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JAILED IN BANGLADESH

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Combating issue of voter fraud

Should voter IDs be linked to Aadhaar to ensure transparency?

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SYDNEY TEST

Rohit is a doubtful starter for final game

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IN BRIEF



PM to inaugurate infra projects in Capital today

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate several infrastructure projects in Delhi on Friday. He is scheduled to hand over the keys of 1,675 newly constructed flats to slum dwellers and lay the foundation stones of three Delhi University projects worth over ₹600 crore. » Page 4

NSS slams Kerala CM over change in attire rule

KOTTAYAM

The Nair Service Society on Thursday criticised Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan for endorsing Swami Sachidananda's remarks about the practice requiring male devotees to remove their shirt before entering temples. » Page 6

Medical help not a ruse to derail Dallewal's strike: SC

Justice Kant accuses Punjab govt., others of insinuating that efforts were on to break his fast; Justice Bhuyan questions the Centre's reluctance to issue a statement that 'its doors are open'

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge, Justice Surya Kant, made it clear on Thursday that efforts to hospitalise farmers' leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal are not a ruse to derail his hunger strike. He lashed out at the Punjab government and other leaders for deliberately creating such an impression in the media.

His companion judge on the Bench, Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, separately questioned the Centre's persisting reluctance to come out with a statement that its "doors are open" to consider the "genuine grievances" of the farmers.

Both judges on the Bench seemed to be keenly aware that Mr. Dallewal's medical condition was becoming riskier by the day.

Q Shifting to the hospital does not mean he [Jagjit Singh Dallewal] will not continue with his fast. Our concern is that he should get access to medical help and facilities

JUSTICE SURYA KANT
Supreme Court Judge

"This issue is becoming more and more sensitive, and time is passing," Justice Kant observed.

"Why cannot your client make a statement that you will consider the genuine grievances of the farmers... That your doors are open... Why can't the Central government make a statement?" Justice Bhuyan asked.

Mr. Dallewal's continuing fast, which had crossed more than 35 days, was surely linked to a face-to-face with the Centre. "That

on behalf of the Centre.

Mr. Mehta said there were "several factors weighing in" for the Centre. He underscored that the issue before the court was the health of one individual, Mr. Dallewal. He assured that the Centre was "concerned with each and every farmer".

But Justice Bhuyan said

Mr. Dallewal's continuing fast, which had crossed more than 35 days, was surely linked to a face-to-face with the Centre. "That

is linked to this..." Justice Bhuyan remarked.

Justice Kant accused the Punjab government, its officers, and even farmer leaders of insinuating in the media that efforts were on to break Mr. Dallewal's fast by "evacuating" him from the Khanauri protest site to a hospital.

"Our directions do not mean that he should break his fast even in the hospital. After his health is taken care of, he can continue with his peaceful protest. Shifting to the hospital does not mean he will not continue with his fast. Our concern is that he should get access to medical help and facilities," Justice Kant explained.

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STATE HAS NO ROLE: MANN

» PAGE 5

Will do whatever is possible in Nimisha Priya case: Iran

Kallop Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI



Nimisha Priya

Iran will "take up" the case of Nimisha Priya, the nurse from Kerala who has been given a death sentence in Yemen, a highly placed Iranian official assured in New Delhi on Thursday.

The case is being tried in Sanaa, the administrative capital of Yemen which is under the control of the Iran-aligned Houthi militants, and the declaration of assistance by the Iranian official might help India in saving the life of the nurse.

"We will take up this issue regarding this nurse. We will do whatever we can," the senior Iranian official told *The Hindu* while meeting representatives of media organisations in the Iranian embassy here.

The death sentence against Ms. Nimisha was approved last Monday by the President of Yemen, Rashad Al Alimi, and could be carried out within a

month. The official also acknowledged the seriousness of the case and noted it pertains to "manslaughter" as Ms. Nimisha was convicted for killing her business partner Talal Abd

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IN BRIEF



Survey report on Sambhal mosque submitted in court

The court commissioner appointed to conduct a survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal on Thursday submitted a detailed report. The report, which includes videography from all angles, was compiled during the survey conducted on November 19 and 24. Advocate Ramesh Singh Raghav told reporters after submitting the report that the survey covered the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, which has been at the centre of a legal dispute following claims that a Harihar temple stood at the same location earlier. PTI

Man who allegedly killed his family sent to judicial custody

A man from Agra who allegedly killed his mother and four sisters in a hotel room in Lucknow was sent to judicial custody on Thursday, while police said efforts were on to arrest his father. The incident took place at Hotel Sharanjeet in the busy Naka area of the city on Wednesday. Mohammad Arshad allegedly killed his mother Asma and sisters Alia, 9, Aksha, 16, Rahmeen, 18, and Alshia 19, according to the police. He then shot a video in which he confessed to the killings. In the 6.5-minute selfie video, Arshad further claimed that his father was also involved in the murders. Preliminary inquiry has revealed that he took the step because of a domestic dispute. PTI

Pansare murder case: HC to no longer monitor probe, asks lower court to expedite trial

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday observed that it will no longer monitor the investigation into the 2015 murder of Communist Party of India leader and rationalist writer Govind Pansare. The court, however, directed the Kolhapur sessions court to conduct the ongoing trial on a day-to-day basis to expedite the delivery of justice.

A Division Bench of Justices Ajay S. Gadkari and Kamal Khata said the monitoring of the investigation was no longer necessary, noting that a report submitted by the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of Maharashtra Police indicates that the case has been probed from all angles.

The Bench said the investigating agency is making necessary efforts to ar-



rest the absconding accused by carrying out investigation as stipulated under Section 173(8) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

"It is thus clear that the only aspect remained to be investigated is the tracing of the two absconding accused. According to us, only for the purpose of arrest of the absconding accused, continuous monitoring of the further investigation by this court under Article 226 of the Constitution of India

is not necessary. After the accused persons are arrested, the investigating agency can report it to the trial court as per the provisions of CrPC," the Bench observed.

Pansare and his wife Uma were shot at in Kolhapur on February 15, 2015 while on a morning walk. He succumbed to injuries five days later while Uma survived. The probe into the case was initially conducted by a Special Investigation Team of the Crime Investigation Department, but later transferred to the ATS in 2022. The High Court has been monitoring the probe since 2016.

On a point raised by the victim's family about the delay in the trial, the court noted that it has already started, and as of December 16, 2024, the prosecution had examined 28 witnesses.

Ladki Bahin scheme: govt. to act against bogus beneficiaries

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government has decided to take action based on complaints about bogus beneficiaries of the Ladki Bahin Yojana, and sought information from the Income Tax Department and Transport Department for their verification.

Maharashtra Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare, who made this announcement on Thursday, made it clear that the State government will only address complaints regarding bogus beneficiaries.

Under the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, launched by the previous Eknath Shinde-led government in August last year, eligible women are provided a monthly allowance of ₹1,500.

The scheme is said to

have played a key role in the victory of the ruling Mahayuti in the November 20 Assembly election. However, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis later indicated that there would be scrutiny of the beneficiaries of the scheme.

Addressing complaints'

"The Maharashtra government is not taking any drive to scrutinise the beneficiaries of the Ladki Bahin Yojana. We have not changed any government policies. We are only addressing the complaints filed with local government offices," Ms. Tatkare said.

"We have sought data from the Income Tax Department and the State Transport Department as some complaints involve beneficiaries with income above the set threshold of ₹2.5 lakh annually or those who own four-wheelers," she said.

T.N. sexual assault case being politicised without genuine concern, says Madras HC

Mohamed Imrullah S.
CHENNAI

Justice P. Velmurugan of the Madras High Court on Thursday expressed deep anguish over the Anna University sexual assault case, and said instead of it serving as a wake-up call to introspect why society as a whole continued to subject women and unleash atrocities against them, the incident was being politicised with no real concern.

The judge spoke his mind when PMK advocate K. Balu made a mention of the State police having denied permission for a protest over the issue by the party's women's wing.

The judge said protests by political parties were aimed merely at attracting media attention, and not out of genuine concern.

Justice Velmurugan said the media too had not acted

NIA court holds 28 guilty for death of youth in U.P. clash

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

A National Investigation Agency (NIA) court in Lucknow on Thursday convicted 28 people for the murder of Chandan Gupta, who was killed in a communal clash that broke out in the aftermath of the 'Tiranga Yatra' in Uttar Pradesh's Kasganj on January 26, 2018.

Special Additional District and Sessions Judge Vivekanand Sharan Tripathi acquitted two persons in the case due to "insufficient evidence" against them.

The quantum of punishment will likely be announced on Friday.

The court found the 28

accused guilty under several sections of the Indian Penal Code, including 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 147 (rioting), and 124(A) (sedition) along with provisions of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

In a letter to Mr. Modi,

NSUI national president Varun Choudhary said,

"Mammo

hohan Singh's recent

demise has left a deep

void, and the most fitting

tribute to his legacy would

be to dedicate premier

educational institutions in

his name."

The violence led to unrest in the town, which led to a week-long curfew and Internet shutdown.

The police filed a chargesheet in the case in July 2018 and the matter was transferred to the NIA after a case of sedition was slapped against the accused persons.



Kin of Chandan Gupta taking part in a protest against his killing in Kasganj. FILE PHOTO

in the minority-dominated Badnagar locality of Kasganj. The bike rally entered the area without the permission of the administration, according to reports.

The procession sparked clashes, which started with arguments and escalated to stone-pelting. During the clash, Gupta was killed while another person was shot.

The violence led to unrest in the town, which led to a week-long curfew and Internet shutdown.

The police filed a chargesheet in the case in July 2018 and the matter was transferred to the NIA after a case of sedition was slapped against the accused persons.

Poverty, trafficking in Bengal linked to climate change: experts

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Despite interventions by the government and efforts by NGOs, trafficking continues to be a major policy challenge in certain parts of West Bengal. With five tropical cyclones battering the State's coastline since May 2020, experts say climate change is one of the factors pushing people into poverty and driving human trafficking.

"Climate change has become a factor behind human trafficking, especially in vulnerable regions such as the Sundarbans. Back-to-back cyclones – Amphan and Yaas – destroyed livelihoods, forcing increased migration, and exposing women, girls, and others to greater risks," said Nihar Ranjan Raptan, founder secretary, Goran-



Taking cover: Passengers at a railway station in north Kolkata amid heavy rain triggered by Cyclone Dana in October 2024. FILE PHOTO

cases in the State.

Several stakeholders from ILFAT (Integrated Leaders Forum Against Trafficking), one of the biggest federations of trafficking survivors comprising over 2,800 members across seven States, feel that the fight against trafficking should integrate cli-

mate change as a factor for effective interventions.

ILFAT released a report on trafficking on July 30, 2024, World Anti-Human Trafficking Day, which points out that the number of human trafficking cases reported in West Bengal in 2020 was 59. This figure increased to 61 in 2021, and

67 in 2022. In 2022, 60 girls and 18 boys below 18 years were trafficked, it stated.

Lured with jobs'

Ramadhar Sarthi, an ILFAT member, said climate change triggers disasters, forcing vulnerable communities to migrate and lose their livelihoods.

"This exposes impoverished populations to the risk of exploitation by traffickers as many are lured by promises of better wages. Women and children are particularly at risk during migration from villages to cities, where vulnerability to human trafficking increases," Mr. Sarthi said.

Shakila Khatun Katakhali, director, Katakhali Empowerment Youth Association, said poverty induced by climate change drives human trafficking. "In our collective, Bijoyini, we

have 28 female trafficking survivors from Hasnabad and Hingalganj areas of the Sundarbans. A large number of them were pushed into poverty by climate change," she said.

Neha (name changed), an ILFAT member and trafficking survivor, narrated the turn her life took after Cyclone Amphan in May 2020 ravaged her village in the Sundarbans, and she left with a person who promised her employment in other States.

"When I left, I thought I was going to work. Little did I know I was being sold to another person. The cyclone changed everything for me. It destroyed my future," Ms. Neha said.

She was rescued and now actively works with ILFAT, spreading awareness against trafficking in the Sundarbans.

BMIC land acquisition: right to property is a human right, says SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Noting that right to property is a human right, the Supreme Court in a judgment on Thursday directed that compensation to people, who lost their land for the over 20,000-acre Bengaluru-Mysore Infrastructure Corridor (BMIC) project over two decades ago, must be paid according to the market value prevailing in April 2019.

A Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and K.V. Viswanathan noted that the Special Land Acquisition Officer (SLAO) had passed the award for payment of compensation with respect to land belonging to these pe-

ople on April 22, 2019.

Justice Gavai said compensation must be paid according to the prevailing market value of the acquired land and not as per the value of the property at the time of acquisition in 2003.

"Right to property continues to be a human right in a welfare state, and a constitutional right under Article 300-A of the Constitution. Article 300-A provides that no person shall be deprived of his property save by authority of law. The state cannot dispossess a citizen of his property except in accordance with the procedure established by law," Justice Gavai observed.

Gadkari announces four infra projects to decongest Delhi roads

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday announced four infrastructure projects for Delhi to decongest roads and reduce pollution.

He also announced a Central Road & Infrastructure Fund of ₹1,200 crore for Delhi. This comes a day after all seven BJP Delhi MPs met Mr. Gadkari and proposed the projects.

The announcement holds significance as the Delhi Assembly election is due in February, and the Model Code of Conduct is expected to come into force in the coming days.

The four projects, expected to cost ₹12,500 crore, include connecting Urban Extension Road-II (UER-II) to the Delhi-Katra Expressway to provide a direct link to Indira Gandhi International Airport and Delhi-Mumbai Expressway for vehicles coming from Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.

The other projects are

connecting UER-II near Alipore to Delhi-Dehradun Expressway near Tronica City to facilitate vehicles travelling to Dehradun from Haryana and Rajasthan; construction of tunnel from Shivamurthy to Nelson Mandela Marg to traffic congestion in Mahipalpur and Rangpuri area and connecting Delhi-Dehradun Expressway to Noida to facilitate traffic from north Delhi, north-west Delhi and south-west Delhi and bypass east Delhi.

Education hub
The BJP Delhi MPs on Thursday met Minister of Housing and Urban Development Manohar Lal to propose an education hub and world-class stadium in Narela.

They asked Mr. Lal to come up with projects to enhance metro connectivity and develop NaMo Bharat corridors and houses for slum dwellers. Other proposals included Delhi-Saharanpur-Neeramra-Behrur and Delhi-Karnal NaMo Bharat corridors.

Farmers' demands pertain to Centre, State has no role: Mann

Punjab CM says Union govt. should shun its 'apathetic' approach and open a way for talks with all the stakeholders, alleges that Centre wants Dallewal, other farmers to be evicted from protest site

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday said that the demands of the farmers, who have been protesting near the Punjab-Haryana inter-State border, pertain to the Centre and that the State government has "no role to play in the matter".

Mr. Mann said he was surprised at the way in which the BJP-led Centre has been "shying away" from holding talks with the agitating farmers while trying to "place the onus" on the Punjab government.

He called on the Central government to "shun its apathetic approach and open a way for talks with all the stakeholders".

The Punjab CM alleged that the Centre had "turned a blind eye" to the plight of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on a fast-unto-death



Senior officials meeting farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on a hunger strike since November 26. FILE PHOTO

since November 26.

Mr. Mann called on the farmer leader and urged him to break the fast.

No law violated

He said that the Union government wants Mr. Dallewal and other agitating farmers to be evicted from the protest site in Punjab's Khanauri district even though they have not violated any law.

Regarding the observa-

tions of the Supreme Court, which accused the Punjab government of insinuating that efforts were on to break Mr. Dallewal's fast by "evacuating" him from the protest site to a hospital, Mr. Mann said, "We respect the Supreme Court. We are conscious of Mr. Dallewal's health, and we are alert."

Farmers groups in Punjab are demanding a legal guarantee that their crops will be purchased at Minimum Support Price.

BJP-led Central government has turned a blind eye towards the plight of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal
BHAGWANT MANN
Punjab CM

voked powers under Article 311 of the Constitution to dismiss DSP Gursher Singh Sandhu.

In March 2023, a private news channel had telecast two interviews of Bishnoi.

The SIT constituted by the Punjab and Haryana High Court concluded that Mr. Sandhu, a Punjab Police Service officer, facilitated the recording of the interview by a TV channel while the gangster was in custody in Kharar. Earlier, seven police officers were suspended in connection with the case.

Punjab govt. dismisses DSP-rank officer in Bishnoi interview case

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab government on Thursday dismissed a DSP-rank officer from service for allegedly facilitating the recording of an interview of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi in police custody.

Bishnoi is one of the accused in the 2022 singer Sidhu Moosewala murder case.

The dismissal orders were issued by the Home Affairs Department Secretary. The government in-

Complaints filed against 'fake voters' in Delhi

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

South Delhi Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) has requested the police to file an FIR against a person accused of submitting forged documents to enrol as a voter.

The Delhi police have received the application and launched an investigation into the matter.

In the letter, Tanuj Bhanot, ERO, Sangam Vihar, stated, "The applicant has tried to deceive the authorities by tampering with the electricity bill as proof of identity." The police have been requested to verify the documents and information provided by the applicant and take necessary actions against those found guilty of tampering with documents, the letter said.

In another application, the ERO of New Delhi has requested the Tilak Marg police station to register an FIR against two women accused of fraudulent applications for deletion of names of voters from the electoral roll.

"These applicants have submitted false information that the elector is permanently shifted," read the application. The accused have been identified as Surendra Devi of Laxmi Bai Nagar and Madhu of Valmiki Sadan, Mandir Marg.

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Hi-Fashion Collection 2024

BRANDED Sweaters, Jacket, Sweat Shirt, Lower, Cardigan & winter wears

NIT.No.:HMDA/DEV/CE/16/2025 Dt: 02.01.2025

Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority invites Request for Proposal (RFP) for "Selection of Advisor cum Merchant Banker to raise funds through debt markets" in single stage two cover system (Cover-A: Technical Proposals, Cover-B : Financial Proposals). The scope of work, eligibility criteria and other details can be seen in the notifications in the website www.hmda.gov.in.

Schedule of Tender Process

Issue of Tender	03.01.2025
Last date for receipt of pre-bid queries	08.01.2025
Pre-bid meeting date and time	09.01.2025 and
Due date for submission of bid	Before 15.00 Hrs IST on 18.01.2025
Technical Bid opening date and time	At 16.00 Hrs IST on 18.01.2025
Date of opening Financial Bid	Will be intimated to technically qualified bidders
Contact Person: Chief Engineer, HMDA	
Mobile : 09849909792, Email : ce@hmda.gov.in	
Sd/- Chief Engineer,, HMDA,	

Telephone No. 01970233116, HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
E-mail ID: ee-deh-hp@nic.in

The Executive Engineer Dehra Division HPPWD Dehra H.P. on behalf of Governor of H.P. invites the item rate bids in the electronic tendering system from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD for the works as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs)	Starting Date for down-loading bid	Earnest money	Deadline for submis-sion of bid
1.	Construction/Establishment of 50 Bedded Critical Care Block & DIPHL at Civil Hospital Dehra in District Kangra (H.P.) (SH: Building Portion including Water Supply & Sanitary Installation, Rain Water Harvesting System and Boundary Wall).	Rs. 16,83,40,625/-	06.01.25	Rs. 34,00,000/-	12.01.25

The bidders are advised to note other details of tender from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in. Date of opening of tender 13.01.2025. Executive Engineer, Dehra Division HP:PWD., Dehra. Pin No. 171701. Tel. No. 01970-233116, e-mail : ee-deh-hp@nic.in

HP /4282/24-25 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh

THE HINDU
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Timings	
DELHI	
FRIDAY, JAN. 03	
RISE 07:15 SET 17:37	
RISE 09:55 SET 21:09	
SATURDAY, JAN. 04	
RISE 07:15 SET 17:38	
RISE 10:30 SET 22:12	
SUNDAY, JAN. 05	
RISE 07:15 SET 17:39	
RISE 11:02 SET 23:15	

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	16	08
Safdarjung	16	08
Palam	14	07

Delhi Palam Today
15°C The weather will be dry. The cold day like conditions to continue. Sky conditions will be obscured due to fog layer.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
15°C The weather will be dry and uneasy. The cold day like conditions to continue. Night also will be very cold and uneasy.

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

503675/13

PRESS NOTICE

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (H & E) Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites online bid in two bid system for the following work from eligible contractors having experience (Technical and Financial) from eligible firms/contractors of repute having experience in similar nature of work for the following work mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Tender value (Rs. In Lakhs)	Time of completion	Bid security	Tender Cost (in Rs.)
1	Construction of New RCC (G+2) Building for Girls' Hostel of Gurucharan College, Silchar, Cachar, Assam Under PM USHA Scheme	281.93581	12 (twelve) months	2% for General, and 1% for reserved category	5,600.00
2	Construction Of Girls' Hostel (G+2) At Janata College, Kabuganj, Dist: Cachar, Under PM-USHA Scheme	282.76777	12 (twelve) months	2% for General, and 1% for reserved category	5,700.00
3	Construction of Ground Floor of Class Room Building at Ramkrishna Nagar College, Karimganj, Assam Under PM-USHA Scheme	269.53051	12 (twelve) months	2% for General, and 1% for reserved category	5,400.00
4	Construction of RCC (G+2) Administrative Building of S.K. Roy Degree College, Katlicherra, Dist: Hailakandi Under PM-USHA Scheme	381.23242	12 (twelve) months	2% for General, and 1% for reserved category	7,600.00

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in from 06/01/2025 at 10:00 am onwards.

The bidders must be enrolled with the tendering web-portal www.assamtenders.gov.in. All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents. The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents.

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

Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Bldg.) Assam

(Health & Education), Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

Inauguration of a NEW ACADEMIC BLOCK

Government Senior Secondary School, Jhilmil Colony, Delhi

Friday, 3rd January 2025



Highlights

- Classrooms equipped with modern furniture
- Computer Lab
- 'State of the Art' Laboratories
- Activity room & Staff Room
- Lift & Toilet Blocks

Chief Guest

Atishi

Chief Minister, Delhi

Presided by

Ram Niwas Goel

Speaker, Delhi Assembly

Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi



Rajendra Arlekar sworn in as 23rd Kerala Governor

The Hindu Bureau

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar was sworn in as the 23rd Governor of Kerala on Thursday.

Kerala High Court Chief Justice Nitin Madhukar Jamdar administered the oath of office at Raj Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan, senior political leaders, government functionaries and Mr. Arlekar's family members were among those present.

Until recently Governor of Bihar, he replaces Arif Mohammed Khan. Mr. Arlekar's stint will be watched with immense interest given the tumultuous relationship his prede-



Pinarayi Vijayan greets Rajendra Arlekar after swearing-in ceremony.

cessor had with the Left government in the State. Mr. Khan replaces Mr. Arlekar in Bihar after a five-year stint in Kerala.

A member of the RSS from a young age and later the BJP, Mr. Arlekar is a former Minister and speaker of the Goa Assembly.

Audience response drowns rancour against T.M. Krishna

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

The tremendous response and participation of the audience in the music concerts and morning conferences contributed to the success of the December music season of The Music Academy and drowned the discordant notes and rancour against vocalist T.M. Krishna, the recipient of the Sangita Kalanidhi award.

"There has been needless external noise and toxicity, particularly on social media over several months leading up to the festival. Notwithstanding all this, the festival went off smoothly and was a big success. Ultimately, music as a force for good has prevailed and prevailed emphatically," said N. Murali, the President of the Academy during his address to the Sadas of the Academy.

The audience's enthusiastic participation in the inauguration of the festival, the overwhelming presence of *rasikas* for the Christmas morning concert by Mr. Krishna and a



T.M. Krishna

similar response for the Sadas proved that good music matters. Mr. Krishna, who came back to the saba music season after a decade, said his participation in the season as the Sangita

Kalanidhi-designate was special. "Presiding over the 98th Annual Conference of the Music Academy was an intellectually invigorating experience. I had the pleasure of curating this year's conference and it would not be wrong to say that this year's conference stood out for the very high standards it set in terms of the quality and rigour in the presentations and lectures," he said.

"To receive the Sangita Kalanidhi award on January 1 and to receive the love and affection that has been

pouring in from so many people from different walks of life had been overwhelming," he added.

Noted Indologist David Shulman, who conferred the award on Mr. Krishna, said: "The richness and standards of excellence are utterly amazing. Carnatic music is flourishing today as never before, also expanding its range and horizon while remaining true to its long classical tradition." He added, "Just look at the long line of awardees, mostly young and highly gifted musicians

who performed over these days. Look at the passionate audiences who attended the performances for many hours. Look at the connoisseurs who know every note and every text."

The Academy also paid homage to former Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh. "He was one of India's great leaders and statesmen, who contributed tremendously to the country's progress, guided by the principles of humaneness, inclusivity and equity," Mr. Murali said during his address.

INBRIEF



Bus fares in Karnataka to go up by 15% from Sunday

Karnataka State Cabinet on Thursday approved a 15% hike in fares of all types of bus services operated by the four Road Transport Corporations (RTCs). This would come into effect from January 5, said Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil after a Cabinet meeting. The increase is expected to bring in an additional revenue of ₹74.85 crore a month to the RTCs. The Cabinet raised the fares following a demand from RTCs because of the increased operating cost owing to hike in diesel prices, salaries, and maintenance costs.

A.P. team to visit Karnataka to study Shakti scheme

A delegation from Andhra Pradesh, comprising Ministers and officials, is set to visit Karnataka to examine the successful implementation of the Shakti scheme, which provides free bus travel for women on non-premium State-run buses. The Andhra Pradesh government is considering launching a similar scheme in the State. According to a senior Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) official, a 15-member delegation, including three Ministers, will arrive in Bengaluru on Friday to study the scheme in depth.

One crore TDP members to get accident insurance

TDP leader Nara Lokesh signed agreements with the representatives of the United India Insurance Company Limited and Pragmatic Insurance Broking Services Private Limited on Thursday for providing accident insurance coverage to one crore party members. A press release said the TDP was approaching a historic milestone in its membership drive, and the insurance coverage was in tune with the party's commitment to take care of the cadres. It was the first time in the TDP's history that such a large-scale insurance facility was being provided to members, it added.

A step forward



New ritual: After much clamour from activists demanding to stop use of animals for temple parades, Cochin Carnival paraded a 'robot elephant' for its annual New Year's festivities on Thursday. THULASI KAKKAT

PSLV C-60 mission: space start-up firm gets desired results

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Bellatrix Aerospace has announced that it has achieved the desired results from the Rudra High-Performance Green Propulsion System, which was onboard the POEM-4 in the recently launched PSLV C-60 mission.

The Bengaluru-based space start-up said the Rudra High-Performance Green Propulsion System has fired flawlessly aboard POEM-4 in PSLV C-60.

"We replicated the same hardware from January

2024's space qualification, reaffirming its dependable and repeatable performance. This is a proud milestone as propulsion systems are complex engines owing to challenging subsystems. All sub-systems are 100% made at Bellatrix," it said.

"Disturbance imparted on POEM body in Yaw axis was 1.4 deg/s for a 60 second firing. 80 degrees angular rotation of the POEM platform was observed. This sets a new benchmark. We have planned more firings during the coming days," it added.

RTO official's Mongolia trip to click Pallas's cat find its way into textbook

M.P. Praveen

KOCHI

During his 15-day trip to Mongolia in the harsh winter of March 2017, Shefq Basheer Ahammed, now serving as Malappuram Regional Transport Officer, had little inkling that his little adventure would become part of a school textbook years later.

Mr. Ahammed had no clue that his trip to photograph the hard-to-spot Pallas's cat, one of the smallest wildcats of the world, was included as a chapter in the *Gul Mohar Language For Life English CBSE Course Book for Class 7*.



Mr. Ahammed came to know about it only after one of his friends happened to accidentally overhear his daughter reading out the chapter aloud.

Hyderabad students protest against 'hidden cameras' in their hostel washrooms; 6 arrested

The Hindu Bureau

HYDERABAD

The warden and five mess workers at the women's hostel in CMR Engineering College were taken into custody by Hyderabad Police on Thursday following a protest held here on Wednesday.

A senior official close to the investigation revealed that while the college management has been booked for negligence, a separate case has been booked against men allegedly peeping inside the women's washroom following a complaint by the students.

Eleven phones seized

"The men were taken into custody for questioning based on the allegations by the students. Eleven phones were seized and analysed. We have not found any obscene content in them," Medchal ACP B. Srinivas Reddy said.

Tension prevailed on the college campus on Wednesday as the students sat on a protest alleging recording of inappropriate videos of girl students in the hostel washroom as well negligence and misconduct by the hostel warden and staff.

The incident came to light after some students noticed palmprints on the bathroom ventilator and the mirror on the New Year's Eve. They were also alerted by the movement of the workers around the washroom area and sus-

pected videos were being secretly recorded in the hostel washroom.

A student from the college alleged that two hidden cameras were found in the washroom and more than 300 videos were recorded.

Despite flagging the concerns to the warden, no action was taken, the students said.

"The mess workers reside very close to the hostel premises, particularly where the washroom ventilator is located. We have processed the fingerprints and sent them to the fingerprint bureau for evaluation," the police official added.

Report sought

Meanwhile, the Telangana State Commission for Women (TGSWC) took suo motu cognisance of the issue based on a news report which indicated that hidden cameras were installed in the hostel bathrooms and 300 videos may have been secretly recorded.

In the communication issued to the Cyberabad Commissioner of Police, the Commission sought a detailed action taken report to be submitted immediately.

Dispute over 'Farishtey' scheme ends, SC asks govt., L-G to make peace

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday reacted that the Delhi government and the Lieutenant-Governor must try to make peace with each other when informed that funds for the 'Farishtey Dilli Ke' scheme, facilitating free medical treatment to road accident victims were provided cashless treatment in private hospitals under the 'Farishtey Dilli Ke' scheme.

The oral observation from a Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and K.V. Viswanathan came after the Delhi government counsel said it did not want to press a petition that accused officials of running the social welfare scheme to seed through their inaction and mismanagement.

The court had sought a re-

ponse from the L-G on the petition filed by the government in December 2023.

The court had found it peculiar that one department of the Delhi government was working against the other. The government petitions had at the time claimed that 23,000 road accident victims were provided cashless treatment in private hospitals under the 'Farishtey Dilli Ke' scheme.

The plea had sought the immediate re-operationalisation of the scheme by clearing pending bills, releasing timely payments to private hospitals and initiating disciplinary action against officials responsible for deliberately orchestrating the "de-operation" of the scheme.

"I was pleasantly surprised to hear that my passion has been found worthy of being included in a textbook," says Mr. Ahammed.

Incidentally, the story about the trip to Mongolia written by G. Shaheed, a senior journalist, along with Mr. Ahammed's photographs was carried by the *Frontline* magazine in the issue dated June 4, 2021. The chapter is named after the title of that story, *The Small Ghost of the Mountain*.

The Pallas's cat is named thus since it is nocturnal and with its white complexion blends seamlessly with its snowy habitat. "Pallas's cat was the primary focus of that trip, along with Bactrian or double-humped camel and Przewalski's horse, named after the Russian geographer Nikolay Przewalski," says Mr. Ahammed.

He first spent four days trekking and camping in the Hustai National Park and the next 11 days in the Altai Mountain areas to get a sighting of the cat, braving inclement weather when temperature dropped to as low as -20 degrees. Mr. Ahammed's passion for wildlife photography has taken him to 26 countries so far.

SPOTLIGHT



Show of strength: NCP chief Sharad Pawar addressing party workers at the Y.B. Chavan Centre in Mumbai on July 5, 2023, days after a group of party MLAs led by Ajit Pawar joined the Mahayuti government. EMMANUEL YOGINI

The tick-tock of the Pawar family clock

A 2023 split in the Nationalist Congress Party, one of Maharashtra's regional powerhouses helmed by Sharad Pawar, who has been in politics for about 60 years, has altered the course of the State's politics. With his nephew Ajit gaining political ground and the third generation of Pawars learning the ropes, Vinaya Deshpande Pandit gauges how the battle for succession has impacted the family itself and the State as a whole

Saheb is definitely hurt that importance was given to personal political ambitions over the family," says Vitthal Maniar, 86, sitting in his office in a crowded lane of Nana Peth in Maharashtra's Pune. *Saheb* is Maniar's college friend and NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, who turned 84 on December 12, 2024. Maniar had fought and lost a college election against Sharad, but gained a lifelong friend. The families are so close that Ajit Pawar, 65, Sharad's nephew, calls him *Kaka* (father's brother).

Maniar is referring to the "personal political ambitions" of Ajit, who is now holding the post of Deputy Chief Minister for the sixth time. In mid-2023, Ajit had split from the centrist Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), co-founded by Sharad in 1999, taking along with him a majority of its MLAs. He then joined hands with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, partners in the ruling Mahayuti alliance.

Since its inception, the NCP has never formed a government on its own, though it has almost always been part of the ruling alliance in the State. It has been one of the strongest regional forces, an umbrella under which sugar barons and regional satraps from resource-rich western Maharashtra gather. Sharad has been Chief Minister four times and his family has businesses in sugar, other agro-industries, realty, and the media.

Today, the Pawar empire is in flux, with six members of the family in active politics and the third generation keen to prove its mettle. While the ongoing tussle between uncle and nephew has drawn national attention, at the heart of the family disruption is the question of who will inherit Sharad's six-decade-old political legacy.

At the polls

Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha poll, Ajit's faction was given the NCP's name and 'clock' symbol. Sharad's group, NCP (SP), was treated as a faction and allotted the symbol of 'a man blowing a trumpet' (*tutari vajavnara maanus* in Marathi). While the matter is sub judice, it was a blow to the patriarch. Days after his trusted aides left him, reporters asked Sharad who was with him. He promptly raised his own hand and smiled.

In the Assembly election to 288 seats in November 2024, the NCP won 41 out of the 56 seats it contested, while the NCP (SP) secured only 10 out of the 86 seats it contested. For the first time in his political career, Sharad, who has never lost an election he has contested, did not address mediapersons the day the results were declared.

The next day, he said at a press conference that the results were "unexpected", but he would

Whatever happens, the fact is that we were a family, we are a family, and we will continue to be a family

SUNETRA PAWAR
Rajya Sabha member and Ajit Pawar's wife

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not resign from politics. "That is a call that my colleagues and I will take. There was clear polarisation of votes in this election," he said in Karad, where he goes every year to pay tribute to his political mentor and the first Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Yashwantrao Chavan, on his death anniversary. "People say the use of money during this election was unprecedented," he said.

"Though he will not fight any polls, that man can never retire from politics. He eats, drinks, and breathes politics. He loves going among people. It works as a tonic for him," his daughter Supriya Sule, 55, four-time MP from Baramati, had said at *The Hindu*'s 'Poll Arena', a political conclave held days before the Assembly election, vouching for her father's love for public life.

Pawar power

Sharad was one of 10 children and born in Baramati, which became his political and business stronghold. Here, among sugarcane farmers, wheat growers, and grape exporters, amid lush green fields of village landscapes and city pockets, he established sugar cooperatives, research and educational institutes, and cultural centres. Today, Baramati's Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation has over 400 companies.

Here, people talk fondly of the octogenarian, but there is a hushed discussion about Ajit's

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NCP leaders and cousins Supriya Sule and Ajit Pawar in Mumbai, months before the party split in 2023. EMMANUEL YOGINI



The people of the State have decided – *Tai* (Supriya Sule) for the Centre and *Dada* (Ajit Pawar) for the State
BARAMATI RESIDENT

women were inducted into non-medical roles in the Army. However, he has also been associated with several alleged scams and controversies, both as a Minister and cricketing body head.

Congress leader K.V. Thomas had in 2014 called him a "backstabber" for revolting against Sonia in 1999. So had Shiv Sena leader Anant Geete in 2021. It was only poetic justice, say critics, that his own nephew betrayed him to join hands with the BJP. Many likened Ajit's move to his uncle's in 1978, when Sharad rebelled and toppled Vasantdada Patil's government to become the youngest Chief Minister at 38 years.

In 2019, when Ajit joined hands with the BJP for the first time, Shalini Patil, the wife of Vasantdada, had said, "The way Sharad behaved with Vasantrao, he must have got a similar experience from his family when Ajit aligned with the BJP."

A matter of succession

In the Lok Sabha poll, Ajit's wife, Sunetra Pawar, contested against his cousin Sule in Baramati. Shrinvivas Pawar, Ajit's elder brother, who heads the Sharayu Group of companies in Mumbai, which deals in agri-business, automobile dealerships, security solutions, among others, led the public expression of the family's displeasure.

During the election campaigning, Ajit appealed to Baramati's electors to vote for a 'Pawar', in an obvious reference against his cousin 'Sule' and in favour of his wife. Sharad had hit back saying, "There is nothing wrong in seeking votes for Pawar. There is the original Pawar and the one coming from outside." Finally, Sule won.

"I do feel bad that I have to contest against a family member. Whatever happens, the fact is that we were a family, we are a family, and we will continue to be a family," Sunetra had said.

During the election, the other Pawars had campaigned for Sule. She maintained that this was a battle of ideologies and she would contest on the basis of her work for the constituency.

Ajit later termed his wife contesting against Sule a "mistake" and appealed to Sharad not to field a family member against him as a candidate in Baramati in the Assembly election. Sharad did just that and fielded Yugendra Pawar, 32, Shrinvivas's son, who lost by over 1 lakh votes to his uncle. Ajit was back as MLA for the eighth time.

During the Assembly election, the rest of the family actively campaigned against Ajit, with Sharad's politically reclusive wife Pratibha, referred to as Kaki, also hitting the ground in favour of Yugendra. In a lasting image, Pratibha, along with Sule's daughter, Revati, in her 20s, was seen standing in front of a banner that read: "*Mhatara jit jaatay, changbhala hotay* (Wherever the old man goes, it changes the winds)."

During his election campaign, Yugendra had said of his uncle Ajit: "Today, he has left Pawar *Saheb*, his ideology, and has taken the party with him. But people love Pawar *Saheb*."

The ascent of Ajit

Things were different even during Deepavali, which at least 50 members of the Pawar clan usually celebrate together in Baramati. This time, the festival came during peak election campaigning. For the first time, the family had two separate celebrations in Baramati, one at Govindbaug, where Sharad and most of the family assembled; the other at Katewadi, where Ajit celebrated and met people at a 'Janata darbar'.

A few months before the Lok Sabha election, Ajit while addressing NCP office-bearers in Mumbai said old people should sit at home and let the next generation handle affairs. Within months, Sharad's NCP (SP) had contested 10 seats in the Lok Sabha poll and won eight. Fortunes were reversed in the Assembly election, though the NCP (SP)'s vote share was larger than the NCP's.

Naresh Arora, who heads Design Boxed, a poll campaign management company, says it was a challenge managing Ajit's image. "One perception was that he was arrogant, rude. That needed to be changed. He is actually a very jovial person, but never connected with people that way. So, we designed a campaign around this," he says.

The party organised the Jan Samman Yatra, which boosted the morale of NCP workers and put Ajit in the midst of his electorate. "He was always seen as someone who sat in the Mantralaya (State Secretariat) and got work done. The *yatra* got him to mix with people. People liked that he cracked jokes and smiled. This was different from the image of the person who worked from early morning, got agitated with officials who didn't deliver, and rebuked them in public," says Arora.

Kiran Gujar, who micromanaged Ajit's campaign, had said during the election, speaking through a pile of papers, local manifestos, and booth management sheets in Baramati: "There are over 1.5 lakh rural voters and 1 lakh urban voters in Baramati. There are 386 booths in 117 villages. We have 11,760 booth *karyakartas* (workers) who are actively working in this election."

Surrounded by party workers asking for directions, Gujar had said the biggest plus was that *Dada*'s work spoke for itself.

On December 12, Ajit, Sunetra, and senior NCP colleagues visited Sharad's Delhi residence to wish him on his 84th birthday. They were greeted by Sule, who almost hugged Sunetra and lovingly kissed her nephew Parth. At the time, the Mahayuti government had not been able to decide on a Cabinet almost 20 days after a decisive mandate. Soon, Ajit was given the post of Deputy CM.

Several leaders close to the Pawar family members say it will be difficult for them to bury their differences anytime soon. "It does not look like Sharad will support the BJP," says a leader. However, another leader says, "The Pawars are like water. You can try to hit water with a stick, but you will not be able to divide it."

Anuj Kumar
anuj.kumar@thehindu.co.in

In more ways than one, 2024 turned out to be a horror show for Bollywood. While the audience paid big time to get spooked in theatres, the overall business left the stakeholders ash.

Throughout the year, exhibitors complained of an unsteady flow of films persuading producers and distributors to serve nostalgia to an audience seeking happy memories after the pandemic.

Industry insiders say in comparison to a stupendous 2023, business dropped by 20% to 30% in 2024.

Failing to herald the renaissance that the medium promised, OTT platforms are also going through a phase of course correction through mergers, measures to cut flab and self-censorship, leaving filmmakers in a creative limbo. The audience, spoilt for choice on their mobile gadgets, seek more agency than just twiddling their thumbs.

There is fatigue for the Hollywood superhero but the Bollywood audience embraces heroism that rises from the South. One of the abiding images of 2024 was of youngsters climbing specially erected structures in Patna's Gandhi Maidan to catch a glimpse of Pushpa Raj (Allu Arjun). Ironically, it is the Hindi dub of the sequel of a Telugu blockbuster that saved Bollywood from blushes.

Rom-com to Hor-com
Horror got mainstreamed in Bollywood as spooky stories ruled the audience's hearts in 2024. Four of the top 10 money-spinners served a heady contraption of chills and thrills topped with plenty of giggles. The genre emerged as a potent tool of subversion in the hands of imaginative filmmakers like Amar Kaushik and Anees Bazmee. If *Street 2* posited the power to vanquish patriarchy in the female protagonist's braid, *Bhool Bhulaiya 3* pitched a message for respecting sexual diversity in a horror comedy. *Shaaitaan* and *Munjya* also packed something to read between the mumbu jumbo. Audiences embraced the re-run of



Appeal of cinema
(Clockwise) Stills from *Jigra*, *Street 2*, *Amar Singh Chamkila*, *Singham Again*, and *Despatch*.
THE HINDU ARCHIVES

or, as exhibitors and distributors complain, Bollywood filmmakers, in their bid to go global, forced audiences to look South for a culturally rooted experience? The love for the original has diminished the business of remakes. While *Sarira* and *Baby John* tanked, *Pushpa* and *Devara* became household names.

Call for collab

As formulae flail and streaming platforms ask for box office reports before buying a film, stars look to collaborate with successful filmmakers from the South. The gambit failed in 2024, with *Baby John* floundering at the turnstiles, but 2025 will see Salman Khan join hands with A.R. Murugadoss on his traditional Eid release *Sikandar* and Shahid Kapoor collaborate with Roshan Andrews on *Devaa*.

Beyond the obvious

In the offbeat space, *Fairy Folk*, *Girl Will Be Girls*, *Merry Christmas*, *Despatch* and *Berlin* made a deep impression but also raised questions about young filmmakers pandering to a foreign gaze or making films a little too obtuse for the common audience in their effort to deflect censorship. The trend will again be scrutinised this January when Sandhya Suri's *Santosh* releases. Also, the growing trend of re-releasing old films proved romance is in demand. The success of Sajid Ali's *Laila Majnu*, Imtiaz Ali's *Rockstar* and Yash Chopra's *Veer Zara* indicated that the audience is missing the purity and poetry in their love stories.

Bollywood lost in the woods

Horror, humour, and heroism drive the Bollywood bandwagon even as it is unsettled by the pan-Indian wave from the South. A look at what is brewing in Bollywood

Sohum Shah's *Tumbbad*, where greed takes the form of a ghost. The trend does not seem to ebb as in 2025, Ayushmaan Khurana will take the shape of a vampire with *Thama* and Sohum has promised to recreate Ramsays' cult flicks.

Agent provocateur
Bollywood continues to offer the tough-muscled cop as an answer to

all our problems. Seen as a safe bet in times of forever agitated troll mobs, the violent State agent, who does not follow the SOP, is presented as someone who would provide the common man with some agency. Rohit Shetty's *Singham*

Again peddled this formula with box office success and its variants in *Fighter* and *Article 370* also scored well. With Bollywood weaponising history to fight the

political battles of today, revenge and retaliation will be a running theme in 2025 with *Sky Force* and *Chhava*.

Writing on the wall

The underwhelming response to *Jigra* and *Vanvaas* underlines that credible performances cannot salvage a pretentious script. Instead of investing in storytelling, Bollywood behemoths chose to keep

their works under wraps before Friday by culling press shows. Low-brow humour packaged with panache is still a safe bet as *Crew* and the catchy *Tauba* *Tauba* tune grabbed eyeballs for something as hollow as *Bad Newz*.

In contrast, riding on inspired writing, right-sized films like *Laapataa Ladies*, *Amar Singh Chamkila*, *The Buckingham Murders*, *I Want To Talk*, and *Kill* found their way into hearts and history. Satire, musical biopic, social thriller, drama, and action, the films belonged to different genres, but each touched a raw nerve with its intent and execution of a socially relevant theme.

Vocal for local

With the catchment area of South Indian blockbusters expanding deep into North Indian territories, it has spurred a debate on how language and lifestyle no longer seem to be a limitation for a film to cross over the Vindhyas. Is it the Hindi film viewer

Collectibles of curiosity

The Princely Cabinet presents riveting, museum-worthy objects across genres like maps, paintings, textiles, sculptures and Naga antiques

S Ravi

The works on display at the ongoing exhibition The Princely Cabinet at the Ojas Art Gallery intrigue and kindle curiosity while also going down memory lane.

A fascinating work is the machine-made German-lace pichwai of the early 20th Century titled *Krishna Leela*. Pichwais are large devotional painted pictures portraying Lord Krishna that are often hung in Hindu temples. "This is a rare one and in good condition. It was made in Germany to cater to the Indian market," says Anubhav Nath, director of Ojas Art. "The painting authentically and aesthetically depicts lord Krishna, his leelas and the *gopis* amid trees, cows, and birds, and reflects spirituality too," he adds.

Also on view are Bagh Phulkari works – embroidery on hand-spun cotton from the late 19th and early 20th Century – showing beautiful patterns and artistry of the makers, and mirroring Punjabi culture and traditions.

Along with the vintage works, are paintings by Jivya Soma Mashe, Krishnanand Jha, Jaidev Baghel and Sohan Qadri. Two works of Mashe – who popularised the Warli tribal art form – the Village Scene and Khetri (Farming) stand out. The former highlights rural life, men and women working, children playing, birds, farms, and bullock carts while the latter depicts people busy harvesting. Both have a cinematic effect.

Four works by the legendary Raja Ravi Varma, *Saraswati*, *Shambukha Subramanya Swamy* and two titled *Laxmi* invoke a sense of divinity. Among the antiques are a rare



Different era A 1799 map on display at the Ojas exhibition. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

selection of totem poles, furniture, and tribal chief's chairs from the Konyak and Wancho tribes of Nagaland. One chair made of deodar wood stands out with its backrest shaped like a head, and its arms and legs like those of human beings.

Two maps take you back in time. An old and antique map of Lorraine by cartographer Johannes Janssonius features a decorative cartouche and mileage chart, and the other map reveals a plan for the Battle of Malplaquet during the War of the Spanish Succession. There are few interesting photographs from the 1880s of the Elephanta Caves. One shows a memsahib with her dainty umbrella, an army officer, a child, and an Indian soldier. Two eye-catching images by renowned photographer Madan Mahatta (1932-2014) include *Glider Being Towed Over Qutab Minar* (1972) that provides a scenic aerial view of the monument and the other depicts Connaught Place during Rains, proving water logging in the Capital has been a perennial problem!

The Princely Cabinet is on at Ojas Art, near Qutub Minar, till January 12 (except Mondays), from 11am to 7pm.

Building a festival by the book

Rachna Singh Davidar, the festival director for The Hindu Lit for Life 2025, elaborates on the evolution of the festival and what the audience can expect this time around



Q: How has the festival evolved, what do you see happening differently in the 2025 edition?
A: The festival has grown and evolved organically. In the recent past we have branched out from being solely about books and literature to other cultural areas and that has been very rewarding. We're primarily about books and writers, but now one can expect to

see and hear from artists, musicians, dancers, actors, and comedians. Showcasing culture in this expansive manner is a way to keep the festival fresh and interesting and give attendees a truly immersive experience.

We have also tried to limit large panel discussions as these tend to become a bit superficial or unfocussed. The one-on-one conversations with eminent writers or cultural personalities tend to be much more deep and stimulating for the audience – especially if the interlocutors are skilful. Workshops on all manner of subjects have been received very well so we are ramping up those as well.

Q: What has been the response to the Dialogue initiative in cities like Hyderabad and Bengaluru? Is the festival now intent on representing a South Indian identity?
A: I am thrilled that we've expanded to Hyderabad and Bengaluru and perhaps we will be able to do a larger festival in both cities next year. We had a terrific turnout and deeply engaged audiences. In both cities it was particularly encouraging to see that there were many student attendees; we have something solid to build on.

We didn't set out to privilege

conflict, love and war, will argue about politics in India and the politics of Israel and Palestine. There will be talk of food and sex, discussion on movies, art and poetry. The festival's founder Nirmala Lakshman will talk about the Tamils as a community. At the heart of the festival there will be stories that belong to us all.

Sanjana Ganesh
sanjana.g@thehindu.co.in

At The Hindu Lit for Life, it has been over a decade of orchestrating scintillating conversations between authors and readers who devour books. In its latest edition, set to take place on January 18 and 19 in Chennai, we go behind the scene with Rachna Singh Davidar, the festival director, to understand what it takes to build a literature festival.

Question: Tell us about your tryst with The Hindu Lit for Life. What was your first experience like?

Answer: I came to the festival in 2012 and became its programme director in 2013. This is my first year as festival director. I'd spent many years running event-based bookstores, and organising a literature festival seemed a natural extension of that. My first experience at the festival was exhilarating. To see a programme that you've worked on for months, playing out onstage is truly satisfying. The first festival in some ways was the most magical, but in other ways seeing the festival develop over the years is just as satisfying.

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Force of ideas

The Islamic State must not be allowed to regain foothold in West Asia

The truck attack in the French Quarter of New Orleans, on New Year's Day, killing at least 15 people and wounding 30, suggests that the threat of low-tech, lone wolf attacks has not gone away. The attacker, identified as 42-year-old Shamsud-Din Jabbar, an American citizen who had served in the military, was killed in a shoot-out. Police found an Islamic State (IS) flag and explosives in his truck. Just hours earlier, Jabbar had posted videos on social media, indicating that he was inspired by the IS. In recent months, the IS, a terrorist organisation founded in Iraq and Syria, and now present across geographies, has released propaganda videos asking its "soldiers" to strike during celebrations in western cities in the holiday season. A few hours after the New Orleans attack, a Tesla Cybertruck exploded in front of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas, killing at least one person and injuring several. Police later said Jabbar, the suspected New Orleans attacker, did not act alone, and are investigating any potential link between the truck attack and the cybertruck explosion.

The IS, which lost its physical Caliphate in Iraq and Syria, has been trying to revive its lost fortunes. The terror group survived as an insurgency, shifted its centre of operations to Afghanistan (Islamic State-Khorasan), where it carries out attacks, targeting the country's Shia minority, and opened new networks in Africa. When the IS was at its peak in 2014-15, it had successfully globalised terror – any sympathiser could hold the IS flag, declare loyalty to the 'Caliph' and unleash attacks against the "infidels". World cities, from Dhaka to Orlando and Istanbul to Belgium, witnessed dozens of IS-inspired attacks. These have ebbed, partly due to the destruction of the IS 'caliphate' and partly due to enhanced security measures and deradicalisation programmes. But now that Syria is in transition following the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime, the IS is trying to rebuild itself. Kurdish fighters in Syria's east, who played a pivotal role in defeating the Islamists in 2015-16, say IS militants have looted government weapons' depots and are preparing for a comeback. The New Orleans attack should serve as a warning signal for the U.S. The IS should not be allowed to regain a foothold in conflict-ridden West Asia. Besides, the U.S. should also get to the roots of the radicalisation of American citizens and counter it. Organisations such as the IS should be fought with both force and ideas.

Cost and benefit

India cannot hand over Sheikh Hasina to the unelected Yunus government

Amidst signs that New Delhi and Dhaka are trying to resolve other issues that have marred their ties in the last few months, the issue of Bangladesh's demand that India extradite Sheikh Hasina remains intractable, with neither side budging. In December, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Miri was able to convey during his Dhaka visit, that India remains a friend. He also reaffirmed the continuity in ties in trade, energy, infrastructure and connectivity; the two sides appear to have calmed the situation at the border as well. Finally, the government indicated to a parliamentary committee that while Ms. Hasina remains in Delhi as India's guest, it had no truck with her political pronouncements and messages targeting Mr. Yunus. The situation seemed to shift last week, as Bangladesh sent New Delhi a "note verbale" or diplomatic missive demanding Ms. Hasina's extradition to face trial for cases that include corruption, and a Dhaka-based International Crimes Tribunal charge that she had perpetrated 'crimes against humanity' in ordering a police crackdown on student protesters. The India-Bangladesh extradition treaty of 2013, amended in 2016, sets out the course of procedures quite clearly, which needs to be pursued through a more formal representation from Bangladesh to India. The *note verbale* appears to be meant only to assuage domestic political constituencies, while India's External Affairs Ministry's response – not rejecting it outright – seems to be a non-escalatory way of dealing with the situation.

While the legalities of the request can be the subject of protracted negotiations, it is important to ensure that the issue does not hold India-Bangladesh relations hostage. The Yunus government must understand that the history of India's relationship with Ms. Hasina and her family is forged in the sacrifices made in both countries for the liberation of Bangladesh. The assassination of her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and members of her family in 1975, and her first exile in India, strengthened the bond. It is futile to expect that India would simply hand Ms. Hasina over, when she has sought refuge here, and no amount of coercive pressure could force an Indian government to comply. The decision to shelter the Dalai Lama in 1959, for example, has not wavered despite Chinese pressure. Furthermore, bringing Ms. Hasina to account is not the mandate of the interim regime, and should be pursued by a government duly elected by the Bangladeshi people. In Delhi, there must be a recognition that the actions of Ms. Hasina's government have scarred the nation. The fact that she is making political statements with ease from Indian soil is likely to embitter ties and New Delhi must conduct a full cost-benefit analysis of how helpful these statements are. Given the consequences of tense border and geopolitical turmoil, both countries must learn to deal with the issue diplomatically – in a separate silo from other aspects of their important relationship.

Remembering the impactful legacy of wise leadership

The passing of Manmohan Singh should be an occasion for evaluating the lasting legacy of the work initiated in the 1991 economic reforms, by him as the Finance Minister, and his team of high-calibre economists, Ministers and professionals (Montek Singh Ahluwalia, C. Rangarajan, P. Chidambaram, Shankar Acharya, and many others), and continued during his term as Prime Minister. Much has already been written on the animal spirits released by the 1991 economic reforms. But the period 2004-14, and the decade that followed, stand in such contrast that it is worth investigating them using verifiable government data – not views that reflect the observer's ideological predilections.

Five outcomes stand out, affecting citizens' lives, and which laid the foundations of a hastened pace of structural change that could have led India to become a high-income/high-human development index country by the 2040s.

Appropriate macroeconomic policies
First, the savings rate had begun to rise ever since the demographic dividend set in in the early 1980s. The rise in savings/GDP ratio – and corresponding growth in the investment to GDP rate – was the basis for the ensuing rise in the GDP growth rate. Thus, by 2003-04, the savings rate had risen to 23% of GDP and investment to 24% of GDP. However, appropriate macroeconomic policies enabled this to be translated into raising the investment to GDP from 24% to 38% over the next six years. This was the highest ever that India had achieved – nearing, though still below, Chinese investment rates. The resulting growth averaged 8.5% per annum over 2004-05 to 2008-09 (under the United Progressive Alliance I). Although helped by a booming international economy, export growth (15%-18% per annum) could not have been maintained without real effective exchange rates being maintained at stable levels.

Despite the global economic crisis of 2008-09, GDP growth dipped for a few quarters before recovering quickly, because of a well-designed fiscal/monetary policy stimulus so that the 2009-14 period also saw 7.5% p.a. Thus, the overall growth rate over 2004-14 averaged 7.8% p.a., which was unprecedented in India's history.

Second, the growth encompassed all sectors – the unorganised and organised. Not surprisingly, aggregate demand was sustained, as all growth engines were firing (public and private investment, final consumption, exports, and government). Hence, non-farm jobs grew at a rate of 7.5 million p.a., which itself was unprecedented. Except agriculture (where workers fell, a good thing), all sectors generated jobs. Construction jobs grew from 26 million in 2004 to 51 million in 2012 (or nearly doubled); manufacturing jobs increased by 8 million, especially, but not only in the labour-intensive sectors (that account for half of all manufacturing

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Santosh Mehrotra

led divisions in the Planning Commission (2006-14), authored the 11th and 12th Plans, and was professor of economics at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

employment) from 52 million to 60 million; as did jobs in modern services (telecom, sale/distribution of cars, financial intermediation/banking, insurance and pensions, airlines, railways, and health and education).

Structural change in the economy, slow for half a century, really gathered momentum.

Third, until 2004-05, non-farm jobs had grown so slowly that although migration from farm to non-farm occurred, never did the absolute number of workers in agriculture fall. But, for the first time in India's post-independence history, the absolute number of workers on farms actually fell after 2004, as non-farm job growth was high. This had the effect of tightening the labour market in rural areas over the entire period till 2014, helped by the government emerging as employer of last resort through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2005.

Fourth, the combined effect of new non-farm jobs and tightening rural labour market was to raise real wages, which rose all the way till 2015. This was true for casual wage work as well as regular/salaried work.

Finally, as real wages rose, private final consumption expenditure continued to rise, especially of simple consumer goods. For the first time in India's history, the absolute number of poor fell – which had never occurred from 1950. The incidence of poverty fell from 1973-74, but the absolute number of poor remained very sticky (due to population growth) till 2004-05. Between 2004-05 and 2011-12, the number of people who rose above the poverty line was 138 million – an achievement of staggering, almost Chinese, proportions.

Policy-induced shocks

Not one of these life-changing transformations in the lives of ordinary people was sustained after 2015. First, the growth rate averaged 5.8% p.a. over the last 10 years. This is hardly surprising, given three policy-induced shocks. The demonetisation damaged the unorganised sector and agriculture leading to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) closing on a vast scale (as demonstrated by the delayed NSS Annual Survey of Unorganized Sector Enterprises 2023).

The poorly designed and badly implemented Goods and Services Tax was another shock that MSMEs and the unorganised sector were unprepared for. For the next nine quarters, GDP growth rates fell. Finally, the unnecessary national, very strict lockdown led to the Indian economy contracting by 5.8% in FY21 when the global economy only contracted during COVID-19 by 3.1%.

Second, overall unemployment jumped from 2.2% in 2011-12 to a 45-year high of 6.1% in 2017-18 (NSSO). The number of those jobless tripled from one crore in 2011-12 to three crore in 2017-18. It rose again by at least 70 lakh by 2022. Jobs had grown by 75 lakh per year in industry and

After 2015, not one of the life-changing transformations in the lives of ordinary Indians was sustained

services between 2004 and 2013, and only 29 lakh per year between 2013 and 2019. This is a 61% drop in jobs as the population of India grew by 10%. Youth unemployment is still double, from 6% in 2011-12 to 11% in 2022-23. The unemployment rate for graduates and postgraduates is about 33% – one in three looking unsuccessfully for a job. This is why engineers are becoming coolies and doctoral degree holders are becoming railway peon jobs.

Third, the process of structural change that had gathered momentum has been reversed, forcing India's youth back into farming. For 15 years (2004-19), the number of agricultural workers declined by 6.7 crore between 2004-05 and 2017-18. This entire progress has been fully reversed between 2020 and 2024 – with eight crore workers added to agriculture. Never in world history, perhaps, has such a retrogressive reverse migration occurred.

This is happening because manufacturing (especially unorganised) took the brunt of job losses. 'Make in India' failed. The share of manufacturing in the economy fell since 2015, falling from a consistent 17% of GVA for the previous 25 years, and hitting an all-time low of 13% in 2022. Assembling expensive iPhones using imported parts from China hardly generates jobs. Reviving labour intensive industries such as garments, textiles, furniture, leather goods and processed food does. These are precisely the industries that lost jobs – and also exports. The number of workers in manufacturing was 600 lakh in 2012; it fell to 567 lakh by 2019, the last year before COVID-19. By 2022, it had barely gone up to 629 lakh, in 2022, despite all the talk about 'Make in India'.

District and unpaid work

The Modi government has neglected exports. Merchandise exports grew four times, from \$77 billion in 2004 to \$323 billion in 2014. Between 2014 and 2022 they grew only one-and-a-half times to \$454 billion. With less production for global markets, there were fewer jobs.

Fourth, wage growth has also suffered. The share of regular salaried workers in total employment, which was 23.8% in 2019 before COVID-19, fell to 20.9%. Unpaid family workers, whose numbers had fallen from 11.1 crore in 2004 to 8.5 crore in 2012, and then by 2017 to 6.2 crore, have risen sharply to 10.4 crore by 2023. This showed that distress has driven these family members (mostly children and women) into work to support the family. But they are unpaid. This makes the unemployment rate look better than before, clearly misleading. Gold-based loans, and defaults on them, are rising daily today.

These reversals have put the earlier achievements under grave threat, and now give legitimate rise to concerns whether India will realise its demographic dividend before 2040. The growing inequality and constrained aggregate demand now may be putting paid to the prospects of India becoming 'Viksit Bharat'.

Reflections as the world grows more 'polarised'



Atanu Biswas

Professor of Statistics,
Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 U.S. presidential election prompted contemplation of a "divided" United States in terms of politics and society, bolstered by waves of fake news amid a post-truth era. In his book *Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2019), academic Nolan McCarty explores the social, economic, and geographic factors that contribute to polarisation in America, walking readers through both what is known and unknown about the causes, evolution, and ramifications of the nation's growing political conflicts.

America has recently appeared to be defined by profound political, cultural, and societal divides as Mr. Trump won a second term in 2024. And along with nine other words, "polarization" was chosen as the 2024 word of the year by Merriam-Webster.

The term "polarization" – defined as "division into two sharply distinct opposites; especially, a state in which the opinions, beliefs, or interests of a group or society no longer range along a continuum but become concentrated at opposing extremes" – has become widely used in the media and in public discourse, and has become a significant aspect of modern life. While MSNBC perceived the 2024 presidential election as having left America "more polarized than ever", and Fox News reports that "[Vice-President-elect J.D.] Vance's debate answer on immigration crisis shows voter polarization", Forbes has cautioned that "cultural polarization is becoming a pressing challenge" in workplaces. Indeed, in October, Merriam-Webster stated that new terms such as "far left" and "far right," as well as "MAGA" – the abbreviation for Mr. Trump's divisive "Make America Great Again" movement – would be included in its dictionary in 2024. Vice-President Kamala Harris warned of fascism under Mr. Trump during the heated election, while Mr. Trump used derogatory language and said his

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opponent was running on "destruction". The election was so divisive that many Americans believed that the other candidate posed an existential threat to the U.S. when they cast their ballots.

About eight out of 10 Harris supporters were very or somewhat concerned that Mr. Trump's beliefs, but not Harris', were too radical, while roughly seven out of 10 Trump supporters felt the same way about Ms. Harris, but not Mr. Trump, according to AP VoteCast, a poll of over 1,20,000 people.

The usage of the word is one aspect that is not polarised. According to Peter Sokolowski, editor at large for Merriam-Webster, "it's something that actually everyone agrees on," to put it in a slightly sardonic way. However, "polarization" has more than only political meanings. The controversy over Taylor Swift's use of a private jet and the Drake-Kendrick Lamar feud (they are rappers) are perceived to be polarising.

"Polarization" refers to beyond America also. Globally, centrist policies are being destroyed. Maybe Emmanuel Macron, the centrist French leader, or Olaf Scholz, the centre-left German leader, can better attest as to what it means if society is increasingly polarised. The insanity of the "other side" – in our politics, at work, or at home – confounds us. Even the "us vs. them" rift may frequently be trembling a political society such as ours.

A germination that began much earlier

However, to believe that polarisation is as recent as Mr. Trump's presidency or that Trump or Trump-like individuals are to blame for today's polarised world would be a grave mistake. The seeds were sown a long time ago. Although it is evident from the current political environment that extreme viewpoints are growing in popularity, McCarty contended that these divisions have been developing for several

decades and are firmly anchored in the way politics and society are structured.

For instance, American culture has seen significant transformation in recent decades, from changing social group relationships and language and behavioural standards to the rising importance of a college degree. In fact, the 1950s-60s civil rights struggles influenced the partisan culture conflicts of today. And decades before the parties' split on these issues, opinions regarding civil rights were already associated with a variety of other culture war beliefs – much earlier than previous scholarship realised. However, since the 1970s, income and wealth disparities have increased dramatically, which has exacerbated existing polarisation.

In the modern context

In recent years, there has been a notable technological revolution. Thus, "polarization" in the modern world can also be viewed through the prism of the shifting global order brought about by social media, the Internet, and artificial intelligence. Yes, Professor Chris Bail critically investigated the underlying causes of political tribalism on social media in his book, *Breaking the Social Media Prism* (2020). It raises an interesting question: do our social media networks impact people's political views? Or do people's political views shape our networks?

Prof. Bail's research highlights how today's political polarisation is exacerbated by the widening gap between social media and in-person encounters. His analogy of social media as a prism refracting, rather than mirroring, perfectly captures how it can skew how people see themselves and other people.

And the AI genie also continues to transform social media and our way of life. The "us vs. them" drift grows as society, politics, and culture descend further into the rabbit hole, rendering the world more and more polarised.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Delimitation and States

The concept of reverse fertility is intriguing, but it is essential to consider alternative approaches before embarking on such ventures. First, the delimitation commission should acknowledge the sense of injustice in using population size as the sole

criterion for parliamentary seats, especially when the southern States have effectively managed to reduce their fertility rates. Second, if reverse fertility measures are to be implemented, they should be based on thorough study and planning that are tailored to the population

dynamics of each State. Impulsive actions could lead to unintended consequences. Presenting well-researched reports to the delimitation commission, highlighting positive measures and efforts, is crucial.

Ravidas Gopichand Rathod,
Mumbai

Slow removal

That it has taken 40 years for the authorities to remove toxic waste from Bhopal, and only after the intervention of the higher judiciary, is shocking. There is grave irresponsibility in serious matters.

Mannatil Ravindranathan,
Ottapalam, Palakkad, Kerala

Corrections & Clarifications

In a report, "T.M. Krishna honoured with 'Sangita Kalanidhi'" (January 2, 2025), the President of the Music Academy, N. Murali, was quoted as saying: "...The academic sessions have been specially curated for the first time in 20 years with an overarching theme 'Aesthetics and Synaesthesia: Reflections on Raga in Indian Art'". It should have been 49 years.

COVID-19 emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019, and not 2020, as mentioned in a report, "China shared COVID information without holding anything back" (World Page, January 1, 2025).

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Should voter ID be linked with Aadhaar to combat voter fraud?

**PARLEY**

On December 29, 2024, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused each other of manipulating the Delhi electoral rolls in an attempt to win the Delhi Assembly elections, scheduled to be held in February. While the AAP has accused the BJP of submitting applications to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to get the names of voters removed from the list in its strongholds, the BJP has claimed that the AAP government is aiding Rohingya immigrants to settle in the capital so that it can secure their votes. Earlier, the Congress had accused the ECI of arbitrarily deleting or adding voters' names in electoral rolls before the Maharashtra Assembly elections. Should voter IDs be linked to Aadhaar to ensure transparency and put all these political claims and counterclaims to rest? S.Y. Quraishi and R.S. Sharma discuss this question in a conversation moderated by Sreeparna Chakrabarty. Edited excerpts:

If we link Aadhaar with voter IDs, would that help ensure that only one voter ID is issued for every citizen of the country?

S.Y. Quraishi: Yes, that was the original intention. In fact, when we were struggling with locating those with duplicate voter IDs and nearly every district in the country was using some kind of a de-duplication software (which can help identify and remove duplicate data from files or across multiple files), some of which were successful and some not so successful, that was when UIDAI (Unique Identification Authority of India) was created. Nandan Nilekani came to meet me to find out where we stand [on this]. That was when we had started experimenting with collecting biometrics in Goa. We decided that we would stop that exercise because the Aadhaar authority was going to do it anyway. We thought that we would merge the two once they completed the job. So, that was the beginning of the whole debate.

R.S. Sharma: Before I answer your question, let me explain that Aadhaar does two things. First, it assigns a unique identity number to every individual, which means that an individual cannot have more than one identity. Second, it provides a service of online real-time authentication of the person. Every database on every system does not need to have the kind of back-end technology that Aadhaar has because that would be too expensive. Aadhaar has been used to clean up a number of databases, such as the PAN (Permanent Account Number) database.



A voter in Amritsar, Punjab. PTI
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Linking voter ID with Aadhaar can solve one problem – it can eliminate duplication of votes. But Aadhaar cannot solve other issues because there are many which are beyond [the scope of] technology. Those are issues to do with human integrity, impartiality, and objectivity.

R.S. SHARMA

except for authentication. Aadhaar also has only four pieces of information: name, age, gender, and communication address. It has the mobile number and email address only if you want to share those. Aadhaar does not know which database it has been seeded with. Therefore, there is no question of any kind of compromise [of security] in any situation.

Activists had earlier flagged the issue of right to privacy. Your comments?

RSS: I don't think there is any connection between privacy and the linking of Aadhaar with voter IDs. How does the right to privacy, which is a fundamental right, get affected when we link Aadhaar with voter IDs? It is beyond my comprehension.

SYQ: I have a question in this regard for Mr. Sharma. You had said that one detail that Aadhaar has and an electoral card doesn't is a person's telephone number. Now, if that number goes into the hands of a politician, he can approach me. If it goes to a marketer, he will start sending me unsolicited messages. To that extent, is it invasion of privacy?

RSS: No, Sir. Because Aadhaar may have the telephone number. But [providing the] telephone number is optional. It is there to help the individual. It doesn't get embedded in the voter ID card. When you link the two, you link the Aadhaar number, not the email address or the mobile number.

Let's talk about the National Electoral Roll Purification and Authentication Programme. It was started in 2015 but after that, issues of missing voters' started surfacing in 2018.

SYQ: The problem of missing voters has been a perpetual one for the ECI. Voters can be missing for different reasons. The first is that they have chosen not to register even though we go door to door asking them to do so. Second, their name can get deleted by a computer error. It can

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be deleted by a clerical mistake. It can also be deleted because of mischief by the administration. Whatever be the reason, a missing voter from the list is disenfranchised. That is the biggest issue.

Though the ECI has controlled all kinds of issues, the electoral roll is our soft underbelly, which means that it is vulnerable to attacks and mistakes and that it is something we should focus on now. That is why checking the electoral rolls regularly (to ensure that one's name is on the list) is a good idea.

So, can we say that in the current fraught political situation over electoral rolls, linking Aadhaar with voter IDs can ensure transparency?

SYQ: I would not entirely agree with what you just now said because deletion can still happen due to various reasons, as I said: human error, dishonesty, and deliberately too, because the officer has been given instructions by the top bosses to delete names because those are potentially hostile voters. This is happening and should be dealt with by the ECI. I can't advise them, but I can as a senior say that silence is not an option. If there is any doubt in the people's minds, they have to clear it. The people want to hear the ECI. Mr. Sharma is defending Aadhaar and I am defending voter IDs, but this has limited value because we are retired officers. Comments have to come from the people who are currently occupying top positions.

In the context of the Aadhaar discussion, to say that voter rolls cannot be manipulated is not true at all. There are serious allegations of voter fraud. If officers are dishonest, even booth capturing can happen. Earlier, it used to be the ballot paper; now, it could be the machine. There are allegations that (during an election), people closed the polls at 4:00 p.m. and then sat in the polling booth and pressed the button. The human element has become weaker and that is what needs to be handled.

RSS: Aadhaar cannot solve every problem under the sun. It can solve one problem – it can eliminate duplication of votes. But it cannot solve other issues because there are many which are beyond [the scope of] technology. Those are issues to do with human integrity, impartiality, and objectivity.



To listen to the full interview
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NOTEBOOK

Manmohan Singh: An easy boss with some mischievous humour

The former Prime Minister did not make much of his remarkable career and was willing to answer uncomfortable questions

Suhasini Haidar

There is a simple way of knowing what world leaders are like, which is to observe the demeanour of their staff. While sitting down for interviews with leaders, I have often been more struck by how nervous or ill-tempered their secretaries and advisers are than by the leaders themselves who, by and large, want to make a good impression. If those in the background are relaxed and smiling, it indicates that the leader is easy-going. If the staff are on their toes, shifting anxiously as the interview proceeds, it suggests that the leader is imperious. I once sat through a particularly difficult interview where the leader's press adviser sat right behind him, fixing me with a pleading stare, sweating profusely every time I asked a question that the boss may not have liked, and repeatedly trying to cut the interview short.

By that count, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who passed away last week, was an extremely easy boss. I seldom saw anyone in his office in New Delhi's South Block appear worried in his presence. In 2009, when Dr. Singh won a re-election after completing a full term from 2004 to 2009, a first at that time since Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, I was able to test my theory on a number of occasions. He granted me an interview on the campaign trail, to speak about his initiatives with the U.S. and Pakistan, charges of corruption against his government, and plans for the future. The 2009 win was particularly significant as he had come through a heart bypass just months before the election, and in his interview, he was clear that it would be his last election (he didn't contest in 2014). He also gave the television channel I was working for (CNN-IBN) access to the Prime Minister's home to interview his wife, Gursharan Kaur, and their daughters. Later, I also attended a children's day show where Dr. Singh interacted with 60 children, who posed largely unscripted questions to him. One of them asked, "Why do you wear a blue turban?" Another asked,

"How do you feel when you are called a weak Prime Minister?" One child was scathing about India's education system, saying "thousands of children are begging on the streets". Even when I asked Dr. Singh about being called a "puppet Prime Minister" with then-Congress president Sonia Gandhi holding the strings, he replied with unerring politeness, and with no interference from his advisers.

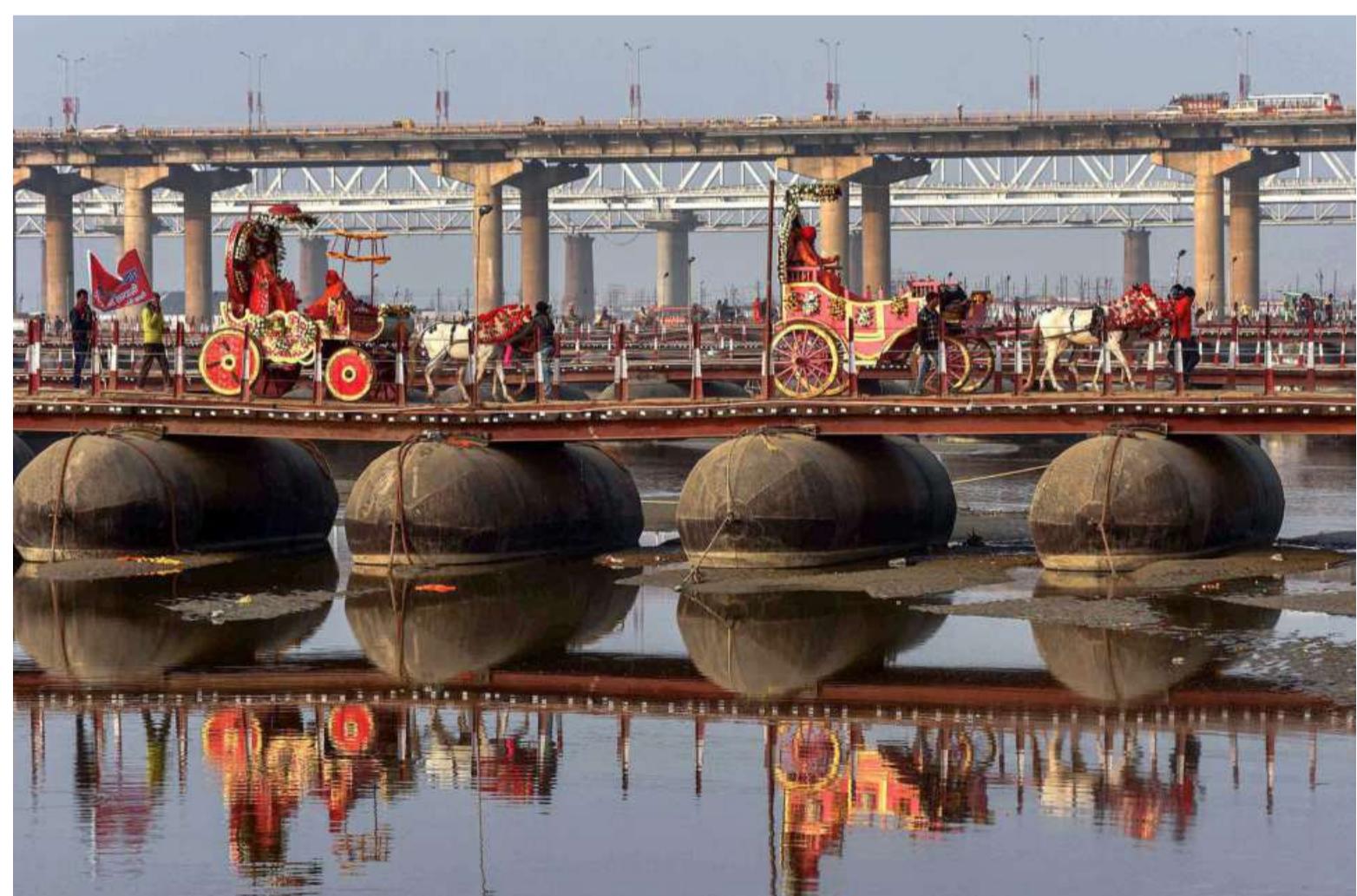
While his bearing was serious, Dr. Singh wasn't above some mischievous humour. At a formal lunch he hosted for a visiting dignitary, he was pressed repeatedly about raising India's climate change commitments. The guest proceeded to give him a lecture on all the new technology that the West was adopting, including in electric vehicles. Dr. Singh listened politely, and whispered something to an aide. When the convoy arrived to ferry the guest away, Dr. Singh handed him, not into the white Ambassador cars that were normally used, but into a tiny Reva, the earliest Indian electric vehicle, with a slightly sardonic smile. "Voh gussa pee jaate hain (He drinks up his anger)," Mrs. Kaur said when I asked her why he never seemed to lose his cool.

Dr. Singh had a remarkable career, but he didn't make too much of it. In fact, he suppressed any reporter's instinct for emotive copy. His family did the same, telling me in an interview that his favourite food was lauki ka halwa and kadi chawal (he was vegetarian) and that they hadn't been on a holiday in decades. Seeing the disappointment on my face at these slightly colourless responses for the profile I was working on, his daughter said, almost conspiratorially, that I should ask him to sing. She disclosed that he had sung to them as children, and had also composed songs for his grandchildren as lullabies. However, I never got my wish. When I asked him at the children's day event to perform his favourite song, he blushed and quickly turned to his wife, known for her kirtan singing, saying, "She is much better than me".

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PICTURE OF THE WEEK

A grand beginning



On January 1, 2025, seers of the Sri Panchayati Atal Akhada made their first 'royal entry', also called Chavni Pravesh, for the Maha Kumbh Mela at Sangam in Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. This marked the formal start of the Maha Kumbh, a religious pilgrimage that is celebrated four times over a course of 12 years. ANI

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 3, 1975

Many British companies seek govt. help

London, Jan. 2: The current financial crisis in Burmah Oil Company, Britain's third largest oil group, harbingers sad tidings on the economic front and the Labour Government is earnestly trying to bail out the ailing oil giant with a loan equivalent to over Rs. 400 crores from the Bank of England.

The company is also one of Britain's oldest

with its roots in the colonial past. This week it joins the large number of British companies forced to come to Government for financial help. The other include the British Leyland, the nation's largest exporter, Alfred Herbert, the country's biggest machine tool manufacturer, Ferranti, the electronics group, and Aston Martin, luxury car manufacturers, who collapsed earlier this week.

On the London stock exchange there is a lot of nervousness and the city is buzzing with all sorts of rumours. Shares, once regarded as the bluest of blue chips, have tumbled to their lowest. Dealings in these shares were suspended yesterday.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 3, 1925

Madras hunt Lattice bridge

Dec 31.: This popular venue was chosen for the last hunt of the year and once more provided a good morning's sport. The usual jog to Boag's corner where hounds were put into the casuarinas of the left of the ride. An obliging jack came out of the paddy into cover to meet them but did not stay to discuss matters and quickly made off westwards near the ride just in front of us.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of districts with high nitrate levels in groundwater

440 High nitrate levels have been found in the groundwater of 440 districts across India, with 20% of the samples collected exceeding the permissible nitrate concentration, the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has said in its report. PTI

The decrease in global insurance rates in the year 2024

0.9 In per cent. Global insurance premiums fell last year as the market became more competitive after years of rate rises, insurance broker Howden said. Insurers have raised rates in recent years in response to wars, natural catastrophes, and inflationary pressures. REUTERS

The growth in India's textile exports from April to October FY25

7 In per cent. India's textiles and apparel exports grew during the April-October period to \$21.35 billion. The outbound shipments from the sector stood at \$20 billion in the same period of the previous financial year. The Ready Made Garments category has the largest share in total exports. PTI

The decline in India's sugar production from October to December

16 In per cent. Sugar production fell to 95.40 lakh tonne in the first quarter of the ongoing current marketing year that started in October, mainly due to a decline in output from Maharashtra. Only 493 mills were operational as against 512 factories in the year-ago period. PTI

Number of para-athletes to receive Arjuna Award

17 In per cent. Double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker and chess world champion D. Gukesh were among the four winners of the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award. An unprecedented 17 para-athletes were named in the list of Arjuna awardees. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Sivagiri row: what is the outrage about?

Why did Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's comments at the inaugural event of the 92nd Sivagiri pilgrimage cause controversy? Who are the Sivagiri seers and why do they command such influence in Kerala? Has the BJP been making overtures within the Ezhava community?

EXPLAINER

S.R.Praveen

The story so far:

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan used the inaugural event of the 92nd Sivagiri pilgrimage at Varkala on December 31, 2024, to slam what he saw as attempts to appropriate social reformer Sree Narayana Guru into the Sanatana Dharma fold. The CM also seconded Sivagiri Madhom president Swami Sachithananda's opinion that the regressive practice of making men remove their shirts before entering temples should be abandoned.

What happened?

Mr. Vijayan sought to equate Sanatana Dharma to the principles of Varnashrama Dharma which forms the bedrock of caste divisions in society. In his opinion, the attempt to portray Sree Narayana Guru as a champion of Sanatana Dharma ran counter to the renaissance leader's humanist message and his work to eradicate casteist oppression. He said that Sanatana Dharma, which commands the patronage of the powers that be, has resulted in the continuing oppression of Dalits, backward classes and minorities in rural areas of north India. The Bharatiya Janata Party was quick to react with former Union Minister V. Muraleedharan accusing the CM of insulting Sanatana Dharma in a manner similar to Tamil Nadu Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin.

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPPC) President K. Sudhakaran in a way echoed the CM's words when he spoke at Sivagiri. He said that attempts to tie down the Guru to Varnashrama Dharma have to be resisted. However, Opposition Leader V.D. Satheesan struck a discordant note, objecting to the CM's equating of Sanatana Dharma to Varnashrama Dharma. He accused the CM of attempting to give the patent of Sanatana Dharma, which is the collective tradition



Need for reform: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at an event as part of the 92nd Sivagiri pilgrimage season, at Varkala on December 31. PTI
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of all Indians, to the Sangh Parivar.

Why is Sivagiri Madhom important? Sree Narayana Guru, who founded the Sivagiri Madhom over a century ago, is regarded as one of the foremost social reformers of Kerala, who played a key role in transforming a society steeped in casteism and untouchability into a progressive one with at least some levels of equality. In 1888, decades before temple entry movements and proclamations which allowed the oppressed castes entry into temples, Narayana Guru consecrated a Siva idol by the Aruvippuram river, in an effort to allow all castes to worship. When the consecration by a non-Brahmin led to opposition from various quarters, he explained that the idol was that of "Ezhava Siva, not a Brahmin Siva", referring to the Ezhavas, an oppressed

caste. Despite this statement which was meant as a counter to specific circumstances, Sree Narayana Guru propounded the wider and inclusive 'One Caste, One God, One Religion for mankind' philosophy. He established the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNP Yogam) in 1903 for the educational and social upliftment of oppressed castes. A decade later, he would disassociate from the SNP Yogam, disappointed that the organisation was being reduced for the representation of just the Ezhavas. Sivagiri, established by the Guru, is now a major pilgrimage centre for Ezhavas.

Why are political parties eager to court the Sivagiri seers?

The Ezhava community, classified as an Other Backward Caste constituting 23% of Kerala's population, are considered as traditional voters of the Communist Party

of India (Marxist)-led LDF, with part of the votes going to the UDF. However, with the BJP's ascendancy in 2014, the Sangh Parivar has been making overtures to the community, and by extension to Sivagiri, as part of its larger strategy to make inroads into Kerala, which has remained electorally almost impenetrable to the BJP until recently. This has led to the Left as well as the Congress launching a counter-strategy to what they see as attempts to appropriate Narayana Guru and the Ezhava community into the larger Hindutva fold.

After the recent Lok Sabha elections, in which the LDF suffered a major defeat and the BJP made gains in left strongholds, the CPI(M) attributed the rightward drift in the backward-class Ezhava votes to the BJP as one of the major factors in its defeat. SNP Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan stated that the Ezhava community had abandoned the LDF in the Lok Sabha elections in protest against the appeasement of minorities.

What is Sivagiri Madhom's stance? The Sivagiri Madhom has always tried to maintain a considered, equidistant stance from all parties. At the annual Sivagiri pilgrimage, leaders of parties from across the political spectrum are accorded an opportunity to address the pilgrims. In recent years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi have addressed the pilgrims. Even as the SNP Yogam hailed the consecration of the Ram temple, Swami Sachithananda decided to stay away from the Ayodhya consecration ceremony. The Madhom leadership has used its influence to raise its voice against the "Brahmanical dominance" in priesthood in major temples, criticising the limiting of the post of priests in major temples to the Brahmin community. Aware of the political heft of the community, the Madhom has held its cards close to its chest. This stand is not expected to change anytime soon.

THE GIST

▼ The Kerala CM sought to equate Sanatana Dharma to the principles of Varnashrama Dharma which form the bedrock of caste divisions in society. In his opinion, the attempt to portray Sree Narayana Guru as a champion of Sanatana Dharma ran counter to the renaissance leader's humanist message.

▼ SNDP Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan stated that the Ezhava community had abandoned the LDF in the Lok Sabha elections in protest against the appeasement of minorities.

▼ The Sivagiri Madhom has always tried to maintain a considered, equidistant stance from all parties. At the annual Sivagiri pilgrimage, leaders of parties from across the political spectrum are accorded an opportunity to address the pilgrims.

Why has Trump called the Panama treaty 'foolish'?

Has transit fees to cross the Panama canal increased? What are the treaties under which the canal was transferred to Panama by the U.S.? How has China responded?

Vaneeta

The story so far:

On December 22, 2024, Donald Trump threatened to take back the Panama canal, calling the transfer treaty "foolish". He said, "Our Navy and Commerce have been treated in a very unfair and injurious way....we will demand that the Panama canal be returned to us, in full, and without question." Panama's President José Raúl Mulino rejected Trump's threat, and said, "I want to express precisely that every square metre of the Panama canal and its adjacent area belong to Panama, and will continue to belong to Panama."

Why is Trump upset with Panama? The first and major reason for the U.S. President-elect's upset is the high transit fees applied on U.S. vessels by the ACP

(Panama Canal Authority). In 2023, Lakes Gatun and Alhajuela experienced severe drought affecting the shipping and navigation of the canal as it relies on these reservoirs to operate its locks. Therefore, the ACP reduced the number of slots for crossing ships by 36%. This led to the increase in transit fees. The second cause of worry has been the increased Chinese presence in the Panama canal. In 2017, Panama became the first Latin American country to sign a Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) agreement, and ever since then, Chinese investment has increased significantly. Hutchison Ports PPC, a subsidiary of Hong Kong-based company, operates two ports near the canal's entrances, igniting concerns over Chinese influence on logistical operations and surveillance over the U.S. Navy.

What is the U.S.-Panama treaty?

The Panama canal is an artificial 80-kilometre canal connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, reducing cost, time and distance for international shipping. The canal is crucial for the global supply chain, and 6% of maritime world trade goes through it. The canal also symbolises U.S.'s technological prowess and economic power. It opened in 1914 after the U.S. finished construction, and was controlled by the U.S. until December 31, 1999.

The canal was handed over to Panama in 1999 under the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. The first, called the Panama Canal Treaty, cancelled the Panama Canal Zone and turned the canal over to the Panamanians on December 31, 1999. Under the second, the Permanent Neutrality Treaty, the canal was declared neutral and open to vessels of all nations. Under this treaty, the U.S. has the right to defend the neutrality of the canal and have priority passage in military emergencies.

THE GIST

▼ The first and major reason for the U.S. President-elect's upset is the high transit fees applied on U.S. vessels by the ACP (Panama Canal Authority).

▼ Panama's President José Raúl Mulino rejected Trump's accusation. He stated that the transit rates are set according to international standards and decided by a procedure.

▼ China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said that the Panama canal was a great creation for the Panamanian people and a neutral passageway. He added that China respects Panama's sovereignty.

Vaneeta is a postgraduate student at Pondicherry University.

IN THE LIMELIGHT

Finding the spirit of Bengaluru in Kannada cinema

Films from several decades have interpreted Bengaluru in different ways. However, with the emergence of the pan-India movement, stories set in Bengaluru have been few and far in Kannada cinema since the last decade

Vivek M.V.

In Ilaiyaraaja's melody 'Naguva nayana' from Mani Ratnam's debut *Pallavi Anu Pallavi*, we see visuals of the iconic landmarks of Bengaluru (then Bangalore). The lead pair in the 1983 Kannada film, essayed by Anil Kapoor and Kiran Virale, stroll on the MG Road and spend their evening in Cubbon Park. Incidentally, Balu Mahendra, the cinematographer of *Pallavi Anu Pallavi*, had made his directorial debut with *Kokila* (1977), a film set in Bengaluru. The legendary filmmaker had a special love for the city, with several of his films having scenes showcasing a large boulder inside Cubbon Park.

For decades together, films have given the city an identity of a recreational hub for outsiders. Bengaluru's iconic places have inspired filmmakers to imagine stories and songs set in and around them.

In the early 1990s, the Vidhana Soudha – an architectural marvel that houses the state's secretariat and legislature – was a favourite destination for Bollywood songs. In *Coolie No.1* (1995), the song 'Main toh raste se ja raha tha' has Govinda and Karisma Kapoor dancing on the steps of the Vidhana Soudha. In *Vijaypath* (1994), Tabu and Ajay Devgn shake a leg in front of the stunning building. Even in a much more serious story like Utsav Gonwar's indie Kannada movie *Photo* – which talks about the migrant exodus during the pandemic – a 10-year-old from Raichur goes to Bengaluru to click a photo in front of the Vidhana Soudha.

Even Anjali Menon's hit *Bangalore Days* (2014) showcases Bengaluru as an exotic destination. The film, powered by an ensemble cast (Fahadh Faasil, Dulquer Salmaan, Nazriya Nazim, Nivin Pauly, and Parvathy Thiruvothu), continues to resonate with the city's burgeoning population of Malayalis, who move to Bengaluru for employment opportunities and discover a home away from home.

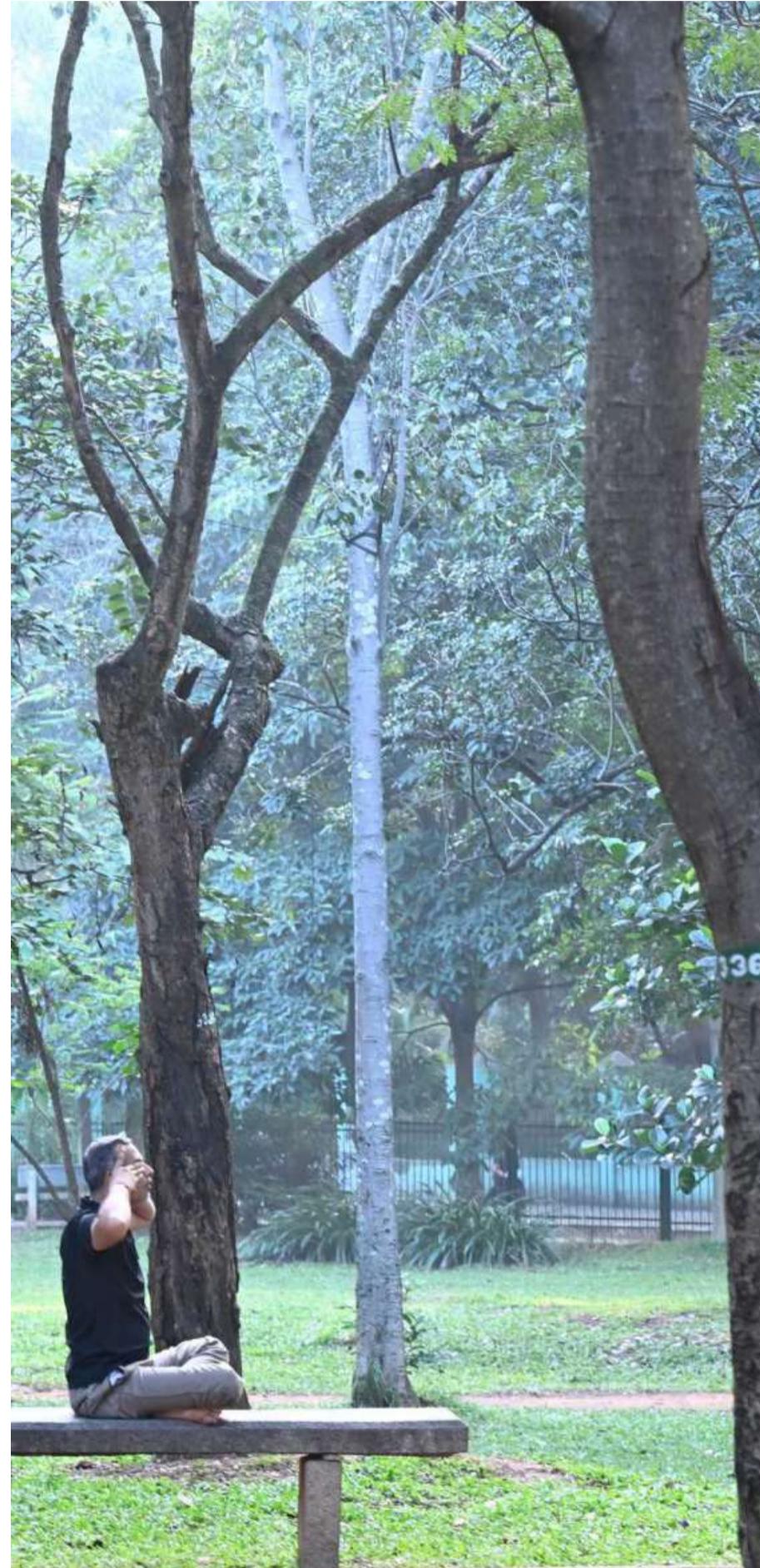
The glamour and the underbelly

However, a local, middle-class Bengalurean watching the film today might find *Bangalore Days* not so relatable, for he or she grew up in a different cultural ethnicity. In that sense, Roopa Rao's *Gantumooote* (2019) is a beautiful ode to the good old, laidback charm of the Bengaluru of the 90s. The coming-of-age story of a high-school teenager is a nostalgic trip to the city's quiet gems, such as the City Central Library and the BMTC bus stops that doubled up as meet-up spots for lovers.

Apart from *Gantumooote*, another film which had Bengaluru as an important character in its story was Pawan Kumar's *U Turn* (2016). Based on an incident that takes place on the Double Road flyover, the film addressed the perils of taking illegal U-turns to avoid one of the city's biggest problems: traffic.

Some evergreen songs address the rapid growth of Bengaluru, but it's surprising how the city's evolution hasn't interested Kannada filmmakers to make relevant social dramas. In Nagathihalli Chandrashekhar's classic *America America* (1997), the song 'Hegide nam desha' takes a dig at the city's traffic menace and compares the BDA site rates

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Cubbon park in Bengaluru. SUDHAKARA JAIN

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to something higher than the Empire State Building in the US.

The legendary S Siddalingaiah looked at Bengaluru from the point of view of a rural Kannadiga migrant. In *Mayor Muthanna* (1969), an honest villager (Dr. Rajkumar) moves to the city, and circumstances lead him to be a mayor of Bengaluru. His *Doorada Betta* (1973), starring Rajkumar again, shows a rural man's challenge of adjusting to the big and glamorous city. Even in the

director's *Baa Nanna Preethisu* (1992), the song 'Kempegowdrie' is the protagonist's conversation with the historical figure who founded the town, in which a line compares the city's growth to Hanuman's tail.

The idea of a rural Kannadiga getting lost in the city is seen even in the film *Lacchava*, which was part of *Katha Sangama* (2019), an anthology. In the heart-warming film, a woman from a town in north Karnataka wanders on the

streets of Bengaluru without any clue how to get back home as she confuses Banaswadi with Basavanagudi. The film rings true as a South Bengalurean might feel alienated in a deserted Whitefield area, known for its less local population.

In the 2000s, gullible rural men in Kannada films began to get caught in the web of the Bengaluru underworld, starting with Prem's blockbuster *Jogi* (2004). Here Shivarajkumar plays an innocent villager who comes to Bengaluru to earn enough money to buy his mother a pair of gold bangles. However, a series of events lead to him becoming a feared don.

Suri's neo-noir films (*Jackie*, *Kaddipudi*) are set against Bengaluru's dark underbelly. He debuted with *Duniya* (2007), in which an innocent man in a stone quarry moves to the city to make money and build a memorial for his mother. Destiny lands him in Srirampura, once home to dreaded gangsters and organised crimes. For a while, Bengaluru's underworld history became a hot topic in Sandalwood, thanks mainly to Agni Sreedhar's three-part book *Dadagiriya Dinagalu* (My Days in Underworld: Rise of Bangalore Mafia). *Aa Dinagalu* (2007), based on Sreedhar's books, was a gripping reflection of Bengaluru in the 1980s when gangsters such as M.P. Jayaraj and Kotwal Ramachandra ruled the city's underworld. *Edegarika* (2012), based on Sreedhar's story of the same name, was another well-made gangster film. Helped by proper world-building, these films were a reflection of the city in that period.

The need to capture the city again

Kannada films today lack the spirit of Bengaluru. The topics of mass migration, start-up culture, and infrastructure issues can make for pertinent social dramas if only the filmmakers are capable of weaving engaging stories around them. The best attempt at that was *Chilli Chicken* (2023). The film was a compassionate take on migrant life in the city without insulting the locals.

Perhaps something changed in the Kannada film industry after the humongous success of Yogaraj Bhat's *Mungaru Male* (2006) and *Gaalipata* (2008). In both films, a Bengaluru-based protagonist (Ganesh) moves out of the city to a picturesque town to find love. In *Gaalipata*, the hero talks about being bored with the city's high-rise buildings, nightlife, and traffic and urges his friend to plan a trip to an exotic place. Both films spurred a series of visually appealing movies, proving how filmmakers had overlooked Bengaluru in their attempt to find never-before-seen locations across Karnataka.

In the era of pan-Indian movies and period dramas, a Bengaluru-centric film looks distant. Sindhu Sreenivasa Murthy's *Aachar & Co* (2023) was a welcome change. The gentle drama depicted the life of an orthodox family in Jayanagar in the 70s. In a hilarious scene, a girl refuses to marry a guy because he lives in Kamanahalli, which came under Bengaluru's outskirts back then. Today, Jayanagar to Kamanahalli is an hour away by vehicle, traffic permitting!

The ongoing tussle between Hindi and Kannada in Bengaluru can make an interesting idea for filmmakers wanting to show the city from today's perspective. It's an age-old conflict, described beautifully by one scene in *Professor Huchuraya* (1974), where the Kannada-speaking protagonist asks for what's written on a board in Bengaluru, and he gets replies in Malayalam, Telugu, and Tamil.

The cosmopolitan city has never had a single identity. The beauty of Bengaluru lies in many worlds, and a lot is yet to be explored on the big screen.

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

THE DAILY QUIZ

Manu Bhaker, D. Gukesh, Harmanpreet Singh and Praveen Kumar have been named as recipients of this year's Khel Ratna Award. Here is a quiz on the award, and its awardees

Sindhu Nagarakrishnan**QUESTION 1**

Here is a very simple one. The award officially goes by what name?

QUESTION 2

Now, the award is officially named after a former sportsperson (answer to Q1). What was it called before? In which year was it changed?

QUESTION 3

Who was the first recipient of the award, in 1991–92? In 2001, then aged 18, who became the youngest recipient of the award?

QUESTION 4

Khel Ratna Award is considered

as India's highest sporting honour. Which comes next?

QUESTION 5

Following an announcement, in August 2015, a PIL was filed in the Karnataka High Court by Paralympic athlete Girisha Nagarajegowda, who mentioned that his performance was ignored by the committee. He claimed to be a top contender for the award with 90 points, owing to his silver medal-winning act at the 2012 Summer Paralympics in the Men's High Jump F42 event. He wasn't awarded the medal, though. Who got it instead?

QUESTION 6

How many cricket players have received the award till now?



Visual question:
Identify this awardee.

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. The Notre-Dame de Paris is an example of this style of architecture. **Ans: French Gothic**

2. Authorities commissioned restoration work on the Notre-Dame de Paris after this 1831 event.

Ans: Victor Hugo published *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*

3. The term 'cathedral' comes from cathedra, a characteristically raised throne reserved for the _____.

Ans: Bishop

4. Between the 14th century and 1766, the only

clocks at the Notre-Dame de Paris were in the form of two _____.

Ans: Clepsydras

5. Until November 1789, the Notre-Dame de Paris belonged to the Catholic Church, but this event moved its ownership to the state of France in that year.

Ans: French Revolution

Visual: This mythological bird was associated with witches and ill omens.

Ans: Strix (or Le Stryge)

Early Birds: Adya Upasana Routray| Siddhartha Viswanathan| Sonali Das| Anil Warrier| Tito Shiladitya



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian
S. Upendran

"I dropped the VCR this morning."

"Dropped the VCR! Good grief! What did your father do? Read you the Riot Act?"

"Read the Riot Act? What does it mean?"

"When you read someone the Riot Act, you give that person a strong warning or scolding. For example, when the players came late for practice, the coach read them the Riot Act."

"My chemistry teacher does that all the time. Whenever we spill acid on the table, he reads us the Riot Act."

"Good for you. You should be careful when dealing with acid, you know. And till you learn to be..."

"...look, if you're going to give me a lecture, give me one on 'until' and 'till'. Is there any difference between the two?"

"Well, many people think that 'till' is a contracted form of 'until'. It is not. They are two different words. Both 'till' and 'until' have the same meaning. One of the meanings of the two words is 'upto the time of'. I have been given time till next week to submit the assignment. I could also say..."

"...I have been given time until next week to submit the assignment."

"But when used in a negative construction, 'till' and 'until' mean 'before'. The package is not expected till this evening. Or, the package is not expected until this evening."

"So, what you're saying is that both words have the same meaning."

"That's correct. They are often used interchangeably. But some people think that 'until' is a bit more formal than 'till'. And there are some who prefer to use 'until' at the beginning of a sentence and 'till' in the middle."

"Is it wrong to say, 'Till I saw her, I didn't know what love was'?"

"Aha! You've let the cat out of the bag. Who is the girl?"

"There is no girl. Tell me, is the sentence acceptable?"

"Of course, it's acceptable. Now, about this girl..."

"...there is no girl. How did the expression 'let the cat out of the bag' come into being?"

"Do you know what it means?"

"Of course, I do. It means to let out the secret. Sohan let the cat out of the bag when he said he was planning to buy a ring before meeting Radha this evening."

"Good example."

"Thanks. But how did the expression come into being?"

"It goes back to the medieval days when pigs were sold in open markets and fairs."

"We're not interested in pigs, but cats."

"I'm coming to that. Since the seller didn't like the pigs running around everywhere, he used to put each pig in a sack and tie it up. Sometimes, instead of a pig, he would put a big cat inside the sack or bag."

"And if the customer didn't check what was in the bag, he ended up buying a cat instead of a pig?"

"Exactly. When the customer opened the bag at home, the truth was revealed."

"The cat was out of the bag!"

Published in *The Hindu* on August 9, 1994.

Word of the day

Fad:

an interest followed with exaggerated zeal

Synonyms: craze, cult, furor, rage**Usage:** To me, fashion is about being comfortable, not the latest craze or fad.**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/fadpro**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /fæd/

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

From Page One

Medical help not a ruse to derail Dallewal's strike: SC

Justice Kant said Mr. Dallewal was a "precious leader" who was not aligned to any political ideology but devoted to the farmers' cause.

The judge said the Punjab government's attitude seemed to be against any sort of conciliation.

"There are people making irresponsible statements... even farmer leaders, their *bona fide* as regards Mr. Dallewal needs to be looked into," Justice Kant said.

'Not taking sides'

Punjab Advocate-General Gurminder Singh assured that the State was not taking any sides and was doing its best to convince Mr. Dallewal to accept medical aid.

"He (Dallewal) is of the firm opinion, as conveyed to our mediators, to the media and in his own messages, that he will take medical help subject to some intervention... We (Punjab) are only for conciliation. We are handling the situation on the ground every day, every moment. We are trying to work out a solution," Mr. Singh assured.

The court issued notice on a petition by Mr. Dallewal's friend, Guninder Kaur Gill, who said the government could not go back on "promises" made to the farmers. The Haryana government's plea against the boundary blockages was also listed, along with a contempt petition against the Punjab Chief Secretary and police chief for their inability to comply with earlier apex court orders to hospitalise Mr. Dallewal.

Next hearing on Jan. 6

The next hearing is scheduled for January 6.

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has reportedly said the Centre would accept whatever decision the court took on Mr. Dallewal's hunger strike.

The farmers are demanding the enactment of a law that ensures a guaranteed minimum price for crops. They argue that a legal guarantee would protect their income and stabilise the agricultural market. Farmers have been camped at the Shambhu and Khanauri boundaries of Punjab and Haryana ever since their march to Delhi was stopped in February 2024. An apex court-appointed high power committee headed by former High Court judge, Justice Nawab Singh, has sent an invitation to the farmers for a virtual meeting on January 3.

'Will do whatever is possible in Nimisha case'

The Houthis control nearly 25% of the Yemeni territory that holds almost half the population of the country. The Saudi Arabia-backed government and the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) are the other two entities that control the rest of Yemen. The case which dates back to at least a decade started as a difficult partnership between Ms. Nimisha and Yemeni national Mahdi when the latter supported her to set up a clinic.

Partnership soured

The partnership however soured subsequently and she alleged that Mahdi had become abusive and took possession of her Indian passport. In 2017, Ms. Nimisha tried to retrieve the passport by drugging Mahdi but the attempt led to Mahdi's death. Following the incident, Ms. Nimisha reportedly with local assistance dismembered the body of Mahdi. She was handed a death sentence in 2018 that was subsequently upheld in 2023.

The situation in Yemen and the security situation in West Asia is also expected to feature in the talks between the Iranian and the Indian sides.

SC directs U.P. govt. to give report on Ansari's death

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Uttar Pradesh authorities to provide medical and magisterial inquiry reports on the death of jailed gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari on March 28, 2024.

A Bench took note of the submissions of senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Umar Ansari. Mr. Umar Ansari said the medical and judicial inquiry reports pertaining to his father's death were not furnished by the State government.

Mukhtar Ansari, 63, allegedly died of cardiac arrest at a hospital in Banda. When Mukhtar Ansari died, his brother and Ghazipur MP Afzal Ansari alleged he was being subjected to "slow poisoning" in jail, a charge denied by the authorities.

'Suicides among CISF personnel dip 40% due to proactive measures'

Samridhi Tewari

NEW DELHI

Proactive measures launched by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) led to a 40% decline in suicide rates among its rank and file, sources said. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, the national suicide rate stood at 12.4 per lakh people in 2022, while in CISF, it has been reduced to 9.87 per lakh people in 2024.

"Suicide of force members is a critical concern within Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). Stress, prolonged family separation and work-related pressures besides personal issues often contribute to this complex issue," senior sources said.

'Creditable steps'

The CISF claims to have taken creditable steps in combating this challenge

Incineration of Bhopal waste will not cause harm: M.P. CM

Mohan Yadav says scientific methods will be employed in Pithampur during the disposal of 337 tonnes of waste from the Union Carbide factory; he accuses Congress of politicising the issue

The Hindu Bureau

BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Thursday said that disposal of the toxic waste from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal will not have a negative impact on the environment in Pithampur, where it is to be incinerated.

Chemical waste weighing 337 tonnes from the factory premises, where the Bhopal gas tragedy of December 1984 unfolded, was transported to Pithampur, an industrial town 35 km from Indore, for disposal at an incineration facility. However, residents and activists have long protested against shifting the waste, raising apprehensions of contamination of soil and water bodies.

Mr. Yadav said the waste was being disposed of in Pithampur as per the directions of the courts and that it will be incinerated using scientific methods after consultations with various departments and research institutes.

"The waste contains 60% soil and 40% naphthalene and other chemical



Safety concerns: Trucks carrying the waste in spill-free containers left the Union Carbide premises in Bhopal on Wednesday amid heavy security. The trucks reached Pithampur on Thursday. PTI

waste. Naphthalene is a co-product from manufacture of pesticides, and according to scientists, its impact vanishes in 25 years. As 40 years have passed since the incident, the apprehensions being raised regarding the disposal of the waste vanish too," he said addressing a press conference.

Mr. Yadav said that the Minister in-charge of Dhar district Kailash Vijayvargiya will talk to all the local public representatives, apprise them of the process, and take them into confi-

dence. "For the last 40 years, the people of Bhopal have been living with this waste. In 2015, 10 MT of waste was incinerated in Pithampur as a trial run in 2015 and a report prepared in the presence of scientists was presented before the Supreme Court. The report revealed that the disposal of hazardous waste has no impact on the environment. After detailed analysis of the reports, the Madhya Pradesh High Court directed the incineration of the remaining hazardous waste," he added. The Chief Minister also said that in the near future, the government will work to dispose of the remaining waste lying in the Union Carbide premises.

Mr. Yadav accused the Congress of doing politics over the issue.

On Wednesday night, 12 trucks carrying the waste in spill-free containers, left the defunct Union Carbide factory premises in Bhopal amid heavy security. The trucks reached Pithampur around 4 a.m. on Thursday.

AAP's policies are anti-agriculture and anti-farmer, says BJP

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government is not implementing Union government policies for farmers in Delhi. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said, accusing AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal of cheating farmers.



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi. "The farmer-friendly schemes of the Central government have also been prevented from being implemented in Delhi by your government. Today the farmer brothers and sisters of Delhi are troubled and worried," he said.

He alleged that the AAP's policies have also been anti-agriculture and anti-farmer and essential agricultural equipment such as tractors and harvesters are being registered in the commercial vehicle category in Delhi, due to which farmers are having to buy agricultural equipment at higher prices.

"For the last 10 years, AAP has been in power in Delhi but it has always seemed that Shri Kejriwal has only cheated the farmer brothers and sisters and has taken advantage of them by making big announcements before the elections," he said.

Article 370 caused spread of terrorism in Kashmir, says Shah

Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI

the National Book Trust and the Indian Council of Historical Research.

"Why did terrorism not spread in other Muslim areas of the country? There is an argument that Kashmir shares a border with Pakistan. Even Gujarat and Rajasthan share borders with Pakistan, but terrorism did not reach there. Article 370 promoted the misconception that the relationship between India and Kashmir is temporary. Gradually, separatism transformed into terrorism. It is unfortunate for 40,000 people lost their lives," Mr. Shah said.

He said that development took a backseat for decades, while there was "a naked dance of terrorism" in the former State of J&K.

Omar makes pitch for easing of harsh police verification processes in J&K

Peerzada Ashiq

SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday pitched for the relaxation of harsh police verification processes put in place in the Union Territory post-2019, saying he "does not consider a militant's son a militant".

Speaking at the first press conference since assuming the office of Chief Minister in October last year, Mr. Abdullah admitted to a truncated role on security matters till Statehood is restored but called for "ease in police verification processes". "In the past, we did away with blacklisting [of families]. We can't instruct given the order [in the Union Territory] but we hope for an



J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah interacts with Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary in Srinagar on Thursday. ANI

easing of verification processes. I have already spoken to the CID chief regarding the issue," Mr. Abdullah said.

The Chief Minister faced a number of questions on harsh police verification processes employed for passports and jobs to family members of militants and separatists, accredita-

tion of journalists, and dismissal of employees by the Lieutenant-Governor. "As a State, a lot could be done [in these matters] but not as a Union Territory. We do need Statehood back," Mr. Abdullah said.

The Chief Minister faced a number of questions on harsh police verification processes employed for passports and jobs to family members of militants and separatists, accredita-

cesses in its manifesto.

The Chief Minister, who was accompanied by his Cabinet Ministers and top officials, also ruled out any major friction with the Raj Bhavan. "It is still a learning experience to know where our authority starts and ends and where the L-G's authority starts and ends. The business rules are being vetted by legal luminaries and its introduction will bring a lot of clarity soon," he said.

He said it was a conscious decision to meet the top leadership of the ruling BJP over the Statehood issue instead of going to the court. "I met the top leadership with the hope that the commitment made to us on Statehood will be fulfilled. I expect it to happen soon," he said.

Centre tells SC it will follow exam reforms panel advice

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday told the Supreme Court that it would implement all the corrective measures suggested by its seven-member expert panel on exam reforms after reviewing the National Testing Agency's (NTA) functioning and holding NEET-UG last year.

The court last year refused to annul the controversial NEET-UG and also expanded the remit of the seven-member expert panel to review the functioning of the NTA and recommend exam reforms to make the NEET-UG transparent and free from malpractices.

In India, the issue has escalated over the years, as evidenced by the NCRB data. All India suicide rates rose from 9.9 per lakh population in 2017 to 12.4 per lakh in 2022, as per NCRB Report - accidental deaths and suicides in India, 2022. (Assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts is available on the DISHA helpline at 1056)

Mindful approach

The CISF says the steps it has taken to address mental health challenges among its personnel has brought positive results



Year	Cases of death by suicide	Total posted strength	Rate of cases per lakh
2020	18	1,40,351	12.82
2021	21	1,40,937	14.90
2022	26	1,43,468	18.12
2023	25	1,47,193	16.98
2024	15	1,51,978	9.86

DG), ensuring timely resolution of grievances, along with mental health support through 24x7 tele-counselling and personal counselling, sources said.

Till September 2024, around 4,200 CISF personnel received help through this facility. Apart from this, one-to-one counselling facility is also implemented. A comprehensive mental health study was conducted in collaboration with AIIMS, New Delhi and actionable recommendations are being implemented at unit level.

In personalised engagements, commanding officers regularly visit duty posts to foster direct communication to hold daily "briefing-debriefing" to promptly identify and address signs of distress.

The CISF also brought in an online grievance portal, which allowed timely monitoring of grievances at all levels (up to the level of

SC to hear Owaisi's plea on Places of Worship legislation

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

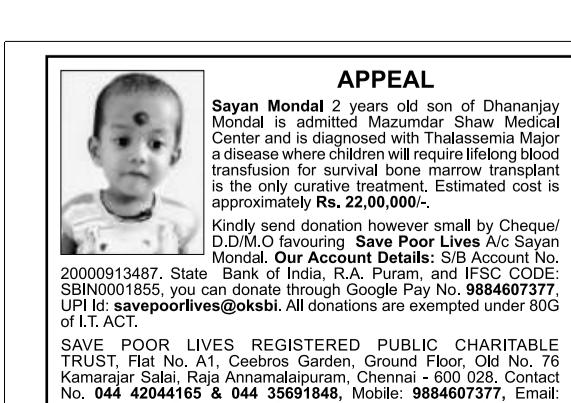
The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to consider a plea of AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi seeking implementation of the 1991 places of worship law, which says that the religious character of a place must be maintained as it existed on August 15, 1947.

The 1991 law prohibits conversion and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947.

tagged with pending cases on the matter and, said it will be taken up on February 17 along with them.

Mr. Owaisi, in his plea, has sought a direction from the Centre to ensure effective implementation of the law, his counsel said.

The 1991 law prohibits conversion and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947.



Sayan Mondal 2 years old son of Dhananjay Mondal, an admitted Mazdoor Shastri. He has a rare disease where children will require lifelong blood transfusion for survival bone marrow transplant is the only curative treatment. Estimated cost is approximately Rs. 22,00,000/-.

Kindly send donation however small by Cheque/D.D./M.O. favouring Save Poor Lives A/c Sayan Mondal. State Bank of India, R.A. Puram, and IFSC CODE: SBIN001855, you can donate through Google Pay No. 9884607377, UPI Id: savepoorlives@okbsi. All donations are exempted under 80G of I.T. ACT.

SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, Flat No. A1, Ceebos Garden, Ground Floor, Old No. 76 Kamarajar Salai, Rajaji Anna Salai, Chennai - 600 028, Contact: 044 4204165 & 044 35691848, Mobile: 9884607377, Email: savepoorlives@gmail.com. Our website: www.savepoorlives.com

'Leave it,' says Bihar CM on Lalu's invite to join INDIA

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday came up with a cryptic response to the comments of Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad that "doors are open" for him to join the INDIA bloc.

In an interview to a local news channel on Wednesday, Mr. Prasad had said, "If he [Mr. Kumar] joins us, we will definitely welcome him. We will also forgive his past mistakes and keep him with us. We will sit and work together. Each time, we take the right decision, but he is not able to take the right decision. He runs away and leaves the alliance."

When asked about the fresh offer when he was leaving Raj Bhavan after the oath-taking ceremony of the new Governor of Bihar Arif Mohammed Khan, Mr. Kumar with folded hands said, "What he said, leave it."

Mr. Prasad's son and Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Legislative Assembly Tejaswi Yadav too downplayed his father's statement, claiming he had issued such a statement merely to "satisfy the curiosity of the media".

Mr. Kumar's comment is being seen against the backdrop of a statement by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the Chief Minister face for the Assembly election due later this year, triggering speculation in the media.

Mr. Shah during an interview to a news channel did not give a clear answer when asked if the BJP will persist with Mr. Kumar as the Chief Minister face or "follow the Maharashtra model", where the BJP's Devendra Fadnavis replaced Sena leader Eknath Shinde as Chief Minister.

He had said, "The party's policy decision is not declared in a TV programme. It is the parliamentary board that will take the decision."

Mr. Kumar had switched sides in 2013, 2017, 2022, and 2024.

Mamata accuses BSF of allowing infiltration to 'malign' Trinamool

Chief Minister says the paramilitary force is trying to destabilise Bengal; alleging that the action is part of the 'blueprint of the Central government'; she directs Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar to find out where infiltrators are staying

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA



Taking stock: West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee chairs the administration review meeting in Kolkata on Thursday. ANI

Mid reports of infiltration and arrests of Bangladesh nationals in different parts of the State, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday accused the Border Security Force (BSF) of allowing infiltrators from Bangladesh to enter India so that the blame on infiltration can be pinned on the State government.

Participating in an administrative meeting at the Secretariat, the Chief Minister accused the BSF of trying to destabilise the State and said the "blueprint of the Central govern-

ment was behind this attitude of the BSF".

"We have received information that the BSF is allowing infiltrators to enter India through Islampur, Sitali, Chopra and several other bordering areas. The BSF is also torturing wo-

men. Why are we not prot-

esting?" the Chief Minister

asked officials at the meeting. Observing that she wants good relations with Bangladesh, Ms. Banerjee said goons were entering India on an "understanding" with the BSF;

West Bengal shares a 2,216 km border with Bangladesh that is guarded by three frontiers of the BSF – the South Bengal, North Bengal and Guwahati frontiers.

A part of the border is unfenced and since rivers serve as the international border, the border between West Bengal and Bangladesh is porous.

Recently, the BSF Director-General Daljit Singh Chaudhury visited West

Bengal and said the border-guarding forces are using technological solutions for guarding areas that don't have a fence.

During the meeting, Ms. Banerjee directed Director-General of Police Rajeev Kumar to find out where the infiltrators were staying and said she would write a letter to the Centre protesting against the acts of the BSF.

She also came down heavily on the District Magistrate of Cooch Behar and the Superintendent of Police of the district, asking why they had allowed security agencies and police forces from other States to check background of migrant workers.

SC questions petition alleging 'favouritism' in legal profession

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI



The court strongly suggested that petitioner-advocate amend the petition.

designation system and the Collegium system to redeem the judiciary from elitism and a culture of privilege".

"How many judges can you name whose 'offspring' have been designated senior counsel? You are making an insinuation that judges have offspring, brothers, sisters, nephews, etc., who have been made senior counsel before the age of 40... How many of these can you find," Justice B.R. Gavai asked Mr. Nedumpara.

Section 16 of the Advocates Act classifies advocates as 'senior advocates' and 'other advocates'. The senior designation is bestowed on an advocate by the Supreme Court or a High Court as a recognition of the professional's distinctive ability, standing at the Bar, special knowledge or experience in law. Senior advocates have pre-audience over other advocates in court under Section 23(5) of the Act.

Mr. Nedumpara, at one point, said he was working on a chart of senior advocate designations received as a result of privilege.

The court strongly suggested that he amend the petition or even withdraw it. "Are you going to delete these averments or not? If this petition comes in the same form next time, action against each one of the petitioners will be taken," Justice Viswanathan warned the lawyer.

PM's New Year resolutions nothing short of jumlas that destroy lives, says Kharge

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Mallikarjun Kharge

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's annual New Year resolutions have been nothing short of *jumlas* (rhetoric) that have been "destroying the lives of every citizen", Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Thursday.

Stepping up its attack on the government's handling of the economy, the Congress also said that the Modi government has earned the "dubious distinction" of being the only government in Independent India that is responsible for "stealing" *mangalsutras* of women due to rise in default on gold loans in the country.

"The Modi government has no solution for the economic turmoil it has created! Seven indicators that illustrate the extent of mess in the lives of ordinary Indians. 50% increase in gold loans and 30% jump in

gold loan NPAs. Private consumption – the total value of goods and services purchased by households has slowed down in the last 8 quarters," Mr. Kharge said.

He added that car sales growth has plunged to a four-year low and wages have grown at a compound annual rate of just 0.8% in the engineering, manufacturing, process, and infrastructure (EMPI) sectors in the past five years (2019-2023). Food inflation has averaged 7.1% over the last eight quarter and indirect taxation in the form of GST on essential items are de-

creasing.

According to the RBI, the income of Indian families is decreasing and the number of borrowers is increasing, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said.

EPFO 3.0 rollout by June: Labour Minister

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said here on Thursday that the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) will launch its new software system EPFO 3.0 by June this year. He told presspersons that the new system will be equivalent to the banking systems in the country and the website will be more user friendly.

The Minister said the EPFO will also provide ATM cards to its subscribers after rolling out EPFO 3.0. The first phase of upgrading the website and systems will be completed by the end of January 2025, he added.

Countering the Opposition's charge of growing unemployment in the country, Mr. Mandaviya claimed that the employment has increased under NDA government when compared to UPA government. He claimed that unemployment rate dropped from 6% in 2017-18 to 3.2%

in 2023-24.

RAJASTHAN RAJYA VIDHYUT PRASARAN NIGAM LIMITED NOTICE INVITING BID

Bids for "Construction of provision of Third phase on existing towers of 132 D/C Modak Rangjanandi Railway TSS line and extension of line from existing TSS to new TSS of Railway by Construction of 132 KV D/C (each circuit having 3 phase + 1 spare) 400 Sq mm on 132 KV underground cable as deposit works of railway including detailed route survey, laying and installation of cable and lattice tower alongwith associated accessories/items and civil worksagainst specification No.RPNV/EHV/A8/SPTN-128 [UBN No. VPN2425WLOB02526] and Construction work of associated line of 132KV D/C overhead line (1.5km) and underground cable (1.5km) from 132KV GSS Daizer with OPGW of complete line including stringing of conductor detailed route survey, laying and installation of cable alongwith associated accessories/items against specification No.RPNV/EHV/A8/SPTN-129 [UBN No. VPN2425WLOB02527]" are invited from interested bidders up to 03.02.2025 (04:00PM). Other particulars of the bids may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>) of the state and <http://energy.rajasthan.gov.in/rvpn> departmental website.

DELI TRANSCO LIMITED NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS

Delhi Transco Ltd (A Government of NCT of Delhi Undertaking) invites online tender, for the following work:

1. T24R220401: Design, Engineering, Supply, Laying, Jointing, Testing and Commissioning of 220KV D/C, Ix1000 sq.mm U/G XLPE Cable infeed for upcoming 220 KV Sarojini Nagar substation by LILo of existing 220 KV R. K. Puram-Trauma Centre D/C UG cable at proposed 220KV Sarojini Nagar Substation & Supply, Laying, Jointing, Testing and Commissioning of 220KV, 1x1000 sq.mm XLPE Cable at existing 220 KV DIAL substation, New Delhi (India) on Turnkey Basis.

2. T24R220403 Design, Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 400/220/66kV GIS TikriKhurd Sub-Station with complete Civil works & Automation on Turnkey Basis in Delhi.

3. T24R220412 : Design, Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 220/33kV GIS Sub-Station with complete Civil works & Automation at Sarojini Nagar, Delhi on Turnkey Basis.

4. T24R220415 : Design, Engineering, Supply, Laying, Jointing, Testing and Commissioning of 220kV D/C, Ix1200 Sq. mm, U/G XLPE Cable from 220KV Naraina substation to 220kV Ridge valley substation along with SETC of one No. 220kV bay at Naraina substation on turnkey basis, New Delhi (India).

5. T24R220423 : Design, Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 220/66/33 KV GIS with complete civil works & automation at existing 220KV GIS Maharan Bagh substation, New Delhi (India) on Turnkey Basis.

6. T24R220424 : Design, Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 220/66kV GIS Sub-Station with complete civil works & automation at Budelia, Delhi on Turnkey Basis.

7. T24P090633. : Augmentation of 33/11 KV, Ix20 MVA & 16 MVA transformer with 2x25 MVA transformer including replacement of outlived Ol no. 1| kV switchgear panel board with new 11 KV Panel Board and complete civil works at 220 KV Substation Patparganj alongwith supply of 02 nos. spare 11 KV panel board - Turnkey package .

For complete details of the tender please visit following websites :- <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in> (Tender ID 1. No. 2025_DTL_267690_1), 2. No. 2025_DTL_267662_1)

3. No. 2025_DTL_267693_1) 4. ,No. 2025_DTL_267691_1)

5. ,No. 2025_DTL_267678_1), 6. No. 2025_DTL_267684_1), 7. No. 2025_DTL_267740_1) respectively.

website www.dtl.gov.in with 1. Unique No. DTL-9461-010125,

2. Unique No. DTL-9465-010125, 3. Unique No. DTL-9464-

010125, 4. Unique No. DTL-9460-010125, 5. Unique No. DTL-

9463-010125, 6. Unique No. DTL-9462-010125, 7. Unique No.

DTL-9466-010125 respectively.

Last date for bid submission at 1:30 PM on 20.02.2025

(For S.No. 1, 4, & 7), 19.02.2025 (For S.No.2), 18.02.2025

(For S.No.3), 28.01.2025 (For S.No.5) and 27.01.2025 (For S.No.6).

All Corrigendum/Addendum/ Amendments/Date of Extension/ Clarifications, if any, to the above e-tenders would appear only on the above mentioned websites.

Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture, Min. of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India is inviting online tender two bid system for the repairs and renovation works/electrical & plumbing work.

For more details and tender process through online (CPP portal) please visit website:

<https://v2.rgca.co.in>.

Last Date: 24.01.2025 (18.00 hrs).

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Director RGCA

Leave it,' says Bihar CM on Lalu's invite to join INDIA

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In an interview to a local news channel on Wednesday, Mr. Prasad had said, "If he [Mr. Kumar] joins us, we will definitely welcome him. We will also forgive his past mistakes and keep him with us. We will sit and work together. Each time, we take the right decision, but he is not able to take the right decision. He runs away and leaves the alliance."

When asked about the fresh offer when he was leaving Raj Bhavan after the oath-taking ceremony of the new Governor of Bihar Arif Mohammed Khan, Mr. Kumar with folded hands said, "What he said, leave it."

Mr. Prasad's son and Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Legislative Assembly Tejaswi Yadav too downplayed his father's statement, claiming he had issued such a statement merely to "satisfy the curiosity of the media".

Mr. Shah during an interview to a news channel did not give a clear answer when asked if the BJP will persist with Mr. Kumar as the Chief Minister face or "follow the Maharashtra model", where the BJP's Devendra Fadnavis replaced Sena leader Eknath Shinde as Chief Minister.

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IN BRIEF



Arif Mohammed Khan sworn in as Governor of Bihar

Arif Mohammed Khan was sworn in as the 42nd Governor of Bihar on Thursday, succeeding Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar who has been appointed Kerala Governor in his place. Patna High Court Chief Justice K. Vinod Chandran administered the oath at the Raj Bhawan in the presence of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his deputies, and Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Tejashwi Yadav, among others. "Bihar has immense potential and I have come to serve the State," Mr. Khan said. Earlier, he told journalists, "I know the glorious history of Bihar. I will try to discharge my duty in accordance with the heritage and tradition of the State."

Pakistani national jailed for 16 years set to return home

After spending 16 years behind bars, Pakistani national Mohammad Masroof, also known as Mansoor Ahmed, is set to return home. He will be released from Gorakhpur district jail on February 7, when his jail term ends, officials said on Thursday. Masroof was arrested near the India-Nepal border in Bahraich, U.P., for illegally entering India. Charged with espionage, the Allahabad High Court later acquitted him of these charges, convicting him only for immigration violations. Jail Superintendent A.K. Kushwaha said arrangements are being made for his transfer to Delhi, from where he will be handed over to Pakistani authorities at the Attari border. PTI

Policeman dies after being pushed in front of train

A policeman was murdered by two unidentified persons who attacked him and then pushed him in front of a train between Rabale and Ghansoli stations in Navi Mumbai, an official said on Thursday. The victim has been identified as 42-year-old Vijay Ramesh Chavan, a resident of Ghansoli, the Vashi railway police station official said. "The incident took place between 5.25 a.m. and 5.35 a.m. on Wednesday. The accused, who were wearing white shirts, attacked Chavan with some unidentified object and pushed him in front of a train. The motive behind the murder is not known. No arrests have been made so far. Further probe is under way," the official said. PTI

Army looking to procure anti-drone ammunition

The Army has issued a Request for Information (RFI) for 23mm ammunition for its Zu-23mm and Schilka air defence weapon systems in service. These anti-aircraft guns use 23mm armour piercing incendiary tracer and high explosive incendiary tracer ammunition. The hit probability of both these ammunitions are low as the guns are manually controlled and the ammunition gets activated (causes damage/destruction) on impact which means a direct hit, the RFI said on the need for new ammunition to increase the hit probability. The Army is also looking to procure air burst rounds for its 30mm cannons on infantry combat vehicles.

Experts on GM crop panels to declare conflict of interest

Ministry of Environment amends rules governing selection of experts to the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee; it calls for details of professional affiliations in past 10 years to be declared

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has amended the rules governing the selection of experts to the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), the apex technical body regulating genetically modified (GM) seeds in India.

Under the new rules, an "expert member" ought to disclose their "interest" that could conflict with their duties. The expert is also expected to take all steps necessary to ensure that any conflict of interest does not affect any decision of the GEAC.

An expert member with any direct or indirect association with a matter being discussed in a meeting of the committee is obliged to disclose this prior to the meeting. Unless specifically requested by the com-



Two judges had ruled differently on whether the Centre was right in according approval to genetically modified mustard. AFP

mittee, the expert is expected to recuse themselves from the meeting. All selected members would also have to fill out a form detailing their professional affiliations to a decade prior to joining the committee.

Split verdict
These rules come on the back of a Supreme Court

order in July 2023 requiring that the Centre form a national policy on GM crops.

In that order of July 2023, the SC delivered a split verdict on the validity of the Centre's 2022 decision granting conditional approval for environmental release of GM mustard crops, thus leaving a final resolution on the release of

the crop to a future Bench.

Two judges ruled differently on whether the party's district unit in West Bengal's Malda, Dular Sarkar, was shot dead in broad daylight on Thursday.

Among the directives that they concurred on was establishing a process for resolving issues around conflict of interest.

As far as the GM case is concerned, the question of such conflict arose following an allegation by an activist group, the Coalition for GM-Free India, in 2013, that one of the members of a Technical Expert Committee appointed by the court, ran an organisation that was funded by Monsanto, a multinational biotech and agricultural pesticides company, and affiliated Indian organisations.

Monsanto has since been bought over by Bayer CropScience Limited, a company with similar interests.

Trinamool Congress councillor shot dead in Malda; 2 arrested

Moyurie Som
KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress councillor and vice-president of the party's district unit in West Bengal's Malda, Dular Sarkar, was shot dead in broad daylight on Thursday.

Two persons have been arrested in connection with the incident.

According to police sources, four armed persons riding two motorbikes chased Mr. Sarkar after he came to his factory in the morning.

He was shot from behind when he ran into a nearby shop to hide from them, they added.

"My close associate, my fellow warrior Babla Sarkar, who has worked with me for many years, has been murdered today. Of course, that was because of negligence by the police," West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said at a secretariat meeting on Thursday morning. "He had security before, which was then withdrawn. He was attacked earlier as well," the Chief Minister said.

WB research scholar feted for artwork on rural life

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Labani Jangi, a research scholar from Centre for Studies in Social Sciences in Kolkata, became the first recipient of the TM Krishna-PARI award for her work in art that "reflects the resilience and complexities of rural India, combining artistic expression with critical social commentary", said a statement from People's Archive of Rural India. The award honours individuals whose works bridge the worlds of art and journalism and includes a cash prize of ₹1 lakh.

"My work with PARI focuses on capturing stories that bring attention to both the systemic challenges and the enduring spirit of rural life. By integrating these narratives into my art, I aim at creating visual expressions that resonate with the complexities of these experiences. My illustrations become a medium through which I contribute to preserving and sharing the cultural and social realities of rural India," said Ms. Jangi.

Apart from the government-run schools, there are 4.54 lakh schools that are government-aided, private and unaided, and others, of which 4.07 lakh have functional electricity.

Of the total schools, 14.47 lakh schools have drinking water facilities, but in only 14.11 lakh schools is the drinking water facility functional.

Of the 10.17 lakh government schools, functional drinking water facility is available in 9.78 lakh schools. Of the 4.46 lakh

Govt. report reveals stark infrastructure gap in Indian schools

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

Of the over 14.71 lakh schools in India, up to 1.52 lakh schools have no functional electricity, according to the latest data released by the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+) maintained by the Ministry of Education. Of the 14.71 lakh schools, 10.17 lakh schools are government-run, of which 9.12 lakh schools have functional electricity, while 1.52 lakh schools do not.

With regard to toilets, of the 14.71 lakh schools, 14.50 lakh schools have toilet facilities, but only 14.04 lakh toilets are functional.

The report says 67,000 schools operate without functional toilets, of which a majority (46,000) are government schools.

The condition is much worse when it comes to providing disabled-friendly facilities. Of the 10.17 lakh government schools, only 3.37 lakh schools have disabled-friendly toilets.

Indian researchers develop injectable hydrogel for targeted cancer treatment

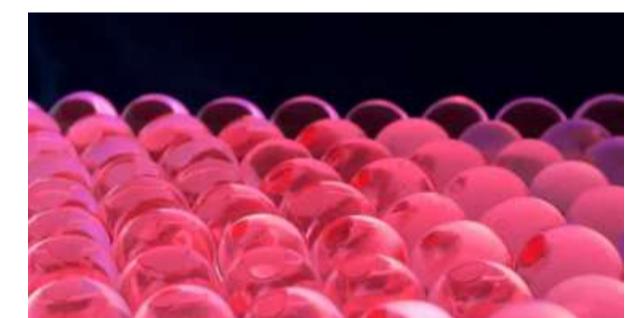
The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) and the Bose Institute, Kolkata have developed an advanced injectable hydrogel for localised cancer treatment. A statement issued by the IIT-G said this hydrogel serves as a stable reservoir for anti-cancer drugs, releasing it in a controlled manner while sparing healthy cells from harm.

The findings of the research, expected to be revolutionary for breast cancer therapy, have been published in *Materials Horizons*, a journal of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

The paper is co-authored by Debapratim Das, along with his research scholars Tanusree Das and Ritika Kushwaha from IIT-G's Department of Chemistry, and Kuldip Jania, Satyajit Halder, and Anup Kumar Misra from Bose Institute, Kolkata.

"Current treatments,



The hydrogel triggers a controlled drug release directly into the tumour, thus reducing systemic side effects. GETTY IMAGES

such as chemotherapy and surgical interventions, often have severe limitations.

Chemotherapy's systemic delivery often results in harmful side effects by affecting both cancerous and healthy cells," the researchers said in the statement.

Localised treatment
The team addressed these challenges by designing a hydrogel that delivers drugs precisely to the tumour site, ensuring localised action. Hydrogels are water-based, polymer networks capable of absorbing and retaining fluids. Their unique structure

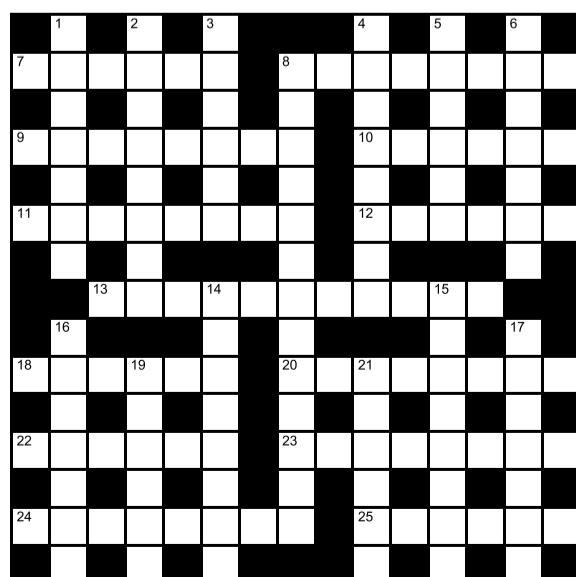
mimics living tissues, making them suitable for biomedical applications.

The hydrogel, composed of ultra-short peptides is designed to remain insoluble in biological fluids, ensuring it stays localised at the injection site. It responds to elevated levels of glutathione (GSH), a molecule abundant in tumour cells.

"This work exemplifies how scientific innovation can address the pressing needs of cancer treatment. The hydrogel's properties allow it to work harmoniously with the biological environment, offering precision," Prof. Das said.

TH CROSSWORD + 14373

(set by Pixie Dust)



Across

- 7 Material stuff a bricklayer conceals (6)
- 8 Stubborn, he will live... Nut case! (4-4)
- 9 Wary fear about a traveller (8)
- 10 Jump in well! (6)
- 11 Indore's chief detective cracks domestic's murder (8)
- 12 Annual party's ending too soon (6)

Down

- 13 According to the Reverend, Norse God defied providence (11)
- 18 Settle father near town (part of the city of Dakar, in Senegal) (6)
- 20 Fondness for Achilles' heel? (4,4)
- 22 Consistently pick up leaders from aggressive, loyal, wise and young senators (6)
- 23 Public letters from Gopal, a No.1 tantrist from the east (8)
- 24 Reject worth? (5,3)
- 25 Ouphe and Llyr ignored regularly for all to see (6)
- 1 Register about time and goal mismanagement (7)
- 2 Say, Steffi's able to love a drawing on the wall? (8)
- 3 Duty doctor surprisingly missed date with chief internist (6)
- 4 Broadcast so bluesy! Thank you very much! (5,3)
- 5 Peninsula misses small region in Russia (6)
- 6 Foolishly independent, a Spaniard is swallowed by city (7)
- 8 Eccentric hot nurse hugs trunk of a flowering tree (5,8)
- 14 Issue from leaders of European Football Union (8)
- 15 That man's notes about simple proteins (8)
- 16 Record beginnings of harsh, odious cry from a huntsman (5-2)
- 17 Baby pool? One hundred percent! (7)
- 19 Letters from Mayor! A Tory spokesperson? (6)
- 21 See, fellow bit wrapped piece of hamburger (6)

SCAN TO PLAY
<https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

E	K	C	G	B	G	R		
B	A	N	S	I	L	Y		
O	I	A	Y	P	I	M		
L	E	T	U	S	E	E		
E	T	U	S	E	E	N		
A	S	L	E	C	C	A		
S	E	T	E	R	I	H		
M	A	R	R	Y	I	N		
P	S	I	A	V	I	V		

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

No. 556389 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

FAITH

Andal's wake-up call

Andal, the youngest of the 12 vaishnavite Azhwars, has composed Tiruppavai in fresh, exquisite, refined and pure Tamil. Acharya Sri Manavala Mamunigal says Andal's devotional songs surpass the works of other apostles. Tiruppavai is the seed of all the Vedas.

Veltukudi Sri Krishnan Swamy said in a discourse that Andal, the manifestation of Lord Vishnu's divine consort Bhudevi, has transcended down from Sri Vaikunta to show the path of self-realisation and the ways and means to realise God.

In Hindu dharma, the term *Mano*, *Vak*, *Kaya*, which refers to mind, speech, and body, is used. Andal says we have to chant and conquer the mind to think of God and offer service to God with our physical faculties. Those who fail to understand this are in the sleep of ignorance. Andal devotes poems 6 to 15 to wake people up to achieve realisation.

There are various types of sleep. In addition to normal sleep, unwanted or irregular sleep at odd times is influenced by "*Thamo Guna*," which is provoked by grief, illusion, pain, and mental darkness. Mistaking the body and soul as the same and thinking that the soul is independent are also considered the sleep of ignorance. Andal says the soul is a subject of God and is meant to serve Him.

Brahman, the Supreme Being, is the source of all energy. A person exhausted from working all day retires to sleep during the night and wakes up fresh the next morning (like a cellphone recharged). How is this possible? It is because of God's help that he recoups energy. This is called enthraling with God (*Brahmanubhava*).

INBRIEF



SEBI to continue probe in ZEE listing norm 'violation'

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said it will slap a fresh show cause notice on Zee Entertainment Enterprises Limited (ZEEL) founder-chairman Subhash Chandra and his son Punit Goenka as it vowed to continue the probe into alleged violation of listing norms against the media baron and his firm. The order said the contents of the earlier show cause notice (SCN) issued to them will also be incorporated "in the SCN to be issued in the instant matter". PTI

'High interest rates, declining finance hurting exporters'

Indian exporters are grappling with liquidity challenges due to high interest rates and a dip in export finance, undermining competitiveness, as per Sanjay Budhia, chairman of CII National Committee on EXIM. To address the issues, he said the government and banks must work together to provide effective solutions. He suggested the Centre extend interest equalisation scheme (which ended on December 31) by three years to all manufacturing exporters. PTI

'States' fundraising may get costly on record borrowing'

States will have to pay additional premium over Central government securities to meet the record high borrowing target for three months through March, which could further pressure banking liquidity, investors said. States aim at raising ₹4.73 trillion (\$55.22 billion) in January-March, or nearly three-fourth the amount raised so far in this financial year. This, along with the Central government's ₹2.79 trillion debt sale, will take the overall supply to ₹7.52 trillion. REUTERS

Nifty, Sensex bounce more than 1.8% but Rupee tanks

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

India's frontline stock indices surged nearly 2% on Thursday, led by auto, IT and financial stocks in anticipation of a good show in the forthcoming third quarter results.

The NSE Nifty surged 1.88% to close at 24,188.65, the best single-day gain since November 22, 2024.

However, the Rupee weakened by 9 paise to close at 85.75 against the U.S. dollar, amid strong demand from importers and foreign fund inflows. The S&P BSE Sensex gained 1,436.30 points or 1.83% to 79,943.71 points.

Front-running: SEBI bans Ketan Parekh & 21 others

Lalatendu Mishra

MUMBAI



The Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has unearthed a front-running scam in the securities market and debarred 22 entities, including stock brokers Singapore-based Rohit Salgaocar and Ketan Parekh, for alleged involvement and impounded ₹66 crore as 'wrongful gains.'

Front-running refers to an illegal practice in the stock market, where an entity trades on the basis of advance information from a broker or analyst before the information has been made available to clients.

Mr. Salgaocar and Mr. Parekh devised the entire

scheme to unjustly enrich from the NPI (non-public information) pertaining to the 'big client' by orchestrating front-running activities," the SEBI order said.

Mr. Parekh was earlier imprisoned and debarred from stock markets for 14 years for his role in the infamous stock market scandal of 2000.

He and Mr. Salgaocar orchestrated a method of front-running the trades of a U.S.-based fund house (referred to as 'big client' or 'FPI' in the order) which manages about \$2.5 trillion globally.

For executing the scheme, Mr. Parekh used the earlier network of Kolkata-based entities. Mr. Salgaocar had access to the information regarding the forthcoming trades of the FPI which he used to pass on to Mr. Parekh. On the basis of this information, Mr. Parekh built positions via Kolkata-based entities.

The entities would square off positions by matching them with the U.S.-based fund's orders.

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday announced the formation of an expert panel to revise the constituents of the country's Wholesale Price Index (WPI) in light of the structural changes in the economy that have occurred between 2011-12, the current base year for the critical price gauge, and 2022-23 that would be the new base year.

The working group, to be steered by NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand, would also examine the composition of, and the methodology for compilation of a new Producers' Price Index or PPI, approved by a technical advi-



er level, it may also suggest any other improvements for enhancing the reliability of the two indices.

The group has been asked to submit its final report to the Office of the Economic Adviser in the Commerce and Industry Ministry within 18 months, effectively giving it a June 30, 2026 deadline.

As per the terms of reference of the 18-member panel that also includes some private sector economists, the group is expected to review price collection system and suggest changes for improvement and decide on WPI and PPI computation methodology.

"The Chairman of the Working Group may co-opt experts/ representatives of

other agencies, as may be considered necessary," the Ministry said. Apart from Mr. Chand, the panel includes eight officials from the Ministries of Statistics, Finance, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Agriculture, and Consumer Affairs. A RBI representative and the CEO of the GST Network have also been roped in.

From the private sector, Crisil chief economist Dharmakirti Joshi, Bank of America Merrill Lynch economist Indranil Sengupta, and Kotak Mahindra Asset Management MD Nilesh Shah have been named as members of the working group. PM's EAC member Shamika Ravi and economist Surjit Bhalla are the non-official members.

Factory activity at 12-month low

HSBC India Manufacturing PMI dropped to 56.4 last month, from 56.5 in November, as sales and output growth stumbled, diminishes hopes of a substantive third quarter rebound from the disappointing 2.2% uptick for the industrial sector in Q4.

Vikas Dhoot

NEW DELHI

Hopes of a recovery in the manufacturing sector took a fresh hit as factory activity levels in India's private sector stumbled to a 12-month low in December from an already weak November performance, with new orders and output levels slipping to the lowest through 2024, as per a private survey-based index.

Manufacturing activity expansion, which had slipped a joint-11-month low in November, plummeted further as per the seasonally adjusted HSBC



Silver lining: Factories, however, continued to hire at a broader level though some producers initiated layoffs last month. REUTERS

India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), which dropped from 56.5 in November to 56.4 in December. A reading

of over 50 indicates a rise in activity levels.

India's manufacturing sector reported growth of just 2.2% in the July to

September quarter of this financial year and the latest PMI reading suggests there is no ostensible rebound likely in the October to December quarter or the third quarter of 2024-25. Although new export orders rose at a slower rate than total new business for surveyed factories, they marked the fastest uptick in international shipment deals since July.

Firming input costs

Input costs continued to firm up, with firms reporting an uptick in container, material and labour costs in December, but the overall rate of input price inflation

was moderate and eased from November.

Factories, however, continued to hire at a broader level though some producers initiated layoffs last month.

"Not only did manufacturing employment rise for the tenth month in a row during December, but also the rate of job creation quickened to the fastest in four months," said S&P Global, which conducts the PMI surveys.

HSBC economist Ines Lam said India's manufacturing activity ended 2024 on a soft note, amid more signs of slowing down, in the industrial sector.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	THURSDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	79,944	-0.11
US Dollar	85.75	-0.42
Gold	79,720	-0.42
Brent oil	76.20	-0.00

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2597.70	-42.85
Adani Ports.	1226.00	-7.30
Apollo Hosp.	7421.65	-52.00
Asian Paints	2343.25	-38.60
Axis Bank	1086.60	-14.80
Bajaj Auto	9079.50	-338.95
Bajaj Finance	1700.65	-124.25
Bharti Airtel	296.80	-2.90
BPCL	296.90	-1.60
Britannia Ind.	4787.80	-6.95
Cipla	1537.90	-8.80
Coal India	392.95	-6.55
Dr Reddys Lab.	1375.05	-6.05
Eicher Motors	5308.10	-422.80
Grasim Ind.	2543.95	-101.80
HCL Tech.	1972.20	-60.25
HFDC Life	620.15	-2.95
Hero MotoCorp	4311.50	-127.15
Hindalco	599.00	-6.05
Hind Unilever	2370.00	-47.90
ICICI Bank	1290.60	-6.95
IndusInd Bank	991.35	-21.95
Infosys	1957.85	-75.35
ITC	489.05	-5.10
JSW Steel	912.50	-7.05
Kotak Bank	1837.15	-48.75
L&T	3713.50	-46.00
M&M	3211.10	-129.10
Maruti Suzuki	11841.30	-633.00
NestleIndia	2200.20	-30.95
NTPC	338.00	-4.35
ONGC	246.07	-9.12
PowerGrid Corp	315.15	-4.75
Reliance Ind.	1241.80	-20.55
SBI Life	1422.25	-21.85
State Bank.	801.20	-8.00
Shriram Finance Ltd.	3060.05	-141.40
Sun Pharma	1878.00	-11.95
TataConsumerProduct	929.65	-9.35
Tata Motors	765.05	-15.80
Tata Steel	138.18	-1.44
TCS	4175.75	-63.30
Tech Mahindra	1726.95	-23.10
Titan	3388.95	-135.10
Trent Ltd.	7321.00	-252.95
UltraTech Cement	1179.70	-350.70
Wipro	303.80	-3.50

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on January 02

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	85.55	85.87
Euro	88.40	88.74
British Pound	106.53	106.93
Japanese Yen (100)	54.44	54.64
Chinese Yuan	11.72	11.76
Swiss Franc	94.35	94.72
Singapore Dollar	62.72	62.97
Canadian Dollar	59.34	59.57
Malaysian Ringgit	19.09	19.19
Australian Dollar	53.18	53.38

Source: Indian Bank

ICRA pares credit growth hopes for this year, and next

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

at a multi-year low of 2.6%, the RBI's stress tests indicate it could rise to 3% by 2025-26 in the baseline scenario of robust growth and declining inflation," the Nomura note said.

Cyclical slowdown

Nomura has reiterated that India is in the midst of a cyclical slowdown, and this "evidence of household balance sheet stress chimes with weak income and K-shaped" urban consumption demand. We expect GDP growth to remain weak at 6% year-on-year in 2024-25 and 5.9% in 2025-26," they concluded.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Short term E-Procurement Notice INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer HP PWD Division Nalagarh Dist. Solan HP on behalf of Governor of HP invites the online bids on percentage rate, in electronic/nic tendering system, in 2 cover system for the under mentioned work from the eligible and approved contractors/firms registered with HPPWD Department.

Job No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (In Rs.)	Ernest Money (In Rs.)	Time Allowed	Cost of Form	Eligibility of Contractor
1.	C/O link road Manjholi Lakhnupur Jhiran km 0/0 to 8/760 (SH- C/O sub structure, super structure of RCC Box Cell bridge (7.42x45.00mtr four cell unit) total span 32.00 mtr at RD (240) and M/T work.	1,73,97,486/-	3,4800/-	Twelve Month	5000/-	B & C

Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The Bid document is available online and bid should be submitted in online mode on website <https://hp.tenders.gov.in>. Bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized certifying authorities ("Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPPWD may obtain the same from the website

RAMALLAH

Palestinian Authority temporarily suspends broadcasts of *Al Jazeera*



The Palestinian Authority has temporarily suspended *Al Jazeera* broadcasts, and on Thursday cited incitement and biased coverage amid clashes in Jenin. The decision follows complaints from the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate. *Al Jazeera* condemned the suspension, likening it to Israeli censorship. AFP

BELIJNG

China slaps sanctions on U.S. firms over Taiwan arms sales



China has sanctioned 10 U.S. defence firms, including subsidiaries of Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, for arms sales to Taiwan. This is the second round of sanctions in less than a week, adding to a list of 45 U.S. entities penalised. The firms face import/export bans and their executives are barred from entering China. AFP

CETINJE

Montenegro enters three days of mourning after gunman kills 12



Montenegro has entered three days of national mourning on Thursday following a mass shooting in Cetinje, where a gunman killed 12 people, including two children, after a bar altercation. The shooter, 45-year-old Aco Martinović, later died by suicide while surrounded by police. Four others were seriously injured. AFP

WASHINGTON

Biden to award Trump critic Liz Cheney with service medal



U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday will award Liz Cheney, a former Republican congresswoman and critic of Donald Trump, with the Presidential Citizens Medal, recognising her service on the January 6 committee. Alongside Ms. Cheney, 19 others will receive the medal for their exemplary contributions. AFP

U.S. Army veteran who killed 15 in New Orleans was 'inspired' by the IS

The federal agency identified the attacker as Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a 42-year-old U.S. citizen from Texas, who has previously served as an IT specialist in the military; Biden said Jabbar had posted videos online expressing his inspiration from the IS

Agence France-Presse
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS

A U.S. Army veteran who drove a pickup truck into a crowd of New Year's revellers in New Orleans, killing 15 people, had posted videos to social media hours before the carnage, saying he was inspired by the Islamic State (IS) group and expressing a desire to kill, President Joe Biden said.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) said it was investigating the attack as a terrorist act. In the early Wednesday attack, a driver steered around a police blockade



Brutal carnage: Investigators arrive at the scene where a truck crashed into a crowd of New Year's revellers in New Orleans. AFP

and slammed into revellers before being shot to death by police. The FBI said it does not believe the driver acted alone.

The FBI identified the

attacker as Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a 42-year-old U.S. citizen from Texas. He appeared to have been a real estate agent working in Houston and had served as

an IT specialist in the military.

Officials said they were

searching for accomplices

but gave few details.

Police Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick described Jabbar as

a "terrorist," and the FBI

said "an ISIS flag was located

in the vehicle".

Witnesses described

scenes of chaos as Jabbar

accelerated down Bourbon

Street around 3:15 a.m.,

where revellers were celebrating the start of 2025.

After ploughing into

pedestrians, Jabbar exited

the vehicle and opened fire

on police officers, resulting

in a shoot-out in which he

was killed. Two officers

were wounded during the

exchange. In the aftermath, officials are searching for potential accomplices, with Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry stating they are "hunting down bad people". The FBI is conducting search warrants in New Orleans and other states related to the attack.

The victims included

young individuals like Ni-

kyra Cheyenne Dedeaux,

an 18-year-old nursing student, and Reggie Hunter, a warehouse manager and father of two.

The attack has raised

concerns about security in

New Orleans, particularly

with upcoming events

such as the Super Bowl.

Israeli strikes kill Hamas police chief and 24 others

Agence France-Presse

GAZA STRIP



A crater caused by an Israeli strike that hit an administrative building in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Thursday. AFP

dren and two women, with 15 others injured. The Hamas-run Interior Ministry condemned the strikes, claiming they intensified civilian suffering and violated international laws regarding the protection of non-combatants.

This incident highlights the ongoing violence in Gaza amid a protracted conflict that began after Ha-

mas's unprecedented attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. The situation continues to deteriorate, with aid agencies warning of a potential breakdown in social order due to extensive destruction of infrastructure and high civilian casualties.

Court in Bangladesh rejects bail petition of Chinmoy Krishna Das

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

A Bangladeshi court on Thursday denied bail to Chinmoy Krishna Das, the former leader of ISKCON in Bangladesh. Mr. Das has been in police custody since November 25 when he was arrested at the Shah Jalal International Airport in Dhaka on charges of insulting the national flag during a rally of the pro-minority organisation Bangladesh Sammilito Sanatani Jagaran Jote in Chittagong.

This is the third time Mr. Das is being denied a bail. Thursday's hearing took place in Chittagong where Mr. Das has remained since he was flown back a day after his arrest. Public Prosecutor Mafizul Haq Bhuiya said the hearing continued for half an hour and the judge declined to give bail after hearing both sides.



Chinmoy Krishna Das

The trial of Mr. Das acquired high profile as for several days, lawyers in Chittagong had avoided coming up to represent him because of the emotionally charged nature of the case.

That apart, the student activists and coordinators of the anti-Sheikh Hasina movement have often targeted him for his activism for minority rights.

An assistant public prosecutor had died in Chittagong on November 26. Mr. Das's supporters clashed with police and military.

27 Europe-bound migrants die as boats capsize off Tunisia

Agence France-Presse

TUNIS

Twenty-seven migrants, including women and children, died after two boats capsized off central Tunisia, with 83 people rescued, a civil defence official said on Thursday.

The rescued and dead passengers, who were found off the Kerkennah Islands off central Tunisia, were aiming to reach Europe and were all from sub-Saharan African countries, said Zied Sdiri, head of civil defence in the city of Sfax.

Searches were still under way for other possible missing passengers, according to the Tunisian National Guard, which oversaw the coastguard.

Tunisia is a key departure point for irregular migrants seeking to reach Europe with Italy, whose island of Lampedusa is only 150 kilometres from Tu-

nisia, often their first port of call.

Each year, tens of thousands of people attempt the perilous Mediterranean crossing, which has seen a spate of recent shipwrecks, with the dangers exacerbated by bad weather.

On December 18, at least 20 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa died in a shipwreck off the city of Sfax, with five others missing. Since the beginning of the year, the Tunisian human rights group FTDES has counted "between 600 and 700" migrants killed or missing in shipwrecks off Tunisia. More than 1,300 migrants died or disappeared in 2023.

Impeached S. Korean President issues defiant message as he faces detention

Associated Press

SEOUL

Impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, in a message to conservative supporters rallying outside his Seoul residence, vowed to "fight to the end" against "anti-state forces," while his legal team warned on Thursday that police officers attempting to detain him could face arrest by his presidential security service or even civilians.

The detention warrant was issued after Yoon evaded requests to appear for questioning

imposition on December 3 amounted to rebellion.

Oh Dong-woon, the anti-corruption agency's chief prosecutor, has indicated that police forces might be deployed if Mr. Yoon's security service attempts to obstruct his detention.

could occur as early as Thursday. But it remains unclear whether Mr. Yoon can be compelled to submit to questioning.

South Korean law permits anyone to make an arrest to stop an active crime, and critics accused Mr. Yoon of inciting his supporters to obstruct attempts to detain him.

The liberal Opposition Democratic Party accused the President of trying to mobilise his supporters to block his detention.

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REALITY CHECK

No surprise if Rohit announces retirement from Tests: Shastri



Former India coach Ravi Shastri said he will not be surprised if Rohit Sharma announces his Test retirement in the near future. "He'll take a call on his career but I won't be shocked at all (if Rohit retires) because he's not getting younger. There are other young players in the wings, there's Shubman Gill," said Shastri.

BIG LEAP

Webster set to make debut at SCG as Marsh misses out on final Test



Australia captain Pat Cummins confirmed that young all-rounder Beau Webster will make his debut in the fifth and final Test against India at the SCG on Friday. Webster will come in for Mitchell Marsh. "Marshy misses out and Bo (Webster) is debuting. Mitchie obviously hasn't quite got the runs, or perhaps wickets," said Cummins.

ALL-CLEAR

Cummins confirms Starc 'was never going to miss big game'



There was a worry about pacer Mitchell Starc's fitness in the lead-up to the fifth Test against India, but Aussie skipper Pat Cummins offered a positive update: "He went off for a scan and got the all-clear to play. It's a big game in the context of the series, World Test Championship too. So, yeah, he was never going to miss."

SPORTING WICKET

Sydney track will have something in it for all, feels Cummins



Pat Cummins, when asked about the playing surface at the SCG for the fifth Test, said: "For two (Sheffield) Shield wickets, they seemed really well. There was a bit on offer for the bowlers, but also runs to be scored. There will be some stages where it will be pretty good for batting, but potentially break up and spin towards the end."

Team India faces Rohit conundrum in decider

Gill could be back if the skipper drops himself. Prasidh likely to be the third seamer as Akash is out with a back injury; the visitor has a solitary win from 13 Tests in Sydney

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

SYDNEY

A new year with its tidings of hope is the overwhelming theme whenever January chimes in. It is no different this time around, especially for India, as it faces the challenge of altering the script in the current Border-Gavaskar Trophy series.

Trailing 1-2, the fifth and final Test commencing at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) on Friday, presents India with an opportunity for redemption. Winning at Perth, losing in Adelaide, a weather-assisted draw in Brisbane, and a loss in Melbourne, have constituted the report card of Rohit Sharma's men.

At the SCG with its history woven around runs and spin, any Asian team should feel optimistic. India is no different though its performance here over the decades reads as one win, seven draws and five losses.

This is the ground in which Ravi Shastri scored a 206 in 1992, a Test in which Shane Warne made his debut. This is the same turf where Sachin Tendulkar posted an unbeaten 241 in 2004, a knock in which he cut out the cover-drive, a shot that had become his tragic flaw. Perhaps the last bit offers a lesson to Virat Kohli, who has been fishing outside the off-stump.

India will miss Akash Deep as the speedster is dealing with a back injury. However, the bigger worry is about Rohit. As a captain, his name would be the first one pencilled into the playing eleven. But with coach Gautam Gambhir not being explicit about whether the out-of-form skipper will find a berth, that old Indian cricket imagery of smoke and daggers is in vogue.

It is the last thing

**The race to the finish**

As the current World Test Championship (WTC) cycle reaches the home stretch, Australia and India square off in the series decider at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG)

Points Table	P	W	L	D	DED	PTS	PCT
1 South Africa (Q)	11	7	3	1	0	88	66.67
2 Australia	16	10	4	2	10	118	61.46
3 India	18	9	7	2	2	114	52.78
4 New Zealand*	14	7	7	0	3	81	48.21
5 Sri Lanka	11	5	6	0	0	60	45.45

Q: Qualified | *No remaining match and out of the race | Points system: 12 for a win, 6 for a tie, 4 for a draw | DED: Points are deducted for slow over rates

IN THE FRAY
AUSTRALIA
■ Remaining games: CRICKET AUSTRALIA India (home, one Test), Sri Lanka (away, two Tests)
■ Best possible finish: 67.54%
■ Needs to win just one of its next three matches to book a ticket to Lord's
INDIA
■ Remaining match: Australia (away, one Test)
■ Best possible finish: 55.26%
■ To qualify for the final, India must win the fifth Test in Sydney, and hope for a positive Sri Lanka result (or a 0-0 draw) when the Aussies tour the island nation

SRI LANKA
■ Remaining matches: Australia (home, two Tests)
■ Best possible finish: 53.85%
■ For the team to progress, the Sydney Test between Australia and India has to end in a draw and it has to win both contests against Australia



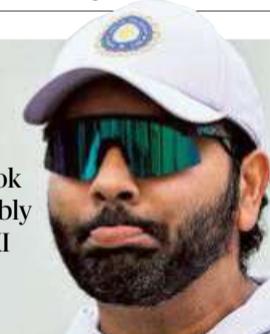
All individuals know the area they have to work on. It's not like I am talking about (specific) individuals. Ultimately, you win and lose as a team



Everything is fine with Rohit. We will have a look at the wicket and probably announce our playing XI

GAMBHIR

India head coach



anyone needs ahead of a vital face-off. If India does manage to defeat Australia and draw level at 2-2, by virtue of being the defending champion, the visitor would retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

It is imperative that the batters collectively fire. K.L. Rahul's runs, Nitish Kumar Reddy's consistency, Yashasvi Jaiswal's promise and the lower-order's fire-fighting have often rescued India. The others have to contribute too and Shubman Gill, benched at Melbourne, could get a look-in.

On the bowling front, Jasprit Bumrah, who might lead if Rohit is dropped, has been exceptional. It remains to be seen if the think-tank would prefer Prasidh Krishna as the third seamer and stick with

Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar as the two spinners.

Across the dividing line, Australia made one change with Beau Webster replacing Mitchell Marsh. If this is a full-stop for the latter, it could be a mirror reflection of the fate that affected his father Geoff Marsh.

The former opener watched his Test career grind to a halt following a lukewarm show against the visiting Indians in the 1991-92 series.

For Pat Cummins, most of his batters have slowly gained form even if they look vulnerable against Bumrah.

The Australian skipper has led from the front and it is one essential trick that Rohit missed in this series. If he does effect a turnaround, sport's latest mira-

cle would be upon us. For now, it looks remote.

The teams (from):

Australia: Pat Cummins (Capt.), Travis Head (Vice-capt.), Usman Khawaja, Samson Konstas, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Josh Inglis, Alex Carey (wk), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Scott Boland, Sean Abbott, Jhye Richardson and Beau Webster.

India: Rohit Sharma (Capt.), Jasprit Bumrah (Vice-capt.), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill, K.L. Rahul, Devdutt Padikkal, Rishabh Pant (wk), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Mohammed Siraj, Harshit Rana, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Sarfaraz Khan, Prasidh Krishna and Tanush Kotian.

Match officials: Umpires: Michael Gough and Sharfuddoula Saikat; Third umpire: Joel Wilson; Match referee: Andy Pycroft.

Match starts at 5 a.m. IST.

but without Harmanpreet Singh on the pitch, they went waste. UP, to its credit, stuck to its plans, preferring to go for open goals and constantly entering the Soorma circle, the attacks orchestrated by Hardik Singh's tireless brilliance right through the middle of the field.

Eight minutes into the third quarter, Floris Worrelboer's aerial cross from the half line was brought down perfectly by Chirmako near the baseline before Jobanpreet Singh deflected

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

SYDNEY

Never has an Indian captain's stint in the nets and his body language been analysed so threadbare. But it all happened at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) and Rohit Sharma was at the centre of it all, on the eve of the fifth and final Test against Australia.

It started when Gautam Gambhir addressed the pre-match press-conference at the SCG here on Thursday afternoon. Just as the interaction warmed up, the Indian coach was asked about Rohit not being present to talk to the correspondents. "Everything is fine with Rohit and I don't think it is anything traditional. The head coach is here, I think that should be fine, that should be good enough and tomorrow we will have a look at the wicket and probably announce our playing eleven," replied Gambhir.

To be fair to the former India opener, there have been instances in the past when the skipper did not turn up and another player faced the media. There has been no tradition set in stone about the Indian captain talking to the press, a day ahead of a contest. So that was one googly, adeptly dealt with.

But the drama was just building up as the backdrop had the stink of a palace intrigue. Rohit's poor form in this series (31 runs from six innings), reports hinting at the coach's strong words with the

team after the defeat in the fourth Test at Melbourne, and speculation about a senior player harbouring captaincy ambitions, were all part of the mix.

A direct question on whether Rohit will be part of the playing XI was raised. "The answer remains the same," the coach said.

Inside the hall, correspondents wrestled with multiple queries in their minds. Is the captain being benched? But wouldn't that be too extreme? Or was it just a casual line?

Soon, attention shifted to India's training stint at the main ground. Rohit participated in the warm-up game of footvolley, but skipped the slip-catching drill. When the players moved to the nets outside the main venue, the captain was missing. K.L. Rahul, Virat Kohli, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Ravindra Jadeja, Rishabh Pant and Dhruv Jurel, all had long batting stints.

Rohit finally turned up. He had a chat with Jasprit Bumrah and chief selector Ajit Agarkar, he returned to the pavilion. A captain being dropped would be too radical. However, officially, the last word would be known at the toss on Friday.

'Only thing that can keep one in the dressing room is performance'

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

SYDNEY

Deep in the basement of the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), Gautam Gambhir had to deal with the microscopic details of the current team and the macroscopic need of an efficient transition. Speaking to the media ahead of the fifth Test, the Indian coach offered an optimistic note: "If someone had said 40 or 45 days ago that we would be in this situation, and that we can come to Sydney and draw this series, then it's a good position to be in."

Drawing level in the series was a theme he repeated later too: "Extremely confident. We have everything in that dressing room that can win a Test here. Not only here, probably go on to do some unbelievable things in the future as well."

Gambhir has often stressed on putting the team first and he reiterated that idea: "If our batting and bowling hadn't done well, we wouldn't have won a Test or be 2-1 down. We could have been in a worse situation. All individuals know which area they have to work on. It's not like I am talking about (specific) individuals here.

Ultimately, you win as a team and lose as a team."

Asked about whether any conversation happened with regard to the future of two veterans – skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, Gambhir clarified: "We just had one conversation, that was about

how we can win the next Test match. We didn't have any other conversation."

Having revealed that Akash Deep is ruled out with a back injury, the coach emphasised that Indian cricket is always safe:

"Indian cricket will always be in safe hands till the time you have honest people. It is not about phasing out senior players or getting the youngsters in. Ultimately, the only thing that can keep you in that dressing room is performance."

When asked about his message to players, who tend to follow their natural instincts, Gambhir said: "The 'team first' ideology matters. People can play their natural game. But if you need to play in a certain way, you got to do that."

And when reminded about reports within the squad, the coach retorted: "Those are just reports. That's not the truth. There are some honest words (in the dressing room). And honesty is very important. Honesty is extremely important if you want to achieve some great things."

UP Rudras thrashes wasteful Soorma, joins Bengal Tigers at the top

HIL**Uthra Ganesan**

ROURKELA

Soorma Hockey Club paid the price for profligacy and waywardness to go down 0-3 to UP Rudras in a Hockey India League (HIL) match here on Thursday.

With its second outright win in as many games, UP joined Shashi Rarh Bengal Tigers at the top of the table with six points while Soorma, with a shootout win, is

on two points. But it only had itself to blame for the loss, with defensive lapses adding to its scoring woes. It was also the most one-sided game so far in the HIL.

Early strike

UP was off the mark even before the opposition could settle in, Sudeep Chirmako slotting in a rebound in the second minute itself. Rattled, Soorma went hard on the attack, pressing hard and rewarded by a couple of penalty corners

but without Harmanpreet Singh on the pitch, they went waste. UP, to its credit, stuck to its plans, preferring to go for open goals and constantly entering the Soorma circle, the attacks orchestrated by Hardik Singh's tireless brilliance right through the middle of the field.

Eight minutes into the third quarter, Floris Worrelboer's aerial cross from the half line was brought down perfectly by Chirmako near the baseline before Jobanpreet Singh deflected

his pass to double the lead.

The game also saw India veterans Lalit Upadhyay and Akashdeep Singh displaying why they continue to be regarded highly on the domestic circuit, using their experience to team up with youngsters like Gurjot Singh and Chirmako to create space out of nowhere.

Akashdeep got his team's third in the 58th minute, slapping hard into an empty goal after Hardik had done all the hard work from own 23-yard line to

the other side.

IN BRIEF



Dream debut for Lhingdeikim as India routs Maldives

Debutant Lhingdeikim netted four goals as the senior India women's team crushed Maldives 11-1 in the FIFA international football friendly at the Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence in Bengaluru on Thursday. Two other debutants – Nongmeikapam Sibani Devi and Simran Gurung – also got on the scoresheet.

The result: India 11 (Lhingdeikim 12, 16, 56, 59, Kajol D'Souza 15, Hawea Haneifa 17-og, Pooja 41, Sibani Devi 45, Simran Gurung 62, 68, Khumukcham Bhumika Devi 71) bt Maldives 1 (Mariyam Rifa 27).



Arsenal beats Brentford, closes gap on Liverpool

Arsenal began the new year in style as it recovered from an early sucker-punch to beat Brentford 3-1 away and move back into second place in the Premier League on Wednesday. The win lifted Arsenal above Chelsea and Nottingham Forest with 39 points from 19 games with Liverpool on 45 from 18.

The result: Brentford 1 (Mbeumo 13) lost to Arsenal 3 (Jesus 29, Merino 50, Martinelli 53).



Perera's quick-fire century gives Lanka consolation win

Kusal Perera cracked a career-best 101 off just 46 balls as Sri Lanka secured a consolation seven-run victory in the third and final T20I against New Zealand in Nelson on Thursday. Sri Lanka posted 218 for five and New Zealand replied with 211 for seven.

The scores: Sri Lanka 218/5 in 20 overs (Kusal Perera 101, Charith Asalanka 46) bt New Zealand 211/7 in 20 overs (Rachin Ravindra 69, Tim Robinson 37, Daryl Mitchell 35, Charith Asalanka 3/50). New Zealand wins series 2-1.

Bangalore Bookmaker's Association to sponsor Oaks

The Bangalore Bookmaker's Association will again sponsor this year's Bangalore Oaks to be run on January 4 (Saturday). The Bookmakers' Association Bangalore Oaks, also known as 'ladies derby', a race for 4-year-old Indian fillies has attracted five runners to run the distance of 2,400m. With a total prize money of ₹25,00,000, the winner of this prestigious event will take home ₹12,50,000 along with the winner's trophy.

HAZARE TROPHY: SIXTH-ROUND FIXTURES

Group-A: Jaipur: Assam vs Manipur, Gujarat vs Goa, Haryana vs Odisha, Jharkhand vs Uttarakhand.
Group-B: Mumbai: Himachal Pradesh vs Services, Meghalaya vs Sikkim, Railways vs Rajasthan.
Navi Mumbai: Andhra vs Maharashtra.
Group-C: Ahmedabad: Arunachal Pradesh vs Nagaland, Hyderabad vs Punjab, Mumbai vs Pondicherry, Saurashtra vs Karnataka.
Group-D: Vizianagaram: Tamil Nadu vs Mizoram, Uttar Pradesh vs Vidarbha.
Visakhapatnam: Chhattisgarh vs Jammu & Kashmir.
Group-E: Hyderabad: Baroda vs Madhya Pradesh, Bengal vs Bihar, Kerala vs Tripura.
Group D matches begin at 8.45 a.m. Rest of the games start at 9 a.m.

LIVE TELECAST

Zimbabwe vs Afghanistan: 2nd Test, day 2, FanCode, 1.30 p.m.
South Africa vs Pakistan: 2nd Test, day 1, JioCinema, 2 p.m.
ISL: Sports 18-3 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.
Hockey: HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 (SD & HD) & Liv, 8.15 p.m.
LaLiga: gxr.world, 1.30 a.m. (Saturday)
Australia vs India: 5th Test, day 2, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 5 a.m. (Saturday)

Manu Bhaker gets the govt's nod for the Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna

Gukesh, Harmanpreet Singh, and Praveen Kumar also chosen for the honour; 32 athletes, including 16 Paralympians, get the nod for Arjuna Award

SPORTS AWARDS

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Double Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker has been chosen for the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award along with World chess champion D. Gukesh, men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh and Paralympic gold medalist Praveen Kumar, as per an announcement made by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports on Thursday. President Droupadi Murmu will present the sports awards at the Rashtrapati Bhavan at 11 a.m. on January 17.

There was a furore when Manu's name was deemed to be missing from the list chosen by the panel that met to finalise the names. The apparent reason was that there was no application from the shooter, as the government had simplified the process by



Elite list: Manu, Gukesh, Harmanpreet and Praveen have been recognised for their feats in 2024. PTI, M. VEDHAN, K. MURALI KUMAR, GETTY IMAGES

advocating self-application, instead of being recommended by the national federation or other persons.

With the Union Sports Minister having the final say, it was not a surprise to find Manu's name being added to the list. In the past, the Union Sports Ministry had proposed Saina Nehwal's name and granted her the Khel Ratna award even without any application or recommendation.

Two other shooters, Swapnil Kusale who won



Elite list: Manu, Gukesh, Harmanpreet and Praveen have been recognised for their feats in 2024. PTI, M. VEDHAN, K. MURALI KUMAR, GETTY IMAGES

the rifle 3-position bronze, and Sarabjeet Singh who had won the mixed air pistol bronze with Manu in the Paris Olympics, have been chosen for Arjuna Award.

The wrestling bronze medalist from the Paris Games, Aman Sehraawat, has also been picked for Arjuna Award.

Petkar recognised
Murlikarni Petkar, the 50m freestyle swimming gold medalist from the 1972 Paralympics in Heidelberg, Germany, was chosen for Arjuna Award in the life-



Elite list: Manu, Gukesh, Harmanpreet and Praveen have been recognised for their feats in 2024. PTI, M. VEDHAN, K. MURALI KUMAR, GETTY IMAGES

time category, after he had won wide acclaim from the film *Chandu Champion* based on his real life story.

The government has listed 32 athletes for the Arjuna Award, with 16 of them being Paralympians. Understandably so, as India had the best haul in the Paralympics in Paris.

Four hockey players get the Arjuna Award, along with two athletes, two boxers, apart from one each in wrestling (Aman Sehraawat), swimming (Sajan Prakash), squash (Abhay Singh), and chess (Vantika



Elite list: Manu, Gukesh, Harmanpreet and Praveen have been recognised for their feats in 2024. PTI, M. VEDHAN, K. MURALI KUMAR, GETTY IMAGES

Agrawal). Shooting coach Deepali Deshpande has been chosen for Dronacharya Award, along with hockey coach Sandeep Sangwan and para-shooting coach Subhash Rana.

Chandigarh University beat Lovely Professional University and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, to win the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy for the Best University.

The list of awardees:
Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna: D. Gukesh, Harmanpreet Singh, Praveen Kumar, Manu

Bhaker.
Arjuna Award: Jyothi Yarraji, Annu Rani (athletics); Nitu Ghanghas, Saweety Boora (boxing); Vantika Agrawal (chess); Salima Tete, Abhishek Nain, Sanjay Rana, Jarmanpreet Singh, Sukheet Singh (hockey); Rakesh Kumar (para-archery); Preeti Pal, Jeevani Deepthi, Ajeev Singh, Sachin Khilari, Dharambir Nain, Pranav Soorma, Hokato Sema, Simran Sharma, Navdeep Singh (all para-athletics); Nitesh Kumar, Thulasimathi Murugesan, Nittha Sivan, Manisha Ramadas (all para-badminton); Kapil Parmar (para-judo); Mono Agarwal, Rubina Francis (para-shooting); Swapnil Kusale, Sarabjeet Singh (shooting), Abhay Singh (squash); Sajan Prakash (swimming); Aman Sehraawat (wrestling).

Arjuna Awards (lifetime): Sucha Singh (athletics), Murlikant Petkar (para-swimming).

Dronacharya Award: Subhash Rana (para shooting), Deepali Deshpande (shooting), Sandeep Sangwan (hockey).

Dronacharya (lifetime): S. Muralidharan (badminton), Armando Colaco (football).

Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar: Physical Education Foundation of India.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy: Chandigarh University.

Saurabh shoots 591 out of 600 in air rifle

SHOOTING

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Saurabh Chaudhary announced his return to top form by shooting 591 out of 600 in men's air rifle in the 67th National shooting championships at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlaqabad, on Thursday.

The 22-year-old Saurabh, who represents Railways, and has been languishing away from the national squad for quite some time after the Tokyo Olympics, shot a series of 99, 97, 99, 99, 98 and 99, in putting up the impressive score in qualification.

The world record in men's air pistol stands at 594, shot by Jin Jongoh of Korea, in the Changwon World Cup in 2009.

The finals of the men's air pistol, junior and youth events are scheduled for January 5.

The high number of entries have been forcing the organisers to have nearly week-long qualification competition before the finals in many of the events.

Mohun Bagan trounces Hyderabad FC



Joy of scoring: Aldred nodded home the second goal for Mohun Bagan. DEBASISH BHADURI

ISL

Amitabha Das Sharma
KOLKATA

Mohun Bagan Super Giant crushed the challenge of the visiting Hyderabad FC for a 3-0 win in an ISL match at the Salt Lake Stadium here on Thursday.

Things went downhill for Hyderabad when defender Stefan Sapic scored an own goal early before Tom Aldred and Jason Cummings found the net

once each to complete the rout.

The win helped Mohun Bagan take its tally to 32 points from 14 matches to extend the lead over the second-placed Bengaluru FC (27 points from 13 matches) and consolidate its position on top of the standings.

Hyderabad suffered its 10th loss to remain 12th with eight points from 14 matches.

The result: Mohun Bagan SG 3 (Sepic 9-og, Aldred 41, Cummings 51) bt Hyderabad FC 0.

Sahaja beats third seed, makes the quarterfinals

Sports Bureau

Sahaja Yamalapalli beat third seed Han Shi of China 5-7, 6-0, 6-2 in the pre-quarterfinals of the \$60,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Nonthaburi, Thailand, on Thursday. Sahaja will next play eighth-seed Maria Mateas of USA in the quarterfinals.

Other results: \$766,290 ATP, Brisbane, Australia: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Rinky Hijikata & Jason Kubler (Aus) bt Rithvik Bollipalli & Robin Haase (Ned) 6-4, 6-2.

\$100,000 Challenger, Nonthaburi, Thailand: Doubles (quarterfinals): Zdenek Kolar (Cze) & Neil Oberleitner (Aut) bt Ray Ho (Tpe) & Niki Poonacha 6-3, 6-3.

\$30,000 ITF women, Nairobi: Pre-quarterfinals: Joanna Garland (Tpe) bt Yashaswini Panwar 6-1, 6-1; Francesca Pace (Ita) bt Ashmita Eswaramurthy 6-4, 6-0.

Maxim Zhukov downs Dhakshineswar Suresh

Sports Bureau

Maxim Zhukov beat Dhakshineswar Suresh 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 in the super tie-break of the quarterfinals. Parijkshit and Dhakshineswar had earlier knocked out top seeds Egor Agafonov and Grigoriy Lomakin in straight sets.

The results: Pre-quarterfinals: Mathys Erhard (Fra) bt Yuvan Nandal 6-2, 6-4; Alastair Gray (GBR) bt Vishnu Vardhan 6-4, 6-3; Florent Bax (Fra) bt Chirag Duan 6-3, 6-2; Egor Agafonov bt Sidharth Rawat 3-6, 6-4, 6-4; Yurii Dzhabayev (Ukr) bt Vladislav Orlov (Ukr) 6-3, 5-7, 6-1; Oliver Cawford (GBR) bt Aryan Shah 6-1, 2-0 (retired); Samir Banerjee (USA) bt Dev Javia 6-3, 7-6(5); Maxim Zhukov bt Dhakshineswar Suresh 6-4, 3-6, 6-4.

Doubles (quarterfinals): Parikshit Somani & Dhakshineswar Suresh bt Yuichiro Inui (Jpn) & Sidharth Rawat 5-7, 6-3, [12-10]; Chirag Duan & Dev Javia bt Sai Kartick Reddy & Eric Vanshelboim (Ukr) 6-3, 6-4; Ishaque Eqbal & Aryan Shah bt Sergey Fomin (Uzb) &

Maxim Zhukov 6-4, 6-2; Mathys Erhard (Fra) & Alastair Gray (GBR) bt Yurii Dzhabayev (Ukr) & Aryan Lakshmanan 6-2, 6-3.



In full flow: Djokovic was in imperious form. AFP

Novak Djokovic was in imperious form as he demolished Gael Monfils 6-3, 6-3 to reach the quarterfinals of the Brisbane International on Thursday.

On a day when rising stars Mirra Andreeva and Giovanni Mpetshi Perriard underlined their potential, Djokovic cruised past fellow veteran Monfils in 72 minutes.

Former world No. 1 Djokovic next plays giant American Frances Tiafoe 6-4, 7-6(4) to reach the men's quarterfinals.

displayed her improvement over 2024 with a 63-minute romp over the Czech Republic's Noskova.

The teenager faces Ons Jabeur of Tunisia in the last eight.

The teenager faces Ons Jabeur of Tunisia in the last eight.

Kohli – the good, the bad and the ugly

The former India captain had earned the love of the Australian fans after his gesture during a 2019 World Cup match asking the Indian supporters to stop booing Smith; however, his shoulder-butting of 19-year-old debutant Konstas at the MCG didn't go down well with the Aussies



GETTY IMAGES

R. Kaushik

Virat Kohli is a man of many parts. A fantastic batter. An extraordinary athlete. The fittest man in the Indian team for the last decade, even though he recently celebrated his 36th birthday. Proud, passionate, intense. An almost senior statesman, who is in his 17th year in international cricket. Statistically India's most successful captain, even though the team didn't win a single major title under his watch.

Kohli is also a scrapper, a streetfighter, someone who takes offence easily even where none is intended. He is private and guards his privacy zealously, is particularly sensitive when it comes to his young family, yet very vocal, very visible, very in-your-face on the cricket field. Perhaps, as they say, you can take the boy out of Delhi, but you can't take Delhi out of the boy.

Learning to love Virat

In Australia, they have learned to love Kohli. Oh, make no mistake, some sections love to hate him, but the majority loves to love him. That wasn't always the case. On his first senior tour Down Under in 2011-12, he flipped a retaliatory bird at an abusive Sydney crowd in his first Test in Australia, a gesture that earned him the match officials' wrath and a 50% fine of his match fee, slapped by match referee Ranjan Madugalle.

Kohli's next foray to the batting crease, in the same Test, yielded only nine, but it wasn't long before he started to earn the respect, if not the affection, of Australian crowds. In the next game on the famous WACA strip in Perth, he made 44 and 75 and finished off the Test leg with 116 (his maiden Test ton) and 22 in the last game in Adelaide. The triangular series that followed saw Kohli in sublime touch, his extraordinary unbeaten 133 off just 86 deliveries in a knock where he treated Lasith Malinga with absolute disdain striking a chord in the Australian fan.

It was on his following Test tour, in 2014-15, that Kohli made it impossible for the Aussies not to like him. He responded to Mitchell Johnson's instinctive throw on his follow-through that struck him on the body, and a blow to the helmet from the same bowler, to uncork centuries in his first two innings as stand-in captain. By the time he finished the four-Test series as the full-time captain in the aftermath of

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's shock retirement, he had stacked up four centuries, done so with flair and authority and panache and a certain arrogance that the Australians identified with. He had suddenly become the most non-Aussie Aussie, if that makes sense. Virat Kohli was now one of their own, even if he wasn't exactly their own.

That didn't mean they didn't heckle him or needle him. They realised that Kohli could rise to the bait, that he didn't take kindly to being targeted and barracked. Kohli didn't disappoint; he interacted and alternated between snarling and charming, taking over the role of the conductor of the crowd orchestra even from his position in the slip cordon, egging on the sizeable Indian section and completely disregarding the majority Australian presence.

Kohli locked horns with Steve Smith on Australia's tour of India in 2017, stopping short of calling him a cheat when the Aussie skipper briefly looked in the direction of the dressing room during the Bengaluru Test, as if seeking clues on whether he should opt for the DRS challenge upon being adjudged leg before. By the end of that fractious tour, Kohli had all but severed links with all Aussie players - it didn't help that Glenn Maxwell mocked the shoulder injury that kept Kohli out of the series decider in Dharamshala.

When India came to Australia towards the end of 2018, the Aussies had a new captain in place, the outwardly placid Tim Paine who, in reality, lived up to his surname. Paine was borderline nasty, using Kohli as the punching bag even when the Indian captain wasn't batting. No prizes for guessing who had the last laugh. Kohli became the first Indian skipper to win a Test series in Australia, Paine the first home captain to suffer the ignominy of defeat in his own backyard.

During that tour, Kohli played one of the great Test match knocks in Australia, a memorable 123 punctuated by some of the most glorious strokes on the debut of Perth's modern monstrosity, the Optus Stadium, as a Test venue. It didn't prevent a big defeat, but the legend of Kohli was firmly up in Australia, the manner in which the runs were accrued reminiscent of some of the counter-punching Australian batters the home fans had come to revere and adore, if not deify.

Each time he came to Australia, Kohli produced something extraordinary. Like

his century against South Africa in the 50-over World Cup in Melbourne in 2015. Like that magical unbeaten 82, when all seemed lost, in the T20 World Cup against Pakistan, also at the MCG, in October 2022. It was as if the air in Australia inspired Kohli to his best, as if the energy of the fans propelled him, as if the rush and the electricity was the drug that elevated him to glorious highs.

When he landed in Perth some eight and a half weeks back, it was to the general assumption that his fifth Test tour of Australia would most likely be his last. In each of the earlier outings apart from 2020-21, when he played just one Test, Kohli had made at least one century. Australians wanted more of him. So much more. The lead-up to the series was marked by images of Kohli splashed across most Australian newspapers, accompanied by captions and headlines in Hindi. It was as if India had come armed with Kohli, and several others. Until Jasprit Bumrah decided to do something about it.

Kohli responded like only he can, with a century in the second innings of the first Test at the Optus. The headline-hunters were thrilled, those marketing a series that, truth be told doesn't need any marketing, were delighted. What more could they have asked for to keep the fire burning than an Indian win, a century from 'King' Kohli?

Kohli's bat has gone cold since that unbeaten hundred in Perth, his woes outside the off-stump mounting with every passing outing. The regularity with which his bat has been magnetically attracted to the carrot dangled in the corridor of uncertainty has been chronicled extensively. In the past, Kohli has shown himself to be a quick and excellent learner, but those skills have deserted him, hopefully temporarily. But the scrapper in him is very much intact, as a massive crowd at the MCG was reminded on day one of the Boxing Day Test last Thursday.

Maybe Kohli saw a little bit of him in an era gone by in Sam Konstas. Most likely, he did - borderline irreverent, no respect for pedigree or reputation, no sign of fear or nerves, no hesitation or uncertainty or self-doubt. After being beaten four times in the first over of his debut Test, the 19-year-old turned on Bumrah. Ruthlessly. Unexpectedly. Unorthodoxly. He scooped and reverse-scooped the best bowler in the world with impunity, with swag and

audacity, dare we say with arrogance. There were gasps of collective disbelief, even a little outrage - 'Who does he think he is, treating Bumrah like this?' - and Kohli decided to do something about it, shoulder-butting the young lad as he walked from slip to slip between overs.

It didn't make for a good look. Kohli made it seem as if it was accidental, Konstas went so far after the game as to insist it was accidental - was he advised to embrace damage-control? - but match referee Andy Pycroft was having none of it, imposing a fine of 20% of the match fee on the former Indian captain. Did Kohli get away lightly? Potentially yes, though the fine and a single demerit point was the maximum penalty for the category under which he was charged. Just to refresh memories, current India head coach Gautam Gambhir was banned for one Test for shoulder-butting Shane Watson whilst running between the wickets during his 206 in the Delhi Test of

Heat of the moment or accidental? Maybe Kohli allowed himself to be consumed by the heat of the moment, maybe it really was 'accidental', maybe he didn't approve of Konstas' onslaught on Bumrah, but there can be no excuse for physical contact in a non-contact sport. Some have suggested it was just a 'harmless coming together of shoulders' which shouldn't be blown out of proportion, but things aren't as simple as that. Kohli is expected at this stage of his career to assuage frayed nerves and douse simmering fires, not take the opposite route.

His gesture to the Indian section of the crowd at The Oval during the 50-over World Cup in 2019 to stop booing Smith, who had just returned from a ban for his role in 'Sandpapergate', and to treat him with the respect he deserved had elevated him immensely in the eyes of the Australians. He has fallen hugely in their estimation after the unnecessary bust-up with Konstas. Thereafter, he was greeted with boos and jeers every time he was in the action in MCG. How will SCG treat him? And more importantly, how will Kohli treat the SCG?

THE GIST

▼ Kohli is a scrapper, a streetfighter, someone who takes offence easily even where none is intended

▼ Each time he came to Australia, he produced something extraordinary

▼ At this stage of his career, the veteran is expected to assuage frayed nerves and douse simmering fires, not take the opposite route

SCIENCE

Obesity: soft core of an epidemic of non-communicable diseases

Obesity is a chronic disease defined by excessive fat deposits that can impair an individual's health. Obesity increases risk of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. It also increases the risk of certain cancers and greatly influences quality of living factors, such as sleep and mobility.

Anbarasu Mohanraj

At no point in the history of mankind has there been so much excess food on the table as there has been over the last few decades. Science and technology have led to massive increases in food production and preservation over the last 50-75 years. That has indeed helped in eliminating famines and improved the overall health of society.

However, this has created its own perils. Throughout history, our ancestors have been either wandering or physically active in some way right from our primate days. This has changed over the last few decades with man being cuffed to his chair. The average life expectancy of humans is at its peak, and the boomer generation is living into the eighties rather easily.

Excessive food on the table and the lack of mobility are taking their toll on humans. It is well and truly the age of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, and obesity.

I see patients in their seventies coming up for heart surgery. Most of these patients are not overweight, but their children who accompany them to the hospital for consultations or for surgery are grossly obese.

It's quite peculiar, but common now to see patients with heart issues at both ends of the age spectrum. With increasing age expectancy, we see lot of very elderly patients. With non-communicable diseases increasing, we also see a number of young and middle-aged patients coming in with heart issues.

Obesity

Obesity is a chronic, complex disease defined by excessive fat deposits that can impair the health of an individual. Obesity increases the risk of diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and affects bone health. It also increases the risk of certain cancers and influences quality of living factors, such as sleep and mobility.

The current incidence of obesity as per the World Health Organization across the globe is huge: one in eight in the world is obese, and one in three is overweight. Worldwide, adult obesity has doubled since 1990, and adolescent obesity has quadrupled: 37 million children under the age of five are overweight; over 390 million children and adolescents aged 5-19 years are overweight; and 160 million children and adolescents are obese.

So what do we mean by obesity? The diagnosis of overweight and obesity is based on body mass index (BMI) – weight(kg)/height² (m²). For adults, overweight is a BMI greater than 25 kg/m² and obesity means a BMI greater than 30 kg/m².

In 2000, a WHO expert group proposed the BMI criteria for overweight as 23-24.9 kg/m² and obesity as >25 kg/m² for individuals from the Asia-Pacific region as against the international criteria. So we need to take these values to define our level of obesity in India.

Childhood obesity

Childhood obesity is a serious health hazard increasingly growing in India. Childhood obesity can lead to poor self-esteem and depression. Children who

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One in eight in the world is obese, and one in three is overweight, according to the WHO. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Join FREE WhatsApp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F> are obese are prone to developing adulthood obesity and, consequently, developing diabetes, hypertension, and other complications early in life. India ranks second in the world in terms of being home to the highest number of obese children.

Causes of childhood obesity include too little activity and consuming too many calories from food and drinks, but genetic and hormonal factors too need to be evaluated. Regular intake of high-calorie food such as fast foods, baked foods, and fizzy drinks, are the common causes of childhood obesity. Although candies and desserts can also cause obesity, more and more evidence is pointing towards sugary drinks and sports drinks as the culprits.

The Indian picture

Like any other nation, India is affected by the epidemic of obesity. The Indian incidence of obesity is around 13%, which is much higher than in other middle-income countries.

In addition to this issue, one other worrying aspect of the Indian population is normal weight obesity, meaning the population has a higher body fat despite a normal body mass index (BMI). Another variation of obesity in this population is sarcopenic obesity. These people have increased BMI or waist circumference along with sarcopenia (gross loss of muscle mass).

Waist circumference is a very important indicator of obesity, which is quite commonly ignored in our country. The incidence of increased waist circumference with normal weight is as

high as 65% in men and women. These individuals are called TOFI (Thin Outside and Fat Inside). TOFI individuals have a high fat deposition around their waist and have a high incidence of diabetes, hypertension, and heart diseases. An ideal waist circumference is 90 cm for men and 80 cm for women in this population.

Overweight and obesity cause 3.4 million deaths annually worldwide. India ranks third after China and the USA. There are economic burdens that can be attributed to overweight and obesity. Apart from the direct medical costs incurred by the country, the issue of overweight and obesity is also linked with indirect costs associated with the process of seeking medical healthcare, economic loss from premature mortality, absence from work, and negative influence on work productivity.

Obesity has a deleterious impact on the individual, family, society and country. One big challenge is that obesity can trigger mental health issues, including low self-esteem, mood disorders, motivational disorder, eating problems, issues with body image, and negatively impact interpersonal communication.

Addressing obesity

Mere weight loss alone results in a reduction in blood pressure, improves cholesterol levels, and reduces diabetes incidence, all in one shot without any pills.

Treating obesity with newer medicines is quite effective, but it is expensive and is not without adverse effects. Metabolic surgery, or bariatric surgery, is effective,

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but the cost involved and the long-term nutritional aspects and protein supplements needed, have to be taken into account. Awareness, attention, advocacy and addressing the issue are the pillars in the campaign to prevent and treat obesity.

Adhering to a healthy diet and cautiously avoiding high carb items, and junk food are the needs of the hour. Regular physical activity and simple changes in lifestyle are a must.

A goal of 6,000-8,000 steps every day, which is easy to track on smart watches or mobiles, with mild weight training, is recommended. Simple remedies like totally avoiding lifts, walking short distances instead of using automobiles; and avoiding long periods of inactivity using mobile phones, and watching TV also help.

Organisations and companies can give employees walking targets. Checking weight and waist circumference regularly will by itself create motivation to address the issue.

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

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

January is cervical cancer awareness month

Ramya Kannan

QUESTION 1

According to the WHO, Cervical cancer is the — most common cancer in women, with around 660,000 new cases recorded in 2022. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 2

HPV, the Human Papilloma Virus that causes cervical cancer, also is known to cause other kinds of cancers. Name a couple.

QUESTION 3

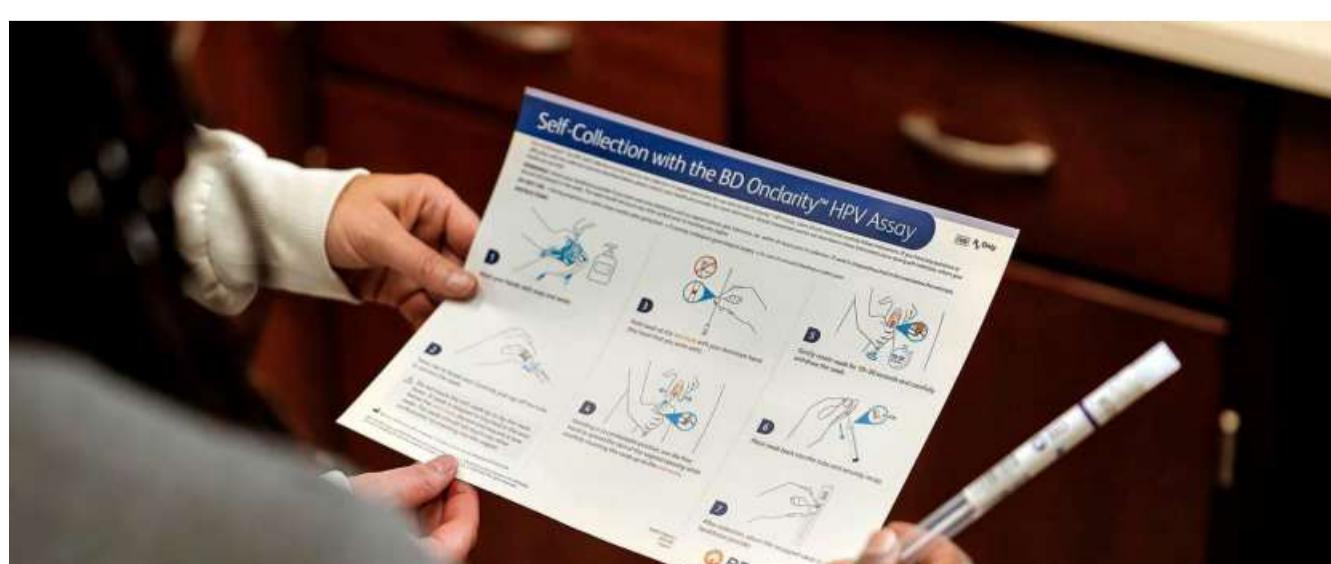
Men can also be carriers of the HPV. True or false?

QUESTION 4

In 2009, a 'demonstration pilot project' on the HPV vaccine — immunogenicity testing — was launched in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, but the trial was suspended due to the death of a few adolescent school girls after HPV vaccination. Later investigations delinked the virus as the causative factor. Name the agency that was involved.

QUESTION 5

The vaccines available to treat cervical cancer are therapeutic or preventive?



Visual question. Today there are self-collection kits to detect cervical cancer. Which was the most commonly used public health mode of testing in the past that reportedly took just a few minutes and was considered more effective than a pap smear? AP



Paracetamol poisoning quietly claims thousands of lives worldwide GETTY IMAGES

Over the counter, under the radar: can paracetamol become fatal?

C. Aravinda

The death of a woman in a Liverpool hospital, reportedly from paracetamol poisoning, has brought the issue out of the shadows. She received a dose far in excess of the recommended dose for her body weight. The truth is, annually, paracetamol poisoning quietly claims thousands of lives worldwide. In the USA alone, it accounts for more than 60,000 emergency hospital visits annually and over 500 deaths. The estimates are limited by a lack of available data from many countries, particularly in Asia, South America, and Africa. Despite its scale, paracetamol poisoning rarely enters public discourse, overshadowed by its reputation as a "safe" drug.

Paracetamol is widely used for pain and fever reduction. In the US and Japan, it is called acetaminophen, while most other countries, including India, use the name "paracetamol." How paracetamol works is not fully understood. It relieves pain by acting on the brain's central nervous system by inhibiting the production of prostaglandins, which are chemical messengers that amplify pain. Paracetamol targets the hypothalamus, the brain's heat-regulating centre for fever reduction.

Safety and risks

The maximum safe dose for an adult is upto 4 grams per day. For children, dosage depends on weight, with the safety threshold being 140 mg per

How paracetamol works is not fully understood. It relieves pain by acting on the central nervous system by inhibiting production of prostaglandins, which are messengers that amplify pain

kilogram of body weight. For example, a person weighing 70 kg should not exceed 10 grams in 24 hours. Exceeding these doses can result in severe abdominal pain due to impending liver failure. It has to be consumed in divided doses, with the maximum dose for adults in the range of 650 mg at a time and for children, 15 mg/kg of body weight.

Dangers of Overdose

When taken in excess, paracetamol becomes toxic. When you take paracetamol as a syrup or tablet, it is absorbed in the small intestine and then enters the bloodstream. It then travels to the liver, where most of it is safely processed. About 60% and 35% are converted into a harmless form called paracetamol glucuronide and paracetamol sulfate, respectively. The remaining 5-10% is turned into a toxic substance called N-acetyl-p-benzoquinone imine (NAPQI). Normally, the liver quickly neutralises NAPQI and removes it as paracetamol glutathione. In case of an overdose, the liver becomes overwhelmed, and NAPQI accumulates and damages liver cells, leading to liver cell death and liver failure. Paracetamol poisoning is insidious, and symptoms often appear after the damage has begun. As toxicity progresses jaundice, confusion, and organ failure may follow.

Treatment

The antidote for paracetamol poisoning is N-acetylcysteine (NAC), which replenishes the body's glutathione reserves and neutralises NAPQI. NAC is most effective when administered within eight hours of the overdose but can still provide benefits up to 24 hours later.

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