



SC POSER TO T.N., KERALA
Which panel is better for Mullaperiyar?

STATES » PAGE 5



5,000 PERFORMERS

More cultural events on R-Day

NEWS » PAGE 11



CABINET DECISION

Uttarakhand to roll out UCC by month-end

NEWS » PAGE 11

DATA POINT
1 in 3 Indians looking to buy EVs next: report

Women influence 52% of such purchases

OPINION » PAGE 7



ON COURSE
Sinner advances to the quarterfinals

SPORT » PAGE 15

Trump, 47th U.S. President, vows to stop all censorship

Press Trust of India
WASHINGTON

Donald J. Trump on Monday took oath for a second term as the United States President, and announced a raft of executive decisions, saying the "golden age" of America had just begun.

In a fiery inaugural address, the 47th U.S. President described January 20 as the "liberation day" and declared that "America's decline is over" as changes will come "very quickly".

"America will reclaim its rightful place as the greatest, most powerful, most respected nation on earth, inspiring the awe and admiration from the entire world," he said.

Mr. Trump has stormed back to the White House with a promise to aggressively reset U.S. policies in a range of domains including immigration, tariffs and energy. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar



U.S. President Donald Trump delivers his inaugural address in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., on Monday. REUTERS

attended the inauguration ceremony. He carried a letter from Mr. Modi for Mr. Trump, sources said.

He issued a series of executive orders targeting diversity programmes and gender identity policies.

Mr. Trump further said "as of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders, male and female."

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10
PARIS ACCORD PULLOUT
» PAGE 14

Lifelong imprisonment for R.G. Kar case convict

Court says it will be 'inappropriate to accede to prosecution's request for death penalty' as case can't be classified as 'rarest of rare'; victim's parents refuse compensation, say they want justice

Shiv Sahay Singh
Moyurie Som
Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

A sessions court in Kolkata on Monday sentenced Sanjay Roy, the convict in the rape and murder of a doctor at R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, to lifelong imprisonment.

The Additional District and Sessions judge, Sealda, Anirban Das, said it was evident that this case did not meet the stringent criteria for being classified as "rarest of the rare", and it would be "inappropriate to accede to the prosecution's request for the death penalty".

In the 172-page judgment, the judge said that the case called for a "carefully considered and appropriate sentence" that balanced the gravity of the crime with the "principles of justice, rehabilitation and the preservation of human dignity". He noted that the court must resist the temptation to bow to public pressure or emotional appeals. Counsel of the Central Bureau of In-



People wait in front of the Sealdah court for the sentence to be announced in the R.G. Kar case on Monday. DEBASISH BHADURI

vestigation and the family members of the victim had prayed for capital punishment for Roy, a former civic police volunteer. The court had on January 18 held Roy guilty under Sections 64 (rape), 66 (causing injury resulting in death of rape victim) and 103(I) (murder) of the Bharatiya

Nyaya Sahita. "You will be in prison till the last day of your life," the judge told Roy while reading the order.

The order noted that Roy will undergo rigorous imprisonment for life and imposed a fine of ₹50,000 for offences under Section 64 of the BNS. In case of default, he will have to undergo simple imprisonment for five more months. He was handed rigorous imprisonment for life and a fine of ₹50,000 (Section 395 of BNSS) for offence under Section 103 (I), BNS, and if in default, simple imprisonment for five months; and rigorous imprisonment for remainder of his life for offence under Section 66 of BNS.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

IN BRIEF



Badlapur: five held responsible for encounter

MUMBAI
An inquiry report submitted before the Bombay High Court on Monday stated five police officers were responsible for the custodial death of Akshay Shinde, the lone accused in the Badlapur sexual assault case. » Page 4

Jobs for youth priority for next 5 years: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI
Aam Aadmi Party national convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Monday that if his party wins the February 5 Assembly election, creating jobs for youth will be on the top of his agenda. » Page 2

Court gives 24-year-old woman death sentence in murder case

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A local court on Monday sentenced a 24-year-old woman to death for the murder of a youth with whom she was in a relationship. The sentence will have to be confirmed by the Kerala High Court.

S.S. Greeshma was accused of poisoning Sharon Raj with a lethal concoction three years ago, after he refused to end their relationship. Greeshma's family had arranged her wedding with another person. Sharon, a final-year B.Sc. Radiology student, died of multiple organ failure on October 25, 2022, 11 days after consuming paracetamol, a herbicide, and an Ayurvedic tonic that Greeshma had given him at her home in Kanniyakumari district.

A.M. Basheer, judge, Additional District and Sessions Court, Neyyattinkara, found Greeshma guilty of murder under Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code two days ago. The court imposed a fine of ₹2 lakh for the offence. Additionally, she was sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for 10 years with a fine of ₹1 lakh under Section 364 (kidnapping or abducting to murder); five years with a fine of ₹50,000 under Section 328 (causing harm using poison or other harmful substances); and two years under Section 203 (destruction of evidence or providing false information). The sentences will run concurrently.

AGE NO MITIGATING FACTOR
» PAGE 5

Kashmir comes closer



New connection: An 18-coach train successfully completed the first trial run on the new railway line between Budgam and Katra in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday. The 272-km Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla line will connect the Kashmir Valley with the rest of India. IMRAN NISSAR

Centre lifts ban, gives nod for sugar export

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI/COIMBATORE

The Union government on Monday lifted the ban on sugar exports partially, allowing industries to export one million tonnes in the 2024-25 season ending in September.

Union Food Minister Pralhad Joshi said the move would ensure price stability, benefit five crore farmer families and five lakh workers, and strengthen the sugar sector. The export ban came into effect in October 2023 to regulate domestic prices. The Food Ministry said the decision to lift the ban will ensure timely payments to

farmers. The move is expected to boost liquidity for sugar mills and balance sugar availability and prices for farmers. The Food Ministry's order allows the millers to export all grades of sugar within allocated quantities. They can export sugar either directly or through traders until September 30.

The Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association welcomed the decision, saying it will address the issue of surplus sugar stocks. This timely decision will significantly aid sugar mills by enhancing financial liquidity, the ISMA said in a statement.

Study moots inclusion of 179 groups in SC, ST, OBC lists

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

In one of the largest ethnographic studies of its kind, the Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) and Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) across the country have, for the first time, comprehensively categorised 268 denotified, semi-nomadic, and nomadic tribes that previous commissions believed had never been classified.

The three-year-long study commissioned by a NITI Aayog panel has recommended the inclusion of 179 of these communities on Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes (Central) lists of 26 States and Union Territories. At least 85 of



People waiting for caste certificates in Sangareddy district, Telangana. FILE PHOTO

them are being recommended as fresh additions to these lists.

Among the fresh additions, 46 communities have been recommended for OBC status, 29 for SC status, and 10 for ST status. The greatest number of fresh additions were recommended for Uttar Pradesh (19), followed by Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, and Ra-

jasthan at eight each.

Apart from the fresh additions, the study recommended correcting the categorisation of nine communities, and found that many of the 268 communities had already been categorised, albeit partially, either in State lists or mentioned in Central lists but only of some States.

Report pending

Top officials of the Social Justice Ministry told *The Hindu* that the report was "pending" with the NITI Aayog panel, which was "scrutinising" the ASI and TRIs' findings. But the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs revealed in a Parliament reply last year that the Social Justice Ministry had received this report in

August 2023. The study also concluded that 63 communities (more than 20%) studied were "not traceable" anymore.

Multiple researchers associated with the study explained that 'not traceable' was a classification for communities that had likely assimilated into larger communities, changed their names, or migrated to other States/UTs.

This report's recommendations to add entries to the SC, ST, OBC lists, which will consequently swell their populations, comes as uncertainty grows over the next Census and whether caste will be enumerated in it, with the clamour for increasing quota percentages to match with latest proportions on

ly growing in the absence of a population count.

While the Social Justice Ministry waits for the "finalised" report from the NITI Aayog panel, sources told *The Hindu* that voices have now emerged within the Development and Welfare Board for DNT, NT, SNT communities that are calling into question the premise of classifying DNTs, NTs and SNTs as SC, ST, and OBC.

Their argument is that being a DNT, NT or SNT, adds a layer of discrimination to their lives, because of which the only fair classification would be to create a quota category just for these communities – either a separate vertical or a sub-quota for them within each category.

DELHI ELECTION

AAP-BJP fight denying houses to EWS: Cong.

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday attacked the BJP-led Centre and the Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi for "denying" people from the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) flats built under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) in Delhi. The party said that of the 35,744 flats built for EWS beneficiaries in the national capital, only 4,833 had been allotted so far, even as the BJP and AAP "are busy fighting over credit" for providing low-cost housing.

There was no immediate reaction from the two parties.

"The Congress-led government had, during its tenure at the Centre, approved the construction of 52,344 EWS flats at 14 locations under the JNNURM with a budget of ₹2,415 crore," said party leader Rajeev Shukla.

"The construction of 35,744 flats was completed years ago. Of this, only 4,833 flats have been allotted yet," he said.

"A total of 30,303 flats are ready for allotment, however, due to the fight between the BJP and AAP, these flats are not being allotted," he added.

In the run-up to the next month's Assembly poll, the three major parties have promised affordable housing to the city residents.

Creating jobs for youth going to be priority for next 5 years: Kejriwal

Ex-CM addresses 3 rallies in north-east Delhi, says youngsters are sitting at home unemployed, will ensure 'our children get jobs'; asks residents to press *jhaadu*, AAP's symbol, on the EVM, otherwise 'all the welfare schemes provided by us will stop'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Monday that if his party wins the February 5 Assembly election, creating jobs will be on the top of his agenda.

"Many of our children are sitting unemployed at home. They have no jobs even after completing their education. My priority for the next five years will be creating employment and ensuring that our children get jobs," said Mr. Kejriwal at a rally in east Delhi's Gandhi Nagar.

The former CM addressed three rallies in the evening, all in north-east Delhi: Gandhi Nagar, Vishwas Nagar, and Krishna Nagar.

Two of these seats – Vishwas Nagar and Gandhi Nagar – are held by the BJP. Delhi's main Opposition party has again fielded two-time MLA Om Prakash Sharma from Vishwas Nagar and replaced the incumbent Gandhi Nagar legislator, Anil Kumar Bajpai, with former Delhi Minister Arvinder Singh Lovely.

Addressing a rally in Vishwas Nagar, Mr. Kejriwal said, "Some of you made a mistake and voted for the BJP. But your legis-



AAP supporters holding party chief Arvind Kejriwal's cut-outs during his address in Vishwas Nagar on Monday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

lator did nothing over the past five years except stall development works." He added that the eight seats that the BJP won in 2020 have fewer Mohalla Clinics because "their MLAs did not want poor people to access free and quality healthcare".

The AAP chief said that if the BJP wins the poll, it

will not only roll back many of the Delhi government's subsidies but also undo the development works done over the past 10 years.

"If, by mistake, you press the wrong button this time, Delhi will experience 10-hour-long power cuts similar to what people

experience in other BJP-

AAP releases blank book to show BJP's 'achievements'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Senior AAP leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh on Monday launched a book titled 'Achievements of BJP in Delhi', all of whose pages were blank. Taking a jibe at the "unfulfilled promises" of the BJP-led Centre, Mr. Singh said,

"The first page has details of how the BJP created two crore jobs every year. The second page has details about how ₹15 lakh was deposited in every citizen's bank account."

In response, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said that if Mr. Singh takes a break from "plotting conspiracies", he would see the symbols of development by the BJP across Delhi.

Sharpening the attack against the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), BJP MP and former Union Minister Anurag Thakur on Monday alleged that Delhi's ruling party is being identified with "anarchism and separatism".

"AAP came to power promising to end Congress's corruption. But now, the 'A' in AAP stands for *arajakta* (anarchy), *al-gawwad* (separatism), *aatankwad* (terrorism), *af-wah* (rumour) and *apradhi* (criminal)," he said while addressing a press conference with party's Delhi unit president Virendra Sachdeva.

"Don't fall for their tricks. These days, they're mingling with *jhuggi* dwellers. But after the election, they'll bring demolish your houses," Mr. Kejriwal said.

"Press *jhaadu* [AAP symbol on the EVM] for free education, health care, water, electricity, and free bus travel for women. If you press any other button, all these things will stop," he added.

Anurag Thakur dubs AAP 'anarchic'; abuses betray panic: Kakkar



BJP MP and ex-Union Minister Anurag Thakur (right) addressing a press conference with party's Delhi unit chief Virendra Sachdeva. ANI

"The BJP has no vision, agenda or chief ministerial face for Delhi," said Ms. Kakkar, adding, "They are panicking because they're facing a leadership drought in Delhi."

Without taking any names, the former BJP Minister said, "There are some who spread rumours of bomb blasts and put the parents of school children in Delhi under tremendous stress."

The Delhi police had recently claimed that a Class 12 student had e-mailed hoax bomb threats to more than 400 city schools, and his parents were linked to an NGO that supported a political party.

The police, however, had not revealed the name of the party.

The ruling party spokesperson said the BJP leaders "proudly claim that their plan is to hurl abuses at AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal". "But will abusing Arvind Kejriwal solve Delhi's problems?" she said.

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer, Govindarajanagar Division, 2nd Floor, Shakthi Soudha, 13th Cross, 4th B Main, M.C. Layout, Vijayanagara, Bangalore- 560 040

No.EE(GRN)/TN/GL-11/2024-25 Date:20.01.2025

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(Through GoK KPP Portal only)

(Two Cover System)

The Executive Engineer, Govindarajanagar Division invites tenders from eligible tenderers for the following works detailed in the table below:

Sl. No.	Name of the Work
1.	Providing and Improvements of pavement roads and other road and other basic facilities to Ambedkar slum at Pantharpalya in Ward No. 143 (Call-2). Estimated Cost : Rs. 250 Lakhs. EMD : Rs. 3,08,000/-
2.	Comprehensive development works of road, drain, footpath in Govindarajanagar Constituency. Estimated Cost : Rs. 200 Lakhs. EMD : Rs. 2,52,000/-
3.	Construction of Building at PF layout in Ward No. 140, Maruthi Mandira. Estimated Cost : Rs. 300 Lakhs. EMD : Rs. 3,60,000/-

1) Tender documents may be downloaded from GoK KPP portal. 2) Pre-bid Meeting: 21.01.2025 at 16:00 Hrs. 3) Last date for uploading the filled proposals: 27.01.2025 upto 16:00 Hrs. 4) Opening of Technical proposals: 28.01.2025 at 16:30 Hrs. 5) Opening of Financial Bids: After approval of Technical bid. Further details can be accessed from GoK KPP Portal : <https://kpp.karnataka.gov.in> or contact the office of the undersigned.

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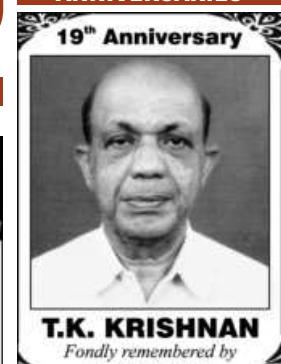
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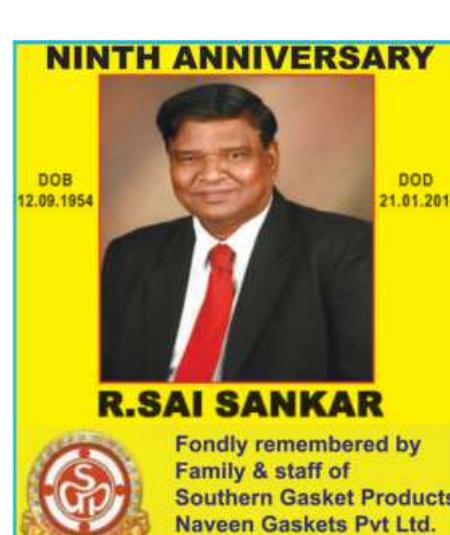
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ANNUAL SPORTS DAY

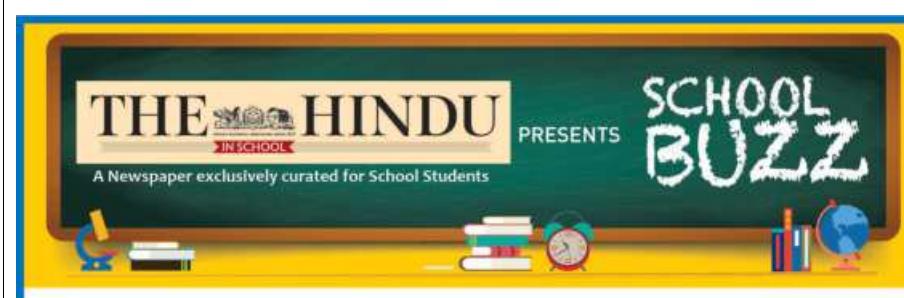
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ANNUAL SPORTS DAY

Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan Vidyashram, K.M. Munshi Marg, Jaipur celebrated their 40th Annual Sports Day with enthusiasm and grandeur. The event began with a welcome by Principal Ms. Preeti Sangwan, followed by a parade by house contingents and NCC cadets. Primary students captivated the audience with ball drill and yoga display, while races filled the air with cheers. Medals and certificates were awarded to winners by the Chief Guest, Principal, and Vice-Principal. The sports blazer for the year was awarded to Aditya Brijesh Sharma. The event concluded with the National Anthem.

ANNUAL SPORTS MEET

CSKM Public School celebrated their 39th Annual Sports Meet, showcasing sportsmanship, athleticism, and healthy competitiveness among students. The event featured a ceremonial lamp lighting, a Zumba performance by tiny tots, and a spirited Guard of Honour by NCC cadets. A synchronized March Past and torch-bearing ceremony added grandeur. Athletic events saw enthusiastic participation from students, parents, and teachers. Winners were felicitated with medals, trophies, and certificates. The chief guest, International Rugby Player and Coach Mr Gautam Dagar, praised the participants and encouraged excellence. The day concluded with a joyful Christmas dance, blessings from the Chairperson, and a vote of thanks.

CELEBRATION OF CREATIVITY AND TALENT

Delhi Public School Ghaziabad Vasundhara hosted their Senior Wing Production, Udaan – Finding Your Own Path, celebrating creativity and talent from grades 9 to 12. The event featured inspiring speeches, a presentation of achievements titled Mindscape of the School, and captivating performances in dance, theatre, and music. The Chief Guest, Mr. Umakant Goyal, Senior Scientist with DRDO, praised the efforts of the students. Principal Dr. Vinod Kumar commended the dedication of students and staff, marking the event as a celebration of dreams and accomplishments.



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Respond to Balyan's bail plea: HC to Delhi Police

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought the police's stand on a regular bail plea by AAP leader and Uttam Nagar MLA Naresh Balyan following his arrest in a Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act case on December 4, 2024.

Timings	
TUESDAY, JAN. 21	
RISE 07:14	SET 17:52
RISE 00:00	SET 11:20
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 22	
RISE 07:14	SET 17:52
RISE 00:42	SET 11:49
THURSDAY, JAN. 23	
RISE 07:13	SET 17:53
RISE 01:37	SET 12:22

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

Delhi Palam Today
26°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be very cool with shallow fog and mist. Day will be comfortable with bright sun shine. Night will be very cool.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
19°C Morning will be very cool with shallow fog. Few spells of light to moderate rain and thundershower with gusty winds to occur.
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To serve Delhi's people, you have to be on good terms with the L-G: Kailash Gahlot

Constant antagonism towards Saxena prevented many of AAP's much-anticipated schemes from seeing the light of day, says former Transport Minister contesting poll from Bijwasan on BJP ticket

Alisha Dutta
NEW DELHI

Despite remaining mainly in the shadows, former Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot was one of the most conspicuous faces in the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), given that every State-owned bus bore his photo alongside that of AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal.

Mr. Gahlot was the party's most prominent Jat face and in charge of several portfolios when he quit AAP and switched to the BJP in November last year.

AAP blamed his decision on the BJP's "dirty politics" and claimed that he was "under pressure" from Central probe agencies.

But the Najafgarh legislator, who rubbed shoulders with Mr. Kejriwal during their India Against Corruption movement days, said he quit the ruling party due to its constant run-ins with Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena.

"I quit AAP when I realised that its politics won't allow me to serve the public well. If you want to work for people, you have to be on good terms with the L-G," said the former Minister, who is now contesting the February 5 Delhi Assembly election from Bijwasan on a BJP ticket.

"The constant antagonism towards the Delhi L-G prevented many of AAP's



Kailash Gahlot, AAP's most prominent Jat face, quit the party and switched to the BJP in November last year. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

much-anticipated schemes from seeing the light of day," Mr. Gahlot said.

"It is because of AAP's attitude towards the L-G that we failed to do so many things – from not being able to find common ground on the appointment of directors in the Delhi Metro to not being able to implement the Mahila Samman Yojana (monthly aid for women), despite allocating funds for it in the 2024 budget," he added.

15 years as lawyer

Mr. Gahlot was born and raised in Miraon village near west Delhi's Najafgarh. He studied to be a la-



wyer and practised as one for 16 years in the Supreme Court, and the Delhi High Court by the time he won his first election from Najafgarh in 2015.

"During the early 2000s, public transport connectivity in Najafgarh was terrible, which prevented many of my clients from visiting my office, so I moved to Vasant Kunj," said the two-time legislator.

When he became Transport Minister, Mr. Gahlot said he worked towards improving connectivity in the west Delhi district and other parts of the Capital.

"I might have been the Najafgarh MLA for the past

decade, but as Transport Minister, I saw every corner of the city, especially places where there was no public transport," he said.

However, the BJP leader said he was not aware of the issues ailing Bijwasan until he visited the constituency. "I used to think that only people living on the outskirts of Delhi have issues regarding potable water and electricity supply, and drainage systems. But, after visiting the constituency, I realised that no real development had happened here," he added.

This election, Mr. Gahlot is up against AAP's Suder Bhardwaj, the husband of a sitting AAP councillor, and Congress's Devender Sehrawat, a former AAP MLA.

Fond of biryani

The former Minister, a self-professed "foodie", fondly remembers his time at Sri Venkateswara College, when he would drop by a food joint in Defence Colony to "devour plates of biryani" and many years later when he would "saunter on old Delhi streets to have kebabs and tikkas with fellow lawyers".

"After heavy meals, my friends and I would hit the running track or the football field. Now that I don't have as much time, I prefer ordering some Chinese food and getting a good night's sleep," he said.

Give relief to patients awaiting aid outside AIIMS in bitter cold, Rahul writes to Nadda, Atishi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Highlighting the plight of hundreds of patients and their family members outside the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has written to Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, urging them to take concrete steps to resolve the "humanitarian crisis".

The letter, which was released on Monday, comes days after Mr. Gandhi visited several spots outside the premier medical institute, where he met patients and their family members who had come for treatment.

In his letter dated January 18 to Mr. Nadda, the Congress leader drew the Minister's attention to the "distressing situation" outside AIIMS. Mr. Gandhi said he was saddened to



Highlighting plight: Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi interacting with patients outside AIIMS, Delhi. FILE PHOTO

see hundreds of patients and their family members huddled on the footpath and in the subway outside in the bitter cold, without drinking water or sanitation facilities, and only thin blankets to protect them.

Provide amenities

"As public representatives, we must all work together to address these issues. I urge you to take immediate and timely steps to address the situation. The government of India should work with the AIIMS leadership,

the government of Delhi and charitable organisations to provide heating, bedding, water, and shelter to patients and expand permanent facilities for accommodation," Mr. Gandhi stated in the letter.

In his letter to Ms. Atishi, Mr. Gandhi urged the Delhi government to explore "more permanent solutions to accommodate patients by building and expanding permanent facilities" in partnership with AIIMS, the Centre, and charitable groups.

Sachdeva criticises AAP for 'lack of maintenance' of JJ cluster flats

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

keep them in good condition".

BJP MP from North West Delhi Yogender Chandolia and party's Delhi unit chief Virendra Sachdeva on Monday visited the Central government-constructed flats in the JJ clusters of Bawana and criticised the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government for "failing to

object. In response, AAP said the flats are lying vacant because the BJP is "adamant about renting them to Central government employees", and the Delhi government believes that these should be allotted to *jhuggi* dwellers, for whom they were constructed. The party said a case regarding the matter is pending before the High Court.

LET'S TALK SPORTS

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Hon'ble Chief Minister of Bihar

Inaugural Address
Shri Samrat Choudhary
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar

Speakers at the Conclave

Learnings from the Paris Games
Adil Sumariwalla (Vice President, World Athletics)
Kalyan Chaubey (President, All India Football Federation and Joint-Secretary, Indian Olympic Association)
Shiva Keshavan (Head - Scholarships, Olympics Sports at Reliance Foundation & India's Deputy Chef-de-Mission at the Paris Olympics)
Kunal (Joint Secretary - Sports Development, Government of India)

Accelerating sports development in Bihar
B. Rajender (Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Sports, Government of Bihar)
Raveendran Sankaran (Director General & CEO, Bihar State Sports Authority)

Unlocking athlete potential through sports science and data
Dr. G. Kishore (Principal of Laxmibai College of Physical Education & Director, SAI-Kerala)
Dr. Pralay Majumdar (Sr. Advisor, Centre of Excellence in Sports Science and Analytics, IIT Madras)
Harendra Singh (Head coach, Indian women's hockey team)

Bihar championing India's e-sports revolution
Rohit Potphode (President: Esports & Gaming Partnerships, JetSynthesys)
Akshat Rathore (Co-Founder, NOODWIN Gaming)
Abhishek Issar (Founder, UNIV Sportatech and Co-Founder, Federation of Esports India)

Presented by BSSA
Associate Partners IndianOil
Sports Technology Partner GreatSportsTech
Knowledge Partner KPMG

NDTV 24x7 SURGES AHEAD ON TV VIEWERSHIP

Channel	Viewership (G AMA 000s)
NDTV 24x7	1122
Times Now	1088
Republic TV	882
India Today TV	623

TRUST STANDS TALL

SOURCE: BARC | ALL INDIA | AVG WK51'24-01'25 | 22+ | G AMA 000s | 24 HRS

IN BRIEF



Another fire at Maha Kumbh; U.P. govt. issues safety advisory

A fire broke out near the Kinnar Akhara camp in Sector 16 at the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj on Monday. There were no casualties in the incident. This comes a day after a massive fire triggered by a cylinder blast engulfed 18 tents in Sector 19 at the world's largest religious gathering. Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh government issued a comprehensive fire safety advisory to ensure the safety of pilgrims attending the Maha Kumbh. "In the case of an emergency or fire, people need to promptly contact emergency services through helpline numbers 112, 1920, 1090," says the advisory.

HMPV case in Gujarat hours after govt. says no active cases

A woman was found infected with human metapneumovirus (HMPV) in Ahmedabad on Monday, the development coming just hours after health authorities announced there were no active cases of the infection in the State following the discharge of six patients. A 69-year-old woman from Mehsana district admitted to a private hospital in Ahmedabad has been detected with HMPV, a release from the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation's health department informed. "The woman was found positive for HMPV in a test conducted on January 18. She does not have any travel history," the release said. PTI

Jayalalithaa hospitalisation: HC quashes panel's advice for inquiry against ex-T.N. Minister



recommendation to initiate appropriate action against him after obtaining legal opinion could not be sustained and the same (the commission's remarks and the government order) were liable to be quashed.

The commission, which had inquired into the hospitalisation of Jayalalithaa and circumstances leading to her death, had recommended an inquiry against Dr. Vijayabaskar and a few others.

Allowing a petition filed by Dr. Vijayabaskar against the recommendation, Justice G.K. Ilanthyairaiyan said the court found infirmity in the commission's report insofar as the observations and suggestions made against Dr. Vijayabaskar in paragraphs 39.1 to 39.7 and 47.28 were concerned. The judge said the government order issued on the basis of the commission's recom-

The Hindu Bureau
MADRAS

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Monday quashed the Justice A. Arumughaswamy Commission's recommendation for an inquiry against former Tamil Nadu Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar in connection with the hospitalisation of and treatment administered to former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa at Apollo Hospitals in 2016.

Allowing a petition filed by Dr. Vijayabaskar against the recommendation, Justice G.K. Ilanthyairaiyan said the court found infirmity in the commission's report insofar as the observations and suggestions made against Dr. Vijayabaskar in paragraphs 39.1 to 39.7 and 47.28 were concerned. The judge said the government order issued on the basis of the commission's recom-

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Mr. Kumar's journey began in 2017 when he visited the cremation ground to attend the funeral of his friend's grandfather. He was dismayed to see children scavenging for food and money near the bodies. "After the funeral, I asked the children why they did not pursue studies. They asked what would happen if they study? I was shocked by this response," he said.

Initial resistance
Mr. Kumar approached the cremation ground authorities, seeking permission to teach the children at the site. "Then I met the parents, but they were initially hesitant to send their children to the cremation ground," he said.

Mr. Kumar's persistence eventually won them over. "Today, there are 100 girls and 20 boys. When I started there were only eight

students," he said, adding that the children come from two slums: Kundal and Ambedkar Nagar.

His efforts have led to a rise in the number of children enrolling in government schools. Every year, 20-25 of his students enrol in government schools for regular classes. Mr. Kumar provides free education, school bags, and stationery to the children. He teaches

them all subjects and follows the NCERT syllabus.

Senior students assist juniors with homework. Twice a week, girls are also taught martial arts by trained Wushu teachers.

The students sit on the floor, using mats or sacks as makeshift seating arrangements. They are often reluctant to reveal the occupations of their parents, who work as rickshaw pull-

Five held 'responsible' for Badlapur encounter

Magistrate submits inquiry report to Bombay HC on custodial death of sexual assault case accused; it says the five policemen could have handled situation without resorting to force; HC calls for FIR

Purnima Sah
MUMBAI

An inquiry report submitted before the Bombay High Court on Monday said that five police officers were responsible for the custodial death of Akshay Shinde, the lone accused in the Badlapur sexual assault case.

Shinde, 24, was arrested in August 2024 for allegedly sexually assaulting two minor girls inside the toilet of a school in Badlapur in Thane district. He worked as an attendant at the school. On September 23, he was killed in an alleged police shoot-out while being transferred from the Taloja prison in Navi Mumbai for questioning. The police said he snatched a pistol and tried to kill them and was shot in self-defence.

The Thane Magistrate submitted the inquiry report in a sealed cover before the Division Bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Neela Gokhale.

According to the report, five Thane police officers were present in a moving van with Shinde when he was shot dead. The report



Searching for clues: A forensic team examines the police van in which the accused was allegedly killed. FILE PHOTO

stated that the police officers could have "easily handled the situation" without resorting to force and that their actions were not justified in the case.

The officers were identified as senior police inspector Sanjay Shinde of Thane Crime Branch; assistant police inspector Niles More; head constables Abhijeet More and Harish Tawade; and a police driver.

No residue fingerprint
The report took note of the Forensic Science Laboratory's (FSL) findings that there was no residue of the fingerprint of the deceased on the weapon (pistol) used

in the firing.

The report supported the version of Shinde's parents, who had moved the High Court, alleging that their son was killed in a staged encounter by the police.

The Bench said, "As per the material collected and the FSL reports, the allegations of the parents of the deceased are justified. In the report, the magistrate has concluded that the five cops are responsible for the death of accused Akshay Shinde. You [the State government] are bound to file an FIR based on this magistrate report. Tell us which agency will investigate the

matter. We shall keep the original report, and all documents and witness statements annexed to it with us for now. The prosecution might need it later when it probes the case."

The Bench also directed that a copy of the inquiry report be given to the prosecution and the parents of the deceased.

Public Prosecutor Hitendra Venegaonkar submitted to the Bench that the State government would take necessary actions in accordance with law and register an FIR.

He also assured the Bench that the inquiry report would be submitted to the State Human Rights Commission. Mr. Venegaonkar also informed the court that the State Crime Investigation Department (CID) would investigate the matter.

The High Court also heard a *suo motu* public interest litigation (PIL) petition related to the case, in which it had earlier ordered the formation of an expert committee to examine and review the safety protocols for children in educational institutions.

Farmers postpone march to Capital, seek early meeting

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Farmers and farm labourers protesting against the Centre in Punjab announced on Monday that their march to Delhi, initially slated for January 21, has been postponed in the wake of the Centre inviting them for a meeting.



Plan of action: Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher and others addressing the media in Punjab on Monday. PTI

include a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) and farm loan waiver. Last week, the Centre decided to hold a meeting with them on February 14 in Chandigarh to discuss their demands. Following the announcement, Mr. Dallewal, who has been on fast-unto-death since November 26, agreed to take medical aid.

Meanwhile, in his first public statement after getting medical aid, Mr. Dallewal on Monday asked the farmers to keep supporting the ongoing agitation, saying they should not think that their issues have been resolved with an invitation by the Centre for a meeting. (With inputs from PTI)

Demands of the farmers

IIT Madras Director endorses cow urine properties again

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Indian Institute of Technology-Madras Director V. Kamakoti on Monday said five scientific papers published in peer-reviewed journals validated the anti-infective properties of cow urine.

On January 15, at a 'goshala' in West Mambalam, he had said cow urine had anti-fungal, anti-bacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties. He said researchers had conducted experiments and published scientific papers on the subject.

He was invited to the 'goshala' on the 'Mattu Pongal' Day, dedicated to cattle. A video clip of his speech went viral on social media, with many ridiculing his claim as unscientific and unbecoming of the head of an institution of eminence.

On Monday, the Direc-

tor said at a media interaction that five research papers on the properties of cow urine had been published in peer-reviewed journals. One of them, 'Peptide profiling in cow urine reveals molecular signature of physiologically-driven pathways and in-silico predicted bioactive properties', by Rohit Kumar et al, has been published in *Nature*. The research was done by ICAR-National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal, Haryana. It was published in 2021.

U.S. patent

He also disclosed the details of a patent from the United States given to Kharja et al on the use of bioactive fraction from cow urine distillate, issued on May 24, 2005. The patent has been filed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research.

Akali Dal begins membership drive; rebels say party leaders 'defying Akal Takht's orders'

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) launched a membership drive on Monday aimed at reviving the party. The campaign began even as the party rebels expressed unhappiness over the Akali Dal's failure to adhere to the directions of Akal Takht – the highest Sikh temporal seat – regarding the party's restructuring.



Sukhbir Singh Badal, the former Shiromani Akali Dal president, at a recent party event in Sri Muktsar Sahib. FILE PHOTO

list around 50 lakh members over the one-month period."

Senior leader Daljit Singh Cheema said the drive will continue till February 20 and that the election for the party president's post will be held on March 1.

Meanwhile, rebel Akali leader Gurpartap Singh Wadala held a meeting with Akal Takht Jathedars.

(chief priest) Giani Raghbir Singh in Amritsar.

The rebel leaders have accused the party leadership of setting up a "parallel committee" for the restructuring exercise, thereby "undermining" the Akal Takht's authority. After the meeting, Mr. Wadala said, "We met over the issue of the restructuring. We will now wait for the Jathedars' directions."

Rising from the ashes: inside Bihar school run from cremation ground

Amit Bhelari
MUZAFFARPUR (BIHAR)

Mr. Kumar's journey began in 2017 when he visited the cremation ground to attend the funeral of his friend's grandfather. He was dismayed to see children scavenging for food and money near the bodies. "After the funeral, I asked the children why they did not pursue studies. They asked what would happen if they study? I was shocked by this response," he said.

Mr. Kumar approached the cremation ground authorities, seeking permission to teach the children at the site. "Then I met the parents, but they were initially hesitant to send their children to the cremation ground," he said.

His efforts have led to a rise in the number of children enrolling in government schools. Every year, 20-25 of his students enrol in government schools for regular classes. Mr. Kumar provides free education, school bags, and stationery to the children. He teaches

them all subjects and follows the NCERT syllabus.

Senior students assist juniors with homework. Twice a week, girls are also taught martial arts by trained Wushu teachers.

The students sit on the floor, using mats or sacks as makeshift seating arrangements. They are often reluctant to reveal the occupations of their parents, who work as rickshaw pull-

ers, garbage collectors, and sewerage cleaners.

Radhika Kumari, a Class 7 student whose father works as an autorickshaw driver, said, "I'm aware that this is a cremation ground, but we focus on what our teacher teaches us. For me, the location isn't important; what matters most is my education. I've been attending classes here for three years."

Making an impact

Mohammad Mubarak, whose father works as a garbage collector, said, "I wasn't enrolled in any school, but since attending classes here, I've learned to read and write."

Mohammad aspires to join Class 4 this year. Mr. Kumar's efforts have not gone unnoticed. The Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation has recognised his initiative, and he has received support from

local authorities. His goal is to help as many of his students admitted in government schools, ensuring they get a formal education and recognised certificate.

Mr. Kumar holds a master's in Arts from Bihar University and an LLB degree from S.K.J Law College in Muzaffarpur.

Originally from Bettiah in West Champaran district, he has been residing in Muzaffarpur since his childhood. His friends have provided him with accommodation, allowing him to dedicate his resources to his endeavour.

Dedicated to cause

Mr. Kumar has also chosen not to get married, devoting his life to this cause. His younger brother, who works in a private company in Kolkata, supports him financially, sending money every month to sustain the social initiative.

CM issues clarification amid public outrage over jumbos 'sent out' of Assam

Press Trust of India
GUWAHATI

The Assam government asserted on Monday that no elephants were transported outside in the recent past, dismissing speculations that a convoy of animal ambulances ferried jumbos from the northeastern State.

"I categorically state, with all the authority at my command, that the elephants shown being transported in vehicles over the last two days are not from Assam," Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in a post on X.

He was responding to a post by Mukrang Engti, the founder of Karbi Anglong Animal Welfare Society, on X in which he had sought clarification over media re-

ports regarding the matter. A convoy of animal ambulances was captured on camera travelling through Assam from a neighbouring State over the past two days. Elephants were being transported in at least some of these vehicles, which bore Gujarat registration number plates, with one of the jumbos visible with its trunk over the open hood of its ambulance.

State Congress president Bhupen Kumar Borah, reacting to the reports, blamed the CM and alleged that Mr. Sarma, for his "political and financial gains", can send these animals to a private zoo outside the State. "A leader must not think only with his brain, but also use his heart," the Congress leader said.

Being young is not a mitigating factor for death sentence: court

The Hindu Bureau

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

While sentencing S.S. Greeshma, 24, to death on Monday for murdering Sharon Raj with whom she was in a relationship, a local court here rejected the defence's arguments seeking leniency for her, stating that her young age and educational aspirations could not be considered mitigating factors.

Greeshma's uncle Nirmalakumaran Nair, the third accused, was sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment with a fine of ₹50,000. The second accused, Greeshma's mother Sindhu, was acquitted.

If the fines are realised, they will be provided to Sharon's parents. The court recommended that the District Legal Services Authority offer further assistance under the Victim Compensation Scheme.

Emphasising the brutality of the crime, the court noted that Greeshma had previously attempted to murder Sharon using a "juice challenge", giving him mango juice mixed with paracetamol tablets. Though Section 307 (attempted murder) of the Indian Penal Code was not incorporated by the police, the court concluded that it was proven beyond reasonable doubt that Greeshma had attempted to murder Sharon, which added to the heinous nature of the crime.

The court commended the investigators, doctors, and scientific experts for



S.S. Greeshma comes out of the court after pronouncement of the verdict on Monday. ANI

uncovering the truth behind the "brilliant crime". It added that the case is a golden feather on the cap of the Kerala Police for successfully gathering crucial digital and forensic evidence.

In his 588-page judgment, A.M. Basheer, judge, Additional District and Sessions Court, Neyyattinkara, said, "God in the cloud saved the data of crime. Based on the scientific principle of Dr. Edmond Locard that no one can leave the place of crime without leaving a trace of evidence, Greeshma carried the evidence with her on her mobile phone and stored everything in the cloud."

The prosecution, led by Special Public Prosecutor V.S. Vineeth Kumar, examined 95 witnesses and presented 323 exhibits and 51 material objects. The case was initially investigated by the Parassala police before being handed over to a Crime Branch team led by Deputy Superintendent of Police Johnson K.J.

Which panel is better for Mullaperiyar, SC asks States

Court asks TN and Kerala whether the supervisory committee formed by it or a statutory committee under the new Dam Safety Act of 2021 will be more effective in taking care of the dam

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday orally asked the States of Tamil Nadu and Kerala to address it on whether the supervisory committee formed by the court would be more effective in taking care of the 129-year-old Mullaperiyar dam or the job must be given to a statutory committee envisaged under the new Dam Safety Act of 2021.

"Which one of these committees would be more effective? If it is the statutory committee under the 2021 Act, then we can avoid overlaps and avoid unnecessary problems," Justice Surya Kant, heading a Bench, observed orally.

The court listed the case for hearing detailed sub-



Next sitting: The Supreme Court listed the case for hearing detailed submissions on February 19. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

missions on February 19.

Section 5 of the 2021 Act mandates the constitution of the National Committee on Dam Safety.

Committee's functions

The committee would be chaired by the Central Wa-

ter Commission Chairperson and have representatives from the Centre and States and include three specialists in the field of dam safety and allied fields.

The committee's crucial functions under Section 6

include evolving policy, guidelines and standards to prevent disasters related to dam failures and maintain safety standards.

Senior advocate Shekhar Naphade for Tamil Nadu said if there was an "honest desire to work out" on the part of both States, things would be resolved. Mr. Naphade said the intent of Kerala was to obstruct.

Senior advocate Jaideep Gupta, for Kerala, said Tamil Nadu was owing a dam in Kerala and "they do not want to take care of it".

Justice Kant said this issue was already resolved and the question now was on whether the supervisory committee of the Supreme Court or the statutory committee of the 2021 Act was the right entity to ensure the safety of the Mullaperiyar dam.

Masked men waylay Kerala businessman's car, rob occupants on outskirts of Mysuru

The Hindu Bureau

MYSURU

A group of masked men waylaid a car and drove it away after assaulting its occupants on the outskirts of Mysuru on Monday.

The car belonging to a Kerala-based businessman, identified as Sufi, was

found abandoned hours later about 10 km from the place of crime. "Around ₹1.5 lakh that was in the car is reported to be missing," said a police official.

Superintendent of Police, Mysuru, Vishnuvardhan, who visited the crime spot at Harohalli on the Mysuru-Mananthavadi

road, said, "Preliminary investigation suggest that the group came in two cars, waylaid the car of the victims, and executed their plan before fleeing the spot." Mr. Vishnuvardhan said he had contacted the Superintendents of Police of neighbouring districts in Kerala to put up barricades

to nab the culprits.

Mr. Sufi was returning to his native place in Kerala when the incident happened. A viral video of the same showed the masked men dragging out a person from the vehicle. The victims complained to the Jayapura police, who registered a case.

Karnataka CM says two lakh people to attend Congress's Belagavi rally today

Rishikesh Bahadur Desai

BELAGAVI



Larger than life: Cut-outs of Congress leaders put up at CPED grounds in Belagavi on Monday. BADIGER P. K.

pronged organisation with a social responsibility engaged in Sarvodaya.

However, the most important task achieved by the session was quelling the differences between the two factions of the party – the Swarajists and No-

Changers.

There is an interesting similarity between the 39th session of the Indian National Congress held in Belagavi in 1924 and the ongoing Gandhi Bharat programme as the State unit of the Congress seems to be divided among groups who are seeking change in the KPCC leadership and the No-Changers.

Leaders like Satish Jarkiholi, K.N. Rajanna, M.B. Patil, and others are believed to be demanding a change in the KPCC leadership. Mr. Satish and Mr. Rajanna have openly demanded that the party needs a full-fledged president and that the one-man, one-post principle be followed.

Apart from this, there appears to be a tussle for the chief ministerial post too as some sections in the party believe that there is a power-sharing pact between the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister, though there is no official word in this regard.

Plea of Walayar mother against integrity certificate for police officer dismissed

Gopakumar K.C.

KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Monday dismissed an appeal filed by the mother of the two minor girls who died at Walayar, against the government decision to issue an integrity certificate to M.J. Sojan, investigation officer, for conferring him with the IPS rank.

In her appeal filed against a single judge's order rejecting her plea, she said the police officer had made obnoxious remarks against the petitioner and her deceased daughters through visual media with a view to humiliating them.



The government order was an abuse of process of power, and the decision was taken without following the due procedure of law, she argued.

The police officer argued that the High Court

had already quashed the case registered against him before the Palakkad special court under the POCSO Act in this regard.

Allegation denied

He contended that he had not made any derogatory statements as alleged.

In service matters, only persons in service can assail the legality of the appointment/selection, he added.

The single judge, while dismissing the petition, had observed that it did not find any ground or material to hold that the government order was actuated with malice or malafides.

+ Student from Hyderabad shot dead in the U.S.

The Hindu Bureau

HYDERABAD

A 26-year-old student from Telangana has been shot dead in Washington.

The victim, identified as K. Ravi Teja, hailed from R.K. Puram in Hyderabad. He had gone to the U.S. in 2022 to pursue a Master's in Business Administration and had recently completed his studies. "The circumstances surrounding the shooting are under investigation," the North American Association of Indian Students said on X.

The National Students' Union of India criticised the BJP government for not ensuring the safety of Indian students abroad.

Pilgrimage season in Sabarimala Ayyappa temple draws to close

The Hindu Bureau

PATHANAMTHITTA

Marking the conclusion of a pilgrimage season that witnessed an unprecedented influx of devotees, the Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala closed its portals on Monday after a Pandalam Palace representative visited the temple and offered prayers here in the morning.

The temple was opened in the morning at 5 a.m. and a Ganapati homam was performed. As is the custom, no other person was permitted to offer prayers at the temple during the day. Following this, the Melsanthi closed the

sanctum sanctorum after covering the idol of the main deity in sacred ash (Bhasmam) and handed over the keys to the palace representative, Raja Raja Varma. The representative then accompanied the procession carrying the Thiruvabharanam (holy jewels) back to the Pandalam Palace. The entourage is scheduled to reach the palace on January 23.

According to P.S. Prashanth, President of the Travancore Devaswom Board, the pilgrimage season recorded a significant rise in the number of devotees, with approximately 6.31 lakh more pilgrims making the journey this year.

Withdraw approval for liquor plant, Elappally panchayat tells Kerala govt.

The Hindu Bureau

PALAKKAD

The Elappally grama panchayat in Kerala has asked the State government to withdraw the permission given to Oasis Commercial to set up a liquor plant in the panchayat. An emergency meeting of the panchayat governing council on Monday asked the government to review its decision in the wake of protests brewing against the proposed liquor plant.

The State government decision to permit Oasis Commercial, a controversial brewery firm allegedly involved in the Delhi brewery scam, to set up a ₹600-crore liquor plant at Man-



A 2018 order of the Kerala High Court says that Malampuzha reservoir water should be used only for farming. K. K. MUSTAFAH

nukkad in Ward 6 of Elappally panchayat has evoked sharp protests from different sections, including the Congress and the BJP.

While the BJP members in Elappally panchayat council supported the ruling Congress's resolution

cil's letter to the State government, Elappally panchayat president Revathy Babu pointed out that the proposed plant would further deplete the ground water level in the panchayat and would deprive farmers of their water.

Paddy farmers of Elappally said the government permission for the liquor plant was in violation of a High Court order in 2018. The High Court had issued an order in 2018 favouring farmer Sivarajan's claim that Malampuzha reservoir water should not be used for other purposes. They said that the second crop of paddy in the district was entirely dependent on Malampuzha water.

In the panchayat coun-

IT staffer's death: wife asked to bring minor son before court

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the wife of a Bengaluru-based IT firm employee, Atul Subhash, who died by suicide last year, to produce their minor son before it through videoconferencing.

A Bench of Justices B. V. Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma was hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by Subhash's mother, Anju Devi, seeking a direction to produce her four-year-old grandson in court.

"We want to see the child. Produce him," Justice Nagarathna addressed counsel appearing for Nikiita Singhania, the wife of Subhash.

The court was informed that the child had dropped out of school in Haryana and was currently residing with the mother.

Custody denied

On January 7, the top court denied her the minor's custody saying she was a "stranger to the child".

Subhash, in his thirties, was found dead at his house in Bengaluru's Munnekolalu on December 9 last year.

He had left behind messages blaming his wife and her parents.

CM YK

Custodial death of detained man sparks tension in Sambhal

Mayank Kumar

LUCKNOW

A protest erupted in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal district on Monday, with hundreds of people gheraoing the Raisatti police outpost under the Nakhas police station limits demanding justice over the alleged custodial death of a 35-year-old man.

Irfan was detained after a relative filed a complaint alleging that he had not received a loan.

According to Irfan's wife, police personnel took him into custody for interrogation despite knowing about his health issues. She alleged that Irfan was tortured to death. "We requested that he be given time to take his medicines, but the police didn't listen to us at all," she said.

However, the Sambhal police rejected allegations, claiming that Irfan died likely due to a heart attack.

Superintendent of Pol-

ice, Sambhal, Krishna Kumar said, "When the deceased was brought to the police outpost, his son was also with him. He told the police that his father needed to take his medicine. He took a tablet and suddenly fell to the ground. The deceased was a patient, and probably died due to it."

More security

The situation turned chaotic, prompting additional deployment of security personnel from Kotwali and Nakhas police stations. Senior officials intervened to calm the protesters, who demanded strict action against the accused police personnel and compensation for the victim. The body was later sent for post-mortem.

Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) chief and Nagina MP Chandra Shekhar Azad demanded a fair investigation and action against those responsible for the alleged custodial death.



Capex quandary

Private investments remain tentative amid growth concerns

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre has been using public capital expenditure on infrastructure to pump prime the economic recovery. The mantra has been that infrastructure building will stoke demand for products such as cement and steel, generate jobs in construction, and together trigger a strong multiplier effect on the economy, eventually creating conducive conditions for private investors to plan greenfield and brownfield projects. In Budget 2024-25, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government will endeavour to maintain strong fiscal support for infrastructure over the next five years, in conjunction with imperatives of other priorities and fiscal consolidation. She announced ₹11.11 lakh crore of capex spends this year, amounting to 3.4% of GDP. That goal is unlikely to be attained partly due to spending curbs in the poll-affected first quarter. While industry has urged the Centre to continue the capex push in 2025-26 as well, it has failed to respond to the government's constant nudges and persuasions to ramp up their own operations.

Data show that two of this year's first three quarters have recorded a notable sequential decline in private investment plans, particularly by domestic industry. In Q1, private capex plans dropped to multi-year lows, and though the July-September quarter recorded a recovery in investment intentions, that up tick has dissipated in Q3. Projects Today data suggest domestic investments' value dropped 1.4% from Q2, while new projects' value dropped over 22% from a year ago as per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. There are many factors playing on corporate risk-taking capacity – weak Q2 results, global uncertainties, spiking costs and waning demand in more lucrative urban markets. Going by current indications, including the early bird Q3 results, demand has not really improved, nor is there ostensible pressure on factory capacities to warrant expansions. For a sustainable breakout from this slowdown, private capital should take the driving seat because there are limits to enhancing public capex while maintaining fiscal rectitude and providing for myriad welfare schemes. The government must accept that exhortations to industry are unlikely to spur fresh outlays, and incentives focused on themes such as import-substitution are insufficient. Not one new rupee will be deployed if a project is unviable and demand flaky. Policy focus should remain firmly on ensuring the ground is ripe to instigate investments and easing the realisation of such plans into billowing chimneys and new jobs. For that, boosting incomes and consumption is critical as is expediting macro- and micro-level reforms. That an economic policy framework outlining next generation reforms, promised in the Budget, has not been heard of since then, is not very comforting.

Go, kho kho, go

India needs to pump in more time and resources into rural sports

Kho kho is not, by any stretch of imagination, among the world's most popular sports. Even in India, where the game is said to have originated several centuries ago, it has not yet caught the imagination. Not many would have noticed India winning the men's and women's titles at the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup in New Delhi on Sunday. Pratik Waikar's men and Priyanka Ingle's women flourished but their collective achievements should not be cause to gloss over the fact that kho kho is not a global sport yet. Indeed, the conduct of the World Cup and India winning both the titles could offer a boost to this particular game with a rural heart. Since India is not really a major power in international sport at large, any world title is a welcome addition to the not-so-overflowing cupboard. There are, of course, a few sports in which India is a superpower, such as cricket and chess. Indian cricket may be going through its lowest phase in recent times – notwithstanding the triumph in the T20 World Cup last year – but in the mind game on 64 squares, India's Grandmasters have been authoring one success story after another, the latest being D. Gukesh winning the World chess championship and Koneru Humpy regaining the women's World rapid championship.

India's brilliant minds, however, have not received the acclaim or support they deserve, especially after their historic double gold at the Chess Olympiad back in September, from the government or corporate houses. The government could do a lot to raise the profile of games such as kho kho, chess and Olympic disciplines. The disappointment at the Paris Olympics last year, where India failed to win even a single gold and finished 71st, below Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, was another stark reminder of the state of Indian sport. India won six medals but its performance was below expectations. India's various sports federations need to review their own functioning. And they could, in fact, learn lessons from how the Board of Control for Cricket in India, for all the criticism directed against it, is running its sport, improving infrastructure and sharing the growth in revenue with players. India may largely be a single-sport country, unlike the United States or Australia, but a game such as kabaddi, with its Pro Kabaddi League, has shown that there is scope for Indian sport on television beyond cricket. The governments, at the Centre and the States, could also do better by developing infrastructure and nurturing varied sport such as kho kho. It is also time to find out if Khelo India is justifying the huge budgetary spend.

UGC's draft regulation has serious constitutional issues

The draft regulation by the University Grants Commission (UGC) on the selection and appointment of vice chancellors of universities has evoked protests by non-Bharatiya Janata Party-headed State governments. Their main objection against this regulation is that it constitutes a violation of the federal principles enshrined in the Constitution of India. The State governments concerned have demanded its withdrawal.

The UGC has sought to amend Regulation 2010 that relates to the selection and appointment of vice chancellors by widening the area of selection. Under the existing regulations, a vice chancellor can be selected only from among academicians who have a minimum experience of 10 years as professor. Through this amendment, the UGC declares that professionals with 10-plus years of experience in industry, public administration or public policy, shall also be considered.

The draft regulation raises serious constitutional issues which need to be examined by separating the political context of protest and a possible political reaction from the UGC or the party in power.

The objective of the UGC Act

The University Grants Commission Act, 1956 was enacted by Parliament to make provision for "the co-ordination and determination of standards in Universities and for that purpose, to establish the University Grants Commission". The Act, therefore, mandates the UGC to take all steps as it thinks fit for the promotion and the coordination of university education, and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities. For performing these functions the UGC can allocate funds to the universities essentially for the maintenance and development of the universities, recommend measures necessary for the improvement of university education, advise the Union or State governments on the allocation of grants to universities for any general or specific purpose, collect information on all matters relating to university education in India and other countries and make them available to any university, regulation of fees.....

Section 26 of the UGC Act empowers the UGC to make regulations for implementing the mandate of the Act. But it is made clear in this section that these regulations need to be consistent with the Act and the rules made there under. The most important among these regulations relate to defining the qualifications required of a person to be appointed to the teaching staff in a university, the minimum standards of instructions for the grant of any



P.D.T. Achary
is former Secretary General, Lok Sabha

degree by a university, and regulating the maintenance of standards and the coordination of work or facilities in universities.

It is not the job of the UGC

The crucial point that needs to be considered here is whether the regulation made by the UGC in respect of the selection, qualification and appointment of vice chancellor is consistent with the provisions of the UGC Act. As a matter of fact, the Act does not contain any provisions relating to the selection and the appointment of vice chancellors. The fundamental objective of the Act is to determine standards in universities and the promotion and the coordination of university education. To lay down the standards of teaching and to prescribe the qualifications of teaching staff whose job is to give instructions, is the main function of the UGC – which it does by making periodic regulations. But the problem arises when this statutory body begins to regulate an area which is not a part of the parent Act. Rules, and regulations are technically called subordinate legislation. The subordinate legislation can be made only in consonance with the provisions in the Act. If the regulation goes outside the scope of the Act, it will be *ultra vires* the Act, and hence invalid.

A close reading of the Act would show that it was not meant to prescribe the qualifications or mode of selection of vice chancellors. All universities, whether under the Union or the States, are established under a statute made by the respective legislature. Therefore, it is the legislature which prescribes the qualifications, mode of selection, and conditions of service of vice chancellors. It is not the job of the UGC. The selection and the appointment of vice chancellors cannot be considered to be an exercise connected with maintaining the standards of education or promotion and coordination of university education. The Bombay High Court in *Suresh Patilkhede vs The Chancellor Universities of Maharashtra and Others* (2011) corroborates this view in the following words "we are of the view that qualifications and method of appointment of Pro-Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of the University cannot be treated as satisfying the 'direct impact' test [on the standards of education]". Therefore, it is safe to assume that under Section 26 of the UGC Act, the UGC has no mandate to make any regulation in respect of the selection and the appointment of vice chancellors.

An interesting constitutional question which arises in the context of the UGC's regulations is whether a regulation can over-ride an Act passed by a State legislature. This question came up in the context of the termination of the appointment

of some vice chancellors in the past. The Bombay High Court in the *Suresh Patilkhede case (supra)* took the view that "Regulation 7.3.0 of UGC Regulations, 2010 being a subordinate legislation under an Act of Parliament cannot override plenary legislation enacted by the State Legislature...." However, the Supreme Court of India, in *Kalyani Mathivanan vs K.V. Jayaraj and Ors (AIR 2015 SC 1875 para 22)* overruled it by holding "we hold that the U.G.C. Regulations through a subordinate legislation has binding effect on the Universities to which it applies...." The reason given by the Court for reaching this conclusion is that "it is only when both the Houses of the Parliament approve the regulation, the same can be given effect". It may be clarified here that Parliament does not formally approve any rule or regulation laid in the House. It can only amend a rule which has already come into effect before it is so laid; if Parliament amends the rule, it will, thereafter, be effective in the amended form. With due respect to their lordships, the observation of the Court does not correctly reflect the parliamentary procedure relating to the laying down of rules and regulations in the Houses of Parliament.

The question whether the UGC regulations override a State law can be answered only in terms of Article 254 of the Constitution which deals with repugnancy. Under this Article, if a State law is repugnant to the central law, the State law, to the extent of repugnancy, be void. But is a regulation made by the UGC, a central law within the meaning of Article 254? Clause (2) of this Article says that if the law made by the legislature of a state has been reserved for the consideration of the President and has received his assent, it shall prevail in the State. In this clause the word 'law' simply means the Bill passed by the legislature and sent to the President. It does not include the rules and regulations which are framed only after ascent is received. So, what overrides a State law is a Bill passed by both Houses of Parliament and assented to by the President, and certainly not the subordinate legislation.

A key ruling

In any case, the Court made a significant ruling on the question of mandatory application of Regulation 7.3.0 of the UGC relating to the selection and appointment of vice chancellors in the *Kalyani Mathivanan case (supra)* it says: "However, the finding of the Bombay High Court that Regulation 7.3.0 has to be treated as recommendatory in nature is upheld in so far as it relates to Universities and Colleges under the State Legislation." This ruling may perhaps help resolve the present controversy.

Prioritising IMEC is in America's best interest

The United States-India relationship has evolved into an increasingly vital strategic partnership ever since the Clinton administration laid the foundation for a new direction in the 1990s. Today, broad bipartisan consensus supports building upon these ties even further, driven by converging interests in economic growth, regional security, and democratic values. As global dynamics shift, the importance of this relationship for the Trump administration becomes even more pronounced.

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) agreement presents a tremendous opportunity for President Donald Trump to solidify this multilateral partnership while advancing both the strategic interests of the U.S. and India. By leading the effort to secure cooperation among the participating nations, the U.S. can help create a robust economic corridor to ensure free and open trade routes, with enhanced energy security and technological innovation, which, in turn, will also benefit American companies.

More conceptual now

Announced in 2023, IMEC represents an ambitious vision to forge an integrated network spanning three vital regions through advanced physical and digital infrastructure. The corridor must develop efficient transportation routes, including railways, shipping networks, and maritime connections, while also establishing cross-border electricity and hydrogen pipelines and digital communication cables. The end goals should be to enhance trade connectivity and reduce transportation costs, while diversifying global supply chains and promoting deeper economic integration among participating countries (India, the U.S., the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Italy, France, Germany, and the European Commission).

At the moment, it is reasonable to suggest that IMEC is more conceptual than concrete. Meeting its lofty goals requires extensive planning and cooperation. The Trump administration's leadership on this matter could enhance his legacy on the international stage. By supporting IMEC, the U.S. and India can establish a



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compelling alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), creating a more balanced global economic architecture that aligns with western democratic values and market principles.

IMEC was never destined to be a straightforward endeavour. Each participating nation faces a complex calculus of investment, political will and economic strategy. The corridor demands substantial infrastructure investments that directly compete with other national priorities. Moreover, private sector engagement introduces another layer of complexity. Corporate investors require clear pathways to return on investment; and without active engagement from the private sector, it is unlikely that the project could succeed.

Several countries, such as Greece and Italy, have shown substantial initiative on IMEC. France has distinguished itself by appointing a special envoy in Gérard Mestrall, who is not a traditional diplomat. France's President Emmanuel Macron has chosen a proven business leader from France to head this geopolitical and economic initiative, as he recognises its economic potential for France. The UAE and Saudi Arabia appreciate the role IMEC can play in advancing relationships with the West, and have spearheaded efforts for its implementation. Without regular, strategic engagement, there is a significant risk of creating an uneven economic landscape that could breed tension and political friction among participating nations. The corridor offers transformative economic opportunities not just for coastal regions and primary ports but also for inland areas that could become crucial nodes in this expansive trade network. Even within the region, we have already seen countries such as Iraq and Türkiye initiate trade agreements to compliment IMEC.

As an alternative to China's BRI
IMEC promises substantial economic advantages for India by dramatically reducing trade costs and transforming maritime logistics. This strategic network reduces vulnerability to potential disruptions such as those that might occur in the Suez Canal, but also creates compelling opportunities for increased foreign direct

The U.S. and India must ensure the completion of this project, which represents a fundamental reimagining of regional economic cooperation

investment. By positioning itself as an alternative to the BRI, the corridor allows India to strengthen diplomatic ties with West Asian and European countries.

Better for the environment

There are implications to this deal that could impact the earth's climate health. India has emerged as a significant player in green hydrogen development, positioning itself as a potential global leader in this emerging clean energy technology. The country has launched ambitious initiatives to develop green hydrogen as a strategic component of its energy transition and decarbonisation efforts.

India is collaborating with international partners such as Germany and Japan, and developing infrastructure for green hydrogen production, storage, and transportation. This will help reduce carbon emissions, decrease dependence on fossil fuel imports and create new job opportunities in emerging green technology sectors.

The Trump administration's role in facilitating the Abraham Accords proved instrumental in creating the diplomatic conditions that made IMEC possible. Former U.S. President Joe Biden has been a strong proponent of IMEC. Looking ahead, questions remain about IMEC's future under potential new U.S. leadership. One intriguing factor is Mr. Trump's warm personal relationship with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This rapport could prove significant to ongoing relations. Now that there is a peace agreement between Israel and Hamas, both leaders could facilitate the much needed (and required) meeting of IMEC participants to discuss the next steps.

This endeavour transcends traditional infrastructure development; it represents a fundamental reimagining of regional economic cooperation that requires unprecedented levels of coordination among diverse stakeholders. The U.S. and India, as key architects of the corridor, must work closely to shepherd this project to completion, recognising both its economic significance and environmental implications for all participating countries.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Poor demand

The economist, John Maynard Keynes, wrote that it is the increase in consumption and investment demand that enhances employment, income and output in the economy. That investment by the private sector fell 1.4% in Q3 in India is a case

in point. The sole way out is to increase capital expenditure by the Centre and State governments. Keynes' work, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, one feels, is germane at all times.

S. Ramakrishnasayee,
Chennai

'Lit for Life'

Some experts seem to have missed the fact that, notwithstanding the accusation that the general election was not on a level playing field, the BJP's hat-trick performance needs to be recognised. There is no ground to confirm that every BJP voter is a believer

of Hindutva (January 20). There are many who accept the politics of Narendra Modi. This is the beauty of our vibrant democracy.

S. Seshadri,
Chennai

That "Young India is hankering for a new kind of politics" sounds surprising.

While the well-educated young India leaves for other continents, one also has the less educated migrating in search of a livelihood. But do the young really vote?

In a hugely populated nation as ours, no political party can ever claim to solve every issue. However, great minds can help ease

problems for the people. Political parties should focus on the young to ensure that they serve India and not other nations.

Balasubramaniam Pavani,
Secunderabad

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

We need distinguished jurists as judges

A critical aspect of a judicial system is the effective and timely delivery of justice. This can be achieved in the Indian judicial system only if the significant crisis of backlogs and vacancies is addressed urgently by both the judiciary and the government.

Data as of January 1, 2025, show that 371 posts of the 1,122 posts sanctioned across the High Courts of the country remain vacant. The Allahabad High Court functions at only 50% of its total sanctioned strength. Naturally, this has a direct impact on the already alarming levels of backlog. As millions of people have to wait for a long time for justice, their faith in the judicial system is eroding. Although this has been a perennial issue, there are now about 60 lakh cases pending across all the High Courts, an astonishing number. To solve this, we need both immediate remedial steps and reformative measures.

While it is true that the pace of Collegium recommendations and the resulting appointments has picked up in the last couple of years, it has unfortunately not been able to match the number of retirements and ever-increasing number of filings. In turn, this has put enormous strain on the system, compelling judges to take on a higher caseload than feasible. This is likely to adversely impact both the time given to as well as the depth of engagement with a particular case. Therefore, a well-staffed judiciary functioning at near-total sanctioned strength is the need of the hour.

A game changer
In that context, Article 124(3)(c) and Article 217(2)(c), now repealed, of the Constitution become increasingly significant. These provisions allow for the appointment of individuals who, in the opinion of the President (read Collegium), are 'distinguished jurists', as judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts. Unfortunately, Article



Kumar Ritwik
Delhi-based Advocate, currently serving as a Law Clerk in the Supreme Court of India

124(3)(c) remains unutilised and Article 217(2)(c) has been repealed without any stated reason. In other words, no jurist has been found to be distinguished enough to be appointed to these posts till date. Although it is a routine practice in jurisdictions across the globe to appoint jurists as judges, appointments to the High Courts and the Supreme Court in India have always been either from the Bar (practising advocates) or the judicial services.

At a time when the issue of vacancies and backlogs is stifling the system, introducing and invoking the provision to appoint 'distinguished jurists' to High Courts of the country can turn out to be a game changer. In fact, a similar idea was floated by Shri Shibban Lal Saxena but negatived by the Constituent Assembly on June 7, 1949, without any meaningful deliberation.

Involving the world of academia directly into the mainstream Indian judicial system can bring both immense benefits and challenges. A vast pool of specialised knowledge, research-based critical thinking, and expertise can provide unique insights and add a hitherto missing dimension to the judiciary's understanding of complex socioeconomic and socio-legal cases. At the same time, the lack of courtroom experience, procedural knowledge, understanding of limits to exercising judicial power, and a certain degree of resistance among the status quoists within the institution are challenges that will need to be overcome as well.

An important message
A number of countries (such as the United States, Poland, Myanmar, Kenya, Thailand, Spain and Italy) that allow jurists or professors of law to be appointed to posts equivalent to that of a judge in the High Courts and/or the Supreme Court of India have vastly benefited from this practice. In India, where academia has expressed its legitimate concerns

and grievances of not having been adequately nurtured or supported, re-introducing Article 217(2)(c) and appointing jurists or academics as judges of the High Courts would send across an important message. At the same time, with adequate training of procedural know-how and courtroom experience, the presence of our sharpest academic minds on the Bench would ensure that the judicial discourse is enriched and that judicial decision-making is further strengthened.

Granting an opportunity to distinguished academics to effectively engage with the complex problems of the contemporary legal world would lend a fresh perspective to the cause of justice. Such appointees would naturally serve as a bridge between academia and practice. This would lead to a synergistic interaction of legal research with the more nuanced and practical aspects of delivering justice.

Therefore, the need of the hour is to tide over the current crisis of increasing backlogs, and bridge the widening gap between the actual strength and the sanctioned strength of courts. First, the government must comply with the Collegium's recommendations within a strict time frame. Second, deploying innovating solutions, such as re-introducing and invoking Article 217(2)(c) to appoint distinguished jurists to High Courts, would help fill existing vacancies. Tapping into the academic world as a valuable resource sector would help ensure that the Indian judicial system remains dynamic, robust, and diverse, grounded in practical realities as well as an in-depth understanding of its underlying constitutional principles. By drawing upon the expertise of our sharpest academic minds, India will be able to address the existing concerns and enhance the quality of the judiciary's output. Such a step could prove to be transformative for the Indian judiciary in the years to come.

A pushback against online abuse

An actor's decision to legally take on harassers on social media is laudable

STATE OF PLAY

S.R. Praveen
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In Kerala, trolls and abusers may fall silent, at least for the time being, thanks to a recent incident involving a courageous actor in the Malayalam film industry.

On January 6, the actor lodged a police complaint against 30 people for allegedly posting derogatory remarks beneath one of her posts on social media. The next day, she filed a complaint against businessman Boby Chemmanur, calling him the "leader" of "social media hooligans". The actor alleged that he had harassed her with sexual remarks on social media but also off it, during the inaugural function of one of his jewellery stores. After she objected to the remarks and refused to attend the inauguration of other outlets of the Chemmanur Group, she received obscene comments from several accounts. It seemed to her like a targeted attack.

The police pressed non-bailable charges against Mr. Chemmanur and arrested him from his tea estate in Wayanad within two days of the actor filing the complaint. The arrest was dramatic. A group of young men claiming to be Mr. Chemmanur's fans attempted to stop the police vehicle, alleging that the businessman was being unfairly targeted, after a local court denied his bail application and sent him to judicial custody for 14 days. The police also arrested a 60-year-old man, who was one of the 30 people who allegedly abused the actor online.

As the probe gathered pace, many of the offensive comments under the complainant's older posts, and in



some cases the profiles used to post such comments on her profile, began to disappear.

While the Kerala High Court granted bail to Mr. Chemmanur, it made him apologise for his theatrics which involved a reported refusal to sign the bail bond.

The actor's decision to legally take on harassers on social media is laudable. Over the last few years, there has been a growing number of instances of targeted online harassment against women in various fields, especially politicians, journalists, and celebrities. While the worst attacks are invariably launched against opinionated women, sometimes all it takes is the posting of a photograph to attract abuse.

The complainant wrote that cruel comments, sexual innuendos, and a planned campaign by certain social media profiles are enough to take lives these days. Many people, including celebrities facing serious allegations, religious and business groups, and political parties seeking to silence those raising uncomfortable questions, have weaponised online armies to push their detractors into submission. They are known to deploy hundreds and thousands of fake accounts to intimidate their targets and even drive them off social media.

Activist Rahul Easwar, who habitually defends on news

channels men facing serious allegations of sexual harassment and assault, waded into the issue by questioning the actor's sartorial choices. Accusing him of orchestrating a cybercrime against her to manipulate public opinion and trivialise her complaint, the Malayalam actor then filed a complaint against Mr. Easwar. She argued that his comments would prevent more women in similar situations from lodging complaints.

The high-profile arrest sent out the important message that online bullying will not be tolerated. The swift action taken by the police and the fear that it has possibly created could act as a strong deterrent against online harassment in the future. Women face a particularly violent and sexualised form of abuse online, sometimes even in the form of rape and death threats, which is why the actor's firm stand has been lauded widely.

However, some people argue that the arrest of the businessman was an attack on the freedom of expression. This is a wilful and wrongful conflation. The freedom of speech does not translate into a freedom from the consequences of such speech. Freedoms come with reasonable restrictions. It is possible to cause great harm to people without being anywhere close to them physically, and therefore, freedom of speech comes with great responsibility. Only stringent and sustained action against both well-known and faceless online harassers can ensure that the social media sphere is reclaimed as a space for creativity, respectful engagement, and sane debates and reasoning, as it used to be, rather than as one where vituperative modes of interaction hold sway, which is unfortunately the case now.

One in three Indians wants to buy an electric vehicle next: report

Women influence 52% of the decisions related to the purchase of EVs in Indian households

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

One in three consumers in India is eyeing electric vehicles (EVs) for their next purchase, says the 'Think Mobility' report by Google and BCG. Women are emerging as key decision-makers in the EV market. While EV-related challenges persist, innovations and localised manufacturing could pave the way for greater adoption, says the report.

The report highlights significant growth potential in India's automotive market. **Chart 1** shows that the vehicular market has the highest potential for growth in developing countries such as India. On the other hand, countries such as the U.S., Switzerland, and Denmark, which already have a high vehicle penetration rate, have limited room for further growth.

Chart 2 shows that 36% of consumers are considering an EV for their next four-wheeler, while 30% are inclined towards an electric two-wheeler.

When read together, Charts 1 and 2 show that not only is there significant growth potential in India's automotive market as only a small share of the population (3.3%) owns cars, but a substantial portion of this growth is likely to be driven by consumers who are increasingly inclined towards EVs.

The study also estimates a 2.7-fold increase in elite households by 2035. This suggests that the affordability of higher-priced EVs is unlikely to deter a substantial share of households.

However, barriers remain. Over half express concerns about the availability of charging infrastructure, while 45% are dissatisfied with the high acquisition costs of EVs. One in three worry about battery life, and one in five feel the current variety of models is insufficient (**Chart 3**).

To address these challenges, the report suggests several solutions:

improving the availability and discoverability of charging infrastructure, offering innovative financing options, scaling up localised manufacturing, extending warranties, ensuring transparency in battery health, and introducing new models – 60% of which are being developed by major Indian-origin equipment manufacturers and are new to the market.

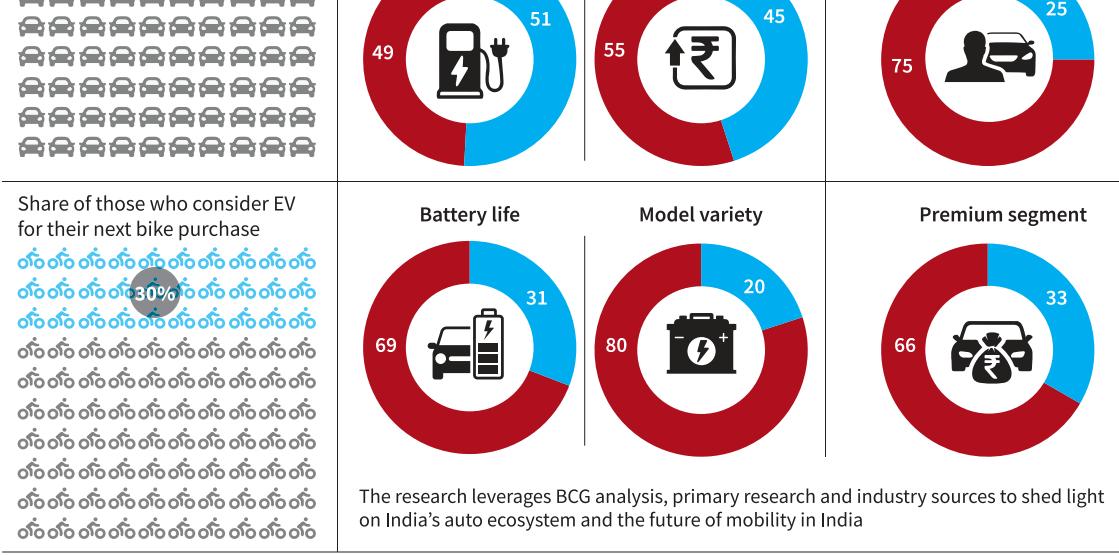
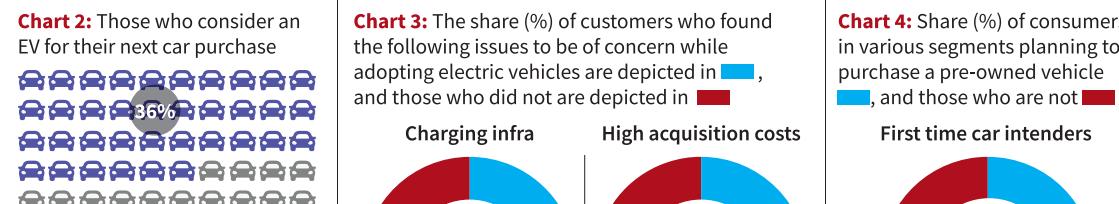
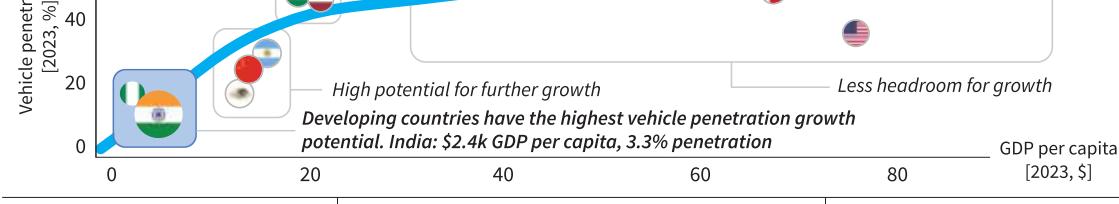
Women influence 52% of EV purchase decisions, while they influence only 38% of non-EV purchase decisions in India. The report says that over 41% of Indian customers with two-wheelers prefer vehicles with in-built navigation systems on the dashboard. It also says that 85% of Indian users are open to considering the car model they rented as their next purchase. Notably, Gen Z is 2.7 times more likely to use self-drive rentals compared to the older generations.

One in four consumers who are buying a car for the first time are planning to purchase a pre-owned vehicle. To convert these intentions into actual sales, factors such as digitisation, transparency, and trust are essential. Additionally, one in three consumers seek pre-owned cars to upgrade their lifestyle. High-income, status-driven commuters are drawn towards luxury second-hand cars for their uniqueness, while those who take frequent road trips prefer pre-owned vehicles for their durability (**Chart 4**).

Sellers are 1.5 times more likely to prefer organised channels when selling their cars. These platforms act as one-stop shops, offering streamlined processes, improved valuations, and hassle-free ownership transfers. However, while purchasing pre-owned vehicles, buyers are less inclined towards organised platforms and prefer local networks of brokers and friends. This hesitation stems from a perceived lack of transparency in organised systems, rigid payment structures, and a lower level of trust compared to familiar in-network sources.

Steering towards a greener future

The data were sourced from 'Think Mobility', a research report published by BCG & Google



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 21, 1975

Tibet badly hit by quake: 36 die in H.P.

Simla, Jan. 20: A heavy toll of lives and extensive damage to property in Tibet have been caused by yesterday's earthquake which killed 36 persons in Himachal Pradesh.

Reports coming in from across the Indo-Tibetan border said there was "tremendous" damage to life and property in Tibet. Eye-witnesses on the Indian side of the border said they saw Tibetan hillocks crumble with a deafening roar in a heap of debris.

Officials in Delhi put the toll in Himachal Pradesh at 36 and said roads had been blocked in the Kinnar area and several buildings laid waste. A massive relief operation was launched to-day and helicopters have been inducted for the task.

An official spokesman in Simla reported extensive damage to property and said district authorities were scanning the affected areas to assess the damage.

According to unofficial sources, several personnel of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police and Army have also been killed in the quake. Several bunkers collapsed.

The affected areas have a widely dispersed population.

According to information received in Delhi by the Himachal Pradesh authorities, 11 persons died in Sainkhari village, 10 in village Leo and three each in villages Chango and Sumdhao. Eight labourers of the office of the Director-General of the Border Roads Organisation and a bus driver were also among the dead.

Among the dead in Leo village were nine boy Lamas and a girl. They were killed when a monastery in Leo village collapsed.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 21, 1925

Railway electrification in South Africa

The connection with the scheme for the electrification of the South African Railways, the contract for the equipment of 83 motor coaches each complete with four 185 B.H.P. electric motors, and the equipment for 133 trailer coaches for the Cape Town to Simon's Town Section of the South African Railways has been placed with the English Electric Company Ltd., London.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Potential temporary gig jobs created by the Maha Kumbh Mela

12 lakh. The Uttar Pradesh government expects to host 400 million devotees. The economic effect of the Maha Kumbh extends across multiple sectors, including infrastructure development, event management, security services, local trade, tourism, entertainment, and horticulture. PTI

The dip in Israel's unemployment rate in December

2.6 In per cent. Israel's unemployment rate slipped in December from 2.7% a month earlier, indicating that military conflict continued to impact the country's labour market. More than 22% of the labour force were absent from work due to being called into military duty. REUTERS

The amount of crystal meth seized in a warehouse in Thailand

1.6 in tonnes. The haul — which authorities said had been sent from Africa via India and was bound for Europe, the U.S. or Australia — was found at a warehouse in Bangkok following a tip-off. Four men were arrested at the scene. Officials declined to say how much the haul was worth. AFP

Chinese investment in Pakistan's Gwadar airport in Balochistan

230 In \$ million. Pakistan's largest airport, funded and built in the country's restive southwest by Beijing, has become operational. Gwadar airport is in the province of Balochistan, which has for decades been the scene of an insurgency by separatists demanding autonomy. AP

Number of Ford vehicles under probe over hands-free tech

1.3 in lakh. The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said on Monday it has opened a probe into Ford Motor vehicles over reports of collisions involving the company's hands-free driving technology, BlueCruise. REUTERS

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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UGC regulations or State university laws?

The crux of the dispute is whether UGC regulations framed by the UGC's Chairman, Vice-Chairman and 10 other members can supersede provisions of State University Acts which are plenary laws passed by State legislatures and assented to by the Governor or President

LETTER & SPIRIT

K. Ashok Vardhan Shetty

Six of Tamil Nadu's State universities are at present without a Vice Chancellor (VC). Some of these posts have been vacant from a few months to over a year. This impasse is due to a disagreement between the Governor and the State government regarding the composition of the search committee for selecting VCs.

The Governor (as ex-officio Chancellor of State universities under the University Acts) insists on including a nominee of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in the search committee as per Regulation 7.3 of the UGC Regulations, 2018. Conversely, the State government insists on adhering to the respective State University Acts, which generally require the search committee to consist of one nominee each from the Chancellor, the syndicate, and the senate. It opposes UGC involvement due to concerns over erosion of State autonomy in university governance.

Conflicting Supreme Court rulings have complicated the situation. One set of judgments support the Governor's stance that UGC regulations are mandatory and can override the State University Acts in cases of conflict. Another set of judgments back the State government, holding that UGC regulations are merely recommendatory for State universities. The controversy has been exacerbated by the UGC's Draft Regulations, 2025 which are seen to erode State autonomy further.

There is a somewhat similar stand-off in Kerala and Punjab where numerous universities also face leadership vacuums. This has led to serious deterioration in university administration, including delays in staff appointments and award of degrees.

A constitutional question

UGC regulations are a subordinate legislation framed under Section 26 of the UGC Act, 1956. The crux of the dispute is whether UGC regulations framed by the UGC's Chairman, Vice-Chairman and 10 other members can supersede provisions of State University Acts which are plenary laws passed by State legislatures and assented to by the Governor or President. This is part of a larger question of law dealing with Centre-State relations — "can delegated legislation (rules, regulations, notifications, etc.) framed by the Union Government and its agencies under a Central law override the provisions of a plenary State law?"

It underlines a critical constitutional issue regarding the scope of delegated legislation with potential for eroding the separation of powers, and federalism — both considered 'basic features' of the Constitution.

Judicial precedents

Article 254(1) of the Constitution addresses conflicts between central and State laws. It states that if a State law is repugnant to a central law on matters in the Concurrent List, the central law will prevail, and the conflicting part of the State law will be void. The plain wording of Article 254(1) indicates that it applies only to plenary laws enacted by Parliament and State legislatures, and not to delegated legislation. The Supreme Court has consistently upheld this interpretation in several landmark judgments.

The leading case on the subject is *Ch. Tika Ramji versus State of Uttar Pradesh* (1956). The Supreme Court ruled that the Centre's Sugarcane Control Order, 1955



GETTY IMAGES

issued under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, could not repeal the provisions of the U.P. Sugarcane Act, 1953. It held: "The power of repeal, if any, was vested in Parliament, and Parliament alone could exercise it by enacting an appropriate provision in regard thereto. Parliament could not delegate this power of repeal to any executive authority. Such delegation, if made, would be void..."

In *Indian Express newspapers (Bombay) versus Union of India* (1984), the Supreme Court ruled: "Subordinate legislation may be questioned on any of the grounds on which plenary legislation is questioned. In addition, it may also be questioned on the ground that it does not conform to the statute under which it is made. It may further be questioned on the ground that it is contrary to some other statute. That is because subordinate legislation must yield to plenary legislation." In *J.K. Industries versus Union of India* (2007), the Supreme Court again ruled: "(Subordinate legislation) may further be questioned on the ground that it is inconsistent with the provisions of the Act or that it is contrary to some other statute applicable on the same subject matter. Therefore, it has to yield to plenary legislation." These rulings make it clear that the Central Government and its agencies cannot use subordinate legislation to override plenary State laws; any changes require a plenary central law passed by Parliament.

An overreach by the UGC

There is no repugnancy between the provisions of the UGC Act, 1956 and Tamil Nadu's University Acts because no provision of the UGC Act addresses the appointment of VCs. According to the UGC, its power to form Regulation 7.3 relating to VCs is derived from Section 26(1)(e), which allows the UGC to define qualifications for university teaching staff, and Section 26(1)(g), which permits regulation of standards and coordination of work or facilities in universities, of the UGC Act, 1956. But the VC is not a 'teaching staff' within the meaning of S.26(1)(e). In all University Acts — Central and State — the VC is an 'officer of the university' along with the Chancellor, Registrar, Controller of Examinations, Finance Officer and Directors. So, the above two provisions do not apply to VCs. Moreover, the UGC's powers under

Section 12(d) of the Act are only recommendatory. While the UGC can advise on standards in higher education, it cannot enforce compliance, except by withholding grants under Section 14. The Supreme Court has affirmed this interpretation in *University of Delhi versus Raj Singh* (1994), ruling that UGC regulations are advisory, not mandatory. Universities can choose whether or not to follow them, albeit at the risk of losing funding. Thus, UGC's regulation 7.3 on VCs is a classic case of executive overreach in delegated legislation and is ultra vires the UGC Act, 1956.

Additionally, the UGC's shifting stance — no regulation on VCs till 2010; introducing a UGC nominee on the search committee in 2010; withdrawing this requirement in 2013; reinstating it in 2018; and expanded control in the 2025 draft regulations — reflects an agenda driven more by administrative control than a genuine effort to improve academic standards.

Inconsistencies in judgments

Recently, some conflicting Supreme Court judgments have created confusion.

In *Annamalai University versus Secretary, Information & Tourism* (2009), *State of West Bengal versus Anindya Sundar Das* (2022), *Gambhiran K. Gadhwani versus State of Gujarat* (2022) and *Professor Sreejith P.S. versus Dr. Rajasree M.S.* (2022), the Supreme Court held, without articulating reasons, that once UGC regulations are laid before both Houses of Parliament, they become part of the UGC Act, invoking Article 254(1) and rendering any VC appointments contrary to these regulations void.

However, in *Kalyani Mathivanan versus K.V.Jeyaraj* (2015), the Supreme Court used the same rationale but confusingly ruled that UGC Regulations are not mandatory for State Universities unless adopted by the State. In *P.J. Dharmaraj versus Church of South India* (December 2024), the Supreme Court held: "If the State Government itself has not adopted the amended regulations, the same cannot be applicable to the (institute)." In other words, UGC regulations apply only if adopted by the State.

The interpretation that UGC regulations lose their subordinate character and automatically become part of the parent Act merely by being laid

before Parliament is not supported by the Constitution or the General Clauses Act, 1897. It contravenes a significant precedent ruled in *Chief Inspector of Mines versus Karam Chand Thapar* (1961) where the Supreme Court held: "(Rules) continue to be rules subordinate to the Act, and though for certain purposes, including the purpose of construction, they are to be treated as if contained in the Act, their true nature as subordinate rule is not lost." In other words, they retain their character as subordinate legislation and do not become integral to the parent Act.

There are three recognised procedures for laying subordinate legislation before a legislature— (i) without further procedure; here the the subordinate legislation takes effect immediately and is for information only; (ii) negative resolution procedure; here legislation takes effect immediately but can be annulled or modified by the legislature within a limited period (as in the case of UGC regulations under Section 28(1)); (iii) affirmative resolution procedure; here resolution takes effect only after receiving prior approval from the legislature.

Courts should recognise only rules and regulations laid under the affirmative resolution procedure as part of the parent Act, because the other two procedures have nil or limited legislative oversight and allow executive overreach.

What next?

Given the constitutional significance of the dispute and doctrinal ambiguities, a definitive ruling by a Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court is imperative. Such a ruling would hopefully reaffirm that Article 254(1) of the Constitution applies only to conflicts between plenary Central and State laws; clarify that delegated legislation does not automatically become part of the parent Act unless laid under the affirmative resolution procedure; and emphasise the advisory nature of UGC regulations for State universities unless adopted by the State.

Such clarity is essential not only to restore the normal functioning of State universities across the country, but also to preserve the delicate balance of legislative powers between the Centre and States.

K. Ashok Vardhan Shetty is a retired IAS officer and former Vice Chancellor of Indian Maritime University.

THE GIST

▼ Conflicting Supreme Court rulings have complicated the situation. One set of judgments support the Governor's stance that UGC regulations are mandatory and can override the State University Acts in cases of conflict. Another set of judgments back the State government.

▼ There is a somewhat similar stand-off in Kerala and Punjab where numerous universities also face leadership vacuums.

Given the constitutional significance of the dispute and doctrinal ambiguities, a definitive ruling by a Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court is imperative.

ABSTRACT

How does welfare politics translate into votes?

When welfare is the new normal, credit monopolisation through branding and centralisation may not necessarily fetch electoral rewards if people struggle to access welfare services

G. Sampath

Kailash, KK (2024), 'The Politics of Welfare: The BJP and the Discerning Voter,' *Studies in Indian Politics*, 12 (2) 228-250, 2024, Lokniti, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.

Right from the time of its independence, India has had to contend with extreme inequality and a large population of poor people. While there have been improvements since 1947, the twin challenges of high inequality and widespread indigence remain. This has made social welfare an integral element of electoral politics.

But what is the exact dynamic that determines how welfare initiatives translate into votes, if and when they do? This paper by political scientist K.K. Kailash attempts to answer these questions using voting studies data from the National Election Studies post-poll survey in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Kailash's key contention is that voters do not "cast their votes only on whether they received private (welfare) benefits but also consider factors such as their experience and well-being while accessing those goods and services." One cannot assume that those who received the benefits will necessarily vote for their benefactor party. What the paper describes as "individual-level processes" – such as how easy or tough it was to access these benefits, and the overall economic well-being of the voter – are also factors that influence voter choices.

Background of welfare politics
The paper starts off with an overview of the scholarship on welfare politics in India, grouping them into two broad streams. One set of studies have focussed on the programmatic elements: the design, implementation, delivery, outcomes, etc. The other set has looked at the influence of welfare policies on two related elements: credit attribution and voting behaviour. While the two sets of studies have bridged the gap between politics and public policy, "they do not necessarily talk to each other." This paper brings together the two strands to examine if the experience of accessing welfare matters for vote choices, and in the process, nuances long-standing debates on social service delivery and its relation to vote choice.

Before coming to the electoral impact of what has come to be described, sometimes derisively, as 'reidi politics', it might be useful to consider how welfare politics has evolved in India.

Initially, the imperative to address socio-economic inequality drove the conception of welfare programmes as part of planned economic growth. The state performance had to play a significant role because "social forces were status quoist and would not let change happen." This paradigm changed when India switched to a market-led growth strategy. Welfarism, from being a good in itself, began to be seen as "an antidote to the limitations of the market". Welfare provisioning became an "appendage to the process of economic reforms" – a tool to ensure that reforms remained sustainable in the face of the rising



Daily grind: MGNREGA workers register their work attendance in Kancheepuram in 2024. FILE PHOTO

inequalities and insecurities it created.

But with the advent of a dogmatic adherence to fiscal discipline and concomitant budgetary constraints, States struggled to increase investments in welfare understood in its traditional sense of public goods. For instance, investments in public healthcare and education began to stagnate. Apart from resource constraints, there was another reason why welfare policies conceived as capacity-building investments took a backseat – the outcomes "do not conveniently materialise with the rhythm of the electoral calendar" and made credit-claiming difficult."

Around this time, welfare witnessed another paradigm shift – to a more 'responsive' strategy, where "provisioning had to meet internationally accepted, supposedly more efficient and equitable norms and delivery mechanisms." In other words, "all government spending had to cope with the demands for market-compatible forms of state intervention". This paved the way for an extreme reliance on technology, cash subsidies, and direct income transfers – all aimed at making the outputs more tangible. Welfare delivery was reduced to "putting money in people's hands", ostensibly to bestow on them the freedom to choose what they want to do with it. Kailash argues that this reorganisation of public welfare as per market principles did two things – one, it recast citizens as 'consumers', and two, it turned welfare provisioning into an opportunity for political parties seeking to mobilise voter support.

Not only did this end up degrading welfare as a policy intervention, it also had a negative impact on long-term economic thinking and strategic provisioning of resources for capacity-building. Schemes that offered cash transfers, housing, and gas connections were 'tangible' and could be easily connected to a singular benefactor, enabling the "brand identification of parties". Thus, welfare, having started out

as a policy instrument to reduce inequality, provide a safety net and build national capacity for equitable growth, has dwindled into a handy tool to offset the limitations of the market, and today serves as a "key component of the electoral arithmetic of political parties."

Centralisation, monopolising credit
Though most sectors in which schemes are implemented are in State or Concurrent lists, the paper notes that the incumbent BJP "has gone big" on centrally sponsored schemes. This "centralising thrust", accompanied by "monopolising credit through branding", as evident from the nomenclature of various centrally funded schemes, are the other key features of the current welfare regime.

To ascertain whether welfare provisioning helps bring credit and votes to the incumbent, Kailash divides voters into beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, and further divides the former into those who benefited from one or two schemes, and those who benefited from three or more schemes. Were voters who benefited from more schemes more likely to vote for the incumbent (in the context of this study, the BJP)? Data from 2024 and preceding elections suggest, in general, they do, while non-beneficiaries and those who benefited from fewer schemes preferred the Opposition. A closer examination of the data, however, shows a more complex picture.

Votes don't always follow credit
In 2024, there was a 30-point increase in the number of people crediting the Centre compared to 2019 for the five major schemes they were asked about: the public distribution system (PDS), Ujjwala (free gas connection with cylinder), MGNREGA, Ayushman Bharat, and the housing scheme. "Given the branding and the constant reminder through advertisements in multiple spaces that these programmes were personal 'guarantees' of the prime

minister, this attribution is not surprising," notes the paper. But did the credit get translated into votes? Not necessarily.

First of all, when welfare becomes the new normal, with every party competing to promise similar schemes, voters' expectations – especially about the nature of service delivery and quality of services – go up. As a result, voters tend to be more discerning about their expectations from the government. So the incumbent must "not only have a reasonable basket of programmes but also ensure their quality" and easy access for citizens. Without quality and access, claim-making could prove counter-productive. As Kailash argues, "Credit monopolisation and centralisation may not bring imagined electoral rewards if people struggle to access welfare services."

Kailash also tests the hypothesis that a 'double engine' government – the same party in power in the State and Centre – with greater welfare offerings would enable the incumbent to monopolise credit and create more partisan voters. He creates two categories of States: those ruled by the incumbent (the BJP or its allies) and those under the Opposition. The survey reveals that while the central government did get credit for welfare programmes across the country, irrespective of the party government at the State level, the incumbent at the Centre "did not get the votes even in the states ruled by the incumbent".

However, in States ruled by the Opposition, "when the voter gave credit to the state government for welfare schemes, the vote also followed." And in States with 'double-engine' governments, "the votes were split between the Opposition and the incumbent when the voter credited the state government." Where voters credited the local government, chances of voting for the opposition were higher. "The voter acknowledges but is not necessarily beholden to the scheme provider."

So why does the incumbent at the Centre, which designs and partly funds the welfare schemes, and even gets credit for them, not get the vote also? Well, "it is not the Centre that implements these programmes; the state and local governments do." When there are last-mile delivery issues, unfair exclusions and access problems, citizens "are more likely to hold those claiming credit responsible for their woes." As the paper notes, "the discerning voter is more concerned about the nature of the service rather than who provides it."

The voter's personal financial condition was another critical factor. When individuals were satisfied with their financial condition, easy access to welfare translated into votes for the incumbent (15-point advantage over the Opposition). But when the individual was unhappy with their financial condition, it did not matter if the access was easy or difficult – the Opposition benefited. Those who were unhappy with their financial condition, and found it tough to access welfare, were most likely to vote for the Opposition.

In conclusion, it would be fair to say there are limits to credit-claiming and welfare branding. As the paper concludes, "welfare beneficiaries are no longer passive recipients but have become discerning consumers." If welfare provisioning is now an integral element of voter mobilisation, then governments will have to focus more on improving access as well as other dimensions of the economy that impact personal economic well-being.

A more discerning voter thus creates space for the Opposition by seeking accountability from the credit-claiming incumbent.

**FROM THE ARCHIVES**

Know your English

K. Subramanian
S. Upendran

"So you feel my writing should be clear."

"Yes."

"Even when I want to write on a profound subject?"

"Yes. Whatever be the nature of the subject, if you have clear ideas, what you write will be clear. Lack of clarity in speech and writing is the result of lack of clear thinking."

"Some mistake obscurity for profundity. Some teachers use big words in order that the students may be impressed by their vocabulary. The obvious is sought to be conveyed in a pompous, difficult language. A good teacher, a good writer, is one who conveys in simple language even the most difficult concepts. A critic said that it is an act of courtesy to the reader to put him to the trouble of puzzling out your meaning. So be courteous to the reader. And courtesy demands that the writer make himself clear to the reader."

"That's right. J. B. Priestley was a novelist and a playwright. About the style of his writing, he said in an essay:

"Deliberately I aim at simplicity and not complexity in my writing. No matter what the subject in hand might be. I want to write something that at a pinch I could read aloud in a bar-parlour. (And the time came when I was heard and understood in a thousand bar-parlours). I do not pretend to be subtle and profound, but when I am at work I try to appear simpler than I really am. Perhaps I make it too easy for the reader, do too much of the toiling and sweating myself. No doubt I am altogether too obvious for the cleverest fellows, who want to beat their brains against something hard and knotty. But then I am not impressed by this view of literature as a cerebral activity. They are no customers of mine, and I do not display my goods to catch their eye. But any man who thinks the kind of simplicity I attempt is easy should try it for himself, if only in his next letter to *The Times*. I find it much easier now than I used to do, but that is because I have kept this aim in view throughout years of hard work. I do not claim to have achieved even now a prose that is like an easy persuasive voice, preferably my own at its best; but this is what I have been trying to do for years, quite deliberately, and it is this that puzzled my friend, the youngish critic, who cannot help wanting something quite different. And this habit of simplification has its own little triumphs. Thus, I was asked to pay a birthday tribute, on the air, to C. G. Jung, for whose work and personality I have a massive admiration. To explain Jung in thirteen-and-a-half minutes so that the ordinary listener could understand what the fuss was about! My friends said it could not be done. But I can reasonably claim, backed by first-class evidence, that I did it. It was a tough little task but when I had come to the end of it, I found, like honey in the rock, a taste of delight."

"It is all right to say that one's writing should be simple. How do you do it?"

"This column will deal with some practical hints on how to write in a simple, clear style."

Published in *The Hindu* on October 11, 1994.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Grammy award winning band, Coldplay, is currently touring India with shows lined up in Mumbai and Ahmedabad. A quiz on the iconic musical act

Vignesh P. Venkitesh

QUESTION 1

What was the band originally called?

QUESTION 2

Name the band's first full-length album.

QUESTION 3

Which tech mogul's memorial service in 2011 had a performance by Coldplay?

QUESTION 4

What day do fans observe annually, to mark the day one of the band's first songs leaked online?

QUESTION 5

Name the band's song which was inspired from the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attack in the U.S.?

QUESTION 6

Name the band member who made a cameo appearance in the T.V. series *Game of Thrones*.



Visual question:
Name this Coldplay song which was shot in India.

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. This was David Lynch's first experimental short film. **Ans: Six Men Getting Sick**

2. The creator of this very popular space opera wanted Lynch to direct this movie of his franchise. **Ans: Star Wars and Return of the Jedi**

3. Lynch appeared in this film directed by Steven Spielberg as this character. **Ans: The Fabelmans and John Ford**

4. Number of times Lynch has been nominated for an Oscar and the film which earned him his first Oscar nomination. **Ans: Four times and The Elephant Man**

5. Name the writer who co-created a mystery-horror drama television series along with Lynch. **Ans: Mark Frost**

Visual: Identify this actor who is a long-time collaborator of Lynch. **Ans: Jack Palance**

Early Birds: Viswanadha Rao Batchu | Rajmohan Velayudhan | Kumar Sonal | Umesh Kumar Yadav | Tito Shiladitya

Word of the day**Derisive:**

abusing verbally; expressing contempt or ridicule

Synonyms:

jeering, mocking, taunting

Usage:

His speech drew derisive comments from the crowd.

Pronunciation:

newsth.live/derisivepro

International Phonetic Alphabet:

/d̪rɪsɪv/

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

From Page One**Lifelong imprisonment for R.G. Kar case convict**

The court noted that all the sentences will run concurrently. The court also held that the convict has the right to prefer appeal against this judgement and that he has the right to avail legal aid for filing of the said appeal.

The court said the victim's parents would get a compensation of ₹10 lakh for the death of the victim, and ₹7 lakh for rape as per regulations of the National Legal Services Authority. However, the parents told the court that they did not want any compensation. "We only want justice for our daughter. Nothing else," the victim's father said in the court.

The court also criticised the role of the hospital authorities, and said that there were no doubts that "efforts were made to show the death as a suicidal one so that the hospital authority would not face any consequences".

Observing that the pain and suffering of the parents cannot be compensated with any amount of cash, the judge wrote in the order, "At the same time I think that as the death of the victim was caused while she was on duty, the State has also the liability to pay compensation which will be in addition to the compensation ordered under Section 395 BNSS [Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita]."

Before pronouncing the sentence, the court asked if the convict would like to make a statement. "I have not done anything. I am being falsely implicated," the convict said. In the order, the court noted that the "accused got the scope to explain the circumstances but he failed to offer any alternative explanation denying his presence at the scene of crime."

Bengal govt. to file appeal

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the government will move the Calcutta High Court demanding capital punishment. "I strongly feel that it is a heinous crime that warrants capital punishment. We will plead for it at the High Court now," Ms. Banerjee said in a social media post.

Ms. Banerjee said that she also wanted capital punishment in the case and was not satisfied with the outcome of the case. "Had there been capital punishment, it would have brought some consolation," she said, adding that if the West Bengal Police were allowed to investigate the case, they would have ensured death penalty. The parents of the victim said they believed that it was the "rarest of rare" case.

Trump vows to stop all censorship

"From this day forward, our country will flourish and be respected again all over the world. We will be the envy of every nation, and we will not allow ourselves to be taken advantage of any longer," Mr. Trump said.

The Republican leader vowed to put America "first" and that the country would "flourish and be respected" under his leadership as a "peacemaker and a unifier".

The American dream will soon be back and thriving like never before, he said.

"I will also end the government policy of trying to socially engineer race and gender into every aspect of public and private life," Mr. Trump said in his inauguration speech, calling the new moves a "revolution of common sense."

At the Capitol, Vice-President J.D. Vance was sworn in first, taking the oath read by Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh on a Bible given to him by his great-grandmother. Mr. Trump followed moments after noon, using both a family Bible and the one used by President Abraham Lincoln at his 1861 inauguration as Chief Justice John Roberts administered his oath.

A cadre of billionaires and tech titans – including Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, Tim Cook and Sundar Pichai – were given prominent positions in the Capitol Rotunda, mingling with Trump's incoming team before the ceremony began. Also, there was Elon Musk, the world's richest man, who is expected to lead an effort to slash spending and federal employees.

(With inputs from AFP and AP)

Stalin urges CMs to oppose draft UGC rules

In his letter to the Chief Ministers, Mr. Stalin referred to the resolution adopted in the Tamil Nadu Assembly against the draft UGC regulations and said, "I strongly believe that it is essential for all States to take a similar stand. I request you to consider passing a resolution in your august Assembly on the same lines as ours."

"It is crucial that we stand united against these attempts to centralise power and undermine the federal structure of our country."

In his letter to Mr. Pradhan, Mr. Stalin listed out certain provisions in the 2024 regulations – the "Conduct of Entrance Examinations for UG & PG Admissions, Eligibility for M.Tech./M.E. Programs with a 4-Year (Arts/Science) Degree, Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit (MEME) System" – and expressed his reservations.

In the draft UGC regulations, 2025, Mr. Stalin objected to provisions, including those over the appointment of "Non-Academicians as Vice-Chancellors, Exclusion of State Government from the Vice-Chancellor Search Committee, and Cross-Disciplinary Teachers".

Parents of R.G. Kar victim unhappy with court verdict

The family called the investigation 'a failure of CBI'; West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee and Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari both say convict should have been awarded capital punishment

**Moyurie Som
Shrabana Chatterjee**
KOLKATA

Expressing their displeasure over the judgment by the Sealdah Sessions Court, which sentenced convict Sanjay Roy to life imprisonment, the parents of the doctor who was raped and murdered at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata said on Monday that they believed that it was the "rarest of the rare" case.

Earlier, the Additional District and Sessions Judge, Anirban Das, had said that the case could not be classified as "rarest of rare" to award a death sentence to the convict.

"I do not agree with the judge saying it's not the rarest of the rare case. I think it is, because my daughter was on duty in a government-run hospital. CBI could not prove it's a rare enough case, it's a failure of the CBI. No one can compensate for my loss," the mother of the victim told mediapersons.

The lawyers representing the family alleged of certain lapses by the CBI.



Case diary: Sanjay Roy being brought to a court in Sealdah on Monday. DEBASISH BHADURI

ishment for Roy, who was convicted of the offence on Saturday.

The lawyers representing the family alleged of certain lapses by the CBI.

Death penalty

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that had the West Bengal police investigated the case the State government would have secured death penalty in the case.

"This was a serious case. Had it been under our purview, we would have ensured death penal-

tised with this verdict," she added.

The Leader of the Opposition, Suvendu Adhikari, said that neither the family nor the society was happy with the verdict for the case.

Mr. Adhikari said that it was the discretion of the judge to either award capital punishment or life imprisonment and he has given life imprisonment.

'No lapses': LOP

The BJP leader, however, refuted allegations of lapses in the CBI probe.

Members of the civil society, including doctors, also expressed dissatisfaction with the sentence.

West Bengal Governor C. V. Ananda Bose also issued a statement saying punishment in such cases is important, but it alone cannot address the broader societal issues contributing to increasing incidents of violence against women. "Punishment, no matter how severe, does not end the problems. The rising incidents of rapes, assaults, and murders are alarming and reflect a deeper societal malaise," Governor Bose stated.

Ban on use of spring water in J&K village facing mystery deaths

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR



People dig a grave for the burial of Yasmeen Kouser, the latest victim in Badhal village.

orders. The Tehsildar and the SHO shall ensure that no community feasts shall take place in the village in any form," the order read.

Since December 7 last year, four waves of deaths have struck Badhal village and left 17, including 12 children, dead and at least 28 affected. Doctors claim that neurotoxins were causing these deaths but failed to detect any source for it so far. In spite of extensive testing, no definitive cause has been established.

Meanwhile, a high-level inter-ministerial team visited Badhal village on Monday. The Ministry of Home Affairs constituted the team to ascertain the cause of death. The J&K government has also set up a special investigation team.

We must rise above instinct of 'a life for a life' for a life': judge

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Sparing the noose for the convict in the R.G. Kar rape and murder case, the Additional District and Sessions judge Anirban Das noted in his order on Monday that society must rise above the primitive instinct of "a life for a life".

"In the realm of modern justice, we must rise above the primitive instinct of 'an eye for an eye' or 'a tooth for a tooth' or 'nail for a nail' or 'a life for a life'. Our duty is not to match brutality with brutality, but to elevate humanity through wisdom, compassion and a deeper understanding of justice," the judge said, adding that the "measure of a civilised society lies not in its ability to exact revenge but in its capacity to reform, rehabilitate, and ultimately to heal".

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said the investigation was complete. The court gave the Central agency three weeks, and no more, to file

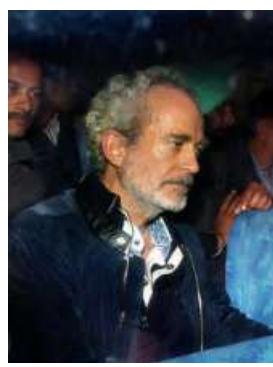
Helicopter scam: SC to examine Michel's bail plea on Feb. 18

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to examine a plea for regular bail filed by Christian Michel James, the alleged middleman in the AgustaWestland helicopter scam, on February 18.

Appearing before a Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath, advocates Aljo Joseph, Sriram Parakkat and M.S. Vishnu Shankar said their client has been in custody as an undertrial without bail for almost the period he would have served had he been found guilty under the law and sentenced to imprisonment.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said the investigation was complete. The court gave the Central agency three weeks, and no more, to file



Christian Michel James

its counter affidavit.

In 2023, the top court had noted that besides several offences, including cheating, dishonesty inducing delivery of property, criminal conspiracy, and corruption, Mr. Michel was also alleged to have committed the offence of forging valuable security.

Mr. Michel was arrested and extradited on December 4, 2018. The FIR itself dates back to 2013.

Chennai airport row: Vijay mounts attack on DMK, calls it 'anti-farmer', 'master of drama'

N. Sai Charan
CHENNAI

Tamil actor and Tamila Vettu Kazhagam (TVK) president Vijay on Monday accused the ruling DMK of being "a master at staging drama" and taking contradictory stances on farmers' issues.

Nearly a year after taking the political plunge, Mr. Vijay met villagers protesting against Chennai's second airport proposed at Parandur in the neighbouring Kanchipuram district. At a meeting organised on an open ground on the premises of a private wedding resort at Podavur, he addressed the residents of 13 villages, including Parandur, Ekanapuram, Nelvay, Valathur, Madapuram, and Akkammapuram, who have been protesting for more than 900 days



TVK chief Vijay in Podavur on Monday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

against the acquisition of farmland for the proposed airport, nearly 70 km from Chennai.

He said that when the DMK was in the Opposition, it supported the causes of farmers and objected to projects such as the Chennai-Salem eight-lane highway and Kattupalli port. The party should have supported farmers when it returned to power,

but it was supporting "anti-farmer projects", he alleged.

Mr. Vijay said he was not against development projects, but was particular that they should not cause environmental degradation.

Chennai floods

He opposed destroying thousands of acres of farmland and 13 waterbodies for the airport project. "The effect of global warming has forced Chennai city to battle floods during every monsoon. A recent scientific study pointed out that the reason for floods in Chennai was the destruction of wetlands and waterbodies in the surrounding areas," he said.

The actor promised the people that he would always stand by them in the airport issue.

Ensure Malik is given videoconferencing facilities, SC tells HCs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



to verify and take immediate steps to install a proper system in the Jammu court. The Bench also asked a Registrar of the Delhi High Court to visit the Tihar Jail and inspect the VC facility there and see if it was "good enough" for Malik to cross-examine witnesses present in the Jammu court without interruption.

Lakhimpur Kheri case: SC asks police to probe allegations of Mishra influencing witnesses

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Lakhimpur Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh to conduct an inquiry to verify allegations that Ashish Mishra, son of former Union Minister Ajay Mishra and accused in the Lakhimpur Kheri killings case, was threatening witnesses.

The younger Mr. Mishra is accused of murder after a sports utility vehicle, allegedly belonging to his convoy, mowed down farmers protesting controversial agricultural laws at a rally in Lakhimpur Kheri district on October 3, 2021.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for



Ashish Mishra and other accused in the case being produced in a court in 2021.

the families of some of the victims, initially urged a Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant to assign the inquiry to a police officer ranked higher than the SP.

"Now he is not in power..." Justice Kant addressed Mr. Bhushan, referring to the accused's father.

Mr. Bhushan urged the

Soldier killed in encounter with militants in Sopore

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

An Army soldier was killed in a gunfight with militants at Sopore in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Monday.

Swar Pangala Kartheek was injured in the encounter and died at a hospital. The encounter that broke out in the Gujjarpati area on Sunday was continuing till reports last came.

"The Chinar Warriors salute his immense valour and sacrifice, express deepest condolences, and stand in solidarity with the bereaved family," the Chinar Corps posted on X.

Preliminary reports suggested two or three militants could be trapped at the encounter site.

Take a call on Rajoana mercy plea by March 18, SC tells Centre

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

A Special Bench of the Supreme Court on Monday listed death row convict Balwant Singh Rajoana's mercy plea in the Beant Singh assassination case for March 18, urging the Union government to take a call; else, the court will go ahead and decide the petition on merits.

Appearing for a Special Bench headed by Justice B.R. Gavai, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, for Rajoana, asked the court for some interim relief.

Rajoana has been in prison for 29 years and on death row since 2007. For 12 years, he was confined in solitary imprisonment.

Prolonged delay
Mr. Rohatgi said prolonged delay in deciding on the plea, leading to a debilitating uncertainty about his death penalty was cruelty and by itself a ground for commutation of his punishment to life sentence. "He has to be brought back into society," he said.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said the government has to take a considered decision on the mercy plea.

In November, Mr. Mehta had said the mercy plea file was with the Union Home Ministry, and not before the President. He had highlighted the fact that the convict had been found guilty of the murder of a former Punjab Chief Minister. The issue was highly sensitive.

In an earlier hearing, the Centre had said there were charges of involvement of Khalistani elements in the assassination.

Uttarakhand to roll out UCC by end of January

State Cabinet, in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister, approves rules for the legislation; passed by the Uttarakhand Assembly in February 2024, Uniform Civil Code has kept tribes out of its ambit

Ishita Mishra

NEW DELHI

The Uttarakhand Cabinet on Monday approved the rules for the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) at its meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami.

Paving the way for the implementation of the code, he said the government would issue a Gazette notification for the legislation by January-end.

The UCC, passed by the Assembly in February 2024, has kept tribal people out of its ambit and provisioned a complete ban on practices such as *halala*, *iddat*, and *talak* (customs related to marriage and divorce in Muslim Personal Law). It ensures that women are given equal rights in matters related to property and inheritance rights.

The code makes it mandatory to register marriage and divorce, failing which



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami being greeted by BJP leaders after the Assembly passed the UCC Bill. FILE PHOTO

the couple concerned will be deprived of the benefits of all government facilities. It has stringent provisions for failure to register live-in relationships. The children born out of a live-in relationship will be considered a legitimate child of the couple.

Poll promise
In the Assembly polls of 2022, we had promised to the people of Uttarakhand

that we will bring a law same for all as we form the government. We brought Uniform Civil Code under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi...we approved the UCC manual in Cabinet meeting and we will issue the notification this month only," Mr. Dhami said at a rally in Muzzorrie.

For the implementation of UCC, the State government has set up an online

portal for registration of marriage, divorce, rights of inheritance, live-in relationship, and termination of live-in relationship. This will help every citizen to register and access his data and application status on the mobile phone or at home, a government communique said.

Simple registration

To make the registration facility simple and easy for the citizens, the Common Service Centres have been authorised by the State to take up the registration.

"In hilly/remote areas where Internet facilities are not available, the agents of CSC will go door-to-door and provide the above facilities to the citizens," a government official said. To make the registration simple and smooth, the option of registration through Aadhaar has also been given and tracking can be done through e-mail and SMS.

Birla urges parties to devise internal code for members

The Hindu Bureau

PATNA/DELHI

ficers Conference in Patna.

Legislatures, Mr. Birla said, were a platform for debates and the legislators were expected to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the people. People's representatives should follow constitutional propriety and must respect parliamentary traditions while expressing their viewpoint, he added.

"It is our collective responsibility to strengthen the Parliament and other



Om Birla
institutions; then only people will get maximum benefit. The House should be

saved from the repeated adjournments and there should be meaningful discussion. All members should maintain the dignity of the House," he said.

Role of House panels

Mr. Birla said the role of parliamentary standing committees should be increased as they worked like a mini-Parliament and had huge responsibility.

The Speaker added that empowering the commit-

Panel on Waqf begins last round of talks, report may be tabled in Budget Session

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI

Parliament's Joint Committee on Waqf (amendment) Bill, 2024 has entered the last round of deliberations, and the members have been given 48 hours to submit their amendments to the legislation. The panel will spend two days going through the 44 clauses of the Bill.



Final stages: Jagdambika Pal, Chairman of the JPC on the Waqf Amendment Bill, after a meeting in Patna on Saturday. PTI

sparency in the functioning of the Waqf Board and not an attempt to interfere with the running of mosques. The Telugu Desam Party had expressed reservations and strongly argued that the Bill should be sent to a joint committee for further scrutiny.

Only 48 hours

The panel will meet on January 24 and 25 for clause-by-clause discussion.

The members have been asked to submit their amendments by January 22. These amendments will be then circulated

among the panel members, giving them just 48 hours to study the proposed amendments to raise their objections.

The panel is in Kolkata to meet the West Bengal Waqf Board and will be in Lucknow on Tuesday for further deliberations. There was a demand from the members that it should visit Jammu and Kashmir

which has the largest minority population in the country. But with a tight schedule ahead, the tour is unlikely to be scheduled. (With inputs from Devesh K. Pandey)

Poll body to hold global conference

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Election Commission will hold a two-day international conference to reflect on key areas of contemporary election management.

It will be held in New Delhi on January 23-24 and will be attended by members from 13 countries.

'Republic Day parade will feature more cultural elements'



Gearing up: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during his visit to the NCC Republic Day parade camp in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

Court defers mayoral polls in Chandigarh until Jan. 29

Press Trust of India

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Monday set aside the Chandigarh administration's notification for holding the mayoral polls of Chandigarh Municipal Corporation on January 24.

The Bench of Justices Rakesh Thakur and Vikas Suri directed the UT administration to issue a fresh notification for holding the mayoral polls after January 29.

The Chandigarh administration had on January 7 issued a notification for holding the polls to the posts of Mayor, Senior Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor on January 24.

The directions came on a petition filed by Aam Aadmi Party councillor and sitting Chandigarh Mayor Kuldeep Kumar Dhalor, who had sought that the mayoral polls be held in February so that he may complete his one-year term, besides demanding steps for transparency in the poll process.

Mr. Dhalor was declared the Mayor of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation by the Supreme Court on February 20 last year after overturning the result of the mayoral polls in which the BJP candidate had emerged the winner. Then the presiding officer Anil Masih was accused of tampering with ballot papers in the 2024 mayoral polls.

Seventy-five years of the Constitution would be the focus of this year's parade. Overall, there would be 31 tableau from 16 States and Union Territories, and 15 Ministries and services. The newly developed quasi-ballistic missile, Pralay, will be showcased during the 90-minute parade, which will commence at 10.30 a.m.

In the petition, the petitioner also sought that voting in the mayoral polls be held by show of hands instead of secret ballot.

COCHIN SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY (CSEZA) GOVERNMENT OF INDIA KAKKANAD, COCHIN - 37 Tel No. 0484-2413111	
NOTICE INVITING TENDER	
CSEZ Authority invites tenders for the following works:	

1. Waterproofing treatment on roof slab of SDF 16, 17, 17B and 43A in CSEZ. (Tender ID No.2025_CSEZA_785632_1)

2. Dismantling, Testing, Maintenance and Refixing of solar PV panels in CSEZ (Tender ID No.2025_CSEZA_785899_1)

Applicants can view/download the documents from <https://www.eprocure.gov.in/epublish/app or www.csezauthority.in>

Kakkanad Sd/- Secretary in-Charge, CSEZA

20.01.2025 Tel.No.0484-2413111 (ext.204)

Procurement Officer

Notice Inviting Tenders for the following works:

1. Name of the Work

2. Class of Contractor

3. Time of Completion

4. Detail Projects

5. Other Details

Tender Online RCK - 01/25 Letter No.- 54 / Date:- 16.01.25

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KENDRAPARA-JAJPUR AT-CHANDIKHOLE, PO- SUNGUDA, JAJPUR-754024 Email - serw_kpd@yahoo.com	
e - Procurement NOTICE	Letter No.- 54 / Date:- 16.01.25

1. Name of the Work : Building & Road Works in the district of Jajpur for the year 2023-24.
2. Class of Contractor : As specified in the Column-6 of the Annexure.
3. Time of Completion : As Specified in the Column - 7 of the Annexure.

4. Detail Projects : As per Annexure attached

5. Other Details :

Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Availability of Tender on-line for bidding Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification Date & Time of opening of tender

1 Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kandrapara-Jajpur Tender Online RCK - 01/25 From 03.02.2025 to 03.02.2025 at 11.30 A.M. To 05.00 P.M. 5 up to 02.00 P.M. 6 04.02.2025 at 11.30 A.M. 7 To be intimated later

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kandrapara-Jajpur

OIPR-25129/11/0026/2425

0-1299:

भारत सरकार - अंतरिक्ष विभाग / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA - DEPARTMENT OF SPACE निर्माण एवं अनुसंधान संगठन, एसडीएसी-जापा / नियन्त्रित कार्यालय / नेटवर्क (जिला), आ०.आ०. / SRIHARIKOTA - 524124 संक्षिप्त ई-निविदा सूचना सं/e-Tender Notice No: CMG/CICON/248733	
तिथि/ Date: 16.01.25	

भारत के राष्ट्रपति की ओर से, "कार्य का नामः एसडीएसी शार की यूटी-2, एसएमपीसी में एसपीएसी एकेज (५), (३ी), (३ी१), (३ी२) एवं (३ी३) भवन संकेत साड़कों (विद्यमान संपर्क साड़कों) के लिए इंटर्नेशनल-प्रॉजेक्ट, बीसी और बीसी१ नियन्त्रित मूल्य-प्रदान करना।" (४) 455 लाखों के लिए ई-निविदा सूचना है इस्की निविदाकार हमारी वेबसाइट www.isro.gov.in वा www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO देखें।

On behalf of President of India, Item Rate tenders are invited through e-tendering for "Construction of Approach roads (Providing WMM –layer 2, DBM, BC and gravel beds for existing approach roads) to SPAG Package (A), (C1), (C2) & (C3) buildings at Unit-02, SMPC, DDSHAR" (₹ 455 Lakhs). Tender documents can be downloaded up to 27.01.2025, 14:30 hrs. Interested tenderers may visit www.isro.gov.in or www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO for details.

हस्ताक्षरित समूह प्रबन्ध, सीएसी० / एसडीएसी शार / Sd/- GROUP HEAD, CM

IN BRIEF



SC stays criminal defamation proceedings against Rahul

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed criminal defamation proceedings against Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi for his alleged remarks against Union Minister Amit Shah. A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta issued notice to Navin Jha, a BJP worker, who had filed the defamation complaint, and directed him to file a counter affidavit in four weeks. Appearing for Mr. Gandhi, senior advocate A.M. Singhvi and advocate Prasanna S., argued that the defamation proceedings were in breach of seven Supreme Court verdicts which have held that criminal action cannot commence on the basis of a proxy complaint.

Two women Maoists killed in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband

Two women Maoists were killed by the security forces in an anti-Naxal operation on Monday, a police officer said. A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) person sustained superficial injuries, the officer said. The operation was carried out in the area of the Manipur Police Station by a team comprising personnel from the District Reserve Guard, the CRPF, and CoBRA, an elite unit of the CRPF, from Chhattisgarh, while a Special Operation Group from Odisha was also involved, the officer said. With this, at least 28 alleged Maoists have been killed by the security forces in the State since January 1. The biggest encounter in 2025 took place at Bijapur on January 16.

Curfew in Meghalaya village after mob attack on school

The East Khasi Hills district administration in Meghalaya imposed a curfew on Monday in areas falling under the Mawlynnong village after a violent mob tried to dismantle a school. The mob attack, thwarted by the police, was linked to the Mawlynnong village 'sardar' or chief's opposition to a no objection certificate issued by his predecessor to the Ramakrishna Mission to establish the school in 2022. "We prevented a mob of some 250 people from dismantling the school. They also tried to attack our personnel," the district's Superintendent of Police Vivek Siyem said. Following this, District Magistrate Rosetta Mary Kurah issued a curfew order.

Sub-adult tiger dies after being hit by train near Nagpur

A sub-adult female tiger died on Sunday after being struck by a passenger train on the Chanda Fort-Gondia railway line in the Sindewadi forest area near Nagpur. The death of the tiger, aged around 18 months, is the first wildlife fatality recorded in the railway route this year. According to officials, the tiger was hit by the Raxaul Express. It sustained a fatal head injury and was thrown off the tracks. The railway line, which cuts through the forested regions of Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, and Gondia districts of Maharashtra, has been flagged as a high-risk zone for wildlife movement. A team of forest officials rushed to the site immediately.

How many vehicles can one own in the same city, asks SC

It asks if there is a law that ensures commercial, residential complexes had enough parking spots on their premises; Bench proposes orally that public authorities must buy only electric vehicles

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked if there was any restriction on the number of vehicles a person could own in the same city, and if there was a law that ensured commercial and residential complexes had enough parking spots on their premises.

"Is there any embargo on the number of vehicles a person can register? There are people who buy their second and third vehicles in the same city?" Justice A.S. Oka, who heads a Bench, asked advocates appearing for the Centre, National Capital Region areas, and local authorities in the capital city.

The court was considering a note prepared by the *amicus curiae*, senior advocate Aparajita Singh, which has recommended a robust and integrated public transport system for reducing the number of private vehicles, a prime cause for rising toxicity levels in air



Polluted skyline: Fog seen over Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Sunday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

quality, on the roads of the national capital.

Justice Oka asked whether development regulations with respect to residential and commercial complexes had provisions which mandate that permission would not be given unless there was room for parking.

"Those who can afford to buy apartments in these residential complexes, they have two or three vehicles..." Justice Oka remarked.

The court said building regulations must make it clear how many parking spots were mandatory in residential and commercial complexes. "In some cities, an apartment is given two parking spaces, or at least one per apartment," Justice Oka said.

Need for parking policy
The court said a substantial parking policy was necessary considering the large inflow of vehicles into the capital city.

Ms. Singh said vehicles parked on roads were a common sight in the capital.

The Bench proposed orally that public authorities must buy only electric vehicles. "The various governments, corporations, etc.," Justice Oka said.

Additional Solicitor-General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Commission for Air Quality Management, observed in her capacity as the Centre's law officer that the government was "aggressively" going for electric vehicles, but a balance had to be maintained still.

"We want to keep a balance as electricity is drawn from coal," Ms. Bhati explained.

The court said it would hear arguments on these concerns which trigger pollution on February 3, 2025. The Bench said authorities, including the Road and Transport Ministry, the Urban Affairs Ministry and Delhi Development Authority, must address the court in the case.



In 2022, there were 149 million persons aged 60 years and above in India. FILE PHOTO

Plea calls for creation of dedicated Ministry for senior citizens

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court of India on Friday allowed a petitioner seeking the creation of a dedicated Ministry for senior citizens in the country to make a representation before the government.

A Bench headed by Justice P.S. Narasimha, who light-heartedly said even judges were part of the senior citizen age group, told petitioner-advocate G. Priyadarshini, represented by senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan and advocate Rahul Shyam Bhandari, the court cannot intervene or direct the creation of an exclusive Ministry.

Additional Solicitor-General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Commission for Air Quality Management, observed in her capacity as the Centre's law officer that the government was "aggressively" going for electric vehicles, but a balance had to be maintained still.

"We want to keep a balance as electricity is drawn from coal," Ms. Bhati explained.

The court said it would hear arguments on these concerns which trigger pollution on February 3, 2025. The Bench said authorities, including the Road and Transport Ministry, the Urban Affairs Ministry and Delhi Development Authority, must address the court in the case.

It submitted that the India Ageing Report 2023 *Caring for Our Elders: Institutional Responses* said there were 149 million persons aged 60 years and above in 2022, comprising around 10.5% of the country's population.

The petitioner argued that senior citizens were a vulnerable class and came under the Constitutional prism of Article 21 (right to a dignified life).

Final electoral rolls for panchayat polls in Jammu and Kashmir published

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI



PM Narendra Modi with the newly elected sarpanches in 2018. FILE PHOTO

The final panchayat electoral rolls for Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) were published on Monday, indicating the Centre's inclination to hold the local body elections soon. The Assembly election was held in the Union Territory in September last year but Statehood is yet to be restored.

The State Election Commission, J&K, said 70,00,670 people were eligible to vote in the panchayat polls.

The total number of voters for the 2018 panchayat polls was 58,54,208. The panchayat elections were last held in the erstwhile State after a gap of seven years and a total of 27,281 panchayats and sarpanches were elected then. There were 12,776 vacant sarpanch and panchayat seats as elections could not be held due to security reasons back then.

The tenure of the Backward Classes Commission was awaited, which is crucial for reserving Other Backward Classes (OBC) seats in the panchayat.

The tenure of the Backward Classes Commission, which was constituted in June last year, ended on December 31, 2024 and there is no notification in the public domain extending its term.

A senior government official told *The Hindu* that though the electoral rolls had been revised, the report of The Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Dedicated Backward Classes Commission was awaited, which is crucial for reserving Other Backward Classes (OBC) seats in the panchayat.

The tenure of the Backward Classes Commission, which was constituted in June last year, ended on December 31, 2024 and there is no notification in the public domain extending its term.

Presently, there is no reservation for OBCs in local body seats in the Union Territory.

J&K ceased to have panchayats from January 9, 2024 after the five-year term of around 30,000 local representatives came to an end.

Another government source said based on the report of the Commission, the rationalisation of panchayat seats will be done, accommodating the changes made in the reservation structure in the U.T. in the past one year.

Polls to happen soon

"The panchayat elections will happen soon, maybe in the next one month. The process of reservation of OBC and SC/ST seats is on," the second government source said.

In February 2024, the Parliament passed a law to provide reservation to OBCs in panchayat and municipal bodies in Jammu and Kashmir.

Presently, there is no reservation for OBCs in local body seats in the Union Territory.

Plan to allow non-medical graduates to teach medical students draws criticism

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The National Medical Commission (NMC), in its recent draft "Teachers Eligibility Qualifications (TEQ) in Medical Institutions Regulations", has retained a two-year-old provision allowing non-medical graduates with M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees to teach medical students anatomy, biochemistry, and physiology during a transitional period.

The draft, released on January 17, notes that the qualifications include M.Sc. in medical anatomy, medical biochemistry and medical physiology with a Ph.D. in these disciplines.

"The above qualifications should have been granted by the NMC recognised accredited medical college/institute as regular in-campus courses in the subjects concerned," said the NMC in its draft guidelines.

The draft has included

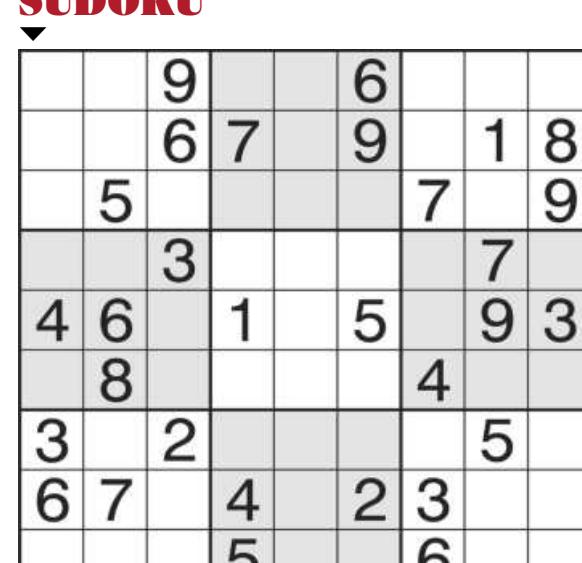
ment with great expectations that quality medical education would expand. Some of the moves taken by it, however, are baffling. The commission, while maintaining that the move is aimed at addressing the shortage of faculties in medical colleges, has now asked stakeholders for their feedback within a week.

Lakshya Mittal, president of United Doctors Front, stated that this move undermines the foundation of medical education, which directly impacts the quality of healthcare delivery in our country.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Monday, in his post on X, said, "First, the Modi govt. lowers the cut-off percentiles for admission to post-graduate medical courses through NEET-PG. Now it relaxes norms for recruitment of faculty by medical colleges. The National Medical Commission was set up in Sept 2020 by an Act of Parliament.

The transition period must be defined, ensuring it serves as a stopgap rather than a permanent compromise, he said.

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

P	S	E	O	R					
V	A	U	J	D					
C	R	I	T	G	S				
Y	E	F	H	M					
A	D	U	U	A					
T	M	R	I	S					
R	A	A	I	L					
E	L	A	S	T					
A	P	O	H	E					
U	D	O	N	G					
P	S	T	E	U					
S	P	L	O	D					
Z	O	T	M	N					
E	R	F	E	V					
I	L	A	B	O					
R	E	X	I	V					
C	M	N	D	S					
Y	N	H	E	R					
K	Y	W	T	R					

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Root cause of activities

What is the root cause of our activities? Whether our physical faculties, called the body, or the soul, called the Aatma (which resides in every person). The physical body is called "Prakriti." The Aatma is also known as "Jeeva." Prakriti is influenced by three qualities: Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, known as "Guna Traya". Aatma dictates the body to execute the activities. Aatma acts according to our past deeds, known as "Karma." Aatma experiences pleasure and pain, comfort and sorrow through the physical faculties. One should mitigate the suffering and boost the performance of good and Godly deeds to eliminate the cycle of births and rebirths.

Valayapettai Sri Ramachariar said in a discourse that the attributes of sattva guna are goodness, joy, and nobility. It denotes freedom from fear, violence, wrath, and malice. Rajas represents the quality of energy, motion, and wealth seeking. The features of tamas are inertia, darkness, ignorance, indolence, and sleep.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says sattva generates attachment to happiness, rajas to action, and tamas to negligence. Can fire and water, which are opposite, exist together? Similarly, can the three gunas, which are opposite to each other, exist in the same body? Even though all three are associated with the nature of the self conjoined with Prakriti in the form of the body, due to previous deeds' dominance, sattva may preponderate over the other two. The fruit of sattva

IN BRIEF



Agri ministry unveils first-ever edible oil consumption survey

The Union agriculture ministry has launched its first-ever survey to assess edible oil consumption patterns in India, aiming to effectively implement the New Mission on Edible Oils-Oilseeds, a senior official said. The initiative comes as India, the world's largest consumer and importer of edible oils, lacks recent data on consumption patterns. "The survey aims to capture the consumption pattern and choice of edible oils, which will help in policy decisions," the official told PTI.

IOB Q3 net rises 21% to ₹874 cr. on improved asset quality

Public sector lender Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) reported a nearly 21% rise in net profit in the October-December quarter or Q3 at ₹874 crore, on the back of improved asset quality and business. The results comes ahead of its proposed qualified institutional placement (QIP) to raise ₹2,000 crore this quarter that will reduce the government's holding in the lender by around 2.5%. The government presently holds 96.38% in the Chennai-headquartered bank.

COAI urges Centre to scrap import duty on telecom gear

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), which represents Bharti Airtel Ltd., Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. and Vodafone Idea Ltd., urged the Centre to scrap import duty on telecom equipment. "Until high-quality equipment is available domestically at competitive prices, we urge the government to reduce customs duties for 4G and 5G network products, as well as other related items, to [zero]," the association said.

Hindenburg says 'not under investigation' by the U.S. SEC

Press Trust of India
TORONTO/NEW DELHI

U.S. short-seller Hindenburg Research said it is not under investigation by U.S. SEC as it rubbished alleged links of its founder to a hedge fund for preparing reports targeting firms.

"Hindenburg is not under investigation by the SEC, to our knowledge, and any suggestion to the contrary is false," the firm said after a Canadian portal cited documents filed before a court in Ontario to allege its founder Nate Anderson was under cloud for alleged links with hedge funds.

Citing a cache of documents filed at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in a complex defamation lawsuit, the Market Frauds portal said the head of Canada's Anson hedge fund, Moez Kassam admitted his firm has shared research "with a wide variety of sources" including Hindenburg's Nate Anderson.

Hindenburg colluded with Anson while preparing a report. The preparation of bearish reports without disclosure of participation can be charged as securities fraud by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Hindenburg said the report "is largely based on an anonymous Tongan blog that is rife with factual errors, wild theorising, and demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of U.S. law".

While short sellers borrow security, sell it on the open market, and expect to repurchase it for less money after damming report against the firm brings stock down, involvement



of hedge funds raises eyebrows as they could also place parallel bets, putting more downward pressure on prices of the stocks.

"We know for a fact, from the email conversations between Anderson and Anson Funds, that he was indeed working for Anson and published whatever they told him to, from the price target to what should and shouldn't be in the report."

No editorial control
"He asked them multiple times if they needed 'more'. From what we can see in dozens of exchanges, at no time did he have editorial control. He was being told what to publish," as per the website.

Market Frauds also shared screenshots of some email interactions – which it claims to have accessed through the documents available with the Ontario court – between Hindenburg and Anson to support its charge.

Last week, Mr. Anderson announced shutting down Hindenburg Research, which made headlines in 2023 after publishing explosive reports about billionaire Gautam Adani's group, sparking political rows and major losses for the company.

Settle with borrowers only after exhausting all options, RBI tells ARCs

Central bank tweaks guidelines to emphasise aspects such as cut-off date for one-time settlement eligibility, permissible sacrifice for various categories of exposures to fix settlement sums, and methodology to arrive at realisable value of security

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

The RBI on Monday modified guidelines related to asset reconstruction companies (ARCs), envisaging that settlement with the borrower should be undertaken only after all possible ways to recover dues have been examined.

The 'Master Direction - Reserve Bank of India (Asset Reconstruction Companies) Directions, 2024' is also being updated



Regulator's dictat: The net present value of a settlement should generally not be less than the securities' realisable value. REUTERS

accordingly, a Reserve Bank circular said.

Every ARC should frame a board-approved policy

for the settlement of dues payable by the borrowers.

According to the latest guidelines, the policy

should, inter alia, cover aspects like a cut-off date for one-time settlement eligibility, permissible sacrifice for various categories of exposures while arriving at the settlement amount and the methodology for arriving at the realisable value of the security.

It further said the settlement amount should preferably be paid in a lump sum. "Where the settlement does not envisage payment of the entire amount agreed upon in one instalment, the propo-

sals should be in line with and supported by an acceptable business plan (where applicable), projected earnings and cash flows of the borrower," the RBI said. The guidelines provide procedures to be followed in cases where the settlement of accounts pertaining to a borrower with an aggregate value of more than ₹1 crore or less.

The net present value (NPV) of the settlement amount should generally be not less than the realisable value of securities.

Large firms resist even good govt. policies'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Even a good government policy requiring timely payments to the key MSME sector faces resistance from large business entities, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran said on Monday.

Speaking at an Exim Bank of India event, he said the government came up with a very thoughtful behavioural nudge to alleviate micro, small and medium firms' (MSMEs) working capital issues.

The law gives enough leeway to make the payment within a financial year and claim the deduction, but even for this kind



of a small nudge, there is resistance from the large corporates, and the association representing them are asking to do away with the 45-day payment ceiling for MSMEs. "Look at some of the political economy and behavioural resistance that continues to prevail in this country..." he noted.

Central Bank of India's Q3 net jumps 33% to ₹959 crore

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

State-owned Central Bank of India posted a 33% year-on-year increase in its profit to ₹959 crore in the third quarter ended December.

Total income rose to ₹9,739 crore from ₹9,139 crore in the same period last year, the bank said.

Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) declined to 3.86% of the total loans at the end of December from 4.50%. Net NPAs, or bad loans, also came down to 0.59% from 1.27%.

Capital adequacy ratio rose to 16.43% from 14.74%.

NCLT orders Go First airline liquidation



Airlines," as per the order.

In an insolvency filing, the airline said it owed creditors ₹1,463 crore, including to banks, financial institutions, vendors and aircraft lessors. Of these, the amount owed to financial institutions stood at ₹6,521 crore, ₹1,202 crore to vendors and ₹2,660 crore to aircraft lessors.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	MONDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	77,073	0.59
US Dollar	86.45	0.17
Gold	82,000	0.00
Brent oil	79.72	-

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2442.80	+43.00
Adani Ports	1148.70	-14.80
Apollo Hosp.	6780.85	-47.25
Asian Paints	2280.55	+19.55
Axis Bank	988.05	-3.00
Bajaj Auto	8544.40	-37.00
Bajaj FinServ	1735.20	+54.55
Bajaj Finance	7440.10	+258.00
Bharat Elec.	285.80	3.65
Bharti Airtel	1641.15	+13.65
BPCL	277.30	+3.70
Britannia Ind.	4885.40	+31.00
Cipla	1445.45	+3.15
Coal India	387.05	-0.60
Dr Reddys Lab.	1302.35	-7.05
Eicher Motors	5016.75	+4.45
Grasim Ind.	2402.00	+26.15
HCL Tech	1796.20	+7.30
HDFC Bank	1651.25	+14.50
HDFC Life	634.05	-8.15
Hero MotoCorp	4092.10	+5.90
Hindalco	618.15	+1.15
Hind United	2345.20	-8.80
ICICI Bank	1232.95	+7.50
IndusInd Bank	970.70	-0.25
Infosys	1813.30	+2.15
ITC	437.70	+2.50
JSW Steel	919.20	+10.60
Kotak Bank	1920.50	+161.90
L&T	3593.00	+24.35
M&M	2888.10	-29.25
Maruti Suzuki	12020.05	-116.30
NestleIndia	2214.00	+3.20
NTPC	336.05	+9.90
ONGC	269.36	+2.79
PowerGrid Corp	306.25	+3.65
Reliance Ind.	1305.45	+3.10
SBI Life	1499.70	-40.80
State Bank	779.25	+15.15
Shriram Finance	516.70	-9.80
Sun Pharma	1778.25	+8.30
TataConsumerProduct	960.30	+5.85
Tata Motors	774.35	+5.40
Tata Steel	131.66	+1.38
TCS	4077.80	+46.50
Tech Mahindra	1674.60	+14.30
Titan	3382.25	+24.85
Trent Ltd.	6090.00	+126.55
UltraTech Cement	10624.45	+44.45
Wipro	300.25	+18.30

Mangalore Refinery Q3 net declines 21%

Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) on Monday reported a 21% drop in its third-quarter net profit as revenues slid, negating a rise in refinery margins. PTI

If Boeing delivered on time, more pilots would be flying: Akasa

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

More pilots at Akasa Air would be flying today if Boeing's aircraft delivery were timely, according to the airline's chief executive officer Vinay Dube.

"Is it a reality that we were supposed to get more aircraft, and therefore we should have seen a larger percentage of pilots clocking flying hours or in training? Yes, absolutely," Mr Dube told *The Hindu* in a telephonic conversation.

Out of 775 pilots "hired for flying" at Akasa Air, 60% are able to log flying hours. Most of the remaining 300 pilots will also be able to fly by 2025-end. Pilots were hired with a 18-24 month timeline in mind before they start flying, keeping in mind the long training footprint for the final batch of 200-300 pilots that joined the airline without a prior Boeing 737 experience, as well as six-month notice period to be served by new hires on their previous organisations, Mr. Dube said countering allegations from a set of pilots that it was hoarding pilots.

The airline received three Boeing 737 MAX 8s in the calendar year 2024, after adding a plane per month since it launched operations in August 2022 because of delays in deliveries from Boeing due to heightened regulatory oversight for it following a mid-air blowout of a door plug on Alaskan Air in January 2024. Later, a 55-day strike by machinists too brought production to a halt. It will add its 27th aircraft next week. If the airline had continued to grow

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BELGRADE

Eight dead, seven injured in a fire at a home for the elderly in Serbia



Eight persons died on Monday in a fire at a home for older people on the outskirts of the Serbian capital, Belgrade, that is suspected of being set by a resident. Seven others were injured in the blaze that erupted around 3:30 a.m. in Barajevo. The police said that 30 people were in the home when the fire broke out. AP

TIBU

Colombia vows 'war' as guerrilla violence kills 100, displaces 11,000



Colombia vowed "war" against left-wing guerrillas, as troops rushed to contain a wave of violence that has killed more than 100 people and threatens to derail the country's troubled peace process. In just five days, violence has been reported in three different Colombian departments with fighting displacing 11,000 people. AFP

PARACHINAR

Pakistan targets militants in the northwest after surge in violence



Pakistan took out a strike targeting militants in a restive northwest district bordering Afghanistan, following a surge in attacks and sectarian strife. It is the first large-scale strike in recent years. The latest attack in Kurram came on Friday when gunmen ambushed aid trucks, killing two security personnel and five drivers. AP

SEOUL

Yoon shuns probe, as supporters face charges over court rampage



South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol refused to be questioned by investigators, as dozens of his supporters faced being charged over a violent rampage on a court building. Security was beefed up at the jail where he is being held as a pre-trial inmate and at the Constitutional Court which is holding his trial. Reuters

Xi's envoy meets Vance, Musk ahead of swearing-in

Associated Press
TAIPEI

China's Vice-President held meetings with the U.S. Vice-President-elect and U.S. business leaders, including Elon Musk, in Washington on the eve of Donald Trump's inauguration, as the two major powers tackle ongoing tensions over trade and technology.

Han Zheng, who serves as an envoy for Chinese President Xi Jinping at the inauguration, "discussed a range of topics including fentanyl, balancing trade and regional stability" with J.D. Vance, according to the Trump transition team.

Mr. Han stressed the "extensive common interests and enormous space of cooperation" the United States and China share in economic and trade relations despite "some disagreements and frictions," according to a readout of his meeting with Mr. Vance issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry on Monday.

Mr. Trump has threatened to impose tariffs and other measures against China in his second term, while also hinting at ways in which the two rival powers could cooperate on issues such as regional conflicts and curbing the export of substances used in the production of fentanyl.

In an unorthodox move, Mr. Trump last month invited Mr. Xi to his inauguration.

While Mr. Xi will not personally attend the event, he and Mr. Trump held a phone call on Friday during which they discussed trade, fentanyl and TikTok. The Chinese social media app restored service to users in the U.S. on Sunday, just hours after it went dark in response to a federal ban, which Mr. Trump said he would pause by executive order on Monday.

U.S. to withdraw from Paris agreement, expand drilling

The Republican leader vows to declare a 'national energy emergency' to expand drilling in the country; it would take a year to leave the agreement after submitting a formal notice to the UN

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration on Monday announced the United States' intention to withdraw from the Paris climate accord for a second time, a defiant rejection of global efforts to combat planetary warming as catastrophic weather events intensify worldwide.

The Republican leader also said his administration would declare a "national energy emergency" to expand drilling in the world's top oil and gas producer and scrap upcoming stringent pollution standards for cars and trucks, which he has derided as an "elect-



Step back: Donald Trump is sworn in as the 47th President of the U.S. in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Monday. AP

ric vehicle mandate."

"President Trump will withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord," the White House said in a statement shortly after the Republican was sworn into office, without providing a specific

ic timeline.

It would take a year to leave the agreement after submitting a formal notice to the United Nations framework that underpins global climate negotiations.

Critics warn it could embolden other major polluters like China and India to scale back their own commitments.

It comes as global average temperatures over the past two years surpassed the critical 1.5°C warming threshold for the first time, underscoring the urgency of climate action.

"The inflation crisis was caused by massive overspending and escalating energy prices, and that is why today I will also declare a national energy emergency. We will 'Drill, baby, drill!'" Mr. Trump said. "We will be a rich nation again, and it is that liquid gold under our feet that will help to do it," he added.

Pakistan airport funded by China enters into operation

Associated Press

QUETTA

Pakistan's largest airport, funded and built in the country's restive southwest by Beijing, has become operational, officials said on Monday.

Gwadar airport is in the province of Balochistan, which has for decades been the scene of an insurgency by separatists demanding autonomy or outright independence.

Pakistani Defence Minister, Khawaja Mohammad Asif, and Chinese officials attended a ceremony at Gwadar airport and watched the arrival of the Pakistan International Airlines inaugural flight from the southern city of Karachi.

The ceremony came months after Chinese Premier Li Qiang and his Pakistani counterpart Sheh-



Planned moves: China has invested heavily in the city of Gwadar where Pakistan's largest airport has come up. AP

baz Sharif virtually inaugurated the airport, which has a capacity of handling 4,00,000 travelers annually.

Heavy stakes

Beijing has invested heavily in the coastal city of Gwadar.

Besides the airport, which has an estimated cost of \$230 million, China

has also constructed a deep seaport as part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative to increase trade by building infrastructure around the world.

This aims to also give Beijing direct access to the shipping lanes of the Arabian Sea through Pakistan via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Yemen's Houthis to 'restrict' their attacks to Israeli ships transiting Red Sea corridor

Associated Press
DUBAI

The announcement comes in the wake of the truce arrived in Gaza Strip between Israel and Hamas

Yemen's Houthi rebels have signalled they now will limit their attacks in the Red Sea corridor to only Israeli-affiliated ships, just as a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip entered its second day on Monday.

The Houthis' announcement, made in an email sent to shippers and others on Sunday, likely will not be enough to encourage global firms to reenter the route that's crucial for cargo and energy shipments moving between Asia and Europe. Their attacks have halved traffic through the region, cutting deeply into

threats against a broader range of international shipping."

The Houthis made the announcement through their Humanitarian Operations Coordination Center, saying it was "stopping sanctions" on the other vessels it has previously targeted since November 2023. For Israeli ships, those "sanctions ... will be stopped upon the full implementation of all phases" of the ceasefire.

However, the Houthi body left open resuming attacks against both the U.S. and the U.K., which have launched airstrikes targeting the rebels over their seaborne assaults.

revenues for Egypt, which runs the Suez Canal linking the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

"The ceasefire is considered fragile," said Jakob P. Larsen, the head of maritime security for BIMCO, the largest international association. "It is assessed that even minor deviations from the ceasefire agreements could lead to hostilities, which would prompt the Houthis to again direct

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e-TENDER NOTICE

Proposals are invited for sale of Handicraft/Textile/Handloom /ODOP products in its Gangotri Showroom located at Shop No. UGL-4, Ground Floor, Emporium Bhawan, Shankracharya Chowk, Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, Varanasi on 'Sale & Return Scheme'. Details are available on <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Proposals can be submitted only online on <https://etender.up.nic.in>. The last date for submission of Proposals is **10.02.2025**, M.D. reserves the right to cancel one/all proposals without assigning any reason.

MANAGING DIRECTOR

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SCO 61-62, PHASE-2, S.A.S. NAGAR (MOHALI)

e-Procurement Notice

The Chief Engineer & Empowered Officer, SRRDA, Punjab on behalf of Government of Punjab invites the price rate bids in electronic tendering system regarding "Request For Proposal (RFP) for Engagement of project Management Unit (PMU) at SRRDA for supervising, monitoring & quality check for roads to be taken up for construction/up-gradation with CTB & Full Depth Reclamation (FDR)Technology in Punjab under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)" from the reputed firms/consultants/companies having experience in similar nature of work.

The Date of release of invitation for Bids through e-procurement (dd/mm/yyyy)

Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and should be submitted online in <https://pmgsytenders.gov.in>. The bidder would be required to register in the website which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder required to have a valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities.

Last Date & Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: 04/02/2025 (dd/mm/yyyy) upto 15:00 Hours (time). For further details please log on to <https://pmgsytenders.gov.in>.

Chief Engineer

State Rural Road Development Agency
O/o Punjab Roads & Bridges Development Board
SCF 61-62, Phase-2, Sector 54, S.A.S. Nagar (Mohali),
Chandigarh, India-160 055

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GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

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

No. Tech-II/54/2024/8

PRESS NOTICE (RE-TENDER 2)

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. Building (Health & Education), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids in electronic tendering system (e-tenders) through Engineering, Procurement and Construction, (EPC-I) mode of contract (Single stage two-part bidding system) from eligible firms/contractors registered with Assam Public Works Department (Building & NH) or firms/Contractors registered with other State/ Central Government Departments. Institutions, Undertaking and Authorities having experience in similar nature of work, for the following works (including Routine Maintenance for four years from the completion of defect liability period):

Sl. No.	Group No.	Name of work	District	Estimated value		Total Bid Value (including GST @18%) (Rs. in Lakhs)	Completion Period (Months)	Bid Security	Cost of Bid (In Rs.)
				Construction (Rs. in Lakhs)	Maintenance (Rs. in Lakhs)				
1	Gr-1	Infrastructure Development of 65 Secondary Schools for construction of new school Buildings under NESID-OTRI Scheme in Baksa District	Baksa	1977.51589	40.54454	2018.06043	15	2% of Bid value for General category and 1% of Bid Value for reserved Category	20.000

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

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

The Work will be allotted only after receiving Government approval.

Details of the bid may be seen at website i.e. <https://www.assamtenders.gov.in> from 22-01-2025, 11.00 am onwards.

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

Reuters
BEIJING

The Myanmar military and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA) signed a formal agreement for a ceasefire that began on Saturday, China's Foreign Ministry said, halting fighting near the border of both countries.

The two sides held talks in China's southwestern city of Kunming where they thanked Beijing for its efforts to promote peace, ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said during a regular news briefing on Monday.

"Cooling down the situation in the north of Myanmar is in the com-



The MNDA is one of several ethnic armed groups fighting to repel the military from what they consider their territories.

mon interest of all parties in Myanmar and all countries in the region, and contributes to the security, stability and development of the border areas between China and Myan-

mar," she said.

China will continue to promote peace and dialogue and provide support and assistance to the peace process in northern Myanmar, Ms. Mao said.

The MNDA, made up of ethnic Chinese, said last July it had taken control of a major military base near the Chinese border.

ROW ENDS

Sports presenter apologises to Djokovic over 'insulting' comments



Tony Jones, a presenter with Channel Nine, apologised on-air to Novak Djokovic after mocking the 24-time Grand Slam winner and his Serbian fans at the Australian Open, saying it was meant to be banter. The 37-year-old tennis great refused to do a routine on-court interview on Sunday as a protest at the comments.

GREAT FEELING

Lys happy despite exit after the 'nicest week' in Melbourne



Despite a heavy defeat on Monday, Eva Lys said it had been an Australian Open to savour and she had enjoyed the journey in the best week of her life. "It's definitely the nicest week I've had in my life just because it wasn't really only about the result, but also about the whole story," said the 23-year-old German.

TOP OF THE HEAP

Sinner and Swiatek claim ITF World champion awards



The International Tennis Federation on Monday named Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek as its World champions of 2024 in recognition of their performances last season. Marcelo Arevalo (Ecuador) and Mate Pavic (Croatia) and the Italian pair of Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini were named doubles World champions.

AT THE HELM

Rishabh Pant named captain of Lucknow Super Giants



Rishabh Pant was on Monday named the captain of Lucknow Super Giants for the upcoming IPL and he vowed to give his "200%" to win the team's maiden title. "I will give my 200%. That's my commitment. I will try whatever is there in my power to repay the faith. I am really excited and looking forward to new beginning."

Soorma Hockey Club gets past Tigers, returns to winning ways

Harmanpreet and veteran goalkeeper Vanasch star in defence while Prabhjot and Maninder get the crucial goals; despite the loss, the Bengal side remains in fourth spot while the winner occupies sixth place in the standings

HIL

Aashin Prasad

ROURKELA

Sorma Hockey Club snapped a two-game losing run in the Hockey India League (HIL) with a 2-1 win over Shrachi Bengal Tigers here on Monday.

The returning Harmanpreet Singh and veteran goalkeeper Vincent Vanasch starred in defence while Prabhjot Singh and Maninder Singh got the crucial goals as Soorma (sixth) continued to trail behind Tigers (fourth) on the points table.

Frustrated

From the pushback, Tigers shaded the possession and circle penetration statistics but couldn't find a way past an in-form Vanasch. Affan Yousuf cut a frustrated figure in the first half after three of his efforts were superbly saved by the Belgian. One particular passage of play saw Vanasch



Keen tussle: The Soorma and Tiger players were intense in their approach. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

thwart both Affan and Jaswan Singh with back-to-back saves.

But it was Harmanpreet who showed his quality on the ball to help breach a sturdy Tigers defence. Afforded time and space

near the halfway line, the India skipper arrowed a ball over the top to find an unmarked Maninder in the circle's edge; a pass so good it got a shout of approval from Vanasch behind him. Maninder

brought it down flicked it towards goal but it deflected off a Tigers player's stick and looped up kindly for Prabhjot to lift the ball past Jamie Carr to give the lead.

The goal proved a sucker-punch to Tigers' confi-

dence as Soorma grew into the game from thereon.

Soorma accumulated the penalty corner count and despite Harmanpreet being off the field, it had a capable deputy in Nicolas Della Torre, whose drag-flick was halted but Maninder was on hand to sound the board.

The second half was an end-to-end affair with Soorma struggling to control the game's pace in the third quarter. Tigers poured men forward and stretched the game to put Soorma on the back foot.

From a penalty corner, Jugraj Singh's powerful drag-flick managed to find a way past Vanasch's padding and squeezed past the man on the line to provide his team with a lifeline.

Jugraj lined up another penalty corner right after, however, Vanasch was there again to see out the victory for his side.

The result: Shrachi Bengal Tigers 1 (Jugraj Singh 39) lost to Soorma Hockey Club 2 (Prabhjot Singh 21, Maninder Singh 28).

Soorma too hot to handle for Pipers

Santadeep Dey

RANCHI

The calm before Monday's storm lasted only nine minutes. Delhi SG Pipers were then blown away like a tin roof in the wind, succumbing to a 5-1 defeat against JSW Soorma Hockey Club during a Women's Hockey India League match at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Stadium here.



Soorma players celebrate a strike. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Soorma's Charlotte Englebert drew first blood with an angry swipe into the bottom of the net after Maria Verschoor put in the hard yards and linked up with the Belgian on the left.

Lightning struck twice as Sonam registered a brace to stun the Pipers into silence. The first of her goals came amid a goal-mouth melee when she managed to sneak the ball past Bichu Devi Kharibam despite the goalkeeper's best efforts.

A minute later, the Pipers even subbed off its goalkeeper with seven minutes to go. But unknowingly, they ended up playing into their opponent's hands, which signed off in style as Penny Squibb scored from a penalty corner.

The result: JSW Soorma Hockey Club 5 (Englebert 6, Sonam 9 & 10, Stapanhorst 36, Squibb 60) bt Delhi SG Pipers 1 (Sangita 38)

Pragg posts win; Gukesh, Erigaisi draw their games

Press Trust of India
WJK AAN ZEE

Indian Grandmaster R. Pragnanandhaa defeated compatriot P. Harikrishna, while Arjun Erigaisi and World champion D. Gukesh settled for draws in the second round of 87th Tata Steel Chess Tournament here. In the challengers' section, R. Vaishali was forced to split the point with Miaoyi Lu.

The results: Round two:
Masters: Vladimir Fedosev (Slo, 1) drew with D. Gukesh (1.5); Erigaisi Arjun (0.5) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 0.5); P. Harikrishna (1) lost to R.

Pragnanandhaa (1.5); Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 1.5) bt Leon Luke Mendoza (Por, 1); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 1.5) drew with Max Warmerdam (Ned, 1); Fabiano Caruana (USA, 1.5) bt Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 0.5); Alexey Sarana (Srb, 1) drew with Wei Yi (Chn, 1).

Challengers: Divya Deshmukh (0.5) drew with Nguyen Thai Van Dam (Cze, 1.5); R. Vaishali (1.5) drew with Maiyo Li (Chn, 1.5); Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 1.5) drew with Nodirbek Kazybek (Kaz, 0.5); Benjamin Bok (Ned, 1.5) bt Ediz Gurel (Tur, 1); Arthur Pijpers (Ned, 0.5) drew with Aydin Suleimanli (Aze, 1); Svane Frederik (Ger, 1.5) bt Oro Faustino (Arg, 0); Irina Bulmaga (Rom, 0) lost to Erwin L'Ami (Ned, 1.5).

Sinner defies dizziness to battle past Rune, meets de Minaur in last eight; Swiatek stays on course

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

Jannik Sinner battled dizzy spells on Monday to reach an Australian Open quarterfinal against Alex de Minaur, admitting a long interruption when he accidentally broke the net was "big, big luck".

The world No.1 and defending champion dropped a set before coming home 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 against Danish 13th seed Holger Rune on Rod Laver Arena.

Sinner struggled in the hot Melbourne conditions, his hand visibly shaking and his heart rate taken in the third set before he left court for a medical timeout.

Damaging

There was then a bizarre 20-minute delay when Sinner demolished the metal brace that secures the net to the floor with a thunderous serve early in set four.

"I was not feeling really well. You know, I think we saw that today I was struggling physically," said Sinner, 23, who is bidding to become the first Italian man to win three Grand Slam crowns.

He refused to say exactly what was wrong with him, only that he was "not there health-wise" and had



"It means the world," said De Minaur. "There's nothing I want to do more than play well here in Australia. So glad I finally made the quarterfinals."

"But let's go for bigger and better things."

But American teenage qualifier Learner Tien's fairytale run is over after he suffered a thigh problem in a four-set defeat to Italy's Lorenzo Sonego.

With temperatures rising above 30 Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) for a second successive day, Ukraine's Elina Svitolina beat Veronika Kudermetova – then declined to shake the Russian's hand.

But Svitolina's husband, the 38-year-old Frenchman Gael Monfils, retired from his match in the last 16.

Five-time major champion Iga Swiatek thrashed "lucky loser" Eva Lys 6-0, 6-1 in her bid to win a maiden Melbourne crown.

THE RESULTS

Fourth round: Men: 1-Sinner (Ita) bt 13-Rune (Den) 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2; Sonego (Ita) bt Tien (USA) 6-3, 6-2, 3-6, 6-1; 21-Shelton (USA) bt Monfils (Fra) 7-6(3), 6-7(3), 7-6(2), 1-0, retd.; 8-de Minaur (Aus) bt Michelsen (USA) 6-0, 7-6(5), 6-3.

Women: 28-Svitolina (Ukr) bt Kudermetova (Rus) 6-4, 6-1;

19-Keys (USA) bt 6-Rybalkina (Kaz) 6-3, 1-6, 3-2; 2-Swiatek (Pol)

bt Lys (Ger) 6-0, 6-1; 8-Navarro (USA) bt 9-Kasatkina (Rus) 6-4, 5-7, 7-5.

Fourth round: Women: 1-Sinner (Ita) bt 13-Rune (Den) 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2; Sonego (Ita) bt Tien (USA) 6-3, 6-2, 3-6, 6-1; 21-Shelton (USA) bt Monfils (Fra) 7-6(3), 6-7(3), 7-6(2), 1-0, retd.; 8-de Minaur (Aus) bt Michelsen (USA) 6-0, 7-6(5), 6-3.

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IN BRIEF**Atiqa Mir to participate in WSK Championships 2025**

Indian karter Atiqa Mir will participate in the World Series Karting (WSK) Championships 2025, driving for the 29-time WSK Champion Team Babyrace. The 10-year-old Atiqa is the first Indian female to drive in the WSK and will also be the only female in the Mini class on the entire grid of over 60 karts. She will race in all three WSK Championships this year; the WSK Super Master Series, the WSK Euro Series and the WSK Final Cup.

Singapore signs Anup Sridhar as additional singles coach

India's Asian Championships bronze-winning former shuttler Anup Sridhar was on Monday roped in as a singles coach by the Singapore Badminton Association (SBA). However, South Korean Kim Ji-hyun will continue to be the head coach for SBA's men's and women's teams.

BTC renames races to be run on January 25 and 26

The Stewards of the Bangalore Turf Club have decided to rename the following races to be held on the Derby weekend:

January 25: The Bangalore Race Course 162nd years Commemoration Trophy will now be run as 'The Coronation Gromor Bangalore Race Course 162nd years Commemoration Trophy' and the Bangalore Winter Million will be 'The Foster's Bangalore Winter Million'

January 26: The Bangalore Derby will be run as 'The HPSL Bangalore Derby', the Indian Republic Trophy is 'The A.R. Trophy'; Vidhana Soudha Cup will be 'The Mysore Race Club Cup', the Mysore Race Club Trophy will be 'The C. Narayanan Reddy Memorial Million' and the Totalizator Cup will be 'The Indian Republic Cup'

WADA says won't appeal in Swiatek doping case

The World Anti-Doping Agency said Monday it will not appeal in the case of Iga Swiatek, who last year accepted a one-month ban after testing positive for a banned substance. WADA said it made the decision after "a thorough review" found that the "contaminated melatonin scenario, as presented by the athlete and accepted by the ITIA, is plausible". Five-time tennis Grand Slam champion Swiatek pulled out of the WTA's Asian swing in September citing "personal matters". WADA has appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in the case of Jannik Sinner and is seeking to ban the men's number one for up to two years. He also denies knowingly doping after twice testing positive for a banned steroid in March.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SCHEDULE

Tuesday: Monaco vs. Aston Villa, Atalanta vs. Sturm Graz 11.15 p.m.; Atletico Madrid vs. Bayer Leverkusen, Bologna vs. Borussia Dortmund, Club Brugge vs. Juventus, Crvena Zvezda vs. PSV Eindhoven, Liverpool vs. Lille, Slovan Bratislava vs. Stuttgart, Benfica vs. Barcelona (1.30 a.m. on Wednesday).

Wednesday: Shakhtar Donetsk vs. Brest, RB Leipzig vs. Sporting CP (11.15 p.m.); AC Milan vs. Girona, Sparta Praha vs. Inter Milan, Arsenal vs. GNK Dinamo, Celtic vs. Young Boys, Feyenoord vs. Bayern Munich, PSG vs. Manchester City, Real Madrid vs. Salzburg (1.30 a.m. on Thursday).

NEW DELHI ROUND-UP**Sunil, Ayush and Vishal shine for their respective teams**

Sunil Dagar and Ayush Ahalwat played key roles as LB Shastri Sports Coaching Centre beat Indo CC by 18 runs in the DDCA League at Ramjas Sports Complex on Monday. In another match, Vishal Abhu scored an unbeaten 93 to help Kishanganj Colts outplay Gush CC.

The scores: LB Shastri Sports Coaching Centre 147 in 36 overs (Sunil Dagar 33, Abhishek 32, Jai Kumar 4/27, Jatin 3/14) bt Indo CC 129 in 33 overs (Aryan Dhaka 33, Ayush Ahalwat 32).

Kishanganj Colts 298/4 in 40 overs (Vishal Abhu 93 n.o., Karan Yadav 66, Ruvik Malhotra 44) bt Gush Cricket Club 135 in 35 overs (Aryan Kundu 37, Suryansh 3/8).

Ekta Club 182/9 in 39 overs (Dhruv Raj Singh 44, Abhishek 3/36) lost to

Darling Club 183/9 in 39 overs (Preet Malik 68, Ujjwal Sharma 3/39, Saba Karim 3/22).

Pioneer Club 305/6 in 40 overs

(CM YK)

MVP Mayank stars for SPC against Punjab Warriors

Mayank Hooda emerged the 'Most Valuable Player' as he guided Sports Promotion Club (SPC) Kiloi, Rohtak, to a 62-35 victory over Punjab Warriors in the under-12 boys final of the Manav Rachna basketball tournament at the Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies courts.

About 40 teams participated in the tournament from across Northern India.

The results (finals): Under-14 boys: Malik Club, Delhi bt Faridabad Modern School 49-37.

Most Valuable Player: Shivam.

Under-14 girls: Geetanjali Academy, Sonipat bt Jhajjar

team 40-30. **MVP:** Angel.

Under-12 boys: Sports Promotion Club, Kiloi, Rohtak, bt Punjab Warriors 62-35. **MVP:** Mayank Hooda.

Under-12 girls: Jhajjar team bt Jind team 22-14. **MVP:** Pari.

LIVE TELECAST

Women's U-19 T20 World Cup: Hotstar, 8 a.m.; Malaysia vs India, 12 p.m.

Australian Open: Afternoon, Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1.30 p.m.

Hockey: HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6 & 8.15 p.m.

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

Europa League: Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 9 p.m.

Champions League: Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 (SD & HD) & LIV, 11.15 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

Australian Open: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 5.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

Spinning a web: Rounak has scalped it rich as a left-arm orthodox spinner. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Teenager Waghela gets Ranji reward after shining for Delhi U-23s

As some of the heavyweights of Indian cricket get ready for a rare appearance in the Ranji Trophy, wide-eyed youngsters have much to gain by being in the same dressing room.

Among those keen to utilise this opportunity is teenager Rounak Waghela, who has been named in Delhi's Ranji Trophy squad for the first time for the game against Saurashtra in Rajkot from Thursday.

Just 17 years old, Waghela has earned the call-up to the senior team after a bag of wickets as a left-arm orthodox spinner for Delhi's U-23 side this season. He also bats left-handed and describes himself as an all-rounder.

In the first five games of the C.K. Nayudu Trophy – the BCCI's U-23 First Class Competition, which resumes on January 25 – he scalped 31 wickets.

In the U-23 one-day tournament that concluded on January 10, he claimed 22 scalps in seven matches. In both competitions, he is among the top

five wicket-takers.

"It is very pleasing to get into the Ranji squad for the first time. I am extremely happy. I was expecting it to an extent because I have been performing well in the U-23s," Waghela told *The Hindu* on Monday.

Among the big guns that Waghela has a chance to observe from close prox-

imity in Rajkot are Rishabh Pant for Delhi and Cheteshwar Pujara and Ravindra Jadeja for Saurashtra.

"It is very important to have experiences like these," was Waghela's laconic response on the prospect of learning from these players.

Waghela, whose father is a tuition teacher, trains at the Venkateshwar Cricket Academy in Dwarka under Devdutt Baghel.

He started out as a left-arm medium-pacer before switching to spin on the advice of his coach.

"He has been coming to my academy since the age of seven. He is very focused on cricket. I would say his game is similar to Jadeja's. His accuracy is his strength," Baghel re-

marked.

Press Trust of India

KUALA LUMPUR

Debutant Nigeria stunned a formidable New Zealand by two runs for a historic win in a rain-interrupted low-scoring thriller in the ICC Women's U-19 T20 World Cup in which both sides were restricted to sub-70 totals on Monday.

The scores: Group-B: Ireland 75 in 17.4 overs (Isani Vaghela 3/10, Aditiba Chudasma 2/16, Ritu Singh 2/8, Chetna Prasad 2/12) lost to USA 79/1 in 9.4 overs (Disha Dhingra 4/6). **PoM:** Isani.

Group-C: Nigeria 65/6 in 13 overs (Lucky Piety 19, Lilian Udeh 18) bt New Zealand 63/6 in 13 overs (Anika Todd 19, Tash Wakelin 18).

PoM: Lucky

Group-D: Bangladesh 91/9 in 20 overs (Afia Ashima 29, Caione Bray 2/18, Elanor Larosa 2/19, Tegan Williamson 2/12) lost to Australia 92/8 in 19.2 overs (Lucy Hamilton 30, Jaantul Maoua 3/15). **PoM:** Lucy.

ANNDONE

Man. City hits Ipswich for a six

Foden scintillates with a brace; Kovacic, Doku, Haaland, and McAtee also find the net as defending champion moves to fourth, ahead of Newcastle



Hitman: Foden nets his second and City's third goal during the rout of Ipswich on Sunday. REUTERS

EURO LEAGUES

Reuters
IPSWICH

Manchester City's Phil Foden scored twice and created another goal in an outstanding first-half display as it hammered Ipswich Town 6-0 on Sunday to roar back into the Premier League's top four.

The win moved City to 38 points and into fourth position on goal difference ahead of Newcastle United, but they are still 12 points behind leaders Liverpool, who have a game in hand,

and six behind Arsenal and Nottingham Forest.

Ipswich, which remains 18th on 16 points, had a couple of good early chances but City shook off the shackles of recent poor performances with a superb display of attacking football, and once they got the first goal, there was no way back for their hosts.

It came in the 27th minute as Jeremy Doku combined with Kevin De Bruyne, and he in turn worked the ball on for Foden to take a touch before drilling it home to break the deadlock.

That trio tormented the Ipswich defence as Mateo

Kovacic doubled the lead three minutes later. Doku was again involved down the left, feeding the ball for Foden to set up Kovacic, who fired into the net from the edge of the box.

The results: Premier League: Ipswich 0 lost to Manchester City 6 (Foden 27, 42, Kovacic 30, Doku 49, Haaland 57, McAtee 69).

Series A: Inter Milan 3 (Martinez 55, Dumfries 79, Thuram 89) bt Empoli 1 (Esposito 84); Verona 0 lost to Lazio 3 (Gigot 2, Dia 21, Zaccagni 58).

La Liga: Osasuna 1 (Garcia 59) drew with Rayo Vallecano 1 (Camello 19); Valencia 1 (Duro 26) bt Real Sociedad 0.

Bundesliga: Werder Bremen 0 lost to Augsburg 2 (Essende 5, 45+1).

India set to host FIDE World Cup 2025

CHESS

Mayank Chaudhary
CHENNAI

India is set to host the FIDE World Cup 2025, marking the country's first major international chess tournament since the 2022 Chennai Chess Olympiad.

FIDE initially listed India as the host in its 2025 calendar for the tournament scheduled from October 31 to November 27. However, the listing was briefly retracted and replaced with "to be announced" on Monday.

Despite this, sources in All India Chess Federation (AICF) have confirmed to *The Hindu* that the hosting rights have been finalised. "India will host the FIDE World Cup 2025, and we will soon announce it officially with the final dates," said a senior AICF official.

The FIDE World Cup, a prestigious knockout tournament featuring over 200 players, also serves as a pathway to the Candidates Tournament, with three qualification spots up for grabs.

R. Praggnanandhaa made history in the 2023 edition, clinching the silver after losing to Magnus Carlsen in the final.

Viswanathan Anand won the event in 2000 and 2002.

Kohli to play for Delhi after 13 years



Kohli...padding up for the domestic circuit. AP

RANJI TROPHY

Vivek Krishnan
NEW DELHI

Star batter Virat Kohli will play for Delhi in the Ranji Trophy fixture against Railways from January 30 to February 2 at the Arun Jaitley Stadium. The last time Kohli played in the First Class competition was in November 2012, against Uttar Pradesh in Ghaziabad.

"Kohli spoke to me and confirmed his availability for the Railways game," Delhi & District Cricket Association (DDCA) president Rohan Jaitley told *The Hindu* on Monday.

With the BCCI making participation in domestic

cricket mandatory for players to be eligible for selection in the national team according to new guidelines, a number of India players, including Rohit Sharma, will be turning out for their State teams in the next round commencing January 23.

Kohli is missing the game against Saurashtra due to a neck sprain.

Kohli had his travails with the bat in the five-Test series in Australia.

The Ranji fixture will give the 36-year-old an opportunity to get back among the runs before joining the Indian team for the three-match ODI series against England followed by the Champions Trophy.

Senhora saves Maharashtra's blushes, helps reach the last-eight stage

Amol Karhadkar
SURAT

Trisha Gogoi gave Assam the best chance, overcoming both her fancied opponents in a nail-biting clash. But Senhora D'Souza saved Maharashtra – last year's bronze medallist – the agony of a round-of-16 exit by clinching the decisive game of the deciding tie despite having her back to the wall.

As a result, riding on Senhora's comeback win, Maharashtra edged past Assam 3-2 to set up a quarterfinal clash against Haryana in the women's team championship of the 86th Senior National Championship at the Pandit Dindayal Upadhyay Stadium here on Monday.

When Trisha stunned an in-form Taneesha Koticha in the clash between the strongest players to level the tie at two matches apiece and enforced the

deciding rubber, Senhora was expected to sail past Bhavna Kashyap. However, while Bhavna upped her ante midway through the match, Senhora stiffened up in the fourth game.

In the fifth, Bhavna's forehand topspins saw her racing to a 7-3 lead and the fourth game. In the fourth game, Senhora had the last laugh as Maharashtra coach Mahendra Chiplunkar

'New King' Jaiswal all set to conquer one-day format

The steely-eyed southpaw is in red-hot form and brimming with such confidence that he will strike fear into the opposition bowlers if he plays in a way that Rohit and Kohli could in their pomp



AFP

Vivek Krishnan

It was after a two-hour delay that chief selector Ajit Agarkar and captain Rohit Sharma sauntered into an air-conditioned hall at the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) headquarters in Mumbai on Saturday afternoon for the press conference to announce India's Champions Trophy squad. As Agarkar began reading out the list of players who had made the cut after a selection meeting that took longer than expected to conclude, a few more seconds ticked by before Yashasvi Jaiswal's name featured in India's 15-man squad for the home ODI series against England and the Champions Trophy.

The pleasing bit for the 23-year-old, of course, is that he has received his maiden call-up to India's 50-over set-up. But at the same time, there was an impression from the media briefing that Jaiswal, who was the 13th player read out by Agarkar, may have to occupy a place on the bench during the eight-team event beginning February 19.

The biggest hint was offered pretty much at the start when the former India seamer-turned-selector from Mumbai announced Shubman Gill as deputy to Rohit.

With Rohit being skipper and opening batter and Virat Kohli – he has 50 ODI hundreds lest it needs reminding – ensconced at No. 3, the only realistic way for Jaiswal to get into the playing eleven was if he was favoured over Gill. But now that the languid stroke-maker from Punjab has been chosen vice-captain, the selectors and coach seem to be on the same page about Rohit, Gill and Kohli making up the top three. You can understand their perspective: Rohit and Kohli are greats in this format and Gill, averaging 58.2 after 47 matches, is on his way to getting there.

Sure, their travails in recent Test matches warrant close attention and deep introspection. Remember, though, that all three were instrumental in India's run to the ODI World Cup final, after which the team played only six matches – three versus South Africa in December, 2023, and another three against Sri Lanka in this format in August, 2024. So, why disrupt what's working? If Indian cricket is to get back on the rails after a turbulent few months, particularly with a view to doing well on the five-Test tour of England

(June 20 to August 4), it is also imperative for the big guns to have their confidence restored by getting back among the runs. The 50-over format provides them the best chance of doing that and alleviating some of the pressure that has built up of late.

But here's the conundrum. The steely-eyed southpaw is in red-hot form and brimming with such confidence that he will strike fear into the opposition bowlers if he plays in a way that Rohit and Kohli could in their pomp. Isn't the temptation justified to throw Jaiswal into the ring at this juncture?

Particularly when Jaiswal has found overwhelming success in the other formats since donning the India cap. He has been India's best Test batter over the past 18 months, and has an equally impressive T20I record to boot. If he had to wait for an ODI call-up until now, it was only because the format had taken a backseat with India's commitments confined to a lone series in 2024 in Sri Lanka.

"We have picked Jaiswal based on what he has shown in the last six-eight months. He hasn't played a single ODI game. But we still picked him because of the potential he has got," Rohit acknowledged on Saturday.

Coming-of-age tour

To understand why Jaiswal has an expanding list of admirers that includes the India Test and ODI captain, his performances in the five-Test series in Australia are worth looking back on. He landed on those shores with a heap of expectations; an image of Jaiswal looking to the sky, arms spread wide in celebration of a century was splashed on the sports page of an Australian tabloid with the headline 'The New King' before the series.

The hype could have been misplaced considering he had struggled on challenging decks in South Africa a year earlier, but by finishing as the visiting team's leading run-getter with 391 runs in 10 innings at 43.44 in a series where no other Indian averaged above 40, he showed that he is the rightful heir to the throne.

While the youngster's voracious appetite for runs at the highest level had become apparent after his record-breaking yield versus England at home last year, joining Sunil Gavaskar as the only Indians to breach the 700-run



He hasn't played a single ODI game. But we still picked him because of the potential he has got

ROHIT

mark in a Test series, succeeding on a tour of Australia is an essential rite of passage for anyone striving to become the best in the business. He has ticked that box now.

The beginning of the tour wasn't exactly ideal for Jaiswal. In the first innings of the opening Test in Perth, he was out for a duck after driving at a wide ball that was caught at gully. But in the very next innings, a bit more restraint and better judgment early on helped Jaiswal navigate the new ball and craft a superb 161 to set India on its way to a 295-run win.

Expansive strokes

It was only as he grew in confidence later in his innings that more expansive strokes were unleashed. Among them was a wristy whip into the stands over deep square leg off Mitchell Starc. He was willing to engage in the sledging game too, casually telling the Australian spearhead that "it's coming too slow".

"I was just playing normally, the way I had prepared. I trust and believe in myself. Whatever is going to come, I am going to enjoy it and be fearless. I will go out and take brave decisions. This is my mindset," Jaiswal told the media in Perth. "I have always wanted to come to Australia and do well, so this is very important for me."

His duels with Starc were riveting right through the series. Once the left-arm bowler began having success against the Indian with a leg-and-middle-stump line, a rethink was needed from the opening batter. He made those subtle adjustments as the series wore on, tinkering with his guard and looking to play down the ground to that straighter channel.

His twin fifties at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) in the fourth Test showed steely resolve too. Responding to Australia's imposing total of 474, Jaiswal struck a breezy 82 off 118 balls to lead India's effort in the first essay.

He looked good for many more until a mix-up with Kohli after a 102-run partnership resulted in Jaiswal's long walk

back to the dressing room.

Yet, he didn't let the disappointment linger in the second innings. Batting on the final day to draw the game, Jaiswal's defensive discipline came through as he chewed up 208 balls over 310 minutes to produce a doughty 84.

With support running out, his resistance came to an end 21 overs from the close when he feathered a short ball down the leg side against Pat Cummins. It meant that India could neither save the Test nor retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after the finale in Sydney, but he should derive personal satisfaction from a coming-of-age trip.

Versatility

Jaiswal's ability to conform to the situation and surface is a standout feature of his game. On his debut in whites against West Indies, for instance, his 171 off 387 balls on a slow track was a quintessential Test knock exhibiting time-honoured virtues like grit and patience. When England toured last year, in contrast, he was a lot more belligerent. One stat that underlines it is that he hit 26 sixes across the five Tests, the most by any batter in a series.

That Jaiswal could also be a six-hitting force in the slam-bang version came to light when he dazzled for Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League in the summer of 2023. Since that breakthrough season, he has smashed 723 runs in 23 matches at an average of 36.15 and a strike rate of 164.31 for India in the shortest format.

These compelling numbers helped Jaiswal get the nod over Gill in the squad for the T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and United States in June, 2024. Though the experience of Rohit and Kohli at the top eventually held sway as India won the title, Jaiswal was well-placed to set the tournament alight given a chance.

There is no reason, then, for Jaiswal not to embrace one-day cricket with similar ease. Before starring in the 2020 U-19 World Cup, his first brush with attention was actually in the Vijay Hazare Trophy – the domestic 50-over competition – when he plundered 203 off 154 balls for Mumbai against Jharkhand in October, 2019, as a 17-year-old. It made him the youngest to score a double hundred in List-A cricket.

But will he get a chance to show that spark in the coming weeks? We will have to wait and watch.

THE GIST

▼
The 23-year-old has found overwhelming success in the other two versions since donning the India cap

▼
The only realistic way for Jaiswal to get into the playing eleven in the upcoming Champions Trophy is if he is favoured over Gill

▼
Jaiswal's ability to conform to the situation and surface is a standout feature of his game

SCIENCE

Newfound nerve-muscle crosstalk shows exercise helps neurons grow

The conventional concept of nerve-muscle interaction emphasises the nerve's control over muscles. However, Ritu Raman and her colleagues at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology started to wonder if the reciprocal could be true: if stimulating muscles could encourage nerves to form

Sayan Tribedi

Regular exercise is proven to be beneficial for our overall well-being. It strengthens our muscles, improves cardiovascular health, helps to maintain a healthy body weight, and can be considered an effective stress buster.

But what if there is more? What if the benefits of exercise go beyond general health?

A recent study by engineers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), published in *Advanced Healthcare Materials*, has revealed that exercise may also stimulate the growth of neurons through its physical and biochemical effects.

This finding can pave new pathways for reparative therapies and perhaps even cures for neurodegenerative disorders.

Nerve-muscle crosstalk

While the effects of exercise on our physical health, like strengthening muscles and supporting the immune system, are widely recognised, researchers haven't explored the specific impact of exercise on neurons (nerve cells).

Given the nerves control the movements of muscles and carry vital information all over the body, understanding the effects of neurons can lead to the development of plausible therapies for nerve injuries.

In a November 2023 paper in the journal *Biomaterials*, researchers established a hint of a biochemical connection between muscle activity and nerve health. Ritu Raman, the Eugene Bell Career Development assistant professor of mechanical engineering at MIT, and her colleagues discovered that they could restore the mobility of mice by implanting muscle tissue at the site of a severe muscle injury and stimulating the new tissue using light.

While examining the graft, the researchers found the grafted muscle had produced certain biochemical signals that induced the growth and development of nerves and blood vessels.

The conventional concept of nerve-muscle interaction emphasises the nerve's control over the muscles. However, Raman and her colleagues started to wonder if the reciprocal could be true: i.e. if stimulating muscles could encourage the formation of nerves.

This hypothesis was initially met with skepticism from the scientific community. Critics argued that the biological environment was complex and that it would be hard to attribute nerve growth to stimulation by muscles because of the variety of other cell types and contributing factors within the organism, including the immune system.

Biochemical benefits of exercise

The new study by Raman & co. concentrated solely on muscle and nerve tissue and aimed to find whether training muscles directly could influence the way nerves grew.

The researchers grew mouse muscle cells into long fibers, which they weaved together to create a small sheet of mature muscular tissue slightly larger than a one-ruppee coin.

Using well-known genetic modification techniques, the team was able to use a



The movement of muscles was found to exert mechanical forces on neurons' structure because of the physical contact between neurons and muscles. JULIEN TROMEUR/UNSPLASH

flashing light to cause the muscles to contract.

In the past, Raman had come up with a brand-new gel mat for building and exercising the muscle. While the researchers stimulated the muscle to exercise, they allowed the muscle tissue to hold its shape and structure instead of peeling off.

The scientists then collected samples of the fluids surrounding the muscle, believing it should contain myokines like growth factors, RNA, and other proteins. Myokines, Raman said, are a biochemical soup of proteins secreted by muscles, some of which may be useful to neurons.

"Myokines are secreted by muscles nearly all the time, but they produce more when you exercise them," she added.

The researchers transferred the myokine solution to a separate dish containing motor neurons – nerves found in the spinal cord that control muscles involved in voluntary movement. They grew the neurons from stem cells derived from mice. As with the muscle tissue, the neurons were grown on a similar gel mat.

After the neurons were exposed to the myokine mixture, the team observed that they began to grow quickly: about four-times faster than neurons that didn't receive the biochemical solution.

The research group also performed a genetic analysis to find out more about the neuronal changes mediated by exercise.

Initially, they isolated RNA from a small cluster of neurons. Cells transcribe instructions on how to make a protein from a gene to RNA first. By measuring the level of gene transcription, they were able to estimate the extent of genetic action in the formulation of those instructions. This enabled them to figure out whether myokines exercised any influence over the activity of certain

neuronal genes.

They found many of the more actively expressed genes were involved in some fundamental processes of neural growth, maturation, neuronal connectivity (including the ones with muscle cells), and axon growth.

The result suggested exercise didn't only stimulate neuronal growth: it also enhanced the maturity of neurons and their functional abilities.

The team, therefore, wanted to investigate whether the physiological response to exercise could also augur well for neuronal function.

Effect of physical stress on nerves

Because of the physical contact between neurons and muscles, the movement of muscles exerts mechanical forces on the neurons' structure.

To check whether these forces could also affect the growth of neurons, the researchers set up mechanical stimulation experiments that tracked neurons' growth in the absence of myokines.

This time, the team cultured another set of motor neurons on a gel matrix containing small magnetic particles. When an external magnetic field was applied, the particles' movement mechanically stretched the neurons, reproducing the conditions in which they might experience mechanical forces during a workout.

They performed this test for 30 minutes every day.

The results were quite surprising. The researchers found that this mechanical stimulation greatly enhanced neuronal growth: the growth level of the mechanically exercised neurons was, on average, equivalent to those exposed to myokine stimulation.

Both groups of exercised neurons also grew significantly more than a set of control neurons that experienced no

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exercise at all.

Exercise as medicine

The findings have tremendous implications for developing exercise-based therapies to repair nerves, especially as they relate to nerve injuries and neurodegenerative diseases such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). By exploiting the crosstalk between muscles and neurons, researchers could develop innovative treatment strategies to promote the recovery of nerve cells and promote their healing by activating the muscles surrounding them.

The investigators stated in their paper that, in their understanding of the bi-directional signalling between muscles and nerves, their finding has practical implications in developing novel approaches for treating nerve injuries in which the nerve and muscle tissue are no longer communicating properly.

The team plans to explore the possibility of using targeted muscle stimulation to regenerate and grow neurons in a clinical setting, which could help redefine the role of exercise in medicine and general health promotion to precise therapeutic intervention for nerve repair. According to Raman, this is their first step towards understanding and controlling exercise as medicine.

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THE SCIENCE QUIZ

The twisted possibilities surrounding time travel

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1
The path an object traces as it moves through the four dimensions of spacetime is called its X. When X forms a closed loop in spacetime, the object can be said to be able to return to its past, i.e., time-travel. Name X.

QUESTION 2
As long as a communication signal travels at or under the speed of light, the receiver will receive it after the transmitter has sent it. But if the signal exceeds the speed of light, the receiver can receive it before it has been transmitted. What is the name for the hypothetical device capable of

doing the latter?

QUESTION 3

Name the physicist who shared the physics Nobel Prize in 2022 for an experiment he conducted in 1988. The experiment helped prove that if quantum physics is complete and non-deterministic, reality is also nonlocal, i.e., admitting action at a distance.

QUESTION 4

The grandfather paradox of time travel holds that if you travel to the past and kill your grandfather, your own existence shouldn't have been possible. Name the paradox that uses this argument to ask whether free will could be real in a world with time travel.

QUESTION 5

Name the interpretation of quantum

mechanics advanced by Hugh Everett that resolves the grandfather paradox by claiming that once you've killed your grandfather, you move into a new future different from the one before.

Answers to January 16 quiz:

1. Surface of the most distant point from which light can reach us – **Ans: Cosmic horizon**
2. Region outside the event horizon of a spinning black hole – **Ans: Ergosphere**
3. Name of surface limiting free travel of light – **Ans: Surface of last scattering**
4. Horizon relating spacetime's structure to black hole physics – **Ans: Killing horizon**
5. Times of day when sunlight is visible before/after the sun has risen/set – **Ans: Twilight**

Visual: **Jacobus Kapteyn**

First contact: Siddhartha Viswanathan | Dularchandra Kushwaha | Dalbeer Pharswan



Visual: Name this sports car first manufactured in 1981. It became famous when the *Back to the Future* films (1985-1990) used it as a time machine. CREDIT: KEVIN ABATO (CC BY-SA 2.5)

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



Water is dropped on the Palisades Fire in Mandeville Canyon on January 11 in Los Angeles. AP

Satellite projects aim to head off future wildfires

Agence France Presse

As Los Angeles firefighters battle the remaining hotspots more than a week into deadly blazes, scientists and engineers hope the growing availability of satellite data will help in the future.

Tech-focused groups are launching new orbiters as space launches get cheaper, while machine learning techniques will sift the torrent of information, fitting it into a wider picture of fire risk in a changing environment.

Satellites "can detect from space areas that are dry and prone to wildfire outbreaks, ... actively flaming and smouldering fires, as well as burn areas and smoke and trace gas emissions," said Clement Albergel, head of actionable climate information at the European Space Agency.

Different satellites have different roles depending on their orbit and sensor payload.

Low-earth orbit is generally less than 1,000 km above the surface. Satellites here offer high-resolution ground images, but see any given point only briefly as they sweep around the planet.

Geostationary satellites orbit at around 36,000 km, remaining over the same area on the earth's surface, allowing for continuous observation but usually at much lower resolution.

As climate change brings more wildfires encroaching on human-inhabited areas, the resolution can be crucial.

Based on satellite observations of Los Angeles, "it's very hard to determine" if a particular house is on fire, WKID Solutions' Natasha Stavros, a wildfire expert who has also worked at NASA, said.

Brian Collins, director of Colorado-based nonprofit Earth Fire Alliance, plans a new low-orbit satellite "constellation" to complement existing

Geostationary satellites orbit at around 36,000 km, remaining over the same area on the earth's surface, allowing for continuous observation but usually at much lower resolution

resources.

It will sport a sensor with a resolution of 5 m, much finer than ESA's current Sentinel-2 satellites that can see objects only 10 m wide.

This means "we're going to learn very quickly that there is more fire on the earth than we know about today, we're going to find very small fires," Collins predicted.

EFA aims to launch four satellites by the end of 2026 at a total cost of \$53 million.

It would take the whole planned swarm of 55, costing a total \$400 million, to reach Collins's aim of imaging every point on the earth at least once every 20 minutes.

Dozens of satellites in orbit could "both detect and track fires ... at a cadence that allows decisions to be made on the ground," Collins said.

Less grandiose efforts include Germany-based OroraTech, which on January 14 launched the first of at least 14 FOREST-3 nanosatellites.

The system will "deliver ultra-fast wildfire alerts and high-quality thermal data," chief executive Martin Langer said in a statement.

Additional data from all these new satellites would be "fantastic", ESA's Albergel said, but the large volume of information could prove problematic.

ESA's Sentinel-2 alone sends down one terabyte of data -- the storage capacity of a modern high-end laptop -- every day.

Collins said finding fire signs in such reams of data "is an excellent machine learning" problem. The data could ultimately help both predict new fire outbreaks and their progression, he added.

For feedback and suggestions
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