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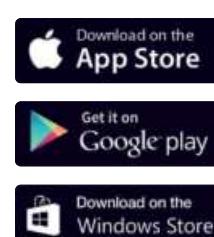
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'Centre rubbing salt into State's wounds'

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Bhujbal out,
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39 Ministers
take oath

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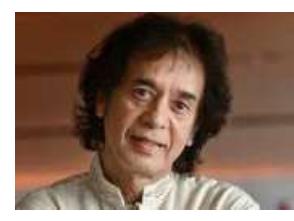
OPINION » PAGE 7



SUPER SUNDAY
Head and Smith help
Australia take charge

SPORT » PAGE 15

IN BRIEF



Zakir Hussain admitted to ICU in San Francisco

NEW DELHI
Tabla maestro Zakir Hussain has been admitted to the ICU of a San Francisco hospital with heart-related issues, his friend and flautist Rakesh Chaurasia said on Sunday. » Page 10

Nitish Kumar puts Mahila Samvad Yatra on hold

PATNA
Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday postponed his Mahila Samvad Yatra a day after the RJD promised a cash transfer scheme for women on winning the Assembly election due next year. » Page 4

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 17

Simultaneous polls Bill not to come up before LS today

Two Bills on the matter removed from the revised list; government likely to complete financial business first; the Rajya Sabha will begin the day with a discussion on supplementary grants

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government has not included the Constitution amendment Bill on holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and Assemblies on the revised list of business for Monday, indicating that the Bill could be delayed.

The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill were earlier listed for Monday in the Lok Sabha.

Indications are that the Centre will bring the Bills once the Rajya Sabha completes the discussion on the Constitution and after the passage of supplementary demands for grants in the Lok Sabha.

Now, if the Centre wants



Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar has invited Mallikarjun Kharge for discussions on Monday to end the impasse. ANI

to bring the Bills on Monday, permission from Speaker Om Birla is necessary to introduce a supplementary list of business. The members received both Bills after the Union Cabinet cleared them last week.

In the statement on objects and reasons, Law Mi-

nister Arjun Ram Meghwal has said the general elections to the House of the People and all State Assemblies were held simultaneously in 1951-52, 1957, 1962 and 1967. However, due to premature dissolution of some Assemblies in 1968 and 1969, the cycle of holding polls simultaneously

with the House of the People was disrupted.

He said the Law Commission, in its 170th report, suggested that holding separate elections for Assemblies should be an exception rather than the rule.

"There is an imperative need for holding of simultaneous elections, given that elections have become expensive and time-consuming," he said, adding that a committee under the chairmanship of former President Ram Nath Kovind too recommended the same.

In the Rajya Sabha, the first item on the agenda is discussion and voting on Supplementary Demands for Grants – First Batch for 2024-2025.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Committed to eliminating Naxalism in Chhattisgarh by 2026, says Amit Shah

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR



Amit Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said that a change in government in Chhattisgarh had provided momentum to the war against Naxalism, even as he reiterated that the insurgency would be completely eradicated by 2026.

Addressing the President's Police Colour Award function at the Police Parade Ground here, he lauded the State government's efforts as well as the achievements of the security forces in the past one year, even as he provided a slew of statistics to highlight some of these breakthroughs.

"The Chhattisgarh Police have secured a significant achievement in the fight against Naxalism in the past one year... 287 Naxalites were neutralised, around 1,000 were arrested and 837 surrendered in the past one year in the State, which reflects the momentum added to the fight against Naxalism. Fourteen top cadres (of Naxalites) were neutralised in the past one year in the State," he said.

"The State leadership, the Chief Minister, the Home Minister of the State have taken a pledge and the Government of India is also committed to your pledge. Together, we will completely eradicate Nax-

alism from Chhattisgarh before March 31, 2026. We all are committed to free Chhattisgarh from the clutches of Naxalism before March 31, 2026," the Home Minister had earlier said.

On the significance of the event and the President's insignia being bestowed upon the Chhattisgarh police, Mr. Shah pointed out how the force receiving it with less than 25 years of service was a departure from the usual trend.

At the Raipur event, and later at the closing ceremony of the Bastar Olympics 2024 in Jagdalpur, Mr. Shah urged the remaining Naxals to lay down arms, join the mainstream, and contribute to nation-building. The Home Minister said that Chhattisgarh has the most attractive surrender policy in the country.

Assembly election: Kejriwal to fight from New Delhi as AAP names all candidates

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday released its fourth and final list of 38 candidates for the Delhi Assembly election due in February next year.

Party chief Arvind Kejriwal will contest from the New Delhi constituency, while Chief Minister Atishi has been repeated from Kalkaji.

There was no change in the constituencies of several senior leaders of the party. Gopal Rai will be contesting from Babarpur again, Saurabh Bharadwaj from Greater Kailash, Raghuvinde Shokeen from Nangloi, Mukesh Kumar Ahlawat from Sultanpur Majra, Amanatullah Khan from Okhla, and



AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal with party leader Manish Sisodia at an event in the Capital on Sunday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

former Health Minister Santyendar Jain from Shakur Basti. In AAP's second list, former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was fielded from Jangpura instead of Patparganj, leading to speculation that other senior leaders may also move to different constituencies.

The final list also in-

cludes the name of Posh Balyan, who will fight the poll from Uttam Nagar.

Ms. Balyan is the wife of MLA Narender Balyan, who is currently in judicial custody in a case lodged under the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act. Ramesh Pehlwan, who switched over from the BJP on Sunday, is

AAP's candidate from Kasurba Nagar, replacing sitting MLA Madan Lal.

Full of confidence'
Taking to X after the release of the list, Mr. Kejriwal said that the party is contesting the election with full confidence and preparation and took a dig at the BJP.

"The BJP is missing in action. They lack a CM face, team, planning or vision for Delhi. They only have one slogan, one policy and one mission - 'Remove Kejriwal'. Ask them what they did in five years for Delhi, and they reply: 'Kejriwal ko bohot gaali di' [We cursed Kejriwal a lot]," he posted.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

No jobs, amenities: Rohingya suffer amid AAP-BJP slugfest

Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

Deen Md., a 65-year-old immigrant living in Madanpur Khadar colony of south Delhi, says he often hears the name of his ethnic group – Rohingya – in the political discourse, but it is never for anything good. "We were persecuted in Myanmar, and now our name gets dragged into political debates here [Delhi] too. We have not done anything wrong. Survival is our only priority," says Mr. Deen, who has been in India for as long as he can remember.

He was among the first to settle in the colony, which houses 66 families and approximately 300 people from the community. However, most of them



A Rohingya refugee at his shanty. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

AAP of "helping to settle illegal Rohingya immigrants" in the capital to cultivate a vote bank.

Hitting back, AAP highlighted a social media post of Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in 2022, who was then holding the Housing and Urban Affairs portfolio, stating that Rohingya refugees will be shifted to EWS flats in Bakkarpur in Delhi and provided basic amenities. Soon after the post, the Centre clarified that the Ministry of Home Affairs had not given such directions.

Mr. Deen said whatever the issue, his community members stay away from political activities. "Even when someone told us about the protests at Shaheen Bagh (anti-CAA agitation), we advised young-

sters not to join it. We keep away from political activities. It can be detrimental to us. Still, our community name keeps cropping up in politics."

'Slum-like conditions'
The refugee colony in Madanpur Khadar, located near an under-construction metro project and situated in low-lying land, gets inundated during rains. Proper roads, water and electricity supply and sanitation are amiss.

Younus Md., a community leader, said many inhabitants have been able to procure UNHCR cards.

"Recently, a few government officials had come here to check our documents. We showed them the UNHCR cards," Mr. Younus said.

The couple sells poori-sabzi at a stall attached to their house, which took four years to build. They have bulbs hanging from ceilings, and tarpaulin sheets covering the shanty. Their five-year-old daughter studies in a nearby government school. She got admission through a UNHCR card. Ms. Minara said even drinking water was not available. "We have to even buy water. How can we survive without a job?" said the 30-year-old.

Her neighbour Sitara Begum says, "My eldest daughter isn't getting admission to any school as we don't have the necessary documents."

SEE ALSO
» PAGE 2

Techie's death: police arrest wife, family, take them to Bengaluru

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru police, investigating the death of 34-year-old Atul Subhash, arrested on Saturday his wife, her mother and brother for allegedly abetting his death.

Atul was found dead at his residence in Munekollala in Bengaluru on December 9. In a note and video, Atul made a series of allegations, including harassment, by his wife and her family, before taking the extreme step.

Nikita Singhania, wife of Atul, her mother Nisha Singhania and brother Anurag Singhania, were the persons who were arrest-

ed. A fourth suspect, Sushil Singhania, Nikita's uncle, is yet to be arrested and efforts are on to secure him, the police said.

Several teams had been dispatched to track down the persons who were on the run. While one team found Nikita at a paying guest accommodation in Gurugram, Haryana, her mother and brother were nabbed by another team of police in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, DCP, Whitefield division, Shivakumar Gu-

nare said. "The accused have been brought to Bengaluru and sent to judicial custody after being produced before a local court," said a police officer. The accused have

been booked under section 108 (abetment to suicide) of BNS. Efforts are on to track down Nikita's uncle who is on the run, added the police.

Justice not served yet'
Meanwhile, Pawan Kumar Modi, the father of the deceased, has demanded the authorities concerned to reunite them with their grandson. The child, according to the police, is under the custody of their relatives. Speaking to the media from his hometown in U.P., he thanked the police for their efforts and demanded strict punishment for the accused. "Those in distress may call 1800-599-0019 for help."

Will improve, not raze slums after winning poll: Bidhuri

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi unit of the BJP on Sunday said it believes "in improving, not dismantling," the *jhuggi* clusters in the city and would create a separate government department for their maintenance if voted to power in the upcoming Delhi Assembly poll.

"Our government will create a separate department to ensure cleanliness in the *jhuggi* settlements," BJP's South Delhi Lok Sabha MP Ramveer Singh Bidhuri said on his visit to V.P. Singh Camp, a slum cluster in Tughlakabad.

According to a 2022-23 government report, there are 675 slum clusters in Delhi, housing around 15.5 lakh people.

Last month, the BJP launched the 'Ratri Pravas Samvad Abhiyaan', a poll campaign under which party leaders and workers interact with slum dwellers and spend a night in their homes. Delhi BJP chief Viresh Sachdeva, who visited Rajiv Camp in Krishna Market of Jhilmil, said his party was "the first to directly communicate with people in slum clusters".

Jhuggi tourism'
Terming BJP campaign "jhuggi tourism", AAP alleged, "BJP feasts with slum residents on one day and demolishing their homes the next day, revealing its two-faced duplicity." "Former CM Arvind Kejriwal has transformed the lives of slum dwellers by providing quality education, health care, free bus rides for women, and free electricity," AAP said in a statement.

Atishi writes to Shah over presence of Rohingya; Puri says AAP govt. 'playing host'

CM Atishi seeks list of 'illegal Rohingya settled in Delhi by BJP-led Centre', cites law and order concerns; Union Minister accuses Delhi govt. of extending amenities, financial aid to refugees

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Sunday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and questioned how did "illegal Rohingya" reach the Capital from across the country's border with Myanmar "without getting detected".

She also reiterated her party's stance that the "illegal" Muslim refugees from Myanmar were "settled in large numbers" in Delhi by the BJP-led Centre, citing an over two-year-old social media post by Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri.

Mr. Puri – who held the charge of the Union Urban Development Minister at the time of his post on X in August 2022 – hit back accusing Delhi's ruling party had dug up an X post of Mr. Puri announcing a "decision to relocate" them to the flats constructed for those from economically



Chief Minister Atishi sought to corner the BJP over a two-year-old social media post of Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri. FILE PHOTOS

monetary assistance to them.

Ms. Atishi's letter came amid a war of words over the issue between AAP and the BJP ahead of the Delhi Assembly poll due in February next year.

While the BJP has accused AAP of facilitating the settlement of the refugees due to vote-bank politics, the Delhi's ruling party had dug up an X post of Mr. Puri announcing a "decision to relocate" them to the flats constructed for those from economically

weaker sections (EWS) in the city's Bakkawala area.

'People kept in dark'

Ms. Atishi sought to know "how many Rohingya did the Centre transport and relocate to Delhi, where they have been settled and why did the BJP government kept the Delhi government and people in the dark".

"I request you to provide a complete list of Rohingya settled by the BJP government along with their addresses," she said, de-

manding that no illegal refugee be settled in Delhi in future "without consulting its people and government". She said the Centre failed to protect the country's borders and said the illegal immigrants would not just cause "law and order problems" for Delhiites but also "take away their jobs and strain the city's limited resources".

In response, Mr. Puri said on X, "Facts and actual position on illegal Rohingya immigrants were immediately clarified through a post on the same day [of his social media post], which they [AAP] selectively chose to ignore."

He said "no Rohingya immigrant has been given any government house". "In fact, contrary to the drummed-up AAP rhetoric, they [AAP] are actually the ones who play host to the illegal Rohingya, have settled them in large numbers, given them electricity and water, and even pay them ₹10,000," he alleged.

Winter refuge: homeless get roof but struggle for amenities

Alisha Dutta
NEW DELHI

As the Capital is reeling under cold wave conditions with the minimum temperature reaching 4.9 degrees Celsius on Sunday, shelter homes have become a refuge for hundreds of homeless who sleep on streets under an open sky.

Over 230 *pagoda* tents for the homeless have been set up by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), the body tasked with the management of shelter homes. These are in addition to the 97 permanent shelters constructed by the DUSIB.

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Rajwati Kosha said the Nehru Enclave shelter home lacks electricity. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lack of electricity makes living difficult.

According to the rules, shelter homes should be equipped with basic amenities like drinking water, clean sanitation facilities, electricity, clean toilets and warm food.

Inside a dark tent near Nehru Enclave's DDA park with 20 single beds, Rajwati Kosha, a resident of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, wrapped in a yellow shawl was seated on a bed. She looked for her phone's torch light in pitch darkness to locate the water bottle she kept at her bedside. She said the tents have been a blessing on cold winter nights, but the

Near the Bangla Sahib

Gurdwara in central Delhi, the tent set up by the DUSIB is well-lit. But here, the problem is different.

The 70-year-old Padma asked if it was too much to expect clean washrooms.

"The washroom lacks a steady supply of water and is always dirty. At my age, it isn't possible to use the washroom inside Bangla Sahib every time the way young homeless do," she complained.

The migrant from Nepal had been working as a house help. However, she has remained unemployed owing to her old age.

In a tent near the DND flyover, 31-year-old Deepak complained that the food served there was always cold and sometimes even stale.

"The food arrives around 6 p.m. and most people come late at night to sleep here. We have no other option but to consume it cold," Deepak, a labourer from Patna, said.

A senior DUSIB official told *The Hindu* that some tents were yet to be electrified. "Basic amenities like beds, blankets, washrooms and drinking water are available but the lights will be installed after December 15 (Sunday)," said the official.

Jamia shuts classes, library on anti-CAA stir anniversary

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia suspended classes and shut its library and canteen on Sunday, the day a student outfit planned to observe a remembrance event marking the anniversary of the

2019 anti-CAA protests and alleged police brutality on campus.

The Left-backed All India Students' Association (AISA) alleged that the university administration's decision was aimed at preventing students from participating in the event.

Students claimed that entry and exit from the campus were restricted, with those inside not allowed to leave and others barred from entering.

The administration issued three circulars late Saturday night, stating that classes, the canteen and

the library would remain closed from 1 p.m. due to "maintenance work".

A section of students questioned the timing of the notice and alleged that it was an attempt to suppress their right to peaceful protest.

An AISA statement criti-

cised the administration and the police for what it called a "nexus" to stifle dissent.

"The university administration has shut down the campus completely and stationed police inside and outside to prevent any activity," it said.

Four held with imported cigarettes worth ₹66 lakh

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

With the arrest of four persons and seizure of 6.50 lakh cigarette sticks worth ₹66 lakh, Delhi Police has busted a syndicate engaged in the illegal trade of

foreign brand cigarettes, a senior police officer said on Sunday. The four accused have been identified as Anas, Saqib, Sameer Ur Rehman and Sagar Haswani and booked under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act.

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Sambhal temple didn't appear overnight: U.P. CM; DM writes to ASI

Administration asks for carbon dating of Bhasma Shankar temple; *puja* offered amid heavy security; temple represents our heritage: Adityanath

Press Trust of India

SAMBHAL

Sambhal District Magistrate Rajender Pensiya has written to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for carbon dating of the Bhasma Shankar temple, including a well there, officials said on Sunday, days after the temple, locked since communal riots in 1978, was reopened.

Carbon dating is a method used to determine the age of archaeological artefacts from ancient sites.

The Bhasma Shankar temple was reopened on Friday after authorities said they "stumbled" upon the structure during an anti-encroachment drive.

However, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said the temple "did not appear overnight" and that it represents "our enduring heritage and the truth of our history".

Speaking at a private event on the Maha Kumbh,



Police personnel stand near a well at the Bhasma Shankar temple in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal district on Sunday. PTI

the CM said several innocent people lost their lives in "barbaric violence" in the town 46 years ago. "Why have perpetrators not been brought to the book even after decades?" he said, criticising those who seek to "suppress the truth and tarnish cultural events", such as the Maha Kumbh.

'24x7 security'
Sharing details about security arrangements at the temple, Mr. Pensiya said, "Security guards have been posted at the temple,

and CCTV cameras have also been installed. *Puja* has also started at the temple."

He added, "There is encroachment here, which is being removed."

Superintendent of Police Krishan Kumar said

CCTV cameras have been installed on all roads leading to the temple. "We will ensure round-the-clock security at the temple premises. Police will be posted there permanently," he said, adding that Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel have already been posted at the temple.

Hospital officials dismissed the possibility of food poisoning.

A private hospital doctor said seven students brought to the facility complained of difficulty in breathing and were coughing due to suffocation. "The remaining were taken to another hospital," he added.

No administration official was immediately available for comment.

A.P. doctors remove dental implant from man's lung

The Hindu Bureau
VISAKHAPATNAM

A team of doctors here successfully removed six implanted teeth from a 52-year-old man's lung recently. The man had

accidentally swallowed his implanted teeth while sleeping. The implants ended up lodged in his right lung but were successfully removed by doctors without causing any harm to his lungs.

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IN BRIEF



BJP govt. will fulfil dream of a developed Rajasthan: CM

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Sunday laid the foundation stone of Poonchri ka Lautha and Govardhan Parikrama Development Project in Deeg district and said "his government will fulfil the dream of a developed Rajasthan". The BJP government in the State completed the first year of its tenure on Sunday. "We will fulfil the dream of a developed Rajasthan and the State will continue to move forward on the path of prosperity," he said. The Chief Minister said the development work of Poonchri ka Lautha and Govardhan Parikrama will add to the spiritual beauty of this holy place and provide facilities to the devotees. Mr. Sharma said while pilgrimages are being developed in the State, infrastructure is also being built rapidly. PTI

'Mushtaq's kidnappers wanted to abduct Shakti Kapoor also'

Four members of a gang have been arrested for kidnapping actor Mushtaq Mohammad Khan from the Delhi airport, holding him hostage in Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh and demanding ransom, the police said on Sunday. The miscreants were also plotting to abduct veteran actor Shakti Kapoor on the pretext of inviting him to an event, they added. Mr. Kapoor was offered ₹5 lakh to attend a similar event, but the deal fell through, the police said. In a related development, Arjun, one of the kidnappers involved in comedian Sunil Pal's abduction, was shot and injured during an encounter with police in Meerut on Sunday, officials said. PTI

Punjab DGP, MHA official meet farmer leader on fast

The Punjab Police chief along with a senior official of the Union Home Ministry on Sunday met farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been staging an indefinite hunger strike since last month, and enquired about his health. Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav and Director in the Ministry of Home Affairs Mayank Mishra met Mr. Dallewal at the Kharau border point and heard his demands. Their visit came two days after the Supreme Court directed the Centre and Punjab government representatives to meet Mr. Dallewal immediately. The top court had further directed that the farmer leader be provided medical help and urged him to break his indefinite fast, saying his life was precious. PTI

With no school buildings, students attend classes under trees, open sky in Haryana's Nuh

SPOTLIGHT

Maitri Porecha

Endless acres of land covered in yellow mustard glisten in the winter sun. In between are deep violet onion shoots springing out of vegetable patches. The scene paints a deceptive picture of abundance in the Nagina block of Nuh district in Haryana.

Closer to Padodiyabass village in Nagina block, children from Class 1 to 5 revise maths tables, their shrill chorus heard from a few meters away. The 30-odd children are seated under a shady neem tree with six cows to keep them company. The open space under the tree also doubles up as their classroom. There is no sight of a school building, toilets, or drinking water for the school children. All of these are prerequisites to run a school in India. As evening approaches, the eager children neatly form a line and tread back home through the fluorescent green fields. A herd of goats rush in through the gates to occupy the shed.

"Over the past four years, I have been scrambling for space in Padodiyabass after the school was made functional on paper by UDISE registration," says Hari Ram, the school teacher who has been post-

ed in at the Government Primary School. UDISE, the Unified District Information System for Education, is a database of schools in India run by the Department of School Education and Literacy, under the Ministry of Education.

Data from UDISE show that the Government Primary School (GPS) in Padodiyabass, features among 19 primary schools in Nuh district declared 'buildingless'. The District Education Department has been unable to construct a building for them, despite allotting them a UDISE code in 2018-19.

Squeezing out space
Alladin, 58, who lent his shed to run the school says, "The school has been shifted thrice. Before this, it was running out of another villager's shed, and for some time even out of someone's house."

Out of 500 government primary schools in Nuh district, 10 of these buildingless schools function out of Firozpur Jhirka block, four are in Taoru block, three in Nagina, one each in Nuh and Punhana blocks. *The Hindu* visited four of these schools: GPS Kubdabass, GPS Ghatwasan, GPS Malibass in Firozpur Jhirka block; and GPS Padodiyabass in Nagina. None had an assigned building, a toilet, drinking water, or electricity. There



Students attending class under a tree, next to a field, at Padodiyabas village, Nuh district, Haryana, since no building has been allotted for several years. R.V. MOORTHY

were no sports or play equipment in sight.

According to the Right To Education (RTE) Act, 2009, there should be one primary school accessible to children in the radius of 1 kilometre within the village. But 10 years later, children of Kubdabass were still traveling 3.5 km away to Rawli village to access the nearest school.

In 2019, when villagers of Kubdabass started demanding that a primary school be allocated to them according to these norms, the Education Department allotted them a UDISE code and a teacher was allocated. Mahesh Kumar, 27, a contractual teaching assistant, who was assigned GPS Kubdabass was shocked on his first day on the job in 2022. "The school merely existed on paper; there was no building," Kumar says.

Kumar knocked on the

doors of the people of Kubdabass, asking them to send their children to 'school'. He chose a shady tree near the village well, and with a single rug and a black board, started holding classes there for children up to 11 years. The villagers started getting increasingly concerned for the safety of their children who were studying out in the open. "The mouth of the well had to be closed. We were scared of a mishap. During the monsoon, snakes would creep out of the bushes," says Goggan Haji Mahtab, 60, a Kubdabass resident.

As a makeshift measure, the villagers in Kubdabass spread some rugs over the *kaccha* mud floor of an over 100-year-old dilapidated room. They etched the UDISE code 06204100131 on the building, where now up to 60 children study. It houses Classes 1 to 5,

and the *bal vikas* or playschool. The room is a village *chaupal* where in the evening, residents gather to discuss local matters. "There is still no drinking water, no toilets, and no hot-cooked midday meals," says Kumar.

Mahtab adds that the village gets electricity only for six hours a day, and so many children in an over-crowded room, in an area where temperatures soar to 48 degrees Centigrade, is another challenge. "There is always a fear of a roof collapse," he says.

Unique challenges
District education officials allege that buildings for these 19 schools have not been constructed as the Gram Panchayats of the villages have not allotted land to build the schools.

Each village has unique challenges. In Kubdabass, the village is designed in



Rajya Sabha member Bisi said party was not consulted by INDIA bloc leaders regarding the motion

ers selected by the State in the academic year 2023-24, only three joined. It shows how teachers don't like Nuh as a place of posting," a senior district education official says.

Now, in the two-room house that children currently call 'school', 30 sacks of rice lay stacked a corner. As the application for a new school building gathers dust at government offices, thousands of ants form neat lines, making their way towards the rice, through crevices of the half broken doors of the crumbling structure.

Robin Khan, Sarpanch of Ghatwasan village maintains a bulky file of letters he has written to the District Education Office at Nuh requesting them to process the village's application at the district and State levels, so that ultimately the land can be transferred to the State government.

"It is only after the land is transferred, will the Central funds for constructing the school building be released. We have been running around for a year trying to get a building constructed," Khan says.

According to latest data obtained from the District Elementary Education Officer, as on November 14, 2024 up to 48% of the 7,906 teaching staff posts in primary schools are vacant. "Out of the 30 teach-

ers selected by the State in the academic year 2023-24, only three joined. It shows how teachers don't like Nuh as a place of posting," a senior district education official says.

'Punishment' postings
To remedy this situation, the Mewat Development Agency (MDA) that plays a role in the area's socio-economic growth, joined hands with non-profits and started recruiting Shiksha Sahayaks or Teacher Assistants in 2022. Newly graduated teachers were paid a monthly salary of ₹17,000, as a makeshift measure.

In the school at Malibass village in Firozepur Jhirka, two teacher's assistants sit with close to 50 children clustered in a single dark room. "We have been employed on a contractual basis, and there has been no raise in our pay for three years now. Last year, the renewal occurred after a delay of three months, leading to a late start in the academic year, only in September," says Rekha Saini, 26, a teacher assistant at the school. This also meant a break in pay. At times their salaries are delayed by two or three months, she adds. They did not get paid in November, which is also the time that Diwali is celebrated.

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

Nitish puts Mahila Samvad Yatra on hold a day after RJD promises cash aid for women

Ruling alliance will likely announce 'better' monthly assistance scheme for Bihar women: NDA leader; Tejashwi copying schemes of NDA-ruled States, says Paswan; RJD leader 'misleading' people: JD(U)

Amit Bhelari

PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday postponed his Mahila Samvad Yatra, hours before it was scheduled to begin. The Chief Minister was slated to interact with women voters across the State, starting from Valmikinagar in the West Champaran district, as part of the campaign. Sources said Mr. Kumar will start his *yatra* sometime this week.

The development comes a day after Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav said his party would launch a cash transfer scheme for women if it wins the Assembly election due next year.

A senior leader from the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) said the ruling alliance will likely announce a "better" monthly financial assistance scheme for women than the ₹2,500



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar paying tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on his death anniversary, in Patna on Sunday. ANI

announced by Mr. Yadav under the Mai-Behan Maan Yojana a day earlier.

NDA mounts attack

Senior NDA leaders hit out at the RJD leader over his cash transfer scheme. While the Janata Dal (United) referred to the "lawlessness" during the 15 years that the RJD was in power in the State, the BJP accused Mr. Yadav of "misleading" the people. The Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) alleged that the Op-

position party was "copying" the programmes introduced by the NDA in other States.

Talking to mediapersons at the Patna airport on Sunday, senior JD(U) leader and Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan tried to downplay the RJD's poll promise.

"Tejashwi Yadav should ask his parents what scheme they brought when they ruled Bihar for 15 years. During those years, there was no road or electricity in Bihar. Why is he

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"Tejashwi Yadav should ask his parents what scheme they brought when they ruled Bihar for 15 years. During those years, there was no road or electricity in Bihar. Why is he

not talking about these issues?" said Mr. Singh.

LJP (Ram Vilas) chief and Union Minister Chirag Paswan said, "Remember the 1990s when a member of his own family was the Chief Minister? At that time, he [Mr. Yadav] neither talked about *mai* (mother) nor *behon* (sister)."

He added, "At that time, he only remembered his MY [Muslim-Yadav] equation through which these people [RJD leaders] used to divide people on the lines of caste and religion. These people abuse mothers and sisters. My own mother and sister were abused by his party members."

BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha said the RJD leader was trying to "mislead the people of Bihar".

He added that if the Opposition party was so concerned about women, it should have introduced such a scheme when it was in power in the State.

On the debate in the Lok

Mayawati backs Central govt. on simultaneous polls

Mayank Kumar

LUCKNOW



BSP chief Mayawati

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati on Sunday supported the Union government's Bill on simultaneous elections, saying it will "reduce expenses and ensure that public welfare works continue uninterrupted". "Other political parties must support the initiative," Ms. Mayawati said, addressing a press conference in Lucknow.

The four-time Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister said parties like the Congress and the Samajwadi Party (SP) should not speak on reservation as they opposed the Bill related to quota in promotions to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) during the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) era.

"It would be better if the two parties remain silent over this issue in Parliament as during the time of the Congress-led UPA rule, the SP opposed the Constitutional Amendment Bill related to reservations in promotion for SC and ST communities," added the BSP leader.

Political observers had speculated that the BJD might align with the INDIA bloc, given the party's loss to the BJD in the last Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. Moreover, two former BJD Rajya Sabha members had resigned from the party and joined the BJP, adding to the anticipation.

As a result, we will not participate in the no-confidence motion," Mr. Bisi clarified. The BJD currently has seven seats in the Upper House of Parliament.

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"Our leader [Patnaik] was not approached for discussions on this matter.

and BJD chief Naveen Patnaik had recently emphasised that the party would take appropriate steps only after assessing the situation.

"Our leader [Patnaik] was not approached for discussions on this matter.

BJD to abstain from no-trust motion against Dhankhar

The Hindu Bureau

BHUBANESWAR

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has decided not to support the no-confidence motion proposed by the INDIA bloc against Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar. BJD Rajya Sabha member Nirjan Bisi said the party was not consulted by the INDIA bloc regarding the motion and, therefore, would abstain from the process.

Former Chief Minister

walk to an acre of pattey ki zameen or panchayat land they have carved out for the school building. This was done over a year ago in coordination with the village Sarpanch.

Now, in the two-room house that children currently call 'school,' 30 sacks of rice lay stacked a corner. As the application for a new school building gathers dust at government offices, thousands of ants form neat lines, making their way towards the rice, through crevices of the half broken doors of the crumbling structure.

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

Will establish Telugu varsity named after Potti Sriramulu: Naidu



Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan felicitating the family members of Potti Sriramulu on his death anniversary on Sunday.

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday expressed the government's commitment to establish a Telugu university in the name of Potti Sriramulu, whose sacrifice for the formation of the Andhra State set the stage for the creation of linguistic States in India.

He said Sriramulu's house in Nellore district would be developed as a memorial.

Besides, his 125th birth anniversary on March 16, 2025 would be celebrated in a grand manner, Mr. Naidu announced.

Participating as the chief guest at a function organised to mark the death anniversary of Sriramulu, which has been named as his 'Amarpana Day' (the day when he breathed his last on the 58th day of his fast), Mr. Naidu recalled the determination with which Sriramulu fought for the formation of the Andhra State in 1953.

The notable thing about the movement for the for-

mation of India's first linguistic State was that it peaked at a time when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was fighting the separatist forces bent on dividing the country on partisan grounds, and succeeded amidst the turbulence, he observed.

The rest of what happened, that is, Andhra State becoming Andhra Pradesh (A.P.) following the merger with Telangana in 1956, and the bifurcation of unified State of A.P. a decade ago was history which no one should forget, lest statesmen like Sriramulu should completely fade into oblivion, he said.

Mr. Naidu recalled that the need to have a separate State for Telugu-speaking people in the Madras Presidency, who were looked down upon as 'Madrasis', was initially felt at a meeting of Yuva Jana Navya Samiti Samithi held in Guntur way back in the year 1903.

The clamour for Andhra State had intensified over the next 50 years and it reached the climax with Sriramulu's fast-unto-death.

Centre rubbing salt into State's wounds: Kerala FM

Balagopal flays Union government for demanding payment for disaster relief and rescue operations conducted by IAF after the 2018 floods and Wayanad landslides earlier this year

Press Trust of India
KOCHI

Kerala Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal on Sunday criticised the Union government for demanding payment for disaster relief and rescue operations conducted by the Indian Air Force (IAF) during the Wayanad landslides.

He described the move as rubbing salt into the wounds of the State, which is already burdened by the aftermath of the disaster.

Addressing presspersons here, Mr. Balagopal accused the BJP-ruled Union government of "failing" to provide even the funds it had promised to the State for disaster relief.



Making a case: Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and K.N. Balagopal, (left), leave after addressing a press meet in New Delhi. FILE PHOTO

He alleged that this was akin to mocking the people of the State.

Stance questioned
He also questioned the stance of BJP leaders, including Union Minister of State for Petroleum and

Natural Gas Suresh Gopi and former Union Minister V. Muraleedharan, on the issue.

Mr. Balagopal made these remarks in response to queries regarding a letter dated October 22, titled 'Settlement of Outstanding

Airlift Charges,' received by the office of then-Chief Secretary V. Venu on November 2. It contained details of unpaid bills – over ₹100 crore for rescue operations during the 2018 floods and more than ₹13 crore for IAF operations after the July 30 landslides in Wayanad.

Meanwhile, BJP leader and former Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar criticised the State government, accusing it of creating a row over the letter.

According to his post on X, "Reimbursement of costs to @IAF_MCC for relief operations is routinely done by ALL State govt." "But for @pinarayivijayan's govt. that has a Budget of 2 Lac crs/year it bcms a "row" why?"

Four killed in Kerala after car hits bus with Sabarimala pilgrims from Telangana

The Hindu Bureau
PATHANAMTHITTA

Preliminary reports indicate that the driver of the car may have dozed off at the wheel

Four persons were killed in an accident involving a car and a bus carrying Sabarimala pilgrims near Konni in Kerala in the early hours of Sunday.

The dead have been identified as a newly married couple, Nikhil and Anu, Mathai Eapen and Biju P. George, all residents of Mallassery near Pathanamthitta.

The police said the accident occurred around 3.30

a.m. on the Murinjakallu-Kalanjoor stretch of the Punalur-Muvattupuzha road. Preliminary investigation reports said Biju had dozed off at the wheel while returning to Pathanamthitta.

The car veered off its track and slammed into the bus carrying 19 pilgrims from Telangana. None of the bus passengers sustained serious injuries.

Local people rushed to the scene immediately after the accident and initiated

rescue operations. A police and Fire and Rescue team joined in.

The car's passengers were extricated from the mangled vehicle and taken to the hospital. Three of them were declared dead on arrival, while Anu died of injuries in hospital.

Residents in the area said the stretch of road where the accident occurred lacked width and had been the site of many accidents in recent years.

cultural heritage, it said.

The first day of the celebrations ended with a 'Mehfil-e-Ghalib' at Ghalib's 'haveli', where Ustad Imran Khan performed some of Ghalib's most celebrated poems, including 'Hazaron Khwahishein Ai-si' and 'Ye Na Thi Hamari Qismat'.

Speaking on the occasion, Saurabh Bharadwaj, Minister of Art, Culture and Language, said, "This celebration is not only a tribute to Ghalib's genius, but also a testament to our commitment to preserving and promoting the rich literary legacy he left behind," he added.

The celebrations will continue on December 18 and 19 at the India Islamic Cultural Centre, featuring a 'mushaira' with renowned poets, such as Moien Shadab, Ejaz Popular Meeruthi and Nadeem Shaad, the statement said.

Three-day event in Delhi to celebrate poet Mirza Ghalib

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

A three-day event titled 'Remembering Ghalib,' organised by the Delhi government, commenced on Sunday to commemorate the birth anniversary of poet Mirza Ghalib.

The event, organised by the Sahitya Kala Parishad under the Art and Culture Department of the Delhi government, began with a candlelight march from the Town Hall in Chandni Chowk to Ghalib's 'haveli' in Ballimaran, a statement said.

Focus on Delhi's heritage

'Remembering Ghalib,' conceptualised by Kathak exponent Padma Bhushan Uma Sharma, aims to bring the essence of Ghalib's life and works to contemporary audiences, particularly the younger generations, while highlighting Delhi's

tivities for catching fish.

National Fisherfolk Forum general secretary A. Dasu said, "At least 10 carcasses washed ashore at the Mangamaripeta beach on Saturday. This is a shocking experience. During this season, the turtles come close to the shore to lay eggs."

More carcasses of Olive Ridley turtles continue to wash ashore in Vizag

V. Kamalakara Rao
VISAKHAPATNAM

Carcasses of Olive Ridley turtles continue to wash ashore along the Visakhapatnam coast.

Environmental experts say that a majority of the deaths are due to marine pollution and trawling ac-



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Permissive no more

The Supreme Court must put an end to violations of the Places of Worship Act

The Supreme Court's interim order halting the registration of fresh suits across the country regarding disputes of places of worship is a welcome departure from the permissive approach of the judiciary in recent times towards such motivated litigation. A Division Bench, headed by the Chief Justice of India, Sanjiv Khanna, has done well to stop the flow of litigation and interim orders, including those that allow 'surveys' of such sites and structures, while it deals with the challenges to the validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. The order signifies a deep understanding that this is not about a set of civil disputes but the future of the country's secular character. It is amply clear to right-thinking citizens that the law, which freezes the religious character of all places of worship in the country as they were on the day of Independence, would want this legislation to remain on the statute book as a bulwark against elements that want to perpetuate the religious divide caused by such disputes. It is unfortunate, and even condemnable, that courts of law have failed to block these suits at a nascent stage by invoking the bar under this law. Instead, they have been allowing applications for surveys, either disregarding the Act and the Court's endorsement of its necessity in past judgments or ruling that the statutory bar does not apply to them.

In the name of reclaiming religious sites lost to invaders, several groups and purported devotees have been moving civil courts and obtaining questionable orders for surveying mosques for evidence that they may have been built on the ruins of destroyed temples. The success of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement was largely due to the political patronage enjoyed by its spearheads, and a final verdict from the Court, which handed over the disputed land to the Hindu litigants while condemning the demolition of the Babri Masjid mosque in December 1992. That the vandals involved in the demolition were acquitted, without any further appeal, added to the triumphalism that marks this movement for altering the status of mosques. This has given rise to further claims in Varanasi, Mathura, and, more recently, Sambhal, among other places that house mosques dating back to the 16th century. A notable feature of this permissive judicial attitude is the complete absence of any understanding of the history of the temple movement that was largely political in character. That judges could entertain obviously baleful and ill-motivated cases is a great cause of concern for those rightfully invested in the secular nature of the country. The criminal imprint on the nation's fabric left by political movements in a religious garb should not be forgotten.

Warding off fire

There should be no slackening in fire safety norms in hospitals

There is no greater betrayal than when a sanctuary turns into a death trap. Fire accidents in hospitals that kill the vulnerable would fall squarely in this category. A massive fire that broke out at City Hospital, an orthopaedic specialty unit in Dindigul in south Tamil Nadu, last week caused the death of six people, including a child and two women. All the victims were trapped in the hospital lift and initial reports suggested they died of suffocation. Only one of the six persons, who was on a wheelchair, was an in-patient at the hospital; all the others were visitors. They were trapped, over half an hour, in the lift as the smoke poured in through the vents, all escape routes sealed. The fire, which reportedly started as a short circuit in the ground floor, swept up to the first floor, and smoke soon curled up to all the floors in the four-storey building, affecting patients. Initially, smoke was noticed in the outpatient department, after patient files caught fire. In response, the power supply was shut down, but six persons still entered the lift at the ground floor. In the melee that ensued, no one paid any attention to the lift, stuck in between two floors. Meanwhile, patients on the higher floors struggled to breathe, but for many, because of mobility issues, there was no opportunity to escape. Thirty-two patients were shifted to the nearby Dindigul government hospital for further treatment and three of them needed ventilator support.

The rash of fire accidents in hospitals in India, in recent times, and the lives lost are uncanny reminders that hospital infrastructure upkeep, in the private or public health-care sector, is astonishingly low priority across the country. One month ago, on November 15, 10 newborns died in a fire in Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College and Hospital, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh. In May this year, seven newborns were killed in New Born Baby Care Hospital, a private facility in East Delhi, after a fire broke out there. It is unconscionable that, as a nation, India pays little attention to fireproofing its hospitals, making sure all equipment in hospitals and the hospitals themselves are ready to act and limit damage if, and when, a mechanical fault was to cause a fire. The government should ensure that periodic renewal of fire licences stops being a travesty. Existing government fire safety regulations must be followed implicitly and spiritedly, without any slacking, with respect to hospitals and public places. If a hospital ever gets into the news, it must be for its healing prowess, not for being a towering inferno.

Let's talk about 'one candidate, multiple constituencies'

Ever since the panel for 'One Nation One Election' led by the former President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, recommended simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, much has been written on its positive and negative aspects, the practical considerations and of course the politics around the subject. Amidst all the political accusations and counter-accusations, another important issue has gone missing from attention. The matter is about one candidate contesting from multiple constituencies (OCMC) for the same office.

The background, the challenges

The Constitution of India provides for regular elections every five years to the Legislative Assembly and the lower House of Parliament. However, the Constitution, other than providing for the Election Commission of India (ECI), has empowered Parliament to regulate the manner of conducting the elections. Therefore, 'contesting from multiple constituencies' has been dealt with in the Representation of the People Act 1951. Under the Act, there was no limit on the number of constituencies a candidate could contest – until 1996. This resulted in candidates contesting from multiple constituencies, sometimes more than two, winning them and vacating all but one seat, in accordance with Section 70 of the same Act. This necessitated by-elections frequently.

Due to this, Parliament amended the Act in 1996 to limit the number of constituencies that a candidate can contest from, to two. The amendment intended to discourage one candidate from contesting from multiple constituencies. Despite this, the practice has continued. The numbers are even more frequent in State Legislative Assembly elections, leading to frequent by-elections – there were 44 by-elections for State Assemblies in November 2024 due to the resignation of sitting legislators.

Frequent by-elections due to candidates winning from multiple constituencies pose several challenges. First, they add to taxpayer costs. The administrative cost of the Lok Sabha elections is borne by the central government, and Legislative Assemblies by the State governments; in the 2014 general election, it amounted to ₹3,870 crore. Adjusted for 6% annual inflation, the 2024 general election is put at a cost of ₹6,931 crore, or ₹12.76 crore per seat. If 10 politicians win from two constituencies, the extra cost of holding a by-election would be around ₹130 crore. While this is relatively small when compared to overall election spending, the real issue lies in the massive expenditure by political parties, estimated at ₹1,35,000 crore for the recent general election, or about ₹250 crore per constituency, according to the estimates by the Centre for Media Studies. This burden ultimately



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If 'one person, one vote' is the core democratic principle for voters, it should be 'one candidate, one constituency' for politicians

falls on the public, and much of the funding comes from black money, which undermines financial transparency.

Second, the by-election necessitated by the vacation of a winning candidate within an initial six months tends to favour the ruling party. This is borne out in by-election trends across multiple States. This emanates from the fact the ruling party can mobilise resources and provide patronage to party workers. Such a scenario of a non-level playing field is skewed against the Opposition, which has negative implications for parliamentary democracy.

Third, the financial burden of organising a by-election disproportionately falls on the already defeated candidate and their party, forcing them to spend resources once again.

Fourth, the saying "Democracy is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people" suggests that elections should serve people's needs. However, a candidate contesting from multiple seats serves as a hedging mechanism against uncertainties and often prioritises the leader's interests, not the people's. This undermines democratic principles, placing politics above the public.

Fifth, OCMC is sometimes used to enhance the reach and message delivery of the leader, relying on their popularity for electoral success. This often reflects the leader's dominance within the party, particularly in family- or leader-centric parties. Moreover, OCMC goes against the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression of citizens. A petition filed in 2023 (*Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay vs Union of India*) argued that when people elect a representative, they trust that person to be their voice. Contesting multiple constituencies, winning them, and vacating one for a by-election violates Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. This practice causes voter confusion and discontent, as seen in Wayanad, Kerala, when Rahul Gandhi vacated his seat in 2024, potentially leading to voter apathy. The voter turnout was 64.24% in the bypoll and 72.92% in the general election.

Some advantages

The OCMC is common in many countries. It may also have some practical considerations. First, contesting multiple seats provides a safety net for candidates, especially in tightly contested constituencies. Second, in a polity such as India, where politics is centered around the leader and family, OCMC smoothens the leader's continuation or transition in case a leader-centric party secures a majority in the elections but the leader of the party loses out. For instance, Mamata Banerjee lost the Nandigram seat in the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections. To make way for her, another leader elected from the Bhabanipur constituency had to resign from the

Assembly. Similar things unfolded in the case of Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister of Uttarakhand in the 2022 Assembly elections.

International experience

OCMC is not unique to India. Pakistan and Bangladesh allow candidates to contest multiple constituencies but require them to relinquish all but one seat. Pakistan places no limit on the number of constituencies a candidate can contest, as seen in the 2018 elections when the former Prime Minister contested five seats and vacated four. Similarly, Bangladesh allowed candidates to contest up to five constituencies until 2008 but now limits it to three. The practice was once common in the United Kingdom but has been banned since 1983. Most European democracies have phased it out to promote clear representation and accountability.

The misuse of the OCMC far outweighs the benefits. There have been demands for reforms, and probable solutions may be considered. First, amend Section 33(7) of the RP Act 1951 to ban one candidate contesting from multiple constituencies for the same office. The ECI, in 2004, recommended the government ban the practice. The 255th Law Commission report in 2015 made the same recommendation.

Second, recovering the full cost of by-elections from the candidate vacating a seat can serve to discourage candidates from contesting simultaneously. The ECI recommended cost imposition on candidates contesting from multiple constituencies in 2004. However, the practice of OCMC will continue as the winning candidate or political party can afford to pay the cost. Third, a more effective deterrent would be to hold the by-elections after a year, allowing voters ample time to make an informed decision and giving the defeated candidate sufficient time to recover and prepare strategically for another contest. This would also provide a more balanced and fair electoral process. This could be done by amending Section 151A, Representation of Peoples Act 1951 which provides for by-election within six months of the occurrence of vacancy.

Holding elections requires substantial financial resources from the state. Furthermore, with elections being a round-the-year affair in India, the frequent need for by-elections takes time and money – resources that could otherwise be better invested in the country's development. However, as the issue of OCMC (one candidate, one constituency) is political, it requires political willpower and the support of the major parties to bring about change. However, unlike the One Nation One Election, it does not have many proponents in political parties. If "one person, one vote" is the core democratic principle for voters, it is time to enforce "one candidate, one constituency" for candidates.

India's firmer attempts at mineral diplomacy

As India seeks to expand its manufacturing and technological capability, critical minerals will become vital to fulfil this ambition. However, India, a major critical mineral importer, still depends on other countries, primarily China, for its mineral security, which has become a cause of strategic concern. Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who voiced India's apprehensions at a defence think tank gathering, said, "While [the] scramble for resources for economic reasons has had a long history, their weaponisation by some nations for strategic reasons is a comparatively new phenomenon", hinting at Chinese attempts. To address India's mineral security challenge, which is aimed at reducing its strategic vulnerability, New Delhi has started an attempt to engage in mineral diplomacy.

Establishing joint ventures

This attempt is based on the pillars of: developing international engagement with mineral-producing countries, and establishing strategic partnerships with intergovernmental organisations. The first pillar focuses on building bilateral ties with resource-rich countries such as Australia, Argentina, the United States, Russia, and Kazakhstan to secure the supply of lithium and cobalt. To facilitate this vision, post-2019, India established the Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL), a joint venture company with a mandate "to ensure a consistent supply of critical and strategic minerals to the Indian domestic market". The objective was to achieve mineral security by securing agreements, and acquisitions through government-to-government, government-to-business, and business-to-business routes.

In March 2022, KABIL signed a Memorandum of understanding with Australia for a critical mineral investment partnership, identifying two lithium and three cobalt projects. Latin America's Lithium Triangle, which constitutes Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia, has also attracted India's



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The moves are to reduce India's strategic vulnerability, but there are issues that need to be resolved

attention. In January 2024, India signed a \$24 million lithium exploration pact with a state-owned enterprise in Argentina for five lithium brine blocks. KABIL is also actively working to secure mineral supplies by facilitating the buying of assets from Bolivia and Chile. Apart from the government, India's private sector has also benefited. Altimin Private Limited signed an agreement with YLB, Bolivia's national company, to secure the raw material supply chain of Li-ion batteries.

Central Asia has also caught India's attention. Recently, India and Kazakhstan formed a joint venture, IREUK Titanium Limited, to produce titanium slag in India. This was one of India's first joint ventures with the Central Asian Republics. This attempt is aligned with New Delhi's proposal to establish an India-Central Asia Rare Earths Forum to leverage the region's rich resources.

Cooperative engagements

The second pillar of mineral diplomacy is international engagement, which is forging and strengthening partnerships with multilateral and multilateral initiatives related to mineral security, such as the Quad (Australia, Japan, India, the United States), the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), Mineral Security Partnership (MSP) and the G-7, for cooperation in the critical mineral supply chain. These cooperative engagements aim to align India with the global best practices in the critical mineral sector across its three segments – upstream, midstream, and downstream.

Additionally, they also facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building, which is important for coordinating with international partners such as the U.S., the European Union (EU), South Korea, and Australia.

To further this collaboration with western partners, India's Ministry of Mines signed a MoU with the International Energy Agency to strengthen cooperation on critical minerals, helping India to "streamline its policies,

regulations, and investment strategies in the critical mineral sector, aligning them with global standards and best practices".

The missing pieces

India's attempt at mineral diplomacy has led to many positive outcomes, but still lacks three essential ingredients required for its international diplomatic engagement. These are: a lack of private sector participation; weak diplomatic capacity, and insufficient sustainable partnership. Also, India's private sector has largely been missing from the equation.

The absence of a critical mineral supply chain strategy and a clear road map for the private sector are two primary variables responsible for the lack of policy clarity, leading to their absenteeism. To address these, India needs to formulate a comprehensive approach for de-risking, considering the role of the private sector across the supply chain. An important step would be to have a supply chain strategy based on India's growth prospects and national security priorities.

Second, India must strengthen its mineral diplomacy engagement. Having a dedicated mineral diplomacy division within the Ministry of External Affairs, similar to the New and Emerging Strategic Technologies (NEST) division and a special position for mineral diplomacy in selected diplomatic missions can be the first step.

Third, India's goal towards mineral security necessitates that New Delhi forge strategic, sustainable, and trusted partnerships with bilateral partners and multilateral forums. Among all its partners, working with EU, South Korea, and the other Quad members is critical to India's mineral security due to its domestic capabilities, diplomatic network and technological know-how. If these issues can be resolved, India's attempts at mineral diplomacy will gain strength and will be able to better complement New Delhi's domestic critical mineral initiatives, which are currently moving at a slow pace.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The two-day debate

The debate in Parliament on the Constitution went exactly as expected. The Opposition criticised the ruling party for its actions, while the ruling party repeated its accusations about the Emergency. It would have been unrealistic to expect this debate to result in any real solutions (Page 1, December 15).

Instead of committing to working together to improve the Constitution, both sides across the political aisle seem to have dug in their heels even more. We can celebrate the Constitution's 75th anniversary all we want, but it will not mean much unless we truly live by its values. As someone who has lived through 70 years

of Indian politics, I have come to believe that leaders who are known for dishonesty and corruption have no right to speak about the Constitution's values. Democracy depends on open-mindedness and constructive dialogue, but it seems like we are seeing less and less of this of late. V. Nagarajan, Chennai

It is astonishing that the Prime Minister spent most of the time in Parliament castigating the Congress Party and its leaders. Development by any government is a continuous process, depending on what

Corrections & Clarifications

In the Editorial, "A legend, made" (December 13, 2024), a sentence in the first paragraph should have read: "Gukesh won Game 3 to tie the match...."

they feel is a priority, the needs of the people and the revenue available to fulfil these needs. A lot of emphasis was given to the Emergency of 1975. Aren't we being subjected now to what is termed as

an 'undeclared Emergency'? The Opposition's motion of their 'no confidence' against the Chairman of the Upper House is an indicator of the abyss that our system has fallen into.

Hemachandra Basappa, Bengaluru

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

The digital frontier of inequality

India stands at a pivotal moment in its digital revolution, underpinned by an internationally recognised model of digital public infrastructure. Today, India has 1.18 billion mobile connections, 700 million Internet users, and 600 million smartphones.

While the narrowing of the digital gender divide is a sign of progress, as in many countries, a surge in gender-based violence (GBV), particularly tech-facilitated GBV, threatens to overshadow gains. In response, the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development recently launched 'Ab Koi Bahana Nahi (no more excuses)', a national campaign aligned with the global '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence'. This annual campaign is led by UN Women.

The risks
India's digital transformation has unlocked immense opportunities for empowerment. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna has increased account coverage almost four-fold since 2015, with women holding 55.6% of the accounts. Digital Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-mobile linkages enable direct benefits and cashless transactions, especially in rural areas. However, this increased connectivity has also exposed women to new risks.

In urban areas, online harassment is rampant, particularly targeting women in public-facing roles such as journalists and politicians. Rural India boasts 20% more Internet users than in urban areas (2021 Nielsen report). Already constrained by societal norms, many women and girls lack the digital literacy and skills to navigate online spaces safely. Compounding the issue, many women are also unaware of their rights or the mechanisms available to them for reporting abuse.

TFGBV takes many harmful forms. These include persistent harassment such as cyberstalking, online trolling, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. Impersonation



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and fraud through fake profiles, voyeurism, and grooming further exploit vulnerable individuals. These often force women and girls to retreat from digital spaces.

India has taken important steps to combat TFGBV. Legal protections, including the Information Technology Act, 2000, and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2024, provide a strong foundation to address digital violence. Mechanisms such as the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal enable anonymous reporting, while the government-led Information Security Education and Awareness Programme spreads digital safety awareness. Women-specific programmes, such as Digital Shakti, launched by the National Commission for Women, equip women with tools to navigate online spaces securely. These measures mark great progress in creating safer digital spaces, though some gaps remain.

India also actively engages in international negotiations and agreements, including the 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women where UN member states, including India, signed off on agreed conclusions that called for "adequate safeguards in order to promote an open, secure, stable, accessible and affordable information and communications technology environment for all women and girls". This underscores India's commitment to tackling TFGBV.

The way forward
Achieving truly safe digital environments for women and girls requires more focused and strategic efforts that can keep pace with this changing and evolving digital world.

The Global Digital Compact, adopted by world leaders including India, at the UN Summit of the Future earlier this year, further strengthens legal and policy frameworks "to counter and eliminate all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use

of technology". Therefore, combating TFGBV must be a top priority. This includes enforcing stricter laws against perpetrators of online violence, and swifter justice for survivors. Holding social media platforms accountable is an important part of the tool kit to reduce TFGBV.

Expanding digital literacy programmes, particularly in rural areas, is critical. Integrating safe online practices into school curriculums and conducting community workshops for women and men, young and old, can be empowering. Additionally, nationwide campaigns that challenge societal norms and actively engage men and boys as allies can foster respectful and inclusive digital spaces.

Collaboration with India's vibrant tech industry is essential. While many platforms have introduced safety features, these need further enhancement to proactively address online abuse. Leveraging artificial intelligence to detect and remove abusive content, yet retaining human oversight, alongside introducing user-friendly reporting mechanisms, can improve safety.

Just as important is the development of robust survivor support systems that offer accessible counselling, legal aid, and rehabilitation services. Expanding the capacity of helplines and initiatives such as TechSakhi, a helpline offering accurate information, empathetic support, and assistance, will ensure that survivors receive timely and effective assistance.

As we concluded observing the 16-Days of Activism that ends on International Human Rights Day every year, India's timely message is unequivocal: *Ab Koi Bahana Nahi*. Ensuring women's safety online is not only a moral obligation but also a critical pillar for India's progress.

Governments, tech companies, civil society groups, individuals, and international organisations have a role to play, and we in the UN Country Team are proud to be a partner in this journey.

Ensuring women's safety online is not only a moral obligation but also a critical pillar for India's progress

A minefield of controversies

Yet another political row has erupted, this time over tungsten mining

STATE OF PLAY

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Tamil Nadu

The Union government's move to grant tungsten mining rights to Hindustan Zinc Limited, a Vedanta Group company, near a biodiversity heritage site in Madurai has kicked up a political row in Tamil Nadu.

The controversy erupted last month after the Union Ministry of Mines declared Hindustan Zinc as the preferred bidder of the Nayakkarpatti block, which is rich in scheelite, a primary ore of tungsten.

The Nayakkarpatti block comprises six villages. One of them is Aritappatti, a notified biodiversity heritage site famous for archaeological monuments, including cave temples, sculptures, Jain symbols, Tamil Brahmi scripts, and Pancha Pandavar stone beds.

Environmental activists and villagers took to the streets saying mining will not only ruin the terrain but also agriculture and their livelihoods. More than 20 panchayats of four panchayat unions in Madurai unanimously passed resolutions opposing the proposed mining.

The auction has pitted the ruling DMK and its allies against the Centre on the one hand and against the Opposition parties in the State on the other. While the DMK government says it was not consulted, the Centre claims inputs were taken from it before the auction and that no objection was raised then. The Opposition was quick to accuse the DMK of 'duplicity.' But the DMK maintains that it was only the Centre and not the State that cleared the mining project and has accused the Opposition of spreading disinformation. Although the Union

government has allowed Vedanta to mine in an area of 2015.51 hectares, the State has not given permission, the government said.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking cancellation of the mining rights awarded to the company. He said mining will cause irreparable damage to the heritage site. "In addition, commercial mining in such densely populated villages will definitely affect the people. This has caused immense anguish among the people, who fear that their livelihood may be lost forever," he wrote.

The Chief Minister said that the Tamil Nadu government in October 2023 had raised concerns about the auctioning of mining rights of critical and strategic minerals, but the Union Minister for Coal and Mines had rejected them, arguing that the auction cannot be withheld, in the larger interests of the country.

Last week, the State Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a special resolution demanding revocation of the award of mining rights. During the debate, Opposition leader Edappadi K. Palaniswami accused the DMK government of being inactive for the 10 months since the Union government brought amendment to the Mines and Minerals Act, 1957, with regard to the mining of critical and strategic minerals. Mr. Stalin argued that the DMK govern-

ment did oppose the amendment. He added that he will not permit the mining as long as he is Chief Minister. Not to be outdone, the State BJP president, K. Annamalai, met Union Minister for Coal and Mines, seeking to call a halt to the project.

Tamil Nadu is no stranger to such controversies. In the last two decades, there has been intense opposition to various projects and striking a balance in the face of it seems to be increasingly difficult for governments in the State. In the last two decades, there has been intense opposition to various projects in Tamil Nadu. In 2010, farmers staged protests in the Cauvery delta region after the United Progressive Alliance government granted permission to the Great Eastern Energy Corporation Limited (GEEL) to explore coal bed methane in the Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts. An MoU was signed by the GEEL and the DMK-led State government in 2011. In July 2013, in response to sustained protests, the then Chief Minister Jayalalithaa suspended the project and followed it up with a ban in 2015.

In 2017, there were protests at Neduvvasal in Pudukkottai and Kadaramangalam in Thanjavur against hydrocarbon exploration in the delta. Later, when contracts were awarded to Vedanta and ONGC under the Open Acreage Licensing Programme Bid Round-I for hydrocarbon exploration in the Cauvery basin, protests broke out again. In 2020, the Cauvery delta was declared a protected agricultural zone.

In 2014, complaints about air and water pollution by the Vedanta Group's copper smelting plant at Thoothukudi led to the closure of the unit. In May that year, 13 people were killed when the police opened fire to quell protests.

Over 78% of top paid H-1B applicants were from India

Many of them were sponsored by relatively smaller U.S. companies

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

In the last four years, more than 78% of the top paid H-1B applicants (whose proposed wage rate exceeded \$1 million per year) were from India. Among the Indians whose wage rate exceeded \$1 million per year, over 25% were women. Also, over 65% of these high-paid H-1B applicants from India were sponsored by relatively smaller companies in the U.S.

Moreover, the salary range of H-1B applicants whose sponsors were U.S.-based companies was in general higher than the salary range of H-1B applicants whose sponsors were India-based companies. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows U.S. companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

These conclusions are based on data obtained by Bloomberg from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Each April, the USCIS conducts a random lottery to determine which H-1B applicants can proceed to submit visa petitions. Candidates may have multiple registrations submitted by different employers. Once selected, an employer can file an H-1B petition on behalf of the beneficiary. These petitions include details about the proposed job, such as salary and location, and form the basis of the conclusions presented in the story. Only about 1 lakh approved H-1B petitions, filed in the 2021-2024 period, for which all relevant data were available, were taken for the analysis.

While an approved H-1B petition is necessary for obtaining an H-1B visa, it does not guarantee one. After receiving approval from the USCIS, applicants may either apply for an H-1B visa at a U.S. consulate abroad or seek an Adjustment of Status with the USCIS if they are already in the U.S.

Chart 1 shows the proposed yearly wage rate in \$ (vertical axis) against the number of workers employed by the sponsor in the U.S. (horizontal axis). Each circle corresponds to an applicant whose application got selected in the lottery and whose H-1B petition was approved. The higher the circle, the higher the proposed salary. The farther to the right, the bigger the company size of the sponsor. Indian applicants are highlighted in a different colour.

Of the 1 lakh H-1B applications, only 123 had a proposed salary of \$1 million and above per year. Of them, 96 (78%) were from India. Over 90% of the proposed salaries were in and around the \$1,00,000 range.

Chart 2 shows the same information, but only for Indians. Here, female and male applicants are differentiated using colours. Of the 96 applicants from India identified in Chart 1, 25 (26%) were women.

As can be seen in both charts, most of the applications with a higher pay – circles on the top – are crowded towards the left of the chart, pointing to the low employee count for those sponsors. Sixty-three of the 96 applicants identified in Chart 1 were sponsored by U.S. companies which had fewer than 1,000 employees in the U.S. In other words, bigger companies – both U.S.-based and India-based – did not sponsor many high-paid H-1B applicants. Most of their applicants' proposed salaries were in the lower range, with very few exceptions.

Chart 3 shows the proposed yearly wage rate in \$ for H-1B applicants of well-known sponsors (big-sized firms), in the 2021-2024 period. It ignores outlier salaries to find the usual salary range proposed for most applicants. The proposed salary range of U.S.-based employers such as Apple and Google were considerably higher than the proposed salary range of Indian-based companies such as Infosys and TCS.

Indians on top

The data for the charts were sourced by Bloomberg News from the Department of Homeland Security under the Freedom of Information Act

Chart 1: The proposed yearly wage rate in \$ (vertical axis) against the number of workers employed by the sponsor in the U.S. (horizontal axis). Each circle corresponds to an applicant whose application got selected in the lottery and whose H-1B petition was approved. The higher the circle, the higher the proposed salary. The farther to the right, the bigger the company size of the sponsor. ● Indians ● Other applicants

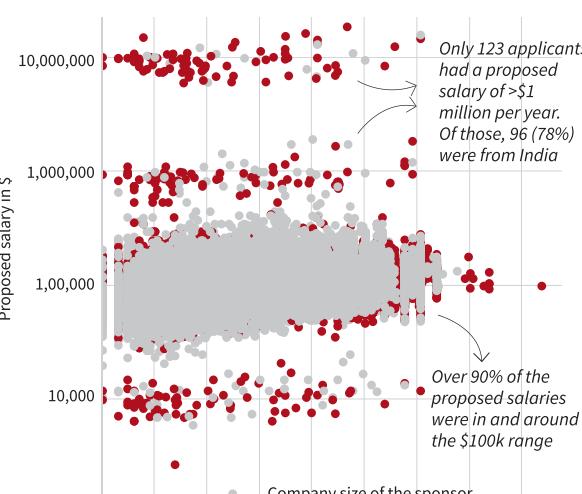


Chart 2: Proposed yearly wage rate in \$ (vertical axis) against the number of workers employed by the sponsor in the U.S. Each circle corresponds to an Indian applicant whose H-1B petition was approved. ● Male ● Female

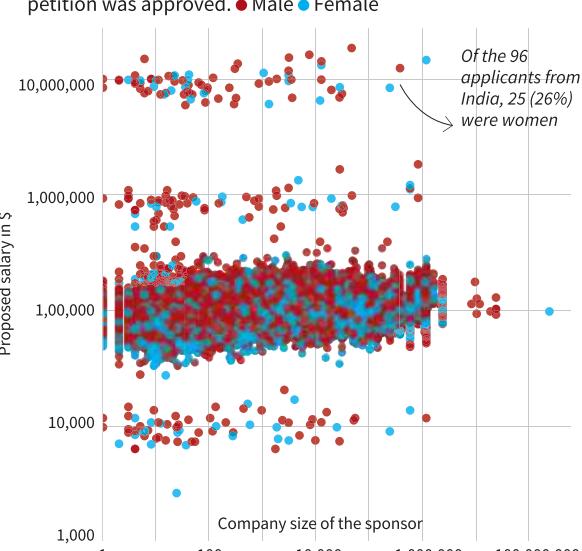
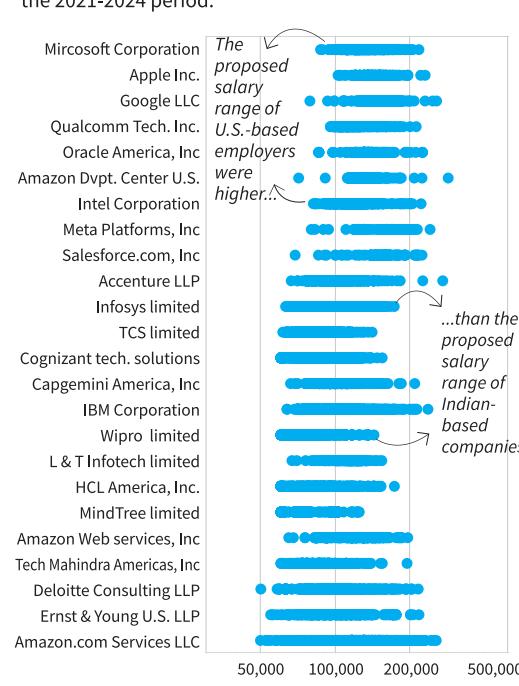


Chart 3: Proposed yearly wage rate in \$ for H-1B applicants of well-known sponsors (big-sized firms), in the 2021-2024 period.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 16, 1974

Electoral rolls revision may be over by June 1975

New Delhi, Dec. 15: A country-wide revision of electoral rolls is now in different stages of progress. It is likely that this work will be completed by June 1975.

Simultaneously the new delimitation of constituencies is also being undertaken and at least in one State, namely Gujarat, this has been completed and the final order of the Commission has been published. The work regarding revision of electoral rolls in Gujarat is likely to be completed in the first week of January next. This means that Gujarat would be ready to go to the polls at any convenient date after this is done. When exactly President's Rule in Gujarat will be terminated is a political decision though reports have it that complete normalcy prevails now and holding of an election to the State Assembly will not pose a law and order problem.

Revision of electoral rolls in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Bihar will commence in January and the likely date of final publication of electoral rolls is June 30 next. So far as Haryana is concerned, revision work commenced on November 1 in respect of some constituencies while in regard to the remaining Assembly constituencies, work began on December 2. By June 1975, the final rolls would have been published. In Himachal Pradesh revision of electoral rolls in respect of snow-bound areas will begin only in May next.

Enquiries with the Election Commission have also shown that so far as Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Punjab and Nagaland are concerned, the revision will be completed by June next.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 16, 1924

Women magistrates for Madras city

The Fort St. George Gazette notifies as follows: The Governor in Council is pleased to appoint the undermentioned persons to be Honorary Presidency Magistrates for the City of Madras and to empower them to sit on the Benches constituted for that city: Srimati Mangalammal (Lady Sadasiva Ayyar), Srimati V. Bhagavani Bayi; Mrs. V. Panduranga Rao, and Mrs. Maud Hume Stanford.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Syrians who returned to Syria in five days after Assad's fall

7,621 More than 7,600 Syrian migrants crossed the

Turkish border to return home in the five days after the fall of Bashar al-Assad. Within 48 hours of Assad's fall, Turkey had increased its daily crossing capacity from 3,000 to between 15,000 to 20,000. AFP

Number of people killed in Mayotte due to Cyclone Chido

14 At least 14 people were killed in Mayotte when a fierce cyclone battered the French Indian Ocean territory, with officials warning it will take days to know the full toll. Rescue workers and supplies are being rushed in by air and sea, but their efforts are likely to be hindered by damage to airports. AFP

The subsidy provided by India to each fisher annually

35 In \$, India has pitched the World Trade Organization for regulations on subsidies given by countries that are engaged in fishing activities. An Indian document noted that it provides \$35 per fisher annually, compared to subsidies as high as \$76,000 per fisher per year in other nations. PTI

Number of migratory bird species recorded in Mathura wetland

192 With winter setting in, the Jodhpur Jhal wetland in Mathura has transformed into a haven for migratory birds from Central Asia, Siberia, Tibet and Mongolia. The wetland has come alive with diverse species, including rare visitors such as the mallard duck and common pochard. PTI

Russian drones destroyed by Ukraine in overnight strike

56 Ukrainian air defences destroyed 56 out of 108 drones launched by Russia during its latest overnight strike, Kyiv's military said. It added that another 49 were "locationally lost", typically a result of electronic jamming. REUTERS

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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How would a carbon market function?

What are carbon credits and how would they be traded between firms? Why do corporations not want the government to be involved in the issue of carbon credits? Who introduced the concept of carbon credits? Why are some experts critical of carbon offsets?

EXPLAINER

The Hindu Bureau

The story so far: COP29, the ongoing climate conference in Azerbaijan's capital Baku, has given a fillip to the idea of using carbon markets to curb carbon emissions by approving standards that can help in the setting up of an international carbon market as soon as the coming year.

What is a carbon market? A carbon market is a market that allows the buying and selling of the right to emit carbon into the atmosphere. Suppose a government wants to limit the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere. It can issue certificates called carbon credits that allow the holder of the certificate to emit a certain amount of carbon into the atmosphere. One carbon credit is equivalent to 1,000 kilograms of carbon dioxide. By limiting the number of carbon credits that are issued, governments can control how much carbon is released into the environment. It should be noted that anyone who doesn't hold carbon credits to their name would not be allowed to emit any carbon into the atmosphere. Carbon credits were first used in the 1990s in the U.S., which introduced the cap-and-trade model to control the emission of sulphur dioxide.

Individuals and firms that hold carbon credits but don't actually need them for any reason can sell their credits to interested buyers. The price at which these carbon credits are traded is determined by market forces, which in this case are the supply of carbon credits and the demand for these certificates. A carbon market can also include the trading of carbon offsets. In this case, a business that pollutes the environment for example, can purchase carbon offsets sold by an environmental NGO that promises to plant trees that suck a certain amount of carbon emissions out of the



ISTOCKPHOTO

atmosphere for each offset that it sells.

What is good about carbon markets? Pollution of the environment and climate change caused by carbon emissions is a classic case of what economists call an externality. An externality is caused when the cost of an economic activity is not properly accounted for (or internalised) by the market price system due to the absence of well-defined property rights. For example, a business that uses raw materials such as iron will have to pay the supplier who owns the iron to be able to procure and use it, thus incurring a certain cost. But when the same firm emits carbon into the atmosphere, it doesn't usually have to pay any money to anyone. In other words, firms are generally able to emit their waste into the atmosphere for free. This of course leads to unhindered pollution of the

atmosphere as firms in this case have no financial incentive to curb their carbon emissions. Carbon markets in which the right to pollute is traded for a price can solve the problem by imposing a certain cost on firms for polluting the atmosphere, helping to curb emissions in the process.

The intersection of standardised accounting frameworks and technological advancements has improved the ability of corporations to monitor and report their carbon emissions. While, this is difficult for the vast majority of small businesses in the developing world, particularly in accurately capturing supply chain emissions, ongoing developments, like real-time data tracking of the energy sector, continue to enhance the granularity and reliability of corporate carbon accounting. However, corporations have preferred a voluntary

reporting system, like the Carbon Disclosure Project. They have been loathe to government interventions limiting carbon emissions, arguing that such budgeting may lead to output restrictions or rise in costs. They also point to varied production processes, some that might have diverse supply chains that might make it difficult to find the optimal carbon budget for their facilities. Large multinational corporations such as ExxonMobil and General Motors have advocated for carbon markets that allows free trading of carbon credits among firms at a price determined by market forces, that would allow these firms to purchase carbon credits from other firms, which don't need them as much. This they say, helps allocate carbon credits more efficiently than government diktat.

What can go wrong? Even when there is a functioning carbon market, a government that is not very keen on reducing emissions may increase the supply of carbon credits and drive down the price of the right to pollute, leading to no noticeable drop in emissions. Others may keep a strict cap on the supply of carbon credits but allow firms to cheat by allowing them to illegally emit carbon. The success of carbon offsets also depends on the degree of personal incentive that firm owners possess to care about carbon emissions, which may often be very little. Critics claim that firms that purchase carbon offsets often do it for the sake of virtue signalling and may have little incentive to ensure that their investments in these instruments are actually helping offset carbon emissions. Meanwhile, other critics have raised more fundamental questions regarding how exactly a government would be able to arrive at the optimum supply of carbon credits. They argue that politicians, who do not incur any personal economic cost when they legislate emission reductions, may restrict the supply of carbon credits more than what is really necessary, leading to slower economic growth.

THE GIST

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Why is the BJD opposing the Polavaram project?

What are the concerns of tribal communities residing in Odisha's Malkangiri district?

Satyasundar Barik

The story so far: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has recently intensified its efforts to highlight the potential adverse impacts of the Polavaram Dam project, undertaken by the Andhra Pradesh government, on the tribal communities in Odisha's Malkangiri district. A delegation comprising BJD's Rajya Sabha members submitted a fresh memorandum to the Central Water Commission (CWC), the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change stating that the impact of submergence due to 'unilateral' change in the design of the project has not yet been studied.

What is the status of the project?

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has vowed to

complete the Polavaram Project on River Godavari by 2027 as the interstate dispute involving mainly Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh has entered a crucial phase. The Union government has assured ₹15,000 crore in this year's budget for the completion of the project. However, the BJD has alleged that the CWC had refused to conduct a backwater study for the revised design flood, despite the recommendations of experts and the Odisha Government's concerns regarding the safety of tribal populations. The BJD argued that various studies, including those by the Government of Andhra Pradesh and CWC, have shown different estimates for submergence levels. A backwater study by AP in 2009 indicates that 50-lakh cusecs flood will cause submergence up to 216 feet in Odisha, far exceeding the originally agreed maximum level of 174.22 feet. A report from IIT Roorkee in 2019 further estimates that a flood of 58 lakh cusecs would result in

submergence levels of Reservoir Level of 232.28 feet in Odisha," it said.

How did the project start?

The Polavaram Irrigation Project on the river Godavari was conceived as a part of the recommendations of the Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal (GWDT). Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha had entered into an agreement dated April 2, 1980, where the project was to be executed by Andhra Pradesh. As per the Andhra Pradesh State Reorganization Act (APRA), 2014, the Polavaram Irrigation Project was declared as a national project. In response to an RTI query, the Ministry of Jal Shakti said that the maximum height of the concrete dam of Polavaram Project, measured from the deepest foundation level (-18.50m) to the top of bridge is 72.60 metre. The initial project cost was ₹10,151.04 crore in 2005-06 which reached ₹55,548.87 crore in 2019.

THE GIST

Though no comprehensive study has been carried out with regards to the likely submergence of the Malkangiri district by backwaters due to the Polavaram project, the Odisha State government in the year 2016 submitted to the NCST that the project was going to submerge 7,656 hectares of land, including forestland, and displace more than 6,800 people including 5,916 tribals in Malkangiri.

The Ministry of Jal Shakti said that as per the Water Resource Department of Andhra Pradesh, by providing remedial measures such as constructing protective embankments for a length of 30 kms along Sileru and Sabari River in Odisha, and 29.12 km along Sabari River in Chhattisgarh, the submergence in both Odisha and Chhattisgarh could be avoided completely. In August this year, the Ministry had asked the State Pollution Control Boards of Odisha and Chhattisgarh to conduct a public hearing for the construction of protective embankments without further loss of time as the project is in an advanced stage of construction. The Odisha State Pollution Control Board is yet to hold a public hearing. The Odisha government had earlier expressed its reservation over the high protective embankment saying it was not feasible. "The construction of an embankment requires the diversion of forestland and creates flooding in Odisha territory."

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has recently intensified its efforts to highlight the potential adverse impacts of the Polavaram Dam project, undertaken by the Andhra Pradesh government, on the tribal communities in Odisha's Malkangiri district.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES



GETTY IMAGES

Why simultaneous elections are impractical and complicated

Critics of simultaneous elections have raised a few objections. First, the logistical nightmare of conducting simultaneous elections in a country of a little over 1.4 billion people, in a context where even State elections need to take place in multiple phases

Gautam Bhatia

The Winter Session of the Lok Sabha is currently underway. The introduction of the two Bills which would enable simultaneous elections in the country, mainly the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill 2024 and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment Bill) 2024, have now been postponed to a later date. In this article, Gautam Bhatia, explains the problem with such a concept.

In recent weeks, there has been increasing discussion about the possibility of having national and State elections at the same time, popularly known as 'one nation, one election'. The formation of a committee, helmed by a former President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, to determine how this might be implemented, and what manner of constitutional changes might be required to make it a legal reality, have generated further debate. The primary arguments in favour of simultaneous elections are twofold: first, that it will decrease the costs of conducting elections (and of electioneering); and second, that it will free up political parties from being in 'permanent campaign mode', and allow them to focus on governance (and, for that matter, constructive opposition) for a five-year period.

Point and counterpoint

Against this, critics have pointed out that when you crunch the numbers, the actual financial savings are relatively minuscule. Furthermore, it is a relatively recent pathology of the Indian political system that central government Ministers and politicians spend a significant amount of time campaigning in State elections: if the concern, therefore, is that frequent State elections hamper governance and the business of Parliament, then simultaneous elections seem a needlessly complicated answer when a simple one is available: that State elections should be primarily fought by State party units, while national politicians can get on with the task of governance. The reality,

however, is that the increasingly centralised – and presidential – character of Indian election campaigns means that this is unlikely to be a reality in the near future.

Critics of simultaneous elections have raised a few other objections. First, the logistical nightmare of conducting simultaneous elections in a country of a little over 1.4 billion people, in a context where even State elections need to take place in multiple phases.

The second, and graver concern, is the incompatibility of a rigid election timetable with some of the fundamentals of parliamentary democracy: as is well-known, at the time of Independence, central and State elections were conducted simultaneously. This arrangement broke down towards the end of the 1960s because of the use of Article 356 of the Constitution, which authorises the Union to suspend (or even dismiss) State governments in a narrowly-defined range of circumstances; but also, and apart from that, the essence of parliamentary democracy is that at all times, the government must enjoy the confidence of the House, failing which it must step down, and go back to the people for a fresh mandate.

Consequently, it is obvious that even if, legally and practically, one is able to synchronise central and State elections for one cycle, this will break down the moment a government falls. To this, two solutions have been proposed, both of which tend to make the problem worse. The first is that President's Rule (that is, central rule) will be imposed in that State until the five-year-period is over. Needless to say, this will starkly undermine both federalism and democracy. The second is that elections will be held in that State, but the term of the new Assembly will only be until the next cycle (which could be in a year, or three years, or four years). Not only does this undercut both the justifications for simultaneous elections – cost and an avoidance of continuous campaign – but, rather, leads to perverse incentives (for example, how much

'governance' will a State government be able to do if elections are scheduled in a year?).

The possibility of 'horse-trading'
The upshot of this is that there will be a strong push towards avoiding the fall of a government, even when it has lost the confidence of the House in the ordinary course of things. And, as we have seen in India, there is an almost institutionalised remedy for this: defections, or "horse-trading". It is, by now, clear that the Tenth Schedule's prohibition on horse-trading has been rendered more or less a dead letter, as politicians have found various ways to get around this (and courts have not been successful in stopping it). Thus, as was pointed out by lawyer and parliamentarian Kapil Sibal in an interview recently, simultaneous elections are likely to see an explosion of horse-trading, where the political parties with the biggest pockets will be the biggest beneficiaries.

While these intractable issues speak to the implementation of simultaneous elections, at a deeper level, there are two principled and interrelated arguments against the idea: federalism and democracy.

First, let us take federalism. Over the years, it has increasingly come to be accepted that Indian federalism is not simply a matter of administrative convenience but also a matter of principle that recognises the legitimacy of linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and other forms of collective aspiration, through the grant of Statehood. In this context, there is, of course, Indian democracy at the central level, but also, at the level of each State, democracy takes its own set of claims, demands, and aspirations. Simultaneous elections risk a blurring of these distinct forums and arenas of democracy, with the risk that State-level issues will be subsumed into the national (this is inevitable, given the cognitive dominance of the national, as well as the fact that national-level parties frequently campaign in a national register, for

understandable reasons).

Keeping absolute power in check

A related point is that in our constitutional scheme, the federal structure is an important check upon the concentration of power (buttressed by the existence of the Rajya Sabha at the central level).

The federal structure, in turn, is sustained by a plurality of democratic contests, and a plurality of political outfits, at the State level. Simultaneous elections, for the reasons pointed out above, risk undermining that plurality, and risk precisely the kind of concentration of power that federalism is meant to be a bulwark against.

Second, on democracy: despite the ringing words with which the Preamble of the Constitution begins, the "People" have very little space in the Constitution, especially when it comes to exercising control over their representatives. Unlike many other Constitutions, where public participation in law-making is a guaranteed right, along with other rights such as the right to recall, in the Indian constitutional scheme, elections are the only form of public participation in the public sphere. There is a different conversation to be had about why this is not enough, but given this framework, relatively regular and frequent elections allow for more extended public participation and debate; simultaneous elections would shrink this scope substantially, without any countervailing changes to deepen it in other domains.

Therefore, it is clear that the administrative benefits from simultaneous elections are overstated at best, and non-existent at worst. However, the costs, both in the implementation and in the concept itself, are significant, and create non-trivial risks when it comes to protecting and preserving the federal and democratic design of the Constitution. These, therefore, are good reasons why the idea is a bad one, and ought not to be acted upon.

Gautam Bhatia is a Delhi-based lawyer.



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

He's sweating bullets in the meeting

The policeman was caught lining his pockets, and now he has been suspended without pay

S. Upendran

"Where is Ajay? I thought the three of us were going out for breakfast."

"Ajay sends his apologies. He has an interview this afternoon. So, he..."

"That's right! Forgot all about the big interview. For some reason, I thought it was tomorrow. How is Ajay doing? Is he, as usual, sweating bullets?"

"Sweating bullets? Are you asking if he's sweating profusely?"

"The expression 'sweating bullets' is limited to informal contexts in American English. When you say that someone is sweating bullets, you mean the person looks extremely nervous."

"In other words, the person is worried about something, and is therefore sweating profusely!"

"I guess you could say that! In this case, however, the focus is more on the worried or nervous look, rather than on the sweating. When I met him, Ajay was sweating bullets over the interview."

"How about this example? The moment I heard my boss wanted to see me, I started sweating bullets."

"Sounds good! Every time I'm asked to make a presentation, I sweat bullets."

"But tell me, why 'bullets'? How is it possible for anyone to sweat bullets?"

"It's not real bullets that the person is sweating. The individual is so worried that the drops of perspiration forming on his forehead are the size of bullets."

"That makes sense! So, tell me, how is your boss doing? Is he still torturing everyone?"

"Didn't I tell you? My boss was fired last week. Everyone celebrated."

"That's not a nice thing to do. But why? Was he caught lining his pocket?"

"Lining his pocket? What are you talking about?"

"When you accuse someone of lining his pocket, what you mean is that the individual was taking bribes."

"In other words, he was making money through illegal means."

"Exactly!"

"My boss has been lining his pocket for many years now."

"I see. It's also possible to say, 'line one's own pockets'. According to rumours, the President of our Housing Society found various ways to line his own pockets."

"I'm sure he did. By the way, how was the concert yesterday? Did you and your friends enjoy it?"

"What concert? It started raining buckets an hour before it was supposed to start. So, the organisers called it off."

"Raining buckets? Does it mean to rain quite heavily?"

"Not just heavily. But also, for a long time. Here's example. It's been raining buckets the past two days. So, it's not surprising that they decided to close the airport."

upendrankye@gmail.com

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

On December 16 every year, 'Vijay Divas' is celebrated to commemorate the victory of the Indian Armed Forces in the 1971 Indo-Pak War. A quiz on the war and its operations

Vembu Shankar**QUESTION 1**

What was the name of the offensive operation launched by the Indian Navy on Pakistan's port city of Karachi during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971?

QUESTION 2

How many days did the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War last?

QUESTION 3

Who was the Chief of Army Staff for India during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War?

QUESTION 4

What codename was assigned for the pre-emptive strikes carried out by the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on

the forward airbases and radar installations of the Indian Air Force (IAF) on the evening of December 3, 1971?

QUESTION 5

What was the name of the Pakistani naval submarine sunk by India in the 1971 war?

QUESTION 6

Who is the only member of the Indian Air Force to be honoured with the Param Vir Chakra posthumously for his gallant action in the defence of the Srinagar Air Field in the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971?

QUESTION 7

Who commanded the guerrilla resistance movement titled Mukti Bahini during the 1971 war?

**Visual question:**

Which Pakistan General signed the Instrument of Surrender and handed over his weapon to Lt Gen J. S. Aurora? AFP

Questions and Answers to the December 13 edition of the daily quiz: 1. The given name of Raj Kapoor and the names of his two brothers. **Ans: Ranbir Raj Kapoor and his brothers were Shamsher (Shammi) and Balbir (Bal).**

2. The 1935 film in which he debuted and the film in which he got his big break. **Ans: Inquilab; Neel Kamal**

3. The first film under the R.K. films banner. **Ans: Aag; The logo of the company was based on a scene from Barsaat**

4. This duo had its debut with Barsaat. **Ans: Shankar Jaikishan**

5. Awaara and Boot Polish were nominated for this award.

Ans: Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival

6. He was working on this film when he died. **Ans: Henna**

7. This Hrishikesh Mukherjee classic is dedicated to Raj Kapoor. **Ans: Anand**

8. This film had Raj Kapoor, Prithviraj and Randhir. **Ans: Kal Aaj Aur Kal**

Visual: Name the person Raj Kapoor is hugging. **Ans: Mukesh, who was the 'voice' of Raj Kapoor**

Early Birds: Nobody got all the correct answers.

Colonel Vembu Shankar, SC is an Indian Army veteran.

Word of the day

Rime:

ice crystals forming a white deposit (especially on objects outside); correspondence in the sounds of two or more lines (especially final sounds); be similar in sound, especially with respect to the last syllable

Synonyms: frost, hoar, rhyme

Usage: The rime was thick and crisp on the grass.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/rimepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /rɪm/

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

From Page One

Simultaneous polls Bill not to come up today

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will also move two Appropriation Bills along with the Supplementary Grants.

Another Bill listed for Monday is the Readjustment of Representation of Scheduled Tribes in Assembly Constituencies of the State of Goa Bill, 2024. Mr. Meghwal will move the Bill. The Bill enables reservation of seats in accordance with Article 332 of the Constitution for "effective democratic participation of members of Scheduled Tribes and to provide for the readjustment of seats" in the Goa Assembly.

Kharge invited for talks

In the Rajya Sabha, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar has invited Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge for another round of discussions to end the impasse. The Opposition has moved a no-confidence motion against Mr. Dhankhar alleging that he is chairing the proceedings in a partisan manner. The House did not transact major business last week as the BJP members protested against the alleged links of the Congress with U.S. billionaire George Soros.

The Upper House has listed a debate on the "Glorious Journey of 75 years of the Constitution of India" for Monday. Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to speak on the matter then.

In Odisha, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has decided not to support the no-confidence motion proposed by the INDIA bloc against Mr. Dhankhar.

BJD Rajya Sabha member Niranjan Bisi said the regional party was not consulted by the INDIA bloc regarding the motion and, therefore, would abstain from the process.

Former Chief Minister and BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik had recently emphasised that the party would take appropriate steps only after assessing the situation.

"Our leader Mr. Patnaik was not approached for discussions on this matter. As a result, we will not participate in the no-confidence motion," Mr. Bisi clarified. The BJD currently holds seven seats in the Upper House of Parliament.

(With inputs from The Hindu bureau in Bhubaneswar)

AAP names candidates, Kejriwal for New Delhi

The AAP national convener added that his party has "a vision and a plan" for the development of Delhi and a good team of educated people to implement it. "There is a long list of work we have undertaken in the last 10 years. The people of Delhi will vote for those who work, not those who abuse," Mr. Kejriwal said.

Time of face people'

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said the BJP will release its list of candidates "in due course".

He added that the time has come for the ruling AAP to face the public and "learn a lesson".

"Arvind Kejriwal's claim of development, vision, and a capable team is completely absurd. In the last 10 years, his shallow vision and team have turned Delhi into the most polluted capital in the world. The Yamuna river resembles a drain," he said.

Mr. Sachdeva added that AAP's "visionary" work includes the construction of Mr. Kejriwal's extravagant "Sheesh Mahal" bungalow and the liquor "scam", which now defines his party and government.

"We are happy that Mr. Kejriwal is fighting from New Delhi constituency. Time has come for him to answer for the exploitation of Delhiites over the past decade," the BJP leader added.

The Congress has released a list of 21 candidates.

AAP released its first list in November, which included the names of six leaders inducted from the BJP and the Congress, while dropping three sitting MLAs. The second list of 20 candidates featured a mix of old and new faces.

'Manmohan Singh believed India would never accept a Sikh PM'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Six years before taking oath of office, Manmohan Singh believed that the country would never accept a Sikh as Prime Minister, Congress veteran Mani Shankar Aiyar has revealed in his memoir.

In the second volume of his memoir *A Maverick in Politics*, published by Juggernaut Books, Mr. Aiyar recalls the time when he tried to persuade Dr. Singh to join the Trinamool Congress.

In January 1998, during Mr. Aiyar's brief stint with the Trinamool, he suggested to Trinamool supremo Mamata Banerjee that she induct Dr. Singh, who had earlier expressed his "huge dissatisfaction" with the

Congress under the late Sitaram Kesri.

"Mamata enthusiastically endorsed my proposal that I meet Doctor (Manmohan Singh) Sahib in Delhi to make to him the offer of the seat (Calcutta North-west) on behalf of the Trinamool Congress," he writes, adding, he had Ms. Banerjee's authority to offer Dr. Singh the Prime Ministership, "if confusion prevailed in the country again".

"My expectation was that he would probably say 'no', but there was an off chance that he might say 'yes'. But nothing prepared me for the answer I actually received. After listening to me patiently, he shook his head and almost mournfully replied, 'This country will never accept a

Sikh as prime minister.' It was a reflection of the long-lasting trauma inflicted on the Sikh community by the country's armed action in the sacred premises of the Golden Temple and the Sikh pogrom in Delhi and elsewhere during the first few days of Rajiv's (Gandhi) premiership," Mr. Aiyar notes.

The Congress veteran recounts his early years in politics; negotiating through the tenure of late Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao; his changing equations with the Gandhis, especially Rahul Gandhi; and eventually fading out from the party (the phase from 2016-2024).

Talking about the "stasis in governance" during the

United Progressive Alliance-II government, the 83-year-old says he believes Dr. Singh should have been elevated to the role of President of India in 2012, and Pranab Mukherjee should have been made the Prime Minister.

"In 2012, the Prime Minister (Dr. Singh) underwent operations for multiple coronary bypasses. He

never quite recovered physically. It slowed him down and this showed up in governance. As for the party, there was no official announcement about the Congress president's (Sonia Gandhi) health when she took ill at about the same time as the Prime Minister," Mr. Aiyar writes.

He quotes Mukherjee as saying in his memoir that

AIADMK appeals to Centre to cancel nod for mining tungsten

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

At a meeting of its general and executive councils on Sunday, the AIADMK criticised the DMK government in Tamil Nadu on multiple fronts, including the alleged lack of preparation in tackling Cyclone Fennel, inadequate relief efforts, and the law and order situation.

It also urged the Centre to withdraw the permission for mining tungsten in Madurai district, provide funds to Tamil Nadu without discrimination, and shift the subject of education from the Concurrent List to the State List.

Despite the DMK government having urged the Centre to drop the proposal to mine tungsten, the AIADMK criticised it over the alleged delay of over 10 months in making efforts to stall the project.

The meeting, chaired by AIADMK presidium chairman A. Tamilmagan Husain, adopted 16 resolutions, one of which criticised the Chief Minister M.K. Stalin-led DMK government over the alleged lack of arrangements to provide food and water to the people affected by the natural disaster.

It also condemned the government over the alleged deterioration of law



Palaniswami at a meeting of the AIADMK's general and executive councils on Sunday.

and order; and the hike in the electricity tariff, property tax, stamp duty, and the price of milk. The party said the DMK government was deceiving the people by not fulfilling the electoral promises made to government employees, teachers, doctors, nurses, farmers, labourers, fishermen, and weavers.

The party alleged that the DMK government with failing to maintain water-bodies for storage, and condemned it for not having taken steps to realise the Godavari-Cauvery link proposal, the Parambikulam Aliyar project and the Pandiyar and Punnampuram projects. The AIADMK also highlighted the "drama" being staged by the DMK government over seeking exemption from the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for Tamil Nadu.

Justice Yadav may appear before SC Collegium

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, who allegedly made controversial statements at a Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) function, is likely to appear before the Supreme Court Collegium soon to explain his stand on the controversy.

The top court on December 10 took note of news reports and sought a report from the Allahabad High Court. "The Supreme Court has taken note of newspaper reports of a speech given by Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, a sitting judge of the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad. The details and particulars have been called from the High Court and the matter is under consideration," an official statement had said.

As per the established practices, the judge, against whom a report is sought by the Supreme Court Collegium on any controversial issue from the High Court concerned, is given an opportunity to put forth his or her version before the Collegium headed by the Chief Justice of India.

Supreme Court sources said Justice Yadav is likely to be asked to appear and put forth his version as per established practices.

Facing flak, West Bengal Minister says he is secular

The Hindu Bureau

KOLKATA

Under fire for his remarks that Muslims will become majority, West Bengal Minister Firhad Hakim said on Sunday that he is a secular person and will remain so till death.

"Presentations by Moroccan officials emphasised the country's investor-friendly climate, free zones, including the Atlantic Free Zone; and incentives for foreign investments. The Indian delegation also visited the Atlantic Free Zone, gaining a comprehensive understanding of Morocco's industrial landscape," the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers said on social media platform X.

Bilateral trade between India and Morocco was approximately \$4.1 billion in 2023, with major exports from India including refined petroleum, vehicles, and various chemicals. India is the largest buyer of phosphate from Morocco.

Mr. Hakim's remarks evoked strong reactions from not only Opposition parties but also from leaders of the Trinamool Congress. Senior party leader Kunal Ghosh came in defence of the party colleague and said Opposition leaders "misinterpreted and twisted" his remarks. Mr. Ghosh said Mr. Hakim was speaking about upliftment of Muslims so that they could join the mainstream of society.

Two Muslim leaders of the Trinamool Congress criticised Mr. Hakim. Former IPS officer and Debra MLA Humayun Kabir said that "quality should be given importance over quantity". "Instead of having five children to become rickshaw pullers, van drivers, vegetable sellers, pushers, migrant workers, hawkers, it is better to have two children as teachers and doctors. Wouldn't it be better to be a police officer like me?" he said.

Another TMC leader going by the same name and MLA from Bharatpur Humayun Kabir said Mr. Hakim should "read the Quran". "Which community will be a majority and which will be a minority depends on the will of Allah and it is stupid to comment on such matters," the Bharatpur MLA said.

Morocco welcomes Indian defence companies to set up production units

Dinakar Peri

NEW DELHI

Morocco is emerging as a springboard for India's ambitions to expand its footprint in Africa for defence exports. Pitching Morocco as a gateway to Africa and Europe for Indian companies, Abdeltif Loudyi, Morocco's Minister Delegate to the Head of the Government, and In-Charge of Administration of National Defence, said they would like "to offer state-of-the-art environment, zero bureaucracy, and profitability for Indian defence companies".

"Morocco and India enjoy excellent bilateral relations based on mutual respect, and have every potential to pursue their positive momentum in various fields, including defence," Mr. Loudyi said, addressing the India-Morocco defence industry seminar held in Rabat on December 9 and 10, and jointly organised by the Defence Ministries of the



Stronger ties: Officials at the first edition of the India-Morocco

Defence industry seminar held in Rabat. X@SIDMINRA

two countries, the Indian Embassy in Morocco, and the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers. "We want you in Morocco; we will support you," he said.

This seminar can only strengthen the historic ties between Morocco and India, two emerging economies with growing strategic cooperation in the defence sector, the Minister observed.

Mr. Loudyi said the launch of the strategic defence industry project placed Morocco at the

centre of attention as a defence development hub, and opened up promising prospects for investors interested in the defence and high-tech sectors, as demonstrated by the new strategic partnership signed between the National Defence Administration and the Tata Group, aimed at local production of the WhAP 8x8 ground combat vehicle. "The partnership between ADN and TASM is part of a broader drive to develop Morocco's defence industry, with the

Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers said on social media platform X.

Bilateral trade between India and Morocco was approximately \$4.1 billion in 2023, with major exports from India including refined petroleum, vehicles, and various chemicals. India is the largest buyer of phosphate from Morocco.



In his memoir, Mani Shankar Aiyar recalls the time when he tried to persuade Manmohan Singh to join Trinamool Congress. M. SRINATH

while Ms. Gandhi was "on holiday in the Kausambi hills", she had given the "vague impression" that she was considering making Dr. Singh the "presidential nominee".

"The choice of Rashtrapati: Manmohan Singh or Pranab Mukherjee. Personally, I was of the view that Pranab Mukherjee should have been given the reins of the government and Dr. Manmohan Singh elevated to President of India when the office of Rashtrapati presented an opening in 2012," Mr. Aiyar writes.

From talking about his wife Suneet's meltdown in the wake of a series of alleged scams during UPA-II to his own assessment of the Singh government's mishandling of the challenges, particularly the An-

na Hazare-led agitation under the banner of 'India Against Corruption', Mr. Aiyar's book is an insider's account of the political turbulence the Congress encountered between 2009 and 2014.

"The Minister of Home Affairs, PC (P. Chidambaram) who initially refused Anna Hazare permission to conduct his fast in the Ram Lila grounds, eventually caved in and the Ram Lila grounds became 'ground zero' for a much-publicized agitation. I think the lowest point in UPA-II's reign was when three Union Ministers went to Delhi airport to receive the private aircraft of Baba Ramdev, the highly controversial 'godman' who was supporting Anna Hazare," Mr. Aiyar writes.

Another TMC leader going by the same name and MLA from Bharatpur Humayun Kabir said Mr. Hakim should "read the Quran". "Which community will be a majority and which will be a minority depends on the will of Allah and it is stupid to comment on such matters," the Bharatpur MLA said.

No Central interference in Cabinet allocation, says BJP Maharashtra president

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit

MUMBAI

There was no friction among the Bharatiya Janata Party, Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party in Maharashtra, and there was no Central interference in the Cabinet allocation discussion, BJP State president and Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule said in an interview to *The Hindu*.

Mr. Bawankule denied speculation that the Mahayuti alliance leaders had travelled to Delhi to meet Union Minister Amit Shah to resolve their differences over the allocation of Cabinet berths. "Mr. Shah and Narendra Modi gave complete freedom to the Maharashtra leaders to take the discussions ahead. Nobody was upset here," he said.

"The Centre took a call only on the policy decisions. Otherwise, nobody went to Delhi with demands, Cabinet expectations, or for negotiations," he told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Bawankule elaborat-



Key event: Maharashtra BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule taking oath as a Cabinet Minister during the ceremony in Nagpur. PTI

ed on the formula for deciding the names of the leaders who were given an opportunity for a position in the Cabinet. "Cabinet expansion has been done with only one goal in mind – to bring on board the performing leadership which will be able to run the government efficiently, and which will be able to deliver on the manifesto within 100 days," he said.

Asked if the BJP had made any suggestions to the Shiv Sena and the NCP on ministerial names, Mr. Bawankule said that each party had taken its own independent call.

Asked to elaborate on the understanding, Mr. Bawankule spoke of the discussions around portfolios.

"Each party wanted to see if, apart from the portfolios they had handled in the last government, they could get one or two more key portfolios. But all the leaders had a compromising stance. Everyone was clear that only apt and reasonable demands should be made, and only the reasonable demands should be fulfilled. There would have been a problem had there been any unrealistic demands," he said.

Bhujbal out, Shelar in: 39 join Maharashtra Cabinet

The Cabinet includes 19 Ministers from the BJP, 11 from the Shiv Sena, and nine from the NCP; Ajit Pawar says those excluded will be accommodated midway through the term of the government

Abhinay Deshpande

MUMBAI

After days of friction and wrangling, the Devendra Fadnavis government in Maharashtra was expanded with 39 Ministers on Sunday, bringing the Cabinet strength to 42. The Cabinet includes 19 Ministers from the BJP, 11 from the Shiv Sena, and nine from the NCP. There are four women.

Prominent names include BJP State president Chandrashekhar Bawankule and party leaders Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil and Girish Mahajan; Mumbai BJP chief Ashish Shelar; Shiv Sena leaders Gulabrao Patil, Pratap Sarnaik, Dada Bhuse, and Sanjay Rathod; and NCP leader Hasan Mushrif. Chhagan Bhujbal and Dilip Walse Patil of the NCP, and Sudhir Mungantwar and Vijay Kumar Gavit of the BJP were among those who did not get the call.

Governor C.P. Radhak-



Taking charge: Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan with BJP leader Chandrakant Patil during the swearing-in ceremony on Sunday. PTI

rishnan administered the Oath of Office and Secrecy to the new Ministers at the Raj Bhavan in Nagpur, marking the first swearing-in of the Cabinet in the State's second capital in 33 years. The swearing-in was previously held in the city during the Sudhakarrao Naik government in 1991.

The week-long Winter Session of the State legislature will begin in Nagpur on Monday. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and his

deputies, Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, took oath in Mumbai on December 5, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other NDA leaders.

Other appointments

Mr. Pawar said those excluded would be considered for appointment during the government's five-year tenure.

"We have decided to allow others for two-and-a-half years, ensuring more

regions and districts get representation," he said addressing NCP workers in Nagpur ahead of the expansion.

"We have decided that during the five-year tenure of this government, we will allow others also for two-and-a-half years, which means many will get a chance to become Ministers and State Ministers. Accordingly, many districts and regions will get representation," he said.

"They are the same

EVMs when you get 100-plus members of Parliament and celebrate it as a victory for your party. You can't a few months later turn around and say don't like them now because election results were different," he said.

The Chief Minister said if the Congress had issues with EVMs it should be consistent in raising it. "If you have problems, you should be consistent in raising it. If you don't trust the machines then don't try to contest elections," Mr. Abdullah said.

The Mahayuti alliance secured a landslide victory in the November 20 Assembly election, winning 230 of the 288 seats.

Tharoor clarifies on calling George Soros a 'friend'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Congress leader and Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor on Sunday clarified that he knew U.S. investor George Soros in a "social sense" and the last time he met Mr. Soros was at Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri's residence in New York when Mr. Puri was a diplomat.

He took to X to issue this "clarification" after an earlier post of his calling Mr. Soros a friend went viral. "Since there is so much unhealthy curiosity about this tweet, I knew Mr. Soros well in my @UN [United Nations] days as an upstanding international-minded resident of New York. He was a friend in the social sense: I have never received or solicited a penny from him or any of his foundations for myself or any institution or cause I supported," he said on Sunday.

Though the Congress MP said he hopes his latest post would clarify the "absurd allegations out of a fifteen-year-old innocuous tweet. But knowing how the troll factory works. I have no doubt it won't!"

PM invokes Nehru to distract from his own 'failures', says Cong.

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI



Jairam Ramesh

ments before May 2014.

In another post on X, he said, "In his rant in the Lok Sabha yesterday, the PM attacked Nehru on the First Amendment to the Constitution – which was carried out with effect from June 18th, 1951." Explaining why this amendment was brought, the Congress leader said, it was carried out for three reasons.

Three reasons

"One, to deal with communal propaganda at a most sensitive time. Two, to protect Zamindari abolition laws that were being struck down by the courts. Three, to protect reservations in education and employment for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and OBCs that had been rejected by the courts," the Congress leader said.

Modi refers to past to build a fresh narrative

NEWS ANALYSIS

Nistula Hebbar

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech at the debate in the Lok Sabha on the journey of the Constitution was full of references to the past.

Some of them, including references to the late Purnashottam Das Tandon, former Congress chief, and the late K.M. Munshi, who was a Minister in the Nehru government, were packed with political narrative-building.

Mr. Modi quoted Tan-

don's views with regard to India's glorious past and its past experiences with democracy predating the British. He quoted Munshi's advocacy of a Uniform Civil Code over a religion-based personal law. The UCC is a core issue for the BJP and Mr. Modi repeated his government's intention to bring in what he terms a "Secular Civil Code".

Munshi parted ways with the Congress in the 1950s and formed the Swatantra Party, and was one of the founders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

"Prime Minister Modi raised the issue of Tandon to build and strengthen



two narratives – how Nehru was anti-democratic and turned the Congress into the fiefdom of one particular family; and second, Nehru was opposed to 'pro-Hindu' leaders right from the beginning. Tandon was known for being a 'pro-Hindu' nationalist

leader within the Congress, and was opposed to Nehru's policy of 'Muslim appeasement'. Tandon defeated Nehru's candidate in the election for Congress president. But Nehru made Tandon resign in 1951, threatening to walk out of Congress Working Committee," Arun Anand, author of two books on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, including *The Safarni Surge: Untold Story of RSS Leadership*, said.

It was also, BJP leaders said, a comment on what they say is the situation within the Congress, with the sidelining of the "G23" group of leaders who at-

tempted to lead an eventually unsuccessful banner of revolt within the Congress a few years ago.

"The Congress is on a particular path, [and] due to the leadership of the Gandhis, it appears irreversible. The recollection of what happened to leaders like Munshi and Tandon shows that Congress had all manner of opinion within its fold, including of Hindu consciousness, generally espoused by leaders who were not part of the dynasty. Under the one-family rule, those strains of opinions have been weeded out," a senior office-bearer of the BJP said.

BJP questions Rajiv Gandhi Foundation's past connection with 'Soros-linked' entity

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday alleged that the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, "a key vehicle for the Congress party", had in 2007-08 partnered with the Human Rights Law Network, an organisation that purportedly received substantial funding from George Soros's Open Society Institute. Why would a foundation linked to a major Indian political party tie up with a foreign organisation with such dubious connections?" it said.

The party asked if the foundation was using foreign funds to push 'anti-national agendas'

tions that have consistently sought to undermine India's sovereignty and national security? What were the true intentions of the tie-up between RGF and HRLN?" the BJP added.

The party alleged that in 2007-08, RGF partnered with the Human Rights Law Network, an organisation that received substantial funding from George Soros's Open Society Institute. Why would a foundation linked to a major Indian political party tie up with a foreign organisation with such dubious connections?" it said.

"How can the Congress tie up with such organisations?" it said.

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(A) DEVELOPMENT OF DISTRIBUTION INFRASTRUCTURE work for segregation of 11 KV mixed feeders under REVAMPED REFORMS-BASED AND RESULTS-LINKED, DISTRIBUTION SECTOR SCHEME (RDSS).
(B) Development of decentralized Solar Power plant in the vicinity of 33/11 KV substation on Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) mode including O&M of solar plant & connecting line for 10 years.
(C) Network management of 33/11 KV substation and downstream network for 10 years.
All the details regarding tenders are available at our website www.energy.rajasthan.gov.in/avnl and www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in. In future, corrigendum/extension etc, if any, shall be published only at web site www.energy.rajasthan.gov.in/avnl and www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in.
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Congress inconsistent on EVM issue, says Omar

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Expressing faith in the electronic voting machines, J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has said the Congress opposes it only when results are not to its expectations.

Striking a differing note within the INDIA in a recent interview with PTI, Mr. Abdullah, whose National Conference is part of the bloc, said, "EVMs can't be a problem only when you lose elections."

"We have decided that during the five-year tenure of this government, we will allow others also for two-and-a-half years, which means many will get a chance to become Ministers and State Ministers. Accordingly, many districts and regions will get representation," he said.

"They are the same EVMs when you get 100-plus members of Parliament and celebrate it as a victory for your party. You can't a few months later turn around and say don't like them now because election results were different," he said.

The Chief Minister said if the Congress had issues with EVMs it should be consistent in raising it. "If you have problems, you should be consistent in raising it. If you don't trust the machines then don't try to contest elections," Mr. Abdullah said.

The Mahayuti alliance secured a landslide victory in the November 20 Assembly election, winning 230 of the 288 seats.

IN BRIEF



Lok Sabha defeats Rajya Sabha in cricket match

In a friendly cricket match organised to create awareness of tuberculosis, Lok Sabha Speaker XI defeated Rajya Sabha Chairman XI by 73 runs in New Delhi on Sunday. BJP MP Anurag Thakur was the man of the match, scoring an unbeaten 111 runs from 59 balls. Speaker XI set a target of 251 runs after losing seven wickets in 20 overs. Chairman XI scored 178, losing eight wickets. Former cricketer Mohammad Azharuddin scored 74 runs of 42 balls for the Rajya Sabha team. He and Minister Rammohan Naidu won the best batter award. Lok Sabha members Deepender Hooda and Nishikant Dubey got the prizes for best bowler and best fielder, respectively.

India seeks strong subsidy rules for high seas fishing

India has pitched at the World Trade Organization (WTO) for stricter regulations on subsidies granted by countries that are engaged in high seas fishing activities, an official said. An Indian document submitted at the WTO has noted that it provides a modest \$35 per fisher annually, compared to subsidies as high as \$76,000 per fisher per year in some European nations. India also suggested that historical subsidisers should seek permission of the Committee on Fisheries Subsidies for grant of subsidies in future. The country has made these remarks in the meetings of the Negotiating Group on Rules (Fisheries subsidies), which are going on in Geneva. PTI

Listening to music helps us discover the art within: Justice Muralidhar

Carnatic vocalist T.M. Krishna presented with *The Hindu Sangita Kalanidhi M.S. Subbulakshmi Award* at the annual Conference and Concerts of the Music Academy; singer says award is a blessing, and carries with it a responsibility

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Justice S. Muralidhar (retd), former Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court, on Sunday said that to discover the art "within each of us, we must be prepared to let the music unpeel the layers below which it lies hidden and allow our artistic self to introduce itself to us".

"It can happen if the music is listened to, not just heard or watched. And it can happen if we don't let our knowledge of music come in the way of our enjoying it in the present moment," he said.

Speaking at the inauguration of the 98th annual Conference and Concerts of the Music Academy here, he said that the 2024 Sangita Kalanidhi-designate, Carnatic vocalist T.M. Krishna, had made his choices clear – musically and politically. He was prepared to face the consequences of such choices.

He had a precedent in "MS Amma, who also made clear and courageous choices," Justice Muralidhar said.

Her opting to sing *Tamizh Isai* earned her a five-year ban from this Academ-



High honour: Justice S. Muralidhar (retd), former Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court, presents *The Hindu Sangita Kalanidhi M.S. Subbulakshmi Award* to Carnatic vocalist T.M. Krishna at the Music Academy in Chennai on Sunday. N. Murali, President, Music Academy, and Carnatic singers Bombay Jayashri Ramnath and S. Sowmya are present. R. RAVINDRAN

my. Thankfully, it made amends and honoured her with the Sangita Kalanidhi in 1968, he recalled.

Mr. Krishna, who was presented with *The Hindu Sangita Kalanidhi M.S. Subbulakshmi Award*, in his speech, said he was blessed to receive an award instituted in her memory.

"For a singer like me to receive an award instituted in her memory is not just a signal honour but a blessing. Even more, it carries with it a responsibility: that I sing not just with my trained voice, not just with a concentrating mind, but

with my very being, my life, my all. I thank *The Hindu* for reposing that responsibility on me," he said.

Sabha culture

With so much happening in the virtual universe, Mr. Krishna said, "We have forgotten Carnatic music's sabha culture."

"I was told by many prominent musicians that between June and September this year, there were hardly any sabha concerts. The sabha network is a unique feeder system that provides consistent opportunities to musicians who are

at various stages in their musical career. The smaller sabhas help them gain experience, receive constructive feedback from *rasikas* and rise in the profession. This network has weakened and this should worry all of us," he said.

N. Murali, President of the Music Academy, said that Justice Muralidhar was widely respected for his integrity, forthrightness, erudition, incisiveness, discipline and above all, a self-effacing nature.

He was a keen and ardent *rasika* and a connoisseur of Carnatic music and

had made time to attend concerts during the season.

On Mr. Krishna, he said that the singer gave his first concert at the age of 12 in 1988 during the Academy's Spirit of Youth series.

His musical career had been truly a voyage of exploration and within the confines of the Carnatic tone, he added.

Carnatic vocalists Bombay Jayashri and S. Sowmya graced the occasion.

The Sangita Kalanidhi Award would be presented to Mr. Krishna at the *Sadas* on January 1.

Ram temple gets award from British Safety Council

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Ram Temple project in Ayodhya bagged the Sword of Honour award from the British Safety Council, said Nripendra Misra, chairman of the construction committee of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, on Sunday.

Mr. Misra said the Sword of Honour is one of the prestigious accolades in safety management, which is given after the British Safety Council conducts the audit of the process and practices, and finally does an on-site activity assessment.

Only those who achieve a five-star assessment are eligible to enter for the Sword of Honour award contest. Earlier M/s Larsen & Toubro responsible for the construction of the temple were also awarded 'Golden Trophy' by the National Safety Council for safety measures taken in the construction of Ram Temple," he said.

Mr. Misra said the construction of the first and second floors, including the "Shikhar" (top), of the temple along with other significant temples has entered the last phase.

The construction is likely to be completed by June 2025.

Jaishankar thanks Moldova for helping Indians during the Ukraine crisis

Kallop Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

India on Sunday expressed appreciation for the support that Moldova extended in airlifting stranded Indian nationals who had to be evacuated when the war in Ukraine broke out in February 2022. India's appreciation was conveyed by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at an event held here, where the Embassy of Moldova was officially inaugurated in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Moldova Mihail Popsoi.

"Moldova extended crucial help during the Operation Ganga to evacuate the very large number of stranded Indian students during the Ukraine crisis," Mr. Jaishankar said acknowledging Moldova's support to the Indian citizens in Ukraine who faced a se-



S. Jaishankar and Mihail Popsoi during the joint inauguration of the Embassy of Republic of Moldova, in New Delhi. PTI

rious threat when Russian forces began the 'special military operation' against Ukraine. Operation Ganga was started to airlift Indian students and professionals who were based in Ukraine. At least 20,000 Indian citizens in Ukraine were evacuated with the help of neighbouring Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Moldova and Hungary.

Mr. Jaishankar also an-

nounced that India would open an embassy in Moldova in "not so distant future". He said India and Moldova, which is located in a strategically important part of eastern Europe, have a "shared vision of the world that values peace, understanding and cooperation".

The Embassy of Moldova has been operating out of New Delhi for around a

year but Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Popsoi on Sunday unveiled the official insignia, thereby formally inaugurating it.

Addressing the event,

Mr. Popsoi said the inauguration of the Embassy of Moldova is a special moment in the relation between the two sides.

"We conducted second round of foreign office consultation after a gap of 21 years reaffirming political engagement.

The first official visit of our minister of education happened just two weeks ago.

This year we launched a scholarship programme for Indian students and we will expand this initiative," said Mr. Popsoi.

Despite geographical distance and different traditions, Moldova and India have always maintained a bond of mutual respect and understanding," he said.

This marks the beginning of fixed scheduled sailing service of cargo vessels from Haldia for NW-1

Centre launches Jalvahak scheme for cargo movement via inland waterways

Dinakar Peri

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday launched the Jalvahak scheme to boost long-haul cargo movement via inland waterways.

The scheme incentivises cargo transport on National Waterways 1 (Ganga), 2 (Brahmaputra), and 16 (Barak) and provides an opportunity for the trade interests to explore movement of cargo via waterways with positive economic value proposition, Union Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said.

He flagged off cargo ships MV AAI, MV Homi Bhabha, and MV Trishul along with two dumb barges Ajay and Dikhu from the G.R. Jetty in Kolkata.

This marks the beginning of fixed scheduled sailing service of cargo vessels from Haldia for NW-1



New network: Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, flags off cargo vessels in Kolkata on Sunday. PTI

(Ganga) and NW-2 (Brahmaputra), the Ministry said in a statement.

"With its advantage of being an economical, ecologically sound, and efficient mode of transportation, we want to boost cargo movement via waterways to decongest the railways and roadways," Mr. Sonowal said.

Further, the regular scheduled freight service,

which began from Kolkata, will ensure that the cargo is transported and delivered within a stipulated time frame, he said.

35% reimbursement

The Jalvahak scheme offers reimbursement of up to 35% of the total operating expenditure incurred, the Ministry said.

To encourage the business proposition of vessel

operators, the scheme encourages cargo owners to hire vessels owned or operated by government entities. "The incentive scheme is ideal for major shipping companies, freight forwarders, trade bodies and associations that handle bulk and containerised cargo. By opting for the scheme, it provides them an opportunity to optimise their supply chain network. The scheme is initially valid for three years."

The fixed day scheduled sailing service will ply vessels between Kolkata-Patna-Kolkata stretch of NW-1 and between Kolkata and Pandu in Guwahati on NW-2 via Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route (IBPR), the Ministry said.

UltraTech Cement said it became the first cement company to leverage NW-1 for gypsum transport at scale.

FAITH

Ramana Maharshi's reach

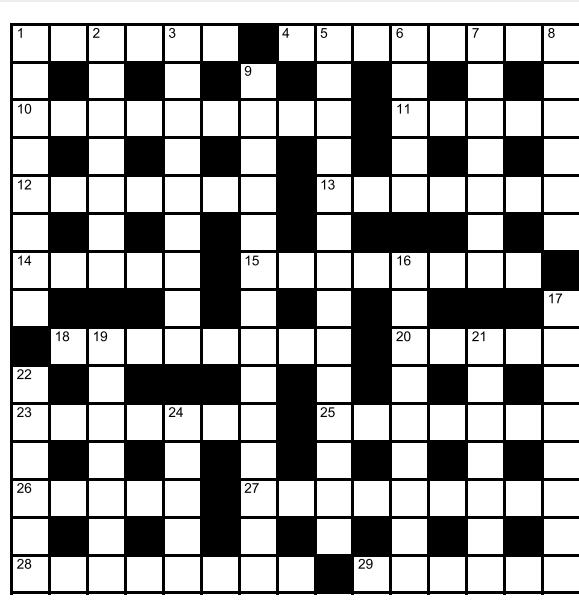
The guidance of a guru is paramount for anyone at any stage in life. It is only under the tutelage of a saintly person who has detached himself from material life that an ordinary person learns to navigate life. From learning all that one can to leading a virtuous life, realising god and attaining moksha, the role of a guru is immeasurable, said P. Swaminathan in a discourse.

One such persona who made a huge difference in the lives of many struggling to strike the mid-path between materialistic pursuits and spiritual goals is Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi. He abhorred false piety. Once, when a devotee prostrated before him over 108 times, the puzzled saint asked him what he was doing. When he replied saying he was paying his pranams to him, Ramana Maharshi said, in an easy tone, "Why did you have to trouble yourself physically to this extent? You could have simply greeted me with joined palms!" This paring to the bone of any activity and dispensing with false narratives was his hallmark which drew countless devotees to him.

Born in December, 1879 at Tiruchuzhi in Tamil Nadu, when the family moved to Madurai, he visited the Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple often and stationing himself in front of the statues of Arubathimoovar (63 Nayamars), the young man became consumed by devotion of the Lord. One day, he 'borrowed' a few rupees from his brother and journeyed to Tiruvannamalai. After praying at Arunachaleswar sannidhi, he renounced everything and attained yogic state. His teachings resonated with the crowds that grew with each passing day. He lived as he preached: with utter simplicity and zero acquisition.

TH CROSSWORD + 14357

(set by KrisKross)



Across

- 1 Default career - "Green Energy" (6)
- 4 End of hapless sailors in spacecraft (8)
- 10 Dirty cat's home filled with basically ugly whiskers (9)
- 11 Expand novel about capturing maiden's heart (5)
- 12 A friend initially moves ASAP possibly (7)
- 13 Ordinary vehicle with poor acceleration (7)

CM YK

- 14 Say, perfect partners splitting the fee regularly (5)
- 15 Part of group accepting Republican (8)
- 18 Stall near house finally sheltering animal (8)
- 20 Most online claims rejected: "Incorrect" (3,2)
- 23 Principal setter's collection of documents (7)
- 25 Americans in civil war are those getting pulled? (7)
- 26 Adds digits without mistake essentially (5)
- 27 King inviting head of excavators near a pit to have another look (2-7)
- 28 Oscar led child away, leaving cold, walled city in India (3,5)
- 29 Customs in America taking a very long time (6)
- Down
- 1 Vagrant man in tears, getting leftovers (8)
- 2 Different route connecting North and South of Rajasthan - it's free of charge (7)
- 3 Printer to remove contents of book in comic genre (9)
- 5 Very gentle woman losing ring, made a courtroom drama (6,5,3)
- 6 Horse circling white tree (5)
- 7 Spanish gentleman concealed devious goal (7)
- 8 Breakfast dish with bad smell, extremely awful (6)
- 9 Horrible people face home truths unhappily (4,2,3,5)
- 16 Engineer says "Brief Note: no unknown, new tools" (5,4)
- 17 Lady with family members heading off for seafood (8)
- 19 Up brewing iced tea, mostly around 10 (7)
- 21 Spooner's conference is packed with people (7)
- 22 Hide impression? (6)
- 24 Paper missing the first edition (5)



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

SUDOKU

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		6			4			

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

H	G	A	S	A	G	T		

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MONEYWISE

Cover from pollution **RIGHTCHOICE**

Amit Chhabra

The northern plains of India are currently grappling with one of the worst air pollution crises in years. The Air Quality Index (AQI) has persistently remained in the 'severe' category, with some areas hitting the maximum level of 500. The air has become 'unbreathable,' with many experiencing respiratory discomfort and other health issues.

Looking at the dire situation, health experts warn the current air quality is similar to smoking over 10 cigarettes a day, posing serious risks to short- and long-term health. Vulnerable groups, such as children, elderly and those with pre-existing conditions are at greater risk. With toxic air causing a surge in respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses, preparedness extends beyond prevention. Health insurance has emerged as a crucial safety net, ensuring financial protection against the growing medical costs linked to pollution-related illnesses.

OPD coverage

Pollution rarely confines itself to hospital stays. It rather tends to hit in the form of eye irritations, skin allergies and breathing issues which often leads to more outpatient visits. For families, especially those with young children or senior citizens, these costs can accumulate quickly.

A single consultation in a metro city costs ₹1,000-1,500 and diagnostic tests can add another ₹5,000. Over time, these expenses can rival hospitalisation costs. OPD coverage, an often-overlooked feature in health insurance plans, can significantly lighten this financial burden, ensuring you don't pay out-of-pocket for frequent visits to the doctor.

Pre-existing conditions

Pollution worsens chronic illnesses like asthma, bronchitis and cardiovascular diseases. For those managing these conditions, frequent medical intervention becomes inevitable.

Policies are now more inclusive, with shorter waiting periods for pre-existing conditions and even immediate coverage in some cases. This evolution in health insurance ensures those already dealing with respiratory or chronic ailments aren't financially overwhelmed by pollution-triggered complications.

Case for high sum insured

Peak pollution seasons often bring unforeseen costs – from doctor visits to diagnostic tests and emergency hospitalisations. For families, a floater plan with a higher sum insured offers broad protection under one policy.

In cities like Delhi, where healthcare inflation is relentless, a policy with ₹10-25 lakh coverage per person – or a ₹1 crore umbrella for the family – has become prudent choice. In fact, insurers now offer riders that provide an unlimited sum insured for a single claim at a modest premium increase of 10-15%. Opting for a ₹10 lakh base plan with this rider ensures financial resilience in the face of escalating medical bills.

Critical illness cover

Pollution isn't just seasonal nuisance; it is a long-term risk multiplier. Conditions like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cardiac issues and even cancer are more and more linked to poor air quality. The cost of managing these diseases can climb to ₹40-50 lakh, a financial burden most households are unprepared to shoulder.

A critical illness cover bridges this gap by offering a lump sum payout on diagnosis. This flexibility allows the insured to use the funds not just for treatment but also for related costs, such as lifestyle adjustments or income loss, providing a vital buffer against life-altering illnesses.

Beyond prevention

No mask, purifier, or closed-door policy can entirely shield you from the health impacts of hazardous air. But financial preparedness, in the form of a well-chosen health insurance plan, can help mitigate its toll.

As AQI levels nosedive year after year, it's time to move beyond temporary fixes and focus on a long-term strategy. Investing in health insurance is not just about handling medical expenses—it's about securing peace of mind in a world where toxic air is becoming an uninvited constant.

(The writer is CBO, general insurance at Policybazaar.com)



Answer to market volatility: your time horizon

If history is any indication, an adequate time horizon takes care of market corrections; as long as the fundamental quality remains intact, you should remain invested

PATIENCE PAYS**Joydeep Sen**

When there is a market correction, investors are worried, as to where the bottom is and when the market would turn around. The fact is, no one knows the top or bottom of the market. Market prices do fluctuate, which is called volatility, a 'constant' in markets. In this context, we will discuss some historical data, which gives a perspective about the future.

Context

We will take instances of significant past corrections and the returns generated till date. Returns till date are calculated from the pre-correction peak i.e. even after you have suffered the correction, you have earned so much (as in the table) return till date.

What table says

Absolute decline indicates non-annualised fall in the market i.e. from peak to trough of that phase, what was the extent of decline.

Nifty50 TRI: market decline and returns till November 30, 2024 are represented by Nifty50 TRI.

Nifty50 represents a little more than 50% of the total equity market capitalisation of India.

TRI means the total returns index, which adds the dividends paid by the companies to the price appreciation of the stocks.

Events of volatility

Prior to 2000, it was the phase of 'dotcom' boom.

Wait and profit

Despite corrections, the market, over an adequate holding period, has rewarded patience

Major Falls > 20% since 2000	Absolute Decline	Nifty 50 TRI*
2000 Dotcom Bubble	-50%	13% (19.3 times)
2004 Indian Election Uncertainty	-30%	14% (15.9 times)
2006 Global Rate Hike Selloff	-30%	12% (8.1 times)
2008 Global Financial Crisis	-59%	10% (4.7 times)
2010 European Debt Crisis	-27%	11% (4.5 times)
2015 Global Market Selloff (Yuan Devaluation)	-22%	12% (3.0 times)
2020 Covid Crash	-38%	16% (2.1 times)

* Annualized Returns from Peak till November 2024

SOURCE: FUNDSINDIA WEALTH CONVERSATIONS

In the initial phase of Internet, any company with 'dotcom' or something similar in the name was galloping at the stock market.

People did not care about the fundamental quality of those companies. Valuations, as measured by the price-earnings multiple, were stretched as prices ran up to many times the earnings of the companies. It was so much that it was in bubble zone.

And whenever there is a bubble, it will burst at some point of time. When it burst, market fell 50%.

From then till date, you would have earned 13% annualised returns. That is, even after suffering 50% fall, you earned 13% annualised returns. The inference is, as long as you have a long investment horizon, you take home decent returns, in spite of big market corrections.

The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008 was another big event. It originated due to excesses in the U.S., but impacted the entire world. Stock markets crumbled, central banks all over the world

cut interest rates and pumped in liquidity to support distressed economies. Our market, represented by Nifty50, fell 59%.

From that level till date, market has given 10% annualised returns.

Similarly, we had many other significant events leading to big market corrections, like COVID in 2020. In spite of corrections, market, over an adequate holding period, has rewarded patience.

Current situation

There was, and still is, some stretch in market valuations, in terms of price-earnings multiples. This stretch is more in the U.S. than in India.

When prices run ahead of reasonable valuations, it is in a way waiting for a trigger to correct. Since October 2024, the correction was triggered by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pulling out of India.

It was not just a simple selling of stocks, but in terms of quantum, the highest ever in a span of one month, in October 2024.

Our markets corrected,

approximately 11-12% at the indices level, and higher for certain stocks. However, the important point is, there is no big adverse event happening, of the scale mentioned earlier in the table.

Whether the correction is over or not, or whether there would be another correction in the near future, is anyone's call. In a way, these corrections are healthy, as it brings valuations closer to historical averages from stretch zone.

The fundamental economic growth of India and the growth of corporates, remain very much in place.

Market price in the short run is a function of many variables other than the quality or growth of the companies.

As we saw over the last two months, big-time FPI sell-off was a reason for correction. However, this does not impact the growth of companies in India in the long run.

Conclusion

When the market is volatile and correcting, investors tend to get apprehensive and some may pull out of markets. However, as long as the fundamental quality remains intact, you should remain invested. Rather, the discounted price levels are a better time to buy more stocks. As we saw in the historical instances, trying to call the market bottom is futile. Just wait it out. Data analysis on Nifty50 and Sensex shows that over the history of the index, on holding periods of 10 years and longer, market has always given decent positive returns.

(The writer is a corporate trainer on financial markets and author)

Income returns or capital rise?

THINKINVESTOR

Choosing between bank deposits and bond funds is a choice between stable returns and higher expected returns with downside risk. A portfolio with a judicious mix is behaviourally optimal

Venkatesh Bangarawuswamy

We believe optimal diversification in a goal-based portfolio involves having capital-appreciation products (equity funds) and income-earning (recurring deposit) products. Previously, we discussed costs/benefits of investing in recurring deposits (RDs). Preference to earn interest income has often been called to question. There are three reasons why we believe earning interest income is more optimal than earning capital appreciation on bond investments.

Stability vs. downside risk

RDs earn interest income. Bond funds provide capital appreciation, which can be greater than interest income. That said, following are the reasons why you should consider earning interest income rather than capital appreciation: One, bond prices are inversely related to interest rates. That is, if interest rate declines, bond price goes up. Therefore, funds that invest in bonds will generate capital appreciation when interest rate declines or when the bond market anticipates interest rate will decline. But by how much can interest rate decline? That depends on inflation in India, which currently is upwards of 4%. A floor (bottom) on interest rates places a cap (ceiling) on bond prices and, hence, on capital appreciation. But there is no ceiling on interest rates which can rise for several reasons. That means bond prices can dip more than they can go up. Why expose a goal-based portfolio to such risk?

Two, equity investments provide capital appreciation but exposes your portfolio to downside risk. It means you need income returns to provide stability to portfolio. Hence, RDs. In times of market crisis, when equity funds generate negative returns, RDs can provide stable returns.

Finally, interest-earning products such as RDs provide visibility of cash flows. Ignoring the small risk that the bank will default, you know today the maturity value of deposit. In contrast, your investments in bond funds fluctuate based on net asset value, which depends on the market price of the bonds in the portfolio.

Conclusion

Our argument does not consider taxes, as norms change. Note, capital appreciation via investing in an active bond fund is taxed at marginal tax rate of 30% similar to interest income. Choosing between bank deposits and bond funds is a choice between stable returns and higher expected returns with downside risk. A portfolio with a judicious mix of capital appreciation and income returns is optimal.

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

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	Interest Rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee
HDFC Bank	10.85-24.00	10,834-14,384	2,167-2,877	Up to Rs 6,500
Tata Capital	11.99 onwards	11,120 onwards	2,224 onwards	Up to 5.5%
State Bank of India	11.45-14.85	10,984-11,856	2,197-2,371	NIL
ICICI Bank	10.85-16.25	10,834-12,226	2,167-2,445	Up to 2%
Bank of Baroda	11.05-18.75	10,884-12,902	2,177-2,580	Up to 2% (Maximum Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	11.00 onwards	10,871 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99-16.00	10,869-12,159	2,174-2,432	Up to 5%
Bank of India	10.85-16.10	10,834-12,186	2,167-2,437	Up to 1% (Min Rs 250 and Max Rs 10,000)
Canara Bank	10.95-16.40	10,859-12,266	2,172-2,453	0.25% (Maximum Rs 5,000)
Punjab National Bank	11.40-17.95	10,971-12,683	2,194-2,537	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	10.15-16.00	10,660-12,159	2,132-2,432	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.49-14.49	10,994-11,762	2,199-2,352	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	11.35-15.45	10,959-12,013	2,192-2,403	Up to 1% (Maximum Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	10.00-31.00	10,624-16,485	2,125-3,297	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	11.25-14.00	10,934-11,634	2,187-2,327	0.50%-1%
South Indian Bank	12.85-20.60	11,338-13,414	2,268-2,683	Up to 2%
UCO Bank	12.45-12.85	11,236-11,338	2,247-2,268	Up to 1% (Minimum Rs 750)
IDFC First Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	2%
Bank of Maharashtra	10.00-12.80	10,624-11,325	2,125-2,265	1% (Rs 1,000-Rs 10,000)
Karnataka Bank	13.68	11,551	2,310	Up to 2% (Min. Rs 2,500 & Max. Rs 8,500)
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	2%-3.5%

Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	Interest Rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee

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TEL AVIV

Israel to close Dublin embassy citing 'extreme anti-Israel policies'



Israel will close its Dublin embassy due to the "extreme anti-Israel policies of the Irish government", Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said on Sunday, citing its recognition of a Palestinian state and support for legal action against Israel. Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris said the decision was deeply regrettable. REUTERS

GOMA

Rwanda, Congo cancel peace talks to end conflict in eastern Congo



Planned talks between Congo and Rwanda were cancelled. Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi and Rwanda's President Paul Kagame were set to meet on Sunday in Angola, which has been mediating to put an end to conflict in eastern Congo between the Congolese army and M23 rebel group, which is allegedly backed by Rwanda. AFP

WASHINGTON DC

ABC News to pay \$15 million to settle defamation suit with Trump



ABC News will pay a \$15 million to resolve a defamation lawsuit brought by President-elect Donald Trump. The case stemmed from on-air comments made by top anchor George Stephanopoulos, who said Mr. Trump was found "liable for rape" during an interview with U.S. Representative Nancy Mace that aired in March. AFP

CAPE TOWN

14 killed in French territory of Mayotte as Cyclone Chido strikes



At least 14 persons have died and 246 were injured after Cyclone Chido caused devastating damage in the French territory of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean, France's Interior Ministry said on Sunday. The tropical cyclone blew through the southeastern Indian Ocean, also affecting the nearby islands of Comoros and Madagascar. AFP

Israeli forces kill 28 in Gaza Strip, attack school sheltering Palestinians

An Al-Jazeera journalist is among the casualties; nine killed as clusters of houses are bombed by Israel while some are set ablaze in the towns of Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun and Jabalia camp; 11 killed in three air strikes on houses in Gaza City

Reuters
CAIRO

Israeli troops killed at least 28 Palestinians, most of them in the northern Gaza Strip, on Sunday in air strikes and other attacks on targets that included a school sheltering displaced Gazans, medics and residents said.

They said at least 11 of the dead were killed in three separate Israeli air strikes on Gaza City houses, nine were killed in the towns of Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun and Jabalia camp and two were killed by drone fire in Rafah.

Residents said clusters of houses were bombed and some set ablaze in the



Childhood horror: Children look on after an attack at a tent camp sheltering displaced people in Deir Al-Balah on Sunday. REUTERS

three towns. The Israeli Army has been operating in the towns for over two months.

An Israeli airstrike hit the civil emergency centre

in the Nuseirat market area in the central Gaza Strip, killing Ahmed Al-Louh, a video journalist for Al Jazeera TV, and five other persons.

Medics said several peo-

ple were killed and wounded during the raid on the school while the Army detained many men. The number killed was not immediately clear.

The military said it struck down dozens of militants from the air and on the ground and captured others in Beit Hanoun.

Medical centre

Separately, Israel said its struck a command and control center in a compound in the Abu Shabak clinic in northern Gaza used by Hamas to store weapons. The Gaza Health Ministry said the medical centre, which also includ-

ed a mental health clinic, was destroyed.

Israel to double population on occupied Golan Heights

Reuters
JERUSALEM

Israel agreed on Sunday to double its population on the occupied Golan Heights while saying threats from Syria remained despite the moderate tone of rebel leaders who ousted President Bashar al-Assad a week ago.

"Strengthening the Golan is strengthening the State of Israel, and it is especially important at this time. We will continue to hold onto it, cause it to blossom, and settle in it," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement.

Israel captured most of the strategic plateau from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War, annexing it in 1981.

In 2019, then-President Donald Trump declared



Israel captured most of the strategic Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War, annexing it in 1981. AFP

developments in Syria increase the strength of the threat," Defence Minister Israel Katz told officials examining Israel's defence Budget. Mr. Netanyahu's office said the government approved a more than 40-million-shekel (\$11 million) plan to encourage demographic growth in the Golan.

At least 39 killed in Niger in attacks near Burkina Faso

Agence France-Presse
NIAMEY

Thirty-nine people have been killed in two attacks in recent days in western Niger, near the border with Burkina Faso, Niamey's Defence Ministry said Saturday.

"Two horrific tragedies happened in the communities of Libiri and Kokorou, criminals cornered by constant operations by defence and security forces launched attacks on defenceless civilian populations," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

The "barbaric acts" saw 21 people killed in Libiri and 18 in Kokorou, including children, the Ministry said.

The operations took place from December 12 to 14, the statement said.

S. Korean leader seeks calm after impeachment of Yoon

Associated Press
SEOUL



Lee Jae-myung

remove him from office or reinstate him. If Mr. Yoon is dismissed, a national election to choose his successor must be held within 60 days.

Liberal Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung, whose party holds a majority in the National Assembly, urged the Constitutional Court to rule swiftly on Mr. Yoon's impeachment and proposed a special council for policy cooperation between the government and parliament.

Mr. Lee, who has led a fierce political offensive against Mr. Yoon's embattled government, is seen as the frontrunner to replace him. He lost the 2022 presidential election to Mr. Yoon by a razor-thin margin.

He told a televised news

conference that a swift court ruling would be the only way to "minimise national confusion and the suffering of people."

The court will meet to discuss the case on Monday, and has up to 180 days to rule. But observers say that a court ruling could come faster. In the case of parliamentary impeachments of past presidents – Roh Moo-hyun in 2004 and Park Geun-hye in 2016 – the court spent 63 days and 91 days respectively before determining to reinstate Roh and dismiss Park.

Mr. Lee also proposed a national council where the government and the National Assembly would work together to stabilise state affairs, and said his party won't seek to impeach Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, a Yoon appointee who's now serving as acting President.

Brazilian President Lula discharged from hospital after surgery

Reuters
RIO DE JANEIRO

Doctors discharged Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva from hospital on Sunday, his medical team told reporters, after a pair of emergency surgeries last week to treat and prevent bleeding in his head.

The 79-year-old spoke publicly for the first time at a hospital press conference and the doctors said he will now continue his recovery from his home in Sao Paulo. An upbeat Lula said he



Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

was eager to get back to work as soon as possible, and his medical team gave him a green light to do so, though they advised him to avoid long flights.

Russian tanker splits in storm, spilling oil into the Kerch Strait

Reuters
MOSCOW

A Russian oil tanker carrying thousands of tonnes of oil products split apart during a heavy storm on Sunday, spilling oil into the Kerch Strait, while another tanker was also in distress after sustaining damage, Russian officials said.

The vessels were in the Kerch Strait between mainland Russia and Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, when they issued distress signals.

Russian investigators opened two criminal cases to look into possible safety violations after at least one person was killed when the 136-metre *Volgoneft 212* tanker, with 15 people on board, split in half with its bow sinking.

The Russian-flagged vessel, built in 1969, was damaged and had run aground, officials said.

The second Russian-flagged ship, the 132-metre *Volgoneft 239*, was drifting after sustaining damage. It has a crew of 14 people and was built in 1973.

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Smith joins Root for most Test centuries against India



REUTERS

Steve Smith notched up a couple of milestones on his way to the 33rd Test century on Sunday. With his 10th three-figure knock, he joined England's Joe Root for most Test centuries against India and also moved past Steve Waugh in the list of most tons for Australia in Tests to be second after Ricky Ponting (41).

MASTERPLAN

Morkel reveals bowlers' strategy against a rampant Head



REUTERS

Indian bowling coach Morne Morkel discussed the strategy devised to counter Australian batter Travis Head during the second day of the ongoing Brisbane Test at the Gabba on Sunday. "Our plan for Travis in this game was to bowl over the wicket and target a straight line. We felt he handled it well in Adelaide," Morkel said.

HIGH PRAISE

Akash Deep has got some skill for sure, feels Smith



AP

India pacer Akash Deep may not have entered the wickets column on the second day of third Test but his ability to make the ball talk earned him high praise from Australian batting mainstay Steve Smith. "I thought Akash bowled really nicely, particularly that first spell. He was getting the ball to move with pretty significant movement," he said.

FLASHBACK

When he's in the zone, I almost go unnoticed: Head on Smith



AFP

Travis Head said that he enjoys batting with Steve Smith and hilariously noted that whenever the 35-year-old bats, he goes unnoticed. Smith roared back to form with his 33rd Test century. "In the couple of years where he dominated, I felt like I was invisible at the other end. Today felt a little bit like that."

Head at it again and Smith finds his feet as Aussies rule the day

The left-hander's blistering 152 and Smith's 101 send Rohit's men on a leather hunt as Cummins' side finishes day two at 405 for seven; Bumrah shines again, returns with a five-wicket haul; Jadeja struggles to make an impact

INDIA IN AUS

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
BRISBANE

A batter enjoying a rich vein of form and a legend searching for runs joined forces as Australia relished a perfect Sunday here at the Gabba. With the series level at 1-1, the host gets an opportunity to press ahead even as the threat of rain lingers.

In his previous three Test knocks at this venue, Travis Head, with three ducks, never troubled the scorers. However, this time around, he kept the number-crunchers busy.

Just like Zaheer Abbas and Graham Gooch, classy batters of the past, the Australian southpaw too revealed a voracious appetite for Indian bowling. His 152, a follow-up to the 140 at Adelaide, ensured that the host sat pretty on the second day of the third Test.

Head found an ally in Steve Smith, who in his previous 24 innings in Tests, failed to score a ton. Amends were finally made and as Smith, scratchy to start with and magisterial later, scored 101, it proved to be a key component for Australia to post an unfinished first innings score of 405 for seven at close, with a belligerent Alex Carey and Mitchell Starc at the crease.

Earlier, Smith and Head combined once Marnus La-



Brisbane heat: Head's blazing knock put the Indians on the back foot. AP

buschagne fell. It was an alliance of contrasts, Head slotted the fifth gear, Smith, meanwhile, survived lbw appeals and play-and-miss routines. The duo found the post-lunch phase to be productive and when Ravindra Jadeja came on, Head tucked into some freebies.

Smith, found his voice too, driving Akash Deep twice, while Head waded into Mohammed Siraj with slashes and pulls. Nitish Kumar found the batters too intimidating and soon

Head reached his inevitable ton. After tea, Head dalled with Nitish on 112 but the edge proved tough for a diving Rohit Sharma at first slip.

Soon Smith etched his hundred and the belated post-celebratory swing of the bat reflected his enormous relief. He fell edging Jasprit Bumrah and Rohit plucked a fine catch but by then the 241-run fourth-wicket partnership had placed Australia on a strong pedestal. With the new ball, Bumrah (five for

72) continued to strike, and scalped Mitchell Marsh and Head.

Early strikes

In the morning, openers Usman Khawaja and Nathan McSweeney strived to extend the overnight score of 28 for no loss. But Bumrah had contrarian idea and lured edges from the duo. The host struggled at 38 for two with Labuschagne and Smith at the crease. The latter had an exaggerated trigger moment, moving across the

SCOREBOARD**AUSTRALIA – 1ST INNINGS**

Usman Khawaja c Pant b Bumrah 21 (54b, 3x4), Nathan McSweeney c Kohli b Bumrah 9 (49b, 1x4), Marnus Labuschagne c Kohli b Nitish 12 (55b), Steve Smith c Rohit b Bumrah 101 (190b, 12x4), Travis Head c Pant b Bumrah 152 (160b, 18x4), Mitchell Marsh c Kohli b Bumrah 5 (16b), Alex Carey (batting) 45 (47b, 5x4, 1x6), Pat Cummins c Pant b Siraj 20 (33b, 1x4), Mitchell Starc (batting) 7 (7b); Extras (lb-17, nb-5, w-11); 33; Total (for seven wkt., in 101 overs): 405.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-31 (Khawaja, 16.1 overs), 2-38 (McSweeney, 18.3), 3-75 (Labuschagne, 33.2), 4-316 (Smith, 82.6), 5-326 (Marsh, 86.2), 6-327 (Head, 86.5), 7-385 (Cummins, 97.5).

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 25-7-72-5, Siraj 22.2-4-97-1, Akash 24.4-5-78-0, Nitish 13-1-65-1, Jadeja 16-2-76-0.

stumps a touch more than usual just at the release-point of the delivery.

There was a spot of gamessmanship as Siraj swapped the bails and Labuschagne reversed the change. Perhaps it distracted the batter as he reached out to a Nitish delivery and the edge flew to Virat Kohli. Australia 75 for three, and in need of a partnership.

It was a requirement that found an immediate response as Head swatted Nitish and drove Bumrah. Australia moved to 104 for three at lunch, a total that gained heft as the day wore on.

Morkel backs the bowlers, says tough to counter Head



Lone-ranger: Bumrah's lion-hearted effort couldn't stop the marauding Aussies. X@BCCI

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
BRISBANE

Got a bit of luck early, admits Smith

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

BRISBANE

A sense of relief was palpable as Steve Smith sat down for his media interaction at the Gabba here on Sunday. The cap low-slung on him, eyes blinking a bit to adjust to the light, and a half-smile creasing his face, the former Australia captain expressed his satisfaction about the century and his contribution to the team.

Discussing his knock, Smith said: "It was nice to get to three figures. It has been a while. It was cool to contribute to the team. It has been tricky in the first couple of games. Had a couple of nice balls and got strangled down the leg-side in Adelaide. I have been batting well the last month. I was sticking to my process, trusting that things will turn around. I got a bit of luck early on and made the most of it."

As for his aggressive fellow-centurion Travis Head, Smith said: "If we can sort of get to 30-odd overs when Travis comes in, it makes a big difference to the team. I think the seam probably starts to settle around 30, 40 overs and the ball stays quite hard. And you see guys batting at five, six and seven are able to get value for their shots."

What about the change in his stance? "I have changed my set-up in pretty much every game I have played for the last 15 years. I figure the best way to play on each surface. This one is a pretty bouncy track. So I was batting out of my crease a bit, trying to get at the bowler, going across my stance, but leaving my left leg a little bit open".

If you start with a reverse, you quickly wake up from the dream: Gajewski

P.K. Ajith Kumar
SINGAPORE

After D. Gukesh lost his 12th game in the World chess championship to Ding Liren, he made peace with himself. He told his coach Grzegorz Gajewski, "I am feeling fine, I am ready to fight him and for the tie-breaks."

That was the moment Gajewski realised that he did not need to be worried about his ward. "He said all those things to me without hesitation," the Polish Grandmaster, who headed the 18-year-old's formidable support staff, tells *The Hindu*.

"He finally made his peace with the fact that his opponent is a World champion and he also wants to win."

He says he was not concerned after Gukesh's de-



Among the elite: Gajewski believes Gukesh is one of the best calculators after Anand, and is also a little like a young Caruana. FIDE

Ding, not the one who had been going through poor form and who had gone on record about his mental health issues. "I told him that the man became the World champion, and it was not a coincidence," he says. "He might have a difficult period, but he will bring his very best for the match. And he will fight like crazy. That is exactly what happened."

About Gukesh rejecting virtual offers of draw, Gajewski says that was how he thought the match could be won. "That was the overall strategy, to exhaust the opponent," he explains.

Gajewski says calculation and deep knowledge are the major strengths of Gukesh. "He is one of the best calculators after Anand, who is the best ever in that department," he says. "And he is also a bit like a young Fabiano Caruana."

feat in the opening game. "In his regard, I am very happy that he started with a loss, you quickly wake up from the dream."

Gajewski prepared Gu-

Nidhi stands tall as India retains women's Asia Cup



Continental champs: India overcame China in a shootout. @THEHOCKEYINDIA

HOCKEY**Press Trust of India**
MUSCAT

India's goalkeeper Nidhi stole the limelight in the penalty shootout, making three sensational saves to help India overcome three-time champion China 3-2 (1-1) and clinch its second consecutive women's junior Asia Cup hockey title here on Sunday.

Nidhi's heroics capped a stellar performance, having already stood tall during

regulation time by thwarting multiple attempts from the Chinese forwards as the four quarters ended in a nerve-wracking 1-1 stalemate.

While skipper Jinzhuan Tan scored for China in the 30th minute, Kanika Siwach's strike early in the second half (41st minute) brought India back into the game in an intense battle for supremacy.

Sakshi Rana gave India a perfect start in the shootout by converting the first attempt, while Nidhi denied China's opener.

China fought back as Hao Guotong equalised, and after misses from Mumtaz Khan and Kanika, it was Ishika's top-corner strike that kept India level at 2-2.

Nidhi's heroics in the final two attempts, blocking shots from Li Jingyi and Zuo Dandan, set the stage for Sunelita Toppo, who sealed the win with a composed finish to seal a memorable victory for India.

The result: India 1 (Kanika Siwach 41) drew with China 1 (Jinzhuan Tan 30). (India won 3-2 via penalty shootout).

MCFC cashes in on a man advantage against MSC

Amitabha Das Sharma
KOLKATA

Mumbai City FC returned to winning ways with a 1-0 result over a 10-man Mohammedi Sporting SC in the ISL here on Sunday.

Vikram Pratap Singh found the net in the 48th minute as Mumbai City raised its tally to 17 points from 11 matches and moved to seventh.

Suffering its seventh loss in eight games, Mohammedi Sporting SC remains at bottom with five points from 11 matches.

Mumbai City found the break thanks to a faulty clearance by Mohammedi Sporting SC's goalkeeper Bhaskar Roy that released Vikram Pratap and he made no mistake with his powerful shot.

The result: Mohammedi SC 0 lost to Mumbai City FC 1 (Vikram Pratap Singh 48).

IN BRIEF



Sonam and Kamalini excel as India routs Pakistan

India, riding on 17-year-old spinner Sonam Yadav's four-wicket haul and an entertaining knock by G. Kamalini (*in pic*), thrashed Pakistan by nine wickets in a Group A match of the U-19 women's Asia Cup in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday.

Left-arm spinner Sonam, with her best international bowling figures of four for six, helped India restrict Pakistan to just 67 for seven in 20 overs. The total was overhauled in 7.5 overs, with Kamalini playing a stroke-filled unbeaten knock of 44 off just 29 deliveries.

India will next play Nepal in its last Group A outing on Tuesday before the teams for the Super Four stage are decided.

The scores: Pakistan 67/7 in 20 overs (Sonam Yadav 4/6) lost to India 68/1 in 7.5 overs (G. Kamalini 44 n.o.).



Bowlers put New Zealand on the ascendancy

England's hopes of a series clean sweep all but evaporated on Sunday as it capitulated on day two of the third Test to trail New Zealand by 340 runs at Hamilton.

The home side skittled England for 143 before reaching 136 for three by stumps in the second innings.

The scores: New Zealand 347 in 97.1 overs (Santner 76, Latham 63; Potts 4/90, Atkinson 3/66) & 136/3 in 32 overs (Young 60, Williamson 50 batting) vs England 143 in 35.4 overs (Root 32; Henry 4/48, O'Rourke 3/33; Santner 3/7).



Thalaivas knocked out of the race; Yoddhas beat Mumba

Jaipur Pink Panthers produced an impressive all-round display to eliminate Tamil Thalaivas from the playoff race with a 34-27 win in the Pro Kabaddi League here on Sunday.

Arjun Deshwal found ample support from Neeraj Narwal and Abhijeet Malik, while Ankush Rathore led the defensive charge. For the Tamil Thalaivas, Nitesh Kumar's High 5 went in vain.

Panthers skipper and star raider Arjun had good support from his supporting raiders as the two-time champions took an early lead.

In the day's other match, UP Yoddhas got past U Mumba 30-27 in a close contest.

Extremely happy to be picked by Mumbai Indians, says Kamalini



Tarun Shastry

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu all-rounder G. Kamalini, who was signed by Mumbai Indians for ₹1.60 crore in the WPL mini auction in Bengaluru on Sunday, said she didn't expect to go for such a hefty amount.

Speaking to *The Hindu* from Kuala Lumpur, an excited Kamalini said, "I am extremely happy to be picked by the Mumbai Indians. I had gone for trials thrice. I didn't expect to be picked for such a huge amount."

"When I went to the Mumbai Indians trials, I found the ambience and the atmosphere to be very positive and encouraging and made me want to be a part of the team," she ad-

ded. The 16-year-old sparked a fierce bidding battle between Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals Women, with the former outbidding the latter, starting at a base price of ₹10 lakh.

After her recent performances in the domestic tournaments, Kamalini emerged as one of the most in-demand players in

Stars struggle as uncapped players strike gold

The 16-year-old Kamalini is bought by Mumbai Indians for ₹1.60 crore while Simran emerges the costliest buy (₹1.90 crore); the likes of Sneh, Poonam, Shubha, Mansi and Tejal fail to find bidders

WPL

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Indian national team players found the going tough while the uncapped ones struck gold in the Women's Premier League (WPL) mini auction at the ITC Gardenia here on Sunday.

Not one among Sneh Rana, Poonam Yadav, Shubha Satheesh, Mansi Joshi and Tejal Hasabnis found an enthusiastic bidder even as the likes of Simran Shaikh, G. Kamalini and Prema Rawat saw gold coins rain.

Highest bid
All-rounder Simran received the highest bid of ₹1.90 crore (base price ₹10 lakh) from Gujarat Giants despite going largely unnoticed in her stint with UP Warriorz in 2023 and being unsold last year.

"We were looking at two power-hitters and we got them both," said Michael Klinger, head coach of Giants which added West Indies all-rounder Deandra Dottin to the line-up for ₹1.70 crore. "We are not too worried about the price tag. Skills matter," he declared. Giants also secured Danielle Gibson and Prakashika Naik to shore up the bowling.

Teenager G. Kamalini was bought by Mumbai Indians for ₹1.60 crore. The 16-year-old from Tamil Nadu, who zoomed up from ₹10 lakh, was the second-highest scorer in the U-19 Women's T20 Trophy (311 runs at SR: 123.90) that Tamil Nadu won in October.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru, captained by the highest-paid player in WPL (Smriti Mandhana, ₹3.40 crore), welcomed Prema Rawat for ₹1.20 crore. The 23-year-old wrist-spinner, who attracted eyeballs during the inaugural Uttarakhand Premier League in August, will join forces with India tweakers Asha Sobhana and Shreyanka Patil.

"She has great control for a wrist-spinner," said RCB head coach Luke Williams. "Looking at how spinners performed last year, adding a spin bowler to our arsenal was ideal."

Interestingly, Delhi Capitals were involved in bidding wars for Simran, Kamalini and Prema. It eventually signed Nandini Kashyap – now part of the

Mini auction's Major gainers

Simran, Dottin, Kamalini and Prema joined the crore club when the players went under the hammer during the WPL auction in Bengaluru on Sunday



DELHI CAPITALS

Meg Lanning, Alice Capsey, Annabel Sutherland, Arundhati Reddy, Jemimah Rodrigues, Jess Jonassen, Marizanne Kapp, Minni Mani, Radha Yadav, Shafali Verma, Shikha Pandey, Suneetha Deepthi, Tanya Bhatia, Titas Sadhu

2025 auction picks: N. Charan (55 lakh), Nandini Kashyap (10), Niki Prasad (10), Sarah Bryce (10)



GUJARAT GIANTS

Beth Mooney, Ashleigh Gardner, Bharti Fulmali, D. Hemalatha, Harleen Deol, Kashvee Gautam, Laura Wolvarta, Mannat Kashyap, Meghna Singh, Phoebe Litchfield, Priya Mishra, Sayali Satghare, Shabnam Shakil, Tanuja Kanwar

2025 auction picks: Simran Shaikh (1.90 crore), Deandra Dottin (1.70), Danielle Gibson (30 lakh), Prakashika Naik (10)



MUMBAI INDIANS

Harmanpreet Kaur, Amandeep Kaur, Amanjot Kaur, Amelia Kerr, Chloe Tryon, Hayley Matthews, Jintimani Kalita, Keerthana Balakrishnan, Nat Sciver-Brunt, Pooja Vastrakar, Saika Ishaque, S. Sajana, Shabnim Ismail, Yastika Bhatia

2025 auction picks: G. Kamalini (1.60 crore), Nadine de Clerk (30 lakh), Akshita Maheshwari (20), Sanskriti Gupta (10)



ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU

Smriti Mandhana, Asha Sobhana, Danni Wyatt, Ekta Bisht, Ellise Perry, Georgia Wareham, Kanika Ahuja, Kate Cross, Renuka Singh, Richa Ghosh, Shreyanka Patil, S. Meghan, Sophie Devine, Sophie Molineux

2025 auction picks: Prema Rawat (1.20 crore), Jagravi Pawar (10 lakh), V.J. Joshi (10), Raghvi Bist (10)



UP WARRIORZ

Alyssa Healy, Anjali Sarvani, Chamari Athapaththu, Deepthi Sharma, Gouher Sultan, Grace Harris, Kiran Nagire, Poonam Khemnar, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Saima Thakor, Shweta Sehrawat, Sophie Ecclestone, Tahlia McGrath, Uma Chetry, Vrinda Dinesh

2025 auction picks: Alana King (30 lakh), Arushi Goel (10), Kranti Goud (10)



TAKES AND TAKERS

India set-up – for ₹10 lakh, a deal Capitals' director of cricket Saurav Ganguly felt was a steal. The 22-year-old was the third-highest scorer in the 2024 senior Women's T20 Trophy (247 runs at SR: 125.38). "We needed one of Nandini, Kamalini or Simran," said the former India skip-

per. "But we didn't expect to get Nandini for that price. She has the best record and we probably got the best [of the three]," opined Ganguly, who also seemed chuffed at getting Scotland's Sarah Bryce (₹10 lakh).

Among notable overseas talents, there were no

takers for England's Heather Knight, Maia Bouchier and Lauren Bell, Australia's Darcie Brown and Lauren Cheate, and South Africa's Lizelle Lee. But Aussie leg-spinner Alana King and South Africa all-rounder Nadine de Clerk found sanctuaries in UP and Mumbai.

Jemimah, Smriti on song as India crushes WI in T20I opener



In smashing form: Jemimah scored a 35-ball 73 with nine fours and two sixes. EMMANUEL YOGINI

WI IN INDIA

Shayan Acharya

NAVI MUMBAI

The DY Patil Stadium has been a favourite venue for Smriti Mandhana as she has played some memorable knocks here. And when international cricket returned on Sunday, the left-hander was busy scoring runs again.

Smriti (54, 33b, 7x4, 2x6) was involved in a pivotal second-wicket partnership of 81 off 44 balls with Jemimah Rodrigues (73, 35b, 9x4, 2x6), paving the way for India's 49-run win against the West Indies in the first women's T20I.

Having scored four centuries in a calendar year in the ODIs, Smriti scored her sixth half-century of the season in T20Is as the Women in Blue amassed 195 for four – their third-highest total in the format – before restricting the visiting team to 146 for seven.

Sloppy fielding, dropped catches and erratic bowling let the West Indies down after it opted to bowl first, and the Indian batters made the most of the opportunity.

While opener Uma Chetry enjoyed a reprieve and got some quick runs before falling to Karishma Ramharack, there was no stopping Smriti and Jemimah.

As nearly 30,000 fans cheered, Smriti anchored the innings, allowing Jemimah to score at will. The latter hammered a few boundaries on the leg-side, leaving the West Indies bowlers searching for answers.

By the time Ramharack dismissed Smriti, India was in the driver's seat and



Richa Ghosh's 14-ball 20-run cameo meant there was no slip-up for the home team.

With dew settling in, it was a tricky situation to be in for the Indian bowlers. However, the young fast bowler Titas Sadhu (3 for 37) got the early breakthrough by dismissing the captain Hayley Matthews on the second ball of her opening over. Shermaine Campbell, too, fell to Deepthi Sharma early on. But then, there was a glimmer of hope for West Indies with Deandra Dottin and Qiana Joseph forging a 44-run stand for the third wicket. After a reprieve, Dottin came up with a quickfire 52 off 28 balls while Joseph was left heartbroken after falling one short of a half-century.

Once they departed, West Indies' hopes were dashed.

The scores: India 195/4 in 20 overs (Smriti 54, Jemimah 73, Ramharack 2/18) bt West Indies 146/7 in 20 overs (Dottin 52, Joseph 49; Titas 3/37, Deepthi 2/21, Radha 2/28); **Toss:** West Indies.

Extremely happy to be picked by Mumbai Indians, says Kamalini



the auction pool.

The southpaw, who has the ability to hit huge sixes, was the second-highest run-getter (311, eight matches) in the under-19 T20 tournament which Tamil Nadu won.

Kamalini, a wicketkeeper-batter who can also bowl leg-spin, has had rigorous training at the Super Kings Academy in Chennai.

Kamalini expressed her gratitude to legendary India cricketer Jhulan Goswami, mentor of the Mumbai Indians Women and former India wicketkeeper Kiran More, the team's manager.

"I am really thankful to my parents and my elder brother for their tremendous support in my cricketing journey."

United pulls off a stunning heist away at Manchester City

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse

MANCHESTER

Manchester United struck twice in the dying minutes to earn a dramatic 2-1 win at Manchester City on Sunday, deepening the pain of City boss Pep Guardiola.

Josko Gvardiol's first-half goal appeared to have won the game for the Premier League champion but Bruno Fernandes levelled from the penalty spot in the 88th minute and the impressive Amad Diallo poked home the winner two minutes later.

Earlier Crystal Palace winger Ismaila Sarr scored a brace as his side beat Brighton 3-1 at the Amex Stadium, handing the Sea-

gulls their first home defeat in the Premier League this season.

Nuno Espirito Santo saluted Nottingham Forest's "heart" and "desire" after it climbed to fourth place in the Premier League with



Delirious scenes: Amad Diallo is mobbed by teammates after poking in United's winner. GETTY IMAGES

a stirring fightback to beat Aston Villa 2-1 on Saturday.

The results: Premier League:

Brighton 1 (Guehi 87-og) lost to Crystal Palace 3 (Chalobah 27, Sarr 33, 82); Manchester City 1 (Gvardiol 36) lost to Manchester United 2 (Fernandes 88-pen,

Diallo 90); Serie A: Bologna 1 (Odgaard 59) bt Fiorentina 0; Parma 2 (Sohn 19, 90) lost to Verona 3 (Coppola 5, Sarr 67, Mosquera 75).

Bundesliga: Borussia Dortmund 1 (Reyna 46) drew with Hoffenheim 1 (Bruun Larsen 90+1); Heidenheim 1 (Wanner 41) lost to Stuttgart 3 (Mittelstaedt 20, Millot 45+2, Woltemade 85-pen).

On Saturday: Premier League: Nottingham Forest 2 (Milenkovic 87, Elanga 90+3) bt Aston Villa 1 (Duran 63).

LaLiga: Espanyol 0 drew with Osasuna 0; Mallorca 2 (Larin 20, 51) bt Girona 1 (van de Beek 7); Sevilla 1 (Bueno 64) bt Celta Vigo 0; Rayo Vallecano 3 (Lopez 4, Mumin 36, Palazon 64) drew with Real Madrid 3 (Valverde 39, Bellingham 45, Rordrygo 56); Serie A: Juventus 2 (Gatt 19, Vlahovic

Deepika, Dhiraj and Ankita top the list at Nationals

The most notable absentee will be the decorated compound archer Jyothi Surekha due to differences between her and the State unit



All set: Dhiraj and Ankita will look to end the year on a high after the near miss in the Paris Games. PTI

ARCHERY

Y.B. Sarangi
JAMSHEDPUR

A head of a busy 2025 calendar, top archers of the country, including Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat, B. Dhiraj, Abhishek Verma and Aditi Swami, will test themselves in the year-ending National archery championships starting at the Gopal Maidan, located in the heart of the city, here on Monday.

The most notable absentee will be the decorated compound archer V. Jyothi Surekha due to differences between the athlete and

her State unit, the Andhra Pradesh Archery Association.

After yet another disappointing outing in the Olympics, Deepika redeemed some pride by securing a silver at the World Cup Finals in Tlaxcala, Mexico, in October and would be keen to close the year on a good note.

For Dhiraj, who along with Ankita experienced a so-near-yet-so-far moment to finish fourth in the mixed team event of the Paris Olympics, the National event marks the beginning of his preparations for the next Olympics.

"I take the positives out of our performance in Pa-

ris. For me, the next Olympics is not far away. I am back to the basics."

"This is an important tournament in my preparation phase as I am focusing on improving the core areas of my game," said Dhiraj.

The first target for the archers, some of whom recently competed in indoor events abroad, will be to get good rankings in order to be eligible to participate in the National Games in Uttarakhand next month.

Then follows a calendar studded with several international events, including the World Championships, World Games, Asian championships and World Cups.

Magnum for the Sweet Girl Plate

RACING

HYDERABAD: The four-year-old gelding Magnum, who ran second to Dyf in his last start in the Golconda St. Leger, should make amends in the Sweet Girl Plate, the chief event of Monday's (Dec. 16) races.

1 STEP ASIDE PLATE (DIV. I) (1,100m), (Terms) Maiden, 2yo-only (Cat. II), 12.45 p.m.: 1. Arizona Sun (7) Akshay K 56, 2. Quick Bay Fox (2) Mukesh 56, 3. Yuvraj (8) Kuldeep Sr. 4. Emerald Touch (1) Ashad Asbar 54.5, 5. Gachchhatu (3) P. Sai K 54.5, 6. Miss Smiley Angel (5) Mohit 54.5, 7. Pacific Heights (6) Vivek G 54.5 and 8. Timeless Elegance (4) Md. Ismail 54.5.

1. QUICK BAY FOX, 2. ARIZONA SUN, 3. PACIFIC HEIGHTS

2 HUSSAIN SAGAR CUP (DIV. II) (1,400m), 3yo-and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 11.5: 1. Caraxes (10) G. Naresh 60, 2. Quality Warrior (1) Afroz K 59.5, 3. Emperors Charm (12) A. Prakash 58, 4. London Bell (9) R.S. Jodha 58, 5. Black Dust (6) P. Sai K 57, 6. Bellingham (5) R.K. Kumar 56, 7. Grey Sky (8) Nakhath 54, 8. N.R.I Star (4) Santosh Raj 51.5, 9. Rani Ruckus (3) B. Nikhil 51.5, 10. Sadiya (1) Surya Prakash 51.5, 11. Hoping King (7) Kuldeep Jr. 51 and 12. Hawk King (2) Ajay K 50.5.

1. EMPERORS CHARM, 2. LONDON BELL, 3. QUALITY WARRIOR

3 STEP ASIDE PLATE (DIV. II) (1,100m), (Terms) Maiden, 2yo-only, 14.5: 1. Cypress (3) Kuldeep Sr. 56, 2. Royal Warrior (5) G. Naresh 56, 3. Beverley (8) Vivek G 54.5, 4. Divine Faith (7) A. Prakash 54.5, 5. Dubai Touch (1) R.S. Bhati 54.5, 6. Mystical Dawn (2) Ashad Asbar 54.5, 7. Pride Aside (6) Gaurav 54.5 and 8. Turia (4) Abhay Singh 54.5.

1. TURIYA, 2. DIVINE FAITH, 3. PRIDE ASIDE

4 NEXT MOVE PLATE (DIV. I) (1,100m), 4yo-and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 21.5: 1. Inderdhanush (4) Shivanthi 61.5, 2. Starwala (5) Mohit 59.5, 3. American Flame (3) H. Akshay 57.5, 4. Star Medal (7) Nakhath 57.5, 5. N.R.I Dheera (1) Kuldeep Sr. 55.5, 6. Jet Falcon (8) Surya Prakash 54, 7. Muasur (6) P. Ajeeth K 54 and 8. Politics (2) Md. Ismail 53.

1. AMERICAN FLAME, 2. MUASUR, 3. N.R.I DHEERA

5 ZOOM ZOOM PLATE (1,200m), 3yo-and upward, rated 40 to 45 (Cat. II), 2.45: 1. Blissful (8) R.S. Jodha 61.5, 2. Torchbearer (4) Ashad Asbar 58, 3. Star Forever (1) P. Sai K 57, 4. Calistoga (10) Vivek G 55.5, 5. Lady Danger (11) Surya Prakash 55, 6. Ariette (9) Akshay K 54.5, 7. First Class (3) Mukesh 54.5, 8. Exclusive Black (7) Md. Ismail 54, 9. High Heels (2) Gaurav 54, 10. Hurricane Wave (5) Afroz K 53 and 11. Normui (6) B. Nikhil 50.

1. ARIETTE, 2. CALISTOGA, 3. TORCHBEARER

54.5, 8. Exclusive Black (7) Md. Ismail 54, 9. High Heels (2) Gaurav 54, 10. Hurricane Wave (5) Afroz K 53 and 11. Normui (6) B. Nikhil 50.

1. ARIETTE, 2. CALISTOGA, 3. TORCHBEARER

6 SWEET GIRL PLATE (2,000m) Terms, 3yo-and upward, rated 50 and above (Cat. II), 3.15: 1. Magnum (3) Akshay K 62, 2. Armstrong (6) M. Mark 60, 3. N.R.I Sport (5) Santosh Raj 60, 4. Barbet (2) Mukesh 58.5, 5. Nightmare (7) B.R. Kumar 58.5, 6. Get Lucky (1) P. Sai K 57.5 and 7. Alpine Girl (4) R.S. Bhati 53.5.

1. MAGNUM, 2. BARBET,

3. N.R.I SPORT

7 HUSSAIN SAGAR CUP (DIV. I) (1,400m), 3yo-and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 3.45: 1. Knotty Senorita (10) Gaurav 60.5, 2. Hoping Star (3) Mohit 59, 3. Virtual Sign (4) B.R. Kumar 59, 4. Grand Duke (9) R.S. Jodha 57.5, 5. In Proposito (11) A. Prakash 57.5, 6. Coming Home (8) B. Nikhil 56.5, 7. Sergeant (2) H.M. Akshay 55, 8. Gun For Gold (12) Surya Prakash 53.5, 9. Splendour On Grass (6) Ajay K 52, 10. Reining Queen (13) P. Ajeeth K 51, 11. Balahaka (5) G. Naresh 50.5, 12. First Lady (1) Santosh Raj 50.5 and 13. Oskars Officer (7) Abhay Singh 50.5.

1. VITAL SIGN, 2. KNOTTY SENORITA, 3. HOPING STAR

8 WANAPARTHY CUP (1,400m), 5yo-and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 4.15: 1. True Icon (5) P. Ajeeth K 60, 2. City Of Blessing (6) Kuldeep Sr. 56, 3. Divine Destiny (9) Surya Prakash 56, 4. Morio Invictus (2) R.S. Bhati 55, 5. Mark My Day (1) Nakhat 54.5, 6. N.R.I Ultra-power (11) Abhay Singh 54.5, 7. Briar Ridge (4) Santosh Raj 54.5, 8. Burgundy Black (8) Mukesh 53.5, 9. Miss Marvelous (3) Afroz K 53, 10. Park Lane (12) Md. Ismail 53, 11. Suprano (10) P. Sai K 52.5, 12. Winning Attitude (7) Vivek G 52 and 13. Sun Dancer (13) Rafique Sk. 51.

1. BRIAR RIDGE, 2. N.R.I ULTRAPOWER, 3. WINNING ATTITUDE

9 NEXT MOVE PLATE (DIV. II) (1,100m), 4yo-and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 2.15: 1. Inderdhanush (4) Shivanthi 61.5, 2. Starwala (5) Mohit 59.5, 3. American Flame (3) H. Akshay 57.5, 4. Star Medal (7) Nakhath 57.5, 5. N.R.I Dheera (1) Kuldeep Sr. 55.5, 6. Jet Falcon (8) Surya Prakash 54, 7. Muasur (6) P. Ajeeth K 54 and 8. Politics (2) Md. Ismail 53.

1. AMERICAN FLAME, 2. MUASUR, 3. N.R.I DHEERA

10 NEXT MOVE PLATE (DIV. II) (1,100m), 4yo-and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 2.15: 1. Inderdhanush (4) Shivanthi 61.5, 2. Starwala (5) Mohit 59.5, 3. American Flame (3) H. Akshay 57.5, 4. Star Medal (7) Nakhath 57.5, 5. N.R.I Dheera (1) Kuldeep Sr. 55.5, 6. Jet Falcon (8) Surya Prakash 54, 7. Muasur (6) P. Ajeeth K 54 and 8. Politics (2) Md. Ismail 53.

1. DALI'S CHAMPION, 2. COSMICO, 3. N.R.I SKYPOWER

11 DAY'S BEST: MAGNUM Jackpot: (i) 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5, (ii) 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9. Mini Jackpot: (i) 2, 3, 4 & 5, (ii) 6, 7, 8 & 9. Treble: (i) 1, 2 & 3, (ii) 4, 5 & 6, (iii) 7, 8 & 9. Tanala: All races.



Winning start: Kerala players celebrate after scoring against Goa. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Kerala fends off a strong challenge from Goa

SANTOSH TROPHY

Meghalaya fights from two goals down to draw with Tamil Nadu

Sports Bureau

HYDERABAD

Kerala rallied to score a 4-3 win against Goa while Meghalaya fought from two goals down to draw with Tamil Nadu in the Santosh Trophy National football championship at the Deccan Arena here on Sunday.

Nigel Fernandes put last year's runner-up Goa in the lead early on in the second minute, as he turned his marker and slotted it low and hard. However, Mohammed Riyas, Muhammed Ajsal and Naseeb

Rahman all scored in the first half, to put the seven-time champion Kerala in a commanding position.

Mazy run

Christy Davis (69) produced a mazy run from just outside the box, as he beat two defenders, and then sidestepped the on-rushing Goa custodian Antonio Da Silva, to score in an empty net. Goa did mount a late surge, as substitute Shubert Joanus Pereira (78, 86) scored two, but Kerala maintained lead to take home the points.

Meghalaya midfielder Damanbalang Chyne produced a brilliant strike in the 50th minute to find the top corner from outside the box before he slotted home a 69th minute penalty to draw his side level after goals by Pandian Sivivasan and Alexander Romario Jesuraj had put Tamil Nadu ahead.

The results: Kerala 4 (Muhammed Riyas, Muhammed Ajsal, Naseeb Rahman, Christy Davis) bt Goa 3 (Nigel Fernandes, Shubert Joanus Pereira 2).

Tamil Nadu 2 (Pandian Sivivasan, Alexander Romario Jesuraj) drew with Meghalaya 2 (Damanbalang Chyne 2).

Delhi 2 (Jaideep Singh, Rohmingthanga) bt Odisha 0.

EDUCATIONPLUS

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Hemalatha M.
Biju Dharmapalan



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

Fuel their passions

Passionpreneurship is the key to unlocking students' potential and reshaping the future of education

cess, encouraging students to harness their unique talents and align them with societal needs. Incorporating passionpreneurship into academic structures aligns well with the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), which promotes self-directed learning and problem-solving skills tailored to diverse career paths. The rise of social media and digital platforms has further facilitated this approach, making

it easier for students to transform their hobbies into viable careers through digital tools and global connections.

Custom-made syllabi
Fostering passionpreneurship within academia is not about rejecting traditional learning. Instead, it enhances it by allowing students to explore unconventional paths that resonate with their passions. Soft skills such as

creativity, critical thinking, communication, and emotional intelligence are vital in this approach. Educators are now developing personalised learning plans, enabling students to tailor course content to match their entrepreneurial goals. A custom-made syllabus can encourage passionpreneurship in several ways:

Enhanced engagement: When students help shape their syllabus, they

can include topics related to their interests, leading to increased engagement and deeper investment in their passions.

Cross-disciplinary knowledge: Custom syllabus allow students to incorporate diverse subjects, supporting interdisciplinary learning. For example, a student interested in health technology might integrate Biology, Software Development, and Business Studies to create a niche in health tech.

Syllabus customisation: Tailoring the syllabus enables students to focus on the skills they need for their entrepreneurial goals, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach.

Problem-solving focus: By designing curricula around real-world problems, students develop a problem-solving mindset. Students interested in sustainability, for instance, could focus on Environmental Studies and green innovation, equipping themselves to launch eco-conscious ventures.

Mentorship and networking: A custom syllabus allows students to connect with mentors and professionals aligned with their passions, providing essential insights and industry connections.

Creative exploration: Custom syllabi encourage students to explore unconventional or emerging topics, fostering creativity and innovation. This helps students generate unique entrepreneurial ideas.

Tailored assessments: Personalised assessments

such as portfolios or business models reflect students' entrepreneurial goals, offering a platform to showcase their skills and build confidence in their ventures.

Thus a custom-made syllabus gives students control over their educational journey and provides a structured way to pursue, experiment with, and refine their passions into viable, fulfilling careers. As passionpreneurship continues to gain traction, the role of academic institutions will evolve. Universities and colleges that succeed in the future will embrace this shift, providing students with the tools and opportunities required to pursue their passions and make a meaningful impact.

Academic success will no longer be measured solely by degrees or exam results but by the ability of institutions to cultivate innovative thinkers and socially conscious entrepreneurs.

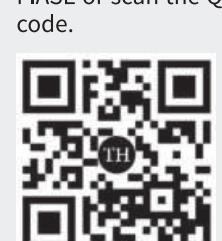
As more institutions adopt this mindset, we can expect to see a generation of students who are not only well-educated but also deeply engaged with their passions, ready to innovate and make meaningful contributions to society. The fusion of passion and entrepreneurship is the key to unlocking students' potential and reshaping the future of education.

Aspiring to become a civil servant is a journey of commitment, resilience, and precision. For those who have cleared the UPSC Mains, the interview is the final step. To guide candidates on excelling in this crucial stage, Fortune IAS Academy, in collaboration with The Hindu EducationPlus, presents a webinar on UPSC Interview: Tips from Experts.

Moderated by Soma Basu, Senior Deputy Editor, The Hindu, the session has D. P. Agrawal, Former Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC); P.K. Sidharth Ramkumar, AIR 4 in the 2024 UPSC CSE and IAS Officer Trainee; and

Kiran P. B., IPS Officer and National Interview Topper of 2022 offer insights, strategies and practical tips on preparation, confidence building and presenting oneself effectively during the interview. The webinar also includes opportunities for aspirants to interact with the panel and seek clarifications from those who are familiar with the UPSC CSE interview process.

When: December 22, 2024, at 10:30 AM.
To register, visit <https://newsth.live/FIAE> or scan the QR code.



Hemalatha M. is

IN BRIEF



Gill wins K1000; Karna Kadur clinches INRC crown

Gaurav Gill and co-driver Aniruddha Rangnekar won the iconic K1000 rally, but it was Arka Motorsports' Karna Kadur (co-driver Musa Sheriff, in pic), who provisionally clinched the 2024 Indian National Rally Championship in the sixth and final round of the Blueband FMSCI INRC at Tumakuru, Karnataka, on Sunday. Jason Saldanha and Thimmu Uddapanda came second ahead of Aroor Arjun Rao and Satish Rajagopal, who slid to third after a flat tyre in the last stage.

India gets 'most improved team' award at World squash

The India men's and women's squads received the 'most improved Team' at awards ceremony of the WSF-World team squash championships in Hong Kong on Sunday. The men had finished fifth while the women came seventh.

Namdhari humbles title contender Real Kashmir

Real Kashmir FC lost to Namdhari FC 1-0 in the I-League in Ludhiana on Sunday. Brazilian Cledson Dasilva Degol scored in the 15th minute.

Relegation-threatened Wolves sack manager O'Neil: reports

Gary O'Neil was sacked as manager of Wolves on Sunday following a winless run that has left the Premier League club in the relegation zone, according to British media reports.



On the podium: Gulveer was the best Indian while Sawan and Gaurav finished second and third. ANI

Kissa and Kebede take the honours; Gulveer runs to a new course record

WORLD 25K

Sports Bureau
KOLKATA

Ethiopia's champion marathoner Sutume Kebede came up with an impressive performance to retain the women's crown in the ninth edition of Tata Steel World 25K road race here on Sunday.

Ugandan Stephen Kissa outran the defending champion, Daniel Ebenyo of Kenya, to lift the title in the men's category.

Impressive
The Indian elite runners also came up with impressive performances, with Gulveer Singh setting a new course record in the men's section and Sanjeevani Jadhav claiming the title in the women's category, in the World Athletics Gold Label event.

The early morning chill offered the right setting for

the runners as more than 20,500 people participated in various categories, raising the popularity of the race.

Among the international runners, Kebede recovered from a stomach ailment just in time to defend her title with a timing of 1:19:17s.

Although she could not better her own course record of 1:18:47s that she set here last year, Kebede was happy to retain the crown, which came after the outstanding performances in the Houston Half Marathon and the Tokyo Marathon where she finished on top earlier in the year.

Steady pace
Stephen Kissa made his 25K race debut in style as he maintained a steady pace with the defending champion Ebenyo for a greater part before breaking away at the 20K mark.

He maintained it till the finish and touched the tape

four seconds ahead of the pre-race favourite.

Gulveer Singh lit up the day for the Indians as he sprinted away from his challengers in the final stage to register the best timing of the course by clocking 1:14:10.

His challenger Sawan clocked a close 1:14:11 to cross the finish line fractionally behind.

Sanjeevani Jadhav, returning to the race after a gap of a year, improved her best by over five minutes to win in 1:29:08s.

The results: Overall International: Men: 1. Stephen Kissa (Uganda) 1:12:33s, 2. Daniel Ebenyo (Kenya) 1:12:37.3, Anthony Kipchirchir (Kenya) 1:12:55.

Women: 1. Sutume Kebede (Ethiopia) 1:19:17, 2. Viola Chepugenyo (Kenya) 1:19:44, 3. Desi Jisa (Bahrain) 1:21:29.

Indians: Men: 1. Gulveer Singh 1:14:11, 2. Sawan Barwal 1:14:11, 3. Gaurav Mathur 1:16:59.

Women: 1. Sanjeevani Jadhav 1:29:08, 2. Lili Das 1:30:58, 3. Kavita Yadav 1:32:19.

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Root 2.0 – a perfect symmetry between unorthodoxy and consistency

England's prolific run-scorer has benefited ever since Stokes and McCullum took over and has shown his willingness to adapt without compromising on his hunger for hundreds even as his illustrious compatriots are struggling for runs due to various factors; if the former captain can succeed in the marquee battles, he might even surpass Tendulkar



AFP

Vivek Krishnan

Of all the ways that Joe Root could have sauntered to his 36th Test hundred, against New Zealand at the Basin Reserve in Wellington last week, you would think that a reverse ramp over the wicketkeeper off a tall fast bowler was fraught with the maximum risk. As the ball sailed over Tom Blundell behind the stumps and trickled into the boundary rope, Root took off his helmet, kissed the Three Lions badge embossed on it, raised his bat and had a hearty laugh with Ben Stokes at the other end.

The manner of getting to the century and the visuals thereafter were revealing of a batter who seems to be at complete ease and enjoying his game more than ever before. So much so that even an impending milestone doesn't deter him from playing a shot that triggered widespread criticism when his execution went awry against Jasprit Bumrah in Rajkot earlier this year.

Perhaps why should it when scoring hundreds has become run-of-the-mill for Root in his current avatar? Since 2021, he has as many as 19 of them; for context, it is just four less than what Kevin Pietersen – an England stalwart – managed in his entire career. In the nine preceding years of Root's Test career, he had 17. For further evidence that Root's career graph has had a significant upturn of the kind that's rare for a batter in his early to mid-30s, consider some more numbers. In 54 Tests from 2021 onwards (before the ongoing third Test against New Zealand), he has compiled 5063 runs at 56.25. In 97 Tests before that, his 7823 runs came at an average of 47.99.

Root has become even more dominant, in fact, since May 2022. With Stokes having taken over as skipper and Brendon McCullum as coach at that juncture, it isn't hard to infer that freeing Root from the responsibility of captaincy has played a major role in this rejuvenation. Although he did rack up a few daddy hundreds as captain from 2017 to 2022, the challenges of leadership particularly when results were not favourable (England had won one out of 17 Tests before Stokes took charge) seemed to wear Root down and not allow him to optimise his ability as a batter by the end.

As skipper, his overall returns were 5295 runs in 64 Tests at an average of 46.44, which is good but still below his career average of 50.93. From the summer of 2022, when 'Bazball' entered the cricketing lexicon, he has 2997 runs in 34 matches at 57.63 including 11 hundreds.

Yes, Root was always a precocious talent destined for greatness from the moment he walked out to bat with a boyish grin against India in Nagpur in December 2012. Soon after his debut, he became part of the 'Fab Four' alongside Virat Kohli, Steve Smith and Kane Williamson, an acknowledgement of the excellence they were simultaneously exhibiting.

In the last couple of years, however, what the 33-year-old has done is find another gear that threatens to leave his famed contemporaries behind. With Kohli and Smith (whose hundred against India in the third Test came after 24 innings) being increasingly prone to patchy form and Williamson having his issues with injuries, the divergence in their returns has been further amplified.

What the other three are encountering is perhaps only to be expected with advancing age slowing down reflexes and prolonging the recovery time after an injury. That Root, who will turn 34 on December 30, hasn't faced such hindrances yet may be a sign that he is on course to scaling higher peaks.

Breaking records

As far as English batters are concerned, Root is already top of the pile. When he amassed 262 against Pakistan in Multan in October, he moved past Alastair Cook to become England's leading run-scorer in Test history. Root is currently fifth in the list of highest run-getters ever, but with just 492 runs separating the Yorkshireman from Ricky Ponting at second, there isn't any doubt that he will take the Australian's spot in the near future.

It has understandably led to the big question: can Root, who has 12,886 runs after 151 Tests, go past Sachin Tendulkar's colossal mark of 15,921 runs in 200 Tests?

For the query to even be raised

is a credit to Root's quality as well as a reflection of the volume of Tests that England plays. Cook seems to be backing his former teammate.

"I can see him overhauling Sachin Tendulkar's record," the former England opener told *the BBC* in October. "When I retired, I thought there was every chance that my record would be broken. I thought only the effects of captaincy and the hunger that takes out of you would stop him. I think the fact that Stokes has taken over the captaincy has helped Root."

"You could say Sachin is still the favourite, but (only) just. He's been so lucky with injuries. All great players who played for a long time have been lucky with injuries. You just never know what's around the corner, but it has to be

something like it that could stop him. But I don't see that happening for Root to lose that hunger and ability to keep driving himself forward for the next couple of years."

Considering Root's understated reaction to surpassing Cook's tally, it is safe to say he is far from satisfied. "I'm obviously proud, but still feel as though there's plenty more left to do and many more runs to get. I'm sure I'll look back on it at some point when I'm finished and be very proud of it," he had told the media.

If Root is managing to be so productive at a time when the returns of particularly Kohli and Smith seem to be dwindling, though they are a year or two older, it is perhaps because the Englishman has fewer chinks or quirks in his batting technique. As opposed to Smith's exaggerated back-and-across shuffle and Kohli's perpetual problems outside the off-stump, Root has a more textbook foundation that's continuing to hold him in good stead.

Like Smith, Root did tend to be a

candidate for leg-before dismissals against pace when he would go across a bit too far and fall over. But Kevin Sharp, one of his formative coaches at Yorkshire, had noted in a chat in 2021 that Root had fixed that issue.

"His back foot was transferring a bit further than he wanted and his front foot came across as well. That could have affected his balance. He is now definitely more balanced at the crease," Sharp had observed then. "This has been something that has always been very important to him. Through the years, he has tried different movements. He needs a pre-delivery movement because that works for him."

Modest returns Down Under

For all of Root's accolades, though, the one glaring anomaly in his illustrious career is his record in Australia. In 14 Tests and 27 innings Down Under, he has only accrued 892 runs at an average of 35.68. More alarmingly, he doesn't have a single three-figure score in the country, with his nine half-centuries underlining a previously existing failure to convert his starts into hundreds.

Team success has also eluded Root in these contests. Since his first tour of Australia for the 2013/14 Ashes, England hasn't won a single Test there.

This is what former Australia batter and coach Darren Lehmann was alluding to when he recently stopped short of calling Root an all-time great. "That's the only thing stopping Joe Root," Lehmann said on *ABC Radio* during the first Test between Australia and India in Perth. "He's a great player, but is he an all-time great? I don't have him in that realm."

With runs in Australia long considered to be the benchmark for opposition batters to gauge their standing, Root's numbers on those hard and bouncy pitches do stick out like a sore thumb. Particularly on the 2021/22 tour, when Root had begun to get back to his very best after three ordinary years, he had an opportunity to make amends. But across five Tests, his 322 runs without a single ton meant he wasn't able to redeem himself.

With the next Ashes series in Australia just 12 months away, Root will be certainly chomping at the bit to prove a point. Before that, he would also be challenged by an Indian attack spearheaded by Jasprit Bumrah over five Tests in England's home summer. If he can sustain his incredibly high standards during the course of these marquee battles, he will get ever closer to the Indian legend stationed at Mount Everest.

THE GIST

Root was always a precocious talent destined for greatness from the moment he walked out to bat with a boyish grin against India in Nagpur in December 2012

If he is managing to be so productive at a time when the returns of particularly Kohli and Smith seem to be dwindling, though they are a year or two older, it is perhaps because the Englishman has fewer chinks or quirks in his batting technique

With the next Ashes series in Australia just 12 months away, Root will be certainly chomping at the bit to prove a point



SCIENCE

Can we make black holes reveal themselves in echoes of light?

When light passes around a black hole, its path bends. So some parts of the light take a direct route to the viewer while others pass around the black hole a few times before getting back on the original path. In this way, light emitted by a distant source in the cosmos may reach the earth at different instances, creating light echoes.

Qudsia Gani

When it comes to making sense of our universe, the importance of black holes is hard to underestimate. Scientists know that a black hole exerts a strong gravitational pull, so much so that any object that gets closer to its centre beyond a point can never get back out. The effects of black holes on their surroundings include the release of a tremendous amount of energy. These effects are crucial to determining the structures of the galaxies they occupy and how the stars around them evolved over time.

A study published in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters* on November 7 is notable in this wider context. It was carried out by astrophysicists from the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, and led by George Wong of the School of Natural Sciences at Princeton University. In their study, the researchers presented a new method to measure the properties of black holes by using the effects they have on light flowing around them.

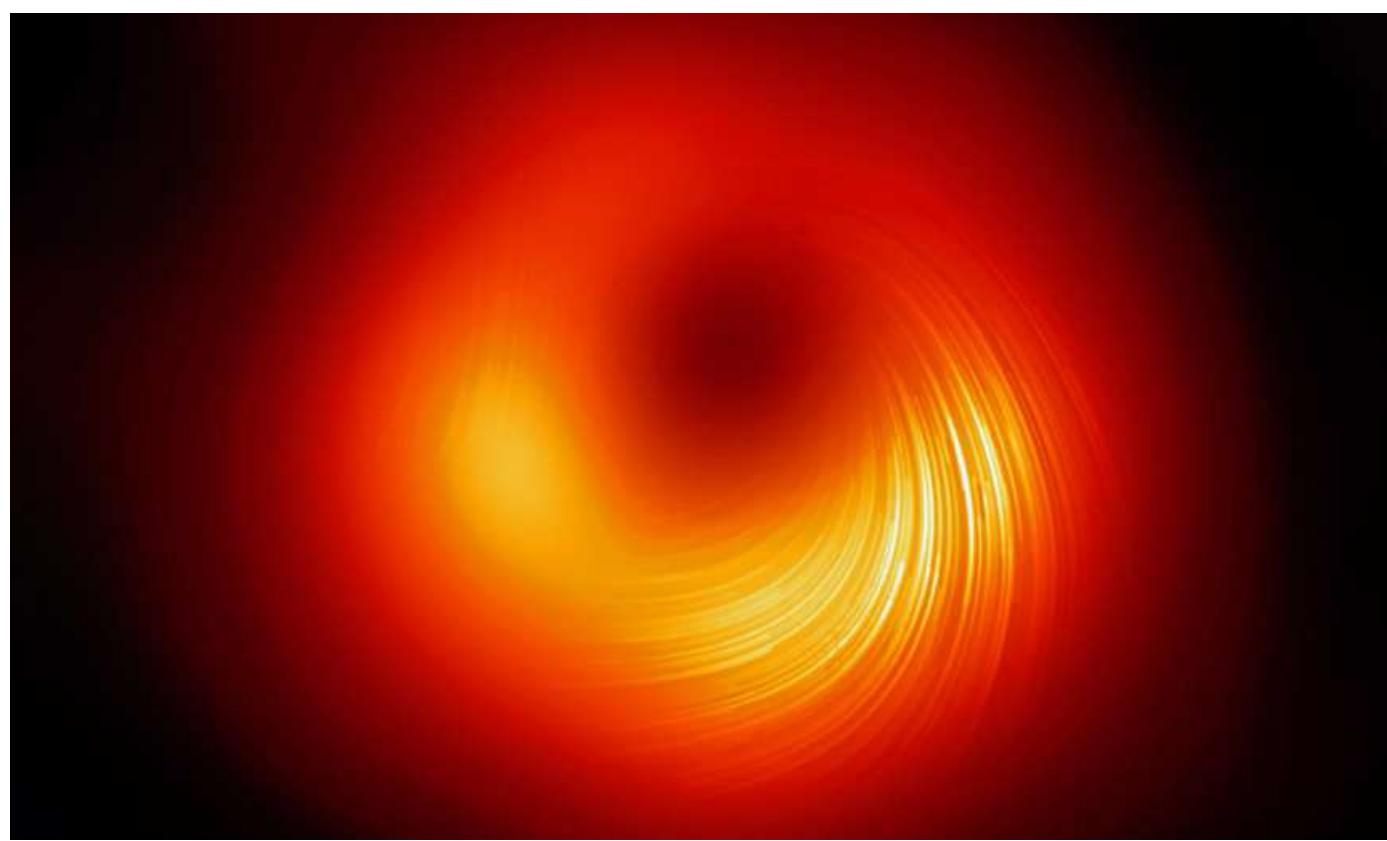
Signatures in the light

When light passes around a very heavy object, like a black hole, its path bends. As a result some parts of the light may take a direct route to the viewer while others may pass around the black hole a few times before getting back on its original path. In this way, light emitted by a distant source in the cosmos may reach the earth at different instances, depending on its interactions with black holes on the way. When two beams of light emitted by the same source reach the earth at different points, the beam to arrive second will be an echo of the beam that arrived first. This phenomenon is thus called a light echo.

The manner and extent to which light circles around a black hole depends on the black hole's mass and radius. If the black hole is spinning (a.k.a., a Kerr black hole), it will also depend on the object's angular momentum. Thus, according to the study, scientists can use light echoes as a new and independent way to the masses and spins of black holes.

In general, the task of measuring a black hole's mass and spin is quite tedious because all the matter, hot gases, and the radiation swirling around the object complicate observations and make signals harder to extract from the noise. Light, fortunately, is affected differently and light echoes could offer a better signal-to-noise ratio.

An object that bends light is called a



A view of the M87 supermassive black hole in polarised light as captured by the Event Horizon Telescope and released in 2021. EHT COLLABORATION (CC BY 4.0)

lens. Black holes do this by the sheer strength of their gravity; thus, the phenomenon is called gravitational lensing. Scientists theorised long ago that gravitational lensing could create light echoes, but they have not been directly measured so far. To get around this issue, the new study proposes the use of a technique called long-baseline interferometry. The principle here is that the non-simultaneous arrival of two signals – like two light beams – could interfere with each other to create a new, unique signal.

To spot light echoes created by a black hole, one telescope could be placed on the earth and the other in space. While the number of instruments may seem modest, they will have to operate with supreme technical rigour.

The main motivation for the new study was the fact that some of the supermassive black holes in the centre of the Milky Way and the nearby M87 galaxies have been found to have bright rings of light at a frequency of 230 GHz around them. The structure of these rings is influenced by astrophysical forces and the spacetime geometry of black holes, and scientists have been keen to study them in detail using very long baseline interferometry techniques. One particular aspiration is to trace the black hole's

Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity also anticipated the phenomenon of light echoes. In particular the theory predicts the echoes will be achromatic, meaning light of all frequencies should be able to form echoes

shadow on these rings to understand spacetime around the black holes.

Independent of colour

The analysis in the new study essentially focused on a black hole at the centre of the M87 galaxy – an appealing object of study for light echoes since it's quite large in the sky. But the results are also applicable to other black holes. The baseline in 'long baseline interferometry' refers to the distance between the two telescopes that receive the light. According to the study, it should be at least $40 G\lambda$, where $G\lambda$ is a unit of measurement that refers to the telescopes' ability to collect signals at a specific frequency.

The Princeton team also carried out preliminary high-resolution simulations to test the credibility of their technique. For this, team members collected several thousand instantaneous images of light

travelling around the M87 black hole, located nearly 55 million lightyears away, using the Event Horizon Telescope. Then they estimated the time beams of light took to travel from the near end of the black hole to its far end, which, according to their idea, would depend on the black hole's mass and angular momentum, after adjusting for the angle at which the telescope was viewing it. From this simulated data, the team inferred the echo delay.

Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity also anticipated the phenomenon of light echoes. In particular the theory predicts the echoes will be achromatic, meaning light of all frequencies should be able to form echoes. (Since $G\lambda$ is inversely proportional to the frequency, building a telescope to detect the echoes is a separate headache.) Thus any approach to detect light echoes at multiple frequencies at the same time could provide a good test of the new technique. A positive result will also be yet another confirmation that the general theory of relativity provides an accurate description of black holes.

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THE GIST

The effects black holes have on their surroundings are crucial to determining the structures of the galaxies they occupy and how the stars around them evolved over time

The mass and radius of a black hole impact the manner in which light behaves. The study claims that light echoes can be used as a new way to determine the masses and spins of black holes

Researchers collected images of light travelling around the M87 black hole. They estimated the time light took to travel from the near end to its far end, which depends on its mass and momentum. From this data, the team inferred echo delay

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BIG SHOT



A camel caravan moves along the Erg Chebbi dunes in the Sahara outside Merzouga, Morocco, on December 5. An extratropical cyclone brought heavy rain to parts of the Sahara, including the Erg Chebbi, in early September. The runoff from the deluge created ephemeral lakes in the desert, including around the Erg Chebbi. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

Mirror life: a deadly geometry

In a mirror, left and right become swapped. While you unscrew a bottle cap anti-clockwise in the real world, in the mirror you'll be rotating it clockwise.

Anything that has a handedness — left or right — is said to be chiral. Chiral molecules that are mirror images of each other are called enantiomers. A good example is the compound thalidomide. It was sold as a sedative for four years in the late 1950s before being withdrawn.

Scientists found that the right-handed enantiomer worked as a sedative, but the left-handed one caused severe birth defects.

In the human body itself, the amino acids used to make proteins are all left-handed whereas the DNA is right-handed (the double-helix twists to the right). The reasons are a mystery.

Scientists have been making and studying enantiomers in the lab for a long time, but recently a few of them have started on the road to creating "microbes" — synthetic bacteria whose building blocks are enantiomers of their natural counterparts.



This illustration shows a DNA molecule twisting to the left. In our bodies, DNA twists to the right, and left-twisting DNA is absent. GETTY IMAGES

Earlier this month, an international group of scientists, including Deepa Agashe of the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, published a 300-page technical report and a commentary in the journal *Science* warning against efforts to build mirror life.

"Our analysis suggests that mirror bacteria would likely evade many immune mechanisms mediated by chiral molecules, potentially causing lethal infection in humans, animals, and plants," the commentary read.

- The Hindu Bureau

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