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Poll-bound Nitish pulls out all stops  
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AERO INDIA  
We should catch up with new trends, says CDS  
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'PARASITIC EXISTENCE'  
Justice Gavai questions freebies for the poor  
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UNDERMINING SAFETY  
Dangerous concessions on nuclear liability  
Proposed amendments a matter of concern  
EDITORIAL » PAGE 6



SWEEPING SUCCESS  
Dominant Men in Blue complete demolition  
SPORT » PAGE 15

## IN BRIEF



Stalemate in Manipur over Biren's successor

**GUWAHATI**  
The BJP in Manipur struggled to find a successor to caretaker CM N. Biren Singh for the third straight day on Wednesday. Party MP Sambit Patra met the Governor for the third time in three days. » Page 10

**New Immigration Bill may deny entry to foreigners**

**NEW DELHI**  
The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025, expected to be tabled in Parliament, is likely to introduce for the first time threat to national security and sovereignty as grounds to deny entry or stay to a foreign national. » Page 10

## Retail inflation eases to five-month low of 4.31%

The rise in food prices slows for the third straight month to 6% in January; inflation for urban consumers drops to 3.87%, below the RBI's 4% median target for inflation but edible oils spike

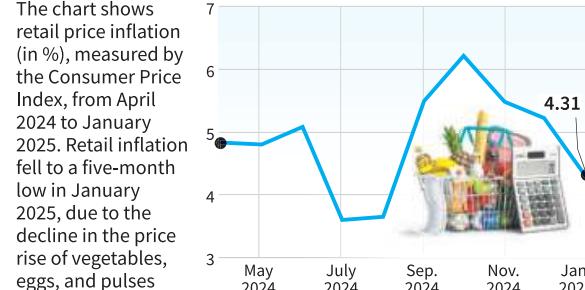
Vikas Dhoot  
NEW DELHI

**I**ndia's retail inflation cooled to a five-month low of 4.31% in January, from 5.22% in December 2024, and 5.1% a year ago. The rise in food prices has decelerated for the third successive month to 6%, from 8.4% in the preceding month, but the prices of edible oils and fruits flared up sharply.

The price rise faced by urban consumers in January dropped to 3.87%, below the Central bank's 4% median target for inflation. For rural consumers, price rise remained above the median target at 4.64%, but down from December's 5.8% rise.

The latest inflation figures were reported just days after the Reserve

### Downward trend



Bank of India (RBI) move to slash interest rates by 0.25 percentage points last Friday on the premise that inflation is declining and will soften to 4.2% in 2025-26 while growth needs are more pressing.

### Rupee depreciation

The RBI has projected inflation to average 4.4% between January to March,

which could imply mild spikes in the price rise pace over this month and the next. Economists have flagged worries about imported inflation as the rupee's depreciation could weigh on the cost of items like edible oils, fertilizers, and petroleum.

"Over the past few months, edible oil has emerged as a major pres-

### At 3.2% in Dec., IIP growth skids to 4-month low

**NEW DELHI**  
Growth in India's Index of Industrial Production (IIP) dipped to a four-month low of 3.2% in December, with manufacturing and mining sectors rising just 3% and 2.6%, respectively. » PAGE 13

sure point for food inflation, impacted by high global prices and import duties. Since around 60% of edible oil is imported, the weakening currency also adversely impacts its price," cautioned Dharmakirti Joshi, chief economist at Crisil.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 10

Do you intend to continue as Minister: SC to Senthilbalaji

Krishnadas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked Tamil Nadu Minister for Electricity, Prohibition, and Excise V. Senthilbalaji to give a straight-forward answer in "yes or no" whether he intends to continue as a Minister while facing trial in money laundering proceedings linked to a cash-for-jobs 'scam'.

**Answer yes or no'**  
"We are asking you, with all this you are facing, do you want to continue as a Minister? Answer 'yes' or 'no'... We know this will be a very difficult question for you to answer," Justice A.S. Oka, heading the Bench, addressed senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi and advocate Ram Sankar, appearing for Mr. Senthilbalaji.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 10

IMEC project gains traction as PM holds talks with Macron



Warm greetings: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with French President Emmanuel Macron in Marseille on Wednesday. AP

Kallol Bhattacharjee  
NEW DELHI

India and France on Wednesday announced that they would continue to work closely to implement the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) project.

The project proposes to connect India to Europe through sea and land routes. A discussion on the project was held during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to

France, where he spoke at the Paris AI Action summit and held talks with President Emmanuel Macron.

"The two leaders recalled the launch of the IMEC on the margins of the G-20 Summit in Delhi in September 2023 and agreed to work together more closely on implementing the initiative," said a joint statement issued after the visit.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 10

## SC to hear pleas challenging validity of CEC appointment law on Feb. 19

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday shifted the hearing on petitions challenging the legality of a new law, which gives a dominant role to the Union government in the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners, to February 19.

Incumbent CEC Rajiv Kumar is set to retire from office on February 18.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners, the NGO Association for Democratic Reforms, indicated to a Bench of Justices Surya Kant and N.K. Singh that the case was time-sensitive due to the impending



CEC Rajiv Kumar flanked by ECs Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu. The CEC is scheduled to retire on February 18. FILE PHOTO

retirement of Mr. Kumar.

Justice Kant, however, assured Mr. Bhushan that the "consequences" of the court's decision on the validity of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act of 2023 would inevitably follow even if something had happened in

the interregnum.

In the previous hearing, the petitioners had told the court that they ideally wanted a decision on the law before the appointment of the next CEC.

### Court's authority

In January, when the case came up, Justice Kant had highlighted that the test regarding the validity of the

Act would hinge on whether the court's authority to pronounce binding decisions under Article 141 of the Constitution could be circumvented or diluted by a law. "The real test here is between the court's opinion and exercise of legislative powers," he had said.

The petitions raise the pivotal legal question of whether Parliament possessed the authority to promulgate a gazette notification or ordinance to nullify or amend a Constitution Bench judgment.

The petitioners have claimed that the law was introduced in December 2023 to dilute a Constitution Bench judgment of the Supreme Court in the Anoop Baranwal case on March 2, 2023.

the interregnum.

In the previous hearing, the petitioners had told the court that they ideally wanted a decision on the law before the appointment of the next CEC.

### Court's authority

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## Flu check



A worker cleans a poultry farm in NTR district on Wednesday with bird flu cases being reported in Andhra Pradesh. G.N. RAO (REPORT: PAGE 5)

Five nursing students held in Kerala on ragging charges

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOTTAYAM

Five third-year nursing students from Kottayam in Kerala were arrested on Wednesday following allegations of ragging.

The arrests came after three first-year students of the Government College of Nursing at the Government Medical College filed complaints alleging physical and mental harassment since their classes began on November 4 last year.

The accused were taken into custody and produced before a magistrate.

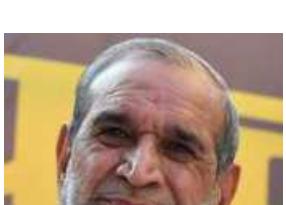
## 1984 anti-Sikh riots: Delhi court convicts former Cong. MP in double-murder case

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday convicted former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar, 79, in a double-murder case related to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. He faces a maximum sentence of death penalty and a minimum of life imprisonment.

The prosecution has been able to prove its case against the accused [Kumar] beyond reasonable doubt," Special Judge Kavari Bawa said, convicting Kumar of offences such as murder, rioting, dacoity, and arson.

The judge then posted the arguments for sentencing on February 18.



The case relates to the murder of S. Jaswant Singh and his son S. Tarundeep Singh, residents of Raj Nagar, Delhi, at the hands of a mob during the riots.

It is the case of the prosecution that Kumar was leading the mob and it was upon his instigation and abetment that it burnt alive the two men, damaged and looted their house,

burnt it down, and inflicted severe injuries on their family members.

Though the Punjabi Bagh police station registered the case initially, a Special Investigation Team later took over the probe. It was stated that no member of the mob could be identified at that time by the victims as they were new to the area, having shifted there only around one and a half months earlier.

**Identified photograph**  
Later, the complainant in the case, Jaswant's wife, saw the photograph of Kumar, who was an MP from the Congress, in a news magazine and identified it to be of "the same bearded

man who was leading the mob on the day of the incident".

The judge noted that through the evidence, both oral and documentary, brought on record during the course of the trial, "the prosecution has been able to bring home the guilt of the accused".

The court held that Kumar instigated the mob and members of the "unlawful assembly" were armed with iron rods, lathis, bricks, etc., which proves that the alleged offences were committed after having made preparations. It said the mob used force and violence as part of its common object of looting and rioting.

"AI is a dangerous tool in anybody's hand, whether Chinese or American, it does not make any difference. It is not that the government is unaware. It is very well aware," a Bench of Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar

AI dangerous tool, be it in Chinese or American hands, says Delhi HC

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday observed that artificial intelligence (AI) is a "dangerous tool" in anybody's hand, whether Chinese or American.

The observation came while hearing a petition seeking a direction to the Centre to block access to DeepSeek, a Chinese AI chatbot providing services free of cost in India.

"AI is a dangerous tool in anybody's hand, whether Chinese or American, it does not make any difference. It is not that the government is unaware. It is very well aware," a Bench of Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar

**Court was hearing a petition seeking a direction to the Centre to block access to DeepSeek**

posed "instant and emergent threats that are prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India, data security of the state, and public order".

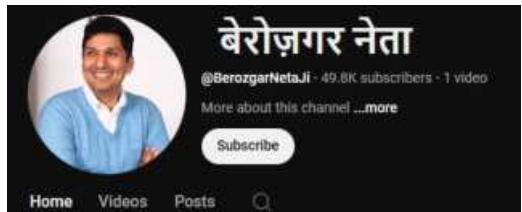
The petitioner said DeepSeek is available for download on mobile phones and its terms of use and privacy policy "fail to protect the Right to Privacy of Indian citizens" and comply with the key provisions of the IT Rules, 2011, and Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, particularly with regard to data collection, disclosure, and security.

"Globally, multiple countries have raised similar concerns about DeepSeek's privacy and security practices," the plea stated.

Rao Gedela said.  
The Centre's counsel said the issue requires consideration and urged the court to grant some time to get instructions in the matter. The court listed the matter for February 20.

**Instant threat**  
The petitioner's advocate Bhavna Sharma, along with advocate Nihit Dalmia, raised concerns over the alleged "inappropriate and unlawful operations" of DeepSeek, saying it

## IN BRIEF



## After poll loss, Bharadwaj launches YouTube channel

Senior AAP leader and former Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Wednesday announced the launch of his YouTube channel, "Berogar Neta", with the aim to engage with citizens' questions "in an open manner". "Many have been asking me about what changes a politician experiences after an election loss. Through this channel, I want to share my journey and address these questions directly," said Mr. Bharadwaj, who lost his Greater Kailash Assembly seat to BJP's Shikha Roy.

## Three arrested for stealing jewellery worth ₹1.5 crore

Three persons were arrested in connection with a jewellery theft worth ₹1.5 crore from a Kalyan Jewellers showroom in Lajpat Nagar, the police said. The main accused, Shoib, stole the valuables on January 29 and sold them to the other accused, Sumit Soni and Manik Kadam, an official said. A total of 100 grams of diamonds and 10 grams of gold were recovered from the accused, said DCP (South East) Ravi Kumar Singh.

## Umar Khalid bail plea: speedy trial not a 'free pass', say police

The Delhi police on Wednesday opposed the bail plea of Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, and others accused in the north-east Delhi riots case, saying that the right to a speedy trial is not a "free pass". They also dismissed the allegations that the prosecution had attempted to delay the proceedings and blamed the complainants for the postponement, adding that orders from the trial court support their claims. PTI

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M.A.C. 400/2022 (GDC 200/20)

Lokanath Prasad Dalapati & others ... Petitioners

Versus

Rabindra Kumar & Another...

.... Respondents

To,

Rabindra Kumar, S/o- Hari Prasad,

Residing At/Po- Bhilaihali, Dist-

Muzaffarnagar, State- Uttar

Pradesh, PIN-250611.

(Driver of the offending Truck with Regd. No. UP-17T- 6155).

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ordinary way of service. Hence this

proclamation U/Order 5, Rule (22)

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them to appear personally or

through his/their counsel before this

Tribunal on 03.03.2025 At 10 A.M.

Take notice that in default of his/

their/your appearance on the day

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case will be heard and determined

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CM YK

# Infighting within BJP preventing selection of Delhi CM, says AAP

Power cuts in city have spiked amid factionalism in the BJP, says Kakkar; AAP making false claims, itself witnessing a power struggle in Punjab: BJP

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over the "delay in selecting a Chief Minister", claiming that people are facing hardships because of the lack of a CM.

This is the first time AAP, as an Opposition party, has taken on the BJP, which won the Delhi Assembly election by securing 48 seats.

Addressing the media, AAP chief spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar said the BJP's delay in finalising the CM is a clear sign of a rift within the party.

"The infighting within the BJP over the selection of Delhi's Chief Minister is causing hardships for the people of the national capital. Several days have passed since the election results, yet the BJP has failed to appoint a Chief Minister, leading to prolonged power cuts across the city," she said.

"Factions of the BJP are meeting in groups of ten because they cannot agree on who should lead Delhi.



BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj at a Ravidas temple in New Delhi on Wednesday on the occasion of Guru Ravidas Jayanti. ANI

Their internal conflict is ongoing, but why should the people of Delhi bear the brunt of it? On Tuesday, reports of prolonged power cuts emerged from several parts of Delhi," she said.

**Rejected by all**  
Hitting back, the BJP said that AAP should stop worrying about the government formation in the national capital.

"After being rejected by all sections of society in the election, AAP leaders were expected to abandon their politics of lies and deception. However, just four days later, in a desperate attempt to stay in the news, Priyanka Kakkar has

started making baseless and fabricated claims regarding electricity supply," Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said. He also claimed that AAP has been facing a "power struggle" in Punjab after it lost the Delhi poll.

However, Ms. Kakkar said, "(AAP chief) Arvind Kejriwal is holding meetings with party workers, leaders from Punjab, and those who fought the Delhi poll to gather feedback and improve our approach."

The BJP, which has won an Assembly election in Delhi after more than 26 years, is yet to hold a party legislators' meeting to elect its leader who will lead it as the next CM.

# Amanatullah claims case against him false; police continue search for him; AAP says he is in Okhla

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Two days after the Delhi police registered an FIR against Okhla MLA-elect Amanatullah Khan and launched a manhunt to nab him, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader on Wednesday wrote to Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora claiming the allegations against him are "false and baseless".

He urged the police chief to "appoint an independent officer, as the present Investigating Officer is biased and is behaving arbitrarily".

On the same day, AAP issued a statement saying its MLA-elect from south-east Delhi "is not absconding as claimed by the police" and is in his constituency.

However, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East) Ravi Kumar Singh said he had not received any letter from Mr. Khan and that search operations to nab him are underway.

"I have not received any such letter. The investigation is being conducted, and we are trying to track him. We have not been able to establish any communication with him so far," he said.

Mr. Khan was booked under various BNS Sections, including 132 (assaulting a public servant), 191 (rioting), 351 (criminal intimidation), and 111 (organised crime), on Monday for "obstructing a police



Amanatullah Khan, the AAP MLA-elect from Okhla.

We are conducting the investigation against Amanatullah Khan and trying to track him. We have not been able to establish any communication with him so far

**RAVI KUMAR SINGH**  
Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East)

arrest" a person.

The MLA-elect added that the person, with whom he "does not have any close relations", showed the men who claimed to be from the police an anticipatory bail order. The men soon left the area. However, the AAP leader claimed, they threatened to implicate him in a false case.

"I request your office to take immediate cognisance of the matter to ensure that a fair and just trial is conducted. I humbly request that any proceedings initiated against me on the basis of this false and baseless complaint may be thoroughly reviewed, and appropriate action may be taken to prevent any undue harassment of a duly appointed public servant," he said in the letter written in Hindi.

Delhi BJP president Narendra Sachdeva demanded that the MLA-elect be arrested immediately.

# BJP now sets eyes on mayoral polls in April

Satvika Mahajan  
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which won 48 out of 70 seats in the Assembly poll and all Lok Sabha seats in Delhi in 2024, is now looking to secure a victory in the mayoral elections scheduled for April.

The party, which lost the 2022 civic polls and won 104 out of 250 wards in the city, is upbeat about winning the posts of Delhi's Mayor and Deputy Mayor, given its current strength in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) House. Accounting for the eight councillors who won the Assembly election, one (Kamaljeet Sehrawat) who was elected the West Delhi MP, and sev-

eral others who joined last year, the party currently has total of 112 councillors. The anti-defection law, which punishes individual MPs and MLAs for leaving one party for another, is not in force in the civic body.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which came to power in the MCD with 134

members, three Rajya Sabha members and 14 MLAs nominated by the Delhi Assembly Speaker also have voting rights in the elections, apart from the elected councillors.

While the Congress, with its eight councillors, could prove to be a road-block in the BJP's plans, the grand old party has, in the last three mayoral polls, abstained from voting.

The BJP will also look to formally take control of the MCD's Standing Committee, the civic body's primary financial and policy panel, where it managed to get a majority in the polls held last year but whose functioning has been affected due to frequent disruptions in the House.

**Numbers game**  
The BJP fancies its chances in the mayoral polls as the Capital's seven Lok Sabha

councillors, now has 118, taking into account the councillors who switched parties and the three who won the Assembly election. The current Mayor, Mahesh Khichi, is from AAP.

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# Bengal budget gives more funds for social welfare, women, govt. staff

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee says govt. has a vision for generating 'more and more employment'; economic review for 2024-25 was also tabled in the Assembly; BJP stages walkout; nothing for industries, health and education: Suvendu

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
KOLKATA

With a significant focus on social welfare schemes and more funds for women, West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya on Wednesday tabled a ₹3.89-lakh crore State budget for the pre-poll financial year 2025-26.

The State government also tried to assuage the anger of the government employees who are locked in a legal tussle over dearness allowance by announcing a 4% hike.

The major highlights of the budget are ₹1,500 crore for the improvement of rural roads under Pathasree scheme and ₹200 crore for Nodi Bandhan scheme to arrest river erosion based on hydrological models. The government also allocated ₹200 crore for purchase of smartphones for about 70,000 ASHA (Ac-



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee and Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya before tabling the State budget in Kolkata on Wednesday. ANI

credited Social Health Activists) and anganwadi workers. There was, however, no increase in the cash incentives given to women under the Lakshmir Bhandar scheme.

On the infrastructure front, the budget sanctioned ₹500 crore for the construction of a 4.75 km-long bridge over the Ganga river to connect Sagar Island where Gangasagar Mela is held every year. A detailed project report for

## Raining grants

Finance Minister's ₹3.89-lakh crore budget is the govt.'s last full budget before the State goes to polls in 2026

- ₹1,500 crore for the improvement of rural roads across the State under Pathasree scheme
- ₹500 crore for the construction of a 4.75-km-long bridge over the Ganga river to connect Sagar Island where Gangasagar Mela is held every year
- ₹200 crore for Nodi Bandhan scheme to arrest river erosion based on hydrological models
- ₹500 crore for a mega project to dredge

Ganga Sagar Setu has already been completed and a tender process has been initiated, said the Minister.

Commenting on the last full budget before the State goes to polls in 2026, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said it has a vision for generating "more and more employment in the State".

Ms. Banerjee said that half of the allocation made in the budget was for women and children. "There are about 2.21 crore benefi-

caries in the Lashmir Bhandar for which the allocation is ₹50,000 crore, the number of beneficiaries in Kanyakshree Prakalpa (scholarship for school-going girls) is about 1 crore and ₹15,000 crore has been allocated," Ms. Banerjee said.

Speaking to mediapersons, Ms. Banerjee said that funds to major schemes like MGNREGS, rural roads and rural housing have been stopped by the Centre, but despite the challenges the

State government will continue to spend on these social sector schemes.

Along with the budget, economic review for 2024-25 was also tabled in the Assembly. The review states that the fiscal deficit has been decreasing over the past few years from 4.24% of the Gross State Domestic Product in 2010-II to 3.27% in 2023-24.

## BJP protests

During the presentation of the budget, BJP MLAs led by Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari raised slogans and walked out of the House. "There is nothing for industries, health and education in the budget. There is no word as to how the government will come out of the debt burden of ₹6 lakh crore," Mr. Adhikari said.

He added that after the R.G. Kar Medical College incident, there is no allocation for safety and security of women in the State.

# HC allows poll panel probe into AIADMK leadership row

**Mohamed Imranullah S.**  
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Wednesday permitted the Election Commission (EC) to find out if there were rival groups staking claim over the AIADMK, and decide which of those groups was actually entitled to be recognised as the political party.



The EC cannot be prevented from exercising its powers under the 1968 order, say judges.

proceedings.

"Therefore, the apprehensions of the petitioner [the AIADMK] that there will be an attempt to overreach the orders of the civil court are not justified. We, however, make it clear that the inquiry would have to be within the four walls of Para 15 of the Election Symbols Order, 1968, and it cannot take in its sweep any other matter, which is the subject matter of the civil proceedings," the Bench

ordered.

Authorizing the verdict, Justice Subramanian pointed out that paragraph 15 of

the 1968 order enabled the EC to conduct an inquiry and take a call on instances of rival sections or splinter groups staking claim over a political party.

Though a senior counsel, representing the AIADMK, had argued that there was no question of rival sections or splinter groups in the party since 2,539 of the 2,665 general council members and 61 of the 65 MLAs were backing the incumbent general secretary, Edappadi K. Palaniswami, the Division Bench left those issues to be decided by the EC.

## Separate complaints

The Bench took note that as many as seven individuals, who had been reportedly expelled from the party, had lodged separate complaints regarding the party affairs before the EC between April 20, 2023 and December 4, 2024. "We therefore find that we as a constitutional court cannot examine each and every complaint and conclude whether the requirements of Para 15 are satisfied....," the judges wrote.

## Plea against 'freebies': retired judge asked to move SC

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday declined to examine a plea against "freebies" and cash-oriented schemes announced by political parties ahead of elections, saying that the Supreme Court was already hearing a similar issue.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela asked the petitioner, a former Delhi High Court judge, to move the apex court, which is hearing the matter on two aspects – distribution of "freebies" to voters and if it amounted to corrupt practices.

"There are two aspects,

freebies and whether it amounts to corrupt practice. This matter is already pending in the Supreme Court. You better seek implementation there and assist the court there," the Bench said, adding that there couldn't be two parallel litigations on one issue.

The court, however, said the petitioner, Justice S.N.

Dhingra, has raised an "important and larger issue". His counsel sought to withdraw the plea and was allowed by the Bench. Though the plea was filed days before the Delhi poll, it came up for hearing on Wednesday.

**SEE ALSO**  
» PAGE 12

## Notice to fill vacancies in Delhi govt.-funded colleges

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Former Education Minister Atishi had alleged "irregularities" in these 12 colleges and had also suggested that they be disaffiliated from the Delhi University.

The university, which created a committee to look into the allegations,

ruled out any appropriation of funds in its report.

The notice, issued on Tuesday and signed by the university's Deputy Registrar, stated that necessary steps are to be taken for filling the positions within a week.

However, an official at one of the colleges said, "We have never been given

a reason for why the recruitments were on hold."

The 12 DU colleges that have been fully funded by the Delhi government include Acharya Narendra Dev College, Bhagini Niwas College, Bhaskaracharya College, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya College, and Shaheed Rajguru College among others.

+ First GBS death in Mumbai, toll rises to eight

## Cutting across party lines, J&K legislators seek ban on liquor

**Peerzada Ashiq**  
SRINAGAR



**Alcohol is not only a personal indulgence; its repercussions reverberate across society, say MLAs**

**BJP backs Bills**

crisis, facilitating access to alcohol will only exacerbate the problem," Mr. Paradesi said.

Awami Ittehad Party (AIP), headed by Engineer Rashid, backed such Bills. Party spokesperson Inam Un Nabi said their MLA Sheikh Khursheed Ahmad - from Kupwara's Langate constituency - "was the first to submit a Bill in the J&K Legislative Assembly demanding a complete ban on alcohol".

The AIP has urged the government and all members of the Assembly to support the Bill ensuring a ban on alcohol.

"This Bill aims to preserve and uphold Kashmir's rich and spiritual Sufi-Shahi heritage. J&K is a Muslim-majority region and alcohol hurts the sensibilities of locals. When liquor is banned in Bihar, why not J&K?" he said.

"Alcohol is not merely a personal indulgence; its repercussions reverberate across society. At a time when we are already grappling with a severe drug

"Rising alcohol consumption poses a serious societal threat, emphasising the need for strict legislation to counter the trend," Mr. Mir pointed out. The Bill calls for harsh penalties, including imprisonment and fines, for violators.

Ruling National Conference MLA, Ahsan Pardesi from Srinagar's Lal Chowk constituency, also submitted a private member's Bill to "ban alcohol".

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) mentioned that the deceased visited Pune 16 days before being admitted to the hospital. However, the BMC did not link the death with the illness. The patient was admitted to Nair Hospital on January 23, after he complained of weakness in his legs and later shifted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), confirmed BMC Commissioner Bhushan Gagrani.

### Societal threat

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epidemic, facilitating access to alcohol will only exacerbate the problem," Mr. Paradesi said.

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**JAIPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

**e-Auction** **310** Residential, Commercial Institutional - Plot/Godown Petrol pump

**19 RESIDENTIAL PLOT**

03 Mahal Scheme, D-Block, Jaipur	03 Kalpana Nagar Jaipur	01 Shaurya Nagar Scheme, Jaipur	02 Patkar Colony Jaipur	01 Hargun Ki Nagal Urf Charanwala, Th. Sanganae Jaipur	01 Rajarampura Jaipur
01 Nilay Kunj Scheme, Jaipur	01 Nilay Kunj Phase-II Jaipur RERA No. RAJ/P/2019/937	01 Hiralal Shastri Nagar Scheme, Jaipur	02 Loha Mandi, Macheda Phase-I, Jaipur	01 Sankalp Nagar Scheme, Jaipur	02 Deendayal Nagar, Jaipur

**133 COMMERCIAL PLOT**

01 Verndhaven Garden-1, Scheme, Jaipur RERA No. RAJ/P/2022/2902	04 Parl Enclave Scheme, Jaipur RERA No. RAJ/P/2022/2902	06 Sheurya Nagar Scheme, Jaipur	17 Loha Mandi, Block-C Scheme, Jaipur	01 Institutional Scheme VIII, Dehmikalla	15 Transport Nagar Scheme, Jaipur	04 Deendayal Nagar, Jaipur	08 Golok Aura Jaipur RERA No. RAJ/P/2021/1547
01 Hari Vihar Scheme, Jaipur	01 Riyasat Town Green Scheme RERA No. RAJ/P/2021/2027	01 Hanuman Vatika A-1 Scheme RERA No. RAJ/P/2022/2928	02 'Vatika Residency' Jaipur	01 The Peral Avenue Scheme RERA No. RAJ/P/2024/2928	02 The Greater Jagatpura Block-B, Jaipur RERA No. RAJ/P/2024/2928	01 Badramianipura Block-B, Jaipur	01 West Way Heights, Jaipur
08 Krishna City Jaipur	05 Aakrati Enclave, Jaipur	11 Balaji Enclave, Jaipur	02 Hanuman H. Jaipur	08 Chetan Vihar Jaipur	07 Kanhayi Kunj Jaipur	03 Shrinath Enclave (Kh. No. 766,767, 768,769,771,773 Th. Basa, Jaipur)	

**131 MIX USE PLOT**

01 Ring Road Project Vill. Surajpura, Jaipur	04 Ring Road Project Vill. Khandwas, Jaipur	11 Ring Road Project Vill. Muhana, Jaipur	20 Ring Road Project Vill. Goner, Jaipur	14 Metro Enclave Jaipur	11 Ring Road Project Vill. Sitarpura, Jaipur	03 Ring Road Project Vill. Badanpura, Jaipur
04 Ring Road Project Vill. Chimanpura, Jaipur	04 Ring Road Project Vill. Pipala, Jaipur	07 Ring Road Project Vill. Khatwara, Jaipur	12 Ring Road Project Vill. Abhaypura, Jaipur	03 Ring Road Project Vill. Dadiya, Jaipur	04 Ring Road Project Vill. Siroli, Jaipur	18 Ring Road Project Vill. Badanpura, Jaipur
03 Ring Road Project Vill. Mahapura, Jaipur	02 Ring Road Project Vill. Khedi Gokulpura, Jaipur	05 Ring Road Project Vill. Shyamnara Buhariya, Jaipur	01 Ring Road Project Vill. Burthal, Jaipur	03 Ring Road Project Vill. Ajayapura, Jaipur	01 Ring Road Project Vill. Gavar Jatan, Jaipur	

**Auto Mobile Shop** **02** Transport Nagar, Sikar Road, Jaipur  
**Constructed Shop** **08** Under Pass (SMS to Tromta Centre)  
**Farm House** **02** Govindpura Ropada Scheme, Jaipur  
**Petrol Pump** **02** Transport Nagar, Sikar Road, Jaipur  
**Godown** **01** Transport Nagar, Sikar Road, Jaipur

**Institutional Plot** **01** Manoharpura, Jaipur  
**Coal Godown** **01** Lakkad Pathar Mandi, Jaipur  
**Service Yard** **03** Transport Nagar, Sikar Road, Jaipur  
**Group Housing** **07** Harit Vihar Scheme, Manpura Tilawala Scheme, Goner

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Scan QR Code for more details

**Delhi Weather** max min  
Delhi City 26 12  
Safdarjang 26 12  
Palam 25 12

**Delhi Palam Today** 26°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be slight cold with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Night also will be slight cold.  
**Delhi Palam Tomorrow** 27°C Morning will be slight cold with mist and haze. Day will be pleasant with increase in wind speed. Dry weather to prevail. Night also will be cold.

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**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
Online tender is invited for Supply of following item as per Tender Specification :-

TS. No.	Name of Item	Unit	Approx Qty.	Online Tender Opening Date
1842	1100 V, Single Core XLPE Insulated Un-armoured Conductor Cable	Km	2854	28.02.2025

For further detailed information visit website <http://www.mpwz.co.in> or <https://www.mptenders.gov.in>  
M.P. Madhyam/118777/2025

**CHIEF ENGINEER (PURCHASE)**

## IN BRIEF

**Mayawati expels nephew Akash's father-in-law from BSP**

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Wednesday announced the expulsion of Ashok Siddharth, the father-in-law of her nephew Akash Anand, from the party on charges of factionalism and engaging in anti-party activities. Mr. Anand, 30, is the national coordinator of the BSP and Ms. Mayawati's political successor. She had sacked Mr. Anand last year only to reinstate him later and appoint him as her political successor. Mr. Siddharth, a former Rajya Sabha MP, was expelled along with Nitin Singh, the Meerut district in-charge of BSP responsible for overseeing party operations in the southern States. PTI

**Trinamool to contest Goa Zila Panchayat elections**

The Trinamool Congress is in Goa for "the long run" and will contest this year's Zila Panchayat elections, its local leaders said on Wednesday. The Mamata Banerjee-led party had drawn a blank in the 2022 Goa Assembly election. Party spokesperson Trojano D'Mello, speaking at a press conference in Panaji along with State convener Mariano Rodrigues, said Trinamool secured a vote share of 10% in the election. "The Trinamool Congress came to Goa in 2022....We contested the Assembly election. We got about 10% of the vote. We are committed to Goa. We are here to stay," Mr. D'Mello said.

**Former Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Salvi resigns as party's deputy leader, may join Shinde outfit****Abhinay Deshpande**

MUMBAI  
Former Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Rajan Salvi resigned as the party's deputy leader on Wednesday, citing "prevailing circumstances" in his Rajapur constituency in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri district. His resignation has fuelled speculation that he may soon switch allegiance to the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.



If Mr. Salvi joins Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's faction, it would be a significant setback for Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) in the Konkan region, once considered a stronghold of the Thackeray-led party. The party has multiple leaders holding the designation of 'deputy leader'.

Mr. Salvi had lost to Shiv Sena MLA Kiran Samant in the 2024 Maharashtra As-

**With an eye on Dalit votes, Nitish-led govt. pulls out all stops on Ravidas Jayanti**

Bihar Chief Minister lists out his govt.'s achievements at event hosted by Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Welfare Department for the first time on the occasion, attacks Opposition RJD

**Amit Bhelari**  
PATNA

**A** head of the Assembly election in Bihar due later this year, the ruling Janata Dal (United)-led NDA government on Wednesday celebrated the birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas, 15th-century poet-saint and Dalit icon.

While such celebrations have been regularly organised by political outfits in the past as well, the event was hosted by the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Welfare Department for the first time – a move largely seen as an attempt to woo the Dalit community, which constitutes 19.65% of Bihar population, as per the socio-economic survey conducted by the State government.

Speaking at the event, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said, "Sant Ravidasji raised his voice against casteism, discrimination and untouchability, and gave the message of equality



CM Nitish Kumar paying floral tribute to Sant Ravidas on his birth anniversary in Patna on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and brotherhood to society. His contribution cannot be forgotten. On this occasion, I also salute [B.R.] Ambedkarji, the maker of the Constitution."

**'Working for all'**  
Listing out the achievements of his government, Mr. Kumar said he has

been working for the "upliftment of all sections of society". "Bihar Mahadalit Vikas Mission was established in 2009 to extend the benefits of government schemes to the Mahadalits. People of the community are getting a lot of benefits because of it. From 2023, the honora-

rium of Vikas Mitras was also increased from ₹3,700 to ₹25,000, with a 5% hike every year," the Chief Minister said.

Targeting the Dalit vote bank, he pointed out that several schemes are being run for the welfare of the SC/ST people. In 2018, Udyami Yojana was started for the employment of SC/ST youth, he said, adding that residential schools and hostels have also been built for SC/ST students.

Addressing the crowd, he lambasted the Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and hailed his current ally, Bharatiya Janata Party, without mentioning either by name.

"Did those in power before us do anything? All that has been done has been done by us," Mr. Kumar said, turning towards the dais where those seated included Union Minister Nitin Gadkari and Deputy CMs Sharad Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, all from the BJP.

(With inputs from PTI)

**HC seeks reply from Centre, Uttarakhand govt. on 2 petitions challenging UCC****Press Trust of India**  
NAINITAL

The Uttarakhand High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre and the State government to respond to two petitions challenging the provisions related to marriage and live-in relationships in the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) implemented in the State last month.

Hearing the petitions, a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Guhanathan Narendar and Justice Ashish Naithani granted the Centre and the State government six weeks' time to file their replies.

One petition, a PIL, contended that the UCC legitimises live-in relationships and gives it a status equal to marriage while another, a writ petition, said it is difficult for Muslims to follow the code as its provisions related to marriage and inheritance are against the tenets of Islam.

Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta represented the Centre and the State government in the court via videoconferencing.

The PIL filed by advo-

**The Division Bench granted the Centre and the State government six weeks' time to file their replies**

cate Suresh Singh Negi said the UCC will grant a valid status to live-in relationships, which is unconstitutional. "It will give legitimacy to live-in relationships, granting them a sanctity similar to marriage," it said.

**'Marriages in danger'**

Mr. Negi also said while marriage as well as divorce is a lengthy procedure, a live-in relationship only needs an application to be formed or terminated. "This may lead to a menace in society where marriages would be under threat and people would prefer to stay in live-in relationships," he said.

The writ petition filed by Almasuddin Siddiqui said a man of Muslim faith finds it difficult to follow the provisions of marriage, divorce, and inheritance in the UCC, which are different from those provided in the Koran.

**Vij replies to Haryana BJP show-cause notice over swipe at CM Saini****Press Trust of India**  
AMBALA

Haryana Minister Anil Vij on Wednesday said he has submitted his reply to the show-cause notice issued by the BJP for alleged breach of party discipline by making remarks targeting Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and State unit chief Mohan Lal Badoli.

The notice was issued to the 71-year-old on Monday on the instructions of the BJP national president and the party had sought a written reply from within three days.

Speaking to reporters here, Mr. Vij said he was in Bengaluru for three days and returned on Tuesday evening. "Before the deadline, I have submitted my reply. I mentioned that if they [party] need an answer to anything else, I will give that too," he said.

When asked if he can



Haryana Minister Anil Vij in Ambala on Wednesday. PTI

share with the media what he has submitted in his reply, Mr. Vij said, "It [the reply] has been sent in a sealed envelope and cannot be disclosed in public."

To another question, the Minister, while referring to the show-cause notice, said, "How that came in the media, this needs to be probed. How a secret communication got leaked before the media, if the party wants then it should get it probed."

Mr. Vij said even before he received a copy of the show-cause notice, he came to know about it through the media.

**Snooping charge: Rajasthan Minister responds to notice, admits he made a 'mistake'****Mohammed Iqbal**  
JAIPUR

Rajasthan Cabinet Minister Kirodi Lal Meena on Wednesday said he had sent his reply to the show-cause notice issued by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party over his recent allegation that he was under the government's surveillance and his phone was being tapped. Mr. Meena's charge led to turmoil in the State Assembly last week.

While admitting that he had made a "mistake" as mentioned in the notice, Mr. Meena did not disclose the content of his response. "I have submitted my reply for the mistake I had made. The mistake is mentioned in the notice given by the party's State president," Mr. Meena told journalists here.

The Minister, whose resignation from the State



Minister Kirodi Lal Meena said any disciplinary action regarding his phone tapping allegations is an internal matter of the BJP. FILE PHOTO

Cabinet tendered in June 2024 is yet to be accepted, said the disciplinary action over his allegation was an internal matter of the BJP. "It is not for me or any Minister or even the Chief Minister to speak. Only the party's president will deal with it," he said.

The February 10 notice, signed by BJP State president Madan Rathore, demanded a statement from Mr. Meena's allegations made at a public event were "patently false" and had tarnished the image of the State government. Terming it an act of indiscipline, the party asked Mr. Meena to give a reply within three days.

**Cong. seeks statement**

Meanwhile, senior Congress leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot on Wednesday demanded a statement from the BJP government on the matter on the floor of the Assembly.

**Assets case: property of ex-U.P. Minister's son attached by ED****The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached ₹60 lakh in moveable property belonging to Anil Kumar Prajapati, son of former Uttar Pradesh Mining Minister Gayatri Prasad Prajapati, in connection with an alleged disproportionate assets case.

The attached sum was in the form of credit balance in the bank account of Balaji Corporation Private Limited as the booking amount of a flat in a project named 'Vertu' in Wadala, Mumbai, retained by the builder.

The ED probe is based on a FIR by the U.P. Vig-



Former Uttar Pradesh Minister Gayatri Prasad Prajapati

lance Department against Mr. Gayatri Prasad Prajapati. "The ED investigation revealed that Gayatri Prasad Prajapati while holding the post of Mining Minister had acquired huge assets disproportionate to his source of income in the name of his family members and other close associates," the agency said.

**Andhra govt. will promote 'work from home' for women in a big way: Naidu****The Hindu Bureau**  
VIJAYAWADA

Extending his greetings to all women and girls pursuing their courses in STEM on International Day of Women and Girls in Science, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said on Wednesday that the government is planning to promote 'work from home' in a big way, especially for women.

In a post on X, Mr. Naidu said such initiatives could help strike a better work-life balance. "The government plans to harness these trends to drive meaningful changes in Andhra Pradesh," he said.

The Andhra Pradesh IT & GCC Policy 4.0 would be a game-changing step in



N. Chandrababu Naidu

that direction, he said. "We're offering incentives for developers to create IT office spaces in every city/municipality, and supporting IT/GCC firms to generate employment at the grassroots," the Chief Minister said.

Mr. Naidu said he was confident that these initiatives would foster greater workforce participation, especially among women

professionals who would benefit from the flexible remote/hybrid work options.

He said the work landscape underwent a shift during the COVID-19 pandemic. With technology readily available to scale, 'work from home' gained prominence.

Concepts such as remote work, co-working spaces, and neighbourhood workspaces could empower businesses and employees alike to create a flexible, productive work environment, he said.

**'Develop spaces'**  
The Chief Minister had directed officials to develop co-working and neighbourhood working spaces, especially in rural areas and small towns. Training programmes would be conducted to equip individuals with the skills. Designated working spaces would be created to support their integration into the workforce, he had said during the review meeting.

**'Generating jobs'**

Mr. Naidu, during a review meeting in December 2024, had stressed that educated women should not remain confined to their homes as homemakers. "With 'work from

**Punjab: 2 more FIRs filed against bogus immigration agents****Press Trust of India**  
CHANDIGARH

A Special Investigation Team (SIT), formed to probe the issue of illegal human trafficking following the deportation of Indian citizens from the U.S., has registered two more FIRs against bogus immigration consultants, the police said on Wednesday.

With this, the police have now registered a total of 10 FIRs against travel agents on the basis of statements of the deportees.

A U.S. military aircraft carrying 104 alleged illegal Indian immigrants, including 30 from Punjab, landed at the Amritsar airport on February 5. This was the first batch of Indians to be

deported by the Donald Trump government as part of a crackdown on alleged illegal immigrants.

The latest FIRs were filed on Tuesday against agents who allegedly deceived people with false promises of facilitating illegal entry into the United States, resulting in their deportation, according to a statement issued by Punjab Police.

Six people have been booked in the fresh FIRs lodged in Hoshiarpur and Tarn Taran districts under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS) and Emigration Act.

The SIT is headed by Additional Director General of Police (NRI Affairs) Praveen Sinha.

## IN BRIEF



## Will stay away from politics, says actor Chiranjeevi

Telugu film actor K. Chiranjeevi on Wednesday said he would keep away from politics and stay close to cinema. The actor turned into a politician with the launch of the Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) in 2008. However, in December 2016, he announced the merger of the PRP with the Congress. He served as a Union Minister of State for Tourism. The actor said his ambitions would be realised by Pawan Kalyan [his brother and Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh].

## Kerala may set up Sabarimala Development Authority

The Kerala government is examining the possibility of forming a Sabarimala Development Authority to oversee the infrastructure development and construction activities related to the hill temple and to coordinate the functioning of various departments which are concerned with the activities involved in the pilgrimage, Devaswom Minister V.N. Vasavan informed the Assembly on Wednesday.

## One more person killed in elephant attack in Wayanad

Protests are brewing in Wayanad with one more person dying in wild elephant attack, the second such incident in the past two days, and the UDF calling for a hartal on February 13. According to sources, the deceased is Balakrishnan, 27, a native of Attamala Erattukund. He was reportedly attacked by an elephant on Tuesday night when he was going to visit his parents. The incident happened close on the heels of the death of Manu, 45, from Vellari Colony in Tamil Nadu, who was trampled to death on February 10.

## Fear not



**Under expert care:** An iguana rescued from the site of a fire accident in Vijayawada on Wednesday. The fire that broke out at the Kashmir Jalakanya Exhibition destroyed several makeshift shops. No one was injured in the accident. G.N. RAO

## Birdwatchers and volunteers to develop Hyderabad Bird Atlas



A mock-survey was conducted at Nehru Zoological Park in the city to train participants about the basics of bird identification.

## The Hindu Bureau

HYDERABAD

The exercise to develop Hyderabad Bird Atlas is under way with birdwatchers along with volunteers scanning different parts of the city to map avian fauna. The Atlas is being developed to understand bird distribution in the city, monitor changes in their population, identify important bird areas and inform authorities about land use planning.

The three-year project was rolled out on February 3, which will go on till February 23. It will be conducted in February (Winter) and July (Summer) to know birds which migrate in winters. Summer helps

to know resident birds.

Prior to the launch, the volunteers were trained in the basics of bird identification. A mock-survey was conducted at Nehru Zoological Park in the city early this month.

Following the training session, volunteers were divided into smaller groups consisting of two to

## 5 nursing students in Kerala arrested on ragging charges

First-year students file complaints alleging severe physical and mental harassment by seniors at the Government College of Nursing attached to the Government Medical College, Kottayam

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOTTAYAM

The Gandhinagar police in Kottayam arrested five third-year General Nursing students from the Government College of Nursing at the Government Medical College, Kottayam, on Wednesday, following allegations of ragging.

The arrested students have been identified as Samuel John, 20, from Moonilavu, Kottayam; Jeeva, 19, from Nadavayal, Wayanad; Rijil Jith, 20, from Manjeri, Malappuram; Vivek, 21, from Koruthodu, Kottayam; and Rahul Raj, 22, from Wandoor, Malappuram. The arrests came after



The victims were subjected to brutal assault in the college hostel, where they were forced to remain nude. VISHNU PRATHAP

three first-year students filed complaints alleging severe physical and mental harassment since their classes began on November 4. According to the complainants, the victims were subjected to brutal assault in the college hostel, where they were forced to remain nude and lift

weight plates using their private parts.

The accused also allegedly used sharp-edged tools to injure the victims and extorted ₹800 from each of them every Sunday to buy liquor.

The abuse came to light when one of the victims contacted his parents, who

urged him to file a complaint with the college. The college authority, in turn, conducted a preliminary probe and lodged a formal complaint with the Gandhinagar police and the District Police Chief, Kottayam.

The police uncovered a case of ragging that had reportedly been ongoing for three months. Official sources said the accused have confessed to the charges during a preliminary interrogation.

Following the investigation, the accused were taken into custody and produced before a magistrate. The college administration has suspended them, pending further inquiry into the incident.

## No reason to deny passport to militant's brother, says J&amp;K HC

**Peerzada Ashiq**  
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Wednesday directed the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the Regional Passport Officer to consider issuing passport based on "uninfluenced report" in favour of a local, after he was denied the same because his brother is a slain militant and his father an overground worker (OWG).

Officials told the court that the passport verification report had been verified through field agencies, which revealed that Mr. Malik's brother, Ayaz Malik alias Abu Musa, remained a militant of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) outfit, and was killed during an encounter with the security forces in 2011.

They added that the father is enlisted as OWG in the records. The High Court observed: "...it is not permissible under law that when 'A' has committed a crime, 'B' should be punished. In the instant case also, the petitioner is sought to be punished for the alleged sins of some other person."

The court direction was widely welcomed by political parties. Former CM and Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti said the court's decision "is certainly a step in the right direction".

Ruling National Conference leader and legislator Tanvir Sadiq welcomed the court's verdict as "a significant affirmation of individual rights and justice".

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Ruling National Conference leader and legislator Tanvir Sadiq welcomed the court's verdict as "a significant affirmation of individual rights and justice".

## Telangana on high alert in view of bird flu

**Ravi Reddy**  
HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has declared a 'high alert' in view of outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) or Bird Flu cases reported in Andhra Pradesh, by setting up over two dozen check posts to check vehicles transporting poultry birds into the State.

Though no cases have been reported in Telangana so far, Animal Husbandry Department officials

have been on their toes throughout the day and had activated all its district teams to be on round-the-clock vigil at the boundary to check vehicles entering the State.

Additional Director of Animal Husbandry Ch. Malleswari said that as many as 24 check posts have been set up on the boundary connecting towns with Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. "Our team of veterinary doctors and police are jointly mounting a vigil and

checking poultry vehicles entering the State," she said. "The vigil and vehicle checks will continue for the next 15 days," said Dr. Malleswari.

**3,000 more birds die** Meanwhile, a day after mass mortality of more than 4,000 birds was reported from a farm at Anumollanka village in Andhra Pradesh, the officials on Wednesday confirmed death of 3,000 more birds at the same farm. All the birds, aged 24 days, were

broiler chicks and belonged to Sri Balaji Poultry Farms, said M. Hanumantha Rao, Joint Director, Animal Husbandry, NTR district.

The officials suspect bird flu, a viral infection, while confirmation of the same has come from the Bhopal-based ICAR-National Institute of High-Security Animal Diseases where samples have been sent for testing. The lab reports are expected in three days.

(With inputs from Vijayawada)

## Centre's stand prompted Kerala to explore revenue-generating model for KIIFB: CM

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Explaining the revenue-generating model, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday said, user fee will be collected on Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board-funded roads to enable KIIFB to repay its loans and, over time, phase out government grants.

Defending the KIIFB model during the Budget discussion in the State Assembly, Mr. Vijayan said the Centre's discriminatory approach to KIIFB had prompted the State government to "in principle" explore revenue-generating models for it. The Centre's arguments can be effectively countered if KIIFB

projects generate revenue. In such a situation, KIIFB loans can also be excluded from the State's borrowing limit, Mr. Vijayan said.

**Excellent credit rating'** KIIFB will successfully complete its mission notwithstanding attempts to impede it with "half-truths and baseless allegations." KIIFB is able to maintain an excellent credit rating because it repays loans promptly and in a time-bound manner, he added.

He described the infrastructure development realised through KIIFB during the past eight-and-a-half years as "matchless." KIIFB has so far cleared 1,147 projects worth ₹87,521.36 crore.



Pinarayi Vijayan

ing unlike Central agencies like the National Highway Authority of India is baseless, he said. Though NHAI collects toll, it accounts for only a small portion of its repayments. For that, NHAI depends on open market borrowings and Central grants, he said.

An earlier statement by former Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac that KIIFB will not entail toll/user fee was made at a time when fund raising by KIIFB was not treated as falling within the ambit of the State's borrowings, he said.

While it is a fact that petroleum cess and a portion of the motor vehicle tax go as grant to KIIFB, the loans availed by KIIFB on its own remain its liability, Mr. Vijayan said.

## Karnataka Governor signs Ordinance to rein in lending firms

## The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot has finally approved The Karnataka Micro Loan and Small Loan (Prevention of Coercive Actions) Ordinance, 2025, with a few suggestions on what needs to be incorporated at the time of its execution.

Following the clearance, the Ordinance was gazetted on Wednesday.

In the city, 180 survey regions were identified for the study. As of now, 51 out of 180 regions were surveyed and 170 bird species were recorded.

## The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

that employ coercive means to recover loans given to poor people. While giving his assent, the Governor observed, "The Ordinance is a good step towards regulating the actions of unregulated/unregistered MFIs and moneylending agencies or organisations, and thereby, protecting and relieving the economically vulnerable groups and individuals from the undue hardship of usurious interest rates and coercive means of recovery."

With this, hurdles have been cleared for cracking the whip on unregistered and unlicensed micro finance institutions (MFIs).

**Hurdles cleared** With this, hurdles have been cleared for cracking the whip on unregistered and unlicensed micro finance institutions (MFIs).

## Parents of Walayar sisters to be summoned to CBI court shortly

## K.S. Sudhi

KOCHI

including the gravity of the offence and the probability of the accused absconding, tampering with the evidence or influencing the witnesses, judicial sources said.

Generally, bail is denied to allow the investigation agency to carry out its custodial interrogation, ensure the appearance of the accused for investigation and collect evidence in the case.

However, the CBI has already interrogated the accused and gathered the required evidence in the case. The first accused is currently out on bail.

The prosecution is likely to oppose the bail application and argue that there exists the possibility of the accused absconding, tam-

pering with the evidence, and trying to influence the witnesses, sources said.

The accused also have the option of moving a discharge petition before the court and contending that there is no sufficient ground to proceed against them in the case.

In its chargesheet filed two weeks ago, the CBI had alleged that the parents had abetted the first accused to sexually assault their minor daughters.

The Walayar girls were found hanging in their house – the 13-year-old on January 13, 2017, and the nine-year-old on March 4 of the same year.

*To overcome suicidal tendencies, contact Disha at 1056.*



## Wilful violation

Supreme Court's queries expose pattern of obstinacy in TN. Governor's conduct

The Supreme Court of India's probing questions to the Tamil Nadu Governor, R.N. Ravi, have exposed a pattern of wilful violation of constitutional duty on his part. The questions related to the lawfulness of Mr. Ravi's act in referring to the President of India a set of Bills for which he had earlier "withheld assent", but was constitutionally bound to grant assent after their adoption for a second time by the State Assembly. The Bench was speaking on behalf of everyone when it asked whether Mr. Ravi had referred these Bills to the President only to avoid granting assent, as required by the first proviso to Article 200 of the Constitution. The earlier understanding that the withholding of assent puts an end to the life of a Bill was altered by the Court's judgment in 2023, holding that whenever Governors opt for that course of action, they should return the Bill to the legislature, as required in the proviso; and if passed again by the House, they were bound to grant assent. Faced with queries, the Attorney-General of India (A-G) raised the issue of possible repugnancy with central law. He argued that the Governor had rightly referred these Bills to the President due to an apparent conflict with UGC Regulations, as these Bills seek to change the manner in which university vice-chancellors are appointed. The A-G also maintained that when the Governor had earlier withheld assent, the Bills ceased to exist and the Assembly had presumed that these had been "returned" by the Governor and adopted them a second time. In a related contention, he has also argued that the requirement to return a Bill does not hold good if the issue of repugnancy is noted.

These arguments may appear fascinating in determining the right course of action to be followed by Governors in dealing with Bills, and the Bench, which has reserved its judgment, may come up with answers. However, the fact that the Governor has been using his powers to scuttle legislation is quite obvious. He had not acted on some of these Bills for a year or two or expressed his reservations relating to the repugnancy aspect while withholding assent. Also, he ignored the fact that he was bound to grant assent when the Bills were presented to him a second time, but referred them to the President. Even in a 2023 hearing, the Court had questioned whether a Governor, having chosen to withhold assent, could exercise another option by referring the same Bill to the President. Mr. Ravi appears bent on scuttling any law that does not suit his world view. It is time the Union government took note of the challenge his continuance in office poses to constitutional governance in Tamil Nadu.

## Averting Engels' pause

Energy sustainability, labour markets emerge as key priorities in AI Summit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted India's stance on the evolving Artificial Intelligence (AI) landscape at the AI Action Summit in Paris on February 11, stressing the need for "governance and standards that uphold our shared values, address risks, and build trust". This perspective is also reflected in the joint statement signed by India and over 50 other countries. Commitments to trust, safety, and universal access align well with India's efforts to advance AI technologies while mitigating risks. The nation's approach to AI will be crucial as the technology progresses and costs decline. Innovations such as Chinese firm DeepSeek's breakthrough reasoning models underscore the growing risks to labour markets. The IT and services sector constitutes a significant portion of India's economy but employs a relatively smaller workforce. AI-driven efficiency gains present an attractive business proposition, yet the potential for job losses or stagnant wage growth in this sector poses serious risks. The Prime Minister rightly pointed out that technological advancements historically create new employment opportunities. However, as noted in the Economic Survey, there is a valid concern regarding an Engels' pause, a phase where firms reap the benefits of new technology while real wages stagnate. India cannot afford even a brief period of such economic strain, making proactive policy responses essential.

The summit's emphasis on sustainable AI growth and energy efficiency is equally timely, given global climate imperatives. The United States produces more than twice the electricity of India, despite having just a quarter of its population. A growing share of this energy is now consumed by data centres, which power AI training and deployment. As AI-driven energy demand surges, ensuring that this growth is powered by renewable sources is critical. Commercial AI success remains elusive, with substantial investments flowing into top market players but offering limited financial returns. While India may not replicate this high-investment, low-return model, developing foundational AI models that are tailored to Indian needs is imperative. Leveraging emerging efficiencies and maximising AI's potential must remain central to India's strategy. The IndiaAI Mission's initiatives, such as subsidised access to Graphics Processing Unit (GPU) clusters and funding for promising projects, are encouraging steps toward this goal. Looking ahead, integrating AI education and skills training at scale will be essential. Even if a significant share of top AI talent moves abroad, India must ensure that its domestic industry retains sufficient expertise to remain competitive. AI will undoubtedly reshape industries, and preparing a robust talent pipeline will be key to ensuring that India not only adapts but also thrives in this transformation.

# Nuclear energy – dangerous concessions on liability

In the Union Budget speech on February 1, the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the government's intention to take up "amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act...". This announcement is likely to please Washington, where successive administrations have been unhappy that the law places some minimal responsibilities on nuclear manufacturers in the event of an accident. But, in India, any move to indemnify suppliers should be a matter of serious concern since this could undermine nuclear safety.

Moreover, the reactors that the American government is pushing India to buy are extremely expensive and their import makes no sense on economic grounds.

Any nuclear reactor carries the risk of accidents – some of which, such as the multiple reactor meltdowns at Fukushima, Japan, in 2011, can be catastrophic. Such a disaster affects three parties: the victims, the operator of the nuclear plant (which, in India, is likely to be the public sector company, Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited or NPCIL) and its supplier, which might be a large multinational corporation.

Following the Bhopal gas disaster (1984) the Supreme Court of India ruled, in 1986, in the Delhi Oleum gas leak case, that any enterprise engaged in a hazardous activity is "absolutely liable" for harm suffered by the victims. However, in 2010, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government created a special law for nuclear accidents that diluted this principle. Under this law, primary liability is channelled to the operator and capped at ₹1,500 crore.

This is unfair to victims because the economic damage caused by an accident can be much higher. The Japan Center for Economic Research estimated that the eventual cleanup costs of the Fukushima disaster could range from ₹35 trillion to ₹80 trillion (or ₹20 lakh crore to ₹46 lakh crore) – more than a thousand times the cap on operator liability in the Indian law.

### Assigning responsibility

Despite this gross mismatch, the law did have one slightly redeeming feature. Under pressure from civil society groups and the political opposition, the UPA government was forced to include a clause called the "right of recourse". This allows the operator to recoup compensation paid to victims from the supplier if the accident was caused by "supply of equipment ... with patent or latent defects or sub-standard services".

Because of the historical monopoly enjoyed by U.S. nuclear companies, liability laws in many other countries lack this feature. Instead, they completely indemnify suppliers. This simply reflects the influence of powerful corporations and is not based on a scientific analysis of



M.V. Ramana

is a physicist with the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP)



Suvrat Raju

is a physicist with the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP)

previous accidents. In fact, design defects have played a role in every major accident to date. A weakness in the Mark 1 containment used in the reactors at Fukushima contributed to that accident. This defect was flagged as early as 1972, when a U.S. Atomic Energy Commission official warned that General Electric (GE), the reactor's designer, had used "data from tests not applicable to accident conditions" in safety assessments. The official recommended that "such designs not be accepted for construction permits" in the future. GE simply brushed aside this concern and, because it is indemnified by the Japanese liability regime, has not paid anything for the Fukushima accident.

Indemnity removes any direct economic incentive for suppliers to ensure reactor safety once a sale is completed. This is not a hypothetical concern. Following the 1979 accident at Three Mile Island, the Kemeny Commission established by the U.S. government noted that Babcock & Wilcox, the supplier of the reactor, had identified a safety hazard in an "earlier accident, bearing strong similarities to the one at Three Mile Island". Even though an engineer at the company had "urged, in the strongest terms, that clear instructions be passed on to the operators" to mitigate this hazard, the supplier failed to do so.

### Backtracking on progress

Nuclear suppliers were furious at the idea that they might have to pay for accidents in India. To appease these companies, the UPA government made farcical attempts to dilute the right of recourse, both during and after the parliamentary debates on the law. This led the Bharatiya Janata Party leader Arun Jaitley to write that a "leopard never changes its spots".

However, after assuming power, the National Democratic Alliance government has pursued precisely the same policy of prioritising nuclear corporations over potential victims. Following U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to India in 2015, the Ministry of External Affairs issued a set of "frequently asked questions" downplaying the operator's right of recourse, and disingenuously suggesting that it could be bypassed using a contractual arrangement between the supplier and the NPCIL.

These machinations have not satisfied U.S. suppliers who are unwilling to expose themselves to any legal hazard in India. Their concerns are easy to guess. Although the current liability cap is low, a future government might rationalise it to reflect the true cost of an accident, exposing these companies to large financial risks. Moreover, accepting even minimal liability in India endangers their cosy arrangements in other countries where they have successfully demanded complete indemnity.

The line in the Union Budget on the intent to amend the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act should be a matter of serious concern

Finally, if the liability law mandates an assessment of the supplier's culpability, this might allow victims to hold corporate executives to account using criminal laws in the event of a disaster.

U.S. officials have actively lobbied on behalf of these politically influential companies. The outgoing U.S. Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, recently indicated that he had been in touch with leaders from both the ruling party and the Opposition in an effort to have the law amended. He also lamented that U.S. corporations had been unable to sell a single reactor to India nearly two decades after the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement. However, this has allowed India to avert a costly mistake as the troubled track record of these reactors in their home country shows.

The leading American reactor design on offer is called the AP1000. Electric utility companies commenced construction on four such reactors in the U.S. Two of these reactors, in South Carolina, were abandoned after repeated delays and cost escalations even though more than \$9 billion had already been spent. Two other reactors, in Georgia, were completed at an eye-popping cost of \$36.8 billion, over 250% of the \$14 billion estimate provided at the start of construction.

These high costs translate to expensive electricity. Even taking into account lower labour costs in India, the cost of electricity from such reactors would be several times higher than competing sources as the writers of this article showed in a 2013 study in the *Economic & Political Weekly*. Small modular reactor designs, such as those offered by the U.S.'s NuScale Power corporation, are likely to be even less economical since they lose out on "economies of scale".

### Hollow safety claims

The debate on liability also exposes the exaggerated safety claims made by suppliers. Westinghouse claims that a large release of radiation from an AP1000 reactor would happen only once in 50 million years. If reactors are so safe, why would nuclear vendors take extreme precautions to protect themselves from the consequences of an accident? If companies such as Westinghouse recognise that the risk of an accident is real and are unwilling to risk financial losses, why should Indian citizens who live near a reactor be willing to risk their lives and property?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi projects an image of a strong global leader. However, the government's announcement on the liability law is a revealing commentary on that message. When faced with pressure from the U.S. government, which puts the profits of U.S. corporations above all else, Mr. Modi's government seems unable to stand up for the basic rights and the safety of Indians.

# Budgeting for a gender-inclusive 'Viksit Bharat'

The Union Budget 2025-26 emphasises the government's commitment to inclusive development, balanced growth and prioritising the well-being of four key population groups: the poor, youth, farmers, and women. In a welcome announcement, the Finance Minister set forth a holistic vision for Viksit Bharat (or Developed India) with 'zero poverty, universal good quality school education, 100% skilled labour with meaningful employment, 70% women in economic activities, and India as the food basket of the world'. The explicit inclusion of women as a priority group within this national development framework is commendable and reinforces the government's pledge towards women-led development.

### Gender budget allocation

One of the most notable advancements in the Budget is the increase in the gender budget to 8.8% of the total Budget, a significant jump from 6.8% in the previous year. This is the highest allocation in two decades, with ₹4.49 lakh crore spread across 49 Union Ministries and departments. It reflects a strong commitment to creating a more supportive and empowering environment for women and girls. Further strengthening this commitment, 12 additional central Ministries – many from non-conventional sectors such as railways, ports, shipping and waterways, land resources, pharmaceuticals, and food processing industries – have integrated gender budgets, reflecting a whole-of-government approach to gender mainstreaming.

As in the Periodic Labour Force Survey, India's female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) measured at usual status has steadily risen, reaching approximately 42% in 2023-24 from 33% in 2021-22. This is approaching the global average of 47%, as reported by the International Labour Organisation. However, a 37-percentage point gap remains when compared to men's labour force participation of 79%. Achieving the ambitious target of 70% women's participation in economic activities by 2047 necessitates increased investment in skilling, employment,



Susan Ferguson

is Country Representative at UN Women India

Gender-responsive budgeting can help India's women to become key drivers of national growth

entrepreneurship, access to productive resources, and social security entitlements – areas that the Budget has acknowledged through its various schemes. Key initiatives such as the Skill India Programme, Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESDP), National Skill Training Institutes, Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), PM Employment Generation Programme, PM Vishwakarma, and Krishonnati Yojana have seen a combined increased allocation from ₹1.19 lakh crore to ₹1.24 lakh crore this year. Approximately 52% of these funds are directed toward women and girls. Additionally, new schemes such as the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana, first-time entrepreneurs' scheme, sustainable livelihood for urban workers initiative, and Centres of Excellence for Make in India, will play a critical role in fostering women's workforce participation.

### A focus on gig workers

With 90% of India's working women engaged in the informal sector, the Budget's proposal to formalise gig workers by issuing identity cards and registering them on the e-Shram portal is a significant step. This initiative has the potential to empower millions of women by providing them with formal identity, access to social security entitlements, and financial inclusion benefits.

While the gig economy has offered women financial independence and flexible work arrangements, it often comes with low wages, job insecurity, and a lack of employment rights, including maternity benefits. The enforcement of labour codes and the provision of comprehensive social security measures, including progressive parental entitlements across informal and formal sectors, will be critical to ensure women's economic security.

The establishment of a Centre of Excellence on Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the education sector and a dedicated ₹600 crore gender budget under the India AI Mission, demonstrate the

government's intent to harness AI for social good. As technological advancements redefine the future of work, investing in digital education, skills, and enterprise training for women will be imperative to ensuring equitable outcomes in the workforce and benefits for the entire economy.

### A diversity of economic roles

Financial institutions must recognise women's diverse economic roles, particularly in agriculture, entrepreneurship, and employment. For example, simplifying documentation requirements for economic and social security provisions, such as delinking Kisan Credit Cards from land ownership, would help women farmers avail loans and credit facilities that they can use to improve crop yields, productivity and expand their agricultural and allied operations. Tracking access and usage of such schemes through gender-disaggregated data would further enhance their effectiveness.

As per the government's Udyam portal, 20.5% of the micro, small and medium enterprises are women-owned employing about 27 million people. Unlocking finance for women-owned enterprises through collateral-free loans, alternative credit scoring models, and targeted financial literacy programmes will catalyse economic growth. Bain and Company, and Google, claim that establishing 30 million additional women-owned businesses could generate 150-170 million jobs, accounting for over 25% of the job creation needed for India's working-age population by 2030.

Budget 2025-26 provides a robust foundation for advancing women's economic participation. Realising the vision of Viksit Bharat requires sustained efforts in policy implementation, infrastructure development, and social norm transformation. By ensuring gender-responsive budgeting, strengthened social protection, and by fostering a labour market which includes both women and men, India can pave the way for women to become key drivers of national growth, ultimately achieving the ambitious target of 70% women in economic activities by 2047.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### AI, the job market

With a large and growing population, India faces significant employment challenges. The advent of AI could exacerbate these issues. Once hailed as a major job creator, the IT sector has seen a decline. This serves as a cautionary tale about the impact of

technological advancements. While AI has advantages, it is also essential to acknowledge its limitations and boundaries. The Prime Minister's speech at the AI Action Summit in Paris seems to be overly optimistic (February 12).

C. Raghavan,  
Chennai

### Pages of history

I happened to read the Editorial in this daily, "India with Indonesia" (January 27), which prompted me to rummage through some old papers that my father had. My father, (the late) T. Govindarajulu, joined the editorial department in 1944, and was posted to

Singapore as *The Hindu's* Staff Correspondent in 1946. He was the only Indian correspondent to have covered the Renville talks between the Dutch and the Indonesians under the auspices of the United Nations in 1947.

Lakshmi Raghavan,  
Chennai

### Domestic cricket

The interview with Saurashtra cricketer Sheldon Jackson, who announced his retirement after a successful career in domestic cricket, underlines the greatness and value of the well-structured Indian domestic cricket system, especially the Ranji Trophy,

which gave cricket a pan-India impetus. If the longest format of the game has to survive, then the cradle of Indian cricket cannot be overlooked.

R. Sivakumar,  
Chennai

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

# Implications of the AI Diffusion Framework

The Biden-Harris administration unveiled a flurry of policies in their last week in office. The most extraordinary among them is the Framework for Artificial Intelligence (AI) Diffusion. It has many goals: preserving U.S. hegemony in AI technology, balancing innovation and national security, and deterring U.S. adversaries from harvesting the strategic rewards of AI. These goals signal the U.S.'s strategic vision for AI, heralding its transformative potential to advance economic prowess and military dominance in the coming years.

**Mechanism of the framework**  
Compute capacity using advanced AI chips is a key infrastructure necessity in developing advanced AI systems. Leveraging the U.S.'s dominance in chips and the AI supply chain, the framework extends the prevailing export controls to cover the entire gamut of AI technology stack, including AI chips, chip-making tools, and closed AI model weights – the key to a trained AI system's learning and decision-making abilities.

Countries are placed in three tiers, each subject to different levels of restrictions. The first tier comprises key allies, irreplaceable in the AI supply chain. They are unconstrained in their freedom to import AI technology. The third tier covers key adversaries such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran. The framework perpetuates the entire spectrum of export controls and prevents the diffusion of advanced AI systems to these countries. The second tier encompasses the rest of the world, including India. The framework establishes a system of limited access to these countries. Companies from the U.S. can tap into the commercial opportunities of AI in these countries as long as they maintain only a tiny share of their total compute capacity there and safeguard against unauthorised access.

The prevailing export controls



**Ashwin Prasad**

Research Analyst in the High-Tech Geopolitics Programme at The Takshashila Institution

have always been restrictive against U.S. adversaries. At first glance, this framework seems to extend some of these restrictions on all but closest allies and partners. Indeed, major allies such as Austria and Israel and other strategic partners such as India are not exempt from the rules. However, the limits and caps imposed are free-handed in satisfying any near-term demand for AI chips from anyone but the countries of concern. Even the export restrictions on model weights are for closed models that far exceed any existing advanced AI systems. So, it will be business as usual in the short term.

The entire system is designed to ensure that if advanced AI systems that are more powerful and capable than the prevailing ones are ever developed, it will happen only in trusted American geographies. The framework will likely succeed in its objectives in the short term and accrue the benefits of cutting-edge AI to the U.S. and its closest allies. But it will influence and reshape the global technological and strategic landscape in the long term.

Through a series of executive actions, the U.S. has mandated the concentration of global AI technological capabilities within its borders and those of allied countries. American companies seeking to establish frontier-scale AI capabilities outside the U.S. – whether motivated by lower costs or more favourable policies – will now face significant barriers. Even among key allies exempt from export controls, this policy sets a concerning precedent of unilateral American executive action that could potentially deny them their strategic priorities in the future.

These allies and American corporations will likely hedge against such possibilities, developing contingency plans to protect their technological interests and maintain competitive advantages. In fact, as AI technology advances in the long term, the likelihood increases that America's plans may yield

unintended consequences. Countries, including U.S. allies, will become more motivated to develop independent supply chains and sovereign AI innovation to circumvent U.S. technological constraints. This could fragment the global AI ecosystem that the U.S. currently dominates.

**Eroding goodwill with India**  
The policy framework disadvantages India, positioning it less favourably than anticipated. By discouraging the development of cutting-edge AI systems beyond U.S. borders, the framework may disincentivise investments and operations of Indian subsidiaries of leading American AI companies. This could create conditions that risk drawing away India's pool of top AI talent and impeding knowledge transfer and technological innovation within the country. This could be a major point of contention for India, given the implications on its technological and economic interests.

The framework evaluates India solely by its technological capabilities in AI, while ignoring the strategic value of the India-U.S. partnership. It also disregards the substantial social capital built between the two countries through recent technology cooperation, including advances in semiconductor manufacturing collaboration. Instead, it serves as a stark reminder of the U.S.-led technology denial regimes that restricted India's access to nuclear technologies for three decades following its nuclear tests.

There is a disconnect between America's export control policies and its strategic partnership with India regarding Indo-Pacific cooperation and shared goals of countering Chinese influence in the region. This misalignment risks undermining the bilateral relationship both nations have carefully cultivated in recent years. It could compel India to hedge against its technological and economic dependence on the U.S.

# Reopening fiscal wounds

The Union Budget has left the Kerala government deeply disappointed

## STATE OF PLAY

**Tiki Rajwi**  
tiki.rajwi@tehhindu.co.in



The Union Budget sparked anger in Kerala over the Centre's "continued neglect" of the State on the fiscal front. For some time now, there has been deepening distrust between Left Front-ruled Kerala and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at the Centre in the financial realm. The Kerala government has repeatedly accused the Centre of initiating lopsided policies that have worsened the imbalances in the sharing of revenue resources and of weakening cooperative federalism.

The CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) government and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) criticised the Budget for "ignoring" the State. Predictably, the Kerala unit of the BJP was quick to describe the Budget as a windfall for Kerala. But its narrative was drowned in the controversy which erupted over Union Minister George Kurian's remark that if the State wanted more funds, it should perhaps declare itself backward in terms of infrastructure, education, and social welfare so that the Finance Commission can make helpful recommendations.

Apart from demanding again a ₹24,000 crore special economic package for overcoming financial distress, the Kerala government also pleaded for a ₹2,000 crore package for relocating the survivors of the landslides that occurred in July 2024 in Wayanad, and for ₹5,000 crore of special assistance for the Vizhinjam port project, which it calls a game-changer for maritime trade. These requests were ignored.

Kerala's Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal described the Union Budget as "extremely disappointing" and said that it lacked a pan-India perspective that was sympathetic to the diverse needs of the States. Expectedly, the State Budget presented by him on February 7 allocated the first tranche of ₹750 crore for the landslide-affected people of Mundakkal and Chooralmala in Wayanad. The Post Disaster Needs Assessment document prepared by experts had estimated the cost of post-landslide reconstruction and rehabilitation to be ₹2,221 crore.

The Railway Budget, too, left the State disappointed. Although Kerala has been allocated ₹3,042 crore for developing rail infrastructure, none of the projects specifically demanded by it, including long-pending ones such as the Nilambur-Nanjangud line or the Sabari rail, were announced.

The Left's narrative that Kerala has been punished yet again for its hard-earned progress in sectors such as education, health, and social welfare was inbuilt in the criticism. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan again accused the Modi government of failing to honour the federal principles upheld in the Constitution.

This is the latest episode in the long-drawn-out struggle between Kerala and New Delhi over what the southern State describes as its dwindle-

ning allocation from the divisible pool and unfair curbs on borrowings. Kerala had moved the Supreme Court last year, challenging the Centre's decision curtailing its borrowing capacity. Before the 16th Finance Commission's tour of Kerala in December 2024 for drafting recommendations, the Left government hosted a conclave of Finance Ministers of non-BJP-ruled States for establishing common ground on shared fiscal grievances.

Kerala has repeatedly drawn attention to its divisible tax pool share that has shrunk from 3.88% under the 10th Finance Commission to 1.92% under the 15th Finance Commission. In the face of diminishing central transfers, Kerala has, however, managed to improve its own-tax and non-tax revenues, though it faces tough financial questions that have no easy answers. The NITI Aayog Fiscal Health Index 2025 placed Kerala among "aspirational States" that have "consistently" faced fiscal challenges over the past nine years.

"These States face high debt, large interest payments, weak revenue generation, and inefficiencies in capital expenditure, with reliance on non-tax revenue impacting their fiscal health and rankings," said the report, which ranked States for the 2023 fiscal. It termed "low quality of expenditure" and "debt sustainability" as two of the significant challenges in Kerala's path.

It remains to be seen how the 16th Finance Commission, which is expected to submit its recommendations by October 31, 2025, will play out for Kerala and its tax devolution concerns. That said, it is evident that delicate negotiations on the financial front with the Centre will continue to be the State's top priority, at least in the short term.

# A 11-year high of 55% urban residents report stagnant income in 2025

Concerns over stagnant income levels overshadowed optimism about reduced expenses among urban consumers

## DATA POINT

### Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Urban consumers in India began the new year with both hope and concern. On the one hand, India's retail inflation eased to a five-month low of 4.31% in January, providing some relief to consumers by reducing the pressure on their household expenses. On the other, worries about the employment scenario continued to weigh on them. Income levels too have been stagnant – in January, 55% of urban consumers reported that their income levels had remained unchanged compared to the same period last year. This is the highest such share in nearly 11 years.

As concerns over stagnant income levels overshadowed any optimism about reduced expenses, a growing share of urban consumers remained pessimistic about the broader economic outlook as the new year began, says the Reserve Bank of India's Consumer Confidence Survey, which was conducted across 19 major cities in January. It covered 6,081 respondents, of which 52.4% were women.

**Chart 1** shows the share of respondents who said that the prices of commodities had increased/decreased/stayed the same in January 2025 compared to a year ago. The share of respondents who reported an increase in prices in January this year (93%) was the lowest since July last year. Around 1% of the respondents said that prices had declined, which has been the case since the pandemic. An increasing share said that prices had continued to remain the same.

**Chart 2** shows the spending perception on essential items. The 87.6% who said that spending on essential items had increased was the lowest since September 2024. Less than 2% of the respondents felt that spending on essential items had declined, aligning with the past trend. Close to 11% felt that

it had remained the same.

**Chart 3** shows perceptions of spending on non-essential items. There was a slight increase in the share of respondents who reported that their spending on non-essential items had remained unchanged compared to a year ago. The share of those who stated that their spending had increased declined marginally in January 2025.

Overall, on the spending front, conditions have slightly improved or have at least not deteriorated further, as reflected in Charts 1, 2, and 3.

**Chart 4** shows perceptions of income levels. The share of respondents who reported that their income levels had remained unchanged compared to a year ago reached a record high in January. There was a decrease in the share of respondents who indicated a decline or an increase in their income.

**Chart 5** shows urban consumers' perceptions of employment. About 42.7% reported a decline in job opportunities compared to a year ago. Following the sharp drop in the employment sentiment during the pandemic, there had been a steady recovery since, with an increasing share of respondents reporting improved job opportunities. However, this trend reversed in mid-2024, as pessimism about the job market began to grow. This pessimism has deepened further in the current year.

**Charts 4 and 5** reveal growing challenges on the income front. Job opportunities are becoming increasingly scarce, and those who are employed are grappling with stagnant income levels, highlighting the mounting financial pressures faced by urban consumers.

Pessimism over stagnant income levels has had a significant impact on consumers, with 43% of them stating that the overall economic situation had worsened in January compared to the same period last year. This is the highest such share in at least a year (**Chart 6**).

## Mixed feelings

The data for the charts were sourced from the RBI's Consumer Confidence Survey - January 2025



Chart 1: Share of respondents (%) who said that the prices of commodities had increased/decreased/stayed the same

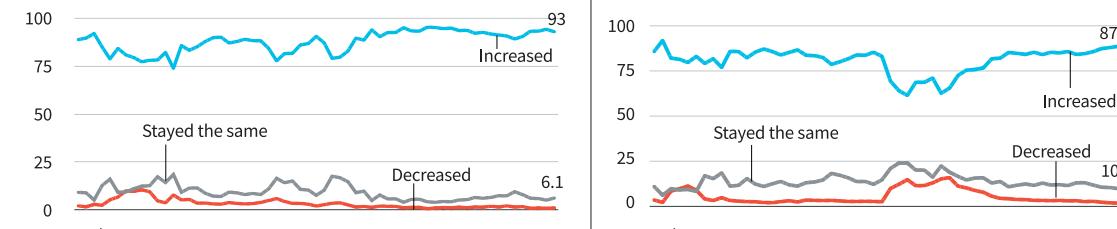


Chart 2: Share of respondents (%) who said that the spending on essential items had increased/decreased/stayed the same

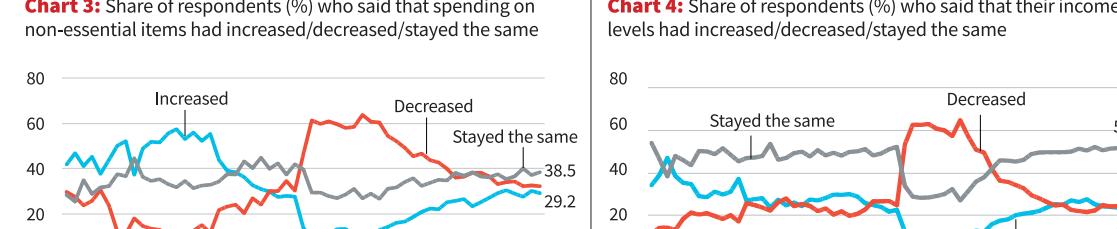


Chart 3: Share of respondents (%) who said that spending on non-essential items had increased/decreased/stayed the same

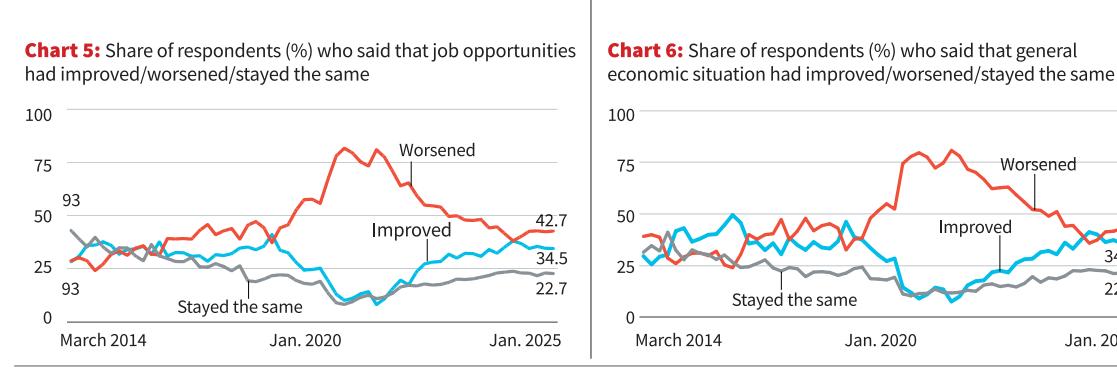


Chart 4: Share of respondents (%) who said that their income levels had increased/decreased/stayed the same



Chart 5: Share of respondents (%) who said that job opportunities had improved/worsened/stayed the same

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

**The Hindu**

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 13, 1975

### U.S. Congress probe into hiring of military trainers

Washington, Feb. 12: Rising unemployment in the U.S. and the lure of high pay and adventure in exotic lands is persuading a number of American ex-servicemen, who had fought in Vietnam, to seek jobs as military mercenaries in Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The latest disclosures show that a 1,500-strong American private force, commanded by a former Major-General, is in Iran to help create a helicopter strike force known as the Iran Sky Cavalry Brigade. It will be modelled after a similar American unit that fought in Vietnam.

The Bell Helicopter International, a private American company which has a five-year contract with the Iran Government to provide this tactical training force, is a sister firm of the Bell Helicopter Company, which sold over 450 attack helicopters to Iran two years ago.

Though the U.S. Government is not involved in this particular training contract, it was revealed early this week that another private company, the Vinnell Corporation of California, had a \$77 million (Rs. 61.6 crores) contract with the U.S. Defence Department to provide a 1000-man special force unit to train Saudi soldiers to protect their oil fields from invasion by foreign troops.

Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have been buying huge quantities of arms from the U.S. with their oil riches, and some of the weapons supplied are so modern and sophisticated that even the U.S. armed forces have not started to use them.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 13, 1925

### Indians in E. Africa

Bombay, Feb. 12: Opposition to an Indian official being sent out to East Africa to inspect an area in the Lowlands of Kenya for Indian Colonisation, was voiced by Mr. C.F. Andrews who was interviewed this afternoon by the Associated Press. The African population of Kenya, said Mr. Andrews, needed all available lands for their expansion and their paramount interest should be respected, for too much land had already been alienated from them in the Highlands and if possible some of this land ought to be recovered for African use, because Native reserves were already proving too small.

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**Death toll in the 2024 crackdown on protests in Bangladesh**

**1,400** The figure was estimated by the UN human rights office. In a new report, it stated that security and intelligence services "systematically engaged" in rights violations that could amount to crimes against humanity. AP

**Degraded forest land identified for Green Credit Programme**

**57,700** in hectares. Seventeen States have so far set aside degraded forest land for tree plantation under the Green Credit Programme. It rewards environmental actions by individuals, communities and the private sector. PTI

**Passenger traffic through European airports' increases**

**2.5** In billion. European airports welcomed more passengers last year than in 2019, surpassing pre-COVID levels for the first time since the pandemic, industry figures showed on Wednesday. Passenger traffic reached 2.5 billion in 2024, up 7.4% from the previous year. AFP

**Israel's first sale in government bonds to the U.S.**

**5** in \$ billion. Israel has sold this amount in dollar-denominated government bonds in international markets to bring down its budget deficit and finance the costs of the war. In the first debt sale of 2025, the Finance Ministry offered two new series of five-year and 10-year government bonds. PTI

**India's imports of palm oil dip to a 13-year low, says SEA**

**65** in per cent. India's palm oil imports dipped as buyers shifted to cheaper soybean oil, industry body Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) said. Vegetable oil imports dropped to 10.49 lakh tonnes from 12 lakh tonnes a year earlier. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## Should convicted persons contest elections?

What does the Representation of the People Act, 1951 stipulate with respect to electoral candidates convicted of criminal offences? What are the various judgments of the Supreme Court which favour the decriminalisation of politics? What is the case for a lifetime ban on convicted individuals standing for office?

### EXPLAINER

**Rangarajan. R**

**The story so far:**

**T**he Supreme Court is hearing petitions filed by Ashwin Upadhyay and others, seeking a life time ban on convicted persons from contesting elections.

**What are the legal provisions?**

Section 8(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act, 1951), provides for the disqualification of a person convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment for not less than two years. Such a person is disqualified from contesting elections for a further period of six years from the date of release. Section 8(1) further stipulates that a person convicted under criminal laws for heinous crimes like rape; the Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) act for preaching or practice of untouchability; UAPA for unlawful association; Prevention of Corruption Act etc., will be disqualified irrespective of the period of their sentence and six years after release.

**What were past decisions?**

The Supreme Court has delivered notable judgments in favour of the decriminalisation of politics. In the *Association for Democratic Reforms* (ADR) case (2002), it mandated the disclosure of criminal records of all candidates contesting elections. In the *CEC vs Jan Chaukidar* case (2013), it upheld the creative interpretation of the provisions of the RP Act, 1951 by the Patna High Court. One of the qualifications as per the act to contest elections is that a person should be an 'elector'. Section 62(5) stipulates that a person in jail is not eligible to vote in elections. The court interpreted that persons who are under trial prisoners, therefore cease to be 'electors' and hence not qualified to contest elections. However, the Parliament amended the act in 2013 to overturn this judgment



GETTY IMAGES

allowing under trial prisoners to contest elections. In *Lily Thomas* (2013), the court struck down section 8(4) of the RP Act, 1951, that allowed a sitting legislator to continue as a member even after being convicted if they filed an appeal, as unconstitutional and against political justice. After this judgment, a sitting legislator is disqualified immediately after the sentencing for a conviction.

It is pertinent to note that Section 11 of the RP Act, 1951 provides that the Election Commission (EC) may remove any disqualification or reduce the period of disqualification of a convicted person. It utilised this power in September 2019, to reduce the disqualification period of Prem Singh Tamang, incumbent Chief

Minister of Sikkim, from six years to 13 months which allowed him to contest and win a byelection.

It was a questionable decision of the EC to have reduced the disqualification period of a person convicted under the Prevention of Corruption Act, considering its various recommendations to curb criminalisation of politics.

**What is the current petition?**

The current petition seeks a life time ban on convicted persons from contesting elections. The petitioners argue that if a convicted person is not eligible for even a junior-grade government job, how could they become law makers six years after serving their sentence. However, the

Central government in an affidavit filed before the court in 2020 had mentioned that MPs and MLAs are not bound by any 'service conditions' unlike government servants, and hence the present disqualification period of six years after serving the sentence is adequate.

The Supreme Court has again sought the response of the Central government and the EC on the current petition.

**What can be the way forward?**

A report by ADR states that 251 (46%) of the 543 elected MPs in 2024, have criminal cases against them, and 171 (31%) face serious criminal charges including rape, murder, attempt to murder and kidnapping. It added that chances of winning for a candidate with a criminal background was 15.4% as against just 4.4% for a candidate with a clean background. The Law Commission in 1999 and 2014, and the EC on various occasions have highlighted the need to curb the criminalisation of politics. They have recommended that even persons against whom charges are framed by a competent court for an offence that entails punishment of more than five years should not be allowed to contest elections.

However, there has been no consensus on this recommendation amongst political parties considering the risk of its misuse. As regards the current petition, there may be convictions that do not involve moral turpitude for which permanent disqualification would be inappropriate and disproportionate. With respect to convictions for heinous crimes and under statutes like the Prevention of Corruption Act, there may be a case for life time disqualification as it is directly linked with probity in public life.

Meanwhile, the powers vested with the EC for reducing or removing the period of disqualification of a convicted person should be reviewed by the court for its constitutional validity.

*Rangarajan. R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. Views expressed are personal.*

### THE GIST

Section 8(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act, 1951), provides for the disqualification of a person convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment for not less than two years.

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A report by ADR states that 251 (46%) of the 543 elected MPs in 2024, have criminal cases against them, and 171 (31%) face serious criminal charges including rape, murder, attempt to murder and kidnapping.

## What is contributing to the downturn in Indian markets?

How are U.S. President Donald Trump's recent directives affecting Indian stock markets? What is the relationship between bond yields and stock markets? Will the rupee strengthen?

**Saptaparno Ghosh**

**The story so far:**

**F**or the sixth consecutive day, BSE Sensex closed lower on Wednesday reflective of a major sell-off among foreign institutional investors and portfolio investors (FIIs/FPIs), mixed earnings and apprehensions about the tightening of the (imports') tariff regime in the U.S.

**Why is Trump affecting markets?** On Tuesday, U.S. President Donald Trump issued directives to restore tariff on steel and elevate the tariff on aluminium to 25%. The White House held these were to protect America's industries which "have been harmed by unfair trade practices and global excess capacity".

However, the directive was not well received in the Indian markets. This is primarily due to apprehensions about a

potential dumping of Asian exports to India, potentially culminating into downward revision of prices and increased competition. Indian steel manufacturers are already amidst a revision in steel prices. For perspective, Indian manufacturer JSW Steel stated in its Q3 earnings about its Net Smelting Return (NSR) in India falling by close to ₹1,800 compared to the preceding quarter. Additionally, with respect to the alleged dumping, India's Directorate General for Trade Remedies (DGTR) has an ongoing investigation into the imports of 'non-alloy and alloy steel flat products'.

**Why is foreign money moving away?** FIIs and FPIs have been increasingly moving towards U.S. bonds, seeking a haven away from the current modest Indian markets with potentially lesser returns. According to Devarsh Vakil, Head of Prime Research at HDFC Securities, the

current situation in the market emanates from tepid domestic earnings growth, elevated valuations in mid and small cap segments, and persistent inflation exceeding the RBI's lower threshold of 4%, and uncertainty around trade and tariffs. It is imperative to note here that bond yield and stock markets have an inverse relationship. This is because both vie for investor funds, aspiring to outdo the other by offering more returns. Therefore, when U.S. bond yield rises, foreign investors transit from Indian equities to U.S. bonds. Domestic, economic, and political certainty alongside monetary policies are other contributing factors. All in all, the entire paradigm contributes to making the dollar stronger and the rupee weaker because of the flow of the rupee. V.K. Vijaykumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial observed that while the downturn in markets has been because of

a combination of factors, the major among them has been the "relentless FII selling". He told *The Hindu* about FIIs having sold in the cash market every day, except for two days, so far this year – totalling to ₹93,907 crore. He further noted that while domestic institutional investors have been compensating for the FII outflows, "market sentiments have been impacted." Apurva Sheth, Head of Market Perspectives & Research at SAMCO Securities pointed out that dollar denominated returns of Indian equities "have not been impressive at all".

Mid and small caps stocks are also experiencing a correction due to the sell-off spree.

**What is outlook for the near-term?** Tightening of trade policies with the probability of a trade war under Trump, geopolitical tensions and slowing global growth could influence markets going forward. According to Mr. Vijaykumar, "FIIs will return to India, only the timing is uncertain." He further adds, "Indications of a growth and earnings recovery in India and dollar decline – we do not know when it will happen, will make FIIs buyers in India." Additionally, Mr. Vakil holds that deep uncertainty about President Trump's tariffs plans may keep investors on the "defensive". As for the outflow, he contends SIP flows are likely to remain strong and should be able to absorb bulk of the selling.

### THE GIST

On Tuesday, U.S. President Donald Trump issued directives to restore tariff on steel and elevate the tariff on aluminium to 25%.

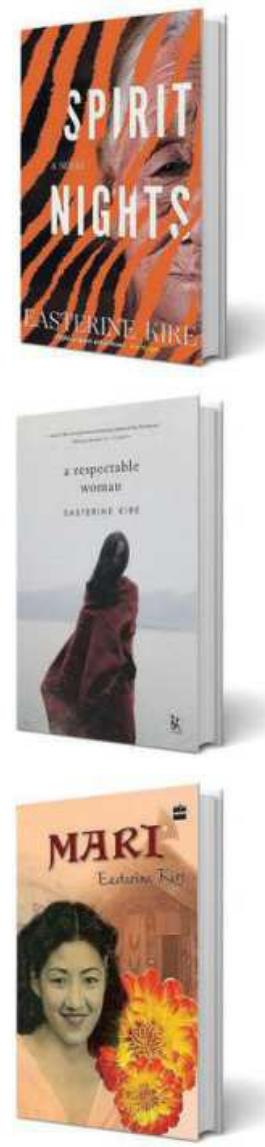
FIIs and FPIs have been increasingly moving towards U.S. bonds, seeking a haven away from the current modest Indian markets with potentially lesser returns.

Tightening of trade policies with the probability of a trade war under the Trump administration, geopolitical tensions and slowing global growth could influence markets going forward.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



Against the current: Konyak tribes perform at the inaugural day of the Hornbill festival in Kisama village, Kohima on December 1, 2024. RITU RAJ KONWAR



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Know your English

**K. Subrahmanian**  
**S. Upendran**

"Let's discuss the two passages given last week. Passage (a) is written in conversational or colloquial English. This is the kind of language we use in our daily conversation. The language of passage (b) is formal, a little too formal. This is the language we use on formal occasions. The whole passage is one sentence. It could have been split into two or more sentences for easier comprehension, (a) is too colloquial, (b) too formal. So long as you are able to communicate your ideas clearly, you can use any language appropriate to the context. You should not mix levels. Don't mix the formal with the informal language. When you introduce a person at a public meeting, you generally use formal language."

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have great pleasure in introducing to you Mr. X. a distinguished scientist.... Now I request the fellow to give his speech." In this context, the word 'fellow' is inappropriate. 'Fellow' is a colloquial word. The audience would be amused when we use the word on formal occasions."

"But we say 'Fellow of the Royal Society.'"

"Sure. Here we are talking about the person's academic achievement."

"I can't say at a condolence meeting: – We have assembled here to condole the death of X who kicked the bucket three days ago."

"No. 'To kick the bucket' means 'to die'. It is slang. It is not used on formal occasions."

"Is 'colloquial language' inferior to other kinds of language?"

"No. It is not inferior but different. It was introduced into English in 1751 by Dr. Johnson in an essay in *The Rambler*. But he did not include it in his Dictionary published in 1755. It doesn't have pejorative overtones."

"But some think it has."

"True. That's why some dictionaries use the label 'informal' instead of 'colloquial'."

"Before you proceed any further, please tell me the difference between 'forego' and 'forgo'."

"'Forego' means 'go before'. 'Forgo' means 'to abstain from, do without'. The foregoing remarks were made by John. He decided to forgo his lunch on the advice of his doctor."

Published in *The Hindu* on May 16, 1995.

## Easterine Kire: chronicler of the lives and fables of Nagas

Shunning media stereotypes of the northeast, the Sahitya Akademi-winning novelist and poet from Nagaland writes about the cultural life of her people, who refuse to be defined by conflict. Kire has also documented their oral history and spiritual world view

## Radhika Santhanam

**Y**ears ago, when I asked a classmate what she was reading, she simply replied, "A book from the northeast." It was a lazy, unhelpful description. Ever heard anyone say they are reading Jerry Pinto, a "writer from the west"?

That was in 2010, but little has changed since. The northeast is still described in many everyday conversations as a homogenous region – an anthropological paradise where "strange" and "exotic" cultures thrive, and complex, ethnic conflicts play out amid natural beauty.

Easterine Kire, a novelist from Nagaland who lives in Norway, spoke of her exasperation with the broad portrayal of the region in an interview to *The Hindu* in 2019. "The media stereotype of the northeast has done so much damage that the true cultural life of the Nagas and their rights have been overlooked," she said. In her works, Kire portrays a people who refuse to be defined by conflict. "We are saying there is more [to Nagaland]," she said in another interview to *The Hindu* in 2015. "There is great beauty, not just the breathtaking landscapes of mountains and rivers and cloud-covered villages, but the beauty of the people who live there and the stories they have to share. The spiritual world is a big part of the Naga world view and it comes naturally to me to write about it."

## Writing about the spiritual

*Spirit Nights* (2022), which won Kire the Sahitya Akademi award in 2024, is a shining example of how the writer is a chronicler of the lives and fables of the

Nagas. The novel's protagonist is Tola, a wise woman and the daughter of a seer. She is warned in a dream of impending doom. Dreams are the gateway to the spiritual world. When a taboo is breached in the spiritual world, intense, all-encompassing darkness descends on her village. Only one person, Tola's grandson Namu, can bring back light. Kire's book is inspired by the story of darkness narrated by the Rengma Naga and Chang Naga tribes. Just as the sun resuscitates a fading leaf, it is the breath of Kire's storytelling that brings an oral tale to life.

*When the River Sleeps* (2014), which won The Hindu Prize in 2015, is also steeped in Naga folktales and myths. A middle-aged hunter named Vile lives inside a forest. He dreams that a "heart-stone" lies on the bed of a river, which will give him expansive powers. Vile sets out on his quest, encountering fellow beings, sorceresses, and spirits on the way. The poet K. Satchidanandan described the book as "a sample of how the mythopoetic imagination can work in our times".

Kire had written elsewhere: "My generation of Nagas accept that our territories are shared between human and spirit inhabitants." These works are rooted in the folklore of Nagaland, but Kire skilfully draws out the deeper meanings of these beliefs and they are universally instructive.

## Nagaland over the years

When Kire was a child, every night one of her grandparents would tell her a story. She grew up in an estate in Kohima, where trees were laden with fruit, wild

flowers bloomed, and she woke up to dawn chorus. Her love for the oral tradition of storytelling, and for beauty and nature, which she infuses into her writing, likely came from these early childhood experiences.

But not all of Nagaland was peaceful and picturesque. Kire recounts how the small town of Kohima was suddenly thrust on the global map when the Japanese invaded the hills in 1944. In 1958, the draconian Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act was imposed to deal with the Naga insurgency. In the 1960s and '70s, Kire recalls in interviews how the Army would patrol the streets and clamp curfews. Nagaland came to be imagined by the rest of India as a land of trouble-makers.

In her works, Kire also traces the lives of different generations to reveal the transformation of a people and a State. For the book *Mari*, which she began writing in parts at 16 and completed in 2003, she sat with her aunt Mari, gently unspooling her memories of Kohima before and during World War II. The war cleaved the history of the region: Kire says it was "remarkable" that "people have little memory of what they were doing before the war years." In *A Respectable Woman* (2019), too, she writes about the conflict: "Many of our people had not known any government other than the British. So, when they left our hills, many people felt orphaned...."

*A Respectable Woman* is also about another war; this time, against the Indian state. Kire says, "Even while the few educated Nagas felt that they had the right to fight for Naga sovereignty, the Indian government sent in armed police

who began a reign of terror... We were no longer safe in our own homes."

Where there is war, there is always resilience. In *Mari*, Mari becomes a refugee in her own homeland and is nearly crushed by the weight of recurrent loss. She bounces back again and again, left with no other choice. As the grandmother says in *Bitter Wormwood*, "If life is hard to you, you simply harden yourself so its griefs are easier to bear."

Kire's protagonists are often women but they are not all "strong women", which makes them relatable. Women, like men, contribute to maintaining the patriarchal order (*A Terrible Matriarchy*). They show their vulnerabilities and express their fears (*Spirit Nights*). Kire does not romanticise their fights and the journeys of their survival (*Mari*). Women assert their agency through micro-feminist acts (*A Respectable Woman*). They are ordinary women who often find themselves grappling with extraordinary circumstances.

Kire's style is to write crisp, short, unadorned sentences and narrate unsettling parables, which reflect her love for allegories. By staying close to their roots, writers like Temsula Ao paved the way for Easterine Kire who is making the road easier for voices of the next generation like Avinuo Kire and others. If works by writers such as Kire find their way into classrooms across India, there may be greater understanding of regional literature from the States of the northeast; stories which encapsulate the tragedies, aspirations, and cultures of a people who have for too long been typecast, and which have been systematically erased from our hegemonic imagination of the nation.

## THE DAILY QUIZ

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Champions Trophy 2025 is scheduled to start from next week. Here is a quiz on the tournament

## Sindhu Nagaraj

## QUESTION 1

What was the tournament formerly called?

## QUESTION 2

Which is the format played in the tournament?

## QUESTION 3

In which year was the tournament inaugurated? Which country hosted it first?

## QUESTION 4

Where was the second edition of the ICC tournament held? It was held in this country to increase the popularity of the sport here?

## QUESTION 5

Which two countries have won the tournament twice?



Visual question: Identify this cricketer. What is the feat he has achieved in this tournament? AFP

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Many people living in this city call it "Chatigaon". Ans: Chittagong

2. In 1989, one conflict in this (now erstwhile) country was over whether the two halves of its name should be hyphenated. Ans:

Czechoslovakia

3. Political efforts to rename this region led to a two-word name in 2020, one representing the local Pashtun people and the other the non-Pashtun. Ans: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

4. In the Turkish language, this water body is called the "Gulf of Basra". Ans: Persian Gulf

5. The name of this country is also the historic name of a region in Iran. Specifically, it was the name of a region south of the Aras river. Ans:

Azerbaijan

Visual: This British Overseas Territory in the south Atlantic Ocean is an archipelago. Ans: Falkland Islands

Early Birds: Tito Shiladitya| Erfanly Oosmany|

M. Suresh Kumar| Prashansa Lohumi| Ayush Jaiwal

## Word of the day

## Acquiesce:

to agree or express agreement

## Synonyms:

accede, assent

## Usage:

He gradually acquiesced to the demands of the opposition.

## Pronunciation:

newsth.live/acquiescepro

## International Phonetic Alphabet:

/ækwi'ɛs/

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

## From Page One

## Retail inflation eases to five-month low of 4.31%

Although non-food inflation inched up to a 13-month high of 3.2%, this was still within the comfort zone, Mr. Joshi said. Vegetables inflation more than halved to 11.3% in January from 26.6% in December, but fruits inflation spiked to 12.22%, and edible oils became 15.6% costlier than a year ago, marking a 33-month high.

## Vegetables, eggs cheaper

The five items that recorded the highest inflation in January were coconut oil (54.2%), potatoes (49.6%), coconut (38.7%), garlic (30.7%), and peas (30.2%). Kerala and Odisha reported the highest inflation rates in the country at 6.76% and 6.05% respectively, while Delhi (2.02%) and Telangana (2.22%) recorded the mildest price pressures for their residents.

"The significant decline in headline inflation and food inflation during the month of January is mainly attributed to decline in inflation of vegetables, egg, pulses and products, cereals and products, education, clothing and health," the National Statistics Office said. Food inflation trends varied for urban and rural India, with cities reporting a 5.5% rise in prices, while rural areas still faced a higher inflation of 6.3%.

## IMEC gains traction as PM meets Macron

IMEC, which involves the participation of Israel, had failed to make headway because of the Gaza conflict.

The French and Indian leadership highlighted the importance of the project for prosperity of India and Europe.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told the media that after the AI summit, Mr. Modi reached Marseille on Tuesday in the French presidential aircraft. "Marseilles will be the entry point for the whole European market, and IMEC will channel a lot of energy to Marseille," Mr. Macron said.

The two sides also agreed to develop nuclear reactors jointly. The joint statement said officials from both sides signed letter of intent on production of small and advanced modular reactors. The two leaders described nuclear energy as an "essential part of the energy mix".

The small modular reactors are factory-fabricated nuclear reactors that are smaller in size and capacity than the conventional nuclear reactors.

Mr. Modi and Mr. Macron jointly inaugurated the new Indian Consulate General in Marseille on Wednesday. Marseille will host the Mediterranean edition of the flagship discussion event of the Ministry of External Affairs - Raisina Dialogue - this year where stakeholders from multiple sectors are expected to participate.

## Do you intend to continue as Minister: SC

Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, appearing for the State, said the Minister had been given a 'Hobson's choice'.

"I was in jail for one year. Cases were piled upon me when I was in jail. After imposing stringent conditions on me [for bail], I have been appearing every alternate day before the court... I am hardly working as a Minister," Mr. Rohatgi submitted.

Mr. Senthilbalaji is accused of playing a "central and pivotal role" in receiving kickbacks for jobs in the Metropolitan Transport Corporation of Chennai and Tamil Nadu State Corporation during his tenure as Transport Minister.

The court was hearing allegations raised by both the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) and K. Vidhya Kumar – an alleged victim of the scam – that Mr. Senthilbalaji was trying to "derail" the trial in the case. Mr. Senthilbalaji was appointed Minister soon after his release on bail by the Supreme Court on September 26 last year.

On December 2, the top court had voiced strong objection to Mr. Senthilbalaji's return as Minister. "What is this? There are serious charges against him, and he straightaway becomes a Minister! This must stop. People would be justified now for their apprehension that witnesses would come under pressure," Justice Oka had remarked.

On Wednesday, Mr. Rohatgi told the Bench that he would convey to Mr. Senthilbalaji the court's question regarding his continuance as Minister.

Mr. Mehta interjected to point out that Mr. Senthilbalaji's lawyers had similarly sought time on the same pretext during the previous court hearing.

The Solicitor-General said a forensic expert, who had been regularly depositing at the trial, had made himself scarce after Mr. Senthilbalaji's return as Minister.

Justice Oka said the Minister was granted bail not on merits but on the sole ground that he had suffered a long incarceration of one year as an undertrial in the case. Mr. Mehta said Mr. Senthilbalaji had wielded power even in jail in the role of a Minister without a portfolio.

In a recent affidavit, the ED had contended that the ongoing examination of prosecution witnesses has been delayed due to Mr. Senthilbalaji's applications for either copies of the digital records or for change of counsel. The Central agency had pointed out that some of the key witnesses cited in the prosecution complaint had previously worked under Mr. Senthilbalaji when he was Transport Minister.

## Congress slams Centre over Adani project near border

Party asks PM to explain if rules were changed to allow infrastructure projects in border areas; he endangered security to benefit billionaires, rules relaxed on other border areas too, says Kharge

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday asked the Narendra Modi-led Union government to come clean on the claims made in a news report that it had changed the rules regarding land allocation near international borders to help the Adani Group build a renewable energy park in Gujarat's Rann of Kutch at the India-Pakistan border.

Reacting to an investigation by *The Guardian*, Congress leaders said the government's move jeopardised national security, and asked the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister to "explain why such a drastic step to compromise our national security was taken".

Neither the government nor the Adani Group has responded to the news reports and the comments made by the Opposition party.

## Protocols changed

The investigation by *The Guardian* said the Adani Group is setting up a solar plant and building the world's largest renewable energy park at Khavda in Kutch, barely a kilometre from the Pakistan border.

Earlier security proto-



**Boon or bane?** Solar panels installed at the Adani Green Renewable Energy plant at Khavda in Kutch district of Gujarat. AFP

cols did not allow any construction in the area, but the Gujarat government wrote to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) before April 2023, seeking permission for infrastructure projects to be built on the land near the border, reported the British newspaper.

Its report claimed that a "confidential meeting" was convened in Delhi on April 21, 2023 to discuss the matter. At that time, the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) was in possession of the land that was leased out by the Gujarat government.

*The Guardian* further reported that by May 8, 2023, the Centre had changed the protocols to allow infrastructure projects. By August 2023, the Adani Group was in charge of the land in the Rann of Kutch, the paper added.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the pseudo-nationalistic face of the ruling BJP has once again been unmasked.

## Endangered security

"Narendra Modi, you have endangered national security at our borders in order to benefit private billionaires. Is it true that you have gifted precious strategic land, just 1 km near the International Border with Pakistan, to your 'dear friend' by relaxing border security rules?" Mr. Kharge asked in a post on X.

"Is it not true that your government has relaxed such rules, not just at the India-Pakistan border, but also on the land adjoining Bangladesh, China, Myanmar and Nepal, thereby jeopardising our strategic and border security?" the Congress chief asked.

Mr. Kharge reiterated the concerns of defence officials quoted in the news report about the possible need "to lay mines or put in place anti-tank and anti-personnel mechanisms".

"Why would you allow a huge private project within easy striking distance of the India-Pakistan border, thereby increasing the defence responsibilities of our armed forces and reducing their strategic advantages?" he asked.

## PM must explain'

Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal asked the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister to explain the need for a change in the rules. "Are we trying to make our energy system a sitting duck against our adversaries? Are military experts who have spent decades protecting our nation mere puppets who can be sidelined? The Modi government's cronyism is a threat to our national security," Mr. Venugopal said in a post on X.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra asked: "Has the process of handing over all the resources of the country to the Prime Minister's 'friend' reached such a point that even the border security rules are being changed?"

## Stalemate continues in Manipur over successor to Biren

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

N. Biren Singh  
consensus candidate for the Chief Minister's post.

The BJP in Manipur struggled to select a successor to caretaker Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh for the third straight day on Wednesday.

Sambit Patra, the MP in charge of the party's affairs in the Northeast, met Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla for the third time in three days. Neither the Raj Bhawan nor the BJP issued any statement on what transpired during their meeting for more than an hour.

Mr. Patra, who continued his one-to-one meeting with the legislators of the BJP and its allies, declined to speak to journalists after emerging from the Raj Bhawan.

However, BJP legislator Karam Shyam dismissed speculation about the imposition of the President's Rule in the ethnic conflict-scarred State. "Contrary to the hypotheses, there will be no constitutional crisis. We have reasons to believe our central leaders will resolve the matter in consultation with the party's State unit," the MLA representing the Langthabal constituency said.

A senior BJP leader in Imphal said the party's central leadership, including Home Minister Amit Shah and national president J.P. Nadda, could meet the State's legislators in Delhi soon to finalise a

**Warning note**  
Amid the political crisis, pressure groups have begun to show their frustration. Ph. Nando Luwang, the president of the influential All Manipur United Clubs' Organisation, said the imposition of President's Rule or keeping the State Assembly in suspended animation would not make any difference to the people of the State at this juncture.

"However, we will not remain passive if there is any threat to Manipur's territorial integrity," he said, obliquely referring to the demand for a separate administration by the Kuki-Zo organisations.

## Centre's new Immigration Bill likely to have provisions denying entry to foreigners

Vijaita Singh  
NEW DELHI

The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025, which is expected to be introduced in the current session of Parliament, is likely to introduce for the first time, threat to national security and sovereignty as grounds to deny entry or stay to a foreign national in the country. It may also have provisions to bar the entry of a foreigner on basis of relations with a foreign state.

The proposed law could make the decision of the Immigration Officer final and binding. Earlier, too, foreigners were denied entry but the clause was not explicitly mentioned in any legislation or Rules.

The Bill is likely to repeal and replace the Foreigners Act, 1946; Pass-

port (Entry into India) Act, 1920; and the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939 – the three laws brought close to the First and Second World Wars. The Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000 will also be repealed.

The four Acts had overlapping provisions and a necessity to repeal the Acts and enact a new comprehensive law was felt.

The proposed legislation was also framed to avoid overlapping of laws with relation to passports or other documents of persons entering or exiting India, including the requirement of visa and registration.

The Bill may also define functions of the Immigration Officer. Obligations of universities and other educational institutions, and those of medical institu-

tions with regard to admitting foreigners may also be covered by the Bill. It is likely that the Bill will include provisions on burden of proof upon such persons to prove that they are not foreign nationals.

Although the Bureau of Immigration already exists, with the passing of the Bill, Immigration Officers and the bureau may get adequate legal backing.

The legislation could propose imprisonment of five years, or fines up to ₹5 lakh or both, for entering India without valid documents. Using or distributing fraudulent travel documents may invite punishments such as two years' imprisonment, which may be extended to seven years. A fine of not less than ₹1 lakh, which may stretch to ₹10 lakh, may also be proposed.

The current toll taxes are levied based on the base rate of fee per kilometre as prescribed by the NH Fee Rules, 2008. Since vehicular traffic on the road has exponentially increased since 2008, the panel directed the Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport

## Public Accounts Committee asks Centre to review toll tax rule for National Highways

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The House panel is headed by Congress leader K.C. Venugopal.

and Highways, V. Umashankar; National Highways Authority of India Chairperson Santosh Kumar Yadav, and other officials who deposed before the panel, to review the rules.

"The base rates should be lowered considering there are more vehicles plying on the road and, therefore, the revenue collection is higher," one of

the panel members said. The members also flagged that many of the concessionaires do not keep their side of the agreement, which includes maintenance of the road, identifying high-risk intersections, managing black spots, and providing passenger amenities, including rest stops, and medical help in case of accidents.

The long traffic jams at the toll gates, despite the introduction of FASTags, were also discussed. The example of Paliyekkara Toll Plaza at the Thrissur-Eddapally section of National Highway 544 was also cited, as the concessionaire was not following the agreement.

The Centre has said it is now running a pilot project with "Automatic Number Plate Recognition" at select highways.

## Govt. set to introduce new Income Tax Bill today

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Union government is all set to introduce a new Bill to reform the income tax laws on Thursday, the last day of the first part of the Budget Session.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had mentioned it during her Budget speech on February 1.

The report of the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill is also likely to be tabled on Thursday.

The panel has already submitted the report on the Bill to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

## HC seeks Centre's reply over women's reservation

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to respond to a plea challenging the validity of Article 334A(l) of the Constitution, which prescribes delimitation as a prerequisite to give effect to reservation of seats for women in Parliament.

The court issued notice to the Ministry of Law and Justice as well as Attorney General, the highest law officer in the country, on the plea questioning why women's reservation should be deferred until the delimitation was complete.

## Average of ₹57 lakh spent by each candidate on LS poll campaign: data

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Candidates in the 2024 Lok Sabha election each spent an average of ₹57.23 lakh for campaigning, according to an Atlas on last year's general election released by the Election Commission of India on Wednesday.

While the Congress's Shashi Tharoor reported the highest individual expenditure of ₹94.89 lakh, the Trinamool Congress's Pratima Mondal spent only ₹12,500.

**'Inbuilt red flags'**  
Speaking at the release of the Atlas, Chief Election

makes the EC "extremely confident" that nothing can go wrong. If someone makes an error, the system will not accept it, he said.

The Opposition, led by the Congress, has been raising concerns about unusual numbers of additions and deletions in voters lists in some States like Maharashtra.

**Highs and lows**  
According to the Atlas, Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi spent ₹92.82 lakh on his campaign trail in Wayanad. Three Karnataka MPs – Sunil Bose, B.Y. Raghavendra and E. Tukaram – were on the list of 15 MPs with

the highest campaign expenditure. DMK MP from Coimbatore, Ganapathy Rajkumar P., was in the ninth position, having spent ₹92.96 lakh on his campaign.

Those who kept their expenditure low, included Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid, who spent ₹2.10 lakh, and Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, who spent ₹20.67 lakh.

The amount of money candidates are permitted to spend on their campaigns is subject to a ceiling. The maximum limit of election expenses was revised in 2022, owing to a rise in the number of electors, cost inflation index, and virtual campaigns.

## Navy eyes fleet of 400 planes to boost maritime security

The Hindu Bureau  
BENGALURU

Charting a future course to strengthen its air capability, the Indian Navy has outlined plans for a fleet of 400 aircraft to bolster maritime security and enhance its capability in both combat and civilian roles.

Over the next two decades, the Navy aims to induct a range of indigenously developed light, medium, and heavy-lift aircraft into its Naval Air Arm.

The "Atmanirbhar Indian Naval Aviation Technology Road map, 2047" envisions a modernised fleet, including a fifth-generation twin-engine deck-based fighter aircraft to replace the current fighter fleet.

The document also highlights the induction of long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft to monitor the Indian Ocean Region, medium and short-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft, aircraft carrier-borne early warning and control aircraft, and amphibious aircraft.

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi and Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth released the document at Aero India here.

While Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. is developing a



Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi with Union Minister Sanjay Seth.  
K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

twin-engine chopper under the Utility Helicopter Maritime (UHM) programme, the Navy says it is exploring options for other original equipment manufacturers to design and develop the helicopter independently or through joint ventures. Multi-role helicopters, heavy-lift helicopters, uncrewed aerial systems, including UAV platforms, will be the areas of focus.

The Navy is planning to induct into its fleet the medium-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft C-295 indigenously manufactured by TATA Advanced System Ltd..

New non-state actors have been deploying capabilities in the sea for the past four to five years and there is a need to address the new environment on sea and rapidly developing tech space," Admiral Tripathi said.

While Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. is developing a

## Army has to evolve new concepts to align with emerging trends: CDS

General Anil Chauhan calls for investing in technology and ideas if 'we want to compete' with the Western countries or align with them; says warfare has become complex and multi-dimensional

Sharath S. Srivatsa  
BENGALURU

Arguing that aligning technology with future warfare is not the only way forward, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan on Wednesday said the Army has to evolve new concepts, doctrines, organisations (theatre command), culture, and processes to align itself with the emerging trends in warfare and battleground.

"Warfare has become complex and multi-dimensional. Aligning technology to the future warfare is not the only answer but it is a part of the answer," he said at a seminar on "Aligning technologies to future conflicts", organised as part of Aero India here.

"Application of emerging technologies in combat is still some distance away," he said.

"We know that these technologies are going to influence warfare in future but in what shape we may not be able to understand fully," he said. He gave examples of the role of artifi-



Jet across: The IAF's Surya Kiran team displaying manoeuvres during Aero India event in Bengaluru on Wednesday. Chief of Defence Staff Anil Chauhan made the comments at the event. K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

cial intelligence with autonomous weapons and sixth-generation aircraft in future warfare that are yet to be known.

### Adapt and adjust'

"Army has to adapt, adjust, and accommodate the emerging technologies. You have to evolve new concepts, doctrines, organisations, culture, and processes," he said.

General Chauhan emphasised the need to

change the processes that are made to acquire the product and said, "By acquiring a product you are actually behind five or 10 years because that product already exists. We have to invest in technology and ideas if we want to compete with the West or align with the West."

General Chauhan also referred to the disruptive technologies such as quantum science and artificial intelligence that could

change the face of warfare.

"Earlier, war was rational because it was a thoughtful decision and finite, as negotiations and politics would take over after the war. Now, it has become irrational and perpetual. Combat earlier was seen between humans that could change to humans against machines or machines against machines. Technology can drive tactics and vice versa," he said.

## Illegal coal mining continues in Meghalaya: report

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

A single-member committee set up by the High Court of Meghalaya to check illegal rat-hole coal mining said such activities continue in six coal-rich districts of the State.

**'Fresh evidence'**  
The Justice (retired) B.P. Katakey panel, in its 27th interim report compiled after drone videography of the mines and volumetric assessment of coal, apart from the extracted

coal inventoried by an authorised private firm, provides fresh evidence of unauthorised mining despite seizures under the Mines and Minerals Development and Regulation (MMDR) Act of 1957.

The panel said the State government, in compliance with a September 2022 court order, reported that 92,268.43 metric tonnes (MT) of coal were seized in the East Jaintia Hills, South Garo Hills, and West Khasi Hills districts between May and August 2022. The private firm en-



An illegal rat-hole mine in Meghalaya. RITU RAJ KONWAR

gaged by the State government recorded an additional 41,477.54 MT of coal in these districts.

A report submitted by

the State's Mining and Geology Department to the committee less than three years later (on February 4) said the volume of seized coal was 4,10,796.4403 MT in these three districts along with the West Jaintia Hills, East Garo Hills, and South West Khasi Hills districts.

Justice Katakey pointed out that the coal declared seized in the West Jaintia Hills, East Garo Hills, and South West Khasi Hills districts was 1,69,602.35 MT more than what was mentioned in a 2022 report by

the State government to the High Court in 2022.

He also underlined the mismatch of coal figures in the East Jaintia, West Khasi Hills, and South Garo Hills districts between 2022 and February 4, 2025.

### 'Need for patrolling'

The panel noted that the State's difficult terrain made conventional surveillance challenging and suggested extensive monitoring with drones. The report also stressed the importance of regular patrolling.

## 'Modi must bring up tariffs, deportations in talks with Trump'

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi must raise the issue of "2Ts – tariffs and traumatic deportation" during his talks with U.S. President Donald Trump, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Wednesday. Mr. Modi will visit the White House for a bilateral meeting with Mr. Trump on Thursday.

On tariffs, Mr. Kharge said that President Trump's recent announcement of a 25% tariff on aluminium and steel imports with "no exemptions, no exceptions" for any country, had serious repercussions for India's manufacturing sector. The U.S. is the biggest market for these two metals.

### Steel tariff woes

According to Steel Secretary Sandeep Poundrik, India only exports a small proportion of the total steel produced here to the U.S. Out of 145 million tonnes of steel produced in India last year, just 95,000 tonnes was exported to the U.S. The fear, though, is that the U.S. tariffs will increase competition and ex-



Mallikarjun Kharge

acerbate oversupply in other steel producing markets.

"We must build closer trade ties for both countries with a mutually beneficial framework, given that the U.S. is one of our biggest trading partners," Mr. Kharge said in a post on X.

The Congress chief also noted that the recent deportation of Indian migrants – who were sent back to India in a military aircraft in handcuffs and chains – had raised strong concern among all Indians. "Mr. Modi must stress that any Indian national must not be humiliated and must be treated with utmost dignity," he said.

All Indians recognise the valuable comprehensive global strategic partnership with the U.S., he said.

## Pranab Mukherjee's son returns to Congress

The Hindu Bureau  
KOLKATA

Former President Pranab Mukherjee's son Abhijit Mukherjee returned to the Congress on Thursday after a four-year stint in the Trinamool Congress.

"This is like a second birthday for me in the Congress and in politics. As the grandson of a freedom fighter [Kamada Kinkar Mukherjee], it was a bad decision to quit the Congress. I ask forgiveness for it. I should not have left the Congress," Mr. Mukherjee said at his formal induction ceremony here.

After formally signing his membership, the former Congress MP waved the party flag in the presence of West Bengal Congress president Subhankar Sarkar, AICC general secretary Ghulam Ahmad Mir, and other leaders.

### 'Ignored in Trinamool'

During his stint in West Bengal's ruling party which began in 2021, Mr. Mukherjee was not given any important role and was hardly seen at events. He was ignored during the selection of candidates for the Rajya Sabha election.

**Government of Rajasthan**  
National Health Mission, Rajasthan  
Department of Medical, Health & FW, Swasthya Bhawan, Jaipur  
Tel. No. 0141-2215190, Email ID: md-nrhm@nic.in

F32(177)/NHM/CSR/H&WC/Desktop/2021-22/461 Date: 06-02-2025

### INVITATION FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

E-Bids for Supply, installation & commissioning of IT equipments are invited from recognized bidders by or before 2:00 p.m. on 27.02.2025. The details and other particulars of the bid are available for perusal, downloading and further actions on the State Public Procurement Portal <https://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in> and <https://rajswasthya.nic.in> and <https://rajswasthya.rajasthan.gov.in>. UBN No.: MHS2425GLOB04763

(Dr. Bharti Dixit)  
Mission Director, NHM

**Department of Handlooms**  
**THE TAMILNADU COOPERATIVE TEXTILE PROCESSING MILLS LTD, C.H.22**  
428, BHAVANI MAIN ROAD, ERODE-632007, Tel: 0424-223997, E-mail: tctpm2015@gmail.com  
Ref.No.A/O/144/2025 Date: 11.02.2025 E-TENDER NOTICE Date: 11.02.2025  
E-Tenders with two cover system are invited from eligible bidders for the Supply of Textile Dyes, Processing Chemicals/Auxiliary Chemicals for the year 2025-2026 in accordance with terms and conditions detailed in the Tender Schedule

**ANDHRA PRADESH FOREST DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED**  
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Head Office : 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, P.V.S. Land Mark, Near APIC Towers, Mangalagiri, Guntur District, 522503 :: LL.No.: 08645-297211 & 08645-297221  
E-mail: vcmcd\_apdc@yahoo.com, vcmcd\_apdc@gmail.com, Website: [www.apdcl.com](http://www.apdcl.com)  
**EUCALYPTUS DEBARDED PULPWOOD SALE NOTICE**  
Ref. No.OP.001/EDPW/2024-25/Gen/1353 Date: 11.02.2025  
Sale of about 4,06 lakh metric tonnes of Eucalyptus Debarbed Pulpwood anticipated from Eucalyptus Plantations of A.P. Forest Development Corporation Limited, grouped into 45 units of sale is proposed to be held through e-tender cum e-auction on "Konugoli", a Govt. of Andhra Pradesh e-Portal, i.e., "<https://www.konugoli.ap.gov.in>" from 12.00 hrs to 14.00 hrs (1<sup>st</sup> spell) and from 15.00 hrs to 17.00 hrs (2<sup>nd</sup> spell) on 28.2.2025. Sale (Units remaining unsold/ unconfirmed will be exposed for sale again on 12.3.2025 & 21.3.2025. Pre-Bid Meeting will be held on 20.2.2025 at 3.00 PM in APFDC Head Office, Mangalagiri. For more details, please visit the websites: <https://www.konugoli.ap.gov.in> & <https://www.apdcl.com>  
Sd/- Dr. Rajendra Prasad Khajuria, IFS., PCCF/Vice Chairman and Managing Director  
DIPR 3524PP/CL, Dt:12/02/2025

## India may revive plan to procure six more P-8I aircraft from U.S.

Dinakar Peri  
BENGALURU

**It is expected to figure in the talks between Prime Minister Modi and U.S. President Trump**

India is looking to revive the proposal to procure six more P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft from the U.S. and the matter is expected to figure in the talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump, in the know said.

India has contracted 12 P-8Is in two batches, eight under a \$2.2-billion deal in 2009 and four more in 2016, under the optional clause in a deal worth over \$1 billion.

### Deal in 2021

Subsequently, the Navy was keen on 10 more aircraft but that got truncated later and in November 2019, the Defence Acquisition Council approved the procurement of six aircraft. In May 2021, the U.S. State Department approved the possible sale of six additional P-8I aircraft and related equipment, a deal then estimated to cost \$2.42 billion.

Complementing the P-8Is will be the MQ-9B Sea Guardian High Altitude Long Endurance UAVs that the Navy will begin receiving from January 2029.

Last October, India signed a nearly \$3.5-billion contract for 31 MQ-9B, under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme of the U.S. government.

**"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA : WORKS DEPARTMENT  
E-mail: [qualitycontrol02@gmail.com](mailto:qualitycontrol02@gmail.com)  
**Bid Identification No. 05/CE/RDQP/2024-25**  
1. The Chief Engineer, RD & QP (R&B), Odisha, Bhubaneswar on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites online bids / tenders in double cover system from eligible and reputed / ISO Certified Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) or their Authorized distributors / dealers in double cover system for supply of various equipment / machineries as listed below to Research Development & Quality Promotion (RD&QP) (R&B) wing, Works Department, Government of Odisha.  
2. Nature of work : **Procurement of Machineries / Equipment** (Vehicle mounted Falling Weight Deflectometer(VFWF), Non-Destructive Testing Equipment (9Nos) for setting up of Non-Destructive Testing Laboratory)  
3. No. of work : **02 Nos.**  
4. Tender Paper Cost : **Rs.10,000.00**  
5. Type of Bidder : **Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM)/ Authorized Distributor / Dealer of OEM**  
6. Availability of bid document : From 11.00 AM of 12.02.2025 to 5.30 PM of 12.03.2025 in the website  
7. Date of opening of Bid : **Dt.13.03.2025 at 11.30 AM**  
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website : <https://tenderodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum of the tender can only be seen in the said website.  
Chief Engineer, RD&QP (R&B), Odisha.  
OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL), ODISHA, NIRMAN SOUDHA, BHUBANESWAR B-927:  
OIPR-34001/11/0008/2425

भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, अंतर्राष्ट्रीय विभाग / DEPARTMENT OF SPACE  
विमान मार्गांश अंतर्राष्ट्रीय केंद्र / VIKRAM SARABHAJAN SPACE CENTRE  
नियन्त्रण एवं प्रबंधण सूचना / CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE GROUP  
तिवारनप्रयोग / THIRUVANANTHAPURAM – 22 / (फोन नं. : 0471 - 245658 / 5699 / 4537)  
टिक्का/Dt. 13-02-2025

इन्विटेड आमंत्रित कराए हुए संस्थान सूचना / BRIEF NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER  
भारत के इच्छिता को ओर से, नियन्त्रित कराये के लिए इन्विटेड द्वारा आमंत्रित करायी जाती है। On behalf of the President of India, online item-rate of interest for the following work,  
1. वायप्रैसली, तुमा में दोषीय अंतर्राष्ट्रीय ए-टेक्नोलॉजी के कर्मसूल पुराने जालीकरण (सिविल कार्य) / Replacement of damaged roofing sheets in A, B and C blocks of AT Guest House, VSSC, Thumba (Civil works)./ NIT No. VSSC/CMG/C0135/2024-25 (पारा. सा. पा.प.क. : 103.09 लाख/Lakhs)  
2. वायप्रैसली, तुमा में दोषीय अंतर्राष्ट्रीय ए-टेक्नोलॉजी के कर्मसूल पुराने जालीकरण (सिविल कार्य) / Refurbishment works in A block rooms of AT Guest House, VSSC, Thumba (Civil Works)/ NIT No. VSSC/CMG/C0136/2024-25 (पारा. सा. पा.प.क. : 78.13 लाख/Lakhs)

आमंत्रित करने को अवधिकारी को पाने के लिए इन्विटेड नियन्त्रित करायी जाती है। Interested tenderers may please refer detailed Notice Inviting E-Tender (E-NIT) for eligibility criteria and other details, which can be downloaded from website [www.tenderwizard](http://www.tenderwizard.in/isro)

## IN BRIEF



## Ram temple priest Mahant Satyendra Das passes away

Mahant Satyendra Das, the chief priest of Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya, died on Wednesday. He was 85. The octogenarian was admitted to the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences earlier this month after suffering a brain stroke. The mortal remains of Das were taken to his residence in Ayodhya. His successor said: "We are waiting for all his disciples to arrive. It is expected that he will be given a 'water burial' on Thursday afternoon." Condoling the demise, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the priest's entire life was dedicated to the service of Lord Ram. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath termed his death an irreparable loss to the spiritual world.

## Police record statements of social media influencer, others

The Mumbai Police on Wednesday recorded statements of social media influencer Apoorva Mukhija and three others in connection with the controversy surrounding the reality show *India's Got Talent*. The development comes a day after the Maharashtra Cyber Department registered an FIR against the show over allegations of offensive content. The Assam Police had also registered a case against YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia and others in Mumbai, and a team arrived in Mumbai to initiate a probe into the matter. However, while statements of Ms. Mukhija, Mr. Allahbadia's manager, and two others were recorded, Mr. Allahbadia himself was not questioned.

# Because of freebies, people don't want to work: SC judge

Justice B.R. Gavai questions whether unregulated welfare schemes discourage the poor from contributing to development; the court was hearing pleas dealing with the lack of night shelters

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge Justice B.R. Gavai on Wednesday asked whether untrammeled freebies lull the poor into a parasitic existence, depriving them of any initiative to find work, join the mainstream, and contribute to national development.

"Rather than making them contribute to the development of the nation, are we not creating a sort of parasite? Because of these benefits, people do not want to work," Justice Gavai, heading a Bench comprising Justice A.G. Masih, observed orally.

The Bench was hearing petitions dealing with the lack of a sufficient number of night shelters to house the urban homeless in the national capital. A lawyer submitted that the existing night shelters were uninhabitable.

"Between a shelter, which is uninhabitable and sleeping on the road, what is more preferable?" Justice Gavai countered.

The discussion in court also touched on free rations and welfare schemes for the urban homeless, who were usually migrants



**Other options:** Justice Gavai says steps to make the poor part of the mainstream were better than offering them freebies. FILE PHOTO

from the rural parts of the country in search of work.

Justice Gavai said steps to make the poor and the disadvantaged part of the mainstream were better than offering them freebies.

"Nobody wants to work for they will get a free ration... We have recognised the rights to shelter and work. But at the same time, should it not be balanced?" he asked.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing on the petitioners' side, submitted that the rural poor migrate to urban parts for work. "They have come to the city to find work. The jobs they get are menial... They cannot even afford shelter," Mr. Bhushan ad-

dressed the Bench.

Attorney-General R. Venkataramani, for the Centre, informed the court that the government was framing schemes to help alleviate urban poverty. These schemes would include shelter for the urban homeless.

The court directed the

Centre to file an affidavit in

six weeks, detailing the

time required to finalise

and implement the

schemes, and what aspects

they would cover.

Appearing for the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), senior advocate Devadutt Kamat submitted that night shelters were well-qualified for, and officials do the rounds to convince the

homeless to come to these shelters, they, however, refuse to do so.

The top court has been looking out for the welfare of the poor and homeless, noting that the right to shelter and safety was a fundamental right.

In 2016, the top court had observed that the city's poor shiver in the winter cold as welfare measures, including the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) scheme, continued to remain a distant dream.

At the time, the court had directed a Committee headed by a former Delhi High Court judge, Justice Kailash Gambhir, to be constituted to verify the availability of night shelters, and whether their operations were in compliance with the NULM's guidelines.

Mr. Bhushan had submitted that the total capacity of shelter homes in Delhi was only around 17,000 persons, and the DUSIB

had demolished nine shel-

ter homes. Mr. Kamat re-

sponded that six temporary

shelter homes were de-  
stroyed due to floods in the  
Yamuna in 2023 and had  
been abandoned since  
June 2023.



Legitimate business messages will now have further disclosure requirements.

com resources of the sender, including PRI/SIP trunks, will be disconnected across all access providers for a period of one year and the sender will be blacklisted.

Financial disincentives of ₹2 lakh-₹10 lakh have also been prescribed for telcos who misreport the spam complaints they receive from users. Recent steps taken by telcos to block spam calls using artificial intelligence have now been baked into regulation. "Access providers are mandated to analyse call and SMS patterns based on parameters such as unusually high call volumes, short call durations, and low incoming-to-outgoing call ratios," it said. The DND (Do Not Disturb) app has been updated. The app allows users to report SMS and call spam to their telcos.

Repeated violators will face further action. "For the first violation of the regulatory threshold, outgoing services of all telecom resource[s] of the sender will be barred for 15 days," it said. "For subsequent violations, all tele-

# TRAI tightens rules against spam calls and text messages

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Wednesday notified tighter rules for spam calls and text messages over telecom networks. Under the fresh amendment to the Telecom Commercial Customer Preference Regulations, 2018, telcos are required to accept complaints against spam after up to a week of receiving such calls, act on unregistered telemarketers faster (within five days), and impose lower tolerance thresholds for reported spammers.

Legitimate business messages will now have further disclosure requirements. "Customers will be able to identify the type of commercial message by just looking at its [SMS sender] header as 'P', 'S', 'T', and 'G' will be suffixed for identification of promotional, service, transactional, and government messages, respectively," the TRAI said.

Repeated violators will face further action. "For the first violation of the regulatory threshold, outgoing services of all telecom resource[s] of the sender will be barred for 15 days," it said. "For subsequent violations, all tele-

# Over 19 million people take holy dip on Maghi Purnima at Maha Kumbh



**Sacred unity:** Devotees take a holy dip at the Sangam on Maghi Purnima, in Prayagraj, on Wednesday. PTI

## Amid the influx of millions of pilgrims, chaos and congestion prevailed in Maha Kumbh area and Prayagraj region

ing with devotees stuck in the jam due to the mismanagement of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) government. In Sultanpur, the S.O. (Station Officer) pushed the devotees stuck in the traffic jam, constables beat them with sticks, [they] misbehaved with women. Condemnable and shameful. On the basis of the video, strict action should be taken against the accused S.O. and constables," the Opposition party said, sharing a video in which some police personnel can be seen getting into an altercation with a few people.

# Sena (UBT), NCP (SP) engage in war of words after Pawar felicitates Shinde

**Vinaya Deshpande Pandit**  
MUMBAI

A political war of words emerged between the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Nationalist Congress Party (SP) on Wednesday, a day after senior leader Sharad Pawar felicitated Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Both parties are part of the Indian National Democratic, Inclusive Alliance in the state.

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, miffed over the felicitation, sent out messages of a rethink on the current political dynamics.

"We consider this as the felicitation of Amit Shah. Even we understand Delhi politics, respected Pawar Saheb," Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said in Delhi on Wednesday.

"The political dynamics



**Crisis brews:** Maharashtra Deputy CM Eknath Shinde being felicitated by NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, on Tuesday. ANI

of Maharashtra has changed. One will have to rethink about who is bowing a google to whom and who is a hit wicket. Sharad Pawar should not have attended that programme of the felicitation of Eknath Shinde.

You are a senior leader and I respect you. But the one who weakened Maharashtra and destroyed the Shiv Sena formed by Balasaheb

Thackeray, you have honoured him. It has pained the heart of Maharashtra," Mr. Raut said.

NCP (SP) leaders advised Mr. Raut to manage his own party's business.

"When Uddhav Thackeray went to congratulate Ajit Pawar for becoming the Deputy Chief Minister,

none of our leaders expressed any sentiments in the public about it. Certain

boundaries are to be observed in politics," NCP (SP) MP Amol Kolhe said.

**'Wrong information'**  
The two parties were at loggerheads throughout the day.

Mr. Raut also corrected Mr. Sharad Pawar over his statement on the contribution of Mr. Shinde to the development of Thane.

"I think, the wrong information has reached Sharad Pawar Saheb. The development of Thane was done by Shiv Sena, under the vision of Balasaheb Thackeray. Thane's downfall started after Eknath Shinde was elected from there," he said.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena Shinde group leaders Nareesh Mhaske and Uday Samant paid a courtesy visit to Mr. Sharad Pawar on Wednesday, further accentuating the bitterness.

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

## FAITH

### Guru Ravidas, the reformer

Guru Ravidas was a 15-16th century Bhakti poet regarded as a contemporary of Kabir and is believed to have met Guru Nanak. Guru Ravidas firmly and steadfastly stood up for those on the marginalised in society and fought against Brahmanical hegemony, dogma, ostentation, oppression, superstition and ritualism. He tried to reform the casteist and discriminatory practices dominant in that period, said Prof. Kumool Abbi.

He was a voice of the oppressed and

## IN BRIEF



## RBI lifts business restrictions on Kotak Mahindra Bank

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday lifted the business restrictions placed on Kotak Mahindra Bank, following satisfactory remedial action. In April 2024, the regulator had restrained the bank from onboarding new customers via online and mobile banking channels, and issuing fresh credit cards. The bank subsequently initiated remedial measures to address the supervisory concerns and submitted compliances, the RBI said.

## Ashok Leyland Q3 net profit grows 36% to ₹762 crore

Ashok Leyland Ltd. reported 36% growth in Q3 consolidated net profit to ₹762 crore compared with ₹560 crore in the year-earlier period. Revenue from operations grew 6% to ₹10,375 crore as against ₹9,806 crore. The company said it had achieved an export volume of 4,151 units against 3,128 units in the same period last year, up 33%. During the quarter, it turned cash positive with net cash of ₹958 crore as against net debt of ₹1,747 crore in the same period last year.

## Bharat Forge Q3 net profit slides 16% to ₹213 crore

Bharat Forge Ltd. reported 16% decline in Q3 consolidated net profit to ₹213 crore from ₹254 crore in the year-ago period. Consolidated revenue from operations for the period ended December 31, 2024 slid 10% to ₹3,476 crore from ₹3,866 crore in the same period last year. On a standalone basis, net profit fell 8% to ₹346 crore from ₹378 crore a year earlier. Standalone revenue from operations fell 7% to ₹2,096 crore from ₹2,263 crore in the same period last year.

**Need to improve liquidation outcomes: IBBI chairman**

## Sanjay Vijaykumar

CHENNAI

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) Chairman Ravi Mital said there is a growing need to improve liquidation outcomes under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (IBC) Code, 2016.

"It is observed that till December 2024, in the completed liquidation cases, the amount realised by claimants has been very low as compared to the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP), and in some cases it has been even lower than the liquidation value," he said in the IBBI's quarterly newsletter for October-December 2024.

The main objective of the IBC is resolution of distressed companies. However, when all attempts to resolve the company fail, the next alternative is liquidation of the company involving sale of assets of the company and distribution of the proceeds thereon among the stakeholders, Mr. Mital said in the newsletter.

"In 2017-18, for every company that was resolved, five companies would go into liquidation. However, in 2024-25 [till December 2024] for every company that is resolved, 1.3 companies go into liquidation. Therefore, there is a visible trend reversal in the number of companies going into liquidation under the code," he said.

While the liquidation process has undergone important course corrections over the years, there is scope for further improvement, Mr. Mital added.

# As PM Modi lands in U.S., Musk's Starlink steals a march into Bhutan

U.S. satellite-based internet service provider announces availability in Bhutan, expected to be used by institutions in remote mountainous regions; officials say future of Starlink's plans for India could come up for discussion during the PM's U.S. visit

**Suhasini Haidar**  
THIMPHU

**E**n as all eyes are on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington for talks with U.S. President Donald Trump and his key advisors, Elon Musk's Starlink has stolen a march into South Asia by setting up in neighbouring Bhutan first.

The announcement came as the U.S. satellite-based services company Starlink updated its product availability map on February 12, making Bhutan the 121st country in the world to join its footprint.

India has thus far not



**Call waiting:** India has thus far not provided Starlink permission to operate over security concerns, as well as pricing issues. AP

provided Starlink permission to operate, mainly over security and privacy concerns, as well as pricing issues and concerns from

the local telecom and satellite industry.

As PM Modi arrived in Washington for a 24-hour visit, officials said the fu-

ture of Starlink's plans for India could come up for discussion.

Thus far, telecom officials have said they are reviewing the "security arrangements in place for the ground stations" from which Starlink traffic would flow to users in India, and regulatory processes remain underway.

"While optical fibres would be the primary medium for global connectivity, with geographical interconnection difficulties and Bhutan being landlocked, it is important for us to have alternative channels and technologies for global connectivity. Starlink

opens that possibility to be globally connected and we are excited to have the Starlink connection in Bhutan," Bhutan's top tech innovator, Ujjwal Deep Dahal, CEO of Druk Holding and Investments Ltd., the Bhutanese Government's commercial arm told *The Hindu* in Thimphu.

However, Mr. Dahal, who is also on the board of local telecom major Bhutan Telecom, indicated that it would be necessary to ensure that Bhutan's national communications infrastructure remained sustainable.

(With inputs from Aroon Deep in New Delhi)

## IIP growth skids to four-month low of 3.2%

**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI



India's industrial output growth dropped to a four-month low of 3.2% in December, with manufacturing and mining sectors rising just 3% and 2.6%, respectively, and consumer non-durables' production slipping 7.6% from a year ago.

Electricity generation was up 6.2% year-on-year and 4.7% over November 2024 levels. The National Statistics Office (NSO) also downgraded the industrial production growth assessment for November 2024 to 5% from 5.2% estimated

earlier. This brings the average factory output growth in the third quarter of 2024-25 to 3.9% from 2.73% in the second quarter. Five of six industrial segments based on the end-use of products, recorded an uptick in December, led by capital goods (up 10.3%) and consumer durables (8.3%). In-

frastructure and construction goods rose 6.3, while intermediate goods and primary goods grew 5.9% and 3.8%, respectively.

Consumer non-durables remained a worry, with production shrinking 7.6% in December and the mere 0.6% growth estimated for November being revised downward to 0.4%. However, output levels for these consumption-linked items were at an 11-month high in December and 5.1% over November. In fact, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) was at a nine-month high of 157.3 points, 6.1% over November. The Manufacturing as well as

the Mining sectors recorded their best index reading in this fiscal year.

"This casts a doubt on a material recovery of industrial activity in the second half of the current fiscal. The 7.6% contraction in consumer non-durables outlines the continued weakness in household demand and consumption," noted Suman Chowdhury, executive director and chief economist at Acuite Ratings & Research.

ICRA's chief economist Aditi Nayar said the December IIP growth was lower than expected, and it could moderate further to 2%-3% in January.

## DGGI detects fraudulent ITC transactions worth ₹1,196 cr.

### Press Trust of India

PUNE

The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) has unearthed fraudulent Input Tax Credit (ITC) transactions amounting to ₹1,196 crore and arrested a person. After searches at multiple locations in Pune, Delhi, Noida and Muzaffarnagar, the DGGI probe showed the accused had set up shell entities that generated fake invoices and e-way bills.

## MARKETS

### MARKET WATCH

	WEDNESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	76,171	-0.16
US Dollar	86.95	-0.18
Gold	87,960	-0.38
Brent oil	75.92	-1.04

### NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2353.45	+31.70
Adani Ports.	1128.95	-11.15
Apollo Hosp.	6374.55	+57.20
Asian Paints	2228.25	-12.60
Axis Bank	1006.90	-0.50
Bajaj Auto.	8711.60	-50.40
Bajaj Finance	1788.70	-43.85
Bharti Airtel	259.15	-5.90
BPL	255.60	0.45
Britannia Ind.	4918.30	+14.25
Cipla	1449.20	-3.95
Coal India	360.35	+1.35
Dr Reddys Lab.	1215.85	+6.05
Eicher Motors	4849.45	-122.90
Grasim	2484.95	-6.50
HCL Tech.	1717.30	-5.90
HDFC Bank	1706.80	+5.40
HDFC Life	629.15	+10.55
Hero MotoCorp	4015.75	-69.80
Hindustan Zinc	598.70	+3.05
Hindu Uniliver	2322.50	+17.25
ICICI Bank	1251.80	-0.95
IndusInd Bank	1039.65	-14.50
Infosys	1863.15	-12.50
ITC	409.90	-8.40
JSW Steel	956.40	+1.90
Kotak Bank	1943.95	+25.35
L&T	3289.65	+50.00
M&M	2987.20	-98.75
Maruti Suzuki	12655.55	-68.80
NestleIndia	2193.75	+1.75
NTPC	306.25	0.65
ONGC	257.05	+4.40
PowerGrid Corp.	1216.55	-18.30
SBI Life	1452.15	+33.15
State Bank.	733.15	+2.05
Shriram Finance	547.15	+8.60
Tata Consumer Product.	1029.75	+15.95
Tata Motors	684.35	+6.60
Tata Steel	132.28	+2.17
TCS	3950.15	-13.40
Tech Mahindra	1680.20	+11.10
Titan	3255.45	-26.35
Trent Ltd.	5237.30	+8.95
UltraTech Cement	11478.50	+178.30
Wipro	310.20	+2.80

### EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on February 12

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	86.69	87.01
Euro	89.92	90.25
British Pound	107.87	108.28
Japanese Yen (100)	56.41	56.62
Chinese Yuan	11.86	11.91
Swiss Franc	95.13	95.49
Singapore Dollar	64.05	64.30
Canadian Dollar	60.57	60.80
Malaysian Ringgit	19.38	19.48
Australian Dollar	54.41	54.61

Source: Indian Bank

## Cancer Screening Rates in India are Low – What's Stopping Us?

Cancer screening plays a critical role in early detection and better survival outcomes. However, in India, screening rates remain alarmingly low, raising concerns about disparities between men and women. The perception that women are screened more often than men stems from the presence of structured breast and cervical cancer screening programs. But does this translate to significantly higher screening rates?

### Are Women Screened More Than Men?

Data suggests that screening rates are low for both genders. According to NFHS-5, among women aged 30-49, only 2.2% in urban areas vs 1.7% in rural areas have ever undergone cervical cancer screening, and only 1.2% in urban areas vs 0.7% in rural areas have ever undergone a breast examination. In comparison, 1.2% of men in the same age group have undergone an oral cancer screening (1% in urban areas vs 1.3% in rural areas). While breast and cervical cancer screening programs exist, participation remains abysmally low. Meanwhile, cancers with high male prevalence – lung, oral, and stomach cancer – lack structured screening efforts altogether. This means that neither gender is being screened adequately, making poor screening coverage a systemic issue rather than a gender-specific one.

**Early-stage cancers often have no symptoms. That's why regular cancer screening is key. Screening can mean the difference between routine treatment and a tough battle.**

**Dr T Raja**  
Director - Medical Oncology  
Apollo Cancer Centre, Chennai

### Poor Cancer Screening Rates and its Challenges

India does not have a nationwide, organised cancer screening programme for various cancers, relying instead on opportunistic screenings, which often miss those at high risk. The result? Most cancers in India are diagnosed at advanced stages, drastically reducing survival rates. These are some of the challenges faced:

**■ Poor Cancer Registries:** As per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's National Cancer Registries Programme, India has 36 Population-Based Cancer Registries (PBCRs) and 236 Hospital-Based Cancer Registries (HBCRs). However, only 28 PBCRs and 58 HBCRs are active registries reporting complete data.

**■ Underreporting and Incomplete Data:** Cancer is not a notifiable disease, meaning healthcare providers are not legally required to report cases. This results in incomplete data collection and underreporting, particularly from smaller healthcare facilities.

**■ Economic and Social Barriers:** Fear, stigma, and lack of awareness prevent many from getting screened. Add to that the fact that rural areas often lack screening facilities and so high out-of-pocket costs make screenings unaffordable for many, especially without government support, forcing lower-income individuals to deplete preventive care.

### Bridging the Screening Gap

- Make Cancer Screening Gender-Inclusive:** Implement structured lung, oral, and stomach cancer screening programs, similar to breast and cervical cancer programs.
- Improve Public Awareness:** Large-scale awareness campaigns to educate people on why and when to get screened.
- Enhance Accessibility:** Expand screening centres beyond urban areas and integrate screening with routine health checks.
- Strengthen Cancer Registries:** Make cancer a notifiable disease, ensuring accurate data for better policymaking.

Enc

**WASHINGTON**

**U.S. Senate confirms Tulsi Gabbard as Director of National Intelligence**



Tulsi Gabbard was confirmed as the top U.S. spy on Wednesday, as Republicans lined up behind a nominee once seen as among President Donald Trump's most controversial picks. The Senate voted 52 to 48 to confirm Ms. Gabbard to the position as Mr. Trump's top adviser on intelligence issues. **REUTERS**

**JERUSALEM**

**Israeli air strike targeting drone hits two persons in southern Gaza**



The Israeli military said it conducted an air strike on Wednesday in the Gaza Strip, targeting two people attempting to retrieve a drone that had crossed into the Palestinian territory. The military said the drone had flown from Israeli territory and was subsequently targeted by an Israeli warplane in southern Gaza. **AP**

**DUBAI**

**Moving Palestinians 'unacceptable', says Arab League chief Aboul Gheit**



Arab League secretary-general Ahmed Aboul Gheit on Wednesday rejected any displacement of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and West Bank, calling it "unacceptable" for the region. Mr. Aboul Gheit was commenting on U.S. President Donald Trump's plan to move Palestinians out of Gaza which has been widely condemned. **AP**

**WASHINGTON**

**Trump fires USAID inspector general after critical report**



Donald Trump fired USAID inspector general Paul Martin after a critical report on the agency's dismantling. The report highlighted risks to \$489 million in food assistance due to Mr. Trump's policies. Mr. Trump, with Elon Musk's support, has been downsizing USAID, leading to legal challenges. **AP**

# UN report finds rights violations under both Hasina, interim govt.

Violent elements linked to Awami League committed serious violations and abuses with the knowledge and coordination of the political leadership, according to the OHCHR team; Mohammad Yunus-led interim government welcomes the report

**Kalol Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI

A report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has held that the deposed Awami League government of Bangladesh carried out large-scale repression during July-August 2024. The report prepared by a fact-finding team also observed that violence against minority Hindus and indigenous communities of Bangladesh took place after the fall of the Hasina government when the interim government was in charge.

"Based on direct testi-



**Brutal suppression:** Mohammad Yunus during a visit to the 'House of Mirrors', a facility allegedly run by Army intelligence in Dhaka. **AFP**

mony from senior officials involved and other inside sources, the OHCHR was able to establish that the integrated and systematic effort using the entire range

of police, paramilitary, military and intelligence actors, as well as violent elements linked to the Awami League, to commit serious violations and abuses oc-

curred with the full knowledge, coordination and direction of the political leadership," it said.

The report also pointed out that violence against minority Hindu community and the indigenous communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) took place soon after the fall of the Hasina government. "Violent mobs engaged in serious acts of revenge violence, including killings, targeting police and Awami League officials, especially early August onwards. Some Hindus, Ahmadiyya Muslims and indigenous people from the Chittagong Hill Tracts were also subjected to human rights

abuses, including the burning of homes, and attacks on places of worship," the report noted.

The Mohammad Yunus government has welcomed the report, but pointed out that the attacks by mobs against the Hindu community and the Ahmadiyya Muslims resulted from "intersecting motives". "Different and often intersecting motives drove these attacks, ranging from religious and ethnic discrimination to perceived opportunities for revenge against Awami League supporters among minorities, local communal disputes, including about land and interpersonal issues."

# Putin, Trump hold phone call, agree to meet in future

**Reuters**

MOSCOW/BRUSSELS

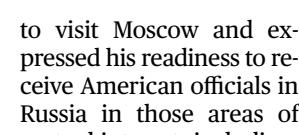


Donald Trump

day, the presidency in Kyiv said, shortly after Mr. Trump said he spoke with Mr. Putin.

Meanwhile, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth earlier on Wednesday said that a return to Ukraine's pre-2014 borders was unrealistic and the Trump administration does not see NATO membership for Kyiv as part of a solution to the war triggered by Russia's invasion.

Speaking at a meeting of Ukraine's military allies at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Mr. Hegseth delivered the clearest and bluntest public statement so far on the new U.S. administration's approach to the war. He also told NATO allies that they would have to step up and assume greater responsibility for Europe's security.



Donald Trump

to visit Moscow and expressed his readiness to receive American officials in Russia in those areas of mutual interest, including, of course, the topic of the Ukrainian settlement," Mr. Peskov said.

"Mr. Putin and Mr. Trump also agreed to continue personal contacts."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky also held a telephone call with Donald Trump on Wednesday.

"The Russian President invited the U.S. President

## China says it opposes 'politicising' issues involving technology

**Agence France-Presse**

BEIJING

China said on Wednesday that it opposes "politicising" issues involving technology and trade, after U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance warned that "authoritarian regimes" were seeking to use artificial intelligence for increased control over citizens.

World leaders gathered in Paris this week for an AI summit, with dozens of nations signing a statement calling for enhanced regulation of the technology to make it "open" and "ethical".

But the United States – which dominates the increasingly vital sector –

**Leaders gathered in Paris for AI summit, with dozens of nations signing a statement calling for enhanced regulation**

did not sign the communique, along with the United Kingdom.

In a thinly veiled shot at China, Mr. Vance cautioned against cooperation with "authoritarian regimes" in AI, saying that "partnering with them means chaining your nation to an authoritarian master that seeks to infiltrate, dig in and seize your information infrastructure".

## Russia to get jailed cybercrime boss in exchange for Fogel

**Reuters**

WASHINGTON/MOSCOW

The United States is freeing a Russian cybercrime boss from prison in return for Moscow's release of U.S. school teacher Marc Fogel, a U.S. official said on Wednesday.

The Kremlin said the deal – the first it has struck with the new administration of President Donald Trump – could help build trust between the two countries.

But it played down Mr. Trump's suggestion that the agreement could make a significant contribution towards ending the Russia-Ukraine war, which he has

pledged to bring to a swift conclusion.

Alexander Vinnik was arrested in Greece in 2017 and extradited eventually to the U.S., where he pleaded guilty in May 2024 to conspiracy to commit money laundering.

He operated a cryptocurrency exchange, BTC-e, through which he was suspected of funneling \$4 billion in proceeds from ransomware attacks, identity theft, drug rings and other criminal activity.

Mr. Fogel, 63, was serving a 14-year sentence for drug smuggling after being caught at a Moscow airport with a small amount of marijuana.

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD			
Office of the Chief Engineer (Kaveri-Operation & Maintenance)			
6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G Road, Bangalore - 560 009.			
No.: BWSSB/CEK(O&M)/TE/TA-01/102/2024-25/2411		Date: 11.02.2025	
<b>INVITATION FOR TENDER</b> (Only through KPP Portal)			
BWSSB invites tender in two cover tender system from eligible tenderers for the work of Construction of Quarters Building 2 Block of 06 Houses (G+2) at Tataguni.			
Amount put to tender: Rs. 263.22 Lakhs. EMD: Rs. 3.95 Lakhs.			
Last date and time for receipt of tenders will be on 13.03.2025 upto 15:00 hrs. The bids will be opened on 15.03.2025 at 16:00 hrs. The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to <a href="https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in">https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in</a> . For further details contact the undersigned office during working hours. Sd/- Chief Engineer (Kaveri-O&M)			

Office of The Additional Chief Engineer PHED			
Region I Jodhpur			
Tele-0291-2651750		E-Mail : rj_aceo@nic.in	
No.ACE/Region I/Ju/Ar. Distt./2024-25/10592-10609		Dated- 31/1/25	
<b>Notice Inviting Bid (NIB No 15-27/2024-25)</b>			
Bids for following works are invited from interested bidders upto 18.00 hrs (time) 24.02.2025 (date). Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal ( <a href="http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in">http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in</a> , <a href="http://sppt.raj.nic.in">http://sppt.raj.nic.in</a> ) of the state; and PHED department website.			

NIT No.	Work Description	Est. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Unique bid no (UBN No.)
15/2024-25	Providing flocs in other habitations of 7 villages of nuse kudi, fitkesani, rasidan under sub dn, Lunji district dn, li jodhpur of tehsil & district jodhpur under jal jeewan mission	1850.68	PHE2425W-LOB08965
16/2024-25	Augmentation of rural water supply scheme birami, birdawas, myansany and peethasani tehsil lunji district jodhpur under jim	707.97	PHE2425W-LOB08966
17/2024-25	Reorganization of piped water supply scheme of dhandhia, deepura, kishana pura, rendari and vishwas tehsil lunji district jodhpur under jim	729.19	PHE2425W-LOB08967
18/2024-25	Reorganization of piped water supply scheme of dhundhara, lakukan thumb, ram garh, sant devaram nagar, sakti likharam nagar tehsil lunji district jodhpur under jim	524.29	PHE2425W-LOB08968
19/2024-25	Proposal for piped water supply scheme for village rohilla kalla, rohilla khurd, moklawas, gangana, bujawad, boranada and basni silawata under jal jeewan mission, distt. Jodhpur with 5 year o & m and one year defect liability period	1604.87	PHE2425W-LOB08969
20/2024-25	Proposal for piped water supply scheme in 27 village connected from jhanwar section pumping station under jal jeewan mission, distt. Jodhpur with 5 year o & m and one year defect liability period	1704	PHE2425W-LOB08970
21/2024-25	Reorganization of piped water supply scheme of kuri bhagtasani tehsil lunji district jodhpur under jim	1150.92	PHE2425W-LOB08971
22/2024-25	Augmentation of rural water supply scheme lolawas, mortuka, moklasani tehsil lunji district jodhpur under jim	623.10	PHE2425W-LOB08972
23/2024-25	Augmentation of rural water supply scheme nimbla, dol, kakani, jambheshwar nagar tehsil lunji district jodhpur under jim	877.02	PHE2425W-LOB08973
24/2024-25	Reorganization of piped water supply scheme of nimblasar, rajor, sardargarh & krishna khera tehsil lunji district jodhpur under jim	676.05	PHE2425W-LOB08974
25/2024-25	Reorganization of piped water supply scheme of Sangaria tehsil lunji district jodhpur under jim	1757.11	PHE2425W-LOB08975
26/2024-25	Reorganization of piped water supply scheme of sar and sarechan tehsil lunji district jodhpur under jim	615.49	PHE2425W-LOB08976
27/2024-25	Augmentation of rural water supply scheme shikarpura tehsil lunji district jodhpur under jim	581.80	PHE2425W-LOB08977

(Dinesh Kumar Nagori)  
Addl. Chief Engineer  
Piped Region (I) Jodhpur

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**MILESTONES**

Gill crosses 5000-mark, becomes fastest to 2500 runs in ODIs



VIJAY SONEJI

Shubman Gill crossed the 5000-run mark in international cricket during the third ODI on Wednesday. He also became the fastest player (50 innings) to score 2500 runs in ODIs, breaking Hashim Amla's record (51). Gill rose to the second spot in the rankings, going past Rohit Sharma and closing in on leader Babar Azam.

**THE BIG GUN**

India is the benchmark in ODI cricket at the moment: Buttler



Despite losing the ODI series 0-3 against India, Jos Buttler was not necessarily downbeat. "We were up against a good side in their own conditions. They are probably the benchmark in ODI cricket at the moment. But I think the fact that we're not anywhere near our potential gives us something to look forward to," said Buttler.

**DOUBLE DELIGHT**

Rizwan and Agha ace the chase as Pakistan books a final against NZ



Skipper Mohammed Rizwan (122 not out) and Salman Agha (134) powered Pakistan to a six-wicket win against South Africa in a tri-series match at Karachi on Wednesday. **The scores:** South Africa 352/5 in 50 overs (Bavuma 82, Breetzke 83, Klaasen 87) lost to Pakistan 355/4 in 49 overs (Rizwan 122 n.o., Agha 134).

**BREAKING A JINX**

Guarrotxena on the double as Goa powers past Mumbai City



FC Goa rode on Iker Guarrotxena's brace (34th and 41st minutes) and Borja Herrera's strike (64th) to beat Mumbai City FC 3-1 in Mumbai on Wednesday. The result ended Goa's 13-game winless run against the Islanders in the ISL. Lallianzuza Chhangte scored a consolation goal in added time (90+7) for the Mariners.

# Sublime Gill, sizzling Shreyas lay the foundation as India pummels England

The vice-captain leads the way with a majestic century, his seventh in ODIs, while the No. 4 batter continues merry run as the Men in Blue pile up 356; Kohli finds form; the visitors implode after a quick start; Arshdeep sends back the openers before Harshit strikes crucial blows

**ENGLAND IN INDIA**

**N. Sudarshan**  
AHMEDABAD

**P**erception matters. It's not just about winning matches but also how you win them. On Wednesday at the Narendra Modi Stadium, India showed, yet again, how this was done with a masterful 142-run thrashing of England in the third and final ODI.

If a settled batting unit led by the sublime Shubman Gill (112, 102b, 14x4, 3x6) put on a mammoth 356, a rejigged bowling line-up – Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav and Arshdeep Singh coming in for Varun Chakaravarthy (sore calf, precautionary), Ravindra Jadeja and Mohammed Shami (both rested) – dismissed England for a paltry 214 to complete a 3-0 whitewash ahead of the Champions Trophy.

For a third straight time this series, England was off to a racy start with Ben Duckett (34, 22b, 8x4) and Phil Salt (23, 21b, 4x4) scoring at 10 runs an over in the first six. But Arshdeep exercised both batters in successive overs with excellent slower deliveries.

Tom Banton (38, 4lb, 4x4, 2x6) and Joe Root (24, 29b, 2x4) resisted, with the former playing a couple of audacious reverse sweeps.



Masterclass: Gill played some breathtaking strokes during his 102-ball 112. VIJAY SONEJI

But Kuldeep had Banton edge behind a flighted wrong'un before Axar Patel forced Root to chop one on. When frontline pacer Harshit Rana returned to send back Jos Buttler and Harry Brook, it was all over.

After being put in to bat, India rode on Gill's seventh ODI century. It appeared like he knew the Stadium like the back of his hand, for he has now scored hundreds in all three formats here. And this reflected in

the way the 25-year-old explored every area of the ground, driving, flicking, jabbing and even late-cutting his way through. Initially, Gill routinely stepped out to negate the appreciable seam movement. And once he settled, he blossomed. Speedster Gus Atkinson was straight-driven and lofted over his head while spinners Liam Livingstone and Adil Rashid were whipped, steered and milked all over the

ground. Such was Gill's onslaught that 77 of the 112 runs he scored came off the trio.

If a sweetly driven boundary to the extra-cover fence off Rashid brought Gill his fifty, the hundred was had with a majestic flick to the mid-wicket fence off Mark Wood. Virat Kohli (52, 55b, 7x4, 1x6) and Shreyas Iyer (78, 64b, 8x4, 2x6) supported their vice-captain well, combining for 116 second-wicket

**SCOREBOARD****INDIA**

Phil Salt c Axar b Arshdeep 23 (21b, 4x4), Ben Duckett c Rohit b Arshdeep 34 (22b, 8x4), Tom Banton c Rohit b Kuldeep 38 (41b, 4x4, 2x6), Joe Root c Axar 24 (29b, 2x4), Harry Brook c Harshit 19 (26b, 1x4, 1x6), Jos Buttler c Hardik 6 (9b), Liam Livingstone st. Rahul b Washington 9 (23b, 1x4), Gus Atkinson b Axar 38 (19b, 6x4, 1x6), Adil Rashid c Hardik 0 (5b), Mark Wood c Shreyas b Hardik 9 (7b, 2x4), Saqib Mahmood (not out) 2 (4b); Extras (b-5, lb-4, w-3): 12; Total (in 34.2 overs): 214.

**FALL OF WICKETS**

1-6 (Rohit, 1.1 overs), 2-122 (Kohli, 18.6), 3-226 (Gill, 34.3), 4-259 (Shreyas, 38.2), 5-289 (Hardik, 40.6), 6-307 (Axar, 43.5), 7-333 (Rahul, 46.4), 8-353 (Harshit, 48.6), 9-353 (Washington, 49.3).

**ENGLAND BOWLING**

Mahmood 10-0-68-1, Wood 9-1-45-2, Atkinson 8-0-74-1, Root 5-0-41-2, Rashid 10-0-64-4, Livingstone 8-0-57-0.

**ENGLAND**

runs and 104 for the third respectively.

Kohli was not at his imperious best but he is at a stage where he will take runs whichever way they come. But he did execute a couple of pleasing drives and a trademark whip in the mid-wicket region. Shreyas' best strokes were the pick-up shots he hit behind square on the leg-side.

Rashid was England's most threatening bowler (four for 64), but he was far

from steady, zoning in and out. He bowled magic deliveries to have Kohli caught behind and Hardik Pandya bowled but also landed rank bad half-volleys and short balls that were deservedly flogged.

The visitors did pull things back in the final 15 overs by limiting India to 356 after the latter was 226 for two in the 35th over. But with another below-par batting effort, they shot themselves in the foot.

Wanted to play this game as a must-win'



In smashing form: Shreyas was in his element again. VIJAY SONEJI

**N. Sudarshan**  
AHMEDABAD

Gautam Gambhir comes across as someone who always has the bigger picture in mind. On Wednesday, India hammered England by 142 runs to sweep the ODI series 3-0 but the head coach hardly cracked a smile in the post-match media briefing, for his eyes seemed set on the all-important Champions Trophy that begins next week.

"There will never be a case where all the boxes will be ticked," he declared. "We could have easily seen this game as a dead rubber. But we wanted to put ourselves under pressure and wanted to play this game as a must-win. And the guys actually turned up like that."

On Tuesday, India brought in spinner Varun Chakaravarthy in place of opener Yashasvi Jaiswal in its Jasprit Bumrah-less Champions Trophy squad. Gambhir stated that it was done to increase the wicket-taking options.

"We wanted another wicket-taking option in the middle [overs] and we could only pick 15."



You can't help it. People like Harshit, Arshdeep, Shami... these guys will put their hand up. We're going to go with a clear mind and try to win the Champions Trophy

**GAMBHIR**  
on Bumrah's absence

know Varun can be a massive threat," he said. "With a lot of teams not having played him, he could be an X-factor."

"I'm not going to say that he's going to start [every game]. But it's always good to have a strong bowling line-up. Yashasvi has got a fabulous future ahead. It's just that we could only pick 15."

Gambhir also expressed confidence that Shubman Gill would extend his superb ODI form into Test cricket in the near future.

"The problem is that we keep judging people after every innings. You have to trust these young players. Imagine what can happen in the next couple of years if we keep backing them..."

# Sachin Yadav hits a new high in javelin; Sawan Barwal breaks another record

**NATIONAL GAMES**

**Stan Rayan**  
DEHRADUN

With Neeraj Chopra showing the way with his Olympic and World Championship golds, there is now a bunch of Indian javelin throwers who feel they can get on to the big stage too. And the group appears to be getting bigger and bigger.

Sachin Yadav is one of them. The 25-year-old from Uttar Pradesh produced a personal best 84.39m and broke the meet record by more than two metres. In the end, Sachin's fifth round brought him the title.

At the other end, defending high jump champion Pooja was in a world of her own.

While the rest of the field faded away at 1.79m, the 17-year-old from Haryana bettered Swapna Barman's three-year-old Games record by one centimetre, clearing 1.84m, and



Unleashed: Sachin's personal best saw him break the meet record by more than two metres. RITU RAJ KONWAR

in my next competition."

Sachin appeared pumped up, and with his Statemate Rohit Yadav also uncorking two 80m throws, the battle for gold was intense. In the end, Sachin's fifth round brought him the title.

Meanwhile, Asian Games bronze medallist Vithya Ramraj lived up to her billing by winning the women's 400m hurdles.

The final day of the Games athletics competition saw another record falling.

Himachal Pradesh's Sawan Barwal, who had bettered Swapna Barman's three-year-old Games record by one centimetre, clearing 1.84m, and

cord on the opening morning, broke G. Lakshmanan's 5000m Games record while winning the gold comfortably.

**The results:**  
**Men: 5000m:** 1. Sawan Barwal (HP) 13:45.93s MR, OR G. Lakshmanan's 13:50.05, 2015; 2. Gagan Singh (Har) 14:00.04, 3. Sunil Dawar (MP) 14:01.33.

**400m hurdles:** 1. Ruchit Mori (Guj) 50.97s, 2. Hardip (Pun) 51.02, 3. Rohan Kamble (Mah) 51.77. **Javelin throw:** 1. Sachin Yadav (UP) 84.39m, OR Rajinder Singh's 82.23, 2015; 2. Rohit Yadav (UP) 80.47, 3. Vikash Sharma (Utk) 79.33.

**Women: 5000m:** 1. Ankita (Utk) 15:56.03s, 2. Sanjivani Jadav (Mah) 15:59.12, 3. Poona Sonune (Mah) 16:53.52. **400m hurdles:** 1. Vithya Ramraj (TN) 58.11s, 2. S.K. Sreevarthan (TN) 59.86, 3. Neha Dhabale (Mah) 1:00.52.

**High jump:** 1. Pooja (Har) 1.84m, 2022; 2. K. Gobika (TN) 1.79m, 3. S. Abhinaya Shetty (Kar) 1.77.

**Shot put:** 1. Jasmine Kaur (Pun) 15.97m, 2. Vidhi (UP) 15.46m, 3. Srishti Vig (Del) 15.46m.

**Mixed: 4x400m relay:** 1. Kerala (T.S. Manu, K. Sneha, J. Bejoy, Ansa Babu) 3:25.35s, 2. Maharashtra (3:25.66), 3. Punjab (3:26.35).

# Real Madrid stuns Man City; Dembele scores brace as PSG downs Brest

**CHAMPIONS LEAGUE**

**Agence France-Presse**  
PARIS

Jude Bellingham snatched a stoppage-time winner as Real Madrid twice came from behind to beat Manchester City 3-2 in the first leg of their blockbuster Champions League play-off tie Tuesday, while Paris Saint-Germain took command of an all-French clash with Brest.

Erling Haaland's double – his first goals in five appearances against Madrid – looked to have secured Pep Guardiola's side a slender advantage, but instead the reigning European champion now goes into next week's return leg in Spain as strong favourite to reach the last 16.

It is the fourth consecutive season City and Madrid have met in the knockout phase of the competition, with the winner in each of the past three encounters going on to lift the trophy.

Madrid equalised on the hour after the City wall blocked a free-kick, with Dani Ceballos clipping the ball back into the area

start at the Etihad and took the lead in the 19th minute as Haaland steered past Thibaut Courtois after Joao Pedro Guedes chested down a pass from Jack Grealish.

Vinicius Junior hit the crossbar for Madrid before City defender Manuel Akanji did likewise with a header, while Haaland was denied a second goal right after half-time when his deflected shot came back off the woodwork.

Madrid equalised on the hour after the City wall blocked a free-kick, with Dani Ceballos clipping the ball back into the area

where Mbappe's mishit volley looped into the net after coming off his shin and leaving Ederson stranded.

Juventus won 2-1 at home to PSV Eindhoven in the first leg of their tie in Turin. Borussia Dortmund is on the cusp of the last 16 after winning 3-0 away to Sporting Lisbon.

**The results:** Brest 0 lost to PSG 3 (Vitinha 21-pen, Dembele 45, 66); Juventus 2 (McKennie 34, Mbangula 82) bt PSV Eindhoven 1 (Perisic 56); Manchester City 2 (Haaland 19, 80-pen) lost to Real Madrid 3 (Mbappe 60, Diaz 86, Bellingham 90+2); Sporting 0 lost to Borussia Dortmund 3 (Giroud 60, Gross 68, Adeyemi 82).

sational goalscoring form as he netted twice for PSG in a 3-0 win over Brest.

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## IN BRIEF



## Asalanka helps Sri Lanka pull off a heist against Australia

Sri Lanka pulled off a stunning comeback against world champion Australia to clinch a 49-run victory in the first ODI in Colombo on Wednesday after a century by captain Charith Asalanka.

**The scores:** Sri Lanka 214 in 46 overs (Asalanka 127; Abbott 3/61) bt Australia 165 in 33.5 overs (Carey 41; Theekshana 4/40). **Toss:** Sri Lanka. **POm:** Asalanka

## Kuhnemann's bowling action reported

Australian Matt Kuhnemann will be forced to undergo biomechanical testing on his bowling action after the left-arm spinner was reported by umpires during the recent Test series win in Sri Lanka. Australian media reported on Wednesday that Kuhnemann has been referred to ICC and faces a ban if his action is deemed to be beyond the limit for the degree of arm flexion permitted.

## India romps past Macau, seals quarterfinal berth

India made a sizzling start to its campaign, delivering a 5-0 thrashing to Macau in its opening Group-D tie of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship at Qingdao (China) on Wednesday. India is assured of a quarterfinal berth and will face Korea in its final tie on Thursday which will decide the group topper.

**The result:** India 5 bt Macau 0 [Lakshya Sen bt Pang Fong Pui 21-16, 21-12; Malvika Bansod bt Hao Wai Chan 21-15, 21-9; Chirag Shetty & M.R. Arjun bt Chin Pui & Kok Wen Vong 21-15, 21-19; Treesa Jolly & Gayatri Gopi Chand bt NG Weng Chi & Pui Chi Wa 21-10, 21-5; Sathish Kumar Karunakaran & Aadya Variyath bt Lok Chong Leong & Weng Chi Ng 21-10, 21-9].

## Sriram Balaji advances to doubles quarterfinals

Sriram Balaji and Miguel Reyes-Varela of Mexico beat Ethan Quinn and Learner Tien 3-6, 6-2, [10-4] in the pre-quarterfinals of the \$766,290 ATP tournament in Delray Beach.

**Other results:** \$200,000 Challenger, Manama, Bahrain: **Doubles:** Pre-quarters: Ivan Ljutarevic & Luca Sanchez (Fra) bt Anirudh Chandrasekar & Ray Ho (Tpe) 7-6(4), 6-3; Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan & Vijay Sundar Prashanth bt Saketh Myneni & Colin Sinclair (Nrm) 6-4, 7-6(1).

\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir: First round: Manas Dhamne bt Alberto Campos (Esp) 7-6(2), 6-3. **Doubles:** Pre-quarters: Oleksi Krutky (Ukr) & Dimitris Sakellaridis (Gre) bt Lorenzo Carboni (Ita) & Manas Dhamne 6-7(4), 7-6(0), [10-7].

## Mumbai Titans outguns Chennai Heat

Mumbai Titans defeated Chennai Heat 85-70 after leading 44-31 at halftime in the INBL Pro basketball league in New Delhi on Wednesday. It was the second victory in four matches for the Mumbai team, which had revived its fortunes with a win over Hyderabad Falcons two days earlier. Hyderabad recorded a thrilling 88-84 victory over Punjab Warriors late on Tuesday for its third win in four matches.

**The results:** Mumbai Titans 85 (Elijah Puna 18, Liam Judd 14, Dalip Panopio 14, Durrell McDonald 11) bt Chennai Heat 70 (Tad Dufelmeier 17, Shakem Johnson 12, Jack Stanwick 10). Hyderabad Falcons 88 (Jack Purchase 32, Kushal Singh 11, Harry Morris 11, Alex Robinson Jr. 10) bt Punjab Warriors 84 (Stokley Chaffee 21, Lucas Barker 18, Gurbaz Sandhu 12, Uche Dibimakama 11).



## City's Grealish injured in CL match against Real

Manchester City's Jack Grealish was injured and substituted after 30 minutes in Tuesday's Champions League playoff against Real Madrid. Grealish crouched down and received treatment before being replaced by Phil Foden.

## LIVE TELECAST

**I-League:** Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 2 & 4.30 p.m.  
**ISL:** Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.

**Europa League:** Sony Sports Ten 1, 2 & 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 11.15 & 1.30 a.m. (Friday)

# Nizar, Azharuddeen hold firm as Kerala makes semifinals thanks to one-run lead

The batters keep J&K's bowlers at bay on the final day; skipper Baby and opener Chandran lead the way with patient knocks

## RANJIT TROPHY

## Shayan Acharya

**I**t was a test of patience for the Kerala batters which they managed to pass with flying colours, batting out the final day of its Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Jammu and Kashmir to force a draw. The one-run lead in the first innings eventually made all the difference as Sachin Baby and Co. made the final four.

Pursuing a target of 399, Kerala was never in a hurry to chase it down. Rather the plan seemed quite clear from the start: to play by the merit of the ball and bat out the day, something it had done in the group league fixture against Madhya Pradesh, earlier this season.

Resuming at 100 for 2, captain Sachin Baby and Akshay Chandran judged the early morning condi-



We've done it: Azharuddeen and Nizar showed resilience to ensure Kerala's progress. EMMANUEL YOGINI

tions well, and denied the J&K bowlers any opportunity to make inroads.

With the entire Kerala camp backing the batters with continuous synchronised clapping, both Baby

and Chandran chose to be watchful and added only 28 runs in the first 24 overs. With the MCA Stadium surface offering no help to the bowlers, Baby and Chandran held fort, and

occasionally took singles.

However, shortly before lunch, Chandran fell two runs short of his fifty, after being caught by Shubham Khajuria off Sahl Lotra. Early in the second ses-

sion, off-spinner Sahil and left-arm spinner Abid Mushtaq, however, spiced things up with quick wickets of Baby, Jalaj Saxena and Aditya Sarvate.

Baby, the Kerala captain, was unlucky to have missed out on a fifty, falling just two runs short, as he nicked one to wicketkeeper Kanhaiya Wadhawan off Lotra.

## Quick strikes

With three quick wickets, a rejuvenated J&K side waited a bit before taking the new ball. However, with Mohammed Azharuddeen (67 n.o., 118b, 9x4, 2x6) and Salman Nizar (44 n.o., 162, 8x4) coming up with an unbroken partnership of 115, the northern side's hopes of reaching its maiden semifinal went up in smoke.

Riding the confidence of a first innings century, Nizar anchored the innings, whereas Azharuddeen played a few shots to put the pressure on the oppo-

nent. J&K used seven bowlers to find breakthroughs, but a determined effort by the Kerala batters saw the team reach the semifinals after six years.

**The scores:**  
**Jammu and Kashmir — 1st innings:** 280.  
**Kerala — 1st innings:** 281.

**Jammu and Kashmir — 2nd innings:** 399 for 9 dec.

**Kerala — 2nd innings:** Rohan Kunnummal c Wadhawan b Yudhvir 36, Akshay Chandran c Khajuria b Lotra 48, Shoun Roger c Vivrant b Yudhvir 6, Sachin Baby c Wadhawan b Lotra 48, Jalaj Saxena c Nazir b Mushtaq 18, Aditya Sarvate c Nazir b Mushtaq 8, Salman Nizar (not out) 44, Mohammed Azharuddeen (not out) 67; Extras (nb-2, b-17, lb-1) 20; Total (for six wkts. in 126 overs): 295.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-54, 2-70, 3-128, 4-159, 5-167, 6-180.

**Jammu and Kashmir bowling:** Nabi 20-6-49-0, Nazir 14-4-35-0, Yudhvir 21-4-61-2, Lotra 36-17-50-2, Khajuria 1-0-5-0, Muzaffar 9-2-17-0, Mushtaq 22-9-56-2, Vivrant 3-2-4-0.

**Match drawn;** Kerala enters semifinals based on first-innings lead.

## A sensational nine-under 61 gives Sandhu the sole lead

## GOLF

Sports Bureau  
KOLKATA

Yuvraj Sandhu shot a sensational nine-under 61 to take the sole lead after the second round of the season-opening Tata Steel PGTI Players Championship at the Tollygunge Club course on Wednesday.

Overnight joint leader Sandhu totalled 16-under 124 to take a three-shot lead at the halfway stage.

Bangladesh's Jamal Hosain struck an impressive eight-under 62 to take the

second position with an aggregate of 127.

Five players, including Honey Baisoya, Rahil Gangjee, S.S.P. Chawrasia, M. Dhama and Arjun Sharma, shared the third place with an identical total of 130. The cut was decided at two-under 138. Fifty-nine professionals and one amateur, Anshul Mishra, made the cut.

## The scores (second round):

124-Yuvraj Sandhu (63, 61); 127-Jamal Hossain (65, 62); 130-S.S.P. Chawrasia (64, 66), M. Dhama (67, 63), Arjun Sharma (63, 67), Honey Baisoya (65, 65), Rahil Gangjee (63, 67); 131-Shamim Khan (67, 64).

## Starc withdraws, Smith to lead Australia in Champions Trophy

Press Trust of India  
SYDNEY

Steve Smith-led Australia will be without its frontline pace attack at the Champions Trophy after Mitchell Starc withdrew from the tournament citing personal reasons.

The ODI World Cup holder has been forced to make several changes to its 15-member provisional squad due to injuries to captain Pat Cummins, paceman Josh Hazlewood, and all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, along with Marcus Stoinis' surprise retirement.

**The squad:** Steve Smith (Capt.), Sean Abbott, Alex Carey, Ben Dwarshuis, Nathan Ellis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Aaron Hardie, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Spencer Johnson, Marnus Labuschagne, Glenn Maxwell, Tanveer Sangha, Matthew Short, Adam Zampa.

## Travelling reserve:

Cooper Connolly.

## Rhythm beats Manu in shoot-off in sports pistol

Sports Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Manu, Rhythm, and Simranpreet Kaur, the toppers in sports pistol. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the top spot, while Chain Singh placed third ahead of qualification topper Kiran Jadhav (596).

With the second trials in the event having finished, the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) was prompt in putting out the average moving scores that placed Manu, Simranpreet Kaur Brar and Esha Singh as the top three, followed by Rahi Sarnobat, T.S. Divya and Rhythm.

The

eventual rankings apart, the final line up had the cream, with Abhinya Patil, Esha (588), Rahi (588), Heena and Chinku placing fourth to eighth.

In the men's 50-metre rifle 3-position event, Swapnil Kusale beat Akhil Sheoran by 2.6 points, for

Such an effort could not help Mehuli's cause immediately, as the moving averages project Arya, Narmada Nitin and Sonam Maskar as the top three, followed by Eleavenil Valarivan, Ananya and Meghana Sajjanar.

Similarly, in men's air rifle, Rudrankksh Patil, Arjun Babuta and Hriday Ha-

zarika were the top-3 in the averages, ahead of Sandeep Singh, Kiran Jadhav and Smit Moradiya.

In rapid fire pistol, Anish Bhanwala and Vijayveer Sidhu were far ahead of the rest in the averages, and were followed by Gurpreet Singh.

## The results: 10m air rifle:

**Women:** 1. Arya Borse 253.5 (632.8); 2. Ananya Naidu 253.0 (633.5); 3. Mehuli Ghosh 230.6 (635.4).

**25m sports pistol:** **Women:** 1. Rhythm Sangwan 37(4) 578; 2. Manu Bhaker 37(3) 591; 3. Simranpreet Kaur Brar 32 (588).

**50m rifle 3-position:** **Men:** 1. Swapnil Kusale 465.1 (592); 2. Akhil Sheoran 462.5 (593); 3. Chain Singh 451.7 (589).

## Geerts beats Mukund to make the quarterfinals

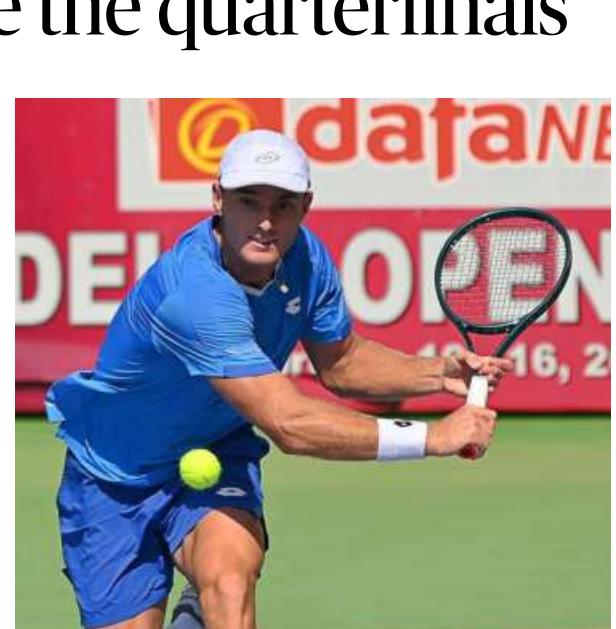
## DELHI OPEN

Kamesh Srinivasan  
NEW DELHI

Michael Geerts of Belgium scotched the Indian hopes as he defeated S. Mukund 6-4, 7-5; Kyrian Jacquet (Fra) bt Jay Clarke (GBR) 7-5, 6-3; Andre Iaglan (USA) bt Timofei Skatov (Kaz) 6-2, 6-3; Tristan Schoolkate (Aus) bt Valentin Vacherot (Mon) 7-6(4), 3-6, 6-4.

**Entertaining**  
In doubles, the second-seeded Niki Poonacha and Courtney Lock of Zimbabwe played an entertaining all-round game, delivering crisp volleys at the crunch to move into the quarterfinals, with a 10-6 victory in the super tie-break against the Czech pair of Marek Gengel and Dalibor Svcina.

Ramkumar Ramanathan and Karan Singh had their chances against Sharato Mochizuki and Kaito Uesugi, but a few errors saw the duo lose 7-10 in the super tie-break.



Pulling through: Schoolkate warded off a stiff challenge from Vacherot. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

## Injured Ghazanfar to miss both CT and IPL

Press Trust of India  
KABUL

Teenage Afghanistan off-spinner AM Ghazanfar has been ruled out of both the ICC Champions Trophy and the IPL due to a lower back fracture that will keep him on the sidelines for at least four months.

Left-arm spinner Nangeyalia Kharote has replaced the 18-year-old in the main squad for Champions Trophy.

**The squad:** Hashmatullah Shahidi (Capt.), Ibrahim Zadran, Ikram Alkilah (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Sediqullah Atal, Rahmat Shah (vice-capt.), Azmatullah Omarzai, Gulbadin Naib, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Fareeh Ahmad, Fazlul Haq Farooqi, Nangeyalia Kharote, Naveed Zadran and Noor Ahmad.

# Kamalini – the accidental cricketer on the fast lane to stardom

The explosive opener shares the secret behind batting left-handed, taking up wicket-keeping, life as a World Cup winner and the upcoming Women's Premier League



B. VELANKANNI RAJ

## Anirudh Velamuri

CHENNAI

**A**t the Chennai International Airport a few days ago, a gaggle of television cameras set up shop and began the usual drill – checking all equipment, dragging the worn-down podium into position and strategically arranging microphones to best display their organisations' logos.

An inevitable guessing game followed. Whose arrival was the preparation for? Was it a politician? One could hear someone whispering that it was an actress flying back after a vacation.

When G. Kamalini walked out, barely visible behind the mountain of bags she was pushing, the cameras began rolling while passers-by looked on wondering why there was so much fuss about the diminutive kid who looked like she would rather be away from all the flashlights.

The women's game in India has increasingly commanded the attention of the nation with achievements like a second-consecutive U19 World Cup title being celebrated with much fanfare. Arriving in Chennai a little over 48 hours after the final, Kamalini stood by her family and patiently indulged the press.

Nearly three hours passed before Kamalini could begin her journey home where her favourite chicken biryani lay waiting. Celebrations aside, the family wanted to feed their famished daughter who didn't have the best culinary experience in Malaysia.

"I didn't like the food. I used to eat pancakes and fruit in the morning. In the afternoon, I used to eat a rice dish I don't even know the name of," she revealed, in a chat with The Hindu.

The 16-year-old, now well-fed and reasonably rested, recalled the World Cup triumph and the party, which involved cake, chips, coca cola and dancing till 1am, with glee.

### Bright lights, big city

It was all well deserved. Kamalini was the third-highest run-getter (143) in the tournament, in a sport she took up purely by chance. A skater until the age of 12, cricket was a lockdown pastime as she began to bowl to her brother, Dominic Kishore, in the nets at their home in Madurai.

Seeing her aptitude for the game, Kamalini's father Gunalan decided to invest time and money in his daughter's career. The intimate and largely traditional confines of Madurai couldn't accommodate the pair's big ambitions and the family decided to relocate to Chennai.

"When we moved to Chennai, I didn't know what was happening. But I knew that I liked cricket and what I wanted to do. My father took the decision to move as the cost of travelling between the cities was greater than just shifting to Chennai. I just told my dad to do what he thought was best," she recalled.

For Kamalini, though, the first memories of staying in Chennai were not very pleasant.

"Initially, my mother was in Madurai and I was in Chennai with my father and brother. The first place we lived in was the most horrible place I have ever seen. But we had no choice as we had to stay to play in the ground there. After that we moved back to Madurai."

"Later we took the decision to move to Chennai and it has been three years since the move. I had some language issues initially since there was a difference in the Tamil dialect spoken in Madurai and Chennai. Over time I got over that and also made many friends here."

### The switch

Kamalini's father has much to do with a lot of foundational decisions his daughter took in her early years in the sport. One of them was the right-handed Kamalini opting to train as a left-hand bat.

"My brother and I were playing in the verandah one day. We are both right-handed and in the game, we had to play left-handed. When he served underarm, I played the drive very well. Then my brother told my father that I was playing the [left-handed] drive superbly and that he should try me as a leftie. The very next day my father told me to play left-handed. I did and have never looked back."

The teenager is comfortably ambidextrous, and not just in cricket.

"I bowl with both my left hand and right hand. I write with my left hand and also my right hand. The only thing I don't do well with my left hand is throwing."

A fortuitous *coup de maître*, in hindsight.

### Concealed grief

In 2023, Kamalini moved up to the Under-19 level and immediately showed her mettle. She hit 311 runs in eight matches to help Tamil Nadu triumph in the Under-19 domestic tournament in October.

She followed that with a dazzling 79-run knock in the final of the U19 Tri-Series against South Africa A. Having earned a call-up to the Indian squad to feature in the U19 Asia Cup, everything was falling into place for the youngster. But things soon unravelled after her father suffered a massive heart attack,



needing open-heart surgery thereafter.

A weak heart notwithstanding, Gunalan lost sleep over how to keep his daughter's dreams intact. His transport business and financial bearings were impacted by his hospitalisation. More importantly, he was not with Kamalini guiding her through the gears of cricket.

A decision was taken by the entire family to keep Kamalini in the dark about everything.

"When it happened, I was not at home, I was playing for my State. My mother and brother did not tell me anything. Father is very well, he will be discharged soon" is what they kept telling me. I didn't have any information beyond that. Only after my father fully recovered did I get to know more details, that he went so close to death and returned," she recollects.

"I was angry as to why they didn't tell me everything before, but they sat me down and reminded me what I was doing at that moment, and how I would have performed had I known the full details. I was angry but I also understood why my mother did what she did."

Gunalan would agree that he was living his childhood dreams through his kids. A lack of support from his family had forced him to give up his cricketing aspirations.

He turned that disappointment into a stubborn drive to give his kids everything they needed. Kamalini's family's sacrifices kept fanning the flame of her passion for cricket. It was not enough to bat well or chip in with some off-spin. Kamalini veered towards keeping too.

"Wicketkeeping came naturally to me and I like it a lot. As I grew older, I was being asked if I was a wicketkeeper or a

bowler. In one Under-15 domestic tournament, I bowled in two matches and kept wickets in the rest. In the Under-19s, I bowled in the T20s and was wicketkeeper in the 50-overs."

Her U19 coach Nooshin Al Khadeer had an important role to play in Kamalini persisting with keeping duties.

"At the World Cup, Nooshin ma'am asked me if I knew why she was making me a keeper. Being quick is one reason, but she said that I also keep the team together. I accepted it and began to fully focus on wicketkeeping, even more than I did on my batting. It actually helped my batting and improved my concentration and ball-eye coordination."

### Mumbai calling

Kamalini went to Malaysia for the U-19 Women's T20 World Cup as a superstar. Her versatile stroke selection, footwork and enviable attitude help her set every stage participation on fire.

In the auction preceding the 2025 edition, Kamalini was registered at a base price of ₹10 lakh, Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians then sparred for rights to get the highest bid, with MI eventually having the last laugh - one worth a staggering ₹1.60 crore.

That's more than half the ₹2.65 crore purse money MI had when they sat down for the auctions.

Kamalini has a wise head on her shoulders. While excited about getting picked by MI for WPL 2025, Kamalini is also very mindful about making the most of her chances without setting any big expectations. The past few months have involved the company of some of the biggest names in the women's game in India. The youngster though is unfazed. No unnecessary respect.

"I do not have any favourite women cricketers and I am not saying it with any attitude. I can't be like Smriti [Mandhana], Smriti is Smriti. I can only be myself. Everyone says I play like Smriti, but we both have our own styles, I can't play like her."

So how about the men?

"I like Steve Smith and Chris Gayle. I like Smith's stance and I love the left-handed Gayle's hitting power. And, of course, my first favourite is my brother."

Her career so far has been like an endless teaser campaign for a product that takes the market by storm. Picking up cricket, becoming a left-hander, and donning the gloves - everything has been by chance, or divine intervention depending on how you want to see it.

The technical expertise has been a happy by-product but Kamalini is well and truly on the path to greatness.

## THE GIST

A skater until the age of 12, Kamalini picked up the ball for fun during the COVID-19 lockdowns and began to bowl to her brother, Dominic Kishore, in the nets at their home in Madurai

In her maiden foray at the Under-19 level, she showed her mettle. Her 311 runs in eight matches helped Tamil Nadu triumph in the domestic tournament in October

When Kamalini landed in Malaysia, there were a lot of expectations as she had set the stage alright in the WPL auction

Having entered with a base price of ₹10 lakh, Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians had a bidding war before the latter secured her services for a staggering ₹1.60 crore

# SCIENCE

# AI can make drug-testing precise, and relevant to human biology

Regulators and the pharmaceutical industry have traditionally banked on animal models' response to various compounds to assess whether a drug can proceed to human clinical trials. But there is a growing body of work suggesting we need to improve the quality of data available at this stage.

**Surat Parvatam**  
**Arvind Ramanathan**

**I**n January 6, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) proposed draft guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to assess the safety and effectiveness of drugs.

The influential body has said that in the last decade, the number of submissions from drugmakers that include an AI or machine-learning component has seen an exponential rise. There was only one such submission per year in 2016 and 2017, but in the next two years it tripled; in 2021, the FDA reported a remarkable 10-fold increase on the previous year alone with 132 submissions, including an AI and/or machine-learning component.

#### Drug development pitfalls

It takes nearly 10 years and over a billion dollars to develop a drug using conventional (animal-based) processes, which also have a success rate of only 14%. Emerging technologies like AI provide opportunities for us to catalyse and improve the human-relevant drug development pipeline.

For example, rats can eliminate some drugs from their bodies much faster than humans can, which means that for the same dose level, humans would be exposed to the drug for a longer duration. As a result, the data for a compound obtained by testing with rats will have to be adjusted for this skew.

The responses of humans belonging to different populations around the world to drugs and diseases vary in ways that can't be captured in the responses of a homogenous, lab-bred animal population. PIXABAY



The responses of humans belonging to different populations around the world to drugs and diseases vary in ways that can't be captured in the responses of a homogenous, lab-bred animal population. PIXABAY

researchers from the U.K. reported in the journal *Toxicological Sciences* a "safety toolbox" comprising a group of computational models that could predict the undesirable side effects of a chemical compound on the entire body or on specific organs the compound isn't designed to target.

This framework involves integrating multiple types of data, such as the level and manner of exposure to the substance (topical, oral, etc.), its structural properties, and any information about its chemical properties.

#### Where do AI models fall short?

Despite the potential to overcome the barriers of conventional testing, AI comes with its own challenges. In particular, the reliability of data analysis performed by an AI tool depends on the quality of the data the model is trained with.

Participants at an FDA-sponsored workshop at Duke University in the U.S. in 2022 used the adage "garbage in, garbage out" to describe this problem. The use of biased and/or under-representative data of a target population will also compromise the output.

Another challenge is transparency. The inner workings of most AI models in use are not open to independent scrutiny, nor is the data used to train them easily accessible, so the models' performance can't be assessed as required.

#### FDA's draft guidelines

The FDA has been open to the idea of using AI and its draft guidelines to present a stepwise framework to assess models' credibility. The text emphasises the importance of identifying questions of interest, the context for each question, and how a model will help address it. This is because a model developed to identify the risk of one adverse reaction to one



AI tools can digest data about how a human body absorbs, distributes, and eliminates a drug and predict the response of vulnerable populations, such as children, whose participation in clinical trials raises thorny ethical and technical issues

drug based on previous clinical trials may not be equally good at identifying the risk of other reactions and/or to other drugs.

The guidelines also stress the importance of assessing the risk AI models may pose. If a model concludes a patient is at low risk for an adverse reaction to a drug, an incorrect prediction could have life-threatening implications. Identifying the level of this risk is another parameter of importance. Axiomatically, improving the quality and quantity of data used to train the AI model and the identification of possible biases will strengthen the model's integrity and value.

AI models can be self-learning, their outputs can change based on new inputs, and they can constantly adapt without human intervention. In response, the FDA framework recognises a need to continuously monitor and provide detailed maintenance plans across the lifecycle of these models. Given the currently vigorous AI landscape, the draft guidelines encourage the industry to engage with the FDA to discuss and design appropriate ways to assess their AI models.

The guidelines focus on the use of AI in the preclinical stage in particular, where it is critical to understand if a compound of interest is safe enough to be approved for human clinical trials.

Regulators and the pharmaceutical industry have traditionally banked on animal models' response to the compounds for this assessment. But there is a growing body of work suggesting we need to improve the quality of data available at this stage as well as reduce animal suffering.

#### From guidelines to adoption

The European Medicines Agency and the International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (a.k.a. ICH) have released similar documents on the use of AI in drug development processes. But the FDA guidelines are notable because they focus on the use of AI to support decisions regarding the safety and effectiveness of a drug before starting human clinical trials.

In 2023, India passed the New Drugs and Clinical Trials (Amendment) Rules 2023. It allowed data generated by advanced computational models to be used to assess the safety and efficacy of new drugs, freeing researchers from relying on animal trials alone.

That said, guidelines issued by regulators can help harmonise (i) government policy, (ii) manufacturers' expectations and compliance burden, (iii) researchers' strategy, and (iv) consumer safety.

In effect, the guidelines serve as a fixed point in the shifting AI space, an anchor where all stakeholders can pause to take stock together, before making the next decision.

(*Surat Parvatam is a senior strategist (research and regulatory science) at Humane Society International India. Arvind Ramanathan is head of research and associate professor, DBT-inStem. suratsaravanan@gmail.com, arvind@instem.res.in*)

#### Inputs to predictivity

Researchers today use AI across the breadth of the drug development cycle.

In the discovery phase, researchers comb through databases with thousands of compounds to select a few hundred promising candidates for a particular use case. Then they test these compounds on animals during preclinical research. The data for compounds that produce encouraging results in animal models are submitted to drug regulators for permission to conduct human clinical trials.

The compounds found to be safe and effective in these clinical trials – conducted in three phases depending on the requirement – are then released into the market following the Drug Controller-General's approval. In the post-marketing stage, the drug manufacturer monitors the drug's effects on the population, under an obligation to report adverse effects.

There are now AI tools that can digest data from a human adult about how their body absorbs, distributes, and eliminates a drug and based on that predict the response of vulnerable populations, such as children, whose participation in clinical trials raises thorny ethical and technical issues.

Another pain point in drug development that AI could surmount is predicting whether a drug could have unintended effects. In December 2024,

## THE SCIENCE QUIZ

### Unusual rivers around the world

#### Vasudevan Mukunth

#### QUESTION 1

The Shanay-timpisha is a tributary in Peru for the Ucayali river. It's the world's largest known thermal river: the water in a 6-km long portion of its lower reaches has a temperature of around 90°C. Which natural source of thermal energy keeps it nearly boiling?

#### QUESTION 2

The Amazon Basin's better-known drainage system is the river of the same name. It has a second system in the form of a subterranean slow-flowing aquifer around 4 km deep and 6 km long. Its path is also roughly the same as the Amazon river aboveground. Name the

aquifer.

#### QUESTION 3

The Qiantang River in China is 459-km long and drains into the East China Sea, through Hangzhou Bay. At the river's mouth, the incoming tide is so forceful that it pushes up the river's current there and flows inward at around 40 km/hr, creating a surfer's paradise. What is this phenomenon called?

#### QUESTION 4

The Dalykan River in Russia's Krasnoyarsk Krai is a tributary of the Ambarnaya River. It's only 29 km long but has become infamous for its blood-red colour – the result of being polluted with the element \_\_\_\_\_ dumped by a smelting facility nearby. Fill in the blank.

#### QUESTION 5

X is the longest river in Antarctica at just 32 km. It flows only during the summer – but it's really unusual because, unlike most rivers of the world, it flows inward, towards Lake Vanda. Name X.

#### Answers to February 11 questions:

1. Element whose presence makes tanzanite blue – **Ans: Vanadium**
2. Element rarely found together with zirconium in minerals – **Ans: Boron**
3. Mineral valued in China and formed in subduction zones – **Ans: Jadeite**
4. Breccia mineral found in Dhofar 280 meteorite – **Ans: Hapkeite**
5. Process in which radioactivity weathers crystals – **Ans: Metamictisation**

Visual: Name this river in Colombia whose riverbed changes colour through yellow, green, black, red, even blue from July to November. ASTROMARIO (CC BY-SA 3.0)

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



NASA's astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams inside the International Space Station's Harmony module. AFP

## NASA looks set to return Starliner astronauts days sooner

**Reuters**

NASA on Tuesday swapped out the astronaut capsule it plans to use for an upcoming routine flight to the International Space Station, a scheduling move that will allow a slightly earlier return for two Starliner astronauts who have been on the station far longer than expected.

The U.S. space agency said mission management teams opted to use a previously flown SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule for its Crew-10 mission to the space station, instead of a new SpaceX capsule whose production it said has been delayed.

The decision moves up the Crew-10 launch to March 12, from the previous target of March 25. NASA said it would still need to do a flight readiness assessment of the previously flown Crew Dragon capsule, which is named Endeavor and has been used on three previous missions.

The return of two astronauts, Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, who flew to the International Space Station on Boeing's faulty Starliner capsule last summer, has hinged on the arrival of the Crew-10's four-person crew in order to keep the station's American contingent staffed at normal levels.

The decision follows President Donald Trump's abrupt demand to SpaceX CEO Elon Musk last month to bring Wilmore and Williams back to Earth "as soon as possible," pleading for an end to their mission that in large part had already been decided on last year.

After Trump's demand, NASA affirmed its plan to bring home the astronauts, saying it would do so "as soon as practical." In its statement on Tuesday, the agency did not say its decision to

#### The return of Wilmore and Williams has hinged on the arrival of Crew-10's four-person crew in order to keep the station's American contingent staffed at normal levels

change the Crew-10 capsule was made to bring the Starliner crew home early.

"Human spaceflight is full of unexpected challenges," NASA's Commercial Crew Program head Steve Stich said in a statement, praising SpaceX for its flexibility.

Trump's call was an unusual intervention by a president into NASA's meticulously arranged ISS schedule and foisted Wilmore and Williams into an unlikely political spotlight.

Trump had blamed his predecessor Joe Biden for the astronaut's situation, though Biden had no involvement in the program. Musk, publicly accepting Trump's demand, also blamed Biden despite his space company's work with NASA to solve a spaceflight dilemma widely acknowledged to be caused by Boeing.

The spacecraft swap affects SpaceX's planned Fram2 private astronaut mission, which was expected to use the Endeavor capsule sometime this year for a polar-orbiting mission.

"We've lost the South Pole in the daylight," the mission's commander, Maltese crypto entrepreneur Chun Wang, wrote on X with a sad face emoji, replying to rumors about the Crew-10 decision. The mission will use a different Crew Dragon in SpaceX's fleet.

The Crew-10 decision is also expected to impact Axiom's planned Crew Dragon mission where it will fly government astronauts from India, Poland, and Hungary. Houston-based Axiom, which arranges private and government astronaut missions using Crew Dragon, did not immediately return a request for comment.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'