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MODI RALLY
PM says AAP will be ousted from Delhi

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PROTESTS GROW STRONGER
Farm outfits seek Modi's intervention to save Dallewal

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NITISH ON RJD OFFER
'Made the mistake twice, will not repeat'

NEWS » PAGE 13



DATA POINT
Sharp fall in Madrasa enrolments
Disproportionate drops need scrutiny

OPINION » PAGE 9



DOUBLE DELIGHT
Australia wins Sydney Test, enters WTC final

SPORT » PAGE 17

Stalin offers \$1-mn prize for decoding Indus Valley script

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced on Sunday a \$1-million prize for experts or organisations that succeeded in deciphering the scripts of the Indus Valley Civilisation for everyone to understand.

"We are not able to decipher the script of the Indus Valley Civilisation that flourished once. It remains a mystery even after 100 years. Archaeologists, Tamil computer software experts and computer experts across the world have been making efforts to decipher the script. To encourage the research, the government will offer one million dollars," Mr. Stalin said at an event in Chennai to mark the centenary of the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilisation by Sir John Marshall.

The Chief Minister also



Signs and graffiti excavated from the Mohenjo-daro site.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

announced a ₹2-crore grant for setting up a chair in the name of noted archaeologist and epigraphist Iravatham Mahadevan to continue the research on the Indus Valley Civilisation jointly by the State Department of Archaeology and the Indus Research Centre at the Chennai-based Roja Muthiah Library.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

Ahead of PM's Paris trip, Rafale, Scorpene deals reach final leg

Modi has been invited to visit AI summit in France on February 10 and 11; government-to-government deals estimated at \$10 billion likely to be placed for approval before Cabinet Committee on Security in the next couple of weeks, sources say

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Two large defence deals between India and France are being finalised, amid expectations that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Paris in February for the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit to be hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron. The deals, together estimated at over \$10 billion, will include the purchase of 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers, and three additional Scorpene-class conventional submarines. The two deals are expected to be put before the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) for approval in the next couple of weeks, sources said.

Shopping list
As Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to be in Paris in February, India is looking to seal arms deals

WHAT THE COUNTRY WANTS?

- 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Navy's aircraft carriers
- Three more Scorpene-class conventional submarines
- The two deals are expected to be put before the Cabinet Committee on Security for approval soon

It is just matter of completing the formalities of the acquisition process and we expect that if not this month, next month, hopefully, this [Scorpene submarines] and Rafale-M deals should be signed

Navy chief Admiral DINESH K. TRIPATHI in December

India needs the naval version of the Rafale for INS Vikrant

"The expectation is that PM Modi will visit Paris to attend the AI Summit and will also have a bilateral component. So both sides are working to tie up the two deals which are in the final stages of conclusion," an informed source said. This was also independently confirmed by other sources.

The French President's office has already announced that Mr. Modi has been invited for the Artificial Intelligence Summit on February 10 and 11. France says the meet will focus on actions to ensure that the global AI sector can drive beneficial outcomes.

was "one level short of taking it to the CCS (Cabinet Committee on Security)" for clearance, which will be followed by the signing of the contract. As it is a government-to-government deal, it is expected to be implemented quickly.

The deal for three Scorpene submarines is a repeat order to the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, which is building them in partnership with the Naval Group of France. Of the six submarines from the earlier contract, five have been induced.

The last one, *Vaghsheer*, is set to be commissioned on January 15 in Mumbai, in the presence of Mr. Modi, along with two other frontline platforms.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

IN BRIEF

Three killed in Coast Guard chopper crash

NEW DELHI
Two pilots and an aircrew diver were killed when a Dhruv advanced light helicopter of the Indian Coast Guard crashed on the runway at the Porbandar airport in Gujarat on Sunday. » Page 14

Four-lane Banihal bypass opens in J&K's Ramban

SRINAGAR
Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Sunday termed the completion of the Banihal bypass in J&K a milestone in strengthening "national security logistics" and enhancing "tourism prospects". » Page 14

CSAT
by Amit Gary Batch-6
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EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 5

Tribal festival



Revelry time: Members of the Toda tribe in the Nilgiris gather around a 'moonbo' (head) temple in the Muthanad 'mund' (hamlet) in Udhagamandalam on Sunday to celebrate the Modwerth festival and discuss plans for the year ahead. M. SATHYAMOORTHY

Data protection rules: Union govt. promises time for compliance

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules seek to protect citizens' rights in accordance with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, while achieving the "right balance between regulation and innovation", said a note issued by the Union government on Sunday. Adequate time will be given to all stakeholders, from small enterprises to large corporates, for the smooth transition to achieve compliance, the note added.

As provided, the Data Protection Board itself will

function as a digital office and will be "born digital", with a digital platform and app to enable citizens to approach it digitally and have their complaints adjudicated without their physical presence, it said.

Portal for feedback

People can share their feedback on the draft rules through the MyGov portal at the link <https://innovateindia.mygov.in/dpdp-rules-2025> till February 18. An official said there would be a structured interaction for feedback.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

4 Maoists, constable killed in Bastar

The Hindu Bureau
KONDAGAON

Four Maoists were killed in a gunfight with security forces that began on Saturday and continued till Sunday afternoon in the Abujhmad forests of Bastar in

Chhattisgarh, police said. A head constable, Sanno Karam, of the District Reserve Guard was also killed. The security forces reportedly seized automatic weapons such as AK47. Abujhmad is a vast forested area spread across Bijapur,

Dantewada and Kanker – three of the seven districts of the Bastar region – and is considered to be a major hideout of the Maoists.

Karam's last rites were performed in the Karli Police Lines of Dantewada later on Sunday.

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Mrs Sangeeta Gupta, IRS (Retd.)
Chief Commissioner Of Income Tax.

Shri K.K. Agarwal IRTS (Retd.)
* Former Member Traffic Railway Board
* Ex. Official Secretary to Govt. Of India

Prof. Promila Batra
Retd. Prof. of Psychology "Psychologist"

Shri O.P. Singh IPS (Retd.)
* Former Director General of Police (DGP), UP
* Former DGP CISF & NDRF

Shri Ranjiv Singh Dalai (Retd.)
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* Former Director General of Police (DGP), UP

Mrs Nirmal Kaur IPS (Retd.)
* DGHarkhand Rapporteur NHRC

Shri Arun Jha, IAS (Retd.)
* Former Secretary, Government of India

Shri B.B. Srivastava IAS (Retd.)
* Former Secretary to the Govt. of India Department of Land Resources (Ministry of Rural Development)

Shri A.K. Mangotra IAS (Retd.)
* Former Secretary to Govt. of India

Dr. Bala Prasad IFoS (Retd.)
(Ex Special Secretary to Govt. of India)

Dr. Satendra, IFoS (Retd.)
International Disaster Risk Reduction Expert, Food and Agriculture. UNO

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Quarantine animals with bird flu symptoms, Centre tells States after tiger, leopard deaths

A.M. Jigeesh
NEW DELHI

With Maharashtra reporting India's first case of avian influenza among animals, the Union Animal Husbandry Ministry sent a circular to all States on Sunday, urging them to quarantine infected or symptomatic tigers and other feline species to prevent transmission to humans and other animals.

Three tigers and one leopard died of the H5N1 virus, better known as bird flu, at an animal rescue centre in Nagpur in the last week of December.

Avian influenza is crossing the species barrier, Union Animal Husbandry Commissioner Abhijit Mitra told *The Hindu* on Sunday. Citing cases in the U.S.



Infection alert: Avian influenza has been found in cattle and goats, as well as in wild species, particularly tigers. A.M. FAROUKI

and Vietnam, he said that avian influenza has been found in cattle and goats, as well as in wild species, particularly tigers. to the Indian Council of Agricultural Research's National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases at Bhopal. There, the samples tested positive for avian influenza," Dr. Mitra said, noting that this is the first time that bird flu has been reported among animals in India. "They are examining the reasons for the infection.

"The animals are in a rescue centre. Maybe the chicken served to them could be the reason for the disease. We are examining it and have alerted the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change too," Dr. Mitra said, adding that there is no need to panic at present. "The human beings who came in touch with the animals during the treatment and the

Kejriwal shuns roadshows for *padayatras* to reclaim his *aam Aadmi* image

NEWS ANALYSIS

Nikhil M Babu
NEW DELHI

On October 16 last year, nearly a month after walking out of jail, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal announced a public outreach drive to tell Delhi residents about the "truth" behind the BJP-led Centre's "ploy" to imprison AAP leaders.

Other than Mr. Kejriwal, two other senior AAP leaders – Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh – went to jail (and were later granted bail) in connection with probes into the excise policy case. AAP was finding itself cornered by the Delhi units of the BJP and Congress over allegations of a liquor "scam".

It was in this context that Mr. Kejriwal asked party workers to go door to door with his letter explaining the "motive" behind the Centre's bid to "finish off AAP".

Later that day, addressing an audience in east Delhi's Kharishpur, he spoke for about eight minutes and, in an unexpected move, stepped down from the stage and started a *padayatra* (foot march).

Direct connect

This was the beginning of a series of at least 15 *padayatras* that Mr. Kejriwal held across the national capital for the next two months. He is expected to embark on many more such foot marches in the city over



AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM Atishi at a public meet. FILE PHOTO

the coming days in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly election due in February this year as part of a calculated strategy to connect with voters, party sources told *The Hindu*.

His decision to connect with the public on foot stands out because it is a departure from how he campaigned in the 2020 poll when he held roadshows atop vehicles and waved at people while being encircled by rows of security personnel.

'Aam Aadmi' image'
In the run-up to the upcoming election, Mr. Kejriwal has gone back to reinforcing his pre-2015 image, where he was seen as an *aam Aadmi* (common man) roaming around the streets in a half-sleeved shirt and a pair of sandals.

"As the BJP put Kejriwalji and Manishji in jail, there was an absence of top leadership at the ground level. We felt that we needed to connect more closely with people and that they needed to see more of Kejriwalji. That is the reason why we decided to go back to the idea of the *padayatra*," said a party source.

"*tra*," said another party insider. The source added that the party is planning many more foot marches and much fewer roadshows compared to its campaign in 2020.

"Brand AAP is directly proportional to brand Arvind Kejriwal. If he goes away from the public eye, the party's popularity dips sharply," explained a top AAP strategist.

AAP insiders say they are expecting a tougher battle in the upcoming election than what they saw in 2015, when AAP won 67 out of 70 seats, or in 2020, when it won 62 seats. "This is the reason behind the *padayatras* and the early announcement of candidates – we're trying to steal a march on the BJP and the Congress."

Mr. Kejriwal has been racing against time to cover the distance – from addressing small gatherings, attending wrestling matches, and addressing press conferences. "This has made a difference and our surveys show that we are in a better position now than in October or November," said a party source.

Modi inaugurates Delhi section of RRTS, Meerut now a 40-minute ride away

PM also throws open to public Janakpuri-Krishna Park stretch of Delhi Metro Phase-IV; CM Atishi says RRTS is not sole initiative of Centre but joint venture with Delhi's contribution of ₹1,260 crore

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a 13-km-long Rapid Rail Transit System (RRTS) section between New Ashok Nagar in Delhi and Sahibabad in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday.

This comes at a time when the Delhi Assembly poll is due in February and the model code of conduct is likely to come into force in the coming days.

Commuters can now board the Namo Bharat train on the RRTS corridor from New Ashok Nagar to reach Meerut South or vice versa. According to the government, the distance of nearly 58 km can be covered in under 40 minutes, reducing the travel time by about one-third. Until now, the last station of the Namo Bharat train was Sahibabad.

Mr. Modi took a ride from Sahibabad to New Ashok Nagar RRTS station and interacted with passengers, including children. "Today is a very important day for Delhi-NCR. Today, for the first time, the Namo Bharat train will enter the Capital, and there will also be an opportunity to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of many development projects, including the expansion of the Delhi



PM Narendra Modi interacting with school students during his train ride between Sahibabad (U.P.) and New Ashok Nagar (Delhi); the Namo Bharat train arrives in the national capital on Sunday. PTI/ANI



Metro," the Prime Minister said in a post on X.

From 5 p.m. on Sunday, Namo Bharat trains were available to the public at 15-minute frequency. The fare from New Ashok Nagar to Meerut South is ₹150 for a standard coach and ₹225 for a premium coach.

The other two RRTS stations in Delhi – Sarai Kale Khan and Jangpura – are expected to be operational by April and May 2025, respectively. In March 2019, Mr. Modi had laid the foundation stone of the Delhi-Meerut RRTS corridor, a ₹30,000-crore project.

The Prime Minister also inaugurated the 2.8-km stretch between Janakpuri and Krishna Park of Delhi

Metro Phase-IV, the first stretch of Delhi Metro Phase-IV to be inaugurated. This will benefit areas of West Delhi such as Krishna Park, parts of Vikaspuri, and Janakpuri.

Upcoming projects

Mr. Modi laid the foundation stone of the 26.5-km Rithala-Kundli section of Delhi Metro Phase IV. This corridor will connect Rithala in Delhi to Nathupur (Kundli) in Haryana, enhancing connectivity in the north-west parts of Delhi and Haryana.

He also laid the foundation stone of the new Central Ayurveda Research Institute at Rohini, which will be constructed at a

cost of around ₹185 crore, providing state-of-the-art health care and medicine infrastructure, a statement said.

Senior Aam Aadmi Party leader and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi said the projects inaugurated by Mr. Modi are not solely of the Centre but a joint venture of the Central and State governments.

"The RRTS, a joint venture of the Central, Delhi, U.P., and Haryana governments, is connecting the NCR region with Delhi. The Delhi government has also invested ₹1,260 crore in the RRTS line being built from Delhi to Meerut, as it will boost the economy of Delhi," she said.

Bidhuri draws flak for remarks against CM, Priyanka

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress and AAP on Sunday criticised former BJP MP and party candidate from Kalkaji Ramesh Bidhuri over his "sexiest remarks" against Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, respectively.

The Congress demanded an apology after a video showed Mr. Bidhuri purportedly making remarks against Ms. Vadra while campaigning in Kalkaji on Saturday. "Not only Bidhuri, but the BJP's top leadership should apologise with folded hands," Congress leader Supriya Shrinate said, adding that it was not only an insult to Mr. Vadra but to all women.

After facing criticism, Mr. Bidhuri, without referring to the particular incident, said in a post on X, "Some people are making statements on social media for political gain based on a statement given by me in some context. My intention was not to insult anyone. But still if anyone has been hurt then I express regret."

Ms. Atishi, who is in poll fray from Kalkaji, slammed the BJP for fielding an "anti-women" candidate.

Later, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal shared another purported video of Mr. Bidhuri "hurling derogatory remarks" against Ms. Atishi. "The people of Delhi will not tolerate the insult of a woman CM," he said.

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Chief Guest

Atishi, Chief Minister, Delhi



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“मैं श्री गुरु गोविन्द सिंह जी को उनके प्रकाश पर्व के पावन अवसर पर शीर्ष नवाता हूं तथा मानवता की सेवा में उनके योगदान का घमटण करता हूं।
उनका अद्वितीय साहस सदैव लोगों को प्रेरित करता रहेगा।”
- नरेन्द्र मोदी

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Salil Sahadevan

A college student is murdered on her birthday and enters a time loop, and repeats the same day over and over again. That is the storyline of the 2017 black comedy *Happy Death Day*. Many higher education providers find themselves stuck in a similar time loop, endlessly chasing current industry needs but never arriving. Job-specific skills can quickly become obsolete. The acceleration of AI intensifies this cycle. Do we need adaptable individuals who can make sense and create a future, or narrowly skilled workers to boost placement stats? If it is the former, then the traditional focus on immediate job readiness is ill placed.

Skilling, upskilling, and reskilling are essential and urgent. But the relentless focus on job readiness can put education in a reactive cycle. We do not want placement pressure to suppress curiosity and growth, leaving young people anxious and unfulfilled. Instead, we need individuals driven by purpose and a hunger to understand the complexities ahead. The true preparedness comes from three meta-skills: meta-cognitive agility, epistemic flexibility, and transdisciplinary fluency. Big words? Not so when you see them in action as new fluencies needed for the mind.

Learning for the future

Why higher education institutions must reduce the focus on job readiness and encourage Anticipatory Learning

pretations of methodologies or a musician developing a plan for targeted practice for challenging pieces both show meta-cognitive agility. A biology student, initially believing all life needs oxygen, encounters anaerobic life and revises his beliefs, showing epistemic flexibility. An architect designing a net-zero home for the elderly shows transdisciplinary fluency. These are the qualities of an anticipatory learner. These skills are job-independent and transferable.

Anticipatory learning is about encouraging students to develop the adaptability

to thrive in the future by developing foresight and creating futures rather than simply reacting to current needs. In institutions, anticipatory learning shifts the focus from transactional models that just try to fill immediate skills gaps to transformative partnerships. These collaborations may rely on evolving policy support for flexible pathways, micro-credentials, context-specific industry

linkages, flexible degree programmes, credit-based modular curricula, and hybrid learning. Using a blend of these, anticipatory learning prepares students for impactful careers, not immediate jobs.

Higher education institutions and the skilling ecosystem must also see the nature and content of jobs. In *Bullshit Jobs*, David Graeber argues that, despite technological progress, many roles are meaningless. He cites jobs like some receptionists and doormen who exist solely to make others look important, market lobbyists for harmful industries, workers fixing problems that should not ex-

ist such as glitches in poorly designed software, and taskmasters inventing unnecessary projects for others to complete. These are illusions of jobs that cause a lot of moral and spiritual damage. These should definitely not be the jobs for which our education needs to prepare students.

Beyond jobs
Many Western universities face pressure to reduce ties with companies engaged in fossil fuels, tobacco, and environmentally damaging practices. It is tricky to balance social responsibility with financial needs and tempting to be myopic. In-

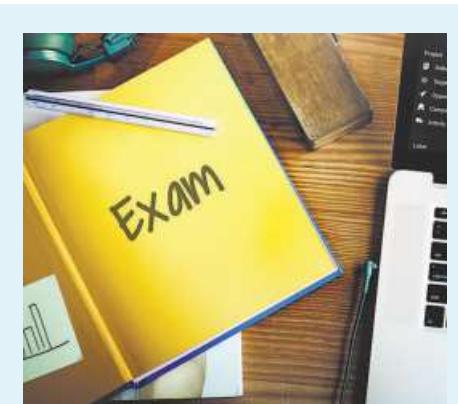
dustry readiness is important, but seeing education solely as job preparation turns learning into an echo chamber. Getting good grades is not a problem but thinking that schools exist just to give grade is definitely a problem. By avoiding such filter bubbles institutions can truly complement the employment ecosystem.

True learning happens when we are passionate about what we learn and free to explore our own interests. Higher education institutions can create this environment where industry readiness is a natural by-product that follows. Job readiness can be a powerful motivator in the short term, but it risks creating narrow, individualistic lives. This is not about rejecting becoming industry-ready but of looking at education only from that lens alone.

As technical skills quickly get dated, the very notion of job readiness is limiting. Educational institutions exist to encourage self-discovery and a sense of wonder. Finding connections, understanding problems, building solutions, and being socially responsible are all outcomes of that discovery and wonder. Anticipatory learning can strike the balance by combining personal growth with career skills to help create more meaningful work. We have more options for organising society and jobs than we realise. So, is it too idealistic to ask for this from all of us?

Views expressed are personal.

The writer is Deputy Secretary, University Grants Commission.



No Detention?

With the Centre having done away with the "no-detention" policy for Classes 5 and 8, The Hindu is hosting a webinar on the connection between no-detention and learning outcomes, how the various states have responded to the move and whether the new rules will help solve the problem of poor learning. The speakers are

Ratna Viswanathan, CEO, Reach to Teach; **K.R. Maalathi**, Founder and CEO, Auro Educational Services; and **Jayanth R.**, Principal Correspondent, The Hindu. The session will be moderated by Ravina Warkad from The Hindu's Education section.

When: January 11, 4.00 pm

To register, visit <https://t.ly/wQpwq> or scan the QR code.



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IN BRIEF



Elephant stuck in rail barrier in Nagarhole rescued

An elephant, which was stuck for nearly an hour in a rail barrier in the Veeranahosahalli range of the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve in Mysuru, was rescued before it safely made its way back to the forest on Sunday. For freeing the elephant, the national park authorities demolished one of the cement beams to which the rail track was wedged. The incident occurred near Chikka Hejjuru village. The rail fence is implemented to prevent elephants from crossing into villages.

Body of A.P. student to reach home from Canada today

The body of Pilli Phani Kumar, who died in Canada on December 14, will be brought to his home at Gajuwaka in Visakhapatnam of Andhra Pradesh on Monday, according to his family. The last rites would be performed on Tuesday, they added. Phani Kumar had died after a cardiac arrest. He went to Canada to pursue higher studies at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Calgary, according to his father Naga Prasad and mother Gitabhai.

Forest Dept. holds census of birds in Godavari estuary

An enumeration of local and migratory bird species on 25 wetlands in the Godavari estuary was conducted on Sunday as part of the annual bird census by the Forest Department. The exercise aims to assess the ecosystem of the estuary, where the Great Knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*) and Indian skimmer (*Rynchops albicollis*) are sighted. Forest Range Officer S.S.R. Varaprasad said the final list of species sighted during the census will be released in a week.

Residents of Munambam form human chain along State Highway

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHE

Hundreds of residents of Munambam, under the aegis of the Kottapuram and Varapuzha dioceses, formed a human chain along the Vypeen-Munambam State Highway on Sunday demanding the restoration of revenue rights of their holdings.

The land issue in Munambam had snowballed into a major socio-political controversy with the residents coming out to the streets in protest against the decision of the Kerala Waqf Board to enlist the nearly 400-acre holding as Waqf and registering the land as a Waqf property. Litigation is pending at the Kerala High Court and the Kerala Waqf Tribunal on various aspects of the issue.

The State government has appointed a judicial commission to look into the issue and suggest ways to support the interests of the residents in the area. However, two organisations campaigning for the restoration of Waqf holdings have demanded steps for restoring the land allegedly illegally alienated by Farook College, Kozhikode.

Inaugurating the protest, Bishop Ambros Putheneettil said the campaign was against the injustice meted out to the residents. Those who took part in the campaign displayed their commitment to fight for the poor and to secure them justice, he said.

The hunger strike taken out by the protesters entered 85th day on Sunday.

Kerala MLA held for 'attack' on Nilambur forest office

P.V. Anvar and 11 others had taken out a protest march to the DFO's office over death of a tribal man in an elephant attack on Saturday; govt. announces ₹10 lakh to the family of the deceased

The Hindu Bureau
MALAPPURAM

P.V. Anvar, Independent MLA representing the Nilambur constituency in Malappuram district of Kerala, was arrested on Sunday night for his alleged involvement in an attack on the Divisional Forest Office (DFO) (North) at Nilambur during the day.

He was among the 11 members of the Democratic Movement of Kerala (DMK) against whom the police filed a case after they vandalised the DFO office on Sunday during a protest against the police and the forest authorities following the death of a tri-



Behind bars: PV. Anvar being taken to the Government District Hospital, Nilambur, after his arrest on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

bal youth from Mancheeri in an elephant attack.

Minutes before the arrest, the MLA told presspersons that Chief Minister

from Poochappara hamlet, 14 km inside the Karimpuzha National Park, was trampled to death by an elephant on Saturday night. Though the forest staff shifted Mani to a hospital at Nilambur, he died around 10.30 p.m.

DMK activists led by Mr. Anvar took out the march protesting the forest authorities' failure in preventing the attack. The marchers broke into the DFO office, and vandalised the furniture and window panes. They then marched to Government District Hospital at Nilambur, where his body was kept.

The government has announced ₹10 lakh to Mani's family.

Revanth asks Telugu NRIs to invest in State

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has invited Telugus settled in different parts of the globe to invest in the State and cooperate in its development.

The State government has prepared a comprehensive plan named 'Telangana Rising' as a roadmap for the all-round development of the State

by 2050. Simultaneously, steps have been launched to develop the proposed Future City with facilities better than leading global cities.

Mr. Reddy was addressing participants of the 12th conclave of the World Telugu Federation here on Sunday. He wished that the two Telugu States, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, compete in ushering in development for setting up facilities on a global scale.

Student falls to death on IIM-B campus

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 28-year-old postgraduate student at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, (IIM-B) died on the campus on Saturday, which was his birthday.

Nilay Kalashbhai Patel from Gujarat was visiting his friend's room in the hostel when he lost his balance and slipped from the third floor of the building, the authorities said.

The security guard noticed him lying on the ground in a pool of blood and alerted the administration officials, who shifted him to the hospital where he died of his injuries.

The Mico Layout Police have filed an unnatural death report (UDR) and are waiting for Nilay's parents to reach the city and lodge a formal complaint, based on which further action will be taken, an official said.



Sneha Enrique Vidal (left) with her adoptive mother Gema Vidal. PTI

Spanish woman comes back to India in search of her birth mother

Press Trust of India
BHUBANESHWAR

Sneha, a Spanish citizen, has returned to India in search of her biological mother, who had abandoned her and her brother 20 years ago.

However, 21-year-old Sneha is running out of time as she has to return to Spain on Monday for her educational commitments.

The researcher in children's education wanted to trace her roots and reached India with scant information about her past.

Her Spanish parents Gema Vidal and Juan Josh supported her in her quest and Gema accompanied Sneha to her home State Odisha. They had adopted Sneha and her brother Somu in 2010 from an orphanage in Bhubaneswar, where they were staying after their mother Banalata Das abandoned them in 2005.

"The purpose of my journey from Spain to Bhubaneswar is to find my biological parents, especially my mother. I want to find her and meet her. I am fully prepared for the journey even if it is difficult," Sneha said.

said.

Asked if she would chide her biological mother for abandoning her, Sneha remained mum. She was only over a year old, and her brother was just a few months old at that time.

Sneha said her Spanish parents have given the siblings everything in life and never made them feel like they were adopted, ensuring the best education and freedom to make their own choices. "They have given us unconditional love," she said.

Accompanied by Gema, a yoga teacher, Sneha arrived in Bhubaneswar on December 19 last year and they have been staying at a hotel. Somu, however, could not come as he was busy with other commitments in Spain.

If they do not find Sneha's biological mother by Monday, they will come back in March for a longer stay. "We have to return to Spain as Sneha has joined a training programme which should not be discontinued. If we do not get Banalata in the next 24 hours, we will come back to Bhubaneswar in March," Gema said.

Art to the people



Visual feast: Visitors throng the Chitra Santhe art carnival, an annual art fair organised by the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, in Bengaluru on Sunday. Over 2,000 artists from all over the country showcase and sell their artworks at the fair. K. MURALI KUMAR

Cong. questions Kerala PSU's investment in private firm

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHE

CPI(M) leaders. The government should now come out with a clear statement as to what kind of investigation it proposed to conduct into the illegal deposit of the money by KFC. Those who caused loss of ₹101 crore of the State would be held legally and politically liable.

'Money in sinking firm'

He added that the former Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac had come out with a statement justifying the investment in a company that was on the verge of liquidation at that time.

He asked whether an economist like Mr. Isaac did not see the reports of a credit rating agency called CARE Rating Limited. In 2018, the agency had warned

that all non-banking financial companies (NBFC) were in red for the last three years. However, without taking into account the report, the KFC deposited the money in a sinking company.

Mr. Satheesan said that deposits of money in the RCFL were in clear violation of the State Finance Corporations Act.

As per Section 33, the KFC could make deposits only in nationalised banks or scheduled banks only with the permission of the RBI. Besides, the financial position of the parent company and its sister companies had not been assessed properly before depositing money. In fact, the RCFL account was not audited for last three years, he said.

Police to use drones to curb rooster fights in A.P.

The banned bloodsport, which has huge patronage in rural areas, is conducted in a big way during the harvest festival; High Court banned it in 2016 in a bid to prevent cruelty to the birds; police are conducting raids, awareness programmes

Rajulapudi Srinivas
VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Police will use technology to prevent rooster fights during Sankranti. The banned bloodsport, which has huge patronage in rural areas, is conducted in a big way during the harvest festival.

The police have been trying to enforce the ban imposed by the Andhra Pradesh High Court in 2016 to prevent cruelty towards the birds.

This year, they are planning to deploy drones to check rooster fights. They are conducting awareness programmes on



Fowl play: In the name of fun, rooster fights are organised throughout the year in Krishna, NTR, Eluru and Godavari. G.N. RAO

the banned game and explaining to the villagers the consequences of participating in the illegal activity.

"In the name of fun, rooster fights are being organised throughout the

year in Krishna, NTR, Eluru and Godavari districts, particularly during Sankranti. Despite the ban, rooster fights are conducted in a big way every year," says V. Shekar of Penamaluru village in

Krishna district. "The lush green fields are stained by blood and lakhs of birds die every year. Amid applause, the villagers enjoy the bloodsport in the orchards. Under the pretext of tradition, the organisers kill the birds in huge numbers during the harvest festival," says Pusala Jyothsna, an animal lover.

The organisers are making arrangements to conduct the fights under floodlights. Arenas are being arranged on the banks of the Krishna and the Godavari.

Recently, the police raided a factory manufacturing knives used in the fights in Eluru and seized huge quantity of knives, raw material and equipment used in their making. They are raiding the gambling dens and arenas.

Horatti says CID will be allowed in Council only with case details

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

police has now been transferred to the CID.

"The said incident happened on the floor of the House. It was not a fight or assault or anything like that, which could leave some scenes at the spot. So, what will the CID officials look for? Will they check the chairs and desks or will they check the floor? Will they bring the complainant and the defendant to the House and seek their statements? Investigators should give complete details. Anyway, I will not be able to take a decision now. I will have to study the matter further," Mr. Horatti told presspersons.

Curbs eased as Delhi air quality improves but still 'very poor'; fog hits flights

51 trains delayed and several flights rescheduled as dense fog continues to envelop national capital; cloudy sky with possibility of light rain today: IMD

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Veiled: A drone view of the Safdarjung Hospital covered in fog, in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

An existing ban on construction and demolition activities and plying of BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel four-wheeler vehicles in Delhi-NCR was lifted with "immediate effect" by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in Delhi and NCR on Sunday.

The ban, among other restrictions, are part of a list of actions under Stage-III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which is a set of emergency measures taken to reduce air pollution. The restrictions ended as the CAQM revoked Stage-III of the GRAP following an "improvement in air quality".

The CAQM had imposed Stage-III restrictions on January 3. Restrictions under Stage-I and Stage-II will continue.

Flights, trains delayed
Meanwhile, 51 trains were delayed and several flights rescheduled as dense fog continued to envelop the national capital on Sunday morning, reducing visibility.

(With inputs from PTI)

Eminent writer Na. D'Souza passes away

The Hindu Bureau
SHIVAMOGGA



Well-known novelist Na. D'Souza, a voice for the people of Malnad region, died in Mangaluru, Karnataka, on Sunday. He was 87.

D'Souza, a resident of Sagar in Shivamogga district, was admitted to Father Muller Hospital in Mangaluru for treatment.

He had been suffering from old age related health issues for the past few days. The writer died around 8 p.m., according to family sources in Sagar. He is survived by wife, Philomena, and three children. The mortal remains will be brought to Sagar on Monday, and the final rites will be held on Tuesday.

D'Souza was born in Sagar in 1937. He studied in Shivamogga and joined the Public Works Department (PWD) as a typist in 1959.

Over 190 gallstones removed from patient

The Hindu Bureau
PUDUCHERRY

A team of doctors at a private hospital in the city recently performed a combination of advanced procedures to successfully remove 195 gallstones from the gallbladder of a 70-year-old woman.

The team at Be Well Hospitals performed the rare surgery on the patient, who had been enduring persistent abdominal pain and nausea for over two weeks.

Her condition required a combination of advanced procedures. A press note said the complex case was managed by laparoscopic surgeons R. Raja and Deepak Ravi, who are also specialists in endoscopic and laser surgery. Within 60 hours, the patient was discharged, the hospital said.

Mahar community condemns Chhattisgarh scribe's murder, takes out candlelight march

Press Trust of India
BIJAPUR



Members of the Mahar community on Sunday took out a candlelight march to condemn the murder of journalist Mukesh Chandrakar in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur town, and demanded capital punishment for the accused. The march started from Ambedkar Bhawan and culminated at Jais-tambh Chowk.

Patron of Maher Samaj R.D. Jhadi said all the accused involved in the murder should be given stringent punishment. "We demand creating a conducive environment for journalists wherein they can independently report news," he said.

The body of freelance journalist Mukesh Chandrakar, 33, was found on January 3 in a septic tank on a property owned by Suresh

Mukesh worked as a freelance journalist for a news channel and also ran a YouTube channel, 'Bastar Junction', which has about 1.59 lakh subscribers.

A news report highlighting alleged corruption in a road construction work in Bijapur aired by the news channel on December 25 is being discussed as the likely motive behind the murder. The construction work was linked to Suresh.

The administration has initiated action against the accused's illegal properties and encroachments. So far, three of his accounts have been put on hold.

Mukesh had played a crucial role in the release of COBRA commando Rakeshwar Singh Manhas from Maoist captivity in April 2021 following the Takaiguda Naxal ambush in Bijapur, in which 22 security personnel were killed.

The Chhattisgarh government has constituted a Special Investigation Team to probe the incident.

THE HINDU
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HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT e-Procurement Notice INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer HPPWD Bangana Division Distt Una H.P on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the online bids for item rate, in electronic tendering in 2 Cover System for the below mentioned works from the eligible and approved contractors/Firms registered with HPPWD Department.

Sr. No. Name of Work Estimated Cost EMD Time Limit Cost of Tender Eligible class of Contractor

1. Construction of Assistant Engineer Office cum Residence at Dera Baba Rudru (Basal) District Una (HP), (SH- C/O Building Portion, Water Supply and Sanitary Installation and Septic Tank) 66,91,494 99,500 One Year 2,000.00 Class- C

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

2. Stage Dates:

1. Date of Online Publication 10.01.2025 11:00 HRS

2. Document Download Start and End Date 10.01.2025 11:30 HRS 15.01.2025 upto 17:00 HRS

3. Bid Submission Start and End Date 10.01.2025 11:30 HRS 15.01.2025 upto 17:00 HRS

4. Physical Submission of EMD and Cost of Tender Document 15.01.2025 upto 11:00HRS

5. Date of Technical Bid opening 15.01.2025 11:30 HRS

6. Evaluation of Technical Bid. Evaluation of technical Bid will be followed after verification of the documents.

1. TENDER DETAILS:

2. The Tender Documents shall be uploaded online in 2 Covers:

i) Cover 1: shall contain scanned copies of all "Technical Documents/Eligibility Information".

ii) Cover2: shall contain "BOQ/Financial Bid", where contractor will quote his offer for each item.

3. SUBMISSION OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS: The bidders are required to submit (a) original demand draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security/Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and other Technical Documents in O/o Executive Engineer HPPWD Division Bangana H.P as specified in Key dates Sr. No. 5 on Tender Opening Date, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive.

4. BID OPENING DETAILS: The bids shall be opened on 15.01.2025 at 11:30 HRS in the office Executive Engineer, Bangana Division HPPWD Bangana H.P. by the authorised officer. In their interest the tenderers are advised to be present along with original documents at the time of opening of tenders. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

5. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than 120 days after the deadline date for bid submission.

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

7. The copy of EPF No/GST No must be attached.

Executive Engineer
HPPWD Division Bangana
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Governor of Himachal Pradesh

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No secret affair

Deliberations on draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules must be open

The draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, is a long overdue advance in the direction of enforcing the fundamental right to informational privacy for Indians, affirmed by the Supreme Court of India in the landmark case, *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India* (2017). The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, which these draft rules seek to enforce, was passed in Parliament over a year ago. This seven-year wait has most likely not been without costs for the privacy of the data of Indians, as it coincided with a period that saw a rapid growth in digitisation. The proposed rules offer direction on how online services will be required to: communicate the purposes of their data collection to users; safeguard children's data online; establish the Data Protection Board of India (DPBI); set the standards for government agencies to follow to be exempt from the Act's provisions, and spell out the procedures to be observed if personal data is breached by a data fiduciary. The concerns regarding the proposed DPBI's institutional design have not been resolved by these proposed Rules, and it may not be realistic to expect such an outcome from subordinate legislation.

It is regrettable that the government continues to cloak the rule-making process of a critical policy such as this in secrecy. Since the Justice B.N. Srikrishna committee was convened to draft the first Bill for data protection, the government has consistently declined to place recommendations from stakeholders in the public domain, and has foreclosed such disclosure for these draft rules as well. For legislation where the stakes are high for individual users as well as for large technology firms, an open deliberative process is essential. It can only be facilitated when industry associations and the general public can find equal footing by being equal participants with transparency into each other's viewpoints during the consultation process. In the short and medium term, it is essential for the government to proceed with these principles in mind, while never departing from the key aims of any data protection law: minimising data collection, promoting disclosures, penalising neglect in protecting user data, and discouraging surveillance practices, both by the private sector and the government. This process must also play out in a timely fashion, as Indians have been waiting far too long to finally obtain the rights that were affirmed for them in 2017. Else, people's confidence in the government's seriousness about protecting their data from government agencies as well as private enterprises would be shaken.

Nothing alarming

Reports of many HMPV cases in China reflect heightened surveillance

Five years after the SARS-CoV-2 virus overwhelmed hospitals in Wuhan, China, acute respiratory diseases caused by viruses including the human metapneumovirus (HMPV) in children and the elderly, and influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), are increasing in the country, especially in its northern provinces. However, the sharp rise in acute respiratory diseases is not unusual during this time of the year, and as per a Chinese official, the overall number of cases in 2024 would be "smaller" than in 2023. Surprisingly, while the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have not raised a red flag so far and there is almost nil reporting in the international media, the Indian media is awash with reports of an HMPV "outbreak" in China. A recent meeting of the Joint Monitoring Group under the aegis of the Union Health Ministry noted that the situation in China is "not unusual in view of the ongoing flu season", and the "usual pathogens that are expected during the season" are causing the present surge in respiratory diseases. The HMPV virus was first identified in children in 2001 in the Netherlands. Infection with HMPV usually occurs by the age of five years with reinfection occurring throughout life as immune protection induced by the virus is too weak to prevent repeated infections. The virus causes upper and/or lower respiratory tract infections, with lower respiratory tract infections being among the most common. While the virus often causes only mild disease, it can lead to severe illness requiring hospitalisation in children, immunocompromised populations and the elderly.

Globally, 3%-10% of hospital admissions and 1% of acute lower respiratory infection-related deaths in children under age five in 2018 are attributed to HMPV, as per a 2021 paper. The study also found that children younger than six months, especially those in low- and lower-middle-income countries, are at greater risk of death caused by the HMPV virus. Detection of a large number of HMPV cases among children aged less than 14 years in China is a reflection of the heightened surveillance and testing for the virus. On the contrary, India does not have any approved inexpensive tests that are widely available for diagnosing the virus. When testing for HMPV in patients with acute respiratory disease should be routine, as the virus has been in circulation for years globally, including India, and fatality is 1% in young children, India is only now expanding the number of laboratories testing for HMPV beyond the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) network due to the spike in HMPV cases in China. What is also urgently needed is a regulatory framework that facilitates a rapid approval of diagnostic tests in the context of local and global outbreaks of novel and less known pathogens.

India is at a pivotal moment in its history. It is among the leading nations in the world when it comes to economic growth and political stability. India today projects an atmosphere of peace, which is seemingly out of place in a world that is undergoing a profound shift in its economic and geo-political landscape. India is today privy to the rise of new economic and political groupings.

The year 2024 was a period of pronounced political uncertainty across the globe. Much of the world was a mute witness to the multiple and concurrent conflicts that threaten peace and stability today. This is specially true of Europe and West Asia.

One major tragedy still unfolding is Gaza, which has few parallels, while the ongoing Ukraine conflict contains the seeds of a much wider conflict in the future. India has, however, managed to steer itself successfully within this geo-political landscape.

A year of new troubles

This may, however, be too good to last. The year 2025 seems poised to bring in a host of fresh troubles that will require deft handling on the part of India's policymakers. At this time, it might, hence, be wise for India's leaders to heed the message contained in an ancient Chinese saying that says 'the wind sweeping through the tower heralds a rising storm in the mountain'.

I begin by assessing the situation with India's largest neighbour, China. Much is being made of the recent border negotiations and an apparent disengagement at the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh. This was followed by the first formal meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and China's President Xi Jinping meeting in five years, as well as the resumption of the Special Representatives' talks on border issues. Wiser heads would know that disengagement does not mean 'dispute resolution'. The border conflict still remains alive and unchanged. Far more needs to be done to reach any kind of détente. India, hence, cannot afford to 'take its eye off the ball'.

Meanwhile, China has, of late, taken a series of steps to strengthen security cooperation with nations of the Global South, which are aimed at outflanking India. It recently facilitated reconciliation talks that were held in Beijing among various Palestine factions. In September last year, China and African nations jointly agreed to progress the China-sponsored Global Security Initiative (GSI) and deepen cooperation in areas such as counter terrorism, disaster management and public health.

China also managed to steal a march over India during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit held in Pakistan in October. It took full



M.K. Narayanan
a former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

advantage of the absence of the Indian Prime Minister at the Summit to mute India's voice at a forum that is perceived as being anti-West. Mr. Xi again took full advantage of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, in Peru in November, to strengthen ties with 'traditional enemy', Japan.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has since agreed with Mr. Xi to promote a 'mutually beneficial relationship ...based on common strategic interests'.

The churn in South and West Asia

It is in India's traditional area of influence, *viz.*, South Asia, however, that the biggest churn is taking place – or has already taken place. Questions have been raised after the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina regime in Bangladesh as to whether India indeed has a proper 'neighbourhood policy'. Today, India appears almost isolated in the region and with the eclipse of Ms. Hasina and the emergence of a caretaker regime (which is openly hostile to India), India appears friendless.

Both Nepal and Sri Lanka today appear to look like 'fair weather friends' – at least in so far as the present is concerned. Where the Maldives stands, is indeed a subject to debate. Pakistan has always been inimical to India, and Afghanistan today does not seem to figure prominently in India's calculations. Bhutan, under the present King, does not display the same warmth towards India, appearing more intent on balancing relations with China. Across the South Asia region, therefore, how the roll of the dice would turn out is a matter of speculation.

Far more problematic though could well be the impact of the current churn in West Asia, more specifically, the developments in Syria of late. The ouster of the Assad regime in Syria is certain to have a cataclysmic impact on that part of the world. In turn, it will have relevance for countries in the wider region as well, including India. How India deals with the situation resulting from the collapse of the erstwhile Bashar al-Assad regime, and the takeover of the reins by a Sunni group, the 'Hayat Tahrir al Shams (HTS)' is unclear. Its leader, who carried the nom-de-guerre Abu Mohammed al Julani, has since reverted to his real name, Ahmed Hussain al Sharaa. The HTS leader was previously linked to al Qaeda, and even briefly flirted with the Islamic State (ISIS), but is today displaying a more moderate outlook. It may, however, be too early to determine what the outlook for Syria is, and for the region as a whole under the new dispensation.

The HTS was able to wage a successful offensive against the Assad regime largely because it could identify with the Sunni majority in Syria, in contrast to the Assad regime that had,

While 2024 saw political uncertainty across the globe, 2025 will require deft handling by India's policymakers

of late, become more reliant on Russia and Iran to maintain its hold over the country. From India's viewpoint, the Assad family (belonging to Syria's Alawite group, a minority sect of Shia Islam) was initially viewed as a stabilising force in the Gulf region, especially during the difficult days that rocked parts of West Asia in the wake of the Arab Spring. India, home to a Shia and Sunni population, had greatly welcomed this. More recently, many of these perceptions had altered.

The implications of a Sunni regime in Syria are certain to be widespread. One by one, elements of the so-called 'axis of resistance' are being dismantled. On the other hand Israel, despite its pogrom in Gaza, seems to be gaining the upper hand in West Asia. Which side has gained the most, given recent developments in Syria, is not yet fully clear, but quite evidently, Iran has been a loser – and it might well result in Iran's influence across West Asia declining. It may also no longer be the same revolutionary force in West Asia, that it was perceived to be following the 1979 revolution in Iran. The Ayatollahs in Iran are also set to face a major setback, and a major churn in Iran cannot be ruled out. The Shia world as a whole would, thus, be the overall loser, and militias such as the Hezbollah could well be cut to size.

Implicitly, the pro-Palestine movement would be adversely affected and Palestine may not persist as a live issue. Global jihad could also face a deathblow.

The biggest gainers will in all likelihood be Israel and Türkiye. Russia's influence has suffered with the fall of the Assad regime. But given Russia's relations with Türkiye's strongman, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the pragmatic approach taken by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia could well retrieve the situation.

Do not rule out the digital threat

In conclusion, it needs to be mentioned that notwithstanding the developments in the geo-political arena, it is the digital threat that is set to achieve a quantum leap during 2025. The situation warrants careful assessment and sending out of a dire warning about the dangers present in the digital arena. Some of this was evident during the latter part of 2024, but this is likely to grow exponentially during 2025. Convergence among technologies is threatening national infrastructure in a manner that had never previously been envisaged. According to data available with Agencies, there was a dramatic rise in cyber attacks occurring in India in the recent period. Almost all major companies and Government institutions were hit by denial of service and ransomware attacks. All this is set to increase in geometrical progression during 2025 and the following years.

Symbolism must not become misplaced showmanship



Air Vice Marshal Manmohan Bahadur (retired)

former Additional Director General, Centre for Air Power Studies

Symbols have an intangible value as they represent some important facets of life. Leaders use the resulting symbolism smartly to message their views. It is for this reason that the recent removal of a painting, a symbol of an iconic moment in modern India's military history, from the Indian Army Chief's office complex, in New Delhi, generated a nationwide surge of emotions.

The painting, of the surrender of the Pakistani Army to India in the 1971 war, has been relocated to a conference centre named after Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. But the incident highlights the importance of valuing symbols for their quality and effect; this is vital, considering the ongoing 'drive' in the military to induct-in learnings that are connected to a distant past. In this drive it must be remembered that history is truth, taken as a whole, and any segmented adoption will lead to skewed learning.

As the dust settles on the angst raised by the removal of the painting, some facets of symbols and the associated symbolism need evaluation. Five important ones stand out – identity, leadership, direction, faith and competency. A few examples would suffice.

Other examples

When Israel was established, the swearing-in of military recruits took place after a gruelling desert march to Fort Masada where they took a vow to protect their country. It symbolised a 'never give in' attitude born from the spirit of a group of 960 Jews who, in 73 CE, fought to the end against the Romans. 'Masada' has become a symbol of the identity of an Israeli soldier.

On April 17, 2012, *The Washington Post* wrote: "An aerial art show pulled thousands of Washingtonians out of their offices, vehicles and homes on Tuesday morning [April 17] as NASA's space shuttle Discovery blew into town atop a

modified 747, the battered space veteran taking a final victory jaunt [after finishing its useful life] before landing at Dulles International Airport... There were costumes, there were cheers and, of course, there were tears." That 'flypast' was symbolic of national pride in the leadership position of the American space programme.

Sometimes, leaders remind themselves of the import of their position. U.S. President Harry S. Truman had a table placard that read, 'The Buck Stops Here'. And, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had the famous lines of 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' by Robert Frost on his table: 'The woods are lovely dark and deep, but I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep.' They were reminders to the two heads of state but, symbolically, had another purpose – the 'knowledge' of the positioning of these placards on the leader's desk was a subtle direction to their countrymen of their duty too.

Duty is visible, in a unique way, at the Base Camp of Siachen Glacier (the highest battlefield in the world) where there is a shrine of 'OP Baba'. Who O.P. Baba was is not known but the tale of him beating back the enemy, single handed, at Malaum post is legendary. The battalion moving up the Glacier reports to the Baba and seeks his blessings for a safe time on the treacherous glacier.

On its de-induction, the battalion reports to him again and thanks him. O.P. Baba, thus, is a symbol of faith in the almighty by soldiers of all religions and a conviction that all will be well.

The importance of 1971

In independent India's history, December 16, 1971 is a red-letter day when India won a resounding victory against Pakistan. Measured against any parameter, the painting of the surrender ceremony is iconic and has come to represent the

The controversy over the removal of the iconic 1971 war painting highlights the importance of valuing symbols for their quality and effect

pinnacle of India's military and political competency. For sure all services were deeply involved but it was the Army jawan who led the foray, resulting in the surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers. The iconic scene is seared in the memories of all Indians – and, rightly so, a huge blow-up adorned a room in the Army Chief's office complex. It is where the Army Chief meets heads of foreign armed forces and dignitaries and the message each one of them would have carried would have been of India's, and the Indian Army's, finest hour. The replacement painting (whose quality is debatable) is touted to represent the future vision of the Indian Army – in a way it is a toss-up between a subtle communication of a spectacular politico-military success and that of an imagined future.

Which is more suited to be in the Indian Army Chief's office? Well, one cannot dictate how someone furnishes his office – one can only have an opinion. But would the painting have a view? Alas, if only it could speak.

The statue in Ladakh

The post script. Even as the controversy over the removal of the painting seemed to ebb there is another one now, raised by the recent installation of Shivaji's statue on the shores of the frigid Pangong Tso (lake) in Eastern Ladakh. There have been disapproving views, including those by the local councillor, of an inappropriate choice having been made. Having operated extensively in the area, one cannot but rue the fact that if any symbol was required to link valour with local history, it should have been that of Zorawar Singh, the legendary Dogra general, whose forays took him deep into Tibet. Symbolism is about linking the viewer to a 'feel' that he can connect with in his surroundings. Else, it is misplaced showmanship.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mega project for Nicobar

The report, "Cruise terminal proposed for Great Nicobar Island" (January 5), was disturbing to read. The ecologically super-sensitive islands will be subject to destruction. The endemic flora and fauna can never get replaced. The island is of strategic importance in terms of our maritime security. Hence, the activities here should only be for those that concern our defence forces. There seem to be overenthusiastic

officials in Delhi who should heed the word of caution and the points being raised by the local senior officials.

B. Sundar Raman,
Coimbatore

The shady manner in which the central government is attempting to implement its much-trumpeted ₹72,000 crore mega-infrastructure project will result in catastrophic consequences. It is hoped that the National Green Tribunal will deter the government from

implementing the project. This is a moment for environmentalists, scientists and environmental advocates to come together, make this issue a rallying point, and thwart the government's attempt by launching a "Save Nicobar" movement.

T.N. Venugopalan,
Kochi

Meet farmers, start talks
The farmers' protest has rekindled memories of the year-long agitation, during

2020-21, near Delhi's borders. The protest now is for the legitimate demand by farmers on MSP and a waiver of loans. The government should begin talks with representatives of all kisan organisations to resolve their long-pending demands.

S.K. Khosla,
Chandigarh

The MSP for key agricultural commodities has been a persistent sticking point in the negotiations between

the government and the farmers. Indian farmers' problems have worsened as farm incomes have been squeezed by slower output growth, higher costs and increased vulnerability to climate change. There is basically a lack of understanding of what agriculture needs. Above all, there is a lack of political commitment to ensure remunerative prices to farmers.

R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

In Sydney

The Border-Gavaskar Trophy lived up to its name. The two powerhouses in the game fought hard and, the better team won. This series will mark the end of many eras and also the start of new ones. The record attendance during the matches ensures that Test cricket lives on.

Subash Balakrishnan,
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

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

India needs to prioritise preventive care

India is facing a healthcare crisis that is growing both in scope and cost. We face an alarming dichotomy today: while life expectancy of Indians is expected to increase further, many are facing disease burden earlier. As the country sees an alarming rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer, the financial burden on individuals and the healthcare system continues to escalate.

NCDs accounted for about 65% of all deaths in 2022, up from about 50% in 2010-13, as per the National Family Health Survey-5. The prevalence of risk factors for NCDs is worryingly high. One in four adult men are hypertensive. One in eight are diabetic. Further, breast, lung, and cervical cancer are on the rise, with the median age of diagnosis occurring earlier than global averages.

Millions of people who are facing these conditions could have been managed better, at often lower costs, had they been diagnosed earlier. In this context, shifting the focus from reactive treatment to proactive prevention is crucial, not only to improve health outcomes but also to control the ever-increasing healthcare expenses.

A growing economic burden
The Union Budget for 2024 allocated ₹87,657 crore to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, marking a 13% increase from the previous year. While this is a step forward, experts agree that this allocation remains insufficient given the scale of India's health challenges.

The National Health Accounts show the total current health expenditure estimate in 2021-22 as ₹7.9 lakh crore, growing at a rate more than overall inflation. The share of household health expenditure, including insurance contributions, while decreasing over time, still drives nearly 50% of the spend. This remains one of the highest globally.

**Sathya R. Sriram**

CEO, Preventive Health, Apollo Hospitals

**Akshay Ravi**

Partner, Healthcare practice, EY Parthenon

The World Health Organization (WHO) projects that the economic burden of NCDs in India will surpass ₹280 lakh crore by 2030 – a cost equivalent to ₹2 lakh per household. This escalating cost, driven by rising healthcare expenses and productivity losses, poses a severe threat to financial stability, particularly for middle and lower-income families.

Regular screenings, especially for high-risk individuals, could significantly reduce the incidence of serious, life-threatening and debilitating conditions and its resultant cascading economic and social effects. In a large hospital network, for every 1,000 people screened, at least three people are identified for pre-emptive cardiac or cancer interventions.

Targeted but periodic screening investigations for individuals such as mammograms for breast cancer, pap smears for cervical cancer, X-ray or low-dose computed tomography for lung cancer, ultrasound for liver disease, echo cardiography and treadmill stress test for heart disease beyond the physical vitals and blood tests enable early intervention.

Unfortunately, comprehensive health checks (which can cost anywhere between ₹8,000 and ₹15,000 in metro cities today) are perceived as expensive. If the government were to enable a step change in preventive health services adoption, it could significantly reduce the overall financial burden on individuals and the healthcare system.

Tax incentives, subsidised screenings, and public awareness are key policy tools that can enable this. As part of the Finance Act, 2013, the Union government made efforts to encourage preventive healthcare by offering a ₹5,000 tax deduction under Section 80D of the Income Tax Act for health checks. However, this amount has remained stagnant for the last decade, despite the 12-14% estimated healthcare inflation rate and the rising cost of healthcare services. Thus, it would be

prudent for our policymakers to consider revising the tax deduction limit to at least ₹15,000 in the Union Budget for 2025-26. This would incentivise more individuals to undergo preventive health checks, potentially saving the nation several thousand of crores in future healthcare costs. The incremental tax foregone to the exchequer from such a measure is estimated to be less than ₹5,000 crore, a worthy investment towards improving the health of the nation.

The path forward
We need to prioritise preventive care to mitigate the increasing economic and financial burden of chronic diseases. A three-pronged approach can potentially drive a change in the adoption of preventive health services.

First, we need to strengthen early intervention capabilities through the Ayushman Health and Wellness Centres, including capturing trends effectively and enabling risk-driven targeted screening using AI-enabled imaging modalities to offer lower cost screenings at-scale.

Second, we need to improve the adoption of screening at private centres by encouraging insurers and private health providers to offer a subsidised minimum screening programme for every individual between 40-60 years. For example, for women after the age of 40, a mammogram is necessary annually or once in two years, based on her risk factors.

Exploring part funding through allocations from proceeds from the healthcare cess or the proposed 35% GST slab on tobacco and sugar products can help reduce funding needs.

Finally, the increase in tax deduction limit can further incentivise people to complete comprehensive health checks.

By prioritising preventive care over reactive treatments, India can pave the way for a healthier and more economically resilient future.

By prioritising preventive care over reactive treatments, India can pave the way for a healthier and more economically resilient future.

A stampede, a rift, and a thaw

The tragedy exposes the fraught relationship between industry and government

STATE OF PLAY

R. Ravikanth Reddy
ravikanth.ramasayam@thehindu.co.in



the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu.

Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) working president K.T. Rama Rao added fuel to the fire by saying film stars who have taken concessions from the government cannot even recognise Mr. Reddy as the Chief Minister.

A family member of Allu Arjun's revealed that Mr. Rama Rao's comments worsened matters and said that he should have refrained from using this episode to settle political scores.

In the Telangana Assembly, Mr. Reddy was forceful, asserting that the law applied equally to all citizens, irrespective of their status. He added that the law would take its course.

He also said that the actor behaved irresponsibly when the police tried to arrest him. Mr. Reddy then lambasted the film industry for not responding to the woman's death, implying that the film industry and the Opposition appeared more sympathetic towards the actor than the woman's family.

Allu Arjun denied these allegations and said this was an instance of "character assassination". He added that he had not been informed by the police about Revathi's death.

With claims and counter claims flying thick and fast, and in order to debunk the actor's allegations, Hyderabad Police Commissioner C.V. Anand released a video of the police escorting the actor out of the theatre.

The Telangana government then announced that it would no longer allow special shows that provide a windfall to the producers. The decision, which caused concern among industry heads as many big-budget movies are awaiting release, further widened the rift between the State government and the film industry.

In the midst of this saga, Dil Raju, who was appointed Film Development Corporation chairman, said that he would bridge the gap between the industry and the government.

The relationship between the industry and political parties in Telangana is complicated. It goes back to the days of the agitation for Statehood when the BRS (then called the TRS) allegedly threatened the industry saying it would not allow professionals from Andhra Pradesh to operate freely in the new State. Later, the industry grew close to the BRS, especially with Mr. Rama Rao, say senior Ministers. This apparently angered the Congress, which had given land and tax incentives to the film industry soon after it had moved from Madras.

The first signs of a thaw were seen at a meeting between film industry heads and the Chief Minister on December 26. Mr. Reddy said the government stood with the film industry. He also said there would be no compromise on law and order and that celebrities are responsible for controlling fans. Meanwhile, Mr. Dil Raju dismissed the issue of special screenings as trivial and said that Mr. Reddy harbours a dream of making Hyderabad an international destination for film shootings.

While working on fulfilling that dream, the industry and the government must together ensure that no more lives are lost in incidents like these.

Sharp fall in Madrasa and unrecognised school enrolments

Officials attribute overall enrolment decline to deduplication, but disproportionate drops in certain schools need scrutiny

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

The number of students enrolled in Indian schools in 2023-24 declined by 1.22 crore compared with 2018-19, show data. Officials argue that Aadhaar numbers and unique student IDs have been used to identify beneficiaries of educational schemes and, in the process, duplicate entries and ghost entries have been weeded out.

However, Unified District Information System For Education Plus (UDISE) data show that this new method of data collection has had a disproportionate impact on Madrasas – both recognised and unrecognised – and other unrecognised schools. Unrecognised schools don't have a license to function and don't meet many of the criteria set by the government in terms of infrastructure, class size, etc. There was a sharp drop in school enrolments among recognised Madrasa schools even as the number of recognised Madrasas and the number of teachers working in them increased.

Charts 1 and 2 show the absolute number of students enrolled in government, government-aided, private, and other schools in 2018-19 and 2023-24. Other schools include unrecognised schools and Madrasas (recognised and unrecognised). Student enrolments dropped from 13.1 crore to 12.7 crore in government schools, 2.7 crore to 2.5 crore in government-aided schools, 9.2 crore to 9 crore in private schools, and 90 lakh to 49 lakh in other schools.

Chart 2 shows the absolute drop in the number of students enrolled in 2023-24 compared with 2018-19 across school types. Enrolments dropped by 36 lakh in government schools, 24 lakh in government-aided schools, 21 lakh in private schools, and more than 40 lakh in other schools.

When read together, Charts 1 and 2 show that the number of students in other schools only formed around 2% to 4% of the total enrolments in both the years (Chart 1), but formed over 33% of the decline in total enrolments (Chart 2).

Calculating the decline in enrolments in percentage terms brings out the disparity further. **Chart 3** shows the percentage drop in student enrolments in 2023-24 compared with 2018-19 across school types. Enrolments declined by 2.8% in government schools, 8.7% in government-aided schools, 2.3% in private schools and 44.8% in other schools.

Chart 4 shows a break-up of student enrolments in other schools – separately for recognised Madrasas, unrecognised Madrasas, and other unrecognised schools – for 2023-24 and 2018-19. Enrolments dropped from 30 lakh to 25 lakh (16% decline) in recognised Madrasas, 6.1 lakh to 78,283 (87% decline) in unrecognised Madrasas, and 53 lakh to 23.5 lakh (56% decline) in other unrecognised schools.

Charts 5 and 6 show the absolute number of schools and teachers for school types presented in chart 4 for 2023-24 and 2018-19. In unrecognised Madrasas and other unrecognised schools, the number of schools and teachers has sharply reduced, which also explains the drop in students in them. However, the number of recognised Madrasa schools have increased by 7%, and the number of teachers in those schools have risen by 13% even though the student share has decreased by 16%.

So, there has been a disproportionate decrease in enrolments in Madrasas and unrecognised schools. Is this because duplicate entries and ghost entries were removed or was there an actual drop in students? It is important to explore this further especially since recognised Madrasas and the number of teachers working in them has increased despite a drop in student enrolments.

The case of missing students

The data for the charts were sourced from UDISE+ reports for 2018-19 and 2023-24

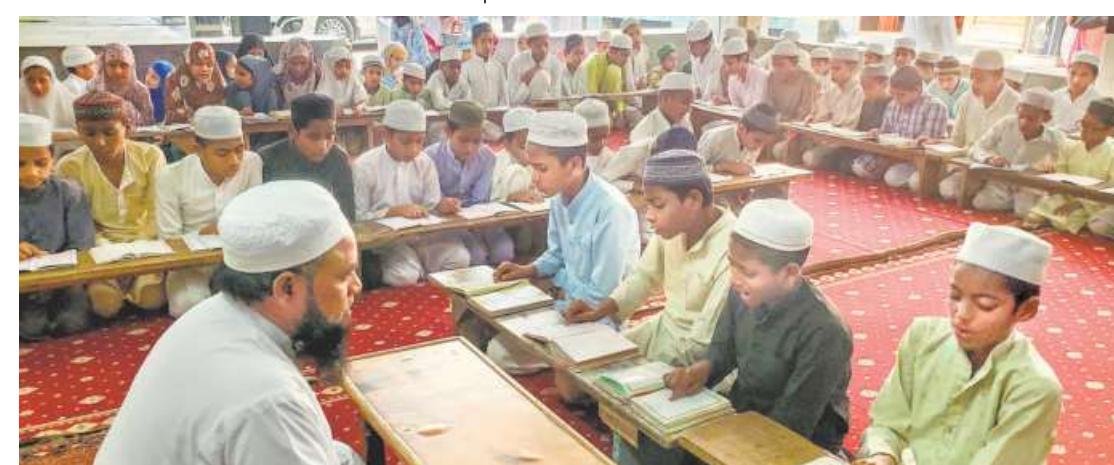


Chart 2: Decline in enrolments across school types in 2023-24 compared with 2018-19

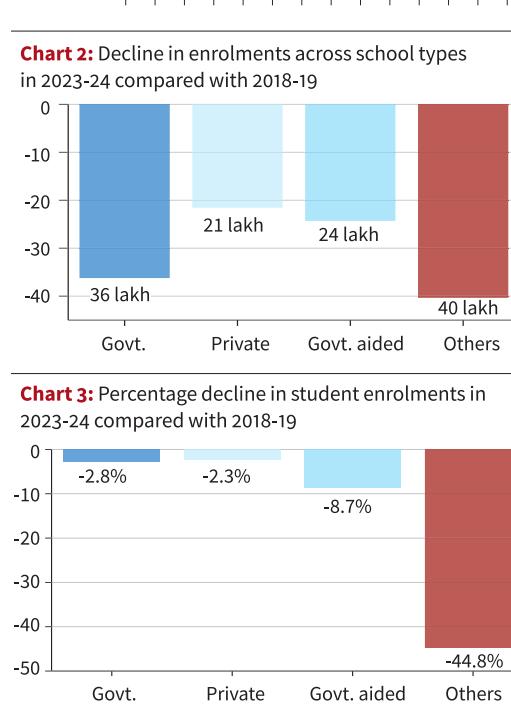


Chart 4: Number of students enrolled across other schools in 2023-24 compared with 2018-19

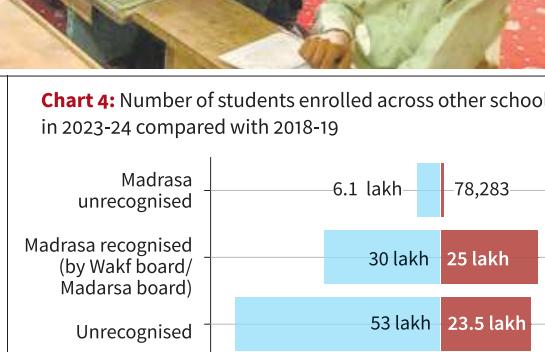


Chart 5: The chart shows the number of other schools in 2023-24 compared with 2018-19

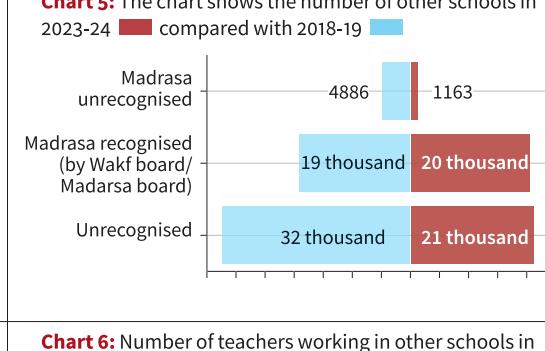
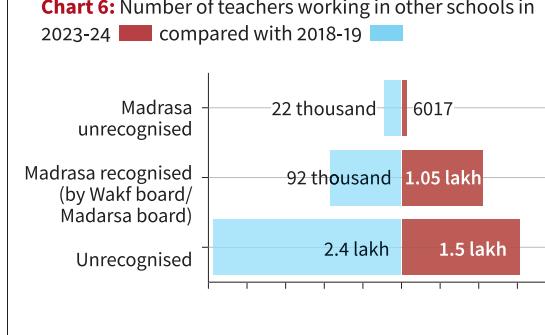


Chart 6: Number of teachers working in other schools in 2023-24 compared with 2018-19



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 6, 1975

A new health problem for Bombay?

New Delhi, Jan. 5: Urbanisation in Bombay has exposed the metropolis to the risk of plague, according to the World Health Organisation's Export Committee on Plague.

Dr. P.J. Deoras told the Indian Science Congress to-day that field rats once confined to the fields had started invading the city because the fields were taken for buildings.

He warned that field rats not only caused more damage but could also spread plague. The house rat was resistant to plague.

Dr. Deoras, who was formerly Assistant Director of Haffkine Institute in Bombay, said that some years ago the field rat formed only one per cent of the total rat population in the heart of Bombay. "As the city has been urbanised, the population of field rats has increased by 45 per cent," he said. He worried that the probable change in rat population might give rise to a new health problem.

A member of Maharashtra State's Environment Committee, Dr. Deoras also warned against the export of frog legs. This would lead to import of more insecticides and, therefore, to more pollution, he said.

Frogs ate insects which damaged paddy crop, Dr. Deoras said. A frog weighing one kilogram ate 600 grams, or some 10,000 paddy pests, he added. "We are unfortunately killing the frog for export of legs and trying to control the insects with endrin which further kills frogs, fishes, birds and other animals," he said.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 6, 1925

Price of tea

London, Jan. 3: The "Evening Standard" says that with the resumption of sales in tea market this week a big effort will be made to defeat brokers whose operations are alleged to have brought the market to confusion. Mincing Lane is preparing for the biggest battle the tea trade has ever witnessed. The paper adds that the recent enormous speculative purchases of tea for resale by bidders who have been able to outbid competitors has had the effect of steadily raising the market price by at least six pence per pound. In the event of efforts to defeat brokers being successful, there is every prospect of substantial reduction in retail prices. The Royal Commission on food prices has had its attention drawn to the position.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of fatalities in the Coast Guard chopper crash

3 Three crew members were killed after a helicopter of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) crashed during landing at the Porbandar airport in Gujarat on Sunday afternoon, police said. The incident took place at 12.10 pm, Porbandar Superintendent of Police Bhagirath Singh Jadeja said. PTI

Chickens culled in Japan due to a bird flu outbreak

50,000 These birds were culled by Japanese authorities after a bird flu outbreak at a farm in the northern Iwate region. It is the 19th bird flu outbreak of the season in Japan, the agriculture ministry said. AFP

Number of Myanmar migrants turned away by Malaysia

300 Malaysia's coast guard escorted away from its waters two boats carrying almost 300 undocumented Myanmar migrants found in a state of exhaustion from lack of food and water. The coast guard did not say if the migrants were Rohingya people. REUTERS

Instant loan limit for the MSME sector by Punjab & Sind Bank

25 In ₹ lakh. State-owned Punjab & Sind Bank plans to launch an instant loan scheme up to ₹25 lakh for the MSME sector as part of its initiative to push credit through its digital platform. The bank has introduced digital home loan schemes under which approval is given within 15 minutes. PTI

The increase in Karnataka public transport bus fares

15 In per cent. Union Minister H. D. Kumaraswamy accused the Congress government of finding ways to discontinue its flagship guarantee schemes, while "burdening" people with increased costs such as the recent 15% hike in public transport bus fares. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Implications of China's mega-dam project

Do all riparian countries have major water infrastructure projects planned in the river basin of the Brahmaputra? What are China's and India's plans and how will they affect communities living alongside the river basin? How important are Tibet's river systems to the Himalayan bioregion?

EXPLAINER

Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman

The story so far:

The ambitious plan to build a mega-hydropower dam across the Brahmaputra at the Great Bend region of the Medog county in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) in China, has been in the drawing boards of Chinese hydrocracy for decades. The clearest signalling to this effect happened in 2020 when this project was included in China's 14th Five-Year Plan. Its approval was granted on December 25, 2024. India, Bhutan and Bangladesh will have serious downstream implications of this 60 GW hyper-dam built upstream by China.

Where is this project?

The Brahmaputra is a transboundary Himalayan river basin spanning four riparian countries. China is the uppermost riparian nation with the river system originating in the TAR, where it is known as the Yarlung Zangbo (or Tsangpo). India and Bhutan are lower riparian nations in relation to China and middle riparian countries in relation to Bangladesh. It is from Bangladesh, which is the lowermost riparian nation, that the river drains into the Bay of Bengal. All riparian countries have major water infrastructure projects planned in the river basin, such as hydropower dams, embankments meant for river control, irrigation dams and barrages.

Is the Brahmaputra river basin trapped within nation-states?

Transboundary river systems are often likened by nation-states to 'taps', which they think can be closed or opened through hydraulic interventions such as dams within their respective nation-states. The Brahmaputra river system has been the site of planned and ongoing mega-dams projects by China, India and Bhutan, all contributing to an intense geopolitical power projection in the river basin. Mega-dams on rivers systems are seen as important sovereignty markers; symbols of nation-state control over natural features. Highly dramatised terms such as 'water wars' are part of the geopolitical vocabulary and upstream hydropower dams are viewed as 'water bombs' by lower riparian nations, as in the case of the Medog dam project. China sits pretty at the top of Asia's water tower, with complete control over Tibet's rivers and significant material, technological and discursive capabilities to deploy unilateral hydropower development.

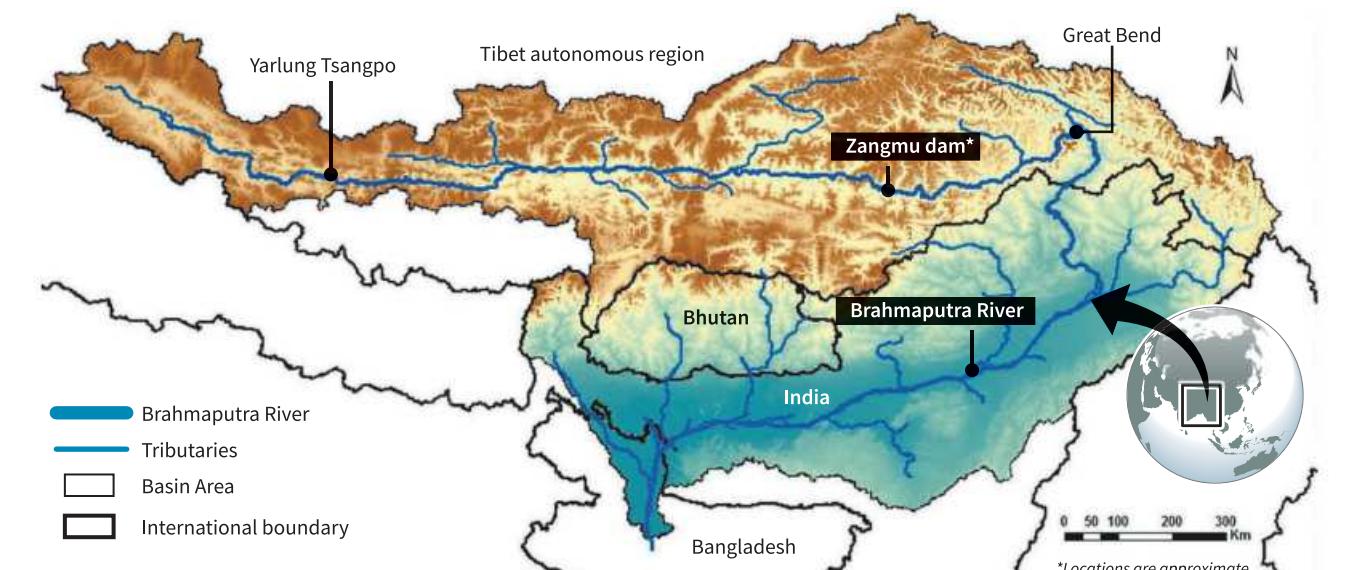
The Chinese hydrocracy has gone forward with mega-hydropower developments such as the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze river and the Zangmu Dam on the Yarlung Zangbo, commissioned in 2015, with its top political leadership firmly backing these interventions as state symbols.

What are the risks for communities inhabiting the Brahmaputra river basin?

The communities living along the river system have adapted as the river has shaped and shifted over centuries. However, with interventions such as mega-hydropower dams by China, India and Bhutan, communities cannot use their traditional knowledge about the river system meaningfully, as the pace and occurrence of disasters have magnified. The upstream communities in Tibet as well as the downstream communities in India, Bhutan and

Taming the 'rogue' river

The Brahmaputra is a transboundary Himalayan river basin spanning four riparian countries. This map shows its flow from the Tibetan Autonomous Region in China through Bhutan and India into Bangladesh.



Power play:
Zangmu was the first hydropower project on China's Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo) to become operational, in 2014.
PICTURE: TWITTER

Source: Non-decisions are also decisions: power interplay between Bangladesh and India over the Brahmaputra River (DOI: 10.1080/025080 60.2018.1554767)

Bangladesh have to live under the shadow of mega-hydropower dams with adverse consequences to their traditional lands and livelihood. The perennial flow of the Brahmaputra in downstream areas in India and Bangladesh depends on the flow of the Yarlung Zangbo. The blocking of that perennial flow, in order to maintain headwaters to operate a mega-hydropower dam of the magnitude that China is planning at the Great Bend, will have catastrophic consequences on surface water levels, and to overall monsoon patterns and groundwater systems of the river basin. This will affect downstream agrarian communities and the sensitive ecology of the overall Himalayan bioregion/ecoregion.

What explains the hydropower dam-building race in the Brahmaputra river basin?

There is a face-off between China and India on the Yarlung Zangbo-Brahmaputra river course. China has announced the biggest hydropower project at the Great Bend while India has announced its largest dam project, at Upper Siang. Bhutan has been planning and building several medium to small dams, which have raised concerns in downstream India and Bangladesh. None of the riparian countries of the Brahmaputra river basin have signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses of 2014, and hence first user rights on river systems are non-enforceable. China and India have an Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) since

2006, to discuss outstanding issues and share hydrological data, but do not have a comprehensive bilateral treaty to govern shared transboundary rivers. The outstanding land boundary dispute between China and India is woven into the intense securitisation of the Brahmaputra river basin, which makes it an active site for strategic posturing by both countries.

A bioregional/ecoregional frame of protecting the Himalayas may help desecuritise Brahmaputra river basin.

What next?
A recent academic book by some Australian researchers titled *Rivers of the Asian Highlands: from Deep Time to the Climate Crisis*, puts forward important deep time (deep time means geological time; billions of years) perspectives to Himalayan river systems. The book juxtaposes a wider planetary thinking to emerge against the backdrop of narrow technocratic decision-making to build mega-dams within nation-states.

Tibet's river systems are important to the Earth's cryosphere, comprising permafrost and glaciers, and major climate systems directing climate and precipitation pathways such as the monsoon. Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) have increased in the Himalayas with climate change events, exemplified by the Chungthang Dam collapse in Sikkim during October 2023, which caused widespread devastation to life and property to downstream communities. The dams across the Himalayas aim at territorialising river systems, breaking

their natural life cycles. This affects agro-pastoral communities, biodiversity, living biota in rivers and wetland systems. The Brahmaputra river basin will turn into an active risk-scape if all these planned dams are built eventually.

An accurate sense of history will help contextualise the site of the Medog dam being built by China. One of the greatest earthquakes of modern times, the 1950 Medog Earthquake, or the Assam-Tibet Earthquake, which transformed the riparian landscape, had its epicenter at Medog in Tibet. The earthquake had disastrous effects downstream in Assam and Bangladesh, with the landscape until now trapped in an unending cycle of annual catastrophic floods.

Philip Ball in his book titled *Water Kingdom: A Secret History of China* describes the Yarlung Zangbo being viewed in Chinese history as a 'river gone rogue' as it turns sharply from its west to east route at the Great Bend, to turn south to enter India, with other major rivers in China running from west to east. While China is going ahead with building mega-dams in Tibet to correct this geographical anomaly by disciplining a 'rogue river', India can assume an important riparian leadership role for regional river systems by not mirroring what China does. A dam for a dam will make the entire Himalayan riparian/climatic systems run dry and turn it into a disaster-scape for its communities.

Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman is a Visiting Associate Fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi, India.

THE GIST

The Brahmaputra is a transboundary Himalayan river basin spanning four riparian countries. China is the uppermost riparian nation with the river system originating in the TAR, where it is known as the Yarlung Zangbo.

There is a face-off between China and India on the Yarlung Zangbo-Brahmaputra river course. China has announced the biggest hydropower project at the Great Bend while India has announced its largest dam project, at Upper Siang.

The dams across the Himalayas aim at territorialising river systems, breaking their natural life cycles. This affects agro-pastoral communities, biodiversity, living biota in rivers and wetland systems.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



The Shompen people, a vulnerable tribal group of the Nicobar islands. FILE PHOTO

Empower the guardians of the earth, do not rob them

A unilateral decision to establish three wildlife sanctuaries in southern Nicobar will deprive the indigenous peoples of their ancestral territories. For millennia, these historically isolated indigenes have relied on these islands as resource reservoirs for sustenance and protected them

**Ajay Saini
Manish Chandi**

The ₹72,000-crore mega infrastructure project on Great Nicobar will now also have an international cruise terminal and a shipbreaking yard, as proposed by the Union Shipping Ministry. In this article, dated April 22, 2024, Ajay Saini and Manish Chandi talk about the rights of the indigenous communities over the little islands of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago and how they have been able to protect and preserve the area's ecological balance.

In the southern expanse of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago, off the shores of Little Nicobar, lie seven tiny islands. Classified as "uninhabited" in the government's records, these islets are nonetheless integral to the indigenous communities of the region. Two, officially called Meroë and Menchal, are known as Piriui and Pingaeyak, respectively, to the Payuh, the indigenous southern Nicobarese peoples, who hold traditional rights over these and other islets.

For millennia, these historically isolated indigenes have relied on these islands as resource reservoirs for sustenance and protected them. Menchal is revered, used, and protected under the spiritual realm called Pingaeyak (a spirit that is believed to reside on the island), prohibiting the overexploitation of resources or any undue harm to its ecosystem. Similarly, Meroë is believed to be the abode of a legendary islander community. Here, too, spiritual belief systems influence how the islanders use and protect natural resources.

Meroë and Menchal are managed by community elders as guardians and

specific individual caretakers. They ensure the protection of the island's resources and sustainability. In today's world, this phenomenon goes by the name of "conservation" and "sustainable use", among other terms and phrases.

Conservation colonialism
In May 2022, in complete disregard of the indigenous land ownership and management systems, the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) administration issued three public notices, announcing its intention to create three wildlife sanctuaries: a coral sanctuary at Meroë Island, a megapode sanctuary at Menchal Island, and a leatherback turtle sanctuary on Little Nicobar (140 sq. km), as wildlife sanctuaries.

In mid-July, the A&N administration issued an order asserting that it did not receive any claims or objections from any individual regarding the land and marine areas within the three proposed sanctuaries; that no individual enjoys any rights within the boundaries of the proposed sanctuaries. And, that there will be "restriction on the people of neighbouring area to enter into these islands... in the national interest."

Approximately 1,200 southern Nicobarese inhabit Patai Takaru (Great Nicobar Island), and Patai t-bhi (Little Nicobar Island), holding traditional rights over both inhabited and ostensibly "uninhabited" islands. Yet, the A&N administration neither consulted nor informed the southern Nicobarese of its plans.

Despite verbal supplications and a letter in August 2022 from the Little & Great Nicobar Tribal Council that expressed the community's concerns to the A&N administration and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate

Change, the A&N administration proceeded to issue official notifications in October 2022, designating the whole of Meroë (2.73 square kilometres, including the surrounding marine area) and Menchal (1.29 sq. km), along with a 13.75 sq. km area (including 6.67 sq. km. of water area within the baseline system) on Little Nicobar (140 sq. km), as wildlife sanctuaries.

Masking an ecological disaster
The selection of Meroë and Menchal Islands as conservation reserves for coral reefs and Megapode birds is arbitrary. Menchal does not have more than a pair or two of the endemic Megapode birds. Similarly, questions arise regarding the actual diversity and abundance of corals on Meroë Island.

Notably, the announcement of wildlife sanctuaries coincided with growing scrutiny and criticism from experts over the denotification of the Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary for a ₹72,000-crore mega project on Great Nicobar, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Establishing exclusionary conservation areas in a region, which is already a paradise for biodiversity, stems from the fact that the champions of the mega project are aware of the extensive environmental and social damage that the project will entail. It will devastate about eight to 10 lakh evergreen forest trees, smother and gouge out scores of coral reefs found along Galathea Bay, destroy the nesting site for the globally endangered Leatherback sea turtle species, devastate hundreds of nesting mounds of Nicobar Megapodes, and kill as many crocodiles.

Furthermore, it will prevent the indigenous Great Nicobar islanders from

returning to their pre-tsunami homeland where they husbanded pigs and chicken, cultivated coconut and betel nut trees, and lived simple and gregarious lives. Most importantly, it will uproot three or more settlements of the Shompen (a 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group') and permanently destroy their foraging and hunting grounds.

The unilateral decision to establish wildlife sanctuaries disregards the islands' profound significance to the indigenous population.

Their ancestral lands are unjustly perceived as "no-man's-land" to appease conservationists, investors, public opinion, and more.

Support earth's guardians

Globally, governments blatantly violate indigenous people's rights by evicting them from their ancestral lands, often under the guise of development, national interest, conservation projects, among others. Approximately 476 million indigenous peoples, constitute about 6% of the global population. Indigenous territories cover roughly 22% of the planet's land surface and harbour 80% of its biodiversity.

Indigenous peoples are the original guardians of our earth. The world must learn from their wisdom. Reason and justice dictate that in southern Nicobar, we should support and empower the islanders to continue to steward their ancestral territories, rather than robbing them of their lands, resources, lifeways, and worldviews.

Ajay Saini teaches at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. Manish Chandi is an independent researcher with over two decades of research experience in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

*Shall I give
give dancing a
whirl?*

The priest's magniloquent speeches are very boring. I almost fell asleep yesterday

S. Upendran

What is the meaning of the expression 'give something a whirl' (Rajni Gupta, Madina, Haryana)

The 'h' in 'whirl' is not pronounced; the word rhymes with 'curl', 'pearl' and 'girl'. One of the meanings of 'whirl' is to move round and round rapidly. If you decide to give skydiving a whirl, what it means is that you are going to give the activity a shot. Skydiving is something you have never done before, but are now willing to try it. You do not know if you will enjoy the experience or not, but you are willing to jump out of a plane – for the first time in your life.

If it hadn't been for Ramdas, I don't think I would have given tennis a whirl.

Rama decided to give the recommended ayurveda treatment a whirl.

How is the word 'magniloquent' pronounced? (R. Ramachandran, Tiruvannamalai)

The word consists of four syllables. The first rhymes with 'tag', 'bag' and 'lag', while the vowel in the second, sounds like the 'i' in 'hill', 'chill' and 'bill'. The following 'o' and 'ue' sound like the 'a' in 'china'. The word is pronounced 'mag-NIL-e-kwent' with the stress on the second syllable. It comes from the Latin 'magnus' meaning 'great' and 'loqui' meaning speak. When someone is 'magniloquent' in his speech, he uses big words. The individual uses flowery language, not in order to communicate with the listener, but merely to impress. There is very little substance in what he has to say. Another word which has more or less the same meaning is 'grandiloquent'. According to scholars, 'grandiloquent' is the older of the two.

His own party members were getting tired of his magniloquent speeches.

Get to the point. Don't try to impress me with your magniloquence.

Is it okay to wish someone 'Good morning' at 3:00 PM? (Sai Kumar, Warrangal)

Very often, in our country, when you run into someone at 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, they greet you by saying 'Good morning'. When you remind them of the time, they respond by saying, "I know it's three o'clock. But since this is the first time I'm seeing you today, it's okay if I say, 'Good morning'!" This, however, is not true. How you greet an individual is determined by what time of day it is – it does not matter if you are seeing the person for the first time. You can wish someone 'Good morning' till 11:59 AM. Between noon and 4:00 PM (sometimes 5), 'Good afternoon' is used. Any time after that, the normal greeting is 'Good evening'. If you meet someone at 11 PM, you will greet him with a 'Good night'. The only time, you'll say 'Good night' is when you take leave of a person in the evening and are sure that you will not be seeing the individual till the next day.

upendrankye@gmail.com

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

Quiz yourself on two iconic Indians – cricket legend Kapil Dev and maestro A.R. Rahman – who celebrate their birthday on January 6

V.V. Ramanan**QUESTION 1**

What was the christened name of A.R. Rahman and the full name of Kapil?

QUESTION 2

If Sadiq Mohammad was Kapil's first Test victim, who was his last and record-setting 434th scalp?

QUESTION 3

Rahman has won seven National Film awards of which two are for Best Background Score. Name the two flicks.

QUESTION 4

At which ground did Kapil

score the historic unbeaten 175 during the 1983 Prudential World Cup?

QUESTION 5

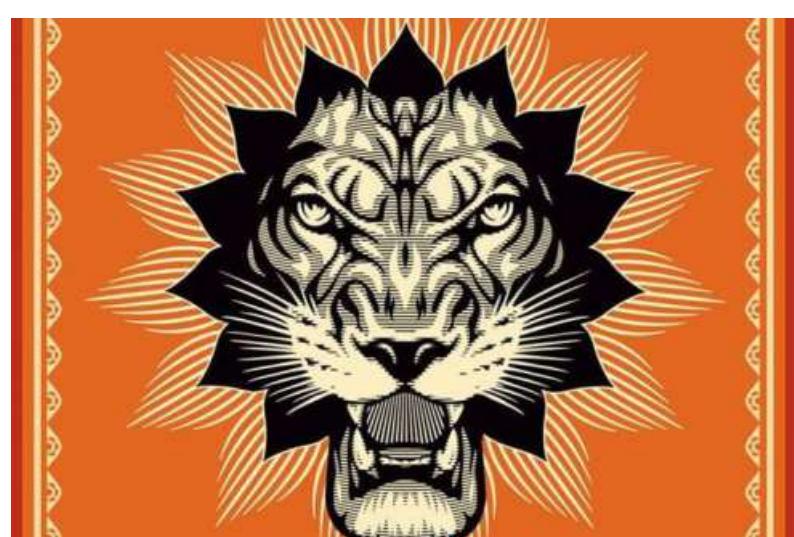
It is well-known that Rahman won an Oscar, Grammy, and BAFTA for his work in 'Slumdog Millionaire'. For which 2011 film was he nominated for the above honours but did not get any of them?

QUESTION 6

What is the latest autobiography of Kapil titled?

QUESTION 7

Name the musical that Rahman created in collaboration with the legendary Andrew Lloyd Webber in 2002.

**Visual question:**

Name this one-off album released by the super group that had Mick Jagger, Joss Stone, Dave Stewart, and A.R. Rahman.

Questions and Answers to the January 3 edition of the daily quiz: 1. The official name of the Khel Ratna award. **Ans: Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award**

2. The name of the award before it was changed in this year. **Ans: Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award; 2021**

3. The first recipient of this award and the youngest recipient of this award. **Ans: Viswanathan Anand; Abhinav Bindra (before Gukesh Dommaraju)**

4. This award is considered as India's second highest sporting honour. **Ans: Arjuna Award**

5. The person who got the award despite Paralympic athlete Girisha Nagarajegowda's court case. **Ans: Sania Mirza**

6. The number of cricket players who have received the award till now. **Ans: Five**

Visual: Identify the player. **Ans: Geet Sethi**

Early Birds: Aman Krishnan| Rajmohan Velayudhan| Abhimuktешwaran| L.S.Hareesh| Aiswarya Mohan

Word of the day

Addlepated:

stupid and confused

Synonyms: addlebrained, muddleheaded

Usage: The blow made me addlepated and weakened my legs.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/ addlepatedpro

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

From Page One**Rafale, Scorpene deals reach final leg**

On July 13, 2023, as Mr. Modi was enroute to Paris, the Defence Acquisition Council chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh accorded the Acceptance of Necessity for the procurement of 26 Rafale-M fighters and three additional Scorpene-class diesel-electric submarines.

Critical for Naval needs

The Rafale purchase includes 22 single seater Rafale-M jets and four twin-seater Rafale trainers, which are not carrier compatible. The 26 jets are meant to fill a critical gap until the indigenous twin engine deck-based fighter, still under development, is ready to be inducted into service. The Navy currently operates two aircraft carriers: INS Vikramaditya procured from Russia, and the indigenously built INS Vikrant which was commissioned in September 2022.

The additional Scorpene are a critical requirement for the Navy as it grapples with an ageing fleet and the huge delay in the procurement of six advanced submarines under Project-75I which is now awaiting a final decision between Germany and Spain. As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, the first of three Scorpene submarines is likely to be delivered in 2031.

\$1-mn prize for decoding Indus Valley script

He said the government would institute two awards to honour and encourage numismatists and epigraphists who had been working to highlight the ancientness of Tamil culture.

Pointing out that 60% of the graffiti marks found in Tamil Nadu had their parallels to the scripts found on the Indus seals, the Chief Minister said archaeologists had established that more than 90% of the graffiti marks of South India and those of the Indus Valley Civilisation had parallels.

Mr. Stalin, who laid the foundation stone for the statue of Sir John Marshall, said his discovery was a turning point in history and completely changed the understanding of the past. "Many used to argue that it was a figment of imagination that Aryan and Sanskrit originated in India. John Marshall's discovery completely changed the perception. His argument that Indus Valley Civilisation predated Aryan Civilisation and the language spoken in the Indus Valley could be Dravidian has been strengthened further," he said.

'Quarantine animals with bird flu symptoms'

"Collect and send samples (nasal swabs) from affected tigers/other feline species to ICAR-NIHSSAD, Bhopal for confirmation and strain identification of Avian Influenza virus," the Centre said, also asking States to report any unusual deaths in poultry and/or any other species.

Zoo staff protection

The Ministry also asked the States to equip all zoo staff with appropriate personal protective equipment, including gloves, masks, and protective suits. "Conduct health screenings for zoo personnel and monitor for flu-like symptoms. Educate zoo staff about the potential zoonotic risks and proper hygiene practices," the circular said.

It added that the deaths of the tigers and a leopard that have tested positive for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HAI) raise significant concerns about the rapid spread of the virus. "The situation demands urgent attention to mitigate risks to both animal and human health. It is requested that the One-Health approach be implemented, integrating the efforts across various sectors, including human health and wildlife, to address the issue in a comprehensive manner," the circular said.

Govt. promises time for compliance

"In addition, structured interaction for feedback with identified stakeholders, such as civil society, industry and government organisations, would also be organised to gather feedback. All feedback/comments will be taken into consideration while finalising the rules," the official from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry said. The final rules as notified will be placed before Parliament.

Stating that adequate time will be given to all entities to adapt their systems to meet the requirements, the official said processing of digital data on the basis of consent given before the new law came into force was permitted. Such processing could continue while citizens were given notice of it so that they could exercise their rights under the law.

"While clear obligations have been cast on 'data fiduciaries' to protect personal data in accordance with the law, prescriptions have been kept to a minimum and compliance burden has been kept low by enabling compliance through digital means. While the entities will prepare themselves for compliance with the law during the period given for adapting their systems, widespread awareness initiatives will be undertaken to educate the citizens about their rights on their personal data," the official said.

3 personnel killed as Coast Guard chopper crashes in Porbandar

In flames: Rescue work under way after a Coast Guard helicopter crashed at the Porbandar airport on Sunday. PTI

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Two pilots and an aircrew diver were killed when a Dhruv advanced light helicopter of the Indian Coast Guard crashed on the runway at the Porbandar airport in Gujarat on Sunday.

The deceased are Commandant (Junior Grade) Saurabh, Deputy Commandant S.K. Yadav, and Manoj Pradhan Navik.

The ALH MK-III helicopter met with the accident around a quarter past noon, the Coast Guard said in a statement. It was on a routine training sortie.

"Immediately post incident, the crew were recovered and shifted to Government Hospital

Porbandar, where they were declared brought dead. The reasons leading to the incident are being investigated by a Board of Inquiry," the Coast Guard said.

The mortal remains of the crew members will be cremated in accordance with service traditions and honour, it added.

The incident comes four months after an ALH MK-III helicopter of the Coast Guard crashed into the Arabian Sea off Porbandar on September 2 last year, killing three crew members. The indigenously designed and developed ALH is a twin-engine, multi-role, multi-mission new generation helicopter.

(With PTI inputs)

Farmers' outfits call on PM to hold discussions

Samyukt Kisan Morcha asks Modi to respect democracy and hold talks with all farmers' organisations and save the life of Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on a fast since Nov. 26

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

After separate Kisan Mahapanchayats in Punjab and Haryana, both the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) and the Samyukt Kisan Morcha-Non-Political (SKM-NP) have decided to strengthen protests against the Centre's policies.

The outfits have also been trying to gather public support for the hunger strike being held by SKM-NP leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal.

Mr. Dallewal, who has been on a fast unto death since November 26, had urged farmers from other States too to join the protest. Thousands of farmers had assembled at the Khanauri protest site on the Punjab-Haryana boundary on Saturday in support of Mr. Dallewal.

The SKM held a Kisan Mahapanchayat at Tohana in Haryana on Saturday. The SKM asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to respect democracy and hold discussions with all farmers' organisations and save the life of Mr. Dallewal.



Massive support: Farmers listen to Jagjit Singh Dallewal's speech during the Kisan Mahapanchayat in Patiala on Saturday. ANI

wal. The Mahapanchayat also called for greater unity of farmers and extended solidarity with the farmers' struggle at Khanauri and Shambu.

The farmers warned the Prime Minister against the authoritarian attitude and demanded him to respect democratic principles of governance. Nobody is above the rule of law in a democracy. The NDA-III government must hold discussions with all farmer organisations and save the life of farmer leader Jagjit

Singh Dallewal at once," the SKM said in a statement.

Repeal NPFAM

The SKM's Mahapanchayat also asked the farmers of Haryana to write a letter to Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, urging him to repeal the National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing (NPFAM).

Senior farmer leader Joginder Singh Ugrahan said the draft NPFAM would lead to the grain trade fall-

ing into the hands of corporates. "A sharp and large fight against the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund will be required," he said.

Bratiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikit said the Haryana government was misleading the public about the Minimum Support Price for 24 crops.

He added that a committee of senior leaders of the SKM was working towards unity among farmers' groups.

In Dallewal's case, SC balances his right to expression and the state's duty to save his life**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, in the case of farmers' leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is fasting unto death, treads a fine line between protecting his freedom of expression and ensuring the state's duty to preserve his life.

The court has clarified that its directions to the Punjab government to hospitalise Mr. Dallewal did not mean the farmers' leader ought to break his fast. However, the very act of hospitalisation may interrupt Mr. Dallewal's fast and its *raison d'être*, that is, to stake his own life for a cause he obviously believes in and leads. The use of the strong arm of law by the State may also prove counterproductive.

Judgments from the Supreme Court in the *suo motu Ram Lila Maidan Incident* case, and the High



Determined leader: Jagjit Singh Dallewal speaks to farmers at Khanauri on Saturday. ANI

Courts, especially the Madras High Court, recognise hunger strike as "a form of protest which has been accepted, both historically and legally in our constitutional jurisprudence".

Reasonable restrictions

The Madras High Court had reasoned that the police's power in the face of a protest by hunger strike was confined to imposing "reasonable restrictions to ensure the safety and con-

venience of the people at large" without confronting a peaceful protest.

The Supreme Court has recognised hunger strike as a form of expressing dissent which draws its source from the Satyagraha of Mahatma Gandhi and has underscored that it cannot be perceived as a threat to public order.

"Hunger strike, in our country, is a well-known form of peaceful protest, and it is difficult to connect

this with public disorder," the apex court observed in its judgment *Mohd. Yousuf Rather vs. State of J&K*, reported in 1979. The court has made it clear that a threat to go on hunger strike or the action itself "cannot be termed as unconstitutional or barred under any law".

Navigate with care

The Punjab government, in Mr. Dallewal's case, has to navigate with care, as, in the words of the Madras High Court in a August 2023 judgment in *P. Thangam vs The Superintendent of Police*, "protesting democratically by way of hunger strike without causing any inconvenience to anybody is the right guaranteed by the Constitution of India".

The Madras High Court noted in 2013 in *K. Thiagarajan @ Thozhar Thaigu vs The Commissioner of Police* that even Chief Ministers

had gone on hunger strike. Here, the petitioner had threatened to go on a fast at the Marina beach to highlight the cause of the Tamil language, tradition, and culture. The Chennai Police Commissioner had termed it a punishable act. The High Court had differed, saying the police's job was to put sufficient safeguards in place. The police could even obtain an undertaking from the protesters to maintain peace and orderliness, but could not interfere or impose themselves on basic rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

"Preventive steps should be founded on an actual and prominent threat endangering public order and tranquility," the Supreme Court observed in the *Ram Lila Maidan* case judgment. It cautioned the state to exercise power with great caution and without arbitrariness.

Acquittal of Nanded blast accused 'tight slap' to Cong., says VHP**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Sunday termed the acquittal of the 2006 Nanded blast accused a "tight slap" on the Congress's face and asked the party's top leadership to apologise to the Hindu society.

The reaction came after a sessions court in Maharashtra's Nanded acquitted on Saturday all nine surviving accused in the 2006 blast case.

"The Congress's dream of proving Hindus to be terrorists in the 2006 Nanded blast case stands exposed, with the court acquitting all the persons made accused in the case during the Congress rule," VHP national spokesperson Vinod Bansal said.

He claimed that the Congress and the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) had already been "exposed" in the Malgaon blast case. "After 19 years, the Nanded court acquitted all the accused and slapped the Congress hard on its face for its anti-Hindu misdeeds," Mr. Bansal said.

"At least now, the top leadership of the Congress should apologise to Hindu society," he added. The case pertains to an explosion at the home of Laxman Rajkondwar – allegedly a Rashtriya Swamsevak Sangh (RSS) worker in Nanded city – on the intervening night of April 4 and 5, 2006.

"His son Naresh Rajkondwar and VHP activist Himanshu Panse were killed in the blast, allegedly while assembling an explosive device," the investigators had claimed. The case was initially investigated by the Maharashtra ATS before being transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

According to defence lawyer Nitin Runwal, 49 prosecution witnesses were examined during the trial.

NIA arrests accused in Phulwari Sharif PFI case**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested an alleged Popular Front of India (PFI) operative in the Phulwari Sharif case of Patna, Bihar, from the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi, on his arrival from the UAE.

An NIA team arrested accused Mohammad Sajjad Alami of East Champaran, Bihar as soon as he landed at the airport on Saturday, the agency said, adding that the accused was involved in channelling illegal funds from Dubai to PFI members in Bihar through a syndicate having links in the UAE. The NIA had earlier arrested and charged 17 accused in the same case.

Calcium intake, exercise crucial for young adults to prevent osteoporosis'

Hospitals; and Shriram Mahadevan, head of endocrinology at Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, Chennai.

Dr. Chaitanya kicked off the session by explaining that osteoporosis is a condition where weakened bones significantly increase the risk of fractures.

Osteoporosis occurs when the balance between bone resorption and bone remodelling is disrupted, leading to decreased bone

mass," he explained. He noted that bone mass peaks during the third decade of life, after which bone resorption exceeds bone formation, accelerating bone loss.

Dr. Mahadevan outlined the key risk factors for osteoporosis, including age, gender, low body weight, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and a family history of the disease. He added that individuals with low physical activity or a history of fractures after the age of 40 are also at higher risk.

Dr. Seshadri stressed that adequate calcium intake, especially from dairy products, and regular outdoor activity are crucial for building strong bones during the growth years. "Unfortunately, modern lifestyles, with academic pressures and increased

screen time, often limit calcium intake and physical activity, making supplements necessary in some cases," he said.

Dr. Mahadevan discussed treatment options for osteoporosis, explaining that medication choices depend on efficacy, scientific evidence, and the type of fracture being targeted. Bisphosphonates are usually the first line of treatment, while bone-forming agents are preferred for severe osteoporosis or recurrent fractures, especially when bone mineral density is low.

He cautioned that these treatments are typically applicable for 18 to 24 months, and stopping them abruptly could be harmful.

The webinar is available at <https://bit.ly/3Pp0WOC>

Made a mistake twice going with RJD, will not repeat it: Nitish

The Hindu Bureau

PATNA



Days after Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad said the INDIA bloc is ready to welcome him back into its fold, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday said he had made a mistake twice going with the RJD and will not repeat it.

The Janata Dal (United) chief was interacting with presspersons during his ongoing Pragati Yatra in Muzaffarpur.

"I went here and there by mistake. Now I will not go anywhere. I have returned to my old partner," Mr. Kumar said after meeting a self-help group member in the State.

He attacked the RJD saying the party did not do any work but kept getting coverage in newspapers. Taking credit for doing work for women's empowerment, he said that women would never venture outside after sunset during the RJD regime.

"I worked for every section, be it women, men, all castes, Hindus, Muslims, backward classes, extremely backward classes, Dalits and Mahadalits," Mr. Kumar said.

He was accompanied by senior Cabinet colleague Vijay Kumar Chaudhary and Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha of the

Nitish Kumar

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

On January 1, in an interview to a local news channel, Mr. Prasad had said:

"If he [Nitish Kumar] joins us, we will definitely welcome him. We will also forgive his past mistakes and keep him with us."

'Not in his senses'

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Legislative Assembly Tejashwi Yadav said the Chief Minister was not in his senses and was unable to take his own decisions.

"Nitish ji has been hijacked by his close associates. He is not in his senses and is unable to take his own decisions. There is no question of taking him back. It is you people (media) who keep asking if he will come or not. Let him get steady; why do you want to make him unstable? Nobody has given him any offer. You people know Lalu ji, he has his own way of speaking," the former Deputy Chief Minister said.

AAP wasted 10 years of Delhi's citizens, says PM

At a rally, Narendra Modi says that what the people of Delhi have seen in the past 10 years is nothing short of a disaster; retorting, AAP chief says the Centre failed to fulfil multiple promises

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday again called the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) rule in Delhi a disaster as he addressed a gathering here ahead of the Assembly election.

Multiple leaders and MPs shared the grand stage with Mr. Modi at the BJP's Parivartan rally at Japanese Park in Sector 10, Rohini.

"For the elections, the Delhi BJP has brought forward promising faces. Now, the dreams of the poor and the middle class will be fulfilled in Delhi. For youth, there will be a promising future with opportunities, and I am confident that lotus (the party symbol) is going to bloom in Delhi Assembly elections," Mr. Modi said.

In his appeal to the voters, he said, "I am here, to appeal to the people of Delhi to give an opportunity to the BJP for Delhi's bright future as it is the BJP that can develop Delhi. In the past 10 years, the government that Delhi has seen is no less than AAP-DA [disaster], and now we can only hear AAP-DA nahi sahenge, badal ke rahenge (We will not tolerate dis-



Promise of change: PM Narendra Modi waves to the gathering at Japanese Park, on Sunday. Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva are also seen. ANI

ter, will bring change) in Delhi..."

Important years

Mr. Modi further said, "The upcoming 25 years are important for India's future, and Delhi's future. In these 25 years, India will become a developed nation, and we will be able to see this journey of developed India before our eyes. We will see India passing through a new phase of modernity. We must develop Delhi as the capital of a developed India..."

Mr. Modi targeted Arvind Kejriwal for building a 'sheesh mahal' (glass palace) for himself, referring to the controversy sur-

rounding alleged irregularities in the renovation of the Chief Minister's official residence. "Today, entire Delhi is proud of Bharat Mandapam, Yasho Bhoomi, Kartavya Path. However, I feel sad that the AAP-DA government wasted 10 years of the people of Delhi. When the people of Delhi were fighting COVID, these people were focused on building a 'sheesh mahal,'" he said.

He said the AAP government had left no stone unturned in destroying Delhi's transport system. "Look at the condition they have created. When it's summer, the Delhi people fight over drinking water; when it rains, streets

are waterlogged; and in winter, it gets difficult to breathe in polluted air," he said.

"The energy of the people of Delhi is being spent on dealing with the AAP-DA government 365 days a year. Hence, only when the AAP-DA is removed from Delhi the double engine of development and good governance will follow. The AAP-DA government did not even implement the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana properly here; it created hurdles in building permanent houses for the poor. Around 30,000 houses built under old schemes are lying vacant..." he said.

Kejriwal hits back

Later in the day, AAP national convener Mr. Kejriwal retorted by raising multiple promises that, he said, the Central government has not fulfilled, and because of which Delhi's development has stopped.

He said that the Prime Minister was interested only in abusing him and the AA was still working with the Centre on different development projects, as the Centre governed half of Delhi since it was not a full State, for the benefit of the people of Delhi.

IN BRIEF



Chinese annexation occurred during Nehru's term, says BJP

The BJP on Sunday flayed the Congress for alleging Chinese occupation of the Indian territory during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's term, saying the party could not get away with "such lies" as it occurred during Nehru's tenure. The reaction came a day after the Congress alleged, "China kept occupying India's land. Narendra Modi kept giving clean chit." "Imagine blaming PM Modi for Nehru's betrayal," BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said on X. PTI

V-P asks youth to 'stay vigilant' against 'anti-national forces'

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday urged the country's youth to "stay vigilant" against "anti-national forces", saying it alone will secure India's democratic values. In his address to mark the formal inauguration of the NCC Republic Day Camp in Delhi Cantonment, he also said that "nationalism has to override all other interests, personal or organisational". The V-P said the foundation of "our national transformation" rests on the pillars of social harmony and adherence to civic duties. PTI

Minority panel team to probe mob lynching in Jharkhand

Jharkhand State Minority Commission (JSMC) on Sunday said the panel would form a probe team soon to enquire into the alleged mob lynching of a man in Seraikela-Kharswan district on December 8. JSMC has taken cognisance of the incident after All India Minority Welfare Front spokesman Sarfraz Hussain in a letter demanded a judicial enquiry into the death of Sheikh Tazuddin. Mr. Hussain also demanded stringent action against the culprits and adequate compensation to the family of the deceased. Four persons have surrendered in the matter. PTI

Centre undermining rights of hill tribes, says Zodintluanga

A former Congress Minister and Mizoram-based leader of the All India Adivasi Congress Committee, Zodintluanga, has accused the Narendra Modi government of undermining the rights of the Adivasis and hill tribes, particularly in the country's northeastern region. He criticised the policies of the BJP-led government at the Centre and said it failed to uphold the rights of the tribal communities and marginalised groups across India. "His [Modi's] authoritarian rule must end if we are to safeguard the values that our country was built upon," he added.

Cong. atoning for Mamata's expulsion, says party leader

Shiv Sahay Singh

KOLKATA



Congress leader said here on Saturday.

Mr. Bhattacharya made the remarks while unveiling the statue of Mitra, who passed away in 2020. Congress State president Subhankar Sarkar was present.

Ms. Banerjee was expelled from the Congress on December 21, 1997, and on January 1, 1998, she started the Trinamool Congress.

Senior West Bengal Congress leader Pradip Bhattacharya has stirred up a hornets' nest by saying the party is still atoning for the expulsion of Trinamool Congress chairperson and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

"The Congress is still atoning for expelling Mamata Banerjee. I had warned against her expulsion. But Somendranath Mitra [then State Congress president] was forced to take the decision under pressure from the central leadership," the veteran

Mamata Banerjee was expelled from the Congress in 1997, and on January 1, 1998, she started the Trinamool Congress. FILE PHOTO

its political dominance while the vote share of the Congress has plummeted. The grand old party currently has no representa-

tion in the Assembly.

On Sunday, reflecting on his remarks, the 79-year-old Congress leader said he was referring to a situation

that existed about 28 years ago when the Congress central leadership pressured the party State unit to expel Ms. Banerjee. He said former Congress president Sitaram Kesri insisted on her expulsion in 1997.

Mr. Bhattacharya is among the senior-most Congress leaders from West Bengal. He had held the post of State Congress president and represented the party in the Rajya Sabha. In 2024, he contested the Lok Sabha election from Kolkata North. Of late, the State Congress leadership has been warming to the Trinamool, after Mr.

Sarkar took over the reins of the State unit from Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

The remarks by the leader were welcomed by the Trinamool leadership. Trinamool Congress leader Kunal Ghosh said that Mr. Bhattacharya was right as Ms. Banerjee was committed to fighting the Communist Party of India (Marxist) whereas the rest of the Congress leaders were not.

Mr. Chowdhury said while the expulsion of Ms. Banerjee was a thing of the past, she had left no stone unturned to "destroy the Congress party in West Bengal" after coming to power.

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH E-Procurement
1. Name of the Work : Construction of SFRC Pre-Tensioned and Pre-Cast Compound wall around Ac.54.7 dec. at Basantpur in Sambalpur District for the work, "Construction of Integrated Aqua Park Chiplika, Sambalpur"
2. Value of the Work : Rs.352.65 Lakhs (Approx.)
3. Period of Completion : 3 (Three) Calendar Months
4. Availability of tender online for Bidding
I. Start Date : 18:00 Hours of dt. 10.01.2024
II. End Date : 17:00 Hours of dt. 27.01.2025
III. Opening date : 17:30 Hours of dt. 27.01.2025
Tender details can be seen from the e-procurement portal: <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>. Corrigendum or Addendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.
Sd/- Chief General Manager (Civil), IDCO, Bhubaneswar
OIRP-14003/1/2024/2425

DIRECTORATE OF TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING
Press Advertisement No: File No.14783/2024/TCP-5
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Name of Work
Consultancy services for Development of Land Use Information System (LUIS) - Geo-Referencing, Digitization and Standardization of Geo - database on GIS Platform for the Approved Master Plans.
EMD
Rs.1,00,000/-
Availability of Tender Documents
[@ 10:00 hrs \(IST\) on 08.01.2025](http://www.tntenders.gov.in)
Start Date and Time of Submission of Tender
29.01.2025 @ 10:00 hrs (IST)
Last date and time for receipt of online bids
14.02.2025 @ 18:00 hrs (IST)
Bid Opening Date
17.02.2025 @ 15:00 hrs (IST)
Name and Address of the office inviting Tender
The Directorate of Town and Country Planning, 3rd Floor, CMDA Complex, E & C Market Road, Koyambedu, Chennai - 600 107
Further details can be seen on the website www.tntenders.gov.in
Director of Town and Country Planning
IICA- T732(3)/2025

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD
Office of the Chief Engineer (South)
7th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K. G. Road, Bengaluru-560 009.
IFT No.: BWSSB/EIC/CE(S)/ACE(S)-II/DCE(M)-I/TA(S)/10188/2024-25 Dt: 04.01.2025

INVITATION FOR TENDER - CALL-5

(Through KPP portal only)

BWSSB, invites tenders in two cover tender system from eligible contractors for the work of Providing, laying 100/150 mm dia DI pipeline to replace 75/100mm dia corroded CI water pipeline at Cheluvadipalya DMA and surrounding area Coming under JJR S/s of AEE SW2 Sub-Division. Amount put to tender: Rs.289.42 Lakhs, EMD: Rs.4.34 Lakhs. Last date and time for submission of tender document is: 15-01-2025 upto 17:00 hours. Tender will be opened on 17-01-2025 after 11:00 hours. The details regarding the tender and participation in the kpp portal process can be obtained by logging on to <https://kpp.karnataka.gov.in> For further details contact the signed office during working hours.

Sd/- Chief Engineer (South)
DIPR/CP/AAPL/R04153/24-25

ODISHA HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LTD.
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OHPC O/o Sr. GENERAL MANAGER, Rengali Hydro Electric Project, Rengali P.O: RENGALI DAM SITE, DIST: ANGUL (ODISHA) INDIA, PIN: 759105 TEL: 06760-26031, Email: sgml500@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

(Through KPP portal only)

Sealed Tenders are invited in two part i.e. (i) Techno Commercial bid & (ii) Price bid in separate sealed envelopes from the reputed manufacturers of Power Transferring for the work as mentioned below.

Description of Materials / Services	Cost of tender paper (Non-refundable)	EMD (Refundable)	Period of availability of tender at OHPC website (Sale)	Last date & Time of receipt of Tender	Date & Time of opening of Techno Commercial bid
Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of one no. 20 MVA, 220/33 KV Station Service Transformer for RHEP, Rengali	Rs.11,800/- (Rs.10,000/- + GST @18%)	Rs.4,99,270.00	From Dt.08.01.2025 To Dt.06.02.2025 (Up to 04.00 PM)	Up to Dt.06.02.2025	At 05:00 PM Dt.06.02.2025

For details of the tender documents, terms and conditions please visit our website : www.ohpcpltd.com

Unit Head
RHEP, Rengali
OPR-04022/11/0039/2425

CAD-2027:

IN BRIEF

**CPI(M) elects P. Shanmugam as Tamil Nadu State secretary**

P. Shanmugam, the secretariat member of the CPI(M), was on Sunday unanimously elected the secretary of the party's Tamil Nadu unit at its 24th State conference in Villupuram. In a press conference, Mr. Shanmugam said the party would continue to oppose the BJP. "In Tamil Nadu, the party would also oppose the policies of the ruling DMK that affect the livelihood of the people," the CPI(M) leader said. He said the flawed policies of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre had resulted in the loss of employment for the youth. Currently, Mr. Shanmugam is the president of the Tamil Nadu Farmers' Association.

Centre to launch new round of PLI scheme for steel sector

The Union government is set to launch another round of production-linked incentive scheme for the steel sector, the Union Ministry of Steel said in a statement on Sunday. "Union Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries...will launch 'PLI scheme 1.1' for the steel industry and call for applications...on January 6," the statement said. The Centre had earlier introduced the PLI scheme to encourage domestic production of specialty steel and lower imports by drawing in capital investments. Initially launched for three sectors to address the need to boost domestic manufacturing, the PLI scheme was later extended to include steel in November 2020. PTI

Govt. launches 'Panchayat Se Parliament 2.0' for women

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will on Monday inaugurate "Panchayat Se Parliament 2.0" which seeks to give insight into the Constitution and parliamentary procedures to over 500 women representatives from Panchayati Raj institutions from across the country. Organised to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of tribal icon Birsa Munda, the programme will have workshops and sessions, a guided tour of the new Parliament House, Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, and Rashtrapati Bhavan for the participants, offering them a deeper understanding of India's legislative process and the functioning of democratic institutions. PTI

Soren seeks suggestions from public for Budget preparation

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Sunday launched the Abua Budget Portal and mobile app to seek suggestions, opinions, and ideas of the general public regarding the Budget preparation for the financial year 2025-26. Mr. Soren said the government had a special attention on Budget preparation that promoted the interests of the general public along with the sustainable, inclusive and all-round development of the State. The portal invites opinions until January 17, 2025, with three top suggestions to be honoured by the government. Mr. Soren has also instructed officials to prepare an action plan for revenue collection.

Four-lane Banihal bypass opens in J&K's Ramban

The 2.35-km stretch, strategically located on NH-44, will boost 'national security logistics' and tourism, significantly reduce travel time for vehicles headed to Kashmir Valley, says Nitin Gadkari

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Union Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Sunday described the completion of the Banihal bypass in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district as a milestone in strengthening "national security logistics" and enhancing "tourism prospects of the region".

Taking to X, Mr. Gadkari announced the completion of the four-lane 2.35-km stretch to Banihal town, built at a cost of ₹224.44 crore. Strategically located on the Ramban-Banihal section of National Highway 44, it effectively addresses the persistent bottlenecks caused by roadside markets and shops, Mr. Gadkari said.

He said two-lane traffic will be allowed initially and four-lane traffic permitted after "junction development" within 15 days.

The Minister said this critical infrastructure ensured unhindered traffic flow, significantly reducing travel time and congestion for both tourists and defence vehicles, *en route* to



Smooth ride: The newly constructed four-lane 2.35-km bypass to Banihal town in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district on Sunday. ANI

the Kashmir Valley. "Beyond improving regional connectivity, the bypass strengthens national security logistics and enhances tourism prospects in the region," he said.

NH-44 is a major highway in India. The longest in the country, it stretches from Srinagar in the north to Kanniyakumari in the south.

The Centre has embarked on a major mission in J&K to ensure that the NH-44 remains an all-

weather road connecting the Kashmir Valley with the rest of the country. Travel time on the 290-km-long Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, which is part of NH-44, has reduced from nine hours to around six hours after significant upgrades such as tunnels.

However, the highway passing through the tough mountains of Ramban district posed a major challenge in the face of sloping ridges and congested roads, especially in

the Banihal area. Multiple tunnels, including the critical Marog-Digdol and Digdol-Khuni-Nallah, are in the final stages to ensure seamless traffic on the highway. The upgrade of the 32-km stretch between Ramban and Banihal, which is under way, will reduce travel time between Srinagar and Jammu, making the Kashmir Valley very easy to reach. National Conference MLA Banihal Sajid Shaheen inaugurated the 2.35-km stretch.

Fresh snowfall in Kashmir; four die in accident in Kishtwar

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Several areas in the Kashmir Valley experienced fresh snowfall on Sunday, which also disrupted air traffic at the Srinagar airport.



Officials say that the northern districts of Kashmir Valley received more snowfall. PTI

traders' body, expressed deep concern over the massive flight disruptions that have plagued the Srinagar International Airport over the past three days.

"This crisis has been precipitated by the Airports Authority of India's continued failure to install the promised upgraded Instrument Landing System (ILS), which would enable safe flight operations even in low visibility conditions. The widespread cancellations have severely impacted thousands of travellers, including international tourists, Umrah pilgrims, students returning to educational institutions, and patients travelling for medical treatment," Faiz Ahmad Bakshi, secretary general of the KCCI, said.

In the Kashmir Valley, the northern districts received major snowfall compared with south and central Kashmir, an official said. North Kashmir's Kupwara and Baramulla received snowfall for most of the day on Sunday. A government spokesperson said the Kupwara administration had started clearing major roads in the district "to ensure a seamless flow of essential services". Meanwhile, snowfall led to the cancellation of most flights at Srinagar airport. The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), a Srinagar-based

not a single person will be spared, says Fadnavis

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday yet again said that the State government was probing the Beed sarpanch murder case with full determination and not a single person would be spared, no matter who they were or what power or position they held.

Speaking to presspersons in Nagpur, Mr. Fadnavis urged political leaders not to politicise the murder case, and that the government and the Beed police were actively working on the case with full determination.

"Everyone is working in full strength to trace the accused who are absconding. No one behind the murder of Santosh Deshmukh will be spared," the Chief Minister said.

PM must set up independent panel to review the Great Nicobar project: Congress

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India will start this month a pilot to onboard paper-based and past permissions given by customers for receiving commercial communications onto its digital distributed ledger technology (DLT) platform, Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti said.

This process, in the long run, would include scrubbing and verifying their current validity and offering opt-outs to those keen on it. He added that tighter regulations on curbing spam as well as new consultation examining an authorisation framework for telemarketers can also be expected in the coming weeks.

TRAI has also ruled out any rethink on its latest regulation that mandates

service providers to offer separate special tariff vouchers (STV) for voice calls and SMS.

Mr. Lahoti told PTI in an interview that while consumers can be encouraged to use data, they cannot be "compelled" to do so.

"TRAI's focus is to protect not only the interest of the industry, but also the interest of the consumer, who must have the option to pay only for services they need," he said.

The regulator is also all set to initiate a massive rehaul of its IT system, a move, it expects, would lead to rationalisation and reduction in multiple instances of filings by telecom companies and other industry stakeholders. Deloitte, which has been roped in as a consultant, is on the verge of submitting its report on revamp of its IT systems.

The Congress on Sunday termed the Great Nicobar Island infrastructure project a "recipe for ecological and humanitarian disaster", and said the Prime Minister should immediately order a pause and set up an independent panel to review it.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the Modi government was pushing ahead with the project despite several objections raised by him in the past.

"The ₹72,000-crore mega infrastructure project in Great Nicobar Island is a recipe for ecological and humanitarian disaster. My exchanges on this unfolding tragedy with the Union Minister of Environment, Forests, and Climate



Jairam Ramesh

Change are all in the public domain," he said in a post on X.

The former Union Environment Minister said the project's various components were an international container transhipment port, an airport, a power plant, a massive greenfield township, and tourism facilities.

"The entire project will destroy at least 33,000 acres of pristine tropical forest. Now comes news

that the project is proposed to be expanded to establish – a cruise terminal to facilitate a global port-led city, a shipbuilding and ship-repair facility, and an export-import port," Mr. Ramesh said.

He claimed that an additional 100 acres of biodiversity-rich forests would be destroyed on account of these new proposals.

"This is sheer folly multiplying. The blatant hypocrisy of a Prime Minister who boasts to the world of his deep commitment to environmental causes stands thoroughly exposed."

"There is no mystery on who will get these port contracts. If the PM wants to walk his talk, he should immediately order a pause and set up an independent panel to review the project," he said.

"Everyone is working in full strength to trace the accused who are absconding. No one behind the murder of Santosh Deshmukh will be spared," the Chief Minister said.

FAITH

Guru Gobind Singh, an icon

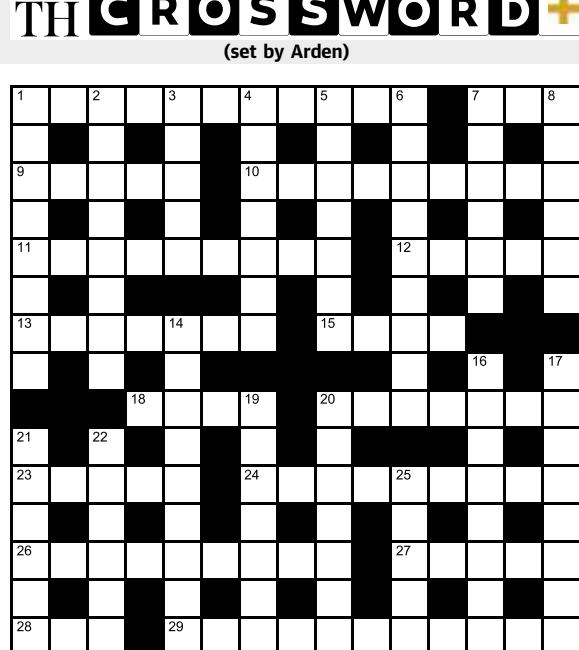
The vision of Guru Gobind Singhji is timeless. His exemplary life is an epitome of courage and resoluteness. It is an inspiration for all in contemporary times. He was an icon transcending time, space, boundaries, narrowness and fragmentation, said Prof. Kumool Abbi.

Guru Gobind Singhji was only nine when his father the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred. He exhibited no visible grief and stoically took up the leadership of the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh was born in an historical period when north India reeled under the tyrannical and oppressive rule of the Moghuls. In the year 1699 Guru Gobind Singhji formed the institution of the Khalsa. The order of the Khalsa was an egalitarian one. Guru Gobind Singhji's pluralistic philosophy encompassed the acceptance of diverse religious identities advocating religious harmony.

He deeply imbibed the true spirit of the saint soldier: 'If I fall as a martyr while fighting my enemies then I think I shall have realised the truth'. He fought 14 wars against his oppressors and tyrants but with ethical and moral principles, never taking captives or damaging the place of worship, and was never the first to be the aggressor. He believed as stated in Zafarnama: only when all avenues fail, it is then righteous to pick up the sword.

Guru Gobind Singh is credited with finalising the manuscript of *Guru Granth Sahib* and declaring it to be the ultimate Guru for the Sikhs. It is his vision which has given a distinct identity to Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh's metaphysical sublime and exquisite poetry have been immortalised in his composition *Dasam Granth*, reflected in *Jaap Sahib*, *Chandi Di Vaar*, and *Benti Chaupai* among others.

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**Across**

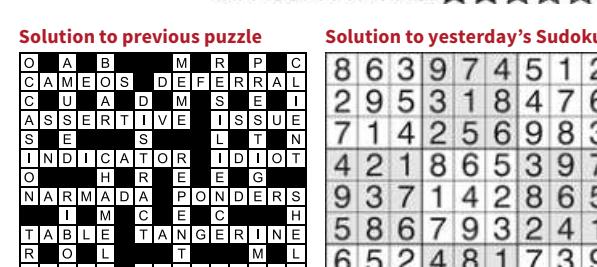
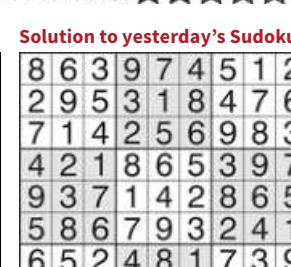
- 1 Brain dead means life missing - provided it's a plant (5,6)
- 7 Initially not awake, peaceful sleep (3)
- 9 He drove fast into a cassia tree (5)
- 10 Family involvement in other castes shows poor taste (9)
- 11 Disgusted with a nude representation that took place (9)
- 12 Recalled story about Charlie's confidence (5)

- 1 Copper's presence in public transport is a cause of anxiety (7)
- 15 Get a refund - reclaim some value (4)
- 18 Uncle in America gets caught in a Ponzi scheme (4)
- 20 Quietly start again, I suppose (7)
- 23 Old money-like following a news (5)
- 24 Extremely essential to block carbon pollution over a city (9)
- 26 Auto race in full bloom (9)
- 27 Leave a European city (5)
- 28 Shortly, moon can be base (3)
- 29 Perhaps agree to stay - confirm he is keen (5,6)
- Down
- 1 Missing when one is in it (8)
- 2 Declare girl's overweight (8)
- 3 Small story rehashed (5)
- 4 Lands as one set off on both sides (7)
- 5 Part of television shows animal eating fish... (7)
- 6 ...no gloss in teleprocessing - perhaps, that's where the trouble starts (9)
- 7 It points to lack of leverage on both sides (6)
- 8 Regular press meets as to get some money (6)
- 14 Supports fast bowling - that's key (9)
- 16 A lousy way to get going, at last - victory for one from the Balkans (8)
- 17 Discourage bottles - able to get a wine bottle (8)
- 19 Crowding, only bachelors allowed in China (7)
- 20 Associate to catch up by mid-afternoon (7)
- 21 Nullify serious illness by changing hands (6)
- 22 He is appointed warden (6)
- 25 Follow Harry - seen around university (5)

SUDOKU

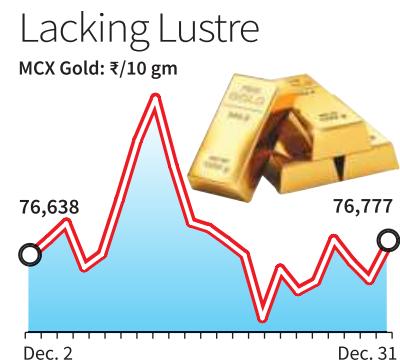


DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

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MONEYWISE



PRECIOUS METALS

Gold, silver suffer from November blues

B. Krishna Kumar

Precious metals extended their lacklustre performance in December too. The range-bound price action witnessed in November spilled over to December as well with the price of both gold and silver remaining in a broad range.

The lack of any meaningful triggers played a key role in keeping the precious metals prices under check.

Comex gold closed 1.29% lower in December to settle at \$2,639.3 an ounce. Comex silver saw a relatively steeper cut of 5.82% in December to settle at \$29.29 an ounce.

Reflecting the lacklustre trend in the global markets, MCX gold closed 0.45% lower to settle at ₹76,777 per 10-gram at the end of December. MCX silver lost 4.3% in last month to close at ₹87,226 per kilogram.

As anticipated last month, Comex gold price remained in a broad range, devoid of any meaningful trend. The recent price action is likely to persist with Comex gold likely to remain in the range of \$2,530-2,730.

A breakout from this range would set the tone for the next big move.

Medium-term outlook

As observed in prior updates, the medium-term outlook is positive for Comex gold. The price is likely to resume its uptrend once the ongoing consolidation is over.

The next major target for Comex gold is \$2,850-\$2,900. The journey towards this target would commence on the completion of the anticipated short-term consolidation.

Weak trend likely

In line with expectations, Comex silver too was stuck in a broad range of \$29.75-\$31 mentioned last month. Silver price is likely to trade in the range of \$29-\$31.8 in the short-term. The short-term outlook for silver appears negative and the price could slip to the immediate target of \$26.5-\$27. The price has to move above \$33 to indicate the resumption of long-term uprend. Until the Comex silver price moves above \$33, expect a range bound to weak trend to persist.

In sync with last month's expectations, MCX gold price was confined to a range, devoid of any meaningful price movement on either direction. The gold price is likely to meander in the ₹73,500-₹79,200 range in the near term. A breakout from this range would influence the next directional move in MCX gold.

MCX silver price has been in a downturn since December 11, 2024. The recent downward move is likely to sustain in the near future and a fall to the next support zone at ₹83,500-₹84,500 appears likely. This view would be invalidated if the silver price moves above ₹86,000-level.

To summarise, gold is likely to be confined in a range in the next few weeks. A move out of this range would set the tone for the next directional move.

Silver prices on the other hand looks relatively weak and could seek lower levels.

(The author is a Chennai-based analyst and trader. The views and opinion featured in this column are based on the analysis of short-term price movement in gold and silver futures at COMEX & Multi Commodity Exchange of India. This is not meant to be a trading or investment advice.)

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For a rainy day: Comprehensive bike insurance offers peace of mind by ensuring financial security in the event of an accident. THE HINDU

Uninsured two-wheelers are a major safety concern

Two-wheeler fatalities rose by 8% in 2022, claiming almost 75,000 lives or 44% of the over 1.68 lakh accident deaths that year; India logs highest number of road accidents globally

'ZERO' COVER

Manas Kapoor

Each year, countless lives are lost on Indian roads due to accidents. India has the highest number of road accidents globally, driven by reckless driver behaviour, non-compliance with traffic rules and human errors. Alarming, two-wheeler fatalities rose by 8% in 2022, claiming nearly 75,000 lives – accounting for 44% of the 1,68,491 road accident deaths that year.

India's roads have become busier over the years as average per capita income rises, leading to more people purchasing two-wheelers. With the world's third-largest road network, the country had 354 million vehicles as of FY22, as per Statista. Yet, a significant concern stays—lack of insurance among vehicle owners.

As per a General Insurance Council report, over 60% of vehicles in India are uninsured, with two-wheelers leading the category. In 2015-2016, Only 8.26 crore of the about 19 crore registered vehicles were insured.

Reasons for hesitation

Although, third-party motor insurance is mandatory, many vehicle owners remain uninsured. This issue stems from three key factors: many bike owners avoid insurance to save money, and those who



Driving sans insurance has legal consequences; first-time violators face a fine of ₹2,000 and/or up to three months in jail; repeat offences involve a fine of ₹4,000

buy, often fail to renew policies and lack awareness about insurance products.

But being uninsured can severely jeopardise your financial security. In the event of a road accident causing property damage or injury, you have to bear all costs out of pocket.

Taking precautions by insuring your vehicle is far better than regretting it later. Driving without insurance also carries legal consequences. First-time violators face a fine of ₹2,000 and/or up to three months in jail. Repeat offences incur a ₹4,000 fine. Here are your options for insuring two-wheelers viz.

Two types of bike insurance are available: third-party insurance and own-damage (OD) insurance.

Third-party insurance:

This mandatory coverage protects against liabilities arising from damage to someone else's property or injury in an accident. Compensation depends on factors like severity of injuries, third party's age, and their profession or income.

The maximum compensation is ₹7.5 lakh for third-party death or property



As per a General Insurance Council report, over 60% of vehicles in India are uninsured with two-wheelers leading the category

damage. However, this policy does not cover: damage to your own bike, belongings inside your bike during an accident and theft or total destruction of bike.

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) determines the premium for third-party insurance based on engine capacity. For example, the premium for bikes with engines between 75 CC and 150 CC is ₹3,851 for a five-year policy. The IRDAI has mandated five-year long-term third-party bike insurance to cut renewal hassles.

OD insurance

This policy covers damages to your bike caused by fire, theft, natural disasters or man-made incidents. Often bundled with third-party insurance, it offers enhanced protection. Add-ons like zero depreciation cover, roadside assistance, key and lock replacement, tyre protector, and invoice price can help you boost coverage.

Own damage insurance policies are valid for one year and must be renewed annually. However, many insurance companies have

also started offering long-term plans like 3+3 years, which are highly affordable. The premium depends on factors like the vehicle's age, registration location, make and model, and voluntary deductibles.

For all-around protection, a comprehensive policy combining third-party and OD insurance is recommended.

Comprehensive bike insurance offers peace of mind by ensuring financial security in the event of an accident. It safeguards not just your finances but also provides coverage for unforeseen situations like theft, natural calamities, and third-party liabilities.

As the number of vehicles on India's roads continues to rise and the risk of accidents grows, having adequate insurance is not just a legal need but a very important step in protecting yourself and others.

Comprehensive bike insurance offers peace of mind by ensuring financial security in the event of an accident. Think about it—you've invested so much in your motorcycle, a companion for your daily rides and cherished journeys.

With today's technology, buying or renewing bike insurance is incredibly simple and can be done in under a minute. This small step ensures your safety, safeguards your bike, and keeps you prepared for any unexpected situation on the road.

(The writer is head, two-wheeler insurance, Policybazaar.com)

When style matters

THINKINVESTOR

One mutual fund need not have a significantly different portfolio compared with another mutual fund with the same benchmark but with a different investment strategy

Venkatesh Bangarawamy

Investing in mutual funds can be overwhelming. Earlier, fewer asset management companies (AMCs) were offering multiple products of the same investment style. With more entrants to the business, similar products are offered by more AMCs.

The upshot? Choosing an active fund continues to be difficult. Here, we discuss the difference between investment style and investment strategy. Being mindful of this difference can help in your fund selection process.

Style vs. strategy

Investment style is based on size – large-cap, mid-cap and small-cap stocks. We have intentionally avoided considering value and growth styles, as the definition can be transient given India is an emerging market. Investment strategy refers to the rules or approach a portfolio manager applies to select stocks from the benchmark to create a portfolio.

Consider two funds listed on the SEBI website awaiting approval for a new fund offering (NFO). One is a momentum fund and the other, an innovations fund, both with NSE 500 TRI Index as the benchmark. Both funds regardless of the names ought to have the same investment style; for style is determined by the benchmark. Although the investment strategy of both funds could differ significantly, your selection of a fund must be based on its investment style. Why?

Overlap in portfolios

Innovation fund and momentum fund have the same investable universe – the NSE 500 Index. So, it is possible their portfolios overlap. A company that is innovating could also see its stock is on an uprend. That is, one fund may pick a stock for its high earnings potential whereas another may pick the same stock based on its momentum. Therefore, one fund need not have a significantly different portfolio compared with another with the same benchmark but with a different investment strategy.

Conclusion

Suppose you already hold active funds in your goal-based (core) portfolios. Then, check whether NFOs or existing funds you want to invest in have the same style benchmark as the funds you currently hold. If they do, it may not be optimal to invest in the NFOs or the existing funds.

If the benchmark is a thematic or strategy benchmark, then check if the index constituents do not significantly overlap with the benchmark of the funds that you already hold. If they do not, invest only if you believe the fund fits with your investment objective.

Investing in funds simply based on their investment strategy may not be really optimal.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%)			
	Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Small Finance Banks				
AU Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.25	7.50	7.25
Equitas Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.10	8.00	7.25
ESAF Small Finance Bank	8.25	6.00	6.75	6.25
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.25	8.25	8.20
NorthEast Small Finance Bank	9.00	7.00	9.00	6.25
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	8.60	8.05	8.60	8.25
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.25	7.20	7.20
Unity Small Finance Bank	9.00	7.85	8.15	8.15
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.00	8.50	7.75
Private Sector Banks				
Axis Bank	7.25	6.70	7.10	7.00
Bandhan Bank	8.05	8.05	7.25	5.85
City Union Bank	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.25
CSB Bank	7.75	5.00	5.75	5.75
DBS Bank	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.50
DCB Bank	8.05	7.10	7.55	7.40
Federal Bank	7.40	7.00	7.10	7.10
HDFC Bank	7.40	6.60	7.00	7.00
ICICI Bank	7.25	6.70	7.00	7.00
IDFC First Bank	7.90	6.50	6.80	6.75
IndusInd Bank	7.99	7.75	7.25	7.25

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.)		
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WEST PALM BEACH

Italian Prime Minister Meloni meets Trump at Florida resort



REUTERS

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni flew to Florida to meet with U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on Saturday, as the key European leader sought to buttress ties with Mr. Trump before his inauguration on January 20. She is also scheduled to meet Joe Biden during a visit to Rome from Thursday to January 12. REUTERS

ATHENS

Costas Simitis, former Greek PM and socialist leader, dies at 88



AP

Costas Simitis, former Prime Minister of Greece and the architect of the country's joining the common European currency, the euro, has died at age 88. He served as the Prime Minister from 1996 to 2004. He also helped secure the 2004 Olympic Games for Athens and presided over a vast program of infrastructure building. AP

DAMASCUS

Syria's new Foreign Minister visits Qatar to develop stronger relations



AP

Syria's new Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani met with his Qatari counterpart and Qatar's Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Doha on Sunday, as Syria's new de facto authorities under Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, establish diplomatic ties with regional and global governments. AP

ISLAMABAD

World Bank to approve \$20 billion lending package for Pakistan



REUTERS

The World Bank is set to approve a \$20 billion indicative lending package for Pakistan - a 10-year initiative to protect its funded projects from political transitions. It will focus on reducing child stunting, combating learning poverty, enhancing climate resilience, and boosting private investment among others. PTI

Dhaka, India exchange detained fishermen

Kallop Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh on Sunday exchanged fishermen who were detained by both sides over the past three months. Bangladesh Coast Guard received 90 Bangladeshi fishermen, and the Indian Coast Guard received 95 Indian fishermen. India returned two fishing vessels belonging to Bangladesh and six Indian fishing vessels were returned by Bangladesh as part of the exchange held near the western International Maritime Boundary Line. The detentions took place despite India and Bangladesh agreeing on Maritime Boundary in 2014.

Bangladesh cancels visit of judicial officers under pact between India and Hasina govt.

The move comes against the backdrop of Dhaka seeking the extradition of the deposed PM who has sought refuge in India after regime change; under the programme, training for officials of the Bangladesh judiciary would have been provided at National Judicial Academy in Bhopal

Kallop Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI



Past deal: The agreement was part of the 22 MoUs signed when Sheikh Hasina visited India in 2017. FILE PHOTO

judicial officials was part of one such bilateral MoU.

According to state-owned news agency UNB, 50 officials were granted

permission on December 30, 2024, to attend the training module in Bhopal.

The nominated officials were chosen from a list of

Assistant Judges, Senior Assistant Judges, Joint District and Sessions Judges, Additional District and Sessions Judges, District and Sessions Judges and other serving officials.

The letter of approval had mentioned that the training module was being financed by the Government of India and that the Government of Bangladesh was not expected to finance the training module. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had visited India between April 7 and 10 in 2017, when the two sides had signed twenty-two agreements. The MoU between the National Judicial

Academy, India, and the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on Training and Capacity Building Programme for Bangladeshi Judicial Officers in India was one of these MoUs.

Under this programme, training for officials of Bangladesh judiciary would have been provided at the National Judicial Academy in Bhopal as part of improving capacity and expertise of Bangladesh judiciary.

However, the latest development comes against the backdrop of the continued deadlock between Dhaka and New Delhi over the presence of deposed

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Indian territory.

Bangladesh has been seeking the extradition of Ms. Hasina as dozens of cases have been filed against her by the victims of the police crackdown of July and August 2024. India has acknowledged that Dhaka has sent a *note verbale* seeking the extradition of Ms. Hasina but has not conveyed what it plans to do regarding the request.

Since coming to power, the interim government has been saying that it will review and if necessary cancel some of the agreements that Ms. Hasina had signed with India.

180 million denied voting rights: Dhaka election body

Press Trust of India

DHAKA

Bangladesh's Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin said almost 180 million have been denied their voting rights and the Election Commission wants to end their deprivation.

The countrywide door-to-door data collection for updating the list of possible voters will start on January 20.

Meanwhile, the EC has decided to investigate irregularities in all previous elections, including the three preceding elections that have been controversial during the Awami League rule in 2014, 2018 and 2024.

Ukraine launches 'counterattack' in Kursk, says Russia

Agence France-Presse

MOSCOW

Russia said on Sunday that Ukraine had launched a "counterattack" in the western border region of Kursk, where Kyiv's forces began a shock ground offensive last August.

It was not immediately clear how much Ukraine had advanced in the region, but pro-Kremlin military bloggers reported earlier that a powerful new offensive was under way.

The assault comes at a critical juncture in the nearly three-year conflict, with both sides seeking to

boost their negotiating hand ahead of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's return to the White House on January 20.

"At about 9:00 a.m. Moscow time (0600 GMT), in order to halt the advance of Russian troops in the Kursk direction, the enemy launched a counterattack," the Russian Defence Ministry said.

Ukraine used two tanks, a dozen armoured vehicles and a demolition unit in the assault, which was headed towards the village of Berdin - about 15 km northeast of Sudzha, it added.

At least 23 killed in Israeli strikes in Gaza, military hits more than 100 terror targets

Agence France-Presse

GAZA STRIP



Grieving faces: Palestinians mourn their relatives at al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah on Sunday. AP

trapped under the rubble of the house," he said.

"Rescuers are using their bare hands because we lack proper equipment," Mr. Bassal said.

Mr. Bassal also accused Israeli forces of "directing violent air strikes on homes where displaced people were sheltering, claiming they were target-

ing resistance fighters".

In a separate strike, five persons were killed when the house of the Abu Jarbo family was struck in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, the civil defence said.

Another strike killed four persons in the town of Jabalia, the agency added.

Two days' strikes

The Israeli military said on Sunday that it had struck more than 100 "terror targets" in the Gaza Strip over the past two days.

Several of the strikes targeted sites from which Palestinian militants had been firing projectiles into Israel in recent days, the military said.

Pro-Turkiye and Kurdish forces face off in Syria, killing 101

Agence France-Presse

BEIRUT

More than 100 combatants were killed over the last two days in northern Syria in fighting between Turkish-backed groups and Syrian Kurdish forces, a war monitor said on Sunday.

Since the evening of Friday, clashes in several villages around the city of Manbij have left 101 people dead, including 85 members of pro-Turkish groups and 16 from the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Turkish-backed factions in northern Syria resumed their fight with the SDF at the same time Islamist-led militants were launching an offensive on November 27 that overthrew Syrian president Bashar al-Assad just 11 days later. They succeeded in capturing the cities of Manbij and Tal Rifaat from the SDF.

White Pearl wins the HPSL Golconda Oaks



One for the album: White Pearl's trainer K. Satheesh, left, jockey Mukesh Kumar, HPSL chairman R. Surendar Reddy, and HPSL's Prudhvi Raju after the prize-giving ceremony for the HPSL Golconda Oaks.

G. RAMAKRISHNA

1. AGOSTINI PLATE (DIV. I) (1,400m): COLT PISTOL (Ajay Kumar) 1, Dream To Fly (Md. Ismail) 2, Nkalanzima (P. Ajeeth K) 3 and Varaneek Gold (H.M. Akshay) 4. Not run: N R I Range, 2-1/2, 1-1/4 and 2, 1m, 26.92s, ₹34 (w), 14, 10 and 13 (p). SHP: 28, THP: 21, SHW: 10 and 12, FP: 28, Tanala: 273. Favourite: Mikimoto. Owners: Mr. Rajendran rep, Rapar's Galloping Stars LLP, Mr. Ranga Raju & Mr. Triparanenwanta Aditya Chowdary. Trainer: D. Netto.

2. ANMOL RATAN PLATE (2,000m): SECRET SAINT (P. Trevor) 1, Yesterday (Surya) 2, Carnival Lady (Gaurav) 3 and Desert Sultan (Akshay) 4. 6-3/4, 6-1/2 and 1, 2m, 5.25s, ₹16 (w), 34, SHW: 19 and 44, FP: 163, Q: 12, Tanala: 645. Favourite: Sun Dancer. Owners: M/s. Atul Banu Sanghani, Keerthi Narasimha Chakravarthy, Ketineni Sayaji Rao & Rajesh Sanghani. Trainer: S.D. Silva.

3. AGOSTINI PLATE (DIV. II) (1,400m): SUN DANCER (S. Sqalain)

1, Clefairy (Deepak) 2, Jungle Girl (Gaurav) 3 and Desert Sultan (Akshay) 4. 1/2, 1-1/4 and 2, 1m, 28. 61s, ₹19 (w), 14, 13 and 14 (p). SHP: 44, THP: 34, SHW: 19 and 44, FP: 163, Q: 12, Tanala: 645. Favourite: Sun Dancer. Owners: M/s. Atul Banu Sanghani, Keerthi Narasimha Chakravarthy, Ketineni Sayaji Rao & Rajesh Sanghani. Trainer: S.D. Silva.

4. DECCAN PRINCE PLATE (DIV. I) (1,200m): LASHKA (P. Trevor) 1, Adbhut (Mohit) 2, Calista Girl (Gaurav) 3 and Runlikeithawards (Sqalain) 4. 3-1/4, 1-2 and 3/4, 1m, 10.98s, ₹21 (w), 13, 14 and 19 (p). SHP: 86, THP: 62, SHW: 16 and 44, FP: 37, Q: 303, Tanala: 3,388. Favourite: Lashka. Owners: Col. S.B. Nair & Mr. Aditya P. Thackersey. Trainer: L.V.R. Deshmukh.

5. ADALYA RAGHAVA REDDY MEMORIAL MILLION (1,400m): PLEASANT STAR (Akshay Kumar) 1, Uchchalishvaras (P. Sai K) 2, Clara (Kuldeep Sr.) 3 and Annihilator (Sai Kumar) 4. 1/2, 4-1/4 and 2, 1m, 26 (w), 11, 17 and 15 (p). SHP: 42, THP: 26, SHW: 13 and 26, FP: 123, Q: 22, Tanala: 258. Favourite: Dali's Destiny. Owner: Mr. Subodh Kumar Ananthula. Trainer: G. Sandeep.

6. GAJASIMHA RAO MEMORIAL CUP (1,400m): HUGH CAPET (Akshay Kumar) 1, Decoy (B.R. Kumar) 2, Dal's Destiny (Trevor) 3 and Barber (Mukesh) 4. Not run: The Inheritor. 1/2, 2-1/2, 2m, 25.11s, ₹26 (w), 11, 17 and 15 (p). SHP: 42, THP: 26, SHW: 13 and 26, FP: 123, Q: 22, Tanala: 258. Favourite: Dali's Destiny. Owner: Mr. Subodh Kumar Ananthula. Trainer: G. Sandeep.

7. HPSL GOLCONDA OAKS (GR. 2) (2,400m): WHITE PEARL (SEDGEFIELD-MYSTIC) (MUKESH KUMAR) 1, Maigira (Cougar Mountain-Solar Midnight) (Trevor) 2, Nyx (Dreamflight-Stimulate) (Akshay K) 3 and Freedom Touch (Moonlight Magic-Freedom Of Speech) (Ashad Asbar) 4, 1/3, 4/3 and 3, 2m, 39.77s, ₹103 (w), 39 and 10 (p). SHP: 28, THP: 36, SHW: 349 and 10, FP: 34; Q: 13, Tanala: 805. Favourite: Maigira. Owner: M.A.M. Ramaswamy Chettiar of Chettinad Charitable Trust and trained by K. Satheesh.

Mukesh positioned his mount in fourth place for most of the race. As they approached the home stretch, this daughter by Sedgefield out of Grey Mist surged ahead on the outside, displaying impressive speed to defeat the first favourite, Maigira.

8. DECCAN PRINCE PLATE (DIV. II) (1,200m): LASHKA (P. Trevor) 1, Adbhut (Mohit) 2, Calista Girl (Gaurav) 3 and Runlikeithawards (Sqalain) 4. 3-1/4, 1-2 and 3/4, 1m, 10.98s, ₹21 (w), 13, 14 and 19 (p). SHP: 86, THP: 62, SHW: 16 and 44, FP: 37, Q: 303, Tanala: 3,388. Favourite: Lashka. Owners: Col. S.B. Nair & Mr. Aditya P. Thackersey. Trainer: L.V.R. Deshmukh.

9. GAJASIMHA RAO MEMORIAL CUP (1,400m): HUGH CAPET (Akshay Kumar) 1, Decoy (B.R. Kumar) 2, Dal's Destiny (Trevor) 3 and Barber (Mukesh) 4. Not run: The Inheritor. 1/2, 2-1/2, 2m, 25.11s, ₹26 (w), 11, 17 and 15 (p). SHP: 42, THP: 26, SHW: 13 and 26, FP: 123, Q: 22, Tanala: 258. Favourite: Dali's Destiny. Owner: Mr. Subodh Kumar Ananthula. Trainer: G. Sandeep.

10. ASTONISH PLATE (DIV. II) (1,200m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-1/2yo only (Cat. II), 12.40 p.m.: 1, Sharanya (5) Abhay Singh 56, 2, Urvraj (6) Kuldeep Sr. 56, 3, Emerald Touch (1) Ashad Asbar 54.5, 4, Foxy Girl (8) M. Akshay 54.5, 5, Misty Night (3) Nakhat 54.5, 6, Pacific Heights (4) Saqlain 54.5, 7, Prince Aside (2) Gaurav 54.5 and 8, Silver Screen (7) Md. Ekram 54.5, 9, Moonlite Rose (2) Saqlain 54.5 and 10, The Purpose (1) Md. Ismail 54.5.

11. CHERIE CHEVALIER, DOUBLE BATTLE ON, 3. DIVINE FAITH

12. BRAVE HUNTER CUP (DIV. II) (1,200m), (Terms), Fillies 3-1/2yo only, 4.10: 1, Trevor (6) 2, 3. Truth (1) Akshay K 54.5, 2, Surya (7) Trevor 54.5, 3, Neeraj 56, 4, See The Light (1) Trevor 56, 5, Stars Envied (8) Akshay K 54.5, 6, Crimson Rose (2) B.R. Kumar 56.5, 7, Mark My Day (5) Nakhat 56, 8, Silver Screen (7) Md. Ekram 54.5, 9, Sucker Punch (7) P. Ajith 54.5 and 8, Top In Class (8) P. Sai K 54.5.

13. FIRST CLASS, 2. WINNING ATTITUDE, 3. CRIMSON ROSE

PEEVED

Gavaskar upset at not being invited to present trophy



Indian legend Sunil Gavaskar expressed displeasure at not being invited to present the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. "I am here on the ground. To me it should not matter that Australia won when it comes to the presentation. They played better cricket. Would have been happy to present the trophy with my good friend Border."

HARD GAME

It's a tough sport, can't be that soft: Gambhir on the Konstas row



"It's a tough sport played by tough men. It can't be that soft. He (Sam Konstas) had no right to be talking to Jasprit Bumrah when Usman Khawaja was taking time," India head coach Gautam Gambhir on accusation of intimidatory tactics raised by Australian coach Andrew McDonald.

ALL-TIME BEST

Bumrah made batting look so much harder, says Ponting



ICC Hall of Famer Ricky Ponting believes that Jasprit Bumrah's exploits are not only the best he's seen of a visiting bowler in Australia but probably the best fast-bowling display of all time. "When you watched him (Bumrah) bowl compared to anyone else in the series, he made batting look so much harder," said Ponting.

STAYING AFLOAT

Masood and Babar lead fightback after Pakistan follows on



Pakistan was 213 for one after following on on the third day of the second and final Test against South Africa in Cape Town on Sunday. The visiting side was earlier bowled out for 194 before captain Shan Masood, in pic., (102 batting) and Babar Azam (81) led the fightback. **The scores:** South Africa 615 vs Pakistan 194 & 213/1.

Australia tames India, regains Border-Gavaskar Trophy

Boland returns a match haul of 10/76; the visitor sorely misses Bumrah as cameos by Khawaja, Head and Webster help the host chase down the target of 162 in just 27 overs on the third afternoon

IND IN AUS

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
SYDNEY

One man's absence was massively felt. Jasprit Bumrah has been a central thread binding together the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, influencing its every twist and turn. But once the Indian skipper and spearhead grappled with a back spasm, the visitor was down for the count.

In a contest of fine margins, Australia prevailed with two days to spare. On the third day, after bowling out India for 157 in its second innings and chasing 162 for a triumph, the host posted 162 for four.

The six-wicket victory in the fifth and final Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground here on Sunday afternoon, helped Pat Cummins and his men reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with a 3-1 margin.

Australia's pursuit flour-

ished initially as both Mohammed Siraj and Prasidh Krishna were guilty of bowling wayward lines.

The odd half-volley was peddled too and Siraj's first over went for 13. India acutely missed Bumrah, who witnessed the melt-down from the pavilion.

In a low-scoring game, the last thing a fielding captain needs is a wide going for four byes. And it all happened while Sam Konstas tucked into Siraj. The impetuous opener, however, failed to restrain himself against Prasidh and a miscued hoick offered India an opportunity.

Australia 39 for one with Usman Khawaja and Marcus Labuschagne pressing forward. The latter struck a four off Prasidh and then got a touch too ambitious and lashed one to an alert Yashasvi Jaiswal at gully.

Steep bounce
Next man Steve Smith with his exaggerated shuffle across the stumps tried to linger but when Prasidh ex-



Mission accomplished: Cummins and Co. ended a 10-year wait to lay their hands on the trophy. AFP

tracted steep bounce, the former Australian captain got into a tangle and popped one towards a diving Jaiswal. Australia 58 for

three and hope stirred within the Indian ranks.

But there were no further alarms till lunch and the host was placed on 71. Af-

ter the break, Khawaja and Travis Head motored on.

The former hit two past the ropes but against the run of play, his half-heart-

SCOREBOARD**INDIA — 1ST INNINGS**

185 in 72.2 overs

AUSTRALIA — 1ST INNINGS

181 in 51 overs

INDIA — 2ND INNINGS

Yashasvi Jaiswal b Boland 22

(35b, 4x4), K.L. Rahul b Boland 22

(20b, 2x4), Shubman Gill c Carey

b Webster 13 (15b, 2x4), Virat

Kohli c Smith b Boland 6 (12b,

1x4), Rishabh Pant c Carey b

Cummins 61 (3b, 6x4, 4x6),

Ravindra Jadeja c Carey b

Cummins 13 (45b, 2x4), Nitish

Kumar Reddy c Cummins b

Boland 4 (21b), Washington

Sundar b Cummins 12 (43, 1x4),

Mohammed Siraj c Khawaja b

Boland 4 (11b), Jasprit Bumrah b

Boland 0 (3b), Prasidh Krishna

(not out) 1 (1b); Extras (b-4, lb-4):

8; Total (in 39.5 overs): 157.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-42 (Rahul, 7.3 overs), 2-47

(Jaiswal, 9.5), 3-59 (Kohli, 13.1),

4-78 (Gill, 15.2), 5-124 (Pant, 22.2),

6-129 (Nitish, 27.3), 7-147 (Jadeja,

34.4), 8-156 (Washington, 38.4),

9-156 (Siraj, 39.3).

INDIA BOWLING

Siraj 12-1-69-1, Prasidh 12-0-65-3,

Nitish 2-0-10-0, Washington

1-0-11-0.

Australia won by six wickets and clinched the five-match series

3-1.

Player-of-the-Match: Boland.

Player-of-the-Series: Bumrah.

ground for four and clenched his fist, Australia was home. In the morning, and at a venue awash in the pink shade as a tribute to the McGrath Foundation's cancer awareness drive, India resumed at the overnight 141 for six, and lasted a mere 8.5 overs.

Ravindra Jadeja, after punching Cummins for four, nibbled at another delivery and watched the ball sail into Alex Carey's gloves. And Siraj walked in as Bumrah preferred to rest his back.

No clue
Meanwhile, Washington had no clue to a Cummins stump-destroyer, more a missle than a delivery, and India was gasping.

Finally Bumrah strode towards the pitch while Siraj fidgeted around. The latter edged and left, the former took a wild swipe.

An edge was brushed, stumps were knocked and Scott Boland had six wickets in his kitty. This was Australia's Sunday.

Rohit and Kohli will plan in Indian cricket's best interest: Gambhir

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
SYDNEY

Twice over seven days, Gautam Gambhir has turned up for press conferences. The first time, he did not commit on whether Rohit Sharma, the regular captain, would play. And during the second time he met the media at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) here on Sunday, the Indian coach refused to reveal a clear roadmap for seniors Rohit and Virat Kohli.

"I can't talk about the future of any player, it's up to them. But yes, they still have the hunger, they still have the passion, they are tough people and, hopefully, they can continue to take Indian cricket forward but ultimately as we all know, whatever they plan, they will plan for the best interest of Indian cricket," Gambhir said.

Australia has 63.73 percentage points now and is well ahead of India's 50.

Meanwhile, India, after having qualified twice for the WTC final and suffering losses to New Zealand and Australia respectively in those summit clashes, will miss the bus.

Reflecting on the spot in the WTC final, Cummins said: "It's huge for us, we talk about the World Test Championship a lot. It's a trophy we are really proud to hold so we want to go back and defend it. To play well consistently across different conditions and against different teams, yeah it's great, can't wait to get over there."



A letdown: Rohit and Kohli failed to make a big impact in the series. FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

When pressed about Rohit opting out of the fifth Test, Gambhir replied: "First of all, so many reports were written. We can be a little more sensible. If a leader has taken this decision, I don't think there is any problem. We talked about accountability and that starts from the top and Rohit started that in the match."

Reflecting on the series

loss against Australia, Gambhir said: "I don't want to say that because Jasprit Bumrah wasn't there we couldn't get the results. We had some moments and it would have been nice if he was there, but we still had five bowlers and a good team is one which is not dependent on one individual. We had our moments in this series. That last session in Mel-

bourne, if we had played well and were at 1-1, the pressure on Australia would have been greater. Here in the second innings, if we left a target of 250 to 300, things would have been difficult."

Gambhir drew heart from the performance of youngsters like Yashasvi Jaiswal, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar and Akash Deep. The coach termed Bumrah as 'outstanding' and praised Mohammed Siraj: "The attitude of Siraj was outstanding. I don't remember a guy who has run in (hard) for every ball despite at times not being 100 per cent fit."

Gambhir also batted for domestic cricket: "I would like everyone to play domestic cricket. If you don't give importance to domestic cricket, you will never get the players you want in Test cricket."

As for the imminent tour of Sri Lanka, Cummins hinted that he might skip as he is expecting his second child: "Becky's (his wife) hanging on at the moment, so we will play it by ear. But I think, mostly I might struggle to get over there (Sri Lanka)."

Against him. More than just the runs that he brings to the game, it is also the debate he stirs, sometimes it can roar you as an opposition, which I am sure is part of his plans. It will be a shame if he doesn't play any more Tests here."

Asked about the turnaround after the loss in the first Test at Perth, Cummins said: "We always knew we had a good team. The message was to stay strong. To get the selec-

United holds Liverpool in four-goal thriller

Agencies

LIVERPOOL

seismic blow as Joao Pedro's penalty secured a 1-1 draw for Brighton.

Mikel Arteta's attacking options were limited by illness and injury but 17-year-old Ethan Nwaneri took his chance to shine with a composed finish to put the visitors in front.

However, Arsenal saw two vital points slip away when William Saliba was harshly punished for a clash of heads with Joao Pedro and the Brazilian slotted home the resulting spot-kick.

Napoli took advantage of its Serie A title rival competing in the Italian Super Cup by beating Fiorentina 3-0 on Saturday to move top of the pile.

The results: Premier League: Fulham 2 (Jimenez 69-pen, 90+1-pen) drew with Ipswich 2 (Szmodics 38, Delap 71-pen); Liverpool 2 (Gakpo 59, Salah 70-pen) drew with Manchester United 2 (Martinez 52, Diallo 80).

On Saturday: Brighton 1 (Joao Pedro 61-pen) drew with Arsenal 1 (Nwaneri 18).

Serie A: Fiorentina 0 lost to Napoli 3 (Neres 29, Lukaku 54-pen, McTomney 68).



The leveller: Diallo's shot squirms its way past the Liverpool defence. AFP

Aussies set up WTC title clash with SA

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
SYDNEY

Inside the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), children ran in that fumbling, happy way. The more adventurous ones did the odd somersault. Some of the Australian cricketers were lying sprawled on the grass, allowing all that ecstasy and relief to seep into them while their families hung around.

Beau Webster, with a lovely debut under his belt, stood close to the pitch and posed with his family for pictures. Pat Cummins and his men were in a happy space. And there was double joy to be savoured. Besides defeating India 3-1 to pocket the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Australia also sealed a berth in the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) final at Lord's in June, later this year.

Lankan hopes dashed
With South Africa having already qualified, the tussle for the second berth was

Message was to stay strong after Perth'

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
SYDNEY

A wide grin plastered on his face, Pat Cummins strode into the press-conference hall at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) here on Sunday. Looking at the just concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, the Australian captain said: "It's a huge win. I felt it was kind of seesawing throughout the whole series, so to finish it at 3-1 and to hold

the trophy is an amazing feeling." Reflecting on the last few months, Cummins said: "We grew up watching Test cricket, loving it, so to be right in the mix, you wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world for these couple of months."

With Virat Kohli probably having played his last set of Tests in Australia, Cummins was quick to praise: "It has always been a wonderful contest

(against him). More than just the runs that he brings to the game, it is also the debate he stirs, sometimes it can roar you as an opposition, which I am sure is part of his plans. It will be a shame if he doesn't play any more Tests here."

Asked about the turnaround after the loss in the first Test at Perth, Cummins said: "We always knew we had a good team. The message was to stay strong. To get the selec-

INBRIEF



Gauff and Fritz deliver for U.S. in the final against Poland

Coco Gauff roared past Iga Swiatek to inspire Team USA before Taylor Fritz sealed the United Cup title with victory over Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in Sydney on Sunday.

The result (final): USA bt Poland 2-0 (Coco Gauff bt Iga Swiatek 6-4, 6-4; Taylor Fritz bt Hubert Hurkacz 6-4, 5-7, 7-6(4)).



Sabalenka emerges champion in Brisbane

World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka downed Russian qualifier Polina Kudermetova to win the Brisbane International on Sunday.

The results (finals): Women: Aryna Sabalenka bt Polina Kudermetova 4-6, 6-3, 6-2. Men: Jiri Lehecka w/o Reilly Opelka 4-1.

Gray triumphs in Indore for seventh career crown

Alastair Gray of Britain won his seventh career singles title in the \$30,000 ITF men's tennis tournament at the Indore Tennis Club on Sunday. The 26-year-old Briton led 6-3, 1-1 when his opponent Samir Banerjee of USA retired. Gray, who did not drop a set in singles, had given a walkover in the doubles final where he was due to play alongside France's Mathys Erhard.

LIVE TELECAST

South Africa vs Pakistan: 2nd Test, day 4, JioCinema, 2 p.m.

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

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



Kiran wins Lakshya Cup

SHOOTING

Sports Bureau

Kiran Jadhav of Navy was in spectacular form over the last 12 shots, that ranged between 10.4 and 10.8, as he clinched the gold medal in the air rifle open event of the 15th Lakshya Cup shooting championship at the Kamala Sports Academy in Panvel on Sunday.

The 29-year-old Kiran overtook the early leaders Gajanan Khandagale and Mohit Gowda for the gold.

"I have been in the finals every time since 2018. It is a special feeling, winning the gold for the first time. I believe in enjoying every moment of the sport and go with the flow," said Kiran, who collected a cash prize of ₹1,50,000.

The runner-up and

bronze medallists were presented ₹75,000 and ₹40,000 respectively.

Himanshu and Shruti made it a 1-2 for Haryana in the junior final.

The junior champion won ₹75,000, while the second and third places fetched ₹40,000 and ₹20,000 respectively.

The results: 10m air rifle: Open: 1. Kiran Jadhav 251.7 (630.9), 2. Gajanan Khandagale 250.9 (631.6), 3. Mohit Gowda 229.3 (630.5).

Juniors: 1. Himanshu 251.5 (632.1), 2. Shruti 250.4 (628.9), 3. Anvii Rathod 229.3 (630.4).

he ran with the ball at full tilt, but his left-footed shot was straight at the feet of Sachin Suresh in the Blasters goal.

In the 58th minute, Blasters were reduced to 10 men after Milos Drincic got a second yellow card.

Punjab received another boost when Blasters defender Aibamha Dohling was sent off in the 74th minute for a clumsy challenge on Augustine. But the visiting side was still able to defend resolutely for a valuable away win.

The result: Punjab FC 0 lost to Kerala Blasters 1 (Noah Sadaoui 44).

Having received the ball on the left flank, Noah cut in and charged into the 18-yard box before Punjab defender Suresh Meitei put in a sliding tackle in a bid to halt the Moroccan-American.

Meitei did touch the ball but made contact with Noah, prompting the referee to immediately point to the spot. Noah made no mistake.

For Punjab, Nihal Sudeesh was lively in the attacking third. Close to the half-hour mark, Sudeesh had an opportunity when

Noah Sadaoui's 44th-minute strike was the difference between the two teams.

The only goal of the game came via a spot-kick

on the cusp of the half-time interval.

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The way the league is set up this time around is more sustainable

A 10-year contract with the Hockey India League is brilliant for the future – for domestic players, young talents, international players and the companies themselves

INTERVIEW

DAVID HARTE

Uthra Ganesan
ROURKELA

He has been around long enough for David Harte to call himself the 'elder statesman' of Irish and world hockey. A trailblazer in more ways than one, Harte not only helped Ireland qualify for the Olympics for the first time in more than a century but also paved the way for others to step out and seek professional success in leagues around the world. A two-time FIH Goalkeeper of the Year, Harte spoke in detail about what the Hockey India League means, the secret to Craig Fulton's success and future plans:

How's it been so far coming back for the Hockey India League?

I think it's been a fabulous experience so far. I had seen a lot of other cities in India but never been to Chennai so it was great to experience a new city. And it was nice to meet the group. Also, it's away from here, the hive of activity, so we could really focus on ourselves.

You're one of the very few who was here during the previous edition of the HIL. That makes you a senior, not just with the Tamil Nadu team but overall in the league itself. What difference do you see from then to now?

I have a feeling that everything – the way the league is set up this time around – is more sustainable. The purse that was there for the players, while it was less, it's more manageable, especially for the franchises if they're going to commit to a 10-year period. And a 10-year contract with the Hockey India League is brilliant for the future – for domestic players, young talents, international players, the companies themselves. Also small things like not as much travel with home and away format that used to take a toll on players. From an athletes' welfare perspective, we're better prepared here. Those would be the two most obvious changes and I think they're definitely for the better.

Most of the players in the HIL this time around, both Indian and foreign, are new to the experience. What would you tell them? Because this is not the usual league format the way it is in Europe.

Two things. One, have patience because it's starting again, there's always going to be some teething problems but from what I've seen, this stay is very comfortable. I think people recognise that there's going to be some things that may go slightly wrong, there may be some mistakes, whether logically or other things. All those things you have to be patient with.

Secondly and more importantly, enjoy it because there are many moments you have in your hockey career that you can look back on. And for me this is definitely one. The fact that



you get to play in the world's largest hockey stadium, it's actually amazing when it's full and the atmosphere there. It's my first time, I have never played here before, super impressive.

The time I spent earlier in India, I still have the same feeling. When I stood on that pitch for the first game against Soorma HC, I was just looking around, taking it all in, thinking how lucky and how blessed we are to be able to experience it all. So I think the players should have some patience but also enjoy every minute of it.

A lot of people wanted the HIL to come back but there were also questions whether it would be sustainable. What do you feel and how would you explain this to those who did not come this time and why they should?

I think it depends on how you are as a person, as an athlete, where exactly you are in your career. People are going to be in different phases of their life. For me, as you mentioned, being more the elder statesman, with two small girls at home, it was an incredibly difficult decision to leave, specially for Christmas. But financially, it was definitely beneficial for us and for our future.

Then there's other people who perhaps felt the money wasn't what they felt they deserved. That's a very personal perspective on what they feel they should earn. Again, I was the cheapest foreign player in my very first year in the HIL back in 2014 (for \$1,000 by Mumbai) but I was coming over for the life experience. I was going to try and see if I could put my name out there to be picked up again.

And not just the local talent and the Indian juniors, it goes the same for the talented overseas players. If you can manage yourself over

here, you can find yourself in any league in the world (he was the most expensive goalkeeper at \$65,000 by the time the league was called off in 2017).

But I also found that as time went on, you got to know the team more, the fan base in Mumbai was incredible. And most people, when they're enjoying things, will perform to their best ability. That's what I found in those last two seasons in the HIL.

One thing that you fondly look back at from back then – maybe players you became friends with, an experience that has stayed with you?

I think it was quite special that, in that first season all those years ago, I was on the same team with Sreejesh, much before he shot to where he is now with his stardom and fame and the level of goalkeeping he has reached these last few years. P.R. Sreejesh back in 2014 wasn't the same he is 10 years later. I saw him a couple of days ago in the stadium, we reconnected and had a little bit of fun and joke about those times.

The same goes for (Krishan) Pathak. I played with him also in Mumbai and I told him back then, he was still a junior at that time, that he has the potential to be one of India's next goalkeepers. It was not to boost his ego but because of what I saw of his ability, his skill set, his hard work and dedication. You've seen that now, he was pushing Sreejesh the whole way for selection towards the Olympics and now he's going to have his time.

Also the other side of the HIL is the fans. When you had a local fan base, you had the same guys coming to most of the matches, you could really engage with them, you know, not just to click a selfie or something but also share some of your kits and that made it extra

special. You were seen as Mumbai family even as foreigners. That's something you do miss this time around.

You've been a trailblazer for Irish hockey – you helped them qualify for the 2016 Olympics for the first time in 108 years, you were the first Irish player to move out and play professionally in the ultra-competitive Dutch league, the first Irish player to come to HIL. How much has Irish hockey changed from then to now?

Thankfully, the professionalism has increased, the support and finances and sponsorship that we have now allowed us to compete in the Pro League last year and again this season and helped massively in our preparation for the Paris Olympics. If I'm being honest, where Ireland needs to get to and where we need to go as an organisation, the men's and women's teams need to be at those major events consistently.

It can't be just one four-year cycle and then you miss out the next. I'm not saying you need to go and be on the podium like Australia or Belgium or the Netherlands but you need to be in that top 8-10 teams in world hockey consistently and we're taking the right steps. The better results you get, the more likely you're going to receive the funding.

I think there are things we can replicate from the women's team, of course, what they've done. We potentially had our golden era between 2015-2018. We had a historic bronze at the European Championships, qualified for the Olympic Games, qualified for the World Cup and then unfortunately went a bit downhill and it just happened to be at the same time as the women won that historic World Cup silver in 2018.

You could see straight away they benefited with sponsors coming in. It's amazing how, if you have that little bit more resources behind you, you can create and build a programme that allows and enables and empowers your team to compete with the best.

How do you see goalkeeping itself change from when you started to now?

I think the way the game is going, goalkeepers now need to be a lot more mobile and agile specially with the importance of a shootout. Those eight seconds you need to be in positions that are uncomfortable, often not within your normal range. So you need to be quicker than ever. But I think height wise, everyone's going to play to their strengths. Regardless if you're 6'5" like me or maybe 5'8" like Pathak.

He does incredibly well for what he has. I would like to say that I use my strengths in having longer limbs, people might view that in a different way. If you take more of the goal space, maybe you're a bit more of a presence on the pitch and give a bit more confidence because you're that presence behind. But I wouldn't see it as a disadvantage whatsoever because you've clearly seen over the tournaments that Pathak has excelled. Maybe you just need to play the game slightly differently.

Craig Fulton was your coach when you guys qualified for the Olympics, now he's won an Olympic medal with India. What would you say about Fulton as a coach and as a person?

I think success follows him everywhere! A key ingredient for that is he is hockey mad and obsessed and has always been from when I first met him, as my club coach in 2006. We had a Skype call with him and the CEO of of Hockey Ireland when he was in South Africa in 2014 to be the men's head coach and he left everything behind to come. Too bad Belgium recognised his qualities and took him away but the guy deserves to be on the biggest stage in the world. I owe an awful lot to him for what he did on a personal and national level.

I've had a lot of coaches in different leagues and teams and not every coach has the full package – tactically and technically strong but also the personal side of things, the softer skills, the interaction and communication with players, and for me he ticks all the boxes.

At 36, what next for David Harte?

I have short term goals. Right now is to try and do my best here for the Tamil Nadu Dragons, then return to my club SV Kampong to try and retain our Dutch title we won in May. With regards to the Irish team, I had a call with the Irish coach and the goalkeeper coach towards the end of November to say I wasn't available for the Pro League in Argentina and won't be available for the Pro League here unfortunately.

It's just too much time away from family and I'm also working now since the end of August with the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (he has a degree in physiotherapy). They have been incredibly supportive to facilitate my dream of playing here.

SCIENCE

Moving away from coal a must: South African court upholds 'Cancel Coal' case

The court ruled the energy minister and the national energy regulator couldn't provide enough evidence to show that the ill effects of coal power on the environment and the health of the people, especially children, had been considered, suggesting they didn't 'comply with their constitutional obligations'

Privali Prakash

Civil society organisations claimed a landmark victory against fossil fuel power in South Africa on December 4 when the High Court in Pretoria turned down the national government's plan to add more coal-fired power stations to the country's power grid. According to the court, the government's plan was "inconsistent with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa" and thus unlawful.

The 'Cancel Coal' case

In its Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), the government of South Africa announced in October 2019 that it plans to add 1,500 MW of coal power to the country's national grid - 750 MW by 2023 and another 750 MW by 2027.

The Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy and the National Energy Regulator of South Africa in 2020 backed the announcement.

In 2021, youth-led civil organisations including the African Climate Alliance, the Vukani Environmental Justice Movement in Action, and the Groundwork Trust, represented by the Centre for Environmental Rights, brought the case against the government's plan. The group alleged that the plan would harm the environment and cause health issues, especially among children. The case soon acquired the popular monicker "Cancel Coal."

South Africa's energy mix

Like most economically developing nations, South Africa is heavily dependent on coal for its energy needs.

According to estimates by the International Energy Agency, almost 71% of the country's total energy supply came from coal power in 2022.

According to an analysis of global emissions through history by Climate Watch, South Africa is the world's 16th largest emitter of greenhouse gases.

South Africa has ratified the Paris Agreement, which means it is legally bound to cut its greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to mitigating global warming.

According to the Nationally Determined Contributions South Africa submitted in 2021, the country plans to cut 350-420 million tonnes of carbon-dioxide-equivalent (MtCO₂e) of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. It has also committed to reaching net-zero by 2050.

In July 2024, the country's President Cyril Ramaphosa signed the Climate Change Act into law, which includes a clause to reduce greenhouse gas



Cancel Coal protests in South Africa. GROUNDWORK

emissions.

Details of the judgement

Civil society organisations contended that the government's plan to add more coal power didn't consider the rights of children as granted by the Constitution of South Africa.

According to the Constitution, South African citizens have the right "to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations." This is to be ensured through measures that "prevent pollution and ecological degradation, promote conservation, secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development."

The court ruled that the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy and the National Energy Regulator couldn't provide enough evidence to show that the ill effects of the coal power on the environment and the health of the people, especially children, had been considered, suggesting they didn't "comply with their constitutional obligations."

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Ritwick Dutta, environmental justice lawyer and associate at Doughty Street Chambers U.K., said the order is a significant development in the field of climate litigation.

"Although, at the core, the judgment still follows the basic principles of administrative law – duty to give reasons and non-application of mind to relevant consideration – what is however

South Africa is heavily dependent on coal for energy. Almost 71% of the country's total energy supply came from coal in 2022. According to an analysis by Climate Watch, South Africa is the world's 16th largest emitter of greenhouse gases

significant is the fact that the court held that the minister, while according approval, did not take into account the interest of the future generations or the unborn generations."

He also highlighted the fact that "since the Court relied on Section 28 of the South African Constitution, which requires the state to protect the child against 'neglect and degradation' to hold that the governments/ministers decision was not in the 'best interest of the child.' The implication of this judgment as I see it is the requirement that a minister/government decision must not be based on the immediate short-term need but must consider a long-term holistic view," Mr. Dutta said.

A 2019 study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* reviewed epidemiological literature to understand the impact of coal-fired power plant emissions on children's health. It concluded that they affect children negatively due to their "developing physiology, anatomy, metabolism, and health behaviours." The review also observed that children who lived near a

coal-fired plant exhibited more asthma and respiratory-related conditions.

Environmental justice

The case is also an example of environmental justice in the context of transitioning away from coal worldwide.

"Even in India, for the first time three ministries – Ministry of Power, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy – jointly filed an affidavit before the Supreme Court in the case of *M.K Ranjitsingh versus Union of India* that India will have to move from polluting coal to wind and solar not only to ensure cleaner air but also to meet its commitment under the Paris Agreement," Mr. Dutta said. "Coal will continue to meet the energy requirement in the short run, but it is now accepted that transition is a must if the world has to slow down climate change. The fact that courts globally are recognising this reality is ... only natural."

The lawyer also said that even though this case is limited to coal power, combating climate crisis goes beyond it. "Judicial decisions on climate change are a recognition of both the urgency to deal with climate crisis and the fact that civil society groups and citizens have an important role to play in tackling the crisis. It should not be forgotten that the South African judgement is an outcome of litigation undertaken by three civil society groups. It is therefore crucial that the state and the judiciary are more open and receptive towards divergent views on dealing with a crisis of an unparalleled nature," he added.

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BIG SHOT



This handout image received on December 26, 2024, from the State Control Centre of the Victoria Emergency Services shows a bushfire in the Grampians National Park in Australia's Victoria state. The country's southeast is sweltering in a heatwave that has raised the risk of bushfires. The nation's weather forecaster said temperatures would be up to 14 degrees C above average in some areas. AFP

THE GIST

In 2021, civil organisations represented by the Centre for Environmental Rights sued the government over plans to start more coal fired plants

South Africa has ratified the Paris Agreement, which means it is legally bound to cut its emissions. It plans to cut 350-420 million tonnes by 2030. In 2024 President Ramaphosa also signed the Climate Change Act into law

A 2019 study concluded that children's physiology, anatomy, and metabolism were negatively affected by plant emissions. The review observed that children who lived near a coal-fired plant exhibited more asthma and respiratory-related conditions

WHAT IS IT?

Dinosaur highway: where dinos walked

Vasudevan Mukunth

limestone quarry in Oxfordshire in the UK has come to be called a "dinosaur highway" for the number of footprints of the long-lost giants scientists have discovered there.

In 1997, workers at the Dewars Farm Quarry revealed more than two score dinosaur footprints, some of them extending for more than 180 metres. Further studies revealed the footprints were from the Jurassic period.

Recently, on January 4, a team of more than a hundred scientists from the University of Birmingham and the University of Oxford announced the discovery of more than 200 footprints in the same quarry. In June last year, a quarry worker had stumbled upon "unusual bumps," as he called them, when he was digging for clay. After he reported them, the scientists got together and found that the footprints were from 166 million years ago — the Middle Jurassic period.

The team found five trackways — or series of footprints — in all. They said



An artist's impression of sauropod dinosaurs on the Isle of Skye in this undated handout photo provided by the University of Edinburgh, December 2015. REUTERS

four were created by sauropods (long-necked herbivores) called *cetiosaurus* and one by a carnivore called *megalosaurus*. Analysis by the team suggested all the animals had been walking, not running, at the (possibly different) times the prints were made.

The megalosaurus footprint is particularly serendipitous because 2024 was the 100th year of its study. In 1824, a megalosaurus fossil

became the first dinosaur fossil to be unearthed and examined in detail by the British theologian and geologist William Buckland.

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