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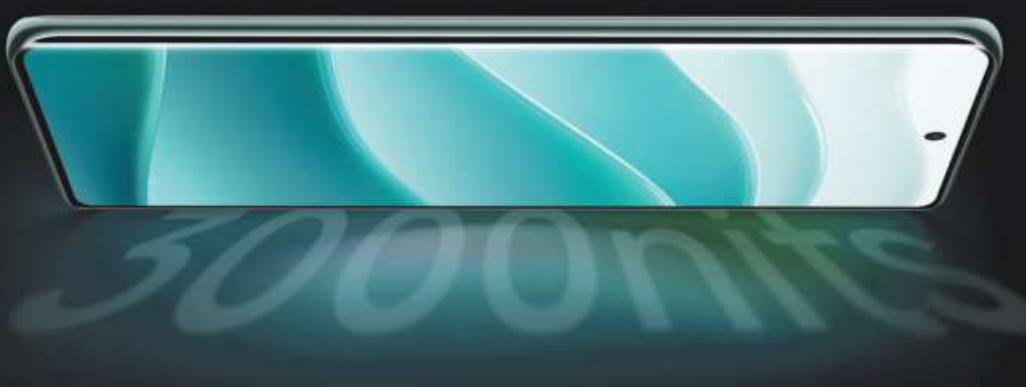
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*Among smartphones under 10K segment *Source: techarc



'FINANCIER' DETAINED
Water starts to recede
in Assam coal mine

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PAST 1.5 DEGREE CELSIUS
2024 global
temperature
cracks climate
Rubicon

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JEE ATTEMPTS
Board's 'folly' caused
dispute, remarks SC

NEWS » PAGE 8



TO WEAR OR NOT WEAR
**In Kerala, a
squabble over
shirts and seers**

Remark sparks debate,
citizens stand divided

GROUND ZERO » PAGE 7



ACING THE CHASE
Pratika, Tejal power
India to victory

SPORT » PAGE 15

IN BRIEF



Invite for R-day
event to honour
southern crafts

NEW DELHI

Invitees for the 75th Republic Day 'At Home' reception at Rashtrapati Bhavan will receive a specially curated box of craftwork from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh along with the invitation card. » Page 4

**Badal's decision
to quit SAD chief
post accepted**

CHANDIGARH

The working committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Friday accepted the resignation of Sukhbir Singh Badal from the post of party president, a move seen as a course correction aimed at reviving the century-old party. » Page 9

Trump sentenced in hush money case, not punished

Though the President-elect gets an unconditional discharge, he will become the first President of the U.S. to be sentenced as a felon; Trump calls it a 'setback for the New York court system'

Agence France-Presse
NEW YORK

A judge sentenced Donald Trump to an unconditional discharge on Friday for covering up hush money payments to a porn star despite the U.S. President-elect's efforts to avoid becoming the first felon in the White House.

The judge spared Mr. Trump prison or a fine even though the 34 counts of falsifying business records on which he was convicted in May 2024 carried potential jail time. Instead New York judge Juan Merchan handed down the mildest criminal sanction available, an unconditional discharge – a relatively uncommon measure.

"Never before has this court been presented with



Case closed: Donald Trump and attorney Todd Blanche appear virtually before judge Juan Merchan for the sentencing hearing. AP

such a unique and remarkable set of circumstances," Mr. Merchan said. "The only lawful sentence that permits entry of a judgment of conviction without encroaching on the highest office of the land is an unconditional discharge."

Mr. Trump attended his

sentencing virtually, with the judge, lawyers and media packed into the scruffy Manhattan courtroom that was the backdrop to the trial's high drama, legal wrangling and vitriolic personal attacks by the divisive Republican.

"This has been a very terrible experience. I think

it's been a tremendous setback for New York and the New York court system," Mr. Trump said before the discharge was passed. "It was done to damage my reputation, so I would lose the election."

The former President appeared on screens in the courtroom with two large U.S. flags behind him, wearing a red tie with white stripes and looking on impatiently as the brief proceeding unfolded.

Ahead of the sentencing, prosecutor Joshua Steinglass said Mr. Trump had been convicted of a "premeditated and continuous deception". "The verdict in this case was unanimous and decisive and it must be respected."

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

Maintain status quo on well near Sambhal mosque, directs SC



Under watch: Friday prayers happen under tight security at the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal on Friday. PTI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed that status quo be maintained with respect to a well located near the entrance of the Shahi Jama Masjid at Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh.

A Bench of Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar issued directions to private respondents and local authorities at Sambhal on an application filed by the mosque's

management committee.

The court directed the respondents to file their counter-affidavits and status reports within two weeks. It posted the case on February 25.

Senior advocate Huzeifa Ahmadvi, for the mosque committee, said the well held historical significance and its water has been used since immemorial.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

SC stays GST notices to online gaming companies

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed the operation of showcase notices of ₹1.12 lakh crore issued under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) proceedings against online gaming companies.

A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan passed the order on petitions filed by 49 online gaming companies.

Advocate Abhishek A. Rastogi, who represented the companies in court, said a freeze on further action protected his clients from any coercive action and ensured that demands made in the showcase notices were not time-barred.

The court listed the case next on March 18.

The core dispute in the case concerned the interpretation of GST applicability on online gaming.

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Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav outside EC office on Friday. PTI

Ensure no more changes in voter list: Cong. to CEO

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

A Delhi Congress delegation on Friday met Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) R. Alice Vaz and asked her to ensure that no deletion or addition in the voters' list be carried out without thorough verification.

The Congress's request comes amid allegations by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) that "large-scale" additions and deletions in the voter list are being carried out at the "behest of the BJP".

Meanwhile, Congress Delhi in-charge Qazi Mohd. Nizamuddin targeted AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal saying that "after the communal incidents in Jahangirpuri and north-east Delhi, Kejriwal neither visited the affected areas nor spoke publicly in favour of the victimised communities".

AAP promises security aid to RWAs

Kejriwal cites 'deteriorating' law and order in the city as the reason behind the election promise; BJP targets AAP chief over 'unmet' assurances to RWAs before 2022 municipal poll, 2019 general election; promise elicits mixed response from RWAs

Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal announced another election promise on Friday of providing funds to the city's resident welfare associations (RWAs) to hire private security guards if voted to power in the February 5 Delhi Assembly poll.

"We [AAP government] are not replacing the police system, but hoping that the private security guards will provide basic security around these colonies, thwart robberies and ban entry of unauthorised individuals," the AAP national convener said.

He said the funds for hiring guards will depend on the area or the number of families residing in the co-



AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal said guidelines for funds and number of guards to be hired will be released later. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

lon. Mr. Kejriwal added that the guidelines for the amount and number of guards to be hired will be laid down later.

Reacting to the announcement, the BJP accused Mr. Kejriwal of making another "false" promise to the RWAs.

Addressing a press conference, Mr. Kejriwal said the BJP was "responsible"

for the "rising" crime in the national capital.

In Delhi, the police come under the Union Home Ministry.

"Today, BJP and the Central government have turned Delhi into a crime capital, with the rise in crimes such as robbery, snatching, and gang wars.

Residents, including women, are scared to step out

of their homes as they feel unsafe," the AAP national convener alleged.

'False promise'

Parvesh Sahib Singh, the BJP candidate against Mr. Kejriwal from New Delhi constituency, asked whether the AAP chief remembers his promises to RWAs in 2018 and 2022.

"You made promises to RWA in 2018 and 2022 too. Did you fulfil them? People of Delhi have understood your false promises and have decided they will not tolerate 'AAPda (disaster)'," the former BJP MP said in a post on X.

In 2018, the Delhi government announced that it would double the financial aid provided to RWAs



**Delhi
Votes**

of their homes as they feel unsafe," the AAP national convener alleged.

'False promise'

Ahead of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi poll in 2022, Mr. Kejriwal promised to grant "financial and political powers" to the RWAs with their own "mini councillors".

Following the announcement, *The Hindu* spoke to several RWAs. Jangpura Extension RWA president Sharaf Sabri said, "Two years ago, AAP announced funds for parks, but that never happened". Greater Kailash-II RWA general secretary Sanjay Rana said residents will undoubtedly benefit from the proposal, provided it is implemented.

Kejriwal insulted not just Purvanchalis but also slum dwellers: BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



BJP workers protesting outside Arvind Kejriwal's residence. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

The Delhi BJP on Friday held a demonstration against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal outside his residence for allegedly insulting people of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar over his comment about "fake voters".

Earlier this week, Mr. Kejriwal accused the BJP of "bringing people from Bihar and neighbouring U.P." to enrol them as voters in his New Delhi constituency for February 5 Delhi Assembly poll.

Protesters tried to breach security outside his official residence at Ferroz Shah Road and more than 20 demonstrators were detained for protesting without permission, a senior Delhi police officer said.

BJP Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari demanded an apology from the AAP chief for his "derogatory words".

Reacting to the BJP protest, Mr. Kejriwal said 90% of the people living in the unauthorised colonies are Purvanchalis – a term used for residents of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. "You [BJP] had all the money and power, but did nothing," he alleged.

Parties cross swords over choice of chief ministerial face

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A war of words ensued on Friday after Chief Minister Atishi took a swipe at Ramesh Bidhuri, a former West Delhi Lok Sabha member and her opponent in the Kalkaji Assembly seat, saying the BJP was planning to project him as its chief ministerial candidate for being its "most

abusive leader".

"The entire city wants to know one thing: who is the chief ministerial candidate of the *guali-galauj* [verbal abuse] party? The Aam Aadmi Party has already declared its chief ministerial face. People know that if they vote for AAP, Arvind Kejriwal will become the Chief Minister," she said.

In response, West Delhi

MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat said nothing could be more disrespectful to Delhi's women than the current Chief Minister saying that Mr. Kejriwal would replace her if AAP wins the February 5 election.

'Kejriwal dreaming'

The BJP MP said Ms. Atishi should have asked herself "how could Arvind Kejriwal, who is bound by re-

strictions imposed by the Supreme Court, dare to dream of becoming the Chief Minister again".

While campaigning last week for the election, Mr. Bidhuri had made derogatory remarks against Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Ms. Atishi.

He had subsequently expressed regret after receiving flak from the Opposition ranks.

AAP's Jat reservation call a gimmick: BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

into one. The entire Jat community has been disrespected by AAP, which never felt the need to raise the issue over the past 10 years it has been in power in Delhi, and is now raising the issue only to do politics."

A day earlier, Mr. Kejriwal had accused the BJP of "cheating" the community by not adding it to the Central government's Other Backward Classes list "des-

pite multiple promises". The AAP chief said he had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue.

In response, the BJP MP said, "Merely writing a letter to the PM does not give reservation to a community."

BJP leader Kuljeet Singh Chahal said Mr. Kejriwal is "suddenly interested" in the issue because he knows that the Jat community is supporting the BJP.

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संदर्भ पत्र

कार्यपालक अभियन्ता, ललू सिटिकाव्ह एम्प्रेंडल, बांका के पात्रांक-2346 दिनांक-28.11.2024 द्वारा आमंत्रित निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या-03/-2024-25 निसा प.र. No. 013751 (MWRD) 2024-25 है, एवं पात्रांक-2526 दिनांक-23.12.2024 एवं पात्रांक-2558 निसा प.र. No. 16078 (MWRD) 2024-25 के निविदा से संबंधित निषियों में अपरिहार्य कार्यावास निम्न प्रकार संशोधन किया जाता है :-

क्र०	विषय	पूर्व नियांसित तिथि एवं समय	संशोधित तिथि एवं समय
1.	परिमाण विषय प्राप्त करने की तिथि एवं समय	दिनांक-10/01/2025 से दिनांक-17/01/2025 के अपराह्न 5.00 बजे तक।	दिनांक-16/01/2025 से दिनांक-23/01/2025 के अपराह्न 5.00 बजे तक।
2.	प्रौद्योगिकी सीटीटीए का स्थान एवं तिथि	मुख्य अभियन्ता, ललू जल संसाधन विभाग, भागलपुर के कार्यालय में दिनांक 13/01/2025 के पूर्वाह्न 11.00 बजे से अपराह्न 3.00 बजे तक।	मुख्य अभियन्ता, ललू जल संसाधन विभाग, भागलपुर के कार्यालय में दिनांक 18/01/2025 के पूर्वाह्न 11.00 बजे से अपराह्न 3.00 बजे तक।
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17	Set of Labyrinth ring for Nose suspension drive (MSU Tube) of WAP7/WAG9 Locos.	80 Set 05-Feb-25
18	SET OF VRLA BATTERY 110V,70AH	505 Set 17-Feb-25
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Delhi L-G issues poll notification

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena on Friday issued gazette notification for the Delhi Assembly election, following recommendations from the Election Commission of India.

Meanwhile, filing of nominations started in the Capital with nine candidates submitting their affidavits.

According to the notification, the last date for filing nominations is January 17. Voting will occur on February 5, it said.

Timings	
SATURDAY, JAN. 11	
RISE 07:15 SET 17:44	
RISE 15:00 SET 04:46	
SUNDAY, JAN. 12	
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Safdarjung 18 06
Palam 17 08

Delhi Palam Today
13°C The weather will be cold and foggy. The cold day conditions to continue. Spell of light rain and thundershower with gusty winds to occur.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
16°C Day temperature to rise. Morning will be cold and foggy. Day will be cool with cold winds. Night will be cold and uneasy.

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THE HINDU
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Minor detained for sending hoax bomb threats to schools

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police have detained a Class 12 student for sending bomb threats to more than 23 schools in the national capital over the past few weeks as he did not want to write his exams, the police said on Friday. All the threats were later found to be hoaxes.

Around 10 educational institutes received bomb threats on Thursday, the latest in a series of such incidents in the city.

According to the police, the accused had sent bomb threats to 23 different schools to trigger panic as he did not want to take his own school examinations.

"The accused hatched a plan to change his IP address by using Virtual Private Network (VPN) and sent threat e-mails to different schools," police said.



The accused hatched a plan to change his IP address by using Virtual Private Network to send threat e-mails to different schools

DELHI POLICE

During interrogation, the accused revealed that he sent multiple mails to schools last year as well. "Usually, he would either send the mail for attention or to delay the exam," sources said.

He was identified through the email ID.

Further investigation is under way, an officer said.

The series of threats began on December 9 last year, when over 40 schools received threatening emails.

Meet PM if you want me to end fast, Dallewal tells Punjab BJP

A team of State BJP leaders met Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Ragbir Singh; farmer leader, who completed 46 days of fast, said he will end the hunger strike if Central govt. accepts demands

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab BJP has appealed to the Akal Takht but should approach Prime Minister Narendra Modi if they want me to end my hunger strike, farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal said on Friday as his fast-unto-death entered day 46.

In a three-minute video message released on Friday, the 70-year-old farmer leader asserted that he will end his fast only after the Centre accepts farmers' demands, which include a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops.

A BJP delegation, comprising Sukhmander Pal Singh Grewal and Sarandeep Singh, appealed to



Members of SKM meeting farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal at Khanauri border in Sangrur on Friday. ANI

Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Ragbir Singh on Thursday to intervene to end the indefinite fast of the farmer leader. The delegation expressed concern over Mr. Dallewal's deteriorating health.

In his video message Mr. Dallewal said, "We have got information that the

[Jagdeep Dhankhar], Agriculture Minister [Shivraj Singh Chouhan], [Home Minister] Amit Shah ji. Instead of meeting them, they are approaching the Akal Takht Jathedar," he said.

Farmer leaders camped at the Punjab-Haryana border also burnt effigies of the Central government on Friday.

Mr. Dallewal, who is the convener of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political), has been on the indefinite hunger strike at the Khanauri border point between Punjab and Haryana since November 26 last year over farmers' various demands.

Mr. Dallewal has refused to take any medical aid during the prolonged fasting period, causing his health to deteriorate.

Tahir Hussain seeks interim bail to contest Delhi election

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain approached the Delhi High Court on Friday seeking interim bail to contest the February 5 Delhi Assembly poll.

Mr. Hussain sought relief in a murder case related to the February 2020 Delhi riots. He has been named All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen candidate from the Mustafabad constituency in north-east Delhi.

The plea was listed before Justice Amit Sharma, but he recused himself from the case. The court listed his plea for hearing on January 13.

In his petition, Mr. Hussain sought interim bail from January 14 to February 9 to participate in the election process.

The plea is in addition to his earlier bail plea pending in the case.

JNU imposes ₹1.79-lakh fine on 2 students for drinking, bringing guests

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has penalised two hostel students for allegedly allowing outsiders into their rooms, consuming alcohol, and using hookah, among other violations – the combined fines amounting to ₹1.79 lakh.

Former president of Sutlej Hostel, Kunal Kumar, criticised the fines,

the fines within five days, as per official notices issued to them on January 8.

Both notices caution the students that failure to pay the fines within the stipulated time could result in further disciplinary action, including eviction from the hostel.

No immediate reaction was available from the hostel warden on the matter.

calling them an act of extortion. "In a university where the semester fee is only ₹200, students are being fined amounts ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹1.5 lakh.

These fines are being imposed on those who do not support the ABVP," he alleged.

Former president of Sutlej Hostel, Kunal Kumar, criticised the fines,

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• WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)

• JANAKPUR B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543

• NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP

• LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

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THE HINDU
THE ADMINISTRATION OF UNION TERRITORY OF LADAKH
DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIES & COMMERCE

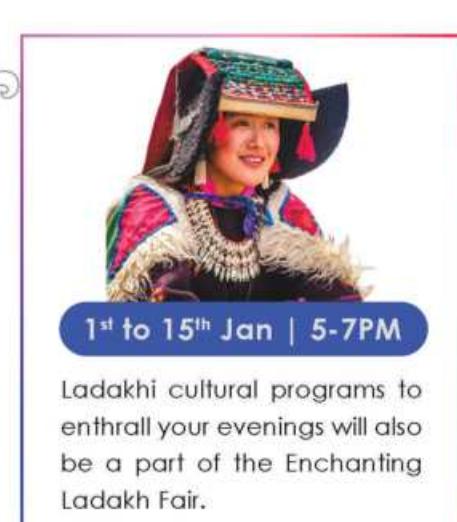
enchanting LADAKH

1ST TO 31ST JAN

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Crafts persons from Ladakh will be showcasing and selling exquisite products made from the Luxury pashmina fibre, other Handloom and handicraft products and Food processing and cosmetic items. The GI Tagged and ODOP products of Ladakh like Seabuckthorn, Raktsey Karpo apricots, Pashmina and Wood carved items will also be on display and sale.



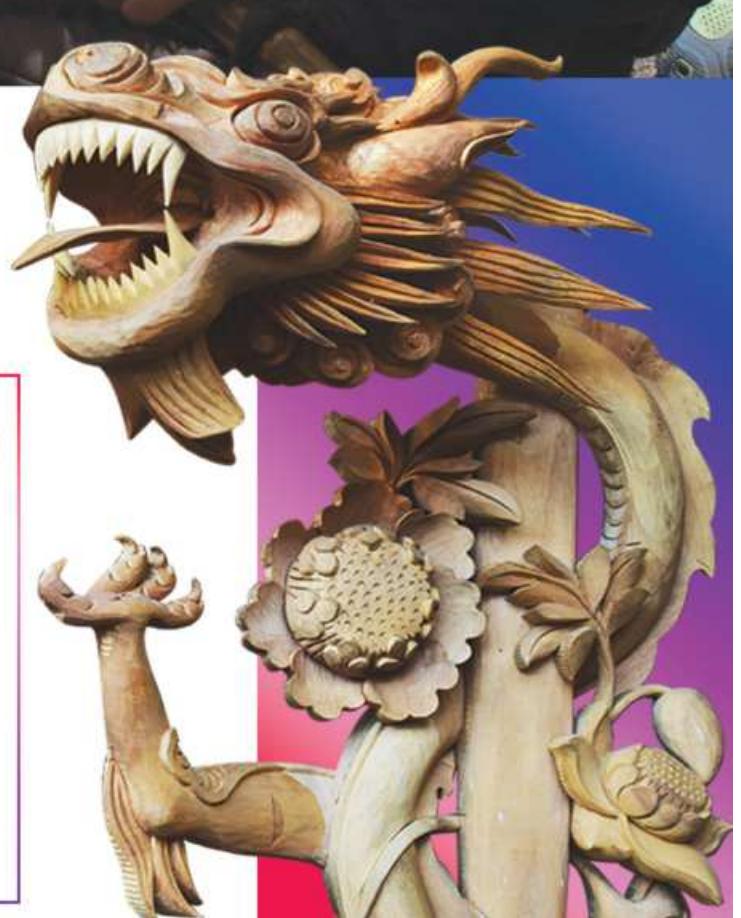
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DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER (HANDICRAFTS)
Ministry of Textiles, Government of India



DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER (HANDLOOMS)
Ministry of Textiles, Government of India



President's invite for 'At Home' to honour crafts from South

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

A stiff white card embossed with the Lion Capital of Ashoka is the usual format of the invitation card sent out for the customary 'At Home' reception held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Republic and Independence Day.

This year, however, to mark 75 years since the formation of the Republic of India, things are different.

Special invite

In a departure from convention, invitees for the 'At Home' will receive a specially curated box of craftwork from the five southern States. FILE PHOTO



Invitees for the 'At Home' at Rashtrapati Bhavan will receive a specially curated box of craftwork from the five southern States. FILE PHOTO

President Droupadi Murmu herself, and executed by Rashtrapati Bhavan, with the support of the National Institute of Design (NID), which has campuses in Ahmedabad and Bengaluru (where President Murmu is a visitor).

"The idea behind the artifacts in the invitation box is the 5,000-year civilisa-

Art in a box

President Droupadi Murmu's guests are set to receive a gift box containing the best of south India's GI-tagged crafts. Here are some products featured in the hamper:



Pochampally Ikat on a pencil pouch: This Telangana staple is known for its distinct geometric patterns and bold colours



Etikoppaka toys: The soft wood and lacquer toys from the eponymous village in Andhra Pradesh are valued for the use of natural dyes and themes depicting everyday life



Kalamkari on bamboo: These goodies will arrive in a bamboo box decorated with Kalamkari motifs, pen-drawn with natural dyes



Kanchipuram silk as a pouch: The handloom silk, world renowned for its richness and elegance, makes its way from Tamil Nadu

tional history of Bharat, with the underlying message of sustainability and colour schemes that invoke the 75 years of the forming of the Indian Republic," Rashtrapati Bhavan officials told *The Hindu*.

The craft products in the invitation box are all made in the southern States, have GI (geographical indicator) tags, and are drawn from the "One District One Product" scheme.

According to NID Ahmedabad director Ashok Mondal, the curation and even the crafting was done in the institute's Bengaluru campus, with craftsmen from five States still hard at work there.

"It is a matter of pride for us that we were asked to execute this, and the initial discussions were held at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Sustainability, inclusion, and the rich culture of the five southern States are included in the box," he said.

Bamboo box

The craft elements will be packed in a box made of bamboo weave with Kalamkari paintings on it done by Nimmakalunta artisans.

The elements of the box include an Ikat-Pochampalli cover that can be used even after the box has been dismantled, a fridge mag-

net depicting Mysore's Ganjifa art, usually seen in the famous Ganjifa playing cards, and a handmade pouch of Kanjeevaram silk from Tamil Nadu.

"Etikoppaka dolls from Andhra Pradesh, a male and female doll, are included, along with a bookmark made of spinespine leaves woven by artistes from Kerala," he added.

The artisans who produced this order for Rashtrapati Bhavan were asked to craft their products on the NID Bengaluru campus.

The guest list

The special invitees at the Rashtrapati Bhavan reception will include a contingent of 'drone didis', women achievers, agriculturists engaged in natural farming, and achievers who are also people with disabilities.

Stalin brings in Bills to curb sexual crimes

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday moved two Bills in the Assembly to enhance punishment for sexual crimes against women and children and prosecute those harassing them on digital and electronic platforms.

The Criminal Laws (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Bill, 2025, seeks to amend the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, in their application to Tamil Nadu.

The second Bill provides for suitably amending the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act, 1998. The Criminal Laws Bill proposes a minimum 14

years of rigorous imprisonment for a rape convict, up from the present 10 years. If the rapist is a member of the police force, it seeks to double the minimum rigorous imprisonment to 20 years.

If the rape victim is a girl aged below 12, it calls for life term as the minimum punishment and death penalty as the maximum.

Increased punishment

Such crimes now attract at least 20 years of rigorous imprisonment that may extend to a life term and with fine or with death penalty. If an injury results in the death of a woman or a persistent vegetative state, it proposes life term, up from 20 years of rigorous imprisonment.

IN BRIEF



U.P. CM inaugurates 'Maa Ki Rasoi' offering meal for ₹9

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday inaugurated 'Maa Ki Rasoi', a community kitchen initiative offering a full meal for just ₹9, in Prayagraj. The community kitchen will be operated by the Nandi Seva Sansthan at Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital to serve people from the economically weaker section. Mr. Adityanath expressed appreciation for the initiative and praised the quality of food, hygiene, and the services being offered. The initiative, under which people can enjoy a full meal of dal, four rotis, vegetables, rice, salad, and a dessert for ₹9, has been launched for the Mahakumbh. Several Ministers, Home Department Principal Secretary Sanjay Prasad, and Jagadguru Mahamandaleshwar Santosh Das were also present.

Underworld don Chhota Rajan taken to AIIMS for nose surgery

Underworld don Chhota Rajan was taken to AIIMS in New Delhi for a surgery, prison officials said on Friday. The officials said he was taken to AIIMS on Thursday for a minor nose operation. The surgery was advised by the doctors and he is likely to be brought back to Tihar Jail after his operation, said a senior prison officer. He will be kept in the prison hospital under doctors' observation. Security has been tightened in and around the hospital as a precautionary measure. Meanwhile, hospital sources said that he is admitted in an old private ward under the ENT Department. PTI

After stint as Odisha Governor, Raghubar Das returns to BJP

Ex-Jharkhand CM tells party workers not to get disheartened by Assembly poll defeat; his return may challenge Marandi's supremacy: party insiders

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Raghubar Das, who recently resigned as the Governor of Odisha, returned to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday. The former Jharkhand Chief Minister joined the party in the presence of its State unit chief, Babulal Marandi.

Mr. Das is an OBC leader who became the first non-tribal CM of Jharkhand in 2014.

His return to the BJP could challenge the supremacy of Mr. Marandi, who was the first CM of the State, which was founded in 2000 following the bifurcation of Bihar.

As the Jharkhand BJP chief, Mr. Marandi oversaw the party's campaign for last year's Assembly election, in which the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led INDIA bloc won 56 out of 81 seats, with the BJP-led NDA securing 24 seats.

'Not eyeing any post'
Addressing the press at the party office in Ranchi, Mr. Das said, "I am very happy to have returned to my party. Let me say that I don't



New beginning: Raghubar Das joined the party on Friday in the presence of its State unit chief, Babulal Marandi. ANI

desire any post in the party. I have only one motive – to awaken people and protect the rich culture and tradition of Jharkhand."

Party insiders said that Mr. Das is likely to replace Mr. Marandi, and the latter could be appointed the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly to maintain the balance between non-tribal and tribal leadership in the party.

The former CM told the party workers not to be disheartened by the Assembly election defeat.

"In 1984, the party won only two seats. At that time,

people used to make fun of us, and today the BJP-led NDA is in power in 22 States," he said.

Asked about the cause of the poll, Mr. Das said, "2024 is over. We must learn the lesson and move forward with new energy and enthusiasm."

Mr. Das represented Jamshedpur East in the Assembly five times until 2019, when he was defeated by Surya Roy.

He was appointed the Governor of Odisha on October 18, 2023 and resigned from the office in December, 2024.

Water recedes at Assam mine where eight are still trapped; mine financier detained

Rahul Karmakar
UMRANGSO

The water level at the flooded rat-hole coal mine in Assam's Dima Hasao district receded by seven metres on Friday, brightening hopes of locating eight miners trapped inside since the morning of January 6. The body of one miner, a resident of Nepal, was retrieved on January 8.

During the day, the police detained a 'financier' of the mining operations from 3 Kilo, the nearest major habitation from the mine at Kalamati about 15 km away. The mine is about 30 km from Umrangso, an industrial town with a cement plant and a hydropower project of a Central public sector company.

Mines abandoned

Dima Hasao District Magistrate Simanta Kumar Das said that the process of 'dewatering' or draining three abandoned mines within 500 metres of the ill-fated mine helped lower the water level within it. It is possible that these mines – each with a network of narrow tunnels branching out from the wall of a vertical pit – could be interconnected.

The three mines were believed to have been abandoned before the National Green Tribunal



Residents waiting near a coal mine in Umrangso in Assam where miners got trapped on January 6. FILE PHOTO

banned rat-hole coal mining in April 2014.

"We noticed a significant improvement after five pumps were used on Friday to dewater the mines. The water level of the mine where the miners are trapped went down by about seven metres," Mr. Das told *The Hindu*. Between Tuesday and Thursday, the water level had remained almost unchanged at around the 28-metre mark in the 90-metre pit, despite constant efforts to drain it.

Mr. Das said the dewatering process is expected to pick up speed once the high-capacity pump flown in from Nagpur by Coal India Limited (CIL) on Thursday begins operations. "It is a complex process but we hope to press this pump into operation by tomorrow [Saturday] evening," he added. Deep div-

ers from the Indian Navy and other personnel from the Army, the National and State Disaster Response Forces, ONGC, CIL, and the district administration are engaged in the rescue mission, entailing a massive expenditure.

Officials said Hannan Laskar, who allegedly invested in the mining operations and kept the miners under pressure to extract a large volume of coal, was detained.

"We are questioning him to find out more about the illegal operations in the area," a local police officer said. Opposition political parties have claimed there are about 200 illegal rat-hole mines in the area, about 60 of which are still active.

Meanwhile, the Congress staged a State-wide protest against the incident on Friday.

Abhishek Banerjee's 'Diamond Harbour model' and the churn within Trinamool Congress

NEWS ANALYSIS

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Political scions often appear to be in a hurry to prove themselves. Recently, Abhishek Banerjee, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew and Trinamool Congress general secretary, organised free health camps in his Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha constituency under his 'Sebaashray' initiative. The push behind the initiative is visible both on the ground and on the social media handles of the Trinamool Congress.

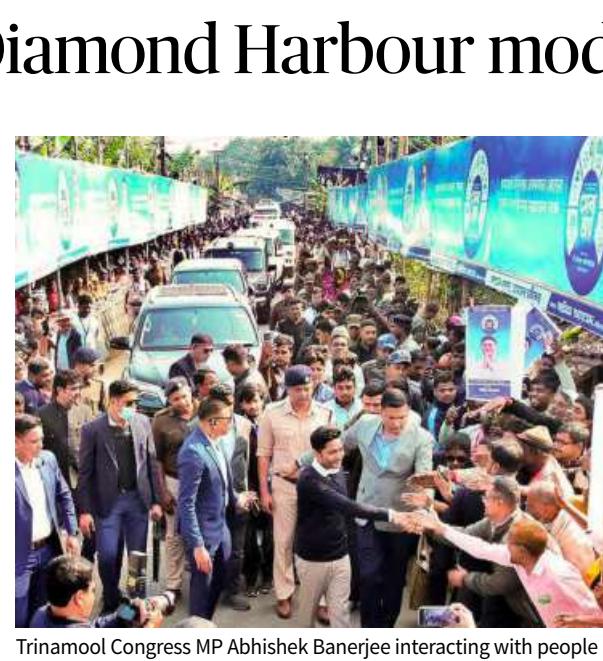
In seven days since its launch, the Trinamool Congress claims that one lakh people have been provided medical services under the initiative.

This is not the first time that Mr. Banerjee, who has

made his mark on the political scene by being considered the party's de facto number two, has launched his own initiatives for the parliamentary seat's electorate and promoted the 'Diamond Harbour model' of governance.

In January 2024, the Trinamool Congress leader took up an ambitious initiative of enrolling about one lakh senior citizens in his constituency for an old-age pension scheme. During the pandemic, Mr. Banerjee claimed to have achieved a successful model for tracking and treating COVID-19 cases in Diamond Harbour.

West Bengal model
While these initiatives have boosted his popularity and acceptance among the electorate, the 'Diamond Harbour model' operating within the larger 'West Bengal model' has posed



Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee interacting with people at a health camp in Diamond Harbour in West Bengal. FILE PHOTO

questions for the Trinamool Congress and the State government. The Opposition parties have been quick to point out that if Mr. Banerjee's model of governance is a success, then there must be some flaws in Mamata Banerjee's West Bengal government model.

vernament and thus has little administrative experience.

Several voices within the Trinamool Congress have been calling for a greater role for the party's heir apparent in the State government.

The debate on the old guard versus the young Turks has also been the subject of speculation among the party's rank and file.

Mr. Banerjee had earlier proposed a retirement age in politics, but the Chief Minister, who is also the Trinamool Congress chairperson, did not appear to be in agreement.

The final word
On December 3, 2024, the Trinamool chief tried to put an end to the speculation about the leadership debate by telling party legislators and Ministers in the West Bengal Legislative

Assembly that "I am still there. I am the final word". Following her remark, the party took disciplinary action against some leaders who had publicly endorsed a larger role for her nephew.

Recently, a section of party leaders, including Ministers, insisted on boycotting artists who were critical of Ms. Banerjee and her government during the protests over the rape and murder of a doctor at R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital. While the Diamond Harbour MP took a more liberal approach and said that people have the right to protest, Ms. Banerjee's loyalists said the disrespect to the party chairperson "could not be taken lightly".

Some went to the extent of saying that the party general secretary was away during the height of the protests and "may not

have been aware" of the kind of criticism that the party and its chairperson had to face.

New power centre

Trinamool Congress is not a cadre-based party. Its strength derives from the charisma and leadership of the party chairperson. Even though Mr. Banerjee has emerged as a new power centre in the party, the old-timers know that they will thrive as long as they have the Chief Minister on their side.

Compared to many other political parties, the Trinamool Congress is relatively new. On January 1 this year, it turned 28 years old. New ideas and a new style of leadership that threaten to upset the status quo and challenge the party's inertia are likely to face opposition in any political system, and things are no different in the Trinamool Congress.

Mr. Banerjee wants a more professional and result-oriented structure for the party, whereas many within the Trinamool benefit from the status quo. Therefore, the Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha constituency has emerged as the laboratory where the party general secretary is testing new ideas and initiatives and trying to give signals that he has what it takes to be the next leader.

So far, the party general secretary's political initiatives, from engaging political consultants to the State-wide 'Nabob Jowar' (New Wave) campaign, have worked for the Trinamool. However, it will take serious efforts and much more time for the three-time Lok Sabha member if he wants to overhaul the Trinamool Congress and fit into the large shoes of Mamata Banerjee.

IN BRIEF



Wild elephant captured in Belagavi after farmers' plights

A team of forest officers used trained elephants from Sakreble elephant camp to capture a wild elephant in Karambal forest of Karnataka's Belagavi district. Following complaints by farmers in Karambal, Chapagaon and nearby areas in Khanapur, officers brought the trained elephants from the Sakreble camp to Khanapur. The operation was conducted successfully and the elephant was captured, Assistant Conservator of Forests Sunita Nimbargi said.

Kerala HC seeks police's reply on businessman's bail petition

The Kerala High Court on Friday sought the response of the police on a petition filed by businessman Boby Chemmannur seeking bail in a sexual harassment case registered against him on a complaint by a woman actor. He was remanded in judicial custody on Thursday. The Ernakulam court dismissed his bail plea. He has been charged with the offences under Section 75 (Sexual Harassment) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita and Section 67 of the IT Act.

Five arrested for contractor's death

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

State Minister Priyank Kharge on Friday.

The others arrested are Nandkumar Nagabhanjane, Gorakhnath Sajan Chinchansur, Ramangouda Patil, and Satish Ratnakar. Their names figure in the FIR registered against nine accused for abetment to suicide. The deceased had left behind a seven-pagenote. *(Those having suicidal thoughts can call Arogya Sahayavani: 104)*

NOTICE INVITING BIDS

Online tenders are invited against "Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Specialized Equipment and Machineries for FSBS-Barapetta" (Tender Id: 2025_AHVD_41988_1). Bidders may log on to <https://assamtenders.gov.in> for submission within 23rd January, 2025 (3:00 PM). Sd/- Chief Executive Officer Assam Livestock Development Agency, GS Road, Khanapara Guwahati-781022

PRESS NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER No:- 19/PNIE-T/EE/WRD-IV/BLN/2024-25 Dt. 06-01-2025						
The Executive Engineer, W.R Division No-IV, Belonia 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/RLYS/CPWD/TAADC having experience similar nature of work up to 3.00 p.m. on 06-02-2025 for the following work. The tender can be uploaded in website tripuratenders.gov.in up to 3.00 p.m. on 06-02-2025.						
Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earmest Money	Time for completion	Bid Fee		
1 MI Scheme at Karmacherra under Rupaichari Block of South Tripura: Construction of earth dam, Chimney of under sluice, pipe outlet, Spillway etc.	Rs.174.08/755.00	Rs. 18 (Eighteen) Months		Rs.10,000.00		
	Rs. 45.68/76.00					
For & On Behalf of the Governor of Tripura (Er. Basudeb Das)						
Executive Engineer Water Resource Division No.-IV Belonia, South Tripura						

ICA/C/3200/25

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE WORKS DEPARTMENT E-mail : ceworldbankprojects@gmail.com	
1st corrigendum to Bid Identification No. CF-BRIDGES - 11 / 2024 - 25	
Tender for the work at Sl.03 "Improvement such as widening and strengthening of Ladiguda village to Paikupakinal road from chainage 0.000km to 2.340km and 2.640km to 10.055km in the District of Rayagada for the year 2024-25" invited vide Bid Identification No. CE-BRIDGES - 11 / 2024 - 25 is hereby cancelled due to single tender received in the first call as per Works Department, Odisha Office Memorandum No.16 dt.01.01.2015, Chief Engineer, Bridges, Odisha, Bhubaneswar OIPR-34174/11/0028/2425	

TRIPURA POWER GENERATION LIMITED (A Government of Tripura Enterprise)	
RESULTS OF TENDER	
Name of Work : Engineer, Procurement and Construction for Installation of 120 MW Combined Cycle Gas Turbine Power Plant at Rokhia in Tripura, India.	
IFB: GM(TECH)/TPGL/AGT/2022-23/03 dated 09/01/23	
Tender ID : 2023_TPGL_A_36874_1	
Tripura Power Generation Limited (TPGL) invited on line Open international competitive bids from eligible bidders on 9 January 2023. The received Bids were opened on the e-Tendering portal on 30 Nov 2023 in presence of TPGL officials and representatives of the bidders. Bids were received from two bidders and evaluation of both technical and price bids were carried out as per Bid Document. The result of bidding are indicated below:	

Name of Bidder	Bid Price as Read Out at Opening	Evaluated Bid Price
Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) Power Sector, Business Group BHEL House, Sirc Fort New Delhi-110049	INR 1265.63,06,100.00	INR 1265.63,06,100.00
Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Limited (MEIL) S-2, Technocrat Indl. Estate, Balanagar, Hyderabad-500037, Telengana, India	USD 500,00,000.00 And INR 706,00,00,000.00	INR 1119,30,15,000.00
Scope of the Contract Awarded:	Engineering, Procurement and Construction for Installation of 120 MW Combined Cycle Gas Turbine Power Plant at Rokhia, Tripura, India as per Contract Agreement.	

General Manager (Technical)	Tripura Power Generation Limited.
Biduy Bhawan (Old Building), North Banamalipur Agartala: Tripura (West) : Pin-799001 Email: gmtpgl@gmail.com	
Contract Price:	
Duration of Contract:	
Scope of the Contract Awarded:	

Arlekar stresses Governors' rights in higher education

Governor's responsibility to oversee universities had been consistently clarified by the authorities concerned at various instances, says the new Kerala Governor; State had slammed draft UGC rules

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar has affirmed that Governors hold the final authority over matters concerning higher education in States, a position that has been supported by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the judiciary on several occasions.

His remarks come amid strong opposition from the LDF government regarding the UGC regulations of 2025. The controversy pertains particularly to the provisions granting the Chancellor greater powers in the appointment of



Courtesy call: Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar calls on Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

Vice-Chancellors.

Mr. Arlekar, interacting with mediapersons in New Delhi on Friday, emphasised that the Constitution entrusts the Governors with the duty of managing higher education in respective States. He also expressed the hope that any misunderstandings regarding this

sue could be addressed and he hoped that all parties would work together for the betterment of Kerala's educational system.

The State government, led by CM Pinarayi Vijayan, has strongly criticised the draft University Grants Commission (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2025, accusing the Centre of attempting to subvert the authority of State governments in running universities and managing the higher education sector as a whole.

Haryana to bring Bill on illegal immigration in budget session: CM

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

to assess law and order in the State, the statement said.

The government will soon unveil a policy to reward police personnel for their exceptional service. This policy will also provide for strict action against any lapses in crime prevention, the CM said.

He said police officers have been instructed to take stringent action against criminals, and to be sensitive towards the public. "A target has also been given for the de-addiction campaign, and take strict action against those involved in the illegal drug trade."

TTD to give financial aid to stampede victims

The Hindu Bureau
TIRUMALA/PITHAPURAM

the critically injured, and ₹2 lakh for those who sustained minor injuries.

TTD Chairperson B.R. Naidu said the board would provide employment (outsourced) to a family member of the deceased and bear the educational expenses of their children. He said there were no lapses in the arrangements.

Couple, 3 minor daughters found murdered in U.P.

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Five members of a family were found dead inside their rented house at Lisari Gate in Meerut district, the police said on Friday.

The victims were identified as Mohammad Moin, 38, his wife Asma, 35, and

their three minor daughters. The police found the bodies of the couple wrapped in sheets on the floor, while the bodies of the minors, stuffed in sacks, were found inside a storage compartment under the bed.

The exact reason for death will be determined

after post-mortem. Initial investigations point to murder due to personal enmity," said Meenur Senior Superintendent Police Vipin Tada.

All victims had head injuries caused by blows with a heavy object. Two persons were detained for the murders. Several sus-

pects have also been taken into custody.

The SSP said, "Based on a complaint filed by the relatives of the deceased woman, a case has been registered against three named accused and some unidentified persons." He added that one named suspect is absconding.

Expressing deep sorrow over the death of six devotees in the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Board on Friday announced compensation for the victims. An ex gratia of ₹25 lakh was declared for the families of the deceased, ₹5 lakh for

the critically injured, and ₹2 lakh for those who sus-

tained minor injuries.

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Roads), Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bid from approved and eligible contractors registered with Assam PWD (Roads) for 1 (One) no. of project under SOPD(G) for the year 2024-25 in Kamrup (Metropolitan) district of Assam. Scheme is not yet sanctioned by the competent authority. In the event of non-sanction of the schemes, the bids may be cancelled and no claim what so ever on this account shall be entertained from the bidders. Details along with Schemes for the works may be seen at website www.assamtenders.gov.in and also at the office of the undersigned in the "City Works Cell". Amendment / Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor / bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWRD, Assam website www.assamtenders.gov.in. Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS)
ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-03

No. CEICWI4012024-25/1

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Planning), Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bid from approved and eligible Contractors having experience in similar nature of works for the following work. Details of bid may be seen at e-procurement portal www.assamtenders.gov.in. The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (BUILDING)
ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3

No. CE/ETB/VII/98/2024/05

PRESS NOTICE FOR RE TENDER

The Addl. Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Planning), Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam re invites bids from Govt. registered eligible Contractors having experience in similar nature of works for the following work. Details of bid may be seen at e-procurement portal www.assamtenders.gov.in. The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in

Sl. No.	Name of Work	LAC	District	Bid Security drawn in favour of	Approx value of work (Rs.)	Completion Period	Bid Security % of Bid value for General category And 1% of Bid value for Reserved category	Cost of Bid
1	Jagannath Community and Skill Centre at Hilara TE under Kaligora LAC (Pkg. No 142)	Kaligora, LAC	Cachar	Executive Engineer, PWD, Lakhipur, Barkhola & Kaligora Territorial Building Division, Silchar	1,40,73,143.00	12 (Twelve Months)	Rs. 2,81,463.00 for General Category and Rs. 1,40,731.00 for reserved Category	Rs. 2900.00

N. B.: 1. Value of work may vary according to the details NIT.
2. The Press Notice will form a part of the Bidding Document.

Addl. Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Planning), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3

GOVT. OF ASS



Chasing truce

Israel's Netanyahu is keener on his government's survival than on peace

President Joe Biden's remark that there is real progress in talks between Israel and Hamas on a ceasefire and hostage deal offers a rare ray of hope in ending the 15-month-long war. Mr. Biden said he was confident that his administration, which has only some more days left in office, could secure a deal. However, experience suggests that there is no deal unless an actual deal is reached, irrespective of the progress in talks. Even now, there are conflicting narratives on the remaining bottlenecks. Mr. Biden says Hamas is an obstacle, while Qatari and Egyptian officials, who were involved in the talks, say Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's refusal to agree to anything more than a temporary ceasefire is the main hurdle. Mr. Netanyahu does not want to bring the war to an end as his far-right government could collapse. But he is ready to accept a temporary halt in fighting in return for hostages. Hamas, fearing that Israel would resume fighting once the hostages are released, demand a permanent ceasefire. While talks drag on, the plight of over two million people in Gaza is nearly forgotten. Israeli strikes have already killed 46,000 Palestinians. Most of Gaza's population lives in tent cities without enough food, drinking water, medicines and electricity.

When Israel launched the war, after Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack, it had three objectives – destroy Hamas, secure the release of hostages and bolster the Jewish state's long-term security. Fifteen months later, while Israel has destroyed much of Hamas's military infrastructure and killed its top leadership, the group has survived and transformed itself as an insurgency. Israel has managed to release very few hostages and its long-term security risks remain. While a ceasefire with Hezbollah brought relative calm to the northern border, the Houthis of Yemen are now firing missiles and drones to Israel. The country is also facing international isolation. The International Court of Justice is hearing a genocide case against Israel, and the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants against Mr. Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant. Rights organisations, from Amnesty International to HRW, are accusing Israel of genocide. Mr. Netanyahu seems unperturbed, thanks to the military, political and diplomatic support that Israel still enjoys from the Biden administration. But its inability to meet its objectives even in the tiny Gaza Strip, its disregard for international law and norms and the barbarity with which it is attacking the Palestinians should shock anyone interested in the country's physical and moral well-being. It is already too late. Israel's leaders and their backers in the West should not prolong this aimless war. Mr. Netanyahu should leave Gaza in return for the release of all hostages.

Local power

Local self-governments make a difference to the lives of people

Instead of signalling its intention to hold elections to rural local bodies, the Tamil Nadu government has appointed special officers for these bodies in several districts of the State. Elections were due in 9,624 village panchayats, 314 panchayat unions, and 28 district panchayats where the term of office of the RLBS came to an end on January 5. These government officers will function for the next six months. In support of its decision, the government has cited the ongoing re-organisation of rural and urban local bodies, which will result in a delimitation of wards of the local bodies – a step that the government considers a prerequisite to the conduct of polls to local bodies. It had given an undertaking to the Madras High Court in December 2024, that no poll notification would be issued without completing delimitation and putting in place a quota of seats and offices for women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Apart from creating four more municipal corporations by accommodating village panchayats, the stage is set for the expansion of the limits of municipal corporations, municipalities and town panchayats by taking in other village panchayats. It has proposed the merger of least 140 village panchayats with municipal corporations. Though there is nothing final about the reorganisation, the government is of the view that rapid urbanisation in village panchayats adjoining bigger cities such as Chennai and Coimbatore necessitates a fresh look at the local bodies.

In *Suresh Mahajan vs State of Madhya Pradesh*, the Supreme Court had held that the delimitation or formation of ward "cannot be a legitimate ground to be set forth by any authority much less the State Election Commission – to not discharge its constitutional obligation in notifying the election programme" at an opportune time and ensure that an elected body was installed before the expiry of the five-year term of the outgoing body. It had also stipulated that in undertaking delimitation, which the Court regarded as a continuous exercise, it "ought to be commenced well-in-advance" so that the elections were notified on time. Sections of residents in a number of village panchayats have opposed the proposed reorganisation of local bodies as they are apprehensive of the cessation of rural development schemes such as the MGNREGA if there is a merger with urban local bodies. Tamil Nadu is not the only State that has failed to hold local body polls on time. Bigger cities such as Mumbai and Bengaluru are on the list. It is time that the States realise the importance of the space that local bodies occupy in the democratic structure. Despite shortcomings, local self-governments do make a qualitative difference to people's lives.

Every year, January 12 is celebrated across the length and breadth of India as 'National Youth Festival', a day which is also the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue is an innovative one, launched with the vision of engaging India's youth in the developmental journey of the nation. The programme seeks to harness the collective energy, creativity and leadership potential of young minds to contribute towards realising a Viksit Bharat, i.e., a Developed India.

In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's belief that the youth of the country are central to India's growth, the dialogue provides a platform for young leaders to engage in discussions, exchange ideas, and collaborate on solutions to the nation's challenges. The competition and its stages are designed to inspire the youth to think critically and contribute in a proactive way towards India's progress.

A dialogue, its competitive nature
The dialogue is a dynamic, multi-stage initiative, designed to engage and empower India's youth in the country's developmental journey. The competition has four stages, the first being a Viksit Bharat quiz held digitally on the My Bharat platform. This stage tested a participant's knowledge about India's achievements, challenges, and vision for a developed future, covering areas such as sustainable development, technology, and national policies. The top scorers moved on to the second stage, i.e., essay and blog writing, where they had to write on themes such as tech for Viksit Bharat and empowering youth for Viksit Bharat, reflecting on their vision for India's future. These submissions were evaluated for originality.

In the third stage, the Viksit Bharat Vision Pitch Deck, participants at the State level presented innovative ideas for India's development through a compelling pitch deck. The best teams from each State advanced to the fourth and last stage of the Viksit Bharat National Championship, which will be held at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on January 11-12, 2025.

In the finale, the selected teams will pitch their visionary solutions to the Prime Minister. This in itself is a unique opportunity to influence national policy and contribute to India's vision of a Viksit Bharat. The competition is structured to



Raksha Khadse

Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India

test not only a participant's knowledge and creativity but also their leadership and communication skills.

The features this year

The National Youth Festival is an annual celebration of India's youth, fostering a spirit of national integration and promoting the ideals of youth empowerment and creativity. However, this year's festival stands out in several ways.

The focus this year is on Youth for Sustainable Development, a theme that resonates with growing recognition of young people as the drivers of global change. In line with India's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the festival has incorporated workshops, seminars and cultural activities that align with the vision of a greener, more inclusive, future. Additionally, there is a greater emphasis on the role of technology and innovation in achieving national goals, with specific sessions dedicated to Tech for Good and Innovation for India's Development.

Another unique feature this year is expanded virtual participation. With digital platforms having been integrated into the festival, young people from remote corners of the country can participate in discussions, workshops, and showcase their talents and ideas online. This inclusivity broadens the festival's reach and ensures that youth, regardless of location, has the chance to contribute.

The 2025 National Youth Festival will feature: workshops and panels on leadership and innovation. With a focus on topics such as youth leadership, digital entrepreneurship, and sustainable living, these sessions will equip participants with the skills necessary to drive change in their communities.

Second, cultural programmes. The festival will celebrate India's rich cultural heritage through music, dance, theatre, and folk art performances. These will provide youth with opportunities to express themselves creatively and appreciate the diverse cultural landscape of the nation.

Third, tech and innovation showcases. With the theme, Tech for Viksit Bharat, the festival will include exhibitions and presentations from young tech innovators and entrepreneurs who are building solutions to real-world problems in sectors such as health, education, agriculture, and urban development.

Fourth, engagement with leaders. The festival will facilitate direct engagement between youth and key leaders as pathbreakers from various sectors, which include government, business and academia. These interactions will provide participants with insights into leadership, governance, and the path to national progress.

Fifth, recognition of youth contributions. Awards and recognitions will be presented to young individuals and organisations that have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation and service. This will motivate others to take active roles in shaping India's future.

The role of MY Bharat

The Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, plays an instrumental role in shaping and guiding the direction of the National Youth Festival. As a platform that empowers youth by promoting engagement, knowledge sharing, and participation in nation-building activities, it is crucial in curating the festival's programmes and ensuring that they align with the aspirations of India's youth. Through MY Bharat, young people can gain access to resources, mentorship, and opportunities that will enhance their ability to contribute meaningfully to the country's development.

In this year's festival, MY Bharat will facilitate the digital integration of youth, enabling participation from across the country. It will also actively support youth-led initiatives, helping them navigate the complexities of social and technological challenges and encouraging them to find innovative solutions for a better India.

In totality, India's youth is indeed its most precious asset. As the country progresses towards its vision of becoming a Viksit Bharat, it is the boundless energy, the ideas and the ambition of young people that will power the nation's transformation. The initiative of the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue will not only open a new chapter but will also shape the mobilisation of the political leadership.

The future of India is bright, and it rests in the able hands of its youth. This resonates with the belief expressed by Swami Vivekananda in unlimited possibilities in youth energy when he had said, 'Give me one hundred 'believing' young men... I will transform India as the number one nation in the entire world....'

India's journey so far on the AI military bandwagon

As the world has begun utilising and developing artificial intelligence (AI) for military purposes amidst debates of ethical concerns, India also appears to have hopped on the bandwagon. Last year saw a defence Budget of ₹6.21 lakh crore (\$75 billion), with an emphasis on modernising and upgrading India's military. India has begun to make strides towards integrating AI systems with their military and using them across various systems. Products such as the Indrajaal autonomous drone security system have been developed. India has also attracted investments from numerous foreign tech giants for its AI ecosystem – Microsoft, for example, has committed approximately \$3 billion to building data centres in Telangana.

On track but there are hurdles

Multiple government figures have made statements about the utility of AI for military purposes, including Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who remarked that "artificial intelligence or AI has the potential to revolutionize military operations, from predictive analytics to autonomous decision-making systems".

Additionally, India is a part of multiple joint initiatives internationally that focus on AI. All these steps indicate the pouring of money and manpower into developing AI systems for military purposes. India is on track to fully utilising the potential of AI. However, there are some obstacles. Once addressed, they will ensure that India's adoption of AI will be even better.

A lack of digitised data to train systems on as well as a dearth of funds are the obvious factors. The biggest issue is the fact that the data centres required to run AI systems are expensive. India's military already has to focus on replacing legacy systems such as older aircraft with newer models, which is an expensive endeavour in itself. India's legacy hardware is no longer competitive in the global sphere, and significant resources are being directed towards replacing and upgrading it.

However, more general hurdles which are



Adya Madhavan

research analyst at The Takshashila Institution

harder to overcome exacerbate the problem. One such issue is that India's policies on AI are still fragmented or lack guidelines for implementation. For instance, the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence outlines India's vision for deploying AI. However it provides little insight on actual mechanisms for deployment.

Similarly, the responsible AI for All paper outlines the importance of accountability and transparency and puts forward principles for responsible AI use, but falls short in making military-AI-specific recommendations. Major strides have been made through these documents, but, as of now, arguably more robust frameworks need to be put in place for the deployment and the regulation of AI in the military. The Defence Artificial Intelligence Council (DAIC) and the Defence AI Project Agency (DAIPA) have been set up, and their objectives will bridge these gaps. However, there have not been any recent updates available to the public from these bodies.

The international picture

AI is also a technology that is a must based on the alacrity with which other countries have been focusing on integrating it with their militaries. Israel and China have focused on rapidly developing and deploying military AI and their technologies are already far ahead. India needs clarity of vision in its attitude towards AI, to make it possible to roll out AI systems faster and catch up with the global AI wave. There appears to be some degree of inconsistency within the government regarding sentiments towards military AI. This is reflected in remarks made by notable figures that underscore resistance or mistrust regarding the new technology. For example, the Minister of External Affairs compared AI to nuclear weapons – AI will be as dangerous for the world as nuclear bombs once were – in terms of their potential dangers to the world.

During the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) in 2023, the Prime Minister

India has begun harnessing AI's potential to strengthen its defence ecosystem, but there are still significant impediments

also remarked that there must be a focus proceeding with extreme caution and warned of the darker sides of AI. While there is clarity on the fact that AI will be critical in the coming years, especially military AI, there appears to be less clarity on how to roll it out.

The specific problems in India

One of the biggest challenges that must be addressed, even when India is at the stage where technologies are ready to be widely deployed, is the historically siloed nature of the armed forces. The Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Air Force have separate doctrines, systems and communication practices. This will likely significantly hinder interoperability and the procurement of systems for joint operations.

Finally, when it comes to the procurement of systems themselves, one of the issues with developing AI for defence is the reliance on public sector units (PSUs), which has prevailed in India for many decades. Despite the misconception that most of India's defence manufacturers are public sector companies, many private entities and startups produce advanced, high-quality systems. To equip the military with the best systems at a large enough scale, there will have to be public-private partnerships (PPPs) or an introduction of private competition. As seen with the space sector, this can significantly change the state of affairs.

India has already begun harnessing AI's potential to bolster its defence ecosystem. However, these multiple impediments serve as a reminder of the measures that need to be taken. Strategic alignment is paramount, and robust frameworks and policies are necessary to ensure AI's effective and ethical deployment. India needs to make systemic changes to tackle issues such as the inter-service silos and an overreliance on PSUs. Finally, collaboration and innovation internationally and in terms of PPPs will accelerate AI adoption and innovation. With a cohesive strategy, India will be able to maximise the utility of AI.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Diaspora, global journeys

The journeys of the Indian diaspora, who are scattered across the globe, are a remarkable chapter. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, to document these journeys, achievements, and contributions, is a timely reminder of the unique role Indians play in connecting nations, cultures and economies (Page 1, January 10). From excelling in academics, business and politics on the one hand to preserving and propagating India's rich cultural heritage on the other, their efforts form an indelible bond

between India and the world. By highlighting their stories of triumph and struggle, India can offer the world a deeper understanding of its global footprint. Acknowledging the contributions of the diaspora will strengthen India's global partnerships. This initiative should be supported through academic studies, cultural exhibitions, and collaborations with overseas communities. Pavithra M., Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

The history of the Indian diaspora is a part of India's

rich tradition and culture. Indian history needs to be highlighted globally.

V. Rajesh Mohan Rao, Dharmadam, Thalassery, Kerala

Indians, wherever they are outside their country, have brought pride to the countries they live in. They have made significant contributions to the growth of the economy of these nations. They are peace loving and tolerant. It is fitting that the Prime Minister has called for documenting the history of the Indian diaspora.

N. Visveswaran, Chennai

Managing crowds

Whenever a stampede occurs, numerous questions arise regarding the precautionary measures and crowd management strategies. Be it music and dance shows, festivals and processions, fairs and miscellaneous functions, the organisers and officials in charge should have a 'risk avoidance' plan in place. Appropriate measures can be taken using technology such as artificial intelligence, drones and stampede monitoring alarms.

M. Pradyu, Thalikavu, Kannur, Kerala

Trump's threats

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's plans to expand America's territorial boundaries have been denounced as 'crazy', 'outlandish' and 'insane'. His 'plans' will have global repercussions. It is almost as if the real estate developer in Mr. Trump has come to the fore. Perhaps we can look at his rash statements as nothing more than a 'political theatre of the absurd' and feel at ease. Mr. Trump will soon be in the White House and one hopes that he will act sensibly and sagaciously for humanity's sake, especially

as he will have access to the nuclear button.

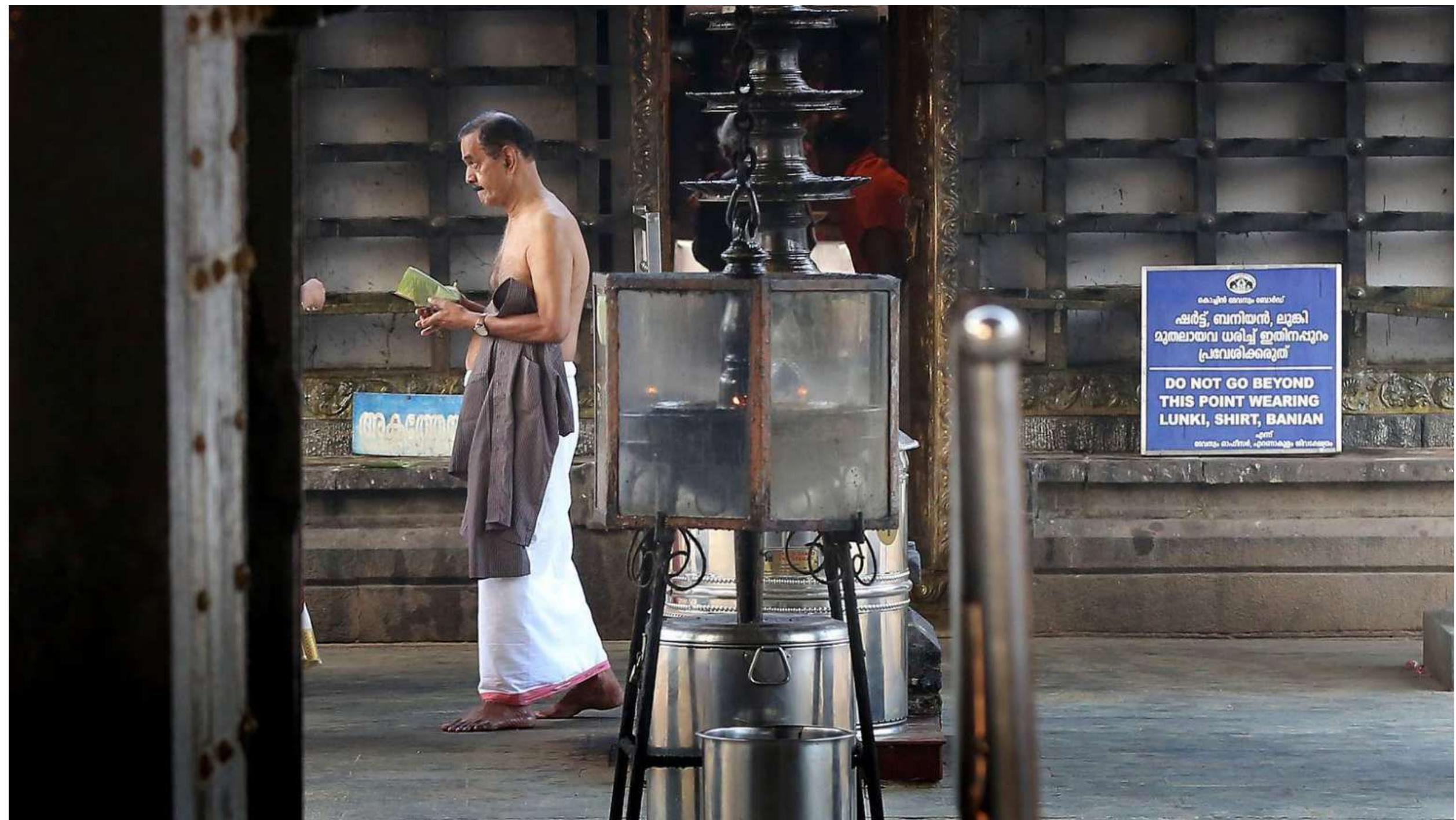
G. David Milton, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

The deleterious and expansionist agenda of the President-elect of the U.S. is concerning. Mr. Trump should respect the sovereignty of other nations and consider the ramifications of his actions. It is once again a reminder of how destructive and dangerous power can be.

Balagopal Gopinath, Keerikkad, Alappuzha, Kerala

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

GROUND ZERO



A devotee at the Siva Temple in Ernakulam. THE HINDU

In Kerala, a squabble over shirts and seers

A few weeks ago, Swami Sathchidananda, the religious head of Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust, said that men should be allowed to enter Hindu temples in Kerala wearing shirts. The Chief Minister has supported his views. The seer's remarks have sparked a debate, with some contending that the rules should be changed and others arguing that age-old practices should be retained, reports K.S. Sudhi

Sugan G. Nair, a 44-year-old interior designer, chants a hymn as he walks down the granite-laid path encircling the Chuttambalam, or outer enclosure, of the Siva temple in Ernakulam. The air is cold and fragrant with the smell of incense.

Nair is dressed in a blue dhoti. His shirt, hung on his right arm, gently flutters in the breeze that wafts in from the backwaters, a network of brackish lagoons and canals lying parallel to the Arabian Sea in Kerala.

A few worshippers, some of them holding flowers and other offerings, follow the chief priest as he carries the idol, adorned with garlands, around the temple in a procession. This daily temple ritual is called Seeveli. Nair stands in prayer as the procession ends before the sanctum sanctorum. He then steps outside the temple and puts on his shirt.

"I won't break the centuries-old practice of entering temples without upper body clothing even if the temple authorities permit me to wear a shirt. It is my choice not to wear a shirt while I submit myself before a deity," he says.

In 2017, the Kerala government decided to permit non-Brahmin priests to perform temple rites. Today, another campaign is ongoing in the State. This time, it is about men's wear in temples.

It began a few weeks ago when Swami Sathchidananda, the religious head of Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust, the organisation leading the spiritual activities of the Ezhavas, who are classified as an Other Backward Class, said that men should be allowed to enter Hindu temples wearing shirts.

His remarks sparked a controversy. Some priests and community leaders got upset, saying temple practices should be left untouched. The call also exposed the deep divide among the major Hindu communities, with the general secretary of the Nair Service Society criticising the suggestion. However, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan supported the call and lauded the campaign. He said it imbibed the spirit of social reformation led by Sree Narayana Guru, the 20th century seer and social reformer.

Pushing for reform

Swami Sathchidananda argues that there are many "undesirable" temple practices that continue to exist even today. "This is one practice which should have long been abandoned," he says. "Temple rituals and customs need to be reformed to be in tune with the changing times. The argument in favour of removing the shirt was that the divine radiance of temples would be diminished if men wore clothes on the upper part of their body. Hundreds of devotees who reach the hill shrine of Sabarimala and other temples have been wearing clothes on the upper part of



I will offer my prayers at a temple only when I am allowed to enter wearing a shirt.

MUKKOLI RAVEENDRAN
Social activist and a follower of Sree Narayana Guru

their body," he points out.

Swami Sathchidananda adds that the practice of not wearing a shirt is also "unhygienic". "Skin diseases could be transmitted through contact," he says. "The practice of allowing people to rent dhotis and wear them over trousers and salwar in some temples is also abominable."

The seer contends that the practice of bare-chested men entering temples was introduced to prevent people from 'lower castes' from entering temples at a time when only 'upper castes' were permitted to enter temples.

"Asking devotees to remove their shirts was the easiest way of identifying who was wearing a poonam (the sacred thread worn by Brahmins across the body) and prevent the lower castes from entering temples," he argues.

The Jagannatha temple in Thalassery, in the northern district of Kannur, has a special place in the history of the Sree Narayana movement in Kerala, as the idol was consecrated by Sree Narayana Guru himself. Designed to resemble the Puri Jagannatha temple in Puri, Odisha, it was the first place where devotees from all castes were allowed to worship.

K. Sathyam, the president of Jnanodaya Yogan, the managing committee of the Jagannatha temple, had tried to implement the committee's decision to permit men to wear shirts inside the temple two years ago. This attempt failed.

"The decision had to be shelved," he recalls. "Some were apprehensive that some sections of society would resist this. We didn't want the temple premises to become a battlefield. So, we decided to keep the decision in abeyance."

Sathyam says only a "mature society" can accept such social changes. He says no one prevents fully clothed devotees, who are mostly from the southern districts, from entering the Jagannatha temple. "We hope that this practice

will gather steam following Swami Satchidananda's call," says Sathyam, who had been heading the temple administration panel for three years.

A mark of respect, a matter of faith

However, some historians and temple priests refuse to buy the argument that the practice of men removing shirts was started with the aim of keeping non-Brahmins out of temples.

Historian Manu S. Pillai says it was a common practice in Kerala society to take off the *thorthu* (the thin long traditional bath towel that is widely used in Kerala) from one's shoulder and tie it around the waist as a mark of respect to elders, landlords, and others who were 'superior' on the social ladder. "It was a way of showing respect. A younger person would never wear a *melmundu* (upper garment) or *thorthu* in front of a family elder. Similarly, a peasant would never keep the *thorthu* on his shoulders while standing before a landlord," he says.

Temple priests, Brahmins, and even kings took off their upper clothing inside temples as a gesture of obeisance, Pillai says. This practice stems from the belief that god is superior to everybody. Removing upper body clothing is an act of obeisance to the idol, he explains. "The erstwhile Kings of Travancore and Kochi never wore anything above their waist, as can be seen from their photographs and portraits," he observes.

He is firm that the practice has nothing to do with identifying Brahmins who wear the sacred thread. "Most people belonging to the so-called upper caste, including those employed in temples, did not wear the sacred thread. So, that cannot be the reason for asking men to remove upper body clothing to enter temples," he reasons.

N. Radhakrishnan Potti, the general secretary of the Akhila Kerala Thanthri Mandalam, the community organisation of Kerala Brahmin priests, defends the practice. He says it has been in vogue for centuries in all the major temples of the State. "It is believed that male devotees absorb the radiance of the idol through their hearts and women through their foreheads. It is a matter of faith for temple worshippers and cannot be tampered with," he says.

Potti explains how men in Kerala used to cover their torso using an *uthareyam*, a piece of thin cloth draped over the body, which they would remove while paying obeisance to gurus and gods. "Such customs may have trickled into temples over the years. It is unique to Kerala," he says.

Potti cites *Kshethraracharangal*, a book on temple rituals and practices written by Kanippayur Sankaran Namboodiripad, which lists out practices that men must avoid when they visit temples. "It mentions smearing your hair with ghee and oil and wearing clothes on the upper part of your body, as well as headgear," he says.

Potti is also clear that the task of initiating reforms and altering practices should be left to senior priests. "It is not an issue to be deliberated by seers and politicians," he asserts.

Changing with the times

The dress code followed in the temples of Kerala is not uniform. Women were banned from wearing salwars to the Guruvayur temple in the town of Guruvayur; they could only wear sarees. This was until 2013, when the authorities modified the dress code to allow salwars too. They said that this had been a long-pending demand, especially from women who came to the temple from north India, and so they finally agreed to it.

Though no dress code has been prescribed for devotees in most of the temples governed by the Travancore Devaswom Board, men are mandated to remove their upper body garments to enter major temples, namely the Karikkakom temple



Senior priests should initiate reforms. This is not an issue to be deliberated by seers and politicians.

N. RADHAKRISHNAN POTI
General secretary, Akhila Kerala Thanthri Mandalam

in Thiruvananthapuram and the Ettumanoor temple in Kottayam.

At the Sree Padmanabha temple in Thiruvananthapuram, men are mandated to wear a dhoti and women are expected to wear a sari or the mundu-set. Men who come to the temple in trousers are allowed to rent a dhoti, while women in salwar are allowed to rent a saree, both to be worn over their clothes, from the temple premises before entering the temple.

Vedanta scholar Swami Chidananda Puri has long been campaigning for such restrictions to be lifted. Speaking of how women's attire changed over centuries, he says, "Women in Kerala never wore clothes on the upper part of their body. Then, *Neriyathu* (an upper garment) and *Mulakacha* (cloth worn around the chest) became their attire. Later, blouses were accepted."

Through this point, Puri underscores how only those religions and practices that have changed with time, to keep in step with societal changes, have thrived. "The dress code of devotees needs to be reformed. The insistence that one should enter temples bare-chested is deterring young men from going to temples. The Marga Darshak Mandal (a platform of Hindu seers) held last year at Thrissur had called for modifying the dress code of men. Now, many temple authorities are making changes in this direction," he says.

Lekshmy Rajeev, author and a researcher on temple tantra, says women had to fight for their right to cover their breasts in Kerala, whereas men never protested about wearing clothing. "I believe this practice of not wearing sufficient clothing evolved into a ritual over time," she says.

Rajeev also says not all men may feel comfortable displaying their torsos. "Men are forced to display their bodies publicly, which can make them feel uncomfortable and uneasy," she says.

Arayakkandi Santhosh, the Devaswom Secretary of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, a social service organisation representing the Ezhavas, says the Yogam has always stood for reformatory practices. "The managing committees of a few temples have recently resolved to abolish the practice and update the dress code. Temple committees stick to customary practices to avoid conflicts. However, men are free to wear shirts at the newly consecrated Guru temples," he says.

The controversies surrounding the dress code have only helped Mukkoli Raveendran, a social activist and a follower of Sree Narayana Guru, strengthen his resolve about temple wear. "I will offer my prayers at a temple only when I am allowed to enter wearing a shirt. It has been five years since I prayed at a temple as a mark of protest against the dress code," says Raveendran, who is also a member of the administrative committee of the Jagannatha temple. He also scoffs at the argument that shirts prevent the "transmission of the radiance of the idols to the devotees".

Sajesh Kumar Manalel, the State vice president of the youth movement of the Yogam, echoes his sentiment. "Though I have been to the Sree Krishna Temple at Guruvayur a few times, I stayed outside and offered my prayers. I hope that one day all the temples of the State will welcome men with upper clothing," he says.



Visitors outside the premises of the Guruvayur temple. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

From Page One**Hush money case: no punishment for Trump**

The trial saw Mr. Trump forced to look on as a string of witnesses testified that he had fraudulently covered up illicit payments to porn star Stormy Daniels in an effort to stop her disclosing their tryst ahead of the 2016 presidential election, which he ultimately won.

Mr. Trump had sought suspension of the criminal proceedings after a New York State appeals court dismissed his effort to have the hearing delayed. However, the Supreme Court ruled that the sentencing could proceed.

Prosecutors opposed the effort to stave off sentencing, 10 days before Mr. Trump is due to be sworn in for a second term, arguing it was wrong for the apex court to hear the case when the mogul still had avenues of appeal to pursue in New York.

An unconditional discharge is a measure without any sanctions or restriction that nonetheless upholds the jury's guilty verdict — and Mr. Trump's infamy as the first former president to be convicted of a felony. The 78-year-old had potentially faced up to four years in prison.

"He's sticking his middle finger at the judge, the jury, the system of justice, and laughing," said Pace University law professor and former prosecutor Bennett Gershman ahead of the sentencing.

Outside the courthouse, Trump supporters held a giant banner emblazoned with their idol's name that was buffeted by high winds. There was also a small vigil of anti-Trump demonstrators behind a hoarding reading "Trump is guilty".

Mr. Trump repeatedly called the prosecution a "witch hunt" which Mr. Steinglass said was "designed to have a chilling effect".

"This defendant has caused enduring damage to public perception of the criminal justice system," the career prosecutor said.

SC orders status quo on well near U.P. mosque

He raised concerns over a notice referring to the site as 'Hari Mandir' and plans for starting religious activities there. "No such activities will be permitted. Please file a status report," Chief Justice Kishan Kumar Singh told the respondents.

Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, representing the Hindu side, argued the well was outside the mosque's purview and had historically been used for worship.

Vokkaligas, Lingayats against caste census**The Hindu Bureau**

BENGALURU

The dominant land-owning communities of Vokkaligas and Veerashaiva-Lingayats in Karnataka, which are more often divided over the issue of power-sharing, seem to be coming together to fight the Socio-Economic and Educational Survey (caste census) which is likely to be brought for discussion before the next Cabinet

meeting.

Driven by political compulsions, the much-contested caste census is expected to be discussed in the Cabinet next week where a decision could also be taken to place it before the legislature.

CLP meet

Government sources said the issue was likely to figure in the Congress Legislature Party meeting convened on January 13.

India has to raise number of operational satellites: ISRO chief-designate

The Hindu Bureau

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

India may need to significantly increase the number of operational satellites over the next three to four years, said V. Narayanan, who is set to take over as the ISRO Chairperson on January 14.

Dr. Narayanan said he envisioned a scenario where the number of satellites would go up from the current 54 to more than 100 in the next three to four years.

His observation came in a recorded video message that was played at the inauguration of the National Aerospace Manufacturing Seminar 2025, organised by the Society of Aerospace Manufacturing Engineers, on the theme "Indian Space Vision 2047-Industry Perspective" on Friday.

Centre allows Kerala to use SDRF funds for Wayanad rehabilitation**The Hindu Bureau**

Rescue workers helping a victim of Wayanad landslides which happened last year. PTI

He also submitted that as per SDRF guidelines, the State Executive Committee constituted under the Disaster Management Act is empowered to spend from the SDRF. The State government is at liberty to utilise the funds in accordance with the approved norms of assistance.

The court observed that the Centre essentially accepts the proposal mooted by the court and has agreed to the "freeing up of

₹120 crore" for immediate use by the State in connection with the rehabilitation measures.

By virtue of the notification, the State government has an opportunity to tap into multiple funding sources for recovery and rehabilitation, such as the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Funds and fund for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SAS-CI).

Odisha to be the highlight of Singapore President's visit**Kallop Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI



Boosting ties: Narendra Modi and Tharman Shanmugaratnam during a meeting held in Singapore in September last year. ANI

standing (MoUS) will be signed.

During his stay in Delhi on January 15-16, the President will confer the Honorary Citizen Award on Taran Das, former Director-General of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), for his contribution to Singapore-India relations. Mr. Shanmugaratnam will meet President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Singapore Presi-

PM Modi to visit Paris for AI summit next month

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Paris next month on a bilateral visit and also attend the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit, French President Emmanuel Macron announced on Friday.

"France will be hosting on February 11-12 the AI Summit, a summit for action. This summit will enable us to have an international discussion on artificial intelligence. PM Modi will be there immediately after his State visit to our country, and this will enable us to have dialogue with all the powers on AI, U.S., China and major nations like India which has a role to play, as well as the Gulf States," Mr. Mac-

The last edition of the summit was held in South Korea in May 2024.

Bench allows students who had specifically dropped out of their engineering courses between

November 5 and November 18 to register for the JEE-Advanced 2025 as a one-time measure

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday orally termed the aborted decision of the Joint Admission Board (JAB) in November 2024 to increase the number of permissible attempts for Joint Entrance Examination (Advanced) to three, only to suddenly revert to two a few days later, as its "folly".

The top court however refused to consider the wisdom or merit of the abandoned move made by the JAB.

On November 5 last year, the JAB issued a press release increasing the number of attempts to three from two. That is, students who have appeared for their Class 12 exams in the years 2023 and 2024 and those scheduled to appear in 2025 were all eligible to register for the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE-Advanced) test for admission to the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) in the 2025 academic year.

But, on November 18,



Some students said that the admission board's change in decision had robbed them of a chance to take a crack at the IITs. FILE PHOTO

the JAB did an abrupt U-turn by restricting the number of attempts again to two. This meant that only students who appeared for their Class 12 exams in 2024 and 2025 were eligible for the JEE-Advanced 2025 test.

The November 18 notification was challenged in the top court by over 20 petitioners/students. They argued that the sudden change had robbed many students of an opportunity to take a crack at the IITs.

A Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and Augustine George Masih said the "promise" made by the JAB in

its November 5, 2024, notification led students to leave their engineering courses to prepare for the JEE-Advanced.

The petitioners had argued that the November 18, 2024, notification breached the principles of legitimate expectation and promissory estoppel. The court agreed with them. "The withdrawal of the promise [of three attempts] cannot be permitted to act to the students' detriment," it noted.

The Bench allowed students/petitioners who had specifically dropped out of their engineering courses

between November 5 and November 18 to register for the JEE-Advanced 2025. Justice Masih observed this was only a one-time measure.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the JAB and other respondents, argued that the rewind to two attempts was based in the "larger interests of the students".

Mr. Mehta explained that three permissible attempts would see students who have got admission in regular engineering colleges other than the IITs concentrate more on the JEE preparation rather than their class work. He said the November notifications saw many students drop out of engineering colleges to prepare for the JEE.

Justice Gavai compared the situation to people jumping overboard a ship to sail a yacht. Nevertheless, the judge remarked sharply to the Board that this had happened "only because of the folly created by you".

The petitioners were disposed of by the court.

SC dismisses pleas challenging law on women's reservation**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Petition had argued for implementation only after a fresh Census and a delimitation exercise

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed petitions filed in 2023 which challenged provisions of a law for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, the upper houses of the State legislatures and the Delhi legislative assembly.

A Bench headed by Justice Bela Trivedi said the petitions had become irrelevant as the women's reservation Bill had already been passed into law under the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act in September 2023.

The court did not accept the petitioners' argument that a clause, which mandated that women's reservation must be implemented only after conducting a fresh census followed by a delimitation exercise, was a violation of Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution. The petitioners had sought the court to declare the "offending" clause as *void ab initio*.

One of the petitions filed by Dr. Jaya Thakur argued that a constitutional amendment passed by Parliament unanimously during

ing a special session should not be made to wait indefinitely for the census. Mr. Singh argued that it was settled law that a constitutional amendment cannot be held back unless it was found to be *ultra vires* the Constitution.

The petitioner had referred to the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments of 1993 which gave women one-third representation in local body elections. Dr. Thakur had drawn the court's attention to the 77th constitutional amendment extending reservations for promotions in jobs for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Finally, the petition had highlighted the recent implementation of the 10% EWS reservation for poor forward caste sections in educational institutions and public employment. It said all these amendments were given effect without calling for census data.

BRS received over 70% of all donations made to regional parties in 2022-23: ADR**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Regional political parties declared the receipt of almost ₹217 crore through 2,119 donations in the financial year 2022-23, according to an analysis of 28 such parties by the Association for Democratic Reforms. This includes donations valued at less as well as more than ₹20,000.

The lion's share of the pie went to the Bharat Rashtriya Samithi (BRS), which got ₹154 crore, almost 71% of the total donated amount. About 90% of the donations — more than ₹194 crore — went to five major regional parties: the BRS, YSR-Congress, Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), and the Communist Party of India (CPI). Of

these, the BRS, TDP, DMK, and CPI declared a rise in their donations while the YSR Congress Party declared a decrease, in comparison with 2021-22.

Under Section 29C (1) of the Representation of People's Act, 1951, political parties are required to prepare a report providing details of contributions in excess of ₹20,000 from any person in a particular financial year to avail 100% tax exemption. These have to be submitted to the Election Commission of India, which uploads it on its website.

The ADR analysis of this data shows that four regional parties — the DMK, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) and Apna Dal (Soniyala) — have also provided details

of donations below ₹20,000.

After the BRS, the YSR

Congress Party declared the second highest donation amount of ₹16 crore from five donations, followed by the TDP, which declared receiving almost ₹12 crore. The DMK and CPI have declared total donations of ₹7.2 crore and ₹7.1 crore, respectively.

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha recorded a whopping 3,685% growth in donations between 2021-22 and 2022-23, the highest percentage increase among regional parties, followed by the Janayak Janta Party (1,997%), the TDP (1,795%).

Among States, donors from Kerala made the highest cash donations of ₹9.09 lakh, followed by donors from West Bengal who gave ₹5.91 lakh in cash.

"BJP-RSS wants only Vice-Chancellors from the Sangh Parivar to be appointed... Taking control

of universities, strangling autonomous institutions, imposing RSS's Manuvi ideology on public education and betraying the youth — this is the education policy of Modi government," he added.

"The National Talent Search Examination Scholarship, started in 1963, paved way for the future of many children, opened the doors to secure good education and they became partners in the country's progress," party general

Mallikarjun Kharge

secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on social media.

"But *pariksha pe charcha* for the personal publicity of the Prime Minister is still going on. In three years, ₹40 crore could have been spent on scholarships, while ₹62 crore have been spent on publicity," Ms. Vadra said.

On Thursday, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh raised the issue and pointed out that the scholarship was discontinued three years ago on the grounds that expenditure on scholarships should be controlled.

"But for the past three years, the non-biological PM has been running a PR stunt called *Pariksha Pe Charcha* on which some ₹62 crore has been wasted... This is called Entire Political Science," he said.

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Akali Dal accepts Badal's resignation as party president

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

The working committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Friday accepted the resignation of Sukhbir Singh Badal from the post of party president, a move seen as a course correction aimed at reviving the century-old party which has been struggling to make a political comeback in Punjab.

Senior party leader Daljit Singh Cheema said it was also decided that the election for the post of a new president would be held on March 1. "The committee on its part recorded the exemplary service extended by the president [Mr. Badal] to the party," he said.

Mr. Badal, who attended the working committee meeting, later expressed his gratitude to party workers who lent their support while fighting for the cause of Punjab and Punjabis. "I am deeply touched by the love and trust they reposed in me," he said, adding he would continue to serve the party and Punjab as a humble worker.

In November last year, Mr. Badal tendered his resignation from the president's post after he was declared 'tanhayia' or guilty of religious misconduct by the Akal Takht, the highest Sikh temporal seat. Last month, it directed the working committee to accept Mr. Badal's resignation and constitute a committee for reorganisation of the party. The Akal Takht had awarded religious punishments to Mr. Badal and several other Akali Dal leaders for the "mistakes" committed by the SAD government from 2007 to 2017.



Sukhbir Singh Badal

As the SAD has been going through a challenging phase, Mr. Badal's apology for his "mistakes" and his stepping down from the president's post is being seen as an attempt to revive the party.

In November last year,

Indian diaspora's bond with homeland is eternal: Murmu

The President says their entrepreneurship, philanthropy, and knowledge-sharing are crucial in shaping the vision of India; she confers the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards on 27 recipients

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

Describing the bond between the Indian diaspora and the homeland as eternal, President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said their entrepreneurship, philanthropy, and knowledge-sharing were crucial in shaping the vision of a developed India.

"The connection between the Indian diaspora and the motherland is eternal. No matter where you are in the world, Bharat is and will always be your home. This bond is rooted in shared heritage, culture, and values. It is this connection that we celebrate today, and it is this connection that will continue to inspire us as we move forward together," Ms. Murmu said, while addressing the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention that came to an end here.

"As we celebrate the achievements of our Pravasi Bharatiya family, let us also look forward to the future with hope and determination. Together, we



Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi welcomes Droupadi Murmu as she arrives at Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar. BISWARANJAN ROUT

can build a Viksit Bharat, a nation that stands tall on the global stage and continues to be a beacon of light for the world," she said.

"Our vision for Viksit Bharat aligns with our growing stature on the world stage, particularly as a leading voice for the Global South. It is guided by our timeless philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, or The World is One Family," she said.

"This vision is about

creating an ecosystem that not only meets our needs but also contributes to global well-being. We seek to be a nation that balances economic progress with social justice and environmental stewardship, ensuring a bright future for generations to come. Each one of you, whether through entrepreneurship, philanthropy, or knowledge-sharing, will play an essential role in achieving this vision," the President said.

Ms. Murmu said recognising the crucial role of the diaspora in nation-building, the Indian government had undertaken several initiatives, including the simplification of consular services for Non-Resident Indians and digitisation process for Overseas Citizens of India.

Under the initiatives like "Know India Programme", younger members of the Indian diaspora are facilitated to rediscover their Indian roots.

"We have also been proactive in safeguarding the interests of Indians living abroad. In recent years, we have launched several missions, including Operation Kaveri, Operation Ganga, and Operation Vande Bharat to assist distressed Indians. Today, Indians around the world can count on their homeland for support and protection in times of need," Ms. Murmu said.

The President presented the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards to Trinidad and Tobago President Christine Carla Kangaloo and 26 others.

IN BRIEF



Pune court grants bail to Rahul in defamation case

A special court in Pune on Friday granted bail to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a defamation case related to his alleged objectionable remarks on Hindutva ideologue V. D. Savarkar. The court

granted bail to the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha on a surety bond of ₹25,000 after he appeared before it through video conferencing. Advocate Milind Pawar, representing Mr. Gandhi, said the court also granted permanent exemption to the Congress leader from appearing before it. "The matter will now be heard on February 18," Mr. Pawar added. The case was filed on a complaint of the grandnephew of Savarkar and stemmed from a speech Mr. Gandhi gave in London in March 2023, where he made certain remarks on the freedom fighter.

Court directs CBI to give three days prior notice to Cong. MP

A special court in Delhi on Friday directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to give three days prior written notice to Karti Chidambaram, Congress MP from Sivaganga of Tamil Nadu, in a fresh corruption case lodged against him. Mr. Chidambaram is accused of allegedly giving relief to an alcoholic beverage company, Diageo Scotland, over a ban on the duty-free sale of its whisky. The order was pronounced on an anticipatory bail application filed by the Congress MP who is travelling abroad. The court also ordered Mr. Chidambaram to join the investigation upon his return to India and cooperate in the process, as and when required in accordance with law.

Uttarakhand Minister's son booked for illegal tree-cutting

The Uttarakhand Forest department lodged a first information report (FIR) against Piyush Aggarwal, son of State Finance Minister Prem Chand Aggarwal, for allegedly cutting trees in a forest area for the construction of a private resort. According to reports, 26 trees have been cut in Khair Khal on Neelkanth Marg of which two trees are of protected species. The villagers in the nearby area said the sub-inspector of the Revenues department reached the spot on three occasions and tried to stop the work, but no action was taken to date. Akash Gangwar, DFO, Kotdwara, said that the matter of illegal tree cutting has come to light and a case has been registered. Mr. Aggarwal, however, said that he took all the necessary permissions for tree-cutting and laying a new road.

Like-minded nations must strive for peace, prosperity: Rajnath

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Emerging as a leading voice for the Global South, India advocates for a multi-aligned policy approach that engages multiple stakeholders, which ensures that diverse views are considered in our collective pursuit of prosperity, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday. He stated that India today can boast of having one of the largest defence industrial ecosystems in Asia and the country is committed to further enhancing existing capabilities.

"It is of paramount importance that the like-minded countries should



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh poses for a photo at Ambassadors' round-table, at Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi, on Friday. PTI

strive together for collective actions for peace and prosperity. Without these, our future generations will not be able to take advantage of economic growth or technological innova-

"In today's geopolitical

landscape, fostering unity among like-minded nations is essential for ensuring mutual prosperity and peace, while addressing contemporary challenges," he told the Ambassadors and High Commissioners of various countries.

Aero India is an event where nations come together and form bonds beyond boundaries, Mr. Singh said making a pitch about the 15th edition of the biennial air show, Aero India 2025, scheduled to be held at the Air Force Station, Yelahanka, in Bengaluru from February 10 to 14. "Asia's largest air show presents an opportunity for nations to jointly explore strengths and capabilities in the defence sector, addressing both strategic needs and tactical requirements. "Aero India 2025 will serve as a

bilities and address strategic and tactical needs," he said.

The first three days of the event will be business days, and the last two days are open to the public. The event includes both air displays and static exhibitions of a large array of military platforms from the aerospace and defence sectors.

Stating that India has emerged as an attractive destination for investment, Mr. Singh said Aero India 2025 presents an opportunity for friendly nations to jointly explore strengths and capabilities in the defence sector, addressing both strategic needs and tactical requirements. "Aero India 2025 will serve as a

vital forum for exploring partnerships that will form the base for future challenges. Together, we can create pathways for growth that are inclusive and sustainable," he added.

Mr. Singh will host the Defence Ministers' Conclave on the theme "BRIDGE – Building Resilience through International Defence and Global Engagement".

Several bilateral meetings are also planned at various levels. The focus will be on bolstering the defence and aerospace ties with friendly countries by exploring newer avenues to take the partnership to the next level, the Ministry noted.

BJP needs a new leader in West Bengal, says MLA

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Satyendra Nath Roy on Friday said the party needs a new leader in the West Bengal with a robust understanding of the organisation.

"It is time for a new leadership, as should have happened much earlier. There are systems in place which take time, but MLAs and mandal presidents are all anxious about when it will happen," Mr. Roy, who represents Gangarampur, told presspersons.

"I do not think every leader in the party understands this organisation very well. The right leader should have the ability to build the organisation and inspire more people to join. If such a person is appointed, then we can win West Bengal," Mr. Roy said.

The Gangarampur Assembly constituency in Dakshin Dinajpur district falls under the Balurghat parliamentary constituency, which is represented by Union Minister and West Bengal BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar. Mr. Majumdar was appointed chief of the BJP's State unit in 2021.

India's rights have to be protected, says Sonowal on China's new dam

Dinakar Peri
KAZIRANGA



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma with Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal during the meeting of IWDC, at Kaziranga on Friday. ANI

have an impact given the scale and size of the project.

If the dam comes up, the Brahmaputra ecosystem will become completely fragile, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said earlier. "If the dam construction starts in China, the entire ecosystem that thrives on the Brahmaputra will reduce by 60%. This is disastrous for the entire northeastern region," he said earlier this week.

The External Affairs Ministry had stated that it conveyed its "concerns" to China about the proposed mega hydropower project in the upstream Yarlung Tsangpo, the Tibetan name for the Brahmaputra

that flows through Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. "As a lower riparian State with established user rights to the waters of the river, we have consistently expressed, through expert-level as well as diplomatic channels, our views and concerns to the Chinese side over mega projects on rivers in their territory," Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said last week.

Upgrading waterways
Mr. Sonowal said that over ₹23,000 crore had been earmarked for development of new national waterways and green shipping initiatives in inland waterways. A major policy initiative

in the form of Riverine Community Development Scheme was mooted at the IWDC to improve the socio-economic well-being of coastal communities by developing infrastructure, promotion of trade and tourism along with riverine ecosystem, providing skill enrichment trainings and upgrading traditional knowledge of river of the communities in an attempt to upgrade the quality of lives of the people living by the banks of the National Waterways.

"IWDC has anchored a new vista for cooperative federalism as both the governments at Union and the States discussed, deliberated, debated and dwelled on multiple aspects for strengthening of inland waterways. Historically, the role of inland waterways has been paramount for civilisations," Mr. Sonowal stated.

He said they were attempting to rejuvenate the support system of inland waterways so that railways and roadways can be decongested while also providing a viable, economic, sustainable and efficient mode of transportation for both passengers and cargo operators.

Nehru Nagar, National Highway No. 4, BELAGAVI - 590 010. Tel: 0831- 2475477

ICMR-NITM Belagavi invites applications for filling up the following posts purely on contract basis.

Sr. No.	Post Name	No. of Vacancies	Last date for submission of filled application
1.	Consultant (Administration/Finance)	02 (Two)	31-01-2025
2.	Project Consultant – Scientific – Non-Medical	01 (One)	Up to 5:00 pm

For detailed advertisement please visit the <https://icmrnitm.res.in/careers/> and www.icmr.nic.in websites.

Date : 09.01.2025
Place: Belagavi

Sd/-
Director

MANGALURU CITY CORPORATION, MANGALURU, KARNATAKA PIN-575003
Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development & Finance Corporation Ltd., (KUIDFC)
Karnataka Integrated Urban Water Management and Investment Programme (KIUWMP)

NO. MCC/MNG/KUIDFC/KIUWMP/02MNG05/2024-25/955 DATE: 10.01.2025

INVITATION FOR PRETENDER CONFERENCE

1. The Commissioner, Mangaluru City Corporation, Mangaluru inviting Pretender Conference as per GOK circular No. PWD 1359 SO/FC 2001 (P-2) Dated: 03.12.2002 to discuss tender document related for the below mentioned work.

2. Interested bidders may propose the changes, if any changes to be made in the estimate cost, specification, provisions in the special conditions of contract or packaging for changes in the tender document. Physical presence of bidders are requested or else the bidders may submit their proposal through e-mail to: jalasiritrancheeemng@gmail.com on or before 16.01.2025.

3. Pretender conference meeting is scheduled on 16.01.2025 at 11.00 am to explain the qualification criteria, specifications and conditions of contract and clarify any reservations. The reservations if any pointed out by the prospective Tenderers shall be further studied and modifications if any required shall be made in the Tender document.

Sl.No	Name of work	Amount put to tender
1	Construction of Intake well, Jackwell cum Pump house and Bank Protection works near Adyar dam for Mangaluru City under KIUWMP Project.	Rs. 1687.22 Lakhs

The meeting shall be convened on 16.01.2025 at 11.00 am at Office of the Executive Engineer, PIU, KIUWMP - Jalasir, KUIDFC, Second Floor, MCC Commercial Complex, Lalbagh, Mangaluru – 575003.

Sd/-
Commissioner,
Mangaluru City Corporation,
Mangaluru

DIPR / MNG / 1170 / MPL / 24/25

IN BRIEF



SpaDeX satellites are at a distance of 1.5 km, says ISRO

The two SpaDeX satellites that are part of a docking experiment are now at a distance of 1.5 km from each other, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Friday. "Spacecrafts are at a distance of 1.5 km and on hold mode. Further drift to 500 m is planned to be achieved by tomorrow [Saturday] morning," the ISRO posted on X. This announcement came a day after the space agency shared that the drift between the satellites that had caused the postponement of the docking experiment for the second time had been arrested and they were put in a slow drift course to move closer to each other.

Delhi's per capita income 3rd highest after Goa, Sikkim

Delhi's per capita income in 2023-24, at ₹4,61,910, was the third highest in the country after Goa and Sikkim, according to the latest statistical handbook. As per the data, the per capita of the city was more than double the national per capita income of ₹1,84,205. The handbook also noted a 7.4% yearly growth in the per capita income of the city. However, it showed a major decline in the number of vehicles on the national capital's roads - from 1.22 crore in 2020-21 to 79.45 lakh in 2022-23. In addition, the number of enrolled students rose slightly for both boys and girls in 2023-24. The handbook, issued annually by the Delhi government, details various socio-economic and infrastructure related data of the national capital. PTI

Bharat Biotech co-founder awarded INSA fellowship

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Krishna Ella, co-founder and executive chairman of Bharat Biotech International, was earlier this week conferred the India Fellowship of the Indian National Science Academy for 2025. It is the first time that the INSA has awarded fellowships to representatives from the industry.

The other notable scientists and technologists who were conferred an INSA fellowship included Anil Kakodkar, former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of India; V.K. Saraswat, former Director-General, DRDO; S. Somnath, Chairman, ISRO; S. Kris Gopalakrishnan, co-founder, Infosys; and Samir V. Kamat, Secretary DDR&D and Chairman, DRDO.

Man held after body of live-in partner recovered from fridge

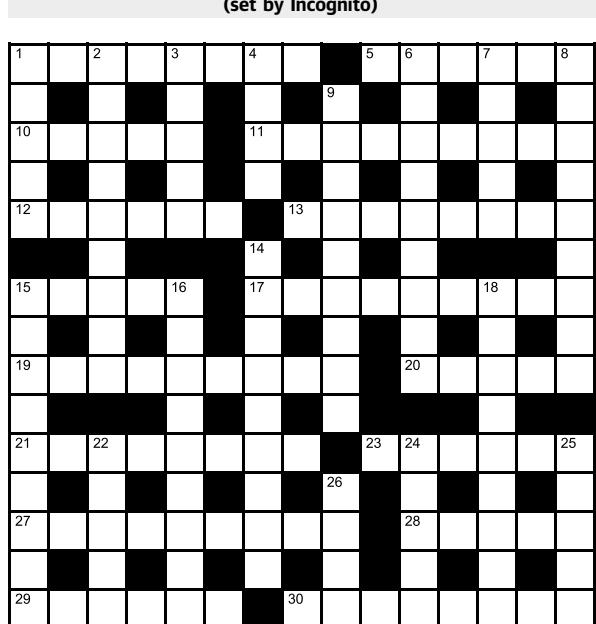
Mehul Malpani
Bhopal

A 44-year-old man has been arrested in Madhya Pradesh's Dewas for allegedly murdering his live-in partner, after a decomposed body was recovered from a fridge in which it had been kept since March last year, the police said.

According to the police, the body was found on Friday at a house in Vrindavan Dham Colony by the current tenant after a foul smell spread in the locality. The saree-clad woman, who was wearing jewellery and whose hands were tied along with a noose around her neck, may have been killed last year, the police said.

The SP said the accused was already married and was in a live-in relationship with Prajapati for about five years and lived in Ujjain for the first three years.

"He revealed that he killed her after she started pressurising him for marriage," the officer said.

TH CROSSWORD + 14380
(set by Incognito)

- Across**
- Refuse container daughter wrongly bust in school (8)
 - Disclose small political leader at this place (6)
 - Scotsman captures an American soldier showing wizardry (5)
 - Killed by wire, fish decayed (9)
 - Perhaps, Pop or Mom defray cost of tenancy of house, I hear (6)
 - Mistakenly pool pill and sweetener (8)

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



SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

B	W	M	F	C	E
CURE	ALEXANDER				
L	E	G	A	R	I
SLIPUP	SHOOTING				
S	I	T	U	G	
KEROSENE	SNIPERS				
Y	U	D	E	N	
CENTURY	CLINKERS				
E	E	T	S		
SATRAP	RESTRICT				
U	T	I	A		
GROUPING	RETOUR				
U	S	L	G	A	B
MAPLE	LEAF				
S	R	E	C	T	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

2024 was the first year to breach global warming limit, show data

It is the first time that mean temperature crossed the threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, says global body; experts say that given the high rate of carbon emissions, the 2024 temperatures represent a point of no return

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Humanity has stepped into a future that climate scientists for decades have warned about. Temperature data made public on Friday by the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), an authoritative source on historical trends in climate, show that 2024 was the first year in history when mean global temperature went 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level.

Annual climate conferences, or the Conference of Parties convened by the United Nations, are about getting world leaders to agree on measures to curb emissions to keep temperatures from going over 2 degrees Celsius above the temperature in the 1850-1900 pre-industrial period and "as far as possible" keeping it below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Consistent rise
The way climatological boundaries are determined, a single year in the red doesn't by itself spell catastrophe. Only when temperatures consistently



Scorching heat: Each of the past 10 years was one of the 10 warmest years on record. FILE PHOTO

breach the 1.5 degrees Celsius mark for a decade or two would a boundary considered to have been breached. However, experts say that given the high rate of carbon emissions at present, the 2024 temperatures represent a point of no return.

"While there may be year to year variability, an El Nino in some years or a major volcanic eruption in others might influence temperatures, this suggests that there is no going back and that we are on a trajectory of exceeding 2 degrees Celsius by 2050," Roxy Mathew Koll, climate scientist, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, told *The Hindu*.

At an average temperature of 15.1 degrees Celsius, 2024 was the warmest year in global temperature records, which go back till 1850, and was 0.72 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average. It was 0.12 degrees Celsius above the average of 2023, the previous warmest year on record.

For 11 months in 2024, the monthly global average temperature exceeded 1.5 degrees Celsius above

pre-industrial levels.

In 2024, the annual average sea surface temperature (SST) over the extra-polar ocean reached a record high of 20.87 degrees Celsius, 0.51 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average.

The average extra-polar SST was at record high levels for the time of year from January to June 2024. From July to December 2024, the SST was the second warmest on record for the time of year, after 2023.

Among the reasons for the record-breaking temperatures in 2024 was the El Nino, which is warming of the Central Equatorial Pacific, that began in June 2023 with effects lasting well into 2024.

'Serious implications'
"A single year with temperatures 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels does not mean we've reached 1.5°C of global warming. However, it does mean we're getting dangerously close. Every fraction of a degree – whether 1.4, 1.5, or 1.6°C – brings more harm to people and ecosystems, underscoring the continued need for ambitious emis-

sions cuts," Professor Joeri Rogelj, Director of Research at the Grantham Institute - Climate Change and Environment, Imperial College London, said in a statement.

Other experts referred to the latest, failed talks at Baku, Azerbaijan, where countries couldn't bring themselves to agree on a financial package that would realistically account for the costs of mitigating runaway carbon emissions.

"The year on year increase in average global temperature has serious implications for developing economies reeling under frequent climate disasters. This, coupled with the failure of COP29 to deliver on meaningful finance, only implies that developing economies will have to allocate more funds to deal with climate impacts and disasters in the future. Mitigation ambition of the developing world would be hit hard, unless fast and meaningful action happens on the carbon markets front," said Vaibhav Chaturvedi, Senior Fellow, Council of Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).

Centre outlines steps to update gender after surgery abroad

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Transgender citizens who undergo gender affirmation surgery abroad can re-enter India by submitting a sworn affidavit of gender change along with a certificate from the hospital, the Union government has informed the Delhi High Court. These citizens can subsequently apply for a renewed passport with updated details, it said.

The Ministry of External Affairs has laid down the specific documents required for the change of gender in passports, from transgender to either male or female, the Centre told the court. It said the person needs to submit a "Certificate of Identity for change of gender (form-4), along with identity card (form-6), issued under the Transgender Person (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 read with Transgender Person (Protection of Rights) Rules 2020 in the desired gender".

Alternatively, the person can submit a "Sworn affidavit regarding change in gender and Supporting Certificate/Surgical Reconstruction certificate from the hospital where the applicant underwent medical treatment for the purpose."

Centre calls for comprehensive approach to address impact of climate change on agriculture

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The challenges posed by climate change to the agriculture sector was one of the key themes discussed at *The Hindu businessline* Agri and Commodity Summit 2025 held here on Friday.

At the inaugural session, Union Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi said the Centre had adopted a two-pronged approach – adaptation and mitigation – to address these challenges.

Ashish Kumar Bhutani, Secretary, Union Cooperation Ministry, said primary agricultural cooperative societies (PACS) can play a vital role in building climate resilience in rural India.

Mr. Chaturvedi said the adaptation strategies include creating drought- and flood-resistant crop

varieties, implementing efficient water management techniques, and providing a cushion through crop insurance in the event of extreme natural calamities.

Mitigation efforts

He added that the mitigation efforts include promoting natural farming to reduce chemical input use and improve soil health.

"The government also

aims to use carbon market incentives to encourage farmers to adopt climate-smart practices. This comprehensive approach seeks to ensure food security and farmer livelihoods in the face of a changing climate," he said.

Mr. Bhutani said climate change was impacting everyone and collective action should be taken. "The crop insurance scheme covers

sation to fund climate-resilient activities were the four pillars necessary to address challenges posed by climate change. The summit saw sessions on irregular monsoons, climate change and new seeds, digitisation, bio energy, and price risk management. There was also an interaction with drone *didis* and solar *didis*.

The Hindu businessline Agri and Commodity Summit 2025 is presented by NABARD and co-powered by the Federation of Seed Industry of India in association with Yara.

The associate partners are NCDEX, Indofl, Bayer, Hindustan Urvarak and Rasayan Ltd., Kribhco Agri, NSE, Aqua Group, and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

The banking partner is State Bank of India and the broadcast partner is NDTV Profit.

FAITH

Efficacy of Govinda namam

Srivilliputtur in Tamil Nadu is a hallowed ground since two Vaishnavite azhwars, Periazhwar and Andal, lived there, experienced God and guided devotees on how to attain His feet. Andal in particular, made God more accessible to everyone, made Govinda a household name that one could reach out to in good times and bad, said Damal Perundevi.

Waking up the neighbourhood with her verses in the month of Margazhi, she begins with the concept of observing *vrat* (fasting), she says, "*nei unnom, pal unnom*" (for-saking ghee and milk), giving up rich clothes, all in the quest to attain Govinda's feet. Towards the end of the month, she sings, "*Koodarai vellum seer Govinda*." She references Krishna's fete in saving the people by holding aloft the Govardhan hill, bringing an egoistic Indra to his knees who then showers Krishna with the waters of the holy Ganga, an occurrence celebrated as Govinda Pabbatishekam. The *vrat* is over and they are ready to partake together, as a community, of sweet Pongal (*akkarakavasal*), prepared with milk and ghee that runs down a devotee's elbow while eating, along with Govinda. They who gave up everything in the beginning of the month are now ready to bedeck themselves, but to their joy when they look in the mirror to adorn the head piece, the arm band, the bracelet, the waist belt and anklets, they see only Govinda reflected in the mirror; they experience His presence. Andal says He is capable of defeating those who are not virtuous and equally captivated by the faith reposed in Him by devotees and invites everyone to come together and find lasting happiness in Govinda *namam*.

INBRIEF



10 grounded SpiceJet aircraft to be back in air by mid-April

SpiceJet on Friday said it will bring 10 grounded aircraft back into service by mid-April. Since raising ₹3,000 crore through a qualified institutional placement in September, the airline has added seven aircraft and ungrounded three of its planes that needed maintenance, allowing the airline to grow its active fleet size to 28 aircraft. The rebuilding of the fleet has allowed the airline to either add or restore a total of 60 flights over the past three months, it said.

Centre releases ₹1.73 lakh cr. in tax devolution to States

The Centre on Friday released tax devolution of ₹1.73 lakh crore to State governments to accelerate capital expenditure and finance welfare activities. The Union government has released tax devolution of ₹1,73,030 crore to state governments on Friday, as against the devolution of ₹89,086 crore in December 2024, the finance ministry said in a statement. Currently, 41% of taxes collected by the Centre is devolved in instalments among states during a fiscal year. PTI

Vodafone exits Indus Towers, sells shares worth ₹2,800 cr.

British telecom firm Vodafone has sold its entire stake in Indus Towers for ₹2,800 crore, the telecom infrastructure firm said on Friday. Vodafone has sold 7.92 crore, or 3% stake in Indus Towers, and used ₹890 crore from the proceeds to clear lenders dues, the company said in a regulatory filing. The company held 3% stake through its indirect wholly-owned subsidiaries, Omega Telecom Holdings Pvt. Ltd. and Usha Martin Telematics Limited. PTI

Lakshmanan, trusted pillar of TVS legacy, passes away at 92

OBITUARY



H. Lakshmanan

H. Lakshmanan (92), former Executive Director of Sundaram-Clayton and a towering figure in the TVS family for almost seven decades, passed away on Friday due to age-related ailments. He is survived by his wife, a son, and two daughters.

Beginning his career at the age of 20 as a typist, Mr. Lakshmanan rose through the ranks to become the most trusted confidant of T. S. Srinivasan, the late patriarch of the TVS Group and founder of TVS Motor, and his son, Venu Srinivasan, chairman emeritus of TVS Motor Company. Mr. Lakshmanan embodied loyalty, trust, integrity and management excellence throughout his journey in the TVS Group.

Role in Padi unit

He played a critical role in the establishment of the Padi manufacturing unit in the 60s. He worked alongside T. S. Srinivasan from 1960 to 1980 and later with Mr. Venu Srinivasan, making significant contributions until 2015.

"His remarkable acumen allowed him to rise rapidly within the organisation. I would describe him as the 'Chanakya' of the TVS industrial empire," recalled Mr. Venu Srinivasan.

Mr. Lakshmanan was pivotal in crafting joint venture agreements with leading global partners such as Dunlop for wheels, Clayton for air brakes, Girling for Brakes India and Lucas for Lucas-TVS. He also

played a critical role in negotiating high-stakes ventures such as the Suzuki joint venture and BMW licensing agreement for TVS Motor.

Labour talks

He was also deeply engaged in labour negotiations, a critical aspect of TVS operations. Starting in the late 70s, he dealt with unions, resolved labour issues and managed key HR and banking concerns. Opposition union leaders, after admitting their mistakes, sought voluntary retirement and expressed their gratitude to him. His calm yet resolute approach earned him immense respect, even from adversaries," said Mr. Srinivasan.

INTUC leader R. Kuppusamy hailed him as the "Bhishma Pitamaha" of TVS, acknowledging his relentless efforts in improving workers' lives and ensuring the company's growth. He acknowledged Mr. Lakshmanan's role in resolving labour disputes in Chennai during 1970s and Hosur in the late 80s.

He rose from a humble background to become the ED, leaving a legacy of dedication, sharp insight and strong values, said Mr. Kuppusamy.

(The writer is with The Hindu Businessline)

Rupee sinks 18 paise to close at a record low of 86.04/\$

Surging crude oil prices, negative sentiment in domestic equity markets blamed for the fall; Dollar strengthens on higher demand amid anticipation of trade curbs after U.S. presidency change

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI

The rupee declined 18 paise to breach the 86-mark against the U.S. dollar for the first time on Friday as it failed to resist pressure from stronger American currency and huge outflow of foreign funds. The local unit settled at 86.04 against the U.S. currency.

Surging crude oil prices overseas and negative sentiment in domestic equity markets also weighed on the Indian currency, forex traders said.

Also, dollar strength-



Currency crash: Weak tone in domestic markets and persistent FII outflows may keep putting downside pressure on rupee. FILE PHOTO

thened on increased demand amid the anticipation of restrictive trade measures by the new U.S. administration after Donald Trump takes over as

President on January 20. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.88, hit an intra-day peak of 85.85 before breaching the 86-mark

to settle at the lowest-ever level of 86.04.

On Thursday, the rupee gained 5 paise to settle at 85.86 against the U.S. dollar.

Anuj Choudhary, research analyst, Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said the rupee hit record low as domestic markets continued to slip and FII outflows sustained. Strong U.S. dollar and crude oil price surge also pressured the rupee.

"Weak tone in the domestic markets, a strong greenback and persistent FII outflows may continue to put downside pressure on the rupee," he said.



Bim Bissell

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	FRIDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	7,739	-0.31
US Dollar	86.04	-0.20
Gold	80,550	0.31
Brent oil	78.63	2.30

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	2374.40	-103.50
Adani Ports	1112.20	-20.15
Apollo Hosp	7036.75	-54.80
Asian Paints	2320.75	-29.45
Axis Bank	1040.70	-21.05
Bajaj Auto	8764.00	-71.85
Bajaj Finance	1701.25	-10.95
Bharti Airtel	271.00	-10.25
Bharti Finserve	7288.05	-10.60
Britannia Ind	4939.20	-12.90
Cipla	1468.80	-19.40
Coal India	368.50	-3.70
Dr Reddy's Lab	1354.40	-17.20
Eicher Motors	5058.45	-81.45
Grasim Ind	2364.10	-46.30
HCL Tech	1995.10	-60.30
HDFC Bank	1656.75	-11.05
HDFC Life	608.65	-3.55
Hero MotoCorp	4122.20	-19.05
Hindalco	574.45	-14.80
Hind Unilever	2442.05	-6.65
ICICI Bank	1249.85	-12.55
IndusInd Bank	937.60	-43.30
Infosys	1966.95	-49.65
ITC	444.90	-5.20
JSW Steel	900.10	9.15
Kotak Bank	1756.20	-34.00
L&T	3536.15	-8.25
M&M	3092.85	-33.65
Maurti Suzuki	11631.10	-109.45
NestleIndia	2247.90	-8.15
NTPC	308.25	-12.10
ONGC	263.02	-0.16
PowerGrid Corp	299.70	-5.55
SBI Life	1241.90	-12.85
State Bank	743.25	-17.20
Shriram Finance	1478.30	9.85
Sun Pharma	1784.80	-41.55
TataConsumerProduct	972.80	2.70
Tata Motors	774.65	-5.45
Tata Steel	127.43	-2.50
TCS	4265.65	-226.80
Tech Mahindra	1705.60	-62.80
Titan	3440.25	-46.80
Trent Ltd.	6584.10	-37.60
UltraTech Cement	10865.20	-394.60
Wipro	300.55	8.25

Remembering the 'tireless patron' of FabIndia

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Few redefined traditional Indian textile aesthetics in the vocabulary of the modern quite like Bimla 'Bim' Bissell, the visionary revivalist and the driving force behind the crafts-rooted 'everything Indian' brand FabIndia.

On Friday, her friends, contemporaries and the brand she propelled to greater heights remembered the dynamic woman. Ms. Bissell died here on Thursday. She was 93.

"A spirited promoter and patron of Fabindia ever since her husband, John, brought his vision of working with India's craftspeople to life," Fabindia wrote on Instagram.

Jaya Jaitly, founder of Dastkari Haat Samiti, remembered her friend as the anchor and aesthetic that inspired John Bissell.

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor took to X to mourn the passing of the "doughty, tireless, colourful and sharp-witted Bim Bissell, who did more than anyone to make Fabindia one of India's best-known brands".

Sensex, Nifty extend losses

Sensex and Nifty nursed losses for the third consecutive session on Friday, in lockstep with a weak trend in global equities as concerns over economic growth and quarterly earnings sapped risk appetite. Surging crude prices and a strengthening dollar index hit investor sentiment. PTI

Domestic investors counteracting global trends'

Lalatendu Mishra

MUMBAI

The countervailing force of domestic institutions (DIIs) have given tremendous resilience to the Indian capital markets in the wake of foreign capital outflow as seen in the December quarter of 2024, Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) chairperson Madhava Puri Buch said.

"Electricity demand has grown at a six-month high of 5.3% but petroleum consumption and crude steel output remained subdued at around 2%," said Paras Jasrai, senior economic analyst at India Ratings and Research.

RE-TENDER NOTICE

For complete details and any corrigendum etc. Please visit www.iiserb.ac.in/Tender and www.eprocure.gov.in. e-Tenders can be submitted only on www.tenderword.com/ISERB.

Sr. No.	Name of the Item (s)/Work	Tender No.	Due Date
1.	Providing round the clock contractual security services for the campus at Bhauri Bhopal	IISERB/SP/2024-25/113 dated 09/01/2025	30/01/2025

Stores and Purchase Officer

DEVI AHILYA VISHWAVIDYALAYA

Nalanda Campus, Indore-452001

IT CENTER

No. DAVV/ITC/2025/1 Date : 07.01.2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Online tenders are invited under two bid system (Technical and Financial) for (i) Supply and Installation of Internet Lease line connectivity. (ii) Purchase of SOPHOS firewall license subscription bundle with UTM upgrade. The tender documents may be downloaded from <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> M.P. Madhyam/118247/2025 REGISTRAR

GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH.

JAL SHAKTI DEPARTMENT.

"Notice Inviting e-Tender"

The Executive Engineer JSV Division Jaisingshpur Invites tenders on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractors for the following work (S) through e-tendering process:-

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest Money	Time Limit	Cost of form
1.	Providing FHTC under LWSS Bheri Paprola, LWSS Tira Jhamet, LWSS Dhal Bhalunder, LWSS Dabi, Ocrah, Khurd (covered under LWSS Lahu Sada) LWSS Duhuk Dhalijara, LWSS Kona Pihri in Lambagaon Block In Tehsil Palampur & Jaisingshpur Distt, Kangra(H.P.) (Sub. Head :- Construction of VWSS Building at Jaisingshpur)	2,48,37,367	2,80,875	12 Months (One Years)	5000/-

1>Last date of filling / uploading the tender through e-tendering:- 20.01.2025 upto 05.00 PM. The tender forms and other detailed conditions can be obtained from the website, <http://tptenders.gov.in>.

HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPAK JSV Division, Jaisingshpur Executive Engineer, HP / 4456/24-25

Karnataka Road Development Corporation Limited

(A Government of Karnataka Enterprise)

No. 8, "Samparka Soudha", Dr. Rajkumar Road,

Rajajinagar 1st Block, Bengaluru-560 100. Telefax : 080-22024000

e-mail : krdcld@gmail.com, cekrdc@gmail.com Website:

JERUSALEM

Israel Army killed two kibbutz residents during 2023 attack'



The Israeli military said on Friday that an internal inquiry found it likely that it killed two kibbutz residents as it fought Hamas militants during their October 7, 2023 attack. However, it added that "in both cases, it is not possible to determine with absolute certainty what caused the deaths". AFP

DAMASCUS

Stampede at central Damascus mosque kills four: health official



A stampede at the landmark Umayyad Mosque in Syria's capital on Friday killed four persons, a Damascus health official told state media. Witnesses at the site of the stampede saw large crowds gathered near the mosque because free meals were being handed out. Sixteen persons were injured in the incident. AFP

CARACAS

Maduro inaugurated for a third term, defying evidence of fraud



Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was sworn in for a third six-year term on Friday despite international condemnation of his recent re-election as illegitimate. Aides to opposition leader María Corina Machado said she was briefly detained on Thursday following an anti-government demonstration in Caracas. AP

WASHINGTON

U.S. unveils sweeping sanctions against Russia's energy sector



The U.S. announced widespread sanctions against Russia's energy sector on Friday, designating more than 180 ships and two major oil companies just days before outgoing President Joe Biden leaves office. The U.S. Treasury Department added that the U.K. was also announcing sanctions against the country's oil and gas sector. AFP

Crew makes progress as death count touches 10 in Los Angeles wildfires

The fires have so far destroyed nearly 10,000 structures, with the number only expected to grow; however, a pause in fierce winds have worked to the firefighters' advantage; forecasters predict that strong gusts could return over the weekend

Reuters
LOS ANGELES

A pause in the fierce winds that supercharged the ring of wildfires that devastated Los Angeles this week helped crews make progress in bringing the infernos under control on Friday but strong gusts could return over the weekend, forecasters said.

The fires, which have devastated Los Angeles neighbourhoods on the east and west sides of the city, have so far killed 10 persons and destroyed nearly 10,000 structures, with those figures only ex-



Killer blaze: A firefighter battles the fire in the Angeles National Forest in Altadena, California, on Thursday. REUTERS

pected to increase.

"It looks like an atomic bomb dropped in these areas. I don't expect good news, and we're not look-

ing forward to those numbers," Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said at a press conference late on Thursday, referring to Pac-

ific Palisades in the west and Altadena in the east.

Wind conditions in the Los Angeles area will improve on Friday through the weekend to about 20 mph with gusts between 35 mph to 50 mph, according to the National Weather Service, a far cry from days ago when wind gusts blasted upwards of 80 mph.

Favourable factors

"It's not as gusty so that should help firefighters, hopefully," NWS meteorologist Alison Santorelli said, adding that conditions were still critical with low humidity and dry vegetation.

Even as red flag wind conditions were expected until Friday afternoon, any periods of easing would allow crucial support from the air for firefighters on the ground for aircraft can drop water and fire retardant on the flaming hills. "There's a bit of good news, if there can be," Ms. Santorelli said.

Farther south in San Diego, winds will pick up, with sustained winds of 40 mph and gusts up to 70 mph, creating dangerous fire conditions there over the weekend, she added. As of early Friday, three major fires were still burning in Los Angeles.

Three million Sudan children facing acute malnutrition: UN

Agence France-Presse
PORT SUDAN

An estimated 3.2 million children under the age of five are expected to face acute malnutrition this year in war-torn Sudan, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"Of this number, around 7,72,000 children are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition," Eva Hinds, UNICEF Sudan's Head of Advocacy and Communication, said late on Thursday.

Famine has already gripped five areas across Sudan, according to a report last month by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a UN-



Dire straits: The UN said that around 7,72,000 children are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition. AFP

backed assessment.

Sudan has endured 20 months of war between the Army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), killing tens of thousands and, according to the UN, uprooting 12 million in the world's largest

displacement crisis.

Meanwhile, Medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said it was forced to suspend activities at a key hospital in the capital of war-ravaged Sudan after months of violent attacks.

Curbing hate speech is 'not censorship', says UN rights chief

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

The UN rights chief insisted on Friday that regulating hate speech and harmful content online "is not censorship", days after Meta scrapped its fact-checking programme on Facebook and Instagram citing censorship concerns.

"Allowing hate speech and harmful content online has real world consequences. Regulating such content is not censorship," Volker Turk said on X. "My Office calls for accountability and governance in the digital space."

Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg an-

nounced on Tuesday the group would "get rid of fact-checkers" and replace them with community-based posts, starting in the U.S., complaining the programme had made "too many mistakes and too much censorship". Instead, Meta platforms including Facebook and Instagram, "would use community notes similar to X, starting in the U.S.", he added.

Volker Turk slams Meta's move to call off its fact-checking programme on Facebook, Instagram

Malala Yousafzai to visit native Pakistan for girls' summit

Agence France-Presse
ISLAMABAD

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai will attend an international summit on girls' education hosted by her native Pakistan, where she was nearly killed by militants as a schoolgirl.

Ms. Yousafzai was evacuated from the country in 2012 after being shot by the Taliban and she has returned to the country only a handful of times since.

"I am excited to join Muslim leaders from around the world for a critical conference on girls' education," she said on Friday. "On Sunday, I will speak about protecting rights for all girls to go to



school, and why leaders must hold the Taliban accountable for their crimes against Afghan women & girls."

Pakistan's Education Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said the Taliban government in Afghanistan has been invited to attend, although Islamabad has not received an invitation.

South Korea's presidential security chief quits post

Associated Press
SEOUL

South Korea's acting leader on Friday accepted the resignation of the chief of the presidential security service, Park Jong-joon, as he faced police questioning over how his forces blocked efforts of law enforcement officials who tried to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol last week.

The acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, also expressed regret over the clashes between law enforcement officials and the presidential security service and called for lawmakers to reach a bipartisan agreement to launch an independent investigation.

SRI VENKATESWARA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, TIRUPATI (A University established by an Act of A.P. State Legislature) TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS

Separate e-tenders are invited on ap-e procurement platform (Two bid system) for purchase of Medical Equipment and Medical Journals. For details log on to the website <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> & <https://svimstpt.apnic.in>.

The Director-cum-VC reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

DONATE LIBERALLY TO "SRI BALAJI AROGYA VARAPRASADINI SCHEME"

Roc.No.P1/19/eprocurement/PD/SVIMS/10, Dt/07-01-2025 Sd/- DIRECTOR-CUM-V.C.

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When rivals turn allies: unpacking the Djokovic-Murray coaching arrangement

At 37, Djokovic is in the last leg of his career, no longer the dominant force he once was. As tennis gets younger, taller and more powerful, he needs fresh solutions if he wants to break his tie with Margaret Court's tally of 24 Majors. Which is why his latest collaboration, set to debut at the Australian Open, is so mouth-watering

N. Sudarshan

Hiring a coach is not an exact science. There is no single foundational principle that guides athletes through this process and there is no overarching hypothesis against which a coach's worth can be tested. It's more abstract, less quantifiable.

In an individual discipline like tennis, it is all the more difficult. There is a need for personalities to match, and cohesion, trust and mutual respect are non-negotiable. If anything, luck often plays an outsized role in zeroing in on the right person.

Anticipated storyline

Against this backdrop, how does one look at the Novak Djokovic-Andy Murray combination? The mouthwatering – at least on paper – player-coach partnership will debut at the Australian Open, the season's first Grand Slam tournament, that gets underway on Sunday, and is already one of the most anticipated storylines going into Melbourne.

Born a week apart in May 1987, the Serb and the Brit have known each other since childhood. And for two years in 2015-16, when Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal were off pace, theirs was men's tennis' pre-eminent rivalry, featuring 12 clashes, nine of them in finals, including three at

[Murray] has a unique perspective on my game as one of the greatest rivals I've had. I love talking to him about the nuances... how I can gain an inch. Every percentage counts at the highest level

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

the Major events.

Murray is a three-time Slam champion, eight-time runner-up and former World No. 1. In fact, the 37-year-old was an active player – though far diminished from his glory days – until August 2024. It is perhaps this pedigree, champion mentality and intricate knowledge of the ever-shifting sands of modern-day tennis that prompted Djokovic to turn to Murray.

At 37, Djokovic is in the last leg of his career. The 24-time Major winner hasn't won a Tour-level title since November 2023 and is in the midst of his worst run at the Slams since 2016-18 when he went eight events without a trophy. He is entering the Australian Open – a title he has acquired a whopping 10 times – ranked No. 7 in the world. Starting 2008, the year of his first triumph Down Under, only once has Djokovic touched down in Melbourne ranked outside the top-five – in 2018 when he lost in the round of 16.

Djokovic is also the last man standing from the famed 'Big Three' era, hoping to delay the inevitable takeover of the sport by the scintillating duo of Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner. As the sport gets younger, taller and more powerful – Djokovic is four years older than the second oldest man in the top-10, Grigor Dimitrov, and doesn't have a height advantage against six of the 10 best players – he needs fresh solutions if he is to overhaul Margaret Court's 24-Slam count.

"He [Murray] has a unique perspective on my game as one of the greatest rivals that I've had," Djokovic told *atptour.com*. "He knows the pros and cons of my game and has also played until recently. So he knows all the other best players, the youngsters, and their weaknesses and strengths. I love talking to him about the nuances, the details, how I can improve, how I can gain an inch, more court positioning, compared to my opponent. And every percentage counts at the highest level."

Picking them right

What gives hope is the Serb's own record in picking coaches. Of course, during his previous slump (2016-18), he flirted with Andre Agassi for roughly a year and sought philosophical answers to his on-court travails from a quasi-spiritual guru Pepe Imaz. But outside of these, his association with coach Marian Vajda has been long-standing, and he struck gold with German legend Boris Becker and Croat Goran Ivanisevic.

Becker had a hand in Djokovic securing six Majors while Ivanisevic helped him bag 12. These appointments, when initially announced, seemed to defy conventional logic, for Becker and Ivanisevic were predominantly attacking players and Djokovic a defensive baseliner.

However, over time, their imprints were visible in Djokovic's progress. In the presence of Becker, he improved his forecourt skills a great deal, with his low volleys standing out. With Ivanisevic in tow, Djokovic bettered his serve immeasurably and also mastered the art of clutch serving. It was no surprise that from 2011 to 2024, Djokovic reached 10 Wimbledon finals and suc-

ceeded in seven of them.

"Andy is a student of the game, both in terms of tactics, and health and fitness," said Australian doubles great Todd Woodbridge. "He is infatuated with tennis. Andy will look at all the data and he'll provide all the statistics to put into the tactics of every match."

"Him joining up with Novak is not just fascinating, but a smart decision from Novak, because who else can coach Novak? He has done everything more than any other person. You put Andy in there, who has won Wimbledon, US Open, Olympics and Davis Cup... he understands the stretch, the pressure and what Novak needs now because he has just been through it."

But such seemingly straightforward fixes can also fail; Djokovic's own association with Agassi is a prime example. After he won the 2016 French Open and became the first man since Rod Laver to hold all four Majors at once, Djokovic experienced a severe lack of motivation. Agassi couldn't bail him out despite having overcome the feeling of emptiness in his own career after he reached the pinnacle of the world rankings.

"In any coach-student relationship you need trust and trust can take time," said Agassi of Djokovic's decision to choose Murray. "It's not about what I [as a coach] know that changes your career. Information doesn't lead to transformation. You need to encounter the right information at work and then you might transform. In order to encounter it, you have to have full buy-in. I'm sure there's going to be a lot of trust immediately. We'll see how the results go."

Wanted: a reassuring presence

It is also worth remembering that Djokovic, arguably, has the most technically sound game in the history of men's tennis. So he will not require a father figure who radically reshapes his court craft but a friend who can put a casual arm around the shoulder and help pick the right piece to finish a complex jigsaw. More a reassuring presence like how Stefan Edberg was to Federer in 2014 when he nudged the Swiss great to embrace a larger racquet head (switching from 90 square inches to 97) to great success.

"Andy won't have any secrets, but there are a lot of small details that he will know that maybe Novak doesn't think about," Swedish great Mats Wilander told *Eurosport*. "We always talk about peaking, and Murray knows how to peak. If you win the Olympic Games twice, Wimbledon twice and you are from Great Britain, you understand how to be at your best at the most crucial times."

"Murray and Djokovic also had similar behaviour towards their coaching boxes. It looked like it was a little bit of complaining or it could have just been about explaining how they were feeling. It will be interesting to see how Murray will react when Djokovic throws his arms up and says 'what am I supposed to be doing now?' It is going to be one of the most entertaining and interesting relationships."

STACKING UP



ATP Men's Top 15				
#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Jannik Sinner	23	11,830	17
2	Alexander Zverev	27	7,635	21
3	Carlos Alcaraz	21	7,010	18
4	Taylor Fritz	27	5,350	22
5	Daniil Medvedev	28	5,030	17
6	Casper Ruud	26	4,210	25
7	Novak Djokovic	37	3,900	18
8	Alex de Minaur	25	3,535	23
9	Andrey Rublev	27	3,520	27
10	Grigor Dimitrov	33	3,200	19
11	Stefanos Tsitsipas	26	3,195	22
12	Tommy Paul	27	3,145	21
13	Holger Rune	21	2,910	23
14	Ugo Humbert	26	2,765	26
15	Jack Draper	23	2,685	22

Top Indians ▶

Sunit Nagal
Rank 96 ▲ 2 spots

Mukund Sasikumar
Rank 371 ▼ 4 spots

WTA Women's Top 15				
#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Aryna Sabalenka	26	9,656	20
2	Iga Swiatek	23	8,120	17
3	Coco Gauff	20	6,888	21
4	Jasmine Paolini	29	5,399	20
5	Qinwen Zheng	22	5,325	20
6	Elena Rybakina	25	4,821	20
7	Jessica Pegula	30	4,671	18
8	Emma Navarro	23	3,551	25
9	Daria Kasatkina	27	3,368	24
10	Barbara Krejcikova	29	3,214	17
11	Danielle Collins	31	3,147	18
12	Paula Badosa	27	2,908	21
13	Diana Shnaider	20	2,895	27
14	Anna Kalinskaya	26	2,721	20
15	Mirra Andreeva	17	2,665	17

Top Indians ▶

Ankita Raina
Rank 284 ▲ 1 spot

Sahaja Yamalapalli
Rank 314 ▲ 38 spots

English Premier League Standings									
#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Liverpool	19	14	4	1	47	19	28	46
2	Arsenal	20	11	7	2	39	18	21	40
3	N. Forest	20	12	4	4	29	19	10	40
4	Chelsea	20	10	6	4	39	24	15	36
5	Newcastle	20	10	5	5	34	22	12	35
6	Man. City	20	10	4	6	36	27	9	34
7	Bournemouth	20	9	6	5	30	23	7	33
8	Aston Villa	20	9	5	6	30	32	-2	32
9	Fulham	20	7	9	4	30	27	3	30
10	Brighton	20	6	10	4	30	29	1	28
11	Brentford	20	8	3	9	38	35	3	27
12	Tottenham	20	7	3	10	42	30	12	24
13	Man. United	20	6	5	9	23	28	-5	23
14	West Ham	20	6	5	9	24	39	-15	23
15	Crystal Palace	20	4	9	7	21	28	-7	21
16	Everton	19	3	8	8	15	25	-10	17
17	Wolves	20	4	4	12	31	45	-14	16
18	Ipswich Town	20	3	7	10	20	35	-15	16
19	Leicester City	20	3	5	12	23	44	-21	14
20	Southampton	20	1	3	16	12	44	-32	6

Spanish LaLiga Standings									
#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Real Madrid	19	13	4	2	43	19	24	43
2	Atletico Madrid								

Want to second a World champion? 'Put aside your personal preferences and get into the player's shoes,' says Harikrishna

The Indian Grandmaster, once ranked as high as World No. 10, has played a significant role in D. Gukesh and Ju Wenjun rising to the top of the chess world. In this interview, he offers an insight into the life of a second and also talks about how it felt to finally win gold at the Olympiad.

INTERVIEW

P. Harikrishna

P.K. Ajith Kumar

There is a common factor between the men's and women's reigning World chess champions: P. Harikrishna worked as a second to both D. Gukesh and Ju Wenjun. Ju retained the women's title back in 2023, while Gukesh became the youngest World champion in history, at 18, dethroning Ding Liren last month in Singapore.

Harikrishna, who played a significant role in the Chennai youngster's triumph, is looking forward to their meeting in the Dutch village of Wijk aan Zee, where they will come face to face across a chessboard, at the Tata Steel tournament, one of the most prestigious events in the chess calendar. It kicks off on January 17.

One of the most prodigious chess talents to have come out of India, Harikrishna was once the World No. 10. He was also a part of India's gold-medal-winning Olympiad team. The 38-year-old was preparing for Wijk aan Zee at his Prague home when *The Hindu* caught up with him over the phone for an interview. Excerpts:

At Wijk aan Zee, Gukesh will be playing two of his seconds – you and Vincent Keymer.

Yes, we could not meet Gukesh after he won the World Championship. So it will be nice to meet him, looking forward to it very much.

There is such a strong field at Wijk aan Zee...

The field is very strong actually, with many strong young players and experienced ones as well. Apart from Gukesh, there are players like Fabiano Caruana, Arjun Erigaisi, Nodirbek Abdusattorov, R. Praggnanandhaa, Anish Giri, Wei Yi... I have been preparing for the tournament, I want to give my best. The last time I played was in 2021. And I had played a couple of times earlier as well.

Wei and you worked together as seconds for Ju for her last World title match...

Yes, for her match against Lei Tingjie, but unfortunately in 2023, there was not much time. We had only three months to prepare. But generally, the preparation should be around six months.

With Gukesh, it was more than that, wasn't it?

Yes. I began working with him actually for the Candidates tournament [held in April in Toronto]. Once he was sure of qualifying for the Candi-

RAJEEV BHATT



RAJEEV BHATT

We were analysing in the best possible way so we could give the ideas to Gukesh... And to make that idea as clean as possible was our task

sleep we could prepare.

Gajewski would, in their evenings, ask us to check something. And then he gave a lot of valuable inputs. And along the lines, we developed which idea could be interesting for Gukesh to play the next day. And to make that idea as clean as possible was our task.

Sometimes we could come up with a better idea, sometimes maybe not convincing. So we had a lot of discussions, a lot of analyses. We did it together. Apart from the work we did in the openings, Gukesh played a lot of blitz games as training.

Yes, Gajewski told me that Gukesh was very well prepared for the tie-breaks if required, by playing hundreds of blitz games.

But, openings are the main part of the preparation. And, you know, with so many strong players in the team, many ideas come up. I also had another role, which was to analyse some main games and some positions. And we used to have this during camps also.

The deep preparation in the opening seems to have paid off for Gukesh, as he looked so sure, making his opening moves quickly in most of the games, which gave him the clear advantage in time over Ding. You must be happy with the way the openings went for Gukesh.

Absolutely. For us seconds, it is not the best opening that he remembers, but the one which he feels good about. That is the most important. He played well in the openings which we discussed. Right from the beginning we decided to have some human touch, because the computer can suggest many, many things. So, we made sure that we equalised not just with the help of engines, but that also we should take some risks. I think that really worked. And we looked at some ideas from games played at the lower levels, so they were not novelties but they helped.

The first game, which Gukesh lost, was a little bit of a setback, I have to say. But, after that, you could see that whatever openings we were choosing, he was feeling good, except Game 12. In that game, Ding also played quite well, I have to add.

He did, almost flawless he was. And that was possibly the best game Ding has played in recent times.

Yes. And credit to Gukesh for being able to recover from that.

How did you find this process of being a second? Is it tiring and how is it different from being a player?

As a player, you have your own choices, but as a second, you need to put aside your personal preferences and go into the shoes of the player and look at what is best. At the same time, you should not lose your strength because you look into what the player wants. You should also use your own strength, to understand the opening or choice of ideas. Yes, it is definitely quite tiring.

How important was the Olympiad gold for you as a player? You have been playing at the Olympiads for a long, long time.

Yes. My first Olympiad was in 2000 when I was 14. And I played all the Olympiads after that except the one in 2014. Two times we finished fourth when I was a member, once in Baku in 2016. And the second time was in Chennai in 2022. Thankfully, the B team won the bronze in Chennai, but the A team, which I was part of, finished fourth. The Olympiad had been the only team competition in which I didn't win a medal. I have won medals at the Asian Games and Asian Team Championships. So I am glad that now I have an Olympiad medal.

GAME THEORY



Trophy collectors Down Under: women's edition

With the Australian Open starting on Sunday, we take a look at the most successful women's singles champions at the event. The tournament began as the Australasian Championships in 1905, with the women's singles first contested in 1922. It became the Australian Championships in 1927 and took its final form as the Australian Open when the Open Era commenced in 1969

MOST SINGLES TITLES

Player	Titles	Editions won
Margaret Court	11	1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1973
Serena Williams	7	2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2015, 2017
Nancye Wynne	6	1937, 1940, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1951
Daphne Akhurst	5	1925, 1926, 1928, 1929, 1930
Evonne Goolagong	4	1974, 1975, 1976, 1977(Dec)
Steffi Graf	4	1988, 1989, 1990, 1994
Monica Seles	4	1991, 1992, 1993, 1996
Joan Hartigan	3	1933, 1934, 1936
Martina Navratilova	3	1981, 1983, 1985
Martina Hingis	3	1997, 1998, 1999
Margaret Molesworth	2	1922, 1923
Coral Buttsworth	2	1931, 1932
Thelma Coyne	2	1952, 1954
Mary Carter	2	1956, 1959
Chris Evert	2	1982, 1984
Hana Mandlikova	2	1980, 1987
Jennifer Capriati	2	2001, 2002
Victoria Azarenka	2	2012, 2013
Naomi Osaka	2	2019, 2021
Aryna Sabalenka	2	2023, 2024



PICTURE THIS



Pretend play

One sign you had switched from football fan to football addict — in the days before the FIFA video game series — was when you began flicking miniature figures with your fingers on tabletops.

Among the many versions of tabletop football, a memorable

variant is Subbuteo, a game invented in the 1940s in Royal Tunbridge Wells, England.

The game's name comes from the Latin name 'Falcao subbuteo' for the bird of prey known as the Eurasian hobby, a small falcon. The game's creator, Peter Adolf, wasn't able to trademark 'Hobby',

which prompted the avian origin of the name.

Not all games of Subbuteo, however, are played on theatrical handmade pitches, such as the one in this photograph from Essex.

In the game, players maintain possession as long as the figure they flick touches the ball and the ball does not subsequently hit an opposing figure; shots on goal can only be taken after the ball crosses the 'shooting line', which is equidistant between the half-way line and the goal line. The goalkeeper figure is manoeuvred with a rod that fits underneath the goal.

SOURCE: AUSTRALIAN OPEN

GAMEPLAN

I contributed in the team's win, that matters the most: Tejal



X@BCCIWOMEN

Middle-order batter Tejal Hasabnis made a memorable comeback, scoring her maiden fifty as she finished off the chase with an unbeaten 53 in the first ODI against Ireland. "I feel great, happy that I contributed in team's win, that matters the most. My gameplan was simple, I love chasing."

LANDMARK

Smriti becomes second Indian woman to cross 4,000-run mark



FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

India skipper Smriti Mandhana, during her 29-ball 41 in the first ODI against Ireland, crossed the 4,000-run landmark. She became the second Indian after former captain Mithali Raj (7,805) to achieve the feat. Smriti (95 innings) is the third fastest to reach 4,000 runs after Australia's Belinda Clark (86) and Meg Lanning (89).

SERIOUS CHARGE

Djokovic claims he was 'poisoned' before 2022 AO deportation



AP

Novak Djokovic has claimed that he was "poisoned" by lead and mercury in his food while he was briefly held in Melbourne in 2022 before being deported on the eve of the Australian Open. "I had some discoveries when I came back to Serbia. I never told this to anybody publicly, but I had a really high level of lead and mercury."

TOP HONOUR

Neeraj named best male javelin thrower by *Track and Field News*



FILE PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

Neeraj Chopra has been named the best male javelin thrower in the world in 2024 by 'Track and Field News'. Neeraj, who was beaten by Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem for the Olympic gold medal in August last year, pipped two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada for the top spot in the 2024 rankings published by the magazine.

Defence holds firm as Dragons pip Bengal Tigers

Goals from Karthi, Uttam help the Southern team emerge victorious and climb to the top of the pile; the opposition pays a heavy price for making a hash of as many as 12 penalty corners

HIL**Y.B. Sarangi**
ROURKELA

Tamil Nadu Dragons' solid defence helped it register a 2-1 win over Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers in a captivating contest of the Hockey India League at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here on Friday.

Dragons' third win enabled it to leapfrog Tigers and take the top spot. Tigers suffered their second straight loss. In the goalless first quarter, Dragons raised the tempo and got two short corners but could not utilise them.

Dragons did not have to wait for long, though. Inside a crowded 'D', Uttam Singh skillfully supplied the ball from the goalline on the left with a reverse hit and Karthi Selvam touched in to provide the breakthrough.

In the last six minutes, Dragons was down to nine and even conceded a penalty corner, but a calm backline withstood the



Opening salvo: Karthi drew first blood for Dragons in the 16th minute. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

pressure. The composure and alertness of captain Amit Rohidas, Chandan Yadav and David Harte saw off some nerve-wracking moments close to half-time.

Tigers replied strongly, securing two consecutive short corners and eventually a penalty stroke. Rupinder Pal Singh deceived Harte to shoot home to the Irishman's left.

Dragons, which had a close shave as Tim Cross's hit finding the crossbar, regained its lead as Uttam

slotted in a Moritz Ludwig cross that came through Nathan Ephraums' deflection.

Tigers constantly pushed to get three more short corners, but Dragons' formidable defence, studded with world-class first rusher Rohidas and seasoned goalkeeper Harte, did not give up.

Tigers had a golden opportunity to draw parity when they were awarded a penalty stroke in the 44th minute following a successful referral, but Rupinder

hit wide. The keen tussle continued as Dragons forward Abharan Sudev's goal was disallowed in the final quarter.

Tigers, who paid the price for wasting 12 penalty corners, entered the circle several times, but could not get the desired result even though Dragons played the two minutes with nine players.

The result: Tamil Nadu Dragons 2 (Karthi 16, Uttam 37) bt Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers 1 (Rupinder 35).

Satwik-Chirag duo through to semifinals



Staying focused: Chirag and Satwik had a battle on their hands.

Press Trust of India
KUALA LUMPUR

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty advanced to the semifinals of the Malaysia Open with a gritty victory here on Friday.

The seventh-seeded Indians battled for 49 minutes to secure a 26-24, 21-15 win over the Malaysian duo of Yew Sin Ong and Ee Yi Teo in the quarterfinals of the Super 1000 tournament.

The opening game was a nail-biter, with both pairs keeping the contest evenly poised. The Indians held a narrow 11-9 lead at the in-

interval and extended it to 18-16, but the Malaysians rallied, earning three consecutive points to level at 19-19 and even snatched a 20-19 lead.

Undeterred, Satwik and Chirag displayed remarkable composure, saving four consecutive game points before closing out the first game 26-24.

In the second game, the Malaysian pair started strong, leading for most of the game up to the interval with an 11-8 advantage.

However, Satwik and Chirag won 13 of the next 17 points to seal the match and book their third consecutive semifinal berth.

National Tennis Centre shuts shop, talent pipeline left high and dry

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Exactly four years after it was launched with the aim of producing a pipeline of talent to replenish the barren terrain of singles tennis in India, the National Tennis Centre (NTC) in New Delhi has ceased operations as on December 31, 2024.

The programme was headed by Zeehan Ali who had moved from Bengaluru lock, stock and barrel. Zeehan was India's Davis Cup coach from 2013 and had resigned in August last year.

Sources told *The Hindu* that the move to close the NTC came as a shock and it was conveyed to those working there, Zeehan included, via a terse email, without specifying any reasons.

Calls to Anil Dhupar, the then secretary-general of the AITA, went unanswered.

It is to be noted that the administration of the AITA is currently in limbo, with the elections held on September 28 yet to be ratified by the Delhi High Court.

A petition filed by former players Somdev Devvarman and Purav Raja alleging violation of the Sports



Sunrise to sunset: Players and coaches during good times at the National Tennis Centre in New Delhi. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Code by the AITA is pending.

The decision to close the NTC was taken at the Annual General Meeting held on September 28.

The NTC was set up to give the talented players, who would have otherwise found costs prohibitive, a chance to excel.

It provided accommodation, coaches, fitness trainers and other services to athletes from around the country.

There was also a pay-and-play component, but at subsidised rates.

Digvijay Pratap Singh, who made his Davis Cup debut against Morocco in Lucknow in 2023, and 21-year-old Karan Singh, who

has been named for the tie against Togo in February, came through the NTC.

But, in the last year, it is understood that the overall standards had gone down, so much so that the centre didn't even have a physio.

"At one point, we had close to 45 to 50 of India's best junior and senior players, leaving aside the top-five like Sasikumar Mukund and Sumit Nagal," said the source.

"We had the best players in the country training together, a system that has worked wonders in countries like the United States, China and many European nations.

"We produced 10 National champions in diffe-

rent age groups in the first three years.

"But that vision became distorted. As players graduated out of the juniors, they needed more support. But what we promised them, things like a travelling coach, expenses for trips abroad, never materialised and players started leaving."

Midway, the AITA decided that the NTC should have U-12 and U-14 players, and to accommodate them, some of the senior players were asked to leave.

Towards the end, the NTC had solely become a pay-and-play academy, militating against its found-

Punjab FC rallies to hold NorthEast United



Late strike: Punjab FC players celebrate the equaliser. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ISL**Sports Bureau**
GUWAHATI

Punjab FC rallied to hold NorthEast United FC 1-1 in the Indian Super League at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium here on Friday.

Punjab had only two shots on target, but an 82nd-minute equaliser by Khaiminthang Lhungdim proved enough for it to end a four-game losing streak and snatch a point.

The Highlanders were on the offensive from the start. The breakthrough came in the 24th minute through Alaaeddine Ajaraie who evaded being caught offside and tapped the ball into the bottom right corner.

Punjab reaped the rewards of fresh legs as the game entered the final stages. F. Muhammad Suhail was introduced in the

75th minute, and made a big impact seven minutes later. Picking up the ball on the left flank, he outpaced the NorthEast United FC defensive line and burst into the attacking third before unleashing a shot that required a diving Gurmeet Singh to block it. The goalkeeper didn't make a clear save, though, and the ball fell at the feet of Lhungdim on the right side of the box who slotted it into the bottom right corner.

Punjab resorted to defensive tactics in the finishing minutes though, with Lhungdim getting sent off immediately afterwards for a second yellow card.

NorthEast United, which has 23 points from 15 matches, occupies the fifth spot. Punjab remains in eighth place with 19 points from 14 games.

The result: NorthEast United FC 1 (Ajaraie 24) drew with Punjab FC (Lhungdim 82).

IN BRIEF



Aaron retires from "representative cricket"

Injury-prone India pacer Varun Aaron on Friday announced his retirement from "representative cricket" after his home State Jharkhand's campaign ended in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy. The 35-year-old, who made his international debut in 2011, played nine ODIs and as many Tests for India. He had retired from red ball cricket last year. "For the past 20 years, I have lived, breathed, and thrived on the rush of bowling fast. Today, with immense gratitude, I officially announce my retirement from representative cricket," Aaron posted on his Instagram account.

Bengal paddlers beat TN in youth boys' team final

Bengal, seeded one, beat Tamil Nadu 3-0 in the youth boys' u-19 team final, to secure the coveted 86th UTT junior and youth National table tennis championships held in Vadodara on Friday.

The results (final): Bengal bt Tamil Nadu 3-0 (Ankur Bhattacharjee bt M.R. Balamurugan 12-10, 11-9, 11-9; Punit Biswas bt P.B. Abhinandhan 9-11, 11-8, 5-11, 11-9, 11-9; Shankadip Das bt Preyesh Raj Suresh 11-9, 11-7, 11-9).



TN regains Cooch Behar Trophy after a 33-year gap

After a 33-year wait, Tamil Nadu clinched a title in the red-ball format when it won on first-innings lead against Gujarat after the Under-19 Cooch Behar Trophy final ended in a draw in Ahmedabad on Friday.

The scores: Gujarat 380 & 172/7 dec. in 25.1 overs (Maulyaraj Chavda 49, Rudra P. Patel 33, Nishit Ghohil 42) drew with Tamil Nadu 413 in 150.1 overs (R.K. Jayant 91, R. Pravin 42, Keval Patel 3/16, Khilan Patel 5/164) & 55/1 in 21 overs. TN won on first innings lead.

LIVE TELECAST

Sri Lanka vs New Zealand: 3rd ODI, Sony Sports Ten 5 (SD & HD), LIV, Prime Video, 6.30 a.m.
Vijay Hazare Trophy: JioCinema, 9 a.m.
Badminton: Malaysia Open, Sports 18-3 & Hotstar, 9.30 a.m.
ISL: Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 5 & 7.30 p.m.
Hockey: HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6 & 8.15 p.m.
LaLiga: gxr.world, 6.30, 8.45, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)
Tennis: Australian Open, Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 5.30 a.m. (Sunday)

Lakshya, Govind advance

Press Trust of India

BAREILLY

Defending champion Lakshya Chahar (80kg) beat Railways' Sahil by a unanimous decision as boxers from traditional powerhouse Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) continued to dominate the senior men's National Championship here.

Railways' Govind Sahani (60kg) continued his impressive run beating Gourav Mazumder of Assam 5-0.

It was also a productive day for Punjab's boxers with Gopi securing a well-earned victory in the fly-weight (50kg) category, while Jayshandeep Singh showcased his skills to triumph in the bantamweight (55kg) division.

Nikhil claimed a decisive win in the lightweight (60kg) category, while Kanwarpreet Singh was impressive performance in the super heavyweight (+90kg) division.

CM YK



In-form Varun could be a dark horse as wrist-spin option for Champions Trophy

The 33-year-old, who tops the Hazare Trophy charts with 18 scalps in six matches, has been focusing on getting over-spin in his deliveries

CRICKET

S. Dipak Ragav

VADODARA

In the highly competitive Indian cricket arena, getting a second chance with the national team can be difficult, especially for players over 30. Varun Chakaravarthy, however, has managed to do just that.

In 2021, the Tamil Nadu spinner made his international debut in T20s and played six games, including three at the 2021 T20 World Cup.

However, he managed only two wickets before being dropped.

Over the next three years, the tweaker worked on his game, adding new weapons to his arsenal and found his mojo again by taking 41 wickets for Kolk-

ta Knight Riders in the last two editions of the IPL.

This helped Varun return to the T20 squad last year, and he has since played the entire series against Bangladesh and South Africa. His second innings in national colours has proven remarkably fruitful, as he has taken 17 wickets in seven outings, including a maiden five-for against the Proteas at Gqeberha.

Even as he cemented his place in T20Is, Varun has continued his good form in the Vijay Hazare Trophy for TN.

On Thursday, he scalped his second five-wicket haul of the season, albeit in a losing cause in the pre-quarterfinals against Rajasthan. His efforts took him to the top of the charts with 18 scalps in six matches, prompting TN head coach L. Balaji to ob-



I am still learning, and I am doing well

serve that the mystery spinner has done well to find success in the one-dayers and is shedding the perception of being a T20 bowler.

More importantly, the 33-year-old couldn't have asked for a better time to up his game in this format, with the Champions Trophy up next month.

Considering there is still no clarity on Kuldeep Yadav's fitness, Varun could be a dark horse as a wrist-spin option for the mini-World Cup.

"I am still learning, and I am doing well. I feel good about my bowling, but there is a long way to go," said Varun when asked about his game.

On the changes he had made in the intervening three years, Varun explained that he had to focus on getting over-spin in his deliveries to succeed at the international level.

"The one thing I understood after the 2021 World Cup was that bowling side-spin would not work at the highest level because the pitches were very placid.

So I went back to the drawing room and started thinking about what to do, seeing a lot of YouTube videos. Over-spin has more revolution, so the ball dips more. And when it dips, it extracts more bounce. So I found that to be more effective.

"Till now, it has been good. I don't want to take anything for granted. I have to keep upping my skill in every tournament coming my way," remarked Varun.



Full of tricks: Varun was in splendid form in the Hazare Trophy.

SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR

A different venue but same old rivalry

ISL

Press Trust of India

GUWAHATI

Mohun Bagan Super Giant would look to assert its dominance over arch-rival East Bengal in the Indian Super League when they face each other on Saturday in a match which has been shifted here owing to inadequate security arrangements in Kolkata.

The venue change comes after the Bidhannagar Police in Kolkata, under whose jurisdiction the original match venue Salta Lake Stadium falls, cited concerns over inadequate security because of the Gangasagar Mela.

Bagan have won eight out of the nine encounters between the two teams in ISL history, with East Bengal yet to record a victory.

Bagan are sitting comfortably at the top on 32 points with 10 wins from 14 matches. Their attacking unit, led by Dimitrios Petros, Manvir Singh, Liton Colaco, Jamie MacLaren, and Jason Cummings has been one of the most



Petros will lead the Bagan attacking unit in the Kolkata Derby. X@MOHUNBAGANSG

relentless in the league.

East Bengal will have to discover a way to break down the cohesiveness in the Mariners' passing patterns.

"What we did in the ISL so far doesn't matter in Saturday's game. We need to perform well, defeat them in the 90 minutes on the pitch. We need to optimise our resources," Bagan head coach Jose Molina said.

EBFC gaffer Oscar Brunzon backed his players to perform well in the Derby.

BFC will be keen to regain consistency



Goal-machine: BFC will again look at Chhetri to deliver the goals.

X@BENGALURUFC

N. Sudarshan

BENGALURU

Bengaluru FC will look to bounce back from a 1-2 away loss to Jamshedpur FC when it plays Mohammedan SC in an early kickoff at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Saturday.

Despite being second in the table (27 points), behind Mohun Bagan Super Giant (32), the 2018-19 Indian Super League champion hasn't been able to stay consistent.

After going six games unbeaten at the start of the season, BFC has won three, lost three and drawn two of its last eight matches. Though scoring goals hasn't been a problem, the side, in the last eight fix-

tures, has shipped 18.

"We have to minimise the individual mistakes," said Renedy Singh, who will be standing in for the suspended head coach Gerardo Zaragoza.

"Our players weren't happy with the way we went down in the last game. But we had our chances, so there were positives to take."

Mohammedan, on the other hand, is rooted to the bottom of the table with just seven points from 14 ties. But the positive is that it is coming into the contest on the back of consecutive 0-0 draws.

In the reverse fixture, the Kolkata club even led BFC until the 82nd minute before losing 1-2.

Karnataka men step it up in extra-time

NATL. BASKETBALL

Sports Bureau

Anil Kumar converted two free throws to fetch a thrilling 100-98 victory for Karnataka over Delhi in extra-time in the men's quarterfinals of the 74th National basketball championship at the Sidsar Sports Complex in Bhavnagar on Friday.

The teams were locked 86-86 at the end of four quarters, thanks to a three-pointer in time by Joginder Singh for Delhi.

Punjab got into the attacking mode in racing to a 105-62 victory over Services in another quarterfinal.

In the women's section, Delhi scored a 69-63 victory over Chhattisgarh while Tamil Nadu beat Madhya Pradesh 77-45 to enter the semifinals.

The results:

Men: Quarterfinals: Punjab 105 (Amritpal Singh 28, Kanwar Gurba Singh Sandhu 22, Amritpal Singh 16, Gurwinder Singh 15, Nawaz Singh Panich 12) bt Services 62 (Sahil 22, VP Abhishek 14, Gaurav Chandal 11).

Karnataka 100 (Abhishek Gowda 27, Pratyanshu Tomar 19, Aravind Yadav 13, Avantika Vardhan 13).

Pre-quarterfinals: Uttar Pradesh 97 (Harsh Dagar 25, Kushal Singh 24, Devendra Choudary 20) bt Chandigarh 41.

Rajasthan 93 (Akshit Hooda 23, Sharad Dhadi 20, Piyush Meena 11) bt Gujarat 83 (Mirant Italia 22, Naman Kanjani 21, Sahaj Kumar Patel 18, Krishnapalsinh Gholi 10, Kasi Rajan 10).

Women: Quarterfinals: Delhi 69 (Prakriti Ranjan 18, Bala Banarsi 14) bt Chhattisgarh 63 (Divyani Gangwal 16, Shanti Xasa 14).

Tamil Nadu 77 (Kritika Suresh Kumar 27, J. Iswarya 12, Nitika Amuthan 11) bt Madhya Pradesh 45 (Khushi Singh 15).

Railways 99 (K. Sathy 17, Vaishnavi Yadav 14, Dharshini Thirunavukkarasu 13) bt Gujarat 33 (Naomi Lakhanpal 13).

Pre-quarterfinals: Maharashtra 62 (Shireen Limaye 14, Siya Deodhar 14, S. Rajeswari 10) bt Karnataka 44 (S. Sobana 14).

Gujarat 78 (Aditi Vasudev 18, Hemangami Gamit 18, Naomi Lakhanpal 17) bt West Bengal 59 (Nima Doma Butia 17, Kiran Yadav 13, Avantika Vardhan 13).

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Finals: Maharashtra 105 (Shireen Limaye 28, Siya Deodhar 24, S. Rajeswari 10) bt Gujarat 83 (Divyani Gangwal 16, Shanti Xasa 14).

Doubles (semifinals): Nikolai Mekhti (Cro) & Michael Venus (Nzl) bt Yuki Bhambri & Albano Olivetti (Fra) 3-6, 6-1, [10-5].

\$15,000 ITF men, Manacor, Spain:

Singles (quarterfinals): Collin Altamirano (USA) bt Manas

\$60,000 ITF women, Nonthaburi, Thailand:

Doubles (semif