



CHOI TAKES OVER
S. Korea votes to oust
Acting President Han

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Suzuki legend Osamu passes away at 94

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FRESH RECORD LOW
Rupee falls 21 paise,
now 85.48 to the dollar

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NAVY SPEEDBOAT ACCIDENT

In Mumbai, a joyride that turned fatal

Concerns over possible negligence in trial run

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Australia has India under the cosh

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Brahmaputra dam will not affect India, Bangladesh: China

Press Trust of India

BEIJING

China on Friday defended its plan to build the world's largest dam on the Brahmaputra in Tibet, saying the project would not "negatively affect" the lower riparian states of India and Bangladesh and that safety issues had been addressed through decades of studies.

China on Wednesday approved the dam's construction, close to the Indian border. At a media briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning played down apprehensions.

The \$137-billion project is located in the ecologically fragile Himalayan region, along a tectonic plate boundary where earthquakes occur frequently.

Ms. Mao said China had studied in depth hydropower development in the region for decades, and safeguard measures had been taken to ensure the project's security and environment protection.



Mao Ning

"The project will not negatively affect the lower reaches," she said referring to the concerns in India and Bangladesh.

"China will continue to maintain communication with countries at the lower reaches through existing channels and step up cooperation on disaster prevention and relief for the benefit of the people by the river," Ms. Mao said.

She said hydropower work on the river aimed to speed up development of clean energy and respond to climate change and hydrological disasters.

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Manmohan's funeral: Congress demands rites at memorial site

Home Ministry announces state funeral with full military honours at a public cremation ground today; Congress alleges 'deliberate insult' to the first Sikh Prime Minister of India; Kharge had spoken to Modi and Shah for allocation of land

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry, in an order on Friday, said former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would be accorded a state funeral with full military honours at the Nigam Bodh Ghat, a public cremation ground in north Delhi, on Saturday.

The Congress, which had demanded a funeral in a place where a memorial to Dr. Singh could be built, called it a "deliberate insult to the first Sikh Prime Minister of India". "The people of our country are simply unable to understand why the Government of India could not find a location for his cremation and memorial that is befitting of his global stature, record of outstanding achievements, and exemplary service to the nation for decades," Congress communication chief Jai-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays his last respects to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

ram Ramesh said in a post on X. "This is nothing but a deliberate insult to the first Sikh Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh."

The government decision came hours after Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had spoken to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Congress general secretaries K.C. Venugopal and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had taken up the issue of a memorial with De-

fence Minister Rajnath Singh, an informed source said.

The source told *The Hindu* that government officials had conveyed it to Mr. Kharge as well as the former Prime Minister's family that land for a memorial would be earmarked in the next few days, but it would not be the place where the funeral took place. In fact, it was the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government that had de-

cided to have a common memorial ground – Rashtriya Smriti Sthal – near the Raj Ghat because of a shortage of land next to the Yamuna in central Delhi.

The government's response came after Mr. Kharge had followed up his telephonic conversations with a letter to the Prime Minister to press for a funeral site where a memorial can be built. "This is in keeping with such tradition of having memorials to statesmen and former Prime Ministers at the very place of their funerals," he said in his two-page letter.

The Congress chief said Manmohan Singh holds a highly revered place in the psyche of the country and the people of this nation, and his contributions and achievements were phenomenal. "Coming from a humble background and having experienced the pains and sufferings of Partition, it is through his sheer grit and determina-

tion that he rose to become one of the leading statesmen of the world," he said in his letter.

Earlier, the Union Cabinet observed a two-minute silence and adopted a Condolence Resolution. "Dr. Manmohan Singh has left his imprint on our national life. In his passing away, the Nation has lost an eminent statesman, renowned economist and a distinguished leader," it said.

In a video message, Mr. Modi described his predecessor's death as a big loss to the nation, asserting that his commitment to the people and the country's development would always be respected.

He recalled Dr. Singh's life journey after his family's migration to India, leaving behind everything following Partition.

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IN BRIEF



Lower bills as DERC slashes power surcharge

NEW DELHI
Over 50 lakh BSES consumers in the national capital can expect substantially lower electricity bills for at least the next three months. This has been made possible by the regulator, the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission, slashing the power purchase adjustment cost, which is levied on consumers. » Page 2

U.P. police set up outpost next to Sambhal mosque

LUCKNOW
A heavy police force was deployed on Friday at the site for a police outpost in front of the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal district of Uttar Pradesh. Excavation was speeded up with the help of the municipality as the police want to complete the outpost construction soon. » Page 5

Snowed up



White town: Vendors pitch umbrellas to protect their wares as the season's first snowfall blankets Srinagar on Friday. Hundreds of vehicles are stranded on the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway. Many passes connecting the Valley are shut. IMRAN NISSAR (REPORT ON PAGE 8)

SC gives Punjab govt. 24 hours to hospitalise farmer on hunger strike

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

An "anxious" Supreme Court on Friday gave the Punjab government 24 hours to act on medical advice to hospitalise farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, whose indefinite fast is posing a danger to his life.

Mr. Dallewal has been on a hunger strike at the Khanauri boundary since November 26 to press the Centre to accept the agitating farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

Appearing before a Va-



Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal has been on a hunger strike at the Khanauri boundary in Sangrur district since November 26. PTI

cation Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia, the Punjab government said its efforts to move Mr. Dallewal to a hospital had been met with stiff resistance.

State Advocate-General Gurinder Singh said that a delegation of eight Cabinet Ministers had made no progress in convincing him to go to a hospital. The farmer leader had made it

clear he would not budge until the Centre opened a dialogue with the farmers.

The State warned that forcibly shifting him to a hospital may trigger "physical jostling" with farmers at the protest site, which may prove extremely risky for the septuagenarian leader.

The Punjab Chief Secretary and Director-General of Police are facing contempt action in the Supreme Court for not hospitalising Mr. Dallewal despite repeated orders, the latest on December 20.

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T.N. BJP chief flogs himself in protest against sexual assault

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

In protest against the sexual assault of a student at Anna University in Chennai, Tamil Nadu BJP president K. Annamalai on Friday flogged himself six times in front of his house in Coimbatore.

Later, speaking to journalists, he said the stir that the BJP had undertaken on Friday would intensify. This agitation is against the deteriorating standards of education, economic depletion, and police apathy on women's safety. "After deep deliberation, I took a decision not to wear foot-wear until the DMK go-



BJP State president K. Annamalai protesting outside his residence in Coimbatore on Friday. S. SIVA SARAVANAN

vernment, which has indulged in all wrongdoings, is ousted," he said.

In the Police Department, there is no question of a technical glitch resulting in the leaking of the FIR, he said. "Releasing the FIR is a tool to silence other victims," he said.

Quoting Chennai Police

Average household spending rose 3.5% through Aug. 2023-July 2024, shows government survey

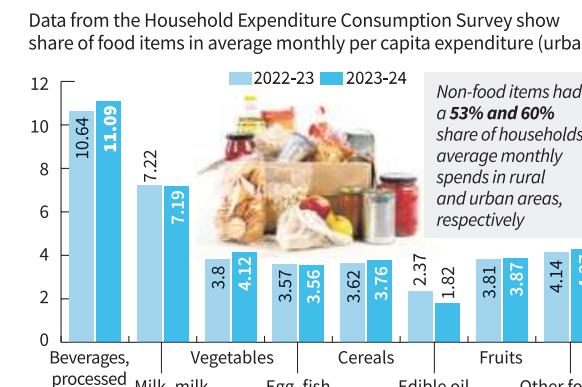
Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

India's average household consumption spends on a per capita basis rose about 3.5% in real terms through August 2023 to July 2024 from a year ago, as per the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, and the Centre said this signals a decline in consumption inequality and a narrowing gap between urban and rural spends.

The initial HCES findings, which are used to assess trends in economic well-being, estimate poverty levels and update the basket and weightages of consumer goods and ser-

Bittersweet fare

Data from the Household Expenditure Consumption Survey show share of food items in average monthly per capita expenditure (urban)



vices used to formulate the Consumer Price Index (CPI) that measures retail inflation, were released by the Union Statistics Minis-

try on Friday.

This is the second year in a row that the HCES was conducted and its findings were released, after a 11-

year hiatus as the government had junked the results of the 2017-18 survey citing "quality" concerns about the data. "Sustained momentum in rural consumption continues as urban-rural gap narrows down further in 2023-24 with about 53% and 60% share in MPCE in rural and urban areas respectively," a fact sheet on the survey noted.

Despite the ratio of food spends to non-food spends suggesting a dip in expenditure on food and beverages, this was primarily due to a decline in spending on edible oils.

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City logs record rainfall; GRAP III revoked as air quality improves

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

With the city recording 30.2 mm of rainfall in 24 hours and air quality expected to improve, the Centre on Friday eased pollution-related restrictions.



A rider negotiates his way through a waterlogged road on Friday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

A total of 42.8 mm of rainfall has been recorded in the month, making it the fifth wettest December since 1901, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD) data.

The highest ever rainfall in December, 77.2 mm, was recorded in 1923. The IMD has forecast light rain and generally cloudy skies on Saturday.

The rain caused waterlogging and traffic snarls in many areas, with the Municipal Corporation of Delhi receiving a total of 13 complaints – nine for waterlogging and four for fallen trees. The Public Works Department

received one call for waterlogging and one for a fallen tree.

IMD officials said that an active western disturbance and its interaction with easterly winds were causing rain over northwest and central India, including the National Capital Region (NCR).

The minimum temperature

on Friday was 11 degrees Celsius, four degrees above the season's average. It is likely to drop to six degrees Celsius by December 31, the IMD said.

The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) on Friday downgraded "with immediate effect" the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) from Stage III to II. GRAP is a set of short-term emergency measures to reduce air pollution.

Under Stage III, the CAQM had announced a ban on construction and demolition activities in Delhi and the NCR, except for some official and essential works. It had also asked schools to shift classes for students up to grade five to 'hybrid mode' in Delhi and adjoining districts of Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar.

HPPWD TENDER

Sealed item rate tender on form 6 & 8 are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, Sundernagar Division, HPPWD Sundernagar on behalf of Governor of HP for the following works from the contractors of appropriately registered in HPPWD. The PAN/GST should be linked with ADHAAR and Income Tax Department duly renewed supported with documentary proof so as to reach in this office alongwith application and tender fees(non refundable) on 03.01.2025 up to 11:00 AM and the same shall be opened on 06.01.2025 at 11:00 AM in the presence of the intending contractors or their authorized representatives if any who may be present. The application shall

Accompany earnest money / Time Deposit Account / Saving Account in any of the Post Office and Bank in H.P. duly pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, Sundernagar Division, HP.PWD Sundernagar. Telegraphic, conditional tenders without earnest money will not be entertained. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject the tenders with assigning any reason. The offer to the tender remains valid for 60 days from the date of opening of tender.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Time	Appropriate class of contractor	Tender Cost
1.	RRD on Shimla Mandi via Tattapani Road KM 135/00 to 146/00 (SH-Supplying and stacking Moorum/sand at between in KM 135/0 to 138/250)	₹ 98690/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
2.	RRD on Shimla Mandi via Tattapani Road KM 135/00 to 146/00 (SH-Supplying and stacking Moorum / sand at between in KM 138/250 to 141/500)	₹ 98690/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
3.	RRD on Shimla Mandi via Tattapani Road Km 135/00 to 146/00 (SH- Supplying and stacking Moorum/sand at between in KM 141/500 to 143/750)	₹ 98690/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
4.	RRD on Shimla Mandi via Tattapani Road Km 135/00 to 146/00 (SH-Supplying and stacking moorum / sand at between in KM 143/750 to 146/000)	₹ 98690/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
5.	A/R & M/O various road under Nihri Sub-Division in Rohanda Section (SH:- Clearance of snow in various road under Rohanda section) Job-I	₹ 85775/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
6.	A/R & M/O various road under Nihri Sub-Division in Rohanda Section (SH:- Clearance of snow in various road under Rohanda section) Job-II	₹ 85775/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
7.	A/R & M/O various road under Nihri Sub-Division in Rohanda Section (SH:- Clearance of snow in various road under Rohanda section) Job-III	₹ 85775/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
8.	A/R & M/O various road under Nihri Sub-Division in Rohanda Section (SH:- Clearance of snow in various road under Rohanda section) Job-IV	₹ 85775/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
9.	A/R & M/O various road under Nihri Sub-Division in Nihri Section (SH:- Clearance of snow in various road under Nihri Section) Job-I	₹ 85775/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
10.	A/R & M/O various road under Nihri Sub-Division in Nihri Section (SH:- Clearance of snow in various road under Nihri Section) Job-II	₹ 85775/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
11.	A/R & M/O various road under Nihri Sub-Division in Nihri-1 Section (SH:- Clearance of snow in various road under Nihri-1 Section) Job-I	₹ 87420/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
12.	A/R & M/O various road under Nihri Sub-Division in Nihri-1 Section (SH:- Clearance of snow in various road under Nihri-1 Section) Job-II	₹ 87420/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
13.	C/o A/E Office cum Residence, 2 Nos. Type-III Qtr. At Nihri (SH:- Preparation of Detailed estimate for site development, building portion and boundary walls)	₹ 99500/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
14.	C/o J.E Office cum Residence, 2 Nos. Type-III Qtr. At Souja-Behri Nihri (SH:- Preparation of Detailed estimate for site development, building portion, approach Road and boundary walls)	₹ 98500/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
15.	C/o Govt. Primary School Punghot at Pung Tehsil, Sundernagar Distt. Mandi H.P (SH:- Preparation of Detailed estimate for site development, Building portion and boundary walls)	₹ 98500/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
16.	Preparation FCA case with revised KML file and verification of dumping sites with preparation of site plans & drawings from Slapper to Tattapani Km 8/500 to 22/150	₹ 98280/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
17.	Preparation FCA case with revised KML file and verification of dumping sites with preparation of site plans & drawings from Slapper to Tattapani Km 22/150 to 35/800	₹ 98280/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
18.	Preparation FCA case with revised KML file and verification of dumping sites with preparation of site plans & drawings from Slapper to Tattapani Km 35/800 to 49/450	₹ 98280/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
19.	Preparation FCA case with revised KML file and verification of dumping sites with preparation of site plans & drawings from Slapper to Tattapani Km 49/450 to 61/600	₹ 98280/-	2000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
20.	C/o Link Road from Sohan Singh Shop to Khan Mod 0/0 to 0/400(SH:- P/L Cement Concrete Pavement at RD. 0/0 to 0/025)	₹ 49585/-	1000/-	One Month	Class- D	₹ 350/-
21.	C/o Ambulance Road from Pung Patsal kapahi to Village Gehra- Patsal, P.O kapahi Tehsil, Sundernagar Distt. Mandi (SH:- P/L Cement Concrete Pavement at RD. 0/0 to 0/062.50 Deposit Work)	₹ 99867/-	2000/-	Two Months	Class- D	₹ 350/-
22.	C/o Ambulance Road from Pung Patsal kapahi to Village Gehra- Patsal, P.O kapahi Tehsil, Sundernagar Distt. Mandi (SH:- P/L Cement Concrete Pavement at RD. 0/062.50 to 0/125 Deposit Work)	₹ 99867/-	2000/-	Two Months	Class- D	₹ 350/-
23.	RRD on Samon Badon Road Km 0/0 to 2/735 (SH:- C/o R/Wall Rd. 1/810 to 1/815)	₹ 99516/-	2000/-	Two Months	Class- D	₹ 350/-
24.	RRD on Samon Badon Road Km 0/0 to 2/735 (SH:- C/o R/Wall at Rd. 1/815 to 1/820)	₹ 99516/-	2000/-	Two Months	Class- D	₹ 350/-

Conditions:-

The tender documents shall be sold to only those contractors who fulfill the conditions as under:-

1. The contractors are required to submit the proof of G.S.T. registration/affidavit along with application form.

2. He Pan should be linked with ADHAAR. The copy of Pan should be self attested with declaration that the same has been linked with ADHAAR.

3. Application must be accompanied with EMD and cost of tender. Applications without EMD/ cost of tender shall be summarily rejected.

4. The application of those contractors shall be accepted who remain present at the time of application and similarly tender from hall be issued to the intended contractor in person.

5. The contract require to submit a valid proof of ownership of machinery in case machinery is to be hired the lease agreement along with copy of RC of machinery should be attached with the tender application.

6. The application form shall not be issued to those contractors who have two works or more in hand or should have completed 75% of the work already awarded to them.

7. The Contractors are required to submit the valid enlistment/ GST registration and latest ITR alongwith application from.

8. Conditional and incomplete tenders shall be rejected.

9. The XEN reserves the right to accept or reject the tender without any reason.

Executive Engineer,
Sunder Nagar Division,
HPPWD Sundernagar

HP/4161/24-25

HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

Delhi residents to get lower bills as DERCS slashes power surcharge

Cut in PPAC surcharge by nearly 50% to result in substantial reduction in electricity bills for nearly 50 lakh consumers till March; with the Assembly election due in February next year, BJP and AAP fight for credit

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



Over 50 lakh BSES consumers in the national capital can expect substantially lower electricity bills for at least the next three months. This has been made possible by the regulator, the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC), slashing the power purchase adjustment cost (PPAC), which is levied by the consumers.

With the Assembly election due in February next year, the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) took credit for the development.

While Delhi's main Opposition party, which has been agitating for a reduction in the PPAC, said its "struggle has borne fruit", Chief Minister Atishi, who also holds the Power portfolio, said the move was "made possible due to the honest, people-centric governance of AAP".

The PPAC, which is revised every quarter, is a surcharge that increases or decreases depending on the prevailing prices of fuel, such as coal and gas, used in power generation. It is calculated and charged on the fixed and variable parts of the bill, depending on monthly consumption. These two

components, along with some minor charges, comprise the total bill.

The DERC uploaded two orders dated December 20 on its website, stating that the PPAC levied by BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) and BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) had been reduced.

According to officials, BYPL has reduced the surcharge from 37.75% to 13.63% and BRPL from 35.83% to 18.19%. The reduced rates will be applicable from December 21 to March 20.

BSES supplies electricity in

most parts of south, west, east, and central Delhi. Other discoms in the city slashed their PPAC surcharge earlier this year, sources said.

AAP's collusion'

Reacting to the move, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said, "The ongoing struggle of the party's Delhi unit since April this year has finally borne fruit."

He added, "The Power Department has declared more than 50% reduction in PPAC, which had been arbitrarily imposed on Delhi residents by

the (AAP chief and former Delhi CM) Arvind Kejriwal government in collusion with private power companies."

"Soon, when the BJP forms the government (in Delhi), this 10-year-long loot by the Kejriwal government and private companies would be referred to the CBI for investigation," he added.

The BJP had staged protests outside the offices of power discoms in the city in July, seeking a reduction in electricity bills and the rollback of recent hikes in PPAC.

'Proper management'

Taking credit for the reduction, the CM said, "It is only through proper management of the power supply chain and pre-planning that the Delhi government has been able to achieve this."

She added that the electricity situation in the Capital is much better than in the neighbouring cities of Noida and Gurugram. "The residents of those cities are charged high tariffs while also experiencing frequent power cuts during summer," she said.

"In Delhi, on the other hand, people enjoy 24-hour power supply and, in many cases, zero electricity bills due to our policies," the CM added.

Bangladeshi immigrant deported for staying illegally in city: police

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

A Bangladeshi immigrant found living illegally in the city for the past six years has been deported, the Delhi police said on Friday.

"During our drive to identify illegal immigrants staying in the national capital, we got to know about a 28-year-old woman, who was found to have stayed in Mumbai and Delhi in violation of the Foreigners Act," said DCP (South West) Surendra Choudhary.

U.P. Rajkiya Nirman Nigam Ltd.	
ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company	
Visheshwariya Bhawan, Sonni Nagar, Lucknow	
TENDER NOTICE	
On behalf of Managing Director, U.P.Rajkiya Nirman Nigam Ltd., General Manager (Delhi Zone) (Lucknow Zone-1) invites online percentage rate bids for the following:	
01. NIT No-153/8/NIT-BADALPUR/UNIT-3/RNN/2024 Dated-21.12.2024, e-tender Construction 48 Capacity Girls Hostel in km. Mayawati, Govt. Girls PG College Badalpur, Gautambudh Nagar under Third Stage of RUSA of PM-USHA with MERU and GSU.	
02. NIT No-4062/GML(Z.-1)/W-151/RNN/2024 Dated-23.12.2024, e-tender Construction 53 houses of 10th Corps PAC, Category-2 of District Level Housing Scheme, Last	

IN BRIEF



BPSC paper 'leak' row: online educators support protesters

The ongoing protests by civil service aspirants in Patna over the alleged paper leak of the 70th Integrated Combined Competitive Examination conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) gained momentum on Friday with founder of Jan Suraaj Party Prashant Kishor and popular online educators extending their support. The protesters holding a sit-in at Gardanibagh are demanding a re-exam of the test conducted on December 13 at 912 centres across the State. However, on Friday, the BPSC ruled out retests, citing "no genuine basis" for the charges. The BPSC has only agreed to conduct a retest at a centre in Patna's Gyan Bhawan on January 4.

Female tiger cub found dead in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve

A female tiger cub was found dead in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Umaria district of Madhya Pradesh, a forest official said on Friday. Prima facie, the female tiger cub, aged around one-and-a-half years, died because of a fight between big cats. However, the exact cause of the death will be known after the autopsy report, Panpatha Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Forest, B.S. Uppal said. The carcass of the female cub was spotted by a tourist in the BTR's Jagua beat on Thursday, after which he alerted the forest staff, Mr. Uppal said. "It appears that the cub died on Wednesday," the official said. PTI

He revived the economy with a magician's touch: Antony

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Former Defence Minister A.K. Antony, a Cabinet colleague of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for seven years and seven months, recalled the revolutionary changes brought about in the country's socio-economic sphere and foreign affairs under Dr. Singh's tenure.

Speaking to the media here on Friday, Mr. Antony said Manmohan's death is "one of the biggest losses suffered by the country in recent years." "When former Prime Minister Narsimha Rao entrusted Dr. Singh, a non-politician, to save the Indian economy from ruins, many eyebrows were raised. But he went on to revive the economy with the touch of a magician. He led the country towards liberalisation,



Manmohan Singh with the then Defence Minister A.K. Antony in New Delhi in 2013.

and ended the licence and quota raj. When Sonia Gandhi chose to give up the Prime Minister's post, and chose Dr. Singh instead, many were sceptical. But, he became one of the most respected global

leaders," said Mr. Antony. Mr. Antony said the former Prime Minister forged stronger ties with most countries. "About 50 countries inked defence deals with India during the period. Though there were border disputes he patiently dealt with these issues without ceding even one inch of land," he said.

Mr. Antony lauded Dr. Singh for following the true spirit of federalism. "He had always taken a liberal approach to Kerala's demands. Kerala got defence-related industries for the first time during his tenure," he said.

Mr. Antony also reminisced about the former Prime Minister's simplicity, honesty and sense of justice. "While getting out of an aircraft, he never let anyone take his bag preferring to carry it himself. He was that simple," he said.

Manmohan Singh played a role in getting Tamil declared a classical language: Stalin

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday paid floral homage to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the latter's residence in New Delhi.

Describing the death of Dr. Singh as an irreparable loss to the entire nation and not just the Congress, Mr. Stalin, in his brief interaction with the media, recalled the contributions of the former Prime Minister in the area of infrastructure development in Tamil Nadu, especially the Chennai Metro Rail Project and the seawater desalination project (implemented in Nammel).

Dr. Singh, who had a close friendship with former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, played a role along with former president of the Congress Sonia



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin paying his respects to the mortal remains of Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Gandhi, in getting Tamil declared a classical language, Mr. Stalin said.

Among those who were present when the Chief Minister expressed his condolences to Gursharan Kaur, the widow of the former Prime Minister, were the DMK's Parliamentary party leader Kanimozhi Karunanidhi; Tamil Nadu government's special representative A.K.S. Vijayan, and

former Union Ministers T.R. Baalu, Dayanidhi Maran, and A. Raja.

'Exemplary statesman' In his message, AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami said that as a former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (1982-1985) and Union Finance Minister (1991-1996), Dr. Singh's monetary and fiscal policies shaped the

country's economy. Describing Dr. Singh as a great economist, able administrator, and an exemplary statesman, Mr. Palaniswami stated that his contributions held a special place in the nation's history.

TNCC chief K. Selvaprunthagi said Dr. Singh, by facilitating the development of the sectors of information technology, and highways and ports, had paved the way for foreign direct investment and employment generation.

Condoling Dr. Singh's death, MDMK general secretary Vaiko, in a statement, recollecting interacting with the late leader on several occasions and called him one of the greatest economists. "The death of [Dr.] Singh, who was known for being patient and humble, is an irreparable loss for the country," he said.

Nitish cancels Pragati Yatra, Soren puts off launch of women's scheme

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren postponed their scheduled programme on Friday as a mark of respect to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who passed away at Delhi AIIMS hospital on Thursday.

As part of his ongoing Pragati Yatra, Mr. Kumar was scheduled to review the developmental work in Muzaffarpur and Vaishali district on Friday and Saturday, respectively. However, he cancelled his visit and rescheduled it for January 5 and 6.

'Irreparable loss' Earlier on Thursday night after the news of Mr. Singh's passing away was confirmed by AIIMS, Mr. Kumar posted a message on X saying, "The demise of former Prime Minister of the country Dr. Manmohan Singh is sad. He was a skilled politician and economist. Under his leadership, India's economy got a new direction. The demise of Dr. Manmohan Singh is an irreparable loss for Indian politics."

Mr. Soren had posted a message on X on Thursday saying, "Today the country lost one of its great sons. The news of the demise of former Prime Minister of the country and world-renowned economist respected Manmohan Singh ji is extremely sad. The pioneer of developmental politics and governance, respected Manmohan Singh ji had selflessly devoted his entire life to the service of the country and countrymen."

On December 28, Mr. Soren was scheduled to transfer the first instalment of ₹2,500 to the bank accounts of eligible women under the Maiya Samman Yojana, as promised during the election. The new date has not been announced.

When Manmohan Singh demonstrated his negotiation skills in Tamil Nadu

T. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, widely known as an eminent economist, had a facet that was relatively less talked about: he was a skilful seat-sharing negotiator, that too, with strong-willed leaders such as Jayalalithaa and M. Karunanidhi of the DMK.

In the run-up to the 1999 Lok Sabha election, Dr. Singh, accompanied by Kerala's former Chief Minister A.K. Antony, visited Chennai a few times on his own to hold talks with Jayalalithaa, and with Karunanidhi nearly five years later. On both occasions, as the key emissary of Congress president Sonia Gandhi, he succeeded in getting a decent number of Lok Sabha seats for his party, despite the other side being reluctant initially. As the former Prime Minister was con-



sious of his party's diminished strength in Tamil Nadu, especially after the formation of Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar) in April 1996, he knew that, unlike in many other States, the Congress had to play the role of a junior partner to either the AIADMK or the DMK.

However, in 1999, Dr. Singh's main task was to manoeuvre the party to a position of relative comfort as, after all, between 1984

and 1996, the Congress contested in two-thirds of the Lok Sabha constituencies – popularly called the MGR formula (named after AIADMK founder M.G. Ramachandran) – in the company of the AIADMK. But, when the party faced the electorate in 1998 for the first time without the support of the two Dravidian parties since 1971, it drew a blank and secured about 4.8% of the votes polled. More importantly, it forfeit-

ed deposit in all the 35 constituencies it had contested, including in its traditional stronghold Nagercoil (now called Kanniyakumari).

Combination of factors The 1999 election was necessitated by a combination of factors. The important among them was the AIADMK's withdrawal of support earlier that year to the BJP-led government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. A few

weeks before Vajpayee's government was voted out in the Lok Sabha, Jayalalithaa and Sonia Gandhi met at a tea party hosted by Janata Party president Subramanian Swamy.

After Dr. Singh and Mr. Antony met Jayalalithaa for 90 minutes at her Poes Gardens residence on June 3, 1999, the former Prime Minister described the talks as "frank, cordial discussions" on an agreement for the Lok Sabha election. At

that time, the DMK and the BJP had also come together. Dr. Singh displayed his understanding of the political situation in Tamil Nadu, when he observed: "Tamil Nadu is known for its rationalist and secular outlook and the people of Tamil Nadu will judge."

The main issue was the number of seats. Jayalalithaa was willing to part with not more than five seats, as mentioned in a report of *The Hindu* on June 27, 1999, whereas the Congress, which considered it too few, was keen on going back to the MGR formula. She offered to set apart 15 seats if the Congress brought the TMC(M) to the alliance. Eventually, Jayalalithaa allotted 12 seats to the Congress even without the TMC(M). The national party had bagged three seats, including Puducherry.

In the subsequent years, the relationship between

the AIADMK and the Congress deteriorated. Jayalalithaa again played the "foe" card against Ms. Gandhi. In January 2004, the Congress chief deputed Dr. Singh to hold talks with Karunanidhi, who had just then walked out of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

'Mutual trust' Pointing out that the idea behind his meeting with the DMK president was to "establish a relationship of mutual trust and confidence" between the two parties, Dr. Singh expressed the hope that it was also "to write a new chapter in the history of the country".

His statement was important as the DMK and the Congress stitched together an alliance after 24 years. The Congress bagged all the 10 seats it was allotted in the DMK-led alliance, which made a clean sweep.

Month after violence, police set up outpost next to Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal

The Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW



Returning to normalcy: Devotees leave after offering prayers at the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, U.P., in November. FILE PHOTO

A heavy police force was deployed on Friday at the site for a police outpost in front of the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal district of Uttar Pradesh. Excavation was speeded up with the help of the municipality as the police want to complete the construction of the outpost soon.

"Measurements for the new outpost have been completed. The outpost is being established to bolster security in the region. The construction of the post will ensure a 24x7 presence of police in the area," said Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Shirish Chandra.

A survey in the locality has been done and construction will begin soon.

During the excavation for the construction of the post, the driver of a small

bulldozer of the municipality lost control and the vehicle rammed a house behind the mosque.

This accident happened when the bulldozer was being loaded on to a tractor after the excavation.

The incident took place on the road behind the Shahi Jama Masjid, causing damage to the house. However, no casualties have been reported.

After the deadly violence that erupted in Sambhal on November 24,

the law enforcement agencies are taking measures to enhance security and the construction of a new police outpost is a step towards it.

Sambhal remained on edge for several days since November 24 after five Muslim youth were killed as residents clashed with the Uttar Pradesh police over the survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid. However, the police have denied allegations of firing at the protesters in Sambhal.

Webinar unveils methods to manage emotional well-being of students

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI



Psychologist and author Aruna Sankaranarayanan addressing the webinar on Friday. Sridhar Aranala of The Hindu Group spoke.



and students. Sridhar Aranala, vice-president, sales and distribution, The Hindu Group, explained how understanding and managing the emotional landscape of Generation Z is crucial for teachers, especially considering diminishing attention spans.

The webinar was held exclusively for subscribers to The Hindu Group's educational products. To stay updated on upcoming events, educators can scan the QR code provided and register for notifications about future value-added initiatives by The Hindu Group's school vertical.

tions with students. It stands for recognising emotions in oneself and others, understanding the causes and consequences of emotions, labelling emotions accurately, expressing emotions appropriately, and regulating emotions effectively. She highlighted how these techniques could be integrated into daily teaching practices to foster better emotional awareness in both teachers and students.

One of the highlights of her talk was the introduction of the RULER model of emotional intelligence, which offers a structured framework for educators to improve their interac-

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER : PWRD, BARCHALLA & DHEKIAJULI TERRITORIAL ROAD DIVISION, DHEKIAJULI

No. EE/BDTRD/SOPD-G/2024-25/ Dated Dhekiajuli, the 20th December 2024

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer, PWRD, Barchalla & Dhekiajuli Territorial Road Division, Dhekiajuli on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bid from approved and eligible contractor registered with Assam PWD (Roads) for 21 (Twenty-One) nos. of work amounting to Rs. 299,809 Lakhs (approx.) for construction of road under SOPD for the year of 2024-25 pertaining to Sonitpur District of Assam.

Scheme is not yet sanctioned by the competent authority. In the event of non-sanction of the schemes, the bids may be cancelled and no claim what so ever on this account shall be entertained from the bidders.

Details along with Schemes for the work may be seen at the office of the undersigned during office hours. Amendment/ Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear at the office notice board of the undersigned during office hours..

Note: - NIT Value is inclusive of GST (12%), Labour Cess (1%) etc.

Executive Engineer, PWD,
Barchalla & Dhekiajuli Territorial Road Division,
Janasanyog /C/5831/24/Dec-24



जल संसाधन विभाग

कार्यपालक अधिकारी का कार्यालय

बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल-2, पटरीना

पत्रकांक- 1415 / पटरीना, दिनांक- 24.12.2024

अल्टकालीन राष्ट्रीय स्पृही निविदा आमंत्रण

(केवल ई-टेन्डर पद्धति के अनुसार वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना सं-01SBD/2024-25 दिनांक 24.12.2024

1. कार्य का विवरण —

क्रमांक/ पुस्तक संं.	कार्य का नाम	प्राककलित राशि (लाख रु० में)	अग्रधन की राशि (लाख रु० में)	परियोग मूल्य (रु० में)	विड शुल्क (रु० में)	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि
1	बाढ़ चंगे 2025 पूर्वी गोपीयों टटरबंध के निर्माणों 16.10 पर किमी 17.10 के बीच एवं निर्माणों 17.10 पर किमी 17.20 के बीच जलान लाइन अवधि का विकास (जेनेरेटर्स प्राप्त होने के पश्चात एवं एकरानामा के पूर्व BMSICL में निर्वाचन करना) अनिवार्य होगा—	928.02	18,561	10000	5900.00	15-05-2025
2	बाढ़ चंगे 2025 पूर्वी गोपीयों टटरबंध के निर्माणों 18.30 पर अवधिकारी स्तर पर, एवं दुलाहा लाइन के निर्माणों 23.40 पर जलान लाइन निर्माणों 27.150 पर किमी 28.00 के बीच जलान लाइन अवधि का विकास (जेनेग्रा सं-08.09.10 एवं 11/2025)	732.55	14,651	10000	5900.00	15-05-2025

2. निविदा का मान्यता दाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की विधि : दिनांक 24.12.2024

3. निविदा का मान्यता दाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की विधि : दिनांक 03.01.2025 को 10:00 बजे प्रवाहन से दिनांक 11-01-2025 के 3:00 बजे अपराह्न तक ।

(सिर्फ वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)

दिनांक 07.01.2025 के 1:00 बजे अपराह्न में मूल्य अभियंता, बाढ़ नियंत्रण एवं जल संसाधन विभाग, गोपालगंज के कार्यालय में

(केवल ई-टेन्डर पद्धति के अनुसार www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)दिनांक 13.01.2025 को 3:00 बजे अपरा हन (सिर्फ वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)समाप्त पदाधिकारी द्वारा बाढ़ नियंत्रण पर घोषित की जायेगी (सिर्फ वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)

प्री-विड मीटिंग की विधि, समय, एवं स्थान : निविदा की बैठक विकास (जलान लाइन अवधि का विकास) का विवादाना एवं पता

(केवल ई-टेन्डर पद्धति के अनुसार www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)10. विशेष जानकारी प्राप्त करने हेतु वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in एवं www.wrd.fmdiswrdbihar.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।

PR. No. 015753 (WRD) 2024-25

उक्त सूचना www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar पर भी देखी जा सकती है।

रक्त की आवश्यकता पड़ने पर लाइसेंस प्राप्त लाई वैकों से ही रक्त प्राप्त करें।

जल संसाधन विभाग

कार्यपालक अधिकारी का कार्यालय

बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, सालमारी

अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या 01SBD/2024-25

(राष्ट्रीय/जागीरी स्पदा)

(केवल ई-टेन्डर पद्धति के अनुसार www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

1. कार्य का विवरण :-

श्रृंखला	कार्य का नाम	प्राककलित राशि (लाख रु० में)	अग्रधन की राशि (लाख रु० में)	परियोग मूल्य (रु० में)	विड शुल्क (रु० में)	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि
1.	परियोगी चम्पारण जिले के जिला अस्पताल में 8000 वर्गफीट में जिला औपीयि भंडार के निर्माण कार्य।	219.85	4,39,800/-	11,800/-	As per Eproc-2	03 माह
2.	सिवान जिले के जिला अस्पताल में 8000 वर्गफीट में जिला औपीयि भंडार के निर्माण कार्य।	214.78	4,29,600/-	11,800/-	As per Eproc-2	03 माह
3.	सीतामढ़ी जिले के जिला अस्पताल में 8000 वर्गफीट में जिला औपीयि भंडार के निर्माण कार्य।	224.65	4,49,400/-	11,800/-	As per Eproc-2	03 माह
4.	सारांश जिले के जिला अस्पताल में 8000 वर्गफीट में जिला औपीयि भंडार के निर्माण कार्य।	206.58	4,13,200/-	11,800/-	As per Eproc-2	03 माह
5.	समसीपुर जिले के जिला अस्पताल में 8000 वर्गफीट में जिला औपीयि भंडार के निर्माण कार्य।	214.16	4,28,400/-	11,800/-	As per Eproc-2	03 माह
6.	रोहतास जिले के जिला अस्पताल में 8000 वर्गफीट में जिला औपीयि भंडार के निर्माण कार्य।	213.12	4,26,300/-	11,800/-	As per Eproc-2	03 माह
7.	पुरीगढ़ी जिले के जिला अस्पताल में 8000 वर्गफीट में जिला औपीयि भंडार के निर्माण कार्य।	218.66	4,37,400/-	11,800/-	As per Eproc-2	03 माह
8.	पटना जिले के जिला अस्पताल में 8000 वर्गफीट में जिला औपीयि भंडार के निर्माण कार्य।	228.38	4,56,800/-	11,800/-	As per Eproc-2	03 माह
9.	नालन्दा जिले के जिला अस्पताल में 8000 वर्गफीट में जिला औपीयि भंडार के निर्माण कार्य।	225.76	4,51,600/-	11,800/-	As per Eproc-2	03 माह
10.	मुग्गपुर जिले के जिला अस्पताल में 8000 वर्गफीट में जिला औपीयि भंडार के निर्माण कार्य।	216.44	4,32,900/-	11,800/-	As per Eproc-2	03 माह</



Letter and spirit

The new detention policy seeks to address a real issue, but it fails

Among the key school education reforms instituted by the UPA government as part of the Right to Education were Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) and a 'no detention' policy up to Class 8. Both sought to create a benign environment in school so that there was no pressure of final examinations and "standards" on the child. The CCE was to be executed from Class 6, in discrete steps throughout the year, which meant no scary final test of just academic achievement based on a year-long curriculum. Whether those reforms contributed to the current situation or not, the reality is that a significant number of students passing out of primary school do not have foundational numeracy and literacy. And they do not seem to catch up by the time they leave middle school. Recognising the gap in achieving learning outcomes, the NDA government sought to do away with the no detention policy, in 2019, leaving it to the appropriate State governments. The CCE was given up too. But the COVID-19 pandemic intruded and made it impossible for schools to even consider detaining students. The recent notification of the Ministry of Education has removed the discretion given to State governments. It has mandated a final examination at the end of Class 5 and Class 8, which will assess a child's competence. If he or she is not found to be competent, the child will be re-examined after two months after additional instruction. If the child fails again, he or she will be detained. The rules say no child should be expelled before completing elementary education.

Practical necessity is driving this change in norms. Steps do need to be taken to address the gap in the learning outcomes achievement. An educated, capable and skilled population is needed to reap the demographic dividend. It takes an entire neighbourhood to educate a child, not just the school and parents. The dismal situation in learning outcomes is a collective failure of society that needs to be addressed. But it would take a lot more than this particular change in policy to trigger a turnaround. CBSE-affiliated and other private schools can easily implement the new policy. However, for some States, it will be a political hot potato. Private schools should not use this as an excuse to expel poor performing students – safeguards would be needed. A sad consequence of the policy is that it brings back a single final examination as an arbiter of a child's promotion or detention. While NEET or the JEE may be taken as special cases applying to extremely competitive professions, to bring back one final test at the school level is a regression. The National Education Policy 2020, for instance, wants to replace summative assessment with formative, and promote self and peer assessments. It promises a "holistic, 360-degree, multidimensional progress report card" detailing the "progress and the uniqueness of each student". The new detention policy does not reflect the NEP's spirit.

Security in safety

Authorities must ensure public spaces are safe environs for all

People derive a sense of ease from what they perceive to be safe cloisters; they let their guard down in these areas and, relax. When an attack happens in safe environs, it would be a harsh betrayal of that sense of trust. In the recent case of sexual assault within the campus of Anna University, Chennai, there has not only been a vile violation of a young student's bodily integrity, but also, possibly as painful, a gross betrayal of trust. On December 23, in one of Tamil Nadu's top engineering institutes, Anna University, a public State-run institution, the engineering student and her friend, also a student, decided to take a walk after dinner. As they walked into a rather secluded neck of the woods, the horror began for them. A stranger there accosted the male companion, threatened him and then went on to sexually assault the girl. Traumatised by her ordeal, the girl called the police helpline – 100 – the next day, and a team from the all women's police station nearby reached the university and took her complaint. She gave a full account of the incident, assuring them that she would be able to identify the culprit if she were to see him again. On Wednesday, police arrested Gnanasekaran, a roadside vendor who has a bunch of petty cases against him, after he had been identified in an identification parade. Apparently, though not an employee, he used to frequent the varsity campus as his wife was a contract labourer employed by the university to work within the premises.

In the aftermath of the incident, the Higher Education Minister said more lights would be provided across the campus, and all the overgrown bushes trimmed. Efforts have also been initiated to regulate who enters the campus, by conducting an ID check before allowing visitors in. While the incident has provoked widespread outrage, it has also acquired varied political hues, with reactions from some quarters bordering on the absurd. What is essential is for the government to ensure, without a doubt, that every corner of all its educational institutions and their vast cloisters are safe for all students. Whatever needs to be done in aid of that should be done, costs notwithstanding. Additionally, the personal details of the complainant were revealed in the public realm, a clear violation of the law and repeated court guidelines. This too must never be allowed to happen another time. The alacrity displayed in apprehending the culprit should be extended to the filing of charges and securing a conviction for a just closure to this horrific crime.

Atul Kumar, the son of a daily wage worker and from the Scheduled Caste community, lost his seat at IIT Dhanbad after he was unable to pay the seat booking fee of ₹17,500 that was required to secure his admission. His case gained widespread attention on social media, prompting the Supreme Court of India to intervene by exercising its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to grant him admission. There are many and similar cases like Atul's, but which never draw media attention or receive justice, leaving many deserving students without opportunities due to financial constraints and systemic inequalities.

The rise in tuition fees
The struggles that Dalit students face echo the challenges of pre-Independence India when they were barred from enrolling in educational institutions because of their caste. While these historical restrictions were overt, the situation now is more insidious. Under the "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan", the Government of India has been pushing for self-reliance in institutions, leading to a significant increase in fees in many government colleges and universities such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), the Indian Institutes of Management, the central universities, and the National Law University. For instance, in 2016, the IIT council's standing committee agreed to increase the undergraduate tuition fees by 200%. This meant a fee increase from ₹90,000 to ₹3 lakh a year.

In response to the criticism regarding the fee increase, the committee set up by the government asserted that students from marginalised communities would benefit from the Vidyalakshmi scheme, which offers interest-free scholarships. However, while this initiative aims to provide support, it remains insufficient to fully address the financial challenges faced by these students, especially as fees continue to rise. The hike in fees that was implemented in seven IIMs including increased tuition fees; IIM-Lucknow hiked it by nearly 30%, IIM-Ahmedabad and IIM-Shillong by 5%, IIM Lucknow by 29.6%, IIM-Calcutta by 17.3%, IIM-Kozhikode by 23.1%, IIM-Ranchi by 19% and IIM-Tiruchirappalli by 20%. IIT-Delhi increased tuition fees for full-time M.Tech students in the semester in 2022-23. The total academic fee is now ₹53,100, which does not include hostel fees. This is a 100% increase from last year's fee of ₹26,450.

The frequent hikes in fees have made it increasingly difficult for students from the marginalised communities to afford higher education or even pursue studies through loans.



Suman Kumar
Associate Professor at the Alliance School of Liberal Arts, Alliance University, Bangalore

With rising costs in the Indian education system, many students from the marginalised communities are unable to even consider enrolling in prestigious institutions such as the IITs and the IIMs despite securing competitive ranks. As a result, while some students manage to cope with the financial burden, there are others who are overwhelmed by the stress and the inequality in academic institutions. This pressure, exacerbated by the high cost of education, has a human angle too. In 2021, data showed that over the past seven years, 122 students from the IITs and the IIMs had ended their lives, many due to the financial strain of rising fees and the anxiety of securing employment.

The issue of dropouts

Another harsh reality is that many students who manage to enrol themselves in prestigious institutions eventually drop out due to their inability to afford rising education fees. The Human Resources Development Ministry reported that 2,461 students dropped out of IITs in just two years (2017 and 2018). Last year, this issue was raised in the Lok Sabha, revealing that over the past five years, more than 13,500 students from the Scheduled Castes (SC), the Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) had dropped out of courses in the central universities, the IITs and the IIMs. Government data showed that in the central universities, 4,596 students from the Other Backward Classes, 2,424 SC students, and 2,622 ST students dropped out during this period. In the IITs, 2,066 OBC students, 1,068 SC students, and 408 ST students left. Similarly, the IIMs saw 163 OBC, 188 SC, and 91 ST students drop out over the past five years. These numbers highlight the significant challenges faced by marginalised communities in accessing and sustaining higher education in India.

One of the key reasons behind the poor economic conditions of the Dalit community is that their identity in India is still largely defined by caste. Dalits continue to be denied the opportunity to perform work that is on a par with others in society. This has not only left them economically marginalised but also socially vulnerable. Dalits in India are considered an oppressed and discriminated class, often labelled as "untouchable". Historically, this stigmatisation has meant that Dalits have been denied access to education. The term "untouchables" also refers to those who have been forced into the most undesirable and degrading jobs. A recent survey in 29 States on urban sewer and septic tank workers revealed that 92% of these workers belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled

Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). A 2019 report by former Education Minister Ramesh Pokhrayan revealed that 95% of faculty positions in IITs were held by individuals from upper caste backgrounds, with only 5% allocated to SC, ST, and OBC categories, despite these groups representing 70%-80% of India's population. An RTI filed by IIT-Bombay students further exposed the disparities, showing that 24 departments had no SC faculty, 15 lacked ST representation, and nine had no OBC faculty. These statistics highlight the deep-rooted caste-based inequalities that persist in both employment and education.

The barriers still exist

After Independence, with provisions in the Constitution and welfare mechanisms, Dalit school enrolment rates have improved over time. However, Dalit children continue to face significant barriers in education, including poverty, social discrimination, and caste-based prejudice. Dalit students are often judged based on their clothes, language, and other markers, making it difficult for them to integrate with their upper caste peers.

In many cases, caste-based remarks and discrimination wound these students, leading to social isolation. Some students succumb to the emotional toll of this prejudice – there are cases such as a woman postgraduate medical student in a medical college in Maharashtra and two students from IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi that are painful reminders of this reality. These incidents underscore the persistent shadow of casteism and harassment over the aspirations of many Dalit students. This troubling situation raises a critical question: how can these prestigious institutions effectively address this issue and foster a safe, inclusive environment for all students?

The unfortunate incidents of student suicides point to the immense pressure students face in the education system. Many students are burdened by their families' expectations that completing a degree will solve their economic problems. But unemployment in India is also high. An RTI filed in 2024 about IIT placements showed that approximately 8,000 students (38%) across 23 IIT campuses remained unplaced this year. For students from the marginalised communities, this struggle is even more pronounced, as their caste identity often doubles the challenges they face in securing jobs. These issues underscore the pressing need for systemic reforms in education and employment to alleviate the pressures on students and address caste-based disparities.

Rules that still manacle the captive elephant

In India, where elephants are revered as sacred symbols of wisdom and strength, privately-held captive elephants live a stark contradiction. Reflecting on this grim reality, the Kerala High Court recently likened the lives of these captive animals to an "eternal Treblinka", drawing a poignant comparison to the infamous Nazi extermination camps. Elephants used for religious purposes, entertainment and tourism are subjected to much cruelty and forced to behave in unnatural ways. These social animals are subjected to isolation and abusive training methods to break their spirit. Although elephants have the highest protection under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, they have been at the forefront of practices that seek to capture them from the wild for a life in captivity.

New rules and loopholes
In its intent to regulate potential misuse of captive elephants in private custody and curb illegal captures from the wild, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) published the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules in March 2024. These rules facilitate the transport and the transfer of elephants and also specify the procedure of transfer of ownership.

However, the ambiguity in procedures and rationale for transport and/or transfer of wild elephants could pave the way for further commercial exploitation. For instance, it states that when an owner is no longer able to maintain an elephant, the ownership of that elephant may be transferred. However, there is no obligation for this exchange to be non-commercial. Elephants can, therefore, be traded as movable property.

The rules also provide for transport of the elephants temporarily. Again, there is no explicit requirement to justify the transportation of a privately owned elephant across or within State borders on an interim basis. States with a high



Shubhra Sotie
an environmental lawyer and Specialist, Wildlife Policy and Research at Humane Society International (HSI) India

number of privately owned elephants could potentially lease their elephants to serve as props, from religious ceremonies to weddings to political rallies. These are activities that compromise the welfare of elephants even as they objectify and commodify them. This regularisation of the transfer of elephants for religious activities, tourism, or any other commercial ventures effectively contributes to the economic valuation of elephants, treating them as tools for generating income. Thus, the legislation could be misused by private elephant owners to essentially "rent out" their animals, which risks incentivising the capture of wild elephants and directly undermines elephant conservation.

Microchip misuse, births in captivity

As of January 2019, there were 2,675 documented captive elephants in the country, with a deeply disturbing implication. It has been reported that when these animals die, they are replaced by elephants captured from the wild. Most captive elephants were microchipped as part of a 2002 initiative that Project Elephant launched to track all captive elephants in India that have valid certificates of ownership. Anecdotes suggest that these microchips are retrieved from an elephant posthumously and then inserted into an elephant caught in the wild to legalise an illicit capture.

Despite this popular *modus operandi*, the Rules do not require the removal and the destruction of microchips implanted in captive elephants, which should be done in presence of forest officials. Moreover, the Rules do not require the submission of a post-mortem report in cases where an elephant dies during transfer or transportation, leaving a critical gap in monitoring and accountability. Worse, this fuels the never-ending cycle of elephants in captivity. This cycle is perpetuated by a provision in the Rules that recognises the birth of calves in captivity, allowing them to be legally classified as

There are ambiguities in the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules that may facilitate illegal trade in elephants

owned captive elephants.

What is required instead, is a mandate to implement humane, non-invasive birth control measures for elephants in private custody, to break the cycle of commercial exploitation and prevent more elephants entering captivity through birth. Additionally, a shift from using live elephants in temples, processions, and tourism to alternatives such as electronic elephants is crucial. Civil society, temple committees and the government should lead this change to protect wild elephants.

The trade between States

Further, there are numerous reports of elephants being transported from the northeastern States to the southern and western States. One such instance involved an elephant being "gifted" to a Delhi temple by a private owner in Assam. Unfortunately, in all these transfers, the new rules have served as an enabling agent for trade in an endangered species.

In August, following reports and objections submitted by this writer and others, the Elephant Project, under the aegis of MoEFCC, took action. It issued an office memorandum that flagged the illegal transfers of captive elephants. The memorandum reiterated the need for the strict adherence to Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024 and emphasised the mandatory digitisation of the genetic profiles of captive elephants. The Ministry's efforts to address captive elephant transfers are commendable. Yet, they fail to adequately remedy these key issues in the Rules.

Regrettably, the legislation lacks the teeth to ensure the meaningful protection of captive elephants. Without language that speaks the welfare of elephants and safeguards them from any form of commercial exploitation, the paradox of the elephant being venerated as a sacred animal while also being the most exploited wild animal will persist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mammooh Singh

The passing of former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh will be felt for long (December 27). Yet in his lifetime, he could best be faulted on being reticent, more correctly lacking a liberal tongue to grandstand on a Dalit theme or denigrating leaders in the Opposition at the drop of a hat. He went about his remit assiduously, much as a craftsman jeweller would be stringing the choicest pearls. He

charted a new highway to India's economic progress. He steered the nation fairly through the economic epidemic that struck from the West. The astuteness he brought through his policies laid the foundation for the present-day vibrant economy.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

India has lost a tall leader. When he was the Prime Minister, we felt safe. He was a leader who was

respected by one and all. There was no deviousness and no vile and polarising talk. There was much respect for the diversity in India's demography.

Tara Fonseca,
Ponda, Goa

Dr. Manmohan Singh was a rare leader whose statesmanship and decency resonated across the political divide. He was the first Prime Minister who saw the tomorrow. The way he

shepherded the civil nuclear deal was a master move, earning him the moniker, 'Singh is King'. The gentle sardar of politics will continue to inspire us.

Dr. A.S. Farida,
Bengaluru

Dr. Manmohan's legacy is

Corrections & Clarifications

In the front page report, "Nation mourns former PM Manmohan Singh..." (December 27, 2024), the name of his wife was mentioned as Gurcharan Singh. It should have been Gursharan Kaur.

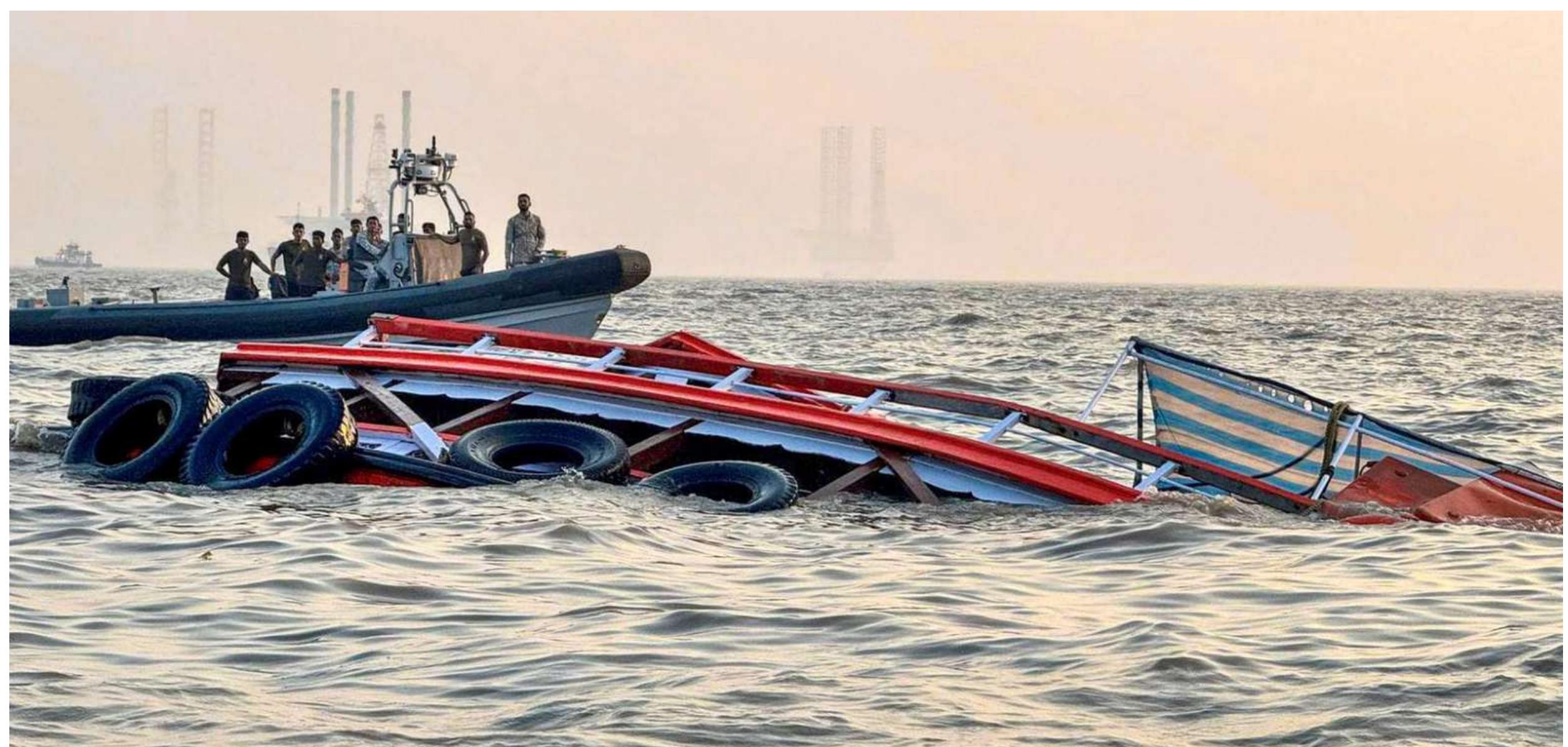
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Manmohan Singh's journey, from humble beginnings to the pinnacle of Indian leadership, is an inspiring tale of intellect and perseverance. He will remain a symbol of transformative leadership and public service. His legacy of progress will inspire generations.

Amarjeet Kumar,
Hazaribagh, Jharkhand

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

GROUND ZERO



Rescue work underway after a ferry capsized off the coast of Mumbai when a Navy speedboat crashed into it on December 18, 2024. PTI

In Mumbai, a joyride that turned fatal

On December 18, a collision between a ferry and an Indian Navy speedboat in the Arabian Sea off the coast of Mumbai claimed 15 lives, raising concerns about safety and alleged negligence by the Navy. **Snehal Mutha** reports on the tragedy, the problem of overcrowding, the lack of adequate life jackets for passengers on ferries, and the complaints of ferry operators regarding the Navy's speedboats

It was at noon on December 18 that Tanvi Wakchaure saw her father, Deepchand, for the last time. Deepchand, a 45-year-old plumber, had dropped Tanvi, 17, at college in Govandi, an eastern suburb of Mumbai. He did not tell her where he was headed to next.

When he did not return by night, Deepchand's family, who live in the same area, started getting worried. "We began calling his friends one by one," says Tanvi.

They learned that Deepchand, an avid explorer, had boarded a ferry to Elephanta Island, located 9 nautical miles off the coast of Mumbai from the Gateway of India. Every day, about 3,000 people visit the UNESCO world heritage site, says Sardar J. Mahadkar, president of Jal Vahatuk Sahakari Sanstha Maryadit, an organisation representing ferry owners. The island is home to the rock-cut Elephanta Caves, which were constructed in the mid-5th and 6th centuries AD and reflect Hindu and Buddhist iconography.

"He liked to explore the city," says Deepchand's friend, Chandrakant Hevale. "That happened to be one of those days. When we found out that he had boarded the ferry and there had been an accident in the Arabian Sea, we rushed to the Colaba police station in the early hours of December 19." The Colaba police station is located about 600 metres from the Gateway of India.

The police asked the family and friends to go to the state-owned JJ Hospital. On rushing to the hospital, the family found Deepchand's body.

"Just a day earlier, he and my mother had celebrated their wedding anniversary," remembers a distraught Tanvi.

At around 3.30 p.m. on December 18, an Indian Navy speedboat had rammed into the passenger ferry not far from Elephanta Island. The ferry capsized. Thirteen people, including Deepchand, died. Two remained missing, including a child. On December 19 and 21, their bodies were also recovered. The death toll increased to 15.

In deep water

Every day, during the off season (the rainy months of July-October), at least 25-30 rides are scheduled from the Gateway of India, an arch built in the Indo-Islamic style in the 20th century to commemorate the landing of King George V in India, to Elephanta Caves. During holiday season (October-January), this number increases to 50 or even 100, says Sardar.

On December 18, the last ferry of the day, Neel Kamal (blue lotus), had left the Gateway at 3:00 p.m. Neel Kamal had a capacity of 80 passengers, but it was carrying 110-115 passengers that day, says an investigation officer on the case from the Colaba police station.

Natharam Chaudhry, 24, a carpenter based in Kurla, was on the upper deck, enjoying the breeze, when the ferry was around 20 minutes from its destination, the Gharapuri jetty at Elephanta Island. He says many of his co-passengers were lounging on the lower deck.

Natharam was among the first to spot the Navy speedboat, but there seemed to be no cause for alarm. "I was fascinated, so I started shooting the speedboat with my phone camera," he says.

The speedboat took two sharp turns before

We raised concerns regarding the speed limits of the speedboats and about possible accidents

IQBAL MUKADAM
Secretary of Jal Vahatuk Sahakari Sanstha

hurtling towards the ferry. It rammed into the right side of the vessel "with a loud bang, like an earthquake," Natharam recalls. "We ran downstairs. The ferry started sinking on the right side, so everyone congregated on the left side."

Realising that there was no way he could balance himself on the sinking ferry, Natharam grabbed a life jacket, strapped it on, and jumped with his cousin and uncle into the cold water.

"The moment I jumped in, I thought of my parents. I panicked about what they would do with me. People were in the water shouting for help," he says.

Natharam went blank for a bit after that, but it was this quick-thinking action that saved his life. His uncle and cousin survived too.

Survivors allege that the ferry did not have enough life jackets. One survivor says, "The people who managed to access life jackets managed to live, while some others drowned."

Natharam was the complainant in the First Information Report (FIR) registered at the Colaba police station against the Navy speedboat which was carrying two Navy personnel and four workers. The driver of the Navy speedboat has been booked under Sections 106(1) (causing death by negligence), 125 (actions that endanger personal safety), 282 (rash navigation of a vessel), and 324 (mischievous causing damage to government or local authority property) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita, 2023. Natharam's video is now being treated as evidence by the police.

Within a few hours of the accident, the Indian Navy released a statement. It said that the speed boat, which was undergoing engine trials, "lost control and collided with a passenger ferry, Neel Kamal, off Karanja, Mumbai."

A Defence spokesperson explained the accident: "The throttle (acceleration) was stuck in the top position, preventing them from taking a turn or slowing down the boat."

Of the 115 people who were rescued, 13 people – one Navy personnel and 12 civilians, including three workers on the speedboat – were declared dead by Mumbai's civic body and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. By December 21, two missing bodies were recovered from the sea.

The Chief Minister announced financial assistance of ₹5 lakh to the families of the dead. The Prime Minister's Office also announced an ex-

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When I reached the spot, I found that nearly 95% of the ferry had sunk. Approximately 50 people, including children, were clinging to the tiny bit that remained above water.

ANMOL SHRIVASTAV
Captain of the JNPA pilot boat

gratia of ₹2 lakh for each family of the dead and ₹50,000 for the injured from the Prime Minister National Relief Fund. The Indian Navy has constituted a Board of Inquiry to probe the accident.

The rescue operation

The survivors say they received help within 20-30 minutes of the accident.

A Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) patrol boat and a Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) pilot boat were the first to reach the spot. "We heard people screaming for help. We saw some people holding children tight and some clutching on to the boat, which was partially submerged in the water. We first focused on rescuing children," says a CISF officer, who was patrolling a 2.3 kilometre radius from the accident spot.

The officer says the biggest challenge was oil spillage. "The diesel from the ferry had spilled on the passengers. It became difficult for us to hold them and haul them up from the water as they kept slipping from our hands."

The captain of the JNPA pilot boat, Anmol Shrivastav, says he heard a distress call on radio channels 12 and 13 from an oil tanker, Tony, moored at Jawahar Dweep 5, a jetty at the Jawahar Dweep oil terminal on an island off the coast of Mumbai. The tanker reported that a ferry was sinking and requested urgent assistance.

"I checked my location and realised that I was only about five minutes from the incident site. When I reached the spot, I found that nearly 95% of the ferry had sunk. Approximately 50 people, including children, were clinging to the tiny bit that remained above water. There were 20-25 people floating nearby. Some were wearing life jackets and some were not," says Anmol.

Eleven Navy boats, three Marine Police boats, two Coast Guard boats, and four helicopters were also deployed in the area for the search-and-rescue operation, says a Defence spokesperson.

Along with the help of CISF personnel, the JNPA rescued 57 people, says Anmol. "The CISF's boat was lower in the water, allowing easier transfers. Together, we created a chain of rescue operations. The CISF pulled people from the water and transferred them to our pilot boat."

Later, the Mumbai Port Authority (MPA) pilot boat, Purva; the Naval ferry, Suvidha; and two fishing boats also began assisting in the rescue operations. Arif Bamne, a master (boat driver) with the MPA, says, "All we could hear was 'ba-chao ba-chao' (help, help). It felt like a scene from a film. A foreign couple helped us in rescuing people and performing CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) on those who were critical." The MPA helped in rescuing at least 35 passengers, he says.

The passengers also helped one another. "A German man who could swim well helped rescue a three-year-old child and gave him CPR. He also helped us rescue other passengers," says Anmol.

All the passengers were taken to the JNPA hospital, the Navy Dockyard, Ashwini Hospital, St George's Hospital, and Karanja Hospital. The passengers were mostly from other districts, including Sangli, Dhule, Nagpur, and Nashik; and Goa and other regions.

The autopsy of 11 out of the 15 dead was carried out at the Indira Gandhi Rural Hospital in Uran in Navi Mumbai. "The reason for the death was asphyxiation due to drowning," said Medical Superintendent Dr. B.M. Kalel. The rest were taken to JJ Hospital.

Navy personnel Karmveer Yadav is still in a critical stage and undergoing treatment. Two people, a six-year-old boy and a 43-year-old man, went missing after the accident. Six Navy and three Coast Guard personnel were deployed to

search for them.

On December 19, the rescue team found the body of the man, identified as Hansaram Bhati, a Malad-based proprietor. The next afternoon, they found the body of the boy identified as Zohan Pathan.

Hansaram's son Tarun, who had held the hands of Natharam Chaudhry and his cousin, was rescued. Since then, he has been in a state of shock. "Tarun has got a fever and is constantly asking about his father," says Jongaram Bhati, 58, Hansaram's brother.

Zohan had come to Mumbai on vacation with his family from Goa. While his maternal aunt, his father, and his 10-month-old brother survived the accident, Zohan and his mother Shafina Pathan, 35, died in the accident.

Sitting outside the Indira Gandhi Hospital in Uran, his maternal aunt, Sonali Gonde, recalls the tragic turn of events. "My sister and her elder son went down to the lower deck looking for a life jacket. She informed me that no life jackets were left, so I asked her to come up. But when I looked down she was gone. All I had were her chappals in my hand. We had shopped for those in Colaba market before taking the ferry ride." Sonali says her sister died because there were not enough life jackets on the ferry.

While the owner of the ferry, Rajendra Padte, refuses to respond to questions, his brother, Shekhar, had only one thing to say: "The ferry was new. It was launched just a year ago."

Trials and tribulations

Locals and ferry operators demand to know why the Navy was conducting trials in an area that is extensively used by ferries. "For the last 3-4 years, the ferries have been tolerating all kinds of shenanigans by the Navy boats. They perform stunts and sometimes come very close to the ferry," claims a tourist guide, Trikal Patil.

Kavita, who sells caps at Elephanta Caves, echoes this allegation. She says, "In the last 5-6 years, we have seen altercations between people in the ferry and Navy personnel."

A Defence spokesperson dismissed these allegations. "This is not a joyride [for the Navy]. It is for the safety of the harbour. The nature of trials is to check extremities. These may seem like stunts but they may be part of trials."

The secretary of Jal Vahatuk Sahakari Sanstha, Iqbal Mukadam, points out that several oral and written complaints have been lodged with the Maharashtra Maritime Board and the Mumbai Port Authority about the movements of the Navy's speed boats. "We raised concerns regarding the speed limits of the speed boats and about possible accidents," he says. Minor collisions between ferry boats and Navy boats have been reported in the past, he adds.

In fact, on December 12, a few days before the accident, Jal Vahatuk Sahakari Sanstha had written a letter to the authorities about the "unauthorised speedboat berthing from jetty 1,2,3, and 4", instead of using "dedicated jetty 5". The letter also cited safety concerns and warned about the risk of accidents.

On December 19, given the mounting concerns about safety, especially after the accident, the Gateway of India is less crowded than usual. A man sitting at a ticket counter made out of tin sheets says, "Today, we have very few passengers."

The police have sprung into action and are busy counting passengers, checking life jackets, and the licences of ferries. A police officer, Jayesh Chavan, who has been stationed at the base of Elephanta Island, says, "This is a routine inspection. But due to the accident, we are being more careful than usual."

The survivors continue to deal with the trauma of the incident. Ishtiyak and Ariha, a newly married couple, had landed in Mumbai after their honeymoon in Kashmir. "They thankfully survived the accident," says the couple's uncle, Rafique Shriv. "But they are so distressed that they have decided to stay away from all water bodies, especially the sea."

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A video grab shows the speedboat before it crashed into the passenger ferry.

From Page One**Manmohan Singh's funeral to be held today**

Dr. Singh's numerous achievements since then were no mean feat, Mr. Modi said.

The Congress's insistence on a memorial can also be seen as one to counter allegations that former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's cortège was not allowed inside the All India Congress Committee headquarters. Dr. Singh's body will be taken to the Congress headquarters for party workers and public to pay their respects before the official funeral takes place.

On Friday, draped in the Tricolour, the former Prime Minister's body was kept at his 3 Motilal Nehru Road residence for leaders and public to pay respects. President Droupadi Murmu, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former President Ram Nath Kovind, BJP chief J.P. Nadda, the Home Minister and Defence Minister were among those who offered their respects.

Chief Ministers M.K. Stalin, N. Chandrababu Naidu, A. Revanth Reddy, and Atishi; AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal, and CPI general secretary D. Raja paid homage at Dr. Singh's residence.

Dam won't affect India, Bangladesh, says China

The dam will be built at a huge gorge in the Himalayan reaches where the Brahmaputra makes a huge U-turn to flow into Arunachal Pradesh and then to Bangladesh. The total investment in the dam could exceed \$137 billion, which would dwarf any other single infrastructure project on the planet, including China's own Three Gorges Dam, which is regarded as the largest in the world, the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* reported on Thursday.

China has already operationalised the \$1.5 billion Zam Hydropower Station, the largest in Tibet in 2015. Concerns arose in India as the dam would allow China to release large amounts of water flooding the border areas in times of hostilities. India too is building a dam over Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh.

SC gives Punjab a day to hospitalise farmer

The court directed both to be present online for the next hearing on Saturday.

"We have serious doubts about those farmers who are not concerned or aware about the danger to his [Dallewal] life. Why should they resist saving his life," Justice Kant asked. He said the State must deal with any law and order problem with an iron hand.

"Please take this very seriously. Somebody's life is at stake," Justice Dhulia intervened.

Mr. Singh suggested the Centre could pitch in and "defuse" the impasse with the farmers.

Letter to PM

He pointed out that States normally could request the Centre to step in. In fact, Mr. Dallewal had addressed a letter to the Prime Minister about meeting the farmers' demands.

"He [Dallewal] wants to make some headway for the farmers," the Advocate General conveyed.

However, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said the first priority for the State should be to save Mr. Dallewal's life.

Besides, he said the Centre's intervention now would only make the situation more complicated. "All this can be discussed. First, let him shift to a hospital," he said.

Mr. Mehta alleged that a "few people around Mr. Dallewal [were] keeping him hostage".

Justice Kant asked Mr. Singh to assure the farmer leader that he would get his day in court as soon as he recovered his health.

"You can assure Mr. Dallewal that the moment he is safe and sound from the health point of view, we will have him online and hear him. We will request the Solicitor-General to assist us in the matter. But please tell him that our primary concern today is his health," Justice Kant told Mr. Singh.

Household spending rose 3.5%: govt. survey

Reduced spending on edible oils offset spikes in wallet shares of items like vegetables over a period of generally high food inflation.

The urban-rural gap in MPCE has declined to 71% in 2022-23 from 84% in 2011-12, and dropped further to 70% in 2023-24, while the increase in the average MPCE in 2023-24 from the level of 2022-23 has been the maximum for the bottom 5% to 10% of India's population, for both rural and urban areas, the fact sheet said.

Consumption inequality declined

"Consumption inequality, both in rural and urban areas, has declined from the level of 2022-23. The Gini coefficient has declined to 0.237 in 2023-24 from 0.266 in 2022-23 for rural areas and to 0.284 in 2023-24 from 0.314 in 2022-23 for urban areas," the Ministry concluded.

The MPCE estimates from the latest survey are based on data collected from 2,61,953 households across all States and Union Territories, with about 59% of those households surveyed in rural India.

Indian visionary dedicated to regional peace: South Asia leaders on Manmohan

Leaders of neighbouring countries remember former Prime Minister; former Afghan President Karzai recalls the guidance offered by him, former Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe pays respects at his home; Pakistan's Deputy PM Ishaq Dar recalls his role in improving relations

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Take steady steps and take your time", was the advice former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh gave Hamid Karzai, who became President of Afghanistan at the age of 45, when he first met him in 2004.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Friday, Mr. Karzai said India and Afghanistan had the "best relations" during Dr. Singh's tenure, as India became Afghanistan's first Strategic Partner in 2012. "I was in a hurry, as a young President, and one day he told me – you can't build a nation in a hurry, you have to have patience for institutions to be built and human capital to develop," Mr. Karzai said, recalling Dr. Singh's famous speech on South Asian connectivity and a vision of being able to have "Breakfast in Amritsar, lunch in Lahore and dinner in Kabul".

As tributes poured in from around the world, many of the personal anecdotes came from leaders in



Hamid Karzai greeting former Indian President Pranab Mukherjee and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the Rashtrapati Bhavan during his visit to India in 2012. REUTERS

India's neighbourhood, who remembered Dr. Singh for his particular interest in South Asian ties. On Friday, Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu, Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, Bangladeshi Chief Executive Muhammad Yunus, Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and Bhutan PM Tshering Tobgay were among those sitting heads of government and state that sent condolences.

"Dr. Singh's wisdom, compassion, and leader-

ship touched many lives, and also strengthened the bond between our two countries," wrote Mr. Tobgay in a social media post, calling the former Prime Minister "a remarkable statesman and cherished friend of Bhutan".

"Nepal will forever remember his support for democracy and lasting friendship," wrote Mr. Oli, and said that Dr. Singh's "wisdom, humility, and dedication shaped India and inspired the region".

Mr. Yunus, a fellow eco-

2006, Dr. Singh had written to him, and Mr. Yunus was invited to address members of both Houses of Parliament at an annual parliamentary lecture.

Look East policy

"Dr. Singh's commitment to progress, and his leadership to strengthen the 'Look East Policy' played a pivotal role in fostering development and cooperation across the South Asia region," wrote Mr. Muizzu in a social media post, where he credited Dr. Singh's 2011 visit to the Maldives for the SAARC summit as a "significant milestone in advancing our economic and social development".

Praising Dr. Singh for his "humility and intellect", Mr. Dissanayake said he was "a tireless advocate of international collaboration", adding that he had "countless admirers worldwide", and influence that "transcended national boundaries".

Former Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is in New Delhi at present, visited Dr. Singh's home and paid his

respects to the former Prime Minister. In 1992, when they first met, Mr. Wickremesinghe was the Sri Lankan Industries Minister and Mr. Singh was Finance Minister, and both held deep discussions about liberalising their economies, and remained in contact years later.

"Dr. Singh was a distinguished economist and political leader," said Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar in a statement. "Beyond his remarkable achievements in the field of economics, Dr. Singh demonstrated a commitment to promoting regional peace," Mr. Dar said, adding that he had played a "notable role in improving Pakistan-India bilateral relations during his tenure as Prime Minister."

Although India and Pakistan came close to a non-territorial resolution to the Kashmir dispute, the process was derailed after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. Mr. Singh famously recited a couplet about the situation that said "mistakes were made in moments, for which the price was paid for ages".

Manmohan an outstanding statesman, says Putin; Anwar calls him 'my mitra, my bhai'

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Leaders from across the world, including France, Russia, and Malaysia, expressed grief over the passing of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and recollect their interactions with him.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was one of the first to recall his personal exchanges with Dr. Singh as the Prime Minister of India.

Dr. Singh and Mr. Ibrahim both served as Finance Ministers during the 1990s when they collaborated extensively.

Subsequently, when he was imprisoned, Dr. Singh reached out to help his family. "Not many people know this, and it is time



Close ties: Manmohan Singh with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in 2013. PTI

that I share it with Malaysians: during the years of my incarceration, he extended a kindness that he didn't have to – one that was neither politically expedient nor, as one can imagine, appreciated by the Malaysian government at that time. Yet, true to his

character, he did it anyway. He offered scholarships for my children, particularly my son, Ihsan. Although I had declined the gracious offer, such a gesture undoubtedly showed his extraordinary humanity and generosity, demonstrative, as the Bard

would have it, of a man so full of the 'milk of human kindness', Mr. Ibrahim said in a social media post, describing Dr. Singh as "my mitra, my bhai".

Russian President Vladimir Putin described Dr. Singh as an "outstanding statesman".

"He also made a major personal contribution to strengthening friendly ties between our two countries by elevating them to the level of a special privileged strategic partnership," he said.

The Palestinian Embassy's Charge d'Affaires, Abed Elræzeg Abu Jazer, conveyed Palestine's tributes to Dr. Singh and shared a photo of the late PLO leader Yasser Arafat meeting Dr. Singh in New Delhi on January 21, 1992,

when he was the Finance Minister. It was during the second tenure of Dr. Singh as Prime Minister that Palestine got its brand new embassy in Chanakyapuri.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in a statement, described Dr. Singh as "one of the greatest champions of the U.S.-India strategic partnership" and gave him credit for laying the foundation for bilateral cooperation over the past two decades. "His leadership in advancing the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement signified a major investment in the potential of the U.S.-India relationship," he said.

The process of framing charges against a total of 54 persons, including Mr. Chatterjee in the ED case related to irregularities in the primary teacher requirement is also going on.

Chargesheet filed against Trinamool leader Partha

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

The CBI on Friday filed a chargesheet against Trinamool Congress leader Partha Chatterjee in the school recruitment scam case. The development comes at a time when the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has started the process of framing charges in the recruitment scam.

In the chargesheet, the CBI has brought charges against two other persons Ayan Shil and Santu Gangopadhyay.

The process of framing charges against a total of 54 persons, including Mr. Chatterjee in the ED case related to irregularities in the primary teacher requirement is also going on.

Snowfall affects traffic movement in Kashmir

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Kashmir Valley received a spell of heavy snowfall on Friday, forcing the administration to raise an alert for the employees "to prepare for eventualities".

Meanwhile, the snowfall enforced the cancellation of all examinations being held by the Kashmir University on Saturday and disrupted traffic on many highways.

An official said multiple spells of snowfall were recorded in south, north, and central Kashmir, including Srinagar. It is the season's first snowfall in the plains of the Valley this year, as December witnessed a dry spell and icy weather conditions due to sub-zero temperatures during the nights.

The fresh snowfall has closed many passes connecting the Kashmir Valley with the outside world.

Gah village in Pakistan mourns its 'Mohna'

Press Trust of India
GAH (PAKISTAN)

"The entire village is in mourning. We feel that someone from our family has died today," Altaf Hussain said as a group of local residents held a meeting to condole the death of village boy Manmohan who became Prime Minister next door.

Mr. Hussain is a teacher at the same school in Gah village where Dr. Manmohan Singh studied up to Class 4.

His father Gurumukh Singh was a cloth merchant and his mother Amrat Kaur a homemaker. His friends called him 'Mohna'. The village lies about 100 km southwest of capital Islamabad and was part of Jhelum district when Dr. Singh was born.

Surrounded by lush green fields, the place can be reached from M-2 motorway linking Islamabad to Lahore, as well as from Chakwal city.



Residents of former PM Manmohan Singh's ancestral village mourn his death at Gah village in Chakwal district of Pakistan. PTI

The former Prime Minister died at the AIIMS in New Delhi on Thursday night. He was 92.

Raja Ashiq Ali, nephew of Raja Muhammad Ali, a schoolmate who travelled to Delhi in 2008 to meet him, addressed the meeting. "All these villagers are deeply moved... They were eager to attend his last rites in India, but it is not possible. So, they are here to mourn," he said.

Dr. Singh's rise brought to spotlight his forgotten ancestral village. Some classmates who were around when he became Prime Minister in 2004 are dead now. But their families still live in Gah and cherish the old link. "We are still overwhelmed by the memory of the days when everyone in the village felt proud that a boy from our village had become the Prime Minister of India," Mr. Ashiq Ali said.

ED searches places linked to Chirag Paswan's associate

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday carried out searches at three locations linked to Lok Janshakti Party (RJD) leader Hulas Pandey, a close associate of party president and Union Minister Chirag Paswan.

The Central agency conducted the searches in a case related to alleged disproportionate assets and sand mining. In Patna, the searches were conducted at Gola Road and Danapur. The third search was in Bengaluru.

Mr. Pandey, a former MLC, had resigned as the chairman of the LJP (RV) Parliamentary Board in December 2023, after his name appeared in the supplementary chargesheet filed by the CBI in the Brahmeshwar Mukhiya murder case in Bihar. Mukhiya was murdered on June 1, 2012,

by unknown persons and the Central Bureau of Investigation had accused Mr. Pandey of plotting the murder. However, Mr. Pandey had termed it a political conspiracy.

Mukhiya was the founder of the private upper caste militia Ranveer Sena responsible for over two dozen caste massacres, killing many from Backward and Dalit communities. The CBI had alleged "loss of his political clout" due to Mukhiya's growing popularity among "upper caste farmers" in the Shahabad region of Buxar, Bhojpur, Rohtas and other districts. Mr. Pandey was elected an MLC in 2010 from the Ara-Buxar seat on Janata Dal (U) ticket. However, he later switched to the LJP (RV).

In April, a special court dismissed the CBI chargesheet against Mr. Pandey. The CBI had filed a chargesheet against Mr. Pandey in the Brahmeshwar Mukhiya murder case in Bihar. Mukhiya was murdered on June 1, 2012, by unknown persons and the Central Bureau of Investigation had accused Mr. Pandey of plotting the murder. However, Mr. Pandey had termed it a political conspiracy.

Manmohan's work profoundly shaped India's destiny: Congress

CWC resolution says the former PM 'embodied the very best qualities of a true statesman, including compassion, honesty, and a deep commitment to public service'; in a message, Sonia mourns the loss of 'my friend, philosopher and guide'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was a true statesman whose "life and work have profoundly shaped the destiny of India", the Congress Working Committee (CWC) said in a resolution on Friday.

The highest decision-making body of the Congress held a special meeting to pass the resolution to honour the departed leader. Calling Dr. Singh a towering figure in India's political and economic landscape, the CWC resolution said his contributions transformed the country and earned him respect worldwide.

"Dr. Singh embodied the very best qualities of a true statesman – compassion, honesty, and a deep commitment to public service. His life was a living example of how grace and



Bidding adieu: Rahul Gandhi pays floral tribute to Manmohan Singh at the Congress headquarters in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

humility can coexist with great power," it noted.

Endorsing his policies of "deregulation, privatisation, and the encouragement of foreign investment", the CWC noted that he had laid the foundation for India's rapid economic growth.

"As Finance Minister in the early 1990s, Dr. Singh was the architect of India's economic liberalisation. With unmatched foresight,

he initiated a series of reforms that not only saved the nation from a balance-of-payments crisis but also opened the doors to global markets," the resolution said.

"Under his stewardship, India emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, a testament to his brilliance and vision," it added.

The party listed out legislation such as the Ma-

hatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Right to Education, National Food Security Act, Land Acquisition Act, Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, the 93rd Constitutional Amendment to further social justice for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, and the Indo-U.S. civil nuclear deal as achievements of his 10-year-long tenure.

"As the 13th Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh led the country with a sense of calm determination and exceptional wisdom," the resolution said. "His tenure was marked by sustained economic growth, global recognition, and social progress."

The party acknowledged his role in shielding India from the worst effects of the global financial

crisis in 2008 by taking strategic measures.

"Dr. Singh's dedication to inclusive growth, international diplomacy, and economic modernisation strengthened India's position in the global arena, while simultaneously focusing on the welfare of the common man. His legacy as a compassionate, reformist leader who prioritised stability and development will forever be etched in India's history," the CWC observed.

In a separate condolence message, Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi described the loss as a "personal one". "He was my friend, philosopher and guide. He was so gentle in his manner but so resolute in his deeply held convictions. His commitment to social justice, secularism and democratic values was deep and unwavering," Ms. Gandhi said.

Activists credit Manmohan for rights-based legislation, providing space for dialogue

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's 10-year tenure, several rights-based laws from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to the Right to Information and Forest Rights Acts were passed in Parliament. Activists remember the space for dialogue that Dr. Singh provided.

Former bureaucrat-turned-activist Aruna Roy told *The Hindu* that Dr. Singh was always willing to listen and gave space for dialogue and deliberation.

"He afforded easy access. One could go up to him and ask for time for an issue of importance. The views and opinions from advisory bodies, parliamentary committees and study groups in Planning Commission and elsewhere were taken into consideration for policy formulation, which is dramatically different from the present



The Tricolour flies half-mast at Parliament on Friday to mourn former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. AFP

regime," Ms. Roy said.

She explained that even in case he had differences with the position the civil society or the National Advisory Council (NAC) took, he heard them out. "We had our share of differences. For example, we wanted a stricter penalty clause in RTI but he argued that already the legislation is a great leap for the bureaucracy from impunity to transparency. So, we did have the penalty clause but not as stringent as we

wanted," Ms. Roy said.

The country's first Chief Information Commissioner, Wajahat Habibullah, said Dr. Singh was "a little uncertain" about the impact of RTI on the government's functioning. "He was a true bureaucrat who understood the importance of secrecy in the government. So, he was a little apprehensive, but he was committed to the idea of accountability and transparency," he said. (With PTI inputs)

Manmohan was humility personified; criticism did not deter him: T.K.A. Nair

The Hindu Bureau

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was humility personified and had a genuine respect for the people whom he met, recalls T.K.A. Nair, who was Principal Secretary to Dr. Singh when he was the Prime Minister.

"He never sought to project himself as the architect of any remarkable achievement, and as a democrat at the core, warned us in the Prime Minister's Office against such a portrayal," Mr. Nair told *The Hindu* on Friday.

"Criticism, however ruthless and uncharitable, did not deter him from pursuing what he thought was good for the country. During the first United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, he was fully aware of the fact that he



T.K.A. Nair with Manmohan Singh. FILE PHOTO

was not an elected Prime Minister. He knew his limitations, but UPA-1 was a crowning success. Many of the programmes today were begun by him. Undoubtedly, his greatest challenge was inking the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, which faced strong headwinds. The Ministry's future was at stake, but he was undaunted by criticism as he strongly believed that the deal was good for the country. The

interests of the country remained uppermost for him," said Mr. Nair.

To a question on Dr. Singh's PMO being mocked as a "Mallu Club" for featuring many Malayali officers, Mr. Nair said Dr. Singh was aware of this.

"It was not by design," I told him. It just so happened that many senior officers were brought in based on their performance and seniority," he said.

Former PM adopted policies that he believed were in India's interest: CPI(M)

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Mourning former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which had withdrawn support to the first United Progressive Alliance government led by him over the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal, said on Friday that he was a leader of "unquestioned integrity".

At the same time taking a nuanced stand, the CPI (M) Polit Bureau said in a statement in New Delhi that Dr. Singh "adopted policies which he believed were in the interests of the country", hinting at the inflection point between the two outfits which led to the eventual disassociation in July 2008.

Conveying their condolences to his wife, Gursharan Kaur, and daughters, the statement said, "Dr. Manmohan Singh during his ten-year tenure as Prime Minister stood firm-



Sitaram Yechury with Manmohan Singh. FILE PHOTO

ly for secular and democratic values."

Polit Bureau coordinator Prakash Karat, who was closely involved in the 2008 talks before the CPI (M) and the Congress split paths over the nuclear deal, said there were points of convergence too. "There were areas of convergence on many policies, like rural employment guarantee, right to information, forest rights and so on, which were part of the common minimum pro-

gramme of the UPA," he said. He said the CPI(M)'s opposition to the nuclear deal went beyond the deal itself. "What we were opposed to was India becoming a strategic ally to the US. But it was former PM Singh's conviction that it was the right path for the country to follow. We had frank exchange of views but couldn't reconcile our differences," he said.

Counting the former PM as one of the "finest leaders" he has known, CPI

general secretary D. Raja said his "humility and politeness in both personal and public life were unmatched shone even in the most challenging of times". Mr. Raja said that Dr. Singh's leadership and the Left's collaboration during the first UPA government proved to be transformative. Monumental decisions such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, and the Right to Information Act were taken during that administration.

"Dr. Singh had deep respect for democratic values. Despite ideological and policy disagreements, he maintained a spirit of decency, civility and fairness. His ability to engage with diverse views, his willingness to listen, and his unwavering commitment to the principles of democracy made him a statesman who earned the respect of all, regardless of political affiliation," Mr. Raja said.

Manmohan was pragmatic on Kashmir: J&K leaders

The Hindu Bureau

SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir leaders on Friday paid tributes to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and praised his handling of the Kashmir issue through multiple dialogue processes as "pragmatic and considerate".

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah recalled Dr. Singh's "deep concern for the development of J&K". He said Dr. Singh will also be remembered for fostering peace and development in J&K. National Conference president Farooq Abdullah recalled Dr. Singh's efforts to bring Kashmiri Pandits back to J&K.

People Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti held a special commemoration ceremony in Srinagar. Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz also expressed sadness over his demise.

'History will count Dr. Singh as a founding father of modern India'

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's life reads like the ultimate dream. Rising from humble beginnings to a glittering resume replete with degrees from the world's best universities, positions of the highest office in public life, global fame and repute, and feted with every coveted award.

A tribute to his legacy would inevitably include a long list of the positions of power and responsibilities he held and his stunning professional accomplishments. In the modern meritocratic era of credentials and positions, his dazzling array of achievements would be Dr. Singh's (as I called him) defining legacy.

But in my view, his defining legacy is to illuminate a virtuous path to extraordinary success in the harsh and treacherous terrain of politics and public service. His whole life is a standout exception to the belief that one has to necessarily sacrifice principles of probity, integrity, sincerity, loyalty, and humility to succeed in politics. His true legacy is about what he was not – the typically duplicitous, virtueless, self-obsessed political leader that is successful. His enormously successful pursuit of the politics of purpose and principles offers tantalising hope and inspiration to millions of idealistic youth to enter public life and dedicate themselves to nation-building. This is perhaps the



Praveen Chakravarty

Chairman,
All India
Professionals'
Congress

His life story is about how in the desert of political cynicism there can be a flowing oasis

legacy that Dr. Singh himself would have been proud to leave behind for the nation that he loved so dearly.

I am very fortunate to have been the recipient of Dr. Singh's fondness for well over a decade. Over the past few years, as Dr. Singh became physically weaker, rendering him unable to venture much outside, his graceful wife, Gursharan Kaur, would tell me to visit regularly and "engage him intellectually". I visited him nearly every month for the past five years and interacted with him closely, including writing some articles for this paper. During these interactions, I learned copiously from and about him. I am shattered that it is now time to write his obituary and distraught that I am stuck outside India, unable to bid my last goodbye to him.

Perennial nation-builder
Even in the private confines of his living room, Dr. Singh was scrupulously polite, warm, thoughtful, and modest. He may have been the wise sage to the external world but his curiosity for new information and learning was boundless. In the long years that I have known him closely, not once was there a semblance of even an intent to lecture or sermonise from a bully pulpit, a trait that typically plagues most accomplished people. I watched with amazement on the day after demonetisation in 2016, how despite being a former Prime Minister, Finance

Minister, and RBI Governor, he sought information from junior RBI officers to senior former Ministers and only after that he formed his opinion on the move. He was so deeply concerned about its deleterious impact on the poor that he felt he owed it to the people to warn the government, through an uncharacteristically strong speech in Parliament and an article in this paper, which then set the tone for the nation's response and actions. This was quintessential Dr. Singh – the unflinching patriot, the humble knowledge seeker, the thoughtful opinion maker, the constant guardian of people's welfare, and the perennial nation-builder.

Dr. Singh's devotion to his duty was simply mind-boggling. In the past two years, when his health was frail and he was wheelchair-bound, he still insisted on being taken to the Congress party office to cast his vote in the Congress presidential election in 2022 and in the next year, to Parliament to fulfil his duties as an MP to cast a vote on behalf of the Opposition, both of which were neither crucial nor compulsory.

History will rightfully count Dr. Singh as a founding father of modern India. He acutely understood that building a nation like ours, with its enormous complexities and contradictions, is necessarily a political project of consensus-building on a foundation of strong institutions. His inclusive growth

paradigm of economic development and a rights-based social welfare framework continue to be the twin pillars of India's governance model regardless of which government is in power.

'Be attached to purpose'

At the same time, Dr. Singh had a Keynesian philosophy to change his mind when presented with new credible information. When I met him last in October, he discussed the shifting political landscape in many nations caused by free trade and its attendant impact on people and seemed open to changing his previous doctrinaire position on the benefits of free trade. It takes the sagacity, curiosity, and humility of someone like Dr. Singh to yearn for new information, process it, and alter their views, in the twilight of their hugely successful life.

Dr. Singh's greatest challenge was navigating the mines of India's and the Congress party's politics. But he believed strongly in the medium of politics for nation-building, however harsh and rough it may be. While his contributions to governance and policy are both legendary and highly lauded, it was his outlook on politics that was the most endearing to me. There have been reams written about the 1991 economic reforms that he championed as India's Finance Minister and the enormous foreign policy successes that he

achieved as Prime Minister. But as he often said, those were possible only because he had his resignation letter handy, ready to sacrifice power if the cause was not right. He was able to effect dramatic turns in India's governance landscape, not only due to his intellectual heft but also through the power of his integrity and righteousness. "Be detached to power and attached to purpose," he would often tell me.

Dr. Singh will surely fill many chapters of history books in India and the world. There will be abundant information on his governance achievements and the course of the nation under his stewardship. But the true legacy of Dr. Singh, as he may have preferred, would be to inspire and motivate young people to enter public life and uphold the highest ideals in service to the nation. His life story is about how in the desert of political cynicism there can be a flowing oasis. That it is possible to uphold the highest principles and still succeed in public life. At a time when devious, demagogic politics is hailed as 'Chanakyan', when the pursuit of power has supplanted all decency and decorum in public life, when showmanship trumps workmanship, one wonders if the era of the politics of sincerity, humility, integrity, and service will end with Dr. Manmohan Singh's passing. I pray not, and so will Dr. Singh.

IN BRIEF



Jaishankar meets NSA Sullivan at White House

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan at the White House during which both the leaders had a wide-ranging discussion on the progress of India-U.S. strategic partnership. Mr. Jaishankar is currently on an official visit to the U.S. during which he is scheduled to meet his U.S. counterpart, Antony Blinken, and other senior members of the outgoing administration. He will also chair a conference of the Consuls-General of India in the U.S. PTI

Odisha govt. identifies over 40 lakh ghost beneficiaries

Over 40 lakh ghost beneficiaries of the public distribution system have been detected in Odisha during the current e-KYC verification, the Mohan Majhi government said on Friday. Speaking to presspersons, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krishna Chandra Patra said on average, 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh ghost beneficiaries were found in every district in the verification process, which was yet to be complete. The Minister said diversion of resources through ghost beneficiaries would be done away with.

IIT-Bombay team makes needle-free 'shock syringe' for painless injections

Purnima Sah
MUMBAI

In a welcome move for patients who have a fear of needles, a team of researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, has developed a needle-free "shock syringe".

The study, led by Professor Viren Menezes from the Department of Aerospace Engineering, was published in the *Journal of Biomedical Materials and Devices*.

The researchers tested the effectiveness of drug delivery by a shock syringe on laboratory rats. "Unlike syringes with needles, the shock syringe does not rely on piercing the skin with a sharp tip. Instead, it uses high-energy pressure waves (shock waves) that can travel faster than the speed of sound to pierce the skin. These waves, when generated, compress the surrounding medium, such as air or liquid, through which they travel. A similar effect happens during a sonic boom; when



The development of a shock syringe could make immunisation drives more efficient for everyone. FILE PHOTO

an aircraft flies faster than the speed of sound, it creates shock waves that push and disturb the air," Professor Menezes said.

Working mechanism

The shock syringe, developed in 2021 in Professor Menezes's laboratory, is slightly longer than a regular ballpoint pen. The device has a micro shock tube consisting of three sections: the driver, driven, and drug holder, which work together to create the shockwave-driven microjet for drug delivery.

Priyanka Hankare, lead author of the study, said, "The shock syringe is designed to deliver medication rapidly... To minimise tissue damage and ensure consistent and precise drug delivery, the pressure in the shock syringe is continuously monitored and rigorous testing on tissue simulants (such as synthetic skin) helps to calibrate the force and speed of jet insertion, ensuring safety and comfort."

"The development of a shock syringe promises more than pain-free injections. It could make immunisation drives quicker and more efficient for both children and adults. It could prevent the occurrence of blood-borne diseases caused by needle-stick injuries due to mishandling or improper disposal. Shock syringes are designed to perform multiple drug delivery shots (example, over 1,000 shots tested), offering reliability and cost-effectiveness over time at the expense of nozzle replacement," Ms. Hankare said.

Bengal Forest Department deploys new 'torch' teams to trap elusive tiger Zeenat

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

The West Bengal Forest Department has set up four teams with *Hula* (torch) party members to trace Zeenat, a female tiger, in Purulia district as the three-year-old big cat has been elusive for more than two weeks. The tiger had escaped from the Similipal Reserve Forest in Odisha on December 10.

The *Hula* party workers are generally used by the department to drive out elephants from human habitats.

The tiger, which had stayed in the Bandwan area of Purulia district for five days, has now moved to the Dangardi forests in Manbazar. According to forest officials, they have set up traps in multiple locations to capture the big cat. They are also using drones with thermal imagery, goats as baits, night vision equipment, monitoring teams, and more to capture the tiger or drive



Till now, Zeenat has managed to kill three domestic goats, spreading fear among residents in the area. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

her out through the same route she came in.

Till now, Zeenat has managed to kill three goats, spreading fear among residents in the area. Forest officials have also put up fencing in multiple places where there is human habitation to reduce the chances of conflict with the tiger.

The department held a meeting on Thursday and made a new strategy to capture the tiger. They have made four teams, which include the *hula* party members. The teams have been equipped with radio trackers, tranquillisers, cages, and traps. These teams will fan out across Purulia's mountains and forest areas to help with the operation.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Debal Roy, Chief Wildlife Warden, said, "She may have been captured with traps and baits before so she knows what it is like, that may be the reason why she is avoiding all traps, and knows the pattern."

Aviation body suspends two top officials at Akasa Air

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Friday suspended Akasa Air's head of operations and head of training for six months each for lapses in training.

In an order, the DGCA wrote, "Director Training of M/S SNV Aviation private Limited (Akasa Air) dated 30th October 2024 has been examined and was found unsatisfactory." It said that the Director of Operations, Captain Floyd Gracious, and Director of Training, Neeraj Bhatia, were being suspended for six months.

This action follows a regulatory audit in October. The DGCA audit had found that pilots were being trained navigation approaches on a simulator which was not certified for the procedure. The DGCA said this was in violation of its rule and issued a show cause notice to the airline, but found the airline's response to be unsatisfactory.

FAITH

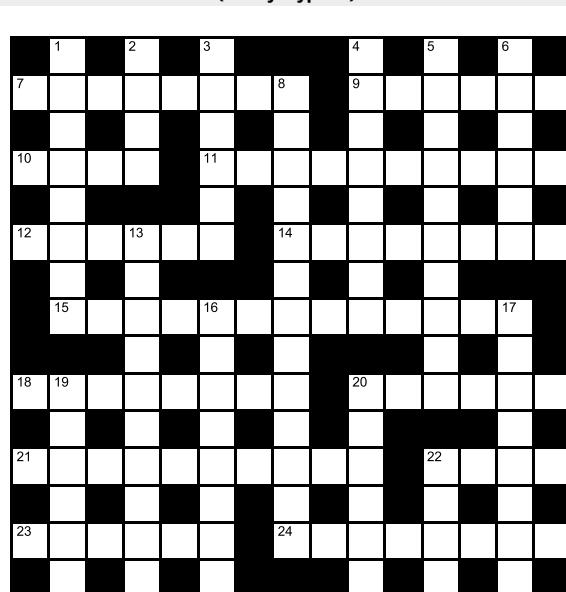
The power of chanting

People celebrate birthdays with friends and relatives, who exchange felicity through gifts and presents. The hosts also reciprocate by giving return gifts. But when we celebrate the days of the various manifestations of God, also known as "Jayanthi", God expects us to pay our obeisance in the form of devotion, and in return, He showers His blessings.

Sri Kesava Vajapeya Swamy said in a discourse that Sri Hanuman is the manifestation of Lord Rudra. The most valuable gifts that Hanuman expect are the reciting of Sri Ramayana and chanting of Sri Rama Nama. As a token of appreciation, Hanuman extends his blessings by enriching our knowledge, valour, name, and fame, and making us fearless and disease-free (*Buddhir Balam*). He shows compassion and showers all these without any delay.

Arjuna asked Lord Krishna about His greatness and powers. The Lord replied that He could not fully describe them, though He is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. The Lord mentions several unique attributes He is fond of, one of which is that of all the 12 Tamil months, He likes the month of "Margazhi" the most. In that sacred month, on a new moon day with the star "Moolam", Sri Hanuman manifested in this world with the sole aim of rendering service to Sri Rama. When Lord Rama decided to leave this world and go to the realm of His abode, He asked all to accompany Him to Sri Vaikunta. But Hanuman declined and said he wanted to remain on earth to listen to the recitation of the *Ramayana* and the chanting of Sri Rama Nama by people. It is believed that Hanuman will be present wherever these take place.

TH CROSSWORD + 14368



Across

- 7 Covers alien in space shuttle initially (8)
- 9 Contests in online outlets (6)
- 10 Won after revolutionary champ (4)
- 11 Just bore a son - a blessing to cherish (10)
- 12 New users supply tenders (6)

- To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/jppTn>
- SCAN TO PLAY**
- 14 Hobby of emperor collecting money over time (8)**
15 An expert presses it (4,9)
18 Wish horse crosses entire ground (8)
20 Correspondence from landlord (6)
21 Harry Potter coin in custody (10)
22 Complaint of boy reversing charge (4)
23 Jostles below funny bones, eventually (6)
24 Lift through real votes mostly rigged (8)
- Down**
- 1 Notwithstanding a husband parting, strong lady moves ahead (8)**
2 Second present's white (4)
3 Noblemen backing president? Maybe, they're cultured (6)
4 Reminiscences of viral images featuring Boris in the centre (8)
5 Doctor, male attender tackling pressure in section (10)
6 Criminal lost near leaderless hideout acquired illegally (6)
8 Likes prawn and gin cocktail drink (9,4)
13 Genius got puzzles accepting small hint (10)
16 Per Spoooner, evil media got Diana, say (8)
17 Essentially asked to reveal blueprint (8)
19 Seldom undercooked meat's gutted liberally (6)
20 Pined and attacked having love for you, eventually (6)
22 Bill and Bob made USA think ultimately (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

INBRIEF



UltraTech to buy 8.69% stake in Star Cement for ₹851 crore

UltraTech Cement said it would acquire 8.69% minority stake from the promoters of Meghalaya-based Star Cement in a deal worth ₹851 crore, further intensifying competition with Adani group entity, Ambuja Cements. The development comes three days after the Aditya Birla group firm completed the acquisition of a controlling stake in India Cements Ltd., turning the south-based firm into its subsidiary. UltraTech is expanding its capacity through acquisitions.

UPI transactions via PPIs on 3rd party apps gets RBI nod

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to allow prepaid instrument holders (PPIs) to make/receive UPI payments through third-party mobile applications. "This will enable PPI holders to make and receive UPI payments through the mobile application of third-party UPI applications," the RBI said. The RBI's decision is aimed at providing more flexibility to holders of PPIs such as gift cards, metro rail cards and digital wallets, among others.

SaaS fintech Zaggle Prepaid raises ₹595 crore via QIP

B2B software-as-a-service (SaaS) fintech Zaggle Prepaid Ocean Services raised ₹595 crore via qualified institutional placement (QIP) route and was eyeing at least two acquisitions in the next 12 months. "The company is evaluating five to six potential targets in the SaaS fintech space, including areas such as merchant card software, accounts receivables and FASTag solutions," Raj Narayanan, founder & executive chairman, Zaggle Prepaid Ocean Services Limited, said.

The West Bengal Power Development Corporation Limited
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
Corporate Identity No. U40104WB198SSG039154
Registered & Corporate Office : Bidyut Unnayan Bhawan
Plot No.: 3/C, LA - Block, Sector-II, Bidhannagar, Kol-700106

Notice regarding Expressions of Interest (EOI)
Ref. No.: WBPDCL/Tend-Adv/24-25/CORP/CC-2894 Dated: 24.12.2024
EOI No.: WBPDCL/Corp/M/C/S-996 /MMCC/EOI/2024-25/2218 Dated: 20.12.2024
Selection of Mine Developer cum Operator (MDO) for Deocha-Pachami-Dewanganj-Harisingha Coal Block allotted to the WBPDCL.

EOI Start Date / EOI End Date: 20.12.2024 from 15:00 hrs. / 03.02.2025 at 17:00 hrs.
Contact Person: Ipsita Chaudhuri, Senior Manager (M&C). Contact No.: 9830616477,
E-mail: i.chaudhuri@wbpdcloin For details please visit: <https://wbpdcloin> ICA-T24093(3)/2024

कार्यालय अंति मुख्य अधिकार्ता, जन स्वास्थ्य अधिकारिकी विभाग, क्षेत्र पाली
E-Mail address: addchiefengineerpali@gmail.com ACEPHEDPALI@RAJASTHAN.GOV.IN
क्रमांक ३/पुस्तक नं. जन स्वा/ क्षेत्र पाली/ ता/ २४/२५/
बिड संशोधन सचिव, NIB संख्या 01/2024-25
इस कार्यालय द्वारा जारी की गई निवादा संख्या 01/2024-25 में आधिकारिक सारोंधन होने के कारण बिड संशोधन जारी किया जा रहा है। [एपीरोक्सी.राजस्थान.गव.इन](https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in) पर अपलोड किया गया।
निवादा संख्या 01/2024-25 (UPN No: PHE2425WLOB07274)
अधिकारिक अधिकार्ता वर्ष स्वा. अधिकारी विभाग क्षेत्र पाली

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Kagithapuram - 639 136. Karur Dist. Tamil Nadu.
Ph.: 04324-277001 (10 Lines), Email : purchase.auto@tnpl.co.in

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Tender No.	Work Description	Due date
242513 00532	Battery Operated Forklift (3T) with Paper Roll Clamp	17.01.2025

Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNPL Website & NIC Portal only. Detailed Terms & conditions, tender fee, EMD etc., are available in the tender document which can be downloaded from websites: www.tnpl.com / <https://tnltenders.gov.in/nicapp>

DIPR/5657/Tender/2024 TNPL - Maker of bagasse based eco-friendly paper

कार्यालय अंति मुख्य अधिकार्ता विभाग, सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग वृत्त इंग्रजी
क्रमांक : ई.एस.निवादा संख्या/2024-25-पी-2237 दिनांक: 17.12.2024
निवादा संख्या 09/2024-25
इस कार्यालय द्वारा जारी की गई निवादा संख्या 09/2024-25 में आधिकारिक सारोंधन होने के कारण बिड संशोधन जारी किया जा रहा है। [एपीरोक्सी.राजस्थान.गव.इन](https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in) पर अपलोड किया गया।
निवादा संख्या 09/2024-25 (UPN No: PHE2425WLOB07274)
अधिकारिक अधिकार्ता वर्ष स्वा. अधिकारी विभाग क्षेत्र पाली

कार्यालय अंति मुख्य अधिकार्ता, सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग, संभाग-टॉक
क्रमांक : ई.एस.निवादा संख्या/2024-25-पी-3584-93 दिनांक: 23.12.2024
संशोधन निवादा संख्या 09/2024-25
इस कार्यालय द्वारा जारी की गई निवादा संख्या 09/2024-25 तारीख 3431-3440 दिनांक 02.12.2024 के द्वारा लागू हो गयी है। निवादा क्रम संख्या 02 अधिकारिक सारोंधन के बाह्य में BOQ में शुरू होने पर पुनः BOQ अपलोड करने हेतु निवादा संख्या में निवादा संख्या को लागू किया जाता है। Old R.O. No. DIPR/C/12391/24

विभाग पृष्ठ में प्रकाशित निवादा संख्या विवरण
निवादा अंवेषण द्वारा जारी की गई निवादा संख्या 09/2024-25 दिनांक 23.12.2024 पर 11:00 बजे से दिनांक 23.12.2024 तक 11:00 बजे से दिनांक 02.01.2025 को सम्म. 06:00 बजे तक
प्री बिड का आवेदन निवादा अंवेषण द्वारा जारी की गई निवादा संख्या 09/2024-25 दिनांक 17.12.2024 एवं अंवेषण निवादा दिनांक 17.12.2024 एवं अंवेषण निवादा दिनांक 16.12.2024 के सम्म. 4.00 बजे तक
अंवेषण अवधीन निवादा को लागू करने के बाह्य में 12.00 दिनांक 03.01.2025 सम्म. 12.00 बजे

NID Code: PWD2425A3101, PWD2425WLOB11390, PWD2425WL0B11391 (पैसेटर निवादा)
अंति मुख्य अधिकार्ता, सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग

DIPR/C/13573/2024

Rupee Rattle: Currency hits fresh record low of 85.48/\$

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened weak at 85.31 and plunged 53 paise to the lowest-ever intraday level of 85.80 amid record demand from importers, and FII outflows

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI

The rupee on Friday registered the steepest fall in almost two years to hit its lifetime intraday low of 85.80 before a suspected RBI's intervention helped recover some of its losses and settled 21 paise lower at a record low of 85.48 against the U.S. dollar on a strong greenback amid higher month-end demand from banks and importers.

According to analysts,



Tight-fisted: The RBI's stance to hold on to dollar payments in short-term forward contracts added to greenback shortage. REUTERS

the Reserve Bank's stance to hold on to its dollar payments in short-term forward contracts added to

the shortage of greenback, with importers rushing to meet their month-end payment obligations.

Despite robust sentiment in domestic equity markets, the rupee was weighed down by sustained outflow of foreign funds and rising crude oil prices, they added. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened weak at 85.31 and plunged 53 paise to the lowest-ever intraday level of 85.80.

Rising U.S. bond yields that raised the dollar's attractiveness spurred the ₹ dip, said Ajit Mishra, senior vice president of research at Religare Broking.



Osamu Suzuki

Osamu Suzuki, who led the Japanese auto firm into India, dies at 94

Reuters

TOKYO

Osamu Suzuki, an ingenious pennypincher who led Japan's Suzuki Motor for more than four decades and played a key role in turning India into a flourishing auto market, has died aged 94.

He died on Christmas Day of lymphoma, said the firm, which he steered ambitiously, during his time as either CEO or chairman, out of its primary market of mini vehicles.

The inexpensive, boxy, 660-cc cars specific to Japan benefited from generous tax breaks, but demanded a stringent reining-in of costs that proved to be a key part of the automaker's DNA.

Even so, Mr. Suzuki's thriftiness was legendary: he would order factory ceilings lowered to save on air-conditioning and fly economy class.

"Forever," or "until the day I die," were signature humorous responses with which he parried queries about how long he would stay at the company.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	FRIDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	78,699	0.29
US Dollar	85.48	-0.25
Gold	79,200	0.44
Brent oil	73.92	0.49

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2409.75	9.70
Adani Ports	1230.70	-13.25
Apollo Hosp.	7246.30	-14.85
Asian Paints	2271.40	9.00
Axis Bank	1077.45	0.75
Bajaj Auto	8928.30	49.80
Bajaj Finserv	1579.30	20.00
Bharti Airtel	1599.85	0.35
BPCL	293.55	-2.05
Britannia Ind.	4769.30	7.65
Cipla	1506.60	16.05
Coal India	380.50	-6.10
Dr Reddys Lab.	1389.45	34.30
Eicher Motors	4876.90	75.55
Grasim Ind.	2480.30	-1.75
HCL Tech	1892.00	-8.75
HDFC Bank	1798.25	7.50
HDFC Life	621.90	-4.50
Hero MotoCorp	4237.95	-37.05
Hindalco	617.40	-11.35
Hindustan Unilever	2341.25	8.50
ICICI Bank	1307.55	10.20
IndusInd Bank	953.40	21.45
Infosys	1916.75	9.35
ITC	478.60	1.65
JSW Steel	913.30	-1.15
Kotak Bank	1759.90	7.10
L&T	3608.10	-21.40
M&M	3049.45	73.80
Maruti Suzuki	10941.05	45.05
NestleIndia	2165.60	15.70
NTPC	335.00	0.35
ONGC	236.90	-3.35
PowerGrid Corp.	309.40	-0.90
Reliance Ind.	1221.05	4.50
SBI Life	1405.30	-3.75
State Bank	799.65	-12.80
Shriram Finance	2898.90	-28.00
Sun Pharma	1861.25	19.90
Tata Consumer Product	907.95	7.00
Tata Motors	750.50	9.70
Tata Steel	138.91	-1.45
TCS	4164.85	-4.25
Tech Mahindra	1711.65	12.95
Titan	3309.20	-13.85
Trent Ltd.	7118.30	54.60
UltraTech Cement	11406.55	-54.10
Wipro	309.10	4.05

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on December 27

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	85.33	85.65
Euro	88.94	89.28
British Pound	106.96	107.37
Japanese Yen (100)	54.09	

HERZLIYA

Israel says suspected Palestinian attacker stabs woman to death



A woman in her eighties was fatally stabbed in Herzliya, Israel, on Friday morning. The suspected attacker, a 28-year-old Palestinian from the West Bank, was "neutralised and arrested" at the scene, the police said. Despite resuscitation efforts at Tel Aviv Ichilov hospital, she was pronounced dead upon arrival. AFP

BEIJING

62-year-old who killed 35 in China car ramming sentenced to death



A man named Fan Weiqiu was sentenced to death on Friday for killing 35 people in a car attack in Zhuhai, China, on November 11. Fan, 62, drove into a crowd exercising outside a sports complex, motivated by anger over his divorce. This incident marks the deadliest attack in China since 2014. AFP

LAHORE

Pakistan-based LeT's deputy leader Abdul Rehman Makki dies



Hafiz Abdul Rahman Makki, the brother-in-law of Mumbai attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed and deputy chief of banned Jamaat-ud-Dawa, died of a heart attack in Lahore on Friday. Makki had been ill due to diabetes and was undergoing treatment. He was designated a global terrorist by the UN in 2023. PTI

BEIJING

China sanctions 7 companies over U.S. military assistance to Taiwan



China imposed sanctions on seven U.S. companies in response to recent American military aid to Taiwan, which China claims as its territory. The sanctions follow U.S. President Joe Biden's authorisation of \$571 million for Taiwan's defence and a military spending Bill that includes "provisions against China". AP

S. Korea's National Assembly votes to impeach Acting President Han

The impeachment of Han Duck-soo passed with a 192-0 vote, despite protests from the ruling People Power Party; Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok will assume Han's duties; situation in the country remains volatile as public discontent rises

Associated Press
SEOUL

South Korea's Opposition-controlled National Assembly voted on Friday to impeach Acting President Han Duck-soo despite vehement protests by governing party lawmakers, further deepening the country's political crisis set off by President Yoon Suk Yeol's stunning imposition of martial law and ensuing impeachment.

The single-chamber National Assembly passed Mr. Han's impeachment motion with a 192-0 vote, despite protests from the rul-



Unstable chair: Han Duck-soo leaves the Government Complex in Seoul after his impeachment motion was passed on Friday. AFP

ing People Power Party (PPP), which boycotted the session and claimed the vote was invalid.

Mr. Han's impeachment

means he will be stripped of the powers and duties of the President until the Constitutional Court decides whether to dismiss or

reinstate him. The court is already reviewing whether to uphold Mr. Yoon's earlier impeachment. The impeachments of the country's top two officials has worsened its political turmoil, deepened economic uncertainties and hurt its international image.

In statement, Mr. Han called his impeachment "regrettable" but said he respects the Assembly's decision and will suspend his duties to "not add to additional confusion and uncertainty". He said he will wait for "a swift, wise decision" by the Constitutional Court.

Mr. Han's impeachment

motion accuses him of collaborating and abetting Mr. Yoon's declaration of martial law. It also accuses Mr. Han of attempting to obstruct the restoration of the Constitutional Court's full membership and of delaying investigations into Mr. Yoon's alleged rebellion by not appointing independent counsels.

Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok will assume Mr. Han's duties during this period. The situation in South Korea remains volatile, with ongoing investigations into Mr. Yoon's actions and rising public discontent regarding political stability.

Azerbaijan plane crash due to 'external interference'

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW

The Azerbaijan Airlines plane that crashed in Kazakhstan this week suffered physical "external interference", the airline and Azerbaijan's Transport Minister said on Friday, citing preliminary results of an investigation, adding to speculation it was hit by a Russian air defence system. The jet crashed near the Kazakh city of Aktau on Wednesday, killing 38 of the 67 people on board, after attempting to land at its destination in the Russian city of Grozny and then diverting far off course across the Caspian Sea.

Russia's aviation chief said on Friday that Grozny was being attacked by Ukrainian drones at the time



Emergency specialists working at the crash site of an Azerbaijan plane which crashed near the city of Aktau on Wednesday. REUTERS

the plane had tried to land, but the Kremlin has declined to comment on reports the plane was accidentally shot down by Russian missiles.

Statements from Azerbaijan citing the investigation suggest Baku believes the plane was hit mid-air.

"Based on the opinion of experts and on the words of eyewitnesses, it can be concluded that there was external interference," Azerbaijani's Transport Minister, Rashad Nabiyev, told reporters. "It is necessary to find out from what kind of weapon," he added, citing reports from survivors of hearing "three explosions" as the plane was over Grozny.

Germany's President dissolves Parliament, sets polls for Feb. 23

Associated Press
FRANKFURT

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Friday ordered Parliament dissolved and set new elections for February 23 in the wake of the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition, saying it was the only way to give the country a stable government capable of tackling its problems, he says

ember 6 when he fired his Finance Minister in a dispute over how to revitalise Germany's stagnant economy.

Mr. Steinmeier said he made the decision because it was clear after consultation with party leaders that there was no agreement among Germany's political parties on a majority for a new government in the current Parliament.

Mr. Scholz lost a confidence vote on December 16 and leads a minority government after his unpopular and notoriously rancorous three-party coalition collapsed on No-

Central University of Himachal Pradesh
(Established under Central Universities Act, 2009)

Employment Notice No. 003/2024, Dated 24.12.2024 for TEACHING POSITIONS

Central University of Himachal Pradesh invites online applications from eligible candidates for various teaching positions to be filled on regular/contract (against lien vacancy) basis. The Candidates may apply online from 24.12.2024. Last Date 23.01.2025. For further details please visit University Website i.e., www.cuhimachal.ac.in

REGISTRAR

RAJASTHAN GOVERNMENT
Superintending Engineer Cum Project Manager, WCDC, ZILA PARISHAD BARMER

No. 3732

Date: 19.12.2024

NOTICE INVITING BID

NIB No 35-37 YEAR 2024-25

Bids for Watershed Development Works are invited from interested bidders up to 06.01.2025 at 06:00 PM as per following details. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> or <https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in> of the state departmental website.

Sr. No. **Block** **NIB No.** **Estimate (Rs in Lacs)** **NIB Code** **UBN Code**

1	Baytu	35/2024-25	264.38	WSC2425A0445	WSC2425WSRC00898
2	Baytu	36/2024-25	136.00	WSC2425A0446	WSC2425WSRC00899
3	Baytu	37/2024-25	51.58	WSC2425A0447	WSC2425WSRC00900

SE CUM PROJECT MANAGER, WCDC, WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT & SOIL CONSERVATION, BARMER

DIPR/C/13460/2024

RAJIV GANDHI THERMAL POWER PLANT, KEDAR, HISAR

(A UNIT OF HARYANA POWER GENERATION CORPORATION LIMITED)

Expression of Interest

RGTPP, HPCL, Khed, Hisar invites Expression of Interest for lifting of pond ash from pond ash user agencies i.e. Cement companies, block manufacturers, traders etc. Pond ash is available for lifting on "as is where is" basis from Ash Dykes of RGTPP, Khed, Hisar and shall be allocated on 'first come first serve' basis. Minimum quantity of pond ash to be allocated to each lifter shall be 1 LMT. All the charges related to loading and transportation are to be borne by the interested parties. Rates and Terms & Conditions for the supply of pond ash shall be decided at later stage after deliberations between interested parties and competent authority at RGTPP, HPCL.

The Interested agencies are requested to submit their requirement in the format available on HPGCL's official website [https://hpcl.org.in](http://hpcl.org.in)

Kindly note that environmental compensation for any short-lifting against allocated quantity shall be @ Rs.1500/- per MT and Interested parties shall have to lift the entire allocated quantity no later than 15.03.2025, therefore, pond ash user agencies are requested to apply for allocation quantity keeping these aspects into consideration. During the course of lifting of pond ash, all norms/rules/regulations set by MoEF&CC, CPCB, HSPC other regulatory bodies, as amended from time to time, shall be followed in true spirit. Further, a contract agreement will be signed on NJSP between RGTPP, HPCL and pond ash lifters to ensure faithful execution of terms and conditions agreed upon deliberations.

For any further queries related to lifting of pond ash, interested firms may contact the undersigned during the office hours. EOI details are as under:-

Sr. No.	EOI scope	EOI submission start date and time	EOI Submission end date and time	Official website	Contact details
1	Lifting of pond ash from, RGTPP, Khed, Hisar	26.12.2024 & 10:00 hrs	05.01.2025 & 17:00 hrs	https://hpcl.org.in	Er. Tinku Goyal, XEN/CMD-II, 8222820043

Note:-

1. This notice of EOI can be cancelled at any stage at sole discretion of HPGCL

XEN/CMD-II, RGTPP, for Chief Engineer, RGTPP, HPCL, Khed, Hisar.

1187/11/18/2025/31326/C/199/7

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FRONTLINE **SPORTSTAR** **YOUNGWORLD** **THE HINDU**

विक्रम विश्वविद्यालय, उज्जैन
मो. नं.: 9425788123, Email id : storevu57@gmail.com
क्रमांक/भाष्टरा/2024/965 दिनांक 21.12.2024

निविदा विज्ञप्ति

विक्रम विश्वविद्यालय, उज्जैन के विभिन्न विभागों हेतु Desktop Computer एवं Multifunctional Printer क्रय किए जाने हेतु खुली निविदा जेम पोर्टल के माध्यम से बिड क्रमांक GEM/2024/B/5735511 दिनांक 20.12.2024 द्वारा जारी की गयी है। इच्छुक प्रदायकर्ता फर्म जेम पोर्टल से दिनांक 20.12.2024 से बिड समाप्त दिनांक 10.01.2025 तक निविदा में भाग ले सकते हैं।

म.प्र. माध्यम/117984/2024 कुलसंचिव

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation

Executive Engineer-Building Department

Phone : (0240) 2333536-40, 2348001-05, Fax : (0240) 2331213

Extension of Last Date for Submission of Bids

Subject: Development of Museum using Modern Technologies at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research Centre, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar

Reference: 1) Tender ID 0224_AMCA_1121229_1

2) Corrigendum-1: O/W/CSMC/EE-Building/2024/103 dated 17/12/2024

In reference to the Tender mentioned above for the work of Development of Museum using Modern Technologies at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research Centre, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar where in the last date of submission of Proposals was "30th December 2024 by 5:00 PM" is rescheduled as per the discussion in pre bid meeting. Revised dates are as follows:-

1. Last Date and Time for receipt of Bids: 13th January 2025 by 5:00 pm.

2. Time and Date of Opening Technical Bids: 15th January 2025 by 11:00 am.

The Common set of Deviations to the Tender issued dated 5th December, 2024 would be provided soon. Please take note.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer (Building)

CSMC, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar

Date : 27/12/2024

PUNE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
Health Department
Tender Cell Department
Tender Advertisement

Sr. No.	Particulars	Date

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GETTY IMAGES

Harry Brook: generational talent or simply at the vanguard of a generation?

The 25-year-old's ability to destroy bowling attacks is symbolic of how Test batting has changed – or certainly of how a Gen-Z batter perceives his craft. Australia's bouncy tracks and India's turners will tell us whether he is an all-timer or merely on the crest of the modern wave

Vivek Krishnan

This is the big league. This is Test cricket. It will humble you as a player and person."

This was Dean Elgar, in September 2022, offering a gentle warning to Harry Brook on the eve of the latter's Test debut against South Africa at The Oval. The middle-order batter had hammered 140 for England Lions against the visiting Proteas at Canterbury a month earlier and was being talked up as an incredibly exciting prospect, but South Africa's then captain and seasoned pro seemed to be telling the budding rookie that Test cricket wouldn't be quite so easy.

Ready on arrival

Well, little did Elgar know that Brook would indeed make Test cricket look easy. That he would take to the big league like he had always belonged. That he would race to 2,281 runs after 24 Tests at an average of 58.48 and a strike rate of 88.37, with eight hundreds. That he would become the first England batter since Graham Gooch in 1990 to amass a triple ton. One that he would get to, against Pakistan in Multan in October, in just 310 deliveries, second only to Virender Sehwag's 278-ball effort against South Africa in Chennai in 2008.

Brook is also the third-fastest Englishman, be-

hind Herbert Sutcliffe and Len Hutton, to 1,000 Test runs. Among his countrymen, only Sutcliffe, whose debut dates back to a century ago, got to 2,000 runs quicker than him.

Brook has done all of this while veering away from conventional wisdom about batting in the longest format requiring copious patience and a copybook defence. As a product of the new generation that has grown up consuming a considerable volume of T20 cricket, the 25-year-old, athletic and affable, lends weightage to scoring runs at a fast rate.

In essence, he fits right into the attacking philosophy espoused by captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum. Although the circumstances of Brook's entry weren't ideal – Jonny Bairstow, in the form of his life, slipped on a golf course and fractured his left leg in a freak accident before the final Test of the English summer – the think-tank had little hesitation in thrusting the young Yorkshireman into the arc lights.

"There are just things that stand out about certain players, like the time they have at the crease, the shots they play," Stokes said at the time of Brook's induction.

The first inkling that the youngster can turn promise into performance came just a few months later in his second Test, against Pakistan in Rawalpindi, when he wallopéd 153 off 116 deliveries and deflated the host's morale altogether. A 65-ball 87 and two more hundreds on that

tour as England whitewashed Pakistan set Brook firmly on his way.



Brook has been able to conjure up three-figure knocks that dovetail ball-striking flair with a calm temperament, indicating a distinct trait to thrive under pressure

As impressive as his numbers have been so far, it is his precious ability to take the game away from the opposition in a trice that turns heads and embodies what Bazball – the term attributed to England's unfettered approach under Stokes and McCullum – is all about.

Whether England is 20 for three on a green top in Manchester or 200 for three on a flat surface in Multan, Brook always looks for ways to mount the pressure back on the bowlers. That impulse

has been buttressed by Stokes and McCullum creating an atmosphere where these young players have the cushion to attack without instantly bearing the consequences of failure.

Shifting emphasis

In a larger framework, Brook's style is also symbolic of how batting in Test cricket has transformed. Or certainly of how a Gen-Z batter perceives his craft. With the T20 format becoming an indispensable part of cricket's fabric, the emphasis even in the five-day game has increasingly swayed towards aggression. Glancing through the strike-rates of the top five run-getters in Tests this year is illuminating. All five are striking at above 60, with Root, who leads the list, being the 'slowest' at 63.38.

Even among the top 10 run-getters this year, only Kane Williamson and Dinesh Chandimal have strike-rates lower than 60. That Williamson is 34 and Chandimal 35 suggests they could be among the last relics of a more conservative approach. To comprehend the rapid shift, you only need to look at the corresponding numbers from, say, five years ago: only two players – David Warner and Quinton de Kock – had strike rates above 60 among the top 10 run-getters in 2019.

So far in Brook's flourishing career, he has never curbed his attacking instincts. His position at No. 5 is an ally too. Unlike the flamboyant Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett, who are put through the wringer at the top of the order, Brook's role mostly comes with the relative comfort of facing a slightly older ball. It allows him that much more liberty to counterattack.

It is not to say that Brook hasn't negotiated adverse conditions and situations. All of his three hundreds in New Zealand, most notably, have been on surfaces with a palpable tinge of green and with the team teetering on the abyss. From 21 for three in Wellington in 2023, 45 for three in Christchurch and 26 for three again in Wellington on the most recent tour, Brook was able to conjure up three-figure knocks that dovetailed ball-striking flair with a calm temperament, indicating a distinct trait to thrive under pressure.

Root, the only batter ahead of Brook in the ICC Test rankings, was lavish in praise of his teammate after the New Zealand series. "Brooky is far and away the best player in the world at the minute," he enthused. "He can absorb pressure, he can apply it. He can smack spin. He can smack seam."

Technical nuances

Brook's set-up at the crease aids his attacking verve. Perhaps akin to hitters in baseball, he tends to hold the willow high in the air as the bowler runs in, as opposed to tapping it on the turf, and doesn't have a pronounced back-and-across trigger movement. It seems to facilitate his devastating off-side play, his high and fast hands slashing at anything with a smidgen of width. Like with Australia's Travis Head who dons a similar role at No. 5, the margin of error while bowling to Brook is therefore minimal.

The acid test for Brook will arrive on the turners in India – he missed the series earlier this year due to personal reasons – and the bouncy surfaces in Australia. Though his average in Pakistan is an enviable 84.10 after six Tests, it must be said that his runs in the subcontinent have come on egregiously placid decks. When Pakistan did dish out spinning pitches for the last two Tests of the series in October after Brook's triple ton in the opener, his returns plummeted to 56 runs across four innings.

There's, of course, some time until England embarks on another tour of India. Before that, Brook will be scrutinised based on how he fares against India at home and Australia away over the next 12 months. If he continues to smash massive hundreds, his status as a generational talent will be beyond doubt. If not, he can always strive to improve while remembering Elgar's wise words: "This is Test cricket. It will humble you as a player and person."

STACKING UP



ATP Men's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Jannik Sinner	23	11,830	17
2	Alexander Zverev	27	7,915	21
3	Carlos Alcaraz	21	7,010	18
4	Taylor Fritz	27	5,100	22
5	Daniil Medvedev	28	5,030	17
6	Casper Ruud	26	4,255	25
7	Novak Djokovic	37	3,910	18
8	Andrey Rublev	27	3,760	27
9	Alex de Minaur	25	3,745	23
10	Grigor Dimitrov	33	3,350	19
11	Stefanos Tsitsipas	26	3,165	22
12	Tommy Paul	27	3,145	21
13	Holger Rune	21	3,025	23
14	Ugo Humbert	26	2,765	26
15	Jack Draper	23	2,685	22



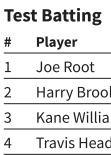
English Premier League Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Liverpool	17	13	3	1	40	17	23	42
2	Chelsea	18	10	5	3	38	21	17	35
3	N. Forest	18	10	4	4	24	19	5	34
4	Arsenal	17	9	6	2	34	16	18	33
5	Newcastle	18	8	5	5	30	21	9	29
6	Bournemouth	18	8	5	5	27	21	6	29
7	Man. City	18	8	4	6	30	26	4	28
8	Fulham	18	7	7	4	26	23	3	28
9	Aston Villa	18	8	4	6	26	29	-3	28
10	Brighton	17	6	7	4	27	26	1	25
11	Tottenham	18	7	2	9	39	26	13	23
12	Brentford	17	7	2	8	32	32	0	23
13	West Ham	18	6	5	7	23	30	-7	23
14	Man. United	18	6	4	8	21	24	-3	22
15	Everton	17	3	8	6	15	22	-7	17
16	Crystal Palace	18	3	8	7	18	26	-8	17
17	Wolves	18	4	3	11	29	40	-11	15
18	Leicester City	18	3	5	10	22	40	-18	14
19	Ipswich Town	17	2	6	9	16	32	-16	12
20	Southampton	18	1	3	14	11	37	-26	6



Spanish LaLiga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Atletico Madrid	18	12	5	1	33	12	21	41
2	Real Madrid	18	12	4	2	41	18	23	40
3	Barcelona	19	12	2	5	21	22	29	38
4	Athletic Bilbao	19	10	6	3	29	17	12	36
5	Villarreal	18	8	6	4	34	30	4	30
6	Real Mallorca	19	9	3	7	19	21	-2	30
7	Real Sociedad	18	7	4	7	16	13	3	25
8	Girona	18	7	4	7	26	25	1	25
9	Real Betis	18	6	7	5	21	22	-1	25
10	Osasuna	18	6	7	5	23	27	-4	25
11	Elche	18	7	3	8	27	28	-1	24
12	Rayo Vallecano	18	5	7	6	20	21	-1	22
13	Las Palmas	18	6	4	8	23	27	-4	22
14	Sevilla	18	6	4	8	20	27	-7	22
15	Leganés	18	4	6	8	17	28	-11	18
16	Alaves	18	4	5	9	21	30	-9	17
17	Getafe	18	3	7	8	11	15	-4	16
18	Espanyol	18	4	3	11	16	30	-14	15
19	Valencia	17	2	6	9	16	26	-10	12
20	Real Valladolid	18	3	3	12	37	25	-12	12



'Chess imprisoned me with its beauty; now my life's mission is to reproduce myself'

In this freewheeling conversation, Maurice Ashley, the world's first Black Grandmaster, talks about falling in love with the game, making history, launching his commentary career in the Kremlin, and working to remove barriers to ensure that young talent from under-served communities can emulate his success

INTERVIEW

Maurice Ashley

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Maurice Ashley's sister Alicia is a former World boxing champion. His brother Devon is a former World kickboxing champion. But he chose chess to make his mark and created history: in 1999, he became the world's first-ever Black Grandmaster. During the World Chess Championship match between Ding Liren and D. Gukesh, Ashley was a familiar face – and voice – as the television presenter and moderator at the press conferences. Excerpts from an interview with the Jamaica-born American Grandmaster in Singapore:

How do you look back at your life, as someone who broke through the glass ceiling?

I learnt chess in Jamaica as an eight-year-old, or maybe I was nine. I remember surprising everybody by discovering the four-move checkmate. I just figured out the scholar's mate. But I didn't do any chess again for another six years. When I was 14, two years after we moved to the United States, I saw a friend in school playing chess. And then I saw a chess book in the library and the love affair started. I remember just seeing the strategies and tactics. The positions, the diagrams. I played with my friend. He crushed me again. I taught myself chess. I had no coach until I was 21 and my rating was 2400. I just studied like a complete maniac. I learnt chess history and about all the world champions. I became like a PhD student of the game.

At that time, were there many from the African-American community that played chess?

There were, thankfully, people who played in the park. And a group of men – they called themselves the Black Bear School – who played chess. They were the reason I became 2400, because they were all 2200. I met them at the park in New York, and at one of their homes. I ended up beating this guy who knew them.

And he was so mad, he wanted to humiliate me by taking me to this group. Little did he know that I was tough enough that I could fight a couple of them in the group, but most of them were better than me. So I ended up playing against these men, and they became essentially my sparring partners. They would crush me, the top ones. And I would go home and study some more, then come back. I just kept going. As long as there existed people who were better than me, I wanted to get better.



P.K. AJITH KUMAR



My biggest problem with my accomplishment is that others haven't followed in my footsteps in great numbers. The way India has followed Anand. And I recognise that it took a while for such a great champion like Anand even to move the needle in India

ed that just this November to find money for young, talented Black kids. In Jamaica, I convinced the government to give a quarter million dollars to developing chess each year.

And I am working with kids in Africa as well. So I am actively participating in what has become the mission of my life. The mission of my life is to reproduce myself. Not just in terms of Black players, but also in terms of Black girls who are, truly, completely invisible in chess.

How did you become a commentator?

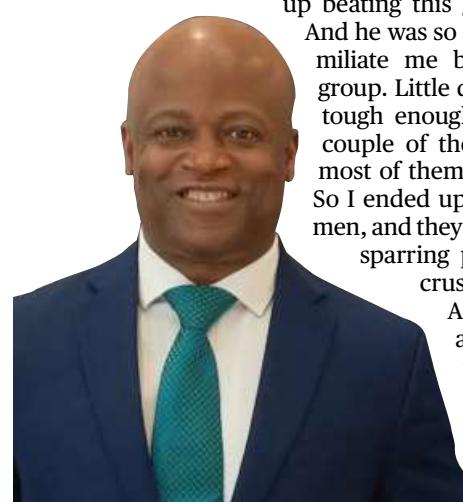
I was discovered by Bob Rice, who was the commissioner of the PCA [Professional Chess Association] that sponsored the World Chess Championship [outside FIDE]. I had coached some young kids to a national championship title, junior high school. I was able to communicate with them, with ease, the difficulty of chess. Bob found out about it and said, 'I think you could do commentary for us, because we have got this new league, with Kasparov and we're planning to do tournaments all over the world.'

I remember when I went to Moscow, that first time, and was in the Kremlin building. I was supposed to just do stuff for Eurosport, but the commentary was in Russian, and Bob and all the Americans were like, listen, we need somebody to talk about it in English, because we can't understand what is going on. So they put me in a booth in the Kremlin, and I stood up there, I thought of basketball, and just called it like I was calling basketball. I was calling it at the top of my voice. Like, what a move by Garry Kasparov!

And it was so entertaining, they said, that Kasparov's mother, Clara, said she would change the channel from the boring Russian to listen to me, even though she barely spoke any English.

What are your memories of the World title match between Anand and Kasparov in New York in 1995?

The first memory is that it took place at the World Trade Centre, the Twin Towers, on September 11. And another memory I have is Garry winning Game 10 after losing the previous one [the first eight games were drawn]. And the way he won was with supreme preparation. He would come into the room. Anand would make a move. He would come in and just play instantly and then walk out of the room. Just play the move, walk out. He did it for the first 20 moves. And poor Anand was just caught in deep preparation. After that, he just crushed him for the rest of the match. And I think Vishy was still young, still had a lot to learn before he became the great champion that he became. But that match was about Garry asserting his dominance.



I taught myself chess. I had no coach until I was 21 and my rating was 2400. I just studied like a complete maniac. I became like a PhD student of the game

When did you start thinking of becoming a Grandmaster?

When I was 14. I read about these Grandmasters in books, and I just wanted to be among the best. It didn't matter the obstacles in my way or not having any trainers when I was a kid or whatever. The game caught me and imprisoned me with its beauty. So it was a long journey to the Grandmaster title. I was elated, of course, and relieved more so because I had been trying for so long. I didn't get it until I was 33. It only taught me one of the biggest lessons I have ever had in my life, and it is in my current book, *Move by Move*, that I arrived at the Grandmaster title and became an advanced beginner. You thought you were there somehow, and then you realised, oh my god, the ocean is bigger than you thought it was.

Did it matter to you that you were the first**Black person to do it?**

All the Black people around me were saying, 'Do it for us'. It is easy to be Black, I am Black. That wasn't the problem. But to become a Grandmaster is hard. I knew a lot of people would be happy, and they were when I finally accomplished it. But my biggest problem with my accomplishment is that others haven't followed in my footsteps in great numbers. The way India has followed Anand. And I recognise that it took a while for such a great champion like Anand even to move the needle in India.

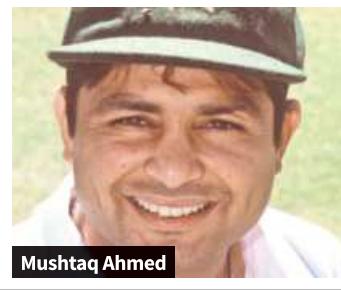
So I should give myself some grace in having not seen the rush that I would have expected of young Grandmasters. More has to be done. And I am doing more now, actively, myself. I am giving free lessons to young prodigies that I think have potential.

I have put a fellowship together, the Maurice Ashley Chess Fellowship in the US. Yeah, I start-

GAME THEORY

Asian Test spinners in SENA

This week, we take a look at the Asian spinners with the best Test bowling averages in South Africa, England, New Zealand, Australia (SENA), venues that traditionally don't favour the style of bowling:

**Best bowling averages:**

Asian spinners in South Africa, England, New Zealand, Australia

Spinner	Country	Tests	Wkts	Ave	Econ	SR
Mushtaq Mohammad	Pakistan	27	38	26.26	2.61	60.2
Muthiah Muralidaran	Sri Lanka	23	125	26.69	2.64	60.6
Mushtaq Ahmed	Pakistan	19	84	28.10	2.74	61.3
Bapu Nadkarni	India	11	26	29.46	1.85	95.5
Erapalli Prasanna	India	20	78	29.94	2.42	73.9
Bishan Bedi	India	25	90	30.98	2.36	78.6
Iqbal Qasim	Pakistan	9	29	31.06	2.58	72.0
Shakib Al Hasan	Bangladesh	8	28	31.07	3.20	58.1
B.S. Chandrasekhar	India	19	71	31.33	2.67	70.3
Saglani Mushtaq	Pakistan	11	40	34.37	2.73	75.4
Ravi Shastri	India	21	47	34.63	2.25	92.3
Dilip Doshi	India	8	29	36.51	2.22	98.5
Anil Kumble	India	35	141	37.04	2.76	80.2
Danish Kaneria	Pakistan	19	75	38.50	3.13	73.6
Ravindra Jadeja	India	22	52	39.05	2.71	86.4
Saeed Ajmal	Pakistan	8	27	39.18	2.78	84.2
R. Ashwin	India	26	72	39.55	2.82	84.1
Harbhajan Singh	India	19	62	39.93	3.09	77.3
Vinoj Mankad	India	11	32	40.87	2.40	102.1
Rangana Herath	Sri Lanka	21	57	42.75	2.93	87.4
Intikhab Alam	Pakistan	22	47	42.85	2.84	90.4
Abdul Qadir	Pakistan	16	43	49.04	2.79	105.2
Yasir Shah	Pakistan	16	46	55.08	3.87	85.3

PICTURE THIS

**Tide's out!**

Veteran footballers play on the wet sand during the 64th Campeonato de Futbol Playero de Santander at the Sardinero beach in Spain earlier this month.

The idea behind the tournament — a long-standing tradi-

tion that dates back to 1960-61 — is to bring together the large community of football enthusiasts on the vibrant Santander coast.

The games are played when the tide is low. So the championship calendar is intricately linked to the tide schedule, with matches arranged around the times when the receding water reveals the playing surface.

Every team is represented by a delegate who acts as the 'owner' of a specific area of the beach, where the playing field is set up for each matchday. The fields are marked out to measure 100 steps in length and 60 in width, with goals that are 6.20

meters wide and 2 meters high. Each team is responsible for marking and preparing its half of the field before the match.

The championship, which features players aged 28 and older, has attracted retired LaLiga footballers, including the likes of former Barcelona manager Quique Setien.

RECOGNITION

Melbourne Cricket Club honour for Tendulkar



FILE PHOTO
The Melbourne Cricket Club on Friday said Indian icon Sachin Tendulkar has accepted its invitation to become an honorary member of the prestigious institution. Founded in 1838, the club is one of the oldest sports clubs in Australia and is responsible for the management and development of the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

IN GOOD TOUCH

Thought we were in for a Kohli masterclass: Smith



Australia batter Steve Smith said that Virat Kohli looked set for a big knock before falling for 36 on the second day of the fourth Test at the MCG. "It was probably the first ball I think he actually played on that fifth, sixth stump line (when he got out). He was really disciplined and I thought we were in for a bit of a masterclass."

GAINING GROUND

Bosch's breezy knock takes the game away from Pakistan



Debutant Corbin Bosch, in pic, hit 81 not out and Marco Jansen claimed two wickets as South Africa took control on the second day of the first Test against Pakistan at SuperSport Park on Friday. **The scores:** Pakistan 211 & 88/3 in 22 overs vs South Africa 301 in 73.4 overs (Markram 89, Bosch 81 n.o., Khurram 3/75, Naseem 3/92).

NEW HIGH

Ervine, Bennett score centuries in record total for Zimbabwe



Craig Ervine, in pic, and Brian Bennett scored tons as Zimbabwe posted its highest ever total on the second day of the first Test against Afghanistan in Bulawayo. The Afghans were 95 for two at stumps. **The scores:** Zimbabwe 586 in 135.2 overs (Sean Williams 154, Ervine 104, Bennett 110) vs Afghanistan 95/2 in 30 overs.

Smith's hundred & late strikes put Australia in a dominant position

The Aussie great registers his 34th Test ton; Cummins stars both with bat and ball while Boland proves his value yet again; India's hopes rest on Pant and the all-rounders as Jaiswal, Kohli flatter to deceive after another failure for Rohit

IND IN AUS

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

MELBOURNE

A modern great's ton ensured Australia's dominance while a youngster's counter-punch helmed India's brief resistance. Steve Smith's fluent 140 placed the host in a dominant position in the fourth Test on Friday.

The former Australian captain's ton helped Pat Cummins and his men post 474 in the first innings. At the second day's close here at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, India, after riding on Yashasvi Jaiswal's 82, finished with 164 for five. The 22-year-old was set for a big knock before a mix-up with Virat Kohli, triggered a run-out.

Prior to this evening meltdown, India's first innings commenced with Rohit Sharma returning as an opener.

The skipper punched Cummins for initial runs and with Jaiswal looking confident, India nursed hopes. But they were dashed when Rohit attempted to pull Cummins, paused mid-stride and popped a catch.

Crucial strike

K.L. Rahul walked in and drove with elan while southpaw Jaiswal uppercut Cummins. The duo settled in but on the brink of tea, Cummins castled Rahul with a delivery that curled in and then straightened to rattle the timber. India 51 for two, and in trouble.

In the last session, Kohli was greeted with a mixture of boos and the 'Kohli' chants. His petty run-in



Mix-up: The Australian players are cock-a-hoop as Jaiswal and Kohli are stranded at the non-striker's end. GETTY IMAGES

with Sam Konstas on Thursday, has obviously split his fandom. Shutting out the noise, he drove Cummins and Mitchell Starc on either side of the pitch.

Meanwhile, Jaiswal tucked into Starc, lofted Nathan Lyon, and hoisted Mitchell Marsh for six. More was on offer when he dabbed Scott Boland straight to Cummins and scampered for a risky single, Kohli did not budge. It became a triple blow as the latter edged Boland and nightwatchman Akash Deep fell for a blob.

Earlier in the morning, Australia resumed at the overnight 311 for six. Just as the sun lit up the venue, the host's first innings gained runs through shots and the odd edge as Smith and Cummins stitched a fine seventh-wicket partnership.

Pitch intruder
Some avoidable drama happened when a fan ran

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA — 1ST INNINGS

Sam Konstas lbw b Jadeja 60 (65b, 6x4, 2x6), Usman Khawaja c Rahul b Bumrah 57 (121b, 6x4), Marnus Labuschagne c Kohli b Washington 72 (145b, 7x4), Steve Smith b Akash 140 (197b, 13x4, 3x6), Travis Head b Bumrah 0 (7b), Mitchell Marsh c Pant b Bumrah 4 (13b, 1x4), Alex Carey c Pant b Akash 31 (41b, 1x6), Pat Cummins c Nitish b Jadeja 49 (63b, 7x4), Mitchell Starc b Jadeja 15 (36b, 1x6), Nathan Lyon lbw b Bumrah 13 (18b, 1x4), Scott Boland (not out) 6 (36b); Extras (lb-11, nb-6, w-10); Total (in 122.4 overs):

474.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-89 (Konstas, 19.2 overs), 2-154 (Khawaja, 44.1), 3-237 (Labuschagne, 65.1), 4-240 (Head, 66.3), 5-246 (Marsh, 68.6), 6-299 (Carey, 82.1), 7-411 (Cummins, 104.1), 8-455 (Starc, 113.3), 9-455 (Smith, 114.1).

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 28.4-9-99-4, Siraj 23-3-122-0, Akash 26-8-94-2, Jadeja 23-4-78-3, Nitish 7-0-21-0, Washington 15-2-49-1.

INDIA — 1ST INNINGS

Yashasvi Jaiswal (run out) 82 (118b, 11x4, 1x6), Rohit Sharma c

Boland b Cummins 3 (5b), K.L. Rahul b Cummins 24 (42b, 3x4), Virat Kohli c Carey b Boland 36 (86b, 4x4), Akash Deep c Lyon b Boland 0 (13b), Rishabh Pant (batting) 6 (7b), Ravindra Jadeja (batting) 4 (7b, 1x4); Extras (lb-2, nb-2, w-5); Total (for five wkts, in 46 overs): 164.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-8 (Rohit, 1.6), 2-51 (Rahul, 14.6), 3-153 (Jaiswal, 40.6), 4-154 (Kohli, 42.1), 5-159 (Akash, 44.3).

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Starc 13-0-48-0, Cummins 13-2-57-2, Boland 12-4-24-2, Lyon 5-1-18-0, Marsh 3-0-15-0.

Smith (140) remained aggressive but when he failed to clear Akash over the infield, the ball grazed his bat and rolled onto his stumps.

With Mohammed Siraj bowling wide bouncers, runs were gifted. Australia had a lunch score of 454 for seven with the morning session yielding 143 from 27 overs.

In the afternoon, Jadeja got one to beat Starc's bat. runs concluded when Cummins freed his arms against Ravindra Jadeja and offered a catch in the deep.

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With Mohammed Siraj

bowling wide bouncers,

runs were gifted. Australia

had a lunch score of 454

for seven with the morning

session yielding 143 from

27 overs.

In the afternoon, Jadeja

got one to beat Starc's bat.

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