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Hon'ble Chief Minister, Rajasthan

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Rajasthan Samvad



Government of Haryana

“भारत ने नारा नहीं, निष्ठा के साथ women led development की ओर कदम बढ़ाए हैं और महिला सशक्तिकरण का लाभ आज हर क्षेत्र में दिख रहा है जो भारत की विकास यात्रा में योगदान दे रहा है।”  
- नरेन्द्र मोदी



## Sashakt Nari Shakti, Viksit Bharat



Prime Minister  
**Sh. Narendra Modi**  
to Launch  
**Bima Sakhi Yojana**  
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And

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Live telecast on  
DD News

Date - 9 December, 2024 | Time - 2 pm  
Venue - Panipat

**डबल इंजन सरकार, विकास को उत्ताप**



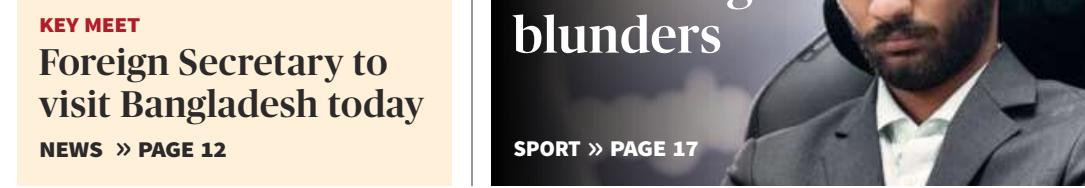
**KEY MEET**  
Foreign Secretary to visit Bangladesh today

NEWS » PAGE 12

BREAKING THROUGH

Gukesh cashes in on Ding's blunders

SPORT » PAGE 17



**MARCH SUSPENDED**  
Haryana police use tear gas on farmers

NEWS » PAGE 4

DATA POINT

**Aftermath of historic rainfall and a full dam**

What went wrong at Sathanur dam?

OPINION » PAGE 9



**FULL IMPLEMENTATION**  
How did Chandigarh enforce criminal laws?

NEWS » PAGE 14

## Militants in Syria capture Damascus as Assad flees

No sign of Army deployment as militants enter capital; Prime Minister calls for free elections



**Tense situation:** Flames sweeping through the criminal security branch of Syria's Interior Ministry in Damascus on Sunday. AFP

Reuters  
AMMAN/BEIRUT/CAIRO

**T**he militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Syria declared President Bashar al-Assad's ouster after seizing control of Damascus on Sunday, ending his family's iron-fisted rule after more than 13 years of civil war in a seismic moment for West Asia.

Mr. Assad flew out of Damascus for an unknown destination earlier on Sunday, two senior Army members said, as militants said they had entered the capital with no sign of Army deployments. Hours later Russian news agencies, citing a Kremlin source, said that Mr. Assad and his family are in Moscow.

The Islamist militants also dealt a major blow to the influence of Russia and Iran in the region, key allies who propped up Mr. Assad during critical moments in the conflict.

As Syrians expressed joy, Prime Minister Mo-

## Questions over Rahul's leadership skills as Pawar backs Mamata

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

With West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's recent remarks over leading the Opposition's INDIA bloc finding a taker in Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar, questions are being raised over the leadership skills of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

"Is Sharad Pawar's sup-

port for Mamata Banerjee to lead the INDIA bloc an indirect message that Rahul Gandhi is incapable of leading? Only time will tell what is on his [Mr. Pawar's] mind," Maharashtra BJP leader Pravin Darekar said on Sunday.

Addressing a press meet in Kolhapur on Saturday, Mr. Pawar called Ms. Banerjee a "capable leader" who has the right to announce her intention to lead the

Opposition alliance. The support comes amid rumours of a rift in the INDIA bloc after the Congress's poor poll show in Maharashtra and Haryana.

However, Shiv Sena leader Manisha Kayande referred to Ms. Banerjee as the "captain of a sinking ship". "Mamata Banerjee is dreaming of a leadership post on a sinking ship. She has our best wishes," Ms. Kayande said.

Several other INDIA bloc leaders have welcomed Ms. Banerjee's statement.

**Praise for Mamata**

"The INDIA bloc is fighting for the Constitution and democracy... Mamata didi is very close to us; she is a good leader," Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray said on Sunday.

Earlier, NCP(SP) MP Supriya Sule said the Opposition will be happy if Ms. Ba-

nerjee took up important roles. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said, "She [Ms. Banerjee] has put forward her statement because she has shown a successful model in West Bengal, where she has kept the BJP away from power and implemented several welfare schemes. Whenever the INDIA bloc meeting takes place, our senior leaders will together take a decision."

## IN BRIEF

**Congress seeks House debate on India-China ties**

**NEW DELHI**  
Days after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's statement on China in Parliament, the Congress on Sunday demanded a debate on the "full gamut" of the India-China relationship. » Page 11

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 6



## Samriddh Narishakti, Viksit Bharat

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— Launch by —

## Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

9<sup>th</sup> December 2024, 2 PM onwards, Sector 13/17, HSVP Ground, Panipat, Haryana

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Watch the live telecast of the programme On DD News

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## Gujarat court acquits ex-IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt in 1997 case

Press Trust of India  
PORBANDAR

A court in Porbandar district of Gujarat has acquitted former IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt in a 1997 custodial torture case, observing that the prosecution could not "prove the case beyond reasonable doubt".

Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Mukesh Pandya on Saturday acquitted Mr. Bhatt, the then Superintendent of Police of Porbandar, in a case registered against him under Sections of the Indian Penal Code pertaining to causing grievous hurt to obtain confession and other provisions, by giving him the benefit of the doubt.

He was sentenced to life imprisonment in a 1990 custodial death case in Jamnagar and 20 years in jail in a 1996 case relating



Sanjiv Bhatt

to planting drugs to frame a lawyer in Palanpur. He is lodged in the Rajkot Central Jail.

He is also an accused in a case of alleged fabrication of evidence in connection with the 2002 Gujarat riots cases along with activist Teesta Setalvad and former Gujarat Director-General of Police R.B. Sreekumar.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 12

**OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE**  
**DEATH**  
**OBITUARY**

**S.V. NARAYANAN**  
1927 - 2024  
Retired Managing Director,  
LIC of India  
Passed away on  
7th December 2024 at  
Dallas Texas, USA.  
Survived by  
Ananthalakshmi,  
Prakash & Janak,  
Lathe & Ramesh,  
Grandchildren, Great Grandson

**DEATH ANNIVERSARIES**  
**FIRST ANNIVERSARY**

**M Vetrivel**  
Retd. Commandant RPSF  
DOB: 17.06.1932 - DOD: 09.12.2023  
Fondly remembered by  
Family Members, Relatives & Friends  
Mob: 98402-9947

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E.A. NO 4/2024 IN E.P.No.6 /2022  
In I.A. No.209/1993 In I.A. No. 1427 /1980  
In AFFAIRE No.243 /1966  
1.Catchirayer Phibrene Antonayyer (Died)  
2.Induva Sandan Ignasimai Pholins  
3.Elizabath Sandana Pragasm  
4.Marie Arcupullass (Died)  
... Petitioner/Plaintiff/DHr.  
V.S.  
1.Thangaraj Catchirayer French E-Bassy,S/o Rock Adrien Catchirayer,  
B-29, South Extentica Part-II, New Delhi - 49.  
2.Johny Catchirayer (Died)  
3.Nallathambiy Alexander Selvarassi (Died)  
Rep. by her LRs R4, RS  
4.Senthane Snobuy  
5.Nallathambiy Xavarine  
... Respondents/Respondents/JDs  
6. Arokianathan@ Joy Anukumar  
7. Joba @ Assolkumar  
8. Ambrosia @ Jcyaraj ...  
Respondents / Proposed parties LRs Of deceased 2<sup>nd</sup> Respondent  
**NOTICE TO 1<sup>ST</sup> RESPONDENT/JD.**  
Please take notice that the above E.A. No 4/2024 in E.P. No.6/2022 has been filed by the Petitioners to implement the legal rights of the deceased 2<sup>nd</sup> Respondent/JD. The Respondents/Proposed parties are 6,7 and 8 of the LRs of deceased Johny Catchirayer. The said case has been ordered for notice to you, through paper publication. The said same was posted coming on 06-01-2025 at 10.00 a.m. for your appearance personally or through your Advocate and filing objection if any in the above said Fiction. Failing which the matter will be decided by this Honble Court.  
R. SUMMUCAM, B.A. B.L.  
S. RANAGARAJAN LL.B.  
Advocates Puducherry - 605 011.  
Mobile No: 9443267755

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

PUBLIC NOTICE! Sasha Shah want to correct my father's name in my CBSE records and school record (Delhi Public School, Srinagar) from PARVAZ AHMAD SHAH TO PARVEZ AHMED SHAH. Now if anybody having objection he/she can contact Concerned authority within 7 days after that no objection will be entertained. Name: Sasha Shah/O/Parvez Ahmed Shah/R/O/Wanbal Gulzarpora Srinagar

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# AAP accuses BJP of 'settling' Rohingya refugees in Capital

Ruling party cites two-year-old X post of Union Minister Hardip Puri over their shifting to EWS flats; BJP junks charge, says the remark was about 'legal refugees', and not about 'illegal infiltrators'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**D**elhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party on Sunday alleged that Rohingya refugees were "settled" in the Capital by the BJP-led Centre and given houses in the city's Bakkarwala area.

The BJP, which is also Delhi's main Opposition party, termed the accusation a "baseless rhetoric".

AAP's allegations came close on the heels of BJP's charges about the rising presence of "illegal Rohingya immigrants in the Capital". The BJP had accused AAP of facilitating their "illegal settlement" in the city to get their votes in election. The Opposition party had levelled the allegation after AAP claimed that the BJP has been conspiring to



AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal during his *padyatra* in Delhi's Karol Bagh on Sunday. ANI

omit names of its supporters from the voter lists in a bid to win the Delhi Assembly poll due in February next year.

Sharpening its attack, AAP cited an over two-year-old social media post of Union Minister Hardip Singh Puri, who held the

charge of the Union Urban Development Minister at the time. In his post on X on August 17, 2022, Mr. Puri had said, "India has always welcomed those who have sought refuge in the country. In a landmark decision, all #Rohingya #Refugees will be shifted to EWS flats in Bakkarwala area of Delhi. They will be provided basic amenities, UNHCR IDs and round-the-clock Delhi Police protection."

Commenting on X, Chief Minister Atishi said, "BJP people were in such a hurry to make false allegations against [former Delhi CM and AAP chief] Arvind Kejriwal that they forgot who brought the Rohingya to Delhi and settled them here." Former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia said Mr. Puri's post is the proof that

the BJP "hatched the conspiracy to settle Rohingya in Delhi".

**'Bid to mislead people'**

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said AAP leaders are misleading people by citing an old comment of Mr. Puri, which was about "legal refugees", and not about illegal infiltrators".

"The real issue is not the settlement of legal refugees but the presence of lakhs of illegally residing Rohingya and Bangladeshis, not just in Delhi, but also in States like U.P., Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Jharkhand," he said.

Daring Mr. Kejriwal for a debate, he said the "illegal infiltrators" are not only disturbing social harmony in Delhi but also contributing to criminal activities.

## BJP says slum dwellers mere vote bank for AAP

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

a "miserable state" due to ruling AAP's negligence in the past 10 years.

"There are no proper roads, sanitation or drinking water facilities. Residents of these slums are deprived of basic amenities. Once the BJP forms the government, it will work to fulfil the aspirations of the slum dwellers," BJP Lok Sabha MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said addressing the protesters at the Govindpuri slum of the Kalkaji Assembly segment.

## Six members of family injured in roof collapse

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Shani Bazar area on Sunday morning, a police officer said. They also suffered burns as they were sitting in their kitchen, where food was being cooked on a gas stove at the time of the incident.

**International Anti-Corruption Day**  
9<sup>th</sup> December, 2024

1.71 lakh youth received Government jobs "Bina Kharchi - Bina Parchi"

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“प्राणाचार से मुक्ति के लिए हर क्षेत्र और हर सेक्टर में प्राणाचार के खिलाफ लड़ाई समय की मांग है और मेरे देशवासियों, मेरे प्यारे परिवारजनों, मेरी माती की प्रतिबद्धता है; यह मेरी व्यक्तिगत प्रतिबद्धता है कि मैं प्राणाचार के खिलाफ लड़ना जारी रखूँगा।”  
**- नरेन्द्र मोदी**

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana [www.prharyana.gov.in](http://www.prharyana.gov.in) Follow us on @diprpharyana

# Unite against lawlessness in Capital, seek safer city from BJP: Kejriwal to residents

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday urged city residents to unite against the "lawlessness" prevailing in the Capital, saying the situation would have been better had the law and order been under the Delhi government's control.

"I want to ask you, do you not feel scared to leave your homes? When a daughter steps out, parents' hearts beat with fear. I would have fixed this in 10 years [of my rule] had it been in my power," Mr. Kejriwal said during his pa-

**Former Delhi CM says situation would have been better had law and order been under AAP govt.**

dayatra in Karol Bagh.

The remarks came as the AAP chief has been repeatedly targeting the BJP over the issue, with party insiders saying it is a part of a carefully crafted strategy to corner the BJP, which rules at the Centre.

Delhi Police reports to the Union Home Ministry, and AAP has sharpened its attack over the issue following multiple murders in the Capital in recent days.

Expressing concern ov-

er the crime situation, Mr. Kejriwal also urged city residents to unite in demanding a safer city from the BJP.

**'Situation worrisome'**

"I am deeply concerned about the deteriorating law and order in Delhi. From morning till evening, I go around Delhi, meet people, and wherever I go, people tell me that they feel scared to even step out of their homes," he said. Mr. Kejriwal said he had been able to fix issues concerning power supply, schools, and hospitals as these were in his control, but he was unable to do anything about law and order as it came under the Centre.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department predicted colder

# Delhi braces for cold; 235 tents set up for homeless people

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) has set up 235 pagoda tents to provide shelter to homeless people, an official said on Sunday.

According to the Delhi government's Winter Action Plan, 250 tents are to be set up. The remaining 15 tents have been reserved for an emergency. "Each tent is equipped with essential amenities such as mattresses, blankets, toilet facilities, and health check-up services, along with three meals a day," the official said.

nights ahead with Delhi's minimum temperature likely to fall to 6 degrees Celsius by December 12, just short of the threshold to sound a cold wave warning. On Sunday, it stood at 7.4 degrees Celsius, two notches below normal.



A shelter home for homeless people at Sarai Kale Khan. ANI

## Hospital treats twin blockage in food pipe

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Delhi's Sir Ganga Ram Hospital has successfully conducted endoscopic procedure to treat double obstruction in the food pipe of a 45-year-old male patient from Himachal Pradesh, who suffered from a chronic liver disease.

**THE HINDU**  
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Timings	
<b>DELHI</b>	
MONDAY, DEC. 09	RISE 07:03 SET 17:25
	RISE 13:00 SET 00:18
<b>TUESDAY, DEC. 10</b>	
	RISE 07:03 SET 17:26
	RISE 13:32 SET 01:21
<b>WEDNESDAY, DEC. 11</b>	
	RISE 07:04 SET 17:26
	RISE 14:06 SET 02:25

**Delhi Weather** max min  
Delhi City 24 07  
Safdarjung 24 07  
Palam 22 10

**Delhi Palam Today**  
25°C Chances of light rain at early morning hours. Day will be comfortable. Night will be cold with mist and fog.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
24°C Temperature will decrease. Morning will be cold with fog and mist. Day will be pleasant. Dry weather is likely.

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<b>CE (Civil Engineering)</b>	<b>10 in top 10</b>	Classroom Course : 8 Online Course : 1 Test Series & IGP : 1 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 90%	<b>20 in top 20</b>	Classroom Course : 14 Online Course : 3 Test Series & IGP : 3 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 85%	<b>90 out of 92 vacancies</b>	Classroom Course : 44 Online Course : 22 Test Series & IGP : 24 Selections from All Courses: 98%	<b>10 in top 10</b>	Classroom Course : 4 Online Course : 6 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 100%
<b>E&amp;T (E&amp;T Engineering)</b>	<b>10 in top 10</b>	Classroom Course : 7 Online Course : 3 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 100%	<b>20 in top 20</b>	Classroom Course : 15 Online Course : 5 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 100%	<b>65 out of 70 vacancies</b>	Classroom Course : 36 Online Course : 12 Test Series & IGP : 17 Selections from All Courses: 93%	<b>10 in top 10</b>	Classroom Course : 5 Online Course : 2 Test Series & IGP : 3 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 70%
<b>EE (Electrical Engineering)</b>	<b>10 in top 10</b>	Classroom Course : 7 Online Course : 6 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 100%	<b>20 in top 20</b>	Classroom Course : 7 Online Course : 11 Test Series & IGP : 2 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 90%	<b>26 out of 26 vacancies</b>	Classroom Course : 9 Online Course : 14 Test Series & IGP : 3 Selections from All Courses: 100%	<b>10 in top 10</b>	Classroom Course : 24 Online Course : 12 Test Series & IGP : 4 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 90%
<b>ME (Mechanical Engineering)</b>	<b>10 in top 10</b>	Classroom Course : 5 Online Course : 5 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 69%	<b>10 in top 10</b>	Classroom Course : 6 Online Course : 5 Test Series & IGP : 5 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 69%	<b>16 out of 18 vacancies</b>	Classroom Course : 6 Online Course : 5 Test Series & IGP : 5 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 89%	<b>10 in top 10</b>	Classroom Course : 24 Online Course : 12 Test Series & IGP : 10 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 87%
								<b>40 in top 10</b>
								Classroom Course : 9 Online Course : 12 Test Series & IGP : 4 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 90%
								<b>76 in top 20</b>
								Classroom Course : 42 Online Course : 24 Test Series & IGP : 10 Selections from Classroom & Online Courses: 87%
								<b>197 out of 206 vacancies</b>
								Classroom Course : 95 Online Course : 53 Test Series & IGP : 49 Selections from all Courses: More than 95%

<b>CE 10 in Top 10</b>	<b>1 AIR Rohit Dhondge Classroom Course</b>	<b>2 AIR Harshit Pandey Classroom Course</b>	<b>3 AIR Laxmikant Classroom Course</b>	<b>4 AIR D Madhankumar Classroom Course</b>	<b>5 AIR Aman Pratap Singh Classroom Course</b>	<b>6 AIR Sanchit Goel Classroom Course</b>	<b>7 AIR Sunil Seervi Classroom Course</b>	<b>8 AIR Rohit Kumar Classroom Course</b>	<b>9 AIR Ankit Meena Test Series &amp; IGP</b>	<b>10 AIR Badugu Rajesh Online Course</b>
<b>EE 10 in Top 10</b>	<b>1 AIR Rajan Kumar Classroom Course</b>	<b>2 AIR Satyam Ch. Khairnar Classroom Course</b>	<b>3 AIR Priyanshu Mudgal Online Course</b>	<b>4 AIR Naman Agarwal Online Course</b>	<b>5 AIR Mayank Kumar Singh Classroom Course</b>	<b>6 AIR Ritvik Kok Online Course</b>	<b>7 AIR Manthan Sharma Classroom Course</b>	<b>8 AIR Mayank Jaiman Online Course</b>	<b>9 AIR Anmol Singh Online Course</b>	<b>10 AIR Akshit Parashari Online Course</b>
<b>E&amp;T 10 in Top 10</b>	<b>1 AIR Himanshu Thapliyal Classroom Course</b>	<b>2 AIR Yashavita Vijayvargiya Classroom Course</b>	<b>3 AIR Unnati Chansoria Online Course</b>	<b>4 AIR Rajiv Ranjan Mishra Classroom Course</b>	<b>5 AIR Parag Saroha Online Course</b>	<b>6 AIR Chandrika Gadgil Classroom Course</b>	<b>7 AIR Debarghya Chatterjee Classroom Course</b>	<b>8 AIR Vidhu Shree Online Course</b>	<b>9 AIR T. Piyush Dayanand Classroom Course</b>	<b>10 AIR Rajvardhan Sharma Classroom Course</b>
<b>ME 10 in Top 10</b>	<b>1 AIR Munish Kumar Test Series &amp; IGP</b>	<b>2 AIR Rajesh Kasaniya Test Series &amp; IGP</b>	<b>3 AIR Gollangi Sateesh Test Series &amp; IGP</b>	<b>4 AIR D. Ajinkya Radhakisan Classroom Course</b>	<b>5 AIR Bankuru Naveen Classroom Course</b>	<b>6 AIR Chandan Joshi Online Course</b>	<b>7 AIR Dinesh Kr. Sharma Classroom Course</b>	<b>8 AIR Shailendra Singh Classroom Course</b>	<b>9 AIR Krishna K. Dwivedi Classroom Course</b>	<b>10 AIR V. Akshay Santosh IGP</b>

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## IN BRIEF



## Modi to inaugurate Rising Rajasthan Summit today

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Rajasthan on Monday during which he will inaugurate the Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit 2024. He will also visit Haryana the same day and will launch the LIC's Bima Sakhi Yojana and lay the foundation stone of the main campus of the Maharana Pratap Horticultural University in Panipat. The Summit will host 12 sectoral thematic sessions on water security, sustainable mining, sustainable finance, inclusive tourism, agri-business innovations and women-led startups among others. Over 32 countries, including 16 partner countries, will participate in the summit. PTI

## Items worth ₹12 lakh stolen during Mahayuti swearing-in

Gold chains, mobile phones and cash cumulatively valued at ₹12 lakh were stolen during the swearing-in ceremony of the Mahayuti government at the sprawling Azad Maidan in south Mumbai on December 5, a police officer said on Sunday. FIRs have been lodged against unidentified persons and efforts are on to nab the accused, the Azad Maidan police officer said. The ceremony, in which BJP stalwart Devendra Fadnavis was sworn in as Chief Minister and Shiv Sena's Eknath Shinde and NCP leader Ajit Pawar as his deputies, was a grand affair with top names of industry, cinema and politics in attendance, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi. PTI

## Naxalites kill woman on suspicion of being informer

A 40-year-old woman was killed allegedly by Naxalites on suspicion of being a police informer in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said on Sunday. As per preliminary information, Naxalites abducted Yalam Sukra from Laded village under Madded police station limits and took her to a nearby hill on Saturday, an officer said. Sukra was strangled, and her body was abandoned in the area, he said. The officer said police team recovered a pamphlet from the Madded area committee of Maoists at the spot. In the pamphlet, the Naxalites accused the woman of acting as a police informer since 2017. A search operation has been launched to trace the assailants, he said. PTI

## Punjab paradox: Akali Dal's road to redemption amid a radical rising in the State

## SPOTLIGHT

## Vikas Vasudeva

The winter chill has begun to set in across northern India's plains. In Amritsar's Golden Temple, it got colder still, following an assassination bid on former two-time Punjab Deputy Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal. The State saw the end of terrorism around the separatist Khalistan movement in the 1990s. But on December 4, Narain Singh, 68, a man the police claim is a "former terrorist" and a pro-Khalistan sympathiser, pointed a gun at the chief of one of Punjab's most prominent political parties.

After the assassination attempt, which was foiled by the prompt action of Jasbir Singh, an assistant sub-inspector in the Punjab police, the attention is back on the emboldening of right-wingers in the State. It also points to the 'existential crisis' engulfing the SAD, the party which was established in 1920 and claims to be the sole representative of the Sikh panth (followers), as well as India's oldest regional party.

Sukhbir was performing his second day of penance, after the Akal Takht, the centre of religious authori-

ty for the Sikhs, had handed him a set of punishments for tankhaiya (religious misconduct). He was in a wheelchair, with his fractured leg in a bandage, sitting at the entrance gate (Gantagar) of the Golden Temple dressed as a sewadar (person performing service), when the attacker drew the gun. Sukhbir escaped unhurt and the assailant was led away by the police.

"As the attacker headed towards Badal ji, I sensed his intention. Our officers had already briefed us about anti-social elements and we were all alert, but we did not frisk anyone at the entrance, keeping in mind the code of conduct at the Darbar Sahib," Jasbir says. He was in plainclothes that day, clad in a typical white kurta-pyjama and a red turban, when he diverted the gun away from Sukhbir.

**A loss of faith**  
A day after the incident, the Golden Temple has returned to its regular pace. Some anxiety though, is palpable.

After paying obeisance at Harmadir Sahib, 32-year-old Manjeet Singh, clad in a black turban and formal clothing, says he prayed for the wellbeing of all. He's clear the firing incident should never have happened, especially in the Golden Temple. "But



**Build-up of resentment:** Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal washes dishes as he serves his religious punishment out at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the day after he was shot; the man who shot at Badal was caught by security personnel. FILE PHOTOS



the way the Badals have misused their power, ignoring the interests of the panth for their personal and political gains, they should be given harsh punishments," he says.

He feels that while Sukhbir has accepted his mistakes, it is up to the panth to forgive him. So far, this hasn't happened.

The SAD government was in power, along with its alliance partner the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in Punjab from 2007 to 2017, with the late Parkash Singh Badal as the Chief Minister. Sukhbir is his son. Manjeet says that among his key mistakes is the pardon granted to Sirsa-based Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim in a 2007 blasphemy case. Ram Rahim, who is at present serving a 20-year jail

sentence for rape, had imitated the 10th Sikh guru Gobind Singh's clothing at a ceremony while holding the initiation for the followers of his cult. This resulted in a police case being filed against him.

The Akal Takht had excommunicated godman Ram Rahim, but Badal used his clout to grant him an Akal Takht-stamped pardon and also spent around ₹90 lakh on advertisements to justify the decision, he later confessed. After a severe backlash from the Sikh community, the pardon had to be rescinded.

Manjeet feels the only way the SAD can redeem itself if all the leaders punished by the Akal Takht "prove through their actions that they are working towards the betterment of

the panth."

He points out that in the Lok Sabha elections held earlier in 2024, hardliners were able to win two seats out of 13 in Punjab. Two independent candidates won: Amritpal Singh, a pro-Khalistan propagator, who is currently in jail under the National Security Act (NSA), 1980; and Sarabjeet Singh, the son of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassin Beant Singh. In 2022, Simranjit Singh Mann, a hardline Sikh leader and chief of the SAD in Amritsar, won from Punjab's Sangrur Parliamentary constituency. Everyone had imagined that the Khalistan narrative was over.

Bijender Singh, a farmer from Deeg town in Rajasthan, who has come to pay obeisance at the Golden

## BJP accuses Kerala govt. of failing to utilise Central funds

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The BJP on Sunday accused the LDF government in Kerala of failing to utilise the Central aid in the State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF) and National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF) for the rehabilitation of the survivors of the landslides in Wayanad and launching a false propaganda against the Centre.



Javadekar said Centre has provided sufficient funds for Wayanad rehabilitation. PTI

the rehabilitation of the landslide survivors in Wayanad, he said it had exposed the falsehood of the LDF and UDF on the issue.

On Thursday, the High Court had severely criticized the State government for its 'failure' to maintain accurate records regarding funds available in the SDRF and its utilisation.

## Blame game questioned

The court also questioned the blame game between the State and the Centre over the release of funds for rehabilitation.

While the State government is maintaining that the Centre is not releasing the funds, the Centre claims that they have released them. But the State government does not have the correct figures, the court had observed.

## Farmers face tear gas at Shambhu border, pause march to Delhi for a day

Eight of them suffered injuries, says KMM coordinator; farmers say Haryana Police first showered flower petals on them for 'promotional photo'; meeting to decide on next course of action today

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHANDIGARH/DELHI

The Haryana police on Sunday again used tear gas to disperse farmers and farm workers after they attempted to enter Haryana at the Shambhu-Ambala inter-State boundary of Punjab and Haryana as a part of their 'Dilli Chalo' foot march to lay siege to the national capital.

The march was suspended for the day after several of the 101 farmers who started the march were injured. The farmers and farm labourers started their march from Shambhu village towards Ambala in Haryana even as the Haryana police stopped them in the wake of a prohibitory order under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita.

On Friday, the Haryana police had fired tear gas shells when farmers had resumed their march.

A group of farmers under the banner of the Ki-



**Shell-shocked:** Tear gas being used to disperse protesting farmers at Shambhu border during their foot march towards Delhi on Sunday. PTI

san Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) – two umbrella bodies spearheading the farmers' agitation in Punjab – have been, since February 13, camping at Shambhu-Ambala and Khanauri-Jind, the inter-State boundaries between Haryana and Punjab, after being stopped from entering Haryana.

They had then given the call for the 'Dilli Chalo'

March to press for fulfillment of their demands which include a legal guarantee for purchasing their crops at a Minimum Support Price (MSP) and farm loan waiver.

KMM coordinator Sarwan Singh Pandher said eight farmers have suffered injuries and one of them was rushed to the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research in Chandigarh.

"We have suspended

the march for today and called back the group members. We are having a meeting with officers from Ambala (Haryana) administration. The next course of action would be decided after the meeting," said Mr. Pandher.

Farmers said the police first showered flower petals on them for a "promotional photo" and then began firing tear gas shells. The farmers collected empty shells and lodged complaints with various human rights agencies.

**Delhi Police on alert**

Sukhchain Singh, a farmer who has been protesting at the Shambhu border since February, said gas from the shells caused burns and breathlessness.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police tightened security at its borders. "Delhi Police is on alert... A skeletal deployment has been made at the Singhu border, but it may increase as per the situation at Shambhu," a senior police officer said.

Pointing to the criticism of the State government by the Kerala High Court on

## Ahead of polls, Bihar BJP raises infiltration issue

**The Hindu Bureau**  
PATNA

On the lines of its election pitch in Jharkhand, Bihar Minister and BJP leader Nitin Nabin on Sunday raised the issue of alleged infiltration of Bangladeshi immigrants ahead of the Assembly poll in the State due next year.

Mr. Nabin said the Bihar government will take strict action against illegal immigrants taking shelter in See-

manchal regions, where the Muslim population is over 47%. A similar issue raised by the BJP during the recent Jharkhand poll backfired with the party facing a defeat. "Action must be taken against illegal immigrants staying in Bihar. In Seemanchal region, there is high possibility of infiltration. The resources of Bihar and India should be utilised by its people and not Bangladeshis," Mr. Nabin told reporters in Patna.

## Syria crisis: Syriac Orthodox Church head cuts short Kerala visit, to fly back tomorrow

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOCHI

The Patriarch of Antioch and head of the Syriac Orthodox Church Ignatios Aphrem II has cut short a visit to Kerala to fly back to Lebanon in view of the civil war that has engulfed Syria.

The Patriarch, who arrived on Saturday, was earlier scheduled to remain in Kerala up to December 17. But Jacobite Church sources said the Patriarch will



Patriarch of Antioch had arrived in Kochi on Saturday.

now leave Kerala on Tuesday.

Church sources also said

that though a new Catholicos Joseph Mor Gregorios has been declared to head the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church in India, he will be consecrated at a later date.

The Patriarch quashed rumours that the new Catholicos may be consecrated before the Patriarch leaves for Lebanon. Joseph Mor Gregorios will succeed Catholicos Baselios Thomas I, former head of the Jacobite Church in India, who

passed away on October 31. The main reason for the Patriarch's visit to Kerala, was to participate in the 40th day memorial of Catholicos Baselios Thomas I.

## Memorial services

The memorial services are scheduled for Monday. The Patriarch will deliver the keynote address at the memorial meeting after a solemn memorial mass at the Patriarchal Centre in Puthenkurisu near Kochi.

um) of the Akal Takht. Directions were also issued to the working committee of SAD to accept Sukhbir's resignation as the SAD president and hold elections for the president's post as well as posts of other office bearers within six months.

The Akal Takht also revoked the title of Panth Rattan Fakhr-e-Qaum (pride of the Sikh community) bestowed on the late Parkash Singh Badal in 2011 for his service towards the Sikh panth.

## The rise of the fringe

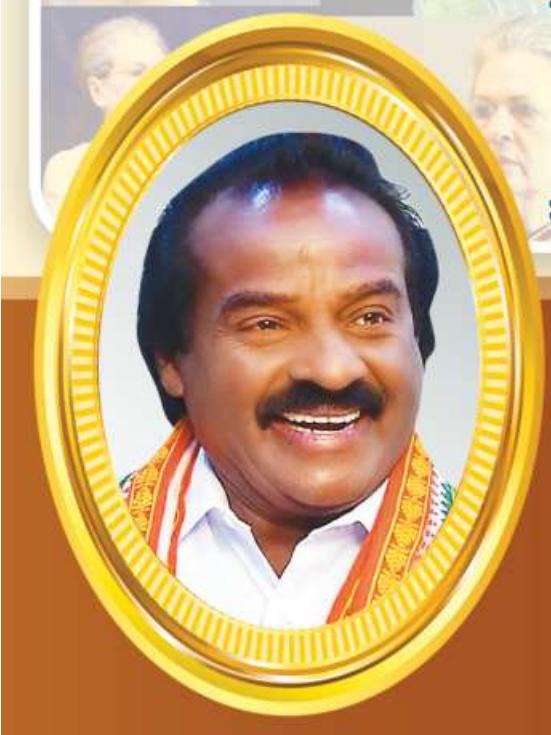
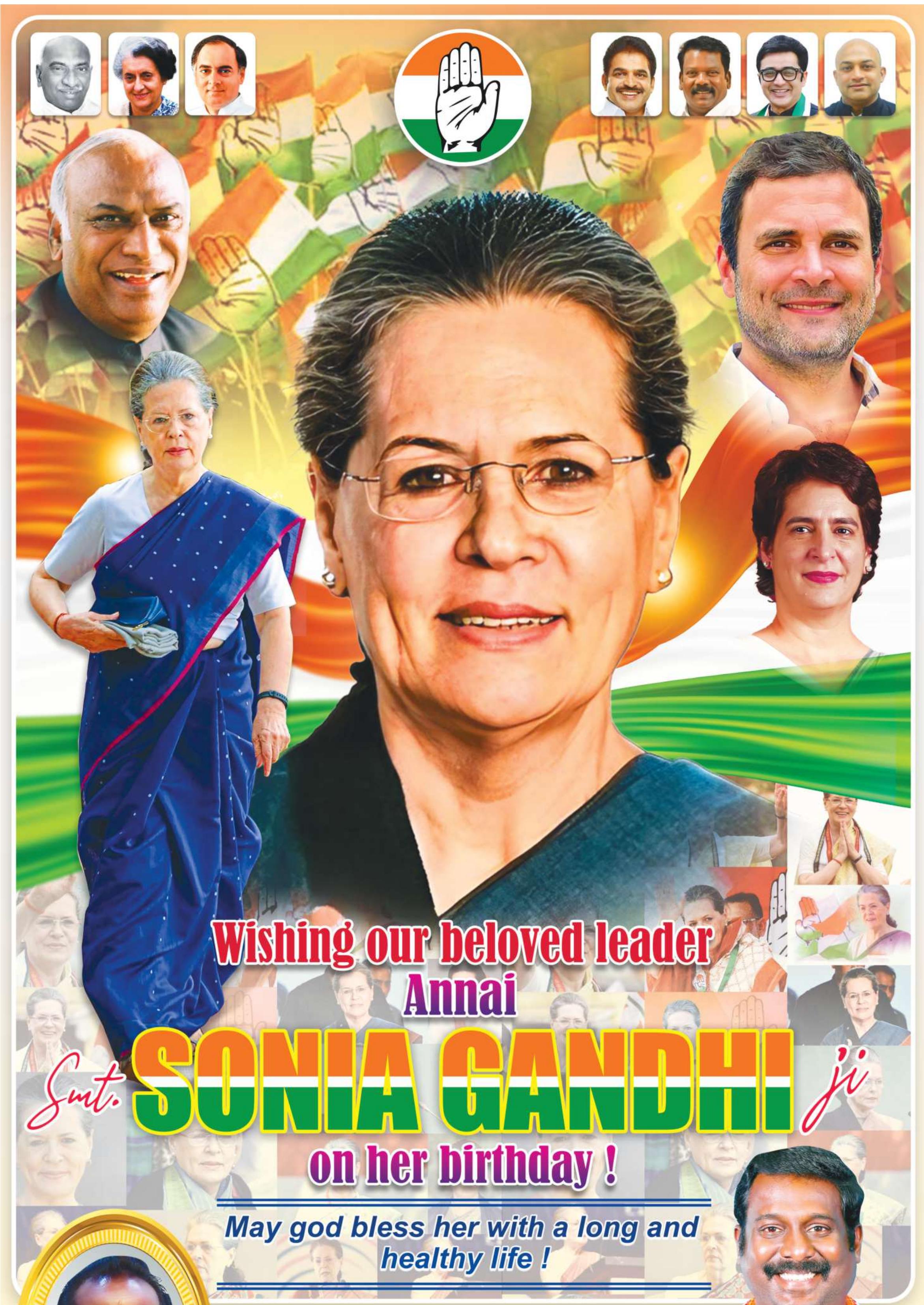
On December 5, a local court in Amritsar sent Narain to a three-day police custody. Pointing out that Narain is a former militant and a criminal, Gurpreet Singh Bhullar, the Police Commissioner of Amritsar stated: "The matter is being deeply investigated keeping in view Narain's radical bent of mind. We have recovered a 9mm pistol from his possession, and are probing where he got it from." Narain has been booked under Section 109 (attempt to murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and relevant sections of the Arms Act, 1959.

Narain's son Jagjit Singh Bajwa, who is his counsel in the case, says, "My father never spoke about anything related to his visit to the Golden Temple. He feels that given the attack, the 'frustration of fringe elements,' who keep pointing fingers at even Akal Takht's decision, has come to the fore. "We will soon hold a meeting to decide on a future course of action," he says.

Dharam Singh, a former professor of Sikh Studies at Panjab University, Patiala, says, "The Akali Dal gave up its panthic agenda at its 1996 conference in Moga and became a Punjabi party. Following this, many non-Sikhs not only became its members but also occupied offices of importance. This resulted in the gradual alienation of Sikhs."

Daljit Singh Cheema, a senior Akali leader says the party has accepted the directions of the Akal Takht. He feels that given the attack, the "frustration of fringe elements," who keep pointing fingers at even Akal Takht's decision, has come to the fore. "We will soon hold a meeting to decide on a future course of action," he says.

**LINK TO FULL STORY**  
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# THE HINDU

## REWIND 2024

### TRIVIA QUIZ

THE HINDU GROUP

DAY  
09

**1.** On 28 February 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for India's second spaceport. At which location was it established?

**2.** On 18 February 2024, India achieved its biggest-ever Test victory, defeating which country by a margin of 434 runs?

**3.** India's first private facility for building military planes was opened in Vadodara in 2024 as part of a partnership between India and which European country?

Scan QR code or visit [newsth.live/RTQPA](http://newsth.live/RTQPA) take the quiz. Top 3 winners\* every day win gift vouchers.

**Answer to yesterday's quiz:**

1. Tai Tzu Ying
2. Gopi Thotakura
3. Gujarat

**Yesterday's Winners:**  
1. PV. Manvitha, Hyderabad | 2. Anil. K, Bangalore | 3. Bilal. S, Chennai

Scan QR code or  
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**Government Of Gujarat**  
**Narmada Water- Resource Water supply & Kalpsar Department**  
**(E-TENDER NOTICE NO.- 12 OF 2024-25)**

**(1) Name of work:** Dismantling, Manufacturing, supply, erection Work of Gate Leaf, Horizontal girder, Arms and its both side walkway platform, Trunnion Assembly, Hoist bridge including main girder, E.R.U & C.D.U Base Frame, Floating Shaft Platform with shaft, Hoist Platform Chequered Plate, Drive Unit Assembly Cover, Footbridge, both side downstream side approach ladder, Gantry Crane CRAB, Hoist and Walkway Platform it's M.S Chequered Plate, M.S Angle, Railing Pipe etc, Replacement of Rubber seal & Colour work of 20 No's Stoplog Gate and Dismantling, Supply, Erection, testing and commissioning work of All Worm Reducer Gear box, electromagnetic brake system, Flexible Drum Coupling, Ele. Motor And Its Control panel, Wiring for LT to Drive Bogies -2 no's, C.T Drive unit Motor, Ele. Motor 60 MT Main Hoist Crane, Ele. Motor 20 MT Auxiliary Crane etc for 60 MT & 20 MT Gantry crane at Madhuban dam. Radial gate size 51'x 48.5' (Damanganga Project.) Dismantled Scrap will be given to Contractor. District- Valsad.

**(2) Estimated Cost:** Rs. 13,70,39,027=00.

**(3) Last Date/Time for receipt of tender (ONLINE)**

Dt.07/01/2025, Up to 18.00 Hrs.

**(4) Pre bid meeting (OFFLINE)**

Dt.17/12/2024 at 12.00 Hrs.

**(5) Name & Address of the E.E. Irri.Mech.Gate & Store Dn.No.:1, 7th Floor, Block-C", Narmada Bhuvan, Jai Road, Vadodara-1. Ph. No.0265-2425149, Fax No.0265-2429170.**

(6) Further details can be seen at [www.statetenders.gujarat.gov.in](http://www.statetenders.gujarat.gov.in) & [www.tender.nprocure.com](http://www.tender.nprocure.com).

Any kind of amendments will be published only online & it will be consider final & binding to all bidders. (INF-VAD-1017-24-25)

## Notices issued to four officials over VIP treatment to actor Dileep at Sabarimala

In view of the Kerala High Court's intervention regarding the VIP treatment extended to actor Dileep during his visit to Sabarimala temple, the Travancore Devaswom Board issued notices to four officials on duty at the shrine seeking explanations on Saturday.

### CITY UNION BANK LIMITED

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#### TENDER-CUM-AUCTION SALE NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002

The following properties/mortgaged to City Union Bank Limited will be sold in Tender-cum-Public Auction by the Authorised Officer of the bank, under Rule 8 (6) & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, under the SARFAESI Act, 2002, for recovery of a sum of Rs.15,31,807/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakh Thirty One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seven only) as on 29-11-2024 together with further interest to be charged from 30-11-2024 onwards other expenses and any other dues to the bank by the Borrowers/ Guarantors No.1 M/s. Sri Balaji Engg. Works, House No.1250B, Ward No.31, Near Police Chowki, Bhagat Singh Colony, Ballabgarh, Faridabad, Haryana - 121004. Also at, M/s. Sri Balaji Engg. Works, FCA 475, East Chawla Colony, Ballabgarh, Faridabad - 121004. No.2 Mr. Om Prakash, S/o. Udal Ram, House No.1250B, Ward No.31, Near Police Chowki, Bhagat Singh Colony, Ballabgarh, Faridabad, Haryana - 121004. Also at, Mr. Om Prakash, S/o. Udal Ram, P-15, 2nd Floor, Park Elite Floors Sector-75, Ballabgarh-121004. No.3) Mrs. Anita Devi, W/o, Om Prakash, House No.1250B, Ward No.31, Near Police Chowki, Bhagat Singh Colony, Ballabgarh, Faridabad, Haryana - 121004. No.4) Mr. Udal Ram Maurya, S/o. Kundan Prasad Maurya, House No.60, Block D, Near Police Chowki Bhagat Singh Colony, Ballabgarh, Faridabad, Haryana - 121004.

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##### Schedule - A

**Property - 1: (Property Owned by Mr. Udal Ram Maurya, S/o. Kundan Prasad Maurya)**

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#### Reserve Price : Rs.38,00,000/-

(Rupees Thirty Eight Lakh only)

#### AUCTION DETAILS

Date of Tender-cum-Auction Sale	Venue
20-01-2025	City Union Bank Limited, Faridabad Branch, E5/10, BP Railway Road, Near Neelam Baba Chowk, Faridabad - 121001. Telephone No.0129-2421708, Cell No.9354776693

#### Terms and Conditions of Tender-cum-Auction Sale :

(1) The intending bidders should be present in person for the auction and participate personally and give a declaration in writing to the effect that he/she is bidding for himself / herself. (2) The intending bidders may obtain the Tender Forms from The Manager, City Union Bank Limited, Faridabad Branch, E5/10, BP Railway Road, Near Neelam Baba Chowk, Faridabad - 121001. (3) The intending bidders should submit their bids only in the Tender Form prescribed in sealed envelopes addressed to The Authorised Officer, City Union Bank Ltd., together with a Pay Order / Demand Draft for an EMD of 10% of the Reserve Price, drawn in favour of "City Union Bank Ltd.", on or before 12.00 Noon on the date of Tender-cum-Auction Sale hereby notified. (4) For inspection of the property and other particulars, the intending purchaser may contact Telephone No.0129-2421708, Cell No.9354776693. (5) The properties are sold on "As-is-where-is", "As-is-what-is" and "whatever-there-is" basis. (6) The sealed tenders will be opened in the presence of the intending bidders at 01.00 p.m. on the date of Tender-cum-Auction Sale hereby notified. Though in general the sale will be by way of closed tenders, the Authorised Officer may, at his sole discretion, conduct an Open Auction among the interested bidders who desire to quote a bid higher than the one received in the closed tender process, and in such an event, the sale shall be conferred on the person making highest bid. The sale, however, is subject to confirmation of City Union Bank Limited. (7) The successful bidder shall have to pay 25% (inclusive of EMD paid) of the sale amount immediately on completion of sale and the balance amount of 75% within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale, failing which the initial deposit of 25% shall be forfeited. (8) The Sale Certificate will be issued by the Authorised Officer in favour of the successful purchaser only after receipt of the entire sale consideration within the time limit stipulated herein. (9) The successful purchaser shall bear the charges / fees payable for conveyance, such as stamp duty, registration fee etc., as applicable under law. (10) The successful bidder should pay the statutory dues (lawful house tax, electricity charges and other dues), TDS, GST if any, due to Government, Government Undertaking and local bodies. (11) The Authorised Officer shall have all the powers to accept or reject the bids or postpone or cancel the sale without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Place : Kumbakonam, Date : 07-12-2024

Authorised Officer

Regd. Office: 149, T.S.R. (Big) Street, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu - 612001, CIN - L65110TN904PLC001287,

Telephone No.0435-2402322, Fax: 0435-2431746, Website: [www.cityunionbank.com](http://www.cityunionbank.com)

# Finance Commission team reaches Kerala for three-day visit

Panel members are expected to hold discussions with CM; meeting is crucial as fiscal awards for 5 years are based on its recommendations

#### The Hindu Bureau

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

**T**he 16th Finance Commission arrived in Kerala on a three-day visit on Sunday as part of preparing its recommendations.

The commission is scheduled to hold discussions with the State government on Tues-

day. Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal and Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) A. Jayathilak received Arvind Panagariya, Chairman, Finance Commission, on his arrival in Kochi.

Mr. Panagariya and the Commission members are scheduled to hold discussions with the Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the Ministers at the Raviz Convention Centre, Kovalam, at 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday.

The consultations are crucial for Kerala as the

K.N. Balagopal

fiscal awards to the State for the five years starting April 1, 2026, are based on the Commission's recom-

mandations.

Mr. Balagopal said on

Sunday that the State go-

vernment has prepared

a detailed memoran-

dum on the State's re-

quirements to be pre-

sented to the

Commission.

Kerala's presentation

will contain proposals

for resolving the imbal-

ances in resource shar-

ing among the States,

and timely allocation of

eligible grants, accord-

ing to the Finance Minis-

ter. On their arrival in

Kochi on Sunday, the

Commission members

left for Kumarakom. The

Commission is sche-

duled to conduct a field

visit to grama pan-

chayats in Kottayam dis-

trict on Monday.

**Continuation of grant**  
There is a compelling ar-  
gument for the continua-  
tion of revenue deficit (RD) grant to Kerala un-  
der the 16th Finance  
Commission, given the  
State's focused spending on  
the creation of "hu-  
man capital" under the  
Kerala Model, according to  
a study by the Gulati  
Institute of Finance and  
Taxation (GIFT).

The study was pre-  
sented in a recent semi-  
nar at GIFT, chaired by

former Union Cabinet  
Secretary K.M. Chandra-  
sekhar and attended by  
economists.

## Believers rejoice as priest ordained Cardinal by Pope

#### Press Trust of India

KOTTAYAM

A day after 51-year-old

priest George Jacob Koovakad was elevat-

ed to the rank of Car-  
dinal by Pope Francis,

a wave of joy and  
pride engulfed the  
faithful of Mammoodu  
Lourdes Matha  
Church and Chang-  
nassery town on Sun-  
day as they celebrated  
the achievement.

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Salil Sahadevan

## Away with the bell

Can we (re)design timetables to take into account the rhythms of students' bodies and minds?

someone we care about can change how time feels. In the same way, looking forward to a learning project can either make us more interested or more anxious.

When institutions blend subjects into themes for interdisciplinary learning, flip the class for self-learning, and design for competency-based learning, they need a flexible approach to time, timing, and timetables.

Why should schedules be personalised to reflect individual energy levels and circadian rhythms? While traditional timetables value efficiency, elevating student engagement to a primary goal is equally essential. Identify peak learning times or power hours for each student. Cluster those with similar patterns to create hi-flex timetables. Such experimentation may lead to initial chaos.

In a connected world of constant learning, rigid instructional hours have become obsolete. Adaptable schedules are key to seizing the learning potential of every moment. They also come with uncertainty, scalability challenges, and difficulties in implementation. Still, they are worth piloting because the idea of habits of mind and habits of body have futuristic implications on how we teach and learn.

**Learning over time**  
Philosophers and scientists agree that, at the quantum level, time is not necessarily continuous but granular. This supports breaking

down learning into smaller, manageable chunks with opportunities for more reflection. As time is a matter of perspective, not rigid measurement, we should shift from measuring performance at specific moments to appreciating the ongoing journey of learning.

We invest heavily in time

— the scarcest resource — to enable learning. Yet, how that time is used often receives less attention. Not all learning moments hold the same value; disengaged time equates to lost time. So, the ideal timetable will be characterised by hybrid models, hi-flex small group approaches, and clusters of circadian

rhythms, all supported by continuous reflection and feedback. These new forms of timetables are less about time and more about minds that learn.

<

# व्यवस्था परिवर्तन से आत्मनिर्भर बनता हिमाचल

2  
साल बेमिसाल



## OPS बहाल

- जो कहा, वो किया: कांग्रेस पार्टी की चुनावी गारंटी को निभाते हुए पहली ही कैबिनेट बैठक में पुरानी पेंशन बहाल की गई।
- प्रदेश सरकार के 1.36 लाख से अधिक एनपीएस कर्मचारियों को पुरानी पेंशन योजना की सौगात।
- प्रदेश के विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रहे कर्मचारियों को मिली सामाजिक-आर्थिक सुरक्षा।
- खुद एक सरकारी कर्मचारी और गरीब का बेटा होने के नाते मुख्यमंत्री ने समझा कर्मचारियों का दुःख-दर्द।
- दो वर्षों में प्रदेश सरकार के कर्मचारियों को 11 प्रतिशत महंगाई भत्ते की किस्त जारी।
- 75 वर्ष और इससे अधिक आयु के पेंशनरों को इस वित्त वर्ष में एरियर का भुगतान।
- कर्मचारियों को एक महीने में दो बार वेतन प्रदान करने वाला पहला राज्य बना हिमाचल।

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## Death by water

Governments need to ensure safety of piped water while widening coverage

**A**s policymakers prioritise universal access to potable water, the death of three persons last week in Chennai due to suspected consumption of contaminated piped water is a reminder that coverage is not the only problem: even urban centres with a long history of piped supply are still not assured of potable water that is free from dangerous contamination. The incident, which involved drinking water supplied through the State agency in suburban Pallavaram, also sent 34 people to hospital with complaints of diarrhoea. The laboratory test reports of local water samples are yet to be made public, and it may be too early to blame the agency. Nonetheless, the remarks of State Minister T.M. Anbarasan, accusing the affected people of not maintaining hygiene in their surroundings, come across as insensitive and irresponsible. Irrespective of the cause, it is concerning that severe contamination of water continues to occur with greater periodicity in cities in India. In the past six months, large-scale outbreaks of health episodes due to consumption of water containing *E.coli* have been reported in cities including Bengaluru, Kochi, Noida and Vizianagaram. This exposes the challenge of catering to the basic needs of people, who are increasingly shifting to cities and living in congested environs, putting the water and drainage infrastructure under strain.

Governments face a challenge in providing safe drinking water in a tropical country such as India. Data from the Jal Shakti Ministry show that arsenic has been detected in groundwater in parts of 230 districts in 25 States and fluoride in 469 districts in 27 States. In 2022, according to the World Health Organization, at least 1.7 billion people, globally, used a drinking water source contaminated with faeces. Worldwide, an estimated one million people die annually from diarrhoea caused by unsafe drinking water, sanitation and hand hygiene. In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly had explicitly recognised the human right to water and sanitation. Towards this end, addressing the issue of chemical pollution of groundwater is also non-negotiable. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin is cognisant of this. Ahead of the last Assembly elections, he had unveiled his 10-year vision statement for seven priority areas to facilitate development of Tamil Nadu. This included promises to increase the annual per capita drinking water supply from nine lakh litres to 10 lakh litres; reduce wastage of water from 50% to 15%; and increase distribution of recycled water from 5% to 20%. Now, he needs to walk the talk, especially in terms of supplying safe drinking water.

## Miles to go

Telangana's challenge is to focus on welfare amid a fiscal crisis

**A** year is too short a time to assess a government's performance, but it is still long enough to ascertain its commitment to fulfil its promises. The first Congress government in Telangana led by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy rode on the back of six guarantees, with a focus on widespread corruption allegations against Mr. Reddy's predecessor, K. Chandrashekhar Rao, who was perceived as being inaccessible and lording over a family-run fiefdom. The guarantees were directed at women, farmers, youth, and the elderly, aiming to enhance disposable incomes, social securities, and to provide employment. They range from providing ₹2,500 a month for women who are heads of below-poverty-line families, to doubling retirement pension for the disabled, and the poor among the elderly. A year on, some of these measures implemented include free public transport for women and increased medical insurance cover per family of up to ₹10 lakh, as well as fiscally expensive decisions such as 200 units of free power per household and writing off farmers' loans up to ₹2 lakh.

Some of the unfulfilled measures include raising input support for farmers from ₹10,000 annually – provided by the predecessor Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government – to ₹15,000, and filling two lakh government job vacancies. The government has cited a fiscal crisis caused by the Chandrashekhar Rao government as the reason for this. Days after Mr. Reddy was sworn in on December 7, 2023, his government released a "white paper on the State's finances", which detailed a "more than ten times" jump in Telangana's debt from ₹72,658 crore to over ₹6.71 lakh crore under the 10 year-long reign of the BRS, and that debt servicing alone constituted more than a third of the State's budget, leaving "very little fiscal space" to implement the Congress guaranteed welfare measures. Since Mr. Reddy rode to power on the popular sentiment of familial corruption, judicial commissions have been set up to probe financial malfeasance in projects ranging from the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme to the power purchase agreement with Chhattisgarh. Mr. Reddy has also accused the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Union government of giving the State short-shrift in tax devolutions and the implementation of centrally funded projects. One promise that Mr. Reddy has worked on is the conduct of a caste census. While it has run into controversy, with complaints of a duplication of information provided to the earlier government, the outcome of the survey and the changes to reservations in government jobs and employment are being keenly watched. Mr. Reddy's hurdles are daunting, but what appears to be lacking is a transparent plan and a candid admission on what to expect, given the situation, over the next four years.

# A good beginning but China negotiations must continue

**T**he statement made by Union External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar on December 3, 2024 was his first substantive statement in Parliament on developments in India-China relations since the Chinese intrusions in Eastern Ladakh in the summer of 2020. His remarks offer clarity on some issues, but many questions remain unanswered.

### The Minister's statement

There are several takeaways from the Minister's statement.

First, the Minister recalled the amassing of troops by China, India's forceful counter deployment, and protracted negotiations, resulting in a disengagement of forces. However, the statement is economical in giving details of the arrangements for disengagement from "friction points" (a recent and inapt coinage in India-China border negotiations to describe areas of Chinese transgressions across the Line of Actual Control, or LAC). Without using the term "buffer zones", the Minister alluded to the construct when he remarked that in a few places where "friction" occurred in 2020, "steps of a temporary and limited nature were worked out, based on local conditions, to obviate the possibility of further friction". He said, "This ... applies to both sides and can be revisited as the situation demands." He flagged disengagement of troops as "an immediate priority", but no such urgency has been attached to the termination of "steps of a temporary and limited nature".

Second, even while stating that the immediate priority of disengagement has been achieved, he made it clear that more work remains to be done on "de-escalation as well as effective management of our activities in the border areas". He reiterated India's consistent position that "the maintenance of peace and tranquility in border areas is a pre-requisite for the development of our ties", a critical linkage China has sought to disavow in recent years. Mr. Jaishankar did not suggest that the border areas have returned to a state of normalcy. That cannot be the case when there is continued large-scale deployment of troops of both countries for the fifth consecutive winter season in forbidding terrain.

Third, he did not suggest a major forward movement in overall relations, indicating instead that recent developments have set our ties in the direction of "some improvement" and adding that the conclusion of the disengagement phase "allows us to consider other aspects of our bilateral engagement in a calibrated manner, keeping our national security interests first and foremost". The Minister has done well to pour cold water on the suggestion from certain quarters about a "reset" in India-China relations. It is naive to think of any major improvement in bilateral ties as long as the borders remain abnormal and a host of structural challenges in the relationship persist. It is intriguing that even



**Ashok K. Kantha**  
a former Ambassador of India to China, now associated with think-tanks

some senior government functionaries are proposing integration with Chinese supply chains, disregarding the imperative of economic security *vis-à-vis* a country with a track-record of weaponising economic dependencies, which unfortunately abound in India's engagement with China.

### Key questions

The statement in Parliament leaves several core questions unanswered.

First, while disengagement is pronounced as completed, India does not have any definitive information on the terms of this exercise. The statement mentions that the "resumption of patrolling to the traditional areas is underway" in Depsang and Demchok. Will this involve Indian troops getting unhindered access to five traditional patrolling points beyond Y-junction in Depsang Plains? In Demchok, will they be able to resume patrolling to Charding La and Charding Nala - Nilung Nala (CNN) junction which they were visiting earlier? How deep on the Indian our side of the LAC will the Chinese patrols be allowed to come?

There is talk of "coordinated patrolling", which is a new and undefined concept in India-China border management. Will there be restrictions on the size and frequency of India's patrols? What are "steps of a temporary and limited nature" agreed to elsewhere, in the Galwan Valley, Hot Spring, Gogra and the Pangong Lake area? How many of India's traditional patrolling points are no longer accessible to its troops (and grazing grounds to Indians graziers) because of these "temporary steps"? These are legitimate questions awaiting answer.

Second, the Minister has underlined that the Indian side "would not countenance any attempts to change the status quo unilaterally". However, has not the status quo along the borders been changed by China since April 2020? In the absence of facts being shared in the public domain, we can only speculate. This writer's discussions with retired senior military officials who have served in Eastern Ladakh suggest that there is denial of access to several traditional patrolling points under new arrangements.

The statement referred to earlier governments having agreed to several steps to defuse situations, including offers to create demilitarised zones (DMZ), limited non-patrolling zones, and so on. The point to note is that the way India and China look at the LAC has changed. Under President Xi Jinping, China considers the LAC within the construct of sovereignty and the mindset of not losing an inch of territory, though the concept of the LAC was agreed to without prejudice to the respective positions of India and China on the boundary question.

Unfortunately, this alteration of the LAC by China or through "temporary steps" has territorial implications for India. We will, therefore, be well-advised to terminate the

so-called "buffer zones" at the earliest and keep insisting on the restoration of status quo ante in patrolling and grazing activities as a matter of high priority.

Besides, there was no understanding on establishing a DMZ either in Barahoti or in Sumdorong Chu Valley as suggested elsewhere. This writer was the Indian lead in the Diplomatic and Military Experts Group which negotiated the disengagement in Sumdorong Chu Valley in 1995. We did not agree to any DMZ or restrictions on Indian patrolling. Earlier, on Barahoti, the two sides could not agree on the extent of the area where a DMZ was proposed by China in 1956.

Third, there are reports in credible media outlets (including *The Hindu*) about Chinese troops being allowed to patrol Yangtse in Arunachal Pradesh. Earlier reports had cited "government sources" as saying that the Chinese demands for patrolling Yangtse were "unreasonable" and "devoid of logic". Chinese troops have repeatedly attempted to access the Yangtse area but their efforts have been foiled by Indian forces, the last reported instance being in December 2022. If there is no quid pro quo in the Eastern Sector, it must be denied authoritatively.

Fourth, the Chief of Army Staff has reiterated even after the announcement of the understanding on disengagement in Depsang and Demchok on October 21 that "we want to go back to status quo of April 2020". However, the Ministry of External Affairs no longer refers to the restoration of the status quo ante. If we acquiesce in facts on the ground changed to the advantage of China, this will be another example of a successful deployment of the Chinese playbook of grey zone operations which involves making incremental gains while staying under the threshold of an outright military conflict.

### Bridge the political divide

Greater transparency on the part of the government on the one hand and the need for the Opposition resisting the temptation to score points on a sensitive issue affecting our core interests on the other will leave us in a better place in India's border negotiations with China. This writer recalls that after India had completed negotiations on the Agreement on Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field (November 1996) and the Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question (April 2005), he was instructed to brief key Opposition leaders in confidence. Not only was the confidence thus reposed not breached by those leaders, but they also appreciated the government's gesture, understood the rationale of those sensitive agreements and supported them after they were signed.

Can we make an honest attempt to pivot towards a broad consensus on India's China challenge, even while leaving room for articulation of differences?

While the External Affairs Minister's remarks offer some clarity, politically, there needs to be an attempt to arrive at a broad consensus on India's China problem

**T**he Indian economy has consistently showcased its robust growth over the past few decades. But higher economic growth is believed to have come with increasing environmental pressure, notably through higher greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. However, India's Economic Survey (2023-24) claims that India has decoupled its economic growth from GHG emissions, as between 2005 and 2019, India's GDP grew at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7%, while emissions rose at a CAGR of just 4%. This raises a crucial question: has India really decoupled its economic growth from GHG emissions? And, what does this mean for sustainable development?

### What it means

Decoupling refers to breaking the link between economic growth and environmental degradation. Historically, economic growth is found to be positively related with environmental degradation, as this growth is believed to be a driver of GHG emissions. However, with the growing climate crisis, the imperative to reduce emissions while ensuring continued economic growth has gained global traction.

Decoupling has largely been classified into two types: absolute decoupling and relative decoupling. Absolute decoupling occurs when the economy grows, while emissions decrease. This is the ideal form of decoupling, where countries grow economically without increasing environmental harm. However, relative decoupling happens when both GDP and emissions grow, but the rate of GDP growth surpasses the rate of emissions growth. While this signifies progress, at the same time, it acknowledges that emissions continue to rise.

Decoupling of economic growth and GHG emissions is important. On one hand, it offers a



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A look at the claim made in the Economic Survey (2023-24), of India having decoupled its economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions

path to sustainable growth and development, a way for nations to grow and improve living standards without exacerbating climate change. On the other, it comes as a response to rising demand for degrowth and sparks the ongoing debate between green growth and degrowth. Proponents of green growth argue that it is possible to maintain or even increase economic growth while reducing environmental harm. In contrast, degrowth advocates suggest that economic growth itself is the primary driver of ecological degradation and should be curbed in favour of reducing resource consumption. But proponents of degrowth overlook the fact that countries, in addition to tackling rising GHG emissions and the climate change, are also required to tackle low standards of living, energy poverty and ensure a decent life, which could be taken care of through economic growth.

### The claim

The claim of India's decoupling made in the Economic Survey comes from comparing GDP and emissions growth rates between 2005 and 2019. The Survey does not specify whether this represents absolute or relative decoupling. Using various decoupling indicators discussed in OECD (2002), we examine the status of the economy-wide and sector-wise decoupling status for India. Since the 1990s, with significant trade liberalisation, India has been experiencing steady and stable economic growth. Hence, we are examining how GDP and emission generation are growing in India with respect to the levels of 1990. While there has been no absolute decoupling in India, since 1990, GDP in India has grown at a much higher pace than the GHG emissions in the country, indicating economy-wide relative decoupling. Since, the agriculture and manufacturing sectors are among

the major contributors of emission generation in India, it is also important to understand whether these sectors have also achieved decoupling or not, which has been assessed by comparing rate of growth of GVA of the respective sector with the rate of growth of GHGs emitted by the sector. From 1990, India's GDP has grown six-fold, while GHG emissions have only tripled.

### Efforts must continue

From the data, it seems that India may have achieved relative decoupling, where emissions are still rising but at a slower pace than the economy. This achievement, while commendable, falls short of the ultimate goal of absolute decoupling, where economic growth can continue even as emissions fall. While most countries fall short of achieving absolute decoupling and still experience rising emissions as GDP increases, many countries have at least managed to achieve a declining rate of growth of emissions. Given that India is a developing country which has not even peaked its emissions yet, emissions are expected to increase with economic growth. Hence, achieving absolute decoupling is not going to happen anytime soon. While India's relative decoupling is a step in the right direction, the path to absolute decoupling is still a long and complex journey. Efforts must still be taken and it will be a significant challenge. This remains a necessary target if India is to meet its long-term climate commitments. Policies and measures that support renewable energy, emission mitigation, and sustainable development will be crucial in ensuring that economic growth and environmental preservation can coexist, ensuring a prosperous and sustainable future for India.

*The views expressed are personal*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### State Department as target

While accusing the Congress and, more particularly, the Leader of the Opposition of being in cahoots with "deep state" actors in trying to derail India's success story, the BJP has dragged in the U.S. State Department. That the government of the day can go to this extent of jeopardising our bilateral ties with the U.S., which could only damage a

multifaceted partnership built over the years, appears to show its desperation in trying to shield a certain businessman. It is certainly not smart diplomacy.

**S.K. Choudhury,**  
Bengaluru

**Notes in the House**  
It is curious and surprising how a wad of currency notes could 'safely' land on

the seat of an Opposition party member in Parliament. How could the monitoring and security systems fail to detect the object when it was taken inside the high-security Parliament building? Only a comprehensive investigation by a specialised agency will be able to unravel the truth. If it is the handiwork of vested interests, it is nothing but highly reprehensible conduct, which merits deterrent action.

**V. Johan Dhanakumar,**  
Chennai

### In Adelaide

The annihilation of India in the Adelaide Test leaves behind serious points to ponder. Virat Kohli's sterling show in Perth now looks like a flash in the pan as his weakness outside his

off-stump against genuine pace has been exposed for the umpteenth time. Rohit Sharma's reflexes have slowed down considerably that he looks out of sorts in whichever position he bats. His poor footwork gets him into trouble too often. Other Indian batters needlessly go hammer and tongs courtesy the limited over cricket. Ravichandran Ashwin is no longer a force to reckon

with especially against batsmen who are prepared to be aggressive. Travis Head demonstrated that. It is naive to argue that Indians played inept cricket. Their technical inadequacies were exposed. It is not for nothing that the Australians are highly ranked in international cricket.

**V. Lakshmanan,**  
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

# Gamify India's skilling initiatives

The problem of unemployment has become a contentious issue in economic policy discussions in India in recent times. Economic Survey 2023-24 estimated that India needs to create 78.5 lakh new jobs in the non-farm sector annually until 2030 to meet the demands of the rising workforce. One of the policy prescriptions often suggested to overcome the unemployment challenge is to close the growing gap between the skill sets of job seekers and the skill requirements of the industry.

**India's skilling challenge**  
Over time, India has established a comprehensive institutional and policy framework for training and skilling. However, the success of this is somewhat limited. The Periodic Labour Force Survey 2022-23 identified that only 21% of the Indian youth aged 15-29 years had received vocational/technical training through formal and informal sources. The share of youth who had received formal vocational/technical training was 4.4% in 2022-23. The Chief Economic Advisor, V. Anantha Nageswaran, recently stated that only 51% of India's graduates are employable. These facts raise concerns regarding the reach, quality, and industry relevance of existing skilling programmes. Incidentally, one of the focus areas of the Prime Minister's package for employment and skilling announced in the 2024-25 Budget was improving the outcome and quality of skilling and aligning the training content and design to the skill needs of the industry.

The enormity of India's skilling challenge is further aggravated by the need to equip the workforce with skills and knowledge that meet the requirements of industry 4.0 (I4.0), which entails integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, the internet of things, and big data to do smart manufacturing. Over two-thirds of Indian manufacturers are expected to embrace digital

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Gamified and simulation-based learning and training modules can potentially improve the quality and outcome of workforce training

transformation by 2025. Government policy support has been given to prepare the industry for I4.0 through the SAMARTH Udyog Bharat 4.0 initiative. But according to estimates, only 1.5% of Indian engineers possess the skills for new-age jobs. Sixty percent of the Indian MSME workforce lacks the new-age digital skills. So, it becomes crucial to skill and upskill our workforce according to I4.0 needs.

**A new initiative**  
India could consider incorporating gamified and simulation-based learning and training modules. While gamified learning incorporates game elements into skill training, simulation-based learning uses virtual environments that mimic real-world scenarios, allowing learners to practice and apply skills in a safe and controlled setting. Using game mechanics makes skill training interactive and enjoyable, leading to higher participant engagement and knowledge retention than traditional learning methods. Also, the rewards and recognition through points and badges can motivate learners to complete training tasks and strive for excellence. Gamified systems often provide instant feedback to help trainees understand their progress and areas for improvement. Features such as 'Leaderboards and challenges' can foster a sense of competition, thereby encouraging trainees to perform better. Clear goals and milestones in gamified learning help trainees stay focused.

Simulation-based learning provides hands-on experience in a controlled environment and allows trainees to experiment, make mistakes, and learn from them without bothering about real-world consequences. Simulations also help trainees understand complex systems and develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical skills. Also, the immersive nature of the simulations allows learners to retain the knowledge gained for longer. Singapore and Germany

have adopted gamified and simulation-based learning into their education, vocational, and skill training systems.

Adopting such a module in government skilling programmes can potentially improve the quality and outcome of workforce training. The module can be customised by identifying areas where skill sets are lacking. Trainees can be presented with challenges during training that will be adjusted based on their progress. The platform can feature training modules that simulate actual professional circumstances, enabling trainees to apply their knowledge practically. Simulations can assess the trainee's decision-making abilities and demonstrate the outcomes resulting from their decisions. At a decentralised level, the module can be extended to education institutes of higher learning by providing the students with a platform to work on real-world projects. Students can be given opportunities to intern on live projects and demonstrate their skills, and industry can use this talent pool while hiring.

The SWAYAM and Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH), the two online platforms for skill education and training initiated by the Indian government, can host the gamified and simulation training module. The SWAYAM platform hosts more than 4,000 courses. Since its inception, over 40 million participants have enrolled in the platform and a lion's share (93.45%) of successful course completions in the platform were under the engineering and physical sciences stream. As of June 2024, 7.63 lakh candidates were enrolled in SIDH's 752 online courses. The platform offers 7.37 lakh minutes of digital content, making it a potentially rich resource for learners. The response to SWAYAM and SIDH demonstrates the huge demand for technical education and training in India and further strengthens the idea of offering gamified and simulation-based skill training on such platforms.

# A worrying mismatch

The maternal deaths in Karnataka have exposed chinks in the drug testing system



## STATE OF PLAY

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The recent deaths of five women following caesarean section deliveries at the district hospital in Ballari have raised concerns about not just the quality of maternal care in the north Karnataka district, but also public healthcare in general.

Of the 34 women who delivered through C-section between November 9 and November 11 at the Ballari hospital, seven developed complications such as acute kidney injury and multi-organ dysfunction. Five of them are dead, though none of them had high-risk pregnancies. An expert committee from the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, set up by the government to probe the deaths, concluded that the women had developed complications after they were administered a substandard Compound Sodium lactate Injection IP (Ringer's Lactate solution), an intravenous fluid that doctors use to restore hydration and fluid balance.

These fatalities occurred despite the significant improvement in maternal mortality over the years in Karnataka. The Sample Registration System 2018-20 bulletin for Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) showed a decline in Karnataka's MMR from 83 per lakh live births in 2017-18 to 69 in 2018-20. The State's Civil Registration System data from 2021-22 to 2023-24 showed a further decline to 64 in 2023-24. This year, 327 maternal deaths have been reported in Karnataka since April.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah ordered the suspension of the Karnataka State Drugs Controller, Umesh S., for de-

reliance of duty. He also directed officials to blacklist Paschim Banga Pharmaceuticals, which had supplied the sub-standard IV fluids to the Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation Limited (KSMSC). While a criminal case has been registered against the pharmaceuticals company, a departmental inquiry has been ordered against the Managing Director of KSMSC. An expert committee is to be set up to investigate whether any other maternal deaths occurred in the State where IV fluids supplied by the company was used.

Currently, the particular batch of the solution in question has been withdrawn, and the Ringer's Lactate fluids supplied to the Ballari district hospital have been sent to private laboratories accredited to the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) to detect the presence of endotoxins.

The incident has exposed chinks in the drug testing system. Flagging a mismatch in test results conducted by the Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL), Kolkata, and the State, the Karnataka Health Department has written to the Drugs Controller General of India to investigate the Standard Quality (SQ) certification issued by the CDL, Kolkata, to the manufacturer.

In his letter to the Drugs

Controller General of India, Principal Secretary (Health) Harsh Gupta pointed out that the batches supplied by the company had been frozen for use in March 2023 by the KSMSC after two batches were found to be Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) by the government analyst at the Drugs Testing Laboratory, Karnataka. The manufacturer challenged these reports. These were referred to CDL, Kolkata, by the competent court, and the CDL found these to be of SQ. Testing at Karnataka had found that 22 batches failed on various parameters, but few of these samples were found to be SQ in Kolkata.

"Since August 2024, some of the earlier frozen batches which had not yet been tested by the drugs control officers or which had been found to be of SQ by the government analyst had been released by KSMSC after those were certified to be SQ by NABL empaneled laboratories. KSMSC has still not released any of such batches found to be NSQ by the Karnataka Drugs Testing Laboratory, even though some of these batches were found to be of SQ by the CDL later," the letter stated.

However, questions remain. How did this mismatch happen and why did it not warrant a thorough review and a more cautious approach, including a recall of all the 192 batches supplied by the company? This oversight highlights the need for more stringent monitoring and transparency in healthcare product testing.

Meanwhile, there are signs that the incident is being politicised instead of being addressed as a public health concern. With the winter session of the Karnataka Legislature beginning today, the Opposition is expected to bring the government to the mat.

# What went wrong at Sathanur dam?

Many days before the historic rainfall brought by Cyclone Fengal, Sathanur was filled to 95% of its capacity

## DATA POINT

**Sambavi Parthasarathy**  
**Vignesh Radhakrishnan**

Data show that Cyclone Fengal brought the highest rainfall recorded in the last 70 years to upstream areas of the Sathanur dam in Tiruvannamalai district of Tamil Nadu. The dam, which was already close to its full capacity days before it received water from the rainfall, flooded villages downstream.

Could the floods have been avoided? Last week, AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami alleged that the release of water from the dam, without prior notice, had caused the floods. PMK president Anbumani Ramadoss said, "If water had been released gradually, such a big catastrophe wouldn't have happened." The DMK government has denied these claims, stating that proper protocol was followed in managing the dam and issuing flood warnings. An analysis of rainfall figures and of data on the dam's storage and flow explains the event.

Map 1 shows various taluks in the Pennaiyar river basin and the location of the Sathanur dam.

Tables 2A-2C show the top 10 wettest days between January 1954 and December 2024 in three immediately upstream taluks of the dam – Harur, Uthangarai, and Chengam. In Harur, 251mm of rainfall was recorded on December 2, the highest in the last 70 years by a wide margin. In Uthangarai, 185mm of rainfall was recorded on that day, the second highest in the period. In Chengam, 115mm of rainfall was recorded, the seventh highest for that place.

Data also show that the downstream taluks of the Sathanur dam recorded copious amounts of rainfall, which increased flooding in the Thenpennai river. Tables 2D-2F show that in downstream areas such as Thandampattu

and Tiruvannamalai, the amount of rainfall recorded on December 1 and December 2 was so high that those days feature in the top 10 list of the wettest days in the last 70 years. In Sankarapuram, the 255mm received on December 2 was the highest in 70 years.

Chart 3 shows the inflows, storage percentage, and outflows of the Sathanur dam between December 5, 2023 and November 28, 2024 (two days before the floods).

In December last year, the dam was filled to 95% of its capacity after heavy rainfall. Later, when inflows stopped due to lack of rain, the dam was opened gradually. The outflow was maintained initially at 530 cusecs and later at 1,430 cusecs for irrigation, drinking water, and electricity generation purposes. The storage went down to 20% by May-June and the outflow was stopped.

In August, rainfall increased the storage to 40%. Heavier rainfall further boosted the storage to over 90% in September and over 95% in October. On many days of September and October this year, water was released in a controlled manner (500-1,200 cusecs) to maintain the storage level at around 95%.

Chart 3 shows the dam's usual cycle: storing water from August to December, releasing it in a controlled fashion from January to April, and repeating the cycle.

Chart 4 presents the same information as Chart 3A, with the addition of data from the seven days between November 29 and December 5, 2024. Due to the historic rains upstream, there was a huge inflow of water into the dam, which was already filled to 95% many days before the event.

Between December 2 and 5, 1.3 lakh cusecs of inflow was recorded in the dam, with a similar amount of outflow. As the dam was already filled to the 95% mark, storing the water and releasing it in short bursts was not an option. Heavy rainfall downstream further worsened the crisis.



**Chart 2:** Tables 2A-2C show the top ten wettest days, between January 1954 and December 2024, in three immediately upstream taluks of the dam — Harur, Uthangarai and Chengam.

Tables 2D-2F show the top ten wettest days, between January 1954 and December 2024, in three downstream taluks — Thandampattu, Tiruvannamalai and Sankarapuram.

*Rainfall in mm			Rank
<b>2A: Harur</b>	<b>Dec 2, 2024</b>	<b>251*</b>	<b>1</b>
Nov. 29, 1959	147	2	
Nov. 10, 2015	147	3	
Oct. 8, 1986	147	4	
Dec. 22, 1983	117	5	
Dec. 5, 1993	115	6	
Oct. 29, 1991	115	7	
Dec. 2, 2017	112	8	
Nov. 16, 1991	108	9	
Dec. 16, 1971	107	10	

2B: Uthangarai			
Dec 18, 1996	316	1	
<b>Dec 2, 2024</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>2</b>	
Dec 20, 2007	147	3	
Dec 2, 2017	135	4	
Nov 10, 2015	127	5	
Nov 19, 2021	123	6	
Nov 6, 1994	106	7	
Dec 8, 1972	101	8	
Aug 16, 2011	92	9	
Jul 26, 1964	92	10	

2C: Chengam			
Dec. 20, 2007	191	1	
Dec. 2, 2017	167	2	
Nov. 4, 1966	144	3	
Nov. 19, 2021	134	4	
May 17, 1955	120	5	
Nov. 10, 1966	117	6	
Dec. 1, 2024	115	7	
Dec. 16, 1971	111	8	
Nov. 6, 1994	107	10	

2D: Thandampattu			
Nov. 4, 1966	174	1	
May 17, 1955	159	2	
Nov. 19, 2021	145	3	
Oct. 20, 1969	142	4	
Dec. 2, 2024	141	5	
Oct 29, 1991	135	6	
Nov. 6, 1994	130	7	
Nov. 28, 2008	120	8	
Dec. 2, 2017	118	9	
<b>Dec 1, 2024</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>10</b>	

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**Road accidents on the Sabarimala route in last 21 days**

**38** According to officials, road accidents have come down compared to the previous year on the Sabarimala route. Over the past 21 days, a total of 38 accidents were reported within a 400-km radius of Elavunkal, Erumely, and Kuttikkanam, resulting in only 20 minor injuries. PTI

**Odisha's loss in excise revenue during COVID due to sales fraud**

**75** In ₹ crore. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) unearthed a loss of excise revenue amounting to ₹75.07 crore due to manipulation of manually maintained sales registers by retail shops of alcoholic beverages in Odisha during the COVID-19 pandemic. PTI

**Drones downed or recovered from India-Pakistan border**

**260** According to data, more than 260 drones have been downed or recovered from India's border with Pakistan this year as compared to about 110 in 2023. The maximum number of such interdictions of drones carrying arms and drugs have taken place in Punjab. PTI

**Value of items stolen during swearing-in ceremony**

**12** In ₹ lakh. Gold chains, mobile phones and cash cumulatively valued at ₹12 lakh were stolen during the swearing-in ceremony of the Mahayuti government at the Azad Maidan in south Mumbai on December 5, a police official said on Sunday. FIRs have been lodged against unidentified persons. PTI

**Bullets stolen from M.P. police's armouries in Morena**

**200** As many as 200 cartridges of 9mm pistols and self-loading rifles were allegedly stolen from the armouries of the Madhya Pradesh police's special armed forces (SAF) in Morena district. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## The place of charity in an unequal society

Billionaire Warren Buffet has given away an amount of almost 52 billion dollars to various charities. While such a move is no doubt commendable, one must also question the processes generating the concentration of such wealth in the first place, regardless of whether it is to be used for philanthropy or not

### ECONOMIC NOTES

#### Rahul Menon

**B**illionaire Warren Buffet, with a net worth of almost \$121 billion by some estimates, has maintained his pledge of giving away his wealth. In a recent message to shareholders of Berkshire Hathaway, he has mentioned a transfer of his wealth to foundations overseen by his children, a total amount of around 870 million dollars. In all, it is estimated that he has given away an amount of \$52 billion.

Mr. Buffet's recent message has captured the attention of mainstream discourse as it has outlined his social philosophy with regard to wealth and its place in society. Mr. Buffet believes that wealth should be used to equalise opportunities, that the luck that favoured certain individuals and helped them get rich should be extended after one's death in order to help those less fortunate. While it is not wrong to amass and accumulate wealth during one's lifetime, allowing it to build across generations is a problem for society. While it is no doubt commendable that Mr. Buffet wishes to give away his fortune, one must also question the processes generating the concentration of such wealth in the first place, regardless of whether it is to be used for philanthropy or not. Inequality is not a question of luck, but of specific policy institutions determined by society. In a world of spiralling inequality, both private philanthropy and the problems it tries to solve are two sides of the same coin, emerging from the very same set of social processes.

**On luck and equal opportunity**  
Mr. Buffet's ideas with regard to wealth and welfare can be seen in the context of a philosophical idea called "luck egalitarianism", which states that no-one should have to suffer the consequences of inequality owing to bad luck or adverse situations. As Mr. Buffet repeatedly



ISTOCKPHOTO

stresses in his letter, he credits much of his personal fortune to fortuitous circumstances, such as being born as a white male in the U.S. Opportunities were open to him that would not be open to women or African-Americans, and the growth of the U.S. over the years caused his wealth to grow significantly through the power of compound interest.

Some might accuse Mr. Buffet of false modesty, claiming that his fortune has been generated through his own diligent efforts and his understanding of markets. But there is truth in what he says. As Branko Milanovic has shown, a significant factor driving global inequality is the differences in income between countries. Where one is born determines how wealthy one might be relative to the global population. In that regard, Mr. Buffet does display a strong egalitarian zeal. If fortune played a huge role in the differences between Mr. Buffet and

others, there is no moral justification for him to pass on his wealth to his descendants. The only moral response is to ensure his wealth can be used to boost the opportunities of those less fortunate. What matters is the equalising of opportunities, and allowing individuals a level playing field in the beginning, rather than trying to equalise final outcomes.

#### What about charity?

However, there are some important questions that need to be addressed. The distribution of private wealth through charity may help to equalise well-being between individuals, but the process by which this wealth was generated and concentrated has led to the differences in opportunities in the first place. In the developed world, wealth distribution was largely equal during the post World War II period. Widespread deregulation and a turn towards neo-liberal economics saw

an explosion of wealth inequality from the 1980s onwards, with the 'trickle-down' economics of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher leading to the concentration of gains for a tiny sliver of individuals and stagnant wages for the majority. In India as well, the liberalisation of the economy may have led to faster growth, but has dramatically increased inequality and skewed the distribution of opportunities.

Differences in opportunities are not merely a question of luck, but of specific policy choices and interventions. Bill Gates' and Jeff Bezos' wealth came from the monopolies they enjoyed in the marketplace; this is less luck than the failure of policy to ensure competitive market practices. Mckenzie Bezos might be doing important work in giving away much of her wealth, but one must ask how it was that Amazon generated so much money for its owners while its workers suffered through stagnant wages and harmful working conditions. Mr. Buffet earned much of his wealth through the compounding of his initial equity holdings, but the widespread financialisation of the U.S. economy – concomitant with the reduction in the power of unions and stagnant wage growth – greatly aided this process.

In the face of rising inequality, societies face a choice: to either do nothing and hope that private charity increases, or devise policy to counter the negative effects of rising wealth concentration. Thomas Piketty advocates for a system of taxation and redistribution backed by the State to ensure equalisation of opportunities, rather than relying on private philanthropy. Interventionist thinkers and those on the left advocate for higher minimum wages and constraints on billionaire compensation. The use of state policy ensures that one does not have to rely on billionaire conscience to ameliorate the very processes that gave rise to their wealth in the first place.

*Rahul Menon is Associate Professor in the Jindal School of Government and Public Policy at O.P. Jindal Global University.*

### THE GIST

▼  
Mr. Buffet believes that wealth should be used to equalise opportunities, that the luck that favoured certain individuals and helped them get rich should be extended after one's death in order to help those less fortunate.

▼  
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▼  
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## What is the delay in forming a government in Austria?

Why are Austria's mainstream parties refusing to enter into a coalition with the far-right Freedom Party? Why did the Austrian President refuse to invite the FPO to lead the country?

### Girimella Subramaniam

#### The story so far:

**T**he Austrian chancellor Karl Nehammer's ruling People's Party (OVP) has inched closer to heading Vienna's next coalition government. The party was the runner-up in the September 29 elections and its vote slump, compared with the 2019 polls, was the biggest loss any ruling party has sustained. The OVP's prospective coalition partner, the Social Democrats (SPO) put up their worst ever electoral showing since World War II. Conversely, the far-right, xenophobic, Eurosceptic, anti-Muslim and pro-Russian Freedom Party (FPO), emerged the largest entity, albeit without a majority.

#### Why is the FPO being shunned?

All of Austria's mainstream parties have refused to form a government with the

FPO. The only ground the ultra-right party has gained since the polls is the election of one of its members as the parliament's speaker. Among the reasons for parties' antipathy towards the FPO are the latter's backing for Russia in its full-scale aggression against Ukraine. The FPO has veered further to the extreme right under its current leader Herbert Kickl, who styles himself as the 'people's chancellor' in a not so oblique reference to Adolf Hitler, and regards Hungary's autocratic President Viktor Orban as his role model. As interior minister in the short-lived 2017-2019 OVP-FPO coalition government, Mr. Kickl shut down mosques in a crackdown against the "Islamisation" of Austria. His infamous raids on the nation's intelligence services severely compromised collaboration with international agencies. He continues to advocate for the re-migration of citizens of foreign origin as part of the mission to

create a homogenous Austrian society.

#### Why is FPO not forming the govt.?

Departing from convention, the Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen opted not to invite the FPO to form a government, even though it had emerged the largest party in the parliament's lower house. President Van der Bellen has previously stressed that the practice hitherto followed by the head of the state was a tradition, not a requirement under the Austrian constitution. As such, on October 9, he gathered the three largest parties in the new legislature in an effort to facilitate consultations on the prospects for a new government. With no signs of a resolution, he tasked chancellor Nehammer with the responsibility.

The President has indicated definite red lines that ought not to be crossed under his watch by any government. Most notable of these is Vienna's European

Union (EU) membership, which the FPO has steadfastly opposed.

#### What explains the FPO's appeal?

The FPO has participated in three federal governments since the 1980s. There was a minor ripple across Europe at the turn of the century, when the FPO's Jorg Haider joined a ruling alliance with the OVP, as EU capitals threatened bilateral boycotts on the country. However, in a measure of the far-right's greater acceptability in Austria and across the EU, the reaction to the party's cohabitation in a coalition with the OVP between 2017-2019 was markedly muted. The FPO's growing appeal has much to do with popular disenchantment with decades of centrist coalitions, a Europe-wide phenomenon, which in the aftermath of the Holocaust, was seen as a bulwark against political extremism. In reality however, the OVP and SPO coalitions have over the years been tainted with divvying up key positions in government and business between themselves.

The prospective coalition among the OVP, SPO and the liberal NEOS will undoubtedly have its share of ideological differences to contend with. The longer they take to strike a deal, the greater the potential within the FPO to pressure its leader Mr. Kickl to step aside to allow the party to join a coalition with the OVP.

*The writer is Director, Strategic Initiatives, AgnoShin Technologies.*

### THE GIST

▼  
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▼  
The prospective coalition among the OVP, SPO and the liberal NEOS will undoubtedly have its share of ideological differences to contend with.

## CACHE

# Should AI be blamed for sporadic layoffs in Big tech?

Thomas Monteiro, lead analyst at Investing.com, says, 'AI hasn't yet grown good enough to replace the bulk of human workers end-product-wise. However, what it did do is change companies' priorities'

**Poulomi Chatterjee**

**D**uring Alphabet Inc.'s September-ending earnings call on October 29, CFO Anat Ashkenazi told investors that the company wants to tamp down costs, noting it would mostly be on how it operates and runs its business. The following day, worried Googlers sought more details at a company's all-hands meeting. CEO Sundar Pichai stuck to a similar refrain, without giving a direct yes or no to questions around layoffs. Mr. Pichai said efficiencies in headcount could also mean reallocation of human resource to streamline teams.

"When you're doing something new and it's going to take 10 people, if you are able to do it with eight people by making smart trade-offs somewhere, that's a good example," he noted. While Ms. Ashkenazi reassured that people are "one of the most important" assets to the company, Mr. Pichai did not wave off the possibility of layoffs. "If we are making company-wide decisions, we'll definitely let you know," he said. Google's head of recruiting, Brian Ong, added that it was a reality that the search giant was tightening hiring, and that workers would find fewer open positions.

Like other tech companies, Alphabet is overhauling its business processes with AI while fending off pressure from investors. Bank of America analysts had warned in June, post Ms. Ashkenazi's appointment as the new CFO, that there was "potential for the company to 'surprise' with further self-help cost cutting actions after limited layoffs in 2024."

Google is a microcosm of the transformation happening in many other tech firms. Employees at Big Tech companies have seen a steady stream of layoffs. Last year alone, based on various reports, nearly a lakh tech workers lost their jobs in just U.S.-based tech companies.

This year, Google laid off more than 200 employees from its core engineering teams in May. During a previous internal meeting, Mr. Pichai said the constant layoffs were necessary to "improve velocity" of the company. The Silicon Valley giant slashed hundreds of staff from their cloud unit, sales and engineering teams again in June. In October, Meta started making similar small cuts across various segments including WhatsApp, Instagram and their Reality Labs division. This followed layoffs in done earlier in June.

Meanwhile, in Amazon, CEO Andy Jassy said in September that he would restructure the e-commerce giant in a way that the ratio of individual contributors to managers increased by 15% by March 2025. A Morgan Stanley report estimated that this could mean eliminating around 13,834 managerial positions resulting in cost savings of between \$2.1 billion to \$3.6 billion. The company also announced a strict five days a week return-to-work policy starting from 2025. Disgruntled employees were convinced that this was a backdoor layoff tactic. Although Mr. Jassy denied this later, at an all-hands meeting days later, Matt Garman, CEO of Amazon Web Services said that displeased employees who were averse to the policy were free to



GETTY IMAGES

seek employment elsewhere. Amazon also keeps closing down units in smatterings. In late October, it shut down its speedy brick-and-mortar delivery service called Amazon Today. A couple of weeks ago, it phased out its free-to-watch streaming service, Freevee.

Microsoft laid off around 2,000 employees in its gaming unit, months after acquiring Activision Blizzard. Two other rounds of cuts were done consecutively in June and July in Azure's

product and programme management segments. LinkedIn, owned by Microsoft laid off 200 employees unceremoniously just last week.

#### Is AI just a ruse?

How much of the blame can truthfully be placed on AI deployment? "This is a correction for a decade-long trend of over hiring in the sector. As easy capital went to the side-lines in 2022, it has become more difficult to start new tech

companies and that takes away tech jobs," explained Aswath Damodaran, Professor of Finance at the Stern School of Business at New York University.

"This is not really about AI, though you may be tempted to make it so. Most of the tech layoffs are happening at places that hired well before AI was even a glimmer in the market's mind. This is a story of accountability eventually catching up at young tech companies that sold themselves on potential but have never been able to monetise it," he noted.

But even if it is a natural comedown, investors are now forced to reckon with the sky-high AI expenditures coupled with a long road before seeing any profitable returns.

#### Big Tech's large capex

According to *Visible Alpha*, Microsoft will spend over \$80 billion in the current fiscal year, which is a jump of more than \$30 billion from the previous year. The Redmond, Washington-headquartered company also predicted slower growth for its cloud segment in the quarter. Mr. Zuckerberg also pegged "significant acceleration" in costs to the pace with which Meta was building data centres and AI infrastructure. The company raised the low end of its capital expenditures guidance for 2024 to \$38 billion from \$37 billion after its earnings report, with the higher limit still at \$40 billion. Alphabet reported \$13 billion in capital expenditures in the third quarter, and CFO Ashkenazi is intent on keeping it the same in the fourth quarter.

Meanwhile, Andy Jassy said he plans to spend \$75 billion on capex in 2024 and expects an even bigger number in 2025. Mr. Jassy told investors that GenAI "a really unusually large, maybe once-in-a-lifetime type of opportunity," reassuring shareholders they would feel good "in the long term."

During the early days of AI, many thought that their jobs will be replaced.

Thomas Monteiro, lead analyst at Investing.com, points out that, "Saving a few specific sectors, AI hasn't yet grown good enough to replace the bulk of human workers end-product-wise. However, what it did do is change companies' priorities, meaning that these are rethinking how they allocate their resources, more than often taking the risk of replacing several otherwise essential workers for a highly disputed, expensive AI specialist."

Labour force inflation and lack of clarity on how to monetise AI is also "forcing companies to figure out ways to become more efficient. But if they can't cut from the expenses side because the competition will run them over once they figure out the AI game, what's left? Well, only further reductions," he added.

The market has been ruthless to companies that ignored the clarion call of AI at the opportune moment. Intel, a Silicon Valley icon, announced it would be laying off 15,000 employees earlier in August to accommodate a \$10 billion savings plan after it became obvious that the company had gotten left behind in AI. To add insult to injury, the company was replaced on the Dow Jones Industrial Average index in November by Nvidia, a company that Intel tried to buy two decades ago.

Although the rate of tech layoffs have somewhat slowed, they haven't fully stopped as tech companies are shedding employees wherever they see fit. "In a sense, layoffs are unavoidable," Mr. Monteiro said. "Companies will always have a choice, and historically, we've seen companies challenging the status quo to reach good results by thinking outside the box. However, we currently live in a world where shareholder value is just as important as consumer value, and no one is willing to take the risk."

## THE DAILY QUIZ

With a dramatic turn in the Syrian war, a quiz on the more than a decade long conflict

**Srinivasan Ramani**

**QUESTION 1**  
Prior to his assassination, this military leader of Iran's elite Quds Force played a major role in training fighters in support of the long-serving Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Name him.

**QUESTION 2**

What do the Syrian Kurds call the de facto autonomous region in northeastern Syria that is now under their control?

**QUESTION 3**

Name the rebel force that was trained by the

United States, and composed of Syrian Arab Army defectors that is now in control of territory near Syria's border with Iraq and Jordan.

**QUESTION 4**  
Which ethno-religious group is Bashar al-Assad, the de jure ruler of Syria, affiliated to? What stream of Islam is it an offshoot of?

**QUESTION 5**  
This intellectual, a Christian by birth, is considered a major influence in the development of the Ba'athist movement — the Assad regime still professes a divergent variant of it. Name him.



#### Visual question:

The key leader behind the dramatic rebel advances in Syria in recent days is also said to have been hand picked by Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to establish a branch of the al-Qaeda in Syria. He now distances his organisation from al-Qaeda. Name him. AFP

**Questions and Answers to the December 6 edition of the daily quiz:** 1. This liberal was once Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and his death triggered protests against the corrupt one-party rule.

**Ans: Hu Yaobang**

2. This Irish officer who ordered martial law in most parts of a particular region in India was assassinated by this revolutionary.

**Ans: Michael O'Dwyer; Sardar Udham Singh**

3. In 1978, in this horrific event, security forces fired on a large protest at Jaleh Square killing at least 100 people.

**Ans: Black Friday**

4. In the 1990s, Hawaii spent three years under martial law after this incident since military officials doubted the loyalty of at least one third of these residents.

**Ans: The bombing of Pearl Harbour; the residents were of Japanese descent**

5. This country has been under martial law since 2022.

**Ans: Ukraine**

Visual: Name this Chief of Army Staff.

**Ans: Zia ul Haq**

**Early Birds:** Tamal Biswas| Dodo Jayaditya|

Piyali Tuli| Sonali Das| Sumana Dutta



## KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

*The ending of the film was quite climactic*

Both of them have not said a word since the event. Guess the cat got their tongues

**S. Upendran**

#### What is the origin of the expression 'has the cat got your tongue'?

There are quite a few expressions in which the cat is the star – 'let the cat out of the bag', 'a cat has nine lives', 'look what the cat dragged in', 'it's raining cats and dogs', etc. The idiom 'has the cat got your tongue' is used in informal contexts. When you pose this question to someone, you wish to know why the individual is choosing to remain silent? Why isn't he speaking up? The expression, at times, is used to indicate annoyance.

*You're unusually quiet this morning. What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?*

Although there are several theories about the origin of this idiom, nobody is really sure about its exact origin. According to some scholars, it comes from a practice followed by ancient Egyptians. In the past, when someone was caught lying, the individual's tongue was immediately cut off, and fed to the cats! Another theory making the rounds is that the 'cat' in the expression does not refer to the animal, but to the whip that the captain of a ship used on his crew. The whip was called 'cat-o'-nine-tails', and it was usually shortened to 'the cat' in everyday conversation. After being whipped by the cat, sailors were in too much pain to speak; they remained silent.

#### Which is correct: remanded to/in/into custody? (K. Shanmugam)

We usually come across these expressions when we read a report in a newspaper about some crime committed. When the suspect or accused is 'remanded in custody', the judge decides to keep him in jail till the trial begins.

*The protesting students have been remanded in custody.*

ictionaries and books on usage do not list 'remanded to' or 'remanded into' as a possibility. If the judge grants the suspect bail till the commencement of the trial, then you talk about the individual being 'remanded on bail'.

*As expected, the two politicians were remanded on bail.*

#### What is the difference between 'climactic' and 'climatic'?

The two words consist of three syllables each; the first syllable in both rhyme with 'fly', 'sly' and 'ply'. The vowel in the second syllable sounds like the 'a' in 'cat', 'bat' and 'hat', while the final syllable is pronounced like the word 'tick'. The only difference between the two words is the manner in which the second syllable is pronounced; in the case of 'climactic', it sounds like the word 'mack'. The word is pronounced 'kly-MACK-tic'. 'Climatic', on the other hand, is pronounced 'kly-MA-tic'. As for the meaning, 'climatic' is related to the word 'climate', while 'climactic' comes from the word 'climax'.

*upendrankye@gmail.com*

## Word of the day

### Capacitate:

make legally capable or qualify in law; make capable

### Synonyms:

qualify

**Usage:** This instruction capacitates us to understand the problem.

**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/capacitatepro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /kə'peɪsɪteɪt/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) with the subject 'Text & Context'.

## From Page One

Militants capture  
Damascus as Assad flees

"We celebrate with the Syrian people the news of freeing our prisoners and releasing their chains and announcing the end of the era of injustice in Sednaya prison," the HTS said, referring to a jail on the outskirts of Damascus where the government detained thousands.

Iran's embassy was stormed by the militants following their capture of Damascus, Iran's English-language Press TV reported on Sunday.

Syria's Army command notified officers on Sunday that Mr. Assad's rule had ended, a Syrian officer who was informed of the move, said. But the Syrian Army later said it was continuing operations against "terrorist groups" in the key cities of Hama and Homs and in the Deraa countryside.

Mr. Jalali said he had been in contact with al-Jolani to discuss managing the transitional period, marking a notable development in efforts to shape Syria's political future.

The U.S. will continue to maintain its presence in eastern Syria and will take measures necessary to prevent a resurgence of the Islamic State, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East Daniel Shapiro told the Manama Dialogue security conference in Bahrain's capital on Sunday.

Thousands in cars and on foot congregated at a main square in Damascus waving and chanting "Freedom" after a half-century of Assad family rule, witnesses said.

Stabilizing western areas of Syria captured in the militants' advance will be key. Western governments, which have shunned the Assad-led state for years, must decide how to deal with a new administration in which a globally designated terrorist group – the HTS – looks set to have influence.

HTS is Syria's strongest militant group and some Syrians remain fearful it will impose draconian Islamist rule or instigate reprisals. Countries such as the UAE and Egypt, both close U.S. allies, see Islamist militant groups as an existential threat, so HTS may face resistance from the regional powers.

HTS militants said they have started an attack on U.S.-backed Kurdish-led forces in the northern Syrian town of Manbij, according to a statement posted on Sunday but dated Saturday on X by the Ministry of Defense of the Syrian Interim Government.

(With AFP inputs)

Court acquits ex-IPS  
officer in 1997 case

The court held that the prosecution could not "prove the case beyond reasonable doubt" that the complainant was forced to confess to the crime and made to surrender by voluntarily causing pain using dangerous weapons and threats. It also noted that the sanction required to prosecute the accused, who was then a public servant discharging his duty, had not been obtained in the case.

Mr. Bhatt and constable Vajubhai Chau, against whom the case was abated after his death, were charged on the complaint by one Naran Jadav for causing him physical and mental torture in police custody.

A first information report was filed against the duo, following the court's direction on Mr. Jadav's complaint before a magistrate court on July 6, 1997. Mr. Jadav was one of the 22 accused in the 1994 arms landing case.

According to the prosecution, a team of Porbandar Police had taken Mr. Jadav to Mr. Bhatt's residence in Porbandar on July 5, 1997, from the Sabarmati Central Jail in Ahmedabad on a transfer warrant. Mr. Jadav was given electric shocks. His son was also given electric shocks. The court registered a case on December 31, 1998, and issued a summons to Mr. Bhatt and Mr. Chau.

On April 15, 2013, the court ordered an FIR against the duo. Mr. Bhatt is undergoing life imprisonment in a 1990 Jamnagar custodial death case.

VHP, Bajrang Dal stage protest ahead  
of Diljit Dosanjh's concert in Indore

## Meul Malpani

BHOPAL

The Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) continued their protests against the sale of liquor and meat at singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh's concert in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, with some Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators voicing their support for the demands.

Hundreds of people affiliated to the Hindu outfits, carrying sticks and banners, staged a protest at the Collectorate on Sunday morning.

Tanu Sharma, Indore head of the VHP's social harmony wing, told *The Hindu* that functionaries of these organisations had in-



VHP and Bajrang Dal say they found stalls and advertisements for various liquor brands at the venue for Diljit's concert in Indore. ANI

spected the venue on Saturday, and found stalls and advertising materials for various liquor brands. "After that, we went to the Collectorate today [Sunday] and showed videos of the venue to officials. The

Collector gave us the assurance that these activities would not be allowed," Mr. Sharma said, adding that some senior functionaries of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal had been deployed at the venue to keep vigil.

"If we find out that activities like love-jihad or open serving of liquor or meat happened at the concert, we will respond in our way. We will not listen to the administration then," Mr. Sharma said.

BJP MLA and former Minister Usha Thakur extended her support to the right-wing organisations.

The police had already made it clear to the organisers that liquor should only be served in the lounges, Indore Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Amit Singh told *The Hindu*. However, a senior police officer said serving liquor at licensed stalls had been allowed earlier, but guidelines had been issued after the protests.

Think tank staff not  
eligible for canteen  
facility, says Ministry

## Dinakar Peri

NEW DELHI

Employees of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence and Security Analysis (MP-IDSA), an autonomous think tank under the Defence Ministry, are not authorised to receive Canteen Smart Card (CSD) facility, the Ministry categorically said in response to an RTI query, adding that the current Director-General, Sujan R. Chinoy, was issued a card "erroneously".

"Sujan Chinoy is not eligible for canteen facility. The CSD card has been made erroneously," the Right to Information reply dated October 22, signed by Brigadier Tamjeet Bis-

was, Central Public Information Officer in the integrated headquarters of the MoD (Army) and addressed to The Polity, Vud Media India Foundation from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, said.

The employees of the MP-IDSA are not authorised to use the canteen facility, the RTI reply seen by *The Hindu* stated.

As soon as the matter came to light following the RTI reply, the card was "hosted", meaning cancelled, defence sources said.

However, questions to the Army with respect to the process of issuing the CSD cards did not elicit a response.

cording to sources, the protests were stopped by security forces about a kilometre short of the mission.

Meanwhile, protests continue in different Indian cities over reports of attacks on minorities, particularly Hindus in Bangladesh, while in Bangladesh these are seen as part of an "exaggerated narrative" being built in India.

"Bangladesh expects India to respect its sovereignty particularly when any comment by Bangladesh on things like India's CAA or NRC laws is frowned upon as 'India's internal affairs'", said Syed Munir Khasru, head of the Dhaka-based Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance, adding that many in Bangladesh feel "vilified" by Indian media coverage of the attacks on minorities, including the arrest of Hindu leader Chimmo Das on sedition charges.

During the FOC talks on Monday, Bangladesh could raise the issue of whether India would extradite Ms. Hasina who is facing a number of cases. Bangladesh has not so far formally approached India with a request for her extradition, however.

Hindutva groups  
continue protests  
in West Bengal

## KOLKATA

The BJP and several Hindutva groups organised processions in different parts of West Bengal, including Kolkata, on Sunday against alleged atrocities on minorities in Bangladesh. BJP leader Suvidha Adhikari led a rally at Kanthi and said that Hindus should be united against the attacks on minorities in Bangladesh.

sides in the past four months.

Though Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma had said in a speech last month that both sides had "sustained positive momentum" on trade, traders on both sides have expressed concerns as anger in both countries aimed at each other has grown. On Sunday, three youth organisations of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party marched towards the Indian High Commission in Dhaka to protest against the attack by a mob on the Bangladeshi mission in Agartala, where the Bangladeshi flag was torn. Ac-

India will run as per  
wishes of its majority:  
Allahabad HC judge

## Ishita Mishra

NEW DELHI

Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court on Sunday said that Hindus did not expect Muslims to follow their culture but only wanted them not to disrespect the same.

Speaking on the subject of the Uniform Civil Code at an event organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) at the library hall of the Allahabad High Court, Justice Yadav said there was no excuse to have multiple wives, triple talaq or Halala and that these practices would not work any more.

"We teach tolerance and kindness to our children since birth. We teach them to love animals, nature. We feel sad with pain of others. But you don't feel the same. Why?... How will your child learn tolerance and kindness when you slaughter animals in front of them," he said.

**'Applies to all of us'**  
Saying that the Hindu society had got rid of several "bad practices", including *Sati* and *Bal Vivah*, Justice



Yadav said that maintenance must be given to the aggrieved divorced Muslim woman but the then Union government had "bowed down in front of some people". "The then Union government was forced to bring another law against the SC's order for the right to maintenance," he added.

"It's not only RSS, VHP or Hindus who advocate UCC. The country's top court also supports it," he said.

**'Applies to all of us'**  
Saying that the Hindu society had got rid of several "bad practices", including *Sati* and *Bal Vivah*, Justice

Yadav said that being a Hindu, he respected his religion, but that did not mean he had any "ill will" towards other religions or faith.

"We do not expect you to take seven rounds [around the fire while getting married.... we don't want you to take a dip in Ganga....but we expect you to not to disrespect the culture, gods and great leaders of the country," Justice Yadav said.

Speaking to advocates and VHP volunteers, Justice Yadav said women should not be treated badly. "You can't disrespect a woman who is considered a goddess in Hindu *Shastras* and *Vedas*. You can't claim the right to have four wives, perform Halala, or triple talaq," he said, adding that denying maintenance to women and other injustices "will not work".

The programme was also attended by Justice Dinesh Pathak. While he inaugurated the event, he did not speak there.

The VHP event drew criticism for the participation of an acting judge.

"What a shame for a sitting judge to actively participate in an event organised by a Hindu organization on its political agenda," senior lawyer Indira Jai Singh wrote on X.



BNP supporters shout slogans during a march to the Indian High Commission in Dhaka on Sunday. AP

Commission in Agartala, and the future of Indian projects in Bangladesh.

## 'Routine talks'

After the pause on the Adani electricity agreement with a high-level inquiry being conducted into the tariffs charged, media reports in Dhaka said that the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Authority is moving to cancel another private agreement with Airtel for India to use Bangladesh as transit to provide broadband services to the Northeastern States.

Officials on both sides have said that the talks are

routine, and follow regular consultations on river water sharing, Ganga barrages, as well as meetings of land officials over the past few months.

"It's the first visit at senior official levels since the Interim Administration took over and would represent an important point of bilateral engagement at a time of increasing tension and acrimony," said former Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla, who had served as the High Commissioner to Bangladesh.

However, in remarks indicating that the agenda for talks could be overshadowed by trouble areas,

Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser said on Sunday that the India-Bangladesh relationship since the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has changed in "qualitative terms".

"If we want to solve problems, we have to admit the problem first," he said at a seminar on the revival of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. "It is not affecting only Bangladesh but also India. The traders of Kolkata are also being affected," he said, indicating a slowdown on bilateral trade, movement, visas and connectivity between the two



A Central team led by Rajesh Gupta, Joint Director, Ministry of Home Affairs, inspecting paddy crops damaged due to flooding and Then Pennai river in Cuddalore district on Sunday. THE HINDU

inlets at Melappakkam.

The team also assessed the damage to roads at Melappakkam, and paddy and banana crops at Azhagiyamalai. Farmers and officials apprised the team members of the extent of damage in the district. Gandeev Singh Bedi, Secretary, Department of Rural Development, and Collector Sibi Adhithya Senthil Kumar elaborated on the losses

photographs.

The team members also inspected damages to houses at Gunduppallavadi and farmland at Kandakadu. Later, they attended a meeting chaired by Mr. Bedi at the Cuddalore Collectorate.

Official sources said that paddy on 48,907 hectares; maize on 942 hectares; black gram on 1,612 hectares; groundnut on 674 hectares; sugarcane on 306 hectares; cotton on 242 hectares; and other crops

through

the affected persons.

The team members also visited a damaged power sub-station and bed dam in Bahour. Later, the team held a meeting with Lieutenant Governor K. Kailashnath and Chief Minister N. Ranagasmay separately, as part of a debriefing exercise of its visit to the flood-hit areas.

On Monday, the team will visit the flooded residential areas in the town.

He recalled how in the *Shah Bano* case, even the Supreme Court had held that maintenance must be given to the aggrieved divorced Muslim woman but the then Union government had "bowed down in front of some people". "The then Union government was forced to bring another law against the SC's order for the right to maintenance," he added.

"It's not only RSS, VHP or Hindus who advocate UCC. The country's top court also supports it," he said.

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BJP councillor terrorising Muslim vendors, says CPI(M)

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) on Sunday accused BJP councillor Ravinder Singh Negi of terrorising Muslim vendors and questioned why the Delhi police's had taken no action against him.

In a post on X, the CPI(M) shared a video of Mr. Negi asking names of shopowners and street vendors, telling Muslim vendors to display their names, and distributing saffron flags to shopkeepers identifying themselves as Hindus. The saffron flag will help buyers identify shopkeepers as Hindus, he can be heard saying.

"BJP councillor Ravinder Singh Negi has been continuously terrorising Muslim vendors trying to earn an honest living," the CPI(M) said in the post.

"This is the latest video. Why has this man not been charged and arrested for spreading communal hatred, Delhi Police?" it asked, tagging the Delhi police's official X handle.

Mr. Negi is the councillor from East Vinod Nagar constituency.

He can also be heard saying that some people from the "other community" were adulterating food.

The councillor has himself shared similar videos on his Instagram handle.

# Sonia Gandhi linked to organisation financed by Soros Foundation: BJP

Reiterating its allegation about a connection between the Congress and billionaire, the BJP says it implies their shared goal of diminishing India's growth; 'U.S. deep state trying to destabilise India'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday alleged that former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, as the co-president of the Forum of Democratic Leaders in the Asia-Pacific (FDL-AP), was linked to an organisation financed by the "George Soros Foundation".

Reiterating its allegation about a connection between the Congress and Mr. Soros, a U.S. billionaire, the BJP, in a thread on X, said it implied "their shared goal of diminishing India's growth".

Sonia Gandhi, as the co-president of the FDL-AP Foundation, is linked to an organisation financed by the George Soros Foundation. Notably, the FDL-AP Foundation has expressed their views that treat Kashmir as a separate entity. This association between Sonia Gandhi and an organisation that has backed the idea of Kashmir as an independent nation expresses the influence of foreign entities on India's internal affairs and the political impact of such



connections," it said.

The BJP alleged that Ms. Gandhi's chairmanship of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation "led to a partnership with the George Soros Foundation, displaying the influence of foreign funding on Indian organisations".

"Salil Shetty, the vice-president of the Soros-funded Open Society Foundation, participated in the Bharat Jodo Yatra. Here, he can be seen with none other than Rahul Gandhi, former president of the Congress," it said sharing a photograph.

The party said that Mr. Gandhi's press conference on Adani was telecast live by the Soros-funded Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), which Mr. Gandhi used as a source to criti-

George Soros and Rahul Gandhi have the same sentiments regarding the Adani issue... they have both suggested that Adani and Modi are closely linked Bharatiya Janata Party

cise Adani. "It shows nothing but their strong and dangerous relationship and highlights their attempts to derail the Indian economy," the BJP said.

George Soros and Rahul Gandhi have the same sentiments regarding the Adani issue. Specifically, they have both suggested that Adani and Modi are closely linked and that the Adani issue could topple the Modi government," it said, alleging that "Congress MP Shashi Tharoor has publicly acknowledged George Soros as an 'old friend'. It's something truly NOTEWORTHY!", the post said.

In another thread, the BJP had earlier accused the U.S. State Department of being behind the agenda of targeting the ruling party and Prime Minister Narendra

Modi, "In fact, 50% of OCCRP's funding comes directly from the U.S. State Department. OCCRP has served as a media tool for carrying out a deep state agenda," it said adding that the "deep state had a clear objective to destabilise India by targeting Prime Minister Modi".

To achieve this, they turned to OCCRP, instructing the organisation to provide material aimed at damaging PM Modi's and India's image. The Congress then exploited this material to launch attacks on PM Modi, propagate false narratives, and disrupt the functioning of Parliament. The U.S. Deep State was always working behind the scenes," it said.

The BJP had said Mr. Gandhi's frequent visits to the U.S. and the U.K. only further reinforced that connection. "For instance, during his secret visit to Uzbekistan last year, Samantha Power, the administrator of USAID (which funds OCCRP), was also present there at the same time. The deep state is an evil force that has brought nothing but destruction," said the post.

# 'New normal prevailing at LAC': Congress demands a full discussion in Parliament

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Days after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made a *suo motu* statement in Parliament on the disengagement process with China, the Congress on Sunday said the Narendra Modi government had agreed to a "new normal" over the "old normal" prevailing before April 2020.

In a statement, the Congress's communication chief, Jairam Ramesh, said Parliament should be allowed to debate the full gamut of the relationship between the two countries.

Mr. Ramesh said that it was unfortunate, but typical of the Modi government, that "MPs were not permitted to seek any clarifications".

While "fully appreciating" the sensitive nature of many aspects of India-China border relations, the party had four pointed questions, the Congress general secretary said.

**Shift in position**  
"On October 22, 2024, Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi restated India's long-standing position: 'As far as we are concerned, we want to go back to the status quo of April 2020... thereafter we will be looking at disengagement, de-escalation and normal management of the LAC.' However, the Minis-



Jairam Ramesh

try of External Affairs statement following the 32nd meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs on December 5, 2024, stated that 'the two sides positively affirmed the implementation of the most recent disengagement agreement which comple-

ted the resolution of the issues that emerged in 2020'. Does this not reveal a shift in our official position?" Mr. Ramesh said.

He then referred to Mr. Jaishankar's statement in Parliament, in which the Minister had said that "in a few other places where friction occurred in 2020, steps of a temporary and limited nature were worked out, based on local conditions, to obviate the possibility of further friction".

The Congress leader said this clearly referred to the so-called "buffer zones to which our troops and livestock herders are de-

nied access that they previously had".

These statements taken together suggest that the External Affairs Ministry is accepting a settlement that does not return the Line of Actual Control to the April 2020 status quo as desired by the Army and the nation. Is it not clear now that the Modi government has agreed to a new status quo and agreed to live with the 'new normal' after the 'old normal' prevailing prior to April 2020 was unilaterally disturbed by China?" Mr. Ramesh said.

The Congress leader questioned why the Chinese government was yet to corroborate any details about the disengagement in Depsang and Demchok.

"Have traditional grazing rights for Indian livestock herders been restored? Will there be unfettered access to our traditional patrolling points? Have the buffer zones ceded during previous negotiations been taken back by India?" he asked.

The Indian National Congress reiterates the demand it has been making for the past few years – that Parliament must, to reflect a collective national resolve, be given an opportunity to debate the full gamut of the India-China relationship."

# Invoking ESMA in Uttar Pradesh means protests can erupt against govt.: Akhilesh

The Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW



Akhilesh Yadav

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday described the Uttar Pradesh government's decision to ban government employees from protesting under the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) for the next six months as a "reflection of resentment" among the employees. He said that imposing restrictions on its own staff meant that the State government accepted that protests could erupt at any time over its failed policies.

"This order of the go-

a government due to corrupt conduct and thinking," Mr. Yadav wrote on X.

He said that the BJP government was "scared". "The reality is that people working in various government departments and semi-government institutions, establishments not only in Uttar Pradesh but all over the country are being forced to become a part of the BJP's corrupt policies and corruption, due to which discontent is growing among them, which will emerge as a strike soon, it is this fear because of which this order has been passed," he said.

vernment that for the next six months, strikes will be banned under the ESMA itself is a reflection of the worsening conditions in Uttar Pradesh. The truth is that the BJP knows how to form a government through manipulation and rigging but not how to run

one dissects the mandate, it becomes clear that Mr. Trump was able to break new ground as a rejection of the liberal politics that went too far in championing causes like illegal migrations and 'wokeism'. It must be borne in mind that not all Latinos in America, like not all Indians for that matter, are illegals (illegal immigrants). They didn't like the Democrat rhetoric of supporting illegal migrations from the Latin American countries, which were increasingly erasing the line between legal and illegal migrants, thus subjecting all Latinos to the same treatment from White Americans.

On the contrary, Mr. Trump's distinction between legal and illegal migrations was welcomed by them. The more important

reason appears to be the total rejection of 'wokeism' and associated politics championed by the Democratic Party. 'Wokeism' reached alarming proportions in America where all decent citizens felt threatened over the future of their children and families.

Finally, American society as a whole has yet to overcome its sexist or gender prejudices. When pitted against women candidates, Mr. Trump romped home easily as against a male candidate like Joe Biden in 2020. It may be a contested argument, but can't be dismissed fully.

**Has the idea of representative politics changed with the defeat of Kamala Harris, following from this support for Trump among otherwise Democrat supporters?**

# NCP(SP) lends support to Markadwadi over 're-election' using ballot papers

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI



The crowd at an anti-EVM event held by Sharad Pawar and Jayant Patil at Markadwadi in Solapur on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

NCP(SP) president Sharad Pawar and Maharashtra State unit chief Jayant Patil on Sunday visited Markadwadi village in Malshiras tehsil in Solapur district of Maharashtra to speak to the residents who had earlier expressed their willingness to hold a 're-election' with ballot papers.

Speaking to the villagers, Mr. Pawar said that the people of Markadwadi had all his support. "I heard that people here were booked when they expressed their stand on re-election over ballot paper."

Criticising the police action against the villagers,

State's Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis, to resolve the doubts of the people of Markadwadi as none of us want to politicise this issue," Mr. Pawar said.

A woman from the vil-

lage said, "We feel we have been cheated for not being

able to vote as we wanted and this is injustice in democracy. The police threatened to file a case against us if we staged a protest."

Mr. Pawar said, "When EVM is not used anywhere in the world, why is it used in India alone? America, England, and many European countries are conducting elections on ballot papers, not on EVM."

Reacting to the allegations, Maharashtra Deputy CM Eknath Shinde accused Mr. Pawar of misleading people about EVMs. Mahayati's win was solely due to the hard work of the party workers; it is time the MVA accepted the mandate and allowed the State to move ahead on the path of development, he said.

# 105 members take oath in Maharashtra Assembly

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

On the second day of the special session of the Maharashtra Assembly on Sunday, at least 105 new members took oath as MLAs.

Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee chief Nana Patole, Congress leaders Vijay Wadettiwar, Amit Vilasrao Deshmukh and Vishwajeet Kadam, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leaders Jitendra Awadh, Rohit Pawar and Rohit R.R. Patil were among the Opposition MLAs who took oath on Sunday.

Reacting to the allegations, Maharashtra Deputy CM Eknath Shinde accused Mr. Pawar of misleading people about EVMs. Mahayati's win was solely due to the hard work of the party workers; it is time the MVA accepted the mandate and allowed the State to move ahead on the path of development, he said.



Ram Madhav

Nistula Hebbal

Ram Madhav, former national general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party and currently president of the conservative think tank India Foundation, speaks to *The Hindu* on the U.S. election results, and the largely post-Second World War "liberal project", which promotes a political and economic system that places importance on individual freedom, democratic government, and open markets. Edited excerpts:

What does the victory for Donald Trump mean for the world order and the 'liberal project'?

Donald Trump secured a majority in the popular vote, and also a majority in both wings of U.S. Congress, the Senate and the House, leading most analysts to interpret this as a more forceful return of the Trump 1.0 era of unpredictability and transactionalism, that it would be worse than his previous term.

However, going by the way he took no time in announcing key appointments, and some of the policy announcements that he was making after the election, it is clear that Trump 2.0 is going to be different.

Interestingly, Mr. Trump's return with a vengeance has become a nightmare for not only the radical liberals but also for China and Europe, which expect him to be harsh with them on several issues. All in all, his presi-

If one dissects the mandate, it becomes clear that Mr. Trump was able to break new ground as a rejection of the liberal politics that went too far in championing causes like illegal migrations and 'wokeism'. It must be borne in mind that not all Latinos in America, like not all Indians for that matter, are illegals (illegal immigrants). They didn't like the Democrat rhetoric of supporting illegal migrations from the Latin American countries, which were increasingly erasing the line between legal and illegal migrants, thus subjecting all Latinos to the same treatment from White Americans.

On the contrary, Mr. Trump's distinction between legal and illegal migrations was welcomed by them. The more important

Kamala Harris's defeat can be attributed to several reasons, one of them being the gender bias at the subterranean level in American society. But she also lost a section of the Democrat vote because she didn't pass through the litmus test of the Primaries, was seen as an Obama (former U.S. President Barack Obama) proxy imposed from the above by many even within the Democratic Party, and there was the problem of Mr. Biden's legacy that Ms. Harris couldn't shrug off in the brief window of three months of campaign.

However, it shouldn't be forgotten that despite all these odds, Ms. Harris still secured 48.4% popular vote. That shows that the Democrats still enjoy wide support in the country. (Full interview is at [newsht.live/rammadhav](http://newsht.live/rammadhav))

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A-II, Industrial Estate, Sananagar, Hyderabad - 500018  
**e-TENDER NOTICE**  
Tender No. 942/TGCP/Lab/CA0405-04/M/2024, Date: 09.12.2024  
e-tenders are invited for providing O&M services from authorized service providers / OEMs in India for CAAO/S stations located in and around Hyderabad, Telangana State. The tender document can be downloaded from <https://tender.telangana.gov.in>. Last date is 30-12-2024 at 03:00 PM.  
Sd/- MEMBER SECRETARY TGCP, HYDERABAD  
DIPR R.O. No : 763-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2024-25

**V.O.Chidambaranar Port Authority**  
Civil Engineering Department  
Tuticorin-628 004  
**Notice Inviting Tender (NIT)**  
NIT No: E(C ) -56/ 4/2024-EST/D. 3387 Dated: 05.12.2024  
V.O.Chidambaranar Port Authority Tuticorin is a Major Port under Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India is one of the best run Ports in the Country with excellent Infrastructure such as Internal roads, Warehouses, Transit sheds, Open storage space, Truck parking facility, Power & Water Supply etc.,  
Port is well connected to various cities in Tamil Nadu and the neighbouring states by Rail four lane National Highways (NH-7A and NH-45B and Airways, Port land totalling 152.03 Acres are available for lease on long term basis at very nominal lease rents for setting up of Industries including Green Ammonia / Green Hydrogen and other Industries etc., under Coastal Employment Unit.  
V.O.Chidambaranar Port Authority invites Offers / Bids from the experienced reputed firms for Allotment of Port land for 30 years lease period on Upright / Annual payment basis in V.O.Chidambaranar Port for promoting industries under Coastal Employment Unit (CEU) (Block — A, D & E) as follows:-  
Downloading of Tender document from website From 10.12.2024 to 09.01.2025  
Pre-bid Meeting 18.12.2024 at 16:00 hrs through video conference  
Last Date & Time of submission of Tender 09.01.2025 at 15:00 Hrs.  
Opening of Technical Bid 09.01.2025 at 15:30 Hrs.  
For Further details, Please visit [www.vocport.gov.in](http://www.vocport.gov.in) and [www.tenderwizard.com](http://www.tenderwizard.com) VOCP  
Sd/- CHIEF ENGINEER & ESTATE OFFICER

## IN BRIEF



## Foreign direct investment inflows into India cross \$1 tn

Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into India have crossed the \$1 trillion milestone in the April 2000-September 2024 period, firmly establishing the country's reputation as a safe and key investment destination globally. According to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the cumulative amount of FDI, including equity, reinvested earnings and other capital, stood at \$1,033.40 billion during the said period. PTI

## Centre writes to States on menstrual hygiene policy

The Centre has written to the States to submit action plans to effectively implement the menstrual hygiene policy to ensure access to low-cost hygiene products and gender-responsive sanitation facilities in public and government-aided schools. The Centre had last month informed the Supreme Court about the 'Menstrual Hygiene Policy for School Going Girls,' which was approved by the Union Health Ministry. The policy advocates for streamlining mechanisms to provide for timely availability of menstrual hygiene products in schools. PTI

## Confederation of Indian Industry urges government to stick to fiscal deficit target

## Press Trust of India

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has suggested that the government stick to the fiscal deficit target of 4.9% of the GDP for 2024-25 and 4.5% for 2025-26, cautioning that "overly aggressive targets" beyond these could adversely affect India's economic growth.

"India has been growing rapidly amidst a slowing global economy. Prudent fiscal management for macroeconomic stability has been pivotal to this growth," said Chandrajit Banerjee, Director-General, CII, elaborating on suggestions for the forthcoming Union Budget.

The CII also highlighted the announcement in the Union Budget, 2024-25, to keep the fiscal deficit at levels that help reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio.

In preparation for this, the forthcoming budget could lay out a glide path to bring the Union govern-

**CII suggests that the fiscal deficit should be kept at levels that help reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio**

ment's debt to below 50% of the GDP in the medium term (by 2030-31), and below 40% in the long term, the CII suggested.

Such an explicit target will have a positive impact on India's sovereign credit rating and further on the interest rates in the economy, the CII said. "To aid longer-term fiscal planning, the government should consider instituting Fiscal Stability Reporting. This could include issuing annual reports on fiscal risks under different stress scenarios and the outlook for fiscal stability. The exercise will help forecast potential economic headwinds or tailwinds and assess their impact on the fiscal path," it said.

The reporting can also include long-term (10-25

years) forecasting of fiscal positions, accounting for the impact of factors such as economic growth, technological change, climate change, and demographic changes.

"Looking at the next year's budget, CII has suggested sticking to the fiscal deficit target of 4.9% of GDP for FY25 and a target of 4.5% for FY26," the industry body said.

**Three interventions**

The CII has suggested three interventions to nudge states towards fiscal prudence.

First, the States could be encouraged to institute state-level Fiscal Stability Reporting. Second, States have been allowed to borrow directly from the market, following the recommendations of the 12th Finance Commission. Third, the Centre could create an independent and transparent credit rating system for states to incentivise them to maintain fiscal prudence.

## Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court's *Ram Janmabhoomi* case judgment in 2019, which gave the title of the disputed Babri Masjid site to the Hindu side, finds itself in the vanguard of a legal battle on the validity of the Places of Worship Act.

Observations made in the judgment impresses, in less than 10 pages, the necessity to keep alive a Central law so "intrinsically related to the obligations of a secular state".

A Special Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna is scheduled to hear the challenge to the Places of Worship Act, 1991, on December 12 even as multiple legal actions instituted by Hindu plaintiffs in local courts across States such as Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan question the character of several mosques and even the Ajmer dargah.

The challenge to the validity of the 1991 Act began trickling in even before a year passed after the Ayodhya judgment in November 2019. The petitions have highlighted the wrongs done during the distant Mughal period. The petitioners find the 1991 Act, which mandates the preservation of character of religious places of worship across faiths as they existed on August 15, 1947, a hindrance to reclaim lost temples.

However, the petitioners would have to address the Constitution Bench's mandate in the Ayodhya judgment that the state and citizens have a positive obligation under Article 51A to preserve religious

harmony and protect the equality of all faiths – an essential constitutional value and a norm which has the status of being a basic feature of the Constitution.

"The law [Places of Worship Act] speaks to our history and to the future of the nation. Cognizant as we are of our history and of the need for the nation to confront it, Independence was a watershed moment to heal the wounds of the past. Historical wrongs cannot be remedied by the people taking the law in their own hands. In preserving the character of places of pu-

blic worship, Parliament has mandated in no uncertain terms that history and its wrongs shall not be used as instruments to oppress the present and the future," the five-judge Bench in the 2019 Ayodhya judgment said.

The Bench said the protection of the 1991 Act was unavailable only in cases in which the conversion of a religious character of a place of worship had taken place after August 15, 1947 and a legal action had been pending at the commencement of the statute.

However, this exception would not be applicable to ancient and historical monuments or archaeological sites or remains governed by law; to a suit or legal proceeding which has been finally decided settled or disposed of; to any dispute settled by the parties before the commencement of the 1991 Act; to a conversion of a place of worship effected before the commencement of the Act by acquiescence; and to any conversion of a place of worship before the

commencement of the Act in respect of which the cause of action would be barred by limitation.

In October 1994, another five-judge Bench of the top court, this time examining the constitutional validity of the Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act of 1993, had held in a majority view that the "status and immunity of a mosque from acquisition in the secular ethos of India under the Constitution is the same and equal to that of the places of worship of the other religions, namely, church, temple, etc".

The minority view on the same Bench, by Justices S.P. Bharucha and A.M. Ahmadi, had highlighted that both the 13-judge Bench in the historical *Kesavananda Bharati* case and the nine-judge Bench of the top court in S.R. Bommai case had upheld secularism as a part of the basic features of the Constitution.

"The state was enjoined to accord equal treatment to all religions," they had pointed out.

## Ayodhya verdict likely to be at the forefront of the battle over Places of Worship Act in SC



**Legal wrangle:** The Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi where a survey was conducted by the ASI based on the orders of a court. AFP

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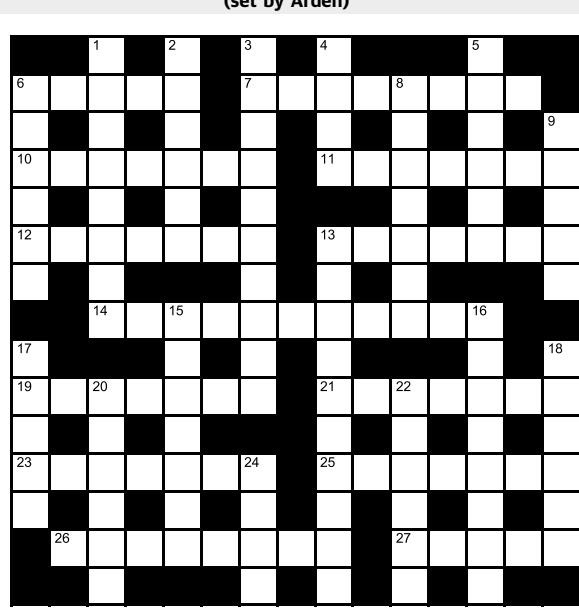
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## TH CROSSWORD

14351

(set by Arden)



## Across

- 6 Nose of a nomad (5)
- 7 Genuine relationships for properties (8)
- 10 Overseas banks repeatedly accept millions - is a natural phenomenon (7)
- 11 Starts with one big leap, gets around the glasses (7)
- 12 It could be a piece of writing (7)

**Crossword**  
14351

(set by Arden)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

QUIET	TASAMOUSE	E	K	A	S	L	S	H	D
LORDS	COMBATIVE	E	A	Y	O	A	K	N	C
PRINCETON	AGGRO	H	N	H	D	I	N	E	N
AVERAGE	ICEBERGS	N	I	N	N	N	E	S	T
TAMARIN	ENTRAPS	G	A	G	H	S	T	R	A
RUNUP	BARCELONA	R	U	R	U	O	C	S	N
SECTORIAL	GLINT	S	L	W	N	E	B	A	S
BELIGERENTLY		B	E	A	S				

Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

## FAITH

## Govinda: cherished name

In the 28th pasuram of Tiruppavai, Andal seeks the Lord's forgiveness for hitherto addressing him by insignificant names. She addresses him as Govinda, which means one who grazes cows. Until then, she had been addressing him as Narayana, Paraman, Uthaman, Padmanabhan etc. None of these names is insignificant. So why does Andal apologise for addressing him by these names?

There is an incident in Bhavabhuti's *Uttara Ramayana*, which provides the answer, said V.S. Karunakarachari in a discourse. Rama is now the king of Ayodhya. He has retained most of his father's officials. So the same man who served as palace guard in Dasaratha's time continues as the guard under Rama. One day, the guard instead of addressing Rama as His Highness, he calls him Ramabhadra. He then checks himself, because he knows that this is not the way to address his king. But why did he say Ramabhadra? Because that was Dasaratha's pet name for Rama. The palace guard had heard Dasaratha address Rama as Ramabhadra. And inadvertently he has now used that name. Normally a king would punish any act of disrespect. But Rama relishes the fact that the guard has addressed Him as His father had. Rama instructs the guard that henceforth he should always address Him as Ramabhadra. Whether in the Rama avatara or Krishna avatara, the Lord was known for His simplicity. Surely, He would be happier if His devotees addressed Him as a cowherd, rather than by any other name. The name Govinda is a clear reference to His simplicity and approachability. So Govinda would be the name that He would cherish more than any other.

# MONEYWISE

## Whither Nifty This December?

### MARKETMUSINGS

#### Vikas Dhoot

It has been a tumultuous couple of months at the Indian bourses. After hitting a record high of 26,277 points on September 27, the broad market benchmark NSE Nifty had tumbled 11.5% to a little over 23,000 points by November 21.

This was the longest secular losing streak for the top 50-shares' market gauge since June 2022. A lot of factors appeared to be pulling down Dalal Street momentum, including the surprisingly weak second quarter results for listed Indian firms, foreign investors recalibrating portfolios towards China as it sought to stimulate its way through a rough patch and anticipated adverse implications for world trade after Donald Trump won his way back to the White House.

November 21 also marked the day the markets got to know about an U.S. Court indictment of some Adani Green Energy officials after a Department of Justice probe into allegations that included securities fraud, wire fraud as well as bribery, with civil charges separately initiated by the U.S. market regulator.

In the eleven trading sessions since then, or between November 22 and December 6, the tide has shifted - with the Nifty gaining in nine of the 11 sessions. By last Thursday, just a day ahead of the bi-monthly monetary policy review of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) that came in the backdrop of rising inflation and a confirmation of the second quarter growth stumble by official data released November 29, the Nifty-50 was at a seven-week high of 24,708 points.

This means the Nifty is still about 6% off its peak, but the rebound rally has bought some respite to nervous traders. The market seems to have shrugged off both the shock of slowing economic growth, and the RBI's decision to withstand a rising domestic clamour for interest rate cuts and keep the repo rate unchanged, even as the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks have been slashing rates for a bit now.

Market experts say the growth slump had already been priced in over the previous weeks' losing streak, and the RBI's policy was hardly a surprise, with October's inflation spiking to 6.2%, and November unlikely to report a dramatic cooling. That perhaps explains the mere 0.1%, or 30 points, drop in the Nifty last Friday after the RBI policy was unveiled.

The Nifty is up 13.5% so far in 2024, and as the year draws to a close, what should investors expect in its last few weeks of trading?

In a report titled 'Nifty: At The Crossroads', Axis Securities dug into the past for a clue. In the past 25 years, the Nifty went up 80% of the time between Nov. 25 and Dec. 31, with average and median returns of 4.1% and 2.2%, respectively. The probability of an uptick shoots up to 100% in the years of U.S. Presidential polls, with mean and median returns of 5.8% and 6.8%, respectively.

Bajaj Broking researchers also termed December one of the best months for the Indian market with the Nifty rising in 17 of the last 24 years. Based on historical patterns and current market analysis, the firm expects the markets will do well this month, and the Nifty could target levels between 24,800 and 25,200.

As of December 6, the index is up 3.2% starting from the Nov. 25 trading session, and 2.2% in this month so far. Of course, past performance is no assurance but if the last 24-25 years' trend holds, there may well be some upside left for the Nifty in 2024.

While investors would hope for a Christmas bonus, Bajaj Broking has warned volatility could be higher this month thanks to domestic and global cues, like the U.S. Federal Reserve's next rate move expected a week before the festival. So keep calm but watchful as you prepare to ring out the old. As for ringing in the new, the prospects for 2025 may hinge a lot on Mr. Trump's action plan for the year (not to be confused with Project 2025 just yet). Enjoy 2024, till stocks last!

**Send queries** on personal finance and investing to the [moneywise@thehindu.co.in](mailto:moneywise@thehindu.co.in) ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.



**Smart pick:** You can choose a medical cover that aligns with your needs and budget. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

## Practical ways to make health cover affordable

By keeping a few simple tips in mind, you can make health insurance more affordable without compromising on quality; affordable doesn't mean settling for less, it means making smart choices

### HEALTHIER CHOICE

#### Siddharth Singhal

**A**s the cloud of uncertainty looms over people across Indian cities owing to pollution and other health hazards, it is imperative not just to secure health and also ensure financial stability. After all, as the saying goes, health is wealth. But due to a lack of awareness, many people make the mistake of dismissing the need for health insurance.

Health insurance is a critical investment. However, it hardly means it has to cost a bomb – most certainly not if you know some feasible ways to make it affordable without compromising protection. Here are some practical tips to help save on premium without compromising on your essential needs.

**Compare prices online** Compare health insurance plans and choose the right plan for yourself. Use online tools to evaluate prices, features and network hospitals. Remember, different insurers price the same risk differently. For instance, a slightly higher premium plan with an extensive hospital network might suit you better during emergencies.

Also, do not hesitate to reach out to a financial advisor who is equipped to give you the right advice.

Keep an eye on your CI-



A high CIBIL score can fetch discounts on premiums; a good financial history not only lowers EMI payments but can also reduce premiums by up to 15%

BIL score. Yes, you read that right. A high score can fetch discounts on premiums, as insurers consider you to be a lower-risk customer. A good financial history not only lowers EMI payments but can also cut premiums by up to 15%. It's an easy way to save money, especially if you already manage your finances well. It's a mutually beneficial deal for both the parties.

#### Premiums into EMIs

If paying the entire premium upfront is difficult, consider EMI options offered by many insurers. For example, instead of paying ₹20,000 annually, you could opt for monthly payments of about ₹1,600. This makes it easier on budget while allowing you to choose a more comprehensive plan that might otherwise feel out of reach. EMIs are a popular payment option for almost anything today, make the most of it to get the health insurance policy you want.

#### Save via modular plans

New-age modular plans let you save considerably by customising your plan as per your needs. Consider



Purchasing health insurance early in life is a wise decision; policies are cheaper when you're younger and healthier, and you lock in age for the future

opting for a deductible or co-pay. This means you'll pay out-of-pocket during claims, but your premium will be lower. If you're healthy and don't foresee frequent hospital visits, this can be a cost-effective choice. It's a smart way to save in the long term while staying prepared for unforeseen events. This makes sense to even senior citizens who might face higher premiums. For instance, you opt for a ₹25,000 deductible and get a 25% discount for a premium of ₹50,000, so you end up saving ₹12,500. Now, if you don't claim for two years, you have already saved ₹25,000 on account of lower premium. This also applies to customers who have a corporate health insurance policy. Also, if you opt for a hospital in your insurer's preferred partner network, you stand to save up to 15% in premiums.

#### Cumulative bonuses

Cumulative bonus lets you increase your sum insured even if you end up making a claim during the policy year. This is different from NCB or no claims bonus that rewards you for not

making a claim. Over time, this can significantly enhance your coverage while keeping costs steady. Let's say you have a sum insured of ₹10 lakh and gain a 10% cumulative bonus every year. In 10 years, the cumulative bonus of ₹10 lakh can potentially be accumulated and make the sum insured just double.

#### Buy early

Purchasing health insurance early in life is a wise decision. Policies are cheaper when you're younger and healthier, and you lock in age for the future. It also ensures coverage before any health issues arise, which could otherwise lead to higher premiums. Not to forget, some insurers apply risk-based loading, especially in case of adverse medical history. This is something you can easily avoid if you buy while you're young and healthy in early years.

Also, this is where something called wellness benefit kicks in. You stay healthy and fit, meet the insurer's criteria and get up to 100% discount upon renewal. You can make the most of this feature if you opt for a plan early in life.

By keeping these simple tips in mind, you can make health insurance more affordable without compromising on quality. Affordable doesn't mean settling for less; it means making smart choices that align with your needs and budget.

(The writer is head, health insurance, Policybaazar.com)

## Pooling funds for F&O trade

### THINKINVESTOR

The objective of pooled funds can be exploring avenues for retail traders to access the futures and options (F&O) segment, while allaying the market watchdog's concerns about excessive speculation

#### Venkatesh Bangarawuswamy

The following discussion is just food for thought, based on recent measures from the stock market regulator SEBI to curb speculative activity in the futures and options (F&O) segment. One of these was to increase the instruments' contract value from ₹5 lakh to ₹15-20 lakh, making it tougher for retail traders to participate in the F&O segment. Perhaps, a simple trading product can offer a solution for SEBI's concern about retail participation while allowing traders to get F&O exposure.

#### Managed funds

SEBI can permit brokerages to apply for a separate licence to start a trading fund. The minimum investment in the fund can be ₹2 lakh in line with the optimal capital needed to previously trade in the F&O segment. Brokerage firms can pool retail money into the fund that can take exposure to F&O.

There are a couple of advantages with this structure. One, it addresses SEBI's concern that retail traders lose money in the F&O segment because they do not appreciate the risks associated with these instruments. In the proposed set-up, professional traders will manage the money. And two, the capital required to take exposure in the fund will be affordable for individuals who were earlier trading in the F&O segment.

It is important that the brokerage firms have an incentive to offer such funds. Why? Unlike typical equity mutual funds that do not trade frequently, funds in the F&O segment must trade actively. That requires time and effort. Therefore, the funds should be allowed to charge a high flat fee of, say, 2% on the investment value. A performance fee, as paid to hedge funds and private equity funds, would be desirable but difficult to implement. Why? As with mutual funds, the funds ought to disclose the daily net asset value. Redemption must be allowed on any business day without lock-in period, as the funds will invest in short-dated tradable instruments. Such short-dated fund structures make it difficult to compute and manage performance fees.

#### Conclusion

This idea is aimed at spurring a discussion among players to explore avenues for retail traders to access the F&O segment, respecting SEBI's concern about speculative trading. The idea necessitates regulatory steps from SEBI to allow such funds to be introduced. Note that, unlike mutual funds, pooled funds can be absolute-return products, with no performance benchmarks.

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

### Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

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

### Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.)		
	Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
(In %)			
Public Sector Banks			
State Bank of India	8.50-9.85	8.50-9.85	8.50-9.85
Bank of Baroda	8.40-10.65	8.40-10.65	8.40-10.90
Union Bank of India	8.35-10.75	8.35-10.90	8.35-10.90
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	8.60-9.95	8.60-9.95	8.60-9.95
Bandhan Bank	9.16-15.00	9.16-13.33	9.16-13.33
RBL Bank	9.00 #	9.00 #	9.00 #
Canara Bank	8.50-11.25	8.45-11.25	8.40-11.15
UCO Bank	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30
Bank of Maharashtra	8.35-11.15	8.35-11.15	8.35-11.15
Punjab and Sind Bank	8.50-10.00	8.50-10.00	8.50-10.00
Indian Overseas Bank	8.40-10.60	8.40-10.60	8.40-10.60
Indian Bank	8.40-10.30	8.40-10.30	8.40-10.30
Private Sector Banks			
Kotak Mahindra Bank	8.75 #	8.75 #	8.75 #
ICICI Bank	8.75 #	8.75 #	8.75 #
Axis Bank</			

**OUAGADOUGOU**

Burkina Faso's military junta appoints new Prime Minister



Burkina Faso's ruling military junta appointed a new Prime Minister, a day after dissolving the government without providing any reason. Riomba Jean Emmanuel Ouedraogo (in picture), until now communications minister and spokesperson of the government, will be the West African country's new Prime Minister. AP

**ACCRA**

Ghana's former leader Mahama wins presidential election



Ghana's Vice-President and ruling party candidate, Mahamudu Bawumia, conceded defeat on Sunday to opposition candidate and former President John Dramani Mahama in the West African nation's presidential election seen as a vote of no-confidence in the current government's handling of an ailing economy. AP

**PARIS**

France's Notre Dame holds first mass after five-year restoration



Newly restored Notre Dame cathedral held its first mass on Sunday, with Christians celebrating the return of the French capital's most famous place of worship after a historic re-opening ceremony. The Paris monument nearly burned down in 2019, but has been fully renovated inside and fitted with a new roof and spire. AP

**PORT SUDAN**

Sudan rescuers say 28 killed in shelling of Khartoum fuel station



A Sudanese network of volunteer rescuers said that 28 civilians were killed Sunday when a fuel station in an area of Khartoum under paramilitary control came under shelling. The youth-led volunteer group also said "the number of injured reached 37, including 29 burns cases" and some shrapnel injuries. AP

## Jubilation as militants enter Damascus, uncertainty looms over future of country

Militants free people held at the notorious Saydnaya prison, where rights groups say thousands were tortured and killed; Russia says President Assad left the country after negotiations with militants and had given instructions to transfer power peacefully; curfew in Damascus till 5 a.m. on Monday

**Associated Press**  
DAMASCUS

Syrians poured into streets echoing with celebratory gunfire on Sunday after a stunning advance by militants reached the capital, ending the Assad family's 50 years of iron rule but raising questions about the future of the country and the wider region.

The militants are led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, or HTS, which has its origins in al-Qaeda and is considered a terrorist organisation by the United States and the United Nations. Abu Mohammed al-



**Homecoming:** People welcome HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Jolani at Damascus's landmark Umayyad Mosque on Sunday. AP

Jolani spearheads the HTS. Separately, Turkiye-backed Syrian militants entered the northern Syrian city of Manbij after taking

control of most of the surrounding area from U.S.-aligned Kurdish forces there, a Turkish security source said on Sunday.

Joyful crowds gathered in central squares in Damascus, waving the Syrian revolutionary flag in scenes that recalled the early days of the Arab Spring uprising, before a brutal crackdown and the rise of an insurgency plunged the country into a nearly 14-year civil war.

Others gleefully sacked the presidential palace and residence after President Bashar al-Assad and other top officials vanished, their whereabouts unknown. Russia, a close ally, said Mr. Assad left the country after negotiations with militant groups and had given instructions to

transfer power peacefully. The militants face the daunting task of healing bitter divisions in a country ravaged by war and still split among different armed factions. Turkiye-backed opposition fighters are battling U.S.-aligned Kurdish forces in the north, and the Islamic State group is still active in some remote areas.

The militants announced a curfew in Damascus from 4 p.m. to 5 a.m. The militants said they freed people held at the notorious Saydnaya prison, where rights groups say thousands were tortured and killed.

Mr. Assad has been accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the war, including a 2013 chemical weapons attack near the capital.

**Largest advance**

The militant advances since November 27 were the largest in recent years, and saw the cities of Aleppo, Hama and Homs fall in a matter of days as the Syrian Army melted away. Russia, Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, which provided crucial support to Mr. Assad, abandoned him in the final days as they reeled from other conflicts.

## Australia PM terms synagogue fire an act of 'terrorism'

**Agence France-Presse**

SYDNEY

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Sunday called a deliberately lit fire in a Melbourne synagogue an act of "terrorism" and warned about the "worrying rise in anti-Semitism" in Australia.

Mask-wearing arsonists set the Adass Israel Synagogue in a Melbourne suburb of Ripponlea ablaze before dawn on Friday, gutting much of the building, though there were no serious injuries. Authorities are still on the

hunt for the perpetrators. Mr. Albanese said on Sunday the fire at the synagogue was the "definition of terrorism".

**Rise in anti-Semitism'** "There has been a worrying rise in anti-Semitism," Mr. Albanese told reporters, adding that he would continue to "call it out".

"Terrorism is something that is aimed at creating fear in the community and the atrocities that occurred at the synagogue in Melbourne clearly were designed to create fear in the community," he said.

## Trump moots 'immediate' truce in Ukraine, threatens NATO withdrawal

**Associated Press**  
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump on Sunday called for an immediate cease-fire in Russia's war with Ukraine and the President-elect renewed warnings that he was open to pulling the United States out of NATO.

Mr. Trump made his cease-fire proposal after a weekend meeting in Paris with French and Ukrainian leaders, claiming in a social media post that Kyiv "would like to make a deal" to end the more than 1,000-day war. The Kremlin responded that it was open to negotiations, while



**Charting course:** Emmanuel Macron, centre, with Donald Trump, left, and Volodymyr Zelensky at the Elysee Palace on Saturday. AP

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky cautioned that any deal would have to pave the way to a lasting peace.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, Mr. Trump said Russia and Ukraine have each lost hundreds of thousands of soldiers in a

war that "should never have started."

"There should be an immediate ceasefire and negotiations should begin. Too many lives are being needlessly wasted, too many families destroyed," Mr. Trump said. He urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to act to bring an end to the fighting.

Separately, Mr. Trump in an NBC News interview that aired on Sunday renewed his warning to NATO allies that he did not see continued U.S. participation in the Western military alliance as a given during his second term in office.

The announcement, which Mr. Netanyahu made while visiting the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights which abut the buffer zone, came after the military said it had deployed forces to the area.

Israel had already said the day before that its soldiers entered the UN-patrolled buffer zone to assist peacekeepers in repelling an attack. On Sunday, the Army announced a troop deployment there, citing "the possible entry of armed individuals".

Since the militant coalition, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, began its renewed offensive against government forces on November 27, Syrian government forces have left positions near the Israeli-held Golan, according to a war monitor.

Most of the plateau has been occupied since 1967 by Israel, which later annexed it in a move not recognised by most of the international community.

In 1974, the buffer zone was established, separating the Israeli-held and Syrian territories, with UN peacekeepers stationed there since.

## Sport

### Duke Of Tuscany wins HPSL Golconda 2000 Guineas

HYDERABAD: Trainer Laxman Singh's ward Duke Of Tuscany, ridden by P. Sai Kumar, won the HPSL Golconda 2000 Guineas, the second Classic of the season held here on Sunday (Dec. 8).

The winner is owned by Mr. K.N. Dhunjibhai & Mr. Z.K. Dhunjibhai rep. Five Stars Shipping Co. Pvt. Ltd. & Mr. Rama Seshu Eyunni.

Jockey P. Trevor, who had a fall during the Kolkata races on Saturday, was indisposed and could not honour his engagements for the day.

P. Sai Kumar, who replaced Trevor, positioned his mount in the fifth or sixth place till the 1000m mark. As the field approached the final bend, top favourite John Wick (Akshay K astride) took a commanding lead of over four lengths, but Duke Of Tuscany (Pai Kumar) produced a powerful turn of foot in the final furlong and surged past John Wick to secure a stunning win by two lengths.

**MEGATOP PLATE** (Div. I (1,200m); AYUSHMAN (Kuldeep Singh Sr.), Gold Giver (Saqalain) 2, Lake Michigan (Akshay K) 3 and Royal Warrier (P. Sai Kumar) 4. Neck, 2 and 1-1/4. Im 15. 88 (w), 12, 24 and 15 (p). SHP: 59, THP: 37, SHW: 14 and 50, FP: 283, Q: 161. Tanala: 689. Favourite: Ayushman. Owners: Mr. Rajesh Sanghani, Mr. Mirza Ayub Baig & Mr. Suchit Jayraj Shah. Trainer: D. Netto.

**BAKRANANGAL PLATE** (Div. II (1,200m); PARK LANE (Md. Is-



**Moment to cherish:** Suresh Paladugu, MD, HPSL, presents the Golconda 2000 Guineas Trophy to Rama Seshu Eyunni, left, part owner of Duke Of Tuscany in the presence of HRC chairperson R. Surrendre Reddy, second from left, and HRC Steward P.S. Reddy. G. RAMAKRISHNA

mail) 1, Wind Sprite (Shivansh) 2, Pancho (B. Nikhil) 3 and Golden Inziz (Kuldeep Str.) 4. 4-3/4, 1-1/4 and Head. Im 15. 92s, 321 (w), 11, 16 and 46 (p). SHP: 55, MTP: 112, SHW: 17 and 18, FP: 112, Q: 57, Tanala: 1,814. Favourite: Park Lane. Owners: Mr. Rakesh Reddy Kondakallla & Mr. Venkata Ravana Reddy Bommarreddy. Trainer: Robin Reddy Kondakallla.

**MEGATOP PLATE** (Div. II

(1,200m): WALKING THUNDER (Imran Chisty) 1, Cherie Chevalier (P. Sai K) 2, Ashwa Changez (Gaurav) 3 and Foxy Girl (Akshay K) 4. 2-1/4, 2 and 2-1/4. Im 15. 56s, 331 (w), 14, 23 and 11 (p). SHP: 42, THP: 24, SHW: 24 and 13, FP: 213, Q: 103, Tanala: 516. Favourite: Foxy Girl. Owner: Mr. Aditya P. Thackeray. Trainer: L.V.R. Deshmukh.

**BASALATH JAH MEMORIAL CUP** (Div. II (1,200m); BERRETTINI (P. Sai Kumar), Minecraft (Akshay K) 2, Brooklyn Beauty (G. Naresh) 3 and Blazing Gun (Mukesh) 4. 2-1/2, Neck and 2. Im 13. 63s, 3283 (w), 42, 12 and 133 (p). SHP: 52, THP: 137, SHW: 59 and 12, FP: 902, Q: 314, Tanala: 19,037. Favourite:

Minecraft. Owners: Mr. Arun Alagappan rep. Arun Alagappan Racing LLP & Mr. Chandrakanth Kankaria. Trainer: A. Imran Khan.

**HPSL GOLCONDA 2000 GUINEAS** (Gr. II) (1,600m): DUKE OF TUSCANY (Cougar Mountain-Nicollini) (P. Sai Kumar) 1, John Wick (Win Legend-Maur Vrat) (Akshay K) 2, King Immortal (Dali-Immortal Story) (I. Chisty) 3, Secret Saint (Multitude-Secret Garden) (S. Saqlain) 4, 2, 1-1/2 and 2-1/4. Im 40, 99s, 336 (w), 13, 11 and 21 (p). SHP: 41, THP: 69, SHW: 14 and 13, FP: 102, Q: 31, Tanala: 479. Favourite: John Wick. Owners: Mr. K.N. Dhunjibhai & Mr. Z.K. Dhunjibhai rep. Five Stars Shipping Co. Pvt. Ltd. & Mr. Rama Seshu Eyunni. Trainer: Laxman Singh.

**BAKRANANGAL PLATE** (Div. I (1,200m); CRIMSON ROSE (B.R. Kumar) 1, Top In Class (Mukesh) 2, See My Attitude (Mohit) 3 and Muaser (P. Ajeth K) 4. Neck, 2 and 3/4, Im 15. 85s, 223 (w), 10, 13, 86s, 337 (w), 15, 10 and 10 (p). SHP: 26, THP: 40, SHW: 11 and 14, FP: 29, Q: 22, Tanala: 133. Favourite: Pleasant Star. Owners: M/S. R. S. Narasimha Rao Raniampi & D.R. Thackeray. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

**TRIBUTE PLATE** (2,000m): DAS (P. Ajeth Kumar) 1, Freedom Touch (Ashad Asbar) 2, Skyward (Gaurav) 3 and N.R.I Star (Kuldeep Str.) 4. 6-1/2, 5-3/4 and 6-1/4. Im 209, 86s, 337 (w), 15, 10 and 10 (p). SHP: 21, THP: 37, SHW: 10 and 17, FP: 91, Q: 44, Tanala: 229. Favourite: Pleasant Star. Owners: M/S. R. S. Narasimha Rao Raniampi & D.R. Thackeray. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

**SHADOW FAX** (Div. I (1,200m); DAS (P. Ajeth Kumar) 1, Freedom Touch (Ashad Asbar) 2, Skyward (Gaurav) 3 and N.R.I Star (Kuldeep Str.) 4. 6-1/2, 5-3/4 and 6-1/4. Im 209, 86s, 337 (w), 15, 10 and 10 (p). SHP: 21, THP: 37, SHW: 10 and 17, FP: 91, Q: 44, Tanala: 229. Favourite: Pleasant Star. Owners: M/S. R. S. Narasimha Rao Raniampi & D.R. Thackeray. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

**SHADOW FAX** (Div. I (1,200m); DAS (P. Ajeth Kumar) 1, Freedom Touch (Ashad Asbar) 2, Skyward (Gaurav) 3 and N.R.I Star (Kuldeep Str.) 4. 6-1/2, 5-3/4 and 6-1/4. Im 209, 86s, 337 (w), 15, 10 and 10 (p). SHP: 21, THP: 37, SHW: 10 and 17, FP: 91, Q: 44, Tanala: 229. Favourite: Pleasant Star. Owners: M/S. R. S. Narasimha Rao Raniampi & D.R. Thackeray. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

**SHADOW FAX** (Div. I (1,200m); DAS (P. Ajeth Kumar) 1, Freedom Touch (Ashad Asbar) 2, Skyward (Gaurav) 3 and N.R.I Star (Kuldeep Str.) 4. 6-1/2, 5-3/4 and 6-1/4. Im 209, 86s, 337 (w), 15, 10 and 10 (p). SHP: 21, THP: 37, SHW: 10 and 17, FP: 91, Q: 44, Tanala: 229. Favourite: Pleasant Star. Owners: M/S. R. S. Narasimha Rao Raniampi & D.R. Thackeray. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

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**SHADOW FAX** (Div. I (1,200m); DAS (P. Ajeth Kumar) 1, Freedom Touch (Ashad Asbar) 2, Skyward (Gaurav) 3 and N.R.I Star (Kuldeep Str.) 4. 6-1/2, 5-3/4 and 6-1/4. Im 209, 86s, 337 (w), 15, 10 and 10 (p). SHP: 21, THP: 37, SHW: 10 and 17, FP: 91, Q: 44, Tanala: 229. Favourite: Pleasant Star. Owners: M/S. R. S. Narasimha Rao Raniampi & D.R. Thackeray. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

**SHADOW FAX** (Div. I (1,200m); DAS (P. Ajeth Kumar) 1, Freedom Touch (Ashad Asbar) 2, Skyward (Gaurav) 3 and N.R.I Star (Kuldeep Str.) 4. 6-1/2, 5-3/4 and 6-1/4. Im 209, 86s, 337 (w), 15, 10 and 10 (p). SHP: 21, THP: 37, SHW: 10 and 17, FP: 91, Q: 44, Tanala: 229. Favourite: Pleasant Star. Owners: M/S. R. S. Narasimha Rao Raniampi & D.R. Thackeray. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

**SHADOW FAX** (Div. I (

## CHALLENGE

Had to show mental resistance after losing the first game: Gukesh



After beating Ding Liren and taking the lead for the first time in the World championship, D. Gukesh said it wasn't a pleasant feeling after losing the first game. "I had to show mental resistance after that. But then once I hit back (third game), I started to play good chess. I did notice the fans cheering my name today. Indian fans are the best".

## TOUGH GAME

40 minutes went calculating some nonsense variations, reveals Ding



Ding Liren said it was a difficult game against D. Gukesh. "By move 4 I was wondering if it was the right move. I remembered that once I played this against B. Adhiban in a rapid event. I forgot what to do with the other moves. Gukesh played 5. a3, which came as a surprise. Those 40 minutes went calculating some nonsense variations".

## MONITORED

We should not put any pressure on Shami, says skipper Rohit



Rohit Sharma stressed that the BCCI's medical team is keeping an eye on Mohammed Shami while not revealing anything on the pacer's return to the Indian squad: "He has played the Mushtaq Ali Trophy but I believe there is a swelling. It would be unfair to rush him and hope he bowls. We should not put any pressure on him."

## IN THE BALANCE

South Africa-Sri Lanka second Test tantalisingly poised after day four



Sri Lanka was 205 for five, chasing a target of 348, on the fourth day of the second Test against South Africa at Gqeberha on Sunday. **The scores:** SA 358 in 103.4 overs & 317 in 86 overs (Markram 55, Stubbs 47, Bavuma 66, Jayasuriya 5/129) vs SL 328 in 99.2 overs & 205/5 in 52 overs (Dhananjaya 39 batting, Mendis 39 batting).



Iceman: Gukesh kept his cool to outwit Ding, FIDE

## Gukesh breaks down the Chinese wall

The Indian wins Game II as Ding cracks under pressure; decisive result after seven consecutive draws puts challenger in advantageous position



P.K. Ajith Kumar

SINGAPORE

**T**here is a place called Little India here in Singapore. It is literally that: with lots of Indian restaurants, temples, Indian jewelleries and even Ayurveda pharmacies.

On Sunday evening, a Little India formed at World Resorts Sentosa. A newly arrived big Indian contingent was there when D. Gukesh stepped out of the elevator to walk up to the playing arena, where the World champion Ding Liren had been waiting for him.

The fans shouted 'Gukesh, Gukesh' – it is still rather unusual for chess to be so vocal, notwithstanding the Global Chess League – in anticipation. For Gukesh, this was going to be perhaps the most vital game yet of the World chess championship.

He had white pieces. He needed to strike.

Strike he did, though with considerable assistance from Ding. Gukesh won Game II and is ahead in the match for the first time.

He is leading 6-5. The sequence of consecutive draws – seven of them –

### GAME 11: MOVES

#### Gukesh vs Ding

1. Nf3 d5 2. c4 d4 3. b4 c5 4. e3 Nf6 5. a3 Bg4 6. exd4 cx d4 7. h3 Bxf3 8. Qxf3 Qc7 9. d3 a5 10. b5 Nbd7 11. g3 Nc5 12. Bg2 Nfd7 13. 0-0 Ne5 14. f4 Rd8 15. Rd1 g6 16. a4 h5 17. b6 Qd6 18. Ba3 Bb6 19. Bxc5 Qxc5 20. Qe4 Nc6 21. Na3 Rd7 22. Nc2 Qxb6 23. Rab1 Qc7 24. Rb5 0-0 25. Na1 Rd8 26. Nb3 e6 27. Nc5 Re7 28. Rdb1 Qc8 29. Qxc6



Black resigned

Game II here was a wildly dynamic one. It began with Gukesh opting for Reti Opening and he once again looked perfectly prepared. He even had a one-hour lead on the clock. But the tables turned when he took one hour for his 11th move.

It was Ding who got a more promising position first, but both were under struggling on the clock, and the game fluctuated. In severe time pressure – when there is not even a minute for a move – mistakes are bound to happen, even at the highest level.

Ding squandered his advantage with a weak 'g' pawn push on the 15th move. But, worse was to follow.

Gukesh coordinated a potent attack against a queen-side pawn before Ding blundered twice in as many moves, the last one with his queen. That allowed Gukesh to offer his queen as a sacrifice.

Ding's position was beyond salvation, now. He resigned immediately, on the 29th move.

As Gukesh came out after the game, there were shouts of 'Gukesh, Gukesh' again from Little India. Those were happy noises.

A little later, Gukesh said that he didn't mind that at all.

## Cummins' five-for hastens India's end

### INDIA IN AUS

#### K.C. Vijaya Kumar

ADELAIDE

It was a Sunday on fast-forward here at the Adelaide Oval. Even if the climax seemed a foregone conclusion, fans merrily trooped in, Bollywood hits wafted in the air and drums were thumped. The temperature was a crisp 22 degrees, and even as the sun lent some warmth, the breeze was bone-chilling.

On the third day, just a mere 16.1 overs were needed as the dregs of defeat stained India's measured progress so far in its sojourn Down Under. Australia registered an emphatic 10-wicket victory over the visitors in the second Test that concluded with two days to spare. And Pat Cummins and his men drew level at 1-1 in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series with three Tests remaining to be played.

Australian openers Nathan McSweeney and Usman Khawaja had a stroll in the sun as a mischievous 19 was needed during the host's second innings. When the duo walked out, the giant screen lapsed into dry humour: Australia needs 19 runs, India needs 10 wickets.

Jasprit Bumrah kept it tight during the opening over, Mohammed Siraj, running into boos from the crowd, yielded a few runs, and Nitish Reddy found McSweeney picking his spots on the off-side for fours.

In the fourth over, the winning runs were secured and the stage is now set for the third Test at Brisbane's Gabba from December 14.

In the afternoon, India resumed its second innings at 128 for five. Rishabh Pant, a buccaneering pirate on Saturday, played the monk dabbling in patience on Sunday. He didn't last for long and in the day's very first over Mitchell Starc drew the edge and Steve Smith was



All at sea: India couldn't rise to the pink-ball challenge. GETTY IMAGES

at work in the slips.

Nitish Kumar, a revelation so far in this series, whipped a four off Cummins and edged Starc past the ropes, while interest was centred on whether India would make Australia bat again. R. Ashwin hung briefly before Cummins employed the shortball tactic with fielders placed for the awkward fend, ambitious hook and the cheeky slash.

The Australian skipper scalped Ashwin but Nitish dabbled in small mercies, clouting a four off Scott Boland as India wiped out the 157-run first innings deficit. Harshit Rana and Nitish (42) were soon consumed in the bouncer tactics em-

ployed by the opposition.

It was time for Siraj to appear.

A subject of the crowd's ire ever since he and Travis Head were locked in some unsavoury words in the earlier part of this game, the Hyderabadi took the hostile reception on his chin. He hit a four off Boland and then found Head waiting for the catch!

India bundled out for

175 in the second dig and Australia having all the time in the world to seize the game while up above, planes glided into the nearby airport. Australia soaring, India grounded, the series is truly alive and it is time to fasten your seat belts.

### SCOREBOARD

#### INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

180 in 44.1 overs

#### AUSTRALIA – 1ST INNINGS

337 in 87.3 overs

#### INDIA – 2ND INNINGS

Yashasvi Jaiswal c Carey b Boland 24 (31b, 4x4), K.L. Rahul c Carey b Cummins 7 (10b, 1x4), Shubman Gill b Starc 28 (30b, 3x4), Virat Kohli c Carey b Boland 11 (21b, 1x4), Rishabh Pant c Smith b Starc 28 (31b, 6x4, 1x6), Rohit Sharma b Cummins 6 (15b, 1x4), Nitish Kumar c McSweeney b Cummins 42 (47b, 6x4, 1x6), R. Ashwin c Carey b Cummins 7 (14b), Harshit Rana c Khawaja b Cummins 0 (12b), Jasprit Bumrah (not out) 2 (5b), Mohammed Siraj c Head b Boland 7 (8b, 1x4); Extras (b-5, lb-2, nb-3, w-3); Total (in 36.5 overs): 175.

#### FALL OF WICKETS

1-12 (Rahul, 3.5 overs), 2-42 (Jaiswal, 8.1), 3-66 (Kohli, 14.3), 4-86 (Gill, 17.2), 5-105 (Rohit, 20.5), 6-128 (Pant, 24.6), 7-148 (Ashwin, 29.4), 8-153 (Harshit, 33.3), 9-166 (Nitish, 35.2).

#### AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Starc 14-1-60-2, Cummins 14-0-57-5, Boland 8.5-0-51-3.

#### AUSTRALIA – 2ND INNINGS

Nathan McSweeney (not out) 10 (12b, 2x4), Usman Khawaja (not out) 9 (8b, 1x4); Total (for no loss in 3.2 overs): 19.

#### INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 1-0-2-0, Siraj 1.2-0-9-0, Nitish 1-0-8-0.

Australia won by 10 wickets to level five-match series 1-1.

#### Player-of-the-Match:

Travis Head.

#### Third Test:

December 14 to 18, Brisbane.

Match starts at 5.50 a.m. IST.

We need to look into our plans: Rohit

### K.C. Vijaya Kumar

ADELAIDE

Holding a mirror to himself and the team, Rohit Sharma was a picture of introspection in the press-conference at the Adelaide Oval here on Sunday evening.

"You know when you come to Australia, you have to play a pink-ball Test. It is just that we didn't play well enough and Australia played better than us. We need to look into our game, our plans and the stuff we do during the game," the India skipper said.

He then elaborated: "The best chance of winning a Test is by putting runs on the board. The disappointing part is that we didn't bat well enough. We probably were 30 to 40 runs short in the first innings and there were opportunities when Australia was batting but we failed to take those chances."

Rohit also played down the incident between Mohammed Siraj and Travis Head on Saturday, in which the former gave a send-off and words were exchanged: "I was standing at slip and I don't know what was exchanged. But when two competitive teams are going at each other, these things happen. Travis bat well. My job is not to look at just one incident, I am focused on the overall picture. There is a thin line and, as captain, it is also my responsibility to make sure we don't cross the line."

Looking ahead, Rohit stressed that his team can spring back: "There are a lot of individuals in that dressing room, who have played a lot of cricket, won a lot of games, and have come back from difficult situations. We hope that everyone stands up to the challenge and takes the team along."

He also emphasised that the bowling attack is not entirely about Jasprit Bumrah and others too need to take up responsibility.

## AROUND THE GLOBE

### Voll, Perry and Sutherland sizzle as Australia seals series

BRISBANE: Opener Georgia Voll (101) and Ellyse Perry (105) smashed centuries as Australia secured a series-clinching 122-run win over India in the second women's ODI here on Sunday. After electing to bat, Australia displayed ruthless intent, posting a mammoth 371 for eight, the highest score against India in an ODI. The host bowled out the tourist for 249 in 44.5 overs, wrapping up the match with ease.

**The scores:** Australia 371/8 in 50 overs (Litchfield 60, Voll 101, Perry 105, Mooney 56, Saina 3/62) bt India 249 in 44.5 overs (Richa 54, Jemimah 43, Minnu 46, Sutherland 4/39).



Perry and Voll. ICC

### Toss: Australia; PoM: Perry.

**Hossain derails India, Bangladesh retains title**

DUBAI: Defending champion Bangladesh beat India by 59 runs to retain the ACC under-19

Asia Cup title on Sunday. **The scores:** Bangladesh 198 in 49.1 overs (Rizwan Hossain 47, Mohammad Shihab James 40) bt India 139 in 35.2 overs (Mohamed Amaan 26, Iqbal Hossain Emon 3/24).

**Mumtaz shines as India thrashes Bangladesh** MUSCAT: Mumtaz Khan slammed four goals while Kanika Siwach and Deepika slotted home three each as defending champion India routed Bangladesh 13-1 in the women's junior Asia Cup hockey tournament on Sunday. Manisha (10th), Beauty Dung Dung (33rd) and Sakshi Rana (43rd) were the other scorers for India while Orpita Pal (12th) scored for Bangladesh.

**Arsenal held by Fulham** LONDON: Arsenal could only muster one goal from a corner in a 1-1 draw at Fulham on Sunday as Mikel Arteta's title-chasing team dropped two points in its bid to reel in leader Liverpool.

**Top results: Premier League:** Fulham 1 (Jimenez 11) drew with Arsenal 1 (Saliba 52); Leicester 2 (Vardy 86, De Cordova-Reid 90+1) drew with Brighton 2 (Lampert 37, Minteh 79); Tottenham 3 (Solanke 5, Kulusevski 11, Son 90+6) lost to Chelsea 4 (Sancho 17, Palmer 61-pen, 84-pen, Fernandez 73). **Saturday:** Manchester United 2 (Hojlund 18, Fernandes 61) lost to Nottingham Forest 3 (Milenkovic 2, Gibbs-White 47, Wood 54). **LaLiga:** Girona 0 lost to Real Madrid 3 (Bellion 36, Guler 55, Mbappe 62).

## Thomas edges ahead of Scheffler

### GOLF

#### V.V. Ramanan

NASSAU

A blemishless steady third round helped Justin Thomas turn in a card of six-under 66 and edge a stroke ahead of overnight leader Scottie Scheffler, going into the final round of the Hero World Challenge, at the Albany course on

## IN BRIEF



## Jyothi Surekha puts it across Yu-Ju in the final

V. Jyothi Surekha claimed her second victory in the Indoor Archery World Series at the Taipei Archery Open, defeating Chen Yu-Ju of the host country 144-140 in the final.



## England ends 16-year wait on NZ soil with series win

England dominated from start to finish to thrash New Zealand by 323 runs in Wellington on Sunday in the second Test and win the series with a match to go. Joe Root scored his 36th century, pulling level with Rahul Dravid.

**The scores:** England 280 & 427/6 decl. in 82.3 overs (Root 106, Bethell 96, Duckett 92, Brook 55, Stokes 49) bt New Zealand 125 & 259 in 54.2 overs (Blundell 115, Smith 42, Stokes 3/5).

## Two second-half strikes send MBSG to the top of ISL table

Mohun Bagan Super Giant won 2-0 over NorthEast United FC to move to the top of the ISL table in Guwahati on Sunday. Manvir Singh (65th) and Liston Colaco (71st) gave Mariners all three points. They also went on top with 23.

## India to meet China for the fifth place

India beat Singapore 35-22 in positional play-off match for fifth to eighth places in the 20th Asian women's handball in New Delhi on Sunday. India goalkeeper Nina Shil was adjudged the player-of-the-match for her outstanding show. In the match for fifth place, India will play China, which beat Hong Kong 38-14. In the semifinals, Korea beat Iran 33-20 and will meet Japan, which pipped Kazakhstan 30-23, in the title clash.

**The results:** Semifinals: Korea bt Iran 33-20; Japan bt Kazakhstan 30-23. Positional play-off (5th to 8th): China bt Hong Kong 38-14; India bt Singapore 35-22.

## LIVE TELECAST

**SMAT:** JioCinema, 11 a.m.  
**South Africa vs Sri Lanka:** 2nd Test, day 5, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 1.30 p.m.  
**Chess:** World Championship, FIDE YouTube channel, 2.30 p.m.  
**PKL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.  
**Serie A:** gxr.world, 1.15 a.m. (Tuesday)  
**LaLiga:** gxr.world, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

## Vanshika and Nitin smash National records; Abhinaya shines



## ATHLETICS

**Y. B. Sarangi**  
BHUBANESWAR

Pole vaulter Vanshika Ghanghas (under-20) and 5,000m race walker Nitin Gupta (under-18) created National records to emerge as the most prominent performers on day two of the National junior athletics championships on Sunday.

Vanshika fell short of her personal best of 3.90m, which got her fourth place in this year's National inter-state meet, but cornered glory here with 3.76m.

Gupta, from Unnao, sensed a record with two rounds to go and pushed for it towards the end to clock 20:01.64 to rewrite a six-year-old mark. Silver and bronze winners Tushar Panwar (20:20.63) and Sachin (20:21.93) respectively also bettered the Na-

tional mark.

Aarti, who rewrote the National record (44:39.39) in the World junior championships in Lima, lowered the meet record to 47:21.68 while claiming the under-20 women's 10000m race walk gold.

Haryana girl Pooja, who set the national record of 1.83m in Lima, achieved 1.82m to improve her own meet record in under-18 women's high jump.

47:21.68 (NMR, Old, Mansi Negi, 47:30.94, 2022); **Long jump:** Sumsita (Raj) 5.92m; **High jump:** Rimpal (Pun) 1.66m; **Pole vault:** Vanshika Ghanghas (Har) 3.76m (NR, Old 3.75m, A. Antony Mangalagiri, 2019); **Hammer throw:** Anishka Singh (UP) 52.72m. **Under-18: Men: 100m:** Aadi Poojary (Mah) 10.736; **5,000m race walk:** Nitin Gupta (UP) 20:01.64 (NR, Old, 20:23.30 Suraj Panwar, 2018); **Discus:** Hemant Raghuwanshi (MP) 57.98m. **Women: 100m:** Abinaya Rajarajan (TN) 11.66 (NMR, Old, Rashmi Shergar, 2015); **High jump:** Pooja (Har) 1.82m (NMR, Old, 1.81m, Pooja, 2023).

**Under-16: Boys: 60m:** Divyansh Kumar Raj (Bih) 6.99 (NR, 7.06, Mudavath Ganesh, 2024); **Long jump:** Amritpal Singh (Pun) 4.71m (NR, Old, 4.68m, 2024); **Shot put:** Nitesh Kumar (Har) 17.42m (NR, Old, 15.31m, Anurag, 2023). **Girls: 60m:** Shourya Ambre (Mah) 7.60 (NR, Old, 7.77, V. Vikram, 2024); **Shot put:** Jamine Kaur (Pun) 13m. **Under-14: Girls: Triathlon:** Arthi S.K. (TN) 6827. **Men:** **100m:** Sakshi Chavan (Guj) 11.86; **10,000m race walk:** Aarti (Har)

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## WRESTLING

**N. Sudarshan**  
BENGALURU

Haryana proved its powerhouse status in women's wrestling by winning seven of the eight golds on the concluding day of the Senior National Wrestling Championship on Sunday.

The pick of the results were that of Priya and Radhika in the 76kg and 68kg categories respectively.

Priya, 19, a world U-20 champion in 2023 and an Asian U-23 champion this year, dominated 2024 Paris Olympian and Services wrestler Reetika (10-0).

Radhika, 23, a silver medalist at Asian Championships earlier this year, overcame the challenge of Delhi's Srishuti (7-1).

"I entered the competition with only the gold in mind," said Radhika, who



didn't drop a single point until the final bout.

"So I am very happy to have achieved that. My next target is the 2026 Asian Games," she added.

**The results (women):** **53kg: Gold:** Jyoti (Har) bt Kavita Mali (Raj) 12-1; **Bronze:** Swati (Mah) bt Banita Patra (Odi) 2-0, Sushma Shokeen (Del) bt Gopava Manjunath (Kar) 10-0. **59kg: Gold:** Anjali (Har) bt Tanu (Pun) 10-0; **Bronze:** Tanvi (Mah) bt Varsha Pandey (MP) 2-0, Manju (Del) bt Anshul (Chd) 12-2. **62kg: Gold:** Bhagyashree (Mah) bt Khushi Thakur (HP) 10-0; **Bronze:** Kalpana (Har) bt Juhi Kumari (Bih) 9-0, Sapna Kumar (Pun) bt Gopi Bakhali (Guj) 18-7. **65kg: Gold:** Manisha (Har) bt Monika (Raj) 8-4; **Bronze:** Jaspreet Kaur (Pun) bt Prinsita Siddi (Kar) 9-0, Shiksha (Del) bt Vaishnavi (Mah) 12-2. **68kg: Gold:** Radhika (Har) bt Srishti (Del) 7-1; **Bronze:** Priyanka (Ser) 10-0; **Bronze:** Navjot Kaur (Pun) bt Shaik Neha (Tel) 2-0, Amrutha (Mah) bt Anjumol Joseph (Ker) 11-3.

**Flawless:** Haryana's Priya was clinical during her bout against Services' Reetika. SUDHAKARA JAIN

## McLaren on top of the world after Norris wins Abu Dhabi Grand Prix

This is the Woking-based team's first Constructors' title since 1998; Sainz, Leclerc round up the podium but Ferrari falls short by 14 points

## FORMULA ONE

**Reuters**  
ABU DHABI

Lando Norris won the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Sunday to deliver McLaren's first Formula One Constructors' title since 1998 after teammate Oscar Piastri collided with Max Verstappen on the opening lap and finished 10th.

Red Bull's Verstappen, who took his fourth successive drivers' title in Las Vegas last month, ended up sixth after collecting a 10-second penalty for a collision that left McLaren's hopes totally in Norris' hands.

McLaren finished with 666 points to Ferrari's 652 and Red Bull's 589.

Norris made his pit-stop for hard tyres at the end of lap 26, retaining the lead with a smooth stop quicker than either of the Ferraris.

**The results:** 1. Lando Norris (McLaren) 1h 26m 33.291s, 2. Carlos Sainz (Ferrari) +5.832s, 3. Charles Leclerc (Ferrari) 31.928, 4. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 36.483, 5. George Russell (Mercedes) 37.538, 6. Max Verstappen (Red Bull) 49.847, 7.

pion Lewis Hamilton finished fourth in his last race for Mercedes, overtaking teammate George Russell on the 58th and final lap. He will join Leclerc at Ferrari next season.

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Pierre Gasly (Alpine) 1:12.560, 8. Nico Hulkenberg (Haas) 1:15.554, 9. Fernando Alonso (Aston Martin) 1:22.373, 10. Oscar Piastri (McLaren) 1:23.821, 11. Alex Albon (Williams) 1 lap, 12. Yuki Tsunoda (RB) 1 lap, 13. Zhou Guanyu (Sauber) 1 lap, 14. Lance Stroll (Aston Martin) 1 lap, 15. Jack Doohan (Alpine) 1 lap, 16. Kevin Magnussen (Haas) 1 lap, 17. Liam Lawson (RB) 3 laps; **Fastest lap:** Magnussen 1:25.637; **DNF:** Sergio Perez (Red Bull), Franco Colapinto (Williams), Valtteri Bottas (Sauber), and Liam Lawson (RB).

**Final standings: Drivers:** 1. Verstappen 437 points, 2. Norris 374, 3. Leclerc 356, 4. Piastri 292, 5. Sainz Jr 290, 6. Russell 245, 7. Hamilton 223, 8. Perez 152, 9. Alonso 70, 10. Gasly 42, 11. Hulkenberg 41, 12. Tsunoda 30, 13. Stroll 24, 14. Ocon 23, 15. Magnussen 16, 16. Albon 12, 17. Ricciardo 12, 18. Bearman 7, 19. Colapinto 20. Guanyu 21. Lawson 4, 22. Bottas 0, 23. Sargeant 0, 24. Doohan 0.

**Constructors:** 1. McLaren 666, 2. Ferrari 652, 3. Red Bull 589, 4. Mercedes 468, 5. Aston Martin 94, 6. Alpine 65, 7. Haas 58, 8. RB 46, 9. Williams 17, 10. Sauber 4.



In focus: McLaren is in the spotlight again after Norris' win sealed the Constructors' crown. GETTY IMAGES

## Aditya and Ananya clinch the titles

## Sports Bureau

Aditya Das of West Bengal and Ananya Muralidharan of Tamil Nadu clinched the under-15 titles in the UTT National Ranking table tennis in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday.

**The results: finals:** **Boys:** Aditya Das (WB) bt Shouren Soman (Mah) 9-11, 11-7, 11-9, 11-6; **Girls:** M. Ananya (TN) bt Aarushi (WB) 11-8, 11-6, 14-12.

## Achievers claim the D'Monde Cup

## Sports Bureau

Chris Mackenzie scored five goals to take Vimal Arion Achievers to a 6-5 victory over Jindal Panther in the D'Monde Cup polo tournament final on Sunday.

**The result:** Final: Hyderabadi Strikers bt Yash Mumbai Eagles 51-44 (Harriet Zeynep 14-11; Lock lost to Karan 11-14; Harriet & Vishnu bt Zeynep & Jeevan & Karan 10-10).

**Semifinals:** Eagles bt Gujarat Panthers 51-43; Strikers bt Rajasthan Rangers 51-42.

## SNAPSHOTS

## India wins 55 medals in Asia Pacific Deaf Games

NEW DELHI: The Indian team finished fifth on the medals table with eight gold, 18 silver and 29 bronze in the 10th Asia Pacific Deaf Games in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The 55 medals were won by the 68-member contingent that was accompanied by 15 coaches and support staff, apart from eight officials.

Of the eight gold, five were won by athletes Vinth Mani, Sandeep Kumar Swami, Sameeha Barwin Mujib, apart from the 4 x 100 metres women's relay and 4 x 400 mixed relay teams.

Two other gold medals were won by Sakshi Haridas and Milan Kaur in judo, and one gold came through Sumit Dahiya in wrestling. The Indian team won medals in badminton, chess, table tennis and taekwondo also. Iran topped the medals table with 24 gold, 16 silver and 20 bronze.

The champions of the five continents will compete in the World Wide Finals next year. The Indian team of Manas Dhamne, Rushil Khosla, Sohini Mohanty and Asmi Adkar had won the world wide final last year in San Diego.

**Indian team for Rod Laver junior challenge tennis**

A four-member team of Samarth Sahita, Aradhya Kshiti, Sohini Mohanty and Rishitha Basireddy, led by captain Vikram Anand, will represent India in the Asia-Oceania Rod Laver Junior Challenge tennis event to be staged at the Winchester Tennis Arena in Singapore from December 16 to 19. Each match in the tournament will feature two boys singles, two girls singles, one boys doubles, one girls doubles, and a mixed doubles if needed to break the tie.

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The Indian team of Manas Dhamne, Rushil Khosla, Sohini Mohanty and Asmi Adkar had won the world wide final last year in San Diego.

**Flawless:</b**

# Tata Steel Chess India – a springboard for the country's burgeoning young talent

Players like Arjun, Vantika and Vaishali have impressed in various editions and gone on to bigger things in the sport; the event continues to rise in stature

P.K. Ajith Kumar  
SINGAPORE

The focus of the chess world is very much at the moment on a small island in Singapore. Sentosa is hosting the World championship match between Ding Liren and D. Gukesh, and it is proving to be closer than most people had anticipated.

But that has not been just the only talking point in chess now. Arjun Erigaisi becoming only the 15th player in history to reach the magical barrier of 2800 Elo points is also big news indeed.

#### In elite club

That milestone is like something making 10,000 runs in Test cricket. Only 14 men have been able to do it, so far. Though Steve Smith needs only 296 runs more to become the 15th. So you get the point - when he does, there will only be 15, in the elite clubs of chess and cricket.

Classical chess is like Test cricket. It is the hardest and most respected format. Rapid and blitz chess are like ODI and T20 cricket. It was by winning the rapid and blitz titles at the Tata Steel Chess India tournament back in 2021 that Arjun caught the attention outside chess circles. Unless you followed chess closely, he wasn't as familiar a name as R. Praggnanandhaa, Nihal Sarin or Gukesh. So Arjun winning the rapid title and then tying for the top spot in the blitz event made people take note.

#### A discovery

Viswanathan Anand even called Arjun a discovery. Over the years, the Tata Steel Chess India has provided a breakthrough not just to Arjun, but some other young Indian talents.

Last year, Divya Deshmukh was the surprise winner in the women's rapid event. She was seeded last and had, in fact, come in as a last-minute replacement for R. Vaishali. It was a career-best performance, at that point, by Divya, who is now one of the world's most exciting young talents in women's chess.

A year later, Vaishali had also come up with a career-best effort to win the women's blitz title. She, too, went on to scale new peaks and made it to the Candidates tournament, qualifying event for the World championship.

And this year, it was Vantika Agrawal's turn to ensure that a young Indian shone brightly in Kolkata. She was seeded last, but finished third in the women's rapid section and fourth in blitz.

So the Tata Steel event has proved to be a big boon for Indian chess. Until the Chennai Masters tournament was held last year – it helped Gukesh clinch a place in the Candidates – the Kolkata event was India's only elite chess tournament.

Tata Steel is indeed delighted that its efforts have paid off. "Six years ago when we started Tata Steel Chess India, many of the players, who helped India win the twin gold at the Chess Olympiad in Budapest recently, were a part of that," Chanakya Choudhary, Vice-President, Corporate Services, tells *The Hindu*. "I feel very happy and satisfied that we got into the act when we didn't really think that it would take shape this way and that it would become bigger and bigger and achieve the status it has."

Chanakya says the aim has always been to give a platform to the Indians and also get top players from overseas. "I feel that this platform has given them the confidence to play in the international arena," he says. "This is a unique tournament where you have an equal number of players from India and outside."

#### Equal pay

Tata Steel is also proud of the fact that there is equality in pay for men and women at the tournament. "When we started, it was more of testing the waters, and it was only the men," he says. "Now then we added a women's tournament, that too with equal prize-money."

That decision was welcomed by the female players. In 2022, Anna Ushenina had said at the press conference: "I don't remember a (chess) tournament where the prize fund was the same for both men and women opening ceremony, because such a tournament didn't exist."

She benefited from that decision by the organisers. The former World champion from Ukraine went on to win the women's rapid title.

So does Tata Steel have plans to have a



Top draw: The Tata Steel Chess India tournament has witnessed the participation of the world's best players as well as those aspiring to become one. DEBASISH BHADURI

high-profile classical tournament in India as well? It already organises one of the best classical events, at Wijk aan Zee, in the Netherlands.

"I will not say that it's on the anvil at the moment, but yes, the conversations have been on," says Chanakya.

#### The spark

"The whole thought process of Tata Steel Chess India came from there. We thought we should have one edition like that in India, like the one in Wijk aan Zee. We felt we could have a feeder tournament here and the players who win can get a free

entry there. Then we thought it would be better to have the rapid and blitz here in India."

"However, those conversations, about having a classical event in India also, have not concluded and they are still continuing. Possibly the way chess has taken off in India, maybe there is a space for one more tournament."

The chess fans of Kolkata have shown that there is room for more big events in India. There have been excellent crowds - most days there were full houses - for the tournament.

With Word No. 1 Magnus Carlsen

making a comeback to the tournament after five years, the fans had reasons to be excited even more. The Norwegian showed his class on the chessboard too, as he won both the rapid and blitz titles with a dominant show.

This year's tournament was held at a new venue. Dhono Dhanya Auditorium is a top-class venue and ideal for a world-class tournament like Tata Steel Chess India.

If more corporate houses come forward to sponsor events like this, a lot more young Indian talents will stand to gain.

## THE GIST

▼ The Tata Steel tournament has proved to be a boon for Indian talent

▼ Event offers equal prize fund for men and women

▼ Presence of top players attracts fans in big numbers

# SCIENCE

# Study brings Indian star tortoise to evidence-based conservation

Researchers have identified two genetically distinct groups of the species. The genetic divergences showed up as differences in physical features that could inform strategies on where and how to release and conserve rescued tortoises, Subhasree Sahoo, a Ph.D. student and first author of the study, says

**Sanjukta Mondal**

BENGALURU

The Indian star tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) is a sight to behold, with its obsidian shell and the striking sun-yellow star patterns adorning it. These tortoises are hardy herbivores and are popular as exotic house pets – but they shouldn't be. It's illegal to own one in India but also unethical since they are vulnerable in the wild.

Endemic to the subcontinent, Indian star tortoises reside in arid pockets of northwest India (bordering Pakistan), South India, and Sri Lanka. However, members of the species have also been found in people's homes as far afield as Canada and the U.S. The increasing demand for them as pets has entangled them in one of the largest global wildlife trafficking networks.

The Indian star tortoise is listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, which provides the highest level of protection to animals in Indian law. Despite this, officials have already seized hundreds of tortoises being smuggled through the Chennai and Singapore airports and across the India-Bangladesh border this year.

Wildlife biologist Sneha Dharwadkar, co-founder of an NGO called Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises of India, is worried that unscientific releases of the seized tortoises could worsen their fate. "We can no longer simply take confiscated tortoises and release them in nearby forests," Dharwadkar wrote in an email.

To find an alternative, researchers from the Wildlife Institute of India and Panjab University explored the diversity and natural distribution in India by sequencing the genomes of Indian star tortoise in zoos, wildlife reserves, and protected areas.

The study identified two genetically distinct groups of Indian star tortoises: northwestern and southern.

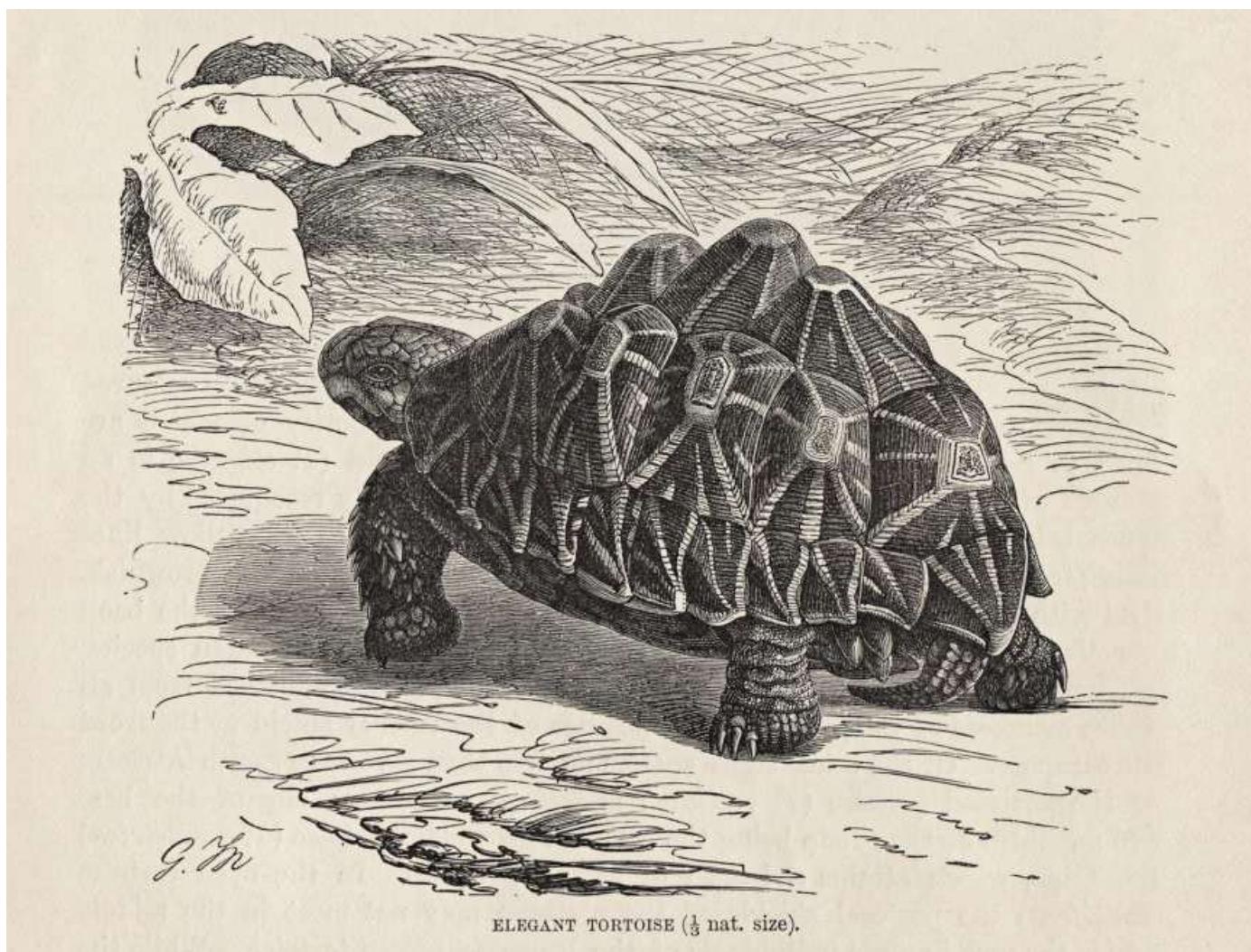
The genetic divergences showed up as differences in physical features that could inform strategies on where and how to release and conserve rescued tortoises, Subhasree Sahoo, a PhD student at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, and first author of the study, said.

#### Same but different

Millions of years ago, *Geochelone*, the group that includes the Indian star tortoise, spread across the Indian subcontinent after the latter split from the Gondwana supercontinent and collided with Eurasia.

Over time, parts of the subcontinent became arid and encouraged the growth of savannahs and open grasslands in northwestern and peninsular India, which are now the tortoises' natural habitats.

But the creation and expansion of



An engraving of an Indian star tortoise. THE ROYAL NATURAL HISTORY (1896)

savannahs came at the expense of humid forests: the increasingly seasonal nature of the monsoons restricted them to parts of southwest India and Sri Lanka. This separation of humid and dry areas paralleled the splitting of the tortoises into northern and southern groups about 2 million years ago.

To find genetic evidence of this split, the researchers of the new study collected tortoise tissue samples from 14 locations.

"These tortoises are very rare to encounter, so I chose the rainy season because that's the breeding season. They're the most active. That's also what poachers do," Sahoo said. With the help of frontline forest staff and local communities living near the tortoises' natural range, she was able to collect 38 samples from northwestern India and 44 from southern India.

Researchers prefer tortoises' blood samples for genetic testing but even small mistakes when drawing blood can cause profuse bleeding. This is manageable in controlled environments like zoos or wildlife reserves, and less so in the wild.

"When I was in Kakatiya Zoo in Telangana, a zookeeper told me, 'Madam, why do you want to take blood? You can take the scutes, right? They come off very easily,'" Sahoo said. Scutes are keratin layers found on the tortoises' limbs, neck, and shell. "I peeled off some scute from the zoo in Kakatiya and tested [it] in the

#### The increasing demand for them as pets has entangled them in one of the largest global wildlife trafficking networks

lab, and it worked just fine."

Once collected, the researchers extracted DNA from the tissue samples. Then they sequenced the mitochondrial genes cytochrome B and NADH dehydrogenase 4. The gene for cytochrome B is highly conserved and used to identify subspecies-level differentiation and later to detect smaller genetic variations between the samples.

The researchers also screened 10 microsatellite markers: short DNA sequences that repeat in a particular location in the genome. They serve as a genome's fingerprint and are helpful to identify how individuals of the same species are related, how they mate, and recent changes in their population.

The results revealed that even after illegal poaching and unscientific releases, the northwestern group remains largely genetically unchanged whereas the southern group is highly diverse.

"For a long time, on-ground practitioners have suspected the presence of at least two evolutionarily significant units, or ESUs – populations of organisms considered distinct for conservation

purposes," Dharwadkar said. "This paper provides a reliable confirmation of that."

#### Restoring natural order

Sandeep Kumar Gupta, nodal officer at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, and corresponding author of the study said that since different Indian star tortoises are found in different areas, it's crucial to not mix the populations during release. Doing so might lower their genetic diversity and depress breeding rates.

Sahoo also raised the concern of shell-pyramiding in captive-bred star tortoises. These tortoises develop pyramid-shaped shells instead of the dome-like shells in the wild due to nutritional deficiencies, and can further complicate mating and breeding issues.

Gupta also emphasised greater public awareness of the legality of keeping certain species as pets and the importance of adhering to national laws on this front.

Overall, the team expressed belief in its paper that the findings could benefit both national and international agencies with evidence-based conservation of the Indian star tortoise.

(Sanjukta Mondal is a chemist-turned-science-writer with experience in writing popular science articles and scripts for STEM YouTube channels. [sanjuktamondal.sm@gmail.com](mailto:sanjuktamondal.sm@gmail.com))

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## BIG SHOT

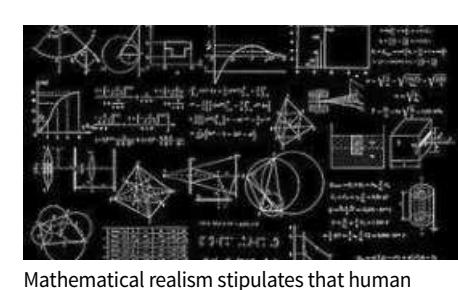


**On display:** A stegosaurus fossil nicknamed 'Apex' was unveiled to the media at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, on December 5. Billionaire Kenneth C. Griffin, who bought the fossil for \$44.6 million, has loaned it to the museum for four years. AFP

## WHAT IS IT?

### Mathematical realism

Is mathematics a discovery or an invention? The answers to this question are an important part of the philosophy of mathematics. To answer it, philosophers would like to know whether mathematics is a natural part of this world that existed before humans discovered and comprehended it or if mathematics was invented by humans. In this discussion, experts have developed many different ideas. A particularly popular one is mathematical realism: according to this view, mathematics is real irrespective of whether there is a human mind to comprehend it. In other words, it stipulates that human minds discovered mathematics rather than creating it. There has been some support from evolution for this view. Insects called cicadas live underground but emerge every few years to eat, mate, reproduce, and then die. This year, three broods of cicadas emerged at the same time: one with a 13-year cycle, one with a 17-year cycle, and one with a seven-year cycle. It's the first such event in 1,547 years. Seven, 13, and 17 are all prime numbers, and some scientists believe evolution opted for them to avoid predators that emerge from underground to hunt cicadas at periodic intervals. By keeping



Mathematical realism stipulates that human minds discovered mathematics rather than creating it. DAN CRISTIAN PĂDURET

their emergence cycle to a prime number of years, cicadas have a better chance of avoiding the predators' more regular cycles. There are many types of realism as well, including Platonic, mathematicalism, and logicism. Other, alternative positions on the nature of mathematics include structuralism, fictionalism, and social constructivism.

-Vasudevan Mukunth

For feedback and suggestions  
for 'Science', please write to  
[science@thehindu.co.in](mailto:science@thehindu.co.in) with the  
subject 'Daily page'