

BIG EVENT

## Maha Kumbh begins in U.P.

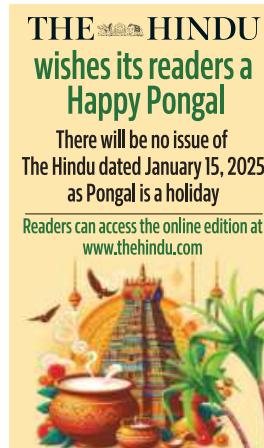
Around 15 million pilgrims take holy dip on opening day in Prayagraj

NEWS » PAGE 13

### IN BRIEF

Meta CEO's claim on poll incorrect, says Vaishnav

NEW DELHI  
Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Monday accused Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg of furthering "misinformation" with his characterisation of the 2024 Lok Sabha election as a loss for the "incumbent" government. » Page 13



The Opportunities section will be included in the January 16 edition.

## Inflation falls to a 4-month low in Dec.

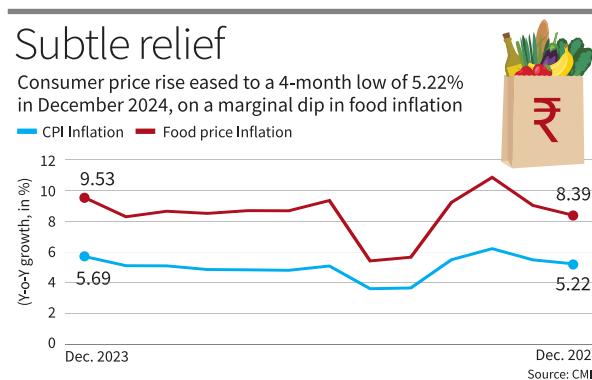
Food inflation eased marginally to 8.4%, but some critical items reported sharper price rise; inflation of edible oils and fats hit a 33-month high

Vikas Dhoot  
NEW DELHI

India's retail inflation eased a bit to a four-month low of 5.22% in December from 5.5% in November, with food inflation cooling marginally from 9.04% in November to 8.4% last month, the National Statistics Office said on Monday.

Overall consumer prices were 4.6% higher in December for urban residents compared with 4.9% in November, while rural consumers faced a steeper price rise of 5.8%, just marginally below the 5.95% recorded in November.

With December's inflation print, India's Consumer Price Inflation has averaged 5.63% in the third quarter of 2024-25, just a tad under the Reserve Bank of India projection of



5.7%. While the RBI expects inflation to cool to 4.5% in this quarter, the latest uptick gives it little room to initiate interest rate cuts in its early February monetary policy review, even as the slowdown in growth has spurred sharp calls from government and industry to fast-track reductions.

While food inflation had also cooled to a four-

month low, marking the second month of deceleration from October's 15-month high of 10.9%, some critical food items reported faster upturns in prices, including edible oils and fats whose prices rose at a 33-month high pace of 14.6%, up from November's 13.3% rise.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 12

At 86.70 to \$, rupee records sharpest slide in two years

Lalatendu Mishra  
MUMBAI

In what proved to be a Manic Monday for India's financial markets, the rupee recorded its sharpest slide in almost two years, to close 66 paise down against the U.S. dollar at 86.70, while benchmark stock indices fell about 1.4%-1.5% to hit their lowest level in over seven months.

A strengthening U.S. dollar and rising crude oil prices in the global markets fuelled the downturn for India's currency and stocks, with small-cap and mid-cap indices also bleeding along with all sectoral gauges. The advance-decline ratio for shares listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange hit 0.15, the lowest since June 4, 2024.

FULL REPORT ON  
» PAGE 15  
OPPOSITION FLAYS GOVT.  
» PAGE 13

## PM opens Z-Morh tunnel in J&K; silent on Statehood

Peerzada Ashiq  
SONAMARG (GANDERBAL)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who inaugurated the strategic Z-Morh tunnel in Sonamarg area of Ganderbal on Monday, remained non-committal on the timeline of restoration of Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the new network of roads and railway lines in the Union Territory has bridged the distance between Jammu and Kashmir and New Delhi.

A strengthening U.S. dollar and rising crude oil prices in the global markets fuelled the downturn for India's currency and stocks, with small-cap and mid-cap indices also bleeding along with all sectoral gauges. The advance-decline ratio for shares listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange hit 0.15, the lowest since June 4, 2024.

Amid freezing conditions, Mr. Modi inaugurated the state-of-the-art 6.5-kilometre-long tunnel built at a cost of ₹2,700 crore. The



Grand launch: Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of a key tunnel in J&K on Monday. IMRAN NISSAR

tunnel has made tourist hotspot Sonamarg a round-the-year destination.

In response to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's speech, where he referred to the Statehood demand, Mr. Modi remained silent on divulging any timeline. "When Modi makes a promise, he fulfills it. Every time has its right time. Right things will take place at the right time," he said.

Mr. Modi said the Z-Morh tunnel and the upcoming

Zojila tunnel, connecting Kashmir with Ladakh, will ease the lives of the people in Kargil and Leh. "During snowfall, avalanches and landslides, the road would get closed, hospitals cut-off and essentials difficult to access. However, life will become easy now for locals living here. We started work on the tunnel in 2015 and it's satisfying to inaugurate it. The tunnel will give new wings to tourism in Sonamarg," he said.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 12

## Delhi HC pulls up AAP govt. for delay in tabling CAG reports

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday questioned the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government for "dragging its feet" on the tabling of the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) over the city administration before the Assembly, saying it "raises doubts about your bona fides".

Justice Sachin Datta, who was hearing a petition by the Opposition MLAs from the BJP over the delayed tabling of the CAG reports in the Assembly, remarked, "The way you dragged your feet raises doubts about your bona fides... You should have

Reports should have been promptly forwarded to Speaker for a discussion in the Assembly, it says

promptly forwarded the reports to the Speaker for having a discussion on the floor of the Assembly."

"You have dragged your feet to avoid having a discussion... See the number of dates you held on to the report, and the time taken to send them to the L-G [Lieutenant-Governor], and then forwarding it to the Speaker...The timeline is stark," the judge said.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 12

## India summons Bangladesh envoy, defends border work

Kallol Bhattacharjee  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday summoned the Head of Mission at the High Commission of Bangladesh to convey that fencing works on the India-Bangladesh border was being carried out in accordance with "all protocols and agreements".

The conversation took place a day after Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Mohammad Jashim Uddin expressed "deep concern" to Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pranay Verma about the construction works by the Border Security Force (BSF) along the India-Bangladesh border.

India reiterated its com-

mitment to ensuring a crime-free border by effectively addressing the challenges of cross-border criminal activities, smuggling, movement of criminals and trafficking. Barbed wire fencing, border lighting, installation of technical devices and cattle fences are measures for securing the border," said the MEA in a press note.

The note was released after acting High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India, Mohammad Nural Islam met the Joint Secretary in-charge of Bangladesh and Myanmar division in the Ministry, B. Shyam, at South Block.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 12

## Kerala youth killed, relative injured fighting for Russian Army, says family

The Hindu Bureau  
THRISSUR

Binil Babu, 32, one of the two men from Thrissur district in Kerala who were forcibly enlisted by the Russian Army, was killed in a shell attack on the Russia-Ukraine warfront, according to a message received by his family on Monday from the Indian Embassy.

The other youth, Jain Kurian, 27, has been severely injured in the attack and has been admitted to a hospital in Moscow.

Babu and Mr. Kurian are relatives. They had gone to Russia looking for jobs and have been stuck in the conflict zone since June 2024, carrying out dangerous



Binil Babu and his relative had been stuck in the conflict zone since June 2024. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tasks such as delivering supplies and digging trenches for Russian soldiers in Ukrainian territory. Later, the Russian Army sent them for combat.

They had telephoned their families a month ago

and told them that they might not be able to call them again as they were asked to get ready for active combat, according to Sanish Skaria, Babu's brother-in-law. The news came as the families have been des-

perately trying to bring them back, by seeking assistance from the Indian embassy and the Department of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NoRKA).

Babu was working as an electrician and Mr. Kurian as a mechanic before travelling to Russia looking for better opportunities. They had been promised jobs in Poland by a relative, but the two later realised that they were actually offered a visa to Russia. They had spent a heavy amount for the visa and tickets, according to their relatives.

Sandeep Chandran, 36, another youth from Thrissur, had lost his life in shellings in Ukraine in August last year.

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CBI receives sanction to prosecute Jain in graft case

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Information (CBI) on Monday informed a city court that it has received the sanction to prosecute Aam Aadmi Party leader and former Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain in an alleged disproportionate assets case. The submission was made in the court of special judge Jitendra Singh, who scheduled the next hearing in the case for January 22.

The probe agency has alleged that Mr. Jain, while functioning as a public servant between February 2015 and May 2017, amassed assets worth nearly ₹1.62 crore, which were disproportionate to his known sources of income.

The first chargesheet in the case was filed in 2019 and a supplementary chargesheet was filed on January 4 this year.

The former Minister is a three-time MLA from Shakti Basti, and has been fielded from the same seat for the Delhi Assembly election. Mr. Jain was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in May 2022. After spending two years in prison, he secured bail in October last year, with the court observing that the "delay in trial" and the "extended incarceration" were sufficient grounds for relief.



The Prime Minister said that the harvest season festivals are deeply rooted in the country's agricultural traditions. ANI

## Modi attends Pongal, Lohri festivities in city

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday joined Sankranti and Pongal celebrations at the residence of his Cabinet colleague and Telangana BJP president G. Kishan Reddy, following which he left for Naraina Vihar, where he took part in Lohri festivities.

Telugu actor Chiranjeevi, badminton player P.V. Sindhu, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, and several Union Ministers were present at the programme at Mr. Reddy's residence.

The PM participated in the rituals of Pongal, which is celebrated in different regions under different names and is associated with the harvest season.

"Attended Sankranti and Pongal celebrations at the residence of my ministerial colleague, G. Kishan

Reddy Garu. Also witnessed an excellent cultural programme," Mr. Modi said in a post on X.

### Celebration of hope'

"People across India celebrate Sankranti and Pongal with great fervour. It is a celebration of gratitude, hope, and renewal deeply rooted in the country's agricultural traditions," he added.

The PM also said, "Lohri has a special significance for those from northern India. It is linked with agriculture and our hardworking farmers."

He added, "This evening, I had the opportunity to mark Lohri at a programme in Naraina in Delhi. People from different walks of life, particularly youngsters and women, took part in the celebrations. Wishing everyone a happy Lohri!"

# No difference between PM and Kejriwal, says Rahul as he targets Cong's INDIA ally

At his first rally ahead of Delhi election, Cong. leader takes on ex-CM over issues such as inflation, dares him to 'clarify stand on caste survey'; he's serving party, I'm serving the nation, says Kejriwal

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Addressing his first public event in Delhi ahead of the February 5 Assembly election, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday trained his guns on Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, blaming him for "rising corruption and pollution" in the national capital.

Speaking to supporters in Seelampur in north-east Delhi, which witnessed communal riots in February 2020 that left 53 people dead and over 700 injured, the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha compared Mr. Kejriwal with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and accused both of making "false promises" to the public.

"Do you remember how Delhi was when Kejriwal came to power? He said he will remove corruption. But what has actually happened? Pollution and inflation have kept increasing," said the Congress leader at his 'Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan' event.

He added, "Just like Mo-



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressed the event in north-east Delhi, which witnessed communal riots in 2020. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

diji, he keeps making false promises one after the other. There is no difference between them at all."

This was his first election event in the Capital since the 2024 Lok Sabha poll, which INDIA bloc partners AAP and the Congress fought together in a 4-3 seat-sharing arrangement and where Mr. Gandhi had campaigned for candidates from both parties.

However, AAP and the Congress are fighting the Assembly

separately.

In response to Mr. Gandhi's comments, the AAP chief, in a post on X, said, "Today Rahul Gandhi came to Delhi. He abused me a lot. But I will not comment on his statements. His fight is to save the Congress. Mine is to save the country."

Mr. Gandhi said that if the Congress wins the election, a caste survey will be conducted in the national capital.

He then dared the former Chief Minister to clarify his stand on the issue of

**Delhi Votes**

Parvesh giving cash, liquor in New Delhi seat, alleges Kejriwal

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday alleged that his rival candidate in New Delhi constituency, BJP's Parvesh Sahib Singh, has been "distributing cash, liquor, as well as bed sheets, shoes, and glasses, to voters".

The former West Delhi MP denied the charge and said money was distributed as part of a drive by an NGO founded by his late father and former Delhi CM Sahib Singh Verma. He added that the non-profit provides monthly financial aid to poor women.

Addressing mediapersons outside the Election Commission of India (EC) office, Mr. Kejriwal said he had informed officials about the alleged model code of conduct violation by the former MP and reiterated the party's plea seeking action against the New Delhi District Magistrate, whom the ruling AAP has earlier accused of acting in a partisan manner.

"Yesterday, blankets were distributed in Kidwai Nagar, shoes were distributed in another colony, jackets in another; cash and glasses are also being handed out. But the local DM's report states that no such activity is happening," said the AAP chief.

He urged people to vote for the Congress and said that the party would ensure the city's development as happened during the 15-year tenure of the Sheila Dikshit government.

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### LEGAL NOTICE

In the Court of Sh. Balwant Rai Bansal DJ-05, New Delhi District, Court Room No.20, Main Building Patiala House Court, New Delhi.

PC 8/2024

PREETI SAHAGAL/PREETISEHGAL VS

STATE OF NCT OF DELHI & ANR.

1. Mrs. Preeti Sanghal@preetisehgalslate

Shri. Triloki Nath Kaul Rd 38 Acadia Road,

Toronto ON M5S2, Canada

Through her POA Sh. Anil Chatta

.....Petitioner/s

Vs

1. State of NCT of Delhi

2. Mr. Pradeep Kaul

S/o Late Sh. Triloki Nath Kaul

R/o 78 Onslow Gdns, London SW73QB

....Respondent/s

Whereas a petition under section 270 r/w section 278 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925

for the grant of Probate/Letters of Administration

to the petitioner in respect of the movable and

Immovable property of the estate of Late Shri

Triloki Nath Kaul.

Notice is hereby given to the general public that any application to object to the grant of

Letter of Administration/Probate in his favour in

respect of the estate of the deceased particularly, "Cottage and four kanals of land appurtenant thereto, in Village Aru, Tehsil Pahalgam, District Anantnag, Kashmir" may file the same in the court personally or through counsel on or before the next date of hearing 16.01.2025.

Given under my hand and the seal of the court

on the 4th day of January, 2025.

Sd/-

New Delhi District

Patiala House Courts, New Delhi

DJ-05, New Delhi District

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## IN BRIEF



## Centre slammed for delay in naming airport after D.B. Patil

Shiv Sena(UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray on Monday expressed disappointment with the Union government for its continued delay in approving the proposal to name Navi Mumbai International Airport after late leader D.B. Patil. The proposal, submitted in June 2022 by the then Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, remains pending. The construction of the Navi Mumbai airport began in February 2018, and the MVA government decided in 2022 to christen it Lokneta Swargya DB Patil International Airport in honour of the late leader.

## '612 arrested in Gujarat for dealing in illegal kite threads'

A total of 609 FIRs have been filed and 612 individuals arrested in Gujarat for manufacturing, selling and stocking prohibited items such as nylon threads, lantern and glass-coated threads in run-up to the Uttarayan festival, the government told the High Court on Monday. In an affidavit submitted in response to a PIL seeking the HC direction to prohibit the use of nylon threads and strings coated with glass for flying kites during the festival on January 14, the State Home Department said between January 9 and 12, the police lodged FIRs against 99 manufacturers and 404 sellers across the State. PTI

## 'Security snatched for raising issue of corruption'

**The Hindu Bureau**

GAZIABAD

Former Union Minister and Muzaffarnagar MP Sanjeev Balyan on Monday alleged that U.P. Police had taken away his security cover after he raised his voice against their "corrupt practices".

In a letter to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Mr. Balyan alleged that officials of Mansoorpur distillery in collusion with the district police had illegally occupied land meant for a temple and a resthouse by building a wall.

Mr. Balyan said on January 12, he had led the villagers to the police station to raise the issue but the police didn't take any action.

However, Abhishek Singh, SSP Muzaffarnagar, told *The Hindu* that Mr. Balyan was being provided security as per the rules.

## 15 Kanyakumari fishermen detained near Diego Garcia

**The Hindu Bureau**

KANNIYAKUMARI



Fifteen fishermen who had ventured into the sea from the Thengapattinam fishing harbour in Kanyakumari district were reportedly detained near the Diego Garcia island, part of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), on January 9, for allegedly crossing the maritime boundary.

Sources said eight of the fishermen were from Thoothoor in Kanyakumari, while the remaining were from other parts of the country.

They would usually go deep-sea fishing and return to the shore only after a long haul.

The fishermen had put out to sea on December 29 from the Thengapattinam harbour on a mechanised boat.

The news of the detention left the families of the fishermen in a state of shock. They urged the district administration to intervene and secure the fishermen's release.

A Fisheries Department official said more details of the detained fishermen could be disclosed only when a formal communication was received from the department.

## A police officer who uses lyrics as 'weapon' to win hearts

**Peerzada Ashiq**

SRINAGAR

Unlike his ilk, this Kashmiri police officer has a completely different set of weapons in his armoury – from dance numbers and wedding songs to patriotic and devotional renditions. Peer Zahoor, 50, a Senior Superintendent of Police rank officer in the J&K Police, is hitting the right notes to win the hearts and minds in the "wounded paradise" with his lyrics.

The most played wedding song in 2024 in Kashmir remained Mr. Zahoor's 'Yamberzal'.

The 'Yamberzal', which brings the energy of yesteryear Bollywood actor Shammi Kapoor to the screen, has already more than one million hits on YouTube.

It enthused audiences to the extent that they creat-

ed over 5,600 reels of the song on Instagram. It's a distinction very rare in Kashmir where cinema halls remained shut for more than three decades.

Besides, his satirical qawwali, 'Battiye', on the electricity crisis in Kashmir remains the most circulated song online in the Valley.

**Favourite wedding song** "We don't have much to offer in the genre of dance items in Kashmir. 'Yamberzal' was an effort to give a fillip to this genre. I was pleased to hear this song in most weddings I attended in Kashmir. In fact, when I was on duty for the Kashmir Marathon event last year, it was heartening to hear my song playing in the backdrop," Mr. Zahoor told *The Hindu* in an interview.

Mr. Zahoor was born in



Peer Zahoor is inspired by the songs of Gulzar and Anand Bakshi. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the most troubled area of Srinagar's Nowhatta, the centre of the old city.

After completing his Bachelor of Engineering degree in Electrical Engineering from Srinagar's Regional Engineering College, he qualified for the Kashmir Police Service (KPS) in 2011.

Since then, the police officer is now 30-plus songs old in the music industry. He has already created ripples with his soulful and ro-

mantic songs in Bollywood. His song, 'Woh Rubaru Khade Hai Magar Fasle Toh Hai', for Yami Gautam and Vikrant Massey-starrer *Ginni Weds Sunny* has already earned him accolades.

Mr. Zahoor won the Mirchi Music Award for the upcoming lyricist award of the year for 'Rubaru' in 2021. He has become the first Kashmiri Muslim lyricist to create a mark in Bollywood.

**Diverse lyrics** Mr. Zahoor's versatility is evident from his lyrics ranging from Kashmiri devotional songs to Hindi songs on Holi and Ganesh Chaturthi. "I have written an item song for Seeta Films and another song has been approved for a movie based on Nirpreet Kaur, a survivor of the 1984 riots. I believe there is a dearth of good lyricists in Bollywood

and there is scope for new serious writers," he said.

Given the conflict that marred Kashmir for three decades, a police officer with a soulful heart is a rare combination.

**'Musical soul'** However, Mr. Zahoor said his lyrics are a testimony to the "passion to keep a musical soul alive".

"Writing is my passion and I managed to keep it alive. My colleagues in the police department encouraged me," he said.

The migration of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley also influenced Mr. Zahoor to do a song, 'Intezaar', for the community's return.

A fan of writers Gulzar and Anand Bakshi, Mr. Zahoor is inspired by songs like 'Ruke Ruke Se Kadam' and 'Meri Awargi Ne Mujh Ko Awara Bana Dala'.

## W.B. govt. admits 'lapse', asks CID to probe 'expired' saline being administered

**Shrabana Chatterjee**

KOLKATA

The West Bengal Health Department on Monday admitted to a lapse and asserted that they will take strict action against anyone found guilty in the administration of expired saline at Medinipur Medical College and Hospital. The government has sought Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to probe the "lapse", which led to a woman's death while three others remain in critical condition.

Five women were administered Ringer's Lactate (RL) on the Intravenous (IV) fluid, which had allegedly expired. All of them fell critically ill and one of them died after delivering a baby.

Three other women were shifted to the SSKM Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata, on Sunday night through a green corridor for better treatment. Families of the patients questioned the delay in taking the step.

West Bengal Chief Secretary Manoj Pant said authorities have yet to verify whether the lapse happened due to a human er-



Congress workers staging a protest on Monday demanding the CM's resignation over the Medinipur incident. ANI

ror or a technical fault after the initial report.

"Primary investigation shows there were violations of procedures. We have collected samples of the medicines and sent them for examination," he added.

Mr. Pant also said that once they get the detailed report from both the CID and the 13-member team of the State Health Department, they will decide the next step. The report is expected within the next three days. Meanwhile, RL usage, along with nine other fluids, has been banned in West Bengal till the investigation is completed.

Families of the five affected women have alleged that they were made to sign a bond by the Medinipur

hospital officials when complications arose during delivery after the RL was administered. Mr. Pant assured that if the allegation is proved, action will be taken.

**'Cause of suspicion'**

Saumya Sankar Sarangi, Chief Medical Officer of Health of the Medinipur hospital, said, "As far as I have seen, a bond was signed. But how anyone came to know that the particular RL from that batch will cause reactions is something, we are not able to grasp. This is cause for suspicion."

Meanwhile, two public interest litigations were filed at the Calcutta High Court on Monday. The case will be heard on January 16.

## Akali Dal faces an uphill comeback battle amid launch of Amritpal's party and rebels waiting to strike a blow

**NEWS ANALYSIS****Vikas Vasudeva**

CHANDIGARH

Even as Sukhbir Singh Badal's resignation as the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president has been accepted – a move that is being seen as a 'course correction' bid to revive the century-old party – the task at hand to resurrect the party could be arduous.

While the party rebels are deliberating on launching a new outfit, Lok Sabha member Amritpal Singh, a pro-Khalistan (sovereign state for Sikhs) propagator, has already declared the launching of his political party on January 14.

For the SAD, which often claims to be the sole representative of the Sikh community, both developments could mean fragmentation of its vote bank, which has already eroded over the years to the extent that the



Sukhbir Badal paying obeisance at the Golden Temple on January 1. PTI

party is facing an existential crisis. The party's poor show could be seen in the recent Lok Sabha election, where it won only one of the 13 parliamentary constituencies in Punjab. Earlier, the party faced electoral drubbings in the 2017 and 2022 Assembly polls.

As the SAD witnessed a gradual downfall in Punjab, where Sikh identity and issues have long been central to the political discourse, a sense among many was evident that under the "sway"

of the Badal family, the party had moved away from issues surrounding the Sikh *panth* (followers). In the recent past, with Mr. Badal's apology for his "mistakes" and his plea for forgiveness from the *panth*, the party appeared to be making a desperate bid to garner its *panthic* support, and it didn't cut ice with its voters.

On January 14, Mr. Amritpal, currently lodged in jail under the National Security Act (NSA), would

launch his *Panth*- and 'Punjabi'-centric political party. Besides, the SAD rebels have threatened to float a new outfit in the coming days. Their presence could dent the SAD's revival plan.

Rajdev Singh Khalsa, a former MP from Sangrur and Mr. Amritpal's legal counsel, told *The Hindu*, "We will launch the party on January 14 at Sri Muktsar Sahib. We are yet to finalise the name of the party, but of course it would include 'Akali Dal'. Amritpal Singh would be the party president while his father Tarsem Singh would be the acting president. The party's main ideology would be issues central to Punjab and the *panth*."

Notably, in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, in Punjab's two parliamentary constituencies, the victories of Independent candidates – Mr. Amritpal and Sarabjeet Singh (son of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassin Beant Singh) – were

seen in political circles as the subtle rise of radical elements in the State. Earlier, the victory of Simranjit Singh Mann, a known hardline Sikh leader and chief of SAD (Amritsar), from Sangrur parliamentary seat in the 2022 by-election, gave a message that the hardliners are getting strong.

**Rebel leaders unhappy** Meanwhile, the rebel Akali leaders are unhappy with the party not completely adhering to the directions of the Akal Takht, the highest Sikh temporal seat. Former MP and rebel SAD leader Prem Singh Chandamra said if the party doesn't enforce Akal Takht's directives, they will be forced to consider launching a new outfit.

The radical Sikh outfit Dal Khalsa has also said that without forceful assertion to implement the Akal Takht's directives, the situation would be back to square one.

## Displeasing' names of 11 villages changed by M.P. CM in Shajapur

**The Hindu Bureau**

BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has announced name change of 11 villages in Shajapur district of the State.

The move comes just days after he changed the names of three villages in his home district of Ujjain. At an event in Shajapur's Kalapipal tehsil on Sunday, Mr. Yadav changed names of villages: Mohammadpur Machhanai to Mohanpur; Dhabla Hussainpur to Dhabla Ram; Mohammadpur Pawadhi to Rampur Pawadhi; Khajuri Alahdad to Khajuri Ram; Hajipur to Hirapur; Nipaniya Hisamuddin to Nipaniya Dev; Reechdi Muradabad to Ritchdi.

Earlier on January 5, names of villages Maulian, Jahangirpur, and Gajnikheri in Ujjain district were changed to Vikram Nagar, Jagdishpur, and Chamunda Mata, respectively.

## HC orders fast-track trial in Badlapur assault case

**The Hindu Bureau**

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday ordered a fast-track trial in the Badlapur sexual assault case as the two victims are young children.

A male attendant had sexually assaulted the girls – aged four and five – inside the toilet of their school located in Badlapur area of Maharashtra's Thane district in August last year.

Public prosecutor Hiten Venegaoorkar informed a Division Bench comprising Justice Revati Mohite-Dere and Justice Neela Gokhale that the probe into the case was over and trial would be held as the next step.

## IN BRIEF



## Indian Navy riders set off on 13-day bike rally to Ayodhya

Fifteen riders from the Indian Navy embarked on a 13-day, 1,600 km motorcycle rally from Visakhapatnam to Ayodhya. The rally, named Dare Square, was flagged off at the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) in Visakhapatnam on Monday. This ride allows the Armed Forces to connect with local communities and motivate the youth to serve the nation by joining the Indian Navy. The rally will culminate at the Dogra Regiment in Ayodhya on January 26.

## One held for 'slashing' udders and feet of cows in Bengaluru

A 30-year-old labourer has been arrested for allegedly slashing the udders and feet of three cows tied on the roadside in Chamarajpet, Bengaluru, on Sunday. He attacked the cows in an inebriated state, upset over the fact that they had soiled the area. "The accused worked as a helper in a shop 50 metres away from where the cows were tied. No other person was found to be involved in the attack," said S. Girish, Deputy Commissioner of Police (West Division) said.

## Mysterious death: protests thwart bid to exhume body

Stiff resistance from the family of an elderly man from Neyyattinkara in Thiruvananthapuram, whose mysterious death sparked a controversy, thwarted the district administration's bid to exhume his body on Monday. Efforts to break open the tomb where the body of Gopan Swami, alias Maniyam, 69, of Kavuvalakam, Aralumoodu, was purportedly interred by his sons were halted for the day, with the authorities deciding to finalise a new date for exhumation on Tuesday.

## Wayanad landslides study focuses on debris flow

Sarah Babu George  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A recent study on the devastating landslides in Wayanad in July 2024 has highlighted the need for improved disaster management strategies to mitigate risks in vulnerable areas.

The research focusses on understanding the behaviour of rapid debris flows that can cause widespread destruction to communities living in steep, mountainous regions.

The collaborative study, involving the University of Kerala; the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali; the University of Mississippi; British Geological Survey; and the T.K.M. College of Engineering and published in the journal *Nature Natural Hazards*, tracks the path of the debris flow using advanced run-out modelling.

It reveals important findings about the speed, pressure and material accumulation of such natural disasters.

By mapping areas of intense dynamic activity, the study identifies regions most at risk of damage.

Experts say these insights are essential for developing more effective disaster prevention strategies. Sajin Kumar K.S., co-author of the study and Assistant Professor of Geology at the University of Kerala, explains that by creating detailed vulnerability maps, which indicate where debris flows could travel, could provide valuable guidance for future planning and mitigation efforts. He emphasises that avoiding development in these high-risk zones could reduce potential for destruction and loss of lives.

## Russia ships reactor vessel to Kudankulam sixth unit

The 320-tonne equipment was made at the plant of Atomstroyexport, the mechanical engineering division of Rosatom State Corporation; four steam generators for the unit to be shipped this year

P. Sudhakar  
TIRUNELVELI

The VVER 1,000-MWe reactor vessel for the sixth unit of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) is being transported to the construction site in Tirunelveli district. The 320-tonne equipment was made at the plant of Atomstroyexport, the mechanical engineering division of Rosatom State Corporation, and shipped on the eve of 2025. A set of four steam generators for the sixth unit will be shipped this year.

## Special transport

Before shipping the vessel, the equipment was delivered by special motor transport to the Atomstroyexport



Currently, four VVER 1,000-MWe reactors are being built at the KKNPP site. FILE PHOTO

plant's pier, where it was loaded onto a river vessel bound for the Novorossiysk seaport.

The reactor vessel was then placed in the hold of the ship for the 6,000-mile (9,656-km) journey to India.

Currently, four VVER 1,000-MWe reactors are being built at the KKNPP

site according to a Russian design. Two units with a similar capacity have been generating power since 2013 and 2016 respectively. The station is being designed, constructed, and supplied with the equipment subdivisions of Rosatom's engineering division. Rosatom supplies fuel to the KKNPP units throughout their life cycle.

The VVER 1,000-MWe reactors have been proving their reliability and efficiency for decades. Their operation in Russia and abroad has exceeded 2,000 reactor years. Installations of this type have the potential for long-term use. In particular, reactor installations of this type can form the basis of nuclear power plants

planned to be built in the Far East, according to an official statement.

"Despite the confident position we have achieved in the nuclear world, we are not standing still. We are developing and making our work more perfect both in terms of equipment design, ensuring an unprecedented level of safety, and in terms of the economic efficiency of our products."

"We are currently developing a reactor installation for a nuclear power plant with increased capacity, more modern operational properties, and improved technical and economic indicators for use in Russia and abroad," says OKB Gidropress general designer Valery Kryzhanovsky.

## Anvar quits as MLA, gets Trinamool post

The Hindu Bureau  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Independent legislator P.V. Anvar from Nilambur in Kerala created political theatre on Monday by meeting Speaker A.N. Shamseer at the latter's office in the Assembly and submitting his resignation.

Hours later, the All India Trinamool Congress named him the party's Kerala State coordinator. Mr.

Anvar's meeting with the Trinamool leadership last week had set the ball rolling. He said the Trinamool had made his resignation from the seat he won as an Left Democratic Front (LDF) Independent for the second consecutive time in 2021 as a pre-requisite for his inclusion in the party.

He said he had informed Mr. Shamseer via e-mail about his decision to resign on January 11.

## AICC to review work of Karnataka leaders

The Hindu Bureau  
BENGALURU

With speculation rife over the Cabinet reshuffle and leadership change, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Monday submitted a report card on the functioning of 20 months for 31 Cabinet Ministers to AICC general secretary Randeep Surjewala.

Mr. Shivakumar told presspersons later that this report would now be reviewed by the AICC.

Party sources said that individual reports from the Ministers had been sought on the performance of their departments and policy initiatives, and contribution to party activities, among others.

The report submitted on Monday was a compilation of these reports.

## A.P. CPI(M) activists burn power bills in Bhogi fire in protest

K. Umashanker  
CHITTOR / MADANAPALLE

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) launched a district-wide protest on the Bhogi festival day, by burning electricity bills in bonfires as a symbolic act against rising electricity charges. The protest, led by CPI(M) district secretary Vada Gangaraju, saw participation across various locations, including Bangarupalem, Potulapattu, Palamaneru, Gangavaram, Punganur, Nagari, and Nindra mandals.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Gangaraju criticised the State government for failing to clarify the abolition of the 40-paise monthly surcharge and highlighted the projected

## Puri Shankaracharya demands 'national' status for Gangasagar

Shiv Sahay Singh  
SAGAR (WEST BENGAL)

Puri's Shankaracharya Swami Nischalananda Saraswati.

island with the mainland.

The Trinamool Congress government has been demanding 'national' status for Gangasagar and Ms. Banerjee had also written a letter to the Prime Minister in January 2024 demanding the status emphasising on uniqueness, significance, magnitude and spiritual significance of the Gangasagar Mela.

The State government has also announced construction of a ₹1,500-crore bridge connecting the island with the mainland, something they have been demanding Central assistance for. "The Centre gives thousands of crores of rupees for Kumbh Mela. The Centre does not give any money for Gangasagar Mela. They do not even look at Gangasagar. All the arrangements at Gangasagar are made by us," the CM had said on January 6.

The Shankaracharya of Puri, who had last year skipped the consecration ceremony of Ram Temple in Ayodhya, emphasised the religious significance of Ayodhya but said that the temple was inaugurated by Mr. Modi for political gains.

## Rooster fights held in A.P. despite police warning

Rajalapudi Srinivas  
JAGGAIAHPET

Thousands of people watched rooster fights in Andhra Pradesh on the first day of the Sankranti festivities on Monday, as many arenas were set up in various districts despite the police warning against organising the sport.

People thronged an arena set up for rooster fights arranged near Ramavarappadu on Monday. A punter put a bet of ₹25,000 on 'Nemali', a rooster, while another bet ₹40,000 on winning of the rival bird 'Dega'. The organisers erected huge tents, barricades and arranged public address systems, air-conditioners, seating areas for different categories of audience, LED screens, and separate parking facilities for two and four-wheelers at the arenas.

Huge arenas were set up near Jaggaiahpet, Gannaram, Ajitsingh Nagar, Ramavarappadu, G. Kondu, Velagaleru, Kalla, Bhimavaram, Palakol, Chinchinada, Sivakodu, Jagannapeta, Jangareddy, Nuzvid, Kaikalur, Udi, Verravaram, Narasapuram and other places in Krishna, NTR, Eluru, West Godavari and other districts.

Flags of various political parties were also seen near some arenas. No police personnel were seen near the rooster fight arenas. Crores of rupees reportedly changed hands in betting at the arenas.

Visitors from several States too arrived for the festival. Hotel rooms were filled with guests, including NRIs, in Vijayawada, Amarapuram, Gudivada and other places.

## Catching the breeze



**Enter the dragon:** A Swedish participant shows her dragon-shaped kite in the International Kite and Sweet Festival organised at Parade Grounds in Secunderabad by the Telangana Tourism and Culture Department as part of Sankaranti celebrations on Monday. NAGARA GOPAL

## All Kannadigas must rise against Centre's discrimination: CM

The Hindu Bureau  
BENGALURU

lower than what several other States got. "Of the ₹1,73,030 crore allocated to States, Karnataka has been given a mere ₹6,310 crore, a shocking drop from previous instalments. We call upon every Kannadiga, cutting across caste, religion, and politics, to rise against this discrimination," he said in a release on the eve of the Sankranti festival on Monday.

Seeking a higher share of funds, he highlighted the State's revenue contribution to the Centre. "Karnataka contributes 8.4% to the nation's GDP. We rank second in GST collection."

The trigger for his latest outbursts is the allocation of ₹6,310 crore as tax share to Karnataka by the Centre on January 10, which is

## Pilgrims throng Sabarimala temple to witness Makaravilakku today

The Hindu Bureau  
PATHANAMTHITTA

The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) anticipates around 1.5 lakh pilgrims at the Sannidhanam for the Makaravilakku festival on Tuesday.

TDB president P.S. Prashanth said a final review of the arrangements for devotees was conducted on Monday.

## Cap on bookings

He said only 40,000 pilgrims would be allowed access to the hilllock via the virtual queue system while spot bookings had been capped at 1,000.

The movement of Kerala



**For a holy glimpse:** Pilgrims gather at the Sabarimala temple on Monday ahead of the Makaravilakku festival. LEJU KAMAL

State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) buses from Nilackal to Pampa would be regulated starting 10 a.m. on Tuesday. Entry to the Sannidhanam

from Pampa would be prohibited after noon to allow the Thiruvabharanam (deity's jewellery) procession. Pilgrims arriving at Nilackal will be permitted to pro-

ceed to Pampa only after 6 a.m. on January 15. To facilitate the return journey after Makaravilakku, 800 KSRTC buses had been arranged. Of these, 150 would operate shuttle services between Pampa and Nilackal.

The Thiruvabharanam procession from the Pandal Palace will receive a ceremonial welcome at Saramkuthi before proceeding to the Sannidhanam.

The reception at the Sannidhanam will be led by Devaswom Minister V.N. Vasavan and Tamil Nadu Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments P.K. Sekar Babu.

## Farmer outfits set to meet again on Jan. 18

### The Hindu Bureau

CHANDIGARH

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), the umbrella body of farmers that spearheaded their 2020-21 agitation, on Monday held a meeting with the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM), the farmer outfits that have been protesting on the inter-State boundaries between Haryana and Punjab.

KMM coordinator Sarwan Singh Pandher said the SKM has extended its support to the ongoing agitation. "We will be meeting again on January 18 to decide on further course of action," he told *The Hindu*.

Farmers and farm labourers, under the banner of the SKM (Non-Political)

and KMM, have been agitating in Punjab since February 13 last year. They are camping at Shambhu-Ambala and Khamauri-Jind - the inter-State boundaries between Haryana and Punjab - after being stopped from entering Haryana en route to New Delhi.

SKM (Non-Political) convenor Jagjit Singh Dallewal has been on an indefinite hunger strike in support of the demands, including a legal guarantee for purchasing their crops at minimum support price, at the Khamauri site since November 26. The meeting was advanced from January 15 to 13 at the request of the protesting farmers in the wake of the "deteriorating" health of Mr. Dallewal.

(With inputs from PTI)

## HC dismisses plea of Jayalalithaa's legal heirs

### The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Monday dismissed a petition filed by J. Deepa and J. Deepak, niece and nephew of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister late J. Jayalalithaa and her legal heirs, claiming right over the confiscated property belonging to her in the disproportionate assets (DA) case.

Justice V. Krishananda passed the order upholding the verdict given by the special court on July 12, 2023, rejecting their plea for re-

leasing the confiscated assets. The order now paves way for the special court to continue the process of transfer of assets to the Tamil Nadu government. It was contended that the special court failed to appreciate the fact that the proceedings against Jayalalithaa were abated before the apex court, and hence, she has to be treated as 'acquitted' as the order passed by the Karnataka HC was in operation at the time of her death. The question of confiscation of assets did not arise as Jayalalithaa was abated by the apex court.

### New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

Main Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar, (U.P.) Website: [www.noldaauthorityonline.in](http://www.noldaauthorityonline.in)

#### E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened /downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: [www.noldaauthorityonline.in](http://www.noldaauthorityonline.in) & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

#### A) Fresh-Tender Work:-

S. No.	Jobs No.	Name of the Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
1	12/DGM/SM (WC-4)/ ET/2024-25	M/o Road (Annual Maintenance of Central Verge and footpath in Work Circle-4 area), Noida.	77.89
2	26/DGM/SM (WC-8)/ ET/2024-25	C/o Boundary Wall (C/o Boundary wall of Vacant plot and M/o drain, Culvert and MS Jal Sharmik Kunj in Sector-110), Noida.	58.00
3	38/DGM/SM(WC-1)/2024-25	M/o Building (R/o Plaster, Painting, Destempering, Kota Stone, Tiles & Sanitary Fitting Work in Old Barat Ghar Sector-12), Noida.	49.50
4	32/DGM/SM(WC-3)/2024-25	Strengthening of Road (P/L DBM & BC between road Sector-47 & 48 Sector-47 side), Noida.	93.57

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 27.01.2025 up to 5:00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 28.01.2025 at 11.00 AM.

#### B) Re-Tender Work:-

S. No.	Jobs No.	Name of the Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
5	01/DGM/SM(WC-9)/ ET/2024-25	M/o Road (Replacement of Existing damaged Expansion Joint on Mahamaya Flyover), Noida.	81.75

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 20.01.2025 up to 5:00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 21.01.2025 at 11.00 AM.

नहर्वाण सूचना- नवीन ओखला औद्योगिक विकास प्रणिकरण के अधिसूचित क्षेत्र में शासन से रेखीकृत मास्टर ड्लान एवं उत्तर प्रदेश औद्योगिक क्षेत्र विकास अधिनियम, 1976 के विपरीत प्लॉटिंग या किसी भी प्रकार का अन्य निर्माण पूरी तरह अवैध है। जनसामान्य को आगामी किया जाता है विसंगत प्लॉटिंग या किसी भी अवैध कॉर्ट लाइनों एवं अवैध भौमानां में भूखण्डों/अपार्टमेंट/दुकान/गोडाऊन/कार्पाहाइस की खरीद-फरोजत से पूर्णतः संबंधित रहता है तथा कॉर्टेनाइजर के द्वारा बनाए रखे गये नियमों एवं युग्मा नियमों के द्वारा क्षेत्र (Flood Plain Zone) में अनाधिकृत अवैध प्लॉट एवं फार्म हाउसों के कारोबार में संलिप्त भूमानियों के चंगुल में न फैसे।

Dy. General Manager (Civil)  
NOIDA

#### CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

### CAUTION REGARDING IMPERSONATION OF IMC INDIA SECURITIES PRIVATE LIMITED

It has come to our attention that certain unknown persons are impersonating the brand, name, logo of **IMC India Securities Private Limited** and/or its affiliates ("IMC") and falsely holding themselves out to be associated with **IMC** and/or its employees in order to defraud the public and induce them to remit money to these impersonators by investing in various products or otherwise perform any financial transactions. Such unknown persons are operating WhatsApp groups, to mislead and fraudulently take advantage of the trust of the innocent public in the brand of **IMC**. These person/entities are also using our office address and photographs including photographs of employees posted on our official website.

We would like to clarify and caution the public at large that **IMC India Securities Private Limited** is a regulated entity, and we do not have any retail customers or clients. **IMC** a proprietary broker and trade in our own account. Therefore, we do not solicit money from the public to do trading or investments nor do we provide any advice or other in this respect. We do not operate or host any customer service phone lines or emails, messaging services or trading applications, in any part of the world. We also do not operate any WhatsApp groups, nor publish any messages over any other means such as mobile applications to solicit money from public to do trading or investments or for any financial products or strategy.

Therefore, please exercise utmost caution while dealing with any persons claiming to be employees/officials of **IMC** or when money is solicited from you or such services are solicited to you, in the name of **IMC**. Everyone is requested to verify the source of communication and content which is published on behalf of **IMC** and to check the official website (<https://www.imc.com/in/disclosures>) and social media handles of the **IMC**. **IMC** will not be responsible in any manner whatsoever, for any claims or losses caused for any fraudulent activities or for impersonating the name, logo or brand of it and/or its employees.

If you come across any such activity, we urge you to also kindly report the same to the appropriate law enforcement authorities at [ig.cbr-mah@gov.in](mailto:ig.cbr-mah@gov.in) or any other relevant authority.

Team IMC India Securities Private Limited

### KARNATAKA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION

Central Office, Bengaluru Board Secretary Branch

#### NOTICE INVITING TENDER No. 07 Dated: 13/01/2025

Tenders (Pre-qualification and/or commercial offers) through e-procurement portal <http://kppp.Karnataka.gov.in> are invited for supply of the following Goods/Services/ Equipment:

Tender Nos as per E-portal	Nomenclature of Items/ Services/ Equipment	Tender Value (Rs. crores Approx)	Last date for submission of tender @ 17.00hrs
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0160	Supply, Installation& commissioning of Diesel Generator Set on turnkey basis.	0.28	27/01/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0161	Supply ,Installation & commissioning of Diesel Smoke Meter with Engine RPM and Oil Temperature Gauge/Sensor on turnkey basis.	0.10	30/01/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/ IND0162	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Electrically operated Minor Garage Equipment's on turnkey basis.	0.34	03/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0163	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Electrically operated Major Garage Equipment's on turnkey basis.	1.50	05/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0164	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of pneumatically / manually operated Minor Garage Equipment's on turnkey basis.	0.38	10/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0165	Procurement of Cold Applied Self Adhesive Polymer Modified Bituminous Composite membrane with Aluminum Foil"	1.99	28/01/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0166	Procurement of Clutch and Clutch Parts	9.50	13/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0167	Procurement of Malleable Components	3.00	18/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0168	Procurement of Automotive Bulbs	1.33	03/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0170	Procurement of Bus Body Building Consumable items	0.49	10/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0171	Procurement of Bus Body Building Hardware items	0.49	17/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0172	Procurement of different types of Tools & accessories	0.49	24/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0173	Procurement of Bus Body Building Welding items	0.49	28/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0174	Supply, Installation and commissioning of Universal Sheet Metal Nibbling Machine, Vertical Band SAW Machine, Cylinder Head Pressure Testing Machine, Cylinder Head Seat & Guide Machine vertical Boring Machine vertical boring Machine & 3 Ton Capacity Diesel Fork Lifter on turnkey Basis.	2.90	20/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0175	Supply and maintenance of communication system Walkie Talkie	0.33	03/02/2025
KSRTC/2024-25/IND0176	Supply, maintenance and commissioning of front Camera and Saloon Cameras for buses.	2.50	13/02/2025

#### SHORT TERM TENDER

KSRTC/2024-25/IND0169	Procurement of Jumbo Thermal Roll for ETM Machines	6.60	16/01/2025
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Further any addendum / corrigendum in respect of change in calendar of events, specification, scope of work other tender terms and conditions etc, will be uploaded/ published through e-portal only.

**NOTE:-** Interested suppliers need to register in the e-procurement portal. For further information log into <http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>. In case of further assistance, contact e-procurement cell (Phone. No. 080-46010000/080-68948777). Interested bidders may also contact e-procurement cell for training on bid submission. Mail to [Support@eprohelpdesk.com](mailto:Support@eprohelpdesk.com) for further information if required. In case of bidders need assistance from KSRTC, can communicate at [cosp@ksrtc.org](mailto:cosp@ksrtc.org), (contact: 7760990225, 7760990224)

Sd/-

CONTROLLER OF STORES & PURCHASES  
(Tender Inviting Authority)

DIPR/CP/4318/Zen/2024-25

### Himachal Pradesh Rural Development Department

#### PRESS NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

On line item rate bids are invited by the Executive Engineer RDD MANDI HP on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from contractors/ firms of appropriate class registered with HPPWD through tendering mode:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs)	Estimated Money	Cost of tender form.	Time.
1.	Reconstruction / Renovation of Temple Baba Balak Nath Complex Shah Talai Dist. Bilaspur Himachal Pradesh.	2,01,58,465.00	4,03,200.00	5000-00	Eighteen Months

- Last date of filling/uploading the tender is 30-01-2025 upto 5 PM
- Tender document and other detailed instructions can be downloaded or viewed on line from the portal <http://hptenders.gov.in> by the firm/individual.

Executive Engineer,  
Rural Development Department,  
Mandi Zone District Mandi H.P.

### INDIRA GANDHI INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES

(An Autonomous Institute of Govt. of Bihar)  
Sheikhpora, Patna-800014 (Bihar, India)  
Tel.: 0612-2297631, 2297098, Fax : 0612-2297225  
E-mail : [director@igims.org](mailto:director@igims.org)

(Tender Notice No.: IGIMS/EC/EW/05/2024-25)

#### E-Tender Notification for Electrical Work

Rates for non-schedule items in two bid systems (Technical and Price Bid) are invited from eligible and experienced firms registered in appropriate class under CPWD, BCD, Energy Department, Railway, autonomous bodies, PSUs or in any government organization under which similar nature of works are carried out towards the work namely "SITC OF COMMAND CENTRE, PA SYSTEM, ADDRESSABLE FIRE DETECTION & ALARM SYSTEM WITH FIRE SURVIVAL CABLE ETC AT IGIMS PATNA-14". Last date & time for uploading of complete tender documents (hard copy) - Technical only is 14/02/2025 till 3:00 pm, through speed post/Registered Post/courier services only. The received bids (Technical only) will be opened on 17/02/2025 at 3:00 PM. Details of the tender can be seen and downloaded from Institute website: [www.igims.org](http://www.igims.org) & [www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in](http://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in). Undersigned reserve the right to accept/reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason. Prospective bidders are advised to regularly visit:



## Indians abroad

Absence of opportunities remains the main driver of migration

**A**t the inauguration of the 18th edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the Indian diaspora as India's "ambassadors to the world", having "seamlessly assimilated" into the local society, served the community, and contributed to India's growth and prosperity. The strength of the India-origin community worldwide of over 35 million – about 15.85 million NRIs and 19.57 million PIOs, who are foreign nationals – is their ability to adapt and thrive in different fields, including in politics, where Indian-origin people have become leaders of more than 30 other countries. Where they retain their Indian passports, the diaspora is known for its distinguished services in many professional spheres. The PBD's purpose is to celebrate this success and discuss issues of importance; President Droupadi Murmu handed out about 27 Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awards. The event, which was first held in 2003, is organised around January 9, when Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in 1915. The latest event, held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, brought more than 3,000 delegates from across 70 countries, with much of the focus on how the diaspora can help in developing India (Viksit Bharat programme).

The achievements of the Indian diaspora are, no doubt, a matter of pride for all Indians, but it is important that the event is not limited to a simple self-congratulatory or laudatory exercise. The issues for the diaspora, particularly for those who are still Indian nationals, are more acute now. The increase in far-right populist governments, particularly in the West, is making visa and entry conditions for Indians more difficult, and it is important for the government to address such issues. Intractable global conflicts, especially in West Asia where more than nine million Indians live and work, are also putting lakhs of Indians in peril, and the PBD engagement would benefit from discussions between the community on how best to increase awareness and enhance safeguards for them. Given the broad spread of the diaspora, it is necessary to ensure that India's ties with its diaspora be inclusive, and non-partisan on political issues. Recent actions by the government to deny or revoke OCI cards for those perceived to be critical of the government bely this necessity. Above all, it is important to acknowledge that one of the biggest drivers of Indians migrating is the lack of economic opportunities within India. While there are no easy fixes for this, the loss to India of some of its most talented people must be counted, even as the country celebrates their incredible success and impact on the global stage.

## Presidential reprieve

Despite the discharge, the U.S. will have to deal with a polarised Trump era

**P**resident-elect Donald Trump was handed an "unconditional discharge" in a felony case in New York, where he was earlier found guilty on 34 counts of falsifying business records to make \$1,30,000 in hush-money payments to an adult film star over an alleged affair. Following his conviction last May, one of four criminal indictments that he faced at the time, Mr. Trump went on to win the November 2024 election and will be sworn into office on January 20. In accordance with the legal immunity for official acts that is offered to the office of the President of the U.S., a position affirmed recently by the Supreme Court, three indictments that had not yet reached the stage of a conviction or acquittal were either dismissed or came to a halt owing to procedural complexities. His indictment for his role in instigating a mob attack on the U.S. Capitol in January 2021 and his indictment for mishandling classified documents discovered at his home in Florida, after his 2020 election defeat, were withdrawn by then Special Counsel Jack Smith because the Department of Justice "forbids the federal indictment and subsequent criminal prosecution of a sitting President". A state-level case in Georgia relating to allegations of tampering with the 2020 election's vote-counting process was paused pending a decision by an appeals court. In the New York case, following his appeal to delay the sentencing, the Supreme Court ruled that sentencing could proceed after the judge, Juan Merchan, said that he would hand down an unconditional discharge – implying no jail time, monetary fine, or probation – given that this would be "the most viable solution" in such unprecedented circumstances.

Other than facing the routine conditions of a ban on convicted felons owning guns and being required to provide the State of New York criminal database with a DNA sample, Mr. Trump has emerged unscathed from the legal quagmire prior to his 2024 victory. The deeper questions that America will wrestle with, however, transcend these legal minutiae – they relate to the fact that Mr. Trump, his 2024 campaign, and the MAGA movement more broadly, remain polarising and there is near-complete breakdown of bipartisanship within political circles as applicable to critical issues of social and economic policy, including the economy and jobs, reproductive rights, the criminal justice system and immigration reform. Liberal and progressive Americans must, understandably, be hoping, in the light of his comprehensive victory leading to a federal government trifecta, that Mr. Trump will strike a conciliatory note on Inauguration Day, and follow that up with a more bipartisan approach to policymaking in the four years ahead. The cost of not doing so appears to be high indeed.

# The Trump card, global politics and outcomes for India

**W**ho is Donald Trump? Dissecting the psychology of the next U.S. President is a popular pastime. His bold, disinhibited speaking style, his outspokenness, his focus on deal-making, his real estate background that defines his coercive leadership and politics, cast him very differently from his predecessors. He is a polarising figure, wading constantly into controversy, stubbornly resilient, a master of populist rhetoric, presenting himself as the voice of the "common people" arraigned against an out-of-touch political establishment.

### It's 'America first'

What is Mr. Trump's approach to the "rules-based international order"? We know from his first Presidency, that he expounds an "America First" doctrine. He debunks multilateralism in global politics, and he trashes international agreements that he believes do not favour the United States. He prefers bilateral agreements over multilateral ones: witness his approach to the Paris Climate Agreement (from which he withdrew and is likely to withdraw again) and to trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership. He is dismissive of international institutions like the United Nations and regional bodies such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, saying that these disproportionately benefit other nations at the expense of the U.S. To the delight of his acolytes, he places American sovereignty over global governance.

In the Trumpian worldview, strategy revolves around the bully pulpit, strong personal branding, a willingness to take risks, unconventional deal-making, winner-take-all in place of win-win. Practical outcomes rather than theoretical constructs are emphasised.

Donald Trump's transactionalism is legend. His MAGA ("Make America Great Again") policy will have implications influencing global geopolitics. This will entail a rise of protectionism in global trade (free trade is an anachronism in this scheme of things), escalating tariffs and trade wars and increased economic uncertainty. Intensified competition with China where Beijing is clearly framed as an economic and ideological adversary will affect global stability, particularly in the Indo-Pacific.

Mr. Trump's scepticism about global institutions will inspire adventurism in global politics and nationalisms that override international law. Polarisation in global politics will be increasingly in evidence, and debates on



**Nirupama Rao**  
a former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador of India

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free trade, immigration and globalisation will become increasingly fractious. Climate policy and action will be downgraded. Instability in global markets will affect nations, whether developed or developing, across the board. The world is in for 'interesting' and tumultuous times.

American isolationism under MAGA (since Mr. Trump has clearly signalled opposition to U.S. direct involvement in external conflict), can encourage powers such as China and Russia already united in their opposition to the U.S.'s power and influence, to expand their global footprint, using both economic and military means. MAGA could be synonymous with disruption beyond American shores and power realignments.

### Ties with India, the line for New Delhi

The strategic outlook for India-U.S. relations under a second Trump Presidency is mixed. Relations between the two countries have witnessed a steady evolution and multi-faceted growth over the last two decades across partisan divides. That trend is expected to continue especially since Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Trump have a warm friendship. India has stressed constructive engagement with the U.S. as a key strategic partner. India's growing geopolitical clout and a mutual interest with the U.S. in countering China (particularly because of the over-assertive Chinese military posture and transgressions across the Line of Actual Control) provide a strong impetus for a growing strategic partnership. India-U.S. defence cooperation will continue to strengthen together with partnerships in critical technologies (provided the new administration does not use export controls as pressure points) and business. Trade frictions could, however, be a complicating factor.

The countering of Chinese influence in the region by the incoming U.S. administration suggests that groupings such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad or the U.S., Australia, India, and Japan), where India is an important constituent, will be strengthened. The maintenance of the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific requires the continued involvement of the U.S., even though India is cautious about an over-reliance on America and seeks to ensure its very own strategic autonomy. India's Indo-Pacific vision stresses regional cooperation, multilateralism and multipolarity.

India would do well to continue to emphasise its own strategic priorities, as shaped by history, Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+Bu7senHpQdhODg1>

geopolitics, national security, its economic interests and civilisational identity. Its border security, a strong defence posture, military modernisation, intensified counterterrorism efforts through strengthened intelligence, anti-radicalisation, and a continued focus on fighting cross-border terrorism, remain of central concern.

The compulsion of economic growth is central to its strategic outlook. India's energy security, diversification of energy sources, building renewable energy and the maintenance of stable relationships with key energy suppliers are vital. Peace and stability in South Asia are important, as also vigilance about containing and neutralising destabilising influences in the region, particularly from China and Pakistan. Security of the Indo-Pacific as a key maritime and economic passageway is a strategic priority. India's partnerships with Japan, Australia, with the European Union and with The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, apart from the U.S. are essential to the balancing of China's rise, to ensure India's access to key technologies, to defence preparedness, and for its trade and economic development.

Key for its strategic future are its digital transformation, space exploration, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity for its digital infrastructure and building resilience against cyber threats from hostile nations and non-state actors. India's priorities should incorporate a deployment of soft power in an emphasis on democratic and constitutional values, pluralism, humanitarian engagement and diaspora outreach. The relationship with Russia must continue to be in focus because of the complex and diversified nature of India's strategic partnership with that country, and because of the counterweight it provides to the growing Sino-Russian alignment in Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific.

### On Trump again

The reality of the second Trump Presidency, and Mr. Trump's victory in the elections, indicate that established patterns of history and geopolitics that served as guides to the future may no longer apply as the positioning system for a global order that will instead be disruptive, polarised and unstable. Global politics, all said, may never be the same. As the American analyst, Ian Bremmer, recently noted, a G-Zero world has arrived, and the law of the jungle may provide the new global playbook.

# Transforming 'men'-talities, redefining masculinity

**A**s another International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women passes by (November 25), we face a stark truth: despite decades of advocacy, nearly one in three women worldwide has endured violence at the hands of men. While men are often the perpetrators, they can also be key agents of change. Addressing violence against women requires addressing men's roles and questioning traditional notions of masculinities based on strength, aggression and control. These notions need to be replaced by a culture where equality, empathy, and non-violence define alternative notions of manhood.

Violence against women can be seen, somewhat paradoxically, as a quintessential "men's issue" – a societal issue that demands the active engagement of men. From early childhood, boys are influenced by norms that tell them strength is dominance, that emotions are a weakness, and that asserting control is the way to protect their status. These deeply entrenched ideas not only harm women but also limit men's lives and their relationships, trapping them in cycles of suppressed emotions and aggressive behaviours. Recognising and reshaping these norms is essential for creating healthier relationships and a safer world.

The subject of men and masculinities has become a prominent focus within the development sector. Over the past two decades, academic research and grass-root efforts have revealed the importance of engaging with men, highlighted strategies that work, and shown how men are increasingly stepping out to challenge traditional gender norms. This growing shift reflects a recognition among men of their role in advancing gender equality.

**An India report**  
UNESCO's Transforming MENTalities initiative has aimed to shift the way men engage with gender issues – not just as allies but as active participants in social transformation. This initiative challenges rigid and stereotyped ideas of masculinity and



**Tim Curtis**  
Director, UNESCO South Asia Regional Office, part of Team UN in India



**Ravi Verma**  
Executive Director, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) Asia

A UNESCO initiative with the goal of changing the way men engage with gender issues is making progress

fosters positive, supportive roles for men, engaging them as champions for gender equality. As we inch closer to Agenda 2030 – working to create an inclusive and equal world – UNESCO, in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), is proud to present the report, "Engaging Men and Boys: A Report on Pathways to Gender Equality in India". This report documents 10 pioneering programmes across India that engage men and boys to address gender inequality.

### Some of the interventions

Through impactful initiatives, these programmes encourage critical dialogues that are aimed at questioning traditional gender norms, reshaping concepts of masculinity, and fostering inclusive attitudes. By emphasising education, open discussions, and community-driven actions, these programmes empower participants to become advocates for gender equity within their household and within communities and institutions they are part of.

For example, 'Mardon Wali Baat (A man's thing)', an initiative by The YP Foundation, uses storytelling and social media to foster conversations around positive masculinities with young men on campuses and in communities. This intervention helps young men critically examine the limiting narratives they have grown up with, empowering them to embrace values of respect and equality. Similarly, Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS), a collaboration between the ICRW and the Department of Education in the State of Rajasthan, uses interactive classroom activities to help adolescent boys see the harm in toxic masculinity and adopt more equitable gender attitudes. In one session, a boy reflected, "I used to think boys should only do outdoor chores. Now, I believe we should work alongside women at home." These moments of transformation create ripple effects that can reshape entire communities.

Initiatives such as 'Dekh Rekh (caring for each other)' and 'Hamari Shaadi (our marriage)

encourage men's active participation in family nutrition and planning, tackling gender bias through small, everyday actions. These interventions prove that when men and boys are invited to engage with gender equality as a part of their lives, rather than as an abstract idea, change becomes possible.

### The defining role of public figures

Change also becomes possible when men and boys have positive role models demonstrating equitable behaviours. These initiatives underscore the importance of role models who actively participate in household and care-giving responsibilities, reject violence as a solution, practise empathy, and embrace vulnerability. Public figures, in particular, can help normalise gender equality. For instance, a well-known Indian cricketer recently sparked a national conversation on shared parenting and responsibility by publicly committing to paternity leave. Actions such as these highlight how equitable relationships are rooted in care, respect, and partnership, redefining what it means to "be a man" in ways that uplift both individuals and communities.

The path to true equality is long, and the active participation of men is crucial in this journey. Beyond rejecting violence, men can challenge the stereotypes and cultural norms that perpetuate it. They must see themselves as essential contributors to change, helping dismantle toxic ideas of manhood. This requires a willingness to question the privileges that patriarchy grants the world and to explore ways to address the pressures and expectations that accompany these privileges. By reflecting on and reshaping their roles, men can play a transformative part in building a more equitable society for all.

In the new year, let us celebrate those men and boys who are "Transforming MEN'talities" and championing equality. Together, by redefining masculinity, we can create a world where every individual, regardless of gender, is free from violence and empowered to thrive.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### The border and Bangladesh

It is baffling why Bangladesh should be concerned if India is erecting fences on the India-Bangladesh border. Perhaps, it was 'open doors' till now and with diplomatic relations changing, Dhaka is reacting. Illegal migration may also be a part of vote bank politics.

**Govardhana Myneedu,**  
Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

### The Governor, actions

The repeated Quixotic antics of certain Governors

grossly erodes the respect one accords to the posts they have been enjoying all along. That the government has such personalities as Governors, especially in Opposition-ruled States, and not reacting to their 'overactions' only shows deteriorating political morality. It is time to restore the image and the prestige of key constitutional posts.

**A.G. Rajmohan,**  
Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh

The headline says it all: "Arrogance shown by the

[Tamil Nadu] Chief Minister Stalin is not good, says Raj Bhavan" (January 13). It is even more astounding that Raj Bhavan has to use the words "absurd" and "childish" in its social media post. It should be the other way around. His excellency must uphold his high dignity and also the honour associated with the post he holds. Tamil Nadu needs a Governor who is more cooperative and understanding.

**Parthasarathy N.,**  
Chennai

**Examination postponement**  
I am writing to express my concern regarding the decision by the National Testing Agency (NTA) to postpone the University Grants Commission (UGC)-NET examination scheduled for January 15, 2025, "due to festivals". While the importance of cultural festivities is acknowledged, such abrupt changes disrupt the preparations of the student community, many of whom have been preparing rigorously for this test for

months. Examinations such as the UGC-NET are critical for academic and professional progress, and last-minute rescheduling creates unnecessary stress and logistical challenges. It is imperative that examination timetables are meticulously planned, taking into consideration significant dates. I urge the authorities to ensure a more considerate and systematic approach in future scheduling.

**K.M. Vishnu Namboodiri,**  
Tiruvalla, Kerala

### P. Jayachandran

The passing of the playback singer has left a void in the hearts of music lovers. Jayachandran's voice transcended geographical and linguistic boundaries, captivating generations with its depth and resonance. His legacy as a singer, musician and devotee will continue to inspire generations to come.

**Padmanabha Suryanarayana,**  
Kochi, Kerala

Letters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the postal address.

## Resisting transparency, eroding public trust

Last year, presiding officer Anil Masih was caught on CCTV camera manipulating votes in the Chandigarh mayor elections to help the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secure victory. The incident underlined the importance of infusing transparency in the electoral process to detect and prevent election fraud. It is ironic then that even before the year ended, the Central government brought an amendment to Rule 93(2) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, to restrict public access to election-related records.

The amendment came days after the Punjab and Haryana High Court directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to provide information under Rule 93(2) of the Conduct of Election Rules. Copies of Form 17C and CCTV footage of the Assembly elections in Haryana were among the records sought by the petitioner.

Rule 93 of the Conduct of Election Rules provides a framework for people to obtain information related to elections. Rule 93(2) originally stated that other than the records specifically exempt under Rule 93(1), all papers relating to elections shall be available for people to inspect and take copies of. The amendment to Rule 93(2) narrows the scope of people's right to information by adding a qualification that only "papers as specified in these rules relating to the election shall be open to public inspection". Records related to the electoral process, including Form 17C, video recordings and CCTV footage, will potentially get caught in the cross hairs of the new amendment.

**Delays that led to doubts**  
The role of the ECI in the matter is particularly disconcerting. One of the safeguards in the Representation of the People Act, 1951, to prevent the ruling party from arbitrarily misusing its power to frame rules is that the rules can be made only "after consulting the

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**Anjali Bhardwaj**

Transparency activist associated with the Satark Nagrik Sangathan and the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information



**Amrita Johri**

Transparency activist associated with the Satark Nagrik Sangathan and the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information

The amendment to Rule 93(2) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, to restrict public access to election-related records, has no place in a democracy

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Election Commission". It is baffling why the institution vested with the responsibility of ensuring free and fair elections is opposed to transparency, especially at a time when serious questions have been raised about the sanctity of the electoral process.

In the general elections of 2024, the ECI did not put out voter turnout figures in absolute numbers after the completion of voting in the initial phases. This, coupled with an unusually high revision of 6% in voter turnout in some phases of the election, without any explanation, prompted a public demand for disclosure of Form 17C. Part I of this Form is filled by the Presiding Officer of each polling station at the close of voting and is submitted to the Returning Officer of the constituency. It contains information on the voter turnout and the number of votes recorded in the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). Part II is filled on the day of counting by noting the votes secured by each candidate as recorded in the EVMs. The documents reveal whether or not voter turnout tallies with the votes polled and counted.

Several political parties also sought copies of Form 17C after the general elections, claiming an abnormally large increase in voter turnout between the figures declared by the ECI at the close of polls on the day of voting and the final turnout declared a few days later. For instance, an ally of the BJP, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), claimed a massive increase between the two figures in some constituencies in Odisha, raising doubts about the integrity of the election process. In the Assembly elections held in Haryana and Maharashtra, similar concerns were raised and applications were again filed seeking copies of Form 17C and other election records.

**Refusal to disclose information**  
Unfortunately, all these requests were stonewalled by the ECI. In a petition to the ECI, the BJD complained that even its

candidates were denied copies of Form 17C, despite making requests under the Representation of the People Act and the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Further, when the matter of proactive disclosure of Form 17C was agitated in the Supreme Court, the ECI opposed it on the specious grounds that there is no legal mandate to share Form 17C with anyone other than the candidates and political parties through their designated polling agents. In fact, it claimed that there is a "one-to-one relationship between each Form 17C and its possessor" and its unrestricted disclosure is amendable to mischief as people may morph the images. Further, it argued that there is no technical facility to scan the documents.

The ECI's reluctance to share copies of Form 17C is inexplicable. Copies of Part I of Form 17C are given to polling agents who are present at the booth and there is no prohibition on their further dissemination. In Digital India, the claim that Returning Officers don't have the technical facility to scan and upload a couple of thousand pages is scarcely credible.

On December 26, 2024, more than six months after the general elections, the ECI released a set of 42 statistical reports terming it a "Treasure Trove for stakeholders including academicians, researchers, election watchers worldwide". This too had no data from Form 17C, which would conclusively resolve the vexed issue of difference between votes polled and counted.

Transparency is key to ensure public trust and participation in the electoral process. In 2024, the Supreme Court struck down the electoral bonds scheme as being violative of a voter's fundamental right to information. A challenge to the new amendment has already reached the apex court. Rather than wait for the verdict of the judiciary, the ECI and the BJP would do well to realise that this amendment has no place in a democracy and withdraw it.

## The promised land record

The Congress government is trying to streamline the land ownership process

### STATE OF PLAY

**M. Rajeev**  
rajeev.madabhush@thehindu.co.in

Ever since the Congress government came to power in Telangana, it has taken a series of measures to streamline the land ownership process, rectify deficiencies in the previous system that had caused sleepless nights for farmers, and improve revenue administration.

Farmers began to struggle when, in 2020, the Telangana Assembly enacted the Telangana Rights in Land and Patta-dar Passbooks Act, popularly known as the Record of Rights Act.

The previous Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government had also introduced the Dharani portal, a land record management portal, billed as one-stop solution for land-related issues. However, the portal was rife with errors. There was often a mismatch between the physical records and the digitised records, and 18.36 lakh acres of land were pushed into the prohibited list even though farmers had been tilling them for decades. The portal was operated by a foreign company.

To make matters worse, the new law left no scope for grievance redress at the local level. The power of redress was mostly vested with the District Collector or Chief Commissioner of Land Administration. The BRS government also did not prepare rules for effective implementation of the Act.

Then the BRS government also scrapped the village revenue officers and village revenue assistants system, arguing that it was a residue of the feudal system and that the officers and assistants were fudging revenue records. Village



revenue assistants had been helping revenue officials in villages with the collection of village revenues, such as agriculture tax and irrigation tax. The village revenue officers and village revenue assistants of 10,950 revenue villages across the State were removed overnight and accommodated in other departments. This hit revenue services at the grassroots level. This forced farmers to approach courts at different levels and as a consequence, the judiciary was faced with a pile of cases.

The government also faced allegations that BRS leaders were taking advantage of the loopholes in the Dharani portal to usurp lands from farmers at throwaway prices. In short, land management became a messy affair.

Immediately after it came to power, the Congress government constituted a committee headed by senior party leader M. Kodanda Reddy to study the lapses in revenue administration and recommend measures to strengthen the system. The committee comprising experts recommended repeal of the Record of Rights Act and suggested that the Dharani portal be replaced with a new farmer-friendly portal, Bhumata.

Last December, the Assembly enacted the Telangana Bhu Bharati (Record of Rights) Act, 2024, with a provision to issue Bhudhaar cards, on the lines of Aadhaar cards, to all

land owners for issuing title deeds and reducing disputes at the village level. "The lack of unique identification number for land parcels is leading to boundary disputes and is also a hurdle in maintaining accurate revenue records. There is a need to create unique land parcel identification numbers for each parcel," the Act said. Last week, the Governor gave assent to the Act. It is hoped that this new law will reduce property-related disputes in rural areas and bring financial stability to citizens by enabling them to use their property as a financial asset for taking loans.

More importantly, the law provides for a redress mechanism. It also provides for expeditious adjudication of lands entered in the prohibited list and aims at creating a user-friendly and hassle-free online portal for record of land rights. Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy has assured the people that the rules for the new Record of Rights Act are being prepared and has promised that the law will come into force in three months. The government has also brought back the system of village level officers and village revenue assistants. The process for verifying their certificates has started.

While these are welcome steps, implementation and transparency are key to success. The problems in the Dharani portal and the problematic Record of Rights Act were said to be major reasons for the BRS' defeat in the Assembly elections. If the new portal is more efficient than the earlier one, and farmers have local support for grievance redress, there will be even greater trust in the Congress, which received overwhelming support in rural areas during the elections.

## The way forward for PM-KISAN

The scheme, which started off strong, has been providing assistance to fluctuating numbers of farmers over the past six years

### DATA POINT

#### T. Ramakrishnan

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), which provides yearly income support of ₹6,000 to eligible farmer families in three instalments, has been through highs and lows both in terms of coverage and payout. It became operational from December 2018.

Originally intended for small and marginal farmers, the scheme, which was launched in February 2019, was later extended to all farmers who owned land when the National Democratic Alliance retained power in May 2019. The government made it clear in Parliament that there was no proposal to expand the scheme further to bring in tenant farmers under the fold. At the time of expansion in 2019, the scheme was expected to cost ₹87,217.5 crore to the public exchequer for 2019-20 with the total number of beneficiaries being around 14.5 crore. However, in the last six years, neither did the amount disbursed exceed ₹70,000 crore during any year, nor did the number of beneficiaries touch the 14.5-crore mark.

As Table 1 shows, allocation for the scheme in the beginning of 2019-20 and 2020-21 was ₹75,000 crore each. But in both years, the expenditure on account of disbursal ranged from around ₹49,000 crore to ₹61,000 crore. The year-on-year growth rate for 2020-21 was close to 25% while it moderated to around 10% next year. However, it was in that year (2021-22) that the absolute figure of payout was the highest (around ₹67,150 crore). With the authorities tightening coverage of the scheme, the annual aggregate amount disbursed began going down and saw a 13% dip in 2022-23. Last year, the amount was ₹62,000 crore.

Table 2 gives an account of the varying number of beneficiaries at the time of payment of instalment

at a given time. Since the scheme was inaugurated, the government has made payments 18 times. The last payment was made in October 2024. The number of beneficiaries started rising in the second year of implementation and this trend continued until the fourth year. Since then, governments, both at the Centre and in States, have been weeding out ineligible persons. At the same time, they have been taking steps to "saturation the scheme with all eligible farmers."

A "major saturation drive" commenced on November 15, 2023 to include more than 1 crore farmers. Another round was carried out from June 2024 and more than 25 lakh farmers were made beneficiaries. At the all-India level, the total number of beneficiaries, at the time of the release of the 18th payout, was approximately 9.59 crore. Of them, farmers from Scheduled Castes (SCs) accounted for 12% and those from Scheduled Tribes (STs) accounted for 9%. While women constituted a little more than 20% of SCs and others, their share among STs was around 29%. In December last year, the government informed the Lok Sabha that it did not maintain any separate data for Other Backward Classes, who were included in the category of "others."

A perusal of the data, as given in Table 3, on the year-wise distribution of funds in 10 States from different regions of the country reveals that all of them have experienced ups and downs. For instance, Tamil Nadu, an important rice-producing State, had 44.6 lakh beneficiaries in 2020-21; now it has 21.9 lakh. The amount disbursed rose only to go down – from around ₹2,594 crore during 2020-21 to ₹1,439 crore during 2023-24. In Manipur, the number of beneficiaries decreased by about 70% between 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Farmers have been demanding a hike in the annual payout. While considering this, the government should incentivise those who efficiently use water, electricity, and other inputs during production.

## PM-KISAN: Highs and lows

The data for the charts were sourced from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha replies and Budget documents



**Table 1:** The table shows the allocation for the scheme and the amount transferred since 2018-19

Year	Allocation	Revised Estimate	Amount transferred
2018-19	0	20,000	6,005.5
2019-20	75,000	54,370.15	49,196.4
2020-21	75,000	65,000	60,989.9
2021-22	65,000	67,500	67,147.4
2022-23	68,000	60,000	58,253.8
2023-24	60,000	60,000	61,886.5
2024-25*	60,000	N.A.	41,687.3*

\*After the 18th instalment (Aug-Nov 2024)

**Table 2:** The table shows the number of beneficiaries at the time of select instalments of payment

Instalment	Number of beneficiaries
1st (Dec 2018-Mar 2019)	3,16,19,876
5th (April 2020 - July 2020)	9,26,93,619
9th (Aug 2021- Nov 2021)	10,34,41,242
13th (Dec 2022 - Mar 2023)	8,12,34,383
16th (Dec 2023 - Mar 2024)	9,04,27,479
18th (Aug 2024 - Nov 2024)	9,58,97,635

**Table 3:** The table shows the year-wise distribution of funds in 10 States from different regions of the country. Since the scheme came into effect in December 2018, the table shows numbers from 2019 as it was the first full inaugural year

State	2019-20		2023-24	
	Number of beneficiaries	Amount disbursed	Number of beneficiaries	Amount disbursed
Andhra Pradesh	49,90,936	2,710.5	44,88,790	2,813.79
Assam	12,29,282	1,396.4	16,54,726	1,358.68
Bihar	62,03,177	2,921.7	80,59,752	4,891.74
Karnataka	50,68,281	2,789.8	51,66,182	2,963.36
Maharashtra	91,29,512	4,898.9	96,94,408	5,888.33
Manipur	2,74,496	86.7	1,06,768	74.63
Punjab	23,10,245	1,262.7	10,26,631	582.67
Rajasthan	55,76,237	3,382.8	70,19,074	4,103.84
Tamil Nadu	36,84,641	2,130.9	23,21,564	1,438.76
Uttar Pradesh	1,98,83,400	11,006.6	2,26,33,008	13,808.24

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**The death toll from the Los Angeles wildfires**

**24** After a weekend spent blocking the explosive growth of fires that destroyed thousands of homes and killed at least 24 people in the Los Angeles area, firefighters got a slight break with calmer weather but cast a wary eye on a forecast for yet more wind. At least 16 people are missing. PTI

**Odisha's pension for persons jailed during the Emergency**

**20,000** In ₹. The government of Odisha announced a monthly pension of ₹20,000 and other benefits for people jailed during the Emergency. The State will also bear the medical expenses of people jailed during the period. PTI

**China's combined import, export trade with Russia in 2024**

**244.8** In \$ billion. Combined imports and exports with Russia totalled \$244.8 billion in 2024, according to China's General Administration of Customs, up slightly from \$240.1 billion. Trade between both nations reached a record high last year. AFP

**EU's humanitarian aid for the nations of Ukraine and Moldova**

**148** In million euros. The European Union announced a new humanitarian aid package of 140 million euros for Ukraine and a further 8 million euros worth of aid for Moldova. The funding is to help with food, shelter, water and heating for Ukraine's people. REUTERS

**Number of AIDS-related deaths in Tripura since 2015**

**512** The Chief Minister informed the Assembly that the State also recorded 7,707 HIV-positive patients till 2021, 8,943 till 2022 and 10,126 till 2023. The State witnessed the highest number of 74 deaths due to AIDS in 2021-22. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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# What led to the Azerbaijan Airlines jet crash?

Why has the Azerbaijani President said that the airliner was shot down? What are the rules regarding aviation safety in conflict zones? What are the legal issues which come into play? Was international humanitarian law breached?

## EXPLAINER

Murali N. Krishnaswamy

### The story so far:

**O**n December 25, 2024, an Azerbaijan Airlines flight, 4K-AZ65, en route from Baku in Azerbaijan to Grozny, the capital of Chechnya in Russia, with 67 passengers and crew, faced a series of serious technical difficulties. The weather appeared to have been a factor as the crew attempted to divert to Makhachkala in Russia. There was another diversion to Aktau in Kazakhstan by the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, but the plane impacted the ground about three kilometres from Aktau's airport, and 38 passengers were killed. There are conflicting reports on the cause, linked to a series of holes in a part of the fuselage and a survivor passenger's video footage. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said "we can say with complete clarity that the plane was shot down... We are not saying that it was done intentionally, but it was done". Azerbaijan has said that the aircraft "was ordered" to fly across the Caspian Sea after it was denied landing at two Russian airports. Data from the black boxes have been decoded in Brazil, where the twin-engine aircraft, an Embraer ERJ-190AR, was manufactured.

### What are the other details?

The flight data site, Flightradar24, has told *The Hindu* that "We can confirm that the flight was operating in an area affected by GPS jamming and spoofing, hence we did not see a large portion of the flight. The last portion of the flight was operated in an area of good coverage."

The website of Azerbaijan Airlines says the airline, which is a member of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), is in full compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. The airline has announced the suspension of flights to several cities in Russia on the directive of the Azerbaijan State Civil Aviation Authority following preliminary results from an investigation into the crash.

A report on the President of Russia's official website, titled "Telephone conversation with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, December 28, 2024", says: "The presidents had a detailed discussion of issues regarding the December 25 crash ... Vladimir Putin apologised for the fact that the incident happened in Russian airspace... It was noted during the conversation that the Azerbaijani passenger airliner was flying according to schedule and repeatedly tried to land at Grozny Airport. At that time, Ukrainian unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) attacked Grozny, Mozdok and Vladikavkaz, and Russian air defence systems were repelling these attacks. The Russian Investigative Committee initiated a criminal case under Article 263 of the Criminal Code (violation of the rules for traffic safety and operation of the air transportation systems). Initial investigation is underway...."

A media report says that the flight data have been analysed by the Aeronautical Accident Investigation and Prevention Center (CENIPA), Air Force Command, the central investigative body that is overseen by the Brazilian Air Force. Investigators from Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Russia are also involved.

On January 3, 2025, the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, said 17 international experts including those from ICAO and the Interstate Aviation



**Gruesome crash:** Emergency specialists at the crash site of the Azerbaijan Airlines plane near the city of Aktau, Kazakhstan on December 25, 2024. REUTERS

Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F> Committee (IAC), the body representing some of the Commonwealth of Independent States (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), were invited to ensure an "impartial and objective incident investigation".

### What does the accident highlight about conflict zones?

Dr. Hassan Shahidi, President and CEO, Flight Safety Foundation, Virginia, U.S., has told *The Hindu* that the operation of civilian flights in conflict zones is a complex issue that involves assessing the risks posed by ongoing hostilities. ICAO guidelines stress the importance of states providing up-to-date risk assessments and advisories to airlines about potential threats, including military activity, missile launches, or other hazards. Airlines, in turn, must conduct their own risk assessments. Under international law, specifically the Chicago Convention and its Annexes, the responsibility for ensuring the safety of civil aviation lies with states. If the crash is found to be caused by actions directly linked to Russia, whether intentional or negligent, questions of state responsibility and accountability under international law may arise, which may include legal actions and findings of criminal liability.

As the flight is said to have been subject to severe electronic and communication interference, Dr. Shahidi said, "spoofing (sending false signals) and jamming (blocking or disrupting signals) can have severe impacts on aviation safety, particularly on navigation and communication systems. These technologies could interfere with Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS), for example, GPS, ADS-B and transponder signals and communication systems. Enhanced cybersecurity measures, alternative navigation systems, and robust incident reporting mechanisms are needed to mitigate these risks".

An ICAO spokesperson has told *The Hindu* that ICAO has readied itself to support this investigation in the interest of aviation safety and security, deputing an ICAO expert to be deployed onsite as an observer to the international investigation team. He said, "The

investigation, as prescribed by Annex 13, shall be conducted with the sole objective of preventing future accidents and incidents, through the collection and analysis of safety data and information.

Annex 13 calls for a preliminary report to be produced within 30 days of the accident, with a final report to follow within 12 months."

Conflict zones, with state and non-state players, pose immense risks to civil aviation and countries are responding to this growing threat with several initiatives. Canada's Safer Skies initiative is one such example that was in response to the shooting down of a Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 in 2020 after take-off from Tehran.

After the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in 2014, the Dutch Safety Board's final report gave rise to the "Risk Assessment Manual for Civil Aircraft Operations Over or Near Conflict Zones (Doc 10084, Restricted)" by ICAO.

The IATA Tactical Operations Portal gives aviation subscribers real-time alerts related to airspace and airport operations. It operates based on a five-level alerting system. Another group is the Expert Group on Risk Information overflying Conflict Zones (EGRICZ), which is an informal international group that puts out information on airspace conflict zone risk assessments. There is also the Safer Skies Consultative Committee which is a formal international platform that examines conflict zone threats.

### Where are GPS interference hotspots?

Flightradar24 says that the jamming of signals has been prevalent in the area around the Black Sea, while spoofing is common around Iraq, Ukraine, Russia, and also the eastern Mediterranean Sea. It says that flight crews are aware of GPS jamming and spoofing and are trained in advanced risk management.

### Have nation-states been involved in air accidents?

As the paper, "Navigating the Legal Horizon: Lawyering the MH17 Disaster" (2017), by Marieke de Hoon in the *Utrecht Journal of International and European Law*, points out, there have been about nine major cases. Some of them include the shooting down of a Cathay Pacific

## THE GIST

The website of Azerbaijan Airlines says the airline, which is a member of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), is in full compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said "we can say with complete clarity that the plane was shot down... We are not saying that it was done intentionally, but it was done". Azerbaijan has said that the aircraft "was ordered" to fly across the Caspian Sea after it was denied landing at two Russian airports.

Azerbaijan Airlines may be financially responsible for making compensation payments, but things get complicated if state responsibility is engaged, more so in a missile strike scenario.

Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+Bu7senHpQdhIDg1> airliner by China in 1954; Libyan Arab Airlines flight 114 by Israel in 1973; Korean Airlines flight 007 by the then-Soviet Union in 1983; Iran Air flight 655 by the United States in 1988; the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 by 'Libyan agents' in 1988; Sibir Airlines flight 1812 by Ukraine in 2001; and MH17.

### What about the legal issues?

Dr. Mohammad Owais Farooqui, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Law, College of Law, University of Sharjah, UAE, has told *The Hindu* that the accident poses important legal questions with regard to jurisdiction under the principles of international law.

It has drawn attention to the absence, ownership, and management of responsibility and authority in international aviation regulation, compensation, and state responsibility. In the investigations, there should be focus on how the existing international legal works and the bases, for example, the Chicago Convention and the Montreal Convention, regulate such occurrences, he says.

The law applicable to the liability for damage in this context is the Montreal Convention. Azerbaijan Airlines may be financially responsible for making compensation payments, but things get complicated if state responsibility is engaged, more so in a missile strike scenario. If there is evidence that a state is involved, principles of state responsibility under the international law may prevail over the Montreal Convention and the responsible state may be under obligation to make reparation under customary international law.

Another area of law is international humanitarian law, he says. The Chicago Convention specifically bans the use of weapons against civil aircraft in flight, and if a state is involved, its conduct may amount to a breach of this law, especially if not in accordance with the principles of necessity and proportionality.

The Azerbaijan case, he says, highlights the necessity for more authoritative and codified regulation of international civil aviation activity, the enhancement of liability regulation at the global level, and cooperation within the international legal framework.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES



In vain: Efforts underway to rescue the labourers trapped inside an illegal rat-hole coal mine, in Dima Hasao district, Assam, on January 9, 2025. PTI

## Rat-hole mining: why the practice continues in spite of its hazards

Labourers mainly from Assam, Nepal, and adjoining Bangladesh risk the hazards of rat-hole mining — asphyxiation because of poor ventilation, collapse of mines due to lack of structural support, and flooding — to earn thrice or four times as much as working in farms or construction sites

### Rahul Karmakar

On January 6, 2025, nine workers were trapped in a flooded coal mine in Assam's Dima Hasao district. Bodies of four of the workers have been recovered, and rescue work is still ongoing. In this article, dated November 29, 2023, Rahul Karmakar explains the dangers of rat-hole mining.

#### The story so far:

A n oral question from the Supreme Court to the Union government continues to remain unanswered even as rescue workers recover bodies of workers who died trapped in a flood rat-hole coal mine at Dima Hasao district in Assam. On January 11, 2019, the top court had asked whether rat-hole mines could possibly operate in the northeast hills without the "connivance" of officials. "Lives are lost due to illegal mining. What about the officials who allowed this to happen?" the court had asked the government.

#### What is rat-hole mining?

Rat-hole mining, of two types, is so named as it involves digging tunnels 3-4 feet deep, barely allowing workers to crawl in and out. They have to squat while extracting coal with pickaxes. The side-cutting type of mining is usually done on hill slopes by following a coal seam — dark brown or black-banded coal deposited within layers of rock — visible from the outside. The second type called box-cutting entails digging a circular or

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squarish pit at least 5 sq. metre in width up to a depth of 400 feet. Miners who drop down in makeshift cranes or using rope-and-bamboo ladders dig horizontally after finding the coal seam. The tunnels are dug in every direction from the edge of the pit, resembling the tentacles of an octopus. Some workers from Assam lost their lives in the coal mines of Meghalaya, dug using this crude method, before and after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned it in April 2014.

#### Why is such mining banned?

The government has little control over the land in Meghalaya, a Sixth Schedule State where the Coal Mines Nationalisation Act of 1973 does not apply. The landowners are thus also the owners of the minerals beneath. Coal mining boomed after Meghalaya attained statehood in January 1972. However, the terrain and expenses involved discouraged mine owners from employing advanced drilling machines. So, labourers mainly from Assam, Nepal, and adjoining Bangladesh risked the hazards of rat-hole mining — asphyxiation because of poor ventilation, collapse of mines due to lack of structural support, and flooding — to earn thrice or four times as much as working in farms or construction sites. Apart from issues of safety and health, unregulated mining led to land degradation, deforestation, and water with high concentrations of sulphates, iron, and toxic heavy metals,

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low dissolved oxygen, and high biochemical oxygen demand. At least two rivers, Lukha and Myntdu, became too acidic to sustain aquatic life. These factors led to the NGT banning rat-hole mining in Meghalaya in 2014 while observing: "...there is unmet number of cases where, by virtue of rat-hole mining, during the rainy season, water flooded into the mining areas resulting in the death of many..." Illegal mining and transportation of coal, as mentioned in the interim reports of a one-man committee appointed by the High Court of Meghalaya, has continued despite the ban and the loss of lives. At least 17 miners were drowned in an illegal mine in the East Jaintia Hills district's Ksan in December 2018 after water gushed in from a river.

#### What led to the NGT ban?

Environmentalists and human rights activists began flagging the hazards of rat-hole mining in Meghalaya two decades ago. The campaign intensified after impulse, a Meghalaya-based NGO, began addressing the issue of human trafficking and child labour in such mines.

Three reports prepared by the NGO, first with the Nepal-based Esther Benjamin Trust in May 2010, the second with Aide et Action in December 2010, and the last with Human Rights Now in July 2011, estimated that about 70,000 children mostly from Bangladesh and Nepal were employed in these mines

because they were the right size to work in them. The State's Department of Mining and Geology refuted the claim but, under pressure from the National Human Rights Commission, admitted in June 2013 that 222 children were employed in rat-hole mines, specifically in the East Jaintia Hills district. The NGT ban came a year later.

#### What is the way forward?

Unlike in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, coal seams in Meghalaya are very thin. This, miners say, makes rat-hole mining more economically viable than opencast mining.

The State has an estimated reserve of 576.48 million tonnes of low-ash, high-sulphur coal belonging to the Eocene age (33-56 million years ago). The stakes for a section of locals have been so high that the State government has been under pressure to facilitate the resumption of mining legally.

In May 2023, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said the Coal Ministry approved mining leases for four of the 17 prospective licence applicants. This would lead to the commencement of 'scientific' mining ensuring minimal environmental impact through sustainable and legally compliant extraction procedures. Anti-mining activists, who are assaulted by miners off and on, said that 'scientific' would eventually be a fancy tag in a State where profit has driven coal mining.



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Know your English

K. Subrahmanian  
S. Upendran

"What news?"

"I am in receipt of a letter from my father. He says that in the eventuality of my not going to my village to see him this week, he will proceed here next month."

"Why don't you say 'I received a letter from my father. He says that if I don't go to his place, he will come here next week?' Be simple and straightforward in your speech and writing. There is a tendency among our people to use big words and roundabout expressions."

"It is impressive to use big words."

"It is impressive to the person who uses big words but not to the listener or reader. Lionel Trilling, a great critic, once said: 'We are fast losing the ability to say clearly and simply what we want to say. A time will come when people will be unable to say: 'They fell in love and married.' They would say: 'Their libidinal impulses being reciprocal, they activated their individual erotic drives and integrated them within the same frame of reference.'

"I like it. It is impressive."

"It is impressively unintelligible. You will have to read the sentence several times to understand what it means. Some are addicted to this kind of language.

Alexander Haig, a former U.S. Secretary of State, apparently was much addicted to it. The story goes that one of Haig's aides asked him for a pay increase. Haig could not say 'no'. Instead he replied: 'Because of the fluctuating predisposition of your position's productive capacity as juxtaposed to Government standards, it would be momentarily injudicious to advocate an increment.' The perplexed aide replied: 'I don't get it.' Mr. Haig replied: 'That's right.' When someone was asked to give advice on how to be a successful public speaker, he said: 'Well, in promulgating your esoteric cogitations and articulating superficial, sentimental and psychological observations, beware of platitudinous ponderosity. Let your extemporaneous decantations and unpremeditated expatiations have intelligibility and veracious veracity without rodomontade and thronical bombast. Sedulously avoid all polysyllabic profundity, pusillanimous vacuity, pestiferous profanity and similar transgressions.'

"It is fantastic. It is terrific."

"Do you understand what is said?"

"No. It is impressive, though. What does it mean?"

"It means speak simply, naturally and do not use big words. So you are impressed by big words. I am reminded of the village schoolmaster described by Oliver Goldsmith: While words of learned length and thund'reng sound

Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around

Still they gazed and still the wonder grew

How a small head could contain all he knew"

"O.K. you have given me examples of bad English. I know what to avoid. What are the essentials of good writing?"

"We will discuss them in the coming weeks."

Published in *The Hindu* on September 20, 1994.

## THE DAILY QUIZ

As the Z-Morh tunnel in J&K becomes operational, a quiz on tunnels across the world

### Vighnesh P. Venkitesh

#### QUESTION 1

Name the longest rail tunnel in the world which is also the first flat route through the Swiss Alps?

#### QUESTION 2

Name the railway system connecting the U.K. and France which has the world's longest undersea segment?

#### QUESTION 3

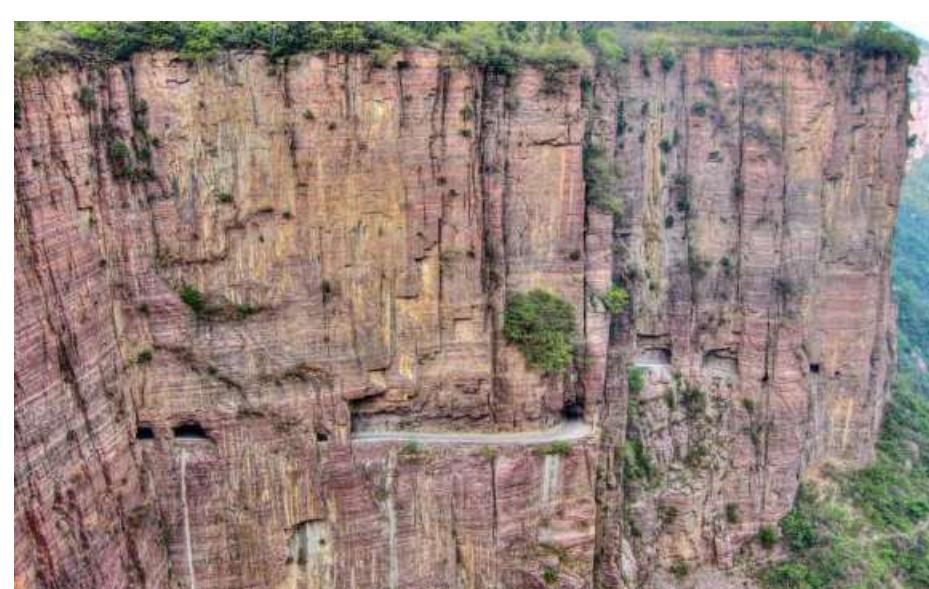
Name the under-construction tunnel in India which is slated to be the highest in the world once completed?

#### QUESTION 4

Name the 27 km long structure, which is technically a ring and not intended for transportation, that runs under the France-Switzerland border?

#### QUESTION 5

What is the significance of the tunnel passing through the Appalachian Mountains of southwest Virginia in the U.S.?



#### Visual question:

Name this tunnel-road structure. KSL

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Name the hill on the western ghats where the Makara Jyothi in honour of Lord Ayappa is lit. Ans: Ponnambalamedu

2. The common name of Curcuma longa tied around the vessel of this dish. Ans: Turmeric and Pongal

3. The more commonly known name of Devavrata, the legendary warrior son of Shantanu and Ganga. Ans: Bhishma

4. The Kite festival is held in this State every year on January 14. Ans: Gujarat

5. The English equivalent of the Makara in the Zodiac. Ans: Capricorn

6. Alanganallur, Avaniapuram, and Palamedu are places famous for this activity. Ans: Jallikattu

Visual: The name given to this temporary makeshift hut used during the Magh Bihu festival in Assam. Ans: Bhela-ghar

Early Birds: Tamal Biswas| Siddhartha Viswanathan| Tito Shiladitya| Piayali Tuli| Naimisha

## Word of the day

### Segue:

the act of changing smoothly from one state or situation to another; proceed without interruption, in music or talk

Usage: He segued into another discourse.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/seguepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /segweɪ/

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

**From Page One****Retail inflation hits four-month low in Dec.**

Vegetables inflation moderated mildly from 29.3% in November to 26.6%, but some items like peas and potatoes saw prices shoot up sharply, while fruit prices accelerated again by 8.5% after easing to a 7.7% pace in November. Cereals inflation stood at 6.5% in December, from 6.9% in the previous month. Pulses prices rose 3.8%, relative to 5.4% in November, marking the slowest inflation in over two years. However, other protein sources such as eggs (6.85%) and meat and fish (5.3%) reported higher inflation in December, while milk price rise was virtually unchanged at 2.8%.

The top five items showing highest year on year inflation at All India level in December 2024 are Peas (89.12%), Potato (68.23%), Garlic (58.17%), coconut oil (45.41%) and Cauliflower (39.42%), the NSO pointed out. Among non-food items, personal care and effects' inflation eased a tad to 9.7% from 10.4% in November, while education inflation was unchanged at 3.9%. Health inflation inched up fractionally to 4.05% in December.

Seven of the 22 States, for which the NSO calculates monthly inflation rates, recorded a price rise of over 6% or beyond the central bank's upper threshold for inflation targeting.

**Modi opens Z-Morh tunnel in J&K**

Describing J&K as a destination with the "distinction of having highest rail and road bridges and rope ways", Mr. Modi said, "The engineering of the Chenab bridge has amazed people across the world. Passenger train trials were completed last week on the bridge. The projects of the Chenani-Nashri tunnel, the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla railway link and the ropeways at the Shankaracharya temple, Shiv Khor temple and Baltal-Amarnath shrine are under way. A ₹42,000-crore connectivity projects are executed in J&K, which include the Katra-Delhi expressway, four national highway projects, two ring roads and 14 Sonmarg-like tunnels. J&K will be the most connected region. Tourists can now even reach untouched destinations."

Referring to the upgraded connectivity, the Prime Minister said Viksit Bharat was only possible when all the regions of the country were well developed. "J&K is the crown of the country and has to be beautiful and strong. I assure you Modi will walk the talk. Any hurdle in your dreams will be removed. 'Dilli ki doori' is already over now. We have to work together to fulfil dreams and have to take pledges together," he added.

**Delhi HC pulls up AAP govt. over CAG reports**

Leader of the Opposition Vijender Gupta and BJP MLAs Mohan Singh Bisht, Om Prakash Sharma, Ajay Kumar Mahawar, Abhay Verma, Anil Kumar Bajpai and Jitendra Mahajan filed the petition last year, and sought a direction to the Speaker to call a sitting of the Assembly for the purpose of tabling the CAG reports.

Earlier, the Assembly Secretariat had told the court that no useful purpose would be served by tabling the CAG reports as its tenure was ending in February. It said no judicial order could be passed to the Speaker in matters of internal functioning of the Assembly. However, counsel for the BJP leaders, during the Monday hearing, submitted that the court was empowered to direct the Speaker to call a sitting of the Assembly for tabling the reports. The Delhi government's counsel raised an objection over the "political" nature of the petition, and alleged that the L-G's office made the reports public and shared it with newspapers. The court posted the case on January 16.

BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said the constitutional scheme required a government to table reports of the CAG, but the AAP dispensation had not done it.

**India summons Bangladesh envoy**

Bangladesh had conveyed to Mr. Verma that the construction of barbed wire fences on at least five locations along the Indo-Bangladesh border was "unauthorised" and had "caused tensions and disturbances along the border".

**Questions 2015 pact**

The Adviser of Home Affairs of Bangladesh, Jehangir Alam Chowdhury, had, in addition, referred to the border agreements between India and Bangladesh as "unequal", casting doubt on the Land Boundary Agreement of 2015 that was concluded between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Responding to Dhaka's accusations, the MEA said, "It was conveyed that with regard to security measures at the border, including fencing, India observed all protocols and agreements between the two governments and between the Border Security Force and the Border Guard Bangladesh.

The latest spat intensified after Mr. Chowdhury addressed a press conference in Dhaka on Sunday where he blamed India for carrying out constructions along the border without following due procedures.

**Army chief says a 'degree' of stand-off prevails along the Line of Actual Control**

General Upendra Dwivedi terms situation 'sensitive but stable', says the Army's deployment is 'balanced and robust'; on disengagement, he says two rounds of verification patrolling completed

**Dinakar Peri**  
NEW DELHI

Saying that a "degree" of stand-off prevails along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi said on Monday that he had authorised all Corps Commanders to handle issues at the ground level with respect to patrolling and grazing so that these trivial issues can be resolved at the military level itself. He termed the situation along the LAC "sensitive but stable", and said the Army's deployment along was "balanced and robust".

"All the Corps Commanders have been empowered to go through the patrolling and grazing issues and wherever you can harmonise relations between the two sides, you should be able to do. When Special Representative talks took place a press release was given. So we are also looking at Kailash Mansarovar *yatra* to resume, some trade points to be resumed. So similarly, we are also looking at, if we



**Straight talk:** Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi addressing the annual press conference in New Delhi on Monday RV. MOORTHY

can have some kind of understanding please go ahead. That kind of delegation has been given to Division Commanders and Corps Commanders. They will come back to us... as far as we are concerned, from my side it is approved," General Dwivedi said in response to a question on whether an understanding had been reached with China not to block their patrols in the Yangtse area in Arunachal Pradesh.

He was addressing the annual press conference ahead of the Army Day on Wednesday.

On the recent disengagement from Depsang and Demchok in eastern

Ladakh, he said two rounds of verification patrolling had been completed by both sides.

"There is nothing called as buffer zone," he said, terming them "temporary moratorium". "Where you feel that the nature or the degree of violence can be high and the fuse is short, you create some distances," he said.

"So when we carried out these negotiations over a period of time, some places were declared as a temporary moratorium. It means that both sides will remain back and will not

go to the common areas because we still feel that if we meet at those places the

violence level may go high."

After April 2020, the trust between the two countries has to have a new definition, he remarked and therefore, there is a requirement for us to sit together and come to a broader understanding of how we want to calm down the situation and restore the trust.

On the situation along the Line of Control with Pakistan, the ceasefire understanding reached in February 2022 is holding on, but the terror infrastructure across remains intact and infiltrations attempts continue. "The violence level is being orchestrated by the epicentre of terrorism that is Pakistan... If the support is not forthcoming the way India is looking at it, this kind of terrorist infiltration will continue to be there," he said.

To a query on the row over the 1971 painting, he described the new one as depicting India's civilisation connect and modern technology as also reaching out to the newer generations.

**NC mobilises local people to attend PM rally in Kashmir**

**Peerzada Ashiq**  
GANDERBAL



Narendra Modi. ANI

Prime Minister's rallies.

"People have been awaiting the tunnel's inauguration. My father Mian Altaf Ahmed Larvi, who was Forest Minister, moved the plan to have a tunnel.

One estimate suggested that over 5,000 local people attended the function. "I have been preparing for the PM's visit for the past three days. We pressed around 500 vehicles to ferry locals from far-off and snow-bound villages of Kangan and Ganderbal Assembly segments. People were eager to listen to what the PM had to offer," NC MLA from Kangan Mian Mehari Ali told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Ali said no government employee was instructed to attend the function of the Prime Minister. Sources said J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah discouraged a proposal of the civil administration to depute government employees. It was a trend during the Central rule that employees from different departments were instructed to attend the

Hanif Malik, a sarpanch from the Kulan area that is under two feet of snow, led a delegation of local people to the venue. "We were instructed by MP Mian Altaf to attend the function since the PM was announcing a project that will benefit us immensely. The tunnel means lifeline for locals who would get cut off because of snowfall," he said.

**UGC-NET on January 15 postponed for festival**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The National Testing Agency has postponed the University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test, scheduled to be held on January 15, on account of Pongal, Makar Sankranti, and other festivals.

The new exam date would be announced later, the NTA said in a circular issued on Monday.

The NTA said it had received representation to postpone the UGC-NET December 2024 examination, and it had decided to grant the request in the interest of aspirants.

**No change on Jan. 16**

"Examination scheduled on January 16, 2025 will be conducted as per earlier schedule," the NTA circular said, advising the candidates to visit the NTA website for updates.

**Retired teacher saved from a digital arrest scam, thanks to bank staff**

**Vijaita Singh**  
NEW DELHI

An alert bank manager with the State Bank of India (SBI) in central Delhi saved a 68-year-old retired schoolteacher from becoming a victim of a "digital arrest" scam a few days ago. The manager saved ₹79 lakh belonging to the victim, which the latter was all set to transfer to the scam accused.

The crime pertains to fraudsters collecting personal information and making phone or video calls to prospective victims, posing as officials from various law enforcement agencies, and at times from the Reserve Bank of India to extort money by creating an atmosphere of fear.

The schoolteacher received a call on December 21, informing her that her name had appeared in a ₹300-crore scam and she needed to cooperate with the police if she wanted



**Fraud case:** The victim had received a call saying her name had appeared in a ₹300-crore scam.

her name cleared from the probe.

Minutes later, an unidentified accused made an audio call on WhatsApp which displayed the logo of the Delhi Police.

"The victim was told that she was being watched and she should disclose all her savings and bank accounts in her name. The fraudsters told her that they would run a sanitisation check to ensure that the money was earned through legal means and later the entire amount would be returned to her

I should mind my own business," the bank manager said. She added that the victim kept looking into her phone and as the mobile network is patchy in the bank, she stepped out several times to speak to someone on phone.

"Her account was a few thousand of rupees short of ₹20 lakh. She asked me to put some money on her behalf and transfer it to another SBI account in Gujarat. I eventually transferred the available money – ₹19 lakh – but put a hold on the transaction. She said that I should let her click a picture of the voucher as a proof, which I refused," she said.

Being a schoolteacher, she was particular about even the smallest deduction from her account. When she came on December 24, she was not her usual self. When I asked why she wanted to dissolve her senior citizens savings certificate. She replied that

with 4% interest," the bank manager told *The Hindu*.

The bank manager said she sensed something was wrong when the senior citizen came to her first to transfer ₹20 lakh to a bank account in Gujarat on December 24.

"Being a schoolteacher,

she was particular about even the smallest deduction from her account.

When she came on December 24, she was not her usual self.

When I asked why she wanted to dissolve her senior citizens savings certificate. She replied that

she should let her click a picture of the voucher as a proof, which I refused," she said.

On December 27, the victim returned, this time to dissolve another savings scheme worth ₹30 lakh and initiated the redemption of mutual funds of ₹30 lakh. The manager had warned other employees not to entertain her request if she comes back.

**RTI's purpose not to satisfy curiosity, Delhi University tells HC over Modi's degree row**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Delhi University on Monday argued before the Delhi High Court that the purpose of a petition under the RTI Act was not to satiate a third party's curiosity as it challenged the Central Information Commission (CIC) order over the disclosure of information on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's educational degree.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said students' information was held by a university in a "fiduciary capacity" and could not be divulged "to a stranger" for the law exempted it.

"Section 6 provides a mandate that information will have to be given, that is the purpose. But the RTI Act is not for the purpose of satisfying someone's curiosity," Mr. Mehta said.

The RTI law could not be abused or misused by directing disclosure of information unrelated to transparency and accountability in the functioning of public authorities, Mr. Mehta argued.

On the RTI petition of an activist, Neeraj, the CIC had on December 21, 2016, allowed the inspection of records of all students who had cleared the BA exam in 1978, the year Mr. Modi also passed it.

The petition sought details of students who wrote the examination in 1978. The CIC's order was, however, stayed by the High Court in 2017.

Mr. Mehta called the CIC's order contrary to established law, and said "inappropriate and impractical" demands under the RTI Act for the disclosure of "all and sundry" information would be counterproductive, and adversely affect the efficiency of the administration.

"He wants everybody's information in 1978. Somebody can come and say 1979. This university was established in 1922," Mr. Mehta said.

**Gangasagar Mela: three people die in West Bengal**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
SAGAR

Three people have died at the Gangasagar Mela in West Bengal this year, which includes one person who drowned while taking a dip at the ghats on Sagar Island in front of the Kapil Muni temple.

The NDRF officials said a body was recovered at 7 a.m. on Monday. Five persons were airlifted from the mela after falling ill over the past three days.

The organisers announced on Monday that the holy dip for Makar Sankranti will begin on Tuesday at 6:58 a.m. on Tuesday and continue till 6:58 a.m. on Wednesday.

**Eric Garcetti's term as U.S. Ambassador comes to an end**

**Kalol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI



He said that his father and a few other members of his family were displaced by the wildfires.

Mr. Garcetti looked back at his 21-month tenure as the U.S. Ambassador to India fondly and described his stint as the "most extraordinary job" of his life.

Mr. Garcetti said the fires were being spread by winds and prevalent weather conditions.

Pradhan  
defends UGC  
draft on V-C  
appointment

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Responding to a statement by Congress president and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge that the new draft guidelines of the University Grants Commission (UGC) are against federalism and for cementing the BJP-RSS control over universities, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Monday that the new draft was in the format of the UGC Regulations of 2010. He said it followed the past procedures for appointing Vice-Chancellors (V-Cs).

The Minister said even in the UGC Regulations of 2010, 2018, or 2025, it was clear that the Chancellor or Visitor appointed the Vice-Chancellor. "The practice of Chancellors discharging the responsibilities of Vice-Chancellor has been going on even before the independence of the country," Mr. Pradhan said on social media.

The Minister alleged that the Congress had kept the country's education system in poor shape and it could never accept that the youth of the country should be educated and it should develop.

"That is why spreading confusion on issues like education, misleading the youth, and wanting to spread unrest in the country has become the policy of the entire Congress, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge," Mr. Pradhan said.

At the Sangam Ghat, hundreds of international pilgrims and spiritual seekers joined the festivities. Several YouTubers from

# Maha Kumbh begins; 15 million pilgrims gather for *Shahi Snan*

Devotees from across the world gathered at Prayagraj's Sangam on Paush Purnima for the first *Shahi Snan* of the 45-day event; strict security measures are in place with more than 50,000 security personnel keeping vigilance across the area

**Mayank Kumar**  
PRAYAGRAJ

**T**he Maha Kumbh, a 45-day event, began on Monday in Prayagraj with the *Shahi Snan* on the occasion of Paush Purnima at the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mystical Saraswati.

Devotion, faith, and spiritual unity were in full display despite a thick blanket of fog and a cold breeze in the morning.

A sea of devotees from around the country and the world numbering around 15 million gathered at permanent and temporary ghats, including Sangam Noida in the city, as they immersed themselves in prayers, and rituals, and took the holy dip on the occasion of Paush Purnima.

"Heartiest congratulations to all the saints, Kalpvaks, and devotees who have got the chance to take a dip in the Sangam on the occasion of 'Paush Purnima' in the auspicious festival of humanity 'Maha Kumbh 2025'. On the first bathing festival today, 1.50 crore Sanatan believers earned the holy benefit of bathing in the uninterrupted and clean Triveni," Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said.

At the Sangam Ghat, hundreds of international pilgrims and spiritual seekers joined the festivities. Several YouTubers from



**Sacred journey:** Pilgrims walk on pontoon bridge across the Ganga on Paush Purnima during the Maha Kumbh, a 45-day event that began in Prayagraj on Monday. SANDEEP SAXENA

South Korea captured the experience on their cameras, while tourists from Japan engaged with local guides to understand the cultural and spiritual significance of the event.

"Heartfelt thanks to all the departments of the Central and State government associated with Maha Kumbh, including the Maha Kumbh Mela administration, Prayagraj administration, Uttar Pradesh Police, Municipal Corporation Prayagraj, Swachhagrahis, Ganga Sevadots, Kumbh Sahayakas, religious social organisations, various voluntary organisations and friends from the

media world, who participated in making the first bathing festival successful," Mr. Adityanath added.

#### Tight security

Strict security measures were in place with over 50,000 security personnel keeping vigilance across the Maha Kumbh area with senior officials, including Additional Director-General of Police (ADGP) Bhanu Bhaskar, Deputy Inspector-General (DIG) Vaibhav Krishna, and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajesh Dwivedi, overseeing security measures by actively engaging at the ground level. The ADGP

conducted extensive inspections and interacted with devotees to address their concerns. He ascended the watch tower at Sangam Noida to survey the security arrangements from above.

Mr. Vaibhav Krishna and Mr. Dwivedi patrolled on horses extensively, ensuring tight security in every corner.

"Taking the holy dip on Day 1 is an experience of a lifetime," said Vaibhav Pandey from Varanasi.

The marketplaces near Sangam Mela and the Hanuman Temple witnessed sellers of puja materials and tilak artists busy at

tending to the huge number of devotees.

"The influx of pilgrims this year has surpassed even the 2019 Kumbh Mela," said Umesh Singh, a retail vendor, selling diya and prasad, near Sangam. He

added that *Gangajal* storage boxes are the most sought-after item, highlighting the pilgrims' eagerness to take back the sacred water as a symbol of divine blessings.

Among the many international visitors was Christina from Spain, who expressed her admiration for the grandeur of Maha Kumbh, calling it a "once-in-a-lifetime experience".

# Kumbhvani radio keeps pilgrims informed, entertained

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI



As lakhs took a holy dip, there was a live report on the event on the Kumbhvani channel.

part of many initiatives taken by the government to project the cultural significance of the Kumbh. Some others are a special cultural zone called *Kalagram* where music, theatre, and crafts programmes would be held.

Local residents, however, do not feel that these initiatives would be instrumental in bringing more pilgrims.

"The Kumbh Mela has been held for centuries, people from all parts of the country have been coming here irrespective of the efforts of the government," Deepak Kumar Sen, Allahabad resident, and author of the book *The Divine Kumbh: Echoes of Eternity: Ganga, Shipra, Godavari, and Sangam*, said.

According to political analyst Nilanjana Mukhopadhyay, "This is yet another example of the agency of the State getting into the promotion of a religious event with the aim of furthering the stranglehold of Hindutva or Hindu majoritarian politics. I find it hugely problematic."

The radio channel is

## Cong. must clarify if alliance was only for polls: Shiv Sena (UBT)

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena (UBT) on Monday slammed the Congress for what it called its "inactive approach" towards the INDIA bloc and "undermining" of regional parties. Party leader Sanjay Raut reiterated that the Congress should take the lead in initiating dialogue with allies.

"INDIA bloc fought the Lok Sabha elections well by stopping BJP from having a majority. Post-Lok Sabha, no meeting of the alliance was held. The responsibility lies with Congress being the 'elder brother', not ours," he said.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led party asked the Congress to learn unity from the ruling National Democratic Alliance. In an edito-

rial published on Monday in its mouthpiece *Saamana*, the party raised concern about the future of the INDIA bloc, and said the Congress needed to decide whether to go solo or strengthen the alliance.

Blaming the party for the breakdown in communication, it said, "If Congress has the capacity to defeat 'Modi thought-process', then no one will stop them. However, to fight the BJP's mafia-style politics, unity, the leadership of the INDIA bloc, and the appointment of a convenor are essential. Otherwise, all the hard work will go in vain."

"Editorial is expressing the views of all alliance partners of the INDIA bloc. Congress must clear its stand, whether the alliance was only for parliamentary elections," Mr. Raut said.

## Meta CEO's description of Lok Sabha election result is 'misinformation': Minister

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI



Ashwini Vaishnaw

trust in a lot of governments around the world... 2024 was a big election year around the world, and there are all these countries, India, just like a ton of countries that had elections... And the incumbents basically lost every single one."

This was the only time in the interaction that Mr. Zuckerberg mentioned India in the conversation.

"Mr. Zuckerberg's claim

that most incumbent governments, including India in 2024 elections, lost post-COVID is factually incorrect," Mr. Vaishnaw said on X.

"From free food for 800 million, 2.2 billion free vaccines, and aid to nations worldwide during COVID, to leading India as the fastest-growing major economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decisive third-term victory is a testament to good governance and public trust."

"@Meta, it's disappointing to see misinformation from Mr. Zuckerberg himself," Mr. Vaishnaw said. "Let's uphold facts and credibility."

A Meta spokesperson did not have an immediate comment on Mr. Vaishnaw's response when contacted on Monday evening.

## Rupee is falling as Modi govt. is incompetent, says Opposition

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

With rupee logging its steepest single-day fall in nearly two years against the U.S. dollar on Monday, the Opposition slammed the Narendra Modi government, blaming its "incompetence" for the slump. Many also recalled Mr. Modi's remarks against his predecessor, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, on the exchange rate.

In a post on X, she said, "The country wants to know what is the reason that only the Indian rupee is falling against the dollar."



Modi took over as PM he was about to turn 64 and the rupee was at Rs. 58.58 to the dollar. He waxed eloquent on making the rupee stronger and mockingly linked its fall to his predecessor's age.

He said that as Mr. Modi

"prepares to turn 75 later in the year, the rupee has already declined well past 80 to the dollar. As the fall continues, Mr. Modi has clearly been hoisted with his own petard!"

CPI general secretary D. Raja said India was already under ₹200 lakh crore of foreign debt, and the slump in the value of Indian rupee highlighted the state of disrepair the economy was in. "Mr. Modi, when he was the Gujarat CM, had equated the value of rupee to the honour of the nation. He said that in his third term, he will en-

sure that India becomes the third largest economy in the world, is this how it will be done," he asked.

Shiv Sena (UBT) senior leader and Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi said that the government had not yet spoken on the issue.

In a post on X, she said, "The country wants to know what is the reason that only the Indian rupee is falling against the dollar."

Trinamool Congress MP Saket Gokhale blamed the government's "incompetence" for the fall.

He said that as Mr. Modi

### राजस्थान पश्चिमी और पश्चिमी विद्यालय, बीकानेर

Stationery Articles डेटा रेप्ट डायलॉग

(₹. -बोली अंग्रेजी संचालन 06/2024-25 (क्रमांक 09.01.2025))

इस विद्यालय के अधीनसंशय ई-विक्रयों में Supply of Stationery Articles डेटा रेप्ट कर्क विड (एकीनीकी व वित्तीय विड) में दर संविधा हैं औंनलाइन ई-बोली अंग्रेजी की जाती है, जिसमें पर्याकृत फोटो हैं और एस. सी. के माध्यम से दिनांक 11.01.2025 से 30.01.2025 को सांय 5.00 बजे तक बोली प्रत्र डाउनलोड कर सकते हैं।

UBN No. : VAU2425GLRC00118 का विस्तृत विवरण स्टेटें पोर्टल की वेबसाइट <http://sppp.raj.nic.in> विभाग की वेबसाइट [www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in](http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in) पर उपलब्ध है।

रिप. संख्या/वी/24/10255

वित्त विभाग

रिप. संख्या/वी/24/10255

### राजस्थान पश्चिमी और पश्चिमी विद्यालय, बीकानेर

Indigenous Furniture डेटा रेप्ट डायलॉग

(₹. -बोली अंग्रेजी संचालन 05/2024-25 (क्रमांक 299 दिनांक 09.01.2025))

इस विद्यालय के अधीनसंशय ई-विक्रयों में Supply of Indigenous Furniture डेटा रेप्ट कर्क विड (एकीनीकी व वित्तीय विड) में दर संविधा हैं औंनलाइन ई-बोली अंग्रेजी की जाती है, जिसमें पर्याकृत फोटो हैं और एस.सी. के माध्यम से दिनांक 08.01.2025 से 28.01.2025 को सांय 5.00 बजे तक बोली प्रत्र डाउनलोड कर सकते हैं।

UBN No. : VAU2425GLRC00117 का विस्तृत विवरण स्टेटें पोर्टल की वेबसाइट <http://sppp.raj.nic.in> विभाग की वेबसाइट [www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in](http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in) पर उपलब्ध है।

रिप. संख्या/वी/24/10254

वित्त विभाग

रिप. संख्या/वी/24/10254

KERALA STATE IT Mission

Department of Electronics & IT, Government of Kerala.

Website: <http://www.itmission.kerala.gov.in/>

### TENDER NOTICE

Internet Leased Connectivity at KSDC2.

Tender ID: 2025\_KSITM\_723036\_1

Tender Reference No. SDC/1/2025-KSITM

Detailed Notification and RFP documents can be downloaded from

<https://etenders.kerala.gov.in/>

(D3/28/2025/I&PRD)

## INBRIEF



## Anti-tank guided missile Nag Mk-2 tested successfully

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Monday announced that the indigenously developed third-generation fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missile, Nag Mk-2, and the entire system was ready for induction into the Army following successful field firing trials. Field evaluation trials of Nag Mk-2 were successfully conducted recently at the Pokhran Field Range in the presence of senior officers of the Army, the DRDO said in a statement. "During the three field trials, the missile systems destroyed precisely all the targets - maximum and minimum range, thus validating its firing range," it said.

## Pugmarks finally lead to capture of tiger in Bengal

Forest department officials on Sunday night captured a 10-year-old male tiger from the Kisorimohampur area in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal after pursuing pugmarks adjoining residential areas for around a week, officials said. "The tiger was successfully captured on Sunday night with the help of a bait," Divisional Forest Officer of South 24 Parganas Nisha Goswami told *The Hindu*. Ms. Goswami added that after ascertaining that the tiger was fully healthy, it was released into the wild in the Sunderbans. According to forest officials, the tiger had escaped nylon fencing and was roaming in areas that were hardly 50 metres from people's houses.

# Search on for miners in Assam; Navy team exits

Five miners remain trapped since January 6 in the flooded coal mine and its lateral branches; water being pumped out, agencies trying to locate workers, Dima Hasao Commissioner says

**The Hindu Bureau**

GUWAHATI

**T**he Indian Navy team on Monday moved out of the site of the flooded rat-hole coal mine in Dima Hasao district of Assam where five miners have remained trapped since January 6.

The bodies of four miners, including a Nepal national, have been retrieved so far.

District officials said the almost unchanged level of the murky water in the 90-metre-deep mine made it difficult for the Navy divers to operate.

Nine pumps operating simultaneously from the ill-fated mine and three abandoned ones nearby helped bring the water level from 30 metres to about 12 metres on Saturday, but the level dropped by only 0.3 metres subsequently.

#### Murky water

"The murkiness of the water and the angles of the tunnels are beyond the capability of the Navy's remotely operated vehicle to see and navigate. The tunnels are too narrow for the divers, who cannot remain



**Anxious moments:** Villagers watching the rescue operation at the coal mine disaster site at Kalamati village in Dima Hasao district of Assam. RITU RAJ KONWAR

under water for more than 11 minutes at a time, to go in with air tanks and other gear," an official monitoring the rescue operations said.

"Dewatering continues with other agencies still trying to locate the other trapped miners," Dima Hasao's District Commissioner, Simanta Kumar Das, said.

Personnel of the Army, the paramilitary Assam Rifles, the National Disaster Response Force, the State Disaster Response Force,

Coal India Ltd., police, and the local administration are engaged in the rescue operations.

#### FIRs lodged

On Sunday, an organisation named the Halali Progressive Welfare Society

lodged a first information report at the Umrangso police station against Debal Gorlosa and his wife, Kanika Hojai. Mr. Gorlosa is the Chief Executive Member of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous District Council, which go

versus Dima Hasao. It accused the duo of defying bans on rat-hole mining by the National Green Tribunal and the Supreme Court to operate the illegal mines in the Umrangso area.

A similar FIR was filed by Sarmindar Karbi Apei, an apex body of the Karbi ethnic community, at the Umrangso police station against Ms. Hojai, accusing her of involvement in illegal coal mining activities along with Punish Hojai, one of two arrested in connection with the accident.

# Six-year-old query from Supreme Court on rat-hole mines remains unanswered

**Krishnadas Rajgopal**

NEW DELHI

An oral question from the Supreme Court to the Union government remains unanswered even as rescue workers recovered bodies of four workers from a flooded rat-hole coal mine in Dima Hasao district of Assam.

On January 11, 2019, nearly six years ago, the top court asked whether rat-hole mines could possibly operate in the north-east hills without the "connivance" of officials. The Bench was at the time examining the rescue of 15 miners trapped in such a mine deep inside the East Jaintia Hills on December 13, 2018.

"Lives are lost due to illegal mining. What about the officials who allowed this to happen? It could not have been done without the connivance of the offi-



**Underground maze:** A 2019 photo of rat-hole mines in East Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya. RITU RAJ KONWAR

cials..." Justice A.K. Sikri (retired) had asked the Union and Meghalaya governments in a hearing in January 2019.

The incident at East Jaintia Hills occurred four years after the National Green Tribunal (NGT), in April 2014, banned rat-hole mining and illegal transport of coal "forthwith" in Meghalaya.

The top court had at the time said it would look into the aspect of how rat-hole mining continued to survive such a comprehensive ban.

A report submitted by a monitoring committee set

up by the NGT under the chairmanship of a former Gauhati High Court judge, Justice B.P. Katakey, had said that despite the ban, the demand for a huge quantity of illegally mined coal from cement manufacturing and thermal power plants in the north-east had sustained and supported rat-hole coal mining.

#### Follow law

In its July 2019 judgment

on an appeal filed by the State of Meghalaya against the ban, the Supreme Court agreed with the NGT's conclusion that "illegal and unscientific mining neither can be held to be in the interest of people of the area, the people working in the mines nor in the interest of environment".

The court had held that although private owners of the land had rights in the minerals, no unregulated

and unscientific mining could be carried out. It had said the mining policy of the State had to be consistent with and regulated by the provisions of laws, including the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act of 1957, the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986, and the Mineral Concession Rules of 1960. Even mining by the landowner was required to be regulated under the statutory scheme.

Among other corrective measures, the court had also upheld an NGT direction to Meghalaya to deposit ₹100 crores, paid out of the Meghalaya Environment Protection and Restoration Fund to the Central Pollution Control Board for restoration of the environment.

The top court judgment had referred to the view that rat-hole mining was a "primitive" method.

# Doctors from 14 nations seek change in India-linked name of a hard-to-treat fungus

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**

NEW DELHI

Dermatologists from India and 13 other countries, including Germany, have objected to the region-specific name given to a novel species of fungus - *Trichophyton (T.) indotiaeae* - that causes widespread and hard-to-treat skin infections and is resistant to most anti-fungal medicines.

The fungal species, named *Trichophyton indotiaeae*, has turned up in over 40 countries and its origin currently remains unknown.

Japanese dermatologists, who had spotted the fungus in patients from India and Nepal, proposed in 2020 that this fungus should be considered a new species and named

# Patna High Court CJ Vinod Chandran appointed to SC

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday appointed Justice Krishnan Vinod Chandran, Chief Justice of the Patna High Court, a judge of the Supreme Court.

The appointment returns the top court to its full sanctioned strength of 34 judges.

The Supreme Court Collegium had on January 7 recommended Justice Chandran for the appointment.

In its resolution, the collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna noted that there was currently no Supreme Court judge with the High Court of Kerala as the parent court.

At the time of his recommendation, Justice Chandran was the senior-most among High Court judges hailing from Kerala.

The top court would function at full quorum till the retirement of Justice Hrishikesh Roy on January 31.

Justice Chandran was appointed a judge of the Kerala High Court on November 8, 2011, and elevated as the Patna High Court Chief Justice on March 29, 2023. He has served as a High Court judge for over



11 years and as a Chief Justice for more than a year. He stands 13 in the combined all-India seniority of High Court Judges.

The Supreme Court Collegium has repeatedly emphasised the need to have its full sanctioned strength of judges, especially with pendency at a high of 82,793 cases.

A November 2023 collegium resolution had pointed out that the top court cannot afford even one judicial vacancy taking into account the "ever-mounting pendency of cases".

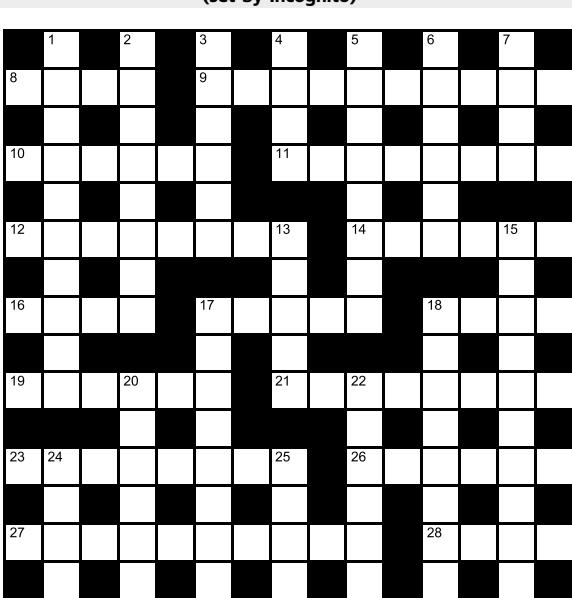
"The workload of judges has increased considerably. Bearing in mind the above, it has become necessary to ensure that the court has full working judge-strength leaving no vacancy at any point of time," the collegium had underscored.

## TH CROSSWORD + 14382

(set by Incognito)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>

SCAN TO PLAY



#### Across

- 8 Vehicle one shouldn't walk into (4)
- 9 Excitedly sits eating eggs (10)
- 10 Thoroughly defeated communist outside Oxford University by end of bout (6)
- 11 Spanish person's resort with drain reflux (8)
- 12 Difficult struggle to capture one Indian town (8)

- 1 Animals having style dance stupendously in the beginning (6)
- 16 Bacterial infection from European behind animal enclosure (4)
- 17 Hunter, perhaps, turning in bed (5)
- 18 Feel absence of young lady (4)
- 19 Reportedly cheat some to obtain mineral (6)
- 21 Customers excitedly rose, red about initial remark (8)
- 23 Large eagles fly around Zulu's animals (8)
- 26 Author Waugh terribly hyperventilates in absence of therapist (6)
- 27 Voyeur's pet pigeon flies over maiden (7,3)
- 28 Masseur orders carrying money (4)
- Down**
- 1 Tory girl ran wildly and with conceit (10)
- 2 Build pits in front of tree with European fighter (8)
- 3 Bereaved lady covers new hole in the wall! (6)
- 4 Enquires, "Donkey carrying king?" (4)
- 5 Maine lab synthesizes legume (4,4)
- 6 Setter's embraced by stout mother in Portuguese pilgrimage town (6)
- 7 "Hark, that lady has the answer" (4)
- 13 Communication device in Agra diocese (5)
- 15 Red oysters spread over warships (10)
- 17 Making blunders and breaking Ming bulb (8)
- 18 Killed a group of crows in front of journalist (8)
- 20 Brushes dust from top of shelf and cries (6)
- 22 Doctor, same mixture results in visions during sleep (6)
- 24 Silver with Edward is old (4)
- 25 Take seat with Earl and plot (4)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

## FAITH

### Chidambara Rahasyam

The image of Lord Siva, dancing His eternal cosmic dance, with one foot lifted and a swinging arm, as depicted in the Chidambaram temple, has been one of the most mesmerising visions over centuries, captivating devotees. In fact, in Saivism, the word temple refers to Chidambaram, which is celebrated as the topmost shrine, the Kailash on earth, said P. Swaminathan in a discourse.

When Manikkavachakar saw the idol at Chidambaram, the image came to life before his eyes and he could hear the

## IN BRIEF



## HPCL commissions ₹4,750-cr. LNG regasification terminal

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (HPCL) has commissioned a 5-million tonne liquefied natural gas (LNG) regasification terminal in Chhara, Gujarat. LNG carrier Maran Gas Coronis berthed at the terminal on January 6 and discharged the commissioning cargo into the onshore tanks on January 12. The auxiliary units will be operational shortly. The terminal represents an investment of about ₹4,750 crore by subsidiary HPLNG, HPCL said on Monday.

## WeWork India Management raises ₹500 cr. via rights issue

WeWork India Management Ltd. (WeWork India), a flexible workspace operator in India, said it had raised ₹500 crore via a rights issue. The funds will be utilised for repayment of debt and reducing cost of capital, the company said. "With this capital infusion we aim to strengthen our balance sheet by repaying existing debt and aim to drive growth which will cement WeWork India's position in the industry," said Karan Virwani, the firm's managing director and CEO.

## Aragen Life Science receives \$100 mn from Quadria Capital

Contract research, development and manufacturing organisation (CRDMO) Aragen Life Science said it has secured a \$100 million investment from Asia healthcare-focused private equity fund Quadria Capital. Quadria will acquire a minority stake in Aragen, at an approximate valuation of \$1.4 billion, primarily through a fresh capital infusion, with a small portion from the sale of shares by existing investors, Aragen (formerly GVK Bio) said on Monday.

## GST rate cut uncertainty dents life insurers' new business 22% in Dec.

N. Ravi Kumar  
HYDERABAD

New business of life insurers declined almost 22% year on year in December to ₹30,218.71 crore, likely due to the continuing suspense over the indirect tax levies on insurance policies with the GST Council deferring a call on an expected tax cut at its December 21 meeting, along with tight liquidity conditions and a general slowdown in the economy.

December's drop in new business marks a deepening contraction from November, when such business fell for the first time in 2024-25, albeit by a relatively moderate 4.5% to ₹25,306.56 crore. In December 2023, insurers had



LIC's new business was down 41% to ₹13,523.87 crore in Dec. 2024 from ₹22,981.28 crore a year earlier. ANI

reported ₹38,583.13 crore as first year premium receipts. One of the contributing factors linked to the downward trend over the past two months, is the new surrender value norm that came into effect from October. For the nine

months ended December 2024, new business has increased almost 10% to ₹2,75,086.92 crore, data released by the Life Insurance Council showed.

In December, private players fared better than the State-owned market leader Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), clocking a 7% increase in new business to ₹6,694.85 crore. For the nine-month period, the first-year premium of the private life insurers rose nearly 14% to ₹17,130.96 crore.

For LIC, new business was down more than 41% to ₹13,523.87 crore in December 2024 from ₹22,981.28 crore a year earlier. However, the behemoth's nine-month tally was 7.16% higher than the

previous year at ₹1,57,955.95 crore.

The growth moderation for life insurers had been anticipated by some analysts. Emkay Research recently said for listed private life insurers a host of player-specific issues including discontinuation of some products after the new surrender regulation, slowdown in the bancassurance channel and increased competition in some key channels were likely to impacting factors.

Emkay Research said the December growth trends were impacted by regulatory uncertainties over the bancassurance channel and implementation of the new surrender regulations leading to an impact on the lower ticket-size policies.

## Tech-savvy force needed to protect India's digital infra, says FM

Press Trust of India  
GANDHINAGAR

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday emphasised the need for a tech-savvy force to protect India's digital infrastructure, such as banks and stock markets, amid growing misuse of technology to disrupt these systems.

Addressing the 4th convocation ceremony of the Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) here, she said technology is being misused by some vested interests or dark forces.

"For a large country like India, security is not what is taking care of us at the borders. Today, technology doesn't wait to recognise borders. Technology, as much as it is available for us to increase productivity, is also being misused by some vested interests or dark forces," the Finance Minister said.

She said misuse of technology can be a threat to India's financial services, digital public infrastructure and installations, such as banks, stock markets, payment institutions, e-commerce portals and cab-booking applications.

"So, more the digital presence in our lives, which makes our economic condition better, there will be people who will target them. Hence, we also need forces within the country who are tech-savvy and conscious of the threats before us to protect our digital infrastructure," Ms. Sitharaman said.

She said many developed countries did not have the digital prowess India had developed in the last 10 years.

## Air India extremely bullish on long-haul international routes'

Jagriti Chandra  
NEW DELHI

Air India Group, which completes three years of privatisation this month, has recorded the fastest growth in passengers on its international destinations such as the U.S., Europe and Australia.

The airline's passenger share on routes to North America, Europe, U.K., Australia, Far East Asia and Africa stood at 16% at the time the Tata Group took over the reins of the airline from the government in January 2022. This share has risen to 21% of the total market share, where it is

the only Indian player to provide non-stop connectivity since Jet Airways shut down in 2019.

"We are extremely bullish in the long-haul market," the airline's Chief Commercial Officer Nipun Aggarwal remarked during a press interaction last week. Indian airlines enjoy only 21% share of international passengers, while there is room to grow up to 50%, he added. Air India's focus on long-haul markets is complemented by its efforts to grow traffic on metro to metro routes domestically, where the Group is the second biggest with a 30% market share.

## HCL reports 5.5% rise in Q3 net profit

The Hindu Bureau  
BENGALURU

HCLTech on Monday posted a net profit of ₹4,591 crore in the October-December quarter, a 5.5% rise from ₹4,350 crore in the same quarter a year ago.

The third quarter of 2024-25 saw the firm's revenue growing to ₹29,890 crore, 5.1% over last year's revenue. Sequentially, the IT firm's profit and revenue grew 8.4% and 3.56%, respectively, it said.



C. Vijayakumar

dence in HCL's Digital and AI offerings.

"I am pleased that our new deal bookings were healthy during the quarter at \$2.1 billion with wins across services and software. We continue to see growing demand for our AI led propositions across services and software offerings," he added.

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even smaller share of 45.45% or ₹7.68 lakh crore, while non-corporate taxes delivered 51.7% of the pie at a little over ₹8.74 lakh crore. Net direct taxes from corporates were up just 8.12% over last year, while they had risen 21.6% from non-corporate sources. A month ago, net corporate tax receipts were up 8.6% at close to ₹7.43 lakh crore, while net collections from non-corporate taxes had grown 22.5% to ₹7.97 lakh crore.

**STT receipts**  
Receipts from the Securities Transaction Tax (STT)

also reported a slower growth of 75.24% as of January 12, compared to a sharper 85.5% surge as of December 17, 2024, indicating some tapering in stock market volumes as equity valuations came under pressure.

STT receipts stood at ₹44,538 crore, relative to ₹40,100 crore a month ago and ₹25,415 crore a year ago.

In 2023-24, net direct tax revenues had risen 17.7% to ₹19.58 lakh crore, with the share of Personal Income Tax (PIT) rising to 53.3% from 50.06% in the previous year.

## MARKETS

## MARKET WATCH

	MONDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	76,330	-1.36
US Dollar	86.70	-0.76
Gold	80,660	0.13
Brent oil	81.00	—

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2225.15	-149.25
Adani Ports	1066.65	-45.55
Apollo Hosp	6839.60	-197.15
Asian Paints	2252.65	-68.10
Axis Bank	1049.30	8.60
Bajaj Auto	8596.25	-167.75
Bajaj Finance	7150.95	-137.10
Bharat Elec.	259.60	-11.40
Bharti Airtel	1597.20	-18.70
BPL	265.30	-12.35
Britannia Ind.	4927.05	-12.15
Cipla	1439.20	-29.60
Coal India	362.70	-5.60
Dr Reddys Lab.	1335.10	-19.30
Eicher Motors	4939.10	-119.35
Grasim Ind	2288.15	-75.95
HCL Tech	1899.40	-5.70
HDPE Bank	1630.85	-25.90
HDFC Life	599.75	-8.90
Hero MotoCorp	4043.65	-78.55
Hindalco	563.75	-10.70
Hind Unilever	2451.00	8.95
ICICI Bank	129.75	-20.10
IndusInd Bank	941.70	4.10
Infosys	1962.20	-4.75
JST Steel	883.75	-16.35
Kotak Bank	11497.70	-133.40
NestleIndia	2237.35	-10.55
NTPC	298.20	-10.05
ONGC	255.73	-7.29
PowerGrid Corp	287.60	-12.10
Reliance Ind.	1239.85	-2.05
SBI Life	1467.40	-10.90
State Bank	729.50	-13.75
Shriram Finance Ltd.	521.10	-10.90
Sun Pharma	1746.90	-37.90
TataConsumerProduct	965.45	-7.35
Tata Motors	751.00	-23.65
Tata Steel	122.93	-4.50
TCS	4291.10	25.45
Tech Mahindra	1659.65	-45.95
Titan	3382.75	-57.50
Trent Ltd.	6224.40	-359.70
UltraTech Cement	10615.15	-250.05
Wipro	291.85	-8.70

## Vikas Dhoot

## India in a cyclical slowdown'

## India in a cyclical slowdown'

India is going through a cyclical growth slowdown driven by fiscal consolidation and slower credit growth on macro-prudential tightening of consumer loans by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), a Goldman Sachs report argued on Monday.

Stating that the "fastest growth pace in public capex is behind us", the firm averred that the central government's fiscal impulse shall remain a drag on India's growth in 2025-26.

## U.S. exports tariff to hit bio pharma, auto parts hard

A 20% tariff proposed on India's exports to the U.S. under the incoming Donald Trump administration will hurt India's bio-pharma and auto component exports the hardest, with a \$3 billion cost impact, the Boston Consulting Group warned.

A majority of state power distribution companies in India are suffering losses due to older power transmission systems and frequent power losses, prompting the government to bring in private players. Dakshinanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam and Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam are each responsible for power distribution in 21 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

Last year, the Union Power Minister asked States to identify and list their profit-making power utilities on the country's stock exchange to meet increasing investment demand in the power sector as well as to improve the transmission system.

New Delhi and Odisha already have private-public power distribution partnerships in place.

## U.P. looking to privatise two of four power distribution firms

## Reuters

Uttar Pradesh is looking to privatise two of its four power distribution companies, a state government tender showed, as the country's most populous state grapples with power losses and lack of sufficient transmission infra.

The northern Indian state is inviting private companies to form partnerships with or privatise State-owned Dakshinanchal

Vidyut Vitran Nigam and Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam, per the tender dated Jan. 12.

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**SEOUL**

**Around 300 North Korean soldiers killed in Ukraine, says South Korea**



Around 300 North Korean soldiers have been killed and 2,700 wounded while fighting in Russia's war against Ukraine, a South Korean lawmaker said on Monday. Seoul has previously claimed North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has sent more than 10,000 soldiers as "cannon fodder" to help Moscow fight Kyiv. AFP

**DUBAI**

**Iran takes delivery of 1,000 drones ahead of Trump's inauguration**



A thousand new drones were delivered to Iran's Army on Monday, as the country braces for more friction with Israel and the U.S. under incoming U.S. president Donald Trump. The drones were delivered to various locations throughout Iran and are said to have high stealth and anti-fortification abilities. REUTERS

**COPENHAGEN**

**Greenland to set terms of defence and mining ties with U.S., says PM**



Greenland Prime Minister Mute Egede said on Monday the country is looking to strengthen its defence and mining ties with the United States, albeit on its own terms, following renewed interest from U.S. President-elect Donald Trump. Mr. Trump had previously floated the idea of acquiring the strategically important Arctic island. REUTERS

**SAN FRANCISCO**

**U.S. announces new restrictions on exports of advanced AI chips**



The U.S. on Monday unveiled new export rules on advanced computing chips used for artificial intelligence, aiming to facilitate sales to allied nations and further curb access to countries like China. The new rules update controls on chips, requiring authorisations for exports, re-exports and in-country transfers. AFP

## Los Angeles wildfire toll surges to 24 as firefighters brace for more winds

Severe fire conditions expected through Wednesday with winds of 80 kmph and gusts in the mountains reaching 113 kmph; officials warn that the most dangerous day will be Tuesday; at least 16 reported missing, with the number expected to rise

**Associated Press**  
LOS ANGELES

After a weekend spent blocking the explosive growth of fires that destroyed thousands of homes and killed at least 24 people in the Los Angeles area, firefighters got a slight break with calmer weather but cast a wary eye on a forecast for yet more wind.

Should that happen, already burned homes and valleys could flare anew, sending embers to unburned territory miles downwind. New fires could add to the complication.

The death toll surged late on Sunday with an up-



**Field day:** Firefighters work to clear a firebreak on a hillside covered with retardant in Los Angeles on Sunday. REUTERS

date from the Los Angeles County medical examiner. At least 16 persons were missing, a number authorities said was also likely to rise.

The relative calm on Sunday allowed some people to return to previously evacuated areas, however.

The National Weather Service issued red flag

warnings for severe fire conditions through Wednesday, with sustained winds of 80 kmph and gusts in the mountains reaching 113 kmph. The most dangerous day will be Tuesday, warned fire behavior analyst Dennis Burns at a community meeting Sunday night.

"It will kind of ebb and flow over the next couple days," Mr. Burns said. "Tomorrow night, it will really ramp up."

Spotting – new fires caused by blowing embers – could happen as much as 3.2 km or more downwind of areas that have already burned, Mr. Burns said.

Despite their recent losses, stress, and uncer-

tainty, the crowd in a Pasadena City College gym was mostly respectful, in contrast with harsh criticism elsewhere for Los Angeles and California leaders. Applause followed each of the experts, police, firefighters and community leaders who spoke.

Fierce Santa Ana winds have been largely blamed for turning the wildfires sparked last week into infernos that leveled entire neighbourhoods around the city where there has been no significant rainfall in more than eight months.

Twelve persons were missing within the Eaton Fire zone and four were missing from the Palisades Fire officials said.

## Israel and Hamas presented with final draft of Gaza deal

**Reuters**  
DOHA/CAIRO

Mediator Qatar gave Israel and Hamas a final draft of a deal on Monday to end the war in Gaza, after a midnight "breakthrough" in talks attended by U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's envoy, an official briefed on the negotiations said.

The official said the text for a ceasefire and release of hostages was hammered out at talks in Doha which included the chiefs of Israel's Mossad and Shin Bet spy agencies and Qatar's Prime Minister as well Steve Witkoff, who will become U.S. envoy when Mr. Trump takes office next week. Officials from the outgoing U.S. administration are also thought to have participated.

"The next 24 hours will



**Water wait:** Children displaced by conflict sheltering at a school in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on Monday. AFP

be pivotal to reaching the deal," the official said.

Officials on both sides, while stopping short of confirming that a final draft had been reached, described progress at the talks.

A senior Israeli official said a deal could be sealed within a few days if Hamas replies to a proposal.

## U.K., Mauritius cite progress in Chagos Islands discussions

**Reuters**  
LONDON

Britain and Mauritius said on Monday there had been good progress in talks to finalise a deal over sovereignty of the Chagos Islands, including a U.S.-British military base, with London hoping for sign-off before Donald Trump's inauguration.

Britain struck a deal in October to hand over control of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius while retaining control of the military base on Diego Garcia, the largest island of the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean, under a 99-year lease – an agreement that needs to be ratified.

Since then, an ally of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump and new Mauritian Prime Minister



U.K.-based Chagos Islanders protest over the planned ceding of sovereignty of the islands by Britain to Mauritius in October. REUTERS

Navin Ramgoolam have publicly criticised the deal.

Mr. Ramgoolam said last month his government wanted to renegotiate the deal. Britain has said the deal works for all sides.

British media have reported that London has offered to frontload a tranche of payments to Mauritius for the lease of

the strategically important military base.

Mr. Trump takes office on January 20. Marco Rubio, his pick as Secretary of State, has said the deal poses a threat to U.S. security by ceding the archipelago – with its base used by U.S. long-range bombers and warships – to a country allied with China.

## Russia takes over village in the south of Pokrovsk

**Agence France-Presse**  
MOSCOW

Russia said on Monday it captured an east Ukrainian mining village south of Pokrovsk, home to one of Ukraine's most important coal mines and where Russian troops have reached the outskirts. Russian forces have been edging towards Pokrovsk, an important eastern hub, since the summer.

Moscow said troops took the village of Pishchane, 8 km south-west of Pokrovsk, which Russia has been trying to seize for months. Last month, Ukraine steelmaker Metinvest and the owner of the Pishchane mine said it had halted operations and evacuated personnel.

## Jeff Bezos's space company calls off debut launch of massive rocket in eleventh hour

**Associated Press**  
CAPE CANAVERAL

Blue Origin called off the debut launch of its massive new rocket early on Monday because of technical trouble.

The 98-metre New Glenn rocket was supposed to blast off before dawn from Florida's Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. But launch controllers had to deal with an unspecified rocket issue in the final minutes of the countdown and ran out of time. Once the countdown clock was halted, they immediately began draining all the fuel from the rocket.



**Aborted mission:** The New Glenn rocket was supposed to blast off before dawn from Florida's Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. AP

Blue Origin did not immediately set a new launch date, saying the team needed more time to resolve the problem.

The test flight already

had been delayed by rough seas that posed a risk to the company's plan to land the first-stage booster on a floating platform in the Atlantic.

No matter what happens, Mr. Bezos said on Sunday evening, "we are going to pick ourselves up and keep going."



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**FINAL HURRAH**

Kyrgios hints he might've played last Australian Open singles match



A downbeat Nick Kyrgios said that his short-lived return to Melbourne Park on Monday might have been his last singles appearance at the Australian Open. "Realistically I can't really see myself probably playing singles again here," a crestfallen Kyrgios, 29, told reporters.

**CHANGED STRATEGY**

With a change in coach, Swiatek embraces new approach



World No. 2 Iga Swiatek, who has five Majors, hopes new coach Wim Fissette and fresh approach will help her to a first Australian Open title. "The preparation has changed a bit because of a different coach. I feel that was enough of a change. We're obviously also working a little bit differently," said the Pole.

**DISAPPOINTING**

Injured Vondrousova pulls out of Australian Open



Former Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova pulled out of the Australian Open on Monday after failing to recover from an injury she sustained at the Adelaide International. The Czech player only returned to action this year after six months on the sidelines following shoulder surgery, which saw her slip to 38 in the world.

**BACK TO BASICS**

Rohit expected to train with the Mumbai Ranji team



India captain Rohit Sharma has "expressed interest" in training with the Mumbai Ranji team and is likely to turn up for the side's practice session at the MCA-BKC ground on Tuesday. "Rohit had approached head coach Omkar Salvi and made enquiries about when they are going to train for the next Ranji match," an MCA official told PTI.

# Dragons' defence to the fore in narrow victory over SG Pipers

The Tamil Nadu franchise's fifth success consolidates its position at the top of the table while the Delhi outfit, which dominated the proceedings in the opening quarter, stays at the bottom

HIL

**Y.B. Sarangi**  
ROURKELA

**T**able-topper Tamil Nadu Dragons again relied on its gritty defence to get the better of a hapless Delhi SG Pipers 3-2 in a keen contest of the Hockey India League at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here on Monday.

The Dragons' fourth outright win, and the fifth overall, firmied up its position, while Pipers, who managed to score twice of their 26 circle entries, continued to lie at the bottom of the table.

Pipers dominated the proceedings in the opening quarter. In the second minute, they drew first blood from their opening penalty corner as Argentine Tomas Domene shot diagonally along the carpet to sound the board on goalkeeper David Harte's right.

Dragons equalised soon as Jip Janssen converted his team's first short corner with a low shot to beat Ben Rennie on the left.

The Dragons kept their



**Drawing level:** Rohidas, left, congratulates a beaming Janssen on netting Dragons' equaliser. HIL

cool and turned the match heavily on its way in the second period as Pipers again lost control after a fine start.

Dragons' clinical ap-

proach and better control fetched them two quick goals early in the quarter that proved decisive.

Nathan Ephraums, with

his back to his post, guided

in a long hit of Amit Rohidas and Blake Govers tapped in a rebound following Abharan Sudev's attempt off another long shot as the Pipers' defence was

caught napping. Following a Dragons' referral opposing a penalty corner, Pipers earned a penalty stroke in the 37th minute and Domene put it past Harte to score his second goal.

The Northern side tried hard to catch up and their active forwards bagged two more penalty corners in the penultimate quarter.

The industrious Pipers distributed well and continued to create chances.

It came close to equalising in the 49th minute, but the alert Harte saved Domene's drag-flick and Jarnmanpreet Singh's shot before the Indian's second effort sailed over the bar.

The Dragons defence, led by Rohidas and Jansen, held tight to frustrate the Pipers.

With Dragons reduced to 10 men in the last five minutes, Pipers got two short corners, replaced their goalkeeper and made multiple attempts but could not find the equaliser.

**The result:**

Tamil Nadu Dragons 3 (Janssen 6, Ephraums 19, Govers 21) bt Delhi SG Pipers 2 (Domene 2, 37).

# Soorma women rally to down Bengal Tigers



**On target:** Soorma's skipper Salima, right, takes off after slotting in her team's third goal. K.R. DEEPAK

**Santadeep Dey**  
RANCHI

JSW Soorma Hockey Club got its Women's Hockey India League campaign up and running with a come-from-behind 4-1 victory over Shachi Rahr Bengal Tigers at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Stadium here on Monday.

Soorma, despite showing a sense of urgency from the get-go, conceded in the 7th minute. A free-hit from the edge of the circle culminated in Hannah Cotter swiping into the roof of the net.

Even though Soorma kept attacking in waves, the Tigers' defensive wall did well to thwart the attempts. Salima Tete's side also won five penalty corners in the

first 30 minutes, but each of those efforts was foiled by the opposition rushers.

The Tigers almost ended up extending the lead on several occasions, having come the closest in the second quarter when Fiona Crackles' ferocious backhand strike was briskly dabbled away by Savita.

**Drawing level**

Soorma finally broke down the door in the second half after repeated knocks when Penny Squibb put in a blistering run and found an unmarked Olivia Shannon on the left. The latter wasted no time in nutmegging Grace O'Hanlon in goal. Charlotte Englebert followed that up with another goal in the 42nd minute as her backhand

strike zoomed past the keeper's left kicker.

Crowd favourite Salima buried the third into the net from the acutest of angles at the edge of the 'D' after one of her earlier attempts was disallowed after a stick check.

Sushila Chanu, almost in a reflection of the Tigers' frustration, got her stick in the way of Maria Verschoor near the backline. And a young Sonam, entrusted with the responsibility of taking the penalty stroke, repaid the faith with a fourth goal in under 10 minutes.

**The results:**  
JSW Soorma Hockey Club 4 (Shannon 38, Englebert 42, Salima 44, Sonam 47) bt Shachi Rahr Bengal Tigers 1 (Cotter 7).

**India defeats Nepal in opening clash of Kho Kho World Cup**

**Sports Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Indian men's team defeated Nepal 42-37 in the opening match of the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here on Monday.

Before the Group A clash in the men's section, a glittering opening ceremony was attended by India's Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and several other dignitaries. Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president P.T. Usha was also present.

"From kho kho's origins in the rural hinterland to now being played on the global stage, I would like to congratulate the Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) for its efforts in turning a dream into reality. I am confident that the Kho Kho World Cup will ignite the passion for India's indigenous games," Usha stated in her address.

India's next match is against Brazil on Tuesday. In the women's section, the host will kick off its campaign against South Korea in Group A.

## Noah the hero as Blasters stun Odisha



**Strike force:** Noah and Peprah scored for KBFC. R.K. NITHIN

Noah Sadaoui scored an injury-time goal as Kerala Blasters pulled off a stunning 3-2 victory over a strong Odisha FC in the ISL at the Nehru Stadium here on Monday.

The Blasters were down by a four-minute goal, but the host team turned the match around, dramatically scoring thrice in a 35-minute spell in the second half.

Odisha, which went ahead through a Jerry Mawihmingthanga goal, displayed a strong defence and managed to cut out the space for the Blasters for much of the first half. But once the Blasters found the equaliser around the hour mark through Kwame Peprah's smart move - he ran through the centre, side-stepped goalkeeper Amrin-

der and scored with an angled shot - Odisha's defence started looked shaky.

The other two Blasters goals also had a touch of drama to them. Sadaoui relayed captain Adrian Luna's cross from the right to Jesus Jimenez, who had come off the bench in the 60th minute, and the latter found the net with a happy push.

The Blasters goalkeeper Sachin Suresh was forced to toil, thwarting two desperate Odisha attempts before allowing the opponent to level 2-2 in the 80th minute but Sadaoui, the day's hero, made sure the fans went home a happy lot with a shot from the left which deflected off a defender's leg and went in.

**The result:** Kerala Blasters 3 (Kwame Peprah 60, Jesus Jimenez 73, Noah Sadaoui 90+5) bt Odisha FC 2 (Jerry Mawihmingthanga 4, Dorielton Gomes 80).

## Djokovic joins Alcaraz and Sinner in second round; Tsitsipas crashes out

## AUSTRALIAN OPEN

**Associated Press**  
MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic's first match with former rival Andy Murray as his coach did not start all that well, even against a 19-year-old making his Grand Slam debut.

Still, after dropping his opening set at the 2025 Australian Open on Monday night to Nishesh Basavareddy, an American who left Stanford University and turned pro last month, Djokovic eventually asserted himself for a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 victory to begin his bid for an 11th championship at Melbourne Park and a record 25th Major title overall.

"I'm obviously thrilled to have him in my corner," Djokovic said about Murray. "I must say, it was a little bit of a strange experience to have him at courtside in my box. We played for over 20 years against each other at the highest level. Great to have him on the same side of the net. He gave me some great advice mid-match."

On a busy and warm Day 2, which included nine Grand Slam champions with a combined 43 Major



**Fighting back:** Djokovic survived a scare, dropping the first set against USA's Basavareddy. AP

trophies in action plus another half-dozen players with runner-up showings, the winners included No. 2 Iga Swiatek, No. 3 Coco Gauff, No. 7 Jessica Pegula and Naomi Osaka among the women, and No. 1 Janik Sinner and No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz among the men.

Osaka, who won two of her four Major titles in Australia, defeated Caroline Garcia 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in Monday's last match at Rod Laver Arena.

**Azarenka bows out**

Noteworthy exits came from two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka, 2017 French

Open champion Jelena Ostapenko, and two-time Major finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas. Ostapenko's 6-3, 7-6(6) loss came against Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Belinda Bencic, who is ranked outside the top 400 after returning in October from maternity leave.

Also one-and-done, but not that surprisingly: Nick Kyrgios, who lost to Djokovic in the 2022 Wimbledon final and played one match the past two seasons because of injuries. Kyrgios dealt with a strained abdominal muscle in the lead-up to this week and was defeated by Jacob Farnley 7-6(3), 6-3, 7-6(2).

**THE RESULTS**

**First round: Men:** Mensik (Cze) bt Basilashvili (Geo) 6-1, 6-7(3), 6-3, 6-3; Michelsen (USA) bt 11-Tsitsipas (Gre) 7-5, 6-2, 6-4; Carballés Baena (Esp) bt 23-Tablo (Chi) 1-6, 6-2, 6-3, 7-6(1); Duckworth (Aus) bt Stricker (Sui) 6-2, 6-4, 6-2; 17-Tiafoe (USA) bt Rinderknech (Fra) 7-6(2), 6-3, 4-6, 6-7(4), 6-3; McCabe (Aus) bt Landaluce (Esp) 6-4, 6-3, 6-4; Borges (Por) bt Muller (Fra) 6-7(2), 6-3, 6-2, 7-5; 1-Sinner (Ita) bt Jarry (Chi) 7-6(2), 7-6(5), 6-1; Marozsan (Hun) bt Seyboth Wild (Bra) 6-3, 6-7(5), 7-5, 5-7, 7-5; 27-Thompson (Aus) bt Koepfer (Ger) 7-6(3), 6-4, 4-6, 6-3; Schoolkate (Aus) bt Daniel (Jpn) 6-7(6), 7-6(4), 6-1, 6-2; Yukic (Aus) bt Dzumhur (BiH) 6-7(3), 6-0, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4; Nishioka (Jpn) bt Dougash (Tun) 3-6, 6-4, 7-6(3), 6-3; Faria (Por) bt Kotov (Rus) 6-1, 6-1, 7-5; 15-Draper (GBr) bt Navone (Arg) 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 7-6(2); 2-Cazaux (Fra) bt Baez (Arg) 6-3, 5-7, 3-6, 6-0, 6-3; Kokkinakis (Aus) bt Safiullin (Rus) 3-6, 6-3, 6-3, 7-6(5); 22-Korda (USA) bt Klein (Svk) 6-3, 0-6, 6-3, 7-6(6); 29-Auger-Aliassime (Can) bt Struff (Ger) 6-3, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2; 7-Pegula (USA) bt Joint (Aus) 6-3, 6-0; 27-Pavlyuchenkov (Rus) bt Yuan (Chn) 6-4, 6-4, 6-3; 17-Kostyuk (Ukr) bt Hibino (Jpn) 3-6, 6-3, 6-1; Cristian (Rou) bt Martic (Cro) 6-2, 4-6, 6-7(7); 20-Muchova (Cze) bt Podroska (Arg) 6-1, 6-0, 6-1; Mertens (Bel) bt Golubic (Sui) 4-6, 6-7(6), 6-4; Aiava (Aus) bt Minnen (Bel) 5-7, 7-5, 6-3; 10-Collins (USA) bt Snigur (Ukr) 7-6(4), 6-3; Osaka (Jpn) bt Garcia (Fra) 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

**Fallen seeds**

**Men:** 10-Dimitrov, 11-Tsitsipas, 23-Tablo, 28-Baez  
**Women:** 16-Ostapenko, 21-Azarenka

## IN BRIEF



## Barcelona thrashes Madrid, wins Spanish Super Cup

Barcelona hammered Real Madrid 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia on Sunday to win the first trophy of coach Hansi Flick's reign. Kylian Mbappe put Madrid ahead but Barca hit five in response before its custodian Wojciech Szczesny was sent off in second half.

**The result (final):** Real Madrid 2 (Mbappe 5, Rodrygo 60) lost to Barcelona 5 (Yamal 22, Lewandowski 36-pen, Raphinha 39, 48, Balde 45+10).

## Former world heavyweight champion Fury retires

Former world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury said on Monday he had retired from boxing. "I'm going to make this short and sweet," the British fighter said in a social media post. "I'd like to announce my retirement from boxing. It's been a blast." Fury enjoyed two stints as heavyweight champion and retires with a record of 34 wins, two defeats and one draw.



## Shafali powers Team-A to a comfortable win over Team-D

Skipper Shafali Verma's all-round show (115 and three for 23) powered Team-A to a comfortable six-wicket win over Team-D in the BCCI senior women's one-day Challenger Trophy in Chennai on Monday. Team-A will face Team-C in the final at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Wednesday.

**The scores:** Team-D 11/9 in 50 overs (Laxmi Yadav 38, S. Anusha 41, M. Dakshini 42, Arundathi Reddy 3/27, Shafali Verma 3/23) lost to Team-A 213/4 in 36.1 overs (Shafali Verma 115, Pragya Rawat 33, Tanusree Sarkar 33 n.o., Sushshree Dibyadhar 4/35).

Team-E 206 in 44.2 overs (S. Shubha 71, Nandini Kashyap 37, Ishu Pathare 3/33, Radha Yadav 3/31) bt Team-B 148 in 37.2 overs (Jincy George 45, M. Mamatha 48, Vasavi Akhila Pavani 3/12, Jintimani Kalita 3/16).

## Napoli downs Verona, consolidates its lead

Napoli extended its lead at the top of Serie A to four points on Sunday after beating Verona 2-0. Meanwhile, Diego Simeone said Atletico Madrid has worked really hard to get on the winning streak which saw it climb to the top of LaLiga. "It's an important streak to show the growth of the club. We have been working really hard," Simeone said after Atletico's 1-0 win over Osasuna.

**The results:** Bologna 2 (Dallinga 61, Ferguson 65-pen) drew with Roma 2 (Saetmaekers 58, Dovbyk 90+pen); Napoli 2 (Montipo 5-0g, Anguissa 62) bt Verona 0.

## LIVE TELECAST

## TUESDAY

**Kho-Kho World Cup:** SS Select 1 & Hotstar, 10.30 a.m. onwards.; India vs Brazil, 8.15 p.m.

**Australian Open:** Evening session: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1.30 p.m.

**I-League:** Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 2 & 3.30 p.m.

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

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

**Serie A:** gxr.world, 11 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Wednesday)

**Bundesliga:** Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 11 p.m. & 1 a.m. (Wednesday)

**Premier League:** SS Select 1 & Hotstar, 1 a.m. (Wednesday)

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

## WEDNESDAY

**Kho-Kho World Cup:** SS Select 1 & Hotstar, 10.30 a.m.; India vs Peru, 8.15 p.m.

**India Women vs Ireland Women:** 3rd ODI, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 11 a.m.

**Australian Open:** Evening session, Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1.30 p.m.

**Vijay Hazare Trophy:** 1st semifinal, JioCinema, 1.30 p.m.

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

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

**Premier League:** SS Select 1 & Hotstar, 1 a.m. (Thursday)

**Bundesliga:** Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 11 p.m. & 1 a.m. (Thursday)

**Serie A:** gxr.world, 1.15 a.m. (Thursday)

**Australian Open:** Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 & LIV, 5.30 a.m. (Thursday)

## Indian shuttlers hope to end title drought in home event

Focus on Satwik-Chirag duo and Sindhu; last-minute withdrawals across the board force organisers to shuffle draw



**Ready for action:** Satwiksairaj, Sindhu, Chirag and Lakshya at the press conference ahead of the India Open in New Delhi. ANI

## INDIA OPEN

Uthra Ganesan  
NEW DELHI

**T**he last time an Indian shuttler won the India Open, it was a Level 3 Super 500 event, played behind closed doors as the world struggled with COVID fallout and the likes of Ajay Jayaram and Parupalli Kashyap were still active on the professional circuit.

It was only three years ago but 2022 feels like a lifetime as Lakshya Sen - who won back then -- and P.V. Sindhu look to leave a forgetful 2024 behind and make new beginnings, starting their season with a fruitful opening on home ground beginning on Tuesday.

Now a Super 750 event, the 3rd Yonex-Sunrise India Open at the Indira Gandhi Stadium will have the cream of world badminton in attendance.

While Lakshya conti-

nued to struggle for form with a first-round exit at the Malaysia Open last week, this will be Sindhu's first competition of the season, returning to action after getting married recently. Sindhu, who was the last Indian woman to win the title here way back in 2017, was also optimistic, having started training under new women's singles coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama of Indonesia.

A change of coaching staff in doubles has also brought back Malaysian Tan Kim Her, the man who first paired up Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy in 2016.

Although the first outing for the World No. 9 duo under Her ended in the semi-finals at the Malaysia Open, it's been an encouraging start for the men with the highest hopes of ending the host's title drought in the competition, having won it in 2022 and reaching the final last year.

A series of last-minute withdrawals, however,

have forced the organisers to shuffle the draw.

Kiran George and Srikanth Kidambi come in from the reserves after top-seed Shi Yu Qi, who won the Malaysia Open on Sunday, and Indonesian Anthony Ginting withdrew late on Monday. Lakshya will now face World No. 14 Lin Chun-Yi of Chinese Taipei in his opener.

Among women, Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrungphan's withdrawal has brought in Rakshitha Sree Santosh Ramraj, who takes Sindhu's spot while the latter moves to Busanan's place in the draw against Shuo Yun Sung of Taipei.

In mixed doubles, top seed Chinese pair of Yan Zhe Feng and Dong Ping Huang's withdrawal has brought in Tarun Kona and Srikrishna Priya Kudaravalil. In women's doubles, the pull-outs of three pairs has given India's Kavya Gupta-Radhika Sharma and Amrutha Pramuthesh-Sonali Singh a chance in main draw.

## Cummins, Hazlewood in Australia's CT squad

Press Trust of India  
SYDNEY

Pat Cummins was on Monday named captain of the Australia team for next month's Champions Trophy while fellow pacer Josh Hazlewood too was included in the squad despite lingering injury concerns surrounding both players.

Cummins was managing an ankle injury throughout the recently concluded five-Test Border-Gavaskar Trophy series against India in Australia.

**SA names Ngidi, Nortje**  
South Africa included Lun-

gi Ngidi and Anrich Nortje in the Temba Bavuma-led squad after the pacer bowlers recovered sufficiently from their injuries.

**The squads: Australia:** Pat Cummins (Capt.), Alex Carey, Nathan Ellis, Aaron Hardie, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Short, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Adam Zampa.

**South Africa:** Temba Bavuma (Capt.), Tony de Zorzi, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Wian Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickleton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Rassie van der Dussen.

## Jamwal downs Thapa, makes the final in welterweight class

## NATL. BOXING

Press Trust of India  
BAREILLY

Himachal Pradesh's Abhinash Jamwal defeated reigning welterweight champion Shiva Thapa in a thrilling semifinal of the men's National boxing championship here.

Sachin Siwach delivered a decisive win over Harya-

n's Gorish Pujani in the lightweight (55-60kg) category. Lakshya Chahar beat Mizoram's Malsawmluang in the light heavyweight (75-80kg) division to book his spot in the medal round.

Jadumani Singh Mandengbam (flyweight), Hitesh (light middleweight), Deepak (welterweight), Jugnoo (cruiserweight), and Vishal (heavyweight) also advanced.

## Karman to meet second seed Udvardy in first round

## ITF TENNIS

Kamesh Srinivasan  
NEW DELHI

Wild card entrant Karman Kaur Thandi will open against second seed Panna Udvardy of Hungary in the \$40,000 ITF women's tennis tournament at the DLTA Complex.

With the ITF Supervisor, Sina Ebrahimian restricting action only to doubles on Tuesday, the day of Pongal and Makar Sankranti, the players will have one more day to prepare for the singles action.

Karman is returning to the pro circuit after more than a year.

She will be keen to test her game and fitness against the second seed, as and when the first round is scheduled.

More than anything, the return of Karman will strengthen Indian women's tennis further at a time when Sahaja Yamalapalli, Shravali Bhamidipaty and Vaidehi Chaudhari have stepped up their game to the next level.

Shravali has drawn qualifier Maria Kozyreva, and so has Akanksha Nitrite, who will play another

qualifier Fangran Tian of China.

Vaidehi will challenge seventh seed Tatiana Prozorova. Vaishnavi Adkar and Riya Bhatia will play Alevtina Ibragimova and Saki Imamura respectively.

The country's No.1 player and Asian Games medallist, Ankita Raina will open against Laura Samson of Czech Republic.

**The seedings:** 1. Darja Semenitaja (Lat), 2. Panna Udvardy (Hung), 3. Laura Pigossi (Bra), 4. Yuriko Lily Miyazaki (Jpn), 5. Georgia Pedona (Ita), 6. Dalila Jakupovic (slo), 7. Tatiana Prozorova, 8. Tina Nadine Smith (Aus).

## Kapil Dev takes golf to Chhattisgarh's Naya Raipur

Sports Bureau  
NEW DELHI

**Fresh start:** Kapil Dev addressed the media, along with Chhattisgarh Dy. CM Arun Sao, as PGTI listed 11 golf tournaments for the first half of the year. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The president of the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI), Kapil Dev, said he was delighted to take golf to Chhattisgarh, as he announced a series of 11 events for the first half of the season, in a press conference at the Delhi Golf Club on Monday.

Deputy Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Arun Sao, was present at the media briefing, adding that everyone would have a memorable experience at the Fairway Golf and Lake Resort in Naya Raipur in the ₹1 crore golf event to be played from Feb. 25 to 28.

The CEO of PGTI, Amandeep Johl, called the course in Naya Raipur "most picturesque besides a lake".

The season will open with the Players championship at the Tollygunge Club in Kolkata, on February 11. The following week, the event will be in Ahmedabad, with Raipur having the third event from February 25. Ahmedabad will have another event in the first week of March.

the Delhi NCR from April 15, before Kapil Dev's Grant Thornton Invitational at the Prestige Golfshire in Bengaluru from April 22.

"Last year we had events for nine weeks in a row. And this time we have 11 weeks in a row, offering 35 crore in prize money, including the ₹2.25 million Hero event," Amandeep Johl said.

Kapil said young players returning scores of 20-ununders was equivalent to a player scoring a triple century in a Test match.

It was also announced that there would be Next-Gen events with ₹20 lakh prize money, for youngsters who are not in top-60, in less known golf cities like Kapurthala, Philar and Lucknow.

## Hitesh overcomes Neimanis in three sets

## Sports Bureau

Third seed Hitesh Chauhan fought his way past Richards Neimanis of Latvia 6-1, 6-7(6), 6-3 in the first round of the ITF junior tennis tournament in Chandigarh on Monday. In the girls' section, Aishwarya Jadhav went down fighting 6-1, 5-7, 4-6 to Eva Korysheva of Kazakhstan.

**The results: First round: U-18:**  
**Boys:** Arjun Rathai bt Alan Aliukhanov 6-2, 6-3; Emanuel Ivanisevic (Croat) bt Sehaj Singh Pawar 7-5, 6-3; Damir Zhagalbasay (Kaz) bt Arnava Paparkar 6-1, 6-2; Ersayli Bakhtiyar (Kaz) bt Tanush Ghildyal 6-2, 6-3; Alexey Shibaev bt Sumukh Marya 6-1, 6-2; Aaron Gabet (Fra) bt Artem Sidorov (Kaz) 3-6, 6-2, 6-1; Artem Bogomolov bt Akshat Dhull 6-1, 6-1; Hitesh Chauhan bt Richards Neimanis (Lat) 6-1, 6-7(6), 6-3; Kerem Yilmaz (Tur) bt Eito Komada (Jpn) 6-4, 6-0.

**Girls:** Yoana Konstantinova (Bul) bt Satima Toregen (Kaz) 6-2, 6-3; Miku Kitakoa (Jpn) bt Diya Chaudhary 6-3, 4-6, 6-4; Daria Koreshkova bt Reet Arora 6-2, 6-3; Anna Perelman bt Yu-Nin Tsai (Tpe) 6-0, 6-0; Masa Jankovic (Srb) bt Yeri Hong (Kor) 7-6(4), 6-2; Manon Favier (Fra) bt Rira Kosaka (Jpn) 6-2, 6-3; Alaina Kakenova (Kaz) bt Rishitha Basireddy 6-4, 7-5; Polina Bereznina bt Nainika Bendram 6-4, 6-0; Yu-Chen Lin (Tpe) bt Yesung Chod (Kor) 6-2, 7-6(4); Eva Korysheva (Kaz) bt Aishwarya Jadhav 1-6, 7-5, 6-4; Polina Kuharenko bt Victoria Milovanova 6-2, 6-2.

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# I hope more Japanese players participate in the HIL

The league is big and fantastic, it is fun with a lot of people; it has been a good experience for me; I really like it and I want to play here again; the 2020 Olympic Games and the 2018 Asian Games are my favourite moments [so far]; I also liked playing Bundesliga hockey

## INTERVIEW

### Koji Yamasaki

Y.B. Sarangi

**F**orward Koji Yamasaki is the lone Japanese player in the 2024-25 Hockey India League (HIL).

In fact, Yamasaki, a member of the Delhi SG Pipers, is the only foreign player from an Asian nation to feature in the HIL's latest edition.

Yamasaki was a member of the 2018 Asian Games gold-medal-winning Japanese team in Jakarta, India, one of the favourites to win the title, lost to Malaysia in the semifinals to finish with a bronze medal and miss out on a chance to qualify directly for the Tokyo Olympics.

While the 28-year-old visited India earlier to play for his national side, he did not have the opportunity to know the country well. As he gets used to his multi-national HIL side and spends quality time with the Indian players in a comparatively relaxed atmosphere, he has developed a liking for the country and the league.

Yamasaki sat down with *The Hindu* to speak about his career, his experience in the HIL, and more. **Excerpts:**

**This is your first exposure to the HIL. How has your experience been so far?**

The HIL is big and fantastic, it is fun with a lot of people. It has been a good experience for me. I really like it. I want to play here again.

**How are you getting along with the Indian players in the Delhi team?**

Yeah, I have [made] friends, such as Sumit (Kumar), Rajkumar (Pal) and Iktidar (Ishrat). They are very kind.

**In 2018, you won the Asian Games gold medal with the Japanese team. Later, in 2021, you took part in your home Olympics in Tokyo. How do you look back on those two events?**

At that time, hockey was doing well in Japan. We improved our attack and defence to reach a good level. We won the 2018 Asian Games. We played in the Tokyo Olympics. India's Va-



Only Japanese players play there because they don't have enough money (to offer to the foreigners). Hockey is not a very popular sport in Japan like football or baseball. Swimming, judo, and wrestling are also popular in our country.

**Why has the level of Japanese hockey gone down of late?**

The hockey team lost the sponsor. It doesn't have enough money. So we can't do a camp. That's why we are down.

**How is the standard of women's hockey in Japan?**

They are also down and I think the reason is the same.

**What do you do for a living?**

I am a professional player, so I just play hockey. I am 28 years old now and I want to play, hopefully, for another 10 years.

**How did you come into hockey?**

I also did swimming, baseball, and track and field (during my childhood). But I liked hockey the most. My elder brother played hockey at the university level, but he is retired [now]. He is just one year older than me and we began playing hockey together.

**How many times have you been to India before?**

This is my fourth visit. I played in the World Cup here in Rourkela (in 2023) and the FIH Series Finals in Bhubaneswar (in 2019). I also played in the Junior World Cup in Lucknow (in 2016). Harmanpreet (Singh) was there, both of us are of the same age.

**Do you face any language issues here?**

Yeah, it is difficult for me, but I can speak some basic English. I have started learning English and some Hindi after coming here.

**What have you learned in Hindi in the short time you have spent here?**

*Mera naam Koji (My name is Koji), mera desh Japan (my country is Japan), thik hai (alright), jaldi jaldi (quickly).*

run (Kumar) and Harmanpreet also played in the Tokyo Olympics. I am really happy playing with them here.

I really enjoyed competing in the Olympics at home and I had a good experience. There was nobody to watch (the matches from the stands due to COVID-19). My family members watched the matches on TV.

**What are your favourite moments in your career so far?**

The 2020 Olympic Games and the 2018 Asian Games are my favourite moments [so far]. I also liked playing Bundesliga hockey.

**Why is it that you are the only player from Japan to be playing in the HIL this season? Is there any other Japanese player who wants to play in the league?**

I am here because I was selected, and I am lucky. I think eight players from our country were in the auction. The others (from Japan) also want to play in the HIL. I hope more Japanese players participate in the HIL in the future.

**How many players from your country play in leagues abroad?**

At present two other players from Japan take part in foreign leagues. One is (Kentaro) Fukuda, who is playing in Spain. And (Kaito) Tanaka is playing in Australia. I played for UHC Hamburg in Germany last season. I was there for two years, from 2022 to 2024. I played for six months in Japan and six months in Europe. Now I am here. I want to play in Europe again.

**Can you tell us about the hockey league back in Japan?**

I am currently playing [in the] Hockey Japan League, but it got over (in November 2024).

# SCIENCE

# In Meghalaya, superstitions make things worse for cancer patients

Studies have reported low awareness regarding the signs, symptoms, and risk factors of cancers in the region, as well as lower adoption of methods for early cancer detection, such as self-breast examination, potentially contributing to delays in diagnosis and poor survival

**Rahul Karmakar**

**A**n “evil eye” or “toxic vibes” from a person supposed to have bad intent is believed to be among the causes of cancer, a study on the factors influencing delayed healthcare in Meghalaya has revealed.

Researchers from the Indian Institute of Public Health in Shillong, the Department of Radiation Oncology of Civil Hospital Shillong, and the State Department of Health and Family Welfare interviewed 37 cancer patients, 12 caregivers, and five healthcare providers between July and October 2021 to understand barriers to cancer care in Meghalaya. The individuals were selected from among people treated at the Civil Hospital Shillong for the five most common cancers in the State: oesophageal, breast, oral, cervical, and lung cancer.

The researchers were Barilin Dkhar, Carmenia Khongwir, Uniquey Gratis Mawrie, Felicita Pohsne, Redolen Rose Dhar, Anisha Mawlong, Rajiv Sarkar, Melari Shisha Nongrum, and Sandra Albert. Their paper was published in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research* in October 2024.

According to the paper, the caregivers and healthcare providers highlighted the prevalent cultural concepts in the community regarding the causes of cancers, such as “bih” and “skai.”

“Bih” is not an easily translatable word; its literal translation could be ‘poison,’ but here, it does not represent poison in the literal sense, rather it represents a concept in Khasi (the language of the matrilineal Khasi community) which embodies a situation associated with an illness acquired after a person has come in contact with or eaten food with/of a person with bad intent,” the paper said.

Likewise, ‘skai’ is the Khasi equivalent of the evil eye in English.

“The stigma and certain religious beliefs among the poor and illiterate people are strong because of the lack of awareness. In many remote, hilly areas, people tend to use traditional or herbal healing. Many patients who come here for treatment think cancer is an infectious disease,” Amal Chandra Kataki, director of the government-run B. Borooah Cancer Institute in Guwahati, told *The Hindu*.

## Vulnerable region

In 2022, India recorded 14.61 lakh cancer cases, with one in nine people in the country projected to suffer from the disease in their lifetime. Studies have estimated a 12.8% increase in the number of annual cancer cases by 2025, to around 15 lakh.

India accounts for about 7% of the world’s cancer burden. The highest cancer incidence in the country is in the northeast, including Meghalaya.

The new study said the region’s cancer profile includes a high incidence of cancers of the upper digestive tract, such as of the stomach, oesophagus, and hypopharynx.

Its paper said the oesophagus is the “leading site” of cancer in both genders, followed by those of the hypopharynx in males and of the mouth in females in Meghalaya. These patterns have been attributed to the consumption of alcohol.

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Students carrying umbrellas form a pink ribbon at Madras University Ground, Chetpet. FILE PHOTO

Join FREE WhatsApp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F> and tobacco and a diet that includes not inconsiderable quantities of smoked meats and fish.

The paper added that “studies have reported low awareness regarding the signs, symptoms, and risk factors of cancers in the region, as well as lower adoption of methods for early cancer detection, such as self-breast examination, potentially contributing to delays in diagnosis and poor survival.”

The lack of cancer-screening also lowers the odds of positive outcomes.

“Awareness about cancer, which needs to be multi-pronged, has not been as intense as for HIV/AIDS,” Dr. Kataki said.

“Many lose the battle against cancer because they come for treatment at the final stages, unlike in Western countries, where early detection saves lives. If the HIV/AIDS campaign could generate awareness in the Northeast on a large scale, a sustained and innovative campaign on cancer care can work too.”

## Cultural underpinnings

The researchers’ interviews revealed the perspectives on health and diseases of the tribal population – the Khasis, with seven sub-groups, and Garos comprise 86% of Meghalaya’s 3.27 million people – due to their beliefs may be an important barrier to ideal health-seeking behaviour of individuals with cancer.

In particular, misconceptions, fatalism, and cultural underpinnings were found to be the principal barriers. Misconceptions included beliefs that radiation would “cook” a patient while fatalism held that the patients were destined to suffer.

“Bih” (taint) and “skai” (evil eye) were examples of cultural ideas in the community regarding the causes of cancer, the study said.

“Kren jemdaw,” which means to speak negatively about a person, was also

believed to make people susceptible to illnesses like cancer.

Other barriers included hesitancy and stigma. Some respondents said they were uncomfortable about discussing their diagnosis while others believed disclosure could bring bad luck.

“Embarrassment and a sense of shame contributed to perceived stigma, depending on the body parts affected,” the paper said. “Female patients suffering from breast and cervical cancers expressed these feelings.”

## Addressing the problem

“Cultural beliefs were just one component among multiple influences on delayed care seeking. We are working with communities to jointly develop approaches that could address the problem,” Sampath Kumar, Principal Secretary of Health and Family Welfare, Meghalaya, told *The Hindu*. “It is a work in progress. Behaviours can take considerable time to change.”

The interviews also underscored a tendency among the patients to self-medicate, including with over-the-counter preparations. They sought medical consultation only once the remedies proved ineffective.

Ten of the 37 individuals interviewed also said they sought treatment from traditional healers. The preference for affordable and accessible traditional medicines was more prevalent among the males, the study said.

“We are in the process of using new virtual reality technologies to remove fears about cancer to help better recovery of cancer patients,” Mr. Kumar said. “This would also help patients understand the science behind the cancer and its treatment.”

“We launched the Meghalaya Cancer Prevention Mission two years ago to

“

Many lose the battle against cancer because they show up for treatment in the final stages, unlike in the West, where early detection saves lives. If the HIV/AIDS campaign could generate awareness in the Northeast on a large scale, a sustained and innovative campaign on cancer care can work too

ensure early detection and care. We enhanced screening in the large East Khasi Hills district, which helped increase overall awareness,” he added. “We are now getting more new cases reported early due to these efforts.”

The researchers acknowledged that their findings are limited by a “potential lack of generalisability” because most participants were “enrolled from a single government hospital,” even if it was a principal referral centre. They also wrote that the individuals’ views of cancer care may have been influenced by the importance given to COVID-19 as the interviews were conducted during the pandemic.

“Nevertheless, this study highlights the barriers for cancer diagnosis and treatment in an indigenous or tribal population in Northeast India,” the paper added. “Our findings underscore the need to address such misconceptions through culturally appropriate messaging via locally suited channels of communication, while addressing the health system-related barriers such as improving the capacity building of healthcare workers in cancer diagnosis and treatment.”

(rahul.karmakar@thehindu.co.in)

## THE SCIENCE QUIZ

### There’s something to measure everything else

#### Vasudevan Mukunth

#### QUESTION 1

This device, when used onboard aircraft, tells the pilots how fast the vehicle is ascending or descending. American engineer Paul MacCready has described it as a “pressure altimeter with a leak which tends to make it read the altitude of a moment earlier.” Name the device.

#### QUESTION 2

The X superseded the circumferentor in the early 19th century. The latter consisted of a compass with markings along its north-south axis. One could measure a horizontal angle by subtracting the angles made by the compass needle in two different directions with respect to

the north-south line. Name X.

#### QUESTION 3

A katherometer is a common component of gas chromatography – a set of techniques used to ascertain the elements in a compound. The katherometer’s contribution is to measure the \_\_\_\_\_, and is thus useful to determine how much combustible methane is present in a volume of biogas. Fill in the blanks.

#### QUESTION 4

When dealing with a gaseous colloid, an aethalometer measures the quantity of particulate matter suspended in it, especially matter that’s K in colour. This is because objects of this colour absorb the most frequencies of visible light. Name K.

#### QUESTION 5

The \_\_\_\_\_, like the aethalometer, tracks the properties of suspended particles in gases and also liquids. It’s often used to measure air pollution. Its name in Greek means “cloud measure”. Fill in the blank.

#### Answers to January 9 quiz:

- Type of lamp that the Davy lamp is – **Ans: Safety lamp**
- Engineer whose safety lamp design predated Davy’s – **Ans: George Stephenson**

3. Name given to Stephenson’s lamp – **Ans: Geordie lamp**

4. Effect of poisonous gases on the Davy lamp – **Ans: Higher and/or bluer flame**

5. Name for build-up of combustible gases in a coal mine – **Ans: Fire damp**

Visual: **Hebbur**

First contact: Viswanadha Rao Batchu |

Chandan Kumar Singh | Joe V.R. | K.N.

Viswanathan | Ronanki Raviprakash

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



Visual: This is a pneumatic tribometer. What does it measure? Medical implant manufacturers frequently use it to test their products’ suitability for use within a human body. MATERIALS SCIENCE 1 (CC BY-SA 4.0)



A mass blooming of *Dipcadi* plants on a sada.  
MANALI RANE

**A Konkan secret, the flat-top sada is a freshwater paradise**

**Manali Rane**

The Konkan region located between the Arabian sea on one side and the Western Ghats on the other is well-known for its beaches and temples.

As one travels across the Western Ghats towards Ratnagiri district, the landscape slowly transitions from mountain ranges standing a thousand metres tall, with steep slopes, to rolling hills with flat tops locally called *sada*, meaning a large flat area. They are the result of centuries of erosion.

The *sada* are barren most of the year but become transformed during the monsoons. They are similar to the plateaus, locally called *pathar*, in the Satara district of Maharashtra, of which the Kaas Plateau is a well-known example.

The *sada*, like the *pathar*, are rocky and harbour unique endemic flora that cover it in the monsoon season. A study undertaken in the southern part of Ratnagiri district between 2022 and 2024 explored the habitat and documented the biodiversity and the ecosystem services they provide. (The author was part of the study group.)

The biodiversity survey recorded 459 plant species, of which 105 are endemic to the Konkan region. The team recorded 31 species of reptiles, 13 species of amphibians, 169 species of birds, and 41 species of mammals in the region.

During the monsoons, the locals use small patches of *sada* to grow rice and millets (like nanchani, *Eleusine coracana*) with traditional practices that don’t require the use of pesticides and chemical

**A survey recorded 459 plant species, of which 105 are endemic. The team recorded 31 species of reptiles, 13 species of amphibians, 169 species of birds, and 41 species of mammals**

fertilisers.

This said, the *sada* itself is far more interesting for its biodiversity and culture.

The analysis of ecosystem services, in a study (to be peer-reviewed) by hydrologists Renie Thomas and Divyanshu Pawar, revealed the villages in the *sada* have access to fresh water all year round even though they are located between dry, rocky open land and valleys of meandering saline creeks studded with mangroves.

This was found to be due to the *sada*’s geology. The highly weathered lateritic soil layer on the top acts as a catchment for the rainwater and recharges the groundwater.

The communities here have access to freshwater through open step or dug wells, springs, and perennial streams that are conserved and maintained as part of rituals the locals have dedicated to deities. These observances also involve community rules regarding the residents’ hygiene and the cleanliness of the natural commons.

(The area is also host to works of art called geoglyphs, dated to roughly 10,000 years ago.)

These waterbodies have also become habitats for freshwater turtles such as the vulnerable Indian flapshell turtle (*Lissemys punctata*) as well as water sources for leopards, jackals, hyenas, barking deer, and migratory birds, among others.

The land-use patterns of this region are changing. The open land and some of the croplands are increasingly being converted to orchards or residential areas, with various developmental projects set to come up. Mining for laterite stones is another threat.

The fact that the *sada* is also classified as a ‘wasteland’ in the Wasteland Atlas makes matters worse.

(Manali Rane is a scientific officer with the Bombay Environmental Action Group. manalirane6588@gmail.com)

**For feedback and suggestions**  
for ‘Science’, please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject ‘Daily page’