



K INVEST KARNATAKA



Shri. Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka



Shri. D.K. Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka



Shri. M.B. Patil
Hon'ble Minister for Large & Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development
launching FMCG manufacturing ecosystem at Aequus Infra's Hubballi Cluster,
marking a significant step for North Karnataka's growth

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President, AB Volvo &
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Mr. Sebastian Thrun
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Ms. Ann Dunkin
Former Chief Information Officer
U.S. Department of Energy



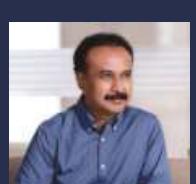
Mr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia
Indian Economist, Former Deputy Chairman
Planning Commission of India



Mr. Shashi Tharoor
Hon'ble Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha)
Thiruvananthapuram



Mr. Akis Evangelidis
Co-Founder &
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Ms. Yvonne Watson
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...many more

Marquee Events



Future of Innovation Expo
Explore innovations



SME Connect
A platform for Karnataka's
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2nd Edition VentuRise
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Highlights

100+
Speakers

30+
Sessions

19+
Country Partners

150+
Exhibitors

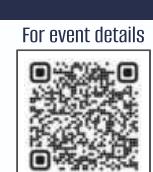
All sessions, including inauguration, will be broadcast live here:
https://www.youtube.com/@InvestKarnataka_KUM



As enshrined in our Constitution, "to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement" is the fundamental duty of every citizen of India.

Gunjan Krishna, IAS
Commissioner for Industrial Development &
Director of Industries & Commerce

Dr. S. SELVAKUMAR, IAS
Principal Secretary to Government
Commerce and Industries Department



For event details





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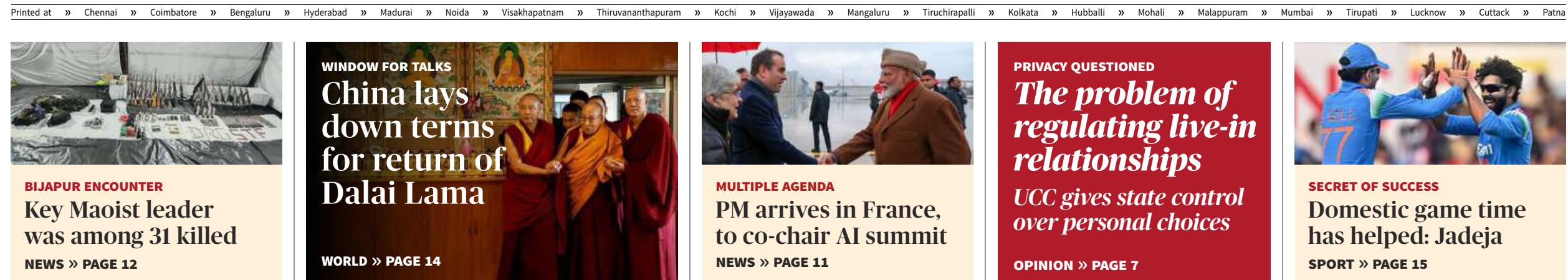
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IN BRIEF



'14 cr. denied food security due to delay in census'

NEW DELHI
Nearly 14 crore Indians are excluded from the cover of National Food Security Act because of the delay in the census, Congress MP Sonia Gandhi said in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. » Page 10

Remarks on CM: Anil Vij served show-cause notice

GURUGRAM
Haryana BJP chief Mohan Lal Badoli on Monday issued a show-cause notice to State Minister Anil Vij for remarks against him as well as Chief Minister Nayab Saini. Mr. Vij has been told to furnish a reply within three days. » Page 4

BJP scouts for new CM in Manipur after Biren's exit

Three Ministers, Speaker among the contenders for the top post; State Congress says it will oppose move to impose President's Rule, calls for 'democratically elected government' to safeguard State

Rahul Karmakar GUWAHATI

A day after Nongthombam Biren Singh resigned as the Chief Minister of resitive Manipur, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday began scouting for his successor.

Sambit Patra, in-charge of the BJP in Manipur, held separate closed-door meetings with each of the party's MLAs – barring seven belonging to the Kuki-Zo community – in the State's capital Imphal on Monday. He also met the MLAs of the Naga People's Front, an ally of the BJP, Manipur's security advisor Kuldeep Singh, and the Hill Areas Committee chairperson Dinganglung Gangmei. Neither Mr. Patra nor the MLAs shared details on

What next?

BJP has initiated the next course of action after N. Biren Singh resigned as Manipur Chief Minister

- State BJP in-charge Sambit Patra holds separate meetings with the party's MLAs, barring seven Kuki-Zo members
- He has also met MLAs of Naga People's Front and State security advisor Kuldeep Singh
- Manipur Congress says it would oppose any move to impose President's Rule in the State
- Security has been tightened in Imphal, especially in sensitive areas such as Sanjenthong, Singjamei, and Kangla Gate



the one-on-one meeting.

"Our discussion was focused on reconciliation and bringing back peace in Manipur," Minister for Municipal Administration, Housing and Urban Development Yumnam Khemchand told journalists, insisting that selecting the new Chief Minister was the prerogative of the party's

central leadership.

"We accepted the decision (on Mr. Singh's resignation) taken by our high command. We will abide by any decision that follows," he said, when asked about the likely candidates for the top post.

Mr. Khemchand is said to be one of the contenders for the Chief Minister's job.

The others are Speaker Thokchom Satyabrata, Public Works Department Minister Konthoujam Govind, Education Minister Thounaojam Basantakumar, and MLA Thokchom Radhesayam – the last two being former Indian Police Service (IPS) officers.

Meanwhile, the State Congress said it would oppose any move to impose President's Rule in Manipur or to place the Assembly under suspended animation. "We want a democratically elected popular government in the larger interest of safeguarding democracy in the State," party president Keisham Meghachandra said.

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Trump proposes tariffs on steel, aluminium imports

Associated Press WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has said the U.S. will impose 25% tariffs on all steel and aluminium imports, including from Canada and Mexico, as well as other import duties later in the week.

"Any steel coming into the United States is going to have a 25% tariff," he told presspersons on Sunday on Air Force One as he flew from Florida to New Orleans to attend the Super Bowl. When asked about aluminium, he responded, "aluminium, too" will be subject to the trade penalties.

Reciprocal tariffs
Mr. Trump also reaffirmed that he would announce "reciprocal tariffs" – "probably Tuesday or Wednesday" – meaning that the U.S. would impose import duties on products in cases in which another

Metal merchandise

U.S. imports most of its aluminium and steel from Canada, China and Mexico. Tables show imports in \$ billion (2018-2023)

	Aluminium and articles made of them	Iron & steel and articles made of them
1	Canada	\$57.3bn
2	China	\$18.5bn
3	Mexico	\$9.6bn
4	UAE	\$8.9bn
5	India	\$4.5bn
9	India	\$15.6bn

country has levied duties on U.S. goods.

"If they are charging us 130% and we're charging them nothing, it's not going to stay that way," he said.

Mr. Trump has said he sees import taxes as tools to force concessions on issues such as immigration but also as a source of revenue to help close the government's budget deficit.

INDIA STAYS STOIC
» PAGE 13

India may offer lower duties to pacify Trump

NEW DELHI
With Prime Minister Narendra Modi set to hold bilateral talks with U.S. President Donald Trump this week, which will likely include intense parleys on tariffs, India could offer fresh cuts in import duties on items of U.S. interest, such as the uniquely American pecan nuts grown in its southwestern States. » Page 12

Aero India is the Kumbh of research, says Rajnath Singh

Hemanth C.S. BENGALURU

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh described Aero India as "the Kumbh of research", as the biennial air show got under way at the Air Force Station in Yelahanka, Bengaluru, on Monday.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the show's 15th edition, Mr. Singh said, "While Maha Kumbh is the Kumbh of introspection, Aero India is the Kumbh of research. While the Maha Kumbh focuses on internal strength, Aero India centres on external strength. While the Maha Kumbh showcases the culture of India, Aero India will display the power of India." He added that this edition of Asia's biggest aerospace and defence exhibi-

bition will showcase, over the next five days, India's aerial prowess and indigenous cutting-edge innovations alongside state-of-the-art products of global aerospace companies.

Innovations galore
The Defence Minister said that between the last edition of the Aero India and now, India had come up with many high-tech products such as the Astra Missile, New Generation Akash Missile, Autonomous Underwater Vehicle, Unmanned Surface Vessel, and the Pinaka Guided Rocket, which were being manufactured within the country.

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Holding formation: The Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team of the Indian Air Force performing during the inauguration of Aero India 2025 at Yelahanka Airforce Station in Bengaluru on Monday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Hamas to stop hostage swap over Israel's 'deal violation'

Reuters JERUSALEM

Hamas on Monday announced it would stop releasing Israeli hostages until further notice over what the Palestinian militant group said were Israeli violations of the ceasefire agreement.

The unexpected announcement comes amid growing doubts over an already fragile ceasefire even as families of the Israeli hostages urge the government to stick to the deal and Gazans try to start rebuilding their lives in the shattered enclave.

Bangladesh cracks down on Hasina loyalists; 1,300 held

Agence France-Presse DHAKA

Bangladeshi police said on Monday that more than 1,300 people have been arrested in a sweeping crackdown dubbed 'Operation Devil Hunt', targeting gangs allegedly connected to the ousted regime of Sheikh Hasina.

Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, head of the Interior Ministry in the interim government that took over after Ms. Hasina was ousted in the August 2024 student-led protests, has vowed the operations will continue "until we uproot the devils".

Police spokesperson Inamul Haque Sagar said op-

erations continue and "1,308 people were arrested across the country" after its launch on Saturday.

The government said operations began after gangs "linked to the fallen autocratic regime attacked a group of students, leaving them severely injured".

The government has tasked a special "command centre" team to "oversee the efforts of the law enforcement agencies", Shafiqul Alam, press advisor to interim leader Muhammad Yunus said.

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BJP urges Delhi L-G to restore 'Sheesh Mahal' to original state

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Two days after winning the Delhi Assembly election, the BJP on Monday said its Chief Minister will not occupy "Sheesh Mahal", referring to the 6, Flagstaff Road bungalow where Arvind Kejriwal stayed as the Chief Minister from 2015 till he stepped down in October 2024.

The property is under scrutiny by Central probe agencies for "irregularities" in its renovation.

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva made the announcement shortly after he wrote to Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena requesting the demerger of the four government properties, which he claimed



were amalgamated during the bungalow's revamp.

He said eight Type-V flats and two government bungalows were amalgamated with the Flagstaff Road bungalow in Civil Lines to create a "lavish complex spanning over 50,000 square metres".

In the run-up to the Delhi poll, the BJP repeatedly attacked Mr. Kejriwal, the Aam Aadmi Party chief, for building a ₹45-crore Sheesh Mahal" for himself.

Why didn't Governor inform T.N. about his objections to Bills: SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday questioned the long "silence" of the Tamil Nadu Governor, spanning months and years, to the State's Bills, culminating in his withholding of consent and the reference of at least 10 Bills to the President for consideration.

Addressing Attorney-General of India R. Venkataraman, who appeared for Governor R.N. Ravi, Justice J.B. Pardiwala said the Governor definitely had "something in his mind" when he withheld consent to the Bills sent to him for assent by the State government. Yet, the Governor did not communicate what was irking him about the proposed laws. "So, he goes quiet for one or two years... He withholds consent... Then suddenly he says I have referred them to the President," observed Justice Pardiwala, accompanied by Justice R. Mahadevan on the Bench.

Mr. Venkataraman said the Governor had earlier communicated to the State his objections regarding the constitution of the search-cum-selection committee for the appointment of Vice-Chancellors of State universities. The Governor-Chancellor had sought the inclusion of the University Grants Commission Chairperson's nominee in the search-cum-selection committee for the appointment process. The State Bills, passed subsequently, sought to remove the Governor, who was also ex-officio Chancellor of these universities, from the Vice-Chancellor appointment process.



Then why did you [Governor] keep silent about the Bills? They [the State] would have probably agreed with you
JUSTICE J.B. PARDIWALA
Supreme Court Judge

"Then why did you keep silent about the Bills? Why did you not tell the State government about your reservations if you found them repugnant?... They [the State] would have probably agreed with you..." Justice Pardiwala reacted to the submission from the top law officer.

'Not a formality'
The judge, turning Mr. Venkataraman's submissions that the Governor had earlier raised objections about the Vice-Chancellors' appointment process on its head, said that then the Assembly's reconsideration of the 10 Bills at its special sitting on November 18, 2023, would not have been just an "empty formality". "The Assembly would have known what his objections were," Justice Pardiwala remarked.

The court reserved the case for judgment.

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BJP, Cong. intensify attack on AAP govt. in Punjab

Dissent in party's State unit, countdown for the Bhagwant Mann govt. has started: BJP; mid-term polls likely, AAP MLAs would leave the party in large numbers following Delhi debacle, says Cong.

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The BJP and the Congress have intensified their attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab even as the latter dismissed speculation over dissent within the party's State unit.

While BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh said on Monday that the "countdown for the Bhagwant Mann government has started", Congress MP and former Deputy CM Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa predicted mid-term polls. He claimed AAP MLAs would leave the party in large numbers following its poll debacle in Delhi. Hitting out at the Mann government, he said Punjab needs a government that



Tarun Chugh



Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa

works for the people.

Mr. Chugh's remarks came amid speculation of dissent within AAP's Punjab unit. He said the people of Punjab are disillusioned with the AAP government. "Delhi got rid of the 'AAPda' (disaster) and now, the people of Punjab also want to get rid of it," he said.

Newly elected BJP MLA from West Delhi's Rajouri Garden Manjinder Singh Kang said, "Bajwa sahib is dreaming impossible dreams that will never come true." He also down-

played the speculation on dissent within AAP, calling national convenor Arvind Kejriwal's scheduled meeting with Punjab MLAs in Delhi on Tuesday a "routine strategy session".

Delhi Congress chief Deven Yadav hinted at a Maharashtra-like scenario. He said, "Punjab does not like interference by outsiders. Surely, we could see an Eknath Shinde model playing out there."

AAP secured a victory in the 2022 Punjab Assembly poll, winning 92 of the 117 seats. However, with Punjab being the only State where the party is in power following its poll defeat Delhi and a poor show in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, the AAP faces increasing scrutiny over its internal cohesion and governance.

Claims dismissed

Senior Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa said, "More than 30 AAP MLAs in Punjab are in touch with us."

However, AAP leaders dismissed all these claims. Party MP Malvinder Singh Kang said, "Bajwa sahib is dreaming impossible dreams that will never come true." He also down-

Retd. IFS officers write to PM over Aravali park

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

Several retired Indian Forest Service officers have sent a representation to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi opposing the 10,000-acre Aravali Safari Park project in Gurugram and Nuh, saying that the "primary purpose should be conservation and restoration and not destruction".

Central govt. meting out unfair treatment to south, says Maran

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran on Monday accused the National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre of meting out "unfair" treatment towards southern States even as "Tamil Nadu was the most successful State of the country".

"There is unfair treatment towards southern States. With an eye on the

Bihar election, there were schemes like the expansion of Patna Airport and the Kosi river project [announced in the Union Budget]. What about Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala," he questioned, while participating in a debate on the Union Budget in the Lok Sabha.

Maybe next year, a lot of schemes would be announced for Tamil Nadu and Kerala in view of the Assembly elections "but they would be mere announcements and nothing would come to Tamil Nadu", he said.

The Kanniyakumari-Thiruvananthapuram economic corridor has been ignored again in the Union Budget, he said. Despite their contribution to the economy, there was no incentives for IT hubs in Bengaluru and Chennai, he said, adding that the Chennai Metro project has also not received funds.

Blame on Congress is misplaced, AAP decided to go solo, says MP

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

"Our alliance partners should understand that they are raising fingers at the wrong party. They should direct their criticism to the party that is actually responsible for breaking the INDIA bloc in Delhi," Mr. Tagore said, adding that former Delhi Chief Minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal had announced on December 1 that AAP would go solo for the Delhi polls.

The INDIA bloc leaders have not met since the Lok Sabha results in June last year. Though the bloc's name is invoked by several of its constituents, it remains in suspended animation with no joint programmes or campaigns.

For LS polls'

"The INDIA bloc was meant for the Lok Sabha elections, to channelise anti-Modi, anti-BJP, anti-RSS

forces and that was done. We are coordinating in Parliament. When Rahul Gandhi spoke in Lok Sabha during the motion of thanks to the President, he spoke of an alternative vision. He did not call it the Congress's vision, he called it INDIA bloc's vision," Mr. Tagore added.

Reacting to the remarks from allies, Mr. Tagore said that such comments would adversely impact the bloc.

Timings DELHI	
TUESDAY, FEB. 11	
RISE 07:03 SET 18:08	
RISE 17:00 SET 06:20	
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 12	
RISE 07:02 SET 18:09	
RISE 18:00 SET 06:58	
THURSDAY, FEB. 13	
RISE 07:01 SET 18:10	
RISE 18:58 SET 07:31	

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	28	10
Safdarjang	28	10
Palam	26	10

Delhi Palam Today

25°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be slight cold with mist and haze. Day will be pleasant. Night also will be slight cold. Dry weather to prevail.

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Delhi Palam Tomorrow

26°C Morning will be slight cold with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Night also will be slight cold. Dry weather to prevail.

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Phone: 0461-2321932, 2321929 E-Website: www.tmb.in Email: shareholders@tmbbank.in									
NOTICE OF POSTAL BALLOT									
[Pursuant to Sections 108 and 110 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rules 20 and 22 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014]									
NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to the provisions of Sections 108 and 110 and all other applicable provisions, if any, of the Companies Act, 2013 (the "Act") read with Rules 20 and 22 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 (the "Rules"), Regulation 44 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 (the "SEBI Listing Regulations"), Secretarial Standard on General Meetings ("SS-2") issued by the Institute of Company Secretaries of India, including any statutory modification(s), clarification(s), substitution(s) or re-enactment(s) thereof for the time being in force, guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (the "MCA"), Government of India, for holding general meetings / conducting postal ballot process through electronic voting (remote e-voting) vide General Circular Nos. 14/2020 dated April 8, 2020, 17/2020 dated April 13, 2020, 22/2020 dated June 15, 2020, 33/2020 dated September 28, 2020, 39/2020 dated December 31, 2020, 10/2021 dated June 23, 2021, 20/2021 dated December 08, 2021, 01/2022 dated May 05, 2022, 11/2022 dated December 28, 2022, 09/2023 dated September 25, 2023 and 09/2024 dated September 19, 2024 (the "MCA Circulars"), the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and any other applicable laws and regulations, to transact the following businesses by way of Special resolutions via Postal Ballot through e-voting process:									
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>S.No.</th> <th>Description of the Resolution</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Approval and adoption of "Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited Employee Stock Option Plan 2024" [TMB ESOP 2024]</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Extension of benefits under the "Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited Employee Stock Option Plan 2024" [TMB ESOP 2024] to the Eligible Employees of its subsidiary companies, associate companies and group companies of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		S.No.	Description of the Resolution	1	Approval and adoption of "Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited Employee Stock Option Plan 2024" [TMB ESOP 2024]	2	Extension of benefits under the "Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited Employee Stock Option Plan 2024" [TMB ESOP 2024] to the Eligible Employees of its subsidiary companies, associate companies and group companies of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited		
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The Postal Ballot Notice is being sent to the Members, whose names appeared in the Register of Members / Register of Beneficial Owners maintained by the Depositories as on Friday, January 31, 2025 (the "Cut-Off Date"), through e-mail to those shareholders, who have registered their e-mail address and through post for those shareholders who have not registered their e-mail address. The Postal Ballot Notice is also available at the Bank's website www.tmb.in under Investors Relations' section and the website of the Stock Exchanges i.e. BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and National Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.nseindia.com and on the website of NSDL at www.evoting.nsdl.com . In accordance with the applicable circulars issued by the MCA, the members can vote on the resolutions proposed in the said Postal Ballot Notice only by electronic means (e-voting). The Bank has engaged the services of National Securities Depository Limited ("NSDL") to provide the e-voting facility. The detailed instructions on e-voting are provided in the postal ballot notice sent to the shareholders.									
The remote e-voting schedule is as under:									
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>EVEN (E-Voting Event Number)</th> <th>132870</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Commencement of e-voting</th> <th>Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 9.00 A.M. IST</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Conclusion of e-voting</th> <th>Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 5.00 P.M. IST</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Cut-Off date for eligibility to vote</th> <th>Friday, January 31, 2025</th> </tr> </thead> </table>		EVEN (E-Voting Event Number)	132870	Commencement of e-voting	Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 9.00 A.M. IST	Conclusion of e-voting	Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 5.00 P.M. IST	Cut-Off date for eligibility to vote	Friday, January 31, 2025
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The e-voting facility will be disabled by NSDL, immediately after 5.00 p.m. IST on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, for voting thereafter. Once the vote on the resolutions are cast by the Member, the same cannot be changed subsequently.									
The Board of Directors have appointed Shri P. Srinivas, (Membership No. FCS 4862) (CP No. 3310), Practicing Company Secretary of M/s. SPNP & Associates, to act as the scrutineer, for conducting the Postal Ballot process in a fair and transparent manner.									
The resolutions, if passed by requisite majority by remote e-voting, shall be deemed to have been passed on the last date of e-voting i.e., Wednesday, March 12, 2025. The results of e-voting will be announced on or before Friday, March 14, 2025, and will be displayed on the Bank's website www.tmb.in under Investors Relations' section and the website of the Stock Exchanges i.e., BSE Limited, www.bseindia.com and National Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.nseindia.com . In case of any queries, you may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Shareholders and e-voting user manual for Shareholders available at the download section of www.evoting.nsdl.com or call on toll free no: 022 - 4886 7000 and send a request at evoting@nsdl.com .									
By Order of the Board of Directors For Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited Sd/- Swapnil Yelgaonkar Company Secretary (Membership No: ACS 21877)									

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IN BRIEF



Omar meets Shah, discusses Statehood, law and order

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday called on Union Home Minister Amit Shah and discussed with him various issues, including restoration of Statehood and the law and order situation in the Union Territory. During the meeting, Mr. Abdullah is believed to have conveyed to Mr. Shah the need for taking people of the UT into confidence and that as the representative of the people, his government should have a say in maintaining law and order, an official said. Mr. Abdullah said the last stages of militancy won't be succeeded in a vacuum, according to the officials. PTI

Marandi slams Soren govt. over 'delay' in transfer of aid

Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Jharkhand chief and former Chief Minister Babulal Marandi on Monday slammed the Hemant Soren government over 'delay' in payment of monthly assistance to women under the Maity Samman Yojana. The last instalment was given on January 6, 2025, when the Chief Minister had transferred ₹145.44 crore to 56.61 lakh women. The scheme had played an important role in the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led INDIA bloc winning 56 out of 81 Assembly seats. "If the Soren government does not take immediate action on public issues, the BJP will launch a statewide stir," Mr. Marandi said.

Vaishnaw quashes rumours, says train operations smooth amid pilgrim rush in Prayagraj

Railway Minister
Ashwini VaishnawMaitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Monday quelled rumours that railway stations in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj were not functioning amid the Kumbh Mela and said 2.5 lakh pilgrims had travelled on a record 330 trains that departed from stations in the area on Sunday.

This number was almost on a par with the 360 trains that operated on Mauni Amavasya last month, when the pilgrim rush was at its peak.

"Today, 130 trains have departed from the mela area so far," Mr. Vaishnaw said on X. Officials said 201 trains had departed by 3 p.m. on Monday, carrying over nine lakh pilgrims.

Mr. Vaishnaw and Railways Board Chairman Satish Kumar reviewed the

Maharashtra move to stop funding eggs in MDM sparks concerns



Eggs being served to students of a Karnataka government school. Nearly 16 States have eggs on the midday meal menu. FILE PHOTO

NEWS ANALYSIS

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government's recent decision to withdraw ₹50 crore in funding for eggs and millet-based sweet dishes in State-run schools under the Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDM) has sparked criticism.

"Egg pulao and sweet khichdi/naachni satya... are being given in alternative form. The management committee should try to provide the benefits of the two recipes and the sugar required for other recipes through public participation. No additional funds will be provided by the government," a Government Resolution dated January 28 had stated.

An analysis of data from the State budget for 2024-

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CM YK

M ND-NDE

Will return to power in 2026 with two-thirds majority, says Mamata

Referencing the Delhi election, the CM tells party legislators that AAP's defeat was because of division of votes with Congress but in Bengal, 'nobody else will be required to defeat BJP'

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday told her party legislators that she will return to power in the Assembly poll due in 2026 with two-thirds majority.

The Trinamool Congress chief made the remarks at a closed-door meeting with her MLAs at the start of the Budget Session of the West Bengal Assembly.

The remarks came against the backdrop of the Delhi election results, where the Bharatiya Janata Party defeated Opposition INDIA bloc constituent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and utterances by BJP leaders that West Bengal is their next target.

During the meeting with Trinamool MLAs, the party chairperson said they should concentrate on the upcoming Assembly poll and eschew factionalism in



Governor C.V. Ananda Bose with CM Mamata Banerjee ahead of the Budget Session in Bengal Assembly in Kolkata on Monday. PTI

the party.

The Chief Minister told the legislators that the party is her family. "I have no family, you all are my family," she said, asking MLAs to refrain from making any comment in public.

Recently, a number of Trinamool legislators had spoken out in public about corruption in certain sections of the party.

Referring to the Delhi results, Ms. Banerjee said AAP's defeat was because

of division of votes between the party and the Congress. She, however, added, "In Bengal, nobody else will be required to defeat the BJP."

Governor's address

Meanwhile, indicating a thaw in the relations between Raj Bhavan and the West Bengal government, Governor C.V. Ananda Bose on Monday delivered his customary address to the State Assembly, laud-

ing the "visionary and dynamic leadership" of Ms. Banerjee. Last year, there was no Governor's address to the Assembly because of the strained ties between the State government and Raj Bhavan.

The BJP legislators tried to disrupt Mr. Bose's speech over various issues, including the absence of any mention of the R.G. Kar rape-murder case.

Leader of the Opposition Suvenu Adhikari raised slogans of 'R.G. Kar, R.G. Kar' and also objected to the fact that the Governor spoke about the Jal Swapna Scheme, saying the State government has changed the name of the Central government's Jal Jeevan Mission.

"The West Bengal government had given an undertaking that they would not change the name of the scheme and then funds were released. I will again write to the Centre and ensure that the funds are stopped," he said.



the Chief Minister for allegedly losing connection with the masses, saying, "Nayab Saini has been on an *udan khatola* (helicopter) ever since he became the Chief Minister."

Mr. Saini, however, sought to downplay the issue, claiming that the Minister was not upset and as a senior party leader he had the right to speak.

Mr. Vij had also demanded Mr. Badoli's resignation after a rape case was registered against the latter in Himachal Pradesh last month. The Minister had said the BJP chief should resign to maintain the "sanctity" of the party till he was found to be innocent in the matter.

Last week, six persons, including a woman, who had accused Mr. Badoli and singer Rocky Mittal of rape, were booked on charges of extortion and criminal intimidation.

Punjab Police cracks down on bogus travel agents after U.S. action

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Days after the deportation of alleged illegal Indian immigrants from the U.S., Punjab Police cracked down on bogus 'immigration consultants' and 'travel agents', with the aim to dismantle the multinational human trafficking nexus operating in the region.

So far, eight FIRs against travel agents have been registered, including two by the district police and six by the NRI (Non-Resident Indians) Affairs Wing of Punjab Police, based on statements by deportees.

The police action has come after complaints from victims. Punjab Police has recorded statements against the travel agents, who defrauded them with false promises of entry into the United States, an official statement said.

Last week, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was set up by Punjab Police to probe illegal human trafficking and illegal emigration after the deportation of 104 migrants from the U.S. who had landed at Amritsar airport on a U.S. military plane.

The SIT headed by Praveen Sinha, Additional Director General of Police, NRI Affairs, is monitoring the investigation.

'Met deportees'

"Senior police officials have personally met the returnees to address their grievances and assure them of due process of law. Commissioners of Police and Senior Superintendents of Police from various districts and Commissionerates are working in coordination with the SIT to bring these offenders to justice," the statement said.

While terming Mr. Meena's act an "infringement of the party's discipline", the notice reminded him of his position as a BJP member, an elected MLA from Sawai Madhopur, and a Minister in the State government.

Mr. Rathore said Mr. Meena's charges amounted to violation of the party's constitution as well.

Rajasthan BJP issues notice to Minister Kirodi Lal Meena over phone tapping allegation

Mohammed Iqbal
JAIPUR

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Rajasthan on Monday issued a show-cause notice to Cabinet Minister Kirodi Lal Meena, citing indiscipline over his recent allegation that he was under the government's surveillance and his phone was being tapped. The notice, signed by BJP State president Madan Rathore, has sought a reply within three days.

While terming Mr. Meena's act an "infringement of the party's discipline", the notice reminded him of his position as a BJP member, an elected MLA from Sawai Madhopur, and a Minister in the State government.

Mr. Rathore said Mr. Meena's charges amounted to violation of the party's constitution as well.



The Rajasthan Cabinet Minister had accused the BJP government of spying on him by tapping his telephone conversations. FILE PHOTO

yet to be accepted, the latest barrage of allegations by Mr. Meena has led to embarrassment and disquiet in the ruling party.

CM should resign: Cong. The Opposition Congress seized the opportunity to demand Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma's resignation, saying the government was spying on its own Minister for raising concerns about corruption in the system.

Kerala Cabinet gives nod to draft Bill for private universities

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A special Kerala Cabinet meeting on Monday approved the draft legislation permitting private universities in the State. The government will introduce the Bill in the ongoing session of the Assembly. The draft Bill stipulates that a sponsoring agency with experience and credibility in the education sector can apply for a private university.

If it's going to be a multi-campus university, the headquarters should be in an area of at least 10 acres. Guidelines of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the State government should be followed in the appointments to the adminis-

nistrative leadership, including that of the Vice-Chancellor and faculty, according to the draft legislation.

A total of 40% seats in each course shall be reserved for students permanently domiciled in the State and the prevailing rules for reservation of seats for SC/ST candidates will be applicable to these seats. Students in the SC/ST categories shall be eligible for fee at concessional rates and scholarships.

Applications to launch a private university should be submitted with the stipulated processing fee to the government with a detailed project report charting the extent of land and resources available.

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CM YK

M ND-NDE

CSR funds scam: SIT formed to probe 34 cases across Kerala

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

An 80-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been constituted to investigate 34 cases, collectively accounting for ₹37 crore, registered at various police stations across Kerala in connection with the alleged corporate social responsibility funds scam.

According to a circular issued by State police chief Shaik Darvesh Saheb, the decision was taken considering the "sensational nature" of the scam and for ensuring an effective investigation and

safeguarding the interests of the investors.

Meanwhile, the Ernakulam Rural police returned the key accused Ananthu Krishnan to judicial custody on Monday after getting his custody for five days.

The police traced his 19 bank accounts through which transactions worth over ₹500 crore were done over the last couple of years.

Mr. Krishnan is the key accused in all cases registered by the Ernakulam Rural police. (With inputs from Kozhikode, Alappuzha and Kottayam bureaus)

Six nabbed for attack on priest

The Hindu Bureau HYDERABAD

Within 24 hours of the attack on C.S. Rangarajan, the priest of Chilkur Balaji temple, six persons have been nabbed so far by the police in Telangana. The main accused, K. Veer Raghava Reddy, the self-proclaimed leader of 'Ram Ra-

jam' militia was arrested on Saturday. On February 7, a group of 25 men and women attacked the priest at his home in Chevella. On Monday, five more persons allegedly involved in the attack as the issue blew up with all the political parties and civil society leaders across the country condemning the attack.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, RPRC, BHUBANESWAR	
(e-mail Id: rprcbbss@gmail.com) Tel-(0674)-2557925	
NOTICE INVITING TENDER THROUGH e-Procurement Bid Identification No. RPRC/19/2024-25	
Notice No - 227 / RPRC Date : 10.02.2025	
1. Name of the Project	: Improvement of Electrical systems inside the Campus of RPRC, Bhubaneswar
2. Estimated Cost	: Rs.140.63 lakhs
3. Period of Completion	: 6 (Six) Calendar months
4. Class of Contractor	: Valid MV or MV/HV License Holder
5. Availability of bid document	: 11.02.2025/10.00 A.M. to 03.02.25/10.00 A.M. in website www.rprcbbss.in/e-portal https://rprc.ewizard.in.
6. Opening of (Technical Bid)	: 03.02.2025/11.00 AM
New Bidders to register on the portal https://rprc.ewizard.in and send a mail to eprocelpdesk.101@gmail.com with details. For queries on registration & online tender submission contact to: Mr. Shivendra Kumar, Mobile - 9355030613 and Jitesh Kumar, Mobile - 9355030604, e-mail: eprocelpdesk.101@gmail.com	
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, RPRC, BHUBANESWAR. OIPR-08004/11/0018/2425	
MM-	

CORRIGENDUM	
<p>Due to some unavoidable circumstances the last date & time for online bidding and opening of bid for the work under DNT No.: 83/CE/PWD(R&B)/ACE (P&DU)/2024-25 of PNle-T No.: 22/EE/DD/PWD(R&B)/2024-25 Dated. 22-01-2025 circulated vide this office Memo No.: 8102-8169 Dated 22-01-2025 is extended up to 15.00 Hours on 20-02-2025 & 16.00 Hours on 20-02-2025 respectively.</p> <p>All other terms and condition will remain unchanged.</p> <p>(Er. Pintu Debbarma) Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Dharmanagar Division ICA/C/3699/25</p>	

Sl.no	Package No.	Name of District	Division	Description of the Works	Length (Km/m)	Construction Amount (In Lacs)	Maintenance Amount (In Lacs)	Total Amount (In Lacs)	Ear-nest Mon-ey Payable* (In Lacs)	Cost of BOQ (In Rs.)	Amount Payable to Works Division
1	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/Sheohar/01	Sheohar	Sheohar	Construction of approach road of Sheohar Engineering College	5.700 km	1008.634	49,565	1058.199	20,582	10,000	Sheohar
2	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/ Kharagpur-Tarapur/01	Munger	Kharagpur-Tarapur	Construction of road "Chorgawon Dhaboadi Pokhar se Four Lane"	2.75 Km	414.478	39,961	454.439	9,089	10,000	Kharagpur-Tarapur
3	State Scheme (NABARD)/24-25/ Danapur/01	Danapur	Danapur	Construction of road "Alipur Dhundhna Chak more to DY Patil School via Police Colony Phase-2"	3.2 Km	316.054	43,221	359.275	7,186	10,000	Danapur
4	State Scheme NABARD /24-25/ Mahnar/01	Vaishali	Mahnar	Vaishali Jila Antartag Gram Balija and Bishnupur ke Beech Gaigha Nadi par Nirmat HL RCC Bridge ke Approach Path ka Nirmit	0.69 Km	384.3	8,30	392.600	7,852	10,000	Mahnar
5	State Scheme NABARD /24-25/ Muzaffarpur East-2/01	Muzaffarpur	Muzaffarpur East-2	Muzaffarpur Jilaantartag Construction of H.L. Bridge Bhagwati to Madhupur Ghat under Gaith block	177.56 m	1962.09	1.98	1964.070	29,641	10,000	Muzaffarpur East-2
Grand Total											4228.583

Date of Bid Invitation	06.02.2025
Date and Time for Downloading of Bidding Documents	: From 24.02.2025 (09:00 Hours) To 10.03.2025 (15:00 Hours)
Last date and Time of Online Bid Submission (including Scanned copy of Affidavits)	: 10.03.2025 up to 15:00 Hours.
Online Bid Opening Date and Time	: 10.03.2025 at 15:30 Hours.

For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar

PR. No.19023 (RWD) 2024-25

नशे की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

(Engineer in Chief-Cum-Additional Commissioner-Cum-Special Secretary) Rural Works Department

बिहार राज्य भवन निर्माण निगम लिंग, पटना							
(विहार सरकार का उपक्रम)							
केवल ई-निविदा पद्धति के अनुसार वेबसाइट एवं www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर							
SBD (EPC) ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना सं0-60/2024-25							
1 निवादा आमंत्रण का पदनाम एवं पता	: मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, बिहार राज्य भवन निर्माण निगम लिंग, अस्पताल रोड, शास्त्रीनगर, पटना-800023						
2 निविदा आमंत्रण की तिथि	: दिनांक: 07.02.2025						
3 निविदा कागजात प्राप्त करने (डाउनलोड करने) की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	: 24.02.2025 से 17.03.2025 को 03:00 बजे तक।						
4 निविदा खोलने के लिए (प्रोलोड करने) की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	: दिनांक-18.03.2025 को 03:00 बजे तक।						
5 निविदा खोलने (तकनीकी बीड़) की तिथि एवं समय	: दिनांक: 19.03.2025 को 03:00 बजे तक।						
6 वित्तीय बीड़ खोलने की तिथि एवं समय	: तकनीकी बीड़ मूल्यांकन के पश्चात।						
7 निविदा कागजात/परियाण विषय विक्री, प्राप्ति एवं खोलने का स्थान	: संबंधित उप महाप्रबंधक, (कॉलम-9 के अनुसार) का कार्यालय						
8 प्री-बीड़ मीटिंग की तिथि, समय एवं स्थान	: दिनांक-03.03.2025 को 16:00 बजे, मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, बिहार राज्य भवन निर्माण निगम लिंग, अस्पताल रोड, शास्त्रीनगर, पटना-23						
9 निविदा वैयता की तिथि	: 120 दिन						
10 निविदा वैयता की तिथि	: निविदा वैयता की तिथि एवं समय						
11 कार्य की विवरणी:-	: निविदा वैयता की विवरणी						
क्रम	कार्य का नाम	निविदा कागजात/परियाण विषय की तारीख	अप्रयोग की तारीख (ई में)	निविदा कागजात/परियाण विषय का मूल्य (ई में)	Bid Processing Fee संभव कर सकते हैं	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि	
1	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	मानोपय मुख्यमंत्री की प्राप्ति यात्रा के दौरान की गयी घोषणा के आलांक में बालाकुल जिला के नवायाग में सेवा कार्यालय के निवास का निवास का नाम	₹ 23,09,12,567.00	₹33,10,000.00	₹10,000.00	As per website	15 (प्रदर्श)	मानपत्र
2	मानोपय मुख्यमंत्री की प्राप्ति यात्रा के दौरान की गयी घोषणा के आलांक में बालाकुल जिला के नवायाग में ईर्वान हाई रुड, बैरवर प्रबंधन में आरंडोर स्टेडियम निवास का नाम।	₹ 12,92,28,342.00	₹22,93,000.00	₹10,000.00	As per website	12 (प्रारंभ)	मुंगेर
निविदा केवल ई-निविदा पद्धति के अनुसार वेबसाइट (www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in) पर निष्पादित किया जाएगा। ई-निविदा प्रक्रिया से संबंधित जानकारी Toll Free No.-18005726571 से प्राप्त किया जा सकता है। विस्तृत जानकारी state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar से प्राप्त की जा सकती है। मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, PR-019120 (B & C) 2024-25 विहार राज्य भवन निर्माण निगम लिंग, पटना							
नशे से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से यार							

Patna Smart City Limited (PSCL)			
NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR			
Construction of 500 pre-fabricated shops at Riverfront Development near Ganga Path, Patna			
NIT No. - 15/MO/PSCL/2024-25 (Through-e-procurement mode only: www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)			
Patna Smart City Limited (PSCL) invites bids from eligible experienced Firms / Contractors / Agencies / Bidders registered in appropriate category in any Government Organization/PSUs for execution of works as given below:-			
Name of Work		Bid Document (Non-Refundable)	Bid Security (EMD)
Construction of 500 pre-fabricated shops at Riverfront Development near Ganga Path, Patna		Rs. 11,800/-	25,48,000/- As per Eproc2 website
2. Date of Downloading of Bid Document		From 10.02.2025 to 05.03.2025 up to 1500 hours. Through website : www.proc2.bihar.gov.in	
3. Place & Date of pre-bid meeting		Date: 24.02.2025, Time: 1500 hours; Patna Smart City Limited, 4th Floor, CCC - cum - PSCL Building, SSS Office Campus, Gandhi Maidan, Patna-800001	
4. Last date of Receiving Queries (Online)		Date: 24.02.2025, Time: 1700 hours (through e-mail)	
5. Last Date and time for uploading of bid.		Date: 05.03.2025 up to 1500 hours through website - www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in	
6. Last Date and time for submission of hard copy of bid		Date: 05.03.2025, Time: 1700 hours	
7. Time & Date of opening technical bids		Date: 06.03.2025, Time: 1700 hours	
8. Time & Date of opening financial bids		To be communicated later on	
9. Place of opening of Bid		Through website : www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in	
10. Periods of bids validity		120 Days.	
11. Officer inviting bids		Managing Director, PSCL, Patna.	
For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar Managing Director PR-019128 (B & C) 2024-25 Patna Smart City Limited			

नशे से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से यार

TAMIL NADU STATE MARKETING CORPORATION LIMITED

The Senior Regional Manager Office, 305A, Vennurkuchi road, Old Chindhaman, Co-operative society godown, Pealamedu, Coimbatore - 641004

Tender ID:012/2025/A3

e-TENDER NOTIFICATION Date : 10.02.2025

Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation, Coimbatore Region consists of six Districts (i.e Coimbatore, North, Coimbatore (South), Tirupur, Erode, Nilgiris and Karaikal). Retail/Vending shops are functioning in those Districts buy back the empty liquor bottles from the retail outlets. Online bidding invited for these collected empty liquor bottles for selling by the Senior Regional Manager, Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation, Coimbatore Region.

e-Tender Notification announced on 04.02.2025, 11:00 F.N. Tender Documents may be downloaded/uploaded in the Tamil Nadu State Government Website <http://Tenders.tn.gov.in/ncigapp/>.



Emergency exit

N. Biren Singh is finally shown the door, but peace in Manipur is elusive

In a long overdue decision, N. Biren Singh resigned as Chief Minister of Manipur on Sunday. It was reportedly under duress due to growing dissidence within the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance government even as the Opposition Congress planned a no-confidence motion in the Assembly. The Supreme Court of India had recently sought the services of the Central Forensic Science Laboratory to provide a "sealed-cover report" on "leaked audio tapes" that it is examining, allegedly featuring Mr. Singh as an instigator of the ethnic conflict that has raged for months between two communities in the State. These proximate reasons apart, Mr. Singh's continuation was long made untenable with the ethnic conflict having shown few signs of abating, and him being seen as championing the cause of chauvinists from one group. In any case, the Union Government had, de facto, used the provisions of Article 355 to seize control over law and order without declaring its imposition. The BJP and its allies had also lost both Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 general election, indicating a fatigue in the valley and hill regions with the State government. Mr. Singh's rhetoric about the Kuki-Zo-Hmar communities, persistently accusing them of being "infiltrators" from Myanmar and providing a haven to "drug dealers" and illicit crop cultivators, fuelled the antipathy on both sides of the conflict, while his inability to rein in violent groups that openly brandished sophisticated weapons – many looted from police armories – created a culture of impunity. With the BJP persisting with its leadership, there was little hope for any reconciliation as civil society activists refused to engage in peace talks.

The Union government and the BJP should now make the best use of the opportunity by looking for a new leader who is unburdened by the shenanigans of Mr. Singh's rule and willing to work towards genuine reconciliation. Second, the Union government should accelerate the process of involving civil society leaders in talks, yet again, to address immediate issues such as the rehabilitation and return of over 60,000 displaced people. This will lay the ground for a political solution and address grievances in the hills and the valley. There are enough instruments in India's federal system that allow for creative solutions within the state-system, which have also worked well in other parts of the country in ending conflicts. But confidence-building measures and an end to wanton violence are a necessity before such solutions are mooted. Mr. Singh's resignation should pave the way for more such measures and it would be remiss on the part of the government to not follow up on these quickly.

Troubled waters

India and Sri Lanka must facilitate discussions among their fishermen

In the latest chapter of the long-standing fisheries dispute in the Palk Bay region, the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 14 fishermen from Tamil Nadu's Ramanathapuram district on February 8 for alleged poaching in waters north of Mannar. Two trawlers were also impounded. On January 27, the Navy had fired at an Indian boat near Delft Island, injuring two fishermen. With these arrests, the total number of Indian fishermen detained this year has risen to 77. Just last week, a Sri Lankan court had released nine fishermen from Karaikal, Puducherry, but one other person received a six-month prison sentence. Additionally, Sri Lankan courts have been imposing hefty fines, complicating their release. Government data over the past decade, based on responses in Parliament, show that in 2024, the number of Indian fishermen arrested in Sri Lanka crossed the 500-mark for the first time in 10 years (528). There were 787 arrests in 2014.

In a letter to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on February 3, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said that 97 fishermen and 216 fishing boats were still under the custody of Sri Lanka. Unlike in the past, when they were quickly released, recent years have seen rising convictions for violations of the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and unlawful fishing. While Tamil Nadu and Puducherry fishermen often cross the IMBL, their counterparts in Sri Lanka's Tamil-speaking Northern Province, who are still recovering from the civil war, oppose their fishing methods, particularly ecologically destructive bottom trawling. Northern Sri Lankan fishermen are seeking a sustainable solution that protects their waters from over-exploitative fishing. Indian fishermen have repeatedly sought a fresh round of talks with their Sri Lankan counterparts, with the last such meeting having taken place in November 2016. The issue was also raised in the most recent Joint Working Group meeting in Colombo last October. However, the Anura Kumara Dissanayake-led Sri Lankan government appears reluctant to negotiate. New Delhi and Colombo must recognise that a fresh approach is required to break the deadlock rather than continuing with a business-as-usual mindset. Unlike the cases of Indian fishermen detained in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, the arrests in Sri Lanka are significantly higher. New Delhi must introduce incentives to encourage Palk Bay fishermen to move away from trawling. While this shift will take time, both governments must facilitate immediate discussions between their fishing communities to find interim solutions. It is only through proactive diplomacy and sustainable fishing policies that this ongoing conflict can be addressed effectively.

D

onald Trump, a consummate dealmaker, often relies on the "expanding the canvas" strategy to resolve an intractable stalemate. Nevertheless, he made his most audacious ever deal-bid on February 4, 2025: with typical nonchalance, he wanted the Gaza Strip to be depopulated, with its 2.3 million residents being relocated to Egypt and Jordan while the United States was to take over this "demolition site" to develop it into "a riviera for the world's people". While swinging this wrecking ball over Gaza and the region at large, he also hinted that in the next four weeks, he may have another proposal for settling the West Bank issue. Both Mr. Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – who was on hand – conspicuously praised Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) and hinted that Saudi Arabia would soon join the Abraham Accords. This prompted MbS to promptly state that Saudi Arabia would not establish ties with Israel without the creation of a Palestinian state.

To most observers, Mr. Trump's pitch was chutzpah off his playbook of many recent grandiloquent remarks. To some others, it was a colonial land grab in West Asia, a veritable geopolitical minefield. Its maximalist opening overture seems to be designed to shock the opponent stakeholders into concentrating their minds and coming up with a more realistic counter-offer for eventual settlement on more balanced terms.

A geopolitical reconfiguration

Mr. Trump's "truthful hyperbole" only underlined two undeniable contextual aspects. First, after a particularly brutal and violent epoch since October 7, 2023, vital but volatile West Asia is now tethering on the verge of a profound geopolitical reconfiguration. Second, with a little nudge from its friends, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia might be among its prominent architects.

The 16 months of unprecedented hostilities have demolished several long-standing shibboleths – from Israeli invincibility to the end of the Syrian civil war. The feared Axis of Resistance stands neutered for the time being, although a revival cannot be ruled out. Iran's extensive and carefully assembled strategic outreach from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean has been upended and its deterrence against Israel has been dented. While Israel has managed a pyrrhic victory, its internal and external consequences are still panning out.

The mayhem has convulsed West Asia and bequeathed the hapless region with colossal challenges which can be broadly divided into two intertwined verticals: political and economic.

Politically, the no-holds-barred conflicts and assassinations galore have left the region



Mahesh Sachdev

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repolised with fewer guardrails, lower mutual trust and unsated revengefulness. The regional turmoil can be further segregated into perennial sub-issues crying for lasting solutions such as the Israel-Palestine question, the Iranian quest for nuclear technology, the Kurdish pursuit of national identity and the Yemeni imbroglio.

Additionally, the region now also faces a "known unknown" all over again: In his second term, Mr. Trump appears as impulsive as before and more unpredictable.

Although he professes to prioritise the American economic resuscitation, Washington's global entanglements keep ceaselessly knocking at his door. Moreover, his abrasive cowboy diplomacy, his penchant for transactional short-term fixes and his propensity for overbidding are often counterproductive. Further, he may discover that the world in general and West Asia in particular are no longer where they were during Trump 1.0. The Gaza war has thrust forth the centrality of Palestinian statehood, complicating, if not derailing, his vision to expand the Abraham Accords with the inclusion of Saudi Arabia and other Arab states. He also has to contend with the growing influence of the ultra-religious Jewish groups in Israel and the HTS-led Syria.

Economic issues

West Asia's current economic problems are two-fold. The first set is rooted in the conflicts waged over the past few years including in Gaza (rebuilding 1,700 houses destroyed is to cost \$50 billion), Lebanon (\$8.5 billion) and Syria (damage from a 13-year civil war is put at around \$500 billion). While humanitarian issues are urgent, a return to socio-economic normalcy would necessarily await the respective political resolutions. In many cases, the western economic sanctions also come in the way. The second regional economic problem is structural: the dependence on hydrocarbons, notoriously fickle natural resources threatened by a global consumption peak by the end of this decade. Recent Trump disruptions including walking away from the Paris climate accord, the launch of the "Drill, baby, drill" campaign and the public call for lower oil prices, make one wonder whether he is part of this specific problem or its solution. The shale revolution has made the U.S. the world's largest hydrocarbon producer, but the technology, being more expensive, is highly price sensitive. If oil prices are drastically forced down, shale technology may no longer be remunerative. Further, an oil glut would dent the West Asian economies which are widely expected to bear the major burden of the huge post-conflict reconstruction.

Moreover, Mr. Trump's tariffs and sanctions blitzkrieg against friends and foes alike has not only disrupted global trade and investment flows

but has also led to the strengthening of the U.S. dollar. As most West Asian currencies are tied to the dollar, they have also risen, denting their economic competitiveness and derailing their bids to diversify away from oil.

Spotlight on Saudi Arabia

To help cope with the multiple crises in West Asia, the U.S. and the Kingdom need to reorient their over 80-year-old alliance beyond its traditional "security in return for oil" paradigm. The Kingdom, the region's biggest economy (GDP 1.07 trillion), has come out relatively unscathed by the conflicts waging around it. It is relevant to note that the Saudi Public Investment Fund is estimated to have total assets of \$930 billion and Saudi Aramco has a market capitalisation of \$1.7 trillion. The country is led by MbS, a pragmatic young leader with an iconoclastic ambition to head the Arab and Islamic world. Apart from hosting two well-attended Arab-Islamic Summits on the Gaza conflict, he has extricated himself from the costly Yemeni civil war and normalised ties with Iran and Qatar. He has deepened links with Russia and China without antagonising Washington. With Saudi Arabia as the world's largest oil exporter, MbS has been a moderating influence on OPEC and OPEC+. A fortnight ago, Mr. Trump told a Davos videoconference that his first official international phone call after re-entering the White House was with MbS, where the Crown Prince offered to invest \$600 billion in the U.S. Mr. Trump then coolly asked him to "round off" the figure to \$1 trillion. The incident only goes to show that the Kingdom under MbS has what it takes to be a political and economic bulwark for the region.

Before the Gaza war, America's regional diplomacy was focused on Riyadh-Tel Aviv reconciliation. While MbS did not rule out joining the Abraham Accords, he played hardball by asking Washington for stiff concessions including a bilateral security treaty, access to nuclear technology and state-of-the-art weaponry. However, 16 months of sordid bloodletting in Gaza has left plenty of toxicity in its wake, making MbS now insist on a pathway towards a two-state solution, which the Israeli Parliament has officially rejected.

Despite these serious obstacles, the rationale for a Saudi-U.S. re-engagement remains intact as MbS can usefully fund the reconstruction of the war-ravaged regions and leverage Saudi Arabia's profile to persuade doubtful and sullen Arabs to see the merit of a negotiated solution. Mr. Trump's other challenge lies in coaxing the Israeli leadership to be more flexible and go beyond its survival instinct. Thus, while Trump-MbS bromance may or may not launch a trillion-dollar bilateral investment boom, their synergy would be a priceless contribution to healing the mauled West Asia.

Gaza and Trump's 'expanding the canvas' strategy

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West Asia is being reconfigured geopolitically with Saudi Arabia as one of its main architects

In his address in January 2025, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, while addressing the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention, the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, said, "Today's India not only firmly asserts its own point but also strongly amplifies the voice of the Global South". Similarly, when India held the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit 2024, last August, Mr. Modi said that India aspires to lead the required reforms to take developing countries into a new, more inclusive structure of global governance.

What has influenced India's renewed enthusiasm to champion the cause of the developing world? And, how can the country influence change to become an effective global development partner?

Unlike the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), India's motivation does not appear to be based on decolonisation or strong criticism of the West. Rather, as India attempts to increase its presence in the Global South, it is simultaneously deepening its relationships with traditional partners such as the United States and Europe. The high-level visit of Jake Sullivan, the former U.S. National Security Adviser, in January, reflects this. Mr. Modi's visit to Poland, in August 2024, also shows India's attempt to create new alliances.

The China factor argument

The cynical answer often circles back to India trying to counter China's growing global dominance. Trends of foreign direct investments in Africa indicate that India appears to be in a race with China, mainly focusing on countries which already have a significant Chinese presence. Further, industrialised countries are thought to be strategically partnering with India to contain China's rising international footprint. The Quad partnership, an on-going dialogue between Japan, India, Australia and the U.S., for a free and fair Indo-Pacific, is seen as one such attempt. However, the India-China competition does not give the full picture.

India is trying to create an individual identity as an emerging power in its own right to forward



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its own strategic trade, defence, and geopolitical interests. Global South countries are disillusioned with present economic paradigms, burdened with debt and conditionalities. They are not looking for another China or a new western institution. India can fill this gap while being a bridge between the Global North and Global South. To be successful, India needs to back up its rhetoric with the right strategies.

Steps that India must take

The first is for India to double-down on its call for an alternate paradigm of development cooperation that is not solely top-down, dictated by the Global North. India often lays emphasis on equal partnerships with other developing countries, trying to set itself apart from traditional powers. In practice, it signals otherwise by putting forward strategies with an India-first approach.

The newly announced 'Global Development Compact' aimed at facilitating growth in the Global South, was described as rooted in Indian experiences and strategies. India's development story as an emerging power and being the world's largest democracy makes it unique. However, it does not hold all the policy answers. It would merit India to not only assert itself as a provider of knowledge but also be open to learning from other Global South countries to address its domestic challenges. Countries are bound to be more receptive toward a country that views them as partners. Otherwise, India may also be perceived as a big brother imposing traditional donor and recipient relationships.

Second, New Delhi has laid stress on a more human-centric approach to tackle developmental challenges. This has been defined at international fora towards promoting behavioural change via Mission LiFE ('Lifestyle For Environment'), which encourages low consumption lifestyles. While important, the need is to rebrand human-centric development in order to focus on building human resource and capacity, especially to tackle future sustainability challenges. Skill India or schemes that mainstream women into entrepreneurship,

New Delhi's aspiration to be the 'voice' of the Global South can take shape if it also learns to listen

will be attractive for countries in the Global South which are also seeking to grow their domestic industry. India's capacity building strategy has tended to revolve around the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, which implements sector-specific short-term activities. It would be more effective for longer term engagement to assist countries in creating their own institutional capacity to create a better workforce. India can leverage its experiences with micro, small and medium enterprises to foster exchanges. A focus on digital infrastructure, climate and energy solutions as well as water and food security are key areas for cooperation.

The goal ahead

Lastly, India has called for more inclusive global governance. The nation demonstrated this intent by championing the addition of the African Union into the G-20 (in 2023) during India's presidency. India should not be content with facilitating changes in established international institutions but also learn to build domestic capacity. As India aspires to become a stronger global development player, it must establish norms, standards and systems to work with partner countries. Initially, it is beneficial to use existing institutional channels of partners such as the United Nations or Germany and France that are more experienced in development cooperation. However, the long-term goal should be for India to create its own robust domestic systems for international cooperation. Trilateral partnerships and increased engagement with new partners need to be seen as a learning by doing process, where India imbibes its experiences to scale up India-led global initiatives.

India aspires to be the 'voice' of the Global South, but it also must 'listen' to be a good leader. When India spearheaded NAM, the country showed the world that there is a new, third option for developing countries. India should not miss out on an opportunity to do the same thing now.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Delhi result

The defeat of the grand old party in the Delhi election should be an eye-opener to the Gandhi siblings. It is going to be a long road for the Gandhi family to get the slow train moving again.

Arunkumar Sadanand,
Chennai

The Indian electorate is, by and large, a moderately tolerant people, but it does react and flag vulgar extremities of corrupt practices. In Andhra Pradesh, this was fully vindicated in the complete defeat of the YSR Congress Party — the 'Rushikonda

palace case' in Vizag is a key example.

Seshagiri Row Karry,
Hyderabad

Interestingly, the BJP beat AAP at its own game by offering freebies. The dismal show by the Congress raises question marks about its

ability to win elections.

Gregory Fernandes,
Mumbai

Lessons from deportation
It is quite unfortunate that there is hardly any Indian expatriate who ever says, "I will get back to my country." On the contrary, they say

they have better opportunities in Canada, Australia and Germany. The Prime Minister does not say 'we will give them similar if not better opportunities'. On the contrary, there is a silence over the handcuffing of our people. The External Affairs Minister goes to the

extent of saying that the U.S. is following standard procedure. India must pursue development and create opportunities.

N.G.R. Prasad,
Chennai

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

The problem of regulating live-in relationships

Uttarakhand recently implemented a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), governing various aspects of civil life. One of the novel aspects of the UCC is that it mandates compulsory registration of opposite-sex live-in relationships, and criminalises those engaged in unregistered non-marital cohabitation. While some of the provisions on live-in relationships are well intentioned, others are problematic and potentially dangerous.

Well intentioned, but...
The biggest concerns around non-marital cohabitation tend to be the protection of the interests of the party that is rendered needy (due to childcare or other household responsibilities or a lack of independent income, for example), and of the rights of any children born to the parties. The UCC goes some way towards addressing these concerns. It declares that children born in live-in relationships will be considered legitimate, which is an improvement on the existing position of law whereby only children born through void or voidable marriages (where a marriage takes place but is legally invalid) are deemed legitimate. The essential legal remedy of maintenance in the event of desertion by a live-in partner is also provided by the law, although desertion in this context remains undefined.

Two potential problems that might arise around these provisions need consideration. First, the maintenance provision might provide a legal recourse to a woman who has been deserted. However, there is no provision for maintenance upon termination (as opposed to desertion), and termination of a live-in relationship requires nothing more than a statement of termination to be submitted to the registrar by either party. This aligns with the informal and flexible nature of non-marital cohabitation but raises its own challenges. When a live-in



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relationship is terminated (without cause or scope for contestation), a woman may be left with no legal recourse despite needing continuing support. A related concern is that since only opposite-sex live-in relationships can be registered, the Uttarakhand government has left same-sex relationships entirely unprotected. Second, the very definition of a 'live-in relationship' is nebulous and overbroad. Drawing from the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and case law on domestic violence, the UCC defines a 'live-in relationship' as a relationship 'in the nature of marriage'. But live-in relationships are frequently not in the nature of a marriage. Parties may not see themselves as being 'married in all but name'. Similarly, the one-month period provided for the registration of a live-in relationship appears to misunderstand the typical nature of such a relationship which does not usually have a formal date of commencement because the transformation of a casual sexual relationship, or non-cohabiting intimate sexual relationship, into a live-in relationship tends to be fluid. This legal-social mismatch is likely to compel the registration of sexual relationships that are, in fact, casual and do not require the kind of protections the UCC offers.

The right to sexual autonomy
There are graver problems with these provisions of the UCC. In *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018), the Supreme Court recognised an adult's right to positive sexual autonomy, encompassing the freedom to make one's own choices about whether and with whom to have sexual interactions. While this is not an unconditional right (being subject to the consent of the other party, laws on public decency, etc.), the essence of the right is that neither the state, nor an adult's family can interfere unreasonably with her consensual sexual choices. However, studies have demonstrated that parents and guardians, through legal (e.g.,

misuse of rape laws) and extra-legal (e.g., forms of social punishment including violence) means frequently undermine this right. Provisions regulating live-in relationships have the potential to enhance such parental control. The provisions in the UCC mandate that any live-in relationship be registered within one month of its commencement. While the age of sexual consent in India is 18 years, where either partner in the live-in relationship is younger than 21 years, the UCC states that information of the relationship will be sent to the person's parent/guardian. In addition to being an unjustified violation of the adult's right to privacy and sexual autonomy, this provision, by alerting disapproving parents/guardians to inter-caste or inter-religious relationships, in a context where honour-based violence is widespread, is dangerous.

The law also intensifies the control of the state over the sexual choices of individuals. The UCC requires that information of all registered live-in relationships be forwarded to the local police. Such a provision reflects a view of a live-in relationship as a potential law-and-order complication requiring state surveillance. This problematic understanding of the law is further reflected in the unsubstantiated criminalisation of the failure to register a live-in relationship for more than a month, or the refusal to register a live-in relationship after a notice to do so from the registrar – offences punishable by imprisonment and/or hefty fines.

In most jurisdictions which permit or mandate the registration of non-marital cohabitation, the purpose of the law is to extend welfare measures and safeguards available within a marriage to non-marital cohabitation. The Uttarakhand UCC, however, appears to conceptualise 'live-in relationships' as a problem to be solved through regulation. In doing so, the law erodes sexual autonomy and reinforces state and social control of sexual choices.

The
Uttarakhand
Uniform Civil
Code erodes
sexual
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Maharashtra: a State of uneven growth

The regional imbalance is stark and has persisted since the State's formation

STATE OF PLAY

Piyush Zaware

Maharashtra, hailed as India's economic powerhouse, presents a paradox. While cities such as Mumbai, Pune, and Thane thrive as global commerce hubs, regions such as Marathwada and Vidarbha are poor and underdeveloped. This stark regional imbalance, persistent since the State's formation in 1960, has widened economic inequality and fuelled social crises, including caste agitations, farmer suicides, and rural discontent.

In 2023-24, the per capita nominal net domestic district product (NDDP) in prosperous districts exceeded ₹3 lakh, while regions such as Washim, Gadchiroli, and Yavatmal recorded per capita incomes below ₹1.5 lakh. This economic gap mirrors disparities in social and human development indicators. A recent NITI Aayog report states that in districts such as Pune and Nagpur, only 3-4% of the population is deprived of essential services such as health, education, and basic amenities. But in Vidarbha and Marathwada, over 10% of the population is classified as multidimensionally poor, with Nandurbar and Dhule seeing alarming rates of 33% and 24%, respectively.

Marathwada's underdevelopment is compounded by its lack of industrial infrastructure. While Western Maharashtra boasts state-planned industrial clusters in places such as Chakan and Ranjangaon, Marathwada has only one major industrial hub at Waluj. This absence of industrial investment, combined with the region's reliance on agriculture, has left it vulnerable to droughts and climate variability. Agricultural distress



is further exacerbated by limited irrigation facilities, erratic monsoons, and an over-reliance on cash crops such as cotton and sugar cane, which are highly sensitive to climate fluctuations.

Farmers continue to rely on unpredictable rainfall and depleting groundwater levels, leading to distress migration and a rise in farmer suicides. Additionally, the growing demand for water-intensive crops in the face of persistent drought conditions has worsened the crisis, making the need for sustainable water management solutions all the more pressing.

Despite multiple efforts to address regional disparities, progress remains slow. Maharashtra has previously appointed two committees – the Dr. V. M. Dandekar Committee in 1984 and the Vijay Kelkar Committee in 2011 – to offer recommendations for equitable development. Unfortunately, many of these recommendations remain unimplemented, and the Statutory Development Boards, which were created to correct the developmental backlog in Marathwada and Vidarbha, remain inactive. This administrative inertia has deepened the developmental divide and bred resentment among marginalised communities.

The State Budget for FY 2024-25 reflects this ongoing imbalance. While larger shares of the divisible outlay have been allocated to regions

such as Konkan, Western Maharashtra, and Vidarbha, Marathwada continues to receive a disproportionately smaller portion of resources.

While infrastructure and industrial development in Western Maharashtra have received significant investments, Marathwada struggles with basic necessities such as roads, healthcare, and education. The disparity in educational institutions and employment opportunities has led to a talent drain, as young people from Marathwada seek better opportunities in urban centres, further weakening the region's economic base.

This regional imbalance is not merely an economic issue; it is a governance challenge. To ensure inclusive and sustainable growth, the State must adopt a balanced development approach. This includes not only allocating more resources to backward regions but also expediting critical projects such as the Marathwada Water Grid and fostering industrial growth in these areas. The time for half-measures and empty promises is over. The solution lies in bold policy decisions, unwavering political will, and a commitment to ensuring that no region is left behind. Investing in human capital, sustainable infrastructure, and industrial diversification is the key to unlocking balanced growth. The prosperity of Maharashtra must not be the privilege of a few but the right of all its citizens. Only through a holistic and inclusive approach can the State move forward as a truly united economic powerhouse, where Mumbai's skyscrapers and Marathwada's fields flourish together in shared progress.

Piyush Zaware is a researcher at the University of Chicago

Centre's allocations for justice-related schemes fluctuate

Allocations for modernising State police forces are severely underutilised

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

The Central government has consistently reduced budget allocations to certain justice-related schemes and projects since 2019, shows the recently released India Justice Report 2025-26.

Data also show that not only have allocations reduced, but also, only a fraction of the envisaged allocations was actually spent on these schemes.

The Modernisation Fund for the State Police Forces was formed to assist special projects and schemes that would upgrade the infrastructure of States' police as well as Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems. **Chart 1** shows the Budget Estimates (BE), Revised Estimates (RE), and actual expenditure of the Modernisation Fund for the State Police Forces for the State Police Forces.

The Centre estimated a budget of almost ₹900 crore for FY19. This declined to around ₹780 crore in BE for FY21. In FY26, it has come down to ₹587.97 crore (BE).

While these figures are for BE, RE show a drastic reduction in allocations. For instance, the ₹780 crore that was budgeted in FY21 was revised to ₹106 crore. Such over-estimations in BE and drastic downward revisions in RE can be seen across most years. In FY25, the allocation for the fund was estimated to be ₹520.51 crore and was revised in the following year to ₹160 crore.

Chart 5 shows the BE and RE of allocations for the development of infrastructure facilities for the judiciary from FY19 to FY26. This is a centrally sponsored scheme that was developed to enhance the judicial resources of State governments. Similar to NALSA, this fund has been utilised almost to its full potential across the past five financial years, but has seen a decrease in allocation from ₹1,123.40 crore (FY25) to ₹998 crore (FY26).

sation of Forensic Capacities is aimed at improving forensic testing infrastructure across the country and addressing the shortage of forensic scientists. **Chart 2** shows the allocation of funds for the Modernisation of Forensic Capacities. There was a stark increase and then a decrease in allocations over the past few years for this scheme.

The Ministry of Home Affairs also introduced the Modernisation of Prisons Fund more than two decades ago, which aims to improve the living conditions of prisoners, renovate existing prisons, and build new cells. **Chart 3** shows the budgetary allocations for it. Despite an initial increase in budgetary allocations for this scheme, which peaked at ₹400 crore in FY23, allocations have come down to ₹300 crore each in the last two years. Until FY23, the allocation was wholly utilised, after which only 44% of the budgeted fund was utilised.

Alternatively, the schemes related to the judiciary have seen an optimal utilisation of funds over the past few years. **Chart 4** shows the BE and RE of allocations to the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) from FY19 to FY25. Funds allocated to NALSA have increased since FY19, but have generally remained within the range of ₹150 crore to 200 crore, with the exception of the RE of FY24, during which it increased to ₹400 crore. NALSA has reported 100% utilisation of the budgeted amounts for all the years between 2018-19 to 2023-24.

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The paper trail

The data for the charts were sourced from the Central government's Budget documents and the India Justice Report 2025-26

Chart 1: Budget Estimates, Revised Estimates and actual expenditure of the Modernisation Fund for the State Police Forces (in ₹ crore)

Years	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actual Expenditure (AE)
2018-19	897.29	915.79	914.12
2019-20	959.8	939.79	929.58
2020-21	784.53	106.74	159.99
2021-22	668.5	240.49	170.45
2022-23	621.45	152.52	34.72
2023-24	264.12	221.16	65.28
2024-25	520.51	160.12	-
2025-26	587.97	-	-

Chart 2: The Budget Estimates of funds for the Modernisation of Forensic Capacities from FY23 to FY26. Figures in ₹ crore

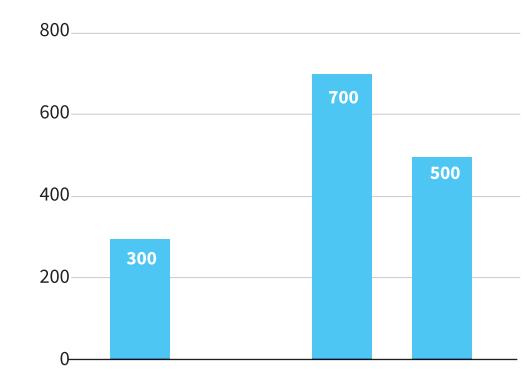


Chart 4: The BE and RE of allocations to the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) from FY19 to FY25

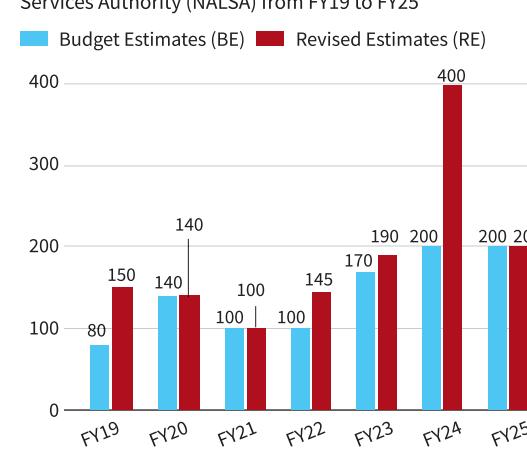


Chart 3: The allocation of funds for the modernisation of prisons from FY22 to FY26. Figures in ₹ crore

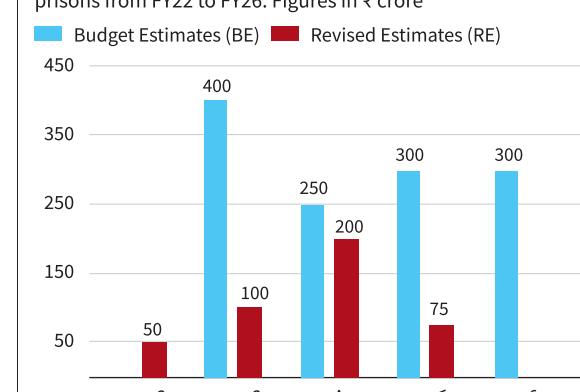
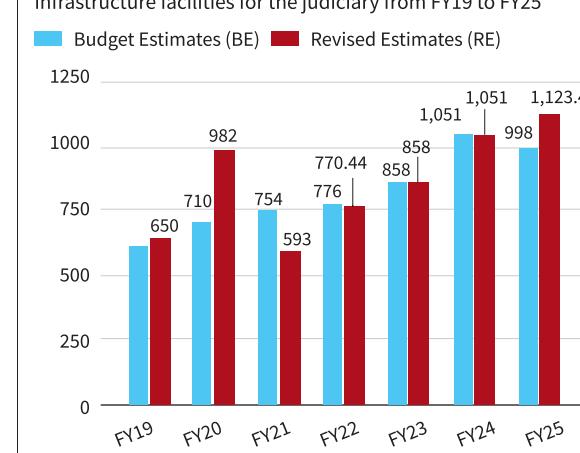


Chart 5: The BE and RE of allocations for the development of infrastructure facilities for the judiciary from FY19 to FY25



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 11, 1975

Wilson warns against raw material cartels

London, Feb. 10: There is a growing concern in Western Capitals about the third world, raw material producing countries' "geopolitical power" – its impact, origin and consequences on the developed countries. It is a term which is very much in vogue and the members of the third world are constantly reminded that they will be only cutting their own feet if they went about organising commodity cartels, marketing associations, etc., trying to extract better prices and terms for their raw materials from the developed and richer countries.

India is still not forgiven for letting the Arabs and other oil producers to hike oil prices four times and for justifying the oil producers' decision on merit of the fact that for decades, industrialised countries exploited oil producers to build their economies on cheap oil. It may now seem that there will be growing confrontation between the third world and the developed countries on this score and the British Government has taken a major initiative to warn the raw material producing countries about the consequences of such tactics.

Last night the British Premier Mr. Wilson called for international assurances for commodity exporting countries that would stabilise raw material prices. Mr. Wilson said that unless guarantees were provided about future markets for many key raw materials, exporting countries would form cartels to push up prices. Both Mr. Wilson and the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Callaghan, intend to develop this theme at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference in April.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 11, 1925

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Amount of GST evaded from April to December 2024

1.88 In ₹ lakh crore. GST evasion of over ₹1.88 lakh crore was detected by Central GST officers during April–December 2024, the Lok Sabha was informed on Monday. In all, 132 arrests were made and recovery of ₹20,128 crore was made during the period. PTI

Amount spent so far on PM Internship Scheme's pilot project

48 In ₹ crore. Around ₹48 crore has been spent so far for the pilot project of the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme, with the Corporate Affairs Ministry gathering feedback from stakeholders to assess its impact. The scheme aims to provide internships to one crore youth. PTI

Students benefiting from Credit Guarantee Fund scheme

6.78 In lakh. The Centre has approved ₹3,019 crore under the Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme benefiting 6.78 lakh students till 2024. Under the scheme, the government gives guarantee for education loans availed by students without any collateral security. PTI

Number of companies that faced Corporate Affairs Ministry probe

462 As many as 462 companies came under the lens of the Corporate Affairs Ministry's regional directors for suspected fraud in the last five financial years. A total of 51 companies were under probe in 2023-24 while the count stood at 205 in 2022-23. PTI

Number of jhuggis reduced to ashes in Himachal Pradesh

23 families were rendered shelterless as a cluster of jhuggis were reduced to ashes in a fierce fire which broke out in Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur, an official said. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained but there was no loss of life. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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What has the Budget offered scientists?

The Union Budget for 2025-26 provided an overall and possibly unprecedented thrust on research and innovation, especially in the private sector. The Budget's support for private sector research is expected to accelerate advancements in areas such as gene-editing, personalised medicine, and sustainable agriculture.

FULL CONTEXT

T.V. Padma

What does India's 2025-2026 Union Budget spell for India's research ecosystem? The author asked seven scientists and science administrators. Their replies are presented below, edited for clarity.

Read the full version online here: bit.ly/scientistsbudget

Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, Department of Science & Technology:

The Budget provides an overall and possibly unprecedented thrust on research and innovation by setting aside ₹20,000 crore for the Department of Science & Technology (DST), and towards research in the private sector, including corporates and startups. There is a focused attempt to bring together academia, the private sector, and startups to work on national missions.

The dedicated fund of ₹20,000 crore is part of the ₹1 lakh crore corpus fund announced in the Budget of July 2024 to boost private sector R&D, especially in the deeptech and sunrise sectors. The DST will be the nodal ministry driving this fund. This will be a major step towards creating strategic autonomy in some key technology sectors. The National Geospatial Mission has been allocated ₹100 crore for FY 2025-2026 to develop foundational geospatial infrastructure and data. The mission will help implement the National Geospatial Policy 2022, with the goal of expanding the access and use of geospatial data and making India a world leader in the geospatial sector.

The Finance Minister has announced several initiatives to boost science, and innovation in the country including the Nuclear Energy Mission, clean tech initiatives, Atal Tinkering Labs etc.

Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology (DBT): The Union Budget demonstrates a commitment to advancing India's biotechnology sector, which aligns closely with the DBT's objectives. The ₹3,446.64 crore allocation reflects a significant increase of 51.45% from the previous year's allocation.

Recently, the government also approved the 'Bio-RIDE' scheme to foster innovation, promote bio-entrepreneurship, and strengthen India's position as a global leader in biomaterials and biotechnology.

The Budget's support for private sector research is expected to accelerate advancements in areas such as gene-editing, personalised medicine, and sustainable agriculture. The proposal for a light-touch regulatory framework based on principles and trust is a progressive step. Aligned with the government's 'BioE3 Policy' for fostering high-performance biomaterials, the National Manufacturing Mission (NMM) announced in the Budget aims to accelerate technology development and commercialisation.

The National Mission on High Yielding Seeds will focus on strengthening the research ecosystem and developing high-yielding, pest-resistant, and climate-resilient seeds. Similarly, some of DBT's initiatives contribute to self-reliance programmes, such as the mission on minor oil seeds. Another is a mission programme on "Characterisation of Genetic Resources", to sequence/re-sequence and characterise available germplasm resources of pulses.



ISTOCKPHOTO

N. Kalaiselvi, Director-General, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR):

The Budget reinforces science, technology, and innovation (STI) as key enablers of national progress, aligning with CSIR's vision of advancing self-reliance and global competitiveness. The Budget's focus on public-private partnerships, industry collaboration, and technology-driven entrepreneurship will accelerate innovation in manufacturing, healthcare, and sustainability.

For agriculture and rural prosperity, CSIR's Aroma and Floriculture Missions align with the Agri-Districts Initiative, promoting value-added farming and boosting farmer incomes. Similarly, CSIR's Millets Mission supports self-reliance in the farming of pulses and oilseeds, ensuring nutritional security and climate-resilient farming. The CSIR Cotton Mission aligns with the National Cotton Mission, strengthening India's position in global textile markets.

The Indigenous Manufacturing and Smart Packaging Missions find synergy with the NMM, driving innovation-led industrial growth. The Green Hydrogen Mission, spearheaded by CSIR, supports the clean energy transition.

For youth-skilling, CSIR's Jigyasa Programme complements Atal Tinkering Labs, fostering STEM education and research exposure. The Seaweed Mission and Learn & Earn Program empowers women entrepreneurs, supporting economic inclusion. Additionally, CSIR's Footwear for Healthcare and India Footwear Sizing Program align with the leather sector's initiatives. This Budget cements CSIR's pivotal role in nation-building and reinforces STI as the foundation for a self-reliant, inclusive, and globally competitive India.

K.S. Parthasarathy, former Secretary, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board: The Central government's ambitious

programme to enhance the share of nuclear power to 100 GWe by 2047 and to invest heavily to support associated R&D is challenging to all stakeholders. Accepting private sector participation in the nuclear sector adds a new dimension to the programme. Success in the project to develop and install Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) is essential in India's energy transition. As per the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), SMRs are nuclear reactors with a power generating capacity of 300 MWe equivalent or less.

The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) has implemented measures to regulate the safety of VVER Russian reactors, pressurised heavy water reactors of 700 MWe etc, all of which include first of its kind technologies.

AERB's reports to the IAEA Convention of Nuclear Safety reveal how openly and transparently it has been fulfilling its mandate. AERB staff updates its knowledge and expertise in safety-related disciplines associated with new technologies. It has linkages with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the French regulatory agency among others, and exchanges its experience regularly.

C.P. Rajendran, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru: The Budget infuses significant funding for science and technology and for the DBT, whereas the allocation for the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research is nominal.

The importance of curiosity-driven science doesn't seem to be a major priority. Much of the funding appears directed towards mission-mode programmes such as nuclear energy, AI, private sector initiatives, etc. The government also plans to amend the Nuclear Liability and Damage Act 2010 that makes operators liable for nuclear damage. This will have serious ramifications. Many experts have raised concerns about SMRs.

The Finance Minister also announced

the expansion of the Small Industries Development Bank of India Fund for Startups with an additional ₹10,000 crore corpus to enhance the "deeptech ecosystem" in startups focused on AI, biotech, and space technology. India had over 3,600 deeptech startups in 2023. In that year, they raised ₹850 million, reflecting a 77% decrease from 2022 due to investors' lack of confidence regarding investment returns.

Curiosity-driven research is propelled by scientists' curiosity regarding specific research questions. What I observe is a growing corporatisation of science driven solely by immediate utility. Another critical issue is the rigid bureaucracy surrounding funding, which has created significant problems over the years.

Tapasya Srivastava, University of Delhi, South Campus:

The Budget meets the increasing needs of health research and biomedical devices, given that the Economic Survey recognised the physical and mental harms of ultra-processed food leading to non-communicable diseases.

The percentage increase from the Revised Estimate of 2024-2025 to Budget Estimate of 2025-2026 for Central universities (4.3%) is about half of that given to IITs (8.4%), which is disappointing given the number of students and the overhauling with respect to the National Education Policy (NEP) that universities are going through. These changes require unprecedented support from the government, which is not evident looking at these numbers.

It would have been more meaningful if the Prime Minister's Research Fellowship became an interim research fellowship of a reasonable amount that replaces the abysmally low ₹8,000 non-NET UGC. The PMRF is competitive and, therefore, ends up mostly in labs with sufficient funding.

The AI bandwagon is something that all governments seem to want to rush into. The allocation has come into the Centre of Excellence in AI education and one hopes the Centre sets benchmarks for adoption in a way that truly benefits Indian society, beyond buzzwords.

With a significant number of youth struggling with mental health issues, overall health decline, reduced attention span and consumerism, the unprecedented advantage of a steady government to implement value-based learning and life skills in school education to bring about generational change appears to have been lost.

Soumitro Banerjee, IISER, Kolkata:

The scientific community of India is dismayed to see the low financial allocation to sectors crucial for scientific development. The NEP-2020, adopted by the same government, recommended the expenditure on education be 6% of the GDP, which requires at least 10% of the Union Budget to be spent on education.

But since 2020, there has been no attempt to meet this target. This year the allocation is only 2.54%. This implies that through NEP-2020, the government is trying to change the structure and content of education without improving its quality. The direction of change is clear from the five-fold increased outlay for 'Indian Knowledge Systems'.

Basic science research has taken a backseat as the funding for IISc and the IISERs has been reduced. The UGC, which funds all universities, saw a drastic reduction in its budget last year (from ₹5,360 crore to ₹2,500 crore). Despite some increase this year (33% BE to BE), it is far below the pre-2024 figure. *T.V. Padma is a science journalist.*

THE GIST

The dedicated fund of ₹20,000 crore is part of the ₹1 lakh crore corpus fund announced in the Budget of July 2024 to boost private sector R&D, especially in the deeptech and sunrise sectors.

The importance of curiosity-driven science doesn't seem to be a major priority. Much of the funding appears directed towards mission-mode programmes such as nuclear energy, AI, private sector initiatives, etc.

Basic science research has taken a backseat as the funding for IISc and the IISERs has been reduced.

ABSTRACT



Extent of impact: A family watches *Ramayana* after it was revived during the pandemic in Jammu, in 2020. AP

How the *Ramayan* TV show helped shape a singular nationwide Hindu identity

In a way, the mass dissemination of a standardised story of Ram couldn't have come at a better time for the advocates of Hindutva, as it helped prime a diverse Hindu population brought up on regional variations of the epic, for the unitary ideology of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement

G. Sampath

Ahmed, Resuf, Paul Brimble, Akhila Kovvuri, Alessandro Saia, Dean Yang. 2025. 'Ancient Epics in the Television Age: Mass media, Identity, and the Rise of Hindu Nationalism in India.' *National Bureau of Economic Research*, Cambridge, MA. Working Paper 3341.

The broadcast of the *Ramayan* television series happened at a pivotal moment in India's media and cultural history. It aired from January 1987 to July 1988. This was a time when television signal reception was expanding but still limited. So for a substantial mass of the population, their very first exposure to this novel medium was the televised adaptation of the ancient Hindu epic. Combined with a gigantic viewership and the religious dimension, it caused the serial to have an outsized impact on its audiences.

Exploiting this aspect—the "geographical and over-time variation in television signal strength"—to identify "the causal effects of exposure to the *Ramayan* TV show, the authors of this paper pose the question: "Can exposure to religious narratives through mass media shape cultural identities and, in turn, influence political landscapes?"

There already exists a body of research that says 'yes'. For instance, it is not a matter of debate that the *Ramayan* broadcast aided the rise of Hindu nationalism. It did. This study, by "examining the long-term effects of the *Ramayan* broadcast on cultural, social, and political outcomes," seeks to bridge the "several interconnected strands" of this literature. Its unique methodology hinges on leveraging variations in TV signal strength across India to track how "exposure" to the *Ramayan* serial "affected cultural norms, communal

relations, and voting behaviour in the years that followed."

How the show affected cultural behaviour

The paper offers three key findings. First, areas with "higher *Ramayan* exposure (higher TV signal strength in 1987) experienced significant changes in cultural practices indicating a strengthening of religious identity." This study tracked two cultural practices—naming of new-borns, and diet in lower-caste households—and both revealed significant changes. Hindu parents became more likely to give their newborn sons common Hindu names, and lower-caste households showed increased adherence to orthodox Hindu dietary practices (a substantial increase in vegetarianism).

Secondly, areas with higher exposure to *Ramayan* witnessed a "short-term" increase in Hindu-Muslim communal violence through 1992.

And finally, the study found a "long-term" effect (through to 2000) on electoral outcomes, with the Hindu nationalist BJP gaining an increase in its probability of winning assembly elections in areas that had higher *Ramayan* exposure.

In this context, one question automatically comes up: how do we know if the effects attributed to *Ramayan* exposure are not also an outcome of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, which was gaining steam around the same time? The authors isolate the 'Ramayan effect' using a control variable "measuring proximity to the travelling mobilisation rallies known as the Ram Rath Yatra (held in 1990)". By doing so, they found that the "estimated effects of exposure to *Ramayan* starting in 1987 do not appear to be confounded by exposure to the Ram Rath Yatra, the key event in advancing the Ram Janmabhoomi movement."

Consolidating a singular identity

Pointing out that prior to *Ramayan's* introduction, there had never been a TV show in India with a religious theme, the paper notes that the *Ramayan* series "represented a step-function in religious TV content". To document this quantitatively, the authors "collected data on all 176 television serials broadcast on Indian public networks since 1980". There were zero religious shows prior to 1987. This was another factor that amplified *Ramayan's* unique impact, given that its viewership, too, was "unprecedented in India", with an estimated 80 million people tuning in to watch each episode.

At its peak, over 100 million viewers were watching *Ramayan* simultaneously at a time when there were only 30 million television sets in India. This is explained by the phenomenon of "community viewing" wherein people gathered in "large groups around a single television set, often in public spaces or at homes of neighbours who owned TVs". As a result, "for the first time, all Hindus across the country saw and at the same time listened to the same thing". The serial "introduced a congregational imperative into Hinduism" and "provided a unifying narrative that transcended local differences".

In a way, the mass dissemination of a standardised story of Ram, an avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu, couldn't have come at a better time for the advocates of Hindutva, as it helped prime a diverse Hindu population brought up on regional and linguistic variations of the epic, for the unitary ideology of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Interestingly, as the paper underscores, the political impact of the series was likely unintended by the government. "At the time of the broadcast, the national government was led by the Congress party and not the BJP" and the "primary motivation for

airing *Ramayan* was to increase advertising revenue for the state-owned television network." In fact, the show's creator Ramanand Sagar had to contend with much scepticism from officials and lobby extensively to get the show approved for broadcast.

Based on their findings, which revealed a strengthening of Hindu religious identity as indicated by shifts to popular Hindu names for new-borns, switching to vegetarianism, and changes in long-term political preferences, the authors contend that "the content of mass media can have far-reaching consequences beyond mere entertainment, potentially shaping the cultural and political landscape of a nation for years to come."

This empirical study is an important intervention at a time when the Indian media landscape, especially news television, is marked by the perverse phenomenon of polarising communal rhetoric beamed out to millions on a daily basis. It also opens up avenues for future inquiry.

For instance, given the rising trend of majoritarian propaganda films coming from Bollywood, how does a certain "narrative structure, character portrayal, and symbolic imagery activate particular social identities?" And how does the mode of consumption—viewing such content as a "communal experience" in a cinema hall or multiplex versus individually—affect its impact on beliefs and group identity? Such investigations could illuminate the mechanisms through which sustained media exposure to particular kinds of cultural and religious content shapes personal identity and political alignments.

As the paper concludes, "The story of the *Ramayan* broadcast serves as a powerful reminder of the responsibility that comes with the power to shape narratives and, by extension, the cultural and political future of a nation."

THE DAILY QUIZ

The Super Bowl is a rare event where the sporting world and the music industry clash, with halftime shows overshadowing the game. Here is a quiz on the event

Vignesh P. Venkitesh

QUESTION 1

This pop singer was brought in to perform at halftime in 1993 following a decline in post-break viewership the previous year. Name the artist.

QUESTION 2

This artist was picked up by a helicopter from stage for her exit at the 1996 Super Bowl. Name the artist and the outro song.

QUESTION 3

Name the hit TV show and the episode which was aired as a lead-out after the game in 1996.

QUESTION 4

What was the halftime event during the first Super Bowl in 1967?

QUESTION 5

Name the artist who revealed her pregnancy to the world during her halftime performance?



Visual question:

Name the singer and his song which got a rare collaboration from nature during the 2007 halftime show. AP

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. This State has won the Ranji Trophy eight times. **Ans:** Karnataka

2. Among active cricketers, this person holds the record for the most runs in the trophy. **Ans:** Cheteshwar Pujara

3. This batsman, during the 1948-49 Ranji Trophy season, was just nine runs short of the then batting record held by Sir Don Bradman. **Ans:** B.B. Nimbalkar

4. This erstwhile Test cricketer held the Bradman-esque average of 98.35 after scoring 3,639 runs in the Ranji Trophy. **Ans:** Vijay Merchant

5. This distinction is jointly shared by Premangsu Chatterjee of Bengal and Pradeep Sunderam of Rajasthan in the Ranji Trophy. **Ans:** Both of them picked all the 10 wickets in an innings.

Chatterjee (10/20) and Sunderam (10/78)

Visual: Identify this bowler and the State/team he represented. **Ans:** Rajinder Goel, Haryana

Early Birds: Mohan Lal Patel| Tamal Biswas| Arun Kumar Singh| Parimal Das| Sumana Dutta



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know Your English

K. Subrahmanian
S. Upendran

"Listen to an extract from an essay..."

Most people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad way, but it is generally assumed that we cannot by conscious action do anything about it. Our civilisation is decadent and our language—so the argument runs—must inevitably share in the general collapse. It follows that any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism, like preferring candles to electric light or hansom cabs to aeroplanes. Underneath this lies the half-conscious belief that language is a natural growth and not an instrument which we shape for our own purposes. Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely. A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step towards political regeneration: so that the fight against bad English is not frivolous and is not the exclusive concern of professional writers.

I am going to translate a passage of good English into modern English of the worst sort. Here is a well-known verse from Ecclesiastes: I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Here it is in modern English: Objective considerations of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

If you simplify your English, you are free from the worst follies of orthodoxy. You cannot speak any of the necessary dialects and when you make a stupid remark its stupidity will be obvious, even to yourself. Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. One cannot change one's habits, and from time to time one can even send some worn-out and useless phrase—some "jackboot, Achilles' heel, hotbed, melting pot, acid test, veritable Inferno" or other lump of verbal refuse—into the dustbin where it belongs.

"Beautiful. Who wrote it?"

"George Orwell. The extract is from his *Politics and the English language*."

Published in *The Hindu* on May 2, 1995.

Word of the day

Malapropism:

the unintentional misuse of a word with one that sounds similar

Synonym: misstatement

Pronunciation: newsth.live/malapropismpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /mæləprɒpɪzəm/

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

From Page One

BJP scouts for new CM after Biren Singh's exit

A Manipur BJP leader, declining to be named, said the party wanted to take the peace-building process forward. "The State needs to reboot for the sake of development and security. The hunt is for someone acceptable to all communities," he said.

There are unconfirmed reports that the BJP's central leadership would meet the 10 Kuki-Zo MLAs, including the BJP's seven, in Delhi, before announcing the name of Mr. Singh's successor.

The non-tribal Meiteis are the largest community in Manipur, concentrated in the Imphal Valley, comprising 40 (along with Jiribam, bordering Assam) of the State's 60 Assembly seats. The remaining 20 seats are in the hills, divided unequally between the Nagas and the Kuki-Zo people.

Speculation over the imposition of the President's Rule or protests against Mr. Singh's resignation had the authorities beef up security across the Imphal Valley, specifically the State capital. The police said the situation was being monitored closely.

Aero India is the Kumbh of research, says Rajnath

"Aero India 2025, a confluence of critical and frontier technologies, will provide a platform to further strengthen relations among like-minded countries based on mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual benefit to deal with today's uncertainties," he said.

He underlined the government's resolve to surpass the ₹1.27 lakh crore defence production and ₹21,000 crore defence export targets in the near future and ensure that the defence sector moves ahead at an unprecedented pace.

The allocation of ₹6.81 lakh crore to the Ministry of Defence in the Union Budget, including ₹1.80 lakh crore for capital acquisition, was proof that the government considered defence as a top-priority sector.

Peace and prosperity

In the present environment of global uncertainty, India had witnessed peace and prosperity, he said. "India has never attacked any country nor has it been involved in any great power rivalry. We have always been an advocate of peace and stability. It is part of our fundamental ideals," he stressed.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar appealed to the Defence Minister to consider incentives for aircraft and helicopter manufacturers who set up units in Karnataka and in India.

"Karnataka, particularly Bengaluru, boasts some of the best talent in the aerospace industry, making it an ideal location to establish aircraft- and helicopter-manufacturing facilities. By offering incentives to manufacturers, we could retain this talent within India, prevent brain drain," Mr. Shivakumar said.

SC asks Ravi why he did not reveal his objections

Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, representing the Tamil Nadu government with senior advocates Rakesh Dwivedi and P. Wilson, said, "Good governance required the Governor to communicate reasons for withholding consent."

Mr. Venkataramani asked if the Governor had acted outside his jurisdiction by withholding assent and referring the Bills to the President after finding them repugnant.

Mr. Singhvi said that once the Governor withholds consent and returns the Bills, with or without giving reasons, it was within the powers of the State Legislature to re-consider the Bills under the first proviso of Article 200 of the Constitution. In this case, the Tamil Nadu Assembly re-examined the Bills and sent them again to the Governor for assent.

At one point, Justice Mahadevan asked why the State took only five days for re-passing the 10 Bills. The Governor had withheld consent on November 13, 2023.

Mr. Singhvi said the State Legislature was the "boss" in the constitutional sense under Article 200 and the Governor had no discretion under the provision.

Bangladesh cracks down on Hasina loyalists

On February 5, six months to the day since Ms. Hasina fled as crowds stormed her palace in Dhaka, protesters smashed down buildings connected to her family using excavators.

Buildings destroyed included the museum and former home of Ms. Hasina's late father, Bangladesh's first President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, sparking condemnation from a group of civil rights activists.

Members of the Students Against Discrimination – the protest group credited with sparking the uprising against Ms. Hasina – were attacked in the Dhaka district of Gazipur on Friday, hours after interim leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus appealed for calm.

The vocal and powerful group – whose members are in the government cabinet – then demanded action.

The operations have raised concerns.

Budget benefits the rich too, says Chidambaram

About 2.27 lakh who had returned income of over ₹1 cr. will benefit from income tax breaks, he says; the Budget was politically driven, keeping the Delhi election in mind, says Congress leader

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Initiating the debate on the Union Budget in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, senior Congress MP P. Chidambaram said the income tax proposals in the Budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman benefited not just the middle class but also the rich and the richest in the world.

He said about 80 lakh to 85 lakh tax payers will be out of the tax net from next year and 2.5 crore tax payers will benefit from the new tax proposals. "This 2.5 crore includes not only the middle class which the Finance Minister passionately champions, it includes 2,27,315 persons who returned the income of more than ₹1 crore. It includes 262 persons who returned the income of more than ₹100 crore and it includes 23 persons who returned a total income of



Raising concerns: P. Chidambaram addressing the Rajya Sabha during the Budget Session in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

more than ₹500 crore," he said.

Mr. Chidambaram questioned the claim that the Centre had foregone ₹1 lakh crore by way of the IT breaks. "Yet she has claimed that the net tax revenues to the Centre will grow by 11.1% in 2025-26. In 2024-25 also it grew by 11%. After foregoing ₹1 lakh crore in this budget, how does she claim that the net tax revenues to the Centre

will grow by the same 11%? This is pure magic, not mathematics," the former Union Finance Minister said.

Mr. Chidambaram also alleged that the Budget was politically driven, keeping the Delhi election in mind. "There ought to be a philosophy behind the Budget, but I cannot find one in this Budget. I shall not attempt to do so because after going through the Bud-

get speech and Budget numbers, I believe there is no philosophy behind the Budget," he said. The senior Congress leader added: "It is obvious that the Budget was politically driven, I shall not elaborate upon that but I congratulate the Finance Minister for achieving one of her objectives a couple of days ago," apparently referring to the results of the Delhi Assembly polls in which the BJP won.

Mr. Chidambaram criticised the Budget for reducing the allocation to MGNREGS and the decision not to cut GST and taxes on petrol and diesel.

"What has this Budget done for the average Indian household in the bottom 50% and the bottom 25%? Nothing? What relief has the Finance Minister given them?" Mr. Chidambaram asked. "She could have raised the minimum wages across the board," he said.

BJP terms Budget a booster shot as Oppn. rakes up slowdown

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Members of the Opposition and Treasury benches went head-to-head during a discussion on the Union Budget in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

BJP leader Anurag Thakur answered Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's criticisms of the Budget. He defended the Budget, calling it a "force multiplier."

"Rahul Gandhi said this is a band-aid Budget. I want to inform Rahul ji that this is not a band-aid Budget. It's a booster Budget, a booster dose," Mr. Thakur said, holding up a poster that said anyone earning up to ₹12 lakh annually will pay zero income tax.

He claimed the government was "forced" to provide tax reliefs to the middle class to turn the wheels of the economy as earlier stimulus to corporates had not worked. The Congress leader also asserted that the common man continues to face problems due to the government's economic policies.

Welcoming the tax rebate, NCP (Sharad Pawar) MP Supriya Sule said "all is not well," and the economy is slowing down. "I request the government to introspect... just winning elections does not mean all is well," Ms. Sule said.

BJP MP claims USAID funded organisations to stir unrest in India

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party MP Nishikant Dubey on Monday alleged that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) had been funding organisations in India that worked to create unrest in the country, and asked the Centre to initiate an investigation into the matter.

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, Mr. Dubey said recently the United States has seen a change in government and President Donald Trump has "shut down USAID on the basis that it was spending money only to make different governments across the world collapse".

USAID is an independent agency of the U.S. go-

vernment that manages foreign aid and development assistance.

'backed caste census' Mr. Dubey claimed that the USAID funded organisations carried out protests against the Agnipravesh initiative of the government, backed caste census, and supported Naxalism in the country.

As the Jharkhand MP made the allegations, several Congress members rose in protest and trooped into the well of the House. The MPs wanted to raise a point of order which was disallowed by Sandhya Ray, who was in chair. Ms. Ray is a BJP member.

The Congress members later met Speaker Om Birla to register their objections to Mr. Dubey being allowed to make unsubstantiated claims in the House.

14 cr. Indians denied food security cover due to delay in census: Sonia

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Nearly 14 crore Indians find themselves excluded from the cover of National Food Security Act because of the inordinate delay in conducting population census, former Congress president Sonia Gandhi said in the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

She was speaking during the Zero Hour which allows members to raise issues of national importance. It was her maiden intervention after being elected to the Rajya Sabha last year. Ms. Gandhi said beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) are being identified as per the 2011 Census, and not the latest population numbers.

The Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson called the NFSA intro-



For the cause of the poor: Sonia Gandhi addressing the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

duced by the UPA government in September 2013 a landmark initiative aimed at ensuring food and nutritional security for the country's 140 crore population.

She said that the quota for beneficiaries is still determined based on the 2011 Census. The National Food Security Act, 2013, provides for coverage of up to

75% of the rural and up to 50% of the urban population for receiving highly-subsidised foodgrains under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), which according to 2011 Census comes to about 81.35 crore.

At present, the government provides 5 kg of free food grains per person per month under the food se-

curity law. "For the first time in the history of independent India, the decennial census has been delayed by more than four years. It was originally scheduled for 2021, but there is still no clarity as to when the census will be conducted," she said.

Ms. Gandhi also claimed that the Budget allocations show that the Census is unlikely to be conducted this year. Around 14 crore eligible Indians are thus being deprived of their rightful benefits under the NFSA, she said.

"It is imperative that the government prioritises completion of the census as soon as possible and ensures that all deserving individuals receive the benefits guaranteed to them under the NFSA," she said.

At present, the government provides 5 kg of free food grains per person per month under the food se-

Biren quitting not an act of conscience: Congress MP

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

A day after Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh resigned from his post following a meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi, Congress MP from Manipur A. Bimal Akojam on Monday said that Mr. Singh's removal was "not an act of conscience; it was because the Centre was compelled to remove him".

Mr. Akojam also insisted that the reason Mr. Singh had lost the support of his own party's legislators was because of the constant pressure created by the Opposition, in Parliament and outside, especially after the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

Mr. Akojam said that the real test for the Centre's intent for Manipur was yet to come. "Whether they take it as a moment to correct themselves will show whether they care," he told *The Hindu* on Monday.

Kuki-Zo legislators planning huddle over next steps this week

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

With one of the top demands of Manipur's Kuki-Zo community, that of N. Biren Singh's removal as Chief Minister, materialising over the past two days, the State's 10 Kuki-Zomi-Hmar MLAs are now set to schedule a meeting within this week to discuss the way forward to end the crisis that began with the ethnic conflict on May 3, 2023.

While the 10 Kuki-Zomi-Hmar legislators, seven of whom are with the BJP, feel it will be tricky to arrive at a decision that "balances party discipline with what the people – constituents – want", civil society leaders of the community told *The Hindu* that amongst the people and themselves, there is "real concern" over how committed the MLAs might be to pressing for the demand for a separate administration.

Within days of the conflict breaking out and Mei-

No internal differences, says Manipur BJP chief

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Manipur BJP president A. Sharda Devi has claimed that internal differences did not lead to Nongthombam Biren Singh's resignation as the Chief Minister of the State.

"The Chief Minister resigned for the people of Manipur, keeping the State's future in mind after requesting the Centre to safeguard the integrity of Manipur and ensure the safety of its citizens," she said hours after Mr. Singh submitted his resignation. "There were no differences among the BJP legislators," she asserted.

It is believed that Mr. Singh's move, on the advice of the BJP's central leadership, followed a decision to let a new set of leaders handle the challenges Manipur faces.

The Kuki-Zo Council said the resignation of Mr. Singh makes no difference to their demand for a separate administration.

Modi, Shah protected Biren, failed to quell violence: Kanimozhi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Commenting on the resignation of Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, DMK member in the Lok Sabha Kanimozhi Karunanidhi said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah must take responsibility for the communal violence that occurred in Manipur.

She said Mr. Singh resigned from the post of Chief Minister for his role in causing numerous human casualties. Mr. Singh was compelled to resign as recordings of his hate speeches directed towards minority communities have surfaced, she said.

Ms. Kanimozhi said the communal violence in Manipur resulted in more than 220 deaths, with more than 60,000 people displaced from the State. "People who had taken refuge in government's relief camps were even abducted and killed. Besides, women were subjected to sexual harassment and violence. These atrocities were carried out with the support of the State government and its affiliates," she alleged.

Ms. Kanimozhi said Manipur stands as a proof of the BJP's fascist politics, which divides people and exploits their deaths for political gains. "Not only Biren Singh but also Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, who protected Biren Singh and failed to contain the violence in Manipur, must own responsibility for the worsened situation prevailing in that State," she said.



CM YK



Moment of joy: Visitors at the inauguration of Aero India at the Air Force Station Yelahanka in Bengaluru on Monday.



In sync: Hawk Mk-132 jets of the Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team during manoeuvres as part of the air show.



Sea of visitors: Delegates and others during the inauguration of the Aero India event in Bengaluru.



Touching the skies: Indian Coast Guard Do-228 planes fly past in Rakshak formation during the air show.

HAL renames upgraded trainer aircraft 'Yashas'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's Hindustan Jet Trainer (HJT)-36 was renamed Yashas on the inaugural day of Aero India. The aircraft was earlier called Sitara. The defence PSU said the trainer had undergone extensive modifications to resolve departure characteristics and spin resistance throughout the aircraft envelope.

"The large-scale changes to the baseline intermediate training platform has led to significant upheaval in its capabilities and hence provided an opportunity for a new name to be given in accordance with the aircraft's continued relevance as a training system for modern military aviation," said D.K. Sunil, Chairman and Managing Director, HAL.

The HAL said that it was capable of Stage II pilot training, counter insurgency and counter surface force operations, armament training, and aerobatics. It added that the capabilities of HJT-36 are stall and spin, aerobatics, armament carriage up to 1000 kg, single point ground refuelling and de-fuelling.

'Self-reliance push drives Indian defence industry'

Rajnath says global companies must utilise opportunities offered by domestic defence ecosystem; overall ease of doing business has improved 'tremendously', he adds at the CEO roundtable

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Saying that the Indian defence ecosystem is driven by policies of self-reliance in defence production, facilitated by a conducive policy regime, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday asked chief executive officers (CEOs) of global defence companies to utilise the opportunities offered by the domestic defence ecosystem.

Listing out measures taken in this regard, he said the portal, Defence Exim, had made the export authorisation process seamless and 46 joint ventures and companies were given foreign investment approval in the defence sector till date.

Mr. Singh was addressing a "CEO Roundtable" at Aero India 2025 with the theme "Enabling Defence Cooperation through Global Engagement" (EDGE), which saw Original Equipment Manufacturers from 19 countries, including 35 Indian private companies and 16 defence public sector undertakings.



Highlighting advances: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the inauguration of Aero India in Bengaluru on Monday. K. MURALI KUMAR

its in the Defence Industrial Corridors set up in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

The Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme was introduced to provide financial assistance to the aerospace and defence sector for setting up six-eight greenfield testing and certification facilities.

As a testimony to the emergence of India as a defence export nucleus, the country has seen 31-fold growth "in the export of products in the last 10 years as compared to Financial Year 2013-14", he said.

He further said over 500

start-ups and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) were working under the aegis of Innovations for Defence Excellence (IDEX), with focus on innovative projects in defence sector.

"Our overall ease-of-doing-business environment has improved tremendously. This is showing great results as India has the third largest start-up ecosystem in the world today. This is expected to witness year-on-year growth of 10-12%.

We possess a young generation of highly-skilled workforce, which constantly updates itself in the face of the fast-changing ecosystem of the world. You must not miss the opportunity to leverage the advantages of this ecosystem," Mr. Singh added.

"The use of drones in recent conflicts indicates that the future would depend on the integrated efforts of manned, unmanned and autonomous warfare systems. Hence, our defence manufacturing has to focus on creating counter measures for these emerging challenges," he stated.

LCA-Mk2 prototype likely to be rolled out by 2025-end, AMCA by early 2027: officials

Dinakar Peri
BENGALURU

The first prototype of the country's fifth-generation fighter jet, the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft or AMCA, is expected to be rolled out by the end of 2026 or early 2027, while the first prototype of the Light Combat Aircraft-Mk2, which is a bigger and more capable version of the LCA, is expected by the end of this year, officials of the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) said.

The two programmes are critical for the IAF's modernisation plans, with force strength down to 31 fighter squadrons.

"The LCA-MK2 is in very advanced stage. All the jigs and fixtures have been completed. The airframe is on the assembly line. We will be making a roll-out by year-end and flying in the first quarter of 2026," said Jitendra J. Jadhav, Director-General of ADA.

"We are very confident it will get inducted from 2028-29," he said, adding "It has all indigenously weapons and about 11 weapon stations. So it will be one of the mighty lethal weapon platforms for the IAF."



For the future: A model of India's AMCA, which is a fifth-generation fighter aircraft. ANI

Given the huge delays in new inductions and rapid modernisation of fighters by China and Pakistan, there is pressure to speed up development process.

Development phase

"The full-stealth AMCA aircraft programme was sanctioned by the government in April 2024. The development phase has just begun and we are anticipating that this aircraft will touch the sky towards the end of 2028. The total duration of the development phase is 10 years.

The aircraft will be certified by 2032 and the plan for induction will be 2034 in the IAF," said Krishna Rajendra Neeli, Outstanding Scientist and Officiating Project Director

of the AMCA programme, speaking to *The Hindu* at Aero India.

The AMCA is a fifth-generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) and its primary role is as a stealth aircraft. While armament of around 1.5 tonnes can be carried internally, the AMCA can also carry weapons at its wing station as a non-stealth aircraft, he said.

In terms of timelines, Mr. Neeli explained that five prototypes are planned to be manufactured for development and testing and initially, four aircraft would be manufactured per year for a few years, by which time the manufacturing line will stabilise to ramp up production.

India, U.K. sign several agreements to strengthen defence cooperation

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The United Kingdom on Monday announced the formal launch of the "Defence Partnership-India", or DP-I, a dedicated cell within the U.K. Ministry of Defence for deepening cooperation with India.

The Aero India also saw several defence cooperation agreements between India and the U.K., which covered production of Man Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) and Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM), as well as establishment of an Advanced Short-Range Air to Air Mis-

The U.K. announces a dedicated cell for deepening bilateral defence cooperation with India

sile (ASRAAM) assembly and test facility in India. A Statement of Intent (SoI) was also signed to design and develop an Integrated Full Electric Propulsion (IFEP) system for Indian Navy ships.

U.K. Defence Minister Lord Vernon Coaker announced the DP-I while opening the U.K.-India Defence Partnership pavilion at Aero India, and the ded-

icated programme office within the U.K.'s Ministry of Defence will serve as a one-stop shop for strengthening bilateral defence collaboration, the U.K. High Commission said.

Thales U.K. and Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) signed a contract that will deliver Laser Beam-Riding MANPADS (LBMs), with an initial supply of STAR-Streak high-velocity missiles and launchers set for delivery this year.

In another development, following the signing of this initial LBM contract, both Thales and BDL will further collaborate to produce LMMs, the state-

ment said. This "develops and expands the partnership between Indian and British industry, laying the foundation for BDL and Indian industry to form an integral part of Thales' global supply chain", it stated.

"It will address mutual security concerns, create jobs in both countries and enable interoperability by both armies."

The statement added that MBDA U.K. and BDL were working on the installation of a first-of-its-kind ASRAAM assembly and test facility in Hyderabad, for missiles that would be carried by Jaguar and Light Combat Aircraft-MkA.

Stealth aircraft from Russia and U.S. showcase their aerial capabilities

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Visitors witnessed a scintillating aerial display by two of the most advanced fifth-generation fighter aircraft in the world on the inaugural day of Aero India here on Monday.

At 2.30 p.m. the Russian Su-57, which was making its debut at the air show, took off from the tarmac of the Air Force Station, Yelahanka and for the next few minutes Sukhoi's chief test pilot, Sergey Bogdan, performed a series of manoeuvres showcasing the unique aerial capabilities of the stealth aircraft.



Making a debut: Russia's Su-57 fighter jet takes off during the inauguration of Aero India in Bengaluru on Monday. K. MURALI KUMAR

The Su-57, developed by Sukhoi Design Bureau, is Russia's first operational stealth fighter with supersonic cruising speeds, ad-

vanced sensor integration, and a wide range of weapons. It can be recalled that India was part of the joint Fifth Generation

Fighter Aircraft programme with Russia before withdrawing in 2018.

After the Russian fifth-generation fighter landed, the U.S.'s F-35 Lightning II took to the skies to demonstrate its capabilities.

After performing some of its signature manoeuvres, the aircraft landed. The F-35 Lightning II has been developed by Lockheed Martin.

This is the second time that the U.S. stealth aircraft is taking part in Aero India.

The F-35A Lightning II is the newest fifth-generation fighter of the USAF with stealth, supersonic, and multi-role capabilities.

Modi arrives in France for AI summit, talks with Macron

Kalol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in France on a three-day visit during which he will co-chair an AI Action Summit with French President Emmanuel Macron and hold bilateral talks with him.

Representing the Global South in the Paris AI Action Summit, broadening consular and diplomatic ties, and nuclear research are some of the items on the agenda of Mr. Modi's visit to France, an official statement said on Monday.

The official statement is issued ahead of his departure for the two-nation



Warm welcome: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with members of the Indian diaspora in France on Monday. PTI

tour covering France and the U.S. informed that he will be co-chairing the AI Action Summit, which will be held in Paris on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The AI summit is the third in a series of global initiatives on artificial intelligence after the AI Safety meet in the U.K. in 2023 and South Korea in 2024.

During the visit, the two sides will review the pro-

gress on the 2047 Horizon Road map for India-France strategic partnership. A new Indian consulate at Marseille will also be opened. Mr. Modi will visit the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project which is a major international project on energy generation and nuclear research.

"I will also pay tribute to the Indian soldiers who laid down their lives during World War I and II at the Mazargues War Cemetery," Mr. Modi said in a statement. The cemetery is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which looks

President takes holy dip at Maha Kumbh

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

President Droupadi Murmu took a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj on Monday. She said the Maha Kumbh was a wonderful and living symbol of India's rich cultural heritage.

"Today I had the good fortune of bathing in the holy confluence of Maa Ganga, Yamuna, and the inner stream Saraswati in the divine atmosphere of Maha Kumbh. This huge gathering of faith and belief is a wonderful and living symbol of India's rich cultural heritage. Maha Kumbh gives the message of unity and spirituality to humanity. I pray to Maa Ganga that she keeps her blessings on everyone," Ms. Murmu said.



ing symbol of India's rich cultural heritage. Maha Kumbh gives the message of unity and spirituality to humanity. I pray to Maa Ganga that she keeps her blessings on everyone," Ms. Murmu said.

IN BRIEF



HC allows custody parole to jailed MP Engineer Rashid

The Delhi High Court on Monday allowed two-day custody parole to jailed Jammu and Kashmir MP Abdul Rashid Sheikh alias Engineer Rashid to attend the ongoing Parliament session on February 11 and 13. Custody parole entails a prisoner being escorted by armed police personnel to the place of his visit. The court said Mr. Rashid would be ferried to the Lok Sabha and back. It said Mr. Rashid cannot use mobile phone or address media. The Baramulla MP is facing trial in a terror funding case in which he is charged with funding separatists and terror groups in Jammu and Kashmir.

Bill introduced to resolve disputes involving aircraft

Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu on Monday tabled a Bill in Parliament that seeks to recognise the international treaty on resolution of disputes related to recovery of aviation assets such as aircraft and engines, often seen between airlines and lessors, including during airline shutdowns. The Minister tabled the Protection and Enforcement of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill, 2025 in the Rajya Sabha. It seeks to implement the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment, 2001 or Cape Town Convention (CTC) and Protocol.

How can convicted persons return to make laws, asks SC

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked how convicted persons could return to Parliament and State legislatures, saying there was an apparent conflict of interest if people found guilty of breaking the law returned as lawmakers.

"Once convicted, how can people come back to Parliament and Legislatures? There is an apparent conflict of interest," Justice Dipankar Datta, heading a Bench comprising Justice Manmohan, observed.

The court is hearing petitions, including one filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, seeking a lifetime ban on convicted persons from contesting elections.

The government, in an affidavit filed by the Ministry of Law and Justice in the top court in 2020, had rejected the idea of a life-



time ban on convicted persons contesting elections, or forming or becoming an office-bearer of a political party.

The government had maintained that disqualification under Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act of 1951 for the period of the prison sentence and six years thereafter was enough for legislators. The Ministry had reasoned that MPs and MLAs were not bound by specific "service conditions".

"They are bound by propriety, good conscience and interest of the nation," the Ministry had argued.

Key Maoist leader among 31 killed in Bijapur encounter

Shubhamoy Sikdar

RAJPUT

Members of the West Bastar Division, a sub-zonal military formation of Naxals, were among the 31 Maoists gunned down by security forces in the National Park area of Chhattisgarh's Bijapur on Sunday, the police said on Monday.

The five identified so far include a secretary of the West Bastar Division, who was responsible for several attacks on security forces and the killing of villagers in the area.

Addressing a press conference in Bijapur, Inspector-General of Police, Bastar Range, P. Sundarraj said Hunga Karma, the secretary or divisional committee member of the West Bastar Division, was carrying a reward of ₹8 lakh on his arrest. He added that Karma's significance in the area was beyond the award money. "He has masterminded many terror attacks and murdered and harassed villagers, apart from attacking security forces several times in the past two decades," he said.

Others include Mangal Hemla, Subhash Oyam and Sannu, each carrying a reward of ₹5 lakh, and Ramesh, who carried a reward of ₹2 lakh on his head. They all held ranks in various area committees in the West Bastar division. Of the 65 Maoists gunned down in the Bastar region this year, 56 were from Bijapur, one of the seven districts in the left-wing extremism affected region, Mr. Sundarraj said, underscoring the critical security challenges of the area where large parts still remain outside the reach of the State.

The IGP said that Sunday's operation was crucial because the National Park area is considered as one of the citadels of the Maoists.



Security personnel after their encounter with Maoists in Farsegarh Jungle in Bijapur. PTI

India may offer lower duties on pecans to pacify Trump

Officials hope to soften Trump's stance on India being a tariff abuser with these concessions and a fact sheet on import duties already being low or zero on several U.S. industrial goods exports

Vikas Dhoot
Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bilateral meetings with U.S. President Donald Trump this week, which are likely to include intense parleys on tariffs, may involve some offers for further reductions in import duties on items of U.S. interest such as the uniquely American pecan nuts grown in its southern States.

Officials hope such concession offers, along with a detailed fact sheet on the country's import duties being quite low or even zero on America's major industrial goods exports to India, could help soften Mr. Trump's stance about it being a tariff abuser.

From low to lower

"India is now very friendly in terms of industrial goods," a top government official said. "On agriculture, we may have sensitivities but we have already reduced duties on items of U.S. interest like almonds.

Tariff matrix

The table shows the current tariffs on top U.S. exports to India

Product	Basic customs duty
Crude petroleum	₹1 per metric tonne
Diamond	5%
Coking coal, steam coal	2.75%
Aeroplanes	2.5%*
LNG	2.75%
Gold	6%
Aluminum and scrap	2.50%
Other types of waste, scrap	0.00%
Saturated acrylic hydrocarbons	2.50%
Suspension grade PVC resin	7.50%
Non-industrial diamonds	0.00%
Bleached/semi-bleached coniferous wood	5%

* zero if imported by a scheduled commercial operator

Now, there are some other items like pecan nuts that we can look at cutting duties on in due course," he said, requesting anonymity.

India levied a 100% import duty on pecan nuts till early 2023, when it was slashed to 30%. However, there is scope for further cuts on such U.S. farm products not produced locally, the official indicated.

The government is hopeful that after meeting

External Affairs Ministry official stressed the special relationship the two leaders share.

New Delhi is also keen to lobby with the U.S. President to restore the special status for Indian exporters under its Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) that he had revoked in 2019.

'Tariff as negotiation'
"With Trump, there is always the 'art of the deal,'" said US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISIP) president and CEO Mukesh Aghi.

"Trump is using tariff as a way of negotiating and he was able to get his way with Canada and Mexico. There is an obvious camaraderie between him and PM Modi, which can and should be translated into a win-win proposition for both," he added.

Mr. Aghi also suggested that negotiating a Free Trade Agreement and ensuring India purchases American defence equipment and energy are amongst the U.S. President's priorities.

Case registered after row breaks out over YouTuber's comment

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI



YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia issued an apology on Monday for making a controversial remark that has drawn widespread criticism.

+

Politicians, including Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Opposition leaders in the State, condemned him for misusing freedom of speech.

The 31-year-old social media influencer, who has lakhs of followers, made the remark in comedian Samay Raina's YouTube show *India's Got Latent*.

The comment led to police complaints against Mr. Raina, Mr. Allahbadia, and others under various Sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Mr. Raina, and other organisers of the show.

The Mumbai Police said they were conducting an inquiry.

Priyank Kanoongo, member of the National

Human Rights Commission, in a letter to YouTube, directed the platform to take down the "obscene and vulgar" video.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the Guwahati Police have filed a first information report against Mr. Raina, Mr. Allahbadia, social media influencer Apoorva Makija, Mr. Raina, and other organisers of the show.

The Mumbai Police said they were conducting an inquiry.

In a video, Mr. Allahbadia said, "I shouldn't have said what I said. I'm sorry."

Concentrate on your studies, ignore external pressures, PM tells students

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



Giving direction: Narendra Modi interacts with students during the Pariksha Pe Charcha programme on Monday. ANI

children about the importance of nutrition, urging them to eat millets and seasonal fruits.

Mr. Modi extolled the importance of good sleep towards ensuring fitness. He also stressed the benefits of sunlight, asking children to make it a habit of soaking in the morning sunlight for a few minutes every day.

Tips on good leadership
Asked to share tips on good

leadership, the Prime Minister said that a leader was not defined by external appearances and always led by example. "Leadership is not imposed but accepted by those around you," Mr. Modi said.

Mr. Modi urged teachers not to confine children to a rigid academic structure as that would only stunt their growth. He laid stress on the importance of an open environment, adding that lessons like gardening

Overcoming failure
Speaking about overcoming failure, Mr. Modi remarked that even if 30%-40% of students failed in their Class 10 and 12 exams, life did not end with that.

He also advised students to solve previous exam papers in order to learn to write concise answers and manage time efficiently.

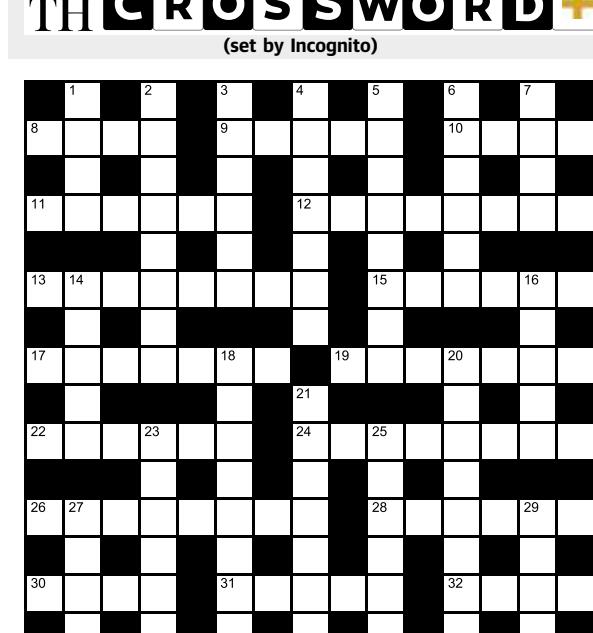
FAITH

Like fragrance and lustre

Lord Rama goes to Mithila, and weds Sita with His father's blessings. But why should the Supreme One marry? He does not need anyone's help for anything. He can create, protect and dissolve at will. He is defined as *nirapeksha*, the One who is not dependent on anyone. There is a raha-sya tattva behind the Sita-Rama vivaha. Without this wedding, none of the events of the Ramayana would have happened. Ravana would not have been killed, and those tormented by Ravana would have continued to suffer. Besides, Lord Narayana earns the respect of everyone because of His consort, M.A. Venkatakrishnan said in a discourse.

The Acharyas give examples to help us understand how this can be so. The value of a flower depends on its fragrance. A single flower sometimes costs more than a bunch of other varieties of flowers. It is the fragrance that makes people seek the costly flower. Likewise, it is the Goddess who adds to His greatness. She is like the lustre of gems. Take the example of a diamond. There are different categories of diamonds, and depending upon cut, colour and clarity, the cost varies. A valuable diamond is brilliant, and is much sought after for this precise quality. A diamond which does not have the same characteristics will be priced cheaper. Goddess Mahalakshmi is like the brilliance of a valuable diamond. Just as a costly diamond is desired because of its properties, in the same way, the Lord is approached because She is with Him. It was because of the significance of Sita that Valmiki referred to his work as Sita's story. In the epic, She is the cause of the Rama-Ravana war, and the ultimate victory of the Lord.

TH CROSSWORD + 14405



Across

- 8 Average time to produce component (4)
- 9 Operation? Time for entertainment! (5)
- 10 Places for getting nourishment in North and South (4)
- 11 The French aristocrat is discharged without punishment (3,3)
- 12 Do women book personal area in centre of city? (8)
- 13 What star produces in Panama, for example? (5,3)

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



SCAN TO PLAY

- 15/23D** Jump and fall in the US? (6,6)
17 Type of clouds one may see soon after Monday (7)
19 Half of herons call for fish (7)
22 Starting to run in the country results in injury (6)
24 Stall fee revised in handbills (8)
26 Captain is holding very extraordian leaders and prisoners (8)
28 Gypsum merchant's totalling machine (6)
30 Allege losing one crustacean (4)
31 Damp beam covering centre of mine (5)
32 Phillip's seeds (4)
Down
1 Go out with daughter, getting tea mixture (4)
2 Members of Turkish dynasty cook tomato with natural salt at first (8)
3 Fool returns with a hot bathroom accessory (6)
4 Once more editor corrects "Dieters" incorrectly (2-5)
5 Always destroyed before alien returns... Destroy! (3,5)
6 Tops of new trees protected by bent wire in cold season (6)
7 Precipitation in frigid weather falls nowadays to some extent (4)
14 Left back carrying nothing for group of soldiers (5)
16 Group of nine performers — one mentioned in New Testament (5)
18 Around 4, Monroe is irritated and is capable of eating plant and animal matter (8)
20 Seafood items produced by students in dilapidated rooms around park (8)
21 Maybe it's lace and capable of stretching (7)
23 See 15 Across
25 Quantitative and qualitative assessments of Sulfur, for example, in Arsenic (6)
27 Partner from Montreal lying partly (4)
29 Old post office exhibition (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

A	C	Q	I	R	E	D	T	A	S	T	E
Z	A	N	A	I	V	R	G				
E	X	P	E	L	C	A	S	S	O		
B	E	I	E	C	R	I	R				

INBRIEF



'Action against banks, NBFCs if gold auction norms violated'

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday told Lok Sabha action will be taken in case there are violations of well laid down processes for auctioning of gold by banks and non banking financial companies (NBFCs) when a borrower fails to pay gold loan. There is a process for giving enough number of notices to bank account holders. In the eventuality of a borrower not coming back to pay, the bank or NBFC will be forced to go for an auction, the Minister said. PTI

Due diligence on for IDBI Bank bidders: FinMin

The due diligence of qualified bidders for IDBI Bank, which is up for privatisation, is underway, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Monday. The government, along with LIC, is selling nearly 61% stake in IDBI Bank. This includes a 30.48% stake of the Government of India and 30.24% of LIC. In January 2023, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management received multiple Expressions of Interest (EoI) for buying stake in IDBI Bank. PTI

Apollo Hospitals Q3 net profit jumps 49% to ₹379 crore

Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd. reported a 49% jump in Q3 consolidated net profit to ₹379 crore compared with ₹254 crore a year earlier on high demand for health care services. The health care firm's revenue from operations grew 13% during the quarter to ₹5,527 crore. The Board of Directors declared an interim dividend of ₹9 per share (180% of face value of ₹5 per share) for the financial year ending March 31, 2025, on the paid up equity shares, out of the company's profits.

RBI followed a highly unfortunate exchange policy: Arvind Subramanian

Sanjay Vijayakumar
CHENNAI

Former Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) Arvind Subramanian on Monday said while a part of India's slowdown was cyclical, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s policies too had contributed to it.

"For about two-and-a-half years till January 2025, RBI followed a highly unfortunate exchange rate policy. It was very costly for the economy. And sadly it went unnoticed below the radar screen," he said at a panel discussion on the State of Economy and Union Budget 2025-2026

organised by the Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS) in association with Malcolm and Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust.

Damage to economy
"The policies have inflicted a lot of damage to the economy and we need much more discussion on that.

We need much more discussions on how we can have guardrails against the eminent institution which can follow inappropriate policies and accountability mechanisms which should be in place. Hopefully the policy has changed in the right direction," Mr. Subramanian said.

Karnataka Forest Department
**Office of the Deputy Conservator of Forests,
Dharwad Division, Dharwad-580008**
Phone : 0836-2447092 Email : dcf_dwd@yahoo.co.in
No.A1/ACT/CR-49/2024-25 Date : 07.02.2025**BRIEF SALE NOTIFICATION**

It is hereby notified for the general information of the public that the Sandal wood and Sandal oil stored at **Central Sandal Depot, Dharwad – 580008** will be sold by e-tender-cum-auction mode through MSTC Ltd., on the online platform www.mstcecommerce.com. The sale conducting authority is Deputy Conservator of Forests, Dharwad Division, Dharwad. The e-tender-cum auction is subject to terms and conditions uploaded on the website www.mstcecommerce.com. by e-tender-cum auction. **Notice No: MSTC/BLR/Karnataka Forest Department/1/Forest Complex/24-25/54432**
(1) Date of e-tender-cum-auction : **05th March 2025**
(2) Mode : **Online-www.mstcecommerce.com**
(3) Time : 03:00 PM to 05:00 PM (4) Quantity of Material : Approximately 121.668816 MT Sandal wood of Different kinds and 0.092882 MT Sandal Oil. (5) Approximate value : Approximately Above Rs. 3.00 Crores (6) Inspection of logs by the bidders : **21-02-2025 to 22-02-2025** (Both dates inclusive) 10:30 AM and 04:00 PM (On working Days) at Central Sandal Depot, Dharwad – 580008. (7) Pre Bid Meeting : **22-02-2025** at 04:00 PM in the Chamber's of Deputy Conservator of Forests, Dharwad Division, Dharwad. **Conditions :** (1) Interested bidders should get themselves Registered with MSTC well in advance. (2) Intended bidders are advised to inspect the material to their satisfaction. (3) The Quantity notified adjacent to each class kept for sale is approximate. (4) Every Registered bidder shall pay an Earnest money deposit (EMD) of Rs. **10,00,000/-** (Ten Lakh only) for all lots/ or any lot. (5) The black listed bidders, defaulters, Minors, insolvent persons will not be Permitted to participate in the sale. (6) Detailed Sale Conditions to be downloaded from www.mstcecommerce.com. E-Auction No : **MSTC/BLR/Karnataka Forest Department/1/Forest Complex/24-25/54432 Sale Conducting Officer,** Deputy Conservator of Forests DIPR/DWD/KSMCA/946/2024-25 Dharwad Division Dharwad

PUNJAB STATE GRAINS PROCUREMENT CORPORATION LIMITED (PUNGRAIN)
ANAAJ BHAWAN, SECTOR 39-C, CHANDIGARH
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Bids are invited under two-bid system i.e. 'Technical Bid' and 'Financial Bid' from bidders for the purchase of 46000 Low Density Polyethylene Covers (LDPE Covers) for storage of wheat during RMS 2025-26 on behalf of all State Procuring Agencies (Pungrain, PSWC, Pusup and Markfed) in the State of Punjab. For details log onto: <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> or <http://foodspub.gov.in>
Bid Submission Start Date and Time: 02:00 PM on 10.02.2025
Bid Submission Last Date and Time: Till 02:00 PM on 12.03.2025.
Date and time of Opening Technical Bid: At 02:30 PM on 12.03.2025.
Pre-bid Conference: On 17.02.2025 at 11:00 AM in the Committee room, Anaj Bhawan, Sector 39-C, Chandigarh.
Note: Any corrigendum(s) to the tender shall be published on the above websites only.
0/2/29/2023/41545

GVK Power (Goindwal Sahib) Limited
Regd. Office: Plot No. 10, Paigah Colony, Sardar Patel Road, Secunderabad-500003, Telangana, India CIN: U40109TG1997PLC028433
(A wholly owned subsidiary of Guru Amar Das Thermal Power Limited, GATPL)
(A step down wholly owned subsidiary of Punjab State Power Corporation Limited, PSPLC)
Dept-HOD, HR & Admin GATP, Goindwal Sahib, invites E-Tender for the work of:
1 Tender Enquiry No. 012/GATP/HADMIN/50007162 dated 10/02/2025
"TENDER FOR GVKPSL EMPLOYEES INSURANCE"
at 2X270 MW Guru Amardas Thermal Plant (GATP), Goindwal Sahib, Distt.: Tarn Taran, Punjab as per details given in the tender specifications.
For detailed NIT & tender specifications, please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 10/02/2025 from 17:00 Hrs onwards.
Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any, will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
GATP 04/25 76155/12/3891/2023/41535

India stays stoic on Trump's aluminium, steel tariffs' gambit

India's steel exports to the U.S. are very minuscule so officials don't fear a major impact from the 25% import duties the U.S. unveiled on Monday

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

President Donald Trump's latest salvo of a 25% blanket tariff on all imports of steel and aluminium into the U.S. are the latest in a series of announcements and executive orders, just days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington, that have affected India. So far, the government has demurred from commenting on these moves or stuck to muted responses.

On Monday, Union Steel Secretary Sandeep Poudrik maintained a stoic stance on the new tariffs, stating India's steel exports to the U.S. are minuscule, with just 95,000 tonnes exported to the U.S. last year from India's total output of 145 million tonnes. "So, how does it matter if you are not able to export 95,000 tonnes?" he remarked at an event organised by Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

He conceded Indian steel producers may face a problem if more countries put safeguards and restrictions on trade. When the U.S. had imposed tariffs on steel and aluminium in 2018, India had hit back by raising tariffs on 29 American products. Meanwhile, experts expect the latest tariff measures to boost



Nickel-and-dime: Only 95,000 tonnes of steel were exported to the U.S. last year from India's total output of 145 million tonnes. PTI

Stocks tank, Gold soars; Rupee trips to almost 88/\$ but recovers

Gold prices zoomed by ₹2,430 to hit a lifetime high of ₹88,500 per 10 grams following firm global trends and a weak rupee. Stock markets closed with losses for the fourth straight day on Monday with the benchmark Sensex falling 0.7% to close at 77,311.8 points as fresh U.S. tariff threats shook investor confidence, triggering a selloff in bluechip banking, metal and oil shares. The rupee plunged 45 paise and neared the 88 per U.S. dollar-level, before eventually closing 5 paise up at 87.45, after the central bank intervened. PTI

U.S. demand for American steel and enable local producers to raise prices, but could confound the situa-

tion for other nations. "The U.S. tariffs on steel will increase competition and exacerbate oversupply at other steel producing markets. Indian steel producers will face increased challenges in exporting their products. Over the past 12 months, high steel imports into India have already dampened prices and earnings of steel producers in India," said Hui Ting Sim, AVP at Moody's Ratings. The government has not yet responded to another decision to "rescind or modify" the sanctions waiver received by India to develop a terminal in Iran's Chabahar port, which is a key part of New Delhi's regional and international trade ambitions. It has also made no comment on Mr. Trump's threats to impose 100% tariffs on BRICS countries if they try to sideline the use of the US dollar.

(With PTI inputs)

Southern States should benchmark themselves against the world, says CEA

Sanjay Vijayakumar

CHENNAI

Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran on Monday said it is about time that the Southern States benchmark themselves against the world and not just India, as the region is leading in many of the parameters when compared with the rest of the country.

Southern States contribute over 30% of India's GDP, with Tamil Nadu and Karnataka emerging as standout performers with high compounded annual growth rates in Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), he said. The region outperforms with a 6.3% annual growth in real terms compared with a little over 5% for the rest of the country. Per capita GDP is rising at over 5%, compared with the rest of India per capita GDP growth of 4.2%, Mr. Nageswaran said.

The South also fares better in terms of Average Labour Force Participation Rate and accounts for a higher share of Gross Value Added (GVA) across sectors including real estate, agriculture and allied services, manufacturing, services among others. The Southern States account for 37.4% in terms of total number of factories, 37% in terms of factories in operation, 25.6% in fixed capital investments.

Speaking on South India's global economic competitiveness at the Confederation of Indian Industries' 'Mystic South - Global Linkages' summit, the CEA said that though 33% of persons engaged in the manufacturing sector are in South India, the region's output share is only 26%. "That kind of tells you there is scope for improvement in productivity because you have a higher share of workforce compared to share of outputs," he remarked.



V. Anantha Nageswaran

eration of Indian Industry's 'Mystic South - Global Linkages' summit, the CEA said that though 33% of persons engaged in the manufacturing sector are in South India, the region's output share is only 26%. "That kind of tells you there is scope for improvement in productivity because you have a higher share of workforce compared to share of outputs," he remarked.

Classifying skill levels into four buckets, starting from basic (level 1) to higher order professional (level 4) skills like medicine, engineering, geology, the CEA said Tamil Nadu and other Southern States in general have a very high level of Skill 2 which is more than basic but in terms of Skill level 3 (associate and professional skills) and the highest order skill sets, there is still a lot of room to catch up.

"If the 21st century is going to be about high value-added manufacturing and artificial intelligence, then we need to improve on skill [levels] 3 and 4," he added.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	MONDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	77,312	-0.70
US Dollar	87.45	0.05
Gold	88,500	2.82
Brent oil	75.83	—

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2290.80	-48.00
Adani Ports	1144.20	-1.90
Apollo Hosp.	6761.25	-29.30
Asian Paints	2270.15	-0.85
Axis Bank	1011.75	-12.35
Bajaj Auto.	8880.55	-108.85
Bajaj FinServ	1792.40	-5.95
Bajaj Finance	8286.80	-187.45
Bharti Airtel	273.45	3.60
Britannia Ind.	4909.65	39.15
Cipla	1458.85	-13.40
Coal India	370.50	-7.75
Dr Reddys Lab.	1220.95	-19.45
Eicher Motors	5335.35	-37.20
Grafix Ind.	2473.25	-14.35
HCL Tech.	1733.85	8.20
HFDC Bank	1715.75	-17.00
HFDC Life	635.70	0.00
Hero MotoCorp	1916.45	-78.20
Hindalco	596.00	-11.40
Hindu Unilever	2361.45	-2.40
ICICI Bank	1262.60	5.70
IndusInd Bank	1068.00	-11.10
Infosys	1880.30	-23.35
ITC	427.20	-3.65
JSW Steel	959.15	-21.60
Kotak Bank	1960.15	30.90
L&T	3328.65	-8.25
M&M	3137.25	-61.20
Maruti Suzuki	12900.75	-148.75
NestleIndia	2221.05	-4.05
NTPC	310.50	-6.45
PowerGrid Corp	268.70	-9.45
Reliance Ind.	1253.65	-13.05
SBI Life	1448.20	-22.75
State Bank.	736.80	-0.40
Shriram Finance	560.80	1.25
Sun Pharma	1732.10	-17.70
Tata Consumer Product	1027.50	6.30
Tata Motors	696.00	-10.75
Tata Steel	134.04	-4.27
TCS	4036.95	7.55
Tech Mahindra	1699.05	6.95
Titan	3327.45	-97.35
Trent Ltd.	5196.75	-257.65
UltraTech Cement	11523.30	-108.30
Wipro	319.05	1.05

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except at 4 p.m. on February 10

	TT BUY	TT SELL

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DYNAMIC AND AGGRESSIVE

Rohit showed the modern way of playing 50-over cricket: Buttler



Rohit Sharma played a brilliant innings, how he can go up and down the gears and absorb pressure, put a lot of pressure back. He showed in this day and age, in the modern sort of way of playing 50-over cricket, it's very dynamic, aggressive — England skipper Jos Buttler after India's victory in Cuttack on Sunday.

TERRIFIC CHASE

Williamson's century eclipses Breetzke's as NZ enters final



Kane Williamson hit a century to take New Zealand into the tri-series final with a six-wicket win over South Africa in Lahore on Monday. **The scores:** South Africa 304/6 in 50 overs (Breetzke 150, Mulder 64) lost to New Zealand 308/4 in 48.4 overs (Williamson 133 n.o., Conway 97). **Toss:** New Zealand. **PoM:** Williamson.

CLOSING IN

Barca moves closer to the top two with a thumping win at Sevilla



Barcelona cut the gap on LaLiga's top two with an entertaining 4-1 win over Sevilla on Sunday, despite playing out the final half-hour with 10 men after Fermín López's red card. Serie A leader Napoli failed to make the most of a stumble by title rival Inter Milan as it was held to a 1-1 draw by Udinese.

ALL-COURT EXCELLENCE

Alcaraz beats de Minaur, claims his first indoor title



Carlos Alcaraz secured his first indoor title by beating Alex de Minaur in the final of the Rotterdam Open in Rotterdam on Sunday. The top-seeded Alcaraz won 6-4, 3-6, 6-2 to become the first Spanish champion in the tournament's 52-year history. "This week has been a really good week," Alcaraz said.

Shreyas Iyer – the middle-order metronome who makes India tick

The batter has underscored his value for the team with crucial knocks in the ongoing ODI series; mentor Amre says he is happy to see the Mumbai player update his approach to the challenges of the modern game

ENGLAND IN INDIA

Y.B. Sarangi
CUTTACK

When Shreyas Iyer came into the then Delhi Daredevils side in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 10 years ago, he had just spent a season in domestic cricket and was considered a bundle of talent.

Even as a 20-year-old rookie, his confidence off the field during interactions with media persons was unmissable. He performed with the same self-belief in his first season of the IPL, gathering 439 runs, including four fifties, at a 128-plus strike rate.

He went from strength to strength to assert himself as a premier white ball batter while overcoming injuries and lean patches.

Shreyas eventually earned India caps in all three formats and impressed with his leadership skills for the Delhi and Kolkata franchises. He led the latter to the IPL title

last year and is all set to captain Punjab Kings in the upcoming season.

In international cricket, Shreyas has done his best in the 50-overs format. He has scored 2,524 runs from 64 matches with five centuries and 19 half-centuries, at an average of 47.62.

The Mumbai batter, who ambles around in the middle with a typical swag of his own while plundering runs or playing as per the situation, was an integral part of India's home campaign in the 2023 World Cup.

So, when Shreyas revealed that he did not expect to play the first ODI against England in Nagpur and came in after Virat Kohli pulled out due to a knee issue, it surprised many. He scored a crucial half-century in a winning cause.

At Cuttack, when India needed some partnerships after the fall of Kohli, the Mumbai batter joined hands with skipper Rohit Sharma for a 70-run stand and then with Axar Patel for a 38-run association.

Unfortunately, a mix-up with Axar and a resultant run out brought about an end to his innings when he was just six runs away from another deserving fifty and India 47 off the target.

Having highlighted his worth at the key No. 4 spot in the middle-order, the 30-year-old Shreyas, who can construct an innings well and accelerate to the finish line as per the need, is likely to be a key component of India's batting order in its Champions Trophy campaign.

His athleticism and fielding skills will add value.

"I am happy he has updated his approach to the challenges of the modern game. He has learned from experience and is determined to work towards excellence in red-ball cricket, too," said Shreyas' mentor Pravin Amre.

For someone who is always prepared to take his chances, the stylish batter should relish the opportunities and challenges he may face in Dubai.



Pulling his weight: Shreyas has made vital contributions in ODIs.
K.R. DEEPAK

Playing domestic cricket helped me, says Jadeja

Y.B. Sarangi
CUTTACK

Ravindra Jadeja is pleased that India's spin department has been doing well in the build-up to the Champions Trophy.

The spin quintet — Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakaravarthy and Washington Sundar — have provided options and also variety to captain Rohit Sharma in the ongoing ODI series against England. While four have got some game time, Washington may get an opportunity in the final ODI in Ahmedabad.

So far, the spinners have done well by providing crucial breakthroughs and containing the England batters in the middle overs. Depending on the team's requirement in Dubai, the team management may consider Varun as a backup to the Champions Trophy squad.

"It's good considering where we are going to play, it is likely to be hot, so we'll only know about the pitch once we get there. Our spin department is doing well. In the middle overs, we need to either take wickets or restrict runs and not give away easy boundaries



Quantity and quality: Jadeja says bowling more overs has seen him maintain his rhythm. K.R. DEEPAK

because five fielders remain inside the circle. Both our fast bowlers and spinners are performing well together as a bowling unit in every match, which is a good sign," said Jadeja after India's four-wicket win, which helped seal the series, at the Barabati Stadium here on Sunday.

He added playing domestic cricket prior to the ODI series helped him.

"It feels really good (to play ODIs again), especially after almost two years — since the World Cup. Coming back into this format requires quick adaptation, but I believe the domestic matches I played helped me a lot. In those matches, I bowled more than 30 overs, which helped me maintain my rhythm.

"Like Tests, I tried to maintain a similar line and length in ODIs. The rhythm remained intact because the break wasn't too long," said Jadeja, looking forward to a fruitful outing in the ICC event.

Karan tumbles out; Geerts survives



Geerts. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Kamesh Srinivasan
NEW DELHI

Eighth seed Timofei Skatov proved a hard nut to crack for Karan Singh as the Kazakh ran away a 6-4, 6-0 victor in the first round of the *Dafa News \$100,000 Delhi Open Challenger* tennis tournament at DLTA Complex on Monday.

The experience and expertise of the 24-year-old Kazakh, who was ranked a career-best 123 in 2023, was evident in the way he studied the Indian's game and also the slow conditions to plot his way forward with crisp execution.

The 21-year-old Karan, ranked a modest 500, did have the big game as he showed in some entertaining rallies and a few classy winners, but not the con-

Dev breaks the pole vault National record; Tajinderpal takes shot put gold

NATIONAL GAMES

Stan Ravan
DEHRADUN

Dev Kumar Meena switched from the quarter-mile to pole vault just three years ago and he now appears to be in a hurry to make up for the lost time.

The 19-year-old from Madhya Pradesh broke the pole vault National record, raising it by one centimetre to 5.32m, while retaining the gold in the National Games athletics at the Ganga Stadium here on Monday. It was the first National record in athletics in these Games here and, in the process, Dev also improved his personal best by 12cm.

After sailing over Tamil Nadu's S. Siva's National record, Dev became a bit ambitious. He went for 5.40m next but kept kicking the bar down every time.

"It was my new coach Angel Garcia Esteban's decision to go for 5.40," said Dev. Ghlyansham Yadav been coaching Dev for the last few years at the MP athletics academy and Garcia Esteban, a former Cuban National champion, will begin working on the youngster soon.

Meanwhile, Asian and Asian Games champion Tajinderpal Singh Toor comfortably won the men's shot put gold with an open-



Extra special: Niharika won the women's triple jump, her maiden gold in a National competition. RITU RAJ KONWAR



Soaring: Dev set the first athletics record of this edition while retaining his National Games gold. RITU RAJ KONWAR

tional record with 21.77m.

There was a big surprise in the women's hammer throw where UP's Anuksha Yadav improved her personal best by more than six metres as she broke the Games record and beat record-holder Tanya Chaudhary for the gold. And in women's triple jump, Punjab's Niharika Vashisth won her maiden gold in a National competition shocking defending champion N.V. Sheena and another leading name, Poorva Savant.

The results:

Men: 3000m steeple chase: 1. Sumit Kumar (Ser) 8:46.26s, 2. Rohit Verma (Ser) 8:49.01, 3. Shankar Lal Swami (Har) 8:49.39.

4x400m relay: 1. Tamil Nadu (3:10.61s), 2. Uttarakhand (3:10.85), 3. Services (3:10.90).

Pole vault: 1. Dev Kumar Meena (Pun) 5.32m National record, OR 5.31 by TN's S. Siva, 2022; 2. G. Regan (TN) 5.00, 3. Kuldeep Kumar (UP) 5.00.

Shot put: 1. Tajinderpal Singh Toor (Pun) 19.74m, 2. Samardeep Singh Gill (MP) 19.38, 3. Prabhkirpal Singh (Pun) 19.04.

Women: 3000m steeple chase: 1. Ankita (Utk) 9:53.63s, 2. Manju Yadav (MP) 10:15.70, 3. Rebi Paul (UP) 10:37.15. **4x400m relay:** 1. Punjab (3:41.77s), 2. Karnataka (3:43.89), 3. Haryana (3:45.83).

Triple jump: 1. Niharika Vashisth (Pun) 13.37m, 2. N.V. Sheena (Ker) 13.19, 3. Sandra Babu (Ker) 13.12.

Hammer throw: 1. Anuksha Yadav (UP) 62.89m MR, OR Tanya Chaudhary's 62.47m 2023; 2. Tanya Chaudhary (UP) 59.74, 3. Nandni (UP) 58.89.

Manu finishes on top in qualification, but Simranpreet wins



On the podium: Esha, Simranpreet and Manu. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Manu Bhaker topped qualification in the 25m sports pistol in the National shooting trials at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlaqabad, on Monday.

Manu shot 587 to be two points ahead of the eventual winner of the final, Simranpreet Kaur Brar. In the title clash, Simranpreet beat Esha Singh 36-35. Esha compensated for her low score of 578 with a sterling performance in the final as Manu was pushed to third.

Arshdeep Kaur, Abhidnya Patil, Annu Raj Singh, T.S. Divya and world record holder Rhythm Sangwan were the others to make the final. Multiple World Cup gold medallist Rahi Sarnobat shot 575 and was placed 10th.

The results: **10m air rifle:** Men: 1. Rudrankksh Patil 253.3 (633.0); 2. Hriday Hazarika 251.4 (633.0); 3. Smit Moradiya 229.1 (632.8).

Women: 25m sports pistol: 1. Simranpreet Kaur Brar 35 (585); 2. Esha Singh 35 (578); 3. Manu Bhaker 31 (587). **50m rifle:**

3-position: 1. Sift Kaur Samra 469.8 (595); 2. Shriyanka Sadangi 465.2 (592); 3. Surabhi Bharadwaj 454.2 (592).

World Champion Rudrankksh Patil continued

IN BRIEF

10-man Odisha rallies to hold Punjab in ISL



BISWARANJAN ROUT

A 10-man Odisha held Punjab 1-1 in the ISL in Bhubaneswar on Monday. K.P. Rahul was given the marching orders in the 44th. Petros Giakoumakis made it count as Punjab went ahead in added time. Isak Vanlalruatfela, in pic, drew level in the 51st. Odisha staved off the challenge for the remainder of the tie.



Familiar foes set to rekindle European rivalry

Real Madrid against Manchester City in the Champions League is the accidental blockbuster of the new knockout playoffs round that starts on Tuesday. Madrid eliminated City in the quarterfinals one year ago, and in two epic semifinal legs before lifting the trophy in 2022. Man City won their semifinal meeting decisively in 2023 on the way to its first European Cup title. It is a different City in personnel and personality that Pep Guardiola will send out in Manchester.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SCHEDULE

Tuesday: Brest vs PSG (11.15 p.m.), Juventus vs PSV Eindhoven, Manchester City vs Real Madrid, Sporting CP vs Borussia Dortmund (all matches at 1.30 a.m., Wednesday).

Wednesday: Club Brugge vs Atalanta (11.15 p.m.), AS Monaco vs Benfica, Celtic vs Bayern Munich, Feyenoord Rotterdam vs AC Milan (all matches at 1.30 a.m., Thursday).

Shardul, Rahane, Suryakumar turn the tide Mumbai's way

The seamer's six-wicket haul helps it gain a slender first-innings lead; the two senior batters consolidate the position with a 129-run stand

RANJI TROPHY

Sahil Mathur
KOLKATA

Mumbai seniors Ajinkya Rahane, Suryakumar Yadav, and Shardul Thakur led the defending champion's dominant display over Haryana on day three of the Ranji Trophy quarterfinals at the Eden Gardens here on Monday.

Rahane and Suryakumar stitched a 129-run fourth-wicket partnership as Mumbai finished the moving day 292 runs ahead after Shardul Thakur's six for 58 shot down Haryana for 301.

Rahane and Shivam Dube saw through the last fifty minutes of the third session after Suryakumar miscued his in-fashion *Supla* shot off Anuj Thakral on 70.

Haryana bowlers failed to control the scoring rate under flat conditions where Rahane and Suryakumar found boundaries with ease across the ground. While the Mumbai captain was more about textbook drives and punches, the Indian T20I skipper gave the small portion of the crowd a glimpse of his cheeky hits.

Suryakumar, with his open-legged stance coupled with a high backlift, was proactive from the start, sweeping and reverse-sweeping Jayant Yadav early into his innings. He also exhibited his not-

**Having a ball:** Thakur picked up all five Haryana wickets on the third day. PTI

so-popular defensive game when not attempting a late cut or a pull shot.

Batting at No. 4, Rahane stayed true to his calm persona when Mumbai lost its openers — Ayush Mhatre and Akash Anand — inside 13 overs.

With Siddhesh Lad, he formed a 52-run alliance for the third wicket before Jayant had the former caught behind seven runs short of his fifty.

Shardul took the morning honours, picking all the remaining five Haryana wickets.

The host could only add 38 runs, falling 14 runs short of Mumbai's first-innings score. The medium-pacer sent back overnight

batter Rohit Sharma in the first over. Thirty-three minutes later, he returned with the second new ball to wrap up the final four wickets, solidifying Mumbai's position to continue aiming for the domestic treble.

The scores:

Mumbai — 1st innings: 315.

Haryana — 1st innings:

Lakshya Dalal lbw b Shardul 34,

Ankit Kumar c Rahane b Mulani

136, Yashvardhan Dalal lbw b

Kotian 36, Himanshu Rana b

Mulani 3, Nishant Sindhu b

Kotian 20, Rohit Sharma c Avasthi

b Shardul 22, Anuj Thakral c Lad

b Shardul 12, Jayant Yadav c

Anand b Shardul 13, Sumit

Kumar (not out) 11, Anshul

Kamboj lbw b Shardul 6, Ajit

Chahal lbw b Shardul 0; Extras

(lb-1, b-5, w-2); Total (in 84.5

overs): 301.

Fall of wickets: 1-87, 2-168, 3-173, 4-218, 5-257, 6-263, 7-284, 8-285, 9-301.

Mumbai bowling: Shardul

18.5-3-58-6, Avasthi 12-2-48-0,

Royston 13-2-47-0, Dube 3-0-17-0,

Mulani 23-3-68-2, Kotian

15-0-57-2

Mumbai — 2nd innings: Ayush

Mhatre c (sub) Dheeru b Thakral

31, Akash Anand c (sub) Vats b

Sumit 10, Siddhesh Lad c Rohit b

Jayant 43, Ajinkya Rahane

(batting) 88, Suryakumar Yadav c

(sub) Amit b Thakral 70, Shivam

Dube (batting) 30; Extras (lb-5,

w-1); 6; Total (for four wkts. in 67

overs): 278.

Fall of wickets: 1-34, 2-48, 3-100,

4-229.

Haryana bowling: Kamboj

8-0-39-0, Sumit 11-3-42-1, Thakral

14-2-61-2, Sindhu 15-1-49-0,

Jayant 13.5-0-58-1, Lakshya

5.1-1-24-0.

Mumbai Titans beats Hyderabad Falcons

Sports Bureau

NEW DELHI

Mumbai Titans overwhelmed Hyderabad Falcons 95-79 after having trailed 47-50 at half time in the INBL Pro basketball league at the Thyagaraj Indoor Stadium on Monday.

The Mumbai team surged ahead in the fourth quarter, scoring 27 points, while conceding a mere se-

ven. It was a welcome revival of fortunes for the Mumbai team which had lost its earlier two matches. After scoring big in winning its first two matches, Hyderabad stumbled a bit.

The result: Mumbai Titans 95 (Elijah Puna 20, Dalph Panopio 18, Liam Judd 17, Pranav Prince 15, Lamer Paterson 15) bt Hyderabad Falcons 79 (Alex Robinson 7, Kushal Singh 15, Jack Purchase 10).

Navdeep Saini stars for Delhi Challenger Club

Sports Bureau

NEW DELHI

tourney at Khalsa College.

The scores: Friends 111 in 19 overs (Abhimanyu 33, Akash Tomar 3/14, Navdeep Saini 2/16 lost to Delhi Challenger 115/2 in 11 overs (Ankit Tripathi 33); Carpe Diem India 162/6 in 20 overs (Harshit Kaushik 35, Rajesh Sharma 32) bt York Ravindra 143 in 19 overs (Vansh Bedi 45, Prashant Bhatti 3/11, Ajay Yadav 2/13).

RANJI QUARTERFINALS - DAY 3

At Nagpur: Vidarbha 353 in 121.1 overs & 165/5 in 62 overs (Yash Rathod 55 batting) vs. TN 225 in 64.3 overs (Andre Siddarth 65, Aditya Thakare 5/34). **At Pune:** J&K 280 in 95.1 overs & 180/3 in 57 overs (Paras Dogra 73 batting, Kanhaiya Wadhawan 42 batting) vs. Kerala 281 in 85 overs (Jalaj Saxena 67, Salman Nizar 112 not out, Auqib Nabi 6/53).

At Kolkata: Mumbai 315 in 88.2 overs & 278/4 in 67 overs (Ajinkya Rahane 88 batting, Suryakumar Yadav 70, Siddhesh Lad 43) vs. Haryana 301 in 84.5 overs (Ankit Kumar 136, Shardul Thakur 6/58).

At Rajkot: Saurashtra 216 in 72.1 overs & 33/0 in 16 overs vs. Gujarat 511 in 159.1 overs (Manan Hingrajia 83, Jaimeet Patel 103, Urvil Patel 140, Ravi Bishnoi 45, Chirag Jani 4/67, Dharmendrasinh Jadeja 5/120).

LIVE TELECAST

Ranji Trophy: Quarterfinals, JioCinema, 9.30 a.m.

Champions League: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 11.15 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

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Rohit – breaking the shackles of self-doubt in typical ‘Hitman’ fashion

After a series of international outings with little to show, the skipper found form with a stunning hundred in Cuttack; this bodes well for the Men in Blue, whose Champions Trophy campaign gets underway in 10 days

R. Kaushik

It's impossible to even venture into imagining what Rohit Sharma must have gone through over the last four months. What started off as one low score mushroomed into two, then four, then a half-dozen. His form became an issue of national debate; every press conference, understandably, focused on the lack of runs. It came to such a pass that, unprecedently, Rohit sat himself out of the decisive Sydney Test at the start of the year, believing his form as it was then didn't warrant a place in the playing XI.

Throughout this depressing phase, the 37-year-old put on a brave exterior. He wasn't feisty or combative, lacing his answers with typical humour - his closest friends will tell you that no one is more capable of laughing at one's misfortunes without rancour - but one could see that he was hurting. Not because his place in the side or his position as leader was under threat, never mind the scrutiny, but because he wasn't pulling his weight as senior batter and captain, in that order. Or maybe not in that order.

There are times when, no matter how hard one tries, the stars align in such a way as to defeat the best-laid plans, to scuttle the best of intentions. Rohit left no stone unturned in his bid to rediscover his rhythm; he hit the nets uncompromisingly, he returned to Ranji Trophy cricket for Mumbai after several years in an effort to find run-making ways and to serve the side largely responsible for where he is today. With absolutely nothing to show.

Strong character

Rohit is a strong character, as one needs to be to thrive in the cauldron of unforgiving competitive sport. His pleasant exterior and a ready smile effectively mask steely inner determination and conformity to the high standards he has set for himself in white-ball cricket for over a dozen years, and in Test cricket since his elevation as opener in October 2019. As skipper, he believes in leading from the front, in setting the example so that there is no need for words and oral exhortations to his teammates to fall in line. These last four months must have been shattering, though at no stage did he question himself, question his ability, question whether the sands of time were running out on him.

Sometimes - actually, more often than one would think - bad things happen to good people. But then, the stars realign and good things happen to good people, too. As it transpired at the Barabati Stadium in Cuttack on Sunday night, in the second of three One-Day Internationals against England.

Rohit's ten previous international hits, nine in Tests and the other in the first ODI last week in Nagpur, had produced a mere 70 runs, a highest of 18 and seven single-digit efforts, leaving his most die-hard fans wondering if... With the Champions Trophy a little over a week away, this was anything but ideal. The confidence that a return to 50-over cricket, which allows Rohit to be himself more than any other format, would trigger an instant turnaround had been dented in Nagpur where, like in Pune and Mumbai and Adelaide and Brisbane and Melbourne, his first mistake was destined to be his last.

Where others might have despaired, Rohit refused to be shackled in self-doubt. True, there would have been the inevitable gremlins - the Hitman is as human as any of us, never mind the sobriquet that paints the picture of a cold-blooded assassin (of bowling units and nothing else) - but to his credit, he didn't allow them to germinate or consume them. He was seized of the need to arrest the slide, maybe even obsessed with that, but somehow, as he has done successfully over the years, he kept the emotion out of the equation, understanding that red mist and white-line fever have never been his go-to options in his 17 and a half years in top-flight cricket.

Near-perfect time

There is no such thing as the right moment to rediscover one's mojo, but this was quite close to the perfect time, with India's first Champions Trophy outing ten days away. The target was steep, 305, but if India got there, plenty of reward lay in store, including a seventh successive ODI home series triumph against the 2019 World Cup champions. 305 would take some getting, but it's not a tally as intimidating as, say, even a decade back. Rohit could afford to take his time,



K.R. DEEPAK

If he so desired, because as history testifies, he is so effortlessly capable of bridging the gap between runs scored and balls faced, given the rich array of strokes at his disposal.

The Rohit of a half-decade back might have started carefully, if not circumspectly, got a few on the board and then decided to tee off, but that is not the Rohit of the last three years or thereabouts. A conscious move to take the fight to the opposition has been the calling card almost from when he was made the all-format captain in early 2022, and any other approach would have been out of character. Understandable, certainly, but not in keeping with the aggressive avatar the world has come to know and admire.

Whether Rohit toyed with the temptation of changing tack isn't clear, but if there was any temptation at all, he swept it out of his mind space comprehensively. In just the second over of the chase, he bared his hand when he charged Gus Atkinson, an attempted aerial drive down the straight field skewing off the outer half of the bat to the point fence. One-bounce four. Hey, maybe the tide was turning just a bit. Maybe, the cricketing Gods had decided they had tried him enough, tested his resilience and patience. Maybe, they were pleased with what he had done when the drought spilled over from one innings to another, one country to another, one continent to another.

Whatever the reason, that four was the trigger for the carnage that followed. Atkinson's next delivery was smeared over long-on for six and in the over that followed, Rohit deposited the first ball he faced from Saqib Mahmood over long off, charging the bowler and revoking a template that had served him so outstandingly well in both the limited-overs World Cups split by seven months.

In the stands, they went nuts. If there has been one constant in these four or so months, it's been the support of the fans, the energy coursing through their veins, the oh-so-visible desire to see Rohit return to form, the goodwill and the prayers of the average fan. It's a far and welcome cry



K.R. DEEPAK

from the days when heroes were installed and brought down on a whim and a fancy.

In the dressing-room, there was a frisson. The sense that something special was on the cards, that the Hitman was back, swatting aside the impostor who had slipped into his body for so long.

Out in the middle, there was apprehension, a feeling of foreboding. England feared they had prodded a sleeping giant and there would be a price to pay. They were singularly clueless from staunching the bleeding, not a trickle but an unchecked spurt from different parts, facilitated by a broadsword here, a rapier there.

Shubman Gill wasn't just an admiring bystander, but he knew his captain was on to a good thing. He knew that his job wasn't to compete but complement. Not even a 35-minute interruption when one of the six light towers decided to act up had disturbed his skipper's

concentration, therefore it was incumbent upon him not to throw a spanner in the works. Gill played his part beautifully and was rewarded with enjoying the entertainment from the best seat in the town.

Entertainment it most certainly was. Rohit brought up his 50 in 30 deliveries, his 32nd ODI century in 76. He didn't so much as stutter through the nervous nineties as race through it, reaching three figures with his seventh six, shimmying down the track to cart leg-spinner Adil Rashid way over long-off. As he accepted batting partner Shreyas Iyer's warm embrace with equanimity, you wondered how this man had failed to score for these many innings. 'These many' might have only been ten, but they felt like a lifetime. As they must have to Rohit too, despite his outward calm.

There was no extravagant celebration, no leap in the air, no punch of the fist, no furious bat-waving, no blood-curdling scream to liberate any pent-up emotions. To most of the rest, it might have signalled the end of a barren run but to Rohit, it must have been further reiteration of the quality nestled in his strong frame. It must have been vindication of the processes he followed, justification of his faith and that of his colleagues in the permanence of his class. Nothing more, nothing less. To Rohit, the 32nd ton wasn't an end in itself, just the means to a potentially glorious chapter in the desert sands of Dubai.

This century took Rohit to outright third in the list of centuries across formats for India in international cricket, ahead of Rahul Dravid (48). Only Sachin Tendulkar (100) and Virat Kohli (81) lie in the distance, neither of them catchable. Rohit will not lose sleep over it, nor will he gloat at moving to sole No. 3, because that's not his style. He won't celebrate having breezed past Chris Gayle to No. 2 in the list of ODI six-hitters, nor will it truly register that he is just 14 sixes short of sending Shahid Afridi's all-time record of 351 into oblivion. He will leave that to the others; for him, it's about making a difference and after a brief lull, that's precisely the promise his 90-ball 119, 12 fours and seven sixes, has evoked.

THE GIST

▼ The stars finally aligned for Rohit, who barely put a foot wrong in his shellacking of the England bowlers in the second ODI

▼ Not even a 35-minute interruption due to floodlight failure disturbed the skipper's composure and concentration

▼ The 37-year-old barely celebrated crossing multiple milestones, instead choosing to remain calm and let his bat do the talking

SCIENCE

Cross-blood transplant performed on a patient with Bombay blood

His mother donated her kidney, though she did not have the Bombay blood group. And doctors in Chennai, who had performed cross-blood transplants for close to two decades, were willing to cross the Rubicon and pulled off what not long ago might have looked like a sheer miracle

Ramya Kannan

It was in his blood that the 30-year-old male should create history. Literally.

In mid-2024, the patient underwent a kidney transplant. Though he was relatively young for a transplant, that's not where he stands unique. He had the extremely rare Bombay blood group, which prevented him from receiving organs or even blood transfusions from anyone who didn't have the same blood group running through their veins.

But then that's exactly what he did: his mother donated her kidney, though she did not have the Bombay blood group. Doctors at MIOT International in Chennai, who had performed cross-blood transplants for close to two decades, were willing to cross the Rubicon into a sector with no precedence whatsoever: no one had attempted a cross-blood match on a Bombay group patient ever before.

A sheer miracle

In a recent paper published in the peer-reviewed journal *Kidney International Reports*, the team that worked on the transplant – Rajan Ravichandran, Yashwanth Raj T., and Kanakaraj Arumugam – chronicled for posterity how a team of doctors in Chennai pulled off what not long ago might have been put down as a sheer miracle. "It was impossible for Bombay blood group patients to receive blood or organs from another blood group, until it was not," senior nephrologist Dr. Ravichandran explained.

The story he believes begins nearly two decades ago, when he was trained in Japan to perform cross-blood transplants, referring to the transplantation performed when donors and recipients have different blood types. In 2010, he and his team at MIOT Hospitals used a kidney from a donor with B blood group on a recipient with O blood group, successfully. Using a special procedure called double filtration plasmapheresis (DFPP) developed by the Japanese, the team had the patient discharged in a week and back at his software job in three months' time.

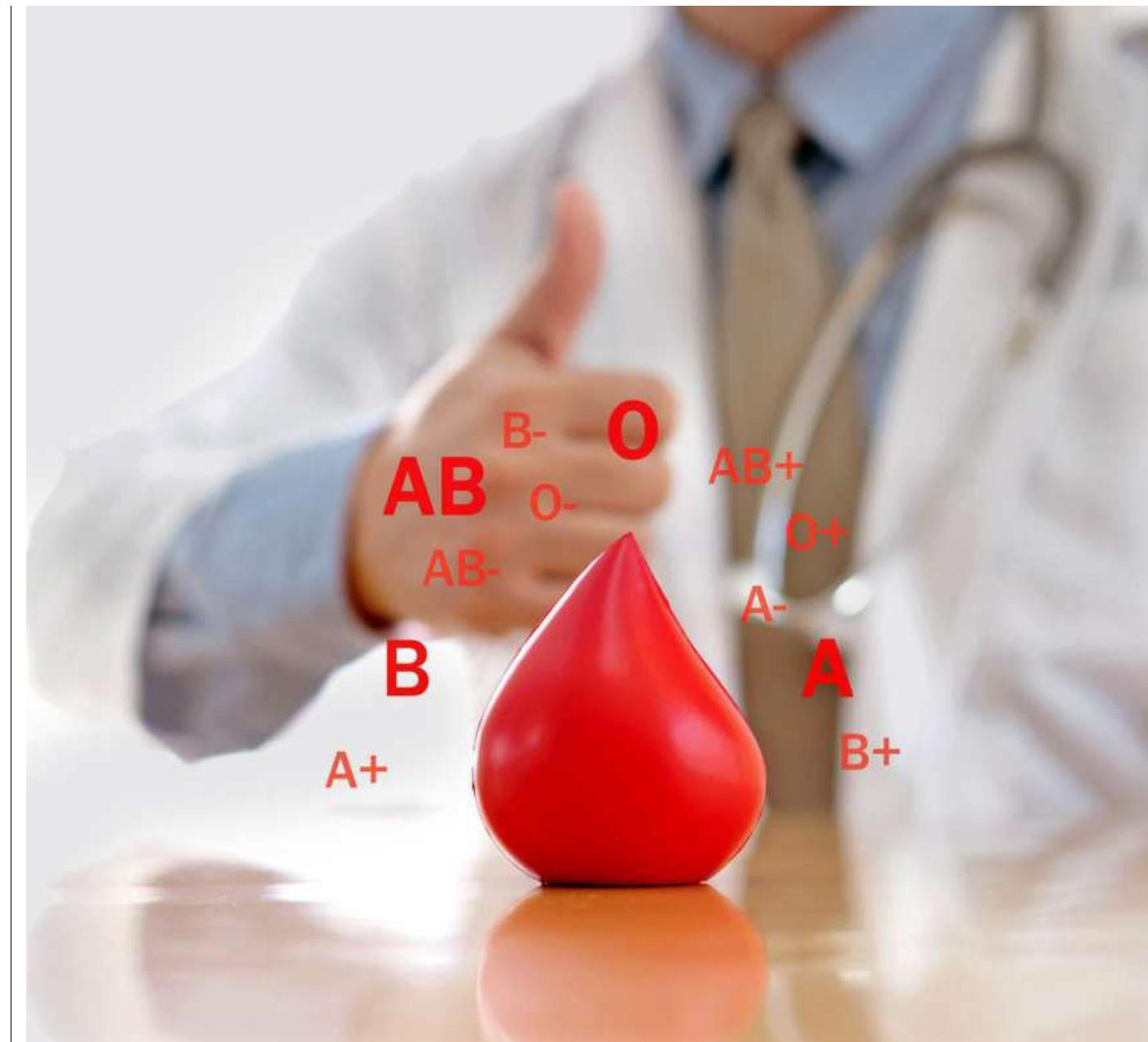
"The most essential requirement in transplantation is a blood group match – ideally, the patient's own blood group, or in the event it is not available, any group for which his blood does not carry antibodies," Dr. Ravichandran explained.

Antibodies are used by the body to detect and neutralise foreign bodies, while antigens are proteins or carbohydrates found on the surface of red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets, and they determine blood type.

The Bombay blood group

The Bombay, a.k.a. HH, blood group is a rare blood group first discovered in Mumbai in 1952 by Y.M. Bhende. The key differences between the Bombay blood group and the common ABO blood groups lie in the presence (or absence) of the H antigen, which is the fundamental building block for the ABO blood group system.

In normal individuals, the H antigen serves as the base structure for building A and B antigens. In Bombay blood group individuals, the gene responsible for producing the H antigen is mutated or absent, so neither A nor B antigens can be formed.



The Bombay, a.k.a. HH, blood group is a rare blood group first discovered in Mumbai in 1952 by Y.M. Bhende. Representative image. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Therefore, these people cannot receive blood transfusions from any ABO group, including type O, which has the H antigen. They can only receive blood from another Bombay blood group donor. Its prevalence is about 0.0004% (one in 4 million) of the total human population. While it drops to one in a million in the European population and one in 10,000 in Mumbai, the act of finding a donor is still daunting.

Clinical challenges

It was daunting for this index patient as well. The issue was not to find a donor for a kidney; his mother was eager to donate hers; the nub was that his body would reject it outright because they had differing blood groups. "We decided that it was time to use the principles of cross-blood matching that we use for the ABO type here as well. We assumed it was a similar situation and decided to use the Japanese technique of DFPP," Dr. Ravichandran said.

"Once you identify the Bombay blood group, you know he has anti-H antibodies. Firstly, we measure anti-A and anti-B antibodies in the blood as we do in the case of ABO cross-blood matches. Here, additionally, you have to measure the levels for anti-H antibodies too, and titrate the levels. The next step is to give a monoclonal antibody injection to the patient to deplete B cells that produce antibodies," he said.

As the authors detailed in the paper,

In normal individuals, the H antigen serves as the base structure for building A and B antigens. In Bombay blood group individuals, the gene responsible for producing the H antigen is mutated or absent, so neither A nor B antigens can be formed. Therefore they cannot receive transfusions from any ABO group

the clinical challenges in such a scenario, even among those with rich cross-blood transplant experience in ABO, include determining a safe anti-H antibody titre cut-off, sufficient enough to stop the body from rejecting the organ from the donor.

Notably, there is no precedence for this, so one had to, again, assume a safe level of antibody concentration. There is a high risk of hyper-acute rejection as anti-H antibodies are more potent than anti-A or anti-B antibodies.

"After determining the titre (levels) of antibodies, we started plasmapheresis, which again removes the antibodies in the blood, lowering the chances of rejection. This was combined with immunosuppressive IVIG [intravenous immunoglobulin] to further suppress antibodies, thereby preventing hyperacute rejection of the organ."

Every alternate day, the team measured the level of antibodies in the patient. "Normally for anti-A and anti-B,

we consider a 1-in-16 concentration of antibody to be an ideal safe point to start transplant. It starts at 1-in-256, we then bring it down, lower the antibodies present. In anti-H there just is no cut off, so we made a few assumptions," he said.

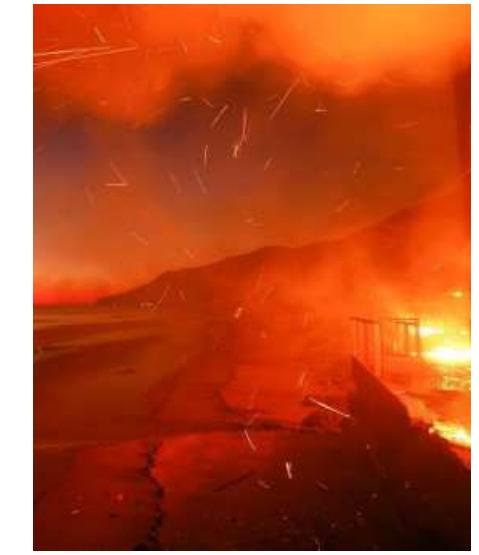
A new hope

At what was assumed to be a safe, no-rejection antibody titre, the transplant surgery was performed. The team scoured the State for units of Bombay blood group units, just in case the patient might need it during transplant surgery, since cross-blood transfusion is not possible. However, he did not need it. The surgery was a breeze, and there were no complications during or after surgery, the team said.

While there is no published literature regarding accommodation of anti-H antibodies by the graft, as it had not been tested before, in this patient the doctors seemed to have achieved a no-rejection antibody titre status, and there was no rejection. The first two weeks, which are also crucial to decide if the organ will be rejected, also passed without incident, the doctors said.

Six months later, the patient is well and able to resume his pre-transplant activities, grateful at how the impossible became possible for him – and hopefully, for others in the Bombay blood group as well, if they are ever to require a transplant.

(ramya.kannan@thehindu.co.in)



The Palisades Fire burns through a beach front property, in California on January 8, 2025. AP

Is global warming accelerating?

Associated Press

The world warmed to yet another monthly heat record in January, despite an abnormally chilly US, a cooling La Niña, and predictions of a slightly less hot 2025, according to the European climate service Copernicus.

The surprising January heat record coincides with a new study by a climate science heavyweight, former top NASA scientist James Hansen, and others arguing that global warming is accelerating. It's a claim that's dividing the research community.

January 2025 globally was 0.09 degrees C warmer than January 2024, the previous hottest January, and was 1.75 C warmer than it was before industrial times, Copernicus calculated. It was the 18th month of the last 19 that the world hit or passed 1.5 C above pre-industrial times. Scientists won't regard the limit as breached until global temperatures stay above it for 20 years.

By far the biggest driver of record heat is greenhouse gas buildup from the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas, but the natural contributions to temperature change have not been acting as expected, said Samantha Burgess, strategic lead for climate for the European weather agency.

The big natural factor in global temperatures is usually the natural cycle of changes in the equatorial Pacific Ocean waters. When the central Pacific is especially warm, it's an El Niño and global temperatures tend to spike. Last year was a substantial El Niño, though it ended last June, and the year was the hottest on record.

El Niño's cooler flip side, a La Niña, tends to dampen the effects of global warming, making record temperatures less likely. A La Niña started in January after brewing for months. Just last month,

It was the 18th month of the last 19 that the world hit 1.5 C above pre-industrial times. Scientists won't regard the limit as breached until temperatures stay above it for 20 years

climate scientists were predicting that 2025 wouldn't be as hot as 2024 or 2023, with the La Niña a major reason.

But Hansen, the former NASA scientist now at Columbia University, said 2025 could break 2024's records. In a study in the journal *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, Hansen and colleagues said the last 15 years have warmed at about twice the rate of the previous 40 years.

"I'm confident that this higher rate will continue for at least several years," Hansen said in an interview.

There's been a noticeable temperature rise even when taking out El Niño variations and expected climate change since 2020, Hansen said. He noted recent shipping regulations that have resulted in reduced sulphur pollution, which reflects some sunlight away from the earth and effectively reduces warming. And that will continue, he said.

University of Michigan environment dean Jonathan Overpeck, who wasn't part of the Hansen study. "There seems little doubt that global warming and the impacts of climate change are accelerating."

But Princeton's Gabe Vecchi and University of Pennsylvania's Michael Mann said they disagree. Vecchi said there's not enough data to show that this isn't random chance. Mann said that temperature increases are still within what climate models forecast.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

There are more minerals on earth than are dreamt of in our geology

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

Tanzanite is a strikingly blue variety of calcium aluminium hydroxyl sorosilicate crystals. Its colour is the result of small amounts of X present in the crystal – in the same way that some tourmalines display a vivid blue colour thanks to metalloproteins called vanabins. Name X.

QUESTION 2

Zirconium and Y are very rarely found in the same natural compounds because the processes that create and accumulate them are very different. This is what makes the mineral painite very hard to find. Most of the currently known deposits of the mineral occur in Myanmar.

Name Y.

QUESTION 3

In pure form, this mineral has the chemical formula NaAlSi₃O₈. It's tough, dense, and doesn't weather easily. Its green form is highly valued in China. It's formed only in the subduction zones of continents, where rock is transformed to contain new minerals under very high pressure. Name the mineral.

QUESTION 4

When angular, hard-edged rock fragments become cemented together by powdery rock, you have breccia. Name the mineral found in the Dhofar 280 meteorite that crashed in Oman in 2000 later identified as lunar breccia.

QUESTION 5

Ekanite is one of the very few minerals

on the earth that are naturally radioactive. It occurs mostly in Sri Lanka. It's hard to find because, in a process called Z, the radioactivity slowly but progressively degrades the crystal structure. Name Z.

Answers to January 30 quiz:

1. First computer virus that 'escaped' to other networks – **Ans: Elk Cloner**
 2. First virus for the IBM Personal Computer – **Ans: Brain**
 3. Code that mutates its algorithm when it runs – **Ans: Polymorphic code**
 4. Code that rewrites itself to perform new functions – **Ans: Metamorphic code**
 5. Worm believed to have disrupted Iran's nuclear programme – **Ans: Stuxnet**
- Visual: **John von Neumann**
First contact: ViswanadhaRao Batchu | K.N. Viswanathan | Dalbeer Singh | Ashish Nair | Joe V.R.



Visual: Name this mineral, thus far found only in Serbia. Its chemical formula is very similar to that of kryptonite as described in the 2006 film *Superman Returns*. DUNGODUNG (CC BY-SA 4.0)

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

For feedback and suggestions
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