

## STORIES FROM THE MOUNTAINS

### In 2025, look to the Himalayas

A recent festival in Delhi, showcasing the cultures and conservation work of Himalayan communities, could kick-start more conversations

MAGAZINE » PAGE 1



## IN BRIEF



### PM calls diaspora in Kuwait a 'mini-Hindustan'

KUWAIT  
Praising the diaspora's contribution to global growth, PM Narendra Modi on Saturday said India had the potential to become the "skill capital of the world". He termed the diaspora in the Gulf nation a "mini-Hindustan". » Page 6

### Delhi's proposal for R-Day tableau fails to get nod

NEW DELHI  
Delhi government's tableau proposal for Republic Day 2025 wasn't approved by the expert committee while Mizoram and Sikkim expressed their inability to participate. Fifteen States and Union Territories have been selected from the roster for the event. » Page 8

MAGAZINE » 8 PAGES  
CLASSIFIEDS » PAGE 5

## Review of GST on life and health insurance deferred

Council raises taxes on used cars, exempts gene therapy and long-range surface-to-air missiles, and proposes setting up a ministerial group to examine tax levies imposed by disaster-hit States

Vikas Dhoot  
NEW DELHI

The much-anticipated review of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) levies on life and health insurance premiums was put off by the GST Council, the apex body in charge of the indirect tax regime, at its 55th meeting on Saturday, as some members sought more discussions on the matter before taking a final call.

A Group of Ministers under Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary is now expected to meet afresh to deliberate on the insurance levies once more before coming back to the Council with its recommendations. Moreover, suggestions on rate rationalisation pertaining to about 150 items, including a price-based differential levy for garments, and 5% levies for packaged drinking water, and bicycles priced under ₹10,000, were also put off till the

### Playing safe

At the GST Council's 55th meeting, members agreed to some changes in the indirect tax regime, while deferring a decision on many broader issues



D-day: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chairs GST Council meeting in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

SETTLED	NOT SETTLED
Popcorn taxation – Savoury to attract 5% or 12% GST, 18% levy on sweetened varieties	Levy on fortified rice kernels to be reduced from 18% to 5%
Gift vouchers are not taxable	Tax on used cars, including electric ones, raised from 12% to 18%
	Review of the GST levied on health and life insurance premiums
	Plan to tax Floor Space Index (FSI) charges for real estate firms
	Future of Compensation Cess levies after March 2026 sunset
	Rate Rationalisation – GoM proposals made for rate changes on about 150 items not taken up

Council's next meeting. The Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, which met in Jaisalmer, also decided to grant more time to a ministerial group tasked with suggesting a road map for dealing with the GST Compensation

Cess levies on several items that are scheduled for a March 2026 sunset.

The Council did agree on some rate changes, including exempting gene therapy and long-range surface-to-air missiles (LRSAMs) from the tax, raising the levies on used

car sales, including electric vehicles, to 18% from 12%.

Separately, a ministerial group would be set up to examine tax levies by States hit by natural disasters.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 6

## 5 killed in Germany Christmas market attack



**Horrible incident:** The police and ambulances working next to the Christmas market, where a car crashed into a crowd on Friday, in Magdeburg, Germany. AFP

Agence France-Presse  
MAGDEBURG

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Saturday condemned the "terrible, insane" car-ramming attack on a crowded Christmas market that killed five people and injured over 200. Seven Indians were among the injured, sources said.

The police arrested a 50-year-old Saudi Arabian psychiatry doctor at the scene on Friday, next to the SUV that had ploughed through the crowd leaving a trail of carnage. Mr. Scholz visited the attack site in Magdeburg on Saturday. He said at least 40 of

the injured were in a condition that people should be "worried" about them but gave no details.

He pledged that Germany would respond "with the full force of the law". He also called for unity in the country that has been plunged into a debate on immigration and security ahead of polls in February.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said that while she would not speculate about the motive, "the one thing" she could confirm was that the suspect had expressed an "Islamophobic" stance.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 6

## 25% of India's total area under green cover: report

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

India's forest and tree cover has reached a quarter of the country's total geographical area, according to the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023, released by the Government of India on Saturday. The increase of 25.17% breaks down to 21.76% of forest cover (7.15 lakh sq. km) and 3.41% of tree cover (1,289 sq. km).

The Forest Survey of India (FSI) defines "forest cover" as land with tree canopy density exceeding 10% and covering at least

one hectare. Thus "forest" in ISFR includes plantations.

The FSI counts trees outside forests towards the 'tree cover' if they occupy less than one hectare and if they also lie outside reserved forest areas. FSI Director-General Anoop Singh said bamboo cover is also included in the tree cover.

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav singled out the report's finding that India has augmented its carbon sink by 2.29 billion tonnes over 2005 levels. India's Nationally Determined Contributions towards the Paris Agreement's targets require it to create an additional car-



bon sink of at least 2.5 billion tonnes by 2030. The FSI's inclusion of plantations in "forests" has

been controversial, however, as they lack the deadwood and underground biomass development that also sequester carbon.

The FSI has been assessing forest cover since 1987 and tree cover since 2001. The current report estimates green cover using data from the Resourcesat series of satellites operated by the Indian Space Research Organisation.

Since 2021, Madhya Pradesh has had the largest area under forest and tree cover (85,724 sq. km).

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 6

## HINDU

## ON SUNDAY

**PES UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS 2025**

**ENGINEERING**  
B.Tech (CSE, CSE-AI&ML, ECE, Mech, EEE, & BT)  
**MEDICINE**  
MBBS  
**COMMERCE**  
B.Com (Day/Evening) / B.Com (Hons.) with ACCA / B.Com (Hons.) with CMA  
**LAW**  
BBA, LLB (Hons.) / BA, LLB (Hons.)  
**PERFORMING ARTS**  
BA (Hons.)  
**PHARMACY**  
B.Pharm / M.Pharm / Pharm.D  
**DESIGN**  
Bachelor of Design  
**RESEARCH**  
Ph.D / M.Tech by Research  
**PSYCHOLOGY**  
B.Sc (Hons.) / M. Sc.  
**ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES**  
B.Sc. (Hons.) in Cardiac Care / Anaesthesia & OT / Medical Radiology & Imaging / Dialysis Therapy / Emergency / Medical Lab / Medical Science  
**PHYSIOTHERAPY**  
Bachelor of Physiotherapy (BPT)  
**NEW PROGRAMS**  
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B.A (Hons.) Liberal Arts  
M.A in Public Policy

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REMEMBRANCE

## DEATH



Smt. S. BHAGYALAKSHMY

w/o Late V. Vinayakan passed away at her residence in Chennai.

Loving mother, grandmother, &amp; great grandmother. She will be fondly remembered for the joy she brought to all.

Mini, Radhika, Srinivasan, Anand, Garima, Sanyukta, Sihari, Aura &amp; Agam brothers Ramanan, Moorthy sister Shanti and their families.

## THE HINDU

**DISCLAIMER:** Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any advertisement before responding to any publication in this newspaper. THE HINDU and its publishers, the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products or services. In case of any dispute the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/company will be held responsible in any manner and can be answerable for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

**NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE**  
Dy. CM/Plant, for Chief Workshop Manager, N.E. Railway, Mechanical Workshop, Gorakhpur, for and on behalf of President of India invites open tender through on line (E-Tendering) for the following work :- S.No. (I), E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work: Tender No.- "41-GKP-MWS-2024-25" "Implementation and Re-Certification of Green Co Rating System at Mechanical Workshop, Gorakhpur". Estimated cost (In Rs.) : 826826.00, Earnest Money (In Rs.) : 16500.00, Cost of the Tender forms: Zero. Last date of tender submission : Up to 11.00 hrs. Date 13.01.2025 Period of Contract : 36 Months. The details of above tender are also available on Indian Railway Website "<http://www.ireps.gov.in>". Dy. CM/Plant, Mechanical Workshop, CPM/Mech. -92 N.E. Railway, Gorakhpur "Never travel on roof and foot boards"

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE**  
Tender Notice No.: EL-50-DNR-OPEN-34-2024-25. The Divisional Railway Manager, E.C. Railway, Danapur for and on behalf of the President of India is inviting online (E-Tendering) Open from the reputed contractors working in State/Central Govt having valid Electrical Contractor license for the required voltage level (as per scope of work) issued by State/Central Govt. Licensing board for the following work.  
Tender No.: EL-50-DNR-OPEN-34-2024-25. 1. Name of work with its location : Comprehensive Annual maintenance contract of various RMPU installed in LHB AC coaches only over Danapur division with Outsourcing the ACCI Activity (Escorting, Operation and Troubleshooting) in AC Coaches of Primary Maintained Trains of DNR Division for three years. 2. Approx cost of the work : ₹31,49,26,156.15 (Rs. Thirty One Crore Forty Nine Lakh Twenty Six Thousand One Hundred Fifty Six and Fifteen Paise Only). 3. Earnest Money to be deposited : ₹17,24,600/- (Rs. Seventeen Lakh Twenty Four Thousand Six Hundred only). 4. Date & time for online submission and closing of all above tenders : Date & time for online submission of tender - 01.01.2025 up to 12.00 hrs. 5. Website particulars, notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where all the above tender form can be seen : CRIS website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. Office of the Sr. DEE (G)E.C. Ry., Danapur, D.R.M. Building, 1st Floor, East Central Railway, Danapur. NOTE : All corrigendum will be uploaded on website before 15 days if required. Civiln. Railway Manager (Elec.G)ECR/Danapur PR/01745/DNR/EGEN/T/24-25/52

**WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY, JABALPUR**  
Office Of The Principal Chief Materials Manager WCR/S-HQ/Sales Policy/e-auc.Program/2024-25, Date:19.12.2024  
Sub: E-auction Program for the Month of February-2025. E-auction program for sale of huge scrap material during the month of February-2025 on "as is where basis" to be held at Kota, Bhopal & Jabalpur is as under:-

Auction CRWS/BPL WRS/KTT JBP/Div. BPL/Div. KTT/Div.  
For Dy.CMM/CRWS Dy.CMM/WRS/ Sr.DMM/BP Sr.DMM/BPL Sr.DMM/  
Contact BPL/0755- KTT/0744- (0761) (0755) (0744-  
Person 2747414 2467082 -2623491 -4001594) 2467006

Date of Auction- Feb-2025 01.02.2025 01.02.2025 01.02.2025 01.02.2025  
03.02.2025 03.02.2025 03.02.2025 03.02.2025 03.02.2025  
05.02.2025 05.02.2025 05.02.2025 05.02.2025 05.02.2025  
07.02.2025 07.02.2025 07.02.2025 07.02.2025 07.02.2025  
10.02.2025 10.02.2025 10.02.2025 10.02.2025 10.02.2025  
12.02.2025 12.02.2025 12.02.2025 12.02.2025 12.02.2025  
14.02.2025 14.02.2025 14.02.2025 14.02.2025 14.02.2025  
17.02.2025 17.02.2025 17.02.2025 17.02.2025 17.02.2025  
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21.02.2025 21.02.2025 21.02.2025 21.02.2025 21.02.2025  
24.02.2025 24.02.2025 24.02.2025 24.02.2025 24.02.2025  
27.02.2025 27.02.2025 27.02.2025 27.02.2025 27.02.2025

**Auction Items:** Scrap Rail & other P-Way Material, all scrap released from workshop Cast Iron, Condemned Rolling Stock, Non Ferrous and Non Metallic Scrap, Turning & Boring, Used Oil, Paints Drum, Condemned Machinery Plants, Condemned Vehicles, Condemned office equipment, MS/GI pipes, Foundry slag and other Miscellaneous scrap etc.

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**THE HINDU REWIND 2024 TRIVIA QUIZ**

DAY 22



In March 2024, a low-intensity bomb blast occurred at a popular restaurant in Bengaluru, injuring nine people. What is the name of the restaurant where this incident took place?

Scan QR code or visit [newsth.live/RTQPA](http://newsth.live/RTQPA) take the quiz. Top 3 winners\* every day win gift vouchers.

**Yesterday's Winners:**  
1. Simmi Raj, Hyderabad | 2. S.Karthikeyan, Trichy | 3. Sadik Bilakhia, Mumbai

**Answer to yesterday's quiz:**  
1. Breaking (Break Dance)  
2. Odisha  
3. Rishabh Pant

## Will fund Dalit students' foreign education: AAP

## The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday announced a scholarship that would allow students from the Dalit community in Delhi to study at foreign universities for free.

A party source said the 'Dr. Ambedkar Samman' scholarship is likely to be implemented after the Assem-

bly election due in February next year. "It will be among our top priorities if we retain power," said the source.

Addressing party workers at the AAP headquarters in the Capital, Mr. Kejriwal described the announcement as a response to the BJP's "insult" of B.R. Ambedkar, the chairman of the committee that drafted the Constitution.

Hitting back, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva termed the AAP chief a "weather scientist of politics" who is skilled at "repackaging old schemes under new names".

The former Chief Minister said that under the scheme, the Delhi government would "bear the entire expense of education, travel, and accommodation" for Dalit students' education at foreign

universities.

**'Nothing new'**  
Mr. Sachdeva called it a case of "old wine in a new bottle". He claimed that Mr. Kejriwal had announced a similar higher education scholarship for Dalit students before the 2020 Assembly poll, but only a few students could avail its benefits. "He has now reintroduced it with a new name," he said.

## BJP targeting Purvanchalis through MCD drive: Singh

## The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday accused the BJP of "targeting" Purvanchalis through a verification drive launched two days earlier by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to identify illegal Bangladeshi immigrants.

"The BJP, through the L-G, has issued the order [to verify illegal immigrants] in order to humiliate children and families from Purvanchal. These directions have been pushed through the MCD to ruin homes of people from U.P. and Bihar," said AAP Raja Sabha member Sanjay Singh.

In response, BJP's Lok Sabha member Manoj Tiwari said that AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal had on several occasions "insulted" Purvanchalis, the Bhojpuri-speaking people from eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and parts of Jharkhand. He alleged that Mr. Kejriwal had in 2019 said that "Purvanchalis travel to Delhi on ₹500 tickets, avail of free treatment worth ₹5 lakh, and return".

## THE GAUHATI HIGH COURT AT GUWAHATI

(HIGH COURT OF ASSAM, NAGALAND, MIZORAM AND ARUNACHAL PRADESH)

## NOTIFICATION

Pursuant to the Short Notice Inviting Quotation (SNIQ) floated by the Registry on 03.12.2024 for the engagement of technical manpower (contractual) under the Phase-III of the e-Courts Project, four bids were received from the following firms:

- 1) Brij Systems Limited, Mumbai
- 2) Convergent Wireless Communications Pvt Ltd, Bangalore
- 3) Technodots, Guwahati
- 4) Trans Virtual Pvt. Ltd., Guwahati

The evaluation of submitted bids is summarized below:

Sl. No.	Firm Name	Submission of all relevant documents	Total Price Quoted for a single unit	Remarks
1	Brij Systems Limited, Mumbai	Submitted	Rs. 2,01,544.0	Qualified. L2 bidder.
2	Convergent Wireless Communications Pvt Ltd, Bangalore	Not submitted. Bidder's presence in Assam with technical manpower on their payroll for last five years and FMS experience in Assam.	Rs. 2,06,942.50	Not qualified.
3	Technodots, Guwahati	Not submitted. Bidder's presence in Assam with technical manpower on their payroll for last five years and FMS experience in Assam.	Rs. 1,31,000.00 *GST not mentioned	Not qualified.
4	Trans Virtual Pvt. Ltd., Guwahati	Submitted	Rs. 1,97,945.00	Qualified. L1 bidder.

Work Order will be issued in due course.

Sd/-  
**JOINT REGISTRAR (PM&P)-CUM-CPC**  
Janasanyog /D/10864/ 24/22-Dec-24  
Guwahati High Court, Guwahati.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER: PWD: BUILDING: ASSAM: CHANDMARI: GUWAHATI-3 NO:CE/TECH-V/54/2023-47					
PRESS NOTICE (RE-TENDER)					
The Chief Engineer, PWD (Building), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-03 on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites fresh bid through Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode-I of contract for the works detailed in the table below, from eligible Firm/Contractor of repute having experience in similar nature of work. Details of bid may be seen at e-procurement portal i.e. <a href="http://www.assamtenders.gov.in">www.assamtenders.gov.in</a> . The bidders must be enrolled with e-tendering web portal <a href="http://www.saamtender.gov.in">www.saamtender.gov.in</a> .					
Sl. No.	Name of Work	Bid Value	Completion Period	Bid Security	Cost of Bid
1	Setting up of Integrated Handloom Park at Kaziranga.	Rs. 42,82,88,943.00	20 (Twenty) Months	2% Bid value for General Category and 1% of Bid value for reserved Category	Rs. 20000/- (Rupees Twenty Thousand) only.

The Bid price may vary at time of uploading DNIT, for which no claim will be admissible. The Press Notice will form part of the Bidding Document.

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**Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Building), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3**  
Janasanyog /C/5473/ 24/22-Dec-24

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Tel:-01970-222270,e-mailid: ae.pwdjm@gmail.com.

Sealed percentage rate tenders on the form 6 are invited by the Executive Engineer Jawalamukhi Division HPPWD, Jawalamukhi on behalf of the Governor of HP for the following works from the approved and eligible contractors (C&D Class) enlisted in HPPWD.

**TENDER SCHEDULE:**  
1. Date and time of receipt of application for tender form:- 28.12.2024 upto 11.00 AM 2. Date and time of issue of tender form :- 30.12.2024 upto 3.00 PM

3. Date and time of receipt of tenders :- 31.12.2024 upto 11.00AM 4. Date and time of opening of tenders :- 31.12.2024 at 11.00AM

The tender forms will be issued against cash payment (non refundable). The earnest money in the shape of NSC/FDR/Deposit at call of any of Post Office/Bank in H.P duly pledged in the name of the Executive Engineer, Jawalamukhi Division HPPWD Jawalamukhi must accompany with each tender.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Time limit	Cost of bid
1.	R/R damages on Sapralu to Tihri road km-0/000 to 10.000 (SH-C/O R/Wall at RD-4/250 to 4/272)	Rs.489576/-	Rs.10000/-	One month	350/-
2.	C/O Link road from Chache Di Hatti Jeen to Kabir Panthi Basdi road km-0/000 to 0/400 (SH: P/L Interlocking Concrete Block Pavement at RD-0/305 TO 0/400)	Rs.493069/-	Rs.10000/-	One month	350/-
3.	Construction of link road Ropoota Brotia to Gagruli Makrohal km-0/000 to 2/000( SH- P/L C.C. Pavement at RD-1/439.20 to 1/527.70)	Rs.499126/-	Rs.10000/-	One month	350/-
4.	R/R damages on Kulara Majheen Sibhola road km-0/000 to 24/800(SH-C/O B/Wall at RD-8/380 to 8/405)	Rs.1,50,000/-	Rs.3000/-	One month	350/-
5.	Ambulance road Plan Da Ghata Kotu road Vijay Kumar House to Keshar Singh House GP Majheen KM-0/000 to 0/300 (SH-C/O R/Wall at RD-0/130 to 0/139 & C.C. at RD-0/000 to 0/096 )	Rs.3,82,383/-	Rs.80		



Visitors at Kartavya Path on Saturday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

# If ED has got L-G's sanction to prosecute Kejriwal, it must share copy publicly, says AAP

Delhi's ruling party says report about ED getting approval to prosecute former CM is 'motivated'; he must face consequences of liquor 'scam', says BJP; AAP chief must own up to 'misdeeds': Cong.

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI



AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal with other party leaders, including Chief Minister Atishi, at an event in Delhi on Saturday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

## Air quality in Delhi shows improvement

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality continued to improve for the second consecutive day on Saturday. The city's air quality index (AQI) reading was 370 ('very poor'), down from 429 ('severe') recorded a day earlier. However, the AQI is likely to deteriorate on Sunday. The Capital saw a sharp increase in air toxicity on December 15, when the AQI entered the 'severe' category, following which the Centre's air quality monitoring panel enforced the most stringent curbs.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday termed "false" the reports about Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena giving sanction to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to prosecute party national convener Arvind Kejriwal. It also dared the probe agency to share a copy of the prosecution sanction.

However, the BJP and the Congress took potshots at Delhi's ruling party over the issue, saying that the law is finally catching up with the former Chief Minister. The developments come ahead of the Assembly election due in February next year.

The case pertains to allegations of money laundering linked to the now-withdrawn excise policy for 2021-22. The ED had arrested Mr. Kejriwal in

March this year in connection with the case. On September 13, he was granted bail by the Supreme Court.

The former CM had recently moved the Delhi High Court seeking to set aside a trial court's order taking cognisance of a chargesheet filed against him by the ED. He argued that the cognisance was taken without sanction for his prosecution, which was required as he was a public

servant when the alleged offence was committed.

The case has been listed for hearing on January 30 next year.

A source on Saturday said the Central probe agency had sought the L-G's sanction to prosecute Mr. Kejriwal on December 3 and received approval on December 7.

When reached for comment, the L-G office confirmed that the prosecu-

tion sanction had been given.

Senior party leaders, including CM Atishi, termed reports about Mr. Saxena granting prosecution sanction to the ED "baseless" and "politically motivated". "Why does the ED not share a copy of the prosecution sanction publicly? This news is being spread solely to mislead people and divert attention from real issues," the CM said in a post on X.

Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Vijender Gupta said, "Kejriwal will have to face the consequences of the massive corruption carried out through the excise policy."

Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav said, "When Arvind Kejriwal and his associates involved in the liquor scam face evidence of their corrupt deeds, they tend to blame everyone except themselves."

Karnataka's C.T. Ravi alleges 'plot to kill him', seeks judicial probe

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

Alleging a "plot to murder" him by using the police, Karnataka BJP MLC C.T. Ravi on Saturday demanded a judicial probe into the case filed against him and the way the police 'misbehaved' with him by taking him across several villages all through the night.

Mr. Ravi was arrested in Belagavi on Thursday for allegedly using a derogatory word against State Minister Laxmi Hebalkar inside the Legislative Council. However, on Friday evening, the Karnataka High Court directed the police to immediately release him from custody.

Addressing presspersons, Mr. Ravi alleged that the police action was nothing but "mental and physical torture". "I have a strong suspicion that Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and Ms. Hebalkar have planned something against me. My life is still under threat and I demand a judicial probe into this," he said.

Alleging that his phone was being tapped, Mr. Ravi said, "I want the government to provide adequate security for me. If something happens to me, the government will have to take responsibility."

Narrating the alleged police action, the BJP MLC claimed the police took him across several districts and through sugarcane fields at night. "I suspect they had directions to finish me off or get me attacked. Thankfully, the media and party workers followed us and nothing happened. There was someone constantly calling the police and giving directions on the route," he said.

He further claimed his phone being tracked needs to be investigated.

"The Deputy Chief Minister said Belagavi is Ms. Hebalkar's area and that I was fortunate to be just let go. What does he think? Is Belagavi a 'banana republic'?" he said.

Timings DELHI		
SUNDAY, DEC. 22		
RISE 07:11	SET 17:30	
RISE 00:00	SET 12:01	
MONDAY, DEC. 23		
RISE 07:11	SET 17:31	
RISE 00:14	SET 12:27	
TUESDAY, DEC. 24		
RISE 07:12	SET 17:31	
RISE 01:06	SET 12:53	

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	23	08
Safdarjung	23	08
Palam	21	09

Delhi Palam Today
22°C The dry weather to prevail. Morning will be cold with shallow to moderate fog. Day will be pleasant. Night also will be cold and hazy.
Delhi Palam Tomorrow

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
21°C Morning will be cold with shallow to moderate fog. Day will be pleasant. Night also will be cold and hazy. Dry weather to continue.

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India's National Newspaper

## Om Prakash Chautala cremated with State honours



Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Saini paying tributes to the mortal remains of Om Prakash Chautala in Sirsia on Saturday. x@CMOHRY

**Press Trust of India**  
SIRSIA

Former Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala was cremated on Saturday with full State honours in his native Sirsa district.

Chautala, a five-time CM, passed away in Gurugram on Friday. He was 89. Vice-President Jagdeep

Dhankhar, Union Minister Manohar Lal, Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini, and Shironmani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal reached Teja Khera to attend the last rites of the departed leader.

Many State Ministers, Speaker Harvinder Kalyan, former Union Minister Venod Sharma, SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia,

BJP's Manpreet Badal, Maninder Singh Sirsa, and several other leaders also paid their last respects.

Earlier, Chautala's mortal remains were kept at the family's Teja Khera farmhouse here for people to pay their last respects. Congress leaders Randeep Singh Surjewala and Kumari Selja had reached the farmhouse in the morning.

**KIND ATTENTION**  
**RESIDENT WELFARE ASSOCIATIONS/ BUILDERS/ PROJECT PROPONENTS/CITIZENS/NGOs**

**PROVIDE ELECTRIC HEATERS AND WARM CLOTHING TO SECURITY AND OTHER STAFF**

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DPCC

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Delhi Pollution Control Committee  
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Interested Students Can Send Their CV at [saurabh.shukla@easemytrip.com](mailto:saurabh.shukla@easemytrip.com) by 30<sup>th</sup> December 2024

**Uttar Pradesh Eco-Tourism Development Board**

C-13, Vipin Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226010  
Phone : +91 9899 521 421  
E-mail : [upetdb@gmail.com](mailto:upetdb@gmail.com)  
Website : [www.upecotourism.in](http://www.upecotourism.in)

## IN BRIEF



## Landslide hits Pithoragarh; road closed, no casualties

A major landslide occurred on Dharchula-Tawaghat-Lipulekh road in Uttarakhand, resulting in the closure of the road. There was no casualty, officials said. The landslide occurred around 11 a.m. near Tawaghat in Pithoragarh, according to the District Magistrate Vinod Goswami. "SDM Dharchula and BRO officials have reached the spot and work on opening the road to Lipulekh on India-China border is on," he said. PTI

## Vrindavan temple appeals to visitors to 'dress modestly'

Vrindavan's Thakur Bankebihari Temple has appealed to visitors to "dress modestly" and refrain from wearing "indecent clothes" while on the temple premises. The appeal was made given the expected rush to the temple ahead of the New Year. "... attire such as mini skirts, torn jeans, half pants, and night suits is inappropriate for the temple setting, as it undermines the sanctity and dignity of the place," the temple authorities said. The appeal was made through media channels and banners put up across the city in Uttar Pradesh. PTI

## Voice of DMK MPs in Parliament has garnered attention: Stalin

## The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Saturday said the DMK MPs had unequivocally conveyed a message in Parliament that the BJP government at the Centre could not treat Tamil Nadu with a stepmotherly attitude.

In a statement, Mr. Stalin said if the BJP does not ensure the rights of the people in Tamil Nadu, it would be taught a fitting lesson. The unanimous voice of the MPs over various issues, including the

'One Nation, One Election' Bill, would have reached the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led BJP government, he added.

"The entire nation has been overawed by the DMK MPs' performance. They have succeeded in drawing the attention of the nation towards the State's rights, and welfare.

As a leader of the Dravidian movement, I take pride in their performance. The country is keenly watching their stand on vital issues," the Chief Minister said.

Mr. Stalin further said

Mr. Modi remained silent on the Adani issue and the Manipur riots.

"We could see the conduct of the BJP MPs [in Parliament], who were against any debate on the failures of their government," the Chief Minister added.

Mr. Stalin said, "At a time when the country is celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution, Union Home Minister Amit Shah denigrated Ambedkar. His [Mr. Shah's] remarks exposed the BJP's upper-class fascist face..."

## Husband, in-laws booked for branding, sexually assaulting ASHA worker

## The Hindu Bureau

BHOPAL

A 32-year-old woman in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district was branded with a hot utensil and sexually assaulted by her husband, in-laws, and a neighbour, the police said on Saturday.

Baora Sub-divisional Police Officer Neha Gaur said a zero FIR has been filed under Sections 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 74 (outrage of modesty), 64 (rape), and 3(5) (common intention) of the Bha-

ratiya Nyaya Sanhita against all the accused.

According to the police, the incident took place on December 13 at the woman's home in Shahpura, but she filed a complaint only on December 15 in Guna district's Ruthiyai police station, where her parents live. The case was later transferred to Shahpura's Karanwas police station.

The woman is an ASHA worker.

All the five accused are absconding and the police is on the look out for them.

## Allu Arjun hits out at Telangana CM; 'attempt at character assassination'

## The Hindu Bureau

HYDERABAD

eight-year-old son is battling for life in hospital. "But, the same industry people called on actor Allu Arjun to know if he got injured after he was released from jail," he said.

## An accident?

Speaking at a press conference, Mr. Arjun, flanked by his father and a lawyer, termed the death of the woman and the injury to the child an "accident".

"This is an unfortunate accident, and it is nobody's fault. Everyone, including the police and myself, acted with positive intentions," Mr. Arjun said, con-

doling with the family and wishing the injured child a speedy recovery. The actor informed the media that he was receiving hourly updates on the child's condition.

Mr. Arjun described the situation as being marred by misinformation and miscommunication, claiming that much of the narrative being shared was inaccurate.

"There has been an attempt at character assassination. Despite the success of the film, we have cancelled all celebratory events to focus on the issue," he added.

## Bihar is turning a new page with 'Didi Ki Libraries' for children living in rural areas

## SPOTLIGHT

## Amit Bhelari

Harsh Kumar, 22, is studying for a BTech degree in Gaya College, one of Bihar's premier institutions. A resident of Amhara village, on the outskirts of Patna, the State capital, nearly 45 km from the city centre, Kumar's father is a small farmer, and the family struggles to eke out a living.

After he graduated from the government-run Amhara High School, he wanted to work towards a degree in engineering, but there were hardly any books available to crack the Bihar Combined Entrance Competitive Examination for admission to various professional courses. "I simply couldn't afford the books. If it wasn't for the 'Didi Ki Library', I would not be pursuing this course," he says.

Started last year by the Bihar government, Community Library and Career Development Centres (CLCDC), across 100 blocks in the State, are known as 'Didi Ki Libraries' (roughly translating to a library run by an older sister). The free-of-cost libraries, in 32 out of 38 districts, are a boon for children who come from families that cannot afford books. The library offers free Internet services and a quiet space

for children to study and for the youth to meet and exchange ideas.

Patna district has four such libraries in Bihta, Khusrupur, Fatuha, and Bakhtiyarpur, all rural areas. Across the State, 'Didi Ki Libraries' have a 6,000-strong sitting capacity while the total enrolment is 1.1 lakh, of which 63% are girls. There is a daily footfall of 60-70 learners, as per Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (JEEVIKA), an initiative under the State government's Rural Development Department.

The World Bank-supported JEEVIKA runs the 'Didi Ki Libraries', with each headed by Vidya Didi, a dedicated cadre of community workers. The Education Department supports the initiative by providing books.

**A village gladdened**  
Rinku Kumari, 21, graduated this year with a degree in History from Mahant Madhusudan College in Patna. She spends five to six hours in the library every day. "I want to clear the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission) exam, and I cannot afford the tuition fee for a coaching institute."

Coaching institutes can cost anywhere from ₹5,000 a month. The average farmer's income in 2021-22 in Bihar was ₹9,252 against the national average of ₹13,661,



New chapter: Children studying at a 'Didi Ki Library' as Archana Kumari, a Vidya Didi, keeps an eye on them at Amhara village in Patna district of Bihar. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

as per the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

In Amhara village, she finds books that will help her through the entrance exam that at least 10 lakh people from across India write each year, for just a little over 1,000 posts. She admits that the books are limited, but says, "With the Wi-Fi I am able to download free books online."

The library in the village is painted yellow and has Mahatma Gandhi's message of avoiding the seven sins in Hindi. It has three rooms

with a seating capacity of 60 at a time and more than 1,200 books on the shelves. Within the rooms are pictures of former president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and freedom fighter Subhas Chandra Bose, as well as maps of India and the world, a window to possibility. Like most other libraries, it has cubicles, students' chairs with desk extensions, ceiling fans, power back-up, a water filter, CCTV cameras, and LED screen. They also get two newspapers and magazines each.

The library is operational eight hours a day, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays;

Archana Kumari, the Vidya Didi of Amhara library, says, "The moment a form for a competitive exam is published, I inform the children and then help them to fill them up. We provide printouts as well, so they do not need to go to the city for any work related to filling forms."

She adds that when the library was opened in February 2023, it had 30 children. Now, Amhara has 1,765 registered children.

The library is operational eight hours a day, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays;

and during exams, on Sundays as well. It has both fiction and non-fiction books, with textbooks from Classes 8 to 12 of the Bihar Board along with sample answer papers. Children can get books issued, though the preference is for them to read on the site.

Some of the most popular books are those that help students learn English, including *Word Power Made Easy* by Norman Lewis and the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Books like *Animal Farm*, the political satire by George Orwell, are also popular.

In Hindi, *Hamara Samvidhan* by Subhash Kashyap and *Bharat Ka Swatantra Sangharsh* by a cluster of authors are well-thumbed through. It also has books to prepare for competitive exams for the Railways, banking, and National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test, among others.

A library in a village in Bihar is often a distant dream. The State saw a 20.46% dropout rate at the secondary level, the highest in India, in 2021-22. The national average was 12.6%.

According to Archana, many students who frequently visit the library have gained admission in Bihar's top institutes like the Development Management Institute. Many have graduated with BE

We have a collaboration with National Institute of Open Schooling and Indira Gandhi National Open University for distance education.

These libraries are emerging as a local support system for increasing the participation of rural children and marginalised learners in higher education.

There are 1,408 registered children at Makhampur panchayat in Jehanabad district of Bihar. The library functions on the first floor of the Panchayat Bhawan in Kohra village.

**Big picture**  
IAS officer and Chief Executive Officer-cum-State Mission Director of JEEViKA, Himanshu Sharma, says, "Education is a proven tool to break generational poverty. CLCDCs aim to bridge the gap between disadvantaged rural youth and their urban peers."

CLCDCs have achieved a few milestones as well. Over 2,500 children applied for technical, professional, and vocational courses with career counselling support, and 110 have secured admission, including two girls in Miranda House and one in Daulat Ram College, both under Delhi University.

Six students gained admission in the postgraduate programme in a development management MBA course with scholarships worth ₹32 lakh. This year, 62 of those visiting these libraries have been selected as Bihar Public Service Commission teachers.

**LINK TO FULL STORY**  
» <https://bit.ly/3P7lrgp>

## Groups termed 'Naxal fronts' by Cong. govt. took part in Bharat Jodo Yatra: Fadnavis

Action was taken against some of these organisations under UAPA, says Maharashtra CM after Winter Session; asserts Gadchiroli will be next 'steel city', district will be Naxal-free in three years

## Press Trust of India

NAGPUR

**M**aharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday alleged that outfits described by past Congress regimes as "frontal organisations" of Maoists took part in Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Speaking at a press conference in Nagpur along with his deputy Eknath Shinde at the end of the week-long Winter Session of the Assembly, Mr. Fadnavis also said his Mahayuti government would identify illegal Bangladeshi immigrants living in Mumbai and deport them.

Mr. Fadnavis reiterated his allegation, made during the session, that "urban Naxal outfits", acting as frontal organisations of Maoists, participated in Mr. Gandhi's march. "I am not saying this, but the reports of the Congress-led State and Central govern-



CM Devendra Fadnavis with his deputies Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, and Legislative Council Chairman Ram Shinde in Nagpur on Saturday. PTI

ments prior to 2014 said so," he said. Action was taken against some of these organisations under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, he noted.

## Public Security Bill

To a question about the Public Security Bill, aimed at curbing the urban Naxal menace, Mr. Fadnavis said it was sent to a joint select committee comprising 21 members from both Houses for scrutiny.

The decision was taken even without the Opposition making such a demand so that nobody can allege that it contains provisions to suppress legitimate dissent, he said. The committee will be headed by BJP leader and Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule, the CM added.

Mr. Fadnavis asserted that Gadchiroli district will be Naxal-free in the next three years and Gadchiroli town will be the next 'steel city' of India in full swing. He said Gondia and Gadchiroli are being linked through the Mumbai-Nagpur Samruddhi Expressway.

sembly last week, Mr. Fadnavis had listed several infrastructure projects across the State and farmer-centric initiatives. He said the northern part of the Gadchiroli district, bordering Telangana and Chhattisgarh, has been rid of Naxals and is on the path of development.

Naxals have either been killed or surrendered, he said. About 1,500 youth from the district, which is in the Vidarbha region, have joined the police force of which 150 are from families of Naxals, he said.

"There has been no recruitment by Naxals from Maharashtra. In the next three years, Naxalism will be completely eradicated from Gadchiroli," he said.

The CM said capacity building for Gadchiroli to make it the "steel city" of India is in full swing. He said Gondia and Gadchiroli are being linked through the Mumbai-Nagpur Samruddhi Expressway.

**Sources said the remarks made by the professors' union vice-president didn't go down well with the party leadership**

"This is to inform you all that Shree Bratya Basu, Hon'ble MIC, Education Department and president, education cell of party, has expelled Monishankar Mandal, vice-president of the party's professors' cell, West Bengal College and University Professors' Association; and Pritam Halder, acting president of the Trinamool Teachers' Association.

The Trinamool Congress on Friday expelled Monishankar Mandal, vice-president of the party's professors' cell, West Bengal College and University Professors' Association; and Pritam Halder, acting president of the Trinamool Teachers' Association.

"There has been no recruitment by Naxals from Maharashtra. In the next three years, Naxalism will be completely eradicated from Gadchiroli," he said.

Mr. Mandal has also put up posters describing Mr. Banerjee as a "game changer" in the Lok Sabha election held this year.

Sources in the party said that the remarks made by the professors' union leader did not go down well with the party leadership.

eight-year-old son is battling for life in hospital. "But, the same industry people called on actor Allu Arjun to know if he got injured after he was released from jail," he said.

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cluding the family and wishing the injured child a speedy recovery. The actor informed the media that he was receiving hourly updates on the child's condition.

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"There has been an attempt at character assassination. Despite the success of the film, we have cancelled all celebratory events to focus on the issue," he added.

# Classifieds

LIFE MADE SIMPLE

## Matrimonial

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

## INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

## BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

## BRIDES WANTED

## BRIDES &amp; GROOMS WANTED

Classification Common for Brides, Bridgrooms, Brides &amp; Grooms

## ASSAMESE

## AWADHI

## BENGALI

## BHOJPURI

## BIHARI

## CHHATTISGARHI

## ENGLISH

## GUJARATI

## HARYANI

## HINDI

## KANNADA

## KASHMIRI

## KONKANI

## MALAYALAM

## MANIPURI

## MARATHI

## MARWARI

## NEPALI

## ORIYA

## PARSI

## PUNJABI

## SAURASHTRA

## SINDHI

## TAMIL

## TELUGU

## TULU

## URDU

## ADVOCATE

## BUSINESS

## DEFENCE

## DOCTOR

## ENGINEER

## FINANCE/ BANKING

## GOVERNMENT/ QUASI-GOVERNMENT

## IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## MBA / CA / ICWA

## NRI

## COSMOPOLITAN

## DIVORCEE

## PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

## MARRIAGE BUREAUS

## WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

## BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

## BUSINESS

✓ AFFLUENT BUSINESS woman, 42yrs, Slim,tall,fit,athletic. Runs own firm. Looking for similar background (even younger) groom. Contact: 9342075206

## COSMOPOLITAN

BEAUTIFUL, CARING professional 26, 168cm, affluent, open-minded S. Indian family. Seeking accomplished, compatible groom. Call/WA: 9345634365

✓ DENTIST MDS: 1989 Fair Mri-gaseeran/ Rishabam: 170 cms Height/ Naidu parents seek Chennai set-tled elite grooms 9445332601

## DOCTOR

SUNNI MUSLIM Urdu, 33yrs, 168cm, MBBS MD. Never Married, from Well Settled Family. Looking for PG Doctors / Engineers from Well Settled Families. Preferably from South India, UK, Middle East. Ct: 9176289180

HINDU TAMIL BC Doctor 26/ 175 cm Fair, Clear Horoscope Seats Tall Handsome PG Doctors with Good Habits from Simple Family. Contact with Full view. Photograph, Horoscope and biodata. Ph: 7200365364

BEAUTIFUL RICH Dr girl Veg 29 MD, Gen Medicine Kettai Chennai details PG Dr Boy Veg only WhatsApp 9384086399

HINDU REDDY Surgeon 34Y 165cms Own Practice, Seeks Suitable Groom, Any Profession from Dubai, Singapore, India. CNB, 89256 40111.

Doctor MD ANS Hindu Nadar 29/70/170 seeks groom EQ details Contact: 997610580 9445225120.

## DOCTOR

**HINDU NADAR**  
Chennai, Only Daughter (25)  
Fair & Good Looking.  
MBBS, (MD) DVL Rich Affluent,  
well-Educated Family seeks  
suitable Good Looking  
Doctor Groom with clean  
habits from Hindu Nadar.  
Ct: 94447 59246  
Cc: 94449 62835

**Wanted Bridegroom**  
USA 27 year old Doctor  
from Tamilnadu doing  
Neurology residency at  
New Jersey seeks  
Doctor groom  
Whatsapp :  
**9677026459**

## IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

Nair Girl, 27/161, Pooradam, IAAS Officer, Contact: 9020408981, 8921417280.

## MALAYALAM

THRISUR EZHAVA girl 30/ 157, M.Tech doing PhD caste no bar 9497073049

SAIVAVELLA GIRL MBBS chithra thulaam 26/154 preparing PG seeks doctor/professional. 8547230711

DELHI BASED Nair girl 29/145 Pooram 1.5 Dosham pursuing PhD in Edinburgh seeks suitable alliance preferably from Palghat/Trichur and nearby districts. Contact 9818364188

HINDU WIDOW, 42/163 cm MCA, Working in MNC Kerala, living with 2 kids, Mob: 9847851263

VISWAKARMA, GS Girl, 36, B.Sc. Agriculture, Bank Manager, 9447528352.

## TAMIL

RC NADAR, 26yrs, MBBS, MD, Elite family, Seeks Suitable Groom. Contact: 9380791999/ 9841329471

CHRISTIAN, NADAR, 33 yrs, Divorced, MBS, MD, at Tirunelveli. Income come 30 lakhs. Ph: 7356483111

CHRISTIAN, RC, 30 yrs, B.E., Software Engineer at Chennai. Income 25 lakhs. Ph: 8138900530

CHRISTIAN GIRL 34 years Eng graduate working in MNC at Chennai wanted Eng graduate from decent literate family – 9444325317

CHRISTIAN-RC SOZIHA Velalar, Doctor 27 yrs, Pursuing PG, Chennai. Seeks PGM Groom. Call 9840150090

GOVT. DOCTOR (MD), 37 yrs, 5ft 2inch. Fair, Never married. Seeks Eng/ Doc 30-40yrs. Never Married Christian Groom,India/abroad. Ct: 9940529886 / 9600573068

RC CHRISTIAN Nadar unmarried fair Bride, 35/170, M.E., Software Engr. seeks FC/FC unmarried Groom. Ct: 98868 88775

LOOKING FOR Christian Bridegroom for the girl working in USA start-up aged 26. End time message. 8939250457

CHRISTIAN CSI, Divorce, age 42, Seeks working Professional, God fearing Christian Groom from educated family. Mob: 8938965578

TAMIL MUSLIM, 30/159, AVP in MNC at Hyderabad, well settled, 24L PA seeks suitable Groom in Hyderabad/Bengaluru. Ct: 9080501299

NATHAMAR UDAYAR, Catholic 31 yrs, HR Professional- MNC with null and void order looking for catholic boy below 35 yrs, premier Institute or IT professional with null and void or unmarried with clean habits. WhatAp 9443126408

BORN AGAIN christian, 44yrs/152, MBBS, MD doctor, seeks christian groom. Ct: 9500188067

LOOKING FOR Christian Bridegroom for the girl working in USA start-up aged 26. End time message. 8939250457

CHRISTIAN, CSI, Divorce, age 42, Seeks working Professional, God fearing Christian Groom from educated family. Mob: 8938965578

HINDU MUTHURAJA GIRL 23 /160/ MCA, Seeks Groom in Tamil Nadu, preferably BE / MCA / M.Sc., Good Job, 29-30 years age. Contact: 89256 15004.

DOCTOR MD (Pathology) DCH 39yrs Hindu BC, Divorced without child, working in a private hospital, seeks well settled, compatible & affectionate Groom CNB Ct: 9176289180

Vanniy Kula Kshatriya Bride 31 Years BE Working in Govt. Service seeks Bridge Groom Govt/Pvt/ Bank Same Caste. Preferable Ct: 9789810972 / 9444949349. Mail: kumarguru59@gmail.com

NADAR BUSINESS family, very rich industrial family, 22 yrs daughter, well educated. Looking for similar business family background group. +91 9994106265

BRIDEGROOM WANTED for a well-to-do hindu family's bride age 42, first marriage, degree-MSW, want from (FC, BC, MBC), working in India. Ct: 9080359664.

HINDU NADAR Chennai Divorcee of 37 yrs in Government job seeks working bridegroom below 41yrs. 9443156344

CASTE NO Bar, 25yrs, BE, MBA, Elite business family, Seeks Suitable Groom. Contact: 971009399/ 9710091999

SUNNI MUSLIM Dr girl Veg 29 MD, MBBS MD. Never Married, from Well Settled Family. Looking for PG Doctors / Engineers from Well Settled Families. Preferably from South India, UK, Middle East. Ct: 944551651

HINDU REDDY Surgeon 34Y 165cms Own Practice, Seeks Suitable Groom, Any Profession from Dubai, Singapore, India. CNB, 89256 40111.

Doctor MD ANS Hindu Nadar 29/70/170 seeks groom EQ details Contact: 997610580 9445225120.

Cosmopolitan

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Doctor MD ANS Hindu Nadar 29/70/170 seeks groom EQ details Contact: 997610580 9445225120.

Cast No Bar, 25yrs, BE, MBA, Elite business family, Seeks Suitable Groom. Contact: 971009399/ 9710091999

SUNNI URDU 26, 163cm, Engg, Hi-jabi, Canadian citizen seeks professional religious groom from Canada/USA/UK. WhatApp +1 403 830 8019.

ELITE FAMILY Urudu Sunni Muslim, 22/162cm, Degree, Fair Girl in Tirupur seeks well settled, high level Business Groom in Tamilnadu. Ct: 95001 49140

GROOM PREFERENCE FROM AN LEADING BRAHMIN FAMILY ELITE AND WELL QUALIFIED kssgrand20@gmail.com

GROOM WANTED MUDALIAR, 24 yrs, 165 cms, B.Arch, Lives in Chennai, Father is a Businessman, Upper middle class family. Looking for a like minded match from the same community. Contact: 9080629216

BRIDEGROOM WANTED for a well-to-do hindu family's bride age 42, first marriage, degree-MSW, want from (FC, BC, MBC), working in India. Ct: 9080629216

Vaniya Chettiar, 28years, Beautiful, C.A. working in MNC in Chennai. We Prefer Hindu groom with C.A./Financial Executive, Tamil-Speaking Non-Vegetarian from Chettiar, Mudaliar & Pillai. Please send Horoscope & other details to WhatsApp No: 94445 87465

BRIDE WANTED for a well-to-do hindu family's bride age 42, first marriage, degree-MSW, want from (FC, BC, MBC), working in India. Ct: 9080629216

Cast No Bar, 25yrs, BE, MBA, Elite business family, Seeks Suitable Groom. Contact: 971009399/ 9710091999

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AGAMUDAIYAR UTHIRADAM 34/180, B.tech, TCS, Hyderabad, 2Lpm, seeks Equaly Qualified bride, Cast No Bar. Contact: 8220984128

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**From Page One****GST review on health, life insurance deferred**

"On the request of State of Andhra Pradesh, the Council recommended that a GoM be constituted to examine the legal and structural issues, and recommend a uniform policy on imposition of levy in case of a natural disaster or calamity in the State," the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

The council clarified on how pepper and raisin supplies by farmers and popcorn should be taxed.

It has decided to levy a tax of 18% on sweetened or caramelised popcorn, and levy 5% on the salty and spicy varieties that are not pre-packaged and labelled, and 12% for labelled and pre-packaged savoury popcorn.

A proposal to levy GST on charges collected by municipalities for granting Floor Space Index (FSI) to builders, presented to the Council on Saturday, was put off for further examination at the Centre's behest on the ground that this amount relates to municipalities and local authorities. It was also agreed upon by Council members that gift vouchers are not liable to attract GST nor are penal charges imposed by banks and non-banking finance companies on borrowers failing to comply with loan conditions.

Ms. Sitharaman announced that the Council had agreed to reduce the GST on fortified rice kernels from 18% to 5% as these are supplied with an intent to pass them on the public distribution system (PDS) to benefit the poor.

**Rule changed to restrict access to polling footage**

However, RTI activists have said it was a setback to transparency. "Huge setback for transparency! Modi government amends Rule 93(2) of Conduct of Elections Rules to restrict people's right to access election related records after High Court orders disclosure! Applications we filed in May 2024 under Rule 93(2) for copies of Form 17C are still pending," transparency activist Anjali Bharadwaj said.

Venkatesh Nayak, Director Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, told *The Hindu*, "Upon initial examination, the amendment appears to be aimed at restricting citizen-voters' right to access a large number of documents created during Parliamentary and State Assembly elections, many of which are not specifically mentioned in the Conduct of Election Rules; instead, they are mentioned in the handbooks and manuals published by the Election Commission from time to time."

Some of these records are reports submitted by Election Observers, scrutiny reports submitted by Returning Officers after polling and index cards sent to the ECI after declaration of results, which contain detailed statistics relating to the elections.

Mr. Nayak said given the controversy over voter turnout in recent Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, access to the Presiding Officers' diaries which contain detailed data of voter turnout at different points of time throughout the polling day and the number of tokens they distribute to voters who are in the queue at the hour scheduled for closing of polling are not mentioned specifically in the Conduct of Election Rules. "Yet access to such documents is crucial to assess the fairness of elections."

**Five killed in market attack in Germany**

Taleb Jawad Al Abdulmohsen, the suspect, had lived in Germany since 2006 and held a permanent residence permit, working in a clinic near Magdeburg. He had also worked as a rights activist who supported Saudi women and described himself as a "Saudi atheist".

He had voiced strongly anti-Islam views, echoing the rhetoric of the far-right in social media posts and interviews.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), condemning the "horrific and senseless" attack, said the Indian mission in Germany is in contact with injured Indians. It, however, did not specify the number of injured Indians.

(With inputs from PTI)

**'25% of India's total area is under green cover'**

The largest increase in forest and tree cover in this period was recorded in Chhattisgarh (684 sq. km).

The overall increase in tree and forest cover means a net gain after accounting for losses. Among other places, losses have been recorded in the Western Ghats and Eastern States Area (58.22 sq. km less forest cover) and the Northeast (327.30 sq. km less forest cover) – both highly biodiverse regions. Likewise, while "very dense" forests expanded by 3,465.12 sq. km, "moderately dense" and "open" forests have shrunk by 1,043.23 sq. km and 2,480.11 sq. km, respectively.

Between the 2021 and the 2023 forest surveys, the Indian government passed the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act.

Conservations, activists, and civil society leaders have criticised the Act for what they have characterised as detrimental changes it makes to the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, including excluding "deemed" and "community" forests from the Act's purview.

(With agency inputs)

# Modi calls diaspora in Kuwait 'mini-Hindustan'

**PM addresses Indian community in Kuwait, says India has potential to become skill capital of the world, discusses initiatives implemented by the Indian government, including e-Migrate portal**

**Press Trust of India**

KUWAIT

**P**raising the diaspora's contribution to global growth, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Saturday that India had the potential to become the "skill capital of the world".

Mr. Modi was addressing a large gathering of the Indian community at a special event, "Hala Modi", at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Sports Complex in the city.

"Every year, hundreds of Indians come to Kuwait. You have added an Indian touch to Kuwaiti society. You have filled the canvas of Kuwait with the colours of Indian skills. You have mixed the essence of India's talent, technology, and tradition in Kuwait," Mr. Modi said.

**'Youngest country'**

The Prime Minister, who is visiting Kuwait at the invitation of the Kuwaiti Emir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, expressed happiness about the presence of Indians from diverse corners of the country in the Gulf nation, and called it a "mini-Hindustan". India's start-ups, fintech firms, smart technology and green technology can develop cutting-edge solutions for every need of Kuwait, he said.

"India is well-equipped



**Close interaction:** Narendra Modi during a visit to a labour camp in Kuwait on Saturday. PTI

to meet the world's demand for skilled talent... India also has the potential to become the skill capital of the world," Mr. Modi said and underlined that for many decades to come, India will remain the youngest country in the world.

Highlighting India's strong commitment to supporting Indian workers in Kuwait and across the Gulf, Mr. Modi discussed technology-driven initiatives implemented by the government, including the e-Migrate portal.

Thanking the Emir for his invitation, Mr. Modi said that it was after 43 years that an Indian Prime Minister was visiting Kuwait to strengthen and solidify the age-old friendship.

Mr. Modi further recalled the centuries-old strong trade ties between the two countries. "Our el-

ders in Gujarat still recall how Kuwaiti traders learnt Gujarati, wrote books in it and traded their world-famous pearls in our markets. We took supplies of horses and many other items. There has been a long-lasting relationship between India and Kuwait," he said.

He also reminded the diaspora that till 60-65 years ago, Indian rupees were accepted in Kuwait.

The PM said that in the coming decades, India and Kuwait will become significant partners in prosperity.

The Prime Minister extended an invitation to diaspora members to participate in Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and Maha Kumbh to be held in India in January.

# Police in Northeast should reorient and focus on citizens too'

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Saturday the police in the northeastern States should change their orientation, and instead of their sole focus being on combating insurgency, they should ensure that every citizen is granted their constitutional right to property, honour and family protection.



Amit Shah

drug-free India, in which the Northeast has a special responsibility, as a major route for narcotics entering India passes through the Northeastern States. He mentioned that significant work has been done in the past six years in this direction, but the pace is still not sufficient.

He said connectivity is no longer a problem in the region, as the Centre has spent ₹81,000 crore for rail connectivity and ₹41,000 crore for road network in these region. He added that Northeast can be utilized better for palm oil cultivation.

Minister for Development of North Eastern Region Jyotiraditya Scindia, along with the Governors and Chief Ministers of all the eight Northeastern States, and senior officials were present at the event.

The Minister urged all the Governors present at the meeting to personally monitor this process, as it is crucial to establish the belief in the Northeast that citizens can obtain justice through filing an FIR.

He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched a campaign for a

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# Death toll in Rajasthan tanker collision fire reaches 14; HC asks govt. to fix responsibility

**The Hindu Bureau**

JAIPUR

The death toll in the deadly tanker-truck collision that sparked a massive fire at Bhankrota on the Jaipur-Ajmer highway increased to 14 on Saturday, with three more persons dying from burns. Five of the deceased are yet to be identified as their bodies are charred beyond recognition.

The accident occurred early on Friday morning when a tanker carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) was making a U-turn on the highway and hit a truck coming from the opposite direction. The fire caused by the collision spread rapidly across a 300-metre stretch of the road and engulfed three dozen vehicles in flames.



Congress leader Sachin Pilot meets families of those injured in a highway accident in a hospital in Jaipur on Saturday. Fourteen persons have sustained over 50% burns. ANI

Twenty-six patients were undergoing treatment in the burns ward at the Sawai Man Singh Government Hospital here, and several of them were under critical care, the

hospital's Medical Superintendent Sushil Bhati said. Among the patients, 14 have sustained over 50% burns, Dr. Bhati said.

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma has directed

the officials to conduct a special drive for identifying "black spots" on the roads as well as accident-prone sites, and fix them to prevent accidents such as the one which took place

on Friday. Senior Congress leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot, who met some of the injured persons at the hospital on Saturday, sought an investigation to find out the reasons for the accident.

The Rajasthan High Court took *suo motu* cognizance of the fire on Saturday and issued notice to the Chief Secretary and the Union government, asking about the steps being taken to fix the responsibility on the authorities, and probe negligence in the performance of statutory duty.

Justice Anoop Kumar Dhand said an adequate compensation should be awarded to the kin of the deceased, those injured and those who had lost their vehicles and properties in the accident.

# Mumbai ferry accident: body of missing boy retrieved

**The Hindu Bureau**

MUMBAI

The body of the missing six-year-old boy in the Mumbai ferry accident was found within the Mumbai harbour on Saturday.

The Navy personnel found the body of the child identified as Jahan Mohammad Nisar Ahmed Pathan. The body was taken to J.J. Hospital, according to the Colaba police.

As per latest updates from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, the death toll in one of the deadliest accidents in the Mumbai harbour rose to 15. Of the 113 passengers, 98 were rescued while two were injured.

The Navy craft, which collided with the ferry, had six people on board with two surviving the accident, the official said.

The Navy craft went out of control during engine trials and rammed the passenger ferry *Neel Kamal* as tourists were heading to the Elephanta caves from the Gateway of India.

Police officials said the Maharashtra Maritime Board (MMB) permitted just 84 passengers and six crew members on board *Neel Kamal*.

The Board cancelled the licence of the ferry on charges of overloading, which is a violation of the Inland Vessel Act.

A case had been registered against the Navy craft driver at the Colaba police station on Sections pertaining to causing death by negligence, actions that endanger the personal safety or life of others, rash or negligent navigation of a vessel, and acts of mischief that cause wrongful loss or damage to individuals or the public under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

## Global terror group tried to target Siliguri corridor'

**Moyurie Som**

KOLKATA

West Bengal Police on Friday said suspected members of the "global terror group" Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) who were arrested for allegedly running a sleeper cell in India had specifically targeted the Siliguri corridor that connects north Bengal to the seven Northeastern States.

"The objective of the sleeper cell was to recruit the local youth to engage in terrorist activities," Supratim Sarkar, Additional Director General of Police (ADG), South Bengal said.

## U.P. to rope in 'digital warriors' to combat fake news, cybercrimes

**The Hindu Bureau**

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Police on Saturday announced its plans to enlist social media influencers and college students as "digital warriors" to combat circulation of fake news and strengthen the fight against cybercrimes.

Director-General of Police (DGP) Prashant Kumar, highlighting details about the initiative, said that the digital warriors will raise awareness of misleading news, train ordinary citizens against cybercrimes and publicise the campaigns of police. The DGP cited a successful pilot pro-



The U.P. police launched 'Digital Warriors' in 2018.

ject run ahead of the Maha Kumbh Mela against fake news involving influencers and college students.

"U.P. police launched

society were added as digital volunteers. In 2023, WhatsApp groups were created enabling the State police to refute fake news and highlight the commendable work of the police. But there is a need to indulge young college students and social media influencers with the U.P. Police by making them digital warriors," the DGP added in a statement.

The initiative will focus on training college and university students through workshops on the need to verify information, analyse them and report misleading news to law enforcement agencies. "By training students, we can

develop critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyse and verify information. They will help report cybercrime and fake news. They will raise awareness of fake news and cybercrime within their social circles," the DGP said.

The Uttar Pradesh Police said they plan to establish 'cyberclubs' in schools and universities, with a teacher from each institution serving as the nodal officer. "Workshops and creative sessions such as poster-making, slogan/short-story writing, and social media content creation will be conducted through the cyber clubs," Mr. Kumar added.



Madan B. Lokur

## Madan Lokur is UN Internal Justice Council chief

### The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Former Supreme Court judge Justice Madan B. Lokur was appointed Chairperson of the United Nations Internal Justice Council for a term ending on November 12, 2028.

In a communication to Justice Lokur, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said the retired judge would head the council which also comprises other distinguished jurists.

Born in 1953, Justice Lokur was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court on June 4, 2012.

He demitted office on December 30, 2018, upon attaining the age of superannuation.

# Change in election conduct rules erodes integrity, says Cong.

The Law Ministry had changed Rule 93(2)(a) of the 1961 Conduct of Election Rules; move of the EC will be challenged legally, says Congress

### The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI



**JAIRAM RAMESH**  
Congress communication chief

The Congress on Saturday said that a change in rules regarding the conduct of elections is "a vindication of our assertions regarding the rapidly eroding integrity of the electoral process managed by the Election Commission of India (EC)".

Congress communication chief Jairam Ramesh, in a post on X, tagged a media report that claimed that the Union Law Ministry, in consultation with the EC, effected a change in the rules after the Punjab and Haryana High Court asked the EC to supply all information including video and CCTV footage pertaining to a particular booth in the recent Haryana Assembly polls to the petitioner.

On Friday, the Law Ministry, through a Gazette notification, had changed

Rule 93(2)(a) of the 1961 Conduct of Election Rules under the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Earlier, the said rule stated that "all other papers relating to the election shall be open to public inspection". However, it has now been changed to read: "all other papers as specified in these rules relating to the election shall be open to public inspection".

"If there was ever a vindication of our assertions regarding the rapidly eroding integrity of the electoral process managed by the Election Commission of In-

dia in recent times, this is it. Sunlight is the best disinfectant, and information will restore faith in the process – a reasoning the Punjab and Haryana High Court agreed with when it directed the EC to share information that it is legally required to do so with the public," said Mr. Ramesh.

"Yet the EC, instead of complying with the judgment, rushes to amend the law to curtail the list of what can be shared. Why is the EC so afraid of transparency? This move of the EC will be challenged legally right away," he added.

## Parliamentary panel suggests giving subsidies to farmers to keep non-milching livestock

### The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI



Stray cattle graze at a potato farm in Uttar Pradesh.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee (PSC) on Agriculture, headed by former Punjab Chief Minister and Congress MP Charanjit Singh Channi, has recommended subsidies for farmers to keep non-milching animals to manage the problem of stray cattle. The panel asked the Centre to increase the allocation for insuring livestock.

Appreciating the efforts of the Union Animal Husbandry Department to control the birth of male bovine offspring using sex-sorted semen techniques – whereby only female calves are born with 90% accuracy rate – the panel said there is also need to prevent further growth of stray cattle from the already existing livestock population of 193.46 million cattle and 109.85 million buffaloes.

"Therefore, the Committee recommend that some incentive/subsidy

sponsored National Livestock Mission for livestock insurance due to insufficient budget provision.

"Looking towards the risk of more than 10 crore engaged in animal husbandry activities the committee recommends that Government should immediately initiate massive livestock insurance scheme to bring 53.5 crore livestock population under the ambit of this scheme. The committee recommends that higher allocation may be made available by the Government for implementation of livestock insurance scheme," the report said.

It also asked the Centre to work for self-sufficiency in cattle feed and fodder availability. "With increased availability of green fodder, cost incurred by farmers on milk production will be decreased and dependence of farmers on cattle feed will also be reduced. This will increase profit margins of dairy farmers," the panel said.

The panel also noted that the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying is covering only 1% of the livestock population under the Centrally

## Kashmir in deep freeze after record temperatures

### The Hindu Bureau SRINAGAR

Night temperature dipped to a record low of minus 8.5 C in Srinagar on Saturday and is the lowest since 1974. Sub-zero temperatures triggered a harsh cold spell across the Kashmir Valley and froze water bodies, just on the eve of 'Chilai Kalan', a 40-day harsh spell of winter starting from December 22.

Srinagar witnessed a minimum temperature of minus 8.5 C.

# Maharashtra CM allocates portfolios to Ministers, retains Home ministry

### The Hindu Bureau MUMBAI



New roles: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in Nagpur on Saturday. ANI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis retained the Home, and Law and Judiciary departments, while Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar got Urban Development and Finance departments, respectively, in the portfolio allocation among the Cabinet Ministers in the State on Saturday.

Tiding over their internal differences, the Mahayuti partners finally announced the Cabinet portfolio allocation on the last day of the Winter Session of Maharashtra Assembly. Portfolios were announced for all the 33 Cabinet Ministers and six Ministers of State. The portfolio allocation has also changed the formula of the last government. Some portfolios have been reshuffled among the three parties, but the three top leaders will continue to handle their favourite departments.

The BJP has been successful in keeping the Revenue portfolio with itself, while Women and Child Development department,

over to a senior woman Minister from the BJP. Young faces have been given an opportunity in this Cabinet.

The BJP's Nitesh Rane

and Jaykumar Gore will handle Fisheries and Rural Development, respectively.

Chief Minister Fadnavis

will handle five portfolios:

Home, Law and Judiciary, General Administration, Information and Publicity,

and departments not allotted to any other Ministers.

Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will retain Urban Development department, along with two other portfolios – Housing and Public Works (public enterprises). Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar will continue to handle the Finance and Planning department, along with State Excise.

Some Ministers have had to take a step down from their previous portfolio. Senior BJP leader Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil will now be the Water Resources Minister.

NCP leader Dhananjay Mundhe has been named the Food and Civil Supplies Minister.

The berth allocation was announced a week after the Cabinet expansion, and almost a month after the Assembly election results in Maharashtra.

## Congress steps up campaign over Amit Shah's remarks on Ambedkar

### Sandeep Phukan NEW DELHI



Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and K.C. Venugopal.

Stepping up its campaign against Home Minister Amit Shah for his comment that it has become a "fashion" to take Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar's name, the Congress on Saturday announced a plan to hold countrywide press conferences and Ambedkar samman (respect) marches in the next few days.

"We will fight to protect Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's legacy against the *Manusmriti* worshippers! INC will mark the upcoming week as Dr. Ambedkar Samman Saptah," party general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal said in a post on X.

Congress MPs, members of the party's working committee, and party lead-

ers will hold 150 press conferences in their constituencies and home districts on Sunday and Monday.

"On 24 December, all across the country, we will hold Babasaheb Ambedkar Samman Marches and submit a memorandum to President of India through District Collectors demanding Amit Shah's resignation," Mr. Venugopal added.

The speed with which

the party has reacted to Mr. Shah's remarks is unusual, but it is clearly aimed at reviving the political narrative that the BJP is out to end reservations in government jobs and educational institutions.

"They [BJP] were always saying that they would change the Constitution. They are against the Constitution, against Ambedkarji, his ideology. Their entire focus is to finish Ambedkarji's contribution," Mr. Gandhi had said on Wednesday.

The principal Opposition party surely knew that the second most powerful Minister in the Modi Cabinet will not resign over his off-the-cuff remark. But Mr. Venugopal sent out directives that on December 18 State units should gherao Raj Bhavans – a symbol of the Centre in a State – across the country over the alleged insult to the architect of the Constitution.

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S/o-Ch Ramana Kumar, Director, Telangana Govt. Text Book Press, Hyderabad

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### NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited through online mode only for appointment of 9 (Nine) Senior Officer (Finance) and 7 (Seven) Senior Officer (Technical) on Contract basis for two years in TIIC.

Eligible applicants are requested to refer to [www.tiic.org](http://www.tiic.org) for more details regarding instructions on how to apply, emoluments, qualifications, experience, etc.

The last date for submission of application is 05.01.2025. TIIC will not be responsible for any delay in submission of application due to technical error, network problem, etc. Candidates will be selected based on experience and performance in the Interview.

**The appointment is purely temporary.**

DIPR/1251/Display/2024

### CHAIRMAN AND MANAGING DIRECTOR

Date: 20 December, 2024

Advt. No.: 1576/XLI-A/24-63/2021

### RECRUITMENT FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR

**EXTENSION OF LAST DATE**

In continuation to advt. no. 1343/2024 dated 14/11/2024 the last date of receipt applications for the Post of Director in Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Engineering and Technology (GPBIET), Pauri-Garhwal (Autonomous Institute of Govt of Uttarakhand) in the pay Level-14, Entry pay Rs 144200/-plus allowances is extended to 31.12.2024. The appointment will be for a period of 3 years and can be extendable for 02 more years or till the age of superannuation as prescribed by State Govt, on contractual basis by the Board of Governor with the approval of Uttarakhand State Government. Essential qualifications and experience will be as prescribed by AICTE (Engineering/Technology program). The duly filled application on prescribed format along with relevant documents & application fee should be sent by Registered/Speed post to "Secretary, Technical Education Department, Uttarakhand Secretariat, Subhash Road, Dehradun, 248001" so as to reach latest by 31, December 2024, 5:00 PM. Incomplete applications and applications received after the last date will be summarily rejected. For details visit website [gpbiet.ac.in](http://gpbiet.ac.in).

**Secretary, Technical Education & Vice Chairman, Board of Governors, GPBIET Pauri**

## Rahul to meet Parbhani victim's family tomorrow

### The Hindu Bureau MUMBAI

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi is visiting Parbhani on Monday to meet the family members of Somnath Vyankat Suryawanshi, a law student who died in judicial custody after violence broke out in Parbhani.

Mr. Gandhi is expected to reach the victim's home by 2.45 p.m. He will be accompanied by Maharashtra State Congress president Nana Patole.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Maharashtra Pradesh Youth Congress chairman Akshay Jain said, "This is Mr. Gandhi's first official visit to Maharashtra after the Assembly election."

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Online Tenders are invited for following items:-

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1	TS-1532 (e-Tender No. 2024-PKVVC-389197-1)	Lightning Arresters	141	5900	15.01.2025

\* For updated/extended due dates for opening of tender (EMD in cover-1 & Techno-commercial bid in cover-2) please refer to the online key dates. For other details visit Company's website: [www.mpez.co.in](http://www.mpez.co.in) or <https://mptenders.gov.in>

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Sr. No.	Name of Work	Amount of work / E.M.D. in Rs.	Eligibility/Tender Cost in Rs.	Time Limit in Months	Division
1	Construction of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Super Speciality Hospital & Post Graduate Institute for Medical Sciences at Kh. No. 101, 102 & 103, Mz. - Indora, Nagpur.	402.08 Cr. 2.01 Cr.	As per Tender Document 50,000/-	36	North

Money :- E.M.D. is to be paid by online only. **Plans & Estimates** :- Available in the Technical Section, Head Office, Sadar, Nagpur. **Tender Forms** :- From 02.00 PM, on Date 26.1

## IN BRIEF



## Rain dashes farmers' hopes for a windfall in Odisha

Incessant rain, driven by a low-pressure area, has left agricultural lands in Odisha waterlogged, submerging ready-to-harvest paddy crop and dashing farmers' hopes of earning ₹3,100 a quintal of paddy for the first time in the kharif season. The State has received widespread rain across most districts after a low-pressure area over west-central and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal turned into depression. The rain has proven to be a curse for farmers in both coastal and interior districts, striking at the peak of the harvest season. With their fields partially submerged, farmers are struggling to salvage their ready-to-harvest paddy.

## Railway stations in Bengal promote GI-tagged products

The Sealdah Division of Eastern Railway is promoting West Bengal's unique local products with the Geographical Identification (GI) tag through its "one station, one product" (OSOP) stalls. One OSOP store in Sealdah station is selling Joynagar Moa, a traditional sweet made from palm jaggery and puffed rice. The unique product, which is prepared at Joynagar in South 24 Parganas district was granted the GI tag in 2015. At the Phulia station in Nadia district, an OSOP stall is selling traditional Santipuri saris. At the Krishnanagar station, another railway station in Nadia district, an OSOP stall is promoting traditional clay idols.

## Row over whitewashing of century-old murals in Kolkata

The 170-year-old Government College of Art & Craft, Kolkata (GCAC), has found itself at the centre of a controversy over the whitewashing of the century-old Rajasthani murals on the college building. The Rajasthani motifs – painted in a repetitive, matrix formation on the arches of three floors – are believed to have been commissioned in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when Ernest Binfield Havell and Abanindranath Tagore were heading the institution. However, the whitewashing of the murals has led to widespread protests in West Bengal's artist fraternity, including among renowned names of the GCAC alumni.

## Will ensure Pashmina shawls don't attract high GST: Omar

Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday said his government will ensure that the famed Pashmina shawls are not considered in the higher slabs of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and warned that such a move would be life-threatening to the Pashmina shawl industry. Mr. Abdullah, who attended the 55th meeting of the GST Council in Rajasthan, said there were some things that were agreed on, and some things were deferred during the meeting. "There had been a lot of speculation that GST on shawls, particularly Pashmina shawls, will be hiked, so we had come prepared to ensure that wouldn't happen," Mr. Abdullah said.

## SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku								
3	5	9	7	6	1	4	2	8
7	6	8	4	5	2	3	9	1
1	2	4	9	3	8	7	6	5
5	1	6	2	9	4	8	3	7
8	3	2	6	1	7	9	5	4
4	9	7	3	8	5	6	1	2
6	4	5	8	2	3	1	7	9
2	8	3	1	7	9	5	4	6
9	7	1	5	4	6	2	8	3

Dinakar Peri  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government's proposal for a tableau for Republic Day was not approved by the expert committee, while Mizoram and Sikkim expressed their inability to participate in the parade this time.

Officials of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep did not turn up for the expert committee meeting. They were among the 15 States and Union Territories originally selected from the roster for the January 26 event, defence sources said. In place of them, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal have been given a chance, sources said.

Against the backdrop of repeated controversies over selection of tableaux for the Republic Day parade and complaints from



The Gujarat tableau is among those selected for the Republic Day parade in consecutive years. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

States year after year, the Defence Ministry, ahead of the parade this year, proposed a roll-over plan for the States and Union Territories to showcase their tableaux, and a roster was prepared for 2024, 2025 and 2026 under which each of them would get a chance to participate at least once during the three years.

"The expert committee

looks into various aspects of theme, concept, designs and visual elements. Out of the 15 States and Union Territories on the roster, the expert committee did not approve the proposal of Delhi," a source said.

While details of the Delhi government's proposal and the specific reasons it was not approved were not immediately known, sources observed that in

the two decades past, Delhi has presented its tableau seven times. On why Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh were selected again consecutively, a source said several States had participated more often than the two of them. They include Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Assam.

Following the agreement on the three-year roll-over plan in January, several States that were selected to present tableaux at the Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path presented them at the Bharat Parv at the Red Fort, which included Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir, Goa, Assam and Uttarakhand.

The Defence Ministry has an elaborate screening mechanism that selects participants for the pa-

much like Metro tickets in many cities. This will help with regulating entry to the station," the official said.

## Stone marvel

Built in stone and featuring two towers with huge curved windows and medieval entrances, Karnataka's Ballari is one of the oldest railway stations in India dating back to 1869. The building is currently painted in white and rust orange colours. "Its heritage look is being aesthetically preserved in the development work. We are restoring the stone facade by sand blasting, filling the cracks by pressure grouting and using water-proofing technique to bring out the natural look of the building," the official said.

A Grade II heritage structure, the Nagpur Railway Station built in 1925 is facing challenges due to increasing footfall and choc-a-bloc vehicle parking, which obscure its facade.

"Similar work is being carried out in Coonoor station, which is another UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is part of the picturesque Nilgiri Mountain Railways," another official said.

After the Heritage Committee suggested that officials revisit their plans to restore Udhagamandalam

and Coonoor stations, officials said they were working in close consultation with the committee to ensure the heritage buildings do not lose their original glory. Revamp of the stations will likely cost around ₹7 crore each.

"The committee has suggested that plans for a new cafeteria at Udhagamandalam be shelved, and that an old stone structure used by the Railway Protection Force can house the cafeteria to maintain continuity of look. In Coonoor, the structure being constructed in the front to be used as a circulating area for passengers will emulate the heritage building," the official said.

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After the Heritage Committee suggested that officials revisit their plans to restore Udhagamandalam

## Temple managements not implementing reservation rosters, says NCST member

Abhinav Lakshman  
NEW DELHI

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## Nayak says there is partiality against SC and ST employees in service matters and promotions

vasthanam, and the Puri Jagannath Temple.

"In so many temples, they are not using rosters at all. Bhadrachalam predominantly has an ST population and it is located in the jungles. They have no regard for reservation. In Srisailam too, this is the case. This is also in the jungle area. There should be more right for STs of the area for their development. In Tirupati, the situation is very bad," Mr. Nayak said.

Referring to the situation at the TTD, Mr. Nayak said the NCST was informed about a host of issues relating to the welfare of SCs and STs there during a review in August. Among the list of complaints were demands to allow SCs and STs to be considered for religious posts in the temples, adequately inform SCs and STs about stipend scheme of the TTD for those studying the Vedas, lack of reservation in shop and hawker licence allotments, and a near absence of a grievance redress mechanism for SC/ST staffers.

"When we took stock of the issues and called the EO to explain what is happening, they kept evading and then went to the High Court to get a stay order. We will fight it tooth and nail in the court. How can the court stay proceedings of a commission, which is itself exercising its Constitutional powers as a civil court?" Mr. Nayak said, adding, all temples he has reviewed have similar issues.

Mr. Nayak told *The Hindu* that he has been able to use his position at the NCST to take the commission's services to more and more people in the southern States. "There have been many more commission members appointed from the North, so some work has been done there. But in the south, awareness about the NCST and what it can do for the people is relatively low," he said.

## Phase I of Maritime Museum in Gujarat to open next year

Sarbananda Sonowal says the project is anticipated to have a daily footfall of up to 25,000 and will create a total of 22,000 jobs; Phase 1A of the project has achieved 65% progress currently



Engineering marvel: A Sea Harrier 609 fighter jet, which will be on display at the maritime museum in Lothal. PTI

centre for learning and study and research globally on maritime issues," he said. The Minister said that the project is anticipated to have a daily footfall of up to 25,000 and would create 22,000 jobs. "At present, 65% physical progress for the Phase 1A of the project has been achieved."

Excavations have revealed the world's oldest known artificial dock,

which was connected to an old course of the Sabarmati river in Lothal, located 80 km from Ahmedabad. The site has been nominated to be enlisted as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Archaeologists believe that the city was a part of a major river system on the ancient trade route from Sindh to Saurashtra in Gujarat, according to the Gujarat Tourism website.

The Union Minister said

that the discovery of the dry dock has proved that India used to be one of the largest shipbuilders and also had world-class ship repair facilities. "The high-quality ships were being built in India and as a result Indian ships were able to complete successful voyages across the world. And this has not only integrated the world community through trade and commerce but also through cultural exchanges and pilgrimages."

The Union Cabinet in October gave its nod to the project. It also accorded in-principle approval for Phases 1B and 2 of the project, as per the master plan, by raising funds through voluntary resources or contributions. It mandated that a separate society will be set up for development of future phases, to be administered by a Governing Council headed by the Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

Common complaint Mr. Nayak said he had conducted reviews of two States, 26 public sector undertakings, and 48 districts across the country in his time with the commission

the two decades past, Delhi has presented its tableau seven times. On why Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh were selected again consecutively, a source said several States had participated more often than the two of them. They include Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Assam.

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INBRIEF



VW moving closer to a deal with employee unions

Volkswagen is getting closer to a deal with labour leaders in the company's longest negotiations over pay and jobs, sources told *Reuters*, as Europe's largest carmaker tries to push through cost cuts and avert mass strikes. Volkswagen has been in talks with labour representatives since September over steps it says are necessary for it to compete with cheaper Chinese competitors, slower-than-expected adoption of electric vehicles and lacklustre European demand. REUTERS

RRP S4E Innovations secures ₹102 cr. Defence Ministry order

RRP S4E Innovations Ltd., which is into electro-optics, said it has won orders from the Ministry of Defence, Department of Military Affairs for procurement of long range thermal imaging (TI) camera and smart thermal imaging sight for small arms (Smart TI Sight for SA) worth ₹102 crore. The company would supply long range TI cameras worth ₹68 crore and smart TI sights worth ₹34 crore for small arms as part of these orders.

Popees Baby Care to ramp up its South India presence

Popees Baby Care Products Pvt. Ltd. plans to add 42 stores during FY26 as a part of its expansion strategy in South India. The expansion would cover Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The firm would also open one store in each metro and other large cities in the country, the company added. It is also gearing up to enter Abu Dhabi and Sharjah by opening two showrooms at Sahara Centre in Sharjah and Dalma Mall in Abu Dhabi, the company said.

# November Gain: U.S. inflation down, consumer spends rise

Autos, recreation, financial services lifted spending 0.4% last month; Core Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) inflation rises 0.1%, marking the smallest uptick in six months

**Reuters**  
WASHINGTON

**U**s consumer spending rose in November amid strong demand for goods and services, underscoring the economy's resilience, which saw the Federal Reserve this week projecting fewer interest rate cuts in 2025 than in September.

There was also good news on inflation. The report from the Commerce Department on Friday showed moderate monthly rises in prices, with a measure of underlying inflation posting its smallest gain in six months. Still, some



**Cautious Optimism:** Though the pace of price rise has been moderate, some areas of stickiness remain. AFP

areas of stickiness remain.

The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index rose 0.1% last month after an unrevised 0.2% gain in October. In

the 12 months through November, the PCE price index advanced 2.4% after rising 2.3% in October.

Personal income rose 0.3%, with wages shooting

up 0.6%. The savings rate dipped to 4.4% from 4.5% in October.

Monthly inflation subsided after showing little improvement in recent months. The increase in the annual inflation rate was partly due to last year's low readings dropping out of the calculation.

"The economy continues to grow from strong consumer demand," said Jeffrey Roach, chief economist, LPL Financial.

"Inflation was more benign than expected but the stickiness of some categories supports the Fed's hesitancy to materially lower rates next year," he added.

## Realty, Metro Rail to drive Otis India's double-digit growth goal'

**Lalatendu Mishra**  
MUMBAI



Sebi Joseph

With the luxury and commercial real estate sector in India doing well and the Metro Rail segment growing rapidly, Otis India, one of the biggest elevator firms in India, is eyeing to sustain double-digit growth, its president told *The Hindu*.

"We are very pleased to retain, sustain the leadership position in new equipment and service. We introduced about 25-plus products over the years,

from Bengaluru, focused high on indigenisation, localisation, which helped in growing our market share, gaining leadership, growing top line, bottom line, and catering to the aspira-

tions of the Indian consumers," Sebi Joseph, president, Otis India, said.

"Today, about 95% of the India's requirement is met by our Bengaluru factory," he said, adding all segments the firm operates in, are growing steadily.

He said the company will increase the capacity of its factory in Bengaluru by about 20% to cater to the growing demand.

"As the market grows and India goes high rise, so we are in tune with India's growth, and at times, ahead of it," he said.

## NPS AUM to touch ₹15 lakh crore by fiscal end'

**Press Trust of India**  
MUMBAI

The assets under management (AUM) of the National Pension System are expected to touch ₹15 lakh crore by the end of current fiscal year, Pension Fund Regulatory Development Authority Chairman Deepak Mohanty said on Saturday.

Mr. Mohanty said the take-up rate by employees in corporates remains a challenge, despite 18,000 companies signing up.

## SRMP Auto eyes leadership in ₹100-cr. India caravan market

**N. Anand**  
CHENNAI

Chennai-based SRMP Auto Manufacturing Pvt. Ltd., a part of SRM group, is aiming at becoming a market leader in the ₹100-crore caravan and camper space in the next few years, a top company official said.

"We forayed into caravan manufacturing business in 2013. But, the business venture started to take off only post COVID. Since then, there has been no turning back," Group chairman Ravi Pachamuthu told *The Hindu*.

### Nascent stage'

"Caravan business in India is still in nascent stage. India market is valued at ₹100 crore, of this we hold 40% market share nationwide and 80% in Tamil Nadu. It is growing by 20% year-on-year," he added.

Besides, caravans, the company also manufactures different types of school and luxury buses, vanity vans, mobile medical unit, election campaign vans, Tempo Traveller conversion and motor-homes among others for corporate houses, educational institutions and political leaders. It also undertakes repair and restoration services. Till date, the firm had sold over 1,200 units.

According to him, there are only four major players in the organised sector. The market between organised and unorganised sector is in the ratio of 80:20. Tamil Nadu has more than 1,000 caravans.

SRMP started this venture to make long distance travel a smooth affair keeping utmost safety aspect in mind. Initially, the firm imported caravans. But it did not suit Indian conditions.

Mr. Ravi said that they initially started manufacturing limited numbers of caravans for personal use.

Later, they started making it for third parties at affordable prices by using chassis procured from Ashok Leyland, Tata Motors.



THE HINDU GROUP

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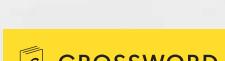
  
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# SCIENCE

## Moon was formed around 4.51 billion years ago, says study

**The Hindu Bureau**

Evidence to support an older age for the formation of the Moon, around 4.51 billion years ago, as per a paper published in the journal *Nature*.

This new analysis suggests that a 'remelting' of the Moon's surface around 4.35 billion years ago may have masked a far older

history.

The Moon is thought to have been formed through a collision between the early Earth and a Mars-sized protoplanet, the last giant impact in our planet's history.

The timing of this event has been estimated by dating lunar rock samples presumed to have crystallised from the lunar mag-

ma ocean that existed post-impact, placing the Moon's age at approximately 4.35 billion years old, as per a *Nature* release.

However, this age fails to account for several discrepancies with thermal models and other pieces of evidence, such as the number of craters on the Moon and the age of some zircon minerals on the Moon's

surface, which suggest that the Moon could be up to 4.51 billion years old.

### Resetting formation

The researchers argue that the frequent occurrence of approximately 4.35-billion-year-old rocks may be indicative of a remelting event, driven by the Moon's orbital evolution, rather than the first solidification of

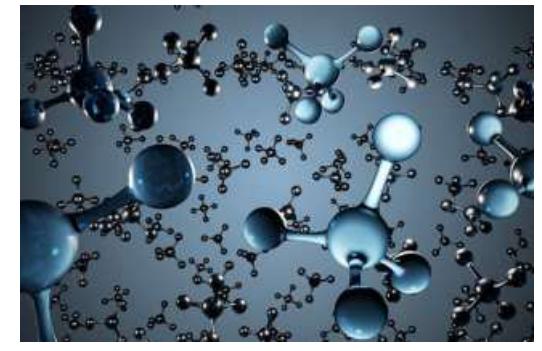
the lunar magma ocean. The authors use modelling to show that the Moon may have experienced sufficient tidal heating to cause this remelting approximately 4.35 billion years ago, which could 'reset' the apparent formation age of these lunar samples.

In addition, the remelting of the Moon would explain why there are fewer

lunar impact basins from early bombardment than might be expected, as they would have been erased during a heating event.

The authors posit that this explanation would suggest the formation of the Moon occurred between 4.43 and 4.53 billion years ago, at the upper limit of previous age estimates.

## SNAPSHOTS



### Eco-friendly reactor converts air and water into ammonia

Taking inspiration from how nature produces ammonia, researchers have developed a reactor that produces the chemical commodity from nitrogen in the air and water, without any carbon footprint. The plasma-electrochemical reactor can sustain a high ammonia production rate of approximately 1 gram per day for over 1,000 hours at room temperature, and does so directly from air, which is a significant advance toward green ammonia synthesis at an industrially competitive production rate.



### Denali Fault tore apart ancient joining of landmasses

A study shows that three sites spread along the Denali Fault located in the southern half of Alaska were once a smaller united geologic feature indicative of the final joining of two land masses. That feature was then torn apart by millions of years of tectonic activity. Historical reconstruction of 483 km of horizontal movement on the Denali Fault found that the three locations at one time formed a terminal suture zone, which represents the final integration of tectonic plates into a larger mass.



### Early warning tool can help control huge locust swarms

Using weather forecast data from the U.K. Met Office, and state-of-the-art computational models of the insects' movements in the air, researchers can now predict where swarms will go as they search for new feeding and breeding grounds. This is the first that can rapidly and reliably predict swarm behaviour. It takes into account the insects' life cycle and their selection of breeding sites, and can forecast locust swarm movements both short and long-term.

## Journal retracts the discredited hydroxychloroquine paper

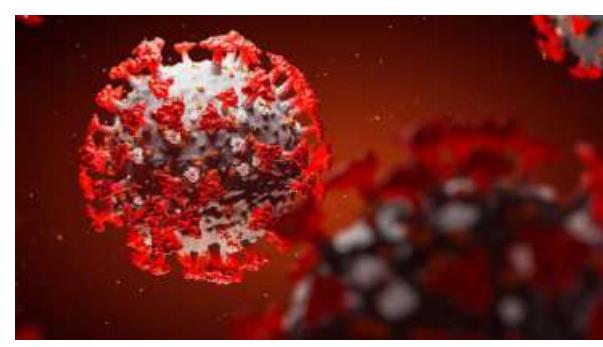
**The Hindu Bureau**

More than four-and-a-half years after the highly questionable "study" by a French researcher Didier Raoult and others claiming that hydroxychloroquine monotherapy and hydroxychloroquine in combination with azithromycin was "significantly associated with viral load reduction/disappearance in COVID-19 patients" was published on March 20, 2020, the paper was finally retracted on December 17 this year. The paper published in the *International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents* was withdrawn because of concerns about the ethical approval for the research. The paper that was submitted to the journal on March 16, 2020 was accepted for publication the very next day.

Three days after the paper was published, ICMR approved the use of

hydroxychloroquine as a prophylaxis by healthcare workers and those caring for COVID-19 patients. The drug was also granted an emergency use authorisation by the U.S. FDA on March 28, 2020, which was revoked about once-a-half months later. The publication of the paper and the FDA approval raised a lot of attention globally and contributed to a demand for the drug despite appropriate evidence of its benefit. The drug was also strongly backed by the then U.S. President Donald Trump.

On April 3, a fortnight after the paper was published, the journal publisher – the International Society of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy (ISAC) – which co-owns the journal with Elsevier, expressed concerns saying that the "article does not meet the Society's expected standard". An independent re-



**Tall claim:** The authors claimed that hydroxychloroquine significantly reduced the SARS-CoV-2 viral load. GETTY IMAGES

view commissioned by the journal also concluded that the trial had "several major methodological issues, including the design, outcome measure and the statistical analyses". Yet, the journal did not retract the paper until a few days ago.

Addressing the concerns about the peer-review process, the ISAC statement said that despite being the Editor-in-Chief of the journal and an author of the paper, "Jean-Marc Rolain had no involvement

in the peer review of the manuscript and has no access to information regarding its peer review".

The paper came under investigation again a few months ago when three authors of the paper contacted the journal saying that they had "concerns regarding the presentation and interpretation of results" and no longer wanted to be associated with the article, as per documents seen by *Retraction Watch*. Responding to *Re-*

*traction Watch*, a spokesperson for the journal said that the "journal was reopening the previously closed investigation after receiving the authors' requests".

Ethical approval for the study was granted on March 6 and as per the paper, the follow-up of the participants was supposed to last for 14 days. But with a "submission date of March 16, the timeline becomes seemingly impossible", Elisabeth M Bik, an independent research integrity researcher wrote on PubPeer in March 2020. In the retracted notice, the journal addresses this concern saying: "The journal has not been able to establish whether all patients could have entered into the study in time for the data to have been analysed and included in the manuscript prior to its submission on the 20th March 2020, nor whether all pa-

tients were enrolled in the study upon admission as opposed to having been hospitalised for some time before starting the treatment described in the article."

As per the details available in the EU clinical trials register, the secondary objective of the trial was to evaluate the "clinical effectiveness of treatment on time to afebrile, normalisation of respiratory rate, and average length of hospital stay and mortality". The results of the secondary objective are not available in the paper. While the primary objective of the study was to shorten the period of virus carrying and thus contagion, the secondary endpoint is "very important for determining whether patients may have clinical benefit and not only a reduced risk of infecting others", a researcher wrote on PubPeer.



### Question Corner

## Squirrels and voles

### Are ground squirrels strictly granivorous?

A new study provides the first evidence that California ground squirrels also hunt, kill and eat voles. Researchers have for the first time chronicled widespread carnivorous behaviour among squirrels. The study changes our understanding of ground squirrels. It suggests that what was considered a granivorous species is an opportunistic omnivore and more flexible in its diet. Through videos, photos and direct observations at the regional park, the researchers documented California ground squirrels

of all ages and genders hunting, eating and competing over vole prey between June 10 and July 30 this year. The squirrels' carnivorous summer behaviour peaked during the first two weeks of July, coinciding with an explosion of vole numbers at the park reported by citizen scientists on iNaturalist. This suggests the squirrels' hunting behaviour emerged alongside a temporary increase in the availability of prey, the study said. The scientists did not observe the squirrels hunting other mammals.

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

## Why are some packaged foods under a cloud?

What did the nutritional profiling of some convenience foods reveal? Are labelling regulations being flouted?

**Zubeda Hamid**

**The story so far:**

A study of 432 convenience food products, in five categories – idli mixes, breakfast cereals, porridge mixes, beverage mixes, soup mixes – and extruded ('puffed' or 'expanded') snacks, has found that a majority of these ready-to-eat/packaged food products are high in carbohydrates.

**Who conducted the study?**

The study, 'Assessment of front and back of pack nutrition labels of selected convenience food products and snacks available in the Indian market' by Shobana Shannugam *et al*, was published in *Plos One*. Researchers with Chennai-based Madras Diabetes Research Foundation, the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Nutrition and the University of Reading, the U.K. were involved. It aimed to evaluate the nutritional profiles and claims of selected convenience food products and snacks in the Indian market and also measured their healthiness.

The nutritional profiling of the foods was conducted based on the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) claims regulations, after evaluating the nutritional information on the front and back of pack labels of the selected food items. Only the nutritional content claims related to protein, dietary fibre, fat, sugar and cholesterol were evaluated in this study. The healthiness was assessed using a nutritional traffic light system.

**What did the study find?**

In essence, the study found that while most of the products could fall under the 'healthy' or 'moderately healthy' categories, except extruded snacks, most of the products provided over 70% of the energy from carbohydrates, while extruded snacks provided over 47% of the energy from fat. The energy distribution from protein

was found to be less than 15%. All convenience food products that the study tested were rich in carbohydrate content. While beverage mixes had the highest carbohydrate

content (35.5g to 95g/100g), extruded snacks had the highest total fat content (mean 28.3±7.5 g/100g), and the highest saturated fatty acid (SFA) content (mean 11.0±4.5 g/100g). The beverage mixes were found to be high in sugar content. The soup mixes had high sodium levels with poor protein and dietary fibre content. The idli mixes had high protein content and were largely sugar free. The study also found that despite FSSAI's packaging and labelling regulations requiring products to display the minimum nutritional information for energy, protein, carbohydrate, sugar, and total fat as "per 100 g" or "100 ml" or "per serving" of the product on the label, only certain breakfast cereals and some beverages widely disclosed the concept of per-serving information. Further, some products that claimed to contain whole grains did not display them in the ingredient list and these claims may be misleading to the consumer, it noted.

**What are the issues around food labelling?** For years, activists have been advocating for front-of-pack labelling that has warning labels indicating high fat, sugar and sodium. "We want the warning labels to be specific, so, for instance, a customer with hypertension can avoid food labelled as 'high sodium' or a customer with diabetes can avoid high sugar foods," said Vandana Prasad, a public health professional.

Lead author of the paper and senior scientist at Madras Diabetes Research Foundation Dr. Shannugam said the present labelling system was not uniform, and customers could find it hard to understand.

**How are changing diet patterns affecting health?**

As per the household consumption expenditure survey 2022-23, Indians are now spending more on processed food, beverages, and refreshments.

Experts have highlighted this changing diet is a huge contributing factor to the staggering burden of non-communicable diseases in the country. The Economic Survey of India this year, citing the Indian Council of Medical Research's dietary guidelines, noted that 56.4% of the total disease burden in India is due to unhealthy diets.

Not only do excessive carbohydrates in the diet place a strain on the pancreas, therefore increasing one's risk for type 2 diabetes, but other chemicals in processed food can increase the risk of ailments such as fatty liver as well, said Nihal Thomas, senior professor, Department of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism, Christian Medical College, Vellore. R.M. Anjana, managing director of Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre, Chennai, who was part of the study, reiterated the importance of reading food labels and avoiding processed food as much as possible.

## What are India's plans for a quantum satellite?

What is its function? When is it expected to be launched? Which are the fields in which this communication device will help? What about security issues? What is quantum cryptography? What are the pros and cons of quantum key distribution?

**Vasudevan Mukunth**

**The story so far:**

In December 13, Ajai Chowdhry, chairman of the Mission Governing Board of the National Quantum Mission, said India plans to launch a quantum satellite in "2-3 years for quantum communications".

**What is the National Quantum Mission?**

The National Quantum Mission (NQM) is a Department of Science & Technology programme to accelerate the use of quantum physics to develop advanced communications and sensing systems.

The development of computers changed the course of human history from the mid-20th century onwards. Advances in this sector gave humankind satellites, telecommunications, weather forecasts, drug-discovery programmes, etc.

But these advances are reaching a saturation point because the physics phenomena on which they are based, called classical physics, are hitting a performance upper-limit. So scientists around the world are developing new technologies to solve the same problems but using phenomena of quantum physics. Because the rules of quantum physics allow for the outcomes of classical physics as well as new 'bonus' ones, the new devices are expected to be more versatile problem-solvers.

The Union Cabinet approved the NQM in April 2023 at ₹6,000 crore, to be implemented from 2023 to 2031. The planned quantum satellite is part of this package.

**What is a quantum satellite?**

A quantum satellite is a term for a

Quantum physics has paved the way for new forms of data protection, and quantum satellites are expected to facilitate them

communications satellite that uses quantum physics to secure its signals.

Communications is a broad term that refers to technologies that send and receive signals. An important part of these technologies is security: preventing bad actors from intercepting a message being transmitted across large distances, through multiple networks.

The advent of quantum computers threatens the technologies currently being used to secure messages. Fortunately, quantum physics has also paved the way for new forms of protection, and quantum satellites are expected to facilitate them.

**How are messages secured?**

Say two people, Anil and Selvi, are standing at two ends of a playground and wish to speak to each other. They could shout or wave their hands. However, Anil composes his message, encrypts it, and writes the encrypted text on a piece of paper. He ties it to the foot of a messenger pigeon and sends it to Selvi. If Selvi knows how Anil encrypted the message, she can decrypt it to access the original text.

Encryption is the task of concealing information. The manner is called the cipher. A simple example is the Caesar cipher, where the letters of the alphabet are offset by a fixed number. If the number is 5, the words BIRDS FLY AWAY become GNWIX KQD FBFD.

Say there is a third person, Kaushik, standing in the middle of the ground and trying to eavesdrop on the conversation. If he intercepts the pigeon, he can't crack the text unless he knows the manner of encryption.

This security paradigm is called cryptographic security. It works by hiding the secret code, or key, behind an extremely difficult mathematical problem. A bad actor like Kaushik can solve the problem with a powerful computer to reveal the code – but the harder the problem, the more time (and/or more computing resources) he will need.

Even the most powerful supercomputers have difficulty cracking the best Advanced Encryption Standard ciphers in use today – but quantum computers may be able to do better.

**How can quantum physics protect messages?**

Quantum cryptography uses the tenets of quantum physics to secure messages. Its most famous type is quantum key distribution (QKD).

In the example before, Anil used a key to encrypt his message and Selvi, who knew the key, used it to decrypt the message. QKD is concerned with sharing this key with both Anil and Selvi such that if Kaushik is eavesdropping on the transmission, everyone will find out and

the sharing will be aborted.

Quantum physics can protect against eavesdropping in different ways. One is quantum measurement – the act of measuring the properties of a quantum system, like a photon (the particle of light). According to the rules of quantum physics, a quantum measurement changes the state of the system. If information about the key is encoded in a stream of photons and Kaushik traps and measures them to look for it, the state of the photons will change and Anil and Selvi will know the key has been compromised.

Another way is to use quantum entanglement: when two photons are entangled, any change to one particle will instantaneously change the other. (This is a simplistic description.)

**Has QKD been implemented?**

Ravindra Pratap Singh of the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad, wrote in 2023 that standards for different QKD implementations are still a decade away. This said, China currently operates the world's largest QKD network with three quantum satellites and four ground stations.

Experts are also trying to implement QKD across longer distances. Since the early 1990s, the distance of reliable transmissions has increased to several hundred kilometres, either through fibre-optic cables or free space.

In an October 2024 study, researchers at the Raman Research Institute, Bengaluru, reported the Indian Astronomical Observatory in Hanle, Ladakh, offers the best atmospheric conditions through which to transmit data for a satellite-based QKD system. The paper's lead author Satya Ranjan Behera said the beam distance would be 500 km.

**Does QKD have drawbacks?**

QKD on paper can be different from that in the real-world. This is why the U.S. National Security Agency has recommended the use of

post-quantum cryptography rather than quantum cryptography. Its criticism is focused on five technical limitations: "QKD does not provide a means to authenticate the QKD transmission source"; "since QKD is hardware-based", QKD networks can't be

upgraded or patched easily; "QKD increases infrastructure costs and insider threat risks" that "eliminate many use cases from consideration"; "the actual security provided by a QKD system is not the theoretical unconditional security from the laws of physics... but rather the more limited

security that can be achieved by hardware and

engineering designs"; and since eavesdroppers can cause a transmission to stop, they can deny the use of a transmission by its intended users (a.k.a. a denial-of-service attack).

The no-cloning theorem of quantum physics also disallows quantum information from being amplified to compensate for losses during transmission.



## Why have Manipur SITs made little progress?

What is the situation on the ground? What are the Supreme Court directions for the special investigation teams? When is the next hearing scheduled? What are the offences the SITs are looking into? Why is it difficult to hold trials in the State?

**Vijaita Singh**

**The story so far:**

A report accessed by *The Hindu* shows that the special investigation teams (SIT), set up by the Supreme Court to investigate cases of rape, sexual offences against women, murder, loot, and arson in ethnic violence-hit Manipur, have filed chargesheets only in a fraction of the cases.

**When were the SITs set up?**

On August 7, 2023, a Supreme Court bench led by former Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud constituted 42 SITs to probe 6,523 first information reports (FIRs) pertaining to violent crimes, including sexual offences, which were reported in Manipur from May 3 to July 30, 2023. The cleaning of records brought down the number of FIRs to 3,023. Since people were displaced from their homes, many filed zero FIRs at police stations in Manipur or even outside the State as they could not travel to the concerned police station fearing for their safety. Zero FIRs are filed irrespective of jurisdiction and are later transferred to the police station.

The SIT submits a status report every month to the Supreme Court. On December 9, 2024, the court directed the Manipur government to provide details of buildings and properties which were burnt, partially burnt, looted and

There are concerns about holding the trial in the State due to the ongoing ethnic violence between the two communities

trespassed during the ethnic violence. The next date of hearing is January 20.

**What does the status report say?**

The *Hindu* accessed a status report of the SIT investigations dated November 20, 2024. It showed that the 42 SITs have filed chargesheets in only 6% of the total 3,023 registered cases. Chargesheets, the police summary of allegations, pertaining to various crimes have been filed only in 192 cases.

From August 2023, when the SITs were constituted, till November 20 this year, the teams arrested 384 persons, identified 742 suspects and examined 11,901 witnesses. As many as 574 accused persons have been chargedheeted so far. The report stated that the SIT is investigating 126 cases of murders and 2,888 cases of loot, arson and other property crimes. A closure report has been filed in 605 cases due to a lack of evidence and witnesses. The SIT has recovered 501 weapons, 13,464 ammunition, and 412 magazines among others so far. Overall, the Manipur Police have recovered around 1,800 looted weapons so far.

**What is the composition of the SIT?**

Based on the recommendation of the Manipur government, the Supreme Court said the cases should be bundled under three categories – FIRs related to murder and heinous crimes, sexual crimes against women, and other crimes such as loot, arson etc. The charter of the SITs was distributed accordingly, and the teams were further divided into six groups, one each to probe cases of murders, heinous crime and rape, and sexual offences against women, and four groups to probe cases of arson, looting and other crimes.

A Superintendent of Police-rank officer deputed by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs was tasked with supervising three SITs each which comprise two inspectors, six sub-inspectors and 12 constables.

**What did the court say?**

On July 20, 2023, after a video of two tribal Kuki-Zo women being paraded naked by a mob surfaced on social media, the Supreme Court

called for reports indicating the steps taken by the government to hold the perpetrators accountable and ensure that such incidents are not repeated. Though the incident occurred on May 4, 2023, the case was filed in July, after the video went viral.

On August 1, 2023, the State informed the court that 11 FIRs involving cases of violence against women and children had been filed, though this was subject to further verification. Seven arrests were made in connection with these 11 FIRs, the State informed the court. The Centre said the State was willing to transfer the 11 cases to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The sexual violence case of the two women was transferred to the CBI along with other cases. Expressing dismay at the "tardy pace of investigation," the court constituted a three-member committee headed by Justice Gita Mittal, former Chief Justice of the J&K High Court. The mandate of the committee is to enquire into the nature of violence against women that occurred in Manipur from May 4, 2023, from all available sources and the FIRs lodged as well as media reports.

The court also appointed Dattatray Padsalgikar, former Director General of Police, Maharashtra to supervise the investigation by the CBI into the FIRs transferred to it and the investigation into the remaining FIRs.

**What are the challenges?**

A senior government official says there are several logistical issues hampering the investigation. For recording the statement of a victim, language is a challenge as many officers heading the investigating teams are from outside the State. There have been instances when victims have changed their phone numbers. "Then, for an FIR registered in Imphal (valley), a victim who hails from the hill districts, will not want to speak to an officer from the valley – this causes delays. The same is true for cases registered in the hills when the victims are from the valley," said the official.

**When will the cases go to trial?**

The trial is yet to commence in any of the cases, as a direction from the Supreme Court is awaited. There are concerns about holding the trial in the State due to the ongoing ethnic violence. Even though the CBI filed a chargesheet last October in a CBI court in Guwahati in the sexual violence case of the two Kuki-Zo women, the trial is yet to begin.



**Cry for justice:** Women protesting in Guwahati in November 2024 against the killing of three women and three children in Manipur's Jiribam. PTI

# PROFILES

## The spinner who shattered status-quo

### Ravichandran Ashwin

After 537 Test wickets, a statistic that places him currently seventh in the all-time list, besides 3,503 runs and an ODI yield of 156 scalps, the 38-year-old cricketer called time on his international career

#### K.C. Vijaya Kumar

To bowl spin is to pause, reflect, tease and torment. It is much akin to making a move in chess, but in cricket with its adrenaline streaks, the big moments are often vested with batters and fast bowlers. A massive six or cartwheeling stumps makes a striking impact and lends an impetus to commentators to raise their voice and heighten the hype. But there is beauty in spin too, a seductive one that strangles batters.

It is in this realm that Ravichandran Ashwin, ever the contrarian and one who is forever questioning the status-quo, made a mark as a great off-spinner. While his deliveries seemingly hung in the air for eternity and drew perplexed batters to their doom, time did fly and twilight wrapped his storied career. After 537 Test wickets, a statistic that places him currently seventh in the all-time list, besides 3,503 runs and an ODI yield of 156 scalps, the 38-year-old called time on his international career.

He made a quick announcement to the media at Brisbane's Gabba on Wednesday. "I didn't want to make this about myself," was his preamble before he said: "Today will be the last day for me as an international cricketer." Vacating the stage when he still had the spark would not have been easy but ageing limbs and a few young spinners snapping at his heels may have pushed him towards the exit door. Additionally, he was not an instant selection overseas when the team-management went for the extra seamer and preferred a lone spinner.

But like M.S. Dhoni, Ashwin is hoping to be a regular in the Indian Premier League (IPL) and fans will get to see him in action for a while, even if it will be in the yellow jersey of Chennai Super Kings, and not in Indian whites or the blue shade. When Ashwin emerged through the ranks, fine-tuning his craft in the tough TNCA league while also coping with excess analysis from a knowledgeable Tamil Nadu

cricketing fraternity, India still had Harbhajan Singh doing his bit in the slow art. Ashwin, however, caught the eye through the IPL. Soon, he was part of the Indian ODI squad and was a member of Dhoni's team, which claimed the 2011 World Cup at home.

#### Origin story

The origin story would not have been easy. For a State that is high on cricket, Tamil Nadu doesn't have as many Ranji Trophy titles as neighbouring Karnataka or more pedigreed players turning out for the national unit. If a historical ambiguity in making the final decisive step could be a bane, another hurdle was the constant desire to compare across eras.

At one point, the regular cliche about Indian cricketers was that they either could be wristy batters or beguiling spinners. When Ashwin surfaced at the highest level, he was stepping into a series of massive shoes. There was the famous spin-quartet of Bishan Singh Bedi, B.S. Chandrasekhar, Erapalli Prasanna and S. Venkatraghavan, the last named also hailing from Chennai, Ashwin's home-town. And then there were his immediate predecessors: Anil Kumble and Harbhajan.

These were legends with stirring achievements adorning their resumes. Comparisons were bound to occur and during a 2011 tour of England, a correspondent asked Ashwin if he felt he was ready to replace Harbhajan, who was in the concluding phase of his career. On that distant cold day at the Old Blighty, Ashwin handled a potential landmine with deft hands, doused the fires, mentioned that he was just beginning but had confidence in his skills and also reiterated his respect for Harbhajan.

It was just a matter of time before Ashwin became India's number one spinner. The signs of his talent and resilience was evident in the IPL when he would gladly bowl the opening over to the likes of Chris Gayle. This was a player who refused to take a step back. Most cricketers make a splash in their



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

debut year before losing their way as rival teams discover vulnerabilities and keep twisting their knives into these raw spots.

Ashwin, though, was made of steel. He constantly reinvented himself, adding new deliveries and also gifted a cult status to the *sodukku* ball from Chennai's streets. Rechristened the carrom ball which involved the last-minute flick of the fingers at the

time of release, the ace spinner befuddled his rivals. At one point he was accused of doing too many experiments while not using his stock off-break often; he took this criticism on the chin and strove for balance.

A restless and eager presence in Indian team nets, Ashwin was never averse to experiment. You could catch him bowling some leg-spin and all this came in handy when he mimicked the

bowing action of others at times. Climbing through Chennai's club cricket with its undercurrent of corporate rivalries, Ashwin leaned on the skills he had and the new ones he acquired. It was a philosophy that held him in good stead, be it playing in his school – St. Bede's, or as a boy in the bylanes of Mambalam.

During his more than a decade-long stint with the national team, only twice did India falter at home, once against the visiting Englishmen in 2012 and more recently against New Zealand. Else, India remained a fortress and one primary reason for this was the genius of Ashwin. Even on

spin-friendly surfaces, control and guile are important and he had these in ample measure.

With his engineering background, it was no surprise that Ashwin was deeply analytical. He knew the rules of the game and if a non-striker stepped out prematurely, Ashwin had no qualms in whipping off the bails. Even as the world lapsed into the 'spirit of the game' debate, the spinner was clear in his mind: if it is a legitimate dismissal then why are we even discussing this?

Ashwin the spinner always overpowered Ashwin the batter in terms of the perception sweepstakes. But he was a fine batter and at times had the languid charms of a V.V.S. Laxman, and six Test hundreds is a testimony to his ability. Having started as an opener before turning to spin, that old talent remained intact within his tall frame.

Always curious, it seemed organic for Ashwin to step into the YouTube space. His videos ranging from cricket to movies, have struck a chord. One of cricket's greats is bound to have a second wind, be it as a commentator or coach. "To strive to be the best I can," has always been Ashwin's motto, and the coming years might reflect that all over again.

#### THE GIST

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## Rebels with a cause

### Syrian Democratic Forces

The Kurdish militia of Syria's northeast is caught between an Islamist regime in Damascus and a hostile Turkey across the border

#### Stanly Johny

When civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, one of the first things Bashar al-Assad's regime did was to pull back troops from the country's north-east so that they could defend the heartland against militias. This gave an opportunity to Syria's Kurds, the country's largest ethnic minority who make up some 10% of its population, to establish a de facto autonomous government in the region. In 2012, they established the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, also known as Rojava. In late 2015, the new administration formally established an armed wing called the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). In the subsequent years, the SDF would emerge as a highly effective ground force in the war against the Islamic State (IS) in the region.

After Mr. Assad crushed most of his enemies by 2016-17, with help from Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, his government entered into a detente with the Rojava. The SDF did not directly challenge Mr. Assad's authority. Mr. Assad's regime did not recognise the autonomous government, but stopped short of attacking the SDF. There was tense stability.

Mr. Assad's government collapsed on December 8. The Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), formerly al-Qaeda's Syria branch, has now cap-



tured Damascus. The HTS is backed by Türkiye, which sees the SDF as a terrorist entity. The Kurds are now caught between a pro-Turkish Islamist group that's in power in Damascus and a hostile Türkiye across the border.

Kurds are often referred to as "a people without a state". They are divided among four countries – Türkiye, Iraq, Syria and Iran. In Iraq, they have enjoyed autonomy ever since the first Gulf war. In Türkiye, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) has been fighting a bloody civil war against the state for decades. When the Syrian Kurds established their own autonomous government and militia, Türkiye got alarmed because it thought the empowerment of Syrian Kurds would invariably strengthen the Turkish Kurds.

The main political party among Syrian Kurds was the Democratic Union Party (PYD). The People's Protection Units (YPG) was its armed wing. Türkiye considered both the PYD and the YPG as extended arms of the PKK and designated

all of them as terrorist organisations.

#### Battle against IS

The YPG assumed regional prominence when the Islamic State, which seized eastern Syria's Raqqa and Deir Ezour, turned to Kobane, a Kurdish town on the Turkish-Syrian border. The YPG, backed by U.S. air power, defeated the IS in Kobane in 2015, which marked the beginning of the downfall of the IS's 'Caliphate', established across Syria and Iraq. Türkiye, a NATO ally of the U.S., strongly opposed America's support for the YPG.

Later in 2015, the SDF was created, with the YPG being its core. Other smaller Arab militias, who were also threatened by the IS, also signed up for the SDF. Ever since, the SDF has acted as the official military wing of the Rojava.

In its battle against the Islamic State, the SDF continued to get support from the U.S. America still has less than 1,000 troops in Syria, in the name of fighting terrorism, and they coordinate with the SDF. In 2018 and 2019, Türkiye car-

ried out limited military incursions into Syria, aimed at capturing SDF-held territories and creating a buffer on the border. Tensions flared up recently when the HTS-led Islamist militants were advancing towards Damascus. The Syrian National Army (SNA), a Turkish proxy and an ally of the HTS, attacked the SDF in the border region and captured more territories.

As Syria changes, the SDF's focus is on protecting Kurdish autonomy. Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, Syria's new ruler, has promised to respect the country's diversity but said nothing about Kurdish autonomy. Türkiye, whose hands have been strengthened by the fall of Mr. Assad's regime, has demanded demobilising the SDF.

Turkey has also mobilised troops along its border, triggering fears that it was planning to launch another incursion. The SDF, caught between an uncertain future and a challenging present, says the threat from Türkiye is weakening its counter-terror operations.

"The danger of an Islamic State resurgence has doubled ever since Assad has fallen," says General Mazloum Abdi, an SDF commander who led battles against the jihadists in the past. "Daesh (IS) has captured weapons from retreating Syrian government troops in recent weeks. Their activity has increased significantly," he adds.

## Revolving door PM

### François Bayrou

The MoDem leader, a centrist ally of President Macron, faces huge challenges in running a minority government amid political divisions and economic woes

#### Adithya Narayan

The Prime Ministership of France, currently caught in a revolving door situation, has its fourth entrant of the year in François Bayrou. The 73-year-old centrist leader of the Democratic Movement (MoDem) party acceded to the role on December 12 after Michel Barnier was ousted in a no-confidence vote – the first since 1962. Mr. Barnier's stint had lasted three months.

Gabriel Attal, who had fulfilled the duties before Mr. Barnier, served for nine months until September before his government was dissolved in June by President Emmanuel Macron, who sought a fresh mandate following the EU parliamentary polls. Elections to the 27-member bloc had delivered a shocker to the 46-year-old President whose party could not poll even half as many votes as Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally.

Mr. Bayrou calls the challenges ahead of him 'Himalayan'.

But the start of his tenure has belied the political acumen usually associated with a seasoned leader active since the 1980s. For when the French territory of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean was languishing in the aftermath of Cyclone Chilo on December 14, the Prime Minister chose to fly off to attend a council meeting in Pau, a small city in South-



ILLUSTRATION: SAI

western France, whose mayoralty he retains.

Not helping the administration's cause was visiting President Macron who lost his temper when taking stock.

"If it wasn't for France, you'd be 10,000 times deeper in shit," the President was caught on camera saying and swearing when residents complained of water and other aid not reaching them despite it being the seventh day since the cyclone struck. While the official death toll stands at 31, thousands are feared dead in France's poorest territory.

For Mr. Macron, Mr. Bayrou's appointment is not just a way of addressing the political instability precipitated by his reckless actions, but the two go back a long way. The MoDem leader, who had thrice run for President unsuccessfully in the past, stepped aside in 2017 and lent support to an emerging Mr. Bayrou as Justice Minister the same year, but the fruits were short-lived as he had to

step down over a party funding scandal in just over a month.

It is reported that the President was mulling other candidates such as outgoing Armed Forces Minister Sébastien Lecornu and former Industry Minister Roland Lescure for the post of Prime Minister. However, Mr. Bayrou is believed to have strong-armed Mr. Macron into naming him to the position.

Born to wealthy farmers in Borderies, Mr. Bayrou worked as a teacher of Greek and Latin before embarking on a political career in the 1980s. First elected to the National Assembly in 1986, he was Education Minister between 1993 and 1997 and went on to become a member of the European Parliament from 1999 to 2002.

**Presidential bids**  
Mr. Bayrou's first shot for President came in 2002 but proved futile. He ran again in 2007 by presenting himself as the third way between the Left and the Right, with the campaign earning him the moniker

of the 'third man' of French politics. Despite tripling his vote share to 18.6% compared to the previous time, Mr. Bayrou wound up third in an election that was ultimately won by the Republican Party's Nicolas Sarkozy. Mr. Bayrou contested once more unsuccessfully in 2012.

Although notwithstanding, Mr. Bayrou is pally with far-right's Ms. Le Pen, whom the MoDem leader helped garner sponsors to run for President. The fact that he also lent support to Socialist candidates François Hollande and Ségolène Royal in the past makes him palatable to the Left too.

However, the snap polls called Mr. Macron to arrest the surge of the far-right saw the leftwing securing a maximum number of 182 seats, while falling short of the 289 majority in the 577-strong National Assembly. Mr. Macron's Ensemble came second with 168 seats while Le Pen's National Rally came close with 143.

This has spawned a National Assembly where none of the blocs have a majority.

Mr. Bayrou overcame a stutter in his childhood to scale the heights of politics. The Centrist leader's challenge now lies in tackling a parliament whose composition leaves him with little teeth to present a Budget that can address France's ballooning economic woes.

**WASHINGTON**

**U.S. Congress passes Bill to avert shutdown at the last moment**



The U.S. Congress averted a Christmastime government shutdown early on Saturday after weeks of tense negotiations that went down to the wire, passing a Bill to fund federal agencies through mid-March. The move saved Christmas for more than some 8,00,000 workers who were at risk of being sent home without pay. AFP

**COLOMBO**

**Sri Lanka President Dissanayake to visit key lender China in January**



Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake will travel to the island's largest bilateral lender China for talks in January, he said on Saturday, days after completing a long-delayed foreign debt restructure. China accounted for more than half of Sri Lanka's bilateral debt at the time of the 2022 economic crash. AFP

**PARIS**

**Eight convicted for killing teacher who showed Prophet caricature**



A French court sentenced eight persons to prison terms ranging from one to 16 years for their roles in a hate campaign that culminated in the murder of a teacher who had shown caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in class. The 47-year-old was stabbed and beheaded outside his school near Paris. AFP

**DHAKA**

**Bangladesh panel flags India's 'role in enforced disappearances'**



An inquiry commission formed by Bangladesh's interim government said it found India's "involvement" in incidents of "enforced disappearances" during Sheikh Hasina's tenure. The panel said there was a "persistent suggestion in law enforcement circles" that some prisoners might still be languishing in Indian jails. PTI

# Rocket from Yemen strikes Tel Aviv; 19 killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza

The rocket strike, claimed by Houthis, leaves 16 persons injured; the counter attack comes two days after a series of Israeli airstrikes on capital Sanaa and the port city of Hodeida killing at least nine persons; casualties in Gaza include 12 children

**Associated Press**  
TEL AVIV

A rocket fired from Yemen hit an area of Tel Aviv overnight, leaving 16 people slightly injured by shattered glass, the Israeli military said on Saturday, days after Israeli airstrikes hit Houthi rebels who have been launching missiles in solidarity with Palestinians.

A further 14 persons sustained minor injuries as they rushed to shelters when air raid sirens sounded before the projectile hit just before 4 a.m. on Saturday, the military said.

The Houthi rebels issued a statement on the Te-



**Capital strike:** Israeli emergency services work at the scene of a missile strike in the south of Tel Aviv on Saturday. REUTERS

legram messaging app saying they had aimed a hypersonic ballistic missile at a military target, which they did not identify.

The attack comes less

than two days after a series of Israeli airstrikes on Yemen's Houthi rebel-held capital, Sanaa, and port city of Hodeida killed at least nine persons. The Israeli

strikes were in response to a Houthi attack in which a long-range missile hit an Israeli school building. The Houthis also claimed a drone strike targeting an unspecified military target in central Israel on Thursday.

The Israeli military says the Iran-backed Houthis have launched more than 200 missiles and drones during the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. The Houthis have also been attacking shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and say they won't stop until there is a ceasefire in Gaza.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said both sides' attacks risk further escalation in the region

and undermine UN mediation efforts.

In the Gaza Strip on Saturday, mourners held the funerals of 19 people – 12 of them children – killed in Israeli strikes on Friday and overnight.

One of the strikes hit a residential building in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, killing at least seven Palestinians, including five children and one woman, and injuring 16 others, health officials said.

In Gaza City, another strike on a house overnight killed 12 persons, including seven children and two women, according to al-Ahli Hospital where the bodies were taken.

# U.S. judge rules Israel's NSO group is liable for hacking

**Reuters**

A U.S. judge ruled on Friday in favour of Meta Platforms' WhatsApp in a lawsuit accusing Israel's NSO Group of exploiting a bug in the messaging app to install spy software allowing unauthorised surveillance.

U.S. District Judge Phyllis Hamilton in Oakland, California, granted a motion by WhatsApp and found NSO liable for hacking and breach of contract.

The case will now proceed to a trial only on the issue of damages, Mr. Hamilton said.

Will Cathcart, the head of WhatsApp, said the ruling is a win for privacy.

"We spent five years presenting our case because we firmly believe that spyware companies could not hide behind impunity or avoid accounta-



WhatsApp accused NSO Group of exploiting a bug in the app to install spy software allowing unauthorised surveillance. REUTERS

bility for their unlawful actions," Mr. Cathcart said in a social media post.

Cybersecurity experts welcomed the judgment.

"The entire industry has hidden behind the claim that whatever their customers do with their hacking tools, it's not their responsibility," he said in an instant message. "Today's ruling makes it clear that NSO Group is in fact responsible for breaking the law."

# Russia claims village in eastern Ukraine; Kyiv strikes deep

**Associated Press**  
Reuters  
MOSCOW

Russian troops have captured the village of Kostiantynopolske in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, the Defence Ministry said on Saturday.

Reuters could not independently confirm the report about the village, called Ostrovsky by Russia.

The settlement lies 10 km southwest of Kurakhove, which Russian troops have stormed and are threatening to encircle, according to DeepState, a Ukrainian group mapping the fighting.

Meanwhile, Ukraine brought the war into the heart of Russia on Saturday morning with drone attacks that local authorities

said damaged residential buildings in the city of Kazan in the Tatarstan region, over 1,000 km from the front line.

The press service of Tatarstan's governor, Rustam Minnikhanov, said that eight drones attacked the city. Six hit residential buildings, one hit an industrial facility and one was shot down over a river, the statement said.

Local authorities said there were no casualties. Flights were halted at Kazan's airport and all mass gatherings cancelled on Saturday and Sunday.

The attacks comes after a Ukrainian attack on Friday on a town in Russia's Kursk border region using U.S.-supplied missiles killed six people, including a child.

# Pakistan military courts convict 25 for pro-Imran protests

**Agence France-Presse**  
ISLAMABAD

**Amnesty called the move 'an intimidation tactic, designed to crack down on dissent'**

called the move "an intimidation tactic, designed to crack down on dissent" and said it was "contrary to international law".

Military courts are largely opaque, but after months of confidentiality the military public relations wing named 25 people who have been prosecuted.

All of the convicted are men and 14 have been sentenced to a decade of "rigorous imprisonment", the military said with the remaining 11 set to serve lesser prison terms.

His detention over graft allegations sparked nationwide unrest, some targeting armed forces installations, and prompting rare prosecutions of civilians in military courts.

Amnesty International

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**DOWN BUT NOT OUT**

'Devastated' McSweeney vows to return a better player



GETTY IMAGES

Dumped opener Nathan McSweeney said he was "devastated" after being dropped from the Australian team but vowed to come back a better player. "Devastated. It's all part of it and I'll get my head down and get back in the nets and work really hard, and hopefully be ready to go for my next opportunity," he told Channel Seven.

**RARING TO GO**

I've got a few plans against the Indian bowlers, says Konstas



AFP

Young Australian opener Sam Konstas cannot wait to take on the Indian bowlers in the Boxing Day Test. "I've got a few plans against those (Indian) bowlers. Feeling like I'm moving really nice and hopefully I get that opportunity," Konstas told Fox Cricket. "I'm just going to react to the ball and show a bit of intent," he added.

**CLASS ACT**

Chetan Sharma backs Kohli to score three tons in the series



AFP

Former India cricketer Chetan Sharma backed Virat Kohli to succeed in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. "He is a player who has achieved so much for us. I am confident he will perform well. Let's hope he scores two more centuries. I had predicted before the series that he would score three centuries in Australia," Chetan said.

**CLOSE CONTESTS**

Pirates, Giants play out exciting tie; Dabang Delhi beats Pink Panthers



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Patna Pirates and Gujarat Giants were involved in an exciting 40-40 tie in a PKL match in Pune on Saturday. The result hurt the Pirates' chances of a top-two finish. For the Pirates, Devank got a Super 10. Dabang Delhi edged out Jaipur Pink Panthers 33-31 in the other match of the day.

# Jadeja hopes to ride momentum in the remainder of the series

The all-rounder says Ashwin the mentor will be missed, but adds his retirement also presents an opportunity for a youngster; the southpaw feels collective effort with the bat will put the team in a good position

**IND IN AUS****K.C. Vijaya Kumar**

MELBOURNE

After a long stint at the nets followed by a workout in the gym, Ravindra Jadeja gulped a beverage and had a tiny bite of a savoury to fortify himself. He then walked towards the assembled media personnel on the fringes of the Melbourne Cricket Ground's turf.

It was a Saturday afternoon of clear skies, rustling wind and birdsong from mynahs. Understandably the first question was about his just-retired senior ally R. Ashwin, and the all-rounder replied: "Obviously he was a mentor on the field. We have been passing messages to each other for so many years. What is the match situation, how is the batter reacting, what can we plan against him and so on. Yes, I will miss him. But this situation also presents an opportunity for a youngster to step up and perform."

But was he aware of the retirement? "Through the



Quality knock: Jadeja came to India's rescue in the Brisbane Test with a fighting 77. AFP

day we were talking but I never knew. I got to know about it at the last moment when he went for the press conference. I got to know some five minutes before that as someone told me. He didn't give any hint. Well that's Ashwin, only he knows what's in his head," Jadeja said with a bemused smile.

Asked for a self-appraisal following his performance in the third Test at Brisbane, that included a none for 95 with the ball and a solid 77 with the bat, Jadeja had his response in order: "If I make runs for the team, then it gives me satisfaction. And as a player, my confidence will be high.

"In the upcoming

matches, I will try to continue this momentum. Whether batting or bowling, I have to react to the situation of the match."

Queried about his responsibility as a player, Jadeja said: "My role in the latest match will be the same as my last match. But yes if we are playing in India, my responsibility as a spinner is more. I didn't

get to play the first two Tests here but I practised during that break, learnt about the conditions. I then tried to implement what I learnt in the match. Rohit (Sharma) told me a day before that I am playing the third Test."

With the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series level at 1-1, Jadeja reflected on a roller-coaster sojourn Down Under: "The good thing is after three matches, we are 1-1 in this series, and the two remaining games will be interesting."

And when probed about his batting colleagues up the order, he added: "When we play in Australia and South Africa, for instance, it is important that we have runs from the top-order, and if that doesn't happen then there is pressure and more responsibility on the lower-order. But if all of us together score runs then we will be in a good position."

He then left to join his teammates in the bus. With 3312 runs and 319 wickets in Tests, the 36-year-old has a bigger responsibility now following Ashwin's departure. And Jadeja knows that.

# India batters train hard ahead of Boxing Day challenge

**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**

MELBOURNE

Past the statues of Dennis Lillee and Shane Warne frozen in their bowling actions, and fringed by lush foliage, the Melbourne Cricket Ground is a pretty sight. There is history in every corner and at one level lower than the main venue, the Indians were busy preparing for their immediate future here on Saturday morning.

Despite a warm sun, the breeze remained cold, the kind that stirs awake old fractures. And in this city of stately churches and the Yarra River, the fourth Test will commence on December 26 (Thursday). While the Australian unit dispersed for a short break, the Indians remained together.

Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Yashavini Jaiswal, K.L. Rahul, Shubman Gill and Rishabh Pant, had their turns with the bat at the nets. The tail too got an extended run as Mohammed Siraj and Akash Deep squared up to pace, spin and throw-downs.

At one point Rohit asked Washington Sundar: "What are your field placements?" The off-spinner complied and keeping this imaginary preventive ring in mind, Rohit played his shots. A reverse sweep was attempted



Time to get going: Kohli will be keen to bounce back after three consecutive failures. GETTY IMAGES

too while against the pacers, it was largely about blocking or allowing the delivery to go past him. Just then a fan from the upper tier hollered: "Rohit I have come from far to see you." The skipper requested his follow to stay mum. <https://www.indiatoday.in/sports/cricket/story/rohit-sharma-virat-kohli-morne-morkel-117500>

The Indians sweated for three hours and inside the venue, previous scoreboards were flashed from the current Border-Gavaskar Trophy series in which the teams are level at 1-1. Nathan McSweeney's player-profile too cropped up on the giant screen, just that he won't be present at the latest game as Sam Konstas has been picked as the former's replacement. India will train again on Sunday before opting to rest on Monday.



On it: Harmanpreet looked at ease during practice. VIJAY SONEJI

## Harmanpreet boost for on-a-high India

**Shayan Acharya**

VADODARA

In a clear indication that she could return to the team for India's first women's ODI against the West Indies, Harmanpreet Kaur had a long bat session in the nets.

As head coach Amol Muzumdar closely monitored the session under lights, Harmanpreet, who missed out on the last couple of T20Is due to a knee niggle, looked at ease while facing the net bowlers. The Women in Blue will be hoping to extend their winning run when the Kotak Stadium hosts its maiden international fixture on Sunday.

While Muzumdar agreed that 'dew will play a factor', he was confident that his team will be able to adapt well. There are concerns

over the fitness of Jemimah Rodrigues, who had some discomfort in her neck.

The visitor will be again pinning its hopes on Deandra Dottin and captain Hayley Matthews, who amassed 308 runs in seven games this season.

**The teams (from): India:** Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana, Pratika Rawal, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Richa Ghosh, Uma Chetry, Tejal Hasabnis, Deepthi Sharma, Minu Mani, Priya Mishra, Tanuja Kanwer, Titus Sadhu, Saima Thakor, Renuka Singh Thakur.

**West Indies:** Hayley Matthews (Capt.), Shemaine Campbell, Aaliyah Alleyne, Shamilia Connell, Nerissa Crafton, Deandra Dottin, Afy Fletcher, Shabika Gajnabi, Chinelle Henry, Zaida James, Qiana Joseph, Mandy Mangru, Ashmini Munisar, Karishma Ramharack, Rashada Williams.

Match starts at 1.30 p.m.



Rogers. GETTY IMAGES

## Villa inflicts more misery on City

**Agencies**

BIRMINGHAM

Aston Villa inflicted more misery on Manchester City on Saturday, defeating it 2-1 in the Premier League with goals from Jhon Duran and former City forward Morgan Rogers.

Villa leap-frogged City into fifth place, while holder City dropped provisionally to sixth.

**Important results: Premier League:** Aston Villa 2 (Duran 16, Rogers 65) bt Manchester City 1 (Foden 90+3); Ipswich Town 0 lost to Newcastle United 4 (Isak 1, 45+2, 54, Murphy 32); Brentford 0 lost to Nottingham Forest 2 (Aina 38, Elanga 51).

**Bundesliga:** Stuttgart 0 lost to St Pauli 1 (Eggestein 21).

**On Friday:** Bundesliga: Bayern 5 (Musiala 1, Lairmer 25, Kimmich 36, Sane 75, Davies 78) bt Leipzig 1 (Sesko 2).

**LaLiga:** Girona 3 (Lope 31, Ruiz 39, Danjuma 81) bt Valladolid 0.

**Series A:** Verona 0 lost to AC Milan 1 (Reijnders 56).

Match starts at 1.30 p.m.

# Ayush Shetty eases into the pre-quarterfinals

**BADMINTON****N. Sudarshan**

BENGALURU

Second seed Ayush Shetty entered the men's singles last-16 with a comfortable 21-12, 21-13 victory over Tamil Nadu's S. Kishore at the Senior National Badminton Championship at the KBA courts here on Saturday.

The 19-year-old from Railways shrugged off the narrow loss to Karnataka's S. Bhargav in the team championship final two days ago in fine fashion. The win over Kishore was his second of the day, having beaten Punjab's Shikhar Rallan in the morning by an equally lopsided 21-14, 21-6 scoreline in a round-of-64 clash.

Women's top seed Aakarshi Kashyap also had a safe passage into the pre-quarterfinals, thrashing Uttar Pradesh's Taranjeet Kaur 21-14, 21-8.

The 23-year-old from Chhattisgarh had a slightly tougher round-of-64 rubber against Chandigarh's Rijul Saini which she managed to win 19-21, 21-12, 21-13. But against Taranjeet, she played a near-perfect match, displaying an array of deceptive half-smashes



No sweat: Ayush Shetty was in full flow. K. MURALI KUMAR

and delicate dabbles to leave her opponent bamboozled.

**Select results (round of 32):**

**Men:** K. Sathish Kumar (TN) bt Ajay Nair (Ker) 21-9, 21-12; Ayush Shetty (Rly) bt S. Kishore (TN) 21-12, 21-13; Manraj Singh (Har) bt S. Bhargav (Kar) 21-11, 21-13.

Rounak Chouhan (Chg) bt D.S. Saneeth (Kar) 21-11, 21-12; Rithvik Sanjeevi (TN) bt Chirag Sen (Rly) 21-12, 21-19, 21-15.

Mithun Manjunath (Rly) bt Samarveer (Chd) 18-21, 21-17,

21-15; M. Raghu (Kar) bt Pranay Katta (Raj) 18-21, 21-12, 21-13.

Sanskars Saraswati (Raj) bt Arya Bhivpathaki (Mah) 21-16, 21-15.

Lakshay Sharma (Pun) bt Tushar Suveer (Kar) 21-18, 21-14, 21-18.

Aalisha Naik (Mah) bt S. Sneha (Kar) 21-18, 21-10.

# Ravinder, Sejal win mixed air pistol



Consistent: Sejal and Ravinder reigned supreme. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

**NATIONAL SHOOTING****Kamesh Srinivasan**

NEW DELHI

Ravinder Singh and Sejal Kamble clinched the mixed air pistol gold for the Army with a 16-12 victory over Pranavi Dwararam and Mukesh Nelavalli in the 67th National shooting championship in Tughlaqabad on Saturday.

Jatin Chaudhary and Kavita Dhoundiyal bounced back from the brink of defeat to beat Anjali Choudhary and Vinayak Kumbhar of Assam Rifles Marksmanship Unit 17-15 to clinch a memorable bronze for the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

However, the biggest surprise was that Sarabjot Singh and Rhythm Sangwan missed the medal round on count back and placed Haryana fifth among 27 teams.

The air pistol triple gold medallist, Suruchi Phogat added another gold by winning the mixed air pistol youth crown in partnership with Samrat Rana, outclassing the Uttarakhand pair of Abhinav Deswal and Yashasvi Joshi 16-2.

**The results (Winners only):**

**10m air pistol:** Mixed team: 1. Army (Ravinder Singh, Sejal Kamble) 16 (57).

**Mixed junior team:** 1. Karnataka (Gamberry Gowda, Jonathan Antony) 16 (58).

**Mixed youth team:** 1. Haryana (Samrat Rana, Suruchi Phogat) 16 (57).

**25m sports pistol:** Junior men: 1. Mukesh Nelavalli 58.

**25m standard pistol:** Junior women: 1. Tejaswani 570.

**50m free pistol:** Women: 1. Sainyam 548.

**50m pistol:** Men: 1. Sainyam 548.

**CM YK**

## IN BRIEF



## Aditya and Divyanshi clinch under-15 titles

Aditya Das and Divyanshi Bhowmick claimed the youth under-15 boys' and girls' titles respectively in the UTT National Ranking table tennis championship at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium, Bengaluru, on Saturday.

**The results:** **Finals: Youth Boys U-15:** Aditya Das (WB) bt K. Akshay Bhushan (TN) 11-9, 11-9, 11-6.

**Youth Girls U-15:** Divyanshi Bhowmick (Mah) bt Ananya Muralidharan (TN) 9-11, 11-5, 6-11, 11-4, 11-7.

**Youth Boys U-13:** Prateek Tulsani (Mah) bt J.N. Sanjeev Arwindh (TN) 11-6, 8-11, 15-11, 11-9.

**Youth Girls U-13:** Tanishka Kalbhairav (Kar) bt Myraa Sangelkar (Mah) 14-12, 11-8, 11-9.

## Silver for Koyel, Nilam in Asian youth weightlifting

India's Koyel Bar and L. Nilam Devi won silver medals in the 55kg youth and junior girls' categories respectively to take the country's tally to six in the Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships here on Saturday. Koyel managed 79kg in snatch and 103kg in clean & jerk for an aggregate lift of 182kg, while Nilam lifted 86 in snatch and 104kg in clean & jerk for an overall effort of 190kg.

## It's Manipur versus Odisha in women's football final

Record 22-time champion Manipur eliminated Bengal, while Odisha ousted last year's runner-up Haryana to set up a summit clash in the 29th senior Women's National football championship for the Rajmata Jijabai Trophy at Narainpur, Chhattisgarh, on Saturday.

**The results:** Manipur 3 (Dangmei Grace 53, Naorem Priyanka Devi 55, Hemam Shikly Devi 78) bt Bengal 0; Odisha 2 Pyari Xaxa (10, 88) bt Haryana 0.

## LIVE TELECAST

**India Women vs West Indies Women:** 1st ODI, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 1.30 p.m.  
**South Africa vs Pakistan:** 3rd ODI, JioCinema, 5 p.m.  
**Serie A:** gxr.world, 5, 7.30, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Monday)  
**LaLiga:** gxr.world, 6.30, 8.45, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Monday)  
**Premier League:** SS Select 1, 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 7.30 & 10 p.m.  
**ISL:** Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.  
**PKL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.

## India gets nod as shooting Junior World Cup host

## Sports Bureau

NEW DELHI

The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) has confirmed India as the host for a Junior World Cup in 2025.

The ISSF has offered two windows in the calendar to slot the competition from September to early November. The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) will decide on the dates soon and convey to the ISSF.

The ISSF president Luciano Rossi had announced that India would host the event during his visit in November for the World Cup Finals.

"Now that the official confirmation has come, we are excited and energised to put our best foot forward as usual. We are indebted to the Ministry of Sports for supporting in every possible way," said the president of the NRAI, Kaliresh Narayan Singh Deo.

"The world's future stars will converge in India for a blockbuster showdown, and we are confident that it will be another big boost for the sport," said the secretary general of NRAI, Sultan Singh.

## Services through to the quarterfinals



On target: Sreyas drew first blood for Services. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## SANTISH TROPHY

## Sports Bureau

HYDERABAD

Defending champion Services entered the quarterfinals with a 2-0 win over 10-man Rajasthan in the Santosh Trophy National Football Championship at the Deccan Arena here on Saturday.

This was the third straight win for Services as it moves to nine points.

Earlier in the day, Jammu & Kashmir kept its hopes alive with a 3-0 win against host Telangana in a do-or-die match.

The defeat also meant the home team was the first to be eliminated.

Services made a quick start as V.G. Sreyas converted

## Swashbuckling Porel leads the charge as Bengal vanquishes Delhi

The opener's unbeaten 170 helps the side make short work of the 273-run chase; pacer Mukesh Kumar shines with a four wicket haul

## HAZARE TROPHY

V.V. Subrahmanyam  
HYDERABAD

**I**t was Abishek Porel show! The 22-year-old Porel served another reminder of his growing reputation with a brilliant, unbeaten 170 (130b, 18x4, 7x6) to fashion Bengal's six-wicket win over Delhi in the Group-E match at Rajiv Gandhi Stadium here on Saturday.

**Challenging total**  
Chasing a challenging total which merited the right blend of caution and aggression, Porel, the wicket-keeper-batter was equal to the task.

Playing late really helped him come up with



Wrecker-in-chief: Porel took apart the Delhi attack with ease. V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

some extravagant strokes. Though he was lucky to be dropped twice (on 25 and then on 92), the southpaw

showed his competence in guiding the team through.

When he crossed the three-figure mark, Porel

indulged in Shubman Gill-like celebrations.

And, more importantly, he stayed till the end

## VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY: FIRST-ROUND SCORES

**Group-A: Jaipur:** Uttarakhand 365/4 in 50 overs (Yuvraj Chaudhary 151, Kunal Chandela 71, Dikshanshu Negi 51 n.o., Aditya Tare 43 n.o.) bt Manipur 183 in 46.2 overs (Himanshu Bisht 3/41); **Toss:** Manipur; **Points:** **Uttarakhand 4, Manipur 0.**

Haryana 260 in 49.3 overs (Nishant Sindhu 88, Sumit Kumar 55, Arzan Nagwaswala 4/56) lost to Gujarat 263/3 in 36.2 overs (Aarya Desai 57, Urvil Patel 115 n.o., Vishal Jayswal 65 n.o.);

**Toss:** Gujarat; **Gujarat 4, Haryana 0.**

Assam 257/9 in 50 overs (Rishav Das 78, Sumit Ghadigaonkar 77) lost to Jharkhand 261/3 in 44.3 overs (Utkarsh Singh 82, Virat Singh 109 n.o.);

**Toss:** Jharkhand; **Jharkhand 4, Assam 0.**

Goa 371/4 in 50 overs (Snehal Kauthankar 67, Ishaa Gadekar 93, Darshan Misal 79, Suyash Prabhudessai 74 n.o.) bt Odisha 344 in 49.4 overs (Swastik Samal 57, Gourav Choudhury 78, Sandeep Pattnaik 73, Kartik Biswal 49, Asirwan Swain 53, Arjun Tendulkar 3/61);

**Toss:** Odisha; **Goa 4, Odisha 0.**

**Group-B: Mumbai:** Andhra 294 in 49.2 overs (Ashwin Hebbar 132, Ricky Bhui 41, Rahul Sharma 4/69, Yuvraj Singh 3/58) bt Railways 203 in 41.5 overs (Suraj Ahuja 40, Mohammad Saif 46,

**Navi Mumbai:** Sikkim 163/8 in 50 overs (Parth Palawat 44, Amit Shukla 4/15) lost to Services 164/5 in 34.4 overs (Ravi Chauhan 59, Ankur Malik 3/56); **Toss:** Services; **Services 4, Sikkim 0.**

**Group-C: Ahmedabad:** Mumbai 382/4 in 50 overs (Ayush Mhatre 78, Hardik Tamore 84, Shreyas Iyer 114 n.o., Shivam Dube 63 n.o.) lost to Karnataka 383/3 in 46.2 overs (Mayank Agarwal 47, K.V. Aneesh 82, Krishnan Shrijith 150 n.o., Praveen Dubey 65 n.o.);

**Toss:** Karnataka; **Karnataka 4, Mumbai 0.**

Hyderabad 276 in 48.1 overs (Tanmay Agarwal 51, Aelganya Varun Goud 57, Aravely Avanish 100, Imliviati Lemtur 4/48, Rongsen Jonathan 3/41) bt Meghalaya 153 in 40.2 overs (Nishanta Chakraborty 47, Vinay Galetiya 4/29); **Toss:** Meghalaya; **HP 4, Meghalaya 0.**

Rajasthan 215 in 40.1 overs (Kartik Sharma 123, Rajneesh Gurbari 4/35) lost to Maharashtra 216/7 in 42.3 overs (Siddhesh Veer 43, Ankit Bawne 74 n.o., Nikhil Naik 46, Aniket Choudhary 4/49); **Toss:** Maharashtra; **Maharashtra 4, Rajasthan 0.**

Saurashtra 285/8 in 50 overs (Sheldon Jackson 71, Arpit Vasavada 62, Chirag Jani 69 n.o.) lost to Pondicherry 289/5 in 48.4 overs (Ajay Rohera 43, Akash Kargave 42, Ankita Sharma 47,

Arun Karthik 73 n.o., Aman Khan 46 n.o.); **Toss:** Pondicherry; **Pondicherry 4, Saurashtra 0.**

**Group-D: Visakhapatnam:** Chhattisgarh vs Mizoram; Match abandoned without a ball bowled; **Chhattisgarh 2, Mizoram 2.**

**Vizianagar:** Chandigarh vs Tamil Nadu; Match abandoned without a ball bowled; **Chandigarh 2, TN 2.**

Jammu & Kashmir vs Uttar Pradesh; Match abandoned without a ball bowled; **J&K 2, UP 2.**

**Group-E: Hyderabad:** Bihar 196 in 46.4 overs (Sakibul Islam 48, Bipin Saurabh 50, Avesh Khan 3/21) lost to Madhya Pradesh 197/4 in 25.1 overs (Harsh Gawli 83, Rajat Patidar 55); **Toss:** MP; **MP 4, Bihar 0.**

Delhi 272/2 in 50 overs (Vaibhav Kandpal 47, Ayush Badoni 41, Himmat Singh 60, Anuj Rawat 79 n.o., Mukesh Kumar 4/66) lost to Bengal 274/4 in 41.3 overs (Abishek Porel 170 n.o., Anustup Majumdar 37); **Toss:** Bengal; **Bengal 4, Delhi 0.**

Baroda 302/7 in 50 overs (Ninad Rathva 44, Shivalik Sharma 86, Vishnu Solanki 54, Bhanu Pania 49 n.o.) bt Tripura 210 in 44.4 overs (Jiwanjot Singh 60, Mandeep Singh 54, Mahesh Pithiya 4/44); **Toss:** Tripura; **Tripura 4, Baroda 0.**

## Liron Jaden claims the overall title

## MOTORSPORTS

## Sports Bureau

COIMBATORE

DTS Racing's Liron Jaden Samuels (37pts) deservedly walked away with the overall title in the JK Tyre Novice Cup, part of the 27th JK Tyre - FMSCI National Racing Championship, at the Kari Motor Speedway here on Saturday.

It was a tight battle between Liron and Aditya Patnaik from Momentum Motorsports. Both secured a double win each. The latter won the fourth and the fifth race in a commanding manner.

But his joy was short-lived as he was imposed a 10-second penalty for the jump start in the fourth race. It pushed him down to fourth place. Liron, having finished second in the

race, was elevated to the top and, with it, boosted his points tally.

Momentum Motorsports, however, was happy to take home the team championship with 63 points to its kitty. DTS Racing (61pts) had to rest content for the second spot.

**The results (provisional): JK Tyre Novice Cup: Race 1 (10 laps):** 1. Liron Jaden Samuels (37pts)

(DTS Racing) 13:33.268; 2. Lokith L. Ravi (DTS Racing) 13:33.639; 3. M. Abhay (MSport) 13:34.421.

**Race 2 (10 laps):** 1. Aditya Patnaik (Momentum Motorsport) 16:24.261; 2. Abhay 16:24.547; 3. Liron 16:25.093.

**Race 3 (9 laps):** 1. Abhay 12:18.579; 2. Saishiva Sankaran (Momentum Motorsport) 12:21.601; 3. Aditya 12:23.864.

**Race 4 (10 laps):** 1. Liron 15:08.194; 2. Neil Singh Kalsi (Momentum Motorsports) 15:09.284; 3. Lokith L. Ravi (DTS Racing) 15:10.549.

**Race 5:** 1. Aditya 13:12.582; 2. Saishiva 13:18.258; 3. Liron 13:18.391.

## India gets nod as shooting Junior World Cup host

## Sports Bureau

NEW DELHI

The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) has confirmed India as the host for a Junior World Cup in 2025.

The ISSF has offered two windows in the calendar to slot the competition from September to early November. The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) will decide on the dates soon and convey to the ISSF.

The ISSF president Luciano Rossi had announced that India would host the event during his visit in November for the World Cup Finals.

The ISSF president Lu-

## Yashas jumps to the lead

## Sports Bureau

Yashas Chandra climbed to the top of the leader board with a flawless 5-under 66 in the third round of the ₹3 crore Tata Steel golf championship at the Beldih and Golmuri golf courses, Jamshedpur, on Saturday.

Udayan Mane was in second spot with 13-under 200, following a round of 68.

"I am delighted with the way I struck the ball today. I also hit it close on both courses," said Yashas.

Overnight leader Saarthak Chhibber had a tough time, shooting 6-over 77, and fell to the joint 14th spot with three others including Jamal Hossain of Bangladesh.

**The leading scores:** 1. Yashas Chandra (69, 64, 69) 199; 2. Udayan Mane (67, 65, 68) 200; 3. Sudhir Sharma (70, 64, 67), N. Thangaraja (Sri) (65, 66, 70) 201; 5. Amardeep Malik (67, 64, 71) 202; 6. Yuvraj Sandhu (71, 69, 63); 7. Veer Ahlawat (67, 68, 68); 8. Tom Omak Chouhan (68, 68), C Muniyappa (70, 65, 69) 204; 10. Gaurav Pratap Singh (69, 70, 66), Gaganjeet Bhullar (71, 67, 67), Milind Soni (68, 69, 8); 9. Shamim Khan (66, 68, 71) 205; 14. Abhinav Lohan (69,

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**Right pick:** Vegetable wholesalers separate rotten tomatoes from fresh ones.



**Perennial operation:** The massive vegetable market ensures round-the-clock flow of raw materials to the waste-to-power plant.



**Circle of power:** The Bowenpally market produces three or four tonnes of organic waste every day, which drives production at the waste-to-power plant in a win-win situation.

# Greens power

The Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Vegetable Market Yard in Hyderabad is mastering sustainability with a system that uses organic waste to generate power, bringing substantial savings in electricity bills



Nagara Gopal  
nagara.gopal@thehindu.co.in

**H**yderabad's Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Vegetable Market Yard, or Bowenpally market, has always been a hive of activity. But recently, the buzz was not just about the arrival of a variety of vegetables from near and far. The noise and bustle of customers and tractors moving goods blends with the whirring motors of a waste-to-power plant located within the market.

The anaerobic gas lift reactor-based plant was developed by the CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), the State Department of Marketing, and Ahuja Engineering Services at a cost of ₹3 crore.

It has a capacity to produce up to 800-1,000 units of electricity a day using 10 tonnes of waste.

The market produces three or four tonnes of organic waste every day. This waste is first placed on conveyor belts which carry it to shredders.

After shredding, the waste is converted into a slurry and is put into large containers or pits. These are high-rate biomethanation technology-based reactors.

The reactors start the process of anaerobic digestion, where organic waste is converted into biofuel. The fuel is then put into biogas generators that converts it into electricity.

The electricity generated from the plant powers more than 100 streetlights, 170 stalls, an administrative building, and the market's water supply network – giving the market committee substantial savings in power bills.

The plant produces biogas, which is being used to replace LPG cylinders in canteens. Biomass generated is sold separately as organic fertilizer.

Currently, the plant produces 300 units of power and 60 kg of biogas every day.



**Nothing goes waste:** Workers remove leaves from vegetables to be sold at the Bowenpally market.



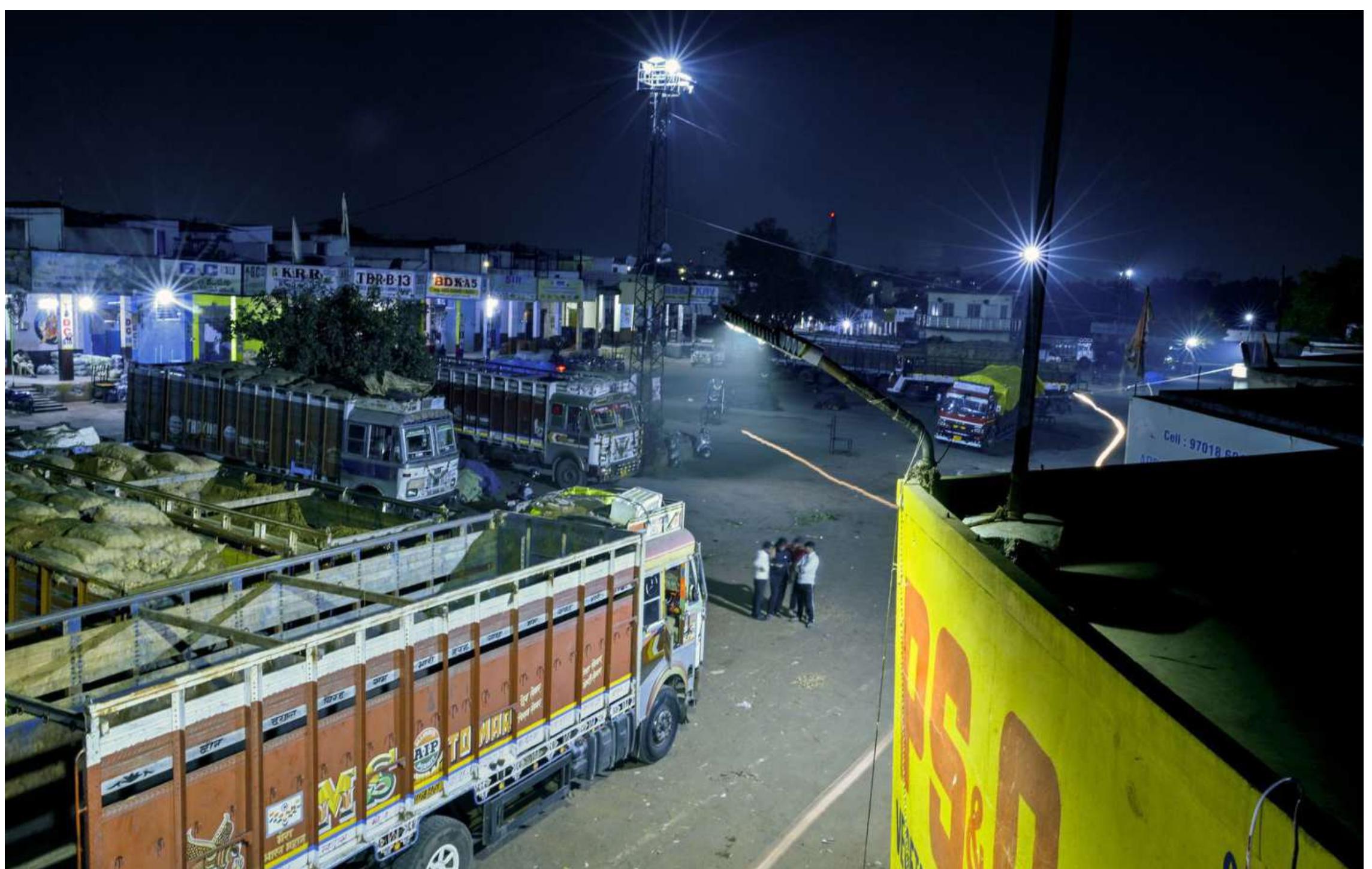
**Power supply:** Workers feed stale vegetables into the conveyor belt at the waste-to-power plant.



**Safety check:** Engineers monitor a reactor at the waste-to-power plant. Careful checks are done to curb breakdowns.



**Thriving business:** A market yard canteen that is fuelled and powered by the waste-to-power plant.



**Self-reliant:** Electricity from the waste-to-power plant lights up a yard at the market.