



CONFIDENTIALITY CONCERN

Govt. officials 'advised' against using AI tools

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UNRESOLVED ISSUES

Congress joins Sikkim BJP to oppose Teesta dam rebuilding

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Six States oppose UGC draft norms

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STATE OF PLAY

Targeting a Dravidian icon and ideology

Tamil nationalists moving against Periyar

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NEXT ASSIGNMENT

India-England ODI series from today

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IN BRIEF

Mamata highlights 'political stability' to draw investors

KOLKATA

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee showcased the State's "political stability and lack of strikes" as a major draw for investors at the 8th Bengal Global Business Summit on Wednesday. » Page 4

Narcotics network backing infiltrators in J&K, says Shah

NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said the narcotics network was providing support to infiltrators and terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. He said there was a need to initiate prompt action. » Page 10

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60% polling recorded in crucial election in Delhi

Turnout almost touches 62.59% recorded in the 2020 Assembly election; parties complain about violations of Model Code of Conduct in several areas, Delhi police say issues are resolved

Satvika Mahajan
NEW DELHI

Delhi recorded a turnout of 60.44% as the polling percentage in the Assembly election was updated at 12.30 a.m. on Thursday.

The voter turnout figure for the high-stakes election is likely to rise as updates continue to come in from polling booths.

In the 2020 Assembly election, the turnout was 62.59%, while in 2015, it was even higher at 67.47%.

Political parties complained about violations of the Model Code of Conduct in Chirag Delhi, Jangpura, Farsh Bazaar, and Seelampur.

However, the Delhi police did not register any case on the basis of these allegations, saying that



Seeking return: AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal with his family members after casting their vote on Wednesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

they had been resolved.

There are close contests expected in several high-profile constituencies, including New Delhi where former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of the Aam Aadmi Party will take on two former Chief Ministers' sons: Parvesh Sahib Singh of the BJP and San-

deep Dikshit of the Congress.

High-profile voters

The Capital is also home to high-profile voters including President Droupadi Murmu, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, who voted along

Exit polls predict victory for BJP in national capital

NEW DELHI

Most of the exit polls on Wednesday predicted the return of the BJP and its allies to power in Delhi after 27 years, while projecting that the AAP would stand second and the Congress a distant third. AAP, however, said it was confident of victory. » PAGE 11

with his family, and Chief Justice of India Sanjeev Kumar. Congress MPs Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and Sonia Gandhi also voted on Wednesday.

CONTINUED ON

» PAGE 10

NO MAJOR COMPLAINTS

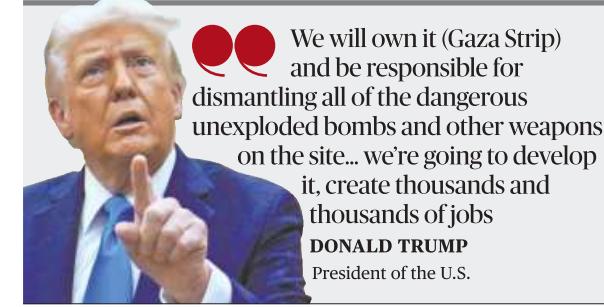
» PAGE 11

U.S. President vows to take over and develop Gaza Strip after resettling Palestinians

Reuters

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump vowed on Tuesday that the U.S. would take over the war-ravaged Gaza Strip after Palestinians are resettled elsewhere and develop it economically, a move that would shatter decades of U.S. policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



We will own it (Gaza Strip) and be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other weapons on the site... we're going to develop it, create thousands and thousands of jobs
DONALD TRUMP
President of the U.S.

moltion site".

"The U.S. will take over the Gaza Strip, and we will do a job with it too," Mr. Trump told presspersons.

"We will own it and be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other weapons on the site," he said.

"If it's necessary, we'll do that, we're going to take over that piece, we're going to develop it, create thousands and thousands of jobs, and it'll be something that the entire Middle East can be very proud of,"

Mr. Trump added.

Asked who would live there, the U.S. President said it could become a home to "the world's people".

Mr. Netanyahu said Mr. Trump was "thinking outside the box with fresh ideas" and was "showing willingness to puncture conventional thinking."

Mr. Trump earlier repeated his call for Jordan, Egypt, and other Arab states to take in Gazans.

ALLIES, FOES REJECT PLAN
» PAGE 14

150-odd voters reach old booth, only to find their names deleted from list

Satvika Mahajan
NEW DELHI

On Wednesday, a group of 150-odd voters travelled 40 km to their polling booth in central Delhi. They claimed to have even received voter slips outside the booth, only to be told by an officer inside that their names had been deleted from the electoral roll. These voters had been relocated from the city's Kali Bari area to Narela last year.

Kali Bari is part of New Delhi Assembly constituency, from where Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal is looking to secure his third consecutive



Voters travelled 40 km to their booth in New Delhi. SATVIIKA MAHAJAN

term against Bharatiya Janata Party's Parvesh Sahib Singh and Congress's Sandeep Dikshit.

"We checked online several times, including once this morning before getting on a bus, to ensure that our names were on the roll," said Durgesh, 41,

an autorickshaw driver. Mukesh Rai, 52, also among those who returned to Kali Bari to cast their ballot, said, "I have been voting in New Delhi since I turned 18. All my paperwork still carries the Kali Bari Marg address."

Rai said when they

followed procedure. When reached for comment, Delhi CEO R. Alice Vaz did not respond. However, an Election Commission official said they had followed the procedure in the case.

RELATED REPORTS

» PAGE 2

U.S. aircraft lands in Amritsar with 100 deported Indians

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A C-17 wide-bodied aircraft of the United States Air Force landed in the Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport of Amritsar on Wednesday carrying around 100 Indian nationals who were suspected by the U.S. authorities of using illegal means to enter the country.

Sources here contradicted the previous assessment of over 200 passengers, saying that the flight carried a little more than 100 passengers as "large-scale deportation flights" usually do.

According to sources privy to the nature of the discussion regarding the passengers on the flight, the individuals on board the aircraft were handed



A U.S. military plane deporting Indian immigrants lands at the Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport in Amritsar on Wednesday. ANI

over to the Punjab police soon after they landed.

The deportation through a military aircraft drew attention as this was the first time the U.S. had carried out such a deportation with one of its biggest cargo aircraft. The BBC had reported that the authorities in Amritsar moved

fast and started sending them back to their home towns in Gujarat, Haryana, and Punjab. Commercial taxis and airlines were being used to send them back to their home towns, sources have said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Over 65% turnout in Milkipur byelection

Press Trust of India
AYODHYA

Over 65% of the total 3.70 lakh voters exercised their franchise in the Milkipur Assembly byelection in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday.

The turnout surpassed the 60.23% recorded in the 2022 poll, with 65.35% votes cast till the completion of voting, according to the Election Commission.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav alleged that presiding officers were "fulfilling the target of fake voting" in the constituency and urged the poll body and the Supreme Court to take cognisance of the "enemies of democracy".

DETAILS ON
» PAGE 3

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DELHI ELECTION

Poll vault



Too young to vote, old enough to volunteer

The Election Commission roped in several students as volunteers at polling booths. Not having turned 18 and unable to vote, these students were happy to guide people and were excited about contributing to the election process. Sunny Chaudhary, 17, had been at the polling booth in New Ashok Nagar since 6 a.m. "I will be able to vote next year, but I am happy to be a part of the election process," he said. Aniket Chauhan, 17, volunteering at a Kalkaji polling station, said he took up the role to learn how the EC manages such a huge task and how the polling booth functions.



Once refugees from Pakistan, now Indian citizens making poll debut

As many as 186 erstwhile Pakistani Hindu refugees exercised their voting rights for the first time on Wednesday. Dharamveer Solanki, president of the Pakistani Hindu refugee community, expressed hope that their struggles would finally come to an end. "Now, we won't have to constantly change our locations. We will finally get permanent homes and a stable means of livelihood," he said. Many such voters, who got Indian citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, queued up outside a polling booth in Majnu Ka Tilla since early in the morning.



Stepped in with voter cards, walked out with surprise gifts

Residents who stepped into polling booths in New Delhi returned with saplings and posed with their gifts at the selfie booths, courtesy of the New Delhi Municipal Council. Some voters who turned up early in the morning were spoilt for choice. At a booth in New Delhi's Golf Links, voters were gifted a ceramic mug, a certificate and a ceramic planter. Expressing surprise at receiving the gifts, Ravi Prasad, 91, said, "This will encourage more voters to turn up. Moreover the initiative is also environment-friendly."

Key issues for Delhi voters: inflation, jobs, affordable houses, safety of women

Prices of food items and cooking gas weighed on the minds of many women voters while a young resident worried about the job market; many also cast their ballot in hope of getting *pucca* houses

Alisha Dutta
Ashna Butani

NEW DELHI

Rising prices, unemployment, and affordable houses were among the top concerns of voters when they walked into polling booths across the 70 seats of Delhi on Wednesday.

In south-east Delhi's Shaheen Bagh, 32-year-old Parveen Bibi, who works as a cook, said inflation has affected many like her. She voted for a party that could bring relief. "The situation at home is so bad that we have to conceal the shortage of food from our teenage children," said Ms. Parveen.

Ajju Nisha, a 60-year-old resident of Matia Mahal, said the rise in prices of cooking gas and raw vegetables determined her vote.

However, Aditi Singh, a 22-year-old resident of Kalkaji, said employment matters most to her. "Having seen so many people taking up gig work despite having a good education, I'm scared to face the job market in the city," she said.

Infrastructure was another key issue for the city residents. Anita, a 40-



(Clockwise from top) Sonia Gandhi with Priyanka Vadra and Sandeep Dikshit; BJP's Parvesh Sahib Singh, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal; L-G V.K. Saxena, SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR / SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA / SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

year-old sanitation worker in Chandni Chowk, said she voted for better housing. "We live in a *kutcha* house. When it rains, the roof leaks. I voted for a *pucca* house," said Ms. Anita.

Pushpa Jethani, 79, was disheartened to see very few women candidates in the fray.

that air pollution did not become a political issue in the election. "Old people like me are forced to wear masks even after the pandemic."

Pushpa Jethani, 79, was disheartened to see very few women candidates in the fray.

Many voters were also dismayed to see the issue of women's safety getting little attention during the poll season. Shabina Jahan, a Matia Mahal voter, said,

"My daughter is studying in Class 11. I am worried about her because Delhi is unsafe for women."

cash" to voters in a building close to a polling booth in Sarai Kale Khan, which is a part of Jangpura Assembly seat.

Candidates of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) levelled allegations of electoral malpractices against each other during polling on Wednesday, even as the police reported no breach of law and order.

While senior AAP leaders and Assembly poll candidates Manish Sisodia (Jangpura) and Saurabh Bharadwaj (Greater Kailash) accused the BJP of distributing cash and preventing voters from reaching the polling booths, BJP's Anil Gaur (Selampur) claimed that bogus voters were being allowed to cast ballot in his constituency. However, the police denied these claims.

Later in the day, Mr. Bharadwaj alleged that the police were trying to stop residents from voting by placing barricades near a polling station. However, DCP (South) Ankit Chauhan said barricades were placed and lifted as per protocol. "We lift barricades for the elderly and those with mobility impairment. Such voters are allowed to bring their cards inside the polling stations, and this rule is implemented everywhere."



Police personnel at a polling booth in Kalkaji. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Mustafabad in north-east Delhi records highest voter turnout

Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

Mustafabad Assembly in north-east Delhi on Wednesday recorded the highest voter turnout at 69%, according to Election Commission data. It was followed by Seelampur – 68.70% – located in the same region.

In Mustafabad, several polling stations saw queues of voters throughout the day as they came

out in large numbers to exercise their franchise. "For people living here [Mustafabad], a vote is a hope for change as they struggle for basic amenities. People also remember the Delhi riots [2020], when the lives

of many were altered forever," said Adil Ansari, 41, who works in a private company.

In Seelampur, Satbir Singh, 64, said people voted enthusiastically as the area saw a lot of campaigns ahead of the poll. "People here are more aware of politics," he added. Sunil Sharma, 40, from the same area, said, "Seelampur is like a village. People know each other, and we come out in groups to vote."

Kheru Nisha, who stays in a night shelter in Lodhi

Hope to be able to afford food, send children to schools: homeless voters

Sobaim Rocky Singh
NEW DELHI

Among those who stepped out to exercise their franchise on Wednesday were the city's homeless citizens. Several such voters told *The Hindu* that they had cast their ballot in the hope of seeing their children in schools and being able to afford two square meals a day.

Kheru Nisha, who stays in a night shelter in Lodhi

Colony, voted early in the morning. The 30-year-old said she voted with the hope of being able to afford food for her five children.

Another night shelter inmate, Sonia, 30, said, "Promises were made about free education and uniforms for poor students, but my children haven't been able to avail of these benefits." She added, "Government school employees ask for a ₹500 bribe for the admission of each student. So, none of my children go to school. But I voted for someone who, I believe, will help get rid of the corruption."

Julekha, 65, who is deaf and mute, showed her inked finger and her voter ID, carefully tucked inside a pouch. When asked where she would go when her night shelter gets dismantled in the summer, she pointed towards the nearby flyover.

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

No.Tech-II/144/2024/19

PRESS NOTICE (RETENDER)

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

Sl. No.	Package No.	Name of work	Bid Value (Rs in Lakh)	Completion Period	Bid Security	Cost of Bid
1	Pkg-I	Sibsagar College, Sivasagar for Infrastructure Development for elevation as Universities under TNEIF	942.76412	18 (Eighteen) Months	2% of Bid value for General category and 1% of Bid Value for reserved Category	Rs.18860.00
2	Pkg-III	Bongaigaon College, Bongaigaon for Infrastructure Development for elevation as Universities under TNEIF	939.87504	18 (Eighteen) Months	2% of Bid value for General category and 1% of Bid Value for reserved Category	Rs. 18800.00
3	Pkg-IV	Jagannath Barooah College, Jorhat, for Infrastructure Development for elevation as Universities under TNEIF	963.31702	18 (Eighteen) Months	2% of Bid value for General category and 1% of Bid Value for reserved Category	Rs.19270.00
4	Pkg-V	Nowgaon College, Nagaon for Infrastructure Development for elevation as Universities under TN EIF	911.74989	18 (Eighteen) Months	2% of Bid value for General category and 1% of Bid Value for reserved Category	Rs.18240.00

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in from 06/02/2025 at 10.00 am onwards.

The bidders must be enrolled with the tendering web-portal www.assamtenders.gov.in.

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

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

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

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ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

No. 218PSC/Sty-2/2021-2022

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

E-tenders are invited by the undersigned through e-procurement system i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in in two bid systems from eligible Agencies/Firms having adequate experience and credential in the concerned fields of work, for all the items mentioned below for entering into a contract for meeting the Commission's requirements for a period of one year, extendable for another one year on satisfactory performance basis from the date of award of Contract.

Item	Scope of Works
A.	Printing & Supply of OMR Answer Sheets with Barcodes microline and water mark, (Single Layer), readable on OMR System, in the format (Specifications & Design) to be decided by the Commission.
B.	Printing & Supply of Carbonless OMR (1+1 Tear off) i.e. in two parts A4 size, Top copy printed in 100-110 GSM paper and bottom copy printed in 50-60 GSM paper with Barcodes microline and water mark, readable on OMR System, in the format (Specifications & Design) to be decided by the Commission.
C.	Scanning of used OMR Answer sheets and result processing at the office of the APSC.

The item either A or B shall be ordered one at a time as per requirement and decision of the Commission.

Important dates of the tender:

Sl. No.	Scheduled	Start date	Start time	End date	End time
1.	Tender publishing	04-02-2025	05:00 PM	NA	NA
2.	Tender download	04-02-2025	05:00 PM	27-02-2025	11:00AM
3.	Pre-Bid Meeting	11-02-2025	At 3:00 P.M.	Venue- APSC Office Khanapara, Guwahati-22	
4.	Bid submission	17-02-2025	10:00 AM	27-02-2025	11:30AM
5.	Bid opening (Technical)	27-02-2025	02:00 PM	NA	NA

Tender documents may be downloaded from the official website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>. The bidders would be required to register in the website for submission of the bids. The bidders are required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-III (only Signing) from any of the Certifying Authorities. Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-procurement may obtain the same by registering in the www.assamtenders.gov.in. The requirements to register with the e-procurement portal are available on the website indicated above.

All other relevant information and the detailed Bid documents are available on website www.assamtenders.gov.in.

Secretary
Assam Public Service Commission
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-22

THE HINDU

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Notice Inviting e-TENDERS

The Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division Haroli invites online tender on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractors for the following works through online process:-

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Earliest Money	Cost of Tender	Time	Class in which contr/ firm eligible
1.	Providing Flood Protection work in Pandoga Industrial area to save abadies of Hanzen Basti in village Pandoga in Tehsil Haroli Dist					

Over 65% voter turnout in Milkipur byelection; SP chief alleges rigging

Voting percentage more than that recorded in 2022 poll (60.23%); Akhilesh posts photos on X, urges EC to take cognisance of 'enemies of democracy'; the seat is part of politically significant Ayodhya district

Press Trust of India

AYODHYA

More than 65% of the total 3.70 lakh voters exercised their franchise in the bypoll to the Milkipur Assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday, surpassing the turnout recorded in the 2022 poll, even as Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav alleged "fake voting" and "rigging by officials".

Voting began at 7 a.m. and continued till 5 p.m., officials said.

Likely to increase

According to the Election Commission (EC), 65.35% votes were cast till the completion of voting. The final percentage can go up as the data is compiled from all the 414 polling stations. The turnout is more than that recorded in the 2022 Assembly poll (60.23%).

The byelection had turned into a prestige battle between the Samajwadi Party and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party as the seat is part of the politically significant Ayodhya district.

Mr. Yadav alleged that presiding officers are "fulfilling the target of fake vot-



A first-time voter flouts her inked finger after casting her vote for the Milkipur Assembly byelection in Ayodhya on Wednesday. PTI

ing" in the constituency, and urged the EC and the Supreme Court to take cognisance of the "enemies of democracy".

He posted on social media platform X an audio clip from a purported sting operation, and said, "This is a sting operation of the truth of presiding officers who are fulfilling the target of fake voting for the ruling party."

He alleged that the police are checking identity cards of voters to "create fear" in them.

However, Ayodhya Senior Superintendent of

Police Raj Karan Nayyar refuted the allegations.

He said the photo in question showed police personnel verifying the identification credentials of a polling agent.

'Polling peaceful'

Meanwhile, addressing reporters, IG Pravin Kumar said, "Voting is going on peacefully at all polling stations. Magistrates and police officers are on patrol. Paramilitary forces have been deployed at important polling stations."

Mr. Yadav also alleged that SP booth agents were harassed at several polling stations and the BJP supporters resorted to violent tactics. "BJP goons ... were openly shielded by the police and administration."

He also added that Muslim women were subjected to humiliation, with some forced to remove their burqas for identification purposes.

Even as the SP is looking to retain the seat, the BJP sees the election as an opportunity to avenge its loss in Faizabad. In the 2022 Assembly polls, Milkipur was the only seat the BJP lost in the district.

Bombay HC dismisses plea against Cong. MP's poll win

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday dismissed an election petition against the victory of Mumbai North Central Member of Parliament and Congress leader Varsha Gaikwad by her rival candidate Asif Ali Siddique.

Mr. Siddique alleged that Ms. Gaikwad had engaged in electoral malpractices during her poll campaign.

Dismissing the petition, a single-judge Bench Justice Sharmila U. Deshmukh pronounced, "The pleadings in the petition fail to set out the mandatory material facts and are completely vague. Substantial pleading is based on alleged information received by the petitioner from his source, whose name has not been disclosed, and the petition is verified as true to his knowledge without disclosing the source."

Timings

DELHI

THURSDAY, FEB. 06
RISE 07:06 SET 18:05
RISE 12:04 SET 01:30

FRIDAY, FEB. 07
RISE 07:06 SET 18:05
RISE 12:54 SET 02:37

SATURDAY, FEB. 08
RISE 07:05 SET 18:06
RISE 13:51 SET 03:43

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 24 11
Safdarjung 24 11
Palam 22 10

Delhi Palam Today
24°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be slight cold with shallow fog and mist. Day will be pleasant. Night also will be cold.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
25°C Morning will be cold with shallow fog and mist. Day will be pleasant. Night also will be cold. Dry weather to prevail.

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छापांग निवास नगर, बुद्धपुर		RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BERHAMPUR						
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(E-Mail:- serwpr2004@yahoo.com, Tel No.:+0680-2404287)								
No. e-tender I/324 // RWCII/ BAI/ Dated 04/02/2025 E-Mail/E-despatch								
2nd Corrigendum to Bid Identification No. Online Tender /22-2024-25/BPR								
1) The partial modification of Road works under MMSY-TRIP (Balance Work) vide above identification has been made as follows.								
1.	Date of availability of tender	10.02.2025 to 24.02.2025 upto 5.30 PM instead of 30.01.2025 to 14.02.2025 up to 5.30 PM	2.	Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	21.02.2025 at 5.30 PM instead of 12.02.2025 at 5.30 PM	3.	Date of opening of Technical Bid	25.02.2025 at 11:00 AM instead of 15.02.2025 at 11:00 AM
4.	Date of opening of Financial Bid	Will be intimated later on.		All other contents will remain unchanged.				
O-1417: Chief Construction Engineer, R.W.CIRCLE, Berhampur OIPR-25071/11/0047/2425								

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INVITATION FOR BID(IFB)								
The Executive Engineer, HP.PWD, Indora, Tehsil Indora, Distt. Kangra (HP) on behalf of Governor of HP invites the item Bid in Electronic tendering system from the eligible Class of Contractor registered in HP.PWD. for the work as detailed in the table. The cost of tender & Earnest Money will be excepted only online mode.								
Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Starting Date for downloading of Bid.	Deadline for submission of the Bid.	Time limit	Cost of Tender	Eligible Class of Contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Periodical Renewal on TippariSamunDainkwan road (Village Road) (SH-P/L 25mm thick Bituminous concrete in Km. 2/00 to 4/00 =2.00 Kms under AMP-2025-26	23,99,343	43500	07.02.2025 10.00 A.M.	13.02.2025 5.00 P.M.	Two Months	500/- A,B,C & D	
2.	Periodical Renewal on Dhangu to Majra road (PMGSY Road) (SH-P/L 25mm thick Bituminous concrete in Km. 2/00 to 4/00 =2.00 Kms under AMP-2025-26	17,83,359	34500	07.02.2025 10.00 A.M.	13.02.2025 5.00 P.M.	Two Months	500/- A,B,C & D	
3.	Periodical Renewal on KandwalDantial road (MDR Road) (SH- P/L 25mm thick Bituminous concrete in Km. 0/00 to 3/00 =3.00 Kms under AMP-2025-26	74,36,328	1,06,900	07.02.2025 10.00 A.M.	13.02.2025 5.00 P.M.	Two Months	2000 A, B & C	
4.	Periodical Renewal on MohitIndora AL No.1 road (Village Road) (SH- P/L 25mm thick Bituminous concrete in Km. 4/00 to 5/00 & 8/00 to 9/00 Kms under AMP-2025-26	38,96,265	66000	07.02.2025 10.00 A.M.	13.02.2025 5.00 P.M.	Two Months	1500 A,B,C & D	
The Bidders are advised to note other details of Tender from the Department website www.hptenders.gov.in. & the said tender will be opened on 14.02.2025 at 11:00 AM. Executive Engineer, Indora Division, HPPWD, Indora, Telephone No. 01893-22412336, e-mail- eepwd-indora-hp@gov.in On behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh.								
HP / 5008/24-25								

PRESS NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER No:- 21/PNle-T/EE/WRD-IV/BLN/2024-25 Dt. 22.01.2025

The Executive Engineer, W.R. Division No-IV, Belonia, South Tripura invites percentage rated e-tender in two bid on behalf of the Governor of Tripura in separate sealed covers in PWD Format F-7, as applicable, from the appropriate classes of enlisted contractors of Tripura PWD & also from the contractors registered in MES/RLLYS/CPWD/TTAACD having experience similar nature of work up to 3.00 p.m. on 21-02-2025 for the following work. The tender can be uploaded in website https://tripuratenders.gov.in. up to 3.00 p.m. on 21-02-2025.

Memo No. F.8(22)/EE/WRD-IV/BLN/PNle-T-21/2063-2112 Dated, Belonia the 22-01-2025.

SI No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Time for Completion	Bid Fee
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Construction of 213 Deep tubewell Minor Irrigation Schemes(DTWMS) in 8 Districts of Tripura/SH: Construction of 32 nos. DTW Minor Irrigation scheme in cl Drilling & Development of Deep Tube Well, Installation of Pump Motor and electrical accessories, Pump House construction and Laying of Distribution System Complete at different parts of South Tripura District. Job No.TR/01/NABARD(RIDF-XXX)/2024-25.	Rs. 12,75,00,564.00	Rs.25,50,011.00	18(Eighteen) Months	Rs. 10,000.00

DNle-T No.- 21/CE/PWD(WR)/ACE(P&DU)/DNleT/2024-25

For & On Behalf of the Governor of Tripura
(Er. Basudeb Das)
Executive Engineer
Water Resources Division no-IV
Belonia, South Tripura

ICA/C/3608/25

Majhi launches special village infrastructure development programme of ₹5,000 crore

Satyasundar Barik

BHUBANESWAR



The scheme will help reduce the gap in development of cities and villages, says the CM.

The Mohan Majhi-led government's village-focused development initiative, 'Bikashita Gaon, Bikashita Odisha' (Developed Village, Developed Odisha), was formally launched on Wednesday.

Launching the scheme, the Chief Minister said it will help reduce the gap in development of cities and villages and bring parity in basic infrastructure.

Under the scheme, ₹1,000 crore will be spent every year for the development of infrastructure in villages. The government will spend ₹5,000 crore in five years from the current financial year to 2028-29 and expand the programme if necessary.

Stating that it is impossible to think of the development of Odisha without the development of villages.

The basic infrastructure of village roads especially those which connect villages.

es to villages will get high priority. Moreover, all community infrastructure such as Kalyan Mandap, community centres, improvement of bathing ghats and market sheds will be constructed.

Plans have also been made for the development of educational infrastructure. Construction of additional classrooms and improvement of the existing infrastructure will be taken up.

"The minimum cost of each project will be ₹3 lakh... so that the quality can be maintained," he said.

Responding to the scheme launch, opposition Biju Janata Dal MLA Arun Sahoo said, "The fund earmarked annually for villages is too meagre to take up any development programme. We had far bigger allocations for village development."

Chhattisgarh Cong. lists 34 promises for ULB polls

Press Trust of India
RAJPUR

Chhattisgarh Congress on Wednesday released its manifesto for the February 11 urban local body (ULB) polls in the State, listing 34 promises, including doorstep delivery of some important certificates, free Wi-Fi at public places and installation of CCTV cameras near schools and colleges.

Pradesh Congress Committee president Deepak Baiji, former MLA Stayanaray Sharma, who is the convenor of the party's manifesto committee for the polls, and other leaders released the manifesto 'Jan Ghoshna Patra' at the party office Rajiv Bhawan here.

The party also promised to provide free sanitary pads to female students in school and colleges, and regularisation of contractual employees of municipal corporations.

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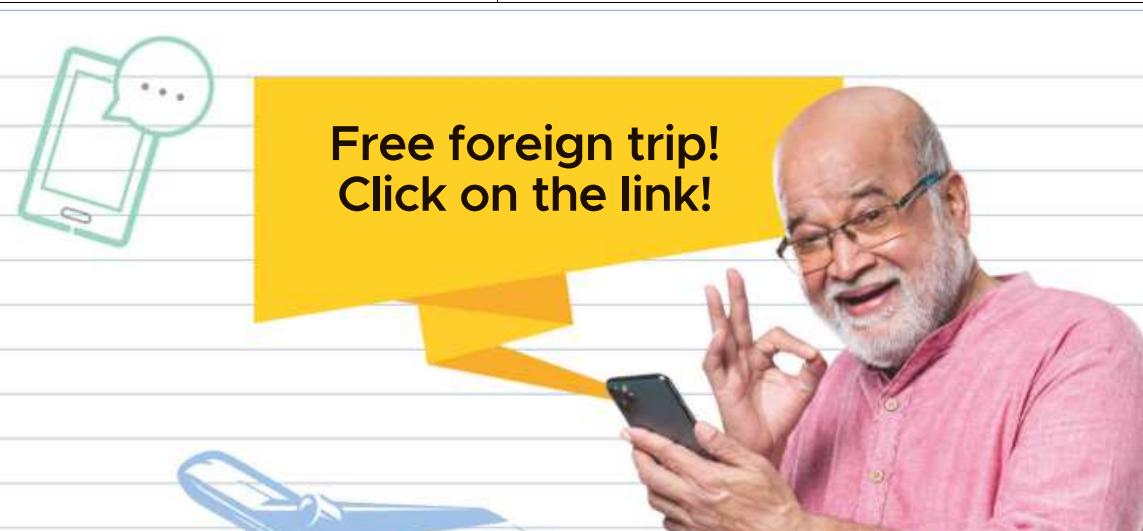
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More details about the program can be found on the website: <https://cscl.iiti.ac.in>
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INBRIEF



RSS chief to visit Bengal, hold talks with outfit's members

Mohan Bhagwat, head of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), is expected to visit West Bengal on a 10-day tour for organisational work, the RSS's West Bengal unit announced on Wednesday. Mr. Bhagwat is expected to hold multiple rounds of talks and discussions with RSS members and *pracharakas* as part of his tour. He will arrive in Kolkata on February 6 and will begin his tour from February 7. This is the first visit by the RSS chief to West Bengal after the India-Bangladesh turmoil, which led to many protest rallies across the State by various Hindu groups.

SECs to discuss challenges of local bodies elections at meet

The 31st annual conference of the State Election Commissioners (SEC) will be held at Pench town in the Seoni district of Madhya Pradesh from March 1-4, a top poll official said on Wednesday. Poll body chiefs of about 25 States will participate in the event, MP State Election Commissioner Manoj Shrivastava said in a statement. During the four-day conference, Mr. Shrivastava said, the participants would discuss the challenges faced during local bodies elections and the measures to deal with them. They will also discuss ways to make people aware of innovations, especially the use of new technologies in polls, he added. PTI

Uproar in Rajasthan Assembly over dissolution of 9 districts; Oppn. seeks debate on issue

The Hindu Bureau

JAIPUR

The Rajasthan Assembly witnessed noisy scenes on Wednesday over the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government's decision to dissolve nine of the 17 districts as well as three divisions carved out in 2023 during the previous Congress regime. The proceedings of the House were adjourned for 15 minutes because of the pandemonium.

The Opposition Congress MLAs demanded a debate on the issue, while accusing the BJP of settling political scores by abolishing the districts which would have ensured better governance through smaller administrative units. Congress MLA Suresh Modi and 30 other members gave notices for adjournment motion during the Zero Hour regarding the

Cong. MLAs accuse BJP of settling political scores by abolishing the districts which would have ensured better governance

situation arising out of the dissolution of newly formed districts and divisions.

The nine districts dissolved by a decision taken in the State Cabinet meeting on December 28, 2024, were Anupgarh, Dudu, Gangapur City, Jaipur Rural, Jodhpur Rural, Kekri, Neem Ka Thana, Sanchore and Shahpura. While the State will now have 41 districts, the BJP government also annulled three new divisions created in 2023, confining their number to seven.

Parliamentary Affairs

Minister Jogaram Patel said the issue of dissolution of districts and divisions had been taken to the Rajasthan High Court through public interest litigation and a *sub judice* matter could not be discussed in the Assembly. He requested the Chair not to allow a debate on the adjournment motion.

LoP raises objection
Raising his objection, Leader of Opposition Tika Ram Jolly said the matter related to only two districts - Neem Ka Thana and Gangapur City - was pending in the court. "We will not mention these two districts here... The rights of the House and the MLAs cannot be curtailed on the pretext of a matter being *sub judice*. We discuss a number of issues on which the court hearing is going on," he said.

Three schoolteachers held for sexual assault of student on campus

The Hindu Bureau

KRISHNAGIRI (TAMIL NADU)

Three government school-teachers were arrested on Tuesday night in connection with a sexual assault on a 13-year-old girl on the school campus at Bargur in Tamil Nadu's Krishnagiri.

The alleged crime reportedly came to light only when teachers visited the girl's home on Monday to investigate her prolonged absence from school.

According to the School Education Department, the accused teachers were named in the complaint lodged by the school headmistress and the block education officer.

A Muniraj, Chief Education Officer (in-charge), citing the accounts of school authorities, told *The Hindu* that since the girl stopped coming to school in January, some of the teachers paid a visit to her house to

find out the reason. The girl told them that she had ulcers, and would return [to the school]. "Again, on Monday, the school authorities visited the girl. That was when she spoke of the alleged sexual assault by three teachers in a toilet on the campus in the first week of January..."

Superintendent of Police P. Thangadurai told *The Hindu* that the police received a complaint from the school headmistress. Along with the Child Welfare Committee, the police visited the girl at her home. She was later taken to a One-Stop Centre (that supports women affected by violence) in the Krishnagiri government medical college hospital. "The incident is said to have happened between January 1 and 3," Mr. Thangadurai added.

The accused were arrested on a complaint from the survivor's mother.

Waiting for the day Dalits take leadership positions in India, says Rahul in Patna

Amit Bhelari

PATNA

Ahead of Assembly elections scheduled in Bihar later this year, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday made an attempt to reach out to Dalit voters by taking part in the 130th birth anniversary of freedom fighter and Scheduled Caste (SC) leader Jagjal Choudhary, who hailed from the Pasi community.

Addressing the gathering at S.K. Memorial Hall in Patna, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said he was waiting for the day when Dalits and weaker sections would be seen in leadership positions in every institution of the country.

"I want to see the day when the owners of the top 10 companies of the country are from Dalit, tribal

communities and Backward Classes. I am fighting to achieve this goal and will continue to fight," he said.

Second visit in a month
This was Mr. Gandhi's second visit to Bihar within a month after attending a conference on 'Safeguarding Constitution' in Patna on January 18.

The Congress leader doubled down on the need

Services back at Agartala mission of Bangladesh

Syed Sajjad Ali
AGARTALA

The Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala resumed visa and consular services on Wednesday after suspending them for over two months following an attack by right-wing activists on its premises. Although there has been no official confirmation from the mission, visa applications were getting accepted and processed during the day.

Additional security personnel are still guarding the mission and the approach road following the December 2, 2024, raid by protesters from an organisation named the Hindu Sangharsh Samiti alleging attacks on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh.

During the vandalism, the protesters allegedly took down the Bangladesh flag besides causing damage to properties. Seven persons were arrested in connection with the incident, but were later released on bail.

The Assistant High Commission had stopped visa and consular services on December 3 reportedly in compliance with the directive of the Bangladesh government.

Night school for Kalbeliya women unlocks new opportunities

Mohammed Iqbal

AJMER

Making a difference within the nomadic Kalbeliya tribal community, Sanju Devi runs an *atta chakki* (flour mill) at her modest home to grind fresh flour for 40 to 50 households in Bhairwai village of Ajmer district, ensuring that they have quality food staples. Ms. Devi manages the entrepreneurial venture herself, maintaining the bills, records and feedback of her customers.

The 28-year-old woman earlier could not read or even recognise letters and was confined mostly to home, doing household chores. Ms. Devi learnt to read and write in Hindi and sign her name at a unique night school, which has unlocked new opportunities for women and children belonging to the

poor Kalbeliya community. The Samata night school, established in the nondescript Bhairwai hamlet in Ajmer district's Kishangarh tehsil about a year ago, is imparting education through a community-designed curriculum which reflects the specific needs and aspirations of Kalbeliyas. The backward community is known for snake charming, folk songs and dances, which form part of its traditions.

Lesson in life skills
Women, who attend the school at night after completing their daily chores, learn Hindi, mathematics, practical life skills, and enjoy songs and games that make learning engaging and relevant.

Bhairwai has long grappled with the absence of basic amenities such as electricity, clean water,



Women at the Samata night school for Kalbeliya community in Ajmer district's Bhairwai village. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and education. Home to about 50 households, the local community primarily relies on the traditional Kalbeliya art of dance and singing to make ends meet. In return for their performances, they receive rice and other essentials, which barely sustain them, while school education and good living standards are an unattainable dream

for them.

Rameshwari Devi, 29, is among other beneficiaries of the education at the doorstep, as she received training in stitching and was given a sewing machine, which she now uses to earn by stitching clothes. She can read signboards while travelling and sign her name in the MGNREGS works register,

where she would earlier put her thumb impression.

Another Kalbeliya woman, Sarju Devi, 32, said she could travel alone after becoming literate and was at present running a small shop, while managing its finances and keeping records. "The night school has been life-changing for me... I am excited to learn English in future to explore new opportunities," she said.

Tailored for women

The school was launched last year by Manthan Santha, a grassroots voluntary organisation based in Kotri village, which identified the pressing needs of the Kalbeliya community and tailored the "nocturnal institution" specifically for women. After an initial reluctance and hesitation, the women gradually warmed up to the idea of

education.

The women, who once hesitated to step outside their homes, are now not just literate, they are aware of their health, cultural heritage, and the opportunities available through government schemes. "Women are playing a proactive role in sustaining the school and advocating for their children's education. They stand empowered today, ready to speak for their rights and make themselves heard," Tejaram Mali, founder-director of Manthan Santha, told *The Hindu*.

Manthan Santha's operations head Sanjay Malakar said the women, after getting education at Samata night school, had transformed their lives by supporting their families, earning a livelihood, and becoming role models in their community.

Murder of sarpanch: culprits will face strict action, says Fadnavis

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, during his visit to Beed district on Wednesday, addressed the murder of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh and assured locals that the perpetrators would face strict action.

Addressing a public meeting, he said that no one involved in the crime would be spared, regardless of their influence or position.

In a related development, the Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Legislative Council, Ambadas Danve, has called for an Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigation into the al-

leged financial dealings between Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) Minister Dhananjay Munde and his close aide, Walmik Karad. Mr. Danve, a Shiv Sena (UBT) leader, made the demand, citing the need for transparency in light of recent controversies surrounding the Minister.

He drew parallels to the case of Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray's aide Suraj Chavan, who recently secured bail in a money laundering case in an alleged scam of a few lakh rupees. "When allegations worth crores of rupees are surfacing, financial relationship between Dhananjay Munde and Walmik Karad must also be probed by the ED," he said.

IN BRIEF



3 killed as cellar collapses at under-construction site

The cellar of an under-construction hotel collapsed during excavation work, claiming the lives of three migrant workers in the L.B. Nagar area of Hyderabad in Telangana on Wednesday. Several others sustained injuries and were rushed to a private hospital for treatment. According to the police, around 10 workers were engaged in excavation when the mud boundary suddenly caved in. As of Wednesday evening, no case has been registered.

Over 24 spectators injured in football gallery collapse

More than two dozen spectators were injured when a temporary gallery collapsed during a football match at Palakkad district of Kerala on Tuesday night. The accident took place during the final match of a charity football tournament. The injured have been admitted to different hospitals in Palakkad and Malappuram. Police said their injuries were not serious. The stadium was packed and the gallery was overcrowded, said sources. The police are investigating if there were safety norms' violations.

College booked for abetment after nursing student ends life

A 19-year-old nursing student, Anamika Vineeth, a native of Kerala, allegedly ended life in her hostel room in Dayananda Sagar University in Karnataka on Tuesday. Her classmates alleged that she was being harassed by the university's management. The police registered a case of abetment of suicide against the management. (If you are in distress, reach out to: KIRAN 1800-599-0019 or Arogya Sahayavani at 104)

Three held for trying to switch off oxygen pipes in hospital

The Hindu Bureau
VISAKHAPATNAM

The One Town police in Visakhapatnam of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday arrested three persons, including a former employee of the King George Hospital (KGH), for deliberately trying to switch off valves of oxygen pipelines near the CSR Block of the hospital, on Wednesday.

The accused have been identified as P. Nuka Raju, alias Raju, 36, K. Suresh, alias Jani, 38, and P. Sivaji, alias Siddappa, 38, all from Visakhapatnam.

Authorities said Raju was a former contract employee in the hospital, but was sacked over alleged addiction issues.

A few days ago, he, along with two others, allegedly turned off the valves of the oxygen pipes near the CSR block. However, authorities turned it back on.

Again on February 1, the trio attempted to turn off the valves of oxygen pipes near the children's ward.

When security personnel at the hospital tried to catch them, they reportedly attacked the staff and fled the scene.

The KGH authorities lodged a police complaint, based on which the One Town police arrested the accused.

Minister reacts
Home Minister V. Anitha reacted to the incident and said a meeting would be held to discuss security measures at the KGH.

Stringent measures would be taken to prevent security lapses, the Home Minister said.

Six States resolve against UGC's new draft regulation

The decision was taken during a conclave of State Higher Education Ministers hosted by Karnataka; a 15-point resolution taken at the meeting urges Centre to withdraw the regulations

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

On Wednesday, Ministers for Higher Education and their representatives from six States passed a joint resolution opposing the draft of the University Grants Commission Regulations, 2025, and grading of higher education institutions based on the New Education Policy, 2020.

This was the outcome of the conclave of State Higher Education Ministers, 2025, hosted by Karnataka. Representatives from Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Karnataka



Power play: The States say that the BJP-led Centre is trying to push its ideology through the new regulations. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

participated and came out with a 15-point resolution, urging the Centre to withdraw the new draft regulations. In their resolution, the States said that the BJP-led Union government is trying to push its ideology through the new

regulations.

The Maharashtra representative, who was to virtually attend the conclave, was unable to continue due to technical glitches. The Jammu & Kashmir Minister communicated that they could not take part

due to emergency meetings, said Karnataka's Higher Education Minister M.C. Sudhakar.

He claimed that even some parties which are in alliance with the BJP have expressed their objection.

Meanwhile, UGC Chairman M. Jagadesh Kumar, said the regulations "aim to ensure the highest standards by introducing a more inclusive and transparent selection process".

He said they "seek to uphold the autonomy and accountability of higher education institutions."

Mr. Kumar added that they welcome constructive feedback and would work collaboratively.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav releases a cheetah into the wild at the Kuno National Park in Sheopur district. PTI

M.P. CM releases five more cheetahs into the wild in Kuno

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

'jeev charachar jantu saamaan' is amazing; which is the ideal shelter for wildlife and the courtyard of the frolic of many endangered wild animals. We are committed to preserving wildlife and biodiversity for the coming generations and will continue to make the holy land of Madhya Pradesh proud with such innovations in the future too," he said.

The total population of cheetahs at the national park is now 26.

Eight cheetahs had been brought from Namibia and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had released them in the enclosures at the park on September 17, 2022, marking a return of the feline species to the country.

More cheetahs

Six to eight more cheetahs are also set to be brought from South Africa and moved to a new home, Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary in Mandsaur district of the State. While an official date is yet to be decided, officials say it could be before April this year.

HC issues notice on Vijay Mallya's plea

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Wednesday ordered issue of notice to the debt recovery officer and 10 banks on a petition filed by fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya.

Mr. Mallya sought directions to the banks to provide statement of accounts for the total amount, along with accrued interest, owed by him, United Breweries Holdings Ltd.



(UBHL), and other certificate debtors, and the amount recovered so far in the process of recovery of debts of erstwhile Kingfisher Airlines Ltd.

HC stays order in vet student case

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Wednesday stayed a single judge's directive to readmit the students who are accused in a case relating to the death of Sidharthan J.S. of Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University in Wayanad and allow them to continue studies, subject to the outcome of the inquiry.

The Bench passed the order when an appeal filed

by Sheeba M.R., mother of Sidharthan, against the single judge's order came up for hearing.

The single judge had quashed the interim and final reports of the anti-ragging squad debarring the students after ordering a fresh inquiry and permitting them to continue studies, subject to the outcome of the inquiry.

On February 18, 2024, Sidharthan was found dead in hostel room under suspicious circumstances.

Three policemen suspended for attacking family in Kerala

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/
PATHANAMTHITTA

A Sub-Inspector and two civil police officers were on Wednesday placed under suspension for attacking a wedding party in Kerala's Pathanamthitta district on Tuesday night.

The Kerala Police came under severe social criticism after a surveillance video footage showing law enforcers caning members of a wedding party, including a couple, in front of a bar hotel at Aaba Junction in Pathanamthitta late on Tuesday emerged in the public domain.

S. Ajeetha Beegum, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Thiruvananthapuram Range), ordered the suspension of Sub-Inspect

or Jinu J.U. and civil police officers Jobin and Ashraf Rasheed following a report from the Pathanamthitta District Police Chief which faulted the officers for indiscipline and official misconduct.

The Deputy Police Superintendent of the District Crime Branch has been tasked with conducting an investigation and submitting a report within two weeks.

The incident occurred when a marriage party returning from a family wedding at Ezham Mile in Adoor briefly halted in front of a bar hotel and stepped out of the van to drop a relative, Sithara Mol.

According to her statement, a police patrol vehicle pulled up near them and baton-charged the

group without any provocation. She sustained a shoulder injury, while her husband, Sreejith, who had arrived to receive her, suffered a head injury.

Ms. Sithara noted that some of the law enforcers were in plain clothes. She alleged that the police did not seek any explanation from them before taking action.

Distress call

According to the police, the patrol team said it merely responded to a distress call for help from the bar management.

The hotel manager told reporters that he had called the police after some "anonymous" people slammed on the hotel door demanding they be let into the bar after 10.45 p.m., the closing time.

Morning scenes



Breakfast by the bay: Pigeons flock in large numbers as morning walkers feed them on Ramakrishna Beach in Visakhapatnam. V. RAJU

Forest personnel conduct search for leopard cubs on Tirupati university campus

The Hindu Bureau
TIRUPATI

Amid suspicion over the presence of leopard cubs on the Sri Venkateswara University (SVU) campus in Tirupati, the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department conducted a "perambulation" across the sprawling campus here on Wednesday.

Accompanied by the university's security personnel, the forest guards conducted the exercise to survey the entire campus.

The exercise started at 10.30 a.m. and ended at



4.30 p.m. but they could not find any trace of leopard cubs.

Four cages were placed across the campus to cap-

ture the elusive leopard that has been making forays into the campus regularly from the abutting Tirumala forests.

New life-sized mechanical elephant to assist Kerala temple in ceremonies

The Hindu Bureau
THRISSUR

A three-metre-tall mechanical elephant weighing 800 kilograms was offered to Kombara Sreekrishna Swami Temple in Kerala's Thrissur, on Wednesday.

Sitarist Anoushka Shankar and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India gifted the life-size elephant, Kombara Kannan, to the temple, in recognition of its decision not to own or hire live elephants.

Kombara Kannan was unveiled by Satish Vimalan, secretary of Unnaiy Warier Smarak Kalanilayam, and will be used to



Larger than life: Kombara Kannan is a three-metre-tall mechanical elephant weighing 800 kilograms. THULASI KAKKAT

conduct ceremonies at the temple.

Kombara Kannan was struck a chord with the de-

votees, especially children, as he can perform duties in accordance with the temple's requirements, but without getting lonely, thirsty, hungry or upset."

Ms. Shankar adds, "By bringing mechanical elephants to temples, real elephants can flourish in their native habitats."

In honour of our decision to never hire or own a live elephant for our temple's requirements, we are absolutely thrilled to accept a mechanical elephant," says Kombara Sreekrishna Swami Temple president Ravi Namboothiri. "All of God's creations deserve love and respect," he adds.



Not worth the risk

India must address illegal emigration with empathy and urgency

The deportation of dozens of Indians, believed to be illegal immigrants in the United States, is neither surprising nor unprecedented. Over the past few years, the U.S. government has intensified its Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations to identify, detain, and deport individuals without proper documentation. For instance, between June and October 2024, the Department of Homeland Security reported that 1,60,000 individuals had been deported on 495 international repatriation flights to more than 145 countries, including India. However, the manner and timing should be cause for concern for New Delhi. To begin with, these deportations coincide with a major crackdown by ICE, spurred by Donald Trump's swearing-in as the U.S. President in January. He has made illegal immigration his "number one priority". India, which has one of the largest populations of illegal immigrants in the U.S., estimated at 7,25,000 undocumented individuals, will need to prepare for a significant increase in the number of returning migrants. Second, for the first time, the use of military flights signals that the U.S. does not intend to be challenged. This move drew protests from Colombian President Gustavo Petro, particularly after reports emerged of deported migrants being shackled. The U.S. Embassy in Delhi has also made it clear that this deportation is part of a broader initiative to tighten immigration laws and enforcement, reinforcing the message that illegal migration is not worth the risk. Further, the timing, just ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's U.S. visit, suggests that diplomatic efforts alone may not be enough to deter the Trump administration from pursuing such measures. This has the potential to become a bilateral flashpoint in India-U.S. relations.

Accepting its citizens, provided they are verifiably Indian and have entered other countries illegally, is undoubtedly the Indian government's responsibility. However, stricter controls must be enforced to prevent Indians from embarking on perilous journeys to cross into the U.S. via Mexico and Canada. The government must ensure that young people in States with high deportation rates (Gujarat, Punjab, and Haryana), understand that working illegally abroad is not a guaranteed path to success. Educational campaigns should highlight the dangers associated with illegal immigration. Importantly, the root causes must not be ignored. The central and State governments must address the underlying economic distress, deepening agricultural crises, social tensions, and employment shortages that push people to take such risks. Attention must be paid to those who deliberately travel to conflict zones in search of opportunities. While altering U.S. immigration policies may be difficult, the Indian government must address the reasons behind this large-scale migration with empathy and urgency.

A tough call

The rupee's slide confounds monetary policymakers' task

The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will conclude its first policy review of 2025 on Friday, in significantly different circumstances from its December meet. For one, the key personnel have changed. The RBI has a new Governor, with former Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra replacing Shaktikanta Das soon after the last review. Deputy Governor Michael Patra, an MPC member who was in charge of monetary policy, also retired last month. With the Centre yet to name his successor, navigating this review is going to be a tad tricky for the new central bank boss, with another deputy holding additional charge of monetary policy. Second, the rupee is in a free fall of sorts. After hitting 85 to the U.S. dollar on December 19, 2024, it slipped to 86 on January 13, 2025 and crossed 87 on February 3, partly due to the third factor at work. The strengthening dollar is driven by U.S. President Donald Trump's overdrive to 'Make America Great Again' with higher tariffs on major trade partners, and other disruptive economic plans such as exiting global tax accords, shutting aid flows, *et al.*

One thing has not changed – the clamour for an interest rate cut from industry and government honchos. In December, this noise was heightened after a sharp growth blip in the July-September quarter when GDP grew just 5.4%. Now, with 2024-25 GDP growth downgraded to just 6.4%, and the no marked uptick in economic metrics in the December-ending quarter, growth worries remain entrenched. In the interim, there has been some back and forth between North Block and Mint Street on the factors responsible for stumbling economic activity. The Finance Ministry sought to lay some of the blame for an urban demand slump on tight monetary policy. RBI officials, in the central bank's January bulletin, said the "one way" to spark a growth rebound and a virtuous cycle of fresh private investments, is to boost consumption through higher disposable incomes, especially for the urban middle class that has been pining for relief from food inflation. With the Budget delivering on this front with income tax cuts, the ball is back in the RBI's court. Inflation has been over 5% in the last five months, but may have eased closer to the RBI's 4% target in January. But a rate cut could also hurt the rupee further, and spur higher imported inflation. It is an unenviable situation for the new RBI chief to be in; he might be tempted to take a cue from Mr. Das who had surprised markets with a rate cut in the first review under his watch in 2019, reversing his predecessor's stance.

A Budget that is mostly good but with one wrong move

The Union Budget has got many things right. Its projection of nominal GDP growth for 2025-26, at 10.1%, is reasonable and acceptable. The Economic Survey 2024-25 had indicated a real GDP growth in the range of 6.3%-6.8% for 2025-26. This provides some buffer if growth picks up more. The increase in the capital expenditure of the government in 2025-26 over the revised estimates of 2024-25 is estimated at ₹1.03 lakh crore. But the capital expenditures in 2025-26, at ₹1.2 lakh crore, are nearly the same as was indicated in the Budget of 2024-25 at ₹1.1 lakh crore.

The overarching aim of the Budget was to accelerate growth and push India towards a developed country status. The required rate of real growth to achieve this is estimated differently including a rate of 8% in the Economic Survey for 2024-25. In any case, the country needs a definite pickup in growth rate. The various measures indicated in the Budget are welcome. In fact, some of these could have been implemented even earlier. The concession given to the 'middle-class' in terms of income-tax is welcome as a relief. But its impact on demand depends on the marginal propensity to consume of the households who are expected to largely benefit from these concessions and their consumption basket.

Gross tax revenues

Growth in the Government of India's gross tax revenues (GTR) have trended downwards in recent years. The buoyancy of GTR has fallen for three successive years from 1.4 in 2023-24 to 1.15 in 2024-25 (RE) and then to 1.07 in 2025-26 (BE). As a result, growth in the Government of India's GTR has kept falling from 13.5% in 2023-24 to 11.2% in 2024-25 (RE), and to 10.8% in 2025-26 (BE). Within the government's tax revenues, the growth rate of Goods and Services Tax (GST) has also fallen from 12.7% in 2023-24 to 10.9% in 2025-26 (BE).

In fact, the structure of the government's taxation has moved away from indirect to direct taxes. The share of direct taxes in the government's GTR has increased from 52% in



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Some of the measures indicated in the Budget could have been implemented even earlier; moving away from 'fiscal deficit' as an indicator is an incorrect step

2021-22 to 59% in 2025-26 (BE) which is a welcome development. Within direct taxes, however, it is personal income-tax which has performed better than corporate income-tax in terms of growth and buoyancy.

However, even in the case of personal income-tax there has been a fall in growth from 25.4% in 2023-24 to 20.3% in 2024-25 (RE) and 14.4% in 2025-26 (BE). This fall in growth in 2025-26 (BE) is partly due to the announced income-tax concessions. In the case of corporate income-tax, the growth in 2024-25 (RE) is quite low at 7.6%. This growth has been raised to 10.4% in 2025-26 (BE). On the whole, assumptions regarding the government's tax revenue growth in 2025-26 (BE) appear to be realistic.

In the case of non-tax revenues, the main contribution has been in the form of dividends from the Reserve Bank of India and public sector companies, which together accounted for about ₹3.25 lakh crore in 2025-26 – an increase of ₹35,715 crore over the revised estimates. Thus, the non-tax revenues have been raised from ₹5.3 lakh crore (RE) to ₹5.8 lakh crore in 2025-26 (BE).

Level of government expenditure

Tax and non-tax revenues, non-debt capital receipts and fiscal deficit together determine the size of government expenditure. As discussed, a gross tax revenue growth at a lower level of 10.8% appears to be realistic. Given the commitment to fiscal consolidation, the size of government expenditure as a percentage of GDP had to be reduced from 14.6% in 2024-25 (RE) to 14.2% in 2025-26 (BE). Growth in total expenditure, at 7.6% in 2025-26 (BE), is lower than the budgeted nominal GDP growth at 10.1%.

In fact, this was so even in 2024-25 (RE), when the government's total expenditure growth was 6.1% as against the nominal GDP growth of 9.7% as per the first advanced estimates. However, there has been a steady improvement in the quality of government expenditure as the share of capital expenditure in total expenditure has been improving. In fact, this share has improved by 10% points over the period from 2020-21 to 2025-26 (BE). Given the contemporary context, the Government of India has to build up

large-scale Artificial Intelligence (AI) infrastructure in order to facilitate the adoption of emerging technologies. In this context, China has taken a clear lead. The United States has recently announced an investment of \$500 billion for AI infrastructure. In the field of AI, India's technology companies have failed to anticipate developments. India should have done what China did. Perhaps, India should push these companies for research and development, by offering some tax concessions, if necessary.

A less transparent fiscal health indicator

One wrong measure introduced in the Budget is to move away from fiscal deficit as an indicator of fiscal prudence. Contrary to what is stated in the Budget document, we are moving from a transparent to a less transparent indicator. As per the glide path given in the Medium-Term Fiscal Policy Cum Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement of the 2024-25 Budget, the fiscal deficit was to be brought down to below 4.5% by 2025-26.

However, in the 2025-26 Budget, the practice of giving a glide path in terms of fiscal deficit is being discontinued. It has been stated that from now on, the focus will be on reducing the debt-GDP ratio annually. In the annexure statement titled 'Statements of Fiscal Policy as required under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003', alternative paths of the debt-GDP ratio with nominal GDP growth assumptions of 10.0%, 10.5% and 11.0% are given.

The glide paths are indicated in terms of alternative growth assumptions and alternative assumptions regarding mild, moderate, and high degrees of fiscal consolidation. This makes the whole exercise vague and non-transparent. It is better for fiscal discipline to indicate specific fiscal deficit target for different years and the corresponding debt-GDP ratios for those years. It should clearly be shown by what year the FRBM Act targets are to be achieved. A larger claim on the available investible resources by the government will make it difficult for private investment to pick up.

The views expressed are personal

A green signal for India to assert its health leadership

The Union Budget 2025-26 lays a robust foundation for India to assert its leadership in global health care and innovation, with strategic announcements that bolster medical infrastructure, expand educational opportunities, and promote global collaboration.

With a ₹90,958 crore health-care allocation, the addition of 75,000 medical seats over the next five years, and investments in daycare cancer centres, India is poised to enhance both accessibility and quality of care. The country will add 10,000 medical seats in FY26 alone, underscoring its commitment to health-care excellence.

India's health-care transformation

This Budget underscores India's remarkable journey of progress, from the 1980s when it grappled with limited medical infrastructure, to its current status as a global health-care leader. The transformation has been nothing short of extraordinary.

Recently, the writer had the privilege of presenting two key recommendations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi first, establishing India as the global health-care destination, and second, addressing the global shortfall of health-care professionals. It has been a delight to see both these ideas in action through the 'Heal in India' and 'Heal by India' initiatives. With streamlined visa processes, enhanced hospital infrastructure,



Dr. Prathap C. Reddy

is Founder and Chairman, Apollo Hospitals

The Budget has recognised the role of health care as a pillar of national growth and development

and robust public-private partnerships, India is poised to become the preferred medical destination for international patients.

Simultaneously, the country is addressing the global shortfall of health-care professionals by training and deploying more doctors, nurses, and paramedics abroad. This will ensure that Indian expertise supports health-care systems worldwide while creating new opportunities for our skilled professionals.

Customs duty exemptions, tech outlook

Moreover, it is commendable that the growing burden of non-communicable diseases such as cancer has been acknowledged in this Budget. The establishment of 200 day-care cancer centres in district hospitals will bring specialised treatment closer to people, improving early diagnosis and better patient outcomes.

The customs duty exemption on 36 life-saving drugs, including those for cancer, rare diseases, and chronic conditions will lower the cost of treatments, in turn, benefiting thousands of patients across the country. Also, the addition of 13 new patient assistance programmes would also improve access to critical medications for patients, particularly those with chronic conditions.

The emphasis on Artificial Intelligence and digital health marks a pivotal moment for the future of India's health care. The new National Centres of Excellence will spearhead innovation

in diagnostics, treatment, and research, enabling India to develop cutting-edge solutions that enhance patient care.

The writer believes that the introduction of cutting-edge technologies to deliver quality health care has strengthened India's position as a global health-care player. Both private and public hospitals have played an integral role in this progress. Apollo was the first hospital to launch Proton therapy for advanced cancer care in this part of the world and continues to attract patients from countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom to name a few.

Build on the momentum

This Budget clearly recognises the government's vision for – and demonstration of bold leadership in recognising – health care as a pillar of national growth and development. From a country that once struggled to provide basic medical care, we have evolved into a nation offering world-class treatment to millions. Through the synergy of Heal in India, Heal by India, and innovation-driven care, we are shaping a future where India's health-care system sets new global benchmarks.

It is our collective responsibility now to build on this momentum – by embracing technology, strengthening medical education, and ensuring that health care reaches every individual in need.

India is not just healing its own people; it is healing the world.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Deportation begins

It is clear that U.S. President Donald Trump means business when it comes to the subject of immigration (Page 1, "U.S. deports Indians as Trump tightens immigration rules", February 5). The 'bromance' that India's leader has tried to portray with the American President and his use of other terms of familiarity such as 'Trump, my dear friend' have made no difference. The choice of using an American military plane has been explicable in terms of Mr. Trump's description of "undocumented immigrants" as "aliens", "criminals" and "invaders".

The deportation of Indians should strengthen our resolve to make India a land of opportunity. **G. David Milton**, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

It is surprising to know that there are thousands of illegal and undocumented Indian migrants in the U.S. The Government of India needs to ponder over why so many Indians are taking enormous risks to migrate

to the U.S. Primarily, it is an issue about mounting unemployment. Our economy has been portrayed as experiencing sustained and fast growth, but employment generation has not been commensurate with this 'economic growth'. **Kosaraju Chandramouli**, Hyderabad

The use of U.S. military aircraft is probably aimed at demonstrating Mr. Trump's muscular image. India has allowed itself to be bracketed with countries such as Guatemala, Peru, Honduras and Ecuador without demur. What happened to India's much touted 'national pride' under a new virile dispensation? **Manohar Alembath**, Kannur, Kerala

In the midst of this, imagine if millions of skilled Indian migrants, pivotal to the U.S. economy, chose to remigrate to India. This "brain (re)gain" would result in a transformative leap for India. Armed with global expertise in technology,

these professionals could supercharge India's growth fuelling innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation. Their return would boost sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, biotech, and sustainable energy. **Gopalaswamy J.**, Chennai

Interestingly, there are media reports that there are an estimated 7,25,000 illegal Indian immigrants in the U.S. It is also said that most are from the northern Indian States, including Gujarat. But the big question is why is there this desperation to leave India? **Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee**, Faridabad, Haryana

It is true that America has been considered a land of immigrants for years. But things have changed and there is a gradual vanishing of that vision. Issues of land, jobs and everyday requirements have become matters of grave concern necessitating a dampening of migration and asylum processes. The world is

politically and administratively divided into large and definite numbers of individual states, with each nation bound to take care of its citizens. Moving to other countries without legal procedures naturally attracts public opposition. **P.R.V. Raja**, Pandalam, Keral

The optics
At a time when a large number of relatives are at the Kumbh looking for their loved ones, the move by the top leader of the land to have a holy dip there is insensitive. It is needless to say that the leader has sent out a not-so-subtle political message of his continuing strategy to consolidate the vote base that backs his party. Such a mix of politics and religion to influence voters' preference is anathema to our constitutional values. **S.K. Choudhury**, Bengaluru

Nursing, dress allowance
I write this letter as the State President (Jammu and Kashmir) of the All

India Registered Nurses Federation (AIRNF). The AIRNF has been working towards the welfare of nursing personnel across India. Recently, the AIRNF has highlighted the issue of the 'non-sanctioning of nursing and dress allowance to nursing personnel' in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The AIRNF has been requesting the government to grant the nursing and dress allowance to nursing personnel in the Union Territory of Ladakh, where such allowances have already been sanctioned. The Principal Secretary, Health and Medical Education Department, Union Territory of Ladakh, has issued orders No.300-H&ME(UTL) of 2021 and No.301-H&ME(UTL) of 2021, sanctioning the payment of nursing allowance and dress allowance to nursing personnel in Ladakh.

Nursing personnel in J&K demand equal treatment. **Vishav Mohan Sharma**, Rajouri, Jammu and Kashmir

Chennai and safety
The incidents of women and girls being assaulted and molested in Chennai make one wonder whether the reputation of Chennai being a haven of peace, and earning an indubitable name for safety, where women can commute without any lurking fear, is under threat. When the political opposition was harping on the subject of safety, one was led to believe that it was attacking the DMK-ruled Tamil Nadu out of animus. But the problem does seem serious. **Mani Nataraajan**, Chennai

The other chess star
Indian chess prodigies R. Praggnanandhaa's title win against compatriot and world champion D. Gukesh in the Tata Steel Masters tournament 2025 signals India's ascending trajectory in global chess. It is a fine example to show that age is not a barrier to excellence. **R. Sivakumar**, Chennai

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

A lesson from the Democrats' 'woke' debacle

Donald Trump's return to the White House is an important lesson not just for Democrats, but political actors everywhere who are attempting to contain burgeoning right-of-centre politics and powerful demagogues.

Mr. Trump won both the electoral college vote and the popular vote. This underlines that the anxiety of democracy's defenders over the erosion of the constitutional order is not the people's anxiety or even their preoccupation. The people do not have revulsion for dictatorial aspirations if they are enticed with a story promising them a better future and protection of interests.

Two countries, two campaigns
As Mr. Trump strengthened his commitment to bring back manufacturing jobs, there was reason to harbour hope. In his insistence to make the U.S. less interventionist and focus on fixing domestic issues such as "porous borders", which, he said, led to "criminals pouring in" and absorbing job opportunities, there was protection of interest.

Democratic Party candidate Kamala Harris highlighted the machinations against democracy, but in making it her overriding theme, she renewed concerns about her being "woke", which in contemporary political lexicon indicates extravagant positions on DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion). Her message was repudiated.

In India, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "mohabbat ki dukan" (shop of love) looks like an adaptation of America's woke culture, which frames the pro-democracy argument in a narrow term of merely opposing an autocrat. But for the poor, democracy is less about waging war against an autocrat to preserve institutions and the social fabric and more about immediate economic redress. The farmers' movement was a powerful exposition of dissent against an autocratic regime, but the poor did not desert the Prime Minister, given his government's



Anando Bhakto
Journalist covering politics and the Kashmir conflict

wide-scale distribution of economic incentives.

Ms. Harris's and Mr. Gandhi's campaign relied too much on fighting for the liberal order. There was little reckoning that the reason why demagogues are able to sway voters is because their dishonest accounts have already rendered the liberal order as a dire threat for the majority, who are willing to be partners to upend it.

Mr. Trump pledged to upend an order beset by "fleeing jobs", "critical race theory", and "criminals pouring in" with the MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement. Mr. Modi offered "Hindu reawakening". Anti-Trumpism in that backdrop was interpreted as hurtling towards catastrophe where outsiders augmented their interests at the expense of white Americans. Anti-Modism is interpreted as the Congress' unease with placing the priorities of Hindus on top.

A pragmatic course would be to engage the electorate with a more tempting narrative while avoiding collision on sensitive areas. In 2020, the Biden campaign had underlined that the election was not a "partisan moment" but an "American moment". The message went home to disillusioned Trump voters, unlike Ms. Harris' and Hillary Clinton's campaigns which focused only on anti-Trumpians. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal understands that calculus. In 2022, when asked about his party's goalpost, he remarked: "I don't want to defeat anyone, I want the country to win."

The attractive alternative vision for the country must emanate from people's expectations. Ms. Harris' campaign miscalculated what the people expected. For long she upheld several consuming obsessions of the Left including a single-payer health insurance system and ban on fracking. It lent Mr. Trump an effective arsenal: "Comrade Kamala" scare. His share of the Hispanic voters, many of whom have fled communist regimes,

The attractive alternative vision for a country must emanate from people's expectations

jumped from 32% in 2020 to 46% in 2024, said Edison Research.

The Congress' mistakes

In berating big business every day, the Congress also miscalculates expectations, especially of India's aspirational class, no longer just the metropolitan and tier one population. India's youth share the conviction that for the country to grow, business people have a crucial role to play as wealth generators and job creators. They demand a coherent plan propelling India's growth.

The Congress offers none. Its dole-out politics has been partly successful in Assembly elections. But the people are not content with relief; they want infatuation with a dream. MAGA induces it and *Achhe Din* induced it. The caste census does not. MAGA and *Achhe Din* will (mythically) come for everybody. But the caste census will benefit only the Other Backward Classes. It hinders Congress' ability to reckon with diverse demographics. Also, given the party's unease with Mandal politics, its sudden fidelity for it appears insufferably convenient.

Today, the idea of a supremely assertive prime minister who can be trusted to place a positive spin to advance India's lofty global role has become a desideratum for most voters. But the Congress' over-reliance on regional parties, who deny it a frontal role and have hardly an effective geopolitical road map, reduces its appeal.

The Congress must exude the air of being in command and declare that it will partner with only those who accept its pre-eminent role and its vision on national security and India's international goalposts, or else sit in Opposition. This would send out a message that it does not have avarice for power but seeks power to secure the people's interest and India's interest. The allies will not disappear – they need it as it needs them. But before allies and the people believe in its leadership, the Congress has to exhibit leadership.

Targeting a Dravidian icon

Tamil nationalists are trying to weaken Dravidian parties by targeting Periyar

STATE OF PLAY

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Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, social reformer and founder of the Dravidar Kazhagam, remains the central point of political discourse in Tamil Nadu decades after his passing in 1973. It has become difficult to eliminate Periyar from the ideological spectrum – so much so that even one of Tamil cinema's biggest stars, C. Joseph Vijay, declared him one of the guiding lights of his fledgling party, Tamilaga Vettai Kazhagam. The followers of Periyar insist that but for him and his reformist movement, Tamil Nadu would not have made strides in various fields.

However, in recent weeks, Seeman, the chief coordinator of Naam Tamilar Katchi, a Tamil nationalist party that polled over 8% of the votes in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, has made Periyar the main target of his attack. Mr. Seeman has selectively resurrected Periyar's long-forgotten comments against Tamil language, literature, and culture to portray him as "anti-Tamil".

Tamil nationalists seeking to replace the Dravidian movement have begun to blame Periyar and his ideology as the root cause of what they call the "evils ravaging Tamil society." They reject the term "Dravida" to collectively address the people of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, and are highly critical of Periyar's comments that "Tamil is a barbaric language." They often say that Periyar's so-called hatred for Tamil language and culture stems from his origin as a Kannada Naicker. They are in fact more vocal about their criticism of Periyar than



Brahmins, who were consigned to the margins in the wake of the emergence of the Dravidian movement.

Periyar was never consistent with his views. He reconsidered them according to the changing circumstances, with good intention. "His five decades of public life have seen several political storms and shifting stands. But through all this he has remained unwavering in his fierce determination to 'liberate' Tamilians from the shackles of superstition, religion and God," wrote the communist leader, Mythili Sivaraman, in her article, 'The Relevance of Periyar: Caste or Class Struggle', which is part of the book *Haunted by Fire: Essays on Caste, Class, Exploitation, and Emancipation*.

As an iconoclast, wedded to the idea of rationalism, Periyar rejected all ideas that were incompatible with science and denigrated human dignity. He launched scathing attacks against Tamil literary works, including the *Kambaramayam*, *Silapathikaram*, and even the *Tirukkural*, idolised by his disciples C.N. Annadurai, M. Karunanidhi, and others. He was furious when a Tamil scholar in Pachaiyappa's College justified the decision of Kovalan, the hero of *Silapathikaram*, to leave his wife Kannagi "because she was not attractive". Sivaraman wrote, "Periyar... championed the cause of widow marriage, marriage based on consent, women's right to divorce to

property, abortion and birth control. He... exposed the male superiority inherent in the concepts of chastity like karpu and pathivirathi that apply to women."

Though Annadurai left Periyar to launch the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) as an antidote to the hardcore atheism preached by his mentor, Periyar's principles remained a guiding force for Dravidian parties. Both Annadurai and Karunanidhi were at one point highly critical of Periyar and lampooned him through their writings and cartoons, but they could not fully eschew his ideology.

Periyar believed that Tamil society could not be liberated without breaking the backbone of Brahminism, rooted in the concept of caste hierarchy by birth. The Bharatiya Janata Party could not make substantial progress in Tamil Nadu despite its campaign against Dravidian parties since humanism is the bedrock of Dravidianism. Mr. Seeman, who has an unmatched talent for stirring controversies, has targeted Periyar even though he was once his admirer. Tamil nationalists seem to think that they can weaken Dravidian parties only by undermining Periyar's principles.

Tamils have protected their language and culture from the onslaught of Sanskrit and from centuries of conquests by non-Tamil rulers. Tamil Nadu has had non-Tamil Chief Ministers. Tamil nationalists argue that the Dravidian movement has failed to ensure a place for Tamils and has allowed non-Tamils to dominate the public and political sphere. Such arguments are bound to be put forth since identity politics has occupied central stage in Indian politics. It remains to be seen whether people will take the 'Periyar versus Tamil nationalism' bait.

The rise and rise of UPI digital payments

There has been a 10-fold increase in digital payments from 2018

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

Digital payments increased more than 3.5 times in value between 2013 and 2024 – from ₹772 lakh crore to ₹2,758 lakh crore. They grew in volume from 222 crore to more than 20,787 crore in the same period. In the last five years alone, digital payments in India increased by 1.6 times in value and 6.7 times in volume, as per the RBI's Payment System Report.

The payments landscape in India is mainly driven by the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which consolidates multiple bank accounts into one mobile interface.

Chart 1 shows the comparison of UPI and other payment methods in digital transactions over the years. UPI's contribution to the digital payments ecosystem in terms of volume rose from 34% in 2019 to 83% in 2024. While the volume of transactions through UPI increased by 46 times between 2018 and 2024, from 375 crore in to 17,221 crore, other methods of digital payments doubled to 3,566 crore. Overall, there was a 10-fold increase in digital payments to 20,787 crore from 2018.

Chart 2 shows UPI transaction volumes and values since 2019. While the volume surged from 1,078.75 crore in 2019 to 1,7220.80 crore in 2024, values increased from ₹8.37 lakh crore to ₹246.83 lakh crore in the same period.

Charts 3 and 4 show the volume and value of UPI transactions Person-to-Person (P2P) and Person-to-Merchant (P2M). P2M transactions grew at a faster rate than P2P in terms of volume.

Charts 5 and 6 show the share of various digital payment methods in the volume and value of transactions in 2024. Though UPI accounted for over 80% of all digital transactions by volume, it constituted just 30% in terms of value.

Payments revolution

Data for the charts was taken from the RBI's Payment System Report, December 2024

Digital payments increased more than 3.5 times in value between 2013 and 2024

UPI contribution to the digital payments ecosystem in terms of volume rose from 34% in 2019 to 83% in 2024

Chart 1: Comparison of UPI and other payment systems in digital transaction volume over the years (in crore)

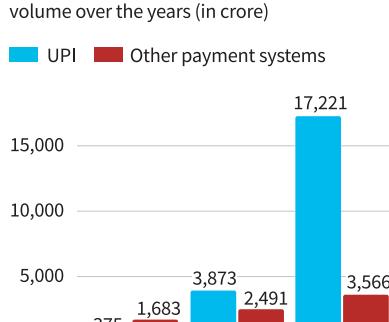


Chart 2: UPI transaction volumes and values since 2019

UPI payments volume (in crore)

UPI values increased from ₹8.37 lakh crore to ₹246.83 lakh crore between 2019 and 2024

Line plot shows the UPI payments volume in crore and bar graph shows UPI payments value in ₹ lakh crore

UPI payments volume in crore

UPI payments value in ₹ lakh crore

H1:2019 H2:2024



Chart 3: The chart shows the yearly total volume of UPI transactions (P2P vs P2M)

■ P2P (in crore) ■ P2M (in crore)

P2M transactions grew at a faster rate than P2P in terms of volume.

2019 2022 2024

741.71 1,124.79 4,995.94

337.24 763.65 6,771.84

1,683 1,668.06 6,523.29

2,206.37 3,887.31 10,697.51

13.11 26.83 67.8

4.78 44.52 179.02

16.79 58.48 138.32

1.58 29.1 44.52

4.78 44.52 179.02

13.11 26.83 67.8

26.83 44.52 179.02

44.52 67.8 179.02

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Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Death toll from Sweden's worst mass shooting

11 Sweden's worst mass shooting has left at least 11 people dead and five seriously wounded, including the gunman at an adult education centre. The gunman's motive hadn't been determined by early Wednesday as the Scandinavian nation reeled from an attack with such bloodshed. AP

MPs elected to Aligarh Muslim University Court

7 Seven MPs, including four BJP legislators, have been elected as members of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) Court, according to a notification issued on Wednesday. The MPs have been elected for a period of three years, until December 23, 2027, or "until the end of their term as a Member of Parliament," whichever comes first. PTI

Number of AC electric buses to be added in Thane this year

100 As many as 100 AC electric buses will be added to the fleet of the Thane Municipal Transport in April this year. The buses will be provided under the PM E-Bus Service scheme. Thane's population is increasing rapidly, and the city needs more buses, the release from local MP Naresh Mhaske's office said. PTI

Voter turnout recorded in Milkipur Assembly bypolls

65 in per cent. More than 65% of the total 3.70 lakh voters exercised their franchise in the bypolls to the Milkipur Assembly constituency of Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday, surpassing the turnout recorded in the 2022 Assembly polls. The voting began at 7 a.m. and continued till 5 p.m., officials said. PTI

Russia, Ukraine exchange prisoners of war

300 Russia and Ukraine each released 150 captured soldiers in their latest prisoner-of-war exchange, both sides said on Wednesday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said some of those returned had been in Russian captivity for "more than two years". PTI
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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What is the SC directive on sacred groves?

What are the implications of the December 18 order? What did *T.N. Godavarman v. Union of India* establish about the definition of 'forest land'? How are sacred groves traditionally conserved by communities?

EXPLAINER

C.R. Bijoy

The story so far:

On December 18, 2024, the Supreme Court directed the Forest Department of Rajasthan to map on the ground and via satellite every 'sacred grove' in detail. They were to be identified irrespective of their size and based "solely on their purpose and their cultural and ecological significance to the local community". After mapping, the court directed the department to classify them as 'forests' and notify them as 'community reserves' under the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) 1972. Effectively, the decision would transfer the sacred groves from community protection to forest officialdom for the purposes of conservation. The move defies the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006, which by virtue of being enacted later overrides the WPA, and which the government had intended to do the reverse; i.e. recognise traditional and customary rights over all forest lands and transfer them back from the Forest Department to gram sabhas.

The sacred groves of Rajasthan, also known as 'orans', 'malvan', 'deo ghat', and 'baugh', number around 25,000 and cover about six lakh hectares of the State.

What was the case about?

In *T.N. Godavarman v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court ordered that 'forest land' in Section 2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, "will not only include 'forest' as understood in the dictionary sense, but also any area recorded as forest in the government record irrespective of the ownership of the land". The court then directed State governments to constitute expert committees to identify areas that met this understanding of 'forest land'.

In 2004, the expert committee report of the Rajasthan government identified only those sacred groves that fulfilled the criteria of 'deemed forests' – that is, trees covering 5 hectares of land with at least 200 trees per hectare were classified as 'forests', while the remainder was not.

The Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee (CEC) disagreed with this choice because it was inconsistent with the court's definition of 'forest land'. The CEC also said all such areas diverted for non-forestry purposes before 1980 could be exempted. The apex court agreed with the CEC and directed Rajasthan to implement the recommendations post-haste in 2018.

In early 2024, the Rajasthan government – responding to interlocutory applications seeking directions to implement this order – said that sacred groves were being identified and documented as 'forest lands'. Ironically, the Rajasthan Forest Policy 2023 omitted the detailed framework for the protection of sacred groves specified in its 2010 policy.

The present order came in response to a challenge to these positions at the Supreme Court.

What do sacred groves mean to communities?

Sacred groves are community-regulated and conserved patches of forest land. They are created and managed traditionally by communities in various ways deeply rooted in their identity. The groves are kept inviolate through customary laws and taboos, many of which completely prohibit the extraction of any resources in any form, except for custodians to access medicinal plants. The grove's conservation ethos is strongly linked to piety and sanctity, enforced in



Sacred heritage: Sacred groves are community-regulated and conserved patches of forest land. THULASI KAKKAT

terms of the community's relationship with its spirits and gods.

India is estimated to have 1-10 lakh sacred groves of this nature – the highest in the world. They are called 'devara kudu' in Karnataka, 'devban' in Himachal Pradesh, 'kavu' and 'sarpa kavu' in Kerala, 'sarna' in the Chota Nagpur Plateau region, 'devbani' in Chhattisgarh, 'jahera' or 'thakuramma' in Odisha, 'devgudi' by the Muria, the Madia, and the Gond adivasis of Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh, 'ki law lyngdoh', 'ki law kyntang' or 'ki law niam' in Meghalaya, 'sabarkantha', 'dahod' or 'banaskantha' in Gujarat, and so forth.

They are often associated with temples, monasteries, shrines, pilgrim sites, and/or burial grounds. These sites are thus also repositories of various herbal medicines and gathering points for local healers, as much as they are biodiversity hotspots. They are also, frequently, sources of perennial streams that support the growth of unique and endemic flora and fauna.

Local legends, myths, and beliefs surround sacred groves, and communities have transmitted them orally through several generations as a matter of conserving their cultural identities. Communities' relationships with their groves have also helped mitigate the effects of floods, landslides, and droughts on their lives while stabilising the soil and preventing erosion. Anthropologists have also documented the impact of sacred groves on their respective communities' mental and physical well-being.

What are community reserves?

The WPA 2002 introduced the category of Protected Areas called 'community reserves', in addition to 'national parks' and 'sanctuaries'.

Community reserves are notified over community or private land where locals have volunteered to conserve habitats to protect 'fauna, flora, and traditional or

cultural conservation values and practises'.

The community, or even the individual, is thus required to prevent any offences specified in the WPA, assist the authorities in arresting any offenders, report the "death of any wild animal," and prevent or extinguish any fires. The offences include damaging the boundary marks, teasing or molesting wild animals, littering in the community reserve, setting fires or allowing a fire to burn, and using any chemical substances that endanger wildlife.

Further, a land-use pattern within a community reserve cannot be changed without the approval of the reserve management committee and the State government. The Chief Wildlife Warden, under whose jurisdiction community reserves fall, effectively has overall control of the reserve and its management plan.

The Supreme Court's directions also oblige the State government to constitute a 'Community Reserve Management Committee' to conserve, maintain, and manage the reserve and to protect wildlife and habitats. This committee is to have at least five members nominated by the gram panchayat (or members of the gram sabha if there is no gram panchayat) and a representative of the Forest or Wildlife Department in whose jurisdiction the community reserve is located. If the reserve is on private land, the committee will consist of the land owner, a representative of the Forest or Wildlife Department, and a representative of the concerned Panchayat or tribal community.

The elected chairperson of the committee will be designated the reserve's 'Honorary Wildlife Warden'.

The court also recommended that the Union Environment Ministry identify and map sacred groves nationwide and formulate a policy for their governance.

and management.

How will the Forest Department's takeover clash with the FRA's provisions?

If sacred groves had fallen under the FRA's purview, they would have been part of 'community forest resources'. According to the FRA, a community forest resource is the "customary common forest land within the traditional or customary boundaries of the village... including reserved forests, protected forests and protected areas such as sanctuaries and national parks to which the community had traditional access".

Thus, the gram sabhas would have been the statutory authority to protect, regenerate, conserve or manage community forest resources, along with the wildlife, flora, and biodiversity within. The gram sabhas would also have been responsible for preventing activities that harm their cultural and natural heritage.

To this end, the sabha would have to constitute its own Community Forest Resource Management Committees to develop and execute the managed plan approved by the gram sabha. And State governments would be duty-bound to support these plans.

All sacred groves in forest areas are currently subsets of community forest resources, which are in turn under the jurisdiction of gram sabhas, and not the Forest or the Wildlife department. All sacred groves outside forest land, if any, also come under the FRA's purview if a proposal to notify them as 'forest land' comes into being. In sum, notifying sacred groves as community reserves controlled by the Forest Department could conflict with the customs of communities, and with the community forest resources notified by the FRA, which complies with the customs by bringing them under its governance.

C.R. Bijoy examines natural resource conflicts and governance issues

THE GIST

▼ The Supreme Court ordered the Rajasthan Forest Department to map and classify sacred groves as 'forests' and 'community reserves' under the Wildlife Protection Act.

▼ This order shifts control of sacred groves from community-based management to the Forest Department.

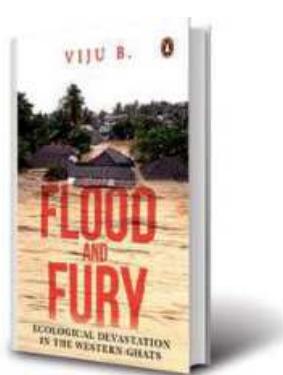
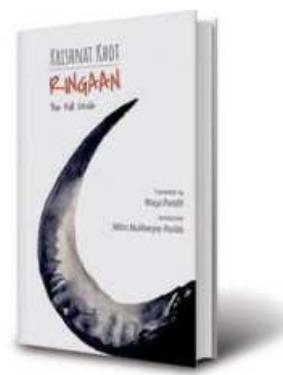
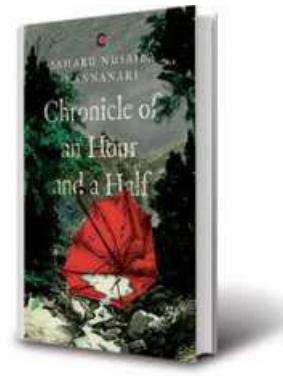
▼ The decision conflicts with the Forest Rights Act, which recognises community rights over forest resources.

▼ The shift in control from community protection to Forest Department management could undermine the traditional governance of these areas.

BIBLIOGRAPHY



Shifting landscapes: What was once a symphony of chirping birds is now being gradually replaced by the relentless roar of heavy machinery in many places. GETTY IMAGES



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian
S. Upendran

I had asked readers to send their favourite passage from a book. Here is one from Mr. Shafiqur Rahman, Royapettah, Madras.

Father Forgets

W. Livingston Larned

Listen, son: I am saying this as you lie asleep, one little paw crumpled under your cheek and the blond curls stickily wet on your damp forehead. I have stolen into your room.

Just a few minutes ago, as I sat reading my paper in the library, a stifling wave of remorse swept over me. Guiltily I came to your bedside.

These are the things I was thinking, son: I had been cross to you. I scolded you as you were dressing for school because you gave your face merely a dab with a towel. I took you to task for not cleaning your shoes. I called out angrily when you threw some of your things on the floor.

At breakfast I found fault, too. You spilled things. And as you started off to play and I made for my train, you turned and waved a hand and called, "Good-bye, Daddy" and I frowned, and said in reply, "Hold your shoulders back!"

Then I began all over again in the late afternoon. As I came up the road I spied you, down on your knees, playing marbles. There were holes in your stockings. I humiliated you before your boy friends by marching you ahead of me to the house.

Do you remember, later, when I was reading in the library, how you came in, timidly, with a sort of hurt look in your eyes? When I glanced up over my paper, impatient at the interruption, you hesitated at the door. "What is it you want?" I snapped.

You said nothing, but ran across in one tempestuous plunge, and threw your arms around my neck and kissed me, and your small arms tightened with an affection that God had set blooming in your heart and which even neglect could not wither. And then you were gone, pattering up the stairs.

Well, son, it was shortly afterwards that my paper slipped from my hands and a terrible sickening fear came over me. What has habit been doing to me? The habit of finding fault, of reprimanding – this was my reward to you for being a boy. It was not that I did not love you; it was that I expected too much of youth.

And there was so much that was good and fine and true in your character. The little heart of yours was as big as the dawn itself over the wide hills. This was shown by your spontaneous impulse to rush in and kiss me good-night. Nothing else matters tonight, son. I have come to your bedside in the darkness, and I have knelt there, ashamed!

It is a feeble atonement. I know you would not understand these things if I told them to you during your waking hours. But tomorrow I will be a real daddy! I will keep saying as if it were ritual: "He is nothing but a boy—a little boy!"

I am afraid I have visualised you as a man. Yet as I see you now, son, crumpled and weary in your cot, I see that you are still a baby. Yesterday you were in your mother's arms, your head on her shoulder. I have asked too much, too much.

I like the passage. It brings out the feelings of a father vividly. By the way, what is the meaning of "practically".

"Practically" means (a) in a practical manner. "Don't panic. Let us look at the problem calmly," said he practically. (b) almost, virtually. "She is practically unknown in this area."

Published in The Hindu on February 14, 1995

Word of the day

Recalcitrant:

stubbornly resistant to authority or control

Synonyms:

ungovernable, insubmissive, uncooperative

Usage:

Her recalcitrant attitude towards the new rules made it difficult to work with her.

Pronunciation:

bit.ly/recalcitrantpronun

International Phonetic Alphabet:

/rəkəlsɪtrənt/

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Western Ghats: a living archive of culture, memory, and resilience

Through old and contemporary works, writers have sought to capture the alarming changes sweeping through the Sahyadri; they serve as a wake-up call to save the ecosystem, scarred by encroachment, displacement of tribal people, and skewed policies, from further ruin

K.S. Swati

The Western Ghats, also known as the Sahyadri, meaning benevolent mountains, stretches along the western coast of the Indian peninsula, spanning six States: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. Known as one of the world's most biodiverse regions, the Western Ghats were once celebrated for their breathtaking natural beauty – cascading waterfalls, lush greenery, and a dazzling array of flora and fauna. Today, however, this idyllic landscape faces a stark transformation. Climate change, deforestation, the decline of traditional livelihoods, land encroachment, and the displacement of tribal communities have left the region in peril.

For years, writers in various regional languages have sought to capture and preserve the narrative of these alarming changes, believing in the transformative power of words. What was once a symphony of chirping birds is now being gradually replaced by the relentless roar of heavy machinery in many places. The novella, *Chronicle of an Hour and a Half*, by Saharu Nusaiba Kannanari, which was shortlisted for the JCB Prize for Literature 2024, explores powerful themes such as the effects of rumours, mob mentality, social media – and nature, especially, relentless rain – hinting that something ominous awaits. Set against a fictional village in the foothills of the Western Ghats, the novella, which begins as a harmless exchange between two individuals, spirals

into chaos through social media. Within an hour, the community descends into mass hysteria. In the background, nature reflects the emotions of the community, mirroring the escalating tension and chaos.

The inter-personal relationship between humans and nature is poignantly highlighted in Kuvenpu's *Malegalalli Madumagalu* (1967), translated by Vanamala Viswanatha as *Bride of the Hills* (2024). Set in the Malnad region in the Western Ghats, where people are closely tied to the land, relying on its fertile soil, forests, and rivers for their livelihood, nature is revered not only for its practical role in sustenance but also for its spiritual significance, with rituals and local deities tied to agricultural cycles. Yet the novel reflects the growing tension between traditional harmony with nature and the pressures of modernisation and exploitation.

An exploitative cycle
Development, coupled with human greed, makes the lives of tribal communities difficult. In *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman* written by Narayan in Malayalam, which won the Kerala Sahitya Academy Award in 1998 and was translated into English by Catherine Thangamma in 2011, the theme of exploitation and marginalisation is vividly portrayed through the struggles of the Adivasi community. As industrial development, moneylenders, and land grabbers encroach on their ancestral territories, people are pushed into deeper poverty and displacement. The novel focuses on how outside forces often

exploit the land's natural resources, disregarding the community's cultural and spiritual connection to it.

In *Ringgaan*, written in Marathi by Krushnat Khot, who won the Sahitya Academy Award in Marathi in 2023, and translated into English by Maya Pandit, the protagonist, uprooted from his village, returns home to rescue a buffalo. He reminisces about his childhood and the harmonious life he once lived. The book highlights important aspects of migration, struggles of displaced victims when large-scale development projects are carried out, and the persistent man-animal conflict.

Loss of traditional occupations
Rampant quarrying, deforestation, illegal mining, and poorly planned construction projects have destabilised the fragile ecosystem. Through meticulous reporting, accounts from affected individuals, interviews, and a critical examination of policies, B. Viju's *Flood and Fury: Ecological Devastation in the Western Ghats* (2019) connects these activities to increased occurrences of landslides, floods, and soil erosion. The book delves into the historical and cultural significance of the Western Ghats while critiquing the apathy of governments, corporations, and society toward environmental conservation.

The Nilgiri Hills – A Kaleidoscope of People, Culture and Nature (2023) by Paul Hockings brings together stories and articles from writers, scholars, such as ecologists, filmmakers, local writers, etc to highlight various aspects of the Western Ghats. The book sheds light on

several topics such as ancient metallurgy, music, the making of honey, and the degradation of the ecosystem.

Resistance and resilience

When livelihood, land, culture, and identity are at stake, resistance, and resilience are the only means of safeguarding them. In *Valli*, written by Sheela Tomy in Malayalam in 2019 and translated into English in 2022 by Jayashree Kalathil, we learn of a tribal community's deep connection to the forest, which sustains them both physically and spiritually. As outsiders encroach upon their land, Valli's family and others in the community resist, clinging to their heritage and traditions. At the same time, Valli grapples with her personal growth, relationships, and changing social dynamics. The novel highlights the strength and perseverance of the Adivasi people as they navigate the complexities of modern life while fighting to preserve their heritage and connection to the land.

Through old and contemporary works on the Western Ghats, authors have stressed that the Ghats are more than just a landscape – they are a living archive of culture, memory, and resilience. Yet, this fragile ecosystem is scarred by encroachment, where tribal people are uprooted, natural resources are destroyed, and policies fail to protect what matters most. To save the Ghats is to do more than preserve their beauty; it is to respect the land and the lives entwined with it, to stand against their erasure, and to recognise that in their survival lies something far greater than us.

THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz about the history of the right of women to vote

Vasudevan Mukund

QUESTION 1

On this day in 1918, Great Britain passed the Representation of the People Act that allowed men over the age of 21 and women over the age of X to vote. What's the value of X?

QUESTION 2

Since 1838, the _____, the U.K.'s sole overseas territory in the Pacific Ocean, has given women the right to vote. Thus it's the territory that has continuously allowed women to vote for the longest duration in history.

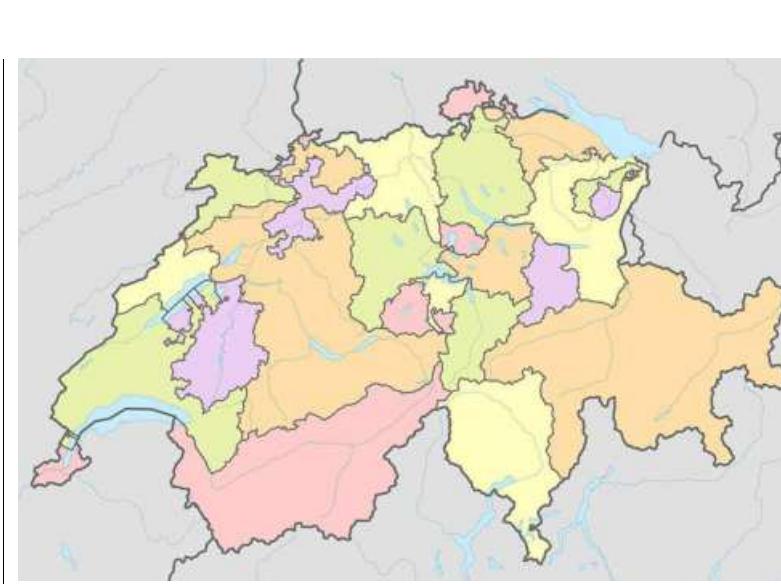
QUESTION 3

Name the first place in India that gave women the right to vote, in 1920, although not the right to

stand in elections. It was governed as a princely state during the reign of the British Empire. Bonus: which princely state first granted both rights, to vote and run for office, to women?

QUESTION 4
During the December 2015 municipal elections in _____, the government allowed women to vote for the first time in its history. Women were also allowed to run for office and thus the country soon acquired its first women politicians. Fill in the blanks with the name of the country.

QUESTION 5
Name the world's first major country to grant both women and men the right to vote at the same time and on equal terms. This was achieved through the Local Administration Act 1897.



Visual Question:
This map of Switzerland shows its 26 cantons. Name the one shown in purple at a roughly 2 o'clock position, which was one of the last places in Europe to grant women the right to vote, in 1991. TOMCHEN1989 (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. _____ is the cause of about 22% of cancer deaths. **Ans:** Tobacco use

2. This is a type of lymphoma in which cancer originates from a specific type of white blood cell called lymphocytes. **Ans:** Hodgkin lymphoma

3. What is the term used to define the spread of cancer to other locations in the body? **Ans:** Metastasis

4. This is a type of cancer that develops from the thin layer of tissue that covers many of the internal organs. **Ans:** Mesothelioma

5. Which U.S. President declared a 'war on cancer'? **Ans:** Richard Nixon
Visual: For which type of cancer, this vaccine is provided? **Ans:** Cervical cancer

Early Birds: Viswanadha Rao Batchu | Fanally Oosmany | Sonali Das

Word of the day

Recalcitrant:

stubbornly resistant to authority or control

Synonyms: ungovernable, insubmissive, uncooperative

Usage: Her recalcitrant attitude towards the new rules made it difficult to work with her.

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International Phonetic Alphabet: /rəkəlsɪtrənt/

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From Page One

60% polling recorded in crucial election in Delhi

Polling began at 7 a.m. and officially ended at 6 p.m., with an electorate of more than 1.56 crore voters deciding the fate of 699 candidates across 70 constituencies. Voting was conducted in a single phase, with 13,766 polling stations including 733 auxiliary polling stations set up at 2,696 locations across the city. Over 30,000 Delhi police personnel were deployed on the ground, along with 200 paramilitary teams.

Among the constituencies, Mustafabad recorded the highest turnout at 69% by 12.30 a.m., while only 53.04% of voters exercised their franchise in Mehrauli. Delhi Cantonment, which has historically seen low voter participation, saw some improvement this year, registering a 59.30% turnout.

The AAP is fighting for a consecutive third term, while the BJP is looking to form the government in Delhi after 28 years. The Congress, which has won zero seats in the last decade, is hoping for a re-entry into the State Assembly. Leaders from all three parties claimed that their messages had resonated with voters and would assure them the victory.

High-profile contests

Other key constituencies are former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia's Jangpura seat, where the BJP has fielded Tarvinder Singh Marwah and the Congress nominee is Farhad Suri. Current Chief Minister Atishi is also in the fray from Kalkaji, defending it from former BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri and the Congress's Alka Lamba.

Several candidates started their day before the polls opened, paying their respects at religious places.

Festival of democracy

Ahead of the election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also encouraged voters to exercise their franchise, in a post on X. "I urge the voters here to participate in this festival of democracy with full enthusiasm and cast their valuable vote. On this occasion, my special wishes to all the young friends who are going to vote for the first time. Remember first vote, then refreshment!" he said.

The Delhi CEO had made extensive arrangements for voters, including the provision of refreshments within polling stations. As voters trickled into booths, party workers and resident welfare associations encouraged people to participate by going door-to-door and sending messages on WhatsApp groups.

U.S. aircraft lands in Amritsar with Indians

The Punjab Police took charge of the passengers soon after they landed in Amritsar. The passengers were being sent home by special aircraft to the National Capital Region as well as Gujarat as several citizens from the group hailed from Haryana, Gujarat and Punjab.

As per a list shared by sources with *The Hindu*, bulk of the passengers who hailed from Punjab were from Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Patiala, Sangrur, Fatehgarh Sahib, and Tarn Taran. The U.S. authorities had previously deported Indians by civilian aircraft but this was the first time that a rare wide-bodied aircraft was used for the same task.

Declined to comment

The Indian officials, however, declined to comment on how the allegedly illegal Indian immigrants were sent back before Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelled to the U.S. on February 12. Mr. Modi held a telephone conversation with Mr. Trump last week when he urged Mr. Trump to discuss the welfare of both sides.

President Trump has been tough on illegal immigration since taking charge on January 20 as he had promised to implement the poll-time vow on crackdown on illegal immigration from all over the world. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio had followed up on the poll promise by his January 26 declaration that every country must take back its nationals as the U.S. had made its intent clear earlier. Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had travelled to the U.S. during the swearing-in ceremony on January 20 when the newly elected Trump administration had shared its concerns about immigration and the pressure on livelihood with the Indian officials.

Punjab Minister urges PM to speak to Trump

Press Trust of India

CHANDIGARH

Hours after a U.S. aircraft landed at the Amritsar airport with illegal immigrants, Punjab NRI Affairs Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal on Tuesday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to speak to his "friend" U.S. President Donald Trump regarding the deportation of Indians.

Mr. Dhaliwal also spoke to some of the deportees hailing from Punjab at the airport.

Speaking to the media in Amritsar, Mr. Dhaliwal said that immigration process of deportees was underway at the airport. He said a total of 104 Indians were deported from the U.S. and, of them, 30 are from Punjab.

"All are healthy and ok. It was a long flight," he said. "In the first batch, paperwork of people from Punjab was done. Thereafter, the immigration process of those who are from Haryana, Gujarat and other States will be carried out," Mr. Dhaliwal said.

Narcotics network backing infiltrators in J&K, says Shah

Union Home Minister directs all security agencies to step up fight against terrorism by aiming for the 'zero infiltration' goal; he adds that it should be a goal to uproot the existence of terrorists

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said that the narcotics network was providing support to infiltrators and terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. He said that there was a need to initiate prompt action with alacrity and rigour against terror funding from the proceeds of narcotics trade.

Mr. Shah, who reviewed the security situation in the Union Territory on Wednesday, directed all security agencies to step up the fight against terrorism by aiming for the "zero infiltration" goal. He asked



Routine scrutiny: Amit Shah chairs a high-level review meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday on the security situation in J&K. PTI

all security agencies to take more stringent action on infiltration and acts of terror with a ruthless approach. He said that it should be a goal to uproot the existence of terrorists.

The meeting was attended by the Lieutenant-Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Manoj Sinha; Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan; Intelligence Bureau Director Tapan Ku-

mar Deka; Director-General of Police J&K Nalin Prabhakar; and other senior officials. A day ago, Mr. Shah held a review meeting with the Chief of the Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi.

Mr. Shah directed the agencies to make fresh appointments to the posts at the Forensic Science Laboratory in view of the timely implementation of the new criminal laws.

Emphasising the government's "policy of zero tolerance" against terrorism, the Minister directed all security agencies to remain vigilant and continue to work in synergy to eliminate terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Govt. warns officials against using AI tools due to security risks

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Finance has advised government officials to "strictly avoid" artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT and DeepSeek, on official devices as they "pose risks to the confidentiality of government data and documents".

Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, which operates ChatGPT, is currently in India to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

DeepSeek, developed by China, was launched in January.

The circular, accessed by *The Hindu*, was issued by the Department of Expenditure (DoE) on January 29.



The DoE issued a circular on January 29, outlining the risks associated with AI tools. AFP

Indian servers.

"DeepSeek is an open source model and we are very soon going to host DeepSeek on Indian servers, the way we have hosted Llama, so that the data privacy parameters can be be addressed. That we will do soon. Already team has done that work. And we will soon be hosting open source models on Indian servers. That will address the concerns regarding privacy," Mr. Vaishnav had said.

The DoE's circular comes months after another Central government office, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), organised a training session for officials in the rank of Joint Secretary and below, including Directors and Deputy Secretaries, on the use of 'ChatGPT-4 Plus'.

The circular to DoPT officials was sent on October 10, 2024, and the training was held from October 14 to 16 of the same year in seven batches. It remains unclear whether other Ministries or Central government departments received similar orders restricting the use of AI tools.

Row over actor Rahul Solapurkar's remarks on Shivaji's escape from Agra

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI



Rahul Solapurkar

ing sweet containers, as is popularly believed, but rather by bribing several of

Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's commanders. This assertion has sparked outrage among historians, activists, and admirers of the Maratha king.

The controversy escalated when members of the Akhand Maratha Samaj staged a protest, demanding Mr. Solapurkar's removal from the trustee post.

In response to the backlash, the actor issued a video apology, expressing re-

gret if his remarks had hurt the sentiments of Shivaji Maharaj's admirers.

Following the protest, the Pune police have heightened security measures outside his residence. Reacting to the actor's remarks, BJP MP Udayanraje Bholase, the 13th descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji, said, "How can anyone dare to insult the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj?"

Stryker infantry vehicle deal with the U.S. progresses; Javelin to be re-demonstrated

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI



Infantry carrier: A Stryker armoured vehicle used by the U.S. Army during their final days in Iraq. FILE PHOTO

Ladakh last September-October and the report has subsequently been shared with the Army Headquarters for further action, according to the sources.

The performance of the vehicles was demonstrated in high-altitude conditions between 13,000 and 18,000 feet which also saw the testing of the Javelin Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM), two sources said. And given some shortcomings, last month a communication was sent and repeat trials are now awaited anytime, the sources stated.

The Stryker with its double-V hull performed optimally, one of the sources said, adding that the Javelin's performance was not at the optimum level, which was due to the age of the system that being used and repeat trials are ex-

pected to validate that. India has already sent a communication to the U.S. side asking for repeat demonstration of the Javelin, another source said, and the schedule is being worked out.

The Army has identified a key requirement for ATGMs mounted on infantry combat vehicles, sever-

al defence officials stated. However, the Stryker variant with the Javelin ATGM is under development and is expected to be demonstrated to India in the near future, it has been learnt.

Assembling in India
The envisaged plan, according to sources, is the procurement of few

hundred vehicles in two stages. Direct import of small number of Strykers in the first stage and license manufacture of a bulk of them, with some customisations, in India likely by defence public sector undertaking Bharat Earth Movers Limited.

The Stryker deal is expected to figure in the conversations during Mr. Modi's U.S. visit along with the deal for license manufacture of General Electric F-414 jet engines in India and the long delays in deliveries of the F-404 engines for the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-MkIA which has delayed the delivery and induction schedule.

The U.S. has in the past demonstrated both the Stryker as well as Javelin ATGM to the Indian Army during bilateral exercises.

Pak. wants to resolve all issues with India: Sharif

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the country wants to resolve all issues, including Kashmir, with India through talks as he reiterated his "unwavering" support for the Kashmiri people.

Mr. Sharif made the remarks while addressing a special session of the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) Legislative Assembly in Muzaffarabad on the occasion of "Kashmir Solidarity Day", an annual Pakistani event to show support for the Kashmiris.

"India should come out of the thinking of August 5, 2019, and fulfil promises made to the UN and launch a dialogue," he added.

West Asia crisis must not be allowed to undermine IMEC'

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI



George Gerapetritis

and Jordan, which will be discussed during the talks. He said Greece is working towards doubling trade and investment initiatives with India and plans to open two new consulates in Mumbai and Bengaluru. It also wants direct flights to begin and more visas to be issued.

The ongoing crisis in the Middle East has delayed the project's planning, but it must not be allowed to undermine the powerful rationale behind IMEC. It is our resolve that of India, Greece, and our partners in between - that we will bring this project of peace and prosperity to pass," Mr. Gerapetritis said in written responses to questions from *The Hindu* about the viability of

due to the West Asia conflict.

"The ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon and the opening of the crossing in Rafah, combined with the new conditions in Syria, represent a significant turning point and leave room for hope that the conflicts will subside," Mr. Gerapetritis said, adding that Greece would pursue "peaceful settlement of disputes" during its current two-year elected term as a member of the United Nations Security Council.

During a visit to India in February 2024, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis had pitched Greece as the "gateway to Europe" for Indian trade over the IMEC. Initial IMEC project proposals had

mentioned Greek's Piraeus port, along with Italy's Messina and France's Marseille, as possible ports on the IMEC route.

More recent reports have also suggested that the Adani Group, which runs other ports on the proposed IMEC route, including Mundra port in Gujarat and the Haifa port in Israel, was seeking terminals in Greek ports like Kavala and Volos.

Trade between India and Greece stood at \$1.9 billion in 2022-23. Both countries have committed to "doubling it by 2030". Greece is particularly interested in Indian commerce in the areas of "construction materials, food & beverages, renewable energy", Mr. Gerapetritis said.

Interview is available at newsth.live/greekminister

Majority of exit polls predict BJP's return to power in Delhi

AAP projected to finish second and Congress a distant third; incumbent rejects results, says it will form the next government with a huge majority

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Most of the exit polls on Wednesday predicted the return of the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies to power in Delhi after 27 years, while the Aam Aadmi Party was projected to finish second and the Congress a distant third.

According to Chanakya Strategies, the BJP and its allies are likely to get 39 to 44 seats, the AAP 25 to 28, and the Congress two to three. The JVC gave 39 to 45 seats to the BJP alliance, 22 to 31 to the AAP, and nil to two seats to Congress.

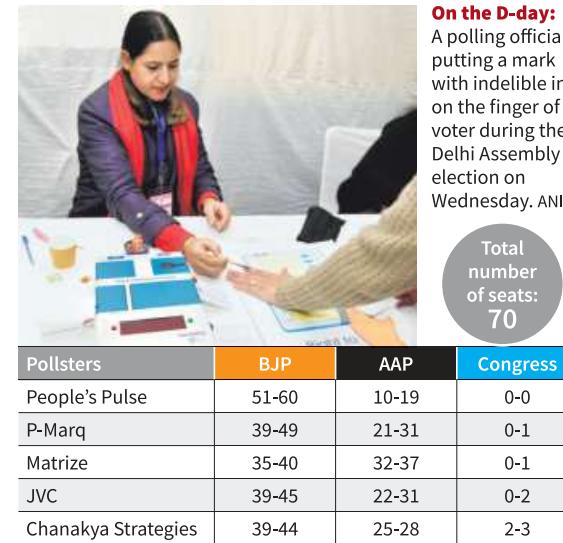
Pollster DV Research predicted that the BJP-led coalition would win 36 to 44 seats and the AAP 26 to 34, while the Congress will not open account.

Matrize showed a close contest between the AAP and the BJP, with the former getting 32 to 37 seats and the latter 35 to 40, and the Congress zero to one. It indicated a 46% vote share for the BJP and 44% for the AAP, and 8% for the Congress.

P-Marq projected a clear majority for the BJP front with 39-49 seats and a 45% vote share, followed by 21 to 31 for the AAP with 42% vote share and nil to one seat for the Congress with 9% vote share. People's In-

What exit polls say

Most of them predict a comfortable win for the BJP in the Delhi Assembly election



sight gave 40 to 44 seats to the BJP alliance, 25 to 29 to the AAP, and zero to two to the Congress. According to Peoples Pulse, the figure would stand at 51 to 60 for the BJP coalition, 10 to 19 for the AAP and nil for the Congress, while Poll Diary gave 42 to 50 to the saffron party's alliance, 18 to 25 to the AAP, and nil to two seats to the Congress.

However, figures released by Mind Brink showed the AAP getting a fourth term with 44 to 49 seats, followed by the BJP with 21 to 25 seats and the Congress with zero to one. Rejecting the exit poll results, the AAP's Saurabh Bharadwaj said, "We have contested this fourth election in Delhi. The exit polls of 2013 and 2015 had defeated us. In 2020 too, our seats were shown to be less and in the exit polls of 2025 too, our seats are being shown to be less. The AAP is going to form the government with a huge majority and all these exit polls will be proven wrong."

On the D-day:
A polling official putting a mark with indelible ink on the finger of a voter during the Delhi Assembly election on Wednesday. ANI

No major complaints of names deleted from voter list in New Delhi Assembly constituency

**Nikhil M. Babu
Satyika Mahajan**
NEW DELHI

There were no major complaints of names deleted from the voter list during polling in the New Delhi Assembly constituency on Wednesday, despite the Aam Aadmi Party's repeated allegations in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly election that the BJP was attempting large-scale manipulation of the electoral rolls. Election Commission officials had dismissed the allegations as baseless.

The Hindu criss-crossed the New Delhi constituency, but did not find anyone whose name was not on the voter list when they arrived at the polling booths on Wednesday, except for a group of people who had previously lived in a slum near Kali Bari which was demolished in October 2024, after which they had moved from the area. Pre-



Queuing up: People waiting to cast their vote in New Delhi on Wednesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

ma Devi, 60, who lives in a slum cluster near Lodhi Road, said that she did not face any issues while voting.

"I voted earlier in the day and did not face any issue. None of the people who live in my slum that I know had any problems. But we go and vote every

election in the fear that otherwise, our names will be deleted from the voter list," Ms. Devi said.

At her polling booth, a school on Lodhi Road, volunteers said that they had not received any complaints of names being deleted from the electoral rolls on Wednesday morn-

ing. Outside another polling booth near Pilanji village, Muni Devi, 55, said that she had voted without any difficulty. At Pilanji village, Bima Devi, 43, said that she also did not face any difficulty and she has not heard anyone raising any complaint. "My husband's name was not

there, but it was not there for the Lok Sabha election also, but we did not go to get it added. We should have done it," she added.

Unfounded fears

At an election booth in B.K. Dutt Colony, volunteers and officials said that there had not been any issues in terms of names being deleted.

Voters near the Valmiki Basti did not experience any name deletions. Similarly, in a booth in Kidwai Nagar, several voters were worried about their names being deleted but discovered that their fears were unfounded.

In the New Delhi constituency, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal is pitted against Parvesh Sahib Singh and Sandeep Dikshit. Mr. Singh and Mr. Dikshit are sons of two former Chief Ministers, Sahib Singh Verma and Sheila Dikshit respectively.

Over 70% turnout recorded in Erode East bypoll

The Hindu Bureau
ERODE

The byelection to the Erode (East) Assembly constituency in Tamil Nadu witnessed over 70% turnout on Wednesday.

The by-election, necessitated by the death of Congress legislator E.V.K.S. Elangovan on December 14, 2024, was boycotted by major Opposition political parties such as the

AIADMK and the BJP.

The DMK faced off against the NTK. A total of 46 candidates, including the DMK's V.C. Chandhirkumar and the NTK's M.K. Seethalakshmi, were in the fray. A total of 2,27,546 electors – 1,10,128 men, 1,17,381 women, and 37 transpersons – were eligible to cast their vote.

Tension prevailed at a polling station in Veerapanchatiram when Naam

Tamil Katchi (NTK) cadre alleged that the DMK had brought in outsiders to cast fake votes. In turn, DMK supporters accused NTK members of being from other constituencies and raised slogans demanding their removal from the polling booth. This situation led to a gathering of NTK members on the road.

NTK also claimed that DMK supporters were voting using only a booth slip

and one of the 12 permitted documents instead of the required Electors Photo Identity Card, suggesting that they were involved in irregularities.

As tensions escalated, an altercation broke out between the cadre, prompting police intervention. Police urged them to disperse, and over 100 police personnel, led by Superintendent of Police G. Jawahar, pacified them.

Normalcy was restored after 30 minutes. However, polling was not disrupted during the incident.

Ms. Seethalakshmi accused the DMK of threatening her booth agents, resulting in 30% of them being absent during polling. Collector Raja Gopal Sunkara said the polling passed off peacefully.

The counting of the votes will take place on February 8.

+ Amid a delay in holding Census, vital reports on births and deaths pending since 2020

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

With the decadal Census exercise pending since 2021 and unlikely to be conducted this year, at least two other key reports on births and deaths had not been released by the Union Home Ministry for the past five years.

The "Vital Statistics of India Based on the Civil Registration System" and "The Report on Medical Certification of Cause of Death" were last released for the year 2020. The annual "Crime in India" report by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) for the year 2023 is also yet to be released.

According to the 2020 Civil Registration System report, Vital Statistics is a compilation of the "occurrence and characteristics of vital events such as births, deaths and still-births" recorded across the country, and is "invaluable for planning, monitoring and evaluating various



Stalled count: A Census operation in Bangalore on March 1, 2011. India has not conducted the next decadal count. K. MURALI KUMAR

programmes related to primary healthcare, family planning, maternal and child health, and education", and others. The States send data to the Registrar-General of India.

In 2023, the Centre enacted the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2023, which mandated that all births and deaths in the country occurring from October 1, 2023 were to be digitally registered through the Central portal crsorgi.gov.in. The Centre hence has

the COVID-19 pandemic but persistent demands from Opposition parties for caste enumeration appears to have held up the exercise now.

According to a senior government official, while deliberations on ways and measures to count caste numbers were held for the past few months, the BJP-led NDA government was not in a hurry to roll out the Census. Other than that of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), caste-wise population had not been enumerated in Independent India.

In 2011, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) conducted the first caste count under the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC), separate from the Census exercise, but the findings were never made public.

According to an affidavit submitted by the Union government in 2021, the SECC data, fraught with "mistakes and inaccura-

cies", had thrown up more than 46 lakh caste names, while the 1931 Census recorded only 4,147 such names.

"For the Census to happen this year, the government should have issued the notification by November 2024. The 10-month period for conducting Census in two phases usually starts from April 1 and since it will be the first digital Census, more than 30 lakh enumerators would require fresh training, which takes three or four months," said a former Census official.

No separate allocation for conducting the Census was made in the Union Budget.

Another official said though a final decision was awaited, nearly 24 lakh enumeration blocks were already finalised and training would not require much time as enumerators were trained in 2019 before the first phase of the Census that was to begin from April 1, 2020.

"Prime Minister, in your speech, you didn't even

Modi did not mention 'Make in India' in speech, he should admit it is a failure, says Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not mention 'Make in India' in his speech in Parliament and the only way India can compete with China is to have its own production system, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said on Wednesday.

Mr. Gandhi's post on the social media platform X came a day after the Prime Minister had lashed out at the Opposition leader during his reply to the Lok Sabha debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address in Parliament.

Without naming Mr. Gandhi, the Prime Minister had said that those speaking of fighting the Indian state could not appreciate the Constitution and national unity.

"Prime Minister, in your speech, you didn't even

mention 'Make in India'! The Prime Minister should acknowledge that 'Make in India', although a good initiative, is a failure. Manufacturing has fallen from 15.3 per cent of GDP in 2014 to 12.6 per cent – the lowest in the last 60 years," Mr. Gandhi said.

He added that China was 10 years ahead of India and had a stronger industrial system. "...this is what gives them the confidence to challenge us. The only way to compete effectively with them is to build our production systems and for that we need vision and strategy," Mr. Gandhi said.

The Congress leader said no government in recent times – the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) or the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) – had been able to meet at scale the



Rahul Gandhi

Will resign if Opposition proves that I did not follow norms: Waqf panel chief

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Jagdambika Pal, Chairman of Parliament's Joint Committee on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, has denied any "procedural lapses" in the conduct of the panel.

The Bharatiya Janata Party MP challenged the Opposition members that he would resign from the Lok Sabha if they could prove that established parliamentary practices were not followed by the panel.

All the 11 dissent notes

filed by the Opposition members accused the Chairman of flouting procedures to hurry through the deliberations. Mr. Pal, however, denied the allegation.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Pal said, "All the members were kept in loop, every step of the way."

In the final report, portions of the dissent notes of the Opposition members were redacted. The members have written to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla urging him to overrule Mr. Pal and retain uncensored

dissent notes in the report. As the Chair, Mr. Pal said he was well within his rights to remove portions from the dissent note. "Their objections to the provisions of the Bill continue to be part of the report. But in the name of dissent, they cannot abuse," he said.

For transparency' Mr. Pal said the government had a majority in both Houses of Parliament and could have easily pushed the Bill through.

"The only reason Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju moved a motion to send the Bill to the parliamentary panel is because the

Pal said. He said the panel met 15 State governments. Representatives were called from those States which the panel was unable to tour. It spent 111 hours in deliberations, meeting all stakeholders, he added.

Mr. Pal accused the Opposition of setting a wrong narrative. "From Day One, they have been projecting that the amendments to the Waqf Bill will endanger all historic structures. This Bill aims to bring in transparency. To ensure that the property is used for the

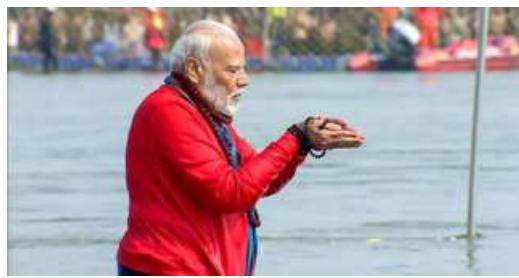
very purpose that the Waqf had intended. How many widows and orphans are benefiting from Waqf properties? So far, only the caretakers are enjoying the dividends," he said.

On poll accusation The Opposition members had accused Mr. Pal of hating through the report in view of the Delhi Assembly election. The members were given only 48 hours to submit their amendments. "In our country, there is an election almost every other month. Can



One on one: BJP MP Jagdambika Pal (left) with Congress MP Imran Masood in Parliament. ANI

IN BRIEF



Modi takes a dip, says feeling blessed to be at Maha Kumbh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a dip at the Sangam on Wednesday, and said he felt "blessed to be at the Maha Kumbh" where he was "filled with a spirit of devotion." "Blessed to be at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. The *snan* at the Sangam is a moment of divine connection, and like the crores of others who have taken part in it, I was also filled with a spirit of devotion," Mr. Modi posted on X. "May Maa Ganga bless all with peace, wisdom, good health, and harmony," he added. His trip lasted around 90 minutes. The PM travelled from the Prayagraj airport to Sangam by helicopter and later used a motorboat to and from the Aaral Ghat. He was accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Make Tejaswi CM of Bihar, Lalu Prasad appeals to people

Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad promised free electricity to households if the RJD-led Grand Alliance, or *Mahagathbandhan*, is voted to power in Bihar. Mr. Prasad made the announcement on Wednesday during his visit to Nalanda, the home district of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. He had attended an event in Nalanda's Islampur to mark the death anniversary of former MLA Krishna Vallab Prasad. Mr. Prasad appealed to the people to vote for the RJD and not bow down before anyone. He said everyone should ensure that his son Tejaswi Yadav became the Chief Minister in the Assembly election due in October-November.

House panel seeks SOPs for timely completion of spiritual tourism projects

Sreeparna Chakrabarty

NEW DELHI

Expressing disappointment over the slow progress of important projects in the spiritual tourism circuits and under the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) scheme, a parliamentary committee has asked the government to develop a "clear-cut Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)" and obtain prior clearances and approvals from relevant authorities for timely completion of projects.

The PRASHAD scheme focuses on developing and identifying pilgrimage sites across India for enriching the religious tourism experience.

In a report tabled in the Lok Sabha on Monday, the



Long trek: Pilgrims trekking through the Sathram-Sabarimala traditional forest path. LEJU KAMAL

Transport, Tourism and Culture noted that of the 23 spiritual circuits, five are yet to be completed out of which two circuits in Kerala – Sabarimala-Erumeli-Pampa-Sannidhanam circuit and Sivagiri Sree Narayana Guru Ashram circuit – are yet to be completed.

In a report tabled in the Lok Sabha on Monday, the

committee, headed by Janata Dal(U) MP Sanjay Jha, said that at the time of the Demands for Grants, 2023-24, it had been informed that the reason for delays in these two Kerala circuits was lack of clearance from the temple authorities.

The panel also observed that under the PRASHAD scheme, only 21 of 45 projects have been completed.

Webinar on heavy menstrual bleeding to be held on Feb. 9

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Naruvi Hospitals, Vellore, in collaboration with *The Hindu*, is hosting a webinar on "Management of heavy menstrual bleeding" from 11.30 a.m. on February 9.

This is the fourth webinar in the 15-part series organised as part of the "Healthy India, Happy India" initiative aimed to "Prevent illness, promote wellness".

Various topics

During the webinar, eminent speakers from Naruvi Hospitals, Vellore, will speak on "Heavy bleeding in the reproductive age".

The session will be moderated by Hiba Mariam.

To register, visit newsth.live/HIIHUIE or scan the QR code.



P.B. Akilasree, senior consultant, obstetrics and gynaecology, will discuss "Pubertal menstrual disorders", and Jeyasheela Kamrajan, consultant, obstetrics and gynaecology, will speak on "Heavy bleeding in the reproductive age".

The session will be moderated by Hiba Mariam.

To register, visit newsth.live/HIIHUIE or scan the QR code.

AIIMS across India facing faculty shortage; 34% posts vacant in New Delhi facility

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) across India are facing a shortage of faculty members.

As much as 34% of the posts are vacant in the institute in New Delhi, 24% in Bhopal, 25% in Bhubaneswar, 28% in Jodhpur, 38% in Raipur, 27% in Patna, and 39% in Rishikesh.

The Union Health Ministry revealed this earlier this week in the Rajya Sabha, while replying to a question by Sanjeev Arora, MP, on the shortage of faculty and healthcare services in the AIIMS.

Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda, in his statement, said there was faculty shortage in 12 partially operational institutes, in-

J.P. Nadda says creation of posts and recruitment is a continuous process

cluding 41% in Mangalagiri, 23% in Nagpur, and 39% in Kalyani.

The Minister said the Centre had approved the setting up of 22 new AIIMS under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana.

"Creation of posts and recruitment is a continuous process. In order to expeditiously fill vacant sanctioned positions in various AIIMS, steps have been taken by the government," his statement noted.

The Minister said that the centralised Nursing Officer Recruitment Common Eligibility Test is conducted by the AIIMS, Delhi

for the recruitment of nursing officers in these institutes, while the Common Recruitment Examination is conducted by it for appointments to Group B and C non-faculty vacancies.

The Institute of National Importance Combined Entrance Test and the Institute of National Importance Super-Specialty examination is conducted by it to select junior residents (academic) and senior residents (academic) for these institutions.

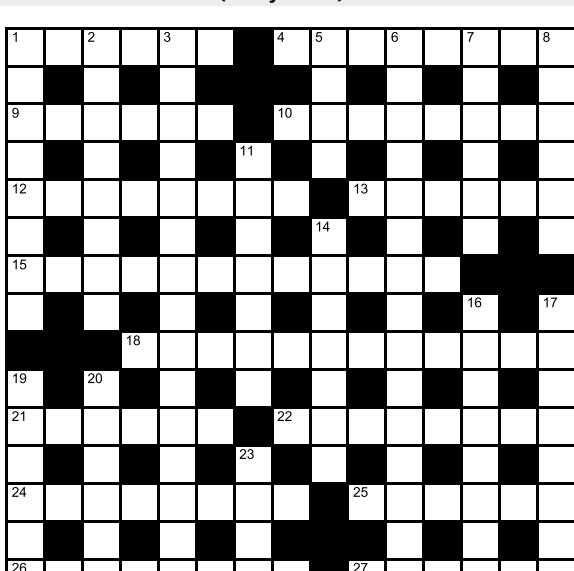
"The government does not want to recruit persons for the sake of filling the posts," the Minister said at a press conference recently.

"The quality of people taken in matters, and we will not compromise on that," the Minister said.

TH CROSSWORD (set by Arden)

14401

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



Across

- Partly it is a new concoction (6)
- Cocktail waiters get inadequate tip, so to speak (2,2,4)
- Finally found it in USA - random checks? (6)
- Money stolen might bring down a game (8)
- Empty threat - I look around and do nothing (3,5)

- Abandoned childcare, had to go round (6)
- A song in celebration of marriage composed by Tom and Phil Aaron (12)
- Evidences show place is in terrible state (12)
- Keen to protect girl in a corner (6)
- A rare medical condition - relapses partially because of sugar (8)
- Media director imbibing alcohol - outsiders make a song (8)
- Pretentious in greeting (6)
- A theatre person takes time to get a fish (8)
- Enemy desperate to get hold of an unknown protein (6)
- Down**
- Patterns running across the nave, say (8)
- Second book on insurrection... (8)
- ...even so, not accompanied by status (15)
- Stagger in as guest, uninvited (4)
- Last challenge, act on it - think he somehow can accept defeat stoically? (4,2,3,4)
- Deplorable hesitancy without any moral principles (6)
- The final encounters go up in value (6)
- Tea cups besides a football team (7)
- Fallen in love with small babies' wear (7)
- Upset harmony over Catholic kingdom (8)
- At home in a country (8)
- Rascals quietly involved in swindles (6)
- Third of silver and gold in the carriage (6)
- Palm tree tops - some are grown outside (4)

SUDOKU

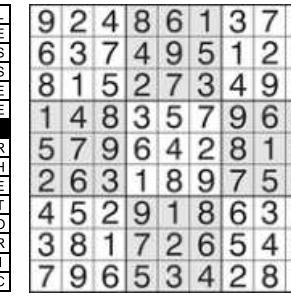
9								3
6	4	2				5		
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						6	1	3
7			9					
						7	2	3
5								9

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Importance of rituals

Like a parent raising a child with an eye on a prosperous future, God too has an abiding interest in the spiritual well-being of a person, right from birth. Leading a virtuous life, it is possible to reach Him: all one has to do is to surrender to him entirely to attain moksha. To that end, God has been guiding man from time immemorial in many ways: by manifestations, by way of scriptural texts and also as resident deity in temples. Additionally, he has sent acharyas, preceptors and gurus, to guide humans, said Karunakaran Swami in a discourse.

One may ask where does God dwell? He is present in Vaikuntam, but none of us can claim to have been there or recall such a darshan. God is within oneself, but we are so overwhelmed by *vasanas* (sensory gratifications) that we fail to engage with Him.

Various gurus have shown how to connect with God in a structured, doable manner. They have advocated embracing daily rituals such as chanting His name, offering simple things such as flowers and fruits to Him every day, with total faith.

Sastras say it is imperative that one does three things. '*Jeevato vakyam karana*' it says, meaning one should keep one's parents /elders happy till their last breath. It also mandates '*Gayanam pinda dhanam*' (visit Gaya at least once and offer pinda at least once to one's dear departed.) Pundits recommend that the surviving family conduct the *sraddham* every year on the relevant tithi and not stop the practice once one has visited Gaya after the passing of one's loved ones. Mata, pita, guru, deivam is the four-step ladder to reaching God.

Army's Fort William in Kolkata set to be known as Vijay Durg

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Army officers gather at Fort Williams in Kolkata during the Army Day celebrations. AP

"vestiges of the colonial era" and "Indianising" military traditions and customs – an initiative Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described as freedom from the mentality of slavery.

In March 2022, while addressing the top military leadership at Kevadia in Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised the importance of enhancing indigenisation in national defence – not just in terms of sourcing of equipment and weapons but also in the doctrines, procedures and customs practised by the armed forces.

He urged the three services to "rid themselves of legacy systems and practices that have outlived utility and relevance".

IN BRIEF



Amid interest rate cut hopes, RBI begins policy review

Soon after the Union Budget, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday began deliberations on the monetary policy review to be concluded on Friday, amid hopes of a 25 basis points' rate cut, the first in five years. One basis point equals 0.01%. While inflation is still to hit the RBI's 4% median target, the declining rupee also poses a challenge. This is the first meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee under the stewardship of RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra.

January Services growth was slowest since November 2022

India's services sector activity expanded at the slowest pace in well over two years in January amid softer increases in sales and output, a monthly survey said on Wednesday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index fell from 59.3 in December to 56.5 in January – its lowest level since November 2022. A print above 50 on the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) denotes an expansion in activity levels. *PTI*

Swiggy Q3 net loss widens to ₹799 cr. as expenditure surges

On-demand delivery platform Swiggy Ltd., which listed last year, said consolidated net loss for the third quarter ended December 31 widened to ₹799 crore from a net loss of ₹574 crore a year ago. Swiggy saw advertising and sales promotion spend rising more than ₹300 crore to ₹751 crore, employee benefit expenses climbing ₹220 crore to ₹657 crore, delivery-related charges up ₹263 crore to ₹1,127 crore and cost of purchase of stock-in-trade climbing ₹233 crore to ₹1,557 crore.

Aurobindo Pharma faces over ₹155-cr. GST demand, penalty

N. Ravikumar
HYDERABAD

Generic drugmaker Aurobindo Pharma has received order under the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, asking it to pay GST, interest and a penalty of more than ₹155 crore.

Additional Commissioner of Central Tax, Ranga Reddy GST Commissionate, Hyderabad, passed the order for the period 2017-18 to 2021-22 demanding GST of ₹77,61,35,242 along with interest. Further, a penalty of ₹77,61,35,242 was imposed, Aurobindo Pharma said in a filing on Wednesday.

An amount of ₹23,71,71,782 paid under protest by the company and ITC of ₹8,78,23,385 reversed by the company were ordered for appropriation, it said.

The order was passed on the contention that the company received excess IGST refund; non-surrender of IGST on short realisation of export proceeds with respect of exports during July 1, 2017 to March 23, 2020 and non-reversal of ITC in terms of Rule 37 of CGST Rules.

Company to file appeal
The company intends to file an appeal before the Appellate Authority, Aurobindo Pharma said.

HC orders status quo in TAFE case

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Wednesday directed Chennai-based Tractors and Farm Equipment (TAFE) Limited and Massey Ferguson Corporation based in the United States, to maintain status quo until the disposal of a civil suit related to a dispute over the usage of the trademark 'Massey Ferguson' by TAFE.

In October last year, TAFE said it had secured an interim relief from the Madras HC in its favour in the dispute with Massey Ferguson. In its civil suit before the HC against the AGCO subsidiary, TAFE claimed the trademarks were distinctive and exclusively owned by it in India.

Kia hit by a \$155 mn. tax evasion charge

Indian tax rules could require Kia to pay up to \$310 mn if it loses dispute, or roughly double the amount evaded, due to penalty and interest

Reuters
NEW DELHI

India has accused South Korea's Kia of evading taxes of \$155 million by misclassifying component imports but the carmaker denied wrongdoing, the latest fight by a foreign automaker with New Delhi over tariffs, as per a document and two sources.

Kia competes with Hyundai and Maruti Suzuki in the world's third-largest auto market, where it has a share of 6% of roughly four million units a year, and its Kia Seltos and Sonet SUVs are among the top sellers.

Foreign companies in India face headaches from high taxes and long-drawn-out investigations.

For example, Tesla has publicly complained about high taxes on imported EVs and Volkswagen last week was sued over a demand for a record \$1.4 billion in back taxes it called "impossibly enormous".

Confidential notice

Tax officers sent a confidential notice to Kia's Indian unit in April, flagging alleged tax evasion of ₹1,350 crore, as per a government notice *Reuters* is reporting for the first time.

The offence centred on incorrect declaration of imports of components for assembly of the carmaker's luxury Carnival minivan, the notice showed.

In a statement to *Reuters*, Kia India said it made



Less taxing: Tax authorities found Kia's Carnival 'car model was being imported in parts' to discharge lesser customs duty'. REUTERS

a detailed response, supported by comprehensive evidence and documentation to substantiate its stand and the authorities were still reviewing the matter. Kia India is committed to complying with all regulations and has "consistently cooperated with" authorities, it added.

Finance Ministry and customs officials did not respond to *Reuters* queries.

In its 432-page notice, the government said tax authorities found Kia's Carnival "car model was being imported in parts or components in separate lots" via different ports, with the "intent to discharge lesser customs duty".

Kia devised the strategy to ensure the imports "could not (be) detected by customs," the government added in the notice.

Similar to VW case

Two sources said Kia's case was similar to that of Volkswagen (VW), accused of evading a higher tax of 30% to 35% applicable on

parts imported in "completely knocked down" or CKD form in a single shipment, instead shipping separate parts over days, making them eligible for a tax rate of just 10% to 15%.

During probe, Kia's website showed the Carnival model sold in India as being in 'CKD' form with retail sales of 9,887 units between 2020 and 2022, the notice said.

Indian tax rules could require Kia to pay up to \$310 million if it loses the dispute, or roughly double the amount evaded, due to penalty and interest.

The latest available corporate filings in India show Kia's domestic annual sales of \$4.45 billion in fiscal 2022/23 were its highest ever, up 53% on year, for net profit of \$243 million.

Kia has deposited ₹278 crore (\$32 million) "under protest" as it continues to fight the Indian tax notice, which is still proceeding, said a government source who declined to be named as the matter is private.

Bombay High Court to hear Volkswagen's \$1.4-bn tax dispute

Purnima Sah
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday agreed to hear the petition filed by Škoda Auto Volkswagen India challenging the tax demand of \$1.4 billion by the Indian customs authorities issued on September 2024.

After the advocates Naren Thacker and Gopal Mundhra representing the Volkswagen, mentioned the petition before a Division Bench of Justices, B.P. Colabawalla and Firdosh Pooniwalla, seeking urgent hearing, stating that they are challenging a show-cause notice issued in September 2024 under Customs Act, the Bench has decided to hear the matter at length in a hearing on February 17, 2025.

The automobile company that operates two manufacturing facilities in India, Pune and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, had filed the petition in January 2025. The Volkswagen group, led by Škoda Auto Volkswagen India, is accused of deliberately misleading customs authorities through its mode of import of parts as individual units rather than as a component of a 'completely knocked down' (CKD) unit, which attracts a higher import duty.

The Customs authorities in their notice have alleged that the company misclassified its imports of Audi, Škoda and Volkswagen cars as individual parts instead of CKD units, thereby paying significantly lower



customs duties. While the CKD units attract a 30% to 35% duty, Volkswagen is accused of declaring its imports as separate components in different shipments paying just 5 to 15% custom duties.

Representing the Customs Department, Additional Solicitor General N. Venkataraman submitted to the court that as per the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRD), for over a decade, the company has been importing nearly complete cars without paying the applicable rates to CKD units.

The authorities have incriminating private records to base their claims against Volkswagen, he said. However, Volkswagen advocates argued that the concept of CKD parts was introduced only in the year 2002, and that the term lacked clarity in definition until 2011. In 2011, the company received a clarification from the tax authorities that was in favour of the company, and now the DRD had suddenly changed its interpretation of the rules, leading to the massive tax demand, the company's advocates argued.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	WEDNESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	78,271	-0.40
US Dollar	87.43	-0.41
Brent oil	74.66	-1.80

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2324.60	+23.10
Adani Ports.	1144.35	+19.25
Apollo Hosp.	6944.65	+152.45
Asian Paints	2275.20	-79.15
Axis Bank	1013.30	-2.00
Bajaj Auto	8927.80	+16.40
Bajaj Finance	1796.75	+16.50
Bharat Elec.	288.95	+4.45
Bharti Airtel	1660.45	-1.00
BPCL	261.25	+5.30
Britannia Ind.	4932.65	+95.70
Cipla	1436.80	-12.25
Coal India	382.85	+6.30
Dr Reddys Lab.	1227.75	+7.60
Eicher Motors	5417.20	-32.90
Grasim Ind.	2490.50	+5.30
HCL Tech.	1712.85	-19.70
HDFC Bank	1737.80	+16.90
HDFC Life	627.85	+1.95
Hero MotoCorp	4270.40	+33.30
Hindalco	600.60	+16.65
Hindustan Unilever	2391.05	-47.00
ICICI Bank	1267.70	-0.50
IndusInd Bank	1061.20	+14.05
Infosys	1897.05	-1.75
ITC	448.15	+7.00
ITC Hotels Ltd.	168.52	+4.78
JSW Steel	949.90	+5.65
Kotak Bank	1911.75	-16.75
L&T	3383.20	+55.95
M&M	3178.75	-10.30
Maruti Suzuki	13086.80	+23.15
NestleIndia	2248.95	+50.50
NTPC	319.60	+0.50
ONGC	261.65	+7.55
PowerGrid Corp	285.20	+0.45
Reliance Ind.	1278.20	+7.00
SBI	1469.15	+3.25
State Bank	766.05	+13.15
Shriram Finance Ltd.	571.30	+5.45
Sun Pharma	1752.75	+12.50
Tata Consumer Product	1015.10	+18.90
Tata Motors	717.05	+6.50
Tata Steel	134.40	+0.98
TCS	4091.10	+15.95
Tech Mahindra	1661.00	+1.95
Titan	3490.90	+106.80
Trent Ltd.	5749.95	+0.35
UltraTech Cement	11585.70	+66.55
Wipro	317.10	+0.85

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on February 05

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	87.27	87.59
Euro	90.92	91.25
British Pound	109.35	109.75
Japanese Yen (100)	57.16	57.38
Chinese Yuan	12.00	12.05
Swiss Franc	96.78	97.14
Singapore Dollar	64.70	64.94
Canadian Dollar	61.12	61.35
Malaysian Ringgit	19.72	19.81
Australian Dollar	54.85	55.06

Source: Indian Bank

Comment on Indian firms taken 'out of context': OpenAI CEO

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Sam Altman

other AI models at a fraction of their costs. In his latest visit to India, he said that OpenAI was "really excited to do a lot more together" in India. He also cited so-called small language models, which are less expensive to build, while acknowledging "ten-fold" cost reductions in training AI models.

Is Cancer in Our Genes or is There More at Play?

Cancer fundamentally arises from changes in the DNA of the tissue where it originates, which controls cell growth and division. However, only 5-10% of cancers are caused by inherited genetic mutations in the germline (mutations present in all cells from birth and passed down through family). The vast majority, 90-95%, are due to acquired genetic changes during a person's lifetime, often influenced by environmental and lifestyle factors. This means that even those without a family history of cancer can develop the disease due to prolonged exposure to harmful triggers.

The Indian Cancer Burden

According to the Global Cancer Observatory, India recorded over 1.41 million new cancer cases annually in 2022, and this number is expected to rise to 1.53 million by 2025. The most common cancers in India include breast, cervical, lung, and oral cancers. While genetic predisposition plays a role, environmental factors like pollution, tobacco use, poor diet, and infections contribute significantly to cancer development. Tobacco alone accounts for nearly 40% of all cancers in India, making it the largest preventable cause.

Nearly 1 in 4 colorectal cancer cases in India now occurs in those under 50 years – making diet

RESULTS PENDING

Will have more clarity on Bumrah's fitness in the next few days: Rohit



FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

Rohit Sharma said there will be some news on Jasprit Bumrah's fitness in the next few days. "Obviously, we are waiting on some update about his scan, which is due to happen in the next few days. Once we get that scan, we can give you more clarity on where he is and about his participation in the last ODI".

TOP STAR

Root has a crucial role in ODIs, says England skipper Buttler



K.R. DEEPAK

Jos Buttler feels Joe Root has a lot to offer to the England side in ODIs. "He's one of the great players of the game. He has loads of 50-over experience, which will be great for some guys who haven't played as much in our group. I feel he has a crucial role for us to play in these games".

RELEVANCE

People will be excited if the best play the best: Buttler on ODIs



K.R. DEEPAK

The ODI format still holds relevance, according to Jos Buttler. "If you talk to guys about winning the World Cup, they'd probably say 50 overs over the T20 one. But schedule is always the thing. If you can get the best players on the park playing against each other in whatever format, I think people will always be excited to watch it".

RAPID CLIMB

Abhishek zooms to the second spot in T20I batters' rankings



EMMANUEL YOGINI

India opener Abhishek Sharma leapfrogged 38 places to the second spot in the ICC men's T20I rankings for batters while Tilak Varma dropped a rung to third. Varun Chakaravarthy, who finished as the highest wicket-taker in the series against England, moved up three spots to joint-second in the bowling list.

It's time to put ODI cricket in the limelight again

The impending Champions Trophy means India and England will want to make use of the three-match series to fine-tune their plans; the Men in Blue bolstered by the return of the big guns

ENGLAND IN INDIA

S. Dipak Ragav
NAGPUR

It has been a challenging few months for the superstars of Indian cricket. The twin Test series defeats to New Zealand (0-3 at home) and Australia (1-3 away) have raised a lot of questions about the road ahead for some of those.

As the big names gather again to don the national colours for the three-match ODI series against England starting here at the VCA Stadium on Thursday, they will want to burnish their reputations.

The ODI format is fighting for relevance, sandwiched between the Tests and the T20Is, and bilateral matches have lost sheen.

Still, these three outings are vital for both teams ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy later this month.

India's batting mainstays Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill have all had meagre returns with the bat in recent times, albeit in Tests, and have a point to prove.

Since losing in the 2023 World Cup final, the Men in Blue have played only six 50-over games.

In December 2023, a second-string squad won 2-1 in South Africa while the team with most of the players who will be part of this series and the Champions Trophy lost 0-2 to Sri Lanka last August.

Most batters, barring Rohit, struggled to get the spinners away in Lanka



Left-field option? With Rohit backing Rahul for the first-choice keeper role, Pant might have to wait for an opportunity. K.R. DEEPAK

during the middle-overs, and it is something the batting group needs to address.

Though India has a stable batting core – led by Rohit and Gill at the top and followed by Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, K.L. Rahul, and Hardik Pandya – the team would look to sort out the rest of the line-up.

With skipper Rohit indicating that Rahul is set to continue to be the first-choice wicketkeeper, Rishabh Pant might have to wait for his chance, though the left-hander offers variety to a right-handed heavy batting order.

It will be interesting to

see which two among Axar Patel, Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar might fill the number seven and eight spots.

Jadeja hasn't played an ODI since the World Cup final. On the bowling front, the management might have to rotate its resources to give everyone game time.

Considering both Mohammed Shami and Kuldeep Yadav are coming off a long injury layoff, their progress will be keenly monitored.

The inclusion of Varun Chakaravarthy, who is set to make his debut in this series, has added another

variable. Meanwhile, England is bolstered by the arrival of Joe Root, who can offer stability at number three.

The English line-up is similar to the one played in the T20Is, and the batters would hope for a better show than what they have managed so far.

Forgettable run

Vice-captain Harry Brook has had a forgettable run in India so far, struggling against spinners and would like to address it soon.

The visitor has added leggie Rehan Ahmed to the

squad to strengthen its

spin arsenal.

Having lost the T20I series 1-4, Jos Buttler's men would want to show a better account of themselves and not leave Indian shores empty-handed.

The teams: India (from): Rohit Sharma (Capt.), Shubman Gill (Vice-capt.), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, K.L. Rahul (wk), Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh and Varun Chakaravarthy.

England (XI): Jos Buttler (Capt.), Harry Brook (Vice-capt.), Phil Salt (wk), Joe Root, Ben Duckett, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Saqib Mahmood, Jofra Archer, Jacob Bell and Brydon Carse.

'Varun will be in contention for the Champions Trophy'

S. Dipak Ragav
NAGPUR

A combative Rohit Sharma clearly stated that he is not too worried about his form and is instead focusing on the road ahead.

During the customary pre-match press conference ahead of the first ODI against England on Wednesday, the skipper was not pleased when asked if he is looking forward to returning to a format in which he has had a lot of success, considering his lean run in Tests in the last few months.

"What kind of a question is that?" snapped Rohit before adding, "This is a different format, different time. As cricketers, we know there will be ups and downs, and I have faced a lot in my career, so this is nothing new to me."

"I am looking forward to the challenge, not looking at what has happened in the past. A lot of good things have happened as well. It's important that I focus on what is coming up and what lies ahead for me. It is as simple as that. Look to try and start the series on a high."

On Varun Chakaravarthy's inclusion in the squad and the possibility of him even playing in the Champions Trophy, Rohit felt it was something that could be discussed.

"He has certainly shown



Rohit and Gambhir... talking tactics. K.R. DEEPAK

India-England H2H in ODIs

	M	India	England	Tied	NR	W
Overall	107	58	44	2	3	52
In India	52	34	17	1	0	25

The schedule: February 6 (Nagpur); February 9 (Cuttack); February 12 (Ahmedabad)

All matches start at 1.30 p.m.

something different. I understand that it was in T20 format, but he has got something different. So we just wanted to have an option and see what we can do with him. During the series, it presents us an opportunity to play him at some stage and see what he is capable of."

"Right now, we are not thinking about whether we are going to take him or not but definitely, he will be in contention. If things plan out really well for us and he does what is required, then there is something that we need to think about," said Rohit.

When asked if the team will look to continue the approach that they followed during the 2023 World Cup, Rohit said it is something that they would consider.

"There is a certain type of cricket we want to play. Whether it means we have to go and do what we did in the World Cup, we will try and do that. Guys know exactly what is required of each one of us. It's been a while since we played this format, so it's just about coming together and trying to (pick from) where we left off during the World Cup".

"Right now, we are not thinking about whether we are going to take him or not but definitely, he will be in contention. If things plan out really well for us and he does what is required, then there is something that we need to think about," said Rohit.

**Amul presents
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Nominees for the National Team of the Year

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

**MEN'S CRICKET TEAM**

Jasprit Bumrah was named player of the tournament at the T20 World Cup

Beat England 4-1 and Bangladesh 2-0 in home Test series, drew 1-1 in South Africa

**WOMEN'S TABLE TENNIS TEAM**

Reached the round of 16 at the World Championships in Busan

Qualified for the team event at the Olympics for the first time

Reached the quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics

Won its first-ever medal—a bronze—at the Asian Championships

**WOMEN'S CHESS TEAM**

Won India's first-ever gold medal in the women's section at the Chess Olympiad

Divya Deshmukh and Vaishika Agrawal won individual gold medals at the Chess Olympiad

Helped retain the Gaprindashvili Cup, awarded to the country with the best overall performance across both open and women's categories

**MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM**

Won Olympic bronze medal in Paris

Bagged successive Olympic medals for the first time in 52 years

Beat Australia in the Olympics for the first time in 52 years

Defended Asian Champions Trophy title in China

**MEN'S CHESS TEAM**

Won India's first-ever gold medal in the open section at the Chess Olympiad

D. Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi won individual gold medals at the Chess Olympiad

Helped retain the Gaprindashvili Cup, awarded to the country with the best overall performance across both open and women's categories



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

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IN BRIEF



Gardner appointed Gujarat Giants skipper for WPL-3

Australia all-rounder Ashleigh Gardner was on Wednesday appointed captain of Gujarat Giants for the third edition of the Women's Premier League beginning on February 14. The 27-year-old replaced Beth Mooney, who will now focus on her batting. Giants will take on Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the opener. The Gujarat outfit finished fifth and last on the previous two occasions.

Sriram-Cabral duo moves into the quarterfinals

Sriram Balaji in partnership with Francisco Cabral of Portugal beat Arthur Bouquier and Arthur Gea of France 4-6, 7-5, [10-4] in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the €181,250 Challenger tennis tournament in Lille, France, on Wednesday.

Other result: \$100,000 Challenger, Brisbane: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Jesse Delaney (Aus) & Mark Whitehouse (GBR) bt Charles Broom (GBR) & Anirudh Chandrasekar 6-4, 6-7(5), [10-7].

Vidarbha retains 17-member squad for Ranji quarterfinal

Last season's runner-up Vidarbha on Wednesday retained its 17-member squad to face Tamil Nadu in its Ranji Trophy quarterfinal in Nagpur from February 8.

The Vidarbha squad: Akshay Wadkar (Capt. & wk), Atharva Taide, Aman Mokhade, Yash Rathod, Harsh Dubey, Akshay Kainwar, Yash Kadam, Akshay Wakhare, Aditya Thakare, Shubham Kapse, Nachiket Bhute, Siddhesh Wath (wk), Yash Thakur, Danish Malewar, Parth Rekhade, Karun Nair, and Dhruv Shorey.

Mumbai-Haryana Ranji quarterfinal shifted to Kolkata

Mumbai's Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Haryana has been shifted from Lahli to Kolkata by BCCI. All the quarterfinals will be five-day affairs, to be played between Feb. 8 and 12. Although no reason has been given for the change, it is learnt that receding winter in the northern region could pose challenges like morning fog at Lahli and affect the proceedings.

LIVE TELECAST

Sri Lanka vs Australia: 2nd Test, day 1, Sony Sports Ten 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 10 a.m.

India vs England: 1st ODI, Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 1.30 p.m.

Zimbabwe vs Ireland: Only Test, day 1, FanCode, 1.30 p.m.

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

ISL: Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.

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

Illness forces Vesely out of Chennai Open



On the prowl: Galarneau made it to the second round with ease.

B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

S. Prasanna Venkatesan

CHENNAI

Jiri Vesely had a brief bout of nausea, took a pill, and was squeezed for effort by opponent Ergi Kirkin before conceding the match 7-6(7), 6-7(3) in the first round of the Chennai Open ATP Challenger at the SDAT tennis stadium here on Wednesday.

Vesely broke Kirkin's serve in the very first game but the Turkey player hit back to make it 4-4. Vesely served an ace to save a set point at 4-5, stretching it to a tie-break.

Kirkin rallied from 2-5 to draw level 5-5 and went on to lead 7-6, but Vesely came up with a couple of forehand crosscourt winners and a backhand crosscourt winner to clinch the opening set.

The second, too, went to a tie-break where Kirkin made it 2-2 after losing the first two games. Two unforced errors from the

Suruchi overshadows the top stars, strikes gold in the air pistol event

Haryana shooter not perturbed by presence of Olympians Rhythm, Rahi and Asian Games winner Palak; says she was confident of claiming big prize

NATIONAL GAMES

Stan Rayan
DEHRADUN

Forever crazy about wrestling, Inder Singh wanted his daughter Suruchi Phogat to be in the sport too. The ex-Armyman came from Sasrol village in Haryana's Jhajjar district, one of country's leading wrestling belts, but with the little girl suffering a collarbone injury following a fall she had to quit the sport after training for about six months.

But Inder wanted his daughter to do some sport.

"One day in 2019, my father and I entered a shooting range. And I was very interested to see the shooters there," said Suruchi, in a chat with *The Hindu*, at the Trishul Shooting

Range here on Wednesday. That journey brought the 18-year-old her maiden National Games gold in the women's 10m air pistol event (245.7 points) today. She had announced her arrival in December while winning the senior, junior and youth 10m air pistol golds at the New Delhi Nationals in December.

There were some big names in the event here, like Paris Olympian Rhythm Sangwan, another seasoned Olympian Rahi Sarnobat and Asian Games gold medallist Palak Gulia. But Suruchi was not perturbed.

"I was confident of winning gold because I topped yesterday's qualification too. Nobody is my challenger, I'm my own challenger," she said.

Haryana's Palak (243.6) and Punjab's Simranpreet

Kaur Brar (218.8) took the silver and bronze respectively while Rahi was fourth.

Incidentally, double Olympic bronze medallist Manu Bhaker also comes from Jhajjar and it's wonderful to see another young talent popping up from the district.

And she was very clear about the people who keep inspiring her.

"My parents, my coach Suresh Singh and myself...and my big goal in the LA 2028 Olympics," said Suruchi.

Suruchi travels more than 100km every day by train to Bhiwani to train for shooting.

"The journey takes about one and half hours," she said.

The long journey and the hard work are now bringing her rich rewards.



Golden girl: Suruchi was on target in the 10m air pistol final. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Kerala enters football final; compound archery gold for Rajat and Deepshikha

Stan Rayan
DEHRADUN

Kerala defeated Assam 3-0, via the tiebreaker, and entered the men's football final of the 38th National Games at Haldwani on Wednesday. The teams were goalless at the end of the regular period. Captain Ajay Alex, Sachin Sunil and Bijesh T. Balan were successful for Kerala in the tiebreaker.

In Friday's final, Kerala will meet host Uttarakhand which defeated Delhi 6-4, via the tiebreaker. The teams were level 1-1 at the end of the regular period in the semifinal. In the compound archery event here, Rajat Chauhan and Haryana's Deepshikha won the men's and women's individual golds at the Rajiv Gandhi cricket stadium.

"My last National Games gold came in Thiruvananthapuram in 2015," said Rajat.

Meanwhile, the presence of Aditi Gopichand



On target: Rajat and Deepshikha won the individual men's and women's golds in the compound archery. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Swami, the first Indian to win an individual World Championship title in 2023, could not help Maharashtra to the women's compound team title. Maharashtra took the silver behind champion Punjab.

The results: Compound archery: Men's individual: 1. Rajat Chauhan (Raj) 144, 2. Hritik Sharma (J&K) 141, 3. Thirumuruganesh Mani Ratnam (AP) 149. Women's individual: 1.

Deepshikha (Har) 148, 2. Parneet Kaur (Pun) 144, 3. Avneet Kaur (Pun) 143.

Mixed team event: 1. Haryana (Rishabh Yadav & Deepshikha) 154, 2. Andhra Pradesh (148), 3.

Punjab (158). **Men's team event:** 1. Delhi (Abhishek Verma, Priyansh, Aman Saini, Madhur) 234, 2. Haryana (232), 3. Rajasthan (229). **Women's team event:** 1. Punjab (Parneet Kaur, Avneet Kaur, Jasveer Kaur, Raj Kaur) 228, 2. Maharashtra (227), 3. Telangana (232).

Teichmann digs deep to get past a dogged Hartono

MUMBAI OPEN WTA 125

Tarun Shastry
MUMBAI

Former World No. 21 Jil Teichmann, now ranked 117th, defeated a determined Arianne Hartono 6-7(4), 6-3, 6-3 at the L&T Mumbai Open WTA 125, held at the Cricket Club of India here on Wednesday.

Hartono started well, using her powerful forehands and strong serves to take the opening game. The Swiss responded with a solid service game to make it 1-1.

However, the Dutch player quickly regained control, breaking Teichmann and building a 4-1 lead.

Teichmann struggled with her rhythm initially and made a few errors, but managed to pull herself together, winning a game with a perfect ace and then another with a backhand slice. She clawed her way back to level 4-4. Despite the Swiss player's fightback, Hartono won the first set in the tie-break.



Srivalli and Riya... powering ahead in doubles. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

In the second set, Teichmann regained her composure and started to play more aggressively. She moved well across the court and took a 4-2 lead in no time.

With forehand volleys, solid serves, and precise returns, Teichmann extended her advantage to 5-2, eventually taking the set 6-3.

She carried the momentum into the decider, quickly racing to a 5-1 lead with a combination of deft backhand slices and solid

groundstrokes. Though the Dutch player won two straight games, the Swiss sealed the match in the ninth with a forehand volley.

The results (first round):
Singles: Jil Teichmann bt Arianne Hartono 6-7(4), 6-3, 6-3.
Doubles: Shrivilash Bhamidipaty & Riya Bhattacharya bt Kyoko Okamura & Mai Hontama 5-7, 6-2, [10-7].
Prarthana Thombare & Arianne Hartono bt Naho Sato & Peangtan Plipuech 6-2, 6-3.
Ankita Raina & Dalila Jakupovic lost to Oksana Kalashnikova & Nao Hibino 7-6(4), 6-2.

Illness forces Vesely out of Chennai Open



Good bye: Halep won 24 WTA titles over her 19-year career including the French Open in 2018 and Wimbledon in 2019. AP

Former World No. 1 Halep retires

Agence France-Presse
BUCHAREST

Former tennis World No. 1 Simona Halep announced her retirement on Tuesday after a first-round defeat at the WTA Cluj Napoca tournament in Romania. The 33-year-old lost 6-1, 6-1 to 22nd-ranked Italian Lucia Bronzetti.

"I don't know if it is with joy or sadness that I speak to you but I made this decision in my soul and conscience, I have always been lucid. My body no longer follows, but today I wanted to play and say my goodbyes on the court," Halep told the crowd.

Halep returned to tennis in March last year after her career had been on hold since October 7, 2022 after testing positive for roxadustat at the US Open.

Halep decided to retire from tennis in March 2023, after winning the French Open and Wimbledon titles in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

Started afresh and working my way up, says Teichmann

Tarun Shastry
MUMBAI

Jil Teichmann was once ranked as high as 21 in the world. The 27-year-old Swiss has, however, had a turbulent time in recent years with injuries and personal struggles pushing her down to 117.

In an interaction with *The Hindu*, Teichmann reflected on her first-round win over Arianne Hartono in the Mumbai Open WTA 125 here on Wednesday.

"It was definitely hard-fought. I wasn't getting into a rhythm initially, but I became more aggressive in the second and third sets, wanting to make it tough for her," Teichmann said.

Teichmann also opened up about the struggles she experienced in 2023.

"Some personal issues started affecting my tennis. I lost over 25 matches that year and, though I had my moments, losing them was



Teichmann.

emotionally draining. I also had back problems and injuries." Despite the setbacks, Teichmann is optimistic.

"I've started afresh and working my way up. I'm happy with the progress. I've learned a lot, especially mentally. I understand myself better now. My coach, who's also one of my best friends, has helped me focus on emotional strength."

"My goal is to advance as far as possible in this tournament, break into the top 100, and qualify for the main draws in the Slams".

Heat on a hot streak in INBL

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Shakem Johnson was the star performer with 23 points as Chennai Heat recorded its successive victory in the INBL Pro basketball league with a 74-66 win over Gujarat Stallions at the Thyagaraj Indoor Stadium on Wednesday.

Heat had beaten Punjab Warriors by a 12-point margin on Tuesday. The teams were well matched, and Heat forced itself forward in the first quarter itself after having trailed 7-14, and led 47-35 at half-time. Stallions marginally bridged the gap in the third quarter, but Heat handled the climax with conviction. The Gujarat outfit was also less accurate in its attempts to score and thus was unable to press its case any further than what it managed.

The results: Chennai Heat 74 (Shakem Johnson 23, Tad Defelmeier 12, Malok Majak 11, Keith Kiner 11) bt Gujarat Stallions 66 (Trendon Hankerson 22, Jock Perry 17, Nate Roberts 11).

Czech and a forehand crosscourt volley in between helped Kirkin go ahead 5-2.

Though Vesely won the next point, Kirkin went on to clinch the tie-break 7-3 as Vesely made a couple of unforced errors. As they returned for a break, Vesely decided to retire.

The second, too, went to a tie-break where Kirkin made it 2-2 after losing the first two games. Two unforced errors from the

Galarneau made it to the second round with ease.

B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

The results (singles):
Second round: Elias Ymer (Swe) bt Jay Clarke (GBR) 7-5, 7-6(2).
Rio Noguchi (Jpn) bt Jacopo Berrettini (Ita) 7-5, 6-3.

First round: Alexis Galarneau (Can) bt Egor Agafonov 6-4, 6-1. Ergi Kirkin (Tur) bt Jiri Vesely (Cze) 6-7(7), 7-6(3) (retd.). Oleksandr Ovcharenko (Ukr) bt Zsombor Piros (Hun) 7-6(4), 6-4.

CM YK

Bumrah's ability to control the ball is like that of Akram: Aaron

Says there is a need to develop other fast bowlers around the pace ace; hails the efforts in Border-Gavaskar Trophy series

CRICKET

S. Prasanna Venkatesan

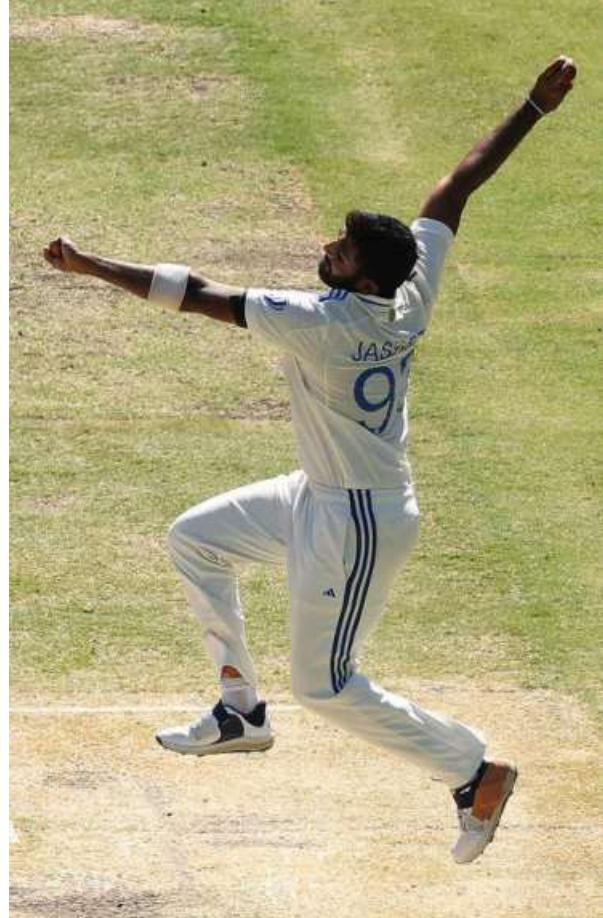
Former India pacer Varun Aaron compared Jasprit Bumrah's ability to control the ball to that of the great Wasim Akram while talking about Bumrah's performance in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series.

"That's one of the finest series I've seen an Indian fast bowler have. I would say the last memory I've had of a subcontinent fast bowler bowling that way is that of Wasim Akram - absolutely doing whatever he wanted to do with that cricket ball, and that's what Bumrah did this time," he said at the Keenan stadium in Jamshedpur.

Aaron highlighted Bumrah's exceptional use of his natural ability.

"I think he makes the best use of his natural ability, which is pace off the wicket. That's why, no matter how many times you play Bumrah, you can never really line him up. He's so quick off the wicket. That's because he's very hyper-mobile. He gets that extra whip through the end of his action. And that's what's his biggest strength," he said.

The 35-year-old emphasised that India needs to



In a different league: Aaron says Bumrah makes exceptional use of his natural ability. FILE PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

work on developing the other pacers around Bumrah. "I would say India has to still work on the other parts around Bumrah. Because, in the BGT series, Bumrah was a standout by far. Nobody could come close to him. And I feel that gap should narrow if India

wants to win tours abroad.

"I think it's just about experience. You've got a young fast-bowling lineup, except for Bumrah. Siraj also has not been there for years. He's also pretty new. So, I think the more experience they get, the better they'll get," he said.



Raring to go: Jhulan, Edwards, Harmanpreet and Sanjana at the media interaction. EMMANUEL YOGINI

Harmanpreet throws her weight behind Yastika

WPL

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

While Yastika Bhatia may be India's second-choice keeper in the national set-up, she remains the top pick for the Mumbai Indians in the Women's Premier League.

However, there may be some competition for the southpaw from G. Kamalini, the new kid on the block who announced her arrival with a sterling outing during India's triumphant U19 World Cup campaign.

Ahead of the upcoming edition of WPL, MI captain Harmanpreet Kaur threw her weight behind Yastika.

"Last year was really good for Yastika. And Kamalini has been brought in as a promising under-19 player.

"Our support staff is going to polish her skills, she needs to work very hard," Harmanpreet said here on Wednesday at the pre-sea-

son media interaction. "To replace Yastika is difficult for me to believe. But we have a few days left for the season where we will play a few practice matches.

"At this time, it's great to see so much competition for places in the team. The new faces we have picked are good, so it's going to be an exciting season for me as a captain and for the team as well."

Making an impact

MI mentor and bowling coach Jhulan Goswami acknowledged the impact the WPL is having on the wider ecosystem.

"If you go to domestic cricket, you'll see the girls now want to play a good brand of cricket and impress scouts to play in the WPL," Jhulan said.

"I have travelled to different parts of the country where you would earlier never get recognition, but people now want to know when the next WPL is coming. The impact of the WPL is amazing."

Head coach Charlotte Edwards hoped for a fruitful season with MI, the inaugural edition champion, which returns to the Brabourne Stadium for the last leg of the competition.

Edwards hoped for a fruitful season with MI, the inaugural edition champion, which returns to the Brabourne Stadium for the last leg of the competition.

Amazing experience

"The first year was an amazing experience to win the WPL. We played some fantastic cricket last year, which is all we can ask for.

"We spoke in the team that we wanted people to want to turn on their TV and watch Mumbai Indians," Edwards said.

"We certainly did that last year. We had some entertaining games of cricket. We missed out by the narrowest of margins, which was disappointing.

"This year there is just pure excitement to keep building this team, keep improving, get back to CCI, and be in another final this year."

WPL's third edition will begin on February 14.

Mumbai Indians will open its campaign against Delhi Capitals the following day.

Mohun Bagan ease past Punjab FC



Smooth sailing: Mohun Bagan cruised to a victory. PTI

ISL

Amitabha Das Sharma
KOLKATA

Jamie Maclarens scored twice to star in Mohun Bagan Super Giant's 3-0 win over Punjab FC in an ISL match on Wednesday and improved its chances of retaining the League Shield.

Liston Colaco scored the other goal as the home team took its tally to 46 points from 20 matches and opened up a 12-point lead over second-placed Jamshedpur FC, which has played two matches less.

The opening half did not see much action as Bagan struggled to open up space against the tight defence of the Punjab side. Greg Stewart had a chance in the 10th minute but his right-footed effort was nicely tipped over by Ravi Kumar. Mohun Bagan continued to show its offensive intent with regular incu-

sions inside the Punjab box but the visitor's defence somehow held firm. The match came alive in the 55th minute when Punjab launched a counter-attack and saw its play-maker Pula Vidal moving into the Bagan box. His accurate cross found Petros Giakoumakis unmarked on the Bagan goalmouth, but the Greek forward found his attempt coming off the upright.

This seemed to bring Mohun Bagan out of its slumber and the host took the lead in the very next minute (56th minute) to set itself on the victory path.

Maclarens, assisted by a cross from Dipendu Biswas, broke the deadlock with a nice finish. Colaco doubled the lead in the 63rd from a fine solo effort before Maclarens completed the tally with his second in the 90th.

The result:

Mohun Bagan 3 (Maclarens 56, 90, Colaco 63) bt Punjab FC 0.

CITY UNION BANK LIMITED

Credit Recovery and Management Department
Administrative Office : No. 24-B, Gandhi Nagar,
Kumbakonam - 612 001. E-Mail id : crmd@cityunionbank.in,
Ph : 0435-243232, Fax : 0435-2431746

RE-TENDER-CUM-AUCTION SALE NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002

The following properties mortgaged to City Union Bank Limited will be sold in Re-Tender-cum Public Auction by the Authorised Officer of the Bank, under Rule 8 (6) & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, under the SARFAESI Act, 2002, for recovery of a sum of Rs.11,05,50,413/- (Rupees Eleven Crore Five Lakh Fifty Thousand Four Hundred and Thirteen only) on a 31-01-2026 together with further interest to be charged from 01-02-2025 onwards and other expenses, any other dues to the Bank by the borrowers / guarantors No.1) M/s. Shree Vimal Sagar Jewellers, #159, First Floor, Kucha Mahajani, Chandini Chowk, Delhi - 6. Represented by its Proprietor : Manish Jain, Also st. M/s. Shree Vimal Sagar Jewellers, through its Proprietor : Manish Jain, S/o. Vinod Kumar Jain, having its Registered Office at, Shop PVT No.8, On Upper Ground Floor, Part of built up Property bearing MPL Nos.1158, 1159 and 1160, Kucha Mahajani, Chandini Chowk, Delhi - 110006. No.2) Mr. Manish Jain (also legal heir of late Mr. Vinod Kumar Jain), S/o. Vinod Kumar Jain, D-24, Upper Ground Floor, Block-D, C.C. Colony, Opposite Rana Pratap Bagh, Delhi - 110007. Also st. Mr. Manish Jain (also legal heir of late Mr. Vinod Kumar Jain), S/o. Vinod Kumar Jain, Property No.87, Block-E, Displaced Jain Co-operative House Building Society Ltd., Situated at Veer Naar, Jain Colony, Delhi - 110007. Also st. Mrs. Neeta Jain, W/o. Manish Jain, D-24, Upper Ground Floor, Block-D, C.C. Colony, Opposite Rana Pratap Bagh, Delhi - 110007. Also st. Mrs. Nisha Jain, W/o. Manish Jain, Property No.87, Block-E, Displaced Jain Co-operative House Building Society Ltd., Situated at Veer Naar, Jain Colony, Delhi - 110007. Also st. Mrs. Neha Jain, W/o. Manish Jain, Property No.87, Block-E, Displaced Jain Co-operative House Building Society Ltd., Situated at Veer Naar, Jain Colony, Delhi - 110007. Also st. Mrs. Naina Jain (Legal Heir-Cum-D/o, Late Shri Vinod Kumar Jain), W/o. Vinod Kumar Jain, D-24, C.C. Colony, Delhi - 110007. Also st. Mrs. Veena Jain (also legal heir of late Mr. Vinod Kumar Jain), W/o. Vinod Kumar Jain, Property No.87, Block-E, Displaced Jain Co-operative House Building Society Ltd., Situated at Veer Naar, Jain Colony, Delhi - 110007. Also st. Mrs. Hemlata Aggarwal (legal Heir-Cum-D/o, Late Shri Vinod Kumar Jain), W/o. Shri Atul Aggarwal, Residing at H.No.30, Block-B, 2nd Floor, Darayangin, Central Delhi - 110002. No.6) Mrs. Naina Jain (Legal Heir-Cum-D/o, Late Shri Vinod Kumar Jain), W/o. Shri Mohit Jain, Residing at, H.No.22, Tarun Enclave, Pitam Pura, North-West Delhi, Delhi - 110034. No.7) Mrs. Meetu Jain (Legal Heir-Cum-D/o, Late Shri Vinod Kumar Jain), W/o. Shri Kapil Jain, Residing at C-3/76, Ashok Vihar Phase -2, Ashok Vihar, North-West Delhi, Delhi - 110052. Note : That our 253-Delhi-Chandini Chowk Branch has also extended Financial Assistance (CUB OSL TERM EMI-BR : 501812080031346) dated 20-09-2017 requested by Nos.2, 4 & 6 and Late Vinod Kumar Jain of your for Nos.2, 4 & 6 and Late Vinod Kumar Jain of whom as co-obligants for the facility for a total amount of Rs.3,00,00,000/- at a ROI of 12.4% outstanding balance as on 31-01-2025 is Rs.1,59,46,932/- plus further interest and penal interest of 2.00% with monthly rests to be charged from 01-02-2025 till the date of realization.

Immovable Properties Mortgaged to Our Bank

Schedule - D (Property Owned by Mrs. Veena Jain, W/o. Vinod Kumar Jain & Mr. Manish Jain, S/o. Vinod Kumar Jain)

Entire Upper Ground Floor of Property Bearing No.24, in Block-D known as D-24, built on land measuring 220 Sq.yards or to say 183.94 Sq.mtr, without its roof / terrace rights, along with share of stilt Parking Floor, Block-D , C.C. Colony, Opposite Rana Pratap Bagh, Delhi - 110007. Boundaries : East House No.D-23, West : House No.D-25, North : Road 30 ft. West, South : Service Lane 15 ft wide.

Reserve Price : Rs.1,90,00,000/-
(Rupees One Crore Ninety Lakh only)

RE-AUCTION DETAILS**Date of Re-Tender-cum-Auction Sale****Venue**

City Union Bank Limited, Delhi-Chandini Chowk Branch, 1917-18, 1st Floor, Opp. Gurudwara Sisganj Sahib, Chandini Chowk, Delhi - 110006. Telephone No.011-23929803, Cell No.9350011163.

Terms and Conditions of Re-Tender-cum-Auction Sale :

(1) The intending bidders should be present in person for the auction and participate personally and give a declaration in writing to the effect that he/she is bidding for himself/herself. (2) The intending bidders may obtain the Tender Forms from The Manager City Union Bank Limited, Delhi-Chandini Chowk Branch, 1917-18, 1st Floor, Opp. Gurudwara Sisganj Sahib, Chandini Chowk, Delhi - 110006. (3) The intending bidders should submit their bids only in Tender Forms prescribed in sealed envelopes addressed to The Authorised Officer, City Union Bank Ltd., together with a Pay Order / Demand Draft for an EMD of 10% of the Reserve Price, drawn in favour of 'City Union Bank Ltd.', on or before 12.00 Noon on the date of Tender-cum-Auction Sale hereby notified. (4) For inspection of the property and other particulars, the intending purchaser may contact Telephone No.011-23929803, Cell No.9350011163. (5) The properties are sold as 'Is-as-is'whereas, 'As-is-what-is' and 'whatever there is' basis. (6) The sealed tenders will be opened in the presence of the intending bidders at 01.00 pm, on the date of Tender-cum-Auction Sale hereby notified. Though in general the sale will be by way of closed tenders, the Authorised Officer may, at his sole discretion, conduct an Open Auction among the interested bidders who desire to quote a bid higher than the one received in the closed tender process, and in such an event, the sale shall be conferred on the person making highest bid. The sale, however, is subject to confirmation of City Union Bank Limited. (7) The successful bidder shall have to pay 25% of the EMD paid of the amount sale immediately on completion of sale and the balance amount of 75% within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale, failing which the initial deposit of 25% shall be forfeited. (8) The Sale Certificate will be issued by the Authorised Officer in favour of the successful purchaser only after receipt of the entire sale consideration within the time limit stipulated herein. (9) The successful purchaser shall bear the charges payable for conveyance, such as stamp duty, registration fee etc., as applicable under law. (10) The successful bidder should pay the statutory dues of the house tax, electricity charges and other dues, TDS, GST if any, due to Government, Government Underwriting and local bodies. (11) The Authorised Officer shall have all the powers to accept or reject the bids or postpone or cancel the sale without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Place : Kumbakonam, Date : 04-02-2025

Authorised Officer

CITY UNION BANK LIMITED

Credit Recovery and Management Department
Administrative Office : No. 24-B, Gandhi Nagar,
Kumbakonam - 612 001. E-Mail id : crmd@cityunionbank.in,
Ph : 0435-243232, Fax : 0435-2431746

POSSESSION NOTICE (Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of City Union Bank Ltd., having its Administrative Office at No. 24-B, Gandhi Nagar, Kumbakonam - 612001 and one of the Branch Offices at Ground Floor, Door No.30, Block-B, Janakpuri, New Delhi, Delhi - 110058, New Delhi-Janakpuri Branch, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13(2) & (2) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice dated 25-10-2024 followed by a Pay Order / Demand Draft for an amount of Rs.1,90,00,000/- at a rate of 12.75%. The same has been also classified as NPA on 27-11-2024 and the outstanding balance as on 26-01-2025 is Rs.23,11,856/- plus further interest and penal interest of 2.00% with monthly rests to be charged from 24-01-2025 till the date of realization.

The borrowers above named having failed to repay the amount despite the receipt of the above referred statutory notice, NOTICE is hereby given to the borrowers above named and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the Properties described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 6 of the said Rules on this 01st day of February 2025.

The borrowers above named in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of City Union Bank Ltd. for an amount of Rs.11,75,54,351/- (Rupees Eleven Crore Seventy Five Lakh Fifty Four Thousand Three Hundred and Fifty One only) and interest thereon from 27-01-2025 till the repayment of entire dues.

The borrowers' attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Note : 1) That our 208-New Delhi Janakpuri Branch has also extended financial assistance (FITL - ADHOC-5019/202003247) dated 12-02-2021 requested by No.4, of you represented by No.5 of you as Proprietor for which No. 2 to 6 of you stand as co-obligants and No. 3 of you stand as guarantor for the facility for a total amount of Rs.13,35,000/- at a ROI of 12.75%. The same has been also classified as NPA on 30-04-2021 and the outstanding balance as on 26-01-2025 is Rs. 23,11,856/- plus further interest and penal interest of 2.00% with monthly rests to be charged from 27-01-2025 till the date of realization.

2) That our 208-New Delhi Janakpuri Branch has also extended financial assistance (FITL - ADHOC-5019/202003247) dated 28-05-2021 requested by No.1, of you represented by No.2 of you as Proprietor for which No. 3 of you stand as guarantor for the facility for a total amount of Rs.15,50,000/- at a ROI of 11% The same has been also classified as NPA on 28-03-2019 and the outstanding balance as on 26-01-2025 is Rs.25,13,913/- plus further interest and penal interest of 2.00% with monthly rests to be charged from 27-01-2025 till the date of realization.

3) That our 208-New Delhi Janakpuri Branch has also extended financial assistance (FITL - ADHOC-5019/202003247) dated 28-05-2021 requested by No.1, of you represented by No.2 of you as Proprietor for which No. 3 of you stand as guarantor for the facility for a total amount of Rs.15,50,000/- at a ROI of 11% The same has been also classified as NPA on 28-03-2019 and the outstanding balance as on 26-01-2025 is Rs.25,13,913/- plus further interest and penal interest of 2.00% with monthly rests to be charged from 27-01-2025 till the date of realization.

4) That our 208-New Delhi Janakpuri Branch has also extended financial assistance (FITL - ADHOC-501



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India keen to dust off ODI rust in final pit-stop before the Champions Trophy

Questions over approach and form of the big guns, team combination assume importance as the hosts look to unravel the jigsaw puzzle; the visitors will be keen to revive their fortunes in the 50-over format after having pressed the reset button

R. Kaushik

Context. It's a massive word in sport, in anything actually, but let's stick to sport for now. Context, and relevance.

What's the relevance of a bilateral Twenty20 International series of the kind India and England have just played out, one might ask. Relevance for the players involved? Check. For the broadcasters and other commercial stakeholders? Check. For the average fan who perhaps gets to see their heroes in flesh and blood maybe about once a year unless they are willing to travel beyond their hometown? Check.

India's 4-1 conquest of England was an unqualified success, but from a larger point of view, that doesn't count for anything. Try saying that to Abhishek Sharma, for instance, and he will disagree as violently as form might permit. But truly, with the next T20 World Cup more than 12 months away, this face-off must be viewed in isolation, not even as a pre-audition to an audition.

But the three-match One-Day International series starting in Nagpur on Thursday? Now, that is another matter altogether.

In one of those strange but true facts, India played a grand total of three ODIs in the whole of 2024. Just sit back for a second or three, and allow that to sink in. Just three 50-over matches in a 12-month period. There was a time when the 50-overs-a-side format was considered the broadcasters' dream because it offered them so many commercial opportunities between overs. Today, the one-day version is gasping for relevance - that word again - as it struggles to keep pace with its revered Test counterpart and the T20 upstart which has revolutionised the sport.

Hardly memorable

That outing to Colombo in August for three ODIs was hardly memorable for the right reasons. After a tie in the first match, India surrendered tamely in the next two, undone by the plethora of spinners Charith Asalanka was able to summon, himself included. Maheesh Theekshana, Dunith Wellalage, Wanindu Hasaranga, Jeffrey Vandersay and Akila Dananjaya ran rings around India's famed batting line-up, defending middling totals on raging turners with great alacrity and making scores of 230, 240 and 248 appear far more menacing than they actually were.

The benefit of hindsight allows one to identify Indian tallies of 230, 208 and 138 - note how Sri Lanka's scores increased with each match and India's replies went exactly in the opposite direction - as the warning bells that went unheeded. The cream of India's batting found it impossible to crack the spin jigsaw puzzle. There was a remarkable similarity between the batters who collapsed against Sri Lanka and those who failed to counter Mitchell Santner and Ajaz Patel in the Test series against New Zealand at home later in the year - Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, K.L. Rahul, Ravindra Jadeja and Rishabh Pant.

But we digress. As India seek to shake off the 50-over rust ahead of the Champions Trophy beginning in a fortnight's time in Pakistan and Dubai, they have so much work ahead of them. And, excitingly, so many possibilities too.

Rohit and head coach Gautam Gambhir's wish list must be long and varied. At the top of that list will perhaps be a return to run-making ways of the captain and his predecessor, two of the most experienced and influential ODI batters in the world.

Rohit and Kohli both had Test tours to forget of Australia, the former more than the latter. So alarmingly disappointing was his run of scores that, unprecedently, the skipper sat himself out of the final Test in Sydney last month. A return to the Ranji Trophy after nearly a decade failed to spark a turnaround, nor did Kohli make a substantial contribution on his Delhi comeback for the first time since late 2012. India's principal desire will be runs from their two main men because as they have shown for nearly 17 years now - Rohit made his ODI debut in June 2007, Kohli in August 2008 - they have the skill and the class to determine outcomes of a game all by themselves.

Of much interest will be how Rohit approaches his innings. Especially in the last year and a half, he has swapped



K.R. DEEPAK

personal glory for team gains, taking the lead role in resoundingly advocating the style of play he wants his side to display. His aggressive starts in both white-ball World Cups were massive driving forces in India's charge to the final in the 50-over flagship event in 2023 and to the title in the T20 show-piece last June. To some, the temptation to revert to the Rohit of old, to build an innings and then unleash his strokes, might appear irresistible but while Jofra Archer and Mark Wood and the rest aren't exactly military medium, it's hard to foresee Rohit dialling down his aggression massively.

India have only these three games before they head to Dubai and the Champions Trophy, where they are placed alongside Bangladesh, nominal hosts Pakistan and perennial bugbears New Zealand. They will therefore be seized of the need to approach these fixtures against England with judicious prudence while balancing any answers they are looking for with the need to keep winning, especially after their poor run in Test cricket from the middle of October.

There will be important calls to make. Such as, who should don the wicketkeeping gloves. The incumbent is Rahul, an extraordinary middle-order bat in the 50-over game when he is behind the stumps, but waiting in the wings is Pant, not yet at home in white-ball formats but with the X-factor that most teams would find hard to look beyond. In Pant's injury-enforced absence, Rahul had a terrific World Cup and should fancy his chances of starting the series, with Pant snapping at his heels.

In good hands

Despite their frugal recent numbers, India's batting is in good hands - famous last words? - and while much the same can be said of their bowling, it can't be denied that the latter department looks a little undercooked. A lot of it has to do

with the fact that Mohammed Shami and Kuldeep Yadav haven't had a lot of cricket of late. Or rather, that while Shami has gradually built up steam from November onwards after being rendered *hors de combat* for 360 days, Kuldeep's only outing since the middle of October was a Ranji game for Uttar Pradesh earlier this month, when he encouragingly bowled 31 overs to show that he has fully recovered from groin surgery.

With blaring question marks over Jasprit Bumrah's availability, Shami and Kuldeep loom as India's strike forces. Arshdeep Singh, preferred to Mohammed Siraj, is still a work in progress in the longer limited-overs format and there is a distinct slant towards spin, something Rohit is very comfortable with. The original 15-strong squad for the England series had four specialist spinners - Kuldeep had Jadeja, Axar Patel and Washington Sundar for company - and India have now thrown in a new dimension with the late inclusion of Varun Chakaravarthy, the Player of the Series in the T20I faceoff with 14 wickets from five outings.

After a disappointing brief and unsuccessful international foray that fetched him just two wickets in his first six matches, Varun found himself on the sidelines following the T20 World Cup in the UAE in November 2021. Determined to add new tricks to increase his efficacy, he shifted his focus from sidespin to overspin with terrific results. Productive back-to-back seasons for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL brought him back into international contention after 35 months and the 33-year-old Bidar-born architecture graduate has since reconstructed his career in grand style.

His last 12 T20Is have yielded 31 wickets, including two five-wicket hauls - both in losing causes, admittedly - which has precipitated his maiden call-up to the ODI set-up. Whether his inclusion for the

series against Jos Buttler's team is a short-term development owing to his hold over the English middle order in the 20-over series, or is a precursor to his being drafted into the Champions Trophy squad as a replacement for one of the other four spinners, will become apparent in the next week. He does boast 59 wickets in 23 List A (domestic 50-over) games and has shown increased fitness and mobility in the field in the last fortnight, so a strong case can be made out for throwing in another attacking, wicket-taking option in the middle overs, which have fallen into a predictable pattern of attrition over the last few years.

England will have their own problems to solve, especially after their defence of the 50-over World Cup ended in an overwhelming fashion in India a year and a quarter back, when they won just three out of nine games and finished seventh in the league standings. Their tall and strong pacers may not find much joy in Pakistan, where they will play their three group matches in the Champions Trophy, but that's not something India will spend too much time worrying about.

As it is, there is so much on the plate so far as Rohit, his deputy Gill and Gambhir are concerned.

Foremost among them is getting the key pieces to rediscover their fire and re-familiarise themselves with a format they haven't had much taste of recently. They will be hoping against hope that Bumrah is cleared fit and fronts up for the final contest this series, in Ahmedabad next Wednesday, but they must make allowances for his potential absence and for the massive blow that will deal to their aspirations.

An exciting week ahead then, with so much at stake, so much to look forward to, so much uncertainty - perceived or otherwise - abounding and so many possibilities looming. With plenty of context and relevance thrown in.

THE GIST

India have only these three games before they head to Dubai and the Champions Trophy, where they are placed alongside Bangladesh, Pakistan and New Zealand. They will therefore be seized of the need to approach these fixtures against England with judicious prudence while balancing any answers they are looking for with the need to keep winning

Of much interest will be how Rohit approaches his innings. Especially in the last year and a half, he has swapped personal glory for team gains, taking the lead role in resoundingly advocating the style of play he wants his side to display

There is so much on the plate so far as Rohit, his deputy Gill and Gambhir are concerned. They will be hoping against hope that Bumrah is cleared fit and fronts up for the final contest this series, in Ahmedabad next Wednesday, but they must make allowances for his potential absence and for the massive blow that will deal to their aspirations

SCIENCE



Machines excel at things that are nearly impossible for most humans, including rapidly analysing large datasets and predicting complex patterns, yet struggle with tasks that children find easy, like understanding motives. Representative illustration. IGOR OMILAEV

Question for the AI age: do machines and humans learn the same way?

The age of artificial intelligence promises to be a time in which scientists will learn a lot about human brain. Existing AI models are inspired mostly by the brains of animals. Human brain makes decisions stunningly fast using abstractions and generalisation whereas machines struggle to do this

T.V. Padma

The dramatic surge of artificial intelligence (AI) has also made visible the machines humming underneath to make its applications possible.

From their origins in being able to separate data into different groups, AI today excels at too many tasks to count. Just in 2024, smartphones have started to be sold with AI models built into them, while five of the seven men who won the 2024 science Nobel Prizes did so for work in AI.

As it happens, the age of AI also promises to be a time in which scientists will learn a lot about the human brain as well. Existing AI models are inspired mostly by the brains of animals. Since these brains haven't been easy to study, scientists have been looking to AI models as a proxy.

How do humans learn?

Machines excel at things that are nearly impossible for most humans, including rapidly analysing large datasets, predicting complex patterns, and learning to play chess like a grandmaster within a day. Yet neuroscientists say they also struggle with tasks that human children find easy, like understanding motives.

"The paradox of today's AI stems from the fact that the human brain has an evolutionary, biological origin and AI does not," Celeste Kidd, associate professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, said. "It is likely that [for] the type of intelligence that we have evolved for taking care of helpless offspring, we need to be able to read the intentions of a child that is running towards a cliff [or one] that's not yet able to feed themselves and say that they are hungry."

According to Arjun Ramakrishnan, assistant professor in the department of biological sciences and bioengineering at IIT-Kanpur, "At the heart of what drives learning in humans and animals" is a "dual focus on both meeting immediate biological needs and adapting to a constantly shifting environment."

"The need to secure resources and maintain balance in the face of an ever-changing environment," he added, "likely spurred the evolution of sophisticated neural mechanisms, driving not just simple responses to immediate needs but also complex learning and strategic decision-making abilities."

Learning is thus not just a process of acquiring static information but an ongoing, dynamic interaction between an organism and its environment.

"The brain, shaped by evolutionary pressures, must adapt not only to predictable stimuli but also to the unpredictability of environmental fluctuations," he added. "This complexity is reflected in the ability of humans and animals to sense and respond to rapid changes in the environment and social interactions, a key advantage for survival."

Learning is thus long-duration,

interactive, and includes feedback loops between the organism's internal state and external challenges.

Humans' upper hand

According to biologists at the Heidelberg Laureate Forum, a meeting held in September 2024 in Germany, machines are not curious. "Unlike AI systems, children are naturally curious, exploring the world on their own while simultaneously learning within a social and cultural context," Kidd said at the forum. "Our curiosity is driven by knowing what we don't know."

According to Kidd, the information children discover when they seek it is of a different type than the data fed into AI systems.

"The single experience of a child with an apple is very different from Google Photos labelling an apple in an image. A child's experience with an apple is sensory. They're feeling the apple, they're seeing the apple, it's multi-dimensional. The data people are getting is much, much richer. And there are tonnes of correlations you can pick up on in order to leverage things like learning and generalisation."

The human brain and the body have been "trained" on such data over millennia.

Thus, human learning requires much less data to solve a problem with the same level of proficiency, according to Ashesh Dhawale, the DBT Wellcome Trust India Alliance Intermediate Fellow at the Centre for Neuroscience, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.

For example, although the AlphaZero model developed by Google subsidiary DeepMind is better at chess than any human player, it reached this level of proficiency only after playing around 40 million games during its training, Dhawale said. "In contrast, it is estimated that humans need some tens of thousands of training games to reach grandmaster proficiency."

"One of the key advantages humans have over machines lies in the speed and efficiency of learning," Ramakrishnan said. "We can absorb new information rapidly, building on past experiences and knowledge in a flexible, adaptive way."

This ability to continuously improve on prior lessons without extensive reprogramming gives humans a significant edge in dynamic environments where new information and challenges emerge constantly.

Humans are also remarkably good at "transfer learning." "We can apply knowledge and skills from one context to entirely different, unfamiliar scenarios with relative ease," Ramakrishnan said.

This ability to generalise is still a significant challenge for machines and artificial networks, which are typically confined to narrow domains and struggle to adapt to new or unforeseen contexts without retraining.

The communication between neurons in the human brain takes the form of biochemical processes that operate more slowly than the channels between neurons in artificial neural networks,

according to Brigitte Röder, professor of biological psychology and neuropsychology at the University of Hamburg. Yet the human brain makes decisions stunningly fast using abstractions and generalisation whereas machines still struggle to do this.

Dhawale used the example of chess. If you are proficient in chess, this ability will likely extend to other board games like checkers. This means humans can learn the structure underlying a task and generalise it to quickly solve new tasks – that is, they can learn to learn," he said.

Researchers are now attempting to bring this paradigm to machine learning, an approach called meta learning. It's not unlikely that machines will catch up here as well.

Humans also excel at motor-skill learning. "Somehow humans and animals are very efficient at learning how to move," according to Dhawale, "but we don't know exactly why this is the case."

Neural networks are great at navigating tasks involving discrete choices, but they stumble with movement. One reason is because being able to make a simple motion, such as reaching for a fruit on a table, requires a learning agent to optimise for many independent parameters varying continuously across many degrees of freedom.

Then there's energy efficiency. According to Ramakrishnan, the human brain's low power consumption becomes readily apparent when recognising patterns, making decisions, and conducting social interactions. Machines can operate very fast, but their energy consumption is also much higher, especially when they process large datasets.

Where machines excel

However, machines are more reliable.

Unlike machines, which are built for repeatability and can perform the same task again with consistent precision, humans contend with fatigue, emotional decision-making, and distractions.

"While we are designed to operate in volatile, ever-changing environments and our ability to explore and adapt is one of our greatest strengths, this flexibility often comes at the cost of consistency," Ramakrishnan said.

In contrast to the brain, neural network models are often trained to search exhaustively for solutions to complex tasks, Dhawale explained. This means they are more likely to discover new, better solutions to problems than humans can. At games like chess and Go, AI models have been known to develop moves that surprise even expert players.

"One could argue that the strategies used by humans to learn may be more efficient but can't discover the most optimal solutions because they are not designed to search exhaustively."

From artificial to human

The differences between human and machine learning could elucidate where the neural network of each brain – artificial or biological – falls short.

"Neurons are often treated



A child with an apple is very different from Google Photos labelling an apple. A child's experience is sensory. They are feeling and seeing. The data people are getting is richer. There are tons of correlations you can use in order to leverage things like learning and generalisation

simplistically as point processes that communicate via electrical impulses, essentially operating in an on/off mode," Ramakrishnan said. "This reductionist approach has nonetheless allowed us to uncover fundamental principles that underlie complex cognitive behaviours."

At its core is the idea that feedback loops drive learning. Researchers used it to develop reinforcement learning, a training algorithm that has also been remarkably successful at explaining how organisms update their knowledge and adapt based on their experiences, according to Ramakrishnan.

The development of artificial neural networks has also expanded our understanding of how memories could be stored and accessed in the brain: as dynamic processes that can be activated and adjusted over time rather than remain preserved in particular areas.

Artificial neural networks with this ability can perform better. "The development of algorithms that handle short-term and long-term memory processes in artificial networks has provided us with a deeper understanding of how the brain may operate in these domains," Ramakrishnan said.

More broadly, AI models' successes in the real world have prompted neuroscientists and cognitive scientists to revisit ideas of how the human brain learns. For some time since the mid-20th century, scientists assumed the brain represented information about the world in a symbolic manner and that its many abilities – perception, planning, reasoning, etc. – were achieved through symbolic operations.

Many early attempts at building AI models thus used approaches. One well-known application was expert systems, models capable of complex reasoning as a series of if-then problems.

On the other hand, contemporary neural networks operate connectionist models, named for the weighted connections between the nodes in a network. These models begin with a blank slate and use pattern recognition techniques to achieve their primary goals: say, to accurately predict the next word in an unfinished sentence.

"The question, therefore, is what type of AI – symbolic or connectionist – is the better model for human learning," Dhawale said. "Despite the success of neural network AI models, I still think they learn in a very different way from how humans learn."

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A city-sized rock hurtles towards the earth's surface, releasing shock waves. Representative illustration. GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

An asteroid might hit earth. How worried should we be?

Agence France-Presse

A colossal explosion in the sky, unleashing energy hundreds of times greater than the Hiroshima bomb. A blinding flash nearly as bright as the sun. Shockwaves powerful enough to flatten everything for leagues.

It may sound apocalyptic, but a newly detected asteroid nearly the size of a football field now has a greater than 1% chance of colliding with the earth in about eight years.

Such an impact has the potential for city-level devastation, depending on where it strikes.

Scientists aren't panicking yet, but they are watching closely.

Dubbed 2024 YR4, the asteroid was first spotted on December 27, 2024, by the El Sauce Observatory in Chile. Based on its brightness, astronomers estimate it is 40-90 m wide.

By New Year's Eve, it had landed on the desk of Kelly Fast, acting planetary defense officer at US space agency NASA, as an object of concern.

The risk assessment kept climbing, and on January 29, the International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN), a global planetary defense collaboration, issued a memo.

According to the latest calculations from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, there is a 1.6% chance the asteroid will strike the earth on December 22, 2032.

If it does hit, possible impact sites include over the eastern Pacific Ocean, northern South America, the Atlantic Ocean, Africa, the Arabian Sea, and South Asia, the IAWN memo states.

2024 YR4 follows a highly elliptical, four-year orbit, swinging through the inner planets before shooting past Mars and out toward Jupiter.

The 1908 Tunguska Event provides the most likely comparison. An asteroid or comet fragment exploded over Siberia, flattening some 80 million trees across 2,000 sq. km

For now, it's zooming away from the earth. Its next close pass will not come until 2028.

"The odds are very good that not only will this not hit earth, but at some point in the next months to few years, that probability will go to zero," said Bruce Betts, chief scientist of The Planetary Society.

A similar scenario unfolded in 2004 with Apophis, an asteroid initially projected to have a 2.7% chance of striking Earth in 2029. Further observations ruled out an impact.

The most infamous asteroid impact occurred 66 million years ago, when a nine-kilometre-wide space rock triggered a global winter, wiping out the dinosaurs and 75% of all species.

By contrast, 2024 YR4 falls into the "city killer" category.

"If you put it over Paris or London or New York, you basically wipe out the whole city and some of the environs," said Betts.

The best modern comparison is the 1908 Tunguska Event, when an asteroid or comet fragment measuring 30-50 metres exploded over Siberia, flattening 80 million trees across 2,000 sq. km.

Like that impactor, 2024 YR4 would be expected to blow up in the sky, rather than leaving a crater on the ground.

For 2024 YR4, the explosion from an airburst would exceed 500-times the power of the Hiroshima bomb.

If it explodes over the ocean, the impact would be less concerning, unless it happens near a coastline triggering a tsunami. The good news, experts stress, is that we have plenty of time to prepare.

For feedback and suggestions
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