

Optional Subject Courses

Offline (Karol Bagh) & Live Online | English Medium



Drishti IAS

Geography

Mr. Rohit Wazir

23 December

Sociology

Mr. Praveen Pandey

23 December

Anthropology

Dr. CP Kaushik

23 December

Public Admin.

Mr. Rajeev N Choudhary

23 December

Philosophy

Dr. Ambuj Srivastav

23 December

Psychology

Mr. Soubik Sen

23 December

PSIR

Mr. Ashutosh Jha

6 January

History

Mr. Tauqeer Zafar

6 January

87501 87501



SENTHILBALAJI CASE

Give details of cases, witnesses: SC tells T.N.

STATES » PAGE 5

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

'Pak. ballistic missile programme a new threat'

WORLD » PAGE 12

PLACES OF WORSHIP ACT

Archaeologists should dig sites, not bigots

Judicial misdirection is adding fuel to fire

EDITORIAL » PAGE 6



INDIA'S RESILIENCE PLAN

New cables to boost undersea network

NEWS » PAGE 10

IN BRIEF



Avoid raking up temple-mosque disputes: RSS chief

NEW DELHI
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday expressed concern over the resurgence of temple-mosque disputes and advised people against raking up such issues. » Page 8

JD(U) backs Amit Shah, tells AAP chief to think positively

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Responding to former Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal's letter to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)] said the INDIA bloc parties cannot even imagine the kind of work done by Mr. Kumar for oppressed communities in Bihar.

JD(U) national working president and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Kumar Jha said in a response to Mr. Kejriwal on Friday that Un-

ion Home Minister Amit Shah had revealed the pages of history, which Congress leader Rahul Gandhi does not want to see.

'Leave prejudices'
In his letter to Mr. Kumar, the AAP leader had asked the Bihar Chief Minister to make his stand clear regarding Mr. Shah's statement allegedly demeaning Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

"I urge you to leave your prejudices and think positively about the progress of the country. The Constitution of this country is very strong," Mr. Jha said.

SC allows appeals against cap on interest on credit card dues

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday allowed appeals filed by banks challenging a 2008 National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) order, which held that charging over 30% interest on credit card dues amounted to unfair trade practice under the Consumer Protection Act.

A Bench of Justices Bela Trivedi and Satish Chandra Sharma pronounced the judgment on the batch of appeals. A copy of the

judgment is still awaited.

The NCDRC had passed the order in 2008 on whether banks could charge the credit card users interest at rates ranging from 36% to 49% per annum if there was any delay or default in payment within the time specified.

The commission was concerned with whether such percentages of interest were "usurious".

It finally concluded that charging interest rates in excess of 30% per annum "is an unfair trade practice".

Five-time CM of Haryana, Om Prakash Chautala, dies

Ashok Kumar
GURUGRAM

Five-time Haryana Chief Minister and Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) chief Om Prakash Chautala died at his residence here after a cardiac arrest on Friday. He was 89.

Chautala will be accorded a State funeral at the family's Teja Khera farmhouse in Sirsa at 3 p.m. on Saturday. The State government has announced three days of mourning and declared a public holiday on Saturday.

Cutting across political lines, leaders from all over the nation paid tributes to



OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA
1935-2024

the late leader. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on X, posted his old picture with Chautala expressing grief over his demise.

"He remained active in State politics for years and

made efforts to carry forward the works of Chaudhary Devi Lal [his father]," read the post.

Seven-time MLA
A seven-time MLA, Chautala made a significant contribution towards the formation of the INLD and was in jail for 19 months during the Emergency. He was Leader of the Opposition for around eight years and had raised his voice against the anti-people policies of different regimes.

Convicted in a case of illegal recruitment in January 2013, and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, Chautala had a fair share of ups and downs in his over five-decade-long political career, which was marred by several controversies. The INLD had blamed the Congress for hatching a conspiracy and implicating him in the case.

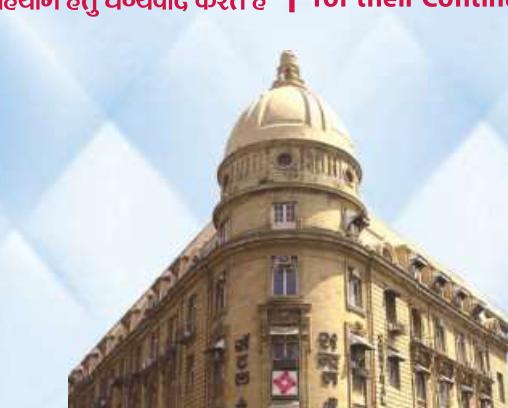
Sworn in as Chief Minister of Haryana five times, Chautala, the eldest son of the late Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal, had completed a full five-year term only once, from 2000-05. He was CM for the shortest span of five days in July 1990 and again for 15 days in March-April 1991.

Born in Sirsa's Chautala village on January 1, 1935, Chautala dropped out of school to make a career in politics, following in the footsteps of his father. Remembered by his former colleagues as a "strict administrator" and "a man of strong convictions", Chautala was known for his organisational skills and strong connection with grassroots workers. He was said to have an elephantine memory and remembered party workers by name. A great orator, Chautala spoke several languages, including Hindi, Sanskrit, and Urdu.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8



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No toll for DND Flyway users, says SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Commuters and ordinary residents won an important victory on Friday with the Supreme Court confirming an eight-year-old verdict of the Allahabad High Court that they need not pay toll to use the arterial 9.2 km-long Delhi-Noida Direct (DND) Flyway connecting Noida in Uttar Pradesh with south Delhi.

The judgment by a Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan marked the end of a 15-year-old legal battle which began when Noida residents moved the High Court against the toll, arguing that the concessionaire, Noida Toll Bridge Corporation Limited (NTBCL), had al-



The 9.2 km-long stretch connects Noida with south Delhi. FILE PHOTO

ready recovered the project costs.

"NTBCL has recovered the project costs and substantial profits, eliminating any justification for the continued imposition or collection of user fees or tolls," held Justice Kant, who authored the judgment.

In fact, the apex court found the selection of NTBCL, without following proper procedure and without giving other competitors any opportunity to bid, an "opaque device" resorted to in contravention of Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution.

"The contract awarded to NTBCL through the concession agreement by the State authorities and the New Okhla Industrial Development Authority (NOIDA) was unfair, unjust and inconsistent with constitutional norms," the court concluded.

It said NOIDA had exceeded its authority by delegating the power to levy fees or impose tolls to NTBCL, rendering such delegation invalid.

BJP shortlists names for all Assembly seats

Party will be at Centre for four more years, 'double-engine' govt. is what Delhiites want; won't stop existing AAP schemes, says Bidhuri

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva and MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri. FILE PHOTO

dents are looking towards the BJP to bring development to the city," he said.

Mr. Bidhuri reiterated that if his party wins, it will not stop the Delhi government's subsidised services, including electricity, water, and bus rides for women. Instead, the BJP would work towards improving the existing services.

"What is the point of providing free water if it is dirty or free bus rides if the bus system is outdated? Or announcing a scheme to provide monthly financial assistance to women if it is not implemented," asked the BJP MP.

AAP has been alleging that, if voted to power, the BJP will stop all the subsidies provided by the Delhi government. The BJP last held the reins of the Capital from 1993 to 1998.

AAP nominee from Mehrauli, convicted in Nov., replaced

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

AAP on Friday replaced its Mehrauli candidate Naresh Yadav, who was convicted last month in a Koran desecration case, with Mahender Chaudhary for the upcoming Assembly election.

On November 30, a court in Punjab's Malerkotla district sentenced Mr. Yadav, the sitting MLA of Mehrauli, to two years in prison in the 2016 case.

AAP national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak issued the party's fifth list and announced the new candidate.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Yadav posted on X, "After meeting [AAP national convener] Arvind Kejriwal, I told him I will not contest elections until I am honourably acquitted. The allegations against me are politically motivated. I will continue to serve the people of Mehrauli and... try my best to make Kejriwal the Chief Minister again."

**Office of
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER TAUNI DEVI DIVISION
H.P. Public Works Department, TAUNI DEVI 177023**
Telephone. 01972-278422, e-mail: ee-tou-hp@nic.in

Tender Notice

The Executive Engineer, Division, HP.PWD, Tauni Devi on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the online bids on percentage rate, electronic tendering system, in 2 Cover System for the under mentioned work from the eligible and approved Contractors/ Firms registered with HPPWD, Department.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs)	EMD (In Rs.)	Time limit	Cost of Bidding Documents
1.	C/o Yamuna, Ravi & Chenab Hostel at Sainik School Sujanpur Tihra Distt, Hamirpur (HP) (Sh:- Providing and laying of Anti-skid vitrified tiles in cadet dorms, distempering, repair and maintenance of doors and window etc.) Deposit work	96,57,616.00	1,29,000.00	Three Months	2000.00

Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: - The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted in online mode on website <https://htptenders.gov.in>. Bidder would be required to register in website which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPPWD, May obtain the same from the website: <https://htptenders.gov.in>. Digital Signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the digital signature issued from authorized Case can use the same in this tender.

Key Dates.

1. Date of Online Publication	27.12.2024 10.30AM
2. Document Download Start and End Date	27.12.2024 at 11.30 PM upto 02.01.2025 05.00PM
3. Bid Submission Start and End Date	27.12.2024 at 11.30 PM upto 02.01.2025 05.00PM
4. Physical Submission of EMD and Cost of Tender Document	03.01.2025 upto 10.30 HRS
5. Date of Technical Bid opening, Evaluation of technical Bid	03.01.2025 11.00 HRS
6. Date of Financial Bid Opening	06.01.2025 11.30 HRS

4 TENDER DETAILS.
The Tender documents shall be uploaded online in 2 Cover.
i) Cover 1: Shall contain scanned copies of all "Technical Documents/Eligibility information".
ii) Cover 2: Shall contain "BOQ/Financial Bid" where contractor will quote his offer for each item

5. Submission of Original Documents:- The Bidders are required to submit (a) original demand draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security/Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and other technical documents in the o/w **Executive Engineer HPPWD Division Tauni Devi as specified in Key dates Sr.No 4 on Tender Opening Date**, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive.

6. BID OPENING DETAILS: The bid shall be opened on 03.01.2025 at 11.00 HRS in the office of the Executive Engineer, Tauni Devi Division HP PWD Tauni Devi HP. By the authorized officer. In their interest the tenders are advised to be present along with original documents at the time of opening of tenders. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

7. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than 90 days after the deadline date for bid submission.

8. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The officer inviting tender shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

Executive Engineer
Tauni Devi Division,
HPPWD, Tauni Devi

HP / 4022/24-25

HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

DU undergraduate students may soon be able to complete a semester at foreign universities

Ashna Butani

NEW DELHI

From the next academic year, Delhi University (DU) students might have the option to complete a semester at a foreign university.

A proposal regarding the 'twinning programme', recommended by a committee constituted earlier this year, will be tabled for approval at the upcoming Academic Council meeting

on December 27.

Undergraduate students from the 2022-2023 batch onwards will have the option to complete their third, fifth or seventh semesters abroad, as per the panel's recommendations.

The credits earned by students at foreign institutes will be taken into account before they are awarded degrees by DU, said an official.

The panel has also recommended scholar-

ships for meritorious students from economically weaker backgrounds.

The university has around 90 Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with foreign institutes for exchange programmes, workshops, and seminars, among other activities.

DU's International Relations office will initiate collaborations with foreign universities for the programme, added the official.

Professor Amarjeet Lochan, Joint Dean, International Relations, said, "We are looking at signing at least 30 MOUs for the twinning programme with top institutes across the world. There is a thrust on institutes in Asia."

He added that under such MOUs, the semester fees in foreign institutes will be waived, but students might have to cover their accommodation and travel costs.

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE HONBLE X JUNIOR CIVIL JUDGE, CITY CIVIL COURT, A/C: HYDERABAD O.S. No.9 of 2022

Between: Shukumar ... Plaintiffs AND AIML Pharmaceuticals (India) LIMITED and others ... Defendants To:

1. AIML Pharmaceuticals (India) LIMITED, Rep. By Managing Director, Sh. K. K. Sharma
2. Sh. K. K. SHARMA, Chairman & Managing Director of AIML Pharmaceuticals (India) Limited
3. Mrs. Manjula Sharma, Director of AIML Pharmaceuticals (India) Limited
4. Mr. Pankaj Marwaha, Director of AIML Pharmaceuticals (India) Limited
5. Mr. S. P. Srinivasa, Director of AIML Pharmaceuticals (India) Limited
6. Asha Mata, Incentive Department, AIML Pharmaceuticals (India) Limited
All above named office at: AIML Pharmaceuticals (India) Limited, Manufacturers & Exporters of Pharmaceuticals Products, Regd. Office at 29944, Street No.17, Ranjeet Nagar, New Delhi-110008
Also at: Head Office at 2699, Street No.13, Ranjeet Nagar, New Delhi-110008
Also at: Manufacturing Unit-1, A-13/2, Naraina Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi-110028
Also at: Manufacturing Unit-11, Saini Mira, Ropar Nagar Road, Tehsil Nalagar, Dist. Sialkot, Himachal Pradesh-174101
... Defendants

Please take notice that the above-said O.S. No. 9 of 2022 has been filed before the Hon'ble X. Junior Civil Judge, City Civil Court at Hyderabad for recovery of money and the Hon'ble Court was pleased to permit issuance of notice through paper publication vide orders dated 30.10.2024 in O.S. No. 9 of 2022. The Hon'ble Court has posted the above-said matter on 06.01.2025 for your appearance in the matter. If no appearance is entered by you on 06.01.2025, the matter will be proceeded with in your absence and will be decided on merits.

(By Order of Hon'ble X. Junior Civil Judge, City Civil Court at Hyderabad in O.S. No. 9 of 2022)

Sd/- Ashish Samat, Advocate, H. No. 8-84/11, Second Floor, P.G. Road, Secunderabad, Ph +91 98598 85951

**PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJNA
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)**

The Chief Engineer (SZ) HPPWD Shimla on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the item rate bids, in electronic tendering system for construction of roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna for each of the following works including their maintenance for five years from the eligible and approved contractors registered with HPPWD/CPWD/R&T/Railways/Other State Govt/Central Govt. Agencies. Non registered bidders may submit bid, however, the successful bidder has to register in appropriate class with appropriate authority in HPPWD.

Sr. No. of Distt.	Name	Package No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (in lacs) Excluding 18%GST	Total cost (in lacs)	Period of completion on	Bid Security	Estimated Cost (in Lakh)	
								Const. Cost	Maint. cost
1.	Shimla	HP-09-354	C/o Balance work of Dhara Kokoi Changheri road km 0/0 to 7/720 (SH:- C/o R/B walls CD works, PCC Drain, PCC parapets, logo Sign Board M/T, KM Stone etc. and five years routine maintenance under ptk.HP09-354)	250.01	43.36	293.37	18 months	5	6
								3	7

1. Date of release of invitation for bids through e-procurement 20.12.2024
2. Cost of bid from cost of Bid Rs.5000 (non-refundable) in shape of Demand draft in favour of Executive Engineer HPPWD Division Rohru.
3. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission - The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website www.pmgstenders.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the website which is free of cost. For submission the bids, the bidder is required to have valid digital signature certificate (DSC) from one the authorised certifying authorities (CA) Aspiring bidder who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in PMGSY may obtain the same from the website: www.pmgstenders.gov.in. Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering bidders already processing the valid digital signature issued from authorised CAs can use the same in this tender.

* Non registered bidders may submit bids: the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

4. Submission of original documents: The bidders are required to submit (a) original demand draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security in approved form and (c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provision of clause 4.4B(a) (ii) ITB with Superintendent Engineering 14th circle HPPWD Rohru address and detail of office where to be submitted on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the bid either by registered post or by hand.

5. Last date/ Time for receipt of bid through e-tendering last date/time for receipt of bids through e-tendering on dated 26.12.2024 up to 6:00 PM.

6. The site for the work is available.

7. Only online submission of bids is permitted, therefore bids must be submitted online on website www.pmgstenders.gov.in. The technical qualification part of the bids will be opened online at 11:00 AM. on 27.12.2024 in the office of Superintendent Engineering 14th circle HPPWD Rohru by the authorized officers. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day at the same time.

8. The bidder is not required to quote his rate for routine maintenance. The rates to be paid for routine maintenance are indicated in the bill of quantities. Further, the payment for routine maintenance to the contractor shall be regulated based on his performance of maintenance activities.

9. All the required materials like Cement/Steel/Bitumen/Explosive etc shall be arranged by contractor at his own level.

10. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than ninety days after the deadline date for bid submission.

11. To qualify for a package of contract made up of this for which bids are invited in the same NIT, the bidder must demonstrate having experience and resources sufficient to meet the aggregate of the qualifying criteria for the individual contracts.

12. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The Employer shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any update, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

(Pramod Kumar Upretili)
Superintendent Engineer
14th circle HPPWD Rohru
Tel 01781241713.240921
email-hp-shi2@nic.in
For Chief Engineer HPPWD
Nigam Vihar Shimla-1712002

HP / 4017/24-25

HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
EASTERN EMBANKMENT DIVISION, BIRPUR
TENDER INVITATION NOTICE
Short Term Tender Notice No - 01/2024-25
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING
(Through e-Procurement mode Only www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)
Letter No. 1546 Birpur,

1. Details of work :-
- | Gr. No. | Name of work | Estimated cost (In Lakh) | Earnest Money (e-payment mode / Bank Guarantee) (In Lakh) | Cost of B.O.Q. Non Refundable (Payable only online mode) (In ₹) | Bid Processing Fee Payable to Belton (Non Refundable) (Payable only online mode) (In ₹) | Date of Completion |
|---------|--|--------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 01 | A.E.Work for D/S of spur km 23.52 of EAB up to Jungle corner and d/s of Jungle corner. | 442.37000 | 8.84800 | 10000.00 | 5900.00 | 15.05.2025 |
| 02 | A.E.Work between spur no. 02 & 04 at behind Chatra Kosi colony. | 202.59000 | 4.05200 | 10000.00 | 3540.00 | 15.05.2025 |
| 03 | A.E.Work for spur no -BD & loop between spur 8C & BD of Pulegauda. | 370.36000 | 7.40800 | 10000.00 | 5900.00 | 15.05.2025 |
| 04 | A.E.Work for spur no-09 of Pulegauda | 211.85000 | 4.23700 | 10000.00 | 3540.00 | 15.05.2025 |
| 05 | A.E.Work for spur no -12 of Pulegauda | 839.39000 | 16.78800 | 10000.00 | 5900.00 | 15.05.2025 |
| 06 | A.E.Work for spur no -13 of Pulegauda | 503.79000 | 10.07600 | 10000.00 | 5900.00 | 15.05.2025 |
| 07 | A.E.Work for spur no 21 of Nepal Bundh | 376.19000 | 7.52400 | 10000.00 | 5900.00 | 15.05.2025 |
| 08 | A.E.Work for spur no-50 & 51 of Nepal Bundh. | 326.51000 | 6.53100 | 10000.00 | 5900.00 | 15.05.2025 |
| 02 | Officer Inviting Bids: | | | | | |
| 03 | Date of issue of Notice Inviting Bid | | | | | |
| 04 | Date and time for Download/Upload of Tender Document (Bid) | | | | | </td |

Delhi air gets slightly better, still remains worst in India

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality improved marginally on Friday even as the city continued to remain the most polluted in the country for the fifth consecutive day.

The Capital's air quality index (AQI) reading on Friday was 429 ('severe'), slightly better than 451 ('severe plus') recorded a day earlier, said the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Such highly polluted air "affects healthy people" and "seriously impacts" those with existing diseases, it added.

As per data, air pollution in the city was over 17 times the safe limit prescribed by the World Health Organization.

The Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi has forecast the AQI to improve further on Saturday.

AAP to 'expose' BJP by taking Nadda speech to Purvanchalis

After Sanjay Singh, Kejriwal accuses BJP chief of calling people from Purvanchal 'Bangladeshis and Rohingya'; BJP says AAP chief opposed free treatment for people from Bihar in the past, and the L-G had to revoke the ban after opposition

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Friday alleged that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief J.P. Nadda had in the Rajya Sabha called people from Purvanchal "Bangladeshis and Rohingya" and AAP will take his comments to the Purvanchal community across Delhi.

Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh will also camp overnight in different areas in the city with sizeable Purvanchali population to "expose" the BJP, Mr. Kejriwal said.

Hitting back, the BJP accused the AAP chief of a U-turn having opposed peo-



AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and other party leaders addressing a press conference at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Friday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

ple from Purvanchal coming and getting treatment in Delhi in the past. "Today Arvind Kejriwal is trying to show himself as a supporter of Purvanchal's people, but they have not forgotten his statement of September 30, 2019, when he said

"Bihar come to Delhi with a 500-rupee ticket, get ₹5 lakh worth of free treatment, and leave," said Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva.

He added that "the Lieutenant-Governor had to re-vote the ban after strong

opposition from the BJP".

On Tuesday, Mr. Nadda said in the Rajya Sabha during a discussion that the Constitution has provision for the deletion of people's names from electoral rolls. "Also, it has to be seen that if they (AAP) were in power for so long on the votes of Rohingya and Bangladeshis," he said.

Responding to this in the House, Mr. Singh had accused the BJP national president of calling people from Purvanchal "who have been living in Delhi for 40-odd years and building Delhi with their sweat and blood" as Rohingya and Bangladeshis.

Conspiracy, says AAP
Addressing party workers, Mr. Kejriwal on Friday

brought up Mr. Nadda's speech again, calling it a "well-planned conspiracy" against an entire community. "On the one hand, BJP leaders brand Purvanchalis as Rohingya and Bangladeshis; on the other, they attempt to strip them of their citizenship," he said.

The former Delhi CM urged the Purvanchali community not to trust BJP workers. "Do not show your voter card or share any details with them. There is a strong possibility that they are collecting this information to remove your name from voter lists," he said.

Mr. Kejriwal said AAP will show the video of Mr. Nadda's comments to "unite Purvanchalis against BJP's nefarious agenda".



Police personnel standing guard after a stampede-like situation occurred in Meerut on Friday. PTI

Huge crowds at 'Shiv katha' in Meerut, injuries in stampede

Press Trust of India
MEERUT

Surging crowds at the entry gate of a congregation of a religious leader here on Friday led to some women reportedly being injured.

Hundreds of people had gathered at the spot being addressed by preacher Pradeep Mishra, who recites the 'Shiv katha'.

The news of the incident spread with some people terming it a 'stampede', but police and district ad-

ministration officials denied it. "Some women fell and sustained minor injuries," Senior Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada said.

He added that police personnel present at the spot helped them and provided first aid.

"As per the information, there was a crowd surge near the entry gate... There are no reports of any casualty," Meerut District Magistrate Deepak Meena said.

Remark on Gyanvapi: HC refuses to quash FIR against DU assistant prof.

Soibam Rocky Singh
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has refused to quash a May 2022 FIR registered against an assistant professor at Hindu College, Delhi University, over his "objectionable" post on social media over a "Shivling" which was reported to have been found at the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi.

Justice Chandra Dhari Singh observed that the

professor, Ratan Lal, has "created disturbance of the harmony of the society and the said tweet/post was made with the intention to hurt the sentiments of a large number of the society".

No right'
"No person being a professor, teacher, or an intellectual has the right to make such type of comments, tweets or posts as the freedom of speech and expression or any

type of freedom is not absolute," the judge cautioned on December 17.

On May 14, 2022, Mr. Lal wrote a post on X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook accounts regarding the presence of "Shivling" in the mosque.

Following the post, a person named Shiwal Bhalla filed a complaint, and on May 18, 2022, a case was registered under Section 153A (promotion of enmity between different groups) and

295A (attempt to insult the religious beliefs) of the Indian Penal Code.

Mr. Lal was arrested on May 20, 2022, and granted bail by a local court a day later.

In his plea to quash the FIR, Mr. Lal said his "promotion was on hold", with the college principal stating that "the FIR was the reason".

He submitted that the post in question was written by him "with all the sense of responsibility as

a historian".

Mr. Lal said he had "no intention" to hurt the religious sentiments of any person or group.

Intent to hurt'

However, the public prosecutor opposed the petition by saying that the social media posts had "created hatred in the society".

The prosecutor alleged that the post's contents show that "there was a clear intent to hurt senti-

ments of the believers of Lord Shiva and the society at large". Even after registration of the FIR, Mr. Lal has continued to make comments on social media platforms, the prosecutor added.

"It is obvious that the act and remarks made by the petitioner are contrary to the beliefs and customs followed and practised by the worshippers and believers of Lord Shiva/Shiva Linga," the judge said.

"Thus, the same shows that whatever content was posted by the petitioner not only hurts the religious sentiments of the complainant but also promotes hatred, enmity and communal tensions among two different communities," Justice Singh added.

The court said the petitioner should be "more conscious" as his statements carry weight and power to influence others.

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+ C.T. Ravi's arrest prima facie illegal'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Observing that the police *prima facie* failed to follow procedure in arresting C.T. Ravi, BJP MLC, in the case of allegedly using a derogatory word against Minister for Women and Child Development Laxmi Hebbalakar inside the Legislative Council, the High Court of Karnataka on Friday evening directed the police to immediately release him from custody.

However, the court directed Mr. Ravi to make himself available as and when summoned by the investigation officer for the

probe.

However, the court directed Mr. Ravi to make himself available for the investigation as and when summoned on the complaint lodged by Ms. Hebbalakar.

Justice M.G. Uma passed the interim order on a petition filed by Mr. Ravi.

Since the offences alleged against him attract imprisonment of less than seven years, the police were required to issue notice to him under Section 35 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita for appearing for questioning before arresting him, the court said.

Do not arrest K.T. Rama Rao till Dec. 30: Telangana HC

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Former Minister and BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao, against whom the ACB registered a corruption case over releasing funds for Formula-E races under the BRS government, got some relief with the Telangana High Court on Friday directing investigators not to arrest him till December 30. Justice N. Shravan Kumar Venkat, however, instructed him to cooperate with the investigators. Posting the matter to December 27 for hearing, the judge issued notices to ACB and Principal Secretary of Municipal Administration and Urban Development. Senior counsel said the criminal case was not maintainable as the police "did not conduct a preliminary inquiry".

Timings
DELHI
SATURDAY, DEC. 21
RISE 07:10 SET 17:30
RISE 23:21 SET 11:34
SUNDAY, DEC. 22
RISE 07:11 SET 17:30
RISE 00:00 SET 12:01
MONDAY, DEC. 23
RISE 07:11 SET 17:31
RISE 00:14 SET 12:27

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 23 05
Safdarjung 23 05
Palam 21 07

Delhi Palam Today 22°C The dry weather to prevail. Moderate to shallow fog will occur in cold morning. Day will be pleasant. Night also will be cold and hazy.

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

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THE HINDU
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Kiran PB
IPS
(National Interview Topper, 2022)

P K Sidharth Ramkumar
IAS Officer Trainee
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NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

THE HINDU REWIND 2024 TRIVIA QUIZ

DAY 21

1. Which dance form, originating in New York City in the 1970s as part of hip-hop culture, made its Olympic debut at Paris 2024?
2. Which state in India became the first to leverage blockchain technology in its efforts to combat gender-based violence (GBV) by launching the Shakti application?
3. Who became the most expensive player in IPL history after being bought for ₹27 crore by Lucknow Super Giants at the mega auction held in Jeddah in November 2024?

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Answer to yesterday's quiz:
1. India
2. Maharaja
3. Vacuum cleaner

IN BRIEF



ASI surveys reopened temple, wells in U.P.'s Sambhal

A four-member team of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) undertook a survey of five shrines on Friday. These include the recently reopened temple and 19 wells in Sambhal. This comes after the Sambhal district administration wrote to the ASI asking for carbon dating of the Bhasma Shankar temple, which had been closed since communal riots in 1978. Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Vandana Mishra visited the temple and ordered the installation of CCTV cameras. A live feed will be available with the Kotwali police station.

Gujarat 'ponzi' scam: accused got ₹360 crore from investors

The Gujarat police's probe into a 'ponzi' scam has revealed that people had invested ₹ 360 crore in four years into four bank accounts of absconding main accused Bhupendrasinh Zala, who used ₹100 crore to buy 17 properties, an officer said on Friday. Properties worth ₹100 crore, five cars worth ₹9 crore have been seized as part of the probe against Mr. Zala, CID Crime Superintendent of Police Himanshu Verma said. A lookout circular has been issued against Mr. Zala, Mr. Verma told reporters. The alleged scam was unearthed in November when the CID found suspicious transactions in the bank accounts of Mr. Zala.

Idol theft: filing of fresh FIRs to replace those that went missing is shocking, says SC

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Secretary, Home Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, to be present virtually in January 2025 to explain the disappearance of 41 files related to FIRs in idol theft cases from police custody.

A Bench headed by Justice A.S. Oka said it was 'shocking' that the police simply registered fresh FIRs in 11 of the cases.

"The moment you file fresh FIRs, it becomes a defence for the accused. How can fresh FIRs be registered," Justice Oka asked senior advocate Sanjay Hegde, appearing for the State. The court recorded the information that 27 of the 41 files were traced, though no steps were taken in the case of three.

Advocate G.S. Mami, ap-

Directs T.N. Home Secretary to file affidavit and be present virtually for hearing on Jan. 31

pearing for petitioner Elephant G. Rajendran, said the thefts happened several years ago. "The idols involved are worth over ₹300 crore in the international market. There is no progress in these cases. This is sheer negligence," he said.

The Bench directed the State Home Secretary to file a personal affidavit before January 27, 2025, while listing the case on January 31, 2025.

The Supreme Court had issued notices to the State Home Secretary, the Director-General of Police (DGP), the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Commissioner, and

CM announces judicial inquiries into Parbhani violence, Beed murder

Fadnavis vows to bring to justice those responsible for lawlessness in Maharashtra irrespective of their political affiliations, urges people to refrain from viewing such incidents through caste lens

Abhinav Deshpande

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday announced judicial inquiries into the recent violence in Parbhani district and the murder of a sarpanch in Beed district, and vowed to bring to justice those responsible for lawlessness in the State.

The government has also decided to provide ₹10 lakh each to the families of Santosh Deshmukh, sarpanch of Massajog village, and Somnath Suryawanshi, who died in judicial custody following his arrest in connection with the violence in Parbhani.

Mr. Fadnavis informed the Assembly that a Special Investigation Team led by an officer of the Inspector General rank is probing Deshmukh's murder, and an additional judicial inquiry will be completed within three to six months.

"The abduction and murder of the sarpanch is a



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis arrives for the winter session of the Assembly at Vidhan Bhavan in Nagpur on Friday. PTI

heinous crime and those responsible, irrespective of their political affiliations, will be brought to justice," the CM said.

He said Deshmukh was abducted on December 9 at a toll naka by a group of assailants and beaten up inside a car. The attack is believed to be linked to an extortion bid targeting an energy project in the area.

"Before the murder, the project manager lodged a complaint alleging that ₹2 crore was demanded to allow the project to continue," Mr. Fadnavis said, adding

that those involved would face charges under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act.

The incident has taken a caste angle with Deshmukh belonging to the Maratha community while some of the accused, including former NCP tehsil chief Vishnu Chate, hailing from the Other Backward Classes. The CM urged people to refrain from viewing the crime through a caste lens and assured that justice would be delivered.

Mr. Fadnavis said a judicial probe will also be con-

ducted into the violence in Parbhani, which was triggered by the desecration of a replica of the Constitution on December 10, in order to dispel doubts surrounding the incident.

'No conspiracy'

The CM clarified that "there is no conspiracy" as the man behind the act of vandalism has been receiving treatment for mental health issues since 2012.

"He acted alone and was not part of the Sakal Hindu Samaj's march held earlier that day. This is not a Hindu versus Dalit issue. Ambedkar belongs to everyone," Mr. Fadnavis said.

He defended the police response, stating that only those involved in rioting were apprehended. On Suryawanshi's death, the CM referred to a magistrate report confirming no torture in custody. "We must reflect on whether lawlessness should be tolerated. Judicial inquiries will provide clarity and ensure accountability," he said.

DMK will win over 200 seats in T.N. Assembly poll: CM

The Hindu Bureau

COIMBATORE/ERODE

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday said that though the DMK had set a target of winning 200 seats in the 2026 Assembly election, he realised that the party would definitely win more than that.

Responding to a query from reporters in Coimbatore whether the Erode (East) Assembly seat – which fell vacant after the death of Congress legislator E.V.K.S. Elangovan recently – would be won by the DMK in the byelection, when announced, he said that the DMK was part of the INDIA bloc, which would undoubtedly win the seat.

When asked whether the seat would be allotted to the Congress, he said a decision would be taken only after consulting party leaders.

On the row over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks against B.R. Ambedkar in Parliament, and the subsequent protest, he said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi would legally deal with the case registered against him.

To a query on the 'One Nation, One Election' Bill, He further said that though Cyclone Fungal had brought unexpected heavy rainfall, proactive measures taken by the government had saved several lives.



CM M.K. Stalin distributing assistance to beneficiaries in Erode on Friday. M. GOVARTHAN

Mr. Stalin said the legislation would bury democratic values and termed it "nasty and tragic".

'EPS spreading lies'

Earlier, at a government function in Erode, the Chief Minister accused AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami of spreading lies as he was unable to accept the DMK government's popularity and success in implementing welfare schemes.

"Mr. Palaniswami is free to criticise, but he must not resort to baseless allegations..." Mr. Stalin said.

He further said that though Cyclone Fungal had brought unexpected heavy rainfall, proactive measures taken by the government had saved several lives.

Bitten by police officer during protest, claims Assam Cong. leader

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

the Additional DGP heading the Idol Theft Wing in February 2023.

Mr. Rajendran had sought a free and fair investigation into the circumstances leading to the disappearance of the files. Mr. Mani had said the missing files pertained to the theft of antique temple idols, precious artefacts, jewels, and other properties.

The petitioner had alleged that the disappearance was the result of a "serious conspiracy" among higher police officers, the bureaucracy, and the idol mafia.

Mr. Rajendran had quoted the Madras High Court saying in a 2019 case that "Tamil Nadu is known for its majestic temples...Idols consecrated in its temples have their significance and rich heritage. Some of them date back 1,500 to 2,000 years."

Demanding justice, Con-

gress shared a video of him narrating the incident and showing where he was "bitten". Mr. Mahanta said he knew the police officer but could not recall his name.

After the incident, he and some other party leaders were taken to a hockey stadium and detained.

'Took me to hospital'

"The police took me to a hospital after repeated requests. A doctor prescribed medicines and injections. I asked the police to buy the medicines as the pain was inflicted by one of them. They did not get me the medicines but took me back to where I was detained," Mr. Mahanta said.

The police did not react to his allegations. Senior police officers did not respond to calls or messages.

Among the Congress leaders detained was the party's State president Bhupen Kumar Borah.

She added that "as it is, the southern States are

ONO Bill will deepen the 'north-south fault lines', says Chowdhury

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Noting that the sharpest reaction to the 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) Bill had come from the southern States, veteran journalist and author Neerja Chowdhury on Friday questioned the need for going ahead with the legislation that will deepen the "north-south fault lines".

Speaking at the 15th Tar-kunde Memorial Lecture, Ms. Chowdhury said: "In the consultation that the Law Commission held with political parties in 2017, the sharpest reaction to the proposed Bill had come from the southern States, and of course, we heard leaders like M.K. Stalin (Tamil Nadu Chief Minister) expressing himself very sharply against this proposed Bill".

Ms. Chowdhury went on to say that "as the Bill is worded", simultaneous elections cannot be rolled out before 2034.

Noida airport: U.P. CM raises compensation for farmers

Press Trust of India

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday announced an increase in land compensation rates for farmers providing their land for the Noida International Airport in Jawar area of Gautam Buddha Nagar district.

The compensation rate has been raised by ₹1,200 per square metre, fulfilling long-standing demands from the farmers, according to an official statement from the Chief Minister's Office.

Mr. Adityanath held an open dialogue with farmers at his official residence and announced the increase in the compensation rate under the third phase of the airport project from ₹3,100 to ₹ 4,300 per square metre, along with additional interest as per norms.

'Gaganyaan-G1 to test capabilities ahead of manned flight'



S. Unnikrishnan Nair, Director, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, with the CARE module and a scale model of HLVM3. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

about the upcoming HLVM3-G1 mission, Dr. Unnikrishnan Nair said the integration of the crew module, which will fly aboard the mission, is progressing at the VSSC, which is ISRO's lead facility for launch vehicles at Thumba here.

Once the crew module is ready, it will be transferred to the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre (URSC), Bengaluru, for integration with the service module.

Orbital module

The service module and the crew module together make up the orbital module. "After a series of tests including thermo-vacuum tests at the URSC, the orbital module will be transported to Sriharikota to be placed aboard the launch vehicle," said Dr. Unnikrishnan Nair, who was the first Director of the Human Space Flight

Centre (HSFC), Bengaluru. The HLVM3-G1 mission will place the orbital module in a 170 km x 430 km elliptical orbit around the earth. It will subsequently be manoeuvred into a circular orbit. Once the orbital module de-orbits, the crew module, which has enhanced safety margins and multiple redundant

systems, will separate for controlled re-entry into the earth's atmosphere and splashdown in the Bay of Bengal.

End-to-end mission

The HLVM3-G1 mission is designed to validate technologies and abilities needed for a manned mission. "It is designed as an end-

to-end mission covering lift-off, injection into orbit, 'circularisation' of orbit, re-entry and splashdown," Dr. Unnikrishnan Nair said. The G1 mission will also flight-test the humanoid robot Vyommitra developed by the ISRO Inertial Systems Unit (IISU).

Human-rating

The ISRO recently announced that the human-rating of the LVM3 vehicle has been completed and all systems have been "tested for enhanced reliability." The related tests had taken close to three years, according to Dr. Unnikrishnan Nair.

The launch vehicle components – the S200 solid rocket boosters, the L110 liquid stage and the C32 cryogenic stage – have arrived at Sriharikota after clearing the human-rating process.

Compared to the conventional LVM3 (formerly known as Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk-III), the HLVM3 has distinct features. "The aerodynamic configuration is different. Normally, you have a bulbous payload fairing atop the vehicle protecting the satellite. Here, we have the crew escape system at the very top. Inside it will be the orbital module. The crew module is connected to the crew escape system. The overall height of the vehicle has increased by around 10 metres to 53 metres," Dr. Unnikrishnan Nair said.

The ISRO is planning two more uncrewed missions – G2 and G3 – before the actual manned flight. These two test missions will be identical in their parameters, Dr. Unnikrishnan Nair said.

NIA raids in 5 States to probe revival bid by Naxal organisation

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday searched multiple locations in five States in connection with a case relating to attempts at revival of the banned CPI (Maoist) outfit, according to an official statement.

Extensive searches were conducted at the premises of suspects at two locations in Patiala and Sri Muktsar Sahib districts of Punjab, four locations in Manesar and Gurgaon districts of Haryana, two locations in New Delhi, and one location each in Patna district of Bihar and Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, the statement issued by the NIA.

NIA investigations have revealed that long-time associates of the outfit were being provided funds from the eastern regional bureau to recruit cadres for the northern region.

Tiki Rajwi

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Gaganyaan-G1, the first of three uncrewed test missions that will lead up to India's maiden human spaceflight, is designed to mimic, end-to-end, the actual flight and validate critical technologies and capabilities including the Human-rated Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (HLVM3), S. Unnikrishnan Nair, Director, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), has said.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) began the 'stacking' or assembly, of HLVM3 at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, on December 18, coinciding with the tenth anniversary of the sub-orbital Crew Module Atmospheric Re-entry Experiment (CARE) mission of 2014.

Speaking to *The Hindu*



M.T. Vasudevan Nair.

**Writer M.T.
Vasudevan
Nair in critical
condition**

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

Renowned writer and Malayalam filmmaker M.T. Vasudevan Nair has been hospitalised in Kozhikode and remains in critical condition on Friday.

According to the initial medical bulletin released by Baby Memorial Hospital, the diagnosis is heart failure. He is receiving intensive medical support to optimise cardiac function and stabilise vital parameters, it added.

Speaking to reporters outside the hospital, Forest Minister A.K. Saseendran said, "Kerala anxiously awaited the latest news on the iconic writer. Let the doctors say the pluses and minuses. There is no space for any speculation. We should all pray for Mr. Nair's well-being," he said.

The 91-year-old was under intensive care treatment at the hospital after he was admitted with congestive heart failure earlier. A multi-disciplinary board of doctors were treating him. For decades, Mr. Nair has been the presiding deity of Malayalam fiction.

Provide details of cases, witnesses against Tamil Nadu Minister Senthilbalaji: SC

The court order comes on the basis of allegations raised by ED that the Minister was trying to derail the trial; Central agency says key witnesses had previously worked under Senthilbalaji

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed Tamil Nadu to place on record details of cases and witnesses arraigned against the Minister of Electricity, Prohibition and Excise, V. Senthilbalaji, who is an accused in money-laundering proceedings linked to a cash-for-jobs 'scam'.

A Bench headed by Justice A.S. Oka also ordered the State to place on the record the number and details of witnesses in the cases involving the Minister, and how many of them were victims and public servants.

The order came on the basis of allegations raised by both the Enforcement



We want to know from the State how many victims there are... With this man occupying the position of a Cabinet Minister, what will happen to these victims?

SUPREME COURT BENCH

ber 26.

"We want to know from the State how many victims there are... There may be a large number.. With this man occupying the position of a Cabinet Minister, what will happen to these victims?" Justice Oka asked while impleading the State through the Home Department as a respondent in the top court proceedings.

The court listed the case

for hearing on January 15. Mr. Mehta said Mr. Senthilbalaji had wielded power even in jail in the role of a Minister without a portfolio.

'Wield power'

"There are a lot of people who wield a lot of power in any State, and without portfolio," senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Mr. Senthilbalaji along with advocate Ram Shanker, responded.

Mr. Mehta retorted that "this is a court, not a political platform".

In a recent affidavit, the Central agency had pointed out that some of the key witnesses cited in the prosecution complaint had previously worked under Mr. Senthilbalaji when he was Transport Minister.

Former Minister Antony Raju appears in court over 'evidence tampering' in narcotics case

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



alleged incriminating undergarment, to Mr. Raju, representing Andrew Salvatore, as part of a conspiracy to insulate the accused from legal jeopardy.

They alleged that Mr. Raju tampered with the undergarment and returned it to the court clerk, stating that it was a crucial material object in the trial as part of a criminal design.

Eventually, a district court found the Australian national guilty of the crime. It sentenced him to 10 years of imprisonment under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. In 1991, the Kerala High Court overturned the sentence, stating that a practical test had proven that the undergarment allegedly used to conceal the narcotic did not physically fit Andrew Salvatore.

Then in 2005 the police in Australia arrested Andrew Salvatore on drug charges.

the suspect's belongings as evidence on record to a magistrate court in Thiruvananthapuram. They included his undergarment, which the police submitted as a material exhibit allegedly used to conceal the narcotic.

While under judicial remand, the Australian national procured magistrate's sanction to release his personal belongings unrelated to the prosecution from the court's material objects room.

Raju's 'role'

The police argued that the court clerk, Jose, released the articles, including the

The police submitted

Brazilian filmmaker Pedro Freire's *Malu* wins Suvarna Chakoram award at IFFK

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Brazilian filmmaker Pedro Freire's *Malu*, a film on the tumultuous relationship of three generations of women inspired from his mother's life, won the Golden Crow Pheasant (Suvar-

na Chakoram) award for the best film at the 29th International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) that concluded here on Friday. The award carries a cash prize of ₹20 lakh, memento, and certificate.

Iranian filmmaker Farshad Hashemi won the Sil-

ver Crow Pheasant (Rajatha Chakoram) award for the best director for the film *Me, Maryam, the Children and 26 Others*. The film also won the Network for Promotion of Asian Cinema (NETPAC) Award for the best Asian film in the competition.

Bengaluru celebrates literature, art and cinema with Lit for Life Dialogue

Nalme Nachiyar
BENGALURU

It was an evening of insightful conversations and stimulating exchange of ideas at the Lit for Life Dialogue 2025, which witnessed a packed auditorium at Christ (Deemed to be University), in Bengaluru on Friday.

A prelude to *The Hindu* Lit for Life 2025 literature festival, the Dialogues are being held for the first time in Bengaluru and Hyderabad, as a teaser to the main event in Chennai on January 19 and 20, 2025.

The Bengaluru Dialogue began with a video message by Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson of The Hindu Group of Publications and Founder and Chair of *The Hindu* Lit for Life.

"It's an exciting chapter



Book talk: Author Anita Nair, right, with Jayapriya Vasudevan at *The Hindu* Lit for Life Dialogue 2025, in Bengaluru. K. MURALI KUMAR

for us as we build on our

relationship with the peo-

ple of the city [Bengaluru], bringing distinguished writers, creative thinkers, and inspiring intellectuals to interact with an engaged audience," she said.

The evening began with acclaimed author Anita Nair speaking to Jayapriya Vasudevan about her new

art. Dwelling on his humble beginnings in Kerala's Kilimanoor town, Mr. Regu spoke of how his formative days and his interactions with the people of rural Kerala blended into his art. "Every artist has a specific identity they lend to their work. My themes revolve around rural life," he said.

A life in cinema

Legendary actor and filmmaker Amol Palekar's interaction with film writer Balaji Vittal was a fitting end to the evening as they gave a glimpse of the former's memoir, *Viewfinder*. Mr. Palekar spoke of his unconventional choice of pursuing a life in fine arts, his accidental entry into theatre and the lasting impression left behind by his mentors in cinema. The event also saw book signings by Ms. Nair and Mr. Palekar.

A.P. woman receives partially decomposed body in a parcel with ₹1.36 crore demand

Rajulapudi Srinivas
BHIMAVARAM

In a shocking incident, a woman, Sagi Tulasi, received a dead body as parcel at her home in Yendagandi village in Undi mandal of Andhra Pradesh.

Ms. Tulasi, who asked a philanthropist to extend financial help for the construction of her house, got a parcel on Thursday, in which the partially decomposed body of a male person was stuffed. The parcel also had a letter with a demand for over ₹1.36 crore claiming it to be the compounded amount of a loan taken years ago. The letter

warned of severe consequences if the amount was not paid.

Husband missing

Tulasi's husband has been missing for the last 13 years and she has been staying alone in the village. She reportedly has a property dispute with her sister Revathi.

"The parcel she received was a wooden box in which the decomposed body was stuffed in. We are trying to identify the body and photographs of the victim have been sent to all police stations in the State and circulated on various social media platforms," West Godavari district Su-

perintendent of Police Adnan Nayeen Asmi told *The Hindu* on Friday.

The woman received the body around 5 p.m. on Thursday. But, the family came to Undi police station around 9 p.m. and the issue came to light on Friday. Police are investigating as to why the family members approached the police four hours after they received the body, he said.

No courier involved

The parcel was not booked through any courier service, but was delivered by an auto driver. Efforts are on to trace the person who had in September 2024 sent two parcels that con-

tained tiles and painting material to Tulasi, the SP said.

"Revathi's husband Siddharth Varma, who was with the family members for sometime after receiving the parcel, has absconded since Thursday night. We are trying to trace him," he said. Post-mortem would be done to ascertain whether it was a murder or death due to natural causes.

"We are trying to find out about the origins of the body and how it came to be delivered, and the auto driver who delivered the parcel. Eleven teams have been constituted to investigate the case," the SP said.

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 21.12.2024 at 11.00 hrs onwards.

**Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Building), Assam,
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Janasanyog /C/5418/ 24/21-Dec-24



Frosty and bitter

Parliament needs to be more productive, not sidetracked by barbs

The first winter session of 18th Lok Sabha ended on December 20 as one of the least productive and most acrimonious in history. The conflict between the government and the Opposition degenerated into a scuffle on the penultimate day, followed by absurd allegations and police reports. The Opposition sent a notice for a motion of no confidence in Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice-President of India Jagdeep Dhankhar, which was rejected by the Deputy Chairman. The acrimony peaked with the Opposition turning a reference by Home Minister Amit Shah to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar into a stick to beat the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with. Mr. Shah's mis-spoken remarks were taken out of context by the Opposition which feels that it is par for the course. After all, the BJP had made ridiculous allegations about the Congress party's supposed link with anti-India forces abroad to stall Parliament proceedings for several days earlier. Productivity in the Rajya Sabha was 40%, as it met for 43 hours and 27 minutes of the schedule. The Lok Sabha functioned for 54.5% of its scheduled time. Both the Houses witnessed protests from the treasury and Opposition sides over issues such as the alleged interference of U.S. billionaire George Soros in Indian politics, and the U.S. government's actions against the Adani Group.

The session was scheduled to take up 16 Bills in the legislative business and the first batch of supplementary grants under the financial business. Of the 16 Bills, only one Bill, the Bharatiya Vayu Vidheyak, 2024, significant for the civil aviation sector, was passed in both Houses. The Rajya Sabha passed the Boilers Bill and the Oil-fields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, bringing major changes in the industrial laws governing large furnaces and boilers and the petroleum sector. Other than the Appropriation Bills as part of the supplementary demands for grants, the Lok Sabha discussed and passed the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, the Railways (Amendment) Bill and the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill. The debates saw Opposition members asking the government to protect the public sector banking system, ensure the safety of rail passengers and employees and bring in transparency in the allocation of funds to States hit by natural calamities. The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, that aim to achieve simultaneous elections in the country, were introduced and referred to a Joint Committee of Parliament. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made statements in both Houses on India-China relations. The winter session demonstrated the need for an urgent restoration of parliamentary norms and basic decency in exchanges between political opponents.

Crime and shame

The stigma and impunity attached to sexual assault must end

The horrors will never go away, and Gisèle Pelicot has got only a semblance of closure after a French court sentenced her former husband to 20 years in prison for committing and orchestrating mass rapes of her for almost a decade. The 72-year-old Dominique Pelicot admitted in court that he had drugged Ms. Pelicot, 72, for years, before raping her, and recruiting strangers online to violate her as she was deeply asleep. In all, 51 people, aged between the late 20s and 70s, assaulted her as she lay in a drug-induced stupor, and have got away with punishment ranging from three to 15 years, less than the terms sought by prosecutors. The evidence, photographs and films, was stored in Dominique Pelicot's computer and shown in court to shock disbelief; the crime itself unravelled in 2020 after he was being probed for another misdemeanour, filming women inappropriately. But in all this, Ms. Pelicot's brave stand – to waive anonymity and requesting a public trial – and boldly stating that "it is not us who should feel shame, but them", struck a chord. People all across France, and the world, have followed the over three-month trial, marched on the streets and held demonstrations to seek changes in law for sexual crimes against women, and also the overturning of societal perceptions and toxic patriarchal behaviour.

Ms. Pelicot said she had led the fight for her daughters and grandchildren and also "unrecognised victims whose stories often remain in the shadows". She hoped that by opening the doors of the trial, and despite her ordeal, "society could take hold of the debates that took place there". Her case has sparked fierce debates on abuse and the aftermath. Under French law, the maximum penalty for rape is 20 years, and rights activists have pointed out that the punishment is simply not enough for ruining a life. In a majority of cases, complaints of sexual abuse and rapes are not reported and prosecuted. France is not the only violator. The United Nations says violence against women remains one of the most prevalent human rights violations, and that globally, an estimated 736 million women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence. Gisèle Pelicot held out hope and confidence that society will "collectively seize a future in which each woman and man can live in harmony with respect and mutual understanding". But first, her words should be heeded, and rape charges must never be trivialised. She has helped break the silence and the shame around rape; the onus is on society and law-makers to shatter the stigma and impunity attached to sexual abuse.

It is for historians to dig for tell-tale remains, not bigots

Normally, digging at historic sites is done by an archaeologist and historians in search of a lost civilisation or an ancient city or some signs of mythological events. But nowhere in the world, in the modern age, is an excavation done underneath a place of worship of one religion to find the remains of a place of worship of another religion. While digging in search of historical facts is a secular act, and is done using internationally recognised scientific methods, digging to establish the presence of a place of worship of one religion in a place of worship of another religion is, clearly, a non-secular act. Therefore, it is absolutely puzzling why the former Chief Justice of India (CJI), D.Y. Chandrachud found nothing objectionable or illegal in a survey in a place of worship of a particular religion by another religious group. In his oral observation, the former CJI, said, in 2022 (he was the CJI then), "a survey may not necessarily fall foul of the Places of Worship Act." He made this tricky observation in the Gyanvapi mosque case.

Clarity in the Act, yet challenged
The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act was enacted by Parliament in 1991 in the background of a strident movement by Ram Janmabhoomi supporters which heightened communal tensions in Ayodhya and many other parts of north India. The government of the day apprehended the imminent outbreak of violence in different parts of the country due to the raising of claims over the places of worship of a particular minority community. This Act bars the conversion of places of worship of any religious community into a place of worship of a different religious community. It declares that the religious character of a place of worship existing on the 15th day of August 1947, shall continue to be the same as it existed on that day.

The Act further provides that any suit and appeal seeking to convert the religious character of a place of worship existing on 15th August, 1947 pending before any court or tribunal shall abate on the commencement of the Act. It also states that no suit or appeal relating to this matter shall lie in any court after the commencement of the Act, and any suit alleging that the religious character of a place of worship has been converted after 15th August 1947 will be determined in terms of this Act.

But the constitutionality of this Act is under challenge in the Supreme Court of India. A petition was filed in 2020 challenging the constitutional validity of the Act on the grounds



P.D.T. Achary
a former Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha

that the date of August 15, 1947 was fixed arbitrarily and that this Act takes away judicial review.

The contention that the date of August 15, 1947 was arbitrarily fixed in the Act to prevent the conversion of a place of worship is a specious one. This is the day when the transfer of power from the British government to the Indian government took place. Naturally, this was the earliest date the government could think of for the purpose of this Act. In any case, the Government of India could not have chosen April 21, 1526 when Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodhi in the battle of Panipat and captured Delhi and Agra and laid the foundation of the Mughal empire. Nor could it have chosen, arbitrarily, a later date and kept the field open for a set of religious fanatics to make reckless claims on the places of worship of another religion. Therefore, by all accounts, the date chosen by Parliament in this enactment was the most reasonable one.

The second ground cited in the petition is that the Act takes away judicial review which is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution of India and any enactment which alters it is unconstitutional. This contention, needless to say, is without any merit. The Act declares that from the commencement of the Act, all pending suits, appeal or proceedings seeking to convert a place of worship of one religion existing as on August 15, 1947 into that of another religion or altering the religious character of a place of worship shall abate. It is the legislative policy of the government to declare through a law that certain types of suits shall abate under certain circumstances. It is not the same as stating that "no court shall have any jurisdiction in respect of any suit arising from the place of worship of any religion". The latter legislative assertion can be interpreted as an exclusion of judicial review which would, no doubt, be unconstitutional. But that is not the case here.

On the lower courts

Subsequent to the above quoted observation of the former CJI, lower courts in the State of Uttar Pradesh are ordering surveys in mosques to determine their religious character with great alacrity. It has led to violence in Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh in which some lives were lost. The lower courts do not seem to have bothered to check whether it was an order of the Supreme Court or a mere observation of the CJI during the hearing. The fact is that such observations from the Bench have no significance as those are not a part of any judgment of the Court.

Besides, it is a matter of common logic that when the law has barred any kind of conversion of the religious character of a place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947, then what is the relevance of ordering or carrying out a survey to determine its character? Legally, its character is what existed on the date as above. So, where is the need for a fresh survey?

A close reading of the provisions of the Act would reveal that what has been prohibited is not merely the act of conversion but also fresh surveys to establish the religious character of a place of worship. As that stands settled, any attempt to resurrect the dispute and get an order from the court would be clearly in violation of the Act.

The Places of Worship Act 1991 has been hailed as a law which protects secularism in the Ayodhya judgment of the Supreme Court. Wisely, the Court has now put a blanket ban on all litigations relating to the places of worship till it finally determines the issue of the constitutionality of the Act.

Protection of a fundamental right

Quite apart from the issue of constitutionality or otherwise of the Places of Worship Act, a religious denomination has the fundamental right, under Article 26, to manage its own affairs in matters of religion. Worshipping in a mosque or a church is a matter of religion and any kind of interference by any outsider in that place of worship can be treated as a violation of the fundamental right of that religious denomination. The court, while ordering a survey of such a place of worship, is in fact committing a violation of Article 26 of the Constitution. The object of this Article is to protect the right conferred on a religious denomination. So, even if the Act was not in existence, a survey or excavation in a place of worship being used by a religious denomination for the purpose of finding out the religious character of that place would be a violation of Article 26.

It is possible that beneath some mosques lie remains of temples. And beneath the remains of temples there may be the remains of Buddha or Jain viharas. History has sequestered in the womb of earth these tell-tale remains for an archaeologist and a historian to chronicle the history of this nation, and not for bigots to kindle revanchism and poison the minds of generations of unwary people. It is a great pity that judicial misdirection is rearing the retaliatory instincts of people fed on the falsehoods of manufactured history.

A chance to strike gold during the Kuwait visit

The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, is set to visit Kuwait on December 21-22. The visit will be the first by an Indian Prime Minister in 43 years, the last being the visit by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1981. Mr. Modi was scheduled to visit Kuwait in January 2022, but the visit was postponed due to concerns about COVID-19.

The visit holds great significance not only for the bilateral ties but also the region, which is going through a very difficult phase of conflict and transition. Mr. Modi has visited all the other countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) over the past 10 years, some more than once, and not having visited Kuwait was seen as a gap in India's West Asia engagement. This visit aims to not only plug this gap but also give a boost to the rather stagnant ties between the two countries which, otherwise, have much potential for a strong engagement.

A country with strategic significance
Why Is Kuwait important? Despite being one of the smallest countries in the region, it holds significant strategic importance. Located at the north-east end of the Persian Gulf, it shares borders with Iraq and Saudi Arabia and hosts important American military bases. It is the only monarchy in the region which has experimented successfully with democracy. On regional issues, it has generally maintained a neutral stance and has often been the interlocutor in resolving disputes.

Its wealth is owed primarily to its vast oil reserves, which are sixth-largest globally. It is also one of the founding members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

It also has one of the largest basket sovereign wealth funds. These funds, managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), have grown at an impressive rate and are currently estimated to



Rajeev Agarwal
a retired colonel, is a former Director in the Ministry of External Affairs, a former Director in Military Intelligence (International Relations) and a former Research Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi (IDSA), New Delhi

be \$924 billion (in March 2024), the fourth largest in the world after Norway, China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Untapped potential, existing links

India and Kuwait have always enjoyed friendly ties, built on a strong foundation of history and cultural bonds. India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Kuwait following its independence from the British Protectorate in 1961. In fact, the Indian rupee was a legal tender in Kuwait till 1961.

Trade and people-to-people ties have traditionally been the main anchors of the bilateral ties. India has consistently been among the top trading partners of Kuwait, with the total bilateral trade with Kuwait during FY 2023-24 being \$10.47 billion. During FY 2023-24, Kuwait was the sixth largest crude supplier catering to about 3.0% of India's total energy needs. The KIA has invested indirectly in India with estimated investments of more than US\$10 billion.

During the COVID-19 pandemic too, India and Kuwait demonstrated a strong sense of brotherhood. India provided two lakh vaccine doses. During the second wave of COVID-19 in May 2021, Kuwait provided 282 oxygen cylinders, 60 oxygen concentrators, ventilators and many other medical supplies to India.

People-to-people ties form the other firm anchor. Out of a population of almost 4.9 million, around 1 million Indians not only form the largest expatriate group in Kuwait but are also among the most trusted. As a special gesture, a 'Festival of India' was organised in Kuwait in March 2023. A weekly Hindi radio programme, 'Namaste Kuwait' has been started by Kuwait National Radio since April 2024. And, 26 schools in Kuwait with over 60,000 students, follow the Central Board of Secondary Education curriculum of India.

When tragedy struck on June 12, in the form of

The Indian Prime Minister's visit, long overdue, has many opportunities to develop an important bilateral relationship

a fire in a residential building in Kuwait killing over 40 Indians, Kuwait rendered help and repatriated their mortal remains quickly.

Areas to elevate ties

Despite enjoying mutual trust and goodwill, India's ties with Kuwait – like with many others in the Gulf region – have not been able to transcend to the next level. Mr. Modi's visit, therefore, offers the perfect opportunity to set things moving. The signing of a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement with Kuwait could be the ideal start. An agreement on defence cooperation could be signed too. India has invited Kuwait to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which Kuwait is likely to accept. An agreement between KIA and the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) in India could be mutually beneficial and give impetus to growth in India. Like the UAE, Kuwait could become an important partner for storing strategic oil reserves in India.

From India, helping Kuwait in building its infrastructure under Kuwait's 'Vision 2035' could be a good initiative. Setting up institutes of higher education, such as the Indian Institute of Technology and the Indian Institute of Management, and modern hospitals in Kuwait could boost people-to-people ties. Kuwait's request for additional seats for its airlines from India (in addition to 12,000 seats per week allotted), could be considered as a special exemption, despite Kuwait not fulfilling the required quota. Cooperation in space programmes including launching satellites for Kuwait would make good headlines too.

The scope for Kuwait-India ties is huge and the wish list endless. Hopefully, this visit will provide the perfect platform to kick-start a golden era in this very important bilateral relationship.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In and outside the House

The 'scuffle' between Members of Parliament across the aisle over the Home Minister's remarks on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is distressing. Parliament, meant for constructive debate, is increasingly becoming a battleground for hostility. B.R. Ambedkar's legacy is becoming a tool for partisan conflicts. Such behaviour not only undermines the dignity of our institutions but also sets a bad example for citizens. Our representatives must remember that their duty is to uphold democracy

through dialogue, not through physical altercations.

Pavithra M.,
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

There have been allegations of gross misbehaviour, the use of physical force and endangering the life of some MPs. The happenings in Parliament are a shade worse than the ruckus in the Kerala Assembly, in 2015, destroying property worth lakhs of rupees. Such incidents highlight the need for a law for the 'recall of elected representatives'.

P.R.V. Raja,
Pandalam, Kerala

Those who oppose the proposal of 'one nation one election' do not seem to realise the advantage of having simultaneous elections. Apart from money being wasted and administrative lapses in conducting such multiple elections, no one is talking about the troubles voters face queuing up before booths. In the earlier years, when simultaneous elections went smoothly, the voter turnout was close to 90%.

Many voters have moved away from their permanent address and may not be

able to return to vote. A simultaneous election could ensure a larger number of voters returning home to exercise their right to vote.

V.P. Dhananjayan,
Chennai

Shift EVM focus to ECI
The problem is not with the Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) but with the integrity and fairness in conducting elections by the present Election Commission of India (ECI). There appears to be a partisan slant in its actions before, during and after the elections. There is also a refusal to give valid reasons for the

discrepancies in the votes polled and recorded. The Opposition should give up complaining about the functioning of the EVMs and instead concentrate on bringing to light the alleged unethical practices of the ECI in conducting elections.

Tharcius S. Fernando,
Chennai

Re-examination woes
The protest by Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) civil service aspirants for a re-examination has continued for three days. It highlights student frustration with the commission's autocratic

attitude. There is to be a re-examination at the Babu Sabha Ghar, where 12,000 students appeared for their examination, but not in other centres. With 3.2 lakh candidates appearing for the examination, conducting a fair re-examination is feasible. The BPSC must shed its rigid stance, engage with students, and ensure justice by ensuring a transparent and equal opportunity for all aspirants.

Ghufran Mustafa,
Purnea, Bihar

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

GROUND ZERO



A Jatra performance at Ralab village in Ganjam, Odisha. BISWARANJAN ROUT

Shock and awe in the world of Jatra

In Odisha's Ganjam district, villagers compete for prestige by staging epic Ramayana performances. To sustain the interest of the audience, they have begun resorting to extreme measures, such as playing with cobras on stage, smashing coconuts on their heads, or even killing pigs and chickens. Satyasundar Barik reports on the radical transformation of Jatra, a traditional form of folk theatre

In the Hindu epic *Ramayana*, Prince Rama of Ayodhya, his wife Sita, and his brother Lakshmana meet Viradha, a ferocious rakshasa (demon), in the dense forests of Dandakaranya. Viradha not only clashes with the brothers but also abducts Sita. This act foreshadows the final few events of the epic. In theatrical adaptations of the *Ramayana*, Viradha is often portrayed as pure evil.

On the chilly evening of November 26, in the remote village of Ralab in Ganjam district, Odisha, a farmer, Bimbadhar Gouda, played Viradha at a Jatra, a form of folk theatre that is popular across Odisha and West Bengal. Instead of bringing a prop to 'devour', Gouda had brought a live pig. "When he ripped the pig apart, there was a stunned silence in the audience," recalled Sadasi Jena, a villager who watched the play that day.

When footage of the incident, seen by a few as an "immersive performance", surfaced on social media and TV news channels, drama enthusiasts and animal rights activists were enraged. "Using any live animal or bird in a cultural performance including ci-

nema and drama is illegal without the permission of the Animal Welfare Board of India. There are clear guidelines which prohibit animal cruelty during stage performances. In Ganjam, the theatre groups are probably not aware of the guidelines," said Biswajit Mohanty, a wildlife expert and secretary, Wildlife Society of Odisha.

In the Odisha Assembly, ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lawmakers Babu Singh and Sanatan Bijuli demanded that those responsible for the act be held accountable. The actor and the procurer of the pig now face multiple cases under sections pertaining to animal cruelty under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. The case has shone a spotlight on the changing character of Jatra.

Where there are no limits
Jatra is usually performed on an open-air stage with the audience, both men and women, seated on all sides. It dates back to the rise of Vaishnavism and the Bhakti movement during the 16th century. Back then, devotional songs and dances that were sung and performed by followers of the Bhakti movement, and plays on mythology, captivated people. Over time, social issues became central to Jatras. While Jatras include plays, music, and dance, today, stunts have taken over, in an

The youth, even in rural areas, is increasingly absorbed in Instagram Reels. So, Jatra has no option but to reinvent itself to sustain the audience's interest

SASHIDHAR PATRA
Jatra enthusiast

attempt to make them more "modern" and "commercial", said various artists and villagers.

On December 12, past midnight in Mancheswar, a village on the outskirts of the State capital Bhubaneswar, a young man lay on stage on a bed of shattered glass under the glare of multi-coloured lights. A large rock was placed on his chest. Suddenly, another actor began hammering the boulder. Despite the sharp glass shards that could have caused serious cuts and wounds, the man who was lying down remained stoic and unscathed. The audience, seated in a sprawling makeshift enclosure, watched in awe.

As the act unfolded, two young women, standing atop massive truck tyres lifted by a group of performers, waved the national flag. The audience rose to their feet. While the actors were to perform a play with social themes, acrobatics and stunts dominated the night and kept everyone spellbound.

"Stunts and 'item numbers' have grown in Jatras because the audience wants it. We have no choice but to match the expectations of people," said Jagannath Bhol, a choreographer of the Rangamal theatre group, based in Bhubaneswar.

In both Ralab and Mancheswar, the troupes use shock and awe as methods to reinvent themselves and remain relevant. This often happens at the expense of traditional storytelling formats.

"Over the last two decades, TV and films have transformed the entertainment landscape. Today, people can enjoy movies, shows, or dance

performances in their living rooms at their convenience. In contrast, Jatra demands an audience that is willing to stay engaged throughout the night," said Sashidhar Patra, who has been a Jatra hopper for 40 years. "The youth, even in rural areas, is increasingly absorbed in [Instagram] Reels. So, Jatra has no option but to reinvent itself to sustain the audience's interest."

While Ralab, a village of 1,400 families of mostly farmers and migrant labourers, is not economically affluent, it is culturally rich. Ralab takes pride in its theatre group, Rama Bhakta Maruti, which boasts 70-80 active members at any given time. Since 1992, the group has been performing the *Ramayana* in Ralab and neighbouring villages. Not just Ralab; hundreds of villages across Ganjam have theatre groups that are dedicated to performing the *Ramayana*. Year after year, the residents of these villages watch the annual play with undiminished enthusiasm.

Politics, however, has divided these villages into two factions. In the past, theatre groups aligned with the Congress and the Janata Dal. Over time, loyalties shifted, and the groups stand mostly divided between the Biju Janata Dal and the Bharatiya Janata Party. This rivalry often transforms the traditional *Ramayana* play into a competitive spectacle known as *Badi Ramayana*, with each faction striving to draw larger crowds to assert their dominance. *Badi Ramayana* is staged with the rule that in passion and battle, limits don't exist, especially in Ganjam district.

"In other parts of the world, a *Ramayana* play typically concludes within five to six hours. However, in our region, the play goes on for 13 to 14 hours," says Nila Baula, a resident of Ralab. "When troupes are drawn into competing in the *Badi Ramayana*, the epic is enacted for days. The actors and the audience remain immersed in the performance and often don't even take a break."

In one of the plays, the actor playing Vali, the king of Kishkindha in the *Ramayana*, lifted bullock cart wheels and cracked a tender coconut on his head. While the audience sat glued to the stage, a rival troupe performed similar stunts nearby. Immediately, the attention of the audience shifted.

"The two plays went on for 40 hours, with neither the actors nor the audience showing any signs of tiredness," said Baula.

To transform or not to transform

The traditional staging of the *Ramayana* in Ganjam villages has undergone an incredible transformation in the last 15 years. Mythological storytelling has taken a back seat and there is an increased emphasis on sensual dances, acrobatics, gymnastics, and comedy.

It is not just that characters, especially demons and monkeys, often perform dramatic stunts, such as playing with cobras, lifting goats on stage, and killing chickens; the plays also give modern twists to iconic moments in the epic. Jatra performers said Sita sometimes makes her entrance in the bucket of an earthmover or Ravana's kidnapping of Sita occasionally involves bullets fired in the air instead of a chariot. Across India, Sita is generally portrayed as the 'ideal' wife and a soft-spoken woman, but in Ganjam, she sometimes breaks into a frenzied freestyle dance, challenging the Sita on another stage to match her moves, much to the delight of the audience.

Santosh Khuntia, 50, who has played the role



A few greedy individuals are giving us a bad name. Every art form must evolve to remain relevant, but not at the expense of its core values

BAPI PANDA
Leader of the Jatra Artists Association

of Kaikeyi in Ralab for over three decades, reflected on the evolution of the epic. "I have seen how the *Ramayana* has changed on stage. Purists might disapprove, but these reinventions are necessary to keep the people engaged," he said.

Subrat Kumar Mishra, the manager of Rangamahal, a professional Jatra troupe based in Bhubaneswar, travels across districts with what he calls his "mini-world". The troupe requires five trucks and two buses to transport equipment, including lights and sound systems, and a diverse team of artists from one location to another.

Seated on a cot behind the Jatra pandal in Mancheswar, Mishra discussed the stiff competition his troupe faces in generating revenue and sustaining the interest of the audience. The performance is meticulously structured to appeal to a wide range of viewers, he said. "The first two hours are dedicated to devotional songs, followed by an episode on Hanuman. Then we play Odia and Hindi film music. Men perform stunts and women wear short costumes and dance. All this caters to people of all age groups," he said.

But not everyone supports these changes. Basant Dalai, a 60-year-old resident of Ralab, said, "I don't subscribe to today's *Ramayana*. I stopped watching these shows long ago."

Similarly, in Bikrampur village of Ganjam, Sakeswar Roul, popularly known as the "*Ramayana* director", has remained steadfast in his traditional approach to staging the epic. "Over the past 40 years, I have directed 27 theatre groups. I have never felt the need to use such distasteful measures to maintain interest," he said.

Even though *Ramayana* performances are staged over several days, the community's enthusiasm has never waned, added Roul. "People take turns staying near the stage, and at no point does the audience count drop to below 250, even between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. By morning, the crowd quickly returns," he said.

Though actors move around villages for seven months a year for rehearsals and performances, they don't receive any remuneration. Most of them are farmers or daily wage earners who enjoy Jatra and perform to uphold the pride of the village. The income generated from *Ramayana* performances is given to the village fund and is used to support various cultural activities. "For us, this is a passion, not a profession," Roul said.

From the sidelines to centre stage

While female dance troupes are roped in to perform as actors change clothes during a performance, women in villages don't have any roles in the *Ramayana* plays. But this is not the case in Bhubaneswar. Rangamahal boasts a significant number of female artists and dancers who perform in front of large crowds. They are undeterred even when they hear lewd remarks.

"As women, we have to maintain our composure. Jatra audiences, who are predominantly from rural backgrounds, often attend performances in groups and don't shy away from making vulgar remarks. While it is hurtful, we choose to take it in our stride," said Samooporna Swain, who has been acting in Jatra for 20 years.

In Bhubaneswar, Jatra groups and artists are professionals and get remuneration. Jyotsika Malla, 19, who was preparing to take the stage with her dance routine, said, "With my father working as a bus conductor, it is tough for my family to manage. I have two sisters and a brother to look after. I had to start earning early, and joining a Jatra troupe was the perfect opportunity."

In the past, women who did Jatra performances were often looked down upon. But times have changed, they said. Anjana Nayak, 45, ran away from home when she was in Class 10. Since then, she has spent 30 years carving out a career in Jatra. She started with just a few hundred rupees a month. Now she earns up to ₹50,000 a month. "I am at the peak of my career," she said, smiling.

A thriving industry

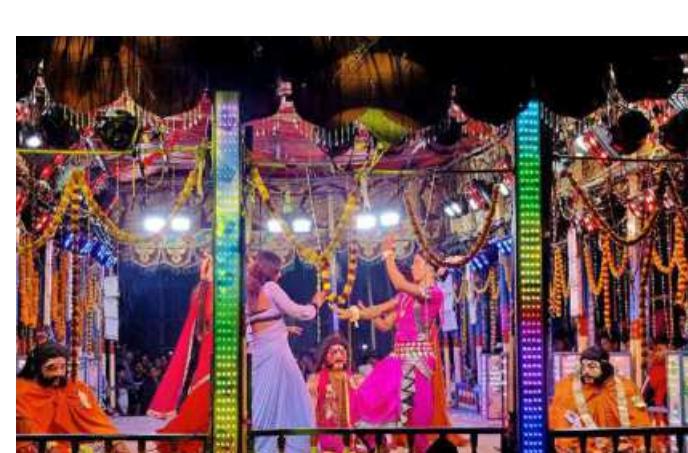
Jatra is no longer a simple gathering of artists who entertain rural audiences; it has evolved into a thriving industry. People who wish to establish a professional Jatra group need ₹8 to ₹10 crore. "There are about 45 major Jatra troupes travelling across Odisha for performances," said Braja Behari Nayak, a 60-year-old character artist. "Some star performers command annual packages of up to ₹45 lakh, while a celebrated couple is said to be paid ₹60 lakh per year."

The competition intensifies when multiple troupes perform in Bhubaneswar, elevating the quality of the acts and driving ticket prices as high as ₹1,000 per show. Securing a ticket to watch a Jatra show is a matter of luck. Bollywood celebrities such as Ameesha Patel, Rakhi Sawant, and Shakti Kapoor have also made brief appearances at these shows, boosting the industry.

"Jatra has been nothing short of a cultural revolution in Odisha," said Naba Kishore Mania, a Jatra critic. "Some proprietors continuously innovate to keep their troupes afloat, and the earnings of certain Jatra stars rival those of top Odia film actors. It is not uncommon for Odia movie stars to step onto the Jatra stage, both to refine their acting skill and earn a lucrative paycheck."

However, some of these radical transformations of the folk art are tarnishing Jatra's reputation and alienating loyal Jatra enthusiasts. Unlike earlier times, some families now hesitate to attend Jatra shows together. Bapi Panda, a leader of the Jatra Artists Association, said, "A few greedy individuals are giving us a bad name. Every art form must evolve to remain relevant, but not at the expense of its core values."

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Earlier, women who did Jatra performances were often looked down upon, but times have changed. A performance at Ralab village. BISWARANJAN ROUT

From Page One**Stormy Winter Session ends with dismal output**

Before adjourning the Lok Sabha *sine die* or indefinitely, the Speaker issued a warning to members about strict action if any of them resorted to demonstrations within the premises of Parliament.

Reflecting on the session, in his valedictory address, Rajya Sabha Chairman Mr. Dhankhar said parliamentarians were "drawing severe criticism" from people. The "persistent disruptions", he said, were "steadily eroding public trust in our democratic institutions". He also castigated the Opposition for publicising the notices they move under Rule 267, which necessitated suspending of all functions of the day to discuss the subject at hand. This, he said, undermined the "institutional dignity". He exhorted the House to return for the next session with "renewed commitment to serve our nation with the dignity it deserves".

At a press conference, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju blamed the Opposition, especially the Congress's continuous protest as the primary reason for low productivity.

Congress Chief Whip in the Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh, on the other hand, said his party's performance in Parliament was "100%" as it raised all relevant issues, including the charges in the U.S. against the Adani Group, but the government ran away from debate.

The PRS Legislative Research analysis shows that in the first week, both Houses functioned for less than 10% of the scheduled time. The deadlock between the two sides was broken only after the government agreed to a demand from the Congress to have a discussion on the Constitution.

There were also serious differences in the INDIA bloc over the primacy of subjects that they should take up during the session. The Congress insisted on keeping the recent indictment of industrialist Gautam Adani at the centre of Opposition's parliamentary strategy, which many in the INDIA bloc, especially the Trinamool Congress and the Samajwadi Party did not agree with.

11 killed, 30 injured in blaze near Jaipur

Rescue workers faced great difficulty as the gas spread at the site. The fire could be extinguished only after about an hour.

Seven critical

The injured were shifted to the Sawai Man Singh Government Hospital in Jaipur through a 14-km-long green corridor created by the traffic police.

SMS Hospital's Medical Superintendent Sushil Bhati said six of the deceased had been identified, and efforts were under way to confirm the identity of others. "As many as 29 persons are admitted to the burns ward at present and seven of them are in a serious condition. Fourteen persons have sustained over 50% burns," Dr. Bhati said.

The police thoroughly checked all the damaged vehicles to confirm the toll. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma visited the accident site and the SMS Hospital along with Health Minister Gajendra Singh Khimsar. They instructed the doctors to ensure proper treatment of the injured persons, even as the resident doctors and nursing staff were called in to manage the situation.

The State government announced financial assistance of ₹5 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased and ₹1 lakh each to the injured. Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the loss of lives in the accident. The Prime Minister's Office also announced an *ex gratia* of ₹2 lakh from the PM's National Relief Fund to the kin of the deceased and ₹50,000 to the injured.

Om Prakash Chautala, former Haryana CM, dies

A former Rajya Sabha member, Chautala cleared his Class 10 and 12 exams in jail.

Chautala was also credited with bringing in a policy to promote sports in the State in his final term as Chief Minister, announcing huge cash rewards for the winners of Olympic, Commonwealth, and Asian Games in 2002. Under him, the Haryana government honoured its "daughter-in-law", weightlifter Karnam Malleswari, with a cash reward of ₹25 lakh for bagging bronze in the Sydney Olympics. The subsequent governments led by Congress Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and BJP's Manohar Lal emulated his government's policy to hike the cash reward for sportspersons and improve sports infrastructure to make Haryana one of the leading States in sports.

However, his first term as CM saw violence during the byelection to the Meham Assembly seat in February 1990. In his last term as Chief Minister, nine farmers were killed in police firing at Jind district's Kandela village in June 2002, during a protest seeking waiver of electricity bills. Out of power for the past two decades, the INLD was pushed to political oblivion after a family feud led to a vertical split in the party in 2018. His grandsons Dushyant and Digvijay formed the Janayak Janata Party ahead of the 2019 Assembly poll and forged an alliance with the BJP. After his release from jail in 2021, Chautala, despite his old age and poor health, remained politically active and made occasional appearances at party events and campaigns. He had flagged off the 215-day padayatra by his son and INLD general secretary Abhay Singh Chautala in Nuh on February 24 last year.

He is survived by his sons Ajay and Abhay and three daughters.

PM's visit to Kuwait aims at strengthening relations: MEA

The visit is also expected to strengthen ties between New Delhi and the Gulf Cooperation Council; the total volume of India's trade with GCC countries was \$184.46 billion in financial year 2022-23.

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

India and Kuwait are expected to focus on shoring up ties in a range of key areas including defence and trade during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to the country beginning Saturday.

Mr. Modi will hold talks with the top Kuwaiti leadership, visit an Indian labour camp, address the Indian community and attend the opening ceremony of the Gulf Cup football tournament. It will be the first trip to the Gulf nation by an Indian Prime Minister in 43 years.

A day ahead of the Prime Minister's trip, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said discussions are underway with Kuwait on a bilateral investment treaty and a defence cooperation pact.

At a media briefing, Arun Kumar Chatterjee, Secretary (Overseas Indian



Sustaining the bond: Narendra Modi with Kuwait Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya in New Delhi on December 5. ANI

Affairs) in the MEA, said a few bilateral documents are expected to be firm during the visit.

"The historic visit by the Prime Minister is expected to open a new chapter in India-Kuwait bilateral relations," he said.

"It will not only consolidate the partnership in existing spheres but also unveil new avenues for future cooperation, reinforce our shared values and build a

more stronger and dynamic partnership for the future," he added.

Mr. Chatterjee said the visit is also expected to boost the ties between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The GCC is an influential grouping comprising the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait. The total volume of India's trade with GCC countries stood

at \$184.46 billion in the financial year 2022-23.

Kuwait is the current chair of the GCC.

Mr. Chatterjee said India is holding negotiations with the GCC for a free trade pact.

On Modi's planned visit to a labour camp in Kuwait, Mr. Chatterjee said the Government of India attaches considerable importance to the welfare of all the Indian workers abroad. "The idea of the visit of the Prime Minister to the labour camp is to express the amount of importance the government of India attaches to our workers. That is the prime purpose," he said.

Over 45 Indians were killed in devastating fire in a building housing foreign workers in southern Kuwait's Mangaf locality in June.

The Prime Minister is visiting Kuwait at the invitation of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Allahabad HC grants interim protection to Zubair from arrest**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI



Mohammed Zubair

clip of Mr. Narsinghanand with the intent to incite violence against him.

A Bench of Justices Siddhartha Varma and Nalin Kumar Srivastava also directed the State to file a detailed response to Mr. Zubair's plea seeking protection from arrest in the said case in which he has been booked under Sections 196, 228, 299, 356 (3) and 351(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The police last week submitted in the court that a First Information Report (FIR) against Mr. Zubair was filed on the complaint of one of the priests at Dasna Devi Temple, Ghaziabad, Udit Tyagi. The complainant had alleged that Mr. Zubair, on October 3, had shared an old video

Efforts on to bring back Indian workers stuck in Libya: MEA**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

The Indian Embassy in Tripoli is "closely following" the situation of a batch of Indian workers in Libya who had travelled to that country without proper documents, and is working to facilitate their return, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday.

The Hindu had reported on the plight of these workers in the edition dated December 20.

MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters that the Indian Embassy is in touch with Libyan authorities to arrange for the exit permit of the workers at a cement company in Libya.

"These Indian workers had reached Benghazi via Dubai. They had gone there but did not have proper documents. When

they landed, there were some issues regarding their work... we came to know of these difficulties... our Embassy in Tripoli is active. We reached out to our workers... through our community there," Mr. Jaiswal said in his weekly briefing.

"And, we have given them a helping hand, we have arranged for their food, for their daily living articles. Our CDA (charge d'affaires) in Tripoli has also met these workers. This happened, I think, on November 4," he said.

"The Embassy is in touch with Libyan authorities to arrange for their exit permit. The exit permit is taking a little time because they had gone there without proper documentation. But, once this is done, ... our embassy will facilitate their return home," Mr. Jaiswal added.

Speaking on the topic of 'Vishwaguru Bharat' at the

RSS chief Bhagwat advises against raking up temple-mosque disputes**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI



Police personnel stand guard outside Shahi Jama Masjid during a prayer in Sambhal on Friday.

Scrap false cases filed over Sambhal violence: SP**The Hindu Bureau**

LUCKNOW

Reacting to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's call to stop raking up "Ram temple-like" disputes, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Friday urged Mr. Bhagwat to ensure the withdrawal of false cases filed over the violence in Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh and ensure compensation for victims.

"When such an important person gives statement, the BJP leaders have the responsibility to withdraw false cases registered in Sambhal," Mr. Yadav told reporters.

MSP for copra hiked by ₹422 per quintal for 2025 season**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Union government has increased the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for copra for the 2025 season. Approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), the MSP for milling copra of fair average quality will be ₹1,582 per quintal, a rise by ₹422 from ₹1,160 in 2024. It will be ₹12,100 per quintal for ball copra, ₹100 up from ₹12,000 in 2024.

The Union government said, from 2014 to 2025, it had increased the MSP by ₹5,250 per quintal for milling copra and ₹5,500 per quintal for ball copra. "A higher MSP will not only ensure better remunerative returns to the coconut growers but also incentivise farmers to expand copra production to meet the growing demand for coconut products both domestically and internationally," the CCEA said in a release.

Convince farmer leader to get medical care, SC tells Punjab**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI



Jagjit Singh Dallewal during an indefinite fast at the Khanauri boundary on Friday.

health officials to report on the medical condition of Mr. Dallewal on January 2, when the court reopened after the Christmas break. It said the State government could approach the top court in case of any emergency.

Meanwhile, the farm leader wrote to the SC, thanking the top judiciary for its concern about his health and seeking the court's help to convince the Union government to accept the farmers' demands.

The Bench directed the Punjab Chief Secretary and

Jiribam violence is a matter of law and order, falls under Manipur govt., says Centre**Abhinav Lakshman**

NEW DELHI

Responding to a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed in the Manipur High Court for a speedy and transparent investigation into the abduction and killing of six women and children of the Meitei community in Manipur's Jiribam last month, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

has now said these are matters of "maintenance of law and order, which fall under the State government".

This comes despite the National Investigation Agency (NIA) taking over the case of abduction and killings on the orders of the MHA, according to a press statement issued by the federal investigative agency.

The MHA took this position in an affidavit filed before the Manipur High Court earlier this month in response to the PIL petition.

The PIL petitions for a transparent probe into the abduction and killing of six Meitei individuals

cause of the failure on the part of the law enforcement machinery of the State as well as the Government of India".

In its counter-affidavit in the case, the MHA, through an Undersecretary, said the kin of the deceased in the case were being given ₹10 lakh as *ex gratia*, half of which was to be borne by the Government of Manipur. Further, it said, "Assistance is being provided for the injured."

As for the other prayers, the MHA's affidavit said, "That as regards the prayers made in this petition, it is humbly stated that the same primarily pertain to the issue of maintenance of law and order, which falls under the domain of the State government, the officers of which have been made separate respondents in this petition."

The NIA is yet to make any arrests in the case.

'Oppn. parties using diversionary tactics after being exposed'

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI



After the Congress and its allies had been 'exposed' by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Parliament for the way they had treated the Constitution and disrespected Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the INDIA bloc had "resorted to diversionary tactics", BJP State president K. Annamalai said.

In a social media post, he said the VCK had staged protests across Tamil Nadu, and the party's leader, Thol. Thirumavalavan, had described the charges levelled against the Congress as mere allegations.

"He has forgotten that he had protested in Parliament against the Congress and the DMK in 2012. His anger is misplaced. He has alliance partners to appease, and has no regard for the people he represents. He has not held a single protest against the DMK in the past four years for the atrocities inflicted on our brothers and sisters from the Scheduled Caste community," Mr. Annamalai said.

"The DMK had been in

The DMK was in an alliance with the Congress at the Centre for decades, and focused only on getting plum ministries. What did they do in honour of Ambedkar?

K. ANNAMALAI
BJP State president

an alliance with the Congress at the Centre for decades, and had focused only on getting plum ministries. What did they do in honour of Babasaheb? Despite their theatrics, the Congress, the DMK, and their allies cannot erase their tarnished record of disrespect towards Babasaheb Ambedkar and neglect of the SC community," he said.

"The DMK had been in

Siliguri corridor a crucial link, SSB presence boosts security, says Shah

The Hindu Bureau

KOLKATA



Reassuring force: Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the 61st Raising Day celebrations of the SSB, near Siliguri, on Friday. PTI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday highlighted the significance of the Siliguri corridor as a crucial link to Northeast India and said that the presence of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) in the area came as an assurance to the entire country.

"Located between Manananda and Teesta, the Siliguri corridor serves as an important link between the northeast and the rest of India. The presence of SSB in the area provides assurance and confidence to the rest of the country," Mr. Shah said. He made the remarks while addressing

the 61st Raising Day celebrations of the SSB in Siliguri.

He lauded the efforts of the SSB in securing the nation's borders with friendly countries such as Nepal and Bhutan. The SSB

guards the 2,450-km border with Nepal and Bhutan. Mr. Shah said that as the Home Minister, he was assured that the border would be protected as the SSB jawans were deployed there.

EVM row: SC moves former MLA's plea to another Bench

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



A petition filed by five-time former MLA Karan Singh Dalal seeking directions to the Election Commission (EC) to lay down a policy or memorandum for checking and verifying the original burnt memory or microcontroller of electronic voting machines (EVMs) was shuttled to another Bench, the third in a row, in the Supreme Court, on Friday.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna said the petition would be heard by a Bench headed by Justice Dipankar Datta.

On December 13, a Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath had bowed out of hearing the case after opining that the Bench headed by Chief Justice Khanna ought to hear it.

The opinion was based on the fact that Justice Khanna (as he was then) had heard and pronounced a judgment on EVMs in April.

Mr. Dalal has argued

that the original burnt memory/microcontroller of the control unit, ballot unit, Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) and symbol loading unit must not be deleted.

The April 26 judgment directed that the burnt memory of microcontrollers of the five per cent of EVMs can be checked and verified by a team of engineers of the EVM manufacturers in case of any suspicion of tampering.

"The exercise would be initiated on a written request from candidates who come second or third in the victor's tally," the judgment had said. The application for verification should be sent within seven days of the declaration of the election results.

**GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
KARAIKAL**

e-TENDER NOTICE No.19/1&PH/TN/2024-25 Dt.19.12.2024

On behalf of the President of India, Bids are invited for the works of "Strengthening the right bank of Nandalar and forming a link road from Andoor to Kazhugumedu connecting Thondamangalam and Konnakaveli village in Karaikal".

For further details please refer the website www.pudutenders.gov.in from 10.00 A.M on 23.12.2024

Sd/-
No, 36/Dip/KKL/ADVT/2024

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER - I&PH

Office of the chief Engineer (East) cum Addl. Secretary, C.A.D., Jaipur

Phone no: 0141-2709487, Email: cccadjaipur@rajasthan.gov.in

क्रमांक:-F-194/CE(E)/CAD/T/NT/2024-25/3108

प्रतिक्रिया :-10/12/2024

E-Tender Notice No.04/2024-25

On behalf of Governor of Rajasthan E-Tenders are invited from "AA" Class category or equivalent contractors/firms registered in CAD/Water Resources Department and State Government/Other State Government/ Authorized organizations of Central Government/ CPWD/Post and telegraph department/Railway etc. for the works of Lining of balance reaches in Distribution System of Right Main Canal (9 Nos. of works) of Chambal CAD Kota amounting to Rs. 10499.13 Lac. The tender documents & other details may be downloaded and uploaded from the following websites:-

1 <http://www.eproc.rajantran.gov.in>

2 <http://www.diproline.org>

3 <http://www.sppr.raj.nic.in>

UBN:- CKJ2425WLOB00187, CKJ2425WLOB00188, CKJ2425WLOB00189,
CKJ2425WLOB00190, CKJ2425WLOB00191, CKJ2425WLOB00192,
CKJ2425WLOB00193, CKJ2425WLOB00194, CKJ2425WLOB00195

DIPR/C/13159/2024

PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT (PMU)
UTTARAKHAND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE PROJECT (U-PREPARE)
5th Floor, USDMA Building, 36, IT Park, Sahastadrupa Road, Dehradun (Uttarakhand). Pin: 248013
E-mail: upreparespmu@gmail.com

Reference No. 861/01/PMU/U-PREPARE/AS/2024-25 Date: 20/12/2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Name of Project: -Uttarakhand Disaster Preparedness and Resilience Project (U-PREPARE)

Loan No. 9654-IN (World Bank)

Assignment Title: Hiring of Account Support Firm for U-PREPARE

Proposals (Technical & Financial) are invited for the above assignment through Request for Proposal (RFP). The RFP document can be downloaded from the website <https://uktenders.gov.in> which will be available on the website from 23/12/2024 to 23/01/2025. The pre-proposal conference will be held on 30/12/2024. Proposals must be submitted online on the website <https://uktenders.gov.in> on or before 11:00 AM, 23/01/2025. The Technical Proposals will be opened on 23/01/2025 at 11:30 PM.

Note: 1. The corrigendum/addendum for the above will be uploaded on website <https://uktenders.gov.in> & or <https://usdma.uk.gov.in>.

2. Email id upreparespmu@gmail.com may be contacted for any information.

Program Director U-PREPARE

Chief Engineer(East) Cum Additional Secretary C.A.D. Jaipur

IWD/SE/NIT/2024-25/22 dated 18.12.2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Name of Project: -Uttarakhand Disaster Preparedness and Resilience Project (U-PREPARE)

Assignment Title: Hiring of Account Support Firm for U-PREPARE

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Program Director U-PREPARE

Chief Engineer(East) Cum Additional Secretary C.A.D. Jaipur

IWD/SE/NIT/2024-25/23 dated 18.12.2024

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Program Director U-PREPARE

Chief Engineer(East) Cum Additional Secretary C.A.D. Jaipur

IWD/SE/NIT/2024-25/24 dated 18.12.2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Name of Project: -Uttarakhand Disaster Preparedness and Resilience Project (U-PREPARE)

Assignment Title: Hiring of Account Support Firm for U-PREPARE

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Program Director U-PREPARE

Chief Engineer(East) Cum Additional Secretary C.A.D. Jaipur

IWD/SE/NIT/2024-25/25 dated 18.12.2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Name of Project: -Uttarakhand Disaster Preparedness and Resilience Project (U-PREPARE)

Assignment Title: Hiring of Account Support Firm for U-PREPARE

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Program Director U-PREPARE

Chief Engineer(East) Cum Additional Secretary C.A.D. Jaipur

IWD/SE/NIT/2024-25/26 dated 18.12.2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Name of Project: -Uttarakhand Disaster Preparedness and Resilience Project (U-PREPARE)

Assignment Title: Hiring of Account Support Firm for U-PREPARE

Proposals (Technical & Financial) are invited for the above assignment through Request for Proposal (RFP). The RFP document can be downloaded from the website <https://uktenders.gov.in> which will be available on the website from 23/12/2024 to 23/01/2025. The pre-proposal conference will be held on 30/12/2024. Proposals must be submitted online on the website <https://uktenders.gov.in> on or before 11:00 AM, 23/01/2025. The Technical Proposals will be opened on 23/01/2025 at 11:30 PM.

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Program Director U-PREPARE

Chief Engineer(East) Cum Additional Secretary C.A.D. Jaipur

IWD/SE/NIT/2024-25/27 dated 18.12.2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

IN BRIEF



Tabla maestro Zakir Hussain laid to rest in San Francisco

Zakir Hussain was laid to rest on Thursday at a San Francisco cemetery as percussionist A. Sivamani (at centre in picture) and other artists performed on their drums at a little distance away in a tribute to the tabla maestro. Hussain died at a San Francisco hospital on Monday due to complications arising from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. He was 73. He was laid to rest at the Fernwood cemetery in San Francisco on Thursday. Hundreds of his admirers gathered at Hussain's funeral to pay their last respects. Mr. Sivamani said, "Rhythm is God, that is you Zakir bhai. I learned a lot in our journey from 1982 till now." PTI

FSSAI seeks quarterly data on rejected, expired food items

To ensure that rejected and expired food items are not being rebranded and sold for public consumption, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has directed all licensed food manufacturers and importers to submit quarterly data on such foodstuffs, through an online portal. As per the FSSAI, the latest directive covers three key areas – quantity of products failing internal quality testing; volume of expired or returned products from the food supply chain; and detailed records of product disposal, including destruction, auction, or alternative use, with specific buyer and waste disposal agency information.

Bombay HC dismisses UAE firm's plea on Dharavi project

The Bombay High Court on Friday gave a green signal to the Adani Group to continue with the Dharavi Redevelopment Project in Mumbai. A Division Bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar observed that it cannot be said that the tender conditions for the Dharavi Redevelopment Project were "tailor-made" to suit only a particular bidder, Adani Properties Pvt. Ltd., as claimed by the United Arab Emirates-based firm SecLink Technologies Corporation. The Bench ruled that there was no "arbitrariness, unreasonableness or perversity" in the Maharashtra government's decision to award the project to the Adani Group.

36 crore beneficiaries verified under PM-JAY, says Minister

Approximately 36 crore beneficiaries have been verified, and 8.39 crore hospital admissions worth over ₹1.16 lakh crore have been authorised under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) so far, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Prataprao Jadhav stated in a written reply in the Lok Sabha on Friday. AB PM-JAY is a flagship scheme of the Centre that provides a health cover of ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to approximately 55 crore beneficiaries corresponding to 12.37 crore families constituting economically vulnerable bottom 40% of India's population.

New undersea cables to boost India's digital connectivity

Two new submarine cable systems will provide additional Internet links to Asia and Europe even as India takes a more active role in discussions on undersea cable resilience and security

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

With data use increasing year on year, India's undersea cable network is growing. Two new cable systems are set to be launched in the coming three months: the India Asia Xpress (IAX) and the India Europe Xpress (IEX), both connecting India with additional Internet links to the two continents. This comes even as India takes a more active role in discussions on submarine cable security and resilience.

Both cable systems, cumulatively over 15,000 kilometres in length, are owned by Reliance Jio, with a strategic investment from China Mobile. The IAX connects Chennai and Mumbai with Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia in Asia, and the IEX connects them with France, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Djibouti. This adds to the dozens of cables landing in India, mainly in Mumbai and Chennai.

The cable expansions not only reflect growing traffic, but also increased geopolitical ambition, Ja-



Experts say India is emerging as a strong maritime cable network player in the region. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

gannath Panda, head of the Sweden-based Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs (SCSA-IPA) wrote recently. The new cable systems bolster India's "defense strategy in terms of the resilience of the cables against physical damages or digital disruptions from cyberattacks by state or non-state actors", Mr. Panda wrote in a paper for the *Marine Policy* journal.

"India is emerging as a strong maritime cable network player in the region," Mr. Panda said in an interview. "There will be focus in the Bay of Bengal and

the South China Sea region, and India's proactive role will be closely watched, and India won't shy away from taking a leading role there," he said.

In March, three submarine cables connecting India to West Asia and Europe were disrupted, impacting traffic to India. While that incident had an impact on India's international bandwidth, traffic still flowed through alternate routes, with data centres within India itself also buffering against disruptions for key Internet services. The alarm over disruptions to connectivity

has been felt worldwide, and India is no exception. Telecom Secretary Neeraj Mittal is part of the International Advisory Body for Submarine Cable Resilience established by the International Telecommunication Union. IT Secretary S. Krishnan asked at an event earlier this month, "Are we stable within the country that all services within this country can be offered even in the event of a disruption?"

Bangladesh connection

The Bangladeshi government recently put on hold plans by Internet service providers in that country to sell bandwidth to North-east India, according to reports from local media. This setback, however, has limited impact for India, said Suvesh Chattopadhyaya, an undersea cable industry veteran. North-east States are already served by fibre laid on top of the Power Grid Corporation of India's transmission lines, and this fibre accounts for "hundreds of gigabits" per second of connectivity, Mr. Chattopadhyaya said, sufficient for current connectivity needs.

Human error led to 19 of 34 IAF crashes in 2017-2022: panel

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI



the crash occurred due to "unexpected change" in weather conditions that led to spatial disorientation of the pilot resulting in Controlled Flight into Terrain (CFIT).

"The accident was a result of entry into clouds due to unexpected change in weather conditions in the valley. This led to spatial disorientation of the pilot resulting in CFIT," the IAF said in a statement.

In addition to these accidents, the IAF also lost a MiG-21 fighter jet and a Mi-17 helicopter on February 27, 2019 during the aerial dogfight with the Pakistan Air Force over the Line of Control (LoC), a day after the Balakot air strike by the IAF. The MiG-21 flown by Group Captain Abhinandan Varthaman (then Wing Commander) was shot down and fell across the LoC in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

On January 14, 2022, the IAF stated that according to the preliminary findings

Defence Ministry signs ₹7,629-cr. pact for 100 artillery guns

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Defence Ministry on Friday signed a ₹7,629-crore contract with Larsen & Toubro (L&T) for 100 additional 155 mm/52 calibre K9 Vajra-T self-propelled tracked artillery guns for the Indian Army.

"The procurement of K9 VAJRA-T will catalyse the artillery modernisation and enhance overall operational readiness of the Indian Army," a Defence Ministry statement said. The contract was signed by senior officials of the Ministry and representatives of L&T in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh in South Block, New Delhi.

The gun, being equipped with cutting-edge technology, is capable of delivering long-range lethal fires with high accuracy, higher rate of fire and will be able to operate in sub-zero temperature in high-altitude areas to its full potential, the Ministry said.

At the height of tensions in eastern Ladakh, the Army deployed one regiment of K-9 Vajra tracked self-propelled howitzers there to augment its long-range fire power to counter a Chinese build-up.

The K9 Vajra is built by L&T with technology transfer from South Korean defence major Hanwha Defence.

Impressed with their performance, the Army is looking to procure 200 more guns in two batches.

Calcutta High Court allows junior doctors to hold protest over R.G. Kar issue

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Friday allowed representatives of the West Bengal Junior Doctors Front (WBJDF) to hold protests in the Esplanade area of Kolkata over the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital earlier this year but restricted the gathering to 200-250 members at a time.

The WBJDF had approached the High Court seeking permission to hold protests after a city court granted bail to two accused who were arrested for tampering with evidence in the rape-murder case. Justice Tirthankar Ghosh allowed the association to hold protests at Dornia Crossing in Esplanade from December 20 to 26.



The West Bengal Junior Doctors Front holds a protest in Kolkata's Esplanade area on Friday. DEBASISH BHADURI

"The stage proposed to be constructed should not exceed 40 feet in length and from the back side of the stage to the guard rail which will be encompassing the crowd or the followers of the organisation, the same should not exceed in breadth of 23 feet," the order said.

Justice Ghosh directed that a list of 10 representatives of the organisers be furnished to the police administration who would interact with each other if there is a request from the police authorities to reduce the crowd at a particular point of time. "The organisers are specifically directed not to deliver any inciting speech so that at any point of time, the law and order situation goes out of hands of the administration," the court said.

Rajkot police take custody of jailed journalist

Press Trust of India
RAJKOT

Senior journalist Mahesh Langa, who is already in jail in an alleged Goods and Services Tax scam in Gujarat, was arrested by the Rajkot police in another case of GST evasion registered by the Crime Branch last month, said an official on Friday.

A team of the Rajkot Crime Branch took Mr. Langa's custody from the Sabarmati Central Jail in Ahmedabad and brought him here on Friday for further investigation, said S.N. Jadeja, Police Inspector and Investigation Officer of the case.

He said an FIR was registered by the Rajkot Crime Branch on November 27 and so far 12 persons had been arrested in connection with the GST evasion case.

FAITH

Choosing good Acharyas

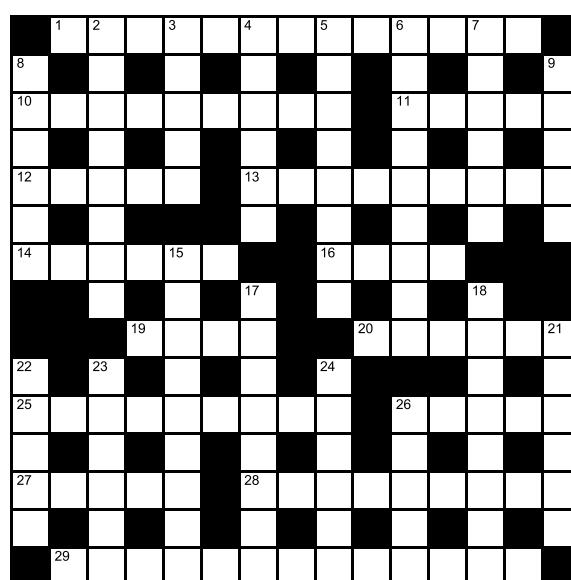
People undertake various activities to reap some benefits, and the benefits may differ from person to person. It is rare to see people undertake activities without anticipation. To enrich their lives, some may choose academics, some may concentrate on sports, etc. It depends on their mental makeup, which is realised through experience.

Thanneerpalli Sri. Krishnan Swamy said in a discourse that a person cannot gain experience in all spheres of worldly activities. For example, a person cannot subject himself to testing whether it will burn his finger if he touches fire. This is learnt from elders' advice. Some experiments may take enormous time, and specific experiments may yield dangerous consequences. Stealing is a cunning and deceitful act that one should not even think of learning. The story of Silappadikaram is the best example of how the blacksmith shifts the blame to Kovalan after stealing the queen's anklet, and the consequences are unimaginable. A person cannot be adamant about learning from his own experience. Thiruvalluvar says the world will quickly respond to eloquent speakers' sweet and well-set words (Kural 648).

The concept of self-realisation is beyond the reach of our faculties, and it can be realised through sastras only under the tutelage of good Acharyas. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that a man who, with faith and without caviling, hears when taught by a qualified teacher will be released from all evil incompatible with devotional life. He shall reach the realm of His abode. The Upanishads say everyone has a bounden duty to find a good Acharya to make life meaningful and purposeful.

TH CROSSWORD 14362

(set by Afterdark)



Across

- 1 Rural teen mostly knows about software modelled on human brain (6,7)
- 10 Cop and man having a good time, spending half of it on pasta (9)
- 11 Group of musicians becomes outcaste after leaving USA (5)
- 12 Rector's finger cut in the front by a point in compass (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

No. 556376 Distribution: www.knightfeathers.com

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

IN BRIEF



SpiceJet to operationalise 3 grounded B737 MAX planes

SpiceJet has entered into an agreement with U.S.-based StandardAero that will provide the services for operationalising the airline's grounded Boeing 737 MAX planes and three of the aircraft are expected to return to service by April 2025, according to a release on Friday. Seven Boeing 737 MAX aircraft of the no-frills carrier are on the ground. StandardAero is also a MRO services provider for CFM LEAP-1B engines, which power SpiceJet's Boeing 737 MAX planes.

Cipla faces over ₹1-crore penalty by GST authority

Pharma major Cipla Ltd. on Friday said a fine of over ₹1 crore has been imposed on the company by the GST authority for alleged inadmissible credit claim. The company has received an order dated December 18, 2024, imposing a penalty of ₹1,194,324 under applicable provisions of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, Cipla said. Cipla noted that based on an assessment of facts and prevailing law, it is "of the view that the penalty levied is arbitrary and unjustified". PTI

Honda Cars to hike vehicle prices by up to 2% from Jan.

Honda Cars India on Friday said that it would increase prices across its model range by up to 2% from January next year, in order to partially offset the impact of rising input costs. The company sells models like Amaze, City and Elevate in the domestic market. The automaker will increase the prices of its models by up to 2% from the beginning of January 2025, Honda Cars India's vice president – marketing and sales, Kunal Behl said. PTI

+ Operate flights to Pokhara, Lumbini from India'

Kallop Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Nepal's Foreign Minister Arzu Deuba on Friday urged Indian private air operators to operate flights

to Nepal's latest international airport in Lumbini. Ms. Deuba said India should make use of the revived infrastructure, and urged joint promotion of cultural and tourism sites.

**Government of Odisha
Sports & Youth Services Department**
Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar-751012
Email — depsportsodisha@gmail.com
No. SYS-CSS-CSSP-0008-2021- 36897/ December 18, 2024

Short Advertisement

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for the contractual post of Head of Sports and Exercise Science (No. of post-1) and Sports Medicine Doctor (No. of post-1) at the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence (KISE) located at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar. Detailed job description, qualification and terms and conditions for the posts are mentioned in the Long Advertisement available at <https://sports.odisha.gov.in/>.

The envelope containing applications with all required self-attested documents must reach to CEO, HPCO, Sports & Youth Services Department, 3rd Floor, Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, and PIN- 751012 via registered/ speed post by January 03, 2025. The envelope containing the documents is to be super scribed with the Advertisement No. and Date along with post applied for and details of the authority addressed to, on it.

By Order of Principal Secretary
Deputy Secretary
GPR-29001/11/0033/2425

TT-11



Inflation largely due to food prices, which have a rather high weight in the CPI, says MPC's external member Nagesh Kumar; Though elevated, inflation trajectory remains on the expected lines. food inflation likely to soften in Q4, said Ram Singh

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Two external members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) Nagesh Kumar and Ram Singh, who had voted for a 25 basis point rate cut in the last rate fixing panel meeting held between December 4 and 6, and batted for revival of growth, were hopeful that inflation would reduce in the last quarter of FY25, the minutes of the MPC meeting released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday showed.

"We find ourselves in a slow growth, high inflation scenario. However, inflation is largely on account of food prices, which have a rather high weight in the CPI," Dr. Kumar said in his statement.

Staying focused: Former RBI Governor Das emphasised that policy priority had to be restoring the inflation-growth balance. ANI

"Keeping in mind the easing of vegetables and edible oil in November, food inflation should be easing further in the coming months. Core inflation persistence has declined over time, suggesting an improving anchoring of inflationary expectations," he emphasised while advocating for a rate cut to provide impetus to growth.

"The policy responses to address the challenges of high inflation and growth slowdown should look into their determinants. Monetary policy, being a demand management tool, has limitations in addressing inflation largely driven by a supply-side shock driving up vegetable prices. The high vegetable prices represent an essen-

tially seasonal supply-demand mismatch that has started to correct itself in November 2024," he stated. "Though elevated, the inflation trajectory remains along the projected/expected lines. As we advance, food inflation is likely to soften in Q4:2024-25, and energy prices are also expected to be stable in the near future," Prof. Singh said in his statement.

"A growth-supportive monetary policy is also consistent with the international scenario," he added. However, RBI Deputy Michael Patra was of the view that durable reduction in inflationary pressures could rekindle the impulses of growth in a sustained manner.

"The expected winter easing of food prices may provide the turning point.

With the prospects for private consumption expected to improve over the rest of the year, the key is to get investment going, since exports are hostage to a difficult external environment," Dr. Patra stated.

Stressing that private investment would like to see a robust revival of domestic demand to draw in the slack that it is now experiencing, he said that "the monetary policy stance is open to support growth, but it must await the ebbing of inflation on a durable basis or else the uneven progress made so far in disinflation will get dissipated."

Former RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had emphasised that policy priority at this critical juncture had to be on restoring the inflation-growth balance.

Friday fall caps worst week on D-Street since June 2022

Lalatendu Mishra

MUMBAI

India's key stock indices plunged a sharp 1.5% on Friday to hit a 21-day low, capping the worst week for the broad market benchmarks in two and a half years, on a day that was marked by a deeper sell-off in mid-cap and small cap stocks as well as sharper declines for IT, auto and bank indices.

With a cumulative drop of close to 5% over five successive days of closing in the red, the Sensex fell 1,176.46 points, or 1.49%, to close at 78,041.59 points on Friday, while the NSE Nifty tumbled.

The NSE Nifty fell 1.52%, or 364.20 points, to end up at 23,587.50 points. Trad-



ing sentiment remained weak in the backdrop of India's record trade deficit numbers for November and the U.S. Federal Reserve's hawkish guidance for 2025 that have spooked emerging markets.

Despite the debacle on Dalal Street, the Indian Rupee (INR) made a surprise recovery, appreciating 10 paise to the Dollar, to close at 85.03.

"On a weekly basis, the

Nifty registered a massive fall of 4.77%, the highest weekly fall in percentage terms since June 17, 2022," noted Nandish Shah, senior derivative and technical research analyst at HDFC Securities.

Shrikant Chouhan, head of equity research at Kotak Securities said global equity markets witnessed various degrees of sell-off this week with Brazil markets down 10%, Japan down 5% and the S&P-500 down 4%, in the aftermath of the U.S. Fed's caution on the pace of future interest rate cuts.

Some of the large stocks to take a beating on Friday included Tech Mahindra (down 3.97%), M&M (3.60%), IndusInd Bank (3.53%), Axis Bank (3.28%) and Tata Motors (2.73%).

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NEW YORK

Suspect in the killing of insurance firm CEO charged with murder



Luis Mangione, accused of gunning down an insurance executive in Manhattan — a killing that tapped into widespread anger with U.S. healthcare — appeared in a New York court to face federal charges including murder. He was extradited from Pennsylvania, where he was arrested at a McDonald's restaurant last week. AFP

DHAKA

Yunus, Sharif discuss the settling of 1971 issues 'once and for all'



Bangladesh has asked Pakistan to settle the issues of 1971 to help Dhaka move forward with its relationship with Islamabad "once and for all for the future generations". Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had met in Cairo on the margins of the D-8 Summit on Friday. PTI

WASHINGTON

U.S. House rejects Trump-backed plan on government shutdown



A day before a potential government shutdown, the House of Representatives resoundingly rejected U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's new plan to fund operations and suspend the debt ceiling, as Democrats and dozens of Republicans refused to accommodate his sudden demands. AP

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka to formulate policy on visits by foreign research vessels



Sri Lanka will soon formulate a national policy on allowing visits by foreign research vessels, Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath said here on Friday, amidst frequent docking requests from Chinese surveillance ships which raised concerns in India. His comments came days after Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's visit to India. PTI

Pak. ballistic missile programme an emerging threat to U.S.: White House

We are going to keep the pressure on Pakistan regarding its long-range missile programme, even as we also continue to seek diplomatic resolutions to address our concerns, says, Jon Finer, U.S. Principal Deputy National Security Adviser

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON

Asserting that Pakistan is developing sophisticated missile technology will give it the capability to strike targets well beyond South Asia, including in the U.S., a top White House official said on Thursday that the Asian country's actions are an emerging threat to the U.S.

The remark comes a day after the U.S. slapped sanctions on four Pakistani entities, including the state-owned flagships aerospace and defence agency – National Development Complex (NDC) – on charges of them contributing to Pakistan's ballistic-missile pro-



Scary proposition: The U.S. is worried some of the technologies possessed by Pakistan allow it to strike beyond South Asia. AFP

gramme. The other three entities are Akhtar and Sons, Affiliates International and Rockside Enterprise. All three are based in Karachi. The NDC, based in Islamabad, is responsible for the ballistic-missile programme. It has worked

to acquire items to advance Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile programme.

"As a result, the (Joe) Biden administration has implemented a series of steps to contend with further development of long-range missile systems. Over the

last year, we have issued three rounds of sanctions against non-Pakistani entities that have provided support to Pakistan's ballistic-missile programme," Principal Adviser National Security Adviser Jon Finer told a think-tank here.

"And yesterday, we issued sanctions directly against Pakistan's state-owned National Development Complex, which the U.S. assesses is involved in the development and production of Pakistan's long-range ballistic missiles, the first time we have sanctioned a Pakistani state-owned enterprise tied to missile development," he said.

"Simply put, we are go-

ing to keep the pressure on Pakistan regarding its long-range missile programme, even as we also continue to seek diplomatic resolutions to address our concerns," Mr. Finer said.

Mr. Finer added that recently, Pakistan has developed increasingly sophisticated missile technology, from long-range ballistic missile systems to equipment that would enable the testing of significantly larger rocket motors.

"If these trend lines continue, Pakistan will have the capability to strike targets well beyond South Asia, including in the United States, raising real questions about Pakistan's intentions," he said.

"In terms of the sanctions, we really are talking

Reconsider sanctions, empower women to help rebuild Syria: UN

Agence France-Presse

GENEVA



Amy Pope

about all the sanctions: UN sanctions, U.S. sanctions, other sanctions," said International Organization for Migration chief after visiting the country.

"You can see that the sanctions have had quite a significant effect, especially on vulnerable populations. So to rebuild the situation, there will be a need to re-evaluate those sanctions," she said in Geneva.

U.S. to drop reward for arrest of Syria's Jolani

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON

A senior U.S. diplomat told Syria's new leader Abu Muhammad al-Jolani (Ahmed al-Shraa) on Friday that Washington was scrapping a reward for his arrest as she welcomed "positive messages" from their talks including a promise to fight terrorism.

"Based on our discussion, I told him we would not be pursuing the Rewards for Justice reward offer that has been in effect for some years," Barbara Leaf, the top U.S. diplomat for West Asia, told reporters after her meeting in Damascus. Ms. Leaf said "we welcomed positive messages" from Jolani since his HTS militants toppled Bashar al-Assad.

Myanmar rebel group captures Army office

Associated Press

BANGKOK

A powerful ethnic armed group in western Myanmar claimed on Friday to have scored a major victory in the war against the ruling military, even as neighbouring nations at a meeting in Thailand were discussing efforts to end the conflict peacefully.

The capture by the Arakan Army of a strategically important regional Army headquarters based in Ann township in Rakhine State would put it a step closer to seizing control of the entire State, a goal not achieved by any of the several other rebel groups in other parts of Myanmar.

Rakhine has become a focal point for Myanmar's nationwide civil war by rebels against the junta.

India lodges 'strong protest' with Bangladesh govt. over comments by aide of Yunus

Kallo Bhattacharjee

DHAKA

India lodged a "strong protest" after a key aide of Mohammad Yunus, Chief Adviser of the interim government of Bangladesh, used a map of Bangladesh that claimed parts of Indian territory.

Student adviser Mahfuj Alam shared a map on Facebook that claimed parts of Indian territory

mind all concerned to be mindful of their public comments. While India has repeatedly signalled interest in fostering relations with the people and the interim government of Bangladesh, such comments underline the need for responsibility in public articulation," said Randhir Jaiswal. India's statement came three days after Mahfuj Alam, the student adviser, posted a text on Facebook on the occasion of December 16 celebration of victory in the 1971 Liberation war.

We have registered a strong protest on this issue with the Bangladesh side. We understand that the post being referred to has reportedly been taken down. We would like to re-

In the now deleted Facebook post, Mr. Alam, who was first noted for his rousing speeches and slogans, said: "Bangladesh had achieved victory in 1971 that was not conclusive and that liberation was still far away." He further said Hindu fundamentalists had opposed the creation of a "United Bengal", which led to the creation of a "moth-eaten Bangladesh". "That is why we are saying that we need new geography and new arrangement," Mr. Alam said in his post, which used a map superimposed on the eastern and northeastern parts of India that included parts of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and West Bengal. "Bangladesh is the point of beginning and not the full stop," he added.

One dead, 12 injured as Russia strikes Kyiv in 'response' to Ukraine's use of U.S. missiles

Associated Press

KYIV

A Russian ballistic missile attack on Ukraine's capital Kyiv early on Friday killed at least one person and wounded 12 others, officials said. Moscow claimed it was in response to a Ukrainian strike on Russian soil using American-made weapons.



Damage control: A rescue worker at the site of a drone strike at a warehouse building in the Boryspil district of Kyiv on Friday. AFP

knocked out heating to 630 residential buildings, 16 medical facilities and 30 schools and kindergartens, the city administration said. Falling missile debris caused damage and sparked fires in three districts.

The falling debris in Kyiv

smashed into the city centre, causing damage to around two dozen high-rise office buildings as well as the Catholic Church of St. Nicholas, which is a city landmark, and the Kyiv National Linguistic University.

The Russian Defence Ministry said that the strike was in response to a Ukrainian missile attack on Russia's Rostov border region two days earlier. That attack used six American-made Army Tactical Missile System, known as ATACMS, missiles and four Storm Shadow air-launched missiles provided by the United Kingdom.

Office of Executive Engineer Mandi Division No.II HPPWD Mandi Phone & Fax No.01905-222051 Email: ee-mandi2@nic.in, ee.mandi2@gmail.com

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer Mandi Division No.II HPPWD Mandi H.P on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the online bids on percentage rate in electronic tendering system for the following works from the eligible and approved contractors/Firms registered with HPPWD department.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	EMD	Cost of tender	Time limit	Eligible class of contractor
1.	Earthquake Retrofitting work in Vallabh Govt. Degree College Mandi H.P. (Sub Head - Retrofitting work in Block D & E.) Under State Mitigation Funds.	Rs 4,28,94,019/-	Rs 8,57,900/-	Rs. 5000	One Year	"B"
2.	Earthquake Retrofitting work in Vallabh Govt. Degree College Mandi H.P. (Sub Head- Retrofitting work in Block C,F & G.) Under State Mitigation Funds	Rs 4,70,19,513/-	Rs 9,40,400/-	Rs. 5000	One Year	"B"

Starting date for downloading bid: - 20.12.2024,

Deadline for Submission of bid: 02.01.2025 11.00 AM

Date of opening of bid: - 02.01.2025 11.30 AM

1. The rates beyond the limit of over +5% will be rejected and the rates quoted below 10 %, the Additional Performance security will have to be borne for unbalanced bid. The rates below -30% are also acceptable.
2. Only scanned copy of original documents as uploaded on the tender website are required for technical & financial evaluation. The original documents shall be required only from the successful bidder before issue of letter of award.
3. The bidder must have experience in building construction works and he/she must have executed any one of the building work equal to the amount put to tender.
4. The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in.

Executive Engineer, HIMACHAL PRADESH UNIVERSITY, HPPWD Mandi Division No.II HPPWD Mandi

HIMACHAL PRADESH UNIVERSITY

(NAAC Accredited 'A' Grade University)

GYAN PATH, SUMMER HILL, SHIMLA-171005

Maintenance Division No.-II

TENDER NOTE

The Executive Engineer on behalf of Hon'ble vice-chancellor invites the tender for the works:- Providing and fixing PVC flooring in warden and Guest room, construction of toilet for male staff, 30.00m long boundary wall of C.G.I. sheets with iron frame work and 10 mtr 1.00m high P.C.C. toe wall to facilitate Girl students in Hostel block A&B in H.P. University Shimla-5, which are scheduled to be sold out on dated 06.01.2025 upto 1.00 P.M. and open on 07.01.2025 at 11:30 A.M for more details please may visit H.P University website i.e. www.hpuniv.ac.in

Executive Engineer (Maint.) Division No. II

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer, Road Infrastructure-TEC, N.R. Square, Bengaluru- 560 002.

No.EE/RI-TEC/TEND/09/2024-25 Date:20.12.2024

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER (IFT)

(Through GOK KPP Portal only) (Two Cover System)

The Executive Engineer, Road Infrastructure-TEC Division invites tenders from eligible contractors for the work detailed in the table below:

Sl. No.	Name of the Work
1.	Providing Road Safety Measures work in view of ensuring Aero India -2025.
2.	Approximate value of work: 160.00 Lakhs. EMD: Rs. 2,40,00/- (1.00 Lakh through e-payment and balance through Bank Guarantee).

- 1) Downloading of tender documents from KPP portal from 23.12.2024 onwards. 2) Pre-bid Meeting : 26.12.2024 at 3.30 p.m. 3) Last date for receipt of tenders: 30.12.2024 upto 4.00 p.m. 4) Opening of Technical bid: 31.12.2024 at 4.30 p.m. Further details can be accessed from GoK KPP website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> or contact the office of the undersigned.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Road Infrastructure-TEC.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-Auction Notice

On behalf of president of India, DRMs (Commercial), E.C Railway, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya invites e-auction for Operation and maintenance of kiosk for packaging of two wheelers and other parcel packages at Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya station. Details are as under:

- 1: AA/1, Name of work with train no. and completion period : Operation and maintenance of kiosk for packaging of two wheelers and other parcel packages at Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya railway station for 03 years. E-Auction Catalogue No.: MSS-DDU-25-01, E-Auction Lot No.: MSS-DDU-TWNOPS-10-24, Date & Time for E-Auction : E-auction will start at 10:00 hrs. and close at 10:30 hrs on 01.01.2025.
2. Website specific where complete details of E-Auction available. : www.reps.gov.in (E-auction Leasing)

Divisional Railway Manager (Comml.) / ECR/ Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya PR/01721/DDU/Comml./N/24-25/32

ANDHRA PRADESH CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY(APCRDA)

Lenin Center, Governerpet, Vijayawada - 520022 (A.P.)

E Procurement Tender Notice

NIT No. 43/MAU/ADMMNSTG/12/2024-STG Dt.19/12/2024 Name of Work: APCRDA - Request for Proposal (RFP) for engaging a strategic management consulting firm to promote private sector participation in economic development of the Amaravati capital city and region". The bid can be downloaded on AP e-procurement portal from 21.12.2024 to 16.01.2025 up to 14.00 Hrs. Due date for submission of Bid is 16.01.2025 up to 15.00 Hrs. Technical bid opening 16.01.2025 @ 16.00 Hrs. For further details Please refer to www.approcurement.gov.in and www.crrda.ap.gov.in. Sd/-Commissioner,APCRDA,Vijayawada.

With Salah defying the age curve, Liverpool has tricky questions to answer

The 32-year-old winger has been central to the Reds' superb first half of 2024-25, but his contract runs out at the end of the season. Just how much can the club afford to invest in the probability of Salah continuing to play at the same level when he is 33, 34, possibly 35?

Sports Bureau

Ever since he joined Liverpool in 2017, Mohamed Salah has conveyed a sense of inevitability.

It's a trait that has comforted Reds fans as much as it has struck fear in the hearts of rival supporters – you can try stopping him all you want, but he invariably finds a way to generate a moment of game-defining brilliance.

The numbers bear this out. Looking at just the Premier League, Salah has averaged 22 goals and almost 10 assists per season from 2017-18 to 2023-24. And even when he isn't scoring or setting up goals at a rate only a select few have matched, the gravity of his presence, with markers drawn to him, opens up space elsewhere on the pitch for teammates to exploit.

Guaranteed end-product?

What makes Salah exceptional is that he has continued to produce end-product in his late 20s and early 30s. The growth of football analytics, especially its influence on player recruitment and retention, has led to an emphasis on understanding how footballers age. With the sums of money involved in transfers, few clubs can afford mistakes on when to buy and sell players.

While there are always outliers, players whose games require explosive bursts of speed as well as the ability to sprint repeatedly at high intensity – such as wingers and full-backs – typically peak earlier than others. This becomes all the more significant when they play in teams that press a lot – given the physical demands, it's difficult to accommodate players past their athletic prime.

At 32, Salah is defying the age curve. Wingers, according to the current consensus in football recruitment circles, tend to peak in the mid-20s, with an athletic drop-off expected in the 30s, if not the late 20s. This doesn't appear to be the case with Salah, so far. While he has had dips in form, there haven't been any obvious signs to suggest his days at the highest level are past him.

Given the degree of professionalism among elite players, as well as the access to the most advanced sports science, many stars have found ways to lengthen their careers. But this places clubs in tricky positions when it comes to making decisions on contract extensions.

Liverpool and Salah are in such a situation at the moment. The winger is out of contract at the end of the season, but his performances have been essential in Liverpool's superb first half of the season. With 13 goals and 9 assists in just 15 Premier League games this season – he has been involved in almost 71% of Liverpool's 31 goals this season! – Salah has been the predominant con-



It is difficult for me to predict the future but the only thing I can expect or predict is that he is in a very good team that provides him with opportunities. Mo is in a very good place at the moment

ARNE SLOT
Liverpool manager

I'm very professional. Everybody can see my work ethic. I'm just doing my best because this is who I am, and I try to give it all for myself and the club. We will see what happens next

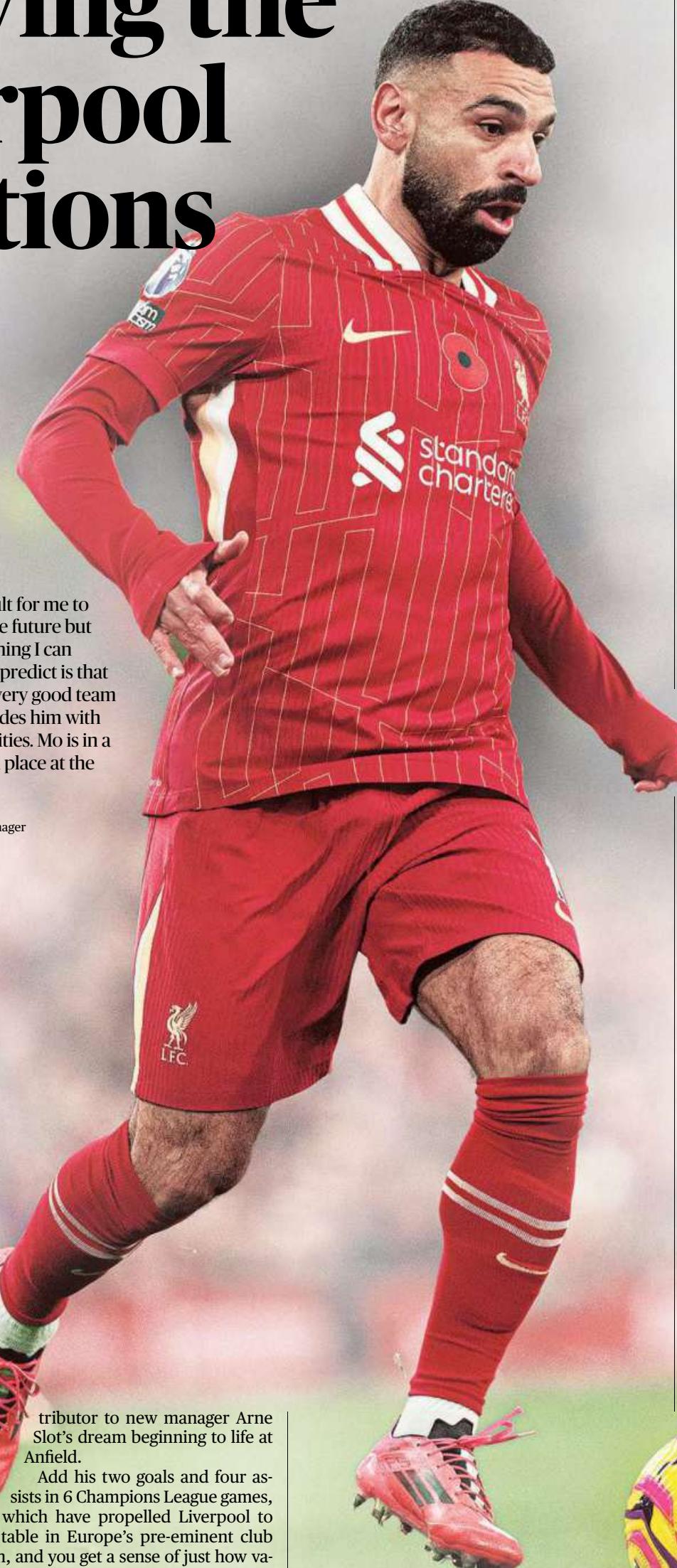
MOHAMED SALAH

tributor to new manager Arne Slot's dream beginning to life at Anfield.

Add his two goals and four assists in 6 Champions League games, which have propelled Liverpool to top of the table in Europe's pre-eminent club competition, and you get a sense of just how valuable Salah has already been this season.

Costs and consequences

But just how much can Liverpool afford to invest in the probability of Salah continuing to play at the same level when he is 33, 34, possibly 35?



a prime age?

What makes things even trickier is that Salah is one of three key Liverpool stars whose deals expire in June 2025. Captain Virgil van Dijk, 33, and full-back Trent Alexander-Arnold, 26, are also yet to agree new terms. Not only have all three been at the centre of Liverpool's resurgence under Jurgen Klopp, with the club winning the complete set of trophies headlined by the Premier League and the Champions League, they have also formed a part of the club's identity.

Managing a transition without any of them is a scary proposition for Liverpool fans. It's no wonder that there has been feverish speculation about the futures of all three, but especially that of Salah, whose goals make his talismanic value more readily apparent to the average football fan.

Salah has raised doubts about staying, saying in November that he is "probably more out than in"; that the matter wasn't in his hands because he hadn't been offered an extension. "You know I have been in the club for many years, there is no club like this," he added, offering a sense of what he wanted, which was in line with his earlier frustration over a lack of progress.

After the win over Manchester City earlier this month, he told Sky Sports that it was "probably the last City game" he would play at Anfield. Some viewed it as Salah trying to force Liverpool's hand ahead of January when he can talk to foreign clubs over a pre-contract agreement. It's impossible to say if this is an accurate interpretation of Salah's words, but there certainly have been developments after he said them.

Developing situation

Spanish newspaper MARCA recently claimed that Salah was "now close to remaining a Liverpool player for another season" after his contract situation had "completely changed". The Athletic journalist David Ornstein reported that Liverpool had made an opening offer to the 32-year-old, with an outcome expected to take time even as the two parties remain in talks.

The length of the contract and Salah's wages will prove crucial – the more the club commits to the player, the smaller its leverage in the transfer market. Will hot young wing talents want to come to Liverpool knowing they won't start until Salah departs? Liverpool will also be wary of a situation in which Salah's impact lessens, but it becomes difficult to move him out.

Handling such a scenario with the respect Salah doubtless deserves but also with the ruthlessness that staying at the top demands will prove challenging. Big clubs risk displeasing their fans and dividing dressing rooms when a relationship with a club hero begins to sour.

Equally, the risk of losing one or two elite Salah seasons without being able to adequately replace the great winger is considerable. With the Premier League more competitive than ever, a reliable scorer of goals is invaluable; it can prove the difference between contending for the title and missing the cut for the Champions League.

Liverpool does have one advantage. It's incredibly well-placed to assess Salah's athletic condition and the likelihood of his continuing to operate at a world-beating standard, thanks to the granular data it would have been able to collect since 2017, monitoring various physical parameters in games, training, recovery and rehabilitation.

"From day one, even when many of his teammates were absent, he trained hard and led by example," Slot said of Salah recently. "It's no surprise he's performing so well. It is difficult for me to predict the future but the only thing I can expect or predict is that he is in a very good team that provides him with opportunities. Mo is in a very good place at the moment."

STACKING UP



ATP Men's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Jannik Sinner	23	11,830	17
2	Alexander Zverev	27	7,915	21
3	Carlos Alcaraz	21	7,100	18
4	Taylor Fritz	27	5,100	22
5	Daniil Medvedev	28	5,030	17
6	Casper Ruud	25	4,255	25
7	Novak Djokovic	37	3,910	18
8	Andrey Rublev	27	3,760	27
9	Alex de Minaur	25	3,745	23
10	Grigor Dimitrov	33	3,350	19
11	Stefanos Tsitsipas	26	3,165	22
12	Tommy Paul	27	3,145	21
13	Holger Rune	21	3,025	23
14	Ugo Humbert	26	2,765	26
15	Jack Draper	22	2,685	22



Top Indians ▶

Sumit Nagal
Rank 98 ▲ No change

Mukund Sasikumar
Rank 367 ▼ 1 spot

WTA Women's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Aryna Sabalenka	26	9,416	21
2	Iga Swiatek	23	8,295	18
3	Coco Gauff	26	6,530	22
4	Jasmine Paolini	28	5,344	20
5	Qinwen Zheng	22	5,340	21
6	Elena Rybakina	25	5,171	20
7	Jessica Pegula	30	4,705	19
8	Emma Navarro	23	3,589	25
9	Daria Kasatkina	27	3,368	24
10	Barbora Krejčíková	28	3,214	17
11	Danielle Collins	31	3,178	19
12	Paula Badosa	27	2,908	20
13	Diana Shnaider	20	2,895	27
14	Anna Kalinskaya	26	2,743	20
15	Eléna Ostapenko	27	2,588	21

Top Indians ▶

Ankita Raina
Rank 287 ▲ 2 spots

Sahaja Yamalapalli
Rank 311 ▲ 1 spot

English Premier League Standings

#	Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Liverpool	15	11	3	1	31	13	18	36
2	Chelsea	16	10	4	2	37	19	18	34
3	Arsenal	16	8	6	2	29	15	14	30
4	N. Forest	16	8	4	4	21	19	2	28
5	Man. City	16	8	3	5	28	23	5	27
6	Bournemouth	16	7	4	5	24	21	3	25
7	Aston Villa	16	7	4	5	24	25	-1	25
8	Fulham	16	6	6	4	24	22	2	24
9	Brighton	16	6	6	4	26	25	1	24
10	Tottenham	16	7	2	7	36	19	17	23
11	Brentford	16	7	2	7	32	30	2	23
12	Newcastle	16	6	5	5	23	21	2	23
13	Man. United	16	6	4	6	21	19	2	22
14	West Ham	16	5	4	7	21	29	-8	19
15	Crystal Palace	16	3	7	6	17	21	-4	16
16	Everton	15	3	6	6	14	21	-7	15
17	Leicester City	16	3	5	8	21	34	-13	14
18	Ipswich Town	16	2	6	8	16	28	-12	12
19	Wolves	16	2	3	11	24	40	-16	9
20	Southampton	16	1	2	13	11	36	-25	5

Top Indians ▶

Ankita Raina
Rank 287 ▲ 2 spots

Sahaja Yamalapalli
Rank 311 ▲ 1 spot

Series A

#	Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Atalanta	16	12	1	3	39	17	22	37
2	Napoli	16	11	2	3	24			

'Gukesh tries to be objective, which is not very usual for Indian chess players'

In this detailed conversation, Polish Grandmaster Grzegorz Gajewski offers an unparalleled perspective on the 18-year-old whom he coached to a historic victory in the World Chess Championship. Gajewski talks about Gukesh's qualities, the strategy for the title match and how the Indian can 'mimic' Magnus Carlsen's style despite being a different type of player

INTERVIEW

Grzegorz Gajewski

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Grzegorz Gajewski commands respect as a coach. Talk to him for a few minutes, you will learn why – if you don't want to go by his stellar record alone. He comes across as a highly intelligent, insightful coach who knows what it takes to produce a World champion. He has, in fact, done just that. His ward D. Gukesh, at 18, is the youngest World chess champion in history. *The Hindu* caught up with the Polish Grandmaster, who has also worked with Gukesh's mentor Viswanathan Anand, for a lengthy interview at Sentosa, the small island off the southern coast of mainland Singapore that hosted the World Championship. Excerpts:

Which factors, do you think, have helped Gukesh win the title?

He was not at his best here chess-wise, and has been facing so many difficulties. In the end, he was able to find a way to overcome them. Another thing is his incredible will to beat the opponent. For three weeks, people were scratching their heads thinking what is he doing, why is he pushing every position for a win? The good one, the bad one – in every position he just keeps playing. And then in the final game, he exhausted Ding and made him miss a simple resource. Gukesh just got rewarded for his incredible ambition.

Are you surprised by the speed with which Gukesh stormed to the World title?

I remember the first time we had a serious discussion was last year during the Stavanger Norway Chess, our first tournament together. He told me he would like to be in the top 10 by the end of the year. Back then I had started reading a lot of sports psychology. I got really into that because I realised that these things actually matter. So I kept convincing him not to think about those things. Just focus on the process. The result is only the outcome. I was telling him to take this pressure off because he is so ambitious. He was in the top 10 in two months.

When Gukesh got off to a bad start here, losing the first game, that too with white pieces, were you concerned?

Losing the first game is not easy, but it is not the end of the world. In a sense, it is good to get this warning sign right away. So many people were saying Ding is not the player he used to be, you are going to crush him. And you have to fight those thoughts. Starting with a loss makes it easier. Because you quickly realise he may be weaker, he may be out of form; I don't know yet, but I know for sure he is dangerous, he can beat me in any situation. So I need to stay alert.

As a coach, what struck you most



For three weeks, people were scratching their heads thinking why is he pushing every position for a win? And then in the final game... Gukesh just got rewarded for his incredible ambition

**about Gukesh?**

His incredible calculation, and his deep knowledge. He tries to be objective, which is not very usual for Indian chess players, who quite often tend to be optimistic. Especially aggressive players tend to be optimistic. He is a very interesting mix stylistically, because he is a very strong calculator, he is very aggressive, but at the same time he is cautious.

Anish Giri told me a couple of months ago that Gukesh had added another layer to his game now, he can shut the position down if he wants to.

It is not his natural instinct to play the positional style. But I have been trying to convince him, and I think I have partially managed to convince him. He can actually mimic the style of a positional player. And we have witnessed this at the Olympiad, when he was basically grinding the win against Wei Yi of China. I think it is the first time in his life where he actually won a game against a top player in such a way that you were just grinding for a couple of hours looking for chances. He will never be a player like Magnus Carlsen in the sense of being an intuitive kind of a player. He

likes to calculate and he likes to go deep into position. He doesn't like to make moves just purely based on intuition. He will never play in the Magnus style, but he can very well mimic it.

We saw a bit of that here as well. He repeatedly rejected Ding's virtual offers of a draw... He went on playing even for the minutest advantage.

That was the overall strategy, to exhaust the opponent. So people must have been thinking – what was he doing, like refusing draws in slightly worse positions? But in the end it paid off.

To refuse draws is like a definition of Gukesh. So this is kind of normal, but also here after the Game 3, which he won, we realised that just a long game with pressure and no clear solution could be the way to beat Ding. There was a lot of tension and there were not only variations that you had to calculate, but also positions you had to evaluate. And after each move there would be another task and there would be no clear solution to this task. And that was difficult for Ding.

Gukesh had a clear edge in the opening.

We did not really prepare for eve-

rything. We were not that thorough, especially compared to the old standards. But our approach has not changed in this regard. It was always to surprise as early as possible. And limit your ambitions in terms of what you are going to get after the opening, just to get a playable position.

Ding had gone on record about having to get treated for mental health issues and he has been in poor form, coming into the match.

I kept telling Gukesh that the man became the World champion. It was not a coincidence. So he might have a difficult period, but he will bring his very best. And he will fight like crazy. That is exactly what happened. So in this regard, I'm very happy that he started with a loss. Because if you start with a loss, you quickly wake up from this dream.

It was a very long journey for Gukesh. Spoiling the winning positions in the middle of the match was a very difficult period for him. After Game 10, he finally made his peace with the fact that his opponent is a World champion and also wants to win. The last four games he played with the perfect mindset. Less pressure, because you don't feel like you need to win. He was just able to play his best chess. He lost Game 12 very badly, but he came back to the room and he said, 'I feel fine.'

Gukesh must be one of the best when it comes to calculation. Who is the best?

Vishy [Anand]. In terms of talent for calculation, perhaps no one in the history of the game could match him. But at the same time, he was so fast that sometimes it became his weakness. Gukesh somewhat resembles a young Fabiano Caruana.

GAME THEORY



Season toppers (men's tennis): leaders on each surface

Jannik Sinner was the best men's tennis player in 2024, winning consistently across a range of surfaces. In terms of win%, he led the ATP Tour on hard courts, grass and indoor (hard) this season. A look at the top five on each surface, ranked by win%:

HARD COURTS: BEST WIN%

Player	Titles	Win-loss	Win %
Jannik Sinner	7	53-3	94.6%
Carlos Alcaraz	2	29-8	78.4%
Novak Djokovic	0	16-5	76.2%
Alexander Zverev	1	40-13	75.5%
Grigor Dimitrov	1	34-12	73.9%

CLAY: BEST WIN%

Player	Titles	Win-loss	Win %
Matteo Berrettini	3	15-1	93.8%
Jannik Sinner	0	11-2	84.6%
Novak Djokovic	1	16-3	84.2%
Carlos Alcaraz	1	17-4	81.0%
Alexander Zverev	1	23-6	79.3%

GRASS: BEST WIN%

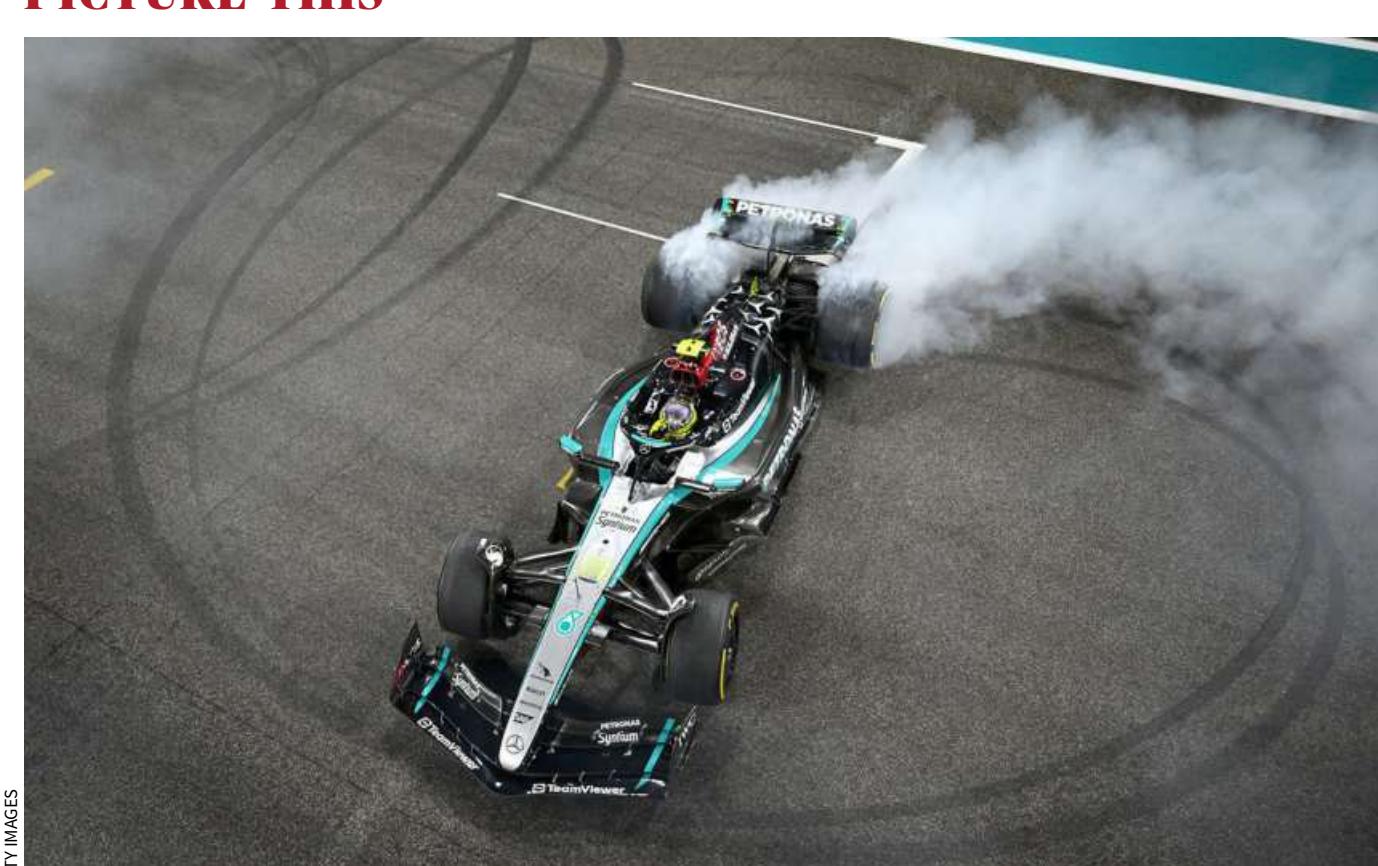
Player	Titles	Win-loss	Win %
Matteo Berrettini	3	15-1	93.8%
Jannik Sinner	0	11-2	84.6%
Novak Djokovic	1	16-3	84.2%
Carlos Alcaraz	1	17-4	81.0%
Alexander Zverev	1	23-6	79.3%

INDOOR (HARD): BEST WIN%

Player	Titles	Win-loss	Win %
Jannik Sinner	2	13-0	100.0%
Karen Khachanov	1	14-3	82.4%
Tommy Paul	2	8-2	80.0%
Alexander Zverev	1	11-3	78.6%
Roberto Bautista Agut	1	9-3	75.0%

SOURCE: ATPTOUR.COM

PICTURE THIS

**Sweet endings**

How do you celebrate the end of a partnership that yielded six drivers' titles and eight constructors' championships? You make doughnuts, of course. Lewis Hamilton's stint at Mercedes may not have finished as he had hoped, but at least he

got to pull off a celebration reminiscent of the glory years that preceded a barren three-season run.

The doughnut, also known as the donut, is a celebratory manoeuvre in which a skid-pattern, shaped like the pastry ring of sweet, leavened dough, is created on the track.

The authorities don't care for it, but the FIA did legalise the rubber-burning, smoke-spewing move in 2014.

The move was popularised by Italian driver Alex Zanardi, who first did it at the 1997 Long Beach Grand Prix, an IndyCar Series race. Intended as a 'thank you' to the Long Beach

fans at the time, its appeal has grown and grown.

The manoeuvre — also called 'baking cookies' and 'round brownies' — strains the vehicle's suspension and drive-train, which can lead to mechanical failure. Apart from the injury risk, there's also the cost of replacing parts.

INSATIABLE DRIVE

Ashwin wanted to learn new tricks to keep up with times, says Shastri



R. Ashwin's constant drive to evolve and excel in his craft, coupled with his focus on self-improvement made him stand out, says former India coach Ravi Shastri. "He wanted new tricks to be learned. He continued to look for new things as his career progressed, to keep up with the times," Shastri said on 'The ICC Review'.

CRITIQUE

Former Aussie captain Clarke picks on selectors over McSweeney axing



Former captain Michael Clarke feels the Australian selectors have erred by dropping Nathan McSweeney mid-series against India, saying the snub can potentially "end his career." "Nathan McSweeney has been dropped. I can't believe that. I think the selectors have got this wrong," said Clarke.

MEMORABLE TRIUMPH

Jaker powers Bangladesh to series sweep against the West Indies



Jaker Ali hit an unbeaten 72 as Bangladesh routed hosts West Indies by 80 runs to sweep the three-match T20I series on Thursday. **The scores:** Bangladesh 189/7 in 20 overs (Jaker 72 n.o., Parvez Hossain 39) bt West Indies 109 in 16.4 overs (Romario Shepherd 33, Rishad Hossain 3/21); **Toss:** Bangladesh; **PM:** Jaker; **PS:** Mahedi Hasan.

SEALING IT

Pink Panthers pip Warriorz, make it to playoffs; Paltan's hopes end



Jaipur Pink Panthers rallied to beat Bengal Warriorz 31-28 in Pune on Friday and confirmed qualification for the playoffs in the PKL. Pink Panthers is the fifth team to progress to the playoffs. The win also meant Puneri Paltan is out of the race for a playoffs berth. Telugu Titans defeated Paltan 48-36 in the other match of the day.

Time running out as Rohit seeks redemption

The India skipper, who has four innings spread across Melbourne and Sydney to end his run drought, needs to be patient; Perth hundred has handed Kohli a lifeline

IND IN AUS

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

MELBOURNE

Under Australian skies, Rohit Sharma is seeking a spot in the sun. The runs have dried up, and under his leadership, the second Test was lost at Adelaide before a doughty lower-order and the rains helped snatch a draw in the third outing at Brisbane.

Down Under, where the knives get sharpened against rival skippers, there have been the odd queries in the local media about whether he deserves to be in the playing XI.

Rohit is aware about these mind games and has preferred to train hard and do what he can in the contests.

Having linked up with the squad through the warm-up game against the Prime Minister's XI at Canberra, the Mumbaikar has endured a drought right from that match. His scores so far in this tour

have been 3, 3, 6 and 10. The dismissals were not engineered by any rash shot but more by a tentativeness around the off-stump besides the fact that he got some terrific deliveries.

That his last Test hundred came against England at Dharamshala in March this year makes his subsequent forays with the bat seem a touch meek. However, in the away ODIs against Sri Lanka in August, he registered 58, 64 and 35.

Mixed signals

Obviously, the signals are mixed; he doesn't seem to be a walking-wicket, but inevitably, after biding his time, he has perished.

Even at Brisbane's Gabba, he was on zero overnight and there was no display of urgency. He hung in with K.L. Rahul and on the next day, fell on 10.

"It is about my mind and the way I am moving and I am feeling good," he said recently.

Batters get judged on various factors but none



Under fire: A poor run of scores and lack of wins have put enormous pressure on Rohit as a batter and leader. AP

more harsh when ageism and leadership become part of the scrutiny.

At 37 and with the In-

dian captaincy resting on him, it is no surprise that Rohit is being analysed threadbare. In the same

year in which he led India to the ICC T20 World Cup triumph, the classy batter, a marauder in limited ov-

ers cricket and an accom-

plished player in Tests, has learnt that sport can be brutal.

Unlike Virat Kohli, whose hyper-energy lures the cameras, Rohit is more of a phlegmatic character. Kohli, through his ton in the first Test at Perth, has gained a breather.

And just across the change-rooms, Steve Smith too had been going through the horrors, but his hundred at the Gabba has given him a lifeline. Rohit needs to replicate this in the coming weeks as he could get four knocks spread across Melbourne and Sydney.

In the ODIs, his aggressive opening style meant that his fellow-batters could build further. Cut to the Tests, and back in the middle-order, Rohit has to be patient and perhaps do a V.V.S. Laxman by scoring vital runs and shepherding the tail.

He has the ability and it helps that his initial brownie points were scored while touring Australia in 2008.

Sixteen years later, he is back in familiar terrain and a redemption song is awaited.

McSweeney makes way for Konstas

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

MELBOURNE

Opener Nathan McSweeney was dropped from the Australian squad set to take on India in the remaining two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series. According to a Cricket Australia press release, McSweeney makes way for Sam Konstas. The 19-year-old opener scored a 107 against Rohit Sharma's men while turning out for the Prime Minister's XI at Canberra, in November.

With the series level at 1-1 and the fourth Test scheduled to commence at the Melbourne Cricket Ground here on December 26, the Australian selectors have also added Sean Abbott, Beau Webster and Jhye Richardson to the squad.

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

India storms into final of U-19 Women's T20 Asia Cup

Press Trust of India

SINGAPORE

A rampaging India extended its unbeaten run in the U-19 Women's T20 Asia Cup as it reached the final with a four-wicket win over Sri Lanka in their last Super Four contest here on Friday.

Aayushi Shukla emerged the wrecker-in-chief with a four-wicket haul as the left-arm spinner conceded only 10 runs in her four overs to help India restrict Sri Lanka to 98 for nine after skipper Niki Prasad opted to bowl.

Parunika Sisodia, who also bowls left-arm spin, chipped in with two scalps.

Only two Sri Lankan batters – Sumudu Nisansala (21) and captain Manudi Nayakkara (33) – could manage double digits.

India did not have the best of starts with opener Ishwari Aswari running herself out in the third ball of the chase without troubling the scorers.

Left-arm spinner Chaitali Praboda (3/16) led the Sri Lankan fightback by dismissing three Indian batters but opener G. Kamalini (28) and G. Trisha (32) ensured that the small run-chase was completed. Once they departed, Mithila Vinod, batting at number seven, carried the side home.

The scores: Sri Lanka 99/9 in 20 overs. (Manudi Nayakkara 33, Aayushi 4/10) lost to India 102/6 in 14.5 overs (Trisha 32, Kamalini 28, Chamodi 3/16).

Dazzling display



Getting it right: The Women in Blue ended a five-year T20I series drought on home soil with a 2-1 win over West Indies in Navi Mumbai on Thursday. PTI

FIDE mulls changes to qualifying system for Candidates'

P.K. Ajith Kumar

Emily Sutovsky is glad the World chess championship, which concluded in Singapore a week ago, has been a resounding success. It answered the critics of the current format of the championship, and its very relevance, in fact.

For the fans of the World title match, a long series of games, the words from the world chess governing body FIDE's CEO should be comforting. "We will continue to have the World championship match in this format," Sutovsky told *The Hindu*. "A match between two players has its own charms and it always brings new ideas to chess."

There will, however, be a change in the format of how the challenger is chosen. The present system had come in for criticism – not unfairly – for the way the players qualified for the Candidates, the qualifying event to determine the challenger.

"There will be changes, and we are considering options," said Sutovsky. "Those changes could come in place after the next World championship (2026)."

Sutovsky said India was an important host for FIDE events, though the country lost out to Singapore in the bid for the World championship match. "But India will potentially host two



Sutovsky, P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Hazy spotlight continues as Vijay Hazare begins

Anish Pathiyil

AHMEDABAD



Up for it: Mayank & Co. have their task cut out in Group C, which also includes heavyweights Mumbai and Saurashtra. VIJAY SONEJI

A format struggling to remain in vogue and a window in the domestic season that does little to spike interest in player performance.

The Vijay Hazare Trophy beginning on Friday, crammed between the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and the second leg of the Ranji Trophy, continues its yearly fight for relevance.

Last year, the competition was held between November 23 and December 16, allowing teams from the Indian Premier League to scour domestic talents extensively ahead of the mini-tournament in Dubai.

Defending champion Haryana, which remained unbeaten throughout the last edition, has been

placed along with Gujarat in Group A, set to be played in Jaipur.

Rajasthan, a finalist last year, and Maharashtra headline Group B set to take place in Mumbai.

Domestic heavyweights Mumbai and Karnataka have been placed together in Group C being played in

Ahmedabad, which also contains the 2022 champion Saurashtra. The Shreyas Iyer-led outfit will be eyeing its fourth trophy after winning the Ranji Trophy, Irani Trophy and the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy this calendar year.

Tamil Nadu – the most successful team in the history of the tournament – is in Group D with Vizianagram and Visakhapatnam playing host, whereas Bengal and Delhi (Group E) will play their games in the city of Hyderabad.

Post the 2023 World Cup, India has played two ODI series which saw a lot of new faces bloodied in. These young performers will be looking for a consistent run in the Vijay Hazare, in a quest to retain the final few slots available in the ODI squad.

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY: FIRST-ROUND FIXTURES

Group-A: Jaipur:

Assam vs Jharkhand, Goa vs Odisha, Haryana vs Gujarat, Manipur vs Uttarakhand.

Group-B: Mumbai:

Andhra vs Railways, Maharashtra vs Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh vs Meghalaya.

Navi Mumbai:

Services vs Sikkim

Group-C: Ahmedabad:

Arunachal Pradesh vs Punjab, Hyderabad vs Nagaland, Mumbai vs Karnataka, Pondicherry vs Saurashtra.

Group-D: Visakhapatnam:

Chhattisgarh vs Mizoram.

Vizianagram: Chandigarh vs Tamil Nadu, Jammu & Kashmir vs Uttar Pradesh.

Group-E: Hyderabad:

Baroda vs Tripura, Bengal vs Delhi, Bihar vs Madhya Pradesh.

All matches begin at 9 a.m.

"Indian chess has come a long way...and is a dominant power now with a golden generation of talents," he said.

CM YK

IN BRIEF



Pakistan thumps SA, wins fifth ODI series on the trot

Pakistan veterans Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan laid the foundation for a series-clinching 81-run win over South Africa in the second ODI at Newlands on Thursday. Pakistan's total of 329 all out was set up by Babar (73) and captain Rizwan (80) before Kamran Ghulam cut loose with his 32-ball 63. Heinrich Klaasen made 97 for SA but the host was bowled out for 248. Fast bowlers Shaheen Afridi (four for 47) and Naseem Shah (three for 37) were the main destroyers. It was Pakistan's fifth successive series win.

The scores: Pakistan 329 in 49.5 overs (Rizwan 80, Babar 73, Kamran 63, Maphaka 4/72, Jansen 3/71) bt South Africa 248 in 43.1 overs (Klaasen 97, Afridi 4/47, Naseem 3/37); **Toss:** SA; **POdM:** Kamran.

Siddhanth, Athatwa advance in National-ranking TT

Karnataka's Siddhanth Dhariwal and Athatwa Nawrange posted victories in the youth boys' under-15 round-of-32 at the UTT National-ranking table tennis championships at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium in Bengaluru on Friday.

The results: **Boys:** Siddhanth Dhariwal (Kar) bt Aarav Acharya (Raj) 11-6, 11-8, 12-10; Athatwa Nawrange (Kar) bt Jishnu Balaj (TN) 11-8, 11-7, 11-3.
Girls: Tushita Sood (Del) bt Kaira Baliga (Kar) 4-11, 11-3, 11-9, 11-4.

National Games champion Arun gets four-year ban

Services triple jumper A.B. Arun of Kerala, who lost his National Games gold after failing a dope test, has been given a four-year suspension. Arun had tested positive for Mephentermine and its metabolites Phentermine, non-specified stimulants which are prohibited in-competition by the World Anti-Doping Agency. The 26-year-old had won the gold with a 16.79m last year. Haryana's Deepanshi, who won the women's 400m silver at the inter-State Nationals in Bhubaneswar in June and had it taken away after testing positive for dope, has been given a three-year ban with effect from July 4 this year (a reduced ban under NADA's case resolution agreement article 10.8 and 8.3).

LIVE TELECAST

VHT: JioCinema, 9 a.m. onwards
Zimbabwe vs Afghanistan: 3rd ODI, FanCode, 1 p.m.
ISL: Sports 18-3 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 5 & 7.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1, 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 6, 8.30 & 11 p.m.
LaLiga: grx.world, 6.30, 8.45, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)
Serie A: grx.world, 7.30, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Sunday)
Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8 & 11 p.m.
PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.

Unnati coasts into second round with win over Jaral



NATIONAL BADMINTON

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Haryana's Unnati Hooda breezed past Unnati Jaral of Jammu & Kashmir 21-10, 21-9 to enter the second round of the women's singles at the 2024 Senior National Badminton Championship at the KBA courts here on Friday. The 17-year-old was no match for her opponent in the first game but faced slight resistance in the second as Jaral kept pace, taking nine points to her opponent's 11 at one stage. But from there, Unnati stepped it up, manoeuvring through the fast conditions in expert fashion to romp home without losing another point.

Select results (first round):
Men: Abhishek Yeligar (Kar) bt M. Anshad (A&N) 21-2, 21-7; Saahas Kumar Potip Reddi (Tel) bt Harshit Thakur (Chg) 21-23, 21-17, 21-7; Naren Iyer (Kar) bt Soumyadeep Saha (Tri) 21-6,

Breezing through: Unnati manoeuvred the fast conditions in expert fashion. SUDHAKAR JAIN

21-15; Rohan Gurbani (Mah) bt Paras Mathur (Odi) 21-14, 21-9; S. Rithvik Sanjeevi (TN) bt Gitchik Sangma (Meg) 21-6, 21-11; Tushar Suver (Kar) bt Bhaskar Chakraborty (RBI) 21-14, 21-11; S. Sankar Muthusamy (TN) bt C.G.; Yash Yogi 21-17, 21-12; Abhinav Garg (Kar) bt Samuel Tamang (Ang) 22-20, 21-14; M. Raghu (Kar) bt Harshal Bhowar (Chd) 21-17, 21-17.

Women: Ilisiaha Pal (Kar) bt Divyanshi Gautam (UP) 22-24, 21-19, 21-7; Tanya Hemanth (Kar) bt Manya Ralhan (Pun) 21-7, 21-6;

Indian women's football team to play Maldives in two friendlies

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Indian women's team is set to play Maldives in two FIFA international friendlies on December 30 and January 2 in Bengaluru, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said on Friday.

The two matches will be played at Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence in Bengaluru.

Rankings

India is ranked 69th while

Maldives is at 163, as per

the latest FIFA rankings re-

leased on December 13.

Coming off a loss

The Blue Tigresses last played an international match at the SAFF Women's Championships in October where they lost to Nepal in the semifinals.

Isn't She Beautiful obliges in the feature event

BENGALURU: S. Padmanabhan-trained Isn't She Beautiful (Sandesh up) won the Dr. M.A.M. Ramaswamy Memorial Trophy (I,200m), the feature event of the races held here on Friday (Dec. 20). The winner is owned by Mr. P.J. Vazifdar, Mrs. P.J. Vazifdar, Mr. M. Rishad, Mr. Mukul A. Sonawala & M/S. DT Racing & Breeding LLP.

THE RESULTS:

1. SEATLE SLEW PLATE (I,400M): MONEY BAGS (Trevor) 1, Circle Of Dreams (Akshay K) 2, Ashwa Kali Bhanji (Suraj) 3 and Sassy Sarah (Shareef) 4. 2-3/4, 1-1/2 and 4-1/4.

Im., 26.34s. 13 (W), 11 and 14 (P).

SHP: 15, THP: 23, FP: 21, Q: 24.

Trinella: 34/21, Exacta: 148/137.

Money Bags. Owners: Capt Jamshed J. Appoo, Mr. K. Manoj Kumar, Mr. K. Kalayaperumal & Mr. J. Ramesh. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar.

2. VIRAJET PLATE (I,200M): DE-

FENCE COUNCIL (Suraj) 1, Live

The Dream (Akshay K) 2, Martino (Arvind K) 3 and Valencia (A.

Ramu) 4. 1-3/4, 2-1/4 and 3-1/4.

Im., 26.34s. 13 (W), 12 and 14 (P).

SHP: 13, THP: 20, FP: 21, Q: 21.

Trinella: 12/112, Exacta: 148/137.

Virajet. Owners: Capt Jamshed J. Appoo, Mr. K. Manoj Kumar, Mr. K. Kalayaperumal & Mr. J. Ramesh. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar.

3. KRISHNA PLATE (DIV. II, I,200M): EBOTSE (Trevor) 1, Ex-

traordinary (A. Ramu) 2, Domina

(Shariq Md) 3 and Megham (Lax-

man S) 4. Not run: Altamonte, 1-

3/4 and 2 and 3. Im., 14.00s. 17 (W),

12, 11 and 14 (P). SHP: 37, THP: 43,

FP: 49, Q: 30. Trinella: 164/56, Ex-

acta: 959/635. Favourite: Ebots.

Owner: Rajagiri Rubber & Pro-

duce Co Ltd rep. by Mr & Mrs.

Dilip Thomas'. Trainer: Arjun Mangalorkar.

4. GLASS HOUSE TROPHY (I,400M):

VICTORIA DORESAINT (Pavan) 1,

Liv In The Mist (R. Robert) 2.

NEW DELHI ROUND-UP



All smiles: Sriram Balaji receiving his reward.

Sriram Balaji wins in style

Sriram Balaji raced past second seed Manish Ganesh for the title in the 74th inter-Services tennis championship at the DLT Complex here on Friday.

He had earlier got a walkover from Mohit Mayur in the semifinals.

The results: Final: Sriram Balaji bt Suraj Prabodh 6-3, 6-3.

Semifinals: Balaji w/o Mohit Mayur; Suraj bt Manish Ganesh 6-3, 2-0 (retired).

Mayank emerges the champion

GURGRAM: Mayank Sharma emerged the champion in the 7th Rajesh Patel memorial ₹100,000 AITA men's tennis at the Tennis



Mayank Sharma.

Vidyalaya, Sector-61, on Friday. Mayank led 6-0, 2-0 when the top seed Parth Agarwal retired.