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IN BRIEF

Probe AAP's data collection, L-G tells Delhi Police

NEW DELHI

In a setback to AAP in Delhi, L-G V.K. Sasena has ordered Delhi Police to take action against private persons gathering personal details of women in the name of Mahila Samman Yojana, which is a poll promise of AAP. » Page 3

Rajasthan BJP govt. dissolves nine districts

JAIPUR

The BJP government in Rajasthan on Saturday dissolved nine of the 17 districts created in 2023 during the Congress regime. » Page 8

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CLASSIFIEDS » PAGE 7

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ED summons ex-Telangana Minister in Formula E case

The Hindu Bureau

HYDERABAD

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned Bharat Rashtra Samithi working president and former Telangana IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao in connection with alleged financial irregularities in the Hyderabad Formula E project. The Central probe agency had filed an Enforcement Case Information Report on December 20.

Mr. Rao has been asked to appear before the ED on January 7. Senior IAS officer and Special Chief Secre-

Jaishankar discusses ties with Trump's NSA choice

Press Trust of India
SAN FRANCISCO



S. Jaishankar with Michael Waltz, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for National Security Adviser. PTI

place Jake Sullivan as the NSA on January 20, when Mr. Trump would be sworn in as the 47th President of the U.S.

India connect

Mr. Waltz is no stranger to the India-U.S. relationship. A three-term Congressman from the sixth Congressional District of Florida, Waltz is Republican Co-Chair of Congressional India Caucus, which is the largest country-specific Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives.

He co-led a Congressional delegation to India in August last year and at-

tended Independence Day celebrations at Red Fort. He has been the sponsor of several India-friendly laws in the House of Representatives. On November 12, Mr. Trump announced that Waltz would be his National Security Adviser.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Jaishankar said he "concluded a very useful two-day conference of team @IndianEmbassyUS and our Consuls General in Washington DC".

"Confident from the deliberations that the continuous growth of the India-US partnership will be accelerated," he posted on X.

Putin apologises to Azerbaijan for crash

Associated Press
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday apologised to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev for what he called a "tragic incident" after an Azerbaijani airliner crashed in Kazakhstan killing 38 people.

The Kremlin said in a statement that air defence systems were firing near Grozny, the regional capital of Chechnya, due to a Ukrainian drone strike as the

plane attempted to land on Wednesday. It stopped short of saying the plane was shot down by Russian air defences.

According to a Kremlin readout of the call, Mr. Putin apologised to Mr. Aliyev "for the fact that the tragic incident occurred in Russian airspace".

The plane was flying from Azerbaijan's capital of Baku to Grozny, when it turned toward Kazakhstan and crashed while attempting to land. There were 29 survivors.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

Punjab 'helpless' as farmer leader's condition worsens

State says a 'forcible evacuation' of Dallewal, who is weakening by the day from a fast-unto-death, will lead to 'collateral damage'; SC says one word from the Centre may defuse the situation

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Punjab government said in the Supreme Court on Saturday that a "forcible evacuation" of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is weakening by the day from a fast-unto-death, to hospital will lead to "collateral damage" to the police and agitating farmers.

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

Aware of the deepening crisis, the court said "one word from the Centre may defuse the situation" with "time was running out for the gentleman (Dallewal)". Mr. Dallewal had written to



For farmers' cause: Former Punjab Chief Minister Rajinder Kaur Bhattal meets Jagjit Singh Dallewal in Sangrur on Saturday. ANI

the Prime Minister, saying he would end his fast only if the Centre engaged with the farmers.

3,000 people at site

Appearing before a Vacation Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia, Punjab Advocate-General Gurinder Singh said 3,000 people had converged at the protest site where Mr. Dallewal was on hunger strike. The State's

Chief Secretary and the Director-General of Police, facing contempt action, were present online at the hearing. Punjab has been unable to comply with the court's orders, including that of Friday, to seek medical advice and hospitalise Mr. Dallewal. Mr. Singh said the numbers at the site had swelled to resist any move to evacuate Mr. Dallewal, who has refused to shift to a hospital.

"Farmers have welded their tractor trolleys together. There is a strong encirclement of the areas around Mr. Dallewal. Farmers have put in place their volunteers in a multi-layered tier system to control access to the protest site. There is a round-the-clock vigil," Mr. Singh said.

He said there were only two choices open before the authorities, confrontation with the farmers or conciliation.

"Opting for confrontation before conciliation would be like putting the cart before the horse... We may lose what we are trying to protect here. The man (Dallewal) cannot take any jostling or physical resistance," he submitted.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8
CALL FOR 'MAHAPANCHAYAT'
» PAGE 10

Manmohan cremated with full state honours



Mortal remains of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh being taken to Nigambodh Ghat for last rites on Saturday. ANI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's mortal remains were consigned to flames at the Nigambodh Ghat, a public cremation ground here, with full state honours on Saturday. His eldest daughter, Upinder Singh, lit the pyre amid the chanting of hymns.

President Droupadi Murmu, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Mauritius Foreign Minister Dhananjay R. Ramful, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Congress lead-

ers Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi were present. Before the cremation, the security forces fired three volleys from small arms and the buglers sounded the "Last Post" as a mark of honour for the former Prime Minister.

Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan and the three services chiefs paid their last respects to Dr. Singh.

The procession carrying Dr. Singh's mortal remains reached the crematorium around 11.30 a.m.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8
TUSSLE OVER MEMORIAL
» PAGE 9

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Six hurt in gas cylinder blast in Najafgarh snacks factory

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Six workers were injured in a gas cylinder blast at a snacks manufacturing factory in west Delhi's Najafgarh, a police officer said on Saturday.

A PCR call was received at 8.16 a.m. and 17 water tenders were pressed into service, the officer said. The blast had occurred on the ground floor of the two-storey manufacturing unit run by Manu Namkeen.

At the time of the blast, workers were baking biscuits in a gas cylinder-operated oven. "The injured are undergoing treatment at Safdarjung Hospital," the officer said, adding that a probe is under way.

Capital receives highest single-day rainfall in December in 101 years

Delhi records 41.2 mm of rainfall in 24 hours till 8.30 a.m. on Saturday; maximum temperature drops five notches below season's normal; city residents get relief from hazardous air after pollution levels dip sharply as rain helps settle pollutants

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi residents experienced chilly weather and cleaner air on Saturday as the city recorded its highest single-day rainfall in December after 1923.

This was also the second-highest rainfall in a single day since 1901, the year when the recording of rainfall data started.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Capital received 41.2 mm of rainfall in 24 hours till 8.30 a.m. on Saturday. The Capital recorded the highest-ever



Commuters drive through a waterlogged service road of the Delhi-Gurugram Expressway. PTI

single day rainfall of 75.7 mm on December 3, 1923.

An active western disturbance and its interaction with easterly winds are causing light to moderate rainfall over north-west and central India, includ-

ing the Delhi-National Capital Region, the IMD said.

Fifth-wettest December

It had earlier said the rainfall so far this month made it the fifth-wettest December since 1901. The maximum temperature was recorded at 15.8 degrees Celsius, five notches below the season's normal. It is likely to increase slightly to be around 17-18 degrees Celsius till December 31.

The minimum temperature was recorded at 12.7 degrees Celsius, six degrees above the season's average and it is likely to drop to five degrees Celsius by December 31.

Meanwhile, Delhi residents breathed cleaner air as the pollution levels dropped sharply following rain that helped settle pollutants in air. According to the Central Pollution Control Board, Delhi's overall 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) reading was 139 (moderate) on Saturday, down from 353 (very poor) recorded a day earlier. The last time the air quality was in the "moderate" zone was on December 14, with an AQI reading of 193. Earlier, the Central panel tasked with improving the city's air quality had revoked its severest curbs.

Another Bangladeshi immigrant deported

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A 50-year-old man was deported to Bangladesh on Saturday after he was arrested by the city police from south-east Delhi's R.K. Puram for staying in the country "illegally". This came a day after a 28-year-old woman was deported to the neighbouring country for being an "illegal immigrant".

'Repeat offender'

Feroz Mulla, a native of Madaripur in Bangladesh, had previously been deported in 2004, when he was found living illegally at Dholak Basti in Yamuna Pusta since 1990, DCP (South West) Surendra Choudhary said.

However, he re-entered India illegally through the

Benapole-Petrapole border in 2022 and has been living in R.K. Puram ever since, the DCP added.

The officer said when the police apprehended the accused on Friday, he falsely claimed to be a resident of Bongaon in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district but on sustained interrogation, he admitted that his native place was in Madaripur in Bangladesh.

Mulla told the police that he worked in shops and dhabas in Delhi to sustain himself.

Following the orders of Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena, the Delhi police had launched a two-month drive on December 11 to identify "illegal Bangladeshi immigrants". They have so far identified over 1,500 illegal immigrants, the police said.

Public Health Engineering Department										
P.H. Division, Supaul										
TENDER NOT No. - 13/SBFe/2024-25										
National Competitive Bidding										
(Through e-procurement mode on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)										
1. Designation and Address of Advertiser	Executive Engineer, P.H. Division Supaul.									
2. Date of issue of Tender Notice	28.12.2024									
3. Period of sale (downloading) of tender Bid Document	07.01.2025 to 21.01.2025 up to 15:00 hrs. through www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in									
4. Date, time & place of pre-bid meeting	09.01.2025 at 11.30 hrs. in the Office of Executive Engineer, P. H. Division, Supaul.									
5. Last date and time of receipt (uploading) of tender	21.01.2025 up to 17:00 hrs on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in									
6. Last date and time of submission of hard copy of EMD (in original).	22.01.2025 up to 16:00 hrs in the Office of:- A. Executive Engineer, P.H. Division, Supaul B. Superintending Engineer, P.H. E. Circle, Saharsa C. Zonal chief Engineer, P.H. E.D. Purnea Zone, Purnea									
7. Date and time of opening of technical bid	22.01.2025 at 17:00 hrs on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in									
8. Date and time of opening of financial bid	To be informed later after the approval of technical bid.									
9. Details of works:- Design, Construction, Supply, Testing and Commissioning of Piped Water Supply Schemes for habitations left out under "Har Ghar Ka Jal" nischay yojna in areas having ground water quality issues; with Electric/Solar Driven Pumps and Iron Removal Treatment Plant having Technology (Adsorption/Ion exchange/Membrane/ Nano Technology/ etc.) certified by CSIR or any other institute of national repute, in the District of Supaul, Bihar on turn-key basis with 6 months Trial Run Period and Comprehensive Operation and Maintenance of 60 months after completion of trial run period under Mukhyamantri Gramin Peyjal Nishchay Yojna (Quality Affected) Under P.H. Division, Supaul.										
Location of Work										
Group No.	Block			Habitation			Ward No.			
	Nos. of scheme s in a Group.	Estimated Cost (in Lakh)	Amount of Earnest Money (in Lakh)	Cost of Tender Docume nt (non-refundable) in Rs.	BSED C Bid Processi ng Fee (in Rs.)	Completion Perio d (in mont hs)				
1	3	4	5	6	7	8				
2	8	305.65220	6.12000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
3	9	334.94374	6.70000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
4	7	280.44966	5.61000	10000.00	3540.00	4				
5	8	320.41096	6.41000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
6	114	4615.66858	56.16000	10000.00	5900.00	6				
7	8	333.51034	6.68000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
8	8	329.69279	6.60000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
9	7	264.90473	5.30000	10000.00	3540.00	4				
10	7	328.16731	6.57000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
11	142	6238.93770	72.39000	10000.00	5900.00	6				
12	7	317.31987	6.35000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
13	6	334.36918	6.69000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
14	5	258.04995	5.17000	10000.00	3540.00	4				
15	8	343.54668	6.88000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
16	6	286.29645	5.73000	10000.00	3540.00	4				
17	129	5982.00747	69.82000	10000.00	5900.00	6				
18	9	349.68395	7.00000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
19	5	227.13068	4.55000	10000.00	3540.00	4				
20	46	2033.70696	30.34000	10000.00	5900.00	6				
21	7	294.64712	5.90000	10000.00	3540.00	4				
22	7	268.61826	5.38000	10000.00	3540.00	4				
23	7	312.38504	6.25000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
24	7	339.93855	6.80000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
25	7	294.93562	5.90000	10000.00	3540.00	4				
26	132	5771.51219	67.72000	10000.00	5900.00	6				
27	7	334.54278	6.70000	10000.00	5900.00	4				
28	8	349.								

L-G asks Delhi Police to probe AAP's data collection by private people

Delhi BJP chief welcomes directive; AAP claims Centre wants to stop its financial aid scheme, is afraid of defeat in Assembly poll due in February

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

In a setback to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Sasena has ordered the Delhi Police to take action against private persons gathering personal details of women in the name of 'Mahila Samman Yojana', which is a poll promise of the party.

Hitting out at the BJP, AAP alleged that the party wants to stop its scheme and is afraid of a defeat in the Delhi Assembly poll scheduled in February.

"The BJP, rattled by the overwhelming support these initiatives have received, has resorted to ordering a sham investigation to derail public trust. This act of desperation shows they have already conceded defeat," party

chief Arvind Kejriwal said during a press conference.

He said that the party will deliver on the Mahila Samman Yojana and the 'Sanjeevani Yojana' and urged citizens to remember AAP's track record in providing free electricity, water, quality education, and health care.

Delhi BJP president Vi- rendra Sachdeva said the party welcomes the directive issued by the L-G to investigate complaints of data collection from women under the pretence of the Mahila Samman Yojana and "its potential transfer to private companies".

If any cybercrime occurs against the women of Delhi, the sole responsibility will rest on Arvind Kejriwal, who has committed the crime of collecting personal data of women in the name of the Mahila Sam-



AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi CM Atishi at a press conference at the party's headquarters in New Delhi on Saturday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

man Yojana," he said.

Complaint filed

Mr. Saxena was acting on a complaint by Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit that AAP workers were going door to door and filling forms for the scheme and it was a "fraud".

"The Lieutenant-Governor has desisted the Chief Secretary to get an inquiry

conducted through Divisional Commissioner in the matter of collection of personal details and forms by non-government people. Further, Commissioner of Police may direct the field officers to take action as per law against the persons who are breaching the privacy of gullible citizens by collecting their personal details in garb of

giving benefits," a letter from the L-G's office to the Chief Secretary and Commissioner of Police read.

The letter also mentioned that the Women and Child Development department has clarified that it will launch a digital portal for collection of forms as and when the scheme is notified.

"The department has further advised people not to fill forms being given by unauthorised persons," the letter stated.

Poll promise

On December 12, Mr. Kejriwal announced that if the party retains power in Delhi, then it will give ₹2,100 to every woman above 18 years of age under the Mahila Samman Yojana.

During his speech, he said that Chief Minister Atishi-headed Delhi Cabinet

had passed a proposal for giving ₹1,000 to women in Delhi but since there is very little time for the upcoming polls, the women will start getting the money only after the election.

He then said that the party has decided to increase the amount to ₹2,100 and it would be implemented if the party comes back to power.

On December 18, Mr. Kejriwal promised free treatment for senior citizens at all government and private hospitals of Delhi if his party retains power in the election. He said the benefit under the Sanjeevani Yojana will be extended to all people above 60 years irrespective of their socio-economic background. He said AAP workers will come to people's houses and register them for both the schemes.

the officials said.

The businessman filed a complaint with the CBI about alleged extortion, based on which its Chandigarh unit planned the trap operation where the complainant was asked to give a bribe of ₹55 lakh in cash to the officer, with the CBI sleuths keeping an eye, the officials said.

CBI arrests man in case involving senior ED officer

Press Trust of India

CHANDIGARH

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested an alleged middleman on Saturday in connection with a bribery case, in which an assistant director of the ED is under the scanner, officials said.

The officer managed to give a slip to the CBI during a trap operation on December 22, while his brother has been arrested, the officials added.

The CBI arrested "middleman" Neeraj and produced him before a special court that sent him to the agency's custody for a day, they said.

The ED assistant director posted at Shimla and his brother, a senior manager in a bank in in Delhi, had allegedly gone to Chandigarh to receive bribe money from a businessman, who is facing a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act,

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JANAKPUR B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543

NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP

LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

NCP releases first list of 11 names for Delhi polls

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Saturday released its first list of 11 candidates for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls.

The party has fielded Mulayam Singh from Badli against Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav, Ratan Tyagi from Burari, Khajid Ur Rehman from Chandni Chowk, Mohammad Harun from Balli Maran and Imran Saifi from

Okhla.

It has fielded Narender Tanwar from Chhatarpur, Namaha from Laxmi Nagar, Jagdish Bhagat from Gokulpuri, Khem Chand from Mangolpuri, Rajesh Lohiya from Seemapuri, and Qamar Ahmad from Sangam Vihar.

The Delhi Assembly elections are slated for February next year.

While the ruling AAP has named candidates for all 70 seats, the Congress has named 47 so far.

ED raids Cong. MLA, son in PMLA case in Chhattisgarh

Press Trust of India

RAIPUR

The Enforcement Directorate on Saturday conducted raids at the premises of Chhattisgarh Congress MLA and former Excise Minister Kawasi Lakhma, his son and others as part of a money laundering investigation linked to an alleged liquor scam in the State, of ficial sources said.

A total of seven premises are being searched under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

The State Congress accused the BJP of harassing the Opposition leaders ahead of the urban body and panchayat polls.

Timings

DELHI

SUNDAY, DEC. 29
RISE 07:13 SET 17:34
RISE 05:47 SET 15:56

MONDAY, DEC. 30
RISE 07:14 SET 17:35
RISE 06:46 SET 16:51

TUESDAY, DEC. 31
RISE 07:14 SET 17:35
RISE 07:42 SET 17:53

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 16 13
Safdarjung 16 13
Palam 16 12

Delhi Palam Today 18°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cold with dense fog. Day will be cool. Night also will be cold and foggy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow 19°C Morning will be cold and foggy. Day will be slight cool, Night will be cool and foggy. Mostly dry weather to prevail.

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THE HINDU GROUP

THE HINDU TRIVIA QUIZ

DAY 29

THE HINDU TRIVIA QUIZ

<p

IN BRIEF



Assam Governor reviews progress of govt. schemes

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya reviewed the progress and implementation of various government schemes in Sonitpur district on Saturday. District Commissioner Ankur Bharali briefed the Governor on the implementation of the schemes. The Governor emphasised the need for timely completion of targets of schemes under the MGNREGA. On Mission Amrit Sarovar, under which water bodies are rejuvenated, Mr. Acharya directed the officers concerned to conduct inspections. He also directed the Education Department to devise strategies to reduce school dropout rates. PTI

Death toll in Jaipur LPG tanker crash rises to 20

The death toll in the LPG tanker accident on the Jaipur-Ajmer highway rose to 20 with one more man succumbing to severe burn injuries at SMS Hospital in Jaipur on Saturday. Confirming the death, SMS Hospital superintendent Dr. Sushil Bhati said, "Seven persons are undergoing treatment at the hospital at present." An LPG tanker collided with a truck on December 20, sparking a massive fireball that turned a stretch of the Jaipur-Ajmer highway into an inferno, engulfing more than 35 vehicles. Eleven people died on the day of the incident. PTI

Protest in Beed over murder of sarpanch; demand for Munde's sacking intensifies



Echo in Assembly: Lawmakers from MVA staged a protest over the killing of the sarpanch during the recent Assembly session. FILE PHOTO

Abhinay Deshpande
MUMBAI

The alleged murder of Santosh Deshmukh, sarpanch of Massejog village in Beed district, has triggered massive protests and a political storm in Maharashtra. Deshmukh was allegedly abducted, tortured, and killed on December 9 for opposing an extortion racket targeting a windmill company.

On Saturday, thousands, including legislators from both ruling Mahayati and Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, gathered to demand justice for the sarpanch. The protest, "Aakrosh Morcha" (March of Anger), also saw participation from social activists and members of the Maratha community.

Prominent participants included Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Raje of the Kolhapur royal family, BJP MLAs Suresh Dhas and Abhimanyu Pawar,

NCP MLAs Prakash Solanke and Sandeep Kshirsagar, and NCP (SP) leader Jitendra Awhad.

The protesters demanded immediate arrest of Walimkar Karad, a close associate of NCP Minister Dhannajay Munde, who has been accused of being linked to the crime.

Emotional appeal

Deshmukh's daughter Vaibhavi made an emotional appeal for "justice" to her father. Mr. Pawar, BJP MLA from Ausa, and a former aide to CM Devendra Fadnavis, criticised the government for its inaction. "... if

the accused are not arrested soon, these protests will spread across Maharashtra. Justice for Santosh Deshmukh's family cannot wait," he said.

Mr. Dhas accused Mr. Munde of benefiting from irregularities during elections. "He won the Parli Assembly seat using bogus votes. His association with accused, like Mr. Karad, raises concerns," he said.

Meanwhile, State BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule criticised Mr. Dhas for making public remarks and urged him to directly share evidence with Mr. Fadnavis.

Student alleges sexual attempt bid by guard at AIIMS Gorakhpur

**Press Trust of India
GORAKHPUR**

Protests erupted at AIIMS Gorakhpur after an MBBS student accused a security guard of allegedly attempting to sexually assault her on the campus, officers said on Saturday.

The incident occurred around 9 p.m. on Friday when the student was heading to her hostel near gate number four, the police said.

Guard Satpal Yadav allegedly passed inappropriate comments but she ignored him and walked ahead. He then allegedly followed her, forcibly grabbed her hand and attempted to drag her into the nearby bushes, the police said.

The student resisted and raised an alarm prompting other students to intervene, the officers added.

In the commotion, students managed to apprehend the accused but other security guards

Students managed to apprehend the accused but other security guards intervened and allegedly helped him escape, police said

intervened and allegedly helped him escape, they said. Enraged, students staged a protest at the gate demanding Mr. Yadav's arrest. They sought action against those who aided his escape, they said.

AIIMS officials and police rushed to the spot to pacify the students and by 12.30 a.m. police detained Mr. Yadav from Pipraich. The protest was called off after assurances of strict action against the accused, they added.

A case has been registered under Section 74 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita, AIIMS Medical Superintendent Vikas Srivastava said.

The party founder said Mr. Mukundan would help

Ramadoss, Anbumani spar at PMK meeting over youth wing president appointment

**The Hindu Bureau
PUDUCHERRY**

Differences of opinion emerged between Patti Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder S. Ramadoss and his son and party president Anbumani Ramadoss at the general council meeting held at Pattanur in Villupuram, Tamil Nadu, on Saturday.

When Dr. Ramadoss named his grandson P. Mukundan for youth wing president, Mr. Anbumani objected, saying he had joined the party only four months ago, and yet another appointment should not be made from within the family. Dr. Ramadoss responded that it was he who had launched the PMK and those who were not interested in continuing in the party were free to leave.

PMK officials and police rushed to the spot to pacify the students and by 12.30 a.m. police detained Mr. Yadav from Pipraich. The protest was called off after assurances of strict action against the accused, they added.

A case has been registered under Section 74 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita, AIIMS Medical Superintendent Vikas Srivastava said.

The party founder said Mr. Mukundan would help

NCW constitutes fact-finding panel to probe assault

**The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI**

After taking *suo motu* cognisance of the sexual assault on a student on the Anna University campus and issuing a notice to the Tamil Nadu police seeking an explanation on the steps taken in the arrest of the accused in the case, the National Commission for Women (NCW) on Saturday constituted a fact-finding committee to probe the incident.

"We clarify that the interview was [given] as per the All India Service Rules, 1968..." Mr. Regupathy posted on social media.

All details of the case have been presented before the Madras High Court, and a special investigation team had been formed on its direction. Investigation is under way, the Minister added.



NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar

"We clarify that the interview was [given] as per the All India Service Rules, 1968..." Mr. Regupathy posted on social media.

All details of the case have been presented before the Madras High Court, and a special investigation team had been formed on its direction. Investigation is under way, the Minister added.

The committee will interact with authorities, the complainant, her family, and other organisations to ascertain the facts in the case. It is likely to visit Chennai on Monday, the release said.

Meanwhile, Law Minister S. Regupathy has said there was nothing wrong with the interview given by Greater Chennai Police Commissioner A. Arun pertaining to the case.

He reviewed the security measures at the university and interacted with male and female students separately.

Teenage girl's bold stand against child marriage sparks reforms in Rajasthan village

**Mohammed Iqbal
JAIPUR**

A 15-year-old girl's courageous stand against child marriage recently has initiated reforms in her village in Rajasthan's Karauli district. Tula Ram, the father of Shivika (name changed), burdened with debt and joblessness, had planned to marry off his four daughters, aged 17, 15, 14, and 13, on the same day.

The four were in school and wanted to continue their education, but when their father expressed his helplessness due to poverty, they seemed to have no choice. Ram had found the "perfect match" for the eldest and was on a mission to fix the marriages of his three other daughters. Shi-

vika, however, was not ready to accept this fate.

Ram's house would earlier ring with the infectious laughter of the four girls, who shared dreams and made their modest home feel alive. Their laughter disappeared with pressure building up for marriage.

High prevalence
For Ram, getting his daughters married on the same day would have meant saving a lot of money. He was planning four marriages in a single ceremony in the village of Karauli district, where the prevalence of child marriage is 33.5%, far exceeding the national average of 23.3%, as per the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), released in 2022.



NFHS-5 showed that 28.3% of women in the 20-24 age group in rural areas of Rajasthan were married before 18 years; the figure in urban areas was 15.1%.

Though child marriage in the State is a traditional custom that enjoys religious and cultural sanction, children often find such alliances mismatched

and asked her to visit their office. They sensed that she was extremely disturbed and needed help.

Accompanied by a friend almost her age, Shivika visited the office of Gramrajya Vikas Evar Prashikshan Sansthan a week before the planned marriages. The office, lined with posters on child rights and against child marriage, felt like a sanctuary. Shivika clutched her friend's hand, her voice barely above a whisper as she explained her plight.

'Unexplainable relief'
"We assured Shivika that no one would know about her visit or that she had informed us about it. We also told her that we would take up the matter from here.

The relief on her face was unexplainable when we said from here on stopping the marriages was our responsibility, not hers," Sanshan director Chhail Bihari Sharma told *The Hindu*.

Sanshan is a partner of the Just Rights for Children Alliance and has been working in various districts of the State to protect child rights. It was instrumental in getting a direction from the Rajasthan High Court recently, which stated that panchayats and village heads would be held responsible for any child marriages in their villages.

The group's members, accompanied by Child Line officials, met Shivika's parents immediately. "When confronted, the parents denied the information.

But the daughters mustered the courage to stand up to their father. They told the officials that the marriages were fixed and would take place in less than a week," Sharma said.

The team explained to Ram the legal and social consequences of child marriage. He conceded and signed an undertaking that he would not allow the marriages of his daughters before they turned 18.

The girls are back in school now. Shivika wants to become a social worker and save other girls from unwanted marriages. Sanshan also helped Ram find a job so that he is not swayed by circumstances to marry off his daughters.

Shivika's fight is a reminder to the villagers that

knowledge, courage, and community support can rewrite the future of girls. "Her dream to save her sisters is proof that even one voice can spark a revolution," Sharma said.

Holistic approach
Just Rights for Children Alliance convener Ravi Kant said its partners are tirelessly working at the grassroots level in the State to combat child marriages.

By collaborating closely with the State government and district authorities, they are also connecting vulnerable families with government schemes.

According to Kant, this holistic approach will ensure immediate prevention and long-term safeguards against child marriage.

IN BRIEF

Breach of Pawan's security:
A.P. govt. orders probe

The serious security lapse during A.P. Deputy CM K. Pawan Kalyan's visit to Parvatiapuram-Manyani district has drawn sharp criticism from Home Minister V. Anitha, who has ordered a probe into the matter. An alleged imposter, identified as Balivada Suryaprakasa Rao, was reportedly seen in close proximity to Mr. Pawan Kalyan. A row erupted when a few personnel saluted Mr. Rao, who was in the attire of an IPS officer.

Five Maoists surrender before
A.P. police in Kothagudem

Five Maoists, including four Area Committee Members (ACMs) and a dalām member of the outlawed CPI (Maoist), turned themselves in before Bhadradi Kothagudem Superintendent of Police B. Rohit Raju in Kothagudem on Saturday. Those who surrendered were identified as Punem Pakli, 27; Ravva Soma, 25; Madivi Gangi, 23; Vetti Deva, 21; and Madakam Ungi, 22. The ACMs carried a bounty of ₹ 4 lakh each on their heads.

Kerala Police launch probe
into death of Cong. leader, son

The Kerala Police have launched an investigation into the deaths of a local Congress leader and his son, who died by suicide on Friday. N.M. Vijayan, 78, was Wayanad District Congress Committee treasurer and Jijesh, 38, a former Cooperative Bank employee. Both were found in critical condition at their house on Tuesday. (DISHA suicide helpline at 1056, 0471-2552056)

Court convicts 14 in Periyē twin murder case; 10 acquitted

The CBI court found the accused guilty in the murder of Youth Congress workers Kripesh and Sarath Lal; former MLA among those convicted

K.S. Sudhi
KOCHI

Fourteen accused, mostly Communist Party of India (Marxist) activists, including former Uduma MLA K.V. Kunjuraman, were convicted in the politically sensitive Periyē twin murder case by a CBI special court here on Saturday.

N. Seshadrinathan, CBI special judge, who found them guilty, acquitted 10 others as the prosecution failed to prove the charges against them.

Those found guilty are Peethambaran, Saji George, Suresh, Anil Kumar, Jinjin, Sreerag, Aswin, Subeesh, Renjith, Surendran, Manikandan, K.V., Kunjuraman, Velutholi Raghavan, and A.V. Bhaskaran.

The court found the accused guilty of various offences, including murder, unlawful assembly, criminal conspiracy, rioting, and wrongful restraint. The punishment for the accused will be announced on January 3.

Kunjuraman and three others were found guilty of the offence of obstructing or resisting the lawful apprehension of a person un-



An accused in the Periyē twin murder case being brought out of the CBI special court in Kochi on Saturday. H. VIBHU

der Section 225 of the Indian Penal Code.

The prosecution case was that Youth Congress leaders Kripesh, 21, and Sarath Lal, 23, were brutally murdered by the CPI(M) activists at Kannadippara, near Periyē, due to political hostility.

Planned murder

The accused hatched a conspiracy on February 14, 2019, at Echiladukkam Bus Stop, Periyē, to murder Kripesh and Sarath Lal to retaliate against the assault on Peethambaran and Surendran on January 5, 2019, at Kalliot town.

The assault reportedly

was in continuation of a clash between Students Federation of India and Kerala Students Union workers at the Munnad college.

The murders were carried out to prevent the active work of Sarath Lal and Kripesh for the Congress among the people in the locality, according to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which investigated the case.

The trial was earlier held before K. Kamanees, the special judge, who later moved to a Thrissur court. Y. Bobby Joseph was the CBI special prosecutor in the case.

Periyē verdict
indictment of
CPI(M), Kerala
govt.: Cong.

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress has interpreted the conviction of 14 people, majority of them CPI(M) workers, in the murders of two Youth Congress workers – Kripesh, 21, and Sarath Lal, 21 – at Periyē in Kasaragod in 2019, an indictment of the Left Democratic Front government.

On Saturday, it portrayed the verdict as a condemnation of the CPI(M)'s "culture of violence and use of assassination as a tool to deny political space to the Opposition in Left strongholds". It demanded that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan give up the Home portfolio for "subverting the State's law enforcement and hiring top lawyers to make a weak case against the murder suspects."

Left Democratic Front (LDF) convener T.P. Ramakrishnan claimed the party and the government had no role in the murder.

CPI(M) leader E.P. Jayarajan alleged that the Congress and the BJP conspired to bog down the party in Kasaragod by employing the CBI as a political tool.

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Sathesan termed the CPI(M)'s decision to appeal the verdict as an admission of guilt.

CWC member Ramesh Chennithala and KPCC president K. Sudhakaran said the Congress would appeal against the court's decision to acquit ten of the murder suspects.

Police file FIR against ex-councillor in death of Bidar contractor

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI



BJP leaders file a petition against the Congress leader in Kalaburagi on Friday

noj Sejewal, Shiv Sena district president Solapur; H.M. Vikas, MD of Unity Infrabuild, Bengaluru; P. Vinay, project manager at Unity Infrabuild, and Ramangowda Patil, class-I contractor of Yadgir district, were demanding a sum of ₹ 1 crore.

In the same note, he alleged Mr. Kapnoor along with Nandkumar, Gorakhnath Sajjan, Ramangowda, Pratap Patil, and Manoj Sejewal were plotting to kill Siddalinga Swami, national honorary president of Sri Ram Sene, BJP MLA Basavaraj Mattimod, BJP leaders Chandrakant Patil and Manikanth Rathod, at the behest of Mr. Priyank Kharage.

Based on the purported

death note of Panchal, in which he mentioned that Mr. Kapnoor was conspiring to kill a religious head and three BJP leaders, the BJP leaders urged the police to file an FIR against Mr. Kapnoor. But when the police declined the demand, the BJP leaders created a ruckus at the Station Bazar Police station.

'Used influence'
The contractor also claimed that Mr. Priyank used undue influence to stay Mr. Kapnoor's banishment from Kalaburagi district.

However, Mr. Priyank on Saturday denied his or his department's role in the death of the contractor. Mr. Priyank said he would be ready to face a CID probe into the death of the contractor.

The death note
In the death note, Panchal alleged that Mr. Kapnoor, Congress leader; Nandkumar Nagabhujange, Congress (publicity) committee district president; Gorakhnath Sajjan from Aland taluk; Pratap Patil, criminal from Solapur district of Maharashtra; Ma-

Accused in several inter-State robberies shot in both legs while attempting to escape in Karnataka

The Hindu Bureau
HUBBALLI

The Hubballi police on Saturday shot at and injured Pala Venkateshwar Rao, alias Kalyankumar, from Andhra Pradesh, an accused in many inter-State cases, in both his legs when he tried to escape after attacking police personnel who arrested him.

Sub-Inspector Pramod and constable Anand Baderi suffered injuries.

The accused and the injured policemen are being treated at KMCRI Hospital in Hubballi.

After enquiring about the health of the police personnel and the injured accused, Police Commis-

sioner N. Shashikumar told presspersons that the criminal was caught by the police when he, along with his accomplices, tried to carry out a dacoity in the house of Vilas Kumar near Dharwad.

The gang members were engaged in criminal activities for generations and attacked and robbed an elderly couple in Dharwad in June, he said.

He said during the early hours of Saturday, they

BC leaders demand national caste census at Hyderabad event

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Former Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana on Saturday called for the need to include Telugu as a language in the sixth edition of the World Telugu Writers' Mahasabhalu in Vijayawada.

"Telugu language is called the 'Italian of the East'. It is the responsibility of the society, the State and the media to preserve the language," he said. The Telugu language has a rich heritage, shaped by famed writers, poets and artists there should be no shame in learning in Telugu, he added.

Representatives of the Backward Classes (BCs) emphasised the urgent need to include a caste census in the upcoming national Census. They argued that accurate data is essential for informed policymaking and ensuring fair representation for BCs, adding that they are still facing "political untouchability".

Speaking at a symposium titled "75 Years of the Indian Constitution-Political Untouchability of BCs" held at the Press Club here on Saturday, they also urged the completion of

State-initiated socio-economic and caste surveys and called for increased reservations for BCs in education, employment and political institutions.

The speakers accused governments of treating BCs as mere vote banks. They highlighted the neglect of Articles 14, 15, 16, and 340 of the Constitution, pointing out how inadequate political representation continues to perpetuate social and economic inequality.

The conference also explored successful BC political movements in various States, contrasting them with the absence of similar initiatives in Telangana.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

BIRTH CENTENARY

Your leadership has shown us the way.
We are grateful for the guidance you provided.



FORMER MANAGING DIRECTOR : SREE VISALAM CHIT FUND LTD
FORMER DIRECTOR : NELLAI FINANCE PVT LTD
FORMER DIRECTOR : ARUNA CHEMICALS & FARMS PVT LTD
FORMER DIRECTOR : SREE VISALAM CHARITABLE TRUST



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Will Always Cherish Your Memory...

AR. Viswanathan Managing Director
AR. Meenakshi Director
AR. Umopathy Director

Family, Realtives, Friends
and Staffs of
Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd

We will try to create a better world through your guidance.

Public Health Engineering Department

Notice inviting Request for Proposal to empanel experienced manpower placement agencies to provide Super Skilled/ Skilled, Semi-skilled and Unskilled manpower as per predefined qualification criteria on the basis of service charges.

(A) The Serial no. 3, 5 & 6 of Notice inviting RFP read as follows:-

Details of Work:-

Tender No	SA_A_RS_ED_OT_24_25_13, Dated: 26.12.2024
Description of Work	Works contract for Modification of CAB AC drain pipe of electric locomotives available at Electric Loco Shed, Southern Railway, Salem Division, Erode.

All details regarding the tender are available at <https://www.reps.gov.in>

Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer / Rolling Stock / Erode

Annexure-3

Name of Agency/Firm:

Address:

Financial Bid(Revised)

Sl. No Category of Manpower No. of Manpower Monthly Honorarium/ Wages per Manpower EPF (Employer contribution exclusive on Point D) as applicable ESI (Employer contribution exclusive on Point D) as applicable Commission/ Service Charge in percentage to be quoted in column D, E and F.

A B C D E F G

1 Chemist, District Water Testing Lab. 15 Rs. 20,000

2 Assistant Chemist, District Water Testing Lab. 76 Rs. 18,000

3 Laboratory Assistant, District Water Testing Lab. 49 Rs. 15,000

4 Data Entry Operator, District Water Testing Lab. 38 Rs. 15,000

5 Chemist, Sub Divisional Water Testing Lab. 76 Rs. 18,000

6 Lab Assistant, Sub Divisional Water Testing Lab. 76 Rs. 14,000

• GST is payable extra as applicable on submission of relevant GST filled documents.

• The monthly remuneration indicated in column-D above is inclusive of employee contribution. Employer contribution in EPF, ESI, and other employee benefit, if any is excluding.

• Above Financial bid should be given on letter head of the Agency/Firm.

Engineer in Chief-cum-Special Secretary
(Work Management)

Public Health Engineering Department, Patna, Bihar

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

योग जनित रोग छुपाओ नहीं ईलाज कराओ,

खुद के साथ अपने जीवन साथी को भी सुरक्षित करें।

Classifieds

LIFE MADE SIMPLE

Matrimonial

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification Common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

ASSAMESE

AWADHI

BENGALI

BHOJPURI

BIHARI

CHHATTISGARHI

ENGLISH

GUJARATI

HARYANI

HINDI

KANNADA

KASHMIRI

KONKANI

MALAYALAM

MANIPURI

MARATHI

MARWARI

NEPALI

ORIYA

PARSI

PUNJABI

SAURASHTRA

SINDHI

TAMIL

TELUGU

TULU

URDU

ADVOCATE

BUSINESS

DEFENCE

DOCTOR

ENGINEER

FINANCE/ BANKING

GOVERNMENT/ QUASI-GOVERNMENT

IAS/ ALLIED SERVICES

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

MBA/ CA/ ICWA

NRI

COSMOPOLITAN

DIVORCEE

PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

DOCTOR

SUNNI MUSLIM Urdu, 33yrs, 168cm, MBBS MD, Never Married, from Well Settled Family. Looking for PG Doctors / Engineers from Well Settled Families. Preferably from South India, UK, Middle East. Ct: 9444516551

HINDU TAMIL BC Doctor 26/ 175 cm Fair, Clear Horoscope Seeks Tall Handsome PG Doctors with Good Habits from Simple family. Contact with Full view. Photo, Horoscope and biodata. Ph: 7200365364

BEAUTIFUL RICH Dr Girl Veg 29 MD Gen Medicine Kettai Chennai seeks PG Dr Boy Veg only WhatsApp 9342104357

HINDU REDDY Surgeon 34Y 165cms Own Practice, Seeks Suitable Groom, Any Profession from Dubai, Singapore, India. CNB, 89256 40111

HINDU, CNB, 24 years, MBBS, Pursuing (IMS) ENT Seeks Groom Ct: 9677199925

DOCTOR MBBS MD Age 28 Govt Asst Professor very fair, Seek for Dr, Business, BE any PG Conct: 9176737036

HINDU NADAR
Chennai & Only Daughter (25)
Fair & Good Looking,
MBBS, (MD) DVL, Rich Affluent,
well-Educated Family seeks
suitable Good Looking
Doctor Groom with clean
habits from Hindu Nadar.
94447 59246
94449 68235

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

Nair Girl, 27/161, Pooradam, IAAS Officer, Contact: 9020408981, 892147280.

Nair Girl, 27/161, Pooradam, IAAS Officer, Contact: 9020408981, 892147280.

KANNADA

HINDU VOKKALIGA Gowda 30, BE from Coimbatore seeks Suitable Groom. Contact: 9791768175.

MALAYALAM

SAIVAVELLA GIRL MBBS chithira /hulaana 26/154 preparing PG seeks doctor/professional. 8547230711

DELHI NADAR Fair girl 29/145 Pooram 1.5 Dosham pursuing PhD in Edinburgh seeks suitable alliance preferably from Palghat/Trichur and nearby districts. Contact 9818364188

HINDU WIDOW, 42/163 cm MCA, Working in MNC Kerala, living with 2 kids, Mob: 9847851263

VISWAKARMA, GS Girl, 36, B.Sc. Agriculture, Bank Manager, 944758352.

NRI

Hindu Telugu Never married 44/168 MS USA working seeking 45-47 Never married working in USA CNB 9866274192

TAMIL

CHRISTIAN GIRL 34 years Eng graduate working in MNC at Chennai wanted Eng graduate from decent literate family - 9444325317

CHRISTIAN-RC SOZIHA Vellarai Doctor 27 yrs, Pursuing PG Chennai. Seeks PG Groom. Call 9840150090

GOVT. DOCTOR (MD),37 yrs, 5ft 2inch. Fair. Never married. Seeks Eng' Doc 37-40ys. Never Married Christian Groom.India/abroad. O: 9940529886 / 9600573068

RC CHRISTIAN Nadar unmarried fair Bride, 35/170, M.E., Software Engg. seeks groom from State Govt / Central Govt / Pvt organisation. Contact: 98868 88775.

LOOKING FOR Christian Bridegroom for the girl working in USA start up aged 26. End time message. 9176289180

TAMIL MUSLIM, 30/159, AVP in MNC at Hyderabad, well settled, 24L PA seeks suitable Groom in Hyderabad/ Bengaluru. Ct.9080501299

NATHAMAR UDAYAR, Catholic 31 yrs, HR Professional- MNC with null and void order looking for catholic boy below 35 yrs, premier Institute or IT professional with null and void or unmarried with clean habits. WhatApp 9443124608

CHRISTIAN, RC, 31 Yrs, MBBS, Doctor at Kanyakumari, Income 10 Lakhs. Ct 8138901281.

RC CHRISTIAN Vellarai, 31/176 CM, B-Tech MBA PWC Bangalore 35PLA. Seeks God fearing well Educated working Professional. Contact: 8870520107 / 9952719542

AFFLUENT BUSINESS class Tamil family seeks suitable match from Bangalore for their daughter (Mtech) 1999 born. (080-69129253)

MUDALIAR 27/167 Fair Beautiful MBBS, MD,Ramachandra,1200000.PA,Affluent Family,CNB,9043991629, 9043987029

GROOM WANTED Rich Mudaliyar 25yrs IMBBS, MS Own Transports& Resorts business family seeks suitable Bride Groom Ct : 98400 37406 / 99404 2003

SC/ST Community Girl (Hindi) 29/155 B.Tech (Chemical Engg) seeks groom from State Govt / Central Govt / Pvt organisation. Contact: 99692 28297 / 98196 30507

DOCTOR MD (Pathology) DCH 39yrs Hindu BC, Divorcee without child, working in a private hospital, seeks well settled compatible, decent & affectionate Groom CNB Ct: 9176289180

AGAMUDI MUDALIAR Elite Family 33/ 165 Murgaimi Raghu in Lagnam, PG in HR (Asst. Manager,MNC) Seeks IM/PG Groom, Age upto 38yrs. 9176780777.

AFFLUENT BUSINESS class Tamil family seeks suitable match from Bangalore for their daughter (Mtech) 1999 born. (080-69129253)

MUDALIAR 27/167 Fair Beautiful MBBS, MD,Ramachandra,1200000.PA,Affluent Family,CNB,9043991629, 9043987029

GROOM WANTED Rich Mudaliyar 25yrs IMBBS, MS Own Transports& Resorts business family seeks suitable Bride Groom Ct : 9710093997 / 99404 2003

HINDU, VANNIYAR, 26 Yrs, B.Arch, Architect at Chennai, Income 10 Lakhs. Ct 7356483111

HINDU, PILLA, 25 Yrs, MBBS, Doctor at Chennai, Income 12 Lakhs. Ct 8138900557

Iyer Vadimal Bharatwajam Uthiradam Nov 92 B Com, MS, CPA working in Europe, seeks lyer groom blw 35. 8903367194 / vadavaran@gmail.com

YENGAR THENKALAI Srivatsam Magan 1994 BE MS employed in Sweden seeks qualified Tamil groom employed in Europe/India. WhatApp 900837183

BORN AGAIN christian, 44yrs/152, MBBS, MD doctor, seeks christian groom in CT -9500188067

VELLALAR (CNB) Fair 31 MBBS, seeks Doctor/ Engineer groom. WhatApp photo & biodata to 8056325579

SOZHYAVELLALAR PILLAI Age 30 BE (CSE) Working in Pvt Sector Chennai, Seeks Groom Preferable from Pillai/Mudaliar Age 30-32, BE Working in IT Field, Employed in Chennai / India / Abroad. Ct Gowdham 9342276143

PILLAI REMARRIAGE 30 / 57' V Fair, B.Tech Canada seeks suitable abroad / India Profiles Geetham 9884858014

HINDU NADAR 27yrs BE 1 Lakh pm, Elite business family. Seeks suitable Groom Contact 6385293227/ 9360732728

LOOKING FOR Elite Bridegroom for 27 yr smart girl, (Nadar) MBA from NUS Singapore, not particular about Horoscope. Broad Minded with Modern outlook. WhatApp: 9342104357

ADI DRAVIDAR Remarriage 37 / 164cm BE MBA working Chennai Seeks suitable Profile CNB Geetham 9884858014

DKV/SC 30/167CM fair BE TCS Chennai, Parents Hindu / CSI. Seeks Groom Dr/Er, Govt Employee Ct: 8056143638

MUDALIAR: 25/ V.Fair, B.Tech, M.Tech (IT), MNC, Project Manager, Chennai, 1,50,000PM, Well Settled Families, seeks groom abroad / Business - 925019776

HINDU NADAR 32yrs/164cm, B.Tech star-Realty work/IT seeks IT/other Proficient Groom 9944410712/ 9519452555

SC/ADIDRAVIDAR/MSC DOB 1983 bride seeks suitable qualified employee bridegroom 9498313625

RICH MUDALIYAR, 25yrs, BE, Elite business family in Chennai, Seeks Suitable Groom. 9982791888/ 7094991999

SC AD 37 BE Software Engineer, TCS 1.5L/Month Chennai, seeks suitable Groom. Cast no bar. Ct: 99521 47216

HINDU REDDY Surgeon 34Y 165cms Own Practice, Seeks Suitable Groom, Any Profession from Dubai, Singapore, India. CNB, 89256 40111

HINDU, CNB, 24 years, MBBS, Pursuing (IMS) ENT Seeks Groom Ct: 9677199925

DOCTOR MBBS MD Age 28 Govt Asst Professor very fair, Seek for Dr, Business, BE any PG Conct: 9176737036

KANNADA

HINDU, CASTE no bar, 22 Yrs, B.A. Business at bangalore, income 1 crore. Ph 8138900652

MALAYALAM

PILLAI 30 Yr 150 cm Mcom CA-Final, Revalthi-Meenam living in Blr seeking alliance. MOB 910498818

SEEKS NRI Groom, CSI/AG Tamil, Villalar, 26yrs/168cm, BBA, ACCA, Call/WA: +91948332578

DELHI NADAR Fair girl 29/145 Pooram 1.5 Dosham pursuing PhD in Edinburgh seeks suitable alliance preferably from Palghat/Trichur and nearby districts. Contact 9818364188

HINDU SC/fair/ 29 Yrs/ 152 M Law well settled/ seeks Groom/ CNB/ Chennai Contact: 637921614.

HINDU NADAR, 42/163 cm MCA, MD, Elite business family, Seeks Suitable Groom. Contact: 9380791999/ 9710091999

HINDU NADAR, 28yrs, BBM, MD, Elite business family, Seeks Suitable Groom. Contact: 9710091999

HINDU NADAR, 30yrs/ 153cm (Star-Rohini) Working in Pvt Company, Seeks Suitable Groom @ Chennai 9884846447

BALIJA NAIDU 30yrs/ 153cm (Star-Rohini) Working in Pvt Company, Seeks Suitable Groom @ Chennai 9884846447

GROOM WANTED Rich Naidu 24yrs MBA Own Transports, Elite business family in Chennai 9710093997/ 99404 2003

BALIJA NAIDU, 50Y Plus 2 Working in a private company. Unmarried. Age and caste no bar. Ph: 78710 52352

TAMIL

HINDU NAIDU Born 1990/ 165cm Ph.D scholar smart good looking medium complexion from a reputed family seeks well educated, settled groom in India born after 1987. Ct: 9790908109

SEEKS NRI Groom, CSI/AG Tamil, Villalar, 26yrs/168cm, BBA, ACCA, Call/WA: +91948332578

GROOM WANTED Rich Naidu 24yrs MBA Own Transports, Elite business family in Chennai 9710093997/ 99404 2003

BALIJA NAIDU 30yrs/ 153cm (Star-Rohini) Working in Pvt Company, Seeks Suitable Groom @ Chennai 9884846447

HINDU NADAR, 28yrs, BBM, MD, Elite business family, Seeks Suitable Groom. Contact: 9710091999

HINDU NADAR, 30yrs/ 153cm (Star-Rohini) Working in Pvt Company, Seeks Suitable Groom @ Chennai 9884846447

HINDU NADAR, 30yrs/ 153cm (Star-Rohini) Working in Pvt Company, Seeks Suitable Groom @ Chennai 988

From Page One**Punjab 'helpless' as Dallewal's state worsens**

Justice Kant asked what the State was doing when this entire "build-up" was happening right under its nose. Unrelenting, the court allowed the Punjab government more time to comply with its directions to hospitalise the farmer leader. The Chief Secretary and the police chief were directed to file compliance reports a day before December 31, the next date of hearing.

Justice Kant deduced Mr. Dallewal may be under "peer pressure" to resist hospitalisation after Mr. Singh said the farmer leader had refused to budge despite visits from delegations, including eight State Cabinet Ministers and even the Assembly Speaker.

"Farmers' gathering for a peaceful agitation is understandable... But gathering to prevent a person from being shifted to a hospital is something completely unheard of," Justice Kant observed.

Justice Dhulia said preventing a person from getting critical medical attention amounted to abetment to suicide.

At one point, Justice Dhulia asked the Centre if it could do anything to defuse the stalemate with the farmers over the MSP law.

However, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who is appearing for the Haryana government in the case, said the Centre did not want to make an already delicate situation worse with its intervention. He alleged that Mr. Dallewal is being kept "hostage" by other leaders. Besides, what better platform could Mr. Dallewal wish for when the SC had itself offered him an opportunity to raise his issues, the Solicitor General added.

"The issue is far larger. We have to balance equities. The Centre cannot take a hardened stand... Mr. Dallewal has said he would end his fast if the law regarding the MSP was considered. A little help can come. At least in such situations, we should go hand in hand. There are no political interests here," Mr. Singh pleaded.

The court said it did not want to be a part of the exchange between Punjab and the Centre, but was only worried about Mr. Dallewal's condition.

"We are with the State of Punjab and the people of Punjab," Justice Kant said.

Manmohan cremated with full state honours

Dr. Singh's final journey started from his official residence at 3 Motilal Nehru Road, and reached the All India Congress Committee headquarters around 9 a.m.

The mortal remains were kept at the AICC headquarters for about an hour, with several top Congress leaders, including Mr. Kharge, Mr. Gandhi, Ms. Gandhi and Dr. Singh's wife, Gursharan Kaur, placing wreaths. Senior leaders including Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled States also paid their final respects at the AICC office.

The vehicle carrying the body of Dr. Singh left the Congress headquarters in a procession amid chants of "Manmohan Singh amar rahe" (Long live Manmohan Singh). Mr. Gandhi also travelled in the vehicle.

A number of party workers, leaders and admirers of the former Prime Minister who were part of the procession chanted, "Jab tak suraj chand rahega, tab tak tera naam rahega" (As long as the sun and moon remain, your name will remain).

All the dignitaries paid their respects by placing floral wreaths on the mortal remains. Draped in Tricolour, the flower-decked casket was kept on a raised platform for leaders to offer their respects. Priests and family members recited the holy Gurbani with chants of "Satnam Waheguru" filling the air, as Dr. Singh was cremated according to Sikh rituals. Mr. Kharge and Mr. Gandhi joined Dr. Singh's family as they prayed before the cremation.

Several Chief Ministers, including Siddaramaiah (Karnataka), Revanth Reddy (Telangana), Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu (Himachal Pradesh) and Atishi (Delhi), besides Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena attended the last rites of Dr. Singh. Former Chief Ministers and Congress leaders Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel; the party's general secretaries K.C. Venugopal, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Jairam Ramesh and Randeep Surjewala; and several former Union Ministers were present.

ED summons former Telangana Minister

According to the FIR, the HMDA made payments to Formula-E Operations Limited (FEO) and associated entities without following established procedures. The government assumed financial responsibility when disputes arose between FEO and Ace Nxt Gen Pvt. Ltd., the sponsor, despite an agreement limiting the government's liability.

The complaint states that ₹45.7 crore was remitted to FEO between September and October 2023, despite FEO terminating its agreement with the Telangana government in the same period. Additionally, the payments incurred a tax burden of ₹8.06 crore, which was borne by the HMDA.

A tripartite agreement signed in October 2022 between the Telangana government, FEO, and Ace Nxt Gen Pvt. Ltd., the sponsor, had limited the State government's financial liability. However, the FIR alleges that when disputes arose between FEO and Ace Nxt Gen Pvt. Ltd., the government assumed financial responsibility, bypassing regulatory approvals and causing a loss to the exchequer.

Tourist killed as snowfall cuts off traffic in Kashmir

Hundreds of travellers remain stranded since Friday on Srinagar-Jammu highway; residents in several villages in the Valley complain of major power outages and snapped water supply

Peerzada Ashiq

SRINAGAR

The J&K administration on Saturday grappled with power outage, air and surface traffic disruptions, and stranded tourists in the wake of a spell of heavy snowfall in the past 24 hours.

Life in the Valley was badly impacted as snowfall, which continued intermittently for the second day on Saturday, made roads slippery and enforced closure of many highways, including those connecting Srinagar to Jammu, Poonch, Gurez, Kishtwar, and Tangdhar.

A woman tourist was killed after a boulder rolled down and smashed a minibus in the Mehar area of Ramban district. The boulder caused "severe head injuries to the victim".

Hundreds of travellers remained stranded on the Srinagar-Jammu highway where around 500 vehicles, including 350 heavy and 150 light motor vehicles, were unable to move since Friday afternoon.

"Snow clearance operations are under way on the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway on a war-footing basis," Senior Superinten-



Snow block: Tourists trudge along with their luggage on the banks of the Dal Lake in Srinagar during a spell of heavy snowfall on Saturday. IMRAN NISSAR

dent of Police, Traffic (Rural), Ravinder Pal Singh said.

Passengers rescued

According to the police, around 16 stranded passengers were rescued in the past 24 hours from south and north Kashmir. Residents opened up their houses and mosques in Ganderbal and Budgam districts to accommodate scores of stranded tourists, including children, mostly from Punjab and Hyderabad.

Residents of several villages of Kulgam, Anantnag, Ganderbal, and Pulwama districts complained of major power outages and snapped water supply after the snowfall.

Meanwhile, all flights at the Srinagar airport were cancelled, officials said. The rail services resumed on Saturday afternoon after being suspended in the morning.

All the examinations to be held by the Kashmir University on Saturday were postponed.

Residents of several villages of Kulgam, Anantnag, Ganderbal, and Pulwama districts complained of major power outages and snapped water supply after the snowfall.

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said around 41 feeders of 33 kV and 739 feeders of 11 kV were down in the Kashmir division.

"Restoration work is under way and more than 90% feeders are expected to be up and functional by evening today," Mr. Abdullah said on Saturday.

Mr. Abdullah reviewed the situation in Ganderbal, directing officials to ensure swift snow clearance and restore uninterrupted essential services including electricity and water.

Rail services partially operational in Valley; two sections shut

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Railway services were partially restored after heavy snowfall led to the suspension of service along the Sangaldan-Baramulla section of the Firozpur division in the Kashmir Valley on Saturday.

"The section between Sangaldan and Banihal was restored at 2 p.m., and the first train departed from Sangaldan at 2.10 p.m. The section between Budgam and Anantnag was restored at 2.30 p.m., and the first train departed at 2.45 p.m. By 4 p.m., the Budgam-Baramulla section was restored and the first train departed at 4.30 p.m.," officials said.

Services along two sections – Anantnag to Qazigund, and via Qazigund to Banihal – remained shut due to the accumulation of snow on the tracks. "By late evening, around 6 p.m., the Anantnag-Banihal section was cleared of snow. Train services will resume on Sunday, provided the weather continues to stay dry," an official said.

Ongoing work

"Nearly 80% to 85% of clearing work along the 130-km stretch is done. Some services were operational along the Srinagar-Budgam section as well. We are working hard to



An earthmover clears a road following heavy snowfall in the Kashmir Valley. ANI

clear snow along the remaining blocked sections, too," a Railway official said.

"A WDM [class of diesel-electric] locomotive along with snow cutter will be run to clear the snow on the tracks," an official said.

Officials said inspection by the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) was expected along the 17-km stretch from Katra to Reasi in January.

"The CRS will share observations on safety along the crucial stretch that runs over the Chenab bridge," the official said, adding that the CRS had already submitted a report on the Reasi-Sangaldan section for improvement of safety.

"Once the Reasi-to-Sangaldan section is operational, it will pave the way to connect Jammu to Kashmir via rail," the official said.

BJP leader denies charges as Bengal police summon him in MLA hostel extortion case

The Hindu Bureau

KOLKATA



Nikhil Ranjan Dey

The Kolkata Police on Saturday summoned BJP MLA Nikhil Ranjan Dey after three men were arrested for extortion in the name of Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee at the MLA hostel in Kolkata.

The three persons arrested at the MLA hostel on Kolkata's Kyd Street on Wednesday night were identified as Junedul Haque Chowdhury, Taslim Sheikh and Subhadip Malik, all residents of Hooghly district. They were allegedly trying to extort ₹5 lakh from Ananda Dutta, a Trinamool leader and chairperson of the Kalna Municipal Corporation in Purba Bardhaman district.

The room they were apprehended from was allegedly booked in the name of

Mr. Dey, the BJP's Coochbehar Dakshin MLA. The BJP leader denied the allegations.

"I want to know who booked the room in my name? The safety of the other MLAs is also involved here. So if the police station calls me, I will definitely go for the investigation. I have not even heard the names of those arrested. How did the booking happen? Of course, someone is involved," the MLA said.

Recently, Mr. Banerjee had launched *Sebasray Camps*, a new initiative to bring accessible healthcare to people.

BJP State president Sukanta Majumdar said the MLA was willing to file an FIR over the "impersonation". "Those arrested could have used anyone's name, including that of Trinamool MLAs," Mr. Majumdar added.

Trinamool leader Kunal Ghosh said that they have no political comments over the issue and the police will investigate the matter in accordance with law.

This is not the first time Mr. Banerjee's name has cropped up in an extortion case. Recently, the party suspended two leaders of its teachers wing for demanding that the Trinamool general secretary be given a more prominent position in the party.

Recently, Mr. Banerjee had launched *Sebasray Camps*, a new initiative to bring accessible healthcare to people.

The development follows the arrest of a Bangladeshi citizen from Central Kolkata's Park Street area on Thursday night, a day

Kolkata police step up watch after arrest of Bangladeshi man with forged documents

The Hindu Bureau

KOLKATA



Manoj Kumar Verma

Units of the Kolkata Police, including its Special Task Force, have been activated to watch out for potential threats from foreign infiltrators ahead of the New Year celebrations, Commissioner of Police Manoj Kumar Verma said on Saturday.

"We are keeping a close watch on the hotels and lodges in the city. We have communicated detailed guidelines regarding such cases to our officers and discussed what we have deduced from our past mistakes," he said. "We made our arrangements based on all the inputs we have collected."

The development follows the arrest of a Bangladeshi citizen from Central Kolkata's Park Street area on Thursday night, a day

after Christmas. The man was allegedly carrying forged Indian identity documents.

He added that they had discussed how nodal officers at police stations could address loopholes in verification processes and avoid further lapses.

Mr. Verma added that the police would keep special watch on cases of rash driving, drunk driving, sexual harassment and so on. "Traffic police personnel will be present through the night. Additional arrangements will be made for late-night hours," he said.

Rajasthan BJP govt. dissolves nine districts created during Cong. rule

The Hindu Bureau

JAIPUR

Minister says new districts and divisions were created with an eye on political gain

Ka Thana, Gangapur City, Jaipur Rural, Jodhpur Rural, Anupgarh, and Sanjour. The State government retained eight districts in view of "administrative necessity".

It also rejected the formation of three new districts – ahead of the 2023 Assembly election, as no Gazette notification was issued for them.

The new districts and divisions were created

with an eye on political gain... The Congress government ignored key factors such as financial resources, population density, geographical area and administrative requirements. Several districts did not even have six tehsils," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel said after the Cabinet meeting.

'Undemocratic move'

The Opposition Congress condemned the decision, saying it was an act of "imprudence and political vendetta". Pradesh Congress Committee president Govind Singh Dotasra said the party would launch a massive agitation from January 1, after the conclusion of the week-long State mourning [following the demise of former PM Manmohan Singh], with the demand for restoration of new districts. He described the decision as anti-people and undemocratic.

Opposition criticises U.P. govt. over police outpost near mosque

The Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW

Opposition leaders hit out at the Uttar Pradesh government on Saturday over the construction of a new police outpost outside the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal.

The Opposition argued that there was questionable intent behind the construction of the outpost outside the mosque.

"The government opens neither schools nor hospitals in most parts of India. If something is built, it is a police post or a liquor bar. The government does not have money for anything else. The data itself reveals

that the least number of government facilities are provided in Muslim areas," All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi wrote on X.

The Congress echoed these sentiments, and said that such actions are part of a broader agenda of criminalising the Muslim community.

The police justified the construction as a necessary measure for enhancing security following violence in the area on November 24, which involved clashes between law enforcement and local Muslim residents over mosque surveys.

Biden hails
Manmohan
Singh as 'true
statesman'

Press Trust of India
SAN FRANCISCO

Mourning the passing of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, U.S. President Joe Biden has called him "a true statesman", and credited his strategic vision and political courage for the unprecedented level of bilateral cooperation.

"The unprecedented level of cooperation between the United States and India today would not have been possible without the Prime Minister's strategic vision and political courage," Dr. Biden said in a statement as he and the First Lady, Jill Biden, joined the people of India in grieving the loss of the former Prime Minister.

"From forging the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement to helping launch the first Quad between Indo-Pacific partners, he charted path-breaking progress that will continue to strengthen our nations – and the world – for generations to come. He was a true statesman. A dedicated public servant. And above all, he was a kind and humble person," Mr. Biden said.

The outgoing U.S. President said he had the chance to meet Prime Minister Singh as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2008 and as Vice-President during his Official State Visit to the United States in 2009.

"He also graciously hosted me in New Delhi in 2013. As we discussed then, the U.S.-India relationship is among the most consequential in the world. And together, as partners and friends, our nations can unlock a future of dignity and unlimited potential for all of our people," Mr. Biden said.

"During this difficult time, we recommit to this vision to which Prime Minister Manmohan Singh dedicated his life. And Jill and I send our deepest condolences to former First Lady Gursharan Kaur, their three children, and all the people of India," Mr. Biden said.

Modi govt's funeral plan was an 'insult' to Manmohan: Cong.

By not allocating a separate place for the last rites, Centre has not done justice to the legacy of former PM who deserves highest respect: Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Rahul Gandhi

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said the Modi government at the Centre had "insulted a great son of Mother India" by not allocating a separate place for the funeral of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

On Friday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging the Centre to identify a designated place where the last rites of the departed leader could be held and a memorial built

thereafter. As a political row broke out over the issue, the Centre said a decision to set up a memorial had already been taken and a trust would be formed to identify the place soon.

"The great son of Mother India and the first Prime

Minister of the Sikh community, Dr. Manmohan Singh ji, has been totally insulted by the present government by performing his last rites today at the Nigambodh Ghat," Mr. Gandhi said on X.

Dr. Manmohan Singh deserves our highest respect," he added.

Party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, on X, said the Centre had not done justice to the dignity of Dr. Singh's post, his personality, legacy and the Sikh community.

Pawan Khera, chairman of the party's media department, alleged "mismanagement" of the funeral by the authorities.

Cong. did not respect Manmohan in life, politicising his death: Nadda

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Final salute: Union Minister J.P. Nadda pays his last respects to Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on Saturday. ANI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president and Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda on Saturday said it was unfortunate that Congress president and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi were "playing politics" over the death of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Mr. Nadda's response came after Mr. Gandhi said the current government had "insulted" Dr. Singh by not allocating a separate space for his cremation.

The funeral was conducted at the Nigambodh Ghat in New Delhi.

"It is indeed very unfortunate that former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and current president Mallikarjun Kharge

are not refraining from doing politics even on the sad demise of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Rahul Gandhi insulted PM Manmohan Singh by tearing an ordinance.

And today the same Rahul Gandhi is doing politics. The Gandhi family has neither given respect to any big leader of the country nor done justice to them. Whether it is from the Congress party or the Opposition, whether it is

Baba Saheb Ambedkar, the country's first President Rajendra Babu, Sardar Patel, Lal Bahadur Shastri, P.V. Narasimha Rao, Pranab Da, Atal Bihari Vajpayee," Mr. Nadda said.

He said the current government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi had already sanctioned a space for a memorial to Mr. Singh and had also informed his family.

'False news'

"Still, Congress is spreading false news. It is necessary to remember the history of Congress. After the death of former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, there was a demand to build a Samadhi Sthal in Delhi's Rajghat complex. But at that time Sonia Gandhi had rejected it. It was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who established a memorial for him in 2015," Mr. Nadda said.

Supporters bid adieu to 'Doctor Sahab'

**Satvika Mahajan
Samridhi Tewari**
NEW DELHI



Poignant moment: The mortal remains of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh being taken inside the AICC headquarters in New Delhi on Saturday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

On a wintry Saturday morning in the national capital, Animesh Pendam and S.K. Rao reached 24 Akbar Road to bid farewell to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who was cremated at the Nigambodh Ghat crematorium.

Mr. Pendam was born in 2004, the year Dr. Singh became the Prime Minister, and though the economics student does not remember much about Dr. Singh's tenure, he knows that the Congress leader's economic policies changed the Indian landscape and inspired him to take up the subject. For Mr. Rao, an Army veteran, Dr. Singh stood tall for a different reason. He had met him briefly as a soldier and recalled how the leader had reminded him of his duty to the country.

The police were de-

ployed in large numbers to maintain law and order, as mourners carrying white flowers and wreaths grieved, hoping to catch a glimpse of "Doctor Sahab".

When the convoy reached the Congress headquarters, the crowd fell into a silence as party workers, citizens, and defence and media personnel made way for it to pass. Inside, a wistful mood pre-

vailed as people shared stories of meeting Dr. Singh in his heyday.

Acharya Yashi Phuntsok, 63, an Indian citizen of Tibetan origin, said Dr. Singh's unwavering support for the community meant a lot to the Tibetan people. "He was a great leader, economist, compassionate man," he said.

The sombre mood, however, did not last long as

the crowd grew impatient. Several people who had come to pay the last respects could not see off their leader due to the number of dignitaries already in the queue. Some party workers attempted to jump over barricades to take photographs of the procession.

Amid the jostling, Rashi, a young woman, asked if Dr. Singh's family had the

time to grieve. "The nation, dignitaries and everyone else gets to grieve Doctor Sahab, but his family has to put up a strong face in front of the cameras," she said.

The procession moved towards Nigambodh Ghat, with riot control vehicles, and Rapid Action Force, Central Reserve Police Force and Military Police personnel clearing the way. Family, friends, party workers and leaders walked alongside the truck which carried Dr. Singh's body covered in marigold, betel and white chrysanthemums. Party workers raised slogans such 'Amar Rahe Manmohan Singh' (Immortal Manmohan Singh) and 'Bharat Ratna for Dr. Singh'.

Closer to Nigambodh Ghat, Gurvinder Singh, 64, a distant relative of Dr. Singh, said there are many memories of the former Prime Minister he holds dear. "India will never see a man like him again," he said.

Nitish Kumar is being controlled by JD(U) leaders, says Tejashwi

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA



Tejashwi Yadav

Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav on Saturday said that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was no longer in his senses and had been held captive by four leaders of his own party.

Without naming any Janata Dal(U) leader, Mr. Yadav said that two based in Delhi and two from Patna were taking decisions for their own benefit and not allowing Mr. Kumar to speak on anything.

While speaking to presspersons in Patna, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader questioned the silence of Mr. Kumar on recent issues including Aam Aadmi Party president Arvind Kejriwal's letter to the JD(U) chief over the row over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remark on B.R. Ambedkar and the alleged Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) paper leak.

'No govt. in Bihar'

"There is no government in Bihar and he [Nitish Kumar] is no longer in his senses. Be it Chirag Paswan, Jitan Ram Manjhi or Deputy Chief Ministers from the Bharatiya Janata Party Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, they all used to say that the mental condition of Nitish Kumar was not good. Now, the time has come to discuss whether there is a government in Bihar or not," Mr. Yadav said.

He further said, "Nitish Kumar is not able to take

any decision, then the question arises who is calling the shots? Few corrupt retired officers, two leaders in Patna and two leaders in Delhi are taking the decisions for their own benefit. They have nothing to do with Bihar."

The RJD leader was indirectly attacking Vijay Chaudhary and Ashok Choudhary, the Cabinet colleagues of Mr. Kumar in Bihar, and Rajiv Ranjan, alias Lalan Singh, and Sanjay Jha, who are members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, respectively.

Questioning Mr. Kumar's silence over recent State and national issues, Mr. Yadav added: "When he launched his yatra, he did not speak to the media neither outside the Assembly nor inside the Assembly. He did not respond to my letter, which I wrote on BPSC. He even did not respond to the letter from former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. Look at the situation. These people have held him captive. Nitishji is not in his senses and his face is just put in front to run the government. This is a bitter truth, believe it or not."

Lothal will become global hub for maritime heritage, says Union Ports Minister

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Maritime legacy: The museum site of the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) project in Lothal on Saturday. PTI

tory, making it a pivotal site of the Harappan civilisation.

Key landmarks

The Ministers toured key project landmarks, including INS Nishank, the Lothal Jetty Walkway, and the Museum Block. They interacted with onsite workers to understand their challenges and progress.

Mr. Sonowal expressed satisfaction with the significant milestones achieved in civil infrastructure development, noting that the project is advancing on schedule. With 65% of Phase 1A already completed, the project is on track to meet its timeline. A key

focus of the review was the integration of local communities into the project's development. Mr. Sonowal said: "NMHC project will boost tourism, provide a platform for maritime education, and foster collaboration between India's maritime community and the global industry."

He further said, "This project will create employment, foster skill development, and empower the youth of Gujarat."

The NMHC is poised to become a cornerstone of India's maritime legacy, harmonising cultural and historical significance with economic and educational development.

Ministers, CMs to join world leaders at Davos WEF meet

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Union Ministers Ashwini Vaishnaw, C.R. Patil, Chirag Paswan, K. Rammohan Naidu and Jayant Chaudhary, along with Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis, N. Chandrababu Naidu and A. Revanth Reddy, will join hundreds of government and business leaders from across the globe in the Swiss ski resort town of Davos for the World Economic Forum annual meeting in February.

Mr. Naidu will be joined by his son and Andhra Pradesh Minister Nara Lokesh, while Karnataka's Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shiva Kumar, Tamil Nadu Minis-



The summit's main theme this time will be 'Collaboration for the intelligent age'.

ter T.R.B. Rajaa and Uttar Pradesh Minister Suresh Khanna will be there for the five-day annual congregation of the world's rich and powerful, starting January 20.

Over 50 Presidents and Prime Ministers from across the world, and top

officials of international organisations such as the United Nations, IMF, World Bank, Interpol, NATO, European Central Bank and WTO are also expected to be in Davos for the WEF Annual Meeting 2025.

Senior Ministers from Pakistan and Bangladesh, including Bangladesh Government's Chief Adviser and head of the interim government Muhammad Yunus, would be present.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had attended the meeting in the past, but there is no official word so far about his participation in the summit, for which the main theme this time will be 'Collaboration for the intelligent age'.

Rajasthan State Construction Engineer, Southern N.H. Circle, Berhampur

Email : senshombam@gmail.com

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Bid Identification No.16/CCE NH, South of 2024-25 [e-Procurement]

Bid Identification No.16/CCE NH, South of 2024-25 No.4106 / Dated : 20.12.2024

1. The Chief Construction Engineer, Southern N.H. Circle, Berhampur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for construction of Road works as detailed in the table below.

2. Nature of work

3. No. of work

4. Tender Cost

5. Class of Contractor

6. Availability of Bid document in the website.

7. Date of Opening of Bid

8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website https://tendersorissa.gov.in.

9. Any Corrigendum/Addendum/Cancellation of will be displayed in the e-tender website only.

Chief Construction Engineer, Southern N.H. Circle, Berhampur.

OPR-34148/11/007/2425

b-31 :

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Southern N.H. Circle, Berhampur

Email : senshombam@gmail.com

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INBRIEF**Patna administration to facilitate meeting with BPSC**

The Patna district administration on Saturday said it has made an offer to the candidates demanding cancellation of the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) examination held on December 13, to facilitate a meeting with it. The candidates, seeking cancellation of the 70th Integrated Combined Competitive Examination (CCE), 2024, under the BPSC over allegations of question paper leak have been protesting for more than a week. The protesters would be required to nominate five representatives for talks after which the BPSC would take a decision "within a reasonable time", Patna District Magistrate Chandrasekhar Singh said. PTI

Metro worker dies after being hit by actor's car in Mumbai

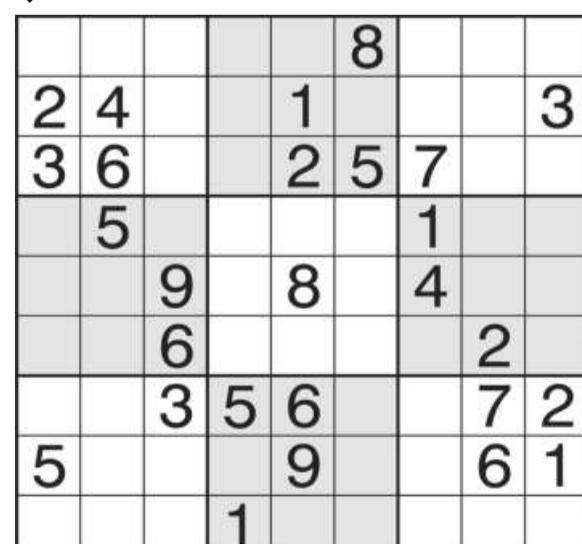
One Metro worker was killed and another seriously injured after they were hit by Marathi actor Urmila Kothare's car in the Kandivali area of Mumbai in the early hours of Saturday, the police said. The actor and her driver were also injured in the accident, an official said, while adding that the incident took place when Ms. Kothare was returning home after finishing her shoot. The incident took place near the Poisar Metro station when the driver lost control at high speed, crashing into the two Metro workers. The actor escaped with minor injuries due to the timely deployment of the car's airbags. A case has been registered against the car driver.

Maharashtra ATS arrests over dozen Bangladeshi nationals

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) arrested more than a dozen Bangladeshi nationals, including six women, for entering India illegally and staying without valid documents. "The arrests were made during a special drive initiated by the ATS," an official said. "Accordingly, action was taken in the last 24 hours with the help of police in Navi Mumbai, Thane and Solapur," the official said. They have been booked in three cases under the Foreigners Act and other relevant laws. "These Bangladeshi nationals had managed to get Indian documents such as Aadhaar cards using forged documents," he said. PTI

Two held for grenade attack on police station in Amritsar

"Punjab Police have arrested two persons for allegedly carrying out a grenade attack on the Islamabad police station in Amritsar recently," officials said on Saturday. The attack was carried out in the early hours of December 17, though no one was injured in the incident. Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said the special operation cell in Amritsar busted a narco-terror module being operated by controllers from abroad. "Gurjeet Singh from Dande in Amritsar and Baljit Singh from Chhapa in Tarn Taran have been arrested," the DGP said in a post on X. "So far, 1.4 kg of heroin, one hand grenade and two pistols have been recovered," he said. PTI

SUDOKU

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Farmers' meeting on Jan. 4; no pressure to fast: Dallewal

Farmers from several States will take part in the 'Kisan Mahapanchayat', says SKM; fasting farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal says 'misconception being spread' about him being kept 'hostage'

Press Trust of India

CHANDIGARH

Farmers, on a war path against the Centre, on Saturday called for a "Kisan Mahapanchayat" at the Khanauri protest site on January 4.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha had earlier given a call for a Punjab bandh on December 30.

The move comes amid the Supreme Court coming down heavily on the Punjab government for not shifting farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been fasting for over a month, to hospital.

SKM leader Kaka Singh Kotra said the 70-year-old's indefinite hunger strike entered the 33rd day on Saturday.

"On January 4 at Khanauri, we will hold a big 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' in which farmers from various States will participate," he said.

On Saturday, while it admonished the Punjab go-

**Heat of protest:** Farmers keep themselves warm on a winter day at the Khanauri protest site in Sangrur district on Saturday. PTI

vernment, the Supreme Court indicated the possibility that Mr. Dallewal may have not been allowed to be taken to hospital by other farmer leaders.

Responding to it, Mr. Dallewal, in a video message, said, "I am sitting on a fast. Who gave this report in the Supreme Court and who spread this misconception that I have

been kept hostage, where did such a thing come from?"

"Seven lakh farmers of this country have committed suicide due to debt. To save farmers is necessary, therefore, I am sitting here, I am not under anyone's pressure," he said.

In his message, Mr. Dallewal said he had written a letter to the Supreme Court, requesting it to di-

rect the Centre to accept the farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee for the minimum support price on crops. He had earlier said he would not break his fast till the government agreed to the farmers' demands.

"We thought maybe the Supreme Court would give direction to the Centre," he said.

Farmer leader Abhimanyu Kohar said Mr. Dallewal may also speak at the mahapanchayat.

On Saturday, a Vacation Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia gave the Punjab govern-

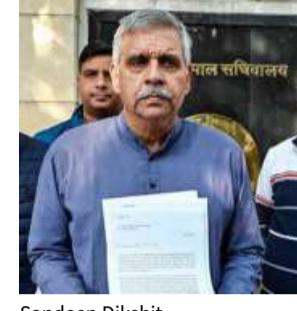
ment time till December 31 to persuade Mr. Dallewal to shift to a hospital, giving it the liberty to seek logistical support from the Centre, if the situation warrants.

Expressing helplessness, the Punjab government said it is facing huge resistance from the protesting farmers who have encircled Mr. Dallewal and are preventing him from being taken to a hospital.

L-G orders border alert as Cong. alleges cash influx into Delhi

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena ordered the Delhi Police to check private vehicles entering Delhi borders after Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit alleged that large sums of cash are being brought into the national capital from Punjab ahead of the Assembly election in the Union Territory.

Mr. Dikshit, the Congress candidate for the New Delhi Assembly constituency, alleged that certain "official vehicles" have been placed outside his home, suggesting surveillance and intimidation.

In a letter to the L-G, Mr. Dikshit accused the AAP-led Punjab government of sending "cash in crores" to Delhi to influence voters ahead of the election. Referencing the letter, the L-G Secretariat, in a note to the Delhi Chief Secretary and Police Commissioner, directed them to be vigilant about private cars from Punjab – with Punjab Police escorts – entering the national capital.

"Hon'ble Lieutenant-

Governor has desired that Commissioner of Police shall take immediate action of checking such vehicles at the border and also sensitise the DGPs of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan," the note said. The L-G Secretariat also directed the Chief Secretary to bring this matter to the notice of the Chief Electoral Office, Delhi to remain vigilant in the coming days.

Commenting on the L-G's note, Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Devender Yadav said that it was a "grave" issue. Responding to the allegations, the AAP in a statement said, "The BJP and Congress are colluding to attack Arvind Kejriwal. They have no vision or plan for Delhi."

Drone show to mark the opening of Mahakumbh**The Hindu Bureau**

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government is planning a drone show, showcasing mythological tales linked to the Mahakumbh and Prayagraj during the event. The show will feature 2,000 drones and light up the skies over Sangam Nose, marking the grand opening and conclusion of the world-famous religious gathering.

"The spectacular show will depict iconic events like the mythical *Samudra Manthan* [ocean churning] and the emergence of the *Amrit Kalash* [nectar pot], creating a magical visual narrative in the evening skies," Aparajita Singh, district tourism officer, Prayagraj, said.

Multiple attempts to catch Zeenat have failed and she has reportedly

Bid to tranquillise tiger Zeenat fails, forest officials remain on their toes

Shrabana Chatterjee

KOLKATA



Tiger Zeenat was last sighted in the Ranibandh area of Bankura in West Bengal on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

killed over three domestic goats.

She was first spotted in Jhargram district, and then she travelled to the Bandwan area of Purulia district on Thursday. She moved to Purulia's Dangardi forests in Manbazar for only a day. She was in Purulia's Bandwan for over five days. Now, she is in the Ranibandh area of Bankura, ac-

cording to Forest Department officials.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Debal Roy, Chief Wildlife Warden, said: "We made an attempt to tranquillise her at 4 p.m. on Saturday, December 28, but that failed. Our teams are on constant watch. We are trying our best and setting up cages in multiple locations. We are using both active

and passive methods to get hold of her."

Mr. Roy mentioned that there have been no reports of any locals being injured or attacked by the tiger to date even as the big cat remains on the move across three districts of southern Bengal. Officials have set up fencing across multiple locations to avoid any conflict. According to Forest officials, they now have three teams on constant watch in Bankura's Ranibandh area, where the tiger was last sighted.

They are employing modern technology, such as drones with thermal imaging, night vision devices, and monitoring teams, and even using goats as bait to manage the situation and either capture the tiger or guide her back along the path she entered.

GPS interference on aircraft rising; 10% of flights report low navigation accuracy over India's borders

Iagrati Chandra

NEW DELHI



A drone view shows emergency specialists working at the crash site of an Azerbaijan Airlines passenger plane in Kazakhstan. REUTERS

Instances of GPS interference on passenger aircraft, including 'spoofing' with false signals, are on the rise over conflict zones globally, including on India's borders with Pakistan and Myanmar as among the top sites for such occurrences, according to OPS-GROUP, a voluntary group of 8,000 aviation personnel, including pilots, who share information on risks to flights.

The GPSjam portal also lists India's borders with Pakistan and Myanmar as among the top five regions where more than 10% of aircraft reported low navigation accuracy.

'Spoofing' is a form of cyberattack that includes false GPS signals to mislead navigation equipment. It is seen in conflict zones and is used to attack drones that are increasingly used in modern warfare. Interference with GPS was recently seen on the Embraer jet involved in the Azerbaijan Airlines crash

on December 25 in which 38 people on board were killed. On Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin apologised to his Azerbaijani counterpart, Ilham Aliyev, for the "tragic incident that occurred in Russian airspace" and said that Russian air defence was repelling attacks from Ukraine's combat drones in Russian towns.

According to a report published by the OPS-GROUP in September 2024, the first series of GPS spoofing was identified in September 2023 in the area of northern Iraq, centred on Baghdad. In

Globally, instances of spoofing have increased from 300 flights impacted daily in January to 1,500 flights impacted daily by August, the report said.

In an advisory in November 2023, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) asked airlines to develop standard operating procedures and provide bi-monthly reports on such occurrences.

This data is not available publicly. *The Hindu* requested the Ministry of Civil Aviation to share this data, but there was no response till the time of going to press.

One IndiGo pilot reported losing both GPS systems for a few minutes while he was flying out of Amritsar earlier this month. Several other pilots have said that "nearly every flight" to Amritsar either experiences interference or spoofing.

Flights to Dubai, Doha and other Gulf destinations from northern parts of India also experience false GPS signals, as do flights to Bangkok, Vietnam, and

Hong Kong while crossing Myanmar.

Pilots have also said flight tracking website flightradar24 can sometimes show, albeit inaccurately, that there had been a flight diversion mid-air because of loss of data used to indicate the aircraft's location to other aircraft and air traffic control, resulting in an immediate message from the airline's operation control centre.

While aircraft systems are built with several redundancies, including the Inertial Reference System that is also used for navigation, which continue to operate safely for up to five hours even if a primary system fails, one pilot described the phenomenon of GPS spoofing and interference as one of flying with "one's hands tied to one's back".

Spoofing the GPS could also result in errors in the speed display, or trigger a terrain warning by tricking the navigation system into believing it's at a dangerously low altitude or in proximity to terrain. The plea seeks the implementation of the 20-point Patients' Rights Charter. Transparent hospital rates, with mandatory display, is also sought.

Currently, the prices of healthcare services, standards of care, and other ethical aspects linked with frequent violation of the rights of patients, are unregulated in private healthcare in India, the JSA said, adding that "massive overcharging" by private hospitals pushed lakhs of families into financial distress.

The group added that although important laws, including the Clinical Establishments Act (CEA) of 2010 exist to regulate private hospitals, their actual, full and uniform implementation has been stalled.

To change this situation, a PIL (public interest litigation) was filed in the Supreme Court by the JSA in 2021, which could majorly change this picture in the favour of patients. The JSA's PIL asks for regulation and standardisation of private healthcare across India by enforcing the CEA and the Patients' Rights Charter," Dr. Shukla said. The plea seeks the implementation of the 20-point Patients' Rights Charter. Transparent hospital rates, with mandatory display, is also sought.

INBRIEF



Tax officials start inspection of M&M records in Chennai

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. on Saturday said State tax authorities in Tamil Nadu initiated an inspection of records at one of the places of its business operations in Chennai. "The GST officials have inspected the records and given some observations on certain GST compliance issues and have advised the company's officials to submit the necessary documents for reconciliation," it said. The company officials cooperated with the GST officials, M&M said. PTI

Zydus Wellness arm gets ₹56.33-crore GST demand

Zydus Wellness Ltd. said its wholly-owned arm has received a GST demand of ₹56.33 crore, along with applicable interest and penalty from the tax authority. Zydus Wellness Products Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary company, has received an intimation from the Directorate General of Goods and Services Tax Intelligence, Surat Zonal Unit, alleging GST demand of ₹56.33 crore, along with applicable interest and penalty, Zydus Wellness Ltd. said in a regulatory filing. PTI

Reliance acquires Karkinos Healthcare for ₹375 crore

Reliance Industries acquired healthcare platform Karkinos for ₹375 crore, the firm said. Reliance Strategic Business Ventures, an arm of India's most valuable company, completed acquisition of Karkinos Healthcare Pvt. Ltd. with the allotment of requisite shares, the firm said. Karkinos provides technology-driven innovative solutions for the early detection, diagnosis and management of cancer. Its turnover stood at about ₹22 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal. PTI



Kinetic Green eyes doubling sales volume in FY26

N. Anand
CHENNAI

Kinetic Green Energy and Power Solutions Ltd. is betting on two new electric vehicles and new showrooms to more than double its sales volume, said a top executive.

"We launched e-Luna some 8-10 months back and sold 17,000 units till October 2024. For the remaining five months, we are planning to sell about 28,000 units, taking the total to 45,000-50,000," Pankaj Sharma, president, two-wheeler business, told *The Hindu*.

"The next fiscal, we are aiming at more than doubling it. We started with a small base and the sales numbers are set to rise with the launch of more showrooms in the country," he added.

Mr. Sharma opened two new showrooms in the city taking the total to 352 pan India and hope to close CY25 at 375. Ultimately, the firm is eyeing 550 showrooms by March.

On the anvil are the launch of a new variant of e-Luna called eZwag in January 2025 and high-end personal family scooter eFlex by February/March next year.

Currently, the portfolio consists of low powered eZinc, eLuna and eZulu.

Visakhapatnam's Adani Data Park a ₹70,000 cr. 'non-starter'

Foundation stones for the project have been laid by two Andhra Pradesh Chief Ministers viz. N. Chandrababu Naidu and again by his successor Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy but at a reduced outlay of ₹21,844 crore but the project is yet to take off

V. Kamalakara Rao
VIKAS KHAPATNAM

The Adani Data Park, envisaged at an investment of about ₹70,000 crore over a 20-year-period here, remains a non-starter after the foundation stone for the project was laid twice—once by the then Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu in 2019, and then by his successor Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy in 2023.

As per the 2019 memorandum of understanding, (MoU), the project involved the setting up of three 5GW data parks viz. at Nakkapalli (350 acre), Kapulupadu (150 acre) and Bhogapuram. Later, in May 2023, the Y. S. Jagan government downsized the capacity of the data park to 300 MW on a land parcel of 190 acre at Madhurawada (200MW) and Kapulupadu (100MW) at an outlay of ₹14,634 crore and ₹7,210 crore respectively, totalling ₹21,844 crore.

Suspended Animation
When enquired by *The Hindu* recently, government officials said, "it appears to be in a state of limbo." The project apparently stalled due to lack of progress in the work so far, they averred.

"In the past, during the YSRCP government led by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as Chief Minister, the Adani Group was keen to take ov-



Twice unlucky: Two Chief Ministers have laid foundation stones for the Adani Group project. THE HINDU

Retired bureaucrat E.A.S. Sarma has urged the State to rethink its Adani Group deals

er Gangavaram Port and Krishnapatnam Port," said O. Naresh Kumar, vice-president, Rushikonda IT Park Association.

"The government also offered them their shares (in the ports) and helped them in facilitating power purchase agreements but unfortunately, the Jagan government could not convince them to start the Adani Data Park in Visakhapatnam," he added.

"I hope the project will be launched at least now to boost the economic growth of the State with

the help of the present government under the Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu. We are looking forward to it becoming a reality in the coming year and we will extend our support from our IT fraternity to facilitate this," Mr. Kumar added.

On the other hand, former bureaucrat E.A.S. Sarma opined the present government led by Mr. Chandrababu Naidu should cancel deals or MoUs with the Adani group over any projects that are supposed to be set up in Andhra Pradesh due to the recent legal issues raised by U.S. prosecutors against the Adani group.

"I even wrote a letter to Mr. Naidu on November 25, 2024, requesting him to reconsider the agreements

and MoUs signed with the Adani Group regarding various projects to be started in the State.

"I have not received any response from the government to my letters yet," said Mr. Sarma.

Even industry sources, including the senior official cadre at the Secretariat of the A.P. State Government, believe the Adani data park is in a 'limbo' due to the recent legal challenges mounted by U.S. prosecutors against the Adani group. Progress on the Adani Data Centre project has been on hold for some time, the sources said.

"We will not comment on the Adani Data Park," a top official at the Secretariat, A.P. State government said, when contacted by *The Hindu*.

There was no response received on queries sent over e-mail to officials at the Adani Group.

Fresh Clouds

The recent U.S. Court indictment of Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani and other group employees, over securities fraud and bribery charges, has also cast a shadow over the company's ongoing projects, including the data park in Visakhapatnam, sources in the government pointed out.

The data park was planned as a large-scale integrated data centre and technology business park

Vodafone clears about ₹11,650 cr. share pledge

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

U.K.-based Vodafone Group has cleared dues of around ₹11,650 crore or about ₹109 million that it raised against shares of Vodafone Idea, according to a regulatory filing.

Vodafone Group had pledged almost their entire stake in VIL to raise these borrowings.

The pledge was created in favour of HSBC Corporate Trustee Company (UK) for the debt raised by Mauritius and India-based Vodafone Group entities.

"On 27 December, 2024, HSBC Corporate Trustee Company (UK) Limited acting as the security trustee for the lenders has released the pledges pursuant to repayment of the outstanding dues owed to the lenders by the Vodafone promoter shareholders," it said.

"Consequently, the indirect encumbrance on 15,720,826,860 equity shares of the target company held by the Vodafone Promoter Shareholders representing 22.56% of the equity share capital of the target company on a fully diluted basis has been released," the filing added.

The shares are valued at around ₹1,649 crore as per the closing price of ₹7.41 apiece for the Vodafone Idea stock on Friday.

The Vodafone Group holds a 22.56% stake, while the Aditya Birla Group holds 14.76%, and the central government holding a 23.15% stake as of September 30, 2024.

Aim to lead in adoption of clean tech: Greaves Cotton

'Our focus is on building a robust, integrated ecosystem that connects products, services and solutions to enhance customer engagement'

INTERVIEW

Nagesh Basavanhalli

N. Anand



Over the last few years, engineering firm Greaves Cotton has successfully evolved from being a single-fuel business, single-fuel company to diversified, fuel-agnostic leader, the firm's vice-chairman Nagesh Basavanhalli said in an exclusive interaction with *The Hindu*.

Can you share insights into your evolution?

The transformation of Greaves Cotton was driven by the imperative to future-proof our 160-year-old legacy amidst seismic shifts in market dynamics and consumer expectations. As early as 2016, we recognised the impending disruption from BS-VI regulations, the shift towards clean energy, and the rise of alternative technologies.

Our strategy focused on transitioning from a single-product, single-fuel business to a multi-revenue, multi-business, fuel-agnostic company. This approach allowed us to pursue multiple growth areas simultaneously, combining organic innovation with strategic acquisitions. At the core of our journey are three mantras: 1. B2B + B2C - bringing us closer to consumers. 2. Value chain expansion - maximising life-cycle value through an

and strengthened consumer trust by delivering accessible, future-ready solutions.

Can you elaborate on expansion plans?

Greaves Engineering addresses industry needs with fuel-agnostic engines, e-powertrains and application-specific solutions, empowering customers across sectors. Our foray into global markets further strengthened our reach and credibility.

Greaves Retail bridges the gap between manufacturers and consumers through a robust network of over 250 distributors, over 20,000 retailers and 25,000 mechanics. Our unique value proposition lies in our 3S model delivering comprehensive support to customers across a range of industries.

What are your key priorities over the next five years?

Our focus is on building a robust, integrated ecosystem that connects products, services and solutions to enhance customer engagement.

This required substantial investments in R&D and a strategic shift toward high-growth sectors such as electric mobility, CNG and adjacent areas such as non-auto businesses, off-highway vehicles and trucks, amongst others.

Despite these challenges, the transformation opened up vast opportunities. We diversified our revenue streams, built a digitally connected ecosystem

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- SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR**
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- CLUB/STATE TEAM OF THE YEAR**
- MOMENT OF THE YEAR**

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THE HINDU GROUP

SCIENCE

Marine heatwave killed four million Alaska seabirds

The Hindu Bureau

The 2014-2016 Pacific marine heatwave wiped out more than half – roughly four million – of Alaska's common murres (*Uria aalge*) seabirds, representing the largest documented vertebrate die-off linked to warming oceans, according to a new study. "Although research on the impacts of global warming on marine birds has clearly suggested major shifts in

species' ranges and abundance, documented changes have been gradual (years to decades). To our knowledge, this study is the first to show that climate impacts can be swift (one year) and intense (eliminating half of the population)," authors of a study write. "Seabird mortalities are often observed in association with heatwaves, but population impacts are not well understood." Marine

heatwaves – intense, prolonged, and expansive ocean warming events – are becoming increasingly common due to climate change. They are profoundly reshaping marine ecosystems globally.

These heatwaves lead to mass mortality of key habitat-forming species like kelp and corals, triggering cascading trophic effects that alter ecosystem productivity, displace lower-trophic-level species, and

amplify food shortages for top predators. Although many upper-trophic-level species suffer from reduced reproductive success, increased mortality, and even mass die-offs due to marine heatwaves, broader population impacts are poorly understood.

Analysing colony counts before that period (2008-14), and after (2016-22), the authors documented a 52-78% population decline

across 13 murre colonies, equating to the loss of four million birds within the span of less than two years. According to them, this represents the largest documented wildlife mortality event in the modern era. Moreover, the findings reveal no evidence of population recovery since, suggesting potential long-term ecosystem shifts and an overall diminished capacity to support historical seabird populations. "Recent

population abundance estimates since then have found no evidence of recovery, suggesting that the heatwave may have led to an ecosystem shift," the Editor's summary says. "We suggest that the pronounced decline of an abundant and widespread upper trophic predator to less than half of its former population size in Alaska may signal a new threshold of response to global warming," they write.

SNAPSHOTS



A study shows why eating less slows aging

A component of bile called lithocholic acid can extend the lifespan of some animals. Researchers found, in mice, that levels of the acid rise during calorie restriction and that it activates a protein called AMPK, which scientists have already linked to the health benefits of eating less. When nematodes and fruit flies were fed lithocholic acid, the animals lived significantly longer than those that had not been given it. There is no evidence yet that lithocholic acid will have the same effect in humans.

Why better prediction of cyclone intensity, heavy rainfall is needed

Two critical areas requiring further research are the prediction of tropical cyclone intensity, especially rapid intensification, and forecasting of heavy rainfall associated with landfall

Madhavan Nair Rajeevan

Tropical cyclones rank among the most devastating natural phenomena, with the potential to inflict significant destruction and loss of life. While the North Indian Ocean basin experiences fewer cyclones compared to other regions, it remains highly susceptible to their impacts due to densely populated coastal areas. This vulnerability was tragically highlighted by the Bhola cyclone of 1970, the deadliest tropical cyclone on record. Observational evidence indicates shifts in the patterns, intensity, and frequency of tropical cyclones, underscoring the need for adaptive measures in vulnerable regions.

Climatologically, the Bay of Bengal experiences a higher frequency of tropical cyclones compared with the Arabian Sea. In recent years, there has been a 52% increase in the frequency of cyclonic storms in the Arabian Sea, alongside a threefold rise in the duration of very severe cyclonic storms. There is a greater likelihood of cyclonic storms intensifying into severe cyclonic storms. In the satellite era, the accumulated cyclone energy over the North Indian Ocean has shown an increasing trend. These trends are driven by environmental factors such as rising ocean heat content and decreasing vertical wind shear.

In future climate change scenarios, anthropogenic climate change is likely to fuel more powerful tropi-

Advanced forecasting technologies needed

Precise tropical cyclone prediction still remains a great challenge

- The Bay of Bengal experiences a higher frequency of tropical cyclones compared with the Arabian Sea
- But in recent years, the frequency of cyclonic storms in the Arabian Sea has increased by 52%, and the duration of very severe cyclonic storms has increased threefold
- The accumulated cyclone energy over the North Indian Ocean has been increasing due to rising ocean heat and decreasing vertical wind shear
- Eight low-pressure systems formed over the North Indian Ocean during the 2024 post-monsoon season (October–December)



Heavy downpour: In Puducherry, Cyclone Fennel dumped 48.4 cm of rainfall in 24 hours.

- Of the eight low-pressure systems, four intensified into depressions and two developed into cyclonic storms – Dana in October and Fennel in November
- Fennel stalled upon reaching the coast due to a rare balanced steering flow, allowing it to maintain its intensity even after landfall
- IMD successfully predicted the landfall near Puducherry but Fennel's north-eastward movement and the slow progression were not accurately predicted

cal cyclones. Additionally, the tropical cyclone precipitation rates are projected to rise, driven by increased atmospheric moisture associated with global warming. Ocean basins may also experience a higher frequency of rapid intensification events, a poleward migration of the latitude of maximum intensity, and a slowing of the forward motion of tropical cyclones.

Cyclone Fennel created its place in history with its unusual trajectory and devastating impact on Tamil Nadu's coastline. Emerging as a low-pressure area over the southeast Bay of Bengal on November 23, it made landfall near Puducherry on the night of November 30. Uniquely, the system stalled upon reaching the coast due to a rare balanced steering flow, al-

lowing it to maintain its intensity even after landfall until the evening of December 1. This persistence was fuelled by abundant moisture from saturated coastal soils, already soaked by preceding rains. The stalling cyclone unleashed unprecedented rainfall, with several locations across Puducherry and Villupuram districts recording 40-50 cm in a single day. Neighbouring districts, including Cuddalore and Tiruvannamalai, also experienced torrential downpours exceeding 20 cm within 24 hours. The deluge submerged vast stretches of farmland, resulting in catastrophic losses for farmers and severely impacting local livelihoods.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has established an impressive

track record for accurately predicting the track and landfall of tropical cyclones over the last decade. Despite this, Fennel presented significant forecasting challenges due to its unconventional track, variable speed, and intense rainfall during landfall. While IMD successfully predicted the landfall near Puducherry nearly three days in advance, certain aspects of the cyclone's behaviour were difficult to forecast. For instance, its north-eastward movement on November 27 was not accurately predicted, and the slow progression or stalling near the coast also posed challenges.

More broadly, weather prediction models often struggle with forecasting the heavy rainfall associated with tropical cyclone

landfalls, a limitation that was particularly evident in Fennel's case. None of the prediction models accurately predicted the exceptional 24-hour rainfall totals exceeding 40 cm recorded in some areas. Limitations in observational data over oceans, and the complex cloud dynamics within the cyclone contribute to forecasting difficulties, necessitating continuous advancements in modeling techniques and real-time data assimilation. Two critical areas requiring further research are the prediction of tropical cyclone intensity, especially rapid intensification and forecasting of heavy rainfall associated with landfall. These challenges are becoming increasingly urgent as IPCC climate models project more intense cyclones, accompanied by heavier precipitation and slower translation speeds.

Critical need

The post-monsoon cyclone activity of 2024 highlights the critical need for sustained investments in advanced forecasting technologies and research to address existing knowledge gaps.

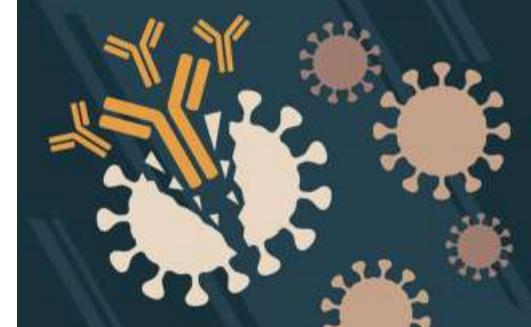
Despite significant progress, achieving precise tropical cyclone predictions remains a great challenge. It is imperative to prioritise measures that safeguard lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems from the devastating impacts of tropical cyclones.

(Madhavan Nair Rajeevan was former Secretary to the Government of India and presently the Vice Chancellor, Atria University, Bengaluru)



Neanderthal DNA got into humans earlier than thought

Two studies now suggest that Neanderthal DNA entered human genomes virtually overnight, much more recently than was thought. One study finds that modern humans and Neanderthals interbred in a roughly 7,000-year period; the other finds that the mixing took place between 45,000 and 49,000 years ago. The results come in part from the oldest human genomes ever sequenced: a male *Homo sapiens* found near Ramis, Germany and a female *Homo sapiens* from Czech Republic.



Skin produces antibodies to keep bacteria in check

The human skin seems to be able to produce its own antibodies to keep microbes in check. In mice colonised by *Staphylococcus epidermidis*, a bacterium found on skin, the skin was able to generate antibodies even when other parts of the immune system were disabled. And this surprise power might be harnessed to fight pathogens: when researchers modified *S. epidermidis* to display part of the tetanus toxin, the skin response protected mice from a lethal dose.

Endocrine glands: the body's tiny titans



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. Balasubramanian

When we worry about the health of our family and our friends, discussion often gravitates towards our hormones, the most talked about being insulin and the thyroid hormone. Hormones are signaling molecules found in most multicellular organisms. They facilitate communication between organs and tissues in our body that are far apart. The signals regulate a wide range of physiological and behavioral processes, such as growth and maturation, sleep, digestive functions, and stress responses.

Our school education has provided us with an understanding of the role

of hormones in human physiology, with the respective endocrine glands that secrete hormones being described by their size and location in our bodies.

What is noticeable about these descriptions is how small these glands are. The adrenal glands, found atop each kidney, weigh 5-10 grams in adults. The pineal gland in the midline of the brain is the size and shape of a grain of rice and weighs 50-150 mg. The thyroid gland in the neck resembles a butterfly in shape and weighs about 25 grams.

Size versus function

One puzzle that has remained unaddressed is the huge differences in the size of the endocrine glands themselves. The thyroid gland may weigh no bigger than a chopstick, but a pineal gland is a mere grain of rice. This



The thyroid gland in the neck resembles a butterfly in shape and weighs about 25 grams. GETTY IMAGES

question has been recently answered, for many of our body's hormones, in an analysis by the Alon group at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, Israel; the study was published in the journal *iScience*. They started with the number of cells in an endocrine gland that secrete hormones. Thus, the parathyroid gland, four of which are found in the neck, each the size of a lentil seed (in Hindi-*masur*; Ta-

mil, *avarai*) weighs 120 mg and has about 10 million cells that secrete the parathyroid hormone. On the other extreme, the adrenal cortex, at over 5 grams, is much larger and has 4.5 billion cells that secrete cortisol.

All cells that are the target of a hormone molecule have a receptor for that molecule on their surface. Cells bearing these receptors can be tagged and their numbers estimated

in slices of tissue using microscopes. This study shows that the number of hormone-secreting cells are in proportion to the number of cells that are targeted. Every hormone producing cell has about 2,000 target cells.

The adrenal cortex is relatively large, as is the thyroid. Adrenaline binds to all cells in the body that have a nucleus. The thyroid hormones keep up metabolic balance throughout the body. The parathyroid hormone comes from a diminutive gland, and its targets include the kidney, the pancreas and some parts of the central nervous system.

Some hormones are secreted by organs that have other functions too. The pancreas, weighing 80-100 grams, has a major role in secreting digestive enzymes. Only 1-2% of cells in the pancreas pro-

duce insulin, which targets the liver and muscle cells.

Adjustments to hormonal levels by dietary and other health measures can have a large impact on our well-being. For example, intermittent fasting reduces circulating insulin concentrations because the absence of food intake diminishes the requirement for insulin secretion. Lowered insulin levels also result from high fibre diets, regular exercise, sufficient sleep and low stress levels.

Reduced insulin levels make the cells of our bodies become more efficient at taking up glucose from the blood. This helps prevent insulin resistance. The small size of these organs belies the influence that they have on our well-being.

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



Question Corner

Durian flowering

What triggers the flowering of durians?

Based on observations of 110 durian plants, researchers have discovered that around 15 days of dry weather can trigger the flowering of durian plants. The flowering occurred around 50 days after an approximately 15-day dry spell, independent of whether the plant was grafted or grown from a seed. The team found that durian plants flowered approximately 50 days after a prolonged period of dry weather. These dry spells needed to be long enough to show up in moving average traces, specifically periods where

rainfall averaged over 15-day windows was less than 1 mm. They proposed that there was some relationship between the flowering of durian and the more general burst of flowering seen in the tropics following long dry spells. But such general flowering events require a longer dry spell of around 30 days to occur. This explains why durians tend to flower multiple times a year, while synchronised flowering across species occurs once every few years.

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

Why will India's foreign policy be a tightrope walk?

Why did Bangladesh events come as a shock to the govt? What about relations with China and the U.S.?

Suhasini Haidar

The story so far:

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi was sworn in for a third time in June, the year was jam-packed with incoming and outgoing visits. Above all, 2024 was full of global insecurity and shocks in the neighbourhood, particularly Bangladesh. As 2025 looks to be even more uncertain, Indian foreign policy's biggest challenge is to remain poised for change.

What were the high points in India's external relations?

The most difficult negotiation completed this year was for disengagement at the Line of Actual Control with China. While restoring ties and rebuilding the trust shattered by the Chinese PLA's transgressions since 2020 is a more prolonged task, the first formal Modi-Xi Jinping meeting in five years at Kazan was a turning point.

The year began with a visit from French President Emmanuel Macron as a guest on Republic Day and a reaffirmation of the dependability of bilateral ties. Early in 2024, the conclusion of the India-European Free Trade Association agreement, India's first with Europe, was heralded as a template for India to complete other such negotiations, although the year ended without similar progress on FTAs with Australia, the U.K., and the European Union.

S. Jaishankar's year-end neighbourhood visit to Washington and meetings with the Trump team indicate that ties with the U.S. will be a priority

Modi's swearing-in. Pakistan wasn't invited, but External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made the first such visit in nearly a decade to Islamabad for the SCO summit. Several visits by the Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay as well as Mr. Modi's visit to Thimphu to receive an award, and successful visits by the new Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, setting aside the tensions earlier, were other high points of the year.

What kept South Block awake at night in 2024?

The transformation of Bangladesh, from a friendly neighbour and most important connectivity partner under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, to becoming estranged over her ouster from power in August was the year's biggest shock for New Delhi.

Ties with Canada took a turn for the worse as Canadian authorities doubled down on allegations that Indian officials had ordered the Nijjar killing, even naming Home Minister Amit Shah in the alleged conspiracy. New Delhi dealt with Canada by slamming its doors shut on PM Justin Trudeau, with the hope a new government will be elected there in 2025. But it wasn't easy to do the same with the U.S., where the Department of Justice filed indictments against the Adani group and a new indictment against an Indian official for the alleged Pannun assassination plot. The U.S.'s role in the South Asian neighbourhood, and China's forays into Nepal and other neighbours are a continuing challenge. However, the election of U.S. President Donald Trump and the largely pro-India team he has picked could be a breather.

How did Indian foreign policy navigate global conflict?

Mr. Modi's visits to Russia and Ukraine within weeks of each other raised speculation that he would play mediator in future negotiations. There were no high-level visits from or to Israel, and Mr. Modi made a point of meeting Palestinian PM Mahmoud Abbas at the UN. While New Delhi repeatedly called for an end to the civilian casualties, it continued to hedge its position at the UN on resolutions seeking to bring Israel to account for the killing of more than 45,000 in Gaza. With multilateral initiatives like IMEC (India-Middle East Europe-Economic Corridor) and I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE and U.S.) in trouble, India sought to engage West Asian countries bilaterally. In 2025, a more difficult tightrope walk for South Block is expected between Iran and the Israel-U.S. combine.

What's on the diplomatic calendar in 2025?

Mr. Jaishankar's year-end visit to Washington and meetings with the Trump transition team indicate that ties with the U.S. will be a priority in 2025. Mr. Trump is expected to visit India for the Quad Summit next year. 2025 is expected to begin with a ministerial visit from Iran, followed by U.S. NSA Jake Sullivan for a last-moment iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology) meet.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto will be the Republic Day guest. All eyes will be on Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Delhi, his first since the war began, expected to be finalised early in 2025.

What will a second Trump presidency bring?

How will the world, and India, negotiate Trump 2.0? Why is Trump threatening punitive tariffs on some countries? Will he usher in changes in immigration policies? Will his second term also likely witness America's continuing withdrawal from global, multilateral and regional engagement?

Narayan Lakshman

The story so far:

When U.S. President-elect Donald Trump is administered the oath of office on January 20, 2025, and officially kicks off his second term at the White House, it will be the onset of four years that herald the deepening of domestic and foreign policy priorities enacted in his first term as President. On the cards are a reimposition of punitive tariffs against nations exporting to the U.S., and India is likely to feature on that list; a tough stance on immigration; and changes in foreign policy, with America likely to see the continuing withdrawal from global, multilateral and regional engagement like in his first term.

What tariffs policies and tax cuts are likely to be tabled by the Trump administration?

The first Trump administration started a trade war with China when it hit Beijing in 2018 with a punitive net tariff coverage of nearly 15% of all U.S. imports. In that case, his administration had already imposed several tariffs prior to 2018 as well, with the result that there were overlapping tariffs on a number of products; for example, the 25% tariff that was imposed that year was over and above an antidumping tariff of approximately 66% that was already in place. Despite this somewhat chaotic approach to tariff imposition, one fact was clear – China was the main target on the global stage: at 11.1% import coverage by U.S. special tariffs in 2018, the rate slapped on Beijing dwarfed the rate for other exporters to the U.S., including India, at 0.2%. In terms of products, the U.S. special tariffs preponderantly targeted imports of intermediate goods, and to a much lesser extent capital goods and final products. This is likely to

There is a possibility of a large-scale deportation of undocumented workers, but there's a huge cost factor

have impacted the final price of finished goods based on intermediate goods sourced within the U.S.

During his 2024 campaign, Mr. Trump had affirmed that he would impose an across-the-board tariff of somewhere between 10%-20% on the entire \$3 trillion worth of U.S. goods imports and a China-specific additional tariff of 60%. Assuming that the focus on intermediate goods continues in this context, this would imply a significant jump from his first term in terms of the value of goods impacted, most likely additional tens of billions of dollars' worth on commodities such as steel and aluminium and at least \$300 billion worth of Chinese goods. Retaliation from China, the E.U., India, and other trading partners of the U.S. is sure to follow swiftly.

Regarding the high likelihood of a corporate tax cut, it could come in the form of renewing the lapsing cuts that Mr. Trump had introduced in 2017, through the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. This despite – or perhaps precisely because of – the fact that the policy did reduce taxes for most people, though it disproportionately benefitted the wealthy, according to the non-partisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Their analysis at the time noted this policy resulted in households with incomes in the top 1% receiving an average tax cut of more than \$60,000 if the cuts were maintained, compared to an average tax cut of less than \$500 for households in the bottom 60%. Additionally, the Trump tax cut "was expensive and eroded the U.S. revenue base... and failed to deliver promised economic benefits," the CBPP noted.

Other economic policy actions that the Trump White House might advocate for include a carbon-border adjustment tax and quantitative restrictions on investments into U.S. assets such as infrastructure and essential medicine production capabilities, by China.

His administration would also likely seek the inputs of the Department of Government Efficiency – led by the "tech bros" Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy – to reduce wastage and inefficiencies within the purview of the federal government, including by rationalising the actions of bureaucrats and cutting down on regulations across sectors. While the duo have hinted at potentially finding \$2 trillion in savings through this initiative, including via mass layoffs and the shutting down of some agencies entirely, critics have challenged the size of the potential gains that could be made here.

What action is expected on immigration?

Going by the Trump campaign's policy promises in the lead-up to the 2024 election, there is a

distinct possibility of a large-scale deportation of undocumented workers. However, there may be several obstacles that the White House might encounter as it carries out this possibly unprecedented action. Firstly, across several states, key urban hubs have vowed to be "sanctuary cities" and pass laws to limit local law enforcement cooperation with the federal government's Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This is likely to make it politically complicated to carry out detention and deportation actions on a sizeable scale and in a short time frame. Secondly, the Trump campaign is yet to share details on the cost of such operations to the exchequer, but non-partisan analysts such as the American Immigration Council estimate that such an immigration proposal could potentially cost taxpayers considerably more than \$300 billion. These estimates notwithstanding, there is little doubt that Mr. Trump will attempt to accelerate deportations to fulfil his campaign promises, especially as the first Trump administration deported close to 1.5 million people – almost the same number as outgoing President Joe Biden and far less than former President Barack Obama, who turned away nearly 3 million people over eight years in office.

What impact could be expected regarding U.S. foreign policy?

Mr. Trump has proclaimed publicly without explanation or details that he can and will end the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas conflict. On the former, he has said he would end the war even prior to Inauguration Day, even if he views the conflict through the lens of halting the "endless flow of American treasure to Ukraine" and demanding that NATO allies in Europe reimburse Washington for its war-related expenses if they expect military support from the U.S. against future Russian aggression.

Regarding Israel, the incoming President has followed in Mr. Biden's footsteps and criticised the Israeli government's aggression in Gaza, although Mr. Trump had tacitly expressed support for Israel by moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in his first term.

What bolsters Mr. Trump's intentions?

While the Trump 2.0 administration is yet to spell out critical details regarding its policy plans on the domestic and international fronts, one thing is certain: Mr. Trump enjoys an overwhelming mandate expressed through the result of the 2024 election. Further, he will be fundamentally operating from a position of institutional strength given the federal government trifecta, which implies that the White House will enjoy the luxury of greater cooperation in getting policies sanctioned by Congress, and possibly important cases ruled in his administration's favour by a sympathetic U.S. Supreme Court.



New dawn: A demonstrator protests at the San Ysidro crossing port on the U.S.-Mexico border, during International Migrants Day on December 18. AFP

Why inflation will matter more in 2025

What have the Q2 of 2024-25 GDP numbers revealed? How are soaring food prices impacting the situation? Why couldn't the RBI effect interest rate cuts? Why is there a worry on both inflation and growth fronts? What are the revised growth projections?

Vikas Dhoot

The story so far:

It has been what one may call, a bittersweet year for the economy, with a sweet first half, when growth surprised everyone, including the government. And a difficult latter half by the end of which the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Finance Ministry mandarins are sparring, as diplomatically as possible, over who is to be blamed for sputtering growth, a persistently resurgent inflation trajectory and the flux this creates for policy making.

Why is there a clamour for a rate cut?

Top government functionaries have been making noises since late November about the need for RBI to cut rates, with some suggesting it should ignore volatile food prices and prioritise growth and investments. The reason for their seemingly urgent pitches became clearer when the Q2 GDP numbers revealed a 7-quarter low growth of 5.4%, with urban demand tottering and showing up in underwhelming corporate results that also affected market sentiment.

How were things this time last year?

India's stock markets were at record highs, the Gross Domestic Product was reported to have risen 7.7% in the first half of 2023-24, from 7.2% a year earlier. The Finance Ministry expected

The Finance Ministry and the central bank are not seeing eye to eye on how to stem inflation and boost growth

growth to be "over 6.5%" for the full year, as it geared up for an interim Budget ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. The RBI was expected to start an interest rate cut cycle in the second half of 2024 as it had projected inflation to average 4% – its median target – through July-September.

But didn't the economy do far better in 2023-24?

Yes, the National Statistical Office (NSO) growth estimates for 2023-24 turned out to be way healthier than all projections, partly because of revisions in earlier quarters' numbers. The first half of 2023-24 was reckoned to have grown around 8.1%, followed by an 8.6% spike between October and December 2023 (third quarter, or Q3), a 7.8% growth in the first three months of 2024. 2023-24 had ended up with a remarkable 8.2% uptick. The first quarter of 2024-25 was largely taken up by the election process. The BJP suffered some reverses, but attained 240 seats in the Lok Sabha and the NDA returned to office with a little help from some allies, and a semblance of continuity was maintained in the cabinet, especially for key economic portfolios like Finance and Commerce.

What did the post-poll Budget offer?

In the full Union Budget for 2024-25 presented in July, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman ramped up references to employment and the middle class and unveiled schemes to spur skilling and job creation with some token tax cuts for income tax payers, that were hoped to alleviate the effects of inflation and boost consumption. While a sustained consumption pick-up was necessary to stimulate greenfield and brownfield private investments, Ms. Sitharaman acknowledged that public spending on infrastructure had to lead the way yet again this year and announced a ₹11.11 lakh capex plan. The government exuded confidence that India would record its fourth successive year with 7% or higher growth, since COVID-19 had tripped the economy.

How did things pan out?

The first growth data for 2024-25, released after the Budget, showed GDP had risen at a



five-quarter low of 6.7%. However, this didn't ring any alarm bells at the time -- the prolonged polling process had affected capital spending plans by the Centre and the States which effectively scuppered a major growth lever. The mood was still upbeat but some had begun to worry. "Growth moderated in the April-June quarter as high interest rates temper urban demand," said Louis Kuijts, Asia-Pacific chief economist at S&P Global Ratings in September. The firm expected India to grow 6.8% this year at the time, well below the 7.2% projected by the RBI. After the Q2 growth shock, many have pared their 2024-25 growth projections down, including the Finance Ministry which now expects it to be around 6.5%, while some worry India has entered the throes of a prolonged cyclical slowdown.

Meanwhile, though consumer price inflation remained under 6% through most of the year, it didn't get near the RBI's goal till July when it hit a five-year low of 3.5%, followed by another benign print in August. Yet, rate cut hopes in the October monetary policy review were scotched by food prices that shot up, starting in September, lifting the headline inflation closer to 6% again. With food prices still a worry and edible oils spiking up, the RBI did not budge on interest rates this month as well, even as it noted the growth-inflation situation is no longer well-poised, slashing its 2024-25 growth projection to 6.6% from earlier hopes of 7.2%.

With slowing growth and high inflation, what next?

While high interest rates hurt demand and lower rates will help private consumption and, in turn, investments too, inflation hurts consumption spending as well. The government has appointed a new Governor at the RBI, but a change of guard may not suffice for a rate cut in February as inflation needs to ebb quickly too. That North Block and Mint Street are not seeing eye to eye on who needs to blink first to break this growth-inflation flux was apparent as the year drew to a close. An RBI article made a solid case for 'exorcising inflation now' to get consumption, growth and investment going on a strong footing. The latest economic review by the Finance Ministry, in turn, sought to blame the "monetary policy stance" for some of the recent demand slowdown. The growth and inflation rebalancing act, therefore, will be the one to watch out for in 2025, apart from any surprises the next U.S. President throws up.

PROFILES

The autumn of a liberal

Justin Trudeau

The Canadian Prime Minister, once a liberal darling, endures a chilly winter with popularity ratings tanking, senior colleagues withdrawing support to him and new foreign policy challenges emerging from across the border after Donald Trump's victory

Srinivasan Ramani

Ince a liberal icon who represented the values of the 'cultural Left', Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, now in the last year of his third term, is mired in a crisis of unpopularity, dissension and defections from within his Liberal Party fold.

The embattled Mr. Trudeau has been in power for nearly a decade since November 2015, for three terms. Few Canadian Prime Ministers have survived to rule for four terms. But in both the 2019 and 2021 federal elections – the latter called in September 2021 after Mr. Trudeau advised the country's Governor General to dissolve parliament – the Liberal Party was reduced to leading a minority government.

In March 2022, Mr. Trudeau was able to retain power after the Liberals and the social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) agreed to a confidence and supply agreement, entailing NDP support in parliament tied to the Liberals backing the NDP agenda on welfare and taxes.

In the years since, Mr. Trudeau's popularity has plateaued. Recent approval ratings show that he enjoys barely 26% support compared with the 63% he had in the early days of his first tenure. Liberal Party leaders within his caucus have called for his resignation and earlier this month, a key Minister and someone widely considered to be his successor, Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, resigned abruptly, calling Mr. Trudeau's policies "costly political gimmicks".

Meanwhile, a resurgent Conservative Party, led by Pierre Poilievre, has steadily upped its popularity due to negative perceptions in the electorate about Mr. Trudeau's governance. And the social democrats have been miffed too because of ideological differences with the Liberal Party.

In September, the NDP had ended its 2022 agreement but Mr. Trudeau survived three no-confidence motions called by the Conservative Party since then, as the NDP and the federalist

Bloc Québécois have been reluctant to vote alongside the conservatives.

Elections are supposed to be held in October 2025 but there is an increasing likelihood that the Liberal Party will seek a leadership change before that to mitigate the loss of support due to Mr. Trudeau's unpopularity. The opposition in Canada apart, Mr. Trudeau has had to chart unsteady waters in Canada's external affairs as well. The re-election of Donald Trump as the U.S. President and his open hostility to Mr. Trudeau, besides threats of tariffs on Canadian goods, is a major irritant.

Ties with India

Canada's relations with India also took a nose-dive over allegations by Mr. Trudeau that Indian intelligence agencies were linked to the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Khalistani separatist and Canadian citizen, even as the Indian government upped the ante over its concerns that Mr. Trudeau's government was providing safe haven to Khalistani extremists. Mr. Trudeau was also confronted publicly by the Chinese President Xi Jinping for "leaking" discussions between the two sides on "Chinese interference" in Canada to the media.

How did things go so south for the "liberal darling" of the northern hemisphere?

Mr. Trudeau rode to power in Canada promising a liberal agenda and delivered on some issues that were dear to the "cultural Left".

He acted on promises of instituting gender equality by appointing a Cabinet with 50% representation to women and appointing more women judges in Canada's Supreme Court. Recreational marijuana's sale and use was legalised in Canada in 2018. A carbon tax was introduced as Mr. Trudeau sought to implement climate-friendly policies. Child care agreements were implemented as was representation for and reconciliation with Indigenous people.

But Mr. Trudeau's image as a reformer committed to liberalism had already been hurt because of a number of scandals. While he appointed an indigenous woman to the post of Justice Minister in Jody



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

Wilson-Raybould in his first term, she resigned over alleged interference and threats from government officials to favour a firm embroiled in a corruption trial. In 2020, in his second term, Mr. Trudeau faced an ethics scandal involving a government contract for a charity that worked with his family members.

His current unpopularity is now tied to the problems related to the economy. Issues such as raging inflation, a housing crisis and opposition to immigration have led to a significant decline in opinion for Mr. Trudeau and the conservative party has benefited from this. With opinion polls pointing to a possible rout for the Liberal party if elections were held now, a number of his party colleagues

have urged him to step down, none more prominent than Ms. Freeland. The NDP has also promised a no-confidence motion in the New Year and it remains to be seen if Mr. Trudeau can weather that storm as he has managed in his three terms.

His boyish looks and charm and the fact that he is the scion of the Trudeau family – father Pierre Trudeau served two terms (one abridged one) as Prime Minister in the late 1970s and early 1980s – helped him garner popular support when he embarked on its first term, calling himself a representative of the younger generation in Canada. Taking a leaf from the playbook of former U.S. President Barack Obama, Mr. Trudeau won a mandate at a time when liberalism was popular in the

early 2010s in the Americas in particular.

Rise of populism

But with high inflation affecting people across Europe and North America and voters turning toward right-wing populists who are avowedly opposed to free trade and the liberal international order, Mr. Trudeau finds himself as an anomaly. The phenomenon of working class voters being wooed by the Right on issues such as immigration and "culture wars" is not unique to Canada as experiences of other Western democracies, including that of the U.S. show.

Ms. Freeland characterised his efforts to win back voters such as a "two month sales holiday" and 250 Canadian dollars as rebate for workers as reckless policies but it also suggested a desperation by Mr. Trudeau to wean away detractors from working sections.

The manner he has attended festivals with Khalistani insignia and others glorifying extremists could also be seen as a way to pander to the influential Sikh community, but his rhetoric about Indian involvement in Nijjar's murder reflects an intention to better his image as a "weak leader".

With signs pointing to drastic Liberal losses, Mr. Trudeau could be persuaded to relinquish power to a colleague as elections beckon, akin to how Joe Biden withdrew from the Presidential race in the neighbouring country. But considering his record in his earlier tenure and how he addressed allegations against him, it is increasingly likely that he will try to portray himself as a defiant leader who will stay in power till the end of his term.

One way to do so would be to prorogue parliament and prevent any no-confidence motions till elections are scheduled in October. As things stand, no Liberal leader has the heft to close the gap between the Conservatives but Ms. Freeland's resignation seems timed to push the party to find an alternative. Whether Mr. Trudeau will succeed in fending off this fresh challenge will be known quickly as 2025 beckons in Canada.

THE GIST

Recent approval ratings show that Justin Trudeau enjoys barely 26% support compared to the 63% he had in the early days of his first tenure

His current unpopularity is tied to the problems related to the economy: issues such as raging inflation, a housing crisis and opposition to immigration have led to a significant decline in opinion for Trudeau

Elections are supposed to be held in October 2025 but there is an increasing likelihood that the Liberal Party will seek a leadership change before that

Troubled waters

Panama Canal

The 82-km-long strategic waterway that connects the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans is in the spotlight after U.S. President-elect Donald Trump threatened to retake its control

Adithya Narayan

Emboldened by his victory in the U.S. presidential polls, Donald Trump has drummed up his rhetoric of belligerence by announcing plans to annex Canada and Greenland and retake control of the Panama Canal. While the U.S. has not historically shied away from coveting the two northern territories, threatening to renege on a deal that ceded Washington's control of the canal to Panama has been strictly the brainchild of the President-elect.

Panama Canal is an 82-km-long strategic waterway that connects the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. It helps ships do away with the need to go around the South American tip of Cape Horn, saving 13,000 km and days of journey. Consequently, the canal facilitates the passage of over 14,000 ships a year.

The 78-year-old Republican first spelt out his plans for the canal during a speech at a Conservative event in Arizona and subsequently on his social media platform Truth Social. "We're being ripped off at the Panama Canal like we're being ripped off everywhere else," he said, referring to the increased shipping rates, on December 22. Mr. Trump also warned of the growing

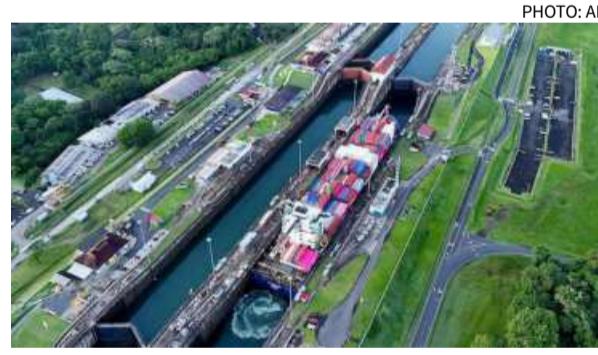


PHOTO: AP

"Chinese influence" in the region. Later, Mr. Trump posted a photo on Truth Social of the U.S. flag flying over the narrow waterway in the Isthmus of Panama. The caption read "Welcome to the United States Canal".

In its response, the Central American nation said, "Every square meter of the Panama Canal and the surrounding area belongs to Panama and will continue belonging to Panama."

Mr. Trump's grief in the matter is understandable for the U.S., whose ships constitute 74% of the traffic in the canal, is its biggest benefactor, followed by China at 21%. If not for the canal, ships traversing the east and west coasts of the U.S. would have to undertake an additional 22 days of voyage. The canal also came to the aid of the Allies during the Second World War.

What began as a French project in 1880 under the leadership of Ferdinand de Lesseps, who had built the

Suez Canal, soon fell apart due to unforeseen difficulties. Americans stepped in to complete the canal but Colombia, which ruled over Panama, did not favour the idea. By orchestrating independence from Colombia, then U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt secured a deal whereby Panama gave his country control over a 16-km wide strip of land to build the canal in exchange for monetary compensation.

Lock technology
The canal entered into operation in 1914. By using a technology comprising a series of locks, it revolutionised shipping. However, a dispute over the ownership and administration soon broke out between the U.S. and Panama, which eventually led to a direct clash in 1964. In 1977, then President Jimmy Carter and Panama's military leader Omar Torrijos signed two treaties – the Permanent Neutrality Treaty and the

Panama Canal treaty that saw the U.S. hand over the control of the canal to Panama in 1999.

The former agreement grants the U.S. the authority to ensure the canal remains free and open without giving it the power to interfere in Panama. The latter ensured that Washington transferred the canal to Panama by December 31, 1999.

Since 2000, Panama has overseen the administration of the canal. However, the region, one of the wettest until recently, experienced a rainfall deficit in 2022. Gatun Lake, which provides the 200 million litres of water needed for each ship to transit the canal, experienced a drop in water levels, prompting authorities to increase shipping charges starting in 2025. Mr. Trump has objected to this.

His allegation of Chinese influence pertains to the Hong Kong-based company C.K. Hutchison Holdings, which manages two of the five ports in the region – one on each side of the canal. Bolstering his claim further was Panama's 2017 decision to cut ties with Taiwan.

Growing tensions between the U.S. and Panama might not align with Mr. Trump's top policy priorities such as stopping illegal migration from South America, warn experts.

Bringing rivers closer

Ken-Betwa project

The massive river link project, envisaged in 1995, has finally kicked off, with hopes that it will provide drinking water to millions and concerns over environmental damage

Mehul Malpani

In December 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in Madhya Pradesh's Khajuraho to lay the foundation stone for various development projects. Among them was the ambitious Ken-Betwa river linking project that plans to transfer excess water from the Ken river basin to the Betwa river basin in the Bundelkhand region that covers parts of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

As the Prime Minister flagged off work on the project, the Congress and a section of environmentalists raised concerns regarding its potential impact on environment, local ecology and wildlife as a large part of the project falls inside the Panna National Park and Tiger Reserve of Madhya Pradesh.

According to the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, the Ken-Betwa link project (KBLP) is the first of 30 such link projects under a National Perspective Plan (NPP) for water resources development and interlinking of rivers with 'surplus water' to those with 'deficit water', formulated in 1980 by the Ministry (then Union Ministry of Irrigation) and the Central Water Commission.

An idea first envisaged in 1995, the KBLP, part of



PHOTO: PTI

the Peninsular Rivers Development, has moved at a slow pace. The first major breakthrough was, however, achieved on August 25, 2005 as the Central Government and the governments of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the preparation of a Detailed Project Report.

After a tripartite MoU was signed between the Centre and the two States in March 2021 for the implementation of the project, it was finally approved by the Union Cabinet in December that year, with a budget of ₹44,605 crore.

The project plans on transferring the declared surplus water of the Ken river by constructing the Daudhan Dam on it and using a 221-km canal, including a 2-km tunnel, to the Betwa river. Apart from this, the project is also expected to generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power.

It is also aimed at solving

the water woes of the drought-prone Bundelkhand region by providing drinking water to 4.4 million people in about 12 districts of Madhya Pradesh and more than 2 million people in 10 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

While launching the works on the Daudhan Dam on December 25, Mr. Modi said the KBLP will bring prosperity to the Bundelkhand region.

Spread between the northern parts of Madhya Pradesh and southern Uttar Pradesh, the partly-hilly region covers 13 districts in the two States and has for long suffered droughts and water shortages. The region is also among one of the country's most socio-economically backward regions.

Environmental issues
Even as the BJP governments at the Centre and in the two States continue to claim various benefits of the project, several environmental concerns have

been flagged.

Among the most prominent is the project's potential impact on the wildlife inside the Panna Tiger Reserve as the project is expected to cause massive deforestation, felling of over 2.3 million trees with a girth of 20 cm or more as per an estimate, and harm the local ecology due to the Daudhan Dam's construction inside the forest.

Former Union Environment and Forests Minister and Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh has claimed that the project is likely to "submerge over 10% of the core area of the tiger reserve".

Experts also believe the data the government has banked on to conclude that the Ken river has surplus water is outdated and have demanded release of the latest figures.

Between 2005 and 2008, the then Panna Collector, Deepali Rastogi, had written to various Central and State Government departments, claiming that there was no surplus water in the Ken river.

In May, 2017, a group of 30 activists and experts had written to the Union Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, flagging several concerns regarding the project, including the possible displacement of at least 10 villages in Chhattisgarh and Panna districts.

ISTANBUL

Turkiye's pro-Kurd party meets jailed PKK leader after 10 years



A delegation from Turkiye's main pro-Kurdish DEM party on Saturday visited jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, who is serving life on a prison island off Istanbul, party officials said. The visit would be the party's first in almost 10 years. Ocalan founded the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) nearly half a century ago. AFP

BRUSSELS

EU's universal charger rules for electric goods come into force



EU rules requiring all new smartphones, tablets and cameras to use the same charger came into force on Saturday, in a change Brussels said will cut costs and waste. Manufacturers are now obliged to fit devices sold in the EU with a USB-C, the port chosen by the bloc as the common standard for charging electronic tools. AFP

BERLIN

Elon Musk backs AfD party in German newspaper opinion piece



U.S. billionaire Elon Musk backed Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD) in a guest opinion piece for Germany's Welt am Sonntag newspaper published online on Saturday that prompted the commentary editor to resign in protest. In the piece, Mr. Musk claimed that "only the AfD can save Germany." REUTERS

CAIRO

First war-time aid convoy reaches besieged southern Khartoum



Civilians in a besieged area south of Sudan's war-torn capital received their first aid convoy this week since the war began 20 months ago. The convoy included 22 trucks carrying food from the UN's WFP, one truck from Doctors Without Borders and Care, and five trucks loaded with medicine from UNICEF. AFP

Israel 'detains' director of one of last functioning hospitals in north Gaza

Israeli troops arrest Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, director of Kamal Adwan Hospital; announcement comes a day after Israel stormed the hospital, forcing many staff and patients outside to strip in winter weather; nine killed in overnight strikes

Associated Press
DEIR AL BALAH

Israel's Army detained the director of one of the last functioning hospitals in northern Gaza as overnight strikes in the enclave killed nine persons including children, Palestinian medical officials said, while sirens rang out across Israel.

Gaza's Health Ministry said Saturday that Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, director of Kamal Adwan Hospital, was arrested by Israeli forces. The announcement comes a day after Israeli troops stormed the hospital, forcing many staff and patients outside to strip in winter weather, according



Crippled existence: A Palestinian who was evacuated from Kamal Adwan hospital in northern Gaza on Saturday. REUTERS

to the ministry.

Israel's Army did not respond to questions about Dr. Abu Safiya. On Friday, it denied claims it had entered or set fire to the complex and said it

was conducting operations against Hamas infrastructure and militants in the area and had ordered people out of the hospital.

It repeated claims that Hamas militants operate

inside Kamal Adwan Hospital but provided no evidence. Hospital officials have denied that.

Frequent target

Kamal Adwan Hospital has been hit multiple times over the past three months by Israeli troops waging an offensive against Hamas fighters in surrounding neighborhoods. The ministry said a strike on the hospital earlier this week killed five medical personnel.

Israel's nearly 15-month-old campaign of bombardment and offensives has devastated Gaza's health sector.

The war has killed more than 45,400 Palestinians,

more than half women and children, and wounded more than 1,08,000 others, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Dr. Abu Safiya was detained on Friday along with dozens of other staff from the hospital and taken to an interrogation center, the ministry said.

On Friday, MedGlobal, the humanitarian organisation where Dr. Abu Safiya worked, said he was a lead physician for the group and was gravely concerned about him. The group said the incident follows the October detention of five other of its staff, calling it an "alarming and egregious pattern of targeting medical personnel and spaces."

Taliban target Pakistan in retaliation for air strikes

Associated Press

Afghanistan's Defence Ministry said on Saturday that its forces hit several points inside Pakistan in retaliation for deadly air-strikes last week.

Pakistan on last Tuesday launched an operation to destroy a training facility and kill insurgents in Afghanistan's eastern Paktika province. The strikes killed dozens of people, mostly women and children.

Comments from the Taliban Defence Ministry on Saturday, posted on X, said its forces targeted Pakistani points that "served as centres and hideouts for malicious elements and their supporters who organised and coordinated attacks in Afghanistan."

Ministry spokesperson Enayatullah Kharzami gave no further information about the strikes, including how they were carried out and if there were any casualties on either side.



Tit for tat: Taliban said it targeted locations in Pakistan that served as points for organising attacks on Afghanistan. AFP

ghanistan civilians.

People celebrated Afghanistan's retaliation in the country's southeastern Khost province, according to the organiser, Rasheedullah Hamdard.

Pakistani officials have accused the Taliban of not doing enough to combat cross-border militant activity, a charge the Taliban government denies.

BNP flays Yunus's plan to lower voting age to 17 in Bangladesh

Press Trust of India
DHAKA

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Saturday said that Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's suggestion to set the minimum voting age at 17 would put pressure on the Election Commission and could delay the election process.

Mr. Yunus, 84, who was sworn in to lead the interim government after the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August, on Friday suggested that the minimum voter age should be lowered to 17 years, *The Dhaka Tribune* newspaper reported.

In a video message, Mr. Yunus said, "To give their [youth] opinion on their own future, I think the voting age for them should be fixed at 17 years."

BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said the chief adviser's



Muhammad Yunus

suggestion to lower the voting age to 17 means a new voter list would have to be prepared.

Further delays

"Now, people will fear that even more time will be wasted and further delays will occur," he said.

Mr. Alamgir said there is an impression among the people that the interim government is deliberately trying to delay the election process. "But that is not my perception," he added.

West Asia can't be a proxy for big powers, say China and Iran

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

The top diplomats of China and Iran agreed on Saturday that West Asia is "not a battleground for the big powers" and should not be an arena of geopolitical competition between countries outside the region.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi agreed that "the international community should respect the sovereignty, security, stability, unity and territorial integrity of Middle East [West Asia] countries," according to a readout from Beijing.

Mr. Araghchi is on his first visit to China since being appointed Foreign Minister of Iran.

The two major trading partners reiterated calls for a ceasefire in Gaza, the proper implementation of

the ceasefire in Lebanon, and the "integrated promotion of counter-terrorism, reconciliation and humanitarian processes in Syria".

"The two sides agreed that the Middle East belongs to the people of the Middle East, and is not a battleground for the big powers, and should not be a victim of geopolitical competition and conflicts between countries from outside the region," the ministry said.

China and Iran were both supporters of ousted Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. Syria's new leader, Muhammad al-Jolani, is an opponent of Tehran.

Russia warns of severe damage from oil spill as Crimea declares a state of emergency

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW

Russia warned on Saturday of severe environmental damage from a huge oil spill in the Black Sea caused when two tankers collided in a storm near Crimea, which declared a state of emergency.

One tanker sank and another ran aground on December 15 in the Kerch Strait between Russia and the annexed Crimean peninsula.

Thousands of volunteers have been mobilised



Thousands have been mobilised for clean-up operations that have been criticised as insufficient by some Russian scientists. AFP

for clean-up operations that have been criticised as insufficient by some Russian scientists.

The tankers were carrying 9,200 tonnes of fuel oil, around 40% of which may have spilled into the sea, around 40% of which may have spilled into the sea, and "no recurring pollution has been detected".

according to authorities.

"The situation is truly critical," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, quoted by Russian press agencies.

The Moscow-installed governor of Crimea said on Telegram he had declared a state of emergency "because of the oil products spill in the Kerch Strait".

Russia's Transport Ministry insisted on Saturday that "all polluted aquatic areas that have been identified have been cleaned" and "no recurring pollution has been detected".



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EVENLY POISED

South Africa in a spot of bother after Jansen sets up modest chase



South Africa was struggling at 27/3 in its chase of 148 on the third day of the first Test at Centurion on Saturday. Earlier, Marco Jansen, in pic, took six for 52 for the home side.

The scores: Pakistan 211 and 237 (Shakeel 84, Babar 50, Jansen 6/52) vs. South Africa 301 and 27/3.

PULLING IT OFF

Mitchell, Bracewell and Duffy help NZ prevail over SL



Daryl Mitchell and Michael Bracewell made half-centuries while Jacob Duffy took three for 21 to help New Zealand to an eight-run win over Sri Lanka in the first T20I at Mount Maunganui.

The scores: NZ 172/8 in 20 overs (Mitchell 62, Bracewell 59) bt Sri Lanka 164/8 in 20 overs (Nissanka 90, Duffy 3/21). **PoM:** Duffy.

MAKING THE CUT

Shreyanka among nominees for Emerging Cricketer of the Year



India's Shreyanka Patil has been nominated for the ICC Women's Emerging Cricketer of the Year award. The off-spinner joins South Africa's Annerie Derkens, Scotland's Saskia Horley, and Ireland's Freya Sargent. Shreyanka has 15 wickets from 13 T20Is in addition to four wickets from two ODIs.

REIGNING SUPREME

PKL All Stars emerges victorious in international exhibition match



The first international exhibition of the Pro Kabaddi League — named Melbourne Raid — was held on Saturday. The first clash between PKL All Star Masters and PKL Mavericks ended in a 41-39 victory for the Mavericks. The showpiece between the PKL All Stars and Aussie Raiders saw the former post a 46-28 win.

Nitish's sublime maiden ton keeps Team India in the hunt

Washington plays second fiddle to perfection in a 127-run partnership for the eighth wicket; it's advantage Australia at the end of Day 3 as the visiting side still trails by 116 with the last-wicket pair at the crease

IND IN AUS

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
MELBOURNE

In one of cricket's grand theatres, Nitish Kumar Reddy soared high. His splendid hundred (105 batting) and his alliance with Washington Sundar, helped India reveal a spine in the fourth Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground here on Saturday.

At a rain-induced close on the third day, the visitors scored 358 for nine in the first innings while trailing Australia's 474. The host has an edge but through Nitish and Washington, Rohit Sharma's men have extended the battle.

Crown jewel

Nitish, surely has taken a liking for the Australian attack, just like the biryani picture he posted on Instagram a few days ago. Through this Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, the youngster from Visakhapatnam, registered 41, 38 not out, 42, 42 and 16. The latest unbeaten ton is obviously the crown jewel.

If Nitish was all about controlled aggression, Washington preferred obduracy. As partners, they had synergy, and through them India breathed easy. Having joined forces at 221 for seven before lunch, the batters hung in together.

Alert to the single, even if it meant the odd risky one, the partnership had its highlight-reels thanks to Nitish. He drove Mitchell



High point: Nitish converted the start into a big score and came good at a critical juncture of the Test. AFP

Starc, but the best was when he leant into a straight-drive off Scott Boland. The new ball did not have much effect even if Starc lured an edge from Washington, which eluded Steve Smith.

Nitish finally got to his maiden fifty and imitated Allu Arjun's signature move from the movie *Pushpa*, as his bat mimicked a hand sliding under an imaginary beard. When Washington took a single, the

SCOREBOARD**AUSTRALIA — 1ST INNINGS:**
474**INDIA — 1ST INNINGS**

Yashasvi Jaiswal (run out) 82 (118b, 11x4, 1x6), Rohit Sharma c Boland b Cummins 3 (5b), K.L. Rahul c Cummins 24 (42b, 3x4), Virat Kohli c Carey b Boland 36 (86b, 4x4), Akash Deep c Lyon b Boland 0 (13b), Rishabh Pant c Lyon b Boland 28 (37b, 3x4), Ravindra Jadeja lbw b Lyon 17 (51b, 3x4), Nitish Kumar (batting) 105 (176b, 10x4, 1x6), Washington Sundar c Smith b Lyon 50 (162b, 1x4), Jasprit

Bumrah c Khawaja b Cummins 0 (3b), Mohammed Siraj (batting) 2 (7b); Extras (lb-2, nb-4, w-5): 11; Total (for nine wkts, in 116 overs): 358.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-8 (Rohit, 1.6 overs), 2-51 (Rahul, 14.6), 3-153 (Jaiswal, 40.6), 4-154 (Kohli, 42.1), 5-159 (Akash, 44.3), 6-191 (Pant, 55.4), 7-221 (Jadeja, 64.5), 8-348 (Washington, 111.6), 9-350 (Bumrah, 113.3).

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Starc 25-2-86-0, Cummins 27-6-86-3, Boland 27-7-57-3, Lyon 27-4-88-2, Marsh 7-1-28-0, Head 3-0-11-0.

Nitish hit a four off Boland, went down on one knee, looked towards his father Mutiyala Reddy in the stands, placed his helmet on the bat and gazed at the sky

fans clad in blue, merrily applauded as it helped India avoid the follow-on at 275.

Southpaw Washington punched Starc past cover, and Nitish scooped Mitchell Marsh beyond a diving Starc at fine-leg and drove another through the sweeper-cover picket. A drizzle advanced tea and India was on 326 for seven.

After the break, Washington reached his 50 and then fell to Lyon and by then the eighth-wicket partnership had clocked 127 runs. In his 90s, Nitish watched Jasprit Bumrah famously nibble one off Pat Cummins.

Relief

Just as the audience held its breath, Mohammed Siraj survived, and there was relief and joy all around when Nitish hit a four off

Boland, went down on one knee, looked towards his father Mutiyala Reddy in the stands, placed his helmet on the bat and gazed at the sky.

Earlier, resuming at 164 for five, India's hopes rested on the lower-order. Rishabh Pant lofted Cummins and pulled Boland. However, Pant's impetuous streak overwhelmed him. Attempting a scoop over the wicketkeeper's head off Boland, Pant toppled. He then attempted an encore and found Lyon at third-man. This was aggression devoid of intelligence.

Solid

The stage was set for Nitish and he drove solidly while Ravindra Jadeja flicked and punched before getting trapped by Lyon.

It was left to Nitish to bolster spirits and he did that with a six off Lyon. With Washington for company, he guided India to 244 for seven at lunch. And the two became India's pillars.

Washington hails Nitish's 'unbelievable hundred'

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
MELBOURNE

On Friday evening, Washington Sundar promised that he and his teammates would fight. And on Saturday, he precisely did that with centurion Nitish Kumar Reddy for company against Australia in the fourth Test.

Striding into meet the sports correspondents for the second consecutive day, Washington said: "Rohit bhai, Gauti bhai and all the support staff keep telling us to fight. Playing for India, in a ground like MCG, Boxing Day Test, we will do what it takes to be in a good position. Very happy for Nitish. He got an unbelievable hundred. Definitely a good day, would have been even better if I hadn't got out."

Talking about his 127-run eighth-wicket partnership with Nitish, Washington



Washington. AP

said: "We wanted to see off some important spells and they came in quite hard. We didn't lose any wicket and then the runs started to come. The entire day was a mixture of different phases. When I went in, things were difficult. After we went back

following the rains, the pitch got a little sticky and those 30 minutes were important."

Analysing Nitish, Washington said: "He is mentally very strong. I have known him for quite a few years. The way he went about his business was amazing. He made sure he picked those phases in the game where he thought he would get a few boundaries in and also made sure that we saw through a few spells. His hundred will be talked about and remembered for a very long time. One thing about Nitish is this, he will give his 120 per cent."

As for India's prospects, Washington expressed hope: "We should pick wickets, and if we can bowl them out for 150, I am sure we will be able to get anywhere between 250 to 300 on day five. It will be exciting."

Could have been better but Australia sitting pretty: Boland

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
MELBOURNE

If there is a local hero that the 'G', as the Melbourne Cricket Ground is referred to in urban lore, adores, it has to be Scott Boland. Whenever he turns up, the G breaks into a deafening roar.

A representative of Australia's indigenous community, Boland offers hope to a multi-ethnic nation. Being the industrious pacifier, he also steps up when Josh Hazlewood or the others get injured. After a long Saturday on the ground with India mounting a stir-

ring resistance through Nitish Kumar Reddy and Washington Sundar in the fourth Test, Boland met the media.

Asked about the pitch, a surface he knows closely, Boland said: "It started off with a fair bit of nip in it. There is still a little bit of nip there but not as consistent as I would like as a bowler, but it's a good Test wicket."

Queried about Nitish, the day's hero, Boland replied: "He is playing really nicely. Coming down in the lower order, he is trying to put the pressure back on us. Young guy from India

who has come through and strikes the ball really well."

Boland, though, believed that Australia held the aces: "We are leading by 116 runs and in a pretty strong position. It could have been better but that's how Tests are, ebbs and flows. Hopefully tomorrow, we get that wicket and then put on a nice lead."

He also clarified that Mitchell Starc, nursing an injury, is fine: "He is okay. He has a bit of a niggle somewhere in his back. But he came out and was bowling around 140kmph. He is tough and can play through a lot of pain."

Disqualified over dress code, Carlsen withdraws from World rapid & blitz chess

Sports Bureau

Defending champion Magnus Carlsen has withdrawn from the World rapid chess championship in New York, taking a stand on his choice of attire: he refused to trade his jeans for trousers, which the world chess governing body FIDE wanted him to, in order to comply with the dress code.

According to Carlsen, during the second day of the tournament, he had told the officials that he was willing to change into the trousers on the third day. He was, however, asked to stick to the dress code after the second day itself and that he would not

be paired for the next round if he did not.

He also said he would not be defending his title at the World blitz championship, which will immediately follow the rapid event.

FIDE, in a statement, said Carlsen breached the dress code, which had been put in place to ensure professionalism and fairness to all participants.

Good day for Indians

Meanwhile, on the board, there was plenty of action on day two, at the end of which there was Indian presence among the leaders in both the open and women's sections.

Arjun Erigaisi, with seven points, shared the lead

with three others — Voldar Murzin and Alexander Grischuk of Russia and Jan-Krzysztof Duda of Poland — at the end of the ninth round.

DSGP claims bonus point after shootout win over Gonasika in the opener

HIL

Uthra Ganeshan
OURKELA

The much-awaited Hockey India League (HIL) finally got off the mark at the Birsa Munda Stadium here on Saturday and if the opening day was anything to go by, it was a mixed bag, both on and off the field as Delhi SG Pipers (DSGP) held Team Gonasika 2-2 before taking the bonus point in the shootout.

With the opening ceremony cancelled due to the demise of former prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, it wasn't the grand start that Hockey India had hoped for. The hour-long sound-and-light show did help but it took time for the



Joy unbound: Domene Tomas celebrates with DSGP teammates after scoring a goal. M. VEDHAN

stands to gradually fill up. That the opening day of a hockey tournament in the city didn't manage a packed house should be food for thought for the organisers.

The competition on

the national stage but clearly not finished yet. Birendra Lakra impressed at the back for Gonasika, Nikkin Thimmaiah did the same up front.

But the man who kept them in the game was English goalkeeper Oliver Payne with a series of saves to deny DSGP.

On the attack

DSGP, with a line-up vastly different from what they would have envisaged after the auction, played the way Graham Reid's Indian side used to — on the attack with a tight defence, fitness being the keyword. It paid off with an early lead, Argentine Tomas Domene converting the first penalty corner in the fourth minute.

Gonasika, truer to coach

Paul Revington's style, was more about using the flanks to open up the field and create chances.

Captain Manpreet Singh, playing higher than he does for the national side, almost got the equaliser in the 13th with a lovely steal but ended up with a missed swing in front of the goal before Struan Walker struck in a rebound off the post from Thimmaiah's shot in the 26th minute to level scores.

The teams added a goal apiece within five minutes in the third quarter to end level in regulation time before DSGP edged ahead in the shootout.

The result: DSGP 2 (Domene 4, 39) drew with Team Gonasika 2 (Walker 26, Charlet 35). DSGP won 4-2 via shootout.

INBRIEF**Arsenal beats Ipswich to go second in Premier League**

Arsenal began life without Bukayo Saka by beating Ipswich 1-0 to move into second place in the Premier League and cut Liverpool's lead to six points on Friday. Kai Havertz scored the only goal as Arsenal failed to turn its dominance into a more convincing scoreline.

The results: Brighton 0 drew with Brentford 0; Arsenal 1 (Havertz 23) bt Ipswich 0.

UP CM extends support for the inaugural kho kho WC

The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, has assured all possible help including financial support for the inaugural World Cup kho kho championship to be staged in Delhi and Noida from January 13. The chairman of the organising committee, Sudhanshu Mittal invited the UP Chief Minister for the inauguration of the championship.

Rahmat's double hundred leads Afghanistan's reply

Rahmat Shah struck an Afghanistan Test record (231 batting) while partnering Hashmatullah Shahidi (131 batting) in an unbeaten 361-run stand on the third day of the first Test against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo on Saturday.

The scores: Zimbabwe 586 in 135.2 overs vs Afghanistan 425/2 in 125 overs (Rahmat 231 batting, Shahidi 141 batting).

Kyrgios to make a return at Brisbane International

Nick Kyrgios will make his return to tournament tennis at the Brisbane International when he takes on Giovanni Perricard of France. It will be the first Tour-level appearance by Kyrgios since the Stuttgart Open in June 2023.

LIVE TELECAST

South Africa vs Pakistan: 1st Test, day 4, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 1.30 p.m.

Zimbabwe vs Afghanistan: 1st Test, day 4, FanCode, 1.30 p.m.

Serie A: gxr.world, 5, 7.30, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Monday)

Hockey: HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 & LIV, 6 & 8.15 p.m.

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

PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.

Premier League: SS Select 1, 2 & Hotstar, 8.30 & 10.45 p.m.

Australia vs India: 4th Test, day 5, Star Sports 1 & Hotstar, 5 a.m. (Monday)

Majumdar and Sumanta power Bengal past Baroda

The two add 158 for the unbroken fourth-wicket stand to guide their team home with seven overs to spare

HAZARE TROPHY**V. V. Subrahmanyam**

HYDERABAD

Anustup Majumdar and Sumanta Gupta strung together an unbroken 158-run stand for the fourth wicket to guide Bengal to an emphatic seven-wicket win over Baroda in a Group E match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy at the Gymkhana Ground here on Saturday.

Chasing a victory target of 229, Bengal faltered at the start with southpaw Abhishek Porel (1) mistiming a hook off India all-rounder Hardik Pandya off the fifth ball of the innings. Sudip Kumar Ghamami (17) nicked one from pacer Lukman Meriwala to make it 43 for two in the 10th over.

This could have raised Baroda's hopes to pull off something special after a disappointing batting show.

Sudip Chatterjee (32,



Superb display: Majumdar hit 12 fours and a six in his unbeaten 99. V. V. SUBRAHMANYAM

41b, 3x4) looked confident before being run-out which saw Majumdar being joined by Sumanta in

the 17th over at 71 for three. Then, it was the Majumdar-Sumanta show till finish as the two batted with a

great sense of responsibility, cutting down all risks, picking up ones

and twos with lovely placements rather than going for any ambitious strokes. A strategy which made the Baroda attack ineffective despite Pandya bowling a terrific first spell.

With emphasis on timing and placement rather than brute force, Majumdar (99 n.o., 106b, 12x4, 1x6) and Sumanta (69 n.o., 80b, 4x4, 1x6) ensured there was no way Baroda would come back into the game.

Brilliant knock

Earlier, Baroda owed its modest total to a brilliant knock by opener Shashwat Rawat (95, 111b, 10x4, 2x6) which was interspersed with two beautifully timed sixes in one over when he swung left-arm spinner Kaushik Maity with ease.

Pacer Sayan Ghosh (three for 43) and left-arm spinner Pradipta Pramanik (three for 25) were the pick of the bowlers for Bengal.

HAZARE TROPHY, FOURTH ROUND SCORES**Group-A**

Jaipur: Assam 139 in 37 overs (Sumit Nagarkoti 3/52, Nishant Sindhu 4/40) lost to Haryana 140/2 in 32 overs (Parth Vats 52 n.o.). **Toss:** Haryana; **Points:** Haryana 4(12), Assam 0(4).

Goa 92 in 29 overs (Deepak Dhopala 3/19, Prashant Bhati 3/20) lost to Uttarakhand 97/2 in 18.5 overs. **Toss:** Uttarakhand;

Uttarakhand 4(8), Goa 0(8).

Jharkhand 199/2 in 27 overs (Virat Singh 52; Arzan Sharma 75, Sahab Yuvraj Singh 47 n.o.; Md. Saptulla 4/33). **Toss:** Railways.

Railways 4(12), Sikkim 0(0).

Navi Mumbai: Services 162 in 36.2 overs (P. Tapaswi 4/28) lost to Andhra 163/0 in 28.4 overs (Srikar Bharat 86 n.o., Ashwin Hebbar 66 n.o.). **Toss:** Andhra.

Andhra 4(12), Services 0(4).

Group-B

Mumbai: Maharashtra 360 in 50 overs (Siddhesh Veer 155, Ankit Bawne 123; Rishi Dhawan 3/83, Vaibhav Arora 5/43) bt Himachal Pradesh 276 in 48 overs (Prashant Chopra 87, Mani Sharma 54, Apporav Walia 45; Azim Kazi 3/71). **Toss:** HP;

Maharashtra 4(16), HP 0(8).

Meghalaya 166 in 42.2 overs (Kamlesh Nagarkoti 3/52, Rahul Chahar 3/34) lost to Rajasthan 168/4 in 32.4 overs (Deepak Hooda 60 n.o.). **Toss:** Rajasthan;

Rajasthan 4(12), Meghalaya 0(0).

Sikkim 198/9 in 50 overs (Ankur Malik 58 n.o.) lost to Railways 199/5 in 32.5 overs (Ashutosh Sharma 75, Sahab Yuvraj Singh 47 n.o.; Md. Saptulla 4/33). **Toss:** Railways.

Railways 4(12), Sikkim 0(0).

Navi Mumbai: Services 162 in 36.2 overs (P. Tapaswi 4/28) lost to Andhra 163/0 in 28.4 overs (Srikar Bharat 86 n.o., Ashwin Hebbar 66 n.o.). **Toss:** Andhra.

Andhra 4(12), Services 0(4).

Group-C

Ahmedabad: Arunachal Pradesh 166 in 43.2 overs (Abhinav Singh 71 n.o.; Vasuki Koushik 4/30, Hardik Raj 4/30) lost to Karnataka 171/0 in 14.2 overs (Abhinav Manohar 66 n.o., Mayank Agarwal 100 n.o.). **Toss:** Karnataka;

Karnataka 4(16), Arunachal 0(0).

Uttar Pradesh 272/9 in 50 overs (Abhishek Goswami 85, Sameer Rizvi 48, Shivam Mavi 52; Harsh Yadav 3/41) bt Chhattisgarh 240 in 49.4 overs (Amandeep Khare 44, Eknath Kerkar 42; Mohsin 44, 20 overs (K. Himateja 42 n.o.).

Karnataka 4(12), Arunachal 0(0).

Group-D

Vizianagaram: Tamil Nadu 353/6 in 50 overs (N. Jagadeesan 165, B. Indrajith 78) bt Jammu & Kashmir 162 in 36.3 overs (Shubham Khajuria 45, C.V. Achyuth 6/31). **Toss:** J & K TN 4(10), J & K 0(2).

J&K 4(10), Tamil Nadu 0(0).

Bangalore: Maharashtra 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Baroda 0(8).

Delhi 258/5 in 50 overs (Ayush Badoni 56, Anuj Rawat 58 n.o., Sumit Mathur 48 n.o.) bt Kerala 229 in 42.2 overs (Rohan Kunnummal 42, Abdul Basith 90; Ishant Sharma 3/48). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Baroda 0(8).

Group-E

Hyderabad: Baroda 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Baroda 0(8).

Group-F

Saurashtra 307/9 in 50 overs (Jay Goril 100, Arpit Vasavada 61, Parswara Rana 48; Nagaho Chishi 4/63, Imlivi Lemtir 3/60) bt Nagaland 262/8 in 50 overs (Sedezhalie Rupero 71, Dega Nischal 75). **Toss:** Nagaland; **Saurashtra 4(12), Nagaland 0(0).**

Group-G

Hyderabad: Baroda 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Baroda 0(8).

Group-H

Dhaka: Maharashtra 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Baroda 0(8).

Group-I

Odisha: Maharashtra 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Odisha 0(0).

Group-J

Baroda: Maharashtra 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Baroda 0(8).

Group-K

Odisha: Maharashtra 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Odisha 0(0).

Group-L

Odisha: Maharashtra 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Odisha 0(0).

Group-M

Odisha: Maharashtra 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Odisha 0(0).

Group-N

Odisha: Maharashtra 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Odisha 0(0).

Group-O

Odisha: Maharashtra 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.

Bangalore 4(10), Odisha 0(0).

Group-P

Odisha: Maharashtra 228 in 48.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 95, Bhanu Pania 42; Savan Ghosh 3/43, Pradipta Pramanik 3/25) lost to Bengal 229/3 in 43 overs (Anup Majumdar 99 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 69 n.o.). **Toss:** Bengal.



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Playing by the year

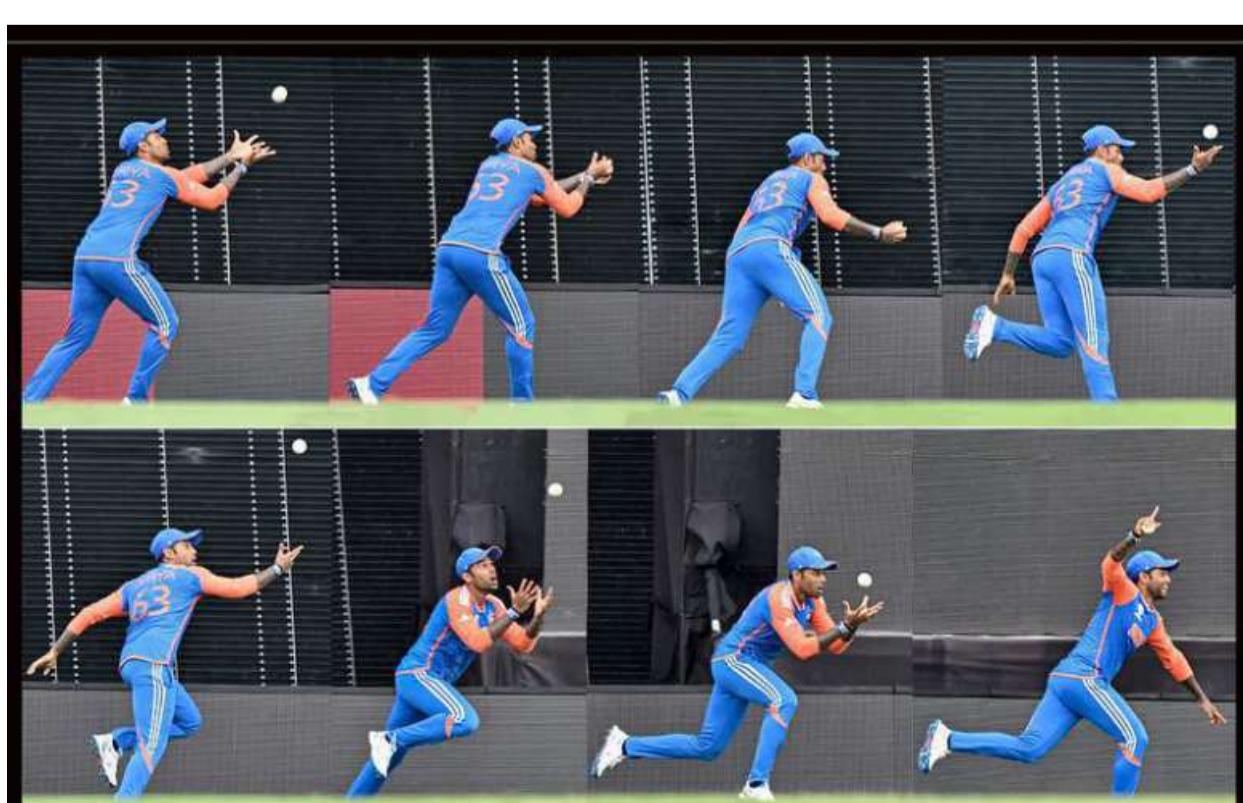
The year 2024 winds down after bearing witness to victories, defeats, elation, and heartbreak of different kinds across the world

Grief and trepidation suffuse the year-end stock-taking. As 2024 winds down to a close, three stalwarts of India passed away in its final days, making the world poorer. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, author M.T. Vasudevan Nair, and filmmaker Shyam Benegal, all of whom touched the lives of everyday Indians in their own way, departed.

Meanwhile, the camera continues to record everything that comes in its way, and without bias: here is a curation of how photographers have responded to events as they enveloped them. They bore witness to erratic weather, disasters, elections, election promises, victories and defeats. Somewhere, a new temple rose in an old temple town; wars never seem to end, no matter what the chatter, and children getting the worst of it, like in any conflict; international sporting events threw up climaxes and anti-climaxes; catastrophes, both manmade and natural, altered lives forever; an all-woman cinema team won international acclaim; and in a split-second moment a former President escaped a bullet, days before he got elected to office, again.

And the camera continues to bear witness.

(Text: Dinesh Krishnan)





Resilient face:
Donald Trump surrounded by Secret Service agents after being shot during a U.S. Presidential campaign rally on July 13. AP



On target: Shooter Manu Bhaker celebrates after winning the first of her two bronze medals at the Paris Olympics on July 28. RITU RAJ KONWAR



Face of danger: NDRF personnel engaged in a rescue operation after a catastrophic landslide in Chooralmala in Wayanad on July 31. THULASI KAKKAT



Fall of a leader: Anti-government protesters in Bangladesh storm Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's palace in Dhaka on August 5. AFP



High aims: Devotees help a man jump as he tries to reach the dahi-handi during Jammashtami in Raigad, Maharashtra on August 27. EMMANUEL YOGINI



Bull's eye: Sheetal Devi, who became India's youngest paralympic medallist, trains before her event at the Paris Paralympics 2024 on August 28. GETTY IMAGES



Remnants of war: People stand on top of the remains of a missile in the Negev desert after an Iranian missile attack on Israel, on October 2. AFP



Rising up: West Bengal junior doctors take out a torch rally demanding justice for the victim of R.G. Kar rape and murder case in Kolkata on October 30. ANI



Dejected champion: Wrestler Vinesh Phogat after being disqualified from her event at the Paris Olympics for being overweight by 100 grams on August 7. ANI



State in strife: Family members of a missing man sit in protest in Imphal West of Manipur on November 30. AFP



Green drive: An anti-smog gun being used to sprinkle water to curb pollution in New Delhi on December 6. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP



Last rally: The mortal remains of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh being taken for a state funeral in New Delhi on December 28. AFP