymbek.

FC Goa scrapes past East Bengal, climbs to second in the table

FATORDA: FC Goa rode on Brison Fernandes' 13th minute goal to beat East Bengal FC 1-0 and move to the second spot in the ISL table on Sunday. It was Goa's eighth win of the season and took it to 30 points in 16 matches.

Yibbi showcased another low drag-flick and Neha struck home in the final period to seal the issue for Warriors.

For Brison, it was his sixth goal of the season. Goa will next play Chennaiyin FC on Jan. 25 while East Bengal will face Kerala Blasters FC on Jan. 24.

Further turmoil for United and Spurs



Final nail: Georginio Rutter sealed the win for Brighton. REUTERS

EURO LEAGUES

Associated Press
MANCHESTER

Manchester United's season lurched further into turmoil Sunday after a 3-1 loss to Brighton in the Premier League. Goals from Yankuba Minteh, Kaoru Mitoma and Georginio Rutter at Old Trafford consigned United to a 10th defeat in the league. Bruno Fernandes scored for United from the penalty spot.

Tottenham's woeful campaign also sunk to new depths with a 3-2 loss at relegation-fighting Everton, but Nottingham Forest's unlikely title challenge goes from strength to strength after a 3-2 win against last-placed Southampton.

The results: Premier League:

Everton 3 (Calvert-Lewin 13, Ndiaye 30, Gray 45+7-g) bt

Tottenham 2 (Kulusevski 77, Richardson 90+2); Manchester

Djokovic sets up mouthwatering quarterfinal clash with Alcaraz

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic surged into an Australian Open quarterfinal clash against Carlos Alcaraz with a dominant straight-sets victory on Sunday while women's World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka was a ruthless winner.

Double defending champion Sabalenka is on a collision course with inform World No. 3 Coco Gauff in the semifinals in Melbourne if both win in the last eight.

On the hottest day of the tournament, Alcaraz went through when Britain's Jack Draper retired injured.

The 37-year-old Djokovic then kept up his end of the bargain with a 6-3, 6-4, 7-6(4) win over Czech 24th seed Jiri Lehecka in the prime-time match on Rod Laver Arena.

The 21-year-old Alcaraz, who has never gone beyond the quarterfinals in Melbourne, was leading 7-5, 6-1 when Draper pulled the plug.

American 12th seed Tommy Paul destroyed Alejandro Davidovich Fokina for the loss of just three games.

Sabalenka blew away

Day Eight in numbers

15 Djokovic has equalled Federer's quarterfinal appearances at the Australian Open

20 Djokovic is only the second player after Federer to progress to the singles quarterfinals of at least one Slam across 20 seasons

64 Alcaraz trails only McEnroe (65) for most singles victories at Slams after 75 matches

105 Zverev now has the second-most wins (105 - tied with Haas) among German men at Majors. Becker (163) tops the chart

* all stats pertain to Open Era

FOURTH ROUND

Men: Fourth round: 7-Djokovic (Srb) bt 24-Lehecka (Cze) 6-3, 6-7(6-4); 3-Alcaraz (Esp) bt 15-Draper (Gbr) 7-5, 6-1, retd.; 12-Paul (USA) bt Davidovich Fokina (Esp) 6-1, 6-1, 6-1; 2-Zverev (Ger) bt 14-Humbert (Fra) 6-1, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Women: Fourth round: 1-Swiatek vs Rune, 8-De Minaur vs Michelsen, 9-Monfils, 10-Sonego vs Tien

Alcaraz (21y 8m) is the youngest player to reach two singles quarterfinals in each of the four Slams

Paul (27y 8m) is the youngest American to advance to his second singles quarterfinal at Melbourne Park since Roddick (21y 4m) in 2004

Sabalenka has pulled level with Azarenka for the longest winning streak in Melbourne this millennium

Zverev now has the second-most wins (105 - tied with Haas) among German men at Majors. Becker (163) tops the chart

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TOP RESULTS

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Women: Fourth round: 1-Sabalenka (Blr) bt 14-Andreeva (Rus) 6-1, 6-2, 27-Pavlyuchenkova (Rus) bt 18-Vekic (Cro) 7-6(0), 6-0;

11-Badosa (Esp) bt Danilovic (Srb) 6-1, 7-6(2); 3-Gauff (USA) bt Bencic (Sui) 5-7, 6-2, 6-1.

Mixed doubles: Second round: Zhang (Chn) & Bopanna (Ind) w/o Townsend (USA) & Nys (Mon).

Badosa is the first Spanish woman to reach the quarterfinals at Melbourne Park since Muguruza (2020), and the first Spanish woman to book a last-eight berth in successive Majors since Muguruza (French Open and Wimbledon, 2015)

Sabalenka has pulled level with Azarenka for the longest winning streak in Melbourne this millennium

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Compiled by Anirudh Velamuri

Smooth sailing for favourites on day one

Amol Karhadkar

IN BRIEF



Sajid, Abrar spin Pakistan to emphatic victory in first Test

Off-spinner Sajid Khan took five wickets and Abrar Ahmed another four to guide Pakistan to a 127-run win on the third day of the first Test against the West Indies in Multan on Sunday.

The scores: Pakistan 230 & 157 in 46.4 overs (Shan Masood 52, Jomel Warriac 7/32) bt West Indies 137 & 123 in 36.3 overs (Alick Athanaze 55, Sajid Khan 5/50, Abrar Ahmed 4/27).
PoM: Sajid.



Jadeja to play Saurashtra's Ranji Trophy tie against Delhi

India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is set to play in Saurashtra's Ranji Trophy tie against Delhi from January 23 after turning up for the team's practice session in Rajkot on Sunday. Jadeja last played for Saurashtra in January 2023.

Rishabh and Jyothi shoot silver in French archery event

India's leading compound archers Rishabh Yadav and V. Jyothi Surekha claimed silver in the final of the Occitanie-Nîmes indoor archery world series tournament in France. While Rishabh was edged 149-148 by Austria's Nico Wiener in the men's final, Jyothi lost 146-147 against Alejandra Usquiano of Colombia in the women's event.

India defender Pritam Kotal joins Chennaiyin FC

India defender Pritam Kotal on Sunday joined Indian Super League (ISL) side Chennaiyin FC, leaving Kerala Blasters FC on a two-and-a-half-year deal. The 31-year-old Kotal, who has more than 50 caps for India, has been a regular feature in the ISL for the last decade. The move will strengthen the defence line of the Marina Machans.

LIVE TELECAST

Women's U-19 T20 World Cup: Hotstar, 8 a.m. & 12 p.m.
Australian Open: Evening session, Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1.30 p.m.
Hockey: HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports 1, 2, 3 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6 & 8.15 p.m.
ISL: Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.
Serie A: gxr.world, 1.15 a.m. (Tuesday)
LaLiga: gxr.world, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)
Australian Open: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 5.30 a.m. (Tuesday)



Top two: Panna and champion Tatiana display their winnings.

Tatiana Prozorova gets the better of Panna Udvardy in a thriller

TENNIS

Kamesh Srinivasan

NEW DELHI

Tatiana Prozorova survived six match points before beating second seed and former world No. 76 Panna Udvardy of Hungary 4-6, 7-6(6), 6-4 in the final of the \$40,000 ITF women's tennis at the DLTA Complex on Sunday.

For the sparse gathering that faithfully stayed glued to the seats for three hours, it was a high quality fare as both players did not hold back right through the gripping contest.

The 21-year-old Russian, Tatiana was perhaps a little more hungry and a lot more athletic to eventually convert her fifth match point for her sixth title in the professional circuit.

Axelsen and Young stamp their class

The Dane secured his third India Open title to equal Malaysian Lee Chong Wei record; the Korean was dominant in the women's section

BADMINTON

Uthra Ganesan
NEW DELHI

After a week of long-drawn matches, upset wins and local heartbreaks, the finals of the India Open on Sunday were anti-climactic with four of the summit clashes decided in straight games. Viktor Axelsen and An Se Young lived up to their pre-tournament favourites tag, registering comprehensive one-sided wins to clinch men's and women's India Open badminton titles respectively here on Sunday.

While Axelsen sent last year's runner-up Cheuk Yiu Lee of Singapore packing 21-16, 21-8 in 41 minutes for his third title in the tournament in six finals over 10 years - equalling Malaysian legend Lee Chong Wei for the most titles here - An Se took a minute less



All smiles: Axelsen and Young strike a happy pose after claiming the singles titles. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

to wrap up a 21-12, 21-9 victory against Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong for her second after 2023. In the process, Axelsen also avenged his first-round loss to Lee at the season-opener Malaysia Open to extend his win record to 7-2 against the World No. 20.

The two Olympics champions have had a con-

trasting time since their Paris triumph but at the packed K.D. Jadhav Indoor Hall, they hit their strides to stamp their dominance in similar style at the Super 750 event. While An Se has continued in the same vein, dominating women's badminton - her only two losses coming against China's Zhi Yi Wang since Pa-

ris - Axelsen has been struggling with injuries, training and motivation, even pulling out of the year-end World Championship Finals in December last.

He had struggled to find his rhythm and form here as well but the Dane found the perfect way to wrap up his campaign. Starting

slowly and being erratic, the 2017 and 2019 champion trailed 2-6 before levelling at 7-7, then reeled off six points to go 13-8 up before winning 21-16, finding a way to retrieve everything that Lee threw at him and getting stronger in his attacks. Once the first game was in, Axelsen was a different beast in the se-

cond, running away with the game and the title to take home a prize purse of \$66,500 and 11,000 ranking points.

An Se, who has never lost to Pornpawee in their nine previous meetings, extended her dominance to 10-0 in just 39 minutes, taking control early on for a 6-1 lead before winning 21-12. The second game was no different, An Se leading 7-1 before closing the match at 21-12, not having dropped a single game in her 10 matches this year.

The results (finals): Men: Viktor Axelsen (Den) bt Cheuk Yiu Lee (Sgp) 21-16, 21-8. **Doubles:** Sze Fei Goh & Nur Izzuddin (Mal) bt Won Ho Kim & Seung Jae Seo (Kor) 21-15, 13-21, 21-16.

Women: An Se Young (Kor) bt Pornpawee Chochuwong (Tha) 21-12, 21-9. **Doubles:** Arisa Igarashi & Ayako Sakuramoto (Jpn) bt Hye Jeong Kim & Hee Yong Kong (Kor) 21-15, 21-13.

Mixed Doubles: Zheng Bang Jiang & Ya Xin Wei (Chn) bt Thom Gicquel & Delphine Delrue (Fra) 21-18, 21-17.

India bowlers prove too good for WI

WOMEN'S U-19 WC

Press Trust of India
KUALA LUMPUR

India shot out a clueless West Indies for 44 and registered a commanding nine-wicket win to begin its title defence in the women's U-19 World Cup here on Sunday.

Left-arm spinners Parvika Sisodia (3/7) and Aayushi Shukla (2/6), as well as



Joy for all: Joshi celebrates after dismissing Samara. ICC

Tesfay and Tele crowned champs



Blood, sweat and toil: Participants running on the Bandra Worli Sea Link. EMMANUEL YOGINI

MUMBAI MARATHON

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

New champions emerged in the Tata Mumbai Marathon as unheralded Berhane Tesfay of Eritrea clinched the elite men's title while Kenya's Joyce Chepkemoi Tele won the women's crown here on Sunday.

The 38-year-old Unheralded Tesfay clocked 2 hours 11 minutes and 44 seconds to complete the 42.195km distance and win his maiden international full marathon title.

Tesfay's compatriot Merhawi Kesete was second in 2:11:50s while Ethiopia's Tesfaye Demeke (2:11:56s) was third.

Tesfay, 29, clocked

2:24:56s to win the elite women's race, finishing ahead of Shitaye Eshete (2:25:29s) of Bahrain and Medina Deme Armino (2:27:58s) of Ethiopia.

Both the men's and women's defending champions from Ethiopia, Lemi Berhane and Aberash Minsewo, failed to finish on the podium this time.

Among the Indians, Anish Thapa (2:17:23s) finished first among men while Nirmaben Thakor (2:50:06s) defended her title among women.

Man Singh was second among Indian men with a time of 2:17:37s while

Sonika Parmar came second among women in 2:50:55s.

Sawan Barwal and Stanzin Dolkar won the half marathon in the men's and women's categories.

Philippos Matthai and Tarushi Vikram won two National titles apiece in the FMSCI Indian National Rally Sprint Championship 2024 organised by the Madras Motor Sports Club at the Madras International Circuit here on Sunday.

The 41-year-old Matthai, along with co-driver K.N. Harish, displayed controlled aggression on a wet track to post the quickest time of the day that earned him the victory in the premier Rally

2 class.

He went on to clinch the Rally Sprint 2 class title too.

Heavy overnight rains forced the organisers to change the original dirt track route to full tarmac.

The 6.2kms circuit was run twice, and positions were decided on the cumulative timings.

The results (provisional, cumulative timings, 2 laps):

Rally Sprint 1: 1. Philippos Matthai & K.N. Harish (09mins,

11.21secs); 2. Chandan Manche Gowda & Venu Ramesh Kumar (09:17.096).

Rally Sprint 2: 1. Philippos & Harish (09:15.788); 2. Chandan & Venu (09:28.473); 3. Arjun Rajiv & Pramod Ramam (09:40.939).

Rally Sprint 3: 1. Chandan & Venu (09:11.231); 2. Arjun & Pramod (09:31.593); 3. Ramprasanth & Robert Antony (09:39.603).

Rally Sprint 4: 1. Amey Desai & Mahadad Asif Mulla (10:02.552); 2. Srava Kumar & Dinky Varghese (10:26.819); 3. Kushal Chaudhari & Suraj Biswas (10:27.018).

Rally Sprint 5: 1. Umesh Rane & Suraj Biswas (10:54.678).

Juniors: 1. Tarushi Vikram & Amitha Aneesh (09:52.374); 2. Vihaan Bhat & G.R. Rohit (11:32.349).

Ladies: 1. Tarushi & Amitha (09:52.374).

Tatiana Prozorova gets the better of Panna Udvardy in a thriller

tiana, but there was no dearth of fight or drama in the decider.

String of errors

Tatiana did take a 4-2 lead, but Panna restored parity. A string of errors saw Panna drop serve at love in the ninth game.

In what proved to be the last game, Tatiana was serving at 40-15 and had two more match points. She had to save three break points to force her fifth match point.

When Tatiana slipped and fell in a tough rally, Panna's shot sailed wide. Tatiana converted her fall into a celebration as she lay on her back to rousing applause from the fans.

A very sporting Panna cheerfully walked across the net to congratulate Tatiana on her hard-earned victory.

Duke Of Tuscany obliges in feature event

HYDERABAD: Trainer Pesi Shroff's ward Duke of Tuscany, ridden by P. Trevor, won the HPSL Golconda Derby Stakes, the main attraction of the Sunday's (Jan 19) races. The winner is owned by Mr. K.N. Dhanjibhoy & Mr. Z.K. Dhanjibhoy rep. Five Stars Shipping Co. Pvt. Ltd., Ms. Anosha Meyers, Mr. Rama Seshu Eyunni & Ms. Anita J. Captain. Trained D. Neel saddled three winners on the day.

Trevor confidently positioned his mount in second place throughout the race, maintaining a steady pace until the field approached the home straight. As they entered the final stretch, this son of Cougar Mountain, Nicollini surged forward effortlessly, seizing the lead and securing a commanding victory.

1. ROYAL CALCUTTA TURF CLUB CUP (DIV. II) (1,100M): DOUBLE BUBBLE (Kuldeep Singh Sr.) 1, Emerald Touch (Neeraj) 2, Racing Ruler (Ashad Asrar) 3 and Victory Run (Ashad Asrar) 4. Head, 1/2 and 1-1/2, Im, 7.94s. 57 (w), 12, 10 and 28 (p). SHP: 19, THP: 41, SHW: 10 and 16, FP: 60, Q: 27, Tanala: 126. Favourite: One Only.

Owners: M/s. Rama Seshu Eyunni, Shankar Srinivas, Ashok Ranipise & Mrs. T. Ranga Raju. Trainer: D. Netto.

2. TURF AUTHORITIES OF INDIA CUP (DIV. II) (1,400M): ONE N ONLY (Kuldeep Singh Sr.) 1, D Minchu (David Allan) 2, Hurricane Bay (Mohit) 3 and Delhi Heights (Mukesh) 4. Head, 2, 10 and 1/2, Im, 26.21s. 22 (w), 10, 13 and 10 (p). SHP: 33, THP: 41, SHW: 10 and 16, FP: 60, Q: 27, Tanala: 126. Favourite: One Only.

Owners: M/s. Rama Seshu Eyunni, Shankar Srinivas, Ashok Ranipise & Mrs. T. Ranga Raju. Trainer: D. Netto.

3. ROYAL CALCUTTA TURF CLUB CUP (DIV. IV) (1,100M): PLEASANT STAR (Akshay Kumar) 1, Royal Touch (Neeraj) 2, Royal Warrior (P. Sai K) 2 and Calabasas (P. Ajeebh) 3 and Philodendron (Md. Ismail) 4. Head, 2 and 3-1/4, Im, 7.51s. 31 (w), 11, 14 and 30 (p). SHP: 19, THP: 42, SHW: 10 and 21, FP: 35, Q: 23, Tanala: 104. Favourite: Pleasant Star.

Owners: Mr. N. Poduval & Mr. V. S. Pathy. Trainer: D. Netto.

4. BANGALORE TURF CLUB CUP (1,200M): ROMANTIC GREY (Vivek) 1, Perception (Md. Ismail) 2, Cherish The Lady (Ajay) 3 and Peanut (Mukesh) 4. Head, 3-1/4 and Short Head, Im, 13.01s. 31 and 15, FP: 21, Q: 20, Tanala: 148. Favourite: Romantic Grey.

Owners: M/s. S.R. Sanas, Ashok Ranipise & D.R. Thacker. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

5. MADRAS RACE CLUB CUP (1,600M): NONPARIEL (Akshay Kumar) 1, China Town (P. Ajeebh) 2 and Clara (Suraj Narredu) 4. Head, 4, 2, 10 and Neck, Im, 39.74s. 20 (w), 10, 46 and 22 (p). SHP: 145, THP: 52, SHW: 14 and 47, FP: 692, Q: 35, Tanala: 6,695. Favourite: Clara.

Owners: Mr. Rajendran rep. Parapar's Gal

BCCI's diktat – a balancing act between planning and execution in pursuit of excellence

While the Board has come up with remedial measures with a view to revive flagging fortunes in red-ball cricket, it will be interesting to see how these get implemented with concerns of player burnout floating around



AFP

R. Kaushik

Well intentioned (?) 'leaks' and well-placed sources have revealed catchy details of the discussions that took place during the review meeting called last weekend by the Board of Control for Cricket in India to dissect what by all accounts has been a dismal season of Test cricket. Having begun promisingly with an expected 2-0 rout of Bangladesh, India won only one of their next eight Tests, thereby playing themselves out of contention for a place in the final of the World Test Championship for a third successive time.

Their batting was in shambles in Australia, with 200 topped only thrice in nine innings. The top order, with the honourable exception of Yashasvi Jaiswal – and, to a lesser extent, K.L. Rahul – came a terrible cropper, skipper Rohit Sharma sat out the final Test because he didn't believe he figured in the best XI on current form and India fielded spinners as if on a whim in the first three Tests before going in with two of them in Sydney, on a green, spiteful deck where collectively, Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar bowled a mere four overs across two innings.

In order to compensate for top-order failings, India were forced to extend their batting line-up, perhaps at the expense of a penetrative bowling option (did they have any left, you might ask) when the brief going into Sydney was clear - win the Test if you are to square the series, retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and theoretically stay alive in the WTC race. One can only presume that these issues were all debated at the review meeting; 'leaks' haven't thrown light, perhaps the clearest indication of how the perception towards what's news and what's not has changed with changing times.

Course correction

What we do know is that there was much soul-searching and banging of heads on developments off the field that the leadership group believed had an impact on the performances on it. As such, there is a spoken desire to embark on course correction, though whether that will be implemented or whether mere lip service is being paid in the aftermath of one of India's most disappointing outings in recent times remains to be seen.

Foremost on the BCCI's priority list is to return domestic cricket to its former glory. How does one do that? By asking

players to represent their respective states in Ranji Trophy and white-ball tournaments when they are not on national duty. Simple, right? Not quite.

Rohit made a pertinent observation on the sidelines of the announcement of India's Champions Trophy squad on Saturday, stopping short of saying that players weren't machines who could play day in and day out. He pointed out that, speaking for himself, from the time he became a Test regular towards the end of 2019, he had been playing near-non-stop international cricket, considering that until the end of June, he was an all-format certainty. He remarked that India's domestic season, between September and March, is when the Indian team is also involved in action generally, in one format or the other and at times in more than one format at the same time in different parts of the world. He spoke passionately of the need for players to rest and recover and recharge physically and mentally. Bravo. Especially for a beleaguered captain to make such logical and valid arguments with calmness and composure spoke to his leadership traits.

In the same breath, Rohit agreed that playing domestic cricket was essential. It's a point of view he has espoused in the past as well. After all, it's at the domestic level where it all started - for Rohit, for Virat Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah, for Rahual and Rishabh Pant and Ravindra Jadeja and Mohammed Shami and everyone else. How can playing for their respective states be a drudge, a punishment?

There is a very thin line between insisting on adherence to norms and running the players to the ground. One of the common arguments is that when the rest of us mere mortals turn up for work every day and don't ask for or take 'breaks', why should an exception be made for the cricketers whose 'work' is to play. Really?

It has emerged that several of those who played in Australia until earlier this month and who will play in Dubai in the Champions Trophy next month will fulfil state duties when the Ranji Trophy resumes on Thursday after having taken a pause to facilitate the white-ball Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy tournaments. Among them is Rohit himself, who hasn't played for Mumbai since November 2015. Others certain to figure in this round of matches are Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Pant, potentially Jadeja and Washington too. That will lift the profile of the Ranji Trophy, undoubtedly. It will inspire their

teammates and their opponents and hopefully, it will catch the attention of the fans, many of whom swear by only white-ball cricket unless the national team is in red-ball action.

Terrific development

From an optics point of view, this is a terrific development, driven by head coach Gautam Gambhir and chief selector Ajit Agarkar. Perhaps lost in all this posturing is a little empathy and understanding, a little sensitivity. Rest isn't such a bad thing. International sport, with its pulls and pressures and massive stakes, compels a certain amount of downtime. Whether an insistence on playing the Ranji Trophy this soon after an eight-week tour of Australia and this close to the ODI series against England, starting in two and a half weeks from now, is ideal is a point to debate.

Balance hasn't always been Indian cricket's greatest virtue. One can only hope that when the dust settles, when passions don't run as high and when calmer minds come together, there will be a little more flexibility when it comes to such matters. Domestic cricket can't and must not be ignored, but can we not make it out like sending the international stars to play for their states is a punishment of sorts?

The review meeting, attended by the BCCI head honchos as well as Rohit, Gambhir and Agarkar, was seized of the need to streamline procedures when the national team is on an overseas trip. Much of the protocols that have been put in place have existed in the past, but the insistence on strict adherence to those protocols has stemmed from experiences in Australia that didn't do full justice to the term 'team'.

While rumours of a house divided are almost certainly only that - rumours - it can't be denied that India appeared a little disjointed Down Under. Some players travelling with their families separately from the rest of the squad was far from ideal.

One of the greatest virtues of team sport is camaraderie and togetherness, which fosters team spirit and a looking-out-for-one-another mindset. India didn't lose in Australia because they didn't travel as one or they didn't stay as one. But the value of experienced players spending time with newcomers off the field, in a non-pressure setting, sharing their journey, asking and answering questions and furthering the bonding process can never be overstated.

In a throwback to the past, existing guidelines with regard to the players being joined by their families while on tour are set to be followed in letter all over again. These guidelines were relaxed during the Covid-19 pandemic when it was imperative for players confined to their rooms to be lifted by the presence of their spouses and kids whenever possible. Post the pandemic, that trend continued but it seems that after what happened in Australia, the authorities have decided that it is time to turn the clock back and place restrictions on when and for how long families can visit the players.

This is being seen as a retrograde, negative, insensitive step in various quarters, with jibes about wives and children being held responsible for the non-performances of their husbands and parents flooding social media space when that is neither the import nor the intent of this messaging. Wives and kids have been travelling with Indian players for more than four decades now but where, in the past, families got together and got along in the evenings and on non-match days, there is a sense of disconnect between most now. Each of them is in their own bubble, which again is far from ideal in a team set-up where you can't just turn up for work in the morning and go home in the evening. To have one's family around, especially when the going is not great, must be a terrific source of support and comfort. Again, balance is the key here. Exceptions will certainly be made and not because of who the request is coming from. Guidelines are in place for a reason, but they can't and must not be set in stone because one of the most important traits of good leadership is to not have a one-size-fits-all approach.

These are troubled times for Indian cricket, and it's during troubled times that all sorts of issues rear their heads. India can buy themselves some breathing space with a good run in the Champions Trophy, but they can't afford to sweep underlying problems under the carpet. Response must be measured, commonsensical and inclusive, not knee-jerk and authoritarian.

Empathy more than carping criticism - from the authorities, if not the experts and the fans - is essential but that should be reciprocated by the players in terms of effort and commitment (after all, there is no guarantee of results). Tricky, interesting days ahead, when collective mettle, character and temperament will be tested as much as skill, ability, planning and execution.

THE GIST

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SCIENCE

Indian cryptography research gears up to face the quantum challenge

Areas where Indian researchers are working extensively include communication complexity, the amount of communication required to complete a computational task; proof complexity, the computational resources required to prove or disprove statements; and algebraic coding theory

T.V. Padma

Fundamental research in cryptography that's used worldwide to facilitate internet banking, e-commerce services, and secure messaging systems is now taking root in India as well.

The principal goal of those developing or using cryptographic systems is to improve system security. Cryptography – from the English roots of “hidden writing” – is the name for techniques that secure information by converting plain text into ciphertext. It is concerned with the creation and use of encrypted messages that only the sender and the receiver can understand and which a malicious actor who interferes with the communication can't.

Sending secret messages isn't new. Archaeologists have unearthed clay tablets made by the ancient Mesopotamians in which they wrote down cryptic formulae to make ceramic glazes. In the first century BC, the Roman dictator Julius Caesar used the eponymous Caesar cipher to relay messages of strategic value to his generals.

More recently, many Polish codebreakers fled their country after Adolf Hitler invaded it in 1939 to work with reputed British mathematicians, including the father of modern computing, Alan Turing, to crack Germany's famed Enigma cryptosystem. Turing's work in particular established much of the foundational theory for modern algorithmic computing.

Scientists have devised many sophisticated methods to prevent adversaries from cracking secret codes and gaining unauthorised access to sensitive information. These methods achieve their goals by using algorithms and protocols to protect some data's confidentiality, integrity, authenticatability, and non-repudiation.

‘Hard’ problems

Cryptographic algorithms convert messages in ways that make it very difficult, very expensive, or both to decode them. A common way to achieve this has been to place some sensitive information behind the answer to a very difficult problem. An agent can access the information by solving the problem, so the harder the problem, the more inaccessible the information.

“Hence the search for harder and harder problems – for instance, even those that quantum computers may find hard to solve,” R. Ramanujam of the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai, said.

As computational techniques evolve, particularly with advancements in quantum computing, the interplay between complexity and cryptography will continue to be a crucial area of research and development, he added.

Modern cryptographic systems are built on problems that demand far too many resources to be solved.

“As they say in the crypto community, if your cryptosystem is broken, either a spy is dead or a million dollars is missing,” Ayan Mukherjee, an assistant professor at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune, said. “Such is the seriousness of the effect of a broken cryptosystem. Thus, oftentimes, people use the old and the trusted to secure their communications.”

This is also why, he added, “The field of cryptography is very slow-moving.”

“There is a close connection between complexity theory and cryptography, hence many [researchers] work on these connections, clarifying notions and building finer techniques,” Ramanujam said.

Areas where Indian researchers are working extensively include communication complexity (the amount of communication required to complete a computational task), proof complexity (the computational resources required to prove or disprove statements), and algebraic coding theory (using algebra to encode and decode data).

Locks and keys

The goal is to make sure an adversary, especially one with enormous computational resources, can't crack the code. At the heart of any cryptosystem is the key: a secret value an algorithm uses to encrypt or decrypt data.

The Caesar cipher is a simple example. It works by mapping the existing alphabet to one where the starting letter is offset by some number of letters. This number is the key. For example, if the key is 14, the encrypted alphabet begins with the letter O (the 14th letter) rather than A. Thus the



At the heart of any cryptosystem is the key, a secret value an algorithm uses to decrypt, or unlock, data. JAYDEEP /PIXABAY

words FIGHT FOR ROME become TWUVH TCF FCAS.

When the sender encrypts data with a key, only someone who knows the key can decrypt the message and read it. More sophisticated systems use two keys – one each for the sender and the receiver – and map them in a separate secret way.

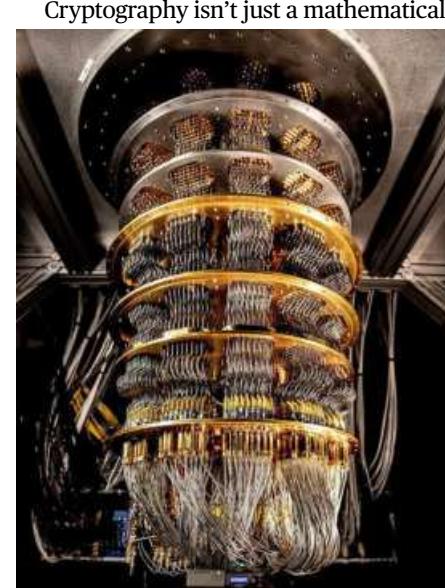
A famous example is public-key cryptography, which is used to secure information over the internet. The receiver uses a single algorithm to generate two keys called the public key and the private key, and shares the public key with the sender. Any message the sender encrypts with the public key can be decrypted by the private key.

Researchers prefer the algorithms that generate keys to be one-way functions, a name in mathematics for functions that are simple to use but hard to crack. In cryptography, this means they can be used to easily encrypt messages but can't be cracked without knowing the key. As Ramanujam put it, the challenge is like protecting a house with a strong alarm system that the house's residents can still use without training.

Some one-way functions are very difficult to crack and thus very secure – but they also take a long time to decrypt messages. This is one of the principal reasons mining for bitcoins has become a very energy-intensive process. The bitcoin system uses a one-way function that has required more computational resources to decrypt messages as the size of its blockchain has increased.

This is why some cryptography researchers in India and abroad are working on simplifying the decryption side in particular. Researchers are also considering whether shorter proofs (of the hard problems) can be used to verify the integrity of data in artificial intelligence and large language models.

Cryptography isn't just a mathematical



A cryostat refrigerator for cooling quantum computing chips at Google's Quantum AI lab in Santa Barbara, California, U.S. REUTERS

or academic curiosity but is of considerable practical interest, Yael Kalai, whose work on proofs won her the 2022 Turing Award, told the 11th Heidelberg Laureate Forum in September (the author was in the audience). “In today's world, the biggest problem we have to solve is trustworthiness,” she said.

Since researchers have solved the problem of authentication and security in communications, she added, the current problem is computation.

“People are computing things for us. How do we know that they are computing correctly? How do we certify the huge and often crazy computations people are coming up with? That is a huge new research problem now.”

Possibility of disruption

Two research areas that could disrupt current cryptographic systems with significant economic and social consequences are homomorphic encryption and quantum information technologies, per a recent paper by the Organisation of Economically Developed Countries (OECD).

Homomorphic encryption is a cryptographic method that allows certain calculations to be performed on encrypted data without the need to decrypt it first and without accessing the secret key. The result of such computations remains in encrypted form and can be revealed later, when necessary. According to the paper, this technique could surmount the problem of processing encrypted data without decrypting it first, which increases risk.

Second, a mature quantum computer could easily break some encryption methods widely used today. Some researchers are thus working on algorithms that can resist attacks powered by a quantum computer, an enterprise called quantum resistant cryptography (QRC).

In fact, marrying cryptography with quantum physics paves the way for encryption technologies based on the laws of quantum physics, which can be more convoluted than mathematical concepts alone.

Researchers worldwide have been working on QRC since 2006, including in publicly funded research projects in the European Union and Japan. In India, Mukherjee's group at IISER Pune, and those at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and the Raman Research Institute (RRI), both in Bengaluru; the Centre for Development of Telematics, New Delhi; and at Pondicherry University are working on it as well.

A huge deal

Cryptography research in India is taking off in other aspects, too, catching up with that in the European Union, the U.S., and China. The National Quantum Mission the Cabinet approved in 2023 includes a research hub for quantum communication. The mission is to enable

A mature quantum computer could easily break some encryption methods widely used today. Some researchers are thus working on algorithms that can resist attacks powered by a quantum computer, an enterprise called quantum resistant cryptography

satellite-based secure quantum communications between ground stations over 2,000 km, long-distance secure quantum communications with other countries, inter-city quantum key distribution over 2,000 km, and multi-node quantum networks, among other outcomes.

The Indian Space Research Organisation is also planning to launch a satellite with ultra-secure quantum communication capabilities.

In July, a team of Indian scientists from RRI, IISc, IISER Thiruvananthapuram, and the Bose Institute in Kolkata published a paper describing a way to generate true random numbers that are crucial to making secure private keys and nearly unbreakable passwords.

“This new method offers the enhanced protection we all need in our daily lives by using truly random numbers to generate keys that will be used to encrypt the passwords,” the Department of Science & Technology said in a statement.

Apart from the Ministry of Science & Technology, major government funders for cryptography research in the country include the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Department of Telecommunications.

“The present status of quantum cryptography is to build quantum-secure cryptosystems,” Mukherjee said. “It's based on the idea that, in the near future, we will have quantum computers. When that happens, the current cryptosystems will fail. This is a huge deal.”

The consequences will also affect India's cryptography policy. According to a recent study commissioned by the Thales Group, the volume of sensitive data in the cloud could surge from 51% of all organisational data to 68% by 2027. As more data enters and lives in the cloud, “encryption techniques for data at rest, in motion, and in use are becoming more pervasive, evolving into a standard practice for protecting cloud-resident sensitive information against emerging cyber threats,” the report said.

There is widespread data loss as well: the report said almost three-fourths of all organisations have faced multiple data breaches in the past year, foremost due to inadequate encryption. Some 71% initiated formal cryptographic programmes and 81% have dedicated encryption teams.

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A boat carrying domestic tourists passing through hyacinth in Lake Naivasha last December. AP

Water hyacinth threatens the livelihoods of fishers on Kenyan lake

Associated Press

For someone who fishes for a living, nothing says a bad day like spending over 18 hours on a lake and taking home nothing.

Recently, a group of fishermen were stranded on Kenya's popular Lake Naivasha for that long and blamed the water hyacinth that has taken over large parts of it.

“They did not realise that the hyacinth would later entrap them,” said fellow fisherman Simon Macharia. The men even lost their nets, he said.

The water hyacinth is native to South America and was reportedly introduced to Kenya in the 1980s “by tourists who brought it as an ornamental plant,” said Gordon Ocholla, an environmental scientist at Mount Kenya University.

Water hyacinth was first sighted on Lake Naivasha about 10 years ago. Now it has become a large, glossy mat that can cover swathes of the lake. To fishers, the invasive plant is a threat to livelihoods.

Usually, the presence of water hyacinth is linked to pollution. It is known to thrive in the presence of contaminants and grows quickly and is considered the most invasive aquatic plant species in the world, Ocholla said.

It can block sunlight and impact airflow, affecting the quality of aquatic life. This has caused a drastic drop in the population of fish in Lake Naivasha and some other affected areas.

The East African Journal of Environment and Natural Resources estimated in a 2023 study that the invasion of water hyacinth in Kenyan

The water hyacinth is native to South America and was reportedly introduced to Kenya in the 1980s ‘by tourists who brought it as an ornamental plant’

lakes – including Lake Victoria, Africa's largest – has led to annual losses of between \$150 million and \$350 million in Kenya's fishing, transport, and tourism sectors.

The fishermen at Lake Naivasha know that well. “Previously we would catch up to 90 kg of fish per day, but nowadays we get between 10 kg and 15 kg,” Macharia said. This means daily earnings have dropped from \$210 to \$35.

There are several ways to deal with the plant, including physically removing it, Ocholla said. Another method is introducing organisms that feed on it. Or chemicals can be sprayed to kill the plant, “but this is not favorable as it would harm other aquatic life.”

Recently the fishers, through a Kenyan start-up called HyaPak, began using a method that converts water hyacinth into biodegradable packaging.

HyaPak started in 2022 as a project at Egerton University in Kenya. HyaPak founder Joseph Nguthiru said the company is trying to use one problem, the hyacinth, “to solve the plastic waste pollution” problem.

HyaPak has entered into a partnership with the fishers, who harvest the water hyacinth and sun-dry it for a negotiable fee. Then it is transported to a HyaPak facility to be converted into biodegradable paper material.

The company works with 50 fishers at Lake Naivasha and processes up to 150 kg of water hyacinth per week, converting it to 4,500 biodegradable packages.

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