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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Growing appetite for insect protein

Demand for edible bugs is expected to explode by the end of the decade. Is India ready to capitalise on it?

MAGAZINE » PAGE 1



Heart failure patients in India die 10 years earlier: study

SCIENCE » PAGE 11



What will be the impact of Trump's trade war?

FAQ » PAGE 12



Kohli returns as India eyes series win against England

SPORT » PAGE 15

BJP sweeps Capital

BJP bags 48 seats, set to return to power in Delhi after two decades

Iaideep Deo Bhani
Satvika Mahajan

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party, winning 48 seats in the Assembly election, has returned to power in the national capital after a gap of over 26 years, scuttling the Aam Aadmi Party's bid for a fourth straight term. The AAP won 22 seats. The Delhi Assembly election was held on February 5.

The results of the election declared on Saturday delivered a jolt to AAP with party national convener Arvind Kejriwal and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia losing their seats. Atishi, who had taken over as Chief Minister from Mr. Kejriwal, managed to retain her Kalkaji Assembly seat.

The Congress failed to win a single seat for the third time in a row, with a majority of its candidates losing their deposit.

While the BJP increased its tally from eight to 48, there was only a 2% difference in the vote share of AAP and the BJP.

Celebrations erupted in BJP offices as trends showed that the party would sail past the majority mark of 36.

Mr. Kejriwal was defeated by Parvesh Sahib Singh (New Delhi Assembly constituency) and Mr. Sisodia by Tarvinder Singh Marwah (Jangpura).

Atishi emerged victorious over her BJP rival, Ramesh Bidhuri, in Kalkaji.

Mr. Kejriwal, who had resigned as Chief Minister in September last year after he walked out of prison on bail, had said he was

Return after a long gap

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured a majority in the 2025 Delhi Assembly election, bagging 48 out of 70 seats

- The incumbent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) lost vote shares across all regions, winning only 22 seats
- The Congress once again failed to win any seats despite a slight increase in vote share (+2%)

Party	Seats won	Vote share (%)
BJP*	48	47.2
AAP	22	43.6
Cong.	0	6.3
Others	0	2.9

52.6%

Vote share secured by the BJP in the "richest" constituencies in 2025, its strongest performance among all classes

45.6%

The BJP's vote share in 2025, its highest since 1993, the year when Delhi's Legislative Assembly was revived

-12.3% points

Decline in AAP's vote % compared with 2020, in seats with over 25% Muslim voters — a key support base in previous polls

-8.2% points

Decline in AAP's vote % compared with 2020, in seats with a relatively higher concentration of the city's 'poorest' residents



Victory lap: BJP workers celebrate the party's victory in Delhi on Saturday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

26 years

The BJP broke its 26-year jinx by returning to power in Delhi. Back in 1993, when they secured majority, they won 49 seats — one more than in 2025

PM promises to make Delhi a 'modern city'

Satvika Mahajan
NEW DELHI

Celebrating the Bharatiya Janata Party's thumping victory in the Delhi Assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday addressed the party's senior leadership and workers at the BJP's national headquarters here.

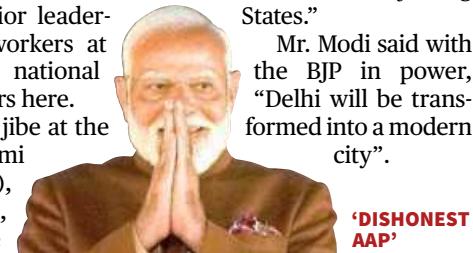
Taking a jibe at the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), he said, "AAP came with pro-

mised to continue all welfare schemes in the Capital such as free electricity and water, even promising to make them better.

The party had hit out at AAP for not delivering on its promises, corruption investigation against its top leaders and the alleged extravagant spending on the renovation of the house allotted to Mr. Kejriwal when he was Chief Minister.

The BJP did not announce a Chief Minister candidate during its election campaign and asked for votes in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The party will now have to pick a Chief Minister to deliver on its promises.

FULL COVERAGE
» PAGES 2, 8 & 9



'DISHONEST AAP'

» PAGE 8

Reserve Bank in sync with govt. on growth focus: FM

Vikas Dhotu
NEW DELHI

With the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) following up the Budget's demand stimulus for the slowing economy with a long-awaited interest rate cut, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday that fiscal and monetary policy working in harmony to spur growth impulses, should yield a bigger boost to the economy.

The Minister was speaking to the media after addressing the RBI's Central Board in the Capital.

The government expected India's tepid private investment trends to reverse, Ms. Sitharaman indicated, citing anecdotal inputs from industry lead-



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra and Directors at a meeting in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

ers after the Budget that unveiled income tax breaks worth ₹1 lakh crore to jump-start urban demand. Industry was clearly showing signs of a consumption recovery, she said. "Whether it is inflation or growth, monetary policy and fiscal policy moving in tandem, like the

two wheels of a car, will definitely provide more benefit to our economy and people. With the RBI's decision, I am sure that together, things can move in the required direction that we need," she said.

TO REVIVE DEMAND
» PAGE 10

U.S. judge blocks data access to Musk's team

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

A U.S. judge issued an emergency order early Saturday blocking Elon Musk's government reform team from accessing personal and financial data stored at the Treasury Department.

U.S. District Judge Paul A. Engelmayer's order restricts giving access to Treasury Department payment systems and other data to "all political appointees, special government employees, and government employees detailed from an agency outside the Treasury Department".

Mr. Musk, who heads Tesla, SpaceX, and X, is leading President Donald Trump's federal cost-cut-

ting efforts under the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). U.S. media had earlier reported that Mr. Musk had been registered as a "special government employee".

The judge's temporary restrictive order will be in effect until a February 14 hearing.

The case was brought against Mr. Trump, the Department of Treasury, and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Friday by attorneys-general from 19 States. They alleged the administration violated the law by expanding access to sensitive Treasury Department data to staff from Mr. Musk's DOGE.

RELATED REPORTS
» PAGE 14

BJP scores big win in U.P.'s Milkipur bypoll

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the high-stakes Milkipur Assembly byelection in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, with party candidate Chandrabhanu Paswan defeating Samajwadi Party's (SP) Ajit Prasad by an impressive margin of 61,710 votes.

While the BJP celebrated the win as a victory for its 'double-engine' government, the SP called it a "false victory", repeating the allegations of large-

scale electoral fraud that it had raised on polling day.

Milkipur is a seat reserved for Scheduled Caste (SC) candidates and lies in the Ayodhya district.

It witnessed a no-holds barred campaign, with the BJP aggressively pushing its Hindutva plank while the SP countered it with its PDA narrative, which stands for Pichda, Dalit, and Alpasankhyak or the backward class, and minority communities.

ELECTORAL FRAUD, SAYS SP
» PAGE 9

IN BRIEF



Fadnavis, Dy. CMs have defrauded women: Patole

MUMBAI
After the Maharashtra government declared five lakh women ineligible for the Ladki Bahin Yojana, State Congress chief Nana Patole on Saturday said the "three brothers" (referring to CM Devendra Fadnavis and his deputies) had defrauded women. » Page 7

NAAC debars varsity in A.P. for five years

BENGALURU
The National Assessment and Accreditation Council on Saturday announced that it has decided to cancel the accreditation process of KLEF in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, and also debar its university for five years from applying for accreditation. » Page 4

MAGAZINE » 8 PAGES
CLASSIFIEDS » PAGE 5 & 6

DMK romps home in Erode (East) bypoll

The Hindu Bureau
ERODE

The ruling DMK won the byelection in the Erode (East) Assembly constituency in Tamil Nadu with a massive lead on Saturday.

Its candidate, V.C. Chandhirakumar, won by a margin of over 90,000 votes. His closest rival was Naam Tamilar Katchi's

M.K. Seethalakshmi, who secured 15.59% of the votes. A total of 6,109 votes went to NOTA.

The counting went off without any major incident in the constituency.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said the victory was people's recognition for the welfare measures and progressive schemes of the DMK government.

PES UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS 2025

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DELHI ELECTION

Who said what



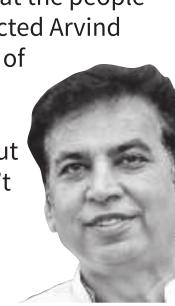
“I believe politics is the only way to improve the education system in the country. I have dedicated my life to education and will continue to work in this sector in the future

MANISH SISODIA
AAP leader, ex-Deputy CM



“The result is a clear indicator that the people of Delhi have rejected Arvind Kejriwal's politics of lies and deceit. Congress workers gave their best, but the results weren't in our favour

DEVENDER YADAV
Delhi Congress chief



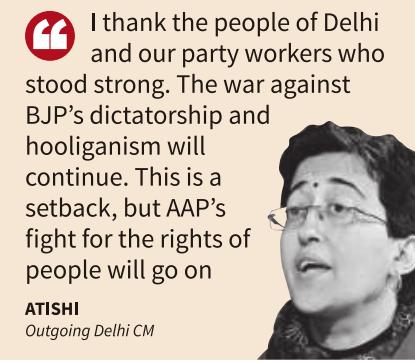
“It's a historic moment and a clear message that PM Narendra Modi resides in the heart of Delhiites. What's clear from the results is that Delhi doesn't need a party that makes false promises

J.P. NADDHA
BJP national president



“The people of Delhi have completely rejected the corrupt and incompetent rule of AAP and Arvind Kejriwal while expressing their faith in the BJP by giving it a decisive majority

VIRENDRA SACHDEVA
Delhi BJP chief



“I thank the people of Delhi and our party workers who stood strong. The war against BJP's dictatorship and hooliganism will continue. This is a setback, but AAP's fight for the rights of people will go on

ATISHI
Outgoing Delhi CM

DOUBLE ENGINE ROLLS INTO DELHI

This time, BJP changed its strategy as it targeted the AAP leadership over governance, excise policy, and CM's house renovation instead of the party's welfare schemes like free power and electricity

Satvika Mahajan
NEW DELHI

It was not just the anti-incumbency but consistently cornering the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over corruption charges, civic issues and infrastructure, micromanaging the election campaign through hundreds of grassroots meetings, and targeting women, Purvanchali and JJ cluster vote banks through poll promises that led the BJP to break its 28-year-old jinx in the Capital and trounce AAP by bagging a whopping 48 of 70 seats.

Learning from its mistake of targeting AAP over free electricity, power, and bus tickets, which it had termed "free ki revdi" (freebies), the BJP changed its strategy, a party leader said. In its manifesto, it too promised several schemes, including direct cash transfer to women.

Along with the traditional methods of campaigning, local party leaders focused on micromanagement and held over 5,000 meetings.

However, a key message



Moment of glory: BJP workers celebrating outside the party's office in New Delhi on Saturday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

that worked in the BJP's favour was its relentless attacks on AAP over corruption charges, slowly eroding the party and its chief Arvind Kejriwal's "honest image" over the alleged excise policy scam and "irregularities" in the renovation of the CM's residence, that it dubbed as "sheesh mahal".

BJP Delhi election in-charge and MP Baijayant Panda told *The Hindu* that to make the battle tough

for AAP, the party fielded heavyweights like Parvesh Sahib Singh against Mr. Kejriwal, and it brought the desired results.

To gain the confidence of slum dwellers, BJP leaders spent nights with them as part of the campaign.

A source said the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh carried out backdoor campaign and helped in bringing the Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrant issue into the poll narrative.

Modi holds meet to pick next CM, discuss govt. formation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday night held a closed-door meeting with senior BJP leaders, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah and party general secretary B.L. Santosh, to finalise the name

of the next Chief Minister and discuss details of government formation.

A party leader said Mr. Shah and BJP national president J.P. Nadda also held parallel meetings with all seven Lok Sabha members from Delhi. Unlike AAP, the BJP went into the election without a CM face.

Mood downbeat at AAP office as hopes of a comeback slip away

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

As the counting of votes started on Saturday, a few hundred feet from where AAP leaders were expected to stand on stage for victory celebrations outside their headquarters at 1, Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla Lane, party workers sat excitedly.

They began their morning with gusto amid AAP's blue and yellow bunting and a tower of sweets stacked up to be distributed later in the day to celebrate a fourth term in the Delhi Assembly. However, after the first round of counting, the collective change in mood was obvious.

"We couldn't believe our eyes and ears as the massive screen displayed live voting trends. From then on, it became a super stressful experience of



Remains of the day: Workers outside the AAP office at 1, Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla Lane on Saturday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

watching the results arrive," said a party volunteer. With AAP starting to trail in the early trends, the crowd outside the office too began to thin out. The boxes of sweets had to be whisked out in a car.

Some of the party volunteers who came from

Punjab said they felt shattered and started to leave around 2 p.m. Those left behind began to dismantle the stage staring at empty chairs.

While they reconciled with the reality, the top leaders of AAP chose to stay away from the office.

Poll vault

Honours even in six north-east Delhi seats hit by riots in 2020



The BJP and AAP emerged victorious in three seats each of the six constituencies in north-east Delhi that were hit by riots in 2020. In Seelampur, AAP's Chaudhary Zubair Ahmad defeated the BJP's Anil Kumar Sharma by a margin of 42,477 votes. AAP was victorious in Babarpur with Minister Gopal Rai retaining the seat by a victory margin of 18,994 votes while AAP's Gopalpur candidate Surendra Kumar defeated BJP's Praveen Nimesh by a margin 8,207 votes. Meanwhile, BJP's Mohan Singh Bisht registered a win in Mustafabad while AAP finished second and AIMIM settled for third spot. BJP has also come out with flying colours in the Karawala Nagar and Ghonda constituencies.

Also-ran? Not by any stretch as Owaisi's party rides 'third' wave



The All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) outperformed Congress in the Delhi Assembly poll. Contesting only two seats in Mustafabad and Okhla, AIMIM got 33,474 and 39,558 votes respectively. In Mustafabad, AIMIM candidate **Mohd. Tahir Hussain**, the Delhi riots accused who was allowed custody parole for poll campaigning, fared better than the Congress candidate Shifa Ur Rehman, also accused in the 2020 Delhi riots, pushed Congress to fourth place in the Okhla constituency as he got 39,558 votes while Congress's Ariba Khan came in fourth, securing 12,739 votes.

Firecracker ban up in smoke as supporters take to pyrotechnics



The BJP on Saturday celebrated its victory by bursting crackers outside the party headquarters in Delhi and several other areas in the city. These celebrations notably come after a round-the-year ban on all types of firecrackers in the national capital. BJP workers holding party flags and shouting "Modi" and "Jai Shri Ram" burst firecrackers outside the party headquarters. A party leader said the BJP did not buy the firecrackers, supporters did. On December 19, 2024, the Delhi government imposed a ban on all forms of firecrackers throughout the year in the national capital.

Switch hit: party-hopping yields a winning return for candidates

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Most leaders who switched sides in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly election managed to secure victory.

Three-time Congress MLA Tarwinder Singh Marwah, who switched to the BJP in 2022, defeated former Deputy Chief Minister and senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia.

Kailash Gahlot, the Transport Minister in the AAP government, switched to the BJP in 2024 and won from Bijwasan.

Arvinder Singh Lovely, who too switched to the BJP from Congress in 2024, managed to win from Gandhi Nagar.

Zubair Ahmed, who left Congress for AAP, bagged



the Seelampur seat. In Patel Nagar, former AAP Minister Raaj Kumar Anand, who contested on a BJP ticket, lost to AAP's Pravesh Ratn. The two switched parties recently.

In a somewhat similar story, Kartar Singh Tanwar, who switched from AAP to BJP, won the Chhattarpur seat, which has always been won by a 'Tanwar'. He defeated Brahm Singh Tanwar, who was formerly with the BJP but contested on an AAP ticket this time.

In Rajouri Garden, BJP's Manjinder Singh Sirsa defeated AAP's Dhanwati Chandela. Mr. Sirsa was formerly with Shiromani Akali Dal.

The exceptions

Fortune didn't work well for Jitender Singh Shunty, a former BJP MLA who made headlines for his social work during COVID-19. He recently switched to AAP and lost to BJP's Sanjay Goel in Shahdara.

Similarly, Kamal Arora, who had switched sides from Congress to AAP, faced defeat in the Gandhi Nagar seat.

Movers and shockers



Parvesh Sahib Singh
BJP
New Delhi
beat Arvind Kejriwal (AAP) by 4,089 votes



Kapil Mishra
BJP
Karawala Nagar
beat Manoj Kumar Tyagi (AAP) by 23,355 votes



Satish Upadhyay
BJP
Malviya Nagar
beat Somnath Bharti (AAP) by 2,131 votes



Gopal Rai
AAP
Babarpur
beat Anil Kumar Vashisht (BJP) by 18,994 votes



Amanatullah Khan
AAP
Okhla
beat Manish Chaudhary (BJP) by 23,639 votes



Sanjeev Jha
AAP
Burari
beat Shailendra Kumar (JD(U)) by 20,601 votes

Low five as Delhi remains a House of few women

Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

Five women candidates – four from the BJP and one from AAP – emerged as winners in the election to the 70-member Delhi Assembly. In 2020, eight women were elected to the Assembly.

The winners included senior AAP leader and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, who beat BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri by 3,521 votes from the Kalkaji Assembly constituency. Kalkaji also saw Congress's Alka Lamba contesting and coming in third with 4,392 votes. Percentage-wise, women's representation is at 7.14%, still a far cry from the 33% envisaged by the women's reservation Act of 2023.

In Shalimar Bagh, BJP's Rakesh Gupta defeated AAP's Bandana Kumari, who had held the seat since 2013, by a significant margin of 29,595 votes. From Greater Kailash, BJP candidate Shikha Roy emerged victorious by beating senior AAP leader and Health Minister Saurob Bharadwaj by 3,188 votes. In Nafajgarh, BJP's Neelam Palwan defeated AAP's Tarun Kumar by 29,009 votes and in Wazirpur, Poonam Sharma of the BJP beat Rajesh Gupta of AAP by 11,425 votes.

Six of the nine candidates that AAP fielded in the last election had won, including Ms. Atishi, Sarita Singh (Rohtas Nagar), Rakhi Birla (Madipur), Ms. Kumari (Shalimar Bagh), Dhawani Chandela (Rajouri Garden) and Pramila Tokas (R.K. Puram). The silver lining for AAP is that despite its seats dropping drastically, its vote share is only 2% less than the BJP's and over 37% more than what the Congress was able to get.

Over 71 lakh of Delhi's 1.55 crore voters are women. All the major parties announced schemes for women ahead of the poll.

A Delhi-sized question mark for Arvind Kejriwal

NEWS ANALYSIS

Nikhil M Babu
NEW DELHI

As the dust settles after the election and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is left smarting from the results, the one question its rank and file will be left with would be – between losing power in Delhi and party chief Arvind Kejriwal's defeat from New Delhi seat, what hurt more?

For AAP, which has fought elections in other States, including Punjab in 2022, on its chief's "clean" image and the 'Delhi model' of governance, it will be hard to recover from the twin losses.

However, Mr. Kejriwal may have an even bigger problem at hand. The AAP national convener, who was arrested and jailed in

connection with the now-withdrawn excise policy 2021-22, walked out on bail in September last year and resigned as the Delhi Chief Minister, stating that he would prove his innocence in "janata ki adaalat [people's court]". He had said he would sit on the CM's chair only after being re-elected. The "peo-

ple's court" has not ruled in his favour, and with the court case unlikely to end soon, the former CM may find it tough to sell his "clean" image. On the setback, a senior party leader said, "We need to think about what went wrong in the campaign and within the party. We still can't fathom the loss of consti-

tuencies like New Delhi and Greater Kailash (Saurob Bharadwaj's seat)."

Born out of the India Against Corruption movement in 2012, AAP projected itself as an alternative to the "politics of scams".

In the party's early days, Mr. Kejriwal would point out "corrupt" politicians while promising graft-free governance.

Now, AAP itself may find it difficult to shake off the corruption allegations surrounding it.

Another question Mr. Kejriwal will have to ask himself is whether he can retain his 22 MLAs in Delhi over the next five years.

Unlike in other established parties, where people spend years rising through the ranks to become MLAs or Ministers, many AAP leaders gained those privileges almost

A neck-and-neck fight with little difference in vote share percentage

The election results threw up several surprises, including the nail-biting contest in Jangpura, where AAP's Sisodia lost by 675 votes to BJP's Marwah

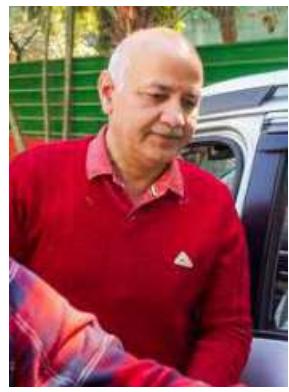
Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

The BJP registered its first big victory in Delhi after 26 years, but the small difference in vote share percentage in several constituencies implies a stiff challenge given by AAP to its opponents in the Assembly poll. Although the BJP emerged victorious in 48 seats and AAP secured wins in 22 constituencies, the vote share percentage stood at 45.56% and 43.57% respectively.

One of the nail-biting contests was witnessed in Jangpura, where former Education Minister Manish Sisodia lost by 675 votes to BJP's Tarvinder Singh Marwah.

After the loss, Mr. Sisodia in a post on X said, "I thank the people of Delhi from the bottom of my heart for giving me the opportunity to serve them for 12 years and shape the future of children."

Among other Assembly



Manish Sisodia.

the two years while I was in office and I hope I have been able to do that," he said.

Sangam Vihar registered the lowest victory margin for the BJP – 344 votes – as Chandan Kumar Choudhary defeated Dinesh Mohaniya. In the Trilokpuri constituency, BJP's Ravi Kant beat Anjana Paracha by 392 votes. In Mehrauli and Timarpur, the margin by which the BJP candidate beat AAP stood at 1,782 and 1,168 respectively.

Highest victory margins

Meanwhile, Rohini, a BJP stronghold, registered the highest margin of victory for the BJP as its candidate Vijender Gupta defeated AAP's Pardeep Mittal by 37,816 votes. In Bawana, BJP's Ravinder Indraj Singh beat Jai Bhagwan Upkar by a margin of 31,475.

However, in Matia Mahal and Ballimaran, AAP won by significant margins – 42,724 and 29,823 votes respectively.

Delhi debacle marks the start of AAP's downfall in Punjab: Oppn.

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party's defeat in the Delhi Assembly poll has set the ball rolling for its downfall in Punjab too, Opposition leaders in the State said on Saturday.

Before the Delhi election, the entire Punjab unit of AAP, including Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Cabinet Ministers, MPs, and MLAs aggressively took part in campaigns in the national capital. Mr. Mann took out roadshows in Delhi and showcased his government's works.

The Opposition parties in Punjab on Saturday slammed AAP and said the people of Delhi "exposed the lies and deceit" of the Arvind Kejriwal-led outfit. They also lashed out at the Mann government, alleging "misgovernance" and "deceiving voters".

Punjab BJP general secretary Subhash Sharma said, "It is the defeat of Arvind Kejriwal's lies, deceit, and dishonesty."

Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa alleged that AAP would now "disintegrate" in Punjab.

As BJP surges, alliance partners fail to keep up

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday secured a decisive victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, but its alliance partners – Janata Dal (United) and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) – failed to make a mark, losing both seats they contested.

The BJP contested 68 out of 70 seats, leaving Burari

for JD(U)'s Shailendra Kumar and Deoli for LJP (RV)'s Deepak Tanwar. Both candidates lost to Aam Aadmi Party rivals. Mr. Kumar was defeated by AAP's sitting MLA Sanjeev Jha by a mar-

gin of 20,601 votes. Mr. Tanwar lost to AAP's Prem Chauhan by a margin of 36,680. The BJP has managed to unseat almost all senior AAP leaders, including Arvind Kejriwal.

Maharashtra pattern of 'voter list fraud' repeated in Delhi: Raut

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut on Saturday alleged that the "Maharashtra pattern of voter list fraud" has been repeated in the Assembly election in Delhi, where the BJP has pulled off a victory after 26 years.

"This is the Maharashtra pattern of voter list fraud. The same has been applied in the Delhi Assembly election. Former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's government was not allowed to work. The L-G had all the powers, and all the prominent AAP leaders were put in jail," Mr. Raut said, adding that the BJP is trying to finish the regional parties that are standing up to it.

Mr. Raut has been critical of the Election Commission after the Maharashtra Assembly election after his party, which was in an alliance with the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar), won only 20 of the State's 288 Assembly seats. After the Delhi results, he doubled down on his criticism and claimed that the poll body had been turning a blind eye to serious concerns. "The 39 lakh votes that have increased in Maharashtra in five months will now shift to Bihar... some went to Delhi," he said.

Timings	
SUNDAY, FEB. 09	
RISE	07:04 SET 18:07
RISE 14:52 SET 04:42	
MONDAY, FEB. 10	
RISE	07:03 SET 18:08
RISE 15:56 SET 05:35	
TUESDAY, FEB. 11	
RISE	07:03 SET 18:08
RISE 17:00 SET 06:20	
Delhi Weather	
Delhi City	max 26 min 10
Safdarjang	26 10
Palam	23 08

Delhi Palam Today
23°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be slight cold with mist and haze. Day will be pleasant. Night also will be cold.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
24°C Morning will be cold with mist and haze. Day will be pleasant with increase in wind speed. Night also will be cold. Dry weather to prevail.

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TRAFFIC ADVISORY

IST MATCH : 2:00 PM TO 06:00 PM

2ND MATCH : 06:30 PM TO 10:30 PM

ARUN JAITLEY STADIUM, FIROZESH KOTLA GROUND, NEW DELHI

DIVERSION / RESTRICTION (AS AND WHEN REQUIRED)

There will be diversion of traffic for half an hour after conclusion of the match. No heavy vehicles and buses shall be allowed on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Delhi Gate to JLN Marg, from Darya Ganj to Bahadurshah Zafar Marg and from Guru Nanak Chowk to Asaf Ali Road. People are requested to avoid following roads from 11:00 AM to 11:30 PM on the day when there are two matches on the match day respectively when the spectators would be coming to the stadium and congestion is expected.

Raj Ghat to JLN Marg.
Asaf Ali Road from Turkman Gate to Delhi Gate.
Bahadurshah Zafar Marg from ITO Chowk to Delhi Gate.

ENTRY TO THE STADIUM

(I) Gate Nos. 1, 3 & 6 are located on the southern side of the Stadium & entry to these enclosures are from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg.
(II) Gate Nos. 10, 14 & 15 are located on the Eastern side of the Stadium on the road and entry is from JLN Marg Next to Ambedkar Stadium Bus Terminal.
(III) Gate Nos. 16 & 18 are located on the Western side of the Stadium & entry is from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg near Petrol Pump.

PARKING

Labeled Vehicles free parking for vehicle is available on Mata Sundari Road, Rajghat Power House Road and Velodrome Road and free park & ride and shuttle bus service also available. Limited parking is available for labeled vehicles in the proximity of the Stadium. Display of car parking label on windscreens is mandatory. Vehicle number must be written on the parking label. Those who do not display parking label with vehicle number will not be allowed in the stadium.

Car parking label holders are advised to take Ring Road, JLN Marg, Asaf Ali Road or Bahadurshah Zafar Marg. U turn at Delhi Gate is allowed. Entry to parking lots P1, P2, & P3 shall be from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg only from near the Vikram Nagar Cut, Shaheed Park.

General Vehicles No vehicle shall be allowed to be parked on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Jawaharlal Nehru Marg & Ring Road from Rajghat to I.P. Flyover (both the carriageways) on the match day. Vehicles parked on these roads shall be towed away and prosecuted as per law.

FREE PARKING

Mata Sundari Road • Rajghat Power House Road • Under Velodrome Road

INBRIEF

**Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma quizzed for nine hours in A.P.**

Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma appeared before the Ongole police in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh for questioning on Friday in a case related to alleged derogatory remarks against Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, his deputy K. Pawan Kalyan, and their family members on social media. He was questioned for nine hours.

Adityanath visits his primary school in Uttarakhand's Pauri

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday visited the school where he studied from Class 1 to 5 in Uttarakhand's Pauri district. He appealed to the students to utilise the improved educational infrastructure created there to build their future. "A very good infrastructure has been created here. There is a modern science laboratory, computers, and smart classes. Now it is the responsibility of parents and teachers to inspire the students to make the best use of these facilities and build their future," he told the students and staff. PTI

Fire at Sabarmati bullet train station, no casualties reported

A fire broke out at the under-construction Sabarmati bullet train station in Ahmedabad in the early hours of Saturday, an official from the fire department said. No casualties were reported and 13 fire tenders were pressed into service to bring the blaze under control, he said. The National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited – the agency responsible for the project – said the fire was reported on the roof shuttering on one part of the construction site. Welding sparks are believed to be the cause of the fire, it stated. PTI

NAAC debars university in A.P. for 5 years from accreditation

The case involves the CBI probe into the alleged bribery of a NAAC team by the Guntur-based Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation; the council also debars all 7 members of the team

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), the autonomous accreditation body for higher education institutions, on Saturday announced that its executive committee (EC) has decided to not only cancel the current process of accreditation of the Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF) in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, but also debar its university for five years from applying for accreditation.

It has also decided to bar all the seven members of the peer team for lifetime in assessment or any other activities of NAAC



with immediate effect.

The case involves the CBI investigation into the alleged bribery of a NAAC team by the KLEF in exchange for an A++ rating for its university.

"In addition, it is decided to review the recent visits to HEIs (higher education institutions) by any of the seven members for which the results are not yet declared. The results of

such HEIs will be withheld, and the Standing Committee of NAAC may critically review them before declaring the results. In addition, it is decided that the visits of the last one year will be carefully analysed and put up to the EC for further necessary action," said NAAC in a statement.

"As per the Dr. Radhakrishnan Committee recommendations, NAAC has

proposed to launch the Basic (Binary) Accreditation in April/May 2025 followed by Maturity-based Graded Levels (MBGL)," the council stated.

It added that special committees are working on the preparation of framework and methodology for MBGL. "It is observed that NAAC's peer review system has faced a challenge due to the recent CBI case. These are undesirable to the higher education system, and NAAC being a quality assurance agency is determined to eliminate such practices through definitive actions," it stated.

NAAC said it is planning to take additional steps to refine the system by eliminating the scope for unfair practices in the system.

Delhi wanted change, says Priyanka Vadra

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday said the people of Delhi wanted change as they were "fed up of the way things were". She was responding to media queries on the BJP's victory in the Assembly election during her visit to Wayanad, her Lok Sabha constituency.

"I think it was very obvious from all our meetings in Delhi that the people wanted change. They were fed up of the way things were. And they wanted change. I suppose they voted for change. My congratulations to all those who have won," Ms. Vadra said.

The Congress MP pointed out that the other political parties would have to work harder from now.

People cast their votes for good politics: Naidu

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Naidu said AAP was a "total failure in Delhi", and its model of governance was neither sustainable nor worthy of replication.

The proposed simultaneous polls were more appropriate at this juncture, he said. The vote for the BJP was a vindication of the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the right leader at the right time, Mr. Naidu said.

After Delhi, BJP hopeful of turning the tide in Bengal



Upbeat mood: BJP supporters breaking into a jig after the Delhi Assembly poll results were declared, in Kolkata on Saturday. ANI

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Enthused with the party's victory in the Delhi Assembly election, the West Bengal unit of the BJP on Saturday said the win will serve as a morale booster for it ahead of the Assembly poll in the State, which is due in 2026.

The ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) has outperformed the BJP in recent elections in the State, including the Lok Sabha poll in 2024.

West Bengal BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar and Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari expressed hope that the win in Delhi will boost the party's prospects in the State.

"The Delhi election results proved that people are not with the corrupt, they are with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In 2026, Bengalis, not only those residing in the State but also elsewhere, will come together to win Bengal [for the BJP]," Mr. Majumdar told reporters.

Reminding BJP workers about the "unity of anti-TMC voters", Mr. Majumdar said his party can trounce the ruling party if all the votes polled in support of the other parties – the CPI(M) and the Congress – come to the BJP's kitty.

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Date: February 14, 2025

Time: 6 PM onwards



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EAST COAST RAILWAY**CORRIGENDUM NO. - 06 TO**

Tender Notice No. EPC-ECONIVSKP2024031

Dt.: 08.08.2024

The following modification has been made against above Tender Notice which may please be noted.

Particulars: Date & Time of Closing of Tender:-

As Published Now To Be Read As

18.02.2025 17.04.2025

at 1200 Hrs. at 1200 Hrs.

For details, please visit website:

www.reps.gov.in

Chief Administrative Officer (Con)/

PR-50/CH/24-25

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Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation Ltd.Cauvery Bhavan, 9th Floor, E&A Block, K.G. Road,
Bangalore-560009. Phone : 080-23118888

Date: 07-02-2025

Short Term Tender Notification

(Through KPP portal only)

Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation Limited invites tenders for the following work through e-procurement from the eligible contractors.

Name of the work: "Construction of 862 DU's (G F Houses) for Houseless Beneficiaries in 10 All Mining Affected Villages on Identified Individuals sites at Ballari Taluk, Ballari District - Karnataka" - (Haraginadona (110 houses), Belagal Thanda (57 houses), Belagal (83 houses), Jenekunte ((4 houses), Jenekunte Thanda (80 houses), Halakundi (181 houses), Honnalli (90 houses), Honnalli Thanda (160 houses), Sanjeevarayanakote (89 houses) and Hagari (8 houses) - 10 all mining affected villages). (FIXED PRICE NO-VARIATION). Indent No: RGRHCL/2024-25/BD/WORK_INDENT1/CALL-2.

Amount put to tender [Excluding GST] (Rs. in Lakhs): **4892.00**. EMD Rs. (in Lakhs): **48.92** (1 Lakh D.D and Rs. 47.92 Lakh B.G).

Last date of submission of bid is Date:

17.02.2025 upto 16.00 hoursFurther information visit : <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>,<https://ashraya.karnataka.gov.in/>

SD/- General Manager (S D)

DIPR/CP/YC/4933/2024-25

**Office of SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, 6TH CIRCLE
H.P. PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, KULLU-175101
Ph: 01902_222530, E.mail.hp-kul@nic.in**
PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJNA (PMGSY)
E-Procurement Notice

The Superintending Engineer, 6th Circle HP.PWD, Kullu on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids, in electronic tendering system, for construction of roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY) for the following work including maintenance for five years from the eligible and approved contractors registered with HP.PWD/CPWD/P&T/Railways/othe State Govt./Central Govt. Agencies. Non registered bidders may submit bids. However, the successful bidder has to register in appropriate Class with appropriate authorisation in HP.PWD.

District	Package No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Period of completion	Bid security (Rs. Lacs) i.e. 2% of the total cost.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Kullu 1	HP-06-152A	Construction of 36.00 mtrs. Span RCC Bow String Arch Bridge over MRL-01 Banjar Bathad Road Km. 9/450 in District Kullu (HP) under PMGSY-II.	Rs. 5,57,73,961/-	12 Months	Rs. 11,15,000/-

2. Date of release of invitation for Bids through e-procurement on 10.02.2025 at 10:00 AM.

3. Cost of Bid Form:- Rs.10,000/- per package/job (non-refundable) only in form of Demand Draft.

4. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission:- The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website www.pmgstender.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering may obtain the same from the website: www.pmgstender.gov.in".

Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the valid digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.

5. Submission of Original Documents:- The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand Draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security in approved form and (c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4B (a) (ii) of ITB with Superintending Engineer, 6th Circle HP.PWD, Kullu, on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the Bid, either by registered post or by hand.

6. Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering:- Upto on 15.02.2025 at 05:00 PM

7. The site for the work is available.

8. Only online submission of bids is permitted, therefore, bids must be submitted online on website www.pmgstender.gov.in. The technical qualification part of the bids will be opened online on 17-02-2025 at 11:30 AM in the office of Superintending Engineer, 6th Circle HP.PWD, Kullu by the authorized officers. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day at the same time.

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

10. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than Seventy Five (75) days after the deadline date for bid submission.

11. Bidders may bid for any one or more of the works mentioned in the Table above. To qualify for a package of contracts made up of this and other contracts for which bids are invited in the same NIT, the bidder must demonstrate having experience and resources sufficient to meet the aggregate of the qualifying criteria for the individual contracts.

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

Superintending Engineer,

6th Circle, HP.PWD, Kullu.

HP / 5081/24-25

HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

Bhubaneswar Development AuthorityBhubaneswar Development Authority
Akash Shova Building, Sachivalaya Marg, Bhubaneswar, Odisha - 751001.
Ph: +91-0674-2392801

RFP No.: 2749/ BDA Dated : 06/02/2025

File No.-BDA/Planning/(General Branch)2024/32

SELECTION OF CONSULTANCY FIRM FOR PLANNING & DESIGNING OF TOWN PLANNING SCHEME UNDER ZONE 4 OF PROPOSED BDA TOWN PLANNING SCHEMES IN BHUBANESWAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN AREA (BDPA) PACKAGE-3 (TPS No.-42, 43, 44, 45)**

Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) intends to select an agency for "Selection of Consultancy Firm for Planning & Designing of Town Planning Scheme Under Zone 4 of Proposed BDA Town Planning Schemes in Bhubaneswar Development Plan Area (BDPA)"- Package-3 (TPS No.-42, 43, 44 & 45)

Interested agencies may participate in this tender and submit their proposal. The RFP documents will be available from 06.02.2025 to 24.02.2025 and can be downloaded from Odisha e-procurement portal i.e., <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. The completed proposal, as per instruction in the RFP document, should be submitted on the portal latest by 24.02.2025 up to 17:00 hrs. Please refer to the RFP document for further details.

BDA reserves the right to cancel this invitation and / or invite fresh Bid / RFP with or without amendments to this invitation, without liability or any obligation for such invitation and without assigning any reason. BDA also reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Secretary,

Bhubaneswar Development Authority.

OIPR-13033/11/023/4245

Superintending Engineer,

6th Circle, HP.PWD, Kullu.

HP / 5081/24-25

HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT & PANCHAYATI RAJ
(An Organisation of the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India)
Rajendranagar, Hyderabad-500030**Recruitment on Deputation for Practitioners**

National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR) an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India is the country's apex organization for undertaking Training and Research on various aspects of Rural Development. NIRD&PR, invites applications from the eligible candidates for the below mentioned posts on deputation basis.

Sl. No.	Name of the Post	Pay Matrix Level	Age limit	Number of Posts
1.	Professor	Level 14	56 years	8
2.	Associate Professor	Level 13 (A)	56 years	4
3.	Assistant Professor	Level 10	56 years	9

For eligibility criteria, online submission of application and other details please visit: <http://career.nirdpr.in/>

Last date for submission of online application is 03.03.2025

Advt.No.38/2024

Sd/-

File No: NIRDPR/Admin/ Sec-I/2024/54 Comp.no. 17314

Assistant Director

Administration (Section-I)

CENTRAL RAILWAY**MATERIALS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT****E-Tender Notice No. NIT/01/25/07 dated 06-February-2025**

For and on behalf of The President of India, The Principal Chief Materials Manager, Central Railway invites e-tenders for supply of the following items:

Tender No.	Description	Quantity	Due Date
27253721	Primary Voltage Transformer	28 Nos.	20/02/2025
27253629	Fire Detection Equipment	52 Nos.	24/02/2025
27253454	Master Controller	110 Nos.	26/02/2025
27253503	Gear Case	83 Nos.	27/02/2025
50245186	Armoured 48 Fibre Optical Fibre Cable	87.9 Km	27/02/2025
27253952	Set of Rotary Switch	110 sets	28/02/2025
62243961C	TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENT IMPLANT	90 Nos.	03/03/2025
41241761	Polyester Glass Silk Tape	307425 Metre	05/03/2025
27251513	Commulator Assembly	45 Nos.	07/03/2025

NOTE: All above mentioned tenders are e-tenders and all tenderers are requested to submit their bids online through the IREPS website at <https://www.reps.gov.in>. For more details regarding the above mentioned tenders and other supply tenders please visit IREPS website.

For Principal Chief Materials Manager

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Matrimonial

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BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

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AWADHI

BENGALI

BHOJPURI

BIHARI

CHHATTISGARHI

ENGLISH

GUJARATI

HARYANI

HINDI

KANNADA

KASHMIRI

KONKANI

MALAYALAM

MANIPURI

MARATHI

MARWARI

NEPALI

ORIYA

PARSI

PUNJABI

SAURASHTRA

SINDHI

TAMIL

TELUGU

TULU

URDU

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DIVORCEE

PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

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9493634365.

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mutually match. 9561343825.

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(Singapore). North Indian Brahmin

Family based in South Mumbai.

Contact: matrimail25@gmail.com

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mutually divorced with a child. Well

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in Manchester, UK who seeks an

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Settled groom in UK, Canada, US

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from the uk is more preferable or

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UK) CT 9789047878 parents @

Chennai

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Grooms. Contact: 9677199925

DOCTOR

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Brides & Grooms

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Mohan Majhi govt. announces unified pension scheme

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

The Mohan Majhi government has announced implementation of the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) for government employees in Odisha, aligning it with the Centre's policy. The Cabinet, chaired by Mr. Majhi on Friday, gave approval for the implementation of the UPS for those employees considered eligible for pension under the National Pension Scheme.

"As you all know, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the UPS on August 24, 2024. Keeping in view the requests of various service organisations to determine appropriate pensions and factoring in compulsory pension, family pension and inflation, the Union government has further improved the existing NPS and implemented this Unified Pension Scheme. It is targeted to be implemented from April 1, 2025. Accordingly, the Odisha government has also decided to implement the UPS for



Mohan Majhi

its employees," the CM said.

As per the Cabinet decision, there will be assured pension for employees who complete 25 years of services. "Pension will be available at the rate of 50% of the average basic pay or basic pay earned in the 12 months preceding retirement. Pension will be paid proportionately for the period of service starting from a minimum period of 10 years to 25 years," it said. Similarly, family pension will be paid at the rate of 60% of the pension that the employee was drawing before death.

In UPS, there will be guaranteed family pension in case of death of a government employee after retirement, unlike in NPS.

₹500-crore fund gives autonomy for National Mission on Manuscripts

Allocation over next six years to be done through special committee; it is not yet clear if the new 'Gyan Bharatam Mission' announced in the Budget will be a part of the NMM or a separate entity

Sreeparna Chakrabarty

NEW DELHI

Steps have been initiated to make the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) autonomous, with the Centre allocating nearly ₹500 crore over the next six years separately to the institution through a Special Finance Committee.

The NMM was established in February 2003 by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. A unique project in its programme and mandate, the Mission seeks to unearth and preserve the vast manuscript wealth of India.

From this year, the NMM has been again put under a Central sector scheme. For Central sector schemes, all initiatives are wholly sponsored and implemented by the Central agencies. The NMM was till now functioning as a part



Conservation efforts: The NMM has digitised 3.5 lakh manuscripts that contain 3.5 crore pages. FILE PHOTO

of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). But for January to March, the funds for the institution were routed through the Sahitya Akademi.

Budget proposal
The Special Finance Committee has allocated an amount of ₹491.66 crore to

the body till 2031.

However, sources said it was not yet clear whether the new 'Gyan Bharatam Mission' for manuscripts, announced in the Union Budget last week, would be a part of the NMM or be a separate entity.

According to the Budget document, the Gyan Bharatam Mission intends to

cover more than one crore manuscripts.

It would undertake the "survey, documentation and conservation" of India's manuscript heritage lying with academic institutions, museums, libraries, and private collectors, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her budget speech on February 1.

The Hindu had reported last October that the Union Culture Ministry was set to "revive and relaunch" the NMM, and was mulling the formation of an autonomous body to help preserve ancient texts.

According to the Ministry, the NMM has documented around 5.2 million manuscripts across the country.

It has conserved 90 million folios of manuscripts and digitised 3.5 lakh manuscripts that contain 3.5 crore pages.

Activists seek more support for disabled NEET applicants

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Disability rights activists have written to the National Medical Commission (NMC), the regulatory body that governs medical education and practice in India, asking for steps to facilitate measures that will support students with disabilities prior to the release of the NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test) 2025-26 brochure.

The Doctors With Disabilities: Agents of Change group said committees, accommodation, and other important measures need to be put in place. Among their demands are enabling the appropriately trained members of the Disability Assessment Boards to apply the functional competency test.

The NMC should issue fresh guidelines for admitting persons with disabilities (PWD) into medical courses and include experts with disability or persons who have worked on disability justice in the committee formulating the guidelines.

Applicants must be in-

NEET applicants must be informed about the compliance of accessibility norms for accommodation available at colleges

formed about the compliance of accessibility norms for reasonable accommodation available at colleges.

Equal opportunity
Students must be informed about the 'Enabling Units' and 'Equal Opportunity Cells' through the booklet circulated for new MBBS students, the college website, and via the Equal Opportunity Policy under Section 21 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act.

"Despite court judgments directing the NMC to comply with its directions before the publication of the NEET admission brochure for the academic year 2025-26, no instructions have been issued from the NMC to medical institutions," disability rights activist Satendra Singh said.

Owner of firecracker factory in Bengal held

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

A day after four people were killed in an explosion at an illegal firecracker factory in Kalyani Rathatala in West Bengal's Nadia district, the police arrested its owner on Saturday.

"Police have arrested the owner Khokan Biswas. The investigation is ongoing and will take time," a senior district police official said on Saturday. Mr. Biswas has been remanded in police custody till February 15.

Ruma Sonar, Bharati Choudhury, Anjali Biswas and Durga Saha were killed in the blast. A woman who sustained injuries was admitted to the nearby College of Medicine and J.N.M. Hospital.

The police said they had to investigate if the premises had a licence to manufacture, or deal in, firecrackers.

Hours after the explosion, Nilimesh Roy Chowdhury, chairperson of the Kalyani Municipality and Trinamool Congress councillor of Kalyani's ward number 11, had said that the site of the explosion had a trading licence.

However, Subrata Guha, Divisional Fire Officer at Nadia district, said the building did not have any licence from the fire department for storing or manufacturing firecrackers.

"Their entire operation was illegal, and no valid licence was given to them by us. The cause of the explosion is not certain yet, but we did not see any electrical connection. So it is possible the raw materials caught fire from overheating," he said.

The local BJP MLA, Ambika Roy, said the police knew about illegal firecracker factories in the area but did not take action against them.

The explosion on Friday, which reduced the building to ashes and left bodies charred and scattered, is reminiscent of a series of similar explosions in illegal firecracker factories in the State in the last few years.

Hats off



Into the ranks: Students of the College of Nursing, Command Hospital, Central Command, celebrate after their commissioning ceremony in Lucknow on Saturday. SANDEEP SAXENA

CM, Deputy CMs have defrauded women in Maharashtra: Patole

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI



Congress leader calls scheme an electoral gimmick to lure women's votes during the election

Bahin Yojana an electoral gimmick to lure the women's votes during the Assembly elections. "We already warned about BJP's action, and now their so-called 'brothers' are treating these women like outsiders," Mr. Patole said, adding ₹1,500 was the monthly payment that was further to be increased to ₹2,100 post elections. Mr. Patole said the BJP is using criteria as an excuse to stop the instalments.

"This is deception; *Mahayuti* promised ₹1,500 to all women to secure votes, and now they are cutting off this financial assistance after coming to power," Mr. Patole said.

On Friday, Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare declared five lakh beneficiaries under the *Ladki Bahin Yojana* as ineligible, as they are either beneficiaries under other schemes or do not fit the eligibility criteria. Mr. Patole called *Ladki*

Mithuns get a glow-up for road safety

The semi-wild bovines of Arunachal Pradesh will soon wear fluorescent collars that are visible enough for vehicle drivers on highways, thus ensuring the safety of both humans and animals

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

The mithun, a semi-wild bovine creature, will soon start wearing fluorescent collars to be visible enough for drivers on a major highway in central Arunachal Pradesh's Siang district.

The mithun (*Bos frontalis*) is a free-ranging animal and stays mostly in the jungles. Seeking warmth, mithuns usually spend winter nights on the roads, leading to accidents fatal for humans and animals.

"Unlike cows, mithuns have a black or deep brown hide, making them less visible at night on poorly lit highways, especially in foggy stretches. The death of at least 30 mithuns in road accidents, some dragged for miles by vehicles, made us think of something that may save them," Niyang Pertin, Circle Officer of Pangin, told *The Hindu* on Saturday.



Pangin is about 20 km from Pasighat, the nearest major town, and headquarters of East Siang district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Pangin is about 20 km from Pasighat, the nearest major town, and headquarters of East Siang district. Inspired by the fluorescent jackets of construction workers, Ms. Pertin located a vendor in New Delhi who sells glow-collars. Along with Okep Dai, Executive Engineer, Public Works Department (Highways),

in the past decade, and the Prime Minister's response was a rhetorical exercise.

"Mr. Modi maintained silence on the humiliation of over 150 Indians being deported back to India from the U.S., and failed to throw light on the death toll in the Kumbh Mela stampede. Instead, he chose to speak on unrelated topics," the *Saamana* editorial said.

The editorial highlighted that the President's speech traditionally presents an assessment of the government and a draft of future policies that are discussed in Parliament. The Opposition spoke.

The editorial noted that the President's speech had become a mere formality

However, this has been "a complete sham of the government", and the speeches of the ruling party "are all nonsense", *Saamana* alleged.

"The Prime Minister did not disappoint this time either. He again criticised the Congress for taking the people of the country hostage, handcuffing them, and turning the country into a jail [referring to the Emergency]. The PM said Congress should not use the word 'Constitution' and [the PM's] supporters applauded. These supporters were former Congressmen who, for their vested interests or to avoid jail, are in the court of Modi," the editorial said.

UPSC extends last date to apply for civil services exam

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has extended the last date to apply for civil services preliminary examination 2025 till February 18.

The civil services examination is conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages – preliminary, mains and interview – to select officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS), among others.

The last date for registration for Civil Services (Preliminary) 2025 and Indian Forest Service (Preliminary) 2025 exams "has been extended till 18.02.2025 (6 pm)," said a note put out by the Commission on its website.

A correction window will also be open for applicants "till expiry of seven days from the next day after the closure of application window i.e. from 19.02.2025 to 25.02.2025", it said.

presented with the collars after they were convinced that their animals would be safer at night. "We thought we had too many collars. As it turned out, we could not give the collars to quite a few mithun owners," Ms. Pertin, who is also in charge of the Kebang Circle, said. "We wanted the mithuns to be as safe as the humans who use the roads. We hope our initiative will serve the purpose," Mr. Dai said.

The mithun collar idea has caught on, officials in Pangin said. There have been enquiries from mithun owners from other parts of the State, seeking guidance to procure the fluorescent collars.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the mithun holds immobile cultural significance, serving as a symbol of wealth and social status, is often used as a form of currency for barter trade, and is especially seen as a crucial part of the bride price in tribal marriages.

ELECTIONS 2025

Capital gains for BJP

In 2025, the AAP faced significant declines among seats with poorest voters and those with considerable Muslim presence – the party's key support bases in the 2020 and 2015 polls

SEATS WON AND VOTES SECURED

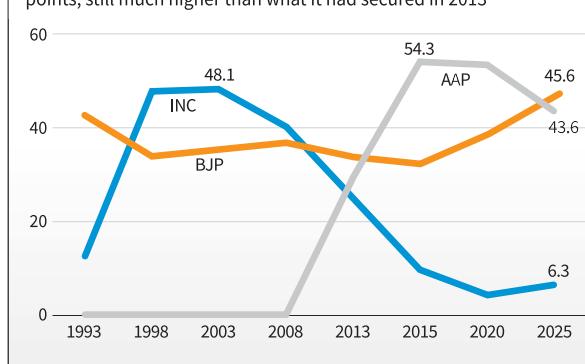
TABLE 1	
SEATS WON	
Party	2025 ↑↓
NDA*	48 +40
AAP	22 -40
INC	0 0
Others	0 0

TABLE 2	
VOTE SHARE	
Party	2025 ↑↓
NDA	47.2 +7.8
AAP	43.6 -10
INC	6.3 +2
Others	2.9 +0.2

*Apart from BJP, it includes JD(U) and LJP(RV), who did not win any seat

CHART 1: HIGHS AND LOWS

Chart shows vote share secured by major parties in Delhi Assembly elections across years. On its own, the BJP secured a vote share of 45.6% in 2025, its highest since 1993. AAP's vote share declined by 10 points, still much higher than what it had secured in 2013



Sambavi Parthasarathy

Nitika Francis

Samreen Wani

Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Srinivasan Ramani

T

he ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s significant decline in vote shares across all regions in Delhi, resulted in its loss of 40 seats compared to its tally in 2020.

This paved the way for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies to secure a decisive victory – it won 48 out of the 70 seats (Table 1).

The vote share of the NDA – which included the BJP, Janata Dal (United), and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) – increased by 7.8 percentage points in the 2025 elections compared with 2020, while the AAP's vote share saw a steep decline of over 10 points (Table 2).

On its own, the BJP secured a vote share of 45.6% in 2025, its highest since 1993, the year when the first Assembly election was held for Delhi as a National Capital Territory after the Legislative Assembly was revived (Chart 1).

The Congress once again failed to win any seats, despite a marginal increase of around 2 percentage points in its vote share.

Among poor and minorities

A closer analysis reveals three distinct patterns. First, the AAP continued to secure the majority of votes in constituencies with a significant Muslim population (Table 3) and in areas with a relatively higher concentration of the city's "poorest" residents – who

comprised its support bases in 2020 and 2015. However, the party's vote share declined by 12.3 points and 8.2 points in these types of seats, respectively.

Second, the BJP, already strong in areas with a relatively higher concentration of the city's "richer" residents, further consolidated its hold in these segments (Table 4). Similarly, in constituencies with a relatively low minority presence – where the BJP already had an advantage – the national party and its allies made further gains.

The combination of these two factors were key in deciding the outcome of the 2025 election.

The AAP's decline in areas with a high Muslim population did not result in major gains for the BJP. Instead, it can be attributed to two key factors: the strong performance of the AIMIM in two seats and the improved performance of the Congress in these constituencies. AIMIM's candidates secured second and third positions in Okhla and Mustafabad, respectively.

Among poor and minorities

The political contours of Delhi have changed significantly as seen in the two maps. The 2020 map shows a mix of orange (BJP) and grey (AAP) constituencies. The 2025 map shows a dominant orange color, indicating a clear shift in power. The Note section explains the class-wise categorisation based on property price values.

Region-wise

The AAP failed to secure a 50% vote share in any region of Delhi this time, a sharp contrast to its performance in the previous elections, where it had surpassed the 50% mark across all regions.

The BJP crossed the mark only in West Delhi in this election (Table 5).

The AAP performed better in seats reserved for SCs, though its vote share in those constituencies declined by 11 points (Table 6).

TABLE 3: SEATS WITH SIGNIFICANT MUSLIM POPULATION

Vote share secured by parties in 2025 (%) and change (↑↓) from 2020 (% points) across seats with varying levels of Muslim population: over 25% voters, between 10% and 25%, and less than 10%

Share of Muslims	NDA		AAP		INC		Others	
	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓
>25% of voters	32.9	1.3	49.5	-12.3	8.7	3.5	8.9	7.5
10%-25% voters	44.7	8.1	45	-7.5	8	1.8	2.3	-2.4
<10% of voters	49.7	8.5	42.4	-10.3	5.6	1.9	2.3	-0.1

Seats with high Muslim population were identified based on estimations by Raphael Susewind using electoral rolls

TABLE 4: CLASS-WISE SPLIT

Vote share secured by parties in 2025 (%) and change (↑↓) from 2020 (% points) across class-wise split* of constituencies. Not all constituencies were included in the analysis (see note for more explanation)

Class	NDA		AAP		INC		Others	
	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓
Poorest	42.2	3.5	48.3	-8.2	5.7	2.6	3.8	2.1
Poor	49.3	10.1	42.6	-11.1	5.2	2.3	2.9	-1.3
Middle	47.3	7.3	45.3	-6.6	6.1	-0.8	1.3	0.1
Rich	52.6	9.3	37.2	-12	8.7	2.7	1.5	0

TABLE 5: REGION-WISE SPLIT

Vote share secured by parties in 2025 (%) and change (↑↓) from 2020 (% points) across regions

Region	NDA		AAP		INC		Others	
	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓
Chandni Chowk	45.8	8.1	45.1	-10.8	7.6	2.8	1.5	-0.1
East Delhi	47.6	5.2	42	-8.4	5.7	0.1	4.7	3.1
New Delhi	47.8	10.8	43	-12.5	7.8	2.2	1.4	-0.5
North East Delhi	44.7	7.6	45	-8.6	5.8	2.2	4.5	-1.2
North West Delhi	48.5	8	40.8	-11.2	8.4	3.2	2.3	0
South Delhi	43.7	3.6	47.8	-6.6	5.4	3	3.1	0
West Delhi	51.3	11.1	42	-12.4	4.6	1.4	2.1	-0.1

TABLE 6: SEAT-TYPE WISE SPLIT

Vote share secured by parties in 2025 (%) and change (↑↓) from 2020 (% points) across seats reserved for SCs and non-reserved

Type	NDA		AAP		INC		Others	
	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓	2025	↑↓
General	47.8	7.2	42.9	-9.8	6.3	2	3	0.6
Reserved for SC	43.9	10.1	46.7	-11	6.7	2.7	2.7	-1.8

Satvika Mahajan

NEW DELHI

Celebrating the Bharatiya Janata Party's thumping victory in the Delhi Assembly election on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the party's senior leaders and workers at the party's national headquarters here.

Taking a jibe at the Aam Aadmi Party, which conceded defeat earlier in the day, he said, "The AAP came with promise to usher in politics of change but turned out to be the most dishonest party."

Congratulating the BJP, the Prime Minister, who had addressed four election rallies in the national capital, said, "For the first time since Independence, the BJP will now have governments in Delhi and all adjoining States."

Thanking voters for the mandate, he said, "People of Delhi today have enthusiasm and satisfaction. There is relief of liberating Delhi from 'AAPda'. I thank all Delhites for entrusting their faith in Modi's guarantee."

He said that with the BJP in power, "Delhi will be transformed into a modern city." "Our focus will be on mobility, infrastructure and providing new opportunities to the youth," he said. He reaffirmed his commitment to restoring the Yamuna.

ELECTIONS 2025

IN BRIEF



Delhi is the trailer, Bihar yet to come, says Jitan Ram Manjhi

Criticising Congress leader Rahul Gandhi after his party's loss in the Delhi Assembly election, Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi said Mr. Gandhi will now "blame EVMs" for the defeat. The Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) founder also advised Mr. Gandhi to "develop maturity" instead of playing the blame game. "The Opposition will now cry about EVMs and voter lists," he said. "Delhi is just the trailer, Bihar is yet to come. This victory is a testament to the trust of the people of Delhi in the development policies of the National Democratic Alliance [NDA] under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Mr. Manjhi later posted on X.

Liquor policy, focus on money 'drowned' AAP: Anna Hazare

As the BJP on Saturday headed to capture the Delhi seat of power after more than 26 years, activist Anna Hazare, once a mentor to Arvind Kejriwal, said AAP "drowned" due to the liquor policy and its focus on money. In a jibe at Mr. Kejriwal, the anti-graft activist added that a candidate's character should be clean and he should know the virtues of sacrifice. "With the liquor policy issue came the money and they drowned in it. The (AAP's) image was tarnished. People saw him (Arvind Kejriwal) talking about clean character and then about liquor," Hazare said. He said AAP lost as it failed to understand the need to serve people selflessly and took the wrong path. PTI

Four Muslim candidates make it to Delhi Assembly

The Delhi Assembly election saw a division of Muslim votes, but despite that, the AAP managed to win in six of the seven constituencies which have a substantial population of the community. Four Muslim candidates made it to the Assembly. They are Imran Hussain from Ballimaran, Aaley Mohammed Iqbal from Matia Mahal, Amanullah Khan from Okhla, and Chaudhary Zubair Ahmad from Seelampur. All contested on AAP ticket. In 2020, the AAP won all seven seats with a substantial Muslim population. This time it won six barring Mustafabad which saw a three-way split of the Muslim vote between the AAP, All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen, and Congress. PTI

Left candidates poll fewer votes than NOTA in Delhi

The Left parties, which came together to contest six seats in the Delhi Assembly election, polled fewer votes than NOTA in all the constituencies, failing to make any dent. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) had fielded candidates from Karawal Nagar and Badarpur, the Communist Party of India was in the fray from Vikaspuri and Palam, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation contested the Narela and Kondli seats. In the six seats, the Left parties together polled 2,158 votes, while NOTA got 5,627 votes. PTI

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku								
2	7	5	9	3	6	8	4	1
1	4	8	7	2	5	6	9	3
9	6	3	4	8	1	5	7	2
4	5	2	8	6	7	1	3	9
3	1	6	5	4	9	2	8	7
7	8	9	2	1	3	4	6	5
8	9	1	6	7	2	3	5	4
5	3	4	1	9	8	7	2	6
6	2	7	3	5	4	9	1	8

CM YK

Delhi verdict a referendum on Arvind Kejriwal's politics of deception: Cong.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge says his party had created an atmosphere against the ruling party in Delhi in 'public interest', but it did not receive the expected mandate from the people; many argue that Congress can make a fresh start by trying for a bipolar fight for Delhi in the future

Sandeep Phukan

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday failed to win a single seat in the Delhi Assembly as the party drew a blank for the third consecutive Assembly election in the national capital. The party's leadership, however, asserted that the Delhi verdict was not a vindication of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies but a referendum on former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

Arguing that the verdict was more about ousting the AAP rather than ushering in the BJP, the Congress's communications chief, Jairam Ramesh, in a social media post, said the AAP had won decisively in 2015 and 2020, at the height of Mr. Modi's popularity.

"This shows that rather than being vindication of the policies of the Prime Minister, this vote is a rejection of Arvind Kejriwal's politics of deceit, deception, and vastly exaggerated claims of achievement,"



Lost ground: A deserted view of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee office during the counting of votes for the Delhi Assembly election on Saturday. ANI

Mr. Ramesh said on X.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, in a post on X, said his party had created an atmosphere against the ruling party in Delhi in "public interest", but it did not receive the expected mandate from the people.

Accepting the defeat
Former Congress chief and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul

Gandhi took to X to thank his party workers for the campaign and "humbly accept" defeat.

"The fight for the progress of Delhi and rights of Delhites against pollution, inflation and corruption will continue," Mr. Gandhi said on X.

Senior leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who campaigned for her party in Delhi, said that the mood on the ground was for

change, and conceded that the Congress needed to work harder to be in the reckoning.

Though the party did not win any seats, Mr. Ramesh said the one consolation was that its vote share improved. The party secured 6.39% of the valid votes against 4.3% in the 2020 Assembly election.

While the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) allies

are likely to blame the Congress for playing "spoilsport" for the AAP and going against Opposition unity, the party rejected it.

"The meltdown of a section of so-called liberals is completely bizarre. They didn't give these lectures on Opposition unity to AAP when the party went to Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, etc., to fight elections and weaken anti-communal, secular vote," senior Congress leader Pawan Khera said on X.

Many argue that the Congress, which once ruled Delhi for three consecutive terms, can make a fresh start by trying for a bipolar fight for Delhi in the future.

"In States such as Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana, where the fight is mainly between us and the BJP, we do make a comeback. But in States where we have lost power to a regional party, we have either been reduced to a fringe player or become a junior partner of the regional player," a Congress leader who did not wish to be named said.

In fact, a section of the party argues that before the upcoming Bihar Assembly election, if the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) did not offer a respectable alliance, the Congress should fight on its own.

'AAP's end'
The break in the Congress-AAP bonhomie has also made it easier for the Punjab Congress to take on the Bhagwant Mann-led AAP government in the State. "Delhi's results point towards the beginning of the AAP's end," senior leader Partap Singh Bajwa, also the Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, said.

"The people of Punjab have also seen the real face of the so-called Kattar Imaander party. Kejriwal and Punjab CM @BhagwantMann made lofty promises in Punjab and garnered their votes in 2022. Mann govt. remained inefficient in taking action against its corrupt ministers and leaders. The Mann govt. will meet the same fate in 2027," Mr. Bajwa said on X.

After Delhi poll debacle, challenges increase for INDIA bloc, Congress

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI



The CPI(M) and the Trinamool worked as emissaries to iron out the difficult relationship between AAP and Congress. FILE PHOTO

stark reminder of the consequences of disunity among secular democratic forces."

Many of the constituents chose to remain silent, such as the Trinamool Congress which has been a strident critic of the Congress and the only party in the bloc not to have an electoral alliance with the grand old party.

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who had earlier called for the disbanding of the bloc, was the first one to react on Saturday morning. In a post on X, even as the early trends were coming in, he blamed the fight between the allies for the outcome.

In a direct attack on the Congress, senior Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Ramgopal Yadav said the Congress campaigned for the BJP's victory in Delhi.

Communist Party of India general secretary D. Raja said the results were a wake-up call for the constituents of the INDIA bloc, particularly the Congress, the largest party in the coalition, and other dominant regional parties.

The poll outcome, he added, "serves as a

the overwhelming majority of the BJP. Every political party is entitled to expand its footprint," he said.

The AAP and the Congress have been uneasy allies. Its entry into the Opposition bloc was resisted by the Congress, which refused to invite it for long for the Opposition's coordination meetings in Parliament.

Alternating between public rebukes and backroom negotiations, the late Saram Veeray, CPI(M) general secretary, and the Trinamool worked as emissaries to iron out this difficult relationship. The AAP was invited to the first meeting of the INDIA bloc in Patna in July 2023. The meeting gave a platform to the party to reach out to

the Congress. Arvind Kejriwal, the then Delhi Chief Minister, had pleaded with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to meet him. Mr. Kejriwal revealed in public what he had spoken behind closed doors. Despite this, the meeting never happened till very late.

To the utter unease of the Delhi unit, the two parties teamed up for the Lok Sabha elections, an arrangement that did not extend to Punjab. They tried to reach an electoral understanding in the Haryana Assembly polls. In Delhi, to the relief of the Congress's Delhi unit, the AAP announced that it would contest the election alone.

The INDIA bloc has not met since the Lok Sabha results. The fragmentation in the bloc that came to the fore after the consecutive defeats in the Maharashtra and Haryana Assembly elections is expected to exacerbate further. In the run-up to the Delhi election, the bloc saw several allies aligning with the AAP against the Congress. In an alternative opinion, many feel that the AAP's defeat will discourage the attempts to form a third pole without the Congress.



Big win: U.P. Deputy CMs Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brijesh Pathak with Bhupendra Chaudhary celebrating victory in the Milkpur and Delhi Assembly polls in Lucknow on Saturday. SANDEEP SAXENA

BJP scores victory in Milkpur; SP calls it 'electoral fraud'

Mayank Kumar

LUCKNOW

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the high-stakes Milkpur Assembly by-election in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, with Chandrabhanu Paswan defeating Samajwadi Party (SP) candidate Ajit Prasad by an impressive margin of 61,710 votes.

While the BJP celebrated the win as a victory for its "double-engine" government, the SP called it a "false victory", repeating the allegations of large-scale electoral fraud that it had raised on polling day.

The Milkpur constituency, reserved for Scheduled Caste (SC) candidates, is in Ayodhya district. It witnessed a no-holds-barred campaign, with the BJP aggressively pushing its Hindutva plank while the SP countered it with its PDA narrative, which stands for Pichda, Dalit, and Alpasankhyak, or the backward class, Dalit, and minority communities.

In Rithala, the BJP's Kulwant Rana defeated the AAP's Mohinder Goyal. In Mangolpuri, Raj Kumar Chauhan, a four-time Congress MLA who contested on BJP ticket this year, defeated the AAP's Dharam Rakshak alias Rakesh Jatav. The saffron party also swept the Badli seat, with Ajit Deepak Chaudhary defeating the AAP's Ajesh Yadav.

The AAP managed to win Burari and Babarpur, two Purvanchali-dominated constituencies.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath attributed the victory to voters' faith in the "double-engine" BJP government at the Centre and State.

Hearliest congratulations to all the dedicated and hard-working party workers for the historic victory of Bharatiya Janata Party in the Milkpur Legislative Assembly bypoll. This victory is a symbol of the unwavering faith of the common people in the public welfare policies of the double engine BJP government led by the Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi and dedicated Uttar Pradesh government for service, security and good governance," Mr. Adityanath said in a post on X.

'Large-scale rigging'
SP president Akhilesh Yadav, however, alleged that large-scale rigging in Milkpur was responsible for the SP's loss. "The BJP cannot face the growing power of PDA on the basis of votes, that is why it tries to win by misusing the electoral machinery. The level of manipulation required to carry out such electoral fraud may be possible in one Assembly constituency, but this game will not work in 403 seats [in the next Assembly election in 2027]. BJP members know this, which is why they postponed the byelection of Milkpur. PDA means 90% of the people have seen this fraud with their own eyes," he said.

BJP hits the right chord, wins big with Purvanchali voters in Delhi

Ishita Mishra

NEW DELHI

have significant Purvanchali populations. In fact, in 27 of these seats, the majority of voters are from Purvanchali.

In the Assembly election, the BJP fielded four Purvanchali candidates and all four won their races.

In Sangam Vihar, where over half of the electorate is Purvanchali, the BJP's Chandan Choudhary defeated three-time AAP MLA Dinesh Mohaniya. The BJP also won the Vikaspuri Assembly seat with Pankaj Kumar Singh defeating the AAP's Joginder Solanki, while in Lakshmi Nagar, the BJP's Abhay Verma won against the AAP's B.B. Tyagi. In Matiala, the BJP's

Parduymn Rajput managed to make a comeback as an MLA for the first time since 2013, defeating the AAP's Vinay Mishra. In Karawal Nagar, Kapil Mishra

won for the second time after 2015, but on BJP ticket. He was earlier an AAP MLA.

Other BJP candidates also found success in Purvanchali-dominated constituencies. In Palam, the BJP's Kuldeep Solanki secured victory against the AAP's Jagdish Solanki, while in Lakshmi Nagar, the BJP's Abhay Verma won against the AAP's B.B. Tyagi. In Matiala, the BJP's

Sandeep Sehrawat managed to defeat the AAP's Sumesh Shokeen. In Rithala, the BJP's Kulwant Rana defeated the AAP's Mohinder Goyal. In Mangolpuri, Raj Kumar Chauhan, a four-time Congress MLA who contested on BJP ticket this year, defeated the AAP's Dharam Rakshak alias Rakesh Jatav. The saffron party also swept the Badli seat, with Ajit Deepak Chaudhary defeating the AAP's Ajesh Yadav.

The AAP managed to

win Burari and Babarpur, two Purvanchali-dominated constituencies.

SCIENCE

Later-onset menopause linked to lower heart disease risk

The Hindu Bureau

Women who go through menopause later in life have healthier blood vessels for years to come than those who go through it earlier, a study by the University of Colorado Boulder researchers found. The study published in the journal *Circulation Research*, offers new insight into why females who stop

menstruating at age 55 or later are significantly less likely to have heart attacks and strokes in their post-menopausal years.

Previous studies show that women who hit menopause – defined as going one year without a period – at age 55 or later are as much as 20% less likely to develop heart disease than those who cease menstruation at the usual 45 to 54

years old. University of Colorado researchers set out to determine the reason by assessing the vascular health of 92 women, looking specifically at a measure called brachial artery flow-mediated dilation (FMD), or how well their brachial artery – the main blood vessel in the upper arm – dilates with increased blood flow.

They found all the post-

menopausal women had significantly worse arterial function than their premenopausal counterparts. The reason: as people age, they produce less nitric oxide, a compound that helps blood vessels dilate and keeps them from getting stiff and developing plaque. Mitochondria in cells lining the blood vessels also become dysfunctional with age and gener-

ate more damaging molecules called free radicals. When menopause hits, the age-related decline in vascular health accelerates. But the 10% or so of women who experience late-onset menopause appear to be somewhat protected from this effect, senior author Dr. Matthew Rossman said in a release.

For instance, the study found that vascular func-

tion was only 24% worse in the late-onset menopause group compared to the premenopausal group, while those in the normal-onset group had 51% worse vascular health. Such differences persisted five years or more after the women went through menopause, with the late-onset group still having 44% better vascular function than the normal onset group.

SNAPSHOTS



Drying, rewetting cycles increased soil CO₂ release

The amount of carbon dioxide released by microbial decomposition of soil organic carbon is nearly five times greater than the amount of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions. The amount of carbon dioxide released from soil increases due to repeated drying and rewetting cycles expected to be caused by changes in precipitation patterns due to global warming. The carbon dioxide released under drying and rewetting cycles were 1.3- to 3.7-fold greater than under continuous constant moisture conditions.

Heart failure patients in India die 10 years earlier: study

Compared with high-income countries, rheumatic heart disease and congenital heart disease cause higher mortality rates in heart failure patients than ischemic heart disease

R. Prasad

Data from India's first nationally representative heart failure registry with prospective follow-up data has found that heart failure patients in India are almost 10 years younger than their counterparts living in high-income countries. One in four heart failure patients in India die within one year of follow-up, with a wide variation in the one-year mortality rate based on the disease that causes heart failure. Heart failure is said to occur when the heart muscle fails to pump enough blood to meet the demands of the body.

A study which looked at the one-year mortality rate of patients with heart failure enrolled consecutive patients admitted with the diagnosis of acute decom-pensated heart failure from January–December 2019. In total, 10,850 participants were enrolled in the National Heart Failure Registry (NHFR), which is a multicentric, hospital-based registry of heart failure patients from 53 centers across 24 States and two Union Territories in India. The registry has nine nodal centers with five participating centres under each of them. The Thiruvananthapuram-based Sri Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST) is the national coordinating centre for the national registry. "The baseline demographic and clinical characteristics, etiology, and one-year survival of heart failure patients may help to influence policies to reduce heart failure-re-

25% of heart failure patients die in a year

There is a wide variation in the mortality rate at one year based on the disease that causes heart failure

■ Heart failure is said to occur when the heart muscle fails to pump enough blood to meet the demands of the body	■ Mortality factors: The study looked at the mortality rate of patients with heart failure at one year
■ 10,845 participants with heart failure enrolled from 53 centers across 24 States and two Union Territories in India had disease etiology identified	
■ Mean age of heart failure patients ranged widely – 29.2 to 61.9 years for peripartum cardiomyopathy and ischemic heart disease, respectively	
■ Ischemic heart disease was the predominant cause of heart failure (7,800 patients, 71.9%) followed by dilated cardiomyopathy (1,877 patients, 17.3%) and rheumatic heart disease (586 patients, 5.4%)	
■ Mortality rate at one year was 21.1% for patients with ischemic heart disease compared with 23.7% for dilated cardiomyopathy	■ Mortality rates were substantially higher in patients with rheumatic heart disease and congenital heart disease compared with ischemic heart disease
■ Lack of awareness about acute rheumatic fever, poor compliance with penicillin prophylaxis, and late presentation contribute to high prevalence of rheumatic heart disease	■ Lack of awareness about acute rheumatic fever, poor compliance with penicillin prophylaxis, and late presentation contribute to the high prevalence of rheumatic heart disease in LMICs.

lated burden and mortality in India," the NHFR registry website says.

The study, which was published in January 2025, looked at one-year mortality among 10,845 patients with heart failure. At 7,800, ischemic heart disease was the predominant cause of heart failure (71.9%). Dilated cardiomyopathy was the second major cause of heart failure among 1,877 patients (17.3%), and rheumatic heart disease in 586 patients (5.4%) was the third leading cause of heart failure. Despite the predominance of ischemic heart disease, at 21.1%, the mortality rate at one year was relatively less dilated cardiomyopathy (23.7%). The other causes of heart failure were non-rheumatic valvular heart disease (1.9%), hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (0.9%), congenital heart disease

(0.7%), peripartum cardiomyopathy (0.5%), restrictive cardiomyopathy (0.4%), and infective endocarditis (0.1%). "Mortality rate of over 20% in one year is considered very high. Such high mortality rates are not seen in most common cancers such as breast cancer," says Dr. Jeemon Panniyamakal, Additional Professor of Epidemiology at SCTIMST and the corresponding author of the paper. "Good and timely acute disease management of ischemic heart disease is one reason for longer survival of such patients. Not following medications and poor lifestyle are reasons for higher mortality in these patients."

A 2022 study found that the 90-day mortality was 14.2%, with ischaemic heart disease being the primary disease cause (72%) followed by dilated

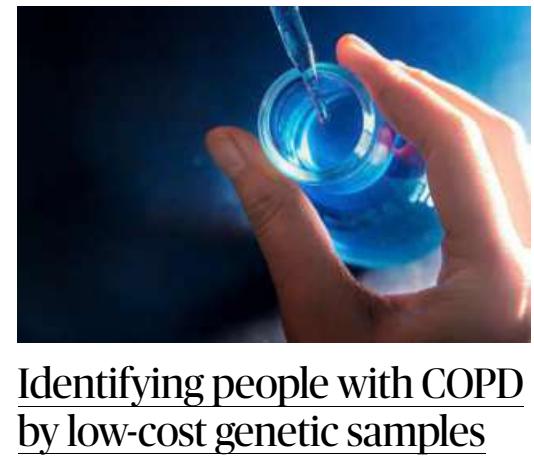
cardiomyopathy (18%). Though ischemic heart disease patients accounted for most deaths even at one year – 1,649 – among heart failure patients in the January 2025 study, the mortality rate was only 21.1%. In comparison, there were 444 deaths in one year among dilated cardiomyopathy, but the mortality rate was higher at 23.7%. In the case of rheumatic heart disease, though there were only 161 deaths in one year, the mortality rate was far higher at 27.5%. The mortality rate was high in infective endocarditis (50.0%), congenital heart disease (34.6%), and restrictive cardiomyopathy (36.8%) compared with other causes of heart failure.

In contrast to the reports from heart failure registries in high-income regions, the National Heart Failure Registry of India

"The high mortality associated with rheumatic heart disease and congenital heart disease in the NHFR cohort has important implications, especially in the low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) context," they write. "Lack of awareness about acute rheumatic fever, poor compliance with penicillin prophylaxis, and late presentation contribute to the high prevalence of rheumatic heart disease in LMICs."

"Patients with rheumatic heart disease require timely surgical corrections. Since the valves get affected by the disease, not replacing the valves on time will lead to heart failure and worsening of the disease," says Dr. Panniyamakal.

According to the authors, in the case of people with congenital heart disease, not treating the disease early is a risk factor for the development of irreversible pulmonary hypertension, and subsequent ventricular dysfunction leading to heart failure. "Appropriate management of congenital heart disease early in life prevents pulmonary hypertension development and progression to heart failure," they write.



Identifying people with COPD by low-cost genetic samples

A study showed that low-cost genetic samples obtained from a cheek swab or blood test can improve identification of people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in the community. Researchers developed a polygenic risk score for COPD based on genome-wide association studies of lung function that was associated with COPD in multiple cohorts. They found that adding the polygenic risk score to a case-finding questionnaire improved the identification of undiagnosed COPD cases.



Researchers use nose bacteria to sneak drugs into mice brain

Bacteria that colonise the nose have been engineered to ferry drugs to the brains of mice. Researchers examined bacteria in the nasal microbiome and identified the species *Lactobacillus plantarum* as both safe to use in treatment and able to bind to a molecule found on a nose membrane connected to the brain. They then engineered *L. plantarum* to produce and secrete three-appetite suppressing hormones.

How do bacteria resist antibiotics?



growth, without harming human cells.

Unique cell walls

A distinguishing feature of bacterial cells is the presence of a cell wall that forms a sheath over the cell membrane. Our cells do not have cell walls. Bacterial cell walls are primarily made of a unique substance called peptidoglycan, which is a mesh-like structure mostly made of two components.

Glycans are long chains of alternating sugar molecules called NAG (N-acetylglucosamine) and NAM (N-acetylmuramic acid). The NAM-NAG unit, linked into long chains, is unique to bacteria. This uniqueness makes it an important target for antibiotic development. Our immune system too looks for this signature to attack invading bacteria.

The 'peptido' portion of peptidoglycans are peptides (short amino acid



Alarming: In 2021, about 1.2 million deaths worldwide were due to antimicrobial resistance. GETTY IMAGES

chains) that link NAM sugars on adjacent glycan strands. The crosslinks form a strong, interconnected mesh. The first antibiotic to be discovered, penicillin, works by interfering with this crosslinking step. The result is a weakened cell wall that can no longer securely hold the cytoplasm, and the bacterial cell bursts open and dies.

How did bacteria evolve

as a simplified analogy. Picture a square cell that is six inches on each side, with walls made of LEGO tiles. To make this cell divide, you would add tiles to two opposite sides until it becomes a rectangle that is twelve inches by six inches. Then you would extend the walls along the middle, creating two six-inch square daughter cells.

Real bacterial cells must synthesise their own wall material. And just as some links in a LEGO wall must be uncoupled to enable the addition of fresh tiles, bacteria selectively break and reform bonds within the existing wall to allow for growth and division. Before new cell wall components can be added, molecular scissors are used: enzymes called endopeptidases uncouple the peptide crosslinks, and lytic transglycosylases (LTs) cleave the backbone sugar chains. Both of these have

to work in harmony, and the bacterial machinery that regulates this process is very complex – new components continue to be discovered.

The group of Dr. Manjula Reddy at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, works on mechanisms that enable bacteria to precisely control cell division. In a study published last year in *PLOS Genetics*, they have shown that bacteria are clever and can make up for the loss of the crosslink-cutting LT scissors. New findings in this field facilitate a better understanding of how bacteria survive against all odds. Such insights will pave the way for new strategies to fight bacterial infections.

(The article was written in collaboration with Sushil Chandani, who works in molecular modelling)



Question Corner

Blood-powered toes

How are salamanders able to take off and stick their landing with ease?

Wandering salamanders are known for gliding high through the canopies of coastal redwood forests, but how the small amphibians stick their landing and take off with ease remains something of a mystery. As per a new study, the answer may have much to do with the blood-powered toes of wandering salamanders. Researchers discovered that wandering salamanders can rapidly fill, trap, and drain the blood in their toe tips to optimise attachment, detachment, and general locomotion through their arboreal environment. The researchers uncovered that wandering salamanders can finely control and regulate blood flow to each side of their toe tips. This allows them to adjust pressure asymmetrically, improving grip on irregular surfaces like tree bark. Surprisingly, the blood rushing in before "toe off" appears to help salamanders detach rather than attach. By slightly inflating the toe tip, the salamanders reduce the surface area in contact with the surface they are on, minimising the energy required to let go.

Readers may send their questions/answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

Is private investment expected to rise?

Will the tax incentives and other measures announced in the Budget help spur consumer demand?

Prashanth Perumal

The story so far:

With the government providing a tax stimulus through income tax breaks to boost consumer spending and the RBI cutting interest rates for the first time in nearly five years, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said she was quite optimistic of the tide turning on private investments in the months to come. Addressing the media, she said, "anecdotal evidence suggests a pick-up in investment activity." Ms. Sitharaman said that she had heard from different sources that orders for Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) for the period April to June were already getting booked, and that "industry is clearly seeing the signs of a possible recovery of consumption."

Why was there a concern?

Private investment in India, which has been on a downward trajectory for more than a decade, showed further signs of weakening in the latest quarter. Private investment plans dropped by 1.4% in the December 2024-2025 quarter even though investments overall increased by 9.9% due to a significant rise in public investments by the Centre and State governments, which grew by 11.8% and 34.6%, respectively.

Private investment matters because it helps build physical, human, and other forms of capital that ultimately help increase the amount of goods and services produced in an economy. It should also be noted that private investment is generally considered to be more efficient than public investment, which is undertaken by the government. This is because private investors are subject to the discipline of profits and losses in the marketplace, which ensures that capital is allocated towards the most urgent needs of consumers. Public investments are not subject to the same degree of market discipline. But notably, public investment is viewed as a major reason behind the high growth numbers reported by India in recent years.

What determines private investment?

It is generally believed that money deposited as savings in banks by ordinary citizens is loaned out to fund large-scale investments. But in reality, private investment depends not on savings levels in the economy but on the pace at which loans are created by the banking system. This is because banks can create loans electronically through simple accounting entries that deposit money in borrowers' accounts even without savings to back these loans. So, there is a strong positive relationship between bank credit growth and the level of private investment, with healthy bank credit growth driving private sector investment higher. In fact, bank credit growth averaged about 22% between 2005 and 2014 when economic growth was high, before dropping precipitously to just around 9% between 2014 and 2021 when the economy began to slow down.

Why has private investment been sluggish? Many economists have blamed the lack of sufficient consumer demand for the lack of strong private investment in the country. They argue that unless the government does something to increase the amount of money that consumers have in their hands to spend, investors would be unwilling to take the risk of investing in business projects. Given this backdrop, making incomes up to ₹2 lakh tax-free is seen as an attempt to put more money in the hands of individuals to boost consumer spending and spur private investment. However, over the decades, there has been an inverse or negative relationship between private investment and consumer spending.

Private final consumption expenditure stood at a high of 90% of GDP way back in 1950-51, from where it dropped gradually over the decades to hit a low of 54.7% of GDP in 2010-11. At the same time, private investment as a percentage of GDP rose from around 10% in the decades between independence and economic liberalisation to around 27% in 2007-08. Interestingly, from around the time when private investment hit a peak in 2011-12, private consumer spending has actually risen, not fallen. In other words, over the last decade or so, consumer spending has actually risen at the same time that private investment has dropped from its peak. This suggests that the negative relationship between private investment and consumer spending could simply be due to the fact that the money in an economy that is not invested is spent on consumption, and vice-versa. Given this, policy uncertainty and unfriendly government policies are cited as the major reasons behind the slowdown in private investment. Many analysts have pointed to the drop in the pace of economic reforms as discouraging private investors from undertaking long-term capital-intensive investment projects.

What will be the impact of Trump's trade war?

Why has the U.S. announced steep tariffs on imports from China, Canada and Mexico? What are the potential risks to such measures? How will it affect world trade? How has China responded? In the case of Mexico and Canada, doesn't it violate the free trade pact they have with the U.S.?

Narayan Lakshman

The story so far:

U.S. President Donald Trump has sought to deliver, in the early days of his second term in office, on his most vociferous campaign promise – to slap a range of the U.S.'s trading partners with significant tariffs in a bid to tamp down on undocumented migrant and illicit drug inflows, while presumably incentivising companies to favour creating jobs on U.S. soil. His administration's initial action in the space, to use executive orders to impose a 25% tariff on Canadian and Mexican goods and a 10% tax on energy products from Canada and a wide range of goods from China, roiled stock markets across the world, especially in Asia.

What followed the announcement?

As Beijing vowed to file a lawsuit with the World Trade Organization against the U.S. for "wrongful practice" and Ottawa and Mexico City announced plans for retaliatory tariffs, Mr. Trump appeared to back down from his position. Following discussions with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and Canadian officials, Mr. Trump said the White House had agreed to "pause" the tariff action for a month in the wake of Mexico committing 10,000 National

Guard troops to man its northern border and a longer-term bilateral deal in the works. Similarly, a 30-day pause on tariff action would be applied to Canada given its Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's commitment to "work together" as his government sought to appoint a fentanyl czar, list Mexican cartels as terrorist groups and launch a Canada-U.S. Joint Strike Force to combat organised crime, fentanyl and money laundering."

While the tariffs on Chinese goods are in force, Mr. Trump temporarily exempted small-value packages imported from there after the U.S. postal service was plunged into chaos as it struggled to deal with new regulations.

What is the broader context for the tariffs?

Although in the traditional macroeconomic policy context, tariffs are imposed to rectify trade imbalances due to artificial price barriers, the justification given by the Trump White House for their tariff plan was that it would address the "national emergency" resulting from "the extraordinary threat posed by illegal aliens and drugs, including deadly fentanyl."

This expansive reasoning for imposing tariffs across the board potentially risks blowback from other nations' inevitable retaliatory tariffs. The resulting trade war could seriously dampen world trade at a precarious time for global economic growth prospects. The irony is that escalating tit-for-tat tariffs will likely exert strong upward pressure on the prices that U.S. consumers pay for imported products, and ignite a broader inflationary trend through higher input prices across industries.

The second cause for concern of the Trump administration's tariff plan is that it tacitly endorses the weaponisation of tariffs as a countermeasure against unrelated inter-country disputes – in this case the inflow of unsanctioned migration and illegal drugs – rather than rely on traditional law enforcement activity to ensure less porous borders.

How have Mexico and Canada responded?

According to the White House, Mexican drug trafficking organisations have an "intolerable alliance with the government of Mexico", and that the latter has "afforded safe havens for the cartels to engage in the manufacturing and transportation of dangerous narcotics, which collectively have led to the overdose deaths of hundreds of thousands of American victims."

The Trump administration has also said that there is a "growing presence of Mexican cartels operating fentanyl and nitazene synthesis labs in



New order: Workers transport boxes of avocados at a packing plant in the municipality of Uruapan, Michoacan state, Mexico, on February 5. AFP

Canada," with a recent study recognising Canada's "heightened domestic production of fentanyl, and its growing footprint within international narcotics distribution." These facts, according to Mr. Trump's administration, suggest that this is an alliance that endangers the national security of the U.S., requiring the eradication of the influence of these "dangerous cartels."

Perhaps emboldened by his success in forcing Colombia to accept deportees from the U.S. flown to Bogota via military aircraft, Mr. Trump has used tariffs to bring Mexico and Canada to the negotiating table, even if his proposal violates the terms of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada free trade pact. Mexico has now already deployed most, if not all, of the promised troops to surveil and protect the U.S. border from unauthorised crossings. Reports also suggest that Mexican authorities have seized 20 million doses of fentanyl since Ms. Sheinbaum's term began in October.

Mr. Trudeau initially responded with greater defiance, announcing retaliatory tariffs on \$106 billions' worth of imports from the U.S. However, despite reportedly being told that "Canada could avoid tariffs by becoming the 51st member of the U.S.", he revived a border security package said to be worth \$900 million, announced last year, and promised to appoint a "fentanyl czar".

Where does China stand?

Mr. Trump's 10% tariff levy on Chinese products is relatively modest compared to the 60% tariff rate that he had earlier threatened to hit Beijing with. Nevertheless, China was quick to announce a 15% counter-tariff to be levied upon imports of U.S. coal and liquefied natural gas, crude oil, agricultural machinery and certain cars – measures that are set to kick in on February 10.

In a more expansive counterattack, the Chinese government further opened an antitrust probe into Google, placed several top U.S. fashion and biotech companies on an "unreliable entities" list, and set limits on exports of critical minerals for high-tech products.

Nevertheless, analysts suggest that both sides have refrained from excessive or knee-jerk reactions, even though the 10% U.S. tariff on China adds to pre-existing levies imposed by Mr. Trump during his first term, and this leaves room for manoeuvre in negotiations that may follow when Mr. Trump meets Chinese President Xi Jinping in the near future.

However, with Mr. Trump promising stringent tariff action against the EU and other "reciprocal" tariffs against all trading partners of the U.S. in the days ahead in his mission to level the playing field, the risk of trade skirmishes derailing global growth prospects remains high.

Are freebies and welfare schemes different?

Can schemes such as the midday meal, the public distribution system, and child development services be considered as welfare? How do targeted cash transfer programmes impact lives? What are the fiscal risks of freebie-driven politics?

Aaratrika Bhaumik

The story so far:

All three major political parties in the Delhi Assembly elections, won by the Bharatiya Janata Party, unveiled a barrage of freebies or subsidies to woo voters. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) pledged a ₹2,100 monthly allowance for all women, an additional ₹21,000 for pregnant women, and subsidised LPG cylinders at ₹500 for those from impoverished backgrounds. The BJP followed suit, offering ₹2,500 per month to women from low-income families, and 'free electricity' through its solar energy initiative. The Congress too joined the fray.

Were these electoral sops or welfare politics?

The core challenge in this debate is the absence of a clear consensus on what constitutes a freebie. Some argue that freebies amount to bribery and discourage voters from making informed choices. Others, however, claim that such a narrative strips voters of their agency and delegitimises welfare politics. "What some perceive as a freebie may be regarded as welfare by others. For instance, while one segment of society may view free transport as an unwarranted concession, for another, it constitutes a vital welfare measure. Ironically, those who criticise free transport as a subsidy

'A growing reliance on freebies will inevitably deepen the revenue deficit'

often benefit from the availability of cheap labour. Affordable transport enables people to travel in search of work, making such labour possible," Dr. K.K. Kailash, Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad, told *The Hindu*.

The National Food Security Act, enacted by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2013, transformed key welfare schemes such as the mid-day meal, the Public Distribution System, and child development services into legal entitlements. According to data released by the Centre, the law's beneficiaries include 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population – roughly 800 million people in total.

A 2023 study by the Centre for Financial Inclusion (CFI) found that carefully designed cash transfer programmes, which channel funds directly to women on behalf of their households, not only empower women but also help mitigate the risks of intimate partner violence.

Where does one draw the line?

According to Dr. Kailash, welfare provisions – unlike freebies – enhance human capabilities and freedoms, aligning with the "capability approach" to development propounded by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. "For instance, access to nutritious, free food through mid-day meal schemes strengthens immunity, and enables individuals to lead dignified lives. In contrast, poor health not only causes personal suffering but also burdens public resources by increasing the demand for hospitals and medical treatment. Investing in nutrition from an early age yields significant long-term benefits for both individuals and society," he explained.

Cash transfer schemes have recently found electoral success in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Haryana, cementing their role as a staple of electioneering. However, Dr. Kailash cautioned that while such schemes stimulate market activity by boosting consumer spending, they ultimately fall short of creating genuine economic opportunities. Freebie-driven politics poses a serious fiscal threat, particularly to heavily indebted State governments. The RBI's latest report on State finances highlights how such measures have led to a sharp increase in subsidy expenditure. It further urges States to

rationalise these subsidies to ensure they do not displace critical investments.

Radhika Pandey, Associate Professor at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), cautioned that the growing reliance on freebies will inevitably deepen the revenue deficit for States. "Delhi reported a revenue surplus of ₹14,457 crore in 2022-23. In 2023-24, this figure was budgeted at a significantly lower ₹5,769 crore, with revised estimates reflecting a further 13.9% decline. For 2024-25, the projected surplus stands at just ₹3,231 crore – a sharp 35% drop from the previous year's revised estimates. With the rising fiscal burden of freebies, the revenue account is likely to slip into deficit unless States substantially scale up their revenue generation," she told *The Hindu*. She further pointed out that the wide array of freebies promised – including cash transfers for women, pensions for senior citizens, and subsidised electricity – would increase annual revenue expenditure by ₹10,000-₹12,000 crore. In the long run, this could result in higher taxes and reduced consumption among the middle class.

Does the judiciary have a role?

In August 2022, the Supreme Court referred a series of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of electoral freebies to a three-judge Bench. The lead petition, filed by BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay, contended that such populist measures undermine the constitutional guarantee of free and fair elections.

During the proceedings, a Bench led by former Chief Justice of India (CJI) N.V. Ramana even suggested forming an expert panel to solicit recommendations from key stakeholders. This marked a significant departure from the Court's earlier position. In *S. Subramanian Balaji vs Government of Tamil Nadu (2013)*, the Supreme Court ruled that such matters fell within the domain of legislative policy and were beyond judicial scrutiny. It further underscored that such expenditures could neither be deemed unlawful nor characterised as a "corrupt practice," particularly since they sought to advance the Directive Principles of State Policy. However, there has been no effective hearing in the challenge since November 23, 2023.

According to senior advocate Sanjay Hedge, there is little that courts can do to distinguish welfare measures from populist sops and pre-election inducements. "It is the legislature's prerogative to rein in unchecked competitive populism. The judiciary should not intervene in the choices made between voters and their elected representatives," he said.



Subsidy poll: BJP workers celebrate with firecrackers after the party's victory in the Delhi Assembly election on February 8. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

PROFILES

Tribunal at the receiving end

International Criminal Court

The international tribunal is in the spotlight after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed sanctions for investigations that threaten the 'national security' of Washington and its allies, which include Israel

Aaratrika Bhaumik

In February 6, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC), warning of "tangible and significant consequences" for those behind investigations deemed a threat to U.S. national security and that of its allies, including Israel. This condemnation follows ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim A. Khan's decision to issue arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant over alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip.

However, this is not the Trump administration's first offensive against the ICC. In June 2020, it sanctioned then-ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and a senior court official after she launched an investigation into alleged war crimes by U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The Biden administration later rescinded the sanctions. The latest sanctions have prompted key member states such as the U.K., France, and Germany to reaffirm their "unwavering support" for the court.

The ICC has always had a contentious relationship with the U.S. While President Bill Clinton's administration played a pivotal role in the negotiations that led to the court's creation, it remained wary of the emergence of an independent tribunal that Washington could not control through the UN Security Council. Although Mr. Clinton signed the Rome Statute, he did not send it to the Senate to be ratified, fearing scrutiny of U.S. actions and those of its allies.

When President George W. Bush took office, he launched a hostile campaign against the ICC. His administration pressured governments worldwide to sign bilateral agreements barring the surrender of U.S. nationals to the court. He also enacted the American Service Members' Protection Act of 2002, which



PHOTO: REUTERS

restricted the ICC's jurisdiction over U.S. military personnel. The law even authorised military action against the court, earning it the nickname "The Hague Invasion Act."

The U.S. position on the ICC softened during Mr. Bush's second term when he recognised its potential to serve American interests, particularly in regions where U.S. nationals were unlikely to face prosecution, such as Africa. In 2005, his administration abstained from a UN Security Council vote granting the ICC jurisdiction over war crimes in Darfur, Sudan. This measured engagement continued under the Obama administration, with U.S. diplomats attending ICC conferences. However, cooperation remained conditional, as Washington made it clear that it would support only those investigations that aligned with American interests.

Under the Biden administration, Washington's double standards in its

purported commitment to the "rules-based international order" lay bare when it endorsed the ICC's arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin while denouncing as "outrageous" the one issued for Benjamin Netanyahu.

'Low-hanging fruit'

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Allied powers established the Nuremberg Tribunal, the first international war crimes tribunal, to prosecute top Nazi officials. This gave birth to the idea of a permanent court to hold perpetrators accountable for the world's most egregious crimes. Although the UN later created ad hoc tribunals to prosecute war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, many international law experts considered them inadequate deterrents.

In July 1998, the UN General Assembly adopted the ICC's founding treaty at a conference in Rome. Unlike the International Court of Justice,

which adjudicates disputes between states, the ICC prosecutes individuals. It complements national courts and intervenes only when they are unwilling or unable to act. A major challenge to its enforcement is the absence of its own police force.

Despite its mandate, the ICC has struggled to gain the membership of major powers, including the U.S., China, and Russia. Some nations have even withdrawn. Burundi left in 2017 after the court decided to investigate its crackdown on opposition protests. In 2019, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte pulled out, rejecting the ICC's inquiry into his war on drugs and insisting that domestic courts were sufficient to uphold the rule of law.

African nations, in particular, have expressed discontent towards the court's tendency to disproportionately target the continent. It was not until 2016 that the court opened an investigation outside Africa – in Georgia – reinforcing perceptions of it

being an instrument for advancing Western political interests. The ICC has also been criticised for focusing on "low-hanging fruit" crimes – prosecuting warlords and rebel leaders while failing to hold senior political figures accountable.

Challenges ahead

Perhaps the most damning criticism of the ICC is its perceived inability to hold the U.S. and its allies accountable. By refusing to ratify the Rome Statute, the U.S. has ensured that the court lacks jurisdiction over crimes committed on its territory or by its military personnel. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it can also veto any attempt to initiate a referral through the Council.

With the Trump administration in power, the court is staring down the barrel of four years of punitive measures from Washington. Whether it emerges as a meagre shadow of itself or a resilient tribunal will depend on the resolve of its member states.

Beyond external pressures, the court faces internal challenges that undermine its standing. Chief among them is the sharp decline in trials. This year, apart from delivering two verdicts, the court will oversee only a single ongoing trial, with no other cases expected to reach the trial stage. Its workload has also diminished significantly, with just 80 hearing days scheduled – a steep drop from the average of 369 annual hearing days recorded over the past eight years (excluding the COVID-related shutdown in 2020).

Further complicating matters is the cloud of sexual harassment allegations against the ICC's chief prosecutor. In November 2024, the court's governing body announced an external investigation into the claims, deepening concerns over the institution's credibility. To preserve its legitimacy and public trust, the ICC must address these internal issues with unwavering transparency and accountability.

THE GIST

▼ The ICC has always had a contentious relationship with the U.S. The most damning criticism of the ICC also stems from its perceived inability to hold the U.S. and its allies accountable

▼ Despite its mandate, the ICC has struggled to gain the membership of major powers, including the U.S., China, and Russia. Some nations have even withdrawn from the body. African nations, in particular, have expressed discontent towards the court's tendency to disproportionately target the continent

▼ Beyond external pressures, the court faces internal challenges that undermine its standing. Chief among them is the sharp decline in trials. This year, apart from delivering two verdicts, the court will oversee only a single ongoing trial

Port of contention

Chabahar Port

The tiny warm-water port in the Gulf of Oman, with minimal trade compared to Iran's main Bandar Abbas port, received a special mention in Donald Trump's memo

Suhasini Haidar

U.S. President Donald Trump has taken aim at many countries around the world in the first few weeks of his presidency – with Iran being perhaps the most predictable target, much as it was during his first tenure. So, while it came as no surprise when he issued a Presidential National Security Memorandum (PNSM-2) on February 4, calling for "maximum pressure" on Iran, as what he called the "world's leading state sponsor of terror", his decision to name the Chabahar Port in particular sent shock-waves through New Delhi.

Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti port terminal is after all India's first international port, its alternative trade route to Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and beyond, and part of its plans for regional leadership. So why does the tiny warm-water port in the Gulf of Oman, that does relatively little trade with the world compared to Iran's main Bandar Abbas port, merit a special mention in Mr. Trump's memo, and where could this lead?

India had an interest in developing a terminal for trade to bypass Pakistan's land route and Karachi port route. Chabahar not only provides a quick sea route from India's west coast, but the plan fits in with India's development assistance to the Afghan republic, especially through the construction of the Za-



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

ranj-Delaram highway in 2009, that could take Indian goods around the country.

In time, India could develop Chabahar as a counter to Pakistan's Gwadar port, that is funded by China. In recent years China showed its interest in Chabahar as well, as a part of its Belt and Road Initiative and signed a 25-year cooperation agreement in 2021 with a potential investment of \$300 billion.

Addition of waivers

In November 2018, the Trump administration decided to add waivers to the U.S.'s Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA 144(f)), stipulating that all consignments through Iranian ports were subject to sanctions, except those meant for humanitarian aid for Iran, and for Afghanistan reconstruction. The waiver was welcomed by New Delhi, and it spurred a new round of interest in Chabahar.

Over the next few years, India's trade and aid through Chabahar grew. While the collapse of the Ghani government and the takeover by the Taliban reduced the U.S.'s engagement, India has tried to

forge ties with the Taliban leadership through the supply of aid.

India also provided equipment worth \$25 million dollars, including six mobile harbour cranes, and developed the terminal at Chabahar during this time, albeit at a slower pace than Iran had hoped. In May 2024, even as India was in the throes of an election campaign, the莫迪 government sent Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to Tehran to sign a 10-year contract for Chabahar to invest approximately \$120 million in equipment for the port and a credit window of \$250 million. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar extolled the agreement, indicating India wanted to connect its Chabahar port to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) so as to trade with Central Asia and Russia.

Reminding India of the Afghanistani aid stipulation, the Biden Administration said the plans carried the "risk of sanctions", but did not move on the implicit threat. Mr. Trump's latest memo brings the risk back into focus.

Given that the order came just days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's U.S. visit, South Block officials hope they can once again negotiate for an exception for India's plans for Chabahar port. The question is what kind of bargain Mr. Trump wants to strike, now that Chabahar is once again in U.S. cross-hairs.

Domestic interests, global cost

USAID

The humanitarian aid organisation is the latest casualty of the reforms initiated by U.S. President Donald Trump and DOGE helmed by Elon Musk

Adithya Narayan

Having returned to the President's chair on January 20 and signing a spree of executive orders since, Donald Trump, along with billionaire friend and advisor Elon Musk, moved to freeze all foreign funding for 90 days. The ramifications of this stop-work order were far-reaching, affecting countries as diverse as Syria, Thailand, Ukraine, and South Africa, where the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the country's premier humanitarian aid agency, was actively involved.

Not stopping at that, the U.S. President, along with Mr. Musk, who heads the newly formed Department for Government Efficiency (DOGE), has sought to tighten the choke-hold by trimming the USAID's 10,000-strong workforce to a mere 294 – a move temporarily put on hold by a court on Friday.

In between, senior officials at the USAID were placed on leave following a run-in with Mr. Musk's DOGE – an organisation whose ambit of power remains sketchy – after it sought access to sensitive information. The USAID's website went dark, and its Washington office was locked, leaving employees to protest outside.

The original plan of the Trump-Musk duo for the USAID involves shutting it down, a position previously stated by the Tesla foun-

der. "What we have is just a ball of worms. You have got to basically get rid of the whole thing. It's beyond repair," Mr. Musk was quoted as saying.

The next best outcome would be the absorption of the USAID into the U.S. State Department – a move driven by Secretary of State Marco Rubio's take-over of the agency's Acting Director role after accusing it of 'insubordination'.

Allegations galore
To justify their actions, the trio has said the USAID's functioning did not align with the President's 'America First' policy.

A statement put out by the White House has criticised the agency's \$1.5 million grant to an LGBTQ group in Serbia and \$2.5 million assistance to an electric vehicle manufacturer in Vietnam.

Separately, Mr. Trump has levelled allegations of corruption against the USAID. He also accused the USAID of shipping \$50 million worth of condoms to Gaza where they were being repurposed as bombs. A *Guardian* fact-check report found that the U.S. did

not ship contraceptives anywhere in West Asia except for Jordan.

However, the fact of the matter is that the U.S. remains the largest contributor of the foreign aid, despite that amount not being the highest in terms of the fraction of a country's annual budget (0.6% of \$6.75 trillion). The USAID is the primary source of that assistance. Of the \$68 billion spent by the country on international aid in 2023, the USAID accounted for \$40 billion.

The agency has operations in 130 countries. It takes care of the education of schoolgirls in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan while monitoring the Ebola outbreak in Uganda. It is also responsible for PEPFAR, an HIV/AIDS control programme that began under President George W. Bush in 2003 and is credited with saving more than 20 million lives in Africa.

Of late, the agency's primary focus has been Ukraine where it buys produce from farmers and sells it in other parts of the world; it also provides prosthetic limbs to soldiers. It boasts a famine

prevention programme that can predict crises in regions. In India, the agency works in areas such as health, education, sanitation and environment.

Soft power
The USAID was established in 1961 by Democratic President John F. Kennedy during the Cold War era to counter Russian influence. While it functioned under the State Department initially, Congress made it an independent agency in 1998. Hence, experts say, the power to dissolve the USAID wrests with Congress.

The U.S. has benefited from this independent stature for it could maintain bridges with non-friendly nations such as Iran and North Korea, where the agency undertook humanitarian work. However, the public in the U.S., mainly Republicans, have always sided with slashing foreign spending.

As Mr. Musk and Mr. Trump chip away at the USAID with the acumen of two businessmen, 'cutting costs and trimming the fat', experts say China will step in to fill the void left by the agency. But China's priority has so far been 'visible programmes', or infrastructure projects it undertakes in the form of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These can never supplant the USAID.

Sadly, the price for the Trump administration's domestic interests end up being paid by the deprived people across the globe.



PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON

Trump revokes Biden's security clearance in a set of new orders



President Donald Trump on Friday revoked his predecessor Joe Biden's security clearance in a blizzard of new orders. "There is no need for Joe Biden to continue receiving access to classified information," Mr. Trump said on his Truth Social network. "JOE, YOU'RE FIRED," he added in all caps. AP

VANCOUVER

Trump's talk of making Canada a U.S. State 'a real thing': Trudeau



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday said President Donald Trump's talk of making Canada the 51st U.S. State is "a real thing" and is linked to the country's rich natural resources. "They're very aware of our resources, of what we have and they very much want to be able to benefit from those," Mr. Trudeau reportedly said. AP

Trump signs order to cut funding for South Africa

Reuters
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order to cut U.S. financial assistance to South Africa, the White House said on Friday, citing disapproval of its land policy and of its genocide case at the International Court of Justice against Washington's ally Israel.

The United States allocated nearly \$440 million in assistance to South Africa in 2023, the most recent U.S. government data shows.

South Africa's Foreign Ministry said on Saturday the Executive Order "lacks factual accuracy and fails to recognise South Africa's profound and painful history of colonialism and apartheid".

The White House said Washington will also formulate a plan to resettle white South African farmers and their families as refugees.

Mr. Trump had earlier said that "South Africa is confiscating land".

Judge orders temporary halt to dismantling USAID

Judge Carl Nichols blocks the Trump administration from placing USAID workers on leave; some workers abroad had been cut off from govt. communication systems needed for emergencies

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

A federal judge on Friday dealt President Donald Trump and billionaire ally Elon Musk their first big setback in their dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development, ordering a temporary halt to plans to pull thousands of agency staffers off the job.

U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols, a Trump appointee, also agreed to block an order that would have given the thousands of overseas USAID workers the administration wanted to place on abrupt administrative leave just 30 days to move families and households back to the U.S. on government expense.

Both moves would have exposed the U.S. workers and their spouses and children to unwarranted risk and expense, the judge said.

It was reported earlier that USAID contractors in the West Asia and elsewhere



Shaky ground: Tributes placed beneath the covered seal of the USAID at its headquarters in Washington DC on Friday. AP

Judge Nichols pointed to accounts from workers abroad that the Trump administration, in its rush to shut down the agency and its programmes abroad, had cut some workers off from government emails and other communication systems they needed to reach the U.S. government in case of a health or safety emergency.

It was reported earlier that USAID contractors in the West Asia and elsewhere

were found even "panic button" apps wiped off their mobile phones or disabled when the administration abruptly furloughed them.

"Administrative leave in Syria is not the same as administrative leave in Bethesda," the judge said in his order Friday night.

In agreeing to stop the 30-day deadline given to USAID staffers to return home at government expense, judge Nichols cited

BERLIN

German Chancellor slams Trump's demand for Ukrainian rare earths



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz slammed as "selfish and self-serving" Donald Trump's demands for Ukrainian rare earths in exchange for U.S. military aid, in an interview on Saturday. "Ukraine is under attack and we are helping it, without asking to be paid in return. This should be everyone's position," Mr. Scholz said. AP

BEIRUT

Lebanon PM Nawaf Salam names new government, vows 'reform'



Lebanon has formed on Saturday its first full-fledged government since 2022, led by Prime Minister Nawaf Salam. The 24-member Cabinet, evenly split between Christian and Muslim sects, was formed after weeks of negotiations. Mr. Salam aims to implement financial reforms and oversee post-war reconstruction. AP

Iran's Khamenei meets top Hamas leaders in Tehran

Reuters
DUBAI

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei met with acting Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya and two other leaders of the Palestinian group in Tehran on Saturday, Iranian state TV reported.

"You defeated the Zionist regime, which was in fact America's defeat," Mr. Khamenei, whose country supports Hamas in its war with Israel, told the Palestinian delegation.

Iranian TV said the Pal-

estinian leaders were in Tehran to congratulate Mr. Khamenei on the anniversary of the 1979 Iranian revolution.

The delegation, which also included Mohammad Darwish, head of Hamas's leadership council, and top Hamas official Nizar Awadallah, presented Mr. Khamenei a report on the current situation in Gaza and the West Bank.

Mr. Khamenei added that the U.S. threats against Iran "have no effect on the mindset of our nation," the Iranian media said.

Rwandan, Congolese leaders meet over eastern DRC conflict, call for ceasefire

Agence France-Presse
BUKAVU

Rwandan President Paul Kagame and his Congolese counterpart Felix Tshisekedi joined a summit in Tanzania on Saturday where regional leaders called for an "immediate ceasefire" in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Rwanda-backed M23 armed group has rapidly seized swathes of territory in the mineral-rich eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in an offensive that has left thousands dead and displaced vast numbers.



Leaders before attending the Extraordinary Joint Regional Summit at the State House in Dar es Salaam on Saturday. AP

The group took the strategic city of Goma, capital of North Kivu province, last week and is pushing into neighbouring South Kivu in the latest episode of

decades-long turmoil in the region.

Mr. Kagame took part in person at the summit in the Tanzanian city of Dar es Salaam that brought to-

gether the eight countries of the East African Community (EAC) and 16-member South African Development Community (SADC). Mr. Tshisekedi appeared via video call.

"We call on all parties to actualise the ceasefire, and specifically on the M23 to halt further advancement and the armed forces of DRC to cease all retaliatory measures," said Kenyan President William Ruto, current chair of the EAC.

The Presidents of Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe were among those present when the summit began.

Three Baltic states disconnect from Soviet-era power grid

Associated Press
VILNIUS

The flow of electricity between the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Russia was officially severed on Saturday morning after officials switched off the Soviet-era grid's transmission lines and prepared to join the rest of Europe on Sunday.

"The Baltic energy system is finally in our hands, we are in full control," Lithuanian Energy Minister Žygimantas Vaičiūnas told reporters.

For 24 hours after detaching from the Soviet-era grid, the Baltic Power System will operate independently. If all goes as planned, the power system will merge with the European energy networks on Sunday afternoon.

आर्मेड कौटील्स निगम लिमिटेड
भारत सरकार का उद्यम
रक्षा मंत्रालय

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NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement

No. IT / 08 / 2025 - 967 / OLIC, Dated - 05.02.2025

The Managing Director, OLIC Ltd., Bhubaneswar invites online tender in percentage rate through e-procurement for installation, electrification, energisation & commissioning of deep bore wells in Subarnapur district of Odisha state. Interested Bidders may visit website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in to view and download Detailed Tender Call Notice and bid documents. The bids should be submitted only online in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Important features of this NCB are as under :

- A. Brief description of Work : Installation, electrification, energisation & commissioning of Deep bore wells in Subarnapur district (05 Packages)
- B. Estimated cost of works : Varies from Rs.610.58 Lakhs to Rs.1081.54 Lakhs
- C. Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal : From dt.12.02.2025 to dt.10.03.2025 (up to 17.00 Hours)
- D. Last date / time for receipt of bid in the Portal : dt.10.03.2025 up to 17.00 Hours
- E. Last date of seeking clarification : dt.25.02.2025 up to 17.00 Hours
- F. Technical Bid will be opened on : dt.11.03.2025 at 11.00 Hours.

Any Addendum/ corrigendum/ Cancellation of tender will be available in the said website. Authority reserves the right to accept /reject any or all the tenders, increase or decrease the quantities of work put to bidding without assigning any reasons thereof.

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
OLIC LTD, BHUBANESWAR
OIPR-32135/11/0013/2425

CAD-2479:

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**SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
RECRUITMENT OF JUNIOR COURT ASSISTANT**

Online applications from eligible candidates are invited for the post of Junior Court Assistant (Group 'B'). Non-Gazetted Post) placed in Level 6 of Pay Matrix with initial Basic Pay of Rs. 35,400/- The approximate Gross Salary as per existing rate of allowance including HRA comes to Rs. 72,040/- per month (pre-revised pay scale PB-2 with Grade Pay of Rs. 4200/-). The details about eligibility conditions etc. can be downloaded from Supreme Court Website www.sci.gov.in.

Sd-
(Mashroor Alam Khan)
Registrar (Recruitment)

Place: New Delhi
Dated: 04.02.2025

**AUCTION SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT**

OFFICE OF THE TAX RECOVERY OFFICER (CENTRAL), KOCHI

Immovable properties situated in Peramangalam, Kaiparambu, Kanippayur, Tholur and Choodal Villages in Thrissur district attached by Income Tax Department will be sold in public auction through E-auction on MSTC platform at 11 A.M on 27th February 2025. Auction notices of the 7 properties, terms and conditions and photos and videos of properties can be viewed on www.mstccindia.co.in. Scan QR code for direct access to link. Intending bidders may please register with www.mstccommerce.com by remitting one time registration (non refundable) charges of Rs. 1000/- + GST.

Contact:-

For Registration
Shri Santhosh Kumar (MSTC) (Mob:8884600700)

For Details
Smt. Anitha Devi J, Tax Recovery Officer

(Mob: 8547000116/8075130138)



ALL GOOD

Batting coach Kotak not fretting over India losing early wickets



Batting coach Sitanshu Kotak did not give too much importance to India losing wickets early in Nagpur. "Gill, Shreyas and Axar batted really well. You are going to lose some wickets, whether it's openers or middle-order. As a batting unit or as a team, there were a lot of positives — the way we batted, the way we showed our intent."

SOAKING IT IN

Rohit and Kohli get the eyeballs at the Barabati Stadium



Hosting an international game after nearly three years, the Barabati Stadium wore a festive look despite the heavy security deployment on the eve of the second ODI. Even though Hardik Pandya, Shreyas Iyer and Harshit Rana skipped practice, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's presence made the day for nearly 20000 fans.

LONE RANGER

Mathews delays the inevitable as Aussies scent victory



Angelo Mathews's gutsy 76 helped Sri Lanka avoid an innings defeat in the second Test in Galle but Australia remained on course for a 2-0 series sweep. **The scores:** Sri Lanka 257 & 211/8 in 62.1 overs (Mathews 76, Kusal 48 batting; Kuhnemann 4/52) vs Australia 414 in 106.4 overs (Carey 156, Smith 131; Jayasuriya 5/151).

MAIDEN CENTURY

Phillips and Santner lead NZ to 78-run win over Pakistan



Glenn Phillips cracked a maiden ODI century and Mitchell Santner scalped three to help New Zealand overpower Pakistan by 78 runs in the opening match of a tri-nations series in Lahore on Saturday. **The scores:** New Zealand 330/6 in 50 overs (Phillips 106 n.o., Mitchell 81, Williamson 58) bt Pakistan 252 in 47.5 overs (Fakhar 84).

Spotlight on Rohit, Kohli as India targets series victory

It will be interesting to see whom the latter replaces, especially after Shreyas' excellent performance in Nagpur; England must adapt to the traditionally high-scoring venue quickly to take it to a decider

ENGLAND IN INDIA

Y.B. Sarangi
CUTTACK

Captain Rohit Sharma's dip in form and Virat Kohli's recovery from a knee issue will be in the spotlight as India, after taking a 1-0 lead in the Orange City, will seek to win the second One-Day International (ODI) and seal the three-match series against England in the Silver City on Sunday.

The host will be keen to see the two stalwarts shine again, like they have done at the Barabati Stadium here in the past, ahead of the fast-approaching Champions Trophy.

Kohli, who also went through a lean phase in red-ball competitions, looked fit to take the field. It will be interesting to see whom he replaces, especially after Shreyas Iyer's excellent performance in the first ODI. India urgently needs to decide its pace combination for the ICC event. As Jasprit Bumrah's return is still in doubt and Mohammed Shami's



Testing times: Kohli and Rohit will be eager to come good and silence the critics. K.R. DEEPAK



search for his old magic continues, debutant Harshit Rana's resilient three-wicket haul in the series opener must have acted as a soothing balm for the host. While Hardik Pandya provides the much-needed balance, left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh, who last played an ODI in August, is waiting for some game time.

Fine performances of

Shubman Gill, Shreyas and Axar Patel with the bat and the effectiveness of the Indian spin trio Axar, Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja has pleased the home think-tank as much as it thrilled the spectators in Nagpur. T20I series hero Varun Chakravarthy is waiting to prove himself after getting a maiden ODI call-up.

Here, too, fans' enthui-

siasm knows no bounds – evident from the sleepless night they spent to buy tickets and filled the stands in large numbers for the Indian team's practice on the match eve – as international cricket returns to the 67-year-old venue, still awaiting modernisation, after nearly three years and an ODI after five years.

Instead of travelling to Cuttack for match-eve nets,

England players chose to take a break and involve in a game golf in Bhubaneswar. The visitor must adapt to the traditionally high-scoring venue quickly.

While contributions of openers Phil Salt and Ben Duckett, skipper Jos Buttler and Jacob Bethell indicated a good beginning in Nagpur, the below-par showing of Joe Root and Harry Brook was disappointing.

England will look to overcome India's spin challenge in the middle overs and expect its own tweakers, including the crafty Adil Rashid, Liam Livingstone and Bethell, to be impactful.

With pace ace Jofra Archer displaying good form, England will hope its other speedsters, such as Saqib Mahmood and Brydon Carse, to be more productive.

With the series on the line, England will push to take it to the decider.

The teams (from): India: Rohit Sharma (Capt.), Shubman Gill (vice-capt.), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, K.L. Rahul (wk), Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy.

England: Jos Buttler (Capt.), Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Jacob Bethell, Harry Brook, Brydon Carse, Ben Duckett, Jamie Overton, Jamie Smith, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Saqib Mahmood, Phil Salt (wk), Mark Wood.

Match officials: **Umpires:** Chris Brown & J. Madanagopal; **Third umpire:** Sharfuddoula Saikat; **Match referee:** Jagaval Srinath.

Match starts at 1.30 p.m.

Not concerned about skipper's form: Kotak

Y.B. Sarangi
CUTTACK

Batting coach Sitanshu Kotak was not concerned about captain Rohit Sharma's form in ODI cricket ahead of India's second match against England at the Barabati Stadium, here on Sunday.

While downplaying Rohit's poor form in red-ball cricket, Kotak cited the skipper's statistics in the 50-over format to underline his point.

"I don't think there is any problem. In the last three one-dayers (before the series opener in Nagpur where he scored two), Rohit made 56, 64 and 35 (against Sri Lanka), averaging 50-plus. We are talking about a player who has got 31 ODI hundreds. When he keeps scoring runs in back-to-back matches, nobody asks 'When will he fail?'" said Kotak on Saturday.

"I don't think I would be worried about their [Rohit and Virat Kohli] form. Australia Test series – that was a tough time. About the one-dayers, the way he batted in the last three one-days before the first match (in Nagpur), he has always been scoring runs. So, not really so much concern about that."



Rahul will have a big role to play with the bat. K.R. DEEPAK

and Virat Kohli] form. Australia Test series – that was a tough time. About the one-dayers, the way he batted in the last three one-days before the first match (in Nagpur), he has always been scoring runs. So, not really so much concern about that."

Kohli fit
On Kohli who missed the first match due to a knee issue, Kotak said: "He is fit. He is good to go. He is here and training with us".



Zipping to victory: Animesh wins the men's 100m while Sudeshna does the same in the women's event and Sawan proudly holds his men's 10,000m gold. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Animesh and Sudeshna emerge as the fastest athletes

NATIONAL GAMES

Stan Rayan
DEHRADUN

Odisha's Animesh Kujur emerged as the men's 100m winner but not before some drama in the 38th National Games at the Ganga Stadium here on Saturday.

When the results came up on the giant screen a few seconds later after the race, it showed Services' Manikanta Hoblidhar as the fastest man.

There had been some confusion somewhere and some 20 minutes later, during the medal ceremony, things became clear and Kujur returned wearing the precious gold medal.

Was he shocked when Manikanta was shown as the winner first?

"No, I knew I came first. I didn't have any doubt. My expectation was to break the national record, but it's

okay," said Odisha's Kujur who clocked 10.28s which equalled Amlan Borgohain's Games record set in 2022. Borgohain took the bronze, while Manikanta went without a medal, taking the fifth spot in 10.46.

Kujur, not a strong stater, made up nicely towards the finish.

"My coach told me, don't panic even if you don't get a good start, you have a good top-end. Just believe that you're going to do good," said Kujur who is coached by Englishman Martin Owens at the Reliance Foundation's Odisha centre.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra's Sudeshna Shivankar, last year's Khelo India University Games champion, surprised top names like R. Giridharani and Srabani Nanda to emerge as the fastest woman here in 11.76s.

The results: Athletics: Men:
100m: 1. Animesh Kujur (Odi) 10.28s EMR, 2. Pranav Gurav (Mah) 10.32, 3. Amlan Borgohain (Assam) 10.43. **1500m:** 1. Yoonus

Nominees for Club/State Team of the Year

Amul SPORTSTAR ACES
2024 was a landmark year for Indian sports with a host of achievements across several disciplines. The annual Sportstar Aces Awards seek to honour the trailblazers



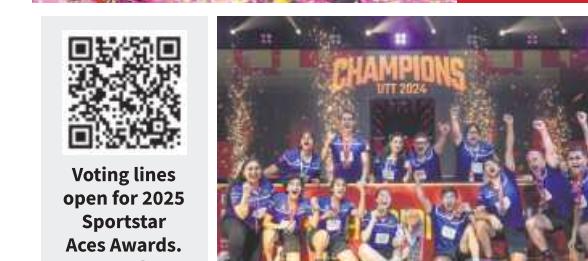
Kolkata Knight Riders



Mohun Bagan Super Giant



Mumbai Ranji Team



Puneri Paltan



Goa Challengers TTC

The awards ceremony will be held in Mumbai on February 14

Voting lines open for 2025 Sportstar Aces Awards. Scan the QR code

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Teichmann ends Maaya's dream run in the semifinal

MUMBAI OPEN WTA 125

Tarun Shastry
MUMBAI

A huge cry of 'vamos' echoed around the court while the fans, who had gathered to rally behind 15-year-old Maaya Rajeshwaran, looked on in disbelief. Soon, the silence was broken by a big round of applause.

Switzerland's Jil Teichmann defeated India's rising star 6-3, 6-1 to seal her spot in the summit clash of the L&T Mumbai Open WTA 125 at the Cricket Club of India here on Saturday.

The 27-year-old Swiss left-hander got off to a quick start and put Maaya on the defensive.

She broke serve in the second game and dominated with aggressive net play and measured drop shots.

Flashes of brilliance

The Indian teen displayed flashes of brilliance, which included a stunning backhand down the line winner. However, she couldn't keep pace.

Teichmann, a former World No. 21, jumped to a 4-0 lead and held off Maaya, who fought back bravely.

She sealed the first set with a blistering forehand winner.

In the second set, it was



Marching on: Teichmann proved too strong for Maaya.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

one-way traffic as errors crept into Maaya's game and the number five seed had no trouble in closing it out.

It was a campaign to remember for Maaya, who entered the tournament in the qualifiers after receiving a wild card.

Other results:
Semifinals: **Singles:** Mananchaya Sawangkaew (Tha) bt Rebecca Marino (Can) 6-2, 6-2

Doubles: Amina Anshba & Elena Pridankina (camilla Rossetto (Ita)) & Nicole Fossa Huergo (Ita) 4-6, 6-3, [10-3].

break into the top 700, making her the youngest Indian to earn a WTA ranking.

Thanks to her performances this week, she will

CM YK

IN BRIEF



Shubham wins the PGTI Qualifying School tourney

Shubham Narain beat Anant Singh Ahlawat on the third play-off 13th hole to emerge the champion, after the duo had tied 16-under 268 in the Tata Steel PGTI Qualifying School at the Gomuri Golf Course, Jamshedpur, on Saturday.

Bayern Munich rides on Harry Kane's brace

Harry Kane scored two penalties as Bayern Munich beat Werder Bremen 3-0 on Friday, while Bayer Leverkusen was held goalless by Wolfsburg on Saturday in the Bundesliga.

The results: Bundesliga: Borussia Dortmund 1 (Brandt 81) lost to Stuttgart 2 (Anton 50+og, Chabot 61); Hoffenheim 0, Union Berlin 4 (Hollerbach 24, 87, Ljubicic 61, Illic 73); Freiburg 1 (Grifo 30) bt Heidenheim 0; Wolfsburg 0 drew with Bayer Leverkusen 0; Mainz 0 drew with Augsburg 0.

LaLiga: Celta Vigo 3 (Beltran 63, Rodriguez 65, Swedberg 87) bt Real Betis 2 (Antony 10, Llorente 22).

Serie A: Verona 0 lost to Atalanta 5 (Retequii 21, 25, 44, 56, Ederson 37).

On Friday: Bundesliga: Bayern Munich 3 (Kane 56+pen, 90+7-pen, Sane 82) bt Werder Bremen 0.

Serie A: Como 1 (Assane Diao 45) lost to Juventus 2 (Kolo Muani 34, 89+pen).

LaLiga: Rayo Vallecano 1 (Alvaro Garcia 71) bt Real Valladolid 0.

LIVE TELECAST

Ranji Trophy: Quarterfinals, JioCinema, 9.30 a.m.
Sri Lanka vs Australia: 2nd Test, day 4, Sony Sports Ten 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 10 a.m.
India vs England: 2nd ODI, Star Sports 2 & Hotstar, 1.30 p.m.
Zimbabwe vs Ireland: Only Test, day 4, FanCode, 1.30 p.m.
Serie A: gxr.world, 5, 7.30, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Monday)
LaLiga: gxr.world, 6.30, 8.45, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Monday)
ISL: Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.
Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8 & 10 p.m.

SNAPSHOTS

Chennaiyin FC blanks East Bengal

KOLKATA: Chennaiyin FC returned to winning ways after a gap of seven matches as it outplayed home favourite East Bengal FC 3-0 in an ISL fixture at the Salt Lake Stadium here on Saturday.

The results: East Bengal 0 lost to Chennaiyin 3 (Nishu Kumar 13-og, Jordan Gil 21, Chima Chukwu 90+9).

At Hyderabad: Hyderabad 3 (Paulista 24, Ramlunchhungha 45+1, Sunny 90+6) bt Mohammedan 1 (Chothe 78).

Delhi Dribblers get the better of Chennai Heat

NEW DELHI: James Montgomery came up with an electrifying performance to help Delhi Dribblers to a 90-80 victory over Chennai Heat in the INBL Pro basketball league at the Thyagaraj Indoor Stadium on Saturday.

Montgomery not only scored 21 points, but had



Chennaiyin players celebrate. PTI

14 rebounds and seven assists, as the team pulled ahead in the fourth quarter, after leading 54-51.

There was a spurt of scoring early in the fourth quarter when Delhi added 10 points without conceding one in the first two minutes. It was the first defeat in three matches for Chennai, while it was the second victory in three matches for Delhi. Alexander Mudronja and Daniel Poelsma along with Suhil helped Delhi stay ahead right through the

match with their consistent scoring. Arvind Kumar top-scored for the Chennai team with 20 points.

The result: Delhi Dribblers 90 (Alexander Mudronja 22, James Montgomery 21, Daniel Poelsma 21, Suhil 15) bt Chennai Heat 80 (Arvind Kumar 20, Tad Dufelmeier 14, Keith Kiner 14, Sejin Mathew 10, Jack Stanwix 10).

Wildcards for Mukund, Ramkumar and Karan

S. Mukund, Ramkumar Ramanathan and Karan Singh have been given the main draw wild cards for the \$100,000 Delhi Open Challenger tennis tournament to be played at the DLTA Complex from Monday.

Owing to a high cut-off, it was hard for the Indian players to get into the qualifying event, except for Aryan Shah who made it as an alternate. The qualifying wild cards were given to Sidharth Rawat, Chirag Duhani, Aditya

Govila and Parth Aggarwal.

In doubles, only Niki Poonacha and Courtney Lock of Zimbabwe could get a direct entry, and the duo was seeded second. Siddhant Banthia and Parikshit Soman got in with protected ranking. The doubles wild cards were given to the pairs of S.D. Prajwal Dev and Sai Kartick Reddy, and Ramkumar and Karan. The singles qualifying event will be played from Sunday.

Manas defeats fifth seed Neuchrist, makes semifinals

Qualifier Manas Dhamne defeated fifth seed Maximilian Neuchrist of Austria 6-7(5), 6-3, [10-8] in the quarterfinals of the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament in Monastir, Tunisia.

In the semifinals, Manas will play top seed Alberto Campos of Spain.

Lake Michigan fancied for Crown Treasure Plate

HYDERABAD: The three year old colt Lake Michigan, who finished third in his last start, should make amends in the Crown Treasure Plate, the chief event of the Sunday's (Feb 9) races.

1 SURYAPET PLATE (1,800m), 4-y-o and upward, rated upto 25 (Cat. III), 10.10 p.m.: 1. Take A Breath (I) H.M. Akshay 60, 2. Wandring Warrior (2) Akshay K 60, 3. Hoping King (4) Mohit 59, 4. Shubrak (6) A.A. Vikrant 56, 5. Hoping Wind (3) Kuldeep Jr. 56, 6. Tupac (5) R.S. Bhati 55 and 7. Silver Arrow (7) P. Sal K 55.

1. WANDRING WARRIOR, 2. SILVER ARROW, 3. TAKE A BREATH.

2 CROWN TREASURE PLATE (1,600m), (Terms) Mайден, 3-y-o only (Cat. II), 10.10 p.m.: 1. Corte Madera (7) Afroz K 56, 2. Lake Michigan (8) Akshay K 56, 3. Ashwa Changez (2) Md. Ekram 54, 4. Blue Candy (2) Md. Ekram 54, 5. La Fleurelle (5) Abhay 54, 6. Mystical Dawn (I) Ashad Asbar 54, 7. Screenshot (3) Md. Ismail 54, 8. The Purpose (4) P. Sal K 54.

1. LAKE MICHIGAN, 2. MYSTICAL DAWN, 3. CORTE MADERA.

3 CIRCAR CUP (Div. II) (1,400m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 25 (Cat. II), 3-15: 1. Arm-

strong (5) Deepak 60, 2. Oliver's Mount (9) Md. Ekram 58, 3. Knight Rider (2) Antony Raj 57, 4. Star Forever (10) G. Nareesh 5, Sangreal (6) P. Sai K 54, 5, 6. N.R.I Ultrapower (1) Abhay 53, 5, 7. Clara (7) Akshay K 53, 8. Annihilator (4) Kuldeep Sr. 52, 5, 9. Catchme If You Can (3) Mukesh 52, 5 and 10. Ariete (8) Santosh Raj 52.

1. KNIGHT CRUSADER, 2. STAR FOREVER, 3. CLARA.

5 CIRCAR CUP (Div. I) (1,400m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 25 (Cat. III), 3-45: 1. Shadow Of Light (5) Afroz K 60, 5, 2. Petra Act (1) Mukesh 59, 3. Hawk Wing (2) R.S. Bhati 57, 4. Clarity (7) Gaurav 55, 5, 6. Aos Si (9) B.R. Kumar 52, 6. Cherish The Lady (3) P. Sai K 52, 7. Exponent (6) Md. Ekram 51, 5, 8. Battle On (10) G. Nareesh 51, 9. Politics (4) B. Nikhil 51 and 10. Varane Gold (8) H.M. Akshay 51.

1. PETRA ACT, 2. HAWK WING, 3. QUALITY WARRIOR.

3 NARAYANPET PLATE (Div. I) (1,200m), 6-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65, 2-45: 1. Runlikehewind (7) Shivansh 61, 2. Dyanosho (4) Akshay K 60, 5, 3. Kings Best (6) P. Sai 59, 4. Winning Attitude (5) Afroz K 58, 5. Challenger (8) Md. Ekram 57, 6. Blissful (2) R.S. Jodha 56, 7. Lady Danger (9) Mukesh 56, 8. Sopranos (3) P. Ajeth K 56, 9. Briar Ridge (12) Kuldeep Sr. 54, 10. Mr. Perfect (10) R.S. Bhati 54, 11. Sucker Punch (11) Surya Prakash 53 and 12. Top In Class (1) Mohit 53.

1. WINNING ATTITUDE, 2. DYANOOSH, 3. CHALLENGER.

4 FLIRTING VISION PLATE (1,400m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 3-15: 1. Arm-

Afroz K 57, 5, 6. Crimson Rose (8) B.R. Kumar 56, 5, 7. Juramento (12) Uday Kiran 56, 5, 8. Sweet Dancer (11) P. Ajeth K 56, 9. Clefairy (5) P. Sai K 54, 10. Mark My Day (6) Md. Ekram 53, 11. Inderdhanush (9) Gaurav 52, 5 and 12. Das (2) Surya Prakash 50.

1. CRIMSON ROSE, 2. CLEFAIRY, 3. FIRST CLASS.

7 ABERADER PLATE (Div. I) (1,100m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 4-45: 1.

Only The Brave (4) Shivansh 62, 2. Star Cruise (3) Kuldeep Sr. 61, 5, 3. Swiss Girl (7) Akshay K 61, 4. Tiger Ruby (13) Uday Kiran 59, 5. Pancho (5) Mukesh 56, 6. D Battle (2) B.R. Kumar 55, 5, 7. Muaser (1) P. Ajeth K 55, 8. Glimmer Of Hope (11) Gaurav 54, 9. If You Like It (4) B. Nikhil 53, 5, 10. Ilene (10) Abbay 53, 11. Grey Sky (8) Md. Ekram 53, 12. Hoping High (9) Mohit 52, 5, 13. Iconic Star (12) Santosh Raj 52, 5 and 14. Reining Queen (6) Surya Prakash 51, 5.

1. SWISS GIRL, 2. PANCHO, 3. GLIMMER OF HOPE.

5 NARAYANPET PLATE (Div. II) (1,200m), 6-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 4-15: 1.

Amrya (10) Shivansh 60, 5, 2. High Reward (1) R.S. Jodha 56, 3. First Class (4) Mukesh 57, 5, 6. Only My Way (3)

Sport

Mulani, Kotian bail Mumbai out on roller-coaster day

The two add 165 for the eighth wicket to lift the defending champion from 113 for seven as the Eden Gardens track eases out; Suryakumar falls early while Rahane & Dubre fail to convert starts

RANJI TROPHY

Sahil Mathur
KOLKATA

Mumbai made a roaring comeback after Haryana flattened its top order in a roller-coaster day one of the Ranji Trophy quarterfinals here at the Eden Gardens on Saturday.

Haryana reduced Mumbai to 113 for seven inside 30 overs before Shams Mulani and Tanush Kotian made use of better batting conditions to stitch a 165-run stand to restore parity.

Despite the situation, both batters played their shots. Kotian placed a backfoot punch towards square to get his first boundary while Mulani checked an upper cut early into his innings.

Flat conditions nullified Jayant Yadav and Nishant Sindhu's spin threat and the pacers were forced to put more effort on the ball.

After batting nearly two sessions, Mulani got a leading edge straight back to Jayant five minutes before stumps, missing his century by nine runs. Mumbai finished at 278 for eight.

Earlier, a 9 a.m. start gave the Haryana pacers a home-like feel with seam movement on offer as Anshul Kamboj uprooted Ayush Mhatre's middle stump off the first ball after Ajinkya Rahane opted to bat. Twenty-six minutes later, Sumit Kumar's inswing-



Plucky knock: Mulani fell nine short of a hundred on stroke of stumps. DEBASISH BHADURI

some good-looking strokes down the ground before getting a faint edge off Kamboj. Shardul Thakur's dismissal early in the second session brought Mulani and Kotian together, who then pulled the defending champion out of the rubble.

The scores: Mumbai — 1st

innings: Ayush Mhatre b Kamboj 0, Akash Anand b Sumit 10,

Siddhesh Lad b Kamboj 4, Ajinkya Rahane c Rohit b Kamboj 31,

Suryakumar Yadav b Sumit 9,

Shivam Dube c Yashvardhan b Chahal 28, Shams Mulani c & b

Jayant 91, Shardul Thakur c & b

Thakral 15, Tanush Kotian

(batting) 85, Mohit Avasthi

(batting) 0; Extras (lb-1, nb-2, w-2): 5; Total (for eight wkts. in 81 overs): 278.

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-14, 3-14,

4-25, 5-65, 6-94, 7-113, 8-278.

Haryana bowling: Kamboj

18-3-58-3, Sumit 13-1-57-2,

Thakral 18-1-59-1, Chahal

5-1-21-1, Jayant 11-2-32-1, Sindhu

16-1-50-0.

RANJI TROPHY QUARTERFINALS SCORES (DAY 1)

At Pune: Jammu & Kashmir 228/8 in 86 overs (Kanhaiya Wadhawan 48, Lone Nasir 44, M.D. Nidheesh 5/56) vs. Kerala.

Toss: Kerala

At Nagpur: Vidarbha 264/6 in 89

overs (Danish Malewar 75, Karun Nair 100 batting) vs. Tamil Nadu.

Toss: Vidarbha

At Kolkata: Mumbai 278/8 in 81

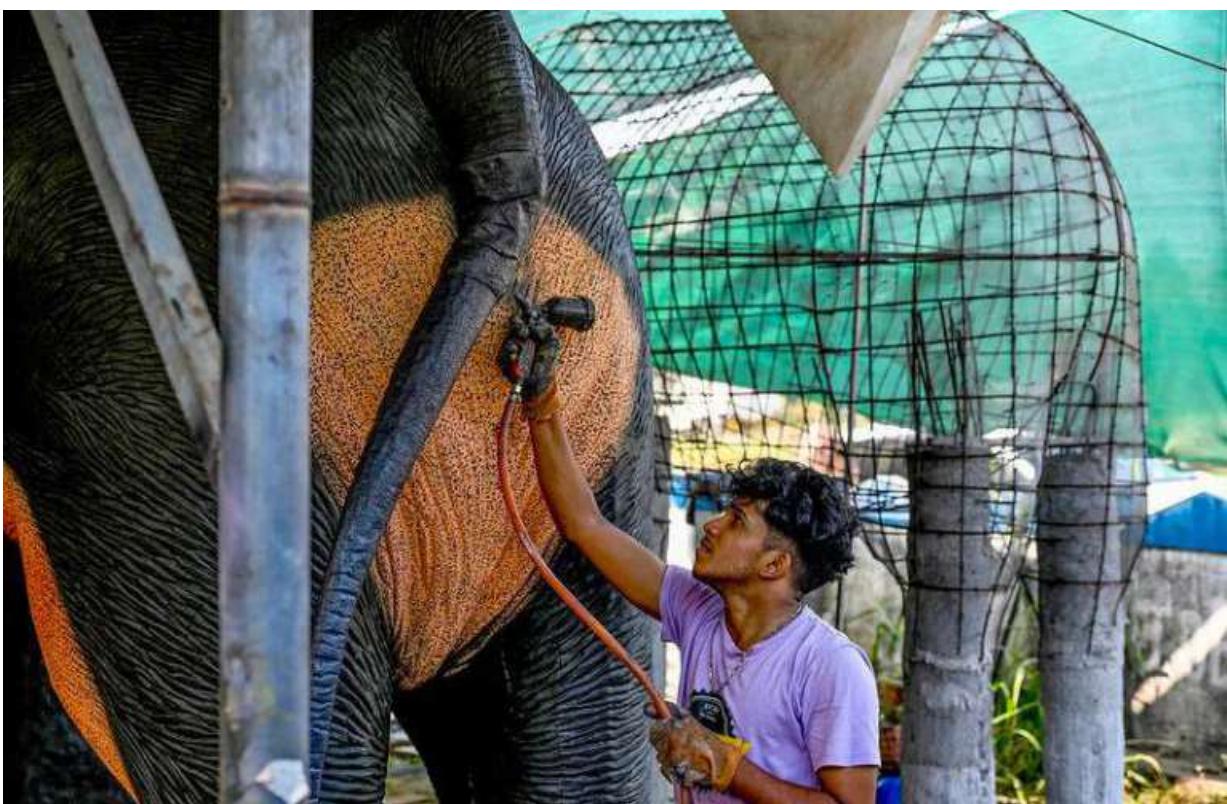
overs (Shams Mulani 91, Tanush Kotian 85 batting) vs. Haryana.

Toss: Mumbai

At Rajkot: Saurashtra 216 in 72.1



Crowning glory: A worker puts together material that will go on to become the head section of a mechanical elephant structure.



Right texture: Finishing touches are applied to the tail of a mechanical elephant next to a metal and cement framework.



Majestic creation: The completed mechanical elephant being moved from a workshop before being offered to the Kombara Sreekrishna Swami Temple in Thrissur district.

Electric elephant breaks cover

The Kombara temple in Thrissur of Kerala has refrained from using live elephants in its rituals since 2015, citing exorbitant costs and suffering endured by captive elephants



Thulasi Kakat
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The ancient Kombara Sreekrishna Swami Temple, located near Irinjalakuda in Thrissur district, recently witnessed a rare sight. While the temple was adorned with festive floral decorations and hosted a vibrant *Panchari melam* (traditional orchestra) with numerous artists, the star attraction, Kombara Kannan, was not a living elephant but a mechanical marvel.

Since 2015, the temple has refrained from using live elephants in its rituals and festivals due to the exorbitant costs and the suffering endured by captive elephants, which are chained and often made to take part in long and tiring processions. Ravi Namboothiri, the temple president, says, "In honour of our decision to never hire or own a live elephant for our temple rituals and festivals, we are absolutely thrilled to accept a mechanical elephant. All of God's creations deserve love and respect."

Standing about three metres tall and weighing 800 kg, Kombara Kannan was gifted to the temple by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and sitarist Anoushka Shankar.

The mechanical elephant was crafted by Prashanth Puthuvellil, an innovator from Chalakudy, and his three partners. Their journey began in 2018 when they built mechanical

elephants for expatriate Malayalis ahead of the Dubai Pooram festival. Since then, they have created over 46 elephants in various sizes, now found across Kerala, several other Indian States, and countries such as the U.S., Canada, Spain, and England. Currently, Prashanth is working on an African elephant model for Kenya.

These mechanical elephants, constructed using rubber, fibre, metal, mesh, foam, and steel, are powered by five motors. Powered by electricity, they mimic the natural movements of elephants – shaking their heads, swishing tails, flapping ears, and spraying water. Mounted on wheelbases, they can be easily manoeuvred during processions and rituals via remote control or even manually.

The installation of Kombara Kannan made headlines in Kerala, coinciding with reports of three human deaths caused by live elephants on a single day. Recent court interventions have also intensified scrutiny over the use of elephants in festivals. Animal rights activists have long highlighted the suffering of captive elephants used in festivals. Kerala's elephant-related death statistics are alarming: from 2012 to February 2023, wild elephants killed 202 people, while captive elephants caused 196 deaths between 2011 and 2023.



Fine touch: A worker paints the trunk of a mechanical elephant at a workshop in Chalakudy, Thrissur.



Crafting tradition: Prasanth Puthuvilil, the innovator behind mechanical elephants, at his workshop in Chalakudy.



Art imitating life: The water spraying mechanism from a mechanical elephant's trunk gets a test run.



Alternative parade: Kombara Kannan is moved along on wheels during the ritual procession.



Decked up: Kombara Kannan, being adorned with a *nettippattam* (a traditional caparison) before being offered to the temple.



Welcome ceremony: The mechanical elephant, in all its finery, is greeted with drumbeats and trumpet tunes at the Kombara temple.